



Legislative Update

July 31, 2026

Legislative Interim Update

Utah legislators returned to the Capitol earlier this summer for their most recent Interim Committee meetings. The Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee and the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee reviewed ongoing issues related to water, natural resources, carbon markets, and environmental permitting. Interim discussions provide an early look at issues, policy, and budget priorities affecting Utah agriculture that will be considered during the 2027 General Session.

Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee Meeting

On June 16, the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee began with a presentation from the Legislative Fiscal Analyst's Office on the Division of Water Quality's Utah Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (UPDES) permitting process. The review found that permit processing is taking longer than the 180-day standard, with average processing time at 219 days, and that only 52% of permits were renewed on time in FY2025. The Legislative Fiscal Analyst's Office identified several ways to improve the process, including improving communication between the Division and permittees, improving support for application quality and timeliness, streamlining the pre-public notice permittee review period, and improving internal data structure and collection practices. The Division of Water Quality is working to implement these process improvements. For agriculture, efficient permitting matters because delays can slow down projects, complicate infrastructure planning, and make it harder for producers to stay on top of compliance requirements. You can read the full report from the Legislative Fiscal Analyst's Office by clicking [here](#).

The subcommittee also received an update on funding for the Species Protection Account, which was created to help prevent Utah plants and animals from being listed under the Endangered Species Act. Utah Farm Bureau strongly supports the account because it provides the scientific data needed to respond to listing petitions and to support efforts to downlist or delist species that have recovered. Utah Farm Bureau has representation on the Species Protection Account Advisory Committee.

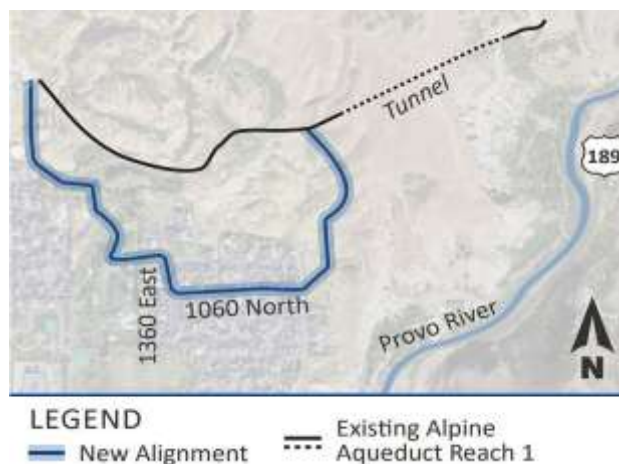
The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources noted that [H.B. 378, Department of Natural Resources Funding Amendments](#) (2025 General Session), established several new funding sources for the Department of Natural Resources, including revenues from transmission facilities, centrally assessed new growth, renewable energy capacity tax, and radioactive waste and disposal fees. These changes were intended to provide a broader and more stable funding base for the Species Protection Account. In the 2026 General Session, the Legislature approved [H.B. 247, Great Salt Lake Related Amendments](#), which redirects brine shrimp royalty revenue away from the Species Protection Account after FY 2027. Historically, the account has been funded through water tax revenues and brine shrimp royalties, with

occasional one-time General Fund appropriations when needed. While the new funding framework is intended to offset that change, it remains unclear whether the account will ultimately be better funded over the long term. Utah Farm Bureau will continue to be involved in any discussions regarding funding for the Species Protection Account. You can rewatch the full hearing by clicking [here](#).

Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee Meeting

On June 17, the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee met and worked through a full agenda that included several topics of importance to agriculture. The meeting began with a report on a legislative visit to the Alpine Aqueduct and water treatment plant project. Members heard about the engineering work, the tunnel construction, and the importance of maintaining major water infrastructure serving large parts of the state. The Alpine Aqueduct Reach 1 (AA-1) is a critical water supply facility that serves more than 1.6 million Utahns. The current AA-1 alignment is approximately 1.4 miles long and extends from the Olmsted Reservoir, near the mouth of Provo Canyon, to the Don A. Christiansen Regional Water Treatment Plant (DACRWTP), north of 800 North in Orem.

