



TRUST LANDS ADMINISTRATION

SUPPORTING UTAH SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 21, 2026

Board Members

Present at Anchor Location

Mr. Bryan Harris, Chair
Dr. Mike Nelson, Vice Chair
Ms. Tiffany James
Mr. Mike Mower
Mr. John Baza
Mr. Brian Tarbet

Board Members

Absent

Mr. Dan Simons

Attending Public

Sheri Mattle, Utah PTA
Margaret Bird, ASTL
Lizz Mumford, Advocacy Office
Jessie Stewart, Advocacy Office
Paula Plant, USBE
Beth Pollock, South Jordan Elementary
Guy Webster, GT Outfitters
Trudy Webster, GT Outfitters
Paula Richmond, Wildlife Board
Julia Cliff, Utah PTA
Cammie Whitchurch, Utah PTA
Riley Peck, UDWR
Mike Canning, UDWR
Troy Justensen, SFW
Kevin Norman, SFW

Attending Public (continued)

Perry Hall (online)
Matt Anderson, Utah Sportsmen Group
Caitlin Curry, Utah BHA
Sarah Erb

Welcome

At 9:00 a.m., Chair Harris welcomed the board, staff, and visitors, and opened the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. James seconded Dr. Nelson’s motion to approve the minutes from the April 16, 2026, board meeting. The motion passed with a unanimous vote, with Mr. Simons absent.

Yea	Nay	Excused	
Chair Mr. Harris		Mr. Simons	
Vice Chair Dr. Nelson			
Mr. Mower			
Ms. James			
Mr. Baza			
Mr. Tarbet			

Confirmation of Upcoming Meeting Dates

June 18, 2026 - Regular Meeting and Board Tour
July 2026 - No Board Meeting
August 20, 2026 - Regular Meeting

Trust Lands Funds in Action

Principal Beth Pollock of South Jordan Elementary discussed the significant impact of Trust Land funds on student growth. These funds are primarily used to hire specialized personnel, including an instructional coach, a language assistant, and various interventionists who support students across the learning spectrum—from those new to the country with no English skills to gifted students needing extensions in language arts and math. By investing in human resources, the school provides targeted interventions, early language development, and enrichment programs to ensure every student makes progress from their individual starting point.

In response to an inquiry about the selection process for the school's three primary focus areas (growth in language arts, math and language learners), Ms. Pollock clarified that their strategy emphasizes the cultivation of consistent, meaningful student relationships over the procurement of external programs.

This approach complements the specific academic objectives for learning and proficiency established by both the state and the district.

Social Media Minute

Ms. Joelette Organista presented a video from the new social media initiative, "What the Heck Happens on Utah Trust Lands." This segment was created to educate the public on the various significant projects occurring on Trust Lands, with the initial feature focusing on geothermal energy. The presentation detailed how a specialized team, including a TLA geologist Chance, and representatives from Fervo, utilizes a geothermal drill rig to access intense heat from deep underground rock and convert it into electricity.

Public Comment Period

Ms. Paula Richmond, Vice Chair of the Wildlife Board, expressed her support for the sale of Book Cliffs land to the Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR), emphasizing that management should prioritize both wildlife and public interests.

Mr. Perry Hall, who joined virtually, spoke in favor of the DWR purchasing the Book Cliffs land and described it as a rare and special backcountry area vital for public access and wildlife sanctuary status. He strongly urged the approval of the DWR's request, emphasizing their capability as stewards and the need to protect the precious property from potential development.

Mr. Riley Peck, Director for Utah's Division of Wildlife Resources, expressed his support for purchasing the Book Cliffs land, emphasizing its critical importance as vital habitat for deer, elk, and a native bison herd, as well as a special place for a variety of public recreation including hiking, birding, and hunting. He viewed the acquisition as a wonderful opportunity to fulfill both the DWR's mission to protect wildlife and open spaces in perpetuity, and the TLA board's mandate to raise money, while maintaining public access to the area.

Ms. Julie Cluff, the Utah PTA president-elect, expressed deep concern regarding the use of education stabilization funds to purchase trust lands, arguing that this approach depletes resources from two directions and compromises long-term benefits for students. She emphasized the PTA's role as a steward of these assets and urged for decision-making that prioritizes the permanent value of trust lands for future generations.

Mr. Troy Justinsen, president of a major Utah hunting and sportsman's group, advocated for selling the roadless part of the Book Cliffs to the Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR). He stressed that this property is held with great esteem and mystique, and it is vital to maintain public access for hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts.

