UTAH CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

2026 General Session | Pre-Session | January, 2026

2026 Legislative Update

Each update provides key highlights for the prior week's General Legislative Session and what is expected for the week ahead. The focus of this update are the Utah state legislation and actions for protecting wildlife and the environment. Questions and comments can be directed to Dan Strauch: strauchmail@yahoo.com.

About the Legislative Update

The Legislative Update is made possible by the Utah Audubon Council and contributing organizations. Each Update provides legislative actions, descriptions and updates throughout the Session and important dates and progress of key committees. For the most up-to-date information and for the names and contact information for legislators, check the Legislative website at www.le.utah.gov. The Update focuses on legislative information pertaining to wildlife, sensitive and invasive species, public lands, state parks, SITLA land management, energy development, renewable energy and conservation and water issues. The Update is distributed after each Friday of the Session. Additional Action Alerts may also be distributed during the session. Please use this information to prepare you to contact your legislator with your opinions and concerns!

Pre-Session Update

Format Update: To help focus energy and attention, the most critical bills now have a number PRIORITY and are sorted to the top of the list. The remaining bills follow by chamber and week of publication. My written updates will focus on bills that have numbered priorities and are therefore most critical to Audubon mission. As new bills are introduced the number priorities may change.

ACTION ALERT: HB 60 Water Rights Amendments is the top priority bill to OPPOSE. This bill makes it much more difficult for the public to oppose water rights change applications and changes the criteria the state engineer uses for approval, removing the concept that water in a stream is beneficial use. Please contact our Representative and Senator and let them know you are strongly opposed to these changes.

There are a number of positive water bills that have been published that have a number priority. These are opportunities to let your Representative and Senator know you support these bills.

BILL TRACKING LIST

Bill	Sponsor	Description	Topic	Status	Priority	Position
H.B. 60 -- Water Rights Amendments	Rep. David Shallenberger	This bill: ‣ addresses actions related to an application to appropriate public water; ‣ modifies the extent to which the state engineer may consider a protest; ‣ addresses temporary applications; ‣ modifies the grounds that the state engineer may consider in approving or rejecting anapplication, including what the state engineer may consider related to public welfare; ‣ clarifies who is an aggrieved person for purposes of seeking judicial review; and ‣ makes technical and conforming changes. *This bill makes signficant changes to the process by which the state engineer makes a determination on a water application.* *Essentially this bill:* *- elimnates the requirement that the state engineer consider public recreation in the decision process.* *- makes it much more difficult for the public to track and protest any water application changes.* *Per the Utah Constitution the waters of the state are for the people, but this bill elimates the consideration of the people in a water application.*	Water		1	Oppose
H.B. 76 -- Data Center Water Policy Amendments	Rep. Jill Koford	This bill: ‣ defines terms; ‣ directs land use authorities to issue certain notices; ‣ requires certain large data centers to communicate with water providers; ‣ requires reporting by operators of certain data centers before construction and annually; ‣ addresses disclosure of the reported information; ‣ provides for enforcement mechanisms; ‣ addresses rulemaking; and ‣ makes technical and conforming amendments.	Water		2	Support
H.B. 154 -- Water Loss Study Amendments	Rep. Doug Owens	This bill: ‣ defines terms; ‣ requires the division to conduct a study regarding water loss; ‣ requires the division to report the findings of the study; ‣ imposes a repeal date; and ‣ makes technical and conforming amendments.	Water		3	Support
S.B. 130 -- River Restoration Amendments	Sen. Lincoln Fillmore	This bill: ‣ modifies how the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands (division) expends moneyrelated to a Jordan River improvement project, including: •allowing the division to expend money for an activity along the entire length of theJordan River; and •requiring the division to consult with the Jordan River Commission before expendingmoney for an improvement project; ‣ creates a matching grant program for counties and municipalities to fund improvementprojects that increase access to a recreational activity on the Jordan River; ‣ directs funding from the Outdoor Adventure Infrastructure Restricted Account to thematching grant program; and ‣ makes technical and conforming changes.	Water		4	Support
H.B. 155 -- Water Rates Amendments	Rep. Doug Owens	This bill: ‣ provides for increasing block units for residential water use in certain water rate structures; ‣ addresses the purpose of increases in rates charged for additional blocks; and ‣ makes technical and conforming amendments. *Allows for increase water rates for outdoor watering.*	Water		5	Support
S.B. 46 -- Water Wise Landscaping Amendments	Sen. Keven Stratton	This bill: ‣ defines terms; ‣ imposes landscaping requirements related to state government facilities; and ‣ makes technical and conforming changes.	Water		6	Support

