

# UTAH STATE POLICIES

The Center for Western Priorities' **Western States Conservation Scorecard** evaluates each Western state in three areas: Lands and Access, Outdoor Recreation, and Responsible Energy Development. Our aim is to illuminate best practices and gaps in state-level public lands-related policy in the West. We hope to highlight where Western states are demonstrating leadership, as well as where they can improve. Please see the full report for a breakdown of methodology and the complete grading rubrics with scores at [www.westernpriorities.org/statescorecard](http://www.westernpriorities.org/statescorecard).

UTAH	LANDS AND ACCESS	OUTDOOR RECREATION	RESPONSIBLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT
	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	AVERAGE	AVERAGE

## NEEDS IMPROVEMENT — LANDS AND ACCESS

With a mixed bag of land and water access, and limited funding for conservation, Utah has room for improvement in state policies. In Utah, floating is permitted through private land, but wading is not, unless permission is granted by a landowner. A 2008 Utah Supreme Court decision expanded public access to private streambeds, but was effectively reversed two years later, when the Utah Legislature passed a law requiring landowner permission for setting foot on streambeds. Access to **state trust lands** in Utah is relatively high, with camping permitted for up to 15 days and hunting available to licensed sportsmen and women.

In Utah, the LeRay McAllister Critical Land Conservation Fund incentivizes local landowners to work together and protect critical open and agricultural lands with matching grants, but is **continually underfunded**. Since 1995, Utah's **Wildlife Habitat Account** has been administered by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, providing roughly **\$2 million annually** for projects.

## AVERAGE — OUTDOOR RECREATION

Though Utah politicians have continually passed anti-public lands bills, finally compelling the Outdoor Retailer trade show to leave the state, Utah was the first state to open an **Office of Outdoor Recreation**—established by Governor Gary Herbert in 2013. The state does generate matching funds up to \$50,000 for outdoor infrastructure projects and funds outdoor education programs through the Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation's **Outdoor Recreation Grant**. Utah has no state-level standards or benchmarks for environmental or outdoor education, but a few years ago, the Utah Office of Education put out a large funding package designed to bring non-formal education programs into schools in support of science curricula.

## AVERAGE — RESPONSIBLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Utah has a range of state-level energy policies. Utah lets counties determine **setbacks** for oil and gas wells, allows blanket bonding for oil and gas well reclamation, and allows coal operators to self-bond. When it comes to spill reporting and transparency, operators are required to report spills within 24 hours and Utah does provide access to some data online. The state requires companies to report chemicals used in fracking through **FracFocus**. Like most Western states, royalty rates for energy extracted on public lands exceed the federal rate of 12.5 percent. Utah also charges a conservation tax and a severance tax on production. The Utah Geological Survey conducted baseline water quality in the productive **Uinta Basin**, but does not require operator testing. Utah does not have methane capture rules in place.