

WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

DECEMBER | 2024

2024 TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION

Idaho, Oregon, Washington producers gather
to celebrate the region's small grains

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President's Perspective



Meet our new president

By Jeff Malone

President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

Hello *Wheat Life* readers! I'm Jeff Malone, and it's an honor to introduce myself as your new president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG). As a fifth-generation dryland wheat farmer in Douglas County, I've been blessed to work the same land my family has cultivated for over a century. Farming is more than a job to us; it's a legacy that ties generations together.

On our farm, I'm fortunate to work alongside my wife, our two sons, my parents, and a dedicated employee who help make it all possible. Farming truly is a family effort, and there's a unique pride in seeing each generation — and every hand involved — contribute to our shared success. Watching my sons get excited about spotting trucks, running equipment, and just being part of farm life is a reminder of what's at the heart of agriculture: the bonds between family, the land, and those who work it together.

I chose to step into a leadership role with WAWG to gain a broader view of the issues facing our community and, ultimately, to make a difference. We face both challenges and opportunities in the wheat industry, from navigating market pressures to adapting to technological changes. By going through the Washington wheat growers' leadership chairs, I've had the chance to gain insights into these dynamics from a statewide perspective.

One of the most rewarding parts of this journey has been the connections I've made with other farmers, advocates, and leaders in agriculture. It's amazing to see the diverse group of people who share the same passion for wheat farming and rural life. As we talk, share ideas, and advocate for policies that protect and promote our industry, I'm constantly reminded that we're all working toward the same goals — to strengthen our communities, support future generations, and sustain our way of life.

Speaking of connections, we just wrapped up our annual Tri-State Grain Growers Convention. We heard about some important issues, such as the importance of Marine Highway 84, the farm bill, and the need to work together to support and strengthen our industry. I hope those of you that attended enjoyed yourselves and took advantage of the opportunity to form new connections and strengthen old ones. The amount of work that goes into planning this event is tremendous, and I want to acknowledge the staff from the Idaho, Oregon, and Washington wheat organizations who pulled it all together.

In this column over the next year, I'll be sharing insights from the farm and updates on industry issues each month. My goal is to keep us connected and informed as we navigate the road ahead. Thank you for the opportunity to serve, and here's to a productive and hopeful year for Washington's wheat growers! ■

Cover photo: Another successful Tri-State Grain Growers Convention is in the books. See convention coverage beginning on page 22. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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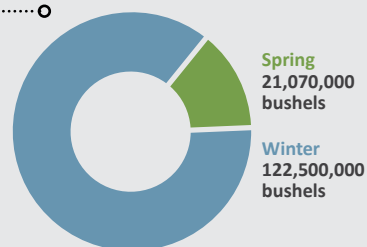


TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION

IDAHO • OREGON • WASHINGTON



2024 Wheat production breakdown:



Contributors

Jeff Malone, president, Washington Association of Wheat Growers
Ben Barstow, chairman, Washington Grain Commission
Lori Maricle, communications director, Washington Grain Commission
Diana Carlen, lobbyist, Washington Association of Wheat Growers
Andrea Cox, conservation coordinator, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

Mike Pumphrey, spring wheat breeder, Washington State University
Alecia Kiszonas, research biologist, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service
T. Randall Fortenbery, Thomas B. Mick Endowed Chair in Grain Economics, Washington State University
Cade Weber, CPA, Leffel, Otis & Warwick

WAWG MEMBERSHIP FORM

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LEVELS OF MEMBERSHIP

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Partnership \$600 (1-5 family members)	X	X	X	X		X
Convention \$720 (2 individuals)	X	X	X		X	X
Lifetime \$3,000 (1 individual)	X	X	X	X		X
Non-Voting Membership						
Student \$90	X	X	X			
Industry Associate \$250	X	X	X			

WAWG's current top priorities are:

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

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

More member benefits:

- Greensheet ALERTS • WAWG updates
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- National Wheat Grower updates
- State and national legislative updates



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WAWG at WORK

ADVOCATING FOR THE WHEAT FARMERS OF EASTERN WASHINGTON

Annual convention recognizes growers, county efforts

It wasn't all fun and games at last month's Tri-State Grain Growers Convention. Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) took the opportunity to discuss challenges facing the industry at both the state and national level and take care of association business.

"The convention is a great opportunity to engage with members who might otherwise be unable to attend county or state meetings on a regular basis," explained Michelle Hennings, executive director of WAWG. "We also take this opportunity to set priorities for the next year and hear from members where they think we should be focusing our efforts. We also recognize those members and counties that have gone above and beyond over the past year in support of the Washington wheat industry. Thank you to everyone who attended our meetings and gave input."

For more on convention, see pages 22-34.



The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) introduced the 2024-25 leadership team. Laurie Roecks (first row, left) from Spokane County joins the team as secretary/treasurer. Next to her is Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director. Back row, from left, are Gil Crosby from Spokane County as vice president, Anthony Smith from Benton County as past president, and Jeff Malone from Douglas County as president.

Andy Juris, past president of WAWG and a farmer in Klickitat County, was named WAWG Member of the Year. Spokane County was recognized as WAWG County of the Year. President Anthony "Bones" Smith passed the gavel to incoming president Jeff Malone from Douglas County. Gil Crosby, a grower from Spokane County moved into the vice president's seat, and members welcomed



WAWG members welcomed the 2024-25 Washington Wheat Ambassadors Karly Wigen from Whitman County and Zach Klein from Adams County.



Andy Juris (right) from Klickitat County was named WAWG member of the year for his work and dedication to the state's wheat growers.

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Laurie Roecks from Spokane County as the new secretary/treasurer.

Current Washington Wheat Foundation president, Randy Suess, recognized Grant Miller for his years of service and leadership to the Foundation. Ben Barstow, chairman of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), recognized Gary Bailey of Whitman County for his service as a commissioner. Bailey is stepping down from the WGC at the end of the year.

Members also heard presentations from the 2024-25 Washington Wheat Ambassadors, Zach Klein of Ritzville and Karly Wigen of Colfax. Read more about them on page 10.

Besides their membership dues, WAWG members also support the association by donating to the Legislative Action Fund (LAF). Members who donated to the LAF were eligible to participate in drawings during the Washington state annual banquet. LAF prizes were donated by counties and individuals. Winners were:

- Casey Chumrau, iPad.
- Richard Wainscott, outdoor solar battery security camera.
- Cindy Rohde, Texas Roadhouse gift certificate.
- Jerome Jantz, \$100 Amazon gift card.
- Jake Holling, \$250 Cabela gift card.
- Ann Krause, \$450 North 40 gift card.
- Grant Miller, Pit Boss grill.

One of WAWG's main activities during the convention is the all-committee meeting. Members heard from U.S. Department of Agriculture agency leaders and state and national legislative updates.

Jon Wyss, state executive director of the Farm Service Agency (FSA), told growers that cost share pay-

ments older than 60 days will be paid by Dec. 15. The acreage reporting deadline is Dec. 15. Wyss also had a request for growers. In the past, Washington growers had up to three years to establish Conservation Reserve Program stands. FSA policy now requires growers to have stands established within two years with the possibility of the county committee extending that to 36 months. Because that requirement is written in policy, Wyss said the state office has no ability to change it. Growers will need to lobby the national office to change it.

"Every state is different. It takes us longer to establish grass in Eastern Washington (than the Midwest)," Wyss said. "That's one of the changes we need you to help work with us on."

Ben Thiel, director of the Risk Management Agency's Spokane Regional Office, told growers that crop insurance is funded outside the farm bill, so if legislators fail to pass a new farm bill, crop insurance will go on as usual. There are several changes coming to crop insurance pertaining to wheat. Thiel said an adjustment to replant payments is coming, and in 2026, margin coverage options for spring wheat will be available.

Ben Johnson from the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) told growers to be on the lookout for the Ag Resource Management Survey, which tracks chemical usage and farm management practices. The survey informs industry and global markets on how responsible growers are and looks at alternative practices growers might be using. That survey will be published in May 2025. ►



MARINE HIGHWAY 84 ADVOCACY. In October, Washington Association of Wheat Growers Executive Director Michelle Hennings and other Marine Highway 84 stakeholders traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate for the lower Snake River dams and discuss the Columbia River Treaty with members of Congress. Pictured from left to right are Brad Trammell, senior associate in government affairs for the American Waterways Operators; Kristin Meira, director of government affairs for American Cruise Lines; Leslie Druffel, outreach director for The McGregor Company; Hennings; Anthony Peña, government relations manager for Pacific Northwest Waterways Association; and Scott Corbitt, general manager of the Port of Lewiston.

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Roylene Comes At Night, state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), said they obligated more than \$20 million this year to wheat growers on more than 100,000 acres. The state will receive a 31% increase in funding in 2025. The state is piloting a new practice that will pay producers to keep high stubble instead of plowing it and planting a cover crop. Comes At Night said she is excited to try the new practice and provide the agency data to see if the practice will work.

National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) staff, Chandler Goule, CEO, and Jake Westlin, vice president of policy and communications, gave federal updates (see page 16). WAWG lobbyists Diana Carlen and Mark Streuli gave a state legislative update that covered the results of the 2024 election (see page 18).

Following all the updates, growers reviewed and updated WAWG's resolutions, which help guide the association's advocacy efforts throughout the year. A complete set of WAWG's resolutions can be downloaded from the website at wawg.org/about-us/. ■

Growers urged to apply for fuel tax repayments

The Washington State Department of Licensing (DOL) is accepting applications for partial repayments to ag producers or transporters of ag products who paid carbon fees related to the state's cap and trade program on fuel

WAWG welcomes new Washington Wheat Ambassadors

Zach Klein of Ritzville and Karly Wigen of Colfax have been selected as the 2024-25 Washington Wheat Ambassadors. The high school seniors will represent Washington wheat farmers at various civic and community events and will also participate in advocacy meetings with state agencies and legislators.

Klein and Wigen each gave a speech at the Washington Association of Wheat Growers' annual banquet during the recent Tri-State Grain Growers Convention and were awarded scholarships funded by the Washington Wheat Foundation. Wigen will receive \$5,000, and Klein will receive \$4,500.

Zach Klein

Klein is the son of Jake and Alisha Klein. He is a student at Lind-Ritzville High School where he maintains a nearly 4.0 GPA while playing on three sport teams. He is involved in FFA and FBLA, as well as being active in his church. In addition to his school and community involvement, Klein also enjoys hunting. He plans on attending either the University of Idaho or Oklahoma State University, majoring in agribusiness and farm/ranch management. He hopes to return to the family farm following college graduation to take advantage of his father's and grandfather's experience by learning as much from them as he can. Continuing the family's farming legacy is important to him.



Klein said he decided to apply for the scholarship in order to learn more about the wheat industry, including how grain is marketed, and where it goes.

"Being named a Washington Wheat Ambassador is a privilege, and I want to represent the wheat industry and wheat farmers the best that I can," he said.

Karly Wigen

Wigen is the daughter of Pete and Brandy Wigen. She is a student at Colfax High School where she maintains a 4.0 GPA. She has been very involved in FFA and serves as her chapter's vice president. Last year, she served as her district's sentinel. She plays volleyball and softball and is a member of the basketball cheer squad. She is the 2024



Distinguished Young Woman of Colfax. Wigen plans to study behavioral sciences in college to pursue a career as an occupational therapist. She said she decided to apply for the scholarship because it is a way to meet new people and grow relationships, something she hopes her future career plans also give her.

"I love being around people and talking to other farmers and ranchers. Occupational therapy will give me a chance to meet new people," she explained. "I want to thank wheat growers for this opportunity. I'm excited to take on this new role in the community, to represent Colfax and Washington in general." ■

purchases. Qualifying purchases were made between Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2023. Funds will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis.

Applications should be submitted at DOL's website at dol.wa.gov/agriculture-support-program.

