

# WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

**JANUARY | 2025**

## **IN THIS ISSUE:**

**What WAWG is watching for in the upcoming  
Washington State Legislative Session**

**2025 AMMO schedule preview**

**Retiring commissioner Gary Bailey looks back**

**WSU winter wheat breeder recognized**

**Washington ag by the numbers**

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

# WHEAT LIFE

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# President's Perspective



## New year equals new beginnings

By Jeff Malone

*President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers*

As we turn the calendar to 2025, we embrace not just a new year, but the promise of new beginnings. This year, with significant changes in Congress, we have reason to hope for the substantial progress our agricultural community needs. Chief among our priorities is the passage of a comprehensive farm bill.

The farm bill is a critical piece of legislation that impacts every facet of farming life, and its absence creates uncertainty in an already challenging industry. Our farms are not just businesses — they are lifelines for communities and cornerstones of the economy. Without a solid farm bill, we are left navigating uncertain waters, which is something our industry can ill afford.

This period of transition and decision-making is a reminder of the importance of strong partnerships. Organizations like the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) and U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) play an indispensable role in ensuring our voices are heard. NAWG helps keep wheat growers at the table when policymakers discuss critical legislation, while USW works tirelessly to keep international markets open and thriving.

The stakes have never been higher. Speculation about new tariffs threatens to complicate global trade even further. In times like these, it's vital to strengthen relationships with organizations that advocate for our industry. These partnerships enable us to respond proactively to potential policy shifts and ensure our farms remain competitive on the global stage.

Closer to home, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers is gearing up for a crucial event: Olympia Days, Jan. 19-21. This annual gathering is a unique opportunity for wheat growers and advocates to meet face-to-face with Washington state legislators. Together, we address the pressing issues facing our state's wheat industry and present a unified message about our goals and challenges.

Olympia Days is more than just a series of meetings — it's a chance to make a meaningful impact. For those who have never attended, I encourage you to consider participating. Sharing your story, your concerns, and your hopes for the future with decision-makers is an incredibly fulfilling experience. Legislators need to hear directly from the people whose lives and livelihoods their decisions affect.

This year's discussions will undoubtedly touch on issues like water rights, transportation infrastructure, and state-level support for farmers. These are topics that influence not just the wheat industry but the broader agricultural community and the economic health of our state. It's crucial that we advocate for solutions that benefit all stakeholders and ensure the long-term viability of our farms. If you are interested in joining us in Olympia, contact the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610.

As we look ahead to 2025, let us remember the strength of our collective voice. Whether we're working with national organizations like NAWG and USW or engaging with local leaders in Olympia, our efforts make a difference. By staying engaged and informed, we can help shape the policies that will define the future of our industry. Let's seize this moment to reaffirm our commitment to collaboration, advocacy, and resilience. Together, we can tackle the challenges ahead and build a brighter future for wheat growers everywhere.

Here's to a productive and prosperous 2025! ■

**Cover photo:** Winter in Eastern Washington. Photo by Robert Hubner. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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# Thank you to our current members

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## WAWG's current top priorities are:

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

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

## More member benefits:

- Greensheet ALERTS • WAWG updates
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# Dialogue

Share your comments with us via email at [editor@wawg.org](mailto:editor@wawg.org) or mail them to 109 East First Avenue, Ritzville, WA 99169-2394. Please keep your submissions less than 300 words.



(Above) In 1981, Kevin Chabre's grandfather, Albert Chabre (middle, bottom row), and uncle, Randy Chabre (left, second row), appeared in *Life Magazine* standing on a grain pile at Walla Walla Grain Growers in Prescott, Wash. (Below) This facility, owned by Northwest Grain Growers, relies heavily on the Snake River to ship growers' grain to export terminals in Vancouver and Portland.



## Lower Snake River dam removal would hit communities hard

Editor,

My grandpa, Albert Chabre, worked with grain growers to establish this site on our property. Northwest Grain Growers has been leasing it from us ever since. It has become one of the most crucial grain shipping ports in our area. With the removal of the dams, this port, along with all other Snake River ports, would no longer function. The trickle effect would be detrimental to the farming communities in Dayton, Waitsburg, Prescott, Clyde, Eureka, and the surrounding areas.

Kevin Chabre  
Prescott, Wash.



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## Regardless of season, advocacy continues

**H**appy New Year! There's been a lot of changes in the last couple months. Not only do we have a large number of new state lawmakers and a new governor, we are also dealing with a change in administration in Washington, D.C. The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) has a lot of work ahead of us, educating and building relationships so wheat growers have a voice to highlight the impacts, both economically and regulatory, of legislative actions.

At the federal level, the farm bill remains a critical concern for the wheat industry even with a last minute one-year extension. WAWG, along with the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), is strongly urging Congress to immediately begin working on a comprehensive farm bill that supports our agricultural community. We advocated for an economic assistance package to support farmers facing financial strain — prices have plummeted by over 36% compared to the 2022-23 marketing year, while production costs remain historically high. Drought and other natural disasters have exacerbated financial pressures, leading to consecutive years of unprofitability for many growers. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, net cash farm income is expected to fall by 27% from 2022, and farm sector debt for 2024 is projected to reach an all-time high when adjusted for inflation. Without economic assistance, many farmers will struggle to continue operations or secure operating credit for 2025.

**S**everal months ago, we sent a team from WAWG to Washington, D.C., to participate in a NAWG fly-in. This event was conducted in collaboration with representatives from the corn, soy, cotton, peanuts, sorghum, and rice organizations, as well as agricultural lenders. The primary objective was to educate Congress on the critical need to strengthen the agricultural safety net and to highlight the economic challenges that have led to multiple years of unprofitability for growers. This marked the first occasion in several years where all agricultural sectors presented a unified front to Congress. The visit made a substantial impact, underscoring the necessity for legislative action and prompting discussions on an economic assistance package.

We are anxious to see how the new administration will address the continued controversy over the lower



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

Snake River dams and the agreements reached by the Biden administration. Even if we have a positive outcome, we must not become complacent. We need to be proactive and keep our advocacy efforts and education momentum moving forward. We can expect with any administration we will always have litigation over whether the dams should be breached or not. The Trump administration's focus on energy and support for increasing supply rather than reducing it has been favorable, allowing the Columbia-Snake River System to remain operational, which provides reliable and cost-effective transportation for our farmers.

**W**e have been working with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) on a transportation study that models what our system would look like without the dams. WSDOT released a status report in mid-December that can be found at [wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-studies/lower-snake-river-dams-transportation-study](https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-studies/lower-snake-river-dams-transportation-study) under the "Outcomes" tab at the bottom of the page. While we appreciate WSDOT's engagement with stakeholders, we believe the taxpayer funds allocated to the study would be far better spent on projects that could have an immediate impact on fish, such as conservation programs or habitat restoration projects. So far, I haven't seen a feasible solution to the high costs and reliability issues presented in their model. We will be diving into the report in the coming weeks.

In an effort to show WSDOT how complex our transportation system is, we gave the department a tour at the ports of Longview and Kalama to highlight a successful system that integrates wheat transportation via barges, trains, and trucks to meet customer specifications. So many people don't realize how much work goes into sourcing the right wheat class with the right protein to meet the customer's requirements and then getting that grain to the export terminal at the same time as the ship. Any delay can result in costly fees or missed shipments.

I am honored to have been nominated to the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association's (PNWA) Executive Committee. WAWG has been working with PNWA and the Inland Ports and Navigation Group to proactively address the various dam studies happening around the

region. I'm also part of a group of river stakeholders that has been instrumental in our advocacy efforts, participating on trips, tours, Army Corps meetings, and educational outreach concerning river system issues like the lower Snake River dams and the Columbia River Treaty.

In August, we organized a tour for congressional staffers at Lower Granite Dam and the Port of Lewiston. The river stakeholders group collaborated to educate staffers about the critical importance of our infrastructure and the M-84 corridor. Unity between stakeholders has been essential in conveying our message effectively, and we have achieved success for two consecutive years with this event. The tour's reputation as a "must-see event" is spreading in D.C., underscoring its impact.

**A**t the state level, I would like to congratulate Derek Sandison on his re-appointment as director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture. Time after time, Director Sandison has demonstrated exceptional leadership, dedication, and a deep understanding of the agricultural needs and challenges within our state. We are thankful he will be representing us for another term.

The state's push for mandatory buffers is still making

waves. WAWG participated in the riparian taskforce but didn't entirely agree with the recommendations included in the final report, especially the suggestion that eminent domain could be used as a regulatory option. We signed onto a letter to the law firm that led the taskforce to provide an agricultural perspective on some of those recommendations. I don't think this issue is going away any time soon, so it's one we'll be keeping a close eye on as the 2025 legislative season gets underway.

Our annual advocacy trip to Olympia is approaching, and we will set our priorities at the next WAWG board meeting on Jan. 7. Our priorities will likely include maintaining our tax exemptions, ensuring conservation legislation remains voluntary rather than regulatory, pursuing a seasonal labor exemption, and educating legislators on harmful legislation. If you are interested in coming with us to Olympia, please contact the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610 for more information.

As we enter the policy season, we welcome volunteers and involvement with WAWG. Our commitment to advocating for the interests of Washington state's wheat growers remains unwavering. Together, we can overcome challenges and seize the opportunities ahead. ■



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## WSDOT releases report on LSRD transportation study

In mid-December, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) released a status report describing existing conditions for barge, rail, and truck activity along the lower Snake River. The status report is part of a transportation study being conducted by WSDOT that looks at what would happen if the lower Snake River dams were removed.

Many agricultural stakeholders in Washington, including the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) and the Washington Grain Commission, met with the study team and provided information that is being used in the study.

“While we appreciate WSDOT’s engagement with stakeholders as they analyze the central role the lower Snake River plays in the region’s transportation infrastructure, we believe the taxpayer funds allocated to the study would be better spent on conservation and habitat restoration efforts,” said Michelle Hennings, WAWG’s executive director. “In the coming weeks, we will be diving

into the report and will be submitting comments and suggestions to WSDOT.”

Using the information they’ve gathered, WSDOT has set up Total Logistics Cost (TLC) diversion model to estimate and evaluate transportation modes and routings based on costs, transportation network capacity, and transportation network access to origin and destination points. According to the status report, the model will be used to “examine how changes in the availability of river transportation may change commodity flow routings and transportation costs in the region. In turn, these outputs will inform assessments of transportation impacts and the impact of development of new infrastructure.”

The next step in the transportation study is to use the TLC model to see what improvements need to be made to the existing transportation system if barges are no longer a viable mode of transportation on the lower Snake River. The status report is available at [wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-studies/lower-snake-river-dams-transportation-study](https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-studies/lower-snake-river-dams-transportation-study) under the “Outcomes” tab at the bottom of the page. ■

## WAWG joins letter urging Sandison reappointment

In November, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers joined with more than 20 other state agricultural stakeholders in a letter



**A CONGREGATION OF CONSERVATIONISTS.** In early December, WAWG Conservation Coordinator Andrea Cox (middle) stopped in at the Washington State Dairy Federation (WSDF) Conference at the Red Lion in Pasco, Wash., to visit with Alicia McCarthy, WSDF resources director, and Kris Mills, Natural Resources Conservation Service’s state outreach coordinator.



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Dig In, Learn More



to Governor-Elect Bob Ferguson urging the reappointment of Derek Sandison as director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA).

“Mr. Sandison’s profound understanding of Washington’s diverse agricultural landscape, combined with his dedication to equitable, sustainable, and forward-thinking solutions, make him an indispensable asset to your administration. He is not only a steward of our agricultural heritage but also a champion of its future resilience and success,” the letter states.

Ferguson reappointed Sandison in early December. Sandison has been the WSDA director since 2015. Before that, he headed the Office of the Columbia River. Along with Sandison, Ferguson also reappointed Cami Feek as

commissioner for the Employment Security Department and Major General Gent Walsh Jr. as the adjutant general of the Washington Military Department.

“I am thankful for these individuals and their unwavering commitment to Washington state. Their experience will help us move our state forward to better serve all Washingtonians,” the governor-elect said in a press release. ■

## How are we doing?

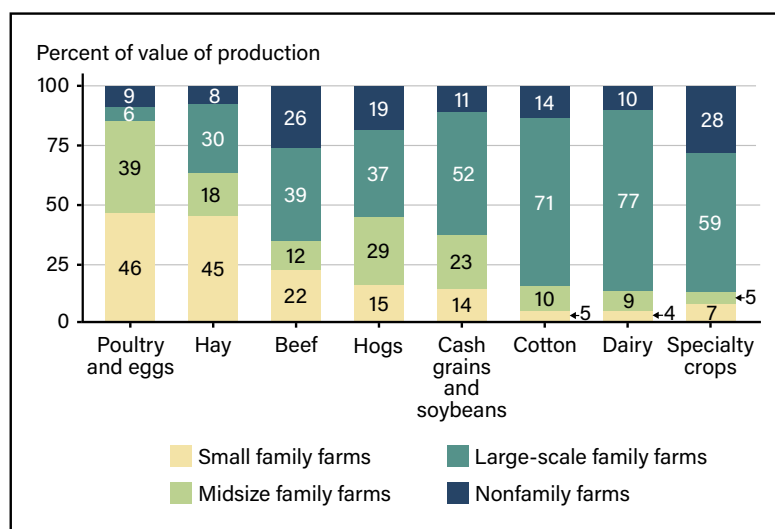
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## Family farms dominate U.S. production

In December, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service (ERS) released a report on America’s farms and ranches. The ERS found that in 2023, most U.S. farms (86%) were small family farms, and those farms operated on 41% of the total value of production. In 2022, small family farms represented 87% of all farms and operated on 44% of ag land. Other statistics published in the report include:

- Large-scale family farms accounted for 48% of the total value of production and 31% of agricultural land in 2023. Midsize family farms accounted for 18% of agricultural land and 18% of the total value of production.
- In total, family farms accounted for about 96% of total farms and 83% of total production in 2023.
- Nonfamily farms accounted for the remaining 4% of farms. Among nonfamily farms, 16% had a gross cash farm income of \$1 million or more. Nonfamily farms vary widely in size, income, and ownership structure and include partnerships of unrelated persons, nonfamily corporations, and farms with a hired manager unrelated to the owners.
- Nonfamily farms’ share of value of production increased from 11% of the total value of production in 2022 to 17% in 2023. Production was concentrated in large-scale nonfamily farms, which accounted for 16% of nonfamily farms and 93% of all nonfamily farms’ production. Large-scale family farms dominate the production of many selected commodities.
- Large-scale family farms accounted for the majority of the value of cash grains and soybeans (52%), cotton (71%), dairy (77%), and specialty crops (59%) production in 2023. ■

Value of production of selected commodities by farm type, 2023



Note: Cash grains include barley, corn, rice, sorghum, wheat, and oats. Specialty crops is a broad term that includes fresh or dried fruits, tree nuts, vegetables, beans (pulses), and horticulture nursery crops. Due to rounding, numbers may not add to 100 percent.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service (ERS) using USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service and USDA, ERS, 2023 Agricultural Resource Management Survey data.



