

WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

JULY | 2024

2024 Wheat College recap

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Today's farm equipment poses challenges
to county infrastructure

Farmers reflect on regulatory burden

The genetics of drought tolerance in wheat

Wheat production in acid soils

Market success down south

The Flour Power Blues

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President's Perspective



A conservation there to here

By Anthony Smith

President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

Benton County, where I farm, has changed dramatically in the past few decades, with no-till and minimal-till farming techniques replacing conventional tillage on many dryland wheat farms. The days of big dust storms caused by soil blowing off fields, thankfully, are past.

But how did we get here? It's mostly thanks to conservation programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). All these programs have helped us develop ways to control our wind erosion by offering incentives that help farmers purchase expensive no-till equipment and working with growers to implement new conservation practices. It can get complicated, though, as all of these programs have enrollment requirements and rules that have to be followed throughout the life of the contract. One of the main things I appreciate with these programs are that they are voluntary. Farmers get to decide if they want to participate in them rather than having these practices mandated. Not every practice is practical in every situation, so letting the farmer choose what best fits their operation is much better, as opposed to, say, officials in Olympia mandating 200 foot buffers along all rivers and streams.

Conservation programs are complicated, and it seems they get more complicated with every farm bill. The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act and its focus on climate added millions of dollars of funding to the state's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office, and they have to get the funding out into farmers' hands as quickly as possible. The Washington Association of Wheat Growers is helping address those issues by hiring a new conservation coordinator, Andrea Cox. This is a joint position with Washington state's NRCS, and Andrea will be focusing on NRCS programs specifically as they relate to Washington wheat growers. I anticipate that the new farm bill — which will hopefully be passed in the near future — will bring more opportunities (and probably more confusing requirements) for growers to enroll in conservation programs.

Andrea came to our Benton County wheat growers' meeting in early June that Markus Smith, our county president, put together. She introduced herself and asked growers what kinds of questions they had about NRCS programs. We are very excited to have Andrea join the team, and if you have NRCS or conservation-related questions, please contact Andrea at andrea@wawg.org.

I also want to thank Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director, for all the hard work she has done to make this new conservation coordinator position happen. She worked with Roylene Comes At Night, the NRCS state conservationist, and Roylene's staff for weeks, ironing out details. This position is definitely a win for the wheat farmers.

Speaking of Michelle, she traveled to the Midwest at the end of June with a group of Columbia-Snake River System stakeholders to see firsthand the infrastructure that exists on the Mississippi River. Building relationships with stakeholders on other river systems is important as we fight to protect our own river system, and I'm looking forward to her report (watch for it in the August issue of *Wheat Life*) and the opportunities for collaboration this trip presents. ■

Cover photo: Soil compaction and testing was one of the rotations at the 2024 Wheat College. See page 32. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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WAWG's current top priorities are:

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

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Growers take stock before harvest break

At the last Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) state board meeting before the harvest break, growers heard from two legislators seeking office and got details on a summer full to bursting with advocacy efforts.

This is the last board meeting until September, as growers will shortly be busy with harvest. Counties reported overall good stands of winter and spring wheat, thanks to the cool weather and timely rains.

Washington State Sen. Kevin Van De Wege (D-Lake Sutherland), who is running for Commissioner of Public Lands, and Rep. Jacquelin Maycumber (R-Republic), who is running to fill Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers' congressional seat, both addressed the board, explaining why they were seeking election and why they felt they were the best person for the job.

Van De Wege, the former chair of the state's Senate Ag

Committee, said he's concerned about the growth in fires and believes the best way to combat them is to continue to do sustainable harvesting on state lands, prescribed burning, and updating the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) firefighting aircraft. DNR, which is the state's largest landowner, leases its lands under a "highest and best use" mandate, which means the agency generally must collect the highest rent possible. Some growers are seeing their DNR leases not being renewed, but instead, the land is being rented for alternative energy projects, such as wind and solar. Van De Wege said he wants to keep as much DNR land in ag production as the department currently has and believes energy production should be primarily on nonproductive ag land.

Maycumber, a farmer from Republic, has been elected as the House Republican Caucus Floor leader three times. She told growers that as a farmer, she understands the responsibility to keep one's family farm growing and sustainable, and what it's like to struggle against onerous regulations. She promised growers she'll fight for them in D.C. if elected.

In state legislation, wheat lobbyist Mark Streuli said the Washington State Department of Licensing is still working on a program to refund farmers who paid cap-and-trade fees when purchasing fuel. The Legislature set aside \$30 million, but Streuli anticipates that money will go quickly and does not equal what is actually owed. In addition, there is some question whether or not the refunds will be considered taxable income. The program is supposed to go live in mid-September, and Streuli encouraged growers to apply online as quickly as they can.

In other state news, a preliminary report from the consultants studying the riparian buffer issue recommends using eminent domain to obtain farmland if voluntary efforts to establish riparian buffers fall short. Streuli, who participated in the riparian buffer workgroup, said there isn't consensus among participants, and agriculture does support voluntary efforts. The final report is expected to be released later this summer.

In national legislation, WAWG leaders just returned from Washington, D.C., after participating in the annual Taste of Washington reception, where the state's agricultural bounty is celebrated, and took part in a farm bill fly-in with the National Association of Wheat Growers. ►



LIND FIELD DAY. Anthony Smith, president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), updated growers on association activities and priorities during the noon program at Lind Field Day last month.

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See pages 22 and 24 for more on these two events.

Casey Chumrau, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), said commissioners approved their 2024-25 budget at the last WGC board meeting. Assessments are down this year, but because the Commission had some unspent money and reduced the budget slightly, they were able to avoid touching reserves.

The 2023-24 marketing year just ended, and U.S. wheat exports for all classes totaled 18.6 million metric tons, approximately the same as the previous marketing year. Most wheat classes were down, but soft red winter wheat was up significantly, thanks to purchases from China.

WAWG Executive Director Michelle Hennings reported on her activities since the last board meeting, most of which focused on transportation and the lower Snake River dams (LSRD). She has been contacted by the consultants who are doing the LSRD transportation and irrigation study for the state. She is concerned that the study's focus is too narrow and isn't taking into account the impact removing the dams might have socially and economically on the region's communities.

Hennings also recently took part in a regional transportation summit panel in Portland concerning the I-5 bridge replacement. She said she talked about what is moving under the bridge, rather than what moves on it.

"It was good to be in front of people who see the bridge but may not understand how it's important in other ways," she explained.

WAWG has two big tours planned for the summer, both focused on the LSRD, but in different ways. The first is a Columbia-Snake River System stakeholders tour of infrastructure on the Mississippi River. Organized by Hennings, the tour is an opportunity to collaborate with users on other river systems, learn about the challenges they face, and explore ways to bring attention to these vital transportation corridors.

"This is a big deal," she told the board. "We want to make a statement as 'U.S. river users.'"

The other tour is a congressional staffer tour of the LSRD planned for mid-August. Last year's tour was very successful, and Hennings said there's a great deal of interest in this year's outing.

Jon Wyss, Farm Service Agency (FSA) state executive director, zoomed into the meeting. He reminded growers of FSA's maximum buffer size of 180 feet. Anything beyond that could make them ineligible for FSA programs. Once again, Douglas County has hit their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) cap, so there will be no general or continuous sign-up this year for growers in that county. In staffing

news, the state office is fully staffed and there are only two openings in the state at the county level. No counties are without a county executive director.

The June meeting included a review of the proposed 2024-25 WAWG budget, which was passed by the board. The next WAWG state board meeting is tentatively scheduled for Sept. 17. ■

Columbia County grower joins WAWG state board

Columbia County growers have appointed **Charlie Mead** as their new Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) state board representative.

Mead is the fourth generation on his family's dryland wheat farm near Starbuck, Wash., where they also grow some hay. He is co-managing partner of the farm alongside his father, and his wife, Whitney, is learning the farm's bookkeeping. They have two children, ages 11 and 9. At the urging of a fellow grower, Mead took part in WAWG's 15x40 program, which pays for 15 growers under 40 years old to attend the annual convention, and said that experience spurred him to get involved in WAWG.



"It really lit a fire under me. I'm a huge advocate for the 15x40 program," he said. "The whole experience solidified the desire and need to be involved in advocating for the wheat industry. I saw (becoming a board representative) as a perfect method of not only involvement but spreading a positive message of agriculture."

According to Mead, some of the issues growers in Columbia County are facing include finding qualified help, wildly increasing input costs and the low wheat price, and dealing with the state's ag overtime law. Like many Columbia County farmers, the Meads take advantage of their close proximity to the lower Snake River, trucking a large portion of their crop to elevators along the waterway, so preserving the lower Snake River dams is another major priority. Mead said he hopes to use his involvement with WAWG to positively influence the public's view of agriculture.

"Farmers need to continue to inform the public, get rid of misinformation, and paint a positive, influential picture of agriculture," he said. "We've been sitting back and thinking people are all right with what we are doing." ■



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Asotin County wheat growers award scholarship

Annie Petty, the daughter of Bruce and Jenny Petty, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship from the Asotin County wheat growers.

Petty graduated from Asotin High School where she was active in FFA, band, and sports,

including cross country and track and field. She is enrolled at Lewis Clark State College in Lewiston, Idaho,

where she plans to take basic classes before attending Washington State University (WSU) and becoming a wheat breeder. She is very interested in biology and enjoys gardening.

"I remember going to some WSU test plots with my dad, looking at the wheat and not knowing what it was but knowing something was happening," she explained. One of the things Petty is interested in is researching gluten and finding ways to grow wheat that is better tolerated by consumers with gluten sensitivities.

Petty grew up on her family's wheat farm above Asotin and is heavily involved during harvest. She has three younger sisters. She said she was shocked when she found out she had been awarded the scholarship.

"Thank you to the wheat growers. It will definitely help me with school," she said. ■



NRCS MEETING. Andrea Cox (right), Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) conservation coordinator, and WAWG Past President Nicole Berg (second from right) joined Roylene Comes At Night (left), state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Robert Bonnie, U.S. Department of Agriculture undersecretary for farm production and conservation, in the Tri-Cities in early June, along with other stakeholders, to talk about government programs, NRCS and Farm Service Agency staffing, and conservation issues facing growers.

Counties eligible for emergency credit

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

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, the primary Idaho counties of Benewah and Kootenai suffered from a drought intensity value during the growing season of 1) D2 Drought-Severe for eight or more consecutive weeks or 2) D3 Drought-Extreme or D4 Drought-Exceptional. Therefore, the contiguous counties also eligible in Washington are Spokane and Whitman counties. The application deadline is Feb. 3, 2025. ■

Producers reminded to file acreage reports

Agricultural producers should make an appointment with their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to complete crop acreage reports before the applicable deadline after planting is complete. July 15 is a major deadline for most crops, but acreage reporting deadlines vary by county and by crop.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch, its intended

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Counties hold summer meetings

June is the month when Washington wheat growers can view the latest results of breeding efforts at variety test plot tours. Many county wheat grower organizations take the opportunity to hold county meetings in conjunction with their local plot tour.



From top are Benton County, Adams County, Grant and Douglas counties, and Franklin County.

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use, and location. Producers can contact their FSA county office for acreage reporting deadlines that are specific to their county.

To file a crop acreage report, producers need to provide:

- Crop and crop type or variety.
- Intended crop use.
- Number of crop acres.
- Map with approximate crop boundaries.
- Planting date(s).
- Planting pattern, when applicable.
- Producer shares.
- Irrigation practice(s).
- Acreage prevented from planting, when applicable.
- Other required information.

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant but were unable to because of a natural disaster, including drought. Prevented planted acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and the Risk Management Agency.

FSA recently updated policy that applies to prevented planted acreage due to drought. To certify prevented planted acreage due to drought, all of the following must apply:

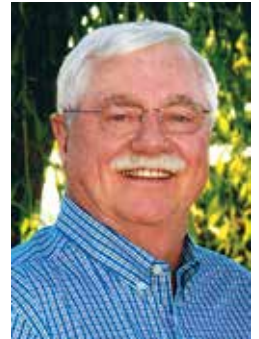
- The area that is prevented from being planted has insufficient soil moisture for seed germination on the final planting date for nonirrigated acreage.
- Prolonged precipitation deficiencies that meet the D3 or D4 drought intensity level as determined by the U.S. Drought Monitor.
- Verifiable information must be collected from sources whose business or purpose is recording weather conditions as determined by FSA.

For questions, producers should call their FSA county office. To find their FSA county office, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator. ■

WAWG remembers past president Stephen Naught

Stephen Paul Naught went to be with his Lord on May 23, 2024, when he died unexpectedly and peacefully in his Bickleton, Wash., home.

Stephen was born June 16, 1945, in Yakima, Wash., to Harold and Vernice Naught. He was raised attending school in Bickleton and graduated in 1963. It was while he was in junior high school that he attended Camp Ghormley and accepted Jesus as Savior, which influenced him for the rest of his life. Following high school graduation, he attended Yakima Valley College (YVC). He then attended and received his bachelor's degree from Washington State University (WSU). During his first year at YVC in 1963, he met and began dating Judy Lanzendorfer of Sunnyside, Wash. They married in January 1966 while they were both students at WSU. He was a member of the Army ROTC while at WSU, so when he graduated in February 1968, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Their daughter, Kim, was born that February, and in May 1968, he, his wife, and daughter traveled to Augusta, Ga., where he reported for six weeks of signal officer training. Following that training, he was sent to Ft. Sill, Okla., for nine weeks of additional training. At its conclusion, he was sent to Ft. Bragg, N.C., for his first duty station.



In May of 1969, he received orders for Vietnam as the signal officer for an infantry battalion. He, Judy, and Kim traveled back to Sunnyside where Judy and Kim lived while he was in Vietnam. He was shot while in combat in September 1969, earning him a Purple Heart and Bronze Star for valor. He was evacuated to a hospital in Japan to recover. He was sent back to the states in October 1969 and was assigned to Fort Lewis where the family lived until May 1970 when he was promoted to captain. He was then assigned as the garrison commander of the Yakima Firing Center. The family settled in Yakima. Son, Kevin, was born and completed the family in October 1970.

In 1974, Stephen joined his father and brother on the farm in Bickleton, and they formed Naught Ranches. The young family moved to the farm that year, and Stephen would live on his farm until his death. Stephen raised wheat, feed barley, and cattle until his retirement in 2023. Stephen was president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers in 1980 and made many trips to

Washington, D.C., and a trip to Geneva, Switzerland, lobbying for the wheat industry. In 1989, he was elected president of the National Barley Growers Association and continued lobbying for the nation's barley industry. He was a lifelong member of the Bickleton Evangelical Presbyterian Church, serving several terms as an elder and teaching Sunday School. He was a member of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers. He was a discussion leader in Yakima's Bible Study Fellowship for many years. He was a lifetime member of the lower valley Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Stephen was a loyal friend, a passionate farmer, and a patriot, but his favorite cause was his family. He and Judy were true soulmates, and his children, grandchildren, and great-grandson were his world. He was very fond of his friends, relatives, and community. He mentored many young farmers and Christians. He was generous to a fault and fun-loving.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Judy; their daughter, Kim, and her husband, David, and their children (Katelynn Clinton, Peter and wife, Cigne Clinton, and great-grandson, Miller Clinton); and their son, Kevin Naught, and wife, Kathy, and their children (Keith, Charlie, and Ian Naught). He was preceded in death by his parents and his brother, Terry, as well as his beloved dog, Buddy. He was truly a gift from the Lord.

