



Legislative Update

April 10, 2025

The 2025 General Session of the Utah State Legislature concluded on Friday, March 7. During the 2025 General Session, legislators introduced 962 bills and resolutions. This year's session was productive for agriculture. The Utah Farm Bureau Federation (UFBF) actively advocated for bills and appropriations that will benefit farmers and ranchers across the state. Below is a summary of agriculture-related funding items and bills that passed during the 2025 session.

Appropriations

| Funding Item | Amount |
|--|----------------------|
| Agricultural Amendments (H.B. 510) | \$75,000 one-time |
| Bear River Basin Cloud Seeding Program | \$3 million one-time |
| Food Labeling Amendments (H.B. 138) | \$50,500 ongoing |
| Food Processor Grants | \$1 million one-time |
| Grazing Improvement Projects | \$500,000 ongoing |
| Great Salt Lake Basin Water Rights Network | \$400,000 ongoing |
| Great Salt Lake Long-Term Water Program | \$1 million one-time |
| High School Rodeo – Athlete and Ambulance Grants | \$145,000 ongoing |
| Panguitch Lake Dam Replacement | \$5 million one-time |
| Pollinator Program Amendments (H.B. 251) | \$240,000 ongoing |
| Predator Control | \$100,000 ongoing |
| Spanish Fork Veterinary Lab Technician | \$52,500 ongoing |
| Statewide R.S. 2477 Legal Services | \$500,000 one-time |
| Utah FFA Association Funding Request | \$496,500 one-time |
| Utah Horse Racing | \$125,000 ongoing |

[H.B. 41, State Water Policy Amendments \(Rep. Carl Albrecht / Sen. Scott Sandall\)](#)

This bill amends current law by expanding the scope of water management priorities in the state. Key changes include promoting groundwater quality in addition to lakes and rivers, which are already listed. The bill also encourages monitoring activities in watersheds that supply drinking water systems, in consultation with watershed councils, to ensure better protection of these vital resources. Furthermore, it promotes comprehensive state water planning, including the development of a state water plan, and supports water reuse initiatives tailored to regional conditions.

[H.B. 46, Water Rights Applications Amendments \(Rep. Doug Owens / Sen. Evan Vickers\)](#)

This bill addresses and streamlines the process for handling requests to reinstate lapsed water rights applications. The bill provides a 60-day window after notice of lapse, during which applicants can request reinstatement and a time extension. It specifies that the State Engineer will change the priority date of a reinstated application to the date the reinstatement request was filed, unless there is a showing that the lapse resulted from a mistake by the State Engineer or fraud. These changes benefit both water users and the State Engineer's office.

[HB 47, Public Lands Water Rights Amendments \(Rep. Carl Albrecht / Sen. Derrin Owens\)](#)

This bill enhances safeguards by establishing strict criteria for federal agencies' claims of federal reserve water rights under Public Water Reserve (PWR) No. 107. In 1926, President Calvin Coolidge created PWR No. 107 via an executive order. PWR No. 107 reserved land containing water and water for the federal government to manage livestock watering on these lands. PWR No. 107 was to promote western settlement and prevent monopolizing scarce water resources on federally-managed lands. HB 47 sets the proof to be provided for a federal agency claim to be valid. HB 47 also creates new protections for grazing permittees by declaring that they are "beneficial users" of water rights used on grazing allotments and requiring agencies to obtain written consent from the beneficial users before filing water rights change applications that affect the grazer's interests. Finally, the bill removes processes from a 2014 Utah statute for the issuance of "livestock watering certificates" that were misused by federal agencies. Overall, this bill provides grazers greater certainty regarding livestock watering rights on federal grazing allotments.

[H.B. 89, Water Transfer Amendments \(Rep. Gay Lynn Bennion / Sen. Scott Sandall\)](#)

This bill amends Utah's probate code to disallow the transfer of water company shares through the small estate affidavit procedure. This change comes in response to complications arising from valuation discrepancies, appraisal challenges, legal threats to companies, and the risk of abuses arising from such transfers. By mandating that all estates involving water shares be administered through the formal probate process, regardless of their value, the legislation aims to ensure proper legal oversight for these valuable assets, protect companies from legal challenges, and provide a more comprehensive framework for determining ownership of water company shares.

[H.B. 94, Exemptions from Dangerous Weapons Provisions \(Rep. Calvin Roberts / Sen. Ron Winterton\)](#)

This bill clarifies laws on firearm use for harvesting livestock in custom meat processing businesses licensed and inspected by the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF). It addresses challenges arising from urban encroachment into agricultural areas where these processing facilities operate.

