

WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

OCTOBER | 2023



HARVEST 2023

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

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Tri-State Grain Growers Convention
Federal legislative staffers tour dam
Dollar Sense: Is an employer-sponsored
retirement plan right for your farm?
Ground broken on new WSU building
Update on barley research

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President's Perspective



A booger of a farm bill

By Andy Juris

What I'm about to relay to you is a true story. A few weeks ago, myself and the rest of the leadership team from the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) stumbled into our hotel in Washington, D.C. It had been a long day of negotiating the innards of our nation's mass air transit, and we were tired. Our cab driver had warned us about the foolishness of walking the downtown streets after dark, so we took an Uber to the only place open and offering solid food after 11 p.m. Back at the hotel, we hit the sack, hoping to catch a few hours of sleep before our first meeting at 7 a.m. the next morning.

Many years spent flying for the airline industry has permanently scarred me regarding the hygienic state of our nation's hotel rooms. But either due to the long travel day or, perhaps, chicken finger-induced indigestion, I neglected to perform my usual inspection. As the dawn's early light illuminated my room, my eyes slowly focused, and then I saw it. I gaped in swirling horror as, mere inches away from my face on the nightstand, lay a nightmarish sight: a booger deposited there by one of the room's previous occupants. Leaping to my feet, instantly awake, I backed carefully away, all the while considering where I might find a biological decontamination facility this early.

It was going to be a long farm bill trip.

As many of you are aware, Sept 30 marked the end of the current farm bill. WAWG has been actively advocating for you in D.C. since farm bill talks began last year. We have also been working with the National Association of Wheat Growers to develop both a state and national priority list. The farm safety net programs of crop insurance, Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage, and disaster aid were each presented to our members of Congress with suggestions for improvements and efficiencies. We stressed just how much farmers pay to participate in crop insurance programs and that an improved safety net system was essential to stabilizing an ag sector reeling from global supply chain problems, COVID shutdowns, crushing inflation, and frequent, intense periods of drought. Although it's a longer-term investment, we also presented the need for a doubling of funding for the Foreign Market Development and Market Assistance Program. As our foreign competitors pour funding into competing with us in our export markets, it is more important than ever to invest in these programs, which haven't seen a funding increase since 2002. Finally, we advocated for changes in voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs to make them more accessible to a broader range of Washington wheat farms.

As we attempt to pick these improvements from the nose of government, the challenges are clear. Budgetary concerns have all but eliminated the chance for additional funding, partisan infighting seems an ever-present distraction, and the uncertainties caused by a looming government shutdown and the 2024 elections all threaten to slow the process. Despite all the challenges, your WAWG officers remain committed as ever to advocating for this, with three D.C. visits already this year, and another one scheduled for later this winter. Together, we hope to do our best to get you all a farm bill that can help us navigate the next five years. It's a booger of a job sometimes, but we always look forward to the next challenge that we will face together.

See page 6 for photos from our trip. I promise, they are booger-free. ■

Cover photo: Harvest 2023 is in the books. See pages 20-27 for harvest photos. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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Industry Associate \$150	X	X	X			

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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WAWG at WORK

ADVOCATING FOR THE WHEAT FARMERS OF EASTERN WASHINGTON

WAWG leaders take part in national farm bill fly-in

Last month in Washington, D.C., leaders and staff of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) met with members of the state's federal delegation during a National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) farm bill fly-in.

"D.C. is currently bustling with farm bill talks. We were able to meet with most of our state's federal delegation and have meaningful conversations about our priorities for the bill," said Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director. "We've heard that there will likely be some type of extension, and Congress' goal is to have a farm bill by the end of the year at the latest. There is quite a bit of work to be done, however, and budgets are tight."

One thing wheat growers heard repeatedly was that House legislators want to make improvements to the bill, especially to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). There are some discussions around making CRP a more regional program, with legislators realizing that a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work for large parts of the country. Hennings said productivity of land in CRP was also a talking point, with Washington growers pointing out that only about 10% of Washington's prime farmland is enrolled in CRP, a number far lower than many Midwest states. ▶



Sen. Maria Cantwell (second from left).



(Left) The Washington Association of Wheat Growers' group included (from left) Anthony Smith, vice president; Andy Juris, president; Michelle Hennings, executive director; and past presidents Nicole Berg and Howard McDonald. (Above) Ryan Casman from the office of Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-Conn.).



(Above) Rep. Dan Newhouse (third from left). (Right) Rep. Kim Schrier (second from right).



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A. Trevor White (right) from the House Agriculture Committee.
B. Katie Clements and Maryana Sawaged from Sen. Patty Murray's office.
C. Noelle Gasper from Rep. Rick Larsen's office.
D. Angela Shin from Rep. Marilyn Strickland's office.
E. Sam Gottlieb (right) from Rep. Adam Smith's office.
F. Michael Bauduy (right) from Rep. Pramila Jayapal's office.



Other topics wheat growers discussed were how to make crop insurance more affordable, increased funding for the Market Access Program (MAP) and the Foreign Market Development (FMD) program, and the potential for a government shutdown at the end of September.

WAWG's farm bill priorities include:

- Protecting and enhancing crop insurance so it continues to provide a strong safety net for producers. According to the Risk Management Agency, nearly 37 million acres or 76% of the country's total wheat acres were covered by a form of crop insurance in 2022.
- Supporting financial and technical assistance through voluntary conservation cost-share programs for pro-

ducers. In addition, the farm bill should not expand conservation compliance to add additional requirements on farmers.

- Encouraging additional investment in agricultural trade promotions and U.S. commodities as part of the farm bill's trade title. MAP and FMD programs have increased farm export revenue by \$9.6 billion annually from 1977 to 2019.
- Supporting wheat research programs authorized under the farm bill and robust funding as part of the annual appropriations process.

Beside Washington state's team, wheat growers from 13 other states also met with their federal delegations, staff



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from the four corners of the House and Senate agriculture committees, and leadership offices.

"I want to thank all of the members of Congress, their staff, and wheat growers who took the time to meet in D.C. and talk about the farm bill," said NAWG president and Oregon wheat farmer, Brent Cheyne. "It is so important for wheat growers to tell their story and share their needs and concerns with lawmakers to help formulate policies and programs that benefit wheat growers and the ag industry."

Besides the legislators (and their staff) pictured, Washington growers also met with the offices of Reps. Derek Kilmer, Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, and Suzan DelBene. ■

Washington wheat organizations celebrate food for peace program

In August, the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) and the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) joined a coalition of American agricultural producers, mariners, and longshoremen, and state and federal officials in Longview, Wash., to raise awareness of the importance of maintaining American agricultural diplomacy around the world. The event showcased the departure of a U.S. Food for Peace shipment of American-grown soft white wheat aboard the U.S.-flag vessel Liberty Glory from the Port of Longview.

"It is an honor to celebrate a program that embodies compassion and collaboration — the U.S. Food for Peace program. Washington farmers understand the role that agriculture plays in ensuring global food security. Washington wheat, known for its exceptional quality, finds purpose beyond our borders nourishing the world and fostering prosperity at home. Wheat for food aid shipments is purchased off the commercial

market, making it a win/win for our farmers and those receiving it. By participating in this program, we not only secure markets for our produce but also take immense pride in knowing that our grains are part of the solution to global hunger," said Casey Chumrau, WGC CEO.

"It is with great pride that we acknowledge the role Washington wheat farmers have played in the success of the U.S. Food for Peace program. As we gather to celebrate



Stakeholders tour the U.S.-flag vessel Liberty Glory as she gets set for departure from the Port of Longview with a load of soft white wheat for the U.S. Food for Peace program.



Wheat grower Randy Suess spoke at the Food for Peace event, representing both the Washington Grain Commission and the Washington Association of Wheat Growers. "Food aid not only benefits everyone around the world and American farmers, but it also involves everybody in the supply chain: the truckers, the warehousemen, the shippers, and the longshoremen. Right now, one U.S. farmer feeds 166 others across the country and around the world. I am proud to be part of this program, working to achieve long-lasting and sustainable food security for the world," he said.

Support for farmers is always in season.




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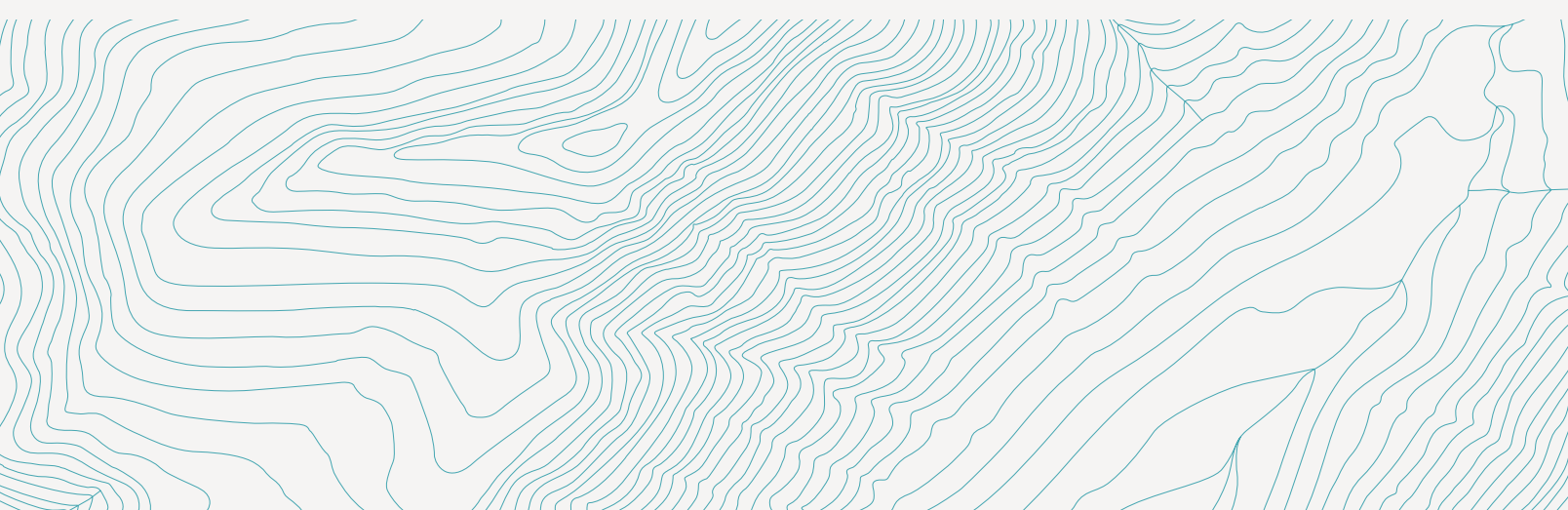
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this program's remarkable achievements, we must also acknowledge that the challenges of global food security persist. The impact of Food for Peace extends far beyond the immediate relief it provides. It fosters resilience, empowers communities, and uplifts societies. By continuing to invest in this program, we pave the way for a brighter, more secure future, and we maintain the bonds of goodwill and cooperation that strengthen our global community. It is essential that we also look forward and consider the importance of continuing this legacy into the future," said Michelle Hennings, executive director of WAWG.

The vessel is bound for delivery to the Middle East to alleviate hunger emergencies in the region.

The event was hosted by Liberty Maritime, U.S. Wheat Associates, North American Millers Association, American Maritime Congress, Transportation Institute, Seafarers International Union, American Maritime Officers, the International Organization of Masters, Mate & Pilots, Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and other federal, state, and local stakeholders. The WGC is a member of U.S. Wheat Associates

"We are honored for the opportunity to come together to commemorate the Food for Peace program and promote wheat as a nutritious component of international food aid. Thank you to all the remarkable individuals and partners who make these shipments possible," Hennings said. ■

Whitman County meets

During September's meeting of the Whitman County wheat growers, producers caught up with the summer's news and heard a pitch to support legislation that would exempt certain purchases of ag equipment from sales tax.

