

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE ADVISORY COUNCIL



**Outdoor
Recreation**

JULY 14, 2026

MEETING PACKET

Virtual

UTAH DIVISION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3		Agenda
4	Item 1.3	Draft Meeting Minutes
9	Item 2	Heavy Equipment / Trail Crew Update
19		Future Meeting Dates

AGENDA

HOST: *Department of Natural Resources*
Virtual

Google Meet Info

<https://meet.google.com/ckz-qdyq-vrf>

Or dial: (US) +1 812-567-2697

PIN: 496 013



ATTENDEES: *Division of Outdoor Recreation Employees:*

Wade Allinson, Evan Beitsch, Maureen Casper, Jason Curry, Mike Innes, Tara McKee, Deirdre Miller, Patrick Morrison, Mike Thomas, Rachel Toker, Jorge Vazquez, Caroline Weiler

Division of Law Enforcement Employees:

Jacob Hinton

Attorney General's Office Representative:

Nicole Hanna

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Advisory Council Members:

Jason Blankenagel (Chair), Brody Johnson (Vice-Chair), Cheryl Butler, Russ Cazier, Mike Cook, Sheriff Nathan Curtis, Brett Davis, Dean Harris, Dave Jacobson, Nicole Nielson, Laci Werner, Scott Wheeler

TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2026

5:00 p.m. INFORMATION	1. WELCOME	Virtual - Department of Natural Resources
	1.1. Call to Order	Jason Blankenagel, Chair
	1.2. Attendance and Introductions	Chair
ACTION	1.3. Approval of June 17, 2026, Meeting Minutes	Chair
5:10 p.m. INFORMATION	2. HEAVY EQUIPMENT / TRAIL CREW UPDATE	Mike Innes and Mike Thomas
5:30 p.m. ACTION	3. ADJOURNMENT	Chair

Item 1.3



OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE ADVISORY COUNCIL DIVISION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DRAFT

*Minutes Of The Meeting Held on June 17, 2026, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting*

HOST: ***Utah Department of Natural Resources
Division of Outdoor Recreation***
1594 W. North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116
Trailhead Conference Room
(Virtual meeting)

ATTENDEES:

Wade Allinson, Evan Beitsch, Maureen Casper, Jason Curry, Deirdre Miller, Patrick Morrison, India Nielsen, Rachel Toker, Jorge Vazquez, Jacob Hinton, Nicole Hanna, Jason Blankenagel (Chair), Cheryl Butler, Russ Cazier, Mike Cook, Sheriff Curtis, Brett Davis, Dave Jacobson, Brody Johnson, Nicole Nielson, Scott Wheeler, Brett Stewart.

MEETING MINUTES:

(0:00) The meeting was officially called to order by Chairman Jason Blankenagel. The Chairman welcomed attendees to the June 17, 2026 session, outlined the expectations for the virtual meeting space, and prepared the council to transition directly into administrative protocols.

(0:07) A roll call was conducted to establish a physical and virtual quorum for the record. Council members representing various interests (including ATV, BLM, Trust Lands, and Off-Road Motorcycles) introduced themselves, followed by staff from the Division of Outdoor Recreation (DOR) and public advocates.

(3:28) Review and Approval of March 6, 2026, Meeting Minutes: The council reviewed the minutes from the March 6 session. Scott Wheeler identified an error that identified him as "Scott Walker" or "Wheeler" interchangeably throughout the text.

Motion: Brody Johnson approved the minutes subject to correcting the name. Seconded by Mike Cook. Minutes approved unanimously.

(5:07) Review and Approval of March 26, 2026, Meeting Minutes: Hearing no objections, typographical corrections, or requests for amendments from the council members, the document was put forward for an immediate vote.

Motion: Mike Cook made the motion to approve the minutes. Sheriff Curtis seconded the motion. The minutes approved the minutes as written.

(6:00) Nicole Hannah, acting as division legal counsel, provided a detailed statutory briefing on the pre-scoring eligibility requirements for the Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation (OHVR) grant program. It is the applicants responsibility to demonstrate eligibility. She emphasized that eligibility is a strict, non-discretionary legal gateway determined by DOR staff on the backend; if an applicant fails to meet statutory thresholds, the application cannot legally proceed to the advisory council for scoring, regardless of the project's quality.