A Celebration of Life Service was held in June at the Bickleton Evangelical Church in Bickleton with military honors. Family inurnment will be in the Bickleton I.O.O.F. Cemetery. Those desiring to contribute memorials are asked to do so to the Alder Creek Pioneer Association or the Bickleton Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Those wishing to sign Stephen's online memorial book may do so at the website, funeralhomesmith.com. ■

Edward Jones

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Happy Independence Day!

Wishing you a celebratory day off with your loved ones.



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Year in Review 2023/24

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

JULY 2023

Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) **testifies in a U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources field hearing** regarding the importance of the Columbia-Snake River System. The hearing is held in Richland.

Washington, D.C., got a taste of Washington agriculture when industry stakeholders, including WAWG, gathered in the nation's capital to **celebrate the state's ag industry** at the 4th annual Taste of Washington event.

WAWG debuts a **new and improved logo** for the association.

Harvest 2023 kicks off a few weeks earlier than average in Eastern Washington. In most places, yield is average or below average, with average quality.

The U.S. Grains Council recognizes **Mary Palmer Sullivan**, vice president of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), for her 35 years of service to the barley industry.

AUGUST 2023

The Washington wheat industry joins a coalition of American ag producers, mariners and longshoremen, and state and federal officials in Longview, Wash., to showcase the departure of a **U.S. Food for Peace shipment of soft white wheat** from the Port of Longview.

Hennings **pens an op-ed** for the *Spokesman-Review* touting the importance of the lower Snake River dams to the region's economy, clean energy generation, and transportation network.

Federal legislative staffers join WAWG and other agricultural stakeholders on an **educational tour of Lower Granite Dam and the Port of Lewiston**. Staffers learn about research and fish passage infrastructure at the dam, power generation, and the businesses that rely on the river system.

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsak joins Washington lawmakers and Washington State University (WSU) leaders for the **groundbreaking of the new Plant Sciences Building** on the WSU Pullman campus.

SEPTEMBER 2023

WAWG leaders and staff take part in a **farm bill fly-in** sponsored by the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG). The group meets with most of the state's federal

delegation and discuss the dams, conservation, and farm safety net programs.

The **Biden administration releases a memorandum** to begin the process of seeking solutions between the parties involved in the fight over the lower Snake River dams. Overall, the memorandum acknowledges the dams must meet their commitments for reliable, carbon-free electricity, for agriculture, and for salmon; it does not explicitly call for breaching of the dams.

The Washington State Department of **Ecology's Fuel Exemptions Workgroup** wraps up four months of work. Consensus among farm groups is the workgroup didn't fully resolve all the issues for all of the ag producers who should be exempt under the Climate Commitment Act.

The **2018 Farm Bill expires**. Congress passes a one-year exemption in November.

The Palouse River and Coulee City **short-line rail system gets a major shot in the funding arm** when the Federal Railroad Administration announces it will receive \$72.8 million through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements program.

OCTOBER 2023

Hennings attends the **Council of State Governments West Legislative Council on River Governance** in Whitefish, Mont., where she hears an update on the Columbia River Treaty from U.S. negotiator Jill Smail and Stephen Glock, a negotiator from the Canadian team.

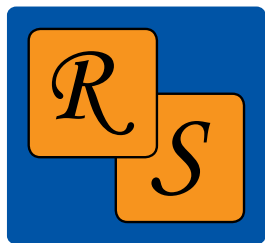
NOVEMBER 2023

WAWG leaders and staff travel to the **NAWG fall board meeting** in Cincinnati, where they take part in committee meetings and consider resolutions to help guide the national organization. Research, trade, supply chain issues, and the wheat industry's next steps for the farm bill are all discussed.

The **2023 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention** takes place at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Producers and industry stakeholders hear industry updates, listen to nationally known keynote speakers, and network. Howard McDonald is recognized as WAWG member of the year, while Yakima/Klickitat County is recognized as WAWG county of the year.

Anthony Smith, a grower from Benton County, takes over as WAWG president. He replaces outgoing president, Andy Juris from Klickitat County. WAWG welcomes Spokane County grower Gil Crosby as the new secretary/treasurer. Jeff Malone, from Douglas County, takes on the vice president's role.

Samantha Holling of Fairfield and Izabella Myers of Latah are selected as the 2024 Washington Wheat



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DECEMBER 2023

WAWG leaders give interviews and provide statements to various news outlets in response to a **draft agreement between the U.S. government and plaintiffs to the litigation over the lower Snake River dams**. In return for a 5-year stay of litigation, the federal government plans to invest more than \$1 billion in fish restoration efforts in the Columbia River Basin and commits to supporting the development of Tribally sponsored clean energy production projects that could eventually replace the energy generated by the dams. However, the government acknowledges that the power to breach the dams can only come through Congress.

Jerry Sheffels, WAWG president in 1973-74, passes away.

JANUARY 2024

The **2024 Washington State Legislative Session begins**.

On growers' priority list is a solution to ensuring that all agriculture fuel used on the farm and for transporting agricultural products are exempt from carbon surcharges and a seasonal exemption for agricultural overtime pay. Overshadowing the session are six initiatives that have qualified for the ballot. Legislators keep their cards close as to what they will do with the initiatives.

Freezing temperatures greet wheat growers as they arrive in Western Washington for the annual **Olympia Days** trip. The group meets with more than 50 legislators and agency representatives on both sides of the aisle. In order to make a "sweet impression," growers hand out cookies and coffee in the Capitol Building.

The "meeting season" continues as WAWG leaders head to Washington, D.C., to take part in **NAWG's winter board meeting**. Growers spend a day meeting with legislators on the Hill. Federal priorities include preserving the lower Snake River dams, protecting crop insurance, marketing development funding, and maintaining access to pesticides. The national wheat groups recognizes Pacific Northwest (PNW) Reps. Dan Newhouse and Cathy McMorris Rodgers with Wheat Advocate Awards for their support of the wheat industry.

Hennings appears in a **live Fox News interview** to talk about the importance of the lower Snake River dams.

The first Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization (AMMO) session of 2024 kicks off.

Jordan Thayer, a financial advisor with Morgan Stanley Wealth Management, and Joe Cerrillo, a CPA with CliftonLarsonAllen, talk about financial planning, planning for retirement, and taxes.

The WAWG board welcomes several new members. **Laurie Roecks** becomes the Spokane County representative, and **Markus Smith** joins as the Benton County representative.

FEBRUARY 2024

WAWG takes part in the **2024 Spokane Ag Expo**.

Promotional items are given to visitors who spin the wheat trivia wheel. Levi Wernz of Fairfield, Wash., wins a drawing for a new iPad.

Hennings leads a **delegation of Columbia-Snake River System users to D.C.** to meet with congressional leaders. The group stresses the fact that the PNW dams aren't just a regional issue, but a national issue, as policies established for the dams could set a precedent for other river systems in the nation.

WAWG leaders head to Houston for **NAWG's annual conference**, which coincides with Commodity Classic.

The **2024 AMMO schedule continues** with sessions on market conditions, weed management, and updates from U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service releases the **2022 Census of Agriculture**, which shows that the number of farms in Washington and the amount of land in those farms continues to decline. The average age of the Washington farmer continues to increase from 58.1 in 2017 to 59.3 in 2022. Washington's Grant County is No. 10 in total value of agricultural production in the nation.

MARCH 2024

The **2024 winter AMMO schedule wraps up** with a special workshop for landlords and a session with Jolene Brown, noted ag speaker, who talks about running a successful family business.

The **2024 Washington State Legislative Session adjourns** on time. While growers escaped the session relatively unscathed, they were disappointed by the failure of the seasonal ag overtime exemption to pass out of committee. On the bright side, the operating budget includes \$30 million in one-time payments to farmers and haulers who bought fuel for ag purposes but had to pay a surcharge due to carbon legislation. Details of the rebates were yet to be worked out. In other legislative news, the Legislature passes three of the initiatives (prohibiting state or local personal income taxes, upholding parental rights to review educational materials, and reinstates vehicular pursuits if there is reasonable suspicion to believe the person has violated the law) and lets the other three be decided by voters during the November general election (repealing the Climate Commit Act, allowing employees to opt out of the state long-term care program/payroll tax, and repealing the capital gains tax). ►

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APRIL 2024

WAWG welcomes a new face in a new position. **Andrea Cox** comes onboard as the new conservation coordinator. She will help wheat growers learn more about Natural Resources Conservation Service programs and funding. Cox grew up on a dryland wheat and barley farm and now lives in Kennewick with her husband, Ben, and three children.

William (Billy/Bill Jr.) George Harder, Jr. passes away. He was a long-time officer of the Franklin County Wheat Association.

The Washington State Farm Service Agency office announces that a **statewide audit of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program** has turned up hundreds of erroneous contracts in 21 counties. On a call with impacted producers, State Executive Director Jon Wyss tells growers that no monies will have to be paid back, and they will receive their October 2024 payment. While some of the contracts will be terminated for noncompliance, most producers will have the choice of voluntarily terminating their contract without penalty or accepting contract modifications and continue in the program.

MAY 2024

WAWG joins with other PNW stakeholders in a **letter to the Washington State Department of Transportation** regarding a transportation study on how to replace barging capabilities on the lower Snake River. The group contends the study fails to address the requirements laid out in the budget proviso passed by the Washington State Legislature and requests clarification on how the scope of the study will be expanded to cover all the areas required by the Legislature.

Farm bill activity, which had been mostly nonexistent since an extension was passed in 2023, suddenly takes off when both the House and Senate ag committees release summaries of their proposed legislation. The House Ag Committee passes their version of the farm bill out of committee in late May.

Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) introduces **legislation to protect the lower Snake River dams from breaching**. The legislation comes as a response to the final package of actions and commitments in the Columbia River System Operations (CRSO) mediation that was released earlier this year.

The WAWG board welcomes **Charlie Mead** as the new Columbia County representative. Mead is the fourth generation on his family's dryland wheat farm near Dusty.

WAWG leaders attend a **conference on Marine Highway 84** that explores the economic importance of the highway as well as its role to contributing to the region's clean energy future.

WAWG volunteers share how Washington wheat is grown, transported, and exported with approximately 1,200 fourth and fifth graders at the **Spokane Farm Fair**.

Washington wheat industry volunteers share wheat and barley farming knowledge, trivia, and snacks with the public and participants in Spokane's annual **Bloomsday race** at the Bloomsday trade show.

WAWG welcomes another new face to the team. **Keri Gingrich** will be manning the front desk as the association's new administrative assistant. Gingrich grew up in Ritzville on a wheat and cattle farm, spent time stationed in Hawaii with the U.S. Air Force, and eventually returned to Ritzville. Before joining the WAWG team, she worked in accounting for Northern Quest Casino and as an administrative assistant for Connell Oil.

WAWG past president **Stephen Naught** (1980-81) passes away at his home in Bickleton, Wash.

JUNE 2024

More than 75 growers attend AMMO's **annual Wheat College** in Davenport, Wash., to hear Ray Archuleta speak about regenerative agriculture.

WAWG Past President Andy Juris participates in a panel at the **2024 Washington State Agricultural Viability Conference** in Kennewick, Wash., to examine how the regulatory burden affects Washington state farms.

Hennings and a group of **Columbia-Snake River System users travel to the Midwest** for a week to talk about Marine Highway 84 and to learn about the Mississippi River System.

Hennings, Crosby, and Marci Green travel to Washington, D.C., as part of a farm bill fly-in and to take part in the annual **Taste of Washington** event, which highlights all the agricultural goodies that the state produces.

Tis the season for **variety research plot tours and county summer meetings**. Growers in Adams, Benton, Douglas, Franklin, Grant, and Whitman counties take a little time before harvest hits to socialize, hear industry updates, and examine the latest variety breeding efforts from researchers. ■

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POLICY MATTERS

WAWG responds to White House dam actions

In mid-June, the Biden administration announced two actions as part of the administration's agreements, formalized earlier this year, with four tribes and the states of Washington and Oregon to advance the health of wild salmon populations. The Department of Interior released a report titled, "Historic and Ongoing Impacts of Federal Dams on the Columbia River Basin Tribes," and a new interagency working group — the Columbia River Task Force — has been formed.

While the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) acknowledges the critical importance of tribes in the Pacific Northwest (PNW), we also strongly believe that a thriving region can only be possible when the interests and well being of all are considered. We do not believe that the health of the salmon population and the interests

of other stakeholders need to be at odds.

"The PNW brings together some of our nation's best attributes — vibrant culture, strong rural economies, and cutting-edge technology. However, for our region to succeed, it is critically important that any decisions made, especially those regarding the Columbia River System, consider the impact on stakeholders from all communities including Washington's wheat farmers," said Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director.

As the Columbia River Task Force begins their work, WAWG appreciates the inclusion of representatives from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). We look forward to working with USDA to ensure our unique perspectives are adequately shared. ■

D.C. gets 'taste' of Washington ag

Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) staff and leaders spent a week in Washington, D.C., last month, celebrating Washington's agricultural industry and meeting with legislators on wheat industry priorities.

Wheat growers were in the nation's capital, along with other agricultural commodity groups, the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and representatives from Washington State University, to take part in the annual Taste of Washington reception that included ag products from around the Evergreen state. The wheat industry provided cookies decorated with WAWG's logo.

"While in D.C., we were able to take part in the National Association of Wheat Growers' (NAWG) farm bill fly-in and meet with our congressional delegation, U.S.



Leaders from many of Washington state's ag groups and representatives from the Washington State Department of Agriculture and Washington State University descended on Washington, D.C., last month to celebrate the state's ag industry at the annual Taste of Washington event.

Department of Agriculture agencies and the House and Senate ag committees," said Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director. "With so much happening on the farm bill, it was the perfect time to remind legislators of the wheat industry's priorities. It was an added bonus to be part of an ag group and be able to talk about the collaboration that takes place between different organizations within our state."

Some of the farm bill priorities that the group discussed included increasing the wheat reference price and the need to maintain crop insurance at current funding levels. The group also advocated for increased funding for research and market development activities and the critical role the lower Snake River dams play in the region's energy and transportation needs. ■



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While in D.C. for the Taste of Washington event, Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) leaders also participated in a farm bill fly-in for the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG). Along with NAWG staff, Marci Green (in white shirt), WAWG past president, met with Senate ag committee leaders, Sen. Debbie Stabenow (left photo, third from right) and Sen. John Boozman (right photo, third from right).