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers encourages growers to apply for their part of the \$30 million set aside by the Legislature last year. ■

Adams, Franklin counties hold November meetings

Adams County

Adams County growers met at Jake's Restaurant in Ritzville to discuss the elections and hear marketing and legislative updates.

Sen. Mark Schoesler (R-Ritzville) said Democrats may end up with a 60% majority in the chamber, which means they wouldn't need Republican votes to pass transportation and capital budgets. He encouraged growers who paid carbon fees related to the state's cap and trade program in 2023 to apply for refunds, as there's still quite a bit of money available.

Pat Yerxa, a grain merchandiser at Ritzville Warehouse, gave a marketing update, telling growers that he expects the price of wheat to be rangebound through the holidays. After a large U.S. harvest, the U.S. wheat supply looks good. The Australian harvest will begin soon, and Yerxa said it is expected to be a big crop. Russia has been slowing the pace of exports due to a smaller crop and less carry-over. Growers could see a price increase in the spring if the Russian crop comes out of dormancy into less favorable weather.

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ters,” he said. “They are too big of a producer, too big of an exporter. What they do affects the world of wheat.”

With low wheat prices and high input costs, Yerxa said growers need to pay attention and move grain when an opportunity comes. Growers should look over their expenses and consider diversifying their income streams if they can.

Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) gave a farm bill update. Due to the elections, she said ag is probably looking at an extension of the current farm bill. The wheat industry is monitoring the new administration’s talk of tariffs. Hennings encouraged farmers to attend the upcoming Tri-State Grain Growers Convention and participate in the association’s resolution meeting.

“We need to hear from farmers on our resolutions because they tell us what issues we need to focus on,” she said.

Marika Kearsley, a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) resource conservationist, closed out the meeting with NRCS updates.

Franklin County

Franklin County growers had an opportunity to earn three pesticide credits at their November meeting, which took place at the Grange in Kahlotus, Wash.

Attendees learned about pesticide residuals and pre-emergent herbicides from Boyd Funk of The McGregor Company, while Kevin Cochrane from Corteva talked about Tolvera, a new broadleaf herbicide for cereals that came out of the corn market and has flexible plant-back rotations.

Matt Mackay and Shane Hansen

(Article continues on page 15)



Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) leaders and staff who attend the National Association of Wheat Growers’ fall conference were (from left) Gil Crosby, WAWG secretary/treasurer; Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director; Anthony Smith, WAWG president; Andy Juris, WAWG past president; and Jeff Malone, WAWG vice president.

NAWG fall conference

Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) leaders and staff spent a week in Phoenix in early November taking part in the National Association of Wheat Growers’ (NAWG) fall conference, where they heard about the latest issues affecting the wheat industry and discussed policy priorities for 2025.

WAWG President Anthony Smith serves on NAWG’s Environment and Research Committee, while WAWG Vice President Jeff Malone serves on the Domestic Trade and Policy Committee. Both Smith and Malone also took part in the board of directors meeting, where they updated NAWG’s resolutions for the coming year. ■



Washington Association of Wheat Growers’ Jeff Malone, vice president, and Anthony Smith, president (second row from left), take part in the National Association of Wheat Growers’ board of directors meeting last month in Phoenix.

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WAWG membership reviews, updates resolutions

During the annual meeting at the 2024 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) membership updated and approved the 2025 resolutions that direct policy for the next 12 months. New resolutions are listed here. For the complete set of resolutions, visit wawg.org/about-us/.

NATIONAL LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

RISK MANAGEMENT

- WAWG recommends that RMA address the issues of indemnity of claims and APH adjustments for uninsured causes (such as fire wildlife damage) due to no fault of the grower.
- WAWG supports efforts to improve crop insurance quality adjustments by refining loss provisions, discount factors, and tables to more accurately reflect marketplace discounts, thereby providing wheat growers with more effective coverage during periods of quality related losses.
- WAWG supports efforts to promote a broad and accessible network of crop insurance providers across all regions, ensuring that growers have sufficient access to qualified agents and diverse policy options to effectively meet their risk management needs.
- WAWG recognizes the soil and environmental benefits of wheat in a crop rotation and therefore supports intentionally seeded winter wheat being eligible for classification as a cover crop for NRCS and climate-smart programs, while not impacting its eligibility as a harvestable cash crop insurable through crop insurance and other safety net programs.
- WAWG supports crop insurance covering all fire damages with the exception of grower caused.

TAXES

- WAWG supports the elimination of the Federal estate tax or maintaining a minimum level of \$13.99 million per individual estate tax exemption indexed to inflation, retaining a step up in basis.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WATER

- WAWG opposes unreasonable buffer zones that exceed the pesticide label recommendations for waterways that are not based on sound science.
- WAWG encourages the Washington State Dept. of Ecology to continue to convene the agriculture and water quality advisory committee.

ENERGY

- WAWG supports the continued use of natural gas for grid reliability and energy affordability.
- WAWG supports retaining and implementing the exemptions in the Climate Commitment Act that exempts certain fuel used for agricultural use (i.e. on the farm and transporting ag products) and making both exemptions permanent. WAWG supports the continuation of a state rebate program through Department of Licensing to rebate farmers and haulers of farm products for carbon fuel surcharges they have paid, but not been reimbursed.

CROP PROTECTION

- WAWG opposes requirements that the applicator provide mandatory notification be given prior to pesticide application.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

- WAWG supports that WSU begins the process of filling positions that they know will be open in the near term, instead of waiting until after the vacancy, especially within CAHNRS, wheat research, and extension.
- WAWG supports the implementation of long-term career incentives by WSU for research and extension positions that provide direct support for Washington grain farms.
- WAWG supports an increase in communication with WSU leadership at least annually to identify priorities and work towards fulfilling them.

STATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

LEGISLATION

- WAWG opposes state legislation creating collective bargaining rights for agricultural workers.

TAXES

- WAWG opposes any requirements that a farmer utilizing an agricultural tax preference must provide certain employee benefits such as medical, dental or retirement benefits to qualify for said tax preference.
- WAWG opposes any increases to payroll taxes.
- WAWG opposes any tax on employers to subsidize the cost for childcare.

REGULATORY REFORM

- WAWG supports the concept that whenever governmental actions adversely affect the value or use of private property, the owner must be fairly compensated at market value.

STATE AGENCIES

Department of Employment Security

- WAWG opposes policies allowing striking workers to receive unemployment benefits.

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

ROAD

- WAWG supports using sales tax revenue from the purchase of vehicles for the state transportation budget and that such funds be protected by the 18th amendment of the state constitution.

RIVERS

- WAWG will continue membership of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association and will hold a position on its board of trustees.
- WAWG is supportive of voluntary conservation programs which offer flexibility and fairly compensate farmers for riparian protection. WAWG opposes programs that mandate riparian protection buffers based on Site Potential Tree Height (SPTH) as it threatens the future viability of agriculture by removing significant portions of productive farmland out of production. ■

from Simplot introduced themselves and the company, telling the crowd that they were probably wondering why Simplot was there. The company is looking to expand into the area with their crop care products.

Henry Wetzel, Washington State University pesticide recertification safety educator, talked about changes to pesticide labels for products with endangered species use restrictions. Labels will include instructions directing growers to the Bulletins Live! Two website. Growers will need to enter location, date of application, and the pesticide's registration number on the website to see if there are restrictions on use.

Brian Cochran, the Washington Grain Commission representative for the area, asked for input on several

new research proposals and updated growers on recent Commission activity, including a trip to South America to meet with potential new customers.

The Farm Service Agency is tightening up enforcement of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts, and growers were warned to be vigilant about meeting the requirements in their CRP contracts and keeping records.

Growers also took care of some county business, approving a treasury report and approving purchases for the upcoming convention auction and the Washington Association of Wheat Growers Legislative Action Fund. The date for the county's Christmas party was set for Dec. 13, at 5 p.m. ■



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POLICY MATTERS

Congressional to-do list is long with time running out

By Trista Crossley
Editor, Wheat Life

Staff from the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) led a break-out session at the 2024 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention on what's happening in D.C. as the 118th Congress winds down and a new administration prepares to take the reins.

Chandler Goule, NAWG CEO; Jake Westlin, NAWG vice president of policy and communications; and Keira Franz, NAWG environmental policy advisor outlined how the November elections reshaped House and Senate ag committees, Congress' long list of to do items, and what to expect in 2025.

2024 election recap

Republicans took control of the Senate 47-53. John Thune (R-S.D.) was elected leader, replacing retiring Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ken.). Goule called Thune a strong advocate for agriculture. Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.) is expected to become chair of the Senate Ag Committee. Current Ag Committee chair, Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), is retiring, and while Senate Democrats haven't set their leadership elections yet, Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) is expected to succeed Stabenow. In the House, republicans barely maintained their majority, 213-219 (with three races still uncalled as of mid-November). Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-Penn.) will retain his position as chair of the House Ag Committee, while Rep. Jim Costa (D-Calif.) is challenging Rep. David Scott (D-Ga.) for the committee's ranking member.

With less than 14 legislative days left in the 118th Congress (as of mid-November), legislators have a tough to-do list. The federal government is currently operating under a continuing resolution that expires on Dec. 20. Also on the docket are the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), and, of course, the farm bill.

In mid-November, the White House submitted a supple-



mental funding request to Congress for \$100 billion in emergency disaster relief. Approximately \$24 billion is earmarked for farmers.

Another piece of legislation being considered by Congress is the Farm Assistance and Mitigation Act, introduced in late October, that would provide a one-time emergency assistance payment to eligible growers based on the difference between projected costs and projected returns.

Farm bill

For the past two years, NAWG has been very active lobbying Congress for a new farm bill. Their messaging highlighted the need for a robust farm safety net in the face of increased production costs and weakening market prices. In May, the House Ag Committee released a title-by-title summary, and on Nov. 18, Stabenow released a draft of their bill. Westlin said there are a lot of differences between the two bills, including how the bills are to be funded.

"The need to get a farm bill done is pretty well understood on Capitol Hill," Westlin said.

Looking ahead

The new administration is expected to tackle a number of items in its first 100 days, with significant interest in extending and/or making permanent many of the provisions in the 2017 Tax Cut and Jobs Act, Westlin said. Other items include:

- Senate confirmations of presidential appointees.
- Navigating the debt ceiling.
- Dealing with any unfinished farm bill business.
- Reconsideration of Pres. Biden's regulatory actions, through executive orders or under the Congressional Review Act.
- Any unresolved FY 2025 appropriations activity.

On the trade front, NAWG is watching to see how the

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threat or implementation of tariffs impact policymaking and how quickly the administration might pick up trade talks with the UK and Kenya. The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) is scheduled for review in 2026, which could lead to changes in the agreement. ■

Democrats slightly extend majorities in state Legislature

By Diana Carlen

Lobbyist, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

The recent election showed that while the country veered red, Washington state turned bluer. Democrats will continue to hold all statewide elected positions and have slightly expanded their majorities in the Legislature.

Governor. Washington's current attorney general, Bob Ferguson, will be our new governor after defeating Republican former Congressman Dave Reichert. This will extend the streak of Washington state not electing a Republican governor going back to 1980. While we expect Governor-Elect Ferguson's priorities to be similar to out-going Gov. Jay Inslee, Ferguson is not as singularly focused on climate change as Gov. Inslee. During his time as attorney general, Ferguson's main priorities were consumer protection, and he has publicly stated that he wants to focus on behavioral health, public safety, and housing. He also made a name for himself by filing almost 100 lawsuits challenging policies of the first Trump administration, and he said he is prepared to respond if the second Trump administration overreaches.

Attorney General. Nick Brown will be our new attorney general. Brown formerly served as Inslee's general counsel and also was the U.S. attorney for the Western District of Washington.

Commissioner of Public Lands. King County Council Member Dave Upthegrove will be the new commissioner of public lands after defeating former Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler. Upthegrove formerly served in the Washington State House of Representatives where he was the chair of the House Environment and Energy Committee.

