

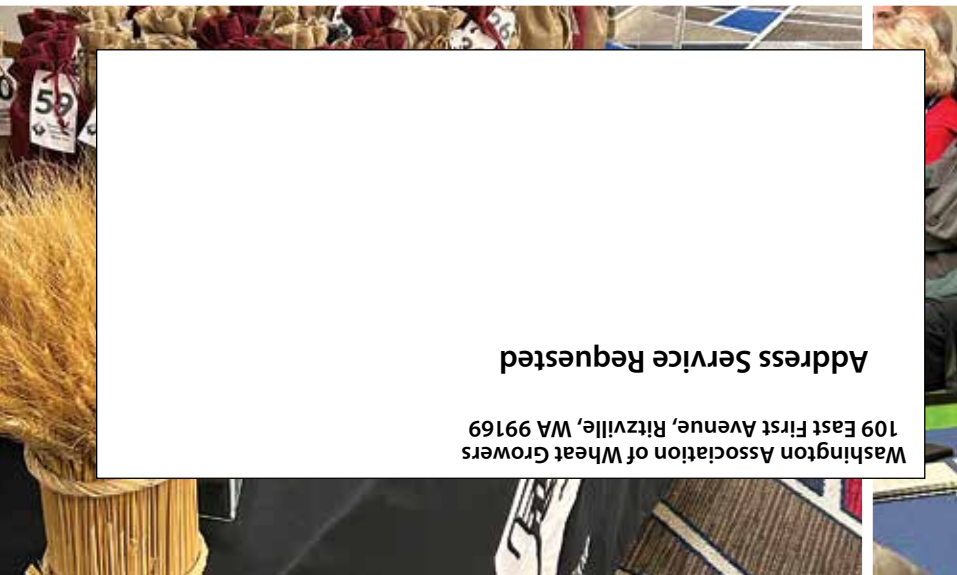
# WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

DECEMBER | 2023



**Welcome to the 2023  
Tri-State Grain Growers  
Convention**



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# WHEAT LIFE

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The official publication of



109 East First Avenue  
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(509) 659-0610

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# President's Perspective



## Honored to be your president

By Anthony Smith

*President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers*

Hello all. My name is Anthony Smith, but you can call me Tony. I'm so excited to be in this position as president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG). I farm in central Benton County, south of Prosser, in a dry-land operation. My wife, Karen, and my son and daughter are very happy and supportive of me farming and being involved with WAWG. Farming with my dad and uncle

paved the road to where I am now.

My dad used to bug me about running for county president. I was hesitant, but when I did, I was welcomed by my fellow Benton County wheat growers. Since then, I've met so many farmers, legislators, and industry leaders!

I joined the WAWG leadership team after being approached by past presidents Andy Juris, Ryan Poe, and Howard McDonald. They asked me if I'd be interested in going through the WAWG chairs, and I said I'd be honored. All the work we do as your WAWG board, which now includes Jeff Malone, has helped us form close friendships. I was extremely grateful for my fellow board members on a recent trip to Washington, D.C., when they saved me after I got locked in the backseat of our Uber, and the driver almost drove off!

I'm still honored to this day to be representing you as president.

Going through the chairs and traveling and meeting people, I've learned legislators and industry leaders want to hear from us about the issues we face. They often want to know what they can do to help us. I believe it's important that we actively advocate for what we need, and I'm ready to do the best I can for you, the grower!

Looking forward into 2024, we've got a lot of issues on our plate. We still don't have a new farm bill, and until we get one, WAWG will keep advocating for our priorities, which include increased funding for market development programs, keeping crop insurance affordable so it's a viable safety net, and making sure conservation programs remain voluntary. Protecting the lower Snake River dams, finding a solution to the exempt fuel problem, and getting a seasonal ag exemption for the state's overtime policy are some of our state priorities going into the 2024 Legislative Session.

Next month, we'll be doing our annual Olympia Days trip. Our goal is to meet as many legislators from both sides of the aisle as we can in less than two days. In order to do that, though, we need growers. We like to have at least two growers for every meeting, and we'd also like to have growers from every county in Eastern Washington participate. If you are interested, please contact the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610 for more information.

As I said before, I'm honored to be here as WAWG president. These past couple of years, going through the chairs has taught me how important it is for growers to be involved in advocating for the industry. Please consider getting involved in your county group and helping guide WAWG to make Washington wheat growers stronger.

Happy holidays and have a wonderful Christmas. ■

**Cover photo:** That's a wrap on the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention. See pages 22-36 for more convention coverage than you can shake a stick at. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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**Lori Maricle**, communications director, Washington Grain Commission  
**Diana Carlen**, lobbyist, Washington Association of Wheat Growers  
**Timothy C. Paulitz**, research plant pathologist, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service

**Kimberly Garland-Campbell**, research geneticist, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service

**Mike Krueger**, founder, The Money Farm

**Larissa Zeiler**, CPA, Leffel, Otis & Warwick, P.S.

# WAWG MEMBERSHIP FORM

## Please check level of membership

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

## WAWG's current top priorities are:

- ✓ Preserving the 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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- National Wheat Grower updates
- State and national legislative updates



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# WAWG at WORK

ADVOCATING FOR THE WHEAT FARMERS OF EASTERN WASHINGTON

## Wheat growers welcome new president, ambassadors

The holidays came a little early for Washington wheat producers as they gathered a week before Thanksgiving to celebrate and support the industry, honor their fellow growers, and hear updates about the obstacles the industry is facing in the coming year.

“The Tri-State Grain Growers Convention is always a fun, informative event that brings our members together to learn from each other and industry leaders,” said Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG). “This year, we were able to take care of business, honor our outgoing president, welcome two new wheat ambassadors, and welcome a new member of our leadership team.”

This year’s convention was held Nov. 14-16 at the Coeur d’Alene Resort in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho.

At the Washington Awards Banquet, outgoing president Andy Juris from Klickitat County told the crowd that Washington agriculture stands at a crossroads. Producers face a political scenario where agriculture has gone from being respected, to being ignored, to being regarded as an enemy by many groups and legislators. Agriculture faces adversaries who are well connected and well funded.

“We have a decision to make. As an industry, do we stay home and hope that things don’t get bad enough that we can retire before we’re forced out? Or do we leave this convention with a renewed resolve to not go quietly into the night, to volunteer our time, our money, our experience, our expertise? Do we fill our county meetings, interact with and attend grain commission and state wheat grower meetings, fund our lobbyists’ efforts through the PAC and look to the future with hope?” he said.

Following his remarks, Juris handed over the president’s gavel to incoming president Anthony Smith from Benton County. Growers also welcomed Gil Crosby, a grower from Spokane County, as the new secretary/treasurer. ▶



(Above) The 2023-24 Washington Association of Wheat Growers’ (WAWG) leadership team are (from left) Michelle Hennings, executive director; Anthony Smith, president; Jeff Malone, vice president; Gil Crosby, secretary/treasurer; and Andy Juris, past president. (Left) The 2023-24 Washington Wheat Ambassadors are Samantha Holling (left) and Izabella Myers (right). They are shown with Anthony Smith, WAWG president. (Below) WAWG President Anthony Smith awards Howard McDonald, a WAWG past president from Douglas County, with the WAWG Outstanding Member of the Year award.

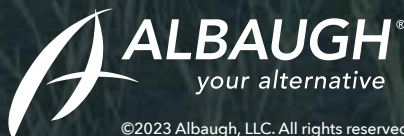




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Jeff Malone, Douglas County, moves into the vice president's seat.

The 2023-24 Washington Wheat Ambassadors are Samantha Holling of Fairfield and Izabella Myers of Latah. Read more about them on page 10.

County of the year went to the growers in Yakima/Klickitat County, while Howard McDonald from Douglas County was honored as WAWG member of the year.

"WAWG is wholly dependent on the time and effort of our volunteer leaders and the support of our members. Howard and the WAWG members in Yakima/Klickitat counties have continually stepped up and advocated for our industry time and time again," Hennings said. "They deserve to be recognized for all the work they've done in Olympia and in Washington, D.C."

Members also support WAWG by donating to the Legislative Action Fund, which helps pay for advocacy activities and materials. Every year at convention, raffle tickets are sold with the proceeds going to the fund. Raffle prizes are donated by county wheat growers' groups and individual wheat growers. Winners in this year's raffle are:

- Colleen Long, \$100 Amazon gift card.
- David Harlow, \$150 Cabela gift card.
- Ron Hennings, \$250 North 40 gift card.
- Gary Bailey, \$270 gift card for the Coeur d'Alene Resort.
- Tanner Cranor, Ring Doorbell.
- Jake and Alisha Klein, Ring Security System.
- Robert Lee, iPad.
- Matt Zieler, Yeti cooler.
- Dan Schmitz, Blackstone grill.

During the convention, WAWG members also took care of business at the all-committee meeting. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies gave updates on staffing and funding opportunities. Jon Wyss, Farm Service Agency (FSA) state executive director, told growers that for the first time in five years, every county office is fully staffed. The next step is to train all program technicians (PTs) so they are proficient in all FSA programs. The other thing Wyss is working on is having each county office have its own county executive director, rather than sharing one with another county.

"We want to train our PTs in all programs, so it doesn't matter what office you walk into, you will be able to get your business done," Wyss explained. "Hopefully this gives you encouragement that we'll be back doing what we do best, which is helping producers and farmers at the local level."

Over at the Risk Management Agency (RMA), Ben Thiel, director of the Spokane Regional Office, said the agency is looking to offer more crop insurance options to some crops, such as canola, oats, and grapes. Last year, RMA did a rate and t-yield review for wheat, and overall, crop insurance rates for wheat trended up.

Aubrey Hoxie, assistant state conservationist for field operations in Eastern Washington for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), said the biggest hurdle for the agency is figuring out how to spend \$30 million in Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) money. The IRA is targeted towards increasing climate-smart agricultural and forestry mitigation activities. Staffing is still an issue at NRCS, but they've got more than 2 dozen job offers outstanding. See page 32 for more NRCS updates.

Dennis Koong, regional director for the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), said the 2022 Census of Agriculture will be released in February 2024. He told growers that NASS relies on producer participation to fill out their surveys. That information is used by other USDA agencies to help design and implement farm programs.

Growers also heard state and national legislative updates. Diana Carlen and Mark Streuli, state lobbyists for the wheat industry, talked about the upcoming 2024 Legislative Session. The big issues are likely to be the cap-and-trade program and the ag fuel exemption, an agricultural overtime exemption, and, possibly, a farmworkers' unionization bill.

On the federal side, Keira Franz and Jack Long from the National Association of Wheat Growers, said the big issue on Capitol Hill right now is the farm bill (Congress passed a one-year extension shortly after this meeting), and NAWG has been active on the Hill, talking about crop insurance, commodity programs, trade funding, research, and conservation. In addition, growers, including Washington growers, have been participating in fly-ins throughout the year.

"Fly-ins are important for educating Congress. Half of the House has never voted on a farm bill. They don't know about agriculture or ag policy," Franz said. "It's important that they are hearing your voice about the need to pass a farm bill."

Following the state and national updates, growers reviewed and updated WAWG's resolutions. The resolutions help guide the association's advocacy efforts throughout the year. See page 14 for the new and changed resolutions. A complete set of WAWG's resolutions can be found at [wawg.org/about-us/](http://wawg.org/about-us/).

WAWG would like to thank all the members and indus-



try supporters who attended this year's convention. Work has already started on next year's convention, and feedback is always appreciated. The 2024 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention is scheduled for Nov. 19-21 at the Coeur d'Alene Resort. ■

## Franklin County growers meet

More than 20 Franklin County growers gathered in Kahlotus, Wash., last month for a county meeting where they heard updates on farm programs, chemical applica-

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tion options, and the exempt ag fuel situation.

Bruce Clatterbuck, Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Franklin County state executive director, touched on committee elections, staffing, and what the office is doing to prepare for the possibility of a government shutdown. He said the agency is releasing as much of the remaining Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and other program payments as quickly as they can before the continuing resolution expired on Nov. 17. Clatterbuck asked growers who are ordering seed for their CRP ground to carefully check the seed bag lot tags against their contract seed mix spec sheet to ensure they are seeding the correct mix. If the wrong mix is seeded, growers could be in violation of their CRP contract.

Kevin Cochrane, a territory sales manager with Corteva Agriscience, discussed some of the cheatgrass control options offered by Corteva, as well as a biological fixation product that gives plants the ability to access nitrogen from the air.

Rounding out the speakers were Rich Dahlgren and Dave Byrnes from Connell Oil who talked about the state's cap-and-trade program and how the company is applying the ag exemption to growers.

