

WHEAT LIFE

The official publication of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers

OCTOBER | 2026

HARVEST 2026



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109 East First Avenue, Ritzville, WA 99169

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2026 convention preview

Q&A with congressional candidates running to represent Eastern Washington

WGC Annual Report

Meet Peanut, a horse that's afraid of cows (and other things)

WHEAT LIFE

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President's Perspective



Farmers looking out for farmers

By Gil Crosby

President, Washington Association of Wheat Growers

I am proud and happy to be part of one of the greatest industries with such a vast and welcoming community. One of the things I appreciate most about agriculture is that no matter where you travel in the world, you can find a fellow farmer, and when you do, there is an instant connection.

There is always something to talk about, whether it is the weather, markets, equipment, crops, or simply the challenges that come with farming. We can commiserate over the things that didn't go right, celebrate the things that did, and share stories that only another farmer would truly understand.

You can find a farmer in a small local community or in the middle of a major city anywhere around the globe, and chances are, you will have something in common. That is what makes agriculture so special. We may farm different crops, use different equipment, and live thousands of miles apart, but the connection is the same. We are all part of something bigger than ourselves, a worldwide agricultural community that understands the hard work, the uncertainty, the rewards, and the pride that comes with feeding the world.

I was reminded of that last month while I was in Iowa. I had the opportunity to meet with several corn and soybean farmers, and as we talked, it became pretty clear that farmers across the country are dealing with many of the same concerns. Low commodity prices, high fertilizer and fuel costs, labor challenges, and uncertainty about what the future holds for our family farms are issues that cross state lines and crop types.

But what makes me especially proud to be part of this community is that, despite all those challenges, farmers still look out for one another. We have a long history of helping a neighbor in need or lending a hand to a fellow farmer. Sometimes that means lending equipment, helping get a crop harvested, fixing a piece of machinery, or simply showing up when someone needs help. And there are countless stories of entire communities coming together to help a farm family through a difficult time.

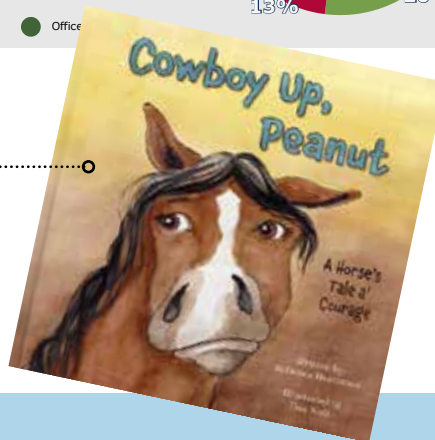
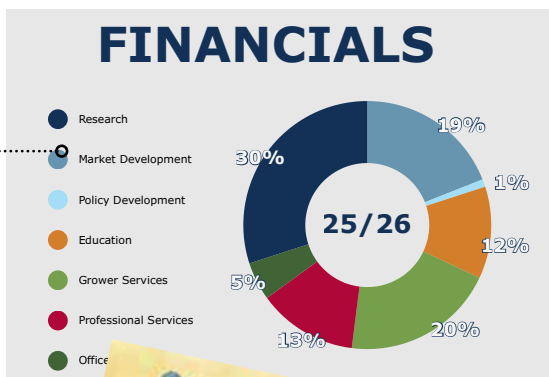
That willingness to help is something special. No matter what we farm or where we farm, when a fellow farmer needs help, we come together. It is one of the things that makes agriculture more than just an industry. It is a community built on hard work, trust, and a willingness to help one another. No matter where we farm or what we raise, at the end of the day, we are all farmers, and that connection reaches far beyond our own fields.

This is why I am so proud to represent every wheat farmer across the state of Washington. It is also why, almost every day, I am reminded of the words from Paul Harvey's famous speech, "So God Made a Farmer." When Harvey described the farmer as the caretaker of God's creation, he captured something that goes far beyond simply growing a crop. Farmers are caretakers of the land, providers for our families and communities, and stewards of an industry that feeds people around the world. ■

Cover photo: Eastern Washington is famous for its steep hills that making harvest "interesting." Hired man Cole Dahmen navigates the hills at the Jim Bauer Sons Farm in Colton, Wash. Photo by Lee Bauer. See more harvest photos on page 18. All photos are Shutterstock images or taken by *Wheat Life* staff unless otherwise noted.

