

# WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

JULY | 2022



## PROFITS DISAPPEAR AS INPUT COSTS RISE

Huge increases in fuel,  
fertilizer, chemicals hurt  
despite high wheat prices

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Legislators tour Ice Harbor Dam

2022 Wheat College recap

USW spotlight: Taiwan

Controlling rush skeletonweed

Tips to staying healthy while dealing  
with harvest stress

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# WHEAT LIFE

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**WASHINGTON  
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WHEAT GROWERS**

109 East First Avenue  
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(509) 659-0610 • (877) 740-2666

## WAWG MEMBERSHIP

(509) 659-0610 • (877) 740-2666  
\$125 per year

## EDITOR

Trista Crossley • editor@wawg.org  
(435) 260-8888

## AD SALES MANAGER

Lance Marshall • lance@wawg.org  
(253) 221-7000

## GRAPHIC DESIGN

Devin Taylor • Trista Crossley

## AD BILLING

Michelle Hennings • michelle@wawg.org  
(509) 659-0610 • (877) 740-2666

## CIRCULATION

Address changes, extra copies, subscriptions  
Katie Teachout • katie@wawg.org  
(509) 659-0610 • (877) 740-2666  
Subscriptions are \$50 per year

## WAWG EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Michelle Hennings

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# President's Perspective

## The joy of being a farmer's wife

By Teri McDonald

*For the July issue of Wheat Life, I'm handing the President's Perspective reins over to my wife, Teri, to talk about being a farmer's wife. —Howard McDonald*

There is an old saying that goes, "happy wife, happy life," but in the case of the farmer's wife, it is equally important if your farmer is happy too! The life of a farm family is quite different from any other type of family dynamic. The pressures of a very hard-working farming life, a marriage and raising babies can be immense, especially for young farm families trying to navigate their way on this fabulous, yet intense journey. So, finding the perfect balance and making sure changes are being made along the way...that is the key to this amazing way of life!

I absolutely LOVE being a farmer's wife! Even in my younger days while raising a busy family, the farm life was/is the best life! The pressures of a farm wife can look like many things. It can be isolating, taxing, a master shuffler of all things, diapers, running for parts, laundry, children, animals, school/sports, house/yard work, meals, flagger, tractor/truck driver, community and church activities, part time working out of the home, and then the big party comes to town — harvest. Ladies, we have grit to take on all of the homefront duties during the busy farming months. There is no doubt that farmers' wives are the strongest women I know. But all of my pressures really do not equal the pressures of my farmer man. He puts in the longest days, and many of those days, he is running on empty. I pray extra loud during his time working God's land, because after all, the pressures of "feeding the world" is the reality of a farmer.

So what do I love about being a farm wife? Just about everything that this beautiful country life has to offer! I balance my life with the joys of being with our grandchildren, gardening, canning, hanging out with our adult children, traveling with my lady friends, planning dinners/parties, fishing/boating, and yoga. By keeping my life in a good balance, I am able to be a solid support to Howard in all things farming and also with his travels with the wheat growers. We have the winters to travel around the country and explore new things together now that I have retired from teaching, so fall and winter is our much needed decompress time from farming. We are at a really cool part of our life where "growing old young" together is pretty fun!

Retirement for Howard? Nope. He loves farming and wants to farm until he can't, so I like to say he is in a "soft retirement" stage of life! Howard is in a unique situation where he is in between generations, where he isn't ready to retire but he has passed the reins to his son, Travis. Howard wants Travis to be successful, and what better way to do it than to watch him grow and learn to run the farm while Howard is alongside him. They talk daily about the finances and operations of the farm. Working together with Travis has been a dream come true for Howard, as he enjoys farming side by side with him. The blending of old and new ways of farming has been the success of the farm, and watching these two grow together has been so great to watch. Howard and I are extremely proud of Travis.

So, from a "seasoned" farm wife, let me tell the younger wives to enjoy it along the way and never give up hope that things will not always be this hard while you raise a family. Reach out to your friends or those who have gone the journey before you. We are all in this together. That is what this country life is all about, and it is good! "Life is beautiful when it is this simple." ■

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## Contributors

**Teri McDonald**, farmer's wife and champion of Washington Association of Wheat Growers' President Howard McDonald

**Mike Carstensen**, chairman, Washington Grain Commission

**Lori Maricle**, communications director, Washington Grain Commission

**Michelle Hennings**, executive director, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

**Drew Lyon**, professor and Endowed Chair Small Grains Extension and Research, Weed Science, Washington State University

**Mark Thorne**, research associate, Washington State University  
**T. Randall Fortenbery**, Thomas B. Mick Endowed Chair in Grain Economics, Washington State University

**Alyssa Wade**, farm stress and suicide prevention coordinator, Washington State University Adams/Lincoln County Extension

**Dr. David M. Kohl**, president, AgriVisions, LLC



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## WAWG's current top priorities are:

- ✓ Preserving the lower Snake River dams.
- ✓ Fighting mandatory climate/carbon regulations.
- ✓ Lobbying the state Legislature for a seasonal overtime exemption.
- ✓ Maintaining a strong, reliable safety net by preserving crop insurance and making sure farm commodity programs work.
- ✓ Maintaining a safe, sound transportation system that includes rail, river and roads.

*If these priorities are important to you, your family and your farm operation, join WAWG today and help us fight.*

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- Greensheet ALERTS • WAWG updates
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## Farmers are needed, and they need to be successful

Repeat after me, “FOOD SECURITY IS SAFE, RELIABLE FOOD; AND SAFE, RELIABLE FOOD IS FOOD SECURITY!” With everything going on in the world today, this has been on my and many other farmers’ minds lately. Everything we do and accomplish is for this, but the challenge is how do you get consumers to understand that?

A colleague and I were recently discussing a trip she took to another country. She recounted how that country did everything possible for their farmers to make sure they were supported and had the resources they needed to farm and provide food. That country had been through WWII and other conflicts, and its citizens have experienced the devastating impacts of not having enough food to feed themselves. Will it take something of that magnitude to get our country to understand the incredible industry we currently have and to gain U.S. consumers’ support of our farmers? Remember when there was a run on toilet paper, and stores had a very hard time keeping it in stock? Now imagine not being able to find basic food supplies on the shelves.

It’s mind boggling to me how so many people don’t support farmers, feel farmers need to be regulated and think some farmers should be put out of business. We not only feed our own, but we feed the world. It’s time for some people to come to the realization that in the current situation the world is in, we NEED farmers, and we NEED them to be successful at what they do.

**S**ince my last column, we made it through the 2022 Washington State Legislative Session, although with some bumps and bruises. We addressed ag overtime issues, salmon recovery buffer bills, carbon policies, Snake River dam removal attacks, unnecessary tax bills, and defended our farm-related tax incentives.

The governor’s buffer bill will be back, and it’s vital we all weigh in on how this could affect our farms. According to the blue line map ([bit.ly/3y19McA](https://bit.ly/3y19McA)), thousands of acres could be removed from production in a blink of an eye. I urge you all to go to this map and look up your farm. I can guarantee you have at least one blue line indicating a



**Michelle Hennings,**  
Executive Director  
*Washington Association  
of Wheat Growers*

waterway. This issue should be high on everyone’s radar.

The state operating budget included money allocated to the Governor’s Office for stakeholder participation in a facilitated process to develop policy and spending priorities to improve riparian habitat. Money was also allotted for an evaluation of several voluntary landowner incentive programs and existing regulatory programs protecting and restoring riparian ecosystems. This is where we will have a seat at the table and provide the necessary information needed to educate the legislature and the committee on the effects this will have on farming. Decisionmakers need to understand the repercussions that these “ideas and concepts” could do to the security of farm production.

We might have come away from session relatively unharmed, but the fight is not over. We have a lot of vital work to do this interim, educating new legislators and their staff on wheat farming and how harmful legislation like the buffer bill could be to agriculture.

**A**nother issue that has come to the forefront is solar farms on Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) ground. WAWG was contacted recently by DNR about the assessment of DNR leases in Eastern Washington that could be used for solar energy. They’ve sent postcards to lessees whose leased ground is a solar farm candidate, and the agency will be reviewing those leases and the land. DNR can take their lease back if it’s for a “higher and better use,” which solar will fall under. It’s necessary to stay informed on the agency’s actions and provide feedback. There are thousands of acres being considered.

As many of you know, the lower Snake River dams are a vital component of our infrastructure in transporting our wheat to market. In the time I’ve worked at WAWG, which has been 18 years now, these dams are more at risk at both the state and national level than they have ever been. The state allotted money to fund a study supported by Gov. Inslee and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) to look at replacing the benefits of the dams if they were breached. ▶



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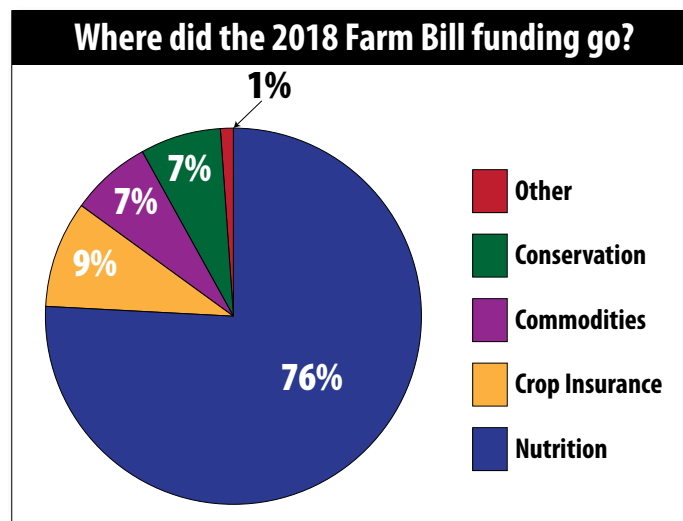


The report recently came out, and it was not favorable. According to the report, removal is possible, although it admits the cost would be extremely high. In my mind, this doesn't make any sense. For one thing, this is another target on farmers and would seriously impact farmers' ability to stay in business by raising the cost to transport their crops to consumers. Secondly, our state is very focused on reducing carbon emissions and improving climate conditions — what better way to accomplish those goals than to continue to move products by barging them down the river system rather than transferring that traffic to the rails and roads. It would take nearly 152,000 more trucks on the road. And let's not forget the amount of rail infrastructure they THINK would need to be installed to replace that barging capacity.

The reliability of our transportation infrastructure is key to agriculture's viability, and if we lose this reliability, it would be devastating to our farmers. It would seriously jeopardize their ability to compete with other states and countries.

There is a comment period on Inslee and Murray's report, so please keep your eye out for our call to action to members to provide comments to the state on behalf of your farm. We will have talking points for you to ease the process, and it should be just a click of the button. Your voice needs to be heard on this, so please take the time to do it.

**A**nother issue we have been contacted regularly by the media to discuss is the price of wheat and the rising cost of inputs, such as fertilizer and fuel, some of which have doubled or tripled. While we are thankful that the price of wheat is up, because the cost of inputs is also up, farmers aren't making huge profits. That's something I want to be very clear about, and it's something I think consumers don't understand. Farmers are paying huge amounts of money to put fertilizer on their fields and fuel in their equipment right now, just to grow their crop. But until they harvest that crop, they'll see no profit. If the wheat price falls between now and then or a storm ruins that crop, farmers will be stuck with enormous bills and no way to pay for them. In that scenario, crop insurance will help, but crop insurance doesn't cover the entire



value of the crop or take into account the amount of money the farmer spent on inputs. Along with fuel and fertilizer, farmers are also dealing with a lack of equipment parts. What will farmers do if they can't get parts to fix their equipment during harvest? Planning is of the essence, but to plan ahead also means more cost up front, and some farmers may not be able to afford that.

At the national level, we are preparing for the 2023 Farm Bill. Congressional committees are starting the hearing process. There's a potential that the election cycle might interrupt or stop any work that has been done up to that point, and Congress may need to start the process from the beginning. We have been working with the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) to prioritize wheat growers' needs for the farm bill. At the top of that list is crop insurance. As we know, thanks to last year's drought, crop insurance is vital. This program gets targeted every farm bill, and we work very hard to defend it.

We consider ourselves lucky, here in Washington, as our very own WAWG past president and Benton county farmer is currently NAWG's president, and she also serves on the crop insurance board in D.C. Having worked policy with Nicole Berg for many years on behalf of WAWG, I am confident her leadership skills will be instrumental in the upcoming farm bill process. WAWG is proud to have her there and appreciates the time and resources she spends advocating on our behalf.

Other farm bill priorities we are working on are increasing the Price Loss Coverage reference price so it better covers the cost of production, improvement of conservation programs, market development funding, and research dollars.

The ag portion of the farm bill is only a small slice of the pie (see chart above), but it is continually targeted by those who feel farmers get too much from the federal government. We work hard to explain that farmers want trade not aid, although there are times when farmers do need help, like during floods or droughts, and to have this support is vital.

**T**o be quite honest, advocacy can be a very frustrating thing, especially when you feel that the needle isn't moving as quickly as you'd like. You strive to keep moving

forward and keep educating and educating, hoping that one decisionmaker realizes how important farming is to the U.S. We need to stand together and highlight the critical role farmers play in keeping our country safe and fed.

If you're not a member of WAWG, please join us. You do have a voice, and it is vital that it is heard, especially in opposition to the harmful regulations that our legislators keep proposing. We regularly do calls to action to membership so they can provide feedback to legislators on studies and legislation. We work on your behalf, so if there is an issue that arises on your farm, please contact us and let us know about it. You can call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610. ■



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## Financials, agency updates focus of June board meeting

This year's June Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) board meeting was a 180-degree turn from last June's meeting. In 2021, growers were in the middle of a drought and were predicting harvest would be early and fast. This year, some counties reported near record amounts of rainfall, and most areas were spraying for stripe rust, which develops under cool, wet conditions. Stripe rust was not a problem last year.

Overall, the winter wheat crop in Eastern Washington looks to be in good shape, but the spring wheat was more varied, as the cool weather has delayed the crop somewhat. Many growers are anticipating a slightly later-than-normal harvest unless the weather warms and dries up.

The main order of business at the June board meeting was to review the 2022/23 proposed budget, one-third of which comes from the Washington Grain Commission. The rest of it comes primarily from *Wheat Life* advertis-

ing and membership dues. Nearly half of the budget is earmarked for committee travel, advocacy efforts and lobbying trips to Olympia and Washington, D.C. The board passed the budget unanimously.

Board members also heard from several U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) state agency leaders. Rick Williams from the Risk Management Agency (RMA) reviewed a request by a Franklin County grower to allow insurance on continuously cropped wheat. Currently, RMA only insures continuous cropping practices for wheat on irrigated and summer fallow ground in a few counties without a written agreement. Williams said the agency doesn't have a lot of data on continuously cropped wheat, but the state office is open to reviewing the practice.

USDA had just released the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) to help agricultural producers offset the impacts of



**LIND FIELD DAYS.** Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, updates growers during the 2022 Lind Field Day. She told growers that they need to remain aware of potential legislation that could seriously curtail their ability to farm, such as Gov. Inslee's riparian buffer bill. Even though that bill was stopped, Hennings warned growers that it will likely be coming back.





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natural disasters in 2020 and 2021. Although the program is being administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), it is using RMA data. Williams said his office has been getting calls from producers because their data is not matching between the two agencies. In those situations, producers should contact their crop insurance agent to see if the errors can be fixed there, since that is where RMA gets its data.

Following Williams, Jon Wyss, the FSA state executive director, said the first round of ERP is going out quickly as prefilled applications are being sent to producers whose crop insurance is already on file. The second round of funding will be more traditional as growers will need to apply. Wyss also reported that Natural Resource Conservation Service staff should be finishing up Conservation Reserve Program inspections to wrap up contracts. The pilot program to collect crop share data, which is used to help calculate CRP rental rates, has gone out to three states (Washington was not one of them).

Wyss had some sad news to share. Rod Hamilton, a long-time farm programs chief at the state FSA office who retired two years ago, passed away suddenly on June 12. Many wheat growers knew Hamilton through his work with CRP. WAWG sends its condolences to Hamilton's family.

In state legislation, WAWG lobbyist Diana Carlen said legislators are gearing up for campaign season. Primaries are on Aug. 2. Republicans will need to take four seats in the Senate and eight in the House to regain the majority. Issues Carlen is monitoring include the capital gains tax, which is being litigated, and the push to prohibit natural gas in new construction.

