

**UGS BOARD MEETING**  
**Department of Natural Resources**  
**Utah Geological Survey, Utah Core Research Center**  
**240 N. Redwood Road, Salt Lake City**  
**Wednesday, January 21<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

The meeting of the UGS Board was called to order at 8:31 am

**ATTENDANCE**

**Board members:** Elissa Richards – Chair, Ken Fleck – Vice Chair, Becky Hammond, Neil Burk, Riley Brinkerhoff, Michael Hansen, Rich Borden, and Andy Bedingfield (SITLA).

**UGS Staff:**, Darlene Batatian, Stefan Kirby, Ben Dlin, Crystal Garza, and Cheryl Wing.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting**

Riley Brinkerhoff motioned to approve the minutes from the August 20, 2025 UGS Board meeting. Rich Borden seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously, and the motion carried.

**Formal Approval of Contract Proposals**

Although contract proposals for external funding are provisionally approved by the Board by email, approval of contracts valued at greater than \$50,000 require formal approval at the next Board meeting. The proposals are:

*Great Salt Lake Playa Groundwater Inflow*; funding from the FFSL; new funding to the UGS \$194,012.79; total project funding \$229,976.79; estimated start date July 1, 2026; estimated end date July 1, 2028

*Evaluating the Role of Groundwater in Sustaining Great Salt Lake Wetlands Under Historical and Future Drought Conditions*; funding from FFSL; new funding to the UGS \$16,654; total project funding \$20,818 (UGS part only); estimated start date 7/1/26; estimated end date 6/30/28.

*Groundwater quality and septic-tank density study in the Bear Lake area*; funding from the Bear Lake Regional Commission, new funding to the UGS \$92,613.15; total project funding \$119,584.30; estimated start date January 1, 2026; estimated end date June 30, 2027.

*RAPID MIN: Accelerating and Transforming Alternate Rare Earth Ore Deposit Characterization*; funding from the DOE, new funding to the UGS \$150,000; total project funding ~\$6.5 million; estimated start date 7-1-2026; estimated end date 7-1-2029.

*SNOWMAP*; funding from NASA, new funding to the UGS \$610,327.18; total project funding \$954,476.30; estimated start date May 2026; estimated end date March 2029

*Quantifying water delivery to GSL wetlands through novel SAR remote sensing*; funding from the Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner, new funding to the UGS \$156,569.91; total project funding \$195,712.39; estimated start date April 1, 2026; estimated end date July 31, 2028.

Ken Fleck motioned to formally approve the proposals, Becky Hammond seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously, and the motion carried.

## **Director's Report – January 2026**

### **New hires:**

Crystal Garza – Financial Analyst III, replaced Winnie Pan  
Mark Radwin – Geologist, Groundwater/Wetlands  
Kitri Spencer – Geological Technician, Bookstore

### **Service Awards:**

Eugene Szymanski – 5 years  
Kathryn Ladig – 5 years  
Emily Kleber – 10 years  
Ben Erickson – 15 years

### **Promotions/Reclassifications/New positions:**

Emily Jainarain      Geologist to Project Geologist  
Trevor Schlossnagle   Project Geologist to Senior Geologist  
Kathryn Ladig      Project Geologist to Senior Geologist  
Paul Inkenbrandt      Senior Geologist to Senior Scientist  
Eugene Szymanski      Senior Geologist to Senior Scientist

### **Recent Publication:**

*Hydrogeologic Study of Castle Valley, Grand County, Utah*, by Erin Brinkman, Greg Gavin, Trevor H. Schlossnagle, and Janae Wallace 56 p., 2 appendices, SS-176, <https://doi.org/10.34191/SS-176>

*Geologic Hazards of Cedar Valley, Iron County, Utah*, by Tyler R. Knudsen, 2 p., scale 1:24,000, SS-177, <https://doi.org/10.34191/SS-177>

*Survey Notes - Volume 57, no.3, September 2025*, <https://doi.org/10.34191/SNT-57-3>

*Survey Notes - Volume 58, no.1, January 2026*, <https://doi.org/10.34191/SNT-58-1>

*2026 Calendar of Utah Geology*, \$8.95ea

*Delineation of Geoheritage Sites in Utah*, by Jim Davis, Mackenzie Cope, and Mark Milligan, 21 p., 1 appendix, DS-3, <https://doi.org/10.34191/DS-3>

*Bouguer Gravity Anomaly Map and Data of Timpanogos Rock Glacier, Utah*, by Bronson Cvijanovich, Michael Thorne, Leif S. Anderson, Ivan Tochimani-Hernandez, Tonie Van Dam, and Christian Hardwick, 6 p., 1 appendix, DS-4, <https://doi.org/10.34191/DS-4>

*Characterization of the Rubys Inn Thrust Fault in Garfield County, Utah, Using Electrical Resistivity Tomography and Transient Electromagnetic Surveys*, by Trevor H. Schlossnagle and Kayla D. Smith, 19 p., 4 appendices, RI-290, <https://doi.org/10.34191/RI-290>

*Montane Ecoregion Wetland Assessment—Spatial Data, Field Studies, and Multi-Metric Index*, by Diane Menuz, Elisabeth Stimmel, and Miles McCoy-Sulentic., 71 p., 6 appendices, RI- 291, <https://doi.org/10.34191/RI-291>

