

# WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

NOVEMBER | 2020



## Weaving together rail, river, roads

ALL THREE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS VITAL TO SUCCESS OF PNW



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



# WHEAT LIFE

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**WASHINGTON  
ASSOCIATION OF  
WHEAT GROWERS**

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# President's Perspective



## Rail, river or road? All three are vital!

By Ryan Poe

My family's farm in Grant County is centered around the town of Hartline. Hartline is the second to the last stop on the CW line of the state-owned Palouse River and Coulee City shortline rail system. The CW line runs from Coulee City to Cheney. Our farm hauls all of our wheat to the HighLine Grain Growers elevator in Hartline. From the elevator, the wheat is loaded onto a "scoot" train destined for HighLine's shuttle-loading facility in Four Lakes. From

Four Lakes, the wheat will be loaded onto one of BNSF's 110-car unit trains and sent down to export terminals in Portland and Vancouver. My family also operates a farm in Franklin County, and that wheat goes from the field directly to a river terminal at Windust where it is loaded onto barges and sent downriver to those same export terminals. How our wheat moves from field to export terminal is determined by two things: proximity and cost. In Hartline, it is easier and less expensive for us to take the wheat to a rail facility. From Franklin County, it is more profitable for us to take the wheat to a river facility. We are lucky, here in Eastern Washington, that we have a choice, and I'm very thankful for it.

That competition between the rails and the river helps keep shipping rates competitive with each other. We talk a lot about what losing the river option would do to our industry. There's no doubt it would be a devastating blow. But what if we lost the rail option, specifically the shortlines? For me and the growers around me, that would be just as devastating. We'd be looking at having to move our crop by truck either to Four Lakes or south to the river. Either way means hundreds more trucks on the road, increased wear and tear on our highways and definitely increased shipping costs. Growers aren't the only ones who would pay a high price for losing one of our transportation options—businesses throughout the region also take advantage of our choices for shipping. You can read more about how they use the region's transportation system on page 20.

Speaking of things I'm thankful for, I'm extremely thankful for the country in which I get to farm. This has been a crazy year, and we may have some problems, but I will argue with anyone that despite all that, we still live in the greatest country in the world. I am also very thankful for my family. I wouldn't be able to farm without them or take the time to serve as your Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) president. I am also very thankful for the amazing WAWG staff who make serving as an officer of WAWG and a board member of the National Association of Wheat Growers a much easier task.

One thing I'm decidedly not thankful for is the fact that we had to cancel our annual convention due to COVID-19. I was really looking forward to the opportunity to be entertained by our usual slate of high-quality speakers; eat a bunch of good food with growers from around the region; and maybe learn a thing or two about our industry.

Instead, Washington will be holding our annual meeting in early December. While we are still nailing down the details, I do know it will be a mixture of in-person and virtual attendance. We will be reviewing our resolutions and making changes as necessary. These resolutions guide our lobbying activities throughout the year, so it is important we get input from our members. Watch our website, wawg.org, and our weekly Greensheet email letter for more details. ■

**Cover photo:** In Eastern Washington, rail, rivers and roads all work with each other to move products in and out of the region in a timely, efficient manner. The competition between them helps keep shipping prices affordable. See story on page 20. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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# Dialogue

Share your comments with us at [editor@wawg.org](mailto:editor@wawg.org) or mail them to 109 East First Avenue, Ritzville, WA 99169-2394. Please keep your submissions less than 300 words.

## Mt. St. Helen's ash legacy needs to be taken into account in conservation

Letter to editor, concerned growers and conservationists:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has never recognized the ash deposits in Adams County from Mt. St. Helens. This has totally changed the soil properties as well as the wind erosion factor. Therefore, the NRCS is using error-filled data to provide information for CSP, CRP and EQIP programs. We need a full blown review of regulations for these programs with the ash situation taken into consideration.

As wheat growers and stewards of the land, we need to be thinking about future generations and programs that will keep our soil on the ground and not in the air. Adams County

has such a diversification of soil types, and they have changed since the six inches or so of ash fell in 1980.

Please become active in pursuing equity in this matter.

After the storms this fall that had winds in excess of 50 mph, we need help. The storms that devastated Washtucna and surrounding areas may have been mitigated if proper cultural practices would have been in place.

Contact your representatives and state NRCS and Farm Service Agency contacts to get recognition for this problem. Our representatives and senators work for us, but they won't do anything unless you tell them.

Jerry Snyder, grower, former WAWG president and conservationist  
Ritzville, Wash.

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## LEVELS OF MEMBERSHIP

	Greensheet Newsletter	Wheat Life Magazine	National Wheat Grower Newsletter	Annual Harvest Prints	WAWG Convention Free Registration	One Vote per Member
<b>Producer/Landowners (Voting Membership)</b>						
<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.
- ✓ Maintaining a safe and sound transportation system that includes rail, river and roads.
- ✓ Establishing favorable trade agreements.
- ✓ Fighting mandatory carbon emission regulations.
- ✓ Fighting unreasonable notification and reporting requirements for pesticide applications.

**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
- Voice to WAWG through opinion surveys
- National Wheat Grower updates
- State and national legislative updates



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of Wheat Growers**

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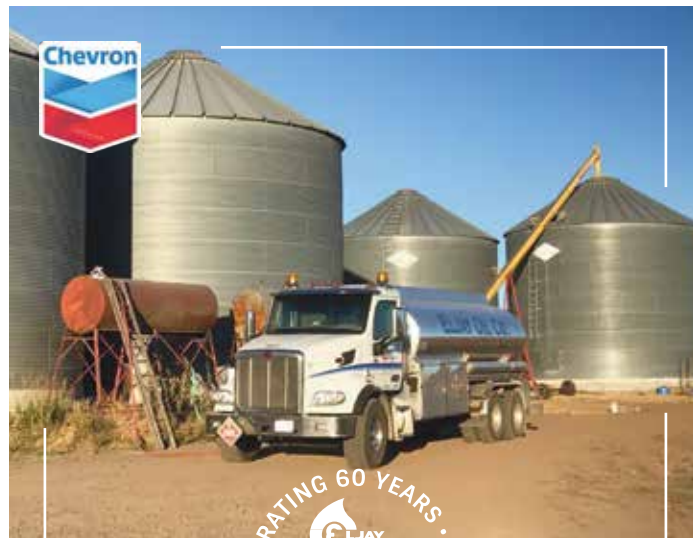
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## Lobbyist: Carbon fees likely back on the legislative menu

Although the state recently got some relatively good news concerning budget shortfalls, legislators are still looking for ways to close that gap, including looking at the state's tax structure and revisiting carbon fees or a cap and trade program, said Diana Carlen, lobbyist for the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), at the association's October board meeting.

The board meeting was a mix of in-person and virtual attendance, with some board members gathering at the Washington Grain Commission office in Spokane and the rest teleconferencing in.

Carlen said that the state's most recent revenue forecast was much more positive than expected—\$4.5 billion instead of the \$9 billion shortfall projected in June. Unfortunately, the transportation budget is still facing a projected \$2 billion shortfall for 2021-23, and taxes on carbon emissions are at the top of potential revenue options. She said some legislators would prefer a carbon tax as that would start generating revenues quickly. There are also legislators who prefer that revenues from a carbon tax only be used for transportation projects. A cap and trade program, on the other hand, could take several years to implement.

"Carbon is definitely on the agenda for next year's session," Carlen told growers.

A legislative workgroup is currently reviewing the state's tax structure and collecting data from neighboring states to see how different tax structures fare during economic downturns. Carlen said the report likely won't be done before the session begins in January.

Speaking of the 2021 Legislative Session, Carlen said it is becoming more clear that next year's won't look like legislative sessions of the past. Some of the restrictions might include no large receptions (or possibly even small ones), no office visits, virtual committee meetings and legislators who will work from home during the session. Carlen said there is a push by Republicans to hold as normal a session as possible as they are concerned that with a more virtual session, the public won't be able to weigh in on issues as much. Carlen told board members that since the session is likely to be largely virtual, WAWG may need to reconsider how the association advocates and meets with legislators, including their annual Olympia Days trip.

"There's lots of things up in the air, and I don't think much will be decided until after the November election," Carlen said.

Board members also heard updates from U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies, including the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Risk Management Agency and the National Agricultural Statistics Service. ▶

## Members invited to attend virtual annual meeting to review resolutions

One of the most important events that takes place at the annual Tri-State Grain Growers Convention is the annual meeting of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) where members review the association's resolutions, update and vote on them. This year, in light of the convention's cancellation thanks to COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines, WAWG will be holding a separate annual meeting on Dec. 1.

While some officers and staff will meet in person, members are encouraged to take part by joining virtually.

"Our resolutions help direct WAWG's advocacy efforts throughout the year," said Ryan Poe, WAWG president. "Every year we review our resolutions and update them as necessary. We use them to guide our actions and responses both in Olympia and Washington, D.C."

Michelle Hennings, executive director of WAWG, said that as a grower-led organization, WAWG needs its members' input to update the resolutions.

"With everything that has been happening this year, it is more important than ever that our members provide guidance," she said.

Details of the annual meeting are still being decided. More information will be posted on our website, [wawg.org](http://wawg.org), and in our weekly Greensheet email letter as it becomes available. All members are welcome to join. ■



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Jon Wyss, FSA Washington state executive director, told growers that all county offices except Adams, Grant and Franklin counties are in Phase 3 and are open for appointment-only grower meetings. Masks are required, and social distancing guidelines will be observed. He added that he's hoping that by Nov. 1, those three counties will be able to meet with growers. FSA is also continuing efforts to help growers recover from the Labor Day fires by streamlining some cost share program requirements (see page 30).

Sign-ups for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

2 (CFAP 2) are underway, with a deadline of Dec. 14. The Washington FSA office has dispersed just more than \$17 million to acreage-based commodities so far. Wyss also said that statewide, there are only two staff vacancies compared to 23 openings in June.

In national legislation, Nicole Berg, vice president of the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), said NAWG has been very involved in CFAP 2 and did a significant amount of lobbying in Washington, D.C., to make sure that all classes of wheat were eligible.

Two WAWG past presidents, Berg and Marci Green,

## Wheat falls to fourth in Washington 2019 production value

Last month, the National Agricultural Statistics Service released their findings that the value of Washington's 2019 agricultural production totaled \$9.49 billion, down 2 percent from the previous year. All wheat fell to fourth place as potatoes moved up to third.

Apples remain the leading agricultural commodity with a 2019 value of \$1.96 billion. This is down 8.5 percent from the previous year. Apples represented 21 percent of the total agricultural value in 2019. In the previous year, apple's share of the total was 22 percent. Milk remained in the second position and had value of production totaling \$1.28 billion dollars in 2019, up 13 percent from 2018. All potato value of production moved up one position from the previous year to third in the state rankings. Potato value in 2019 was \$934 million, up 18.5 percent from the previous year. All wheat, valued at \$793 million, represented the fourth highest value in the state. This was a 6 percent decrease from the previous year. Cattle and calves rounded out the top five with a value of \$699 mil-

lion, up 7 percent from the previous year.

These five commodities had a combined value of \$5.67 billion, or 60 percent of the 2019 value for all commodities (excluding government payments). The same five commodities in 2018 had a combined value of \$5.56 billion, 57 percent of the total value.

Record high values of production were established for potatoes and hops. Value of hop production in 2019 was \$476 million, up 11 percent from the previous year and 4 percent higher than the previous record high in 2017. Onion value of production entered the top ten, with a value of \$181 million in 2019, an increase of 2.5 percent from the previous year. There were notable commodities outside the top ten that showed significant increases in value from the previous year. The value of blueberries reached a record high value of \$153 million in 2019, up 10 percent from the previous year and 4 percent higher than the previous record in 2015. Barley value of production increased 39 percent to \$29.9 million in 2019. The value of canola, at \$22.3 million, increased for the fourth consecutive year. Five of the top 10 commodities declined in value from the previous year, including apples, wheat, hay, sweet cherries and grapes. Other notable commodities that declined in value in 2019 were eggs, down 30 percent to \$168 million, and all pears, down 31 percent to \$145 million. ■

Commodity	Rank		Value of production (in \$1,000s)			% Change 2019/2018
	2019	2018	2017	2018	2019	
Apples	1	1	2,430,353	2,140,650	1,958,900	-8.5
Milk <sup>1</sup>	2	2	1,188,642	1,131,648	1,281,987	13.3
Potatoes	3	4	686,602	788,256	934,144	18.5
Wheat, all	4	3	690,902	844,592	792,509	-6.2
Cattle and Calves	5	5	671,506	652,062	698,751	7.2
Hops	6	7	458,686	427,502	475,686	11.3
Hay, all	7	6	515,901	519,277	468,306	-9.8
Cherries, sweet	8	8	474,579	426,470	393,577	-7.7
Grapes, all	9	9	318,890	360,910	308,070	-14.6
Onions, all	10	12	161,495	176,211	180,576	2.5
Value of crop production			7,349,906	7,162,332	6,797,804	-5.1
Value of livestock production			2,476,236	2,520,163	2,697,189	7.0
Total value of production, all commodities			9,826,142	9,682,495	9,494,993	-1.9

<sup>1</sup>Value at average returns per 100 pounds of milk in combined marketings of milk and cream plus value of milk used for home consumption and milk fed to calves.