Senate Republicans release farm bill proposal

In mid-June, Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.), ranking member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, released a five-year farm bill proposal from Senate Republicans that doubles funding for trade programs and agricultural research and increases funding in the farm bill's conservation title. The proposal also makes investments in small business development, broadband expansion, and infrastructure programs and modernizes the farm safety net by updating risk management tools and increasing reference prices by an average of 15%.

"We believe that our framework reflects the chamber's shared commitments across all 12 titles while putting more farm in the farm bill, something we've been calling for since the onset," Boozman said in a press release. "Our farmers, ranchers, foresters, consumers, lenders, and other stakeholders helped us fashion a farm bill that meets their varying needs. It's a delicate balance ... but on the agriculture committee, we have shown we can come together to carry these heavy lifts across the finish line."

The proposal would shift funds from 2022's Inflation Reduction Act into the farm bill's conservation title to help pay for some of the increased funding. Democrats claim the proposal cuts millions in SNAP benefits.

"Unfortunately, the framework follows the same flawed approach as Chairman Thompson's proposal in the House and splits the broad farm bill coalition," said Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), chair of the Senate Ag Committee. "It makes significant cuts to the family safety net that millions of Americans rely on and walks away from the progress we have made to address the climate crisis. Similar to the House, the framework also appears to propose spend-

ing far in excess of available funding."

The current farm bill expired in 2023, but was extended through September 2024. Agricultural groups have been anxious to see movement towards a new farm bill.

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) President Keeff Felty commended Boozman for releasing his proposal and called it a step in the right direction.

"The farm bill is one of the most impactful pieces of legislation when it comes to protecting our food supply and food security, advancing conservation and environmental stewardship, and ensuring the farmers who produce our food can feed a growing population," Felty said in a statement. "We will continue to review this proposal and urge members in both chambers to get a bipartisan farm bill signed into law this year."

NAWG's farm bill priorities include:

- Protecting crop insurance that serves as the cornerstone of the farm safety net.
- Working to strengthen and enhance Title I and crop insurance to protect farmers better.
- Supporting financial and technical assistance through voluntary conservation cost-share programs for producers in all climates and wheat-producing regions.
- Encouraging additional investment in agricultural trade promotions and U.S. commodities as part of the farm bill's trade title.
- Supporting wheat research programs authorized under the farm bill and robust funding as part of the annual appropriations process. ■



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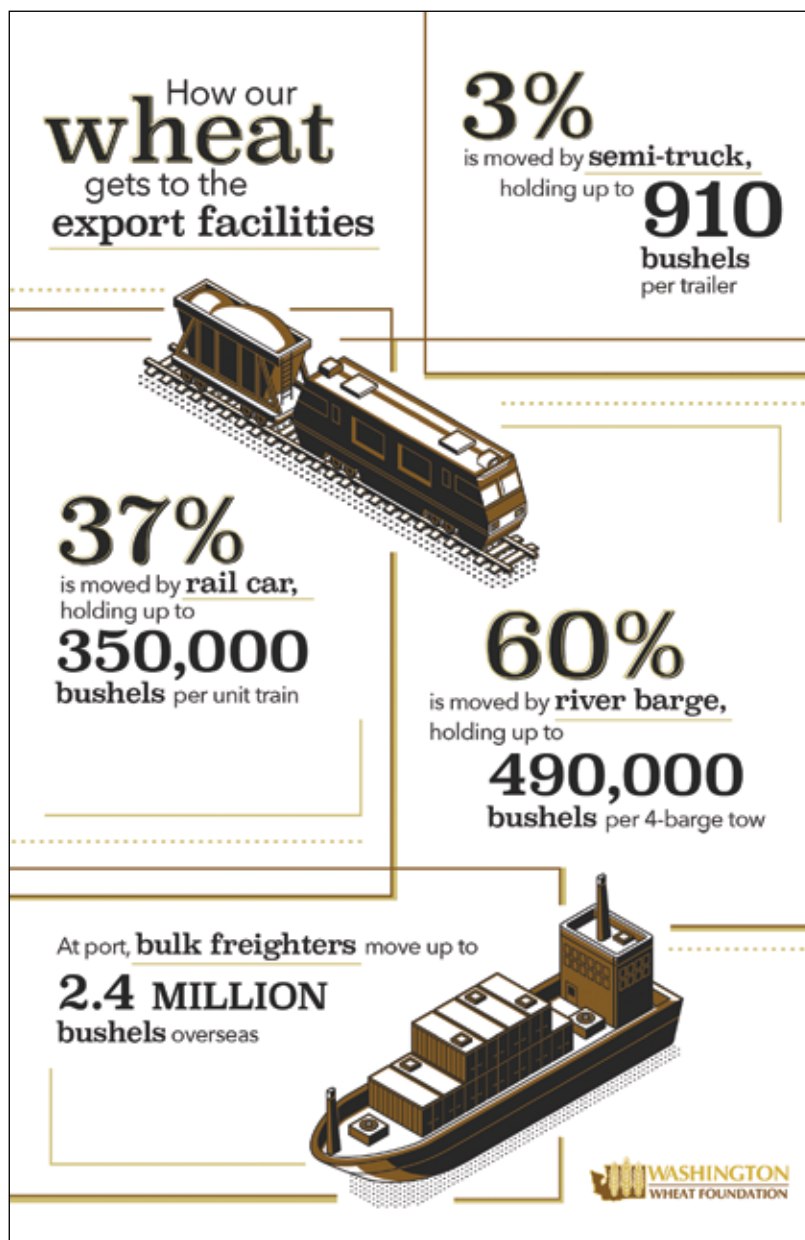
Harvest is coming, and it's a great time to look a little closer at how wheat gets from the field to consumers. Like every good adventure, the story is a diverse one. This diversity helps keep our farms sustainable and efficient. If any piece is removed, Washington wheat farming becomes less viable.

In Washington, all exported wheat begins its journey on a semitruck from the field. The trucks are filled with wheat in the field by either a grain cart or directly from a combine. Once off the field, the wheat is temporarily stored in large bins either on a farm or in a cooperative storage facility near the farm.

The wheat stays in the bins until it is sold and ready for shipment to the export ports along the Pacific Coast near cities such as Vancouver, Longview, or Portland. Only 3% is transported by semitruck to the ports. Roughly 37% of the crop is loaded at one of five, 110-car rail shuttles and makes its way to the coast by train on the railroad.

The majority of the wheat crop (60%) is loaded onto barges along the Snake or Columbia rivers and then pushed down the river to the port by a tug. And we aren't the only farmers using this mode of transportation. Each year, roughly 10% of all U.S. wheat is moved by barge on the Snake River alone. According to the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, barging is the safest method of moving cargo, with a lower number of injuries, fatalities, and spill rates than both rail and trucks. It is also the most fuel efficient and has the lowest emissions. In 2020 alone, it would have taken more than 42,000 rail cars or 162,000 semitrucks to move the cargo that was barged on the Snake River.

All modes of transport are vital to Washington's wheat farmers. Having a diverse



transportation system keeps them from being forced into a monopoly, or becoming captive shippers. Washington wheat's journey is complex, but it's vital to feed our neighbors down the road and across the world. ■

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Caution. Crossing ahead

FARMERS NEED TO CONSIDER WEIGHT LIMITS WHEN CROSSING COUNTY BRIDGES

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

With harvest right around the corner, local officials are asking growers to be aware of load limits on county bridges when they are moving equipment. Bridges without a load limit sign typically have a weight limit of 80,000 pounds or 40 tons.

“Just be careful what you drive your big equipment over. The last thing I ever want to do is have a conversation with a farmer who broke a bridge and inform him he needs pay for the bridge,” said Mark Storey, Whitman County Public Works director. “Farm equipment is getting so large and so heavy now that it cannot safely travel over bridges. Bridges, especially the short spans, are susceptible to those heavy loads, and it doesn’t matter whether it’s a low ground pressure piece of equipment or not.”

In particular, Storey points to equipment that is really meant to stay in the field and is not a legal, on-the-road vehicle, such as a bank-out wagon or a combine; both carry a lot of weight on short wheelbases. Instead of older equipment that spread 50,000 pounds over 50 feet, newer equipment can easily weigh 70,000 to 80,000 pounds spread over 20 or 30 feet. Shorter span bridges were not made to carry all of that weight at once.

Today’s combines present another issue besides just weight and how it is distributed; they are also wider, which puts more pressure on the outside of a bridge where there is often less reinforcement, especially on wooden bridges. A few years ago near Oakesdale, Wash., a short span wooden bridge collapsed as

a combine with header went over it. Storey estimated that the single front axle had several thousand pounds more on it than a regular axle on a fully loaded semitruck did.

“When you put the header on the front of a combine, you are sort of doing a cantilever, and you are putting more load on the front tires and taking load off the back tires at the same time as your total weight goes up,” Storey said.

There are approximately 300 bridges (and structures treated like bridges) in Whitman County. Storey estimated that the average age of the county’s bridges is 40 years. The issue is much bigger than just Whitman County. Other Washington counties and counties across the nation are also seeing agricultural equipment testing bridge load limits. Scott Yaeger, an engineer for Adams County, has the same warning for growers in his area.

“Older structures were not designed to handle more than a single axle wheat truck with a legal loading of 28,000 pounds,” he said. “These structures are capable of handling a semitruck and trailer unit as these units usually allow for the spacing between axle sets to typically be 22 feet or more, and the loading of those axle sets doesn’t exceed 23,000 pounds legally.”

Yaeger also asked farmers to be aware of the width of their equipment to avoid damaging a bridge’s safety rail system.

Adams County has approximately 287 bridges and structures treated like bridges, such as large culverts. In both counties, bridges are inspected every other year. Funding for county bridge replacement typically comes from the federal government; tight funding means there isn’t enough money available to replace all of a county’s aging bridges. However, replacing a wooden bridge with a concrete or steel structure doesn’t resolve the issue, as federal money



An example of an older, wooden bridge still in use in Adams County. Photo courtesy of the Adams County Public Works Department.



Older, shorter-span bridges weren't built for today's modern farming equipment, which is becoming heavier and wider. County officials are warning farmers to take precautions before moving farm equipment across county structures, such as emptying tanks, removing headers, or avoiding structures whenever possible. Even newer bridges are susceptible to failure if load limits are exceeded. Photo courtesy of the Whitman County Public Works Department.

comes with regulations that require bridges to be built for trucks, not farm implements. Newer bridges are built with the same weight limit of 80,000 pounds or 40 tons.

"The very first thing I would do (when a bridge is damaged during use) is look at what they drove over it. I am compelled to look at how the bridge broke," Storey said. "If the bridge broke because of some lack of maintenance, it wouldn't be the farmer's issue. If some vehicle like a combine or bank-out wagon exceeds those maximum axle loads, then it becomes the responsibility of the person that broke the bridge."

Storey said it could cost more than \$150,000 to replace a 25-foot wooden bridge.

Bridges without posted load limits should be safe up to 80,000 pounds. Bridges with lower limits will have signage posted. Several years ago, counties were required to do bridge assessments for heavy single trucks that have four to seven axles. Whitman County has posted signs (SU4

through SU7) on approximately 110 bridges that may be susceptible to heavy farm equipment.

"If you see that posting, you should get a little nervous about what you are putting on the bridge, because that posting means that the bridge is susceptible to heavy, concentrated loads. That's the kind of sign you need to watch for. If you see that, then be careful," Storey explained.

Both Storey and Yaeger said the best thing farmers can do to prevent damaging or collapsing a bridge is to avoid the structures all together, even if that means taking a longer route from field to field. If avoiding a bridge isn't possible, farmers should empty bins and storage tanks and remove headers before driving over the bridge.

"Farmers need to know the weight and length of their tractors and implements along with the width of their implements and predrive their transport route to identify any roadway or structure restrictions," Yaeger said. "To reduce the potential of overloading a structure, I would sug-


gest transporting any tractors weighing more than the old single axle wheat truck of 28,000 pounds on a trailer that will disperse the weight to a larger area, which will help with the concentrated loading.”

Growers with questions should contact their county public works office. However, Storey warned that there is no easy way to calculate exactly how much load a bridge can take before it is damaged or collapses.

“I’m happy to visit with any farmer on the phone. What I can’t do is have a farmer call me up on harvest day and say, ‘I’m sitting at the bridge, and I’ve got a big old honking tractor I want to cross the bridge with. Can I?’” he said. “I can give them guidance, but I don’t have exact answers, and it might take days to figure out their exact tractor weight and what it might do to a bridge. We are trying to keep people down to the lightest loads they can on the bridges.” ■



(Above) Bridges that have load limits are usually posted. Photo courtesy of the Whitman County Public Works Department. (Left) Today’s farm equipment is often wider than older bridges, so caution is needed to avoid damaging safety rail structures. Photo courtesy of the Adams County Public Works Department.



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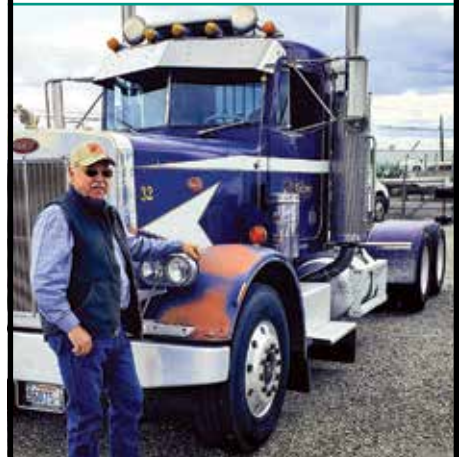
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Regenerating ag

WHEAT COLLEGE SPEAKER SUGGESTS MIMICKING NATURE IS KEY TO INPUT FREEDOM

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

At the 2024 Wheat College, Ray Archuleta had a message for growers that was both hopeful and a warning.

“Agriculture can heal the planet by itself without changing anything else. I believe agriculture is the answer for the future,” he said. “Regenerative agriculture is not for everyone. I’m going to be brutally honest. Regenerative agriculture is for people that want freedom, and freedom is not for free. It’s tough. You have to manage better. You have to think. What I do promise is regenerative ag will give you freedom from a lot of the inputs and make it more financially viable to bring others in (to a farming operation).”

More than 75 growers joined Archuleta last month in Davenport, Wash., at the Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization’s annual grower event. Archuleta is a certified professional soil scientist with the Soil Science Society of America and has over 30 years of experience working for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. He established the Soil Health Academy to teach biomimicry strategies and agroecology

principles for improving soil function. He currently lives in Missouri where he owns and operates a family farm.

When it comes to climate, Archuleta said governments around the world are focusing on the wrong problems, namely CO₂. One of the efforts to address CO₂ levels is to reduce agriculture and the number of cattle.

“I think the problem that is happening on a global scale is the soil is naked, hungry, thirsty, and running a fever,” he explained. “If we would mimic the way nature farms, we wouldn’t be having these discussions. Soil eats with plants. If you go six months with wheat, you are feeding the soil, but if you leave it bare, the soil is starving.”