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keep submissions less than 350 words. Submissions may be edited for length. ■

## Board to meet in January

The first Washington Association of Wheat Growers state board meeting of the new year will be on Jan. 7, beginning at 10 a.m., at the Washington Wheat Foundation building in Ritzville. Contact Keri at the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610 for more information. ■

## Texas court blocks BOI reporting on nationwide basis

By Paul Neiffer  
*Farm CPA Report*

Judge Amos L. Mazzant II of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas issued an injunction on Dec. 3 to block the implementation of the Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) under the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA) on a nationwide basis. The lawsuit was brought by the Texas Top Cop Shop, Inc. among other co-plaintiffs.

The CTA would require about 32 million small businesses to file a report in 2024. As of Dec. 3, when I filed a few of my own, there had been about 9 million already filed which means at least 23 million were still unfiled with less than a month to go.

This will get appealed by the federal government to the fifth district, which is one of the more conservative districts in the U.S. and will likely rule in favor of the judge. However, we already have a case being appealed in the 11th Circuit that may go in favor of the government. Either way, this will go to the Supreme Court sometime next year. But in the meantime, it appears you do not have to file your BOI report for a while. ■

## Are you receiving your ALERT?

With their annual membership, Washington Association of Wheat Growers members can receive industry updates through the weekly digital Greensheet ALERT via email. If you are not receiving this ALERT, either we don't have your current email address, or our ALERT is going into your spam folder. Call our office at (509) 659-0610 to make sure we have your current email address. ■

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# POLICY MATTERS

## Funding bill extends farm bill, includes economic aid

Farmers' hopes for a new farm bill were dashed last month as Congress failed to make any traction on new legislation and instead pushed through another one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill. That extension and billions in economic aid and disaster funding for farmers were included in a continuing resolution to fund the government through March 14. The continuing resolution passed the House 366-24 and the Senate 85-11 and was quickly signed by President Biden.

The bill includes \$21 billion for farmers who experienced natural disasters and \$10 billion in emergency economic aid for agriculture. Agriculture groups, including the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), praised the bill's passage and the agricultural aid that was included.

"NAWG applauds members of both the House of Representatives and Senate for coming together to provide much-needed economic assistance and disaster relief for farmers nationwide. While this legislation also includes a one-year farm bill extension and short-term relief, it is not a replacement for a long-term farm bill. As we enter the 119th Congress, NAWG urges lawmakers to work quickly to pass a farm bill that strengthens the farm safety net and provides long-term certainty for producers and rural America," said Chandler Goule, NAWG CEO.

Just days earlier, negotiations over including economic aid to farmers in the continuing resolution appeared to break down entirely with both sides of the aisle blaming the other side. Farm groups were quick to call legislators out, opposing any year-end spending bill that did not include economic aid. While the U.S. Department of Agriculture will make the final calculations, according to initial estimates, wheat producers may see financial assistance payments of about \$31 per acre. Corn would see a payment of about \$43 per acre, while soybeans are at \$30 per acre, cotton at \$84 per acre, and rice at \$71 per acre. There are payment limitations of \$125,000 or \$250,000 (for those who derive at least 75% of their total gross income from farming).

Two previous continuing resolution bills failed to get enough votes to pass out of the House.

The 2018 Farm Bill expired in September 2023. This is the second time Congress has passed an extension. WAWG leaders and staff have participated in multiple

farm bill fly-ins over the past year, advocating for new legislation and for wheat industry priorities. Those priorities include an increase in the wheat reference price, strengthening the farm safety net, and opposing any cuts to crop insurance.

"It's a challenging time in agriculture. High input costs and low commodity prices have combined to push farmers to the edge," said WAWG President Jeff Malone. "We are thankful that Congress recognized the need for immediate aid, but it is critical that we get a farm bill that addresses these issues and provides a strong, stable safety net so growers can have some long-term assurances going forward." ■

## Washington rep named to House ag committee

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers congratulates Rep. **Dan Newhouse** (R-Wash.) for being named a member of the House Agriculture Committee for the 119th Congress. Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-Pa) will remain chairman of the committee.



House Democrats have selected Rep. Angie Craig (D-Minn.) as ranking member of the House Ag Committee. She replaces Rep. David Scott (D-Ga.).

Reauthorization of the farm bill is expected to be at the top of the committee's to-do list in 2025. ■

## Water resources, infrastructure funding bill passes Congress

In early December, both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives passed the Thomas R. Carper Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024. This legislation authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to undertake locally driven infrastructure and water resources projects that also deliver regional and national benefits to strengthen the nation's global competitiveness



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and supply chain, grow the economy, move goods throughout the country, and protect communities from flooding.

“In the Pacific Northwest and across the country, investments in ports, harbors, and inland waterways support good-paying jobs and are key to long-term economic growth, which is why I applaud the passage of the Water Resources Development of 2024,” said Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.), ranking member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. “WRDA 2024 creates good-paying jobs across the country by building on our committee’s bipartisan tradition to improve our nation’s water resources.”

The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association advocates on behalf of the Corps. They supported language in the bill including:

- Authorizing the Inland Waterway Trust Fund for a federal cost share of 75% and 25% nonfederal instead of 65% and 35%.
- Authorizing appropriations to pay Canada for preplanned flood control storage pertaining to the Columbia River Treaty.

The bill now goes to President Biden to be signed into law. ■

## Wheat industry congratulates ag secretary nominee

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) and U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) released the following statements in response to President-elect Donald Trump’s nomination of Brooke Rollins to serve as secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).


“Congratulations Brooke Rollins on her nomination to serve as our next secretary of agriculture. NAWG members look forward to working together to foster public policy initiatives that will help wheat growers and rural communities thrive,” said Chandler Goule, NAWG CEO.

“As the wheat industry’s export market development organization, U.S. Wheat Associates looks forward to working with Secretary-Designate Rollins and the new administration on issues related to fair global trade and market access,” said USW President and CEO Vince Peterson. “We welcome a renewed partnership with her and USDA to support U.S. agriculture and the farmers we represent in the world wheat market.” ■



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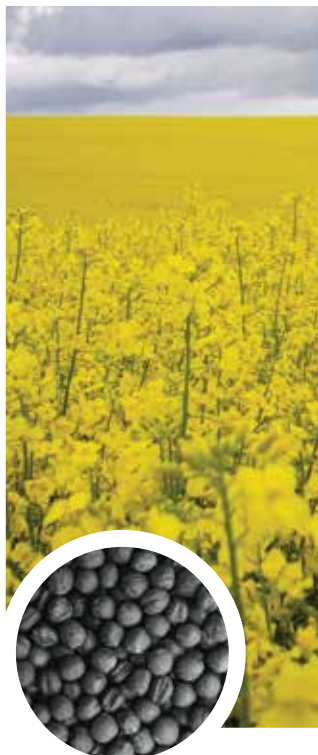


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## Generational farms: Preserving a legacy, sustaining our future

Across Washington, more than 94% of farms are family-owned and operated. These farms are more than businesses — they are legacies. Passed down from one generation to the next, these farms symbolize hard work, perseverance, and a deep connection to the land. For families who have farmed Washington's rich soils for decades — or even centuries — the land is more than property; it's home.

For many of today's wheat farmers, the story begins at an early age. Children grow up helping with harvest, spending hours in the tractor cab, and learning the value of dedication and teamwork. These experiences not only shape their childhood, but also instill a love for farming. Often, that love draws them back to the farm as adults, ready to continue the family legacy. The thought of the family farm not continuing is unthinkable for many — it's a heritage they are determined to preserve.

Yet, preserving this legacy is becoming increasingly challenging. The average age of a U.S. farmer was 58.1 in 2022, reflecting a steady aging trend in the farming population. This underscores the growing need for younger generations to return to the land. Without them, the future of family farms — and the security of our food supply — could be at risk.

But farming is not for the faint of heart. Wheat farmers endure grueling hours and unpredictable challenges. During harvest, 18-hour days in the combine are the norm. In the winter, they brave freezing temperatures for 2 a.m. calving checks. And year-round, they put thousands of hours into maintaining tractors, mending fences,

and working fields. It's a labor of love and necessity, ensuring that their crops not only feed their families but also contribute to feeding the world.

For those who return to the farm, the journey often involves more than inheriting land. It requires buying into the operation, finding new opportunities, and expanding the business to support future generations. These younger farmers innovate, exploring sustainable practices and diversifying operations to adapt to changing markets. In doing so, they make room for their own children to one day step into the family business.

Wheat farming in Washington embodies this generational commitment. Farmers are the original stewards of the land, cultivating it with care and foresight. They understand that healthy soil today ensures bountiful harvests tomorrow. Their work is not just about feeding the present but also about protecting the future — for their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

This commitment goes beyond family pride; it safeguards a safe and secure food supply for the world. The wheat fields of Washington, nurtured by generations of farmers, are a testament to resilience and stewardship. These fields tell stories of families who have weathered storms, embraced innovation, and remained steadfast in their dedication to the land.

To every farmer pulling long days, nurturing the soil, and passing on a legacy: thank you. Your work feeds us all, and your commitment sustains the heart of agriculture. ■



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Duane Lenz • 10:00am • Wednesday, 2/5  
Rob Sharkey • 9:00am • Thursday, 2/6



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- Research Equipment Grants
- Scholarships
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# 2025 legislative preview

## WAWG WILL ENGAGE ON SALMON RECOVERY EFFORTS, AG LABOR ISSUES

By Diana Carlen

*Lobbyist, Washington Association of Wheat Growers*

On Jan. 13, 2025, the Washington State Legislature will be back in session. There will be a lot of new faces, including a new governor (Bob Ferguson), commissioner of public lands (Dave Upthegrove), and a couple dozen new legislators. The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) will need to do a lot of education with newly elected officials and build relationships.

The 2025 session is scheduled to last 105 days. The primary job of the Legislature will be to pass operating, capital, and transportation budgets for 2023-25. Legislators face a daunting task this year as the state is facing a budget shortfall of between \$10 billion and \$12 billion over the next four years.

Politically, Democrats expanded their already considerable majorities in both the state House of Representatives and the Senate by adding a seat in each chamber. Democrats will hold majorities of 59-39 in the House and 30-19 in the Senate. Democrats will now have a 60% majority in each chamber, meaning they will not need Republican votes to pass the bond votes for the transportation and capital budgets. This means that Republicans could be left out of negotiations on those budgets, which have typically been bipartisan.

To kick off the budget development process for the upcoming session, the outgoing governor, Jay Inslee, will be releasing a proposed 2025-27 budget on Dec. 17 (not available at the time this went to publication). That spending plan will serve as a template for lawmakers and Governor-Elect Bob Ferguson when they write budgets in the 2025 session. Gov. Inslee is likely to release two budget proposals. State law requires the governor to propose a budget that is balanced without any new revenue. It is speculated that the first proposal Gov. Inslee releases will be one with deep cuts in state programs and services. It is also anticipated he will release an alternative budget that relies on new revenue (either new taxes or an increase in existing taxes) to buy back some of the proposed cuts in his first budget proposal. Governor-Elect Ferguson is anticipated to follow with a document listing his budget priorities, but not a full budget proposal.

Democrat legislators have indicated that new revenue (i.e. tax increases or new taxes) will be necessary to deal with the projected budget deficit. With the Legislature's makeup more progressive this year, there is a lot of discus-

sion over a wealth tax on the highest state earners or a tax on high salaries paid by large corporations similar to Seattle's JumpStart tax.

Typically, there are over 2,000 bills that are introduced during a legislative session. WAWG staff will be reviewing every piece of legislation that is introduced and engaging on any legislation that will impact farmers in the state. WAWG's primary focus will be maintaining a viable agricultural industry in the state and making sure the rural areas of the state have a voice as legislation is developed.

On the policy front, now that the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) will remain in place after voters rejected repealing the law, it is likely we will see legislation making tweaks to the law as the state moves forward, potentially linking its carbon market with California and Quebec. WAWG will continue to advocate for a comprehensive solution to ensure that all fuel used by the ag industry on the farm and for transporting agricultural products is exempt from carbon surcharges, which the Legislature intended when it passed the CCA.

While some farmers have been able to purchase fuel without the carbon surcharge, the issue has not been resolved for smaller loads and at retail. Governor-Elect Ferguson has publicly stated that ensuring farmers get promised rebates is one of his priorities. WAWG looks forward to working with him on this issue.

WAWG will also be involved in discussions regarding salmon recovery efforts. For the past couple of years, WAWG has been actively engaged with the work of the Riparian Taskforce in developing measures to improve and protect riparian areas across the state. WAWG continues to support voluntary incentive programs, like the Voluntary Stewardship Program, instead of regulatory approaches.

