

WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

NOVEMBER | 2023

*Happy
Thanksgiving*

from the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

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WHEAT LIFE

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President's Perspective



End of the road

By Andy Juris

It's hard to believe it's been a year already, yet here we are with another convention upon us. Soon, you'll have the privilege of meeting our next president and will no longer be subjected to my monthly ramblings. I can say, with certainty, that I appreciate your indulgence and patience as I relayed whatever was floating around in my head over this past year. And thank you to those who actually took the time to read it!

It has truly been a privilege to serve as your president for 2023. This year has presented us with several unforeseen challenges, many of which will continue into the future. It seems that life just moves faster these days, and with that fast pace comes a set of problems that can threaten to take all of our focus. I could easily fill up this column with a long list of concerns for the future, warnings against apathy, and strong condemnations for the accuracy of the weather forecast, but that isn't what I will remember when I look back on this year. I'll remember how much I enjoyed representing all of you, the people who make Washington wheat the envy of the world (quite literally).

I truly enjoyed meeting so many of you at county meetings, variety trials, and Wheat College. The enthusiasm you have for your industry and love you have for this way of life is infectious. It is apparent in the care and attention you put into a crop, the pride you take in a job well done, the concern you have that people and nations depend on us, and the consistent hope for the future. Despite wild and volatile weather, foolish politicians, and uncertain markets, this hope that next year will be a good one and we can do what we do best carries us forward. Whether you realize it or not, you have been an immense encouragement to me, and for that, I will be forever grateful.

My fellow officers have also made this year extremely enjoyable. It takes a team to tackle difficult situations, and the officer team I have worked with has risen to meet them. Moreover, I consider them all lifelong friends — perhaps one of life's most valuable commodities.

I would be remiss here if I didn't also mention the people who truly keep the lights on at the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG). I can say, without reservation, the staff at WAWG is one of the finest and most competent groups of people I have ever had the pleasure of working with. Michelle, KayDee, Katie, Trista, and Lance do their jobs with a degree of excellence I would have given anything to have during my time in the corporate world. They have made my time as an officer thoroughly enjoyable and smooth. As we look to a somewhat uncertain future, you can know for certain that WAWG is in good hands with these folks.

And so, here we are at the end! But not the end; we go on together to the next year, the next crop, the next challenge. We will need each other with our collective voice in the coming year(s) to meet these challenges. The strength of WAWG is not in a president, officer group, or board, it's in all of you. The greatest strength of any organization is the people within it. As we look to the future, regardless of any potential problems, I know that if we meet these issues together, we will assure the continuance of what George Washington called "the most healthy, the most useful, and the most noble employment of man." ■

Cover photo: We wish all a Thanksgiving full of family, friends, and too much food. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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Partnership \$500 (1-5 family members)	X	X	X	X		X
Convention \$600 (2 individuals)	X	X	X		X	X
Lifetime \$2,500 (1 individual)	X	X	X	X		X
Non-Voting Membership						
Student \$75	X	X	X			
Industry Associate \$150	X	X	X			

WAWG's current top priorities are:

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

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

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- Greensheet ALERTS • WAWG updates
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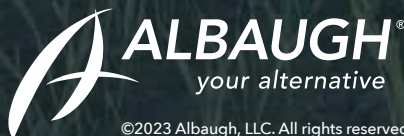
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State board meetings resume after summer hiatus

After the summer break, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) resumed regular board meetings last month.

Jon Wyss, Farm Service Agency (FSA) state executive director, said the impacts from the 2018 Farm Bill expiring, which happened on Sept. 30, are still unknown, but for now, programs and funding will continue. See page 28 for more on the expired farm bill.

Wyss also addressed the contract issues the Washington FSA office has had this year in Whitman, Douglas, and Whatcom counties, telling the board that he understands farmers are losing confidence and trust in the agency. He added that staff is fixing the errors and undergoing training. One bit of good news that has come out of the situation is the discovery that the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) can be used in cases of fire on shrub steppe habitat that includes a threatened species. The advantage of CREP, especially for Douglas County, is that the acres don't count towards the county's 25% enrollment cap like acres in the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) do, rental rates are equivalent to SAFE rates, and enrollment is continuous. The Washington FSA will be doing a pilot program in Douglas County, which will cover burned areas that include habitat for sage grouse.

Another positive change for growers is if a county experiences a D2 drought designation, FSA can authorize emergency haying and grazing immediately rather than having to wait for eight weeks. Finally, Wyss thinks there will be few, if any, Agriculture Risk Coverage or Price Loss Coverage program payments this year.

Continuing on the farm bill theme, Nicole Berg, co-chair of the National Legislation Committee, said the search for a House speaker and the potential government shutdown are holding up work on the farm bill. Most programs are funded through the end of the year, and she thinks the conversation is turning towards passing an extension rather than a new farm bill.

The House Ag Committee is doing a deep dive into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and is exploring some options, such as changing the program to being based on dollars rather than acreage and becoming a more regional program. They are also looking at productive vs. nonproductive land, with more money being put to fragile,

nonproductive land. Berg encouraged the board to be part of the conversation to make sure Washington wheat growers' concerns are heard. She added that WAWG may need to think about doing another farm bill fly-in between now and the end of the year. WAWG President Andy Juris added that they've already done several this year.

Switching over to state legislation, WAWG lobbyist Diana Carlen and Washington Grain Commission (WGC) lobbyist Mark Streuli called into the meeting. Carlen updated the board on the activities of several workgroups, including the riparian buffer workgroup and the fuel exemption workgroup.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources' riparian buffer workgroup had its third meeting in early October onsite with the Roza Irrigation District and the Tribes. Carlen said the meeting's key takeaway was success is more likely when done at a local level vs. the state level.

The Washington State Department of Ecology's fuel exemption workgroup just concluded its work (see page 22) with some participants feeling like the main issues weren't resolved, especially a mechanism for producers to avoid paying extra fees on fuel. Carlen suggested that WAWG

Iowa tops list of states with most CRP payments

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued more than \$1.77 billion this year in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) payments to agricultural producers and landowners for their voluntary conservation efforts on more than 23 million acres of private land. Since 2021, CRP has grown by 21% in terms of acres enrolled.

Top five states for CRP participant payments are:

- Iowa, \$402,508,900.
- Illinois, \$172,723,800.
- Minnesota, \$150,773,400.
- South Dakota, \$129,545,200.
- Missouri, \$99,849,600. ■



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get with like-minded groups and come up with solutions that can be sent to Ecology.

WAWG's annual Olympia Days trip is scheduled for Jan. 14-16, 2024. Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director, said that growers from every county are needed to meet with legislators. Anybody interested in participating should contact the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610.

Mary Palmer Sullivan, WGC vice president, gave the commission report. Nine different countries, representing 57% of soft white sales in 2023, sent trade teams through Eastern Washington this summer. The WGC has started a monthly e-newsletter, and people can sign up for it on their website at wagrains.org. Sullivan said nomination letters for three open positions on the commission have been sent out. Finally, the Herbicide Resistance Initiative, which recently received \$3 million per year for three United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service research positions, is closing in on its first hire.

The next WAWG state board meeting will happen at the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention on Wednesday, Nov. 15, where members will be reviewing and updating resolutions. All growers, especially WAWG members, are encouraged to attend as the resolutions help guide WAWG in its legislative efforts. ■

Whitman county growers meet

Last month, Whitman County growers were honored at the annual Lacrosse Community Pride Harvest Dinner, but before the festivities, growers met briefly to conduct county business.

Growers approved a motion to pay the expenses for those that are attending the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention in November as well as approving a donation to the Legislative Action Fund and a purchase at the convention auction that will be re-auctioned at January's county meeting.

It was estimated that approximately 75% of the county would be finished seeding within the next few weeks, and growers reported that the majority of the county was very dry.

Ben Barstow, a commissioner on the Washington Grain Commission, reported that there were seven trade teams that came through Eastern Washington this summer/early fall. On many of the itineraries were visits to the lower Snake River dams and a dinner with growers. Barstow said the visits, especially the dinners, help the trade teams understand the size of the towns in Eastern Washington, the capabilities of producers and communities, and the

commitment growers have to the grain trade.

Larry Cochran, representing the Washington State Conservation Commission, gave a report covering carbon sequestration and the issues conservation may face in the upcoming election year.

Growers also received an update on the trestle bridge in Winona that was destroyed in a wildfire this summer. Work on the bridge is completed, and it is expected to be open by mid-October.

The next meeting of the Whitman County growers is scheduled for January at Eddy's Restaurant in Colfax. ■

Drought designation declared for Washington counties

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, the Washington counties of Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla, and Whitman suffered from a drought intensity value during the growing season of 1) D2 Drought-Severe for eight or more consecutive weeks or 2) D3 Drought-Extreme or D4 Drought-Exceptional.

This natural disaster designation allows the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) to extend emergency credit to producers recovering from natural disasters through emergency loans. Emergency loans can be used to meet various recovery needs including the replacement of essential items such as equipment or livestock, reorganization of a farming operation, or to refinance certain debts. FSA will review the loans based on the extent of losses, security available, and repayment ability.

Contiguous counties that are also eligible for emergency credit in Washington state are Adams, Benton, Franklin, Lincoln, and Spokane counties. Benewah, Latah, and Nez Perce counties in Idaho and Umatilla and Wallowa counties in Oregon are also eligible. Application deadline is May 20, 2024.

To file a notice of loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local USDA Service Center. ■

2023 grain growers convention about to kick off

There's less than a week left to register for the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention, which will be held Nov. 14-16 at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

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Growers, the Oregon Wheat Growers League, and the Idaho Grain Producers Association, the convention offers an opportunity to socialize and network, hear state and national policy updates, enjoy top-notch keynote speakers, and participate in educational breakout sessions. A detailed agenda is available online at wawg.org/convention/schedule/. Producers can register online for the convention through Nov. 9 at wawg.org/convention/registration/. The resort's room block is no longer available; growers will need to contact the hotel at (800) 688-5253 for room availability.

This year's keynote speakers include former ambassador Kip Tom; Rob Sharkey, better known as The SharkFarmer; Dr. David Kohl; and weatherman Eric Snodgrass. Breakout sessions will cover marketing, financial planning, a farm bill report, stress management, and barley trends.

Although the deadline to enter into the photo contest has passed, convention attendees are encouraged to vote for their favorite agricultural-themed photo in this year's contest. The taker of the winning photo will receive a free registration to the 2024 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention back at the Coeur d'Alene Resort. ■

2023 yield contest winners

From the National Association of Wheat Growers

The National Wheat Yield Contest is thrilled to announce the achievements of its 24 national winners, hailing from 12 different states, who have achieved an average yield of 144 bushels per acre across all categories. Additionally, we proudly recognize the 83 state winners representing 28 states, with their remarkable yields averaging 127 bushels per acre across the various categories, including winter wheat-dryland, winter wheat-irrigated, spring wheat-dryland, and spring wheat-irrigated.

Chris Gross, of Reardan, Wash., took the bin buster award in the winter wheat-irrigated category with an average yield of 211.98 bushels per acre. In the state awards, Washington winter wheat-dryland winners are Kurt Druffel, Pullman, in first with an average yield of 109.6 bushels; second place is Garrett Warren, Dayton, with an average yield of 98.9 bushels; and third place went to Scott Hennings, Ritzville, with an average yield of 91.4

The contest not only emphasizes high yield but also quality. The 24 national winners will submit grain samples for detailed analysis of milling and baking qualities. Outstanding quality will be rewarded with \$250 at the Commodity Classic in February 2024. See the full list of winners at wawg.org/national-wheat-yield-contest-2023-winners/ ■

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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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- Farm Bill Report
- Managing Stress
- Financial Planning
- Legislative issues
- Barley Trends



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Auction and Dinner

The auction and dinner will be held Thursday, Nov. 16, at 6 p.m. Social hour starts at 5:30. Donation forms for auction items can be found at wawg.org.



Go to wawg.org/convention for schedule

POLICY MATTERS

River treaty negotiations continue; agencies making plans

Last month, Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, was invited to attend the Council of State Governments West (CSG West) Legislative Council on River Governance in Whitefish, Mont., where she heard an update on the Columbia River Treaty from U.S. negotiator Jill Smail and Stephen Glock, a negotiator from the Canadian team.

Hennings said Smail seemed confident that the treaty will be renegotiated by the deadline, which is September 2024.

“My impression is that negotiations right now are focusing on flood control, with Canada asking for the flexibility to hold more water in their reservoirs to better meet their environmental and recreational needs,” Hennings said. “Wheat growers are invested in seeing the treaty modernized as it directly impacts how the dams on the Columbia-Snake River System are managed.”

The Legislative Council on River Governance is a cooperative, bipartisan program comprised of state legislators from Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Through collaborative efforts, members can exchange information and identify solutions to address the challenges and opportunities along the Columbia and Snake River basins.

