

HB0376S01 compared with HB0376

~~{Omitted text}~~ shows text that was in HB0376 but was omitted in HB0376S01

inserted text shows text that was not in HB0376 but was inserted into HB0376S01

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1 **Land Management Funding Amendments**
2026 GENERAL SESSION
STATE OF UTAH
Chief Sponsor: Carl R. Albrecht
Senate Sponsor: Scott D. Sandall



2
3 **LONG TITLE**

4 **General Description:**

5 This bill addresses funding for watershed restoration and forest health.

6 **Highlighted Provisions:**

7 This bill:

- 8 ▶ defines terms;
- 9 ▶ establishes the Utah Forest Restoration Institute (institute) in connection with Utah State
University;
- 11 ▶ provides funding to the institute;
- 12 ▶ requires the institute to:
 - 13 • conduct research as provided by state and federal law;
 - 14 • study how the state can improve forest and watershed health;
 - 15 • recommend mitigation strategies that reduce the risks and impact of wildfire;
 - 16 • coordinate with the Watershed Restoration Initiative to fund watershed and forest restoration
17 projects;
 - 18 •

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review and respond to, in a timely manner, an emergency request for funding a watershed restoration project in response to a natural disaster; and

- 20 • monitor the long-term effectiveness of watershed and forest restoration projects;
- 21 ▶ requires the Watershed Restoration Initiative to:
 - 22 • coordinate funding decisions with the institute on partnership watershed restoration projects;
 - 24 • coordinate the long-term monitoring of a watershed restoration project with the institute;
 - 26 • collect data required by the institute;
 - 27 • provide research and learning opportunities for higher education students and faculty associated with the institute; and
- 29 • submit an annual report to the institute and two legislative committees; and
- 30 ▶ makes technical and conforming changes.

31 **Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

- 32 ▶ This bill appropriates \$1,900,000 in operating and capital budgets for fiscal year 2027, all
- 33 of which is from the Income Tax Fund.

34 **Other Special Clauses:**

35 None

36 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**

37 AMENDS:

38 **79-2-601** , as last amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 34

39 **79-2-602** , as enacted by Laws of Utah 2022, Chapter 51

40 **79-2-605** , as enacted by Laws of Utah 2022, Chapter 51

41 ENACTS:

42 **53H-4-317** , Utah Code Annotated 1953

44 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

45 Section 1. Section **1** is enacted to read:

46 **53H-4-317. Utah Forest Restoration Institute.**

47 (1) As used in this section:

48 (a) "Institute" means the Utah Forest Restoration Institute created in Subsection (2).

49 (b) "Watershed Restoration Initiative" means the initiative created in Section 79-2-602.

50 (2) There is created the Utah Forest Restoration Institute in connection with Utah State University.

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- 52 (3) The institute shall:
- 53 (a) conduct research as provided by state and federal laws governing the establishment and maintenance
54 of southwest ecological restoration institutes;
- 55 (b) study how the state can improve the health of forests, woodland ecosystems, and watersheds;
- 57 (c) recommend mitigation strategies that reduce the risks and impacts of wildfire;
- 58 (d) coordinate with the Watershed Restoration Initiative to fund watershed and forest restoration
59 projects in accordance with Subsection (4); and
- 60 (e) monitor the long-term effectiveness of watershed and forest restoration projects funded by the state.
- 62 (4) To coordinate the funding of watershed and forest restoration projects with the Watershed
63 Restoration Initiative, the institute shall:
- 64 (a) review a prioritized list of watershed restoration projects submitted by the Watershed Restoration
65 Initiative;
- 66 (b) approve funding for watershed restoration projects based on:
- 67 (i) immediate need for watershed and forest health;
- 68 (ii) the projected short-term and long-term benefit to watershed and forest health;
- 69 (iii) available funds; and
- 70 (iv) recommendations from the Watershed Restoration Initiative; and
- 71 (c) before May 1 of each year, notify the Watershed Restoration Initiative of the approved watershed
72 restoration projects from the prioritized list described in Subsection (4)(a).
- 74 (5)
- 75 (a) The Watershed Restoration Initiative may submit an emergency request for funding to the institute
76 in response to a wildfire, flooding event, or other natural disaster.
- 77 (b) If the institute receives an emergency request for funding from the Watershed Restoration Initiative,
78 the institute shall:
- 79 (i) within 72 hours of receiving the request, review the emergency request for funding;
- 81 (ii) within 96 hours of receiving the request, notify the Watershed Restoration Initiative of the institute's
82 decision to provide funding for the request; and
- 83 (iii) within a reasonable time of receiving the request, if the institute decides to provide funding for the
84 request, distribute funding to the Watershed Restoration Initiative.
- 86 (6)

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(a) The institute shall prepare and submit an annual report on or before July 1 of each year to the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee.

89 (b) The report shall include:

90 (i) a list of programs funded by the institute;

91 (ii) any programs or research completed in the previous year and an assessment of the programs or research; and

93 (iii) a complete operating and financial statement for the preceding fiscal year.

94 Section 2. Section **79-2-601** is amended to read:

95 **79-2-601. Definitions.**

As used in this part:

97 (1) "Administrative costs" means the costs of administering the initiative, including costs for staffing, rent, data processing, legal, finance, accounting, travel, maintenance, and office supplies.

100 (2) "Director" means the director of the initiative who is appointed under Section 79-2-602.

101 (3) "Division" means the Division of Wildlife Resources created in Section 23A-2-201.

102 (4) "Initiative" means the Watershed Restoration Initiative created in Section 79-2-602.

103 (5) "Restoration" means to assist the recovery of ecosystems and ecosystem services that have been mismanaged, degraded, or destroyed.

105 (6) "Utah Forest Restoration Institute" means the institute created in Section 53H-4-317.

