

**MINUTES OF THE
AGRICULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY TASK FORCE**
Monday, June 17, 2002 – 9:00 a.m. – Room 403 State Capitol

Members Present:

Rep. Craig W. Buttars, House Chair
Sen. Mike Dmitrich
Sen. Parley Hellewell
Sen. Millie Peterson
Rep. Eli H. Anderson
Rep. Glenn Donnellson
Rep. James R. Gowans
Rep. Peggy Wallace
Mr. Chris Falco*
Dr. Bruce Godfrey*
Mr. Richard Nielson*
Mr. Randy Parker*
Mr. Flint Richards*
Mr. Clark Willis*

Members Absent:

Sen. Dan Eastman, Senate Chair
Sen. Bill Wright
Rep. Cindy Beshear
Rep. Darin Peterson
Mr. Todd Ballard*
Mr. Arthur Douglas*
Mr. Stan Hamblin*

Staff Present:

Mr. O. William Asplund, Assistant Director
Mr. James L. Wilson, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Sandra Wissa, Legislative Secretary

*Non-voting members

Note: A list of others present and a copy of materials can be found at <http://www.image.le.state.ut.us/imaging/history.asp> or by contacting the committee secretary at 538-1032.

1. Committee Business

Chair Buttars called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and he excused Sen. Eastman and Rep. Peterson from the meeting.

MOTION: Sen. Peterson moved to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2002 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Presentation on the SARE (Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education) Program

Mr. Asplund introduced the SARE program and distributed a packet of information for the Task Force members to review. Dr. Rasmussen, who had a schedule conflict, will come to the next meeting to make a presentation and to provide greater detail on the SARE program.

3. Preserving Grazing on Public Lands

Mr. Kim Christy, Assistant Director of Surface, Trust Lands Administration, distributed and reviewed two documents, "School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration" and "Utah Surface Land Ownership." He explained trust lands and the use of trust lands for grazing. (1536 permits for 203,000 A.U.M.) Mr. Christy indicated that the main source of revenue to the trust fund comes from mineral leases and that about \$300,000 comes from 70 telecommunication sites. He stated that the sale of land to private owners is targeted at \$3 million a year. Mr. Christy also explained that when grazing permits are up for renewal

others are allowed to bid on them. However, the original permit holder is allowed to match any offer. He expressed concern about water rights if grazing permits are purchased and then are not used and noted that perhaps there is a need to look at legislation requiring beneficial use from permittees. He answered questions from the Task Force.

Mr. Bill Hopkin, General Manager, Deseret Land and Livestock, explained how people using federal lands for grazing are being taken to court by groups in favor of preserving public lands. He stated that there are an increasing number of court cases and that these court cases are costing large amounts of money for the ranchers. He said Rich, Box Elder and Tooele counties have been targeted in his area. Federal courts are being used and the BLM is being sued, claiming that it is violating various federal laws. Mr. Hopkin explained that many of these groups are nonprofit organizations and that some of them are not interested in any sort of dialogue. He also distributed a speech "Federally Owned Rangelands: Are There New Grounds for Common Ground?" by Under Secretary of Agriculture Mark Rey which he felt outlined the situation very well.

Mr. Hopkin explained that in the case of the ranch he manages, through appropriate practices, that wildlife numbers have increased and water resources have improved, along with increased cattle production. His county has organized a CRM (coordinated research management) to coordinate management of the lands. For instance, appropriate controlled burns in the early spring could prevent the terrible fires that often occur in the summer time.

He talked about several options that the Task Force might look at. The options were:

- Allowing for State intervention in some of these law suits,
- Giving financial aid and support since the suits are a real drain,
- Providing greater disclosure of the non-profit organizations and how they are funded,
- Granting more local political control in the management of these lands,
- Providing greater incentives to manage the lands properly,
- Making more information available to urban dwellers as to the implications for them of changes in how the public lands are treated, and
- Teaching of agriculture in the class room.

Mr. Asplund distributed an article "Federal Grazing Permit Retirement" proposing that the federal government buy up all the permits and remove cattle from the public lands. Mr. Nielsen said that the purchase of permits by Conservation Groups is being challenged in the courts.

4. Other Items/Adjourn

Chair Buttars stated that the next meeting would be on July 22, 2002 at 9:00 a.m.

MOTION: Sen. Peterson moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Chair Buttars adjourned the meeting at 10:35 a.m.