

# WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER | 2020

## HARVEST DURING COVID-19

*Social distancing. Masks.  
What farmers are likely to see as  
they start up the combines and  
head out into the fields*

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Washington Association of Wheat Growers  
109 East First Avenue, Ritzville, WA 99169

# WHEAT LIFE

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The official publication of



**WASHINGTON  
ASSOCIATION OF  
WHEAT GROWERS**

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Ritzville, WA 99169-2394  
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\$125 per year

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# President's Perspective



## It's that time of the year

By Ryan Poe

Wow! Harvest is really here. This is an exciting time of year on the farm. You get to see much of the effort, energy, time and resources you've spent over the preceding months rolling into the bulk tank of the combine.

It's sure been an odd year with COVID-19 and the weather. As I write this in mid-July, we are finally seeing the warmer weather that's more typical of harvest season.

Overall, this year's weather has been wetter and cooler than normal. June is a big month for our winter wheat, and the cooler temperatures seemed to help our crop immensely. Combine that with rain that we don't normally see, and we are excited to get out and start combining.

We had a challenging time seeding last fall and ended up reseeding a big chunk of our acres. Typically, the wheat we get up early will outyield the later reseeded acres, but this year, that isn't necessarily going to hold true. The earlier-seeded wheat was farther along when we started getting rain, so it will be interesting to watch the yield monitor and see how the crop comes in.

While I look with excitement at a good crop to be harvested, it's hard knowing that others aren't as fortunate. Parts of Eastern Washington never got the rains we did, and I've heard that some farmers are getting a light harvest. That has to be even more stressful than normal with wheat prices and the uncertainty around COVID-19.

We have been working with the National Association of Wheat Growers to make the classes of wheat we are growing in Eastern Washington eligible for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. We've heard from U.S. Department of Agriculture agency leaders that wheat is still being considered. If we get any news, we'll post it on our website, wawg.org, as well as on Facebook and Twitter. If you aren't already, follow us on social media to stay informed of what we are working on.

Keep in mind that our governor has published a set of COVID-19 requirements for agriculture. I personally question the feasibility of many of them for dryland wheat farmers, and I believe his one-size-fits-all approach to agriculture is a mistake. However, rumor has it that L&I is doing spot checks, and the fines for not complying with the requirements are steep (upwards of \$10,000), so I will be complying as best I can, and I'd urge you to do the same. You can read more about the requirements on page 24. If L&I stops by your farm, please let the Ritzville office know at (509) 659-0610.

I hope everyone has a good harvest with minimal breakdowns and stays safe. This is a time of long hours and more people around the farm. Keeping everyone safe is a priority for all of us. Double check that all your fire extinguishers are charged, and make sure everyone knows where they are. Also take care when moving equipment, especially on the main roads. Just other day, I was moving a loader tractor down the highway to dump a load of wheat out of our home storage pit, and a truck and trailer didn't move over very far when passing me. They came way closer to my tractor than I was comfortable with! ■

All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.



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# WAWG MEMBERSHIP FORM

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<b>Grower or Landlord \$125</b>	X	X	X			X
<b>Family \$200</b> (2 family members)	X	X	X			X
<b>Partnership \$500</b> (1-5 family members)	X	X	X	X		X
<b>Convention \$600</b> (2 individuals)	X	X	X		X	X
<b>Lifetime \$2,500</b> (1 individual)	X	X	X	X		X
<b>Non-Voting Membership</b>						
<b>Student \$75</b>	X	X	X			
<b>Industry Associate \$150</b>	X	X	X			

## WAWG's current top priorities are:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ✓ Preserving the Snake River dams.  | ✓ Fighting mandatory carbon emission regulations.   |
| ✓ Maintaining a safe and sound transportation system that includes rail, river and roads. | ✓ Fighting unreasonable notification and reporting requirements for pesticide applications. |
| ✓ Establishing favorable trade agreements.  |   |

**If these issues are important to your operation, become a member today and help us educate our legislators and advocate for agriculture.**  
**We are making sure the wheat industry's voice is heard.**

## More member benefits:

- Greensheet ALERTS • WAWG updates
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- State and national legislative updates



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## Additional commodities added to CFAP, but not all wheat

In July, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a list of additional commodities that have been added to the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) and indicated that additional commodities could be announced as eligible in the coming weeks. Durum and hard red spring wheat classes are covered under CFAP while hard red winter, soft red winter and soft white wheat classes are not currently included in the program. The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) sent a follow-up letter to USDA calling on the agency to make assistance available for all classes of wheat and to begin providing assistance for 2020 crop losses as wheat harvest is well underway.

"CFAP provides important assistance to producers of hard red spring and durum wheat, two classes which comprise about 30 percent of 2019 wheat production," said NAWG president and Cass City, Mich., wheat grower Dave Milligan. "The program continues to leave out over 70 percent from other classes of wheat despite farmers facing historically low prices."

In the letter, NAWG notes that the 2020 harvest is already underway or even wrapped up for many of the nation's wheat farmers and urges USDA to consider local price conditions in evaluating economic loss being experienced.

## Grower organizations make difficult decision to cancel 2020 convention

Due to the uncertain time frames of current group restrictions and the financial implications of delaying a decision, the small grain grower associations of Idaho, Oregon and Washington regret to announce the cancellation of the 2020 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention. The event was scheduled for Dec. 1-4, 2020, at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Idaho.

The Tri-State Grain Growers Convention has become a premier annual event in the Pacific Northwest for small grain producers and industry partners. It attracts nearly 450 people from Idaho, Oregon and Washington. At the event, the grower associations hold their annual business meetings to direct their policy work and install new leadership. Jointly, the three states hear from nationally elected officials, high caliber keynote speakers, participate in educational breakouts, collaborate with industry partners, celebrate our industry and more.

"This was a very difficult decision to make, but we feel that with the current uncertainty and fluctuating social distancing restrictions, canceling this year's convention was in the best interests of our growers and our organizations," said Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers.

We want to express our sincere appreciation to the grower members and convention sponsors and exhibitors for their continued support during these uncertain times. State leaderships will continue their work on behalf of the association members as we head into critical legislative sessions.

The 2021 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention is slated for Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 2021, at the Davenport Grand Hotel in Spokane, Wash. Idaho Grain Producers Association, Oregon Wheat Growers League and Washington Association of Wheat Growers hope to see you there! ■

"If USDA is going to continue evaluating price impacts by comparing a pre-COVID time frame to another time frame, we urge you to look at cash price changes as well, as farmers are generally faced with lower prices locally than the price on futures markets, and the futures markets do not reflect the adverse price impacts being felt directly by wheat farmers," the letter states.

"While we appreciate the USDA quickly getting CFAP off the ground and the inclusion of certain classes of wheat, all wheat farmers have been impacted by depressed prices while marketing their 2019 crop earlier this year and now with marketing this year's crop as it's being harvested," Milligan said. "NAWG will continue to advocate that any future aid program, including CFAP, should provide assistance to farmers of all classes of wheat."

Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of



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Wheat Growers, has been in contact with Washington state's Farm Service Agency (FSA). According to FSA, wheat is still being evaluated for CFAP eligibility.

The changes to CFAP include:

- Adding the following commodities: alfalfa sprouts, anise, arugula, basil, bean sprouts, beets, blackberries, Brussels sprouts, celeriac (celery root), chives, cilantro, coconuts, collard greens, dandelion greens, greens (others not listed separately), guava, kale greens, lettuce – including Boston, green leaf, Lolla Rossa, oak leaf green, oak leaf red and red leaf – marjoram, mint, mustard, okra, oregano, parsnips, passion fruit, peas (green), pineapple, pistachios, radicchio, rosemary, sage, savory, sorrel, fresh sugarcane, Swiss chard, thyme and turnip top greens.
- Expanding for seven currently eligible commodities—apples, blueberries, garlic, potatoes, raspberries, tangerines and taro—CARES Act funding for sales losses because USDA found these commodities had a 5 percent or greater price decline between mid-January and mid-April as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally, these commodities were only eligible for marketing adjustments.
- Determining that peaches and rhubarb no longer qualify for payment under the CARES Act sales loss category.
- Correcting payment rates for apples, artichokes, asparagus, blueberries, cantaloupes, cucumbers, garlic, kiwifruit, mushrooms, papaya, peaches, potatoes, raspberries, rhubarb, tangerines and taro.

FSA is accepting CFAP applications through Aug. 28, 2020. ■



## Washington wheat growers gratified to see USMCA fully implemented

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) and the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) are hailing the implementation of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) as a huge step forward in the effort to stabilize the uncertain trade environment wheat growers have been dealing with over the past few years.

"The road to updating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the U.S., Mexico and Canada has been long and uncertain. We appreciate the efforts of U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to bring the USMCA to fruition and thank members of Congress who have supported this trade agreement," said Ryan Poe, WAWG president and a farmer from Hartline, Wash. "The success of implementing the USMCA proves to our other trading partners that the U.S. is open for business and willing to establish trade agreements that are beneficial to both parties."

The USMCA entered into force on July 1, 2020, following notification that Mexico and Canada had taken the steps necessary to comply with their commitments. The updated trade agreement contains significant improvements and modernizes approaches to rules of origin, agricultural market access, intellectual property, digital trade, financial services, labor and numerous other sectors.

From the beginning, WAWG and the WGC have been big advocates for the USMCA. Our grower leaders have made multiple trips to Washington, D.C., over the past few years to meet with members of Congress in order to educate them about the importance of a trade agreement with Mexico and Canada. Our growers have also hosted roundtable discussions about the need for the USMCA and worked with our federal delegation to provide them with trade and market information pertaining to the wheat industry.

"Washington wheat growers sell the majority of their crop to overseas mar-

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kets, so any trade uncertainty is cause for concern,” said Gary Bailey WGC chairman and a grower from St. John, Wash. “While Mexico and Canada are bigger markets for Midwest wheat growers than Washington growers, having that stability and demand is good for the entire wheat industry. We’ve put a lot of time and energy into advocating for the USMCA, so we are gratified to see it go into effect.” ■

## Washington counties designated as primary natural disaster areas

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue designated seven Washington counties as primary natural disaster areas. Producers in Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan and Yakima counties who suffered losses due to recent drought may be eligible for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) emergency loans.

This natural disaster designation allows FSA to extend emergency credit to producers recovering from natural disasters. Emergency loans can be used to meet various recovery needs including the replacement of essential items such as equipment or livestock, reorganization of a farming operation or the refinance of certain debts.

Producers in the contiguous Washington counties of

Adams, Benton, Ferry, Franklin, King, Lewis, Lincoln, Pierce, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish and Whatcom, as well as Gilliam, Hood River, Morrow, Sherman and Wasco counties in Oregon, are also eligible to apply for emergency loans.

The deadline to apply for these emergency loans is Feb. 11, 2021. FSA will review the loans based on the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability.

Emergency haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program land can sometimes be approved during periods of significant drought. The farm bill provides that when a county reaches D2 on the U.S. Drought Monitor, the FSA state committee can authorize emergency haying or grazing once the primary nesting season ends on July 1. FSA is monitoring the situation and will announce if any counties will be approved for emergency haying or grazing.

Counties that currently have at least a portion of the county at D2 on the drought monitor are Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Franklin, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, Walla Walla and Yakima.

If haying and grazing are approved, producers will need to submit an application to FSA and work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to obtain a conservation plan that complies with farm bill provisions for emergency haying or grazing. Haying or grazing cannot begin until the producer is approved by FSA.

FSA has a variety of additional programs to help farmers recover from the impacts of this disaster. FSA programs that do not require a disaster declaration include Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program; Emergency Conservation Program; Livestock Forage Disaster Program; Livestock Indemnity Program; Operating and Farm Ownership Loans; and the Tree Assistance Program.

Farmers may contact their local USDA service center for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is also available online at [farmers.gov/recover](https://farmers.gov/recover). ■

## Calling all cooks

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) wants your best recipes for appetizers, beverages, soups, salads, main dishes, breads and desserts. And we want them by the end of August!

Every year, WAWG sends out recipe books full of grower-submitted recipes to more than 40 Washington state fairs. The books are provided free of charge and are used as part of the fair’s baking awards. The last time we updated the recipe book was more than 10 years ago, and we are looking for some new dishes with new flavors. The recipes don’t have to include wheat or wheat-based products.

You can fill out the form on page 55 and mail or fax it in, or you can fill out the pdf on our website at [wawg.org/grower-education/](https://wawg.org/grower-education/). For more information, please contact Chauna at the WAWG office, (877) 740-2666 or [chauna@wawg.org](mailto:chauna@wawg.org).

The recipe book is also available for purchase at the WAWG office in Ritzville. ■

## Re-enrolling expiring continuous CRP contracts

If you have a continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) contract that expires Sept. 30, 2020, and you wish to re-enroll it in a new contract that starts Oct. 1, the deadline to submit the completed offer is Aug. 21. However, you need to start this process before that deadline to



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allow the Farm Service Agency time to generate the offer for your signature. If you do not submit a signed offer to re-enroll by Aug. 21, the land will become ineligible for continuous CRP/CREP. ■

## Combined PNW winter wheat production down

From the National Agricultural Statistics Service

Based on July 1, 2020, conditions, production of winter wheat in Washington is forecast at 122 million bushels, up 1 percent from last month and up 3 percent from last year. Harvested area, at 1.65 million acres, is down 50,000 acres from 2019. Yield is expected to be 74.0 bushels per acre, up 4.0 bushels from the previous year. Idaho winter wheat production is forecast at 60.3 million bushels, up slightly from the June 1 forecast and up 2 percent from last year. Harvested area, at 670,000 acres, is down 10,000 acres from 2019. Yield is expected to be 90.0 bushels per acre, up 3.0 bushels from 2019. Oregon winter wheat production is forecast at 43.8 million bushels, up 3 percent from last month but down 12 percent from last year. Harvested area,

at 730,000 acres, is unchanged from 2019. Yield is expected to be 60.0 bushels per acre, down 8.0 bushels from the previous year.