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have been named to national positions. Berg was recently sworn in as the specialty crop representative to the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation's board of directors, while Green has recently become a farmer ambassador for U.S. Farmers & Ranchers in Action. See more on page 26.

The next WAWG state board meeting is scheduled for Jan. 12, 2021. ■

## 2019 ARC, PLC payments out; sign-ups for 2021 now open

From the Farm Service Agency

Agricultural producers can now make elections and enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2021 crop year. The sign-up period opened Oct. 13. These key U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) safety-net programs help producers weather fluctuations in either revenue or price for certain crops, and more than \$5 billion in payments are in the process of going out to producers who signed up for the 2019 crop year.

"Although commodity prices are starting to show a glimmer of improvement, recent depressed prices and drops in revenue, compounded by the effects of the pandemic, have seriously impacted the bottom line for most agricultural operations," said Richard Fordyce, administrator of USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). "Through safety-net programs like ARC and PLC, we can help producers mitigate these financial stressors and keep the ag industry moving forward. Make time over the next few months to evaluate your program elections and enroll for the 2021 crop year."

Enrollment for the 2021 crop year closes March 15, 2021.

ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guaranteed level. PLC provides income support payments on historical base acres when the effective price for a covered commodity falls below its reference price. Covered commodities include barley; canola; large and small chickpeas; corn; crambe; flaxseed; grain sorghum; lentils; mustard seed; oats; peanuts; dry peas; rapeseed; long grain rice; medium and short grain rice; safflower seed; seed cotton; sesame; soybeans; sunflower seed; and wheat.

### 2021 elections and enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in crop-by-crop ARC-County or PLC, or ARC-Individual for the entire farm, for the 2021 crop year. Although election changes for

## Receiving your ALERT?

With their 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. ■

2021 are optional, enrollment (signed contract) is required for each year of the program. If a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2021, it will be necessary to sign a new contract. If an election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2021, the election defaults to the current election for crops on the farm from the prior crop year.

For crop years 2022 and 2023, producers will have an opportunity to make new elections during those sign-ups. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

### 2019 crop year ARC and PLC payments

FSA began processing payments in mid-October for 2019 ARC-County (ARC-CO) and PLC on covered commodities that met payment triggers on farms enrolled for the 2019 crop year. In addition to the \$5 billion now in process, FSA anticipates it will issue additional payments by the end of November for 2019 commodities covered under ARC-Individual (ARC-IC) and additional commodities that trigger PLC and ARC-CO payments for which rates have not yet been published.

Producers who had 2019 covered commodities enrolled in ARC-CO can visit the ARC and PLC webpage at [fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/arcplc\\_program/arcplc-program-data/index](https://fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/arcplc_program/arcplc-program-data/index) for payment rates applicable to their county and each covered commodity. For farms and covered commodities enrolled in 2019 PLC, the following crops met payment triggers: barley, canola, chickpeas (small and large), corn, dry peas, grain sorghum, lentils, peanuts, seed cotton and wheat.

2019 PLC payment rates for the following covered commodities have not been determined: crambe; flaxseed; long and medium grain rice; mustard seed; rapeseed; safflower; sesame seed; sunflower seed; and temperate Japonica rice. Payment rates for these commodities will be announced at a later date.

For additional questions and assistance, contact your local USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-center-locator). ■



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# POLICY MATTERS

## Governors jointly commit to rebuilding fish stocks

Last month, the governors of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana signed a letter to collaboratively advance the goals of the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force and work together to rebuild Columbia River salmon and steelhead stocks. The letter does not mention the lower Snake River dams or breaching them.

“We recognize the relevance of the recent release of the Columbia River System Operations Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Biological Opinions, and the Record of Decision for Columbia River System Operations to this collaboration effort. Our respective states may view the adequacy of these documents differently and, as such, act on that assessment differently. However, regardless of those differences and separate from each state’s recourse, we commit to this ongoing collaboration to help achieve the Partnership’s abundance goals to uphold treaty rights, support state fishery and fishery-related objectives and river-dependent economies. We also recognize the relevance and importance of advancing state clean energy goals and the regional goals to ensure an efficient, reliable and affordable energy system,” the letter states.

Convened in 2017 by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and its Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MFAC), the Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force was tasked with establishing a common vision and goals for the Columbia Basin and its salmon and steelhead stocks. Members of the task force include the four states, tribes and stakeholders from various industries, including fishing, agriculture, conservation, transportation and hydropower. In its final meeting in September 2020, the



Brad Little, Idaho State Governor



Steve Bullock, Montana State Governor



Kate Brown, Oregon State Governor



Jay Inslee, Washington State Governor

task force presented its Phase 2 Final Report that provides recommendations and implementation strategies to achieve its goals, which include increasing naturally produced salmon and steelhead to as high as 3.6 million adults. That report hasn’t been publicly released as of *Wheat Life’s* deadline date and was slated to be presented to MFAC on Oct. 20.

In their letter, the governors commit to involve the region’s tribes, federal agencies and stakeholders and recognize that efforts to address the task force’s recommendations would be “constructive, science-based” efforts.

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) does not support any action that would disrupt the ability of wheat growers to ship their crop by barge to export terminals in Portland and Vancouver, including breaching the lower Snake River dams.

“We fully support the preferred alternative put forward in the final environmental impact study that rejects dam breaching and instead calls for implementing more flexible spill operations during times of low power demand to help improve fish passage. We firmly believe that dams and fish can co-exist,” said Michelle Hennings, executive director of WAWG. “Barging is the most efficient and least carbon-intensive mode of cargo transportation available to our growers. To lose that transportation option would not only threaten the livelihood of our growers, but it would also negatively impact the state’s stated carbon-reduction goals.”

Of the Eastern Washington wheat crop that is sent overseas, roughly 60 percent of it is shipped by barge on the Columbia-Snake River System. ■

## NAWG announces membership in consortium to advance ecosystem services

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) is pleased to announce that it has joined the Ecosystem Services Market Consortium (ESMC). ESMC is a nonprofit organization working to advance ecosystem service mar-



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kets that incentivize farmers and ranchers to improve soil health systems that benefit society.

“Wheat farmers know the importance of managing their operations to maintain soil health and productivity, and we are excited to be a part of an organization that is looking at ways to provide farmers incentives and market opportunities for voluntary actions to sequester carbon and improve water quality,” said NAWG president and Cass City, Mich., wheat grower Dave Milligan. “NAWG looks forward to being part of this effort and lending another farmer voice in this group’s efforts to develop a marketplace that benefits farmers and society. NAWG believes its participation in ESMC will help ensure that the program will benefit the grower in the short and long run.”

ESMC’s partners consist of a broad consortium of corporations, agricultural producer associations, NGOs and technology companies. The goal of ESMC is to launch a voluntary national ecosystem services market conceived and designed to sell ecosystem assets such as carbon and water quality and quantity credits for the agriculture sector by 2022. Learn more about the organization at [ecosystems-services-market.org/](http://ecosystems-services-market.org/). ■

## State Supreme Court strikes down \$30 car tab initiative

Last month, the Washington State Supreme Court struck down I-976, an initiative passed by voters last year that reduced car tab fees to \$30, on the grounds that the initiative contained more than one subject, and its subject was not accurately expressed in the title.

The court held that the initiative violated the “single subject” rule that requires initiatives to contain a single proposal. Besides reducing car tabs, I-976 also repealed a state statute allowing the imposition of a vehicle fee for a Transportation Benefit District and repealing the local option motor vehicle excise tax for passenger-only ferry service, among others.

When the initiative passed in 2019, it was estimated it would cost state and local governments more than \$4 billion in revenue over the next six years. The initiative was never fully implemented as a King County Superior Court judge blocked its implementation until the state Supreme Court could issue a decision. ■

## NAWG continues to urge action on reauthorization

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) continues to urge Congress to pass the Grain Standards Reauthorization Act, which will reauthorize grain inspection and weighing services for five years and was reported out of the Senate Agriculture Committee by voice vote last June. The FY 2021 continuing resolution included a provision extending authorization for these services through Dec. 11, 2020. Passage of the bill before expiration of the extension is a priority for NAWG, and we urge the Senate to approve this bill as soon as possible and for the House of Representatives to quickly process the legislation.

In September, NAWG joined with several other national agriculture organizations in sending a letter to the Senate about the importance of this legislation. ■

## WAWG kicks off Legislative Action Fund drive, donations needed

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers’ (WAWG) Legislative Action Fund (LAF) helps to provide funding for the organization’s lobbying efforts, especially in Olympia and Washington, D.C. This year, meeting formats may look different than in the past, but it has never been more critical to have wheat growers’ voices heard.

WAWG needs your generous contributions to continue to tell wheat’s story and advocate on growers’ behalf on issues such as carbon taxes, tax preferences, infrastructure needs and more. If you donate \$20 or more, your name will be put in a drawing for a chance to win some fabulous prizes donated by Adams County,

Benton County, Columbia County, Douglas County, Grant County, Walla Walla County and Whitman County at our virtual annual meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2020.

We’ll be giving away nearly \$1,000 worth of prizes, including a Blackstone Grill, popular electronics, gift cards and more! You don’t have to be present to win.

LAF donations must be mailed to the WAWG office at 109 E 1st Ave., Ritzville, WA 99169 and must be received by Nov. 23, 2020. Please include your name, address and phone number with your donation. ■

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## NAWG SHAPES POLICY WITH QUALITY LOSS OPTION



By Dave Milligan

*NAWG President and Cass City, Mich., wheat farmer*

When wheat farmers across the country buy their crop insurance policies this fall and spring, a new option will be available to them. This new Quality Loss Option will help growers who have experienced a quality loss in any of the last 10 years be able to remove that quality-adjusted yield from their actual production history (APH) and insure a higher guarantee. This is a big win for wheat farmers and for the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), which has been

working with our state associations for several years on making changes to how crop insurance works when problems like low falling numbers are experienced.

In recent years, throughout different regions in the country, wheat growers have experienced quality loss issues. As the national representative of America's wheat growers, NAWG has listened to farmers voice these issues and worked with Congress to make improvements to how quality losses are treated in federal farm programs. This work culminated in a 2018 Farm Bill requirement for the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) to research and develop new methods of adjusting for quality losses, which was one of NAWG's priorities for the bill.

Following enactment, NAWG engaged with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Risk Management Agency (RMA) on implementation of this provision which resulted in a new Quality Loss Option being announced on July 6, 2020, for the 2021 crop year. A big win for agriculture producers, the Quality Loss Option will allow a producer to replace their quality adjusted yield in their APH databases with their actual yield. This allows the producer's APH database yield to increase for individual crop years in which there was a notice of loss (NOL) filed.

The overall impact of the Quality Loss Option is to prevent an insured producer's guarantee from declining due to low quality in an abnormal production year when this option is selected. This optional provision provides flexibility to producers and is available regardless of whether you received an indemnity for the year(s) selected. It is an available option under Yield Protection, Revenue Protection, Revenue Protection with Harvest Price Exclusion and APH plans of insurance.

Not only is the new Quality Loss Option a big win for producers, but also a victory for NAWG and our state associations. As an advocate for more crop insurance coverage options for producers, NAWG played a pivotal role as a voice for producers during the development of the 2018 Farm Bill. In collaboration with other agriculture associations, NAWG represents producers' positions in Washington, D.C. When producers work with their agriculture association, it makes a difference in agriculture policy.

Farmers' voices need to be heard in Washington, D.C., and that is where we step in. Agriculture associations have one goal, to support and advocate for our state associations and farmer members, and the evolution of this issue culminating in a new crop insurance option for growers demonstrates the value of participating in NAWG. ■

### 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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and managed by investment professionals. The foundation's distribution design is created to spend a portion of the growth each year from the fund and retain earnings each year to "grow the fund" allowing the fund to be in place for perpetuity.

Like all community foundations, we are governed by a volunteer Board of Directors comprised of leading citizens and professionals with expertise in knowing community needs. We go beyond simply making grants to advance charitable activities. We also strive to identify current and emerging issues in our communities and stimulate resources to address those needs and help our region prepare for the future. During COVID-19, CBF established our COVID-19 Crisis Fund and raised \$126,000 in 30 days to assist food security, youth services, family services, senior services, first responders, small business support, and mental health services. During this pandemic, CBF business has been as busy as ever because communities are depending on us for support and direction during the crisis. Clearly, we provide a conduit of charitable giving and are a gathering place for generosity.

At CBF, we keep our system simple. We offer you the power and flexibility in charitable giving without the paperwork, time and expenses associated with managing your own private foundation. We assist donors in setting up funds that will maximize both tax advantages and community impact.

However you decide to give, your gift changes lives today and in the future. For farmers and ranchers, the CBF Ag Endowment is one way for the agricultural community to set aside funding for students to pursue degrees in agriculture and dollars for 4H, FFA and Ag awareness programs. Please contact Executive Director, Corinne Isaak for more information.