Insurance Commissioner. Sen. Patty Kuderer (D-Seattle) defeated Sen. Phil Fortunato (R-Auburn) and will be our new insurance commissioner. This opens Kuderer's current Senate seat for appointment in the new year. Both 48th District representatives, Amy Walen and Vandana Slatter, are expected to seek Kuderer's seat. Democratic Precinct Committee officers will meet to recommend three names to the King County Council and

will select one of those names to serve as Kuderer's replacement until a special election can be held in November of 2025.

Initiatives

Three of the four initiatives to roll back the state cap-and-trade program and state tax policies to repeal the capital gains tax and the payroll tax for long-term insurance have failed. The only initiative that was approved by the voters was Initiative I-2066 to block state and local efforts to phase out natural gas service, which passed by a margin of 51.64% to 48.36%, but opponents have already indicated that they plan to sue, arguing that it violates the single subject rule, which was the demise of many Eyman initiatives by the Washington State Supreme Court.

The no campaigns on the three initiatives that failed to pass were greatly outspent by the yes campaigns (no campaigns raised over \$33 million versus Let's Go Washington raising around \$9 million for all four initiatives, and most of that money was spent to qualify the measures for the ballot). Plus, the wording of the ballot titles, which were drafted by the attorney general, was confusing. Finally, the Legislature added a requirement that all ballot titles must contain fiscal impact statements for initiatives that impact revenue. This year's initiatives were the first to be caught up in that requirement, highlighting the specific programs that would be defunded and by how much by each initiative.

What can we expect now that Washington state's Climate Commitment Act will remain in place? The state will continue to discuss linking its carbon market to California and Quebec. We anticipate seeing legislation in the upcoming legislative session beginning in January on making tweaks to the law that will further linkage and implementing the program. We will be actively involved in these conversations to ensure that the exemption for agriculture on exempt fuel is honored.

Legislature

Democrats currently hold majorities of 58-40 in the House and 29-20 in the Senate. Democrats were hoping to pick up enough seats for a super-majority (two-thirds majority) in both chambers. This would have granted them the authority to send constitutional amendments directly to the voters (i.e. such as sending a constitutional amendment to allow a state income tax).

While Democrats were unsuccessful at getting a supermajority, they were able to gain one seat in each chamber, which means they will have a 60% majority in both chambers. This is important because authorizing the issuance of bonds, which is a customary part of infrastructure packages like transportation projects and capital budget

spending, relies on this heightened 60% threshold that is set in the Washington State Constitution. This means Democrats in the Legislature will not need Republican votes to pass the capital and transportation budgets, which have typically been bipartisan.

There were some bright spots in the election results for agriculture. In the 10th Legislative District (Island County and parts of Skagit and Snohomish counties), Sen. Ron Muzzall (R-Oak Harbor), a farmer and ranking member of the Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources and Parks Committee, defeated Democratic challenger Janet St. Clair in late breaking ballots. This seat was seen as one of the most likely to flip and the most expensive legislative race this campaign cycle.

Republicans in the Senate and House were able to successfully defend all three seats in the newly drawn 14th Legislative District in the Yakima area.

Historically, this district has been a stronghold for the Republican Party. However, a federal judge recently rewrote the boundaries to make it a majority Latino district. The new lines made this district more competitive for Democrats, and Democrats spent heavily trying to flip all three seats. Long-time Sen. Curtis King (R-Yakima) had to move into the new district to run again because of redistricting. Sen. King is the lead for the Senate Republican Caucus on labor and transportation issues and a champion for agriculture.

In the 45th Legislative District, Rep. Larry Springer, a moderate Democrat who has worked well with agriculture, was able to fend off a serious challenge by the left and was re-elected. Rep. Springer (D-Kirkland) is the deputy majority leader for the House Democrat Caucus and the liaison for his caucus for the business community. ■

Edward Jones

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A season of thanks: Celebrating food and togetherness

The holiday season is a time when many of us gather around the dining table, filling our homes with laughter, love, and delectable aromas. The dining table, often the center of our celebrations, brings us together in a unique way, creating a space where stories are shared, memories are made, and gratitude is expressed. As one of the focal points of many holidays, it's proof that few things are as unifying as food and the ample invitation it provides. This season, join us in taking a moment to reflect on the profound connection between food, family, and the holidays and give thanks to those who make it all possible.

Showing gratitude to our farmers

Before the feast is prepared and enjoyed, our food embarks on a journey that begins with the hardworking hands of farmers. Right here in Washington, there are hundreds of hardworking farmers and local operations who work diligently to provide goods for our friends and neighbors! These dedicated individuals rise with the sun, stewarding our fertile land with care and commitment. Their efforts ensure that we have the freshest produce and grains to grace our tables and fuel our bodies. This season, let's not take for granted their labor and dedication, which enable us to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

The unsung heroes: Transport workers

Once harvested, our food travels miles upon miles to reach homes around the state, nation, and world. This journey is possible by a network of devoted transport workers, including truck drivers, train engineers, and barge captains. These unsung heroes work tirelessly to move goods efficiently and safely across the country and around the world, from your online gift delivery to the food you plan to prepare for holiday festivities. Their efforts allow our holiday tables to be filled with delicious and nutritious options. Let's give thanks to these individuals who make sure our food gets from the hands of farmers to the table of consumers like you and I!

Keeping the shelves stocked: Grocery workers

As food arrives at its destination, grocery stockers play a crucial role in keeping our local businesses filled with

the ingredients we need for our holiday meals. From unloading trucks, logging inventory, stocking shelves, and preparing products to reach the hands of consumers, their work can often go unnoticed. This holiday season, may we take a moment to appreciate their devotion, which allows us to find everything we need on the shelves.

Cherishing moments with family and friends

Food is a central component of holiday gatherings, but it is the presence of loved ones that truly makes this season special. Around the dining table, we find warmth and connection, sharing not only meals but also our stories and our lives. Enjoying fellowship together is a time to reconnect with loved ones, to laugh, to reminisce, and to create new memories that will be cherished for years to come. Let us be thankful for the joy and love that our families and friends bring into our lives, in this season and beyond.

Embracing the spirit of the holidays

As we make our final preparations for the upcoming holiday season, let's embrace the spirit of thanks and togetherness. Whether you are preparing a traditional feast or experimenting with new recipes, remember the many hands that have contributed to your meal. Celebrate the connections food fosters and allow the dining table to be a place of unity and thankfulness.

May this season be filled with warmth and recognition for all who play a part in bringing us together. Here's to celebrating the beauty of food and the treasured moments it brings to our lives. Happy Holidays! ■



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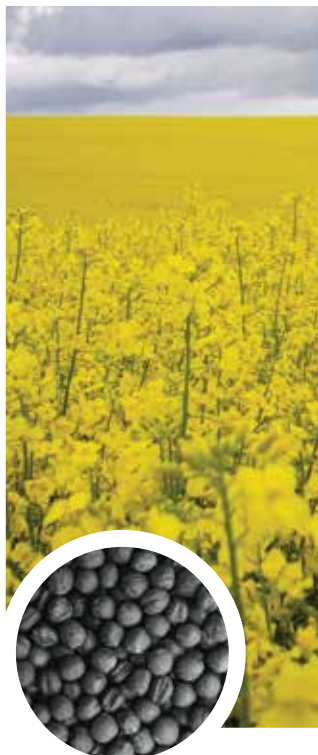


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Sowing success

FARMERS NETWORK, LAUGH, LEARN AT ANNUAL TRI-STATE CONVENTION

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

They say good things come in threes, and this year's Tri-State Grain Growers Convention proved it with three days of education, honoring fellow growers, and hearing from ag leaders about the challenges and opportunities coming our way in 2025.

More than 300 growers, industry stakeholders, and exhibitors from Idaho, Oregon, and Washington gathered at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, Nov. 19-21, to celebrate all things grain. Keynote speakers included social media guru Derrick Josi, motivational speaker John O'Leary, ag economist Bart Fischer, and everyone's favorite meteorologist, Eric Snodgrass. Breakout sessions covered financial planning, U.S. Department of Agriculture energy grants, grain merchandising and marketing, lessons on lobbying effectively, and thinking critically about barley's future. See page 30 for a brief summary of some of these breakout sessions.

Emcee Greg Schwem kept the crowd entertained with his "dad" humor. Prize drawings included a free 2025 convention registration, gift cards, and other items. The convention concluded with the dinner and silent and live auctions. Items donated by growers, county organizations, and industry supporters raised money for each of the three states' grain foundations. The Washington Wheat



DERRICK JOSI told convention attendees that it's important to be talking to people online as that's where they are getting their information. Josi has more than a million followers across multiple platforms and regularly shows the reality of being a fourth-generation dairy farmer in Tillamook, Ore. He called social media both a "blessing and a curse" and said it is amazing how many people want to know how food is grown or raised. Josi can be found at tdfhonestfarming.com.

"Your life is a precious, priceless gift. Say yes to being used for good," **JOHN O'LEARY** told his convention audience. Despite a challenging situation — when he was 9, O'Leary was burned over 100% of his body and given less than a 1% chance to live — he emphasized the power of gratitude. "Use your one life for good. If someone asks you to serve, you say yes," he said.



2024 TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION

Foundation uses that money for scholarships and grants supporting small grains research.

This year included a special breakout session focused on Marine Highway 84, or M-84. Stakeholders representing the length and breadth of the Columbia-Snake River System talked about the role the system plays in their industry, lobbying activities, and spreading awareness of the system beyond the Pacific Northwest. For more about the All River Matters session, see page 26.

“We really wanted to highlight the different industries that use M-84 and bring awareness to the challenges facing the river system, whether that’s removing the lower Snake River dams or not investing in the infrastructure needed to allow bigger ocean-going vessels access to the ports on the lower Columbia River,” said Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG). “I want to thank all the leaders who participated on the panel. I believe the information that we shared was extremely valuable, and I hope growers will be able to use it to become river champions themselves.”

While networking and enjoying time with friends is



ERIC SNODGRASS, a principle atmospheric scientist at Conduit, said most weather models are predicting a weak La Niña this winter, which generally means the Pacific Northwest will see above-average precipitation with colder-than-average temperatures. The West needs a “nasty winter” to recharge reservoirs. If the Alaska High stays in the north Pacific Ocean, that generally means a “good” winter. If the Pacific High migrates south, the Pacific Northwest could become warm and dry.



After a quick glance at the current economy — inflation stabilizing, food prices still high, interest rates still high — **DR. BART FISCHER**, an ag economist at Texas A&M, turned his attention to the farm bill. He pointed out that farm bills carry all sorts of baggage, and the U.S. should be rethinking how farm bills are done. He said it is unlikely that Congress will pass a new farm bill during the lame duck, and there is increasing “chatter” about a one-year extension.

a big part of the annual convention, each state takes the opportunity to get some business done. Washington wheat growers attended an all-committee meeting where they heard updates from U.S. Department of Agriculture agency leaders, as well as federal and state legislative updates from WAWG’s lobbyists and staff from the National Association of Wheat Growers. WAWG members reviewed and updated the association’s resolutions and ushered in a new member of the leadership team, Laurie Roecks from Spokane County, as the secretary/treasurer.

See more convention photos on page 24-25. NAWG updates are on page 16, and updated resolutions can be found on page 14.

“We’d like to thank our sponsors, industry supporters, and exhibitors who help make the convention successful. I’d also like to recognize all the time and hard work put forth by the staff at the three states’ grower organizations to make this annual event successful,” Hennings said.

Next year’s convention will look a little different. Washington will be returning to Coeur d’Alene by themselves, Nov. 17-19, 2025. Idaho and Oregon growers will be gathering at the Sun Valley Resort, in Sun Valley, Idaho, Nov. 18-20. ■

2024 TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION



2024 TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION



**See you next year
for the WAWG convention
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2024 TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION

All river matters

A CONVENTION SUPER-SIZED BREAKOUT SESSION FOCUSED ON MARINE HIGHWAY 84

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

A big part of the annual Tri-State Grain Growers Convention is educational breakout sessions that aim to educate and inform growers. At this year's event, one super-sized session focused on Marine Highway 84, or M-84, and included a panel of stakeholders representing the entire Columbia-Snake River System, from Astoria, Ore., to Lewiston, Idaho. Throughout the session, growers were encouraged to ask questions.