Following a lunch catered by The Farmer's Daughter, county growers conducted some county business, including making plans for a Christmas potluck in December, passing a motion to make leadership positions two-year terms, and donating a \$250 North 40 gift card for the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention.

The next county meeting is tentatively scheduled for Jan. 11. Pesticide credits are being applied for. ■

## Meet wheat's newest ambassadors

Two high school seniors have been selected to represent Washington wheat farmers and will serve as the Washington Wheat Ambassadors for the upcoming year. Samantha Holling of Fairfield and Izabella Myers of Latah were selected after an initial written application process that included submitting a short introductory video. During the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention, both ambassadors gave a speech, which was judged on the quality of their presentation, and were awarded scholarships funded by the Washington Wheat Foundation. Holling will receive \$5,000, and Myers will receive \$4,500. Both ambassadors will represent Washington wheat farmers at various civic and community events and will also participate in WAWG advocacy meetings with state agencies and legislators.

### Samantha Holling

Holling is the daughter of Casey and Miranda Holling. She is a student at Oakesdale High School where she maintains a very high GPA while being extremely active in FFA. She has served in many FFA chapter and district positions and is very active in her community, including being a youth mentor. She raises and shows pigs on her family's wheat farm where she has been helping out since she was young. Besides FFA and her community involvement, Holling also plays volleyball and basketball. She said she is excited to educate herself and meet new people as an ambassador.



"I'm excited to make new connections and being able to see what goes on at the Washington Association of Wheat Growers," she said.

Holling is planning on attending the University of Idaho and majoring in agribusiness. She hopes to find a career working directly with farmers.

"I want to thank wheat farmers. I'm very excited and really looking forward to this opportunity," she said.

### Izabella Myers

Myers is the daughter of Clint and Tawnya Myers. She is a student at Liberty High School where she maintains a high GPA. She has been involved in 4-H and FFA throughout her school years and raises and shows pigs while also helping out on her family's wheat farm. When she's not volunteering for a nonprofit that puts together activity kits for hospitalized children, Myers can be found playing on her high school basketball team.



"I think the ambassador program is a great opportunity to expand my thinking and working in the community on what other farmers think," she said.

Last year, Myers started a small baking business and is in the process of getting a small plane pilot's license. She plans to study agricultural education at a four-year university and become a high school ag teacher.

"I'm thankful for the opportunity to get this scholarship and have the opportunity to earn the money," she said. "I'm really looking forward to being able to get out and meet other people and expand my knowledge." ■



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# WAWG leaders attend NAWG fall conference

Last month, Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) leaders took part in the National Association of Wheat Growers' (NAWG) annual fall conference in Cincinnati. WAWG leaders sit on many of NAWG's committees, including Operations and Planning, Budget, Environment and Research, Domestic Trade and Policy, and a special climate and sustainability committee.

Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director, said much of the discussion during the conference focused on the farm bill and what an extension might look like.

"We also discussed some of the farm bill marker bills that we could see and how they might help and/or hurt the legislation," she added. "It was a successful conference, and the committees had a lot of informative discussions on wheat priorities and issues." ■



Washington Association of Wheat Growers' vice president, Anthony Smith (third from right at table) sits on the Environment and Research Committee.



Nicole Berg (center), past president of both the Washington Association of Wheat Growers and the National Association of Wheat Growers, sits on the Operations and Planning Committee.



Both U.S. Wheat Associates and the National Association of Wheat Growers participate in a Joint Trade Committee. Ben Barstow, chairman of the Washington Grain Commission (second from right), stood in for commissioner Mike Carstensen, who chairs the committee but was not able to attend. Andy Juris (right), president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, is vice chair.



Marci Green (second from right), past president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, serves on the Budget Committee.



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# WAWG membership reviews, updates resolutions

During the annual meeting at the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) membership updated and approved the 2024 resolutions that direct policy for the next 12 months. New resolutions are listed here. For the complete set of resolutions, visit [www.wawg.org/about-us/](http://www.wawg.org/about-us/).

## NATIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

- WAWG opposes the foreign ownership of agricultural land in the state of WA by countries not friendly with the U.S.
- WAWG supports the monitoring and education of the foreign ownership of our ag lands.
- WAWG supports federal monitoring and reporting of foreign ownership of agricultural land.

## TAXES

- WAWG supports the elimination of the Federal estate tax or maintaining a minimum level of \$13.6 million per individual estate tax exemption indexed to inflation, retaining a step up in basis.

## NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

### CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

- WAWG supports the establishment of a conservation priority area (CPA) for all endangered species and/or priority species that is exempt from the current state CPA zone acre cap.
- WAWG supports raising the individual payment limitation for CRP from \$50,000 to at least \$150,000.
- WAWG supports a regionally based CRP program that accounts for the different climates, soils, and agro-economic conditions across all wheat regions.

### CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

- WAWG supports an easy to navigate program that pays producers yearly for the carbon sequestration practices they completed that year.

## AIR

- WAWG supports voluntary wildfire incentive-based programs but doesn't believe 25% of the county has to be affected for funds available (TABLED, not approved).

## STATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

### DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

- WAWG supports the Climate Commitment Act paying producers or offering some type of credit for the carbon sequestration practices they completed that year.
- WAWG supports holding DOE accountable to find solutions to the Climate Commitment Act fuel exemptions.

## TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

### RIVERS

- WAWG supports development of biologically effective salmon recovery measures that maintain the existing federally authorized, multiple-use river system and invest in the addition of fish passage over Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams, to expand salmon habitat up to Canada.

## MEMBERSHIP AND PUBLIC RELATIONS INFORMATION COMMITTEE

### MEMBERSHIP

- Harvest Plus Lifetime Membership dues will be 20 times that of the grower membership level. As of 11/15/2023 the amount is \$3,000 and payments over a three-year billing period is allowed and is non-refundable.

The dues for regular membership (voting) shall be:

- Grower/Landlord-\$150 per person per annum,
- Family-\$250 for up to 2 people per annum.
- Partnership-\$600 for up to 5 people per annum.
- Convention-\$720 for 2 individuals, membership, and convention registration

The dues for student nonvoting membership

- Education-\$90.00 per annum, *Wheat Life* magazine and Green Sheet

The designated dues for Associate Members (non-voting) shall be:

- Level 1 Industry Supporter-\$250 per annum membership. ■





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# POLICY MATTERS

## Farm bill, pesticides top list of national issues to watch

By Trista Crossley  
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Capitol Hill may seem far away, but what happens in Washington, D.C., has a direct impact on Eastern Washington farmers. Two National Association of Wheat Growers' (NAWG) staff, Keira Franz, environmental policy advisor, and Jack Long, government relations representative, gave an "inside the beltway" perspective about Congress at the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention.

Next year is an election year, and as Franz pointed out, running for election takes time away from D.C., plus things tend to get more political. In the House, all members are up for election every two years, while a third of the Senate is up for election. In the House, there are 24 members that say they are not running for re-election. In the Senate, several prominent members are not running for re-election, including Sen. Debbie Stabenow, chair of the Senate Ag Committee.

"That opens up a lot of seats, a lot of activity, but also kind of changes the dynamics of the discussion," Franz said. "That's going to put pressure over the next year to get this bill done. We believe she (Stabenow) has a very strong interest in getting another farm bill completed before she leaves Congress. With the countdown at a year to get that done, the pressure is really on."

*Editor's note: Just the day before this presentation, Congress had passed a one-year extension to the 2023 Farm Bill as part of another continuing resolution, pushing its renewal into an election year.*



National Association of Wheat Growers' (NAWG) staff, Keira Franz, environmental policy advisor, and Jack Long, government relations representative, updated growers on issues NAWG is watching in Washington, D.C., during a break-out session at the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention.

*During her presentation, Franz said passing a farm bill extension isn't unusual. It was done when the 2002 and 2008 farm bills expired.*

For the farm bill, NAWG will be looking to protect and enhance crop insurance; institute a meaningful reference price increase; double trade promotion funding; continue voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs; and oppose conservation compliance requirements.

"(Conservation compliance) has changed over the last few farm bills, adding requirements and linking that to crop insurance, and we don't want to see that expanded any further," Franz said.







Some of the farm bill obstacles that NAWG is seeing are debates on permanent disaster funding, the appropriations process, the upcoming elections, and the politics that are creating delays and turmoil in Congress. Legislators are also discussing a base acre update. NAWG does not support a mandatory base acre update; they prefer the current system of historical bases.

One of the big farm bill debates comes down to funding and where the funding comes from to increase the wheat reference price and to double trade promotion funding. Franz said that one of the funding sources that is being talked about is the Inflation Reduction Act, which earmarked \$18 billion for conservation programs.

"Stabenow is adamant that money should be maintained for conservation and for the climate-smart practices of conservation," Franz said. "Nutrition funding is always a hot button issue, and we don't expect that to wane."

There are also delays from the Congressional Budget Office and delays tied to the agricultural appropriations legislation. ▶



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“We will be working hard to see more farm bill activity next year, to get more significant activity through the committees and then, hopefully, a final bill prior to the end of September next year,” Franz said.

Although the farm bill is taking a lot of NAWG’s focus, there are other national issues the association is also keeping tabs on. One of those is herbicide and pesticide regulations. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a herbicide strategy plan in 2022 in response to a lawsuit that said EPA wasn’t complying with Endangered Species Act regulations. Long said there were several things in the plan that were concerning:

- Pesticide-use limitation areas.
- A system of efficacy points and mitigation practices that are given with those points.
- The economic impact on producers.

NAWG joined with other commodity groups to submit comments, which EPA is considering.

“Hopefully, we see some shift in some of the mitigation practices they offer, something easier for producers to utilize, and something that is definitely economically efficient for them as well,” Long said.

One win for NAWG and producers happened recently when a federal court of appeals vacated EPA’s regulations banning the use of chlorpyrifos. NAWG is also monitoring treated seed litigation that would prevent growers from using treated seed until the seed itself is registered with the EPA. NAWG is preparing to submit comments.

In transportation, Long said NAWG is looking into reciprocal switching and has drafted a letter to the Surface Transportation Board (STB) about rules that impose impossible hurdles on customers and doesn’t create competition. STB has responded that they are drafting a final rule on reciprocal switching that would provide additional relief to rail customers suffering from poor service and provide for additional competition.

NAWG is also monitoring Congress for any potential legislation that might impact the lower Snake River dams.

Finally, Franz touched on the Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) legislation, which has been an ongoing issue for years. A revised regulation went into effect in September, but several legal challenges have been filed against it.

“We are still dealing with this patchwork of implementation of where the WOTUS regulation is in effect,” she explained. “We are really looking at what are those jurisdictional waters, and how do you determine what is navigable, what is a tributary, and how much flow does a river need to have to be considered a jurisdictional water of the U.S.?” ■

## Legislators gear up for session; cap-and-trade still making waves

By Diana Carlen

*Lobbyist, Washington Association of Wheat Growers*

Washington state legislators are gearing up for the upcoming legislative session, which will begin on Jan. 8, 2024, but prior to that, they will be hosting their annual Assembly Days in Olympia. This is an opportunity for legislative committees to hold work sessions and for legislators to outline priorities for the 2024 Legislative Session.

### Cap and trade revenues keep going up

Washington state has brought in over \$1.4 billion in revenues from their carbon auctions this year. At this pace, the state is expected to bring in a billion more than anticipated by next year. How to spend the increased revenue will be part of the discussions during the upcoming legislative session.

Washington state has also been fluctuating as either the highest or second highest fuel prices in the nation. Instead of recognizing the impacts of the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) on increased fuel prices, Gov. Jay Inslee and legislators who supported passage of the CCA have blamed the petroleum industry for price gouging.

Gov. Inslee has stated that he will be proposing legislation next year modeled after legislation recently passed in California. Specifically, the legislation would require oil companies throughout the entire supply chain to open their books and be transparent about their profits. The proposed legislation would also establish penalties if it was shown that price gouging was indeed occurring.

### State wants to link with other carbon markets

Washington State Director of Ecology (Ecology), Laura Watson, recently announced that the state will pursue linking Washington state’s carbon market to the carbon markets in California and Quebec. In announcing this decision, Ecology released a preliminary analysis report on Oct. 12 for cap and trade linkage criteria. The reason for linking the carbon markets is the hope that it will drive the price down to purchase credits and in turn, help lower fuel prices heading into an election year.

### Ecology sued over exempt fuel issue

Back in June, the Washington Farm Bureau (WFB) and the Washington Trucking Association (WTA) filed a Petition for Rulemaking with Ecology requesting that Ecology initiate the rulemaking process to ensure the guaranteed exemption for agriculture under the Climate Commitment Act is facilitated and develop a mechanism



by which those who have been unlawfully charged are reimbursed.