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WAWG MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please check level of membership

- ☐ Student \$90
 ☐ Family \$250 (up to 2 members)
 ☐ Grower \$150
 ☐ Partnership \$600 (up to 5 partners)
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 ☐ Convention \$720
 ☐ Industry Associate \$250
 ☐ Lifetime \$3,000

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Zip

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Thank you to our current members

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If you are not a member, please consider joining today.

LEVELS OF MEMBERSHIP

	Greensheet Newsletter	Wheat Life Magazine	National Wheat Grower Newsletter	Annual Harvest Prints	WAWG Convention Free Registration	One Vote per Member
Producer/Landowners (Voting Membership)						
Grower or Landlord \$150	X	X	X			X
Family \$250 (2 family members)	X	X	X			X
Partnership \$600 (1-5 family members)	X	X	X			X
Convention \$720 (2 individuals)	X	X	X		X	X
Lifetime \$3,000 (1 individual)	X	X	X	X		X
Non-Voting Membership						
Student \$90	X	X	X			
Industry Associate \$250	X	X	X			

WAWG's current top priorities are:

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

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

More member benefits:

- Greensheet ALERTS • WAWG updates
- Voice to WAWG through opinion surveys
- National Wheat Grower updates
- State and national legislative updates



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Message to growers impacted by quality loss discounts

To Washington wheat growers who experienced quality losses due to low-protein harvest results, please know that the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) recognizes the seriousness of the situation and the financial strain these discounts may place on your operation. Many producers have worked through a challenging growing season and, despite strong yields in some areas, reduced protein levels have affected the overall value of harvested wheat.

WAWG has begun conversations with regional and national agencies, as well as members of Washington's congressional delegation, to raise awareness of the issue and pursue potential options for assistance. Our focus is on identifying a viable pathway that acknowledges these quality-related losses and provides meaningful support for affected producers.

"We understand the uncertainty this situation creates for growers and farm families," WAWG Executive Director Michelle Hennings said. "WAWG will continue working on your behalf with the Washington Grain Commission, industry partners, policymakers, and agency leaders to seek practical solutions that will help protect the economic stability of Washington wheat operations."

While in Washington, D.C., in mid-September, Hennings and representatives from Oregon and Texas wheat met with officials at the Risk Management Agency to discuss the need for crop insurance to better address quality losses. The group told RMA that producers are facing quality discounts of up to \$2 per bushel



While in Washington, D.C., for a farm bill fly-in, wheat leaders from Washington, Oregon, and Texas met with Ken Selzer, associate administrator of the Risk Management Agency, to talk about quality discounts that don't trigger insurance indemnities. Pictured (from left) are Selzer; Steelee Fischbacher, executive director at the Texas Wheat Producers Board and Association; Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG); Thad Eakin, president of the Oregon Wheat Growers League; Andy Juris, WAWG past president; Amanda Hoey, CEO of the Oregon Wheat Commission; and Jeff Malone, WAWG past president.

for issues that don't currently qualify for insurance indemnities, specifically:

- In some areas of the Pacific Northwest, soft white wheat protein levels dropped to 6–7% this year (against a 9–10.5% target). Current RMA policies lack discount factors for protein, leaving some growers to absorb a potential \$.30 dockage per bushel. According to the Wheat Marketing Center, the overall crop average is 9.1%.
- Current insurance tables for test weight do not trigger until levels fall below 51 pounds. Standard milling wheat contracts generally specify a test weight of 58 pounds.
- The threshold for reduction in value calculations in falling numbers is currently set at 200, a level that may be scientifically arbitrary and fails to account for economic losses from falling numbers that register between 200 and 300. In addition, the current falling numbers endorsement has low adoption rates due to prohibitive premium costs.

RMA officials acknowledged growers' concerns and committed to working with producer groups in the future. ■

October board meeting

The next state board meeting of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 29, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Wheat Foundation Building in Ritzville. ■

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ARC/PLC enrollment open

Producers can make elections and enroll for the 2026 crop year through Dec. 11, 2026, and for the 2027 crop year from Nov. 2, 2026, through March 15, 2027. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently updated the programs to include more than 30 million new base acres.

