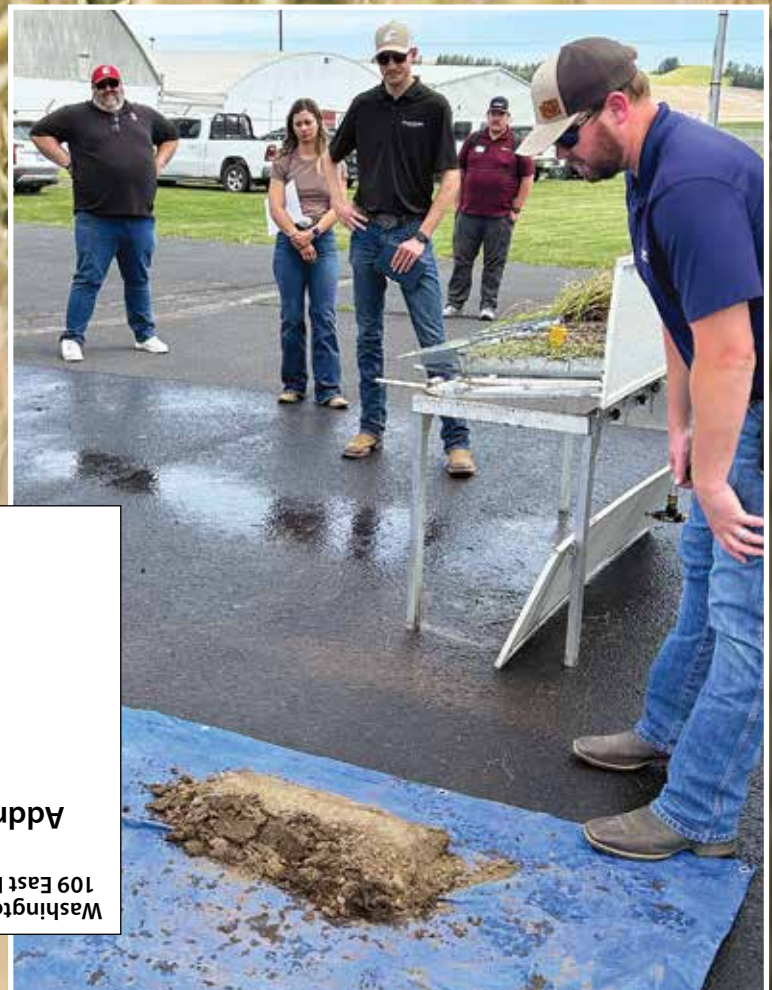


WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

JULY | 2026

WHEAT COLLEGE 2026



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EDITOR

Trista Crossley • editor@wawg.org
(435) 260-8888

AD SALES MANAGER

Lance Marshall • lance@wawg.org
(253) 221-7000

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Devin Taylor • Trista Crossley

AD BILLING

Michelle Hennings • michelle@wawg.org
(509) 659-0610

CIRCULATION

Address changes, extra copies, subscriptions
Keri Gingrich • keri@wawg.org
(509) 659-0610
Subscriptions are \$60 per year

WAWG EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Michelle Hennings

WAWG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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President's Perspective



A 6-month perspective

By Gil Crosby

President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

I first want to wish all wheat farmers a safe and bountiful harvest. As I reflect on my first six months as president of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), I want to thank all of the previous presidents for the time and dedication they invested while moving through the chairs. I am sure each tenure came with challenges, but also moments of satisfaction, accomplishment, and pride.

The year has flown by. It is hard to believe that my tenure is already halfway complete. I knew that taking on the role of president would be time-consuming, but I welcomed the challenge of balancing the responsibilities of my own farm with the duties that come with serving WAWG. What has surprised me most is the sheer size and scope of what we represent. Washington is the third-largest wheat-producing state in the nation, and last year, our farmers produced approximately 140 million bushels of wheat. Wheat production contributes nearly \$3 billion annually, both directly and indirectly, to our state's economy. We represent approximately 3,700 wheat farms across Washington, the vast majority of which are family-owned operations. Serving on the board and progressing through the chairs is a significant responsibility, and one that I do not take lightly.

Some of the highlights of the past six months began in January when WAWG attended Olympia Days. This year, we focused our discussions on how difficult it has become to remain profitable as farmers in Washington. One of the highlights of Olympia Days is always our gathering at Anthony's, where we invite representatives, senators, and legislative staff to join us. It provides a great opportunity to visit with them outside the office in a more relaxed setting and build relationships that help us advocate for agriculture.

Next, our WAWG group attended the winter National Association of Wheat Growers meetings and Hill visits in Washington, D.C. At one point, I wasn't even sure our group would make it, as a major snowstorm was shutting down much of the city and causing widespread flight cancellations. Our Hill visits are always a valuable opportunity to share growers' concerns and help Congress better understand how they can support policies that allow farmers to remain successful.

The opportunity that stands out the most, however, was receiving an invitation to the White House for the "Great American Agriculture Celebration." It was truly an experience I will never forget. Being there and hearing how important agriculture is to this administration was meaningful and seeing tractors displayed on the South Lawn was something I never imagined I would witness.

I can honestly say serving as president has been even better than I expected. The support of our outstanding executive director, Michelle Hennings, along with KayDee Gilkey and Keri Gingrich, has helped make everything run smoothly. I have also relied on the guidance of several past presidents and our current officer team, and I am grateful for their willingness to share their experience and advice.

I am confident the next six months will be just as rewarding as the first. I welcome any concerns, ideas, or comments you may have. I truly enjoy visiting with fellow farmers and learning about what's taking place across our industry. Once again, I wish everyone a safe harvest season with bin-busting yields. Stay safe, take care of one another, and here's to a successful crop year. ■

Cover photo: This year's Wheat College took place in Colfax and focused on making small decisions that can add up to better yields. See article and photos beginning on page 24. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

Inside This Issue

WAWG President's Perspective	2
Membership Form	4
WAWG at Work	6
Policy Matters	18
Washington Wheat Foundation	22
Wheat College 2026 Small decisions, increased yields	24
Disease alert Soilborne virus found in Whitman County	30
Crafting an excellent pour Beer festival to benefit barley advocacy	36
WGC Chairman's Column	41
Variety testing program update Changes are an opportunity to modernize	42
Great wheat begins in the lab A look at WGC-funded research projects	44
Nutrition overdrive Research project focuses on enhanced varieties	47
Wheat Watch	50
Flouring Oakesdale mill gets new lease on life	52
The Bottom Line	56
Your Wheat Life	58
Happenings	60
Advertiser Index	62



Contributors

Gil Crosby, president, Washington Association of Wheat Growers
Kevin Klein, chairman, Washington Grain Commission
Maddison Dayton, communications and content manager, Washington Grain Commission

Mike Pumphrey, assistant professor and spring wheat breeder, Washington State University
Allison Thompson, owner, The Money Farm
Paul Neiffer, Farm CPA Report

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WAWG's current top priorities are:

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

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

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Growers report good stands at June meeting

With harvest quickly approaching, growers at the June state board meeting of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) reported above average to “amazing” winter wheat stands; spring wheat looks to be more variable.

The meeting, the last before the summer break, heard short updates from Dennis Koong, director of National Agricultural Statistics Services’ (NASS) Northwest Regional Field Office, and Andy Pittenger from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

The board reviewed and approved the budget for 2026-27, which was mostly unchanged from last year.

Casey Chumrau, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), gave an update on staffing, saying they’ve hired Jessica Pupo to replace Jake Liening as a marketing specialist. Pupo has a degree in plant health management and global food systems, and Chumrau said she will be able to “connect dots between customers and farmers.”

The WGC just approved their 2026-27 budget of \$8.2 million. The current year’s revenues are down to just over \$6 million, but the commission had some undedicated funds from past years they were able to use to fill the gap and avoid cutting programs. The WGC is working on a collaboration with the Washington State University athletics program to promote the wheat industry during the fall.

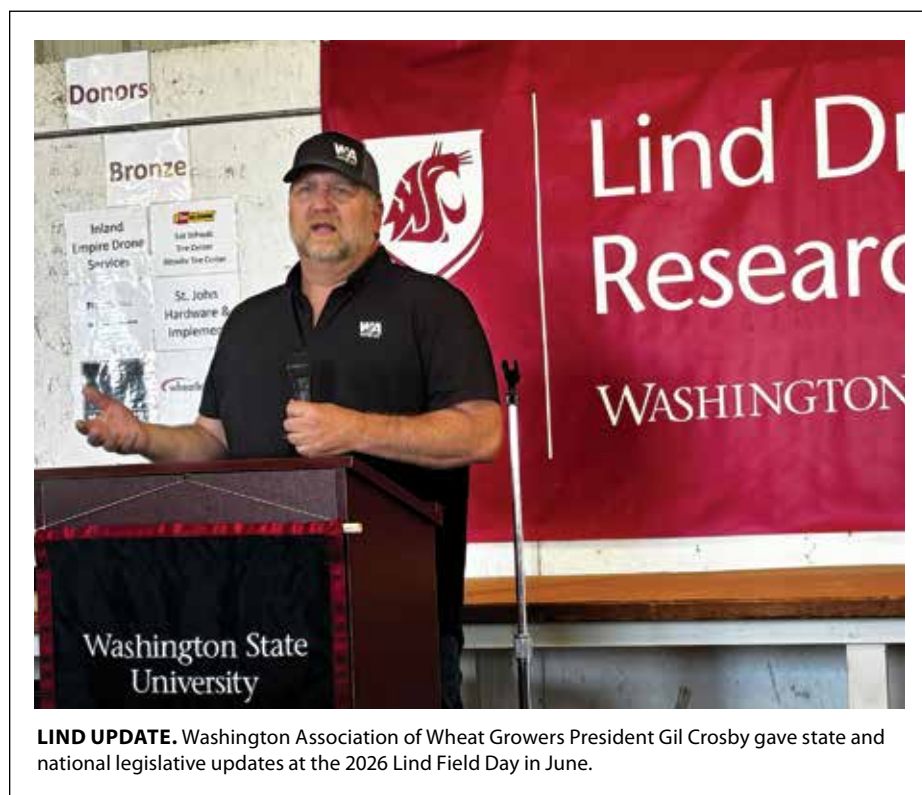
The end of May marked the end of the marketing year. Chumrau said top customers for soft white wheat

for the year were the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

In national legislation, the farm bill is currently in the Senate Ag Committee. There is likely to be a farm bill fly-in later this year. Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director, said the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) has hired a new policy person, and four new states — Pennsylvania, Illinois, New Mexico, and Missouri — are considering joining NAWG. Hennings asked the board for feedback on the base acre update process. The consensus was that the process is slightly different in each county, with some confusion among growers as to what exactly they need to do.

Lobbyists Diana Carlen and Mark Streuli called in to give a state legislative update. The state is anticipating a budget deficit of about \$5 billion, and Gov. Bob Ferguson has told state agencies to consider cuts. Campaign season is in full swing, with the primary scheduled for Aug. 4. Agriculture is still participating in riparian buffer meetings, and the big obstacle is the desire from the Tribes and environmentalists for a regulatory backstop.

Ferguson and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) have launched Washington’s Water Future, an initiative to address increasing water shortages, drought, and climate impacts ahead of the 2027 legislative session. Ecology will be holding regional meetings. ►



LIND UPDATE. Washington Association of Wheat Growers President Gil Crosby gave state and national legislative updates at the 2026 Lind Field Day in June.

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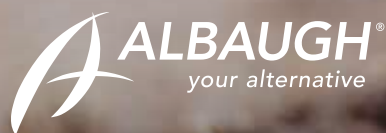
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Benton County growers meet, attend local plot tour

Benton County growers gathered at the Horse Heaven Hills Community Center last month to hear industry updates and tour the winter and spring wheat Washington State University variety trial plots. The event ended with lunch back at the community center. The meal was sponsored by The McGregor Company's

Horse Heaven Hills team. Speakers at the meeting included Nicole Berg, representing the Washington Grain Commission; Jeremy Nelson, Farm Service Agency's district director; Larry Jensen with Horse Heaven Grain; and Melissa Greenwalt with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. ■

WAWG continues to participate in the Washington State Conservation Commission's Food Policy Forum. KayDee Gilkey, WAWG outreach coordinator, serves on the subcommittee on preserving farmland. She said she reminds them that family farms tend to operate as corporations, and farms in the state don't all look like west-side farms.

Nicole Berg's Benton County farm has hosted visits from several high-level U.S. Department of Agriculture officials to talk about the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and crop insurance. Hennings introduced a white paper on CRP that a WAWG subcommittee has been working on. The paper will be shared with state and national agency leaders as well as elected officials.

The board approved two letters of support, one for a Federal Railroad Administration CRISI grant to continue work to improve the Palouse River and Coulee City shortline rail for the Washington State Department of Transportation and the other for funding for the Hood River-White Salmon bridge replacement project.

The next state board meeting is scheduled for Sept. 14. ■

FSA opens base acres update to eligible producers

At the end of May, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced eligible landowners have from June 1 until Aug. 31, 2026, to review and consider base acre increases on farms enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, as authorized by provisions included in the Working Families Tax Cuts Act, also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

The Act provides landowners with the opportunity to increase base acres in preparation for enrollment in ARC and PLC beginning with the 2026 and future crop years. Nationwide, up to 30 million new base acres can be added by eligible farms.

"This is the first chance for adding base acres since 2002. These base acre improvements will help strengthen the farm safety net for producers across the country and help them better manage risk by providing greater flex-

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ibility for operations that have expanded or diversified since the last time we revisited base allocations,” said FSA Administrator Bill Beam.

FSA began notifying eligible landowners by direct mail that Base Allocation Summaries outlining potential base acre increases will be available for review beginning June 1, 2026. These Base Allocation Summaries can be accessed online at fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc using a Login.gov account. Landowners who do not currently have a Login.gov account are encouraged to contact their local FSA county office to obtain their Base Allocation Summary. The Base Allocation Summary should be reviewed, and any necessary actions completed by Aug. 31, 2026.

Farm operators often maintain detailed historical planting records. Early communication between landowners and farm operators will ensure the Base Allocation Summary is accurate and all necessary actions are completed by the deadline.

