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WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

MAY | 2026

CRP

Many Eastern Washington growers in low rainfall zones frustrated with conservation program rates, requirements

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President's Perspective



Don't overlook mental health wellness

By Gil Crosby

President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

This month's column, focusing on mental health in agriculture, is a bit of a challenge to tackle. It's a crucial issue that we should all be mindful of, especially given the current state of the industry. It's important for us to look after our own mental well-being and support our fellow farmers and community members. With the rising issue of declining commodity prices and escalating input costs, Chapter 12 bankruptcies have surged by over 55% in 2025.

Even in the middle of all this, agriculture still has a way of reminding us to smile, usually at the most unexpected times. A load of seed wheat that is 200 pounds short to finish a field, a tractor that only starts when it feels like it, or a display that just keeps throwing errors can test a person's patience, but they also give us stories we end up laughing about later. That humor matters more than we give it credit for. It's often the first crack in the pressure, the moment where a hard day loosens its grip just enough to breathe. Taking five minutes to swap those stories with a neighbor, or to admit "today didn't go as planned" doesn't make anyone less tough, it makes your load a little lighter. In a line of work where so much is out of our control, holding onto those small, human moments might be one of the most practical tools we have.

Farmers are already about 3.5 times more likely to die by suicide, which makes taking care of our mental health just as important as taking care of the operation itself. For me, that means stepping away now and then, whether it's a round of golf, a few hours fishing, or even a quick couple of days to catch a Mariners game. Those breaks aren't wasted time, they are what help reset my head and let me come back more focused and steady. Everyone's version of that reset looks different, and it doesn't have to be big or expensive. It might just be a few hours off the farm to clear your mind. The important part is making time for it, because taking care of yourself is part of taking care of everything else.

In agriculture, we pride ourselves on resilience, but resilience doesn't mean going it alone. Too often, it means keeping things to ourselves until the weight gets too heavy. Looking out for each other is not just neighborly, it's necessary. It's checking in, even when it feels a little uncomfortable. It's noticing when someone isn't quite themselves. It's reminding each other that a tough season doesn't define a lifetime. In a season where margins are tight and pressures are high, the strongest thing we can do is to stay connected to our work, our purpose, and each other. ■

Cover photo: In the low rainfall zones of Eastern Washington, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is used to help control wind erosion and establish wildlife habitat, like this land in Benton County. Unfortunately, growers are raising concerns about lower rental rates, narrow seeding windows, and stand requirements unsuited to the region. See page 26. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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WAWG MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

WAWG's current top priorities are:

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

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

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WAWG at WORK

ADVOCATING FOR THE WHEAT FARMERS OF EASTERN WASHINGTON

WAWG leaders attend White House event

In late March, Gil Crosby, president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), and Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director, attended the U.S. Department of Agriculture's official National Ag Day event, "Together We Grow: Celebrating 250 Years of Progress in Agriculture," at the White House. Featured speakers were President Donald Trump and Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins.

Crosby and Hennings were there by invitation of the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG).

"I felt very fortunate to be able to attend this event at the White House. It was great to hear the president and ag secretary speak about the importance of agriculture in the U.S.," Crosby said.

In his speech, Trump announced finalization of the highest renewable volume obligations in the history of the renewable fuels standard program, new "Grocery Guarantee" loans through the Small Business Administration's International Trade Loan Program, and furthered work at the Environmental Protection Agency to remove diesel exhaust fluid sensors for diesel equipment. Additionally, the president highlighted the recent issuance of emergency E-15 waivers, discussed "Product of USA" labeling for increased consumer awareness, and urged Congress to quickly pass a new farm bill. ▶



(Above) Gil Crosby, president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), and Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director, attended a National Ag Day event at the White House. (Left) Wheat growers from across the nation traveled to Washington, D.C., to hear President Donald Trump and Ag Secretary Brooke Rollins talk about the importance of agriculture.



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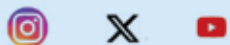


PNWVT	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	PNW	2023	2024	2025
LBS PER ACRE							LBS PER ACRE			
Control Mean	3743	3399	2683	3128	4711	4403	Private trials			
Rubisco Seeds' Hybrids										
KICKER	4972	4701	4383	3505	5841	5394	KICKER	4678	6667	6828
MERCEDES	4419	4359	3756	3881	5393	4798	MERCEDES	4945	6569	6167
AKILAH					5876	5201	AKILAH	5686	5455	6094
PHOENIX CL	4611	4043	3398	3454	5093	4780	DRIFTER	4856	6795	6449

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

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Also during the event, NAWG President Jamie Kress, a farmer from eastern Idaho, participated in a panel discussion alongside National Pork Producers Council President Rob Brenneman and American Soybean Association Vice President Dave Walton. The panel highlighted the value of agriculture in America from a variety of industry perspectives, emphasizing the progress made across the sector, the challenges that remain, and opportunities for collaboration to strengthen and grow U.S. agriculture. ■

WSDA asks ag participants to fill out ag viability surveys

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is asking producers, farmworkers, and agricultural partners to share the challenges and opportunities they are seeing in agriculture. That information will help WSDA better understand the challenges facing Washington agriculture, identify opportunities for improvement, and develop recommendations to inform policymakers and industry leaders. The surveys are at agr.wa.gov/departments/directors-office/washington-

state-agricultural-viability and will take 10-15 minutes to complete. They are available in multiple languages.

Washington’s farmers, ranchers, producers, farmworkers, and agricultural partners are the foundation of one of the most diverse and productive agricultural economies in the nation, explained Derek Sandison, WSDA director, in an email. Over the past year, WSDA has been engaging with participants across the state and compiling data to better understand the current landscape of agricultural viability.

These survey responses will directly inform WSDA’s phase 2 report, which will serve as the state’s comprehensive assessment of agricultural viability. This final report will not only reflect on-the-ground conditions, but will also identify practical, actionable solutions. These findings will be shared with policymakers, industry partners, and stakeholders to help guide decisions that impact the future of agriculture in the state. ■

Base acre expansion explained

Up to 30 million new base acres, tied to recent planting history, could significantly expand Agriculture Risk

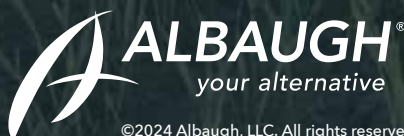


Franklin County Farm Fair. In March, Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) volunteers manned the WAWG booth at the Franklin County Farm Bureau’s Farm Fair held at the Franklin County Fairgrounds. The story of wheat and wheat facts were shared with hundreds of fourth graders, teachers, and parents throughout the event.

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Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) eligibility starting in 2026.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA) includes one of the most consequential changes to U.S. farm programs in more than a decade, a large-scale expansion of base acres that will determine who qualifies for commodity payments under ARC and PLC. While the concept is straightforward — better aligning payments with actual production — the statutory language is detailed and, in places, complex, which is driving the current uncertainty the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is trying to address.

At the core of the OBBA provision is a one-time opportunity to add up to 30 million base acres nationwide, beginning with the 2026 crop year. Unlike previous farm bills, which largely locked in base acres from older historical periods, OBBA allows producers to update base using a modern planting window — 2019 through 2023. The law directs USDA to calculate eligibility based on:

- 5-year average planted acres of covered commodities.
- Prevented planting acres (e.g., drought, flooding).
- In some cases, eligible noncovered crops and other acreage categories.

A farm qualifies for new base acres if its recent planting history exceeds its current base acres. Base acres are calculated by taking a five-year average (2019–2023) of planted plus prevented acres and subtracting existing base acres. The difference becomes eligible new base. New acres are allocated proportionally across crops based on planting history, and no new commodities are created — acres are assigned to existing program crops.

The law includes several important limits and structural rules:

- **National cap.** Total new base acres cannot exceed 30 million nationwide. If demand exceeds that level, there will be an automatic pro-rata reduction across all farms. Early analysis suggests demand will likely exceed the cap, meaning everyone’s allocation could be scaled down.
- **Farm-level limits.** Total base acres cannot exceed total farm acreage.
- **No loss of existing base.** Producers do not have to give up current base acres to receive new ones.
- **Automatic allocation unless declined.** USDA will automatically assign new base acres to eligible farms. Owners will have a limited window (about 90 days) to opt out.
- **Conversion of “generic” or unassigned base.** Existing unassigned base (e.g., cotton base) is converted first into covered commodity base acres.

- **Payments begin in 2026.** Newly created base acres become eligible for ARC or PLC starting with the 2026 program year.

Producers should contact their local Farm Service Agency office if they have any questions. ■

WAWG state board meeting scheduled for May 12

The next state board meeting of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) is scheduled for May 12. The meeting starts at 10 a.m. at the Washington Wheat Foundation Building in Ritzville, Wash. Board meetings are open to the public. For more information, call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610. ■

Growers appointed to the state FSA committee

In mid-April, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced the appointment of five leaders in agriculture to serve on the Washington FSA state committee.

Members of the state committee are appointed by Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins and are responsible for the oversight of farm programs and county committee operations, resolving program delivery appeals from the agriculture community, maintaining cooperative relations with industry stakeholders, and keeping producers informed about current FSA programs. Each FSA state committee is comprised of three to five members including a designated chairperson. The individuals appointed to serve on this committee for Washington are:

Debra Ausman, chair (Clarkston). Ausman brings more than 30 years of experience in agricultural lending, financial management, and risk management, including 15 years with Northwest Farm Credit Services and leadership roles in commercial and agricultural banking. She serves as chief financial officer and human resource and safety manager for a commercial farming operation and has an extensive record of community and producer service committee and advisory board roles with Asotin County FSA Committee, Tri-State Memorial Hospital, Twin County United Way, Leadership Idaho Agriculture, and multiple local organizations.

Sam Krautscheid, member (George). Krautscheid is a fourth generation diversified agricultural producer whose operation is comprised of conventional and certified organic systems. He has over 20 years of experience in soil health, irrigation, and sustainable practices, demonstrating

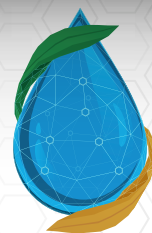
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his commitment to long-term land stewardship. He also has leadership experience in local agricultural organizations, including serving on his local FSA county committee and as former president of the Grant County Farm Bureau.

Jason Lee, member (Ridgefield). Lee is an agricultural operator with lifelong experience in cattle and hay production, managing cow-calf and hay operations through his family farm and additional agricultural enterprises. He also serves as land manager for a regional property holding that includes contract grazing, forestry, and wetland mitigation activities and brings more than 20 years of experience in the commercial and industrial petroleum sector. Lee’s background includes leadership roles with the Washington Cattlemen’s Association, the Washington Farm Bureau, and the Clark County Assessor Farm Advisory Committee.

Julienne Loveall, member (Colville). Loveall is an agricultural advocate with more than 35 years of experience supporting Washington’s farming and dairy sectors through extensive board and committee service at the county, state, and national levels. She has served on the boards of Darigold, the Washington State Farm Bureau,

the Stevens County Farm Bureau, and the Washington Dairy Products Commission, along with multiple water, stewardship, and conservation committees, consistently representing producer interests and advancing agricultural policy.

Madelyne Vanderkooy, member (Mt. Vernon). Vanderkooy was raised on her family dairy farm in Skagit County and brings an agriculture-rooted perspective to her work, supporting farm communities through program management, outreach, and mental health initiatives. She serves as Extension coordinator and program manager for the Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Partnership and has extensive experience in multiagency collaboration, data-driven program administration, and statewide and national agricultural mental health education.

“These individuals, selected by Secretary Rollins in partnership with key stakeholders in each state, are held in high regard in the agriculture industry and are entrusted to ensure FSA programs are delivered in a manner consistent with federal farm policy and in the best interest of all agricultural producers in their state,” said FSA Administrator Bill Beam. ■

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POLICY MATTERS

Governor signs budgets, 'millionaires tax'

By Diana Carlen
WAWG Lobbyist

Gov. Ferguson wrapped up bill action and signed the Operating Supplemental Budget, Transportation Supplemental Budget and the Capital Supplemental Budget into law the first week of April. All budgets were signed with partial vetoes.

The Operating Supplemental Budget (SB 5998) included the following notable vetoes:

- **Clean Energy Permitting/Planning:** This section appropriates money for grants to support siting and permitting of clean energy projects. This year's budget added a section that mandated priority shall be given to awards in jurisdictions where transmission constraints or rapid load growth threaten reliability and achievement of clean energy goals. The governor vetoed this section because funding has already been awarded and cannot be distributed in this manner.
- **Climate Resilience Workgroup:** This section would have reduced funding to the Department of Ecology to lead the interagency Climate Resilience Coordinating Council. State law mandates convening of this council and eliminating the funds to do so puts federal funding at risk. This means the amount funded in 2025 is maintained.

Gov. Ferguson also signed the vast majority of legislation that was sent to his office this year.

"Millionaires Tax" signed into law

On March 30, 2026, Gov. Ferguson signed ESSB 6346 into law, establishing a 9.9% tax on annual income exceeding \$1 million. The policy will take effect Jan. 1, 2028, with the first tax payments due in 2029. The bill is a notable departure from Washington's historical position as one of the few states without a broad-based income tax. Under the new law, only income above the \$1 million threshold is subject to taxation. About \$3.5 billion is anticipated to be generated from an estimated 21,000 filers.

As expected, there will be litiga-

tion and ballot measures challenging the new tax. The Citizen Action Defense Fund has announced its plan to sue, challenging the constitutionality of the income tax. Rob McKenna, former state attorney general and 2012 Republican candidate for governor, has been retained to lead the litigation. The lawsuit will argue that the legislation imposes a graduated tax on income, which has long been classified as property under Washington law and its constitution. As such, the income tax passed by the Legislature violates the uniformity requirement and constitutional limitations on property taxation established under Article VII of the Washington State Constitution.

In addition, Brian Heywood, founder of the political committee Let's Go Washington, filed a referendum to the Secretary of State to give voters a chance to repeal the law this fall. But, as expected, the secretary of state's office declined to process it, citing the Legislature's inclusion of language that the new tax "is necessary for the support of the state government and its existing public institutions." Democratic lawmakers put this so-called "necessity clause" into the law to prevent a referendum.

On April 3, Let's Go Washington filed an emergency petition to the Washington Supreme Court to direct the Secretary of State to process the referendum. If successful, Let's Go Washington must submit signatures of 154,455 voters by June to qualify for the fall ballot. Even if Let's Go Washington loses the referendum court case at the Washington Supreme Court, Let's Go Washington has said an initiative to overturn the law will be pursued either this year or next.

Federal court debates mail-in ballot rules

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on March 16 in a case out of Mississippi that could require all ballots containing federal races to be physically received by Election Day, not just postmarked by it.

If the Supreme Court decides the ballots must be physically received by election day, this is a huge departure from Washington's current rules. Ballots postmarked by Election Day are currently accepted if received days or even weeks afterward. However, this only impacts the federal races, not the state ones, thus complicating the process. The Supreme Court ruling is anticipated in late June or early July. ■





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Federal, state legislators announce retirement

With the 2026 election season gearing up, a score of legislators have announced they will not be seeking reelection.

Back in December, Fourth District Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) announced he will be stepping down from Congress. He was first elected in 2014. Before that, he served in the Washington State House of Representatives and then as director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture.



Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.)

“After over 25 years of public service, including more than a decade in the House, I am grateful to the Washingtonians who put their faith in me, as well as the colleagues I have served with on both sides of the aisle,” Newhouse said in a statement. “Public service takes many forms. As I look

forward to this new chapter and ways I can continue to serve my community and this great nation, I do so with confidence that there are now qualified and serious people expressing interest in this office. Central Washington will have a strong, capable leader to whom I can pass the torch.”