While the treaty doesn't expire until next year, the U.S. agencies involved in the Columbia River System are considering potential impacts to the way the system is managed for flood risk, whether the



Pacific Northwest legislators and stakeholders gathered in Whitefish, Mont., last month at the Council of State Governments West Legislative Council on River Governance. The Washington Association of Wheat Growers was represented by Executive Director Michelle Henning (front row, fourth from right). Photo by Carina West.

treaty is updated or not. In four virtual sessions held in September and October, federal planners from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) provided some information to the public.


“It is imperative that we develop plans for future operations with and without reaching an agreement with Canada on a modernized Columbia River Treaty regime,” said Brigadier General Geoff Van Epps, commander of the Corps' Northwestern Division, in the Sept. 27 session.

Without a new agreement, the U.S. will not be able to direct the operation of space in Canada until it is necessary, what the Corps is calling “real time operations for flood risk management.” This could lead to deeper drafts in Grand Coulee and unpredictable flows, reducing some of the management flexibility the Corps has had in the past. Unpredictable flows will also make it more difficult for the Corps to manage the dams in such a way that all authorized purposes of the dams are met, such as navigation, irrigation, fish and wildlife, and recreation.

Even with an updated treaty, the Corps believes Canada is likely to operate its reservoirs differently than it does today, but the agency is unsure how the flows will change. Canada makes up 15% of the Columbia River Basin but provides 35% of the flow on average. Some of the possible impacts that unpredictable flows could have on the Columbia River System include:

- A higher chance of flooding, which could lead to increasing repair costs on levees and dikes, more expensive flood insurance, and expanded floodplain areas.
- I-5 bridge lifts may become more common if there are more high water events. ▶

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- Increased shipping costs due to more frequent high water events and more disruptions in late summer due to low water.
- Changes to the timing and cost of pumping irrigation water to Banks Lake.
- Lower reservoir levels may increase shoreline erosion and make boat ramps less accessible.

“At this point we simply don’t know the actual changes in reservoir operations or potential changes in flooding because we don’t know how Canada will be operating their system,” Van Epps said. A recording of the session is available at nwd.usace.army.mil/CRWM/Columbia-River-Treaty/. ■

Wheat is third for value of production

From the National Agricultural Statistics Service

The value of Washington’s 2022 agricultural production totaled \$12.8 billion, shattering the previous record high of \$10.4 billion in 2015 and up 27% from the revised previous year value of \$10.1 billion. The value of Washington’s crop production in 2022 was \$8.60 billion, up 22% from 2021. The value of livestock production in 2022 totaled \$4.18 billion, up 38% from the previous year. Both crop and livestock production values were at record highs.

Apples remain the leading agricultural commodity in the state, with a 2022 value of \$2.07 billion, up 3% from the previous year. Apples represented 16% of the total agricultural value in 2022. In the previous year, apple’s share of the total was 20%. Milk remained in the second position and had a value of production totaling \$1.68 billion dollars in 2022, up 39% from 2021. All wheat, valued at \$1.17 billion, represented the third highest value in the state, with a 55% increase from the previous year, and up from fourth in the state rankings in 2021. Cattle and calves value of production moved down one position from the previous year to fourth in the state rankings. The value of cattle and calves in 2022 was \$1.02 billion, up 28% from the previous year. Potatoes rounded out the top five with a value of \$943 million, up 32% from the previous year. These five commodities had a combined value of \$6.88 billion, or 54% of the 2022 value for all

commodities (excluding government payments). The same five commodities in 2021 had a combined value of \$5.48 billion, 54% of the total value.

Eggs entered the top 10 in 2022 and set a record high value of production. The value of egg production in 2022 was \$460 million, up 149% from 2021. Of the other top 10 commodities, milk, wheat, cattle and calves, potatoes, all hay, and all grapes also increased significantly from 2021. ■

PNW winter wheat production down

From the National Agricultural Statistics Service

Washington planted 1.80 million acres of winter wheat in 2023, down 50,000 acres from 2022. Harvested area, at 1.75 million acres, is down 50,000 acres from 2022. Winter wheat production in Washington is 94.5 million bushels, down 23% from last year, with yield estimated at 54 bushels per acre, down 14 bushels per acre from 2022. Idaho planted 750,000 acres of winter wheat in 2023, down 20,000 acres from 2022. Harvested area, at 630,000 acres, is down 80,000 acres from 2022. Winter wheat production in Idaho is 56.1 million bushels, down 12% from last year, with yield estimated at 89 bushels per acre, down one bushel per acre from 2022. Oregon planted 740,000 acres of winter wheat in 2023, up 10,000 acres from 2022. Harvested area, at 725,000 acres, is up 10,000 acres from 2022. Winter wheat production in Oregon is 40.6 million bushels, down 16% from last year, with yield estimated at 56 bushels per acre, down 12 bushels per acre from 2022.

Spring wheat

Washington planted 500,000 acres

Top 10 agricultural commodities in Washington 2020-2022						
Commodity	Rank		Value of production			Change
	2022	2021	2020 (1,000 dollars)	2021 (1,000 dollars)	2022 (1,000 dollars)	2022/2021 (percent)
Apples	1	1	2,095,265	2,007,502	2,067,829	3
Milk ¹	2	2	1,192,975	1,209,744	1,678,291	38.7
Wheat, all	3	4	948,593	756,838	1,171,388	54.8
Cattle and Calves	4	3	705,796	796,068	1,018,952	28
Potatoes	5	5	753,377	712,442	942,651	32.3
Hay, all	6	6	500,740	601,794	882,595	46.7
Eggs	7	12	220,203	184,441	459,994	149.4
Hops	8	7	444,909	482,267	434,460	-9.9
Cherries, sweet	9	8	561,696	470,222	407,727	-13.3
Grapes, all	10	9	302,178	300,750	394,865	31.3
Value of crop production			7,447,605	7,046,960	8,598,203	22
Value of livestock production			2,770,761	3,031,003	4,177,486	37.8
Total value of production, all commodities			10,218,366	10,077,963	12,775,689	26.8

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

of spring wheat in 2023, up 25,000 acres from 2022. Harvested area, at 490,000 acres, is up 20,000 acres from 2022. Spring wheat production in Washington is 18.6 million bushels, down 14% from last year, with yield estimated at 38 bushels per acre, down 8 bushels per acre from 2022. Idaho planted 410,000 acres of spring wheat in 2023, up 30,000 acres from 2022. Harvested area, at 395,000 acres, is up 35,000 acres from 2022. Spring wheat production in Idaho is 32.4 million bushels, up 11% from last year, with yield estimated at 82 bushels per acre, up one bushel per acre from 2022. ■



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Did you know that Washington is one of the best states for beer lovers? According to our friends at the Washington Beer Blog, Bellingham and Yakima made the top 25 cities with the most breweries per capita (with populations more than 50,000). And, our brewers are really good at what they do. In 2022, they won 19 medals at the Great American Beer Festival, and in 2023, they won 14. This is the premiere beer competition in the U.S. More than 2,100 breweries submitted more than 9,900 beers and only 300 medals were awarded.

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In November 2022, the Washington Grain Commission posted a map of breweries that feature beer made, all or in part, with Washington-grown malt.

It also includes fun facts about Washington-sourced brews.

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Source: Maricle, L. (2022, November 2). Drink Local. Washington Grains Commission. <https://wagrains.org/articles/drink-local/>

Washington Beer-telligence






PHOTO BY LORI MARICLE, WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

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Memo doesn't call for breaching

WHAT DOES BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S MOVE MEAN TO STAKEHOLDERS, REGION?

By Michelle Hennings
Executive Director, Washington
Association of Wheat Growers

In September, you may have seen some press regarding the Snake River Dam litigation process and a memorandum released by the Biden Administration. I understand the way this was being reported in the press may have caused some concern and confusion, and I'd like to provide more information.

In regards to the litigation process, the stay was extended for 60 days, to Oct. 31. During this time, the federal mediation process will continue. We aren't sure what will happen after that date, but we'll keep members informed as best we can.

Separately, the Biden Administration released a memorandum to begin the process of seeking solutions between the parties involved in the fight over the lower Snake River dams. Overall, the memorandum acknowledged the dams must meet their commitments for reliable, carbon-free electricity, for agriculture, and for salmon.

Notably, although the Administration has been facing pressure from environmental groups to support breaching the dams, the memo does not explicitly call for it. While there is still plenty of work to do moving forward in ensuring an appropriate solution that both supports salmon health and protects the irreplaceable benefits of the lower Snake River dams, this is a satisfactory step.

The memo ordered federal agencies to review their programs affecting native fish populations in the Columbia Basin and, if necessary, develop plans and budgets within



220 days that align with the Biden Administration's priorities, which include:

- Restoring healthy and abundant salmon, steelhead, and other native fish populations.
- Securing a clean and resilient energy future for the region.
- Supporting local agriculture and its role in food security both here and abroad.
- Investing in local communities that depend on the services provided by the dams.

What does the memo and the litigation stay extension mean moving forward?

As I mentioned, there has been a huge amount of pressure on the Biden Administration to support breaching the lower Snake River dams, and past public statements made by the Administration seemed to lean towards supporting that option. However, the memo did not explicitly say that restoring native fish populations is the main goal. Instead, it requires that federal agencies support what we've believed all along, that healthy salmon populations can co-exist with the dams, which provide clean energy, transportation of products up and down the river, and thriving economies throughout the Pacific Northwest.

While we are satisfied that the memo did not call for breaching the dams or stating that restoring native fish populations is the top priority, we and our partners are concerned about a number of issues raised by the memo (as detailed in a Sept. 28 newsletter from Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners):

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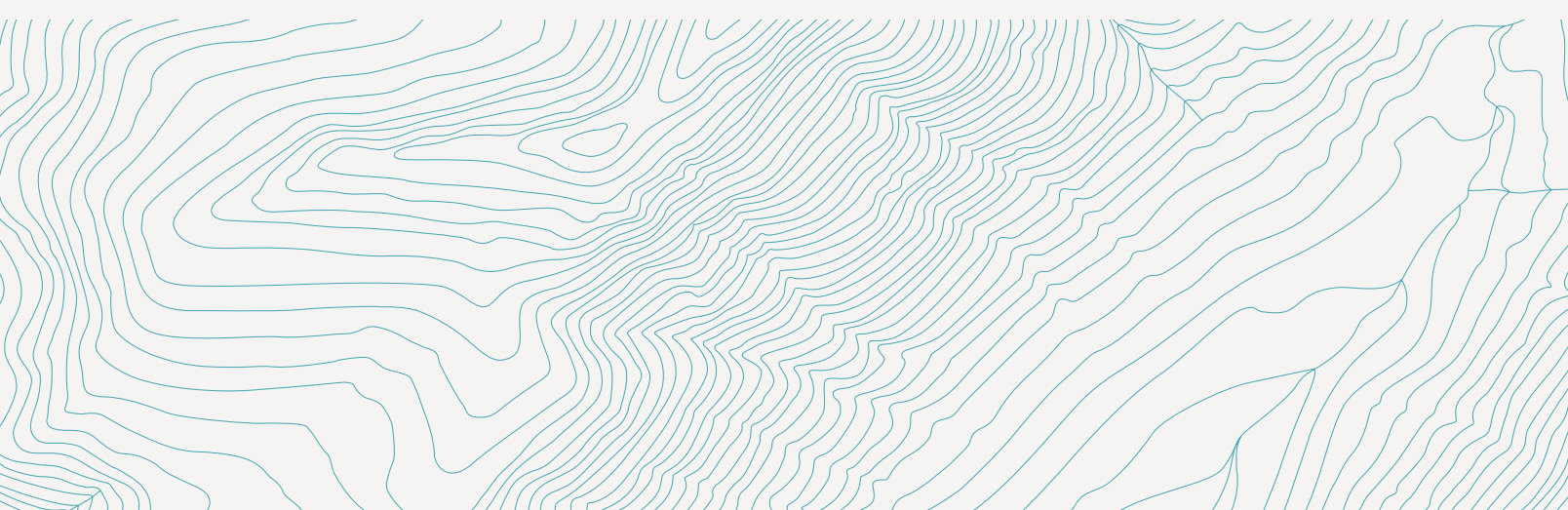
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- **Ignoring prior action agency consensus.** The memo seemingly ignores the 2020 Columbia River System Operations Final Environmental Impact Statement that addresses how best to accomplish multiple objectives for the hydropower system.
- **Shifting recovery standards.** The memo continues the Biden Administration’s shift to a subjective salmon recovery standard. The U.S. government has always utilized the National Energy Policy Act (NEPA) recovery standard for endangered species. The Biden Administration started referencing a new “healthy and abundant” stocks standard at the onset of this process. While we also want healthy and abundant salmon populations, the new “standard” is not rooted in either longstanding federal policy precedent or validated scientific research.
- **Failed process.** The memo continues to give the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) a hand in what has been a failed stakeholder process, one that has been stacked against public power and agricultural interests. The memo asks CEQ to lead a multi-agency effort with the Office of Management and Budget. We believe this could lead to funding requests to fund dam breaching feasibility studies and other initiatives that could undermine the federal Columbia River Power System.
- **Tees up offensive by the plaintiffs.** Over the next 220 days, we anticipate federal agencies, such as Bonneville Power Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Bureau of Reclamation, will see an effort by plaintiffs to take steps that would devalue the hydropower system and/or make hydropower much more costly for our communities with the prospect of further, costly litigation hanging over the effort.