Jesse Johnson, founder of The Farm John Coalition, told growers the group is dedicated to passing legislation that helps support small- and mid-sized family farms, including an idea to create a sales and use tax exemption on certain farm equipment purchases. According to their website, farmjohncoalition.com, the coalition is a group of advocates fighting for family farms in the U.S. While growers supported the idea in general, they ultimately decided not to support Johnson's request.

Alex McGregor gave an update on the Washington wheat industry PAC, which met its funding goal last year.

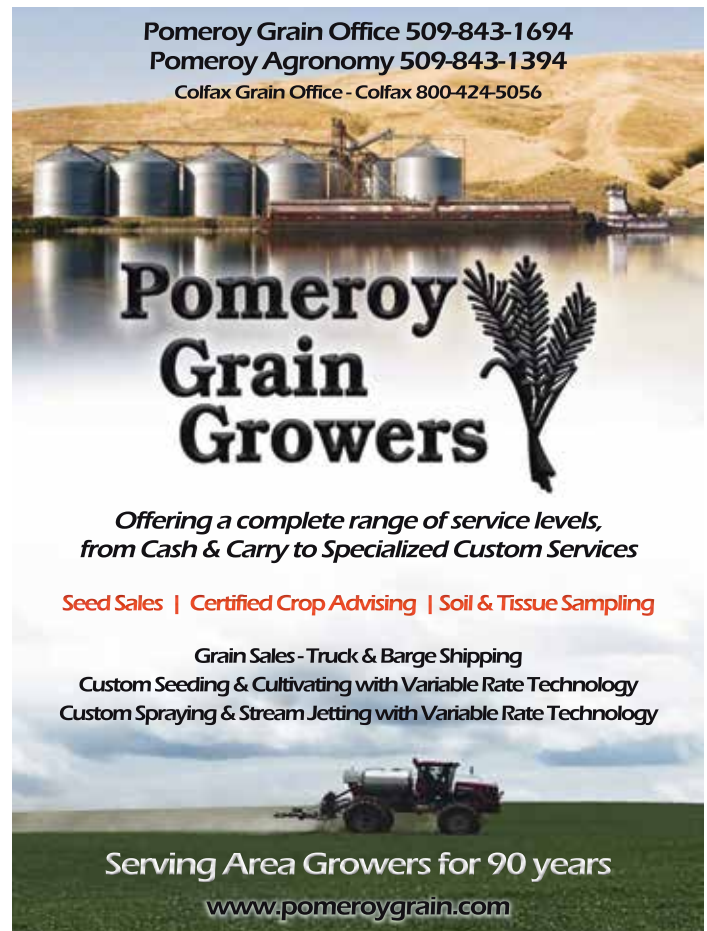
Gary Bailey, a commissioner with the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), also gave an update. The WGC has hosted five trade teams so far this year, with several more scheduled. Growers reported below-average yields across the board, and nobody had started seeding as of the first of September.

Another WGC commissioner, Ben Barstow, reported on the recent federal dam tour stakeholders hosted. See page 40 for more on the tour. ■

Beginning farmers needed

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced a call for nominations to the Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers, which advises the Secretary of Agriculture to enhance USDA's goals for new farming and ranching operations. Members of the public are invited to submit nominations for themselves or other qualified experts by Oct. 10, 2023.

Nomination packages should include a cover letter, a resume that documents the nominee's background and experience (five pages or less), and a completed USDA Advisory Committee Membership Background Information Form (AD-755 (PDF, 2.1 MB)). Nominees may also provide links and samples of published writings related to matters affecting new farmers and ranchers and letters of endorsement — both are optional. Nomination packages may be sent to acbfr@usda.gov. For more information, visit usda.gov/partnerships/advisory-committee-on-beginning-farmers-and-ranchers. ■



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POLICY MATTERS

Salmon and farmers are on the same side

This Op-Ed ran in the Spokesman-Review on Aug. 30, 2023. It was written in partnership with Northwest RiverPartners.

By Michelle Hennings
Executive Director, Washington
Association of Wheat Growers

In the hottest year ever recorded, another wheat harvest is wrapping up. Extreme weather means it's more important than ever to preserve the critical infrastructure we depend on to deliver goods to market. The lower Snake River dams provide affordable, clean, and reliable energy for our farms and communities, but the benefits of these dams extend even further.

The dams enable efficient transportation of our wheat to global markets. The navigable waterways allow us to transport larger quantities of our products at lower costs, making our exports competitive in the international market. Ten percent of all wheat exported from the United States travels on barges through the lower Snake River. To replace the cheap and efficient barges, grain would need to be trucked to ports on the coast, clogging roads and generating air pollution in local communities.

The dams also provide a critical water source for irrigation, enabling area farms to cultivate crops even as our summers heat up. Without them, we would lose 48,000 acres of irrigated farmland and thousands of farmers could lose their livelihoods.

And let us not forget that family farms, just like any family, need affordable and reliable energy.



Ice Harbor Dam on the lower Snake River.

Because so much of our region's power supply is managed by the federal government, three Pacific Northwest senators recently wrote a letter to U.S. Secretary of Energy Jennifer M. Grandholm, a key Biden Administration player, which stated:

"On average, the lower Snake River dams provide the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) with approximately 1,000 megawatts of power annually. With the capacity to generate over 3,000 megawatts of power on demand, the lower Snake River dams are vital for meeting peak energy demands and supplying affordable power to millions of Americans. Notably, BPA credited the lower Snake River dams as responsible for keeping the lights on in part of its service territory during the July 2021 heatwave."

No one here has forgotten the July 2021 heatwave.

As farmers, we also care deeply about salmon preservation. The importance of responsible resource management is core to everything we do. But we strongly believe that removing the lower Snake River dams is not a responsible reaction to salmon struggles.

It is highly unlikely that salmon populations will substantially benefit from removing the dams. In fact, Chinook salmon return to the Snake River at about the same rate as undammed rivers in Alaska and Canada, possibly due to the dams' highly effective fish passage systems.

What are scientists on the river saying? According to a recent story in the

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Capital Press, a regional newspaper covering agriculture issues across the Pacific Northwest, “The vast majority of salmon are getting up, over, around, and through the four lower Snake River dams even as legal challenges and political battles swirl around them, according to the federal agency in charge of monitoring fish health.”

For every 100 young Chinook and steelhead that head downstream and past the four dams every spring, the *Capital Press* reported, about 75 survive. “That’s pretty good,” said Ritchie Graves, Columbia Hydropower Branch chief for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “In a lot of river systems, that would be something they would shoot for.”

The data show that dams and salmon can coexist, and they must. According to a 2021 NOAA Fisheries study, salmon are facing an existential threat from the warming ocean. Getting rid of the dams makes us more reliant on electricity from fossil fuels, adding to the CO2 problem. Wind and solar power are great, but it will take decades before enough are built to replace existing coal and natural gas plants.

As experts in sustainable ecosystem management, farmers understand the importance of maintaining balance in systems. We know that every action can have both intended and unintended consequences.

We see plainly that losing the lower Snake River dams would have devastating unintended consequences for the farming community and the millions of other people in the Northwest who rely on the hydropower system for clean, affordable, and reliable electricity. ■

Northwest RiverPartners is a member-driven organization that serves not-for-profit, community-owned electric utilities in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Nevada, and Wyoming. For more information, visit their website at nwriverpartners.org/take-action/.

Wheat growers disappointed with final WOTUS rule

In late August, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced the final definition of the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule. This comes after a May 2023 Supreme Court decision in the Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency case ruled that portions of the January 2023 WOTUS definition were invalid. The new ruling made several changes to the definition, including:

- Redefining “adjacent” to mean “having a continuous surface connection.”

- Removing all references to the term “significantly affects.”
- Revising the term “tributary.”
- Removing “interstate wetlands” from the defined list of WOTUS categories.

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) expressed concerns about how these actions might have repercussions for wheat growers.

“While NAWG acknowledges that the EPA and the Army Corps have taken steps to address the aspects of the 2023 Waters of the U.S. regulation that the Supreme Court’s Sackett decision rendered invalid, we cannot help but express our unease with the outcome,” said NAWG CEO Chandler Goule. “While we recognize the intent to bring more clarity to wheat growers concerning waters subject to Clean Water Act jurisdiction, we are concerned about the repercussions for our members’ farming operations. The intricate ‘significant nexus’ standard posed challenges for our growers, both in comprehension and alignment with the Clean Water Act. NAWG is disappointed both agencies are proceeding with these regulatory adjustments without public consultation on the proposed changes prior to finalizing the regulation.” ■

NAWG’s Westlin joins USDA trade advisory committee

From the National Association of Wheat Growers

In August, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced new members of the Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) for Trade in Grains, Feed, Oilseeds, and Planting Seeds. Among the new members is **Jake Westlin**, National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) vice president of policy and communications.



“It is an honor to be appointed to serve on the Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) on behalf of NAWG and represent growers from across the United States,” Westlin said. “I look forward to working with the other members of the committee to provide a wheat perspective and support American farmers.”

Westlin has been with NAWG for over three years and handles trade and food aid policies, among other topics within his portfolio. Congress created the advisory committee system in 1974 to counsel the Secretary of

Agriculture and the U.S. Trade Representative on diverse agricultural trade matters. The newly appointed committee members will serve until August 2027.

“We are excited Jake will be representing wheat growers on the ATAC for Grains, Feed, Oilseeds, and Planting Seeds,” said NAWG CEO Chandler Goule. “Having someone with Jake’s extensive trade policy experience, particularly in wheat, receive an appointment to ATAC will benefit wheat growers who rely heavily on exports.” ■

USDA may use CCC funds to boost ag exports

According to several news outlets, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is planning to use \$1.4 billion in Commodity Credit Corporation funds to boost ag exports through a new program, the Regional Agricultural Promotion Program.

As of press time, USDA has not confirmed the funding.

The news comes after U.S. Sens. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), chairwoman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, and John Boozman (R-Ark.), ranking member, sent a letter to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack highlighting the need to invest in trade promotion and in-kind international food assistance, both of which support American farmers and producers.

“As Congress works toward reauthorizing critical programs in the farm bill, we continue to hear from organizations representing the vast majority of U.S. agriculture about the need to strengthen trade opportunities, increase revenue streams, and help producers grow and thrive in a global economy,” the senators wrote. ■

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International trade vital for Washington state producers

Trade seems like such a simple concept. In fact, our nation was founded on the premise that trade with our neighbors would lead to prosperity. The pilgrims of the Mayflower only survived their first years through trade with the indigenous Wampanoag tribe.

Today, we live in an era of American food security. While prices fluctuate at the grocery store due to unpredictable weather, input markets, processor expenses, and crop losses, even our poorest communities have access to food banks, programs, and services that keep families fed with the safest and healthiest food in the world. In America, we are also privileged to eat mostly on a local level. In Washington state, we are especially fortunate to have more than 300 commercially grown foods grown within a day's drive. There are more than 60 farmers markets throughout the state, and our grocery store shelves showcase healthy food choices year-round. We have more than 35,000 farms that are organic, traditional, urban, rural, big, and small. We grow so much food in this state that we have excess after feeding Washington and our neighbors around the U.S.

Not every nation in the world has food security. Not every nation can grow food for itself. The American farmer, especially those in Washington state, farm for those nations as well as ours. The U.S. makes up only about 4% of the world's population, but we help feed the other 96%.

Trade is vital to our Washington farmers and the countries they feed. Washington exports roughly 30% of its food and ag products annually, valued at roughly \$6.7 billion. Specifically to grains, Washington exports roughly 80% of its wheat annually. Much of it goes to the Pacific Rim and Mexico.



Why is wheat so important? Outside of the U.S., wheat is a staple source of protein. Only about 30% of the world's protein comes from animal sources. Most humans don't eat meat regularly like Americans.

"Wheat is the source of 20% of the world's caloric intake and a dietary staple worldwide. It is an excellent source of energy, providing complex carbohydrates, fiber, B vitamins, and iron," according to the U.S. Wheat Associates.

