

WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

DECEMBER | 2020

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 and 

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From the Washington Association
of Wheat Growers

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WHEAT LIFE

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WHEAT GROWERS**

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President's Perspective



Reflecting on an online world

By Ryan Poe

When I decided to go through the Washington Association of Wheat Growers' chairs a couple of years ago, I never would have guessed that we'd be faced with a pandemic, social distancing from my neighbors or learning that "zoom" meant more than my kids running around the house. This past year has brought a lot of changes to all of our lives, some positive and some not so

positive.

On the positive side, I've gotten to spend more time with my family as my travel schedule has pretty much disappeared. I've gotten to see how our industry has adapted to the changes forced on us by the pandemic, and I'm proud that through it all, agriculture (mostly) kept food on store shelves when people needed it. I've also learned that going virtual means I can participate in advocating for our industry at just about any time, even if I'm on a tractor in the middle of a storm, seeding. It also means I can't use seeding, in the middle of a storm, as an excuse for missing a meeting. Darn.

Speaking of going virtual, the National Association of Wheat Growers' fall meeting wrapped up last month. Like most events, it went online. We were able to conduct the necessary business, but it's just not the same as an in-person conference. I miss sitting down with my friends from other states over coffee or a meal and learning what's happening in their corner of the world.

Another event that is going virtual, at least to start with, is our Agricultural Marketing and Management (AMMO) series. In this case, there's actually an upside to going virtual with these workshops—we are bringing in some speakers that we normally wouldn't be able to. We've got two convention favorites booked, Damian Mason and Peter Zeihan. If you haven't heard either one of them speak—and they are fantastic—now's your chance. And you'll be able to do it from the comfort of your home. You can find more information about the upcoming AMMO schedule beginning on page 22.

I have a feeling that this year will have brought some permanent changes to how we meet and conduct business. As virtual meeting technology has developed and our electronic devices have become more powerful and mobile, I think, at a minimum, the conference call is a goner. I think we'll be able to interact more with people who normally would be too busy to travel to us, and I think we'll have more opportunities to weigh in on issues in Olympia and Washington, D.C., through remote testimony. That's good, because this coming year looks like it could be intense, legislatively speaking.

The holidays are upon us. This is typically a time of the year that my family gets together for good food, playing games and just enjoying each other's company. I'm sure it's the same in your families. This year, though, I'm not sure what to expect when a simple cough or a slight fever could mean more than just a cold. Like most of you, I guess we'll get through it as carefully as we can. I hope everyone has a safe, fun-filled holiday season. ■

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Thinking back on 2020 but looking toward 2021

This year...WOW! I really hope 2021 will be the year that we get back to some normalcy. I'm ready to put 2020 in the rearview mirror, as I'm sure many of you are, as well.

Life, both personally and professionally, in a pandemic, has been interesting. On the positive side, I've gotten to enjoy more quality time with my family, as my kids haven't been as preoccupied with school and sports, and I haven't been traveling like I used to. I've attended more virtual meetings and gotten involved in a number of groups I wouldn't normally be able to, but I do miss the personal interactions, and I feel like in-person meetings are more effective for networking and relationship building.

We've all had to learn to be more flexible, and I really want to thank the Washington Association of Wheat Growers' (WAWG) leadership for their patience and understanding. Most of our WAWG staff have young kids, and it's been a struggle to balance working from home and doing homeschooling. As our school district has transitioned into part time schooling, our leadership team has allowed us to come up with a schedule that fits our employees' needs. Currently, our office is staffed full time with one staff member. We rotate who that person is, and, if it isn't our turn to be in the office, we continue our work from home. We haven't seen a slip in communication or a decrease in the work being accomplished.

I'm extremely proud of our team, and I can't say enough about how dedicated they all are. Despite not being in the office at the same time, we work hard to make sure we are all aware of what's happening in Olympia and Washington, D.C., as well as the issues farmers are dealing with and other grower concerns. We have an amazing team, and that's why we've been able to be effective, even during a pandemic.

One of the big differences we've made in the past six months is making sure all wheat is eligible for the second round of Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) payments. We worked closely with the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) and our Farm Service Agency (FSA) state director, Jon Wyss, to prove to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that all wheat has been impacted by COVID-19. We also saw one of our top 2018 Farm Bill priorities come to pass when the



Michelle Hennings
Executive Director
*Washington Association
of Wheat Growers*

Risk Management Agency instituted a quality loss option that protects producers' 10-year actual production history, especially in cases where the loss isn't big enough to trigger an indemnity payment.

This quality loss option is the culmination of a years-long effort by WAWG, NAWG and members of our federal delegation that began in earnest in 2016 after much of the Pacific Northwest was hit with low falling numbers. It was devastating as growers lost millions of dollars that year due to quality discounts, but because yields were high, very few of them qualified for a crop insurance payment. We made many trips to Washington, D.C., to meet with USDA agencies and with House and Senate ag committees to explain the issue and its impacts. Getting this accomplished through the farm bill gives us a sense

of accomplishment, but we have much more work to get done. It is a constant battle to educate and advocate for our farmers' needs, but having NAWG at the federal level to lead efforts like this is a huge benefit to wheat farmers everywhere in the U.S.

Another big success for Washington wheat growers was the August release of the final Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which identified a preferred alternative that did not include dam breaching. WAWG worked with a coalition of Pacific Northwest stakeholders to educate and inform the public on the benefits of the Columbia-Snake River System dams, and we participated in multiple stakeholder interviews and provided data to the federal agencies in charge of the EIS. We also submitted comments in support of the dams.

I'd like to say the dam-breaching issue is settled once and for all, but I think we all know that's not the case. In fact, I know of at least one environmental group that has already given notice of their intent to file a lawsuit. WAWG spends a huge amount of time defending the dams and explaining why they are so vital to our industry. Fortunately, our federal delegation also recognizes the importance of the dams, and they've consistently supported our efforts.

As I was finishing this column up, I got some great news from FSA's Jon Wyss. As some of you might know, a change in the 2018 Farm Bill on how State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) are classified meant

Douglas County didn't have a CRP sign-up this year. We monitored the situation closely as FSA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) worked together to find temporary funding so growers could continue to get paid for their conservation efforts. Director Wyss told me funding has been approved through next year as well. We appreciate all the work FSA and NRCS did to try to resolve this issue. Now we just need to work on a permanent fix by getting that language changed in the next farm bill.

I don't know what the next six months will bring, but I do know they won't look anything like they normally do. This is the beginning of our "meeting" season, with the Tri-State Grain Growers Convention and our NAWG fall and winter conferences. It has been with great disappointment that many of our meetings have been cancelled, including our traditional visits to members of Congress. To make matters a little more complicated, we are in the beginning stages of planning for the next farm bill.

One of the most important things WAWG does is develop relationships with our elected officials and agency leaders. Once you have established that relationship and trust, you can get down to business quickly. That's how things get done. This year, we are starting from scratch as we'll likely be dealing with a new administration in the White House, not to mention a boatload of new state and federal legislators. It will take time to establish ourselves as a trusted, bipartisan organization, and that will all be complicated by the pandemic restrictions. Virtual meetings will help, but they just aren't the same. If there's an issue keeping me up at night right now, it's this one.


We are in the process of developing a state and national strategy on how we can connect with Congress, our state legislators and all the various agencies we need to talk to when we can't meet with them face to face. It won't be easy, but I'm confident we'll sort this out. We've got a great group of people at our back. Not only do we have a solid WAWG leadership team (Ryan Poe, Howard McDonald, Andy Juris and Jeff Shawver) and staff, but we've also got Nicole Berg from Benton County about to step into the president's position at NAWG (she was also recently elected to the board of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation). Marci Green from Spokane County is serving as a national farm ambassador, and then there's the folks at the Washington Grain Commission (WGC). Our close relationship with the WGC makes the Washington wheat industry that much stronger.

Another solid relationship we've developed has been with Derek Sandison, director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture. He's been a huge advocate of agriculture in Washington state, and he's made many trips with us back to D.C. It really makes an impression when you can walk into a meeting accompanied by the director of your state's ag department. It shows how the


ag industry in our state works together for the benefit of all our growers. Our federal delegation, of course, has also worked hard to protect our farmers and ranchers, and very little would be accomplished without their support.

Most of all, I want to acknowledge our members. As a volunteer-led organization, WAWG is only as strong and effective as our members' involvement. If you have any suggestions or need to discuss an issue, please call our office at (509) 659-0610 or email me at michelle@wawg.org.

I wish everyone a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. ■




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 ☐ Partnership \$500 (up to 5 partners)
 ☐ Landlord \$125
 ☐ Convention \$600
 ☐ Industry Associate \$150
 ☐ Lifetime \$2,500

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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 |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Producer/Landowners (Voting Membership) | | | | | | |
| Grower or Landlord \$125 | X | X | X | | | X |
| Family \$200 (2 family members) | X | X | X | | | X |
| Partnership \$500 (1-5 family members) | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Convention \$600 (2 individuals) | X | X | X | | X | X |
| Lifetime \$2,500 (1 individual) | X | X | X | X | | X |
| Non-Voting Membership | | | | | | |
| Student \$75 | X | X | X | | | |
| Industry Associate \$150 | 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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WAWG at WORK

ADVOCATING FOR THE WHEAT FARMERS OF EASTERN WASHINGTON

WAWG participates in national fall meetings, virtually

Last month, via Zoom, officers and staff of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) attended the National Association of Wheat Growers' (NAWG) annual fall conference, taking part in NAWG's policy committee meetings and the full board meeting. The conference kicked off with a Domestic and Trade Policy Committee meeting, where the committee continued discussions on rail rate policy; domestic farm programs with an eye towards farm bill reauthorization; Grain Standards Reauthorization Act; and reviewed its strategic plan and policy priorities. WAWG President Ryan Poe serves on this committee.

The Environment and Research Committee received an appropriations and regulatory update; discussed research activities related to the U.S. Wheat & Barley Scab Initiative and National Predictive Modeling Tool Initiative; received an Ecosystem Services Market Consortium update; discussed U.S. Department of Agriculture Ag Innovation Comment review; received a pesticide/glyphosate lawsuit update; and reviewed its strategic plan and policy priorities. Also, the committee approved two resolutions in support of the Wheat Genetics Research Center. WAWG Vice President Howard McDonald serves on this committee.

The Operations and Planning Committee discussed

a strategic plan action item process for handling state requests as well as options for the 2021 Winter Meeting and Annual Meeting. The Budget Committee reviewed and approved the Q1 FY21 financials and draft 2019/20 audit results; reviewed the September 2020 Small Grain Report; and discussed the FY2021/22 budget. WAWG Past President Marci Green serves on this committee.

Finally, at the full board of directors meeting, NAWG President Dave Milligan, National Wheat Foundation Chairman David Cleavinger and NAWG CEO Chandler Goule provided reports to the board. The board also heard reports from the policy committee chairs as well as an election update from NAWG staffer Jake Westlin. ■

FSA extends emergency haying and grazing

From Jon Wyss, State Executive Director
Washington State Farm Service Agency

Washington State Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff has worked with Washington, D.C., staff to obtain approval to allow fire-impacted Washington producers who want to



Thank you

The Idaho Grain Producers Association, Oregon Wheat Growers League and Washington Association of Wheat Growers are excited to see our grower members and industry partners again in 2021. Plans are underway to resume standard business meetings and to showcase the high caliber of speakers we have come to expect from our joint convention effort. We'd like to thank our convention sponsors for continually supporting our industry efforts, especially Northwest Farm Credit Services and Anheuser-Busch, who pledged their sponsorship even with this year's convention canceled.



Join us for the 2021 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention Nov. 30-Dec. 3, 2021.

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utilize Conservation Reserve Program Emergency Haying and Grazing for longer than 90 days to do so, not to exceed Dec. 31. This would apply to both producers who have already utilized emergency haying and grazing and those who have not.

Producers must follow the normal rules for emergency haying and grazing. If producers have already completed

the requirements, they don't need to do them again. They will just need to make sure that their local county committee documents in the minutes that they requested to graze further and that the local county board approved it. All livestock must be removed by Dec. 31.

Please contact your local FSA office if you have any questions. ■

Washington wheat industry selects 2020/21 ambassadors

Grace Hanning and Julia Klein have been selected to represent Washington wheat farmers as ambassadors for the upcoming year.

The two high school seniors were selected after a written application process that included submitting a short introductory video. The ambassadors will represent Washington wheat farmers at various civic and community events and will also participate in an advocacy trip to Olympia with Washington Association of Wheat Growers' (WAWG) leaders. In addition, the ambassadors will each receive a scholarship from the Washington Wheat Foundation.

Grace Hanning

Hanning is the daughter of Josh and Kelsey Hanning. The Hanning family operates a wheat and cattle operation near Centerville, Wash. She has maintained a strong grade point average at Goldendale High School while also completing running start courses at Walla Walla Community College. In addition to serving as ASB and FFA president, Hanning participates in basketball, cheerleading, Honor Society, Link Crew and FBLA and is an active member of the NW Jr Charolais Association. Grace has been accepted to the University of Idaho and is considering a career in ag business or communication.

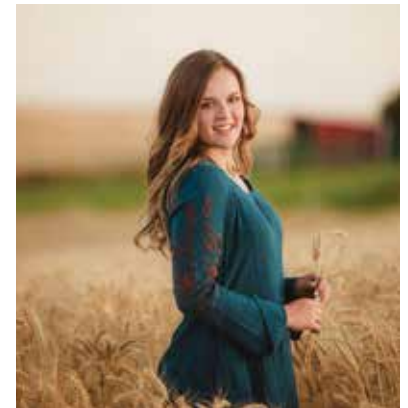


Hanning heard about the Washington Wheat Ambassador program through *Wheat Life* Magazine and from her FFA advisor. She said she is excited to learn about the wheat industry and the work that WAWG does.

"I would like to say thank you for the opportunity. I'm really excited to make connections and to learn more about wheat production in Washington," she said.

Julia Klein

Klein is the daughter of Jake and Alisha Klein. She grew up on their multigeneration family farm near Ritzville. She has maintained a strong grade point average at Lind-Ritzville High School while also completing running start courses through Eastern Washington University. Klein is also very active in school and community activities, including being involved in three varsity sports, FFA, Honor Society, Link Crew and FBLA. She is a member of the Washington High School Equestrian Team. Julia plans to obtain a degree in biology/premedicine and then a doctorate of chiropractic degree.



