

From: [Beverly Vargo](#)
To: [Wendy Gurr](#)
Subject: Opposition to proposed development by Ryan Leick
Date: Monday, August 10, 2026 9:38:28 PM

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Dear Emigration Canyon Planning Committee:

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed construction of access roads, structures, related infrastructure, including a helipad, on the presently undeveloped property near Emigration Oaks by Ryan Leick.

My opposition is not based upon a general objection to private property rights or reasonable development. Rather, I am deeply concerned about the substantial and potentially irreversible consequences of introducing roads, structures, vehicles, utilities, and increased human activity into pristine and environmentally sensitive land in an area where **wildfire is a threat and water availability is a serious concern.**

The Rocky Canyon Fire currently burning less than ten miles from this area provides a stark and timely example of this danger. The fire has threatened Henefer and surrounding areas, resulting in evacuation orders and placing homes, livestock, wildlife habitat, and firefighters at risk.

Importantly, authorities have determined that the Rocky

Canyon Fire was human-caused. This is particularly relevant when considering a proposal that would introduce substantial new human activity into presently undeveloped wildland.

What is occurring nearby is not an abstract projection of what *could* happen in a wildfire-prone landscape. It is happening now.

Constructing a number of buildings including a a lumber mill and helicopter access is not the right decision for this land. Constructing roads, structures, utilities, and a helipad would bring construction equipment, vehicles, electrical and mechanical systems, and ongoing human activity into terrain that is currently largely undisturbed. Each additional element of development creates potential ignition sources and increases the complexity of wildfire prevention and response.

Fire does not recognize property lines. Nearby residents, wildlife, and the firefighters called upon to protect them would all share the consequences.

Before any approval is granted, at a minimum, there should be a comprehensive and independent assessment of wildfire risk, including potential ignition sources, evacuation capacity, emergency vehicle access, firefighting capability, defensible space, availability of

water for fire suppression, and the potential consequences to existing neighboring communities.

Water availability is another serious concern. Water is an inherently limited resource in our canyon environment, and additional development creates additional demand for domestic use, construction, possible landscaping, for proposed animals on the property and, critically, fire suppression.

Any proposed development should be required to demonstrate not only a legally available water source, but a reliable and sustainable supply sufficient to meet ordinary needs and the extraordinary demands of wildfire protection without adversely affecting existing residents or surrounding natural resources.

The land in question is presently largely pristine and provides valuable wildlife habitat. Roads and associated development would permanently alter that environment as roads require clearing, grading, excavation, drainage modifications, vegetation removal, and continuing vehicle traffic.

The appropriate question is what the landscape will become once the entirety of the proposed development is completed.

Once roads have been cut across these hillsides and

infrastructure established, the pristine character of this land cannot simply be recreated.

The Rocky Canyon Fire unfolding nearby should serve as a powerful reminder of those shared consequences. A single ignition in dry wildland can rapidly become a threat to thousands of acres, wildlife, livestock, homes, emergency responders, and an entire community.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the proposed roads, structures, potential helipad, and related development be denied. At a minimum, no approval should occur without a comprehensive and independent evaluation of wildfire and evacuation risk, water availability and fire-suppression capacity, wildlife and habitat impacts, grading and vegetation loss, and the cumulative environmental effects of the entire proposed development.

Given what we are witnessing today with the Rocky Canyon Fire, I believe that question deserves the most careful scrutiny possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Beverly Vargo, MD

From: [Rachel Baar](#)
To: [Wendy Gurr](#)
Subject: Ryan Leich
Date: Monday, August 10, 2026 6:17:59 PM

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In regards to the Ryan Leich Forestry Activity Plan, the proposed project presents significant risks to Utah's private property rights, fragile water resources, and protected wilderness. While agriculture remains an essential part of Utah's economy and heritage, this plan overreaches in ways that threaten long-term sustainability and public interest.

1. Private Roads and Property Rights

The proposal requires the use, alteration, or expansion of private roads to support increased agricultural traffic and infrastructure. Such a move undermines the rights of landowners who depend on those roads for safe, quiet access to their homes and land. Heavy equipment, livestock transport, and increased traffic will degrade these roads, impose maintenance costs on private citizens, and erode the principle of private control over private land. Utah's long tradition of respecting individual property rights should not be sacrificed for short-term agricultural gains.