He said that approximately 20 to 30% of the earth’s surface is bare because of too much tillage and too much pesticide use. “Death by tools,” he called it. Archuleta was quick to add that organic isn’t the answer as “... some of the most destroyed soils I have seen have been in organic farms.” Instead, Archuleta focuses on four things when he looks at farming operations:

- How much sun is the soil getting, because more photosynthesis means more diversity of life, and 50% of all biodiversity is in the soil. ▶



Last month, Ray Archuleta (right) brought his regenerative agriculture message to the 2024 Wheat College. Archuleta told growers that there is too much tillage and too much pesticide use. He touted the use of cover crops as a way to feed the soil and suggested animals are an important part of regenerative ag.

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“You need to bring the pieces together to understand the whole. Any time there is a problem in the field, I back off and look at how things are connected. Don’t separate things into pieces,” he explained.

Archuleta acknowledged that farming in a way that mimics nature challenges the current model of farming. He recommended finding like-minded growers and working together and doing one’s own test plots and research. He also recommended the Haney soil test, which uses unique soil extracts in the lab to determine what quantity of soil nutrients are available to soil microbes.”

“Don’t try to do it alone. It’s too complex,” he said.

One of the key elements in Archuleta’s regenerative agriculture method is cover crops, which he said helps boost soil biology by increasing soil aggregates and helping water infiltration and microbes. However, they do need to be designed properly, or they can “suck up water.” Cover crops also help cash crops, like wheat, by leaving a path for the roots to follow, meaning the cash crop doesn’t have to expend as much energy. He pointed to research by Dr. Buz Kloot showing increased organic matter, phosphorus, and soil pH after three years of cover crops.

Regenerative agriculture usually also includes animals; animals replace a fallow system and provide an additional opportunity for growers to make money.

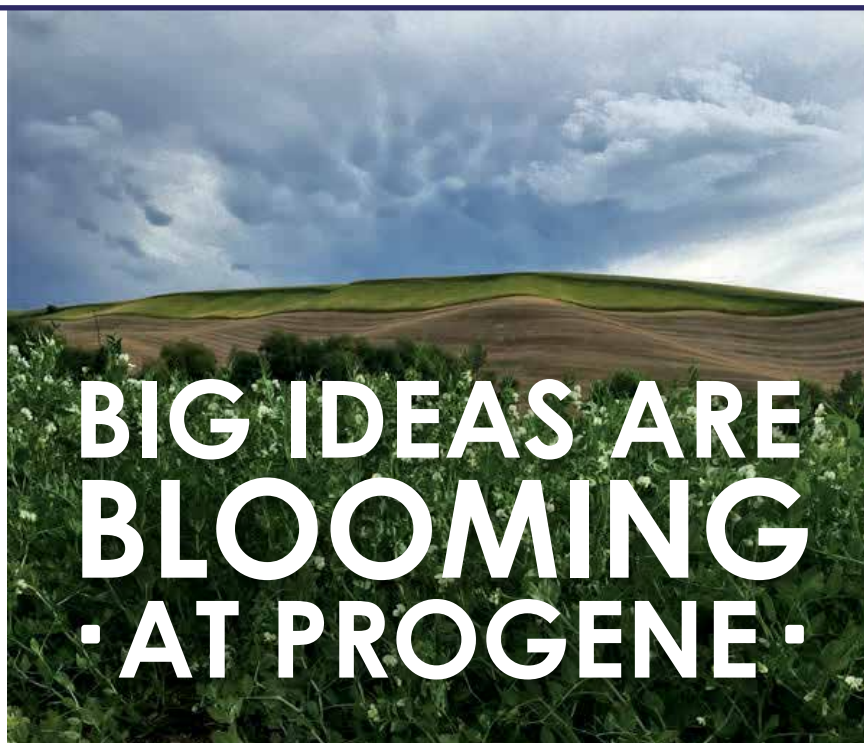
In response to a grower’s question about making cover crops work in an 8-to-10-inch rainfall zone, Archuleta said he couldn’t see it working without cattle, but growers need to look at their situation and figure out how to make it work.

Biofarming, or spraying microbes on crops, is another potential avenue for farmers to reduce their reliance on chemical inputs. Archuleta has been working with a group of Pacific Northwest farmers who have been experimenting with unorthodox farming methods.

“It requires farmers to be willing to change and be open minded, innovative, curious, and willing to ask questions, be adaptable, have a holistic view of their farm, and have the desire to change the status quo,” Archuleta said. “I think this is the next way to get away from chemicals and fertilizers.”

The challenges to regenerative agriculture include:

- Crop insurance, which isn’t designed to work outside of conventional farming methods.
- Social conditioning.
- In the current system, it is easy and efficient to grow commodities.
- Financing is geared towards conventional agriculture.



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- Most universities and agencies support the current system.
- You have to think and manage. It's not easy, and farmers will experience failures.

"You have to change the way you think. Mindset is everything," Archuleta said.

Archuleta recommended that farmers go to YouTube and search "regenerative ag" to learn about what other farmers are doing and the research happening in the field. Other resources can be found at soilhealthacademy.org.

Industry updates

Following Archuleta's presentation, growers heard industry updates from the Washington Association of Wheat Growers and Scot Hulbert, senior associate dean

for Washington State University's College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences.

After lunch, growers heard from Doug Finkelnburg, a University of Idaho Extension educator who talked about the Pacific Northwest Herbicide Resistance Initiative (PNWHRI), a tri-state effort to reduce yield loss and loss of crop value to weeds by addressing herbicide resistance.

The PNWHRI has received federal funding that supports three U.S. Department of Agriculture research units in Pullman, Wash., and Pendleton, Ore. Finkelnburg said the regional effort is trying to determine which weeds are resistant to which herbicides and building strategies to combat resistance. More information is at pnwhri.org.

The 2024 Wheat College wrapped up with rotations on roots, soil compaction, and soil pH. ■

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(Above) Doug Finkelburg, a University of Idaho Extension educator, talked about the Pacific Northwest Herbicide Resistance Initiative (PNWHRI), a tri-state effort to reduce yield loss and loss of crop value to weeds by addressing herbicide resistance. (Left) Ric Wesselman, a seed care specialist with Syngenta, talked about the importance of seed treatments for establishing healthy roots. (Below) Rachel Wieme, a Washington State University Extension specialist, demonstrated the effects of soil pH on plant growth.





Haly Neely (center, holding probe), assistant professor of soil science at Washington State University (WSU), and Natalie Sturm, WSU PhD candidate (third from left), talked about the impacts of soil compaction and testing with 2024 Wheat College attendees.

(Right) Andrea Cox, Washington Association of Wheat Growers' new conservation coordinator, introduced herself to growers at the 2024 Wheat College. Cox will be working with wheat growers to connect them to available Natural Resource Conservation Services programs and funding opportunities. (Below) Growers were able to view the root systems of plants that had different seed treatments applied to them during one of the Wheat College rotations.



**Thank you,
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Ag under pressure

VIABILITY PANEL LOOKS AT HOW REGULATORY BURDEN IMPACTS FARMS

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Last month, Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) Past President Andy Juris joined a roomful of agricultural stakeholders to examine how the regulatory burden affects Washington state farms.

Juris participated on a panel at the 2024 Washington State Agricultural Viability Conference in Kennewick, Wash. The Washington State Department of Agriculture and Washington State University's College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences hosted the conference, which was designed to bring together the state's farmers, ranchers, and agricultural businesses to discuss some of the challenges growers face within the agricultural industry, highlight successes, and discuss opportunities to invest in the future of agriculture.

Joining Juris on the panel were Matthew Cox, owner

of Green Bow Farm; Maggie Elliot, science and communications director for the Washington Hop Commission; and Karen Sheehan, owner of J&K Dairy. The panel was moderated by Jon Wyss, state executive director for the Farm Service Agency. Wyss opened the panel by telling the audience that farmers are the best environmentalists because they make their living from the land.

"Agriculture is the lifeblood of any economy. The farmers and producers who are in this room and on this panel and their associated members care for the 18 to 24 inches below the ground where everything starts: food, fiber, production, land, water. They take care of it and have been given the instruction to take care of it for future generations," Wyss said.

Wyss asked the panelists to introduce themselves and talk about some of the challenges they face.

MATTHEW COX. Green Bow Farm in Ellensburg



Andy Juris, past president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, participated in a panel at the 2024 Washington State Agricultural Viability Conference in Kennewick, Wash. The panel examined how the regulatory burden affects Washington's farms and farmers. The panel was moderated by Jon Wyss, state executive director for the Farm Service Agency. From left is Wyss; Matthew Cox, owner of Green Bow Farm in Ellensburg; Juris; Maggie Elliot, science and communications director for the Washington Hop Commission; and Karen Sheehan, owner of J&K Dairy in Sunnyside.

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sells meat and eggs directly to consumers through farmers markets, on-farm sales, and online. Cox said new labor laws are one of their biggest hurdles. "We need to produce to have a product to make money, and a lot of those regulations are biting into our ability to produce," he explained. The increasing cost of labor, higher wages, and paid worker time off are impacting his bottom line.

ANDY JURIS. Juris, a wheat farmer from Bickleton, said the biggest issue he sees on the horizon is Washington state's transportation system. Shipping on the Columbia-Snake River System is a huge competitive advantage for his farm, which deals with low rainfall, shallow soils, and a short growing season. Juris is able to truck his wheat a short drive away to Roosevelt, Wash., where grain can be shipped downriver more cheaply than using other forms of transportation. He explained that any regulations that interfere with that shipping advantage could be devastating to wheat farmers.

"Ag is the bedrock of the U.S. economy. Just about every sector touches it. You'd be hard pressed to find a regulation or environment or industry where there is something going on that doesn't affect all of us in this room," he said.

The expired farm bill is another hurdle Juris' farm faces. The farm bill uses data that is, on average, six years old, and costs have increased, especially inflation. Although the wheat industry isn't as labor intensive as other agricultural sectors, wages and availability of workers is still a hurdle.

MAGGIE ELLIOT. Washington commands nearly a third of the world's hop supply, and regulatory compliance in hops is a full-time job. Air and water quality, health and safety, and third-party certification are all challenges for the state's hop growers, Elliot said. "We export hops to 60 countries, and each country has its own phytosanitary regulations. We need to be able to harmonize every ingredient we apply to our product with 60 different sets of regulations." The Washington hop industry is also competing against countries that heavily subsidize their own hop growers.

KAREN SHEEHAN. J&K Dairy in Sunnyside has more than 4,000 cows and young stock. They also grow about 2,000 acres of crops. Their largest costs of production are feed and water, labor, regulatory issues, and inflation. "If you don't have water, you can't grow crops, and you can't treat manure," she said. Sheehan wants to see continued success with the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, which is a collaboration committed to addressing water, fishery, habitat, and climate variability challenges in the Yakima River Basin. She said the dairy collaborates with 15 other farmers to share water and is installing central pivots and



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The state's dairy industry has been dealing with labor and overtime rules longer than most. Besides a shrinking workforce, the labor pool looks very different from 10 to 20 years ago — skills are different and there are many more distractions, such as cell phones. J&K Dairy strives to be transparent to both state agencies and consumers. Sheehan acknowledged that being proactive to stay ahead of regulations costs more, and it's an extra cost that other states don't have.

"Every five years that bar gets raised, regardless of the science," she said. "All regulations have a cost for us in dairy. The threat of 3rd party lawsuits always haunts us.

We control what we can control. We've worked hard to build relationships with our neighbors, other farmers, state agencies, stakeholders, etc. We've opened the farm up for tours. We tell our story. If we don't tell our story, somebody else is going to. Telling our story, involves stories of sustainability and making sure people understand we are taking care of the land."

Part of the panel included the audience participating in a survey on what they saw as some of the biggest hurdles in Washington's ag industry. Regulatory challenges, labor costs, high input costs, water scarcity, economic resilience, labor availability, and the rural-urban divide were at the top of the list. ■

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Atlas Agro has its roots in the fertilizer industry. The company was started in 2021 by Petter Østbø and Knut Karlsen, former executives with Yara International. According to Atlas Agro's website, the Pacific Green Fertilizer Plant will use renewable electricity to produce green hydrogen through electrolysis of water. The plant is expected to produce .7 million tons of zero-carbon nitrate fertilizer a year destined primarily for farmers in the Pacific Northwest. The products that the plant will produce will include CAN27, ANSol20, and CN9/CAN17. The total cost of the project is estimated to be about \$1 billion, with product scheduled to be available to growers by 2027.

Wheat Life reached out to Atlas Agro to find out more about the Pacific Green Fertilizer Plant and why the company decided to build it in Richland.

What was it about the Pacific Northwest (PNW) and Richland, Wash., in particular, that makes it a good fit for Atlas Agro's first North American green fertilizer plant?

The Tri-Cities area was chosen for its strong agriculture, access to clean energy, and strategic location reducing reliance on foreign fertilizer imports. We were also very impressed with the City of Richland and Port of Benton teams, whose expertise and dedication facilitated the siting and permitting process.



An artistic rendering of Atlas Agro's planned Pacific Green Fertilizer Plant in Richland, Wash.

Additionally, the area's highly educated and skilled workforce will be pivotal in building and operating the world's first green nitrogen fertilizer plant. This collaboration positions the PNW as a leader in sustainable agriculture, set to reduce carbon emissions by over a million tons annually, benefiting local farmers and the global environment alike.

How did the hydropower capabilities of the dams on the Columbia-Snake River play a part in that decision?

Atlas Agro recognized the importance of the Northwest hydropower system and its role in enabling Washington's clean grid and broader renewable energy transition, an important component of Atlas Agro's carbon-free footprint.

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More information about Atlas Agro and their fertilizers can be found on their website at atlasagro.ag. There is also contact information for growers who want to talk to their team about carbon-free nitrates. ■



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Lind Field Day 2024

CHAIRMAN

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

By Ben Barstow



I was recently invited to an online panel, the Collaborative Platform on Agriculture, that included participants from the U.S. and European agriculture industry discussing Integrated Pest Management. It was enlightening to see that European agricultural professionals have as much concern about meeting current European Union pest management policies as we would have. We have pesticide policy problems, too. The latest iteration of never-ending restrictions is coming, just as foretold about 10 years ago by former Washington State Department of Agriculture director and now retired lobbyist, Jim Jessernig. He warned that the Environmental Protection Act requires that every federal agency that proposes an action (like granting a pesticide label) that may impact an endangered species must *consult* with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before taking such action. How to do this *consulting* between federal agencies, who will do what, by what criterion, who has expertise, and a host of other issues (it's complicated) has been making its way through the courts.