Wheat accounts for roughly 20% of all the protein eaten worldwide. Nations like Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand cannot raise wheat. Their climate and land base do not allow for it, so they rely on our Washington farmers. We are fortunate to have ports along the Pacific coast to keep transportation to these trade partners cost-effective and efficient.

When trade disruptions such as war, port delays, and politics shut down exports from Washington, we all suffer. The farmers rely on exports to keep their businesses viable. Global consumers rely on Washington to supply their markets with necessary food they cannot grow.

Although international relations can get complicated, trade is still a simple concept. And especially for the Washington wheat industry, trade is vital. We are fortunate to be able to eat locally in Washington, but we must continue to think globally about our responsibilities and commitments to feed the world. ■

Create a lasting legacy and remember the Washington Wheat Foundation in your estate planning. Visit wawheat.org.



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

HARVEST 2023

For thousands of Washington wheat farmers, the 2023 harvest has wrapped up, and they are deep into seeding next year's winter wheat crop.

This year's harvest came early and went fast. Most producers reported average to below-average yields with average quality. Producers north of Highway 2 battled snow mold issues, while hot, dry weather across the region impacted the crop.

For the 2023 harvest, *Wheat Life* spent time with

three producers in Adams, Columbia, and Lincoln counties. Of the farms featured on the following pages, two of the three are multigenerational, while the other one is hoping to be. All of them are immensely proud of their history and the work they do to protect the environment while raising the world's best wheat (we might be a little biased).

Want to see more harvest? Go to pages 70-71 for just some of the harvest photos submitted by *Wheat Life* readers. ■





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At the end of harvest, we get to visit with you, for just a bit. Everyone's glad another harvest is in the bin. All is good. Some nice stories about the farms, and how it went this year.

This warm fall afternoon, Chris Hanson rolled onto our trailer lot, in from the family farm down by Oakesdale. The ol' '69 KW with Armstrong power steering purred as he backed the trailer into its fall resting spot. Setting the brakes puffed the dust as if to say, "This is the end of the trail for this year."

The look in this picture kinda says it all. "It's hard work...but I love it."

We couldn't agree more!

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Windy Hill Ranch Adams County

Speaking to Reid Phillips about his family's farm, Windy Hill Ranch, it's obvious how profoundly proud he is to be able to pass it to his son, Palmer.

"It takes more than one generation to make a successful family farm or any farming operation," Reid said. "You have to have a strong commitment. We have long time frames, and it takes hard work, dedication, and commitment."

Windy Hill Ranch is located southwest of Lind, Wash., and was originally homesteaded in the 1920s by Reid's grandfather, Robert Hugh Phillips. RH, as the elder Phillips was called, gifted the ranch to his oldest child, Mildred, when she married in 1941. The newlyweds farmed for a few years, but ended up moving to California. Mildred leased the farm to her brother, Robert (Reid's father), who farmed it until he retired, and Reid took over. In her will, Mildred, who died in 2012, gave Reid the opportunity to buy the land he and his father had spent their lives farming. In 2016, Palmer, the fifth generation, graduated from Washington State University and returned to the farm. The Phillips use direct seeding methods to grow mostly dryland wheat with some winter peas and canola occasionally thrown in.

"I'm really proud of what we've been able to accomplish together as a family," Reid said, adding that it hasn't always been easy. As was the case for many farmers, the 1980s and 90s were financially difficult for the Phillips. "I'm proud of where I'm at."

This harvest season welcomes the sixth generation of the Phillips family — Palmer's infant son, Timothy.

"It means a great deal to me that Palmer's returning and shows such a strong interest in adding to the continuation of the farm and family," Reid said. ■



Reid Phillips (above, right) and his son, Palmer, are the fourth and fifth generations to farm Windy Hill Ranch in Franklin County. The land was originally homesteaded in the 1920s by Robert Hugh Phillips. The remains of the old homestead are still evident (below). In 2023, Palmer's son, Timothy, joined the harvest crew. Palmer's wife, Lauren, is a nurse practitioner in Ritzville.





Lambert Farms Columbia County

Mark and Brett Lambert are the fourth and fifth generations, respectively, to farm their family's land near Dayton, Wash. They grow mostly dryland wheat, chickpeas, peas, alfalfa, and some cattle. They use direct seeding and no-till practices as much as possible.

The farm was first established in the late 1800s by Brett's great-great-grandfather, Rolla Lambert, who traded the family's original land on Eckler Mountain for their current place, which was flatter and better for farming. The farm passed to Rolla's son, Lauren, then to Lauren's son, Doug, before Mark and now, Brett. The father/son duo take care of most of the farming, but hire help during harvest.

"I feel blessed with the opportunity to have such a wonderful thing passed down to me through the generations," Brett said about the family's farm.

Brett has farming genes from both sides of his family. His maternal grandfather, who farmed in Lincoln County, urged him to explore other options than farming before making the decision to go back to the farm. But after graduating from Whitman College, Brett decided the farm was where he wanted to be.

"When you decide to farm, it is a life commitment for you as well as your family," Brett said. "You don't get to just take vacations when you want. The farm dictates when and what you are doing. Having a supportive spouse that understands the level of commitment necessary to farm is key."

Fortunately, Brett has just that. His wife, Taylor, is a nurse, and they have three children: Kayson (5), Blake (4), and Rylan (2). Like most children, they love to ride in the combine. Brett said that while he'd like to see his children involved in the farm, he wants them to do what makes them happy.

"I love my job. I'm passionate about what I'm doing every day," he said. ■



At the southern edge of the Palouse, in Columbia County, Mark (left) and Brett Lambert are the fourth and fifth generations on their family's farm. The farm was first established in the late 1800s. The father/son duo grow mostly dryland wheat and use direct seeding and no-till practices as much as possible.





Steward Farms Lincoln County

In Lincoln County, Josh and Katie Steward's dream of establishing their first generation wheat farm has become a reality. It remains to be seen if it's a dream shared by their children: Jack, 12; Sadie, 9; and Gracie, 4.

"This was Katie and mine's dream," explained Josh. "If they don't want to do it, can we support them in another way? We encourage them to see what else is out there. We'd love to see at least one come home, but if they didn't, I think we are okay with that, too. We understand that this is what we wanted to do."

The Stewards started farming in 2011, when they were able to lease land from retiring farmers, Jim and Sue Els. In the intervening years, they've increased their leased acreage and upgraded equipment. They grow mostly dryland wheat, although this year, they put a couple of acres into canola. They are considering transitioning to a no-till system. Josh's father works on the farm, and their children, especially Jack, help out. Josh said the biggest lesson he's learned is that you can't control everything.

"I'm learning that some things just happen. You just have to make changes and go along with it, like calling an audible in football," he said.

"Being efficient with time and equipment," Katie added. "I didn't realize how much that was going to play into it."

As harvest 2023 wrapped up, the Stewards said they are focusing on increasing their efficiency, following the advice of Dr. David Kohl, a popular ag speaker and writer, that better is better before bigger is better.

"That's where we are at now, trying to figure out how to get better," Josh said. "We've got the acres, so it's how to be more efficient and be better at what we do."

The Stewards are active on social media, posting pictures of their farm life. They say it helps them connect with people and hopefully debunk common farming myths, like farmers drown their wheat in Roundup.

"A lot of people don't understand where food comes from, or what it takes to get food to the grocery store," Josh said. "There's lots of false information out there. There's been a few people I've had good conversations with. I hope they went away with a better understanding (of farming)."

Follow the Stewards on Facebook at @StewardFarmsInc and Instagram at @stewardfarmsinc. ■



For first generation farmers, Josh and Katie Steward (on the left), making a living in agriculture on their Lincoln County farm is a dream realized. They hope at least one of their children, Jack, 12; Sadie, 9; and Gracie, 4, will want to follow in their footsteps. Josh's father, Dave (right), is a valued part of their farm team.







Convention COMING SOON

something awesome is in the works

Fieldwork for the year may slowly be winding down, but preparations for the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention are reaching a fever pitch.

Staff from the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), the Oregon Wheat Growers League, and the Idaho Grain Producers Association are putting the finishing touches on this year's convention, which will be held Nov. 14-16, 2023, at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The annual convention offers growers an opportunity to socialize, network, hear state and national policy updates, and participate in educational break-out sessions. The convention will wrap up with dinner and the traditional silent auction, which raises money to support the industry through various activities, including funding grants and scholarships.

"Every year, we strive to make the convention bigger and better, to provide more opportunities for our producers to learn and to network. This year is no exception," said Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director. "Staff has been working overtime to make this year's convention successful. We have some interesting, noteworthy speakers lined up, and the break-out sessions will provide something for everyone, no matter what their interests are. We hope to see everybody in beautiful Coeur d'Alene next month."

Part of the convention will be dedicated to taking care of business. Washington growers are invited to attend the all-committee board meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 15, at 9:30 a.m., where members will review and update the association's resolutions. The resolutions help direct WAWG's advocacy efforts for the coming year.

"We are a grower-led organization, so it's critical that our members weigh in on the issues that they want us to focus on for the coming year," explained Hennings. "We've got a number of issues already on our radar, including ag overtime, riparian buffers, and carbon fuel surcharges, but we want to hear what else is weighing on growers' minds."

Members that can't attend the meeting are welcome to call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610, and a staff member can submit comments on their behalf. A copy of the current resolutions can be downloaded at wawg.org/about-us/.

The convention kicks off with an agribusiness breakfast featuring former Ambassador Kip Tom. Tom served as the U.S. Ambassador to United Nations Agencies for Food and Ag and was chief of the U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome from 2019 to 2021. He is the managing member of Tom Farms in Indiana. See more on page 36. ►

2023 convention passes up for grabs

Looking for a (mostly) free trip to this year's convention? If you are a Washington producer under 40 who hasn't attended convention before, you are in luck. There's still room in the 15x40 program, which offers a free 2023 convention registration and, if the producer isn't a member of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, a one-year paid membership.

Participants in the 15x40 program will be provided a standard room rate by the Washington Wheat Foundation (no additional incidental charges will be allowed). This is a first-come, first-serve program. To register, call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610. ■



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Other keynote speakers scheduled include:

- Rob Sharkey, better known as The SharkFarmer, is an Illinois grain farmer, podcast and radio show host, and host of multiple TV shows on RFD-TV and PBS. See more on page 35.
- Dr. David Kohl, a popular ag speaker and writer, will provide a unique perspective into future trends of the ag industry and economy.
- Eric Snodgrass, principal atmospheric scientist for Nutrien Ag Solutions, develops predictive, analytical software to help producers manage weather risk.

The convention will be emceed by Tim Gard, a hilariously fast-paced and informative speaker who uses a down-to-earth style and real-life humor to keep audiences entertained.

All shutterbugs are encouraged to enter the annual photo contest. Entries will be displayed throughout the 2023 convention area, and attendees are encouraged to vote for their favorite. The grand prize is a free registration to the 2024 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention, which will be held back at the Coeur d'Alene Resort. Contest is open to conven-



The Coeur d'Alene Resort is nestled on the north shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene and has a delightful array of resort amenities. Each of the 378 guest rooms feature spacious living and work areas and oversized bathrooms. Make your hotel reservations by going to cdaresort.com or calling (800) 688-5253, press #2, then #1 for group reservations. Ask for the Tri-State Grain Growers group rate and choose North Wing for \$140, Park Town for \$150 or Lake Tower for \$180 per night. Room rates are subject to fees and taxes. Parking is \$20 per night for self-parking and \$24 per night for valet parking. If possible, make reservations by Oct. 13 to ensure availability. ■

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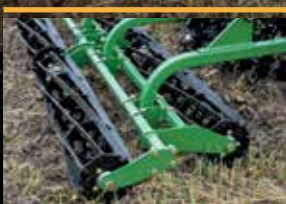
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tion registrants only, and photos must have been taken within the past 12 months. Submissions should be emailed to katie@wawg.org by Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2023. Please include photographer's name, contact information, and caption information. Winning photos will be used in 2024 marketing materials and may be published in *Wheat Life*, *Oregon Wheat*, and *Idaho Grain* magazines.

