

Emery County Public Lands Council

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: September 1st, 2026

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Location: Emery County Courthouse, Canyon Conference Room

<https://zoom.us/j/4353813570?pwd=NWduRlZzRCtGNUdndld0NkNNdmxIZz09#success>

Public Lands Council: Rod Player, Varian Allen, Ben Grimes, Brad Richman, Kim McFarlane, Leon McElprang, Les Wilberg, Tyson Huntington

Absent: Craig Johansen, Patrick sundstrom

Administration: Jim Jennings, Natalie Olsen

Commission: Jordan Leonard, Keven Jensen, Dennis Worwood

****Agencies:** (BLM), Ryan Jones (UDAF), Tifnie Hansen, Ellis Oveson (DNR/State Parks), (DOGM), Chris Wood, Colton Taylor (DWR), Darren Olsen (USFS), Brian Torgerson-online (SITLA), Nicole Nielson (PLPCO) Jeremy Lake, AJ O'Neil (ECSO), (DWRi)

Washington: Lynn Sitterud (Senator Curtis)

1. Call to Order / Welcome

Rod Player, Chairman, called the meeting to order. Members and attendees were asked to sign the attendance sheet.

2. Approval of August 4th Meeting Minutes

Brad made a motion to approve the meeting minutes with the correction of fixing the word "late" to Lake under the National Forest with a second from Varian.

3. Discuss/Approve/Deny: Working on the White Dugway.

The Council discussed the condition of the White Dugway above Joes Valley Reservoir.

- The roadway is in poor condition, with several plugged or inadequate culverts and significant erosion occurring along the switchbacks.
- The lower portion of the road is within Emery County, while the upper portion is within Sanpete County.
- Concern was expressed that no agency or county has clearly taken responsibility for maintaining the entire roadway.
- The road provides important access to several recreational areas and trailheads.
- The condition of the road was identified as a safety concern.
- Discussion included the possibility of installing an additional culvert near the top of the dugway to redirect water and prevent further erosion.
- The Council discussed possible grant funding and an agreement between Emery and Sanpete Counties for road work.
- Liability concerns were discussed regarding work performed outside a county's jurisdiction.

- The Council agreed the issue should remain active and requested that the White Dugway be placed on a future agenda for follow-up.

4. Agency Reports

- **Utah State Department of Agriculture: Ryan**

Ryan reported that summer activities have slowed and work has focused primarily on invasive weed grants and projects in partnership with the State Park, Forest Service, county, and conservation district.

- A project is being coordinated with the Green River Conservation District and the county weed department to treat weeds along rights-of-way in Green River.
- The Lee Ray McAllister Conservation Easement Program continues to accept applications.
- Property owners interested in weed treatment were encouraged to contact the county weed supervisor regarding available assistance and funding.

- **Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation**

No one in attendance

- **Utah Division of Water Rights (DWRI): Cash**

No one in attendance

- **Utah State Parks: Tifnie Hansen**

Tifnie reported that activity had slowed in August as seasonal employees were released following the summer season.

- A recent event at Huntington State Park, held in partnership with USU Extension, honored individuals who have lost their lives to substance abuse and overdose and had more than 220 attendees.
- September is National Recovery Month, with a planned event at Huntington State Park on September 26.
- New restrooms at Huntington State Park are approximately 85% complete.
- Millsite Campground is receiving five new pull-through campsites.
- Recent rainfall increased Millsite Reservoir approximately 4% and Huntington Reservoir approximately 1%.
- Quade has been promoted to a full-time ranger, bringing the park's full-time staff from three to four.

- **Manti-La Sal National Forest (USFS) Darren Olsen**

The Forest Service provided updates on the Black Canyon Fire and other forest activities.

- The Black Canyon Fire was approximately 95% contained, with crews continuing cleanup and fire-line work. Some closures remain in place while access is evaluated. Miller's Flat and Skyline Drive are accessible, with restrictions remaining around portions of the Reeder Trail and Potter's Road.
- Fire restrictions have been reduced to Stage 1. Campfires are permitted in designated areas, and wood permits remain available. An update was also provided on the ongoing underground fire at the Wattis Mine.
- The Joes Valley Campground project is nearing completion, with some finishing work remaining.
- The Council discussed the Muddy Creek ore sampling project, including permitting, reclamation, water use, and potential impacts to local water

resources. The current drilling is authorized under an existing permit, with additional review required if the project advances to mining. A presentation on the mining permitting process will be scheduled for the October meeting.

