

Senate Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee

February 27th, 2025

Bill: HB 243 – Agricultural Water Optimization Amendments

Sponsor: Representative David Shallenberger

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Support

This Bill addresses agricultural water optimization.

Discussion: The sponsor explained that this Bill leverages existing grant funds to help ranchers adopt water optimization technology, using data to improve crop irrigation while promoting sustainable practices. The Department of Agriculture and Food and the Weber County Commissioner spoke in support of the Bill. No further discussion ensued.

Yeas: 3

Nays: 0

N/V: 4

Outcome: HB 243 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 3rd substitute HB 274 – Water Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Casey Snider

Floor Sponsor: Senator Daniel McCay

UASD Position: Support

This Bill addresses regulations related to water.

Discussion: Representative Snider introduced Amendment 1, which was adopted by the Committee. He explained that the Bill focuses on enhancing water conservation measures and emphasizes the importance of treating water like other utilities. The legislation allows municipalities to set varying water rates based on conservation efforts and establishes guidelines for impact fees and facility plans related to water services. Additionally, it permits special districts to establish fees based on the reasonable estimated cost of delivering services, including expenses related to water conservation efforts. These costs may be incorporated into the rate charged for a block unit of water. Hinkins inquired whether the Bill addressed fluoride, to which the sponsor confirmed that it does not. The Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District expressed support for the Bill. No further discussion followed.

Yeas: 3

Nays: 0

N/V: 4

Outcome: 3rd substitute HB 274, as amended, passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 1st substitute HB 311 – Watershed Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Casey Snider

Floor Sponsor: Senator Scott D. Sandall

UASD Position: Oppose (Consider Track with Concern)

This Bill addresses the augmentation of water resources in Utah watersheds.

Discussion: Representative Snider explained that the Bill clarifies the authorities granted to the Utah Water Agent (“Agent”). He noted that while the original Bill would have introduced a regulatory role in water compliance, the substitute instead allows the Agent to collaborate with individuals to help navigate compliance in various situations. The Bill authorizes the Agent to include facilities and land in negotiations for water augmentation projects. It also grants the Board of Water Resources the authority to enter into contracts for water augmentation projects negotiated by the Agent.

Senator Blouin asked whether the Bill would facilitate the Bear River Development, to which the sponsor clarified that it does not address that project. Senator Hinkins inquired about the anticipated 2nd substitute and what the Committee should expect. The sponsor stated that the substitute is intended to continue discussions on water compliance with other groups but emphasized that he would prefer not to adopt it unless required by the Senate. Senator Stratton asked whether the Bill addresses tier pricing, and the sponsor confirmed that tier pricing is covered in separate legislation.

The Utah Rivers Council spoke in opposition to the Bill. No further discussion followed.

Yeas: 4

Nays: 1

N/V: 2

Outcome: 1st substitute HB 311 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.