# WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

MARCH 2025

**COVER CROP CONUNDRUM** Why the wheat industry is

advocating that winter wheat be designated as a cover crop

> ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: AMMO recaps: Weed management strategies and NAWG farm bill updates A look at soft white wheat key buyers Herbicide best management practices Using analytics to make marketing decisions



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## WHEAT LIFE

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## **President's Perspective**



#### **Research on my mind**

By Jeff Malone President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

There's just a lot going on these days in agriculture. Between all the new advances in technology, chemistry, biologicals, spending money, and worrying, I find that my mental dance card is a bit full! This month I'd like to highlight one particular aspect of our industry that will either fill you with excitement or make you think about watching paint dry — research. Like it, love it, or leave it, research

is the cornerstone upon which all advances in our modern era have been based. The complex dance of research, how it is proposed, funded, and deployed, is a bit extensive. But it is safe to say that nearly everything we do today on our farms is because of it, and many mouths are fed here at home and abroad thanks to it.

Since its inception in 1958, the Washington Grain Commission has supported research at Washington State University (WSU) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (USDA ARS). Every year, the commission's research review gives growers a chance to look at the current status of ongoing projects and give their opinions on the direction of future development. Mary Palmer Sullivan has been a central figure in organizing the review, communicating with researchers, and advocating successfully for research dollars during her 3 decades with the commission. I'd like to personally thank her for her continued tireless work on our behalf.

The list of folks working on all this is longer than I can probably list here. But as wheat farmers, we all look to WSU researchers like Mike Pumphrey, Arron Carter, Ian Burke, and others with admiration and, sometimes, panic as they work to help us meet the needs and challenges of the future. We also need to recognize WSU Extension and the folks there for their tireless efforts to keep us all going.

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) also has a role in promoting research and lobbying for funding. Retired WSU College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences Associate Dean for Research, Jim Moyer, currently serves as chair of WAWG's Research Committee.

With all of these people, projects, and problems, we've still barely scratched the surface of all this. So where do we, the farmers, fit in? Well, despite what I'd like to think, complaining about things doesn't count. What all of these hardworking people need is your participation. It is extremely important that your voice is heard as WSU, USDA, the WGC, and WAWG grapple with decisions regarding where to spend your assessment dollars, and what projects to advocate for for federal funding. We need farmers to attend field days, variety trials, and wheat college. There is nothing more discouraging to researchers than no one showing up to learn and give input. Not only does it help them, but we need to be outstanding in our fields while we are out ... standing in our fields, and all of this helps us accomplish that. Every single variety of wheat, crop protection product, and fertilizer I use is because someone worked hard to develop it. If I could have a chance to provide input on what would work best on my farm, why wouldn't I do it!

The future of Washington Wheat has many challenges — most of which we don't even know yet — and we are going to need a healthy and robust research community working to address them. So, let's take the opportunities afforded to us to help! Give encouragement, input, constructive criticism even, but most importantly, give of your time. The future is counting on it.

**Cover photo:** Winter wheat as a cover crop? Check out page 26 to see why growers are advocating for this designation. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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## WAWG's current top priorities are:

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

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

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# WAWG WORK

ADVOCATING FOR THE WHEAT FARMERS OF EASTERN WASHINGTON

## River stakeholders take advocacy to the Hill during fly-in

A group of Pacific Northwest river stakeholders spent a week in Washington, D.C., in February, meeting with members of Congress to discuss the importance of the lower Snake River dams (LSRD).

The group was led by Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers. Joining her were Captain Jeremy Nielsen, president of the Columbia River Pilots; Austin Rohr, deputy executive director for Northwest RiverPartners; Scott Corbitt, general manager of the Port of Lewiston; Leslie Druffel, outreach director for The McGregor Company; and Anthony Pena, government relations manager for the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association.

Meetings with regional delegations included Washington Reps. Emily Randall, Michael Baumgartner, Kim Schrier, Dan Newhouse, and Marie Glusenkamp Perez; Idaho Sen. James Risch; and Idaho Rep. Russ Fulcher. One of the main purposes of the fly-in was to meet with congressional offices that sit on committees that have a bearing on the LSRD. The group met with offices from Georgia, Tennessee, Minnesota, Louisiana, and Ohio. They also met with staff from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the House Natural Resources Committee, and the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Over three days, they attended more than 20 meetings.

"This trip was important because there are so many new members of



The river stakeholders group included (from left) Captain Jeremy Nielsen, president of the Columbia River Pilots; Austin Rohr, deputy executive director for Northwest RiverPartners; Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers; Scott Corbitt, general manager of the Port of Lewiston; Leslie Druffel, outreach director for The McGregor Company; and Anthony Pena, government relations manager for the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association.

Congress that are unfamiliar with the lower Snake River dams. Our meetings were successful, and I feel that we made a very positive impact," Hennings said. "With this administration's emphasis on America-first energy, now is the time for us to find a solution that doesn't hinder our ability to produce clean, affordable energy and reliably move goods throughout the system, while protecting endangered fish. We also emphasized how dependent many local economies are dependent on the river system."

In the committee meetings, the group discussed two governmental actions: the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) effort currently underway, which is evaluating updated and changed circumstances related to the Columbia River System, and a 2022 National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) report that claims removing the LSRD is instrumental in fish recovery. Hennings said their message was that the SEIS should be rescinded and that the NOAA report, which wasn't based on research or science, should be improved or also rescinded.

"One of our main talking points was the need for collaboration between



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## USDA kicks off ARC/PLC sign-up

In January, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the 2025 enrollment period for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs. Agricultural producers can submit applications to USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) for ARC and PLC for the 2025 crop year from Jan. 21 to April 15.

ARC and PLC provide financial protections to farmers from substantial drops in crop prices or revenues and are vital economic safety nets for most American farms.

"Our safety-net programs provide critical financial protections against commodity market volatilities for many American farmers, so don't delay enrollment," said FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux. "If you're getting coverage through the Agriculture Risk Coverage or Price Loss Coverage programs, avoid the rush and contact your local FSA office for an appointment. Even if you are not changing your program election for 2025, you still need to sign a contract to enroll."

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County (ARC-CO) or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual (ARC-IC), which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2025 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multiyear contract on the farm it will continue





Congressional meetings with the river stakeholders included (from top) Georgia Rep. Mike Collins (middle); Washington Rep. Dan Newhouse (third from left); and Washington Rep. Michael Baumgartner (second from right). Baumgartner brought the river stakeholders group to a House hearing and then discussed the group's issues on the walk back to his office.



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for 2025 unless an election change is made. If producers do not submit their election revision by the April 15 deadline, their election remains the same as their 2024 election for commodities on the farm from the prior year. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the cropland.

USDA also reminds producers that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products including Supplemental Coverage Option, Enhanced Coverage Option and, for cotton producers, the Stacked Income Protection Plan (commonly referred to as STAX).

For more information on ARC and PLC, producers can visit fsa.usda. gov/resources/programs/arc-plc or contact their local USDA Service Center.

## February round up of county meetings Franklin County

At the Franklin County meeting, growers learned that the county Conservation Reserve Program sign-up rates are projected to remain the same and that the agency has opened Agriculture Risk Coverage

and Price Loss Coverage sign-ups. County growers who attended the recent Washington Grain Commission Research Review gave a report, and the group discussed upcoming Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization sessions. They also discussed a letter in support of the Lind Dryland Research Station and its employees, as well as drafting a letter in support of House Bill 1188, sponsored by Washington state Rep. Mary Dye (R-Pomeroy). The importance of the Washington State University variety



**SPOKANE AG EXPO.** The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) appreciates the Spokane Ag Expo volunteers who manned our booth and assisted attendees in answering wheat facts for a prize of WAWG swag.

trials was another topic of discussion. Currently, Franklin County only has one location for variety trials.

The next county meeting is scheduled for March 13 at the Kahlotus Grange.

#### **Lincoln County meeting**

In late January, the Lincoln and Adams Area Extension team held two dryland wheat producer meetings to update growers on some of the latest research projects happening in the region. The Lincoln County meeting was followed by an afternoon session focused on soil health in dryland sessions. Growers received pesticide credits at both meetings. This recap covers only the Lincoln County meeting held in Davenport, Wash.

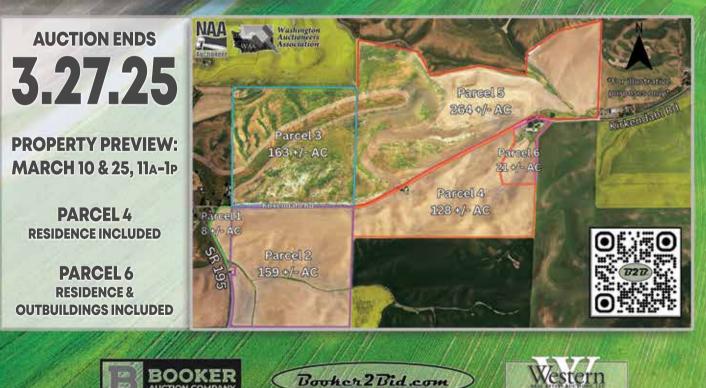
Aaron Esser, Washington State University (WSU) Extension agronomist and director of the Wilke Extension and Research Farm, talked about fungicide applications in winter wheat to control stripe rust and, to a lesser extent, strawbreaker foot rot. He said producers often justify fungicide applications with herbicide timing, regardless of thresholds or cultivars planted, as cheap insurance. However, this approach increases costs, potentially antagonizes grassy weed control, and potentially negatively impacts soil health. Experiments at the Wilke Farm have shown that there is no yield or economic benefit with an unnecessary fungicide application at herbicide timing. Before applying the fungicide, Esser recommended growers look at the variety, crop rotation, and the current

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stripe rust forecast before deciding.

Esser also gave an update on what's been happening at the Wilke Farm. In 2024, they had trials on canola, weeds, spring peas, soil pH, cover crops, crop rotations, and a Kernza assessment.

Jesse Ford, a WSU Extension research associate with the Washington Oilseed Cropping Systems Program, covered dryland canola production considerations including herbicide options, 2024 variety trials, pests, and winter canola challenges.

Casey Chumrau, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), talked about HB4, the transgenic wheat developed by Bioceres and released in South America. The trait has been approved in the U.S., but has not been commercialized. The WGC is seeking grower feedback about the wheat and the future of transgenic wheat in the U.S.

Drew Lyon, professor and holder of the Endowed Chair Small Grains Extension and Research, Weed Science at WSU, covered the grassy weed trifecta of rattail fescue, downy brome, and feral rye. Rattail fescue emerges May to June, grows up to 3 feet tall, and has a shallow, fibrous root system that makes it susceptible to drought. It can form dense mats of residue, which can be allelopathic to wheat seedlings, reducing root and shoot elongation. It is intolerant of repeated tillage, and glyphosate is only marginally effective; control requires higher rates and repeated applications. Some evidence shows that waiting until the plants are bigger gives better results with glyphosate. Management includes preventing seed production, crop diversity (at least two years between winter wheat crops), chemical control in winter wheat, and chemical control in fallow when leaves are expanded and the plant is growing rapidly. Growers may also need to consider some tillage.

Downy brome heads about four weeks before winter wheat and can produce more than 500 pounds of seed per acre. Downy brome is developing resistance to the herbicides growers have relied on to control it in winter wheat, and growers need to be looking for multiple modes of action. Management includes preventing seed production and crop diversity (at least two years between winter wheat crops). In fallow, consider light tillage to stimulate germination, seed wheat at the optimum time, use a preemergence herbicide, and follow preemergence herbicide with a postemergence herbicide.

Feral rye seedlings are often more robust than wheat, but seed longevity drops after one year, although a small percentage of feral rye seeds will stick around in the seed bank. Management includes crop rotation, preventing seed production, light tillage, seeding wheat at the optimal time, and rope wick applications with glyphosate and/or hand rogueing.

Scot Hulbert, senior associate dean at the WSU College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences, told growers that state funding is slowly being whittled away, and the college is using some grant money to hire faculty. The college is using grants, U.S. Department of Agriculture earmarks, state-funded initiatives, proviso funding, and partnerships with other state agencies to maintain research capacity.

Rachel Wieme, a WSU Extension agronomist based in Walla Walla, Wash., talked about tools to mitigate soil acidity in the intermediate cropping region. Soil pH is often called a "master variable" in soils because it affects a lot of things that growers rely on to grow a good crop, such as nutrient availability and crop performance (especially pulses), and changes herbicide efficacy. Reduced vigor, yellowing, and patchiness in wheat are signs of a pH issue. When testing, she recommended sampling for pH at different depths throughout a field.