[H.B. 98, Landowner Liability Amendments \(Rep. David Shallenberger / Sen. Brady Brammer\)](#)

This bill expands the definition of “recreational purpose” to include rock climbing on Via Ferrata routes and target shooting. This benefits private property rights by providing increased liability protection for landowners who allow public access to their land for this broader range of recreational activities.

[H.B. 138, Food Labeling Amendments](#) (Rep. Neil Walter / Sen. Derrin Owens).

This bill addresses labeling cultivated meat products and plant or insect-based meat substitutes. The bill defines these terms and requires clear labeling of foods containing such products to ensure consumers are notified of their presence. This bill aligns closely with our newly adopted Utah Farm Bureau policy on labeling lab-grown meat products.

[H.B. 194, Beekeeping and Veterinary Amendments](#) (Rep. Ariel Defay / Sen. Scott Sandall)

This bill addresses the growing challenge of American and European Foulbrood, which has affected nearly 50 bee colonies in Utah over the past two years. By modifying the veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) requirements, H.B. 194 allows a UDAF veterinarian to establish a VCPR with a registered beekeeper when issuing a veterinary feed directive if the apiary is inspected by a county bee inspector or a UDAF inspector working with the veterinarian. This will facilitate beekeepers' access to antibiotics needed to treat Foulbrood. Foulbrood can decimate hives if left untreated, forcing beekeepers to burn or bury the infected colonies. This change is crucial because 2015 FDA regulations require a veterinary feed directive for all animal antibiotics added to feed, and establishing a traditional VCPR with a veterinarian coming to the property can be difficult for beekeepers.

[H.B. 202, Private Landowner Big Game Revisions](#) (Rep. Carl Albrecht / Sen. Evan Vickers)

This bill makes changes to Utah’s big game hunting regulations designed to benefit agricultural producers and private landowners. One change is the creation of a new landowner draw system for bull elk vouchers. Landowners owning at least 640 contiguous acres of private land within a limited entry elk unit are eligible to participate in this draw. The system allocates 5% of limited entry bull permits specifically for this landowner draw, increasing hunting opportunities on private lands. Landowners with between 4,000 and 8,999 contiguous acres could potentially qualify for up to two additional bull elk vouchers each year. The bill also focuses on landowner associations, establishing a program to encourage private landowners to manage their land to improve habitat for public wildlife, increase hunting opportunities, and decrease depredation problems. This offers economic incentives for wildlife management, helps reduce crop damage, and aims to balance the management of public wildlife on private lands.

[H.B. 208, Urban Farming Assessment Modifications](#) (Rep. Jason Kyle / Sen. Daniel McCay)

This bill simplifies the application process for the Urban Farming Assessment Act by eliminating the requirement for annual renewal applications. Through the changes made by the bill, once an initial application is approved, urban farmers no longer need to submit yearly renewals unless specifically requested by the county assessor. This bill reduces administrative burdens on urban farmers while maintaining the integrity of the assessment program.

[H.B. 237, Rollback Tax Amendments](#) (Rep. Casey Snider / Sen. Scott Sandall)

This bill significantly changes how rollback tax revenues are handled when land no longer qualifies under the Farmland Assessment Act and the Urban Farming Assessment Act. Counties are now authorized and required to retain and use 100% of the rollback tax revenue for preserving open space and agricultural land, a substantial increase from the previous 20% allocation. The funds can be used to establish conservation easements or fund similar methods to preserve open or agricultural land. If the county does

not spend or obligate 100% of the rollback tax funds for preservation purposes within 10 years of collection, the balance must be paid to the statewide LeRay McAllister Working Farm and Ranch Fund. The bill also updates this fund's revenue sources to include rollback tax and fee-in-lieu revenue. These changes create a valuable mechanism to protect farmland and open space by providing a dedicated funding source at the county level, with the potential to use these funds as matching contributions for conservation easements.