During his time in Congress, Newhouse has been a staunch supporter of the lower Snake River dams, worked on farm-worker issues, and advocated tirelessly for agriculture. He sits on the House Committee for Agriculture and is chair of the Forestry and Horticulture Subcommittee.

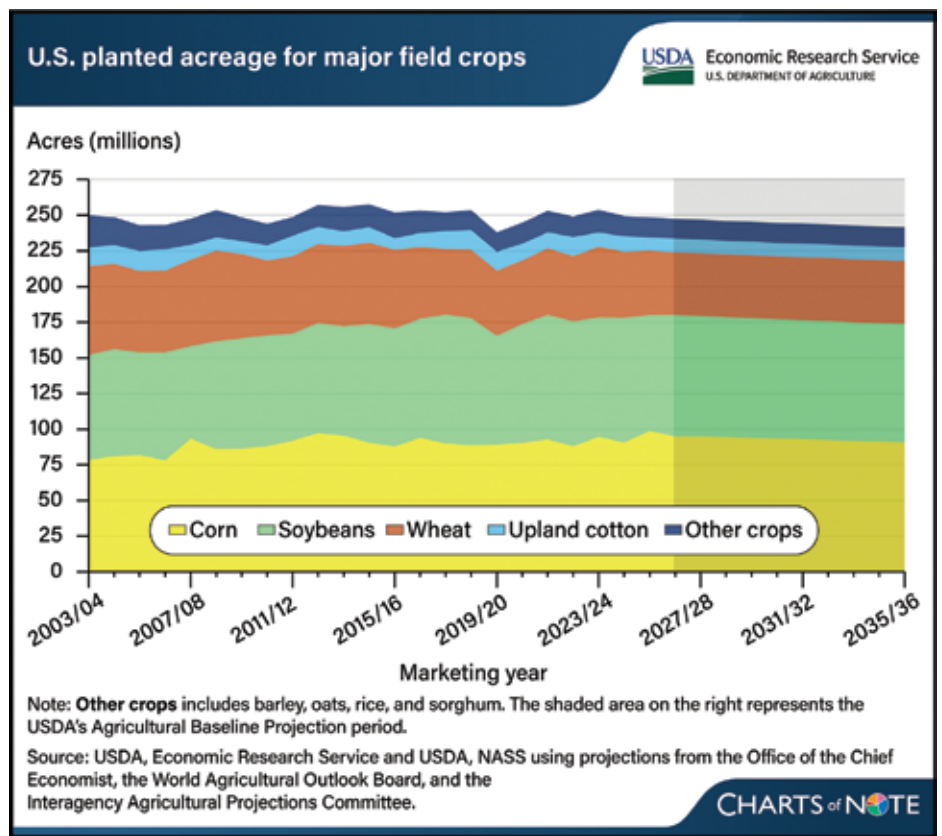


Sen. Judy Warnick (R-Moses Lake)

Judy Warnick (R-Moses Lake), another tireless advocate for agriculture, announced in March that she will not seek reelection to her state Senate seat, which she has held since 2015.

“Serving the people of the 13th Legislative District has been the greatest honor of my professional life,” she said in a statement. “I grew up on a dairy farm and ran

ROW CROP ACREAGE PROJECTED TO DECLINE. Total planted area for the eight major row crops grown in the U.S. is projected to decline by 2.4% over the next decade, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) long-term agricultural projections. Overall, the outlook points to a stable-to-softening acreage base dominated by corn and soybeans, with incremental reductions from recent highs as profitability pressures persist. The acreage of the eight crops — corn, soybean, wheat, upland cotton, oats, rice, sorghum, and barley — is projected to decline from 247.6 million acres for the 2026-27 marketing year to 241.6 million acres by 2035-36. This projected contraction reflects steady to slightly higher crop prices and rising input prices that keep margins tight for most crops. After reaching 98.8 million acres in 2025-26, corn acreage is projected to drop to 95 million acres in 2026-27, before easing to 91 million by 2035-36. Soybeans are projected to rise to 85 million in 2026-27, the sixth-highest mark historically, but then slip to 83 million later in the projection period. Wheat acreage remains flat at 44 million throughout the projection horizon, down from 45.3 million in 2025-26, and remaining well below historical levels. This chart draws from the USDA Agricultural Projections to 2035, released in February 2026.



my own small business, so I came to Olympia with a simple goal: to ensure that the hardworking families, farmers, and ranchers of central Washington had a seat at the table. I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together to protect our water rights, support our small businesses, and empower the next generation of leaders.”

Warnick served as vice chair of the Senate Republican Caucus in 2017 and as chair of the Senate Republican Caucus in 2021. She was named “Legislator of the Year” from the Association of Washington Business, the Cattle Producers of Washington, and the Washington State Potato Commission, as well as the Guardian of Small Business award from the National Federation of Independent Business. She also received the Hall of Fame award from the Washington State Dairy Federation in March 2026.

“Rep. Newhouse and Sen. Warnick have been champions of agriculture from the moment they stepped into office. We thank them for their advocacy and leadership on behalf of Washington wheat growers,” said Gil Crosby, president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers.

Washington wheat growers were frequent visitors to both Newhouse’s D.C. office and Warnick’s Olympia office. Both lawmakers were always willing to listen to growers’ concerns and proved to be dedicated advocates of the state’s ag industry.

The list of state legislators announcing their retirement includes:

- Rep. Timm Ormsby (D-Spokane) is retiring.
- Rep. Carolyn Eslick (R-Sultan) is retiring.
- Rep. Alex Ybarra (R-Quincy), is running for the Senate seat being vacated by Sen. Judy Warnick.
- Rep. Suzanne Schmidt (R-Spokane Valley) is run-

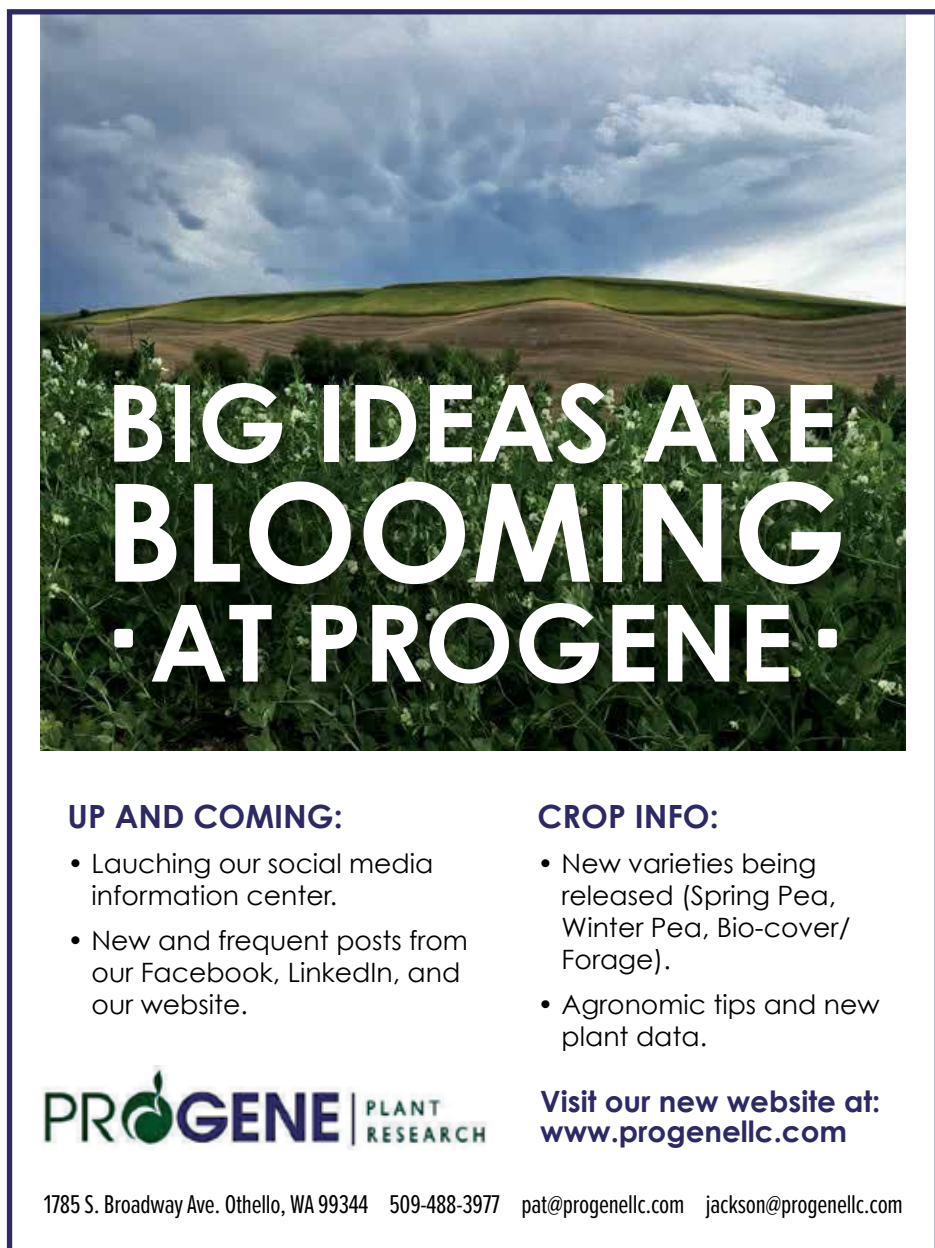


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- Rep. Mike Volz (R-Spokane) is retiring to focus full-time as Spokane County Treasurer.
- Rep. Jenny Graham (R-Spokane) is retiring.
- Rep. Jeremie Dufault (R-Selah) is running for the Senate.
- Rep. Steve Tharinger (D-Sequim) is retiring.
- Rep. Michelle Valdez (R-Port Orchard) is retiring.
- Rep. Sharlett Mena (D-South Tacoma) is running for the Senate.
- Rep. Cindy Ryu (D-Seattle) is running for Senate to challenge her fellow Democrat seatmate, Sen. Jesse Salomon.
- Rep. Sharon Wylie (D-Vancouver) is running for Clark County auditor.
- Sen. Matt Boehnke (R-Kennewick) is running for retiring Congressman Dan Newhouse's seat.
- Sen. Nikki Torres (R-Pasco) is running for 8th Legislative District Senate seat.

- Sen. Steve Conway (D-South Tacoma) is retiring.
- Sen. Rebecca Saldaña (D-Seattle) is running for King County Council.
- Sen. Sharon Shewmake (D-Bellingham) is retiring. ■

ITC urged to revoke duties on fertilizers

On March 31, the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) urged the U.S. International Trade Commission to revoke countervailing duty orders on phosphate fertilizers from Morocco and Russia, citing significant economic harm to U.S. wheat farmers.

In a letter to Secretary Lisa R. Barton, NAWG emphasized that maintaining these duties would continue to impose unnecessary costs on farmers already facing a challenging economic environment.

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“Phosphate fertilizer is a critical and necessary component in growing wheat, and the current countervailing duties have placed an unsustainable financial burden on America’s farmers who raise wheat,” said NAWG CEO Sam Kieffer.

“Revoking these orders would provide immediate and meaningful relief to growers and strengthen the competitiveness of U.S. agriculture.”

Fertilizer accounts for roughly 38% of wheat operating costs, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture projections. Research from Texas A&M University estimates the duties added \$6.9 billion in fertilizer costs for U.S. producers between 2021 and 2025, with wheat farmers bearing nearly \$1 billion. NAWG’s analysis estimates wheat farmers alone incurred nearly \$1 billion in added costs over that period.

NAWG also noted that the U.S. relies on imports to meet phosphate demand, with domestic supply falling short by about 3 million metric tons annually. Reduced imports following the duties have tightened supply and contributed to higher prices.

“America’s wheat farmers are already facing multiple external pressures outside their control, including geopolitical disruptions that have recently exacerbated fertilizer and shipping costs. The commission now has an opportunity to remove one cost driver that is within U.S. policy control,” Kieffer added. ■

How are we doing?


Like something you read in *Wheat Life*? Disagree with something you read in *Wheat Life*? Let us know by emailing your comments and suggestions to editor@wawg.org or mail them to 109 East First Avenue, Ritzville, Wash., 99169-2394. Please keep submissions less than 350 words. Submissions may be edited for length. ■

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Girl Scout cookies demonstrate differences between wheats

Thin Mints. Samoas. Trefoils.

Every spring, Girl Scout cookies show up in force, and most of us don't think twice about eating them by the sleeve full. They're all made with wheat, satisfy our sweet tooth, and rarely get blamed for digestive issues. But swap those cookies for a sandwich or pasta, and suddenly, wheat becomes suspect for some people. People talk about bloating, discomfort, even "gluten sensitivity."

Cookies, bread, and pasta all start with wheat, but experts are finding that the digestive tolerance for each may have less to do with wheat and more to do with how it's used.

Wheat isn't a single, uniform ingredient. Different types of wheat behave very differently in food. That's why thousands of Washington wheat grower checkoff dollars have been spent to teach our customers how to use our soft white wheat through partners like the Wheat Marketing Center. Cookies, including most Girl Scout favorites, are typically made with soft wheat flour. Soft white wheat is lower in protein and forms less gluten. That's exactly what bakers want for tender, crumbly cookie goodness.

Bread is a different story. Bread needs strong gluten development to create structure and rise. That chewy texture and airy rise come from the proteins in wheat, mainly glutenins and gliadins, forming an elastic network that traps gas during baking. To get there, bakers often use higher-protein flours from hard wheat. Commercial bakers sometimes add vital wheat gluten to strengthen the dough even further.

So right away, we're dealing with two very different uses of wheat: one designed to minimize structure, the other completely relying on it.

Another key difference

between cookies and bread is the fermentation process.

Cookies skip it entirely. Bread does not. Before baking, yeast and bacteria ferment bread dough, producing gas and flavor. In traditional sourdough, this can take hours or even days. In modern commercial baking, it often happens much faster. According to experts, timing matters. Longer fermentation allows microbes to break down parts of the wheat, including gluten and certain carbohydrates. Faster processes leave more of those components intact.

Gluten often gets the blame for digestive discomfort, and for people with celiac disease, avoiding it is mandatory. But for others, the story is more complex.

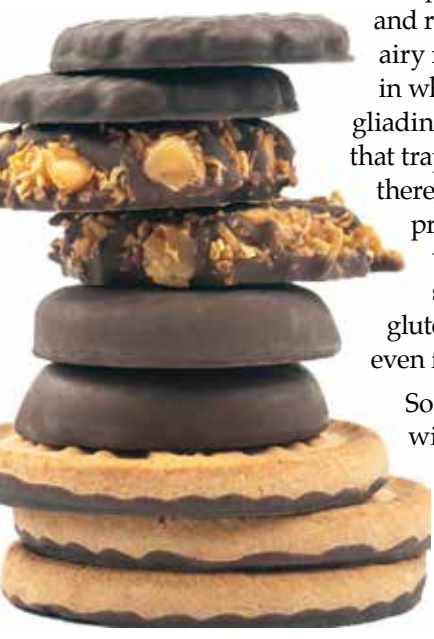
Wheat also contains FODMAPs, particularly fructans, which are fermentable carbohydrates. These aren't fully absorbed in the small intestine and can be fermented by gut bacteria, producing gas and discomfort for some. Recent research suggests that in some people who believe they're sensitive to gluten, fructans may actually be the bigger trigger.

Cookies don't rely on fermentation or strong gluten structure. They're made with softer wheat and designed to be tender, not elastic. They have less developed gluten, don't involve fermentation, and are often eaten in smaller portions (never mind the personal belief that a full sleeve is one portion). So, if cookies don't bother you but bread does, it doesn't necessarily mean wheat itself is the problem. It may be how that wheat was processed.

