UPAC Approved House Bill 163 Talking Points
Provided by Kenny Wintch

As of the 2020 Winter Meeting, House Bill 163 (HB 163) has passed out of the Utah House of representatives and is currently awaiting passage out of the Utah Senate. UPAC urges this committee’s favorable recommendation of House Bill 163, for the following reasons:

- This bill creates a position within the Division of State History whose primary purpose is to create and maintain a highly functional, coordinated approach to site stewardship. This is critical – we all know that volunteers need professional guidance and mentoring in order for their work to be effective. Further, we all know that someone needs to facilitate coordination between volunteers, agencies, and even different offices of the same agency statewide in order to put in place a truly coordinated, statewide system.

- Most western states have a coordinated, statewide historic and archaeological site steward program that engages members of the public in voluntarily helping state and federal agencies “keep an eye” on the condition of the state’s most important historic and archaeological sites. This bill borrows from the best such model, that used in Nevada.

- This bill harnesses the long Utah tradition of volunteerism toward protecting important sites statewide.

- While Utah has for years benefitted from many dedicated volunteer stewards, the program has historically been “hit or miss” across agencies and across portions of the state. It has also lacked coordination and has ebbed and flowed over time. Bringing the program permanently to the Division of History will fix many past issues, ensure long-term sustainability, and maximize coordination and volunteer effort.

- Provide a valuable service not only to the public, but to state agencies like SITLA, the Dept. of Natural Resources, UDOT; municipalities and other subdivisions of the state; and federal agencies.

- Prove once again that the State of Utah not only cares about its valuable historic and archaeological resources, but that it is able to take a position of leadership in effectively, economically and functionally managing those resources for the benefit of all Utahns.