What are the next steps?

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) and our partners in this process will have to remain engaged. Before Congress can vote to deauthorize any federal dams, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would be required to do a study, so we’ll be watching future legislation for any funding earmarked for that purpose. WAWG will also remain engaged with our members of Congress who serve on committees of jurisdiction involving the dams and will continue advocating against dam breaching. ■

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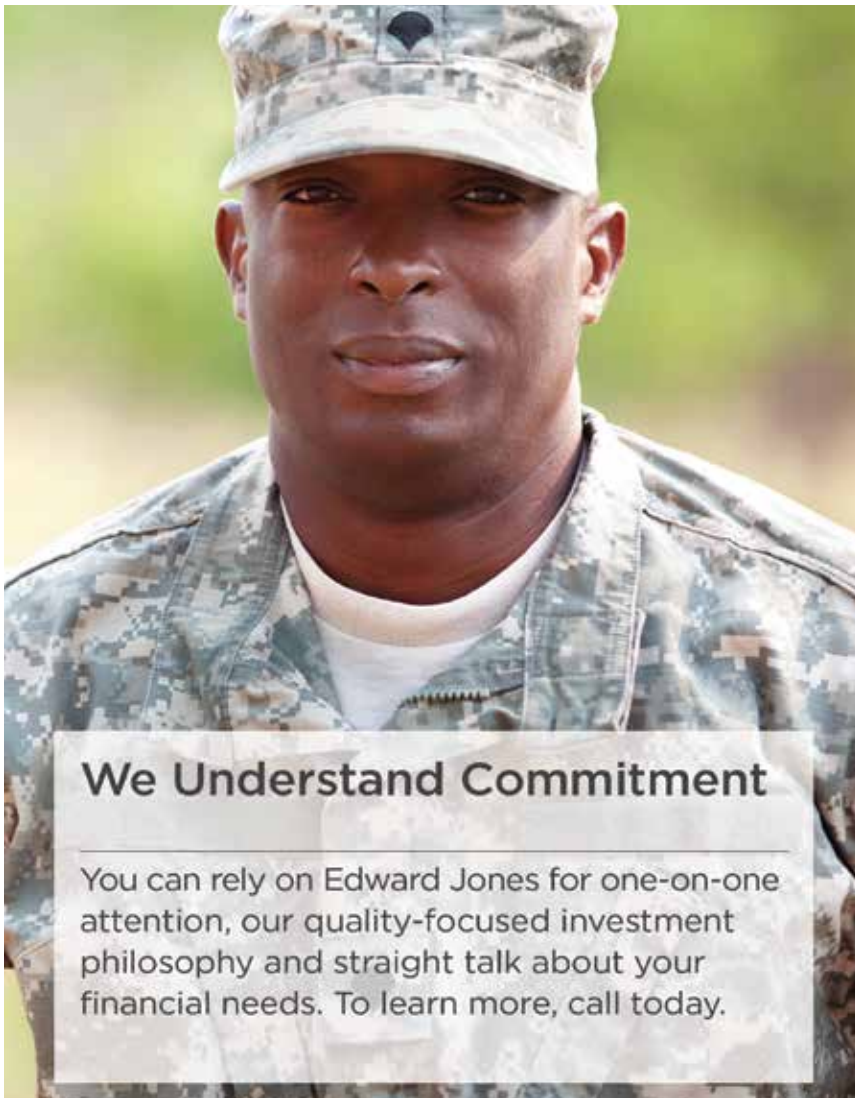
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Fuel workgroup winds down

Opinions differ on how effective the effort was in resolving producers' issues

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

In September, the Washington State Department of Ecology's (Ecology) Fuel Exemptions Workgroup wrapped up four months of work. Whether it was successful or not might depend on who you are talking to.

Washington State's Climate Commitment Act, which includes a cap-and-invest program, went into effect in January 2023 and requires covered entities that meet a certain threshold, including many fuel suppliers, to purchase allowances equal to their

greenhouse gas emissions. In preparation, fuel suppliers began tacking on a fuel surcharge that was passed down to fuel distributors and, ultimately, to consumers. However, the cap-and-invest program exempted emissions in certain situations, including:

- Watercraft or maritime fuels combusted outside of Washington.
- Aviation fuel.
- Emissions from fuels used in agricultural operations.
- Emissions from fuels used to transport agricultural products to market on public highways.

Ecology is responsible for implementing and managing the cap and invest program and was tasked with determining a method for exempting fuels used to transport ag products on public highways for the next five years. However, when the legislation went into effect, no exemption mechanism was in place. Producers were stuck paying thousands of extra dollars in fuel surcharges while the fuel industry, legislators, and state agencies tried to pin the responsibility elsewhere.

"The idea was that we would try to get the stakeholders involved with exempt fuels together around the table to talk out some of the problems we were facing, that they were facing, and really try to think of solutions together.

How to make sure farmers and end users did not pay surcharges on exempt fuels and try to get through those problems so the system could work as planned," explained Luke Martland, Ecology's Climate Commitment Act implementation manager.

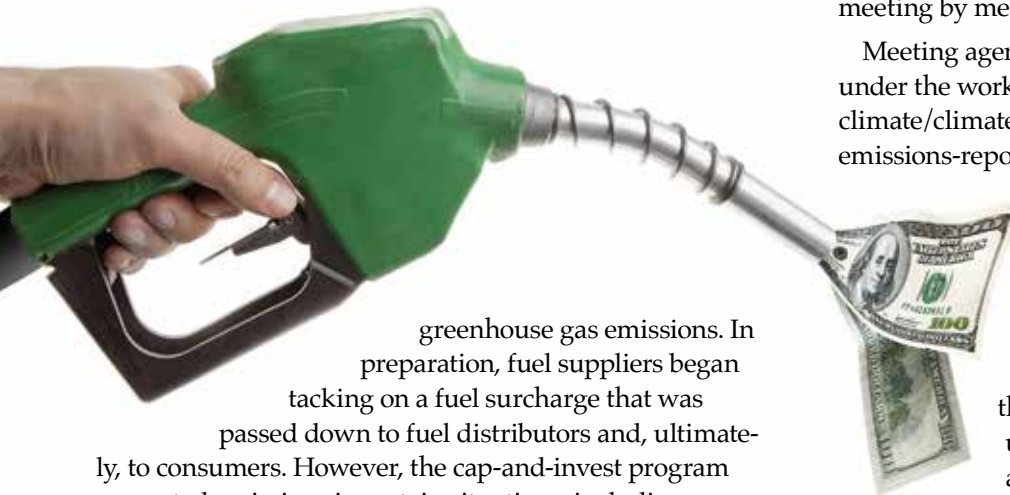
The workgroup consisted of 37 participants representing a wide swath of stakeholders, including truckers, the maritime industry, agriculture, energy suppliers and distributors, environmental nonprofits, and state government. The first few meetings focused on identifying the most important issues and then "working towards solutions" meeting by meeting.

Meeting agendas and summaries can be found under the workgroup tab at ecology.wa.gov/air-climate/climate-commitment-act/cap-and-invest/emissions-reporting

In Martland's opinion, the workgroup was successful in that progress was made and stakeholders were better informed on how the cap-and-invest program and compliance obligations are meant to work, although he acknowledged that it didn't solve all the problems. One misunderstanding was that fuel distributors and fuel suppliers had to account for every gallon of gas, where it went, who it went to, and whether it was exempt or not. Martland said that Ecology allows fuel suppliers to "true up" their accounts at the end of the year by tracking the volume of exempt fuel sold. In June, Ecology was aware of two fuel suppliers that weren't imposing surcharges. By August, that number had increased to 23. Many fuel suppliers and distributors are using a combination of certification and card locks to avoid charging exempt users.

"That really came from farmers understanding that they shouldn't have to pay surcharges and talking to their fuel supplier and fuel distributor. It was a matter of info and advocacy that really made a difference," Martland said.

One area in particular that the workgroup struggled with was how to apply the exemption for fuel used to transport ag products on public highways, including how to apply the exemption when buying fuel at a gas station with no line of sight back to the supplier or no card lock, and how to deal with "mixed" loads of ag and nonag products. Martland said Ecology will be issuing guidance on mixed loads and what constitutes an ag product. ▶



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Certification was also suggested as a workaround for buying exempt fuel at a gas station.

“This is the toughest of them all. I don’t want to oversell and pretend everything is fixed, because it’s not. But I feel even with this tough scenario, we are beginning to make progress. We’ll just see how it works over time. We are going to keep talking to fuel suppliers and keep working with them and doing everything we can to assist in that process,” he said.

Refunds and rebates were another area of misunderstanding, although there is some progress there as well. During the workgroup meetings, two fuel suppliers said they’ve issued rebates, and Ecology hopes the market pushes more suppliers to do the same.

“A lot of folks thought Ecology had the money from the surcharges imposed on exempt fuels. Of course, we don’t. We don’t want there to be surcharges on exempt fuels. We hadn’t ordered that or mandated that. It wasn’t required. In our view, it was contrary to the law, and we don’t have the money from it,” Martland said. “Once we explained that we don’t have the money and we don’t think surcharges should be imposed, that helped (the workgroup) move forward with solutions.”

Martland said Ecology will continue working with covered entities and providing technical assistance to help them comply with the program.

“I truly appreciate everyone participating in the workgroup,” he said. “Sometimes we had difficult conversations. We had a lot of perspectives in the room, but there were a lot of folks that really contributed and, I think, really moved things forward, so we really appreciate that.”

What do the participants think?

Andy Juris, president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), was a little more pessimistic about the success of the workgroup. He said a lot of the time was spent trying to identify a problem that seemed fairly obvious — Ecology failed to do a job it was supposed to. Despite all the workgroup discussions and suggestions, Juris feels that the agency is simply going to wait for the fuel industry to solve the problem itself.

“It’s not like they didn’t see this coming. It wasn’t legislation passed a week before being enacted. They saw this coming, and nobody did anything. The onus is on the state to truly exempt these industries,” he said.

Juris acknowledged that some fuel suppliers and distrib-



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utors have implemented their own solutions to honor the exemptions, although he has yet to be offered a rebate for the thousands of extra dollars he's spent on fuel used on his Klickitat County farm. He also pointed out that this issue (and the workgroup) brought together multiple parts of the energy industry. It also demonstrated how invested local co-ops are in working closely with their customers.

"You got to hear from lots of different industries, hear their problems, hear their concerns. We aren't the only ones struggling with this. Other industries are grappling with this as well," he said. "However, I wish Ecology had approached this problem solving and rulemaking with the same energy that they litigate landowners for infractions."

Jon DeVaney, president of the Washington State Tree Fruit Association, also participated in the workgroup. He said whether or not the workgroup was successful depends on one's definition of success.

"It didn't fully resolve all the issues for all of the ag producers who should be exempt under the Climate Commitment Act but are currently not able to get their fuels exempted," he said. "It was helpful in identifying many of the unresolved issues and providing some additional guidance or clarification of Ecology's interpretation of the law. I think that has helped some fuel suppliers move towards solutions on their own."

DeVaney feels the workgroup was successful in helping participants understand how complicated the fuel production and distribution supply chain is and highlighted why it is so difficult to exempt just part of the system.

"From Ecology's perspective, I think they felt that they fully stated their intent and were hoping fuel suppliers would then figure out how



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to do it, whereas many of the fuel suppliers seemed to think they need firmer ground on what the expectations and authorities are in order to do some of those things," he added. "Ultimately, these parties need to complete their work on these issues to provide the relief promised to growers by the Legislature."

Tony Wisdom, CEO and founder of Skagit Valley Farm, one of the state's major fresh market potato producers, felt the workgroup might have helped other industries, but it made little difference in addressing agriculture producers' frustrations and concerns. He added that most of the progress thus far has come from farmers working with their own suppliers and pushing them to come up with solutions.

"From day one, my personal opinion was that Ecology should have called in the refiners and the major fuel suppliers and gotten them in a room in Olympia, and they could have solved all these problems within a week. I feel like the workgroup was just an opportunity to allow everybody a chance to voice their frustrations and concerns, but I don't really think it moved the needle at all with regards to helping the ag industry solve this exempt fuel problem," he said. "I'm frustrated because ag users were exempt from day one, and yet we have all paid the tax/fee to our suppliers, and very few refunds have been given to date. That's robbery unless they pay back those fees with interest. I mean, we paid the tax/fee with borrowed money, and yet we are getting no interest on that money that we are paying interest on," he said. ■

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Farm bill, funding updates

HOW DOES EXPIRED LEGISLATION, POTENTIAL SHUTDOWN IMPACT FARMER PROGRAMS?

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Producers are facing two financial uncertainties going into the end of 2023 that could have huge impacts on the agricultural industry.

On Sept. 30, the 2018 Farm Bill expired with no sign of new legislation to replace it. Congress is also facing a funding deadline of Nov. 17 to avoid a government shutdown.