And, your gut also plays a role.

The trillions of bacteria in your microbiome help determine how you digest food. Differences in those bacteria may explain why one person tolerates bread easily while another feels uncomfortable. Even sourdough, often seen as easier to digest, doesn't work the same for everyone. While longer fermentation can reduce certain carbohydrates, results vary depending on how the bread is made.

Wheat hasn't fundamentally changed. How we process it and how our bodies respond to it is more complex than we once thought. Our Washington soft white is still the same wheat it's always been. Thankfully we can enjoy it one Trefoil sleeve at a time. ■



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Wheat College to commence

ANNUAL EVENT WILL FEATURE MICHIGAN EXTENSION AGENT ON YEN, YIELD MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

The 2026 Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's (AMMO) Wheat College will be held June 2, in Colfax, Wash., at the Palouse Empire Fairgrounds.



The keynote speaker will be **Dennis Pennington**, a wheat systems specialist at Michigan State University (MSU). His presentation is titled, "Stacking the Bushels: Small Decisions, Big Yield."

This annual event will offer a mix of indoor and outdoor presentations. Registration begins at 9 a.m. with the Graybeal Group sponsoring coffee and doughnuts. Admission to Wheat College is free, and lunch is included. Growers do not have to be member of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) to attend. Growers are asked to RSVP at wawg.org/ammo-workshops/, email kgilkey@wawg.org, or call (509) 659-0610. Growers who RSVP by May 29 will be entered in multiple prize drawings.

Besides Pennington, Wheat College presentations will also include:

- **Soilbourne Wheat Mosaic Virus: Know the Signs and Symptoms** featuring WSU Extension Regional Agronomist Morgan Menaker.
- **WSU's Amber Hauvermale and Alison Thompson** will give updates on falling numbers and talk about tools to help manage the problem.
- **Getting Land Back into Production After CRP.** Do you have land that is currently in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or recently have had land come out of CRP that you want to put back into production? This presentation helps explain your next steps, and how to put your land back into production. Presented by Mitch Ruchert from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
- **Soil Health Demonstration – Rainfall Simulator.** NRCS will have their Soil Health Trailer on site and will be providing presentations of their Rainfall Simulator to demonstrate the effects of rain on different types of soil. The presentation demonstrates the characteristics of healthy soil and the importance of cover crops. Presented by Stephen Johnson.

"Wheat College is one of our most popular AMMO offerings, and I think we've raised the bar this year by bringing Dennis out to speak to our growers," said KayDee Gilkey, WAWG's outreach coordinator. "Besides the educational value of Wheat College, it's also a fantastic opportunity to network with other growers."

Data-driven decisions

Pennington has been employed with MSU Extension for 29 years. He received both his Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in MSU's Crop and Soil Sciences Department. His current research program includes the wheat state variety performance trials, precision planting, high yield management project, and the Great Lakes Yield Enhancement Network (YEN). The Michigan Wheat Program farmer checkoff funds 50% of his position in partnership with MSU. He is based out of the Mason Research Farm southeast of Lansing, Mich.

Besides sharing some of the findings from the Great Lakes YEN, Pennington will also talk about wheat phenology, growth, and development and how management interacts with different yield components. Crop nutrition, disease management, and fungicide applications will also be discussed.

"We collect a lot of data in the YEN program, so my plan is to share some of that with the group and show how we use it to support decision-making on the farm," Pennington explained. "That decision-making process is something I want to spend some time on, because having access to data on how a crop grows and responds to its environment is essential for improving yields.

"I often hear growers say they don't have time to run on-farm trials, but I want to challenge that thinking. If you don't have time to try new things, how will you achieve higher yields? If you keep doing the same thing, why would you expect a different outcome?"

Pennington also plans to engage growers through live troubleshooting, using real farm data to walk the group through the process of developing at least three agronomic recommendations for a given operation.

"The goal is to get them thinking more broadly, not just about the value of data, but about wheat agronomy as a whole, including crop growth, development, and management, and how all those pieces fit together to drive yield," he said. "It's about using the information they have to make informed decisions about what they can change or improve on their own farms. ▶



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“I want the group to ask questions. Interactive discussion is a big part of that, because it helps put the pieces together. Sometimes those conversations go off script, but that’s okay, as long as we’re learning together. There are a few key things I want to cover, but I also want to dig into the topics that matter most to them.”

Great Lakes YEN

The Great Lakes YEN has come up at previous Wheat Colleges. Pennington has been involved from the YEN’s beginning in 2021, when it was started by the Michigan Wheat Board and the Grain Farmers of Ontario. Grower data is collected throughout the year and compiled into reports (both group and individual) that growers can use to fine-tune their operations. Pennington said the ability to create a network of growers that allows them to share ideas and data with each other was what got him excited about being part of the Great Lakes YEN.

“Out of all of the Extension programs I’ve done over my 20-plus years, this has probably been the one that’s been the most farmer-driven and the most exciting for me to be part of because of that focus on ways that we can help farmers improve yields,” he said. The Great Lakes YEN is in its sixth year and now includes over 600 site years of data. “We have all of this data from all these different environments, which is powerful to summarize and try to glean learnings from.”

The report that YEN participants receive include about 60 data points with comparisons to group averages. Pennington is hoping to spend a few extra days in Eastern Washington to visit some farms (and possibly explore the idea of setting up a YEN here).

There is currently one grower in Eastern Washington who is participating in the Great Lakes YEN — Jesse Brunner in Lincoln County.

“What would be ideal is we get 30 or 40 growers in it. And then we can group their data together so that you’re only comparing Washington growers with

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each other,” Pennington said. “If you’ve only got three or four growers, it’s going to take a long time before you build much of a database. I would love to see if there’s interest in it by the growers.” ■





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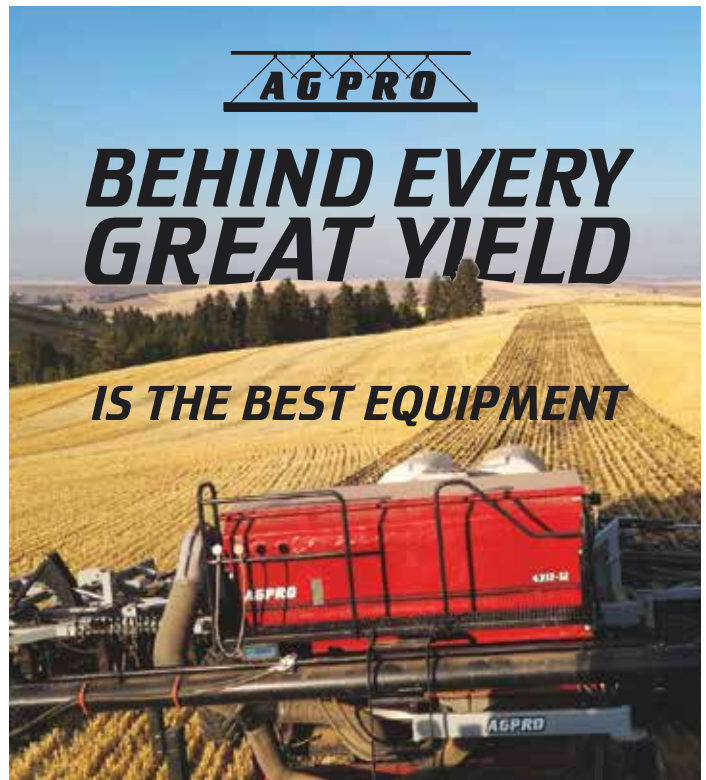


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- Welcome - 9:30 am
- Dennis Pennington - 9:35 am
- Industry Updates - 11:40 am
- Lunch - 12:30 pm
- Morgan Menaker - 1:00 pm
- Rotational Topics - 2:00 pm
- Closing - 3:15 pm

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Wheat College

Stacking the Bushels:

Small Decisions, Big Yield Keynote speaker: Dennis Pennington

Dennis, the MSU wheat extension specialist, has been employed with MSU Extension for 29 years. Dennis received both his Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in the Crop and Soil Sciences Department from Michigan State University. His current research program includes the wheat state variety performance trials, precision planting, high yield management project and the Great Lakes Yield Enhancement Network.

Additional speakers and topics include:

Morgan Menaker, WSU Ext. Regional Agronomist
Soilborne Wheat Mosaic Virus: Know the Signs and Symptoms

WSU's Amber Hauvermale and Alison Thompson
Updates on Falling Number and Tools to Help Manage the Problem

Mitch Ruchert, NRCS – *Getting Land Back Into Production After CRP*

Stephen Johnson, NRCS – *Soil Health Demonstration (Rainfall Simulator)*



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CRP frustrations mount

WHEAT GROWERS LAMENT LIMITATIONS OF CONSERVATION PROGRAM IN LOW RAINFALL ZONES

By Trista Crossley
Editor, Wheat Life

For more than 40 years, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has been helping Eastern Washington growers address natural resource concerns. But lately, some growers in low rainfall zones have been feeling like their participation in CRP is more likely to break the bank than help keep the farm afloat.

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) has helped organize several meetings with Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) officials to discuss growers' concerns, including rental rates, seeding windows, and stand viability. The most recent meeting was in early March in Pasco, Wash. Patrick Bell, the new FSA state executive director, and Roylene Comes At Night, NRCS state conservationist, attended, along with members of their staff.

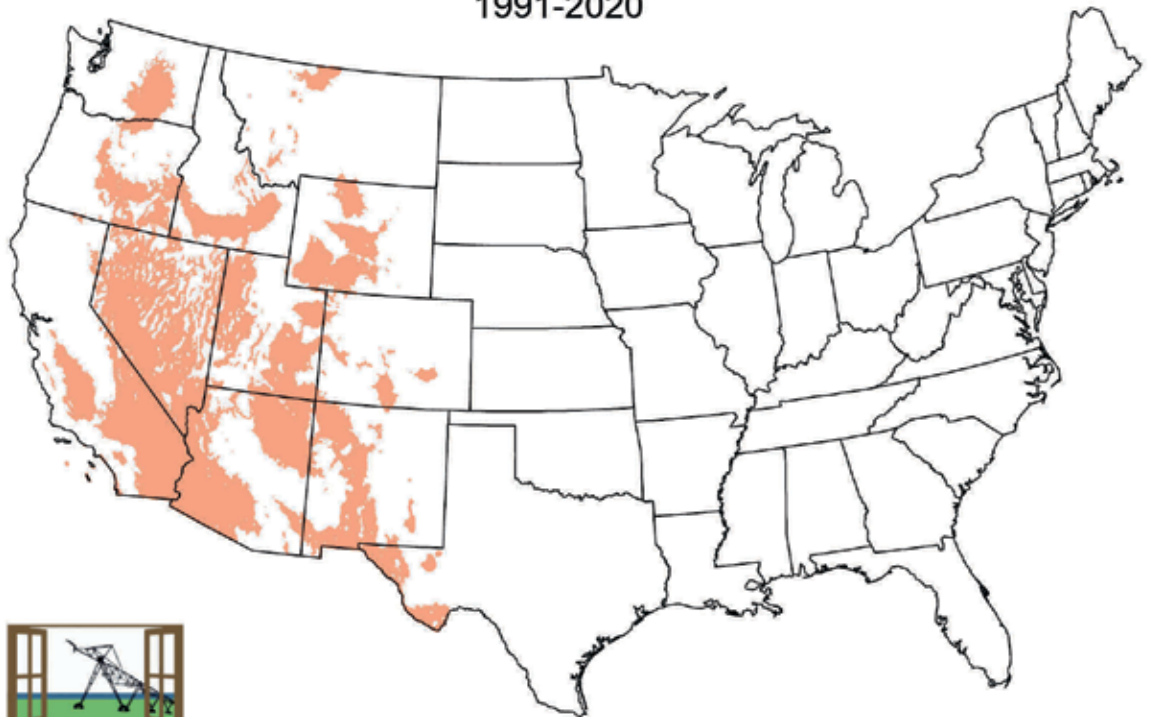
"It's just really important to get growers in front of the state FSA and NRCS representatives to be able to talk

about what's happening on the ground and to give growers an opportunity to voice their concerns," said Michelle Hennings, WAWG's executive director, who also attended the March meeting. "In order to make CRP viable for growers in Eastern Washington and reflect actual conditions on the ground, it needs to be restructured into a regional program, not a one-size-fits-all program. Our dryland wheat farmers don't have the same growing conditions as the Midwest does."

According to Farm Service Agency (FSA) records, in 2024, Washington state had 920,530 acres enrolled in CRP, down more than 48,000 acres from 2023. The top three counties for CRP acreage in 2024 were Douglas County (151,251 acres), Adams County (126,177 acres), and Lincoln County (111,978 acres). In 2024, Colorado had the highest number of CRP acres with 2,779,253, followed by South Dakota at 2,390,835, and Nebraska at 2,209,191.

CRP was introduced in the 1985 Farm Bill, also called the Food Security Act of 1985, with two primary goals: reducing soil erosion on highly erodible cropland and

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Nearly all rainfall zones receiving less than 12" of rain are located west of the Rocky Mountains. Trying to apply the same set of Conservation Reserve Program requirements across the U.S. leaves many Eastern Washington growers frustrated.



Created by Fiona Carey, Franklin Conservation District
 data from PRISM Group, Oregon State University, <https://prism.oregonstate.edu>, data created 12 June 2025, accessed 13 June 2025.

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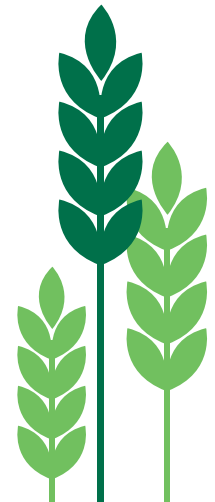
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curbing the production of surplus commodities. Secondary objectives included improving water quality, fostering wildlife habitat, and providing income support to farmers. By 1990, 33 million acres had been signed up for CRP.

In exchange for yearly rental payments and cost share assistance of up to 50%, landowners and operators agree to establish and maintain an approved perennial cover on enrolled acreage for 10 to 15 years. Enrollment is limited to 25% of the cropland within each county. Currently, Douglas County is the only county in Washington state bumping up against the county cap. In 1990, FSA adopted payment caps based on soil-specific, productivity-based rental rates and developed an environmental benefits index to rank offers. Over time, new practices have been added, and a mid-contract management provision was introduced in the early 2000s. Changes to CRP are generally made through the farm bill, including funding, program requirements, and acreage caps.

Besides helping to manage natural resources concerns, which in Eastern Washington are primarily wind erosion and wildlife habitat, other benefits of CRP include a dependable yearly payment and a contract that can be used as collateral on a bank loan.

“Another benefit of CRP is most of the time when we are working on CRP, it’s in the fall or in the spring when we’re not quite as busy on the farm dealing with our crop,” said Jeff Malone, a wheat grower in Douglas County. “However, you have to treat CRP like a crop because it is. It’s a source of income.”

Rental rates and cost share payments

Malone’s family has had land enrolled in CRP from the beginning. Like most farmers, he also manages

Average Eastern Washington CRP rental rates by county

Average County Rental Rate	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
ADAMS	47		62		46	50	53	52	52
ASOTIN	59		60		32	89	53	52	53
BENTON	50		48		40	53	53	46	46
COLUMBIA	79		93		77	89	62	74	73
DOUGLAS	42		49		44	47	53	49	50
FRANKLIN	49		54		40	53	53	59	59
GARFIELD	75		80		69	74	60	69	69
GRANT	55		59		40	78	53	64	63
KLICKITAT	39		48		53	53	53	48	48
LINCOLN	55		69		54	52	52	57	57
SPOKANE	75		69		55	53	50	70	70
WALLA WALLA	75		91		76	89	63	62	62
WHITMAN	91		94		87	89	83	80	80

According to the Farm Service Agency website, fsa.usda.gov/tools/informational/reports/conservation-statistics/crp, these are the approved county average rental rates (rates unavailable for 2023 and 2025). The posted rates will differ from the rates growers actually receive because the rates are reduced by a factor of 85% for general CRP and 90% for continuous CRP, a requirement of the 2018 Farm Bill.