Because eligible acres exceeded the nationwide 30-million-acre cap, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is applying an across-the-board, prorated reduction of 3.69% to all newly allocated base acres. Landowners did not lose base acres through the base allocation process. If landowners did not notify FSA of changes, the base allocation summary is considered accurate and complete; however, an across-the-board factor will apply. FSA determined the base allocation reduction using all acreage reported as eligible, and new base acres will automatically be allocated to farms after applying the 3.69% reduction. Landowners can access notifications at fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc using a Login.gov account. Landowners who do not currently have an account can contact their FSA county office to obtain their base allocation notification.

Producers can now change their election and enroll in ARC-County or PLC, which both provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual, which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2026 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each

year. Existing multiyear contracts ended in 2025, but producers have the option to sign a new multiyear contract for 2026 through 2031. Producers who opt out of a multiyear contract can enroll for the 2027 crop year starting Nov. 2, 2026, through March 15, 2027.

If producers do not submit their 2026 election by Dec. 11, 2026, their election remains the same as their 2025 election for crops on the farm, and the farm is ineligible for payments for the 2026 program year. Landowners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

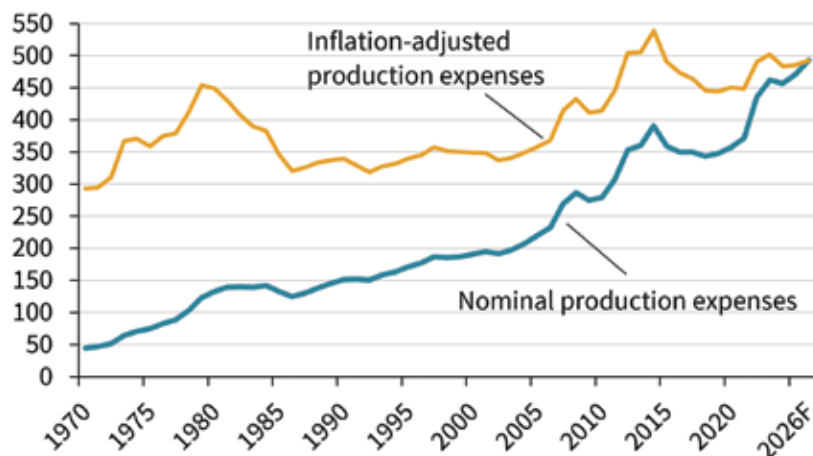
Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium and short grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed, and wheat.

Producers can make program elections and enroll either online at fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc using a Login.gov account or by making an appointment at their local FSA office. Producers are reminded that ARC and PLC election and enrollment can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products.

Producers can now add Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) coverage or the Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) regardless of their ARC or PLC election. Previously, pro-

Nominal and inflation-adjusted U.S. farm production expenses, 1970-26F

Dollars (billions)



Note: F = forecast. Values are adjusted for inflation using the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Gross Domestic Product Price Index (BEA API series code: A191RG) rebased to 2026 by USDA, Economic Research Service.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Farm Income and Wealth Statistics. Data as of September 3, 2026.

PRODUCTION EXPENSES FORECAST. Farm production expenses are forecast at \$492.8 billion in 2026, up from the 2025 estimate of \$471.6 billion, an increase of \$21.2 billion (4.5%). When adjusted for inflation, the expenses are forecasted to increase by \$7.1 billion (1.5%) from their 2025 levels.

Livestock/poultry purchases, feed, and cash labor are expected to be the three largest production expense categories. In 2026, livestock/poultry purchases are projected at \$71.9 billion, up \$7.4 billion (11.4%) from 2025 in nominal terms. With this increase, livestock/poultry purchases would exceed feed expenses for the first time, making it the single largest expense category in 2026. Feed spending is projected at \$69.5 billion, down \$1.5 billion (2.1%) from 2025. Cash labor expenses are forecast at \$44.3 billion for 2026, which is generally comparable to 2025 (down \$0.4 billion or 0.8%). After adjusting for inflation, the declines in feed and cash labor are larger — 5% and 3.7%, respectively.

