

Navigating Utah River Access Working Solutions Under Utah's Current Stream Access Framework

**Farmer and Rancher Perspectives on Private
Property Rights, Recreation, and Shared Stewardship**

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Inspire

all Utah families to connect, succeed,
and grow through the miracle of

agriculture



Utah Farm Bureau Federation

More than
37,000
Member Families



Utah Farm Bureau Policy Development Process

Policy development is a fundamental, primary purpose of Farm Bureau. Participating in the Farm Bureau policy development process is a proven, tested exercise that produces sound policy and educated Farm Bureau members.



You have an idea, need or concern and share it with your County Farm Bureau.



Your County Farm Bureau helps draft, review and submit your policy resolution.



The Resolutions Committee reviews and debates your policy resolution.



During annual convention, delegates vote on the resolutions that were passed on by the counties.



Any resolution adopted at the annual meeting becomes one of UFBF's policy priorities.



Why This Conversation Matters

- Healthy rivers and streams depend on healthy relationships. Utah rivers and streams support agriculture, recreation, wildlife, and urban and rural economies. Farmers, ranchers, anglers, floaters, and other recreators all value clean water and healthy rivers and streams.
- Streambed access is not just a recreation issue; it is a private property, agriculture, water, and liability, and fairness issue.
- Many farmers and ranchers already allow recreational access or tolerate impacts voluntarily.
- Long-term access depends on trust between landowners and recreators.

