

House Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Committee

2/11/2026

Bill: 1st substitute HB 473 – Colorado River Authority Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Chew

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Track

This Bill addresses the Colorado River Authority of Utah.

Discussion: The sponsor explained that the Bill creates a new title in state Code to govern the Colorado River system and the transfers authority of the Colorado River Authority of Utah (“Authority”) from the Governor’s Office to the Department of Natural Resources (“DNR”). The Bill adds three new members to the Authority, including a River Commissioner seat, with the Utah State Engineer designating certain positions. It also clarifies that future appointments will be made by the Governor, establishes four-year board terms, and specifies that River Commissioners may not serve concurrently as the DNR Director or State Engineer. The Bill’s effective date is July 1, 2026.

Cody Stewart, Director of Strategic Engagement for the Colorado River Authority of Utah, spoke in support of the Bill. Representative Arthur questioned the transfer of authority, and Mr. Stewart explained that the change would allow for greater coordination with the staff and expertise of the DNR and the Colorado River Authority. Representative Albrecht spoke in support of the Bill. The General Manager of Moon Lake Water Users Association and the Executive Director of the DNR also spoke in support. The Committee adopted the 1st substitute which addresses use of money in the Colorado River Authority Restricted Account.

Yea: 9

Nay: 0

N/V: 5

Outcome: 1st substitute HB 473 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation

Bill: 3rd substitute HB 157 – Department of Natural Resources Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Shipp

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Track

This Bill addresses provisions related to the Department of Natural Resources.

Discussion: The sponsor explained that the 3rd substitute of HB 157, which was adopted by the Committee, is a Department of Natural Resources (“DNR”) “cleanup” Bill. It adds language allowing the DNR to fund ongoing litigation related to water resources, grants rulemaking authority outside of an advisory board structure, aligns DNR law enforcement authority with

other state law enforcement agencies, permits electronic recording of records, and removes the \$10 million cap on low-interest loans.

The Bill also expands the Utah Geological Survey Board to include a member with expertise in groundwater and water resources, repeals a section specifying funding sources for the watershed restoration program to allow greater leveraging of partner funds, and provides for a post-performance tax credit for companies constructing energy-efficient facilities.

The Deputy Director of DNR spoke in support of the Bill. Representative Albrecht questioned the \$5 million fiscal note. That amount is associated with water litigation.

Yea: 9
Nays: 0
N/V: 5

Outcome: 3rd substitute HB 157 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: HB 292 – Rule Against Perpetuities Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Shelley

Floor Sponsor: Senator Owens

UASD Position: Track

This Bill amends provisions relating to the rule against perpetuities.

Discussion: The Committee did not discuss the Bill.

Yea:
Nays:
N/V:

Outcome: HB 292 was not heard in the Committee today.

Bill: HB 456 – Pesticide Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Clancy

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Track and Amend

This Bill modifies provisions related to application of pesticides.

Discussion: The Committee did not discuss the Bill.

Yea:
Nays:
N/V:

Outcome: HB 456 was not heard in the Committee today. It will be heard on Friday.

Bill: HB 490 – Water Optimization Reporting Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Owens

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Track

This Bill creates a study related to agricultural water optimization.

Discussion: Representative Owens explained that this Bill was brought forward by the Utah Farm Bureau. The Bill addresses the issue of agricultural water being converted to municipal and industrial uses without clear tracking or oversight. He acknowledged the significant fiscal note and asked that the Committee hold the Bill in Committee after it is presented.

Warren Peterson, representing the Utah Farm Bureau, presented with Representative Owens. He explained that water originally allocated for agriculture is increasingly being used for landscaping and other non-agricultural purposes, sometimes without a water right or an approved change use application. He noted that additional work is needed before passing this legislation, particularly to collect reliable data to accurately measure the amount of agricultural water being used for non-agricultural purposes. The proposal is for the Commissioner's Office, Department of Agriculture and Food, State Engineer, and Division of Water Resources, with assistance from the Farm Bureau, to work with canal companies to generate the data necessary to determine the true amount of agricultural water use. The sponsor stated that much of the initial data gathering can be done administratively through the Division of Natural Resources over the next year and that he will then determine whether legislation is needed to address this issue in 2027.

A member of the public spoke in support of the Bill.

Yea:

Nay:

N/V:

Outcome: At the request of the sponsor, the Committee moved on to the next item on the agenda.