Who is using the river system?

M-84 serves a lot of purposes and industries, from recreation to irrigation to transportation. **Captain Jeremy Nielsen** is president of the Columbia River Pilots. Every ocean-going ship that enters the river system has himself or one of his partners on it. These pilots help navigate vessels to their river berths, usually in Vancouver or Portland. Nielsen said the size of ships entering the river system is increasing, but river infrastructure isn't keeping up. Overhead power cables aren't high enough to accommodate bigger ships, anchorages were designed for smaller vessels, and some bridges, especially the Lewis and Clark Bridge at Longview, Wash., are too low or lack safety features, such as protection around bridge piers. The river pilots are advocating for continued dredging to maintain the channel, expanding anchorages and deeper draft allowances, and investing in new high speed pilot boats.

Q: For bigger vessels how much wider does the channel have to get?

A: We would like to see a 700-foot-wide channel. Currently, it's 600 feet. River pilots are bringing ships in that are 1,200 feet long; we can't even turn these ships around. An extra 100 feet would give us some breathing room.

Q: If you had a one-foot draft restriction on the Columbia River, what does that mean in terms of cargo value?

A: Somewhere between \$1 and \$1.5 million in cargo value.

The McGregor Company uses M-84 to bring in fertilizer. **Leslie Druffel**, outreach coordinator for the company, said a reliable local supply of fertilizer is critical for Pacific Northwest growers, and many companies along the river have made major capital investments to be able to receive shipments by barge. Rail, while a critical mode of transportation for the region, has had challenges with prompt,

timely deliveries. Like most retailers, the amount of fertilizer needed, especially for fall planting, exceeds the amount of storage The McGregor Company has.

"Timing is everything. We need to ensure an adequate supply of fertilizer ahead of and during spring and fall planting seasons," she explained. "Barge deliveries via M-84 are efficient, reliable, and timely."

Q: Are barges generally more on time than railroads?

A: Yes. When we can bring in product by barge, we know pretty much to the hour when that product will get there. That's because we have to make sure our tanks are empty so we can receive the product. It's all about logistics.

Kristin Meira is director of government affairs for American Cruise Lines. Cruising on M-84 is one of their most popular itineraries, and the company is making major financial investments in vessels, as well as infrastructure up and down the system. Meira said access to the Snake River up to Lewiston, Idaho, is critical to American Cruise Lines and is only possible with the lower Snake River dams.

"This is a bucket list experience for people who come out and spend a lot of money to cruise with us," she said.

Scott Corbitt is manager of the Port of Lewiston, a multimodal port that includes barge, rail, and truck. Approximately 270 barges a year move through the port, with about 200 of them carrying wheat. He reminded growers of what happened in the 1992 drawdown — infrastructure failed, dead fish and stinking mud, and excessive scouring along bridge pilings.

"We are ground zero because no place will be more affected if the dams go," Corbitt said.

The power of water to move cargo

According to **Rob Rich**, vice president of marine services at Shaver Transportation, M-84 has a lot of opportunities and a lot of challenges, pointing out that if the public is serious about salmon and the environment, we already have the answer — barge transport. Barges use less fuel to move cargo (675 ton miles traveled per gallon of fuel) than rail (472 ton miles) or trucks (151 ton miles), and the number of serious injuries and fatalities is extremely small when compared to rails and roads.

"When it comes to fuel and emissions, greenhouse gases, all the things that are touchstones for the opposi-

2024 TRI-STATE GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION



Stakeholders who took part in the All River Matters breakout session at the 2024 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention were (from left) Captain Jeremy Nielsen, Columbia River Pilots; Clark Mather, Northwest RiverPartners; Rob Rich, Shaver Transportation; Greg Zanavich, Tidewater Barge Lines; Leslie Druffel, The McGregor Company; Danielle Nelson, Torrey Advisory Group; Kristin Meira, American Cruise Lines; Michelle Hennings, Washington Association of Wheat Growers; Scott Corbitt, Port of Lewiston; and Neil Maunu, Pacific Northwest Waterways Association.

tion, we already have the absolutely best system,” he said. “Without spending a single dime on the Columbia-Snake River System, there’s 50% more capacity on that river. It can easily handle over 2,000 tows a year. When it comes to truck and rail, how can they add 25 to 50% without spending a dime?”

Many products move on M-84, but one of the big ones that tends to get overlooked is refined petroleum products, such as gas, diesel, and jet fuel. In a year, Tidewater Barge Lines moves millions of gallons of fuel through the system, said **Greg Zanavich**, Tidewater’s business development manager. They also handle thousands of tons of fertilizer.

“No lower Snake River dams mean no Central Ferry or Port of Wilma,” he said.

Q: If there’s extra capacity on the river, what are extra barges going to be used for?

A: If there’s an opportunity to shift something to the river, you should. Rail to barge transfer, Boardman already has that. Wheat, soy, and corn, opportunities for an increase there. How much traffic do we want to see on highways? What would stresses and pressures be on trucking and rail to provide service? The system we have has the capacity to flex forward. What other system has that?

Lights on with hydropower

According to **Clark Mather**, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, more than half of the electric capacity in the region is hydropower, something the public tends to dramatically underestimate. Because of hydropower, the Pacific Northwest has some of the cheapest electricity in the world, which is fortunate, as regional demand for power is estimated to grow by 30% over the next 10 years.

One of the fundamental questions that is being asked is if salmon and dams can co-exist. Mather pointed out that there are more salmon in the river now than before the dams were put in place. According to University of Washington data, average returns for salmon and steelhead at Bonneville dam are triple, on average, what they were in 1938. At Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River, returns have quadrupled, on average, since 1975.

“This needs to be a regional conversation. Dams and salmon can and do co-exist,” Mather said. “We need your help to bring more light to this conversation.”

Q: Of the four dams (on the lower Snake River) about what percentage of electricity are they responsible for?

A: Snake River dams are about 10% of hydro output of the

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federal system. At times, they are very important for reserve capacity. Sometimes, they are 25% of that. They are very important, especially during extreme weather events.

Voices for M-84

Danielle Nelson, director of government affairs for the Torrey Advisory Group, a D.C. lobbying firm that works closely with wheat growers, said there are more than 4,000 federal positions the incoming administration will need to fill, and many of those employees will need to be educated on what the lower Snake River dams are, and why they are important. The Trump administration's landing team will be setting priorities for the administration, and we are likely to see a shift in the regulatory agenda.

Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) is a nonprofit trade association that advocates for the region's waterways, including M-84. PNWA's executive director, **Neil Maunu**, explained that the U.S. and Canada have reached an agreement in principle on the Columbia River Treaty that reduces the amount of preplanned flood control, although details are still being worked out. If the flood control portion of the treaty isn't locked in before January, when the wet season begins, there could be some issues on the river.

The potential breaching of the lower Snake River dams is more than a regional issue, said **Michelle Hennings**, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers. If the dams are breached, it could set a precedent for other U.S. waterways. That's why M-84 stakeholders are forming coalitions with stakeholders outside the Pacific Northwest and hosting congressional staff tours on the lower Snake River dams.

"We need to have a U.S. river systems as a unified voice. We need to let them know, what's going to happen to your system when we lose ours?" she explained.

Q: It seems like in the last administration, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) ramped up their focus on breaching the dams. Will we get more favorable people in those positions?

A: We've seen the establishment of an energy council that includes several secretaries. In the first Trump administration, CEQ didn't get filled until 2019. ■

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Breaking out breakout sessions

MARKETING, RENEWABLE ENERGY GRANTS, AND CONSERVATION UPDATES

The breakout sessions at the 2024 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention ran the gamut from advice for successful lobbying to a global wheat market outlook to thinking critically about barley's future. Here's a recap of some of those sessions.

Soft white projected to lead rise in U.S. exports

The "Global Wheat Trade and Marketing" session provided an overview of current wheat market dynamics, geopolitical influences, and future opportunities. Luke Muller, assistant director of the U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) West Coast Office in Portland, Ore., discussed how global events, such as the Black Sea conflict, have impacted wheat prices. Despite a 10 million metric ton (mmt) drop in Russian production, aggressive exports continue, aided by high interest rates incentivizing sales. Ukrainian production is down, with ending stocks sustaining exports. Black Sea ending stocks are 38% lower over the last three years. Meanwhile, production in Australia, Canada, and Argentina is projected up.

Domestically, wheat acreage remains stable despite competition from corn and soybeans. Improved U.S. moisture profiles are a positive for growers, though a strong dollar and rising storage costs weigh on competitiveness. Hedge funds show less bearish activity than last year, signaling potential for price movement. On the demand side, global import trends are rising, though Turkey has banned wheat imports, and India's import policies remain uncertain. World ending stocks for



Vince Peterson, president of U.S. Wheat Associates, reported a projected 50% increase in global wheat trade by 2050 during a breakout session at the 2024 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention.

major exporters have fallen 28% since 2017-18.

Mike Spier, USW vice president of overseas operations, highlighted a 20% rise in U.S. wheat exports this year, with soft white wheat (SW) leading the way. SW exports are up nearly 50% year over year, with key markets like the Philippines, Japan, and South Korea showing substantial growth. USW's partnership with UFM Baking and Cooking School in Bangkok, Thailand, has further boosted SW demand over the last 10 years.

Vince Peterson, USW president, reported a projected 50% increase in global wheat trade by 2050. While logistics pose challenges, the U.S. is positioned to grow exports to 70-75 mmt if the world production projection holds, leveraging strong market development and a global network of USW staff offices to maximize producer income and expand market opportunities.

Finding the ZEN in renewable energy grants

Next year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has millions of dollars to give away through its Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), and David Funk, president of Zero Emissions Northwest, wants to help Pacific Northwest growers get their share.

REAP provides grant funding to eligible agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Funds are available for renewable energy projects, such as solar, geothermal, or wind, and energy efficiency grants, which could include HVAC

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systems, drones, new windows, or new machinery. Zero Emissions Northwest assesses and qualifies the project, handles all the paperwork, and submits the grant application on the producer's behalf. They are an official technical assistance contractor for REAP.

Producers will need to provide Funk's company with the appropriate material, such as utility bills or fuel bills, register in sam.gov, and connect Zero Emissions Northwest with the entity that will be building or installing the project.

"Our job is to win the most money, with the highest certainty, in the shortest amount of time for you," Funk explained. "We look at how you are scoring and figure out which grants are the best match for you."

Grants can be up to 50% of the project's cost, and there may be federal tax credits available. The reimbursable grants are usually awarded three months after the application has been submitted. As of October 2024, Zero Emissions Northwest has helped Washington producers win 44 grants for nearly \$2 million. The company just launched a group-purchasing plan for solar for Washington and North Idaho producers. Funk estimates that will reduce the cost of solar by approximately 30% compared to a farmer buying a system alone.

NRCS state updates

The Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Update was provided by Washington's Roylene Comes at Night, Idaho's Lori Kassib, and Oregon's Greg Becker.

Washington's team utilized 94% of Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) funds available, which included all approved applications. The new 809 Conservation Harvest Management interim practice has been announced in Washington, and details will be available soon. Comes At Night announced that CSP is being revamped at the national level based on survey results, and the goal is to have staff better educated on the program to better serve growers.