Klein was familiar with the ambassador program as several former Lind-Ritzville students have been previous ambassadors. She said they encouraged her to apply. Although she has grown up helping her family grow wheat and raise cattle, she said she is excited to become more involved in the wheat industry in a professional manner and to be able to share the impact farming has had on her life.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity. I have an idea of what goes on in WAWG, but I'm looking forward to expanding my knowledge to better understand how WAWG serves the industry and to get to represent the industry," she said.

Klein is already an ambassador of sorts. She works at a local coffee spot in Ritzville and often finds herself answering questions about farming as she's serving coffee to visitors as they pass through.

"I get to tell them that my dad's a farmer, and I drive combine. I get to tell them about agriculture and what goes on," she explained. ■



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Foundation accepting applications for ag scholarship

The National Wheat Foundation has officially begun accepting applications for the Jerry Minore Scholarship, honoring students pursuing a career in agriculture. The scholarship is available to college students for the 2021/22 academic year with an application deadline of Dec. 31, 2020.

"The scholarship is meant to recognize those students who have shown a passion for agriculture, both inside and outside the classroom," said David Cleavinger, chairman of the National Wheat Foundation. "Programs like the Minore Scholarship encourage the next generation to teach others the importance of wheat and agriculture and the significant role both play in society."

The late Jerry Minore was a BASF senior market manager and a liaison to the wheat industry. Since his unexpected death in 2012, BASF has partnered with the National Wheat Foundation to fund scholarships and honor his advocacy efforts for wheat growers. This year the Foundation will be issuing two scholarships for \$2,500 each.

"We value our partnership with the National Wheat Foundation and our shared passion for investing in students who have shown a commitment to the agriculture industry," said Scott Kay, vice president U.S. Crop, BASF Agricultural Solutions. "There's no better way for BASF to honor Jerry's legacy than to support these students as they achieve their ag dreams."

For more information on how to apply, visit wheatfoundation.org/education-and-scholarships/. ■

USDA announces sign-ups for 2021 CRP general, grasslands

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced the sign-up periods for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the CRP Grasslands in 2021. Sign-up for general CRP will be open from Jan. 4, 2021, to Feb. 12, 2021, and sign-up for CRP Grasslands runs from March 15, 2021, to April 23, 2021. Both programs are competitive and provide annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

"The Conservation Reserve Program and the many focused programs that come under it, like CRP Grasslands, are some of our most critical tools we have to help producers better manage their operations while conserving natural resources," said Richard Fordyce, administrator

of USDA's Farm Service Agency. "As one of our nation's largest conservation endeavors, CRP has proved to protect our valuable resources, and next year's sign-up gives our farmers and ranchers an opportunity to enroll for the first time or continue their participation for another term."

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the U.S. It was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program marks its 35-year anniversary this December.

For more information on CRP, visit fsa.usda.gov or contact your local FSA county office. ■

WAWG signs letter asking for balanced salmon approach

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers has joined dozens of Northwest leaders in signing a letter to the governors of Washington, Oregon and Idaho, asking them to explore solutions to salmon recovery that are grounded in science and balance the purposes of the Columbia-Snake River System with fish recovery.

The letter points out the importance of hydropower as a renewable, clean energy in the fight against climate change, explaining that it provides close to half of all the northwest states' electricity and 90 percent of the region's renewable electricity.

"As a result, our region has the least carbon-intensive electric service and the most-affordable renewable power in the nation. It is crucial that we retain this leadership position in clean and affordable energy to meet the region's equity, environmental health and economic recovery objectives. Our respective organizations have never believed there is any inherent conflict between the region's hydropower, irrigation, recreation and navigation systems and healthy salmon populations. The data reflect this perspective," the letter states.

The letter refers to a new, peer-reviewed study published in *Fish & Fisheries* that shows there have been near-uniform declines in Chinook salmon survival across the West Coast of North America over the past 50 years, including in rivers with dams and those without dams. Two other recently released studies point to the strong relationship between climate change, warming oceans and declining salmonid health. The studies, the letter states, show that salmon struggles are not isolated to the Columbia River Basin, but are, instead, an ocean-wide problem that requires a holistic approach and perspective.

"It is often implied that breaching the lower Snake River dams will solve the problem of salmon recovery because we are told its habitat is pristine. However, decades of development have taken a toll on many areas of the river. Additionally, the *Fish and Fisheries* study demonstrates that even truly pristine rivers have experienced equivalent steep declines in adult salmon survival."

The letter calls for a number of principles to guide the four-state process, including:

- Solutions must be grounded in the fact there is strong scientific research demonstrating the declines in key salmon populations are due to warming, acidifying oceans that are shifting the balance between salmon predators and prey.
- Solutions must be evaluated for their effect on the social cost of carbon.
- Solutions must be examined for their likely socioeconomic and health impacts for under-represented and vulnerable communities that need access to affordable energy, clean air and agricultural jobs.
- Solutions must not add to the risk of wildfires and other climate-driven disasters that can affect both salmon and people.
- Solutions must be balanced in nature, recognizing the Congressionally-authorized multiple purposes of the Columbia River Power System. These purposes include flood control, navigation, recreation, irrigation and electricity production.
- Solutions that would diminish significant clean energy resources and/or low carbon transportation infrastructure must undergo nonpartisan and rigorous scientific testing before adoption. ■

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Changes to fertilizer placement and timing have benefits to the wheat crop, said Keegan Jones.

Keegan Jones, is a third-generation farmer at Jones & Jones Ranches in Pendleton, Oregon, a dryland operation in annual crop production. Fields are prescribed crops in advance of the season in order to adhere to a crop rotation plan designed to maintain soil health and reduce weed and disease pressures.

Primarily focused on winter wheat, Jones & Jones Ranches also produces spring wheat, mustard seed for condiments and even fresh peas as part of the rotation.

Feeding the Plants

More than three decades ago, Keegan's father, Bryan, decided to make changes to the timing and the way fertilizer was applied to the wheat crop. His concept of placing fertilizer 3 inches below the soil surface and making those applications during the growing season resulted in the creation of the SpikeWheel™ in 1989.

The subsurface injection system protects fertilizer investment by placing liquid nutrients in the root zone for better uptake by growing plants with low crop disturbance above ground. Today, Keegan calls the practice "tuning to your wheat's yield potential."

"With SpikeWheel, we go out ahead of predicted rainfall events and apply a measured amount of fertilizer and place it in the ground so growing plants can make the best use of that fertilizer," Keegan said. "It's a tuned application of in-season fertilizer instead of the traditional mindset of predicting in the fall how much fertilizer your crop may need in the spring and spreading it across the field to sit and wait for rainfall ahead of the crops to be planted."

Keegan runs SpikeWheel through his winter wheat early and makes applications as late as four months after planting to feed the crop nutrients needed to increase yield and protein production. The results have been improved use of fertilizer by the crops, less wasted product and money, and improved wheat crop performance.

Growing Quality Wheat

Variety selection is based on plot work conducted with WestBred® the last several years, which has allowed Jones to observe how varieties perform in his cropping system and within his microclimate. WestBred's dark northern spring variety, WB9303, was a top performer in his 2019 and 2020 test plots. WB9303 was the highest yielding both years while also showing good disease resistance and excellent protein quantity. A good dryland variety, WB9303 is part of the wheat crop rotation at Jones & Jones Ranches.

"Being the highest-yielding variety is not always the best thing," said Keegan about his experience with plot work. "Some varieties may be more efficient at making protein — they may have a higher milling and baking quality than other varieties, and that is what makes the PNW wheat industry stand out among other counties. Quality wheat is important, and I feel like WestBred is focused on varieties that produce high protein quantity with high yield potential. Quality wheat production is important to our industry."

To learn more about WestBred wheat varieties, go to westbred.com. To learn more about SpikeWheel, visit spikewheel.com.

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POLICY MATTERS

New WOTUS rules won't affect state's regulations

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) has indicated that it has no plans to relax its regulation of the state's waters despite a revised federal ruling that redefines what waters are considered "waters of the U.S."

The revision, which was finalized in June 2020 by the Trump Administration, narrows the definition of waterways that fall under federal regulation from eight to four categories: territorial seas and traditional navigable waters; perennial and intermittent tributaries; certain lakes, ponds and impoundments; and wetlands that are adjacent to jurisdictional waters. In 2015, the Obama Administration passed a Clean Water Rule that broadly defined what waters and waterways were considered to be under federal jurisdiction, causing confusion for many farmers and ranchers.

In emails from Ecology, a spokesperson said Washington's waters are protected under state law regardless of their status under federal law, and Ecology will continue to use its existing state authority to regulate the state's waters. The new WOTUS definition simply means that there is less overlap between federal and state protected waters. However, Ecology is expecting to see an increased workload as the agency will now need to review projects that previously would have received a streamlined nationwide permit. In order to deal with the projected workload, the department is asking the legislature for a budget increase that would allow them to hire six new full-time employees.

For farmers, because the definition of state waters isn't changing, they'll likely see little difference in what is or isn't regulated.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), this revised rule was intended to eliminate federal overreach and strike a balance between federal protection of the nation's waters and states' autonomy over their own aquatic resources. The final rule also details what waters are not subject to federal control, including features that only contain water in direct response to rainfall; groundwater; many ditches, including most farm and roadside ditches; prior converted cropland; farm and stock watering ponds; and waste treatment systems.

Ecology estimates that approximately 29 percent of the



state's wetlands and 14 percent of its streams will lose federal protection. Washington has joined a number of other states in a lawsuit against the EPA to bring back the previous definition of the rule.

In comments submitted in 2019 on the draft rule, Ecology said it was "gravely concerned" that the proposed rule would:

- Put Washington's water quality at risk. Federal protection would be rolled back to cover only certain stream reaches instead of the entire water body.
- Create an artificial divide between state and federal waters, allowing the federal government to shirk its responsibility to protect the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the nation's waters under the federal Clean Water Act.
- Ignore years of science that Washington's surface

streams and wetlands are often directly connected to underground sources of water.

- Create a need for a new state permitting program. ■

Court strikes down ag overtime exemption

On Nov. 5, the Washington State Supreme Court issued its decision concerning the constitutionality of RCW 49.46.130(2)(g), the statute exempting agricultural workers from the overtime pay requirement set out in the Washington Minimum Wage Act, ch. 49.46 RCW. Since 1959, agriculture has been exempted from paying overtime pay.

In a 5-4 decision, the Washington State Supreme Court sided with the class of dairy workers who brought the lawsuit and held the statute violates article 1, section 12 (the privileges and immunity clause) of the Washington State Constitution as applied to dairy workers. We do not yet know if this ruling will affect nondairy agricultural employers.

This opinion will not take effect

Are you receiving your ALERT?

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



Season's Greetings

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until the Supreme Court issues a mandate which typically takes 20 to 30 days. Also, the dairy or agricultural intervenors in the case may file a Motion for Reconsideration before the Washington State Supreme Court. There is no appeal of this decision to a higher court since only state issues are involved.

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers will continue to monitor this case closely and keep the membership apprised of the case, including further action at court and whether legislation may be needed to address the uncertainties caused by this decision. ■

Preliminary election results

By Diana Carlen
WAWG Lobbyist

While many predicted a “blue wave” in Washington state, that did not materialize. While some state legislative seats changed from Republican to Democratic hands and vice versa, the net result is that Democrats will now have the same majorities in Olympia as they had before the election.

Democrats will maintain their 57-41 majority in the state House and their 28-21 majority in the state Senate. However, the composition of the Democrat caucuses is leaning more progressive in both chambers.

Republicans were able to flip the 19th District in south-west Washington by defeating two, long-time incumbent Democrats. Sen.

Dean Takko (D), who is chair of the Local Government Committee, lost to Longview Port Commissioner Jeff Wilson (R). Rep. Brian Blake (D), who is the chair of the Rural Development, Agriculture and Natural

Resources Committee, lost to Joel McEntire (R). On the other hand, Democrats were able to pick up a couple of seats to balance out the losses in the 19th Legislative District. Sen. Steve O’Ban (R) lost to Twina Nobles (D) in the swing 28th District, and Rep. Luanne Van Werven (R) lost to Alicia Rule in the 42nd District.

At the time of this article going to print, there is one legislative race that is too close to call. In the 5th Legislative District, Sen. Mark Mullet (D) currently leads Ingrid Anderson (D) by only 73 votes and is headed to a recount. While both candidates are Democrats, Mullet is a business moderate, and Anderson is a progressive candidate backed by organized labor and endorsed by Gov. Inslee in an unprecedented move against a member of his own party.

Democrats currently hold all state executive offices except the secretary of state and treasurer positions. Except for the state treasurer position, incumbents for all state executive offices prevailed over their challengers by significant margins. Gov. Inslee won a third term against challenger Loren Culp (R). Former Congressman Denny Heck, a moderate democrat, defeated progressive democrat State Senator Markos Liias in the Lt. Governor race. If Gov. Inslee is appointed to a position in President-Elect Biden’s administration, the lieutenant governor will serve as governor until a special election is scheduled.

Secretary of State incumbent Kim Wyman (R) defeated challenger Gael Tarleton (D), a retiring House legislator. Former state Representative Mike Pellicciotti (D) defeated incumbent Duane Davidson (R) for the race for state treasurer. Commissioner of Public Lands incumbent Hilary Franz (D) defeated challenger Sue Kuehl Pederson (R). ■

Report questions salmon survival data interpretation

From Northwest RiverPartners

Newly published research has unveiled remarkable insight into the survival rates of Chinook salmon populations along the North American West Coast, highlighting a dramatic omission in the way such data has been interpreted for more than two decades.

The peer-reviewed research, “A Synthesis of the Coast-Wide Decline in Survival of West Coast Chinook Salmon,” has been published by the leading science journal, *Fish and Fisheries*. The research was carried out by a team from Kintama Research, led by the award-winning Dr. David Welch, who has been involved in marine research on salmon for 40 years and recognized globally for his work.

This pivotal research comes at a time when many interest groups continue to press for the removal of productive, cost-effective hydroelectric dams, despite the region’s aggressive carbon reduction goals. Many believe that the federally operated dams are preventing the recovery of threatened and endangered salmon populations—specifically in the Snake River, the largest tributary of the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest.

The study reveals that Chinook salmon survival has fallen by two-thirds, on average, for almost all regions along the western coast of North America, in both dammed and undammed areas, not just in the Columbia River Basin. The study is supported by deep technical and scientific analyses of the extensive survival data collected by government agencies over many decades. The research also reveals that survival is indistinguishable for Puget



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Sound and Snake River spring Chinook populations, despite the absence of major dams in the Puget Sound region.