Among other categories, pesticide expenses (spending on agricultural chemicals and application costs) are projected to decline in 2026 relative to 2025 (by \$1.4 billion, or 6.6%), while fertilizer, lime, and soil conditioner expenses are expected to increase in 2026 (by \$5.3 billion or 15.3%). Fuel and oil expenses are also expected to increase (by \$4.8 billion or 28.8%).

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



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ducers who elected ARC-CO or ARC-IC were ineligible to purchase the SCO through their approved insurance provider for the same acres.

For more information on ARC and PLC, visit fsa.usda.gov/resources/income-support/arc-plc or contact your local FSA county office. ■

Assistance available for land impacted by drought, wildfire

Agricultural operations in Washington have been significantly impacted by recent drought and wildfires. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from these adverse weather events.

Livestock producers who suffered grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash-leased land, or fire on federally managed land, may be eligible for the 2026 Livestock Forage Disaster Program.

The Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides eligible producers with compensation for feed and grazing losses. ELAP can also help offset the above-normal economic impacts of transporting livestock to feed or hauling feed and water to sustain livestock through these conditions.

FSA also offers a variety of direct and guaranteed farm loans, including operating and emergency farm loans, to producers unable to secure commercial financing. Producers in counties with a primary or contiguous disaster designation may be eligible for low interest emergency loans to help them recover from production and physical losses. Additionally, FSA offers several loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their farm loan programs debt to the agency because of reasons beyond their control.

Outside of the primary nesting season, emergency and nonemergency haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres may be authorized to provide relief to livestock producers in areas affected by a severe drought or similar natural disasters.

During the primary nesting season, emergency grazing of CRP is authorized at a 50% reduction of normal carrying capacity when a county triggers for the Livestock Forage Disaster Program due to a qualifying drought. Additionally, nonemergency grazing can also be requested during the primary nesting season. Producers interested in haying or grazing of CRP acres should contact their county FSA office to determine eligibility.

Additional USDA disaster assistance information can be found on farmers.gov, including USDA resources specifically for producers impacted by drought and wildfire. ■

NRCS-WA taking applications for conservation programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to put Farmers First through a historic investment in conservation on agricultural lands through USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

While NRCS accepts applications year-round, interested agricultural producers in Washington should apply by Dec. 18, 2026, to be considered for fiscal year 2027 funding. Programs include:

- **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).** ACEP enables producers to protect their agricultural land from development by enrolling it in a permanent agricultural land easement. The Wetland Reserve Easement component of ACEP helps landowners protect, restore, and enhance wetlands which have been previously degraded due to agricultural uses.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).** CSP helps producers build on existing conservation efforts while strengthening their operation.
- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).** EQIP provides producers with the technical and financial resources they need to address resource concerns on their land including improved water and air quality, increased soil health, reduced soil erosion, improved natural vitality, and more.

NRCS is also providing additional financial assistance nationwide through the Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP), which enables producers to implement whole-farm regenerative practices through a single application for EQIP and CSP. Additionally, producers can apply to participate in a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) project. The ranking date for RCPP applications will be announced at a later date. ■

Are you receiving your ALERT?

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



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In Congress, Michael has fought for farmers, protected the dams, and helped pass the Farm Bill through the House. Michael grew up in Colton, in wheat country, and he knows our values and our priorities. Join these supporters in voting for Michael Baumgartner.

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<i>Sen. Mark Schoesler</i>	<i>Dennis Hanson</i>	<i>Jay Holzmillier</i>
<i>Fred Fleming</i>	<i>Don McQuary</i>	<i>Richard Quirk</i>
<i>Matt Hanson</i>	<i>Mark Wagoner</i>	<i>Carol Chipman</i>
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POLICY MATTERS

Washington growers take part in all-ag farm bill fly-in

On Sept. 16, the Senate Ag Committee voted to advance the 2026 Farm Bill (also called the Agricultural Act of 2026) on a party line vote. The bill now heads to the full Senate for consideration.

“Farm country is hurting and needs results now. Advancing this bill out of committee is a critical step toward getting a fully updated farm bill signed into law. While this is clearly welcome progress, we need more of our colleagues’ votes to reflect the urgency of supporting farmers, ranchers, forest landowners, and rural communities,” said Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.), chair of the ag committee, in a statement.

The legislation includes several priorities important to wheat farmers, including support for agricultural research, risk-management and trade programs, expanded access to agricultural credit, and the permanent transfer of the Food for Peace program to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In a press release following the committee action, the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) called on the full Senate to take action quickly.