David Funk, president of Zero Emissions Northwest, helps farmers apply for U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Energy for America Program grants for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

In FY 2024, Washington wheat growers submitted 126 applications totaling 119,846.50 application acres. Seventy-five contracts were obligated for a total of \$20,690,498.81 and 104,948.90 contracted acres. Statewide total FY 2024 allocations for Washington, including both farm bill and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding, totaled \$47,607,132 in funds; \$22,494,000 in CSP funds; and \$1,235,287 in Agricultural Conservation Easement Program funds. FY 2025 funding includes \$29,218,986 in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)-farm bill; \$21,165,616 in EQIP-IRA; \$11,830,000 in CSP-farm bill; and \$15,654,000 in CSP-IRA. Initial allocations include a 31% increase in total technical and financial assistance funding due to the IRA. There is a 21% decrease in EQIP-farm bill funding and a 14% decrease in CSP-farm bill funding.

Kassib has been filling in as Idaho's state conservationist for over a year now, and the state has had great success as a big water team with pipeline and canal projects. EQIP contracts were obligated for just over \$65.6 million. This was the biggest year that Idaho NRCS has ever had. One



Roylene Comes At Night, state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, gave an update on conservation program funds allocated in Washington.

hundred eleven CSP contracts totaling \$15,345,635 were obligated. In fiscal year 2024, \$13,662,257 was obligated through five ACEP-agricultural land easements. There are several new practices and enhancements for FY 2025 that the team is very excited about. New practices and enhancements include 204-Adaptive Management for Soil Health; 397-Aquaculture Pond; 447-Irrigation and Drainage Tailwater Recovery; 555-Rock Wall Terrace; 570-Stormwater Runoff Control; 589-Cross

Wind Trap Strips; 609-Surface Roughening; 610-Salinity and Sodic Soil Management; 633-Waste Recycling; 910-Annual Forages and Grazing Systems; and 812-Raised Beds.

Oregon FY 2024 obligations for CSP included \$16.8 million in general CSP and \$11.7 million in CSP-IRA. EQIP obligations included \$31.8 million in general EQIP and \$20.1 million EQIP-IRA. Conservation Implementation

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Strategy project areas include on-farm irrigation and energy efficiency in Deschutes County; unit soil health and sustainability in Jefferson County; irrigation water conservation and drought resilience in Klamath County; soil health management planning and implementation in Morrow and Umatilla counties; and preservation of no-till in Morrow County. EQIP-IRA funding practices for cropland and energy included 329-Residue Management (no-till); 345-Residue Management (reduced till); 590-Nutrient Management; 340-Cover Crop, and many other climate smart practices. There has been no slowdown yet in hiring with the new administration.

Grain marketing 101: Building skills for risk management

The “Benchmarking Your Merchandising and Future Risk Management Skills” session offered insights into grain marketing and risk management tailored for wheat and barley growers. Presented by Mike Rohlfesen and Jeff Kazin of AgrisAcademy LLC, the session highlighted key principles growers can adopt to improve their operations’ financial stability and marketing strategies.

Understanding and managing risk in grain marketing can lead to more informed decision-making and better outcomes. Rohlfesen and Kazin emphasized that many myths surrounding commodity merchandising persist in agriculture. They encouraged growers to think like their buyers and use professional tools and strategies to gain clarity and understanding of their farm’s market position.

A significant takeaway was the idea that futures markets, while not



Mike Rohlfesen (right) and Jeff Kazin of AgrisAcademy LLC presented a breakout session that highlighted key principles growers can adopt to improve their operations’ financial stability and marketing strategies.

predictable, remain the best source of price information due to their efficiency and the collective knowledge they represent. Growers were urged to treat futures as a tool for risk management rather than speculation. This shift, though challenging, can significantly enhance marketing results.

The session also covered the importance of benchmarking, including farmers understanding market risks, defining their specific risk profile, and measuring their farm’s position accurately. Inaccurate estimates of yields, costs, and contracts often hinder farm operations, but a clear, measured approach can improve both risk management and operational efficiency.

Practical steps for growers included developing spreadsheets to track costs, exploring new market outlets, and learning more about the finer points of merchandising. The presenters stressed the importance of building long-term knowledge that can transform marketing practices into a permanent asset for the farm.

The session also underscored the importance of understanding merchandising terminology to build credibility with grain buyers. Speaking the same language as the professionals purchasing farmers’ crops not only demonstrates knowledge but also positions the farmer as a serious player in the marketplace. This fluency can foster trust and pave the way for stronger business relationships. Rohlfesen and Kazin highlighted that building and maintaining these relationships is essential for long-term farm success.

Buyers value consistency, transparency, and professionalism, and growers who approach their marketing with these traits in mind are more likely to secure better opportunities. Avoiding burned bridges and cultivating a network of trusted buyers can open doors to more competitive markets and better terms over time. ■

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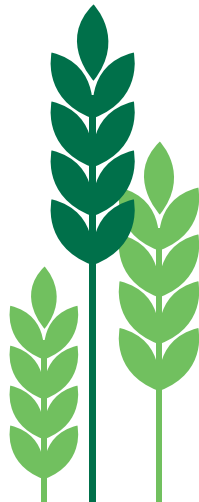
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ANNUAL REPORT

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



A letter to our constituents:

As the year comes to a close, I think it's safe to say that many look to 2025 hoping for better grain prices. A 27% rebound in statewide wheat production and 4% rise in barley production in Washington would normally be cause for celebration. However, as prices crept down toward 2020 levels, the soaring cost of inputs, high interest rates, and a challenging spring wheat crop have dampened optimism.

Throughout the year, the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) heard farmers' calls that market development was more important than ever. In addition to our research and education effort, we went to work on initiatives to help stimulate demand for Washington grain. We hosted trade teams from our three largest soft white (SW) markets—the Philippines, Japan and South Korea—and sent a SW team from the Pacific Northwest (PNW) to South America to discuss imports. We reinvented harvest sample collection to provide thorough crop quality data

to customers and we hired a full-time market development specialist to increase customer outreach. On the barley side, WGC supported the WSU breeding program's development of new varieties aimed to meet consumer demands.

Fortunately, demand for wheat exports picked up in the second half of 2024 and SW wheat sales are 44% ahead of last marketing year (June-May). Sales of all classes of U.S. wheat are up 18% compared to last year.

One of the keys to PNW wheat remaining competitive on the global market is maintaining efficient, reliable, and cost-effective transportation. The WGC and the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) continue to work together in support of the entire transportation system and especially the essential services provided by the four Lower Snake River dams.

I'd like to thank outgoing commissioner Gary Bailey from St. John for representing Wheat District 2 the last nine years. He has represented Washington farmers proudly on the state, national, and international level and leaves a positive legacy from his time on the commission. His kind and thoughtful contributions will be missed.

The WGC remains in a strong position and full of new ambitions for 2025 that aim to enhance the economic well-being and competitiveness of Washington's grain industry. We encourage growers to reach out to commissioners and WGC staff, sign up for our newsletter, or follow us on social media to learn more about how your assessment dollars are working for you.

- Casey Chumrau, CEO



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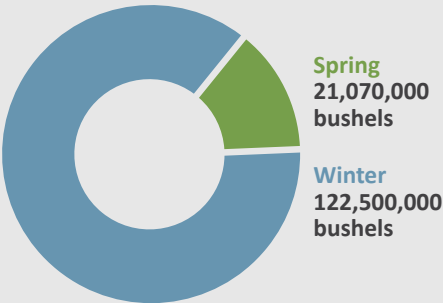


WA accounted for
53.8%
 of soft white production
 amongst the PNW (WA, OR, ID).

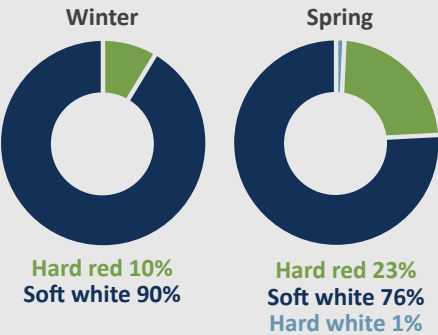
Washington Production

Washington ranks fourth among the U.S. wheat-producing states. All wheat production for Washington was 143.5 million bushels (3.9 million metric tons), a 27% increase from a year prior. The average winter wheat yield was 70 bushels per acre. The average spring wheat yield was 43 bushels an acre. Barley production in Washington was 4.62 million bushels, up 4% from last year, with yield estimated at 66 bushels per acre.

2024 Wheat production breakdown:



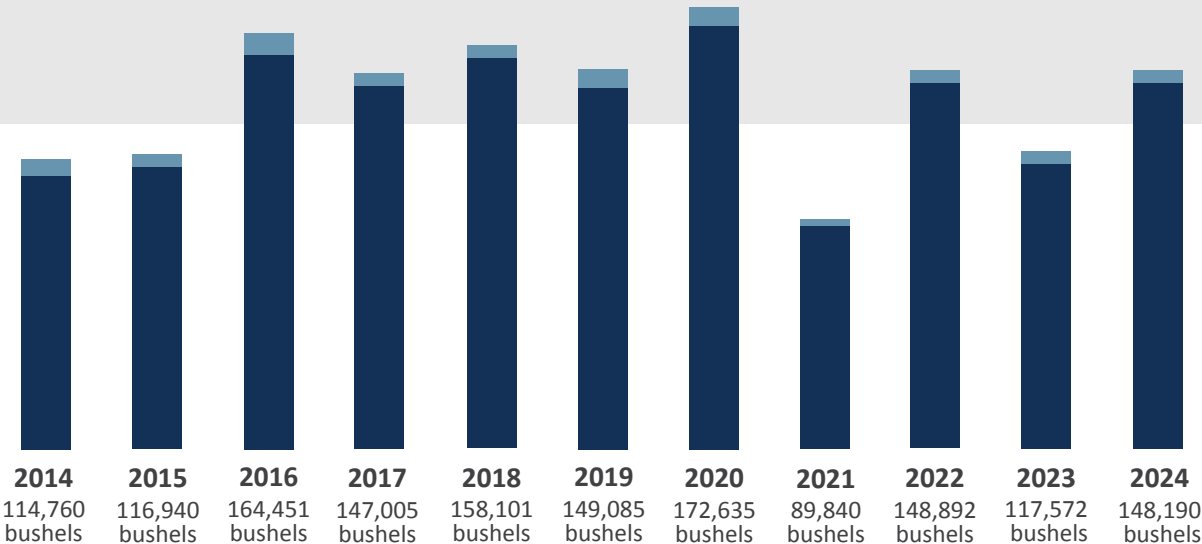
2024 Wheat production by class:



Washington total production 2014-24

(1,000 bushels)

Barley
 Wheat



Market Development

The WGC marketing objective is to strengthen existing markets and develop new markets for PNW small grains. Activities promote superior quality, consistency, and value of Washington wheat and barley (as part of the PNW region) in new and existing uses. In 2023-24 the WGC budgeted \$1,629,585 toward market development.

Marketing efforts

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



5 Trade teams

In coordination with U.S. Wheat Associates (USW), which is the export market organization for the U.S. wheat industry, the WGC hosted five trade teams to Washington state.



1 Crop quality tour

Flour millers from Nisshin Flour Milling, Miller Milling, and Rogers Foods traveled through Eastern Washington to get updates from grain handlers about the soft white wheat harvest.



11 Marketing conferences

WGC staff and commissioners participated in overseas market development activities with USW, the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Indonesia, Japan, Malta, Mexico, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam.



1 Club wheat exchange to Japan

One part market development, one part research, this program is a collaboration between the Japan Flour Millers Association (JFMA), the WGC and the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS). Each year, JFMA analyzes developmental lines of USDA-ARS club wheat and then provides feedback on which lines best meet the end-use quality parameters of Japanese millers and consumers. The organizations take turns visiting each other's countries.



Representatives from the Japan Biscuit Association at HighLine Grain near Four Lakes on Sept. 19.



Representatives from Nisshin Flour Milling and Rogers Foods try their hand at identifying club wheat mixed in with common soft white wheat at the Washington State Dept. of Agriculture grain inspection office in Spokane Valley on Aug. 12.



USDA-ARS scientist Dr. Alecia Kiszonas (right) shows representatives from four South Korean milling companies the cookie quality testing done at the Western Wheat Quality Lab in Pullman on July 29.