To be eligible for new base acres, a current covered commodity must have been planted or prevented from being planted on the farm during the 2019 through 2023 crop years. The farm’s average planted and prevented planted acres during that period must exceed the total existing base acres for all covered commodities in effect on Sept.

30, 2024, excluding unassigned base acres. FSA farm total base acres cannot exceed the farm’s total cropland acres. If eligible requests exceed the nationwide cap of 30 million acres, USDA will apply an across-the-board, prorated reduction to all approved new base acres.

For additional information, producers should contact their local FSA county office. ■

NRCS unveils priorities, motto, and mission

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is putting farmers first and reaffirming this commitment by updating its strategic priorities, motto and mission and vision statements for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). These updates complement NRCS’s historic role in providing practical, voluntary, and locally led conservation solutions for producers.

“We are reaffirming NRCS’s role as the trusted, boots-on-the-ground conservation partner for America’s farmers, ranchers, and private landowners,” said NRCS Chief Colton L. Buckley. “The updated motto, mission, and



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vision statements better reflect the operational direction, producer-centered focus, and conservation philosophy guiding our work today and align with NRCS's priorities."

The new NRCS motto is "Keeping Working Lands in Working Hands." The mission statement is, "We deliver practical, voluntary, and locally led conservation solutions that help producers conserve natural resources, strengthen agricultural production, and keep working lands productive for generations to come."

NRCS is also updating its strategic priorities to guide agency operations, program delivery, stakeholder engagement, and modernization efforts through fiscal year 2026 and beyond.

NRCS's seven priorities include:

- Preserve and protect agricultural land.
- Shift to outcome-based conservation and farmer empowerment.
- Recenter field engagement and strengthen technical expertise.
- Expand wildlife conservation and outdoor access.
- Strengthen partnerships by streamlining processes and accountability.
- Optimize mission delivery by strengthening workforce culture.
- Modernize NRCS infrastructure and technology.

Learn more about the priorities at nrcs.usda.gov/about/priorities. ■

County committee nominations open

Nominations are now being accepted for farmers and ranchers to serve on local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees. These committees make important



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decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2026 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 3, 2026.

Elections for committee members occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA). LAAs are FSA committee elective areas in a single county or multicounty jurisdiction and can include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area. Producers interested in serving on the FSA county committee can locate their LAA at fsa.usda.gov/coc and determine if their LAA is up for election by contacting their local FSA office.

Agricultural producers can be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

- Participate or cooperate in a USDA program.
- Reside in the LAA that is up for election this year.

A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to

FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits.

Individuals can nominate themselves or others, and qualifying organizations can also nominate candidates. USDA encourages all eligible producers to nominate, vote, and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agriculture community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Committee members play a key role in how FSA delivers disaster recovery, conservation, commodity, and price support programs, as well as making decisions on county office employment and other agricultural issues.

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to learn more about their county's election. To be considered, a producer must sign an FSA-669A nomination form. This form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/coc. ■

Year in Review 2025/26

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

JULY 2025

Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG), appears on **Oregon Public Broadcasting** to talk about June's Columbia-Snake River System tour with members of the Upper Mississippi Waterway Association.

Andy Juris, WAWG past president and a farmer in Bickleton, Wash., speaks with the **Western Ag Network** about the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the previous administration's agreement regarding the lower Snake River dams.

Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins announces the **Supplemental Disaster Relief Program** for producers who suffered a crop loss due to natural disasters in calendar years 2023 and/or 2024.

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) announces that the **sales closing date for canola and rapeseed will move** from Aug. 31 to Sept. 30 in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington beginning with the 2026 crop. This change came about from an offhand comment during a WAWG board meeting earlier in the year.

Wheat harvest kicks off in Eastern Washington.

AUGUST 2025

For the third year in a row, **WAWG brings congressional staffers from across the nation to Lewiston, Idaho**, to showcase the lower Snake River dams and the critical role they play in the region's economy. Sixteen staffers, representing districts including Pennsylvania, Indiana, Hawaii, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Florida, hear from a panel of river users before taking a jet boat ride through the Lower Granite Dam lock, touring the fish research facilities, and stopping by the Port of Lewiston.

WAWG helps sponsor a **tour for state legislators in the Skagit Valley**. Regulatory burdens, labor issues, and access to markets are some of the issues discussed during the tour.

WAWG leaders and staff participate in a **farm bill fly-in to Washington, D.C.**, where they join other wheat-growing states in advocating for farm bill legislation and discussing the challenges in the current farm economy.

Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) hosts a **listening session** in Prosser, Wash., that includes Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-Pa.), chair of the House Agriculture Committee; Derek Sandison, director of the Washington State department of Agriculture; and Jon Wyss, Farm Service Agency state executive director. H2-A reforms, market access, and ag profitability are all discussed.

WAWG signs onto comments with other ag stakeholders submitted to the Washington State Department of Ecology opposing the department's proposed plan to control nonpoint sources of pollution. ►

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Harvest is mostly wrapped up by the end of the month. Growers report mixed results. Winter wheat yields are average to above average with good quality, while spring wheat yields are below average due to an exceptionally dry spring and summer.

SEPTEMBER 2025

The Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission **releases its second draft of the "Make Our Children Healthy Again Strategy."** While the draft stops short of calling for changes that would threaten farmers' access to pesticides, it still advances misconceptions about these products and their regulation. Growers are also concerned about the MAHA Commission's framing of enriched and refined grains as "ultra-processed."

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) **hires a new CEO, Sam Kieffer.** Hennings participated in the NAWG hiring committee.

WAWG leaders and staff travel to Washington, D.C., for a **NAWG fly-in.** The Washington contingent was able to meet with White House staff to discuss litigation on the lower Snake River dams.

WAWG joins other Columbia River System stakeholders in a **letter to Washington Gov. Bob Ferguson,** urging him to refrain from becoming a plaintiff in river system litigation.

OCTOBER 2025

Andrea Cox, WAWG's conservation coordinator, helps organize a **low-till and no-till drill demonstration** in Franklin County. More than 100 growers show up to learn about low-till and direct seeding methods and to see four drills in action.

The **White House dismisses the Farm Service Agency's Washington state executive director, Jon Wyss,** with no explanation. Growers and several members of the state's congressional delegation express their concerns.

More than 40 growers attend a workshop in Walla Walla on the **Endangered Species Act and pesticide labels.**

NOVEMBER 2025

WAWG leaders and staff travel to the **NAWG fall board meeting** in Austin, Texas, where they take part in committee meetings and consider resolutions to help guide the national organization.

The **2025 Washington Grain Growers Convention** takes place at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Producers and industry stakeholders hear industry updates, listen to nationally known keynote speakers, and network. Anthony Smith from Benton County is recognized as WAWG member of the year, while Franklin County is recognized as WAWG county of the year.

Gil Crosby, a grower from Spokane County, takes over as WAWG president. He replaces outgoing president Jeff Malone from Douglas County. WAWG welcomes Grant County grower Ryan Poe as the new secretary/treasurer. Laurie Roecks, also from Spokane County, takes on the vice president's role.

Isabella Huntley of Whitman County and Luke Goetz of Grant County are selected as the 2026 Washington Wheat Ambassadors and are awarded scholarships funded by the Washington Wheat Foundation.

DECEMBER 2025

WAWG joins a coalition of state ag industry organizations in submitting **comments on Ecology's best management practices** that are part of the department's Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture.

Whitman County wheat growers elect a new county president, Kelli Weber, to replace David Swannack. She also becomes the county's state board representative.

The Trump administration announces a **one-time, \$12 billion Farm Bridge Assistance program,** which is intended to temporarily help producers through market disruptions and elevated input costs.

Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) announces **he won't seek re-election** in 2026.

JANUARY 2026

The 2026 Washington State Legislative Session begins.

Like last year, legislators are facing another large budget shortfall and are looking for ways to fill the gap. Both Gov. Ferguson and democrats endorse a 9.9% tax on adjusted gross income above \$1 million. WAWG endorses an exemption from carbon taxes on lubricants and opposes an ag unionization bill and an environmental crimes bill that resurfaced from last year at the last minute.

WAWG members and staff spend three days in Olympia, discussing WAWG priorities with more than 40 legislators, handing out cookies, and meeting with the governor and his staff to advocate for the state's wheat industry.

The **Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's (AMMO) 2026 winter schedule kicks off.** This year, seminars cover herbicide resistance, financial matters in down times, estate planning, an ag policy outlook, global wheat markets, and pesticide recertification.

Despite a late January snowstorm that disrupts travel throughout much of the country, WAWG leaders and staff trek to Washington, D.C., to take part in **NAWG annual winter meetings** and spend time on the Hill meeting with the state's congressional delegation. ▶

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Patrick Bell, formerly the Spokane County Communications director and a past senior staff member for former Eastern Washington Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, is appointed as the new state executive director of the Farm Service Agency in Washington state.

FEBRUARY 2026

Hennings joins her crew of **"Dam Heroes" in Washington, D.C.**, to visit with congressional members who sit on committees that oversee the lower Snake River dams.

Raj Khosla, the new dean of WSU's College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences, joins Whitman County growers at their monthly meeting to talk about his plan to lead the department.

Hennings speaks to a group of HighLine Grain Growers in Odessa, Wash., about WAWG's state and national priorities.

At the **Spokane Ag Show**, WAWG volunteers share wheat facts with visitors to the association's booth.

As the **warm, wet winter winds down, concerns about stripe rust and other diseases begin rising**. Reports of wheat grain mites, Hessian flies, and army cutworms hitting fields across Eastern Washington are heard.

MARCH 2026

Hennings testifies during a public hearing of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. She reiterates WAWG's belief that dams and fish can co-exist and explains to the panel how important the river system is to wheat growers.

With WAWG's support, wheat growers gather in Pasco, Wash., to talk to state leaders of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency about their **concerns with how the Conservation Reserve Program** works in Eastern Washington.

The **2026 Washington State Legislative Session comes to a close**. At the last minute, lawmakers pass a tax on income over \$1 million. One of WAWG's priorities, an exemption for lubricants from Climate Commitment Act fees, is passed.

There's finally some movement on a new farm bill, as the **House Ag Committee passes the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026** out of committee.

The new **Research Advisory Subcommittee jumps into action** to help steward research projects and communicate grower concerns and priorities back to researchers. The subcommittee is chaired by WAWG Research Committee chair, Jim Moyer.

APRIL 2026

Hennings and Crosby attend the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Ag Day event at the White House. Featured speakers were President Trump and Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins.

WAWG leaders and volunteers man the WAWG booth at the **Franklin County Farm Bureau's Farm Fair**, sharing the story of wheat with hundreds of fourth graders.

On the last day of the month, the **U.S. House of Representative passes the farm bill**, which now advances to the Senate Ag Committee.

Ecology announces the **completion of their Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture**, which offers best management practice options that can be tailored to site-specific needs while protecting water quality.

MAY 2026

Hennings takes part in a **panel on the importance of the lower Snake River dams** at a Central Washington Energy Summit hosted by Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.).

WAWG continues its outreach efforts by having booths at the **Spokane Farm Fair** and, along with the Washington Grain Commission and the Washington Wheat Foundation, the **Bloomsday trade show**. Volunteers share wheat facts and pass out wheat-based snacks (at Bloomsday).

Asotin County growers award **scholarships to Brooklynn Appleford and Stone Ausman**.

JUNE 2026

Growers gather at the fairgrounds in Colfax, Wash., to hear Michigan State University Wheat Extension Specialist Dennis Pennington and The McGregor Company's Sam Kimmell talk about making small decisions for increased yields at AMMO's **2026 Wheat College**. Growers also hear industry updates and learn about a quick falling number test, taking land out of the Conservation Reserve Program, and the impacts of soil health on runoff and erosion.

Rep. Michael Baumgartner (R-Wash.) hosts a call with farmers and House Ag Chair Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-Pa.) at the AgWest Farm Credit building in Airway Heights, Wash.

The **U.S. Supreme Court rules in favor of Monsanto/Bayer**, holding that the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act preempts state-law failure-to-warn claims based on pesticide labeling when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has not required the warning at issue. ■

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POLICY MATTERS

Baumgartner, Thompson meet with growers

Last month, growers had the opportunity to ask questions to Rep. Glenn “GT” Thompson (R-Pa.), chair of the House Agriculture Committee, during a virtual meeting hosted by Rep. Michael Baumgartner (R-Wash.).

A group of ag stakeholders gathered at the AgWest Farm Credit building in Airway Heights, Wash., with Baumgartner, while more participated virtually. After an introduction by Washington Rep. Mark Schoesler (R-Ritzville), Thompson began by highlighting the passage of what he called Farm Bill 2.0 through the U.S. House and the wins for agriculture it contains. Committee members held 160 sessions in 43 states “listening to ag folks tell us what they needed. The farm bill re-



Rep. Michael Baumgartner (R-Wash.)



Rep. Glenn “GT” Thompson (R-Pa.)

flected those needs,” Thompson said. The bill is now in the Senate Ag Committee.

Wins for wheat in the farm bill include modernizing the Farm Credit Title, transferring Food for Peace to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and reauthorizing the Conservation Reserve Program. Baumgartner’s amendment to include funding to complete the Columbia Basin Project was also included.

Thompson added that the farm bill passed out of the House with 96% of republicans supporting it and the highest minority party support since 2008. He was confident that the bill would pass the Senate and predicted that in conference, the main issues will be dealing with California’s Proposition 12, which requires all pork sold in the state to come from breeding pigs given enough space to turn around in, and SNAP error rates.

Baumgartner then opened the floor to questions and comments for Thompson, some of which are summarized on the next page.



RMA VISIT. Last month, two Risk Management Agency officials, Pat Swanson (fifth from right), administrator, and Ken Selzer (fourth from left), associate administrator, visited Nicole Berg’s (fourth from right) Benton County farm to witness agriculture in the Pacific Northwest. Berg serves on the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation board, which oversees the federal crop insurance program. Berg said Washington, D.C., officials are always amazed at how diverse Washington state is for growing different crops, yet Eastern Washington mainly only grows wheat, no dryland soy or corn.