In Washington Grain Commission

## Counties hold summer meetings

### Adams County

After attending the Washington State University variety plot tour last month, more than two dozen Adams County growers gathered at Ron Jirava's house to enjoy a catered meal, hear county updates and honor **Bill Schillinger**, former director of the Lind Dryland Research Station who retired this year. County President Jake Klein thanked Schillinger for his research and presented him with a gift card and plaque from growers. Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, gave a legislative update, as did state Sen. Mark Schoesler, who said it's pretty quiet at the state level right now.



### Grant/Douglas County

For one last time, Grant and Douglas County growers gathered last month at Larry Tanneberg's shop for the annual wheat growers' meeting and the Washington State University variety plot tour. Variety trials will be moving to a new location next year. Thank you Larry and Marilyn for hosting for 40 years!! At the county meeting, growers heard updates from industry stakeholders while enjoying a cookout.

### Benton County (no photo)

Benton County growers met on June 1 at the Horse Heaven Community Hall to hear county updates and attend the local Washington State University plot tour. ■





## Happy Independence Day

Wishing you and your family a safe and festive July Fourth holiday.



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509-927-8033



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news, CEO Glen Squires said the commission's budget is up slightly from last year, even though income is down. The commission was able to roll over \$1 million from last year that was unused due to curtailed travel. Both he and Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director, said they've been spending a significant amount of time advocating for the lower Snake River dams. A draft report from the study supported by Gov. Jay Inslee and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) on whether or not the benefits the dams provide could be replaced has been released (see page 24). A call to action was being readied to urge WAWG members to submit comments on the report.

In national legislation, Nicole Berg, president of the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) and a Benton County grower, called into the meeting to update the board on NAWG's recent activities. Officers and staff have been doing a tremendous amount of media and holding meetings on Capitol Hill. Some of the topics they are regularly discussing include Ukraine, transportation, supply chain issues, disaster aid and the farm bill.

The WAWG board will not meet again until September because of harvest. The next board meeting is tentatively scheduled for Sept. 13 in Ritzville. ■

## Asotin wheat growers award scholarships to ag students

The Asotin County Wheat Growers Association has awarded scholarships to two area high school graduates. Lacey Sanford and Caylie Browne will each receive \$1,000 to help further their college pursuits.

### Lacey Sanford

Sanford, the daughter of Chad and Kerry Sanford, grew up on her family's cattle and hay farm in Anatone, Wash. She graduated from Asotin High School where she was very active in FFA. She showed cattle, was on the livestock judging team and participated in parliamentary procedure.

She was also one of the FFA chapter's officers. When she's not working at a local Mexican restaurant, she likes to do cow cutting with her horse and hike with her dog.

"I was super excited (to receive the scholarship)," Sanford said. "I thought it was such an honor. It's practi-



cally free money they are willing to give me, and I'm honored to be able to receive it."

Sanford will be heading to Casper, Wyo., to attend Casper College on a livestock judging scholarship. She plans to major in ag business and minor in ag communications and animal science, but isn't sure what her future career looks like. She said she's a little nervous about going to a new school so far away, but her older sister is in Cheyenne, Wyo., only a few hours away from Casper.

"I'm excited to get out of the valley for a little bit and go see other places and travel with the team," she said.

### Caylie Browne

Browne is the daughter of Dustin and Cami Browne. She and her two sisters are the fifth generation on her family's dryland wheat farm and cattle ranch near Anatone, Wash. Browne graduated from Asotin High School where she was active in softball, basketball, 4H, FFA and the National



Honor Society. She is part of this year's state-winning FFA parliamentary procedure team and will be competing at nationals this fall. This is the fourth time she's qualified for nationals, and it's the third time she'll be competing — she placed in the top 10 in her first two tries. During summers, Browne usually plays travel softball and enjoys helping out on her family's farm and raising her five cows and calves.

Browne will be heading to the University of Idaho to major in ag education with the goal of working as a high school FFA advisor. She said FFA has played a big role in her life, teaching her leadership and speaking skills that she uses every day.

"I was really excited," she said about receiving the scholarship. "I'd like to say thanks to the wheat growers for awarding it to me." ■

## Growers encouraged by passage of water resources bill

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) is encouraged by the U.S. House of Representatives' bipartisan passage of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022, which continues robust investments in U.S. waterways infrastruc-



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**ERIC SNODGRASS** is the Principal Atmospheric Scientist for Nutrien Ag Solutions, where he develops predictive, analytical software to help agricultural producers manage weather risk. His frequent weather updates focus on how high-impact weather events influence global agriculture productivity.

**JULIE BORLAUG** is continuing the Borlaug legacy of food security and innovation in agriculture. She serves as President of the Borlaug Foundation and Vice President of External Relations for Inari. She is the granddaughter of the late Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and the founder of the World Food Prize.



**ROBERT BONNIE** (invited) is the Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation at USDA. Prior to joining USDA, Bonnie was at Duke University, first as a Rubenstein Fellow and later as an Executive in Residence at the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions working on conservation and environmental issues in rural America.

Watch [wawg.org/convention](http://wawg.org/convention) for additional speakers and breakout topics.

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ture that allow wheat growers to safely and efficiently move our products to consumers around the globe, particularly during times of global instability and food insecurity.

WAWG has been actively engaged with key allies in our nation's capital to ensure no extreme measures are put in place through WRDA reauthorization that could lead to breaching of the lower Snake River dams in Eastern Washington. The Columbia-Snake River System is vital for our growers, with over 60 percent of Washington wheat and 10 percent of all U.S. wheat flowing down the river to West Coast ports for export.

The House bill would establish a Columbia River Basin Task Force to develop a restoration plan for the Columbia River Basin, based on the results of an assessment that would be conducted by the U.S. Secretary of the Army. Importantly, the bill includes a provision to protect the integrity of the lower Snake River dams by preventing the modification, deauthorization or removal of any of the dams as part of the Columbia River Basin Task Force process.

"We commend the actions of Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Congressman Dan Newhouse in securing language that would ensure any federal restoration efforts related to the Columbia River Basin take into account the vital role the river system plays, both for wheat growers and our state's economy at large, by providing navigation, irrigation, hydroelectric power and recreation benefits, among others, to people across Washington," said WAWG Executive Director Michelle Hennings. "We look forward to working with our

congressional allies across the Pacific Northwest as WRDA progresses, to defend the congressionally authorized purposes of the four lower Snake River dams now and in the future."

WRDA legislation provides authority for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to implement water resources development projects. Congress has developed and passed a WRDA bill on a bipartisan and biennial basis since 2014. The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved WRDA 2022 on May 18, and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved its version of the bill on May 4. ■

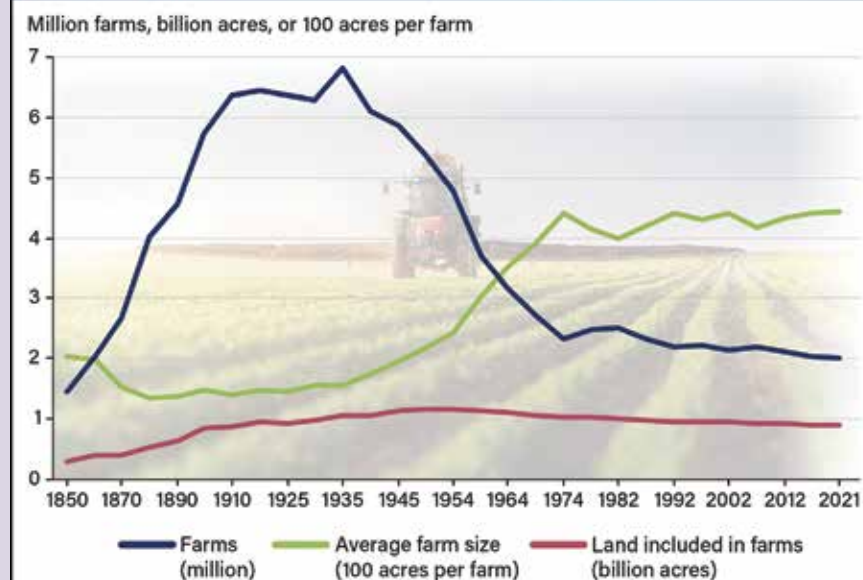
## FSA accepting nominations for county committees

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) is now accepting nominations for county committee members. County committee members make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2022 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2022.

Producers who participate or cooperate in a USDA program and reside in a Local Administrative Area (LAA) that is up for election this year may be nominated for the county committee. Individuals may nominate themselves or others, and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. Producers should contact their local FSA office to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election, including if their LAA is up for election this year. ■

Farms, land included in farms, and average acres per farm, 1850-2021

USDA Economic Research Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Censuses of Agriculture (through 2017) and Farms and Land in Farms: 2021 Summary (February 2022).

**FARM NUMBERS SLOWLY FALL.** After peaking at 6.8 million farms in 1935, the number of U.S. farms and ranches fell sharply through the early 1970s. Rapidly falling farm numbers in the mid-20th century reflect the growing productivity of agriculture and increased nonfarm employment opportunities. Since then, the number of U.S. farms has continued to decline, but much more slowly. In 2021, there were 2.01 million U.S. farms, down from 2.20 million in 2007. With 895 million acres of farmland nationwide in 2021, the average farm size was 445 acres, only slightly greater than the 440 acres recorded in the early 1970s.





**These dollars will be used to support candidates who understand what is critical to our industry and the livelihood of our members**

***Political advocacy is something many of us think we can never get involved in; the Washington Wheat PAC is out to change that.***

The Washington Wheat PAC is a nonpartisan political action committee that is dedicated to supporting ag-friendly candidates.

The Washington Wheat PAC pledges to promote and support elected officials from all parts of the state who positively influence agriculture.

***Why Support the Washington Wheat PAC?***

Washington farmers are losing ground politically! The ability to protect our interests is slowly dwindling. Washington wheat producers need elected officials who know and understand the industry. Without these relationships our ability to remain competitive is at risk. During the legislative session, thousands of bills are introduced; many not favorable to farming. Now is the time for the industry to join together and proactively influence legislation that directly impacts the Washington wheat producer.

Please join our efforts by financially supporting the Washington Wheat PAC. Your contribution will strengthen the network of elected officials who understand the wheat industry's goals and objectives by fighting for what is critical to the livelihood of our members.

***Protect your interests by supporting farm-friendly candidates who can make a difference in Olympia.***

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When you make a donation to the Washington Wheat PAC, you are investing in the future of agriculture in Washington State.

# Year in Review 2021/22

Another year, another 12 months of advocating for the Washington wheat industry. Here are some highlights and a look at what the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) has been up to for the last 365 days.

## JULY 2021

As the **drought lingers into July** and the start of harvest, most growers are predicting an early, fast harvest. Yields are expected to be down, especially in spring wheat. In anticipation of expected quality losses, WAWG and other state associations, working with the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), ask Congress to add funds to the Quality Loss Adjustment program to cover multiple years (the original funding was for quality adjustments only in 2020).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) **designates 14 Washington counties, mostly in Eastern Washington, as primary natural disaster areas due to drought.** This designation allows the Farm Service Agency (FSA) the ability to offer emergency loans to producers. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) takes steps to streamline and accelerate issuance of indemnity payments to policyholders in areas impacted by the drought.

The **general sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) ends** this month. Nearly 1.9 million acres are eventually enrolled, including 115,899 in Washington state.

**Rich Koenig takes over as interim dean** of Washington State University (WSU) College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences. He replaces Andre-Denis Wright, who joined the University of Oklahoma as provost.

**Katie Teachout joins the WAWG staff** as an administrative assistant, replacing Chauna Carlson.

## AUGUST 2021

**Harvest in Eastern Washington is in full force.**

**WAWG leaders take part in a roundtable discussion** hosted by Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) and Glen Thompson (R-Pa.) in the Tri-Cities. The group discusses the drought, the importance of the lower Snake River dams, rural development, broadband infrastructure and conservation.

Andy Juris, WAWG's secretary/treasurer, films a television spot for **KXLY's Tribute 4 Our Farmers**, which airs across Eastern Washington.

WAWG partners with other state and regional agricultural stakeholders to sponsor a tour of Ice Harbor dam for several dozen Washington state legislators and staffers. The

tour focuses on the **importance of the dams in regional power generation and agriculture** and the dams' role in facilitating fish passage.

WAWG sends a **letter to RMA** supporting a change that would allow winter wheat and spring wheat to be insured as separate enterprise units. WAWG also requests that the Federal Crop Insurance Commission reassess determinations related to replant payments. Currently, if a producer loses their fall-planted wheat before the final planting date, they do not receive a replant payment despite the loss.

## SEPTEMBER 2021

WAWG leaders and staff take part in a **legislative food and farm tour** in the Walla Walla area that highlights some of the issues facing agriculture. More than 60 legislators, legislative staff and industry stakeholders tour a wheat farm and a grain elevator, among other agricultural enterprises.

Both the House and Senate ag committees agree to continue funding the **Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) program for 2020 and 2021 losses.** WHIP+ provides payments to producers who experience quality losses due to certain natural disasters. Growers who experienced high protein in soft white wheat due to the drought are eligible.

As harvest wraps up, producers' attention turns to **seeding.** Conditions remain dry across Eastern Washington. What little rain falls creates more problems, such as crusting, causing many farmers to have to reseed.

## OCTOBER 2021

Conditions remain dry throughout Eastern Washington. In the October board meeting, counties report **significant amounts of reseeding happening.**

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) announce a study to determine if there are **reasonable means for replacing the benefits provided by the lower Snake River dams.**

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) calculates that the **2021 winter wheat production was 71 million bushels**, down 47 percent from 2020. Spring wheat production was even worse at 16.2 million bushels, down 51 percent from last year.

Continuing drought-related crop issues, the **average protein for the 2021 soft white wheat crop is calculated to be slightly higher than normal at 11.3 percent.** Fortunately, there is enough lower protein soft white wheat that elevators can meet customers' needs by blending. ►



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For crop year 2021, most Washington counties end up not triggering the Agriculture Risk Coverage-County payments for wheat, but **Price Loss Coverage payments are triggered** for both barley and wheat.

USDA announces it will **invest \$10 million** to sample, measure and monitor soil carbon on CRP acres beginning in fall 2021.

The Washington Soil Health Initiative releases a road map outlining issues and concerns and sets milestones on the **journey to improving the state's soils**.

For the past few months, average wheat **prices have slowly been ticking upward**. That's great news for producers, but the increased wheat price is more than offset because...

...**Input costs have also been rising steadily** due to a combination of factors, including weather, transportation issues, increased demand from India, and strained relations with China. Farmers are paying significantly more for fertilizer and fuel.

**Craig Morris**, longtime director of the Western Wheat Quality Lab in Pullman, Wash., passes away.

## NOVEMBER 2021

WAWG officers travel to Kansas City, Mo., to take part in the **NAWG fall conference**. They discuss national policies and legislative priorities, including farm bill, climate change, conservation, risk management and trade.

WAWG spearheads a **letter to Pres. Biden** emphasizing the importance of the Columbia-Snake River System to the nation's navigation and infrastructure system. More than 100 ag organizations from around the country sign onto the letter.

**Cadence Zellmer** and **Tate Nonnemacher**, both from Davenport, Wash., are named the 2021-22 Washington Wheat Ambassadors. They will represent wheat farmers in various civic and community events and participate in WAWG advocacy meetings throughout the winter and spring.

Vietnam announces it is **eliminating the 3 percent tariff** on U.S. wheat imports at the end of December.

Washington Grain Commission (WGC) CEO **Glen Squires** is sworn in as Pacific Northwest Waterways Association's board president for the coming year.

Former WGC Program Director **Joe Bippert** starts a new position with U.S. Wheat Associates as assistant regional director for South Asia.

## DECEMBER 2021

The **Tri-State Grain Growers Convention** returns as an

in-person event. Several hundred growers, agency representatives and industry supporters descended on the Davenport Grand Hotel in Spokane to hear industry updates, listen to nationally known keynote speakers and network. Alex McGregor is recognized as WAWG member of the year, while Columbia County is recognized as WAWG county of the year.

**Howard McDonald**, a grower from Douglas County, takes over as WAWG president. He replaces outgoing president, Grant County's Ryan Poe. WAWG welcomes Benton County grower Anthony Smith as the new secretary/treasurer. Andy Juris, from Klickitat County, takes on the vice president's role.

## JANUARY 2022

The **2022 Washington State Legislative Sessions** begins as a mix of virtual committee meetings and on-site votes. Most buildings and offices remain closed to the public due to COVID-19 concerns. Of immediate concern to agriculture is Gov. Inslee's proposal that establishes riparian buffer zones along all salmon-bearing streams. WAWG leaders and staff testify in various committee hearings throughout the session.