### Key features of a community foundation include:

#### SIMPLICITY

Creating a philanthropic fund through a community foundation can avoid the legal complexity, administrative burdens and compliance requirements of establishing and maintaining a private foundation.

#### TAX BENEFITS

Gifts and bequests to a community foundation typically receive maximum income, gift and estate tax benefits; integrating a charitable giving program through a community foundation with your overall financial plan can further these benefits.

#### COMMUNITY IMPACT

Giving through a community foundation allows donors to put their charitable dollars directly to work in their own communities.

#### FLEXIBILITY

A community foundation can accept nearly any kind of gift, from cash and real estate to stock, QCD and other appreciated assets. An individual, family, business or organization can create a philanthropic fund for virtually any charitable purpose.

#### RECOGNITION

Endowing a fund at a community foundation is a fitting way to memorialize or honor a loved one and create a permanent legacy to be remembered for generations. Also, if a donor is interested in complete anonymity to protect their identity, this type of fund can be established as well.

#### COST EFFECTIVENESS

Because a community foundation manages many individual donor gifts, it can service and administer each of them at a fraction of the cost of a private foundation or smaller non-profit organization. The Columbia Basin Foundation looks forward to working with you. We are just a call away and can assist you in creating a lasting legacy that will benefit the community where you have lived and worked for your lifetime.

# ON THE MOVE

Rail, river, roads all make movement of products in and out of region possible

By Trista Crossley

Although barging and the dams on the Columbia-Snake River System have monopolized the spotlight recently, that's not the only transportation option that Pacific Northwest (PNW) growers and businesses rely on. Trains and trucks are critical links in a system with lots of moving parts.

Crops and products move both ways in the PNW with most utilizing all three modes of transportation at some point in their life cycle. Crops may go first by truck to a country elevator and then by barge or rail to downriver ports on the coast, while products such as fertilizer are shipped upriver via barge to river terminals and dispersed into the countryside by truck. Lose one part of that chain, and the whole system falters.

"We start with this interesting dynamic, geography, that gives us this balance. We are really close to the coast, we have fantastic river systems, and two Class I railroads run through our footprint. All of that is in balance with a highway system that integrates the two," explained Paul Katovich, CEO of HighLine Grain Growers. "We have this

nice balance of reliability and alternatives. It doesn't just happen that way. We've spent a lot of time and effort supporting and helping people understand that freight balance is important for our farmers. It creates a competitive tension between the two, and that keeps us as competitive as we can be back to the farm gate."

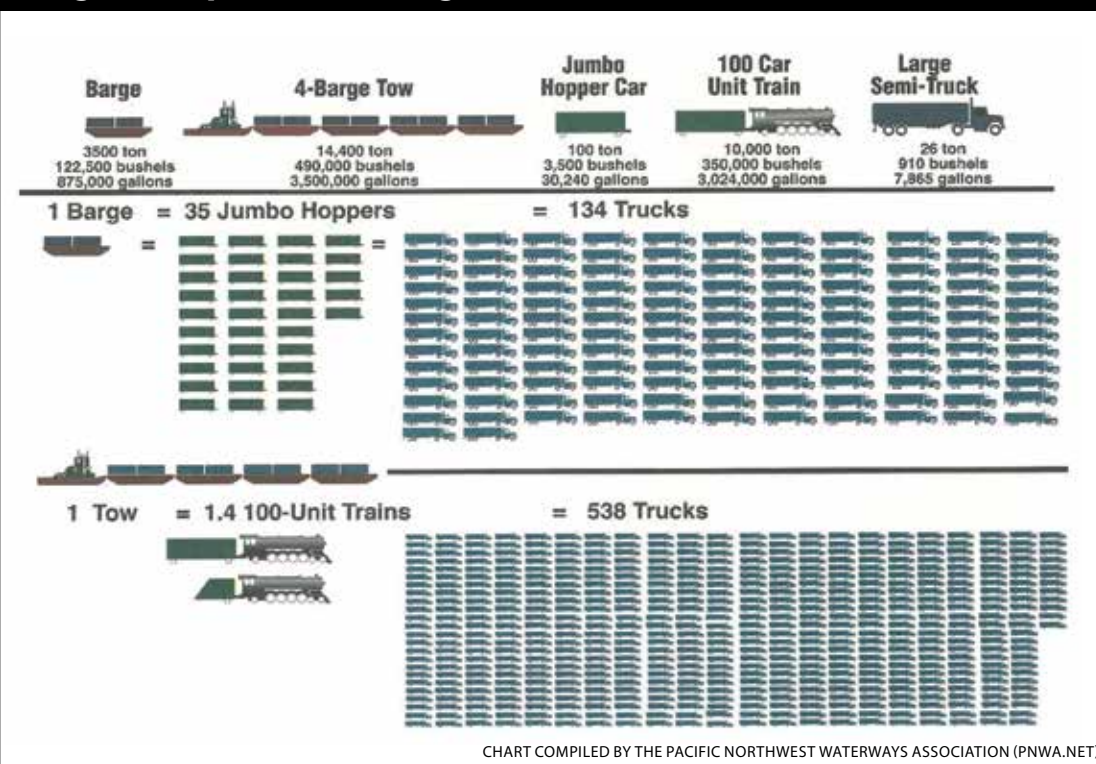
The capacity of the different modes of transportation varies greatly and can be difficult to put into perspective. One barge has a capacity of 122,500 bushels of wheat. One jumbo hopper rail car has a capacity of 3,500 bushels of wheat, and a large semitruck has a capacity of 910 bushels of wheat. In other words, one four-barge tow has the same freight capacity as 140 jumbo hopper rail cars (that's one and a third 110-car unit trains) or 538 semitrucks (a line that would stretch more than seven miles long). See comparison chart.

Approximately 85 to 90 percent of Eastern Washington's wheat crop is exported overseas. In a normal year, the Washington Grain Commission estimates that roughly 60 percent of the crop moves to export terminals in Portland and Vancouver via the river system, and 40 percent moves

by rail. Based on the most recent harvest report from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the 2020 Washington wheat crop is estimated to be 165.6 million bushels. That means that roughly 87 million bushels of wheat will move by barge (710 barges) and roughly 58 million bushels will move by rail (16,570 jumbo hopper cars). Almost all of that crop will start the journey on a truck.

"No one mechanism has the capacity to move the entire (wheat) crop. You can't do it by rail, by barge and certainly you can't do it by truck to Portland.

## Freight comparison of barges, trains and trucks





This integration builds a network of interdependency. If you lose any one of those legs—think of it like a stool—it doesn't work without all of the stool's legs," Katovich said.

And wheat is only one of many products that moves through the region. Soybeans and corn from the Midwest, wood products, bulk minerals and autos are just some of the major commodities that flow through the Pacific Northwest both by rail and by river.

Some of those bulk products are various fertilizers and nutrients that are earmarked for the ag retail market. The McGregor Company, a family-owned business, is among the largest crop input companies in the Pacific Northwest, serving customers throughout Eastern Washington, north-central Idaho and northeastern Oregon. They rely on all three modes of transportation to bring in fertilizer components to their two river terminals, where the individual components are blended and then shipped to their stores or directly to grower customers by truck. Generally, The McGregor Company will handle roughly two-thirds of their fertilizer business in the fall and one-third in the spring. Because it all happens within a very narrow window, the company has to use every mode of transportation available to them in order to get their product out to growers in a timely manner.

In a typical year, The McGregor Company estimates it will provide fertilizer to more than a million acres of cropland. The company will receive the equivalent of 500-plus rail cars or 1,500-plus trucks of nitrogen solutions via barge each year between their two river terminals. While each fertilizer season may last eight to 12 weeks, approximately 80 percent of that volume goes out in an eight-to-12-day window each fall and spring. Without the high volume capability of barge traffic, that scenario would not be remotely possible in such a short time frame. ▶

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Craig Chatterton, director of crop nutrition for The McGregor Company, explained that as yields have increased, so has the volume of fertilizer that is needed. He said that the company can go through a single barge shipment of fertilizer ingredients in just a few days during fall and spring seeding.

"In the world of agriculture, everything is getting bigger and faster. The volume of fertilizer that farmers can go through in a single day has grown exponentially over the course of 20 or 30 years," he said. "With the bigger equipment out in the fields, I can't keep up with just a single barge (load). I have to utilize all three parts of the transportation system to keep product flowing and not stop anybody out in the field."

When employing conservation tillage methods, especially when direct seeding, growers try to keep the number of passes over a field to a minimum. In order to do that, they often apply fertilizer at the same time as they seed. Any delay in seeding

could mean a corresponding decrease in yields, so in order to get their crops seeded in time, growers have to have their fertilizer on hand. And seeding, especially for winter wheat, tends to hit all across the region at about the same time, putting a huge demand on crop input companies like McGregor to time their shipments accurately.

"(Under more traditional tillage methods) fertilizer was applied separately, and then farmers would come in and seed. That extended the season about two to three times longer than it is today," said Alex McGregor, chairman of The McGregor Company. "It has condensed the amount of fertilizer that needs to get to the farm gate into a narrower and narrower window, and you have to hit that window perfectly."

Chatterton said without a barge option, he'd be forced into much longer supply chains because the same products currently

received by barge would have to be shipped via rail out of Canada, the Midwest or the Southeast. Availability of rail cars would also be an issue as the PNW would be competing for the cars against the rest of the nation and Canada. Additionally, the company's river facilities, which are where most of their product is received and mixed, aren't set up with the infrastructure or the space necessary to store the volume needed if it came mainly by rail. Chatterton explained that rail shipments have widely variable estimated times of arrival, so the company would need to keep more reserve product on hand, which would dictate a larger footprint and additional rail track and storage at each terminal. That cost, as well as any increased shipping costs due to less transportation competition, would eventually come out of the end users' pockets.

"When you take one of the choices away and it becomes a situation where you have no more choices, that certainly doesn't lead to competitive pricing," McGregor added.

"If we lost access to the barge option, that would put intense pressure on the rails to service our customers in a timely manner," said Fred Morscheck, general manager of operations at The McGregor Company. "Trucks are absolutely not an option. ►

*"If we lost access to the barge option, that would put intense pressure on the rails to service our customers in a timely manner. Trucks are absolutely not an option. It would take so many trucks and so many drivers that don't exist today to run them to try to replicate what you can move by rail and by barge."*

—Fred Morscheck  
General Manager of Operations,  
The McGregor Company

## Support of rails, river, roads high on WAWG priority list

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) has been a staunch defender of all three modes of transportation in the Pacific Northwest, working with other industry stakeholders throughout the region to educate the public on the benefits of the dams on the Columbia-Snake River System, promote the necessity of a well-maintained rail system, especially the shortlines, and advocated for funding to keep the state's highways in good repair.

"Since we export approximately 85 to 90 percent of our wheat overseas, being able to move our product out of the country and down to the coast in a timely, efficient manner is critical. The U.S. has a sterling reputation for being able to deliver high quality wheat to our customers on time and at a competitive cost, partly due to our access to a varied transportation system," said Michelle Hennings, executive director of WAWG. "If we lost any of those choices, our growers—and many other industries in our region who take advantage of our transportation options—would face higher costs that could threaten their livelihood and risk straining our relationships with our trading partners." ■



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It would take so many trucks and so many drivers that don't exist today to run them to try to replicate what you can move by rail and by barge. If we were down to one option, if we lost barging and 100 percent had to depend on rail...it is very challenging to schedule rail deliveries, more so than barges and more so than trucks. It would be extremely challenging."

Contrary to how The McGregor Company moves product into the countryside, growers are more interested in moving grain out of the countryside and down to the ports. Generally, grain bound for export takes one of two paths: It is moved by truck to a local elevator or shuttle-loading facility and put on a rail car, or it is moved by truck to a river facility where it is loaded on barges and taken downriver.

*(Editor's note: There are a number of major companies in Eastern Washington that gather grain and other products and ship them down to the coast. The two companies we spoke with are representative of how most of these shippers use the three different modes of transportation available to them.)*

HighLine Grain Growers' footprint, which covers most of the Highway 2 corridor from Spokane to Wenatchee, includes all those options, but for growers farther from the river, truck to rail tends to be the main way of moving grain. Katovich, the CEO of HighLine Grain Growers, said without the rails, growers would have to shift to trucks to get the grain to a river facility or to one of the shuttle-loading facilities (there are five in Eastern Washington: one in Ritzville, one in Four Lakes, one between Rosalia and Oakesdale, one in Endicott and one in Plymouth). That

could mean dozens more trucks per hour on the highways during harvest, resulting in an increased safety risk, risk of environmental damage and damage to the highway system.

"It is a scary number of trucks on the roads and miles traveled if we don't have a balanced, integrated system. That's in addition to what we already see today," he said. "If you took one or the other transportation option away, that relative scarcity of transportation would immediately spike the cost of transportation. I would say within a month or two, every bushel would cost at least \$.15 more to move to the coast. It's simple supply and demand."

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) estimates that the cost of raising a bushel of wheat in Eastern Washington sits at an estimated \$5.50 to \$6. When that same bushel of wheat is being sold for less than \$6, an extra cost of \$.15 per bushel could be enough to threaten farmers' livelihoods.