H.B. 30 -- Wildlife Management Area Amendments	Rep. David Shallenberger	This bill: ‣ creates the Wildlife Management Area Stewardship Fund; ‣ repeals language related to access to wildlife management areas requiring a hunting,fishing, or combination license; ‣ defines terms; ‣ requires that an individual meet certain conditions to access a wildlife management area; ‣ directs the Division of Wildlife Resources (division) to approve an educational video andprovide digital verification of completion of the educational video; ‣ provides for exceptions to the conditions to access a wildlife management area; ‣ authorizes rulemaking and requires reporting regarding rulemaking; ‣ provides for voluntary financial contributions for the benefit of wildlife management areas; ‣ permits the division to oversee the provision of volunteer labor to benefit a wildlife management area, including addressing liability issues; ‣ enacts nonrefundable tax credits for contributions to wildlife management areas inaccordance with statute and rules; ‣ addresses apportionment of a nonrefundable tax credit; and ‣ makes technical and conforming changes. *This bill adds requirement that all parties 18 and older must complete an on-line education course to receive a digital pass for access to a WMA. The requirement for "all parties" to obtain a pass has raised questions. Speaking to sponsors this requirement is meant to address users in groups that may not remain together, such as bikers or off road vehicles where allowed. Oftern those parties do not travel all together.* *This bill modifies the WMA access requirements of HB309'25. That bill, HB309'25, also limited allowable participants on the Wildlife Board to individuals with hunting licenses, removing fishing only or non-consumptive members. I will take the opportunity to object to that change and request that be addressed as part of this bill as well.*	Lands		7	Support w/ amends
H.B. 187 -- Water Amendments	Rep. Colin Jack	This bill: ‣ exempts from provisions related to abandonment or forfeiture for nonuse certain water rights of a water conservancy district that are related to the lower basin; ‣ prohibits certain instream flow change applications related to the lower basin; and ‣ makes technical and conforming amendments. *Would bar water rights holders from participating in in-stream flow incentives as streams in lower basin flow to other states.*	Water		8	Oppose
		HOUSE BILLS				
		PRE-SESSION				
H.B. 16 -- Solar Power Plant Amendments	Re. Colin Jack	This bill: ‣ establishes eligibility criteria for state incentives for solar power plants based on land characteristics; ‣ provides for reduction of incentives for solar power plants located on certain protected farmland; ‣ creates exemptions for solar power plants with existing agreements or incentives; ‣ requires wildlife impact consultation with state or federal agencies for solar power plants; ‣ establishes requirements for decommissioning plans and financial assurance for solar power plants; ‣ creates a permitting process for solar power plants; ‣ requires submission and approval of development plans for solar power plants; and ‣ provides for severability. *This bill modifies the state incentives paid for solar projects based on the type of land that the project will convert. Projects that will be on "prime farm land, farm land of statewide importance, farm land of local importance, or farm land of unique importance, as designated by the Natural Resource Conservation* *Service" will not be eligible for state level tax incentives. This bill does not prohibit such projects but only limits available incentives for new projects proposed after May 6, 2026.*	Solar		L	Support
H.B. 18 -- Public Land Access Amendments	Rep. Nelson Abbott	This bill: ‣ repeals requirement that under certain circumstances an individual is required to hold authorization to hunt or fish to access wildlife management areas; and ‣ makes technical and conforming amendments. *This bill eliminates the requirement for a hunting or fishing license for parties 18+ years to access a WMA. However, a new requirement is added in HB30'26 also detailed in this tracker.*	Lands		H	Support
H.B. 63 -- Livestock Watering Amendments	Rep. Scott Chew	his bill: ‣ provides for sub-basin livestock watering claims.	Water		L	Support
H.B. 64 -- School and Institutional Trust Lands Amendments	Rep. Carl Albrecht	This bill: ‣ defines terms; ‣ creates a process for a county to nominate a culturally or scientifically significant sitelocated on school and institutional trust lands (trust lands) for potential preservation; ‣ establishes requirements for the nomination of a proposed culturally or scientificallysignificant site; ‣ requires the director of the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration(administration) to: •notify a county with trust lands of the opportunity to nominate a culturally orscientifically significant site; •approve a nomination for a culturally or scientifically significant site if the directordetermines that the nomination is consistent with the established requirements; and •maintain and periodically review a list of approved culturally or scientificallysignificant sites; ‣ allows the director of the administration to: •reject a nomination if the director determines the nomination is inconsistent with theestablished requirements; and •consider a preservation measure if the culturally or scientifically significant site is atrisk; and ‣ makes technical and conforming changes.	Lands		L	Support
H.B. 78 -- Nuclear Regulatory Amendments	Rep. Carl Albrecht	This bill: ‣ defines terms; ‣ establishes the Nuclear Energy Regulatory Office within the Division of Waste Management and Radiation Control; ‣ grants rulemaking authority to the division for nuclear energy regulation; ‣ authorizes establishment and collection of fees for nuclear energy licensing and oversight; ‣ directs the division to pursue expanded Agreement State status with the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission; ‣ authorizes the director to enter cooperative agreements with federal agencies; and ‣ authorizes new positions for the Nuclear Energy Regulatory Office. *Early step in the process to build nuclear facilities and process nuclear waste. State needs more expertise in these areas before proceeding.*	Nuclear		L	Oppose
H.B. 93 -- Goshen Bay Waterfowl Management Area	Rep. Doug Welton	This bill: ‣ provides for the creation of the Goshen Bay Waterfowl Management Area; and ‣ makes technical and conforming amendments.	Lands		H	Support