The phase-in for **overtime in agriculture** begins. Starting this month, agricultural employers are required to pay their workers overtime for any hours worked beyond 55 hours a week. WAWG and other agricultural stakeholders work on legislation that would amend the rule to allow for a seasonal exemption.

Washington's new **capital gains tax** goes into effect. The law imposes a 7 percent tax on the sale of stocks, bonds and other assets in excess of \$250,000.

WAWG leaders and staff **travel to Washington, D.C.**, to attend NAWG meetings and meet (mostly virtually) with members of the state's federal delegation. Topics discussed with legislators include the need to preserve the lower Snake River dams, keeping carbon regulations voluntary, maintaining crop insurance, and the 2023 Farm Bill.

**Jon Wyss** is re-appointed as the FSA state executive director. The position had been vacant for more than a year despite repeated calls to fill it from many of the state's ag groups.

The Washington wheat industry says goodbye to another long-time advocate as **Bill Schillinger**, director of the WSU Lind Dryland Research Station, retires.

## FEBRUARY 2022

With state legislators' offices being closed to the public for the second year in a row, WAWG's traditional **Olympia**





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Brandon, Brett and Kevin Larmer of KAL Joint Venture. That's the official name for a wonderful group of farming families in the Harrington area.

These folks look happy! I think it was the 2" of rain, but the truck and trailer might have helped.

Grandpa Ed went all in for farming in 1931 in the midst of a depression. It's pretty evident he made it work. Son Kevin and his wife, Renea, followed in the farming life. Now, their son, Brandon, and his bride, Jennifer, are following along with Brett (that's LaMarr and Susan's son). The next generations are at the wheel with hopes of many more to follow in some aspect of enjoying this wonderful area they have called home.

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**Days takes a sweet pivot** this year. Instead of visiting legislators' offices, WAWG leaders and staff invite legislators to discuss issues important to wheat growers over breakfast at an off-campus location. Following the well-attended breakfast, growers set up a booth on the steps of the capitol building and hand out cinnamon rolls, coffee and educational materials.

The winter schedule of the **Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization kicks off**. Growers hear USDA agency updates, explore U.S. wheat markets in Asia, hear a market update, learn about estate and income tax planning, and get a spring weather forecast at workshops held throughout the month.

FSA publishes the **2022 CRP rental rates**, and in most Eastern Washington counties, the rental rates fall. Growers bring their concerns to their local FSA offices, and in several counties, there's enough evidence to support higher rates. The issue is passed through the state office and onto D.C., but unfortunately, the D.C. office doesn't agree and publishes the original rates. WAWG keeps working on the issue.

WAWG signs onto a **letter to Gov. Inslee** and the state House and Senate leaders offering suggestions on actions that would increase riparian enhancement and protections from salmon.

Over at the **Spokane Ag Expo and Farm Forum**, where WAWG has a booth, weatherman Art Douglas predicts a cooler/wetter than normal spring and summer for the Pacific Northwest. Unfortunately, the Plains aren't expected to fare as well, as he predicts a dryer-than-normal spring and summer for them.

**Russia invades Ukraine**, one of the world's top producers and exporters of wheat, corn and sunflower seeds. The resulting chaos threatens Ukraine's agricultural industry as farmers are unable to plant crops in some areas and transportation and export infrastructure is damaged. The invasion causes extreme market volatility and contributes to increasing input costs and high commodity prices.

## MARCH 2022

The 2022 Washington State Legislative Session adjourns on time. The governor's **buffer bill** ultimately doesn't make it out of committee, but the agriculture industry expects it to make another appearance next year. Another of WAWG's priorities, a seasonal exemption to the ag overtime bill, also dies in committee. Final budgets include millions to be spent on salmon recovery and conservation programs.

WAWG leaders and staff take part in **NAWG's annual conference** in New Orleans, where committees discuss issues

of national importance, including farm bill priorities, carbon regulations and trade.

WAWG sends a **letter to Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack** asking that the USDA extend the CRP sign-up in order for the agency to address grower concerns about rental rates, especially rates that are based on cash rent data, as most Washington growers use crop share agreements. The request is not approved, but WAWG keeps working with USDA agencies behind the scenes.

Benton County grower **Nicole Berg** steps into the president's role at NAWG. She testifies in front of the House Ag Committee in a review of the 2018 Farm Bill Title I programs.

A Douglas County Superior Court judge agrees that the new **capital gains tax is actually an income tax** and overturns it. The state plans to appeal the ruling.

**Chuck Erickson** joins the WAWG board of directors as the representative from Grant County.

The average **wheat price spikes**, hitting nearly \$13 per bushel before falling below \$10. For the next few months, the price will bounce between \$10 and \$11 per bushel.

## APRIL 2022

Throughout March and April, WAWG leaders participate in numerous **media interviews** about the lower Snake River dams, the rising cost of inputs, and the impact of the war in Ukraine on global wheat supplies.

WAWG participates in the 27th annual **Franklin County Farm Bureau Farm Fair** in Kennewick, Wash. Approximately 450 area fifth grade students visit the WAWG booth to learn about how wheat is grown and exported and the products made from grain.

NAWG President Nicole Berg **testifies in front of the House Livestock and Foreign Agriculture Subcommittee** on international food aid and ag trade promotion programs in the 2018 Farm Bill.

Asotin and Franklin county growers get good news on **CRP rental rates**. After agreeing to review Washington state's rental rates, the national FSA office decides to increase the rates in those two counties. WAWG staff works with the state FSA office and NASS to incorporate crop share questions in future grower surveys.

In response to **shipper complaints regarding the Class 1 railroads**, the Surface Transportation Board schedules two days of hearings. Shipper representatives talk about double trip times, excessive dwell times at origin, delayed arrivals, crowded lines, and uncertain schedules.

April closes out as the **third coldest and 10th wettest April** in Washington state since 1895.



USDA designates **nine Washington counties as primary natural disaster areas due to drought** conditions that have persisted for at least eight weeks. Drought lingers across many areas of Eastern Washington despite the wetter-than-normal spring.

#### MAY 2022

WAWG participates in the **Spokane Farm Fair**, talking to fifth grade students about wheat and agriculture.

In a stark contrast to last year, May ranks as the **8th wettest May since 1895**. It remains unseasonably cool.

#### JUNE 2022

After going virtual for two years, **Wheat College** is back as an in-person event. Peter Johnson, aka Wheat Pete, is the featured speaker, holding forth to more than 75 growers on how to increase yields. WSU Extension and Corteva Agriscience lead breakout sessions focusing on integrated weed management, plant diagnostics, wheat pests and nitrogen management.

WAWG helps sponsor a **tour for members of the Congressional Western Caucus** to learn about the energy benefits the lower Snake River dams provide and the measures the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has implemented to help salmon survival. The group takes a boat tour from Richland, Wash., up through the lock at Ice Harbor Dam.

The **draft report** from the Inslee/Murray study to determine if there are reasonable means for replacing the benefits provided by the Lower Snake River dams is released. It finds that replacement of dam benefits is possible, but at significant cost and only with a major infrastructure program. ■



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# POLICY MATTERS

## Legislators release draft report on breaching dams

Last month, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) released the draft report of their study on breaching the lower Snake River dams. The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) finds the report's conclusions — replacement of the dams' benefits are possible but at a significant cost and with major restructuring of the region's infrastructure — to be flawed and the costs to wheat growers and the region significantly undervalued.

"Farmers from as far away as the Midwest rely on the transportation options provided by the dams on the lower Snake River. Railroads are already running at or near capacity, causing delays, labor shortages and cancelled railcars, issues that were discussed in the recent Surface Transportation Board hearings. Railroads and trucks simply can't absorb the volume of shipping that is currently being done by barge," said Howard McDonald, WAWG president and a wheat farmer from Coulee City, Wash. "The draft report acknowledges that many costs are not available, and we believe the true costs to replace all of the dams' benefits are incalculable. Dams and salmon can and do co-exist, and that money would be better spent adding fish passage capabilities to dams that don't have them and addressing other resource concerns, such as predation and habitat restoration."

The team hired by the governor's office, Ross Strategic/Kramer Consulting, gathered information by interviewing technical experts, tribes and stakeholders and solic-



The fish ladder at Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River.

iting online feedback. They also looked at recent reports, including the proposal from Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) and the 2020 Columbia River System Operations final environmental impact statement, to gather information. The report estimates that replacing the services provided by the dams would cost from \$10.3 billion to \$27.2 billion and says anticipated costs are still not available for several necessary actions. Simpson's plan put the cost of replacing the dams' benefits at a minimum of \$33.5 billion.

"Although this draft report describes a potential path forward to successfully replace, or even improve upon services currently provided by the LRSD (lower Snake River dams), significant work would be needed to bring this outcome about. Congressional authorization would be needed for the Army Corps to pursue breaching the dams. In addition to congressional action, moving forward with dam breaching also would require establishing timelines and milestones for results, agreement on a comprehensive funding strategy, additional analyses to maximize benefits at all stages of the process, continued technologi-





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cal advancements and implementation of a significant infrastructure program,” the report states.

The report acknowledges that some industries will be fundamentally altered if the dams are breached, such as the cruise boat industry, which had an economic impact of approximately \$4 million in 2019, mostly in the Lewis-Clark Valley, and the industries that rely on barging, including the barge companies.

In particular, the study considered five types of benefits and provided principal actions for replacing the benefits or mitigating their loss:

- **Navigation and transportation.** Most studies conclude that if barging on the Lower Snake River were eliminated, rail would become the predominant regional transportation mode, with trucking as the next most predominant mode. Given the estimated changes in rail and truck transportation, significant improvements would be required to expand and upgrade shortline rail networks as well as local and state roadways. Compensation for increased transportation costs, infrastructure maintenance and loss of jobs would need to be considered.
- **Irrigation.** If the LSRD were breached, a variety of replacement actions have been identified to maintain the services provided by the LSRD to irrigated lands and the surrounding agricultural community. These actions include deepening of wells and modifications to pumping infrastructure to accommodate the lower water table and modifying surface water withdrawal infrastructure such as intake structures and pumping capacity.
- **Energy.** Studies found the energy generated by the LSRD could be replaced by a clean energy portfolio that would rely on increased solar and wind generation, energy storage, energy efficiency, and demand response. Replacing the energy production of the LSRD would take time, funding, planning and collaboration across all stakeholders to ensure that the region’s future clean energy goals are met, the region maintains a reliable system, and customers, especially the most vulnerable, are not overly burdened by increased electricity rates. The replacement portfolio must be in place and demonstrating that it is producing energy and providing services to the grid before breaching of the dams to avoid significant impacts to the regional energy system and the communities it serves.
- **Recreation.** Significant investment for recreational amenities and compensation for impacted industries would be required if the dams were breached. There would be a need for redevelopment of the waterfront in Lewiston, Idaho, and Clarkston, Wash., as well as

other recreational facilities along the current reservoir areas, and development of new recreational opportunities consistent with a free-flowing river.

Michelle Hennings, WAWG’s executive director, and Glen Squires, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission, were interviewed by the consulting team.

“My family farm depends on low-cost, efficient transportation to move our wheat to market to feed people around the world. There simply is no alternative to barging that can move over 60 percent of Washington’s wheat as safely and efficiently, and without the lower Snake River dams, barging becomes nonexistent,” said Hennings. “I’m concerned about the draft report, which shows a lack of understanding of the practical impacts that breaching the lower Snake River dams would have on thousands of farmers across the Pacific Northwest. Increasing our reliance on rail and trucking will only drive up costs for farmers and consumers, further congest our railroads and highways, and add harmful emissions to our environment.”

The draft report is available at [lsrdoptions.org](https://lsrdoptions.org). Comments on the report must be submitted by July 11, 2022, and can be done through the project website or emailed to [info@lsrdoptions.org](mailto:info@lsrdoptions.org) with the subject line “Draft LSRD Benefit Replacement Report.” ■

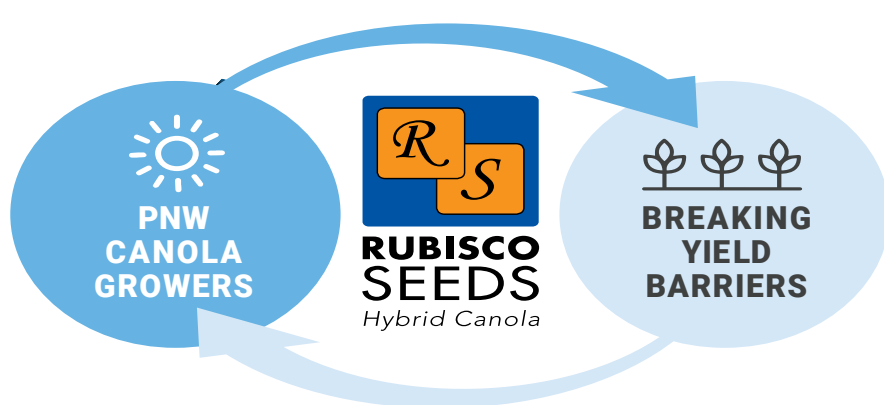
## President signs Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2022

On June 13, the House of Representatives approved the Senate version of the Ocean Shipping Reform Act in an effort to reduce bottlenecks at U.S. ports and improve conditions for agricultural exports. In a 369-42 vote, the House sent the legislation to the White House, where President Biden signed it into law. The bill places guidelines on ocean carriers’ ability to decline export cargo, puts guardrails around when demurrage can be charged, sets minimum standards for ocean shipping service contracts, and prohibits ocean carriers from retaliating against shippers that lodge complaints. ■

## How are we doing?

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





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PNWVT	2018	2019	2020	2021
Control Varieties	lbs/ac (rank)			
Athena	4,084 (10)	4,344 (18)	4,015 (15)	3,698 (12)
Dwarf Essex	3,413 (28)	--	3,698 (23)	3,279 (27)
Ericka	2,865 (30)	3,829 (25)	3,516 (25)	3,219 (28)
Rubisco Seeds' Hybrids	Data courtesy of University of Idaho			
<b>Kicker</b>	—	—	4,792 (1)	4,701 (1)
<b>Mercedes</b>	4,933 (1)	5,145 (1)	4,419 (6)	4,359 (3)
<b>Plurax CL</b>	4,708 (2)	4,959 (2)	4,717 (2)	4,465 (2)
<b>Phoenix CL</b>	4,636 (4)	4,900 (4)	4,611 (3)	4,043 (5)
PNWVT Mean	3,956	4,470	4,085	3,726
LSD (p=0.05)	326	287	253	228
C.V. (%)	14.7	12.4	12.3	10.6

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## Poe Farms J.V., established 1888 in Hartline

Katie Utt moved from Wisconsin to Hartline, Wash., in 1888 with her parents and four sisters. In May 1889, Katie purchased a deed containing 172 acres. On this land, Katie and her family were able to build several small shacks.



In 1889, Katie married James Harris, a Canadian who had moved to the region, and moved to the quarter-section he had homesteaded and built a home just south of the Utt homestead. James and Katie had three daughters: Florence, Margaret and Ethel.

With roughly 662 acres of farmland, the Harris family raised wheat, which sometimes was just enough to feed the horses. Eventually, they began growing more spring crops including oats and barley.

After James Harris's death in 1923, Katie Harris did her best to keep the farm going with the help of her sons-in-law, but decided farming wasn't for her. In the fall of 1935, at the age of 21, her grandson, James Poe, began renting the ground. By that point in time, the other portion of the section, which James was already farming, was owned by descendants of Ethel.

James and his wife, Ann Poe, continued the family farming legacy and later transitioned the farm to their two

sons and their wives, Terry and Sheila Poe and John and Sue Poe.

Terry and Sheila have two children, Dean Thompson and Jen Doughty. John and Sue have two children, Ryan Poe and Chrissy Fagerholm. Terry, Dean and Ryan presently operate the farm, Poe Farms J.V. What started as 662 acres 133 years ago has grown to an operation of roughly 15,000 acres. They grow primarily winter wheat and winter canola and have a beef cow/calf operation.

Ryan said that some of the biggest changes on the farm are technology and equipment.

"In my short time farming, we have gone from driving tractors manually to utilizing technology such as auto-steer, auto boom height on our sprayer, yield monitors on our combines, and variable rate fertilizer application equipment," he noted. "Our most recent technology advancement is the addition of a Weed-It system on our sprayer, allowing targeted spraying of weeds rather than blanket application, thus reducing chemical use." ■



Harvest in 1927 on the Poe farm.



Harvest 2017 at Poe Farms J.V. (Back row, from left) John Poe, Ryan Poe, Terry Poe, George Davis, Dean Thompson, Todd Kinzel, and Logan Bohnet. (Front row, from left) James Poe and Brennan Hansen-Hines.