USMCA. The comment was made that Mexico and Canada are both important trading partners, with much of the nutrients applied to crops coming from Canada. The U.S. needs to find a way through the U.S.-Mexico-Canada-Agreement (USMCA) process. Thompson agreed and told growers that they'd recently had a USMCA committee hearing on how important the agreement is. He added that there may be some things that can be tweaked, but it is important that everybody followed the rules. Thompson said the U.S. should be doing what it can to produce the products farmers need here in the U.S., and he is hoping to take a group to Ottawa for talks.

Barley. A grower highlighted how the barley industry is struggling to compete against Australian barley being malted in China and sent to Mexico where it is brewed into beer which is then imported into the U.S. Thompson said he had full confidence in U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, and that the U.S. needs to hold Mexico to task and address China's subsidization of industries.

SNAP. One grower pointed out that most of the farm bill funding goes to SNAP and asked Thompson if that can be reduced. Thompson said SNAP is a "pretty heated point." Republicans were able to pass reforms during the budget reconciliation process, including targeting mismanagement by the states and adding work requirements for able-bodied adults.

Dams. Baumgartner asked if data centers' need for water and power was impacting the conversation around hydropower and the dams. Thompson called data centers an opportunity to use some "untapped" energy sources like dams and natural gas. When it comes to solar power, those sites should not

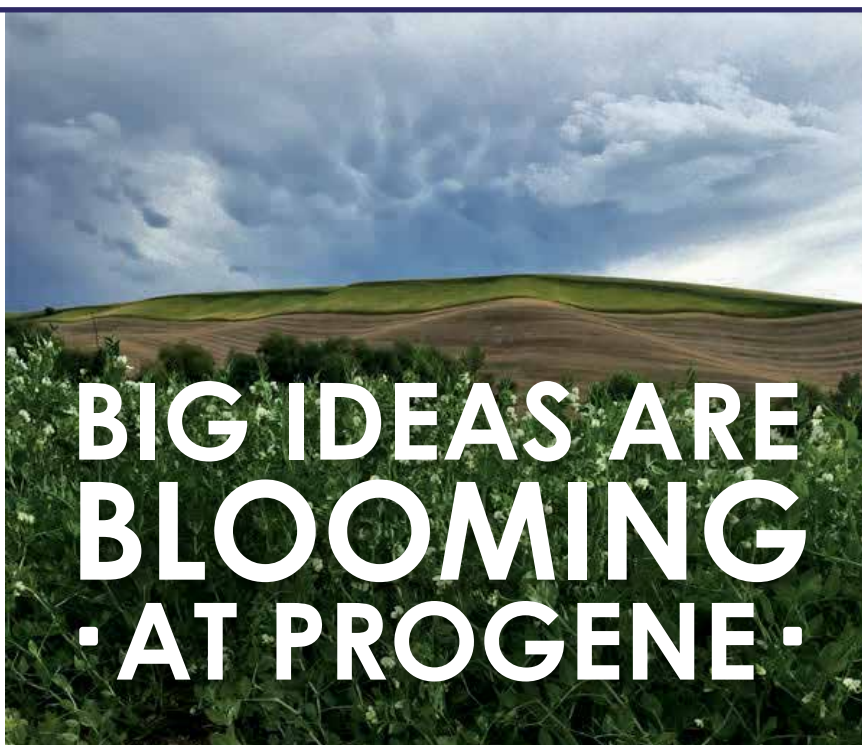
be located on prime farmland.

Research grants. Another grower said he was worried about research funding at land-grant universities. Thompson said they put significant dollars back into research in Farm Bill 1.0, otherwise known as The One, Big, Beautiful Bill. Thompson called ag "critical" in terms of national security.

State regulation. Baumgartner noted that a lot of Washington agriculture's problems stem from legislation passed at the state level. He asked Thompson's advice for rural areas of blue states. Thompson suggested emphasizing agriculture's role in providing nutrition and adding to the state's economic bottom line. "You have to take care of farmers to take care of food." ■

Ag groups call for USMCA renewal

On June 1, nearly 160 food and agricultural organizations from across the



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U.S., Canada, and Mexico, including the National Association of Wheat Growers, urged their governments to renew and strengthen the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) ahead of its mandatory 2026 review.

In a joint letter addressed to trade representatives from all three countries, the groups stated that “over the past 20 years, North American agricultural trade under NAFTA and USMCA has helped make the region the most food secure region in the world.”

The letter highlighted USMCA’s role in keeping North America globally competitive, particularly in areas such as sanitary and phytosanitary measures and agricultural biotechnology. The letter also emphasized USMCA’s role in mitigating trade challenges and protecting rural communities from economic harm. The groups noted that this facet is important as the food supply chain faces high input costs, low commodity prices, natural disasters, and global unrest. ■

NAWG board approves new strategic plan

On June 18, the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) board of directors approved a new strategic plan that will guide the organization’s work through 2033 and help shape priorities for the years ahead. The plan includes updated mission and vision statements that reflect NAWG’s commitment to advancing the interests of U.S. wheat farmers in a rapidly evolving agricultural landscape.

NAWG’s vision is, “A successful and competitive future for U.S.

wheat farmers shaped by effective national advocacy,” and its mission is, “To lead policy, partnerships, and initiatives that drive progress for U.S. wheat farmers to succeed today and into the future.”

The updated mission, vision, and strategic framework are the result of months of discussion, evaluation, and planning by NAWG’s board of directors. Together, they are designed to ensure the organization remains focused on the opportunities and challenges most important to wheat producers.

The strategic plan is built around five key priorities:

- Policy leadership and advocacy.
- Resource stewardship and organizational excellence.
- Communication, engagement, and leadership development.
- New uses and demand.
- Organizational alignment and industry collaboration. ■



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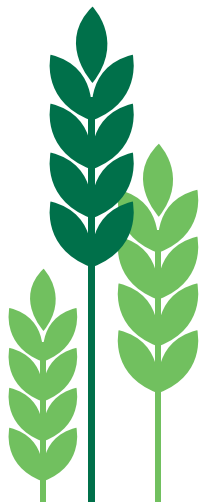
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When most people hear the word “sustainability,” they picture solar panels, electric vehicles, or corporate climate pledges. But real, personal sustainability starts with choices that affect our households. Start with the food we eat. Many believe that organic or farmer’s market farmers are the most sustainable options available. But, in reality, the inputs used or the miles traveled to fill our ample grocery sacks are just two pieces of a multifactor journey. At the end of the food journey, the sustainability factor is simple: can the farmers producing our food actually afford to keep doing it? It doesn’t matter if they’re organic, conventional, big, small, urban, or rural. If a farmer can’t afford to sustain their chosen practices, they aren’t sustainable.

Farmers are some of the greatest stewards of the land in the world. No matter their practice choice, their livelihoods depend on healthy soil, clean water, and productive ground. If they fail to replenish nutrients, rotate crops, or care for the land responsibly, the results are obvious. History already showed us what happens when conservation is ignored. The Dust Bowl remains one of the greatest agricultural disasters in American history.

Modern farmers learned from those lessons. Today, agriculture produces more food using fewer resources than ever before. Thirty years ago, U.S. agriculture would have needed nearly 115 million additional acres to produce what farmers



grow today. Through precision agriculture, improved crop genetics, and better conservation practices, farmers have learned how to produce more using fewer resources. Those who have figured out how to do it and stay profitable are sustainable. Those who haven’t, sadly, end up with a sale sign in their driveway.

Look no further than Spirit Airlines. The company operated on razor-thin margins for years, chasing low costs at every turn. When fuel prices increased and labor pressures mounted, they had no cushion. They borrowed against assets, burned through reserves, and repeatedly found themselves in financial distress. There was no room to reinvest into systems, employees, or long-term stability because survival became the only focus.

Farmers are facing a similar challenge. Washington currently ranks 50th in farm profitability. Rising labor costs, taxes, regulations, and increasing production expenses squeeze margins tighter every year. When profitability disappears, reinvestment becomes harder. Financially healthy businesses are better positioned to invest back into what matters. When families are financially stable, they donate to charities, support causes they care about, and invest in their communities. But when budgets stop balancing, priorities shift toward survival. The focus becomes paying bills, finding more income, and simply making it to the next month.

Agriculture works the same way. When margins are healthy, farmers can invest more into conservation practices, upgraded equipment, soil health, and long-term sustainability efforts. But when profits disappear, the ability to pour resources back into the land becomes more difficult. That does not mean farmers stop caring. It means the economic reality becomes harder to overcome.

True sustainability is not just environmental. It is economical. If farming itself is not sustainable financially, neither is the future of the land. ■

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Wheat College 2026

FOR PRODUCERS, MANY SMALL DECISIONS CAN ADD UP TO INCREASED YIELDS

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Unexpected neck surgery prevented the 2026 Wheat College keynote presenter from appearing in person, but growers were still able to take advantage of his knowledge as he zoomed in.



Following coffee and doughnuts sponsored by the Graybeal Group, **Dennis Pennington**, the Michigan State University (MSU) Wheat Extension specialist, appeared virtually to talk about making many small decisions for increased yields.

“What I’ve learned over the past years working with growers that are really working hard to push yields higher is it’s not a single decision or two or management practice that you can change on your farm that translates into those high yields,” he said. “It’s a series of small things that you do and do right, and when you add them up, that translates into higher yields.”

Increasing yields depends on the capture of three primary resources: solar radiation, nutrients, and water. Solar radiation provides energy for growth and development. The goal is to have a thick, lush canopy that stays green as long as possible. Pennington said the total amount of biomass that a crop produces has a direct relationship on yield potential. Growers need to make sure they have adequate nutrients, and the plants have a good root system that can take up those nutrients, as well as water.

“Those of you that are in a really water-stressed area, this is going to be a considerable limiting factor, and that’s what limits how high the yield potential is on your farm,” he said. “If you have that water restriction, these other two things become even more important.”

The foundation of yield potential starts with roots, which are needed for water uptake, nutrient acquisition, anchorage, standability, stress tolerance, and tiller survival. Roots have root exudates, chemical signals that detect changes in nutrient depletion zones from other nearby roots. Those root exudates influence how the plant grows. When many neighboring plants are detected, the root pattern is narrower with less lateral root branching and goes deeper, accessing deeper water and nutrients. This is good when water is limited, but it tends towards less tillers per plant and more early competition between plants.

In stands with lower plant density, roots have more lateral branching, a wider root spread in the topsoil, more tillers per plant, lower competition per plant, and more topsoil water and nutrient capture.

“One of the important things to take away is the way we manage our plant density is going to impact the way our roots grow. We need to think about seeding rates and spacing and where the plants are accessing nutrients and water,” Pennington explained.

Wheat plants have two types of tillers: first order tillers that have roots attached to them, and second order tillers that don’t have roots and get all their

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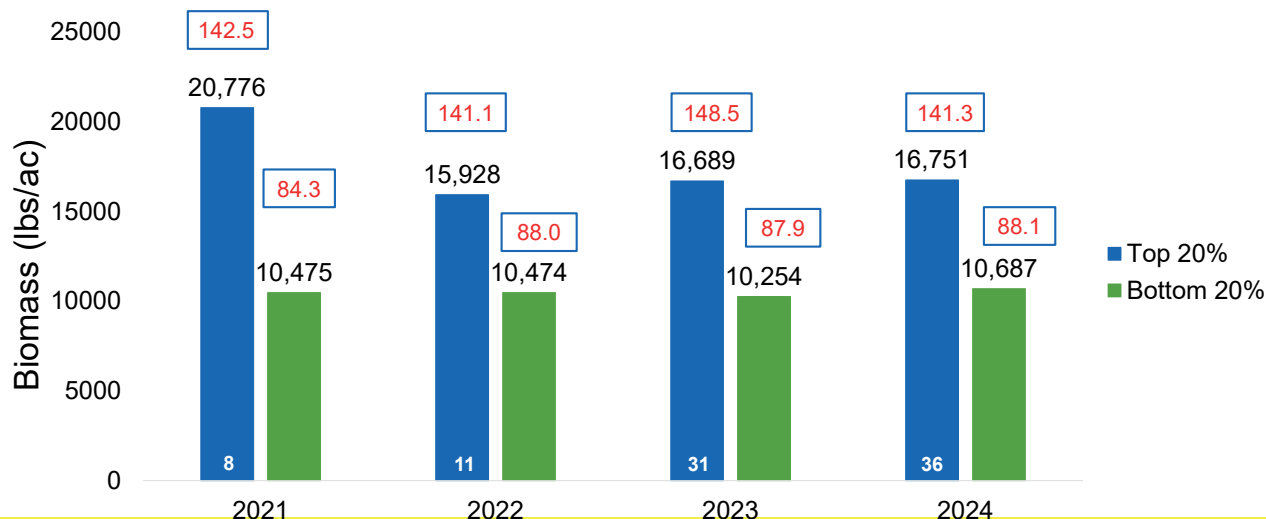
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water and nutrients from the main tiller. Pennington said second order tillers only contribute to yield if the plant has enough water and nutrients to support them. He showed results from a MSU study on the impacts of seed spacing on tillers. The study found that the amount of tillers increased significantly as seeding rates dropped.

The study also compared tiller impacts from a precision planter vs. a drill. The precision planter started out with more tillers, but by harvest both methods ended up with about the same number.

“Ideally, we would like to maintain those tillers all the way to harvest because that’s going to really bump our yield production. When we lose these tillers, we’ve expended resources, water, nutrients to grow them, but then we’re not getting benefits out of it,” he said.

2021-2024 Average Biomass (lbs/ac)



GREAT LAKES YEN

N=87

One of the statistics the Great Lakes Yield Enhancement Network tracks is biomass. Growers are sorted by yield, then the top 20% and bottom 20% are averaged. The numbers show that the growers with more biomass have significantly higher yields. Graphic courtesy of Dennis Pennington, Michigan State University Extension.

Why is tiller number so important? Using data gathered from the Great Lakes Yield Enhancement Group, or YEN, Pennington found that 900 to 1,000 heads per meter squared (3.6 to 4 million heads per acre) produces the highest yields; growers need between 52 and 58 heads per row foot.