H.B. 111 -- Wildlife Amendments	Rep. Bridger Bolinder	This bill: ‣ addresses who may provide verification of illness, injury, or disability in relationship to alicense, certificate, or permit issued under the Wildlife Resources Act; ‣ amends provisions related to notice of acquisition of real property; ‣ provides for the management of grizzly bears; ‣ grants rulemaking authority; ‣ modifies when conservation easements held by the Division of Wildlife Resources maybe terminated; ‣ addresses discharge of a dangerous weapon related to a waterfowl management area orwildlife management area; and ‣ makes technical and conforming amendments *This bill allows for the termination of a conservation easement if "...the Division of Wildlife Resources determines that the conservation values of the conservation easement are no longer met..." however it is unlcear what the criteria the DWR would use in making such a determination. It also sets compensation for acqusition of the land.* *This bill also directs the DWR to manage grizzly bears to prevent their establishment in any areas in the state as well as direct the removal of grizzly bears that are discovered. The bill gives authority to the Wildlife Board to set rules to manage grizzly bears. If passed need to follow this rule-making, concern this would be opportunity to institute a hunt.*	Wildlife		H	Oppose
H.B. 157 -- Department of Natural Resources Amendments	Rep. Rex Shipp	This bill: ‣ removes language related to determining the work period for certain Department ofNatural Resources' employees; ‣ transfers property, rights, interests, powers, and functions of the Provo-Jordan RiverParkway Authority to the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands; ‣ modifies provisions related to records kept by the Division of Water Rights, including toallow for the records to be kept in physical or electronic form; ‣ corrects citations; ‣ removes a cap on low-interest loans related to secondary water metering; ‣ clarifies rulemaking authority related to rules enforced by the Division of LawEnforcement; ‣ modifies the duties of the Utah Geological Survey; ‣ modifies the makeup of the Board of the Utah Geological Survey; ‣ changes the term "buffalo" to "bison" in certain circumstances; ‣ repeals section specifying funding sources of the Watershed Restoration Initiative; ‣ repeals the Alternative Energy Development Tax Credit Act; ‣ repeals outdated language related to the Provo-Jordan River Parkway Authority; and ‣ makes technical and conforming amendments. *Complex bill with many changes, need to monitor.*	Admin		L	Oppose
H.B. 215 -- Political Subdivision Landscaping Authority	Rep. Thomas Peterson	This bill: ‣ defines terms; and ‣ restricts a municipality or county from prohibiting a property owner from removingvegetation on property located in a wildland-urban interface area.	Lands		L	Support
H.B. 247 -- Great Salt Lake Funding Amendments	Rep. Raymond Ward	This bill: ‣ directs revenue generated by the brine shrimp tax to the Sovereign Lands ManagementAccount instead of the Species Protection Account; ‣ provides for how the revenue is to be spent; and ‣ makes technical and conforming changes. *Moves taxes from brine shrimp industry from the Species protection account and into the Sovereign Lands Management account. The bill directs all money collected to be used in benefit of the Great Salt Lake. While losing money from the SPA is not ideal since this is dedicated to the GSL will support.*	GSL		L	Support
		HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTIONS				
H.C.R. 1 -- House Concurrent Resolution Regarding Advanced Nuclear Manufacturing	Rep. Carl Albrecht	This resolution: ‣ expresses Utah's support for the advanced nuclear industry; ‣ expresses Utah's desire to have nuclear manufacturing done in Utah; ‣ expresses Utah's commitment to helping technology companies overcome challenges regarding safety in manufacturing, transportation, and waste management; and ‣ signals that Utah is committed to fostering the development of technical solutions toremaining challenges.	Nuclear		H	Oppose
H.C.R. 5 -- House Concurrent Resolution on State Management of Federal Public Lands	Rep. Steve Eliason	This resolution: ‣ highlights the need to develop and maintain state parks, monuments, and campgrounds toprovide the people of Utah with outdoor recreational opportunities; ‣ suggests land that the Division of State Parks (division) may consider for a potential statepark, state monument, or state campground; ‣ encourages the division to work with federal agencies to acquire, lease, or manageproperties considered suitable for use as a state park, monument, or campground; ‣ urges Congress to establish a framework for state operation of federal public lands, undera joint management agreement, to improve public land management and reduce federalexpenditures; ‣ requests that the division petition the Bureau of Land Management to transfer land to thestate for the creation of the Little Sahara State Park; ‣ requests that the division negotiate with the United States Forest Service to transfer theAntelope Flat Campground to the state for the creation of the Flaming Gorge State Park;and ‣ requests that the division update the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and EnvironmentInterim Committee on the division's study regarding new state parks and statecampgrounds. *Need to monitor, could be a mechanism for state to manage federal propoerties like National Parks or National Forests.*	Lands		H	Oppose
		SENATE BILLS				
		PRE-SESSION				
S.B. 20 -- Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Technical Changes	Sen. Keven Stratton	This bill: primarily repeals outdated language but clarifies procedure for the Great Salt Lake Commissioner to submit a strategic plan by October 1st of each year.	GSL		L	Support
S.B. 21 -- Geothermal Amendments	Sen. Michael McKell	This bill: ‣ clarifies the purposes of the geothermal chapter; ‣ addresses definitions; ‣ modifies provisions related to ownership of geothermal resources or fluids; ‣ amends powers of the Division of Water Rights related to confidentiality of information; ‣ addresses bonding requirements; and ‣ makes technical and conforming amendments.	Geothermal		L	Support
S.B. 23 -- Airborne Chemicals Amendments	Sen. Ronald Winterton	This bill: ‣ defines terms; ‣ establishes that the release of a chemical or substance from an aircraft for the purpose of solar geoengineering is a third-degree felony; ‣ provides a means for a person to submit information regarding suspected solargeoengineering; ‣ requires the Department of Transportation to report credible instances of suspected solargeoengineering to the Office of the Attorney General; ‣ requires an airport operator to report suspected solar geoengineering activity to theDepartment of Transportation; and ‣ makes technical and conforming changes.	Air		L	Support

