

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

UACD 2024

Craig W Buttars

Commissioner, Utah Department of Agriculture and Food

Introduction



The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food and the Utah Association of Conservation Districts share a common goal: fostering sustainable agricultural practices that protect our natural resources and promote long-term environmental health



Conservation Division Highlights



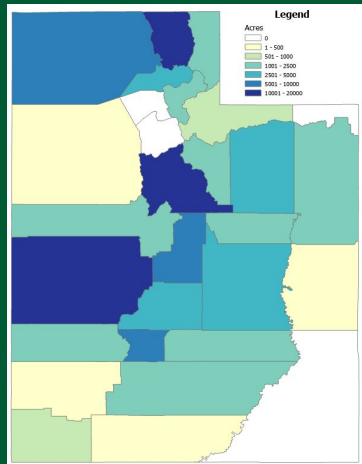
Updates on:

- AgVIP
- ARDL
- Ag Water Optimization
- Land Conservation
- Rural Rehab



CONSERVATION

- 77 new producers, 37,000+ new acres, & over \$1.1 million in new contracts
- Total program enrollment now exceeds 100,000 acres across 25 of 29 counties



- In FY25 AgVIP will be incorporating new tools to expand eligible conservation practices beyond just nutrient management plans

Total number of acres enrolled in AgVIP as of FY24.

Agricultural Voluntary Incentive Program (AgVIP)

Water Optimization Program

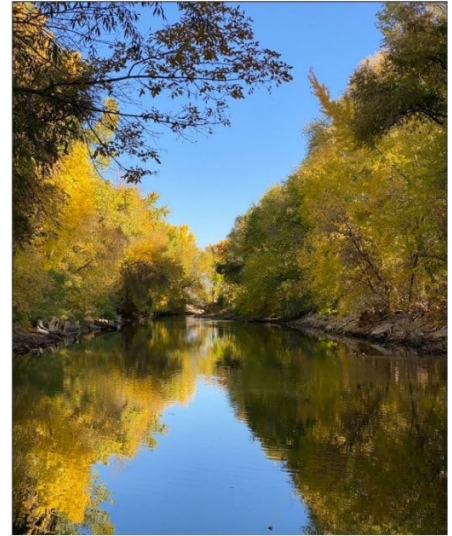
- 217 projects and \$41.3 million in new obligations
- Program will receive an additional 122 annual reports this year compared to only 26 last year.
- Updated ranking & program criteria sheets for the FY 25 application period
- Committee approved obligating \$30 million for FY 25



Land Conservation Program

LeRay McAllister Working Farm & Ranch Fund

- **LeRay McAllister Fund** just announced **\$1,725,500 in grants** for 6 future easements over **5,700 new acres** of farm and ranch land in **Cache, Utah, Morgan, Weber, and Wasatch** counties.
 - Total LRM Grants to Date: **\$29,138,516**
 - Total Acres Preserved: **105,623 (65% Ag)**
 - Total Project Costs: **\$219,038,509**
- First joint UDAF & USU Extension **Farm and Ranch Succession Planning Workshop** in Bear River City was a huge success! More workshops to come around the state, email jeremyc@utah.gov to sign up.
- UDAF will be hosting **two breakout sessions on Farm and Ranch Succession Planning on Thurs (11/7) during the UACD conference.** Check schedule for details.



CONSERVATION

AGRICULTURE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT LOANS (ARDL)

In FY24, the ARDL program:

- Funded 46 loans totaling \$10,343,557
- Loans funded improvements with approved conservation practices affecting approximately 20,306 acres

In FY25:

- Received 22 new loan applications YTD
- Funded 19 loans YTD totaling \$4,033,437

Agricultural Loan Programs

RURAL REHABILITATION LOANS

In FY24, the Rural Rehabilitation Loan Program:

- Funded 6 loans totaling \$9,631,533
- Loans funded are loans of last resort, and assist beginning farmers with farm acquisition and seasoned farmers with debt restructuring

In FY25:

- Funded 2 loans totaling \$1,964,809
- 3 Rural Rehabilitation applications pending



Animal Industry Programs

- Electronic brand inspections and card payments have been implemented
- Updates to imports
 - Elk producers are now allowed to import east of the 100th meridian
 - Working with the legislature to provide terminal import options
- Early 2024 welcomed new state veterinarian: Dr. Daniel C. Christensen
 - Implemented vet loan repayment program to assist with veterinarian shortage

Predator Control

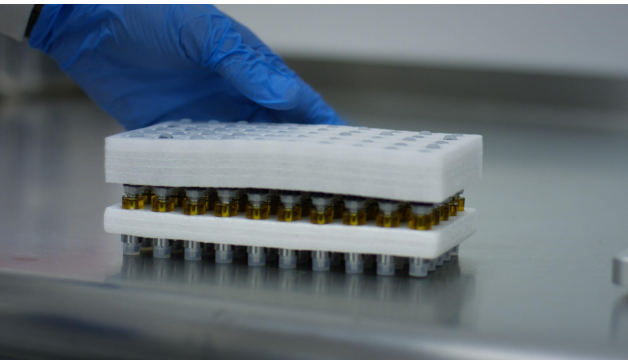
- Predator Control Program separated from USDA and became fully state-managed in 2024
- Flew 750 hours for livestock protection and wildlife management
- Addressed 59 incidents of livestock loss due to bears or cougars