It is anticipated that there will be a number of labor proposals that could impact agricultural operations, such as policies to make it easier to unionize farmworkers, allowing striking workers to access unemployment benefits, increases to the minimum wage, and expansion of the paid family leave program that could impact smaller employers.

WAWG will be hosting their annual Olympia days Jan. 19-21. We encourage our members to come experience Olympia days and meet with elected officials so lawmakers can learn more about our industry from the people who grow the food that feeds the world. ■



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# WHO'S REPRESENTING YOU IN 2025?

## Washington State Representatives

|    |                   |                  |    |                      |                      |    |                       |                 |
|----|-------------------|------------------|----|----------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1  | Davina Duerr      | D-Bothell        | 17 | Kevin Waters         | R-Stevenson          | 33 | Edwin Obras*          | D-Seattle       |
|    | Shelley Kloba     | D-Kirkland       |    | David Stuebe*        | R-Washougal          |    | Mia Su-Ling Gregerson | D-SeaTac        |
| 2  | Andrew Barkis     | R-Lacey          | 18 | Stephanie McClintock | R-Vancouver          | 34 | Emily Alvarado        | D-West Seattle  |
|    | Matt Marshall*    | R-Eatonville     |    | John Ley*            | R-Hazel Dell         |    | Joe Fitzgibbon        | D-Burien        |
| 3  | Natasha Hill*     | D-Spokane        | 19 | Jim Walsh            | R-Aberdeen           | 35 | Dan Griffey           | R-Allyn         |
|    | Timm Ormsby       | D-Spokane        |    | Joel McEntire        | R-Cathlamet          |    | Travis Couture        | R-Allyn         |
| 4  | Suzanne Schmidt   | R-Spokane Valley | 20 | Peter Abbarno        | R-Centralia          | 36 | Julia G. Reed         | D-Seattle       |
|    | Rob Chase         | R-Liberty Lake   |    | Ed Orcutt            | R-Kalama             |    | Liz Berry             | D-Seattle       |
| 5  | Victoria Hunt*    | D-Isaquaah       | 21 | Strom Peterson       | D-Edmonds            | 37 | Sharon Tomiko Santos  | D-Seattle       |
|    | Lisa Callan       | D-Isaquaah       |    | Lillian Ortiz-Self   | D-Mukilteo           |    | Chipalo Street        | D-Seattle       |
| 6  | Mike Volz         | R-Spokane        | 22 | Beth Doglio          | D-Olympia            | 38 | Julio Cortes          | D-Everett       |
|    | Jenny Graham      | R-Spokane        |    | Lisa Parsley*        | D-Olympia            |    | Mary Fosse            | D-Everett       |
| 7  | Andrew Engell*    | R-Colville       | 23 | Tarra Simmons        | D-Bremerton          | 39 | Sam Low               | R-Lake Stevens  |
|    | Hunter Abell*     | R-Colville       |    | Greg Nance           | D-Bainbridge Island  |    | Carolyn Eslick        | R-Sultan        |
| 8  | Stephanie Barnard | R-Pasco          | 24 | Adam Bembbaum*       | D-Port Angeles       | 40 | Debra Lekanoff        | D-Bow           |
|    | April Connors     | R-Kennewick      |    | Steve Tharinger      | D-Sequim             |    | Alex Ramel            | D-Bellingham    |
| 9  | Mary Dye          | R-Pomeroy        | 25 | Michael Keaton*      | R-Puyallup           | 41 | Tana Senn             | D-Mercer Island |
|    | Joe Schmick       | R-Colfax         |    | Gyndy Jacobsen       | R-Puyallup           |    | My-Linh Thai          | D-Bellevue      |
| 10 | Clyde Shavers     | D-Oak Harbor     | 26 | Adison Richards*     | D-Gig Harbor (check) | 42 | Alicia Rule           | D-Blaine        |
|    | Dave Paul         | D-Oak Harbor     |    | Michelle Caldier     | R-Port Orchard       |    | Joe Timmons           | D-Bellingham    |
| 11 | David Hackney     | D-Tukwila        | 27 | Laurie Jenkins       | D-Tacoma             | 43 | Nicole Macri          | D-Seattle       |
|    | Steve Bergquist   | D-Renton         |    | Jake Fey             | D-Tacoma             |    | Shaun Scott*          | D-Seattle       |
| 12 | Brian Burnett*    | R-Wenatchee      | 28 | Mari Leavitt         | D-University Place   | 44 | Brandy Donaghy        | D-Everett       |
|    | Mike Steele       | R-Chelan         |    | Dan Bronoske         | D-Lakewood           |    | April Berg            | D-Mill Creek    |
| 13 | Tom Dent          | R-Moses Lake     | 29 | Melanie Morgan       | D-Parkland           | 45 | Roger Goodman         | D-Kirkland      |
|    | Alex Ybarra       | R-Quincy         |    | Sharlette Mena       | D-South Tacoma       |    | Larry Springer        | D-Kirkland      |
| 14 | Gloria Mendoza*   | R-Grandview      | 30 | Jamila Taylor        | D-Federal Way        | 46 | Gerry Pollet          | D-Seattle       |
|    | Deb Manjarrez*    | R-Wapato         |    | Kristine Reeves      | D-Federal Way        |    | Darya Farivar         | D-Seattle       |
| 15 | Chris Corry       | R-Yakima         | 31 | Drew Stokesbary      | R-Auburn             | 47 | Debra Entenman        | D-Kent          |
|    | Jeremie Dufault   | R-Selah          |    | Joshua Pennel*       | R-Orting             |    | Chris Stearns         | D-Auburn        |
| 16 | Mark Klicker      | R-Walla Walla    | 32 | Gindy Ryu            | D-Seattle            | 48 | Vandana Slatter       | D-Bellevue      |
|    | Skyler Rude       | R-Walla Walla    |    | Lauren Davis         | D-Shoreline          |    | Amy Walen             | D-Kirkland      |

\*Freshman Representative

## Washington State Senators

|   |                   |                  |    |                |                 |    |                      |                 |
|---|-------------------|------------------|----|----------------|-----------------|----|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Derek Stanford    | D-Bothell        | 16 | Perry Dozier   | R-Walla Walla   | 33 | Tina Orwall          | D-Normandy Park |
| 2 | Jim McCune        | R-Graham         | 17 | Paul Harris    | R-Vancouver     | 34 | Joe Nguyen           | D-West Seattle  |
| 3 | Marcus Riccelli   | D-Spokane        | 18 | Adrian Cortes* | D-Battle Ground | 35 | Drew C. MacEwen      | R-Union         |
| 4 | Leonard Christian | R-Spokane Valley | 19 | Jeff Wilson    | R-Longview      | 36 | Noel Christina Frame | D-Seattle       |
| 5 | Bill Ramos        | D-Isaquaah       | 20 | John E. Braun  | R-Chehalis      | 37 | Rebecca Saldaña      | D-Seattle       |
| 6 | Jeff Holy         | R-Spokane        | 21 | Marko Lias     | D-Mukilteo      | 38 | June Robinson        | D-Everett       |

**Find contact information  
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## U.S. Senators

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Patty Murray (D)</b><br>murray.senate.gov • (202) 224-2621 | <b>Maria Cantwell (D)</b><br>cantwell.senate.gov • (202) 224-3441 |
|---|---|

## U.S. Representatives

|  |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Suzan DelBene (D) District 1</b><br>delbene.house.gov/ • (202) 225-6311 | <b>Rick Larsen (D) District 2</b><br>larsen.house.gov/ • (202) 225-2605 | <b>Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D) District 3</b><br>gluesenkamp.perez.house.gov • (202) 225-3536 | <b>Dan Newhouse (R) District 4</b><br>newhouse.house.gov/ • (202) 225-5816 | <b>Michael Baumgartner (R) District 5</b><br>Contact information not available | <b>Emily Randall (D) District 6</b><br>Contact information not available | <b>Pramila Jayapal (D) District 7</b><br>jayapal.house.gov • (202) 225-3106 | <b>Kim Schrier (D) District 8</b><br>schrier.house.gov/ • (202) 225-7761 | <b>Adam Smith (D) District 9</b><br>adamsmith.house.gov/ • (202) 225-8901 | <b>Marilyn Strickland (D) District 10</b><br>strickland.house.gov • (202) 225-9740 |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|--|---|--|

**Congress in 2025:**

U.S. Senate

47th



4(D)

53(R)

215(D)

220(R)

30(D)

19(R)

59(D)

39(R)

U.S. House of Representatives

State Senate

State House of Representatives

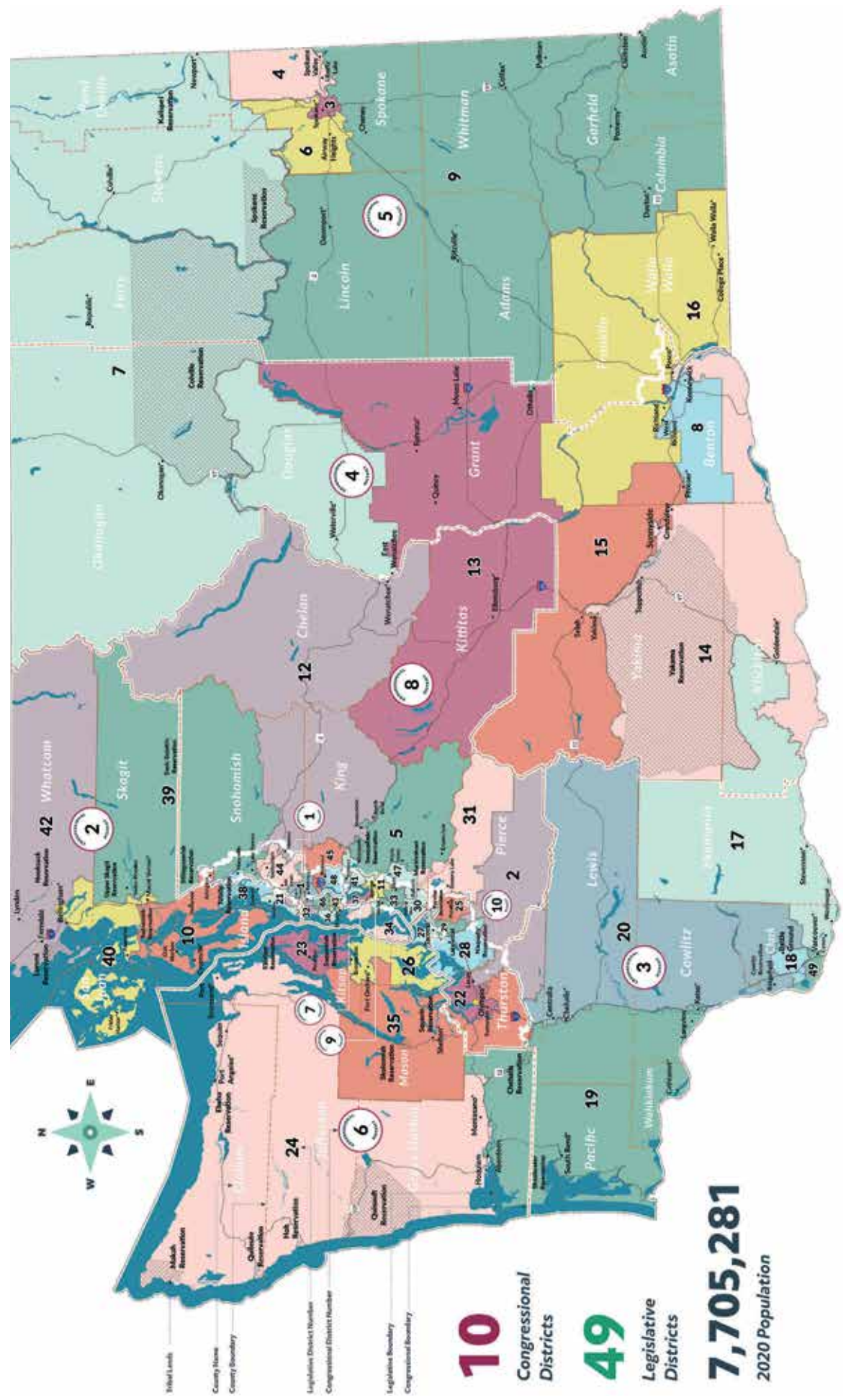
State Legislature in 2025:

State Senate

State House of Representatives

|    |                  |              |    |                   |                |    |                    |                 |
|----|------------------|--------------|----|-------------------|----------------|----|--------------------|-----------------|
| 7  | Shelly Short     | R-Addy       | 22 | Jessica Bateman   | D-Olympia      | 39 | Keith L. Wagoner   | R-Sedro-Woolley |
| 8  | Matt Boehnke     | R-Kennewick  | 23 | Drew Hansen       | D-Poulsbo      | 40 | Elizabeth Lovelett | D-Anacortes     |
| 9  | Mark Schoesler   | R-Ritzville  | 24 | Mike Chapman      | D-Port Angeles | 41 | Lisa Wellman       | D-Mercer Island |
| 10 | Ron Muzzall      | R-Oak Harbor | 25 | Chris Gildon      | R-Puyallup     | 42 | Sharon Shewmake    | D-Bellingham    |
| 11 | Bob Hasegawa     | D-Seattle    | 26 | Deb Krishnadasan* | D-Gig Harbor   | 43 | Jamie Pedersen     | D-Seattle       |
| 12 | Keith W. Goehner | R-Dryden     | 27 | Yasmin Trudeau    | D-Tacoma       | 44 | John Lovick        | D-Mill Creek    |
| 13 | Judy Warrick     | R-Moses Lake | 28 | T'wina Nobles     | D-Fircrest     | 45 | Manka Dhingra      | D-Redmond       |
| 14 | Curtis King      | R-Yakima     | 29 | Steve Conway      | D-South Tacoma | 46 | Javier Valdez      | D-Seattle       |
| 15 | Nikki Torres     | R-Pasco      | 30 | Claire Wilson     | D-Federal Way  | 47 | Claudia Kauffman   | D-Kent          |
|    |                  |              | 31 | Phil Fortunato    | R-Auburn       | 48 | Vacant             |                 |
|    |                  |              | 32 | Jesse Salomon     | D-Shoreline    | 49 | Annette Cleveland  | D-Vancouver     |

\*Freshman Senator





# Spinning up grower education

## 2025 AMMO SESSIONS TO BEGIN IN JANUARY

By Trista Crossley  
Editor, *Wheat Life*

This year's slate of Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's (AMMO) winter sessions will focus on mental health, weeds, local and global markets, and U.S. Department of Agriculture agency updates.