Without a new farm bill or an extension, one of three things will happen to farm bill programs: some would lose funding and shut down; some programs, like crop insurance and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, would continue with little or no changes; and some would revert back to rules established in 1938 and 1949 farm bills, which could cost consumers and the government millions of dollars and leave many of today's most popular crops, such as soybeans, with no support.

Nicole Berg, chair of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers' (WAWG) National Legislation Committee and past president of both WAWG and the National Association of Wheat Growers, said at first, the wheat industry was hopeful that Congress would be able to pass a new farm bill before the end of the year, but now, an extension of the current farm bill is the more likely outcome, especially with 2024 being an election year.

"There's been a lot of upheaval in Congress this fall, and with all the work on appropriations bills and keeping the government open, legislators are running out of time to pass farm bill legislation before the end of the year," Berg said. "Most of the crop support programs farmers rely on are funded through the end of the year, but after December, without new legislation or an extension, some farm bill funding falls back to 1930s rules. Nobody really knows how that will go."

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies are keeping a close eye on Congress and making contingency plans. Farmers should check with their local USDA service center if they have questions.

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Jon Wyss, Washington State FSA state executive director, said that even without a new farm bill or a farm bill extension, most of FSA's programs already have approval

authority, so payments will continue as normal until the program(s) term expires. This includes the Emergency Relief Program and the Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program. In addition, the state office just finished sending out Conservation Reserve Program payments in October. Even without a new farm bill, FSA staff can continue to take applications and sign producers up for programs; they just can't sign new contracts.

"Until they give us the authorization and the software programs open back up, we'll say 'thank you for applying, and we've got you in the system,'" he explained.

In case of a government shutdown, FSA state and county offices will close, and FSA employees would be put on leave until Congress passes a new funding bill. Wyss added that a few employees would be designated as essential personnel to check on the office(s), open mail, and deposit checks, but FSA offices wouldn't be open to the public.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

According to an NRCS spokesperson, generally, farm bill programs and provisions expire at the end of the fiscal year (Sept. 30) or the end of the crop year (varies by commodity), and permanent programs do not expire. For the time being, both permanent programs and programs that expire at the end of the crop year continue to operate as normal.

Programs that expired on Sept. 30 and were authorized and funded through the farm bill have stopped receiving new funding and conducting sign-ups for 2024. Existing contracts in these programs continue, and in certain instances, program operations continue, to some extent, based on the amount of carry-over balances that remain in the accounts.

Programs that expired on Sept. 30 and were authorized through the farm bill and funded through the annual appropriations process continue as long as they receive funding. Currently, NRCS is operating under a 45-day extension of last year's annual appropriations, so these programs continue until at least Nov. 17. If Congress does not approve an annual appropriations bill for 2024 or another extension of the 2023 bill by that date, these programs will stop operating.

In addition, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), extended some conservation programs and their funding authority for the IRA's 10-year budget window, such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and the



Conservation Stewardship Program. Because of additional funding from the IRA, producers have increased opportunities to sign up for oversubscribed programs. USDA has opened up the application period for fiscal year 2024 conservation assistance giving producers the opportunity to apply for this historic funding. NRCS encourages wheat producers interested in climate-smart agricultural or conservation practices to contact their local NRCS office to find out how they can begin the process of applying for funding or creating a conservation plan for their operation.

In the case of a government shutdown, NRCS offices will be closed and most employees furloughed.

Risk Management Agency (RMA)

Ben Thiel, director of RMA's Spokane regional office, said if there

is a lapse of funding through a government shutdown, RMA offices will close, and employees will be furloughed. Producers' crop insurance policies will still be serviced, and any claims will be processed by their approved insurance provider. Crop insurance, while amended by farm bills, is permanently authorized and funded separately from other farm bill programs. ■

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Farm Bill Myth vs. Fact

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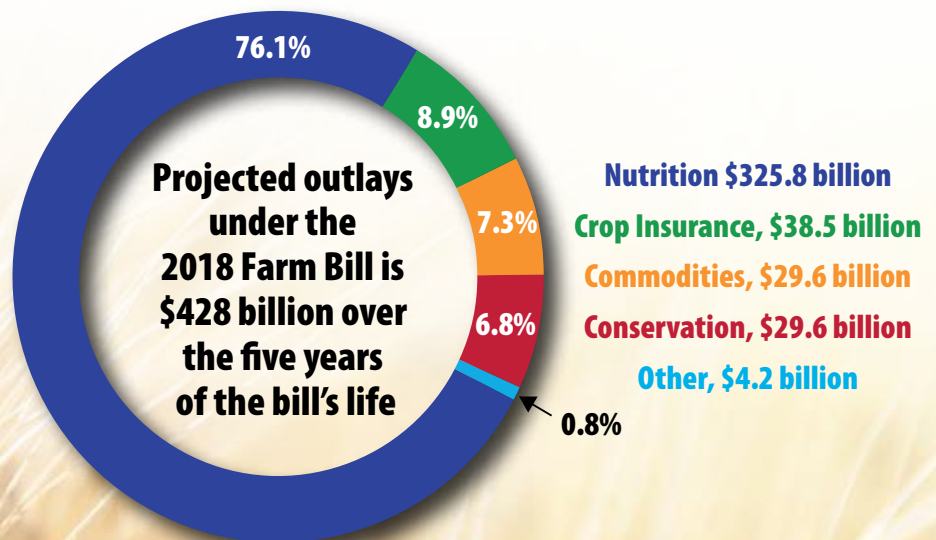
Agriculture makes up the majority of funding in the farm bill.

Fact:

Only about 23% of the 2018 Farm Bill was earmarked for agriculture, including crop insurance, commodities, and conservation. The majority, 76%, went to nutrition programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Did you know ...

- The 2018 Farm Bill, otherwise known as the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, has 12 titles or chapters: commodities; conservation; trade; nutrition; credit; rural development; research, Extension and related matters; forestry; energy; horticulture; crop insurance; and miscellaneous.
- Farm bill legislation is updated and passed every five years. The first farm bill was enacted in the 1930s as part of FDR's New Deal. Its three original goals — to keep food prices fair for farmers and consumers, ensure an adequate food supply, and protect and sustain the country's vital natural resources — responded to the economic and environmental crises of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. While the farm bill has changed in the last 70 years, its primary goals are the same.
- The entirety of the farm safety net is projected to only cost about .2% of the expected federal budget over the next 10 years, a historical low. Projected baseline farm safety net spending (which is the sum of farm programs, plus crop insurance, plus other disaster assistance) is \$18.5 billion — that's 47% below the most recent five years, and 32% below the 10 year average.
- Crop Insurance has been part of the farm bill since 1938. Crop insurance protects more than 90% of planted farm acres and more than 130 crops in all regions of the U.S. Going back 10 years, the projected price tag has only increased 12% while the acreage covered has increased 83%. Crop insurance is a public-private partnership — costs are shared between farmers, private-sector crop insurance companies, and the government. Farmers paid nearly \$6.8 billion out of their own pockets in 2022 and \$6.8 billion again in 2023 for coverage on their crops.



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Stakeholders from around the region gathered at the HighLine Grain Growers facility in Cheney, Wash., in September to celebrate the announcement of \$72.8 million in funding for the Palouse River and Coulee City short-line rail system. The grant was awarded by the Federal Railroad Administration through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement program. Washington Association of Wheat Growers Past President Howard McDonald and Executive Director Michelle Hennings were among the group. Photo courtesy of the Washington State Department of Transportation

A shot in the funding arm

Federal grant will help rehabilitate a significant portion of Eastern Washington's short-line rail system

By Trista Crossley
Editor, Wheat Life

In late September, the Palouse River and Coulee City (PCC) short-line rail system got a major shot in the funding arm when the Federal Railroad Administration announced it would receive \$72.8 million through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program.

“It will be transformative in terms of the level of investment that’s being made for the PCC system,” said Janet Matkin, communications manager for the Washington State Department of Transportation’s (WSDOT) Rail, Freight, and Ports Division. “We purposely identified the top needs on all three of the branches. The goal is to try to ensure that those areas that are most in need are addressed.”

The CRISI money will be matched with state funding from the Move Ahead Washington transportation package, resulting in a total project budget of \$112 million. The improvements will include track enhancements and upgraded road crossings in four of the five counties where the PCC is located: Adams, Grant, Lincoln, Spokane, and Whitman counties. One of the major goals is to upgrade as much of the track as possible so trains can run at 25 miles per hour. Currently, the majority of the track can only support speeds of up to 10 miles per hour. In addition, Matkin said the upgrades will also allow the PCC to carry the heavier, 286,000-pound industry standard railcars used on the Class 1 railroads.

“Right now, we can only use smaller railroad cars. There will be increased shipping efficiency and better rates for shippers if we can run the larger cars,” she explained. “This is the culmination of the two-decade journey to



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

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

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

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

Why Support the Washington Wheat PAC?

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

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

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improve this system to make it more and more viable for farmers and businesses throughout Eastern Washington.”

The work on the short line likely won't start until 2025. Matkin said the first steps are to negotiate the grant contract with the Federal Railroad Administration, develop the contract bid package, and advertise these as public works contracts. This will take the better part of a year. The process will be complicated, as much of the track needs to remain accessible while under construction, especially during harvest.

The state began acquiring the PCC in 2004 when the former owners decided to abandon the lines, which were in poor shape due to years of deferred maintenance. Today, WSDOT contracts with private companies to operate and maintain the PCC's three branches. Historically, about 20-25% of Washington's wheat ships on the PCC system.

WSDOT applied for the CRISI grant in 2022 with the support of stakeholders and legislators across the PCC's footprint. Matkin said they had approximately 40 letters of support for their application, which reflects the importance of the short line.

“This is a key link in transporting products from the fields to the global marketplace. A lot of this wheat is going to Asia, so the fact that we are able to provide that kind of support to Eastern Washington's economy is really important,” she said. “It's the reason WSDOT and its local partners are so invested in upgrading the PCC system.”

Both the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) and the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) were among the CRISI grant supporters.

“This badly needed funding was



Grain Train's time is ending

Most people who drive through the five counties where the Palouse River and Coulee City (PCC) short-line rail system operates are likely familiar with the Grain Train (grain-branded rail cars). The rail cars were acquired beginning in the 1990s to help alleviate a national shortage of grain hopper rail cars. There are about 100 cars currently riding the rails, evenly split between the three branches of the PCC. But according to Janet Matkin, communications manager for the Washington State Department of Transportation's Rail, Freight, and Ports Division, the Grain Train rail cars' time is coming to an end.

“They served their purpose at a time when rail cars were in short supply, but at this point, they are being maintained but there is no plan or program in place to replace the cars once they age out and can no longer move out onto the Class I railroads,” she said. ■

made possible with the cooperation of farmers, stakeholders, and our state and federal legislators,” WAWG Executive Director Michelle Hennings said. “In order for Washington farmers to continue feeding the world, we must be able to get our product to market safely and quickly, and the short-line railroads are absolutely a necessary piece in that system. We are eager to see the work started on this critical part of our transportation infrastructure.”

“This grant will allow the grain industry to respond to a critical need for improved transportation infrastructure and is deeply appreciated,” WGC CEO

Casey Chumrau said. "The leadership of our senators and Eastern Washington representatives will secure reliable and competitive methods of transporting agricultural products and ensure the economic vitality of our state." ■

Keeping an eye on the dam debate

With railroads, including Palouse River and Coulee City (PCC) short-line rail system, often being touted as a viable replacement if barging capabilities are lost on the lower Snake River due to breaching the dams, it's no wonder the people at the Washington State Department of Transportation are keeping a close eye on the debate. The department released some preliminary impacts that breaching the dams could have on the state's freight infrastructure, including:

- The lower Snake River currently moves about 2.4 million tons of grain by barge annually.
- Breaching the lower Snake River dams could add twice as many trains per year on the PCC system.
- BNSF and Union Pacific predict an increase of four additional unit trains per week.
- The loss of barging could add as many as 220 daily truck trips, approximately a 20-25% increase.
- Highways paralleling the Snake River would likely require significantly more maintenance.
- Additional analysis is needed to help determine more accurate changes in freight volumes, needed resources, and costs. ■

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WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

By Ben Barstow



The 2023 crops are in the bin, and 2024 winter wheat is in the ground. My equipment is still, for the moment, not burning fuel or wearing out parts or making more repair work for me. Finally, those critically important but weather-modulated tasks are done for a while, leaving all of us with that ever present, year-round critically important task of MARKETING.

Some expert at a marketing seminar years ago said you should spend at least 15 minutes per day on marketing. That would be about 60 hours per year. Your Washington Grain Commission (WGC) averages more than 60 hours every week on marketing efforts on our behalf. For example, WGC staff and commissioners Casey Chumrau, Ty Jessup, and Brian Liedl, participated in the August 2023 U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) North Asia Marketing Conference as speakers and representatives of the Washington wheat industry. It is somewhat a privilege to be invited to speak at these meetings, and we are always well represented. Attendees included Japanese, South Korean, and Taiwanese buyers, USW staff from these countries, U.S. Department of Agriculture officials, and state wheat commissioners and staff.

