

[View this email in your browser](#)



NRULPC Newsletter Vol. 9, No. 1

February 12, 2026

Contents: [Directors' Message](#) | [Evan Nye](#) | [Policy Cats](#) | [Desert Tortoise](#) | [Brandon Clark](#) | [Mining Law Summit](#) | [Jeff Menges](#) | [Affiliated Members](#) | [WRRC Conference](#) | [Communication](#) |

Directors' Message

Executive Director – Natural Resource Users Law and Policy Center (NRULPC), University of Arizona

I had hoped to introduce the candidates—or perhaps even announce the new NRULPC Center Director—by the time this newsletter went out. Unfortunately, several issues have arisen that have delayed the process.

A few members of the original Search and Screen Committee requested to be excused, which required us to identify and onboard new committee members. The University has been very helpful throughout this transition; however, it

several times.

I want to emphasize that this delay is not due to university bureaucracy. The responsibility lies with us, and we are working diligently to move the process forward as efficiently as possible.

Our new Search and Screen Committee members are:

- Carolyn Greeno, Director of Business, Finance, and Administration, UA Cooperative Extension
- Taylor Bowen, Agricultural Community Outreach, NRULPC
- John Lacy, Co-Associate Director, NRULPC

I sincerely thank each of them for stepping up to serve in this important capacity.

The current timeline anticipates informal interviews concluding by the end of February, with on-campus interviews taking place in April. If all goes as planned, we could have a start date by May 1 for the new Center Director. We have received 17 applicants to date.

Please rest assured that I am working closely with the Search and Screen Committee to identify and hire a permanent Director as soon as possible.

In the meantime, I want to thank everyone for their continued support of the Center. As we approach another funding cycle, I ask that you help share the importance of the NRULPC and the valuable work it continues to do across the state.

See you all soon!

Best regards,

Ed Martin

Director, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension



Welcome Evan Nye NRULPC Forestry Policy and Outreach Manager

As a young boy scout, Evan spent many summer days exploring and camping in Arizona's national forests. He is a proud graduate of Arizona State University, where he received his bachelor's degrees in political science and sociology. As an undergraduate, Evan lived and worked in rural Panama, where he discovered his passion for environmental policy while supporting restoration efforts in the Panamanian jungle. After completing multiple policy-focused internships at the state and local level, Evan worked to help elect Congresswoman Yassamin Ansari to the Phoenix City Council, leading voter and constituent outreach.



In 2021, he relocated to Washington, D.C., where he worked for the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition and later for Foreign Policy for America, leading outreach, policy advocacy, fundraising, and stakeholder engagement nationwide. Evan recently earned his M.S. in Environmental and International Affairs from Georgetown University, concentrating on Environmental Science, and is excited to join the Natural Resources Users Law and Policy Center as the Forestry Policy and Outreach Manager.

Policy Cats Spring 2026 Internship Program

Taylor Bowen

The Natural Resource Users Law and Policy Center is currently conducting a spring hybrid in person and online internship program. This internship is a

Inaugural Spring 2026 Intern Cohort.

Two students, Harper Ostrich and Olivia Carroll, are working with the Arizona Farm Bureau. Harper is a freshman studying public affairs with a concentration in environmental policy and a minor in animal science. Olivia is a current sophomore studying applied biotechnology with a concentration in food science, policy, and chemistry.



Harper Ostrich



Olivia Carroll

Two students, Ramine Mohebbi and William Santos, are working with the Arizona Rock Products Association. Ramine is a senior studying natural resources with an emphasis in wildlife conservation and management. William is a senior studying agribusiness economics and management with a minor in Spanish and business administration.



Interns have the opportunity to engage and be placed with a natural resource industry political organization for the semester on several fronts, including policy, communications, and membership, and will work closely with the government relations teams to advance policies important to natural resource industries. The NRULPC is extremely grateful for the partnership between the Arizona Farm Bureau and the Arizona Rock Products Association for taking a leap of faith to work with us for this internship program. The Policy Cats program would not be possible without their help, dedication, passion for giving back to students, and their hard work. Interns are gaining a broader understanding of the political landscape regarding natural resources in Arizona. All students are receiving class credit hours through the University of Arizona.

Just before the semester started, one of our interns, William Santos, had the opportunity to attend the opening day of the State Legislature at the State Capitol. Senator Tim Dunn was gracious enough to give our Policy Cat a gallery pass to enjoy the opening ceremonies from the balcony.

Photo credit: Taylor Bowen



Sonoran Desert Tortoise

John Barrett

In June 2025, a group of environmental organizations filed a complaint in the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2022 determination that the Sonoran desert tortoise (*Gopherus morafkai*) did not warrant being listed as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The plaintiffs assert that the Fish and



the tortoise population and that the decision does not account for threats posed to the tortoise by a number of factors, including habitat loss and drought.