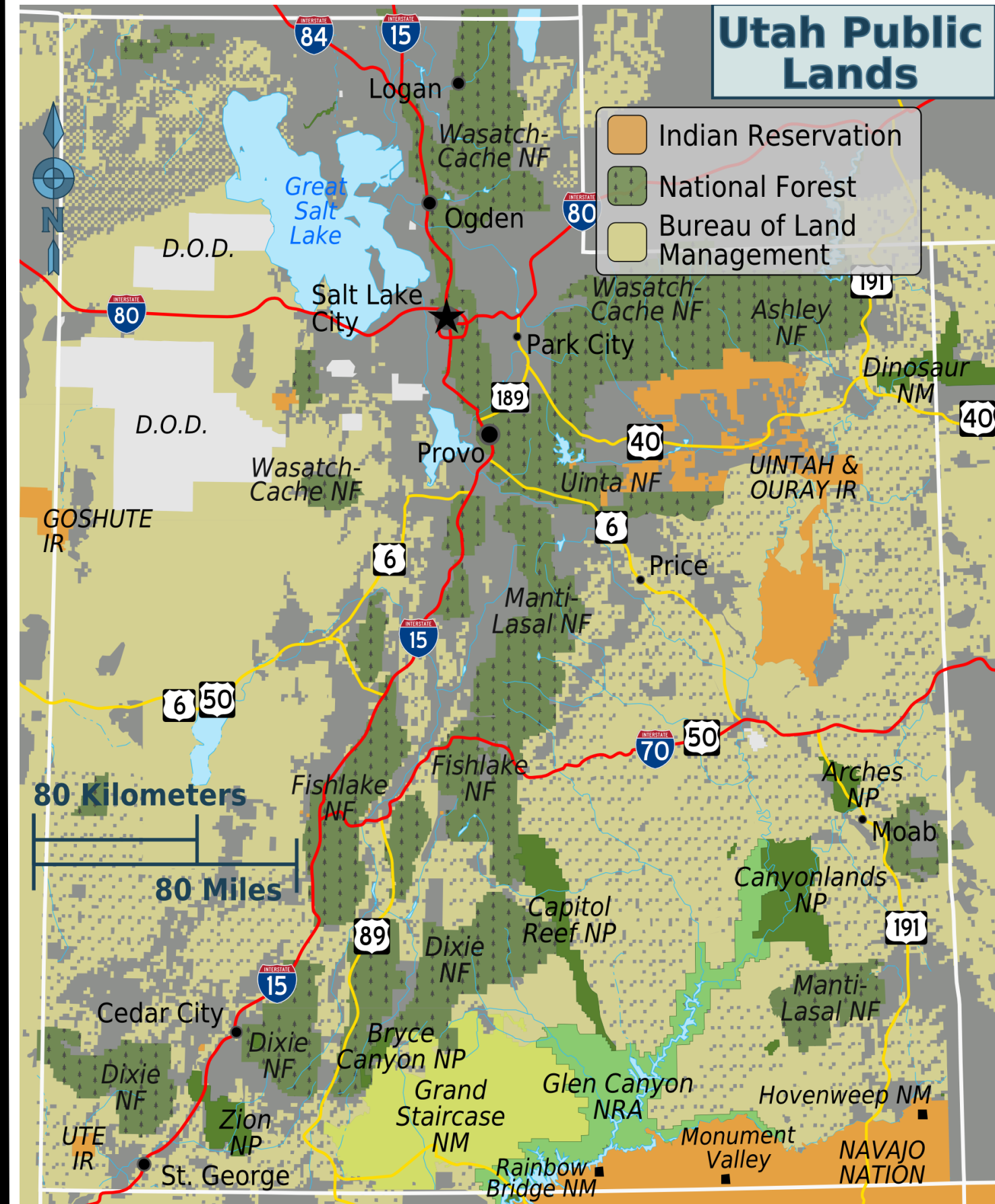


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Utah is a Public Lands State

- Utah is a public lands state - Over 64% of Utah is federally owned. Another 10% is state owned and 4.5% is Tribally owned or managed.
- Utah has abundant public lands, but access often runs through private working lands. Public expectations can spill onto private property.
- Enforcement is harder in mixed-ownership landscapes.
- The cost of recreation should not fall unfairly on adjacent landowners.



Utah Farm Bureau's Policy Perspective

- Property rights are among the human rights essential to the preservation of individual freedom.
- We support the sanctity and protection of private property rights without government interference.
- We support private property owners' right to close their land to public access.



Utah Farm Bureau's Perspective Cont.

- Utah Farm Bureau policy emphasizes that streambed access must respect private property rights.
- Public recreational access must protect landowners from liability.
- Farm Bureau supports accountability for damage and trespass.
- Farm Bureau supports voluntary, incentive-based solutions rather than mandates.
- Farm Bureau is not opposed to recreation but believes it must be properly managed.



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Challenges Landowners Face

- Many producers are protecting livestock, crops, irrigation systems, families, and other property.
- Trespassing is difficult and costly to enforce, especially in rural areas.
- Recreation on and near agricultural lands can create real challenges for farmers and ranchers, including open gates and escaped livestock, damaged fences, spread of weeds, damage to irrigation infrastructure, trash, riverbank erosion, unauthorized use of private property for restroom facilities, alcohol-related behavior, and other public safety concerns.
- Filmed confrontations can spread online without context and lead to substantial backlash.