The South Asia Quality tour is this month, and there will be others to Asia and South and Central America throughout the year. If there is an opportunity somewhere in the world to get people interested in buying the grain you grow, chances are someone from the WGC will be there.

On the barley side, I recently had the opportunity to join WGC staff Mary Palmer Sullivan and the U.S. Grains Council (USGC) staff to represent Washington barley to brewers and food processors in Mexico. Thanks to the hard work of USGC staff, we visited with representatives from the largest breweries in Mexico, research and development staff from two large food processors (think food barley), and with small craft brewers at Cerveza Mexico, the national craft beer exposition.

You may have noticed the absence of animal feed buyers in that list of potential barley customers. The fundamental economic reason behind that is that grain for human food almost always commands a premium price over grain for animal food.

Barley in Washington must economically compete for acres with spring wheat (human food), and until spring feed barley can outyield spring wheat so far that it overcomes the lower price, feed barley is not going to be

planted on many acres. As a result, and as you may have read in Dr. Brueggeman's *Wheat Life* article last month, barley breeding and development has been refocused on malting varieties.

The commission also hosted six USW-coordinated teams and one additional international trade team visit from July through September. Trade team visits build confidence in Washington's high-quality wheat by showcasing all levels of the marketing chain to customers in our export markets. These visitors from foreign flour mills and bakeries are CEOs, vice presidents, production managers, procurement managers, quality control managers, and, occasionally, research and development managers. They come here to see where their food comes from. They want to meet the people who grow it and learn how it's done, where the seeds come from, how it is handled and stored, and shipped. There is always someone to translate, and some visitors speak, or, more often, understand English fairly well.

I want to say thank you to everyone who was able to join us for meals with these groups. Especially to the two former Gar-Pal High School basketball teammates who were such a hit with the Asian team members. Farmers talking to them and answering their questions about farming and our lives were a highlight of these teams' experience in the U.S., and your participation helps us foster strong relationships into the future. Personally, I love answering their questions. It makes me consider my farming and farm life in general in a different light, and it seems like there is at least one novel question that comes out of every group.

In an effort to keep these visitors engaged after they return home, the WGC recently started a customer-focused e-newsletter to keep them up to date on what is going on with the Washington crop throughout the year. You can subscribe to receive this monthly newsletter at <http://eepurl.com/iwpUks>.

These are just a few examples of some of the marketing work your commission dollars did this year to keep our customers coming for more high-quality Washington wheat and barley for markets around the world. I look forward to seeing more growers helping in our commission market development events in the future. If you're interested, track me down at the Tri-State Grain Growers Convention coming up Nov. 14-16 at the Coeur d'Alene Resort, and let's talk about it. ■

REVIEW

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Crop and Soil Sciences chair named

Lynne Carpenter-Boggs, a professor at Washington State University (WSU), has been appointed as the new chair of the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences. Carpenter-Boggs is a renowned researcher and educator, and she is the first woman to lead the crop and soils department at WSU. She aims to foster collaboration and camaraderie among department members and help new faculty integrate with senior scientists to rekindle the department's familial atmosphere. Her research specializes in soil science, particularly in studying natural systems of agriculture like organic farming. Her passion for soil science stems from her college education, which ignited her interest in the vital role soil plays in Earth's ecosystem. Her personal experience, including growing up on a small farm, has deepened her appreciation of the importance of agriculture in various aspects of life. ■



Finnie joins wheat quality lab

The Western Wheat Quality Laboratory of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) welcomed **Sean Finnie** as its new director. Finnie assumes the role that was left by the late Dr. Craig Morris and was previously held by Dr. Alicia Kiszonas as interim director.

Sean Finnie grew up in Moscow, Idaho, and received a B.S. and M.S. in food science from the University of Idaho. Finnie completed his Ph.D. in grain science and industry at Kansas State University and served as a postdoctoral research fellow at KU Leuven, in Belgium. Finnie's Ph.D. and postdoctoral research focused on understanding the role wheat lipids play in overall quality. Before joining the USDA, Finnie was the senior manager of cultivar development and research at Bay State Milling Company within the varietal solutions business unit. In this role, he led cultivar development initiatives with an emphasis on nutrition and quality traits. This included commercializing the first wheat varieties with elevated total dietary fiber content by increasing the levels of resistant starch in the grain. ■



PNWA announces new executive director

The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) has hired **Neil Maunu** as executive director. He began on Aug. 7.

Maunu replaces outgoing Executive Director Heather Stebbings, who served with PNWA for 15 years, the last two as executive director. The Washington Grain Commission is a member of PNWA,



which is a nonprofit, nonpartisan trade association of ports, businesses, public agencies, and individuals who support navigation, energy, trade, and economic development throughout the region. ■

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Hulbert promoted; Edgar joins CAHNRS

Scot Hulbert has been named senior associate dean for Washington State University's (WSU) College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences (CAHNRS), while Leslie Edgar will replace Hulbert as associate dean for research in 2024.

Hulbert, a regents professor in the Department of Plant Pathology at WSU, has been serving as the associate dean for research since 2018. In this capacity, he has overseen research initiatives that benefit Washington's agriculture, community health, and state resilience, supported by a substantial \$101 million in extramural funding in 2023. As senior associate dean, Hulbert will work on projects aligned with the priorities set by the dean and other associate deans, including the development of a new strategic plan aimed at enhancing the college's research efforts.



Leslie Edgar. Photo courtesy New Mexico State University; photo by Josh Bachman.

Leslie Edgar, currently an associate dean of research and director of the agricultural research station at New Mexico State University, will assume the role of associate dean for research at CAHNRS starting on Jan. 2, 2024. Edgar brings a wealth of experience from her background in agricultural communication and leadership, including previous leadership roles at the University of Georgia and the University of Arkansas. Edgar's objectives include a comprehensive assessment of CAHNRS's research portfolio and active engagement with industry and growers to shape and strengthen the overall vision for the science produced within the college. Her upbringing on a family farm in Idaho instilled in her a deep understanding of production agriculture, and she is eager to collaborate with stakeholders in Washington's agricultural community. ■



Scot Hulbert

Wheat market export organization welcomes new faces

U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) is the export market organization for the U.S. wheat industry. In August, USW hired Mr. Yi-I Huang (pronounced "E.E. Huang") as country director for Taiwan, succeeding Boyuan Chen who retired in September 2023. Huang comes to USW after a 14-year career in grain merchandizing at Mitsui & Company, at both the company's Taipei and Tokyo offices. Mitsui is the parent company of Vancouver, Washington's, United Grain Corporation, which is a major grain supplier to several Asian markets. USW has maintained an office in Taipei for more than 50 years, with strong demand for U.S. hard red spring, soft white, and hard red winter wheat from Taiwan's milling and baking industries.

In addition to Huang, USW announced Norman Karlson was hired as its fiscal officer in August. Kurt Coppens has been promoted to director of finance from the role of fiscal officer and current Senior Staff Accountant Adam Kiely has been promoted to comptroller.

Luke Muller joined the team in June as assistant director for the USW West Coast Office in Portland, Ore. Muller has a broad set of skills and experience in agricultural research and economics. Raised on his family's wheat, cotton, sorghum, canola, soybean, and alfalfa farm in southwestern Oklahoma, Muller worked as a research assistant in Michigan State University's Department of Agriculture, Food, and Resource Economics, where his duties included investigating fungal and insect effect on crops in the Midwest. He also served as a consultant for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome, Italy. His work and study abroad offered an opportunity to see firsthand how other countries develop sustainable food chains through technology, research, and policy.

Brenda Taylor was hired in 2022 as director of USW's information technology in its Arlington, Va., headquarters office. Taylor is an experienced information technology manager, having worked primarily in a local law firm where she guided the firm's technology strategy while leading a team of analysts in three local offices. ■



Yi-I Huang



Norman Karlson



Luke Muller



Brenda Taylor

Breaking ground for agriculture's future

New USDA-ARS Plant Sciences Building will be home for collaborative wheat research

The U.S. Department of Agriculture broke ground this summer at WSU Pullman for the new USDA-Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Plant Sciences Building, to help solve challenges facing Northwest wheat and other globally important crops.

“This new facility builds on the involvement of the Washington Grain Commission and our grower partners, for which we are very grateful,” said Wendy Powers, Cashup Davis Family Endowed Dean of CAHNRS. “When complete, it will be a modern home for cutting-edge research that keeps Washington agriculture productive and resilient, as well as a tangible reminder of the more than 90-year collaboration between USDA and WSU.”

Powers joined U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Washington Grain Commission Vice President Mary Palmer Sullivan, U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, U.S. Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, USDA Chief Scientist Chavonda Jacobs-Young, ARS Administrator Simon Liu, and WSU Provost, Executive Vice President and Pullman Chancellor Elizabeth Chilton to break ground Aug. 1, 2023. WGC Chairman Ben Barstow, State Sen. Mark Schoesler, and WSU Regent Brett Blankenship also attended.

WSU scientists in Plant Pathology, Crop and Soil Sciences, and Horticulture will work closely with federal researchers on projects that improve crops and reduce the impacts of weeds, pests, and disease.



Agriculture Updates

Managing herbicide resistance

Supported by wheat growers and USDA-ARS, WSU scientists lead a tri-state effort addressing the increasing resistance of weeds to herbicide tools. Coordinated by Ian Burke, R.J. Cook Endowed Chair of Wheat Research, the Pacific Northwest Herbicide Resistance Initiative uses fundamental and applied weed science approaches to understand and identify weed-resilient management methods in wheat-based cropping systems.

Soil health and resilient crops: Rachel Wieme

Joining the Small Grains team in 2023, Rachel Wieme is WSU's extension agronomist in Walla Walla County, serving southeastern Washington. A Crop and Soils Sciences alumna, Wieme will collaborate in projects on soil health and support for resilient cropping systems. Her research has explored nutrient cycling, soil health, alternative crops and management practices, and cropping system diversification.

Singhs lead research for drylands, soil health

Married couple Shikha and Surendra Singh are leading research for better agriculture in the Inland Northwest. Surendra joined WSU's Lind Dryland Station as director and dryland cropping systems agronomist in 2023; he will expand research into practices that store water, enrich soil, and reduce erosion. Shikha came onboard as research assistant professor and soil scientist, taking part in new long-term soil health research.





Stewarding Washington's Land Legacy

Growing wheat on the Palouse for nearly 40 years, Asa Clark still drives tractors and grain trucks every spring and summer. Retirement has its benefits, but farming remains central to his life.



“There’s a connection with the land and a lifestyle that comes from it,” says Clark, the current chairman and one of 15 members of the Land Legacy Council: experienced producers and professionals who oversee gifts of land to Washington State University.

Now in its second decade, the Land Legacy program provides a dependable stream of revenue for research and learning at WSU, while helping keep the Inland Northwest’s rich agricultural heritage alive.

Clark and fellow volunteers on the council ensure that gifted farms are well managed, families are remembered, and land remains connected to communities.

From breeding to soil fertility to herbicide resistance, Washington farmers depend on research from land grant universities now more than ever. Land legacies support a wide range of discovery for wheat and grains. Donors specify the impact they want to make.



“If a farm owner wants to help perpetuate agriculture in eastern Washington, I can’t think of a better way to do it than a Land Legacy gift,” said Hal Johnson, council member and founding chairman. “It’s an invaluable program, and I’m glad to see it continue to have an impact.”

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Land Legacy Program



Better varieties bred through partnership

WSU’s newest wheat varieties, bred in partnership with Washington growers, are top performers with superior adaptation to the region’s unique challenges. WSU cultivar development is made possible and enhanced by grower support and involvement.

“This partnership allows us to interact with growers, learn about their needs and concerns, and then work to develop varieties that reduce their risk,” said Arron Carter, O.A. Vogel Endowed Chair of Winter Wheat Breeding and Genetics.

Top performances

- **Ryan:** Leading soft white spring variety
- Widely planted: **Tekoa**, **Louise**, and **Seahawk** spring wheat varieties; **Melba** and **Hedge CL+** club wheats
- **Piranha CL+:** Top-planted soft white winter wheat, fall 2023
- **Stingray CL+** and **Sockeye CL+:** Two of the top 8 soft white winter wheat varieties
- **Pritchett:** Leading club wheat accounts for almost 45% of club winter wheat acreage. It was co-developed by WSU and USDA

New arrivals

Hale hard red spring wheat, **Roger** spring club wheat, and **Butch CL+ Clearfield** soft white spring wheat are top performers, available to growers. Our newest soft white spring candidate, **WA8351**, is expected to release in 2024.

New winter wheats **Rollie**, **Jameson**, **Nova AX**, and **Windust** are commercially available this fall.

Soil chemistry and organic matter:

Joao Antonangelo

Joao Antonangelo is the new assistant professor in applied soil chemistry. Supported through a Washington Grain Commission Distinguished Professorship, Antonangelo studies soil acidification, soil organic matter dynamics, and soil biochemistry in direct support of healthy and sustainable grain production. At WSU, he will focus on establishing the optimum base saturation for wheat production in acidified soils, as well as reducing aluminum toxicity in non-tolerant wheat varieties.