*Natural Pozzolan in Utah and Reconnaissance for Potential Resources on SITLA Lands*, by Andrew Rupke, Taylor Boden, and Marie D. Jackson, 47 p., 2 appendices, 1 plate, RI-292, <https://doi.org/10.34191/RI-292>

*Fault Trace Mapping and Surface-Fault-Rupture Special Study Zone Delineation of Quaternary-Active Faults in Central Utah, Garfield, Juab, Millard, Piute, Sanpete, and Sevier Counties*, by Adam I. Hiscock, Tyler R. Knudsen, and Rachel N. Adam, 26 p., RI-293, <https://doi.org/10.34191/RI-293>

Darlene commends UGS staff for their dedication, outstanding publications, creating funding and proposal opportunities, excellence and expertise, goodwill and camaraderie for each other.

UGS is kicking off the 2026 New Year reflecting on our success over the past year. One year ago almost to the day, UGS was faced with the “Federal Funding Freeze” and a great deal of uncertainty about our overall budget. Over this past year, we successfully navigated those federal funding uncertainties, as well as transitioning through the retirement of Director Keach and my appointment as UGS’ new Director. We welcomed new board members Richard Borden and Michael Hansen onto our Board. I led UGS into strategic planning, revisiting our statute and leading with our statutory priorities to guide us through a myriad of strategic decisions. These informed, decisive actions successfully averted our potential budget shortfall: We brought a +\$1M carryover into FY26, anticipate a +1M carryover into FY27, and +1M carryover at the end of FY27 into FY28. We closed out 2025 year by celebrating with a series of holiday events- Many thanks to those Board members who could attend!

We also wrapped up 2025 by recognizing many of our staff with promotions, adjusted salary increases, and incentives awards, as outlined below. I have added structure to the process for these: We met collaboratively as a leadership team to review benchmarks for promotion, especially the more senior roles, and discussed these collaboratively as a leadership team. Promotions, ASIs and incentive awards will now take place 2x/year (December and June), giving both management and staff more predictability in the process and consolidating budgetary

impacts. I also gave Program Managers an incentive award budget to use any time over a 6-month period, with flexibility to award ‘spot bonuses’ to recognize staffs’ performance.

We will take a pause from the intense pace of the past 9 months, and focus on 4 initiatives:

1. Budget Management: UGS is financially healthy, allowing us to focus on our science, our staff, our stakeholders, and new priorities. We will take a pause now to measure and monitor our budget management strategies:
  - Focusing on our statutory mission;
  - Go/No Go proposal kickoff meetings to ‘vet’ new proposals for their impact, match commitment (for both external grants and internal use of our general funds).
  - Follow our staffing plan, including anticipating grant completions to re-allocate staff, and being flexible when new opportunities do drive potential new hires. We have 3 open science positions and will likely fill these this spring.
  
2. UGS Community: Our Culture, Health and Our Environment.
  - We just held a ‘Speed Networking’ event to bring staff from different programs together in a fun, casual get-to-know-you environment. Staff really liked it and asked to repeat it.
  - Creating an exhibit to display the *Diabloceratops* skull in the DNR lobby
  - Improvements in our work areas (adding a water bottle filling station, possibly an break room refresh). After a deep ‘housekeeping’ (removal of old paper and surplus cabinetry), we will do some space planning- we have grown organically and our workspace could be better organized and planned. Also adding a PA/camera system to UCRC meeting room.
  
3. Strategic Plan: UGS will continue to develop our new mission-focused Strategic Plan, enlisting the assistance of the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) Strategic Advisors team to help us develop our Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Tactics.
  
4. Training: Developing and Coaching Staff. UGS has a relatively young demographic; many do not have prior project or personnel management training or experience. As we develop the next line of future leaders, we want to be intentional about building skills and will develop a training plan for the year.

**Upcoming Legislative Session:** This session, UGS has only one building block request: A \$750K permanent adjustment to our restricted account appropriation. We will use our time on the Hill to meet and greet our legislative representatives, and build our engagement and value to state leaders.

To this end, UGS tailored our January Survey Notes articles towards legislative concerns with articles that demonstrate the return on investment of UGS funding, as well as other state priorities, like defining potential new mineral deposit models, and invasive phragmites management.

**External engagement :**

- UGS will be represented by Mike Vanden Berg and Andrew Rupke at upcoming USGS Earth MRI meetings in Reston VA; Mike will also meet with new USGS Director Ned Mamula.
- We continue to foster relationships with policy aides to Senator Curtis and Lee.
- I plan to attend AASG's Spring Liaison visit in DC.
- In April, Stefan and I will attend the Intermountain West Coalition of geological surveys in Tucson AZ.
- We are considering sponsoring fellowships with local universities: We met with Randy Irmiss, U of U/NHMU, and could use our Board's assistance reaching out to BYU. (See Discussion Items)

**Board Discussion Items:**

- UGS/NHMU License Plates
- Fellowship opportunities with local universities.
- Pending NDA's that will be announced soon
- Board Field Trip was discussed and potentially planned to fly to Mexican Hat area in the Utah State plane. The field trip is planned to take place Late September to Mid-October.

Board adjourned 10:36