### Spring Wheat

Washington spring wheat production is forecast at 30.6 million bushels, up 29 percent from last year. Harvested area, at 510,000 acres, is up 5,000 acres from 2019. Yield is expected to be 60.0 bushels per acre, up 13.0 bushels from the previous year. Idaho spring wheat production is forecast at 42.8 million bushels, up 9 percent from last year. Harvested area, at 510,000 acres, is up 70,000 acres from 2019. Yield is expected to be 84.0 bushels per acre, down 5.0 bushels from 2019.

### Barley

Washington barley production is forecast at 7.28 million bushels, up 24 percent from last year. Harvested area, at 97,000 acres, is up 13,000 acres from 2019. Yield is expected to be 75.0 bushels per acre, up 5.0 bushels from the previous year. Idaho barley production is forecast at 50.9 million bushels, down 6 percent from last year. Harvested area, at 480,000 acres, is down 40,000 acres from 2019. Yield is expected to be 106.0 bushels per acre, up 2.0 bushels from 2019. ■

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- Gift a portion of the proceeds from your sold crop to Second Harvest.
- Return form and donation to your local elevator.
- All funds raised from Washington Grain Growers Against Hunger will be used to secure and distribute more food through Second Harvest's network of food banks and meal centers in the Inland Northwest.

"I believe we should dedicate some of our harvest to help hungry people. That's what my family is doing."  
*Bruce Nelson, Whitman County Farmer*

For more information about the program and an authorization form, see your local elevator, e-mail [WGGAH@2-harvest.org](mailto:WGGAH@2-harvest.org) or call Second Harvest at (509)252-6273.

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# POLICY MATTERS

## NAWG sends letter to congressional leaders on COVID-19 relief

Last month, as Congress continued debating over additional COVID-19 relief programs, the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) sent a letter to congressional leaders regarding assistance options.

The letter was sent to Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.). NAWG thanked Congress for the assistance provided to growers through the CARES Act, but reiterated that all classes of wheat have been impacted by the pandemic and should be eligible for relief. Under current Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) rules, only two out of the six classes of wheat qualify. In addition, CFAP doesn't cover any 2020 crop losses.

"As a representative of the wheat industry, we urge you to also consider specific options to assist wheat growers, including adding provisions to ensure that any aid program factor in actual price conditions being experienced at the local level; that all wheat farmers be included in the program; and that 2020 crop losses begin to be covered as soon as possible. We also urge you to provide additional and significant funding for procurement of U.S. commodities through our international food aid programs, as well as to consider some other potential options," the letter states.

Options NAWG put forward include basing CFAP eligibility on an extended time period vs. two, five-day

snapshots; using local cash prices rather than future prices; additional procurement funding of U.S. commodities through international food aid programs, as well as additional funding for transportation of those food aid commodities; and making the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program forgivable under certain conditions. ■

## USDA accepts 1.2 million acres into grasslands program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced the acceptance of more than 1.2 million acres in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands program during the recent sign-up period that began March 16 and ended May 15. The number of acres offered during this sign-up period was 1.9 million acres, more than three times the number offered during the last sign-up period in 2016.

Through CRP Grasslands, farmers and ranchers can protect grasslands, rangelands and pastures while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices, such as haying, mowing or harvesting seed from the enrolled land. Timing of some activities may be restricted by the primary nesting season of birds.

"This large and unprecedented enrollment is a reflection of the popularity and importance of CRP Grasslands," said FSA Administrator Richard Fordyce. "The program emphasizes support for grazing operations and plant and animal biodiversity while protecting land under the greatest threat of conversion or development."

Participants will receive an annual rental payment and may receive up to 50 percent cost-share for establishing approved conservation practices. The duration of the CRP contract is 10 or 15 years. FSA ranked offers using a number of factors, including existence of expiring CRP land, threat of conversion or development, existing grassland and predominance of native species cover and cost.

The 2018 Farm Bill set aside not fewer than 2 million acres for CRP Grassland enrollment. On Oct. 1, 2020, grassland enrollment is expected to be 2.1 million acres. CRP is one of the largest conservation programs at USDA. CRP marks its 35-year anniversary in 2020 with 21.9 million acres currently enrolled. ■

## Are you receiving your ALERT?

With their annual membership, Washington Association of Wheat Growers members can receive industry updates through the weekly digital Greensheet ALERT via email. If you are not receiving this ALERT, either we don't have your current email address, or our ALERT is going into your spam folder. Call our office at (509) 659-0610 to make sure we have your current email address. ■

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## US House passes FY2021 agriculture appropriation bill

In July, the U.S. House of Representatives passed its version of a fiscal year 2021 agriculture appropriations bill by a vote of 224-189. This bill includes several National Association of Wheat Growers' and the National Wheat Improvement Committee's research priorities, including funding for the U.S. Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative; Small Grain Genomics; Soft Wheat Falling Numbers Test Research; Crop Degradation; and the Genome to Phenome program. Additional resources were also allocated for U.S. Food Aid Programs and Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network. The Senate has yet to unveil its version of a FY2021 agriculture appropriations bill. ■

## Water Resources Development Act of 2020 moves forward

In mid-June, the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure voted the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 (WRDA 2020) out of committee. It now heads to the House floor for a vote.

WRDA provides authority for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to carry out water resources development projects and studies, as well as policy direction for implementation of the Corps civil works missions. Nearly 80 percent of traded goods that Americans rely on are moved through the nation's ports, harbors and inland waterways.

Among other things, WRDA 2020:

- Authorizes the construction of all 34 pending Corps Chief's Reports received since the enactment of WRDA 2018. Chief's Reports are the final recommendations to Congress by the Chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on rigorously studied water resources infrastructure priorities.
- Authorizes 35 feasibility studies for water resource development projects, including those identified through the public review process established by section 7001 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014.
- Directs the Corps to expedite the completion of 41 feasibility studies currently underway.
- Fully unlocks the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund by providing the authority to appropriate additional funds for harbor maintenance needs from the existing

balance in the trust fund. The current estimate of the balance in the trust fund is approximately \$10 billion.

- Directs the Secretary to equitably allocate harbor maintenance expenditures to pay for U.S. harbor operation and maintenance needs, while addressing the ongoing needs of the nation's largest ports, its Great Lakes harbors and emerging harbors.
- Invests additional federal resources for the construction of inland waterways projects and prioritizes the construction of projects identified by inland users, including the Upper Ohio River navigation system and the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program for the Upper Mississippi River. ■

## How are we doing?

Like something you read in *Wheat Life*? Disagree with something you read in *Wheat Life*? Let us know by emailing your comments and suggestions to [editor@wawg.org](mailto:editor@wawg.org) or mail them to 109 East First Avenue, Ritzville, Wash., 99169-2394. Please keep submissions less than 350 words. Submissions may be edited for length. ■

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## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Ever wonder what happened to all those amazing Washington Wheat Ambassadors? Are they running the world yet? Are they still in agriculture? Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram this harvest season as we will be touching base with a handful of former ambassadors. They will be creating content and sharing their stories with us throughout the summer and fall. Don't miss Maya, Hallie, JD, Nick, Morgan, Lacey, Gunnar, Tessa, Matthew and others!

## SHARE YOUR HARVEST

Did you know most Americans have never been on a farm? Well, it's true. What's also true is that most people have absolutely no idea what the harvest process really includes. We'd love to share more of the real Washington wheat farm life with them. Let's take our farms to their screens! Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram and tag [@wawheatfoundation](#) with images of your harvest story this summer. Or, email us your harvest photos, and we'll upload them for you. Here's to a safe and slow harvest this year! ■



Lacey Miller, a former Washington Wheat Ambassador from Ritzville, Wash., currently attends Knox College in Illinois where she plays softball and plans to pursue a degree in public relations or communications.



## Calendar:

Harvest Classic Golf  
Tournament, **TBD**

- Washington Wheat Ambassador Program application deadline **Oct. 15, 2020**. Information and an application can be found online at [wawg.org/washington-wheat-ambassador-program/](http://wawg.org/washington-wheat-ambassador-program/). Open to high school seniors.

## Reminders:

- Remember the Foundation in your charitable giving. Go to [wawheat.org](http://wawheat.org) to find out more about ways that you can support your industry.

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Deadline: October 15, 2020

This is a program of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers  
Contributions made in part by the Washington Wheat Foundation

# PREHARVEST PICTURE

What farmers need to know about harvesting the 2020 crop amid social distancing, mask rules

*Editor's note: The people in this article were contacted and this article was written during the third week of July. We all know how quickly conditions can change. Our hope is that the information in this article remains relevant throughout the harvest season. If there are updates, we will post them on our website at [wawg.org](http://wawg.org) and on our Facebook page.*

By Trista Crossley

So far, 2020 in Eastern Washington has proved to be anything but normal, from the weather, to politics, to pandemics. With harvest already begun in the southeast and southcentral parts of the state and quickly approaching in the rest, a bit of field scouting revealed a preharvest picture that's mostly business as usual with some extra social distancing precautions.

During harvest, elevators are one of the primary points of contact for farmers. The message from the elevators we talked to was simple: the truck driver should stay in their truck.

"That is going to be everybody's mantra this year," said Paul Katovich, CEO of HighLine Grain Growers. "We will have people spaced out. One person at this pit, one person at that pit. One person in the scale shack. One difference we are driving home is that when it's hot outside, stay out of the scale shack. It's just a natural thing to do that when there isn't much activity and there's a few people around to get next to the air conditioner. We can't have that. That's something that we need to reinforce and pay attention to."

HighLine Grain Growers owns 50 grain and seed handling warehouses primarily along the Highway 2 corridor from Wenatchee to Spokane. Katovich said the company has developed a response plan, including contact tracing, if an employee or an employee's family member tests positive for COVID-19.

"We have a good sounding board in our group. We can talk about it and be open and honest," he said. "We want to protect our employees and protect our patrons. We think of this platform (the HighLine group) in a way that is multigenerational. It's not ours, it's just our turn. This is just another event that we have to manage through. Overarchingly, we are here to be good stewards of the platform and pass it on in better shape than we received it to those that follow."

While Katovich doesn't see any huge red flags when it

comes to this year's crop, part of the area that HighLine Grain Growers draws from is very dry. He said the crop in Douglas County is especially distressed. Though the group is always on the lookout for quality problems, early indications point to a high quality crop.

"Every harvest seems to bring with it some kind of challenge, and we've dealt with a lot," Katovich said, adding that they'll be focused on how to keep the elevator plat-



form open for business in the face of a pandemic. "While I wouldn't be surprised if we roll through harvest just fine, the COVID challenge will be the defining event of Harvest 2020. We'll fight the battle that presents itself."

Down south in Roosevelt, Wash., Horse Heaven Grain was in full-on harvest mode. General Manager Larry Jensen said the social distancing measures they've implemented have been working well.

"We are limiting truckers from coming into the scale office. We are wearing masks, and of course, all our receiving pits are outdoors. If (drivers) are out of their truck, we can maintain a distance. We haven't had negative feedback, and it's not slowing things down," he said.

In late May, growers in Benton and Klickitat counties were seeing below average precipitation, and many were worried that the crop would be written off. Fortunately, parts of the area got some rain, but it was sporadic. Jensen



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said yields are all over the board, and growers in the Bickleton area are likely looking at a later-than-normal harvest.

"There were some timely rains out there that were beneficial to probably at least a third of the area," he said. "I think it caught a lot of people by surprise. We are seeing great quality and good test weights. In red winters, proteins are above normal. We just got started with DNS (Dark Northern Spring) and are seeing a positive increase in DNS protein and test weight. We have no historical problems with falling numbers. We are fortunate with that."

Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative operates 45 facilities throughout Whitman and Spokane counties in Washington, and Latah, Benewah and Nez Perce counties in Idaho. CEO Shawn O'Connell said the company has implemented social distancing and sanitization procedures in their facilities, and they have a system in place if an employee tests positive. He also encouraged drivers to stay in their trucks.

"We will dump the truck and hand them the paperwork. That's the safest and easiest way to keep control. We can't stop farmers or truck drivers from gathering if we have a long line, but our employees will not be involved in that, and we don't encourage that. We encourage them to stay in their vehicles at all times," he explained.

O'Connell said he hasn't seen such a cool and rainy growing season before. For the most part, he is anticipating a large, high quality crop. He joked that right now, he was concerned about everything.

"Right now, we don't know what we don't know. We have no reason to believe there will be quality problems," he said, adding that due to the size of the anticipated crop, storage capacity will likely be an issue. "Our focus with this pandemic, this

situation we are in...we are a service company, as the grain industry is, and we are doing everything thing we can to keep all the pits open for harvest because this is going to be a big one and a long one. We want everybody to be safe."