The implication of the research is that the shared ecosystem of all Pacific salmon, the Pacific Ocean, is likely the source of the coastal-wide decline in Chinook salmon populations. Dams, while having some effect on salmon survival, do not appear to be a key limiting factor for recovery.

Welch's scientific analysis also found a significant flaw in the models used to produce adult survival estimates for Columbia River Basin salmon. The two predominant models used to formulate regional salmon policy both rely on PIT tag data—small RFID tags implanted in some fish, which only track salmon when they swim past in-river receivers. Adult salmon caught in fisheries in the ocean or river are not counted by these monitoring systems, meaning that harvest is ignored in the models. The assumption by the modelers is that harvest is insignificant and stable from year to year, so excluding it isn't a problem.

In contrast, Welch's research found that harvest of Columbia River Chinook stocks can be large—as much as 75 percent of the total salmon run for some Columbia River populations—and highly variable over time. This finding means that the predominant models fail to recognize that the reason for good or bad salmon returns may have been strongly influenced by how a range of U.S. federal, state and Canadian agencies were regulating the adult salmon catch.

As a result, the model outcomes are unintentionally providing erroneous information. This new research clearly shows a need to revise the models and, ultimately, salmon policies themselves.

The governors of Oregon and Washington both recently pointed to the region's devastating and deadly wildfires as signs that climate change will continue to have a very negative effect on Pacific Northwest communities. Welch's study shows that they should be similarly concerned about the oceanic impacts of climate change and their effects on salmon survival.

This conclusion means that our carbon-free hydropower resources are more important than ever.

Northwest RiverPartners (NWRP) is a not-for-profit, member-driven organization, representing not-for-profit, community-owned utilities across Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Nevada. They also proudly represent farmers, ports and businesses across the region that support clean energy and low-carbon transportation. Find more at nwrivernpartners.org. ■



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WHEAT FOUNDATION AWARDS EDUCATIONAL GRANTS

Each year, the Washington Wheat Foundation trustees gather to review and award educational grants to Washington nonprofit entities that support programs and activities that increase the public awareness of farming's responsible approach to the essential production of our safe food supply and the development of new knowledge about environmentally sound farming practices.

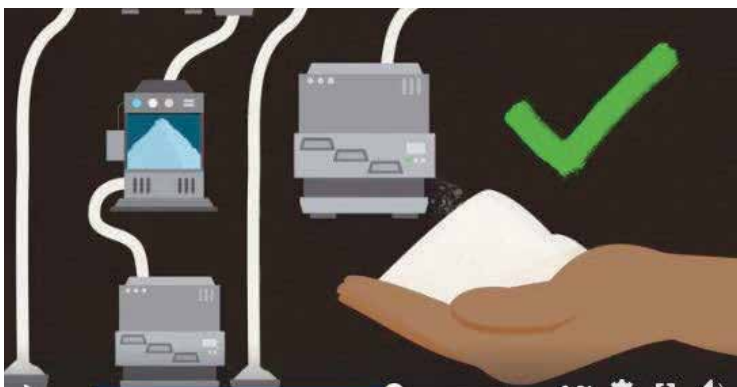
This year's recipients include:

- Washington Agriculture and Forestry Education Foundation (AgForestry). The only program of its kind in Washington state that specifically focuses on developing adult leaders in agriculture, forestry and natural resources.
- Northwest Natural Resources Institute (NNRI). They enhance agricultural elements for student programs and teach educator workshops focusing on agriculture or touching on agriculture in any way. NNRI celebrated its 27th year of education but was forced to cancel many events due to COVID-19. They are currently working on virtual programs to further their educational footprint.
- Washington State FFA Foundation. This grant will support "Emerge" events that aim to expose FFA members to all ranges of the agricultural industry in Washington state, including the grain industry. One event is the Evergreen Tour, which brings the FFA to individual schools and regions and exposes members and nonmembers to what FFA has to offer and the many different industries therein. As with other events, the FFA Foundation is adjusting their events to take place virtually. Last year the Emerge conference saw 300 students participate, while the Evergreen Tour hosted more than 9,000 students across Washington state.

Each organization has visibly and measurably built and strengthened current and future agricultural leaders. They provide these leaders with the tools and skills needed to increase agricultural awareness and demand. We are always impressed with the results and encouraged by the outlook of future endeavors.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND OUTREACH UPDATE

October was a great month for the Foundation's outreach on social media, overall. More than 200 new followers were gained and useful content shared. The team's second animation debuted at the end of the month and focuses on the milling process. The goal is to take the "boogeyman" out of the flour-making



process. While there are other videos available, none are clear, concise or built for the social media audience we are trying to reach.

Website visits were up 24 percent in October, and most visitors were from Seattle, Spokane and Tacoma, which means we are hitting our targets! Our "History of Wheat" and "How Wheat Works" pages are the most popular. We will be conducting an audit of the website and YouTube channel to make sure we are utilizing all SEO (search engine optimization) best practices and organization methods to get the best results with our audiences. ■

Reminders:

- Remember the Foundation in your charitable giving. Go to wawheat.org to find out more about ways that you can support your industry.

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AMMO shoots out winter program

EXPANDED 2020/21 SCHEDULE WILL FOCUS ON VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

By Trista Crossley

This year's Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's (AMMO) schedule will look a little different, thanks to social distancing rules and restrictions on large gatherings.

"We looked at the feedback we've received from past years, as always, but we also wanted to keep in mind some of the topics we'd usually offer at the Tri-State Grain Growers Convention and use the AMMO program to roll out that information instead," said Lori Williams, outreach coordinator for the Washington Association of Wheat Growers. "We've booked speakers that we haven't been able to in the past. We've expanded the number of sessions we'll be offering, and those sessions will include both virtual and, hopefully, in-person workshops."



Currently, all AMMO sessions scheduled through mid-February are planned as virtual events, with the remaining two sessions tentatively scheduled as in-person events, depending on COVID-19 restrictions. In August, the grain grower organizations of Idaho, Oregon and Washington made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention, which was scheduled for the first week of December in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, due to social distancing restrictions.

What hasn't changed is the annual Wheat College, traditionally one of AMMO's most popular offerings. This year's event is scheduled for June in Ritzville, Wash., and will feature Peter Johnson, a Canadian agronomist with 30 years of specializing in growing cereal crops. Johnson was the featured speaker at the 2020 Wheat College, which was held virtually. Williams is hopeful that by the time June 2021 rolls around, COVID-19 restrictions will allow a return to Wheat College's traditional, in-person, hands-on format.

"Networking with fellow growers and industry representatives is a large component of the AMMO workshops, and it's something we are all missing a little right now," Williams said. "Sometimes, in those side conversations, you learn just as much as you do from the speaker, but even in our virtual formats, there'll still be opportunities for questions and answers and a chance to interact with our speakers."

For more information, see ad on page 24.

Besides Johnson, other scheduled speakers and topics will include:

- **Peter Zeihan**, a geopolitical strategist, book author and popular past convention keynote speaker;
- **Damian Mason**, an agriculturist, author, business consultant and past convention emcee, on the business of agriculture (see story on page 26);
- A weather outlook with **Eric Snodgrass**, the principal atmospheric scientist for Nutrien Ag Solutions;
- **Randy Fortenbery**, a Washington State University agricultural economics

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professor, on marketing basics and strategic marketing; and

- National wheat issues with staff members from the **National Association of Wheat Growers**.

Pesticide credits will be available in those sessions that are applicable.

The AMMO webinars and Wheat College are offered free of charge.

In-person sessions are free to WAWG members. Nonmembers are welcome but will be charged \$25 per person. Lunch is included at any in-person session. To register for an AMMO session, visit

wawg.org/ammo-workshops.

Meeting restrictions are being monitored, and should a session need to convert to a webinar format due to travel restrictions, that information will be updated at wawg.org.

For more information, call (877) 740-2666 or email lori@wawg.org. ■

2020/21 AMMO schedule

| Date / Time | Speaker | Title | Location |
|------------------------|--|--|-----------|
| Dec. 15 9-10:30 am | Damian Mason | The Business of Agriculture | Webinar |
| Jan. 26 9-10 am | Syngenta | What's Behind Seed Treatment? | Webinar |
| Jan. 29 9-10:30 am | Peter Johnson (aka Wheat Pete) | The Building Blocks of Yield | Webinar |
| Feb. 8 9-10:30 am | Randy Fortenbery, Washington State University | Strategic Commodity Marketing | Webinar |
| Feb. 11 11 am-12 pm | National Association of Wheat Growers | Wheat Lies Ahead for Ag Policy in D.C. | Webinar |
| Feb. 16 1-2:30 pm | Peter Zeihan | America on the Edge | Webinar |
| Feb. 18 9-12 am | Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Service | Wheat 101: What's new in 2021 | Spokane |
| Feb. 23 9-10:30 am | Eric Snodgrass | Weather Risk in Wheat Production— An Outlook for 2021 | Spokane |
| June 15. 9 am-3 pm | Peter Johnson in coordination with Corteva Agriscience | Wheat College | Ritzville |



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2020/2021 WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Register online at: www.wawg.org/ammo-workshops

DEC 15

THE BUSINESS OF AGRICULTURE • WEBINAR

Speaker: Damian Mason

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. PST

JAN 26

WHAT'S BEHIND SEED TREATMENT • WEBINAR

Speaker: Syngenta

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. PST

JAN 29

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF YIELD • WEBINAR

Speaker: Peter Johnson aka Wheat Pete

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. PST

FEB 8

STRATEGIC COMMODITY MARKETING • WEBINAR

Speakers: Randy Fortenbery, Washington State University

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. PST

FEB 11

WHEAT LIES AHEAD FOR AG POLICY IN DC: AN UPDATE FROM NAWG • WEBINAR

Speaker: National Association of Wheat Growers

Time: 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. PST

FEB 16

AMERICA ON THE EDGE • WEBINAR

Speaker: Peter Zeihan

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. PST

FEB 18

WHEAT 101: WHAT'S NEW IN 2021 • IN-PERSON

Speaker: Natural Resources Conservation Service

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. PST

FEB 23

WEATHER RISK IN WHEAT PRODUCTION – AN OUTLOOK FOR 2021 • IN-PERSON

Speaker: Eric Snodgrass

Location: Spokane, WA

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. PST

JUN 15

WHEAT COLLEGE • IN-PERSON

Speaker: Peter Johnson aka Wheat Pete in coordination with Corteva Agriscience

Location: Ritzville, WA

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. PDT

For more information:

1.877.740.2666

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SPEAKER TO DISCUSS AG TRENDS, SUPPLY CHAIN IMPACTS IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

By Trista Crossley

Damian Mason may be best known as an entertaining emcee from past Tri-State Grain Grower Conventions, but dig a little deeper, and you'll find he's also a firmly rooted advocate of agriculture as an author, podcaster and business consultant, not to mention a farm owner.

Mason will be the featured speaker in the first session of the 2020/21 Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's (AMMO) winter schedule. Due to social distancing restrictions, this session will be held virtually on Dec. 15. While Mason will be exploring trends in agriculture and looking at supply chain impacts from COVID-19, attendees should still expect some laughs despite the serious subject matter.

"These (Eastern Washington growers) are my pals. We'll make it fun," he said in a telephone interview last month.

One of the trends that Mason expects to discuss in his AMMO presentation is how consumers are increasingly dictating what is being grown and how, a possible consequence of a U.S. food supply system that has created an abundance of safe, affordable food.

"We in agriculture are so focused on production, we forget who it is for," he explained. "We are seeing increasing amounts of consumer dictates being placed on us in that they are becoming increasingly pernickety because they can be. One hundred years ago, we could say, 'we grew a whole bunch of grain, now eat it.' Now you can't do that because people aren't starving like they once were."



Political trends are another topic Mason will be serving up. He pointed out that in 2020, U.S. farmers are expected to receive more than \$50 billion in direct aid despite the fact that some commodity prices have been steadily increasing since last summer. Mason wondered if that amount of federal aid is sustainable or even politically desirable, even though it helps guarantee a secure food supply.

"What's remarkable is that in the past, when these sort of record amounts of money were thrown at commodities, prices were in the toilet. Starting last summer, prices grew almost 20 percent on soybeans and the same on corn. Wheat comes along for the ride. It seems untenable that this (the amount of federal aid) would be done again next year because of political pressure. It's good for ag real estate and in rural America, but rural America generally doesn't get a vote. Government programs seen as giveaways are seen as political. I can't see that being replicated or repeated with these numbers," he said.

Speaking more on political trends that impact agriculture, Mason said farmers love to talk about policy and politics, but they sometimes miss the bigger picture. He pointed to recent news reports where a presidential candidate made a statement about supporting dietary recommendations that could include limiting the consumption of red meat. Wheat farmers might be wondering why they should care, but Mason pointed out that a fair amount of wheat ends up being animal feed.

"We might see a real bad agriculture policy, not subsidies, but policy that dictates what America eats. I think our risk isn't about whether there's going to be a farm program or if there is money for crop insurance. The bigger, longer



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term risk is when food becomes a political football by certain people dictating how it is produced or what we are allowed to have, buy or eat," he said.

Besides his work as an author and speaker, Mason also hosts a business-oriented podcast. Late last summer, he posted an episode where he listed seven things COVID-19 and the reaction to it revealed about the business of agriculture:

- The power of fear and how that fear drives behavior. In agriculture, he said, adversaries are using fear as a tool (think Roundup, factory farms, etc.);
- Supply chain tightness and how they are all interrelated;
- Consumers fly to what is known when there is tumult. During the pandemic, consumers flocked to comfort foods;
- Convictions and beliefs fly out the window when there is stress, and when folks get squeezed, money becomes more important than adhering to those beliefs (keeping to a vegan diet or choosing higher-priced organic produce);
- How resilient agriculture is;
- Consumer ignorance is even greater than agriculture realized; and
- Agriculture's efficiency is amazing until consumption patterns change quickly.

"We learned that our supply chains are amazingly efficient, but when faced with crinkles because of shutdowns, we saw how that efficiency can rapidly create a little bit of hysteria or at least shortages," Mason explained. "The gist is, just in time manufacturing...might be good for autos, but not for our food system. Maybe we should have more slack built in."

One of the "crinkles" that COVID-19 revealed in the supply chain was when producers were unable to get their animals processed, and some consumers saw meat shortages at the grocery store. Mason pointed out that commodities such as wheat or corn normally have several months of carryover in the system, while meat generally only has one to two weeks built in.