“If you can only get two tillers to survive all the way to harvest, that means you need a seeding rate between 1.8 and 2 million seeds per acre, but if you can go to four tillers per plant, you can cut your seeding rate back considerably,” he explained. “That’s what we’re finding growers are doing in our YEN program. They’re cutting their seed rate back, because they’re able to get more tillers, and they’re still able to maintain these high head counts, which is driving a higher yield.”

In another MSU trial on planting date, Pennington planted plots every two weeks, from mid-September to mid-November. Each planting date also included five different seeding rates, from .8 million up to 2.4 million seeds per acre. As expected, they found significant differences in growth development. The trial showed that seeding rate didn’t make much of a difference when seeding early. High seeding rates at late-planted dates saw some increase, but nothing compared to the earlier seeding dates. Another study showed that increasing nitrogen, adding

fungicides, or micronutrients couldn’t make up for planting late.

“Just by planting late, you’ve automatically lowered the bar for your yield potential. You have to plant on time. We can’t increase seed rate to fix this, and there’s no amount of management you can apply to fix a late planting date. You have to do whatever you can on your farm to figure out a way to get it planted on time.”

Another trial looked at manipulating seed placement and row spacing to increase yield. Michigan growers generally use a 7.5” row spacing. Researchers found that as row spacing increased, yield decreased. One surprising data point was a 5” row space gained 10 bushels over the 7.5” row space.

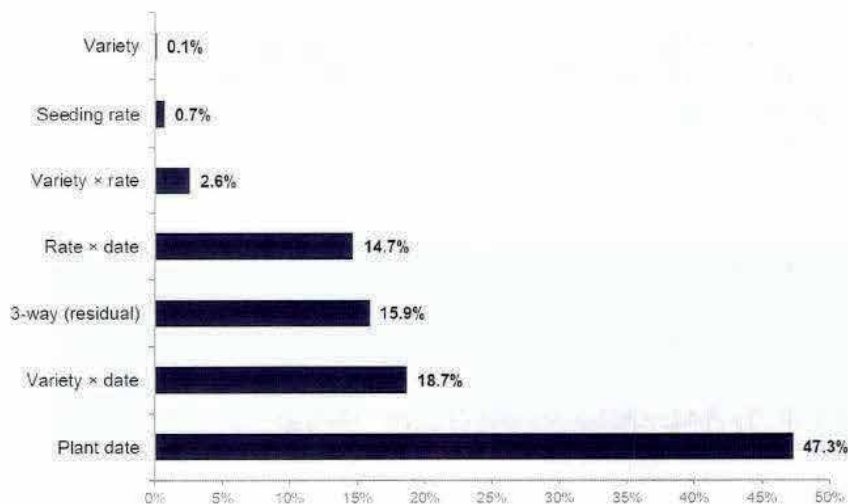
Pennington finished up his presentation by talking about the Great Lakes YEN, which is a collaborative program that helps wheat growers across the region better understand the gap between their actual and potential yields through field benchmarking and agronomic analysis. Data from the YEN supports the idea that biomass is a key to higher yields (see graphic above), as well as that split nitrogen applications are more effective than a single application.

Common elements from the high-yield growers in the YEN include:



Yield components

- Heads per acre



The takeaway

Plant date alone explains 47% of all variation — more than 2.5× the next factor.

Variety x date is the second-biggest source (19%) — much larger than variety alone (0.1%). Variety doesn't matter on average. It matters on a given date.

Seeding rate is negligible as a main effect (~1%) and only weakly interactive. Bumping rate to fix stand isn't supported here.

Seeding rate, seeding date, variety, and row width can all impact heads per acre, but data from a multiyear trial by The McGregor Company shows that seeding date is by far the main factor, accounting for 47.3% of variation. Graphic courtesy of Sam Kimmell, The McGregor Company.

- Timely establishment. High yielding crops are planted within the optimum planting window for their region. You can't compensate for that.
- Optimize head counts. High-yield crops have 800+ heads/per meter squared. Earlier planting, more fall tillering. Seeding rate and row spacing make a difference.
- Maximize biomass. High yielding crops produce more than 17,000 pounds of biomass per acre.
- Attention to detail. High yielding growers make timely input applications based on crop stage and needs.

"There is not one thing that the high yield growers do. It's a series of decisions that they make. They're constantly out there scouting their crop and paying attention to what's going on, and then they make adjustments to their program on the fly based on what they see in the field," Pennington said.

2026 decisions, 2027 impacts

Sam Kimmell, The McGregor Company's business unit manager for the north Palouse, keyed in on how 2026 input decisions could impact the 2027 crop. He began his presentation by acknowledging the past.

"It's important to remember that the things that worked

at times that are similar to these are oftentimes the same things that will work on a year like this," he said.

In the fall of 2025, most Eastern Washington growers were facing extremely dry seeding conditions, but that soon turned around. A warm, wet winter allowed for a big accumulation of growing degree days. Early-planted wheat did better with above average fall growth, lots of tillering, and active roots and above-ground growth almost all winter.

"There's some baggage that came along with that, with disease and insect pressure, but the guys that planned for the best, prayed for the best, are singing from the hilltops a little bit right now," he said.

Kimmell said there are three yield components that a grower can impact: heads per acre, grains per head, and weight per grain. Each component has a window when it's most sensitive to stress, but also when it's most responsive to inputs. Once a component is set, growers generally cannot rebuild it, only protect it. Kimmell focused on heads per acre, calling it one of the easiest levers for a grower to pull.

Seeding rate, seeding date, variety, and row width can all impact heads per acre, but data from a multiyear trial by The McGregor Company (TMC) shows that seeding

Wheat College 2026





Sam Kimmell
Business Unit Manager,
The McGregor
Company



Gil Crosby
President, Washington
Association of Wheat
Growers



Kevin Klein
Chairman, Washington
Grain Commission



Sieg Snapp
Associate Dean for
Research, Washington
State University's
College of Agricultural,
Human, and Natural
Resource Sciences

date is by far the main factor, accounting for 47.3% of variation. Variety and planting date was second at 18.7%. Seeding rate was negligible as a main effect.

"Variety almost didn't matter when the plant date was right," Kimmell said. "If you're going to plant late, picking the right variety swung pretty big, too. It was kind of eye opening."

In the trial, TMC researchers seeded plots in successive weeks beginning in mid-September through the end of October; everything else — fertility, variety, seeding rate — was the same. What they found was every week of late planting cost growers about three bushels per acre.

Other benefits of timely seeding include:

- Dealing with grassy weed issues. Pre-emerge chemistry likes early seeding times and beating the first germination rain in the fall is paramount. Kimmell advised growers to seed problem fields first and get a pre-emergent on. "Put the dollars where it might make a difference and then adjust."
- Crop competition. One of the greatest weed control tools that growers have.
- Root development and access to nutrition.

Looking ahead to this fall's planting, smart fertility decisions are critical. As input costs rise, a lot of growers may be thinking about cutting back. Kimmell said that's fine on nutrients that growers can catch up on, but not for those they can't.

- Avoid cutting back on phosphate and zinc, especially zinc, which is good for tillering.
- Chloride is very mobile but has decent demand in fall and spring. Back off fall chloride and make it up in the spring.
- Nitrogen is a big one, so look at it objectively. "We have lots of growing degree days, maybe the best in the world if we can avoid a March frost." Nitrogen application can be risky without rain.
- Sulphur is an important nitrogen efficiency number. It curves with nitrogen demand and is hard to catch back up on.

"Falling behind can't be an option in tough times," he said. "On fertility decisions, my head still goes to efficiency. I think that's a

lever we need to look at more."

In some of the higher rainfall areas, nitrogen stabilizers might help avoid top dressing in late fall or early spring, and variable rate technology can help direct inputs where they'll make the most difference.

"Honestly, this sounds silly, but one of the simplest, easiest lever wins is to move some of your nutrients from your highest or lowest production ground and put them in your medium production ground. Suddenly, your average goes up, because you're over fertilizing some of your ground, and you're under fertilizing some of your ground. But that middle zone, it's going to pull up your average, right? I know it sounds simple, but that works really well, and it's fairly inexpensive," Kimmell explained.

Kimmell's take-home advice was:

- Set the crop up for success and adjust as needed. Look objectively at your base fertility package. Don't cut fertility to the point of no return and apply nutrients at the right place at the right time.
- Set an enterprise budget and do your best to stick with it.
- Be willing to try the tested but shy from the unproven and rely on local research and local experience.

Industry updates

Following the main presentations, growers heard updates from industry leaders.

Dr. Sieg Snapp, associate dean for research in Washington State University's College (WSU) of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences, told growers that the college just interviewed a third candidate for the Washington Grain Commission-funded weed science endowed chair. Her job is to make sure WSU staff are listening to industry about how to improve crops.

Kevin Klein, chairman of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), talked about how the WGC is investing grower dollars in research, market development, and education. The variety testing program has had some difficulties recently, but breeders Mike Pumphrey and Kimberly Garland-Campbell have stepped up to keep it going. A new

research subcommittee is helping to direct research dollars and provide more grower feedback to researchers. Summer is trade team season, and the WGC would like to increase grower participation.

Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) President Gil Crosby reviewed the association's efforts during the 2026 Washington State Legislative session, which included getting a seasonal overtime exemption, a permanent exemption for lubricants on Climate Commitment Act taxes, and protecting ag tax exemptions. In national legislation, the farm bill is in the Senate Ag Committee after passing the House in April. While many of the farm bill's provisions were funded in separate legislation, important programs like the Conservation Reserve Program were not. Crosby also touched on continuing lower Snake River dam litigation and reminded growers of the annual convention, which will take place Nov. 30-Dec. 2 in the Tri-Cities and include growers from Oregon.

Rotational topics

Wheat College wrapped up with four rotational topics. Morgan Menaker, the Washington State University (WSU) regional Extension agronomist for Whitman, Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties, talked about the recent discovery of Soilborne Wheat Mosaic Virus in Whitman County (see article on page 30).

Researchers Amber Hauvermale and Alison Thompson gave an update on falling numbers and efforts to develop a quicker, more reliable test. Stephen Johnson from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) talked to growers about taking land out of the Conservation Reserve Program and putting it back into production. Mitch Ruchert brought NRCS's rainfall simulator to demonstrate the impacts of soil health on runoff and erosion. ■

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Disease alert

SOILBORNE WHEAT MOSAIC VIRUS HAS APPEARED IN MULTIPLE LOCATIONS IN WHITMAN COUNTY

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

Soilborne Wheat Mosaic Virus (SBWMV), a disease previously only found in Walla Walla County, has now been identified in multiple locations in Whitman County.

Morgan Menaker, the Washington State University (WSU)



Regional Extension agronomist for Whitman, Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties, notified growers of the bad news

at the Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization's 2026 Wheat College in early June.

"Unfortunately, this disease was identified in Whitman County this past spring. This is one of those that we absolutely have to raise the alarm bell on," he told growers.

In March, a grower asked Menaker to take a look at some "weird yellow wheat." Unable to identify the problem, Menaker took samples back to Washington State University (WSU) where the virus was identified. Further investigation confirmed that the virus was present in 11 noncontiguous fields south of Pullman and east of Almota.

SBWMV is vectored by a parasitic, fungus-like protist, *Polymyxa graminis*, that infects the roots via motile swimming spores. Winter wheat is most susceptible, but spring wheat can be affected. The protist forms resting spores that can survive in the



Soilborne Wheat Mosaic Virus has appeared in southern Whitman County fields. Besides yellowing, plants will have missing tillers, and leaves will display a yellow/purplish mottling and mosaic. The virus generally appears near wet soil. Photo by Morgan Menaker, Washington State University Regional Extension agronomist.

soil for many years. It requires free moisture to infect, and that is why symptoms are usually found in plants in low-lying areas with wet soil. Once the virus is present in the soil, the only treatment is to plant resistant varieties.

"That is the only way that we're going to be managing this into the future. Once a farm has this, they are pretty much stuck with it forever. There's no fumigation that is economic to do," Menaker said. "Rotation is not a viable option to control this disease, unfortunately."

The virus was first discovered in the central Plains in 1919. In 1995, it was identified in the Willamette Valley in Oregon. Shortly after that, it was found in the Milton-Freewater area and, by 2008, in the Walla Walla Valley. In 2023, it had

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— Jerry McReynolds,
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made its way to Nez Perce and Idaho counties in Idaho.

How SBWMV made the jump into Whitman County is unknown, but it is generally spread via cultivation, wind, and/or water. Anything that carries infested soil can spread the disease. So far, researchers haven't been able to find a common link between infested fields.

Why is the disease showing up now? Menaker pointed to the warm, wet winter as a likely suspect. In most of Eastern Washington, the ground never really froze. Data from the WSU Small Grains website, shows that the Pullman area is almost a month ahead of last year in growing degree days.

Identifying SBWMV

Menaker said it is very difficult to identify SBWMV by eye as its symptoms can mimic other problems, such as nitrogen deficiency, water logging, and early season stripe rust. The only way to be sure is with an ELISA or DNA test. Besides yellowing, plants will have missing tillers, and leaves will display a yellow/purplish mottling and mosaic. A mosaic is irregular patches of alternating light green, dark green, yellow, or white on the leaf. Infected plants will generally be located in wet locations. There is a very narrow window to collect tissue samples, usually in the spring when the wheat begins to green up. As the weather warms, disease development slows and stops. Growers should be on high alert when scouting for weeds or making herbicide passes.

"When stuff looks off, put boots on the ground and find out what's going on," Menaker said.

Yield impacts

Infected wheat will generally grow out of the disease, but plants tend to remain stunted with reduced



In March, a grower asked Menaker to take a look at some "weird yellow wheat." Yellowing of the wheat, like these areas in the background, are one of the signs that the virus is present in the soil. Photo by Morgan Menaker, Washington State University Regional Extension agronomist.