In my opinion, after a couple decades of being beaten over the head with actual science and risk assessment, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Pesticide Programs developed a reasonable approach to safe pesticide use through labeling. Many people and organizations were not happy with that because they felt it allowed far too much pesticide use. They found a way to shift control of pesticide use to another agency where they have better hopes of regulating away the use of pesticides forever. That, however, is just me being cynical and blaming everything on the mythical "they." In any case, we now face another multidecade task of educating another agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, about agricultural pesticide use.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife faces a gargantuan task with this. Every endangered species has its own susceptibilities that, in most cases, have never been scientifically evaluated. The volume of scientific work required to test every labeled pesticide use for every possible impact on every endangered species is staggering. Rather than attempt to develop actual risk data, they appear to be taking an exclusionary approach; if there is endangered species habitat near where you want to use a pesticide, you must keep the pesticide from moving off target.

That is a good thing, and something we have been getting better at for years. Except now, drift control/off-target movement strategies are also under the purview of U.S. Fish and Wildlife and National Marine Fisheries.

The federal agencies are trying to build a one-size-fits-all system that will spit out application requirements when you input your location and the EPA registration number of the pesticide. (How many EPA registration numbers have *you* memorized?)

It's probably easier if you are a younger farmer than I am, but if it rains or you are waiting for parts, try your luck with Bulletins Live! Two (epa.gov/espp/). When I first test drove this system a few months ago, I wanted to enter my location and see which pesticides had limitations on my farm, but it does not work that way. At least, I couldn't get it to work that way. It appears to be designed to accommodate ever-changing Pesticide Use Limitation Areas or PULAs. Get used to that acronym. I predict we will be seeing it a lot. As I was writing this, the only PULAs in Eastern Washington border salmon-bearing streams, but I'm sure there are others in the works.

If a PULA is mapped on your farm, you may have additional label restrictions, and finding out what they are is cumbersome. I do not recommend trying this on your smartphone. If you do manage to find the instructions for your proposed application, you will find the mitigation that may be required to make a legal application. Mitigation would be things you could do to reduce the potential of off-target movement (see the draft pick list at epa.gov/endangered-species/drift-and-runoff-reduction-measures-and-associated-points). In the example PULA I looked at, there were mitigation points for different kinds of buffers and riparian vegetation, but no specifics about spray drift reduction technology or stewardship program participation, indicating my example was likely a concern for runoff. EPA has a drift reduction technology program, but that information on low drift nozzles and drift reducing additives does not appear to be included as mitigation measures in the particular pesticide/PULA combination I was reviewing.

I believe this is a work in progress, and I think once actual pesticide users get involved, it will change and, hopefully, will continue to change and evolve as technology improves. I also think that farmers in the Inland Pacific Northwest have a good sense of how to mitigate pesticide drift and runoff and getting those local practices on the pick list would go a long way toward both protecting endangered species and food production. Begrudging thanks to Dr. Ian Burke for bringing this to the June Washington Grain Commission meeting. A safe and happy harvest to all. ■

Rooted in research

Digging deeper into the genetics of drought tolerance in wheat

By Luigi Peracchi

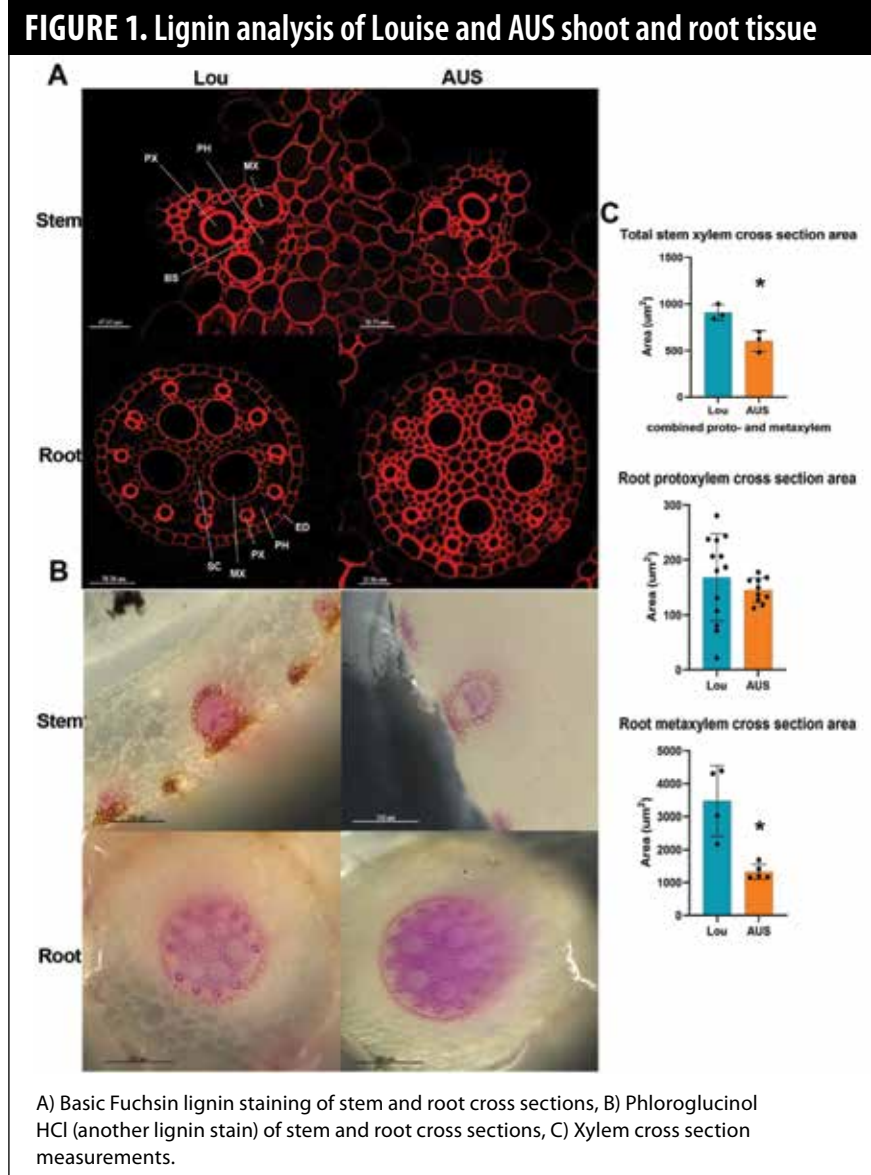
Graduate Student, Washington State University Sanguinet Lab

By Karen A. Sanguinet

Associate Professor, Washington State University

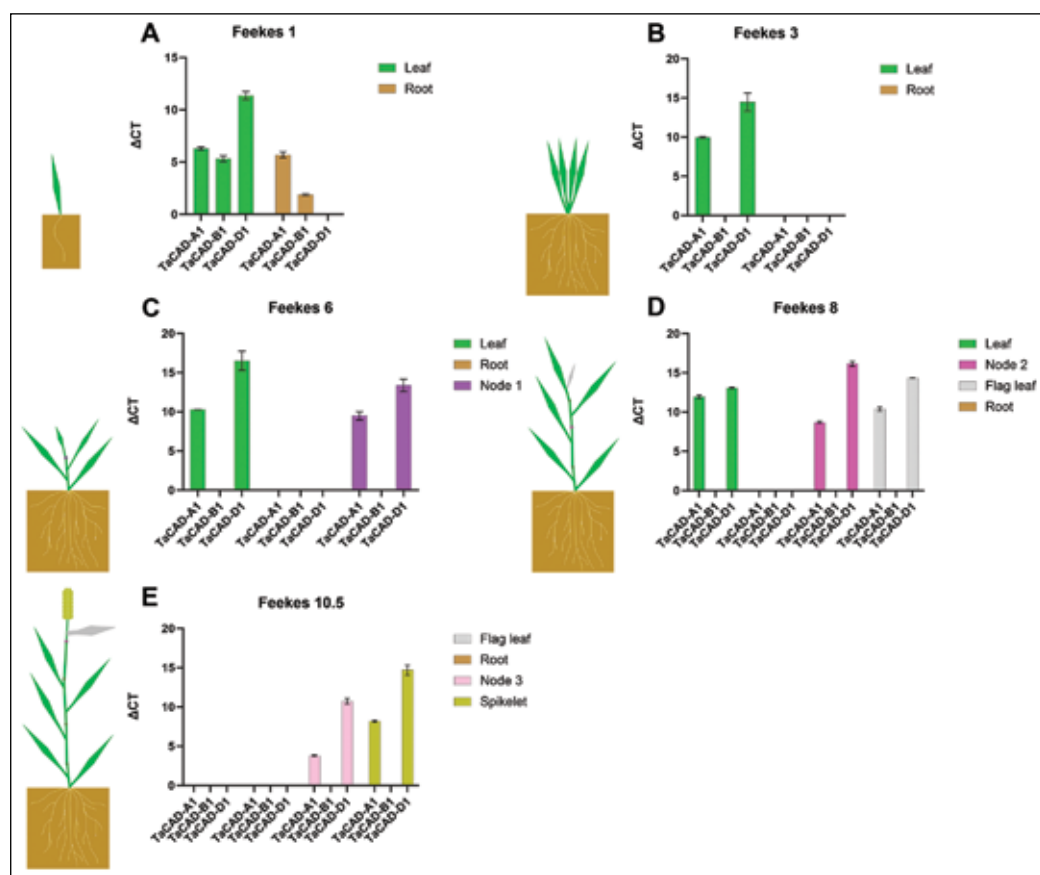
The ability of wheat plants to survive and thrive relies most importantly on one key environmental factor — water. Even so, the average wheat plant grown in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) will likely experience drought at some point in its lifecycle. The ability of roots to sense and respond to water deficit is a key mechanism to ensure survival and, ultimately, secure stable yields. We have been investigating the genetic variation in wheat root systems for over a decade now, because we hope that understanding this hidden half of the plant will help unlock secrets to yield optimization in water-limited conditions.

Plant breeders take advantage of genetic variation from wild relatives and landraces to search for new ways to improve elite wheat varieties. Most of our research over the past funding cycle has focused on understanding responses to drought in Louise and an Iranian landrace called AUS28451. Louise is a PNW-adapted soft white wheat variety with good stripe rust resistance, whereas AUS28451 is a landrace that shows resistance to root lesion nematodes as well as increased lignin in the roots. Lignin is a phenolic compound that decorates secondary cell walls of plants, which acts to



fortify the stem tissue and subsequently prevent lodging as well as lines the vascular tissue to prevent water loss and improve water movement.

Previous research in our lab found that Louise and AUS28451 lines have very different root architectures. Specifically, Louise showed decreased root biomass and increased root diameter compared to AUS28451. The research literature has shown that increased root biomass, area, and length are

FIGURE 2. qRT-PCR of the class I *TaCADs* in different tissue types at different developmental stages

A) Seedling stage of development. All *TaCADs* are detectable except for *TaCAD-D1* in roots at Feekes 1 B) Class I *TaCAD* transcript becomes undetectable in roots, and *TaCAD-B1* becomes undetectable in leaf tissue C) *TaCAD-A1* and *TaCAD-D1* are consistently co-expressed, while *TaCAD-B1* remains undetectable. D) *TaCAD-A1* and *TaCAD-B1* transcript is detectable in the developing flag leaf at levels consistent with node and leaf tissue. E) Mature flag leaf has no detectable class I *TaCAD* transcript.

associated with drought tolerance. Recent studies have also shown plants with increased lignification in stems, leaves, and roots showed improved drought tolerance. But it is unclear how root traits, drought, and lignin are correlated. Moreover, it is not simple because increased lignin content also inhibits growth and has other unwanted consequences, like straw with more lignin breaks down more slowly.

The purpose of our recent work is two-fold. The first goal is to investigate whether lignin composition plays a role in drought stress in wheat varieties important to the Inland Pacific Northwest. The second goal is to measure how plants respond to drought on a molecular level.

First, we performed biochemistry experiments to further investigate not only total lignin, but also the chemical composition of lignin in Louise and AUS28451. This, we hoped, would shed light onto how lignin composition impacts drought response. We found Louise roots and shoots differed in the lignin cell wall composition and in modification of lignin in the cell wall compared to AUS28451 shoots and roots. We also looked at the spatial distribution of lignification in root cross-sections and

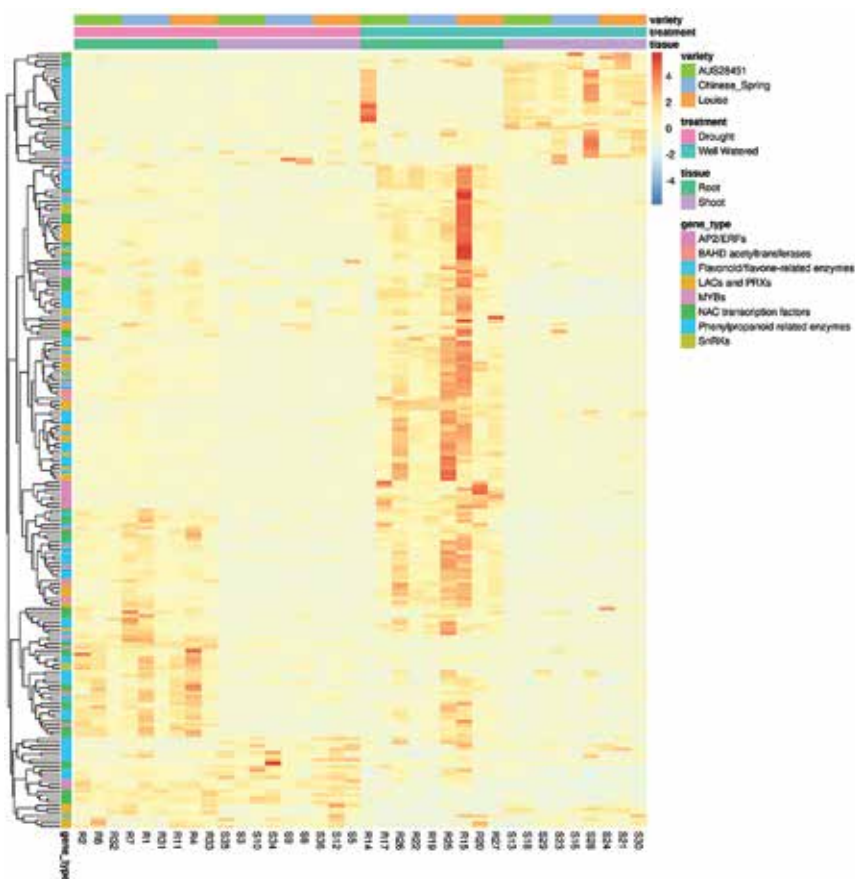
found increased lignification in AUS28451 compared to Louise throughout the root vascular system (Figure 1). In addition, we found a decrease in the area of the xylem, the water-conducting cells of the root, in AUS28451 roots. Taken together, these data indicate and confirm that root traits, both for lignin content and vascular organization, highly differ between AUS28451 and Louise.