CRP contracts for landowners. In Douglas County, CRP is used to help manage habitat for endangered species such as the sage grouse and pygmy rabbits.

For 2026, Malone’s rental rate is projected to be \$36/acre. In 2024, the average rate in his county was \$49/acre. He said it is challenging to make his CRP pay when he splits the payment 50/50 with his landlords. In some cases, that payment isn’t even enough for landlords to pay their taxes.

“My problem is they just keep reducing the CRP payment. We are also getting less for our cost share when it comes to actually taking care of the ground,” he said. “It’s not a working system, especially where we’re at with wheat prices. Honestly, it used to be that in times like this, CRP was the one payment you could count on. Now that payments are getting less and less, it’s just not making ends meet. Guys have to find different avenues.”

Down in Benton County, Nicole Berg’s rental rates actually went up slightly, from \$48/acre in 2024 to \$50/acre in 2026. But even with that increase, her family is still struggling to make their CRP ground profitable because input costs have skyrocketed.

“Seed prices have gone up, as has fuel,” she said. “We used to start to recover CRP costs in the third or fourth year of our contract. Now we’re in the sixth or seventh year just because input costs are so high. There’s only so long you can go before something’s got to break.”

Both Berg and Malone said they are seeing cost share payments declining as well.

“The value of the seed has gone up significantly, and we’re not getting much help with cost share,” Malone said. “They used to cover at least half of our costs, but lately, it seems to be closer to a third.”

Stand density and species count

Most Eastern Washington CRP contracts have a standard requirement of .8 approved plants per square foot as measured by NRCS technicians. For areas of



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Eastern Washington that get 20 inches of rain, that usually isn't a problem. However, for growers in the Horse Heaven Hills where Berg farms, they average 6 inches of rain a year.

"The problem with the standard is it's a .8 standard for 6 inches of rainfall in the Horse Heaven Hills, and it's a .8 standard for Whitman County and Spokane County and Lincoln County, which get 20 inches of rain. So, we're having an issue trying to get the stand to meet that .8 standard," Berg explained.

Growers who fail to meet the standard may be required to repay their contract if they can't show a good faith effort that they tried to create the stand. Another issue Berg and her neighbors are dealing with is stand density. When a grower signs a contract, they agree to have a certain number of species in their stand, but over the life of the contract, the more prolific species tend to choke out everything else.

Malone also has had problems with species count. In his case, some of the seeds growers in his area use for their CRP State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement contracts have

a lifespan less than the length of the contract.

"You get to the end of your 15-year contract, and you've only got six species growing where they required nine. Come to find out, the plants don't last that long. It's a broken system," Malone said.

Seeding window

Chris Herron in Franklin County has been pushing FSA to give growers in the low rainfall zones of Eastern Washington an extra few months when planting CRP ground. In their contracts, growers have 24 months to prepare and plant their CRP ground, but because NRCS rules require dormant seeding, it means growers only have one shot to kill cheatgrass before they have to seed CRP.

"The timeline starts on Oct. 1. You are on the clock. Really, I can't touch the field for seven months because it's dry, dead sticks. To kill it, it's got to be green, and that happens in the spring. So, October, November, December, January, February, March, April — already you're seven months in the contract," Herron explained. "If you match NRCS and FSA together, they want you to seed CRP on



Under a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract, growers are required to have a certain number of plants per square foot. Two popular plants in Eastern Washington CRP contracts are Basin wildrye (left) and yarrow. Each plant counts as one plant despite the fact one Basin wildrye plant is significantly bigger than one yarrow plant. Photos courtesy of Chris Herron.



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month 14. I can do that, but it'll fail. I would prefer two spring seasons in order to kill the weeds."

Herron said at the March meeting they were given a handout about CRP. At the bottom of the page, he noticed a second seeding window, March through May. Turns out there is a second seeding window, but only for areas with 16 inches of rain (Franklin County gets less than 12 inches of rain on average).

"You know what that means to me? If they have differ-

ent interpretations, you can seed earlier or later if it rains, why can't you make it earlier or later if it doesn't rain?" he asked. "If they allowed me spring seeding instead of eliminating me from spring seeding because I don't have 16 inches of rain, I could squeeze that seeding in after the second cheatgrass kill in April, and I could seed it in May. And I would beat the 24 month FSA deadline."

For more on the 24-month seeding deadline, see wheatlife.org/crp-seeding-window-narrows/ ■

Right seed, right soil, right conditions

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

The ultimate success of a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract is whether or not the grower meets their contract's stand density and count requirements, and that all starts with planting the seed mix that's right for local conditions.

Ultimately, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is responsible for telling growers what they are required to plant. Those requirements came out of soil surveys mostly done in the early 1920s and 30s, said Todd Harris, part owner of Western Reclamation, a native reclamation and forage seed company that provides CRP seed mixes.

"NRCS has been studying this for years, and so they know the precipitation zone. They know the soil type. They know the likelihood of rains, and when they come. With all that at hand, they then pick the species that are going to go into their mixes," Harris explained. "Basically, NRCS comes up with an applicable mix that fits the precipitation zone and the soil type, and it usually has done that very, very well."

Harris, who has sold CRP seed mixes for 20 years and, prior to that, helped produce the seed, said the seed mixes for Eastern Washington have gradually moved to include more native species. In fact, he said CRP was a driving force in stimulating the native seed industry, as was the need to replant wildfire-stricken rangelands.

The seeds that Harris sells are mainly grown in Eastern Washington under irrigation. He said if you put a native species under irrigation and manage it properly, it's kind of like a native plant on steroids.

"It does not look the same (as a plant grown under dryland conditions). I mean, they have the same botanical characteristics, the same panicle, the same leaf

structure, everything else, but you do raise a big plant in comparison when you have water," he said, adding that growers have to be careful not to give the plants too much water; they are dryland plants, after all. "When you grow native dryland plants on irrigation, you have to manage that, and it takes years to actually understand what works and what doesn't work."

The cost of the seed mix is one of CRP's main input expenses. Many growers say the seed mixes are becoming more expensive overall, but Harris said in his experience, the price has stayed quite consistent, within a \$20 range, with prices in the fall of 2025 falling slightly below 2024's prices. Market demand is the main factor impacting seed prices. In years with heavy wildfire activity or an increase in the CRP cap, seed becomes scarcer and more costly. In addition, certain seed mixes are just more expensive — the higher the number of species and different type of species in the mix, the higher the cost. However, the more plant species present, the higher the environmental benefit (and, potentially, a higher CRP rental rate).

How the seeds are planted can very much impact the overall stand density and variety. For example, a grower may have a seed mix that incorporates some wheatgrass, Snake River wheatgrass, thickspike wheatgrass, and maybe a Basin wildrye, but also has Sherman big bluegrass in it. If the soil is a little bit dry and the grower seeds a little too deep, the Sherman can't emerge from more than a half inch deep, so it would be a lesser percentage on the landscape than the grower's wheat grasses.

"I've seen other growers who seed on the very surface. They get beautiful stands of Sherman, but because the larger seed didn't have good seed to soil contact, they have lesser percentage of those larger seeded species," Harris explained. "It's all about seed bed preparation." ■

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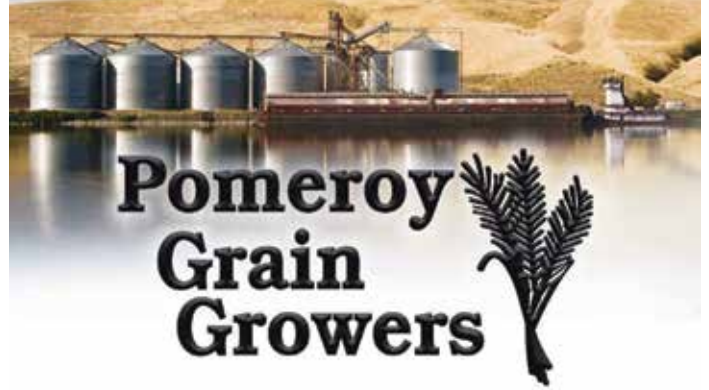
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FSA's Bell responds to grower CRP concerns

Wheat Life reached out to Patrick Bell, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) state executive director, to ask him about growers' concerns with the Conservation Reserve Program. These are the written answers Bell provided.

As rental rates continue to decrease in Eastern Washington, CRP is becoming less attractive to growers. What factors are causing rental rates to decrease, and is there anything the state FSA can do about it?

FSA periodically reviews and updates CRP soil rental rates to ensure that CRP payment rates are set at an amount that encourages enrollment of eligible land but does not adversely impact the cropland rental market.



Patrick Bell
Washington State
Executive Director, Farm
Service Agency

The rate process is informed by National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) cash-rent survey data. If this data is not available, provisional rates are established using the six closest counties with available NASS rates. The FSA state committees can provide alternative rates for review and approval if supporting justification can be provided. We actively look at these rates and make supported justifications

with valuable input received from our local county committees and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) partners. It is important to note that market dynamics — crop prices, input costs, and land demand — also influence cash-rent market trends, which feed into CRP soil rental rate calculations.

Overall, the single most important thing individual producers can do to ensure soil rental rates are accurate is to complete their annual NASS surveys and encourage neighboring producers in their county to do so as well.

For many growers in the less-than-12" rainfall zone, the 24-month seeding limit is not conducive to establishing a successful stand. Why can't the contracts take local conditions into consideration?

Standard CRP contracts require seeding within 12 months, but up to 24 months can be granted if certain criteria are met on a case-by-case basis. These limits were implemented to accelerate stand establishment.

Under USDA national policy 7 CFR 1410.20, producers must comply with contract terms — including establishment timelines — which are uniform nationwide, with

only limited flexibility at state or county level. These rules ensure consistency and fairness across the country, but they don't always reflect the realities of extremely dry environments.

Acknowledging the feedback producers have shared regarding the challenges our stand establishment limits have created in arid parts of Eastern Washington, I am committed to opening further, proactive dialogue with FSA and USDA leadership and to providing constructive, field-based feedback that could support more flexible standards in the future.

Growers in the less-than-12" rainfall zone, specifically in the Horse Heaven Hills, have issues meeting stand count requirements. Again, why can't the CRP contracts take local conditions into consideration when setting requirements?

We understand the challenges low precipitation poses for our state's producers. Producers in the Horse Heaven Hills area, with an average of 6–9" annual precipitation, probably have some of the toughest stand establishment challenges anywhere in the region.

As with seeding timelines, stand count and density requirements are standardized across CRP contracts, as NRCS and FSA apply national technical criteria using USDA's Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). While state-level adaptation is limited unless explicitly provided for in national regulations, I am working with my counterpart here in Washington at the Natural Resources Conservation Service, our sister agency, to identify ways we might be able to tailor the seeding timeline and density issues producers are facing in our especially arid climates.

How are cost share payments calculated? What factors might decrease cost share payments?

CRP cost share reimburses up to 50% of eligible establishment costs, based on either actual expenses or USDA's established allowable costs, whichever is lower.

If actual costs come in higher than the cost share maximum allowable amount for that practice or component, the reimbursement cannot exceed 50% of the allowable cost, not the producer's full cost.

WAWG supports making CRP a more regional program, rather than a one-size-fits-all program. Where does that effort begin, and how can WAWG members help?

One of the most helpful things WAWG and its members can provide is local data and examples, as Chris Herron

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and others have done. In my view, this only strengthens WAWG's case, whether it be in farm bill advocacy, engaging with elected officials, or making proposals for policy flexibilities to FSA at the state and national levels.

You recently met with growers to discuss CRP. What did you take away from that meeting?

What stood out most was the willingness of producers to speak candidly about where CRP works well for them, and where the program may not be meeting their needs. While providing feedback and expressing concerns, they also offered practical ideas for program improvement. I left the meeting encouraged that we can make progress, by working together to address some of the thornier issues that have crept up in some regions of the state.

Serving as the FSA state executive director, I think it's fundamental in this role that I make producers' concerns, my concerns. That means listening, learning, and going to work to get results on their behalf. Probably my biggest single takeaway is that producers are passionate about the program. I heard a lot of proposals on ways to improve it by trying to tailor it to local needs to the extent it can be.

As I mentioned previously, I am actively working with NRCS leadership to identify ways we can collaborate on improvements to our service delivery for producers who sign up for CRP, as well as proactively explore, in consultation with national office leadership, opportunities for policy flexibilities to address local concerns.

I do want to also encourage continued producer engagement, through the grassroots county committee process, in regional producer meetings, and during CRP sign-ups,

to ensure FSA remains responsive and informed to local needs and concerns.

Anything else you'd like to add about CRP?

For 40 years, CRP has been USDA's flagship conservation program, and we want to keep it that way for another 40 years. Many producers right here in Washington state helped lead the charge to establish the program. I'm encouraged producers are now focused on ways to further improve the program, and I am also encouraged by the depth of knowledge and experience we have at our disposal, from producers, our state FSA team, and our partners at NRCS.

For my part, I'm committed to continuing to collaborate with NRCS, WAWG, and our national FSA office to explore strategies that will produce results. ■

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Glenn Leitz farm gift benefits the future of NW agriculture

In life, Glenn Leitz eagerly shared his passion for agriculture, discovery, and history. Following his wishes, part of the Fairfield, Washington, farmer's acreage is now a Land Legacy farm for Washington State University, helping benefit future generations of Washington grain growers.

Born in 1930 to a pioneer farm family, Leitz was a WSU alumnus, veteran, history buff, and ardent supporter of research-informed farming. A founding member of the Land Legacy Council—a group of farmers that guide the use of roughly a dozen properties funding research and education at WSU—he is the first member to leave his land to the university.

“Glenn was ahead of the curve,” said Joe Schmitz, a Palouse grower and retired tenant who produced crops on Leitz's WSU-donated land. “He tried to take care of his ground the best that he could.”

Since Leitz's passing at age 92 in 2023, about 400 acres of northern Palouse farmland now support research into soil health and conservation farming.

“Glenn was a colleague and friend,” said Rich Koenig, professor of crop and soil sciences and an ex-officio member of the Land Legacy Council. “Salt of the earth. He loved farming and agriculture.”

A donor to the department for many years, Leitz annually sent a check with simple instructions: ‘Do something with this money to advance wheat breeding and precision agriculture.’

“He was always dedicated to WSU,” said Schmitz, whose late father, Albert, was a good friend of Leitz's. Both grew up on nearby farms and then roomed together at then-Washington State College in the late 1940s.

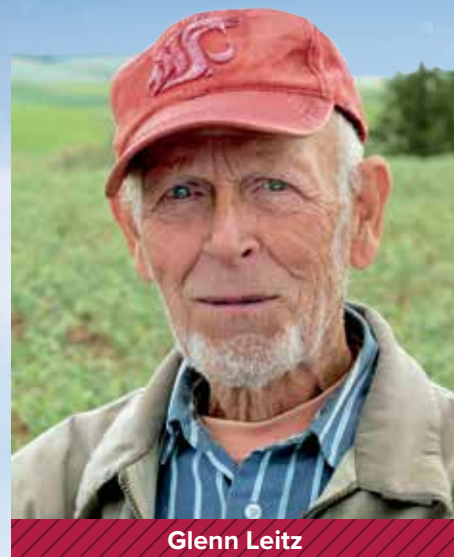
As salutatorian from his Fairfield High School class, Leitz was offered a fully paid semester at the state college. He graduated with a degree in general agriculture in 1952, then briefly attended graduate school at Washington State before being drafted into the U.S. Army. Following his army stint, he returned to the family farm for the rest of his career.