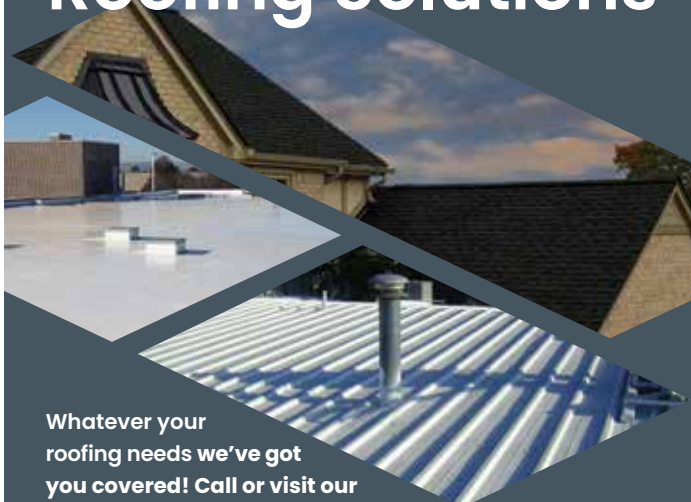
tillering. Yield reductions of 40% in susceptible varieties are common, with a 37% reduction in biomass, and a 34% reduction in heads per meter squared. One bright spot is there is no significant reduction in test weight or quality.

Managing SBWMV

As previously mentioned, once a field is infected, there is no cure, only management. Menaker's suggestions included:

- Plant early, get wheat to germinate but not get waterlogged. "Soil wetness post planting has a much greater importance than seeding dates."
- Plant known affected fields last. "It's really important that you track what fields and what farms have this problem. I recommend that is the last thing you plant. It might not be the easiest thing to do, but I would hate for you to run through that patch and then jump into your next farm and then jump down to some leased land and then back to your own land and then have an absolute mess, right?" ▶

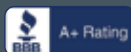
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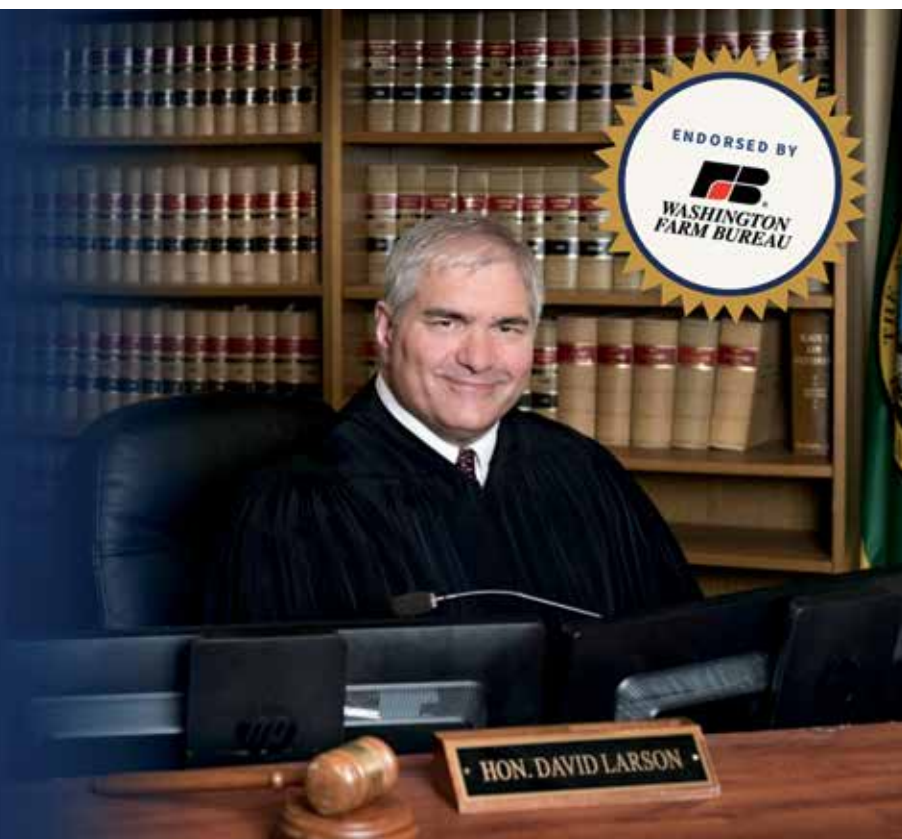
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This photo was taken while Judge Dave Larson (ret.) was a sitting judge in Federal Way.

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The only sure way to confirm the virus is with an ELISA or DNA test. Photo by Morgan Menaker, Washington State University Regional Extension agronomist.

- Choose resistant varieties. This is the only way to manage it.
- Be leery of custom planting, spraying, and harvesting. “I like that we have the option (of custom work), but you need to know where they were last, and they need to know if they were in infected soil or not.”

Resistant varieties

Because the Midwest has been dealing with SBWMV for over a century, genetic resistance is already in most of their varieties and there are known resistance genes. Testing has shown that some Pacific Northwest-adapted varieties, mostly hard red winter wheats, are already resistant. WSU wheat breeders are using genetic markers to determine which soft white wheat varieties in the variety testing program might already have some form of resistance.

In other positive news, the effort to identify the SBWMV problem got a major boost when WSU researchers were approved for a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant to support additional research.

Going forward

Menaker told growers that fall 2026 will be their first opportunity to act by considering planting varieties that have been identified as having some resistance. He is hopeful that will slow the spread of the disease. He will also be tracking yield losses and any quality impacts from the fields that were identified this year.

“If you see something crazy, some weird wheat, please call me,” he said.

More information about SBWMV and variety resistance is available at smallgrains.wsu.edu. ■



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Crafting an excellent pour

SPOKANE FESTIVAL TO SHOWCASE BEERS MADE WITH LOCALLY SOURCED-GRAIN

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

In early August, the truth behind the catchy slogan, “No Barley, No Beer,” will be on full display at the GRAINMAKER Festival in Spokane, where the public will be able to sample craft beers made with Pacific Northwest Grain and interact with brewers. The next day, brewers will visit a dryland wheat and barley farm to see how the grain they are using is grown and harvested.

This is the fifth year for the GRAINMAKER Festival, a partnership between two farmer-owned grain and malt suppliers, Linc Malt and Cold Stream Malt and Grain. Brian Estes, enterprise director for Linc Malt, said the festival is a way to showcase to the community some of the exceptional beer that is being made across the western U.S. with locally grown grain. The event will be held on Aug. 7 at Spokane’s Brick West Brewing. Tickets will be available at grainmakerbeerfest.com. Attendees will be able to sample more than two dozen beers, representing more than 40 breweries from across the western U.S.

“There’s real educational opportunities for the end consumer. One is giving local folks the opportunity to better understand and appreciate the role that grain plays in beer, but then also the fact that we are in the middle of a region with this vast potential and a really incredible track record of quality,” explained Estes. “The other thing that’s unique about the beers that are being poured is not only are they being specially made for this festival and showcasing the grain from Linc and Cold Stream, but there’s this whole



GRAINMAKER Festival attendees will enjoy live music as well as different beers using malt barley grown in our region. This will be the 5th year for the event.

concept of a collaboration beer where one brewer will host another brewer, plan the recipe together, and then get together for the brewing. It adds a whole other layer of education and engagement for the brewers that are participating.”

Matt Horlacher, one half of Cold Stream Malt and Grain, will host the brewers on his farm in Latah, Wash. He is also the Washington state representative for the National Barley Growers Association. Part of the festival proceeds will go to the Washington Association of Wheat Growers to be used to help promote and advocate for the state’s barley industry, especially to trade teams. Horlacher said bringing brewers and industry people, many of which have never seen how the grain is grown, out to his farm is a great opportunity to showcase the industry.

“It’s pretty amazing to them,” he said. “They’re always amazed by the hills we farm on and how laid back it is. I think that everybody, whether you’re producing beer, widgets, or whatever, it’s like go, go, go, and farming’s not really that way. It’s kind of an art. You have to take your time, and you have to go through the proper processes, and you can’t be in a hurry. What’s a better place to be than out on the farm?”

The number of acres planted to barley in the state has been steadily decreasing. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, Washington farmers planned to plant about 70,000 acres in 2026, down from 80,000 in 2024, but up slightly from 2025. Horlacher said one of the biggest challenges the barley industry faces is the cost of freight. Horlacher ships barley by container through Seattle, mostly to Korea. He explained that the cost to ship a container of barley to Korea is the same as what it costs him to send barley by rail to Seattle and double that to truck it to Seattle.

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drance in our ability to be competitive in the world,” he said.

This year’s GRAINMAKER festival is a little extra special. Horlacher will be part of a U.S. Grains Council malt summit the same week as the festival that will bring about 30 foreign buyers of malt and food barley to Seattle. The group will end the trip at the Spokane event.

Horlacher encouraged growers to attend the GRAINMAKER Festival, explaining that it’s a good chance to interact with customers in a relaxed setting — all while enjoying craft beer.

“It’s kind of a welcome reception for our industry. We’re bringing 40 breweries (to Spokane), and a lot of these people really enjoy being around farmers and learning about agriculture, but they don’t get the opportunity very often,” he said.

Estes seconded that thought. “Obviously, it’s the second Saturday in August, not exactly the quietest time of year for producers, but if folks are in striking distance to Spokane and have the time and ability to get away, they should,” he said. “My vision for this event is a gathering space for our local community to celebrate harvest, and yeah, that’s a hell of a thing to do while you are doing it, but it’s something worth celebrating.” ■

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Your leadership shapes our industry, our state, our country

By Kevin Klein
Chairman, Washington Grain Commission

I cannot overstate my appreciation for all of you who make the extra time and effort to serve in leadership roles in our communities, in addition to the everyday roles you undertake on the farm. It is not a small thing to freely give your extra time to your communities.

As Washington Grain Commission (WGC) commissioners, I know the majority of us serve on other boards and in our local communities. I often hear of farmers volunteering with fire and rescue, as school board members, at a local co-op, as a church board member, with the Farm Service Agency or conservation organization, and on many other committees or board positions. These volunteer opportunities, big or small, better our communities across the state.

As we work together in various capacities, it's more enjoyable to serve when we are all actively participating and making conscious efforts to get along, even when differences in opinion arise. This is how we make progress. To those in positions of leadership, I know it can be tough to serve when you come up against the scrutiny of others, but it's part of the job. When divisions arise in any organization, I have grown to truly appreciate those who come to the table with an open mind and possible solutions.

Leadership is also happening on our farms. As Washington state business owners, we come up against more challenges each year. As members of the ag community face these challenges, it is important to step into leadership roles that can help illuminate the unique challenges that agricultural businesses face. We need more growers who are willing to help us educate lawmakers and take part in the Washington Association of Wheat Growers' (WAWG) annual Olympia Days visit. Agriculture is a large portion of Washington's economy, and your leadership here can make a real, lasting difference for your farm and for generations to come.

For me on my farm, at this stage in my farming career, I am entering a new phase of leadership. My 24-year-old son is now back on the farm full time. As our roles shift, handling the long-term farm management decisions, like expansion, current farm viability, and scheduling, presents new challenges. I am constantly wondering how to begin planning for the next generation to take over the farm, and what to do to ensure long-term success for future generations.

I read somewhere that the planning should start sooner rather than later — easier said than done. I'll sit at my desk to get something started, only to stall because there is so much that goes into every step of planning, and where do I begin? Then the phone rings, and it's back to the field and shop to deal with the next breakdown.

Still, the planning must happen. It is my responsibility to be a leader on my farm.

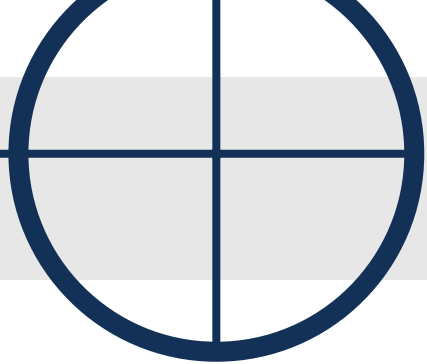
The WGC and the WAWG host an array of opportunities throughout the year to help educate growers on pertinent issues and get involved, such as WAWG's Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization seminars and Wheat College and the WGC's invitation to growers to participate in trade team visits. It's nice to have a variety of meetings to choose between, but busy schedules make it easy to miss out on these opportunities that set us up to be better leaders in our communities and on our farms.

So how does the WGC and WAWG extend our efforts to advocate for our industry? It all comes back to volunteers getting involved and doing more. We need more leaders, more people willing to step up in our local communities to keep rural America alive.

It is going to take all of us doing something extra, big or small, to continue to provide the leadership we need for the ag industry to survive. This goal is simply not achievable alone. I cannot do it myself. You cannot do it yourself. So I'm here, asking for help. We are the backbone of rural America. Showing up in our communities does make a difference, but it is a privilege that requires sacrifice. ■



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REPORTS

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

WSU variety testing program update

Maddison Dayton
*Communications and Content
Manager, Washington Grain
Commission*

Choosing which wheat or barley variety to plant is one of the most important decisions a grain producer makes each year, and the Washington State University (WSU) Extension Cereal Variety Testing Program (VTP) is a reliable tool Washington growers use to make that decision with confidence.

Selecting the right variety ensures that the crop is well-suited for the local climate, pests, and diseases. The right variety can maximize yield and, importantly, ensure that the grower is producing a crop that meets the buyers' demands each year.

Here in Washington — where the large majority of our wheat crop is exported each year — it is critical that local growers can select a variety of wheat that meets the needs of our international markets.

In the Pacific Northwest (PNW), our world-class wheat brings in interested buyers from all over the world. Selecting a variety with good end-use quality ensures PNW wheat maintains a competitive advantage.

The WSU variety testing program

Meeting these global expectations requires more than good seed, it requires reliable, local performance data. This is where WSU's VTP becomes indispensable. The mission of the VTP is to provide growers and the agribusiness industry with comprehensive information on the adaptation and performance of winter and spring wheat and barley varieties across the different climactic regions of Eastern Washington.

Washington growers rely on the VTP for objective and



Researchers, growers, and members of the public attended Lind Field Day to learn more about the various research projects being undertaken by Washington State University researchers.

updated performance data when making wheat and barley variety selection. As explained by U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service researcher and club wheat breeder Kimberly Garland-Campbell, "The WSU VTP is the foundation for multiple projects funded through the Washington Grain Commission and the Washington Research Foundation, including the Preferred Variety Brochure, soil and plant samples for mineral and nutritional uptake, and resistance to environmental, disease, and insect stressors."