Next, we decided to investigate the genetics of lignification in wheat roots. To that end, we characterized the gene family that is known to encode the final step in the production of lignin monomer components — the CAD gene family. CAD stands for CINNAMYL ALCOHOL DEHYDROGENASE (CAD in *italics* indicates genes and nonitalicized references are proteins) and encodes an enzyme that makes the precursor molecules or monomers to the lignin polymer. We found that CAD genes are encoded by a large protein family with 47 members in wheat. We performed a genome-wide analysis and found their locations on the wheat chromosomes. We care about genes because they encode proteins. These proteins carry out the business of the cells and plant, like making cell walls, lignin, and responding to stressors

in the environment. CAD proteins can be divided into three classes, or types of proteins. It is considered that only the Class I CADs are mostly responsible for lignin production in plants. Therefore, we performed expression analysis of the three Class I CAD genes in wheat called *TaCAD-A1*, *TaCAD-1B*, and *TaCAD-1D*. We detected expression of CAD genes throughout development, and found expression is mostly correlated with rapidly growing tissues. For example, all three *TaCAD* genes were expressed in shoots at Feekes 1 stage, and two of the three in roots at Feekes 1. However, later in development, we could not detect Class I CAD expression in the roots (Feekes 3 and later developmental stages). The *TaCAD-A1* and *TaCAD-1D* genes are the most highly expressed genes throughout development (Figure 2).

Following the characterization of the CAD gene family, we investigated which genes change in their expression in response to drought. We used a molecular technique called RNA sequencing that measures all the genes that change expression in response to drought. Specifically, we compared three wheat lines: Louise, AUS28451, and Chinese Spring (drought susceptible) and looked at how gene expression in each line changed when plants experienced drought stress. We compared both root and shoot responses to drought. We found thousands of genes that are differentially expressed in response to drought. To make meaning of these genes and to focus on our goal of looking at the lignin responses in response to drought, we focused on enzymes and transcription factor proteins that are known to be involved in lignin production or in regulating lignin production (Figure 3). These data show us that

FIGURE 3. Heat map of lignin-related gene expression



A heat map representing differential gene expression of lignin-related genes (encoding known transcription factors and enzymes) in three wheat lines AUS28451 (green), Chinese Spring (blue), and Louise (orange). Two treatments were performed, drought (pink) and well-watered (teal). We also looked at root tissue (light green) and shoot tissue (lilac). We see different genes that are up or down regulated in drought vs. well-watered conditions and different responses to drought in roots versus shoots.

lignin genes are more highly expressed in growing tissues (well-watered conditions) — if you look at the histogram, you see more red color in the root and shoot tissues. Moreover, the genes that are responding in roots and shoots are different. In addition, there are variety-specific responses. Many of the same genes increase expression in all varieties but some are unique.

In summary, we have used biochemistry and genetics to try to understand how wheat plants respond to drought, how different varieties respond to drought, and how different tissues (roots vs. shoot) respond to drought. Overall, we found lignin is an important cell wall constituent and varies in wheat varieties, but lignin production is not necessarily regulated on the transcriptional level in response to drought. These experiments have yielded a wealth of data that will keep Washington State University researchers and students busy for years to come. By understanding which genes and proteins are important for stress responses, breeders can determine not only markers, but also genes and the proteins they make that enhance performance of wheat varieties. Finally, we are extremely grateful to you, the grain growers and commissioners who support our work on wheat, lignin, and drought. ■

A base saturation approach

OPTIMIZING WHEAT PRODUCTION IN ACID SOILS

By João Antonangelo

Assistant Professor, Washington State University

Wheat stands tall as one of the staple grains nourishing billions worldwide. Behind every loaf of bread and every bowl of pasta lies the dedication of farmers battling diverse challenges to ensure bountiful harvests. Among these challenges, acidic soils pose a significant hurdle, thwarting the full potential of wheat cultivation. However, with the right approach, even acid soils can yield flourishing wheat crops. Enter lime requirement assessment, a crucial step in soil management, where the base saturation (BS%) approach emerges as a beacon of efficiency, offering promising solutions to farmers worldwide.

The acid soil dilemma

Acidic soils, characterized by low pH levels, hamper wheat production by impeding nutrient availability, hindering root growth, and promoting toxic aluminum (Al) accumulation. As a result, wheat yields dwindle, robbing farmers of their livelihoods and communities of sustenance. The conventional solution to combat acidity involves raising soil pH through lime application, a practice crucial for unlocking the soil's fertility potential.

The pH target approach: a common pitfall

Traditionally, farmers have relied on the pH target approach to determine lime requirements, aiming to elevate soil pH to a predetermined level, often 6.5 to 7, a globally established range for optimal availability of essential nutrients. However, while this method has its merits, it often falls short in accurately addressing soil chemistry dynamics. Soil pH alone provides an incomplete picture of soil fertility, overlooking critical factors like cation exchange capacity (CEC) and BS% levels.

The base saturation approach

In contrast, the BS% approach offers a holistic perspective, considering not only soil pH but also the relative proportions of exchangeable cations — calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), and potassium (K) — to detrimental (or acidic) cations — Al and hydrogen (H). By striving for balanced cation ratios, this approach ensures optimal soil fertility, fostering ideal conditions for wheat cultivation. The benefits of the base saturation approach include:

- **Precision in lime application.** Unlike the pH target approach, which may lead to over- or under-liming, the BS% approach tailors lime application to spe-

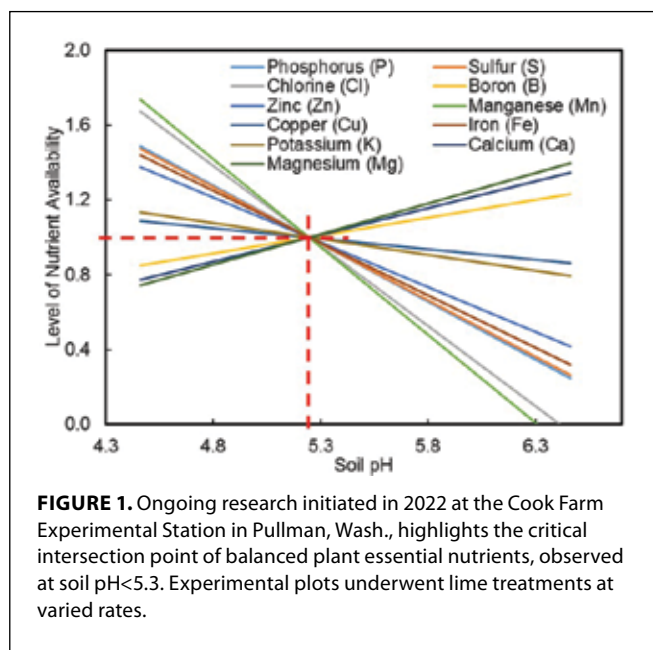


FIGURE 1. Ongoing research initiated in 2022 at the Cook Farm Experimental Station in Pullman, Wash., highlights the critical intersection point of balanced plant essential nutrients, observed at soil pH < 5.3. Experimental plots underwent lime treatments at varied rates.

cific soil needs, optimizing resource utilization, and minimizing costs for farmers.

- **Improved nutrient availability.** By targeting balanced cation ratios, the BS% approach enhances nutrient availability, fostering robust root development, and maximizing wheat yield potential.
- **Long-term soil health.** Beyond immediate pH correction, the BS% approach promotes long-term soil health, mitigating acidity-induced Al toxicity, and preserving soil structure for sustained productivity.
- **Environmental sustainability.** By promoting efficient lime utilization, the BS% approach minimizes environmental impact, reducing the risk of lime leaching into water bodies and mitigating carbon emissions associated with lime production.

Why this is true?

- Because raising soil pH to the 6.5 to 7.0 range can potentially cause nutrient imbalances:
 - **Availability of nutrients.** While some nutrients become more available to plants as soil pH increases, others may become less available. For instance, phosphorus availability tends to decrease as pH increases significantly, which can limit plant uptake (see Figure 1).
 - **Nutrient interactions.** Soil pH influences the chemical reactions that govern nutrient availabil-

ity and uptake. Altering pH can affect the interactions between different nutrients in the soil, potentially leading to imbalances. For example, high pH can increase the availability of Ca and Mg while decreasing the availability of other essential nutrients like zinc and copper (Figure 1).

- Because wheat yields do not respond to lime application targeting pH 6.5 to 7.0:

-Optimal pH range. High pH levels can lead to nutrient imbalances and reduced nutrient availability, thereby limiting yield potential. Therefore, applying lime to raise pH to the 6.5 to 7.0 range may not necessarily benefit wheat yields and could potentially hinder growth. Multiple studies conducted across the U.S. from the 1980s (Pacific Northwest) through the past decade (southern U.S.) have consistently demonstrated that regardless of whether the cultivar exhibits resistance or sensitivity to toxic aluminum and low soil pH, there is no observed increase in yield beyond a soil pH of 5.5 even with higher rates of lime application. Additional findings elsewhere in the U.S. (Columbia Basin, Oklahoma, and Kansas) are illustrated in Figure 2.

- Other soil factors. Soil fertility and productivity are influenced by a combination of factors beyond just pH, including nutrient levels, soil structure, moisture availability, and microbial activity. If these factors are not optimal, wheat yields may not respond significantly to lime application targeting specific pH levels.

Keep in Mind

In global wheat farming, soil pH is still

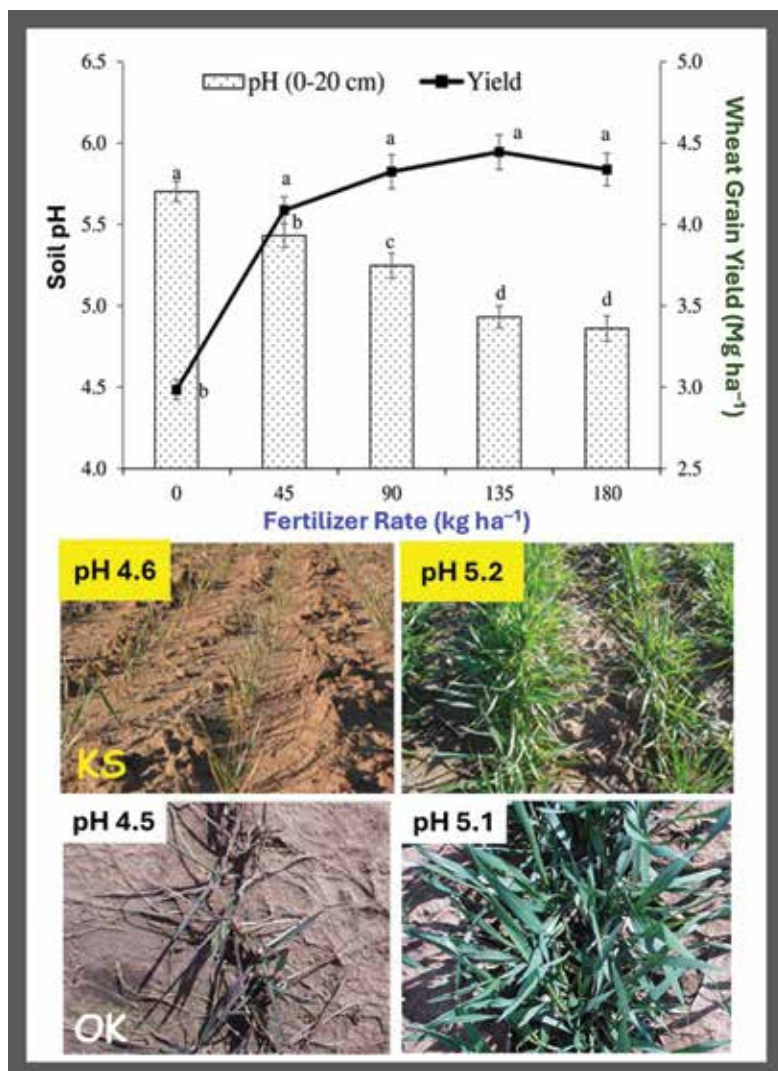


FIGURE 2. (Top) Wheat yield response to soil pH and N rates in 0-20 cm soil depth. Different letters denote significant differences. Ammoniacal N sources acidify soil by converting ammonium to nitrate, releasing H ions. Optimal yields occur at pH < 5.5 with 45 kg N ha⁻¹. In Kans. (Center) and Okla. (Bottom), wheat on highly acidic soils (pH 4.6 and 4.5) responded to lime, raising pH to 5.2 and 5.1. The figure was created using graphs published by Drs. Ghimire, Machado, and Bista – “Soil pH, Soil Organic Matter, and Crop Yields in Winter Wheat–Summer Fallow Systems,” and photos outputted by Dr. Ruiz Diaz (K-State Research and Extension), and presented by Dr. Zhang (Oklahoma State University).

a critical factor impacting nutrient availability and crop performance. Despite similar pH levels, soil nutrient balances vary due to factors like fertilization history and microclimates. Establishing a universal pH standard is challenging, but a BS% can offer a more standardized approach, though wheat cultivars must be considered. Understanding local conditions and cultivar needs is key to optimizing soil health and ensuring sustainable yields worldwide. ■

Market success down south

LONG-TERM INVESTMENT IN SOUTH AMERICA IS BUILDING DEMAND FOR PNW WHEAT

This is the second in a series of articles describing how U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) is investing funds from the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) to maintain and grow demand for soft white (SW) and other classes of U.S. wheat in overseas markets. The partnership with the WGC, Oregon Wheat Commission, Idaho Wheat Commission, and 14 other state checkoff programs allows USW to apply for export market development funding from U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service programs.

That partnership has been working since the 1950s, yet ongoing export promotion remains vitally important to Pacific Northwest (PNW) wheat growers. For example, the U.S. exports an average of 55% of total annual SW production and carry-in stocks, and the percentage for Washington-grown SW is closer to 80%. From such products as sponge cakes, cookies, and pastries to blending with other wheat classes, SW wheat flour has the versatility to improve the quality of a wide variety of products in the top SW export markets of Southeast and North

Asia, as well as growing opportunity in Latin America.

In this article, the focus is on export promotion strategies and successful activities in Latin American markets including Chile, Peru, and Colombia where the demand for cookies, crackers, and cakes is growing with disposable incomes and population.