"We've never been in that situation where we've only had 12-14 days of wheat. It might end up being that the protein complex starts to resemble the commodity grains complex. The reality is maybe that will end up being policy," he said.

Mason believes exports are another area that might see changes, although not directly from COVID-19 impacts. He said U.S. farmers have learned how dependent they are on inputs, such as fertilizer and generic herbicides, that

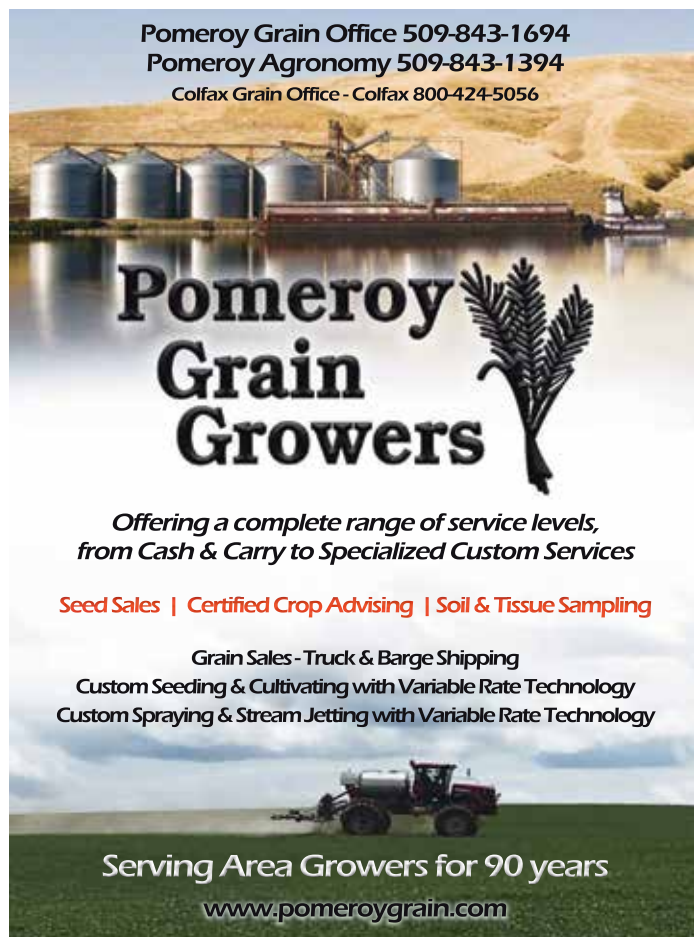
come from foreign countries, especially China.

"I think it is time for a little reset on that," he said.

Looking ahead to a time when things might return to normal and how agriculture might fit into that, Mason said in the short term, consumers are likely to continue eating at home more, but he doesn't expect that trend to stick because "consumers are lazy." And that surge of interest in home cooking and baking that has happened since February probably isn't enough to make up for what restaurants were consuming prior to the shutdown.

"What does that do to us? It changes the product mix," Mason said. "Everybody got excited about baking. Is that going to last long enough that we have consumers eating more flour? Could that home baking make up for the fact that for several months, consumers didn't go to iHop? If Mr. and Mrs. Consumer bake cookies once a week, is that new consumption? I'm not sure it is. If I'm in the wheat business, would I rather iHop stays open and makes boatloads of pancakes instead of Mrs. Consumer staying home and baking cookies once a week?"

To learn more about Mason, visit his website at damianmason.com. For more information on the 2020/21 AMMO winter schedule, see page 22. ■



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| 1475 | 59.03 | 60.2 | 12.29 | 10-2681 | SWW |
| 1401 | 56.06 | 60.8 | 12.24 | 14-ML-111 | SWW |
| 1400 | 56.02 | 60.8 | 11.83 | YSC-261-1 | SWW |
| 1370 | 54.83 | 60.1 | 11.90 | B-11-0577 | SWW |
| 1367 | 54.70 | 60.8 | 12.22 | Moro | SWW |
| 1336 | 53.46 | 61.8 | 11.33 | 10-2440 | SWW |
| 1328 | 53.14 | 60.6 | 11.61 | 14 ML-103 | SWW |
| 1325 | 53.02 | 61.8 | 11.77 | RxW Cross #5 | SWW |
| 1313 | 52.54 | 60.7 | 11.86 | Wag. Sel. #35 | SWW |
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| 5273 | 211.00 | 61.7 | 9.78 | IMI-1-08-128 | SWW |
| 5210 | 208.46 | 62.0 | 9.76 | 10-2440 | SWW |
| 5201 | 208.11 | 62.1 | 10.55 | B-13-1193 | SWW |
| 5194 | 207.82 | 61.0 | 8.03 | ARS Crescent | SWW |
| 5138 | 205.57 | 63.5 | 8.66 | B-11-0473 | SWW |
| 5034 | 201.43 | 62.6 | 8.86 | YSC-221-2 | SWW |
| 5017 | 200.73 | 61.3 | 9.73 | LCS Art Deco | SWW |
| 5014 | 200.63 | 61.5 | 9.43 | SY Ovation | SWW |
| 4928 | 197.19 | 60.9 | 9.67 | B-14-1221 | SWW |

| 2020 FERDINAD WINTER YIELD TRIAL | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------|------|-------|--------------|-------|
| FW | Bu/Ac | TW | Prot. | Variety | Class |
| 4424 | 177.01 | 57.5 | 11.16 | YSC-D862 | SWWC |
| 4196 | 167.90 | 57.1 | 11.47 | UI Palouse | SWW |
| 4111 | 164.48 | 59.0 | 11.57 | YSC-D491 | SWW |
| 4078 | 163.16 | 50.8 | 9.95 | 10-1281 | SWW |
| 4075 | 163.04 | 57.9 | 10.57 | Pritchett | SWW |
| 4040 | 161.65 | 55.6 | 11.72 | YSC-215 | SWW |
| 4036 | 161.49 | 58.9 | 10.79 | B-11-0473 | SWW |
| 4031 | 161.31 | 56.7 | 11.61 | Brundage 96 | SWW |
| 4027 | 161.13 | 58.4 | 10.63 | Jet | HRW |
| 3959 | 158.41 | 56.8 | 10.54 | ARS Crescent | SWW |
| 3700 | 148.06 | 57.9 | 10.58 | SY Ovation | SWW |

| 2020 ST JOHN WINTER YIELD TRIAL | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|------|-------|--------------|-------|
| FW | Bu/Ac | TW | Prot. | Pedigree | Class |
| 5366 | 214.71 | 61.1 | 10.46 | 14 ML-93 | SWW |
| 5113 | 204.57 | 62.6 | 11.18 | RxW Cross #5 | SWW |
| 5074 | 203.03 | 61.3 | 10.46 | NW Duet | SWW |
| 5042 | 201.75 | 62.4 | 11.46 | B-11-0473 | SWW |
| 4956 | 198.31 | 60.7 | 11.58 | UI Palouse | SWW |
| 4892 | 195.74 | 60.2 | 10.86 | Jasper | SWW |
| 4819 | 192.81 | 62.7 | 10.50 | PNW Hailey | SWW |
| 4789 | 191.62 | 61.5 | 10.77 | 10 - 2681 | SWW |
| 4749 | 190.02 | 61.2 | 11.43 | B-14-1201 | SWW |
| 4703 | 188.18 | 61.3 | 10.68 | Mpress | SWW |
| 4630 | 185.27 | 61.6 | 10.58 | YSC-215 | SWW |
| 3974 | 159.00 | 60.8 | 10.87 | SY Ovation | SWW |

| 2020 WARDEN WINTER YIELD TRIAL | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|------|-------|--------------|-------|
| FW | Bu/Ac | TW | Prot. | Pedigree | Class |
| 4854 | 194.21 | 60.1 | 12.00 | Otto | SWW |
| 4766 | 190.72 | 60.3 | 11.84 | B-14-1201 | SWW |
| 4579 | 183.21 | 59.4 | 11.86 | B-11-0577 | SWW |
| 4553 | 182.19 | 61.0 | 11.52 | RxW Cross #5 | SWW |
| 4534 | 181.42 | 59.6 | 11.23 | NW Tandem | SWW |
| 4478 | 179.18 | 61.0 | 11.63 | B-11-0473 | SWW |
| 4463 | 178.59 | 60.4 | 10.97 | Cashup | SWW |
| 4454 | 178.21 | 59.6 | 12.03 | UI Palouse | SWW |
| 4445 | 177.87 | 59.5 | 11.70 | B-14-1221 | SWW |
| 4408 | 176.38 | 59.1 | 10.85 | LCS Art Deco | SWW |
| 4064 | 162.61 | 60.5 | 11.11 | SY Ovation | SWW |
| 3963 | 158.57 | 60.3 | 11.59 | YSC-215 | SWW |



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and Chair of the CTE
Department, Moses
Lake High School



Lynn Cotter, Manager,
Junior Livestock Show
of Spokane



Kara Kaelber, Education
Director of the Franklin
Conservation District
who oversees the
Wheat Week program

By Trista Crossley

In a time of increased remote K-12 education, how are the traditional, hands-on classes and activities faring? It's something of a mixed (tool)bag according to instructors.

Since February, the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced nearly all Washington schools to at least a partial remote learning schedule, hitting classes that require hands-on instruction, such as career and technical education (CTE) classes, not to mention extracurricular activities like FFA and 4H, like a hammer. The U.S. is already facing a shortage of skilled trade workers. A recent study by JFF, a national nonprofit involved in American workforce and education systems, predicts 1.3 million job openings annually through 2028 for electricians, welders, mechanics and others.

In agriculture, there will always be a need for those technical skills, no matter how much of the industry goes digital. What happens, then, when large groups of students lose the opportunity to get hands-on training during their formative years?

Odessa Junior/Senior High School

"I think, if this (remote learning) were to continue long term, it could be extremely detrimental," said HaLee Walter, Odessa Junior/Senior High School agriculture teacher and FFA advisor in Odessa, Wash. "There's an entire niche of society that could roll downhill quickly. It's scary. We are already looking at a massive shortage of people who go into technical careers anyway, like welders or electricians. My job as an ag teacher is to introduce these kids to that. If I have two or three years that we don't have to catch their interest, that could filter down. It could get ugly."

Walter normally teaches shop and ag mechanical classes and an ag food and natural resources curriculum, as well as running the school's greenhouse, which grows and sells plants to raise money for FFA. When schools went full remote in February, she ended up raising the plants and selling them herself.

"Last spring, when we shut down in March, we would have been hot and heavy into projects," she said. "There was nothing I could do. I can't send kids home with a hammer, and not everybody has a table saw at home. A lot of that stuff just stopped. Districts that are doing full remote learning...it's totally changed how they can teach."

The Odessa School District began the year with a hybrid learning system, where half of the students attended classes every other day except Friday. Walter said she was able to adapt shop safety and beginning bookwork lessons to online learning and focus on hands-on projects on the days students were in class. Last month, the school district moved to a four-day-a-week schedule where classes are 35 minutes long, and students are done by 1:30 p.m. Walter said that has helped, but the shortened classes leave little time to get anything substantial done.

"It gets a little harder when trying to get everybody out in the shop. By the time everyone's got their safety glasses on and gets set up, there's only 10 minutes then they have to start cleaning up," she explained.

Walter's FFA and 4H students are also feeling the pinch. The kids weren't able to do their spring officer elections and missed out on their normal competitions and fundraisers, including running the Reuban sandwich booth at Odessa's annual Deutchesfest and produce judging contests.

"It's all been a big shift. Basically, right now, the calendar is canceled through January," Walter said. "I just tell students that I hope that come spring, things will start opening up, and we'll be able to start doing things."

Moses Lake High School

In Moses Lake, Wash., Tony Kern, the ag teacher, FFA advisor and chair of the CTE department, is feeling the same way. In November, Moses Lake High School started a blended model where students attend two days, hitting each class for one hour a week. The rest of the time, they are doing remote learning.

"It's not a lot, but I'm super excited," Kern said. "The thing that is exciting from a CTE standpoint is we get to do some of the hands-on work. That hour that we get them here in school, we are trying to use every minute of it doing things that we just can't replicate online."

For Kern, that means his horticulture students spend their hour in the greenhouse, and his ag physical science students work on mouse-trap vehicles. The remote learning tends to focus on informational parts of the CTE curriculum.

"Up to this point, it has been really difficult being all online," he said. "It's truly creating a bubble. I feel like this bubble is going to follow these kids for a while. It's going to have some impacts for sure."

Kern said Moses Lake has a very large, very active FFA chapter, and despite the pandemic, many of his kids were able to complete their FFA projects. One silver lining for him was the fact that with no in-person classes last spring, he was able to do more home visits to check on his students' FFA projects. He has been able to maintain some of his normal FFA activities that take place outdoors, such as officer training, their annual pumpkin sale and cleaning out the downtown planters (the FFA students also grow the flowers for the planters).

"Some people have this mindset that the wave of the future is the computer. If anything, this pandemic has proved to me the need for that contact, the need for kids to be able to manipulate stuff and experience it and do it. When you try to replicate that online, and I feel like the

Moses Lake School District has been a leader in that, they are missing out," he said. "I really feel like, moving into the future 20 or 30 years from now, the classes you are going to have as brick and mortar are experiential. The kids need it. They really do."

Junior Livestock Show of Spokane

One of the milestones for many Eastern Washington farm kids is showing animals at the Junior Livestock Show of Spokane, a tradition that's been happening every May for the past 85 years. In 2020, amid the COVID-19 shut-

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downs and restrictions on crowd sizes, the show went virtual.

"It was a tough, tough decision," said Lynn Cotter, manager of the show. "Ultimately, it was lack of a venue to have the show and a lack of 4H and FFA kids who could participate because of the shutdown. We were looking for options that we could still have kids participate in something. We looked at options and decided to offer a virtual show. It's kind of a sign of the times."

The participants made a 30 to 90 second video of their animal(s) that were judged by a panel of Midwest judges. Cotter said the feedback from the judges was that it was difficult not being able to handle the animals, but it gave kids the opportunity to show what they were doing. Approximately 230 kids took part in the virtual show, about one third the number that normally participate.

"I can't be unhappy (with the number of participants) because it was the unknown," Cotter said. "I would have loved for 100 percent, but even 100 percent of the kids that enter (the live show) don't show up."