Representatives from four Filipino milling and baking companies, and U.S. Wheat Associates, tour the WSU greenhouse with winter wheat breeder Dr. Arron Carter (red shirt, right) on Aug. 19.

Top 10 U.S. white wheat markets

By metric tons (1 metric ton = 36.74 bushels)

Source: USDA – Foreign Agricultural Service, Weekly Export Sales Report. The marketing year (MY) is June 1 through May 31.



Research Activity

In 2023-24 the WGC contributed \$2,155,206 to directly fund research at Washington State University. In addition, the WGC contributed \$147,904 towards Grower Services research projects.

Research funding by activity for the year included:

73% Plant breeding and genetics

11% Quality

7% Disease/Insects

9% Production/Management



Paying it forward

Since 1990, the Washington Grain Commission has established six research endowments at Washington State University. The endowments are managed by WSU with distributions made annually to the research program of the faculty holding the endowment. These endowments are perpetual and require no further contributions from WGC to continue funding work on behalf of the wheat and barley industries and the state’s small grain producers into the future. Values reported as of 6/30/2024.



Growers attending the WSU Spillman Farm field day on June 24 learn about the weather data available to them through the AgWeatherNet system.

Endowment name	Current chair	Original principal	2023-24 Research distributions	Utilization	Current value
(1990) Orville A. Vogel Endowed Chair in wheat breeding and genetics	Arron Carter	\$1.5 million	\$120,584.97	to help fund graduate student and post doctorate positions, upgrade sensor technology, and support genotyping and WSU wheat variety seed production in partnership with WSCIA.	\$3,155,900
(1990) Orville A. Vogel wheat research fund*	—	—	\$203,494.44	projects rotate on a three-year funding cycle. Details are available online at: https://bit.ly/45BTew6 .	\$5,308,300
(1990) Robert A. Nilan Endowed Chair in barley research and education	Robert Bruggeman	\$1 million	\$60,122.51	barley research efforts.	\$1,564,200
(1997) R. James Cook Endowed Chair in wheat research	Ian Burke	\$1.5 million	\$21,871.25	program support for weed management research	\$2,534,800
(2009) Thomas B. Mick Endowed Chair in small grain economics	Randy Fortenbery	\$2 million	\$112,182.62	program support	\$2,918,300
(2010) Washington Wheat Distinguished Professorship	Joao Antonangelo	\$1.5 million	\$78,524.52	to cover salaries, wages, and benefits for personnel working on soil acidification and sensor technology projects for wheat in the PNW, along with goods, services, and administrative fees.	\$2,042,700
(2011) Endowed Chair in Small Grains Extension and Research	Drew Lyon	\$1.5 million	\$77,327.43	Applied research and extension outreach on weed science issues.	\$2,011,600

Education

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

In 2023-24 the WGC contributed \$650,500 to directly fund education programming. In addition, the WGC contributed \$431,200 towards Grower Services education programs contracted through WAWG.

Highlights

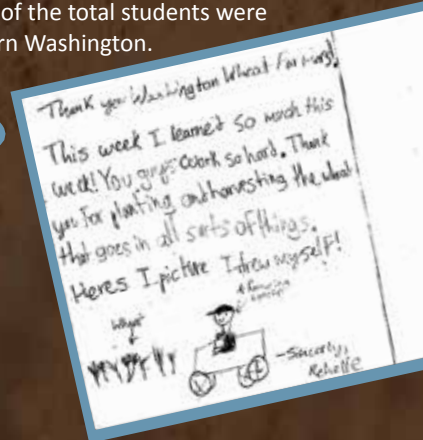
Cultivating the next generation is an important part of the WGC's education efforts. The largest portion of the WGC education budget goes to fund the Wheat Week program through the Franklin Conservation District. Wheat Week is a hands-on science program aligned with required Washington State Sciences Standards taught in fourth and fifth grade classrooms across Washington.

Wheat Week reached 20,089 students and 954 teachers during the 2023-24 school year. In-person and DIY Online Wheat Week reached 259 schools in 23 counties, and 64% of the total students were in Western Washington.



Children enjoy the wheat box at the 2024 RiverFest event in Kennewick. The educational display is sponsored by the WGC and coordinated by the Franklin Conservation District.

Tri-Cities Energy and Agriculture Career STEM Academy student flying the drone he just built. Photo by Cristian Gonzalez.



New program: The Benton and Franklin conservation districts, Benton PUD, WGC, and a consortium of industry leaders and educational institutions, launched the Tri-Cities Energy and Agriculture Career STEM Academy, a new initiative aimed at educating high school students about science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-related careers in agriculture and renewable energy. The goal is to increase attendance at the Career STEM Academy next year from 20 to 25. Agriculture and hydropower will continue to play a significant role.

Financials

2023-24 Assessment revenue: Roll forward to 2024-25 budget:

\$6 **\$1.9**
MILLION MILLION

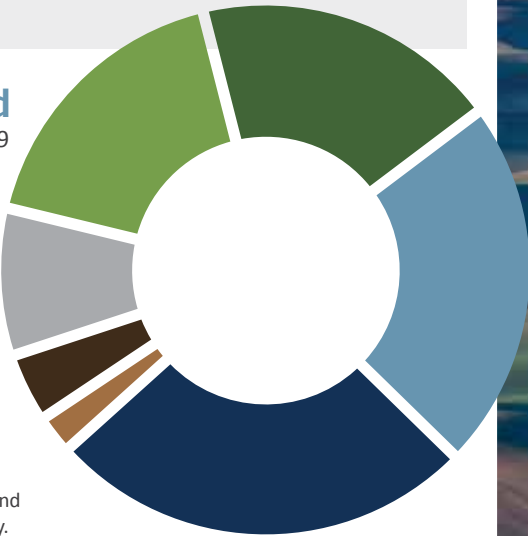
2023-24 Budget: \$8.6 million
vs. spent \$6.6 million

Looking forward

FY 2024-25 Budget: \$7,287,379

- 26% Research
- 22% Grower Services*
- 19% Market Development
- 16% Professional Services
- 10% Education / Information
- 5% Office Operations
- 2% Policy Development

*Supports efforts related to issues and programs affecting wheat and barley.



Service recognition: Gary Bailey

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

Gary has been a commissioner since 2016 and served as the WGC chairman from 2018-20. He also served on the board of directors for U.S. Wheat Associates.



Subscribe to our e-newsletter!

Stay informed on how the Washington Grain Commission assessment contributions drive market development, empower innovation through research, and support vital wheat and barley industry initiatives. Scan the QR code with your smart phone's camera to sign up.



CHAIRMAN

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

By Ben Barstow



I've written before about the numerous advantages of being an "above-average-age" farmer, but another advantage has recently come to mind, and I thought I would share it here.

I was thinking about how platforms like social media are so often based on a single-soundbite-type of experience, and how a single photo or soundbite so often becomes the basis for a person's perceptions of rural life. This is in contrast with farmers like us who experience our natural environment every day. While a picture captures a moment in time, we watch the same ecosystem over decades. Take a picture of a dust storm or a burning field, put it on the backdrop of your phone, and it looks like there is dust storm or open field burn every day on every farm. Just like that, you have a perceived crisis. Long experience though — seeing the same environment over multiple decades — gives a much more realistic view. Unfortunately, this long experience is the kind of view common to farmers and maybe a few others, but it's a rare viewpoint in our increasingly mobile society.

Long experience shows us that change is a constant thing. My grandfather saw cheatgrass become a problem. I saw jointed goat grass and then Italian rye become a problem. Without that experience, it probably wouldn't have occurred to me to ask, while on a Snake River dam tour, "How many non-native species are there in our rivers that could impact native salmon?" The answer I got was, "a lot, and we don't know their impacts." It seems everyone should be wondering how much our fish problems are related to introduced species in our aquatic ecosystems, but that's my long experience talking.

Long experience is essential for understanding how important scientific research is to our industry. For one thing, it takes a long time to accumulate enough results over enough years to come to a reliable conclusion about one part of a much bigger problem. Generating reliable research is a long, slow process, but as advances are made, we quickly incorporate them and take them for granted. Resistance to Hessian fly is a great example. Hessian fly has been an occasional yield drag on spring grains but largely ignored. However, Washington State University released Roger, a new Hessian fly-resistant spring club, this year. I suspect within a few years, spring wheats with Hessian fly resistance will be the norm, and most of us won't even remember this break-

through if pest control is taking place.

Even on the marketing front, long-term relationships are very important. The Washington Grain Commission (WGC) started reaching out to our Asian customers before I was born. Many of our Asian customers have been meeting WGC representatives for decades, and for me, anyway, it always seems like meeting a customer for the second time is always a deeper and warmer experience than the first. It seems like we are just starting to make headway with that level of connectedness to the South American markets, and I think we are really poised for some improvements there.

As I mentioned above, though, long experience tells us we must be constantly adapting to change. Learning, for instance, that some customers in South America save about \$11 per ton on shipping costs when their orders are loaded in Vancouver, B.C., instead of a Columbia River port, means we need to adjust our marketing approach to tackle this new challenge.

The WGC has been "playing a long game" in public education as well. We have been sponsoring the Wheat Week educational program in elementary schools across the state, especially in urban areas, for years. I think it is a great program, but it is extremely difficult to tell if it is having any long-term impact on the public's perception of our industry.

Of the three WGC strategic pillars — marketing, research, and education — I think education is the toughest to find quantifiable metrics that demonstrate success. From my service on the WGC board, I've learned that if you really want to educate the public about what we do on the farm, it takes a budget number with lots of zeros to make any headway. If you do manage to move the needle over, say, a five-year period, it can move all the way back in 48 hours with one bad incident. Luckily, Wheat Week has been providing an overwhelmingly positive experience for kids in Washington state for nearly 20 years and counting.

As the new year arrives and change continues to happen, the WGC will remain steadfast in serving the state's growers through preserving our markets, upholding our way of life, and driving innovation to ensure a sustainable future for our industry. Or, put another way, continuing to leverage our long experience for positive change. ■

Only the best

Collaboration helps bring high quality spring wheat varieties to farmers' fields

By Mike Pumphrey

Spring Wheat Breeder, Washington State University

By Alecia Kiszonas

Research Biologist, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service



The Pacific Northwest (PNW) grain industry is known for high-quality wheat, and Washington growers have earned that reputation after prioritizing and investing in countless ways over decades. The most discriminating local-to-international markets are consistently supplied by our state's farmers. The quality of what we produce today is built upon decades of improvement in all parts of the supply chain, and future quality depends on what we do today.

"Quality" may have different meanings at each level of the grain supply, such as seed identity, purity, viability, vigor, and size when planting; quality wheat varieties need to be resilient across a range of environmental and soil stressors, weeds, pests, and diseases in order to meet grain specifications for hardness, test weight, protein, color, soundness, and starch properties; quality commercial production requires timely management, including cultural practices, fertility, and harvest; milling and eventual end-use baking qualities are variable and measured by another couple dozen physical and chemical tests depending on final product purposes; nutritional quality of wheat is another frontier that is now being more directly addressed and will increase in the future.

Plant breeding is at the foundation of supplying quality raw materials at each level of the supply chain for production of high-quality food, feed, and fiber products. The newest varieties available from Washington State University's (WSU) Spring Wheat Breeding program represent the best "quality" available from foundation seed to farm fields, flour mills, and finished products. Varieties expected to be widely multiplied or produced in 2025, in each market class of spring wheat grown in Washington, are built on quality at each level. High quality foundation through certified seed is available from the Washington State Crop Improvement Association and seed dealers, and their broad adaptation and pest and disease resistances make them a solid choice for dryland spring wheat production throughout Washington.

WSU's newest hard red spring wheats, Hale and Net CL+, are at the top of the list for end-use milling and baking quality in the Idaho, Oregon, and Washington commissions' 2024 Preferred Variety pamphlets, in addition to leading grain yields and test weight in variety performance trials. The baking properties of these varieties are maintained across a range of years and environments with desired mixing times and strength and high dough mixing stability. This gives millers and bakers flexibility in product formulations and baking processes.

