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# UTAH ANGLERS COALITION

*“to protect and enhance aquatic resources in Utah”*

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January 18, 2025

Speaker Mike Schultz  
350 N State Street, Suite 350  
Salt Lake City, UT, 84114

Dear Speaker Schultz:

The Utah Anglers Coalition (UAC) is writing to comment on funding for the proposed Logan Aquatic Animal Health and Research Center (AAHRC) construction project currently under consideration by the Utah State Legislature. As a group, we strongly support this project, which will expand and improve fish health and research services for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR), and provide significant benefits to the angling public.

The UAC is an affiliation of many different angler groups and fishing industry representatives in the state of Utah. The coalition’s stated mission is “to promote the protection, enhancement, and enjoyment of Utah’s aquatic resources and angling opportunities by supporting the collective interests of member organizations, businesses, and individuals”. The UAC has been organized for more than 20 years, and represents a broad array of angler interests in the State. It is a diverse and inclusive organization with membership available to any person or organization having interest in Utah waters, native aquatic species conservation, and sportfishing. The organization includes fly fishermen, warm water anglers, general interest fishermen, water quality enthusiasts, and many others.

Fishing is big business in Utah and across the nation. Specifically, in 2023, fishing as a recreational pursuit was estimated to contribute approximately \$2.18 billion to Utah’s economy through direct, indirect, and induced expenditures by resident license holders. It also provided substantial labor income across the state, totaling some \$860 million, and employment for over 17,800 individuals across various sectors. Finally, fishing contributed a total of \$426 million in government revenues in Utah, highlighting the fiscal benefits associated with this recreational pursuit. These revenues in turn support public services and infrastructure development, benefiting communities statewide.

*Source: The Economic Impact and Benefit of Utah’s Blue Ribbon Fisheries; by Z. Wang, M-K Kim, and M. Zia; prepared for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources; July 9, 2024.*

Utah provides some of the best and most diverse fishing opportunities in the nation, and our state contains many quality waters of national renown. In order to maintain/expand upon the quality of Utah’s fishing experience, it is imperative that the state maintain/expand the fish health services and aquatic research currently provided by the Logan AAHRC. To do this, it is necessary that modern, up-to-date facilities and equipment are provided to UDWR staff.

The current AAHRC facility in Logan was built in the early 1960's and was primarily designed as a fish hatchery. Our angler group toured the facility during the summer of 2024, and it was obvious to us that the building is in poor condition and needs to be renovated or replaced. The facility has been variously retrofitted and modified to accommodate the other necessary functions of the AAHRC including fish health services, disease diagnostics, statewide pathogen surveillance, disease and fisheries management research, development of national laboratory standards, and general administration. At the current location, tissue samples for disease diagnostics are brought on station in close proximity to production lots at the fish hatchery, with the very real potential to infect those production lots. Our coalition is very concerned about this potential and we feel that the hatchery function should be completely separated from the fish health function. Furthermore, we feel that the facility should be upgraded to modern standards to further facilitate the excellent work being done by the highly-efficient staff.

The proposed AAHRC reconstruction project should be undertaken without delay, and the UAC supports the funding request of \$15.9 million to make this happen. The project is essential in maintaining the quality of fishing in Utah going forward. We consider this a prudent and reasonable investment in the future of Utah's \$2.18 billion fishing industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on pending legislation and budget matters. The UAC and affiliated member organizations plan to remain engaged in this issue as it works its way through the legislative process. If you need clarification or would like additional information, please feel free to contact Roger Wilson (see contact information below).

Respectfully yours,

*Roger Wilson*

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