If a pH issue is found, adaptation (crop tolerance via variety) and liming are two ways to deal with it. Successfully correcting low soil pH through effective liming depends on the right source of lime, the right placement, at the right time. Liming rate depends on buffer capacity, which is the ability to withstand changes in soil pH, and is affected by soil texture, parent material, and organic matter. There is a lime requirement calculator and a liming material selection and comparison calculator at smallgrains.wsu.edu/ soil-and-water-resources/soils-tools-calculators/

#### **Spokane County meeting**

More than a dozen Spokane County growers met last month in Rockford, Wash., the first meeting of the new year. The county has two members going through the leadership chairs of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG): Gil Crosby as vice president and Laurie Roecks as secretary/treasurer. Spokane County was named County of the Year at the 2024 Tri-State Grain Growers Convention.

Crosby shared updates on the National Association of Wheat Growers' (NAWG) winter meeting and Hill visits that happened in D.C. in early January. Washington growers met with both new representatives from the Washington delegation and talked about the importance of passing the farm bill. Andy Juris (a WAWG past president) was elected to NAWG's Budget Committee.

Roecks provided an update of the recent WAWG Olympia Days trip. She encouraged others to consider attending in the future. Marci Green mentioned that if anyone has had any issues with the Natural Resources

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Conservation Service (NRCS) to work directly with Andrea Cox, WAWG'S conservation coordinator. Cox is working hard to ensure that wheat growers are able to use NRCS programs and for things to move in a timely manner.

The group approved a motion to purchase a \$500 tile for the Washington Wheat Foundation annex as a county. The current slate of Spokane County officers was approved with Marci Green as president, David DeGon as vice president, and Debbie McGourin as secretary/treasurer. The new WAWG board representative will be Matt DeGon.

#### Whitman County meeting

Whitman County wheat growers got an update on a brewing issue with the Washington State Department of Ecology over Spring Flat Creek at their February meeting.

Tom Kammerzell told growers that Ecology is looking at whether or not Spring Flat Creek, which feeds into the South Fork of the Palouse River, meets water quality standards for temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen. Kammerzell suggested growers and landlords whose land borders the creek monitor the water temperature throughout the year, at where the creek enters the farm and where it leaves the farm. A proposal was put before the group to purchase equipment for producers to use. That proposal was put on hold until more information could be attained.

Jonelle Olson, county executive director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA), gave an agency update. Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage sign-up will end April 15. She suggested the growers keep all records for seven years in case of an audit. She also suggested that growers be cautious when their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) conservation plans intersect with riparian buffers, as those buffers, especially if they had trees planted, could impact future farmland compliance rules.

Olson also said that CRP contracts before 2019 have cost share on mid-term maintenance, but newer contracts do not. She advised growers to talk to FSA before doing any mid-contract management.

County Commissioner Art Swannack reported on filling the empty position for county commissioner left open when Michael Largent retired. A discussion was held on GMO wheat, and it was decided to invite the Washington Grain Commission to a future growers' meeting.

The meeting wrapped up with a financial report.

## WAWG thanks members

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers would like to thank each and every member of our organization. You, the members, keep the organization strong The grassroots WAWG is built on keep the leadership, committees and board members moving forward in a positive way. Without your support and activity, WAWG would not be the efficient and effective organization it is today. Thank you for your time and support.

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### Winter Canola Hybrids: AKILAH, KICKER, MERCEDES, PHOENIX CL, CLAVIER CL, COLIN CL



NEW HYBRIDS- Intense focus on yield, disease & shatter : AKILAH, PICARD, MANHATTAN, MESSI & DRIFTER





**Contact Us** 

(270) 903 - 4994 GENERAL INQUIRIES (270) 316 - 4316 CROP PRODUCTION PROGRAMS

AKILAH: NEW conventional hybrid stacked with Turnip Yellows Virus (TuYV) resistance and extremely robust blackleg resistance, conferring the next level in plant health, and yield potential, coupled with excellent winter hardiness.

RUBISCO

SEEDS

Hybrid Canola

KICKER: Top yielding conventional hybrid, 2020 to 2024 PNW Winter Canola Trials. Excellent winter hardiness and resilience to pod shattering. Good drought tolerance. Medium maturity.

MERCEDES: Top yielding conventional hybrid, 2012 to 2024 PNW Winter Canola Trials. Vigorous fall establishment and early season cold tolerance. Responds to lower seeding rates relative to OP canola. Medium maturity.

\*PHOENIX CL: Two-gene Clearfield hybrid with proven performance in the PNW. Superior cold tolerance. Vigorous fall growth helps overcome insect feeding. Early maturity. Enhanced pod shattering resiliency. High yield potential.

\*CLAVIER CL New Two-gene Clearfield hybrid with high fall vigor. Medium-early maturity. Excellent plant health with stay green characteristics. Strong resistance to blackleg. Good lodging resistance. Very high yield and oil potential

\*COLIN CL hybrid with medium maturity. High cold tolerance. Excellent root development. Good drought tolerance and plant health. Superior tolerance to pod shattering compared to Plurax CL. Multi-gene Blackleg resistance. High yield and oil content potential.

PNWVT	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	PNW	2023	2024
				LBS PE	R ACRE				
Control Mean	4086	3743	3399	2683	3128	4711	Private trials	s	
Rubisco Seed	s' Hybri	ds							
KICKER		4972	4701	4383	3505	5841	KICKER	4678	6667
MERCEDES	5145	4419	4359	3756	3881	5393	MERCEDES	4945	6569
AKILAH						5876	AKILAH	5686	5455
PHOENIX CL	4900	4611	4043	3398	3454	5093	DRIFTER	4856	6795
	Data	courteen	Universi	ty of Ida	ha Conti	ol Mean	- Athena Dw	arf Esser	Fricka

Data courtesy University of Idaho, Control Mean= Athena, Dwarf Essex, Ericka

Phoenix CL, Clavier CL & Colin CL compatible within Clearfield wheat rotations. Strong cross tolerance to Imi / SU herbicides. Can be sprayed post emergence with Beyond herbicide. SU or SURT Canola cultivars are not viable in a Clearfield rotation. (50% yield reduction in soils containing IMI residues, independent research Caldbeck Consulting.)

Earn Non-GM premiums in addition to optimizing yields

- Locally based research on germplasm and agronomy
- All hybrids developed with a strong focus on shatter tolerance
- All seed is certified Blackleg free. Organic growers, please inquire
- Secure Early Season Discounts by May 15th, 2024 (Ask your Retailer)

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Learn more at **Conserve.wa.gov** 

Tye Knebel (center) and his family have been farming along the Tucannon River for five generations. With support from the Columbia Conservation District, he's taking steps to protect soil and water to ensure his land stays strong for generations to come.









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# POLICY MATTERS

## 2025 legislative session passes first major deadline

#### By Diana Carlen

#### Lobbyist, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

Feb. 21 marked the first major deadline of the 2025 legislative session when bills must have been voted out of their respective policy committees to still be considered alive for this session. The second deadline was less than a week away on Feb. 28, when bills must be passed out of their fiscal committees to remain alive. As of the policy cutoff on Feb. 21, hundreds of the 1,960 bills introduced this session died because they did not move out of their policy committees. However, it is important to note that no issue is really dead until the last day of session as bills can be resurrected in various ways.

Once bills advance out of both a policy and a fiscal committee, they go to the Rules Committee in their respective chambers. Bills remain in the Rules Committee until they are selected to be brought up for a vote for the entire chamber of the House of Representatives or Senate. All bills must be voted out of their House of Origin by 5 p.m. on March 12. Starting the following day, the process begins all over again in the opposite chamber.

Some of the active bills the Washington Association of Wheat Growers are following include:

• Agricultural Fuel Exemptions (Substitute House Bill 1912), sponsored by Rep. Tom Dent (R-Moses Lake), seeks to ensure that farmers receive the exemptions they were promised under the Climate Commitment Act for fuel used for agricultural purposes. As originally introduced, the bill required the Department of Ecology to adopt rules to establish a remittance program for suppliers and users of agricultural and farm fuels exempt from the Climate Commitment Act (CCA). The bill also made the temporary exemption for fuels used to transport agricultural products on public highways permanent. On Feb. 20, the House Environment and Energy Committee passed out a new version of the bill. The revised version no longer contains a remittance program for farmers to get rebates for fuel purchased with the carbon surcharge. In addition, the bill removed the provision that would have made the exemption for fuels used to transport agricultural products on public highways permanent. Instead of a remittance program, the revised bill sets up a regulatory program for the entire fuel distribution network to track and report exempt fuel sales in

the hopes that this will enable fuel suppliers to stop imposing a CCA surcharge on exempt fuels. Retail locations (i.e. gas stations) and other fuel sellers could sell CCA exempt fuel to farmers if they register, report, and track exempt fuel sales. However, they would also open themselves up to liability and enforcement including potential fines of \$10,000 per day, per violation. The first stakeholder meeting on this bill was held Feb. 21. At the meeting, it was stressed that it was important not to disrupt any mechanisms currently in place allowing farmers to receive exempt fuel. The bill has been referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

- Clean Fuels Program (Substitute House Bill 1409), sponsored by Rep. Joe Fitzgibbon (D-Burien), proposes significant amendments to Washington's Clean Fuels Program (i.e. Washington's low carbon fuel standard for transportation fuels). The bill adjusts the reduction schedule to achieve a 20% decrease in carbon intensity by 2034. The substitute bill changes the carbon intensity standard for the program to 55% below 2017 levels by no earlier than Jan. 1, 2038, by reducing the carbon intensity of the program by 8% on Jan. 1, 2027, and by 4% each year afterwards through Jan. 1, 2038. Dyed special fuel used for agricultural purposes is exempt under current law in the Clean Fuels Program until 2028. However, agricultural groups are still concerned with the legislation because it removes prior conditions prohibiting Ecology from increasing carbon intensity reductions by more than 10% until there was at least a 15% net increase in state liquid biofuel production and the use of foodstocks grown or produced in Washington and at least one new or expanded biofuel production facility sited in the state. It also establishes a detailed penalty framework for noncompliance, including fines for late reporting, misreporting, and improper credit usage, with penalties appealable to the Pollution Control Hearings Board.
- Paid Family Leave Expansion (Substitute House Bill 1213), sponsored by Rep. Liz Berry (D-Seattle), expands worker protections under Washington's Paid Family and Medical Leave program. Currently, small employers with fewer than 50 employees are exempt from providing job protection and health benefits continuation for employees on Paid Family and Medical

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Leave (PFML). This bill eliminates these exemptions. In addition, employees could begin utilizing the benefits after 90 days of employment (current law requires you to have worked for the employer for a year before utilizing the benefits). It also expands access to grants for small employers to offset the costs of employees' use of leave in the PFML Program. A public hearing was held in the House Appropriations Committee on Feb. 22.

• Workplace Monitoring Regulations (Substitute House Bill 1672), sponsored by Rep. Shelley Kloba (D-Kirkland), establishes regulations on the use of electronic monitoring and automated decision systems (ADS) by employers in Washington, effective July 1, 2026. The bill restricts electronic monitoring to specific purposes, such as job function assistance or legal compliance, and prohibits its use in private areas or off-duty activities. Employees are granted rights to data access, protection from retaliation, and restrictions on monitoring of personal devices. The bill passed out of the House Labor & Workplace Standards Committee on Feb. 19 and has been referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

These bills were not passed out of committee before the Feb. 21 deadline:

- Seasonal Flexibility from Paying Overtime (Senate Bill 5487/House Bill 1597) would have allowed agricultural employers to select 12 weeks where the agricultural employer may employ agricultural employees for up to 50 hours before the requirement to pay overtime applied. No public hearings were held on these bills.
- Minimum Wage Increase & Vacation/Bereavement Leave (Senate Bill 5487/House Bill 1764), would have raised the minimum wage to \$25 an hour by 2031 and also mandated paid vacation and bereavement leave.
- Delinking From California's Motor Vehicle Emission Standards (Senate Bill 5091), sponsored by Sen. Matt Boehnke (R-Kennewick), would have prohibited the Department of Ecology from adopting California's motor vehicle emissions standards and instead required Ecology to implement standards consistent with federal law.
- **Reporting Cattle Methane Emissions** (House Bill 1630), sponsored by Rep. Lisa Parshley (D-Olympia), would have required each owner or operator of a dairy farm or feedlot to report the annual metric tons of methane emitted from the farm or feedlot to Ecology from the preceeding year. The industry was concerned that this legislation sets the foundation of what could possibly lead to a per head cow tax in the coming years.

• Local and Tribal Approval for Energy Facility Siting, House Bill 1188, sponsored by Rep. Mary Dye (R-Pomeroy), would have required local government and tribal approval for the siting of wind and solar energy facilities in Washington state. Public testimony was heard in the House Environment & Energy Committee on Jan. 20.

For weekly updates on the 2025 Washington State Legislative Session, please visit wawg.org. ■

## Legislation strengthens market access for farmers

On Feb. 6, Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) introduced the Agriculture Export Promotion Act of 2025 to increase funding to the Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development Program (FMD) and help American farmers compete in global markets.