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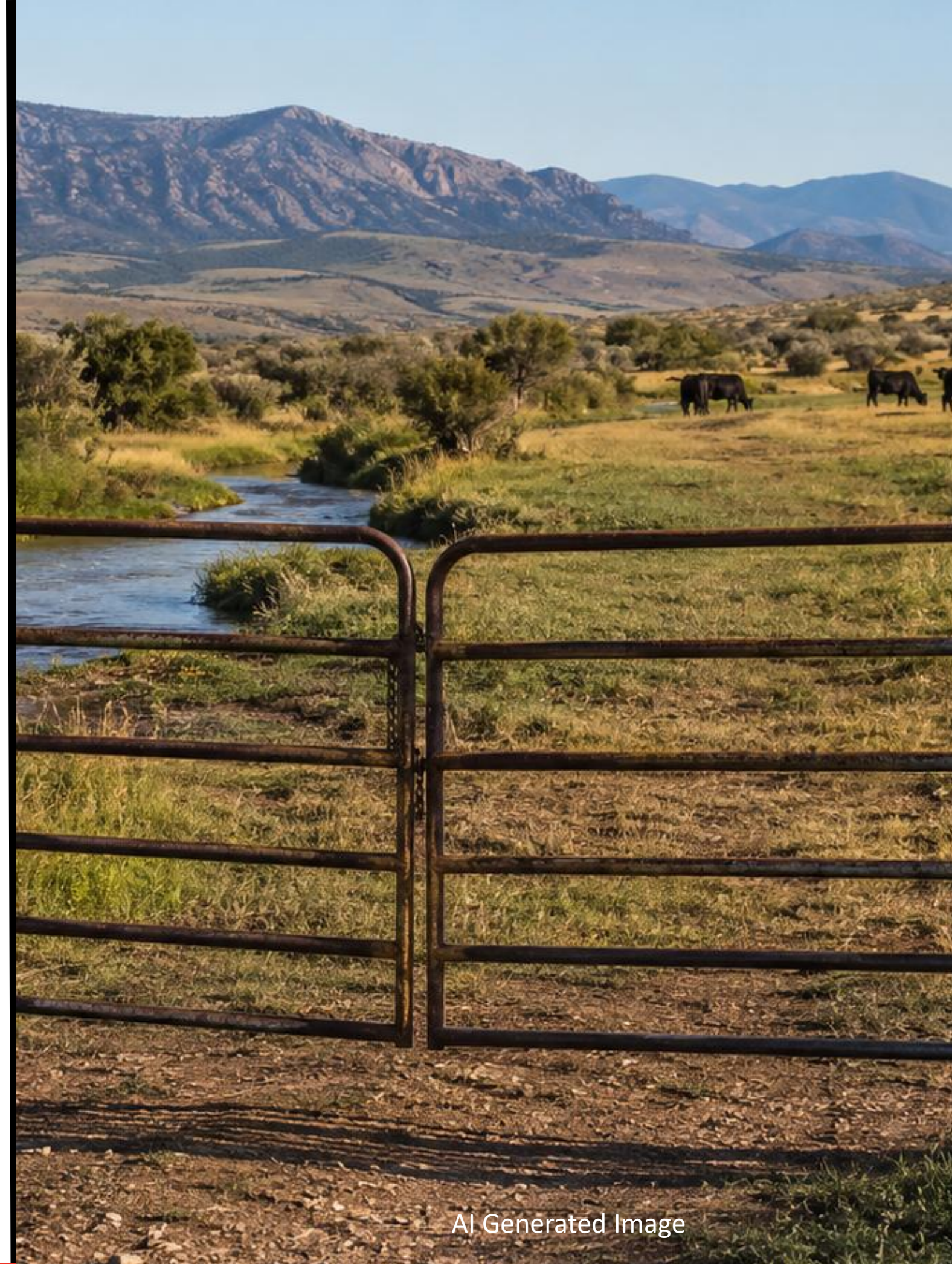
Many Producers Already Allow Access

- A lot of accommodation for public recreation on private lands already happens in Utah.
- Many agricultural operators already tolerate informal access near working lands.
- Some allow crossing, parking, or coexistence with recreation despite real costs.
- Most landowners want communication, respect, and accountability — not conflict.
- Access is often granted when there is respectful communication and you simply ask.