On Aug. 11, Ecology denied the petition. In September, the WFB and WTA filed a lawsuit in Thurston County challenging the denial of the Petition for Rulemaking. The lawsuit seeks to have the court compel Ecology to engage in rulemaking that is compliant with the CCA.

### Signatures being collected on six ballot measures

A conservative political donor is currently funding signature gatherers to qualify six ballot measures in Washington state, including measures that would repeal the state's cap-and-trade program and the capital gains tax; a measure to prohibit state, counties, cities, and other local jurisdictions from imposing or collecting income taxes; and a measure that would allow employees to opt out of the state's long term care insurance program.

Proponents of the ballot measures must gather around 400,000 signatures for each initiative from registered voters by the end of the year. If successful, all six initiatives would be submitted to the Democrat-controlled legislature in January.

### Minimum wage to increase

The Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) announced the increase in the minimum wage to \$16.28 an hour. The raise takes effect Jan. 1, 2024. The federal minimum wage remains set at \$7.25 an hour.

L&I also calculates new minimum salary thresholds for overtime exempt employees. This change impacts how much executive, administrative, and professional workers plus computer professionals and outside salespeople must earn in salary to be exempt from the requirement to pay workers' overtime. The 2024 threshold for employers is two times the minimum wage. That means an exempt employee will have to earn at least \$1,302.40 a week (\$67,724.80 a year). ■



## Happy Holidays

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## Manpower, horsepower in Washington wheat country

*Excerpted from a HistoryLink essay on the history of wheat farming in Washington by Jim Kershner.*

Wheat farming in early days required plenty of manpower and horsepower, along with a considerable investment in specialized machinery for harvesting. The two most important machines were the header and the thresher. The header cut off the heads of the mature wheat stalks with a device somewhat like a giant reel mower. A header required six horses, which pushed — not pulled — the machine through the fields. The header also had a conveyor belt that catapulted the heads into a wagon alongside. The wagon would then take the heads to the second key piece of machinery, the thresher. This was a huge, complex contraption that knocked the grain from the heads. In the early days, the thresher (also called a separator) was horse-powered, requiring 12 to 14 horses. By the late 1880s, big iron steam engines appeared on the scene. These 42,000 pound behemoths and their engineer-drivers traveled from farm to farm at harvest time.

Harvesting required an average of 20 men on every farm. Beginning in July, dozens of workers would arrive by train in wheat towns and wander “up and down Main Street, looking for work,” as a 1968 history recalled. These were the men who pitched straw, sewed up sacks of grain by the thousands, ran the machinery, and guided the horses. It was a hot, backbreaking, dusty job. Sometimes, operating a thresher was dangerous for another reason: explosions and fires. In the hot summer of 1914, spontaneous explosions wrecked at least 40 separators in the Palouse, sometimes causing serious burns.

Beginning around 1890, the combined header-thresher — the “combine” — appeared in Washington. It was a complex and expensive piece of machinery, built on a heavy wooden frame, but its advantages were obvious.



Wheat harvest in Lincoln County circa 1911. Photo courtesy of the University of Washington’s Special Collections (UW6888).

“In a single sweep, the grain was cut, separated, and sacked. There was no need to haul the headed or bundled wheat to the separator. Instead of bringing the wheat to the thresher, the combine took its thresher to the wheat and did the job while moving through a field.”

By 1905, the combine had become common, and before long, it had swept away the competition. Some of the biggest combines cut a swath 30 feet wide or more, which

made them marvelously efficient, but it also meant they required a tremendous amount of horsepower. Most used a 32-horse (or mule) team, and some rigs on steep, rolling farmland required 50 horses. On hills, the combine driver was often faced with the disconcerting sight of his long line of horses disappearing over a ridge. “Even the most experienced drivers had a sense of relief as the combine pulled over the hill and the horses came back into view.” The manpower required for a typical harvest plummeted from an average of 20 men to about six.

In the hilly Palouse country, the combine had one serious disadvantage. It could overturn on a side hill, endangering men and horses. This was solved by an invention called the side-hill leveler, which allowed the header to adjust to the slope, while keeping the main body of the combine level. The leveler was invented in 1891 and put into general use over the next decade.

The era of the 32-horse combine lasted for a surprisingly long time, even after gas- and diesel-powered combines and motorized tractors appeared on the scene following World War I. By 1926, many wheat farmers had turned to motorized combines and tractors, but a wheat-growers’ study showed that most farmers were still using horsepower because it was a more economical way to farm. However, horses were inexorably disappearing on Washington wheat farms as improvements were made to

The next Washington Wheat Foundation Meeting is scheduled for **Jan. 22, 2024**, at the Wheat Foundation Building in Ritzville, Wash.

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motorized combines and tractors.

By the end of the 1930s, the conversion to gas or diesel power was nearly complete. By 1941, "great, brightly painted, dust-covered behemoths, like army tanks, go charging over the landscape" plowing 100 acres a day, wrote wheat-country newspaper editor Giles French. Harvest crews had dwindled to a mere three. This did not come without cost, especially to the social fabric of the towns scattered around wheat country. French believed something important had been lost.

"Saturday or Sunday night (in the early part of the century) the whole crew went to town, the boss and

wife occupying the seat of the hack, and the children and the hired men filling the back. The barbershop was full of animated humanity, the saloon resounded to joke and song, and the store clerks were busy until all hours. ... Now (1941) the men who turn over 50 acres a shift are lonesome men. They sit a long 10 hours, 12 hours, listening to the rattle of the motor; they grab their lunch at noon or midnight between gear shifts and have communication with neither man or beast in their work." ■

*This essay is part of the ag history project's wheat curriculum and can be found at [historylink.org](http://historylink.org). Reprinted with permission from HistoryLink.*

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# Wheaties welcome!

## Wrapping up the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention

By Trista Crossley  
 Editor, *Wheat Life*

In a perfect prelude to the holiday season, producers, stakeholders, and industry supporters from Idaho, Oregon, and Washington gathered last month to hear industry updates, network, and do a little Christmas shopping, all in service to the Pacific Northwest small grains industry.

The 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention was held Nov. 14-16 at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. More than 400 attendees heard



**WEATHER FORECAST.** Meteorologist Eric Snodgrass told growers that current models are predicting a weaker El Niño, which generally means a milder, slightly dryer winter for the Pacific Northwest. Snodgrass also talked about how artificial intelligence programs have the potential for faster, more accurate global weather forecasting.



**THINGS TO TALK ABOUT.** When the hog market tanked in 1998, it hit Rob and Emily Sharkey especially hard as they had just invested everything they owned in hogs. Rob was advised by his banker to file for bankruptcy and start over. "That was devastating. This was my dream (to farm). Now I'm being told I failed," he said. Rather than filing bankruptcy, the Sharkeys decided they were going to pay their debts off. It took them seven years, but along the way, they built a media enterprise that now includes podcasts, radio shows, and TV shows that discuss the things in agriculture that aren't usually talked about, such as farm-related accidents, addictions, and mental health. "If you are hurting out there, you need to talk to somebody. If it's not family, not friends, get a professional."

keynote presentations from former Ambassador Kip Tom, media producer Rob Sharkey, meteorologist Eric Snodgrass, and ag economist Dr. David Kohl. Break-out sessions covered a range of topics, including transition plans and other legal advice, planning for retirement, barley statistics, and the CPR of mental health. See page 32 for a brief summary of some of these break-out sessions.

Emcee Tim Gard kept the crowd laughing between drawings for gift cards, free 2024 convention registrations, and other items. The convention culminated in the dinner and auctions, which benefit the three states' wheat foundations. All auction items were donated by growers, industry organizations, and businesses.

"We had a great turnout from both farmers and industry representatives, conducted business necessary to operate efficiently and effectively for the next year, learned a few things, and had a lot of fun," said Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG). "Organizing such a large event takes a huge amount of time and effort that begins almost as soon as the previous convention ends. The staff from all three states' industry organizations worked hard to make the con-

## 2023 TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION





**FOOD FOR THOUGHT.** You can't have national security without food security was the message former ambassador Kip Tom shared at the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention. The U.S. hasn't always been food secure (think the Great Depression), but when World War II hit, the country had to figure out how to make food shelf stable and then how to ship it to the troops stationed around the world. That success helped build the foundations of America's food security, which are networked and navigable waterways, a temperate climate and great land quality, an educated and skilled workforce, and geographic security. But Tom warned the U.S. is losing that advantage as the majority of the population moves farther away from the farm. Threats to food security include policy, regulatory, consumer preferences, and interference by foreign countries.

vention successful, so they deserve a huge thank you."

Washington growers took the opportunity to get some business done during the convention. The all-committee meeting included updates from U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies, state and national legislative updates, and a look at what's been happening in the effort to protect the lower Snake River dams (see page 26). Washington growers reviewed and updated WAWG's resolutions, followed by an awards banquet (see page 6). Jake Ozburn of Soda Springs, Idaho, won a free registration to the 2024 convention as winner of the photo contest. The winning photo will be used in promotional efforts throughout the following year and may appear in industry publications.

See page 24 for more photos from the event.

"Having all three states come together as a region is vital for all of our producers, most of whom share the same concerns and face similar issues," Hennings said. "The tri-state convention allows growers to network with farmers in other states, share stories, and make new friendships."

The wheat organizations of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington would like to thank those who made the convention possible, especially our sponsors, industry supporters, and exhibitors. Join us at next year's convention, which will also be at the Coeur d'Alene Resort, Nov. 19-21, 2024. ■

See you  
in 2024 back  
in Coeur d'Alene!  
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**JUST 5%.** Renowned ag speaker, Dr. David Kohl, told convention attendees that to be successful in agriculture, they should write goals to be 5% better in production, marketing, risk management, and human resource management. "Boring is better," he said. The four cornerstones of success are planning, strategizing, execution, and monitoring, and one of the keys is to focus on the things you can control and manage around the uncontrollable. He closed out his presentation by suggesting that when growers make a dollar, they put 60% towards becoming more efficient or growing the business, 30% to working capital, and 10% towards personal enjoyment.

## 2023 TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION





## 2023 TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION





## 2023 TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION





# Advocacy for dams continues

Representatives from four stakeholder groups gave updates on dam activities

By Trista Crossley  
*Editor, Wheat Life*

One of the break-out sessions at the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention definitely gave a “dam” about the Columbia-Snake River System.

Moderated by Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, a panel of stakeholders talked about the importance of the Columbia-Snake River System and updated attendees on advocacy and legislative efforts to protect the lower Snake River dams.

## Jeremy Nielsen, Columbia River pilot

Nielsen, a 20-year veteran of the Columbia-Snake River System and president of the Columbia River Pilots, explained that no matter how you measure it, ships are getting bigger, in both size of the ship and cargo carrying capacity, but the infrastructure hasn’t kept up.

“This is becoming a real problem, not only for U.S. ports, but for ports around the world,” he said.

The modern deep draft navigation channel on the lower Columbia River (from Astoria to Portland) was designed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was designed around a ship that was 600 feet long, with an 85-foot beam that drafted 35 feet. The channel started out with a depth of 37 feet and has been modified twice, the last time in 2010, when it was deepened to 43 feet. Ships operate on the lower Columbia River with a two-foot under-keel clearance, which Nielsen said was the industry’s lowest.

“Channels are deepened for money. They are widened for safety,” he explained. “It’s been deepened three times, but it’s never been widened.”

The largest dry dock on the West Coast is located in Portland, so the lower river is seeing larger and larger ships, including, last year, the largest cruise ship that has ever come up the river. Nielsen said they relied heav-



Panelists at the “We Do Give A Dam!” break-out session at the 2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention were (from left) Jeremy Nielsen, Columbia River pilot; Anthony Peña, government relations manager at Pacific Northwest Waterways Association; Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners; Danielle Nelson, the Torrey Advisory Group; and moderator Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers.

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ily on technology, and it took a lot of planning to get the ship under the Longview Bridge as they had to pick the right day, the right stage of the river, and the right speed. Besides GPS, they had surveyors on the shore and on the boat using laser equipment to measure the space between the bridge and the highest part of the ship. In the end, they passed under the bridge with just over four feet of clearance.

Another part of the infrastructure that hasn't kept up with the increasing size of ships

The Columbia-Snake River System is made up of a deep draft and an inland portion. The deep draft portion goes from Astoria, Ore., to Portland, is about 110 miles long, 43 feet deep, and handles 51 million tons of cargo annually. The Inland system runs from Portland to Lewiston, Idaho, is 365 miles long, 14 feet deep, includes eight locks and dams, and moves about 8.5 million tons of cargo annually.

is the anchorage area where ships wait. The "swing" areas for Panamax vessels (the point a vessel rotates around while anchored) already bump up against each other and the edge of the ship-

ping channel. Larger boats need a larger swing area.