In March 2025, the Central Utah Water Conservancy District (CUWCD), in partnership with the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), began construction on the Alpine Aqueduct Reach 1 project. This important project will realign the existing aqueduct to better protect residents and maintain reliable water service. The project will reduce major risks from seismic events and landslide movement. It includes installation of a new 108-inch-diameter aqueduct along 1060 North and sections of Somerset Drive (1360 East) and 1560 East in Orem. The project is expected to be completed in early 2027.



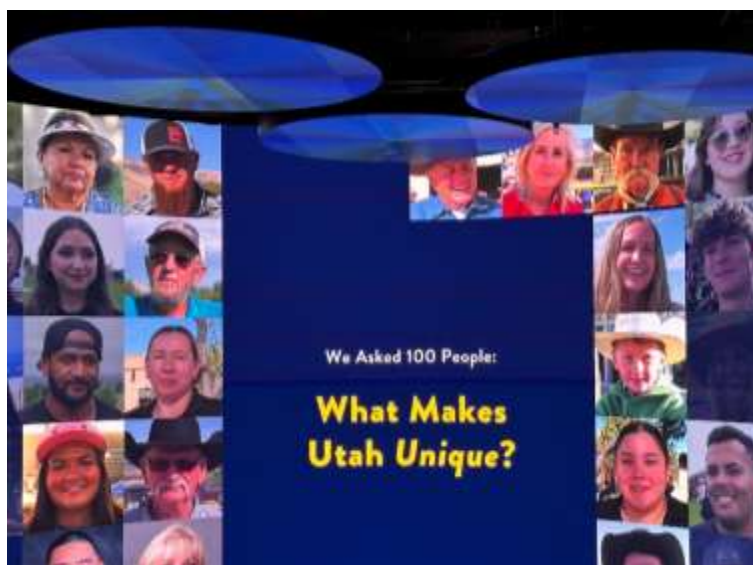
The committee then moved into carbon markets and emission reduction credits. The State Auditor, Tina Cannon, presented and explained that [H.B.185, Carbon Credit Amendments](#) (2026 General Session) requires her office to collect and report carbon credit transaction information for state entities, with reporting covering transactions from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026. She also outlined the challenges of tracking credits across multiple registries and the risk of duplicate reporting or fraud, while noting that Utah is still in the early stages of building out the reporting process. Taylor Payne of the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food Grazing Improvement Program and Dr. Kris Hulvey of Working Lands Conservation presented next on the Three Creeks grazing project in Rich County, describing how improved grazing management may increase soil carbon, improve watershed health, and help support ranching operations over time. Their testimony made clear that any carbon market policy should remain voluntary and should protect private property rights and producer choice. This is a topic we encourage County Farm Bureaus to discuss during annual business meetings, as carbon markets represent an emerging opportunity for farmers and ranchers and an area where our policy could be strengthened.

Several other topics were discussed during the June 17 hearing, including air quality credits, waste tire recycling, antifreeze recycling, electronic waste, and drinking water monitoring. Utah Farm Bureau will continue monitoring these discussions because they could affect both agricultural business decisions and the broader regulatory climate for Utah producers. You can rewatch the hearing by clicking [here](#).

Around the Capitol

The new Museum of Utah officially opened at the Capitol Complex on June 27 and offers an outstanding opportunity to learn more about Utah's history, culture, and natural resources. If you're planning a trip to Salt Lake City or visiting the Capitol for meetings, we encourage you to stop by and tour the museum. Admission is free, and the exhibits provide an excellent experience for both adults and children.

The new museum even includes a video presentation featuring our very own Iron County Farm Bureau President, Scott Stubbs. You can learn more about the new museum and how to visit by clicking [here](#).



*Iron County Farm Bureau President, Scott Stubbs - Museum of Utah Video -
Photo Credit: Terry Camp*



Mormon Meteor at the Museum of Utah - Photo Credit: Terry Camp

The next Interim Session is August 18-20. You can view the agendas for the upcoming meetings by visiting le.utah.gov. As always, we encourage you to send your questions or comments to the policy team on topics of concern. We also encourage you to read through the [2026 Utah Farm Bureau Policy Book](#), which can be found under the policy section of our website and using the QR code below.



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