"Our goal each year with the AMMO program is to bring information that is important and relevant to growers," said KayDee Gilkey, outreach coordinator for the Washington Association of Wheat Growers.

All in-person sessions begin with registration at 9:30 a.m., and presentations at 10 a.m. Lunch will be included. WAWG members can attend AMMO sessions free of charge; nonmembers will be charged \$25 per session. Preregistration is required. More information is available at [wawg.org/ammo-workshops/](http://wawg.org/ammo-workshops/) as well as a registration link. Growers can also call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610 to register. AMMO has offered grower education programs since 2009. It provides education opportunities and an avenue for growers to connect with professionals and experts on many of the challenges facing agriculture.

The Lions Club building in the Franklin County town of Washtucna will play host to an AMMO seminar this year and will include lunch at hometown favorite, Sonny's Tavern and Grill. While AMMO sessions have been held in many parts of Eastern Washington, this is the first time the schedule has come to Washtucna. This session, scheduled for Feb. 19, will include updates from the leaders of the state's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices.

"Sonny's is owned and operated by a local ranching family, and supporting rural communities is something AMMO is proud to do," Gilkey said.

For growers who can't make it to Washtucna but still want to hear from NRCS and FSA, the session will be repeated in Spokane Valley on Feb. 21 and includes a roundtable of NRCS and FSA experts who are ready to answer grower questions.

Another special AMMO session Gilkey highlighted will focus on mental health, presented by Darla Tyler-McSherry. Tyler-McSherry turned her grief over her father's suicide into a mission to prevent other farm families from experiencing the same thing through her initiative, Ask In Earnest.

Ask In Earnest trains people to recognize the signs of somebody struggling with mental health and provides tools and resources to start a difficult conversation. Tyler-McSherry hopes the AMMO session will help farmers understand there's nothing wrong in asking for help when things get overwhelming.

"That's where we challenge the stigma and help people understand that just like we'd go to the doctor for help with our sprained knee or our diabetes or our high blood pressure, we can tap into a professional to help with our mental health, too. There's no shame in that. We shouldn't feel like we have to suffer through that alone. It's not a weakness to ask for help. It's a sign of incredible strength and bravery," she explained.

*Wheat Life* previewed Tyler-McSherry's AMMO presentation in the December

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issue. A copy of the article can be found at [wheatlife.org/from-grief-to-action/](http://wheatlife.org/from-grief-to-action/).

While the bulk of AMMO sessions will happen in February, the first one will be held on Jan. 28, in Pullman, Wash., and will focus on all things weeds. Washington State University (WSU) Extension personnel will discuss a variety of topics, including managing drift, herbicide efficacy, and the new Endangered Species Act pesticide labels. Gilkey has applied for three pesticide credits for the session.

One of AMMO's most popular sessions tends to be the one focused on global and wheat markets. Allison Thompson, owner of The Money Farm, will examine the global wheat market, while WSU Extension's Randy Fortenbery will focus on the regional and local market.

A farm bill webinar with Jake Westlin, vice president of policy and



communication for the National Association of Wheat Growers, will be held on Thursday, Feb. 13, beginning at 11:30 a.m.

Wheat College, also part of the AMMO offerings, is scheduled for early June with Peter “Wheat Pete” Johnson at the Wheat Land Fairgrounds in Ritzville. Wheat College will offer a mix of indoor and outdoor presentations, providing interactive demonstrations on the latest agronomic research being conducted in the Pacific Northwest. Besides Johnson, personnel from WSU Extension will provide localized presentations. Registration reminders will be mailed prior to the event to WAWG members. Unlike the regular AMMO sessions, admittance for Wheat College is free of charge to both WAWG members and nonmembers.

AMMO sessions for 2025 are:

**All Things Weeds** with Washington State University Extension personnel. Pesticide credits have been applied for. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. and session begins at 10 a.m., Jan. 28, at the Courtyard by Marriott in Pullman, Wash.

**Farm Bill Update** webinar with the National Association of Wheat Growers, Thursday, Feb. 13, beginning at 11:30 a.m.

**USDA Program Updates** with NRCS and FSA.

Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. and session begins at 10 a.m., Feb. 19, at the Washtucna Lions Club building in Washtucna, Wash.

**Global and Local Wheat Markets** with Allison Thompson, The Money Farm, and Randy Fortenbery, WSU Extension. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. and session begins at 10 a.m., Feb. 20, at the Hampton Inn-Garden Springs in Spokane, Wash.

**USDA Program Updates** with NRCS and FSA. A roundtable of experts will answer grower questions following the main presentation. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. and session begins at 10 a.m., Feb. 21, at the USDA headquarters in Spokane Valley, Wash.

**Ask in Earnest** with Darla Tyler-McSherry. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. and session begins at 10 a.m., Feb. 27, at the Hampton Inn-Garden Springs in Spokane, Wash.

**Wheat College** with Peter “Wheat Pete” Johnson at the Wheat Land Fairgrounds in Ritzville, Wash. More information will be made available at [wawg.org/ammo-workshops/](http://wawg.org/ammo-workshops/) closer to the event. ■



2025

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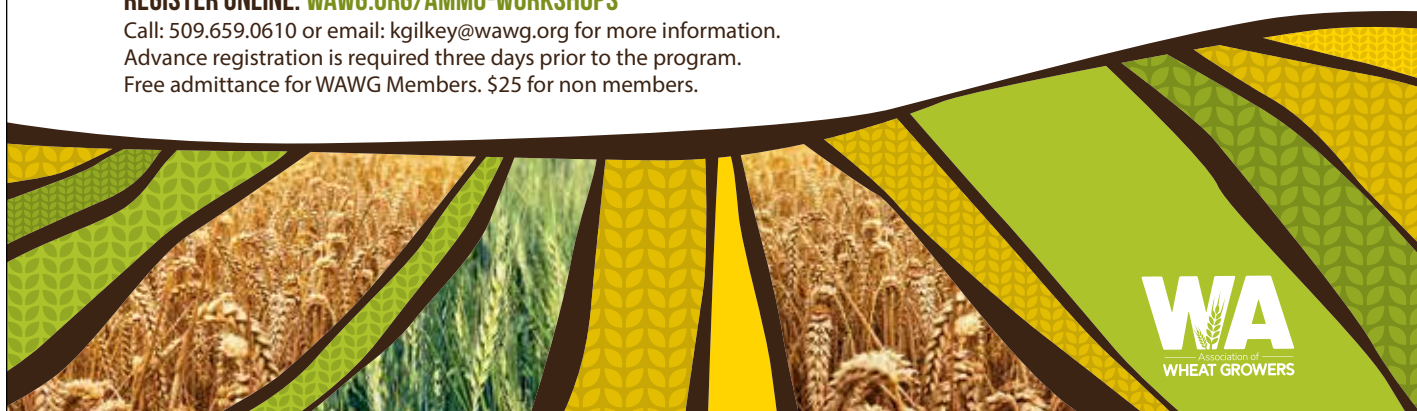
Our goal each year with the AMMO program is to bring information that is important and relevant to growers. AMMO has provided grower education programs since 2009 and an avenue to connect with professionals and experts on many of the challenges facing agriculture. This year's slate of Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's (AMMO) winter sessions will focus on mental health, weeds, local and global markets. NRCS and FSA staff will also be providing program updates. All in-person sessions begin with a check-in at 9:30 a.m. Presentations begin at 10 a.m.

**REGISTER ONLINE:** [WAWG.ORG/AMMO-WORKSHOPS](http://WAWG.ORG/AMMO-WORKSHOPS)

Call: 509.659.0610 or email: [kgilkey@wawg.org](mailto:kgilkey@wawg.org) for more information.

Advance registration is required three days prior to the program.

Free admittance for WAWG Members. \$25 for non members.



# 'Act Now' to get assistance quickly

By Andrea Cox

*Conservation Coordinator, Washington Association of Wheat Growers*

On Nov. 7, the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington (NRCS-WA) implemented the Act Now policy. Through this program, NRCS-WA can quickly approve and obligate a ranked application in a designated ranking pool when an eligible application meets or exceeds a state-determined, minimum threshold ranking score. Applications are ranked according to the needs of applicants, local resource concerns, and the amount of conservation benefits the work will provide. Growers can potentially begin conservation projects sooner versus waiting through the traditional application process.

Applications that will be considered are those for eligible practices specific to the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) renewals and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Growers are not required to apply separately to Act Now.

Eligible practices differ by state. Eligible applications for the NRCS-WA EQIP FY 2025 will be placed in the following ranking pools:

- High Tunnel/Low Tunnel Systems-\$750,000 funds available (60-point minimum ranking score).
- Conservation Planning Activities and Design and Implementation Activities and Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities-\$250,000 available (20-point minimum ranking score).
- Statewide Disaster Recovery-\$500,000 available (30-point minimum ranking score) that encompasses any range, forest, or pasture that was burnt or impacted by flood events and includes fence replacement, seeding, or replanting necessary due to losses from disasters last year.
- North Central Team Local Working Group's Forestry Initiative-\$150,000 available (30-point minimum ranking score) for forest landowners in Douglas, Chelan or Okanogan counties that want to do forest thinning, woody slash treatment, fuel breaks, tree planting, forest buffers, or wildlife habitat plantings.
- Snake River Team Local Working Group's Forestry Initiative-\$1 million (30-point minimum ranking score) that includes forest thinning, wood slash treatment, fuel breaks, tree planting, forest buffers, or wildlife plantings in Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, Walla Walla, and Franklin counties.

- Snake River Team Local Working Group's Nutrient Management Initiative-\$2 million available (30-point minimum ranking score) that utilizes only practice code 590, nutrient management for growers who are interested in better nutrient management.
- Northeast Team Local Working Group's Forest Health, Forest Health and Wildfire-\$1.3 million available (30-point minimum ranking score) that focuses largely on fire mitigation, using forestry practices including fuel break, woody residue treatment, tree thinning and tree planting, and wildlife habitat similar to the North Central and Snake River teams.
- West Palouse Team Local Working Group's Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience-\$978,000 available (30-point minimum ranking score). This is similar to the Northeast, North Central and Snake River teams.
- Southwest Team Local Working Group's Forestry Initiative-\$750,000 available (30-point minimum ranking score). This is similar to the above listed forestry initiatives.

As mentioned, numerous practices are being utilized by growers and are region-specific. For example, the Snake River team utilizes practice code 217, soil and source testing for nutrient management to look at soil health through soil testing and is pairing this with the 590 nutrient management practice.

Applications will be pre-approved, if they meet the minimum ranking threshold score, until funds run out. Applications will then move forward to the contracting process at local NRCS field offices. Field office staff have 45 calendar days from the date of pre-approval to complete obligation. Once the Act Now funding limit has been reached, applications can be rolled over into the next funding cycle or considered in other ranking pools.

To get started, contact your local NRCS office, where an NRCS conservation planner will plan a visit to your property. Following the visit and discussion regarding your goals and any resource concerns, the conservation planner will develop and propose a conservation plan that includes conservation practices or activities to address management goals and resource concerns. ■





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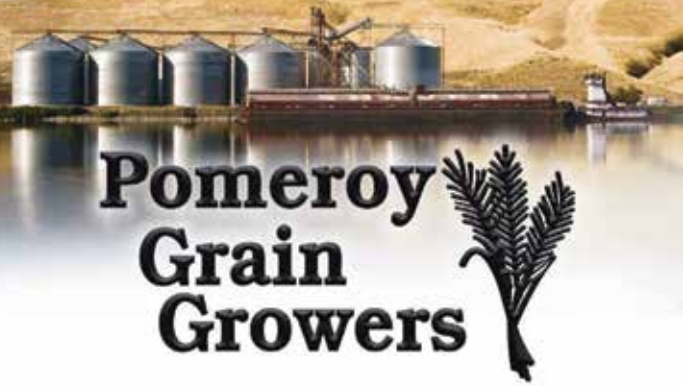


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### Keith Griswold, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

By Kevin Gaffney  
*Special to Wheat Life*

Not many people are fortunate enough to have their career employment place them in locations where they can indulge their favorite hobbies to the extreme.

Keith Griswold would qualify as one of those few. His conservation career has included stops in Oregon, Idaho, Alaska, and Washington state. An avid hunter and fisherman, Griswold has successfully hunted for elk, moose, grizzly bears, Dall sheep, mountain goats, caribou, and more. He enjoys fishing for salmon, steelhead, trout, ling cod, and yelloweye rockfish. He continues to enjoy camping, hunting, and fishing with his wife, Julie, and sons, Aaron and Jonah. Their sons are out on their own now, but they all reside in Coeur d'Alene.

Griswold was born in Nampa, Idaho, and raised in The Dalles, Ore. His extended family operates a farm/ranch south of Nampa, where they raise alfalfa, seed crops, and registered Angus cattle. Griswold often worked on the Idaho farm when he wasn't working for farmers and ranchers around The Dalles, where he graduated from high school.

There is a wide variety of crops grown in the Nampa area, including row crops, seed crops, orchards, and vineyards.

Between the family operation and working on Oregon farms, Griswold had a wide variety of work experience in his youth. After high school, Griswold attended Oregon State University and earned a degree in rangeland resources management with a minor in forestry. Following college, Griswold was hired by the Umpqua Soil and Water Conservation District in southwest Oregon. His four years there were spent mostly working with the timber industry. Griswold then joined the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission.