Cotter said she is hopeful the 2021 show will be an in-person event, but either way, she is moving forward with the planning. After all, many of the kids have already

bought their steers and will be buying their hogs, lambs and goats soon.

Wheat Week

It's not just high school CTE classes and FFA and 4H activities that have been impacted by COVID-19. In grade schools across the state, one of the most popular activities, Wheat Week, has also gone virtual. Kara Kaelber, education director of the Franklin Conservation District who oversees the program, said they've shrunk the curriculum down significantly, from a five-hour program to 45 minutes, and created a kit with everything teachers need that concentrates on the core lessons. Students still get to grow wheat and thresh a wheat head.

"It's obviously not full Wheat Week, but it is something that teachers need right now," Kaelber said. "Teachers are hungry for anything created for a virtual format."

When the online version of Wheat Week was released in September, Kaelber was blown away by the response. Within 24 hours, more than 10,000 kits had been requested. She said that most of those requests came from teachers who had had Wheat Week in their classrooms previously. Before the pandemic, Wheat Week's reach was constrained by the number of educators trained to teach

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the curriculum and the accessibility of schools (the majority of Wheat Week is taught along the I-5 corridor in Western Washington). While Kaelber is hoping her educators can eventually return to the classroom, in a virtual format, Wheat Week has the possibility of reaching every fourth and fifth grader in the state.

"The silver lining with COVID-19 is that for people too far out for us to send an educator to, this would be the perfect format for them to participate in moving forward. Every year, we have some schools fall off because their scheduling won't allow it," she said. "We could offer them this opportunity instead, then they could fit it in whenever they like."

Wheat Week is funded by the Washington Grain Commission. ■

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Advising farmers, ranchers in the Inland Northwest

Steve Van Vleet, Whitman County WSU Extension agent

By Kevin Gaffney

It's only fitting that **Steve Van Vleet** works directly with farmers, ranchers and fruit tree growers all over Eastern Washington. Van Vleet grew up on the western slope region of Colorado on a fruit farm. Along with apples, pears, peaches and apricots, they also had a few cattle to work with.

His hometown of Paonia is located in a region known mostly for tree fruit production and coal mining. Rumor has it the town was named after the peony flower, but was misspelled. After finishing high school in 1985, Van Vleet earned his bachelor's in biology from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colo., in 1990. The next career step was working for the National Park Service for two years. Van Vleet then moved on to the University of Wyoming to complete his master's degree in entomology. He was working full time under a weed science professor when he completed that degree in 1995. Deciding he wasn't quite done with his schooling, he was encouraged by his mentor and professor, Steve Miller, to earn his Ph.D. in agronomy.

During this time, Van Vleet completed some remarkable work, helping to develop AIM herbicide for FMC Corporation, a company that helped fund his research.

"At that point, I was hired by American Cyanamid and developed the Clearfield wheat production system. Before that project was completed, the company was sold to BASF for \$3.8 billion," recalled Van Vleet. "I actually had to re-interview to retain my position."

After about two years serving as head of BASF's Pacific Northwest (PNW) region from Potlatch, Idaho, Van Vleet felt that his career just wasn't headed in the right direction.

"I moved back to Wyoming and worked for the noxious weed control board. Then a position with the U.S. Department of Agriculture came up in Dubois, Idaho, working with sheep grazing, weed control and other projects," Van Vleet said. "I was working as an agronomist there from 2003 until April Fools Day 2005. On that day, I started my current position with Washington State University (WSU) Extension, based here in Colfax."

That move was ideal, as Van Vleet already was familiar with many of the professors at WSU, and he loved the fact that research was a big part of his duties. His position encompasses working with a wide range of agricultural crops and natural resources.

"Having been based in nearby Potlatch, I knew many of the area growers. My knowledge base includes cereal



grains, legumes, livestock and weed science, so I can efficiently serve virtually all facets of ag in this region," he said. Van Vleet has marshalled funding from BASF and Bayer to launch several research projects, including several focusing on weed control.

"I believe the essence of my job is to bring information to the growers," emphasized Van Vleet. "Our region has perhaps become a little bit complacent over the years, taking the rich, productive soils of the Palouse region for granted. I would like to see farmers take more interest in the health of their soil. Without the soil, we have nothing. We need to start paying more attention to micronutrients and especially to the pH of our Pacific Northwest (PNW) soils."

Van Vleet has a wealth of experience in the PNW states and internationally to make comparisons. He has worked with growers in Ireland, Afghanistan, Iraq, Moldova and the Ukraine.

"I was struck by the importance that western Europeans place on agriculture. Those nations know what it is like to go hungry, and they value agriculture in a way that our society does not. I found that farmers in the Middle East region are very hungry to learn and to try different methods of farming," he noted. "The soil in the Ukraine is very comparable to that of our Palouse region. Of course, their entire nation is similar to the size of Texas. They do not have the infrastructure that we enjoy here in the USA, and government corruption is also a massive problem in their society."

Van Vleet's projects have been quite diverse in the PNW, including hazelnuts, berries, cereal grains, legumes, fruit

trees, corn, potatoes, canola and livestock production.

"I love working for Extension because I'm sharing research and information that directly helps the growers. Working in the industry provided a bigger paycheck, but my work now is more satisfying. I present information and my opinions, and it is up to the individual farmers to use it as they see fit in their farming operations."

Van Vleet will make recommendations as to fertility, seed and tillage decisions, but he tends to be open-minded and willing to look at new or better ways to do things. He expressed some impatience with growers who only want to do things the same way generation after generation, never wanting to change anything.

"I ask them, you are happy with 120 bushels per acre, but will your grandchildren still be able to get those same yields if you don't treat your soils properly? I try to get them to think of their farms as an ecosystem," explained Van Vleet. "For some, direct seeding is the best system. For others, a tillage system is better. I would like to see the growers do more extensive soil testing in their fields. Using one or two tests for an entire field simply doesn't provide enough information. More testing throughout the fields will enable more efficient variable rate fertilizing.

"The days of just putting on nitrogen, sulfur and phosphate should be gone. The soil needs more micronutrients, and proper soil testing can make that happen. Crop rotations are also critically important. Including legumes, barley, canola and even triticale will help control weeds, improve yields and increase soil health."

Van Vleet believes, with all the competition of the private and land-grant university breeding programs, there can be a tendency to release too many new cereal varieties.

"If a new variety has the same end-use quality as a prior one and only gets 3 percent better yields, why not wait another year or two and release when you actually have a substantially better wheat variety?" he asked.

In Van Vleet's opinion, GMO wheat probably is not necessary. He believes with continually improved wheat varieties and better soil management, dryland yields of 200 bushels an acre are not out of reach. For those ready to dismiss that as an unrealistic goal, a Pomeroy dryland wheat grower working with Van Vleet had a field that yielded 189 bushels per acre in 2020. He has been entered in the national dryland wheat yield contest, and Van Vleet expects him to win.

Van Vleet's work has not gone unrecognized. He has served as the national chair of the Sustainable Ag Committee and currently serves as the national chair of the Agronomy Committee for the National Association of County Agriculture Agents. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Award for the group in 2017.

Van Vleet is a family man. His wife, Sherri, works for the U.S. Postal Service. His daughter, Kaitlyn, recently graduated with a degree in criminal justice and criminology and is seeking employment. In his free time, Van Vleet spends time with his family and walks their dogs. He and Sherri also refinish antique furniture as a hobby.

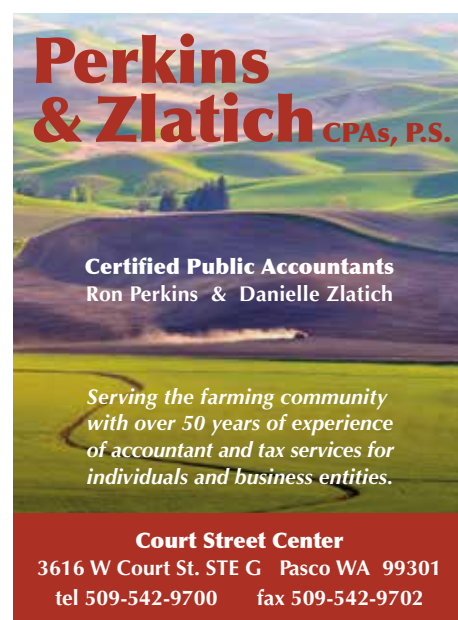
"I'm very proud to have the opportunity to work with the growers here in the PNW region. We have a really good working relationship. They know that I am on their side and will go to battle for them when necessary."

Van Vleet can be contacted at the WSU Extension office in Colfax at 310 North Main Street or by email at svanvleet@wsu.edu. ■



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CHAIRMAN

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

By Gary Bailey



One of the strengths of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) has been its ability to talk face to face with customers, either when they arrive here as part of a trade team or when commissioners travel overseas. Over the past 60 years, generations of millers and bakers (not to mention farmers and merchandisers) have met in person and forged relationships that have led to the mutual appreciation and trust we enjoy today.

When I am asked what the commission accomplishes for farmers and landlords, I refer back to the first meeting of the WGC in April 1958. In the minutes of that meeting, the director of agriculture at the time said the formation of the commission was intended to do as a group what farmers could not accomplish alone.

But how do we fulfill our mission in a pandemic era when travel is not recommended, and our customers—as well as ourselves—remain sequestered in our individual countries? The answer is modern communication.

I'll get to the commission's business in a moment, but first, I want to bring your attention to the virtual celebration of RiverFest 2020 that can be accessed right now at riverfestwa.com. The commission made a decision four years ago to support RiverFest, a fun-filled day for the whole family that educates as it celebrates the role of rivers and dams in the region. This would have been the event's third year at Columbia Park in Kennewick, but the pandemic nixed that.

Instead of withdrawing our support for the effort, the commission decided to continue its funding and, in combination with others, helped create a terrific documentary about the history and importance of our rivers and dams. It is an hour long, so it takes an investment of time. But it's well worth it, and I encourage you to watch the program and then pass it on!

We are lucky at the WGC to have anticipated the turn to videos. Early in program director Joe Bippert's tenure at the commission, our CEO, Glen Squires, gave him the go-ahead to purchase a drone for shooting aerial footage. Since then, Joe has sharpened his production and editing skills, filming farmers from ground level and their operations from above and then sharing the results with customers overseas.

Joe realized early on that filming videos is not the

same as producing and polishing them, so he has worked with some excellent professionals in creating informative, as well as gorgeous, videos to share with our customers. You can find some of the results on our website (wagrains.org) and on our Facebook page.

On a national level, U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) has been pulling out all the stops to fill the gap that the absence of personal visits has left. It deserves mentioning that Washington wheat farmers and landlords help support USW to the tune of \$634,000 in the 2020/21 budget. USW's Steve Mercer, vice president of communication, and Amanda Spoo, director of communication, have been coordinating with customers around the world directing virtual meetings. They ensure that the many virtual meetings being scheduled not only go off without a hitch, but have the lighting and sound one would expect of a professional level organization.

I have participated in some of these USW meetings and webinars, and while they will never replace in-person gatherings, they are an excellent substitute. With well-used PowerPoint slides and a presenter's voice that is free of electronic glitches and hitches, real communication can happen.

Although I'm looking forward to "normal" returning one day soon, the knowledge we have gained about virtual technology will not go to waste. I believe the future will likely be a hybrid of in-person and virtual interaction.

Because of restrictions on meeting size, the WGC had its first, all virtual meeting in September, and while the technology did its part, we human beings were less successful. Work got done, but to me, the meeting pointed out the drawbacks of the technology. By the end, there wasn't a remotely plugged-in commissioner who didn't think meeting in person would be preferable.

We are a social animal, and while the technology we've been using to make it over this COVID-19 hump is valuable, it's no replacement for looking people in the eyes—in the same time zone. Although I've been filmed in several of the recent videos that have been made, I would just as soon step out of the spotlight and get back to the commission's business of doing for an industry what one farmer can't do alone...in person. ■



REVIEW

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Dam salmon survival

According to new research, dams are not the culprit in declining salmon numbers. In a release from Northwest RiverPartners commenting on research published in *Fish and Fisheries*, salmon survival has fallen by two-thirds, on average, for most regions along the western coast of North America whether the regions have dams or not, and not just in the Columbia River Basin. The research showed that salmon survival is indistinguishable for Puget Sound and Snake River spring Chinook, despite the absence of major dams in the Puget Sound region. Implications from the research would indicate that the Pacific Ocean and climate change are key to coast-wide declines in Chinook populations. Of course, it doesn't help that as much as 75 percent of the total salmon run for some Columbia River populations are being harvested in the ocean and not counted as part of fish models, according to the research led by David Welch, a 40-year veteran of marine investigations. With the governors of Washington and Oregon recently pointing to climate change as the reason for devastating wildfires, Northwest RiverPartners said Welch's study shows they should be similarly concerned about the oceanic impacts of climate change on salmon survival. ■



Who leads the quality charge?

In the Pacific Northwest, it was what was then the Washington Wheat Commission that led the fight to establish the Preferred Wheat Variety brochure more than two decades ago. In the Midwest, the milling company, Grain Craft LLC, is establishing a list of hard red winter varieties that can replace higher priced spring wheat varieties and work just as well in baking applications. Depending on the year, hard red winter may be as much as a dollar less (or more) per bushel than hard red spring. Traditionally, blending 25 percent hard red spring wheat with 75 percent hard red winter is necessary to get adequate baking performance. Recently, Grain Craft has partnered with farmers and grain elevators to segregate 33 high performing varieties, paying a premium on production and an incentive for planting. Within five years, the company hopes that 50 percent of the hard red winter wheat milled by Grain Craft will be segregated by preferred varieties. "We're in this not just for us and our customers," said Alan Koenig, chief supply chain officer. "We think this is the right thing to do for the industry to get all the quality up, not just for domestic use but for export use." ■

Don't hold your breath

A year and a half ago, it was just a matter of time before the Grain Foods Foundation (GFF) expected to have an assessment on bread and rolls in place to fund an annual \$15 million war chest on behalf of increasing consumer consumption. A year and a half ago, of course, no one had heard of the coronavirus. As a result of a contingent of food service bakers who opposed the measure, the GFF recently requested the withdrawal of publication of the order to establish the breadbasket checkoff program. The pandemic has severely impacted the food service baker because of the toll it has taken on their customers. The checkoff steering committee "remains unwavering in its commitment" to the checkoff as being crucial to the health of the industry, but a future checkoff application may narrow participation. The organization has already spent \$2 million over two years to advance the process. Under the former application, an assessment of 16 cents per hundredweight of flour would be levied, with 13.5 cents of that paid by bakers and 2.5 cents per hundredweight by millers. That amount was said to be worth about \$15 million a year in terms of funding an advertising program seeking additional consumption. ■



COVID's silver lining

Every now and then, there's something good that comes out of the COVID-19 social distancing requirements, and the film called "Our Rivers, Our Life" is one of them. With the 3rd RiverFest celebration at Columbia Park in Kennewick, Wash., cancelled due to the pandemic, organizers pivoted to producing a film that would encapsulate the history and the importance of the multiuse Columbia-Snake River System, as well as efforts to increase salmon numbers. The film was directed by Kara Rowe, a former staff member at the Washington Association of Wheat Growers and currently an owner/producer of the video firm, North by Northwest. Using footage from a wide array of sources, Rowe weaves the story of the river system's history and importance to the region. Although the film could be called a documentary, it is a documentary with a point of view and comes with commercials for various entities associated with the river system, including an organization called the Washington Grain Commission. The film, which is an hour long, deserves to be seen as a whole, but at riverfestwa.com, there are also opportunities to break it into segments. Watch the video and then urge your friends and landlords to watch too. ■

Who's on first?