As a student, and later as a farmer, Leitz met and was inspired by Orville Vogel, famed Pullman-based wheat breeder, whose mid-century work in dwarf varieties helped launch a world food revolution.

“Glenn would talk about Vogel and what he did for wheat growers in Washington,” Koenig said. “He gifted his farm because of the work of Vogel and the impact that he had on Washington agriculture.”

Another connection was Leitz's friend and fellow farmer Lorenz Bohrsen, who donated his 1,014 acres of farmland to WSU in 1991. That farm funds wheat breeding and genetics work today.

Leitz also remembered lessons from WSC advisors that college is an opportunity not everyone receives; students should appreciate education and remember to give back.



Glenn Leitz

“Glenn really wanted to continue that legacy of support for wheat breeding, genetics, and all that our scientists do for Eastern Washington farmers,” Koenig said.

Remembering the past, protecting the future

In retirement, Leitz's inquiring mind thrilled to history. He played a leading role in preservation of the one-room Prairie View School in Waverly, Washington, and wrote three books on the history of Palouse farm communities, geology, and pioneer life.

Archaeological finds, great floods, and Native American history deeply interested him. Tour groups tapped him to lead vanloads of visitors through historical



WSU LAND

and geological landscapes, where Leitz would point out where mammoth fossils were found.

“Every intersection, Glenn knew the history of everything that was there or had been there,” Koenig said.

In 2014, Leitz created his namesake Glenn Leitz Soil and Conservation Farming Endowment at WSU. The fund reflects his interest in what might be described today as sustainable farming.

Joe Schmitz remembers touring Leitz’s farm, the older farmer pointing out his good soil, proper drainage, and erosion-preventing improvements. Leitz carefully planted trees on hilltops, grassed unproductive spots, and put in ponds to encourage wildlife.

“It’s good-producing ground,” said Dan Schmitz, Joe’s son, who is continuing the family tradition as the current tenant on Leitz’s WSU acreage.

“Glenn was very knowledgeable about farming,” Dan Schmitz said. “He was a good friend to talk to. He’d get on the tractor and give us great history lessons on how they did things back in the old days.”

Leitz always appreciated how his tenants cared for the land and worked to improve it, Dan added.

“Glenn lived through some of the worst erosion and saw the transition to conservation farming on the Palouse,” Koenig said. Leitz put new ideas into practice, and as he retired from farming, donated equipment to WSU research farms.

Funding from the Leitz endowment today directly support WSU research into practices that store water, enrich soil, and reduce erosion. The latest beneficiary is WSU’s Lind Dryland Research Station, where endowment funds purchased a much-needed equipment trailer.

“This mobility is essential for us to do farmer-focused experiments,” said Surendra Singh, Lind Station Director. “By allowing us to bring research tools to growers’ fields, the fund strengthens our collaboration with producers and expands the practical impact of our work.”


Farm-based experiments led from Lind help scientists understand soil health and improve dryland agronomy practices. To Singh, they’re a true reflection of WSU’s land-grant mission.

“We are deeply grateful for the generosity and vision of the Leitz Fund,” he said.

Koenig, who often reached out to donors in his council role, remembers regularly checking in with Leitz over breakfast at The Harvester in Spangle.

“Whenever I asked to meet, his answer was simply ‘When?’” Koenig said. “He was always interested in learning what his resources were being used for; in what the breeders were doing, the history of our work, and the impact.”

‘Do good things,’ Leitz would tell the scientist.

“He wanted his gift to do good things,” Koenig said. 

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Dan Schmitz, current tenant of the Glenn Leitz Land Legacy farm, and his wife Carissa continue the family tradition of farming on the approximately 400-acre property.

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CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



Education funding casts wide net

By Kevin Klein
Chairman, Washington Grain Commission

One of our key goals as a commission is to educate about the importance of small grain production in Washington. To me, the education

portion of the Washington Grain Commission's (WGC) budget has always been a challenge. As we educate, we ensure that Washington producers are seen as trusted leaders and critical to our food systems, communities, and economy. The challenge comes when determining where commission funds are best spent.

Determining which educational programs to fund involves deciding which programs will have the widest, most effective reach, and that can be difficult to track. At our last board meeting, the commission received an update report from Kara Kaelber, district manager of the Franklin Conservation District, on Wheat Week, a program she has been heading up for the past 19 years. The presentation was encouraging, and I was very impressed by the number of fourth and fifth-grade students that this program reaches each year. Some of the current teachers welcoming Wheat Week into their classroom actually went through the program when they were in school!

The program has flourished and expanded over the years under Kara's thoughtful guidance and is envied by

neighboring states and other commodities. This innovative program has taken time, persistence, and financial investment from the commission over many years to get where it is today. I want to offer my genuine thanks to all the leaders, teachers, and Wheat Week employees involved in making this outreach and education possible. I will continue to be a strong advocate for Wheat Week funding.

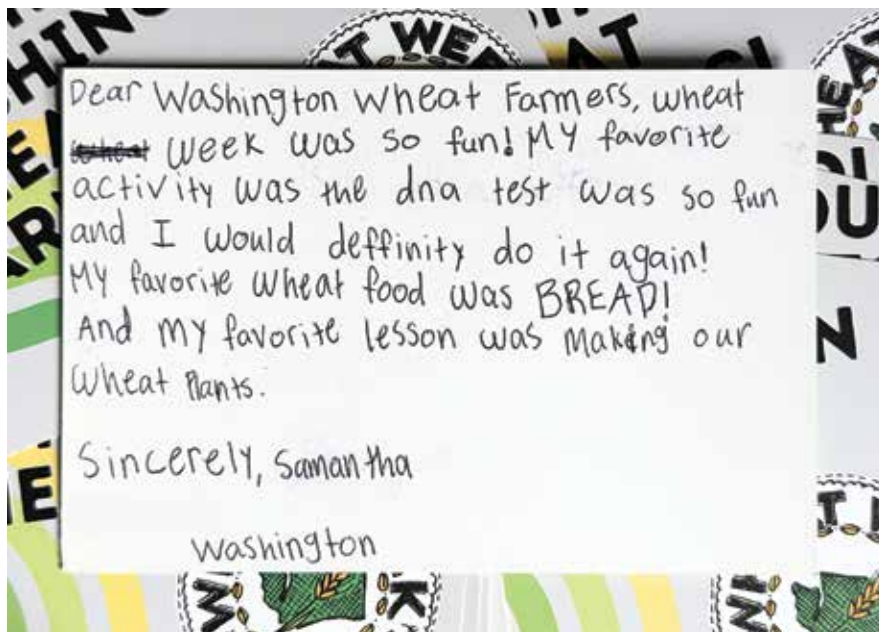
Another area of commission-backed education is through the Wheat Foundation. The Wheat Foundation has taken time to invest in more social media outreach to consumers, working hard to connect nonfarm families to Washington's wheat world.

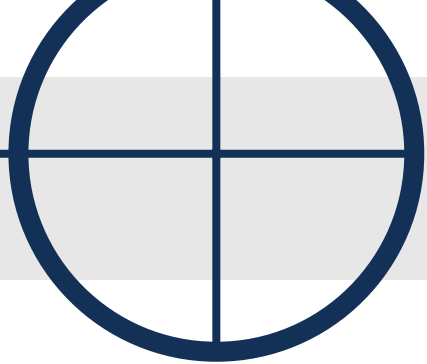
KR Strategies also plays a critical role in the commission's educational outreach. Utilized by both the Wheat Foundation and Washington Grown, KR Strategies helps create high-quality, engaging educational content. Along with the Washington Potato Commission, the Washington Grain Commission is proud to provide funding for the upcoming season of Washington Grown. We are excited to see more wheat and small grains coverage in the coming year!

WGC also lends and supports speakers at the Spokane Ag Show, the annual wheat growers convention, and other educational programs hosted by the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG). We host a Portland Grower Tour each year where we take a group of Washington growers to Portland and show them where Washington wheat ends up, both as an export and as an end product.

The last educational outreach point I'll bring up is this — this very article. *Wheat Life* is an integral part of our education budget. WAWG takes on the responsibility of planning, organizing, and publishing the majority of the magazine. The WGC has a designated section that we try to keep pertinent and informative. This key touch point with our community helps us stay in contact and share important information about small grains in Washington.

As a commission, we are committed to frequently analyzing and reevaluating where our education dollars are going so we can continue to best serve the growers we represent. ■





PNW continues to focus on quality

Eight new varieties join 2026 wheat quality rankings

The Washington Grain Commission is pleased to provide the 2026 wheat quality rankings for the Pacific Northwest (PNW). Considering about 80% of PNW wheat production is exported each year, producing a high-quality crop that meets customer demands is critical to maintaining export markets.

The Preferred Wheat Varieties Brochure ranks Eastern Washington, Oregon, and Northern Idaho wheat varieties using not just one, but six components to evaluate end-use quality. Washington was the first state in the U.S. to rank varieties for quality, with Oregon and Idaho joining the effort soon after. Wheat growers are encouraged to reference these rankings when deciding between varieties.

End-use quality determinations were based on results from grain, milling, and product quality tests. The most desirable ranking characterizes varieties that have high test weights, appropriate protein content (kernel properties), and excellent milling and end-use properties. Desirable-ranked varieties range from good to very good kernel, milling, and end-use qualities. Acceptable varieties have qualities ranging from acceptable to good and may contain potential minor flaws, but are acceptable in international trade.

Of the components used in evaluating quality, 10% of the score is assigned to a variety's test weight and protein, while milling attributes receive 30% of the focus. The largest consideration is end-use functionality (baking performance), where 60% of a variety's score is assigned. The scores are reviewed yearly as new data becomes available and are subject to change.

There are eight new entries to the Preferred Wheat Varieties Brochure for 2026. The new entries for soft white winter wheat include LCS Scorpion AX as Most

Desirable, and LCS Hydra AX, LCS Kraken AX, and LCS Reaper AX as Desirable. There was one new entry for hard red winter wheat: LCS Eclipse AX as Acceptable. There was also one new entry for soft white spring wheat: Soda as Most Desirable. The two new entries for hard red spring wheat, WB9623 and CP3530, also came in as Most Desirable. Most of the new entries are at the Desirable and Most Desirable levels, so we continue to hold steady with the high-quality varieties in the PNW that our customers expect and appreciate.

These rankings are based on the results of the genotype and environment study (G&E) quality testing conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Western Wheat Quality Laboratory, the Washington State University Wheat Quality Program, the University of Idaho Wheat Quality Laboratory, and the Oregon State University Cereal Quality Laboratory, including relevant breeding nurseries.

The quality scores presented here reflect a minimum of three years of data in the G&E Study, using a reference variety for each class. Therefore, varieties may be in commercial production before they are included in the list. The list is reviewed annually and includes the top varieties currently in production. Varieties not listed have not been tested or have less than three years of data. For complete results, please visit wwql.wsu.edu.

All classes have shown dramatic improvements in quality since the G&E study first began gathering data in 1997. The Preferred Wheat Varieties Brochure is provided courtesy of the Washington Grain Commission, the Oregon Wheat Commission, and the Idaho Wheat Commission. ■

Alecia Kiszonas, a research biologist with the USDA's Agricultural Research Service, contributed to this article.

2026 Quality Rankings

Varieties are listed by statistical quality rankings by class. When making a decision between varieties with similar agronomic characteristics and grain yield potential, choose the variety with the higher quality ranking. This will help to increase the overall quality and desirability of Pacific Northwest (PNW) wheat.

Most Desirable (MD)—These varieties generally have high test weights, appropriate protein content (kernel properties), and excellent milling and end-use properties.

Desirable (D)—The kernel, milling, and end-use qualities of these varieties range from good to very good. The quality attributes of these varieties are desirable in international trade.

Acceptable (A)—The kernel, milling, and end-use qualities of these varieties range from acceptable to good. Individual varieties may possess minor flaws. The quality attributes of these varieties are acceptable in international trade.

Least Desirable (LD)—These varieties have displayed low quality characteristics for this class of wheat. The intrinsic quality of PNW wheat will be improved if these varieties are not planted.

Soft White Spring

Soda	WSU	MD
Tekoa	WSU	MD
Bush	WSU	MD
Diva	WSU	MD
WB6341	WB	MD
Butch CL+	WSU	MD
Louise	WSU	MD
UI Cookie	UI	MD
Alturas	UI	MD
AP Mondovi CL2	AP/SY	MD
Ryan	WSU	MD
Seahawk	WSU	MD
WB6121	WB	D
TMC Lochaven	TMC	D
WB6211CLP	WB	A

Hard White Spring

UI Platinum	UI	MD
WB-Hartline	WB	D
Dayn	WSU	D

Hard White Winter

UI Silver	UI	MD
Earl	WSU	A

Soft White Winter

Sockeye CL+	WSU	MD
Bobtail	OSU	MD
LCS Shine	LCS	MD
UI Vixen	UI	MD
LCS ScorpionAX	LCS	MD
Nixon	OSU	MD
Gale	OSU	MD
Nimbus	OSU	MD
Nova AX	WSU	MD
WB1621	WB	MD
VI Gem	LCS/UI	MD
AP Exceed	AP/SY	MD
Jameson	WSU	MD
LCS Jefe	LCS	D
Piranha CL+	WSU	D
WB1720	WB	D
VI Encore CL+	LCS/UI	D
AP Olympia	AP/SY	D
Rydrych MZ	WSU	D
OR2X2 CLP	OSU	D
VI Presto CL+	LCS/UI	D
LCS Hydra AX	LCS	D
LCS Kraken AX	LCS	D
TMC M-Pire	TMC	D
SY Ovation	AP/SY	D
UI Magic CL+	UI	D
LCS Reaper AX	LCS	D
Appleby CL+	OSU	D
Stingray CL+	WSU	D
VI Voodoo CL+	LCS/UI	D
WB1922	WB	D
SY Assure	AP/SY	D
GS Bounty	GS	D
LCS Blackjack	LCS	D
Norwest Duet	OSU/LCS	D
TMC M-Press	TMC	D
Mallory CL+	OSU	D
YSC-93	YSC	D
Rollie	WSU	D
Inspire	WSU	D
Stephens	OSU	D
LCS Hulk	LCS	A
SY Dayton	AP/SY	A
AP Iliad	AP/SY	A
LCS Artdeco	LCS	A
Norwest Tandem	OSU/LCS	A
Curiosity CL+	WSU	A
Rosalyn	OSU	A
LCS Kamiak	LCS	A

Winter Club

Cameo	ARS	MD
Castella	ARS	MD
ARS Crescent	ARS	MD
Cara	ARS	MD
Pritchett	ARS	D
Bruehl	WSU	D

Hard Red Winter

LCS Missile	LCS	MD
Guardian	PG	MD
Scorpio	WSU	MD
Gemini	WSU	MD
Sequoia	WSU	D
WB4311	WB	D
SY Touchstone	AP/SY	D
Keldin	WB	D
LCS Jet	LCS	A
LCS Eclipse AX	LCS	A
WB4303	WB	A
WB4623CLP	WB	A
WB4510CLP	WB	A
LCS Evina	LCS	A
LCS Rocket	LCS	A
WB4394	WB	A
LCS Helix AX	LCS	A
Battle AX	Montech	A
LCS Blackbird	LCS	LD

Hard Red Spring

Jefferson	UI	MD
Hale	WSU	MD
SY605 CL	AP/SY	MD
Net CL+	WSU	MD
SY Selway	AP/SY	MD
Glee	WSU	MD
WB9623	WB	MD
CP3530	CP	MD
SY Coho	AP/SY	MD
Alum	WSU	MD
SY Gunsight	AP/SY	MD
Chet	WSU	MD
AP Renegade	AP/SY	D
Kelse	WSU	D
WB9303	WB	D
WB9668	WB	D
WB9662	WB	LD

Spring Club

Roger	WSU	MD
Melba	WSU	MD
JD	WSU	MD
Hedge CL+	WSU	MD

Abbreviations

AP/SY: AgriPro/Syngenta
 ARS: Agricultural Research Service
 CP: Croplan
 GS: GeneShifters
 LCS: Limagrain Cereal Seeds
 OSU: Oregon State University
 PG: PlainsGold
 TMC: The McGregor Company
 UI: University of Idaho
 WB: WestBred/Bayer Crop Sciences
 WSU: Washington State University

* Hard white wheats are scored for export quality requirements such as bread quality and potential noodle quality.