[H.B. 240, Urban Farming Assessment Amendments \(Rep. Rex Shipp / Sen. Keven Stratton\)](#)

This bill modifies the Urban Farming Assessment Act to allow qualification based on gross sales (\$1,000 annually per quarter-acre), not just agricultural production. It ensures that farms that may have a temporary setback in meeting timing requirements can still qualify based on prior sales. The bill also simplifies the application process by removing the need for annual renewal applications, reducing administrative burdens on farmers and county assessors. This portion of the bill is similar to what passed in H.B. 208. The bill also clarifies that a portion of land may qualify for urban farming assessment even if other portions do not. It requires applicants to submit documentation to county assessors demonstrating that the land meets either production or gross sales requirements. Additionally, it establishes circumstances under which a county assessor may request additional information from landowners approved for urban farming assessment.

[H.B. 243, Agricultural Water Optimization Amendments \(Rep. David Shallenberger/ Sen. Scott Sandall\)](#)

This bill changes the Agricultural Water Optimization Act. Previously, the law required a 25% match for drip or automated surge irrigation projects. However, the bill clarifies this by specifying that the match applies to three distinct types of projects: subsurface drip irrigation, automated surge irrigation, and measurement, telemetry, or reporting projects. Additionally, the bill introduces a new provision regarding the use of funds in the Agricultural Water Optimization Account. Now, these funds can be used for research to develop methods to measure the amount of water saved or to assess the effectiveness of the agricultural water optimization funding.

[H.B. 251, Pollinator Program Amendments \(Rep. Ashlee Matthews / Sen. Evan Vickers\)](#)

This bill makes significant changes to Utah's pollinator program. The bill renames the pollinator pilot program to the pollinator habitat program and makes it permanent. The legislation repeals the scheduled sunset date for the program, which was previously set to expire in 2026. The bill outlines various activities for the program, including public education efforts, distribution of pollinator-friendly native flowering plants or seeds, support for local government and nonprofit pollinator programs, and grants covering up to 75% of costs for planting pollinator-friendly vegetation on private or public land. As noted above, the pollinator habitat program received \$240,000 in ongoing funding.

[H.B. 253, Agriculture and Food Amendments \(Rep. Carl Albrecht / Sen. Don Ipson\)](#)

This UDAF "cleanup" bill introduces various changes designed to support farmers, ranchers, and veterinarians across the state. Among other provisions, the bill:

- Expands the Veterinarian Loan Repayment Program by allowing a veterinarian to qualify if they practice 20% livestock medicine and 10% in another area (animal shelter, Indian Country, for the department) rather than just 30% livestock medicine.
- Renames the "Fertilizer Act" as the "Plant Food Act" and changes references to "fertilizer" to "plant food" to make the law clearer. Adds plant food as a defined term to include fertilizer, soil amendment, beneficial substance, plant amendment, plant biostimulant, plant inoculant, or any

combination. Clarifies the label requirements for soil amendment and beneficial substances in plant food, and provides the exact format required for the statement of composition for non-nutritive ingredients.

- Allows for 10-year livestock brands, at the applicant's discretion.
- Amends the Elk Act to remove a requirement that elk test negative for red deer genetic factor. Allows UDAF to make rules regarding unique visual tag requirements (to be consistent with the U.S. Department of Agriculture).
- Allocates a portion of sales tax revenues to the UDAF Division of Conservation, created in Section 4-46-401, to implement water related programs.
- Allows for 75% cost share for agricultural water optimization measurement, telemetry, or reporting projects.
- Clarifies that if a political subdivision has an ordinance that allows a person to own livestock, they must also permit the trading, selling, or transferring of that livestock up to the amount allowed by the ordinance. Furthermore, the political subdivision may not deny a business license solely on the grounds that a person owns, trades, sells, or transfers livestock within these permitted limits.

H.B. 274, Water Amendments (Rep. Casey Snider / Sen. Daniel McCay)

This bill focuses on promoting water conservation through tiered rate structures. The bill authorizes culinary water suppliers to implement tiered conservation rates to encourage more efficient water use. These rates are considered reasonable as long as they reflect the water provider's actual costs. Larger retail water suppliers (those with more than 500 connections) must evaluate incorporating at least one water conservation measure when setting rates for their highest usage tier for residential customers, with a deadline of July 1, 2027, to comply.

H.B. 274 also addresses secondary water suppliers, requiring them to bill end-users using tiered conservation rates that consider revenue stability, water conservation, and the cost of service. This applies regardless of current metering or existing contracts. Any new or renewed contracts with secondary water suppliers after July 1, 2025, must accommodate billing via tiered conservation rates. By April 30, 2030, secondary water suppliers are also tasked with providing an educational component to end-users, as determined by the Division of Water Resources.