Newhouse was joined by Reps. Tracey Mann (R-Kan.), Brad Finstad (R-Minn.), Ashley Hinson (R-Iowa), Jimmy Panetta (D-Calif.), Kim Schrier (D-Wash.), Jim Costa (D-Calif.), and Chellie Pingree (D-Maine) in introducing the legislation.

MAP was established in 1985 and allows agricultural trade associations, farmer cooperatives, nonprofit trade groups, and small businesses to apply for either generic or brand-specific promotion funds to support exporting efforts. Generic commodity funds are issues with a 10% minimum matching fund, while brand-specific funds require a funding match of at least 50%. FMD was first developed in 1955 and is largely used for the promotion of bulk commodities, helping agricultural trade associations establish permanent presences in important markets. It also includes a matching fund requirement.

The legislation is supported by over 150 stakeholder organizations including the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, the National Association of Wheat Growers, and U.S. Wheat Associates.

## Industry supports moving Food for Peace to USDA

U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) and the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) welcome new legislation introduced in February that would move the Food for Peace international food assistance program under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) administration. The legislation is sponsored by Reps. Tracey Mann of

Kansas, Rick Crawford of Arkansas, Dan Newhouse of Washington, David Rouzer of North Carolina, and House Agriculture Committee Chairman GT Thompson of Pennsylvania, along with Sens. Jerry Moran of Kansas and John Hoeven of North Dakota.

USW and NAWG have long advocated for "keeping the food in food aid" and have expressed frustration at growing trends in food assistance programs of cash donations and commodity purchases from U.S. competitors.

## **Rollins** confirmed as ag secretary

On Feb. 13, the U.S. Senate confirmed Brooke Rollins as the next Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture.



"Congratulations Secretary Brooke Rollins," said Chandler Goule, CEO of the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG). "I appreciate Mrs. Rollins committing to getting the much-needed economic assistance for wheat producers rolled out during her confirmation hearing, as well as her interest in getting a long-term, meaningful farm bill signed into law this year that strengthens the farm safety net. NAWG looks forward to working with you to deliver real results for wheat growers and rural America."

Rollins is originally from Texas. Most recently, she served as the founder, president, and CEO of the America First Policy Institute (AFPI). During the first Trump Administration, she was the director of the Domestic Policy Council and assistant to the president for strategic initiatives in the White House. She also previously served as director of the Office of American Innovation.

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## Farming smarter: How technology has revolutionized ag

Agriculture has always been an industry rooted in innovation and adaptation, and today, technology is transforming how farmers grow our food with unmatched precision and efficiency. From self-driving tractors to real-time field mapping and precision fertilizer application, farmers are using cutting-edge technology to maximize productivity while minimizing environmental impact.

#### **GPS: The backbone of modern farming**

Just like self-driving cars are making waves in urban areas, GPS-guided tractors have been revolutionizing farming for decades. Gone are the days when farmers had to manually steer their tractors across vast fields; today, GPS-enabled auto-steering systems allow tractors to operate with incredible precision — down to just a few centimeters. This not only reduces operator fatigue, but also improves efficiency by minimizing overlaps and skipped areas during planting and harvesting.

By utilizing GPS technology, farmers can plant straight, evenly spaced rows, optimize fuel usage, and reduce soil compaction by keeping equipment on predetermined paths. This precision translates to higher crop yields, less waste, and greater sustainability. In fact, precision farming with GPS can improve efficiency by over 30%, meaning more food is grown using fewer resources.

GPS technology doesn't stop at navigation. It also enables real-time field mapping that helps farmers track productivity across every acre of land. Combines equipped with GPS technology can monitor crop yields as they harvest, generating maps that show the most and least productive areas of a field. This information is invaluable because it allows farmers to make data-driven decisions about how to manage their land for the best results.

For example, if one part of a field consistently produces higher yields, it might indicate strong soil health and proper nutrient levels. On the other hand, areas with lower productivity might need adjustments in fertilizer, irrigation, or soil management. This brings us to another critical advancement in agriculture: variable rate application.

Once farmers have detailed yield maps of their fields, they can use variable rate application (VRA) technology



to apply fertilizers and crop protection products with surgical precision. Instead of applying a uniform amount of fertilizer across an entire field, VRA allows farmers to increase fertilizer use in high-yielding areas that need more nutrients and decrease it in low-yield areas that don't require as much.

This reduces unnecessary fertilizer use, cutting costs for farmers while reducing environmental impact. By applying the right amount of nutrients in the right places, farmers prevent runoff into waterways, conserve resources, and grow healthier crops with less waste. It's a win-win for both agriculture and the environment.

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## **Cover crop conundrum**

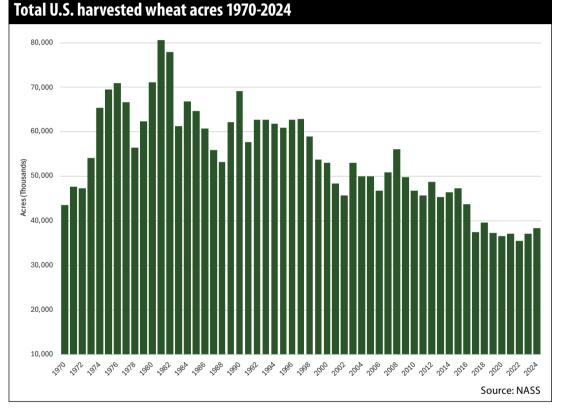
#### Wheat industry would like to see definition of cover crops expanded to include winter wheat

#### By Trista Crossley Editor, Wheat Life

With the last administration's push on climate-smart practices, a lot of attention has been focused on cover crops. But how do you implement a cover crop if your cash crop is winter wheat, and you don't have many other rotation options? tillage systems that leave standing wheat residue result in increased water infiltration due to the durable crop residue left in the field. The benefits provided as a crop for harvest are the same — if not better — than those of a traditional terminated cover crop. These benefits should be more broadly recognized by climate smart programs and government policy.

The answer, according to Jake Westlin, vice president of policy and communications for the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), is to get the Natural **Resources Conservation** Service (NRCS) to issue a technical note that the environment benefits of winter wheat are similar to a cover crop, but doesn't require termination before harvest, a key requirement of cover cropping.

"That would provide a solution that growers could have a cover crop, but they could also do winter wheat, which has similar environmental benefits to a cover crop, and they could bring it to harvest," Westlin said.



According to NAWG's policy guidelines, winter wheat, planted in the fall and harvested the following summer, provides a living cover and root system over winter, similar to a cover crop. In fact, winter wheat is a cover crop under NRCS conservation practice standard 340 for cover crops, but it cannot be harvested. A harvested winter wheat crop provides the same or more carbon sequestration because the wheat taken to grain harvest is in the ground longer than a terminated cover crop. Winter wheat, whether part of a rotation for harvest or terminated as a cover crop, provides environmental benefits including reducing nitrogen losses, interrupting pest cycles, sequestering carbon and improving soil health. Reduced The wheat industry is concerned that tax credits, such as the Clean Fuels Production (45Z) tax credit, or some NRCS programs that require a cover crop may disincentivize wheat production, leading to a loss of wheat acres in the U.S.

"If growers move away from wheat production, what is the long-term viability of wheat in the U.S.? Are we going be a major exporter? Are we going to continue to see a decline in (wheat) acres and see winter wheat acres shift to something else?" Westlin asked.

According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, more than 82.8 million acres of corn, 86 million acres of soybeans, and 38.4 million acres of wheat were harvested in the U.S. in 2024. For wheat, that's more than a 50% deWe know ag financing like you know work-life balance.

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crease from its high of 80.6 million acres in 1981.

The change could also be relevant to growers because of carbon initiatives being pushed by some states, such as Washington and California.

"At the state level, there's a lot of low carbon fuel standards they're looking to put forward. So that could be a factor," Westlin added.

In the drier rainfall regions of Eastern Washington, the worry isn't so much that winter wheat acres will shift to another crop, but that there's some evidence that cover crops grown during a fallow year take moisture away from the following winter wheat crop. And if growers can't grow a cover crop, they may be ineligible for some benefits, such as lower crop insurance subsidies, premium relief on crop insurance, or the ability to participate in sustainably grown marketing opportunities.

In September 2024, armed with research from Kansas

State University that supported winter wheat as a cover crop, Andy Juris, a wheat grower from Bickleton, Wash., and past president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers; NAWG President Keeff Felty; and Kansas wheat grower Chris Tanner met with Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack to discuss the issue. Their message was that growers in drier regions didn't necessarily need the incentive payments for cover crops, just the ability to grow a crop that is classified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a cover crop.

"We emphasized that if you look at what the USDA classifies as a cover crop, winter wheat checks every single box," Juris said. "Some of these other cover crops aren't food crops. They are just something designed to hold the soil down or to add organic matter or whatever. Here's a crop that accomplishes all of that in addition to being a food crop."



Iuris said that USDA's main concern seemed to be that producers who receive incentive payments for planting a cover crop that is then harvested as a food crop are "double dipping." Vilsack and the USDA agency representatives that the group met with were receptive to growers' message about changing the definition of cover crops to include winter wheat.

"When we look at it from Washington's perspective, the viability of just wheat in general as a crop, a lot of us are limited in what we can grow. If we are going to see incentives for cover crops come out that do not allow us to participate, that is disappointing," Juris said.

Both Juris and Westlin said that even if the new administration doesn't have the same focus on climate and climate-smart practices, they would still like to see the issue resolved for the future. Although that solution could be done through the farm bill, NAWG would rather see it come via an NRCS technical note.

"We don't want to overprescribe or put unnecessary guardrails around that situation if we're legislating it," Westlin said. "We're confident that we can fix this administratively, since it that's kind of where this originated."

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## **Strategies for spraying**

AMMO session focuses on pesticides, weed management, EPA label information



DREW LYON Professor and holder of the Endowed Chair Small Grains Extension and Research, Weed Science at Washington State University.



HENRY WETZEL Washington State University pesticide recertification safety educator



IAN BURKE Professor and the R.J. Cook Endowed Chair of Wheat Research at Washington State University

By Trista Crossley Editor, Wheat Life

In the first Agricultural Marketing and Management session of 2025, some of the top researchers in the region explored the weeds and weed management practices Eastern Washington wheat growers are working with.

Drew Lyon, a professor and holder of the Endowed Chair Small Grains Extension and Research, Weed Science at Washington State University (WSU), tackled pesticide drift and herbicide efficacy and persistence; Henry Wetzel, WSU pesticide recertification safety educator, covered how the Endangered Species Act and the Environmental Protection Agency is affecting pesticide applications; and Ian Burke, a professor and the R.J. Cook Endowed Chair of Wheat Research at WSU, talked about managing weeds in wheat. Growers received three pesticide credits for attending the session.

#### **Avoiding the drift**

"There are two types of drift, spray particle and vapor. Both can cause injury in nearby susceptible things, and if it's not going where you want it, you aren't getting the control you need," Lyon told growers at the beginning of his presentation. "That's a problem for other people and you."

Growers should pay attention to four things when dealing with pesticide drift:

- Wind direction. Know the location of anything sensitive around you and spray when there is a gentle, steady breeze that is blowing away from sensitive areas. Growers should also know the distance downwind of sensitive areas. As Lyon explained, if the distance downwind is doubled, the amount of drift decreases fivefold. For example, if the distance downwind increases from 100 to 200 feet, there's only 20% as much drift at 200 feet as there is at 100 feet.
- Wind speed. There is almost a 700% increase in drift when wind speed doubles. Lyon doesn't recommend spraying when the wind speed is more than 10 mph.
- Boom height. When the boom height increases, so does the amount of drift. "This is something you can control," Lyon said.
- Spray droplet size. Growers can control this by the nozzles being used. Larger droplets are less likely to drift because they are heavier and slower to evaporate or volatilize.

Growers should also be aware of temperature inversions, which happens when a layer of cooler air gets trapped near the ground below a layer of warmer air. Pesticides can linger longer in the air and are more apt to drift. Inversions normally occur from just before sunset until just after sunrise when skies are clear to partly cloudy with light winds. Growers can recognize an inversion by watching to see if dust or smoke levels off instead of rising. Use of a smoke bomb or smoke generator is recommended to identify inversion conditions. AgWeatherNet is using temperature gauges installed at heights of 6 and 30 feet on some of their towers to identify the existence of temperature inversions and to predict temperature inversions for the next 24 hours.

"Drift will happen, but reduce it as much as possible," Lyon said. "You can't control the wind speed or direction, but you can control the droplet size to a large extent, so do the things you can do and try to manage around the things Mother Nature gives us. There is no substitute for common sense."

Switching over to herbicide efficacy and persistence, Lyon told growers that there are a lot of

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factors that influence how persistent herbicides are in soil, but two big ones are the type of soil and soil pH. Clay particles, because of their larger surface area, provide more opportunity for binding or interaction with herbicides than sandy soils do. The amount of organic matter also plays a role.