Ms. Jenny Earl of the Utah State Board of Education attended the meeting to gather more details on the potential sale of the property, specifically requesting discussion on access issues because her primary interest is ensuring the best future for Utah's schoolchildren. She highlighted that funds generated from these kinds of investments are highly beneficial to schools, noting the significant increase in payments received, and stated her goal is to collect information to determine the best potential outcome for students.

Mr. Guy Webster, an outfitter and guide with over 30 years of experience on the roadless Book Cliffs, emphasized that the land provides irreplaceable educational and life-altering experiences not available in a classroom setting, such as appreciation for nature and conservation. He expressed concern that selling the unique backcountry area to a private entity would eliminate public access and pleaded for the Division of Wildlife Resources to purchase it to preserve this heritage for thousands of future hunters and outdoor enthusiasts.

Ms. Sarah Erb, an advocate for families of blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind children, expressed gratitude for the Trust Lands Advocacy Group and requested assistance in addressing the decades-long lack of access to institutional Trust Lands funds for this student population. Although \$4.8 million was restored to the fund, she highlighted a 25-year gap where students missed out on enrichment experiences and asked for action to ensure the funds reach the children rather than being used solely for staffing at the school for the blind.

Mr. Matt Anderson, director of the Utah Sportsman's Caucus, expressed strong support for selling the Book Cliffs land to the Division of Wildlife Resources on behalf of a broad coalition of hunting and fishing groups. He emphasized that the acquisition serves as a "win-win" by providing funding for Utah's schools while offering students invaluable hands-on educational opportunities outdoors.

Ms. Trudy Webster of Green River, Utah, shared that the Roadless Book Cliffs area is vital to her outfitting business and personal life, noting that her family spends 30 to 40 days a year enjoying the land for riding, hunting, and camping. She pleaded that the pristine backcountry be kept open for public access, emphasizing that the experiences offered there are as important as classroom learning and must be preserved for future generations.

Ms. Caitlin Curry, representing the Utah Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, expressed strong support for the sale of the iconic Book Cliffs area to the Division of Wildlife to ensure the protection of its diverse wildlife habitat and historic artifacts. The organization emphasizes that this transition will preserve critical public access and research opportunities within one of Utah's most remote and cherished backcountry landscapes.

Ms. Margaret Bird expressed grave concerns regarding the proposed land sale, characterizing it as a breach of fiduciary duty and criticizing the absence of a public auction to ensure full market value. She argued that bypassing a competitive bidding process undermines the transparency required for managing public assets and fails to protect the financial interests of the state. Warning that the deal appears to favor special interests over the schoolchildren's fund, the speaker emphasized that the

long-term revenue potential for educational programs is being sacrificed for immediate, non-competitive gains.

Chair's Report

Postponed to the June meeting due to the length of the public comment period.

Director's Report

Postponed to the June meeting due to the length of the public comment period.

Advocate Report

Ms. Liz Mumford, director of the Land Protection and Advocacy Office, recommends the approval of the sale of 50,000 acres in the Book Cliffs to the Department of Natural Resources to bolster the public schools' trust. Her office's support is based on a rigorous evaluation process, including the analysis of three independent third-party appraisals that ensured fair market value and considered the highest and best use of the land. Key to the recommendation is the protection of subsurface mineral access, ensuring future development benefits for public school children. Ultimately, the transaction is seen as a prudent fiduciary move that transforms a low-revenue surface asset into a significant cash infusion for the permanent fund.

Notification Items

Item 10A.

Director, Michelle McConkie, and Deputy Director, Chris Fausett reviewed a detailed presentation on Proposed Sale of Trust Lands in Grand County, Utah - Book Cliffs Roadless Area Block, which included a [Director's Finding](#) report. Details of this presentation can be found on the [Public Notice Website](#).

In response to an inquiry from Trustee Mower regarding the status of private grazing permits on the property, it was clarified that no such permits would be retired. The explanation provided noted that all existing permits for the land are held by the UDWR, and private permits located primarily on the retained "north block" will not experience material impacts because of the transaction.

Trustee Mower expressed appreciation for a good analysis which highlighted the significant discrepancy between the current earnings from the property compared to the potential earnings when the sale proceeds are placed in the permanent fund for beneficiaries, emphasizing the "time value of money".

Vice Chair Dr. Nelson observed that maintaining lands such as the Book Cliffs carries a lasting and fundamental importance. He noted that while the intrinsic worth of such landscapes can be challenging to articulate, their value grows substantially when they are preserved for the continued use and benefit of the public.

Chair Harris affirmed that the proposed decision is the best course of action for the beneficiary regarding the property. He also clarified that their fiduciary duty is clearly met in this instance because they are following specific guidelines established by state statute throughout the process.

Trustee James indicated the fiduciary responsibility has remained a central consideration, particularly since it is directly tied to the best interest of the beneficiaries. This is underscored by the fact that the beneficiary advocate's office is speaking out in favor of the proposal.