(11:43) Counsel began discussion into the specific provisions governing eligible entities. The presentation outlined the dual-prong necessity for non-state applicants to be legally registered under Utah Chapter 6A corporate code (or registered as a foreign corporation with a valid Utah DBA) and to possess clear, foundational organizational bylaws and articles of incorporation that explicitly state a corporate purpose supporting OHV recreation interests.

(24:48) The council held a discussion regarding the legal boundaries of vetting an applicant's true organizational "intent." Board members raised concerns about groups whose bylaws claim to support OHV recreation, but whose public actions or social media footprints advocate for motorized trail closures. Counsel clarified that DOR can legally evaluate an organization's public corporate footprint to verify alignment of intent, though staff does not monitor private member pages. Additionally, the division emphasized that grant recipients must maintain compliance with state vehicle registration laws, as funding is derived directly from those public fees.

(32:14) Discussion of Division of Duties: The division possesses non-discretionary authority over statutory compliance and legal eligibility (whether an applicant *shall* or *shall not* be funded based on law). In contrast, the Advisory Council possesses discretionary authority over project merits, evaluating applications based on rules and public benefit to provide funding recommendations that the division heavily weighs and honors.

(35:01) The division reviewed the structural modification of the Foundation for America's Public Lands (the BLM's charitable arm). To satisfy state grant criteria, the Washington D.C.-incorporated 501(c)(3) agreed to establish a valid Utah corporate entity. Furthermore, a thorough background review confirmed that while the foundation funds both motorized and non-motorized public lands projects, none of its historical work or advocacy is detrimental to motorized OHV recreation.

(40:24) The board reviewed risk-mitigation strategies regarding post-award compliance, contract breaches, and the prevention of overlapping or duplicate project funding. A discussion ensued regarding scenarios where a federal field office and its non-profit "Friends" group might apply for funds on the same trail system. The division noted that applications are strictly audited pre-scoring to prevent dual funding; the current material-and-labor division at the Cricket Mountains trail system was cited as a model partnership, where the foundation purchases materials via the grant and the BLM coordinates the physical labor.

(50:54) The council discussed the fiscal limits of funding an applicant's administrative overhead. Legal counsel clarified that while indirect overhead costs are legally non-reimbursable under the grant program, direct administrative project management

fees are permissible. However, these fees are heavily scrutinized by the board on a case-by-case basis to maximize the amount of money hitting the ground, with the council noting that direct administrative fees should ideally remain at or below 5%, while any request approaching 10% triggers strict documentation requirements.

(55:35) The segment concluded with a request to invite David Zang, the outreach and legal counsel for the Foundation for America's Public Lands, to a future council session to give a formal presentation. Wade Allinson noted that the foundation is heavily backed by Polaris and is currently collaborating with the division on a highly beneficial joint project in Cedar City.

Action Item: Nicole Hannah and Wade Allinson to contact David Zang to coordinate a formal presentation for the council at an upcoming meeting.

(59:13) Trail Cameras and DWR Code: Legal Counsel Nicole Hannah briefed the council on a \$6,900 grant request from Sevier County, which included \$600 for trail cameras to monitor trail usage. She explained that to deploy year-round trail cameras on public lands legally, the division must comply with Utah Code Annotated UCA 23A-5-307, a Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) statute enacted because the state owns and regulates all native wildlife.

(1:01:44) Counsel clarified that because the cameras are placed in open public spaces, there is no legal expectation of privacy. Failure to secure the MOU would legally restrict camera usage for six months out of the year.

(1:03:05) Chairman Jason Blankenagel opened the floor to fill the vacant Dealership Representative position. Grant Manager Rachel Toker presented the qualifications and regions for five distinct applicants under strict new state data privacy guidelines.

(1:10:32) Scott Wheeler commented regarding the suspected use of Generative AI tools in writing application narratives, advocating for shorter, personal paragraphs over highly polished, AI-assisted text.

Action Item: For future application cycles, Rachel Toker will integrate a formal AI disclosure question into the Qualtrics application portal and look into practical word limits.

(1:21:08) As council discussion began touching upon candidate character and professional standing, Legal Counsel Nicole Hannah brought up the Open and Public Meetings Act (OPMA). She advised that specific character judgments must strictly occur in a noticed, closed executive session. To prevent legal exposure or scheduling delays, the board elected to stay in open session and evaluate candidates based entirely on their submitted materials, personal land manager relationships, and public histories.