Garland-Campbell also explains that, in addition to providing variety performance data for producers, the test plot data supports breeding programs by helping breeders make decisions about advancing experimental lines and provides Extension education opportunities. This ultimately leads to better performing, more profitable varieties being released to growers.

Program changes

While leadership changes have raised questions among growers, the changes have also created a unique

opportunity to modernize and strengthen the program, ensuring it remains responsive, effective, and aligned with grower priorities while recognizing the long-term economic and operational realities.

In 2026 and 2027, Garland-Campbell and WSU spring wheat breeder Mike Pumphrey are skillfully leading the VTP through this transition, and their lead technical staff, Tricia Demacon and Vadim Jitkov, are serving as coordinators for winter and spring grain trials.

A full-time VTP manager — with a focus on Extension — will be hired and trained by this seasoned team. Hiring is a long process and selecting the right candidate is critical. The current plan is to onboard this new manager before the start of the 2027 spring season. The new coordinator will join the current dryland Extension team, Rachel Wieme, Morgan Menaker, and Aaron Esser, to conduct research and outreach that answers grower needs.

Plot tours

In 2026, 18 winter wheat locations and 10 spring wheat locations were planted.

Washington maintains one of the most robust testing programs in the nation. The VTP here sustains the most test plot locations nationally in order to represent the diversity and complexity of wheat and barley growing regions. This includes soft white, club, and hard red cultivars, as well as cultivars with herbicide-resistance traits.

All of the major plant breeding entities are represented

in these variety trials; the program managers strive to analyze and send out preliminary harvest data to farmers within one week of harvest. Sign up for the prelim data mailing list by choosing the [prelimdata list](https://lists.wsu.edu/join.php) at <https://lists.wsu.edu/join.php>.

The total number of locations has been reduced from the maximum in 2024. The decision to reduce locations was made in consultation with farmers and seed suppliers to ensure the trials represent major production regions and to prioritize locations with consistently relevant data.

Variety testing funding

The WSU VTP is funded with grower dollars, with the goal always being to run a program that directly benefits growers. The time, energy, and manpower dedicated to creating a world-class variety testing program make Washington wheat more competitive and marketable on the global stage, ensuring that Washington growers always have a seat at the table.

Without reliable, locally validated data, growers risk planting varieties that underperform, fail to meet market standards, or miss premium pricing opportunities.

The variety testing leadership team actively welcomes grower input to ensure the program continues to meet real-world needs. Your feedback directly shapes goals and program priorities. Please contact the variety testing team through the small grains website or via email at small.grains@wsu.edu. ■



Researchers, growers, and members of the public attended the Washington State University variety plot tour in Douglas County.

Great wheat begins in the lab

SELECTED RESEARCH PROJECTS INCLUDE FERTILIZER ALTERNATIVES AND HEAT-RESILIENT WHEAT

Maddison Dayton

Communications and Content Manager, Washington Grain Commission

Great wheat does not start in the field, it begins in research labs and test plots, where thousands of hours of work go into developing each variety before it reaches growers. Research has always been a cornerstone of the Washington Grain Commission's (WGC) mission, helping improve wheat through traits like disease resistance, higher yield, and end-use quality to keep growers competitive.

As stewards of grower funds, the WGC prioritizes research that meets the needs of wheat producers across the state. In 2025, the process for selecting research projects was strengthened with the creation of a dedicated subcommittee, led by Jim Moyer, to provide a more

thorough evaluation of each proposal.

The subcommittee carefully reviews each project's design, goals, and relevance, then recommends funding decisions to the WGC board. Projects not selected receive feedback to support future improvement.

As research is completed, results are shared through the preferred variety brochure, publications, and field days, ensuring growers have access to the latest advancements.

Among the many excellent projects selected for funding in the 2026-27 fiscal year, here are two new projects that may be of particular interest to growers across the state. These projects include Maren L. Friesen's work on synthetic fertilizer alternatives and Andrei Smertenko's work on heat wave resilience.

Researchers exploring ways to harness nitrogen-fixing bacteria for use in grains

Friesen, associate professor in Washington State University's (WSU) Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, and Vincent James, Ph.D. candidate in molecular plant sciences at WSU, will begin their work on creating a practical, sustainable alternative to synthetic fertilizers this month.

Crop productivity relies on nitrogen as an essential nutrient for plant growth. Even though nitrogen gas makes up about 78% of the air, plants cannot use it directly. Instead, they rely on a process called nitrogen fixation, where nitrogen is converted into forms plants can absorb.

Farmers in Washington, especially wheat producers, currently depend on synthetic nitrogen fertilizers. These fertilizers work quickly and are easy for plants to use, but they come with potential drawbacks. They are expensive, and their cost can fluctuate because they rely on fossil fuels. Overuse has also caused soil acidification, which reduces crop yields and can lead to problems like aluminum toxicity. Additionally, plants do not absorb all the applied nitrogen.

Because of these issues, scientists are exploring alternatives such as biological nitrogen fixation, performed by specialized bacteria. These bacteria can convert nitrogen gas into usable nutrients for plants. Some plants, like legumes, naturally partner with these bacteria in structures called root nodules, small growths on roots where bacteria are protected and supplied with energy by the



Images on this page and facing page are of a set of isolation streaks and dilution plates used to procure bacteria in Friesen and James' research

plant. In return, the bacteria provide nitrogen. However, crops like wheat do not form these nodules, so bacteria must live more loosely around their roots where conditions are less ideal and competition is high.

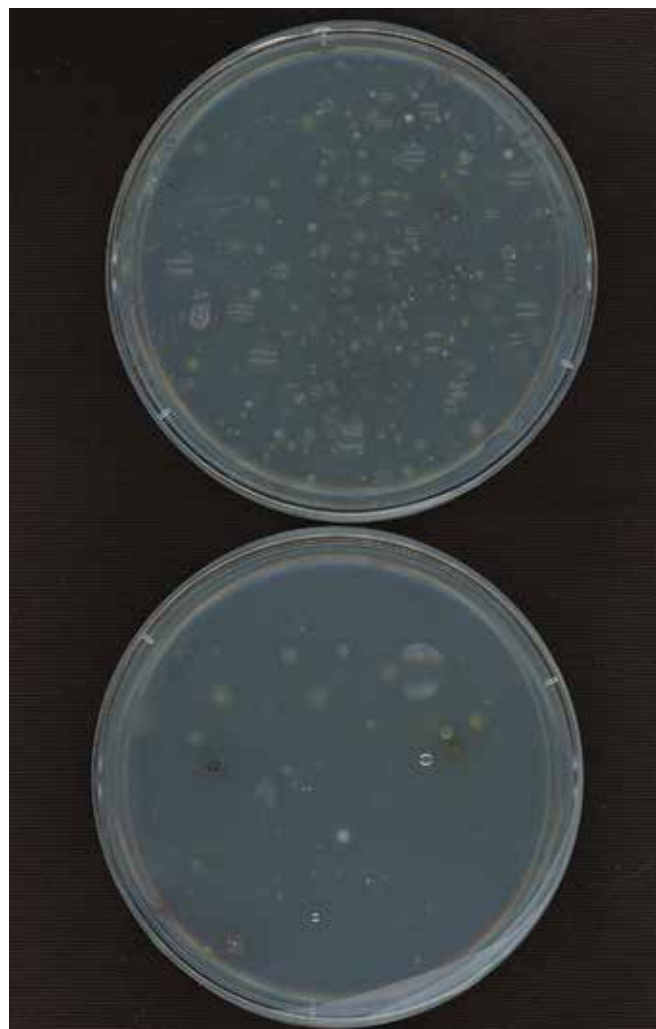
There has been growing interest in biofertilizers,

products that contain beneficial bacteria to improve plant growth. While they can sometimes boost yields, their results are inconsistent.

To address these challenges, Friesen and James's project proposes to study new ways of harnessing nitrogen-fixing bacteria for use in nonlegumes, like wheat. There are three key aspects to the research.

First, scientists will identify and test local nitrogen-fixing bacteria from soil and wheat roots. They will look for the presence of a key gene called *nifH*, which is part of the enzyme nitrogenase that enables nitrogen fixation. Second, they will look at ways of providing the correct environment for these bacteria to fix nitrogen, which requires low oxygen and high carbon. Finally, they will explore how wheat roots and these nitrogen-fixing bacteria can be encouraged to interact with one another. If successful, this system could lead to a commercial product that improves wheat production while reducing environmental impacts and reliance on fossil fuels.

The potential benefits to farmers and to society are significant. Nitrogen fertilizer currently accounts for 20-35% of farmers' costs, and much of it is wasted. A system that delivers a steady, low dose of biologically fixed nitrogen could reduce costs, improve soil health, and lower environmental impacts. It could also reduce the need for additional inputs like lime, which farmers use to counteract the soil acidity that occurs due to applications of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer. Overall, efforts by WSU and others to enhance biological nitrogen fixation could help usher in the second Green Revolution.



Project will help identify wheat varieties that perform well under heat stress

Also this month, the WGC will begin funding work on heat wave-resilient wheat by Smertenko, an associate professor in molecular plant sciences at WSU. Smertenko's proposal outlined a goal of establishing a standardized framework to help scientists and farmers identify wheat varieties that perform well under heat stress.

Heat waves, especially when they occur in late spring or early summer during flowering, are becoming more of a problem for wheat production in Washington. Flowering is a critical stage when the plant reproduces, and high temperatures can interfere with this process, ultimately reducing grain yield. These effects are even worse when heat waves happen at the same time as drought.

Growers sometimes try to avoid heat damage by planting crops earlier, but this strategy is becoming less effective as weather patterns become more unpredictable, and heat waves happen earlier in the season. As changes in the climate increase the frequency and severity of heat

and drought, it is important to understand the risks and develop varieties of wheat that are more tolerant of the stress brought by heat waves.

Wheat reproduction is particularly sensitive to heat stress, but current methods of evaluating crop performance mainly focus on the final yield at harvest. This approach misses important details about how stress affects different parts of the plant during development.

A wheat floret contains both male and female structures. The male part, called the stamen, produces pollen, while the female part, called the gynoecium, contains the ovary where seeds develop. These structures go through several stages, including meiosis, a type of cell division that produces reproductive cells, pollination, fertilization, and seed development.

Heat and drought can affect all these stages, but meiosis, anthesis, and the first two weeks of seed growth are particularly vulnerable. Because each stage depends on the previous one, damage early on can reduce the final

yield. Currently, there are no widely used methods to evaluate how each stage responds to stress separately.

To address this gap, researchers have previously conducted greenhouse experiments to test how heat and drought affect different reproductive stages in wheat. They grew three varieties of spring wheat and planted them in a staggered schedule so that different plants were at different developmental stages at the same time. The plants were exposed to drought and then briefly heated to 42°C (107°F). Scientists examined the plants' reproductive structures using fluorescence microscopy. They also measured how much yield was lost compared to unstressed plants. The results showed that different wheat varieties had different levels of tolerance at different stages. These results demonstrate that it is possible to identify varieties that are more resistant to heat stress by studying each reproductive stage carefully.

The overall goal of Smertenko's research is to create a reliable system for evaluating and certifying how well wheat varieties can tolerate heat waves. This involves developing consistent testing methods and applying them to a wide range of wheat varieties from breeding

programs. Smertenko also plans to establish field experiments where heat stress is applied in controlled conditions using specialized enclosures and heaters. The test is designed to monitor temperature closely and test plants at key developmental stages. The impact of stress will be measured using factors like grain number, grain weight, and the presence of damaged kernels. Statistical methods will be used to compare results across different varieties and stages.

The expected outcome is a standardized framework that helps scientists and farmers identify wheat varieties that perform well under heat stress. The project will also classify varieties based on their tolerance using a simple certification system: one star for tolerance at one stage, two stars for two stages, and three stars for tolerance at all key stages. Varieties with three-star certification are expected to maintain stable yields even when heat waves occur at different times.

In the long term, using heat-tolerant wheat varieties will help reduce crop losses and improve stability in food production despite increasingly variable climate conditions. ■



Nutrition overdrive

Joint research project aims to develop nutritionally enhanced grain varieties

Mike Pumphrey

Assistant Professor and Spring Wheat Breeder, Washington State University

Washington grain growers have been particularly impacted by the past several years of weather, supply chain issues, input costs, global COVID-19 pandemic uncertainties and outcomes, transportation and shipping costs, labor affordability, federal farm support policies, and other market/trade disruptions.

These are not new problems in agriculture, but if the frequency of these major challenges is any indication of more to come, it is clear we are behind and need to build on our strengths while improving our resilience to sustain farm economies in the medium and long term. While macroeconomic disruptions are not issues that Washington farmers can out-manuever year to year, Washington's current and future rain-fed grain production potential remains among the most reliable and versatile in the world.

Currently, around 90% of Washington wheat production is exported. Primarily soft white wheat or the club wheat-enriched Western White subclass is exported to Asian, Latin American, and some Middle Eastern countries for use in breads, crackers, snacks, and pastries. Thus, over 85% of planted acres in Washington currently are sown to the same winter and spring wheat class(es). Our reliable and high-quality supply that meets the strict quality requirements of portions of our customer base has provided a relatively stable market for Washington growers, with some price advantage and reliable exports.

The challenges of realizing more diverse and economically resilient Washington grain systems are substantial, though. This challenge is now further complicated by variable and declining financial support at the federal level for traditional land-grant research and Extension efforts due to policy priorities and private-sector investment during extended periods of low agricultural returns. With this in mind, we have been actively seeking



Washington State University Spring Wheat Breeder Mike Pumphrey presents at Lind Field Day, June 2026.

alternatives to enhance our ability to contribute to our grain systems.

Grain systems investments

In September 2025, a team led by Kevin Murphy of the Washington State University (WSU) Breadlab was notified of a successful application for nontraditional research and Extension support from the Washington Research Foundation (WRF), a Seattle-based private foundation founded in 1981 that “envision[s] Washington state research institutions delivering innovations that transform our lives.”