If HighLine Grain Growers lost any of their transportation options, Katovich said there would be outsized economic impacts in the investment it would take to increase their capacity to move the crop using whatever options were left to them. He believes that neither the rails nor the river is prepared to handle the entire wheat crop over an extended period of time.

"Right now, we are in balance (as far as transportation options go) so relative scarcity is controllable in an understandable way. But if you lose one of the major competitors in our integrated system, we would have to immediately invest a generation's worth of economic capital. We as an



individual company can only withstand that once in a generation. These are farmer dollars we are spending. If we lost one of those options, the cost associated with that, the need to change our capacity to handle it would be astronomical," he explained.

While Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative utilizes all three modes of transportation to move their farmers' products to export terminals on the coast, they tend to rely on trucks a little more heavily. The company operates 45 facilities throughout Whitman and Spokane counties in Washington, and Latah, Benewah and Nez Perce counties in Idaho. Only three of those facilities have the infrastructure to use the shortline rails, so most of their product is moved by truck from local elevators to a shuttle-loading facility or to a river terminal.

"Since we are using trucks for transfers within our footprint, obviously, trucks are very important to facilitate movement (of product) to market," said Shawn O'Connell, CEO of PNW Farmers Cooperative.

Trucks also figure prominently for PNW Farmers Cooperative because, in addition to wheat, their footprint includes a large number of pulse acres. Due to a lack of container shipping services in Portland or Vancouver, the majority of pulses are dry bagged and sent by truck to export terminals in Seattle and Tacoma.

"When the steamship carriers pulled out of Portland, using a barge was no longer a viable option," explained O'Connell. "Using rail isn't viable for us going to Seattle or Tacoma because of costs, so we utilize trucks."

But while PNW Farmers Cooperative might use trucks more than other companies spoken to for this article, O'Connell pointed out that losing any of their shipping options would dramatically affect the company and increase storage and marketing costs for their farmers. Once grain is moved by truck to a shuttle-loading facility or to the river, typically 45 percent is shipped to export terminals by rail and 55 percent by barge.

"If we lost one those modes of transportation, that changes our infrastructure completely. The storage that is built at our terminals may not be usable anymore. For example, no one is going to deliver grain down to a barge-loading facility with no rail access and store it, simply to put it back on a truck to take it to a rail-loading facility," he said. "Shipping grain from here to Portland via truck just is not physically possible. We don't have enough trucks, enough equipment to move that volume of grain regardless of cost. We just physically can't do it."

Besides a lack of equipment, O'Connell pointed out there aren't enough truck drivers either. He doesn't believe any one of the available modes of transportation could handle

the entirety of the crop, especially as improved genetics and farming practices produce higher average yields each year.

"All three modes of transportation are extremely important to not only us as growers but to the industry itself," he said. "This year, we've seen some of the best yields we've ever seen in certain parts of the region. That's even more reason to utilize all modes of transportation to help facilitate movement of products to marketplace." ■

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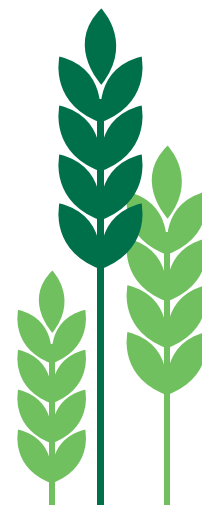
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Nicole Berg, vice president of the National Association of Wheat Growers and a Washington Association of Wheat Growers' past president (2013/14), was sworn in as the specialty crop representative to the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation's board of directors.



Not only is Marci Green a Washington Association of Wheat Growers' past president (2017/18), she's also a farmer ambassador for U.S. Farmers & Ranchers in Action.



Michelle Hennings, Washington Association of Wheat Growers' executive director, is also the state executive director leader for the National Association of Wheat Growers.

# LEAVING A MARK

## National positions bring spotlight to Washington wheat leaders

By Trista Crossley

When it comes to leaving a mark in the national wheat industry, three Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) leaders are stepping up to the challenge.

Nicole Berg, vice president of the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) and a WAWG past president (2013/14); Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director; and Marci Green, WAWG past president (2017/18), have all accepted assignments that are bringing national attention to Washington wheat growers. Hennings said the Washington wheat industry has become more active at the state and national levels in the last few years, and she is pleased to see women in farming have become more involved as leaders.

"Having Washington wheat growers serving on boards and in national organizations helps our state and our members. It helps our message get heard and gives us a voice and an opportunity to weigh in on national issues," she said. "I feel that the women who are serving in these positions are great role models for leadership. They know how to deal with people, they want to educate the public, and they want to make a difference in our industry. But in order to do that, you have to be involved and be willing to go the extra mile."

### BERG: UNTANGLING THE INTRICACIES OF CROP INSURANCE

Berg, who farms in the Horse Heaven Hills, is no stranger to navigating the complex world that is crop insurance, but now she gets to experience it from the other side of the table. Last month, she was sworn in as the specialty crop representative to the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation's (FCIC) board of directors (besides wheat, the Berg family also grows sweet corn, peas and beans). The FCIC administers the federal crop insurance program, and the board of directors' primary responsibility is to approve any new policies, insurance plans or major modifications to existing insurance plans.

"I farm in a very dry area of the U.S., and crop insurance is a necessary tool in our toolbox in order for us to stay in business," Berg said. "I just thought that in this position, I would be able to help farmers tell their story about how important crop insurance is as a safety net. I also want to help make sure that crop insurance remains affordable and that it continues to help cover the risk of farming because farming is getting riskier and riskier just due to the pure economics of it."

Berg will serve a four-year term. The board generally meets five times a year in either Washington, D.C., or at the Risk Management Agency's (RMA) office in Kansas City, although thanks to COVID-19, all meetings are currently being held virtually. As a member of the board, Berg will work with crop insurance policies for a wide range of crops, not just wheat. In general, the changes the board considers are at least a year out from being made available to growers due to how crop insurance deadlines work.

Despite keeping very busy with her official NAWG and WAWG duties—Berg is chair of WAWG's Natural Resources Committee—she said she was excited to get more involved in the intricacies of crop insurance and to be able to have some influence over crop insurance policy. In the last farm bill, a crop insurance quality endorsement was one of the Pacific Northwest's top priorities. Thanks in part to the work done by the wheat industry organizations of Washington, Idaho and Oregon, growers are now able to elect a quality loss option in their crop insurance policies that protects their production history in cases



where a quality loss isn't big enough to trigger an indemnity payment.

"The Pacific Northwest wheat industries have really molded together. We tend to come in with a coalition around issues, and that helps move policy, especially in D.C.," Berg said.

## GREEN: AMBASSADOR TO THE FOOD SECTOR

Although Green finished up her term as WAWG president several years ago, she hasn't stopped working hard for Washington wheat growers. Besides serving on NAWG's budget committee and chairing the WAWG Public Information/Public Relations Committee, she's recently become a farmer ambassador for U.S. Farmers & Ranchers in Action (USFRA). USFRA—formerly known as U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance—represents farmer- and rancher-led organizations committed to furthering globally sustainable agricultural systems. The focus of the organization is to create collegial interaction and proactive collaboration among the best minds in food, agriculture, science and technology, leading to environmental, social and economic sustainability, according to their website.

In September, Green participated in USFRA's virtual Honor the Harvest Forum, where she was able to explain the grower's role in supplying the nation's food and fiber. Besides growers, the forum included participants from all walks of life, including, among others, 4H; the World Wildlife Fund; Microsoft; the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; major universities; commodity groups; and food production companies.

"The forum was held virtually over two weeks," Green said. "They would have speakers and then would break everybody into small groups for break-out sessions. They did try to have at least one grower in




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each of the small group break-outs, so I would try to give the producer point of view in those sessions that I was in.”

Green said her role as a USFRA farmer ambassador is still evolving as the organization further defines what its role and objectives are in U.S. agriculture. Its partners cover nearly all aspects of the nation’s food sector, from the grower to the consumer, and includes university researchers, ag input companies, commodity associations, industry stakeholder groups, food production companies and even banks.

“I think the farm ambassador role is to be the voice of agriculture to this broad group,” Green said, adding that sustainability and climate smart agriculture are two of USFRA’s main focuses. “I think we have the potential to have a positive impact on climate change, and I think this might be a good avenue for us to make that point, but I also think it is important that we have a voice at the table, because with this forum, I got the impression that there were people there who thought that big equals bad and small equals good and that organic equals sustainable. I do believe that the farmer ambassadors and those of us who are producers got the point across pretty well that that’s not true. That there are all different types of agriculture, all different sizes of agriculture, but one is not better than another.”

Green used her participation in the forum to explain that when looking at climate smart agriculture and sustainability, there isn’t a one-size fits all solution for all of agriculture. She also made sure to drive one aspect of sustainability home.

“Several times, I pointed out that sustainability has to include economic sustainability. You can’t just be talking about the environment and conservation. Sustainable farming has to make business sense as well, because if you can’t maintain your business, if you change practices and then go out of business, you won’t do anybody any good,” she said.

## **HENNINGS: A CHANNEL BETWEEN STATE LEADERS AND NAWG**

For the past year, not only has Hennings been tasked with leading the Washington state wheat industry as WAWG’s executive director—a position she’s been in for five years—she’s also been acting as the liaison between NAWG staff and the state executive leaders of NAWG’s other 19 member states.

In her role as the state executive director leader for NAWG, Hennings organizes and leads meetings between all the other state executive leaders to talk about issues that are happening in each state and to build a consensus around policy issues that should be addressed at the national level. The group meets once a month virtually and then in person (in normal times) at the NAWG fall and winter conferences and at Commodity Classic.

“The state executives are a very important part of NAWG, because we are the ones that work most closely with our board members and hear about our growers’ issues first,” Hennings said. “To have this group come together and communicate with each other can lead to very positive outcomes at the national level. We work to make sure everyone is on the same page with different issues and that each state is getting their issues addressed at the national level.”

Some of the issues the state executive group have discussed include policy decisions such as making all classes of wheat eligible for Coronavirus Food Assistance Program payments; addressing farm bill implementation, personnel and training issues at U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies; and helping shape NAWG’s strategic plan. Hennings feels that having a unified group and being able to provide input to NAWG has provided the national organization with a consensus from the states and helped it be more effective and efficient.

“There are times that states have issues that other states don’t,” she explained. “We’ve been working to address what NAWG’s role is in these situations. We can use this group as an avenue to introduce an issue to NAWG and to get a feeling from other states if they are having the same issue.”

While Hennings has dealt with both state and national issues since becoming WAWG’s executive director, she said she has a passion for working issues at a national level.

“To build a strategy around national policy and then get it passed is challenging,” she explained. “You are always going to have wins and losses, but when you get that win, it’s fulfilling knowing you have accomplished a goal, and you’re ready for the next challenge. Advocating at the national level for farmers is rewarding because not only have you helped your own state, but others as well. My job is never boring, and I enjoy working on behalf of the wheat industry. As a farmgirl myself, it’s in my blood.” ■





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# Blazes char more than just land

LABOR DAY FIRES BURN MORE THAN 42,000 ACRES OF CROPLAND, 70,000 ACRES OF CRP

By Trista Crossley

If there is any silver lining to the 2020 Labor Day fires that hit Eastern Washington, for wheat farmers, it's the fact that most of the wheat had already been harvested. But even though the crop may have been mostly saved, losing that much stubble, not to mention the damage to Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land, still burns.

The extent of the damage to the land is staggering. According to numbers provided by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), in Douglas County, the Road 11 and Pearl Hill fires burned 233,360 acres. Of that, 34,490 acres were cropland; 36,533 acres were fallowed ground; 63,656 acres were in CRP; and 35,422 acres were grazing lands. Over in Lincoln County, the Whitney Fire burned 127,410 acres,

of which 7,921 was cropland; 3,461 acres were fallowed ground; 7,847 acres were in CRP; and 70,439 acres were grazing lands. Down in the Palouse, the Babbs-Malden and Manning fires that devastated Malden and Pine City, burned a total of 18,254. At this time, FSA doesn't have data on how many of those acres were cropland, fallowed ground or CRP.

Jon Wyss, FSA Washington state executive director, told growers in the October board meeting of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, that several programs designed to help farmers and ranchers recover are active, and the agency has put a Programmatic 850 order in place to help speed recovery. Previous to the order, landowners who wanted to qualify for cost share on



The Labor Day fires that swept through Eastern Washington left behind more than just charred stubble and pasture. Hundreds of miles of fencing, telephone poles and brush were also destroyed.



repairs to fences or structures or to remove debris from a fire had to have an environmental review done by FSA before work could begin. Wyss said that with the order in place, landowners can start work as long as they document that the repairs are being done in the same location as the original structures and that there is no additional ground disturbance above the previous level of ground disturbance. This order pertains to:

- Direct Farm Ownership Loans, Direct Operating Loans and the Emergency Loan Program;
- The Emergency Conservation Program;
- The Emergency Forest Restoration Program;
- The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program; and
- The Tree Assistance Program (TAP).

Landowners with any questions should contact their local FSA office for more information.