"I was hired to work on the total maximum daily loads



Keith Griswold, assistant state conservationist for programs for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, caught this 22 pound King salmon (below) off Montague Island in Alaska.



(TMDLs) and nutrient management plans," said Griswold. "A TMDL is the calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant allowed to enter a body of water so that it meets and will continue to meet the water quality standards for levels of any particular pollutant."

After four years working in southern Idaho, Griswold was hired by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). He first worked in Caldwell, Idaho, a diverse region that produces small grains, fruits, potatoes, and other vegetables. The next stop for Griswold was the Cascade region in Idaho where he worked mostly with livestock and timber industry operations.

Griswold followed that with a long trip north. He spent eight years as a district conservationist in Alaska. That move provided world-class hunting and fishing opportunities in the land of northern lights and midnight sun.

Griswold returned to the "lower 48" in 2016 and has worked in the Spokane NRCS regional office since then. He was named assistant state conservationist for programs in 2019.

"My position involves overseeing contract obligations from the conservation teams in the 11 geographic regions here in Washington state," said Griswold.

"Most of the work we handle is in three specific NRCS programs. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is the most popular one offered by NRCS. It provides financial assistance and direction for protecting and/or enhancing natural resources. It can be used to fix problems or help operators to meet established conservation standards.

"EQIP was initiated in the 1996 Farm Bill. Because of the



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popularity of the program, there is often a waiting list for applicants. The participation rate for EQIP is twice that for all the other programs offered. If applicants are not accepted, they can try again the following year. EQIP can be used for establishing new conservation practices on farms, such as grass strips, wildlife habitat, divided slopes, terraces, or other erosion control measures."

Another example of an EQIP project could be for cattlemen to install wireless fencing systems.

Wireless fencing uses GPS mapping and cell phone network service. The cattle must be fitted with special neck collars. The rancher sets the map boundaries on his phone, and when the cows reach the border of the invisible fence, the collar delivers a mild shock to the top of their neck to back them away. The system works in a radius of five to six miles from a controller unit located in each pasture unit.

"The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is the program that provides funds to ag operators who desire to adopt higher levels of conservation," said Griswold. "Unlike the EQIP program where we are helping to meet standards, with CSP, we provide funds to help them achieve a higher level of soil or resource conservation. Examples of this could be helping to finance adoption of direct seeding or to help pay for precision ag equipment. Another example could be the purchase of a stripper header for grain harvesting."

Griswold explained that the third main program managed by his office is the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which he said has been very successful in Washington state.

"RCPP requests must be from an organization such as an irrigation district, conservation district, or a

group of growers or producers," said Griswold. "It is basically a one-to-one fund matching program to double the impact of the project they are working on."

Griswold pointed to the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program, which is an ongoing project of the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District to replace irrigation wells with water from the Columbia River. The RCPP has funded close to \$50 million for this project. He appreciates how the NRCS programs are able to make a real difference for participants.

"When you can clearly see the progress in production or in the reduction of erosion, that really hits home with me," said Griswold. "Whether we are working with cattlemen, orchardists, grain growers, vineyards, or oyster farmers, we can help make significant improvements to their operations."

"I believe most ag operations in our state are doing a pretty good job with conservation plans and practices. We help to promote our programs with information booths at county fairs, ag shows, and conventions and with pre-



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sentations at cattlemen association meetings and soil conservation district events. This helps generate more interest for our programs.”

Griswold said the most important issue right now is for Congress to get busy and pass a new farm bill as soon as possible. Since agriculture is already operating on an extension of the current farm bill, he feels it is important to get the new bill passed so the Farm Service Agency and the NRCS can begin implementation of the bill.

For questions or comments concerning NRCS programs, Griswold can be reached at (509) 323-2971. ■

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By Ben Barstow



There are agronomic benefits to having barley in your rotation, or to put it in more contemporary terms, a more *diverse* crop rotation that includes barley is more *sustainable* and can *improve soil health*. Eastern Washington farmers know, however, that feed barley is not price competitive with spring wheat. Without a contract to a malt house or some other specialty use justifying a premium over the market price for feed barley, it is hard to justify planting it when you know it will probably not pay for the cost of producing it.

When a farmer decides to trade a piece of equipment or a company decides to close a processing plant, there are usually many factors that go into those decisions. Operating costs, though, are always an important consideration. The Climate Commitment Act was signed into law in May 2021 and is one of a suite of laws intended to drive down greenhouse gas emissions in Washington. Emissions-intensive, trade-exposed (EITE) industries named in the bill include food manufacturers, which encompasses businesses, like barley malting facilities, that process raw materials into food products for sale to wholesalers or retailers. These EITE industries were granted an exemption for carbon dioxide emissions through 2026, followed by a small percentage of total emissions being phased in through 2034. After that point in time, it is yet to be determined how the implementation will continue or what the added costs might be, though the Washington State Department of Ecology is working on recommendations for the Legislature.

If a food manufacturer has a facility in need of upgrades or improvements and knows that operating costs are going to go up more than competitors in other states over the next 10 years — and quite possibly rise much more after 2034 — how likely is it they make a major investment in the facility? Would you borrow money today to refurbish a plant that you may have to close in 10 years because the operating costs make your Washington plant too expensive compared to your competitor's plant in another agricultural area?

We've now heard that Great Western Malting has chosen to concentrate on its malting facility in Pocatello, Idaho, and will close its Vancouver, Wash., facility. This joins a list of departures that includes a potato processing facility, some vegetable processing facilities, and a feed processor. The owners of all of them have chosen to invest their money elsewhere rather than continue

agricultural processing with the unknown, but likely higher, future costs in Washington. These cases represent how production will shift out of Washington. I don't see a dramatic wholesale exodus, but as facilities reach their expected useful life as defined by the federal tax code, they will not be upgraded or improved but gradually closed, and new facilities will be constructed elsewhere in states, or even countries, where their investments are more likely to provide a return.

Policy makers in our state have recognized that economically forcing carbon-releasing industries out of state defeats the purpose of reducing carbon. They refer to this as "leakage," and this is why exemptions were initially granted to EITE industries. Part of those recommendations that Ecology is working on is a report due by Dec. 1, 2026, that provides alternative methods for determining no cost allowances for EITE emissions. It will take continued advocacy for Washington producers to help Ecology see how important revisions to EITE exemptions are for the sustainability of our agricultural industry.

In the case of barley, the WGC has been investing your assessment dollars in a barley breeding program to develop malting barley varieties adapted to our production environment that would economically compete with spring wheat. The next market-limiting factor for barley is the capacity of local processing facilities.

I think every sustainability article I have read mentioned how important rotational crops are for sustainable production, but in our quest for carbon neutrality, we are effectively making barley unviable as a rotational crop. It is especially hard to find dryland crops that fit our local climate that are economically and biologically sustainable. Unfortunately, I don't have any ideas for new rotational crops, even though U.S. Department of Agriculture and state-level researchers have been looking for new, viable crops for our area since I was a college student in the 1970s.

Canola was one of the crops considered, but it took the recent construction of a canola crushing facility in our state, shortly before the Climate Commitment Act, to make canola viable as another crop for some dryland producers. Previously, the closest canola crushing plant was two states away in Great Falls, Mont. The question is, when that new plant reaches its expected useful life, when it is time for an upgrade in 15 or 20 years, will it also relocate to another state? ■

## Looking back

Gary Bailey reflects on his time with the Washington Grain Commission

As my time serving as Wheat District 2 Commissioner for the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) comes to an end, I find myself reflecting on the remarkable journey it has been. Representing Washington's wheat and barley growers has been both a privilege and a responsibility that I've carried with pride.

I had always wondered what happened to our wheat after it left the export markets in Portland. Joining the Washington Grain Commission would help answer that question.

I had returned to the farm in 1989 after a 12+ year stint with the farm credit system. Upon returning to the farm, I served as a director for St. John Grain Growers, which is now part of Northwest Grain Growers. The background and education I received from these organizations proved beneficial when joining the WGC.

The mission of the WGC is to enhance the long-term profitability and competitiveness of Washington small grains and small grain producers by responsible allocation of assessment funds in research, marketing, and education. In other words, to advance our industry in ways an individual farmer could not do on their own.

Over the years, I've witnessed firsthand the resilience, innovation, and determination that define our industry. From advancing cutting-edge research to expanding global markets and cultivating the next generation through both grower and public education, the work of the commission is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together.



Linda and Gary Bailey. After many years of service, Gary is stepping down from the Washington Grain Commission.

Washington wheat's global reputation has been strong throughout my tenure on the commission. The WGC has always been transparent with our global customers, regardless of the news. It pays dividends when communicating with our customers. Building and maintaining relationships has been a focus of the WGC.

An activity that started during this time was the technical exchange of club wheat with Japan. As the leading buyer of Western White Wheat, Japanese flour millers had a desire to provide input into club varieties

coming in the variety release pipeline. The exchange was instrumental in helping our club wheat breeder provide varieties that the end user prefers. It makes sense that we provide what the customer wants rather than just saying "here's what's available."

A few years ago, the WGC partnered with the Idaho Wheat Commission and the Oregon Wheat Commission to fund a U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) technical position to work with millers and bakers in South America to educate them on the quality and value of U.S. wheat classes. They love the quality but, logistically, face challenges. Most companies don't have the storage capacity to take advantage of full cargos. Companies are working together to secure the desired wheat and have it delivered to two or more ports. Collaborations between USW staff, importing companies, and export companies have led to increased sales in the region.

The WGC will continue to build new relationships along with USW, as well as build upon current relation-



ships. USW has the boots on the ground and does a fantastic job of promoting our wheat.

Research funding is an important function on the commission. We all remember the widespread falling numbers issue we had in 2016. The commission dedicated funds to research falling numbers, which led the commission to successfully lobby to get a full time U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientist located in Pullman to lead a group of scientists to study the issue. The commission and federal funds have led to the development of a quick test for falling numbers so elevators can quickly segregate grain. Breeders have also been releasing varieties with stronger falling numbers, as well as culling weak varieties out of the pipeline.

Innovation in herbicide resistant varieties has been robust. The Clearfield and CoAXium systems are tools widely used by farmers. More recently, Rydrych MZ has

been released by Washington State University (WSU), which provides a third herbicide resistant trait. Rydrych MZ has resistance to metribuzin and provides another avenue to combat grassy weeds.

It should be noted that the WSU and ARS wheat and



Gary Bailey (in red) talks to a South Korean film crew from the SPC Samlip company in July 2018. SPC is the affiliate organization for a variety of familiar American brands in South Korea, including Baskin Robbins and Dunkin'.



In May 2018, the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) partnered with U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) and the Korea Baking School to hold a cake-baking contest to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the WGC. Gary Bailey (third from right, front row) and WGC former CEO Glen Squires (center, front row) served as judges for the competition. Also pictured is the student winner of the contest (seated front row), as well as representatives from the Korea Baking School and USW. Photo courtesy of USW.





In 2018, the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) and the Japan Flour Millers Association (JFMA) came together to formalize the collaboration between the WGC and JFMA to strengthen the club wheat breeding program in Pullman, Wash. The group that attended the signing ceremony included representatives from Washington State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Washington State elected officials (not pictured).

barley breeders regularly engage the commission to get direction for the programs. Recent and ongoing discussions will center around the new biotech drought resistant trait HB4. Should we introduce the trait into our soft white wheats? Should we be proactive and get the trait introduced into our wheat and put them on the shelf for release upon acceptance? To date, our markets have been dead set against the acceptance of GMO wheats. Acceptance will not happen quickly, and there are numerous hurdles to overcome.

Speaking of GMOs, have you ever had someone tell you they don't eat wheat products because they are all GMO? I have. There is also the perception by some that we douse our wheat with Roundup just before harvest. This really speaks to the need for continuing education. Many growers are using social media to tell wheat's story, and they do a great job. Shows like Washington Grown also highlight ag in a positive light. The WGC provides funding to Wheat Week and Ag in the Classroom, two excellent programs that highlight wheat to elementary and secondary students.

Throughout my time on the WGC, one of the most rewarding aspects of the role has been collaborating with fellow commissioners, growers, researchers, and industry partners. While the challenges facing our industry are complex and ever-changing, I've learned that no single individual or organization can tackle them alone.

While challenges remain, I am confident that the foundation we've built will support continued progress for years to come.

As I look back on my time with the WGC, I'm proud of the accomplishments our board has made. This role has not only deepened my appreciation for the challenges we face but also my hope for the opportunities that lie ahead. I would encourage producers to get involved in the industry, whether it's grower associations, cooperative boards, or other organizations. Working together with common goals gets things done!

It's been an honor to serve on the WGC and the USW boards. It would not have been possible without family support at home and the support of my district's growers in Whitman County. ■



Gary Bailey (left) and Mike Carstensen at Bailey's final board meeting as a Washington representative to U.S. Wheat Associates in Chandler, Ariz., in November 2024.



# Standard for excellence

## COMMISSION RECOGNIZES THE WORK OF WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY WINTER WHEAT BREEDER

The Washington Grain Commission (WGC) is recognizing Washington State University (WSU) winter wheat breeder Arron Carter and celebrating his contributions to the Washington wheat industry.

A professor in WSU's Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, Carter recently became the sole holder of the O.A. Vogel Chair of Wheat Breeding and Genetics, previously co-held with WSU spring wheat breeder, Mike Pumphrey.

"Washington wheat farmers are fortunate to have someone like Arron leading the winter wheat breeding program. His ability to balance scientific innovation with the real-world needs of farmers ensures our crops are competitive globally while being practical to grow locally," WGC CEO Casey Chumrau said. "Beyond his success in breeding, his dedication to our community and the industry sets a high standard for excellence. Arron is a true advocate for Washington's farmers, always listening to their needs and translating those insights into solutions that improve their livelihoods."