We are currently several months into a new five-year, \$19 million project to lay the groundwork for new product and market opportunities. This effort is a collaboration between WSU-based wheat and barley scientists; soil scientists; wheat quality and food science product development faculty; human digestive-system biologists and food epidemiologists; and University of Washington food science, nutrition, and policy scientists, with both financial support and collaboration from the Washington Grain Commission, the Washington Pulse Crop Commission, USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council, The

Land Institute, Port of Skagit, MGP Ingredients Inc., Brabender/Anton Paar, American Heart Association, Rockefeller Foundation, and the Meter Group.

Of the \$19 million, \$10 million comes from WRF, with the additional \$9 million in matching funds coming from a combination of in-kind and cash contributions from the institutions mentioned above, WSU, and the University of Washington.

We aim to develop new and novel nutritionally enhanced varieties while improving agronomic and nutrient management information and eventually increasing the availability and accessibility of these grains and grain-based food products. For Eastern Washington grain growers, this means systematic measurement and tracking of the flow of nutrients from our test plot fields to initial quality selections and eventually, large-scale production to human consumption.

The Washington Grain Commission’s long-term support of WSU’s variety testing program (VTP), U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Western Wheat Quality Lab (WWQL), and wheat breeding programs features heavily in these plans, and we have now started



systematic measurement of both beneficial mineral nutrients and other nutritionally relevant aspects of grain from a plant and human nutrition perspective and undesirable heavy metal levels in both soil samples and harvested grain samples from VTP and breeding plot work across the region.

WSU's Variety Testing Program, WWQL Cultivar Development Manager Alecia Kiszonas, and soil scientist Shikha Singh at the Lind Dryland Research Station, are leading the charge to better understand our soil and grain mineral dynamics. Because some of the most important changes in grain composition, including mineral contents, oils, fiber, and antioxidants, are variable among varieties and selectable by plant breeders, WSU grains breeders, Bob Brueggeman, Arron Carter, Kim Garland-Campbell, and Mike Pumpfrey, are working in concert with soil and cereal scientists like Girish Ganjyal, Emily Klarquist, and Amber Hauvermale to characterize and improve the grain nutritional composition in new varieties. Royalty income generated from current WSU commercial varieties was reinvested in this effort to provide some of the matching funds for this expanded breeding effort.

The expanded research team will collectively evaluate nutrient-dense crop varieties for key indicators of human health and consumer acceptability, followed by epidemiologic and economic research that focuses on community and population-level impacts of the foods produced. Promising existing and newly developed crop varieties with enhanced health and nutritional traits will be developed into nutritious, flavorful, and affordable food products.

Washington grain growers are uniquely positioned with sophisticated seed production and grain handling systems, the ability to grow winter and spring versions of cereal crops, diverse production areas, well-established research teams, and close relationships with research, Extension, and private sector supporters. As we have in the past 130 years, we will continue to work with our industry partners and, broadly, with our stakeholders to develop food products to add value to a more resilient grain system in the future. Perhaps the greatest limitation to many value-added specialty grain products has been their lack of inclusion in high-octane research programs. ■



(Left) A 2025 field tour of winter wheat variety trials by Pacific Northwest wheat researchers and industry in Pullman, Wash. The research team holds regular meetings to coordinate research and Extension activities and communicate among state and regional efforts. (Above) Although certainly only for specialty food uses, new, improved genetic material for blue wheat is available, which elevates antioxidant concentrations. This image shows what no blue allele, versus up to three copies of the blue allele looks like.

WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Markets seek footing as harvest advances



By Allison Thompson
Owner, The Money Farm

The wheat market has had a lot to digest this year. Poor crop ratings sparked a spring rally, harvest pressure brought a correction, global wheat production estimates improved, and now the charts are starting to show early signs of stabilization. For producers, it has been a frustrating market because the U.S. crop story is not bearish. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has confirmed a much smaller winter wheat crop than last year, yet futures have struggled to hold the strength they found earlier this spring.

That does not mean the market ignored the poor crop ratings. It traded them. Wheat futures rallied as traders added weather and production risk premium. The crop was struggling across key areas of the Plains, spring wheat ratings came in below expectations, and the market had to respect the possibility that production could

fall short. That rally made sense. The correction that followed also made sense. Once harvest got underway, the market shifted from trading what could go wrong to measuring what was actually coming out of the field.

The USDA's June reports confirmed that the U.S. winter wheat crop is significantly smaller than last year. Winter wheat production was forecast to be just over 1 billion bushels, down sharply from 2025. National yields were projected well below last year's level, and hard red winter wheat production was cut significantly. Kansas remains the clearest example. As the largest wheat-producing state, Kansas often sets the tone for the hard red winter market, and USDA expects production there to be much smaller than last year as both harvested acres and yields declined.

The crop had a difficult growing season. Drought stress, freeze events, wind, uneven moisture, and late-season storms all left their mark. Some areas caught timely rains and held together better than expected, while others never fully recovered. That is why harvest



reports have been so mixed. As combines move farther north, variability continues to be the main theme. Some producers are finding yields that are better than feared. Others are seeing the damage that poor crop conditions suggested months ago.

But quality may become just as important as yield. Rain during harvest has slowed progress in some areas and raised concerns about test weight, sprouting, and other quality problems. At the same time, early protein reports have been encouraging in places. Like yield, quality will take time to fully understand. The first loads do not always tell the whole story, and the market may need more harvest data before deciding how much value to place on this crop.

This is where harvest pressure comes into play. Even when a crop is smaller, harvest can still pressure futures. Bushels are moving, elevators are filling, and producers are making sales. Traders also become less willing to pay for unknown risk once the crop starts coming out of the field. The spring rally was built on uncertainty. The correction has been built on harvest, global supply, and the removal of some of that risk premium.

The global side of the story matters because wheat is not just a U.S. market. A smaller crop in Kansas matters, but so does a bigger crop in Russia. Lower production in Oklahoma matters, but so does favorable weather in Ukraine. Wheat buyers around the world do not care where the wheat comes from as much as they care about price, quality, and availability. In the June World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report, USDA lowered U.S. wheat production but raised production estimates in several key exporting countries, including Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine. Those gains helped keep the world balance sheet more comfortable than U.S. producers may have expected.

That is the tug-of-war. The U.S. story is supportive, but the global story is more comfortable. Right now, the market has been leaning toward the global story. Larger Black Sea production estimates and harvest pressure have limited rallies. Buyers have not panicked, and importers appear willing to wait. That keeps a lid on prices, even when U.S. production is smaller.

But that does not mean the bearish story is guaranteed to win. The market has already corrected sharply from the spring highs, and a lot of negative news may now be priced in. Traders know harvest is underway. They know global production estimates have improved. They know Black Sea wheat remains a major competitor. The question now is whether there is enough new bearish news left to keep pushing prices lower.

That is where the charts become interesting. After

several weeks of pressure, wheat futures have started to show signs of stabilization. The market has stopped falling as aggressively, some contracts have stopped making new lows, and momentum has begun to flatten. Technicians would describe that as early bottoming action. That does not mean the lows are definitely in, but it does mean the market is acting differently than it did during the heart of the correction.

A bottom is usually a process, not a single day. Markets often stop going down before they are ready to go up. They test the lows, bounce, pull back again, and force everyone to question whether the worst is over. Wheat may be entering that stage. If harvest results continue to confirm a smaller crop, quality problems become more widespread, or spring wheat weather turns threatening, wheat could find support. If global production estimates continue to grow and harvest pressure remains heavy, rallies may still struggle.

Spring wheat remains the wildcard. Earlier this season, spring wheat condition ratings came in well below trade expectations. Minnesota has generally looked strong, but conditions in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana have been more uneven. Recent rains helped stabilize parts of the northern Plains, but the crop is not made yet. By the time winter wheat harvest is winding down, spring wheat is moving through important stages of development. Heat, dryness, disease pressure, or additional stress could still change production expectations.

For producers, the takeaway is to stay balanced. The wheat market is not as bullish as it felt during the spring rally, but it may not be as bearish as it felt during the correction either. The U.S. crop is smaller. Harvest results are variable. Quality is still being determined. Spring wheat still has weather risk ahead. At the same time, global supplies remain comfortable enough to keep buyers patient, and wheat rallies will likely need fresh evidence that current supply expectations are too optimistic.

That leaves wheat caught between two stories. One story says harvest pressure and global supplies are enough to keep futures contained. The other says the market may have already priced in much of the bearish news and is starting to search for a floor. The answer will come from the fields, the weather maps, and the charts. For now, the lows may be trying to form, but the market still has to prove it. ■

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

FLOURING

Century-old mill to be given a new lease on life by community, port | By Trista Crossley

One of the most recognizable landmarks in the Palouse has been given a new lease on life, thanks to the community of Oakesdale, Wash., the Innovia Foundation, and the Port of Whitman County.

The Port was awarded a \$1 million Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) grant in January to fund critical improvements to the four-story, 13,400-square-foot J.C. Barron flour mill in Oakesdale, including replacing the roof, stabilizing the building's exterior, and extending water, sewer, and fiber utilities to the site.

"The community of Oakesdale has long had an interest in the mill. It's the source of their annual town celebration, Old Mill Days," explained Kara Riebold, executive director of the Port. "It's the last standing mill in Whitman County, and they have a lot of pride in it and a lot of community stories around it."

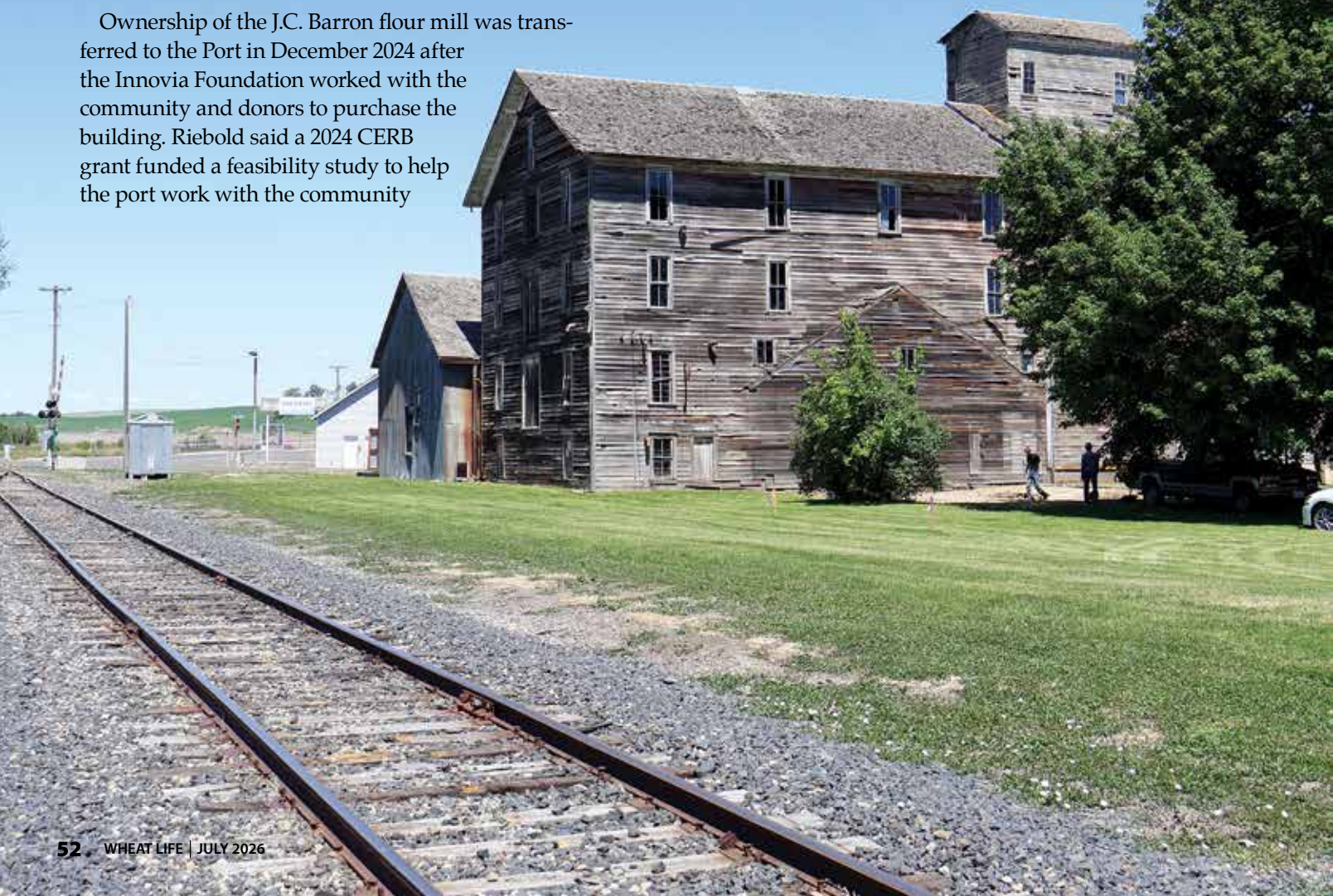
Ownership of the J.C. Barron flour mill was transferred to the Port in December 2024 after the Innovia Foundation worked with the community and donors to purchase the building. Riebold said a 2024 CERB grant funded a feasibility study to help the port work with the community

to figure out the future economic development of the building.

"By the end of the year, that first phase of building stabilization will be completed, and we'll have bought more time to refine the potential uses (of the building)," she explained. "We'll spend part of the next phase trying to move forward with that and bringing the engineering alongside so we can understand what our next capital ask is in order to tackle the inside of the mill."

Riebold said potential uses for the building vary and include retail space and/or event space, in addition to a tribute to the history of the building and the community. In the end, the building needs to support itself. The flour mill is located on Highway 27 and sees a significant amount of traffic go by.

"I think the community would like to see



some kind of coffee shop or restaurant. The building is large enough that it lends itself to some mixed use,” she said. “We’re trying to be flexible in that vision. It might take multiple users or maybe one building manager who brings in multiple users to fill the space in a way that’s affordable for all and that can sustain itself.”

The building is on the National Register of Historic Places, and the port is working with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to meet the designation requirements. On the inside, the Port and many community members would like to see photographs and/or exhibits that illustrate the building’s original use as a flour mill; however, how the building will be used will likely dictate how the interior looks.

