



# Legislative Update

May 31, 2023

## Interim Update

Although Utah's Legislature is part-time, lawmakers conduct public legislative work during monthly interim meetings at the Capitol. Interim meetings are where much of the policy development happens prior to the 45-day general session, which begins on the fourth Monday in January each year. During interim, legislative committees, made up of both senators and representatives, study key issues facing the state. This is different from the general session when the Senate and House each have standing committees composed of only their own members.

During interim, committee chairs prioritize what should be studied over the interim period based on items not addressed during the general session, with input gathered from committee members and the public. These identified items are put on a master study list carefully selected by the Senate President, Speaker of the House of Representative, and committee chairs. The Legislative Management Committee then votes to adopt interim study items and the schedule for the upcoming year. From there, interim committees listen to expert and public testimony to determine whether to recommend legislation, and vote to prioritize bills for the upcoming general session and occasionally for future special sessions. Interim meetings are held throughout the year, are open to the public, and can be streamed live or listened to later by visiting [le.utah.gov](http://le.utah.gov).

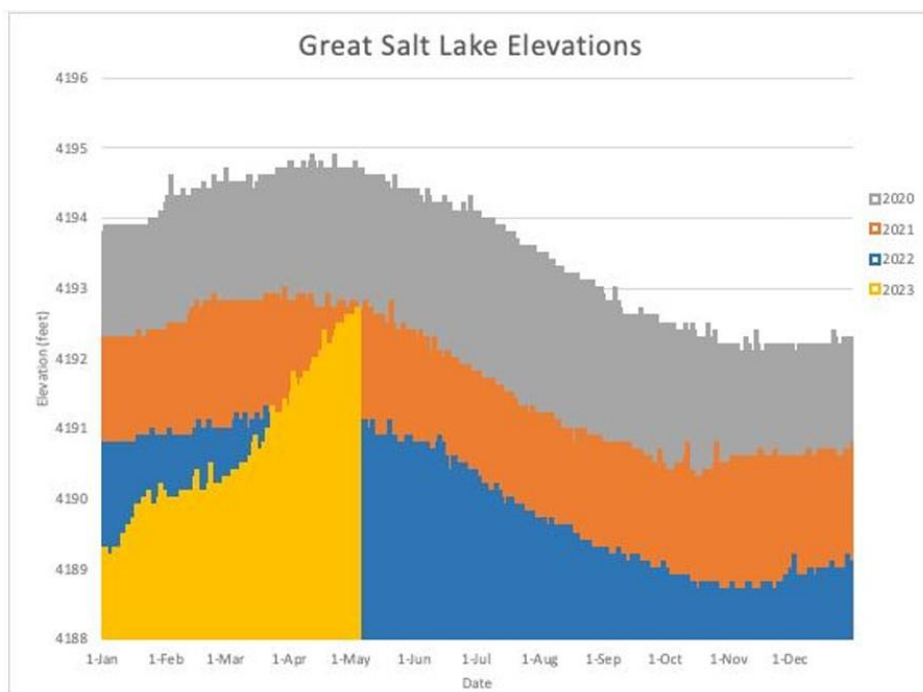


In addition to interim meetings, special sessions are periodically called to address pressing issues that arise during the interim. These special sessions may be called by either the Legislature, or the Governor by proclamation. On May 17, 2023 Governor Cox convened a Special Session of the Legislature to consider extending a state of emergency related to flooding; to reallocate funding to address costs related to snow removal flooding, flood response, mitigation, and other costs related to the state of emergency; to consider amendments to House Bill 225, Firearm Possession Amendments, to consider amendments to death

benefits under the Firefighters' Retirement Act; and for the Senate to consent to appointments made by the governor. You can read the proclamation by clicking [here](#).



On May 16, the Legislative Water Development Commission (Wade Garrett represents Utah Farm Bureau on this commission) met to discuss the state of Utah's water supply and share highlights and ideas generated from a recent legislative and executive branch delegation trip to study water conservation in Israel. At the meeting, Joel Ferry, executive director of the Utah Division of Natural Resources, discussed the record snowpack we received this winter. Average snowpack peaked at 30 inches of snow water equivalent versus just 12 inches last year. Executive Director Ferry noted that peak flows typically occur between the first and second week in June. Additionally, Executive Director Ferry also reported that Great Salt Lake has already come up 4 feet since hitting a record low last November. Finally, he recommended that everyone visit [Floods.Utah.Gov](https://www.floods.utah.gov), which includes a flood plain map and weather and flood forecasts.



(Chart courtesy of Utah DNR)

Later in the meeting, Teresa Wilhelmsen, State Engineer and Director of the Division of Water Rights, Candice Hasenyager, Director of the Division of Water Resources, and Craig Buttars, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture and Food, each provided a recap of the Utah delegation trip to Israel and takeaway points. Teresa's takeaways were the need for additional metering and data gathering, improving water data accounting, enhancing innovation and education by establishing research centers to better understand consumptive use of water, and upgrading infrastructure including by identifying where water reuse can be successfully deployed and where ground water storage may be viable. Candice highlighted the need to improve water education, implement new water conservation technology, integrating land use and water planning, evaluating changes to how we price water, and additional agricultural water optimization projects.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Representative Snider announced that the co-chairs plan to open a committee bill file related to water. Components of this draft bill will include potential changes Utah's water regulatory structure (Israel has one water entity, Utah's water regulation is divided among several divisions), expanding research and innovation through university extensions, water infrastructure prioritization, changes to pricing of water to generate capital for infrastructure improvements, and improving water accounting. You can view the meeting materials and rewatch the meeting by clicking [here](#).

On May 17, interim committees, including the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee, met throughout the day prior to the Special Session. At the meeting, the Committee heard additional presentations on Utah's water supply and flooding and considered extending emergency powers for flood mitigation and infrastructure rehabilitation. The Committee also approved a list of interim study items which includes many Farm Bureau priorities. The list includes wildlife management, water issues, mining regulatory processes and operations, land issues, cannabinoid products, egg sale restrictions, agritourism barriers, state park fees, boards and commissions, and veterinary practices in rural areas. You can view the full list with additional details by clicking [here](#). Utah Farm Bureau will be actively engaged on these study items throughout the summer and fall.

As always, we encourage you to actively communicate with our policy team with questions or comments on topics of concern. We also encourage you to read through the [2023 Utah Farm Bureau Policy Book](#) which can also be found under the policy section of our website.

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