- The Southside Road landslide repair has not yet been completed. The Forest Service is looking at beginning work in the fall, with funding and staffing affecting the timeline.
- The Council received updates on the Cleveland Reservoir land transfer. The process is being handled through the regional office. Matthew Winkle Cotter is serving as a lead on the process and has been working with the landowner.
- The Forest Service reported that a number of citations were issued, particularly early in the closure, to individuals found within the restricted area.
- The Council discussed the proposed Roadless Rule changes and travel management. Members were encouraged to review the proposals and participate in the public-comment process.
- The Council discussed concerns regarding a trail and gate near the Mammoth Lake area. The Forest Service requested the specific location and will investigate the issue.

- **Trust Lands Administration (TLA) Bryan Torgerson**

A representative provided an update regarding a proposed limestone quarry.

- The project has received approval and involves approximately 10 acres near Bitter Seep, also known as Furniture Draw, in the Cedar Mountain area.
- The quarry would involve limestone, with a crusher likely to be used as part of the operation.
- A small water right is being obtained for dust suppression. The specific source of the water right was not known at the meeting.
- The Council discussed whether commercial operations are required to contribute toward road maintenance. It was stated that Emery County requires applicable permits and fees for commercial use of county roads.
- The representative had no additional updates.

- **Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Colton**

The Division of Wildlife Resources provided an update.

- The Regional Advisory Council meeting was scheduled for the following day.
- Topics included fishing, spearfishing, and a mid-plan review of the elk management plan.
- Proposed elk changes include removing the cap on the any-bull hunts, removing the cap on the multi-season spike elk hunt, and reinstating a multi-season any-bull permit.
- Pronghorn classifications are scheduled during September.
- DWR reported increased bear activity throughout portions of Utah due to drought conditions and poor food availability in the mountains.
- Late frost affected berries and acorns, contributing to bears moving into communities in search of food.
- Bear incidents are handled on a case-by-case basis. Where possible, bears may be relocated; however, bears that cause significant property damage or kill livestock or pets may be euthanized under DWR policy.
- The Council discussed the distinction between the two any-bull elk hunts and confirmed that the proposal would remove the existing cap from both hunts.

- **Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining (DOGM) Dal**

No one in attendance

- **Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Jayden**

- Jurassic National Monument: New quarry building substantially completed; soft opening anticipated around Fossil Day, with a larger grand opening planned for the following spring.
- Wedge Campground: Final documentation is awaiting Fish and Wildlife concurrence, with groundbreaking anticipated around mid-October.
- National Public Lands Day: Goodwater Rim Trail maintenance and cultural education/stewardship activities scheduled for September 26.
- Temple Mountain OHV Interpretive Trail: Nine interpretive sites are planned, covering mining history, structures, equipment, and other historical features. The Council emphasized that the area's history should also recognize ranching and grazing that predates uranium mining.
- Travel Management: BLM travel-management decisions are currently on hold pending new federal regulations. Mountain Dew Trail work is also paused.
- Mining/SITLA: Discussion continued regarding existing and proposed mining activity and county road/encroachment permits.

- **Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office (PLPCO) Nicole**

- **Public Lands Day:** State and other partners will have personnel at various San Rafael Swell sites on September 26.
- **Emery water:** PLPCO continues assisting the Town of Emery with short-, medium-, and long-term water-storage solutions and legislative funding efforts.
- **Roadless Rule:** Discussion covered the proposed nationwide rescission, potential effects on forest management and access, the short public-comment period, and differing views regarding whether the rule should be rescinded or modified.

- **Washington Delegation Staff Lynn Sitterud**

Updates included the Fix Our Forests Act, critical minerals legislation, agricultural issues, and examination of potential federal assistance following flooding in Orangeville.

5. Commission Comments on Public Land Items

Commissioners stepped out to attend the Flood meeting in Orangeville so were not present when this line item came up.

6. Council Members Comments

Utah Spaceport Authority: Council members discussed the State's exploration of a potential spaceport, with Green River and Delta identified as finalist locations. The Council discussed the possibility of locating the project on the Emery County side of the Green River area and potential infrastructure needs.

Future presentations: The Council discussed the importance of inviting representatives of significant projects to provide information directly to the Council.

7. Concerned Citizens

No comments

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned.