



WASATCH OPEN LANDS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2024 thru EARLY 2025

Updated March 10, 2025

2024 thru early 2025 are amazing years to finish appropriating all \$10 million of the 2018 Open Space Bond with four more projects within Wasatch County, Utah. The Wasatch Open Lands Board (WOLB) presents this fourth Annual Report to the Wasatch County Council outlining the final use of the 2018 Open Space Bond money during 2024 into early 2025.

WOLB will also continue to monitor and update the County Council on the evolving status of these approved NOI conservation easement applications as well as continue to receive new NOI applications and collaborate with the County Council on funding for them.

WOLB thanks former County Council member and WOLB member, Steve Farrell for his leadership, perseverance and dedication in leading the County to adopt the WOLB Code and bring the nine total projects now approved to use the Open Space bond money. Steve has retired and we will greatly miss his expertise and commitment to preserving Wasatch County's agricultural heritage.

WASATCH COUNTY OPEN SPACE BOND MONEY UPDATE:

Open Space Bond approved by voters in 2018: \$10 million.
County Council bonded for \$5 million of that in September 2020. The other \$5 million has not been bonded for yet.

Years in Review:

In 2021: Total Bond Money spent: \$2.3 million for 191 acres.

In 2022: Total Bond Money approved: \$2,250,000 for 125.5 acres.

*(*Yet only \$250,000 spent because the \$2 million for the Lundin Heritage Farm is not funded pending meeting County Council requirements.)*

In 2023: Total Bond Money spent: \$758,000 for 56.47 acres.

In 2024: Total Bond Money approved only, not spent yet:

- \$750,000 for the Christen Michel Farm, **37 acres** on River Road.

- \$2,250,000 for the Laren Gertsch Farm, approximately **165 acres** in the North Fields.

Update in 2025, as of March 2025:

- \$750,000 for the White Living Trust Farm, 39.56 acres off of SR 113.

- \$1,000,000 for the GH Squared Dairy Farm, 52 acres on Lake Creek Road.

At this point, all of the \$10 Million in Open Space Bond money is appropriated, including an additional \$58,000.

UPDATE ON 2018 OPEN SPACE BOND AMOUNTS



MARCH 2025

Open Space Bond approved in 2018 for \$10 million. County Council bonded for \$5 million in September 2020.

Totals calculated for last two columns:

- **Column 6 totals** ('\$5 M Tranche Remaining') are calculated from subtracting Column 5 (Open Space Bond Funding Amount) from the \$5 M first Tranche of Open Space Bond money.

YEAR	EASEMENT PROJECT	TOTAL ACREAGE	TOTAL EASEMENT VALUE – ALL FUNDING	OPEN SPACE BOND FUNDING AMOUNT	\$5 M TRANCHE REMAINING \$5,000,000 (beginning balance)
2021	Kohler Dairy Farm	102 acres	\$12,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$3,000,000
	Mt. Spa Easement	46 acres <i>-Public Trail included.</i>	\$7,160,000	\$300,000	\$2,700,000
2022	Muirfield Nature Park	9.25 acres <i>-City Park.</i>	\$991,000*	\$250,000	\$2,450,000
	Lundin Farm	116 acres	Approx. \$7,000,000 to \$10,000,000	\$2,000,000	**
2023	A. Giles Farm	56.47 acres	\$2,653,350	\$758,000	\$1,692,000

2024	C. Michel Farm	37 acres	\$6,000,000 to \$6,500,000	\$750,000	**
	L. Gertsch Farm	165+ acres	\$13,000,000	\$2,250,000	**
2025	White Living Trust Farm	39.56 acres	\$6,525,000	\$750,000	**
	GH Squared Dairy Farm	52 acres	\$7,350,000	\$1,000,000	**
	EASEMENT PROJECT	TOTAL ACREAGE	TOTAL EASEMENT VALUE - ALL FUNDING	OPEN SPACE BOND FUNDING AMOUNT	\$5 M TRANCHE REMAINING
TOTALS	9 Projects	623.28 + acres <i>preserved or proposed to be preserved.</i>	\$66,179,350+	\$10,058,000 <i>spent or approved from Open Space bond money.</i> <i>-\$58,000 coming from other County funding sources, i.e. rollback taxes.</i>	\$1,692,000

-This shows an over six times (6.59%) leverage of the bond money to the 'Total Easement Value – All Funding' for all acreage preserved in perpetuity.

-Also shows an average cost of \$16,137.20 per acre of Open Space bond money spent or proposed to preserve the total 623.28+ acres of agricultural heritage of Wasatch County.

**Heber City is spending an additional \$2+ Million for Muirfield Nature Park improvements on easement property, etc. This was a full land purchase for public use as defined per County Code.*

***These are County Council approved projects **NOT funded yet** because Council conditions still need to be met.*

Arbitrage concerns started in Sept 2023 that the County needs to track for the Sep 2020 Open Space bond. This requires an arbitrage auditor.

WOLB is again happy to report that *no* Open Space bond money has been used for WOLB's administration costs. All work to review proposed conservation easements, prepare Board reports, and take WOLB proposals to the County Council is done **voluntarily by the WOLB members**.

All of the reviews for the required conservation easements, administration of County easement requirements and financial processes, administrative support for WOLB meetings, etc., were from County Staff and Administrators.

WOLB greatly appreciates the invaluable work done by County Manager - Dustin Grabau, Jon Woodard, and well as previous WOLB and County Council member, Steve Farrell.

2024 OPEN SPACE BOND PROJECTS

Two Open Space Bond Projects were approved by the Wasatch County Council in 2024:

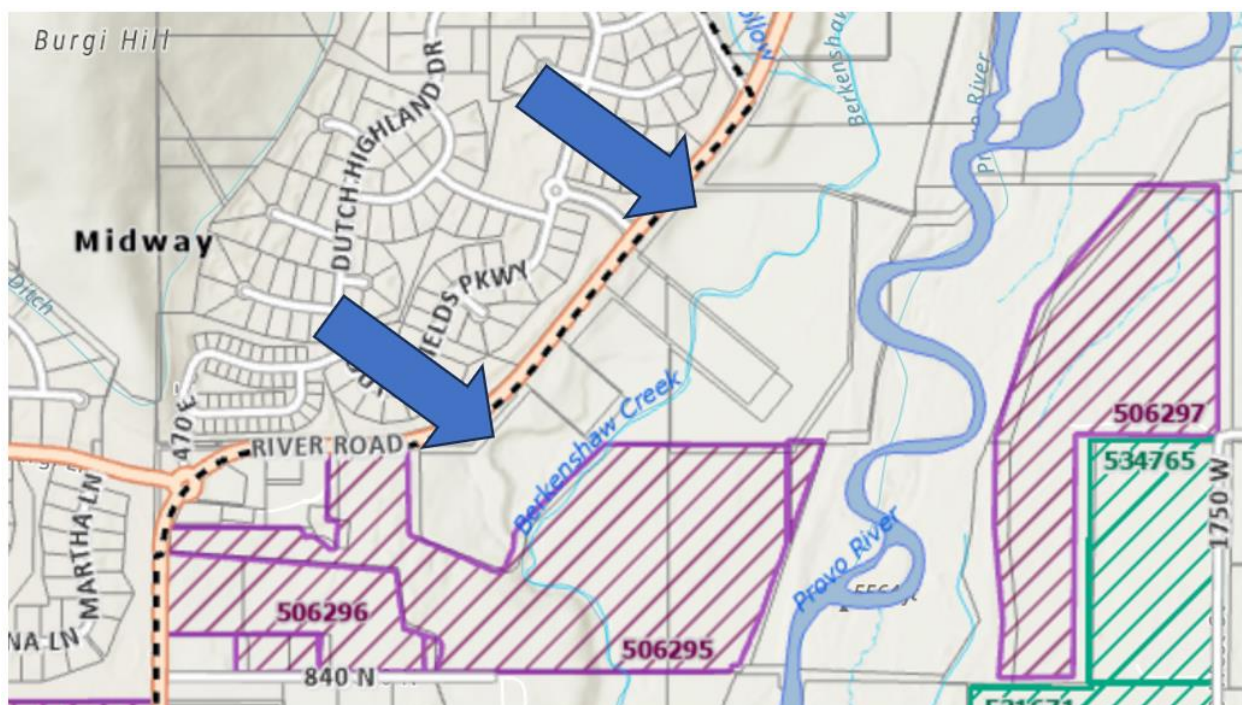
1st Project Approved: The Christen Michel [Kissel] Land Trust NOI- 1100 N. River Road, Midway- 37 acres, Parcel #'s 07-4356 & 07-4760, for \$750,000 of Open Space Bond money. Submitted to WOLB on March 14, 2022; and approved by the Wasatch County Council in March 2024. Proposed Conservation Easement value is approximately \$6 - \$6.5 Million and will be verified by approved appraisal at closing.

WOLB gave a positive recommendation with the following conditions approved by the Wasatch County Council:

- (1) prior to seeking funding, the property owners shall provide WOLB and the County Council for review and approval a certified appraisal for the property to be conserved establishing a conservation value of \$6 Million - \$6.5 Million as represented in the application; and
- (2) the certified appraisal shall include a specific description of the total irrigated and non-irrigated acres included in the conservation easement along with the historic water rights & water shares associated with the irrigated and non-irrigated property.
- (3) the title report, and draft Conservation Easement will be reviewed by County Attorney per County Council directions.

Additionally:

- This is a **5th Generation Family Farm** that continues Agricultural uses of the property, including hay growing with required water rights for existing & historical uses. The Christian Michel LLC NOI was received by WOLB on May 9, 2022; and just recently obtained NRCS funding because of a lengthy funding process.
- **Owners are giving a 25% contribution to the conservation easement value (\$2 Million out of the \$6+ Million total value.)**
- Preservation of farmland that is adjacent to the Kohler Farm conservation easement property in Midway, and such preservation is for the scenic enjoyment of the general public along River Road and other conservation values. Proposed easement provides a greater buffer and entryway into Midway City. See map below.
- This Viewshed is important to Midway City, which is contributing matching funds of \$250,000 for this conservation easement; as well as NRCS.
- It **leverages the Wasatch County Open Space bond money 4+ times** in the conservation easement value.
- Christian Michel LLC parcels are historically important and sensitive land areas also adjacent to Provo River Corridor on the east side. Parcels contains wetlands & the Berkenshaw Creek. The Utah Geological Survey notes that there is a ‘high’ stress level for Wetlands on this property, see [Utah Wetlands](#). Provides buffer for maintaining water quality, wetlands, and riparian areas in Provo River.
- Protects Historic Farming area from potential development because parcels are within the Midway City Annexation Boundary line, and Midway City already has residential developments on the north side directly across from the Christian Michel LLC parcels.
- Map below shows the Michel’s two Parcels adjacent to Kohler Dairy Farm Conservation Easement designated in **purple** hashmarks, River Road, and the Provo River Corridor on the east side of parcels.



Finally: If we combine the already approved Kohler Dairy Farm of 102 acres adjacent to the south and east of the Michel Farm, plus add in Michel's Farm 37 acres, plus add the 69.36 acres of the Provo River Corridor land in between that's a total of 208.36 acres of continuous conservation easement, historical agriculture and open space, along with wildlife protection, significant viewshed corridor protection, wetlands protection, etc., etc., for all of Heber Valley. The sum of this proposed easement is much, much more than these separate parts.

2nd Project Approved: The Laren Gertsch NOI, 1100 W. 1200 N., Heber North Fields, Wasatch County, UT, for approximately 165+ acres.

Parcels #'s submitted:

00-0007-9520

00-0007-9538

00-0007-9553

00-0007-9611

00-0007-9637

00-0000-5889

00-0008-0270

00-0008-0056

00-0007-6243

00-0007-6542

00-0007-6484

00-0007-6443

00-0007-6468

00-0007-6435

00-0007-6427

Submitted to WOLB on April 27, 2021, by Utah Open Lands.

Approved for \$2,250,000 of Open Space Bond funds in March 2024 by the Wasatch County Council with these conditions:

(1) prior to seeking funding, the property owner shall provide WOLB and the County Council for review and approval a certified appraisal for the property, the total number of acres/parcels to be conserved establishing a conservation value of \$13 Million as represented in the application; and

(2) the certified appraisal shall include a specific description of the total irrigated and non-irrigated acres per parcel included in the conservation easement along with the historic water rights & water shares associated with the irrigated and non-irrigated property.

(3) the title report and draft Conservation Easement will be reviewed by County Attorney per County Council directions.

(4) a geological report for subsurface activity will be reviewed by WOLB and County staff.

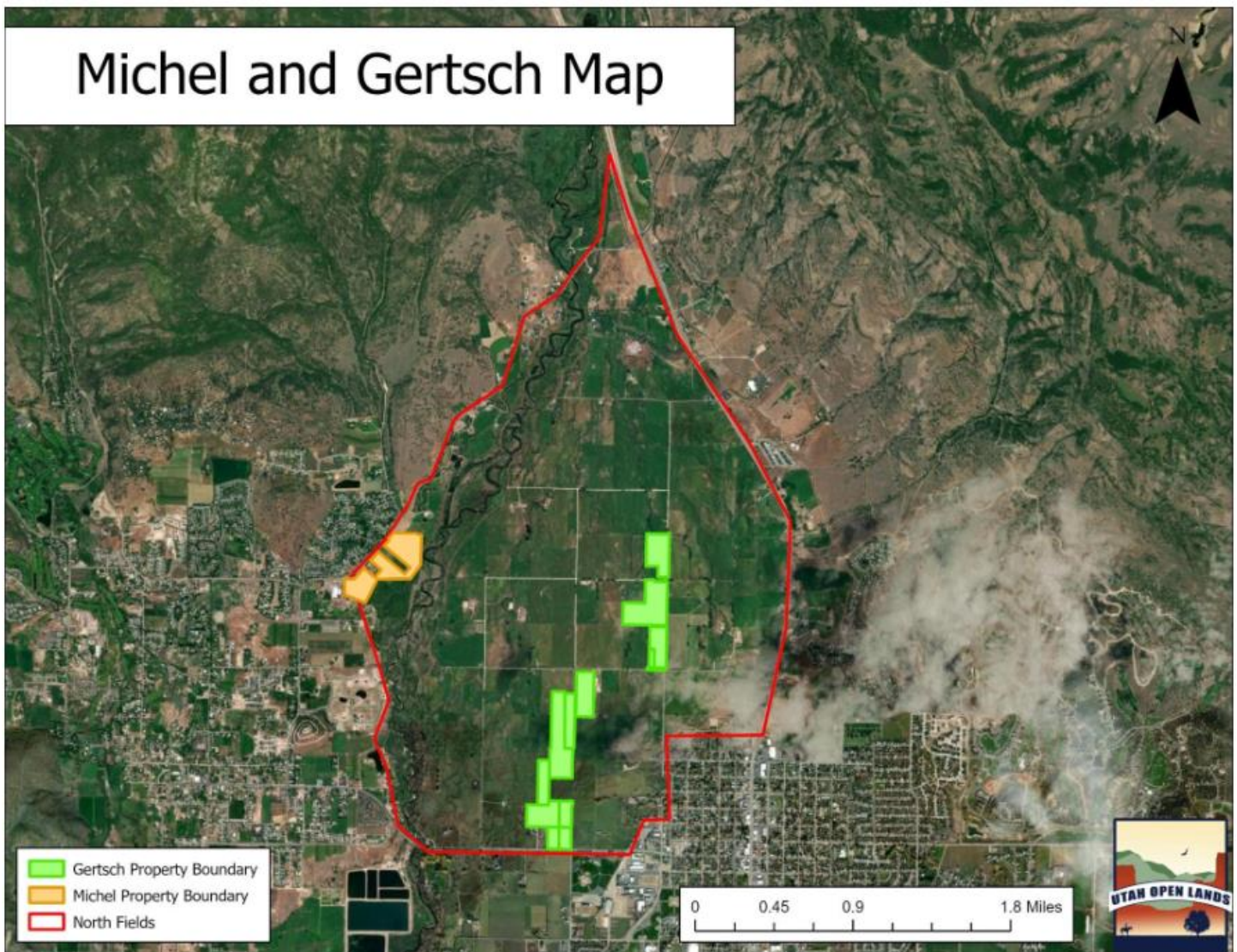
(5) current lots of record will be verified with County as to current development rights within the A-20 zone.

(6) in the case of extinguishment of the conservation easement by eminent domain on any parcel(s) in this NOI, then the Open Space bond money used for the parcel(s) will be repaid to Wasatch County per Wasatch County Code 3.06.04.

WOLB members found particularly important the following factors:

- The Gertsch Family bought the historical farm parcels in 1962, which parcels were in agricultural use many decades before their purchase. The proposed conservation easement will continue the Agricultural uses of the property, including growing hay and grazing/ranching with required water rights for existing & historical uses as well as protect many other conservation values. Parcels run through the center of the North Fields from 100 South to 2100 North. The proposed conservation easement is from the largest property owner in the North Fields.
- WOLB received the Laren Gertsch NOI on April 27, 2021; well before any preliminary draft Parkway routes were announced October 2021 (see Heber Valley Corridor Alternative Concepts | UDOT (utah.gov)). Because of the NRCS' lengthy funding process, the Laren Gertsch NOI **only recently obtained** NRCS funding for 50% of the Conservation Easement value, as well as McAllister Funding of another \$500,000. UDOT knew of this pending NOI since Nov 2022.
- Owners are asking for \$2.25 Million of Open Space bond money, which is less than the usual 20% county bond funding match given in previously funded conservation easements (usually the County's 20% match could be up to \$2.6 Million of the Open Space bond money).
- Owners are also giving a 25% contribution to the conservation easement value contributing \$3,250,000 Million out of the \$13 Million total easement value. This is an incredibly significant contribution, more than WOLB has seen with any NOI application; especially given the continuing Heber City annexation & density pressures along Midway Lane.
- Conservation easement leverages the Wasatch County Open Space bond money 6 times over with the matching NRCS funding, McAllister funding, and owner contribution, etc.
- Conservation easement will preserve significant acreage of historical farmland within the North Fields, which many call the 'crown jewel' of Heber Valley. It provides a much needed buffer between Heber City and Midway City and preserves the A-20 zone in Wasatch County. It protects Historic Farming area and uses from potential development because of parcels that front on Midway Lane.
- Easement property is also next to property that tried to annex into Heber City and appealed to Boundary Commission. This annexation proposed hundreds of density units.
- Most of the proposed easement property is also under the agricultural protection area protection previously given by the County Council.
- The North Fields Viewshed is important and irreplaceable to Wasatch County citizens and visitors. Easement parcels are viewed through the North Fields when traveling north/south on Highway 40, traveling on Highway 189, and on Midway Lane (SR 113), etc.

- The Laren Gertsch NOI parcels contain wetlands, Spring Creek, and Middle Ditch. The Utah Geological Survey notes that there is a ‘high’ stress level for parcels with frontage on Midway Lane, see Utah Wetlands.
- Proposed easement language must support the purposes of the easement from the County Code requirements—to protect all conservation values including historical agricultural uses.
- Proposed conservation easement supports County Resolutions 2022-09 & 2006-04 where the County Council supported the original Bypass route. This proposed easement also supports the other previous citizen referendum majority vote to protect agricultural zoning in the South Fields.



EARLY 2025 OPEN SPACE BOND PROJECTS

Two more Open Space Bond Projects were approved by the Wasatch County Council in 2025:

1st Project Approved: The Gerald L and Cathleen F White Living Trust NOI at 105 East 850 South, Midway, Parcel #: 00-0008-5162 for approximately 39.56 acres; for \$750,000 of Open Space Bond money. Submitted to WOLB in December 2024; and approved by the Wasatch County Council in February 2025. Proposed Conservation Easement value is approximately \$6,250,000 Million and will be verified by approved appraisal at closing.

WOLB gave a positive recommendation with the following conditions approved by the Wasatch County Council:

- (1) prior to seeking funding, the property owner shall provide WOLB and the County Council for review and approval a certified appraisal for the property, the total number of acres/parcels to be conserved establishing a conservation value of approximately \$6,525,000 Million as represented in the application; and
- (2) the certified appraisal shall include a specific description of the total irrigated and non-irrigated acres per parcel included in the conservation easement along with the historic water rights & water shares associated with the irrigated and non-irrigated property.
- (3) the title report and draft Conservation Easement will be reviewed by County Attorney per County Council directions.
- (4) a geological report for subsurface activity will be reviewed by WOLB and County staff.
- (5) current lot of record will be verified with County as to current development rights.
- (6) in the case of extinguishment of the conservation easement by eminent domain on any parcel(s) in this NOI, then the Open Space bond money used for the parcel(s) will be repaid to Wasatch County per Wasatch County Code 3.06.04.



Additionally:

This parcel is contiguous to DNR property of 32.5 acres, plus the Ken C Gardiner land donated south of that for another 38.1 acres, plus more open space to the east with the 76 acres of

HVSSD property, plus the Provo River Corridor east of that. This is an integral piece to preserve a large viewshed and other conservation properties within the SR 113 viewshed.