The state FSA office was also able to extend the Emergency Haying and Grazing deadline for growers in some of those counties that are in a designated drought or are contiguous to a drought-designated county. Counties who received the extension are Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Franklin, Grant, Klickitat, Kittitas, Okanogan, Walla Walla and Yakima counties. The exact deadline date will vary by producer and is 90 days from the date the producer was approved to turn out his or her cattle. Unfortunately for growers in Lincoln County, they were not eligible for such an extension.

"While wildfire is a qualifier, it must also have a 40 percent loss in forage production in the county in which the CRP acreage is located to be eligible," Wyss said. The state FSA office was also able to get authorization to help with the cost of hauling water to cattle that are on CRP land under the Emergency Livestock and Forage Program.

Growers with CRP land who were impacted by the fires should contact their local FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service offices to get more information on programs that might be available to help them recover.

The Douglas and Lincoln county fires happened mainly within the footprint of HighLine Grain Growers, a farmer-owned cooperative that operates primarily along the Highway 2 corridor from Wenatchee to Spokane. Paul Katovich, CEO of HighLine Grain Growers, said the cooperative didn't lose any facilities to the fires, thanks to the actions of their growers who plowed firebreaks and the fire crews.

"It is a brave thing to hook onto a plow and drive toward the fire," he said. "We lost about half of a million acres within our footprint of pasture and stubble ground. The

fire crews did a phenomenal job saving all the homesteads and houses that they did."

Katovich said he is hearing that the loss of fencing is a particular blow to the farmers and ranchers in that area, not to mention the loss of organic matter that helps growers retain moisture and prevent erosion.

"Fences are important to cattlemen and important to farmers. It keeps one out of the other. When you have a fire and lose hundreds of miles of fencing, that's a big deal," he said. "Then, there's the loss of pasture and plant material that was on the fields. When you lose all that, you start over. Those are pretty significant impacts, long-ranging impacts that you never get back."

The Whitman County fire was in Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative territory, which covers much of the Palouse in both Washington and Idaho. The company lost a crib elevator and a steel tank in the Babbs-Malden fire, but as Shawn O'Connell, CEO of the company, said in a statement, "Our losses are nothing compared to those of the residents of Malden and Pine City." ■




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# CHAIRMAN

## WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

By Gary Bailey



The July 31 release of the final environmental impact statement (EIS) evaluating the four lower Snake River dams' impact on salmon should make all wheat farmers happy. The conclusion of various federal agencies that dams should stay with additional mitigation practices put in place to encourage salmon recovery was a victory, right? Yes, it was, but I'm not celebrating. Since the National Marine Fisheries Service began listing as threatened and endangered the salmon stocks up and down the west coast, including those in the Snake and Columbia rivers, many efforts have been made to bring a commonsense approach to salmon recovery including improved dam operations.

Every biological opinion has been thoroughly investigated and debated, followed by court challenges that a judge subsequently ripped apart. Looking back over the history of efforts to protect salmon and dams is like reading about wars during the Middle Ages. They just keep coming.

When it comes to our Snake/Columbia River highway to the sea, I am convinced those who have fought the dams for more than 30 years will not let a massive federally funded EIS report stop them from pursuing their goal of breaching the dams. But I have to give it to the breachers, like "Save Our Wild Salmon." At least they're up front about their intentions. So, it's disappointing when other groups navigate the issue of dams without saying upfront what they really want. I'm talking here about a letter to Gov. Jay Inslee from a group of Washington State Senate and House members.

The letter states the goal of salmon recovery "must be the restoration of healthy, harvestable salmon runs in the Columbia system rather than merely avoiding extinction." The definition of healthy salmon runs is always going to be open for debate, especially when said salmon are already being harvested. Not to mention, the EIS does provide a comprehensive strategy to help increase salmon numbers.

One of the lines in the letter does reach out to agriculture. "Today, we have the opportunity to think bigger and bolder about salmon recovery so that we restore populations of salmon, we build the infrastructure for our clean energy future, and we invest in the economic success of our farming communities."

But the real point of the letter was contained in the next paragraph. "We were encouraged by the comments from you and the other Northwest governors reflecting your commitment to a regional dialogue about recover-

ing salmon, including discussion concerning removal of the four lower Snake River dams." Fortunately, it will take an act of Congress and the signature of the president to remove the dams, not a group of state legislators.

In a letter released subsequently by the governors of the four northwest states, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana, there is no mention of dam breaching, but there is the scent of it. Or maybe, as a farmer who utilizes the river, I'm just too sensitive. When I read about a collaborative public process with the involvement of the regional stakeholders, including the tribes, I wondered if such diverse interests can ever come to an agreed-upon solution that protects the dams.

Furthermore, reading the statement that a consortium of environmental and fishing organizations issued after the governors' letter was released did nothing to allay my concerns. After praising the governors' letter, a Defender of Wildlife spokesperson said federal agencies are failing to act on rising Snake River temperatures that threaten salmon. "It is more important than ever before that our elected leaders bring people together and restore a free-flowing Snake River to benefit wild salmon, orcas, tribes, farmers and fishing communities."

Did you notice the word "free-flowing?" It's just another way of saying dam breaching, but apparently, we're not supposed to figure that out.

Agricultural interests—including those in Idaho and Oregon—have done a magnificent job of building a coalition to approach issues, including dam breaching, from a common point of view. But we must continue to remain cohesive. Breach any part of a defensive line, and the battle is usually over. Agriculture must remain united. Meanwhile, even the dam breachers don't know if the breaching they advocate is going to make a bit of difference to salmon numbers. The Fraser River in Canada doesn't have dams on it, and salmon struggle to survive.

Our Columbia and Snake river salmon spend years in the ocean compared to their brief journey up and down the river. It's just commonsense that what is happening in the ocean is impacting salmon numbers to a much greater extent than river conditions. But the ocean is big and hard to study. Meanwhile, pollution, predators, habitat and hatchery utilization are just a few of the additional issues that need to be considered before ever breaching the subject of breaching. Nevertheless, I fully expect another lawsuit from the community of dam breachers, which is why we must remain vigilant. The future belongs to those who prepare for it. ■

# REVIEW

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION



## More than wheat movement depends on region's dams

If Washington wants to experience rolling blackouts in the future, then the state should just continue to follow California's example, said Andy Barth of Inland Power & Light. Utilities have warned that renewable sources like wind and solar cannot be expected to carry the entire load when a perfect storm of variables occurs, such as extremely hot temperatures, people coming home from work, a setting sun and no wind. Barth, who serves as Inland Power's business development and community relations officer, said California is a good case study in showing the importance of flexible resources. "The bottom line is that hydropower is the reason we have clean power, some of the cheapest electrical rates in the nation and our power supply is constant and reliable," Barth wrote in a recent op-ed, adding, "If (Governor Jay Inslee) is successful in making the state rely on solar and wind as the primary sources of power, it is not a matter of if blackouts will happen, but when." ■

## Industry's 20 minutes of history

If the last 5 million years (approximately the time since our humanoid ancestors began walking on two feet), could be compressed into a single year, the industrial revolution wouldn't begin until Dec. 31 at 11:40 p.m. ■

## The pains of losing trains

Japan's rural passenger train lines are experiencing a similar phenomenon that occurred in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho in the early 1990s when short haul freight lines were abandoned. At the time, Class I railroads like BNSF and Union Pacific wanted to rid themselves of shortlines and concentrate on more efficient direct routes. The same is true in Japan, except the freight is passengers. While bullet trains in Japan efficiently connect the country's cities, nearly 50 rural rail lines spanning more than 600 miles of track have closed since 2000. The phenomenon is further isolating older Japanese residents and reducing rural populations. ■

## Ag's malaise trickling up

Bayer AG, the German company that purchased Monsanto for \$63 billion in 2017, recently announced it will cut billions of dollars to offset falling demand for agricultural products. The pandemic hit its crop science business harder than anticipated as crop prices fell, and the company doesn't expect conditions to improve in the near term. Bayer said additional savings might lead to more job cuts. Bayer had previously announced it would cut \$2.6 billion in annual costs from 2020, including a 10 percent cut to its workforce. ■

## Change is in the air

King Arthur Flour, based out of Norwich, Vt., and known as the oldest flour company in the U.S., is now King Arthur Baking Company. The rebranding is intended to reaffirm the company's belief in the power of baking and its commitment to inspiring bakers. The company's new logo features a wheat crown. The creative director at the company said the name change "harnesses who we are. We are bakers, and we revel in the joy of baking." The company is launching a Bake Joy campaign, part of which allows consumers to share photos of their baking creations. ■



## Who knew?

There was a time when debate over the first release of a genetically engineered wheat variety focused on countries like the U.S., Canada, Australia and China. But it was Argentina that recently announced it is poised to release a GE, drought-resistant variety. Whether the new variety will actually be commercialized is still in doubt. Argentina has to get buy-off from Brazil where the majority of its wheat is exported. If Brazil approves, it's still anybody's guess whether that will light the fire under more GE releases. ■



## Lifestyle farming like yoga

Houston-based tractor maker Mahindra North America sees lifestyle farming as the fastest growing of all its markets, expanding 10 percent a year for the next decade. Among the reasons are active baby boomers entering retirement and getting back to the land. Also, more Americans are interested in growing their own food. Making a return on their investment is not necessary as many of those interested in farming as a lifestyle have money to burn—er, farm. As one wealthy individual said about his farm, “It’s very relaxing, like meditation and yoga. It’s peaceful, fulfilling, and it’s a good thing to fade into,” adding that farming is for people “who don’t want to sit around and watch TV or have too much energy.” ■

## Heck no, we won’t go!

The average age of wheat farmers in Eastern Washington is 58, which means there are a lot of farmers older than that. But working longer is not just an agricultural trend. Since 2008, the average labor force participation rate among 55 to 64 years olds in developed countries has risen by 8 percent. A recent report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), said older workers are vital for prosperity in high income economies. The average age within developed countries is now 40 and is expected to rise to 45 by 2050 when there will be 58 retired people for every 100 workers, up from 41 for every 100 today. A British survey found that many people are happy to work longer with fully a quarter of those queried saying they had retired too early and their lives had lost purpose. ■

## Wily coyote

Once mostly found west of the Mississippi in the U.S., coyotes have spread east, settling in almost every urban area in the country. It’s estimated that upwards of 4,000 coyotes live in Chicago. Why the increase? Demand for American furs have declined and trapping the animals is not as acceptable as before. Coyotes flourish in cities eating rats, rabbits, woodchucks, young Canada geese and fawns of white tail deer as well as cats and small dogs. Just one human has been reported killed by a coyote in America, in 1981, when a toddler was snatched from her garden in Los Angeles. Dogs, on the other hand, kill around 50 people a year and send thousands to hospitals. Even deer kill more, causing traffic accidents that cause an estimated 200 traffic fatalities annually. ■

## Chocolate chip cookies, the final frontier

As one of their research projects, astronauts on the International Space Station developed a chocolate chip cookie baking protocol that requires an oven heated to 325 degrees and a baking time of 130 minutes. Back on earth, that baking time would be 16 to 18 minutes. The research was made possible by a partnership of DoubleTree and Hilton hotels, where freshly baked chocolate chip cookies are a mainstay at afternoon check-ins. Learning to bake the cookies in space is another way researchers are trying to make long-term space travel more hospitable. ■



## The soybean of the future?

Could feeding 9 billion people by 2050 include eating insects? Perhaps, but not directly. Raising insects on cheap inputs, then crushing them and using them as fish food is catching on. The humble flour beetle, specifically the larval stage better known as mealworms that can be found in contaminated flour, has been used as fish food for a long time. But now, companies hope to turn out tons of the larvae by industrializing the process of raising them. An outfit in Washington state called Beta Hatch is building a commercial mealworm farm inside an old juice factory. A robot-rich test facility now raising mealworms in France has 10,000 mealworm trays turning out 30 tons of protein a month. The company recently announced it will build a new facility that will produce 1,500 tons of protein a month. A new insect now being investigated for the same purpose is black soldier flies larva, which will feed on any decaying organic material. But while flour mealworms are vegetarians, fed on a diet including wheat bran, the diet of the black fly is a proprietary secret, although it was once known to include blood from slaughterhouses. Although the amount of feed produced by insects is trivial today, that leaves plenty of room for growth. ■

## Pressing the pause button in 2020

NO PNW EXPORT TOUR TO PORTLAND THIS YEAR THANKS TO PANDEMIC

By Mary Palmer Sullivan

The Pacific Northwest (PNW) Export Tour and Wheat Quality Workshop is a Washington Grain Commission (WGC)-sponsored annual event to Portland that has been happening since 1997.

The 2019 bus tour included farmers, landlords and representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Washington State University. Like many of the past tours, the event included a stop at Bonneville Dam and Locks; Franz Bakery; Columbia Export Terminal; the Wheat Marketing Center; Shaver Transportation; and Full Sail Brewery. The group also heard from representatives of PacifiCorp LLC, U.S. Wheat Associates, Columbia River Bar Pilots, Columbia River Pilots and the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association. As soon as the 2019 tour wrapped up, I started making plans for the 2020 event, and those interested in attending started signing up.