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The next Washington Wheat Foundation Meeting is scheduled for **Oct. 3, 2022**, at the Wheat Foundation Building in Ritzville, Wash.



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# The case of the disappearing dollars

FARMERS WATCH PROFITS SHRINK AS FUEL, FERTILIZER COSTS KEEP RISING

By Trista Crossley  
Editor, *Wheat Life*

With wheat prices hovering north of \$10 per bushel, wheat growers may look like they are doing pretty well, but appearances can be deceiving as rising production costs keep eating away at producers' profits.

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates, total U.S. production expenses increased 5.5 percent from 2021 to 2022, on top of an 11.5 percent increase from 2020 to 2021. Fertilizer saw an especially big jump. From 2020 to 2021, fertilizer prices rose 16.5 percent; from 2021 to 2022, they jumped 12 percent.

Many of the same issues that are pushing wheat prices higher (limited global supplies, the war in Ukraine, weather and production issues) are also pushing input costs higher. Randy Fortenbery, holder of the Thomas B. Mick Endowed Chair in Grain Economics at Washington State University, pointed out that white wheat prices haven't changed much since November of 2021 compared to the changes in the cost of inputs (see Chart 1).

"White wheat prices were already pretty good last fall, so prices have not gone up as fertilizer prices have gone up for white wheat producers in the Pacific Northwest,"

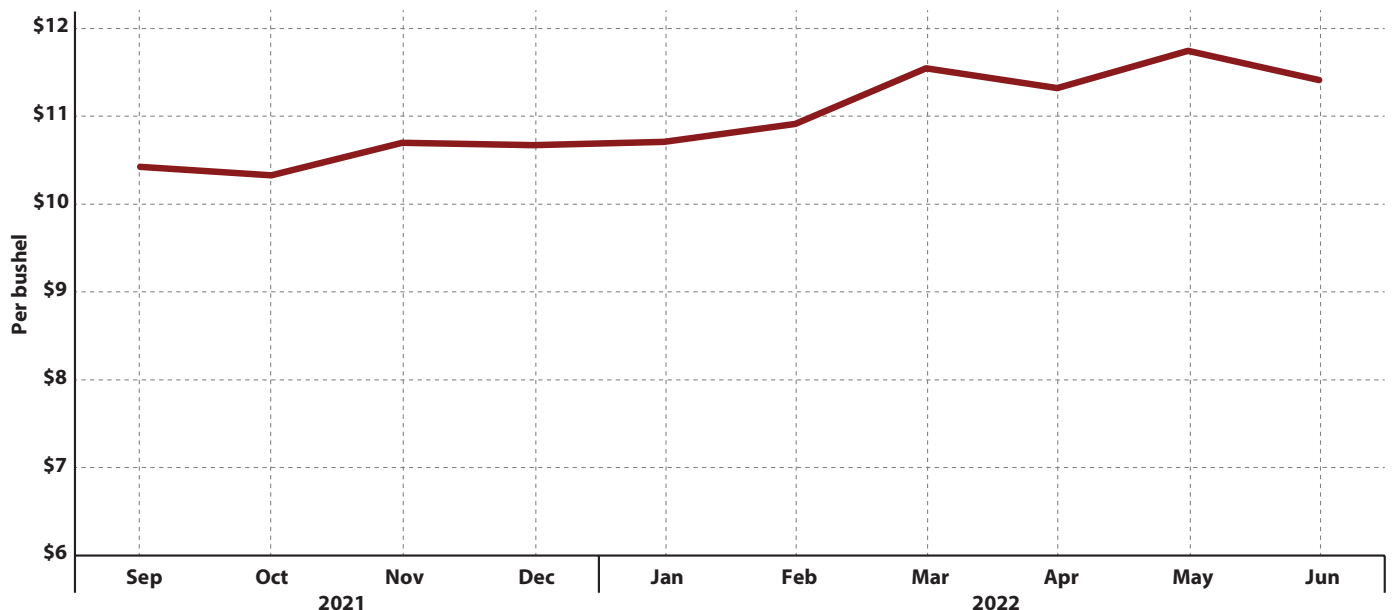
he explained. "White wheat prices really have only been in a 50-75 cent range for eight months, and fertilizer prices have gone up a lot over that period of time. Prices look high, but input costs are even higher."

Producers vary in the fertilizers that they apply to their fields, but three common ingredients are anhydrous ammonia, urea and liquid nitrogen, and all three have seen prices rise. Based on Iowa data from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA often uses Iowa prices as representative for the U.S.), anhydrous ammonia was \$1,571.80 in May of 2022, up from \$689.25 in May of 2021. A ton of urea cost \$981.54 in May of 2022, up from \$518.23 in May 2021. Nitrogen was \$746.61 in May of 2022, up from \$354.40 in May 2021 (see Chart 2).

Glyphosate is a critical tool that producers use to control weeds, especially in no-till cropping systems, and China is the world's largest producer of glyphosate. According to the China Price Index, found at [agribusinessglobal.com](http://agribusinessglobal.com), the wholesale price for glyphosate in June 2020 was \$11.20 per gallon. In February 2022, the price had quadrupled to \$44.87 per gallon (see Chart 3).

Fuel, particularly diesel, is another major expense for wheat farmers. According to the U.S. Energy Information

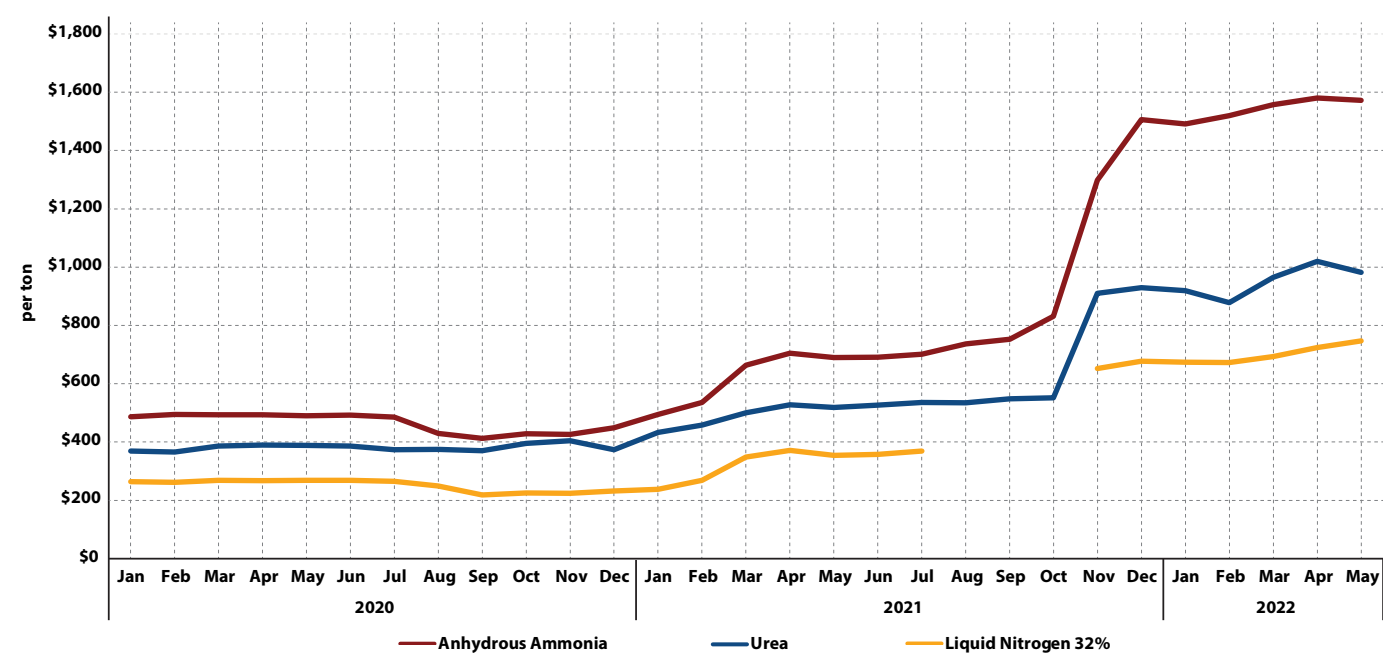
**Chart 1. Average soft white wheat prices (Clarkston cash prices through June 15, 2022)**



Source: <https://markets.cahnr.wsu.edu/Data/CashPrices>

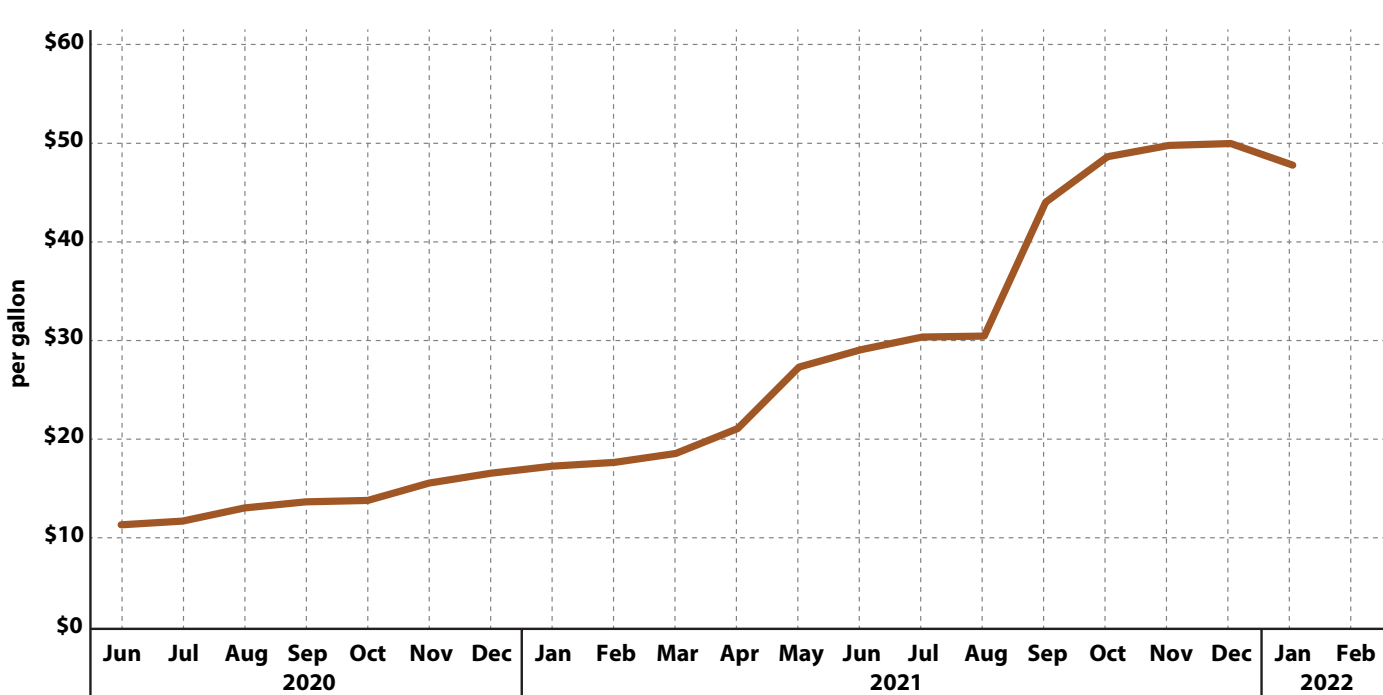


**Chart 2. Average cost of fertilizer components since January 2020**

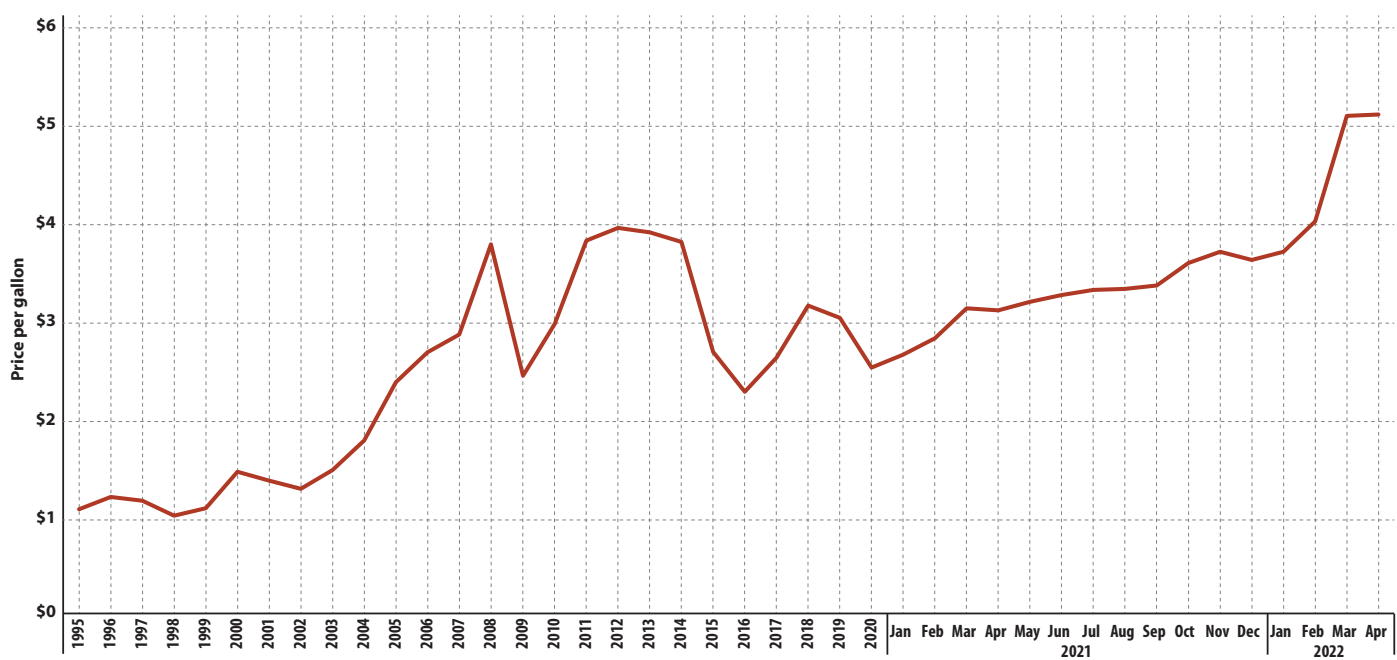


Source: <https://mymarketnews.ams.usda.gov/viewReport/2863>

**Chart 3. Average cost of glyphosate since June 2020**



Source: China price index: <https://www.agribusinessglobal.com/agrochemicals/china-price-index-downward-price-trends-for-glyphosate-glufosinate-a-tipping-point-for-key-herbicides/>

**Chart 4. Average U.S. cost of No. 2 diesel 1995-April 2022**

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

Administration, the average U.S. price for a gallon of No. 2 diesel in 2020 was \$2.55. In April of 2022, it was \$5.12 per gallon (see Chart 4).

Fuel, fertilizer and chemicals aren't the only inputs that are hurting producers' bottom line. Other costs have gone up as well, such as seed and interest rates on production loans. It's difficult to calculate just how much profit producers are actually making, because there are so many variables that have to be taken into account, and every producer's situation is different. But on the whole, industry stakeholders agree that the current high wheat prices aren't translating into fat bank accounts for producers.

The Agricultural and Food Policy Center (AFPC) at Texas A&M University published a report in May 2022 analyzing the economic impacts of higher crop and major input prices based on 64 representative farms, including 11 wheat farms, three of which are in Eastern Washington ([afpc.tamu.edu/research/publications/files/716/BP-22-06.pdf](https://afpc.tamu.edu/research/publications/files/716/BP-22-06.pdf)). The report found that wheat farms are facing an average reduction in net cash farm income of \$399,000 from 2021 to 2022. That's an average decline of \$83 per acre. The authors also noted that:

- A major point of reference for the report — net cash farm income in 2021 — included a significant amount of ad hoc assistance. Absent another infusion of assistance in 2022, they estimate that significant increases in input prices will result in a huge decline in net cash

farm income in 2022 (compared to 2021).

- Despite the significant reduction from 2021, high commodity prices will likely still result in positive net cash farm income for most of AFPC's representative farms.
- Much of their analysis hinged on producers being able to lock in high commodity prices at average yields. With drought ravaging half of the country (and many other areas facing excess moisture), this assumption may be overly optimistic.

The full impact of rising input costs may still be coming, as Fortenbery pointed out.

"One of the challenges right now is the winter wheat was all planted last fall. Fertilizer prices have been going up dramatically for quite a while, but they weren't as high last September as they are now," he explained. "These really high prices we've seen lately will have more to do with next year's crop than this year's crop, except for spring wheat, spring canola or any pulses that were planted. They are all affected by fertilizer prices from just five or six weeks ago."