Soils high in clay and/or organic matter have increased herbicide adsorption, decreased leaching, and decreased volatilization. Soils high in clay and/or organic matter generally have a greater potential for carryover and generally require higher use rates for activity. Medium and coarse-texture soils with less than 3% of organic matter are at lowest risk for herbicide carryover.

In soil, pH is often called the master variable because it influences so many things, including the biology of crops and microorganisms, the availability of nutrients, and, importantly, the ability to affect the charge properties of some herbicides.

According to Lyon, herbicides range from nonionic to ionic (charged). Nonionic herbicides are most likely to interact with organic matter, while ionic herbicides, which range from neutral to charged, are either repelled by or attracted to a given soil component. Most of the herbicides used by growers are weak acids. When soil pH is low, those herbicides aren't greatly affected, but as the soil pH rises, they bind less, making them more likely to leach, be broken down by microbes in the soil, or be taken up by plant roots.

Some of the keys to avoiding herbicide persistence are:

- To know your soil pH, texture, organic matter content, and cation exchange capacity.
- Check the recrop statement on the pesticide label.
- Apply the correct rate for your soil type and weed problem.
- Consider herbicide combinations and avoid two or more herbicides with longer residual life.
- Plant tolerant rotational crops or varieties.

#### **Bulletins Live! Two**

Wetzel reviewed the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) integration of the Endangered Species Act with pesticide registration through the agency's use of bulletins, which became effective in late 2023. Bulletins are notifications for geographically specific information for threatened and endangered species habitat and will be found on pesticide labels. Bulletins must be obtained within six months of the planned pesticide application. Failure to follow bulletin instructions, which are an extension of the pesticide label, could result in hefty fines. In Washington state, bulletins are mostly focused on salmon.

"Your first line of defense is to look at the container label

for endangered and threatened species protection requirements," Wetzel said. "If it's there, that means you need to go into the bulletin system. If your label doesn't direct you to obtain a bulletin, no further bulletin action is required."

To get a bulletin, go to epa.gov/endangered-species/ bulletins-live-two-view-bulletins, enter the pesticide registration number and the location and date of the planned application. Wetzel recommended using GPS coordinates, rather than a street address, when possible. Growers can use Google Earth to get latitude and longitude.

If the location of the pesticide location comes up pink, that means it is in a Pesticide Use Limitation Area (PULA), and there are likely additional directions for pesticide use. In the upper right corner, growers can use the green "Printable Bulletin" link to find out the particular limitations for that pesticide in that location for that date. If your field is not located in a PULA, you will still get a green "Printable Bulletin" but most likely there will be no additional restrictions for the use of the pesticide. Growers are required to "obtain" a bulletin, but what that actually means is unclear.

"If you are outside a PULA, you don't need to obtain a bulletin," Wetzel explained. "Obtaining a bulletin means looking at it, not printing it or saving a pdf. You don't need to keep it, but it's a good idea to have it in case something goes wrong."

EPA has begun using mitigation points to help limit herbicide spray drift and runoff. New federal registrations will require growers to have a certain number of mitigation points in order to use products with this language on the label, regardless of whether the application is in a PULA or not. To date, there is only one active ingredient, glufosinate-p-ammonium, (trade name, Liberty ULTRA), that contains the new mitigation information, and that active ingredient isn't registered in Washington state yet.

Wetzel's take-home advice for growers was:

- Read the pesticide label. Labels are changing.
- The container label is first line of defense. Look for the endangered and threatened species statement in directions for use.
- Online labels can be found through several online databases, such as PICOL or CDMS (Telus Agriculture).
- Application records. It doesn't hurt to make a note that you checked the bulletin.
- Learn how to use a GPS program and map critical points on your farm.
- Do everything proactively to keep pesticides on your farm. Do the best you can with wind restrictions and knowing the weather within a reasonable amount of time of making applications.

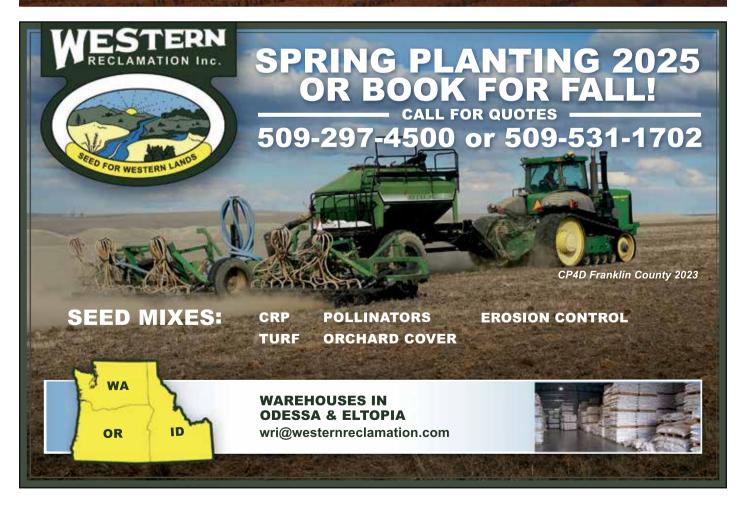
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   Conservation Service practices and soil conservation). Practices that you are already doing on your farm may count for the use of pesticides that have bulletins or label language requiring runoff/erosion mitigation. View EPA's mitigation menu at epa.gov/pesticides/mitigationmenu for more information.

#### **PNW weed management**

Burke had some dire words for growers concerning the future of weed management in Pacific Northwest wheat.

"There are likely few, if any, products coming in the near future to match previous product introductions. We are at the end of the line for priority herbicide development," he said, explaining that Pacific Northwest wheat has become somewhat of a minor market in the U.S., especially when compared to the Midwest's corn and soybean market.

Currently, regional weed scientists are focusing on a variety of cultural and mechanical inputs for weed management, but all of them are incremental, time consuming, and potentially expensive, hazardous, or risky to implement. One promising direction is integrating weed biology in decision-making. Growers could make decisions on a per field basis if they know when weeds are emerging, and when they are most vulnerable. Establishing a good crop canopy is one of growers' best weed management tools, behind crop rotations.

Another management tool gaining attention is harvest weed seed control — managing weed seeds in wheat chaff. Some of the options Burke talked about include a bale direct system, which is slow to operate and can be complicated. Chaff tramlining concentrates the chaff and weed seed in areas where it will be compacted by being repeatedly driven over. This is one of the cheaper options for farmers to implement. Impact mill systems, which send the chaff through an impact mill and shatters the weed seed, have been gaining traction in Eastern Washington. To make harvest weed seed control more effective, Burke suggested farmers plant the earliest maturing wheat varieties they can and then push the harvest date as early as possible when more of the weed seeds are still on the plants.

Burke also talked about using metribuzin, which is an important tool for effective control of grass weeds in wheat. However, because certain wheat varieties are less tolerant, growers have lowered application rates, making metribuzin much less effective. Burke discussed his work with the new wheat variety, Rydrich MZ. Burke recommended applying metribuzin according to label rates as early as possible in the spring to Rydrich MZ, avoiding preemergence or late postemergence. He said injury can still happen when applying

## 2025 SPRING SEED



metribuzin outside of early spring application timings, resulting in possible lower yields. He also cautioned growers that metribuzin carries rotational restrictions at higher rates, and farmers in annual crop areas should check that their rotation isn't affected by the use of higher rates of metribuzin.

Burke briefly discussed Russian thistle and Palmer amaranth. He wrapped up his presentation by talking about the Pacific Northwest Herbicide Resistance Initiative, which is a coordinated, interdisciplinary, systems-based approach to managing herbicide resistance in weeds that is regional in scope and long-term in impact.

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## Hill, farm bill updates

NAWG TAKES STOCK OF 119TH CONGRESS IN AMMO WEBINAR

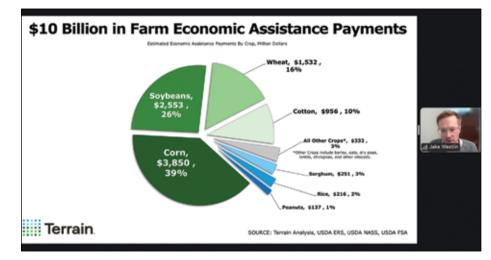
#### By Trista Crossley Editor, Wheat Life

The start of a new administration usually brings a flurry of activity, and the second Trump administration is no exception. Fortunately, Jake Westlin, vice president of policy and communications for the National Association of Wheat Growers, was on hand to walk growers through what's happening on the Hill as part of an Agricultural Marketing and Management Association webinar in mid-February.

On the day Westlin spoke to growers, Brooke Rollins had just been confirmed as agriculture secretary at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Westlin said NAWG is looking forward to working with Rollins to get the \$10 billion in economic and disaster assistance funding that was included in December's continuing resolution out to farmers. She has stated that getting that funding distributed is a top priority.

"We are looking forward to having people in place who can make decisions," he said. "Right now, we have 'acting' personnel in place, but they aren't positioned to enact stuff on behalf of the president. They are there to keep things rolling but not to deliver on any new policy directives."

According to the continuing resolution text, Congress has 90 days to get the disaster and economic assistance money delivered, but Westlin noted that deadlines can slide, especially if it is a complicated or new program. The funding mechanism is meant to be fairly straightforward, but there are still a few things the USDA will have to implement before rolling it out. From a wheat perspective, Westlin said the



numbers needed seem to be readily available, and growers will hopefully just need to confirm them. Wheat growers are slated to get approximately 16% of that \$10 billion, which works out to about \$1.5 billion. In messages to Congress, NAWG is stressing the importance of getting that funding on the ground as quickly as possible.

Besides the disaster and economic assistance funding, NAWG is monitoring proposed budget resolutions, tax legislation, tariffs, and the March 14 expiration of the last continuing resolution.

One of NAWG's biggest agricultural priorities for 2025 is getting a new farm bill passed. The House and Senate ag committees have some new faces on them. The Senate Ag Committee is chaired by John Boozman (R-Ark.), and the ranking member is Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) On the House side, the Ag Committee is chaired by Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-Pa.), and the ranking member is Angie Craig (D-Minn.). Westlin said they are excited to work with new members.

Both the House and Senate ag committees have begun holding hearings on the state of the farm economy. NAWG President Keeff Felty had participated in the Senate's "Perspectives From the Field: Farmer and Rancher Views on the Agricultural Economy" hearing the week before, detailing some of the challenges he and other wheat growers are facing, and why it is important to get a farm bill done this year, rather than continuing to extend the 2018 Farm Bill.

Other important farm bill considerations growers should keep in mind include:

- The current 2018 Farm Bill extension expires at the end of September 2025.
- What will the House proposal look like? Last year, the House Ag Committee passed farm bill legislation out, but it didn't go anywhere. With a narrower majority this year, Westlin said it will be a challenge for Thompson and Speaker Mike Johnson to get the 218 votes to pass something out of the House without some democratic support, especially since there is a segment of Johnson's caucus that doesn't support getting a farm bill done. Last year, Thompson got four democrats on the committee to vote with him, but there was still a large number that didn't support that bill. What tweaks will have to be made to get all Republicans on board or

enough Democrats on board to overcome the far right freedom caucus deficit?

• On the Senate side, Boozman and then-Chair Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) were unable to come to any agreement last year. What compromise will have to be struck between Boozman and Klobuchar to bring the legislation together, since, generally speaking, it will have to be bipartisan to get the 60 votes needed to pass the Senate.

Within the farm bill, NAWG will be advocating to protect and strengthen the farm safety net, specifically, looking at ways to make higher levels of coverage more affordable for crop insurance and increasing the \$5.50 per bushel statutory reference price for wheat. NAWG has been talking to ag committee staff about how the cost of production has eroded the effectiveness of the current reference price, and it needs to be more reflective of the current on-farm situation.

"As farm bill discussions continue in this new Congress, NAWG will likely have farm bill visits," Westlin said. "I think your (Washington's) delegation, by and large, understands the importance of getting a farm bill done, but having these more general fly-ins lets us educate that majority that doesn't deal with ag much."

Besides the farm bill, NAWG is also advocating and lobbying around tax policy. The national wheat group is part of an agricultural tax coalition with shared tax principles, including:

- Maintaining stepped up basis.
- Estate tax relief.
- Making lower individual tax rates and expanded tax brackets permanent.
- Making the 199A Qualified Business Income deduction permanent.
- Maintaining Section 170 expensing.
- Restoring 100% bonus depreciation.
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- Maintaining the 20% capital gains rate.

A recording of the webinar is on the Washington Association of Wheat Growers' YouTube channel at https://youtu.be/tL3CPK-JKUk. ■

### NAWG president testifies at Senate Agriculture Committee hearing

#### From the National Association of Wheat Growers

On Feb. 5, National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) president and Altus, Okla., wheat, cotton, and pasture-land farmer, Keeff Felty, testified before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry during the "Perspectives From the Field: Farmer and Rancher Views on the Agricultural Economy, Part 1" hearing.