Then along came COVID-19. Back in April, I was hope-

ful that we could ride this out and make the 2020 tour happen. By August, I knew we had to make a decision on whether we could consider this year's event or wait until 2021.

Typical tour stops and facilities that we have been visiting for all these years are not operating the same. Tours and visits from groups of any size aren't being considered. As a result, the Washington Grain Commission's 20-plus years of hosting tours have hit the pause button in 2020. We are, however, committed to restarting the tour when we can be assured that everyone involved will be safe and have the best experience. Sadly, the PNW Export Tour and Wheat Quality Workshop is just one of many wheat meetings and events that will not happen in 2020.

I inherited the tour from Glen Squires in 2012, when he was named CEO of the WGC and he delegated the duty to me. I embraced the opportunity and was excited for this new challenge. I would meet 23 new friends!



2019 tour participants at Shaver Transportation.



Getting better acquainted with the farmers that we represent has always been something I have loved. So I jumped in and started planning and organizing the tour stops and contacting all of the folks involved. Once I knew all the players and fine-tuned all of the stops, things fell into place, and I knew if I could just get on the bus with everyone, it would work out. And it did. Eight years later, I still look forward to meeting 23 new friends every year. It just won't happen this year.

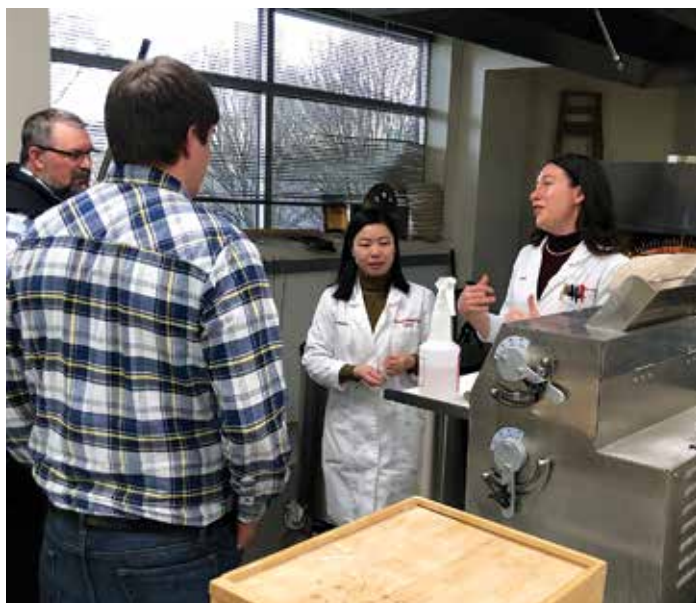
We are optimistic we can continue this tradition and provide the tour in 2021. We encourage anyone who hasn't been on the tour to consider contacting our office and signing up for the 2021 event. It will be held in mid-November. Call (509) 456-2481 and get on our list! ■



A Shaver Transportation captain (left) shows the group the wheelhouse of the tug while sailing on the Willamette River.



(Left) Mandarin House restaurant and the noodle-making demonstration is always a highlight of the tour. (Above) A Full Sail Brewery tour guide explains their brewing process to the group.



(Left) Wheat Marketing Center staff provide education and demonstrations on how to determine wheat quality. (Above) Federal Grain Inspection Service personnel at Columbia Export Terminal provide wheat grading as ships are loaded with wheat for export destinations.

# A new framework for trade

Ambassador recognizes importance of stability, growth potential for U.S. markets

By Joe Bippert and Mike Miller

The first time Mike and Joe met was in 2013 during Gov. Jay Inslee's first trade mission to China. Prior to meeting up with the governor, the agriculture delegation made a stop in Tokyo to discuss a few issues with government officials from their Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW).

The meeting with MHLW was primarily to discuss phytosanitary restrictions hindering the entry of Washington blueberries. As is the standard for a meeting to determine market access, there was a lot of work that was done beforehand to ensure all the details of the issue were covered; however, once everyone was on the same page, MHLW staff was able to sort out the issues in very short order to provide better access for blueberries to Japan in a conference room with barely enough room for the delegates to sit.

Reminiscent of that experience in Japan was a recent meeting sitting down with Ambassador Gregg Doud, chief agricultural negotiator for the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR). The meeting took place in Spokane at the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) office with a few commission representatives.

USTR Robert Lighthizer and Ambassador Doud recognize the importance of helping the agriculture industry by establishing various trade agreements with the industry's most stable markets such as Japan, Mexico and Canada, while simultaneously negotiating significant growth potential such as China.

The result was a modernized U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and a trade deal with Japan that would keep U.S. agriculture competitive in those markets.

Competitive trade with Japan is significant to Washington's wheat exports. This deal, like that of Mike and Joe's first days together in Japan (but on a much larger scale), would be taken care of in a matter of weeks as opposed to months or even years, thanks to the work done by the USTR negotiating team.

The USMCA agreement had a different spin to it, according to the ambassador. Building on the North American Free Trade Agreement, the U.S., Mexico and Canada agreed to work together in other forums on agriculture matters; improve transparency and consultations on matters affecting trade among the countries; as well



Ambassador Gregg Doud observed the loading of wheat ships at the United Grain Corporation in Vancouver, Wash. The grain was destined for Japan and China where he has negotiated increased market access on behalf of U.S. agriculture.

as adding increased access for several industries within agriculture. The final product of the USMCA is one that was tedious and contentious, and ongoing monitoring of the long-term agreement will keep the staff at USTR very busy over years to come.

Much has been made of the U.S.-China Phase One agreement over the past few years. Putting the two largest economies in the world in a room filled to the brim on both sides of the table and addressing fundamental differences in government structure and regulatory barriers would take long, exhausting meetings half a world apart and often in person.

But the ambassador said the longer-term outlook is also improving because of behind-the-scenes structural changes contained in the Phase One agreement.

"There were some 57 structural changes that China agreed to make in terms of U.S. agriculture market access into China," Doud said. "Where we are at, these months later, is that 50 of the 57 changes have been made."



Doud says some important issues are yet to be resolved, including some involving ractopamine, an animal feed additive, and biotech. But he says they have made “enormous progress” in the areas of beef, poultry and dairy, as well as wheat.

In an address last year to Pacific Northwest (PNW) wheat farmers, geopolitical analyst Peter Zeihan showed how the rules of international trade are changing, independent of any political administration. These trade agreements are setting a new framework for future international trade deals with the U.S.

Ambassador Doud shared that, following negotiations with Canada, Mexico, China and Japan (our four largest export markets), the U.S. continues to discuss agricultural trade with key trading partners, aiming to expand market access for U.S. farmers and ranchers. An example of this, specific to wheat, is Brazil’s implementation of an annual, duty-free tariff rate quota of 750,000 metric tons of wheat imports.

This new framework needs to be deliberate, and while negotiators are moving as quickly as they possibly can, he acknowledges that the stakes are high for agriculture, and this is the one chance to get the deal right. “We are building a brand,” he said, “and that takes time.”

To date, even though overall wheat exports to China are up, soft white wheat out of the PNW has not seen any shipments to China under the Phase One agreement. While this may appear discouraging, Ambassador Doud reminded commissioners that patience with China is key to long-term success in that market. It takes time to move the \$80 billion in agricultural products that China has committed to buying over the next two years without major disruptions to our export capacity and infrastructure.

The ambassador used the example of U.S. beef where it had no access prior to the Phase One agreement. While U.S. beef historically had minimal access into the Chinese market, U.S. beef exports through August 2020 reached more than \$95 million, a 114 percent increase over the same period in 2019.

The same trends over the past few months could be said for other commodities. A year ago, China purchased very little wheat, and they are currently No. 2 in all U.S. wheat sales. Soybeans are shattering records. Corn is flowing at a steady pace, and the list goes on.

Is it sustainable?

One of the primary duties of USTR is to monitor and enforce the terms of the agreements we have with countries all over the globe. Looking to the future, there is still a lot of work for USTR in China to create longevity of these gains while simultaneously looking at new trade opportunities, of which Ambassador Doud mentioned Indonesia, India and Vietnam, among others.

To have people like a Kansas farm boy, a past FFA officer, cattleman, hay grower and a friend to the industry representing America’s agricultural interests on the world’s biggest stage is something every farmer in the U.S. should be thankful for. At the same time, Ambassador Doud has surrounded himself with people like Trey Forsyth, his policy advisor, who made the trip to our state as well and is another farm boy from Iowa who understands what we do. For our industry to have the opportunity to show them our state and highlight more than 13 commodities in five days is something we should be proud of. ■

## Ag negotiator visits the real Washington

Washington’s wheat industry has been highly engaged in Washington, D.C., making it a point to educate lawmakers and federal agencies on the priority issues impacting our industry.

Beyond typical engagements in Washington, D.C., Mike Miller has returned many times to represent the Washington Grain Commission and U.S. Wheat Associates, making visits to elected or appointed officials to answer questions in regards to production concerns, enforcement of agronomic practices or lack of enforcement in some cases.

Miller’s travels have often been with Washington State Department of Agriculture Director Derek Sandison in order to broaden the focus to all of Washington agriculture.

With such engagement coming from Washington state, it was a natural fit for Ambassador Doud and his policy advisor to come to our state where they were able to get a firsthand look at 13 commodities throughout the region as well as visits to our largest deep water ports. ■

# The hidden majority

Project images wheat plants' roots to document disease development



By Isaac Madsen

Plant roots are often referred to as the hidden half of the plant. In Eastern Washington dryland wheat production, it might be more accurate to refer to roots as the hidden three-quarters.

The rain-fed wheat of the region relies on healthy root systems to see the plants through the dry summer to harvest. In order to develop a healthy plant, the wheat seedlings must establish strong roots. The physical, chemical and biological properties of the soil all play a role in seedling root development. Soil pathogens are especially concerning in the Pacific Northwest where many acres of dryland production have been in wheat for years.

Healthy roots are critical to raising healthy, high yielding plants, but roots are extremely difficult to study. In his book, "Plant Roots," Peter Gregory said, "Soils are optically opaque so that continuous visual observation of growth is impossible, while disturbance of soil to expose roots substantially changes their environment, which may, in turn lead to modifications to growth and function." This is an elaborate way of saying that roots grow in the soil, and since we cannot see through the soil, anything we do to study roots is going to disturb the system we are trying to examine. This is the dichotomy which has plagued root researchers since the field emerged in the early 1900s. A variety of techniques have been used to counteract this issue.

One technique is called a rhizobox. A rhizobox is a transparent box that allows growing roots to be imaged as they grow and proceed through the soil. The rhizobox technique has been in use for some time. Recently, researchers in the department of Crop and Soil Sciences (CSS) at Washington

State University (WSU) have experimented with replacing half of the rhizobox with office scanners to image growing root systems (see Figure 1). This imaging method can be used to capture high resolution time-lapse videos of the root growing and interacting with the soil. The scanner-based rhizobox can be used to image single-celled root hairs as well as pathogen infections.

CSS researchers have teamed up with scientists from the Department of Pathology in order to image the development of disease symptoms on wheat roots. The specific disease we selected to study is *Rhizoctonia solani*.

*R. solani* is responsible for yield loss and dead patches in wheat fields across Eastern Washington. In order to better understand the symptom development as well as to develop a quantitative approach to disease rating, the WSU research team used the scanner-based rhizobox to image wheat varieties grown in soils free from and infested with *R. solani*. *R. solani* is characterized by stunted root systems, spear tipping and lesion formation.

The rhizobox experiments successfully captured the growth of wheat roots and the development of disease symptoms. Using the scanner-based rhizobox, we were



**Figure 1.** Scanner based rhizoboxes allow for high resolution imaging of plant disease root interactions.



able to image all these symptoms and to quantify the root stunting. The images were stitched into videos that can be found on the Youtube channel [youtube.com/playlist?list=PL169ynYEInCHhIELI90qi4Zs0CBRU6jlx](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL169ynYEInCHhIELI90qi4Zs0CBRU6jlx).

Spear tipping and lesion formation can be seen in Figure 2. These images highlight the advantages of the scanner-based rhizobox approach. The size of lesions, the root hairs and overall root system architecture can be quantified over time.

Root length was manually quantified, and it was found that the roots visible in the rhizobox had significantly different lengths (see Figure 3). Future efforts will focus on developing an automated process to convert images to metrics of root stunting, spear tipping and lesion formation.

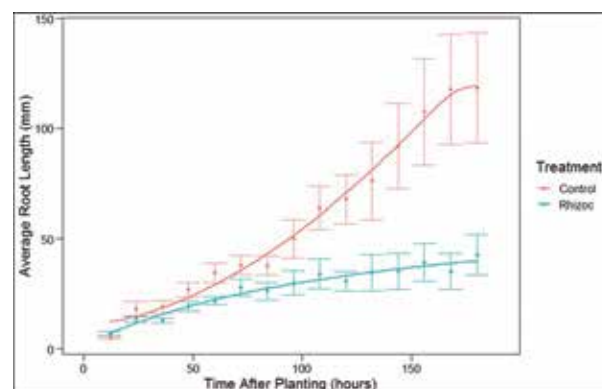
In the initial experiments, three varieties of wheat (Louise, SPCB3104 and SPCB3014xLouise) were compared. Louise was included as a susceptible control. SPCB3104 was included as it is thought to be tolerant to *R. solani*. However, no differences between varieties were detected in the plant's ability to tolerate the *R. solani* infection. A parallel experiment using a traditional root-rating approach did not find any differences either. Additional experimental runs have been completed with Seahawk (thought to be susceptible), but to date, no differences in symptom severity has been detected.

