

LeRay McAllister Fund Working Farm & Ranch Fund

[Edit Request](#)

Requester Information

Legislator: Snider, Casey

Creation Date: 2024-01-18

Submission Date: 2024-01-26

Section 1: Request Details

Description:

\$5 million is requested to preserve and restore working agricultural lands that exhibit a substantial positive impact to Utah's agricultural future, whether on their own or as part of a broader working landscape. The requested funds will be administered by the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) through the LeRay McAllister Working Farm and Ranch Fund and used to provide matching grants to complete the purchase of agricultural conservation easements. This mechanism multiplies the impact of the state's investment and underscores a shared responsibility among the stakeholders for preserving agricultural landscapes for future generations.

Legislative designee contact information:

- Name: Jim Bowcutt
 - Organization: Utah Dept. of Agriculture & Food (UDAF)
 - Position: Director of Conservation
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Section 2: Funding Information

How will the appropriation be used?

	One-time	Ongoing
Personnel Services	2024: \$0.00 2025: \$0.00	\$0.00
In-State Travel	2024: \$0.00 2025: \$0.00	\$0.00
Out-of-state Travel	2024: \$0.00 2025: \$0.00	\$0.00
Supplies and Equipment	2024: \$0.00 2025: \$0.00	\$0.00
Technology Purchases	2024: \$0.00 2025: \$0.00	\$0.00
Infrastructure/Capital Investments	2024: \$0.00 2025: \$0.00	\$0.00
Other Charges/Pass Thru	2024: \$0.00 2025: \$5,000,000.00	\$0.00
Expenditure Total		
One-time 2024	One-time 2025	Ongoing 2025
\$0.00	\$5,000,000.00	\$0.00

Funding Sources:

General Fund

- Amount Requested 2024 (One-time) \$0.00
- Amount Requested 2025 (One-time) \$5,000,000.00
- Amount Requested 2025 (Ongoing) \$0.00

Revenue Total

One-time 2024
\$0.00

One-time 2025
\$5,000,000.00

Ongoing 2025
\$0.00

Should unused funding be returned to the state at the end of the fiscal year?

No

Is this project scalable if the Legislature does not fund the full requested amount?

Yes

A short explanation describing how the project might be scaled

The project is scalable to different funding levels. With less than the full requested amount, the program can prioritize funding a few number of high-priority projects based on the available budget. Each dollar provided by the State is leveraged 7:1 on average. This leverage demonstrates a collaborative effort between the state, federal government, and the private sector, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and commitment to addressing this critical conservation need.

Section 3: Agency Information

Subjects:

Health and Wellbeing
Land and Environment

Agency:

570 / Agriculture

Type of entity to receive pass-through funding

- State Government
- Local Government
- Private for Profit

Section 4: Performance Outcome Measurement

Who would benefit from this request (who is the target audience)?

This request will benefit the state's agricultural economy by directly assisting working farms and ranches keep their land in production in a sustainable manner. These projects also provide a wealth of benefits to the public by preserving scenic open space, wildlife habitat, and maintaining critical ecosystem functions for future generations. This helps to ensure our future food security, protects the jobs and livelihoods that the agricultural sector provides, and preserves the quality of life that makes Utah a desirable place to live, work, and do business.

What is this project or program intended to accomplish?

This request will ensure the protection of vital farmland, promote sustainable agricultural practices, and safeguard the long-term viability of agricultural communities and markets in Utah. The \$5 Million in requested funds will be highly leveraged and provide the necessary funding to secure agricultural conservation easements on properties that contribute to Utah's agricultural future, whether on their own or as part of a broader working landscape. This includes properties which preserve significant aspects of the State's agricultural heritage.

How will the Legislature know whether the project or program achieved its intended purpose?

Performance measures used to track the ongoing success of the program include acres protected under easement, project leverage, state cost share, and the documentation of conservation values and additional public benefits for each funded project. Under Utah Code Section 4-46-303, the Land Conservation Board is required to report annually on the administration of the LeRay McAllister Working Farm and Ranch Fund. Since 1999, the LeRay McAllister Fund has made more than \$27 million in grants preserving nearly 100,000 acres of land, two thirds of which is working agricultural land. The total project cost for these transactions exceeds \$200 million, averaging more than 7:1 leverage of State money for land conservation since the Fund's inception.

Section 5: Other Supporting Documents

Intent Language

The Legislature intends that \$5,000,000 from the General Fund provided by this item be used by the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) through the LeRay McAllister Working Farm and Ranch Fund to make grants for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements.

Previous State Funding

Since its inception in 1999, the LeRay McAllister fund has made grants totaling \$27.4 million to projects in 24 counties, leveraging more than \$213 million in matching funds and protecting nearly 100,000 acres across the State. The fund was moved from the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) to UDAF's Division of Conservation in 2022. (UCA 4-46-301). The program's staff are highly skilled and can provide specialized assistance to landowners and eNGOs engaged in land conservation projects. UDAF currently holds and monitors nearly 40 easements.