“We applaud Chairman Boozman and members of the committee for addressing many of the challenges facing wheat farmers and moving this legislation forward,” said NAWG CEO Sam Kieffer. “But committee action must not be the end of the road. Wheat growers are still facing



In a meeting with Kyle Kunkler (fifth from right), Environmental Protection Agency deputy assistant administrator in the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, growers discussed glyphosate and Waters of the U.S. legislation.

stubbornly high input costs and prolonged global uncertainty, while operating under a farm bill that hasn’t kept pace with today’s economic realities. Senate leadership must bring the farm bill to the floor and pass it as soon as possible.”

The House passed its version of the 2026 Farm Bill on April 30. The current farm bill extension was set to expire on Sept. 30.

In the days leading up to the committee’s consideration



Wheat growers met with Richard Fordyce (seventh from left), undersecretary for farm production and conservation at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The group discussed program delivery and crop insurance issues.

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When a whirlwind of wildfires swept through Spokane and Nine Mile Falls, tragedy struck with breathtaking speed. In a matter of hours, friends, family, and neighbors were displaced, while others faced the unimaginable loss of their homes and cherished memories.

Refusing to stand by while our community suffered, we rallied together to launch a dedicated supply drive.

Our initial goal was simple: collect basic school supplies to provide immediate relief. But as donations poured in, the momentum grew, allowing us to expand our scope far beyond what we first envisioned. Thanks to an overwhelming surge of community support, we directly assisted three local schools—distributing essential classroom supplies, hygiene products, household necessities, and comforting items to families navigating an impossible transition.

This massive effort was only possible because our community stood shoulder-to-shoulder. We owe a special debt of gratitude to our key business partners who answered the call without hesitation: **Demco Trailers, Truck Paper, and Leland Trailer**. We also extend our deepest thanks to the **countless friends, family members, and anonymous donors** who stepped up. While we cannot list every name, every single contribution made a measurable difference.

We are deeply humbled to be in a position to help fill such a critical need. To every family still working to rebuild: know that you are not standing alone. We are Spokane Strong, we are steadfastly in your corner, and you remain in our constant thoughts and prayers.

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During their D.C. farm bill fly-in, Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) leaders were able to meet with Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) to talk about input costs in the Pacific Northwest and thank him for his years of service and support of the state's agricultural industry. Newhouse is not running for re-election this year. Pictured, from left, are Jeff Malone, WAWG past president; Newhouse; Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director; and Andy Juris, WAWG past president. WAWG leaders also met with the offices of Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.).

of the bill, more than 70 farmers representing eight commodity and agricultural organizations visited nearly every Senate office to advocate for the legislation. The group included the American Farm Bureau Federation, National Corn Growers Association, American Soybean Association, USA Rice, National Association of Wheat Growers, Farm Credit Council, American Bankers Association, and National Sorghum Producers.

Staff and leaders of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) participated in the fly-in, including Michelle Hennings, WAWG executive director.

"The timing of this commodity fly-in was crucial," Hennings said. "Having so many different ag sectors come together and advocate for the farm bill shows the importance of this legislation to the industry. The economy has changed significantly since the last farm bill was passed in 2018, and it is imperative that we modernize it so that farmers have the tools they need to keep farming."

Besides meeting with members of the Senate, wheat growers also participated in meetings with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Farm Service Agency, and the Risk Management Agency. ■

Opinion: Farmers fed up with fertilizer companies taking advantage of our farms

Reprinted with permission from the Iowa Corn Growers Association

In early September, in Ogden, Iowa, farmers of commodities ranging from corn to soybeans to wheat and specialty crops gathered from every corner of

the country to attend the "Fed Up: Fertilizer Cartel Profits on Farmers' Backs" fertilizer hearing. That title might sound extreme, but so is watching family farms across the nation shutter their doors at continually increasing rates.

We came together to share our stories, and while our crops differ, our reality is identical. Consolidation in the fertilizer industry is bleeding the American farmer dry.