Was the late October snowfall in Eastern Washington—the earliest on record—the result of La Niña, which was recently declared, or something else? La Niña is characterized by cooler-than-normal surface waters in the equatorial Pacific. The last time La Niña showed up was in late 2017, and U.S. farmers in the southern Plains harvested poor crops. But in the Pacific Northwest, the forecast this year is for wetter-than-normal conditions. In the period between 1983 and 2013, yields in Eastern Washington averaged 62 bushels an acre during El Niños. During the same period, but under the control of La Niña events, winter wheat averaged 57.4 bushels an acre. However, a record yield of 75 bushels an acre occurred in 2011 under a weak La Niña influence. This winter, forecasters are predicting the La Niña influence will turn the southern tier of the U.S. dry and warm, worsening existing drought conditions. ■



The bigger the better

A *Wall Street Journal* article said the Trump Administration is expected to pay farmers more than \$37 billion in 2020. Of the first \$5 billion paid out under the pandemic relief program, a little more than 1 percent of recipients received at least a quarter of the funds. The average payment to farmers was \$12,000, but for the top 25 percent of payments, the average was \$311,000. The disparity is mostly the result of production differences to which many farm safety net programs are tied. Smaller farmers say the imbalance makes it even harder for them to compete. They would like relief calculated on revenue because they often sell their production directly at higher prices. Large and midsize farms are said to make up 10 percent of all U.S. farms; operate on 52 percent of the nation's farmland; and generate 79 percent of the value of America's agricultural production. ■

Coming soon

Farmers in the American Southeast will be the first to try Bayer's latest formulation of glyphosate called Roundup PowerMAX3. The latest formulation includes a new surfactant blend that increases plant uptake and the highest concentration of glyphosate on the market. Bayer said the highly concentrated product allows growers to spray more acres with less product, less packaging and fewer bulk trucks on the road. The herbicide will be rolled out in other parts of the country over the next two years. ■

A plant-based protein, potato diet

Are plant-based and cell-cultured proteins meat? Start-up companies that are working to replace meat on the hoof on the basis of impacting climate change, among other challenges, certainly want to confuse the issue. But when it comes to climate change, the beef industry has some facts on their side.

Cattle only account for 2 percent of U.S. greenhouse emissions. American cattlemen produce the same amount of beef with 33 percent fewer cattle compared to 40 years ago, and if all Americans went vegan, greenhouse gases would only diminish 2.6 percent. ■



Very interesting

Milling & Baking News may be the last place you would suspect finding an article on the video sharing app, TikTok, which was in the news when President Trump ordered that it be closed down in the U.S. without a change of its Chinese ownership. That saga plays on, but the president did ban WeChat, a China-based texting, social media and payments app. An editorial in the magazine said that while the diplomatic tiff appears far removed from grain-based foods, it really isn't. "Many U.S. commodity ingredient and grain-based foods companies have global operations, and the increasing use of sanctions against businesses as a foreign policy weapon is an ominous sign." Given that WeChat is used by more than 1.1 billion people in China and is widely used by U.S. companies operating in China, the ban is a concern. Although it drew little attention, President Trump, in late August, blacklisted 10 Communist China military companies, including Chem China, which owns Syngenta. This blacklisting, said the editorial, "gives the White House broad powers to impose sanctions on companies doing business with Syngenta." In 2019, the company's North American crop protection sales totaled \$2.5 billion with another \$738 million worth of seeds sold. According to the editorial, "U.S. businesses broadly have much to lose if pathways for foreign expansion are narrowed or closed." ■

Greener pasture bound

Shepherd's Grain is the name of the flour products made from wheat grown in the Pacific Northwest by Columbia Plateau Producers (CPP). Since 2006, Shepherd's Grain flour has been milled in Spokane by Archer Daniels Midland (ADM). When the farmer cooperative decided to shift its operations to GrainCraft's Pendleton, Ore., mill, citing various examples of "lack of performance," ADM asked a court for a temporary restraining order blocking the move. That request was denied even though the ADM/CPP contract was to last until 2022. According to ADM, the breach of contract will harm its brand, reputation and goodwill, in addition to a loss in profits of \$4 million. Columbia Plateau Producers responded that ADM has repeatedly ignored its "cries for help" by failing to accommodate its milling needs and trying to stop the cooperative from hiring the services of a third-party miller to mitigate the problem. ■



Bravo! Bravo!

The \$3 million Rosalie and Harold Rea Brown Distinguished Endowed Chair in plant pathology at Washington State University (WSU) has been established with the aim of developing practical solutions for farmers. **Tim Murray** is the recipient



of the new endowment, which is a gift of the Rosalie and Harold Rea Brown Foundation. Murray is grandson of the Browns, whom the endowment is named after. Murray's uncle, Harold Brown, and his foundation are funding the endowment. Murray has been on the WSU faculty since 1983. Among other things, he is involved in genetic research of plant pathogens to better understand them. Although he is the endowment's first chair, Murray said the focus of the endowment will be flexible for future researchers who hold the chair. "This endowment is one of several that Harold Brown's Foundation has established, all of which emphasize developing solutions to problems including cures for cancer. The goal of this endowment is to support research that bridges discoveries from basic science to develop applied solutions for producers that will reduce losses caused by plant diseases and, thereby, improve food security. These are the kinds of things I've been doing throughout my career," Murray said. ■

Climate change supply chain

The new president of the North American Millers Association said recently that sustainability and climate change have been hot topics of conversation along the grain supply chain and "that's an area where we have a role, for sure." **Jane DeMarchi** served as research director at the National Association of Wheat Growers before leaving for the American Seed Trade Association. She said that a rash of high profile product recalls in 2016 tied to flour contamination is still on the industry's mind—and the FDA's—regardless of a relatively quiet period lately. A new food and drug publication, anticipating the next 10 years, cites traceability as an important factor in the food industry. DeMarchi has flour in her blood. Her great-grandfather was a flour broker in the early 20th century, and her father led a business that provided engineering and equipment to large production bakeries. ■



Yeah, but wait until 2020!

Long before the coronavirus boosted home baking, the per capita flour consumption number for 2019 was calculated, coming in at a 30-year low, sustaining its steepest year-to-year drop since 2011. The 130.7 pounds per capita Americans ate last year was down 2.1 pounds from 132.8 pounds in 2018. The 2019 figure was the smallest since 1989. In 1997, per capita consumption stood as high as 146.8 pounds. Flour consumption has been falling for a long time. In 1902, it was estimated at 224 pounds. In 1943, during World War II, it stood at 166 pounds. There could be an uptick in per capita consumption in 2020 based on early indications. ADM profits, for instance, jumped 68 percent in the first quarter of 2020 over 2019, fueled in part by an acceleration in demand for flour. But although home baking initially increased during COVID-19, restaurant baking has simultaneously declined. ■

Change is in the air

Dry bulk agricultural freight, including commodities and fertilizer, hasn't changed much in 50 years, a circumstance that Roger LLC intends to change by bringing modern digital technology to shippers and carriers through a new app. An independent company, Roger was developed by five agribusiness companies as charter members including The Andersons, Inc; Cargill; Consolidated Grain and Barge Co.; Koch Fertilizer LLC; and the Scoular Co., as well as a leading ag tech company, Bushel. The companies account for more than 900,000 loads annually, excluding fertilizer. Although the website, rogerthat.com, was launched last April, other shippers and carriers will be allowed to join when it's launched publicly in 2021. Carriers using Rogers are able to receive payment in less than three days once a load is delivered. Currently, such payments average 12 to 17 days. The system also provides paperless ticket capture with drivers snapping a photo of a load ticket that is saved in the app. Identity preservation of commodities is a potential benefit of the system. ■



The million dollar combine?

Their names make them sound like fighter jets: the X9 1000 and X9 1100.

Actually, they are the newest addition to the John Deere lineup of combines and depending on accessories, may be the first to exceed \$1 million to purchase. With big capacities, the X9 1100 can harvest 30 acres of high yielding wheat an hour or 7,200 bushels of corn an hour, and both can make automatic adjustments depending on conditions. The X9 1000 has a 420-bushel grain tank, and the 1100 holds up to 460 bushels. The machines are also said to be easy on fuel, running for 14 hours between fill-ups. ■

Rice versus wheat

Overseas, rice is often the staple grain with wheat as an afterthought. In the U.S., the situation is reversed, but rice consumption has risen dramatically since 1970, when the average per capita consumption was 7.7 pounds. In 2000, it stood at nearly 20 pounds, a growth of 147 percent. What it is today is not much more than an educated guess, since rice consumption isn't tracked by the government. Wheat flour consumption during the same 1970 to 2000 period grew from 111 pounds to 146 pounds, a 32 percent increase. ■



No pats on the back

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize gets a lot more publicity when it's an individual who receives it, but organizations can also be cited. In 2020, the prize went to the World Food Program (WFP), a United Nations agency, "for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contributions to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict." The WFP is the world's largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security. In 2020, it's estimated WFP provided assistance to nearly 100 million people in 88 countries. As a result of the pandemic, WFP recently said acute hunger in the countries where it operates could reach 279 million people by the end of the year, an 82 percent increase. ■



Trade barriers throttle U.S. exports, prices

U.S. Wheat Associates' (USW) submission on global wheat export trade barriers went to the U.S. Trade Representative's (USTR) office just days before the recent U.S. presidential election. Given the election's outcome, the comments were timely as they envision a large role for the World Trade Organization (WTO).

While the WTO had been sidelined during much of the Trump Administration as more trade deals played out on a bilateral stage, USW's analysis of barriers to wheat trade views the organization's ability to discipline world trade as "effective because they are enforceable," and USW supports them because "enforceable trade commitments help resolve trade barriers."

Given President Trump's fondness for tariffs, USW's 12-page submission to the world trade body did not include the same appreciation. One section stated that even tariffs imposed in full compliance with a country's WTO commitments can still distort markets and should be removed. The submission, however, did not delve further into the issue of tariffs.

With nearly 50 percent of U.S. wheat production exported annually, open markets and fair trade are critical to the success of the U.S. wheat industry. In the 2019/20 marketing year, the U.S. exported 26.3 million metric tons (mmt) of wheat valued at more than \$6 billion. Of the 192 mmt of world wheat trade, the U.S. accounts for 14 percent.

Although WTO rules are "trade policy foundation," USW agreed that major gains can be made through negotiating high-standard bilateral or multilateral free trade agreements. USW also made it clear that it views negotiations as an opportunity to solve trade barriers and "does not, in any way, see violations of trade agreements as reasons for abandoning or renegotiating agreements."

There are three important avenues countries use to thwart wheat trade. Domestic support violations refer to domestic subsidies that exceed a country's WTO commitment. Encouraging production through input subsidies and market price supports artificially increases domestic prices, eliminating trade opportunities and lowering

global wheat prices, which, in turn, reduce revenue to U.S. wheat farmers.

Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regulations are important to protect human and environmental health, but SPS standards can morph into SPS barriers and unjustifiably disrupt trade. Diseases and weed seeds are two restrictions frequently used. Residue and contaminant requirements are also proliferating.

As the USTR submission put it, "USW questions whether these SPS requirements are based on sound science and use the least trade distorting measures or instead are based on misperceptions or are motivated by purposes other than those allowed by the SPS agreement." If developed from science-based risk assessments and implemented in the least trade distorting manner, USW does not object to SPS requirements.

A third way countries are creating barriers to trade is through biotechnology and plant breeding innovations. Although there is no commercial GMO wheat production in the U.S. and won't be for a number of years, "well-entrenched resistance to acceptance of commodities produced via biotechnology is a concern that inhibits progress toward development of biotech wheat varieties." Especially concerning is the lack of standard tolerances for low level presence of GMO material—a lesson the Pacific Northwest has learned as a result of several occasions when GMO wheat plants were discovered growing in fields.

There are, however, plant breeding innovations that are not considered GMO, such the gene splicing technique, Crisper Cas9. USW said as these innovations are used more often, it's important they are kept separate "from traditional 'biotechnology' under regulations as these new technologies can result in new varieties without the presence of foreign DNA."

USW listed specific examples of trade barriers in eight countries, including Australia, Brazil, China, Kenya, Korea, Taiwan, Turkey and Vietnam. China, Brazil and Turkey had the most egregious collection of trade barriers, impacting U.S. wheat exports directly or by lowering the price for wheat to U.S. farmers. ■

Wheat farmers never stop... ...and neither does their wheat

Neither cold, nor snow, nor sleet prevents winter wheat from growing throughout the year

By Scott A. Yates

Dormant, hibernating, sleeping, inactive—I've heard all of these terms used to describe what's happening to wheat in the winter, and I've used them myself, but it turns out, none are technically correct.

Winter wheat plants, which are referred to as winter annuals, continue to metabolize, that is, release the energy needed to function, in the deepest winter. Only death, called winter kill (usually caused by relative warmth followed by a 30 degree drop in temperature, wind and no snow cover), causes the cellular activity of the plant to cease. Until that happens, the plant can always come back and grow again.

In a Wheat All About It! podcast released in December 2018, Kim Campbell, research geneticist at the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Karen Sanguinet, a crop physiologist in the Crop and Soil Sciences Department at Washington State University, spoke about the marvelous survival ability of wheat during the winter, and what's happening inside the plant when it otherwise appears inert. For the record, from the moment the seed imbibes water, it never shuts down, although it does slow down.

