

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

Wednesday, June 14, 2000 - 9:00 a.m. - Jeremy Ranch Clubhouse

Members Present:

Sen. Howard C. Nielson, Senate Chair
Rep. Eli H. Anderson
Rep. Melvin R. Brown
Rep. Craig W. Buttars
Rep. Mary Carlson
Rep. David N. Cox
Rep. James R. Gowans
Rep. Keele Johnson
Rep. Evan L. Olsen

Members Excused:

Rep. Bradley T. Johnson, House Chair
Sen. Leonard M. Blackham
Sen. Joseph L. Hull
Rep. Fred J. Fife, III
Rep. Tom Hatch
Rep. Jordan Tanner
Rep. Matt Throckmorton

Members Absent:

Sen. Beverly Ann Evans
Sen. Millie M. Peterson
Rep. Bill Wright

Staff Present:

Ms. Constance C. Steffen,
Research Analyst
Ms. Jeanenne B. Larson,
Associate General Counsel
Ms. Joy L. Miller,
Legislative 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. **Call to Order** - Sen. Nielson called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

2. **Conservation Easement Basics** - Mr. Rory Reynolds, Division of Wildlife Resources, showed a video presentation on how conservation easements are being used to enhance fish and wildlife habitat along the Weber River. He distributed several handouts regarding conservation easements.

Mr. Jerrold Jensen, Attorney General's Office, explained conservation easements were officially recognized by the legislature in 1985. Land conservation easements are a prohibition against development and are becoming increasingly popular. Mr. Jensen said the Quality Growth Commission is facilitating these easements. The Department of Natural Resources or Department of Agriculture and Food is the grantee of the easements.

3. Quality Growth Commission's Role in Land Conservation - Mr. David Allen, Vice Chair, Utah Quality Growth Commission, stated the legislature created the commission in 1999 to: 1) advise the legislature on issues related to growth; 2) administer \$250,000 for planning grants for counties; and 3) supervise the LeRay McAllister Critical Land Conservation Fund. He distributed information concerning the commission and briefly reviewed some of the projects it has helped fund. Mr. Allen anticipates that applications for funds will continue to increase.

4. Peaceful Valley Conservation Easement - Mr. Art DuFault, distributed information on the Utah Forest Legacy Program, which is designed to preserve environmentally important forested lands. In most cases, conservation easements are used to achieve this goal. He noted that partnerships are a key element of the program and added the division has received significant support at the federal level. Mr. DuFault reviewed the projects that have been involved in the program, including the Peaceful Valley project.

The committee traveled to the Peaceful Valley ranch for a presentation held at the Bauchman Pony Express cabin.

Mr. Grant McFarlane, Peaceful Valley ranch shareholder, discussed the history, ownership structure, and operations of the ranch. The Clayton MacFarlane Company, of which there are more than 50 shareholders, owns the property. Some of the shareholders reside outside the state and had expressed interest in selling the ranch. The ranch's operating income is only \$20,000 - \$30,000 per year, which is not sufficient to refurbish the buildings and replace the fences. If sold, the land could bring \$9 million; nonetheless, the majority of the shareholders wanted to retain the ranch. The idea of a conservation easement was appealing to them. When the deal is completed in July, it will give the shareholders \$2.5 million.

Ms. Wendy Fisher, executive director of Utah Open Lands, indicated private monies were given towards the purchase of the Peaceful Valley conservation easement because of public support. The project could not have happened without all the partners involved.

Mr. Dwight Bunnell, Rocky Mountain Elk foundation, stated the project has a vision for the future and everyone benefits from it.

Mr. Ken Brown, Forestry, Fire, and State Lands Advisory Council member and landowner, expressed his support for the project.

At 11:00 a.m. the presentation concluded and the committee traveled back to the State Capitol.