Of interest to agricultural users, a provision effective July 1, 2030, stipulates that secondary water suppliers must charge the lowest tiered conservation rate to end-users who use a portion of their water for growing food, including gardens, fruit trees, or pasture. This specific provision, introduced via a substitute from Sen. Kevin Stratton, will likely be subject to further revision before its implementation date.

H.B. 285, Water Infrastructure Modifications (Rep. Casey Snider / Sen. Scott Sandall)

This bill builds upon Rep. Snider's previous legislation, [H.B. 280](#), passed in 2024, which aimed to consolidate water infrastructure funding within Utah. This new bill discontinues the Water Resources Cities Water Loan Fund. It redirects repayments on loans out of the Cities Water Loan Fund to be paid into the Water Infrastructure Fund established by H.B. 280. Furthermore, it facilitates financial transfers between the Water Infrastructure Fund and other state-managed accounts, including the Water Quality Security - Utah Wastewater Loan Program Subaccount, the Drinking Water Security – Drinking Water Loan Program Subaccount, and the Water Resources Conservation and Development Fund. Starting in Fiscal Year 2027, these boards will assess their respective funds annually to determine the amount needed

for loans authorized in the prior year and transfer those funds accordingly. Additionally, public water systems seeking state or federal funding must implement capital asset management plans by July 1, 2028.

[H.B. 309, Wildlife Amendments \(Rep. Casey Snider / Sen. Mike McKell\)](#)

This “cleanup bill” for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) introduces several updates to wildlife management policies. One notable provision in the bill requires Wildlife Board members to have held a hunting or combination license for three of the last five years and possess a valid license while serving, with similar requirements for Regional Advisory Council members, except those representing agriculture. Notably, UBBF successfully advocated removing the hunting license requirement for the agricultural representative on the board, thereby assuring agricultural perspectives in wildlife management decisions. The legislation allows night hunting of nonprotected wildlife when permitted by county ordinance and redefines “wildlife management area” to include lands owned or managed by the Division for wildlife protection, public access, or wildlife-based recreation. It also requires individuals 18 years or older to hold a valid hunting, fishing, or combination license to enter wildlife management areas in first- or second-class counties, with some exceptions. The bill replaces references to the federal Wildlife Services Program with UDAF’s predator control program. Of particular significance for ranchers, the bill introduces a 3:1 multiplier for bear or mountain lion damage claims if the livestock owner has demonstrated and documented husbandry practices to prevent losses, including daily contact with the livestock and the use of guardian animals. Additionally, it modifies definitions of various wildlife-related terms, updates procedures for taking depredating predators, and revises the definition of “big game” to include bison.

[H.B. 342, Animal Composting Amendments \(Rep. Mike Kohler / Sen. Derrin Owens\)](#)

This bill redefines “commercial nonhazardous solid waste treatment, storage, or disposal facility” in the context of farm and ranch operations. Specifically, it clarifies that when farms or ranches compost animal mortality or offal waste from processing facilities that handle their livestock, the farm or ranch will not be classified as commercial facilities under the Solid and Hazardous Waste Act. This legislation benefits both farmers/ranchers and processing facilities by allowing farms to manage animal mortality or offal waste through composting while providing processors with an additional mortality or offal waste management option.

[H.B. 346, Department of Agriculture and Food Amendments \(Rep. Doug Welton / Sen. Mike McKell\)](#)

The bill mandates that an accountant annually review any department account containing proceeds from marketing orders, replacing the previous requirement for a full audit. This bill eases the financial oversight burden on Utah Apple, Red Tart Cherry, and Sheep marketing boards by requiring an annual “review” of their accounts instead of an unnecessary and more costly “audit.”

[H.B. 414, Raw Milk Amendments \(Rep. Cheryl Acton / Sen. Wayne Harper\)](#)

This bill introduces new enforcement measures for raw milk suspected in foodborne illness outbreaks. It directs UDAF to establish rules for raw milk testing at third-party laboratories and outlines procedures for epidemiological investigations. The legislation sets standards for reissuing suspended permits and removing cease-and-desist orders, requiring producers linked to outbreaks to meet stricter testing requirements before resuming sales. Producers may request analysis by two laboratories, with one selected from an approved list. The bill also addresses public disclosure of a producer's identity during outbreak investigations. Before UDAF can publicly disclose a producer's name or identifying information, they must notify the producer that they have linked them to an outbreak with a positive whole genome

sequencing test. UDAF must collect a sample within two working days of issuing a cease-and-desist order, and if public disclosure is intended, this sample must undergo whole genome sequencing. The time between sample collection and notifying the producer of results cannot exceed 15 working days unless UDAF provides written notice of needing additional time. Finally, the bill establishes specific timeframes for UDAF to collect samples during investigations and notify producers of test results. Administrative penalties for violations are introduced, ranging from \$300 for a first offense to \$1,500 for subsequent offenses.