When it comes to market concentration, potash, phosphates, and nitrogen are all highly concentrated at the local level. The fertilizer industry continues to push the narrative that it is an international market, but that is not the reality where we actually shop. One company, Mosaic, controls roughly 75% of U.S. phosphate production, while Nutrien controls potash and is vertically integrated down to the retail level so they can push out smaller retailers and co-ops.

With only a handful of mega-corporations dictating terms, there is no shopping around. We don't get to negotiate; we are handed a price tag and forced to take it.

Industry defenders claim that these price spikes are purely the result of global supply chain shocks rather than domestic consolidation. But deflecting blame to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz or "uncontrollable global forces" is a moot point when a company that controls three-quarters of the market share actively lobbies in Washington to block foreign supply and eliminate the very international competition that would otherwise keep domestic prices in check.

Farmers are tired of being fed lies as to why it is justified that we pay double the price for these essential inputs we need to produce food, fiber, feed, and fuel used around the

world. They call it “national security.” But true national security isn’t found in corporate earnings reports. It’s found in independent American farmers who can afford to farm with access to a fair, competitive pricing for our inputs.

We do not possess the subpoena power to investigate prices or litigate corporate collusion on our own. That duty falls directly on the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Department of Justice, and state attorneys general. The FTC announced its fertilizer investigation at the first “Fed Up” hearing in Texas back in May, which was a welcome sight to producers who have long asked for an investigation. But an investigation alone won’t keep farms open. We must hold these agencies accountable and ensure they follow through, treating the fertilizer monopolies investi-

gation as an urgent priority rather than an easy gesture to appease desperate farmers.

I am fed up. My fellow farmers are fed up. It is time to prioritize fair prices for the American farmer instead of ensuring the pocketbooks of the fertilizer giants continue to grow at the expense of rural America.

If you are a farmer who is fed up and ready to stand with us, or if you have evidence of anti-competitive practices by fertilizer oligopolies, sign your name and share your story at savefamilyfarms.us. ■

Steve Kuiper is president of the Iowa Corn Growers Association. He has been farming for over 38 years, growing corn and soybeans on his family’s farm in Marion County.

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Washington is one of the nation's most export-dependent wheat-producing states. While some of what we grow stays closer to home, the vast majority heads overseas. Our wheat becomes everything from noodles and cakes to crackers, breads, and traditional foods enjoyed by families around the world.

The world loves our signature soft white and club wheats. Their light color, mild flavor, and baking characteristics make it highly sought after in markets throughout Asia and beyond.

Exporting grain isn't just about finding a market for what we grow. It's also about being part of something much bigger. Not every country has the land, climate, water, or agricultural infrastructure to grow all of the food its people need. Washington does have the ability to grow an abundance of high-quality wheat, and international trade allows that abundance to reach people around the world.

That connection matters. A wheat field in Lincoln County can ultimately help stock a bakery in Manila, supply a mill in Japan, or become part of a family's meal in Ho Chi Minh. At the same time, those international customers help sustain our farms and the rural communities built around them. It's a relationship that works both ways: Washington farmers need the world, and the world needs farmers like us here in Washington.

The journey

For many Washington wheat farmers, their connection to the global marketplace begins surprisingly close to home.

After harvest, wheat moves from farms to local elevators, and then into a transportation network of trucks, railroads, and barges. Much of the wheat grown in Eastern Washington ultimately travels down the Columbia-Snake River System to export terminals near Portland and Vancouver, where it is loaded onto ocean-going vessels.

That makes transportation infrastructure, including the dams and locks on the Columbia and Snake rivers, an important part of Washington wheat's competitiveness.

Efficient transportation helps farmers hundreds of miles inland reach customers thousands of miles away.

Who buys our wheat?

The Philippines has long been an important market for U.S. soft white wheat, where it is used in products ranging from cakes and cookies to pan de sal, the soft, slightly sweet bread rolls that are a staple on Filipino tables. Japan prizes Washington-grown soft white and club wheat for products including delicate sponge cakes, cookies, and noodles.



Across Asia, buyers choose Washington wheat because different wheat classes perform differently in the kitchen. The characteristics that make soft white wheat ideal for a tender cake aren't necessarily the same characteristics needed for a chewy loaf of bread. That means Washington isn't simply producing a commodity. We are growing wheat with particular end uses and customers in mind.