"We can't even bring those ships in because we don't have a place for them to anchor," Nielsen said.

The Columbia River Pilots is working to alleviate some of these issues. Efforts include:

- Having the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration survey all the above-water structures in the Columbia River, including docks, bridges, and overhead power cables, to collect precise measurement data.
- Working with the Coast Guard to designate new anchorages.
- Continually improving piloting software.
- Working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to identify dredging needs.
- Working with the Corps to designate two new turning basins in Longview and Kalama. Because the channel is only 600 feet wide, larger ships will need a larger place to turn around in.
- Advocating for a real-time air gap sensor on the Longview Bridge. Nielsen explained that in the last four years, there's been about 15 ships that have been within 10 feet of that bridge.

"We have a system that is reliable. It's efficient. It's adaptable. It's paid for, and it's viable on all levels. And we have capacity," Nielsen said. "We still have capacity, and it's technology that has allowed us to do that."

### Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners

Miller talked about the recent efforts of Northwest RiverPartners, an organization that advocates for hydropower on behalf of about 100 member organizations in the Pacific Northwest, including many public utility districts. He said groups advocating for breaching the lower Snake River dams are very well funded and have been influencing the public's perception of the dams and hydropower. Fortunately, recent polling by Northwest RiverPartners has shown that their pro-dam digital media campaigns are making inroads, especially with young adults.

"It's an incredible turnaround for the youngest group of adults in the Northwest. They were the least supportive group for hydropower, and now, they are up there with the most supportive," he said. "We can make a difference. It does take money, and it does take strategy, and we do have to copy some of the strategies some of these other groups use that fight against us, but it's an effective strategy, and we can make a difference. We just can't sit on our hands."

### Anthony Peña, government relations manager at Pacific Northwest Waterways Association

Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA), a nonpartisan, nonprofit trade association, represents stakeholders who are concerned with the movement of people and goods on waterways across the Pacific Northwest.

"We are a huge trade gateway, especially for grain, and that's because of our multimodal transportation corridor enabled by locks and dams and rail," Peña said. "Two of the really big benefits are irrigation and transportation."

PNWA is heavily involved in advocating for funding for the Corps' Portland, Walla Walla, and Seattle districts and the Northwestern division, which means the association keeps a close eye on the federal Water Resources Development Act, or WRDA. WRDA legislation is passed by Congress every two years and authorizes any projects or studies done on civil works projects run by the Corps. PNWA is a defendant intervenor in the litigation surrounding the lower Snake River dams.

In 2020, the Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Study (EIS) was published by the

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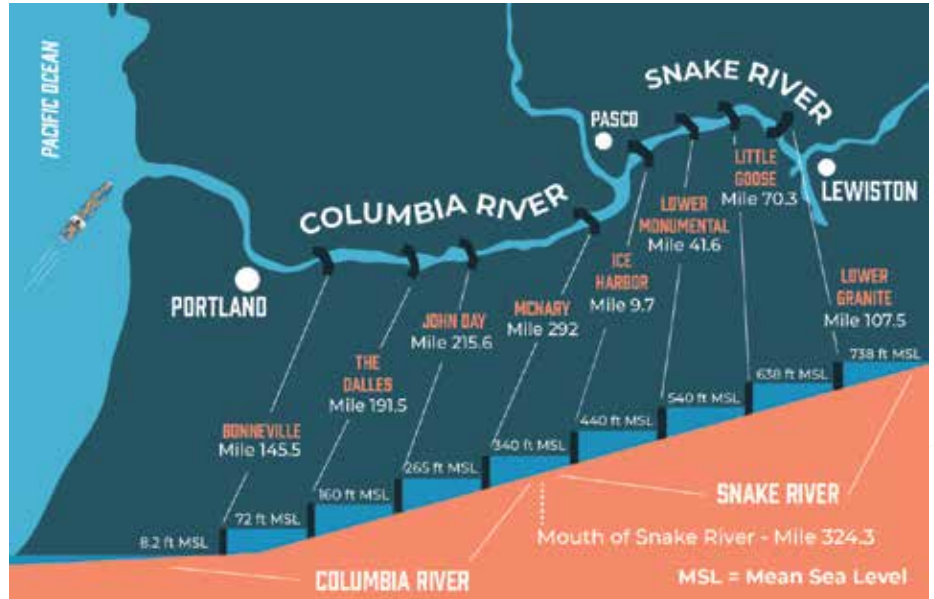


federal government. It was a four-year effort to develop an operations plan in regards to salmon and EIS obligations. The EIS concluded that the dams couldn't be breached for multiple reasons and that there would be a lot of mitigating factors and consequences that would occur. Environmental groups were quick to sue. After the Biden Administration came in, there was a two-year stay in litigation while the opposing sides went through a federal mediation process.

"It's been tough. It's almost been like a moving goalpost in terms of who the players are, what the rules are, and what the goals are overall for this mediation," Peña explained. "Regardless of where this ends up, the litigation, the courtroom drama isn't going to end. Breaching advocates are already suing the Corps over warm water issues in the Snake River. The overall objective has been to get us out of the courtroom, and ultimately, it's been a massive failure because we are going to end up back in the courtroom, whether it's on this or something else."

Recent developments in the issue include:

- An announcement by the Biden Administration that \$200 million will be spent in the Upper Columbia River Basin for reintroduction efforts of non-endangered salmon runs above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams.
- A Sept. 27 memo from the Biden Administration that sets a new federal policy of "healthy and abundant" fish populations.



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF PACIFIC NORTHWEST WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

Peña said they are still trying to figure out what healthy and abundant means.

- The results of the mediation process are set to be published by Dec. 15, 2023.

### Danielle Nelson, the Torrey Advisory Group

The Torrey Advisory Group is a Washington, D.C., lobbying firm that works for WAWG on the lower Snake River dams issue and is keeping a close eye on WRDA.

"Everything that is done by the Corps, in terms of water resource activities, has to go through WRDA," Nelson said. "Typically, it's been a bipartisan effort. What we've seen in the last few years is an uptick in contentious conversations, and some voices have started to stir the pot."

The last time WRDA was authorized, in 2022, the first draft of the bill contained language that would have created a taskforce to do a study on breaching the dams. Fortunately, all the language pertaining to breaching the dams was removed from the final bill during the conference process. Nelson said one of the big concerns going into 2024 is that those in favor of breaching the dams could potentially use WRDA to further their cause. Congressional authorization to breach the dams can only begin through WRDA legislation.

"That's why it is so important to make sure that that first effort in a WRDA bill is not made. Once that ball starts rolling, we all know how quickly it can snowball, and what we can be looking down," Nelson said. "This time around, we are being even more proactive. We aren't going sit around and play defense this time around and wait for there to potentially be language that could harm our efforts." ■



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# Not just fun and games

Convention educational sessions covered a wide range of topics

One of the highlights of the Tri-State Grain Growers Convention is the variety of topics available in the break-out sessions. This year's sessions included topics on retirement, land values, markets, estate planning, barley, mental health, and crop insurance. Here's a short summary of several break-outs.

## Succession planning

Pinion estate plan advisor Kevin Bearley told producers that waiting to have a succession plan or trying to predict what the future estate tax exemption is going to be is a mistake.

"Fifty percent of people don't do succession planning if they don't think they'll owe estate taxes. I always tell them that's a terrible reason to not do estate planning," he said. "Why would you take that kind of risk with this thing you have been working at for generations? The best time to do succession planning is now."

He recommended four documents that producers should consider:

- A will.
- A revocable trust. This helps one manage their assets should they become ill or disabled. A revocable trust, also called a living trust, can be revoked or rewritten by the grantor when desired.

- An irrevocable trust. This type of trust cannot be changed or terminated without the permission of the grantor's beneficiary. Irrevocable trusts are generally set up to minimize estate taxes and protect assets.
- An intentionally defective irrevocable trust. These types of trusts are generally used to transfer income-producing and highly appreciating assets out of one's estate while still receiving that income. These assets generally do not incur any estate tax when the grantor dies.

## High land values

Paul Vuletich and Ryan Kile from AgWest Farm Credit said dryland farm values in Eastern Washington are generally stable to increasing. Land inventory is low. Kile said in recent years, there's been lots of outside money flowing into the Palouse with most investors looking for a 3 to 4% return. If an investor paid \$4,000 per acre, they have to charge approximately \$172 per acre as a cash rental rate, a price much higher than most farmers are willing to pay. With commodity prices dropping, farmers who pay that rental rate are likely subsidizing that ground from other ground they own.

Because of higher interest rates, the debt service cost has increased from \$169 per acre in January 2023 to nearly \$226 per acre in November 2023. In order to purchase land, some producers are going with a five-year fixed rate loan in hopes that when the variable interest rate kicks in, interest rates are lower. However, Kile warned that if interest rates don't go down, that variable rate can be a "death blow" to some operations. He said producers who use this need to be willing to gamble on that risk.

Looking at 2024, Vuletich and Kile predicted:

- Losses for higher cost producers.
- A continued decrease in working capital.
- A continued slowing of equipment purchases.
- Outside investors will continue to have an interest in purchasing larger tracts of land.
- Unfavorable lease structures will drastically impact high leverage operations.

## NRCS update

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) session was led by Aubrey Hoxie from NRCS-Washington,



In the "Wild World of Wheat" break-out session, Allison Thompson, owner of The Money Farm, talked about global factors impacting market supply and demand.



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Chelcey Larsen from NRCS-Idaho, and Nathan James from NRCS-Oregon. The session focused on the allocation of new funds across various programs through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

The IRA infused NRCS with \$19.5 billion in 2022 to bolster existing conservation initiatives like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Conservation Technical Assistance. This act uses current farm bill authorization and must be utilized by Sept. 30, 2031. This new funding significantly amplifies NRCS's mission to deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world. According to NRCS, agricultural producers can play a critical role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, sequestering carbon, and delivering lasting solutions to the climate crisis.

Each speaker provided an overview of their state's IRA allocations, new practices and enhancements available to growers, and application cutoffs. While initial application cutoffs have passed for Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, growers interested in these programs may still be eligible and were encouraged to apply.

"We accept applications all year, as additional cutoffs could occur," Hoxie said.

The breakdown of NRCS's Climate-Smart Mitigation Activities highlighted the various ways for growers to leverage the IRA funds, which includes a broad spectrum of applications from soil health and nitrogen management to energy efficiency and wetlands restoration. A full list of qualifying mitigation activities is available on the NRCS website at <https://bit.ly/40Jus5q>. Speakers discussed incorporating these activities into existing programs like EQIP, CSP, and RCPP. They also discussed how NRCS was leveraging IRA funds through agreements, contracts, and partnerships.

Speakers emphasized the importance of engaging with local field offices for guidance on the best enhancements and additional practices that align with individual farms. The session concluded with an update on NRCS hiring and job opportunities, the differentiation of the organic program, and the flexibility within CSP concerning land uses and resource concerns, highlighting avenues for broader participation and conservation efforts.

## Mental health

The emergencies might look a little different, but QPR, just like CPR, can save lives.



Ben Johnson, National Agricultural Statistics Service state statistician for Idaho, was part of a break-out session that looked at the historical trends in the barley industry and what data will be provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2024.

QPR, which stands for question, persuade, refer, is a technique to help one recognize signs of suicide, said Oregon State University Extension's Cassie Bouska. She pointed out that agriculture has a higher rate of suicide than in other industries, and the rates of suicide have increased significantly over the past 20 years. Male producers are at a higher risk, for reasons including:

- Feeling they can't ask for help.
- Limited access to health care.
- Multiple uncontrollable stressors.
- Lack of a close confidant.
- Stress-driven onset of a depressive disorder.
- Alcohol abuse.

"You may not even know you are feeling something that can be helped," she said. "The theory (behind QPR) is to reach people where they are at and doesn't require them to ask for help. QPR is not intended to be a form of counseling or treatment. It is intended to offer hope through positive action."

The QPR steps are:

- Question. Plan a time and place to ask and talk to the person in a private setting. A less direct approach could be asking them if they've been unhappy lately. "You're not thinking of killing yourself, are you?" and "You wouldn't do anything stupid, would you?" ▶



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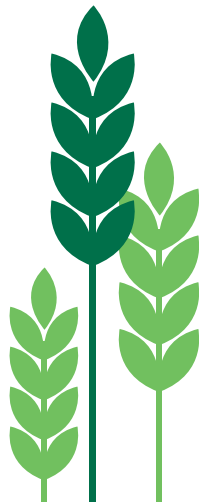
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are examples of how not to ask about suicide.

