

House Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee

2/20/2025

Bill: 1st Substitute HJR 9 – Joint Resolution Regarding Utah's Share of Colorado River Water

Sponsor: Representative Casey Snider

Floor Sponsor: TBD

UASD Position: Tracking

This Resolution addresses usage of allotted shares of Colorado River water.

Discussion: This Resolution outlines the historical interstate compact regarding the Colorado River, highlights the significance of the Colorado River water allocated to Utah, and declares that it is the position of the state of Utah that any basin state should be able to use the state's Colorado River allocation at any location within the geographic boundaries of that state. Representative Bennion inquired whether the Resolution addresses the issue of "over-allocation" that Utah received when water rights were distributed under the Colorado River Compact. The sponsor explained that the water rights were allocated over 100 years ago, and the Resolution does not aim to address that issue. Instead, its purpose is to emphasize to Utah's Congressional delegation that, while other states have received their full allotment, Utah has not.

Yeas: 11

Nays: 0

N/V: 3

Outcome: 1st Substitute HJR 9 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 2nd Substitute HB 309 – Wildlife Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Casey Snider

Floor Sponsor: TBD

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill addresses state activities related to wildlife.

Discussion: This Bill modifies various definitions, addresses the issue of night hunting for nonprotected wildlife, and imposes requirements for holding a hunting or combination license for service on the Wildlife Board or a regional advisory council. It also clarifies the definition of and access to wildlife management areas, makes changes to provisions regarding the Department of Agriculture and Food's activities related to livestock depredation and big game protection, and addresses compensation for damage to livestock. Additionally, the Bill corrects the definition of "big game." Representative Snider stated that there have been ongoing discussions regarding the Bill that have led to the language in the 2nd substitute. The substitute was adopted by the Committee. The Committee raised several questions regarding hunting licenses, the Wildlife

Board, and the regional advisory council. The Utah Farm Bureau and other organizations expressed support for the Bill, while the Western Wildlife Conservancy raised concerns.

The 2nd substitute removes the language that prompted the Utah Association of Special Districts (“UASD”) to track this Bill. The original Bill included a provision that would have imposed limits on a political subdivision or conservation easement prohibiting or restricting hunting, but this provision has been deleted in the 2nd substitute.

Yeas: 10

Nays: 1

N/V: 3

Outcome: 2nd Substitute HB 309 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 1st Substitute HB 378 – Department of Natural Resources Funding Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Casey Snider

Floor Sponsor: TBD

UASD Position: Tracking

This Bill addresses revenue and expenditures related to funding of state accounts within the Department of Natural Resources.

Discussion: Representative Snider addressed the 1st substitute, which was adopted by the Committee. This Bill requires counties to remit to the state funds based on certain new transmission facilities, expands the resources deposited into the Species Protection Account, and outlines a tax on the gross receipts of a radioactive waste facility from the disposal of concentrated depleted uranium and containerized waste, with certain revenue directed to the Species Protection Account. The Bill also imposes a tax on wind and solar electric generation facilities, with the revenue going into the Species Protection Account, addresses the impact of certain taxes on ratepayers, and authorizes rulemaking. The goal of the Bill is to find long-term funding solutions for the Account and its work. A rate will be established for wind and solar plants, as they currently do not contribute to mitigation efforts like coal and natural gas plants. This rate is modeled after a similar one imposed in Wyoming.

Representative Bennion inquired if Wyoming was the only standard for determining the proposed rates. The sponsor clarified that other factors were considered, and they performed calculations to determine the necessary charges to make a difference. Representative Bennion also asked if other energy sources would contribute to the Account. The sponsor noted that the only other contributors are Brine Shrimp royalties, while oil and gas companies pay mitigation bonds. Representative Bennion suggested using oil and gas projects to help fund the Account, to which the sponsor expressed openness. Representative Shallenberger asked how the funds are used to support endangered species. Riley Peck from the Division of Wildlife Resources explained that they are reactive to rumors about endangered species, using mitigation and conducting studies. However, they lack sufficient funding to be proactive in protecting

endangered species. Representative Monson asked how many projects would be impacted. The sponsor acknowledged not having an exact number.

The Central Utah Water Conservancy District and other organizations expressed support for the Bill. The Utah Association of Counties testified that a better method may exist to achieve the Bill's goal and encouraged the Committee to work with the sponsor to find a different solution. The Utah Taxpayers Association requested more details on the funds and how they will be used.

Yeas: 10

Nays: 1

N/V: 3

Outcome: 1st Substitute HB 378 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.