[H.B. 421, Grazing Amendments](#) (Rep. Logan Monson / Sen. Scott Sandall)

This bill adds a new requirement for DWR before purchasing or acquiring a grazing permit. Under this legislation, DWR must obtain approval from three entities: the local land use authority, the Department of Natural Resources, and UDAF. The bill also includes a provision that DWR may consider the request approved if these entities do not deny it within 60 days of submission. This additional layer of oversight will help protect grazing permits in Utah by ensuring multiple stakeholders have input on the acquisition process.

[H.B. 435, Building Code Amendments](#) (Rep. Mike Kohler / Sen. Mike McKell)

This bill provides an exemption for a high tunnel structure from county building regulation. Previously, the legislature provided this exemption from municipal building regulation, but not counties. This change benefits farmers by reducing regulatory burdens associated with installing a high tunnel.

[H.B. 510, Agricultural Amendments](#) (Rep. Jennifer Dailey-Provost / Sen. David Hinkins)

This bill requires UDAF to study barriers and gaps in increasing the availability of local food within the state. The study will examine key areas such as the intrastate food supply chain, crop production and optimization, the agricultural workforce, and capital funding for local food production. It will also explore regulatory burdens on local food systems. Additionally, the research will assess production costs, economic impacts for agricultural operators, and opportunities for modernizing equipment or incorporating alternative crops. Findings and recommendations will be reported to the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee by June 2026.

[S.B. 33, Water Rights Recording Amendments](#) (Sen. Evan Vickers / Rep. Rex Shipp)

This legislation modernizes the process of recording water rights addenda by allowing both grantors and grantees to use facsimile or electronic signatures. It streamlines documentation for water rights transfers with land transactions and standalone water rights conveyances.

[S.B. 80, Drinking Water Amendments](#) (Sen. Scott Sandall / Rep. Casey Snider)

This bill authorizes and requires the Department of Environmental Quality to establish an annual fee based on domestic water consumption that will be assessed against public water systems to help fund Utah's Safe Drinking Water program. Under the bill, the Department will undertake a rulemaking process to establish the fees and will be required to consider several factors, including but not limited to program costs and the indirect costs of regulating public water systems in Utah, after consulting with stakeholders. Additionally, the bill authorizes the Water Development Coordinating Council (state council) to establish a separate fee schedule for public water systems and secondary water suppliers, effective July 1, 2026, subject to approval by the legislature. This fee may include an annual fee on public water systems based on consumption for direct delivery of water for human consumption and domestic uses, and an annual fee on secondary water suppliers based on consumption for direct water delivery for irrigation purposes. The

fees collected under this schedule will be deposited into the Water Infrastructure Fund to fund water infrastructure projects ranked and prioritized in the unified water infrastructure plan. It's important to note that agricultural water is specifically exempted from both fee schedules. We are carefully watching this area of the law and are mindful of the assessments already paid by agricultural water users.

[S.B. 113, Traffic Code Amendments](#) ([Sen. Scott Sandall](#) / [Rep. Scott Chew](#))

This bill establishes a rebuttable presumption of driver negligence in cases involving open-range stock drifting onto highways to or from their accustomed range. This bill is valuable for Utah ranchers as it will improve ranchers' ability to recover damages when livestock are injured or killed in collisions with vehicles.

[S.B. 279, High School Rodeo Amendments](#) ([Sen. Mike McKell](#) / [Rep. Jon Hawkins](#))

This bill makes participation in high school rodeo events a valid excuse for student absence from school. This legislation provides high school students involved in rodeo activities with the same consideration given to other school-sanctioned sports and activities.

The UFBF is pleased with the outcomes of the 2025 General Session and will continue to work closely with legislators and stakeholders to implement these new laws and policies. We thank our members for their engagement and support throughout the legislative process. We look forward to continuing conversations on these bills and future legislation at Spring Issue Surfacing Meetings. As always, we encourage you to actively send our policy team questions or comments on topics of concern. Our 2025 Utah Farm Bureau Federation Policy Book is now online and can be found [here](#). Happy spring!

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