Registration and a complete convention schedule is available on our website at wawg.org/convention/. Early bird registration ends Oct. 25. Here's a closer look at the breakout sessions scheduled for the 2023 convention:

Global Wheat Trade and Market. U.S. Wheat Associates staff will help the audience digest and better understand the news headlines of global wheat market outlooks and challenges.

D.C. Talk. Keira Franz and Jack Long from the National Association of Wheat Growers will deliver an "inside the beltway" perspective about what farmers can expect from lawmakers moving into 2024. They will provide an update on the farm bill, as well as other federal issues.

Dealing With Mental Health Emergencies. Oregon State University's Cassia Bouska will explain how QPR, like CPR, is an emergency response to someone in crisis that can save lives. Question, persuade, and refer are the three simple steps anyone can learn to help save someone from suicide.

How to Tell Your Ag Story. Geoff Vetter of the Clyde Group will focus on helping you tell your ag story and discussing difficult topics, such as pesticides, in a way that can resonate with a public audience and sway decisionmakers.

Making Crop Insurance Decisions. So many factors need to be considered when purchasing crop insurance. Join our panel of crop insurance professionals and farmers to discuss making crop insurance purchases.

Natural Resources Conservation Service Update. Learn about program updates, including how Inflation Reduction Act funding can benefit your farms, from representatives from each of our three NRCS state offices.

Securing Your Retirement and Your Legacy. Not putting all of your proverbial eggs in one basket is something everyone is familiar with when it comes to planning your retirement, but what are the various "basket" options available to a self-employed farmer? Join Jordan Thayer from Morgan Stanley as he discusses several topics he has mentioned in recent *Wheat Life* articles.

Wheat Market Update. The Money Farm's Allison Thompson will provide a global wheat marketing update and bring marketing statistics and trends into perspective.

It Takes a Plan to Build a Legacy and an Estate Plan to Protect it. The most common regret Kevin Bearley of Pinion sees with farm families is not having a comprehensive estate and next-generation plan when it's time to pass the business on to family or transition to new ownership. It's crucial you make sure your planning fits with your desires and dovetails with current and future situations that may arise.

All About Barley. Experts in the barley industry will take an in-depth look at expanding opportunities for growers in the Pacific Northwest. What are the economic and demographic forces driving demand today?

High Land Values and How They Impact Your Farm. AgWest Farm Credit representatives will discuss the market trends and headlines surrounding regional farmland values and how that impacts your operation.

We Do Give a Dam! Are you tired of all the rhetoric surrounding the dams? We are bringing a panel of dam experts to share information and perspectives on Marine Highway 84 that you may not have considered. ■

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Meet The SharkFarmer

Popular host to speak at 2023 grain growers convention

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Agriculture has a tale to tell, but finding a way to tell it is sometimes difficult. That's where **Rob Sharkey**, aka "The SharkFarmer," comes in.

Rob and his wife, Emily, have created a platform for farmers to tell their story through their SharkFarmer podcast and hosting programs on RFD-TV, PBS, and Sirius XM radio. The couple own a farm in Illinois and are the owners of a white-tail deer outfitter. Rob will be one of the keynote speakers at the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention Nov. 14-16 at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.



Creating a successful media platform wasn't always a smooth process. The Sharkeys had to learn the technical aspects of creating content, often by watching YouTube videos, and they were covering topics that weren't often talked about in traditional ag media.

"Our thought was that we were going to provide that platform for people in agriculture who really never got a platform before. If someone had a very cool story, really, the only way they would get it out there is if a farm magazine would come interview them or a TV show or something like that," Rob explained. "When social media and podcasts started to crank up, all of sudden, the platform could be available for anybody. We are just finding all these incredible stories in ag out there, from farmers, from ag professionals, from even ag media. It's like we couldn't record them fast enough."

On their programs, the Sharkeys work to keep the "farmer-ese" to a minimum. Even though the stories are mostly from a farmer's perspective, Rob said the response overall has been positive. He said some of the notes and letters they've received have really touched him.

"It kind of takes your breath away," he said. "You are letting someone else tell their story, and I don't realize how much it is going to affect someone else at the time. That makes me feel really good."

In his speaking gigs, Rob usually focuses on his family's story, not just going from a corn and soybean farmer to a media shark, but his earlier experiences growing up on a farm.

"I came out of college and then worked for my dad for a couple of years. We got into hogs at the absolute worst time you could get into hogs. It drove us to the verge of bankruptcy," he said. "I'm going to talk for 45 minutes about how I failed at so many things. Literally, I've made some huge mistakes, but I'm not a failure, and I'd love to get that message across — don't be afraid of trying stuff just because you are afraid of failing."

For more information on Rob and Emily Sharkey, visit their website at sharkfarmer.com. For more information on the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention and to register, visit wawg.org/convention/. Early bird registration ends Oct. 25. ■

A global outlook on US ag

Former UN food ambassador to be featured speaker at 2023 grain growers convention

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

On the surface, **Kip Tom** doesn't appear to share much in common with the average Washington wheat farmer, but dig a little deeper, and the similarities emerge.

From 2019-2021, Tom served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture and chief of the U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome. He is also managing member of Tom Farms, his family's multigenerational Indiana corn and soybean farm. The farm has been a top seed supplier to some of the world's largest seed companies, and Tom has served as a crop production consultant in the U.S. and overseas. He'll be one of the keynote speakers at the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention where he'll be talking about global and domestic policy issues, markets, and farm programs. This year's annual convention is Nov. 14-16 at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

"We are no different than the farmer with 2,000 acres, it's just at a different scale," Tom explained. "We operate under similar conditions, that is, Mother Nature's in control of a lot of what we do. We use a systems approach to our operation, which I think a lot of farms are moving more to digital platforms, the way they manage their finances, their productivity, their equipment, all their inputs, and everything."

While Tom Farms may have a global presence now, Tom started much smaller — his parents raised five kids on about 525 acres. He said that grounding in agriculture was critical when it came to making decisions during his time as an ambassador.

"I've farmed at all scales, so I can relate to any farmer, because there isn't anything they do that I haven't done, probably. That goes from fixing a tile line to an irrigation pipe to fixing a tractor, planter, or irrigating. I've done all that," he said. "It just so happens, I got fortunate to be able to travel this path in life and serve our nation on representing us to the ag and food agencies in Rome, Italy. But I can tell you as soon as I got home, the nice wingtip shoes came off, and the boots went back on."

Tom is still an active advocate for U.S. agriculture. Over the fall, he spent time in Europe speaking out against the EU's European Green Deal, which seeks to reduce the environmental and climate footprint of the EU food system by significantly reducing the use of fertilizer and pesticides, taking land out of production, and making



agriculture more sustainable. He said the program is trying to influence American farmers' markets and trading channels.

"I think that's what you need to do once you come home from serving in a post, make sure you take what you've learned and remain engaged, even at your own expense. You need to be involved. I love the industry, and I love the people," Tom said.

During his time as ambassador, Tom said he brought a very pragmatic, boots-on-the-ground approach to his posting. Out of the nearly 200 people he worked with at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), he was the only farmer. The FAO's mission is to create resilience and capacity on ag systems, something Tom feels they've failed at doing.

"I spent a lot of time educating, entertaining, and everything else. Every week, I'd have two to three dinners at my residence and have ambassadors from Europe over, ambassadors from across Africa, Middle East, southeast Asia, Latin America over, just trying to give them an idea of what the reality is, and what it takes to grow food," he said. "I came back having my eyes opened up and understanding how inefficient they (the UN) are, and how they are actually not getting the work done they have been charged to do."

Despite the challenges, Tom is optimistic about U.S. agriculture's trade opportunities, especially in light of what the EU is doing with its European Green Deal — he said he wouldn't be surprised if the EU ends up being a net food importer in the future. He pointed to Africa as being untapped as a trading partner, but believes the U.S. has to stop focusing so much on climate and refocus its energies on trade.

"I look at our international wheat sales and soybean sales, and boy, we are sliding. We need to get our selling shoes on and get back out there and promote U.S. products," he explained. "The biggest thing I want to push with producers everywhere I go is to encourage their advocacy. I realize we are all busy growing a crop, raising cattle, whatever it may be, but the reality is, we've got to make sure the consumer understands what we are doing, because when they don't understand, someone else gives them the answer, and those answers aren't usually very accurate."

For information on the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention and to register, visit wawg.org/convention/. Early bird registration ends Oct. 25. ■



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AMBASSADOR KIP TOM served as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture and the chief of the U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome from 2019 to 2021. He is the managing member of Tom Farms in Indiana. Ambassador Tom will be discussing trade issues and status of the 2023 Farm Bill.



ROB SHARKEY is better known as the SharkFarmer. He is a risk taker and out-of-the-box thinker who believes everyone has a story to tell. His authentic interview style and ability to tackle controversial issues has catapulted him onto Sirius XM, PBS, Acres TV, and six seasons of SharkFarmer TV.

DR. DAVID KOHL is an academic Hall of Famer in the College of Ag at Virginia Tech. Dr. Kohl has keen insight into the agriculture industry gained through extensive travel, research, and involvement in ag businesses. Dr. Kohl's wisdom and engagement with all levels of the industry provide a unique perspective into future trends.



ERIC SNODGRASS is a Science Fellow and 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.

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Watch wawg.org/convention for updates



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_____ Tri-State Luncheon (Wednesday)	_____ Idaho Banquet (Wednesday)	_____ Luncheon (Thursday)
	_____ Washington Banquet (Wednesday)	_____ Dinner & Auction (Thursday)

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Delving into the dams

Federal legislative tour shows staffers how critical lower Snake River dams are to region

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

In an effort to show, not just tell, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, along with other industry stakeholders, brought 15 federal legislative staffers to Lewiston, Idaho, in August to showcase the lower Snake River dams and the critical services they provide to the Pacific Northwest.

“We appreciate those staffers who took the time to come to the Inland Northwest and experience first-hand our river system and learn how vital this river highway is for agriculture, energy, and the economy,” said Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG). “There’s a world of difference when people can experience our infrastructure in person and see the technology in use that generates clean energy, provides safe fish passage, and offers carbon-friendly methods of transportation.”

The educational tour included a boat ride through the locks at Lower Granite Dam, followed by a tour of the dam’s state-of-the-art fish passage system and a trip to the powerhouse. The group visited Idaho’s only seaport, the Port of Lewiston, as well as the Port of Wilma, fol-

lowed by dinner at Lindsay Creek Vineyard. The visitors included staff from many PNW congressional offices, as well as staff from the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, and the House Committee on Natural Resources. Industry stakeholders who participated in the tour and spoke to the group included representatives from several ports, transportation groups, cruiseslines, and advocacy groups. Besides WAWG, the tour was sponsored by the Washington Potato Commission, NW RiverPartners, and The McGregor Company.

Matt Harris, director of governmental affairs for the Washington Potato Commission, told the group that removal of the dams would hit irrigators hard, as not only are growers in the Odessa area struggling to manage over 30,000 acres of potato production from a failing aquifer, but now special interest groups want to remove another 10,000 acres of potato production by demolishing the lower Snake River dams. That’s over 2.4 billion pounds of food. He added that all irrigated lands receiving electricity from the Bonneville Power Administration could see up to a 50% increase in costs. He estimated that a 2,000-acre potato farm in Franklin County would see an increase



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in energy costs of \$50,000 per year, which is a significant shock to a family farm. The Washington potato industry contributes more than \$7 billion to the region's economy, 31,000 jobs, and is responsible for 20% of the country's potato supply.

"There's a lot to consider," he said.

Kurt Miller, executive director of NW RiverPartners, told the staffers that dams are not the reason salmon numbers have declined and may not be the reason they haven't returned. He explained that salmon returns from 1915-1937 averaged less than 1 million; Bonneville dam wasn't built until 1938.

