



March 2026 Utah Dairy Commission + Dairy Producers of Utah Joint Meeting Minutes

03/18/2026 2:30 PM MDT to 5:00 PM MDT

Marriott City Creek, Park City Room, 75 S West Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84101

Attendees:

Utah Dairy Commissioners (UDC) present:

Kaleb Bateman, Daniel Buttars, Chace Fullmer (arrived after roll call), David Roberts, Sheila Sherwood, Trevor Wayment, Landon Wiser, Mitch Hancock

Utah Dairy Commissioners absent:

None

Dairy Producers of Utah (DPU) Board Members present:

Bruce Clark

Dairy Producers of Utah Board Members absent:

Brad Bateman, Dean Blackhurst, Charlie Hansen, Shane Munk, Russ Otten, Clint Wade, Jim Withers

Others present:

Mike Kohler, Steve Doxey, Jenny Nelson, Steve Seppi, Bryce Chambers, Lacey Papageorge, Cathy Knowlson, Ron Stratford

Call to Order

Chairman David Roberts called the Joint UDC and DPU Meeting to order at 2:48 PM MT.

Roll was taken and a quorum was present for UDC.

Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Roberts called for any amendments to the agenda and if none, a motion to approve. Commissioner Daniel Buttars moved to approve the agenda without amendment. Commissioner Mitch Hancock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Checkoff Updates from Dairy West

Steve Seppi (CEO, Dairy West) confirmed with the room that Dairy West is officially a four-state region which went into effect January 2026. This board meeting was the first with all regions together. Mr. Seppi gave a brief re-cap of the Joint Dairy West Board meeting from earlier in the day noting that discussions were held on the operations, negotiations, and vision needs of business units, with additional highlights on partnerships, branding, and marketing strategies. The updates also covered asset availability through new collaborations.

- Discussion on growth partnerships to drive incremental milk utilization, setting criteria for co-investment with processors.
- Potential proposals are being explored with the Meadow Gold team, aiming to support The Creamery.
- Updates were shared on new assets available through partnerships.

Lacey Papageorge (Manager - Farmer Relations, Dairy West) talked about a new grant initiative supporting farm tourism, with eligible expenses.

- The program allows farmers to apply for up to \$3,000 per calendar year to fund on-farm events and tours.

- Eligible expenses for the grant include things like a hand wash station, boot wash station, tents, tables, chairs, and sanitizing equipment.
- The grant program also includes provision for different signs, such as educational signs and directional signs for farm tours.
- There is a possibility of creating additional specific directional signs if requested, such as signs for a corn maze.

There was discussion around insurance coverage barriers for on-farm events and activities such as wagon rides.

- It was noted that despite state law provisions for tourists, insurance issues such as liability coverage still pose practical challenges.
- There may be potential benefits if Dairy West could vet different insurance companies that farms use and understand potential umbrella insurance coverage options.

Jenny Nelson (Strategic Advisor, Dairy West and Co-Founder and CEO, Dairy Protein Institute) updated the farmer stakeholders on the launch of Dairy Protein Institute (DPI).

- An update was provided on growth initiatives, highlighting the potential to distribute dividends and outlining the vetting of various companies as part of a pipeline of 20-30 potential opportunities, including sectors such as cosmetic, beauty industry, and technology equipment.
- The website has been converted to a more consumer-facing format, targeting appropriate audiences through DPI, while remaining open for stakeholder investment.

Mr. Seppi responded to a question around Dairy West's expansion into a four-state region.

- He recapped recent productivity and teamwork, highlighting collaboration across states and the integration with United States operations.
- A reduction in staff headcount was noted as part of organizational adjustments, reflecting a focus on operational efficiency.
- A general sense of unity among board members/farmers is observed, with shared perspectives and minimal disagreement regarding operations.

Dairy Producers of Utah Updates

Mike Kohler (Executive Director, DPU) gave updates on DPU.

- A legislative session discussed the ongoing raw milk bill, which has been introduced annually over the past six years. It started in the house and was worked on with stakeholders like the Farm Bureau and various departments to create a practical bill.
- The raw milk bill was divided into two tiers: Tier 1 involves minimal regulation for sales direct from farms, while Tier 2 involves sales in markets requiring Department of Agriculture inspections and sample testing.
- Discussion around regulation of raw milk highlights concerns about public health and potential business shutdowns if products cause sickness repeatedly.
- The legislative session also focused extensively on water issues, with new incentives proposed for crop changes to aid the Great Salt Lake. Concerns were raised about water usage in agriculture versus residential development.
- Concerns about water management in Utah indicated conflicts with other states over Colorado River usage, potentially leading to Supreme Court involvement.
- Legislative updates included changes to development and zoning laws that allow certain developers to override local regulations under specific conditions, potentially leading to unrestricted development.
- A study is being conducted to more accurately determine water usage between agriculture and residential homes, which is expected to provide updated data showing agricultural usage below previous estimates.
- There is anticipation for water usage data being finalized by summer, which will inform future legislation and public policy.

Open Discussion

Chairman Roberts opened the floor for open discussion.

- There was a mention of the Replenish program continuing despite adjustments planned for the next school year.
- There was a general discussion about local meetings and increased involvement in rural areas.
- Concerns were raised regarding potential upcoming staff hires within Utah government and the need for these individuals to be supportive and engaged with dairies.
- Mr. Kohler shared updates regarding water exaction policies:
 - There is an ongoing groundwater study funded for the summer, potentially impacting future water policy.
 - A goal was expressed to have developers recharge water accounts to prevent downstream flow issues; ongoing discussions and studies are in progress.
 - Commissioner Hancock shared that Bear River Canal Company collaborates with counties to ensure implementation of water exaction policies, necessitating developers to provide one acre-foot per year per house.
 - Concerns about the effectiveness of water exaction enforcement were discussed in relation to state-level policies and developer practices.
 - There is reference to House Bill 24284, which dictates that by 2030, cities must prove their future water supply adequacy rather than requiring water from developers.
- Commissioner Chace Fullmer shared key takeaways from the Milk Flow Study presented at an earlier meeting:
 - Discussion focuses on the unsustainable costs of production being the highest among three states, while being a dollar under their pricing.
 - Idaho is noted for exerting pressure due to increasing competition from processors, affecting milk availability and pricing.
 - There's a significant concern about freight costs and competitive disadvantage despite similar inputs across regions.
 - Currently dealing with the issue of 800,000 pounds of milk being processed daily at the plant, posing logistical challenges.
 - Concerns raised about how voucher pricing does not reflect increased class pricing leading to a poor performance in market valuation.

Adjourn

Chairman Roberts called for a motion to adjourn the Joint Utah Dairy Commission and Dairy Producers of Utah meeting. Commissioner Hancock moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Sheila Sherwood seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 3:36 PM MT.

DCR

David Roberts
2026-06-02 00:59 UTC

Chairman/Vice Chairman

Daniel Buttars

Daniel Buttars
2026-05-27 22:00 UTC

Secretary