



# Blue Ribbon Fisheries Advisory Council

## Handbook and Supplemental Documents

*Updated June 2022*

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## I. Background

The Blue Ribbon Fisheries Advisory Council (BRFAC), created by Governor Mike Leavitt in 2001, was formally established in 2005 under Executive Order signed by Governor John Huntsman (*see supplemental materials*).

According to this Executive Order, the BRFAC was created to:

- A. Identify fisheries** throughout Utah for designation as Blue Ribbon Fisheries (BRF),
- B. Make recommendations to Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR)** regarding the enhancement of habitats and recreational settings associated with BRF,
- C. Make recommendations to UDWR regarding the protection of BRF** through collaboration with government agencies and private entities, and
- D. Make recommendations to UDWR regarding publicity and promotion** of BRF among resident and nonresident anglers.

## II. Mission Statement

“To identify, enhance, and protect those Utah waters and their watersheds that provide, or have the potential to provide, Blue Ribbon quality public angling experiences for the purpose of preserving and enhancing these economically valuable natural resources.”

## III. Purpose

The BRFAC is a Utah State Advisory Board, an Executive Branch organization, created by Executive Order in accordance with the Governor’s Handbook for Members of Utah State Boards and Commissions (Handbook for UtB&C). The BRFAC shall serve as an advisory board to the UDWR according to the following:

“... an advisory board provides advice and makes recommendations to another person or entity who makes policy for the benefit of the general public. It is created by statute or executive order. It performs its duties only under the supervision of another person, as provided in statute”.

Specifically, the BRFAC will work with UDWR to:

- A. Review** criteria used to identify BRF or potential BRF as needed,
- B. Advise** on the selection of specific waters for BRF status based on defined criteria and cooperation with Utah anglers,
- C. Coordinate** that acquisition of angler access to BRF and potential BRF through development of agreements with private landowners,
- D. Provide legal protection** to BRF and potential BRF through involvement of Utah Division of Water Quality and other agencies,
- E. Review the status of designated BRF** on a regular basis to determine whether these waters maintain defined criteria,
- F. Review and evaluate proposals** related to BRF or potential BRF,
- G. Provide recommendations regarding the funding** of proposed projects related to BRF or potential BRF, and
- H. Review management strategies and regulations** implemented by UDWR on BRF or potential BRF.

## IV. Membership, Selection and Terms of Service

### A. Council Make-Up

Council membership shall consist of 13 individuals appointed by the Governor to a term of three years and an executive secretary appointed by the UDWR (*see Table 1*). Council positions will represent: coldwater anglers; warmwater anglers; commercial interests related to angling; each of the five UDWR regions, and; at-large members appointed based on their interests as they relate to the Council’s purpose. The ex-officio, non-voting, representative from the UDWR will serve as the Executive Secretary to the Council.

**Table 1: BRFAC Membership Make-up**

<i>Position</i>	<i># of representatives</i>
Coldwater	2
Warmwater	2
Commercial	1
At-Large	3
Northern Region	1
Central Region	1
Northeastern Region	1
Southeastern Region	1
Southern Region	1
Executive Secretary	1

### B. Member selection, reappointment, terms, resignation

The process by which Council members are replaced/chosen (Figure 1) has been outlined by the Governor’s office.

#### 1. Selection

- a. Nominations can be made by Council members or UDWR personnel.
- b. Nominations must initially be presented at a Council meeting and voted on by Council Members. Nominees receiving two-thirds majority approval are then required to submit a resume in electronic format to the Executive Secretary. (*See the Director of Boards and Commissions web page at <https://boards.governor.utah.gov/s/board/a0Z2M00000zDIDdUAO/blue-ribbon-fisheries-advisory-council>*).
- c. In addition to submitting a resume to the Executive Secretary, nominees also apply to become a member on the Boards and Commissions webpage (<https://boards.governor.utah.gov/s/board/a0Z2M00000zDIDdUAO/blue-ribbon-fisheries-advisory-council>).
- d. The Executive Secretary will then present resumes and formal membership recommendations to the Director of Boards and Commissions for consideration and appointment by the Governor.