"There's a strong correlation between ocean temperatures and salmon returns," he added.

One thing staffers heard multiple times was the fact that removing the lower Snake River dams would have national implications. Hennings pointed out that 30% of the country's wheat, corn, and soy goes down the river system.

"This is not just a regional issue, it's national," she said. "I'm thankful you are on this tour. We want to find a science-based solution we can all live with."

Michael Seyfert, president and CEO of the National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA), which includes nearly 1,000 member companies representing all aspects of the grain fuel and food supply chain, echoed Hennings' remarks. In a follow-up email, Seyfert said he's very familiar with the lower Snake River dam issue and protecting the dams is one of the NGFA's top policy priorities.

"The Columbia/Snake river corridor is the third largest grain and oilseed export corridor in the world. It is of incredible importance to farmers and exporters not only in the PNW, but also into the interior of the U.S." he said. "I was having a



conversation with one of the congressional staffers and was able to explain how this issue directly impacted NGFA member facilities and jobs in their congressional district. I could tell it was really a moment that tied it all together for them."

Seyfert said he hoped the staffers came away with a better understanding of the complexity of the issue and the potential impact on the overall agricultural economy, including producers, exporters, and processors in both the Pacific Northwest and throughout the U.S. He pointed out that there is strong data representing the importance and economic value of the dams, while there is little, if any, data demonstrating that salmon populations will go up if they are removed.

"I'm a big believer there is nothing better than 'boots on the ground' and seeing it for yourself," he said. "I am hopeful they are able to return back to D.C. and their district offices and have fact-based discussions with their members of Congress and constituents that will result in common-sense, science-based solutions."

Christen Harsha, senior counsel for the House Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations, said she learned more of the importance of the dam system to the local economy before the tour.

"I thought the whole tour was really valuable. Some of the safety and environmental benefits of shipping local products via rivers were new to me and very interesting," she said.

Christopher Perez, outreach representative for the Congressional Western Caucus, was a staffer who wasn't very familiar with the issue. He was briefed before the tour, but said he learned more than expected, especially about how removal of the dams would impact wheat exports that could feed 1 million people in Yemen for a year.

"One thing that stood out to me on the tour is that the Snake River dam system is the top exporter of wheat in the U.S., and last year, they made a profit, which benefits taxpayers around the country," he said. "These facts changed my perspective on the dam system. Now I see them as not just of regional importance but of both national and international importance."

Mark Matava, communications assistant for Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, just recently joined the congresswoman's staff. While he was familiar with the

issue, he said the tour opened his eyes to how vital the dams are, not only for exporting agricultural products, but for the stability of farmland and entire local economies throughout the region's communities.

"One moment that really stood out to me was seeing Lower Granite Dam's retrofitted fish passage technology first-hand and hearing how seriously the staff took counting fish returns and investigating causes and potential solutions to low returns," he said. "It's no wonder Lower Granite Dam has hit 98% fish passage!"

See tour photos on pages 44-45. ■



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Jordan Thayer

This is the fourth of four financial advice articles that have appeared in the last few issues of Wheat Life. The information in this series is presented in partnership with Jordan Thayer, a financial advisor with Morgan Stanley who works with growers in Eastern Washington.

Thayer is scheduled to be a break-out session speaker at the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention in November.

Farmers may find benefits in retirement plans for employees

Editor's Note: This is the fourth and final installment of financial advice articles that have appeared in Wheat Life. The information in this series is presented in partnership with Jordan Thayer, a financial advisor with Morgan Stanley who works with growers in Eastern Washington. Thayer is scheduled to appear at the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention in November.

Employer-sponsored retirement plans aren't just for big corporations. Even farmers with only a few employees might find there are benefits and advantages to offering a retirement plan.

What are the advantages to having an employer-sponsored retirement plan?

There are many options, but the most popular tend to be a Simplified Employer Pension (SEP) or SEP IRA, a SIMPLE IRA, and a 401K plan. An employer-sponsored retirement plan acts as a great tool in many ways:

- You can recruit high quality employees by offering them the ability to save into a retirement plan, often incentivizing them with an employer match.
- Employer contributions into employee accounts are tax deductible.
- Employee accounts grow tax-free.
- Tax credits for starting a plan may be available.
- Plans are flexible to adapt to your growing business.

Any money an employee earns that they contribute into a traditional 401K plan is money they will not pay income tax on now. They will pay income tax on it later when they withdraw it in retirement ... but they are retired. The point is, when they are retired and not working a regular job, their income tax bracket will likely decrease significantly. Therefore, by deferring income into a traditional 401K and then withdrawing in retirement, an individual has much higher chances of paying less in income taxes.

When looking at different plans, what should a farmer be looking for?

As a business owner, the first thing I would look at is cost and complexity. SEP IRA and SIMPLE IRA plans are simple, cheap, and can accommodate up to 100 employees. They are not as flexible as a 401K, but they allow for many of the benefits discussed here. As a business grows near or above 100 employees, a 401K may be the more appropriate choice, and it allows for much more flexibility and ability to incentivize employees with options such as profit sharing, employer matching, automatic enrollment for employees, and Roth options.

A farmer should also consider what assistance is available from the servicing company or provider. Can an employee call them for help in signing up or discuss investment options? Employee education is becoming a much more sought after offering in the realm of retirement plans. Most people are good at their jobs, not navigating the complexity of retirement investing (hence the need for plan advisors) and will have questions such as how much should I defer out of my paycheck? Which funds should I invest in? How do I sign up and make adjustments? All of these questions should be able to be handled by the service provider the farmer selects.

What are some common mistakes in employer-sponsored retirement plans?

I would say the most common mistake is simply not using an employer-sponsored retirement plan. A simple phone call to any number of providers can instantly give a quote of



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cost and timeline to institute a plan. It takes a little time on the front end, but being able to reap tax benefits on the business side and set employees up for success in retirement are just a few of the many benefits of these types of plans.

When should a farmer start thinking about setting one or more of these up?

I would start with an informal poll of your employees. Is this something they would be interested in? Even if the majority say no, instituting a small, low-cost plan like a SEP IRA or SIMPLE IRA would allow for the business to enjoy some tax benefits and at least provide the option for the employees to utilize. I have often seen over time that it only takes one or two employees to begin utilizing an employer-sponsored plan, and many more begin to sign up as the advantages are realized and the word begins to spread.

Anything else farmers need to know?

Employer-sponsored plans can be complicated and utilizing a trusted financial advisor is a good way to navigate the deep pool of options. The primary components to keep in mind are cost, simplicity, and the ability to use the provider to help take care of the day-to-day tasks so that the farmer doesn't have to. ■

Jordan Thayer is a financial advisor with the Global Wealth Management Division of Morgan Stanley in Seattle, Wash. The information contained in this article is not a solicitation to purchase or sell investments. Any information presented is general in nature and not intended to provide individually tailored investment advice. The strategies and/or investments referenced may not be appropriate for all investors as the appropriateness of a particular investment or strategy will depend on an investor's individual circumstances and objectives.

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CHAIRMAN

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

By Ben Barstow



While May is designated as Mental Health Awareness Month, when they tell you to be aware of the stress in your life, I find I am also aware of it in September and a little in October, unless fall field work drags on into November (eeek!). I always find myself a little depressed at the end of spring work, the end of harvest, and the end of fall work. Big tasks coming to an end leave me feeling a little empty, even though there is always a long list of “I’m going to do that as soon as this is over,” waiting to pounce as soon as the tractor or combine is parked. My little fits of depression are minor, lasting a few days at most, but it can be a serious problem. It can be like that little hydraulic leak that suddenly splits open, draining the fluid in a moment and wrecking an expensive and hard-to-replace pump before you can even turn around.

Just like those little leaks or odd new noises, we need to pay attention to our mental machinery before something really bad happens. Most of us are pretty good at shutting the tractor off if something needs to be fixed, and we need to be able to — need to give ourselves permission to — shut some things off to attend to our mental state as well. Sometimes, that’s all it takes, shut the engine off and take a few moments to stretch your legs and take a good look around. Every place has its own beauty if you look at it the right way. If I wait too long to address a blossoming bad attitude, little things start to compound and send me into a foul, black mood that I can’t explain or readily pull myself out of, and that is a version of me no one wants to be around.

Sometimes, talking to a friend or partner or family member about what is weighing on you can do wonders to change your perspective. That’s one of the reasons I enjoy the annual Tri-State Grain Growers Convention (coming up Nov. 14-16 at the Coeur d’Alene Resort. See more on page 28). Sometimes I find it easier to talk to fellow farmers who share the same issues, both farming and personal, if they are not my neighbors. Maybe that’s because those guys from southeast Idaho and Condon, Ore., haven’t driven by my Italian rye or seen those big skips where I fell asleep with the drill.

The three states meeting together is not just social, though. It is ultimately about getting your grain sold. It is

the region where soft white wheat is grown that attracts millers and bakers from around the world, not the individual states. That is why the three states cooperating together to maintain a consistent supply of high-quality grain is in our best interest. Washington, Oregon, and Idaho united together in promoting our grains to the world puts more force in our marketing efforts.

Maybe that is a part of the mental health benefit for me, too, that coming together of wheat farmers from throughout the Pacific Northwest shows me that the challenges I face, both on and off the farm, are actually facing a lot of other wheat farmers. We are not in this alone, and there are cheap places to get help, like the website farmstress.us and by phone at (800) FARM-AID. I know, personally, that counseling can be a good thing, but we’ve got to have the courage to seek it out.

Mental health challenges don’t always behave like that small hydraulic leak. Sometimes, they come on suddenly and with great force, like a rod through the side of an engine on the second day of harvest. The latest for me was when I realized that a recent injury may never fully heal. That hit me pretty hard, but there are plenty of other triggers. An unexpected diagnosis, losing a long-time relationship, a canceled lease, losing a loved one, a fire, or any of a dozen other catastrophic events could tip a person into serious depression. I believe some life events can be as crippling as a physical brain injury. Add in the normal, everyday things like a poor crop year, weed control failure, high fuel prices that weren’t supposed to happen, parts you can’t get, fertilizer you can’t afford, and a stubbornly downward price trend, and yeah, this is a stressful business, and you are not a failure if you need a little help sometimes.

So, if you are feeling a little let down, if it feels like things are starting to pile up around you or life has delivered you some heavy blows, take a few minutes or days and remember, everything, every situation, has its own beauty if you look at it the right way. Even my drill skips and weed disasters make my neighbors feel better about their own farming competence. It doesn’t mean I’m a failure, it means I’m providing a valuable public service to my community! ■

For immediate mental health needs, please contact one of these national hotlines:

- ✓ **Farm Aid Hotline: (800) FARM-AID (327-6243) Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Eastern time).**
- ✓ **9-8-8: Suicide and Crisis Lifeline that’s available 24/7.**
- ✓ **2-1-1: A comprehensive hotline that connects callers with local resources.**

Officials break ground on new WSU building

AG SECRETARY JOINS INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS IN PULLMAN TO MARK EVENT

By RJ Wolcott

WSU News & Media Relations

Federal officials joined Washington lawmakers and Washington State University (WSU) leaders in August for the groundbreaking of the new U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) Plant Sciences Building on the Pullman campus.

More than 150 guests listened as speakers, including the Washington Grain Commission's (WGC) Mary

Palmer Sullivan, discussed the 20-year path to securing support for this new facility. The project dates back to 2003 and ultimately received nearly \$125 million in federal funding for the building which is slated to open in 2025. The site was formerly occupied by Johnson Hall, which was demolished earlier this year to make way for the new construction.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack asked attendees to think ahead to a future when the facility is



Officials who helped break ground on the new Plant Sciences Building on the Washington State University (WSU) campus in Pullman included (from left) Wendy Powers, dean of WSU's College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences; Elizabeth Chilton, chancellor of the WSU Pullman campus; Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.); U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack; Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.); Chavonda Jacobs-Young, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) chief scientist and undersecretary of research, education, and economics; and Simon Liu, USDA-Agricultural Research Service administrator. Photo by Robert Hubner, Washington State University Marketing and Communications.

completed, bustling with students, faculty, and researchers looking to solve the problems facing farmers in Washington and far beyond.