"As I enter my 40th year in farming, the agricultural economy is facing a severe downturn the likes of which we haven't seen since the early 1980s. We know you understand these challenges, and NAWG greatly appreciates the hard work that leadership and committee members played in getting economic and disaster assistance signed into law this past December," Felty said. "That assistance is much needed across all of agriculture. However, long-term improvements to the farm safety net must be included as this committee, and Congress, work to reauthorize the farm bill this year."

Felty opened by talking about the first-ever multicommodity fly-in held in Washington, D.C., last year. Producers and staff from all the major commodity organizations, plus Farm Credit and the American Bankers Association, went to Capitol Hill in a united effort to highlight the financial pressure building across American agriculture and urged Congress to pass a robust farm bill that strengthens the farm safety net. Felty also emphasized NAWG's number one farm bill priority is protecting crop insurance. In discussing crop insurance, Felty told a story about a devastating hailstorm that took out one of his wheat crops last year. Crop insurance helped his operation remain viable and remains his first line of defense against natural disasters.

Felty also discussed NAWG's request for Congress to make a meaningful increase in the wheat Price Loss Coverage (PLC) reference price. The current wheat PLC reference price hasn't changed since the 2018 Farm Bill, while crop inputs have increased by about 30%. The cost of production is expected to remain elevated in 2025 at roughly \$386 per acre for wheat, and according to U.S. Department of Agriculture projections, a wheat farmer is expected to lose approximately \$96 per acre.

"Increased input costs, high interest rates, and depressed commodity prices have created significant challenges for farmers in rural America. When looking at the commodity-level changes in farm income, wheat growers experienced a 43% decrease in net cash farm income from 2023 to 2024. That marks the lowest level in the last 15 years," said Felty.

Watch the hearing at agriculture.senate.gov/hearings/ perspectives-from-the-field-farmer-and-rancher-viewson-the-agricultural-economy-part-1-02-05-2025.

# **WL** PROFILES

### A digital gathering space for growers, researchers

### Carol McFarland, PNW Farmers' Network

### By Trista Crossley Editor, Wheat Life

**Carol McFarland** hopes the PNW Farmers' Network can play a complementary role in the digital space that the coffee shop plays in the real world, a place to gather and share information. And while it's not required, a keen interest in talking about drills and spray nozzles is always welcome.

The PNW Farmers' Network was born as the Washington State University (WSU) Farmers Network by Dr. Haiying Tao as part of her Extension work on soil health and fertility in the mid-2010s. McFarland, who had recently graduated from WSU with a master's in soil

science, joined the team in 2017. Under Tao, the WSU Farmers Network shared research information through soil health events and on-the-ground work with farmers. In 2021, Tao left WSU, and McFarland continued the soil health community focus of the program through funding and collaborations with other regional research entities, such as the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Northwest Sustainable Agroecosystems Research (NSAR) Unit. With those collaborations came a new name, the PNW Farmers' Network, and a broader, regional focus for engagement with the ag community.

Coming to graduate school at WSU directly from two years of Peace Corps service had a big impression on the work McFarland has done since arriving in Pullman.

"One of the things that I really took away from that is just the power of community, especially at the grassroots level, and so that's something that's really been infused (into the PNW Farmers' Network)," McFarland, now a research associate, said. "It's kind of grassroots community building and trying to bring in high engagement and participatory flavors into the work, both in person and leveraging the digital space."

The goal for the PNW Farmers' Network is to provide spaces to share ideas on cropping systems innovation and soil health in the inland Pacific Northwest dryland grain region. One of the main ways McFarland does this is through the On-Farm Trials Podcast where she speaks with growers, researchers, and other partners about their



farming system innovation efforts. Part of the podcast idea came from a comment during a Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association conference, when growers commented that they wished they had more time to hear from each other about what they are doing on their own farms. McFarland was hearing the same thing from others in the ag community. In collaboration with Dave Huggins at the Northwest Sustainable Agroecosystems Research Unit in Pullman, the On-Farm Trials Podcast took off.

"The core of it is people really like to hear from producers," McFarland said. "To me, a lot of what the On-Farm Trials is about isn't 'I tried this thing, and it

worked like gangbusters. Everyone should try it.' That is absolutely not what we're doing. It's really about the power of a good conversation, with great people, and celebrating that. And it's not just the celebrity innovators, but it's also every farmer who tries something a little different on their farm. It doesn't have to be major radical changes. What innovation looks like on each farm is going be a very different thing. There's not just one solution, or one case fits all solutions in agriculture. We're exploring what does the process look like of asking and answering questions on a working farm?"

McFarland does all of her interviews out in the field, although her audio engineer drew the line at doing interviews on running farm equipment. She said that one of the first questions her team had to confront was what actually are on-farm trials? They realized there was no single answer.

"Farmers design the experiment. They decide how and what they're going to compare it to, where it's going to go, what they're going to monitor, what data matters to them in the end," she explained. "But then there's a whole spectrum where you can get other people in the ag community, including researchers, involved. Several of our episodes have shown amazing partnerships between producers and researchers. That information is enriched, I think, on both sides, because of that collaboration, because everybody is bringing their different perspectives. And it really deepens the quality of information that we can get out of the work we're doing together." ▶







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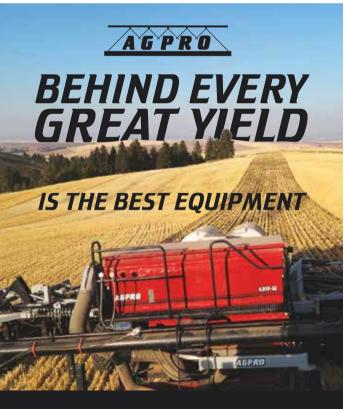


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Season 2 of On-Farm Trials will explore more of those innovation partnerships and will include not only researchers, but a range of different collaborations in the ag community.

When looking for topics to focus on or people to interview, McFarland said it's hard to narrow that down.

"My problem is that I'm an agroecologist, and we tend to be systems thinkers. And the problem with systems thinkers is that it's all part of the system," she explained. "So I've really landed in the space of soil health and cropping systems innovation, and, to me, cropping systems innovation can be really inclusive. I really want there to be something for everyone in this space. That bleeds in some alternative marketing spaces, and many other topics, including building soil health, diversifying rotations, and optimizing inputs with tools like the Weed-It and precision nutrient management. It's really about what each guest is excited about."

One recurring theme in the podcast is drills. McFarland generally asks her guests about their drills, and what they like about them. For anybody considering no-till, there's a whole range of different experiences about adopting no-till and no-till equipment on the podcast.

For McFarland, a good podcast episode is getting an engaging conversation going with a guest who is comfortable sharing what they are doing and why. Besides the On-Farm Trials Podcast, PNW Farmers' Network also produces bonus episodes called "Stories From The Field," that is more for a general audience that "doesn't need to hear about someone's drill or spray nozzles, because us, in the ag community, love that, but we want folks outside of ag to have a chance to hear farmers' perspectives from them directly about the great stewardship work that's happening in our region." The network also holds a monthly Zoom call, "Soil Health Coffee Hour," which features short presentations from scientists talking about the latest soil health research taking place in the Pacific Northwest.

"What really makes it great is the conversations that follow the main talk, when people get really excited talking about soil health together," McFarland added.

Recordings of the Zoom call are posted to the network's YouTube channel, along with other informative videos.

While the podcast may be the most visible part of the PNW Farmers' Network, McFarland points out the network is more than just the podcast.

"It's all underpinned by this desire to leverage different tools and spaces to bring our community knowledge together to support soil health and cropping systems innovation," she said. "None of this is possible without the support of the community, people contributing and just showing up, showing that it's valuable to them."

McFarland insists she doesn't have a favorite podcast episode, "because each one is an amazing and unique story and contribution," but two of the most popular ones are an interview with Eric Odberg, a long-time Shepherd's Grain grower, and Doug Shuster and his daughter, Erin Ruehl, who is taking over their St. John farm.

"One of the super fun things has been being able to go back to some of the original founders of the Direct Seed Association and some of the earliest adopters of no-till in our region and actually record some of their stories, like this career retrospective on innovation," she added. "It's been amazing to hear farmers like Tracy Eriksen talking about cobbling together his first direct seed drill in the late 1970s!"

More information about the Soil Health Coffee Hour, workshops, and links to the podcast are on the PNW Farmers' Network website at https://www.pnwfarmersnetwork.org.



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By Casey Chumrau

### A message from the CEO on grower engagement

In 1958, Washington's farmers recognized a need to work together to accomplish what an individual farmer could not do on their own. And so, the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) was born. We take seriously the responsibility of stewarding grower dollars and will continue to work tirelessly to maximize the competitiveness and sustainability of Washington wheat and barley. This foundational mission, comprised of the strategic pillars of market development, research, and education, are the guiding principles that fuel innovation, drive impact, and shape a better future.

One of my goals this year is to increase the engagement between the WGC commissioners and staff and the farmers we represent. It truly is a critical element to ensuring both that our constituents are aware of, and confident in, the work the WGC is doing on their behalf and that we hear about their evolving challenges and needs.

And I ask that you meet us halfway, because we can't do it alone. We won't know what our state's growers need unless you show up and tell us. Your involvement in WGC events and activities and willingness to call or send an email ensures that our work is truly working for you.

To kick off the year, WGC staff and commissioners participated in a series of grower meetings across Eastern Washington in January and February to have a discussion with Washington wheat farmers on the HB4 transgenic trait developed in Argentina, and its potential implications for the agricultural industry.

Last August, when the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service deregulated the trait, the first ever for wheat, the Washington, Oregon, and Idaho wheat commissions recognized the need to communicate with customers AND farmers to help navigate the changing times. The Pacific Northwest (PNW) wheat industry supports and encourages new technologies that provide growers with additional tools for productivity and profitability. At the same time, we remain committed to providing our customers with the quality and reliability they have come to expect from PNW wheat. Grower feedback collected during the listening sessions will inform the WGC's future efforts in research, education, and market development regarding a range of topics, including the HB4 trait and future biotechnology opportunities that may emerge.

We were thrilled to see such a strong turnout and engagement at these local grower meetings and want to continue the momentum throughout this year.

Feb. 11 in Pullman was another excellent opportunity for growers to provide direction on commission-funded activities. At the annual Washington State University (WSU) Wheat and Barley Research Review, we heard a progress report and new proposals for crop, soils, and economic research at WSU and the USDA's Agricultural Research Service. Grower feedback helps keep projects relevant to real-world challenges and ensures they contribute to your farm's profitability and sustainability.

For those who were not able to attend any of our grower listening sessions or this year's research review, do not despair! We have a range of additional annual events throughout the year that growers can take advantage of. You are always welcome to attend a WGC board meeting, or maybe you'd like to join a trade team for dinner this summer and meet the international customers who purchase your wheat. They always love meeting farmers, and I'm certain you would learn a lot, too.

We also welcome growers to learn more about where their wheat goes after it is delivered to the local elevator. For farmers, delivery to the elevator can feel like the culmination of a year's work that ends with the mad sprint that is harvest, but that is just the beginning of Washington wheat's journey to tables across the world. The WGC hosts a group of wheat and barley growers on an educational tour that begins in Spokane and follows the grain chain along the Columbia River to the export terminals in Portland, Ore. Growers interested in participating should contact the WGC office and provide their names and contact information to be placed on the event waiting list. You can always catch us at WSU Variety Testing Program field days, which happen throughout the month of June. Please watch for the schedule to be published on smallgrains.wsu.edu and here in Wheat Life.

But you don't have to wait for an event or meeting to contact us. Each WGC board commissioner is here to ensure their constituent's viewpoints shape our work. So, whether you have concerns, ideas, or just want to stay informed, please reach out to your district wheat or barley commissioner. If you would like help getting connected, please contact the WGC office at wgc@wagrains.org or (509) 456-2481. WGC staff are always ready to answer questions, too.

Your input is truly essential to the work we do.





# Washington wheat: A favorite for SW exports

By Jake Liening Market Development Specialist, Washington Grain Commission

Washington state continues its status as a leader in soft white wheat (SW) production, with 85% of its crop grown as soft white wheat. Prized for its low protein content and versatility in pastries, noodles, and crackers, SW remains a strong element of Washington's export economy, driving strong demand in international markets.

### A look at key buyers

**Philippines:** U.S. wheat and the Philippines have had a long and tenured relationship. This has cultivated a preference among Filipino end-consumers for the taste and quality of high-grade wheat. This relationship has allowed SW to secure a strong position in the Philippine market.

A notable trend in the Philippines is the high bread consumption spurred by long-term influence of Westernstyle diets that have influenced Filipino food culture. This trend has created an ideal opening for SW. In the Philippines, bakers use SW as a dough improver for texture, and bread products are made with significantly more sugar than in the U.S. to appeal to Filipino consumer preferences. A soft and airy flour roll called pandesal



is a common breakfast bread throughout the Philippines. Bread formulations include sugar content of around 17% versus 4% in the U.S.