The Natural Resource Use and Management Clinic was contacted by a group of people on behalf of their associated agricultural organizations who were interested in learning more about the lawsuit, including whether third parties could “intervene” in the litigation. Intervention is a legal procedure by which someone who is not named in the lawsuit can formally join in the litigation to try and protect their interests that could be impacted by the outcome of the litigation. Students spent their time researching the law related to intervention and provided the groups with basic materials to help guide their decision about whether to intervene.

However, the vision behind the Natural Resource Use and Management Clinic was not just that law students would have an opportunity to work with actual people on actual legal matters related to natural resources, but that they could take advantage of the depth of expertise and the University of Arizona and learn about the science underlying some environmental litigation. To do that, several students took the opportunity to meet with Dr. Bob Steidl, a professor of wildlife conservation and management, to talk generally about how science informs Fish and Wildlife’s listing decisions. “In practice,” says Dr. Steidl, “strategies to manage and conserve natural resources require both reliable scientific information and knowledge of the boundaries imposed by existing policy and law.”

Afterwards, one of the students reflected on the experience and said, “meeting with Dr. Steidl provided a great opportunity to further understand the issues surrounding the listing of the desert tortoise and the full effects of listing for the tortoise as well as local landowners.” She also noted that “talking with scientists and technical professionals” is “valuable for law students to provide context to their legal studies and to help bridge the gap between law and science.” Dr. Steidl also sees a role of working across disciplines, saying that “helping students of law and natural resources understand their respective roles and contributions seems like a useful way to foster appreciation for all involved.”

New NRULPC Advisory Board Member Welcome Brandon Clark!

Brandon Clark is the Director of Sustainability at United Dairymen of Arizona (UDA), a farmer-owned dairy cooperative representing 35 dairy farm families across Arizona. Born and raised in Arizona, Brandon's work is grounded in the realities of operating agricultural businesses in an arid, resource-constrained state. In his role, he helps guide the cooperative's environmental strategy with a focus on climate risk, water stewardship, and ensuring producers are positioned to meet evolving customer, regulatory, and market expectations without losing sight of economic viability.



Brandon works across the dairy value chain, supporting efforts related to on-farm data collection, greenhouse gas inventories, manufacturing operations, transportation, and customer engagement.

His role is often connective rather than directive. He works alongside dairy producers who are leading projects such as renewable natural gas development from manure, helps influence fleet conversion to compressed natural gas, and collaborates with operations teams on energy efficiency and resource management initiatives at UDA's processing facility. He also oversees sustainability reporting and third-party assessments, translating technical requirements into clear disclosures for customers and external frameworks.

Much of Brandon's work centers on turning complex sustainability and climate policy concepts into practical decision-making tools for producers and leadership, particularly in the context of water availability, land use, and emissions accounting in the Southwest. He is especially interested in how private-sector reporting, voluntary programs, and emerging regulation intersect with long-standing natural resource law in Arizona.

As a member of the Natural Resource Users Law and Policy Center Advisory Board, Brandon looks forward to contributing an applied, producer-focused perspective to the Center's research, education, and policy engagement.

Executive Summary of Mining Law Summit 2025 Presented by Melissa Sanderson, Retired, Freeport-McMoRan ([Full video presentation](#))

Melissa Sanderson argues that the United States is at a pivotal moment where **extraordinary opportunity and significant risk** converge in the mining and critical-minerals landscape.

After decades of under-developing its own mineral resources, the U.S. now faces the consequences of relying heavily on foreign supply chains—especially China—for materials essential to technology, defense, and economic security. The current administration is temporarily easing regulatory barriers to accelerate domestic mining and processing, but the lack of long-term policy stability creates uncertainty for industry.

Alliances with countries like Australia, Canada, and others are part of the strategy, yet these partnerships carry geopolitical vulnerabilities and ethical considerations. Global sourcing raises moral questions about environmental damage and human impact in regions such as the Amazon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sanderson also highlights the transformative role of AI and automation, which will reshape mining and many other industries, reducing traditional job creation and challenging societal definitions of human value.

She warns that the West is now spending trillions to rebuild industrial capacity it previously ceded to China, often engineering solutions for past mistakes rather than designing for the future. In a world of shifting geopolitical winds—illustrated by renewed engagement with Saudi Arabia—she calls for a coherent, forward-looking strategy that balances opportunity, security, sustainability, and moral responsibility.

Mining Law Summit 2025

- Looking to the Future of Mining: The political and Technical Landscape [website](#)
- [All videos on YouTube](#) from the Summit held November 18, 2025



In light of current news about Greenland we are also highlighting Anya Mallet's presentation [What's the Issue in Greenland](#) which covers Greenland's mineral resources and current legal issues.