Equipment parts and repair stores are another point of contact for growers during harvest. All businesses *Wheat Life* talked to reported they had instituted social distancing and mask-wearing measures. Tom Herres, owner of Farm & Home Supply in Pomeroy, Wash., recommends growers call the business first to make sure it's not a wasted trip.

"We'll either have parts set out, or during business hours, we will bring them out to the vehicles for them. Whatever it takes to make the world keep turning," Herres said. Farm & Home Supply will also have a box of masks available "to keep everybody legal."

Marc Lange, owner of Class 8 Trucks in Spokane, Wash., said his business, which sells and rents trailers used during harvest, is taking a commonsense approach.



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"We will try to do everything outside," he said. "For trailer rentals, it's a signature and a walk around. We'll visit at a comfortable distance, six feet apart, and get you on your way."

Lange also encouraged growers to call first. Masks are being used, and truck interiors are being cleaned and wiped down with sanitizer between test drives.

"We will extend hospitality and guidelines per our customers' requests," Lange said. "Come on in. We are open for business."

For those farmers who need to contact their local U.S. Department of Agriculture offices, local service centers remain closed to the public, but employees are available by phone or email.

Jon Wyss, state executive director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA), said opening guidelines are changing frequently, but there's a chance that some local offices will resume appointment-only, in-person meetings during August. Social distancing requirements will still be enforced, with people staying six feet apart, and both producers and staff wearing masks.

"All offices are still functioning and performing duties," Wyss said, adding that his staff just completed signing up 111 percent of producers for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs while working remotely. "August is harvest, so things slow down at the FSA office, but with CFAP (Coronavirus Food Assistance Program) and crops being added, it's still going to be pretty busy. The staff we have have stepped up to this challenge, and they've done a really, really good job. I think producers are getting the same service as when we were in the office."

Wyss also said that nearly every FSA form, except for tax documents and documents that need to be notarized, can be signed electronically, even on cell phones. ■

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# Don't overlook the state's ag requirements

Businesses that don't comply could be fined thousands of dollars

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) wants to remind growers that Washington State Gov. Jay Inslee has released a set of COVID-19 requirements specifically for agriculture. The Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) has the authority to fine businesses \$10,000 or more for refusal to comply.

"We want to see all of our farmers and their employees finish this harvest safely. We encourage them to make every effort to comply with the governor's orders," said Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director. "While WAWG understands that these new health and safety guidelines are intended to protect farmworkers, we are deeply concerned with how broad, burdensome and unattainable some of them are and fear they will substantially increase the overhead costs of family businesses. We have communicated our concerns to the governor's office and have asked them to work with us to develop agricultural guidelines that are more in line with how work is conducted on dryland wheat farms."

Some of the more notable requirements include:

- **Cloth facial coverings.** Guidance states that employees are free to wear homemade face coverings that meet the minimum requirements. This does not relieve employers of the obligation to provide face coverings to each employee who does not wish to wear a homemade version. Nor may an employer require employees to provide a homemade face covering.
- **Physical distancing.** Employers, providers and housing operators must ensure physical distancing of six feet or more during all interactions within the scope of employment.
- **Workplace disinfection.** Employers must ensure that high-touch surfaces are disinfected prior to the start of each workday and before and after the morning, lunch and afternoon breaks.
- **Transportation.** Any farming vehicle that is used solely by one individual need not be disinfected until or unless another individual intends to use the vehicle.
- **Handwashing stations.** For employees engaged in hand-labor operations in the field, employers, housing operators and transportation providers must supply adequate handwashing stations at every location and

at all times that employees are acting within the scope of their employment. Employers must put in place adequate measures to ensure, at a minimum, that employees wash their hands for more than 20 seconds at certain intervals.

- **Hand sanitizer.** Hand sanitizer is not an adequate substitute for a handwashing station. Hand sanitizer must instead be provided at high-traffic and other strategic locations where a handwashing station is impractical.
- **Educational materials and training.** Employers must provide adequate educational materials and training to educate employees about the risks of COVID-19 and the required safety protocols.
- **COVID-19 response plan.** Employers are required to document and maintain a COVID-19 response plan.
- **Temperature check.** At the beginning of each day, employers must conduct a temperature check and review the symptom checklist with employees concerning themselves and their households.
- **Testing.** To the extent feasible, employers must ensure timely access to COVID-19 tests for symptomatic employees and must provide transportation as needed.

The entire guidance for agriculture can be found at [governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources/covid-19-reopening-guidance-businesses-and-workers](https://governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources/covid-19-reopening-guidance-businesses-and-workers)

The Washington Farm Bureau is working to distribute 500,000 washable cloth face masks to farm employees across the state. These masks are provided and delivered at no cost to the farms who request them or employees who receive them. They cannot be resold and can only be used for workers in agriculture. Farms or employers do not need to be Farm Bureau members to receive face masks. Please complete the form at [wsfb.com/agriculture-mask-distribution/](https://wsfb.com/agriculture-mask-distribution/).

"We've heard that L&I is doing spot checks on farms to make sure they are adhering to the governor's requirements. If that happens to you, please contact the WAWG office to let us know. We'd also love to hear how harvest in your area is going," Hennings said. "We wish everybody a safe and bountiful harvest." ■





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# Quality loss option now available

PRODUCERS CAN HELP PROTECT APH WITH NEW CROP INSURANCE TOOL

By Trista Crossley

Wheat farmers now have another tool in their arsenal when it comes to utilizing crop insurance to safeguard their livelihoods.

Beginning with the 2021 crop year, growers will be able to elect a quality loss option that protects their 10-year actual production history (APH), especially in cases where the loss wasn't big enough to trigger an indemnity payment.

According to Ben Thiel, director of RMA's Spokane Regional Office, the option allows producers to replace a postquality adjustment production amount in their APH with a prequality adjustment amount for any year in their database.

"The key is, for any one of those years you used, a notice of loss has to be on record," Thiel said. "That means for a year that maybe you had a quality loss but it didn't rise to the level of meeting your coverage level and you weren't paid an indemnity, you can still use this option for those years, but you had to have a notice of loss filed. Once you elect the quality loss option, you still select how you want it to apply. You can have any number of databases depending on how much you farm and how your unit structure is. It can also be used in combination with other yield adjustment options. There's no limit on how far back you can go. Some APHs, depending on crop rotation, could go back a number of years."

There is a cost associated with the quality loss option.

Thiel said it is based on the degree to which it increases a producer's coverage and will depend on the unique parameters of what and how it is adjusting.

He added that one way to think about the option is it's a way of increasing the overall coverage level without reducing the premium subsidy.

"Some producers may want to maximize coverage and elect 85 percent every year. They can't go higher than that, but if they've had some quality losses, this is just another option to sort of plug yields that maybe made their APH go down over time," he explained. "Its framework is somewhat similar to the yield exclusion option, just a different trigger. Yield exclusion is only eligible in years where the county yield for the crop had a significant loss as opposed to an individual loss. This has nothing to do with the county. Producers have the freedom to elect this as long as they have that notice of loss."

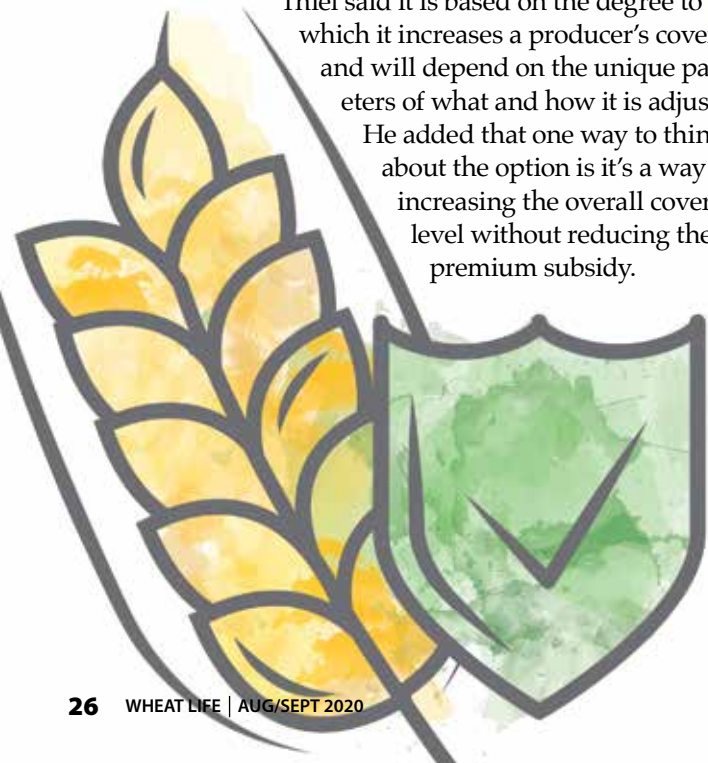
The new quality loss option was mandated in the 2018 Farm Bill, a direct result, Thiel said, of lobbying done by the wheat industry, especially the stakeholders in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

"I know, based on feedback from tri-state meetings and board meetings, that this has been raised as concern about how quality adjustments impact producers' overall APH. As I see it, WAWG (the Washington Association of Wheat Growers) working through NAWG (the National Association of Wheat Growers) was instrumental in putting this provision in the farm bill."

That effort started in 2016 when a large percentage of the Pacific Northwest wheat crop was hit with low falling numbers, a measurement of starch damage caused either by too much moisture at harvest and/or extreme temperature swings during the growing season. Growers were hit not only with millions of dollars' worth of quality discount fees at the elevator, but a better-than-average yield meant most of them didn't qualify for a crop insurance indemnity, even though the discounts were being used by RMA to calculate their APH.

At that time, industry organizations from Washington, Oregon and Idaho asked RMA to waive their rule that takes into account quality adjustments even when no claim is filed. The agency was unable to grant the request due to existing policies and procedures, and discussion turned to the 2018 Farm Bill as a way to address these types of situations. The wheat stakeholder groups of the three states, NAWG and members of Congress all worked to get a provision included in the farm bill that required the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation to establish an alternative to quality loss adjustments that didn't impact APHs.

"This is a culmination of a years-long effort to get RMA to give producers a means of protecting their actual production history in cases where a quality loss may not trigger a crop insurance payment," said Michelle Hennings,





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## Despite closed doors, RMA open for business

Ben Thiel, director of the Risk Management Agency's (RMA) Spokane Regional Office, reminded producers that while RMA's offices are closed to the public, the agency's employees are still working and available by phone or email. Many crop insurance processes can be done online or with a phone call, and any time an adjuster makes an on-site visit, social distancing measures and mask requirements will be observed. The agency has also granted some relief on inspection dates to meet social distancing requirements. ■

executive director of WAWG. "We appreciate all the work done by NAWG and members of our federal delegation to keep this issue at the forefront of crop insurance discussions and to get it addressed in the 2018 Farm Bill."

Wheat producers who are interested in the quality loss option have until the crop insurance sales closing date of Sept. 30 to elect it for the 2021 crop year. Producers should contact their crop insurance agent with any questions. ■

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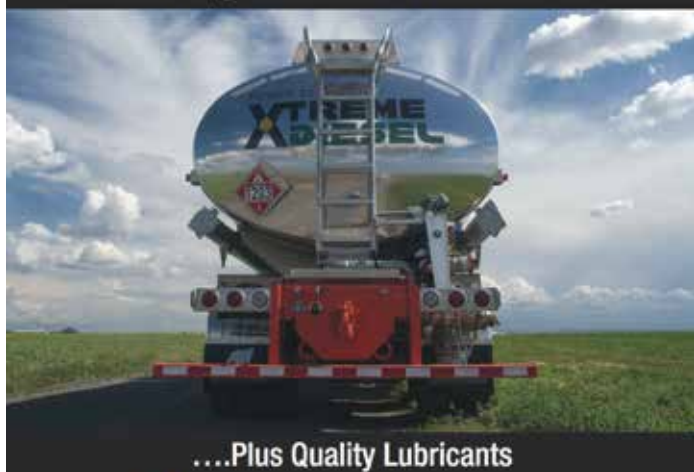


