OHV ADVISORY COUNCIL
FY27 Q1 OHVR PRE-SCORING MEETING
DIVISION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DRAFT Meeting Minutes:

Minutes of The Meeting Held on September 4, 2026 From 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

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

ATTENDEES: Jason Blankenagel (Chair), Brody Johnson (Vice-Chair), Cheryl Butler, Russ Cazier, Sheriff Nathan Curtis, Brett Davis, Dave Jacobson, Nicole Nielson, Scott Wheeler, Alexander Davenport, Jenna Jorgensen, Brett Mciff, Brett Stewart, Chelsea Phillippe, Caroline Weiler, Deirdre Miller, Evan Beitsch, Jacob Hinton, Maureen Casper, Jason Curry, Rachel Toker, Nicole Hanna, Patrick Morrison, Todd Royce.

MEETING MINUTES:

(0:00) Jason Blankenagel, Chair, called the meeting to order. Everyone in attendance virtually and in person introduced themselves.

(6:19) Brody Johnson motioned to approve the July 14, 2026, meeting minutes. Sheriff Curtis seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

(7:25) Evan Beitsch, Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Administrator, provided an operational overview of the program and presented survey results gathered from both committee members and grant applicants:

- Funding Overview**:** Non-motorized RTP received 32 applications requesting nearly $4M, with 15 projects approved totaling roughly $3M. Motorized RTP received 12 applications requesting $1.2M, with 9 projects approved totaling 842,000 with roughly $1.7M.

- Funded Priorities: Key funded project categories included equipment purchases (especially for motorized trail maintenance), new trail development, facility/signage support, and trail education.
- Survey Results: Committee members and applicants highlighted high priorities around increased public access, trail maintenance, rural community assistance, and network connectivity.
- Application Adjustments: Applicants expressed frustration over lengthy application requirements. The division plans to streamline applications for upcoming cycles to request shorter, more concise answers and raw data rather than long narrative responses.

(17:43) Evan opened up the floor for feedback, comments, and questions. Mr. Beitsch provided more insight and clarification.

- Chair Blankenagel asked clarifying questions about the survey and if most respondents were awarded or not rewarded. Mr. Beitsch stated that 79% of respondents were awarded and the remaining percent were not awarded.
- Chair Blankenagel also asked whether non-motorized applicants were federal agencies, non- profits, or local governments. Mr. Beitsch stated the applicants represented a diverse range of organizations.
- Committee Member, Alexander Davenport gave praise to the program.
- Council Member, Brody Johnson asked about large equipment purchases and what kind of tracking is in place. Mr. Beitsch stated that the Division's Grant Compliance Officer, Caroline Weiler would discuss the matter further with compliance. The Division wants to ensure that awardees are in compliance.
- Council Member, Scott Wheeler asked about coordinating the OHV Recreation (OHVR) Grant and RTP at the same time for more efficiency. Mr. Beitsch shared that both of these applications will be closing on the same dates in the future and that this will be resolved.
- Chair Blankenagel asked whether the annual RTP allocations had changed. Mr. Beitsch stated that the allocations had remained relatively consistent from year to year.

(25:46) Chief Todd Royce presented updates regarding the Division of Law Enforcement (DLE) following its consolidation:

- Reporting & Collaboration: DLE will aim to improve communication with the OHV Advisory Council by sharing data on outreach, community policing, and ranger hours tracked through their UKG system. Chief Royce offered the council options for quarterly or bi-annual reports and invited council members on ranger ride-alongs.
- Accident Tracking & Safety: Mr. Johnson and Mr. Wheeler raised questions about accident tracking, including helmet and seatbelt usage and safety class completion. Chief Royce noted that serious incidents and multi-vehicle crashes are consistently tracked through statewide accident forms. However, incidents that were not reported to law enforcement, such as when individuals went directly to the hospital, remained significantly underreported.
- Ranger-Public Interface: Lieutenant Jacob Hinton stated that data on in-person and online safety course metrics was being compiled to help establish future rider education goals.

(37:33) Patrick Morrison, Grants Deputy Director, and Ms. Caroline Weiler, outlined updated compliance policies and monitoring efforts across Division grants:

- Stricter Performance Standards: Mr. Morrison discussed enforcing tighter contract timelines and progress/final report submissions. Unresponsive grantees, or those requesting repeated extensions without progress will face stricter enforcement to ensure responsible stewardship of public funding.
- Site Visits & Inspections: Ms. Weiler detailed her role in conducting project checks 10 years after the award to ensure continued compliance. Focus areas include evaluating site conditions, verifying machine and equipment usage, and establishing clear inspection guidelines for motorized equipment.

(59:43) Rachel Toker, OHVR Grant Administrator, summarized the updated policy guidelines for the current grant cycle:

- Funding & Category Thresholds: Annual grant funding had increased from $3.5 million to $6 million. Applications requesting $350,000 or more will require 10-minute presentations with 5-minute Q&A sessions at review meetings, and must be scored by the full council.

- Trail Work Cap Discussion: Council members and Director Jason Curry voiced concerns that capping trail work could limit large-scale, high-impact trail development projects that benefit from economies of scale. Discussion continued and the conversation was tabled to be had in the future meetings.

- Search & Rescue (SAR) & Tourism Increases: The SAR flat-rate funding models were increased, and OHV Tourism request caps were raised from $50,000 to $75,000.

- Equipment Purchases for Non-profits: Non-profits may now request up to $15,000 per machine or piece of equipment (previously restricted), subject to heightened scrutiny regarding project necessity and organizational capacity. Two competitive bids are required for any single non-profit purchase item over $10,000.

(1:27:55) Ms. Toker reviewed the application evaluation workflow for the current grant cycle:

- Application Breakdown: 30 applications were submitted requesting a total of $2.4 million of the $6 million available. Each evaluator had been assigned to evaluate 7 to 8 applications.

- Review Platform & Form Updates: Evaluators were provided with a reference sheet and access to the Salesforce portal. A new option, "Requires Additional Discussion," was added to the evaluation form to flag uncertain projects for full council deliberation rather than forcing a strict pass/fail score.

- Land Manager Support: Cheryl Butler with the United States Forest Service (USFS), emphasized that official letters from land management agencies (e.g., USFS, Bureau of Land Management) should be mandatory deal-breakers prior to project approval.

- Review Deadlines:
    - September 18: All reviews and scores due in Salesforce.
    - September 21: Draft agenda distributed.
    - September 23: OHV Advisory Council review meeting in Vernal, Utah.

(1:55:24) Director Curry provided divisional updates and legislative context:

- Legislative Sunset & Restricted Account: The Advisory Council's sunset clause will be extended by 10 years via upcoming legislation. Language will also be updated to explicitly include council oversight of the division's restricted

account. Additionally, legislation will seek to remove statutory fee caps on snowmobile/OHV registrations to allow fee adjustments as needed.

- Divisional Restructuring: Following Wade Allienson's departure, the Division is hiring a new Motorized Operations Deputy Director to manage trail crews, community outreach, and OHV program management. Mr. Johnson volunteered to sit on the hiring selection panel.
- Wildfire Season Impacts: Severe wildfires in high-elevation forest areas will require extensive trail clearing, hazard removal, and erosion control. Director Curry advised the council to remain selective with current grant awards to ensure funding remains available for upcoming fire-rehabilitation grant requests next year.
- Reciprocity Rule: Effective September 8th, street-legal out-of-state OHVs must also purchase an non-resident OHV permit.

(2:17:13) Brody Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sheriff Curtis seconds the motion. The meeting was adjourned.