- **Persuade.** Once the question has been asked, most people thinking of suicide want to talk. Listen to the problem and give them your full attention. Remember, suicide itself is not the problem, only the solution to their problem that they've come up with. Don't be judgmental.
- **Refer.** Get them help. Ask them to go with you to get help. Suicidal people often believe they cannot be helped so you often have to do more. Have your resources handy (phone numbers, counselor's names, and any other information that might help).

The hardest part of QPR is often asking somebody if they are thinking about suicide. Direct verbal clues include saying "I've decided to kill myself," or "I wish I were dead." Indirect verbal clues, which are more common, could include saying "I'm tired of life, I just can't go on," "My family would be better off without me," or "Pretty soon you won't have to worry about me." There are also behavioral clues, such as previous suicide attempts, putting personal affairs in order, and giving away prized possessions. Situational clues include being fired or being expelled from school; loss of any major relationship; sudden, unexpected loss of freedom or fear of punishment; and anticipated loss of financial security.

"How you ask the question is less important than that you ask it. If you cannot ask the question, find someone who can," Bouska said.

Immediate mental health crisis resources include:

- Farm Aid Hotline at 800-FARM-AID (327-6243), open Monday-Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Eastern time.
- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, open 24/7.
- 2-1-1, a comprehensive hotline that connects callers with local resources. ■

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- OpenSky® herbicide
- Pixxaro® EC herbicide
- WideARmatch® herbicide
- WideMatch® herbicide
- Tarzec® herbicide
- PowerFlex® HL herbicide
- Quelex® herbicide
- Rezuvant® herbicide
- GoldSky® herbicide
- Stinger® HL herbicide
- Starane® Flex herbicide
- Embed® Extra herbicide
- Aproach® Prima fungicide
- Lumivia® CPL insecticide seed treatment
- Utrisha™ N
- Instinct® NXTGEN, N-Serve® nitrogen stabilizers



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# CHAIRMAN

## WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

By Ben Barstow



It's that time of year again. Every communication you see right now looks a lot like this one: another year-end review. However, if we never look back on what we've done, it is easy to feel like nothing has been accomplished since last Christmas. I encourage you to take a few minutes of this busy season and look back at the last year with me, at the same time we look to the work ahead of us.

One of the changes for the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) has been the changing of the CEO. From my perspective, it has been one of those odd situations that simultaneously seems like it was just a few months ago that Glen Squires announced his pending retirement, and yet it feels like his replacement, current CEO Casey Chumrau, has been here forever. It is hard to believe it's been barely a year.

In the marketing area, the WGC has hosted a full schedule of trade teams from Asia and South America this summer. It's good to have these in-person visits back. It just seems like we have more questions, more in-depth discussions, more concerns get expressed, and those concerns get answered more thoroughly, when we meet in person. In addition to welcoming trade teams back, Pullman's Western Wheat Quality Lab also welcomed a new director, Dr. Sean Finnie.

There were a lot of research and education positions important to small grains production that changed this year, too. The Washington State University (WSU) College of Agriculture, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences (CAHNRS) has a new dean, Dr. Wendy Powers. She will be working with new associate dean and director of research, Dr. Leslie Edgar, and the Crop and Soil Sciences Department has a new chair, Dr. Lynn Carpenter-Boggs.

It is hard to describe how important it is to everyone who works in the college to have a permanent, instead of an interim, person in the upper administration. Sometimes, needed decisions and long-term policy establishment can get postponed until a permanent hire is made. Work continues to get done, but it really helps to have someone at the top to say, "No, we will not spend our time on this," and, "Yes, we really should put more focus on that."

We have all been concerned about the number of open Extension faculty positions at CAHNRS, and though there are still too many vacancies, some of those are finally being filled. Rachel Wieme is the new regional Extension small grains agronomist, and the

Lind Dryland Research Station has a new director, Dr. Surendra Singh, a dryland cropping systems agronomist. His wife, Dr. Shikha Singh, was also hired as a soil scientist working on long term soil health. You can read their bios at [smallgrains.wsu.edu](http://smallgrains.wsu.edu).

Dr. Joao Antonangelo joined the WSU faculty in August this year, filling a long-vacant position on the Pullman campus in applied soil chemistry. To facilitate hiring a top-quality candidate to this position, the WGC committed to granting the Washington Wheat Distinguished Professorship Endowment to the holder of this position for the next three years.

The professorship was established in 2010 with an endowment from the WGC with the intent that it would provide temporary support to a member of the Washington State University faculty whose research focus coincides with a priority research need identified in conjunction with the Washington wheat industry. In this case, we identified the need for research into soil acidification and carbon sequestration in our dryland cereal grain production systems.

When we made this decision last year, those of us in the room felt like this was a good use of our wheat grower dollars, but what do you think? Was there some other burning issue that should have been the focus of our attention? The WGC has committed our funds to endowed faculty positions in wheat breeding and genetics, economics, barley breeding and genetics, and wheat research, and every year, we review their performance and provide direction about the current concerns of the industry.

The endowment reports are separate from the annual research review where individual, short-term research projects are presented for funding. I will say it again, it kind of scares me sometimes when such a small number of people come together to decide what is worth putting grower dollars into. If you have any ideas or suggestions about the endowments, contact your commissioners and express your opinions. Growers can also join us Feb. 13, 2024, in Pullman to provide their feedback on our research priorities.

There truly has been progress this past year, far more than I can cover in one page. And mainly, I've only talked about research. Though we pause for a bit now to celebrate the greatest gift, there's plenty of work just around the corner. Make a New Year's resolution to participate! ■

# 2023 Annual Report



**WASHINGTON  
GRAIN  
COMMISSION**

The Washington Grain Commission was created in 1958 by the Washington State Department of Agriculture with the support of Eastern Washington farmers. Barley came under the auspices of the organization in 2009. Our mission is to enhance the long-term profitability and competitiveness of Washington small grains and small grain producers through research, marketing and education. The current commission board is made up of seven farmer members, two industry representatives and a representative from the state's Department of Agriculture.





Casey Chumrau



From left: Brit Ausman, Scott Steinbacher, Kevin Klein, Mike Carstensen, Ben Barstow, Ty Jessup, Gary Bailey, Mike Miller, Casey Chumrau, Brian Cochrane, Brian Liedl



### A letter to our constituents:

As another year comes to a close, it is a good time to reflect on the important work the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) did in support of wheat and barley growers in 2023, and my first year as CEO. I am proud to report that WGC remains in a very solid financial position, with excellent grower and industry leadership effectively representing the interests of Washington grain growers at a state, national and international level.

I can certainly say that pandemic-related restrictions were in the rearview in 2023. In addition to hosting numerous trade teams here in Washington, WGC commissioners and staff visited Japan, Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico, Vietnam, and the Philippines, and presented at three international buyers conferences. In a year when PNW grain struggled to be price competitive, these market development activities are very important to demonstrate the advantages of high-quality Washington grain compared to our competitors.

On the research front, WGC continues to invest grower dollars in projects that will contribute to better crop yields; help combat disease, pest and weed problems; and provide better end-use qualities for our customers. Through partnerships at Washington State University, USDA-ARS, and the Wheat Marketing Center, we strive for innovative solutions to enhance the long-term profitability of Washington farmers.

As part of our ongoing education efforts, we celebrated 16 years of Wheat Week. In partnership with the Franklin Conservation District, we reached over 19,000 elementary students this year, and this curriculum will continue to be a foundational component of our public education efforts.

I'd like to thank outgoing commissioner Mike Miller from Ritzville for representing District 4 over the last 13 years. During his tenure, he served as chairman of WGC, chairman of U.S. Wheat Associates, and a member of countless state and national committees. He has represented Washington farmers well and made many connections around the world that helped move our industry forward.

The WGC is proud of the progress we have made, the partnerships we have cultivated, and the communities we have supported. As we look to the year ahead, we remain focused on our mission: to enhance the economic well-being and competitiveness of Washington's grain industry. I want to express my sincere gratitude to our dedicated team, our fantastic partners, and all our growers for their support and participation. I hope to meet and get to know more of you at WGC activities in the next year!

- Casey Chumrau, CEO

### Commissioners

#### Districts:

- 1 Mike Carstensen
- 2 Gary Bailey
- 3 Brit Ausman
- 4 Mike Miller
- 5 Brian Cochrane
- 6 Ben Barstow, Chair
- 7 Kevin Klein, Vice Chair

#### Industry Representatives:

Ty Jessup, Treasurer, and Brian Liedl

#### WSDA

Scott Steinbacher

### Staff

Casey Chumrau, CEO

Mary Palmer Sullivan, Vice President

Lori Maricle, Director of Communication

Sheila McCrea, Finance & Administrative Specialist

Parker Dawson, Systems & Data Processing Specialist

Shari McCarthy, Receptionist & Account Specialist

Program Director, vacant



# Market Development

The WGC marketing objective is to strengthen existing markets and develop new markets for PNW small grains. Activities promote superior quality, consistency, and value of Washington wheat and barley (as part of the PNW region) in new and existing uses.

## Top 10 U.S. white wheat markets

### Philippines



### China



### Japan



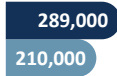
### S. Korea



### Indonesia



### Thailand



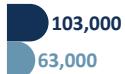
### Yemen



### Chile



### Vietnam



### Taiwan



2022-23

2021-22

By metric tons  
(1 metric ton = 36.74 bushels)

Source: USDA - Foreign Agricultural Service, Weekly Export Sales Report

## Marketing efforts

In 2022-23 the WGC budgeted \$1,541,740 toward market development.

WGC participates in export market development activities with U.S. Wheat Associates (USW), the export market organization for the U.S. wheat industry. In 2023, the WGC hosted seven USW trade teams and one U.S. Grains Council barley trade team.

Trade teams and crop quality tours allow us to deliver timely and relevant information to customers and provide an opportunity for U.S. participants to learn about the needs and challenges of customers.







6

**1 USW/Japan:** Nobukazu Mae (right), representing Nisshin Flour Milling; Kazunori Nakano (center), country director for USW/Japan; and Mari Ito (left), representing Taiyo Flour Milling; tour the wheat research greenhouses at Washington State University in Pullman on September 13.

**2 USW/SE Asia:** Representatives from Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Singapore. Carmeli Te (left), representing Mabuhay Interfl our, discusses sponge cake quality testing with Bui Thanh Duong, representing Vimaf flour Ltd. Co., during a tour at the USDA-ARS Western Wheat Quality Lab in Pullman on August 3.

**3 USW/Taiwan:** Washington State University winter wheat breeder Arron Carter (far right) explains wheat breeding during a tour of the wheat research greenhouses at WSU in Pullman on June 13.

**4 USW/Philippines:** WSU spring wheat breeder Mike Pumphrey (left) showcases spring wheat variety trials to Michael Tan (center), representing Monde Nissin Corporation, and Weevens Ty (right), representing Wellington Flour Mills, at the WSU Field Day in St. John on June 27.

**5 USW/Japan:** Representatives from the second-largest milling association in Japan, known as “Zenfunkyo,” joined WGC Commissioner Kevin Klein to observe harvest and take a few combine rides on his farm near the town of Edwall on August 15.

Back row from left : Kazunori (Rick) Nakano, Toshiyuki Abiko, Jusuke Shiga, Kevin Klein, Damon Sauer, Sadamu Nishida, Mary Palmer Sullivan. Front row from left : Hiroki Minagawa, Ryoichi Yoshihara, Kenichi Kasahara, Koza Abe.

**6 USW/Chile:** WGC Chairman Ben Barstow talks with Javier Heredia, representing Heredia Molinos, at the Palouse Caboose during dinner with the trade team and other local growers on July 24.

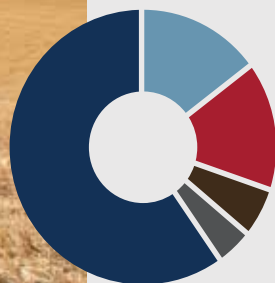


Of the teams that visited Washington this summer, the nine countries represented accounted for **57% of soft white wheat sales** in 2022-23, and **37% of sales of all U.S. wheat classes**.