Hemp & Medical Cannabis Programs

- Reduced availability of high-THC products at retailers and largely removed synthetic THC analogs
- 2025 point-of-sale tax on hemp to assist with program funding
- Hemp & Cannabis Lab has expanded testing panels and approx. doubled sample processing since 2022
- Aided resolution of several food-borne illness outbreaks in 2024





Marketing Program Updates

Ag Stress Assistance Program - in 2021 UDAF partnered with USU AgWellness to provide suicide prevention resources to farmers, ranchers, and their family members.

- Vouchers for mental healthcare up to \$2,000 were made available
- Over 240 farmers received funding for over 1,500 behavioral health appts
- AgWellness campaign reached over 6.3 million viewers

New programs:

- Farm to School - first FTE at UDAF
- Utah Agritourism Program - new as of September 2024
- Resilient Food System Infrastructure Grant Program - \$3.2 million
- Regional Food Business Centers - Southwest Region
- Utah's Own website redesign

Food Security Grant

- Third year of the Food Security Processing Grant program
 - received \$1 million in 2024 to provide grants to local processors to help them increase their capacity
- 22 grants were approved by the ranking committee, ranging from \$3200 to \$148,000

- Based on reporting from the 2023 round, processors have been able to increase aspects of their processing capacity by an average of 85%
- This year for the first time, ranking criteria ensured that some funds were set aside for smaller "micro grants"





Plant Industry & Pesticide

- 68 projects funded with a total allocation of \$2.7 million under the Invasive Species Mitigation Program
- Over 100 producers currently certified organic or undergoing organic certification
- Approximately 200 instances of direct assistance with:
 - Contracts for pest control (Mormon crickets & grasshoppers)
 - Bait
 - Other questions





Inspection Programs

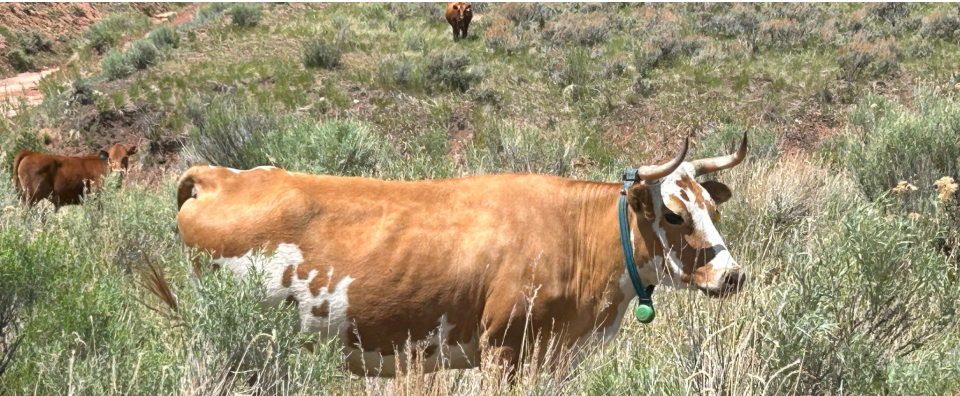


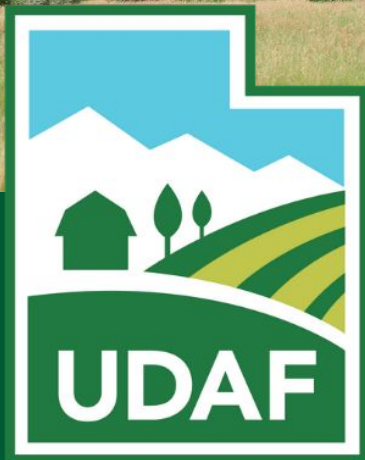
- Trained new inspectors under all food inspection programs (Manufactured Food, Retail Food, Dairy, Weights & Measures)
- Implemented new comprehensive training programs to expand inspection coverage
 - New HACCP inspections, Egg Inspections, Preventive Control inspections, and more



Utah Grazing Improvement Program (UGIP)

- To date, over 70 new wells have been dug in Bears' Ears and Grand Staircase National Monument
 - All equipped with solar-powered pumps and storage
 - More than 315,000 acres are now supplied with permanent water
- New virtual fencing projects have turned up positive results in 2024
 - One producer used virtual fencing to graze cattle on the unburned portion of their land the year after a fire, which allowed foliage to recover
 - Fulfilled goals for both the producer and the Forest Service





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THANK YOU

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