106 [~~6~~] (7) "Watershed" means the geographical surface area that drains water into a stream, river, or other body of water.

108 Section 3. Section **79-2-602** is amended to read:

109 **79-2-602. Watershed Restoration Initiative -- Creation -- Objectives.**

110 (1) There is created within the department the Watershed Restoration Initiative under the general supervision of the executive director.

112 (2) The policies and objectives of the initiative are to manage, restore, and improve watershed ecosystems throughout the state by focusing on improving:

114 (a) watershed health and biological diversity;

115 (b) water quality and yield; and

116 (c) opportunities for sustainable uses of natural resources.

117 (3) The initiative shall:

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- (a) submit a prioritized list of watershed restoration projects to the Utah Forest Restoration Institute in accordance with Section 53H-4-317; and
- 120 (b) coordinate the long-term monitoring of a watershed restoration project with the Utah Forest
Restoration Institute, including:
- 122 (i) collecting data required by the Utah Forest Restoration Institute; and
- 123 (ii) providing research and learning opportunities for higher education students and faculty associated
with the Utah Forest Restoration Institute.
- 125 [~~(3)~~] (4) Consistent with this part, the initiative may integrate, coordinate, or partner with federal, state,
local, private, and non-profit plans and programs to further the initiative's objectives.
- 128 [~~(4)~~] (5) To achieve and implement the policies and objectives under [~~Subsection (2)~~] Subsections (2)
and (3), the initiative shall:
- 130 (a) develop and oversee a watershed restoration project proposal process to develop statewide
watershed restoration priorities, including ranking criteria;
- 132 (b) maintain a website that includes:
- 133 (i) an events calendar;
- 134 (ii) tracking of watershed restoration projects;
- 135 (iii) a description of the watershed restoration project proposal process, including applicable ranking
criteria; and
- 137 (iv) the name and contact information of each person with decision-making responsibilities related to
ranking and selecting watershed restoration project proposals;
- 140 (c) organize and oversee a biennial statewide watershed restoration workshop;
- 141 (d) assign funding to watershed restoration projects, and manage and track project budgets;
- 143 (e) submit a request to the Utah Forest Restoration Institute for funding a partnership watershed
restoration project;
- 145 [~~(e)~~] (f) provide initiative partners with contract support, reporting, and tracking assistance regarding
incoming and outgoing watershed restoration project funds;
- 147 [~~(f)~~] (g) ensure that watershed restoration projects meet applicable cultural resource requirements;
- 149 [~~(g)~~] (h) upon request and as appropriate, provide performance reporting and initiative information to
the media, partners, and the executive and legislative branches of state government;
- 152 [~~(h)~~] (i) prepare and provide training and technical support for watershed restoration project managers;
and

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154 [(†)] (j) provide the executive director and the Utah Forest Restoration Institute with reports and
155 recommendations regarding the initiative's performance and funding.

156 Section 4. Section **79-2-605** is amended to read:

157 **79-2-605. Reporting.**

158 (1) The initiative shall prepare and submit an annual report on or before November 1 of each year to:

160 (a) the Utah Forest Restoration Institute;

161 (b) the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee; and

162 (c) the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee.

164 (2) The annual report described in Subsection (1) shall include:

165 (a) by source, the initiative's total annual resources, including partner funds;

166 (b) the initiative's historical annual funding amounts from year to year;

167 (c) the amount of funds received from the Utah Forest Restoration Institute for partnership projects;

169 (d) the total amount of state funding used to leverage non-state partner resources;

170 (e) the total administrative costs related to the initiative, including the costs of each initiative partner
171 that receives funds through the initiative; and

172 (f) performance metrics that demonstrate the initiative's impact and effectiveness.

[—The initiative shall prepare and submit to the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and
Environment Interim Committee, on or before November 1 of each year, an annual report that
includes:]

176 [(1) by source, the initiative's total annual resources, including partner funds;]

177 [(2) the initiative's historical annual funding amounts from year to year;]

178 [(3) the total amount of state funding used to leverage non-state partner resources;]

179 [(4) the total administrative costs related to the initiative, including the costs of each initiative partner
that receives funds through the initiative; and]

181 [(5) performance metrics that demonstrate the initiative's impact and effectiveness.]

183 Section 5. **FY 2027 Appropriations.**

184 The following sums of money are appropriated for the fiscal year beginning July 1,
185 2026, and ending June 30, 2027. These are additions to amounts previously appropriated for
186 fiscal year 2027.

187 Subsection 5(a). **Operating and Capital Budgets**

188 Under the terms and conditions of Title 63J, Chapter 1, Budgetary Procedures Act, the

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189 Legislature appropriates the following sums of money from the funds or accounts indicated for
190 the use and support of the government of the state of Utah.

191 ITEM 1 To Utah State University - Education and General

192 From Income Tax Fund {} (650,000)

193 Schedule of Programs:

194 Public Service {} (650,000)

195 The Legislature intends to reallocate the ongoing
196 appropriations under this item to Utah State University's
197 Utah Forest Restoration Institute from Utah State
198 University Extension.

199 ITEM 2 To Utah State University - Special Projects

200 From Income Tax Fund {~~6,000,000~~} 2,550,000

201 Schedule of Programs:

202 Utah Forest Restoration Institute {~~6,000,000~~} 2,550,000

203 The Legislature intends that the Utah Forest
204 Restoration Institute at Utah State University use, of the
205 ongoing appropriations under this item:

206 (1) no more than \$800,000 for operations and
207 staffing purposes; and

208 (2) at least \$1,750,000 to fund and study
209 watershed restoration projects as required under
210 Subsections 53H-4-317(4) and (5).

211 Section 6. **Effective date.**

Effective Date.

This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.

3-3-26 8:40 AM