

Public Lands Update

- A plan by Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) to sell over 3,200 square miles of federal public land for housing and infrastructure was blocked from Republicans' tax and spending bill after the Senate parliamentarian ruled it violated reconciliation rules. Lee's proposal, aimed at transferring federal land in 11 Western states to local control, sparked internal GOP division and strong opposition from Democrats, environmentalists, and some Western lawmakers who warned it would harm public access and conservation efforts.
- Lee says he plans to revise his controversial proposal in hopes of including it in Senate Republicans' broad tax and spending cut package. He will submit the updated version to the Senate parliamentarian, who will determine whether it meets the strict rules of the fast-track process Republicans are using to advance the legislation.
- Separately, in an [op-ed in the Durango Herald](#), the [Energy Council of La Plata County](#) states that Public lands are vital to Colorado's identity and economy, supporting recreation, conservation, and energy production. Claims that new legislation, the [Productive Public Lands Act](#), prioritizes industry over the environment misrepresent its intent. The bill aims to restore balance to public land management by streamlining permitting and ensuring access for all users, including the oil and gas sector, which contributes billions to Colorado's economy and funds public services. It does not eliminate environmental reviews or public input. Most leased lands remain undeveloped, and energy activity is highly regulated. Colorado leads in emissions reduction, and its approach should be a national model. Stewardship—not prohibition—is the path forward.

Gold King Mine Compensation Update

- The [Durango Chamber of Commerce](#) has contacted Colorado delegates with [a letter](#) in strong support of [S.568](#), the Gold King Mine Spill Compensation Act of 2025, which is sponsored by Sen. Michael Bennet and co-sponsored by Sen. John Hickenlooper. It was introduced in February of 2025 and referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.
- The Chamber's letter emphasizes that nearly ten years after the EPA-triggered spill, local businesses and residents in Southwest Colorado are still dealing with economic fallout. Many of those businesses affected received little to no compensation at the time. The bill's proposed \$3.3 million allocation offers long-overdue accountability and relief. The Chamber urges swift passage of the legislation to help restore trust and support those impacted.

Medicaid Response Update

- The Durango Chamber of Commerce sent [another letter](#) to the Colorado delegation opposing proposed federal Medicaid cuts, emphasizing that Medicaid is essential not only for health care but also for economic stability in rural communities. In La Plata County, 1 in 4 residents rely on Medicaid, including thousands of workers. The letter states that cutting the program would hurt businesses by reducing workforce health, increasing costs, and threatening rural hospitals. Medicaid also supports the county's largest employment sector—health care and social assistance. The Chamber urges lawmakers to protect Medicaid as a foundation for both health and economic resilience in Southwest Colorado.

Visit Durango, La Plata County and the Durango Chamber Update

- May 6, 2025, La Plata County terminated its tourism marketing contract with [Visit Durango](#). Now the Durango Chamber of Commerce is urging La Plata County Commissioners to renew their partnership with Visit Durango by allocating \$1.3 million from the County lodgers tax. The Chamber [sent a letter](#) to County Commissioners expressing support for Visit Durango's mission to promote regional tourism and support the local economy. The Chamber emphasizes that tourism benefits the entire county—not just Durango—and that Visit Durango has a strong history of regional promotion. The funding would support marketing, events, visitor services, and

partnerships. The Chamber also supports developing a transparent MOU and encourages continued collaboration between the City, County, and Visit Durango.

Airport Update

- American Airlines will expand its flying of the larger Airbus A319 aircraft between Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport and [Durango-La Plata County Airport](#) beginning in September. American will begin using the Airbus A319 on Wednesday, Sept. 3, with flights continuing through Nov. 1. The aircraft will fly twice per day between DRO and DFW to supplement American's flights on a regional jet aircraft. The Airbus A319 seats up to 128 passengers in a dual-class configuration.

La Plata County Commissioner Resignation

- La Plata County Commissioner Clyde Church submitted his resignation June 23 with an effective date of July 1, 2025. By State Statute, the La Plata County Democrats must appoint a new commissioner by July 3.
- Church was elected in November of 2022 for his second term. He said he now needs to be a primary caregiver for his wife.

La Plata County Sales Tax Update

- The Board of La Plata County Commissioners is moving towards asking voters in November to increase the County's sales tax by .75%. The Board directed staff to finalize revenue projections for the increase and consult with bond counsel to prepare a question.
- Currently, staff projects the increase would generate about \$13.4 million a year. The reasoning behind the request is because of the low property tax rate revenues are significantly reduced, resulting in a structural imbalance that has the potential to affect service levels across the county.