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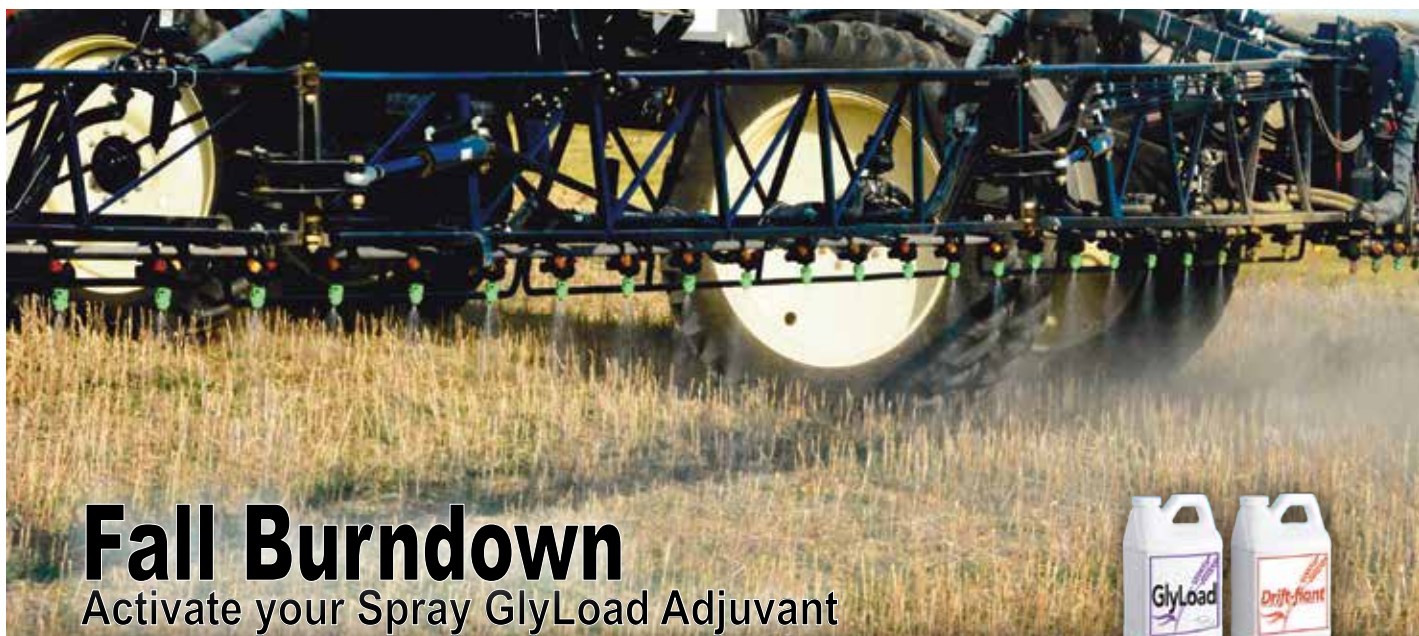
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# Tillage guidance

Ecology releases first set of ag BMPs to help regulate nonpoint source pollution



*“The goal behind the guidance is to provide more specific guidance tailored to what producers can do to protect water quality. We are hoping the guidance will be used by both producers and local partners working in watersheds with producers, such as conservation districts and NRCS.”*

— Ben Rau, Watershed Planning Unit Supervisor, Washington State Department of Ecology

By Trista Crossley

Back in March, the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) published the initial chapter of their voluntary clean water guidance for agriculture. This draft chapter, which is the first of 13 that the department plans to release over the next five years, covers tillage and residue management.

To help protect water quality, Ecology recommends growers implement a conservation-based tillage system that achieves a residue coverage of 60 percent or more or a STIR value of 30 or less. The STIR value is a soil tillage intensity rating used by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to evaluate the effect of tillage on soil health.

For lower-residue crops that might have a difficult time meeting those values, such as potatoes, peas, beans or lentils, Ecology recommends a set of secondary tillage best management practices (BMPs):

- Minimize tillage to the maximum extent possible and supplement residue cover to achieve 60 percent soil coverage; and
- Use supporting, sediment-trapping BMPs to protect water quality from erosion in cases where it cannot be controlled in the field.

According to the guidance, “Recommending a minimum of 60 percent residue coverage provides a more conservative lower end limit. It achieves an effective erosion control of approximately 90 percent, or more, while limiting soil organic carbon loss. While residue coverage above 60 percent provides for increased erosion control, few crops can generate enough residue to meet those levels. In addition, the types of tillage systems that can be utilized also becomes a limiting factor. The 60 percent residue goal achieves effective erosion control while allowing for a variety of conservation-based tillage options, encouraging greater adoption by more farmers.”

“The goal behind the guidance is to provide more specific guidance tailored to what producers can do to protect water quality,” said Ben Rau, Ecology’s Watershed Planning Unit supervisor. “We are hoping the guidance will be used by both producers and local partners working in watersheds with producers, such as conservation districts and NRCS.”

Under the Clean Water Act, Ecology is required to provide guidance on all nonpoint sources (NPS) of water pollution. The guidance is required to identify best management practices and include measures to control NPS pollution. According to Rau, the other major sources of NPS pollution in the state, such as onsite septic systems and stormwater runoff, already have guidance that is tailored to them or have a regulatory program in place.

“The agriculture sector was really the gap in the guidance that we had,” he said.

Rau stressed that the recommendations are voluntary, and he hopes they become an additional source of information for producers who are making decisions about what tillage practices to use. Ecology worked with NRCS to make sure there wouldn’t be a conflict with NRCS’s recommendations, which aren’t



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necessarily designed to focus on state water quality standards. Producers who implement Ecology's recommendations will be assumed to be meeting water quality standards.

"The intent is that if you implement recommendations, you are good to go. If there's an open complaint and they are implementing these recommendations, unless there's something that really went wrong with the operation, they are good to go," Rau said, adding that the recommendations are meant to be flexible, as every farm operation is dealing with different issues. "If you feel like there's a different way to protect water quality... that's just as legitimate of an approach. We want to be clear about our recommendations, but also, be clear that people have the option to put together their own system to meet water quality goals. The question at the end of the day is whether the practices being implemented protect water quality."

This isn't the first time Ecology has issued BMPs concerning agricultural practices. Rau said they released draft guidance for livestock operations about 10 years ago that wasn't particularly well received. This time around, the department reached out to agricultural industry groups and their own Agricultural Water Quality Advisory Committee for feedback and came away with two recommendations: to form an advisory group and to include a discussion about implementation of the recommendations.

"I think it's important that we have both pieces," Rau said. "We want to have good guidance and how effective the practices are in meeting the end goal, but it's also important to have the perspective of the producer and what it takes to implement these practices. What might be barriers to them, and what are different ways to address those challenges and barriers?"

The guidance recognizes that conservation tillage practices may not be suitable to all operations or crop types, and the practices that are most appropriate to protecting water quality for any given operation are highly dependent on farm-specific conditions and circumstances and the producer's priorities, crops and production methods. The guidance also recognizes that there can be a significant monetary cost to adopting conservation tillage. Rau encouraged producers to talk to their local technical assistance providers, such as conservation districts and NRCS, to explore what options are available.

The advisory group includes agricultural stakeholders, stakeholders for local government, local conservation districts, NRCS and Washington State University researchers. The first task was to divide the guidance

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into manageable chunks. Besides tillage, other chapters will cover crop systems, nutrient and pest management, sediment control, water management and livestock management. Each chapter will be published in draft form so the public will have an opportunity to review the recommendations and provide feedback.

“Our hope is that (the guidance) is useful to conservation districts and NRCS and ends up being something else they can put in front of producers when working with

them on that suite of practices they’ll be implementing,” Rau said. “I feel like the more information we can provide for producers, the better they can make informed choices. One of our big goals with the guidance is to provide that information so that individual producers can make those decisions from a really informed place.”

The first chapter of the guidance is available at [ecology.wa.gov/VoluntaryAgGuide](http://ecology.wa.gov/VoluntaryAgGuide). That page also contains links to an online comment form. ■

## Hangman Creek conservation efforts get funding boost

By Trista Crossley

In recent years, the Hangman Creek Watershed in southern Spokane County has become something of a flashpoint in terms of water quality and nonpoint sources of pollution. The Spokane Conservation District (SCD) is hoping that \$1.75 million will go a long way to helping clear the water.

The SCD funding is part of \$23 million in grants and loans awarded in June by the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) for high-priority, clean water projects in Eastern Washington. The SCD will combine the Ecology money with other state and federal funds to continue work already happening in the watershed and establish incentive programs for farmers. Starting this fall, a stakeholder committee will be formed to help determine how to best utilize the money over the next three years, said Walt Edelen, SCD Water Resources Program manager.

“That will get things kicked off and start moving all of the different wheels that need pushing to get all these things set up,” he said. “This really helps Ecology reach some of those (water quality) goals. It’s work that we do anyway, but it’s great to get support, get funding and be able to make a difference out there with these types of programs.”



The result of the work done by the Spokane Conservation District stabilizing Hangman Creek streambanks at mile 17. Photo courtesy of the Spokane Conservation District.

Some of the projects that the money is likely to be used for include:

- Continuing work on repairing streambanks. The SCD just finished a project at river mile 17 where they repaired about 3,000 feet of streambanks, shaped and stabilized them and planted vegetation along them. The Ecology money will go towards phase 2 of that project, focusing on streambanks in the Valleyford area.
- Approximately \$1 million of the money will be used for a conservation tillage loan program specifically for producers in the watershed. Edelen said he is hoping to get more money for this project considering that “\$1 million could be just two pieces of (direct-seed) equipment.”
- Setting up a cost share program for direct seeding. Ecology currently limits cost share at \$28 per acre up to a maximum of 250 acres per contract. Edelen is hoping to increase those limits. ►



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- Funding for the SCD's livestock program that provides up to 75 percent cost share on certain best management practices to help livestock operations address typical issues, such as management of manure and sediment.
- Funding for a riparian restoration program, also providing up to 75 percent cost share on projects, similar to the SCD's commodity buffer program.
- Funding for a large streambank project on the Little Hangman Creek.

Edelen said the SCD will be reaching out to producers in the coming months as the stakeholder committee is formed and as programs and plans become finalized. The SCD has also just submitted their renewal application for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which pairs federal money through the Natural Resources Conservation Service with local and state partners. To date, the RCPP in the Spokane River Basin has prevented more than 400,000 tons of sediment from reaching waterways; helped install 119 miles of commodity buffers; established no-till operations on 125,000 acres; and made about 3,500 acres of forest stand improvements.

"Put all that together and we've got kind of a perfect storm of opportunity for us to get projects done to help improve operations and really make an impact on water quality," Edelen said. "I think we have good support in Spokane to do great work and to continue our legacy of improving water quality in Hangman Creek."

The Hangman Creek Watershed has been the focus of water quality efforts in the past few years. In 2018, Ecology settled a lawsuit brought by the Spokane Riverkeeper in 2015 that claimed Ecology wasn't doing enough to clean up the Hangman Creek Watershed fast enough. According to the agreement, Ecology will complete an assessment of the watershed to analyze its health, document pollution inputs, prioritize improvement work and monitor the effectiveness of best management practices.

Edelen called Hangman Creek a "young



These photos from the Spokane Conservation District show the original condition of Hangman Creek streambanks at mile 17 and some of the recent stabilization work that was performed by the conservation district.

system" geologically, explaining that it is still moving back and forth, which naturally creates sediment. Human activity, such as straightening the stream, cutting off meanders and deforestation are also issues that have impacted the watershed. To investigate agriculture's impacts on water quality, the SCD has been doing edge-of-field monitoring along the creek between conventionally tilled fields and direct-seeded fields.



Edelen said the difference in the amount of runoff (both water and sediment) between fields is huge until the conventionally tilled fields get vegetation on them.

"Hangman Creek has a lot of fine particles in it, clay and loam, and when that stuff erodes, it becomes murky," he said, adding that there are reports from the 1800s that described the water as murky during high flow periods. "Hangman Creek is just a nasty beast. Will it ever be perfect? I don't know, but I believe, and it's my understanding, that there are definite improvements on the part of agricultural producers over the past decades." ■



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## Jumping in is nothing new to this farmer and his family

Phil Isaak, WAWG past president 1993/94

By Kevin Gaffney

Most Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) presidents spend several years working through the ranks of their county organizations. Many serve as committee chairs or county reps on the WAWG state board before going through the state officer positions. **Phil Isaak** jumped directly into the WAWG secretary-treasurer position at the request of then-outgoing President Chris Laney.

It wasn't like Isaak was an unknown quantity, however.

Isaak had experience on various boards and commissions before WAWG and many more in the years following his service in the leadership positions. And nearly as important, Isaak had already spent an entire year traveling around the state with his daughter, Brenda, as she served as WAWG Wheat Queen.

"During that year, Brenda was honored at a session of the Washington State Legislature; she met with the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture in Spokane; and was a public representative for Washington wheat at fairs, parades and other events all over the state of Washington," Isaak said. "This gave me the opportunity to meet with wheat industry leaders from all over our state. It helped me to develop a better understanding of the unique challenges growers faced in different counties and growing regions of our state."

By the time Isaak accepted the WAWG officer position, he had already developed relationships with many of the state committee chairs and officers.

"It truly was an honor for me to serve as a WAWG officer. It helped



me grow as a person and see things from a bigger perspective. We have so much diversity in wheat farming from regions like Douglas County to the Horse Heaven Hills to the Palouse country.

"I believe the true strength of WAWG is the grassroots nature of the organization. It allows all members to offer views and opinions to formulate positions on important issues. This enables growers and WAWG leaders to all speak with a unified voice, effectively articulating well-developed statements on the positions of the organization."

Two major critical issues were paramount during his presidency. Along with the federal farm bill formulation, an election year issue became a controversy regarding divided loyalties among membership who favored either long-time U.S. House of Representatives incumbent Tom Foley or the challenger, George Nethercutt. WAWG's long-standing policy of nonpartisanship was tested when the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) expressed support for Tom Foley.

"They put pressure on our state organizations," said Isaak. "A lot of growers were understandably very upset about this endorsement by NAWG."

Growing up in Hartline, Wash., Isaak had an early inclination that he was meant to be a farmer. He graduated from Hartline High School in 1962, shortly before the consolidations of small schools had begun. Continuing his education



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at Washington State University (WSU), he earned a B.S. in agriculture in less than four years. Offered an assistant research position working toward a master's in ag economics, he continued his schooling at WSU. By this time, he had met and married Ruth, the love of his life, and they decided to move to Coulee City to join his family on the farm in 1967.