Reforging WSU's Wheat Advisory Committee

Promoting a shared vision and strategy for the future of wheat breeding and research in Washington, WSU is working to revitalize its Wheat Advisory Committee. The WAC brings together members of the Washington Grain Commission, Washington Association of Wheat Growers, and WSU and USDA-ARS scientists. Formed in 2008, the initial committee met for five years before going dormant. It was reconstituted in May 2023 to enhance communication and collaboration between the university and industry.

Members meet quarterly to monitor and share feedback on progress and priorities and report back to the dean of CAHNRS and CEO of the WGC. Crop and Soil Sciences professor Rich Koenig leads the group.

A falling numbers fact-finding mission

Weather patterns, susceptible varieties behind problem



Alison L. Thompson
Research Biologist,
U.S. Department
of Agriculture's
Agricultural Research
Service

In April of 2023, my colleague, Amber Hauvermale, and I set out on a falling numbers fact-finding mission with a twofold purpose. The first was for me to introduce myself as the new U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) scientist hired in Pullman to work on falling numbers, to meet those impacted by low falling numbers, learn about the challenges they face, and identify what tools and information are needed to help mitigate future impacts of low falling numbers. (Read more about me from the April *Wheat Life* at <https://bit.ly/3HSADMI>). The second was for Amber, a member of the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences at Washington State University, to share information about the development of a new rapid test to detect alpha-amylase activity, the starch-degrading enzyme responsible for low falling numbers, to gauge industry interest, and to identify early adopters of the new technology. The rapid test development is part of a project supported by the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research. (More about this in the June *Wheat Life* at <https://bit.ly/3F184pa>).

After several interviews, it became clear to us that there is a gap in understanding among some grower groups regarding the falling numbers method, its purpose, and its history with Pacific Northwest (PNW) grain. As a result, a second round of interviews was conducted to provide clarity. This article is the first in a three-part series to share what we learned over the course of these 18 interviews.

Purpose and history of falling numbers in the PNW grain chain

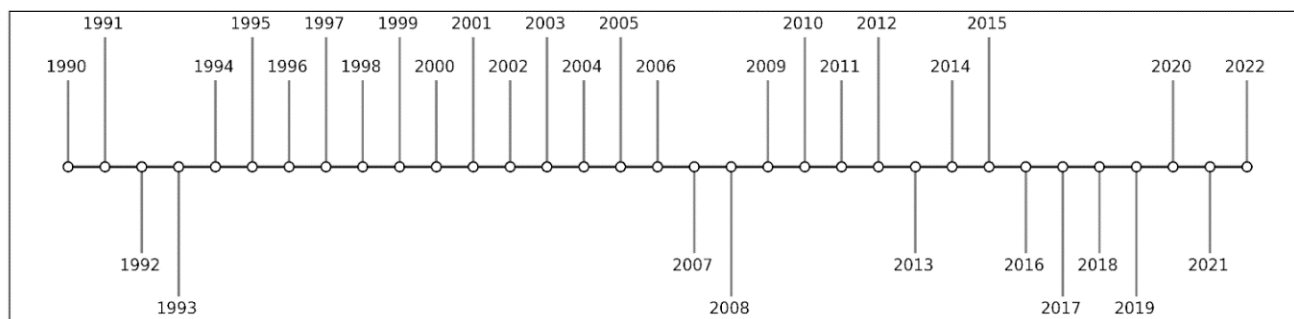
A “falling number” is the number of seconds it takes a stirrer to fall through a slurry or gravy made from wheat meal. The thicker the slurry, the longer it takes the stirrer to fall, which results in a high falling number. Thin slurries are due to starch degradation by the alpha-amylase enzyme and result in a low falling number. Flour with degraded starch yields baked products like cakes, breads, and cookies that are sticky and misshapen, which are less marketable to consumers.

The falling numbers method to test for alpha-amylase activity was first published in 1964 by Herald Perten, a cereal chemist from Sweden. Dr. Perten's original study was conducted to help millers and bakers reliably measure alpha-amylase activity in flour for the purpose of adjusting to desirable levels for the final baked product. It is important to note that some alpha-amylase activity is necessary for bread baking. In fact, Perten found that the ideal range of falling numbers for bread was between 200 and 250 seconds. So, the questions become, when did the standard for falling numbers change from 250 to 300 seconds and why?

To answer these questions, a brief dive into the history of PNW grain in the global market is needed. One of the first recorded sales of PNW flour from Walla Walla was in 1868 to a British vessel bound for Liverpool. By the turn of the century, 100 vessels were coming to Portland, Ore., for PNW grain bound for Japan and China. In 1959, the PNW was producing far more soft white wheat than the U.S. and current trade partners could consume, thus the Western Wheat Associates was formed to help expand international markets. In 1980, due to the changing global marketplace and demand for all market-class grain produced in the U.S., Western Wheat Associates joined with a similar organization in the Great Plains to become U.S. Wheat Associates. It is also at this time that farmer associations approached the Federal



Amber Hauvermale
Research Assistant
Professor, Washington
State University

Figure 1: Falling numbers, 1990 to present

The years shown above the black line had high falling numbers and years shown below the black line had low falling numbers according to interviewees. These designations were provided according to individual interviewee experiences of that growing season and represented regional issues which were not necessarily reflective of overall PNW crop quality as officially reported for a given year.

Grain Inspection Services (FGIS), founded in 1946, to start testing for grain quality metrics including falling numbers. By the mid-1980s, the falling numbers test became part of the FGIS standard protocol and part of the market contract specifications for U.S. grain. In 1992, a mild, preharvest sprouting (PHS) event throughout the PNW precipitated the development of a stricter falling numbers standard of 300 seconds, as well as discounts of \$.01 per second. These new standards were established in a collective effort by farmer associations, grain elevators, the marketing arm for U.S. wheat, and overseas buyers to minimize risk. The 300 second standard became part of the market contract specifications in August of that year. In 1993, a severe and widespread preharvest sprouting event occurred in the PNW, and the new 300 second specification was strictly enforced. This enforcement was driven mainly by Japan, who remains the top buyer of PNW soft white wheat today, followed by South Korea and the Philippines.

The wheat quality metrics, established in the 1980s, have been the primary selling points for PNW soft white wheat on the global market ever since. To the overseas buyer, these metrics are important to ensure a consistent, quality product for their consumer market, which is typically confectionery items like cakes and cookies. Very few countries in the world choose to consistently meet these quality metrics for soft white wheat.

Insights to falling numbers in the PNW

So, why has the falling numbers metric of 300 seconds become so difficult for PNW farmers to meet in the last 10 years? Every organization that was interviewed indicated a year or several years where low falling numbers had been detected (see Figure 1). While these localized events did not negatively impact the overall quality of

PNW wheat, they may have caused economic loss at the level of individual farms.

Research to date suggests there are two culprits: changing weather patterns resulting in PHS, which is sprouting of grain due to rain before harvest, and varieties susceptible to late maturity alpha-amylase (LMA). LMA is the result of a cool, wet period during the early dough development stage of wheat. It is unclear if susceptibility to LMA has always been present in PNW varieties and the variable weather patterns that cause this problem just didn't occur, or if susceptibility was introduced at some point in a germplasm exchange. Either way, incorporating resistance to LMA and PHS is a focus for PNW breeders to help mitigate these problems.

To conclude, the falling numbers method to test for alpha-amylase activity has been established since the method first was published in 1964. At that time, the falling numbers standard was 250 seconds. In the early 1980s, U.S. farmer associations approached FGIS to incorporate falling numbers into their standard practice for grain quality to be more competitive in the global marketplace. In the early 1990s, a series of PHS events across the PNW resulted in falling number discounts leading to a shift from 250 to 300 seconds as a standard for market contract specifications.

Low falling numbers has been a recurring problem since 2007 and has become more widespread with the discovery of LMA in 2013. Wheat breeders in the PNW are working to incorporate resistance to PHS and LMA in released varieties to help mitigate the economic impact of PHS and LMA at the regional level.

The next article will focus on how low falling numbers is currently managed throughout the "grain chain," from the country elevators to the export centers. ■

Boosting wheat production with AI

TECHNOLOGY HAS APPLICATIONS IN FIELD MANAGEMENT, GRAIN INSPECTION

By Zhiwu Zhang

Associate Professor, Washington State University

Artificial intelligence comes to every corner of our life. It is not only in the automatic driving cars on the roads, but also coming to our wheat fields and inspection stations to improve production.

Stripe rust, caused by *Puccinia striiformis* f. sp. *Tritici*, is one of the most devastating diseases of wheat and causes large-scale epidemics and severe yield loss. Applying fungicides during early epidemic development is crucial to controlling the disease, but is often challenged by resource-limited human visual scouting.

In the U.S. Pacific Northwest alone, growers spend over \$10 million annually on fungicides for temporary solutions. Last year, I reported in the February *Wheat Life* how artificial intelligence was used to develop a computer vision system named RustNet to help farmers use drone and phone images to detect wheat stripe rust at its early stage for timely fungicide applications.

The technology was latter published by a peer reviewed journal, *Computers and Electronics in Agriculture*, in April 2023. An independent validation on field images from Germany achieved accuracies over 80%. RustNet is

freely available at <https://zzlab.net/RustNet>.

Fungicide application implies a heavy financial toll and environmental footprint. Developing resistant cultivars is the most effective long-term solution.

Resistance evaluation of tens of thousands of breeding lines in experimental fields currently relies on visual observation of disease symptoms, which is labor-intensive, inefficient, subjective, and prone to error. The low efficiency limits the ability to develop resistant cultivars.

Drone images have the potential to enhance efficiency and accuracy. Our results from winter wheat stripe rust nursery fields suggested that breeding lines with high and low severity scores can be identified with accuracy above 90%. The breeding lines with high severity are framed with red and low severity with green in the picture below. Although the system is currently still having difficulty differentiating the lines with moderate severity, the system can help breeders quickly find the targets and ignore the lines with problems.

The wheat industry contributes over \$1 billion to Washington state's economy, with more than 80% of the wheat being exported overseas. Club wheat, a type of soft white wheat, commands a trade premium of up to

During the breeding process wheat breeders generally need to screen tens of thousands of breeding lines for stripe rust resistance. These lines are planted in short, single rows. Framing these rows and predicting their severities on drone images are much more challenging than working with experimental plots, which are usually 20 times bigger. The lines with red boxes are predicted to be more severe than those with green boxes.





From left are Meijing Liang, Zhiwu Zhang, Cameron Hendrickson, Jared Berarducci, and Joshua Duncan at the Washington State Department of Agriculture's Grain Inspection Station in Colfax, Wash.

\$1.50 per bushel. Club wheat is specialized for low gluten strength, clear separation between bran and endosperm for milling, and low water absorption. These properties place club wheat in high demand as an ingredient to mix with common wheat to produce special products such as sponge cakes.

"Club wheat is used for blending with common soft white wheat to create special Western White products," said Scott Steinbacher, program manager for the Warehouse Audit Program and the eastern regional manager for the Grain Inspection Program, both part of the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA).

In 2022, Washington's wheat production reached 144 million bushels, with club wheat accounting for 5% to 10% of the total. Due to grain inspection limi-

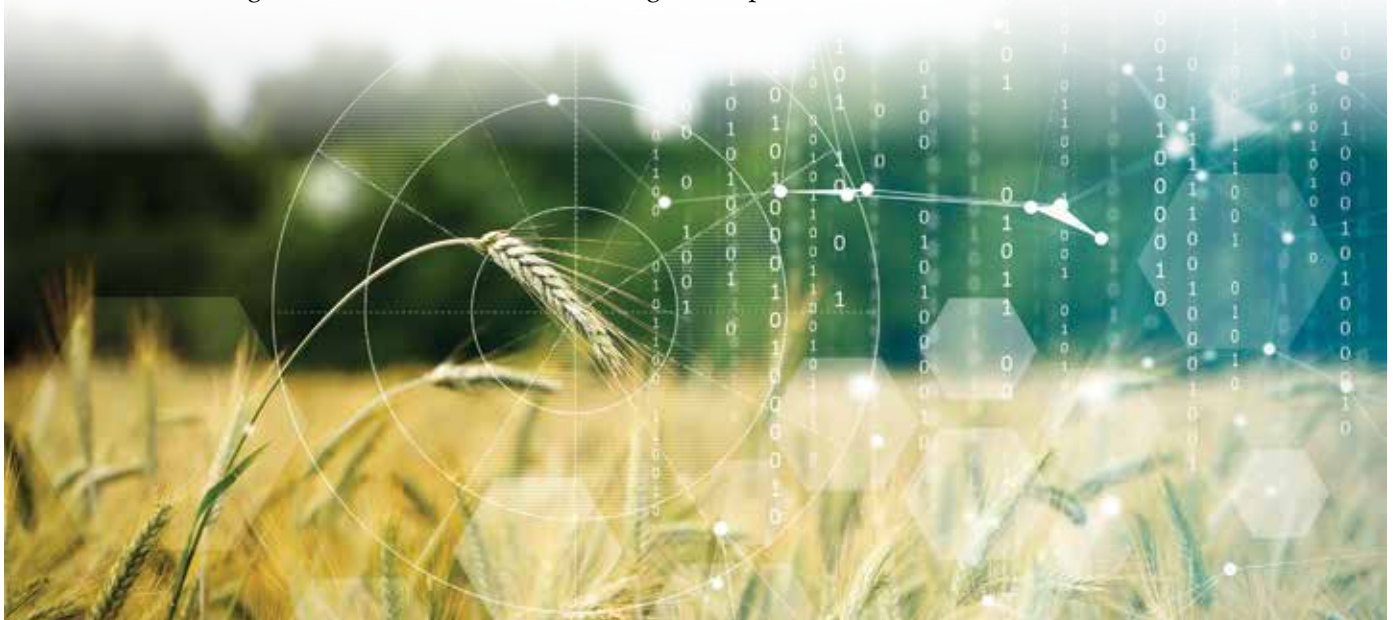
tations, approximately 5% of club wheat is over-blended into common soft white wheat.

