



Legislative Update

February 5, 2024

We are at the midpoint of the 2024 General Session. 674 bills are currently introduced with more still to come. We had a busy week commenting on bills, meeting with legislators on requests for appropriation, and presenting before the Rural Caucus.



On Monday, we provided comments before the Senate Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Confirmation Committee in support of the reappointment of Teresa Wilhelmsen as the State Engineer and Tim Hawkes as a member representing aquaculture for the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council. We have known and worked with Teresa and Tim for years and believe they are both eminently qualified for these positions. Teresa is always open to suggestions and accessible to our members. She frequently attends Utah Farm Bureau events to speak with our members and answer questions.

On Tuesday morning we were on hand for the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee meeting. The hearing included several requests for appropriations (RFAs) that the Utah Farm Bureau is supporting. These requests include:

- 1) \$1 million one-time for Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) grants to agricultural producers for one-time equipment purchases to expand or improve their meat, poultry, pork, sheep, and fruit and vegetable products processing capacity.
- 2) \$300,000 one-time and \$300,000 ongoing for UDAF to hire three new predator control trappers and better serve the needs of agricultural producers throughout Utah. \$150,000 of one-time funding is requested to purchase trucks for each new trapper. \$150,000 of one-time funding is requested to allow UDAF to purchase ATVs and sheep camps for the new and existing trappers.
- 3) \$400,000 ongoing for agricultural water research. The request is for two FTEs at Utah State University and for on-farm application demonstration projects within the Great Salt Lake watershed related to water efficiency, agricultural water optimization, and water measurement.

- 4) \$500,000 one-time for pilot projects and a handbook to assist farmers who wish to participate in voluntary water transactions, such as agricultural optimization, split season leases and seasonal leases.
- 5) \$500,000 one-time to support the Utah FFA program helping high school students learn hands-on skills and trades.

On Thursday, the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee met to discuss additional RFAs. The committee heard a presentation requesting \$5 million in one-time funding for the LeRay McAllister Fund Working Farm and Ranch Fund. This funding will 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.

Later in the afternoon on Thursday, we spoke in favor of H.B. 297, Utah Bee Inspection Act Amendments. This bill restricts the ability of governmental entities from adopting or enforcing any restrictions on beekeeping that are more restrictive than state law, except as authorized by the state. The committee favorably recommended this bill to the full House.

On Friday morning, Utah Farm Bureau president, ValJay Rigby, and Buddy Deimler, retired agricultural education specialist, testified before the Rural Caucus in support of funding for the Utah FFA. The presentation highlighted that career and technical education concentrators outperform non-concentrators in graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, postsecondary completion, full-time employment rates, and median annual earnings. We are hopeful that the legislature will fund the RFA request.



As always, we welcome you to send our policy team questions or comments on bills or topics of concern. We also encourage you to read through the [2024 Utah Farm Bureau Policy Book](#), which can also be found under the policy section of our website. Finally, please mark your calendar for Farm Bureau Day on the Hill on **Friday, February 23**. We will have a full day of activities on Capitol Hill.

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