The Isaak farm had been founded by Isaak's grandfather in 1929. There had been some very tough times during the depression years. Isaak's father decided he wanted to continue farming despite the difficulties facing dryland farmers. A somewhat risky expansion strategy was taken with the purchase of several hundred acres of marginal cropland. After some irrigation wells were drilled, that decision began to look better. Rather than spending large sums of capital on expensive irrigation systems, the Isaaks decided to build their own.

"We patched together pieces from surplus sales. It really didn't look good, but it got us started, and we learned a lot about irrigation system design and maintenance from those first lines we built. Then we acquired several used circle systems from some failing farms near the river, allowing us to put together quite a few circles at a reasonable cost.

"When I first came back to the farm, my older brother, Larry, and I didn't have a lot of fancy, new equipment," Isaak said. "In fact, most of it was pretty old. But as time went on, we upgraded, buying mostly used equipment to save money."

Sadly, Larry Isaak developed serious heart disease and passed away at age 42 in 1985. Phil is not involved in the day-to-day operation of the farm now, leaving that in the

capable hands of his sons, Brian and Brad.

Over the years, the Isaaks have continued to upgrade and now have a nice fleet of mostly John Deere tractors and combines. They run a very diverse operation that includes dryland farm acreage in a winter crop-summer fallow rotation in a region that gets approximately 10 inches of moisture annually. They have experimented with direct seeding, but have not adopted it. Isaak believes that the low rainfall makes it problematic in their area.

They have significant acreage in the Conservation Reserve Program and a very sizable amount of irrigated acreage with dozens of irrigation circles. That earlier gamble paid off big. The Isaak operation also includes cattle. They run 250 mother cows, the feed provided by their own alfalfa and hay crops.

Isaak has served on numerous boards and commissions that include the Washington Grain Commission; the Wheat Marketing Center; Black Sands Irrigation Group; the Washington Wheat Foundation; Grant County PUD; Coulee-Hartline School Board; the Grant County Economic Development Council; U.S. Wheat Associates; the Governor's Committee on Ag and the Environment; Key Bank; and the Coulee City Council.

"I have always had the philosophy that you serve on a board to give back to the community, but you must know when it is time to move on and let others serve. I don't believe in serving as a lifetime board member," Isaak said. "My favorite thing about farming is being able to see Mother Nature provide the fruits of your labors year after year. I don't mean only the crops. I also include the generations of the family that have worked the land, always striving to leave things better than when you started." ■



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A summer storm in Grant County.  
Photo by Marlene Poe.



# CHAIRMAN

## WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

By Gary Bailey



COVID-19 continues to be a serious issue as I write this column in early July. As we approach harvest, grain companies are updating protocols with growers to limit close contact and keep everyone safe. I could have never imagined that a mask would become another piece of standard equipment for us to carry in our rigs.

Even as we feel somewhat safe as farmers mostly isolated in the country, we are only the first link in the grain chain. The movement of grain depends on every other link doing its part. Transportation, from highways to rails to rivers to oceans, have continued to move our commodity, and I applaud the truckers, engineers and barge and ship crews that make it possible. And don't forget the inland elevator handlers and exporters who ship to customer specifications.

I am also grateful for Washington state's grain inspectors—and the administrators whose job it is to ensure them a safe environment—for continuing the important work of grading export cargoes of wheat, corn and soybeans. In Eastern Washington, teams of inspectors will soon be grading the 2020 crop according to new protocols that emphasize social distancing and put the locations themselves off limits to any outside visitors. I know offices will be working hard to ensure grades get back to farmers as quickly as possible.

Even as the pandemic has pushed other issues off the front page, it is not as if those issues have ceased to exist. Glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup, has been in the news a lot recently. Bayer, which bought Monsanto in 2018 for \$63 billion, will pay another \$11 billion to settle thousands of lawsuits brought by people alleging the chemical caused their cancer. There was a provision to allocate \$1 billion of the total to a scientific panel to prove once and for all whether glyphosate causes cancer, but last minute maneuvering and a judge's decision scuttled the requirement. Thankfully, Roundup will remain on the market.

A few days after the settlement, a U.S. District Court Judge in California ruled that Bayer is not required to include a warning on Roundup labels stating that the herbicide is known to cause cancer. California Proposition 65 requires explicit warnings for consumer products containing substances that may cause cancer. All along, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has said that Roundup isn't cancer-causing. An agency within the European-based World Health Organization, on the other hand, has found it is likely to cause cancer.

Bayer will pay the settlement bill today, but farmers will ultimately pay the price through increased costs, lost

innovation and market consolidation. The price tag for bringing new products to the market is already so high, with all the regulatory hurdles, that new products are almost nonexistent.

But both the Bayer settlement and the Prop 65 case bodes well for Eastern Washington wheat farmers. There is great irony in all of this. While environmental advocates push for fewer chemicals, I would argue many of these products have actually benefited the environment. Roundup has reduced the need for tillage, which can lead to increased erosion rates. Roundup also replaced more toxic chemicals, thereby reducing the level of toxicity in our soils.

At the same time, we can't ignore other issues that continue to confront the chemical, including herbicide weed resistance. Working with Washington State University, a best management practice was developed that is intended to give guidance on managing resistant weeds. You can see it at the Washington Grain Commission website, [wagrains.org](http://wagrains.org), under "Our Publications."

In the June edition of *Wheat Life*, you may have read about a trip to Australia that I was fortunate to take. Commissioner Brit Ausman, CEO Glen Squires and Washington State University (WSU) scientists Arron Carter and Ian Burke were also on the trip. The purpose of our visit was to learn from a country that has been battling weed resistance issues far longer than we have. On page 50 of this issue, you can read about WSU Extension weed scientist Drew Lyon's separate observations of the Australian system.

I don't believe it will be possible to adopt Australian methods wholesale, but we need to adopt their "out of the box" thinking. Australia's approach to weed control is more holistic and not about just using chemicals or relying on tillage. Weed management begins at harvest, and the Australians have come up with innovative alternatives to address weeds and herbicide resistance.

For example, when the Australians acquire new chemistries or work with effective existing chemistries, they don't continue using them until they no longer work. They put a chemical on the shelf for a few years before using it again. Rotations are also important and seeing their practices has made me re-examine my own.

Harvest is already underway in the drier areas of the state, and soon everyone involved in the grain chain's first link will be spending a lot of time in combines, trucks or tractors pulling bank-out wagons. I hope you have a successful harvest season and above all, be safe. ■



# ANNUAL REPORT TO FARMERS *From Glen Squires*



*“Providing the world’s  
best small grains”*

To Washington Grain Commission constituents,

The ability to juggle various tasks simultaneously is an important strength for any organization to possess—even when the juggling might not be obvious at the time.

Certainly, one of the benefits of this annual report, beyond providing Washington Grain Commission (WGC) constituents with an overview of our work, is the opportunity it provides to reflect on the past year. When I do, I see a whole lot of juggling going on.

It is remarkable how much our team accomplishes at the direction of the WGC’s 10-member board. Even in a year marred by COVID-19, the WGC’s ability to juggle has continued without a dropped ball, bowling pin or chainsaw.

Nearly a year ago, Japanese officials met with us in Spokane, along with a team from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), to address the second discovery of genetically engineered wheat plants found growing in the state in May 2019. It was the fourth such discovery in the U.S. since 2013. At a meeting moderated by Washington State Department of Agriculture Director Derek Sandison, the concerns of our longstanding partners were acknowledged, and solutions discussed. Later consultation among APHIS, Washington State University (WSU) and WGC commissioners and staff established a best management document for weed treatments that is also intended to thwart future biotech events.

Maintaining our relationships with established customers like Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Taiwan is one of the paramount responsibilities of the WGC, but creating new relationships cannot wait. Wheat markets are ever unfolding and failure to investigate new opportunities would be a dereliction of duty.

For almost a decade, the WGC has been working with the Idaho and Oregon wheat commissions and U.S. Wheat Associates to explore opportunities in Central and South America, known collectively as Latin America. The WGC remains convinced exports into the region can be increased.

Trade was the word of the day during the 2019/20 marketing year, which runs from the first of June to the end of May. Among the trade maneuvering that took place, I would cite the signing of the U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement as the most important success for Pacific Northwest farmers. The action puts U.S. wheat into Japan on a level playing field with grain from Australia and Canada. Without the deal, U.S. wheat was expected to lose market share in Japan. With the deal, a good night’s sleep was restored to many.

I would be remiss not to mention action closer to home. The release of a federal report on the future of the four lower Snake River dams was much anticipated. Written by three agencies, the environmental impact statement’s (EIS) conclusion drew a sigh of relief from farmers. The thick document, backed by copious research, concluded that dams should not be breached. The WGC, as well as the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA), of which the WGC is a member, were both involved in contributing to the report. It would be nice if I could declare the EIS conclusion signaled an end to dam battles. Alas, it’s unlikely the opposition will ever give up, and so neither can we.

The Commission appropriated \$75,000 as part of a consortium of river interests to tell the industry’s side of the story. Check out PNWA’s website link, “It’s Our River System,” to see how wheat industry engagement is being leveraged to ensure river navigation—as well as salmon—are being protected.

Finally, not enough can be said of WSU and USDA Agricultural Research Service scientists. It’s hard to imagine a small grains industry without their essential contributions in the lab, the field and at meetings with customers and farmers.

Whether it’s our commissioners juggling their farming activities with their Commission duties, or staff juggling deadlines, topics and meetings, I believe the past year has not only been unusual for its challenges, it has been noteworthy for its achievements.





# DOLLARS AT WORK

## A pause in the trade winds

Trade turmoil ratcheted down a few notches between the 2018/19 marketing year and the recently completed 2019/20 marketing year. Japan, after a couple of years urging the U.S. to rejoin the Trans-Pacific Partnership, signed on to a unilateral deal negotiated by the Trump Administration in September 2019.

Although most of agriculture's attention—indeed the nation's—was focused on the escalating U.S./China tariff war, it was the Japanese impasse that kept Gary Bailey up at night. Bailey, chairman of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), said of all the trade issues addressed within the last year, leveling the playing field for U.S. wheat into Japan was arguably the most important.

"Japan has been an important buyer of U.S. wheat since 1949, and we have built many relationships with our partners there. The trade deal was not just about farmers in the U.S. breathing a sigh of relief. Our Japanese importers were equally thrilled," he said.

The deal equalized tariffs paid on wheat imports from the U.S. with that of Canada and Australia, countries, that along with Japan, are members of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, a reconstituted Trans-Pacific Partnership



treaty without the U.S. The Japanese wheat market is worth about \$1.2 billion annually, with the U.S. taking the lion's share. Japan is the Pacific Northwest's (PNW) second largest customer for soft white wheat.

It's that status, as well as the esteem the U.S. and Japan hold each other, that was behind the Japan Buyers Conference conducted by U.S. Wheat Associates in Tokyo. Washington State University's (WSU) spring wheat breeder, Mike Pumpfrey, attended the meeting, discussing with the Japanese new breeding techniques like CRISPR-Cas9. The occasion also provided an opportunity for WGC commissioners to meet with the

Japan Flour Millers Association regarding club wheat and Western White wheat demand.

Other trade deals also crossed the finish line, thanks in no small part to the contributions of WGC Commissioner Mike Miller. WGC CEO Glen Squires said Miller has been a key asset for our industry "relative to several trade agreements negotiated by the U.S. trade office."

A revamped U.S.-Mexico-Canada treaty, renamed USMCA, was passed in December 2019. The treaty has less direct impact on PNW wheat, but it does offer huge opportunities for other regions. And as wheat interests throughout





# DOLLARS AT WORK



the country are fond of saying, “a rising tide lifts all boats.”

The Phase One deal with China was also struck during the last marketing year, but political and pandemic ramifications have muted its impact so far. Noting that China has never been a consistent purchaser from the Northwest—in fact, for years it quarantined soft white on account of TCK Smut—Squires is hoping the Phase One deal sets the stage for substantially greater export volume.

“We’re looking forward to larger and more consistent purchases in the future,” he said.

## Marketing: Education is key

Not all of the WGC’s attention is spent

looking eastward. With his fluent Spanish, WGC Program Director Joe Bippert has proven to be a natural fit when it comes to making connections in Latin America. Demographics reveal the region’s allure. If the 33 countries that make up Latin America were a single nation, the population of 639 million would rank it third most after China and India.

Among other duties, Bippert has been tasked with attending many of the region’s milling conferences, frequently in the company of teams from U.S. Wheat Associates (USW). Working with all three PNW wheat and grain commissions, USW hired a new wheat technical specialist for South America in 2018. The three PNW states are sharing activity support for

Andres Saturno equally, although he is formally employed by USW.

Saturno is working closely with customers in South America to provide training, technical advice and ongoing support. Since he was hired, he has also been conducting in-person seminars and technical training, work that has, for the time being, shifted to virtual delivery.

Although Bippert and Saturno are well versed in the many advantages of soft white wheat over competitor wheat classes, customers can be less aware. For the record, soft white has lower moisture, higher thousand kernel weight, higher flour extraction, a white bran and the ability to blend for a superior product at a lower cost. Not to mention breeders have been selecting for soft white quality for more than 25 years.