#### 2. Reappointment.

- a. Council members can be nominated for reappointment to a second term. According to the Handbook for UtB&C (*see supplemental materials*), nominees for reappointment must go through the normal selection process above.

### C. Terms

Each term of Council membership will not exceed three years. Terms will be considered to

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begin on July 1 of the year of appointment to the Council, and end on June 30 of the year of expiration.

#### **D. Resignations**

A signed resignation letter must be submitted in the event that a Council member resigns. This letter should be submitted to the Chair at least one week prior to resignation.

Additionally, courtesy copies of the letter should be delivered to the Executive Secretary and the UDWR Director. In the event that a member resigns during his/her term, the position will be filled using the normal selection process above.

#### **E. Removal from Council**

A list of annual expectations from members is presented in Appendix 1. Members who fail to meet the annual expectations may be removed from the Council following a two-thirds majority vote and following the procedures outlined in the Handbook for UtB&C (*see supplemental materials*).

## **V. Meetings**

#### **A. Public notice**

As stipulated in Section 52-4-202 of the Utah Open and Public Meetings Act, the BRFAC shall give not less than 24 hours of public notice of each meeting.

1. Notification shall consist of an agenda, and information regarding meeting date, time, and location.
2. The Council Chair should provide this information to the Executive Secretary no later than 10 days prior to the meeting date.
3. The Executive Secretary will then post the meeting announcement on the Utah Public Meeting Notice website.

#### **B. Council notification**

The Chair shall provide Council members with a meeting agenda as well as information regarding meeting date, time, and location, no later than ten days prior to the meeting date.

#### **C. Attendance requirements**

As stipulated in the Handbook for UtB&C, a quorum must be present for business to be conducted. A quorum consists of a simple majority of voting members. Regular attendance is, therefore, critical. Council members unable to attend meetings should notify the Chair prior at least one day prior to the meeting date.

#### **D. Meeting procedures and agendas**

As stipulated in the Handbook for UtB&C, Council meetings must be conducted using parliamentary procedure, ensuring an equal voice for all Council members.

Meeting agendas must include:

1. a Chair report
2. a list of old business, such as unresolved action items from previous meetings,
3. a list of new business for discussion,
4. assignment of action items for the next meeting, and
5. scheduling of the next two meeting dates.

#### **E. Meeting minutes; open and closed meetings**

Written minutes and an audio recording shall be kept for all Council meetings. Specific items for inclusion in written minutes are identified in Section 52-4-203 of the Utah Open and Public Meetings Act. During closed meetings audio recordings must remain complete and unedited. Written minutes must follow the same standards for those of open meetings except in those instances where inclusion of information would negate the original purpose of closing the meeting.

## **F. Closed meetings**

Closed meetings can be held with the approval of a two-third majority of Council members when a quorum is present. Justifications for a meeting closure are specified under Section 52-4-205 of the Utah Open and Public Meetings Act.

## **G. Meeting Schedule**

The Council will meet at least quarterly, as described in the Executive Order. The meeting schedule is as follows:

1. Spring (March): Annual funding review meeting performed in collaboration with the Habitat Council
  2. Summer (June):
    - a. On-boarding of new members/member training
    - b. Have each member spend 10-15 minute reviewing their annual accomplishments and what they learned (see member responsibilities described below)
    - c. UDWR presents draft management plans and annual reports for BR fisheries
  3. Fall (first week of November):
    - a. Annual review of Blue Ribbon fisheries, add or remove waters from Water list
    - b. Develop promotional priorities for next year
  4. Winter (January):
    - a. UDWR presents the following to BRFAC for discussion:
      - i. Updates on BR funded projects from current fiscal year
      - ii. Updates on upcoming projects that will be proposed on BR waters
    - b. BRFAC update on strategies being employed by UDWR Outreach to address previously discussed/suggested outreach objectives and a discussion of new or ongoing outreach objectives
2. Additional/Emergency Meetings may be called by the Council Chair with a minimum of 10 day notice. An agenda will be provided when the meeting is called. Due to the short notice, these meetings may be held electronically.