"The Washington grain industry potentially loses about a million dollars annually," said Ben Barstow, Washington Grain Commission chairman.

"Currently, the identification of club wheat grains relies on trained inspectors based on visual characteristics, especially for certain club wheat varieties," said Joshua Duncan, WSDA commodity inspection supervisor in Colfax, Wash. The human approach is subject to human errors and limited to the resolution of human eyes.

"The computer vision system we developed currently achieved 80% accuracy to differentiate club wheat from common wheat", said Meijing Liang, a Washington State University Ph.D. graduate student in my lab.

Our team is working closely with the grain inspection station in Colfax to extend the potential applications, such as identifying hard white wheat as a contaminant in soft white or identifying mixtures of hard red spring in hard red winter. ■



2023 soft white wheat crop results

Farmers overcome hot, dry season to produce highly functional product

“This was not an easy year for Washington farmers, between the dry conditions, high input costs, and relatively low prices,” Washington Grain Commission (WGC) CEO Casey Chumrau said. “Fortunately, the functionality of the crop is going to be similar to a typical year and satisfactory for our customers.”

Each year, the WGC and industry partners collaborate with U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) to test harvest samples for milling and baking properties. USW is the export market development organization for the U.S. wheat industry. The resulting annual report is provided to customers around the globe as a service and commitment to transparency.

“Crop quality testing is essential in a year like this,” Chumrau said. “Pacific Northwest (PNW) wheat is more expensive than other options, and buyers need to know it is high quality so they don’t look elsewhere. Customers have come to rely on this information, and it is one of the best investments the industry makes.”

Seeding conditions were good in the fall of 2022 with sufficient moisture to get the soft white (SW) winter wheat crop off to a good start in the PNW. Dryness set in just as the crop was breaking dormancy and turned hot as farmers seeded their spring SW. Hot, dry conditions persisted and accelerated maturity and harvest.

Washington completed its wheat harvest in September. According to estimates from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Washington produced 113.1 million bushels (3.08 million metric tons) of wheat in 2023. This figure is down from 144 million bushels in 2022 and below the five-year average of 138.8 million bushels. NASS estimated average overall wheat yield at 50.5 bushels per acre,



Soft white wheat

compared to the five-year average of 62.1 bushels per acre. SW wheat made up 89% of Washington production, hard red winter made up 8%, and hard red spring wheat contributed 3% to the overall output.

The growing conditions affected yields across the PNW, with national SW production now estimated at 5.8 million metric tons or almost 212 million bushels. That is 23% less SW than farmers produced in 2022.

The dry conditions also contributed to a SW crop with above-average protein. Yet, the crop has appropriately weak to medium gluten strength and acceptable or better finished product characteristics. Stocks of more typical protein SW from 2022 are also available to buyers. In addition, the higher protein SW in this crop provides opportunities in blends for crackers, Asian noodles, steamed breads, flat breads, and pan breads.

The following 2023 crop quality highlights include functional data for club wheat, a subclass of SW with very weak gluten strength, typically used in a Western White blend with SW for cakes and delicate pastries.

2023 soft white crop highlights

- The overall average **grade** of the 2023 SW crop is U.S. No. 1 SW; club average is also U.S. No. 1.
- **Test weight** averages trended lower this year with an average of 60.3 lb/bu (79.3 kg/hl) for SW and 60.7 lb/bu (79.8 kg/hl) for club.
- **Protein** (12% moisture basis) is higher this year with an average of 11.1% for SW and 10.6% for club.
 - **Falling numbers** average is 336 seconds or higher for all SW composites and 327 seconds for club.
- Buhler **Laboratory Mill** average extraction for SW is 70.3% and 72.1% for club. Commercial mills should see better extractions, although some adjustments may be necessary for portions of the



Club wheat

crop with lower test weights. Flour extractions should not be compared to last year or the five-year average as the calculation has shifted from a total product weight basis to a tempered wheat weight basis.

- **Solvent Retention Capacity (SRC)** lactic acid and water values for SW are 105% and 51%, respectively, indicating weak to medium gluten strength. Overall, SW composites have SRC profiles suitable for good cookie and cracker performance. Lactic acid and water SRC values for club are 71% and 51%, respectively, and are indicative of very weak gluten with low water holding capacity.
- **Starch pasting properties** include amylograph and RVA viscosities for SW and club indicating the crop is suitable for batter-based products. The low protein SW composite average of 368 BU/2122 cP peak viscosity is reflective of a slightly lower falling number (313 seconds). The overall SW and club averages are similar to last year.
- Soft white and club **dough properties** are typical and suggest very weak to medium gluten strength and low water absorption values similar to their respective 2022 and five-year averages.
- **Sponge cake** volumes average 1089 cc for SW and 1110 cc for club. Hardness value for SW is 353 g and

337 g for club. All SW and club cakes were baked from an experimentally milled straight grade flour. For comparison, control cakes baked at the same time from a commercially milled short patent cake flour (2022 harvest) have an average volume of 1205 cc and an average firmness of 242 g.

- **Cookie** diameter values are 7.7 for SW and 7.9 for club. Spread ratio for SW is 8.2 and 8.8 for club. These values should not be compared to 2022 or the five-year averages as the cookie method has changed as of 2023 (see analysis methods available at uswheat.org).
- Average soft white **pan bread** bake absorption is 56.1% and loaf volume is 696 cc. Blends of hard wheat with up to 20% SW should produce acceptable pan breads, especially from higher protein SW.
- **Chinese southern-type steamed bread** values for club and medium and high protein SW composites scored similar to or better than the control due to greater volume and whiter internal crumb color. Specific volume and total score averages are SW 2.7 mL/g, 70.8 and club 2.7 mL, 70.7, respectively. ■

Reprinted from the Oct. 9, 2023, U.S. Wheat Associates' Wheat Letter Blog. Crop quality information on all U.S. wheat classes is available at uswheat.org.



Fresh-baked, Asian-style sponge cakes, cookies, and pastries made with U.S. wheat on display for sampling during a Washington Grown TV production visit to ABC Bakery, a large commercial baking company located in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, that imports high-quality U.S. soft white wheat for cakes and pastries. Among its many products, the bakery also makes burger buns for fast food chains including McDonalds and Burger King. Photo by Lori Maricle, Washington Grain Commission.

A BITTER EXPERIENCE

COLD WINTERS TOOK TOLL ON EARLY WASHINGTON SETTLERS AND THEIR LIVESTOCK

In 1936, the state of Washington began a project to preserve the lore of its earliest pioneers. Elderly people receiving old age assistance through the State Department of Public Welfare were interviewed, and excerpts from those interviews were published in three volumes, the last one in 1938. "Told by the Pioneers. Reminiscences of Pioneer Life in Washington," aimed to preserve, in the language of the pioneers or their children, the household tales of early days and to inspire in students the desire to unearth other stories to be preserved in the future. Here is an excerpt from Volume 3, pages 92-98, which talks about the toll harsh weather had on the state's livestock industry.

The first severe stroke of ill luck was the hard winter of 1861-62. This winter was particularly hard on the east side and did its greatest damage to the cattle ranges. Snow so deep and cold so severe that range men lost practically all the stock in the territory. Settlements, as such, were so new that little or no preparation had been made to provide the stock with winter feed. Experiences of former winters had shown that outside range was available through the entire winter season.

The bitter experiences of 1861-62 were soon forgotten by the early settlers, and the new settlers, seeing their stock forage winter after winter, thought it would not happen again. Almost two decades did pass before the second hard winter came. In 1879-80, snow began to fall on Friday night in early January, and by Tuesday morning, it measured from four to eight feet in depth all over the state. Olympia, Seattle, Bellingham, and Vancouver on the west side reported over four feet. Towards the mountain



Train appears buried by snow in the winter of 1937 near Latah, Wash. The highway between Tekoa and Latah was closed all winter. Note: caption states photo is courtesy of Katherine Krell. Photographer unknown. Photo courtesy of the Whitman County Library and the Tekoa Museum. (WCL0002_item070, washingtonruralheritage.org)

ranges in eastern Lewis, Snohomish, and Skagit counties, depths of eight feet were reported. Mild weather came for a few days, softening the snow, then followed weeks of freezing weather, forming a crust the livestock were unable to break through. Again, heavy losses in livestock were taken.

On the east side, the snow fall was not so heavy, but the cold was more intense, and dam-

age to livestock was heavier because of the greater number of people depending upon that kind of farming for a livelihood. This heavy loss to the range men, coupled with the opening of the central part of the state to homesteads, saw the last of the great herds of cattle and bands of horses.

Ten years later, almost to the day, occurred the third storm with similar results.

Elma Rees Turner, Walla Walla County

My grandfather, Michael Ward, came up here from Oregon, seeking a dry climate to relieve his throat trouble. He drove 300 head of cattle up from the Willamette, arriving here in time to lose all but 40 head during the severe winter of '61 and '62. He sold 13 of these and a calf for \$1,000.

Joseph P. Lefevre, Spokane County

During the severe winter of 1889-90, I lost about 90% of my cattle through starvation. They were grazing as far south as the Snake River. A heavy crust formed on the snow, and we were unable to get them to grass. We had an abundance of feed at our ranch, but there was no way possible to get it to them. We were able to save almost all of the horses. ▶



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“A story of agriculture will be told. It would be better if it were told by you.”

— Jerry McReynolds, past president of the National Association of Wheat Growers

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Julius C. Johnson, Lincoln County

At the beginning of the severe winter of 1889 and 1890, I had 30 head of horses and 30 head of cattle, but when the snow was gone, I had only three or four cows and three horses left, as the others were frozen or starved to death. When it was time for seeding, my remaining horses were in such a weakened condition that they could be worked only at short intervals, and it was necessary to do about half the seeding by hand.

William J. Heath, Spokane County

The winter of 1889-90 is a lasting memory with the settlers of the Big Bend Country, especially those in the livestock business. Several heavy snowstorms covered the ground to a depth of from two to three feet, and these were followed by rains and severe cold weather, causing a heavy crust of ice to form. Cattle and horses on the range died by the thousands from starvation, as it was impossible for them to break through the crust to graze. My brother and I ran out of feed but saved our horses by shoveling off patches of snow and ice down to the grass. One of my horses ate the fiber door mat. It became so serious that I told my brother if we couldn't get them to the ranch of a neighbor, Mr. Hutchinson, who had hay, I intended to feed them the straw filling from the bed ticks. The following day, by much shoveling through drifts, we were able to get them to the neighbor's.

George W. Wilson, Lincoln County

During the cold winter of 1889-90, a number of people would have frozen to death if "Wild Goose" Bill Condon had not come to the rescue by selling the settlers his rail fences at \$5 per load. In December 1889, during the big snowstorm, we were living in a cabin in Wilbur. On the morning following the heaviest snow, we found our cabin



Snow is piled high along the side of Main Street in Dayton, Wash., circa 1911. Photographer unknown. Photo courtesy of the Columbia County Rural Library District. (ccrld0041, washingtonruralheritage.org)

entirely covered by a snow drift. It was necessary to tunnel my way out and shovel the snow from the windows. This was a tough winter for all of the settlers, as about 90% of the livestock was lost by freezing or starvation.

Mrs. E. M. Ferris (Esther M. Yaeger), Douglas County

The bunch grass hay, which had been stored the previous summer, would have been sufficient to have fed all the cattle in the country during any normal year, but in the cow-killing blizzard, it was only a wisp of straw in the wind. Snow was four feet deep in the valley. The storm from the north blew day after day. The hay was gone. The seed grain was fed. Hay was brought from the Big Bend Country and cost \$50 per ton. Oats cost \$.03 a pound while it lasted and until the Big Bend ranchers refused to sell any more.