** Analysis parameters for dough mixing strength have been modified to better reflect suitability in commercial bakeries. Quality designations of the strongest and weakest mixing lines have changed because of this.

Winter wheat trial results

2025 CROP HAD A LOT TO CONTEND WITH, FROM SNOW MOLD TO HOT, DRY JULY



Kimberly Garland-Campbell
*Research Geneticist and Club
 Wheat Breeder, USDA-ARS,
 Washington State University*

We are well into the 2026 winter wheat season. After an unusually warm winter, the winter wheat is up to two weeks early in some locations. The mild winter increased the incidence of stripe rust,

Hessian fly, wheat mite, and wheat soil-borne mosaic virus. Even with seven months behind us, a lot can still happen to the winter wheat crop during the 10-month growing season.

This was evident in the results of the 2025 Washington State University (WSU) Extension winter wheat trials. Dry weather during planting in the fall of 2024 impacted emergence at Lind and Almira. Snow mold left us little to look at in Douglas County. A sudden cold snap in February 2025 severely damaged some varieties, especially at Harrington, Ritzville, and Walla Walla. The hot, dry July terminated grain fill at Pullman; grain

was shriveled, with low test weight and high protein at harvest. High input costs and low prices continued to plague production.

Things could have been worse, however, as winter wheat acreage increased slightly over 2024, and the state's average yield was close to normal at 68 bushels per acre (compared to 70 bushels per acre in 2024). Much of the steady production is due to farmers' skills. Another major factor is the quality of the wheat varieties. The WSU Extension wheat trials evaluate current and potential new varieties from all major breeding entities in both the public and private sectors. The mission of the variety trials is to generate and report high-quality, accurate data on variety performance, representing the major wheat-growing regions of Washington.

The total winter wheat trial effort is large, including over 35 separate yield trials throughout Eastern and Central Washington. The soft winter wheat varieties and experimental lines were divided into low (less-than-16 inches) and high (greater-than-16 inches) annual rainfall zones. Entries were grown in their most representative zones. The CLOAX trial consisted of soft winter wheat carrying Clearfield or CoAXium herbicide resistance.



Table 1: 2025 WSU Extension Soft White Winter Wheat Performance, Less-Than-16" Zone

Variety (Club)	Yield bu/ac	Grain Protein %	Test Weight lbs/bu
Castella	72	10.4	60.0
WA8438	70	11.3	59.3
WB1922	70	11.4	61.5
LWW22-6387	70	9.9	59.6
Rollie	69	10.0	62.0
LWW21-1436	69	10.6	60.4
WA8404	68	11.3	59.2
ARS14X1114RS-3CBW	67	10.3	60.1
LWW22-6372	67	10.8	58.9
Norwest Tandem	67	10.5	60.4
ARS15X1496-7-2CBW	66	10.6	59.2
Norwest Duet	66	11.1	60.2
Pritchett	66	10.7	60.0
LCS Jefe	65	9.8	60.2
16-478001	65	10.7	60.4
WB1720	65	11.0	61.1
TMC M-Press	65	10.6	60.8
Jameson	64	11.3	60.5
WA8442	64	11.5	59.9
16-007057A	63	11.5	60.0
WA8417	63	11.7	60.1
WB1621	63	10.6	61.3
LWW22-1105	63	10.9	60.1
WA8439	63	10.8	58.6
LCS Hulk	62	11.0	60.5
TMC M-Pire	62	10.9	61.1
Nimbus	62	10.9	60.3
17-995133B	61	10.7	60.8
LCS Shine	60	10.2	59.5
Devote	60	11.3	62.3
GSW22-21	59	12.0	60.1
OR5180072	56	11.3	59.0
OR2180149	56	10.6	59.3
17-355144A	56	10.8	61.5
OR2180350	54	11.0	59.4
LCS Kamiak	53	11.9	60.0
Mean	64	10.9	60.2
LSD (0.05)	4	0.4	0.5

Locations: Almira, Anatone, Eureka, Harrington, Horse Heaven, Lind, Reardan, Ritzville.

For consistent fertility management, the hard winter wheat trials include hard red, hard white, and herbicide-resistant hard wheat varieties. Data from the 2025 soft white and CLOAX trials are summarized by location within the low (less-than-16 inches) and high (greater-than-16 inches) rainfall zones. The hard wheat trials are summarized across all rainfall zones because the high rainfall zone included only two locations. Only entries grown at all locations within a rainfall zone were in-

Table 2: 2025 WSU Extension Soft White Winter Wheat Performance, Greater-Than-16" Zone

Variety (Club)	Yield bu/ac	Grain Protein %	Test Weight lbs/bu
LCS Jefe	130	9.9	61.0
ARS14X1114RS-1CBW	129	11.1	60.3
Norwest Tandem	128	10.6	60.7
WA8404	127	11.1	59.8
SY Dayton	126	10.4	60.8
WA8441	126	10.9	60.6
Norwest Duet	126	10.8	61.1
WA8448	125	10.5	59.6
LWW20-2867	125	10.7	60.1
16-007057A	124	11.6	60.7
LCS Shine	124	10.3	60.2
LCS Blackjack	124	10.8	58.0
LWW22-2864	124	10.9	60.5
LCS Kamiak	123	11.9	61.4
AP Exceed	123	10.9	61.3
WB1922	122	11.3	61.8
Rydrych MZ	122	11.3	62.1
LCS Artdeco	122	10.5	59.3
GSW22-21	122	11.4	60.6
TMC M-Press	122	10.8	60.7
ARS16DH44-17CAW	122	11.2	60.2
LCS Mazama	122	11.0	61.5
OR2180149	121	10.3	59.9
AP Olympia	121	10.9	62.0
GS Bounty	121	11.4	60.7
Nimbus	121	11.4	60.6
Inspire	121	11.1	59.0
Castella	121	10.9	60.6
VI Gem	120	10.7	61.5
PN18MS604566	120	10.8	60.1
TMC M-Pire	118	11.0	60.8
WB1621	118	10.8	62.1
14-211120A	118	11.1	60.1
Cameo	117	11.8	59.9
17-995133B	117	10.9	61.8
LCS Hulk	117	11.2	61.2
WA8419	116	10.5	61.8
OR2170559	114	11.2	61.5
Mean	122	10.9	60.7
LSD (0.05)	6	0.3	0.5

Locations: Fairfield, Farmington, Mayview, Pullman, St. John, Walla Walla.

cluded in the summary tables. Complete data is available at the Washington State University Small Grains Variety Testing website (smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety).

In the soft white winter wheat trials for the low (less-than-16 inches) rainfall zone, the top performers included the club wheat, Castella, and the soft white wheat, Rollie, with several others ranked above average (Table 1). Several lines performed well in the high (greater-

Table 3: 2025 WSU Extension Herbicide Resistant Soft White Winter Wheat Performance, Less-Than-16" Zone

Variety (Club)	Yield bu/ac	Grain Protein %	Test Weight lbs/bu
Sockeye CL+	71	10.3	60.1
VI Encore CL+	63	11.1	59.3
ARS18X376-16CBW CL+	63	10.9	59.5
LWWC21-5070 CL+	62	10.8	59.5
LWWC21-0317 CL+	60	11.8	59.1
ARS18X371-34CBW CL+	59	10.8	59.5
WA8421 CL+	59	11.1	61.4
Mallory CL+	57	10.9	58.7
VI Presto CL+	56	11.7	61.3
UIIL 19-713070A CL+	56	11.7	62.2
LWHA22-0008 AX	66	10.9	60.6
LCS Hydra AX	64	10.6	61.7
LWHA21-5188 AX	63	10.7	59.4
Nova AX	62	10.6	59.7
LCS Kraken AX	62	10.7	60.6
WA8420 AX	61	11.0	60.1
LWWA22-H22 AX	61	10.6	60.0
WA8443 AX	60	10.3	57.9
LCS Scorpion AX	56	10.6	60.2
LCS Reaper II AX	54	11.4	61.7
OR3230026 AX	53	10.5	60.1
Mean	60	11	60
LSD (0.05)	4	0.3	0.7

Locations: Almira, Anatone, Eureka, Harrington, Horse Heaven, Lind, Reardan, Ritzville.



Table 4: 2025 WSU Extension Herbicide Resistant Soft White Winter Wheat Performance, Greater-Than-16" Zone

Variety (Club)	Yield bu/ac	Grain Protein %	Test Weight lbs/bu
Sockeye CL+	133	10.4	61.4
LWWC21-5070 CL+	129	11.0	60.6
WA8446 CL+	129	11.1	60.9
VI Voodoo CL+	128	11.2	60.4
Piranha CL+	127	11.1	61.5
WA8445 CL+	124	10.6	60.0
VI Encore CL+	124	11.2	61.7
ARS18X371-34CBW CL+	124	11.3	60.7
Stingray CL+	123	11.3	60.8
Mallory CL+	119	11.1	60.5
ARS18X371-34CBW CL+	118	11.5	61.3
Resilience CL+	117	11.4	61.8
UIIL 19-713070A CL+	114	12.2	63.2
LWHA21-5188 AX	132	11.2	60.9
LWHA22-0008 AX	129	11.2	60.9
WA8420 AX	126	11.0	61.5
WA8444 AX	124	10.9	62.5
LWWA22-S22 AX	123	11.0	61.1
LCS Scorpion AX	122	10.6	61.7
OR3230026 AX	117	10.6	61.0
Nova AX	117	10.7	61.0
LCS Reaper II AX	113	11.8	62.8
LCS Dagger AX	107	11.5	63.1
Mean	122.6	11.1	61.4
LSD (0.05)	5.5	0.3	0.4

Locations: Fairfield, Farmington, Mayview, Pullman, St. John, Walla Walla.

Table 5: 2025 WSU Extension Hard Red Winter Wheat Performance, Over All Locations

Variety (Club)	Yield bu/ac	Grain Protein %	Test Weight lbs/bu
Scorpio	83	12.1	60.9
LCS Missile	80	11.7	61.2
LCS Jet	79	12.0	60.4
LCS Eclipse AX	79	11.2	58.9
WB4640	78	12.6	63.0
WA8401	78	11.2	61.1
WA8399	77	11.3	61.2
Keldin	77	12.2	62.5
LWH21-0760	76	12.2	62.2
CO19D087R	72	11.6	62.3
WB4510CLP	70	11.8	64.2
LCS Top Gun	70	11.9	61.3
GSHRS	64	13.0	60.8
AAC Vortex	61	12.9	62.2
Mean	75	12.0	61.6
LSD (0.05)	4	0.3	0.5

Locations: Almira, Anatone, Eureka, Horse Heaven, Lind, Moses Lake, Pullman, Reardan, Ritzville, Walla Walla.

than-16 inches) rainfall zone, including LCS Jefe, Norwest Tandem, SY Dayton, Norwest Duet, LCS Shine, and LCS Blackjack (Table 2). Average grain yields were 64 bushels per acre in the low rainfall trials, but almost double at 122 bushels per acre in the high rainfall trials. The averages of protein and test weight were similar across the rainfall zones.

Sockeye CL+ had the best yield among the Clearfield lines in the low-rainfall CLOAX trials (Table 3). A group of lines with the CoAXium trait, LCS Hydra AX, Nova AX, and LCS Kraken AX, performed similarly. In the high rainfall zone, Sockeye CL+, VI Voodoo CL+, and Piranha CL+ were the best Clearfield lines, and LCS Scorpion AX and Nova AX were best in the high rainfall zones (Table 4). Yields of the CoAXium lines were slightly lower than those of the soft white wheat and Clearfield lines, but several experimental entries are doing well.

As with soft white wheat, the average yields of the high rainfall CLOAX trials were double that of the low rainfall trials. The average test weight of the CLOAX lines was slightly low in the low rainfall trials, while the average protein was slightly high in the high rainfall trials.

The top performers across the hard wheat nurseries included Scorpio, LCS Missile, LCS Jet, and LCS Eclipse AX (Table 5). Scorpio and LCS Jet had slightly low test weights, while the protein of LCS Missile and LCS Eclipse was slightly low. The average yield was better than the state average yield at 75 bushels per acre, protein averaged 12%, and test weight averaged 61.6. Several of the new experimental lines had competitive grain

yields in all trials, so stay tuned for new releases (Tables 1-5).

The 2026 winter wheat trials were planted in the fall of 2025. The variety testing team has visited all sites, and most look good, though some trials are affected by variable emergence due to dry soils at planting. All have been sprayed with fungicide to control stripe rust.

Staffing for the WSU variety testing program is changing in 2026. The 2026 trials are currently managed by Mike Pumphrey and Kim Garland Campbell until a new project leader is hired. WSU technicians Patricia DeMacon, Vadim Jitkov, and Alex Brown manage the day-to-day activities. Our Dryland Extension Team, Aaron Esser, Morgan Menaker, and Rachel Wieme developed the summer field day and plot tour schedule (see page 48 for schedule). We are grateful for the support of the Washington Grain Commission, the Variety Trial Advisory Committee, and all the farmers who use the data.

Full results from the 2025 winter wheat trials are posted on the WSU Small Grains website at smallgrains.wsu.edu. This site will take you to location maps and GPS coordinates for all 2026 trials, as well as current and archived data. You can also join the Variety Trial PrelimData listserv to receive yield data within a week of harvest.

Contact the dryland extension team if you have questions about tours or field days. All other questions about the trials can be submitted through the variety testing website. Let's hope the next five months remain kind to the 2025 wheat crop. ■





2026 PNW Crop Tour Schedule

WSU Variety Testing Program

The 2026 crop tour season will begin soon and provides opportunities to view field trials and interact with WSU personnel. The list below provides an outline of the time and location of each tour. Please check with the contact listed prior to the tour to verify the time, location, and agenda or reach out to your local county wheat growers association or other co-sponsor. Location maps for the WSU Extension Cereal Variety Trials are available online at <https://smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/>.

Thank you to the Washington Grain Commission for funding to support the trials and tours as well as the county wheat growers associations and co-sponsors for programs and meals associated with the field days. Finally, a big thank you to all the grower cooperators for their time and resources to host the variety trials. We truly appreciate all the continued support.