# **VI. Organization and Responsibilities**

## **A. Council Chair**

A Council Chairperson (Chair) will be selected from voting representatives by a two-thirds majority vote of the Council. Chair selection shall be conducted as needed, but a council member may not serve as chair for more than three years. The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the Council and assume general management and control of the business and affairs of the Council.

## **B. Vice Chair**

A Council Vice Chairperson (Vice Chair) will be selected from voting representatives by a two-thirds majority vote of the Council. Vice Chair selection shall be conducted as needed. A Council member may not serve as Vice Chair for more than three years. The Vice-chair shall, in the absence or inability of the Chair to, exercise the powers and perform the duties of the Chair. They shall also generally assist the Chair and exercise such other powers and perform such other duties as shall be prescribed by the Council.

## **C. Member Responsibilities**

Council members are expected to do the following annually:

1. Attend at least three quarters of the meetings held annually. At least two of the meetings attended annually must be in-person (vs. virtual attendance; will accommodate for extenuating circumstances).
2. Visit and provide scores for at least half of the waters that the Council is reviewing that year (potential new Blue Ribbon fisheries or re-evaluation of existing fisheries).

3. Volunteer to provide Blue Ribbon support for DWR programs when available, requested, and within your expertise (e.g., in your region or your special interest) and follow through on these tasks. Examples include writing support letters or voicing support for DWR actions at meetings.
4. Regional Representatives: Contact your Regional DWR staff at least monthly for updates on Blue Ribbon funded projects in your region. Also review construction plans or attend project meetings as requested by the DWR.
5. Special interest representatives: Identify groups that are aligned with your interests (e.g., examples for warmwater representatives are Rocky Mountain Anglers and bass clubs). Maintain monthly contact with these groups. These representatives also provide presentations about the Blue Ribbon program to these groups, when requested. Coordinate your contacts with other special interest representatives so groups are not double contacted (e.g., High Country Fly Fishers doesn't need to get contacted by both Coldwater Representatives monthly). Coordinate contact with these groups among special interest representatives so the same groups are not contacted by multiple representatives.
6. Attend at least two events annually that help familiarize you with the activities of DWR fisheries biologists. Examples include attendance at the Utah Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Meeting, site tours, assistance with field work, or water users meetings.
7. Do at least one of the following annually: 1) Go fishing with another Council member for the purpose of scoring a Blue Ribbon water, 2) Go on a tour of a Blue Ribbon funded project with another BRFAC member, or 3) Attend a social function with another Council member outside of a Council event (e.g., fishing club meetings, barbeques, etc.).
8. Participate in at least two Blue Ribbon member recruitment events annually. Examples include: 1) invite someone you think would be a good Blue Ribbon member to a Council meeting, 2) talk to someone at a fishing related event (e.g., a club meeting) about Blue Ribbon and try to recruit them as a potential member, 3) take a potential member to some function where they can learn about the UDWR for recruitment purposes. Examples include taking them on a tour of a Blue Ribbon funded project or going with them when they help with a UDWR project such as electrofishing, or 4) attend and support Blue Ribbon at a UDWR sponsored event that is intended to recruit Blue Ribbon members.
9. Track time spent doing BRFAC business (i.e., time spent doing all the member responsibilities outlined above). The Executive Secretary will bring UDWR volunteer timesheets to each meeting and members will spend a few minutes filling out their volunteer hours between meetings on this timesheet.

Council members will track their completion of these responsibilities and will report their progress annually during the June Council meeting.

#### **D. UDWR Responsibilities**

UDWR staff are expected to do the following:

1. Attend at least three quarters of the meetings held annually. At least two of the meetings attended annually must be in-person (vs. virtual attendance; will accommodate for extenuating circumstances).
2. Regional staff will contact the Executive Secretary ahead of the June and November meetings to vet any management proposals/projects that will be discussed with the Council during those meetings
3. The Executive Secretary will coordinate with UDWR Outreach on any Blue Ribbon outreach needs
4. Recruitment efforts:
  - a. Staff members will assist with new member recruitment efforts by discussing the Blue Ribbon program with anglers who they feel could become productive future members.
  - b. The Executive Secretary will ensure that some UDWR outreach is dedicated annually to member recruitment. Examples will include social media posts and press releases.