In early June, fertilizer prices dropped slightly, primarily because of reduced demand. Producers across the U.S. are having such a hard time getting their spring crops planted that they aren't buying fertilizer because they can't get out to their fields to use it.

Will the high wheat prices continue? Fortenbery is keeping an eye on the red wheat crop, which is expected to



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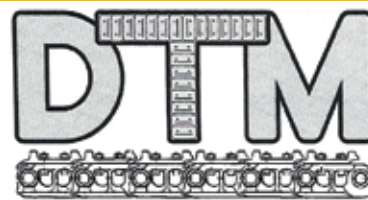
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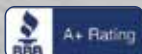
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yield below average due mainly to drought. For white wheat, he says it's too early to know.

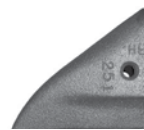
"If the weather continues like it is and we get some heat and we have a great white wheat crop, white wheat prices could go down even as red wheat prices go up. We could also end up being too wet, and if we don't get some heat and dryness so we can get in a harvest by August or July, then maybe wheat quality ends up being a problem. It's a little hard to say right now," he explained. ■



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# Generating a show of support

Caucus members tour PNW energy facilities, including Ice Harbor Dam

By Trista Crossley  
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Last month during a tour through Eastern Washington that included a boat ride to Ice Harbor Dam and a tour of the facility, members of the Congressional Western Caucus learned about the energy benefits the lower Snake River dams provide and the measures the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has implemented to boost salmon survival. The Washington Association of Wheat Growers was one of the sponsors of the tour.

The tour was led by Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.), chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus, and included Caucus Vice Chair Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.) and members Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-Iowa), Rep. Cliff Bentz (R-Ore.) and Rep. Matt Rosendale (R-Mont.). The legislators were joined by local producers and industry stakeholders, as well as staff from other congressional offices. The Congressional Western Caucus advocates for rural policy issues, especially across the West, including encouraging responsible resource development and energy independence; increasing access to public lands and promoting multiple-use policies; and supporting the nation's farmers, ranchers and agriculture industry.

The dam tour began in Richland, with the farm bureau presidents of California, Idaho, Oregon and Washington summarizing the issues faced by their agricultural communities. All four presidents highlighted water/drought, availability of labor, cost of inputs, and burdensome regulations as issues farmers in their states were dealing with. ►









Tom Kammerzell, a wheat grower from Whitman County and a commissioner for the Port of Whitman County, represented the agriculture industry on a local industry panel. He explained that trucking wheat from in-country elevators to the river and then barging the grain to export terminals in Portland was the cheapest method of transportation for wheat farmers. Wheat farmers already have to contend with variable wheat prices and input costs, he told the group, “so we need a river system that is reliable.”

Others on the industry panel were Matt Harris, director of governmental affairs for the Washington Potato Commission, representing irrigators; Kristin Meira, director of government affairs for American Cruise Lines, representing tourism; and Rob Rich, vice president of marine services at Shaver Transportation, representing the transportation industry.

Alex McGregor, chairman of The McGregor Company, touched on the history of the Columbia Basin, how the dams made irrigation possible and let agriculture flourish. He also noted that the railroads don’t have the capacity to make up for the loss of barging if the dams were breached.

“The goal is for people to come together and find holistic solutions,” he said, thanking the legislators for taking the time to learn about the river system.

Rick Dunn, general manager of the Benton Public Utility District, talked about energy policies and the reliability of the western power grid that coordinates and depends on the energy generated by the lower Snake River dams. He pointed out that California is very dependent on Pacific Northwest load balancing, and the dams are an integral part of that.

“Hydro is foundational,” he said.

As the boat approached Ice Harbor Dam and prepared to enter the lock, Heather Stebbings, executive director of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, and Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest River Partners, looked at the challenges related to the dams, especially ongoing and persistent litigation. Finally, representatives of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the federal agency responsible for the management of the dams, talked about how fish are moved through and around the dams.

Once through the lock, the group disembarked and toured Ice Harbor Dam before boarding a bus to return to Richland. The day wrapped up with a reception at the Washington State University Wine Science Center that featured foods crafted with regional ingredients. ■



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# Wheat College recap

2022 event focused on the importance of disease control, nitrogen and crop management

By Trista Crossley  
Editor, *Wheat Life*

According to Peter Johnson, better agronomy is the key to unlocking a crop's yield potential.

Johnson, an agronomist from Ontario, Canada, was the featured speaker at the Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's (AMMO) 2022 Wheat College, held last month in Ritzville, Wash. More than 75 producers spent the morning learning about factors that impact yield potential, followed by industry updates and breakout rotations by Washington State University Extension faculty that covered integrated weed management and pest management. Corteva Agriscience led a breakout session on nitrogen management. Two pesticide credits were offered, and giveaways were provided by Corteva and other AMMO sponsors. Steve Taylor was the winner of a Blackstone Grill, and James Amery won a Corteva cooler.

Johnson began his presentation by challenging growers to ask themselves "why" every time they made a crop management decision, and if they couldn't answer the "why," not to do it.

"Think through the 'why,' and make sure it's the right decision," he said. "I can't emphasize that enough. Think about things and really try to open your mind to different possibilities. It's tougher than you think, but it's an important thing."

**A JOHNSON GEM: My definition of average is put your head in the oven, your feet in the freezer, and, on average, you are comfortable. Always be careful with averages.**

On average, growers should be getting better yields than they did 30 years ago. Some of that is due to genetics; some of that is due to climate change. But a big chunk of that potential — Johnson pegged it at nearly 30 percent — should be coming from agronomic decisions, and if growers are making the same management decisions they

always have, they are likely leaving yield potential on the table.

"Better genetics aren't enough. You need the better agronomy to support the better genetics. You can have the best wheat variety in the world, but if you don't put enough nitrogen on it or you plant it too deep or if you don't do the right agronomy, it's not going to yield any better than any wheat crop out there," he said.

In dryland wheat, water is often considered the limiting factor to yield. Research indicates that producers need a minimum of four inches of water to grow a crop, and everything beyond that should add yield, Johnson said. Under perfect conditions with perfect timing, the maximum yield potential of an inch of water is estimated at 33 bushels.

"We think it's all about water. That's not true. Your management has a huge impact on how many bushels per acre you make out of the water you get," he explained. "There's a whole range of other things that come into play. Water matters, but management matters in terms of how you can utilize that water most efficiently. I want to challenge your brain around how to do that better."

## 2022 AMMO sponsors

Thank you to the sponsors who helped make the 2022 Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization seminars and Wheat College possible:

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## A 'YEN' for more information

One of the things Johnson touted as a route to better yields was "yield enhancement networks" or YENs. First started in the U.K., YENs encourage insight into actual and potential yields by bringing together growers, researchers and agronomists, among others, to learn more about how a crop grows and develops. Participants share knowledge and data with the goal of improving farming practices and farmers' bottom lines.

Johnson is involved in a YEN in the Great Lakes region that encompasses



(Clockwise from right) Peter Johnson, aka Wheat Pete, was the featured presenter at the 2022 Wheat College where he talked about yield strategies and answered questions.

Derek Sandison, director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, gave an agency update.

Aaron Esser, Washington State University (WSU) Extension, talked about integrated weed management.

One of the break-out sessions included a plant diagnostic clinic with Cassandra Bates of WSU Extension.

Corteva Agriscience led a break-out session on nitrogen management.





Ontario as well as several U.S. states and is based on how well farmers in the YEN do against their yield potential. It's much more than just a yield competition, he said.

"We do have an overall wheat yield winner, but what we do in the YEN is we calculate your yield potential based on soil-available water, rainfall, sunshine. Once we have those three things, we plug them into a formula, and tell

**A JOHNSON GEM:**  
**There are no mistakes in agriculture, only test plots.**

you, 'hey, mister farmer, you got 40 percent of your yield potential or you got 60 percent of your yield potential,'" he explained. Last year, the

YEN's first year, the average bushel per acre was 115, but the yield potential was 220 bushels per acre. "So, on average, we achieved 52 percent yield potential. We could do better. Nobody puts their worst 10-acre chunk in the YEN, but we are still at 52 percent."

### Lessons learned

So where does wheat yield come from? Johnson's work has uncovered some clues.

- Soil health, the amount of organic matter in the soil, and the cycling of nutrients.
- The amount of sunlight intensity plants receive and the temperature during grain fill.
- Monoculture tends to result in poorer soil health and lower yields. Studies consistently show that a two-year break between wheat crops gives a yield bump. Summer fallow is not enough to break that cycle. Even in lower rainfall zones, Johnson encouraged growers to look for other crops to rotate in (different varieties of the same crop don't count).
- Fall tillers make yields, not spring tillers, so early seeding is generally a good thing. But, Johnson cautioned, a really lush plant in the fall could encourage disease. A producer asked how early is too early? "Your early-planted wheat will start yielding less. All I can say is

try it. You just have to experiment."

- Data from YENs indicate that the high yield growers seed an average of four days earlier than other growers. Why? Because, Johnson explained, it takes four days to make a tiller. "If every plant that I seeded gets one more tiller by being four days earlier, what does that do to my head count? The head count goes way up. That four-day difference makes a huge difference on the number of final stems per square foot."
- The high yield growers also tend to seed less seeds per acre.
- The amount and timing of nitrogen applications. "I say if you put all your nitrogen on in the fall, you've spent 100 percent of your money, and you have no opportunity for management." If there is ample winter moisture, producers can put the rest of the nitrogen on (plus a little more) in spring because of a higher yield potential. On the flip side, if conditions are dry and yield potential is down, producers can hold off on applying nitrogen because it may not be needed.

Johnson hosts a weekly podcast, "Wheat Pete's Word," for Real Agriculture. Those podcasts can be found at [realagriculture.com/series/](http://realagriculture.com/series/) or on other podcast services. ■

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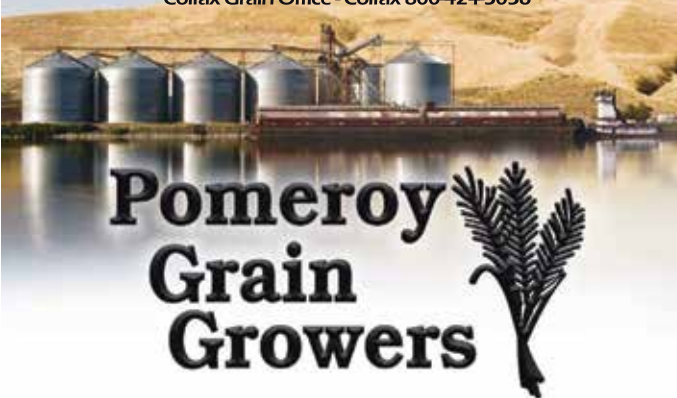
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# CHAIRMAN

## WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

By Mike  
Carstensen



The other day, Grandpa Henry wondered “what the heck” was the insurance company billing him for now? Well, this was a classic case where the company sent out the bill before the agent sent out the policy. While there’s no hail yet, this sets the stage for my article about the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) budget and addressing “what the heck” is the WGC spending our money on?

Our last WGC board meeting was just after the press run for the June magazine, so I am pleased to be able to include an update here on our annual budget review. Just like every year, there was a lot of good discussion among my fellow commissioners as we identified the priorities for the WGC in the next fiscal year.

I’d like to start off by saying thank you to the WGC commissioners who represent our seven grain districts, along with our industry and Washington State Department of Agriculture representatives. They do an outstanding job of representing the interests of their district’s growers, while keeping a guiding eye on the WGC’s pillars of research, marketing and education.

I think one of the reasons the WGC has been so successful over the years is the level of engagement we get from the growers in our districts. I hope that continues, and I encourage my fellow growers to talk to us about the issues that we all are experiencing in our operations. We can’t solve all problems, but together, we can take steps forward in addressing common challenges. We need your help to stay on course.

Last year, Washington’s crop was the lowest since 1964. It’s not surprising that assessment income for 2021/22 was down (about \$6.1 million) compared to the previous, record-yielding year in 2020/21 (\$7.6 million). Our 2022/23 budget was approved for \$7.8 million. While this is up from the current fiscal year (\$7.3 million), it includes about \$1 million that will roll forward due to continued COVID-19 restrictions on travel and activities.

The main four budget items are research, at \$1.95 million; marketing, at \$1.54 million; grower services, at \$1.84 million; and education, with \$598,500. It should be noted that the grower services budget category contains many line items that are educational in nature, just focused on services for growers as opposed to general public education programs. The full details on our new fiscal budget are posted at <https://bit.ly/wgc-budgetFY23>. As you can see, there’s a lot to cover, so I’m going to focus this month on the biggest funding category: research.

The WGC will invest \$1,951,105 in research, just edging

up from \$1,947,909 last year. Research accounts for 25 percent of the budget, with emphasis on ensuring farmers’ core interests at the previous year’s allocations. The slight increase is to recognize the need to account for the increasing costs we are all seeing for supplies and labor, which are hitting our public universities as well.

Remember, last year, the commission updated its research strategic plan. Our stated objective is to “encourage and support research to optimize grower, buyer and end-user benefits.” The main way we do this is by funding projects aimed at “improving varietal end use and processing attributes, agronomics, production systems and new uses for wheat and barley through efficiencies, targeted research and public/private collaboration.”

A little closer look at the \$1.95 million divides as breeding, 68 percent; quality, 17 percent; disease/insects, 9 percent; and production/weeds, 6 percent. In addition, the WGC was successful in securing \$2 million from Congress for the PNW Herbicide Resistance Initiative, as well as working with Congress to secure an additional \$1 million. This is a collaborative effort with the Idaho and Oregon grain organizations and Washington State University (WSU). It’s important to know WGC funds to WSU are leveraged to receive a significant level of additional grant funds. You can read about another example of this from *WSU Insider* at <https://bit.ly/3t5KKpy>.

Arguably, breeding is the most important research category. However, breeding is only one line item. There’s also research to combat diseases and pests; to control weeds and fight resistance; and improve soil health. A few other research related updates include:

- The Agricultural Research Service falling numbers scientist recruitment is underway again as the previous scientist has left WSU.
- The Western Wheat Quality Lab Director hiring process is underway to replace Dr. Craig Morris.
- The WGC worked with WSU for filling Extension positions in Columbia and Walla Walla counties.
- The Cereal Variety Release Committee is adjusting the variety release process to enhance timely release utilizing all data for quality and agronomics.

At the WGC, we understand that research is a primary avenue to accomplish our mission of enhancing the long-term profitability and competitiveness of Washington grain farmers. You can say research is the big daddy when it comes to “what the heck” the WGC is spending our money on. ■

## Taiwan: A market mainstay

ISLAND NATION IS A LOYAL, LONG-STANDING U.S. WHEAT CUSTOMER

*The Washington Grain Commission (WGC) promotes the small grains industry through the allocation of farmer checkoff dollars in the areas of research, market development and education. When it comes to promoting our wheat in international markets, WGC works directly with U.S. Wheat Associates (USW), which is the export market development organization for the U.S. wheat industry. USW activities in more than 100 countries are made possible through grower contributions from 17 state wheat commissions (including Washington) and cost-share funding provided by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. This Wheat Life series features some examples of how your commission checkoff dollars are working hard to promote, grow and maintain demand for the high-quality U.S. wheat the world has come to rely on.*

### Wheat market overview

Taiwan is a loyal and long-standing customer of U.S. wheat, mostly for its quality-conscious flour industry. Imports of wheat are about 47.8 million bushels per year, about 80 percent of which is from the U.S. and the rest mainly from Australia and Canada.

Taiwan's domestic wheat production is negligible at under 367,500 bushels per year. Taiwan has relied entirely on imports for its food wheat requirements for the past 50 years and will likely continue to do so in the future. Per capita, wheat consumption in Taiwan exceeded that of rice several years ago and now is stable at 119 to 128 pounds. Taiwan is a traditional rice country where wheat consumption exceeds rice consumption due to urbanized lifestyles, the sheer variety available in wheat products, and USW outreach activities funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Market Access Program (MAP) and state wheat commissions, including the Washington Grain Commission. In coming years, it is projected that a fast-aging population will hinder the growth of overall wheat consumption.

The health awareness of Taiwan consumers has risen rapidly during the COVID-19 outbreak. Consumer preference is for clean label and no- or low-additive wheat products. The clean label trend is good for U.S. wheat, helping to increase the probability of growth of high-quality wheat products.