(1:29:56) Motion: Scott Wheeler moved to initiate a roll-call vote where each member votes their chosen candidate from the floor. The motion was seconded by Brody Johnson. The motion was carried unanimously via Roll Call (with Russ Cazier abstaining and Dave Jacobson designated as non-voting).

(1:32:45) Roll-Call Tally: A vote-by-name call resulted in Laci Werner receiving 3 votes, William Chambers receiving 2 votes, and Charlie Stevenson receiving 2 votes.

(1:34:57) Motion: Sheriff Nathan Curtis moved to formally accept the vote tallies and nominate Laci Werner as the incoming Dealership Representative. The motion was seconded by Brody Johnson. The motion passed unanimously via roll call.

(1:36:07) The council evaluated the applications for the vacant Snowmobile Representative seat. The two candidates were Alton "Dean" Harris (Mendon / Top of Utah Snowmobile Association) and Michael Fogg (Mountain Green / Weber County Search and Rescue). Scott Wheeler and division staff highlighted Mr. Harris's extensive history solving single-track fuel issues in Logan Canyon and successfully executing a recent state parking grant at Franklin Basin.

(1:40:20) Motion: Scott Wheeler moved to initiate the identical open roll-call voting procedure used in the previous appointment. The motion was seconded by Brody Johnson. The motion was carried unanimously via roll call.

Roll-Call Tally: All seven voting members unanimously cast their floor votes for Alton "Dean" Harris.

(1:42:04) Motion: Brett Davis moved to ratify the election results and appoint Alton "Dean" Harris as the Snowmobile Representative. The motion was seconded by Sheriff Nathan Curtis. The motion passed unanimously via roll call.

(1:43:42) Council Chair and Vice Chair Appointments OHV Program Manager Wade Allinson took over to oversee annual leadership elections for Fiscal Year 2027.

(1:44:27) Motion: Brody Johnson moved to formally open floor nominations for Council Chair and Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Mike Cook and carried unanimously via roll call.

(1:45:09) Motion: Brody Johnson nominated incumbent Jason Blankenagel to serve a consecutive term as Council Chair. The motion was seconded by Mike Cook. The nomination passed unanimously.

(1:46:36) Motion: Following an initial confirmation roll call, Nicole Nielson moved to formally ratify the nomination. The motion was seconded by Brody Johnson and passed unanimously (with Chair Blankenagel recusing himself).

(1:47:55) Motion: Brody Johnson made a motion to open the voting for Council Vice Chair. Scott Wheeler seconded. Motion passed via roll call.

(1:48:28) Motion/ Nomination: Scott Wheeler nominated Brody Johnson to serve as Council Vice Chair. Brody Johnson accepted the nomination. Seconded by Brett Davis. Sheriff Nathan Curtis moved to close all floor nominations, and Mike Cook seconded. The vote to appoint Brody Johnson as Vice Chair carried unanimously.

(1:50:48) Wade Allinson and Nicole Hannah clarified that federal partners are legally prohibited from serving as council chairs due to structural conflict laws, and state employees are strongly discouraged from doing so.

(1:51:42) Wade Allinson provided an executive update addressing the recent legislative audit and subsequent KSL media coverage regarding agency finances.

- **Audit Findings:** The audit formally demands increased council oversight on specific financial expenditures, points out infrastructural deficiencies within the snowmobile program, and mandates thorough compliance tracking for active grant projects.

(1:57:13) Brett Stewart with Utah OHV Advocates requested advisory council backing for a policy shift to eliminate registration reciprocity for out-of-state street-legal OHVs. He cited an event in Moab where out-of-state users actively registered vehicles in South Dakota or Montana specifically to bypass contributing to the Utah OHV restricted fund account. Nicole Hannah reviewed the controlling statutes and determined that the state code already mandates decal purchases for these vehicles; the inconsistency lies within the administrative rule.

(2:06:21) Wade Allinson outlined upcoming agency initiatives, including an analysis of heavy equipment deployment, the planned hiring of single-track seasonal workers, and the creation of a Volunteer Coordinator position to certify the public on chainsaw operations and tread repair. Wade Allinson urged the board to review Arizona's helmet and seatbelt codes for side-by-sides, expressing deep safety concerns over recent youth fatalities in Parowan.

(2:09:12) Nicole Hannah provided a confidential brief regarding recent Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA) discovery requests originating from the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA). Because the requesting entity is actively involved in highly contentious RS2477 litigation against the State of Utah, Nicole Hannah warned the board to maintain extreme caution to avoid violating standing court orders.