It's easy to look across a wheat field in Eastern Washington and think of it as a very local landscape. But the crop growing there is connected to ports, rivers, railroads, international buyers, millers, bakers, and, ultimately, families around the world.

Every bushel has somewhere to go.

And for Washington wheat, that "somewhere" might be a bakery in Manila, a noodle shop in Japan, a kitchen in the Middle East — or a grocery store right here at home. ■

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HARVEST 2026

Photos and stories by Trista Crossley, *Wheat Life* editor

While other parts of the U.S. suffered through drought and a poor wheat harvest, the Pacific Northwest was the nation's bright spot. Thanks to a cooler summer, many producers saw average to above-average yields with good quality. There were some reports of frost damage in the higher elevations and some scattered reports of low falling numbers. While overall protein levels averaged just above 9%, according to the Wheat Marketing Center, some elevators began discounting wheat with protein below 9%. As we roll into October, most Eastern Washington producers have turned their attention to seeding next year's winter wheat crop.

For the 2026 harvest, we spent time with the Schafer family in Franklin County, the Goetz family in Grant County, and the Powers family in Klickitat County. All of these families are proud of their farming heritage and are working hard to leave their land in better shape for the next generation. Read more about these remarkable Eastern Washington families on the following pages and see photos of their harvests. ■



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Windy Acres Farms, Franklin County

As Andrew and Jessica Schafer's kids — Riley (9), Aiden (7), and Sloan (4) — grow, so does the struggle to keep up with their favorite harvest tradition.

"We pile all five of us into the combine to go cut the outside round and test the wheat, to make sure it's ready," Schafer explained. "We have photos to prove it for the last four years. It's getting more cramped (in the combine cab) the bigger they get."

The Schafer family farms in Franklin County between Connell and Kahlotus. Schafer is the fourth generation. The farm, Windy Acres Farms, was established in the 1940s by Schafer's great-grandfather. In 2013, Schafer and his wife left careers in hospitality to take up farming full time. They mostly grow two to three varieties of winter wheat for seed for local seed dealers. Schafer said he drives the combine a little slower when harvesting to help the machine clean the grain better.

"We don't have as much foreign material in the bulk tank, and that makes it easier for the seed cleaner to process the grain and be able to clean it for seed purposes," he said. "We also have everything segregated. We have to blow out combines and trucks and clean out augers and pits and tanks when we switch varieties."

During harvest, Schafer has a "smorgas-bord" of help. He has several cousins and friends who rotate in to help. One constant is full-time employee Paul MacDuff, another relative. That rotation is likely to include Schafer's kids at some point in the near future. He said his oldest daughter, Riley, spent a few solo hours on the chisel plow this spring and is excited to learn to drive the combine. Having



Andrew and Jessica Schafer are the fourth generation to farm Windy Acres Farms, which was established in the 1940s in Franklin County. Pictured, from left, are Jeff Habberstad, Aiden Schafer (7), Andrew Schafer, Sloan Schafer (4), Riley Schafer (9), Jessica Schafer, Paul MacDuff, and harvest dog, Lee.

family involved in the farm is very important to Schafer.

"I think it's where our roots began. It kind of centers everybody," he said. "We're all so caught up in the social media world and 'keeping up with the Joneses' that it really allows everyone to center themselves and realize what's important in life and realize it's an important task, feeding the world and our community. The value of a hard day's work and seeing what you accomplished in a day is pretty rewarding."

Going into the 2026 harvest, Schafer was anticipating challenges with fuel and labor costs.

"We use probably 350 gallons of diesel a day, and with the current cost of fuel, we're probably talking a \$1,000 difference a day on operating expenses alone from last year," he said. ■





Goetz Wheat Farms JV, Grant County

The Goetz family grows winter wheat and some canola about seven miles north of Marlin in Grant County. Kevin Goetz is the fifth generation to farm in the area; he and his wife, Jennifer, returned to the family's operation in 1997.

"I've farmed with my dad, Les, ever since 1997. We were in partnership from 1997 to 2015, and technically, we still farm together, but I started to buy him out in 2016. Now, Jennifer and I are the operators, and dad's the best hired man that I have or could ever have," Goetz said. His appreciation has only grown throughout the years. "I took (working with family) a little bit for granted when I first started out. When I got out of my 20s and into my 30s, I began to appreciate it more and to realize how much you really do enjoy working together and balancing ideas off each other. I value it more every day."

