

Steve Eliason proposes the following substitute bill:

House Concurrent Resolution on State Management of Federal Public Lands

2025 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Steve Eliason

Senate Sponsor: Ronald M. Winterton

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This resolution urges the federal government and state entities to identify public lands for the state to manage for outdoor recreation.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- urges Congress to enact legislation establishing a framework for state operation of federal public lands to improve public land management and reduce federal expenditures;
- highlights the need to develop and maintain state parks, monuments, and campgrounds to provide the people of Utah with outdoor recreational opportunities;
- encourages the Division of State Parks (division) to work with federal agencies to acquire, lease, or manage properties considered suitable for a state park, monument, or campground;
- suggests land that the division may consider for a potential state park or campground;
- requests that the division petition the Bureau of Land Management to transfer title to the state of Utah for the creation of the Little Sahara State Park;
- requests that the division negotiate with the United States Forest Service to transfer the Antelope Flat Campground for the creation of the Flaming Gorge State Park; and
- requests that the division update the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee on the division's progress.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:

29 WHEREAS, the state of Utah is committed to protecting and enhancing the state's
30 recreational opportunities, experiences, and facilities for the people of Utah;

31 WHEREAS, the state's growing population and vibrant tourism industry will require the
32 state to develop new outdoor recreational opportunities and maintain existing state parks,
33 monuments, and campgrounds;

34 WHEREAS, state parks play a critical role in preserving the state's distinctive natural
35 landscapes and geological features;

36 WHEREAS, state parks, monuments, and campgrounds provide valuable outdoor
37 recreational opportunities and protect significant natural and cultural resources for the people
38 of Utah;

39 WHEREAS, the Monte Cristo area located in Cache, Rich, and Weber counties offers
40 unique recreational opportunities that the Division of State Parks (division) may evaluate for
41 designation as a state park, monument, or campground;

42 WHEREAS, various school and institutional trust lands, including trust lands in the San
43 Rafael Swell, may present opportunities for public recreation while generating revenue for
44 trust beneficiaries;

45 WHEREAS, the federal government manages numerous national parks, Bureau of Land
46 Management lands, and national forest lands within the state;

47 WHEREAS, many of these federal public lands face significant maintenance backlogs and
48 operational challenges that impact visitor experiences and resource conservation;

49 WHEREAS, the United States Forest Service has decommissioned campgrounds in the
50 state due to the degradation of campground infrastructure, including the Sunset Campground
51 in Farmington Canyon;

52 WHEREAS, the state has a demonstrated capability in effectively managing state parks and
53 other public lands;

54 WHEREAS, state lands and federal public lands could be enhanced and reclaimed for
55 recreation and conservation purposes if put under state control;

56 WHEREAS, if the state could voluntarily assume operational responsibility of federal lands
57 within the state's borders, under a joint management agreement, the state could improve
58 management efficiency and visitor experiences while reducing federal expenditures;

59 WHEREAS, a voluntary framework for state operation of federal public lands could help
60 address maintenance backlogs while preserving federal obligations and environmental
61 protections;

62 WHEREAS, the state is well-positioned to understand and respond to local needs and

63 conditions affecting public lands within the state;

64 WHEREAS, state management has the potential to enhance economic opportunities while
65 ensuring continued public access and resource protection;

66 WHEREAS, there are several scenic areas within the state that are managed by federal
67 agencies that could be managed by the state, including the Little Sahara Recreation Area, the
68 Antelope Flat Campground near Flaming Gorge Reservoir, and land near Farmington Canyon;

69 WHEREAS, the Antelope Flat Campground is located on the scenic shore of the Flaming
70 Gorge Reservoir and within the beautiful Ashley National Forest;

71 WHEREAS, the division has attempted to enter into an agreement for the management of
72 the Little Sahara Recreation Area as a state park, an area that receives 300,000 visitors
73 annually;

74 WHEREAS, in accordance with Utah Code Section 79-4-606, the division may enter into
75 an agreement with the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the use of the
76 Little Sahara Recreation Area as a state park;

77 WHEREAS, in accordance with Utah Code Subsection 79-4-203(4), the division may
78 acquire property in the name of the state by legal and proper means;

79 WHEREAS, if a land transfer agreement is not possible, the division may seek to purchase
80 or lease the land from the BLM under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, 43 U.S.C. Sec.
81 869;

82 WHEREAS, there are other opportunities for the transfer of land to state ownership for
83 state parks, monuments, or campgrounds, such as the stretch of land from Farmington Canyon
84 and across Skyline Drive to Bountiful;

85 WHEREAS, Utah's congressional delegation is uniquely positioned to understand the
86 state's capacity and desire to manage federal public lands within the state's borders; and

87 WHEREAS, leadership from Utah's congressional delegation on this issue could establish a
88 model framework benefiting all states:

89 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
90 Governor concurring therein, urges Utah's congressional delegation to lead the effort in
91 Congress to enact legislation establishing a framework that allows the state to voluntarily
92 assume operational responsibility, under a joint management agreement, for federal public
93 lands within the state's borders.

94 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor encourage the
95 division to once again petition the Bureau of Land Management to transfer title to the state of
96 Utah all land necessary for the creation of the Little Sahara State Park.

97 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor encourage the
98 division to negotiate with the United States Forest Service to transfer the Antelope Flat
99 Campground to the state for the creation of Flaming Gorge State Park.

100 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor encourage the
101 division to work with federal agencies to acquire, lease, or manage any other properties
102 considered suitable for a state park, state monument, or state campground.

103 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge the division to
104 evaluate recreational and scenic locations in the state, including the Monte Cristo area and
105 trust lands in the San Rafael Swell, for designation as new state parks, monuments, and
106 campgrounds.

107 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor encourage the
108 division to conduct a study considering the feasibility of a potential state park or state
109 campground encompassing Davis County Skyline Drive, including Buckland Flats
110 Campground, Bountiful Peak Campground, and the former Farmington Canyon Sunset
111 Campground areas.

112 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor request that the
113 division submit an annual report to the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment
114 Interim Committee regarding the division's progress before the November interim meetings in
115 2025, 2026, and 2027.