PNW wheat opportunities

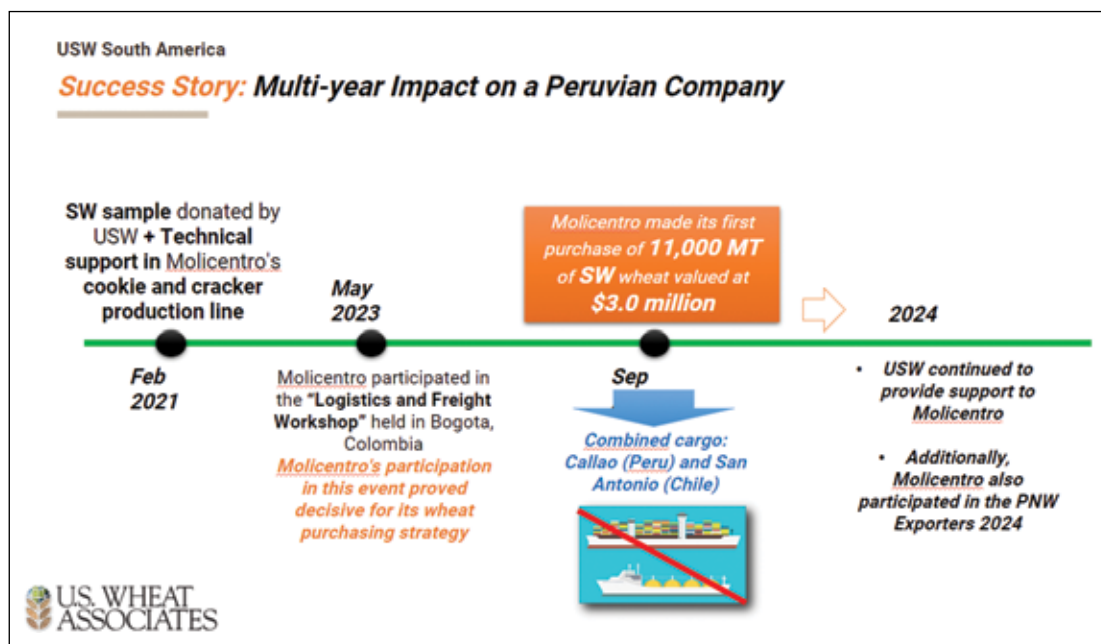
Because these markets are close to the Gulf of Mexico, soft red winter (SRW) wheat is the predominant soft wheat class moving to Latin American markets. However, USW is working to increase SW demand, especially in South America's Pacific Coast markets.

Chile is currently the largest SW market in South America, with USW making progress developing SW demand in Peru and Colombia. These markets remain price sensitive with an equally significant constraint relating to import logistics.

"Very few flour milling companies in our region have the capacity to import an entire vessel of wheat,"



Ben Barstow (center), chairman of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), and WGC Commissioner Gary Bailey (in blue) show a Chilean trade team the 2023 wheat crop.



said USW Regional Director for South America Miguel Galdos. "That is why we are working hard to create and support opportunities for small buyers to pool purchases in combined cargoes. This approach addresses a challenge and opens prospects for growth and collaboration in the milling and baking industries."

Building new demand

As an example, Galdos points to a multiyear effort with Mollicentro, the largest cookie and cracker manufacturer in Peru. Under the Agricultural Trade Promotion program, USW donated a container load of SW to Mollicentro in February 2021. USW made two, in-plant visits to provide milling and processing support that validated SW flour performance. Then in May 2023, Mollicentro participated in a USW-sponsored logistics and freight workshop for South American wheat purchasing managers held in Bogota, Colombia.

"The information Mollicentro gained there proved decisive for its U.S. wheat purchasing strategy," said Galdos. "The company made its first ever purchase of 11,000 metric tons of soft white wheat in a combined cargo with another mill in Peru and one in Chile. It was a breakthrough with a \$3 million return. And we recently heard the company has cooperated with an Ecuadoran miller to purchase an additional 10,000 metric tons of SW in a combined cargo with hard red winter and hard red spring that will load in July."

Reviving steady demand in Chile

Sales of SW to Chile are steady for cookie production and for blending with hard wheat flour for French-style bread. USW's 2023 work in this market was particularly

important because millers imported much less of the drought-limited 2022 SW crop. Several Chilean millers attended USW's 2023 workshop, including a purchasing group known as G9 that mainly imported Canadian wheat. Following the workshop, G9 started comparing moisture content between competing wheat supplies and incorporated new specifications favor-

ing drier SW supplies. Also, in July 2023, G9 representatives joined other Chilean millers on a trade mission to Washington and other states to learn more about new crop U.S. wheat.

Target Colombia

G9 responded to these trade service activities by increasing its SW imports from 4,400 metric tons to 34,500 metric tons (1.27 million bushels) in 2023 with an estimated return of \$9 million to farmers and the grain trade.

With its Pacific port in Buenaventura, Colombia is an opportunity market for PNW wheat. To address the challenge that 90% of the wheat entering the Pacific port has been Canadian, USW took an innovative opportunity to shape future demand through a HRW Food for Progress monetization program in 2023. The monetized HRW introduced a viable alternative to Canadian spring wheat for bread and pasta production in the western region. One of the buyers was the country's largest wheat importer, Harinera del Valle (HDV), that has received substantial trade and technical service from USW with the direct support of PNW state wheat commissions. HDV had received two container loads of SW in 2020 and asked USW for technical support using U.S. soft wheat for cookie flour in 2022. Representatives from HDV also visited Idaho in July 2023 as part of a Colombian trade team.

The effort to promote load-outs of U.S. wheat from the PNW will continue in marketing year 2024-25.

The next article in this series looks at traditionally strong markets for PNW wheat in the North Asian countries of Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. ■



(Top photo) Washington Grain Commission chairman Ben Barstow (middle right, green shirt) hosts the U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) Chilean trade team for dinner at the Palouse Caboose in Palouse, Wash., July 2023, with several other local growers and representatives from Washington State University.

(Right photo) During their trip to Eastern Washington, the Chilean trade team stopped by the Almotia Elevator on the Snake River.

(Above photo) During the Chilean trade team's stop at the USDA-ARS Western Wheat Quality Lab in Pullman, Wash., Research Biologist Alecia Kiszonas explains the lab's tests for wheat quality to Miguel Galdos from USW Santiago.

WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

World wheat exports forecast to be lower



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

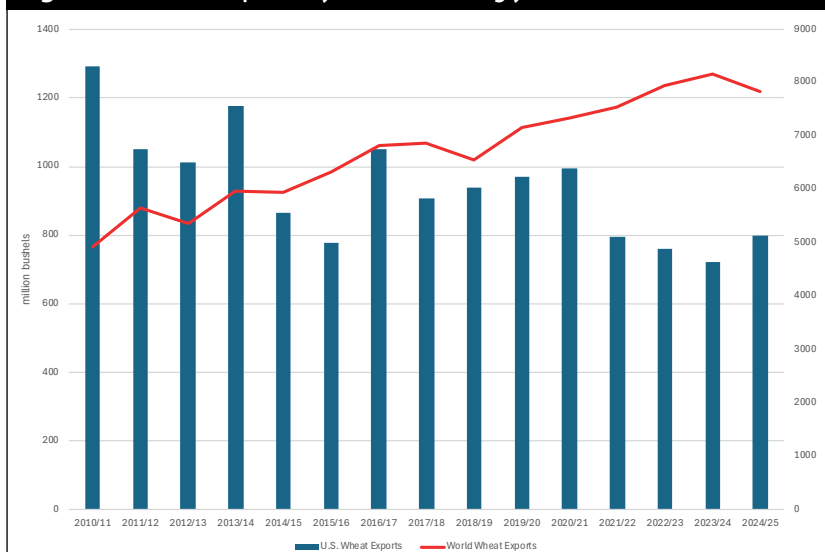
The outlook for the 2024-25 U.S. wheat marketing season has improved compared to the earliest forecasts. Back in February 2024 and then again in May, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) forecast the average 2024-25 U.S. marketing year wheat price at \$6 per bushel. In their June 2024 World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE), USDA raised their price projection to \$6.50 per bushel. The improved price outlook was largely based on an increase in the estimate for U.S. wheat exports in 2024-25.

In June, USDA forecast U.S. wheat exports this marketing year to be 800 million bushels. While still well below export volumes of a decade ago, the current USDA forecast does represent the highest U.S. wheat export volume in the last four years (Figure 1).

In contrast, total world wheat exports are expected to be lower than both last year (2023-24) and the prior year. Thus, if these forecasts are realized, the global market share of U.S. wheat will increase this year compared to the last couple of years. Note from Figure 1 that this will be the first year-over-year decline in total world wheat trade since the 2018-19 marketing year.

The USDA forecast of lower global wheat trade is matched by the current forecast of the International Grains Council (IGC), which is also forecasting a year-over-year reduction in total world wheat exports. They currently project world wheat exports will fall by about 3% in the 2024-25 marketing year (they use a

Figure 1: Wheat exports by U.S. marketing year



SOURCE: USDA WASDE

slightly different market year definition than USDA — their marketing year begins July 1 and ends the following June 30).

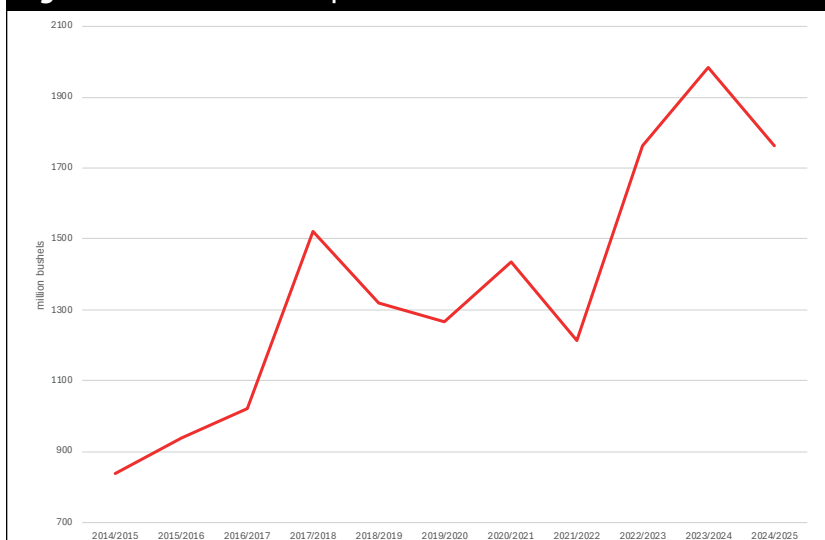
The reductions in world wheat trade are largely the result of improved crop prospects for some traditional wheat importers. China, for example, is expected to realize an increase of about 2% in total wheat production this year compared to last. Combined with their large stocks, this leads to a reduction in total Chinese wheat imports this year of about 18%.

Much of the Middle East is also expected to realize a significant increase in wheat production this year, with the current USDA production forecast up about 6% compared to last year. As a result, wheat imports to the Middle East are expected to be down 2% this year.

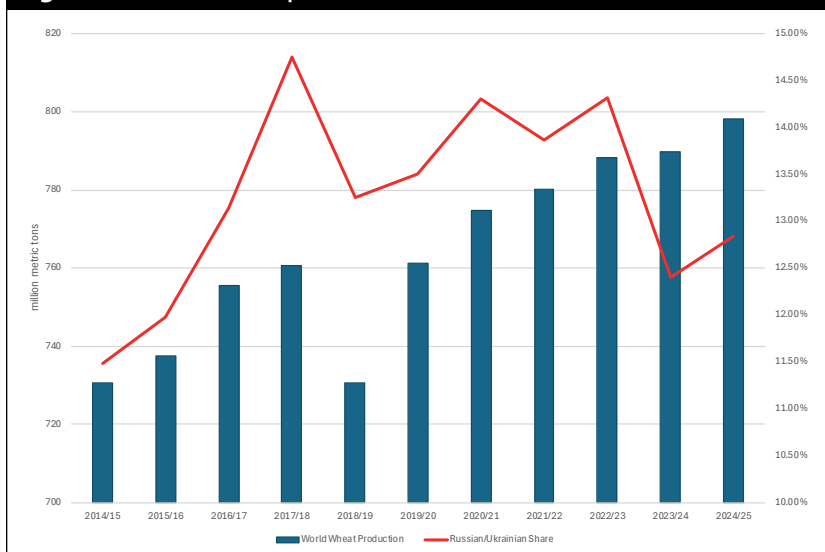
World wheat consumption is also expected to drop slightly this year, and this also contributes to lower trade. The lower consumption number comes from expectations of reduced wheat feed demand. USDA currently forecasts global wheat feed demand will fall by 7% this year, while the IGC is currently forecasting a reduction in total world feed demand of 4.3%.

Russia is expected to continue to be the world's largest wheat exporter in 2024-25, but USDA reduced its projection of total Russian exports for 2024-25 by 8% in the June WASDE relative to their export forecast in May. If realized, the 2024-25 USDA forecast will match Russian wheat exports in 2022-23. Even though smaller than last year, this will still be the second largest Russian wheat export volume ever (Figure 2).

IGC currently forecasts that Russian wheat exports for 2024-25 will not only fall below last year's export volume, but also be down relative

Figure 2: Russian wheat exports

SOURCE: USDA WASDE

Figure 3: World wheat production vs. Russian/Ukrainian share

SOURCE: USDA WASDE

to the 2022-23 marketing year by about 3%. IGC's forecast for 2024-25 Russian wheat exports is below USDA's current forecast by about 52 million bushels, or 3%. However, even if one adopts the IGC forecast, Russian wheat exports this year will still exceed their average export volume prior to 2022-23 by a significant amount.

IGC is currently projecting Ukrainian wheat exports to fall by 26% this year. This would be their lowest export volume in at least a decade.

Among the major world wheat exporters, Ukraine and Russia account for the year-over-year decline in total world exports. This comes despite their share of total world wheat production increasing in 2024-25 (Figure 3). The other major exporters are expected to increase export volumes in 2024-25 relative to last year. IGC currently projects Argentinian wheat exports will be up 17%, Canadian exports up 9%, Australian exports up 5%, and exports from the EU up 4%.

USDA will provide its first forecast of U.S. white wheat exports for the 2024-25 marketing year in the July 12 WASDE. The early pace has white wheat exports up relative to year ago levels, but we are only one month into the 2024-25 marketing year. Through mid-June, white wheat shipments from U.S. ports were up 259% relative to year ago levels, and sales were up 60%.

Although total world wheat trade is expected to decline this year, there is projected import growth in some important U.S. markets. Wheat imports by Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) are expected to increase about 1% compared to last year. The IGC is currently forecasting an increase in Thai wheat imports of 7% for this year. Through mid-June, U.S. sales of white wheat to Thailand were up 178% (again, very early in the marketing year but still a positive event). Total U.S. white wheat sales are also up on a year-over-year basis to Japan, Republic of Korea, and the Philippines. However, very little of this wheat had been shipped through mid-June.

Mexico is also an important U.S. wheat market, though most of the wheat they buy comes from the red wheat classes. None the less, Mexican wheat imports are projected by IGC to increase 8% this year. U.S. sales of both hard red and soft red wheat to Mexico are up this year compared to the first few weeks of the 2023-24 marketing year.

Even though the outlook for the 2024-25 wheat marketing year has improved over the last couple of months, we will still see a significant amount of price volatility going forward. With world wheat production expected to increase this year and total world trade projected to decline, prices are not likely to match last year's even though the outlook has improved over the last month or so. ■

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

The Flour Power Blues

By Daniel Moore

Workday is starting,
Dark morning hues.
In my truck mumbling
The flour power blues.

Banker in my corner
Shakes hands with a grin.
His shop built of bricks,
Mine is made of tin.

Farm's name is D.E.T.
Initials? Would be nice.
But here's another thought:
I "Do Everything Twice!"