-The WSU Cereal Variety Testing Team

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Date	Start Time	Tour	Starting Location	GPS	Contact
4-Jun	8 am	Western Wheat Workers Meeting Field Tour	Holiday Inn Express 1433 West Pine Street, Walla Walla, WA	46°04'03.3"N 118°22'04.6"W	Kim Campbell, 208-310-9876
4-Jun	8 am	Horse Heaven	Horse Heaven Community Hall 37301 County Well Rd, Prosser, WA	46°11'12.2"N 119°34'29.6"W	Mike Pumphrey, 509-592-5234
5-Jun	10 am	Walla Walla* with Western Wheat Workers	VT Winter Wheat Site: 46°06'56.3"N 118°14'14.2"W	46°06'56.3"N 118°14'14.2"W	Rachel Wieme, 320-250-7224
5-Jun	1:30pm	Eureka*	VT Winter Wheat Site: 46°19'31.2"N 118°35'58.0"W	46°19'31.2"N 118°35'58.0"W	Rachel Wieme, 320-250-7224
9-Jun	7:45am	Pendleton, OR (OSU/ARS)	CBARC Station 48037 Tubbs Ranch Rd, Adams, OR 97810	45°43'06.0"N 118°37'31.6"W	Debbie Sutor, 541-278-4405
10-Jun	7:45am	Moro, OR (OSU/ARS)	Sherman Station 66365 Lone Rock Rd, Moro, OR 97039	45°28'56.6"N 120°43'34.3"W	Debbie Sutor, 541-278-4405
10-Jun	7:45 am	U of I Weed Science Field Day	Parker Farm 1025 Plant Science Rd, Moscow, ID 83843	46°43'23.5"N 116°57'32.7"W	Joan Campbell, 208-885-7730
11-Jun	8:30am	Lind Field Day	Lind Research Station 781 E. Experiment Station Road, Lind, WA	47°00'04.3"N 118°34'05.0"W	Samantha Crow, 509-677-3671
12-Jun	10am	Harrington*	VT Winter Site: 47°23'57.6"N 118°24'02.7"W	47°23'57.6"N 118°24'02.7"W	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
TBD	TBD	Douglas County*	VT Winter Site: 47°35'04.2"N 119°37'07.3"W	47°35'04.2"N 119°37'07.3"W	Kim Campbell, 208-310-9876
17-Jun	8:30am	Mayview: Spring Canola	WSU Canola VT Plots: 46°37'04.0"N 117°24'40.7"W	46°37'04.0"N 117°24'40.7"W	Jesse Ford, 509-990-6316
17-Jun	9:30 am	Mayview (WSU/NWGG): Spring and Winter Cereals*	NWGG Spring Wheat Plots: 46°37'05.6"N 117°26'31.7"W	46°32'26.2"N 117°22'24.5"W	Morgan Menaker, 704-989-3752
18-Jun	9am	Dayton	VT Winter Site 46°23'00.6"N 117°51'02.0"W	46°23'00.6"N 117°51'02.0"W	Rachel Wieme, 320-250-7224
18-Jun	7:30am	Fairfield	Harvest Moon Restaurant, 20 S 1 st St Rockford, WA	47°23'27.4"N 117°02'24.0"W	Ken Fuchs, 509-220-0891
22-Jun	8:30	Spillman Farm Field Day*	Spillman Research Farm 1452 Johnson Road Pullman, WA	46°41'44.0"N 117°07'44.4"W	Morgan Menaker, 704-989-3752
TBD	TBD	Almira*	McKay Seed Almira 39355 Sorensen Rd. N, Almira, WA 99103	47°45'46.7"N 118°56'18.9"W	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
23-Jun	8:30am	Wilke Farm Field Day	Wilke Research Farm 39440 State Hwy 2 E, Davenport, WA 99122	47°39'23.1"N 118°07'54.4"W	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
23-Jun	1:30pm	Reardan*	VT Winter Site: 47°41'22.0"N 117°55'34.0"W	47°41'22.0"N 117°55'34.0"W	Aaron Esser, 509-659-3210
25-Jun	8:30am	WSU Potato Field Day	Othello Research Station 1471 W. Cox Rd Othello, WA	46°47'42.7"N 119°02'52.5"W	Mark Pavek, 509-335-6861
3-Jul	10am	Bickleton Spring Wheat	VT Spring Site: 46°01'07.9"N 120°17'17.0"W	46°01'07.9"N 120°17'17.0"W	Mike Pumphrey, 509-592-5234

*Includes Falling Numbers presentation from Dr. Alison Thompson and Dr. Amber Hauvermale

Dates and agendas are subject to change. Please check with event contact or smallgrains.wsu.edu for final schedule



Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication or program information, or reasonable accommodations need to contact the coordination person listed under Contact above at the telephone number listed at least two weeks prior to the event. Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office.

Washington growers plan to plant same as last year

By Jake Liening

Market Development Manager, Washington Grain Commission

According to the Prospective Plantings Report put out by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Washington growers intend to plant 2.3 million acres of wheat in 2026, a number nearly unchanged from last year. Barley acreage is expected to rise slightly this year to 72,000 acres. Nationally, NASS projects record-low wheat acreage of 43.8 million acres, while barley is forecast slightly higher.

Washington wheat acreage overview

Total Wheat: 2.3 million acres, -1.1% year over year, -0.2% vs. 5-year average (2.3 million acres). Washington accounts for 5.3% of U.S. prospective wheat plantings.

Winter Wheat: 1.85 million acres, 0% year over year, +2.2% vs. 5-year average (1.81 million acres). Washington accounts for 5.7% of U.S. prospective winter wheat plantings.

Spring Wheat: 450,000 acres, -5.3% year over year, -9.1% vs. 5-year average (495,000 acres). Washington accounts for 4.8% of U.S. prospective spring wheat plantings.

National context

U.S. farmers intend to plant 43.8 million acres of wheat in 2026, down 3% from 2025, and, if realized, the lowest all-wheat planted area since records began in 1919.

That total includes:

- 32.4 million acres of winter wheat, down 2% from last year.
- 9.42 million acres of other spring wheat, down 6% from 2025 and the lowest since 1970.

- Of the spring wheat total, 8.78 million acres are expected to be hard red spring.
- Winter wheat acres are made up of about 23.1 million hard red winter, 5.79 million soft red winter, and 3.54 million white winter.

The report also noted that, if realized, California, Nebraska, and Virginia would post record-low wheat planted area, while North Dakota — the nation's largest spring wheat-producing state — is expected to plant 4.7 million acres of spring wheat, down 8% from last year.

Washington barley acreage overview

- Acreage: 72,000 acres, +1.4% year over year, -11.6% vs. 5-year average (79,200 acres).
- Washington accounts for 2.9% of national barley acreage.

National Context

Producers intend to seed 2.35 million acres of barley for the 2026 crop year, up 2% from the previous year. In Montana, the largest barley state, acreage is expected to increase by 3% from last year. Record low acreage is expected in Utah.

Weather

Washington saw a generally warm winter, including early December flooding in western Washington, followed by a prolonged dry stretch and below-normal snowpack, raising concerns about spring and summer water supplies, streamflow, and wildfire risk.

Notably, Washington ranked among the 10 warmest winters on record. Snowpack in parts of the region, including southern Washington, fell to less than 50% of normal by late January. ■



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WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

USDA forecasts lowest wheat acres since 1919



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

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provided its first estimates for U.S. wheat markets in the 2026-27 marketing year back in February at their annual Agricultural Outlook Forum. At that time, they forecast U.S. wheat acres in 2026 would total 45 million, with just over 81% of those acres being harvested (consistent with the historical average of planted to harvested acres). Combining that with a 20-year trend yield, they estimated the U.S. wheat crop would total 1.86 billion bushels this year, down about 6.3% from last year's harvest. In January, prior to USDA's outlook conference, I had estimated total U.S. wheat acres in 2026 would be 43.4 million. Both USDA and my forecasts were made based on USDA's estimates of winter wheat acres planted last fall, but before any data was collected from farmers concerning spring wheat intentions

On March 31, USDA released its Prospective Plantings report, which provides estimates of crop acres for the 2026 harvest based on farmer surveys. For wheat, this includes the earlier estimates of winter wheat planted and producers' expectations (in March) of the number of spring wheat acres they will plant. Based on the surveys, USDA amended its forecast of total wheat acres for 2026 to 43.8 million, about halfway between my January forecast and USDA's February forecast. Even though the new USDA forecast is above what I anticipated last January, it still represents the lowest U.S. wheat acres since 1919 (Figure 1).

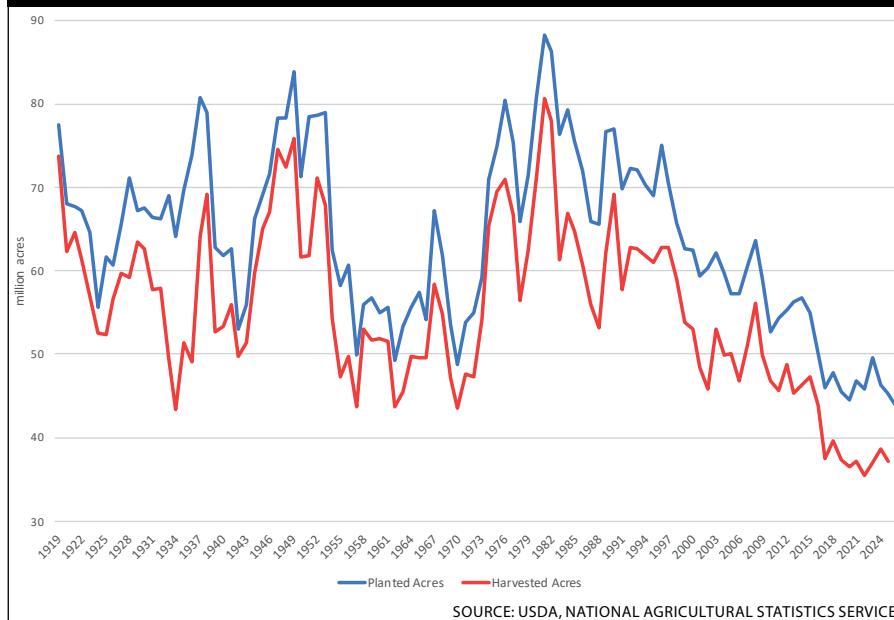
If we take the new planted acres estimate and make the same assumptions concerning harvested acreage percentage and trend yields adopted by USDA last February, we get a total U.S. wheat production estimate of 1.802 billion bushels for 2026, over 9% smaller than last year's wheat harvest, and the smallest crop since 2022.

If U.S. wheat yields match the 20-year trend this year, then wheat yields across all classes of wheat would average 50.8 bushels per acre. This is lower than average yields in both 2024 and 2025. However, for this year, the trend yield and percentage of harvested acres estimates may prove too optimistic.

As of mid-April 2026, five of the largest 10 winter wheat-producing states reported significantly poorer crop conditions this year compared to 2025 (Figure 2). If winter wheat conditions in these states do not improve approaching harvest, we may see an increase in abandoned acres (planted acres not harvested for grain) and yields below the 20-year trend.

In USDA's Crop Progress report issued April 14, Kansas (the largest wheat-producing state) estimated that 32% of its 2026 winter wheat crop ranked in the good and excellent categories. In mid-April 2025, 43% of the Kansas crop was ranked good to excellent. Montana reported 27% of its current wheat crop as good to excellent, compared to 59% a year ago; Oklahoma 10% good to excellent this year, compared to 44% this time last year; Colorado 16% good to excellent compared

Figure 1: U.S. wheat acres



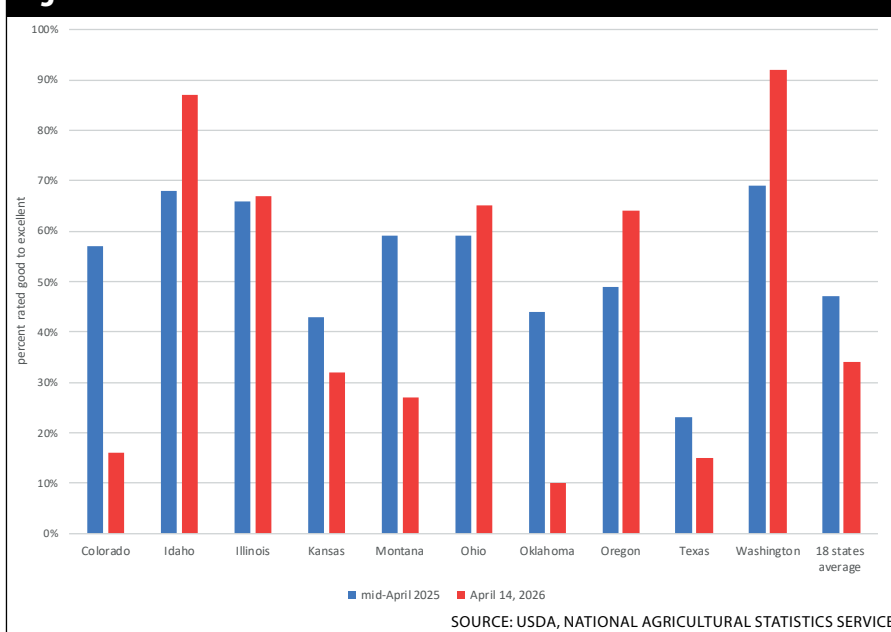
to 57% in 2025; and Texas 15% this year compared to 69% in 2025. Only two states among the top 10 reported significant improvement in crop conditions compared to last year. These were Idaho (86% good to excellent compared to 67% in 2025) and Washington (a whopping 92% good to excellent compared to 69% a year ago).

Combining crop conditions across the 18 states that account for 90% of all winter wheat production, the current wheat crop in aggregate was ranked 34% good to excellent, compared to 47% in 2025. Most of the year-over-year deterioration in wheat conditions is accounted for by hard red winter wheat-producing areas. If conditions in these states do not improve as we move through the growing season, we could see some additional price support coming from supply concerns. If this happens, Washington growers could benefit from both improved prices and above-average yields, given current reported conditions in the Northwest.

One caveat is that early crop condition reports do not always provide accurate measures of final crop yields — a lot can happen over the next couple of months. For producers expecting a positive market reaction from wheat production issues, it will be important to monitor USDA's weekly progress reports to ensure current concerns are not offset by improved conditions later in states with relatively low condition ratings.

The International Grains Council (IGC) published its initial world wheat supply and demand estimates for the next marketing year in mid-March. IGC currently expects world wheat production to total 30.2 billion bushels in 2026-27, down 2.7% from 2025. However, because beginning stocks for 2026-27

Figure 2: U.S. winter wheat conditions



exceed stocks in June 2025, total world wheat supply will only be down about 0.3%. For the U.S., IGC has forecast a slightly higher production figure than implied by the most recent USDA acreage estimates, but they still have the U.S. production down about 6% compared to 2025.

In general, IGC is expecting lower wheat production this year for every major wheat exporter. The largest reduction is expected for Argentina (down almost 27% from their 2025 wheat harvest) and the smallest for Ukraine (down 3.6% year-over-year). In addition, they are forecasting significant increases in wheat production from some major wheat buyers, and this leads to their forecast of lower overall wheat trade in the coming marketing year. North Africa, for example, is projected to increase wheat production this year by over 14% and Turkey by over 17%.

USDA will update its February estimates of U.S. wheat demand for the 2026-27 marketing year, as well as provide its initial world wheat supply and demand estimates, on May 12 in the monthly World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE).

Current expectations for both world and domestic wheat balance sheets suggest some improvement in market fundamentals going into the next marketing year and provides some basis to believe wheat prices next year should be better than the year just ending. However, the balance sheet improvements do not point to price levels experienced three or four years ago unless we continue to see a deterioration in crop prospects domestically (specifically in the hard red winter wheat areas) or among our major export competitors (Argentina, Canada, or Australia). The market is already pricing in production declines for our major competitors, so additional price improvement will likely require production prospects to fall even further. ■

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

Reflections on Olympia Days

LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION WAS HIGH POINT | BY LUKE GOETZ, WASHINGTON WHEAT AMBASSADOR

Getting to experience Olympia Days and everything that it brought forth was an experience that was not only personally eye-opening, but also one that made me all the more proud to come from a community that champions agriculture. It was really rewarding to see how a group of farmers and people with farming backgrounds came together in the name of advocating for Washington wheat. I couldn't help but think it was that image that represents our government to a "T" — ordinary people composing and making up their government, a government by the people for the people.