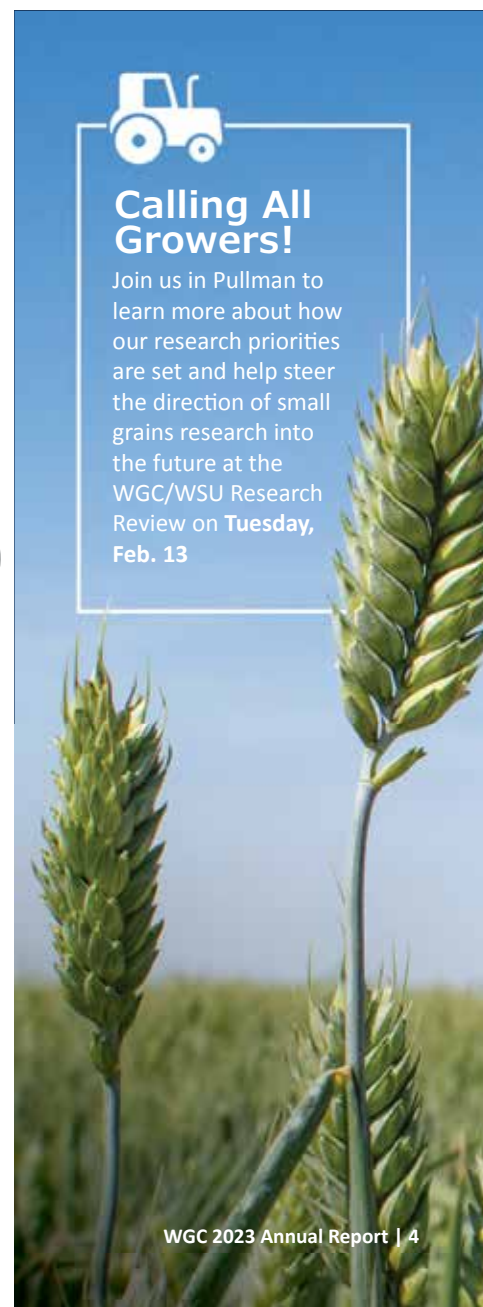


## Looking forward

WGC market development 2023-24 budget - \$1,629,585



**58% Partner organizations**  
**15% Trade servicing**  
**15% Additional projects**  
**7% Crop quality reporting**  
**5% Travel**



## Calling All Growers!

Join us in Pullman to learn more about how our research priorities are set and help steer the direction of small grains research into the future at the WGC/WSU Research Review on **Tuesday, Feb. 13**

# Research Activity

In 2022-23 the WGC contributed \$1,996,965 to directly fund research at Washington State University and USDA-ARS. In addition, the WGC contributed \$138,885 towards Grower Services research projects.

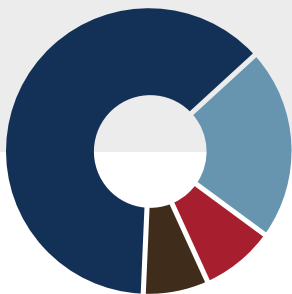
## Research activity for the year included:

**61% Plant breeding and genetics**

**22% Quality**

**9% Disease/Insects**

**8% Production/Management**



## Paying it forward

The first two of six research endowments at Washington State University were created by the Washington Grain Commission in 1990 to establish a perpetual funding mechanism for the advancement of the commission's strategic research goals. Currently, these endowments fund seven research faculty positions aimed at improving varietal development, end use and processing attributes, agronomics, production systems, economics, and new uses for wheat and barley.

The endowments are managed by WSU with distributions made annually to the faculty researcher(s) holding the endowment. These endowments are perpetual and require no further contributions from WGC to continue funding work on behalf of the wheat and barley industries and the state's small grain producers into the future.

Values reported as of 6/30/2023.

Est. 1990: the **ORVILLE A. VOGEL ENDOWED CHAIR IN WHEAT BREEDING AND GENETICS** was established in a partnership

between the state of Washington, WSU and what was then the Washington Wheat Commission. WSU winter and spring wheat breeders **Arron Carter** and **Mike Pumphrey** currently hold the Vogel endowment.

**Original principal:** \$1.5 million

**2022-23 research distributions:** \$116,000

**Utilization:** to help fund graduate student and post doctorate positions, upgrade sensor technology, and support genotyping and WSU wheat variety seed production in partnership with WSCIA.

**Current Value:** \$2,982,900

Est. 1990: the **ORVILLE A. VOGEL WHEAT RESEARCH FUND**, part of the Vogel endowment, is partially funded by an annual revenue gift from the Bohrsen Farm.

**2022-23 research distributions:**

\$195,753.15

**Utilization:** projects rotate on a three-year funding cycle. Details are available online at: <https://bit.ly/45BTeW6>.

**Current Value:** \$5,041,700

Est. 1990: this fund was originally established as the Robert A. Nilan Distinguished Professorship in Barley Research and Education. The endowment was updated in 2013 to the **ROBERT A. NILAN ENDOWED CHAIR IN BARLEY RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**. It is held by barley breeder **Robert Brueggeman**.

**Original principal:** \$250,000

**2022-23 research distributions:**

\$57,847.38

**Utilization:** barley research efforts.

**Current Value:** \$1,491,800

Est. 1997: the **R. JAMES COOK ENDOWED CHAIR IN WHEAT RESEARCH** is held by weed scientist **Ian Burke**.

**Original principal:** \$1.5 million

**2022-23 research distributions:**

\$78,878.29

**Utilization:** program support for weed management research.

**Current Value:** \$2,417,600

Est. 2009: this endowment was originally established as the Endowed Chair in Small Grains Economics, and then updated in 2012 to honor and acknowledge Thomas B. Mick's service and dedication to the grain industry of Washington. The **THOMAS**

**B. MICK ENDOWED CHAIR IN SMALL GRAIN ECONOMICS** is held by agricultural economist **T. Randall Fortenbery**.

**Original principal:** \$2 million

**2022-23 research distributions:**

\$106,663.39

**Utilization:** program support

**Current Value:** \$2,783,400

Est. 2010: The **WASHINGTON WHEAT DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP** rotates among scientists depending upon pressing research needs of the moment. This professorship recently transitioned to **Joao Antonangelo**, an expert in soil chemistry. It was held in 2022-23 by Zhiwu Zhang, an expert in statistical genomics.

**Original principal:** \$1.5 million

**2022-23 research distributions:**

\$75,557.67

**Utilization:** to develop new analytical methods and computing tools to improve breeding efficiency for sustainable agricultural production using genomics and phenomics.

**Current Value:** \$1,948,300

Est. 2011: the **ENDOWED CHAIR IN SMALL GRAINS EXTENSION AND RESEARCH** is held by **Drew Lyon** with an emphasis in weed science.

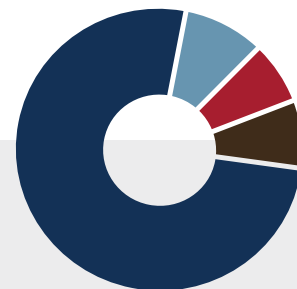
**Original principal:** \$1.5 million

**2022-23 research distributions:**

\$74,405.82

**Utilization:** applied research and Extension outreach on weed science issues.

**Current Value:** \$1,918,600



## Looking forward

WGC research 2023-24 budget - **\$2,036,773**

**77% Variety development and quality**

**9% Plant protection**

**7% Cropping systems**

**7% Barley**





The Washington Grain Commission and the Washington Wheat Foundation sponsored Baking STEAM 2023, a two-day hands-on baking workshop for high school home economics teachers from across the state, August 4-5 in Spokane coordinated through the Washington Family & Consumer Sciences Educators Association and the Home Baking Association.

# Education

Part of the WGC mission is funding educational programming with the goal that Washington's wheat and barley producers are recognized as good stewards of the land producing healthy, high quality small grains.

In 2022-23 the WGC contributed \$598,500 to directly fund education programming. In addition, the WGC contributed \$291,100 towards Grower Services education programs contracted through WAWG.

## Highlights

Cultivating the next generation is an important part of the WGC's education efforts. The largest portion of the WGC education budget goes to fund the Wheat Week program through the Franklin Conservation District. Wheat Week is a hands-on science program aligned with required Washington State Sciences Standards taught in fourth and fifth grade classrooms across Washington. The program teaches students about wheat, dam and transportation systems, water, soil, conservation, DNA, and energy as well as how they impact our daily lives.

The program reached 19,406 students and 923 teachers during the 2022-23 school year. In-person and DIY Online Wheat Week reached 244 schools in 23 counties, and 65% of those students were in Western Washington.



## Service recognition: Mike Miller

Thank you for 13 years of dedicated service to the Washington Grain Commission!

Mike has been a commissioner since 2011 and served as WGC chairman from 2016-17. He previously served on the National Wheat Improvement Committee and served on the board of directors for U.S. Wheat Associates, serving as its chairman from 2017-18.



### Looking forward

WGC education 2023-24 budget - \$650,500

# Financials

2022/23 Assessment revenue:

**\$8.8**  
MILLION



2022/23 Budget: \$7.8 million  
vs. spent \$6.3 million



Roll forward to 2023/24 budget:

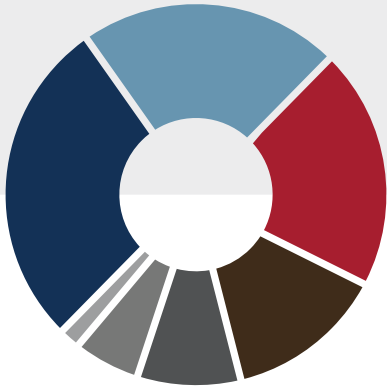
**\$2.5**  
MILLION



## Looking forward

FY 2023-24 Budget: \$8,643,904

- 28% Grower Services
- 24% Research
- 19% Market Development
- 15% Professional Services
- 8% Education / Information
- 5% Office Operations
- 1% Policy Development



## Fusarium crown rot is everywhere, persistent

Genetic resistance, tolerance will be best management tools

By Timothy C. Paulitz

Research Plant Pathologist, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Agricultural Research Service

By Kimberly Garland-Campbell

Research Geneticist, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Agricultural Research Service

Of all the soilborne fungal pathogens that attack wheat in the dryland Pacific Northwest (PNW), *Fusarium* crown rot is the most ubiquitous and widespread. It is caused by two species: *Fusarium pseudograminearum* and *F. culmorum*. The fungus attacks the crown and tillers of wheat early in their growth phase, causing a brown discoloration on the lower stem. The pathogen cuts off the flow of water and nutrients to the head, resulting in whiteheads, which are bleached heads that turn brown prematurely when other heads are still green. The result is reduced yield, smaller grain size, and smaller test weight. Work by Richard Smiley at Oregon State University in Pendleton documented an average of 9.5% yield loss across the region, but in some cases as high as 35%.

Work by Grant Poole, funded by the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), showed both species were found together across the dryland wheat production areas, in both conventional and no-till. This disease has a strong interaction with the environment and is favored by hot, dry conditions and moisture stress. Unfortunately, there are no good control measures, chemical or cultural. Because it is a disease of water stress, it is important to not overfertilize with nitrogen and use up the water supply in the soil. The fertilization needs to be based on the stored water and potential yield.

Seed treatments have not shown to be very effective because the plant needs to be protected for a longer period of time than just the seedling stage. When seed treatments target seed and seedling diseases, they typically provide systemic protection against smuts or bunts. Soilborne diseases like *Fusarium* are different because they can continue to infect young wheat throughout the fall and again in the spring when the seed treatments are no longer effective. Because the fungus can survive in the soil as resistant spores for many years, crop rotation

with noncereals is not very effective either.

Genetic resistance or tolerance will be the best way to manage *Fusarium* crown rot. This has been the focus of research by our research team (Kimberly Garland-Campbell and Timothy Paulitz) for the last decade, funded by the WGC. The good news is that genetic resistance to *Fusarium* crown rot has been identified in wheat by our previous work and by extensive work in Australia. This is in contrast to other soilborne pathogens like *Pythium*, *Rhizoctonia*, and take-all that have no genetic resistance identified. However, unlike resistance to rust or cereal cyst nematodes, which are major single gene resistance, tolerance to *Fusarium* crown rot is polygenic or quantitative (QTL), and effective resistance requires many cycles of breeding and selection to accumulate several genes. Along with the Australians, we identified a number of tolerance QTLs from mapping populations. Many genes may work together to provide tolerance.

The other major soilborne disease of winter wheat in Eastern Washington is eyespot, also known as strawbreaker foot rot, which is caused by *Oculimacula yallundae*. Eyespot is also present in most wheat growing regions of Eastern Washington; in fact, *Fusarium* crown rot and eyespot are often discovered together. Eyespot is more prevalent in higher moisture conditions, and *Fusarium* crown rot is more prevalent in dryer environments.