## Doing business virtually

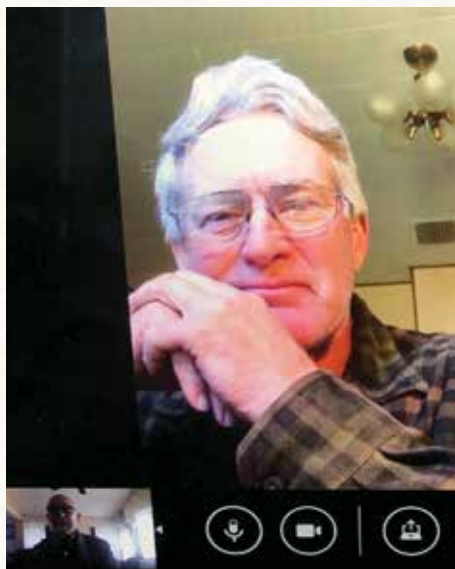
With meeting and travel curtailed in mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, one might wonder if clairvoyance was involved in the earlier installation of a video conferencing system at the WGC office. It wasn’t, but the system has been a boon in a world where COVID-19 has changed the way business is done.

The Zoom-like Lifesize network used by the WGC for video meetings and chats has been a lifeline, or in this case, a business-line, to continue the WGC’s mission “to enhance the long-term profitability





# DOLLARS AT WORK



and competitiveness of Washington small grains and small grain producers by responsible allocation of assessment funds in research, marketing and education.”

Links are made overseas using the Lifesize network, and meetings have been held among WGC employees when working from home. Scott Yates, director of communications and producer relations, now uses the link to record his Wheat All About It! podcasts.

Even the commission’s annual meeting in May was conducted by video. Ten commissioners and three staff were arranged within the board room according to COVID-19 protocols. Other staff were in the building, but monitoring the meeting on their computers from their offices. Visitors offsite also tuned in.

USW is working to continue to keep customers in the loop despite overseas and in-country travel restrictions. There have been some positive reactions from customers who have attended virtual events. Attendees like that there was no traveling involved within the country; they like that topics were covered quickly and efficiently; and they like the ability to ask questions of presenters all at once.

How long the new normal lasts is unknown, but for now, it has become a normal part of business life.

## Mike likes it!

Commissioner Mike Carstensen has mastered PowerPoint presentations and frequently uses them to illustrate the status of his crop during WGC meetings. The combination of PowerPoint, poise and a sense of humor goes a long way with the overseas customers he addressed during a swing through South Asia last November.

Customers are looking for connections with the products they use, and U.S. farmers are the genuine article. Hearing from them and seeing their operations via PowerPoint displays with video and unique drone footage is about more than the information being conveyed. In a sense, a single American wheat farmer becomes proxy for all American wheat farmers and serves to help customers get to know those who supply them with their raw product.

Carstensen was in Taiwan as a representative of Eastern Washington at the 56th anniversary celebration for the China Grain Products Research and Development Institute (CGPRDI) in Taipei. The celebration included the dedication of a new baking training center building and the 2018 Creative Chinese Fermentative Baking Contest. CGPRDI is

a leader in training programs for baking and Chinese traditional food products, as well as grain research, technical service and analysis in Taiwan.

Although Taiwan ranks 8th among the PNW’s top 10 soft white wheat customers, its impact is outsized. Not only a consistent buyer, it is also an innovator with many other countries looking to it as a wheat-use leader. The WGC agrees and has funded travel for bakers from other countries to Taiwan to learn, for one, their techniques for making noodles from a combination of soft white and hard red winter wheat.

Prior to the COVID-19 travel restrictions, 10 trade teams visited Washington, including the first teams in history from Myanmar and Malaysia. The WGC also hosted Philippines and Indonesia representatives during the Pacific Northwest Wheat Quality Meeting in Spokane. They provided valuable end-user perspectives on the evaluation of quality.

Speaking of quality, the WGC began new breeder quality trials during the past year. The new program enables private and public breeding programs to evaluate the quality of early promising varieties against established varieties.





# DOLLARS AT WORK

## Barely there, barley now

Barley hasn't had a lot of positive news in the last few years—and then Bob Brueggeman was hired last summer to fill the R.A. Nilan Chair in Barley Breeding at WSU.

Brueggeman came from North Dakota State University to take what he calls his “dream job.” Given that barley acreage has fallen precipitously over the last 15 years, partly as a result of corn's dominance but also because of other competitive spring crops, he has a big job.

Most of the barley crop grown in Washington, an average of 5.5 million bushels over the last five years, is used as feed for livestock. Barley, however, is a triple threat. In addition to feeding animals, it can be used as a human food and as an ingredient in beer. Brueggeman is interested in exploiting all of these categories.

There are two “barley” commissioners serving on the WGC's 10-member board. Most of the time, it is impossible to tell a wheat commissioner from a barley one. That was not the case at the January 2020 meeting of the WGC when Kevin Klein and Ben Barstow enthusiastically backed a proposal from Brueggeman to support the establishment of a malt barley quality lab at WSU.



Quizzed at the January meeting by other commissioners about spending a large portion of the barley reserve in one fell swoop, Klein and Barstow were unanimous. Given the growth of the craft beer market, it only made sense for WSU to have the facilities needed to evaluate malt barleys for taste and speed up the process of barley development, they said.

Mary Palmer Sullivan, who leads the grain commission's barley efforts, said Brueggeman's pilot malting facility proposal was exactly why barley

reserve funds (which are kept separate from wheat funds) have been carefully shepherded.

“With Bob's expertise and vision, the \$280,000 price tag for the lab has the potential to return many times that amount by increasing barley production and price, at the same time raising the profile of today's WSU barley program,” she said.

Craft brewers are a burgeoning sector, but much more barley is used by the commercial beer industry. Brueggeman





# DOLLARS AT WORK

believes the pilot facility can help make inroads there too, by knowing earlier in the breeding process whether a line meets the malt specifications required by the American Malting Barley Association.

## The word is collaboration

Scientists often talk about standing on the shoulders of their predecessors, but when it comes to today's research, the WGC believes scientists collaborating shoulder-to-shoulder will make better progress faster.

Researchers have taken to heart the WGC's direction to collaborate for the

good of the industry. That also goes for the administrative side of the equation. WSU College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences (CAHNRS) dean, André-Denis Wright, has worked hand-in-hand with the WGC to generate outcomes which not only benefit wheat farmers, but the state's agriculture in general.

Nearly 38 percent of the WGC's 2019/20 budget was devoted to 24 research projects ranging from critical varietal development needs to weed research, insect resistance and end-use quality efforts, among others. Extension

education continues to drive on-farm advances. Although variety testing program plot tours were cancelled this year, Clark Neely, the new director, collaborated with a team within the university to create several virtual tours. Find them on CAHNRS's YouTube page.

## Partnerships leverage capacity

The WGC partners with numerous entities to accomplish the work of the commission in research, marketing and education. All are essential in working together for a strong small grains industry.

## WHO WE ARE

### Commissioners of the Washington Grain Commission



**MIKE CARSTENSEN,**  
DISTRICT 1



**GARY BAILEY,**  
DISTRICT II



**BRIT AUSMAN,**  
DISTRICT III



**MIKE MILLER,**  
DISTRICT IV



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**Glen Squires,** CEO

**Mary Palmer Sullivan,** vice president

**Scott Yates,** director of communications  
and producer relations

**Joe Bippert,** program director

**Sheila McCrea,** finance  
and administrative specialist

**Parker Dawson,**  
system and data processing specialist

**Shari McCarthy,**  
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## Resistant weed strategies from Down Under

By Drew Lyon

I've spent a good deal of my time in recent years working on herbicide resistance, observing in real time as Eastern Washington wheat growers lose effective herbicides as resistance in weeds, including Italian ryegrass and downy brome, grows.

The phenomenon is not limited to this region. The Midwest is well ahead of the Pacific Northwest (PNW) in confronting herbicide resistance, but it is Australia that faces what may be the most daunting herbicide resistance issues in the world.

As a result, Australian wheat growers have had to think outside of the box to address resistance issues. This includes using nonchemical approaches to manage herbicide-resistant weed populations. One that I find particularly interesting is called Harvest Weed Seed Control (HWSC).

HWSC is an innovative, nonchemical approach that takes advantage of seed retention of the plant at maturity in many dominant annual weed species.

I connected with Dr. Michael Walsh, currently with the University of Sydney, shortly after arriving in Pullman in 2012. Dr. Walsh has been a leader in HWSC, and he served as my mentor on the topic. In October and November 2018, I spent seven weeks in Australia with Dr. Walsh on a visiting professorship from the University of Sydney to learn more about HWSC.

There is high weed seed retention at crop maturity by dominant annual weeds in Australian cropping systems. Under normal conditions, these seeds are collected, threshed, separated from the grain and expelled from the combine in the chaff fraction during harvest. The chaff material containing weed seed is then spread back across the harvest swath, a process that often results in seeding hundreds of thousands of seeds.

Disrupting this process is the goal of several HWSC systems that have been developed. By targeting the chaff fraction during harvest, reseeding of weeds contained in the chaff can be prevented.

I have used funds from my Washington Grain Commission Endowed Chair fund to support research

**Table 1.** Seed retention at harvest for weeds of concern in wheat production systems of the inland Pacific Northwest.

Weed species	Seed retention (%)	Harvest weed seed control potential
Cereal rye	49-61	Intermediate
Downy brome	25-87	Low to high
Italian ryegrass	27-50	Low to intermediate
Jointed goatgrass*	>75	Intermediate
Rattail fescue	11-90	Low to high
Wild oat*	39	Low

\*DATA FROM THE GREAT PLAINS (WALSH ET AL., 2018).

on narrow-windrow burning and weed seed retention in Italian ryegrass. Recent studies on seed retention of Italian ryegrass were not promising. I found in winter wheat that site conditions, such as slope position, influenced the rate of seed shattering in Italian ryegrass, with less than 50 percent of the seed remaining in the head at wheat maturity.

Consequently, HWSC has low to intermediate potential for the management of Italian ryegrass in winter wheat. However, preliminary data suggests that Italian ryegrass seed retention at harvest may be greater in spring wheat than in winter wheat. In work conducted in northeast Oregon, Dr. Judit Barroso found that downy brome seed retention at harvest varied widely (see Table 1), with retention rates being higher at wetter, cooler sites than at drier, warmer sites. Cereal rye (aka feral rye) was also found to be a good candidate species for HWSC in the PNW.

Narrow-windrow burning is currently the most commonly used HWSC system in Australia. With this practice, a chute is attached to the rear of the combine that concentrates the chaff and straw into a 20- to 24-inch windrow. These windrows are subsequently burned when environmental conditions are favorable.

Research in Australia and Eastern Washington has shown that 99 percent of annual ryegrass seed in the windrow is destroyed by this method. However, this



system has several drawbacks, including the destruction of crop residues critical for collecting and retaining soil water, reducing soil erosion and promoting soil health. The practice also results in smoke, which poses health and safety issues.

The bale direct system uses a large square baler attached directly behind the combine that builds bales from the chaff, which contains the weed seeds, and straw exiting the combine. This system requires available markets for the baled material. Furthermore, there are concerns over removing too much crop residue, which is a source for both carbon and plant nutrients, not to mention possible spreading of weed seeds as bales move on roads and highways.

The development and integration of impact mills, such as the integrated Harrington Seed Destructor or the Redekop MAV Seed Control Unit, into the rear of combines, has shown great promise for processing the chaff during harvest to sufficiently control weed seeds. For many growers, however, the cost of purchasing and operating the equipment is prohibitively high, but it is likely that as development continues and costs come down, this may be the preferred HWSC system.

Chaff lining and chaff tramlining are two other low-cost HWSC systems that are rapidly gaining popularity in Australia. Attachments at the rear of the combine collect and place chaff into 10- to 12-inch rows, either between stubble rows directly behind the combine (chaff lining) or in the wheel tracks (chaff tramlining). Although controlled traffic allows chaff lines to be placed in the same spot every year, it is not critical to the success of chaff lining, although it is required for chaff tramlining.

Concentrating the chaff in narrow rows creates a hostile environment for weed seed germination and emergence. Those weeds that do emerge and grow are concentrated in the narrow rows where they compete with each other, thus reducing seed production, and affect less of the crop area. Subsequent weed control efforts, if required, can be concentrated on these narrow strips in the field. Chaff tramlining places the seed in the wheel rows where the soil is compacted, making growth and development even more difficult.

Perhaps the most significant change in weed management strategy in Australia has been a shift to focus on reducing the weed seed bank and maintaining low seed bank levels by whatever means possible. They call this a “zero tolerance policy” or a “take no prisoners” approach.

This approach runs contrary to that advocated for many years—and still effectively used for insect and dis-



Chaff lining, where the chaff and weed seeds are laid down in a narrow line behind the combine. Weed seeds in the chaff struggle to survive in this inhospitable environment.

ease control—of using economic thresholds to determine if weed density is great enough to warrant the expense of applying an herbicide or using tillage. However, because the likelihood of selecting for herbicide resistance in a weed population increases as the number of plants treated with a particular herbicide increases, keeping weed numbers as low as possible reduces the chances for selecting a resistant weed biotype.

