

**REVISED
MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
INTERIM COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, October 20, 1999 - 2:00 p.m. - Room 303 State Capitol

Members Present:

Sen. Howard C. Nielson, Cochair
Rep. Bradley T. Johnson, Cochair
Sen. Beverly Ann Evans
Sen. Joseph L. Hull
Sen. Millie M. Peterson
Rep. Eli H. Anderson
Rep. Craig W. Buttars
Rep. Mary Carlson
Rep. David N. Cox
Rep. Fred J. Fife, III
Rep. James R. Gowans
Rep. Tom Hatch
Rep. Keele Johnson
Rep. Evan L. Olsen
Rep. Matt Throckmorton

Members Absent:

Rep. Melvin R. Brown
Rep. Bill Wright

Members Excused:

Sen. Leonard M. Blackham
Rep. Jordan Tanner

Staff Present:

Ms. Constance C. Steffen,
Research Analyst
Ms. Jeanenne B. Larson,
Associate General Counsel
Ms. Joy L. Miller,
Secretary

Note: A list of others present and a copy of materials distributed in the meeting are on file in the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel.

1. Committee Business - Sen. Nielson called the meeting to order at 2:20 p.m.

MOTION: Sen. Peterson moved to approve the minutes of August 18, 1999. The motion passed unanimously. Sen. Hull and Reps. Hatch, K. Johnson, and Throckmorton were absent during the vote.

2. Water Conservation Plans - Mr. Cleal Bradford, Chairman, Board of Water Resources, introduced other board members in attendance. He stated that the required plans will be beneficial in determining water resources in the various areas of the state.

Mr. Lyle Sommers, Division of Water Resources, reviewed the board's report on implementing water conservation plans. He said water conservation legislation required all water conservancy districts and water retailers with over 500 service connections to submit water conservation plans to the Division of Water Resources. To date, the division has received plans from 87 of the 148 water systems required to submit plans. Mr. Sommers pointed out that although the plans are required, there is no penalty when a plan is not submitted. He noted that the cost of a plan may be prohibitive for some systems.

Mr. Sommers reviewed the evaluation form used for the plans. Out of a possible score of 10, the average score for the plans was 4.9. Mr. Sommers discussed the conservation measures that were included in the plans submitted. Those measures mentioned most often were: 1) public information and education; 2) incentive pricing; 3) landscape and irrigation guidelines and ordinances; 4) installation of meters on all connections; 5) water use audits; and 6) retrofit, rebate, and incentive programs. He reviewed the board's recommendations on implementing various water conservation measures.

3. State Park Planning Processes - Mr. Courtland Nelson and Mr. Terry Green, Division of Parks and Recreation, discussed a process the division uses to evaluate current and future state parks. A decision-tree analysis is used in which environmental, socio-economic, and administrative criteria are evaluated. Mr. Green indicated that as an alternative to state ownership of a park, the division will consider partnerships with the federal government or private entities in which the federal government or private entity maintains ownership of the park grounds.

4. Cedar Mountain Science Center - Ms. Lana Johnson, Southern Utah University, distributed information regarding the center. She explained that H.B. 54 provided an appropriation for environmental education and literacy. The Cedar Mountain Science Center project entails professional development, a student summer camp, and pilot programs. There are several partners involved in the total project. Ms. Johnson said they recommend ongoing legislative support of \$98,760 for the project.

Ms. Carol Everett, Project Director, Cedar Mountain Science Center, indicated three sessions for summer camp have been scheduled for next year. Through professional development, they are expecting to impact 85 teachers and 750 classroom students.

5. Utah Association of Conservation Districts - Mr. Randy Greenhalgh, Utah Association of Conservation Districts, distributed a progress report on improving Utah's land and water resources within the 38 soil conservation districts. He reviewed federal and district staffing trends and the projected manpower needed to help prepare the comprehensive nutrient management plans that will be required for animal feeding operations.

6. Pheasant Predation Study - Mr. Terry Messmer, Utah State University, distributed information on the Jack H. Berryman Institute for Wildlife Damage Management. The institute is housed in the College of Natural Resources at Utah State University. It consists of faculty and undergraduate students that are interested in resolving wildlife damage problems. He pointed out that the institute receives no direct state funding. Faculty and students are supported largely on grants and contracts received from outside sources. The biggest benefactor of the institute is

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services which contributes \$240,000 annually to support operation of the institute. Mr. Messmer pointed out that these contracts are always at risk. He noted that Wildlife Services is interested in seeking some type of state support for the program.

Mr. Messmer distributed the preliminary findings of the pheasant predation study. In 1996, 12 sites in Cache and Box Elder Counties were identified for the study - six sites were trapped and six were not. The primary predators targeted for trapping were coyotes, red fox, striped skunk, and raccoon. In these smaller sites there was no significant increase of pheasants as a result of trapping. Four sites of 16.5 square miles each were studied in Sevier and Sanpete Counties - two sites were trapped and two were not. Pheasant populations in these trapped areas increased dramatically. Because of the larger blocks of land being treated, they saw more predators being removed and a slower rate of predators coming back. Mr. Messmer indicated that in Cache and Box Elder Counties hunter support had increased for habitat improvement. In Sevier and Sanpete Counties, there was a significant increase in hunter support for use of predation management.

7. Deer Management Plans - Mr. John Kimball, Division of Wildlife Resources, distributed a summary of the deer management plans. He briefly reviewed deer populations in the different regions and the objectives that have been set. He stated the statewide winter population objective is 418,700. Most of the herd populations are monitored and managed by simulation modeling.

8. Ground Water Permits - Mr. Don Ostler, Division of Water Quality, distributed a brief report on ground water permit fees. He explained that the ground water program began in 1989. The number of regulated facilities has grown from 0 in 1989 to 119 currently. However, ground water staffing has decreased by two full-time equivalents (FTE's) due to a reduction in federal funding. He indicated the ground water budget is approximately \$600,000. The permit fees were expected to generate an additional \$63,000. Mr. Ostler briefly reviewed the major permitting functions to be covered by the new fee. The impact of no additional funding would be: 1) an increase in permit issuance times; 2) inadequate administration of permits; 3) and inadequate permit compliance oversight. He noted the fee structure has been prorated based on the size of the facility. Mr. Ostler said they have met with the trade associations affected by the ground water permit fee to discuss the fee structure and how it is applied to specific entities. The Division of Water Quality recently sent a letter to every ground water permittee which assesses what the fee would be for the permittee's facility and requests input on the assessment.

Mr. Brian Mauldwin, Circle Four Farms, said they represent 59 percent of the fees in question. He said they are concerned about the fees and are working with the Department of

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Environmental Quality to determine if an agreement can be reached on a future rate schedule.

MOTION: Rep. K. Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:25 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.