Taiwan has the world's highest concentration of modern convenience stores with at least one appearing on every city block. They number about 11,000 and include 7-11, FamilyMart, Hi-Life and Circle K. Frozen wheat products, one sector that has benefited from the COVID-19 outbreak, has made it to convenience stores, meaning the fragrance of freshly baked items is gradually becoming commonplace all over Taiwan. Sales of frozen cake and pastry products in convenience stores have grown by more than 20 percent in the COVID era and are expected to grow thereafter.

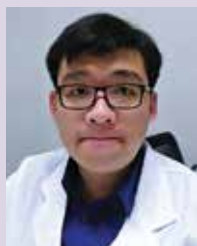
Acquisition of U.S. wheat has a long history. The Taiwan Flour Millers Association (TFMA) purchases all U.S. wheat for all 16 of Taiwan's mills as a group, with the emphasis on consistency. The flour market typically specifies a U.S. No. 1 grade of wheat; is very competitive regarding cost and quality; and shows signs of excess capacity. ►



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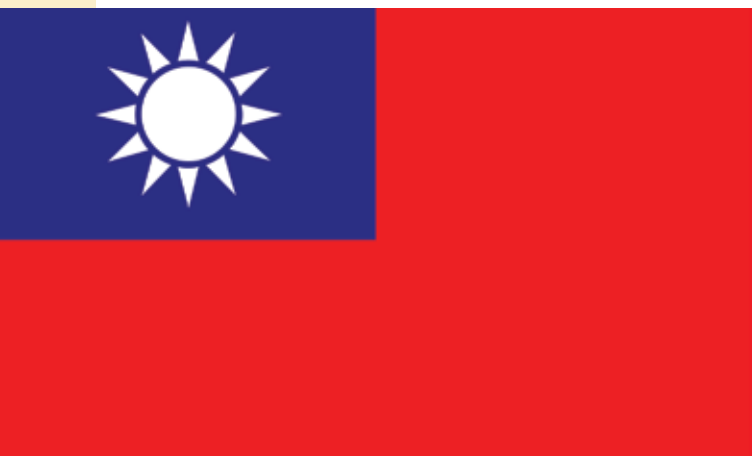



# TAIWAN

Taiwan is officially named the Republic of China (Taiwan), not to be confused with the People's Republic of China, which is commonly known as China.


As of 2021, Taiwan is home to about 23.5 million people, which is slightly higher than the population of Florida (22 million). Its capital is Taipei City. The main island and its outlying islands take up a combined 13,975 square miles (approximately one fifth the size of Florida) in the western Pacific Ocean, in between the Philippines to the south and Japan to the northeast. Its closest and largest neighbor is China, to the west. It has been a member of the World Trade Organization since 2002.

Taiwan's topography features volcanic mountains, forested foothills, tablelands, coastal plains and basins. Around 20 percent of the country's land is protected. Taiwan has a native species of freshwater salmon, also known as the Formosan landlocked salmon or Taiwanese salmon, found only in the basin of the Chichiawan Stream in the mountains of central Taiwan.



 **Official languages:** Mandarin (Chinese), Holo, Hakka and Matsu (Taiwanese). Other Austronesian languages are also spoken.

**Head official:** Tsai Ing-wen, president. The president and vice president are directly elected by the people for a term of four years and may be re-elected once.

 **Government type:** Multiparty democracy. What does that mean? This is a democratic form of government where more than two political parties contend for elected office, either on their own or in coalition. Taiwan's government includes the Office of the President and five major branches, called "Yuans." The Yuans include the Executive Yuan, to formulate and implement policies; the Legislative Yuan, to review and enact legislation, review policy matters, and examine budgetary bills and government operations; the



Examination Yuan, to manage the civil service system; the Judicial Yuan, to oversee the courts; and the Control Yuan, to audit government agencies, which can include censure and impeachment of officials.



**Main religion/culture:** Major religions include Buddhism, Taoism, I-Kuan Tao, Chinese folk religions, Christianity and Islam. Over 95 percent of the population are Han people, which is the dominant ethnicity originating in mainland China. Only about 2 percent of the population are indigenous Malayo-Polynesian peoples, and there are 16 officially recognized indigenous tribes in Taiwan. About 2 percent of the population are new immigrants. Taiwan is more populous than three-quarters of the world's nations.



**Economy overview:** The currency of Taiwan is the New Taiwan dollar (NT\$). One U.S. dollar is about NT\$30. According to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), the gross domestic product of Taiwan in 2020 was \$635.5 billion (U.S. dollars). Its economy is export oriented. Major economic sectors include services, information and communication technology, and industry (mostly merchandise). Agriculture makes up just 1.56 percent of Taiwan's GDP and covers about 1.96 million acres. The major crops besides rice are sugar, tea and many kinds of fruit.

Taiwan considers mainland China, the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the U.S., Japan, and the EU as its top export markets.

According to the USTR, U.S. goods exports to Taiwan in 2020 were \$30.2 billion. Of that, exports of U.S. agricultural products were \$3.3 billion, making Taiwan the U.S.'s eighth largest agricultural export market. Leading agricultural exports from the U.S. include soybeans (\$606 million); beef and beef products (\$552 million); wheat (\$309 million); poultry meat and products (\$223 million); and fresh fruit (\$196 million). Read more about Taiwan at [taiwan.gov.tw/about.php](https://taiwan.gov.tw/about.php). ■



In 2018, leaders of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) visited the China Grain Products Research and Development Institute to help celebrate the WGC's 60th anniversary and its Solvent Retention Capacity equipment donation.

TFMA regularly tenders three classes of U.S. wheat from the Pacific Northwest (PNW):

- Soft white (SW), primarily from Washington state, is used for cake and biscuits products.
- Hard red winter (HRW), for a multipurpose flour, which includes traditional Chinese products and noodles.
- Hard red spring (DNS) is used for bread products and as a flour improver.

TFMA was established in 1952 with 38 member flour mills. Currently, only 16 mills are in operation. The top 10 millers account for over 90 percent of the Taiwan flour market. It is expected that a consolidation trend among producers in the Taiwan wheat flour market will continue.

Wheat flour is a favored ingredient in both Western and traditional Chinese foods. Heavy usage of high-protein DNS reflects the industry's need for strong gluten flour for making products such as youtiao (a fried donut-like snack), loaf bread and rolls, and for blending with high-protein HRW flour to make traditional Chinese flour foods and noodles. Taiwan uses low-protein SW as well as Western White, which is a combination of soft white and club wheat, for cakes, biscuits and pastries. It is projected that by 2025, Taiwan, like much of the developed world, will become a super-aged society. Older people demand softer wheat products, which may indicate

the potential to increase consumption in SW products.

### Market outlook for 2022/23

The COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on Taiwan flour demand as tight virus controls governed assembly and movement, as well as international arrivals and departures. However, Taiwan recently achieved a very high rate of vaccination and changed its COVID strategy to loosen these controls. Although the Taiwan government has not officially announced a lockdown in response to recent Omicron infections, the catering industry and inland tourism business have been hit by the pandemic, and the consumption of wheat flour products has decreased. High global wheat prices and stagnation of Taiwan's population growth also added downward pressure on wheat consumption. TFMA expects wheat imports to fall by 5 percent in 2022, but also expects wheat consumption will recover rapidly in the first half of 2023 if the pandemic is well contained and wheat prices start to cool. Taiwan also plans to ease border controls in fourth quarter 2022. A good and sufficient U.S. wheat supply in 2022/23 is important to the Taiwan market.

### Market development success story

Typical U.S. SW protein is 9 to 10 percent, which has broad acceptance among Taiwan millers. The 2021 Pacific Northwest drought pushed average protein to 11 percent and prompted concern among Taiwan's flour millers. To help millers understand how the prevailing higher



protein found in the new crop would perform, USW collaborated with the China Grain Products Research and Development Institute (CGPRDI) in Taipei to conduct a milling and application seminar in December 2021.

An analysis of typical SW flour compared to the high-protein 2021 SW crop showed millers that the higher protein flour maintained the desired weak gluten strength and baking characteristics. Tests with a flour blend made up of 75 percent high-protein SW from 2021 showed that sponge cakes and refrigerated cookies had similar baking performance and mouthfeel as products made with 9 percent protein SW. Testing included Solvent Retention Capacity (SRC) analysis, giving Taiwan millers a deeper understanding of the properties of the high-protein SW.

The SRC testing apparatus was donated to CGPRDI by the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) in February 2018 with the hope of increasing research into soft wheat products. Without this SRC equipment, USW/Taipei and CGPRDI would not have been able to conduct the effective SRC analysis for Taiwan millers during the difficult period of high-protein SW and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sharing these results with quality control, research and development staff from Taiwanese flour mills was an important activity to reassure these important customers, who rely on U.S. SW and other wheat classes every year, of the wheat's continued suitability.

CGPRDI, as a long-standing partner of the WGC and USW, conducts flour analysis and testing for each U.S. wheat vessel purchased by TFMA, which usually amounts to 20 to 24 vessels each year. USW and the WGC helped to establish the CGPRDI school and laboratory in 1967 to provide technical training for the Taiwan baking

and milling industries. Recent projects provide credible and reliable cereal testing and analysis geared to the profitability of the industry and the nutritional health of the Taiwanese population. Over the past 40 years, the CGPRDI center has garnered respect and recognition from domestic and international communities and has played a vital role in the development of wheat-based foods in Taiwan.

### Policy issue facing the Taiwan market

The U.S. has a long history of bilateral exchanges and forums with Taiwan. However, a full-fledged free trade agreement (FTA) has proven politically challenging due to Taiwan's status as an independent country while being claimed by China as part of its territory.

For any country to sign an FTA with Taiwan is to directly challenge China's claims, which have so far been too large an obstacle for Taiwan to overcome with major trading partners. That was reflected in the country's absence from the Obama Administration's Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations and again in the Biden Administration's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity.

Fortunately, in the last month, the U.S. has proposed to elevate government trade relations with Taiwan through the U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade. Though still short of a comprehensive FTA, the initiative will create the largest trade forum to date between the U.S. and Taiwan and will include specific outcomes in trade facilitation and agriculture. The USW team is closely watching the forum and looking for opportunities to further strengthen the trade relationship with one of our most important customers. ■



Solvent Retention Capacity (SRC) testing apparatus (an automatic shaker, above, and an Eppendorf 5180R, right) was donated to the China Grain Products Research and Development Institute by the Washington Grain Commission in February 2018 with the hope of increasing research into soft wheat products.



# Posted to Pullman

New hires will increase USDA-ARS research unit's problem-solving capacity

Climate change, sustainability and food security are some of the global “grand challenges” facing the agricultural industry. The roots of these challenges are complicated, multifaceted and interconnected. To move the needle, we will need local solutions deployed across the globe, which is no small order. This will require scientific knowledge, and a lot of it.

To advance this effort in the U.S., the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) established the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in 1953 to deliver scientific solutions for these types of national and global agricultural challenges. The aim of ARS research is to deliver cutting-edge, scientific tools and innovative solutions for American farmers, producers, industry and communities. ARS laboratories across five regions of the country provide the field research to support this aim.

Some good news for Pacific Northwest growers is that the USDA's Northwest Sustainable Agroecosystems Research Unit (NSARU) is located in Pullman, Wash., and is part of the Pacific West Area of the USDA-ARS. In 2021, NSARU hired four new scientists that joined Research Leader David Huggins, who was hired in 2020.

“These hires have tremendously increased our unit's capacity to do relevant research — we emphasize that we want to be a problem-solving research group where our research priorities are identified by working closely with stakeholders such as the various commissions,” he said. Huggins is also a soil scientist with expertise in soil carbon cycling, nitrogen-use efficiency and conservation farming systems.

According to the unit's website, NSARU works on technologies that mutually help growers more economically produce food, feed, fiber and fuel while enhancing air, soil and water resources. The group is part of the national Long-Term Agroecosystem Research Network, which is a collaborative of USDA and other scientific institutions working together to find innovative solutions for the sustainable intensification of agriculture. As one of 18 long-term research sites in the USDA network, what makes NSARU special is its research is focused on dryland agriculture of the Pacific Northwest region.

NSARU provides the scientific foundation to enhance decision support for precision and conservation agriculture and for cropping system intensification and diversification. That means they can provide a wealth of information for Pacific Northwest commodity farmers



Dr. Garrett Heineck, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service cropping systems agronomist, conducting field soil sampling for an intercropping study in spring 2022. Photo courtesy of NSARU.

who are looking to do more with their ground without degrading, and instead regenerating, the natural resources of their farm for future generations.

The new Eastern Washington-based NSARU scientists are:

- **Dr. Garrett Heineck, cropping systems agronomist.** Heineck's expertise is with developing innovative cropping systems that are profitable, mitigate and adapt to climate change and weather extremes, provide diverse environmental services, and promote sustainable agricultural intensification.
- **Dr. Joaquin Cassanova, remote sensing.** Cassanova's expertise is in utilizing ground- and satellite-based observations to assess soil and plant performance metrics and identify stresses associated with climate, weeds, pathogens, insects, nutrient deficiencies, poor soil health, and management at various spatial scales.
- **Dr. Melissa LeTourneau, cropping systems modeler.** LeTourneau's expertise is in the development and use of process-oriented cropping systems models to simulate atmosphere-plant-soil continuum and the biophysical environment of agricultural systems to



assess soil and plant performance from field to regional scales.

- **Dr. Claire Phillips, air quality.** Phillips' expertise is to investigate and develop quantitative relationships between agricultural emissions (e.g. greenhouse gases, particulate matter, wind erosion) and factors such as soil properties, crop management, field hydrology, meteorology and climate change at various spatial scales.

These new scientists are now on board at NSARU and join support scientists Ian Leslie (soil physics), Bryan Carlson (ecoinformaticist, data management), and Dr. Jeremy Hansen (soil microbiologist); technicians John Morse, Ian Guest and Caven Halsey; a Washington State University laboratory support scientist, Jenny Carlson; and a new administrative person, Teri Hansen. In the next year, the unit is expected to grow even further as appropriations to address herbicide resistance and climate science will enable the addition of more technical expertise to support field and laboratory research efforts.

Together, with strong university scientist partnerships and working closely with producers and agribusiness, NSARU plans to find practical solutions to challenges in soil health (soil acidification, declining soil organic matter, soil erosion); viable cropping system alternatives (intercropping, perennial options, flex cropping); precision, site-specific decision support (crop health diagnostics, improving nutrient and water use efficiencies); and climate science (reducing greenhouse gas emissions, sequestering soil carbon).

More details and staff contact information is available online at <https://bit.ly/3N0cVh4>. ■

# Controlling rush skeletonweed in fallow

## MOISTURE LOSS TO WEEDS CAUSES DELAYED OR REDUCED SEED EMERGENCE AND WHEAT STAND ESTABLISHMENT

By Drew Lyon

*Professor and Endowed Chair Small Grains Extension and Research, Weed Science, Washington State University*

By Mark Thorne

*Research Associate, Washington State University*

Rush skeletonweed is a deep-rooted perennial forb in the sunflower family (Asteraceae). It is of Eurasian origin and is invasive in Australia, Argentina, Canada and the U.S. In Australia, wheat yield has been reduced as much as 80 percent in areas heavily infested with rush skeletonweed. In North America, the species is most prevalent in disturbed rangeland and other noncrop areas, particularly in the Northwest, where it occupies an estimated 6.2 million acres of rangeland. Rush skeletonweed substantially expanded its range in Eastern Washington when farmland was placed into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and not controlled during the CRP contract period. As infested CRP acres are returned to wheat production, rush skeletonweed persists largely because standard weed management strategies used in the winter wheat/summer fallow (WW/SF) production region are insufficient.

While yield loss resulting from direct competition with the crop is of concern, moisture use by skeletonweed plants during the fallow period of the rotation is of greater concern. In areas where poorly controlled skeletonweed depletes seed zone moisture during the fallow period, wheat stands either fail to establish or have markedly delayed or reduced emergence and stand establishment. Both cases result in reduced yield potential. The fallow period is critical for rush skeletonweed control because it can flourish without competition from the crop, but also, more herbicide options are available that can help reduce the populations over time.