- c. The Executive Secretary will work with UDWR Outreach so they are aware of the Blue Ribbon program so they can potentially discuss the program with potential members they encounter at events they host. The intent is to enable UDWR Outreach to identify potential productive members and provide additional program information to those individuals. UDWR fisheries staff may attend the same events. They will be also be prepared to meet with potential members.
  - d. The Executive Secretary will work with UDWR Outreach on the development of some kind of Blue Ribbon membership marketing materials. Both UDWR Outreach and UDWR fisheries staff will be provided these materials so they can be passed out to potential members at events such as seminars, fishing events, or when people are assisting the UDWR in the field. The intent of these materials is to be passed to targeted individuals who seem like they could represent the Council well.
5. Regional UDWR staff will bring forward any waters that should be removed from the Blue Ribbon list due to emergency circumstances to each meeting. Those waters will be discussed with Executive Secretary ahead of the meeting.
  6. Regional staff will bring forward any opportunities that will help Council members accomplish their checklists to each meeting (e.g., potential member recruitment events, times when field assistance is required, etc.).
  7. Provide BRFAC members reimbursement for travel to meetings and other BRFAC related events (e.g., field tours).

## E. Committees

Ad hoc or permanent committees may be created by the Chair with the approval of the Council to provide recommendations in specific areas deemed worthy of additional attention.

1. **Creation.** Committees may be formed when the Chair or majority Council opinion dictates. Committee members will include at least two Council members.
2. **Public participation.** Committee membership shall not be limited to only Council members.
3. **Member approval.** All committee members shall be approved by a Council majority prior to involvement.
4. **Committee chair.** Each committee chair will be approved by Council majority.
5. **Reports to the Council.** Updates on committee progress will be provided at regularly scheduled Council meetings.
6. **Recommendations.** Committee recommendations will be presented to the Council during meeting updates, and must be approved by Council majority vote prior to implementation.
7. **Deactivation.** Committees may be deactivated upon task completion or other reason by a majority vote of the Council.

## VII. Blue Ribbon Fishery Designation Process

### A. Criteria

The BRFAC will be responsible for all designation of BRF waters and will rate waters using the most current version of the Hepworth/Walker Rating System or other system approved by a two-thirds majority of the Council.

### B. Steps for nominating waters

1. **Nominations.** A water can be nominated for Blue Ribbon status by any person or organization.
2. **Timeline.** Nominations must be made at or prior to the January meeting of the BRFAC. To ensure the intent of Section II, an acceptable numbers of Council members will have until the November meeting of the BRFAC to visit the nominated water. At the November meeting, the

Council will rate and vote on nominated waters.

3. **Determining BRF status.** The BRFAC may approve a water as Blue Ribbon if:
  - a. The water has been reviewed and ranked by the Council and meets or exceeds a minimum threshold score established by the Council for its category. (*See Table 2 for categories and current point thresholds based on the Hepworth/Walker scale.*)
  - b. No overriding issues exist that would discourage designation. Examples may include, but are not limited to:
    - legitimate concerns about a the ability of a fishery to support increased fishing pressure that may result from designation
    - circumstances such as structural work in the watershed (e.g. dam repair or maintenance, etc.) or rotenone treatment that could negatively impact the Blue Ribbon experience in the long-term

**Table 2: Blue Ribbon Fishery Categories and Thresholds**

<i>Flat Waters (Reservoirs &amp; Lakes)</i>		
<i>Category/Type of Fishery</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Minimum points for BRF</i>
Large/Cold	1,000+ acres	65 points
Large/Warm	1,000+ acres	65 points
Moderate/Cold	200-999 acres	60 points
Moderate/Warm	200-999 acres	60 points
Small/Cold	Less than 200 acres	60 points
Small/Warm	Less than 200 acres	60 points
<i>Flowing Waters (Rivers &amp; Streams)</i>		
Large	More than 30 feet average width	65 points
Moderate	15-30 feet average width	55 points
Small	Less than 15 feet average width	55 points

3. At least one-third of the Council members can attest to visiting the water body in question within the past 24 months.