2. Threats to the Aquifer

Perhaps the most concerning aspect is the potential draw on the local aquifer. Utah already faces critical water shortages due to drought, climate pressures, and population growth. Expanding agricultural use that demands large-scale irrigation threatens to overdraw groundwater reserves. Once an aquifer is depleted or contaminated, it is nearly impossible to restore within a human timescale. Sacrificing future generations' water security for short-term agricultural expansion is neither responsible nor sustainable.

3. Impact on Wilderness and Ecosystems

The proposal encroaches on areas bordering designated wilderness, risking habitat destruction, soil erosion, and fragmentation of ecosystems that are already under stress. Utah's wilderness areas are not only ecological

treasures but also economic assets, drawing millions of visitors who support local communities through recreation and tourism. Once disturbed, wilderness cannot be easily restored—its value lies precisely in its undisturbed state.

Conclusion

Forestry Activity Plans must be balanced with the preservation of Utah's water, land, and wilderness. This proposal fails that test. By threatening private property rights, jeopardizing our aquifers, and endangering protected wildlands, it places short-term agricultural expansion above long-term public good. Utah's leaders should reject the current proposal and instead pursue policies that strengthen forestry through efficiency, water conservation, and respect for private and public land stewardship.

Sincerely,

Rachel Baar

From: [Christopher Canale](#)
To: [Wendy Gurr](#)
Subject: Ryan Leick proposed Forestry Activity Plan
Date: Monday, August 10, 2026 6:36:33 PM

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I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed Forest Activity Plan and associated uses for the approximately 40-acre parcel in the Freeze Creek area of Emigration Canyon owned by Ryan Leick.

I understand that the proposal is intended to establish an agricultural or agroforestry use on this property. However, the potential activities and infrastructure associated with the proposal raise significant concerns that go far beyond simply maintaining a forest or conducting limited agricultural activities. In my view, allowing the construction of roads, bridges, a lumber mill, apiaries, helicopter access, and a septic drain field on this isolated 40-acre parcel would fundamentally alter the character of the property and could create significant environmental, safety, and community impacts.

Most importantly, this property is located within a watershed. What occurs on this property does not remain confined to its boundaries. Water, sediment, pollutants, and other impacts move downhill through the drainage. Any disturbance to the land therefore has the potential to affect downstream residents, natural resources, and the broader canyon ecosystem.

Impact on Water Quality and the Watershed

The construction of roads, bridges, buildings, a lumber-processing operation, and a septic system would require substantial disturbance of the existing landscape. Roads and construction can increase erosion and sediment runoff, particularly in steep canyon terrain. A septic drain field introduces another potential source of nutrients, bacteria, and other contaminants into the groundwater and watershed.

The question should not simply be whether each individual component can technically be engineered or permitted. The City should consider the cumulative effect of all of these activities occurring together in one small, isolated property within a drainage basin.

Once roads, bridges, industrial equipment, wastewater infrastructure, and other facilities are constructed, the property would no longer function as an isolated forested parcel. It would become an active developed operation within a sensitive canyon watershed.

Increased Roads and Permanent Land Disturbance

One of the greatest concerns is the introduction and expansion of roads into an otherwise isolated area.

Road construction requires clearing, grading, drainage structures, and ongoing maintenance. Roads also change how water moves across a landscape and can become channels for erosion and sediment transport. In a steep canyon environment, these impacts can be particularly significant.

Roads also create a permanent change in the character of the property. An isolated 40-acre parcel that currently has limited access is very different from a parcel containing a network of roads capable of supporting logging equipment, trucks, construction vehicles, and other commercial activity.

The City should carefully consider whether opening this previously isolated area to substantial vehicular access is consistent with the long-term land-use vision for Emigration Canyon.

Bridges and Stream-Crossing Concerns

The construction of bridges or other crossings introduces additional disturbance to the drainage system. Any crossing has the potential to affect streambanks, drainage patterns, sediment movement, and aquatic habitat.