What follows is an edited version of the first part of a two part podcast (episodes 104 and 105), available at the Washington Grain Commission website, wagrain.org. Click on podcasts at the top of the page and scroll down the page to



Kim Campbell (right), research geneticist at the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Karen Sanguinet, a crop physiologist in the Crop and Soil Sciences Department at Washington State University, appeared on the Washington Grain Commission podcast, Wheat All About It!, to talk about the marvelous survival ability of wheat during the winter.

see all of the past episodes of Wheat All About It!.

I began my interview by asking Campbell whether the term hibernation, as in what bears do, is an accurate description of wheat in the winter.

CAMPBELL: I don't think it's exactly the same because a bear goes into a kind of physiological stasis and actually loses weight and resources during the winter. The wheat plant can continue to grow very slowly. It is weathering the cold weather, and then when it gets warmer, it can continue to grow. In Oregon where it doesn't get as cold, the wheat can grow all winter. If you measured the amount of biomass for a plant in Oregon in December, there would be more biomass in February, even though it might not look like it's growing a whole lot. ▶

YATES: So hibernating isn't the correct word. Is dormancy?

CAMPBELL: We use that term a lot, but I don't think it's quite right. When I think of dormancy, I think of the seed going dormant after harvest. It is not very active metabolically. It is sitting there. As soon the seed imbibes water and is put in the ground, it becomes active again. For many plants, like perennials, the top structure will die. I think of those as dormant, but the wheat plant doesn't get to that stage. It is incredibly active throughout the winter.

SANGUINET: In a physiological sense, it is just growing very, very slowly and responding to its environment, getting cues from the temperature and the day length. The root system won't grow appreciably between December and February, but as soon as it gets the appropriate cues, such as warming of the soil and longer day length, growth takes off, and we see very rapid growth in the root system before we see appreciable biomass accumulation in the shoot. It's why we calculate growing degree days for wheat plants and heat units to see how they are growing.

YATES: Are you saying that with the right scientific instruments, you could go out on Christmas day and

Learn more about wheat in the winter at
wagrains.org/podcast/episode-104-dead-of-winter-alive-with-life-wheat-plants-in-the-cold/
 and
wagrains.org/podcast/episode-105-dead-of-winter-alive-with-life-wheat-plants-in-the-cold-2/

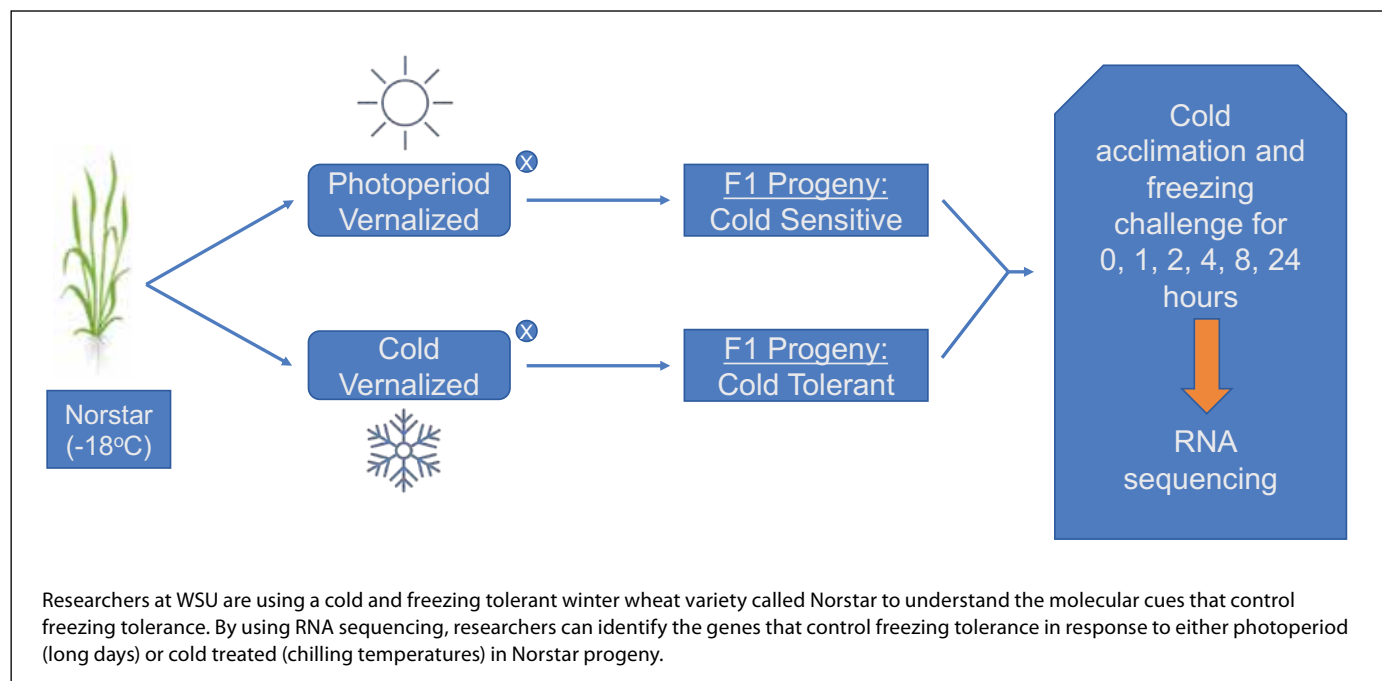
detect the plant growing?

SANGUINET: It's not growing quickly, but it is still incredibly metabolically active, and there is a lot going on in terms of signaling and molecular cues—signals that are changing over that period of cold. It is becoming more

cold hardy, there are changes in gene expressions and epigenetic changes to the DNA, not changes to the DNA itself, but to the chromatin structure. It's very technical.

YATES: Is there a point at which the plant is most cold hardy during the winter, and is there a point at which the plant is most susceptible to the cold?

CAMPBELL: The wheat right now is actually pretty susceptible to the cold. A lot of the wheat has just come up and hasn't received enough cold weather to be acclimated, what we call "hardening off." Exposure to cold starts the genetic and physiological activity for the wheat to survive the cold. It takes about six weeks for the plant to get well acclimatized. The wheat is usually most cold tolerant in December and January. And then it starts gradually to lose that cold tolerance, and over time, becomes less and less cold tolerant. At that point, the plant is ready to grow again, but the temperatures aren't allowing it to do that. The period when it's pretty susceptible again is often late February, when it is ready



to grow but when we can sometimes get really cold temperatures.

YATES: Silly question—you used the term “hardening off.” Do the plants actually get harder?

SANGUINET: When you have colder temperatures, the cells become more dense. Typically, cell size is smaller, and the cells are not as flexible. Cold also triggers an accumulation of cell wall modification enzymes. We also see changes in membranes, in the plasma membrane of the plant. I compare it to olive oil and butter. What happens is that we get more unsaturated fatty acids in the plasma membrane of cold-treated plants. Again, because the plants aren’t growing as quickly, they aren’t elongating as much. That means the cells are smaller and more dense. That also gives them that extra rigidity.

YATES: The crown of the wheat plant has been described to me as the brain of the plant. Kill it, and you kill the plant. Is brain an accurate description?

SANGUINET: Darwin actually called the root the brain of the plant because of the developmental plasticity of roots. But it depends on how you define a brain. The crown is certainly integrating a lot of signals, including environmental and developmental cues. It is also a site of activity and response in winter wheat for overwintering, and it is a huge carbon sink for the plant. The crown is where the plant is putting all its resources to overwinter so it can grow and recover.

CAMPBELL: One thing we need to clarify here is the difference between the air temperature and the soil temperature. The wheat crown is buried in the soil, and what I like to look at when I’m looking at temperatures is the depth of the soil at two inches. Looking back over some of the old records of big, damaging freezes, you can see where soil temperature has decreased because the air temperature was cold and because there was no snow cover to insulate the soil. In contrast, most of the time, the soil temperature is in the high 20s at the two-inch depth.

YATES: But isn’t it the wind, not the cold, specifically, that is the real killer?

CAMPBELL: The response of wheat to drought is very similar to the response to cold. It is a dehydration effect in both cases, and so the worst thing for wheat is to have wind that is causing dehydration, dry soil and cold temperatures all at the same time. When you get that, you get dead wheat, especially if it happens in February when we often don’t have snow cover, and the wheat is



Among the many challenges wheat plants must survive during the winter, farmers north of Highway 2 consider snow mold as one of the most damaging. The combination of snow mold and extreme cold can be devastating so researchers at the Agricultural Research Service use a programmable freezer to select for resistance to freezing prior to evaluating snow mold resistance in the field in Grant County. Released varieties will have resistance to both freezing and snow mold.

less cold tolerant.

YATES: Photo period refers to the amount of sunlight received by the plant. Is that still important in the winter?

SANGUINET: The plants are constantly measuring day length, and they do that through photo receptors that measure red and blue light. They use the integration of those cues, the intensity and duration of the red and blue light, as a trigger to transition to flowering. The crown will transition from vegetative to reproductive growth in response to those cues, which can, among other things, activate tillering, stem development and then spike development. ■

WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Higher wheat exports, corn rally fuel prices



By T. Randall Fortenbery

Futures prices for U.S. wheat have seen significant improvement since the low was put in at the end of June. On June 29, 2020, soft red wheat futures prices for delivery in December 2020 traded as low as \$4.80 per bushel. By late October the price had risen by about \$1.50 per bushel.

The improvement in wheat prices has been influenced by several factors, but two of the most visible are better-than-expected exports of U.S. wheat, and a rally in U.S. corn prices from summer through the corn harvest (Figure 1).

At the start of the marketing year, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) forecast U.S. wheat exports between June 1, 2020, and May 31, 2021 (the 2020/2021 wheat marketing year), would total 950 million bushels. This would have resulted in a decrease of about 15 million bushels year over year. By August, USDA had increased the forecast to 975 million bushels, about 5 million bushels over the previous year's wheat export volume.

Through mid-November 2020, U.S. wheat exports were running above the weekly pace of a year ago and above the average weekly volume needed to meet USDA's current forecast for the marketing year. Figure 2 shows the weekly accumulated U.S. wheat shipments this year compared to a couple of benchmarks.

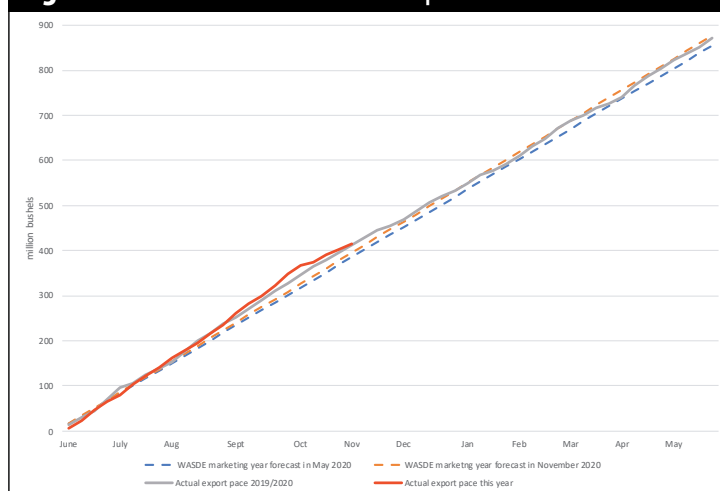
In addition to better-than-expected shipments for U.S. wheat this year, export inspections through mid-November were running about 1 percent ahead of last year and ahead of the pace one would expect, given the current USDA export forecast. Thus, it appears wheat shipments through at least the end of the current calendar year will continue to outpace the volume necessary to reach the marketing year export total currently forecast.

Despite the generally favorable outlook for U.S. wheat exports in aggregate compared to a year ago, some classes are lagging the year-ago export

Figure 1: Wheat vs. corn prices



Figure 2: Cumulative U.S. wheat exports



pace. Through mid-November, hard red winter, hard red spring and white wheat exports were up 3, 9 and 4 percent, respectively, on a year-over-year basis. Both soft red winter and durum were down from year ago levels—soft red by 24 percent and durum by 13 percent.

Further, the splits between class performance is quite different than the by-class forecasts in USDA's most recent WASDE. USDA's November forecast for the 2020/21 marketing year calls for hard red winter exports to be down by about 9 percent this year compared to last year, not up 3 percent. They also forecast only a 3 percent increase in both hard red spring and white

wheat exports, so both are also outperforming USDA expectations so far. Durum is also doing better than expected; USDA had projected a decline of almost 25 percent in durum exports this year compared to the current 13 percent decline. However, USDA also forecast soft red wheat exports would be down only 13 percent this year compared to last, and they are currently well behind that pace. Because the overall wheat picture is positive, however, soft red futures for December 2020 still exceed year-ago levels.

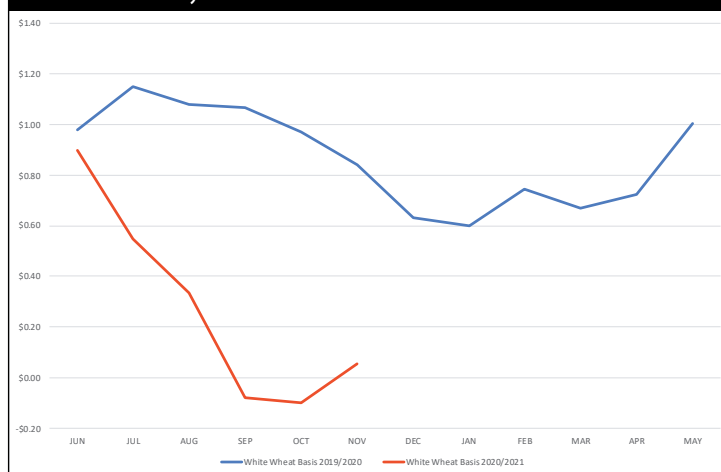
The better-than-expected export environment is not the only thing providing a bit of support to wheat prices this fall. Wheat prices are also benefitting from an improved price picture in the U.S. corn market. In July and August, several major corn-producing areas experienced significant weather events that impacted expectations of the overall corn crop size, and corn markets began to respond by pricing in weather premiums.

July was quite dry for much of the major corn-producing areas of the U.S., but despite this, there was a generally optimistic view of the corn crop. This was evident in the USDA Crop Progress Report issued on July 5, 2020. At that time, the aggregate U.S. corn crop was rated 54 percent good and 17 percent excellent, compared to ratings of 47 and 10 percent, respectively, at the same time in 2019. In addition, the July WASDE was projecting a U.S. corn crop of 15 billion bushels, compared to 13.6 and 14.3 billion in each of the previous two years.