The two diseases cause similar symptoms because they restrict water movement to the developing spike, causing whiteheads. They also both cause brown and black stem lesions that are difficult to distinguish. We have good sources of resistance to eyespot, derived from Madsen and other winter wheat cultivars. Our task to develop *Fusarium*-resistant cultivars is complicated because we need to identify lines with good resistance to *Fusarium* and with good resistance to eyespot. Fortunately, we can use marker-assisted selection and additional disease screening nurseries to incorporate resistance to eyespot. *Fusarium* resistance continues to be a challenge.

There is a strong environmental effect to disease ex-



The greenhouse inoculation procedure to screen for Fusarium crown rot starts with placing ground up millet seed inoculum around a vernalized wheat plant (first panel). The second panel shows an infected seedling with brown discoloration at base. The third panel shows a highly susceptible plant with all tillers infected.



pression, which makes selection under natural field conditions very difficult, especially when targeting strong disease pressure every year. Our approach has been to develop a reliable and consistent greenhouse/growth chamber assay to screen advanced lines and prebreeding material for resistance to Fusarium. For her Ph.D., Yvonne Thompson manipulated the conditions in the greenhouse and growth chamber to favor the disease. Winter wheat lines were first vernalized, and both winter and spring lines were first grown under cooler conditions. Temperature and water stress were increased after heading. For her Ph.D., supported by the WGC, Nickayla Strauss reduced the variation among experimental runs. She developed a method of standardizing the inoculum. Instead of scattering a few infected millet or wheat seeds in each pot, she ground the inoculum, quantified it with dilution plating, and applied a uniform amount around the seedlings. She also found that a rating system based on counting infected internodes was faster and more consistent than the previous quantitative rating of 1-9.

We now have an optimized system, which enables us to screen advanced PNW varieties to see what are the most susceptible and tolerant. We were able to identify a new soft white winter wheat line from Washington State University breeder Arron Carter's program, Devote, which has a higher level of tolerance to Fusarium, as well as snow mold and eyespot. This line is adapted to the lower and intermediate rainfall areas. Our goal is to identify the most tolerant and susceptible lines from what is already out there. But how do we find even better sources of resistance that will be easier to incorporate into adapted varieties? This has been the focus of our efforts the last three years. We have been developing populations based on crosses with more adapted lines, with the goal of screening them to identify useful genes. These include a number of new collections.

The first are crosses with synthetic wheat lines from the International Wheat and Maize Research Center (CIMMYT). Synthetics are attempting to create the original diversity that happened when the original bread wheat was domesticated, from a cross between tetraploid pasta wheat, *Triticum durum*, and the donor of the D genome, *Aegilops tauschii*. CIMMYT created a number of these synthetics during the 1970s to 1990s. We crossed these synthetics with adapted PNW varieties, including the spring wheats Chet, Ryan, and DH11SRW070-14; the winter wheats Selbu, WA8252, Sequoia; and club wheat Cara. Louise was also crossed with synthetics and advanced to backcross F8 generation.

Second, we have a double haploid population between the club wheat Cara (moderately susceptible) and the common wheat Xerpha (moderately resistant). Recently, we screened a population derived from a cross between the spring wheat cultivar Louise and AUS28451, which is an Iranian land race that has shown multiple resistances to other soilborne pathogens, such as root lesion nematode and *Rhizoctonia*. We have found both resistance to Fusarium crown rot and cereal cyst nematode in some of these lines. All of these exotic sources of diversity contribute to our quest to find a major gene for resistance to Fusarium crown rot.

Now that we can reliably screen for Fusarium crown rot resistance in the greenhouse, we can rate winter and spring wheat multiple times per year. Our goal is to incorporate resistance based on greenhouse screening and verify in the field at Lind, Wash., in an inoculated nursery. These soilborne diseases often have under-appreciated negative effects on grain yield and crop health in the PNW. With this work, we can eliminate the most susceptible proposed new cultivars, and we can identify new genes that increase the resistance in our adapted breeding lines. ■

# WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

## All eyes are on crops in Brazil, Argentina



By Mike Krueger  
*Founder, The Money Farm*

The markets over the past 30 days or so have been dominated by less-than-ideal weather in Brazil and significant buying of U.S. soybeans by China.

Soybean futures rallied nearly a dollar a bushel from their early October lows to the mid-November highs. Wheat and corn futures, on the other hand, have been steady to lower.

The November U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports were generally considered bearish. Soybean, wheat, and corn ending stocks estimates were all increased. Corn bore the brunt of the bearish news with the national yield increased nearly two bushels per acre from October.

Here's what the reports told us:

- They increased the corn yield 1.9 bushels per acre. That increased production by 170 million bushels. Part of that supply increase was offset by an increase in the export and ethanol forecasts. The net was a 45 million bushel increase in ending stocks. That isn't a lot, but another reason to be bearish.
- They increased the U.S. soybean yield by .3 bushels per acre. They increased ending supplies from 220 million bushels to 240 million bushels. That is still tight.
- They made no change to Brazil's soybean production estimates despite the weather problems there. Brazil's soybean planting window is so wide it is likely too early to trim the yield estimates.
- They made no change to their estimate for corn production in Brazil. It is too early to do that even though it is a certainty now that the Safrinha crop will be planted as much as 30 to 40 days later than normal.
- They raised U.S. wheat ending stocks by 14 million bushels. That is really nothing — but considered bearish.
- They raised Russia's wheat production forecast by 5 million metric tons (mmt), almost 200 million bushels. That means more wheat exports from Russia.
- They made no changes to China and Brazil wheat

production. Most analysts believe as much as 50% of Brazil's wheat crop is feed because of the persistent heavy rain. Some believe as much as 20% of China's wheat crop is also badly weather damaged.

China became an aggressive buyer of U.S. soybeans after the U.S. harvest was finished. Potential production problems in Brazil because of poor early season weather, coupled with the fact China had slim forward coverage, prompted the surge in purchases. China's purchase of soybeans so far this marketing year total 15.5 mmt. This is down from 20 mmt at this time last year.

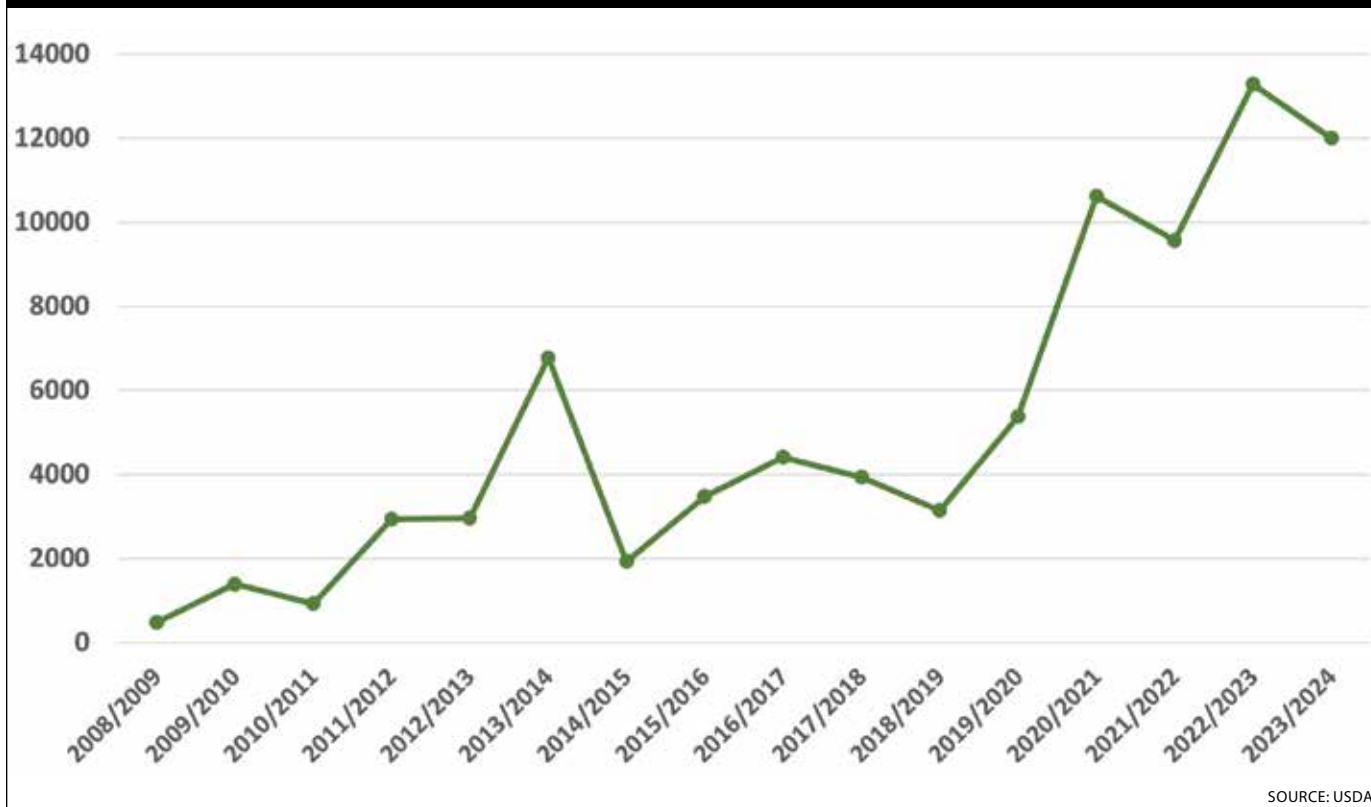
China has also continued to buy wheat. Analysts think China's total wheat imports could exceed 14 mmt. They imported 13.3 mmt in the previous marketing year. China has purchased about 850,000 metric tons (mt) of wheat from the U.S., half of which is soft red winter wheat. Last year at this time, China had purchased 328,000 mt of U.S. white wheat. There are no white wheat sales to China yet this marketing year. Chart 1 is China's wheat imports. It is important because China holds 50% of the world's wheat ending supplies, and yet, their wheat imports have been increasing steadily.

Corn and soybean crop production in Brazil and Argentina will be the most important market factor for the next three to four months barring any unforeseen geopolitical events that would affect grain shipments. This is true from the Black Sea in particular. Shipments from Ukraine and Russia continue to exceed expectations, but that can change instantly.

The USDA and other analytical groups are forecasting big corn and soybean crops in South America. Conditions across Argentina have been slowly improving following two years of severe drought. Argentina's wheat crop was again hurt by the drought, but corn and soybean crops are off to a better start. It is uncertain today whether late soybean planting across Brazil will hurt soybean production. Expect the soybean market to stay strong until and unless Brazil's weather patterns change for the better. The entire Southern Hemisphere's growing season is still ahead. U.S. soybean ending stocks will be tight again. A significant reduction in South American production would be bullish because the U.S. doesn't have enough supplies to be an adequate backstop.

A potential market factor in corn could be the impact



**Chart 1: China wheat imports (in million metric tons)**

of late planting of Brazil's Safrinha (second crop) corn. Delayed soybean planting will also mean the Safrinha corn crop will be planted at least 30 days later than normal. That can push pollination of that crop into a much hotter and drier weather pattern. That could trim the corn yield. Brazil's Safrinha corn crop typically is about 70% of total corn production.

World wheat markets are still somewhat of a dilemma. Supplies among the major exporting countries are among the smallest in decades. That has yet to translate into increased exports from the U.S. Russia continues to dominate the world wheat market with a steady flow of cheap wheat. Any slowdown in Russia's export pace should result in a rapid increase in wheat prices, but there has been no evidence that will happen.

The world geopolitical situation has gotten messier. The Black Sea conflict continues to slog on with no definitive end in sight. A commercial vessel leaving

the Ukraine was struck by a Russian missile in early November. That event didn't result in any additional shipping problems and little market reaction. In fact, the markets seem to have placed the Black Sea conflict far on the back burner. It remains a day-to-day situation. The conflict between Israel and Hamas has also not had much impact on markets. The risk is that if Iran gets involved, it could push crude oil prices sharply higher.

Volatility should stay with us through the South American growing season. China's level of imports of soybeans, wheat, and corn will also be an important market factor. ■

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

## Program seeks to develop leaders in natural resource sectors

### AgForestry Leadership Program

By Trista Crossley  
*Editor, Wheat Life*

After nearly a half century of success, Washington's vaunted natural resources leadership program, AgForestry, is taking a hard look at itself and its role going forward.

AgForestry was established in 1977 and designed to develop leaders in natural resource sectors. At the time, it was based on a similar program in California, and now, over 30 states have programs similar to the AgForestry Leadership Program. The program runs for 18 months and includes 11 seminars held across the state, a week in Washington, D.C., and two weeks in a foreign country. Each class, or cohort, represents a wide range of professions across the natural resource industries and is selected by an independent committee from an applicant pool. The program is overseen by a board of directors.