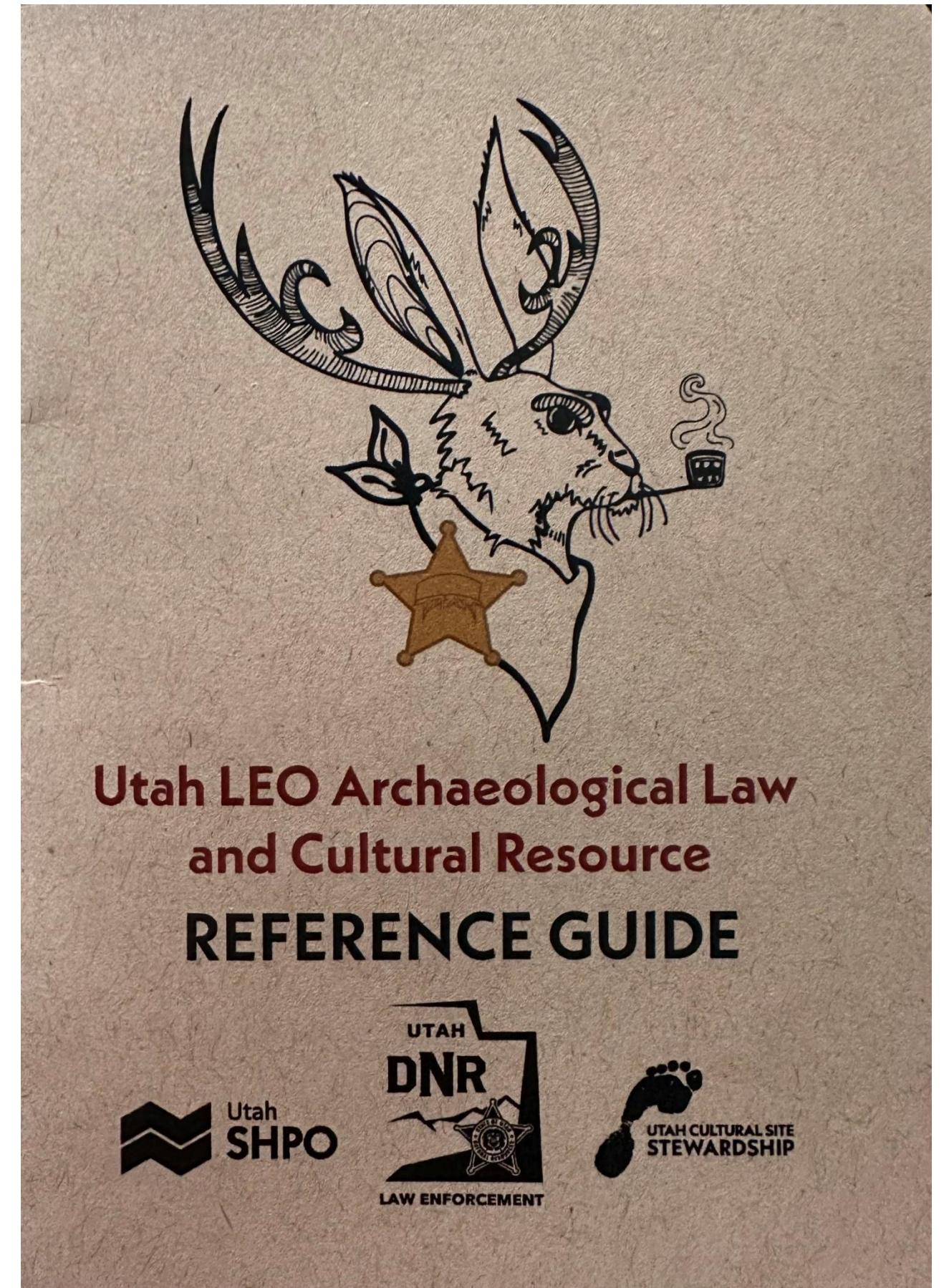
What Endears Landowners to Recreators?

- Trust is built one interaction at a time
- Close gates exactly as found. Or leave gates open that were already open.
- Respect livestock, fences, irrigation systems, and crops.
- Know where you are. Stay off private banks.
- Pack out trash—even if it isn't yours.
- Police other recreators.
- Say thank you and build goodwill.



Education

- Education reduces conflict.
- Previous Utah Farm Bureau educational efforts have encouraged closing gates and respecting working lands.
- Agricultural literacy helps recreators understand livestock and irrigation realities.
- Stewardship messaging works better than conflict.
- Recreator, landowner, and law enforcement handbook on applicable laws could be helpful