### **C. Approval**

Designating the water as a Blue Ribbon Fishery requires approval by two-thirds of the Council.

## **VIII. Blue Ribbon Water Reevaluation/Delisting**

The Council does not encourage removing Blue Ribbon status from a water for problems readily addressed. Pursue this action with utmost caution, and only in close cooperation with UDWR personnel. Council funds should be used whenever possible to address developing problems on Blue Ribbon waters before they reach a stage that could degrade the experience.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the condition of some fisheries change over time for a variety of reasons. The credibility of the BRF program depends on ensuring reliable, high-quality fishing experiences for the public.

### **A. Notification**

Council members, UDWR personnel or members of the public may request the Council review any Blue Ribbon water and rescore it based on new information. Delisting requests should be submitted by the January meeting each year. The UDWR will bring forward proposals for emergency delisting due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., wildfire, reservoir draining, etc.) to Council meetings, if necessary. The Council will be notified at least 10 days prior to a meeting about whether an emergency delisting is be considered



during the meeting.

### **B. Evaluation**

A review that shows that the fishery no longer meets the appropriate scoring threshold and/or extenuating circumstances that suggest a significant, long-term decline in the experience may require it be delisted.

### **C. Vote**

After a request is submitted to review a water, a vote of the Council will be taken at the next Council meeting concerning its Blue Ribbon status. A simple majority vote of the council is needed to remove a water's Blue Ribbon status.

### **D. Reevaluation**

The Council will reevaluate each Blue Ribbon Water on a rotational basis that caps the number of waters evaluated by the Council annually at eight waters. That rotation will be developed during calendar year 2022 and will be added as an appendix to this handbook. Some waters may lose Blue Ribbon Water status after reevaluation.

## **VIII. Project Funding**

### **A. Recommendations**

The Council provides the UDWR advice on the allocation of funds provided by the UDWR towards the improvement of Utah's fisheries. The UDWR currently allocates \$450,000 and that value may change in the future. These funds are used to enhance, protect, or secure access and habitat at Blue Ribbon Waters or other waters in the state.

### **B. Project review timeline**

The following schedule for review of project is a guideline of the review and recommendation of Blue Ribbon Projects

1. January: Review known projects seeking funding
2. March: Joint BRFAC/Habitat Council meeting for project presentation and review. Following this meeting all council members will rate projects using the BRFAC rating criteria, on their own or as a group at the discretion of the Council as a whole.
3. June: Review the projects approved by UDWR. UDWR may begin consultation for projects that may be considered during the next funding cycle.
4. Projects on waters with Blue Ribbon status will receive highest priority recommendations for requests from the Council's grant funds.

## **IX. BRFAC Handbook**

### **A. Periodic review**

The Council handbook will be reviewed as needed to ensure functionality, completeness, and adherence to current guidelines.

### **B. Changes and updates**

Changes in the BRFAC handbook will be conducted by the Executive Secretary or their designee as needed.

1. **Request for modification.** All suggested changes to the handbook must be announced to the Council during a regularly scheduled meeting. Any Council member may suggest modifications.
2. **Approval.** Approval of changes and updates requires the approval of two-thirds of Council members.

### **C. Distribution**

A bound copy of the Council handbook will be provided to all Council members. Electronic copies of the handbook will be available on the BRFAC website.

# Appendix 1: Blue Ribbon Fisheries Advisory Council Guiding Document

Note, this is not part of the handbook but is a new document. It is a supplemental material that will be provided as an appendix (see supplemental material description on page 1 of this document). Rex and TJ have already seen this document.

