

(Draft – Awaiting Formal Approval)
**MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**
Room 25, House Building
July 14, 2015

Members Present: Sen. David P. Hinkins, Chair
Sen. Mike K. McKell, Chair
Rep. Kay J. Christofferson, House Vice Chair
Sen. Margaret Dayton
Sen. Scott K. Jenkins
Rep. Scott Chew
Rep. Susan Duckworth
Rep. Brian M. Greene
Rep. Stephen G. Handy
Rep. Timothy Hawkes
Rep. Ken Ivory
Rep. Justin J. Miller

Members Absent: Sen. Jim Dabakis
Sen. Peter C. Knudson
Sen. Ralph Okerlund
Sen. Kevin T. Van Tassell
Rep. Michael E. Noel
Rep. Lee B. Perry
Rep. Marc K. Roberts

Staff Present: Mr. Ivan D. Djambov, Fiscal Analyst
Mr. Brian Wikle, Fiscal Analyst
Ms. Linda Service, Committee Secretary

Note: A copy of related materials and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.leg.utah.gov.

Chair Hinkins called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Vice Chair Christofferson moved to approve the minutes of the following meeting: January 29, 2015, February 4, 2015, February 10, 2015, and February 12, 2015. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Phragmites Control, Financial Update: Efforts, Results, Performance Measures, Plans, Goals and Needs

Mr. Brian Cottam, State Forester and Director, Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands, reported on the progress of the division's efforts to control Phragmites. Ms. Laura Ault, Sovereign Lands Program Coordinator, responded to a question regarding the apparent increase in Phragmites in the state. She explained that the division is becoming more proactive in dealing with the issue after years of lack of management. Mr. Cottam elaborated on funding, 3-year management, acreage treated, and benefits of treatment. The committee discussed issues related to Phragmites.

3. Catastrophic Fire Prevention, Financial Update: Efforts, Results, Performance Measures, Plans, Goals, and Needs

Director Cottam discussed a charge from Governor Herbert to develop a wildfire reduction strategy for the state. Using a slide presentation, he provided background information and commented on budget, projects, and program assessment. In addition, he distributed the handout, "Catastrophic Wildfire Reduction Strategy," and responded to concerns raised regarding federal funding for fire reduction. Director Cottam emphasized the importance of three goals, which form the foundation of fire policy: (1) restore and maintain landscapes, (2) fire adaptive communities, and (3) improved fire response. A discussion followed focusing on wildland fire policy as it relates to the responsibility of landowners and state and local governments involved in managing the land.

4. Legislative Audit Report on Projections of Utah's Water Needs

Mr. James Behunin, Audit Supervisor, distributed and reviewed "A Performance Audit of Projections of Utah's Water Needs." The Division of Water Resources (the division) is the state's water planning authority. The division predicts that water demand by Utah's growing population will exceed the state's currently developed water supply sometime around 2040. Questions have been raised regarding the accuracy of those predictions. The audit focuses on the division's planning role, including estimates of future water demand and supply.

The division uses the Division of Water Rights data as the foundation of its analysis of the state's water use. In reviewing the data used by the division for its projections and planning, the audit shows that water use data reported by public water systems to the Division of Water Rights contains significant inaccuracies. Lack of documentation and changes in methodology raise doubts about the reliability of the division's water use studies. The Division of Water Rights acknowledges that they do not have sufficient staff to monitor accuracy of water use data. Unreliable water use data has resulted in an inefficient verification practice. It is suggested that the division needs to develop additional methods for efficiency verifying water use data.

Because of the lack of documentation of the methods used, there is a question as to the reliability of the division's 2000 M&I baseline water use study. The report consists of data from studies conducted between 1992 through 1999 and does not include any data from 2000. In addition, because secondary water systems are not metered, much of the reported outdoor water use is based on estimates.

The projection that Utah's demand for water will exceed its currently developed supply by 2040 is based on the assumption that per capita water use will not decline after the year 2025 when the state is expected to reach its current goal to reduce water use by 25 percent. However, current trends suggest per person water use in Utah should continue to decline for the next several decades; trends towards greater conservation suggest a strong likelihood that the 220 gallons per person per day will be lower in the future. Conservation and policy choices such as metering, pricing, and updated water projections can reduce demand for water.

Chapter IV of the audit report identifies two major sources of additional water supply that are not included in division projections: (1) expected local water development, and (2) estimates for future sources of supply. It is critical that the estimates of supply and demand are accurate. If the state believes water is a valuable resource, it needs to be treated as such and the necessary resources put into managing it.

Response from the Division of Water Resources

Mr. Mike Styler, Executive Director, Department of Natural Resources, and Mr. Todd Adams, Deputy Director, Division of Water Resources, addressed the committee. Director Styler stated that Utah has a great heritage of water collection, delivery, and prudent usage. However, many water basins are in a state of decline. There is no “new water” but water can be diverted from one use to another, although, not without consequences. There is a delicate balance between water use and returning water to replenish aquifers. He acknowledged that numbers received from water users are not completely accurate. The department is working with all entities involved in water collection and supply to improve reporting accuracy. As the state grows, there will be a change of water use from agriculture to municipal and industrial. The committee discussed issues and questions of concern.

5. Carp Removal Plans: Utah Lake’s Long-term Funding Plans for Carp Removal

Mr. Henny Maddux, Department of Natural Resources, discussed a slide presentation, which provided background information on carp on Utah Lake. In 2004, the lake was in an unhealthy state; destroyed primarily by invasive species. Through a series of studies, it was determined that the lake could be brought back to its natural state by removing 75 percent of the carp. Full scale implementation of the removal program began in 2009, and as of 2012, there had been a 48 percent reduction in carp. He mentioned the need for continued funding to reach removal objectives. Mr. Maddux discussed the beneficial effects of the removal program and stated that monitoring and long-term maintenance will be required in the future.

6. Hogle Zoo: Introduction of the Newest Organization Funded Through the Subcommittee

Mr. James Hogle, Chairman of the Board, Hogle Zoo, offered a brief history of the zoo from its inception at Liberty Park to its present location. Mr. Ivan Djambov, Fiscal Analyst, LFA, explained that the funding transfer from the Social Services Appropriations Subcommittee to this subcommittee took place late in the 2015 General Session.

MOTION: Rep. McKell moved to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Hinkins adjourned the meeting at 12:13 p.m.