These impacts should be evaluated not only at the point of construction but downstream, where increased sediment or altered drainage could affect neighboring properties and the watershed as a whole.

Lumber Mill and Commercial Activity

A lumber mill is particularly concerning because it represents a significant intensification of activity on a small forested parcel.

A milling operation could generate heavy-equipment traffic, noise, dust, wood waste, increased fire risk, and additional vehicle trips. It could also require substantial infrastructure and storage areas.

That type of operation is difficult to reconcile with the idea of preserving the natural and residential character of Emigration Canyon. The City's planning materials specifically identify protection of water quality, open space, ecosystems, noise, and the canyon's environmental character as important community values.

The City should not look at a lumber mill simply as an accessory to forestry. It should evaluate the real-world consequences of bringing an industrial-type activity into an isolated canyon watershed.

Helicopter Access

Helicopter access raises additional concerns involving noise, wildlife, neighboring residents, and the character of the canyon.

Emigration Canyon is valued in part because of its relatively undeveloped natural environment. Regular helicopter operations would introduce a type of activity that is fundamentally different from traditional, low-impact agricultural or forest-management practices.

If helicopter access is necessary to make the proposed operation economically viable, that fact itself should be considered when determining whether the proposed use is appropriate for this location.

Septic Drain Field

The proposed septic infrastructure deserves particularly close scrutiny because of the property's location within a watershed.

A septic system may be appropriate in some circumstances, but the City should require a thorough analysis of soil conditions, groundwater, slope, drainage, capacity, and the potential for contamination or failure. The concern becomes even greater when a septic system is considered in combination with roads, bridges, forestry operations, equipment, and other proposed improvements.

The City should have confidence—not simply assumptions—that the proposed wastewater system will have no unacceptable effect on groundwater or downstream water quality.

Fire and Emergency Concerns

Emigration Canyon is a steep, heavily vegetated canyon environment where wildfire is a serious community concern. The City's own website emphasizes the extreme wildfire risk associated with the canyon's steep terrain and dry vegetation.

Introducing a lumber mill, heavy equipment, increased vehicle traffic, wood storage, and potentially helicopter operations creates additional activities that should be evaluated from a fire-safety perspective.

At the same time, the construction of roads and bridges could create additional demands on emergency services and could complicate evacuation, firefighting, or emergency access depending on their location and design.

Precedent for the Canyon

Perhaps the most important issue is precedent.

The City must consider what happens if this proposal is approved and similar requests are made elsewhere in Emigration Canyon.

If a 40-acre parcel can be developed with roads, bridges, commercial forestry infrastructure, a lumber mill, apiaries, helicopter access, and wastewater infrastructure because those activities are characterized as agricultural or forestry-related, the decision could establish a precedent for substantially more intensive development throughout the canyon's forested areas.

The cumulative effect of allowing isolated parcels throughout the canyon to develop in this manner could be enormous.

Emigration Canyon's character is one of its greatest assets. Residents have chosen to live here because of the open space, forests, wildlife, natural beauty, and relatively undeveloped character of the canyon. The City's

planning documents recognize the community's commitment to protecting the canyon's ecosystems and resources, including water quality and open space.

I respectfully ask the City Council and Planning Commission to deny the proposed Forest Activity

This is not an objection to responsible forest management, conservation, or legitimate agricultural activity. It is an objection to allowing an isolated 40-acre forest parcel within a watershed to become the location for a collection of uses and infrastructure that, taken together, could substantially change the property and affect the community beyond its boundaries.

Once roads, bridges, industrial facilities, wastewater systems, and permanent access are constructed, the character of the land cannot easily be restored.

Emigration Canyon has a responsibility to protect its watershed, open spaces, natural resources, and the quality of life of the residents who live downstream and throughout the canyon. Decisions made about one 40-acre parcel should be made with that long-term responsibility in mind.

I respectfully ask the City Council and Planning Commission to reject the proposal as currently presented and to protect the watershed and the character of Emigration Canyon from this level of development.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Christopher Canale

Sent from my iPhone