The experience in Australia over the past decade has shown that minimizing seed set or seed bank replenishment to sustain low weed seed bank levels is critical for profitable grain crop production. Harvest weed seed control is a new tool that can help manage weed seed bank levels in Eastern Washington.

For more information on harvest weed seed control see “Harvest Weed Seed Control: Applications for PNW Wheat Production Systems” ([pubs.extension.wsu.edu/harvest-weed-seed-control-applications-for-pnw-wheat-production-systems](https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/harvest-weed-seed-control-applications-for-pnw-wheat-production-systems)) available on the Herbicide Resistance Resources page ([smallgrains.wsu.edu/herbicide-resistance-resources](https://smallgrains.wsu.edu/herbicide-resistance-resources)) on the Wheat and Small Grains website ([smallgrains.wsu.edu](https://smallgrains.wsu.edu)). ■

# WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

## Trio of circumstances driving wheat market



By Mike Krueger

The markets are getting more complicated with more moving parts than ever before, but for now, we continue to deal with three primary market factors:

- COVID-19 and its impact on demand;
- China's compliance with the Phase One trade agreement; and
- World production among the major wheat exporting countries.

COVID-19 has flared upwards throughout this summer with a number of states restricting elements of their economies rather than opening to more economic activity. Market analysts frequently cite "demand concerns over COVID-19" as the reason markets are lower.

The fact is, we've seen little evidence of consumption loss due to the virus. There are strong arguments that demand has increased as consumers build supplies of flour and pasta at home. U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) overall supply and demand numbers continue to point to increased demand, not a reduction.

China's compliance with the Phase One trade agreement with the U.S. is probably the most important issue affecting markets over the longer term. They agreed to purchase up to \$40 billion in U.S. agricultural products each year of the agreement. They are far behind the pace necessary to reach that goal in 2020. Products they will buy range from wheat, corn and soybeans to DDGs, pork, poultry, etc. We have not seen any definitive list of the quantities of commodities they will buy, although a number of possibilities necessary to attain the dollar goal have been floated.

The numbers are big. For example, some analysts think they will need to purchase more than 40 million metric tons (mmt) of soybeans and up to 10 mmt of corn and 5 mmt of wheat to have a chance of getting to \$40 billion. These levels would surpass previous annual levels by a wide margin, including soybeans.

China's pace of purchases accelerated sharply in mid-July with sales announcements in one week totaling 3 mmt of corn and nearly 2 mmt of soybeans. China has also purchased U.S. hard red winter wheat and hard

**Table 1: US Wheat Production by Class (million bushels)**

	2020	2019	% Change
Hard Red Winter	720	883	-18%
Soft Red Winter	280	240	+17%
White	227	231	0%
Durum	55.6	53.7	+1%
Other Spring	550	562	-2%
All Winter Wheat	1,218	1,304	-6%
All Wheat	1,823	1,920	-5%

red spring wheat, and there have been rumors about purchases of soft red winter wheat. These purchases had little immediate impact on prices, although Chicago wheat futures were up more than 20 cents after rumors of soft red winter wheat sales surfaced.

Markets appear more worried about the ongoing negative political rhetoric between the U.S. and China that could derail the entire trade agreement. The latest issue is the crackdown by China in Hong Kong and the imposition of more U.S. sanctions because of the political situation there. The next question is, will there be a "Phase Two" agreement, or even talks?

The July USDA WASDE (World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates) numbers made few changes in the U.S. or world wheat outlooks. U.S. winter wheat production estimates were also updated. Table 1 shows a quick comparison with 2019 winter wheat production and 2020 production.

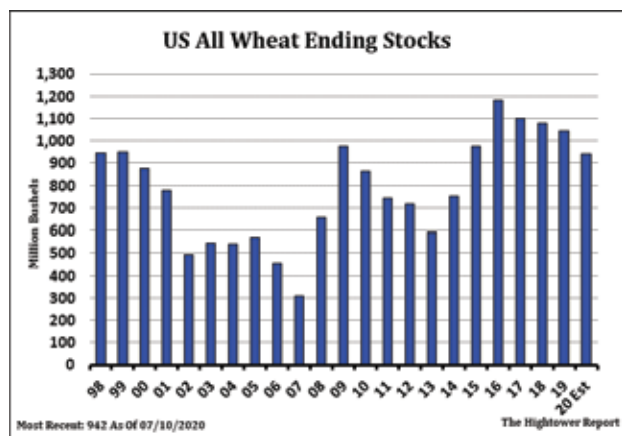
Among major wheat exporting countries, there are some significant changes in wheat production. The two biggest changes are in Australia and the EU. Australia's wheat crop is forecast to jump from 15 mmt following last year's severe drought to 26 mmt this year. Conditions are certainly much better than last year, but the critical season is September and October.

The EU crop was cut by drought this year. It is now forecast to be down 14 mmt from 2019. There are only minor changes expected among the other major exporters. We note that USDA is forecasting a record wheat yield in Canada. That might be difficult to achieve, but we won't know the final number until September.



U.S. wheat ending supplies are now forecast to drop from 1.04 billion bushels last year to 942 million bushels this year. We see three potential issues with these estimates:

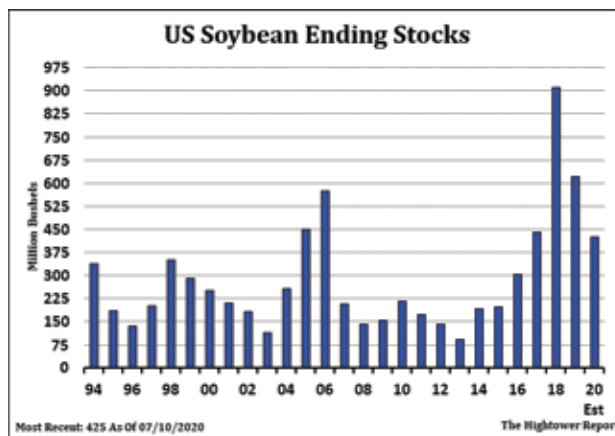
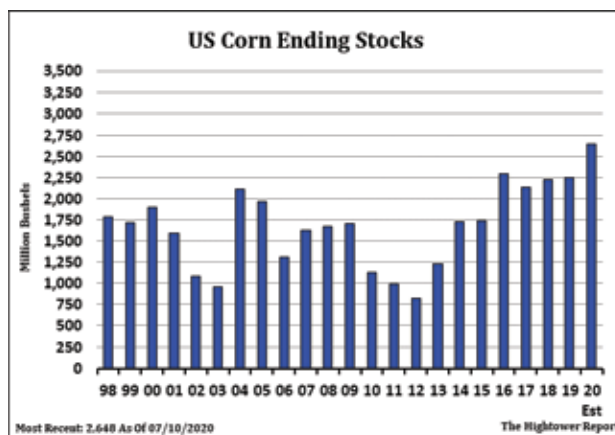
- The U.S. winter wheat production estimate will likely be trimmed in future reports. We base this on smaller yield reports from Kansas and Nebraska.
- The spring wheat production estimate might also be too high. It was extremely dry through May and June across the western half of the northern Plains. It turned wet in July. The question is whether the rains came soon enough to maintain a good yield.
- The U.S. wheat export forecast looks too small by as much as 50 to 100 million bushels. It doesn't appear that USDA has included any wheat sales to China, and some sales have already been made. The current export forecast is slightly smaller than last year.



U.S. white wheat production and ending supplies never seem to vary much. That is the case again this year with production down just 4 million bushels from last year. White wheat ending supplies are projected to increase from 95 million bushels last year to 105 million bushels this year. The export forecast was reduced slightly. The final export number will depend on how Australia's crop finishes.

The biggest change in the July WASDE report was that corn production was cut by almost 1 billion bushels. This was based on the June 30 acreage number that came in 5 million acres below the March planting intentions number. The problem corn has is that ending supplies are still expected to exceed 2.6 billion bushels. That is still bearish even though it is far below the June estimate.

Two things must happen to turn corn even somewhat bullish. The yield must decline from today's record estimate, and/or China must continue to buy a significant amount of corn from the U.S.



The soy complex continues to have the most positive fundamentals. U.S. ending supplies will be tight at the end of the next marketing year if the demand side remains strong. Soybean crushing in the U.S. continues to set records almost every month as demand for soybean meal (protein) continues to expand. The key will be how many soybeans China buys over the next several months. ■

**Mike Krueger** is president and founder of The Money Farm, a grain advisory service located in Fargo, N.D. A licensed commodity broker, Krueger is a past director of the Minneapolis Grain Exchange and a senior analyst for World Perspectives, a Washington, D.C., agricultural consulting group.

## QuickBooks tips

# How to improve time spent at desk

By Cassi Johnson

While lately, the world has been this crazy whirlwind of viruses and riots, I would imagine your life is a lot like mine. I still live a good distance from dense populations and have not seen a change in my daily activity. Now, don't get me wrong, I have been struggling through homeschooling children and figuring out which direction I can go in which grocery aisle, but otherwise us "essential" agriculture producers are still just trying to figure out how to turn profits, and how to either get our operation started if you're a young producer on their own or how to grow our current operation to sustain children with desires to join us. Being "essential" doesn't seem to help us in the struggles we have been and continue to face in our industry.

With many new assistance programs becoming available, like you, I have been filling out lots of government paperwork attempting to utilize these financial assistance opportunities. This part has been fairly painless for me, though, because our operation uses QuickBooks to keep ourselves organized so that these things are quick and

painless, which is a necessity in a house of three kids that are either fighting over Legos or pushing the baby around the patio like he's a race car. Have today's challenges left you wondering how you could improve the organization of your financials to help with making better decisions or quicker decisions? I'm here to tell you that QuickBooks is NOT your only option in the world, however, it is one of the most well-known and one that I have become dependent on in many ways.

Let's talk about my top three things I suggest you try to improve your organization and time spent at your desk.

**BANK FEEDS.** Bank feeds can be used on both QuickBooks Desktop or Online. Many of my farmers and ranchers don't use this because they pay all their bills using a check. If you are printing your checks, you are basically entering your transactions as you go. But if you have any auto pay bills, transfers that happen automatically or use a debit card, this tool can be super handy. You can also connect your credit card to QuickBooks. Basically, it allows you to download transactions from your bank or credit card account. Then, you simply select which ex-





# Calling all cooks!

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) is putting together a new cookbook for readers and cooking enthusiasts to enjoy! *Wheat Life* readers are encouraged to submit their favorite recipe(s) of any kind.

The cookbook will feature main dishes, desserts, appetizers, soups and sides.

Please fill out the form to the right (attaching additional pages as necessary) and scan and email it to [chauna@wawg.org](mailto:chauna@wawg.org).

You can also mail or fax the form to the address below.

Another option is to fill out the pdf form at [wawg.org/grower-education/2020-wawg-recipe-book/](http://wawg.org/grower-education/2020-wawg-recipe-book/), and then save and email it to [chauna@wawg.org](mailto:chauna@wawg.org)

For more information, please contact Chauna at the WAWG office, (877) 740-2666 or [chauna@wawg.org](mailto:chauna@wawg.org).

*Submissions need to be received no later than Aug. 31, 2020.*

**Washington  
Association of  
Wheat Growers**  
109 E 1st Ave.,  
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(509) 659-4302 (fax)

**Recipe Title:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Submitted by:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City and state:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Contact Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Contact Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

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*(Recommended abbreviations are c, tsp, Tbsp, pkg, qt or pt.)*

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pense or income account you want the transaction posted to. You can also create “rules” in QuickBooks to have transactions that happen all the time automatically post to a certain account for you without you having to do it. This makes this process even faster. I can tell QuickBooks that any transaction that has the description “Maverick” in the text description automatically posts to fuel expense. How you set up bank feeds in QuickBooks Desktop vs. Online is a little different, and each bank works a little different with QuickBooks. This makes the initial setup take a little time, but a little legwork in the beginning really frees you up in the long term.

**BILL PAY.** Now here’s the thing on this one—QuickBooks has actually discontinued this service on their desktop program. However, if you are using QuickBooks Online, this can be a super handy and efficient tool. QuickBooks actually uses a third party to complete bill pay, although you do it all through your QuickBooks program. There is a cost to this service of \$1.99 per check. It’s cheaper if you do bank transfers. To compare, I calculated my costs. For a check, envelope and postage, it roughly costs me \$.85 per check. That doesn’t account for my time for printing, signing, stuffing in an envelope and driving to the mailbox. The difference in supply costs are \$1.16. Understandably this may not be the route for you, but as far as convenience and the ability to pay a bill when I’m not home, this option is one that might simplify your life. In my life, simplicity carries a value.

**MEMORIZED TRANSACTIONS.** Many people have transactions that occur every month or year. For instance, maybe your health insurance or car payment is on auto pay, your pasture rent is due semi-annually or rent for an employee’s house every month. You can memorize transactions that occur regularly and have QuickBooks auto generate the transaction on any date you set. QuickBooks can automatically post a transfer or transaction that is done monthly like a truck payment. You could also have QuickBooks automatically create a check that is set “to print” twice a year for your pasture rent so that you don’t forget to pay it. When you sit down to pay your stack of bills during the month you told QuickBooks to create the pasture rent check, you will find that check sitting in your “to print” queue automatically. I am all about tricks that give me one less thing I have to remember to do.