## Blue Ribbon Fisheries Advisory Council Guiding Document

### Background

During spring 2022, the Blue Ribbon Fisheries Advisory Council (BRFAC) drafted a guiding document that describes the activities that the Council will carry out. This guiding document is based around the four objectives outlined in the Executive Order that established the council:

1. Identify fisheries throughout the State to be designated as “Blue Ribbon Fisheries”
2. Make recommendations as to the enhancement of the fishing ecosystems and aesthetic values of such “Blue Ribbon Fisheries”
3. Make recommendations as to the protection of “Blue Ribbon Fisheries” through collaboration with government agencies and private groups
4. Make recommendations as to the protection of “Blue Ribbon Fisheries” to attract anglers from within and outside the State

For the purpose of this document, these four actions will be called “Blue Ribbon Program Objectives”. An additional administrative objective of “Improve Member Recruitment and Training” has been added to this list.

### Purpose of Guiding Document

Describe the actions that will be carried out by the BRFAC to accomplish the four Blue Ribbon Program Objectives and the added member recruitment objective.

### Actions to Address Each Objective:

- 1. Identify fisheries throughout the State to be designated as "Blue Ribbon Fisheries."**
  - a. Only consider new Blue Ribbon waters where those waters have proven to be truly exceptional fisheries. These waters will be scored using the Hepworth-Walker Scale as described in the Council Handbook.
  - b. Develop a schedule for re-evaluating current Blue Ribbon waters and re-evaluate them according to that schedule using the Hepworth-Walker scale.
  - c. The DWR brings forward recommendations for waters that need to be removed from the Blue Ribbon water list for emergency reasons to every meeting (if there are any waters that warrant removal). BRFAC then votes on whether the water should be removed. Removed waters can have Blue Ribbon status restored only after the conditions that prompted removal are resolved.
- 2. Make recommendations as to the enhancement of the fishing ecosystems and aesthetic values of such "Blue Ribbon Fisheries."**
  - a. Such recommendations will be carried out in the form of the BRFAC providing funding for projects.
  - b. Regional reports at future BRFAC meetings will be replaced with regional discussions where regional DWR staff relay draft recommendations (e.g., management changes or project ideas

- outlined in draft annual reports or management plan documents) and BRFAC provides input on those recommendations.
- c. BRFAC members will provide the DWR assistance outside of meetings by consulting construction plans and attending construction meetings including site tours. These additional meetings will be limited to situations where anglers could provide valuable feedback on the design/implementation of a project.
  - d. BRFAC members need more training on a) their roles as BRFAC members and b) potential actions that the DWR can carry out to improve fish habitat and angler amenities. The DWR will dedicate time during meetings and through site visits to educate members so their feedback (Objective 2, action B) is as beneficial as possible.
- 3. Make recommendations as to the protection of "Blue Ribbon Fisheries" through collaboration with government agencies and private groups.**
- a. The BRFAC and the DWR will dedicate time during one meeting every five years towards selecting a focal issue. That issue will receive additional discussion, project development, and funding during the subsequent five year period (already agreed upon a focus on water availability for next 5 years). Potential projects addressing this issue will be brought forward by the DWR and will be discussed during in-meeting regional discussions (incorporated as part of Objective 2b).
  - b. DWR informs BRFAC when situations that require angler support arise and BRFAC decides whether to support the cause. BRFAC then provides appropriate level of support (e.g., attend public meetings when warranted and supported by BR, write a letter of support, etc.). DWR also provides training on how to talk to constituents/partners/decision makers to make this task easier.
- 4. Make recommendations as to the promotion of "Blue Ribbon Fisheries" to attract anglers from within and outside the State.**
- a. Blue Ribbon will dedicate part of one meeting annually to the discussion of desired promotional goals for the next year. The DWR Outreach section will be invited to the next meeting and part of that meeting will be spent discussing how Blue Ribbon and Outreach can collaborate towards meeting those promotional goals. The goals should be focused on effectively informing the public about the BR program.
  - b. Re-do the BRFAC economic assessment at five year intervals (will bring proposal during FY24 BRFAC funding cycle).
- 5. Improve member recruitment and training**
- a. On-board new members at the same time annually and provide training to these new members at their first meeting. Use the training as an opportunity to re-train existing members (i.e., all members participate in training annually). Provide members modified handbook at onboard training.
  - b. Increase the diversity and quality of BR members. Several elements member and DWR responsibilities described in the Council Handbook target member recruitment