(2:11:15) Rachel Toker announced that the Fiscal Year 2026 grant overview summary and annual Advisory Council evaluation surveys would be distributed via email the following morning. Additionally, Todd Royce, Director of the Division of Law Enforcement, requested that a permanent, recurring agenda slot be created for upcoming sessions to allow his team to provide localized updates on statewide enforcement efforts.

(2:13:45) DOR Director Jason Curry informed the council of his recent formal testimony before the Utah State Legislature regarding the council's scheduled 2027 statutory sunset. Jason Curry strongly advocated against the sunset, testifying that the department cannot legally or practically execute its recreation mandates without this advisory body.

(2:16:16) Motion: Brody Johnson moved to formally adjourn the session. The motion was seconded by Mike Cook. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned.

Trail Crew Program

Heavy Equipment Plan

6

July

2026

Introduction

The Trail Crew program is nearing three years of successfully operating with four region-based trail crews across the state. Over this time, with the steady increase in both capabilities and expectations, the program has begun to struggle with budget constraints, increasing workloads, the need for employee growth and retention, and the capacity to meet partner needs in areas like that of heavy equipment work.

We have now been tasked with the implementation of heavy equipment operations with the legislative funds that have been allocated to us.

New Funding Breakdown

1151 (Outdoor Fund) - \$80,000

OHV - \$380,000



Costs and Concerns

Under **original talks**, 1-2 **new** operators would be hired and based out of Richfield and travel statewide to complete our partners' heavy equipment projects.



Travel Costs



\$20,000+/year

For hotel and travel costs per person



\$100,000+/year

Per new full-time staff member's wages and benefits



>\$50,000 one-time

For a new truck purchase, not including ongoing fuel costs, fleet fees, etc.



Recruitment process

Valuable staff hours and efforts must be spent on recruiting highly skilled staff



Candidate Options

It may be difficult to find skilled operators at the rate we can pay in Richfield



Operator Retention

We are concerned about retaining skilled operators with constant statewide travel

Staffing and Recruitment

Operational Efficiency



Extensive Travel Time

Travelling statewide would cost valuable crew time ferrying back and forth



Project Distribution Issues

Projects in the central region may receive preference due to location bias



Rebuilding Relationships

Partners would need to coordinate with 2 separate supervisors



Scalability

It may not be feasible to scale up this new crew model out of other other 3 regions in time to keep up with demand

Other Concerns

Language in HB2

“The State of Utah is home to a vast network of trails, with around 80,000 miles designated for motorized vehicles. These routes are primarily on federal land, but they make up the vast majority of trail opportunities for Utah residents and visitors. The managing federal agencies do not have the capacity to provide for all of the desired maintenance to ensure public access, especially on OHV routes. State trail crews are a critical force in keeping our trails open and accessible for all of Utah's recreation communities. **The additional trails crew** will help the Division of Outdoor Recreation (DOR) keep up with the demands of trail maintenance throughout Utah by **employing an Operations Coordinator** to ensure quality and efficiency in operations among the four regional crews and **staff that will be specialized in operating heavy equipment** to further maximize the amount of work the crews are capable of completing each year on **motorized routes.**”

<https://cobi.utah.gov/2026/3412/issues/24699>

Initial Action Items

This not only offers us ways for our existing staff to grow their capabilities, with enhanced supervisor *and* crew lead roles, but it also offers more **efficient dispersal of heavy equipment projects and funds.**

Get Regional Crew Supervisors Class A Modified CDLs

Crew Supervisors will now be operators we will use funds to **increase their pay to match their new qualifications.**

Potential for leads to get CDLs as well. The shop already knows the process for acquiring these licenses.

Create 4 new full-time Crew Lead Positions

Supervisors will be away from the crew more often for heavy equipment projects, increasing the need for a full-time highly trained and dependable Lead.

This could also satisfy the legislative language about new positions and employees.

Equipment Training During Off-Season

Supervisors will be expected to **prioritize training on heavy equipment** throughout the entire 2026/2027 off-season.