“There’s an effort to try to make sure that we understand how to deal with a particular disease that is impacting wheat production. And imagine the spark, the passion, the energy, the excitement that occurs when the solution is discovered. That’s what this facility is about, that moment of discovery,” he said.

Vilsack noted the new facility will not only be a place for discovery but also a resource that farmers, both local and far afield of the Palouse, will benefit from in the form of new techniques and greater insight into the vital work they do.

“To the extent that we have a university and a government research entity in partnership, ensuring that that farmer, that rancher, that grower, that producer can continue to be productive, is an enormous opportunity for this country, and each one of us should be thankful at this groundbreaking for the science that’ll take place that’ll help these farmers, ranchers, and producers continue to be productive,” Vilsack said.

WSU’s partnership with the USDA dates back to 1931 and represents one of the agency’s most vigorous partnerships with its best day ahead of it, said Chavonda Jacobs-Young, USDA chief scientist and undersecretary of research, education, and economics.

The university’s departments of Plant Pathology, Crop and Soil Sciences, and Horticulture will inhabit the new building alongside federal scientists and four ARS research units: Wheat Health, Genetics and Quality; Grain Legume Genetics and Physiology; Northwest Sustainable



The Washington state wheat industry was well represented by growers including Jim Moyer (left), Washington Grain Commission Chair Ben Barstow (middle) and Marci Green. Photo by Robert Hubner, Washington State University Marketing and Communications.

Agroecosystems; and Plant Germplasm Introduction and Testing.

Elizabeth Chilton, chancellor of the WSU Pullman campus, noted that the groundbreaking represented much more than the beginning of a new research facility.

“It is evidence of the incredible partnership that WSU celebrates with USDA and our local, state, and federal legislators, commissioners, and communities,” Chilton said. “The groundbreaking research that this facility will support will literally change lives. This building will support faculty members, students, and researchers partnering together to create better crops and more sustainable farming practices so that we’re able to better feed our planet.”

U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.) highlighted the university’s track record of exceptional agriculture research and how that factored into USDA’s plans for the Pullman campus going forward.

“Over many years and countless breakthroughs, WSU has earned a rep for excellence in the field of ag research and built a very special relationship with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service,” Murray said. “WSU has deservedly become one of the most trusted partners for ARS, and the WSU-ARS partnership has been incredibly fruitful, which is why this new facility has long been a top priority for the department.”

Thinking back on her time as a Cougar, Murray fondly recalled to the crowd her experiences as a student, including her first political victory: Successfully petitioning for women to be allowed to wear pants to dinner at campus dining halls rather than dresses, which were customary at the time. ►



The U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service Plant Sciences Building groundbreaking ceremony took place on the campus of Washington State University Pullman, Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023. Photo by Robert Hubner, Washington State University Marketing and Communications.

Upon taking the stage, Eastern Washington Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) touched on the significance of agriculture locally, with Whitman County being the number one producer of wheat in the nation and Pullman recognized as the lentil capital of the world.

“To everyone at the Department of Agriculture, thank you for recognizing the potential of our community just waiting to be unleashed and placing us at the heart of your work to develop new agriculture products that enhance our competitiveness, will strengthen our supply chain, protect our farmers’ crops and livelihoods, support jobs here in Eastern Washington, and I know that this mission is only going to continue to grow because of this facility,” she said.

Wendy Powers, dean of the College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences, thanked the many individuals who helped to make the event pos-

sible. Among those highlighted were Zoe Higheagle Strong, vice provost for Native American Relations and Programs and tribal liaison to the President, who provided the university’s land acknowledgement. Powers also noted the importance of a recently ratified memorandum of understanding between WSU and more than a dozen partner Tribes and Native Nations.

In addition to representatives from the federal government and Washington state agriculture groups, WGC Chair Ben Barstow, WSU Board of Regents Chair Lisa Schauer, and Regent Brent Blankenship also attended the events.

After shovels of dirt were lifted and media questions answered, Sen. Murray joined university officials on a tour of the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory and the Paul G. Allen School for Global Health. ■

Reprinted from the Aug. 1, 2023, WSU Insider.

WGC's Sullivan recognized for 35 years of service

The U.S. Grains Council (USGC) recognized **Mary Palmer Sullivan** for her 35 years of service to the organization at the Council's 63rd Annual Board of Delegates Meeting in Calgary, Canada, held July 26-28.

Sullivan serves as vice president of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), where she oversees research and promotion of Washington barley and wheat. She also assists with overseas market development and organizing trade team visits to Washington.

"This is the only job I've ever had, but it's evolved. I started out in barley in 1988 and got involved with the Council right after that," Sullivan said. "I've been doing this for a long time, it's what I like to do, and I'll probably continue to do it until I retire."

She vividly remembers planning logistics for a Council trade team of more than 20 Japanese buyers and researchers to visit Washington dairy operations and then being unexpectedly asked to help lead the team herself just a month into the job.

"Was it hectic? Yeah. Did I love every minute of it? Yes,

I did," Sullivan said. "That was my experience with the Council, seeing that this is what it provides, and this is what I want to do."

Since then, Sullivan has welcomed barley teams from China, Cyprus, Japan, Korea, Latin America, and Taiwan and continues to bring more than a dozen groups to the state every year between her work with barley and wheat.

"Washington is a trade-dependent state, and the Council has contacts around the world to reach current and potential customers," Sullivan said. "This is an investment that growers make to become even more competitive in global markets."

One of her favorite memories is traveling to Japan every six months to meet

with barley industry leaders in the 1990s when grain purchases shifted from single-desk selling through the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to simultaneous buying and selling, which contributed to U.S. barley achieving a 60% market share there.

Out of the office, Sullivan stays busy with her three grandchildren and has taken an interest in fishing after a recent trip to Alaska with her father. ■



Mary Palmer Sullivan speaks at the groundbreaking for the new Plant Sciences Building on the Washington State University campus in Pullman. Photo by Robert Hubner, Washington State University Marketing and Communications.

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Craft beer brewing in China

U.S. BARLEY REPRESENTATIVES TRAVEL TO CHINA, MEET WITH IMPORTERS, STAKEHOLDERS

China, the country with the world's largest beer industry, is dominated by large producers making typical lager-styled beers. However, there is also a relatively small but growing craft beer industry emerging.

In June, the U.S. Grains Council (USGC) sent a team to China to learn about demand and consumption trends in its beer market, attend the Craft Beer Conference and Expo (CBCE), and further develop and strengthen relationships between U.S. suppliers and Chinese malt/barley importers. The CBCE is the largest event of its kind in China.

The primary constraint of U.S. malted barley exports to China is that local craft brewers are not aware of the import opportunities, nor the overall production and marketing systems, for U.S. malted barley. The Council is focused on providing market information and assessing opportunities for U.S. barley malt producers to supply Chinese craft beer industry customers.

"China has become a significant export market for barley in recent years, and we believe that U.S. barley/malt is well-positioned to compete in the burgeoning craft beer sector in China," said Manuel Sanchez, USGC director in China.

While in China, the team met with top barley importers in addition to making presentations at the CBCE's technical symposium. Sanchez offered an overview of the Council's malt program before handing the program over to the mission's members, including Nathan Boll, USGC barley sector director and chairman of the North Dakota Barley Council; Jared Strober CEO of Two Track Malting, LLC in North Dakota; and Matthew Horlacher, CEO of Cold Stream Malt and Grain Co. in Washington. Topics covered in their presentations included how to customize malt for brewers; new malt varieties and technology; and U.S. barley planting, breeding, and varieties.

"I really didn't know what to expect when preparing for this trip, but after meeting with several different Chinese companies and seeing the excitement and interest in U.S. barley and malt, I firmly believe there is a huge potential for the barley sector in China," Boll said.

By attending CBCE and meeting with important barley players in the country, the Council hopes the craft brewing industry stakeholders in China have an improved understanding of the U.S. barley and barley malt industry, in addition to generating sales of U.S. malting barley



(Above) The group meets with Mr. Jiang Qi of No. 18 Brewery, who sampled the U.S. products on display. (Below) Attendees heard from U.S. suppliers, including U.S. Grains Council Barley Sector director and chairman of the North Dakota Barley Council, Nathan Boll (pictured), on U.S. barley utilization and distribution capabilities. Photos courtesy U.S. Grains Council.



to more breweries in China.

"USGC's presentations received a lot of engagement from the audience," said Caleb Floss, USGC manager of global programs. "There was a lively Q&A session after presentations had concluded, and it was apparent that the concept of high-quality ingredients make better craft beer resonated with the conference attendees." ■

Breeding resilient malt barley

WSU research program aims for varieties that can withstand environmental instability

By Robert Brueggeman

Associate Professor and Robert A. Nilan Endowed Chair in Barley Research and Education, Washington State University

The major objective of the Washington State University (WSU) barley breeding program is the release of spring and winter malt barley varieties that are desired by the adjunct and craft malting, brewing, and distilling industries. To secure significant acreage, the most important goal is developing varieties selected by industry to make the American Malting Barley Association (AMBA) recommended barley variety list. Varieties that make the AMBA recommended list have been through rigorous testing that shows superior malt quality and/or agronomics across multiple environments and site years, as well as acceptance by the malting, brewing, or distilling industries in full scale evaluation. Thus, AMBA recommendation assures that only the best-performing modern varieties are selected. Large malting facilities across the county, including Great Western Malting Company

in Vancouver, Wash., exclusively contract and purchase AMBA recommended varieties. These industries contribute billions of added-value dollars to the U.S. economy, not to mention the important role they play in our U.S. social fabric. This year, the WSU breeding program submitted four promising spring malting lines to the AMBA testing program with plans to release one or more as varieties in the near future.

Bringing the genetic package together for over 12 genetically complex malt quality characteristics is becoming an increasingly difficult goal to achieve due to environmental instability across experimental site years. Each year, we experience wide environmental swings such as drought, excessive precipitation, and heat waves to the point that it is difficult to know what a normal growing season looks like on the Palouse. Thus, breeding for resilience and broad adaptability is naturally built into the selection process across years as these extreme environmental factors have major effects on quality pa-



Washington State University spring malt barley yield trials at Spillman Farm in Pullman, Wash.



Dr. Shaun Clare (left), postdoctoral researcher, and Matthew Brooke, Ph.D. student, stand in front of the line WAM-487.1 in the Washington State University (WSU) spring variety trials at Spillman Farm in Pullman. 20WAM-487.1 and three other WSU experimental spring malt barley lines were submitted to the AMBA evaluation program in 2023.

rameters. Many malt quality traits show large genotype by environment interaction, which is the differences in the response a combination of genes have under different environmental conditions.

Four years ago, when I accepted the barley breeding position at WSU, I began by introgressing new sources of malt quality genetics into the traditional feed barley breeding program. Identifying winning genetic combinations from hundreds of new crosses required screening tens of thousands of offspring progeny from these crosses. The process involves identifying and scoring phenotypic variations in the offspring as a result of parental gene combinations that are better than either parent for multiple malt quality and agronomic traits. Though this labor-intensive research has effectively introduced the needed malt quality into the program, the last few years of field data have shown that climate uncertainty presents complex challenges. We have found that the diverse sources of malt quality genetics have variable stability under a broad range of environmental conditions. Thus, developing malt barley varieties that can thrive in the face of climate uncertainty is no small task. It requires a multidisciplinary approach that combines traditional breeding methods with innova-

tive genetic techniques to identify genetic combinations contributing to resilient and stable malt quality.