The O.A. Vogel Chair of Wheat Breeding and Genetics was the first of six research endowments created by the WGC at WSU to establish a perpetual funding mechanism for the advancement of the commission's strategic research goals. The Vogel chair was established in 1990 through a partnership with the state of Washington, WSU, and the WGC.

"What impresses me most about Arron is his humble, hard-working demeanor. Whether it is in the field, the classroom, or on a trade mission, he is a tremendous representative for WSU and the college and always puts the best interest of growers and his students first," said Wendy Powers, Cashup Davis Family Endowed Dean of the College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences.

WSU and the Vogel chair work closely with the WGC and wheat growers to understand the needs for the in-

dustry, then respond with opportunities to exceed those needs.

"This partnership is of great value to WSU," Powers said. "Through dialogue and collaboration, we build a more resilient grain industry and, therefore, a more resilient Washington, which is at the heart of the land-grant mission."

As Vogel chair, Carter participates in trade team



Arron Carter (second from right) connects with growers and other colleagues at the Washington Genetics booth during the industry trade show at the 2024 Tri-State Grain Grower's Convention in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

and technical servicing activities through U.S. Wheat Associates (USW), the export market development organization for the U.S. wheat industry.

"Arron's availability and willingness to engage with overseas buyers through USW activities and with our growers here at home has helped us foster a critical connection between innovation in wheat breeding and the needs of our global customers," WGC Vice President Mary Palmer Sullivan said. "Whether hosting trade team tours or participating in technical exchanges, he ensures the quality and performance needs of customers are heard and incorporated into his breeding program, all while delivering the yields and agronomic traits growers depend on." ►

For example, Carter participated in a Wheat Quality Improvement Team (WQIT) trip to Latin America in December of 2018, visiting with wheat buyers in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Peru to learn about the end-use quality factors that Latin American buyers value.

“Arron is a once-in-a-generation wheat breeder bringing new technology and methods coupled with persistence to his work,” said Steve Wirsching, vice president and director of the USW West Coast Office located in Portland, Ore. “He is a natural leader amongst his peers and in the Wheat Quality Council, where many of his soft white varieties have been recognized for genetic gains for yield and quality.”

Carter was named the WSU winter wheat breeder in July 2009 after completing his doctoral degree with an emphasis in wheat breeding and genetics earlier that year. Using a combination of traditional plant breeding methods, molecular marker technology, and biotechnology, his breeding program focuses on high-yielding, disease-resistant varieties with good end-use quality that will maintain profitability and reduce the risk to growers.

“The best thing about being the Vogel Endowed Chair is the continued interaction I get to have with the growers and working with them to improve cultivars through continued research. The funding allows me to rapidly begin addressing the needs of growers in Washington and the needs of the breeding program and then leverage that for additional competitive funding,” Carter said. “Looking forward, I am really excited about working on new sources of herbicide tolerance in wheat to provide growers additional options for weed control.”

According to the U.S. Department



Arron Carter (in red) provides a tour of the plant breeding greenhouse facilities on the Washington State University campus in Pullman in July 2024 to a group of representatives from the top milling companies in South Korea. These trade team visits, coordinated through U.S. Wheat Associates, provide critical direct feedback to plant breeders regarding the quality and end-use characteristics of their wheat varieties from international buyers.

of Agriculture, 85% of all wheat acres planted in Washington in 2024 were winter wheat. Carter’s winter wheat breeding program makes 800 crosses annually, evaluating about 60,000 head rows and 20,000 yield plots, along with operating four observation nurseries for disease ratings. This is comparable to other national public programs with a large impact on the industry.

Over the last 15 years, Carter has led the winter wheat breeding and genetics program to release over 20 new winter wheat cultivars that address a wide range of pests, diseases, and environmental factors present in the Pacific Northwest region. These range from plant resistance for stripe rust and snow mold (among others), to bolstering traits for emergence and falling number scores, and providing additional tools to growers in their cropping systems through CoAXium wheat varieties, and, most recently, a variety with Metribuzin tolerance.

“Continuous improvement is the hallmark of the winter wheat breeding program,” Powers said. “Arron has a strong vision and plan for the program that deploys the latest technologies and, in return, produces the best possible product and strong returns for growers long into the future.”

The Vogel endowment was established with an initial principal of \$1.5 million. Through investment growth, the Vogel endowment now stands at over \$3 million. Its 2023-24 research distributions were nearly \$121,000.

There are five additional research faculty positions that are funded in part by WGC endowments aimed at improving varietal development, end-use and processing attributes, agronomics, production systems, economics, and new uses for wheat and barley.

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





Biosolids application during the study at Lind Dryland Research Station. Photo courtesy of William F. Schillinger.

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# Tracking biosolids

## LONG-TERM AGRONOMIC IMPACTS IN DRYLAND WHEAT SYSTEMS

Wheat production in the dryland region of the Inland Pacific Northwest (PNW) is strongly reliant on limited rainfall and soil moisture availability. This dryland region of Eastern Washington receives less than 14 inches of rainfall annually, and soils in the region are characterized by erosion-prone and low soil organic carbon (SOC) content. The wheat-fallow system is the most common cropping system in this region and typically involves tillage during spring of the fallow period to minimize soil water evaporative loss during the hot, dry summer. While this rotation results in reliable wheat yields, it is associated with decline in SOC, increased wind erosion, and overall degradation of soil health, which are among a few major increasing concerns among farmers in the region. The reduction in SOC, in turn, contributes to decreased nutrient cycling, water retention, and overall soil fertility. To help improve soil health, farmers and researchers are looking into the feasibility and economics of adding amendments like biosolids, biochar, and manure, mainly because limited low moisture availability limits how much crop biomass can be produced and added to soils. Additionally, conservation tillage (e.g., undercutter tillage, no-tillage, etc.) and crop residue retention can help in improving SOC, nutrient availability, soil health, and reduce erosion.

In response to these challenges, researchers in the region have been investigating cost-effective strategies to improve SOC and enhance sustainability. One potential alternative that is getting traction is the incorporation of biosolid fertilizers into soils. Biosolids, produced as by-products of municipal wastewater treatment, are processed and tested to meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards. Studies across the U.S. showed that using biosolids is an effective way to improve soil fertility, SOC, soil water retention, nutrient availability, and microbial activity and abundance while reducing

soil erosion and compaction, especially in dryland wheat systems. While immediate benefits when actively applying biosolids have been researched in the region to some extent, there is still a lack of research-based information on the persistence and residual effects of biosolids applications (after discontinuation of applications), hereafter referred as “legacy effects” in the low precipitation region of the PNW.

We conducted a study to determine the legacy effects of biosolids seven years after the last application at the Washington State University’s Lind Dryland Research Station. The study was set up in 2012 under a wheat-fallow system with two fertilizer treatments including biosolids and synthetic fertilizers (N+S fertilizers) and two tillage treatments including traditional tandem disk and conservation undercutter tillage. Both tillage treatments were applied immediately after biosolids applications at 2.8 dry tons per acre (on dry weight basis to meet two wheat crops requirements) in mid-April of 2012 and 2016. Anaerobically digested and dewatered Class B biosolids were sourced from the King County wastewater treatment plant. For synthetic fertilizer treatment, 50 pounds of nitrogen per acre and 10 pounds of sulfur per acre were applied for each wheat crop as liquid aqua NH<sub>3</sub>-N and thiosol S, respectively. Synthetic fertilizers were injected with the undercutter in late April. For the tandem disk treatment, synthetic N+S was stream-jetted on the surface then immediately incorporated into the soil. These treatments were continued until 2019, and after that, all the plots were tilled, fertilized with synthetic fertilizer (N+S), and returned into wheat-fallow rotation. In 2022, to determine the legacy ef-

**Table 1: Soil properties in the top 4 inches affected by tillage method (tandem disk vs. undercutter) and fertilizer type (biosolids vs. synthetic N+S) seven years after application of biosolids**

| Fertilizer treatments             |                   |                   |                       |                       |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Soil Properties                   | Biosolids         | Synthetic         |                       |                       |
| Total Carbon %                    | 1.15 a*           | 0.75 b            |                       |                       |
| Total Nitrogen %                  | 0.129 a           | 0.093 b           |                       |                       |
| Soil Phosphorus (ppm)             | 87.6 a            | 27.3 b            |                       |                       |
| Soil Sulfur (ppm)                 | 8.87 a            | 5.44 b            |                       |                       |
| Soil Zinc (ppm)                   | 3.18 a            | 0.525 b           |                       |                       |
| Soil Iron (ppm)                   | 55.3 a            | 34.1 b            |                       |                       |
| Soil Manganese (ppm)              | 16.0 a            | 8.69 b            |                       |                       |
| Soil Copper (ppm)                 | 2.06 a            | 0.913 b           |                       |                       |
| Soil Magnesium (ppm)              | 1.49 b            | 1.68 a            |                       |                       |
| Soil pH (ppm)                     | 5.25 b            | 5.7 a             |                       |                       |
| Tillage treatments                |                   |                   |                       |                       |
|                                   | Disk              | Undercut          |                       |                       |
| Soil Magnesium (ppm)              | 1.54 b            | 1.63 a            |                       |                       |
| Fertilizer and Tillage treatments |                   |                   |                       |                       |
|                                   | Disk<br>Biosolids | Disk<br>Synthetic | Undercut<br>Synthetic | Undercut<br>Biosolids |
| Total Carbon (%)                  | 0.923 b           | 0.728 b           | 0.769 b               | 1.37 a                |
| Total Nitrogen (%)                | 0.106 b           | 0.0913 b          | 0.0094 b              | 0.151 a               |
| Soil Potassium (ppm)              | 930 ab            | 889 b             | 998 a                 | 958 ab                |

\*Means followed by small letters show significantly different means among treatments at p < 0.05 within a row.

fects of previous biosolids application on yields, soft white winter wheat was seeded in late August 2022.

Soil samples were taken from the top 4 inches of soil and tested for pH, electrical conductivity, nitrate-N, ammonium-N, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sodium, sulphur, zinc, iron, manganese, copper, boron, total soil carbon, and total soil nitrogen. (Table 1). Grain yields, spike density, thousand kernel weight, and straw production (biomass without grain) were measured from each plot, as well as grain protein. Results showed that seven years after the last application of biosolids, soil nutrients were significantly higher compared to synthetic fertilizer. As you can see in Table 1, measured amounts of soil nutrients ranged from 1.6 times higher for both sulfur and iron, 1.8-fold for manganese, 2.3 times higher for copper, 3.2 times higher for phosphorus, and up to 6.1-fold for zinc in the biosolids treatments. Total soil carbon and nitrogen were higher under biosolids with undercutter tillage than the disk with synthetic fertilizer.

The biosolids’ legacy effects were also more pronounced on crop responses, including spike density, grain yield, and straw production that were up to



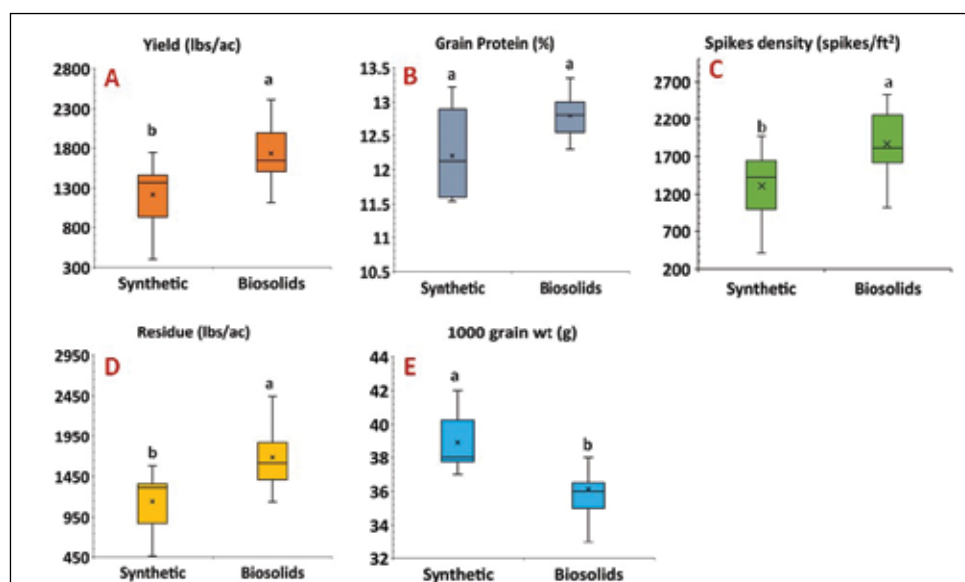
47% higher (Figure 2). Although previous studies reported higher grain protein under biosolids, the legacy effects of biosolids and synthetic fertilizers showed similar grain protein. The increased straw production under biosolids can be crucial for the low SOC, erosion-prone soils of the PNW. The long-term availability of soil nutrients from biosolids' legacy is likely why grain yield (42%), straw production (47%), and spike density (42%) were higher compared to synthetic fertilizer. Our study shows that even seven years after the last application, biosolids continue to supply both macro- and micro-nutrients, making them a cost-effective and long-lasting option for boosting soil nutrient availability in the PNW drylands. Overall, biosolids improved nutrient availability, wheat grain yield, and some yield components even seven years after the last application. This study suggests that periodic biosolids application can enhance soil nutrient availability, SOC, and grain yields in dryland wheat systems of PNW.