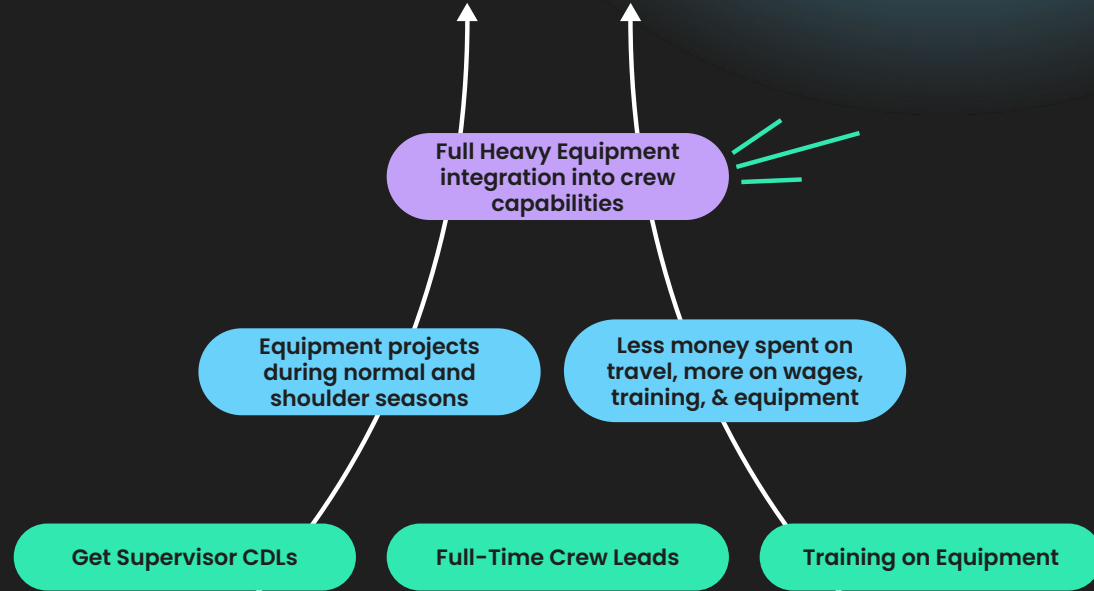
Use funds to hire trainers if needed.

More Projects, Less Travel

Heavy Equipment Operations Through Both Regular & Shoulder Seasons

Biweekly or monthly) heavy equipment projects by all 4 supervisors would **produce more work** completed than one crew traveling all over the state.

Supervisors would also complete heavy equipment projects **during the shoulder seasons** with the help of their full-time crew leads.



Program Benefits

**4-8 operators
instead of 1-2**

**Reduced costs
compared to
statewide travel**

**More career progression &
professional development for
both Leads and Supervisors.**

**Reduced ongoing fuel and
vehicle costs that hiring a
new crew would add to the
program.**

**Increasing employee
certifications and experience
boosts staff retention, and makes
it an easier transition from Lead
to Supervisor in the case of
Supervisor turnover.**

**No change in
supervisor-partner project
planning. Partners will be
submit projects requiring
heavy equipment through the
same process that is
currently being used.**

**Supervisors now equipped to
train local clubs/volunteers in
their region if needed.**

**Higher volume and
better distribution of
heavy equipment
projects throughout the
state.**

What about equipment?



Vehicles →

Under this plan, the program would not have to purchase two additional trucks.

Existing Equipment →

The program already owns 2 trail dozers, 2 mini excavators, and a skid steer.

1 trail dozer and 1 mini excavator would be stored in SLC and Richfield respectively.

Equipment Sharing →

Supervisors in neighboring regions would coordinate with each other to determine who needed what and when.

New Equipment →

The HB2's allotted one-time funding could be used to purchase additional heavy equipment to be kept in Moab.

Further Expansion →

Potential for further equipment purchases as heavy equipment operations expand and the needs and funding arise.

Further Plans of Action



Position Classifications

Reclassify or modify positions to allow higher pay ceilings for positions that will now require greater qualifications and responsibilities.

Training

Moving forward with internal equipment trainings and considering if external training resources are needed.

A white, curved, decorative line starts from the top left corner and extends diagonally towards the center of the slide.

Thank you!

Trail Crew Program

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE ADVISORY COUNCIL 2026 MEETING SCHEDULE

OHVR GRANT REVIEW

Wednesday, September 23, 2026

Scheduled

Vernal, Utah

SITE VISIT

October, 2026

Not Scheduled

TBD

OHV PROGRAM FINANCIAL UPDATE

November, 2026

Not Scheduled

TBD