A primary strategy is to select for traits that enhance climate resilience. For example, we look for varieties that have improved heat tolerance and can withstand prolonged periods of high temperatures. High temperatures due to untimely heat domes lead to heat stress, affecting quality and yield depending on when the events occur in the barley growth stages. Additionally, we need to select for greater drought tolerance by selecting for water-use efficiency as malting varieties will need to endure periods of water scarcity. These traits help ensure that barley crops can continue to grow and develop quality malt even in the face of untimely heatwaves and low rainfall. If this can be achieved, growers can meet the quality standards to make malt grade barley and receive premium prices consistently, despite the highly variable growing conditions.

Advancements in genetic technologies and research have provided our team with powerful tools to expedite the development of climate-resilient varieties. The use of marker-assisted selection (MAS) and genomic selection allows us to identify and prioritize promising barley lines more efficiently. MAS enables breeders to identify



Early generation, single plant selections of offspring from new spring malt barley crosses. One hundred plants from 1,000 individuals are selected from nearly 100 crosses (~100,000 individuals) to advance to the next round of selections.



Washington State University's barley breeder, Robert Brueggeman, is concentrating his research on varieties that are resilient to climatic events and can make the American Malting Barley Association recommended barley variety list.

specific genes, or markers, associated with desirable malt quality traits, including heat tolerance.

Another critical aspect of breeding for climate resilience is disease resistance. As the range and prevalence of barley diseases shift with changing climate conditions, breeders must continually monitor and adapt their strategies. This often involves identifying genetic markers associated with disease resistance and using them to guide breeding efforts.

This targeted approach speeds up the WSU breeding process by allowing us to select progeny with the most promising genetic profiles. Genomic selection is also an important tool we are beginning to explore, which involves analyzing the entire genetic makeup of progeny coming down the breeding pipeline. This comprehensive approach provides us with a more holistic view of each plant's genetic potential and allows for the selection of individuals with a combination of traits that are well-suited to climate uncertainty. Wide shifts in temperature and precipitation patterns present malt quality and yield challenges, and I believe broad adaptability can be achieved through understanding superior genetic combinations across the entire genome.

Although climate uncertainty brings real challenges to

malt barley production in the Pacific Northwest (PNW), I think it will also bring opportunities for growers. Despite more frequent high temperatures and the accompanying heat stress effects on quality and yield, we have not seen the devastating events, such as drought, excessive precipitation, or Fusarium Head blight epidemics, that ravage entire malt barley crops in other production regions of the U.S. and the world. With stable barley varieties and adequate marketing, I am confident that Washington malt barley could be known as a superior product, like Washington wheat, and this could become a premier region for the nation's malt barley production. As always, the breeders play a pivotal role by developing malting barley varieties that can withstand the challenges of climate uncertainty.

Washington state has been a hub for grain farming for generations, and feed barley held a special place in dryland rotations. However, as times change, the beer and spirit industry demand a significant share of the barley acreage. Washington and the greater PNW could be poised to fill the need for quality malting barley for the U.S. and worldwide markets with broadly adapted and resilient varieties that produce high yields and quality malt under challenging environmental conditions. ■

WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Hot, dry weather hits most wheat classes



By Mike Krueger
Founder, The Money Farm

The summer of 2023 has come and gone across the Northern Hemisphere. Wheat harvests are complete, and the U.S. corn and soybean harvests should move quickly. Corn and soybean crops were pushed to maturity by the very hot and dry weather that encompassed much of the country during August and early September.

The hard red winter wheat crop was badly hurt by drought for the second consecutive season. White wheat production was also reduced by drought. The hard red spring wheat and durum crops across the northern Plains were touched by a very hot, late spring/early summer, but producers were generally surprised by better yields than expected throughout the harvest. Nonetheless, the spring wheat crop will be smaller than last year. Four of the five major classes of wheat had smaller production in 2023 than in 2022. Only soft red winter wheat had increased production and ending supplies. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) made no changes to the U.S. wheat production estimates in their Sept. 12 reports. Any changes will be reflected in the Sept. 29 Annual Small Grains Summary report.

A major question has been to what degree the late summer heat might have hurt corn and soybean yields. Weekly crop condition ratings for both crops were consistently lower than the previous year throughout the season. The USDA's initial corn and soybean yield estimates were for record high yields. Those lofty yield estimates have since come down, but not by much. The September USDA corn yield estimate was reduced from 175.1 bushels per acre in August to 173.8. The June estimate was a record 181.5. That much of a cut would have been bullish, but the USDA also increased harvested acres by 800,000. That offset most of the yield decline.

The September soybean yield estimate was 50.1 bushels per acre. That was down from 50.9 in August. The USDA also increased the harvested acreage estimate by 100,000 acres. The USDA's September yield surveys reflected a massive 9.4% increase in soybean pod counts. Was that increase in pod counts enough to offset the hot finish to the growing season? Harvest will answer that question.

Markets removed all weather premium from the markets early in the summer. The lack of any noticeable improvement in the pace of wheat and corn export sales also contributed to the price weakness.

The markets have also become apathetic to the Black Sea war. It has become a "back-burner" event. The Black Sea Grain Initiative expired in July and hasn't been renewed. Russia continues to attack and damage Ukraine facilities in Odessa and along the Danube River. Ukraine started to attack and damage Russian export facilities in August. Corn and wheat markets have been immune to all this news. Shipments of wheat and corn from the Black Sea have continued to be larger than expected. Crop production in Ukraine hasn't been reduced as much as once thought. Russia seemingly has an endless supply of cheap wheat and continues to export that supply.

Not all is bearish in the wheat world despite the market's summer decline. Drought cut Canada's durum crop by nearly 40%. Canada's total wheat production will drop from 34 million metric tons (mmt) last year to below 30 mmt in 2023 despite more planted acres. The shift from La Niña to El Niño had the expected negative impact on Australia's wheat crop. It will drop from a record 40 mmt crop a year ago to 25-26 mmt this year.

Table 1 shows the expected reduction in wheat exports from the seven major world wheat exporters in this mar-

Table 1. Change in wheat exports from 2022-23 to 2023-24 (in million metric tons)

Country	Change
Russia	-3
Ukraine	-7.8
Argentina	+7
Canada	-12
Australia	-11
U.S.	-1.6
EU	+2.5
Total Change	-24.9

SOURCE: USDA SEPTEMBER WASDE



Harvest in Edwall, Wash. Photo by Lori J. Maricle, Washington Grain Commission

keting year according to the USDA's September World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report.

This projected 25 mmt (about a billion bushel) reduction is a huge quantity. It begs the question, who will make up this billion-bushel loss? The market certainly didn't react to these numbers, and most market analysts made no comment on the numbers. This steep decline in wheat exports from the world's major wheat exporting countries will have to be significant to prices at some point.

The U.S. corn outlook is bearish based on the September USDA ending supply estimate of 2.2 billion bushels. That can shrink some if the corn yields aren't as good as expected when the harvest shifts into full motion. Corn export sales also continue to be sluggish, although China did buy U.S. corn in mid-September. The USDA is projecting a 385-million-bushel increase in corn exports this marketing year. Corn's problem is that U.S. producers are now expected to harvest 8 million more acres of corn than last year. That will increase production nearly 1.4 billion bushels from 2022. That is a big number.

The U.S. soybean situation will remain tight for another marketing year. Fewer planted acres combined with another year of record domestic crush will result in soybean ending supplies of 220 million bushels. That compares to 250 million bushels at the end of the last marketing year. It is interesting to note that the USDA is forecasting a 200-million-bushel reduction in U.S. soy-

bean exports to keep the ending stocks number at minimal (bin-bottom) levels. It will take another big Brazilian soybean crop to trim U.S. soybean exports that much. We note that China is expected to import a record amount of soybeans this marketing year.

The bearish side of the markets is big corn ending supplies and better-than-expected Black Sea shipments. The dollar also remains strong, and there is little reason to believe that will change in the year ahead. The bullish side of the markets is that world wheat supplies will tighten further during this marketing year to very small levels. There is still great uncertainty surrounding the Black Sea war. Any serious destruction of Russian or Ukrainian export facilities **OR** a military attack on a commercial vessel would change the market tone quickly.

Market volatility has softened over the last month as the trade has become comfortable with U.S. production as the corn and soybean harvests are underway, coupled with the ongoing slow pace of U.S. export sales. World geopolitics and Southern Hemisphere production prospects will dictate price direction and the level of volatility going forward. ■

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

Vital link in transportation chain is largely unseen by farmers

Jeremy Nielsen, Columbia River Pilot Captain

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Captain **Jeremy Nielsen's** role in the transportation chain that takes wheat to market is mostly unseen to farmers, but without him, their grain would be dead in the water.

Nielsen is a river pilot, responsible for navigating ocean-going vessels through the lower Columbia River. Using a ladder on the outside of the ship, river pilots board as vessels pass under the bridge in Astoria, relieving bar pilots who are responsible for bringing vessels over the bar at the mouth of the river. River pilots guide ships anywhere upriver they go, with the majority heading to ports in Longview, Kalama, and Vancouver. Federal and/or state law requires most ships on the river to have a pilot onboard.

"Every commercial port in the world has pilots, and pilots are the local experts in that area's waterways," Nielsen explained. "A ship may come in, and the captain has never been to the Columbia River before. There's a lot of local customs; things operate differently in every port. There's different recreational traffic, fisherman you have to worry about, dealing with the local government, all this aside from safely navigating the ship. We get onboard, and generally, they are happy to see us. We navigate the ship into whichever port it's going to dock at. When it's ready to go, we undock it and take it back out."

Nielsen originally wanted to pilot airplanes, not boats. He was born and raised in Montana. As a senior in high school, he missed his chance to apply to the U.S. Air Force Academy, but switched course when he learned that the Navy actually flew more planes than the Air Force. He successfully applied to the U.S. Naval Academy, but was facing a year's delay due to lost paperwork. Out of the blue, he got a call from another U.S. academy he'd never heard of, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, who offered him a spot. The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy was established at the beginning of WWII to carry supplies for the U.S. maritime force. The academy is located on Long Island, N.Y., on a former estate of Walter Chrysler, founder of the Chrysler Corporation.

"They said something about ships and seeing the world,



and I thought, 'Well, sure, I'm up for adventure.' So I got my congressman to change my nomination, and that's where I went, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy," Nielsen said. "I still remember the day I flew into New York City. It was quite eye opening for a rural Montana boy."

As part of his education, Nielsen spent a year at sea, traveling all over the world. He's been through the Panama Canal, spent time in the Far East, China, and Alaska, and been up and down both U.S. coasts and the Gulf Coast.

He recalled a trip to China on one of the first U.S.-flagged vessels allowed into the country. The 1,000-foot container ship sailed up the Yangtze River.

"The river, and it's a very large river, was clogged with all these very small vessels. They were bouncing off the sides of the container ship. Families were living on them, and there's little kids running around without life jackets. That's their home. When we docked, there were about 500 Chinese Red Army in formation, all with rifles, on the dock. That was our welcome reception. It was a little bit intimidating. They did allow us off the ship, so I got to walk around Shanghai. For the most part, people were really friendly, but I had armed guards follow me everywhere I went. That was a little bit unnerving."

As Nielsen finished up his service, he realized that the long-term time commitment required to serve aboard a ship wasn't what he wanted. Fortunately, one of his trips had included a stop on the Columbia River, where the pilot's comments set the stage for his next adventure.

"(The pilot) said, 'Hey, kid, if you ever want to be pilot, this is the place to be a pilot. It's challenging, it's a great schedule, and you get to live in Pacific Northwest,'" Nielsen said. "I made it my goal to be a Columbia River pilot after that."

Nielsen's first few jobs in the Columbia River maritime industry included steamship agent, which takes care of a ship's logistics when it comes into port, including food and fuel for the ship, cargo logistics, and crew transitions, and as a stevedore, which manages the loading and unloading of cargo. He spent nine years as a tugboat captain for Shaver Transportation before becoming a river pilot and

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joining the Columbia River Pilots (CRP) association in 2013. For the past four years, he's served as president of the CRP.