In addition to the imaging of disease symptoms, we sampled the microbiome associated with the rhizosphere and bulk soils of plants exposed to *R. solani* in control rhizoboxes. Our objectives in sampling the microbial populations associated with the plants was to determine the effect of *R. solani* on other microbes in the soil.

The microbial communities were found to be significantly different in the infested and noninfested soils. When the communities were examined closely, it was found that the infested soil allowed other "bad" microbes to thrive in the presence of the *R. solani*. This cascading effect of pathogens on soil microbial communities deserves a closer look. ■



**Figure 2.** Scanner-based rhizoboxes allow for high resolution imaging of plant disease root interactions. Symptoms of rhizoctonia infection include spear tipping (top) and lesions (bottom).



**Figure 3.** The effect of *R. solani* on overall root growth over time in comparison to noninoculated controls. The inoculated soils showed reduced root length over the duration of the experiment.

# WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

## Reversing low commodity price expectations



By Mike Krueger

Grain and oilseed markets have undergone an amazing change in direction since early in August.

Until that point, the corn and soybean outlooks were distinctly bearish with the potential for corn ending supplies to approach 3 billion bushels with soybean ending supplies approaching a billion bushels.

Those expectations had analysts talking about December corn futures below \$3 a bushel and soybean futures below \$8 a bushel. Bearish corn and soybean markets also meant wheat had no place to go either. The big funds were short nearly every commodity, holding a record large short position in corn at one point.

What caused the huge turnaround in prices?

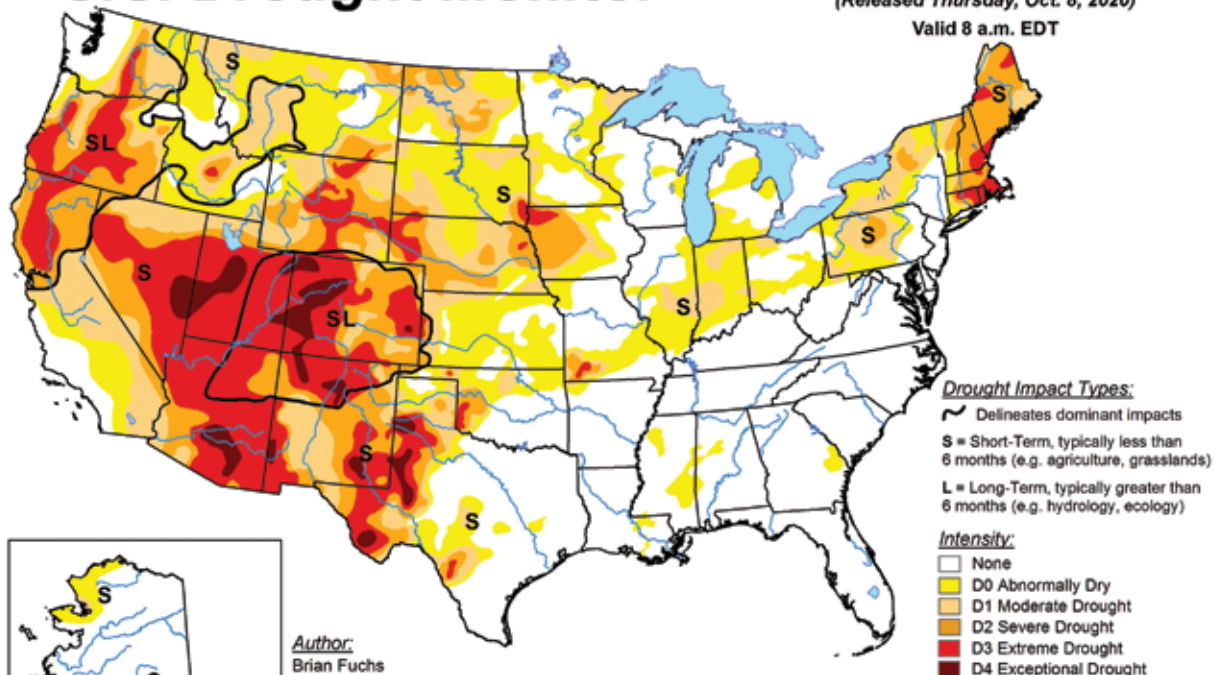
- The “derecho” wind event caused significant crop

losses across much of Iowa and parts of Illinois.

- A sneaky drought also enveloped most of the western Corn Belt during the last half of summer. Those dry conditions are still in place and are expanding as a recent drought monitor map clearly shows. The U.S. southern Plains have also been very dry as the hard red winter wheat crop is being planted, but there is still plenty of time for rain to improve conditions.
- China went on a buying binge that hasn’t stopped yet. That buying has centered on corn and soybeans from the U.S., but has also included significant purchases of spring wheat and dry beans from Canada.
- The Sept. 30 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) quarterly stocks estimates (stocks as of Sept. 1) contained surprisingly small corn and soybean numbers. And smaller than expected stocks numbers had to be reflected in smaller than expected ending

### U.S. Drought Monitor

October 6, 2020  
(Released Thursday, Oct. 8, 2020)  
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Author:  
Brian Fuchs  
National Drought Mitigation Center

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>



[droughtmonitor.unl.edu](https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)



supply estimates. But we will never know why the USDA quarterly stocks estimates were so much below all expectations.

- It has been very dry across most of Argentina and southern Brazil as the corn and soybean planting seasons get underway. The drought in Argentina has already hurt wheat production, and analysts are now reducing Argentina's corn and soybean production estimates. The USDA did not reduce Brazil's production estimates. They (and others) are forecasting a record soybean crop in Brazil. Weather has moved into a moderately strong La Niña pattern. La Niña is associated with dryness in Brazil and Argentina, and this will be a factor to watch.
- Parts of the Black Sea region, including the Ukraine and southern Russia, have had one of the driest fall seasons in a decade. This has impacted winter wheat planting, but it is still not too late for conditions to improve.

How significant have China's purchases from the U.S. been? They have purchased 400 million bushels of corn with another 160 million bushels listed in the "unknown" category that is also likely to move to China. Last year at this time, they had purchased just 2.4 million bushels.

China has also purchased 850 million bushels of soybeans. Here too, there is another 400 million bushels listed as "unknown" that is likely to be exported to China. They had purchased 185 million bushels at this time last year.

Wheat purchases have totaled 52 million bushels so far, of which 37 million bushels was hard red winter wheat. China has also been buying a lot of spring wheat from Canada.

The important question is why is China's appetite so big? Analysts have been reluctant to get bullish. Funds, however, have moved from a record large short position in corn to big long positions in every commodity. There has been more and more chatter that China isn't simply buying so much to fulfill their obligation under the Phase One trade agreement. Many analysts now believe that China must buy big amounts of soybeans, corn, wheat, dry beans, pork, etc., to prevent food shortages.

China's huge surplus supplies appear to have been overstated, and the quality is apparently not good. This year's massive flooding also must have caused much greater crop losses than reported or acknowledged. China is buying protein of every variety from several countries. The extent and duration of their buying will be critical to whether the current bullish markets are a short term or longer term event.

The result of all of this positive market news is that

instead of corn futures heading for \$3 a bushel, they are in the neighborhood of \$4. Instead of soybean futures heading to \$8 a bushel, they are approaching \$11. More importantly, these price rallies occurred right in the midst of big corn and soybean harvests that were unimpeded by weather. Basis levels for corn and soybeans are the highest they've ever been during a harvest period. The market now needs significant cash selling by farmers to stem the explosion in export demand.

Wheat markets have been a quiet observer of the corn and soybean rallies, although prices have rallied some. Export demand for U.S. wheat has been solid, but lacks the excitement of big purchases by China. Some analysts believe China will buy more U.S. wheat. One issue might be the logistical capacity in getting wheat to Pacific Northwest ports and getting vessels loaded with wheat, what with the big corn and soybean programs already on the books.

Australia, a major competitor of the U.S. in Asia/Southeast Asia wheat markets, has a much better crop than a year ago. The USDA estimates Australia's wheat crop at 28.5 million metric tons (mmt) compared to just 15.2 last year. They are forecasting Australia will export 19 mmts of wheat compared to 9.4 mmt last year. West Australia's wheat crop has been declining the last two months. It stopped raining there in early August and hasn't rained since. The region's crop could be 2 mmts or more below the USDA number. That could benefit U.S. white wheat exports. Currently, the USDA estimates white wheat exports will be slightly smaller than last year.

Finally, there is a concern among some meteorologists that we are starting to see a change to a drier trend in the long-term weather pattern. They suggest the coming decade will be one of below normal precipitation across much of North America. We have been in an above normal precipitation pattern for the last 30 years (since the 1988 drought).

This wet phase increased annual rainfall as much as 20 to 25 percent from the long term average. This could mean a return to long-term rainfall averages if the analysis is correct. Interestingly, the impact on the Pacific Northwest could be more precipitation, not less. The northern Plains became part of the Corn Belt because of the increased rainfall (coupled with shorter season GMO corn and soybean varieties). It will be an interesting scenario to observe. ■

**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.

# Saving stories

EASTERN WASHINGTON RURAL MUSEUM PAYS TRIBUTE TO AREA'S HERITAGE

By Trista Crossley

Everybody has a story, and the St. John Heritage Museum wants to collect them all.

"The mission (of the museum) is to keep the names alive, the forefathers, the farmers, the people who had businesses here," explained Lydia Smith. "It's a heritage museum. It's about people and their stories."

The museum is located in the same building as city hall in St. John, Wash., in a former drug store space that was donated by the sons of Glenn White. In 2011, Smith, a city councilor at the time, offered to helm a committee to take on the museum project.

"We had no money. Everything was paid for by crab feeds, bake sales—we've had a little of everything," Smith said. "St. John is so generous. You need something, you just put the word out. The work was all done by volunteers, and the doors were opened in 2013."

One of those volunteers was Denny Hinds, a local pastor who made sure the space was structurally sound and helped install walls and floors. A group of Washington State University interior design students helped design the space, while a sign company in Spokane Valley prepared photos for display. Smith said all of that input helped steer the committee.

"We'd never done a museum, but it just grew into what we decided we wanted. We decided we didn't want a second-hand store full of butter churns," she explained.

Today, the museum is a light, airy space with large windows that face main street. Inside, historical farming photos line one brick wall, while on the other wall, a timeline tracks important historical events alongside the price of wheat and gasoline. In the back, a photo display of rural schoolhouses shares space with a display of branding irons that overlooks a replica of a woman's dressing

Two of the stories displayed on the St. John Heritage Museum's Warrior Walls.



**ELMER SCHMIDT** graduated from Colton High School in 1942. Jobs were scarce and with the war in Europe building up Elmer decided to join The Army Air Corps before the military drafted him. He was paid \$21 a month for his service to our country.

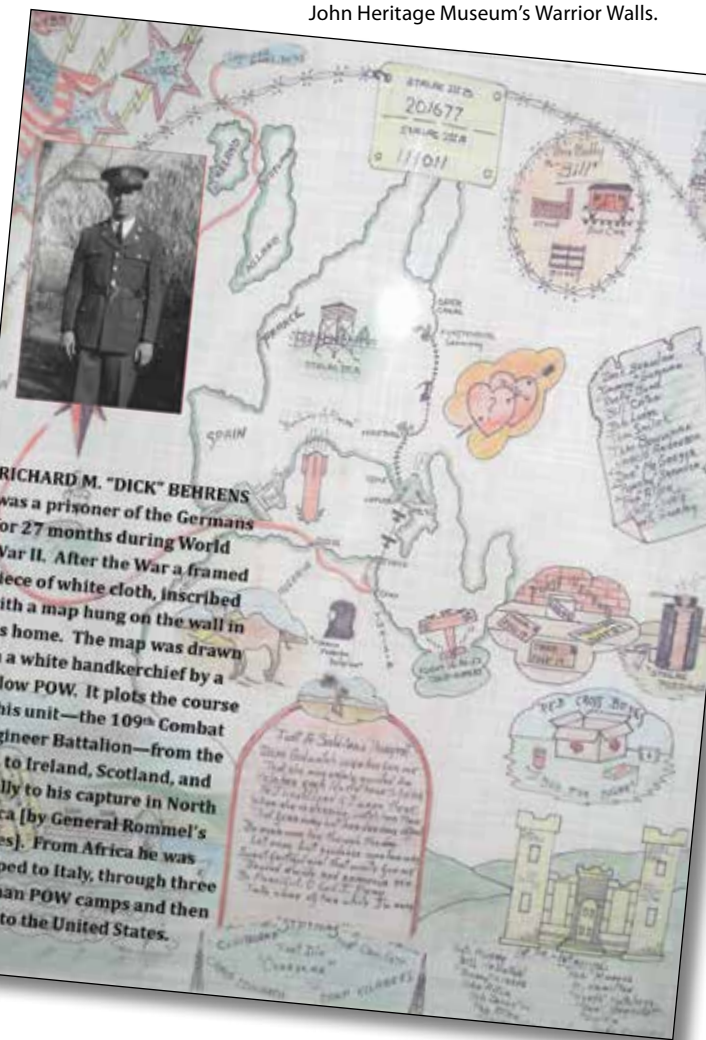
Elmer shipped out to Europe in October of 1944. He sailed to England on the Queen Mary (during the war the luxury liner was put into service as a transport ship) with 17,000 troops. Elmer later told his family the Queen Mary was fast enough that it could zig-zag back and forth so the enemy submarines couldn't catch her.