We conducted field trials at three locations in Eastern Washington from fall 2017 through summer 2020 to test herbicide strategies for rush skeletonweed control during the fallow period. Two locations were near LaCrosse, Wash., and one near Hay, Wash. All three locations had been infested with rush skeletonweed during the CRP contract period (Table 1). The LaCrosse 2017 trial ran from 2017-19 and was managed with tillage during the fallow period in a WW/SF rotation. The LaCrosse 2018 and Hay trials ran from 2018-20 and were managed in a no-till WW/SF rotation. Experimental treatments were applied either in October following wheat harvest, April of the fallow year, or June/July when rush skeletonweed plants were bolting. At both LaCrosse sites, plants had experienced a frost or freeze prior to the fall applications as evidenced by a dull green stem color and cessation of flowering. Plants at the Hay site were still green and actively flowering at the time of application, suggesting they did not experience the same cold temperatures. ►

Treatment efficacy was determined by counting rush skeletonweed plants in each plot in June and August of the fallow year and comparing those densities with the initial densities from October following wheat harvest. Overall, picloram (Tordon 22K) applied in the fall provided complete control of rush skeletonweed through June of the SF year at all three locations (Table 1). Picloram has long been known to be very active on rush skeletonweed, which is likely due to long soil persistence as well as better leaf penetration and root activity. However, picloram is not recommended for spring applications in SF because of potential crop injury.

Fall-applied treatments with clopyralid (Stinger and Curtail) reduced the initial density of rush skeletonweed compared to the nontreated control at both LaCrosse sites. However, these treatments were not effective at Hay. At the August census (data not shown), picloram continued to provide superior control of rush skeletonweed at the two LaCrosse sites. However, picloram was no longer effective at Hay. The lack of frost or freezing temperatures at Hay prior to the fall applications could

explain the lack of control in August. In other Asteraceae species such as Canada thistle, dandelion and chicory, freezing temperatures in the fall signal the plant to convert long-chain storage carbohydrates into short-chain fructans and sucrose, which act as antifreeze to help protect the roots from freezing during the winter. Fall applications of synthetic auxin herbicides following frosts or freezes interfere with this process, leaving the plants more susceptible to winter kill.

Spring- and summer-applied treatments were largely ineffective for the control of rush skeletonweed in fallow and may only be beneficial for burning down rush skeletonweed to preserve soil moisture for the subsequent wheat crop. Our nonexperimental summer maintenance treatments included glyphosate and saflufenacil (Sharpen) to achieve this goal. In the subsequent wheat crop, rush skeletonweed density remained low at 12 percent of initial density in the fall picloram-treated plots at both LaCrosse sites but was not different from the nontreated control at Hay. Of the treatments applied, only aminopyralid (Milestone) is not labeled for use in





**Table 1.** Efficacy of treatments for control of rush skeletonweed in fallow.  
Treatments assessed in June of the fallow year as a percent of initial fall density.

Treatment <sup>1</sup>	Rate <sup>2</sup> (oz product/A)	Timing	Rush skeletonweed density <sup>3</sup>		
			LaCrosse 17 ----- % of initial density -----	LaCrosse 18	Hay
Clopyralid (Stinger)	10.67	Fall	3 e	31 ef	243 a
Aminopyralid (Milestone <sup>4</sup> )	1.2	Fall	12 cd	47 def	246 a
Clopyralid fb 2,4-D (2,4-D LV6)	10.67 fb 43	Fall fb Summer	5 de	37 def	229 a
Aminopyralid fb 2,4-D	1.2 fb 43	Fall fb Summer	11 cd	26 f	313 a
Clopyralid/2,4-D (Curtail)	64	Fall	6 de	54 def	465 a
Clopyralid/2,4-D + chlorsulfuron/metsulfuron (Finesse)	32 + 0.4	Fall	6 de	72 bcd	225 a
Picloram (Tordon 22K)	16	Fall	0 f	0 g	0 b
Glyphosate (RT 3) + 2,4-D fb 2,4-D	64 + 43 fb 43	Fall fb Summer	16 bc	166 a	397 a
Clopyralid + glyphosate	10.67 + 24	Spring	41 a	56 def	316 a
Aminopyralid + glyphosate	1.2 + 24	Spring	24 abc	65 cde	507 a
Glyphosate fb 2,4-D	64 fb 43	Spring fb Summer	16 bc	121 ab	485 a
Nontreated check		---	26 ab	105 abc	481 a

<sup>1</sup>Product name given in parenthesis at first mention.

<sup>2</sup>Sequential applications are designated by "fb" (followed by). Clopyralid and 2,4-D rates round up to the nearest whole number.

<sup>3</sup>Means followed by the same letter at each site are not statistically different at the 95 percent probability level. Means less than 100 indicate a percent reduction compared with the initial density. Means greater than 100 indicate a percent increase in density.

<sup>4</sup>Milestone is not labeled for use in wheat or fallow. This was an experimental use covered by an experimental use permit granted to Washington State University by the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

wheat or fallow (see disclaimer at the end of the article). Picloram was applied at the maximum labeled rate. Wheat yield was only reduced at LaCrosse 2018 with the spring-applied treatment of aminopyralid. However, grower experience suggests that picloram carryover can be a problem in some, particularly dry, years.

For long-term control, the first step should be to control rush skeletonweed before land is taken out of CRP and returned to wheat production. Once in production, a labeled rate of picloram applied postharvest in the fall following a frost or light freeze and then followed by effective burn-down treatments if needed during the SF period to preserve soil moisture, may be a good approach. It is also important to plant and fertilize winter wheat at optimum times and rates to promote establishment of a competitive wheat crop. Clopyralid, in various products, is labeled for application in the wheat crop and

if applied correctly, can provide some control or suppression before the next fallow year. As per the label, spring clopyralid applications should not occur directly before a frost. Long-term control of rush skeletonweed in WW/SF systems will likely require consistent effort over several crop rotation cycles. ■

*IMPORTANT: Some of the pesticides discussed in this presentation were tested under an experimental use permit granted by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). Application of a pesticide to a crop or site that is not on the label is a violation of pesticide law and may subject the applicator to civil penalties of up to \$7,500. In addition, such an application may also result in illegal residues that could subject the crop to seizure or embargo action by WSDA and/or the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. It is your responsibility to check the label before using the product to ensure lawful use and obtain all necessary permits in advance.*

# WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

## Hard red winter could see reduction in stocks



By T. Randall Fortenbery  
Professor and Thomas B. Mick Endowed Chair  
School of Economic Sciences, Washington State University

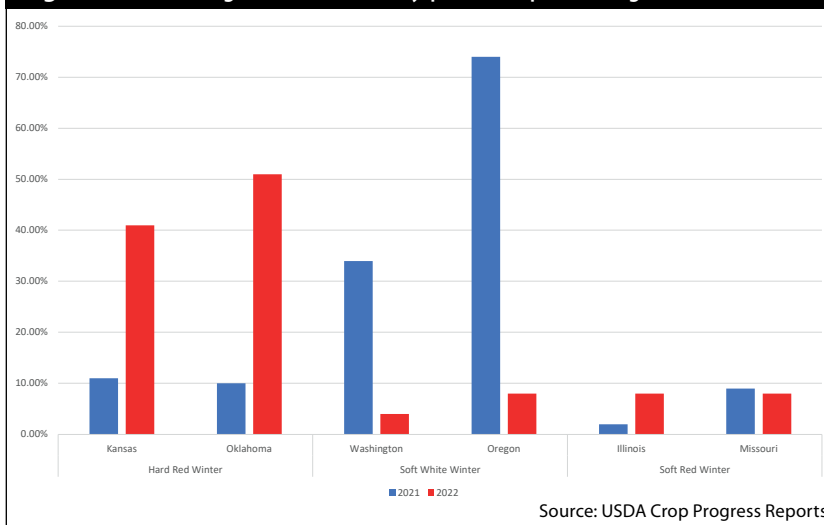
U.S. wheat production is expected to be up this year compared to last according to both the International Grains Council (IGC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The IGC is forecasting U.S. wheat production to be up 4.5 percent over last year, while USDA's June World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) forecasts a year-over-year increase of 5.5 percent.

USDA will report their first production estimates by wheat class for the 2022/23 marketing year on July 12. However, crop progress through late June suggests we will see a significant reduction in hard red winter wheat this year with the shortfall more than made up by increases in soft red and soft white winter wheat production.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of the wheat crop listed as poor to very poor for the top two producing states for various winter wheat classes this year compared to last. Soft red winter wheat conditions for Illinois and Missouri show favorable crop conditions both years. Soft white wheat conditions have improved this year relative to 2021, while hard red winter conditions have deteriorated significantly.

Despite the projected increase in total U.S. wheat production, ending stocks for the current marketing year are still expected to fall short of last year, primarily due to the low level of stocks carried into the marketing year and a stable domestic demand projection for 2022/23.

**Figure 1. Percentage of wheat in very poor and poor categories (as of mid-June)**



Both the IGC and USDA are also projecting a tighter global wheat balance sheet for 2022/23. IGC has estimated world wheat production will be down about 2 percent year-over year, while USDA estimates a reduction of less than 1 percent. More importantly, both also project a reduction in world ending stocks this year — about a 5 percent reduction, according to IGC estimates, and a 4.5 percent reduction according to USDA.

Even with the tighter balance sheet estimates, both the IGC and USDA are forecasting total wheat trade this year will match last year's trade level. IGC has forecast total global wheat trade to be 194 million tons — equal to last year — and USDA has forecast global wheat imports to be 201 million tons.<sup>1</sup> The USDA forecast is up slightly from their estimate of total world wheat imports for 2021/22. USDA expects China to account for 9.5 million tons of total world imports (5 percent) this year, about 1 million tons less than last year.

Interestingly, both the IGC and USDA trade estimates include significant shipments of wheat out of both Russia and the Ukraine in 2022/23. They both have forecast a significant increase in Russian wheat exports for 2022/23 (a 12 percent increase in the IGC forecast and a 21 percent increase from USDA). If realized, this would be Russia's largest wheat export volume since the 2017/18 marketing year.

IGC and USDA are both forecasting Ukrainian wheat exports for 2022/23 at 10 million tons. While this is down about 47 percent from last year, it still represents 5 percent of total world wheat trade. Figure 2 shows USDA estimates for wheat exports from Russia and the Ukraine

<sup>1</sup>The difference between the IGC and USDA estimates is partly a function of how each defines the wheat marketing year. IGC's marketing year for wheat runs from July 1 through June 30 of the following year. USDA's wheat marketing year begins a month earlier (June 1) and runs through May 31 of the following year.



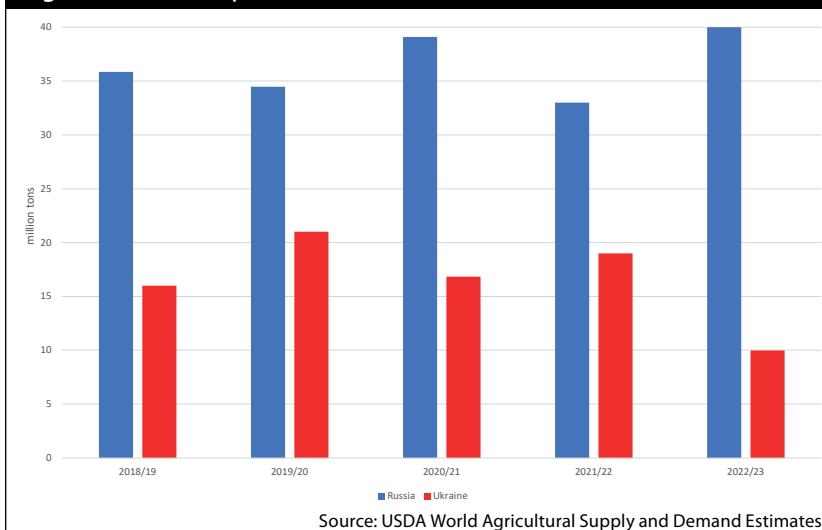
over the last few years compared to the forecasts for 2022/23.

The war between Russia and the Ukraine has resulted in very volatile prices for red wheat, but has had much less of an impact on white wheat prices. Just before the invasion, soft red wheat futures for December 2022 delivery were trading below \$8 per bushel. By mid-May, they had rallied to a high of over \$12.80 per bushel and exhibited a significant increase in overall price volatility.

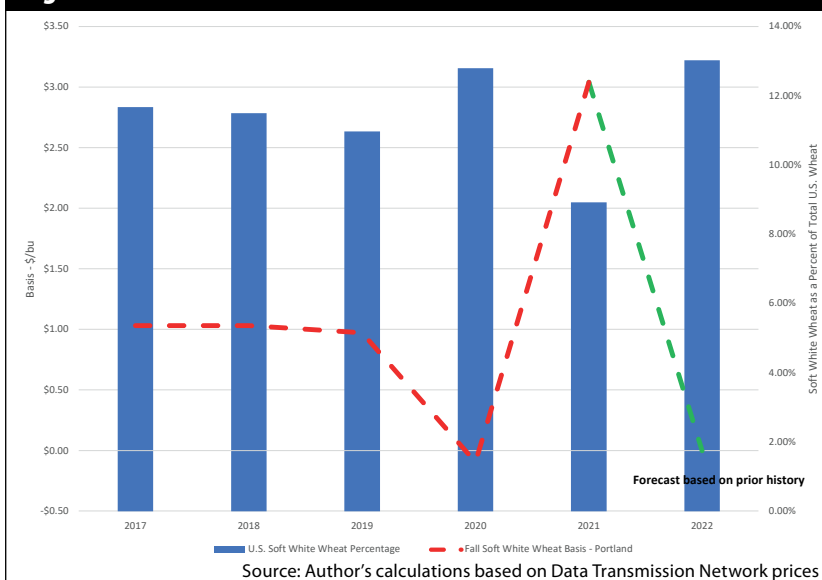
Soft white wheat prices in Portland have averaged about \$11.38 per bushel between the start of the conflict and mid-June this year and been contained to a very tight trading range, with a minimum price of \$10.75 per bushel and a maximum of \$12.60. However, even that range overstates price volatility. Since the third week of February, Portland prices have only been under \$11 per bushel four days and only exceeded \$12 per bushel for four days. The majority of the time, the Portland price has hovered in the mid-\$11 per bushel range. The result has been a very volatile basis for soft white wheat — exceeding \$3 per bushel early in the year and actually going negative for a day or two last spring. This suggests that even if the Russian/Ukraine conflict continues through the rest of the 2022/23 marketing year and further impedes Ukrainian wheat exports, a much larger impact is likely in the red wheat markets compared to white wheat. Thus, betting on a war rally in white wheat following this year's harvest is risky.

Figure 3 shows the Portland soft white wheat basis in October compared to the percentage of total U.S. wheat made up of soft white. Note that there is generally a negative relationship between the two — the larger the market share of white wheat the weaker the basis (meaning the cash price in Portland is reduced relative to the soft red wheat futures price). Based on current crop conditions and USDA data, soft white wheat is expected to represent about 13 percent of total U.S. wheat production this year. The last time that happened (2020), Portland basis was actually negative — Portland cash prices

**Figure 2. Wheat Exports**



**Figure 3. Soft white wheat market share vs. Portland basis**



in October 2020 were below the average October price of the December futures contract. In the previous three years (2017, 2018, 2019), white wheat accounted for between 11 and 11.5 percent of the total U.S. wheat production, and the Portland price averaged about \$1 per bushel above the December soft red futures in October.

Soft red wheat futures for December delivery stabilized in June, trading between \$10.65 and \$11.10 through the first three weeks. If the futures market stability is maintained through harvest and fall basis behaves consistent with past years, we should expect the average soft white wheat price in Portland to be close to the average December futures price in October. However, if futures rally into harvest, I suspect white wheat prices will begin to lag red wheat prices, and we could see a negative basis this fall. ■

**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.

## Harvest season brings harvest stress

# Tips to stay healthy



By Alyssa Wade  
*Farm Stress and Suicide  
 Prevention Coordinator,  
 Washington State University  
 Adams/Lincoln County Extension*

As the dog days of summer roll on, rural towns all around Washington are buzzing with tractors, trucks and other farm machinery. To those in the throes of harvest, it's the accumulation of all their hard-earned efforts, and with that comes an intense and stressful season. Nearly all of the stressors that affect agricultural production are beyond the control of producers. Dealing daily with excessive workload, unforeseeable weather and extreme work conditions is exhausting. Compound that with debt burden, unpredictable markets, inflation and equipment repairs, and it can result in endless hours of physical and emotional stress. Chronic stress can lead to injuries and accidents

on the farm and, if left untreated, anxiety, depression and disease. As the famous author C.S. Lewis once said, "It's not the load that weighs you down; it's the way you carry it." Stress in agriculture is inevitable, but learning how to identify it and manage it is crucial to staying healthy. Here are some changes you can incorporate this season to lessen stress and stay healthy while harvesting.

## Eat healthy and drink water

During harvest, it can be easy to forget to take care of yourself. Stress eating can be tempting, and fast food is quick and convenient. Eating well-balanced meals with proteins, vegetables, fruits and complex carbohydrates during times of stress will keep you feeling full and energized longer. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and try not to abuse caffeinated drinks to the point where you may begin to feel jittery or anxious.