The country is home to an estimated 35,000 bakeries where 50% of the flour usage is through mechanized bakeries, creating a high demand for consistent, premium flour that can perform reliably in production line operations. Filipino millers rely heavily on U.S. wheat to meet this expectation, further strengthening the trade partnership between the two nations.

In the 2023-24 marketing year, the Philippines imported 43.39 million bushels (1.18 million metric tons (MMT)) of SW, closely aligning with its five-year average of 44.12 million bushels (1.20 MMT). For the current 2024-25 marketing year, as of Jan. 23, year-to-date (YTD) sales reached 40.27 million bushels (1.96 MMT), reflecting a 14% increase over the same period last year. The Philippines' growing bakery sector, coupled with its established taste for U.S. wheat, ensures its continued role as a key market for Washington's SW exports.

**Japan:** Traditionally, Japan has imported a blend of SW called Western White (WW) wheat, which includes over 20% of white club wheat, to produce the highest quality of confectionery products, such as cookies and sponge cakes. WW wheat, mainly produced in Washington state, has over 90% share of the Japanese confectionery flour market, with a minor quantity of lower-protein Japanese wheat being used, too.

The Japan Flour Millers Association and Washington Grain Commission (WGC) established a technical exchange program of club wheat in 2018, working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Western Wheat Quality Laboratory and Washington State University in Pullman to develop and enhance the breeding efforts of high-quality club wheat. The Japan Biscuit Association has also started close interaction with the WGC to share information on the white wheat market.

Japan ranked as the second-largest buyer of SW from Washington in 2023-24, purchasing 22.24 million bushels (605,000 metric tons (MT)). However, this is below Japan's five-year average of 23.60 million bushels (642,000 MT), which is down 6%. In 2024-25, YTD sales to Japan has reached 21.02 million bushels (572,000 MT), a 12% increase from last year. Japanese buyers consistently value Washington's SW and club wheat for its premium quality, using it for high quality confectionery products.

**South Korea:** South Korea is pushing up against record imports of SW, largely due to an increasing demand in its feed market. The combination of competitively priced U.S. wheat, ample supplies, and economical freight rates allows the U.S. to tap into this secondary market.

In the previous year, 2023-24, South Korea purchased 20.99 million bushels (571,000 MT) of SW, representing its base milling industry demand. Anything beyond that figure reflects access to the feed market, a secondary market that can be hard to reach when these conditions do not align.

By mid-January, SW sales to South Korea for the 2024-25 marketing year have surged nearly threefold compared to the 2023-24 total, reaching 54.01 million bushels (1.47 MMT), marking a 211% year-over-year increase. This significant increase suggests that South Korea's feed demand is nearly as large as its milling demand, though accessing this secondary market is contingent on price, supply, and freight conditions. Once U.S. wheat reaches South Korea's feed market, it can open the door to favorable access to other regional markets.

**Indonesia:** Indonesia's buying patterns reflect the country's sensitivity to price. In 2023-24, SW struggled to compete with Australian wheat due to a smaller crop in the Pacific Northwest, leaving Indonesia to buy from cheaper alternative markets.

However, the 2024-25 marketing year presented a unique opportunity. A strong U.S. wheat crop coincided with high Australian prices, creating a window where SW became more competitive. Australia's aggressive export strategy in the first half of its previous marketing year left its farmers hesitant to follow declining wheat prices after the Northern Hemisphere harvest. With Australian prices remaining high, U.S. wheat gained a foothold in Indonesia as the more cost-effective option.

The result is a significant uptick in sales to Indonesia, with YTD purchases of 18.24 million bushels (496,000 MT) — a 29% increase year over year. While this appears to be historically high, it is partly amplified by the relative dip in sales from 2023-24, which totaled 14.12 million bushels (384,000 MT). Indonesia's renewed interest in U.S. wheat underscores its price sensitivity and the importance of competitive pricing in sustaining this key market.



These fluffy, yeasted dough "mantou" are the original Chinese bread, cooked with steam in large trays.

**China:** China produces more wheat each year than any other single country and holds about half of the global wheat stocks. This substantial domestic production allows it to dictate its buying strategy, often leveraging global market conditions to secure favorable deals. This unpredictability makes it difficult for exporters like the U.S. to plan for consistent trade.

In 2023-24, China purchased 11.89 million bushels (323,000 MT), which is down 40% compared to its fiveyear average of 19.71 million bushels (536,000 MT). If there is anything predictable about China's approach, it is its tendency to act unpredictably in response to shifting economic and geopolitical factors. This underscores the importance of maintaining trade servicing for this market, which, when it swings to the U.S., can be a significant buyer.

### Washington's role in the global market

Washington's proximity to ports along the Pacific Rim and its reputation for producing high-quality SW continues to provide a competitive edge. By maintaining strong relationships with key buyers overseas and navigating global trade challenges, Washington's wheat growers remain at the forefront of the industry.

U.S. wheat being competitively priced with ample supplies has put the U.S. up in most markets across the globe. Overall, the total known outstanding sales and accumulated exports of SW for the 2024-25 marketing year total 183.35 million bushels (4.99 MMT) which is 43% above last year's pace. Considering all of this, it's truer now than ever that Washington wheat helps feed the world.

# **Commissions fund scholarships**

STUDENTS SHOWED THEIR WORK AT THE ANNUAL PNW WHEAT QUALITY COUNCIL MEETING

On Jan. 29, the annual Pacific Northwest Wheat Quality Council meeting kicked off in Portland, Ore. With thanks to the Idaho, Oregon, and Washington grain commissions, there were a few more students in attendance than years past. Each state commission provided full funding for a deserving undergraduate or graduate student pursuing a career relevant to the wheat industry to attend. Congratulations to our scholarship recipients!

### MADISON (MADI) WEBER is

a sophomore at the University of Idaho, earning a degree in agricultural education and is "excited to pursue a career that can enrich our future leaders in agriculture" after graduation. Weber is from Eastern Washington and grew up on her family's multigeneration wheat farm where she developed her love for agriculture working with her father, uncle, and grandmother. When asked about the biggest challenge in the future of the wheat industry, Weber replied, "From my own experience, I have seen that the biggest challenge is for smaller operations to remain profitable. It is important that we feed our world, no matter how that will look, but I will always be passionate about continuing the American tradition of family farming."

**DALTON JONES** is a graduate student attending Oregon State University earning his doctorate in plant breeding and genetics with Margaret Krause and hopes to become a wheat breeder after graduation. Jones' research includes integrating genomic selection models with high-throughput phenotyping



College students (from left) Madison (Madi) Weber, Anna Carroll, and Dalton Jones were awarded scholarships funded by the Oregon, Idaho, and Washington grain commissions. Picture courtesy of Amber Hauvermale.

to improve wheat yield and end-use quality. Jones is from Utah, just north of Salt Lake City, and earned his undergraduate degree in botany. His favorite class was molecular biology where he was able to use confocal microscopy to visualize gene expression, which solidified his "passion for genetics." After receiving his undergraduate degree, he moved to Montana and began working with his uncle, which started his interest in plant breeding. When asked about the most interesting thing he has learned about wheat, Jones replied, "I love the complex evolutionary history of wheat."

**ANNA CARROLL** is a graduate student attending Washington State University earning her master's in crop and soil sciences with Amber Hauvermale and hopes to work abroad in research related to sustainable agriculture after graduation. Carroll's research includes validation of the new falling number rapid test and identifying crop management strategies to help prevent low falling numbers. Carroll was born in California but moved to Western Washington when she was a preteen. In 2020, she "began pursuing my dream of going back to school," and studied environmental sciences before coming to Pullman. When asked about the most interesting thing she has learned about wheat, Carroll replied, "that wheat accounts for about 20% of all calories consumed by humans. It helped put into perspective just how important wheat is to global food security."

# **Best management practices**

### Maximizing the effectiveness of herbicide applications

### By Ian Burke

Professor and R.J. Cook Endowed Chair of Wheat Research, Washington State University

### **By Drew Lyons**

Professor and Endowed Chair Small Grains Extension and Research, Weed Science, Washington State University

### **By Aaron Esser**

### Regional Extension Agronomist, Adams County Director

The most expensive herbicide application is the one that doesn't work. As we move through a season where commodity prices are very challenging, maximizing our investment in herbicides is critical. Achieving the best results from a herbicide application requires more than simply selecting a product and spraying it on a field. Many factors influence the effectiveness of herbicides, including application timing, environmental conditions, and proper use of equipment. Indeed, poorly executed applications can lead to increased costs, poor weed control, and the development of herbicide-resistant weed populations. To ensure the highest level of weed control while minimizing negative consequences, it is important to follow a few simple best management practices (BMPs) when applying herbicides.

One of the most fundamental aspects of herbicide application is understanding the difference between contact and systemic herbicides. Contact herbicides, as the name suggests, kill only the plant tissue they come into direct contact with. These products do not move within the plant, so complete and uniform coverage is essential for effective control. Common contact herbicides include paraquat and bromoxynil (Gramoxone and Buctril, respectively), which act quickly and are often used for burn-down applications before planting or as part of a weed control program targeting small, actively growing weeds. Other commonly used contact herbicides include the PROTOX inhibiting herbicides Sharpen (salfufenacil) and Reviton (tiafenacil). In contrast, systemic herbicides are absorbed by the plant and move through its vascular system, allowing them to control weeds more effectively, even if coverage is not perfect. Glyphosate and 2,4-D are examples of systemic herbicides that translocate within the plant to reach growing points and kill it from the inside out. The choice between contact and systemic herbicides depends on the target weed species, application timing, climate conditions at application, and overall weed management strategy.

Timing is one of the most important factors in herbicide application. Applying herbicides at the correct stage of weed growth significantly improves their effectiveness. It's often difficult to get timing right in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) because of our climate conditions in the spring. Young, actively growing weeds are more susceptible to herbicides than mature weeds with well-



established root systems. Early applications can prevent weeds from reaching reproductive stages, reducing the seed bank and minimizing future weed pressure. Preemergence herbicides, which are applied before weed seedlings emerge, can provide residual control that suppresses weeds for an extended period and provide expanded windows for timing postemergence herbicide applications. Postemergence herbicides, on the other hand, are applied after weeds have emerged and require proper timing to maximize control. Delayed applications may result in reduced effectiveness, requiring higher herbicide rates or additional applications, increasing costs and the risk of herbicide resistance. We encourage farmers to cultivate a mindset around ensuring every weed exposed to an herbicide dies before setting seed.

Environmental conditions play a major role in determining how well an herbicide performs. Temperature, humidity, and soil moisture all affect herbicide absorption and activity. Warm temperatures generally enhance herbicide uptake, but extreme heat can cause rapid droplet evaporation, reducing the amount of herbicide reaching the target weeds. Wind speed and direction should also be considered to minimize spray drift, which can lead to off-target damage to sensitive crops, nontarget plants, and even water sources. High humidity can improve herbicide effectiveness by reducing evaporation, while drought-stressed weeds may be less responsive due to slowed metabolism, reduced translocation of systemic herbicides, or increased wax layers on leaf surfaces that reduce herbicide uptake. As we all know, the change from high humidity to heat and drought can occur in the same day in the PNW. For soil-applied herbicides, rainfall is essential to activate the chemical and move it into the root zone, where it can effectively prevent weed emergence. We are actively exploring how to shift application timings to better address weed emergence and early growth periods.

Proper application techniques ensure that herbicides reach the intended target in the correct amounts. Using the right spray nozzles, pressure settings, and carrier volumes are critical for achieving uniform coverage. Contact herbicides require fine droplets and high spray volumes to ensure complete leaf coverage, whereas medium to course droplets, which are less likely to drift off target than fine droplets, work well for systemic herbicides due to their ability to move within the plant. State regulations influence our ability to spray when fine droplets are generated. Additionally, using the right surfactants and adjuvants can enhance herbicide uptake and spread, especially on plants with waxy or hairy leaf surfaces that can repel water-based sprays. Always follow herbicide label recommendations for application rates and tankmix instructions to avoid compatibility issues that could reduce efficacy or cause crop injury and use a high-quality surfactant.

Tank mixing herbicides with different modes of action





is an effective strategy for managing herbicide resistance and broadening weed control. However, it is important to ensure that tank-mixed products are compatible and do not negatively interact with or antagonize each other. Some herbicides require specific order-of-mixing protocols to prevent issues such as poor solubility or reduced effectiveness. Additionally, rotating herbicide modes of action from season to season can help delay the development of resistant weed populations.

Over-reliance on a single herbicide or repeated use of the same mode of action can lead to the selection of herbicide-resistant weeds, making future control more difficult and expensive. As mentioned previously, it's important that all the weeds that are treated with an herbicide die before setting seed.