Greenland is the largest island in the world and 80% is covered in ice. In some parts the ice sheet is two



Jeff Menges Named Agriculturalist of the Year by Arizona FFA Foundation

Rochell Planty, Executive Director of the Arizona FFA Foundation

The Agriculturalist of the Year Award recognizes individuals whose leadership, service, and commitment make a lasting impact on Arizona agriculture and the communities it serves. The 2025 Agriculturalist of the Year was Jeff Menges.

Jeff is a fourth-generation rancher whose roots in agriculture run deep. After growing up in Arizona and New Mexico, he returned to Arizona to continue his family's agricultural legacy. He and his wife, Suzanne, are proud parents of three sons and grandparents to five grandchildren.



A true product of FFA, Jeff was active for all four years of high school, competing in events like Livestock Evaluation, Dairy, Poultry, Horse, and Meats. His FFA experiences shaped his leadership and inspired a lifelong passion for mentoring youth. Some of his standout moments include winning the Livestock Judging Contest at the Arizona National against 74 teams from 14 states, earning Gold at the National FFA Livestock Evaluation Contest, and traveling with students to Louisville and Indianapolis, visiting places like Churchill Downs and Purdue University.

For more than 20 years, Jeff has volunteered as a Livestock Evaluation coach with the Safford FFA Chapter. He is driven by a love for working with young people, helping them grow as individuals while developing skills that prepare them for the future. Jeff often speaks of the meaningful partnership he shares

Through his leadership, mentorship, and unwavering support of FFA and 4-H, Jeff Menges embodies the spirit of the Agriculturalist of the Year. His dedication continues to strengthen Arizona agriculture and inspire the next generation of leaders.

The NRULPC is proud to have Jeff Menges as an Advisory Board Member.

Affiliated Membership Expansion

Ed Martin

The Center is pleased to announce a significant expansion of its Affiliated Membership. Our new Affiliated Members bring a broad range of expertise and professional experience that will enhance the Center's capacity to address Arizona's most pressing natural resource challenges.

This expansion reflects the Center's ongoing commitment to diversifying the knowledge and perspectives that inform our research, outreach, and policy engagement efforts. By drawing on the strengths of these new members, the Center will be better positioned to develop innovative, collaborative solutions that serve the state's communities and stakeholders.

We extend a warm welcome to all our new Affiliated Members and look forward to their valuable contributions to the Center's mission.

View all our Affiliated Members on our [Leadership and Staff](#) page of our website (scroll down to the Affiliated Members section).

Registration Now Open for WRRC 2026 Conference!

[Registration Website](#)



New Resources on the NRULPC Website and Blog

Website

- Several new [Affiliated Members](#) added.

Western Lands, Western Waters Blog

- No new posts at this time.

Natural Resource Users Law & Policy Center (NRULPC)

The Natural Resource Users Law and Policy Center (NRULPC) is a creative partnership of the University of Arizona's James E. Rogers College of Law and Cooperative Extension that grew out of grassroots discussions. The Center's aims are to collaborate with stakeholders, mentor student clinicians and fellows, provide scholarly legal and policy analysis, and address the underrepresented law and policy needs of the natural resource community of Arizona and the West.



NRULPC Website

The NRULPC website provides information on the about the center, student programs, leadership and staff, out publications and the Advisory Board.

- Vol. 1, Number 1 - November 2, 2017 - Welcome to the First NRULPC Newsletter!
- Vol. 1, Number 2 - December 22, 2017
- Vol. 1, Number 3 - February 9, 2018
- Vol. 1, Number 4 - March 19, 2018
- Vol. 1, Number 5 - April 30, 2018
- Vol. 1, Number 6 - May 31, 2018
- Vol. 1, Number 7 - July 24, 2018
- Vol. 2, Number 1 - October 19, 2018
- Vol. 2, Number 2 - December 20, 2018
- Vol. 2, Number 3 - February 25, 2019

The first issue of the NRULPC Newsletter was released November 2017. It is published at various times of the year, but generally about every two months.



[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [VIEW BY TOPIC](#) [VIEW BY SEASON](#) [OTHER BLOGS](#) [CONTACT US](#)

Western Lands, Western Waters

Hot topics in natural resource law and policy affecting the American West

[Blog](#)

Our Blog posts are carefully researched and written by NRULPC Clinic students.



[Regulatory Roundup](#)

Summarized updates to law, policy, legislative and regulatory changes. Information made available several times a year.

Would you like to be on our NRULPC listserve? If so, please contact [Sheila Merrigan](#).

Copyright © 2026 NRULPC, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