The milch cows were kept alive by feeding a mixture of flour and water. The range cattle climbed to the round ledges of the mountains where the wind had blown away the snow, looking for bunches of grass that grew between the rocks. They were weak and starving and fell like plummets to the creek bed in Pine Canyon. A big beef steer would stagger to the door yard, fall, and beg with his eyes for help. The family, children and all, tramped trails to the round points on the mountains and tried to drive the cattle to them for the scanty feed. Some made it, but all ended up a mass of hoofs, horns, and tails sticking

out of the snow at the bottom of the canyon. The stench of the rotting carcasses lasted the summer and yet another. Crows and coyotes speeded the disintegration. Two men with strong stomachs and weak sense of smell took the hides from the dead animals. What they did with them was not known, but the settlers sniffed their new boots with suspicion from then until now.

Robbins Schiller, Douglas County

In 1889-90, we were branching out in the stock business and lost many of our cattle. We had, however, bunch grass stored for winter, so were able to feed and save most of our stock. No one had ever had to feed before, and all were caught unawares. In order to save their beasts, farmers fed their seed grain on the plateau. Spring planting time was coming, and there was not a bit of grain on the plateau. The farmers had no money with which to buy.

A.L. Rogers fixed up a note, which the farmers signed. Rogers went out on snowshoes to Davenport, Wash., and got \$2,000. He bought seed with the money, and the farmers were saved. ■

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THE BOTTOM LINE

MPCI acreage reporting: Why it matters

By Curtis Evandenko
McGregor Risk Management Services

Greetings readers! I believe the subject matter of acreage reporting is timely, though not due to the season of use, but rather that many have had another year of production and revenue losses paid on their wheat policies. Unfortunately, one does not learn of “misreported information” until the worst time for such discovery, that is, at a time of loss when the policy is expected to perform.

I believe a crop insurance policy can be likened to a three-legged stool. The three legs are components that are interconnected and collectively determine the coverage for an insured person. Simplified, these components are:

- **Application.** Submitting a timely application for wheat and coverage options to be insured for the person(s) to be insured.
- **Production reporting.** Timely submitting production record(s) that are then used to build a production database for each wheat type and practice to be insured. Coverage(s) choices noted on the application are based upon the actual production history that the insured person has.
- **Acreage reporting.** Timely providing planted acreages of crop(s) to be harvested and insured under the Multi-Peril Crop Insurance (MPCI) policy.

The acreage report is the first time during the wheat policy coverage year that liability is established and, correspondingly, premium is determined. Planted acres are reported to the agent/agency, who in turn electronically submits the acres to the approved insurance provider (AIP) via the crop company’s data processing system. This data is then electronically sent to the Risk Management Agency’s (RMA) system, which upon successfully passing RMA system edits, the AIP generates a summary of coverage for wheat for the crop year. If the information submitted does not pass the RMA system edits, the policy is suspended until the errors are resolved. This is a bit of an oversimplification of the process, yet provides you a snapshot of the steps involved.

A valid acreage report must contain the following items for wheat: type (fall or spring); practice (summerfallow or continuous crop); date planted; your interest/share of the crop; location of planted acres, which includes farm serial number; farm tract number; and farm field number, also known as common land unit (CLU) from your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office.

Each county actuarial has special provisions of insurance that includes what crop/type/practice is insurable in that county, including the corresponding acreage reporting deadline dates. Fall acreage reporting deadline is Dec. 15, and spring reporting deadline is July 15. These are the dates acres must be reported and certified to by the insured, pen on paper. We have much less flexibility than the local FSA office for reporting acres. If acres are not timely reported, the insurance carrier can choose to accept or deny late reported acres pending an inspection of said late reported acres.

An issue that we occasionally find is reported share not coinciding with how they’ve been reported to the county FSA office or how the grain is marketed — loss adjustment procedures require acres to be reported how the crop is sold. If this is conflicting, any potential claim payment will be delayed until resolved. Typically, we learn of a change in the farming operation that occurred sometime between planting and harvest, and this change may not have been timely communicated by the insured and to us. Any changes to your farming operation must be shared with your crop insurance agent, not just the accountant and the lawyer.

Incorrectly reported acres can also cause some heartburn, especially true when the possibility of a crop loss exists. Correcting acres after the acreage reporting deadline can be done, but is difficult at best. The crop insurance policy does not allow for liability to increase, either increasing the acres above what was initially reported or increasing a crop share more than that what was initially reported, after a notice of loss has been submitted to the AIP. My experience has shown that acres may be correctable after a notice of loss has been submitted to the AIP; however, this is generally unlikely as

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the crop conditions are not ideal and crop yield potential does not meet the policy minimum requirements, hence the reason for loss notification submission. We strongly encourage you to always review your summary of coverage to verify that the information is accurate.

We are human and make mistakes. The last time I walked on water was January in the homeland as I was ice fishing! If the information associated with the planted acres, crop type and practice, plant date, insured share, and location are not submitted to us in a timely manner,

accurate coverage cannot be provided. This could jeopardize the financial safety net crop insurance can provide as a valuable risk management strategy tool for your farm business.

I welcome your comments and wish all a blessed and safe Thanksgiving and Christmas season! ■

Curtis Evanencko serves as a risk management advisor with McGregor Risk Management Services. He can be reached at (509) 540-2632 or by email at cevanencko@mcgregorrisk.com.

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(From left) Madelyn (5), Vienna (5), and Malcolm (5) Walter at Schoonover Farms between Odessa and Ritzville. Besides potatoes, Schoonover Farms also grows wheat.
Photo by Greg Walter.



Sunset over Barlass Farms in Colfax.
Photo by Lily Barlass.

Your wheat life...



Spring storm clouds skirt past old granaries near Colton. Photo by Leslie Druffel.



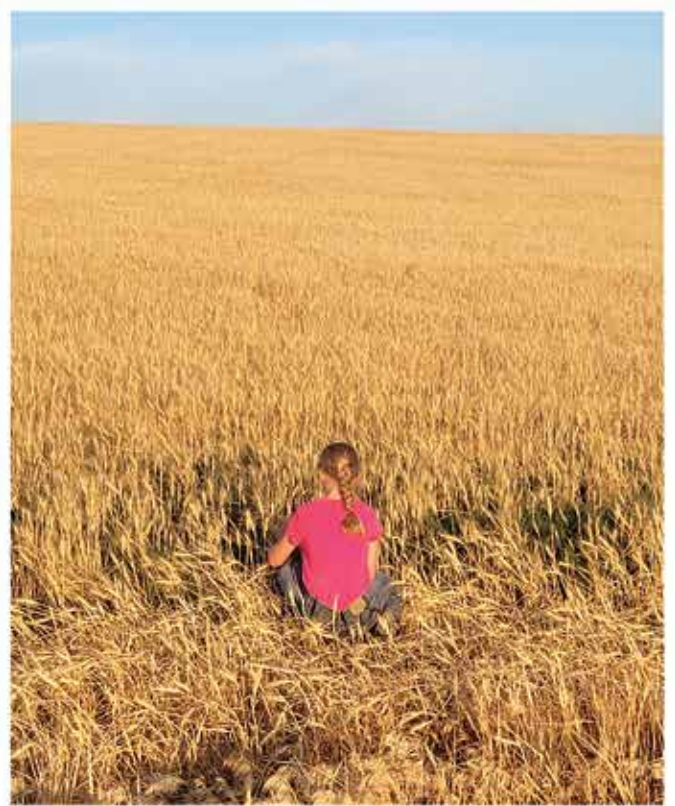
Taysom Bye (2) waving "bye-bye" to daddy during spring work in Pomeroy. Photo by Tai Bye.



Ann Marie Ferriole spends the day at her family farm in the Horse Heaven Hills. She has spent her adult life on the west side of the state, but is able to visit the farm a couple times a year. Photo by Jennifer Knight.



Kate Schultheis is the 6th generation on her family's Colton farm. Photo by Emily Truong.



Claire Walters (10) at Emerald farms in Walla Walla checking the wheat. Photo by Jenny Offer.

HAPPENINGS

All dates and times are subject to change.
Please verify event before heading out.

NOVEMBER 2023

1-3 WA STATE WEED ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE. Trade show, workshops, break-outs, 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. wawg.org/convention/

24-30 CHRISTMASTOWN. Choirs, carolers, gingerbread houses, photos with Santa. leavenworth.org/christmastown

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

30 AGFORESTRY NETWORKING RECEPTION. Mingle with AgForestry Leadership Program Class 45 at Fortuity Cellars in Ellensburg, Wash. AgForestry alums, friends, and prospects invited! agforestry.org

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

7 AGFORESTRY NETWORKING RECEPTION. Mingle with AgForestry Leadership Program Class 44 at Reininger Winery in Walla Walla, Wash. AgForestry alums, friends and prospects invited! agforestry.org

12-13 WSU WHEAT ACADEMY. Increase your knowledge of disease diagnostics, insect pest management, herbicide decisions and nutrient management. Registration is required. Pullman, Wash. smallgrains.wsu.edu/2023-wheat-academy/

JANUARY 2024

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

9-10 2024 CROPPING SYSTEMS CONFERENCE. Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick, Wash. Registration and more info at directseed.org

14-16 OLYMPIA DAYS. WAWG's annual advocacy trip to Olympia needs grower participation from every county. Call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610.

17-18 2023 NORTHWEST HAY EXPO. Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, Wash. For more information visit wa-hay.org/northwest-hay-expo.html ■

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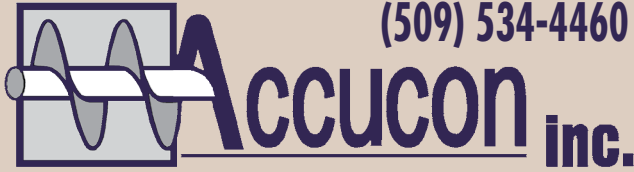
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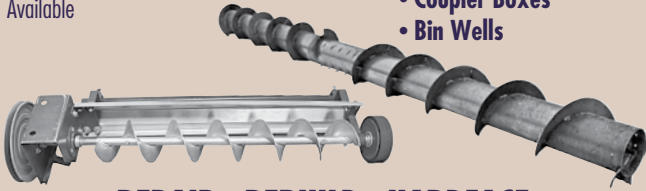


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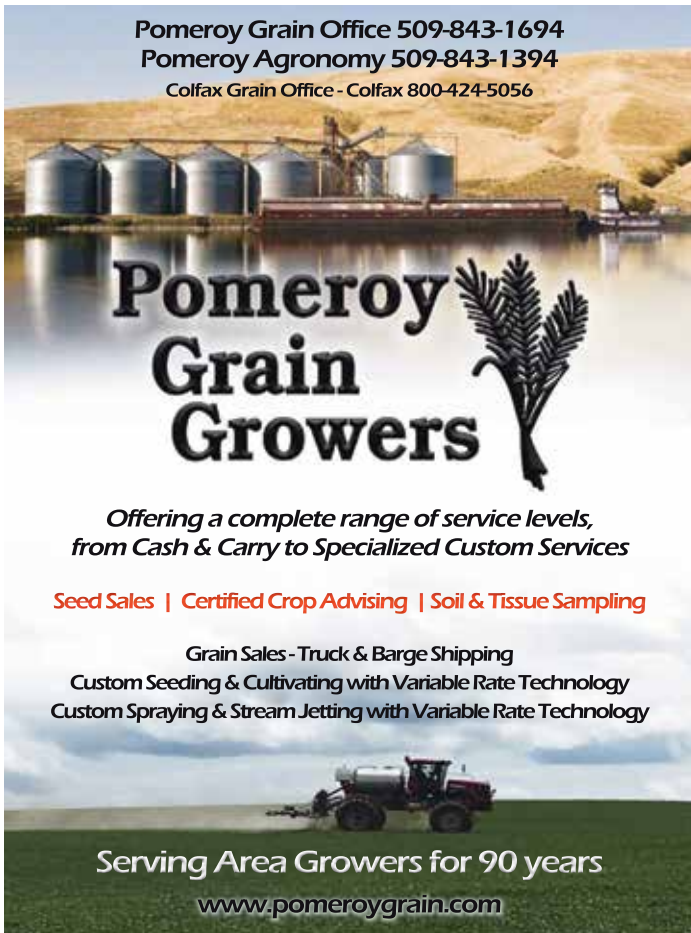
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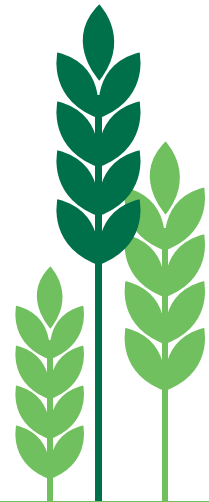
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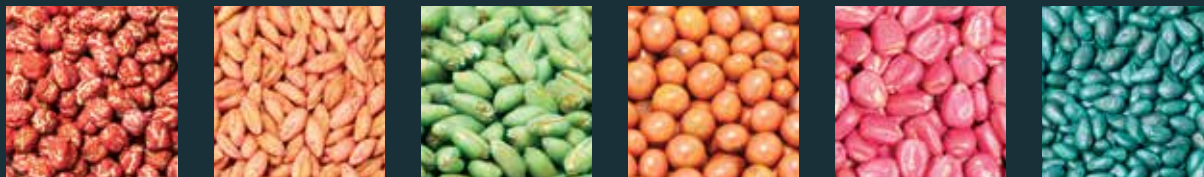
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