Repeat trips to the FSA!
What have I not reported?
"You are the government,
All-knowing," I retorted.

Wheat is very tough,
But coffee talk will flow.
Nine or ten crop failures
Before we'll really know.

Throw out the chart!
If you want to score,
Sell a day after me.
Your price will be more!

If a tree falls in the forest,
Does it make a sound?
If a sprayer stays in the shed,
Does the wind abound?

The tax man cometh.
Won't need calculator.
Wait ... What? A tax due?
Sneaky budget buster!

"To be or not to be,
That is the question."
Will bearing last or not?
Now there's a question!

Yikes! There it is.
Shiny box on a post.
Ha, ha! There it goes.
Bill bearing host.

The 35th said I'm unique.
I thought I was special.
But I didn't understand
The gap in the middle.

Workday is ending,
Dark evening hues.
In my truck mumbling
The flour power blues. ■



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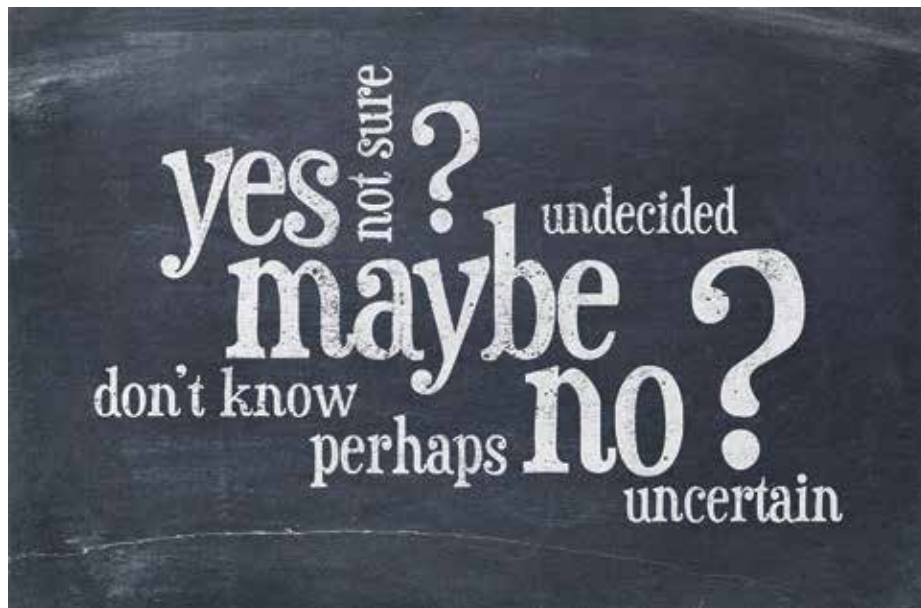
Landowner considerations for CRP

By Tim Cobb

Owner, The Farmland Company

This year marks the 39th year since the inception of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a proactive program administered through the unique partnership of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and landowners across the country. Some may have initially thought CRP and similar land-based rental programs would be short lived, instead, those programs have gained wide acceptance by landowners and operators and, in many cases, permanently changed the farm landscape.

At the onset of CRP's establishment, the intended concentration was only on specific areas of the farm and aimed at sensitive locations with a high risk of erosion from water and wind. Over the decades, however, CRP has taken a more expansive approach to include signing up entire parcels of land.



The thoughtful landowner will always assess the potential positive and negative impacts of any lease encumbrance placed on the land, and with standard CRP lease terms requiring a 10 to 15 year enrollment, it certainly deserves that same assessment.

Impactful considerations for farmland owners and (CRP) include financial, environment, and economical.

FINANCIAL IMPACT. Assessing the economic viability of participating in the program is crucial for farmland owners.

Depending on the current production levels of the farmland, enrollment in CRP can often bring more consistent and increased levels of income per acre. This income often is not “weather dependent” nor impacted by variations in commodity markets.

Often the program includes incentives and “cost share” to assist in the implementation of certain specific conservation directives; a landowner should always calculate the full extent of how much it will cost to implement and maintain the conservation cover. Specifically, over the last five years, the inflation of input costs from seed, fertilizer, chemical, fuel, and labor warrant a thorough examination of the economic viability for enrolling in a conservation reserve program. The levels of expense are beginning to erode overall return in these programs.

Lastly, landowners must consider the impact on the overall market value of the property. When considering the disposition of any piece of farmland, sellers should remember that a CRP contract can narrow the pool of potential buyers. Furthermore, the return on investment (ROI) can be misconstrued at the time of sale, as a purchaser may look to the CRP rental income as opposed to the long-term crop production capability of the land.

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT. By design, the most important reason to consider long-term enrollment of farmlands into CRP is the environmental benefit.

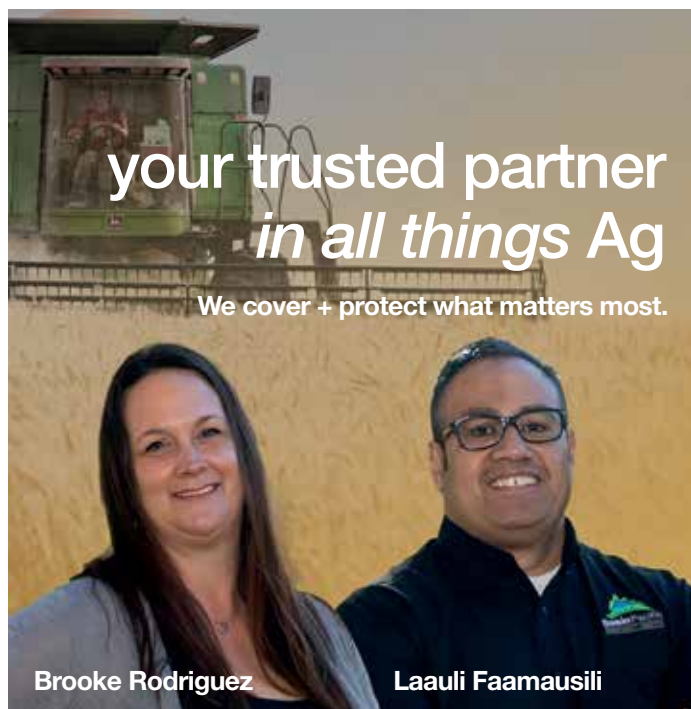
Practices like planting native grasses and trees, both of which are directives in certain CRP contracts, will help prevent soil erosion. Additionally, soil health and fertility can be maintained in a more natural way for current and future land use. Planting perennial vegetation along waterways, wetlands, or buffer zones can act as a natural filter to improve the overall quality in larger bodies of water above and/or beneath the surface. Land in CRP reintroduces natural habitat for wildlife. These habitats provide food, shelter, and breeding grounds for various species of animals and fowl and can contribute to the strengthening of their population numbers across the region.

LAND USE IMPACT. Any modification to the use of farmland will have a local impact on the subject property and its neighbors. I'm reminded of lands that I have seen where the initial intent was to improve the natural ecosys-

tem. However, over time and with changes in ownership, these lands have fallen into disrepair and, in some cases, have been abandoned to any crop production potential. While we can't always influence what happens alongside us, we can make certain that any land under our direct supervision is cared for in a proper manner.

If you are considering enrolling or re-enrolling any of your lands into a conservation program, it is important to evaluate how enrollment may affect future land management decisions, including crop production, land values, and succession planning. Look further into the future than just the next 10 years as you consider what is best for you and your family's land. ■

Tim Cobb is a farm kid from Eastern Washington and is the owner of Farmland Company, based in Spokane, Wash. Farmland Company specializes in direct farmland management, real estate brokerage, and consulting across the Pacific Northwest. For more information, visit the company's website at farmlandcompany.com.



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Cousins Jacob Heitstuman and Nash Heitstuman getting a drink of water in Pomeroy. Photo by Hannah Heitstuman.



Winter wheat emerging on a beautiful evening, with Jack Woods Butte in the background, at the home of Pete and Darcy Carstensen north of Almira. Photo by Cameron Carstensen.



Stanley Bothman (16 months old) overseeing the annual winter overhaul in St. John. Photo by Michelle Bothman.



Grady Howard (1) taking his papa, Paul Sievers, for a walk at the end of a long day of harvest near Spangle.
Photo by Marshall Howard.



Kayden Lautenschlager (16 months) was all smiles for the first harvest field visit of the season at Lautenschlager & Sons in Endicott. Photo by Kaysha Lautenschlager.



Harvest 2023 at Wagner Farms outside of Harrington.
Photo by Treig Wagner.



Twelve days after seeding winter wheat south of Kahlottus.
Photo by Travis Matthews.

HAPPENINGS

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

JULY 2024

3 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR.

Bickleton, Wash., at 1 p.m. For information call Hannah Brause at (509) 773-5817 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

4 GRAND OLD FOURTH. Pancake breakfast, parade, fireworks, car show. Pasco, Wash. www.pascogo4.com

4 FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION. Live music, entertainment, and fireworks. Sunnyside Park in Pullman, Wash. pullmanchamber.com/events/4th-of-july/

12-14 CHENEY RODEO. Dances Friday and Saturday nights after rodeo. Parade. Cheney, Wash. cheneyrodeo.com

19-21 PIONEER DAYS. Parade, music, BBQ, chalk contest, vendors. Davenport, Wash. davenportpioneerdays.org

AUGUST 2024

1-3 MOXEE HOP FESTIVAL. Parade, beer garden, live entertainment, food and crafts, games, BBQ cookoff. Moxee, Wash. evcea.org

2-4 KING SALMON DERBY. Over \$10,000 in cash and prizes available. Registration required. Brewster, Wash. brewstersalmonderby.com

3 SCOTTISH HIGHLAND GAMES. Enjoy the traditional features of Scottish Highland Games, such as massed bands, pipe band exhibitions, individual piping, heavy athletics and highland dancing. 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Spokane County Fair and Expo Center in Spokane Valley, Wash. spokanehighlandgames.net

7-10 YAKIMA VALLEY FAIR AND RODEO. PRCA rodeo, car show, parade, beer garden. County Fair Park in Grandview, Wash. yvfair-rodeo.org

8-11 OMAK STAMPEDE. Parade, carnival, art show, rodeo dances and vendors. Omak, Wash. omakstampepe.org

13-17 GRANT COUNTY FAIR. Ag exhibits, livestock competitions, carnival, arts

and crafts, entertainment, food. Moses Lake, Wash. gcfairgrounds.com

16-25 NORTH IDAHO FAIR AND RODEO. Fireworks, draft horse pull, demolition derby, entertainment, carnival. Kootenai County Fairgrounds in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. northidahostatefair.com

17 NATIONAL LENTIL FESTIVAL. Stop by and see the world's largest bowl of lentil chili. Fun run, parade, softball tournament, beer garden. Pullman, Wash. lentilfest.com

20-24 BENTON FRANKLIN FAIR AND RODEO. Demolition derby, parade, live entertainment. Kennewick, Wash. bentonfranklinfair.com

22-24 LINCOLN COUNTY FAIR. Rodeo, exhibits, food, games. Davenport, Wash. lincolncountywafair.com

22-25 NCW FAIR. Live entertainment, carnival, livestock sale, rodeo and horse. Waterville, Wash. ncwfair.org

24 SPRINT BOAT RACING. Enjoy 5 grass terraces, two beer gardens and a great atmosphere to watch fantastic racing in St. John, Wash. Fun for the entire family! Bring the lawn chairs, sunscreen and blankets. 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. or until racing is finished. webbsslough.com or (509) 553-1014.

28-SEPT. 2 PIG OUT IN THE PARK. Music and food. Riverfront Park in Spokane, Wash. spokanepigout.com

29-SEPT. 1 WHEAT LAND COMMUNITIES' FAIR. Rodeo, exhibits, entertainment, vendors. Ritzville Rodeo Grounds. wheatlandfair.com

30-SEPT. 2 ELLENSBURG RODEO AND KITTITAS COUNTY FAIR. Carnival, midway, pancake breakfast, parade. Ellensburg, Wash. ellensburgrodeo.com

31 METHOW VALLEY RODEO. Saddle bronc, bareback, bulls, barrel racing, team roping and junior events. Held at the rodeo grounds, about halfway between Twisp and Winthrop beginning at 1 p.m. methowvalleyrodeo.com

SEPTEMBER 2024

6-15 SPOKANE COUNTY INTERSTATE FAIR. Livestock exhibits, rides, food booths, rodeo and entertainment. Fair and Expo Center, Spokane Valley. spokanecounty.org/fair/sif/

11-14 OTHELLO FAIR. Adams County Fairgrounds in Othello, Wash. othellofair.org

14 CONNELL FALL FESTIVAL. Parade, food, vendors, car show. connellwa.com/fallfestival/

19-22 DEUTSCHESFEST. German music, food, crafts. Parade. Biergarten, fun run. Odessa, Wash. deutschesfest.com

20-22 SE SPOKANE COUNTY FAIR. Cornhole tournament, soapbox derby, parade, fun run, truck pulls. Rockford, Wash. sespokanecountyfair.org

20-24 VALLEYFEST. Pancake breakfast, car show, entertainment. Centerplace Regional Event Center and Mirabeau Point Park in Spokane Valley, Wash. valleyfest.org

20-29 CENTRAL WASHINGTON STATE FAIR. Entertainment, beer garden, monster trucks, demo derby, food and carnival. State Fair Park in Yakima, Wash. fairfun.com

27-29 GREAT PROSSER BALLOON RALLY. Sunrise balloon launches from the Prosser airport. Weekend also includes a harvest festival and farmers market. Prosser, Wash. prosserballoonrally.org ■

Submissions

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



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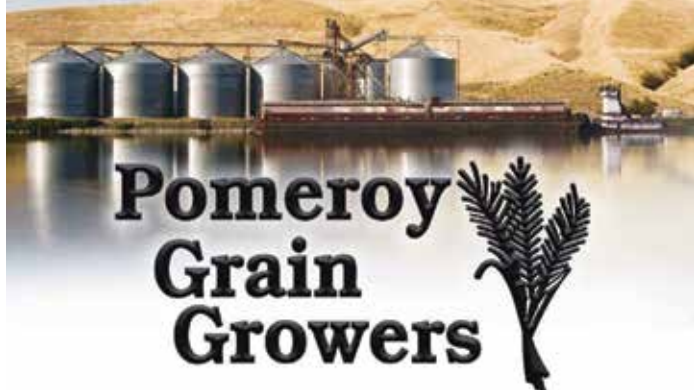


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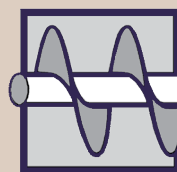
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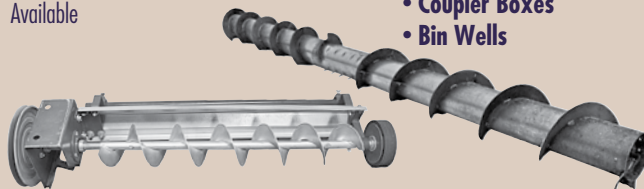


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