These are a few of the simplifying program features I use in my personal QuickBooks program as well as on the books I manage for clients. This crazy market and society have left us “essential” businesses still scrambling to keep up. Decreasing the time in your office and maximizing family time, personal time or sometimes, to my husband’s dismay, the time you can spend fixing more fence is

important in our lives. Plus, it is becoming increasingly important to keep an eye on our operations numbers so we can stay competitive in this hard economy. As always contact me anytime for more questions on QuickBooks functions, features and financing options for your farm or ranch. ■

*Besides offering QuickBooks consulting services, Cassi Johnson is also a loan officer for Pacific Intermountain Mortgage Company. Her company, 3 Bar Consulting, can be found at [3barconsulting.com](http://3barconsulting.com). She can be reached at [cassi@pacificim.net](mailto:cassi@pacificim.net).*

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Larry has a great work truck, but needed a little "refer" to hold, haul, and deliver his six varieties of grapes and wines. Some of it will even go to the oldest saloon in Roslyn, Wash., "THE BRICK," which they've owned for 23 years.

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## Smith family finds balance in being landlords

By Trista Crossley

Balancing the business side of farming with the emotional side can take some work, but one family of landlords has figured out a way to do it.

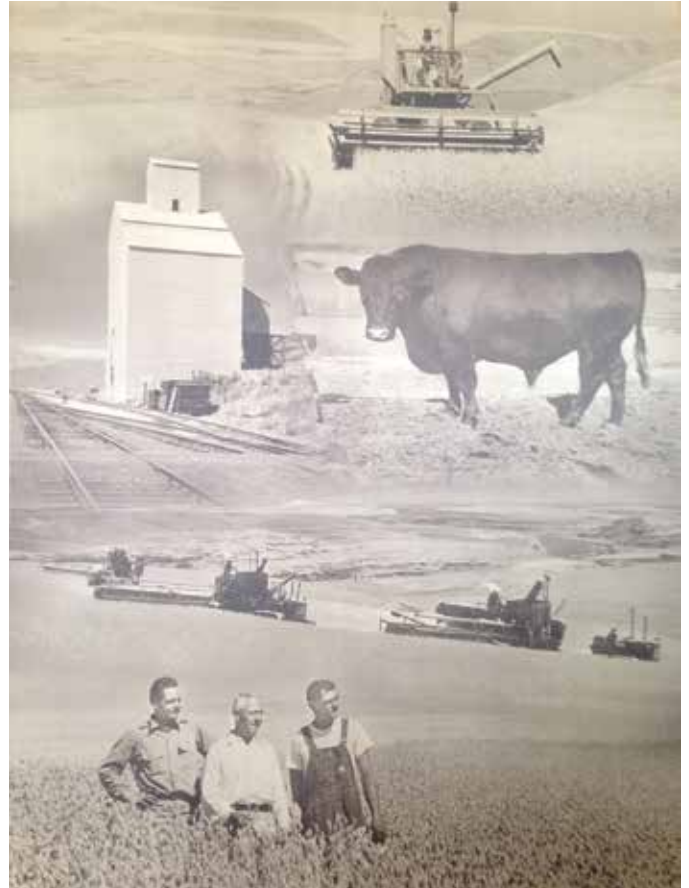
The Edgar L. Smith Inc. family farm is located near St. John and Endicott, Wash. It is in a dryer part of the area and was established by Edgar W. Smith during the depression. Edgar W.'s two sons, Edgar L. Smith II and Jackson W. Smith, took over the farm, eventually splitting it into two. When Edgar L. retired, his son, David, took over farming, acting as the tenant for the rest of the family, which included the parents and three other siblings. David stopped farming in 2010 due to poor health, and the family brought in an outside tenant. The family grows dryland wheat on about half of their land, with the remaining land in rangeland, pasture, Conservation Reserve Program and alfalfa. The pasture is rented to one tenant as a cash rent agreement, and the tillable cropland is rented to another tenant as a crop share agreement.

Peter Smith, David's younger brother, became the family farm president five years ago.

"We've always had a cattle tenant. In my lifetime, we've never been in the cattle business ourselves," Smith explained. While Smith grew up helping out on the farm, he ultimately chose a career in finance and business. "My dad's advice was don't go to school to be farmer, so I went in a different direction. Even my brother, who farmed, previously was a banker."

That business background immediately shows up in the way Smith describes how the family manages their farm, which was incorporated back in the early 1970s. There is a three-person board of directors (Smith; the son of his late brother who used to farm; and their accountant). Smith's brother in Alabama and a sister in Arizona make up the third and fourth shareholders. The board of directors meets a few times a year, and the group holds an annual shareholder meeting that also serves as an opportunity for a family reunion. In addition, Smith, who is chair of the board of directors, sends out a quarterly email to all the shareholders and directors summarizing what's happened on the farm in the last quarter.

"We do run the farm like a corporation in that we establish goals for the primary tenant at the beginning of each year and have a performance review at the end of each year," Smith said. "In addition to having the tenant participate in setting the goals, I ask the tenant to tell us



A newspaper reporter from Portland who visited the Smith farm during harvest created this photo collage. It includes pictures of the Smith's grain elevator (80,000 bushels of dryland wheat); a Harris 55 combine; a prize bull affectionately referred to as "Big Cove Hay Burner"; three pull combines; and Edgar W. Smith with his two sons, Edgar L. Smith II (left) and Jackson W. Smith (right), all deceased. Photo courtesy of the Smith family.

how he thinks he has performed against those goals, and then we come back with our thinking. It's a documented performance review."

When Smith became chair about five years ago, his first action was to do an "R2A2" review, which looks at the roles, responsibilities, accountability and authority in their organization, to make clear who was responsible for what and who had the authority to make decisions. They have also developed strategic principles for the farm and taken steps, as landlords, to support their tenant in figuring out better farming practices. Recently, the shareholders voted to change from a C corporation to an S corporation in preparation for possibly selling the farm in the not too distant future, although the final decision to sell has not been made. Smith said none of the shareholders



have a majority vote. In cases where there's a disagreement, the issue is discussed by the board of directors, then discussed and voted on by the shareholders. The majority rules.

"I've heard this is the most structured, most well defined farm organization most people have seen," he said. Smith also acts as the farm's operations manager. In that role, he is responsible for communicating with the tenants, marketing the landlords' share of the crop and reviewing the farm's operations over the past year at the annual shareholders' meeting.

For the family, operating their farm this way makes their landlord expectations of their tenants very clear. Smith recalled an instance when he and his brother from Alabama walked the farm before one of their annual meetings and found their pastureland infested with Scotch thistle. While the family had expected the pasture tenant to contain the primary noxious weeds, that stipulation wasn't included in their lease agreement, and they were left to deal with the problem.

"We were really upset," Smith said, explaining that because none of the siblings live near the farm, the tenants are their "boots on the ground." "It took us awhile to work through that. Now, thanks to our current tenants, we have the Scotch thistle problem down to something manageable vs. the huge problem it was before. Now, in the lease, that would be a termination issue."

Smith recommended that all landlords who have shareholders or other partners have strategic principles or a strategic plan and once a year, review that document and update it. Communicating with tenants is another key to successfully operating as a landlord. In Smith's case, both of his tenants email him a monthly report summarizing their activities on the land. In some cases, they'll include pictures of improve-



In this 1955 photo, the Smith family used 3 pull combines and a wheat truck to bring in the harvest on their farm near St. John, Wash. Photo courtesy of the Smith family.

ments they are undertaking. In addition, the family is willing to work with their tenants to help finance new ideas for improvement.

"I think the monthly communication and openness to ideas has worked well," Smith said. "It's sure a lot better to make things clear when times are good. You have to figure out what's best for your situation. It's a lot easier to get an agreement (with your tenant) when times are good and relationships are good and there is a high degree of trust than when you get into a problem."

Looking towards the future, Smith said a lack of an upcoming generation that is interested in taking on the responsibility of the farm is what prompted the family to consider selling the land. They also believe that because most of them worked on the land at some point, they are best positioned to make the sale.

"There's a lot of best practices when it comes to selling farmland, and we've learned a lot through that initial process, with more to learn as we work that process to final sale," he said. ■



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# THE BOTTOM LINE

## Small updates to policy may have drastic effects

By Curtis Evankenko  
*McGregor Risk Management Services*

Greetings everyone!

My goal is to provide an update on the recent changes to the Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) policy. A handful of changes were made effective for the 2020 policy year, Jan. 1 for calendar filers and the effective tax date for fiscal year filers. I believe these changes are good enhancements and improvements to the policy.

First, let's recap the WFRP policy:

- Available in all counties in all 50 states;
- \$8.5 million liability limit;
- Coverage level of 50-85 percent in 5 percent increments;
- Protects a farm operation against the loss of revenue earned or expected from commodities produced during the insurance period or bought for resale during the insurance period;
- Average allowable historic revenue increased by up to 35

percent if operation physically expands and is approved by the Approved Insurance Provider;

- A replant payment is available for annual commodities if there is no replant provision provided with a Multi-Peril Crop Insurance policy;
- Operations with two or more commodities meeting minimum diversification requirements receive premium subsidy;
- Sales closing date of March 15 for calendar year filers and Nov. 20 for fiscal filers; and
- Requires five most recently filed Schedule F forms (2015-19) for the coming 2021 tax year.

The WFRP policy is the resulting evolution of the original pilot policies Adjusted Gross Revenue and Adjusted Gross Revenue Lite and a 2014 Farm Bill-authorized expansion of risk management tools for producers. This policy remains very popular amongst fruit growers. Although WFRP hasn't been as successful amongst small grain producers, I believe the recent changes will help with additional participation.

Prior WFRP policy language had a revenue "hard cap" for livestock and nursery producers whose revenue exceed \$1 million; they were ineligible for WFRP policy coverage. Recent policy language changes include modifying livestock and nursery producer revenue limits from a \$1 million hard cap to a \$2 million "soft cap." Additionally, language disqualifying producers with expected revenue from livestock, nursery and greenhouse commodities at sales closing greater than \$1 million has been removed. The soft cap allows WFRP to provide up to \$2 million in coverage for any size livestock or nursery operation without excluding operations, for both the intended and revised reporting periods. All revenue earned from the sale of livestock, nursery and greenhouse commodities is revenue to count.

Industrial hemp is an insurable commodity under WFRP only when planted, grown and harvested in accordance with the regulations governing industrial hemp production on the land the industrial hemp is produced and in accordance with a valid marketing contract. "Hot" hemp (hemp with THC concentrations above 0.3 percent) will not be considered an insurable cause of loss at this time.

As of 2020, state and federal disaster program payments will be excluded from revenue-to-count- and allowable revenue determinations. Another favorable change regarding revenue-to-count pertains to crop insurance payments. As long as the amount of the loss payment is below the policy deductible, the monies will not be considered when determining the revenue-to-count. Think fire, hail or small production losses for example.

Several measures are now available as "options" to prevent large drops in approved revenue from year to year and to "smooth" historic values. The new options are:

- **Revenue substitution.** A 60 percent revenue plug based upon the simple average or simple indexed average revenue. Any years having less revenue

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than the average may be substituted by 60 percent of the average to calculate the approved revenue. Cannot be combined with the exclusion elections.

- **Revenue exclusion.** Producers may drop the lowest year revenue from the history and calculate the average revenue based on the four remaining years. Cannot be combined with the revenue substitution election.
- **Revenue cup.** Cupping the current insurance year's whole-farm historic average revenue below 90 percent of the previous year's approved revenue. This means the insured's historic average revenue will be at least 90 percent of the prior year's approved revenue, which makes this option only applicable to renewal policies. The 90 percent comparison is made after all applicable adjustments (indexing, expansion, etc.) and smooths out the effect of a single or multiple years of low whole-farm revenue.

Each option selected will be billed for additional pre-

mium and must be selected by the sales closing date. If the insured selects more than one option, the option that results in the highest revenue amount will be considered elected for determination of their whole farm historic average.

While these recent changes may seem insignificant, the effect they can have on the allowable revenue to count has the potential to be drastic. WFRP is not a one-size-fits-all policy and is worth looking into. Overall, I believe the recent policy changes, like the smoothing options outlined above, will enhance the average revenue determination used for calculation of coverage and will provide you with a better policy. ■

**Curtis Evanenko** has more than 25 years of crop insurance experience serving the Pacific Northwest from both the whole-sale and retail sides of the business. He currently serves as a risk management advisor with McGregor Risk Management Services. He can be reached at (509) 540-2632 or by email at [cevanenko@mcgregorrisk.com](mailto:cevanenko@mcgregorrisk.com).

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Robbie (8) and Sidney (8) Wolf had a blast watching a helicopter is spraying fields near Pomeroy.  
Photo by Jessica Wolf.



Teddy Krause (2) from Creston on his way to feed his calf. Photo by Leslie Krause.

Ryan Blain (10) and Copper get a ride during harvest in Sundale Orchards.  
Photo by Tabitha Reilly.





# Your wheat life...



Wheat fields in May overlooking the Snake River towards Lower Granite Dam.  
Photo by Kim McCabe.



Wheat fields near Pine City. Photo by Jessica Kile.

Email pictures to [editor@wawg.org](mailto:editor@wawg.org).  
Include location, names of all people in  
the picture and ages of all children.



Carson James Greene (4) is always willing to help his dad, Jesse, work their family farm in Cloverland.  
Photo by Heidi Greene.



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