Proper record-keeping is an often overlooked but essential component of effective herbicide application. Keeping detailed records of herbicide use, including product names, application rates, weed species targeted, environmental conditions, and application timing, helps farmers and applicators track the success of their weed management programs. These records can also provide insights for making adjustments in future applications and can be useful in cases where herbicide performance issues arise. Additionally, documentation of herbicide applications is required for compliance with pesticide regulations and environmental stewardship programs. Integrated weed management (IWM) is a holistic approach that combines herbicide applications with nonchemical control methods to reduce reliance on herbicides and slow the spread of resistant weeds. The PNW Extension publication 754, Best Management Practices for Managing Herbicide Resistance, is a good source of additional information on this topic. Crop rotation, cover cropping, mechanical cultivation, cleaning equipment before moving to new fields, buying clean seed, and altering planting dates are all practices that can complement chemical weed control. By incorporating multiple weed management strategies, farmers can create a more resilient and sustainable approach to weed control that reduces herbicide use while maintaining high levels of productivity.

Overall, achieving the best results from herbicide applications requires careful planning, attention to detail, and adherence to best management practices. Understanding the differences between contact and systemic herbicides, applying herbicides at the optimal time, considering environmental conditions, using proper equipment and techniques, and implementing integrated weed management strategies are all essential components of an effective weed control program. By following these principles, farmers can maximize the effectiveness of herbicides, reduce costs, and ensure long-term sustainability in weed management.

# WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

### Supply, demand rule price discovery



By Allison Thompson *Owner, The Money Farm* 

The Why behind a move, whether it be higher or lower, always captures market headlines. On a daily basis, this creates market noise or market volatility. Movement of the U.S. dollar,

global weather and production concerns, and potential trade wars seem to make the top of the list for near-term price movement (volatility). These factors impact market movement, but be careful thinking they are the only reason behind near-term direction. Price discovery is not

a simple equation. "A" plus "B" does not always equal "C." In the big picture, yes, these equations matter, but just remember price discovery is dependent on several different factors.

In the month of January, the U.S. dollar traded to a 26-month high. The move capped a fourmonth, 10% jump, and yet corn, soybean, and wheat futures pushed higher. Cattle futures did the same. Does it matter? Yes, a higher U.S. dollar can have ramifications to U.S. grain demand, but in the long run, a 10% spike isn't going to rewrite the fundamental (supply and demand) outlook. That is the reason grain futures rallied after the Jan. 10 U.S. Department of Agriculture report. It proved supply and demand ultimately "rule" price

key crop stages. For wheat exchanges, weather markets are a bit more diverse. Wheat is grown across the globe, which makes global weather and production a yearround concern for the trade. During this time of the year, the trade is often bombarded by winter wheat conditions in the U.S., Europe, Russia, and Ukraine. Moisture (snow), or lack thereof, combined with temperature swings can create market movement based on production prospects, hence the term "weather market." Just remember that rain or snow entering dry areas doesn't always correlate directly to higher production, just as wet areas experiencing relief doesn't necessarily equate

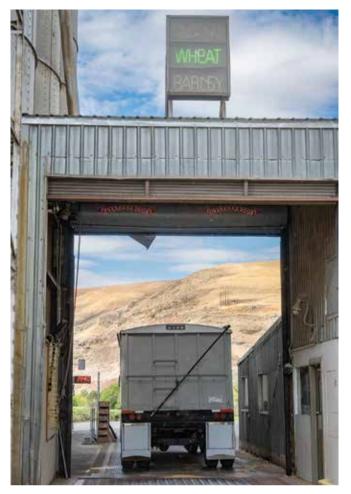


The bulk vessel, M/V LIBERTY GLORY, loads Washington-grown white wheat at the Port of Kalama for the Food for Peace program in August 2023. Photo courtesy American Maritime Congress.

discovery. Fast forward to the end of January and into the month of February, and the U.S. dollar has continued lower. Did the move send grain markets higher? It certainly helped solidify a higher trend across grain futures. While the move hasn't been entirely based on the action of the U.S. dollar, it does matter. A higher dollar does not always equate to depressed grain futures and vice versa.

A similar equation is often touted between U.S. grain futures and global weather forecasts. For corn and soybeans, South America rules the roost, particularly during to better quality. For 2024 spring wheat producers in the Red River Valley, this hits home. One late season rain in this region that spans parts of Minnesota, North Dakota, and Manitoba, Canada, did quality damage that couldn't be undone by improved weather forecasts as harvest advanced.

Given the prolonged, less-than-ideal conditions stretching across Russia and Ukraine, the A + B = C narrative has supported the rally across wheat exchanges. Dryness, lack of snow cover, and a potential cold snap



A truck delivers wheat to the Almota elevator on the Snake River during harvest in July 2024.

across the region easily creates market volatility. Just be cautious that it will continue to hold true. Why? Actual production results for the region are yet to be realized with harvest still months away. For now, a potential "weather scare" will support the equation rhetoric, but real production results will ultimately determine price based on supply and demand. Currently, the weather outlook is keeping selling across wheat exchanges limited. Yes, wheat prices have experienced "back and forth" market action, but the trade is holding prices above levels that could extend downward price movement. The action is fairly impressive given higher wheat production estimates for Australia, Argentina, Canada, and China. One would think the lack of realized production losses near the Black Sea, along with high production in other areas of the world, would pressure futures sharply lower. That hasn't happened. Again, the "simple" equation doesn't always fit.

More market noise hitting the grain trade is potential tariffs and trade wars. Global trade relations are taking center stage with the new U.S. administration negotiating trade with multiple countries. So far, an "official" trade war has been avoided with concessions being immediately met by both Canada and Mexico. However, the quick turnaround still rattled grain markets. The good news is that it was a quick A + B = C reaction. The bad news? No one knows who or what could be involved in the next trade headline. With that, the global grain trade is closely watching trade relations, especially as the recent tariff threats prove trade relations will be a major tool used by the new administration over the next four years. It is not a new concept but proves that the outlook can change quickly. Good or bad, grain markets hang in the balance.

Unlike the U.S. dollar or weather markets, tariffs can have immediate effects to U.S. grain supply and demand outlooks. This means the "simple" equation will likely hold true following tariff headlines. The shortlived "trade war" with Colombia, Canada, and Mexico is a perfect example. The news sent initial shock waves across grain futures but the resolution, at the end of the day, kept wheat prices trending higher. A + B may not always equal an extreme C.

In my opinion, the equation results, so far, are supportive. Based on historically correlated markets and recent market noise (news items), grain prices could be much lower. The U.S. dollar recently printed over two-year highs, global wheat production remains near record highs, and trade relations involving tariffs are on the brink. Yet, A + B is not necessarily equating to C. As a general rule, in a rising market (a bull market), prices will only keep moving higher if there is a constant flow of good news or strong demand. This is commonly referred to as "the bulls needing to be fed daily." Yet, the lack of aggressive downward pressure on prices appears to be enough at the moment. That is key. My guess is that the market will either confirm or deny the recent move higher across grain markets by April, meaning that I am still not convinced that the recent rally is anything more than a rally in a two-year bear market. Don't get me wrong, I like the set up and the trade seems to as well, but these three items have potential to create market movement based on updates and perceived notions on how they equate to price.

For producers hoping the simple A + B = C equation doesn't materialize, I hope you also have hedges in place just in case. Defend the price you can for both old and new crop while staying in position to reward new highs with sales, not new lows. Why? It will drown out the daily market noise, whatever the Why.

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

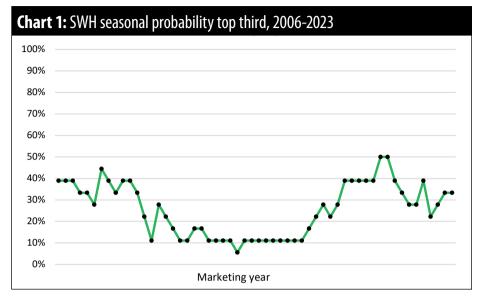
# Improving the odds

### HOW ANALYTICS CAN HELP YOU MAKE BETTER MARKETING DECISIONS

### By Howard Nelson Special to Wheat Life

"When should I sell my wheat?" This question is something every wheat grower has to work through each crop year, but there is an implied condition that is not stated. "When should I sell my wheat and get a good price!" No one wants to sell their wheat at a low price, but the wheat market is hard to predict, and what is a good price? A good price can only be determined after the fact by looking backwards at the market prices, and we have to look forward toward the unknown. In addition to the desire to do a good job of marketing, cash flow needs and maintenance of working capital need to be balanced with your marketing goals.

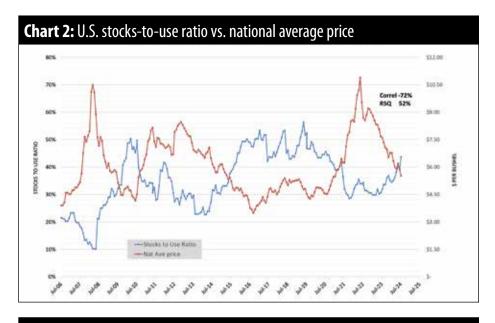
Let's break out the factors in the questions stated above. WHEN to sell. Every day there is a wheat market price stated by our local grain companies. It is easy to put those prices into a seasonal chart where the percentage of the marketing range each year is averaged over a number of years. Now we need to add GOOD PRICE into our calcula-



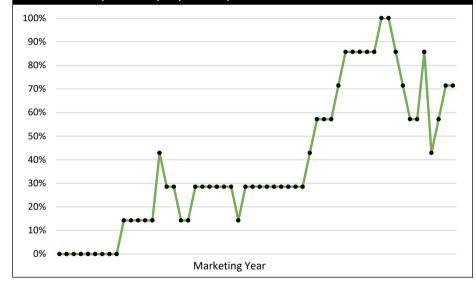
tions. The definition of a good price may be different for each individual, and it depends on how you currently grade yourself for your marketing ability. You need to make achieving a good price a marketing goal, and as with any goal, it should be something that can be achieved, but also hard to reach. There is an old adage that two-thirds of the wheat crop is bought in the bottom third of the market range. I've found this to be sadly true. But what isn't said is how much wheat was bought in the middle and top third of the market range. Only a small fraction of the crop is bought in the top third of the market range, which makes this our good price goal.

Let's take a look at our original question, when is the best time to sell wheat (May to April)? You can see in Chart 1 there is only a short time, in February, that you have a 50% chance of selling in the top third of the market range. This graph shows the difficulty growers face each year with the desire to do a good job of marketing. But can something be done to improve this situation? Can we





**Chart 3:** SWH probability top third upward trend, 2006-2023



use analytics to improve our odds and meet our marketing goals? Analytics is a process where we use data and statistics to predict a future event based on historical patterns. The use of analytics has been especially popular in athletics and was featured in the movie "Moneyball" and is also used in weather forecasting.

Traditionally, there have been two different schools of thought to analyze markets: technical analysis and fundamental analysis. Technical analysis looks at price movements on charts, and fundamental analysis looks at supply and demand factors. If we look at a chart showing the relationship between the U.S. monthly prices received by farmers and monthly stocks-to-use ratios reported in the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) reports, it shows an inverse relationship where the stocks-to-use ratio goes up, the price goes down. There is a strong inverse correlation, -72%, between these factors.

But as things often go, there is a problem. The supply and demand numbers change each month as conditions change. First, we look at supply factors as the crop develops and proceeds toward harvest, and then we look at demand fac-

tors such as exports of grain. These numbers change each month, more at the beginning of the marketing year with fewer changes later. Over the course of the marketing year, the WASDE numbers move from a projection to an estimate to the final number. While it may seem trivial, a projection uses trends, an estimate uses partial data, and the final number uses collected data. In addition, there are times that the Quarterly Grain Stocks report reflects inaccuracies in the estimates. We saw this during the COVID epidemic, when domestic use of wheat products increased more than expected as people cooked more at home. See Chart 2.

Technical factors also reflect supply and demand. In its simplest form, the intersection of the supply and demand curve is the market price. Market prices move up if the quantity demanded is more than the quantity supplied, and vice versa. In addition, there may be shifts in the supply and demand curves. Of the nine shift combinations, market prices can be predicted in six of those combinations. But again, there is a problem. How do we determine the difference between movement along the curves and shifts in the curves? Sometimes the shift is obvious and sometimes it is subtle.

Can we put all of these imperfect factors into something that can be used in a decision tool to help market wheat?

A simple technical factor to add to our conditions is market trend. Is the market trend moving higher, lower, or sideways? So, let's add to our conditions a trend for higher prices. Since 2006, there have been eight years that markets have trended higher. If we select those years as analogues, we get a chart like Chart 3.

We now have a time period where

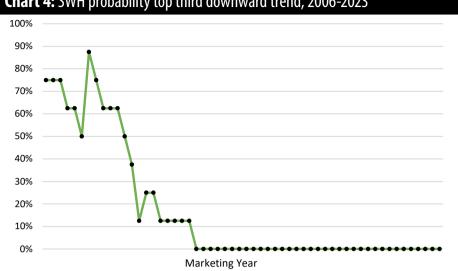
the chance of getting a good price exceeds 50% and is in our favor! After Jan. 1, you have the best chance to get a good price and do a good job of marketing. But nothing is absolute. Remember to look at the flip side. If the chart shows a 70% chance of marketing in the top third, there is a 30% chance that you won't.