## Ongoing research at Lind Dryland Research Station

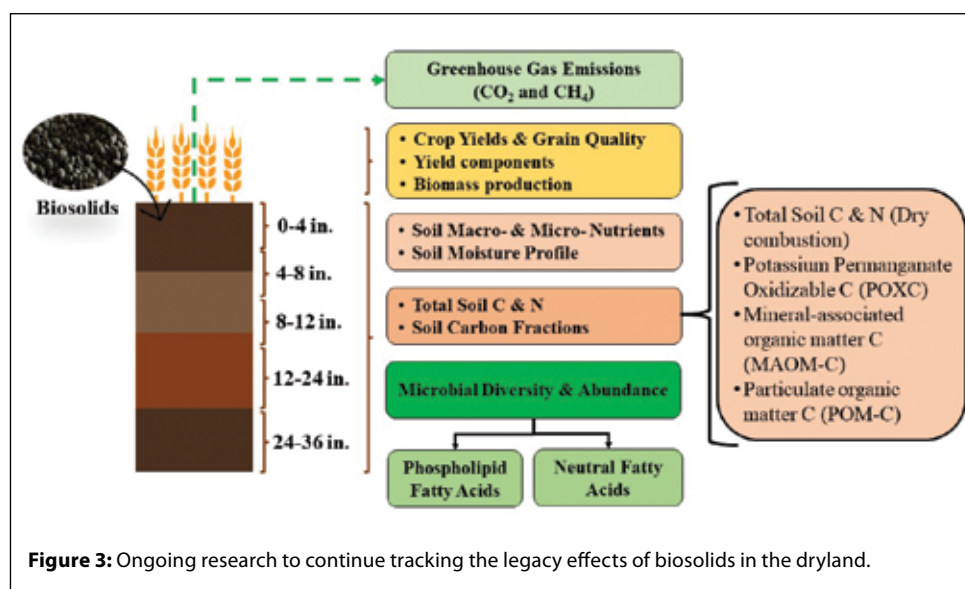
Currently, I (Surendra Singh) am working with soil scientist Dr. Shikha Singh at the Lind Dryland Research Station to continue tracking more detailed legacy effects of biosolids applications in dryland wheat systems such as SOC sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions, deep soil carbon, nutrient supply, microbial diversity and abundance, microbial activity, carbon fractions, and overall soil health (Figure 3).

For more information related to this article please refer to these articles and podcast:

- Wheat Beat Podcast with Drew Lyon, "Digging into the Legacy in Dryland Research with Dr. Surendra Singh" (Nov. 4, 2024). Link: <https://smallgrains.wsu.edu/wbp195/>



**Figure 2:** Responses of wheat grain yields, yield components, grain protein, and straw production to biosolids and synthetic fertilizers seven years after application of biosolids across both tillage treatments. Different letters above data boxes denote the significant differences between means based on LSD at  $p \leq 0.05$ .



**Figure 3:** Ongoing research to continue tracking the legacy effects of biosolids in the dryland.

- Schillinger, W. F., Cogger, C. G., & Bary, A. I. (2022), "Biosolids and conservation tillage for rainfed wheat farming in dry Mediterranean climates." *Soil and Tillage Research*, 223, 105478. Link: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167198722001647>
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# WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

## USDA tightens corn, wheat ending stocks



By Allison Thompson  
*Owner, The Money Farm*

For any remaining bulls (those still holding a positive outlook) in the grain sector, the December U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) report was a true Christmas gift with corn, soybeans, and wheat rallying higher following its release. Typically, the December round of USDA data is uneventful with the agency waiting until the January report to make any aggressive adjustments. This year was different, and many of the adjustments can have interesting implications to futures markets as the calendar turns to 2025, specifically for both corn and wheat markets.

The star of the report was the corn market with U.S. ending stocks falling well below trade estimates. The USDA reported 2024-25 U.S. corn ending stocks at a surprising 1.738 billion bushels (BB) versus the average trade estimate of 1.906 BB. The aggressive 200-million-bushel (MB) cut was due to two domestic demand adjustments: exports and ethanol usage. Domestic exports, alone, were raised by 150 MB while ethanol usage was increased by 50 MB. The export adjustment was the “shock” to the market as the change all but dispels the recent headlines of front-loading demand. In the end, the U.S. has less corn on hand going into 2025 as exports rise to their second highest level on record.

Global corn ending stocks saw a similar adjustment, they were cut 7.7 million metric tons (MMT) to 296.4 MMT. The cut was not only due to lower U.S. supplies but lower production in the EU and Mexico, as well as higher import demand from Bangladesh, the EU, Mexico, and Iran. It’s also worth noting that Chinese imports were cut by 2 MMT, but China’s corn import activity has essentially been nonexistent. Interestingly, the market didn’t pay too much attention to this fact. Why? Based on monthly export totals by destination, Mexico and Japan have been bigger players in 2024 corn export demand. In my opinion, that demand looks to remain consistent, especially with the USDA printing proof of their strengthening demand in recent reports. Overall, it was an encouraging report for the corn market.

Wheat, believe it or not, actually had a supportive December USDA report. In a mildly friendly move, the USDA lowered U.S. wheat ending stocks for 2024-25 to

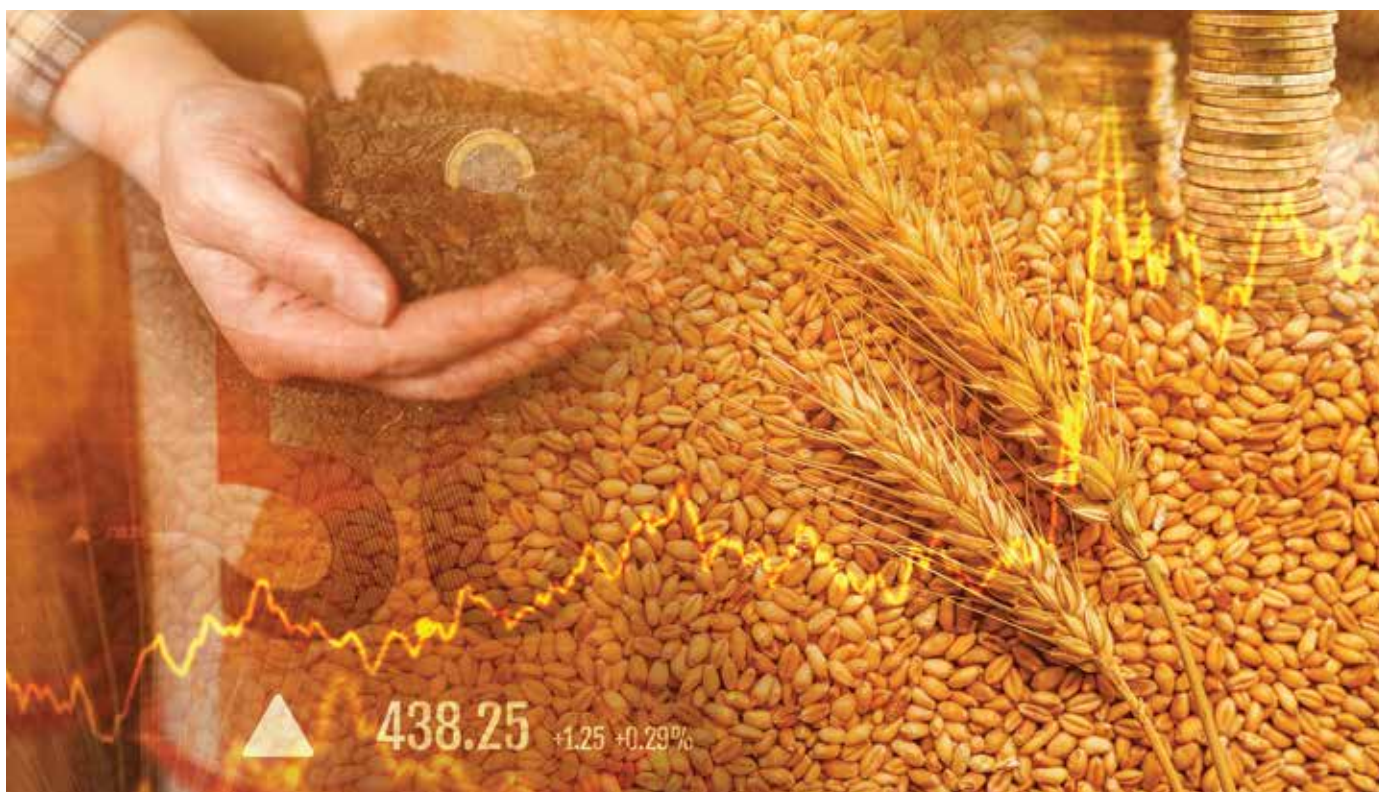
795 MB, down from 815 MB in November. Despite a 5 MB increase to projected imports, a 25 MB increase in wheat exports resulted in a cut of 20 MB from the U.S. balance sheet. The export demand adjustments stemmed from higher-than-expected sales and shipments of white wheat to east Asian markets, which gained 15 MB of the 25 MB increase. The remainder of the increased export demand was divided between soft red winter and hard red spring wheat. Hard red spring wheat demand is hard to ignore with the USDA increasing imports for the wheat class and local basis firming. With lower quality wheat in the heart of the growing region this year, the cash price will be the true determinant of continuing demand. So far, it remains supportive.

Global wheat ending stocks for 2024-25 were raised slightly despite lower global production. The USDA made notable lower production adjustments to both the EU and Brazil based on harvest data, but global trade was also lowered in anticipation of Russia’s newly imposed export quota. As a result, global wheat ending stocks were reported .3 MMT higher, but still remain at their tightest level since 2015-16 at 257.9 MMT. At this point, the global wheat market is trying to outguess Russia, not only on teeter tottering production estimates but also on the implications it could have on global demand. Unfortunately, the back-and-forth narrative isn’t going away anytime soon with the dormancy period flip flopping outlooks. I have said it before, and I will say it again, winter wheat has the nine lives of a cat. It can die nine times and still come back for a 10th. Be prepared.

As of mid-December, corn and wheat markets have been trading alongside one another. Historically, both corn and wheat tend to correlate. Corn follows wheat and vice versa. Not in tandem or equal steps, but the market movement has coincided more often than not. This makes both the corn and wheat markets important to understand going forward as they could have market implications to one another. With that, if you’re bullish (optimistic about higher prices) corn, you may, in turn, have to be bullish wheat. If you’re bullish wheat, you may, in fact, have to be bullish corn. This is not always the case, but currently, the fundamentals (supply and demand) for both markets appear to be matching. U.S. ending stocks for both commodities are slipping with demand being an important piece of futures price discovery.

Good or bad, demand data is released weekly by the





USDA. Both export inspections and export sales reports will be the proof in proving or denying the current USDA estimates. While the numbers can sway weekly, especially around the holidays, the trade is always looking for a trend. Right now, export demand for both corn and wheat has been strong. That trend needs to continue over the coming months to keep futures prices supported. Unfortunately, potential trade policy changes and geopolitical tensions are unknowns looming over both corn and wheat markets. Arguments can be made on whether or not any come to fruition, but I will certainly be keeping an eye on all major trade partnerships moving forward. Any headline pertaining to these topics has the potential to support or completely crumble the current outlook.

Ultimately, supply and demand remain key to both fundamental (supply and demand) and technical (chart pattern) outlooks. From a technical or charting perspective, the recent action has sparked conversations about a possible “new plateau” in grain prices, meaning grain markets may not trade to levels experienced in previous years. This is certainly a point worth exploring with current prices at or near four-year lows. At this point, current prices have the potential to be new long-term lows (a “new plateau”) or a temporary peak that will be followed by a downhill return to prices we haven’t seen in the past four to five years. In the case of corn, the market may be proving the “new plateau” theory over the past

six months. The August low in corn was printed at \$3.72 in the front month contract when the projected carryout was near 2 BB. The corn market and balance sheet are well off both of those levels now. If the action is proving a “new plateau,” wheat will need to follow suit. With demand and production issues materializing, it may be a matter of time before the wheat market follows the corn market’s trend higher.

Talking with clients, the tone has changed with many feeling a bit more optimistic than before. I get it. Grains are coming off four-year lows, and the latest USDA report was supportive, which has sparked some market optimism. Is there more fuel to put on the fire? In my opinion, it depends on continued demand and the position of large speculators (the Funds). Grains are cheap compared to the stock market, and the Funds certainly have the power to push prices higher. Remember, we now know why the Funds were holding a net long corn position (betting on higher prices) ahead of the December report while remaining net short (betting on lower prices) on wheat. With that, it will be interesting to see if they flip these short positions to add to their recent winner. I’m optimistic. ■

**Allison Thompson** is the owner of The Money Farm, a grain marketing advisory service located in Ada, Minn. She is also still actively involved in her family’s grain farm, where her husband and father grow corn, soybeans, and wheat.

# Washington ag by the numbers

Washington crop production value dropped in 2023; wheat falls to 6th

From the National Agricultural Statistics Service

The value of Washington's 2023 agricultural production totaled \$14 billion, up almost 6% from the previous record high of \$13.2 billion in 2022. The value of Washington's crop production in 2023 was \$7.71 billion, down about 10% from the record high value of \$8.56 billion in 2022. The value of livestock production in 2023 totaled \$4.35 billion, up nearly 5% from the previous year. The value of livestock production was a new record high following the 2022 record high.

Apples remain the leading agricultural commodity in the state, with a 2023 value of \$1.99 billion, down 4% from the previous year's value of production of \$2.07 billion. In 2023, apples represented 14% of the total agricultural value, down from 16% of the total share in 2022. Cattle and calves value of production climbed to second in the state rankings from fourth in 2022. The record high value of cattle and calves in 2023 was \$1.33 billion, up 30% from the previous year. Milk dropped into third position when

compared to 2022, with a value of production totaling \$1.33 billion in 2023, down 21% from 2022. Potatoes' value of production was up 23% from the previous year with a record high value of production of \$1.16 billion, ranking fourth in the state. Hay value of production rounded out the top five with \$861 million, down 4% from 2022.

The top five commodities had a combined value of \$6.68 billion, or 48% of the 2023 value for all commodities (excluding government payments). The same five commodities in 2022 had a combined value of \$6.61 billion, 50% of the total value.

All wheat value of production dropped from third to sixth rank in 2023, with value of production at \$672 million, a 43% decrease from the record high of \$1.71 billion in 2022. Among all wheat-producing states, Washington ranked second in production in 2023, producing 7.6% of the nation's wheat. Kansas was the leading wheat-producing state in 2023.