## Prioritize sleep

As the old adage goes, "there is no rest for the weary" and working till the job is done is something growers are all too familiar with. There are times there is no way





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around long days and late nights, but prioritizing sleep is crucial to staying healthy. Lack of sleep can decrease reaction times, cause poor decision making, and lead to mistakes and/or accidents that could cost you time and money. After a stressful day in the field, the best way to assure a restful slumber is to try to create a cool, dark space to lay down and unwind. Aiming for seven to eight hours of quality sleep is best, and rest whenever possible.

## Get physical activity

Sitting for hours, days and weeks in machinery during harvest can lead to physical tension as well as elevated stress. Take time to walk after supper or in the morning before the day starts. A short walk can have big benefits such as improving cardiovascular health, weight loss, increased endurance and energy, and the release of endorphins to improve your mood and relax. Daily stretching releases tension both physically and mentally, increases range of motion preventing injuries, and increases serotonin levels.

## Limit alcohol and drug use

As much as a beer (or several) after a long day may feel relaxing and helpful to wind down, it can also affect your ability to get a good night's rest. It may help you fall asleep faster, but it inhibits you from reaching the REM sleep state and as a result, can leave you feeling less rested and more fatigued. Self-medicating with drugs and alcohol when stressed can lead to more serious mental health issues in the future like anxiety and depression.

## Create a plan

Agriculture is unpredictable, and although unanticipated circumstances may arise, it will help you to sit down with your family and employees and develop a well-thought-out plan. In order to facilitate a smooth and efficient harvest, allow your team to give input and develop a plan of action. Assign responsibilities to everyone involved and allow others to share the workload. Have an emergency or crisis plan in place for unforeseen events. Make plans for how things would be handled in the event of machinery breakdowns, injuries, accidents or other disasters.

## Build a team you can rely on

Building a team to support you and your farm is extremely important and can cut down significantly on stress during times like harvest. Your team starts with your family and employees. Discuss with them what skillsets they have that they feel would be most valuable. Clearly communicate your expectations and put each team member in a place where you feel confident with them completing the assigned task(s) safely and efficiently.

If there are tasks you feel your team is not equipped to handle, seek experts to help, such as Extension specialists who can help you enlist agronomists, financial advisors or other ag experts.

## Take time away from the farm

Harvest season isn't exactly the perfect time to take a vacation, but you can still take time away from the farm even if it's just mentally. Blocking out a small window of time every day to eliminate any sort of farm-related talk or thoughts can release tension and aid in diminishing stress associated with the day. Pray, meditate, listen to music or a podcast, watch your favorite TV show, or talk to family/friends. Ten to 30 minutes is enough to leave you feeling re-energized and newly focused. Having something to look forward to like a vacation or special plans when harvest is completed can be helpful to staying positive as well.

## Seek help if you need it

The most important asset on your farm is you. If you are starting to show signs of extreme stress, it is time to ask for help no matter what is happening on the farm. It may be time to seek help if you are experiencing extreme irritability, anxiety, depression, muscle tension and pain, rapid heartbeat, exhaustion, headaches, dizziness, high blood pressure, and digestive problems. It is okay to ask for help. Your farm cannot thrive if you are not well.

Utilizing these tips may not alleviate all the stress that can arise during harvest, but they can substantially reduce it, and that will benefit both your operation and your health. If you or someone you know needs assistance, there are options available. For more resources you can go to [farmstress.us](http://farmstress.us) or call (800) FARM-AID. If you are considering self-harm, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 785-2433. ■



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# THE BOTTOM LINE

## Producer tips to managing the unexpected

By Dr. David M. Kohl  
*President, AgriVisions, LLC*

Rising inflation, interest rate increases, a conflict in Europe, supply chain disruptions, and shifting consumer preferences are creating an environment of unexpected consequences. Managing a farm or ranch business in an economic environment with extreme volatility can be challenging, but also opportunistic.

At a recent agricultural conference, Dr. Steve Isaacs, Extension professor of agricultural economics at the University of Kentucky, summarized the business environment well when he said, "One does not live solely off the gross revenue or expense side of the equation. It is all about net margin." Let's examine both sides of the equation and provide some insights in placing the margin odds in your favor.

From businesses to households, the question on many people's minds is where is inflation headed? While the Federal Reserve is raising

interest rates to temper inflation, the duration may be impacted by a convergence of events out of the central bank's control.

At the top of mind is the conflict in Europe, creating havoc on inputs such as fuel, fertilizer and anything related to the energy complex. With a considerable amount of potash produced in Russia and nitrogen and phosphorus produced in China, both the cost and availability of each remains in question this year and well into next year.

Food inflation, particularly as it relates to the wheat sector, is becoming an issue. Russia and Ukraine produce between 25 and 30 percent of the world's wheat exports. Fifty countries, many of which are emerging nations, are dependent on these two countries for more than 30 percent of their wheat imports. Typically, Egypt and Turkey import over 60 percent of their wheat from Russia and Ukraine. The Russo-Ukrainian War is a major disruption of food security in regions of the world where social stability is very fragile. The silver lining of this conflict is that it heightens the importance of a stable source of food, fiber and fuel. Of course, extreme weather, the recent COVID-19 outbreak in China, the movement toward de-globalization, and trade disrupters all build a case for extended inflation.

Commodity prices are at record levels due to the aforementioned factors. However, one must be cognizant of net margin. What are producers doing to manage inflation? A set of surveys from a recent conference provided a checklist to score your business strategies compared to your peers.

- Many producers are more diligent about completing cash flows and enterprise budgets for each commodity. The strongest managers are being more intentional about understanding operations from the beginning of the year to the end to improve net margin returns. For example, instead of compiling annual financial statements, the best managers are using the income statement as a living document that is monitored and analyzed in the decision-making process throughout the year. The projected cash flow and income statements compared to actual results can be useful in formulating both purchasing and selling decisions and overall break-even analysis.
- More attention is being focused on cropping rotations, agronomy practices and soil testing.
- Producers are carefully scrutinizing capital purchases such as equipment and facilities to prioritize needs versus wants.
- Producers are stepping up their marketing and risk management strategies to achieve profits and margins while staying as cost efficient and effective as possible. Other practices being implemented are the careful examination of the working capital position and quickness to cash by marketing crops and livestock against offsetting expense obligations at inflated levels.
- Some producers have increased operating lines of credit after analysis of financial spreadsheets with sensitivity testing to develop the outcome guardrails for strategic thinking.

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When all is said and done, financial and economic cycles are a reality of life. This period is very reminiscent of the late 1970s. Old-time management habits with new twists, regardless of the level and duration of inflation, need to be considered.

Make sure you have an accurate financial record-keeping system. This is critical! Ownership of the finances and monitoring key performance indicators to measure business trends and conduct peer analysis can keep you ahead of the curve.

Being receptive to advice that you can customize to your situation through a team of advisors is a high priority. Utilize innovative practices when profitable and use technology to improve effective and efficient practices.

Weather management is a new term being coined by leading producers. Eric Snodgrass, also known as "Eric the Weatherman," provides regional and global weather insight on Northwest Farm Credit Services' website to aid your margin management decisions.

Good communication skills are very important in managing the unexpected. Do not shut down. Be a good listener and focus your energy and efforts on the controllable variables and manage around the uncontrollable

ones. A combination of these strategies will help you manage through the unexpected this year and for many years to come. ■

**Dr. David Kohl** is an academic hall-of-famer in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va. Dr. Kohl is a sought-after educator of lenders, producers and stakeholders with his keen insight into the agriculture industry gained through extensive travel, research and involvement in ag businesses. This content was provided by



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# Your wheat life...



The McGregor Land & Livestock crew on G & L Farms in Benge. Photo by Lisa Beckley.



Randy Schmick and grandson, Mac Melcher (3), near Lancaster getting ready for spring work as a storm rolls in from the north. Photo by Samantha Melcher.



Jim and Linda McKeirnan of Pomeroy had five boys and one daughter who all chose different careers. Do you think any of their grandchildren might become farmers? (From left) Linda McKeirnan; Floyd McKeirnan; Rory McKeirnan; Caroline McKeirnan holding James Onstad; boots for Holter Onstad (arriving soon); Genevieve McKeirnan; Brantley McKeirnan; Brenna McKeirnan; Isabelle McKeirnan holding Liam McKeirnan; Reagan McKeirnan holding Cormac McKeirnan; Brayden McKeirnan; and Jim McKeirnan. Photo by Shane McKeirnan.





Plowing with real horsepower at an old time plowing bee in Davenport. Photo by Randy Suess.



Owen Portillos, 13, waiting for Uncle Scott Schwab to say when the combine is ready for wheat harvest at Moses Lake. Photo by Charles Schwab.



Duane Fletcher (11) of Dayton looking at the latest *Wheat Life*. Photo by Christina Fletcher.

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of your wheat life!**

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of all children.



# HAPPENINGS

*As of press time, the events listed here are being planned. However, you should check prior to the event for updates. All dates and times are subject to change.*

## JULY 2022

**4 GRAND OLD FOURTH.** Pancake breakfast, parade, fireworks. Pasco, Wash. [pasco-wa.gov/844/Grand-Old-4th-of-July-Celebration](http://pasco-wa.gov/844/Grand-Old-4th-of-July-Celebration)

**4 FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION.** Music, entertainment and fireworks. Sunnyside Park in Pullman, Wash. [pullmanchamber.com/events/chamber-events/](http://pullmanchamber.com/events/chamber-events/)

**7 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR.** Bickleton, Wash., at 1 p.m. For information call Hannah Brause at (509) 773-5817 or [smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/](http://smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/)

**9 WATERVILLE PLATEAU FARMERS MARKET & WATERVILLE ROLLERS CAR SHOW.** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Pioneer Park in downtown Waterville. Variety of homemade/homegrown crafts, garden items and nonprofit information booths will be available. Vintage car show. Local restaurants and food vendors. Open to the public. [historicwatervillewa.org/events](http://historicwatervillewa.org/events)

**8-10 CHENEY RODEO.** Dances Friday and Saturday nights after rodeo. Parade. Cheney, Wash. [cheneyrodeo.com](http://cheneyrodeo.com)

**15-17 PIONEER DAYS.** Parade, live music, BBQ and vendors. Davenport, Wash. [davenportpioneerdays.org](http://davenportpioneerdays.org)

**30 PALOUSE MUSIC FESTIVAL.** The festival opens at 11 a.m. and concludes at 8 p.m. and features local musicians performing throughout the day. There will also be arts and crafts vendors, nonprofit organizations, and several food vendors. Admission is \$10 per adult, \$5 for kids 6-16, and 5 and under are free. Hayton-Greene Park in Palouse, Wash. [facebook.com/PalouseMusicFestival/](https://facebook.com/PalouseMusicFestival/)

## AUGUST 2022

**4-6 MOXEE HOP FESTIVAL.** Parade, beer garden, live entertainment, food and crafts, games, BBQ cookoff. Moxee, Wash. [evcea.org](http://evcea.org)

**5-7 KING SALMON DERBY.** Up to \$20,000 in cash and prizes available. Registration required. Brewster, Wash. [brewstersalmonderby.com](http://brewstersalmonderby.com)

**6 SCOTTISH HIGHLAND GAMES.** Enjoy the traditional features of Scottish

Highland Games, such as massed bands, pipe band exhibitions, individual piping, heavy athletics and highland dancing. 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Spokane County Fair and Expo Center in Spokane Valley, Wash. [spokanehighlandgames.net](http://spokanehighlandgames.net)

**10-13 YAKIMA VALLEY FAIR AND RODEO.** PRCA rodeo, car show, parade, beer garden. County Fair Park in Grandview, Wash. [yvfair-rodeo.org](http://yvfair-rodeo.org)

**11-14 OMAK STAMPEDE.** Parade, carnival, art show, rodeo dances and vendors. Omak, Wash. [omakstampede.org](http://omakstampede.org)

**13 SWIM THE SNAKE.** Only .7 of a mile, lots of flotilla support. Participants MUST preregister at [eventbrite.com/swimthesnake](http://eventbrite.com/swimthesnake). Lyons Ferry, Wash. [swimthesnakedotorg.wordpress.com](http://swimthesnakedotorg.wordpress.com)

**13 WATERVILLE PLATEAU FARMERS MARKET.** 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Pioneer Park in downtown Waterville. Homemade/homegrown crafts, garden items and nonprofit information booths will be available. Local restaurants and food vendors. [historicwatervillewa.org/events](http://historicwatervillewa.org/events)

**16-20 GRANT COUNTY FAIR.** Ag exhibits, livestock competitions, carnival, arts and crafts, entertainment, food. Moses Lake, Wash. [gcfairgrounds.com](http://gcfairgrounds.com)

**19-20 NATIONAL LENTIL FESTIVAL.** Stop by and see the world's largest bowl of lentil chili. Fun run, parade, softball tournament, beer garden. Pullman, Wash. [lentilfest.com](http://lentilfest.com)

**20-21 PIONEER POWER SHOW AND SWAP MEET.** Farm equipment, vintage trucks, equipment parade, wheat threshing and binding demos, working sawmill, blacksmith shop farm tractor pulls. Central Washington Ag Museum, Fullbright Park in Union Gap, Wash. [centralwaagmuseum.org/pioneer-power-show-union-gap.asp](http://centralwaagmuseum.org/pioneer-power-show-union-gap.asp)

**23-27 BENTON FRANKLIN FAIR AND RODEO.** Demolition derby, BBQ cookoff, parade, live entertainment. Kennewick, Wash. [bentonfranklinfair.com](http://bentonfranklinfair.com)

**19-28 NORTH IDAHO FAIR AND RODEO.** Fireworks, draft horse show, demolition derby, entertainment, carnival. Kootenai County Fairgrounds in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. [northidahostatefair.com](http://northidahostatefair.com)

**20-21 PIONEER POWER SHOW AND SWAP MEET.** See the equipment of yesteryear with vintage trucks and engines

on display and watch our popular equipment parade. Learn about blacksmithing and watch demonstrations of the turn of the century sawmill and the apple packing line. Enjoy the quilt displays, other historic exhibits and more. See wheat threshing done the old-fashioned way and then enjoy freshly baked bread at the Bread Shack. Central Washington Ag Museum, Fullbright Park in Union Gap, Wash. [centralwaagmuseum.org/pioneer-power-show-union-gap.asp](http://centralwaagmuseum.org/pioneer-power-show-union-gap.asp)

**20-27 BENTON FRANKLIN FAIR AND RODEO.** Demolition derby, parade, live entertainment. Kennewick, Wash. [bentonfranklinfair.com](http://bentonfranklinfair.com)

**25-27 LINCOLN COUNTY FAIR.** Rodeo, livestock, exhibits, food and games. Davenport, Wash. [lincolncountywafair.com](http://lincolncountywafair.com)

**25-28 NCW FAIR.** Live entertainment, carnival, livestock sale, rodeo and horse. Waterville, Wash. [ncwfair.org](http://ncwfair.org)

**25-28 NORTHEAST WASHINGTON FAIR.** Exhibits, parade, talent show, live entertainment, Colville, Wash. [stevenscountywa.gov](http://stevenscountywa.gov)

**27 SPRINT BOAT RACING.** Enjoy 5 grass terraces, two beer gardens and a great atmosphere to watch fantastic racing in St. John, Wash. Fun for the entire family! Bring the lawn chairs, sunscreen and blankets. 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. or until racing is finished. [webbsslough.com](http://webbsslough.com) or (509)648-8900.

**30 SNAKE RIVER ROCK FESTIVAL.** Live rock, food vendors, kids area, dry camping, beer garden and one heck of a sound system! 12-10 p.m., Nez Perce County Fairgrounds, Lewiston, Idaho. [facebook.com/SnakeRiverRF](https://facebook.com/SnakeRiverRF)

**31-SEPT. 5 PIG OUT IN THE PARK.** Music and food. Riverfront Park in Spokane, Wash. [spokanepigout.com](http://spokanepigout.com) ■

## Submissions

Listings must be received by the 10th of each month for the next month's *Wheat Life*. Email listings to [editor@wawg.org](mailto:editor@wawg.org). Include date, time and location of event, plus contact info and a short description.



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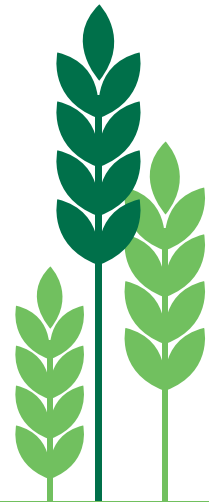
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