

CONSERVATION EASEMENT WORKSHOP

A Conservation Easement Workshop held last Thursday at the BATC west campus proved to generate much interest. A rather diverse group of forward thinking individuals and organizations came together to discuss information on this specific topic. Participants listened to county, state and regional representatives who described the why, what, and how of conservation easements. We also enjoyed listening to a panel of landowners who have been successful in the application process. This seminar was of special interest to landowners, legislators, community leaders, planning commissioners, and financial and legal advisors. There are a few remaining information packets available at the Extension office for those who may have missed the meeting.

Community leaders have worked for over 30 years in identifying ways of preserving priority lands. Land use ordinances, agricultural protection areas, conservation easements, conservation subdivisions, cluster developments, urban growth boundaries, transfer of development rights, local option sales taxes, county land trusts, and several other options have been considered, all with varying degrees of success.

We currently have 13,056 Cache County agricultural acres protected in Agricultural Protection Areas. The purpose of that designation is to declare agricultural production the priority industry for those specified areas. Some suggest there is no real protection, only window-dressing, but applications continue to come on a regular basis. Most are surprised to learn that nearly 10,000 Cache County acres are already in Conservation Easements. The process is somewhat laborious and funding is always the limiting factor, but 10,000 acres is an impressive start.

Many local land owners, who have placed their land in conservation easements, have received partial funding from the LeRay McAllister Critical Land Conservation Fund, administered by the Utah Quality Growth Commission. A new application cycle is now underway. Pre-applications are due Monday, May 12, 2008 by 5:00 PM. The LeRay McAllister Critical Land Conservation Fund provides grants and loans to preserve or restore critical open or agricultural land in Utah. This is a competitive program and matching funds are required. There are \$2.4 million available this season.

Eligible applicants are counties, cities, towns, the Utah Department of Natural Resources, the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, and charitable organizations that qualify as tax exempt under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Staff will assist landowners to find an eligible partner if one has not already been identified.

The application involves several steps. It is important that applicants know what will be required before a grant can be awarded so that the required documentation will be prepared for submission. Full information and application forms are available on the Internet at: www.qualitygrowth.utah.gov. If you have questions or would like further information or printed forms, contact:

John Bennett, Executive Director, Utah Quality Growth Commission

Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
Suite 150, Utah State Capitol Building, Salt Lake City, Utah 84114
Phone: (801) 538-1027, Fax: (801) 538-1547, E-mail: jbennett@utah.gov

Another item of interest is the Pesticide Disposal Day, scheduled for April 22nd. Folks who have pesticides that are no longer needed, properly labeled, or effective should contact UDAF compliance officer, Mark Ashcroft (752-6263). Depending on how much interest is shown, Mark will help make arrangements for collection and delivery to the proper site. Please call if you have pesticides that are nothing more than a hazard around your place.