Item 10B.

Mr. Aaron Langston reviewed a Minor Development Transaction which involved the sale of the final two commercial lots in Hurricane City, totaling 3.02 acres near the Coral Canyon area. The buyer, Kubota, plans to relocate its existing Washington City operations to this site, which is situated immediately south of the state liquor store. Kubota also maintains active locations in Sandy and Springfield. Presentation details are located on the [Public Notice Website](#).

In response to a query regarding whether the purchaser is Kubota's corporate entity or a dealership, Mr. Langston explained that the transaction involves a dealer.

Item 10C.

Mr. Bryan Torgerson reviewed a straightforward transaction involving approximately 2.72 acres of landlocked property near Big Water in Kane County. Due to the land being inaccessible except through adjacent private properties or the natural rim barrier, the board subcommittee directed the team to reach out to neighboring landowners. While one owner, Mr. Paul Hyde, declined the offer, another landowner, Mr. Mark Gongola, agreed to purchase both parcels for \$35,000 per acre. The final survey aligned the property line directly with the rim, providing a clear natural landmark. Details of the presentation are posted to the [Public Notice Website](#).

Item 10D.

Ms. Alexa Wilson reviewed a Notice of a Minor Development Transaction for Proposed Brixton Park Development Lease, located in Saratoga Springs, Utah County. The board examined two developable parcels situated west of Saratoga Springs, the 49-acre TLA West parcel and the 19-acre TLA Brixton South parcel. These properties currently lack infrastructure and access, and are characterized by steep slopes, necessitating the construction of a water tank for any future development. Ms. Wilson noted that while the development deal itself was provided for notification, the board's formal approval is required specifically for the water tank project.

Action Items

Item 11A.

Ms. Alexa Wilson shared a proposal on a Water Tank Cost Share Agreement, located in Saratoga Springs, Utah County. Details can be found on the [Public Notice Website](#).

Ms. Wilson presented three options for the board: participating in a \$1.8 million cost share agreement, declining participation, or the preferred choice of participating in the cost share while simultaneously entering a development lease with the Brixton Park developers to help cover their share of the water tank cost.

Trustee Mower inquired whether TLA has looked into the option of selling the parcels and avoiding the complexity of a buyback agreement. Mr. Aaron Langston elaborated that the land's current appraised value is very low due to a lack of water infrastructure and access, and the goal of the current proposal is to invest a small amount to significantly increase the value and revenue potential of the properties.

The discussion regarding the Water Tank Cost Share Agreement addressed inquiries about the infrastructure's scope and financing. Ms. Wilson confirmed that the water tank would service both of TLA's parcels and support the Three Canyons Project, ultimately benefiting TLA. Mr. Langston confirmed that the proportionate cost-sharing plan was proposed by the developers and landowners. He cautioned that while non-participation would result in losing water access entirely, simply paying the proportionate share upfront was also problematic, as rising future connection costs could erode the value of the initial investment before the parcels are fully developed.

Ms. James moved to approve the Water Tank Cost Share Agreement as proposed, and Mr. Tarbet seconded the motion. With Mr. Simons excused from the meeting, the board voted unanimously in favor.

Yea	Nay	Excused
Chair Mr. Harris Vice Chair Dr. Nelson Mr. Mower Ms. James Mr. Baza Mr. Tarbet		Mr. Simons

Item 11B.

Mr. Mike Johnson proposed board adoption of Resolution 2026-1 on Electronic Meetings Authority and Procedures for Participation. He clarified that the purpose of updating the eight-year-old resolution on electronic meetings is to ensure consistency with current statutes and organizational practices, particularly concerning remote involvement. A key revision specifies that remote board members who are visible and audible will be officially included in quorum counts.

Trustee Baza inquired about the requirement for a physical "anchor location" for public meetings that include online participants. Mr. Johnson confirmed that, while not strictly mandated by statute, the board intends to always provide a publicly noticed physical location for in-person attendance at all meetings.

Following a motion by Mr. Tarbet, seconded by Dr. Nelson, the Resolution 2026-1 was unanimously approved as outlined in the Board Memorandum.

Yea	Nay	Excused
Chair Mr. Harris Vice Chair Dr. Nelson Mr. Mower Ms. James Mr. Baza Mr. Tarbet		Mr. Simons

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 am following a motion by Mr. Mower, which was seconded by Ms. James. The motion passed unanimously, with Mr. Simons excused.

Yea	Nay	Excused
Chair Mr. Harris Vice Chair Dr. Nelson Mr. Mower Ms. James Mr. Baza Mr. Tarbet		Mr. Simons