Eight of the top 10 commodities decreased from the

| Commodity   | Rank |      | Value of production     |                         |                         | Change                 |
|---|------|------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
|   | 2023 | 2022 | 2021<br>(1,000 dollars) | 2022<br>(1,000 dollars) | 2023<br>(1,000 dollars) | 2023/2022<br>(percent) |
| Apples  | 1    | 1    | 2,007,502               | 2,067,829               | 1,991,918               | -3.7                   |
| Cattle and Calves                                 | 2    | 4    | 857,601                 | 1,023,989               | 1,332,089               | 30.1                   |
| Milk <sup>1</sup>                                 | 3    | 2    | 1,209,744               | 1,678,291               | 1,331,722               | -20.7                  |
| Potatoes  | 4    | 5    | 712,442                 | 942,651                 | 1,160,712               | 23.1                   |
| Hay, all  | 5    | 6    | 601,794                 | 899,495                 | 861,760                 | -4.2                   |
| Wheat, all  | 6    | 3    | 756,838                 | 1,171,388               | 672,207                 | -42.6                  |
| Eggs  | 7    | 8    | 184,441                 | 459,707                 | 405,894                 | -11.7                  |
| Hops  | 8    | 9    | 482,267                 | 434,460                 | 405,767                 | -6.6                   |
| Onions  | 9    | 7    | 292,982                 | 504,913                 | 383,662                 | -24.0                  |
| Grapes, all                                       | 10   | 12   | 300,420                 | 394,865                 | 309,299                 | -21.7                  |
| Value of crop production                          |      |      | 6,982,057               | 8,560,704               | 7,712,567               | -9.9                   |
| Value of livestock production                     |      |      | 2,998,882               | 4,156,609               | 4,345,473               | 4.5                    |
| Farm-related income <sup>2</sup>                  |      |      | 264,888                 | 508,937                 | 1,892,870               | 271.9                  |
| <b>Total value of production, all commodities</b> |      |      | <b>10,245,827</b>       | <b>13,226,250</b>       | <b>13,950,910</b>       | <b>5.5</b>             |

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

<sup>2</sup>Includes forest service products sold and other farm-related sources of income published in USDA Economic Research Service's Farm Income and Wealth Data.



record high value of production in 2022. While all grapes entered the top 10 in 2023 with a value of production of \$309 million, this is down 22% from the record high in 2022 of \$395 million. Egg value of production dropped 12% from the record high value of production in 2022 of \$460 million but remained in the top ten in 2023. Onion value of production was \$383 million, down 24% from the record high in 2022 of \$504 million. Hops value of production of \$405 million dropped 7% from 2022 but was still ranked eighth in the state.

Other notable commodities that declined in value in 2023 were blueberries, down 57% to \$78 million. Raspberries were down 43%, with a value of production of \$76 million in 2023. Sweet cherry value of production of \$290 million, is down 27% from 2022.

While several commodities decreased from 2022, other notable commodities outside the top 10 increased in value in 2023. The value of sweet corn increased 8%, with value of production at \$123 million in 2023. Dry bean value of production increased to \$43.9 million, up 17% from 2022. Green pea value of production increased by 9%, with a value of production of \$39.1 million. Barley value of production at \$36.3 million in 2023 increased 16% from 2022. ■

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# THE BOTTOM LINE

## A fair look at farm lease renewals

By Tim Cobb

Owner, The Farmland Company

A shift is underway among operators and owners of farmland across the country that is directly impacting farm lease agreements. External financial factors (cost of machinery, capital, inputs, and labor) once thought to be “transitory” are settling more into reality as many cast their projections for the coming crop year. These factors are setting the stage for what may prove to be difficult conversations with long-term relationships and lease arrangements. Fairness from both parties at this inflection point will be key to future success.

### Rising costs vs. diminishing prices

The financial headwinds of the preceding 24 months have lingered longer and, in some cases, cut deeper than operators would have hoped. As in many industries, the agriculture complex has experienced a non-linear path from seed to when the

finished product is delivered and priced. Many budgetary plans that appeared sustainable at the beginning of the growing season have instead ended shorter than expected, which has many searching for a path to financial stability.

Careful consideration of the following three points will be required by farmland owners and operators who wish to succeed through current and future challenges:

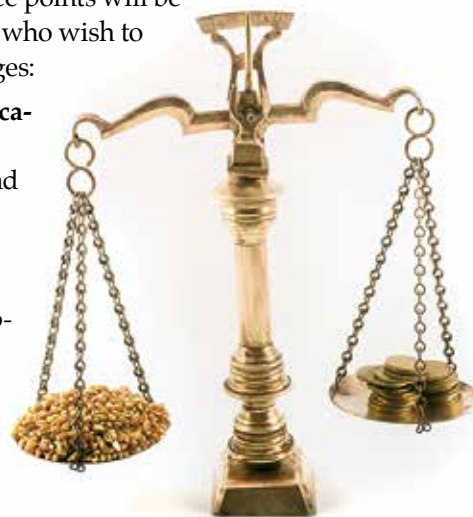
**Finding fairness through clear communication.** While not always easy, communication is the key to finding equitable approaches and long-term stability in farm lease agreements. Oftentimes, however, heightened emotions and individual personalities can distort the best way to express the true challenges or opportunities that are happening in real time. There can be no question that the land and its best productive capabilities are important to the operator and owner alike.

The genesis of a “fair look” will be consistent open communication based in trust. This trust is built over time and includes operators who may need to ask for reductions or modifications to rental rates during challenging times, but at the same time, extend commitment to consider increasing percentages and rental rates in more prosperous commodity periods. In all things, fairness begets fairness, which leads to durational success for leased farmland.

**Farm lease balance.** Some of the shifts that the market is currently experiencing include modifications to traditional farm lease agreements. Fixed rate, cash rental, and crop share structures are being scrutinized in the market to find the right entry points to value. This scrutiny is based on financial and economic implications on the input cost side of production with the largest impacts coming to inequitable break-even points for a bushel of grain.

Current lease structures that are finding traction in the market now include an agreement with a reasonable base percentage that allows for flexibility and upside when commodity prices improve. This often includes percentage increases to production share based at certain price points for the commodity grown. For example, a 25% NET of production expenses crop share lease may be appropriate when local wheat prices are in the \$5 (local price) per bushel range but could flex to 28% NET when grain prices achieve \$6 (local price) per bushel or better. A further shift could potentially be included in the lease terms to allow room to reach a more traditional 30% NET level when the price point is at or above \$7 (local price) per bushel, with each farm deriving its own starting point as well as variation for price thresholds.

The key is achieving a balanced approach that will provide more current market movements and achievable results that won't cause production deficiencies or adverse impacts to the land.



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**Sustainable crop production processes.** In challenging times, short term management decisions can start to impact long term sustainability of the land. The tendency may lead to an operator shortening the care of the farm either by reducing soil health activities, modifying crop rotation, or lessening crop protection protocols to find profitability.

Mom and dad always said, "When you take care of the land, it will always take care of you," and that sage wisdom rings true in good or challenging financial times. Owners and operators of farmland have a moment to act in the best interest of the land.

As always in farming, NOW is the best time to ensure input decisions and leasing structures to allow for the dirt to continue to provide into the future as it has in the past. This is best achieved by encouraging fairness among the parties, balance in leasing, and sustainability practices for the soil. ■

**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](http://farmlandcompany.com).



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# Your wheat life...

Email pictures to [editor@wawg.org](mailto:editor@wawg.org). Please include location of picture, names of all people appearing in the picture and ages of all children.

It was a tight squeeze but Riley (7), Aiden (5) and Sloan Schafer (2) helped out during harvest on Windy Acres Farms near Kahlotus. Photo by Andrew Schafer.



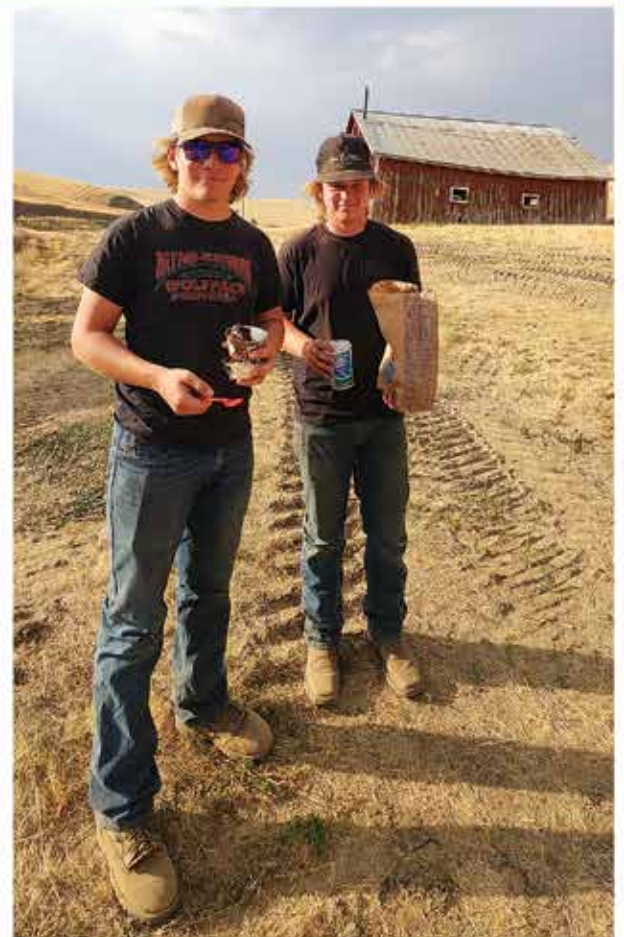
Michelle Praetorius Ovens and Brandon Ovens at Duck Creek Farms outside of Odessa. Photo by Jared Praetorius.

Helping grandpa are Arleigh Fox (9), Remington Fox (3), and Lucie Fox (5) on the Fox family farm in Shano. The farm was started by Medford R. Fox in 1901! Photo by Ross Fox.





Two F-35s flying over the canola fields. Photo taken from the top of Steptoe Butte. Photo by Misty Zornacki.



(Above) While waiting for canola cutters to come in, Jaelynn Chapman reads her books (with no phone!!) in Columbia County. Photo by Shannon James. (Right) It's a tradition that on the first day of harvest, ice cream is delivered to the crew at Just Farms in Waitsburg. Jasper Morrow (left) and Teagan Largent were on hand to pick them up. Photo by Lisa Morrow.



# HAPPENINGS

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

## JANUARY 2025

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

**7-8 2025 CROPPING SYSTEMS CONFERENCE.** Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick, Wash. Registration and more info at [directseed.org](http://directseed.org)

**15-16 2025 NORTHWEST HAY EXPO.** Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, Wash. For information visit [wa-hay.org/northwest-hay-expo.html](http://wa-hay.org/northwest-hay-expo.html)

**17-26 LAKE CHELAN WINTERFEST.** An event for the whole family! Ice sculptures, fireworks, ice slide, and more! Chelan, Wash. [lakechelan.com/winterfest/](http://lakechelan.com/winterfest/)

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

**19-21 OLYMPIA DAYS.** WAWG's annual advocacy trip to Olympia needs grower participation from every county. Call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610.

**24 WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION BOARD MEETING.** 9 a.m. at the Marriott Residence Inn in Pullman, Wash. (509) 456-2481.

**28 ALL THINGS WEEDS.** AMMO workshop with Henry Wetzel, Drew Lyons, Doug Finkelnburg, and Ian Burke. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Courtyard by Marriott in Pullman, Wash. Lunch is provided. No charge for WAWG members; cost for nonmembers is \$25. Preregister by calling (509) 659-0610 or print out and mail form at [wawg.org/ammo-workshops/](http://wawg.org/ammo-workshops/)

## FEBRUARY 2025

**4-6 SPOKANE AG SHOW.** The largest farm machinery show in the Inland Northwest. More than 250 agriculture suppliers and service companies all under one roof. Held at the Spokane Convention Center. [agshow.org](http://agshow.org)

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

**13 FARM BILL UPDATE.** AMMO webinar with the National Association of Wheat Growers, Thursday, Feb. 13, beginning at 11:30 a.m. [wawg.org/ammo-workshops/](http://wawg.org/ammo-workshops/)

**19 NRCS AND FSA UPDATE.** AMMO workshop. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Lions Club building in Washtucna, Wash. Lunch is provided. No charge for WAWG members; cost for nonmembers is \$25. Preregister by calling (509) 659-0610 or print out and mail form at [wawg.org/ammo-workshops/](http://wawg.org/ammo-workshops/)

**20 GLOBAL AND LOCAL WHEAT MARKETS.** AMMO workshop with Alison Thompson, owner of The Money Farm, and Washington State University's Randy Fortenbery. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Hampton Inn Garden Springs in Spokane, Wash. Lunch is provided. No charge for WAWG members; cost for nonmembers is \$25. Preregister by calling (509) 659-0610 or print and mail form at [wawg.org/ammo-workshops/](http://wawg.org/ammo-workshops/)

**21 NRCS AND FSA UPDATE.** AMMO workshop. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. at the USDA headquarters in Spokane Valley, Wash. Lunch is provided. No charge for WAWG members; cost for nonmembers is \$25. Preregister by calling (509) 659-0610 or print and mail form at [wawg.org/ammo-workshops/](http://wawg.org/ammo-workshops/)

**27 ASK IN EARNEST.** AMMO workshop with Darla Tyler-McSherry focusing on mental health. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Hampton Inn-Garden Springs in Spokane, Wash. Lunch is provided. No charge for WAWG members; cost for nonmembers is \$25. Preregister by calling (509) 659-0610 or print and mail form at [wawg.org/ammo-workshops/](http://wawg.org/ammo-workshops/) ■

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Email listing to [editor@wawg.org](mailto:editor@wawg.org). Include date, time and location, contact info, and short description.

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