Community involvement has been key to preserving the building and will continue to be important going forward.

“I feel like this is one where the story’s really just beginning. It is the heart of the community, and the history of it is amazing,” Riebold said.

History

Editor’s note: Most of this information was taken from the 1977 National Register of Historic Places application.

The Oakesdale flour mill was originally built in Illinois, and much of the structure and equipment moved to



The Oakesdale flour mill was originally built in Illinois and moved to Oakesdale in 1890 by J. G. Porter. In 1907 Joseph C. Barron Sr. purchased the original mill. It ran until 1960. Photographer unknown. Photo courtesy of the Oakesdale Historical Society. (WCLOA001, washingtonruralheritage.org)

Oakesdale by J. G. Porter during the late summer and autumn of 1890. The steam-powered mill was running and flour was being produced on contract by December of that same year.

In July 1892, a fire burned down almost every other wooden commercial building in the town, but the mill was untouched. By the mid-1890s, the Oakesdale Milling Company, then the name of the operation, had gained a reputation for producing one of the Pacific Northwest’s finest flours. In December 1895, with J. A. Henry as the miller, the operation was running 24 hours a day. The output was kept small, with a daily capacity of 80 barrels (196 pounds per barrel).

To store grain for flour production, a crib elevator was added to the east face of the mill in 1898. The capacity of the four wooden bins was 20,000 bushels of wheat. Throughout the late 1890s, however, and until 1907, the mill was beset by financial problems. As well as frequent changes of ownership, including a sheriff’s sale of the mill in 1897 and the temporary closing of the mill early in 1898, a number of liens and mortgages were made against the property. This ended with the February 1907 sale of the mill to Joseph C. Barron.

Barron was a second-generation miller, his father having operated a water-driven grist mill in Pennsylvania. Barron ran flouring operations in



The Model T delivery truck for the Oakesdale flour mill with a load of coal, circa 1920. The truck was driven by J.C. Barron Jr. Photographer unknown. Photo courtesy of the Oakesdale Historical Society. (WCLOA003, washingtonruralheritage.org)

Crawfordsville, Ind., and in Asotin, Wash., before coming to Oakesdale. Soon after purchasing the mill, Barron converted it to electricity and made the building housing the steam generator the family's living quarters.

Barron successfully ran the Oakesdale flour mill for over 30 years, contributing significantly to the economic stability of the town. Barron died in 1955, and his son, Joseph Barron Jr., born in 1909, took over the business. The mill closed permanently in 1960, unable to compete with larger, centralized mills, but the junior Barron wasn't done with milling. He set up a small electric specialty mill in his garage and made organic flours and cereals.

In 1998, Barron sold the mill and equipment to MaryJane Butters

Oakesdale's Old Mill Days annual celebration

Oakesdale's annual celebration inspired by the J.C. Barron flour mill, Old Mill Days, is scheduled for July 10-11, 2026. The celebration will include food and drink, music, bingo, an FFA pancake breakfast, fun run, scavenger hunt, food vendors, corgi races, and a parade.

The first ever Old Mill Days was in 1988, but was canceled for a few years before starting up again in the mid-2010s, said Oakesdale Mayor Dennis Palmer.

"The celebration is part of the town, and we needed to bring it back," Palmer said, adding that in 1919, there were 19 flour mills in Whitman County. The Oakesdale mill is the last one standing. "It (the mill) needs to be restored for future generations to see." For more on the Old Mill Days celebration, visit facebook.com/OakesdaleMuseum/. ■

of MaryJanesFarm in Moscow, Idaho. Barron died in 2000. The building remained closed, although the new owner would occasionally open it for tours. Eventually, Butters put the property up for sale, and with the help of community donors, the Spokane-based Innovia Foundation bought the property in May 2024 and transferred ownership to the Port in December 2024. ■



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THE BOTTOM LINE

Farm entities will need new 902E by September

By Paul Neiffer
Farm CPA Report

Here is the bottom line up front: if you farm through an entity, your old Form CCC-902E is about to become history. None of the existing 902Es sitting at your county Farm Service Agency (FSA) office are going to roll forward. Every entity that farms — your LLC, your S corporation, your partnership, your joint venture — will need to file a brand-new 902E by Sept. 15, 2026. No grandfathering, no exceptions.

Why the reset?

This traces back to the One Big Beautiful Bill Act and the final payment limitation rule the U.S. Department of Agriculture released June 2, 2026. We have written several times about the good news inside that rule: qualified pass-through entities (QPTEs) can now multiply payment limits by the number of actively engaged owners, members can finally be paid salaries or guaran-

teed payments without blowing up eligibility, and adjusted gross income (AGI) is tested at the owner level instead of at the entity level.

All of that flexibility comes with a catch. The old 902E was never built to capture the information FSA now needs to apply these rules. The agency can't take your 2020-era form and figure out how many limits your operation is entitled to. So, they are starting fresh which means everyone refiles, at least based on what we know and have heard.

What's new on the form

The new 902E asks questions the old one never did. The biggest change is that you now have to tell FSA exactly how the entity is taxed. Expect to identify whether you are:

- An S corporation
- An LLC not taxed as a C corporation (taxed as a partnership or disregarded)
- A partnership, LP, LLP, or LLLP
- A general partnership or joint venture
- A C corporation (which does not get multiple limits)

Why does tax classification suddenly matter so much? Because it is the gate to the multiplied limits. A C corporation is still stuck with one limit. A QPTE is what unlocks a separate limit for each qualifying owner. Check the wrong box and you could either lose limits you are entitled to or claim limits you are not.

What to do now

Don't wait until Labor Day. Here is our suggested game plan:

- Pull your current 902E from your county office so you know what FSA has on file today. Realize that your local office may not have the new form yet, and they are also dealing with the new base acres increase and may not have time to deal with the new form. Be patient.
- Confirm your entity's tax classification with your CPA and make sure your structure actually qualifies as a QPTE.
- Line up your owner information. Each owner claiming a separate limit must be actively engaged, and you'll want their details in hand.
- Get on your FSA office's calendar early. Every farm in the county is refiling at the same time, and Sept. 15 will arrive faster than you think.

This is one of those rare cases where a single piece of paperwork can be worth real money. File it right, and file it on time. ■

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Paul Neiffer, CPA, is an agribusiness and business advisor specializing in income taxation and accounting services related to farmers and processors. He's a member and past chair of the Farm Financial Standards Council and authors a monthly column for Top Producer magazine called "The Farm CPA." He is author of the Farm CPA Report, which can be subscribed to at farmcpareport.com.



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Your wheat life...



Kade Meacham chasing down Joe Roach and Chris Herron to unload in Kahlotus during harvest 2025.
Photo by Travis Matthews.

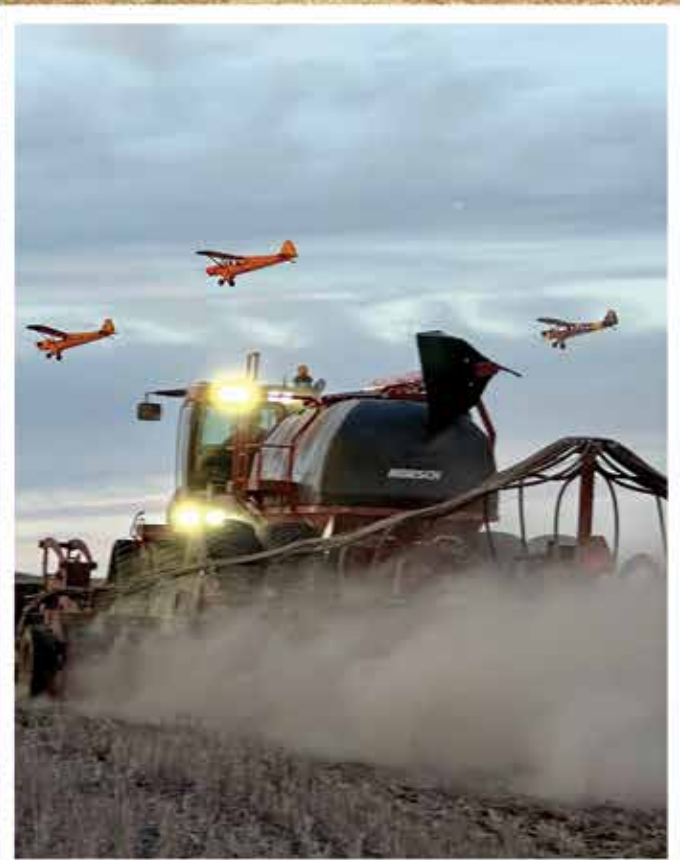


(Left) Harvest with an International 1470 at Everly Farms in Stevens County. Photo by Kristin Everly.
(Above) Calahan Bingman (3) during harvest in Pomeroy for Bingman Farms. It was his first ride to the elevator in a tandem wheat truck. Photo by Brian Bingman.



Brody Beale (2) waits with his papa (Loren Beale) to unload his dad (Sean Beale) during harvest in Pomeroy. Photo by Amanda Beale.

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



In St. John, Jacob Swannack seeds the 2026 crop with some "visitors." Photo by Don Swannack.



Fall seeding at Joe Thomas Farms in Prescott. Photo by John Thomas.

HAPPENINGS

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

JULY 2026

3 WSU VARIETY TESTING CROP TOUR.

Bickleton, Wash., at 10 a.m. For information call Mike Pumphrey at (509) 592-5234 or smallgrains.wsu.edu/variety/

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

4 FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION.

Entertainment, fireworks. Sunnyside Park in Pullman, Wash. visit-pullman.com

10-12 CHENEY RODEO.

Dances Friday and Saturday nights after rodeo. Saturday parade. Cheney, Wash. cheneyrodeo.com

11-12 OLD MILL DAYS. Food and drink, music, bingo, an FFA pancake breakfast, fun run, scavenger hunt, vendors, corgi races, and a parade. Oakesdale, Wash. facebook.com/OakesdaleMuseum/

11 WATERVILLE FARM & CRAFT

MARKET. Vendors offering homegrown/homemade items. historicwatervillewa.org/farmers-market

17-19 PIONEER DAYS. Parade, live music, BBQ, and vendors. Davenport, Wash. davenportpioneerdays.org

25 PALOUSE MUSIC FESTIVAL. The festival opens at 11 a.m. and concludes at 7 p.m. and features local musicians performing throughout the day. There

will also be vendors and a beer garden. Hayton-Greene Park in Palouse, Wash. palouseartscouncil.org

31-AUG. 2 KING SALMON DERBY.

Over \$10,000 in cash and prizes available. Registration required. Brewster, Wash. brewstersalmonderby.com

AUGUST 2026

1 SCOTTISH HIGHLAND GAMES.

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

5-8 YAKIMA VALLEY FAIR AND RODEO.

PRCA rodeo, cowboy market, car show, beer garden. County Fair Park in Grandview, Wash. yvfair-rodeo.com

6-8 MOXEE HOP FESTIVAL. Parade, beer garden, live entertainment, food and crafts, games, BBQ cookoff. Moxee, Wash. evcea.org

8 WATERVILLE FARM & CRAFT

MARKET. Vendors offering homegrown/homemade items. historicwatervillewa.org/farmers-market

13-16 OMAK STAMPEDE. Pow Wow, carnival, rodeo, dances, and vendors. Omak, Wash. omakstampepe.org

18-22 GRANT COUNTY FAIR. Exhibits, carnival, arts and crafts, entertainment, food. Moses Lake, Wash. gcfair.fun

20-22 LINCOLN COUNTY FAIR. Rodeo, livestock, exhibits, food and games. Davenport, Wash. lincolncountywa.com/497/Fair-Rodeo

21-30 NORTH IDAHO FAIR AND

RODEO. Fireworks, rodeo, petting zoo, entertainment, carnival. Kootenai County Fairgrounds in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. northidahostatefair.com

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

25-29 BENTON FRANKLIN FAIR AND

RODEO. Demolition derby, parade, live entertainment. Kennewick, Wash. bentonfranklinfair.com

26-30 NCW FAIR. Live entertainment, carnival, livestock sale, and rodeo. Waterville, Wash. ncwfair.org

29 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. ■

Email listings to editor@wawg.org. Include date, time and location of event, plus contact info and a short description.



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Advertiser Index

Adams Tractor	11	Eljay Oil.....	57	Pomeroy Grain Growers	55
AGPRO	21	Farm & Home Supply.....	9	ProGene.....	19
AgWest Farm Credit.....	9	Fluid Roofing	33	Romafa Metal Works	54
Albaugh	7	Gateway Materials & Trailers	57	Rubisco Seeds	63
Austin Drone Solutions.....	37	Great Plains Equipment	5	Scales Unlimited	61
Bank of Eastern Washington	40	HighLine Grain Growers	37	Spectrum Crop Development ...	13
Barr-Tech Compost.....	55	J & M Fabrication.....	38	State Bank NW	37
Butch Booker	21	Joe Schmick	35	T & S Sales	17
Byrnes Oil Company.....	55	Jones Truck & Implement.....	40	Terraplex Pacific NW.....	39
Class 8 Trucks	31, 55	Kincaid Real Estate	21	The McGregor Company	64
CO Energy	35	Mary Dye	35	Valley Wide Coop	31
Coldwell Banker Tomlinson.....	37	Matt Boehnke.....	38	Vantage-PNW.....	39
Coleman Oil	15	McKay Seed.....	40	Western Insurance	21
Country Financial	21	Mike Baumgartner for Congress .	31	Wheatland Bank	15
Custom Seed Conditioning	33	North Pine Ag Equipment	17	Washington Crop Improvement	
Dave Larson	33	Northwest First Realtors.....	40	Association.....	20
Edward Jones.....	29	PNW Farmers Cooperative.....	13	Yunker Brothers.....	61



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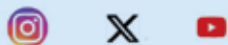


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LBS PER ACRE							LBS PER ACRE			
Control Mean	3743	3399	2683	3128	4711	4403	Private trials			
Rubisco Seeds' Hybrids										
KICKER	4972	4701	4383	3505	5841	5394	KICKER	4678	6667	6828
MERCEDES	4419	4359	3756	3881	5393	4798	MERCEDES	4945	6569	6167
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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