- The White Living Trust family bought this historical farm parcels in 1960's, which parcels were in agricultural use many decades before this. The proposed conservation easement will continue the agricultural uses of the property, including raising Llamas (the Pear Tree Llama Farm) thus continuing a unique and wonderful aspect to the Valley's agricultural heritage. This parcel also provides grazing for 50 head of cattle from the already conserved Kohler Dairy Farm in Midway. This proposed easement also contains required water rights for existing & historical uses as well as protects many other conservation values.
- The White Living Trust will also ask for matching funds from Midway City, the LeRay McAllister fund, and NRCS.
- The White Living Trust is also willing to donate \$1.625 Million toward the conservation easement cost, which is 24.9% of the projected easement cost.
- This parcel is contiguous to the Utah State Department of Natural Resources property (Midway Fish Hatchery) on the south side.
- Property is part of Midway's SR 113 scenic viewshed and provides needed open space buffer for existing residential density on SR 113. Also provides an amazing open space viewshed west of Provo River in that area.
- Easement property is northwest of property that wanted to annex into Midway City and appealed to Boundary Commission.
- Different types of wildlife, avian, foxes, etc., also live on property.
- Conservation easement will leverage the Wasatch County Open Space bond money 8.7 times over with the matching NRCS, McAllister, Midway City funding, and owner contribution, etc. This is a very high leverage of bond money, well over the average leverage of 6.59% (see 'Update on 2018 Open Space Bond Amounts – Jan 2025' agenda information).
- Proposed easement language will support the purposes of the easement from the County Code requirements—to protect all conservation values including historical agricultural uses.

2nd Project Approved: The GH Squared Properties LLC NOI at 155 South 2100 East, Heber City, Parcel #: 00-0008-9610 for approximately 52 acres; for \$1,000,000 of Open Space Bond money. Submitted to WOLB in December 2024; and approved by the Wasatch County Council in February 2025. Proposed Conservation Easement value is approximately \$7,350,000 Million and will be verified by approved appraisal at closing.

WOLB gave a positive recommendation with the following conditions approved by the Wasatch County Council:

(1) prior to seeking funding, the property owner shall provide WOLB and the County Council for review and approval a certified appraisal for the property, the total number of acres/parcels to be conserved establishing a conservation value of approximately \$7,350,000 Million as represented in the application; and

(2) the certified appraisal shall include a specific description of the total irrigated and non-irrigated acres per parcel included in the conservation easement along with the historic water rights & water shares associated with the irrigated and non-irrigated property.

(3) the title report and draft Conservation Easement will be reviewed by County Attorney per County Council directions.

(4) a geological report for subsurface activity will be reviewed by WOLB and County staff.

(5) current lot of record will be verified with County as to current development rights.

(6) in the case of extinguishment of the conservation easement by eminent domain on any parcel(s) in this NOI, then the Open Space bond money used for the parcel(s) will be repaid to Wasatch County per Wasatch County Code 3.06.04.

Additionally: This 9th project will finish using all of the 2018 Open Space bond money, as well as needing an additional \$58,000 in other County funding (such as roll back taxes) to complete. The first Open Space Bond project in 2019 was also a dairy farm. Now this last open space bond project is also a dairy farm. It is so fitting and proper that the Open Space Bond money continues this wonderful agricultural heritage within our Valley.



Additionally:

- The GH Squared Family parcels have been in agricultural use many decades as one of the few remaining historic dairy farms in Wasatch County. The proposed conservation easement will continue the agricultural uses of the property, including rotational grazing of 100+ dairy cattle, and other animals, as well as the Holmes Dairy operations. This easement also contains required water rights for existing & historical uses as well as protect many other conservation values.

- This proposed conservation easement and dairy farm operation also uses eight other same owner parcels in the North Field for their existing dairy operations.

- Along with the existing buildings on this parcel, two more building envelopes of 3 acres each will be taken out of the total 71-acre parcel, leaving 52 acres conserved out of the total parcel.
- The GH Squared NOI will also ask for matching funds from the LeRay McAllister fund and NRCS.
- The GH Squared Family is also willing to donate \$1.95 Million toward the conservation easement cost, which is 26% of the projected easement cost. This is higher than the usual 25% of owner donation toward the conservation easement.
- This parcel provides critical, historic, scenic viewsheds and open space along Heber City's Center Street/Lake Creek, especially close to Heber City boundaries. This property is consistently well maintained as grazing, agriculture, green open space.
- Property is in the County RA-1 zone, which allows development of one unit per acre. Given the other existing and proposed development adjacent to this parcel, this proposed dairy farm could be sold and developed easily given location and growth pressures.
- Conservation easement will leverage the Wasatch County Open Space bond money 7.3 times over with the matching NRCS funding, McAllister funding, and owner contribution, etc. This is much higher than the average leveraging of bond money – see the 'Update on 2018 Open Space Bond Amounts – Jan 2025' agenda information sheet.
- Proposed easement language will support the purposes of the easement from the County Code requirements—to protect all conservation values including historical agricultural uses.