Soft white spring wheat varieties Ryan, Seahawk, Tekoa, and Butch CL+ also have most desirable end-use quality with leading acreages and superior in-field



performance. Tekoa is currently the highest ranked soft white spring wheat for end-use quality and was a 2024 National Yield Contest winner produced by Joel Zwainz in Reardan, Wash. Tekoa planted acreage has steadily climbed over the past five years.

Our newest release, Bush, may be ranked even higher for end-use quality than its parent variety, Tekoa, with field trial-topping yield and test weight performance over varieties Ryan and Tekoa across precipitation zones and years. Bush is poised to be the leading spring wheat variety after aggressive seed multiplication in 2024 and 2025, increasing the overall quality of the PNW soft white wheat commodity class due to excellent grain, milling, and baking properties with preferred dough color.

Ryan and Butch CL+ are both partial waxy flour types with bright noodle color, a unique property that has created additional streams for their grain to Udon noodle markets. Ryan has led PNW soft white spring acres for multiple years. Butch CL+ is now commercially available as WSU's first two-gene Clearfield soft white spring wheat variety to help with soil-carryover in Beyond herbicide rotations. Like its parents, which include Ryan and Seahawk, Butch CL+ has excellent stripe rust resis-

tance, Hessian fly resistance, and aluminum tolerance in an early-maturing, medium-height variety with high test weight and broad adaptation.

Spring club wheat varieties offer an alternative to growers of soft white spring wheat and a potential market premium. Our newest release, Roger, is the first Hessian fly-resistant spring club wheat and improves options to go along with available varieties Melba and Hedge CL+. Roger is earlier maturing and has lower protein than other club varieties, with very good-to-excellent test weight and broad yield adaptation. Roger is among the highest yielding soft spring wheat varieties and also the highest ranked club type for end-use quality.

The combination of farm-to-table traits in these varieties is the result of collaboration between WSU's spring wheat breeding and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Western Wheat Quality Lab. We partner in selection and evaluation of all wheat varieties over years of their development through testing in WSU's Wheat Variety Testing Program trials and in our neighbor states. Each of the varieties we have released over the past decade has "Most Desirable" quality, leading in-field performance, and has enhanced our reputation as a local-to-international source of high-quality grains. ■



Washington State University's (WSU) Wheat Variety Testing Program research plots at Spillman Farm near WSU campus in Pullman on June 24, 2024.

WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

World wheat trade forecast to hit 4-year low



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

Based on data from the International Grains Council (IGC), total world wheat trade is expected to reach a four-year low in the 2024-25 marketing year (IGC defines the wheat marketing year as July 1-June 30, as opposed to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) definition of June 1-May 31) and be down 8% from last year (Figure 1).

The USDA is also forecasting a year-over-year reduction in world wheat trade, although in the November World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE), their forecast reduction was only 3%.

Both IGC and USDA are forecasting a slight increase in global wheat production this year compared to last, but reduced carry-in stocks for 2024-25 means total wheat supply is down compared to last year. Even with reduced trade, world wheat ending stocks for 2024-25 are projected to be below last year's levels. IGC is currently forecasting world ending stocks will be down 2.4% in 2024-25, while USDA is forecasting a 3.2% reduction.

Wheat exports in 2024-25 are expected to be significantly lower for Russia, Ukraine, and the EU, higher for the U.S., Australia, and Argentina, and nearly unchanged from last year for Canada (Figure 2). Based on USDA export forecasts, the U.S. market share of wheat trade will increase from about 9% last year to over 10% in 2024-25, while the IGC estimates suggest the U.S. share will improve to about 11.4%.

Both estimates may turn out too low if Russia imposes export restrictions later this year to stabilize domestic prices. Russian wheat export prices are the lowest in the world, but are up about 1% compared to this time last year. U.S. prices for hard red winter wheat out of the Gulf of Mexico, on the other hand, are down about 11% compared to a year ago, and white wheat out of the Pacific Northwest is down about 1%. In addition, Canadian wheat out of Vancouver is down about 18%, and Argentinian wheat prices down about 20% compared

Figure 1: World wheat balance sheet

(In million tons. Based on October 2024 IGC)

Marketing Year	IGC 21/22	IGC 22/23	IGC 23/24	IGC 24/25
Beginning Stocks	279	274	284	272
Production	780	804	795	798
Total Supply	1,058	1,078	1,079	1,070
Food	545	550	557	563
Feed and Industrial	174	174	182	175
Seed	38	39	39	38
Total Demand	784	794	807	804
Exports	198	209	215	197
Ending Stocks	274	284	272	266
Stocks To Use	35.01%	35.79%	33.73%	33.06%

SOURCE: INTERNATIONAL GRAINS COUNCIL, OCTOBER 2024

to year ago levels.¹ Thus, the Russian price advantage in international markets has eroded compared to last year.

The increase in Russian export prices relative to other major exporters is the result of a poor production environment in 2023-24 and poor winter wheat planting conditions this fall. In general, the wheat-producing regions of Russia have been abnormally dry. USDA has estimated the 2024 Russian wheat harvest is 11% below the 2023 crop. This comes from a 3% reduction in harvested acres compared to 2023 and an 8% reduction in yields. Fall planting conditions suggest the 2025 winter wheat crop may also be below average (about 70% of total Russian wheat production is comprised of winter wheat).

In addition to Russia's wheat production challenges, Russian consumers are facing significant price inflation this year, including food price inflation.² As a result, we may see Russia ration wheat exports beyond what might happen based solely on export prices to stabilize prices in their domestic food markets. If this were to happen, the U.S. world wheat trade share could grow beyond the current USDA and IGC forecasts.

Reductions in wheat export volumes from Russia and Ukraine are coupled with forecasts of significant reduc-

¹Based on November estimates from IGC.

²According to Trading Economics (<https://tradingeconomics.com/russia/inflation-cpi>), Russian inflation in the summer months averaged about 9%, with inflation in September and October still running about 8.5%.

tions out of the EU. This largely reflects both a poor crop in 2024, and poor planting conditions for the 2025 winter wheat crop. However, in contrast to Russia and Ukraine, the EU production issues are the result of excessive rainfall.

About 27% of all EU wheat is produced in France and another 17% in Germany. Winter wheat in the EU is planted between September and December. In fall 2023, both France and Germany experienced abnormally wet conditions impacting winter wheat seeding.

During the 2023-24 growing season for winter wheat (December 2023 to May 2024), rainfall in northern France exceeded the 20-year average by almost 30%. As a result of excessive moisture, EU harvested acres in 2024 were the lowest since 2008. In addition, EU wheat yields were below trend line yields for the third year in a row. The combination of lower harvested acres and reduced yields resulted in an EU wheat crop 8% smaller than last year's (based on IGC estimates) and the smallest EU wheat crop in over a decade.

EU planting conditions for the 2024-25 winter wheat crops have also been poor. Rain amounts this fall have exceeded the 20-year average by about 59% and are above fall 2023 by 28%. Thus, planted acres for the 2024-25 crop may well end up below acres planted last year.

Despite the improved U.S. market share in world wheat trade and higher Russian and Ukrainian export prices, U.S. wheat prices are at multiyear lows. However, if Russia begins to limit exports to address domestic food price issues and the EU continues to struggle with excessive moisture in their primary wheat-producing areas, there could be some price relief in the late winter/spring time period. As of late November, futures prices for soft red winter wheat are pointing

Figure 2: Wheat exports

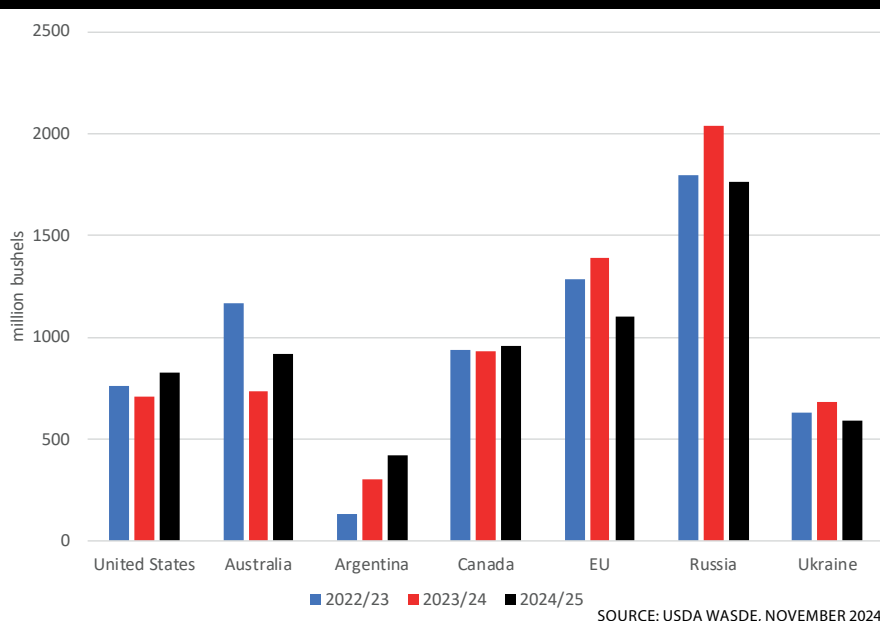
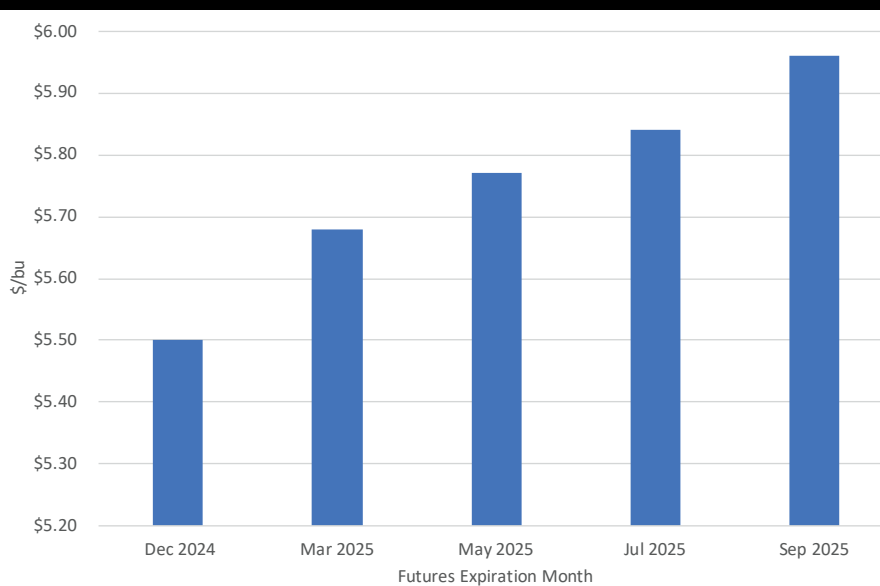


Figure 3: Soft red wheat futures prices (as of Nov. 18, 2024)



to higher prices in later months. As of Nov. 18 (Figure 3), March futures prices were trading at an \$.18 premium to December futures, and May was another \$.09 above March. In addition, unlike the last couple of years, the current local basis (local cash price minus the futures price) for Washington producers is quite weak, meaning that if the futures markets should respond in a positive way to challenges in the global wheat balance sheet, local prices should respond positively as well. The last couple of winters, local prices were trading at a high enough premium to futures that improvements in futures prices did not always translate to improved local pricing opportunities. ■

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

From grief to action

FAMILY TRAGEDY SENT DAUGHTER ON SUICIDE PREVENTION PATH

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Darla Tyler-McSherry turned one of the worst moments of her family's life into a life-saving mission to prevent other farm families from experiencing the same thing hers did.

By 2016, Dick Tyler, Tyler-McSherry's 82-year-old father, had worked on the family's Montana wheat farm his entire life and was very proud of the fact that he had been part of or led harvest for 71 years. Because of a congenital eye condition and other health issues, he was no longer able to participate in harvest. The family didn't realize how tough that was for him.