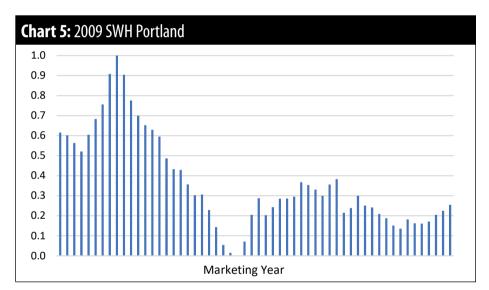
Chart 4 shows the condition of a trend for lower prices. Since 2006, there have been eight years with a downward trending market. It also shows that you have a chance greater than 50% to market in the top third of the market. It just comes early! You need to market your crop before July 1 if you want to get a good price.

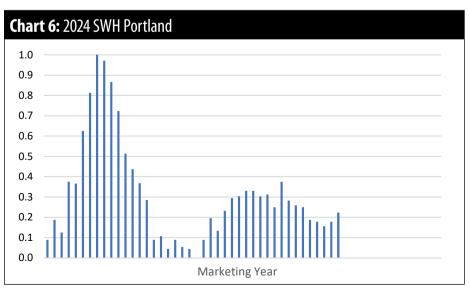
The downward trending market is the most difficult of the trends. First, you need to identify that it is downward trending market quickly, contrasted with the upward trending market that moves higher more slowly over time. The downward market will penalize you for waiting; procrastination is a killer. The upward trending market pays you for waiting; procrastination is rewarded.

Let's take a look at the 2024-25 marketing year, using analytics, when we look for analogue years with similar fundamental and technical indicators. There was only one year that was a good analogue for the above conditions — 2009. Ideally, we would like three or more analogues to make a prediction, but there will be years with conditions that are not common, and analogues will be hard to find. Here is the price action for 2009 as compared to 2024. See Charts 5 and 6.

To date, Charts 5 and 6 look very similar. The timing of the market highs was within one week of each other, and the market lows were within four weeks of each other.







### Chart 4: SWH probability top third downward trend, 2006-2023

The use of analytics doesn't replace a marketing plan but should be used in addition to it. The marketing plan should have projections of bushels to be marketed before harvest and then updated to the actual bushels after harvest. It should include cash flow requirements, working capital goals, and crop insurance coverage. Different marketing strategies should be included to be used as determined by the market trend. You may want to use minimum price contracts in a year with an up-trending market and hedge-to-arrive (HTA) contracts in a year with a down-trending market. Forward pricing is the most unused tool that is available to growers. While it may be hard to sell a portion of the crop you anticipate harvesting, the market trends down 44% of the time. The chart shown for downward trending years (Chart 4) shows the top third of the market happens before July 1. Ignoring forward pricing means that you give up getting a good price in those years.

In the movie, "Moneyball," the Oakland Athletics were able to win the American League West with a payroll of \$44 million compared to the New York Yankees payroll of \$125 million. The Athletics didn't make it to the World Series but lost to the Minnesota Twins in the American



League Division Championship that year. We should have similar expectations when using analytics to market our wheat. Our goal should be to improve our game and not expect to win the World Series.

Howard Nelson is a retired agronomist and commodity broker. He worked for 31 years in the PNW grain industry and retired in 2020 from HighLine Grain Growers. He has a bachelor's degree in agronomy from Washington State University and currently lives in Kennewick, Wash., with his wife, Cheryl. Nelson can be contacted at howardnelson73@gmail.com.



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# THE **BOTTON LINE**

### Do you understand your living trust?

By Norman D. Brock Attorney, Brock Law Firm

Lately, I'm seeing a number of new clients who have done their estate planning with some other law firm, and, as a part of their planning, a revocable grantor living trust has been utilized for the client.

I'll always ask the client (and of course I already know the answer!), "Why did you set up a living trust?" The answer is ALWAYS, "To avoid probate, of course!" Usually, the wife, laughingly, will say, "I don't want to die first, and some floozy gets ahold of Charlie, who already is getting forgetful, and will then get talked into a new estate plan with the second wife (or girlfriend), and our estate ends up going to HER children to the exclusion of our children."

However, back to "We set up a living trust to avoid probate!" Then I ask, "Did you ask the attorney, what is probate? Did the attorney fully explain it to you?"

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I have a very extensive probate practice. Probate in Washington and Idaho is VERY streamlined. Especially since COVID, we've learned that probably more than 90% of probates are extremely simple and can be handled fully online if the client wishes. There is NO going to court as a requirement of initiating a probate proceeding.

Typically, the sole function of probate (in the author's opinion) is to get the person who is named as the personal representative in your will admitted by the court as the appointed personal representative, or PR, in charge of probate proceedings. This then allows your PR to be able to sign your name to a bank account or a brokerage account solely in your name, on a deed for example, to convey title from the decedent's name to the heir, etc. If your estate is substantial enough to have estate tax reporting issues, for example, a living trust doesn't make such matters any easier. Whether it's your PR of your estate or trustee of your trust handling such matters, the work required with larger estates is typically the same.

Probably the single BIGGEST thing that irks me about a typical living trust is, again, the idea is that you won't have to probate your will. But it almost always ends up there is some asset in the decedent's name that didn't get transferred to the living trust. The asset, such as a bank account, a parcel of real property missed, etc. that ends up, when you die, STILL in your name, and NOW requires that the will be filed, and probate initiated to get the named PR appointed!

The will you signed as part of your living trust plan is called a "pour over" will. Read it, so when the will is admitted to probate, that allows the PR to then convey the missed asset to your trustee/trust for disposition pursuant to the trust.

If you are "sold" on a revocable living trust, do you know what happens when the first spouse dies? I'll bet dollars to donuts you don't! Read the dispositive provisions of your trust. Attorneys draft revocable living trusts differently, TRUST ME! Your trust might, for example, provide:

- That the whole estate, i.e. decedent's half and survivor's half, are "locked" up they can't be changed, even as to the surviving spouse as to his/her half (that may be exactly what you want).
- Does the first deceased spouse's half get allocated to a decedent's trust (or some other terminology)? This is a typical trust provision. Does your estate warrant that planning? You may have a simple estate having a few hundred thousand dollars in savings, a car, and a home. Do you need/want the complication for the surviving spouse of a "forced" decedent's trust to divide the estate? Maybe not?
- Does the decedent's trust contain a limited power of appointment for the surviving spouse to be able to later change by testamentary disposition (in his/her will) how the decedent's trust ultimately goes? Assuming you trust your spouse, you'll want this flexibility. How many times, say 10 years after dad has died, do I hear from the wife the story of one child on drugs, in a

bad marriage, etc., all good reasons why the surviving spouse maybe should have the power to reallocate the trust remainder amongst the children/grandchildren.

• Lately, I'm seeing a particular living trust plan that is insidious, as far as I'm concerned, and I'll guarantee the client didn't understand. The client thought they had a living trust to avoid probate, but the trust they signed says that the first deceased spouse's half actually "passes back" to the probate estate of the first deceased spouse, so we have to open a probate! Then, the trust says that the first deceased spouse's half will be distributed pursuant to the will and goes into a forced special needs trust. Sounds good, but was all that discussed and understood?

I am not against revocable living trusts! I have probably thousands of such trusts in use in my practice, but hopefully for specific reasons understood by the client. Such examples include:

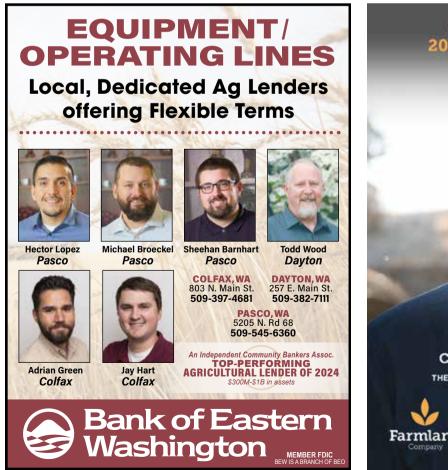
• A revocable living trust to hold title to out-of-state real property, i.e. the Idaho lake property, the Montana ranch, etc., to avoid a dual or ancillary probate in the foreign state.

- I use such trusts in conjunction with most gifting to children, especially if giving LLC units or corporate shares of the family's closely held entities.
- I will use a trust for mom, who is getting some dementia, and not handling her business efficiently, etc.
- We design trusts to hold gifting/inheritances for the "problem" child/grandchild.

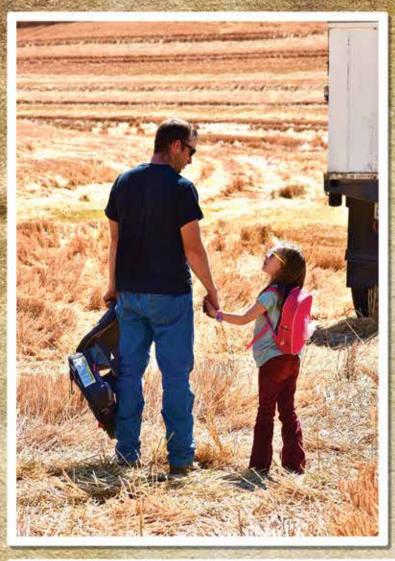
These are just some of the examples of uses of revocable living trusts. I am intentionally not dealing with irrevocable trusts, which are a whole other topic to itself.

Bottom line, most folks don't have the concerns/issues addressed in the article. They want the simplest estate plan they can have, all to each other, then the kids! If a revocable living trust is part of your estate plan, just be sure you understand it!

**Norm Brock** has been representing farm families throughout Eastern Washington, Idaho, and Northwestern Oregon for more than 50 years. He works out of the firm's Davenport and Spokane offices and can be reached at (509) 721-0392 or brocklf.com.



<section-header>





(Left) Tory Bye and daughter, Breckyn (5), headed to the grain truck in Pomeroy. Photo by Tai Bye. (Above) Taysom Bye (3) talks to his cousin, Ryan Gingerich, on the CB during Taysom's first combine ride with his daddy, Tory. Photo by Tai Bye. (Below) A smoky sunset on the Fox family farm in Othello. The farm was settled in 1901. The grain elevator on the left was built in 1941. The elevator on the right was built in 1918 and cost  $\ddagger3,000$  for the wood. Photo by Ross Fox.





So much beauty and hard work to appreciate in the wheat fields on Pleasant Prairie in Spokane County, which was being harvested by Kaelin Farms. Photo by Andra Perrickson.



# Your wheat life...



(Above) Cousins Lance and Gavin Wagner during harvest 2024 in Harrington. Photo by Travis Wagner. (Left) Harvest at Schroeder Family Farms south of Wilbur. Photo by Alli Schroeder.

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

# HAPPENINGS

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

### **MARCH 2025**

**2** SAUSAGE FEED. All meals will be to go. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Menu includes homemade sausage, sauerkraut, mashed potatoes, green beans, roll, applesauce and pie. Uniontown Community Center, Uniontown, Wash. facebook.com/ groups/2523604837767404/

### 7-9 SPRING ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW.

Professional artists and crafters from across the Northwest will display and sell their fine art, hand crafts and specialty foods. Spokane Fair and Expo Center, Spokane, Wash. custershows.com

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

**21-23 SPRING ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW.** Professional artists and crafters from across the Northwest will display and sell their fine art, hand crafts and specialty foods. HAPO Center, Pasco, Wash. custershows.com

### **APRIL 2025**

**12-13** EASTERN WASHINGTON AGRICULTURAL MUSEUM'S SPRING FARMING DAYS. Free family event.

Plowing usually begins at 9 a.m. each day. Lunch available for purchase each day 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily. Garfield County Fairgrounds in Pomeroy, Wash. Reserve camping spots at 509-843-3701. ewamuseum2008.gmail.com

**19 ST. JOHN EASTER EGG HUNT.** St. John City Park in St. John, Wash. stjohnwa.com/events

**24-27 COMMUNITY FAIR.** St. John, Wash. stjohnwa.com

**25-26 ODESSA SPRING FLING, QUILT SHOW, CAR SHOW, AND COMMUNITY WIDE YARD SALES.** Quilt show hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Car show begins 9 a.m. Saturday. Yard sales are various hours and include Sunday. Quilt show featured quilter is Robin Long of Robin

Ruth Designs, plus over 150 quilts on display along with a Hoffman Challenge grouping, Con-temporary Quilt Art Association display and quilting supplies vendors. odessaquiltclub.com

**24-MAY 4 WASHINGTON STATE APPLE BLOSSOM FESTIVAL.** Parade, carnival, golf tournament, apple pie and dessert bake-off, live entertainment, auction. Wenatchee, Wash. appleblossom.org

**30-MAY 3** JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SHOW OF SPOKANE. Spokane County Fair and Expo Center. juniorshow.org

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