While every waterway has its own navigational challenges, piloting on a river system means constantly dealing with a current.

"The current sometimes is hitting the vessel on the side and pushing you one way and pushing you the other way. It's really a challenge when we are on a big, heavy, deep ship," Nielsen explained. "Turning the ship around, at times, can block off the flow of the river. Anyone who has tried to hold a piece of plywood against the wind can relate to some extent."

Many of the ships Nielsen pilots on the lower Columbia River are longer than the river is wide — the deep draft channel is only 600 feet wide and 43 feet deep — leaving him very little room to maneuver. The channel is sounded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) every 30 to 60 days from the mouth of the river to the head of deep navigation in Vancouver. If a pilot finds a problem, they can usually get it checked out by the Corps within a day and get a dredge repositioned within a few days.

Dredging is a big focus for the CRP, which works closely with the Corps and other industry groups to make sure the Corps has the funding to maintain the channel. If the depth of the deep draft channel isn't maintained, it can limit traffic on the river as well as the amount of cargo ships can load.

"We have not had a draft restriction for about six years now because the Corps has been well funded, and they've done a very good job keeping the channel clear," Nielsen said. "But if we do have to have a draft restriction, on a typical Panamax-size vessel, I've been told that the value of one foot of cargo they can't load is about \$1 million. It's significant."

Two of the biggest changes Nielsen has seen in the maritime industry is the amount of information available on the industry and the level of precision pilots need to do their job — ships have gotten bigger, but bays, harbors, and rivers have not.

Nielsen believes that without all eight of the dams on the navigable Columbia-Snake River System, the system doesn't work. He said there's a lot of misinformation being spread about the lower Snake River dams and talked about overhearing a federal legislative staffer during a recent tour of Lower Granite Dam who was surprised that the power generating equipment was in excellent shape.

"I jumped in and said, 'Why wouldn't it be in good shape? They are state-of-the-art systems,'" he recalled. "There's misinformation about the condition of the dams. There's misinformation about the cost of the dams; they actually produce more revenue than the operating and maintenance costs are. There's misinformation about the fish passage numbers. There's misinformation about orcas that supposedly only like Snake River salmon. There's misinformation about the state of Puget Sound's local waters. So really, there's just a lot of misinformation out there. I think if people are honest, put emotion aside, and look at facts, the facts show that what we have is a jewel that needs to be protected."

Nielsen hopes that farmers in the Inland Northwest understand that the river pilots are working for them, doing their part to make sure the river system is advocated for and that every ship that comes through is treated with the utmost care to get cargo to market.

"I'm really proud of my fellow pilots," he said. "It is hard to describe the amount of extended focus it takes to navigate ships on the lower Columbia

River facts

Columbia River pilots are licensed to pilot more than 320 nautical miles of the Columbia River from Astoria to the ports of Longview, Kalama, Vancouver, Portland, The Dalles, and Pasco. They also provide pilotage service on 13 miles of the Willamette River from its mouth to the seawall in downtown Portland.

This route is considered by many to be one of the most lengthy and challenging pilotage grounds in the world. The Columbia River navigation channel is a narrow and winding channel subject to strong currents, shifting shoals, and inclement weather. The channel is maintained to project depth of 43 feet and width of 600 feet. The distance between the Astoria Pilot Station and the ports of Portland and Vancouver is 75 nautical miles. The longest straight stretch of river is only about two miles in length, and there are more than 90 course changes between Astoria and the Portland Downtown Sea Wall. ■

(Information from colrip.com)

River system, but we do it day in and day out, largely unknown, with extreme precision while maintaining an excellent safety record. They are an exceptionally skilled group that I'm proud to be part of."

When not piloting on the river, Nielsen spends his time enjoying the outdoors with his wife, Sarah, and their three children. For more information about Columbia River pilots, visit colrip.com. ■

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THE BOTTOM LINE

I'm a farmer, what do I need an attorney for?

By John Kragt

Attorney, McGuire, DeWulf, Kragt & Johnson, P.S.

Many people ask me all the time what kind of law I practice, and they are surprised when I tell them agricultural law. They then wonder how I feed my kids. I also have several clients that do a will or a one-off project and say, "Thanks, but I hope to never have to use you again." However, I always like to think of the farm's lawyer as having a long-term role in their operation if its beneficial to them. So here are my five reasons a farmer may need a lawyer:

Annual corporate compliance.

Most farms, as discussed in previous articles, are incorporated in some fashion, whether that be a "C" corporation, limited liability company, or a limited partnership. With all those entities, they require different levels of annual reporting and compliance. Specifically, corporations require an annual meeting and thus some level of annual minutes. While



I know several of my clients do a set of annual minutes each year, I have a vast majority who have my firm prepare the minutes and file them in the original corporate binder that I maintain. I also have several clients that ask me to sit in on the meeting with the CPA and/or banker. Those clients see a role for me to play in helping to handle some of the complexities that come up on an annual basis.

Estate planning/transition. This is a common discussed topic in *Wheat Life*, so I won't go into too much detail. However, it is important to remember that death is inevitable, and if the owners of the farm don't have their estate plans updated or in sync with the plan, then problems arise. A very common scenario I see is that while mom and dad have their estate plan in order, the kids in their 20s don't. In that untimely death, the child who is now married and did a simple will from Legal Zoom now has moved his ownership of the farm to his relatively new wife. While that might work out, it also puts unneeded stress on the family during an already terrible time. So, just because your kids don't have kids, if you have given them some ownership in the farm, make sure they have their wills done!

Real estate issues. Our firm is very strong in real estate matters, whether it is working through an old legal description for a farm lease to buying and/or selling large amounts of acres. Typically, I recommend my clients get their farm lease legal descriptions reviewed or else what they think they have the legal right to farm is potentially owned by the neighbors. ►

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Tax concerns. While we are not CPAs, we do provide a lot of tax guidance including estate tax, excise tax, controlling interest tax, capital gains tax, use tax (I know a lot of my clients don't believe me that use tax is a real thing), open space taxation, and a few more tax situations. Obviously, we are all taxed past a level that we want to pay, but instead of blindly paying taxes, why not talk to your attorney about some avoidance options?

Alternative energy leases. Lately, we have seen an influx of alternative energy proposals. While these leases are promised to be "form" and "standard" leases, that is anything but true. With the number of companies and the platform of energy including wind, solar, battery storage, and peaking power plants, there really is no one standard lease. Nothing pains me more than a client bringing me a copy of a signed lease that I know they left a significant amount of money on the table. The real heartache is that most of those companies are used to reimbursing some amount of legal fees to review the agreement. If they don't, that may be a sign to pass on that company.

Lawyers can be as involved or uninvolved as a farmer wants them to be. While I know the idea of paying your attorney for legal work for something you can do yourself is about as much fun as getting hit in the face with a wrench,

sometimes, it's cheaper than waiting until the problem is too big to fix yourself. I always recommend that a client be comfortable picking up the phone and calling their lawyer with a quick question, just to double check. ■

John M. Kragt is an attorney with the law firm of McGuire, DeWulf, Kragt & Johnson P.S. He and his partners work with farm families and other agricultural businesses for the majority of their needs throughout Eastern Washington. The firm has offices in Davenport, Odessa, Ritzville, Colfax, St. John, Rosalia and Fairfield.

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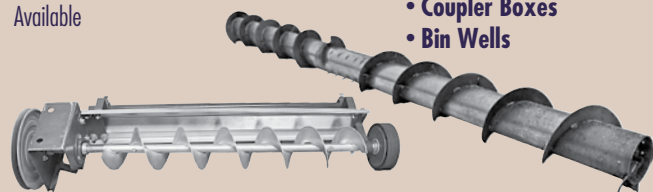


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Caleb Jenkins (3) waiting for the combine on Buob Farms in Coulee City. Photo by his great-grandmother Marilyn Buob.



Brayden Steadman (11) wishing he could nab a seat in the combine near Odessa. Moments after this photo, the driver offered Brayden and his cousin, Kaleb, a ride. Photo by Kaleb Walter.



Wheat harvest at White Farms in the foothills of the Blue Mountains in Walla Walla. Photo by Amy White.

Your Harvest 2023 wheat life...



Tory Bye and Gary Bye harvesting on Bye Farms in Pomeroy. Photo by Tai Bye.



(Above) Scott Ford in modern harvesting equipment vs. old in Prescott. Photo by Julie Himmelberger.

(Right) Makenna DeChaney (2) holds down the fort in Waterville. Photo by Karryn DeChaney.



Email pictures to editor@wawg.org.
Please include location of picture, names
of all people appearing in the picture and
ages 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.

OCTOBER 2023

6-7 OKTOBERFEST. Bier gartens, food, music, vendors, kinderplatz. Leavenworth, Wash. leavenworth.org/oktoberfest/

6-7 OKTOBERFEST. Live entertainment, German food, arts and crafts, beer garden. Town Toyota Center in Wenatchee, Wash. oktoberfestprojektbayern.com

7 FRESH HOP ALE FESTIVAL. Over 70 breweries, wineries and cideries, live music and food. SOZO Sports Complex in Yakima, Wash. freshhopalefestival.com

7 CONCOURS DE MARYHILL CAR SHOW. 24th annual open car show at the historic Maryhill Museum. All makes and models of cars, trucks, and motorcycles welcome. 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Dash plaques, trophies, raffle prizes, silent auction, food vendor. Vehicle registration is \$25 and includes two tickets to the museum. Spectators are free. Goldendale, Wash. For info call (509) 539-2557 or visit goldendalemotorsports.org

7 RIVERFEST. Celebrate our rivers and learn why they are so important to our region at this free, family-focused event. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Columbia Park in Kennewick, Wash. riverfestwa.com

10 WAWG BOARD MEETING. Meeting starts at 10 a.m. at Washington Wheat Foundation Building, Ritzville, Wash. (509) 659-0610, wawg.org

13-14 OKTOBERFEST. Bier gartens, food, music, vendors, kinderplatz. Leavenworth, Wash. leavenworth.org/oktoberfest/

13-14 OKTOBERFEST. Entertainment, German food, arts and crafts, beer garden. Town Toyota Center in Wenatchee, Wash. oktoberfestprojektbayern.com

21-22 HAUNTED PALOUSE. Haunted houses, food, fortune tellers, and street entertainment. Must be 12 or older. Downtown Palouse, Wash. hauntedpalouse.com

28-29 HAUNTED PALOUSE. Haunted houses, food, fortune tellers, and street entertainment. Must be 12 or older. Downtown Palouse, Wash. hauntedpalouse.com

NOVEMBER 2023

1-3 WASHINGTON STATE WEED ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE. Trade show, workshops, break-out sessions, credits requested. Wenatchee Convention Center, Wenatchee, Wash. Register at weedconference.org

13 WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION BOARD MEETING. 9 a.m. Spokane, Wash. Call (509) 456-2481 for more information.

13-14 WASHINGTON STATE CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Best Western Plus University Inn, Moscow, Idaho. washingtoncrop.com

14-16 2023 TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION. Industry presentations, break-out session, vendors. Coeur d'Alene Resort, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Register online at wawg.org/convention/registration/

24-30 CHRISTMASTOWN. Choirs, carolers, gingerbread houses, photos with Santa, crafts, story corner for kids. leavenworth.org/christmastown

25-26 CHRISTMAS AT THE END OF THE ROAD. An old-fashioned cowboy Christmas! Skate with Santa, music, fireworks, and food. winthropwashington.com/events/christmas-festival/

DECEMBER 2023

1-2 HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS. Santa, parade, shopping. Waitsburg, Wash. waitsburgcommercialclub.org/events

1-24 CHRISTMASTOWN. Choirs, carolers, gingerbread houses, photos with Santa. leavenworth.org/christmastown ■

Email listings to editor@wawg.org. Include date, time and location of event, plus contact info and a short description.

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After the storm in Hartline.
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