S.B. 53 -- Public Land Management Advisory Board Amendments	Sen. Karen Kwan	This bill: ▸ adds as a member of the Public Land Management Advisory Board: •the state historic preservation officer or the officer's designee; and •the director of the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration or the director'sdesignee; and ▸ makes technical and conforming changes.	Lands		L	Support
S.B. 135 -- Nuclear Reprocessing Amendments	Sen. Derrin Owens	This bill: ▸ creates the Utah Nuclear Fuel Recycling Program; ▸ directs the Nuclear Energy Consortium (consortium) to administer the Utah Nuclear FuelRecycling Program; ▸ requires the consortium to coordinate with federal agencies, national laboratories, andprivate entities to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a nuclear fuel recycling facilityin the state; ▸ requires the consortium to conduct a feasibility study and site evaluation; ▸ requires the consortium to implement a public outreach and education program; and ▸ requires the consortium to report findings and recommendations to the Public Utilities,Energy, and Technology Interim Committee. *This has never been done successfully even on a national level.*	Nuclear		L	Oppose
		SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTIONS				
S.C.R. 1 -- Concurrent Resolution Regarding Nuclear Energy	Sen. Darrin Owens	This resolution: ▸ highlights Utah's support for nuclear energy development and deployment; and ▸ expresses Utah's intent to pursue agreement state status for additional elements of thenuclear fuel cycle.	Nuclear		H	Oppose
S.C.R. 3 -- Concurrent Resolution Regarding Nuclear Weapons Testing	Sen. Kathleen Riebe	This resolution: ▸ urges the government of the United States to not resume explosive nuclear weaponstesting.	Nuclear		L	Support
S.C.R. 4 -- Concurrent Resolution Regarding Permitting of Oil, Gas, and Mining	Sen. Ronald Winterton	This resolution: ▸ discusses the intent to enter into and the benefits of a memorandum of agreement (MOA)with the BLM; ▸ supports the drafting of an MOA to formalize an enhanced cooperative and consultativerelationship with the BLM; ▸ affirms the authority for the BLM to enter into such an MOA; ▸ urges the Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining to immediately initiate negotiations with theBLM to formalize the MOA; ▸ recognizes benefits of the MOA; and ▸ recognizes that the final MOA must explicitly state that the Secretary of the Interior or theauthorized officer of the BLM retains the ultimate, non-delegable authority and finaldecision-making authority over the issuance of federal leases and permits.	Lands		H	Oppose