Elmer flew on Boeing B17s with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force 303<sup>rd</sup> Group. Their group was nicknamed "The Hells Angels." As the radioman, Elmer sat behind the pilot's com-door. When he looked down it was completely open and all he could see was air.

The men endured constant flak around the plane and once their oxygen hose was hit. Elmer had to crawl back to get portable oxygen tanks to the tail gunner and the waist gunner (bottom row, two men on the right). The pilot called back, but Elmer couldn't answer so the pilot [luckily erroneously] reported them all dead. They ended up flying 30 missions.

The mission he hated most was when they had to bomb Dresden Germany where all the fine china was made.

In 1945 Elmer left Molesworth Air Force base in England as a Tech Sergeant making \$96 a month. He sailed home on a hospital ship where he helped care for the wounded.



**RICHARD M. "DICK" BEHRENS** was a prisoner of the Germans for 27 months during World War II. After the War a framed piece of white cloth, inscribed with a map hung on the wall in his home. The map was drawn on a white handkerchief by a fellow POW. It plots the course of his unit—the 109<sup>th</sup> Combat Engineer Battalion—from the U.S. to Ireland, Scotland, and finally to his capture in North Africa (by General Rommel's forces). From Africa he was shipped to Italy, through three German POW camps and then back to the United States.





The St. John Heritage Museum in St. John, Wash., is all about keeping local residents' stories alive.



The museum is particularly proud of its Warrior Walls, a space that celebrates local military veterans.



The museum's Journey Stories space celebrates local residents.



Lydia Smith, a long-time St. John resident, was instrumental in taking the museum from idea to reality.



space, complete with a 100-year old wedding dress. There's even a nook reserved for those who want to research the area's history with newspapers clippings, yearbooks and scrapbooks.

But the real story of the museum is written up in the center of the space.

"The thing that we are really proudest of are our Warrior Walls. The family of Ruth and Edgar Smith donated lots of money for us to be able to do that," Smith said.

The Warrior Walls acknowledge the sacrifices made by area residents who have served in the military. Each person's story is researched and written up, to be displayed with photos and personal items. There's the story of Richard M. "Dick" Behrens, a prisoner of war who was held by the Germans for 27 months during World War II. His photo is displayed on a map, drawn on a white handkerchief by a fellow prisoner. Then there's the story of Elmer Schmidt who flew 30 missions in WWII as a radio-man in the Air Force.

Next to the Warrior Walls are the museum's Journey Stories, a collection of stories from St. John residents about how they came to the area.

Smith said that when they were putting the idea of the museum together, she and fellow committee members took a class on starting museums. The instructor advised them to avoid putting "a bunch of stuff in there." Instead, he told them to make sure everything in the museum had a story.

"So that's how we started. We started gathering stories," Smith said. "There's still so many stories we haven't gathered yet."

The stories are found through word of mouth and through the relationships museum committee members have with area residents. Sometimes, family members will contact the museum about a story, or a tidbit gleaned from a scrapbook will uncover an idea. Once a story has been found, a volunteer will sit with the subject to gather information, the story is written up and sent back to the subject for verification before being added to the museum. Smith said most people are happy to share their stories, but that there is pressure to record as many stories as they can before that knowledge is lost.

"Nobody wants their family to be forgotten," she said. "I'm afraid we are going to forget somebody."

The museum operates as a 501c3. A thrift store that just opened across the street will help support the museum. While the museum doesn't have regular hours, visitors can check in with the city clerk at city hall for entry. ■



A display of historical farming photos adorns one sunny wall of the St. John Heritage Museum.



In the back room of the museum are pictures and a diagram of old schoolhouses in the area.



Celebrated Eastern Washington artist Nona Hengen has donated some of her paintings to the St. John Heritage Museum.



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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.

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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 Dec. 31, 2020.*

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## Ingredients:

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

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## Landlord stays involved despite living on west side

By Trista Crossley

Christi Janett may have lived in Olympia for close to 40 years, but she'll be the first to tell you that she's an Eastern Washington wheat girl at heart.

Janett and her sister grew up on the family's farm in Reardan, where they raised animals and helped raise crops such as hay and wheat. Janett graduated from Washington State University and ended up going to work in the telecommunications industry on the west side of the state where she raised her son and daughter.

"I never lost my ties to the farm," Janett said. "From the time my children were born, we made multiple trips every year back to the farm. I wanted them to have the experience of being on a farm more than just at Christmas time. When my kids were babies, I'd take the month of August off so we could all go over and camp out at the farm and be there at the height of harvest. They would spend weeks with their grandparents. To this day, they are as close to the farm as I am."

Janett's parents, Ted and Wanda, retired from actively

farming in the early 1970s, taking on the role of landlord and renting out their land.

"Dad farmed in an era where there were no cabs on tractors or combines. It was just like they were out in the elements," she said. "It was hard work, but rewarding work."

After Janett's father died in the early 2000s, Janett's mother stayed on the farm until she was 90, with Janett taking over landlord duties about 15 years ago on a portion of the family's 320 acres. The family's land is split, with 160 acres of cropland and 160 acres of pastureland. Janett's mother died three years ago.

"(Thinking about the farm) makes me really emotional. It brings back such happy memories of growing up there. I feel connected to my mom and dad because of their love of the farm and all their hard work and dedication. It is so important to me that the farm is preserved and well taken care of and well looked after," Janett said. "I'm not in this for the business aspects. I'm in this to preserve the legacy of my parents."

Currently, Janett has two tenants and uses a crop share



The Janett place in Lincoln County. Photo by Christi Janett.



lease with her cropland tenant who happens to be a farm neighbor. She said she wanted to do a crop share lease because it allows her to be actively involved in what is happening on the farm.

So far, Janett hasn't run into many issues being an absentee landlord, mainly thanks to having reliable tenants. She said she's always made multiple trips throughout the year back to Reardan, which gives her the opportunity to talk to her tenants face to face. In addition, she has a community of sorts that keeps watch over the house and outbuildings while she's away.

"I'm surrounded by neighbors that watch out for the place. It's just this sense of community where even if I'm not physically there, my community is looking out for me and for my property. I feel really blessed in that regard," she said. "I'm very fortunate that not only is my farmer my neighbor, and obviously a friend, but he's just so great about telling me what his plans are for the future and running that by me."

Janett said she makes an effort to stay informed on issues, markets and trends that might impact the farm by reading industry publications and talking to her tenant. She even participated in this year's Olympia Days trip with the Washington Association of Wheat Growers to meet with state legislators. Her advice for prospective landlords is to find a tenant who understands that good communication is the most important thing in the tenant/landlord relationship.

"There's so many things we are unable to control as farmers that I think it is really important that I understand, and we all work to understand, how we impact the factors we can actually control and bring some action to," she said. "We need to step back and say, 'we can't control Mother Nature, but what are some things we can control, and what can we do about them?'" ■



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# THE BOTTOM LINE

## Wisdom for a resilient business, personal mindset

By Dr. David M. Kohl

In recent discussions with my neighbors, many have indicated that they cannot wait for the year 2020 to be over! The global pandemic, fires in the western U.S., hurricanes in the South and other events have taxed both business and emotional aspects of everyday life. In the context of all of this adversity, how does a business, family or individual develop a process to weather the storms and adversities of business and life? In this article, I will draw upon some of the wisdom of previous generations and decades of experience in working with the agricultural industry.

The aforementioned tragic events are somewhat parallel to some events our family dairy business in upstate New York experienced decades ago in my youth. First, Mother Nature struck with a waterspout tornado spun off Lake Ontario that leveled our hay and storage barns. Within a few days, our dairy barn and some livestock went up in

flames due to electrical complications as a result of the storm. Later in the year, a major snowstorm of more than 60 inches shut down travel for 10 days. This was followed by the milk cooperative filing bankruptcy, which caused loss of revenue for the farm. It appeared that it just was not our year. However, there were lessons learned from these natural and man-made negative events that actually resulted in a resilient business and personal mindset.

### The power of support networks

One of the positive attributes of agriculture is the supportive nature of many individuals involved in the industry. In the case of our family business, the neighbors pitched in to clean up and construct new facilities. Fellow farmers brought loads of hay, corn silage and livestock to assist getting us back to normal. Even our suppliers and lenders were incredibly supportive in our efforts to work out a game plan for a turnaround to begin the journey on the road back to success.

### Business planning

These events were very stressful on the owners and family members. Emotions were running high, which can stretch the bounds of objectivity. This was when our agriculture teacher suggested we take time to reassess our goals and develop a short- and long-run game plan. The wisdom that he shared was that we needed to follow a process and that the business, personal losses and other wounds would not heal overnight.

His wisdom can be linked to a recent pre-COVID-19 Canadian study by Farm Management Canada, who I have worked very closely with over the decades. This study of more than 1,000 producers, including intense focus groups, yielded some interesting results. A written business plan contributes to peace of mind and conquering adversity. The Canadian study found that 88 percent of the farms and ranches surveyed found that the business plan had a moderate or large impact on assisting management in navigating the business white waters. The business plan also provided focus, general acceptance and peace of mind. As one Canadian producer stated, good business plans and management cannot cause a business to avoid a crisis linked to trade wars, crop failures or weather events, but a good business plan will assist in getting through tough times. One pearl of wisdom that our agriculture teacher stressed was to never equate your self-worth to your financial net worth because wealth can be gone overnight due to unforeseen events. Net worth is important, but it is only one of the pillars of the foundation of business and personal resiliency.

### Team approach

Bridging business and financial planning requires a collaborative effort and a team approach. To be the most effective, undistractable time and effort must be committed to the process. This is particularly true in these days of instant communication. Calling on your support team, whether it is an industry consultant, a lender or a trusted peer, can be invaluable to critically think through any unintended consequences. Personally, I can remember being included, but as more

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of a listener, in my youth. An advisory team is a great sounding board that helps to weigh both the pros and the cons of the alternative decisions. Scenario planning with options A, B, C and D provides a proactive approach to identify the parameters or boundaries of possible outcomes and provides guiding principles.

## Reevaluate goals

External and internal adverse events put a spotlight on what is important rather than what is urgent in life. Decades ago, one of the big farm business dilemmas was whether the business was going to continue to expand, and what would be each family member's role. Applications of goals that my agriculture teacher taught in class were brought to life to set the course of the business. It was tough and somewhat frustrating for the senior generation to reestablish their course in the journey of the business and family. However, it was through this process that I realized that the family business was not big enough, which altered my journey in life. Initially, it was a tough pill to swallow, but the adverse events produced positive outcomes later in life. A lesson learned in the goal-setting process was that these adverse events required decades to overcome the financial and emotional scars. There

is no quick fix. Finding balance in business and life and learning from the mistakes made along the way provide a pathway for the business and personal journey in life.

On a side note, I recently had a two-hour discussion by phone with my older brother, my only living sibling, about many of these events and the resulting outcomes. Our discussion provided fulfillment and peace of mind for both of us, particularly in the days that we are facing. When building a business and personal resiliency mindset, it is important to archive the stories and history so that future generations have a frame of reference. ■


**Dr. David Kohl** is an academic hall-of-famer in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va. Dr. Kohl is a sought-after educator of lenders, producers and stakeholders with his keen insight into the agriculture industry gained through extensive travel, research and involvement in ag businesses. He has traveled nearly 10 million miles; conducted more than 6,500 workshops, speeches and seminars; and published more than 2,250 articles for leading publications. Dr. Kohl's involvement with ag businesses and interaction with key thought leaders provide a unique perspective into future trends of the ag industry and economy. This content was provided by  **Northwest**  
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An old homestead near Hartline. Photo by Marlene Poe.



Wheat ready to be harvested near Wilbur. Photo by Alli Schroeder.

# Your wheat life...

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Please include location of  
picture, names of all people  
appearing in the picture and  
ages of all children.





A Badten family photo in the Case Steiger 335 with mom Taerrah; dad Tyler; and daughters Calan (2.5) and Leeah (7 weeks, all wrapped up) in Waterville. Photo by Taerrah Badten.



Jentry Mae Aune (21 months) driving the combine with dad Justin's help. She is a 6th generation farmer and will likely be joining the harvest crew sooner rather than later! Photo by Elizabeth Aune.



Ryan Long posts a flag every year in "Freedom Corner" just north of Waterville in preparation for harvest. Photo by Lacey Malone.



Robert Plucker, 93, out checking on his 2020 wheat harvest operation in Touchet. Photo by Nick Plucker.



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