OTHER SUBMITTED NOI'S (NOTICE OF INTEREST APPLICATION)

**These are at various stages of review.*

- Gifford Hickey/Rio Gaucho LLC, from Liz Lewis. This is a 20-acre parcel in North Fields, but already have a home on it so no development rights on it. Not sure if there are any other lots of record within the 20 acres.
- Densonock, LLC NOI, for 54.6 Acres. Submitted 11/2/22 (Owners are same for 'Two Girls Real Estate NOI' next.)
- Two Girls Real Estate NOI for 36.41 acres in North Fields. Submitted 11/2/22.
- Continuing discussions on JSSD Property in North Fields.

WOLB OUTREACH & ACTIVITIES

-WOLB receives Midway Open Space Advisory Committee & Heber City Open Space, Trails, Parks, and Trees Committee updates each month. WOLB continues to reach out to the Wasatch Farm Bureau, the NRCS - National Resource Conservation Service, & certified 503C Land Trusts: Summit Land Conservancy & Utah Open Lands. Their collaboration & partnerships are invaluable to fulfill WOLB's mission. WOLB wrote a Letter of Support to NRCS for the Utah Open Lands RCPP application in 2024.

-WOLB also reaches out individually and collectively to agricultural landowners that could preserve their land and benefit from the Open Space bond money with conservation easements. This public outreach continued in 2024-2025.

-WOLB continues to meet with UDOT about the proposed alternatives for the Heber Valley Parkway (Bypass Road) compared to proposed and approved NOI's.

-WOLB continues to inform landowners about other preservation options including the County's Agricultural Protection Area designation and application process.

WOLB congratulates Midway City for passing another Open Space Bond in 2024 and appreciates their leadership and vision to preserve Midway's open space heritage!

WOLB CONTACT INFORMATION:

-Contact WOLB and submit NOI (Notice of Interest Applications)

at: openlands@wasatch.gov

-Download the 'Landowner Packet' and 'NOI'

at: <https://www.wasatch.utah.gov/Departments/Open-Lands-Board> *Click on 'Information and Application' to download.

-Other **Videos** are available to learn about preserving land and conservation easements at website.

-**WOLB public meetings** are usually held the 2nd Monday of each month, 6:30 pm in the County Administration Building, downstairs conference room. Agendas are publicly noticed on the County's website. All are welcome to attend.

CONCLUSION

WOLB looks forward to more open space preservation in 2025 and beyond! We again thank former County Council member, Steve Farrell for his service on WOLB. WOLB will continue collaborating with the agricultural landowners within Wasatch County to encourage the use of land preservation and conservation easements. WOLB will work with the County Council on potential future funding for preserving our agricultural heritage and incredible open space. We thank the Wasatch County Council, the County staff, and Wasatch County taxpayers for their tremendous support & vision to preserve the magnificent heritage of Wasatch County!

WASATCH OPEN LANDS BOARD MEMBERS SERVING IN 2024:

Steve Farrell, Wasatch County Council Representative

Karl McMillan, Wasatch County Council Representative

Dr. Steve Stevens, Midway OSAC Representative

Heidi Franco, Heber City Mayor (Chair)

Dallin Koecher, Wasatch County HVTED Director
Tracy Taylor, Associate Broker, County Appointed Representative (Term 2021-2025).
Justin J. Keys, J.D, County Appointed Representative (Term 2024 - 2029)

WASATCH OPEN LANDS BOARD MEMBERS SERVING IN 2025:

Erik Rowland, Wasatch County Council Representative
Karl McMillan, Wasatch County Council Representative
Dr. Steve Stevens, Midway OSAC Representative
Heidi Franco, Heber City Mayor (Chair)
Dallin Koecher, Wasatch County HVTED Director
Tracy Taylor, Associate Broker, County Appointed Representative (Term 2025-2030).
Justin J. Keys, J.D, County Appointed Representative (Term 2024 - 2029)

PRESERVING WASATCH COUNTY'S LEGACY 