"My dad was born on the farm, and he died on the farm by his own hands," she said. "I've spent my career educating people about physical health and mental health. I never thought it would touch me so personally. I was trained to spot these behaviors in people, and I didn't see them in my dad."

In 2018, two years after her father's suicide, Tyler-McSherry started the Ask In Earnest initiative, which is focused on raising awareness about mental health issues in the farm community and educating people on ways to protect their mental health. The name, Ask In Earnest, is a nod to her father. Shortly after his death, Tyler-McSherry was talking to one of her father's friends. That friend told her that whenever her father saw someone he knew, he'd stop and ask in earnest how they were doing. The friend explained that that question wasn't asked to be nosy but because her father really cared.

"It is one of most beautiful things anybody said about my dad, and I took that phrase to use as my initiative name," Tyler-McSherry explained.

Tyler-McSherry said she still struggles with some guilt for not seeing warning signs in her father's behavior and explained that sometimes family members can be too close to the situation. She encourages people to slow down, zoom out, and take a close look at loved ones. Part



of what Ask In Earnest does is help concerned family and friends initiate what can be a very scary conversation with someone they suspect is suffering with mental health issues.

"We might know they are struggling, but we might not have any idea how badly they are struggling," she said. "We help give you some skills and some confidence that you can have this conversation, and you can be nervous, and your voice can be shaky, and you can be sweaty, and you can feel like your heart is racing. All those are okay, and you can potentially save a life if you ask someone if they are thinking of suicide."

Ask In Earnest teams up with other grassroots initiatives and other entities in the agricultural community who are teaching prevention courses. Besides her own initiative, Tyler-McSherry is a certified QPR trainer, which is a 90-minute class that's been identified as a best practice for suicide prevention. QPR stands for question, persuade, and refer and can be compared to CPR for suicide. She's also training in a course called COMET (Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory) that is similar to QPR but is geared more for rural populations.

Crisis hotlines are often seen as help only for the person in crisis, but that's not case. If you suspect somebody is struggling, you can call a crisis hotline and ask for ways to approach the person you are concerned about. One of the roadblocks to asking about someone's mental health can be the sense of responsibility it confers on the person doing the asking.

"When you learn CPR, no one is expecting you to turn into the emergency room doctor. You are the bridge between that person in trouble and life-saving help," Tyler-McSherry said. "It's the same thing with QPR or COMET or mental health first aid and the work I do with Ask In Earnest. I'm not suggesting in any way shape or form that you are going to turn into a mental health counselor in 90 minutes, or that if I'm worried about you and I start

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

- **Farm Aid Hotline 800-FARM AID (327-6243), M-F 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST**
- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 24/7**
- **2-1-1: Hotline that connects callers with local resources**

talking to you about suicide, that means I've become your mental health counselor. No. You are going to be the bridge to help someone in crisis and get them connected to some quality life-saving help."

If you are struggling with your mental health, Tyler-McSherry has some tips:

- **Sleep.** Evidence shows that sleeping too much or too little has an impact on mental health. To help get better sleep, keep the room dark, quiet, and slightly humid. Do something relaxing a half hour or hour before bedtime. Avoid stimulates such as nicotine and caffeine a couple hours before bedtime. Larger amounts of alcohol consumption have been shown to disrupt sleep patterns. It's recommended mattresses be changed every eight years and pillows every two to three years.
- **Nutrition and hydration.** Farmers spend a lot of time making sure that their crops and livestock are well fed and hydrated, and they need to do the same for themselves. Drink nonalcoholic and nondehydrating fluids throughout the day. Caffeine can actually flush fluids out of the body. Research has shown that people who eat more fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, lean meats, and low amounts of sugar report fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety than people who eat a lot of processed fast foods and foods high in sugar and fat.
- **Gratitude.** Tyler-McSherry said there's research showing that actively expressing and practicing gratitude 15 minutes a day, five days a week for six weeks can make a positive impact on mental health because it broadens our perspective and can help us see a different view. This can be as simple as writing in a journal or saying out loud what you are grateful for.

Tyler-McSherry said the attributes that make good

farmers — hard working, independent, problem solvers, resilient, adaptable — can also work against them.

"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," she said. "There's no shame in that. We shouldn't feel like we have to suffer through that alone. Effective health is available. It's not a weakness to ask for help. It's a sign of incredible strength and bravery."

Tyler-McSherry will be bringing her Ask In Earnest initiative to Washington growers Feb. 27 as part of the Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization winter workshops. Registration for the session begins at 9:30 a.m. and will be held at the Hampton Inn-Garden Springs in Spokane, Wash. More details will be made available at wawg.org/ammo-workshops/.

More information about Ask In Earnest can be found at askinearnest.org. ■

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THE BOTTOM LINE

Importance of tax planning in low income years

By Cade Weber

CPA, Leffel, Otis & Warwick

If you are reading this, you probably know as well as I do that the trend in commodity prices has not been favorable to farmers over the last year or two. Margins for producers have become razor thin, and annual budgets do not paint as pretty of a picture as they have in the recent past. Under these conditions, it may be easy to disregard tax planning over the next couple of months since you may not have what you would traditionally consider a “tax problem.” However, there is one key factor of the current tax law that makes tax planning very relevant, even in low-income years.

On December 22, 2017, President Donald Trump signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) into affect. The TCJA was a major tax overhaul that cut taxes for both businesses and individuals. While the bulk of the TCJA was favorable to taxpayers, it made the treatment of Net

Operating Losses (NOLs) less favorable. Under the previous law, you could offset 100% of your current year income with a NOL from a prior year. The TCJA changed this rule to only allow 80% of current year income to be offset by prior losses. To illustrate the significance of this, let’s look at a simple example. We will assume that an operating farm corporation reported a NOL of \$500,000 in year one, followed by income of \$500,000 in year two. Under the old tax law, the NOL in year one would completely offset the income in year two, resulting in zero tax due. But under the TCJA, only 80% of the income in year two could be offset by year one’s loss, resulting in taxable income of \$100,000. At the current corporate tax rate, this would result in owing \$21,000 of tax for what was a breakeven two years ago. Given the fluctuations in the farm economy and farmers’ ability to manipulate the timing of income and expense, this situation is not an uncommon occurrence without proper tax planning.

If you are sitting with a taxable loss before your year end, the best practice from a tax perspective would be to bring in some taxable income and minimize that NOL to the extent you can. One of the most common responses I hear after explaining this to clients is that they do not want to sell wheat under the current marketing conditions. Luckily, there are several options to increase taxable income without having to sell crop inventory for a price you are unhappy with. One of these potential options is to capitalize fertilizer costs. Generally, fertilizer costs are expensed in the year they are paid, but to the extent the fertilizer is for the benefit of future crops, an election can be made that pushes off the deduction into future tax years. Deferred payment contracts also allow flexibility on the timing of income. If you have crop contracted for a payment date after your tax year end, you can elect to pull that income into the current year. Another way to increase taxable income without selling crop is to utilize Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) loans. The CCC is a government corporation that will loan you money with your crop as collateral. While there is an interest cost associated with CCC loans, it is usually significantly less than the interest on an operating line of credit. These loan proceeds can be treated as income in the year they are received and can be a good option for operators who want to minimize their tax loss while maintaining the ability to market their crop when they want.

So, while the current farm economy may allow you to skip tax planning with minimal consequences this year, do not miss your opportunity to be proactive and put yourself in the best tax position moving forward. History has shown us that things will turn around, and tax planning in lean years can go a long way towards minimizing tax in the future. ■

Cade Weber is a CPA with Leffel, Otis & Warwick, P.S. and works out of the firm’s Odessa, Wash., office. He was raised in Odessa and enjoys advising farm families and ag businesses. For information, visit low.cpa.



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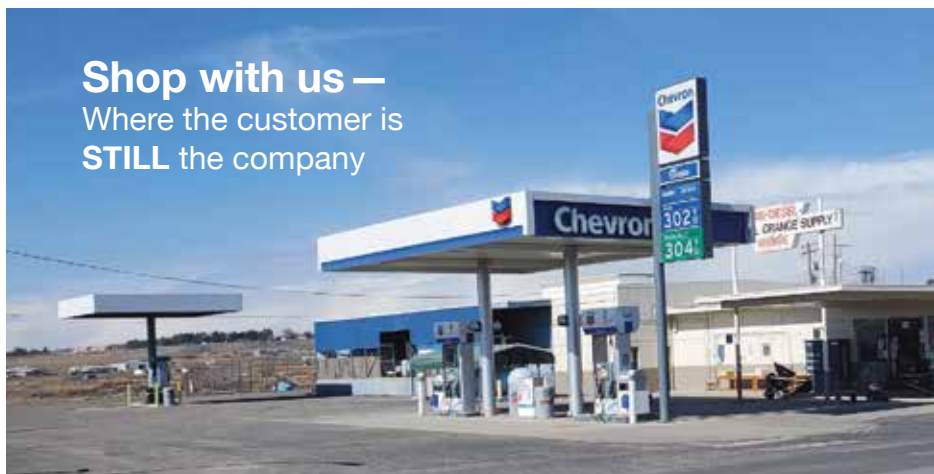
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Summer on Greenville Farm in Prescott. Photo by Addilyn Chabre.



Raegan (7) and Harlan Appel (5) on the family's farm in Thera. Photo by Natalia Meyerhofer.

Your wheat life...



Harvest 2023 near Lamont. Photo by Amy Swannack.

Email pictures to editor@wawg.org.
Include location, names, and ages of all children.



Grady James Howard (2) helping his grandpa, Paul Sievers, get things ready to haul wheat.
Photo by Paige Howard.



Sunset over winter wheat near Wilbur. Photo by Daleen Jensen.

HAPPENINGS

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

DECEMBER 2024

6-7 HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS. Santa, parade, shopping. Waitsburg, Wash. waitsburgcommercialclub.org/events

10-11 WSU WHEAT ACADEMY.

Increase your knowledge of disease diagnostics, insect pest management, herbicide decisions and nutrient management. Registration is required. Pullman, Wash. smallgrains.wsu.edu/event/2024-wsu-wheat-academy/

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

15-16 2025 NORTHWEST HAY EXPO.

Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, Wash. For information visit 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/

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

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/

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

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

19 NRCS AND FSA UPDATE. AMMO workshop. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Lion's Club 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/

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/

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/

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/ ■



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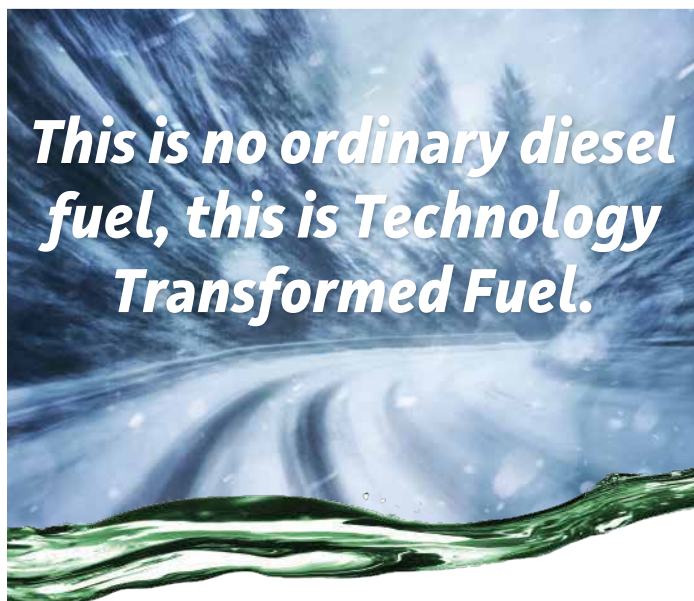
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From research equipment to scholarships, the WWF supports various activities making a positive influence on farming including:

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- Research Equipment Grants
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