Whether we were talking about lubricant exemptions, the dams, or rodenticides, I came out of the two days with a greater appreciation for the work that both lobbyists and elected officials do daily.

While I took away a great deal from every interaction that I had on the Capitol campus, whether it be with an elected official or administrator, the experience that I took away the most from was the dinner/social hour reception with legislators on Monday evening. At this point dur-



ing Olympia Days, we had already been in many meetings and had discussed a variety of meaningful topics and issues that affect Washington wheat. Needless to say, I was expecting a time where conversation would be less focused on our issues and instead be more candid conversation. What actually occurred during the reception was the opposite of my preconceived notions, and I actually garnered some of the most meaningful conversations that I had throughout the entirety of Olympia Days. What made the interactions in the reception different from those that were held

on the Capitol campus was instead of meeting with one legislator at a time, there were multiple legislators in the same room that we got to talk to in a short span of time. Something that my mom has always told me is that food brings people together. I kept that in the back of my mind throughout the night, and it proved to be very true.

One of these meaningful conversations was with Rep. Kristine Reeves. While eating our hors d'oeuvres, Rep. Reeves, Isabella (our other wheat ambassador), and I



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talked through the issues from a more personal perspective. Having ties to the Moses Lake area and a farming background, Rep. Reeves understood where we came from and took the time to listen to us intently, ignoring the fact that we were high schoolers or assuming that we didn't know about agricultural issues or care as much as others. We talked about everything from the activities we both are involved in with high school to rodenticides and the need for them in the exporting of our wheat. Our conversation covered a large amount of ground in a way that helped me understand just how important civil discourse is in our republic and governmental systems. Even though on ideological terms we might not have agreed with Rep. Reeves on every issue or every ideological stance, we took the time to understand each other's point of views, we shared a meal, and we laughed together, resulting in one of my favorite interactions of the experience as a whole — an experience that showed me what true commonality looks like.

That conversation with Rep. Reeves was one of many meaningful dialogues that Isabella and I had throughout the reception. Some conversations were more challenging

and pushed our communication skills more than others, but each one was rewarding and helped us gain a better knowledge of our political systems, as well as our own ideological beliefs and why we believe the way we do.

Personally, I have always had a love for politics, political strategy, and our political systems, something that only grew throughout my experience at Olympia Days. But something also changed. Before, I saw much of my beliefs as strictly the right against the wrong, and that political strategy was doing everything to make sure that “the other side” does not succeed. After the conversations that I had through Olympia Days, though, I realized that politics is rather the science of doing your best to convince others with the perspectives that you bring to the table. For me, it is these perspectives, whether it comes from growing up in a rural landscape, a rural family, or a minority population of the state, that make my voice important and worth being heard. I will forever be grateful for Olympia Days and the interactions that I had as an ambassador for teaching me these lessons. I will most certainly take them with me into college and into life, where I will continue to advocate on behalf of agriculture. ■



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These dollars will be used to support candidates that understand what is critical to our industry and the livelihood of our members

Political advocacy is something many of us think we can never get involved in; the Washington Wheat PAC is out to change that.

The Washington Wheat PAC is a nonpartisan political action committee that is dedicated to supporting ag-friendly candidates.

The Washington Wheat PAC pledges to promote and support elected officials from all parts of the state that positively influence agriculture.

Why Support the Washington Wheat PAC?

Washington farmers are losing ground politically! The ability to protect our interests is slowly dwindling. Washington wheat producers need elected officials who know and understand the industry. Without these relationships our ability to remain competitive is at risk. During the legislative session, thousands of bills are introduced; many not favorable to farming. Now is the time for the industry to join together and proactively influence legislation that directly impacts the Washington wheat producer.

Please join our efforts by financially supporting the Washington Wheat PAC. Your contribution will strengthen the network of elected officials who understand the wheat industry's goals and objectives by fighting for what is critical to the livelihood of our members.

Protect your interests by supporting farm-friendly candidates who can make a difference in Olympia.

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THE BOTTOM LINE

Meet the 2030 agricultural CEO

By Dr. David M. Kohl
Professor Emeritus, Virginia Tech

American farms and ranches, which now number under 2 million, are operating in an economic environment characterized by chaotic extremes. This creates both challenges and opportunities requiring a high level of management skill.

Some operations are specialized single enterprises, such as grain, row crops, specialty crops, or large-scale livestock businesses. These businesses are often export-dependent, where lowest global breakeven levels determine sustainable success.

Others are more diversified, with a mix of crops, livestock, and value-added businesses. These operations, often close to consumer trends, tend to generate a positive bottom line regardless of size, tenure, or the complexity of the agricultural business model.

In either case, the owners, managers, and CEOs of today's agricultural

businesses will need skill sets far different from those of previous generations. The "trifecta" or the power of three, will be the game changer, often defining positive outcomes in both business and life.

Consider some sports analogies where the number three plays a pivotal role. Babe Ruth, who wore number three, is arguably the greatest baseball player of all time and even recorded a rare triple play. In football, a three-point field goal can determine a championship. In basketball, Stephen Curry's three-point shot has transformed the game at all levels.

In agriculture, the trifecta, an integrated skill set of Business IQ (Management Mindset), EQ (Emotional Intelligence), and AQ (Adaptability), will be critical for success.

Business IQ (Management Mindset)

The first component of the agriculture trifecta is Business IQ or Management Mindset.

The four pillars of Business IQ are imperative in a rapidly changing and evolving agricultural industry. At the top of the list is production excellence, emphasizing efficiency and competitive economic margins.

Next is cost management, with close attention to agricultural budgets that are monitored for continuous improvement. The third pillar is a wide array of risk management programs, interspersed with proactive marketing strategies that capitalize on profit windows and mitigate losses when cycles and markets present headwinds. This has assisted the agricultural industry to circumvent a repeat of the 1980s farm crisis.

The final pillar is capital and human resource efficiency. Carefully scrutinizing machinery, equipment, facilities, and the productivity of rented and owned land is an ongoing process. Evaluating the human element, from employees to management, is essential when positioning the business for a sustainable bottom line.

EQ (Emotional Intelligence)

The next component of the trifecta is emotional intelligence (EQ), which has been rapidly emerging as younger farmers and ranchers enter the industry. Historically, farmers and ranchers were independent and often preferred not to deal with people. Now and in the future, interdependence through collaboration with others is quickly emerging.

Successful businesses assemble productive teams by focusing on the three "A's": hire for attitude, train for aptitude, and hold people accountable, especially family members and friends. Ongoing proactive education is critical to staying abreast of innovation and developing the human skills necessary for a productive and profitable business.

Next, and most important, is assembling a team that combines warriors and worriers. The warriors push the envelope with new methods and ideas. The worriers, on the other hand, provide checks and balances, bringing processes

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and critical thinking to ensure both short- and long-term goals are achieved.

AQ (Adaptability Quotient)

Third, a difference maker that is quickly evolving in an economy full of twists and turns, is business AQ focusing on adaptability and performing when conditions are not ideal or when the business and economic cycle shifts in your favor. More specifically, AQ is the ability to assess, adapt, and, most importantly, be held accountable for strategies and actions.

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A high AQ business will develop alternatives, i.e., plans A, B, C, and D, and, in some instances, a clearly defined exit plan if performance is not up to standards. An AQ-driven business will often follow the “fail fast principle,” responding to failures quickly and, more importantly, avoiding repetition of the same mistakes. AQ is especially critical when a business is in transition or requires adjustments for growth.

An apprenticeship culture that integrates the next generation, whether family members or individuals from outside the family, into the existing business culture is also very important. What separates a high AQ business is its proactive adaptability to changing technology, policy, and markets. Innovation and resilience during downturns, when adversity arises from price, cost, weather, and market changes, are key variables. Agility and nimbleness when opportunity knocks are also defining attributes.

Integration: Where the magic happens

Elite owners and managers combine all three dimensions of IQ, EQ, and AQ to form the trifecta, which is the game changer in building legacies and champions. Whether in sports or agricultural businesses, success is defined by this integration. ■

Dr. David Kohl is an academic hall-of-famer in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va. Dr. Kohl is a sought-after educator of lenders, producers and stakeholders with his keen insight into the agriculture industry gained through extensive travel, research and involvement in ag businesses.

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WASHINGTON WHEAT FOUNDATION ANNEX
(IN RITZVILLE, WASH.)

FOR RENT

Rental Includes:
Seats 100 • Full service kitchen • Wi-Fi • 2 large screens
Free coffee and tea • Pull out wall divider • Free parking
18 x 22 lobby to gather or serve buffet
Separate board meeting room (seats 12)

\$150/DAY PLUS \$50 CLEANING DEPOSIT

Contact **Keri Gingrich**
at the **Washington Wheat Foundation rental line**
(509) 659-0610



Savannah Hoeft (4) enjoying lunch out by the combine with dad, Logan Hoeft, at Hoeft farms in Walla Walla. Photo by Christal Hoeft.



(Above) Mallory DeVore (14) getting some combine driving in with dad, Darin DeVore, in Ritzville. Photo by Darin DeVore. (Below) After harvest near Waukon. Photo by Marlena Falk.



Finishing up Harvest 2025 at Pierret Farms in Franklin County. Photo by Jim Kelsey.

Your wheat life...



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

Views over Columbia County.
Photo by Chele Smith Stacey.



Madison Sawyer (4) taking in the action at the Ritzville rodeo, thinking "someday that will be me!"
Photo by Johnna Sawyer.



Flash and Madeline Hodges and their kids, Hallie (4) and William (18 months), on the family farm in Oakesdale. Photo by Madeline Hodges.

HAPPENINGS

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

MAY 2026

2-3 RENAISSANCE FAIR. Music, entertainment, food, arts and crafts and maypole dances. East City Park, Moscow, Idaho. moscowrenfair.org

3 BLOOMSDAY. Spokane, Wash. bloomsdayrun.org

9 WINTHROP '49ER DAYS. Parade, live music, and dancing. Winthrop, Wash. winthropwashington.com/events/old-west-festival/

9-16 SPOKANE LILAC FESTIVAL. Car show, parade, marathon. spokanelilacfestival.org/

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

13-14 WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION BOARD MEETING. Meeting begins at 10 a.m. on Wednesday and 8:30 a.m. on Thursday at the commission building at 2702 W. Sunset Boulevard, Spokane, Wash. Contact wgc@wagrains.org for more information or access to the virtual meeting.

15-17 SELAH COMMUNITY DAYS. Carnival, car show, entertainment, vendors. Selah, Wash. selahdays.com

15-17 WAITSBURG CELEBRATION DAYS. Classic car show, cornhole tournament, fun run, vendors, parade, soap box derby, music. Waitsburg, Wash. waitsburgcd.com

21-24 MOSES LAKE SPRING FEST. Three on three basketball tournament, car show, parade, carnival, entertainment. McCosh Park in Moses Lake, Wash. springfestivalinmoseslake.com

22-24 LAST STAND RODEO. Cowboy breakfast, parade, entertainment. Coulee City, Wash. laststandrodeo.com

23 WATERVILLE COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE. Event runs from 8 a.m. to approximately 3 p.m. Maps and a list of addresses will be available for pick up on

W. Locust Street. The event is sponsored by Waterville Main Street Association. historicwatervillewa.org/

27-28 METHOW VALLEY RODEO. Saddle bronc, bareback, bulls, barrel racing, team roping and junior events. Held at the rodeo grounds, about halfway between Twisp and Winthrop. methowvalleyrodeo.com

JUNE 2026

2 WHEAT COLLEGE. AMMO workshop featuring Dennis Pennington from Michigan State University. Registration starts at 9 a.m. Preregister by calling (509) 659-0610. No charge, and lunch will be provided. Palouse Empire Fairgrounds in Colfax, Wash.

4 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Horse Heaven, Wash., at 8 a.m. For information call Mike Pumphrey at (509) 592-5234 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

5 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Walla Walla, Wash., at 10 a.m. For information call Rachel Wieme at (320) 250-7224 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

5 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Eureka, Wash., at 1:30 p.m. For information call Rachel Wieme at (320) 250-7224 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

6 REARDAN MULE DAYS. Three on three basketball tournament, poker ride, car show, parade, vendors. Reardan, Wash. reardanmuledays.com

6 ROSALIA BATTLE DAYS. Community festival, parade, car show, vendors market, pin-up contest, fun run, kids activities, family games and more. Rosalia, Wash. rosaliabattledays.info

9 PENDLETON STATION FIELD DAY. Event begins at 7:45 a.m. at Pendleton Station on Tubbs Ranch Road outside Pendleton, Ore. For information call Debbie Sutor at (541) 278-4405.

10 MORO FIELD DAY. Event begins at 7:45 a.m. at Sherman Station on Lone Rock Road outside Moro, Ore. For information call Debbie Sutor at (541) 278-4405.

10 U OF I WEED SCIENCE FIELD DAY.

Event begins at 7:45 a.m. at Parker Farm in Moscow, Idaho. For information call Joan Campbell at (208) 885-7730.

11 LIND FIELD DAY. Event begins at 8:30 a.m. at the WSU Dryland Research Center in Lind, Wash. For information call Samantha Crow at (509) 677-3671 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

12 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Harrington, Wash., at 10 a.m. For information call Aaron Esser at (509) 659-3210 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

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

12-13 DEMOLITION DERBY EXTRAVAGANZA. Combine demolition derby, parade, barbecue. Lind, Wash. lindcombinederby.com

13 SNAKE RIVER FAMILY FESTIVAL. Celebrate the lifeblood of the Palouse and a free lunch and ice cream, live music, favorite exhibitors, and kids' activities. Boyer Park and Marina, Colfax, Wash., 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. portwhitman.com/snake-river-family-festival

17 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Spring canola. Mayview, Wash., at 8:30 a.m. For info call Jesse Ford at (509) 990-6316 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

17 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Winter and spring cereals. Mayview, Wash., at 9:30 a.m. For information call Morgan Menaker at (704) 989-3752 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

18 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Dayton, Wash., at 9 a.m. For information call Rachel Wieme at (320) 250-7224 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

18 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Fairfield, Wash., at 7:30 a.m. For information call Ken Fuchs at (509) 220-0891 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

19-21 ALL WHEELS WEEKEND. Car show, music, food. Dayton, Wash. historicdayton.com/all-wheels-weekend

19-21 WENATCHEE RIVER BLUEGRASS

FESTIVAL. Adults/children workshops, food, vendors, live music. Chelan County Expo Center in Cashmere, Wash. cashmereconcerts.com/festival/

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

20-21 UNION GAP OLD TOWN DAYS. Washington state's biggest civil war reenactment. Trading post, blacksmith shop, train rides, games and wagon tours. Fullbright Park in Union Gap, Wash. centralwaagmuseum.org/old-town-days-union-gap.asp

20 SLIPPERY GULCH DAYS. Chamber breakfast, fun run, tractor show, parade, music, vendors, fireworks. Tekoa, Wash. slipperygulch.com

22 SPILLMAN FARM FIELD DAY. Event begins at 8:30 a.m. in Pullman, Wash. For information call Morgan Menaker at (704) 989-3752 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

23 WILKE FARM FIELD DAY. Davenport, Wash., at 8:30 a.m. For info call Aaron Esser at (509) 659-3210 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

23 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR. Reardan, Wash., at 1:30 p.m. For info call Aaron Esser at (509) 659-3210 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/ ■

Submissions

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



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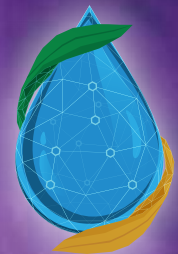
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