"There's so few people left that operate and have expertise in natural resources that if we don't have more people that truly understand, not just the natural resources sector they are in, but all of them, we could stand to lose so much," explained **Vicky Scharlau**, AgForestry's executive director since 2021. She's an AgForestry graduate herself (Class 10).



Like so many other programs, COVID-19 shut AgForestry down for a year, and when the program returned, the board of directors recognized their target audience was shifting.

"Baby Boomers were slowly aging out, and the expectations and needs of the next generation were being made more obvious," Scharlau said. A strategic planning process revealed the need for change, and the board hired Scharlau to help guide the organization. "The board wanted somebody who had done this before. I've been an executive director or worked in, for, or with nonprofits all my professional life. I know the landscape, and there were lots of really of hard decisions that were going to have to be made by the board."

One of the first goals the board identified through the strategic planning process was to ensure that the program maintained its first-class status. The best practices to promote leadership development in adults have changed, and there is new technology to take into account. Using a grant from the Washington State Department of Agriculture, AgForestry is putting its curriculum through a formal



Class 44 during one of their experiential tours. Photo courtesy of AgForestry.

evaluation process and developing ways to measure the program's impact.

"We have to know we are meeting the needs of the employers and meeting the needs of the participants," Scharlau said. "With this grant, we have the opportunity to look long and hard at who we are, the roles we play, and what the impact of the program is."

AgForestry isn't cheap. The current \$6,000 tuition covers only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to actual expenses. Scharlau estimates that the program now costs more than \$40,000 per person. In order to keep the tuition as low as possible, cuts were being made to the program to the point where, as she described it, "the fat was already gone, and we were cutting into bone." The difference between the actual cost of the program and participants' tuition is made up by outside contributions from alumni, commodity groups, and other sources.

"Part of what came out of the strategic planning process is we have to get this organization built up to the point



where it should be, financially. We run two programs per year, so this is a million-dollar program, and we are trying to operate at half that. That's not sustainable," Scharlau said.

AgForestry's ideal participant is someone with some professional experience under their belt who is willing to be vulnerable and willing to examine their own biases. Scharlau pointed out they aren't necessarily looking for people who are already leaders, but for people who have the potential "to be bright and shiny." She also explained that AgForestry isn't a certificate program or a master's program in leadership.

"You are not in it for a certificate. You are in it to go through change. You are in it for personal development. You have to be willing to have a personal paradigm shift," she said. "What you get out of the program is based on what you put in. It is about your journey in leadership and the relationships you build with the other members of your cohort, because you will learn as much, probably more, from your cohort as you will from the seminars in a year and half."

The seminars are grouped into three modules that each focus on a particular aspect of leadership: personal leadership, leadership in public policy, and leadership and systems thinking, and they all come together at the final Applied Leadership and Graduation seminar. The seminars build on each other and may include workshops, experiential tours, and speakers. For many participants, the highlight of the program is a two-week international trip that explores the inner workings of a foreign country (or countries) as it relates to natural resource management. When the program first started, international travel was much less common, and it was designed to pull participants out of their comfort zone. The current class, Class 44, will be traveling to Costa Rica and Panama.

One of the aspects that Scharlau said the program needs to address is increasing tribal participation, especially because they figure prominently in many of Washington state's natural resource sectors. In fact, part of AgForestry's origins lie in the "fish wars" of the 1960s and 70s between sport and commercial fishing industries and the Tribes.

For more information on AgForestry, visit the website at [agforestry.org](http://agforestry.org). Applications for the next class, Class 46, open next year.

"AgForestry will impact who you

are, how you live your life, and the impact you make both personally and professionally more than anything else you've done," Scharlau said. "If somebody comes into the program and they are really open and embrace developing as a leader — actively pursue that journey — they will come out a different person." ■

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# THE BOTTOM LINE

## Year-end tax planning: Finding the sweet spot

By Larissa Zeiler

CPA, Leffel, Otis & Warwick, P.S.

Which is a better problem to have: too much income or too little income? From a tax standpoint, the answer is typically neither. Farm income in our region certainly seems to be across the board this year. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Emergency Relief Program and Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program payments and healthy crop insurance checks blessed many farmers with income. However, high inflationary input costs and declining commodity prices have taken a significant chunk out of profits this year.

All this volatility can leave farmers uncertain of where their targeted taxable income should be. In my practice, I generally aim for "break-even" income for farm C-corporations. Under the current corporate tax structure, this is the sweet spot between owing no corporate income tax and creating unnecessary losses. From my observation, it appears that farmers fall into two different camps this year: those with too little taxable income, and those with too much taxable income. Here are some tax-planning considerations to think about before the year is over.

### Too little taxable income

**Net Operating Losses (NOL).** While it may be enticing to report a loss to Uncle Sam, showing too little income does have its drawbacks. Since 2021, net operating losses are only available to offset up to 80% of taxable income in future years. For example, suppose you create a loss of \$100,000 this year, which is carried forward to next year. Assume your taxable income next year is \$100,000. You can only offset \$80,000 of next year's taxable income with the loss, leaving \$20,000 subject to income tax. The remaining \$20,000 of unused NOL is carried forward to future years.

**Capitalize fertilizer costs.** Another drawback of reporting a large loss in one year is that it pushes income into the following year, creating an income snowball effect. Why not smooth out taxable income from year to year and show profit at break-even? Farmers

have the option to capitalize their fertilizer costs, which means spreading out the cost of the fertilizer over its useful life (generally one to two years), rather than when paid. This can help increase income if you are in a loss situation. You and your agronomist should estimate the portion of fertilizer costs that benefit the following crop year, and those costs will be deducted in that tax year. Note that all fertilizer costs incurred during the year are subject to the same treatment.

**Sell grain.** Many farmers aren't overly excited about selling grain right now due to low prices. I get it! If you need cash flow to pay expenses or your operating line, you might consider taking out a Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) loan on your crop and elect to report the loan proceeds as income in the year received. This allows the farmer to access cash without having to market the crop at today's low prices, while still increasing the current year's income. CCC commodity loan rates are currently around 6.75%, so it may make sense to pay off existing debt having higher interest rates with the CCC loan funds.

### Too much taxable income

**Defer crop insurance proceeds.** A special deferral provision allows farmers who meet the statute's requirements to include the insurance proceeds in gross income for the tax year following the destruction or damage. To qualify, the farmer must 1) report income on a cash basis

and 2) have a history of selling crops in a taxable year after the tax year in which they are harvested. The deferral election is "all or nothing" and applies only to yield loss. The portion of proceeds applicable to price loss cannot be deferred.

**Depreciation expense.** Depreciation expense is one of the most powerful tools in our tax-planning arsenal. Section 179 depreciation allows the flexibility to use any amount of depreciation, subject to a cap, so that taxable income is dialed in to meet tax planning goals and reduce taxable income to break-even. Since a loss cannot be created with section 179, the

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unused portion carries forward to future years to offset taxable income, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$1.16 million for 2023. This is not subject to the 80% offset like the NOL is.

**Pay yourself.** For a mature C-corporation, it is generally better to keep the corporation "lean" in equity and build wealth outside of the entity. Farm C-corporations are currently taxed at a flat 21%, whereas personal income tax brackets begin at 10%. Approximately \$340,000 of income can be taxed at personal tax rates before we begin to exceed the corporate tax rate. Commodity wages and land/equipment rents paid to the farmer can be used to transfer income out of a C-corporation to fill up lower personal income tax brackets, typically at a 10-12% tax rate.

A farm tax professional can be invaluable in tax planning. As we close out 2023, farmers should consider working with a tax professional to find their taxable income "sweet spot." ■

**Larissa Zeiler** is a CPA with Leffel, Otis & Warwick, P.S. and works out of the firm's Odessa, WA office. She was raised on an Eastern Washington wheat farm and enjoys advising farm families and ag businesses. For information, visit [low.cpa](http://low.cpa).

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# Your wheat life...

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of all children.



(Above) Breckyn Bye (4) playing in daddy's wheat in Pomeroy. Photo by Tai Bye. (Below) Westyn and Tyler Frederick of O2 Farms in Ritzville! This is Westyn's first harvest experience with his dad, Tyler. Photo by Nicole Frederick.



*steep country to plow*

*too rough to farm  
but we do*

In about 1946, Hal Oliver caught these photos of his father, Jim Oliver, on the family's Prescott farm. Photos submitted by Chris Oliver (Hal's son).







Matthew and Abby (2) Talbott during Harvest 2023 at Balch Road in Dayton. Photo by Adalirys Talbott.



Daphne Gibbons (1), being held by cousin, Everett Howard (7), Heath Gibbons (3), and Lydia Howard (5) are waiting for papa (Roger Gibbons) to come back around so they can scoop a few buckets of dry peas in Columbia County. Photo by Cindy Gibbons.



Harvest at Null Farms/Lazy 8 Ranch located between Harrington and Odessa. Photo by Katie Null.



# HAPPENINGS

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

## DECEMBER 2023

**1-2 HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS.** Santa, parade, shopping. Waitsburg, Wash. [waitsburgcommercialclub.org/events](http://waitsburgcommercialclub.org/events)

**1-24 CHRISTMASTOWN.** Choirs, carolers, gingerbread houses, Santa, crafts. [leavenworth.org/christmastown](http://leavenworth.org/christmastown)

**7 AGFORESTRY NETWORKING RECEPTION.** Mingle with AgForestry Leadership Program Class 44 at Reining Winery in Walla Walla, Wash. AgForestry alums, friends and prospects invited! [agforestry.org](http://agforestry.org)

**12 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/](http://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](http://wawg.org)

**9-10 2024 CROPPING SYSTEMS CONFERENCE.** Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick, Wash. Registration and more info at [directseed.org](http://directseed.org)

**12-21 LAKE CHELAN WINTERFEST.** An event for the whole family! Ice sculptures, fireworks, ice slide, and more! Chelan, Wash. [lakechelan.com/winterfest/](http://lakechelan.com/winterfest/)

**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.

**13. WINTERFEST.** Experience the fun and excitement of winter games in Deer Park! A community celebration for the whole family. Deer Park, Wash. [facebook.com/DPWAKiwanis/?fref=tag](https://facebook.com/DPWAKiwanis/?fref=tag)

**17-18 2023 NORTHWEST HAY EXPO.** Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, Wash. For more information visit [wa-hay.org/northwest-hay-expo.html](http://wa-hay.org/northwest-hay-expo.html)

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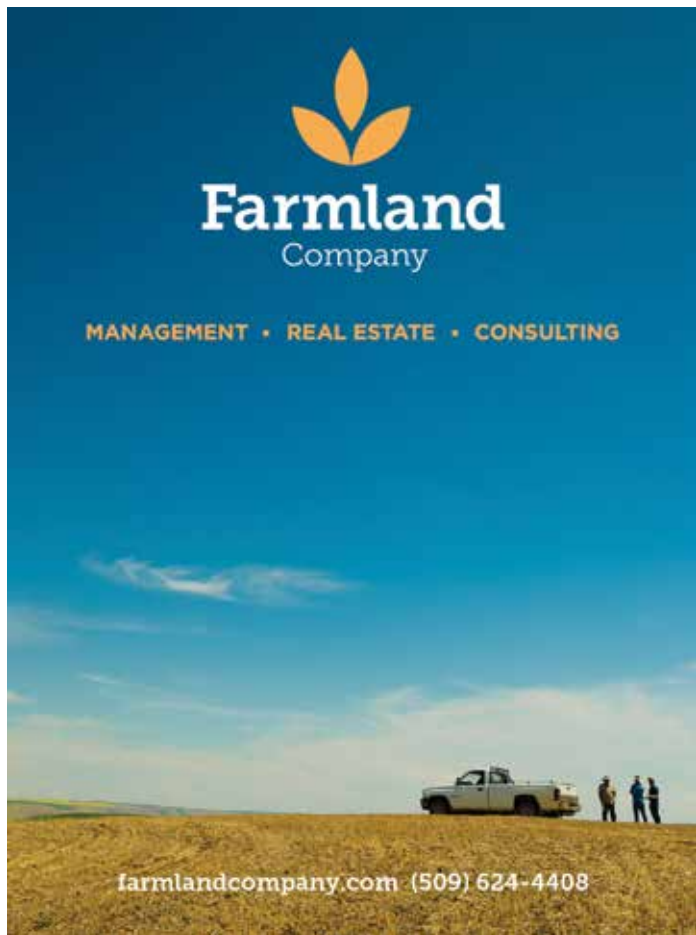


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