RHA Sales Tax Update

- The [Regional Housing Alliance](#) (RHA) is discussing putting on the November 2025 ballot a question about a new sales & use tax of .2%. This would equate to about \$3.23 million annually. This money would be used as a funding source for RHA operations and the Catalyst Fund, Revolving loan fund, land acquisition, etc.

La Plata County Land Use Code Update

- The Board of County Commissioners met with the Community Development Department for a work session to discuss upcoming changes to the County Land Use Code. The process has already begun, with recent updates to the Sketch Plan process recommended for approval by the County Planning Commission.
- The Department has listed [priorities and timelines](#) for moving forward.

La Plata County Moratorium

- On June 17th, La Plata County Commissioners approved a moratorium on the installation of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). BESS is a technology that uses batteries to store electricity from various sources, like renewable energy sources or the grid, for later use. County Planning staff said the current regulations are not sufficient to address BESS, and the Land Use Code has no regulations specifically regulating BESS. The moratorium is in place until December while staff researches, develops, and puts forth amendments.

Durango Energy Performance Contract Update

- At its June 3 meeting, Durango City Council approved expanding the Energy Performance Contract to include energy-efficient HVAC upgrades at the Carnegie Building and Chapman Hill. An audit of city buildings found that the Carnegie Building uses twice the energy of a typical office and recommended a full HVAC replacement.
- The city has secured \$750,000 in state grant funding and expects \$1.09 million in federal rebates from recent solar projects. These funds could cover most of the Carnegie upgrade, leaving the city responsible for just \$200,000 to \$400,000 in up-front costs.

Durango Renewal Partnership (URA) Update

- Tom Kurek, Director of the Public Private Partnership (P3) Office for Colorado's Department of Personnel & Administration, spoke at Durango's Renewal Partnership (aka the Urban Renewal Authority) meeting. Kurek said the P3 Office has finalized a purchase of 7.07 acres next to CDOT Region 5 headquarters in Durango. The site has previously been approved for 140 residential housing units. They are now looking for local partners to take over the CDOT headquarters land in order to make a larger development opportunity for affordable or attainable housing on the north side of Durango. If the project progresses, this may become another URA in Durango.

Planning Projects

- On 6/12/25, the LPC Planning Commission approved the Gelande Ski Lift sketch plan. The proposal is to construct a ski lift in the southernmost area of the existing Purgatory Ski Area, generally from the Gelande Parking area to the top of the ridge within the existing ski area boundary.
- On 6/17/25, the LPC Board of County Commissioners approved the 9th Amendment to the Durango Mountain Resort (Purgatory) Development Agreement to revise Land Use Regulations pertaining to Grayrock Village for a density transfer of the residential dwelling unit types to allow for 62 single family dwellings and 38 townhomes and propose associated residential standards, and general updates to the Master Plan Map.
- On 5/22/25, the LPC Planning Commission approved the Rodriguez minor ADU, an additional dwelling unit on their property at 156 Linda Lane.
- In May, the Durango Community Development Commission approved a plan to subdivide an 11,250 square foot lot into two lots of approximately 5,938 square feet and 5,302 square feet at 364 E. 7th Ave.
- The Durango CDC also approved a Major Site Plan for Durango Dermatology at 350 Wilson Gulch Drive. The proposed project includes complete site improvements, utility improvements, and the construction of a new 14,984 square foot building.
- The Durango CDC also approved a parking variance for the HIVE DGO at 1175 Camino del Rio.

Meetings attended May 22-June 26

5/22 - 6 pm LPC Planning Commission	6/12 - 6 pm LPC Planning Commission
5/24 - 10 am BOCC Meeting	6/16 - 3 pm BOCC Work Session on Sales Tax
5/28 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time	6/18 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time
5/28 - 12 pm BOCC Work Session	6/19 - 6 pm Joint Planning Commission
6/3 - 2:45 pm Durango City Council Study Session	6/23 - 5 pm Durango Comm Dev Commission
6/3 - 5:30 pm Durango City Council Meeting	6/24 - 10 am BOCC Meeting
6/9 - 4:30 pm Durango URA Meeting	6/24 - 11:30 am BOCC Work Session on Sales Tax
6/10 - 10 am BOCC Meeting	6/24 - 6 pm Cong. Hurd Tele-Town Hall
6/11 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time	6/25 - 8:30 am BOCC Discussion Time
6/12 - 2 pm RHA Meeting	6/26 - 4 pm LAC Meeting