On July 11 of this year, western Minnesota experienced a weather event that resulted in significant hail damage across much of its western corn-producing region. At about the same time, Nebraska corn farmers were subjected to several hail storms, excessively high winds (with gusts reported as high as 94 miles per hour) and several tornadoes. Figure 1 shows that corn prices jumped a bit in early July in response to these events, but then trended down into early August.

The real rally in corn prices, and the resulting influence on wheat prices, started in the second week of August. On August 9 and 10, the Midwest was hit by a derecho wind event that resulted in severe damage, especially in eastern Iowa and western Illinois. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has estimated that the damage in Iowa alone exceeds \$7.5 billion. It has been estimated that more than 14 million acres, or about

Figure 3: White wheat basis
Nearby soft red wheat futures and Portland cash



43 percent of the state's production, were adversely affected in Iowa.

Another 23 million acres were impacted across other Midwestern states. By Sept. 8, the Crop Progress Report revealed a significant decline in the perceived corn crop conditions, and in the November WASDE, USDA lowered its 2020 U.S. corn production estimate by almost 500 million bushels. The final U.S. corn production estimate will be released by USDA in January 2021, and if revisions continue downward for 2020, additional price support is possible.

The recent price activity has been a welcome event for wheat market participants, but looking forward, the futures markets are presenting a rather flat price projection through the rest of the marketing year. As of this writing, the soft red wheat futures price for May 2021 delivery is only trading about 10 cents above the current price for delivery in December 2020. Thus, the futures market itself is offering little incentive to store wheat past the end of the year.

Unless we continue to receive better-than-expected export news that drives the whole futures complex higher, any returns to storage through the spring will need to come from basis improvement, i.e. the local price needs to improve even if wheat futures prices do not. Figure 3 shows the Portland basis (Portland white wheat cash price minus nearby soft red wheat futures price) this year compared to last. It appears that cash prices in Portland have significant room for improvement, even if futures markets do not rally in order to return to the basis levels experienced last year, and this could provide for storage returns even in the absence of higher futures prices. ■

Randy Fortenbery holds the Thomas B. Mick Endowed Chair in Grain Economics at Washington State University. He received his Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign.

Tis the Season

Homesteading through the holidays in Eastern Washington

By Trista Crossley

Homesteading in Eastern Washington, especially in the dryer parts of the region, wasn't easy. Back then, as it is now for many, the holidays were a chance to forget the struggles of farming for a little while and celebrate with family.

Those first generations of farmers are gone, and their experiences only survive from the stories that they passed on. Thankfully, a few of those old-timers had the forethought to write down their memories. While browsing the Washington Rural Heritage database, I came across one such publication written by Otto Olds of Connell, Wash. As this is our December issue, I thought it would be nice to share Olds' account of one of his first Christmases in Eastern Washington.

Olds was born in Nebraska in 1893, the oldest of five children (three girls and two boys), to Robert Lee and Kate Emma (Janosky) Olds. His extended family moved west in stages, beginning in 1896 when two of his uncles went out to help build Seattle's Northern Pacific Cascade Tunnel and later settled near Lind. Olds' grandparents followed the uncles, homesteading near Connell, and in December 1900, Olds' family made the trip themselves.

The family filed on 160 acres just outside the town and were able to purchase an adjoining 320 acres. Olds grew up helping his father on the family's farm, which he eventually took over. He married Pauline Shuler in the 1930s. They had no children.

In 1964, Olds began writing down his memoirs in a volume titled, "Memories of a Pioneer," for the benefit of his numerous grandnieces and nephews. In his introduction, Olds said, "I have been as far south as Texas and as far east as Iowa. I've been to Canada and Alaska, Idaho and Oregon, but never California. I have ample means to go almost anywhere in the world but am very happy to stay at home in the state of Washington." Olds died in 1978 at the age of 85, one year after he published his memoirs. Pauline died in 1985 at the age of 88.

In his memoir, Olds said he didn't recall much of his first year in Washington, "only that we got a house and barn built out of 1 by 12's standing on end. Dad managed to plow about 15 acres with a walking plow or 'foot burner,' as they are called, and planted it to oats in the fall. We had to sell one of the cows as it took most of the daylight to haul water and cut sagebrush to clear the land. Dad and Uncle Ed got a harvest job by driving to Lind, 30 miles away. Dad got \$3.50 a day, himself and four mules, so was able to buy our winter groceries."

As the family's second Christmas in Eastern Washington rolled around, Olds recalled it being a less-than-festive occasion. ►



Otto Olds inside a business on Main Street in Connell, Wash., circa 1956-1965. Photographer unknown. Photo courtesy of the Franklin County Graphic and Mid-Columbia Libraries, Connell Library. (con0098, washingtonruralheritage.org)



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I don't remember having a Thanksgiving Day that year, and we had our doubts about Santa Claus finding us in Washington again. There would be no Christmas tree, we thought, because a tree was not to be seen in 50 or 60 miles, and this was long before the Boy Scouts thought of selling trees.

Christmas Eve we were feeling pretty low. Uncle Ole and family came down to spend the evening, and for some reason, we were not allowed to go into the living room.

Shortly after dark, we heard a noise at the back door, and Dad hollered, "Come see who's here!" Aunt Mary took the only lamp we had and went into the living room followed by us kids, and behold, there was Santa Claus and the most beautiful Christmas tree I ever saw! It was made out of sagebrush limbs nailed to a two by four and had colored decorations of paper chains, trimmings of popcorn and, of all things, six wax candles. Don't ask me what held them to the tree. Where all these things came from, I'll never know. You didn't go out and buy crepe paper, popcorn and colored candles in Connell.


The presents consisted of homemade shirts for Johnie, Roy Larson and myself; a dress for my sister, Laura; and a small toy apiece for the smaller children. Lon got a little cast-iron horse named Dick hitched to a cart. Many afternoons were spent hauling sand to build railroads and farms.

We were so excited we never realized Mamma had disappeared and came in as Santa Claus. Later in the evening, there were two more Santa Clauses at the door. My two uncles had ridden the "blinds" on a passenger train and bailed out as they went by the house, bringing us candy and apples. They were almost black from eating soot and cinders crouched between the tender and baggage cars.

Olds' entire memoir can be found by visiting washingtontoruralheritage.org and searching for "con0003"







or "Otto Olds." This excerpt was published with the permission of the Otto Olds family and the Connell Library, which is the contributing institution to the Washington Rural Heritage database. ■

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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/, and then save and email it to chauna@wawg.org

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

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

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Preplanning could mean a smaller tax bill

By Trista Crossley

Most people generally don't start thinking about taxes until closer to April, but for crop share landlords, a little forethought and planning could mean a smaller tax bill.

Paul Neiffer is a CPA with CliftonLarsonAllen in Walla Walla, Wash., specializing in income taxation, accounting services and succession planning for farmers and agribusiness processors. He is also a regular contributor at farmcpatoday.com and agweb.com. He said there are a number of tax strategies that crop share landlords can take advantage of. Unfortunately, these only apply to crop share landlords, not cash rent landlords.

The first tax strategy is called farm income averaging. In this approach, the landlord can apply the previous three years' tax rates to part of the farm income earned in the current year. For example, if a landlord earns \$100,000 of farm income in the current year, they can elect to apply the past three years' tax rate to \$75,000 (\$25,000 each year). This is especially helpful if the current year's income is pushing one into a higher tax bracket. There are some caveats, however. First, the landlord has to have a written lease already in place. Second, the amounts spread out over the previous three years have to be equal. Third, only an individual can take advantage of farm income averaging, such as a sole proprietor, a partner or a shareholder in an S corporation; estates and trusts are not considered individuals in this case. Finally, this strategy works best if the landlord has an unused portion of a lower tax bracket in each of the three previous years.

"If someone had low rates in the previous three years, this can save them a fair amount of tax," Neiffer said.

Another tax strategy for crop share landlords is a deferred payment contract. This allows a landlord to sell their crop in the current year, but hold the actual payment until January of the following year. That income would then be counted on next year's taxes. But that's not the only advantage of a deferred payment contract. If the current year's taxes turn out to be lower than expected, the landlord can elect to bring that income back into the year of sale.

"There's a lot more flexibility on when to report that income," Neiffer explained.

Under a crop share agreement, a landlord agrees to pay part of the farming expenses (usually fertilizer and seed) in return for a share of the harvest. Those input costs, Neiffer said, can be paid in the current year—even though they might be applied to the crop the following year—and used as tax deductions. Expenses related to construction of a farm building can be deducted, as can mileage traveling to and from the farm.

Under current tax law, landlords can take a 100 percent bonus depreciation on qualifying farm assets rather than spreading out the depreciation over a number of years. This applies to equipment and property placed into service after Sept. 27, 2017, and before Jan. 1, 2023, that has a depreciable life of 20 years or less. And don't forget about fencing; it can be depreciated as well.

Neiffer had other tax advice for crop share landlords, including making sure the landlord doesn't have any management-type duties spelled out in the lease, which could open them up to having to pay self-employment taxes. Landlords should also consider how they own the property, individually or in an LLC. An LLC, Neiffer explained, allows them to more easily transfer property to the next generation. Finally, he recommended that all landlords have property and casualty insurance on their land.

"It's likely nothing is going to happen, but if somebody falls, you might get sued. That opens you up to risk," he said.

In general, Neiffer said he prefers a crop share lease rather than a cash rent lease because it rewards both the tenant and the landlord for a good harvest and penalizes them both for a bad year.

"It equalizes the parties and makes (the relationship) like a partnership," he said.

Every landlord's situation is different. Please contact your accountant to determine which tax strategies will work best in your situation. ■

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THE BOTTOM LINE

Navigating a business-related disaster loss

By Chris Jenness, CPA
Leffel, Otis & Warwick, P.S.

The fires that spread across Eastern Washington this summer added a new challenge to an already stressful year with the ongoing pandemic. Locally, the Whitney Fire in Lincoln County spread so fast that many farmers and ranchers were not able to assess the damage until weeks after the fire was extinguished. Understanding the income tax effects of damaged property and pending insurance claims can avoid any undue surprises when settlements begin to arrive.

Business-related disasters allow farmers and ranchers relief related to property found on the farm, including buildings, machinery, livestock, feed and supplies. While farmers and ranchers have several options to deduct losses or defer gains related to fire proceeds, highlighting a few of the most used tools can simplify the complex tax law.

Casualty losses

A casualty loss can result from the damage, destruction or loss from any sudden, unexpected or unusual event. A casualty loss is generally only deductible in the tax year in which the loss is sustained. The amount of the loss is calculated as the lesser of the fair market value of the property immediately prior to the event reduced by its fair market value after the casualty, or, the adjusted basis of the property immediately before the casualty. In the absence of insurance coverage or potential cash settlements from the destruction of property, casualty losses are the main tool that can be utilized to recoup lost property via a deduction on a taxpayer's return. Many farmers and ranchers, however, file their taxes on the cash basis method resulting in raised livestock and growing crop that has zero tax basis because those expenses have been deducted as the expense is incurred. Unfortunately, the result of having no basis for a farmer and rancher's largest asset leads to no deduction from the loss. Producers need to be aware when casualty losses exist and when deductions are allowed or disallowed due to tax reporting methods.

Involuntary conversions

Involuntary conversions allow more flexibility to farmers and ranchers who receive insurance proceeds related to a fire. With an involuntary conversion, a taxpayer is allowed to defer the gain recognized on the insurance proceeds that exceed the adjusted tax basis of the property destroyed for up to two tax years following the gain. Similar to casualty losses, timing is important with involuntary conversions. In the case of insurance proceeds received with destroyed property, a taxpayer is allowed to reinvest the insurance proceeds in similar property that was destroyed in the fire and avoid recognition on the gain. The proceeds used to purchase similar property reduces the depreciable basis in the newer asset and can eliminate any future depreciation related to that asset. In the case of many insurance settlements, a large lump sum is received by the producer, which leaves a challenge in the allocation process of the loss between the various assets destroyed and how those proceeds must be reinvested.

For example, on Sept. 7, 2020, a fire destroyed a combine that was originally purchased in 2018 for \$200,000. Depreciation taken on the combine totaled \$140,000, leaving a net tax basis of \$60,000 at the time of the fire. In February 2021, the insurance company issued a check for \$130,000 on the destroyed combine. In this example, a gain is realized of \$70,000 (\$130,000 received less the adjusted basis of \$60,000). The taxpayer has a few choices that would allow them to either pay the tax on the realized gain of \$70,000 in the year the

proceeds are received or reinvest the proceeds into similar property before 12/31/23 with a properly filed election. Assuming the farmer purchases a replacement combine in May 2021 at a cost of \$195,000, the depreciable basis on the newer combine would be \$125,000 (\$195,000 cost of replacement less the \$70,000 deferred gain) and no gain is recognized on the insurance proceeds received.

Conclusion

Recognizing that there are tools available in the midst of a disaster can be key to avoid throwing additional

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fuel on the fire when it comes to tax time. While the two techniques described above are often used, livestock producers or farmers in federally declared natural disaster areas can take advantage of a new set of rules to maximize the tax laws. Partnering with a tax preparer familiar with these guidelines and proper planning is fundamental to be sure undue taxes are not paid on an already stressful situation. ■

Chris Jenness, CPA, is a shareholder with Leffel, Otis & Warwick, P.S., working in the firm's Wilbur, Coulee City and Okanogan offices. The majority of the firm's clients are family farms and ag-related businesses. For more information, visit leffelotiswarwick.com

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Lucas Vanhooose (13) first day of 2020 harvest driving
the bank-out wagon near Walla Walla.
Photo by Jasper Morrow.



Farm boy Jesse Talbott (2) waiting for a combine ride
with daddy Matt Talbott in Dayton.
Photo by Adalirys Talbott.



Harvest at
Pearl Farms
in Pomeroy.
Photo by
Trent Gwinn.



Waiting on the grain cart to catch up at Schorzman Farms JV in Marlin. Photo by Kaedin Schorzman.



Sam Bagby (8) of Pomeroy takes a break while harvesting with Mike Tardif in Walla Walla. Photo by Mike Tardif.



Matt Schroeder with his two daughters, Mattie (5) and Tatum (2), during harvest 2020 south of Wilbur. Photo by Matt Schroeder.

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