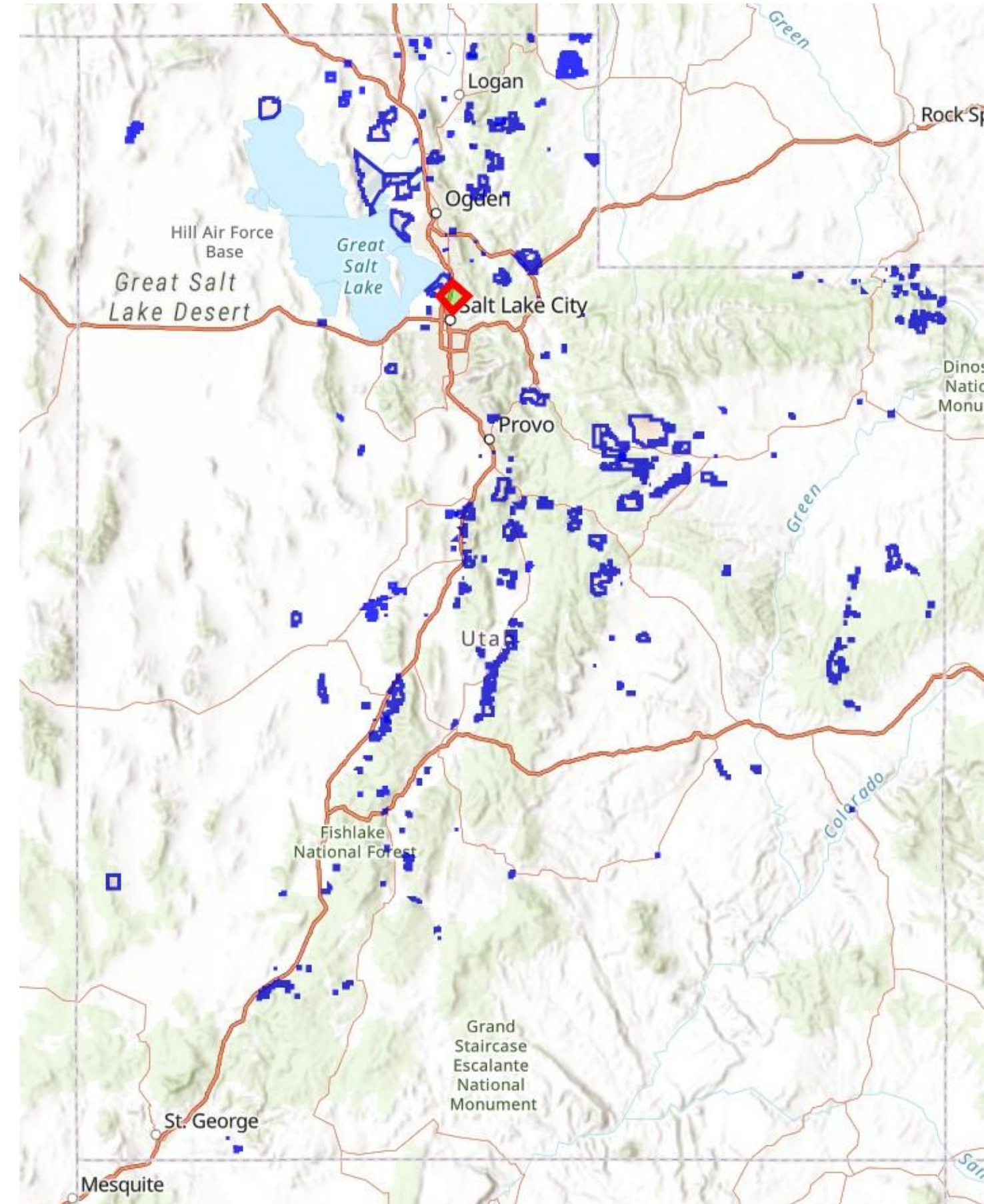


Gate Closing Video Example



Utah Walk-in Access Program

- Voluntary access should make sense for producers
- Participation should remain voluntary, compensated, and locally driven.
- Compensation often does not offset costs, liability, and management burdens.
- Better funding could incentivize more participation and access.
- Access has value. Private landowners should be treated like partners.



Partnerships That Work

- Stewardship builds trust. People protect what they help care for.
- Examples:

Utah Fish for Garbage helps improve landowner–angler relationships through massive river cleanups.

Trout Unlimited collaborative partnerships with private landowners supporting riverbank restoration and erosion control projects among other projects.

High County Fly Fishers project on the Weber River that improved access across private land with owner’s permission to ensure fencing is not damaged.



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Example - High Country Fly Fishers Project



Photo Credit: The Park Record

Conclusion

- Farmers, ranchers, anglers, floaters, and families all value healthy rivers.
- Mutual respect creates better access and stronger communities.
- Additional access on private lands depends on trust with people who live and work on the land. Recreation-user accountability goes a long way.
- Voluntary, incentive-based programs are key. Advocating for increased funding for the Utah Walk-In Access program should be a shared goal.
- Collaborative partnerships create goodwill and will pay substantial dividends for new public access to recreational opportunities.

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