

**MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
February 5, 2004
Room 305, State Capitol**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Thomas Hatch, Co-Chair
Rep. David Ure, Co-Chair
Sen. Parley Hellewell
Rep. Craig W. Buttars
Rep. Carl W. Duckworth
Rep. Ben C. Ferry
Rep. James R. Gowans
Rep. Darin G. Peterson
Rep. Michael R. Styler
Rep. R. Curt Webb

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sen. Ron Allen
Rep. Michael Noel

STAFF: Steven Allred, Fiscal Analyst
Cindy Hopkin, Committee Secretary

SPEAKERS: Joel Frandsen, Director, Forestry, Fire and State Lands
Will Baker, Administrative Director, Forestry, Fire and State Lands

Note: A list of visitors and a copy of handouts are filed with the committee minutes.

Rep. Ure called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m.

MOTION: Sen. Hellewell moved to approve the minutes of February 4, 2004. The motion passed unanimously with Sen. Allen, Sen. Hatch, Rep. Duckworth, Rep. Ferry, Rep. Noel, and Rep. Peterson absent for the vote.

Mr. Joel Frandsen, assisted by Will Baker, gave a presentation of the division's programs and accomplishments.

Mr. Frandsen reported that the sovereign lands which they oversee have been greatly impacted by drought. Low water levels cause many issues such as debris which causes navigational hazards.

Rep. Ure requested a definition of sovereign lands for the committee. UCA 65A-1-1 defines sovereign lands as "those lands lying below the ordinary high water mark of navigable bodies of water at the date of statehood and owned by the state by virtue of its sovereignty."

The division has requested a small building block for upgrading the Little Valley Harbor Ramp.

The existing ramp has deteriorated to the point that equipment is being damaged during launch and retrieval. This ramp provides access to the north arm of the lake and is used for brine shrimp harvest monitoring and law enforcement, water quality and chemistry studies, maintenance of the weather station on Gunnison Island, and search and rescue operations.

Mr. Frandsen reported on other sovereign lands issues: Things are going well in terms of resolving the debate regarding ownership of portions of the Utah Lake bed. The drought has caused a lot of problems with Bear Lake, it has created more beach, and there is greater need for management of recreation. They have established the Jordan River forum which is a group from the counties and cities that the Jordan River runs through in an effort to plan and facilitate information in regards to the river.

Mr. Frandsen also reported on forestry issues. The continuation of the drought has affected the health and stability of national forests, and state and private lands. The massive die-off of trees due to disease and insect infestations has the potential of causing additional problems. The division is working closely with the Department of Natural Resources in southern Utah to establish a federally approved unit whereby timber which is collected on federal lands would be available to local industry. The state has lost several saw mills which limit our ability to harvest the dead and diseased trees.

Mr. Frandsen reported that there were more fires this year than last year, but they burned fewer acres and cost less money. He talked about the division's Community Fire Plans program. They are making headway in preparing communities for fire hazard mitigation through fuel reduction projects. The division is requesting an increase to Lone Peak's fleet of fire crew vehicles of 3 specialized crew carriers which they already purchased for the two crews established in FY 2003; and an increase of three additional specialized crew carriers in FY 2005.

Mr. Allred presented the committee with an overview of the FY 2005 Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands budget (Tab 6). The division is funded primarily with three funding sources, the General Fund, the General Fund Restricted - Sovereign Lands Management Account, and federal funds.

The Wildland Fire Suppression Fund is capped at \$8M. Mr. Allred recommends when considering annual appropriations going into the fund to consider changing the cap as well in order to build up enough funds for the fire season. The fund pays fire suppression and pre-suppression costs on private and unincorporated county lands. The state matches county payments into the fire suppression fund. Even if a county doesn't participate in the fund, as long as their budget is approved by the state forester, the state is obligated to pay half of their costs in excess of that budget.

Mr. Allred recommended a total Forestry, Fire and State Lands appropriation of \$13,365,500 with almost half being from the federal fund and General Funds being \$2,864,900. Division hot spots include: The division's transfer of one employee from the DNR payroll to the AG payroll,

Utah Lake comprehensive management plan, Little Valley Harbor Ramp improvements, Lone Peak initial attack fire crews (the twenty crew members equate to Approximately 7.5 FTE), and the unauthorized fleet expansion.

The state's Division of Fleet Operations is required to coordinate all purchases of state vehicles and receive legislative approval which must be authorized by the appropriations committee. Mr. Allred recommended the division explain this purchase to the subcommittee, including funding sources used and why it was done without legislative approval. The committee spoke strongly against such purchases, but opted to postpone a decision in this particular case until later.

MOTION: Rep. Ferry moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:25 p.m. The motion passed unanimously with Sen. Allen, Sen. Hatch and Rep. Noel absent for the vote.

Rep. David Ure, Co-Chairman

Sen. Thomas Hatch, Co-Chairman