

# Emery County Public Lands Council

## Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: March 3, 2026

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Location: Emery County Courthouse, Canyon Conference Room

<https://zoom.us/j/4353813570?pwd=NWduRlZzRctGNUdnd1d0NkNNdmlZz09#success>

---

**Public Lands Council:** Rod Player, Varian Allen, Les Wilberg, Ben Grimes, Patrick Sundstrom, Brad Richman, Kim McFarlane, Craig Johansen

**Absent:** Sheriff Tyson Huntington & Leon McElprang

**Administration:** Jim Jennings, Jan Olsen

**Commission:** Keven Jensen, Dennis Worwood, Jordan Leonard

**Agencies:** Kyle Beagley, Mike Tweddell & Nick LaFazio (BLM), Tifnie Hansen (State Parks), Dal Gray (DOGM), Colton Taylor & Daniel Olson (DWR), Darren Olsen (USFS), Jaron Hansen (UFBF), Andy Bedingferd & Rachel Boyack (SITLA), Chris Wood (DWR)

**Washington:** Ron Dunn & HD Sanderson (Cong. Kennedy)

**Public:** Don & Terri Bennett, Wayne Ludington, Ed Geary, Ray Petersen, JR Bird, Tom Hansen

### 1. Call to Order / Welcome

- Rod Player, Chairman, calls the meeting to order.

### 2. Approval of Minutes

- Prior meeting: February 3, 2026, Regular Meeting
- Motion by: Varian Allen Seconded by: Ben Grimes Vote: Unanimous

### 3. Presentation from Utah Trust Lands

Andy Benningfield, Managing Director of Energy and Minerals, presented on the role of the Utah Trust Lands Administration (TLA) in managing approximately 3.3 million acres of trust land, primarily benefitting public schools.

- Key points from the presentation included:

- An overview of the revenue model, stating that TLA is self-funded, with revenues generated from leasing mineral rights and land for oil and gas and renewable energy projects.

- Detailed information on solar projects, existing leases, and the fiduciary responsibility to manage lands for beneficiaries, rather than public recreation or other non-revenue-generating uses.
- Insights into the approval process for solar leases, including internal and external reviews, public notifications, and outreach to adjacent landowners.
- Discussion on a recent canceled solar lease in Cedar Mountain due to community concerns, and the successful relocation of some projects to more suitable areas.
- A Q&A session followed, where concerns about environmental impacts were raised by council members and attendees, particularly regarding water runoff, weed control, and the monitoring of lithium battery recycling in solar installations.

## 6. Agency Reports

- **Utah State Department of Agriculture:**

No one in attendance

- **Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation**

No one in attendance

- **Utah Division of Water Rights (DWR)**

No one in attendance

- **Utah State Parks**

- Tifnie Hansen reports recent trail grooming efforts on Millers Flat and Skyline, with updates on snow conditions and seasonal readiness.

- Current projects at Huntington State Park are aimed at improving campground facilities.

- Announced ongoing seasonal hiring for summer positions, encouraging local applicants

- **Manti-La Sal National Forest (MLNF)**

Darren shared information about:

- Grazing and livestock operations, emphasizing ongoing dialogue with livestock operators regarding drought responses.

- Projects aimed at fuel management and habitat enhancement within the forest.

- **Trust Lands Administration (TLA)**

Spoke about up above

- **Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR)**

Chris Wood reported: - The upcoming big game application season from March 19 to April 23, stressing the importance of hunters knowing permit numbers, which will be released shortly.

- Ongoing monitoring efforts for crucial water sources and the effects that environmental changes may have on wildlife habitats.

- **Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining (DOGM)**

Dal Gray provided updates on: - Current status of Skyline Mine, discussing the workforce transition and ongoing assessments of water flow management in the area.

- Plans for Fossil Rock and the management of coal production.

- **Bureau of Land Management (BLM)**

Kyle Beagley provided an update regarding current projects on Buckhorn Road. It was reported that right-of-way access has been ensured to allow for the cleaning of ditches to assist with flood control.

Mike Tweddell reports on the Wild Horse Management Plan,

1. **Scoping Period**: The public input process begins with a scoping period, which has been opened for 30 days. During this time, the public is encouraged to provide feedback, comments, and suggestions regarding the management of the wild horse herd within the designated Herd Management Area (HMA).
2. **Management Evaluation Report**: The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has produced a Management Evaluation Report that summarizes current herd conditions, environmental factors, and population estimates. This report is made available to the public and serves as a foundation for understanding the issues at hand.
3. **Public Notification**: Stakeholders and interested parties are notified about the scoping process. This notification includes grazing permittees within the HMA, local government representatives, and various interest groups that may have a vested interest in wild horse management.
4. **Soliciting Alternatives**: The BLM is seeking input on alternative management strategies. Interested parties are encouraged to submit their thoughts on what management alternatives should be considered in the environmental assessment (EA). This may include ideas for fertility control, gathering strategies, and monitoring practices.
5. **Environmental Concerns**: The public is invited to address any environmental concerns they may have regarding wild horse management. These concerns will be taken into account as BLM develops the EA.
6. **Future Review Process**: After the public comments are collected, they will be reviewed by BLM officials who will assess them for incorporation into the management plan. An environmental assessment will be prepared based on the scoping comments received, and that document will later be subject to another public comment period.
7. **Final Decision Making**: After considering public feedback and the results of the environmental assessment, BLM will finalize the management plan and implement the chosen strategies to manage the wild horse population effectively. This process aims to foster transparency, gather community input, and address the concerns of local residents while ensuring that wild horse populations are managed in a way that is ecologically responsible. Public

participation is essential to improve the management practices and outcomes for the wild horse population in the area.

- **Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office (PLPCO)**

Nothing new that has not been mentioned. If needing help, please reach out to us.

- **Washington Delegation Staff**

Ron talked about: - Recent legislative initiatives affecting public lands and opportunities for community engagement, including upcoming discussions on nuclear energy and potential bills related to the management of federal lands.

## **7. Commission Comments on Public Land Items**

Commissioners discussed the importance of collaborating with various agencies to address public land management issues and emphasized the need for a structured feedback mechanism to engage with local communities effectively.

## **8. Additional Issues from Council Members**

Council members expressed interest in improving communication with representatives on the future of nuclear energy discussions in the area. They proposed inviting potential speakers, such as nuclear experts or Valor representatives, to provide detailed insights in upcoming meetings.

## **9. Concerned Citizens**

Several citizens voiced their opinions on wild horse management and the environmental impacts of solar projects in the area.  
- Concerns about the lack of public input opportunities were raised, particularly relating to how future land-use decisions are made and the lack of environmental assessments on new projects.

Public comment on Emery County-related public lands issues.  
(Comments may be limited by time at the discretion of the Chair.)

## **10. Adjourn**