Goetz's three sons, Kameron, Jared, and Luke, have grown up helping out on the farm and pitch in during harvest when they can; currently Kameron and Jared are headed to careers in medical fields, while Luke just graduated from high school and is off to college to study business. Goetz said although his



Three generations of the Goetz family and their harvest crew getting ready to start the day's work near Hartline in Grant County. Pictured, from left, are Caden Correia, Jared Goetz, Kevin Goetz, Les Goetz, Luke Goetz, and Mike Correia.

sons love the farm, he and his wife have encouraged them to explore careers in fields they are passionate about.

"If (farming) is something that is interesting to them later in life, we'd love to incorporate them into the farm," he said, adding it is important to him they choose their life's path.

That appreciation for working alongside family extends to the people who have become part of the farm over the years. Besides family, Goetz's harvest crew usually includes one of his best friends, Mike, who has been working with the family for nearly 35 years. Getting to work side by side with the most important people in Goetz's life has been very rewarding.

That sense of gratitude, however, exists alongside the challenges of making a living in the industry. Reflecting on agriculture in Washington state, Goetz called it an "uphill battle, with the cards stacked against us." He's particularly felt the impact of buying fuel this year, combined with state lawmakers who don't seem to understand how their legislation is impacting farmers.

"As a farmer, if I don't have optimism, then it makes the day-to-day life really tough," he said. "It does get hard when you have all these battles. You've got all the input issues and then you've got your fight in your state legislation. It's just like a thousand cuts. One cut isn't necessarily that big of a deal, but after you have a thousand of them, it hurts."

And while the business of farming has changed over the generations, Goetz's connection to it began long before he ever had to worry about fuel prices or legislation. This isn't Goetz's first brush with harvest publicity. When he was seven years old, he was featured on the front page of a *Seattle Times* insert driving a combine (with his father) in a story about small towns in Eastern Washington.

"Farming is what I always wanted to do ever since I was knee high. I caused a lot of mischief early on until I was old enough that I could see over the steering wheel," he said with a laugh. ■





Powers Ranches, Klickitat County

For the Powers family outside of Bickleton, Wash., family farming means that, literally. Mitchell and Taylor Powers and Mitchell's parents, Lance and Susan, run the show with no hired help, although there could be a new supervisor on the scene — Renzie, Mitchell Powers' 2-year-old son who is named after Powers' great-great-grandfather.

"Grandpa still checks in on us, but he's 89 years old, so he doesn't help with any of the operations anymore," Powers said. "Where we live, every farm around here is a family farm. Almost all of them I can think of have a long history of being in the same family, so where we live, without family farms, there's no farms."

The Powers family raises mostly spring wheat with some winter wheat; the family has farmed in the area since 1880. They also grow alfalfa for hay and run cattle. Unusually, for the drier regions of Eastern Washington, they don't incorporate a fallow period as the soil in their area is generally too shallow to hold moisture.

The seeds of one of the family's most enduring harvest tradition was planted in the early 1970s when Powers' grandparents bought a farm that had an apple tree on it.

"We pick the apples off the tree and make a couple pans of apple bars, and then we have one in our lunch every day during harvest," he explained.

In 2026, Powers and his father are facing the same challenges most Eastern Washington wheat farmers are: high input costs and low commodity prices. Because harvest is generally just him and his father, lines at the elevator or other unexpected things that holds one of them up can seriously slow their progress. They rely on their spouses for help in moving equipment around.

"A long time ago, everybody had lots of help, but really, since self-propelled combines, it's pretty well always been a family operation," Powers said. "There's been a couple hired hands through the years, but mostly it's just family." ■



The Powers family raises mostly spring wheat and runs cattle near Bickleton in Klickitat County. Pictured, from left, are Robert (Bob) and Sandra Powers; Lance and Susan Powers; and Mitchell and Taylor Powers with their son, Renzie (2).





Getting an in-person perspective

Congressional staffers see firsthand how lower Snake River dams impact region, economy

By Trista Crossley
Editor, *Wheat Life*

In mid-August, a group of 15 congressional staffers got a crash course in why the lower Snake River dams are so important to the Pacific Northwest.

The staffers spent a day hearing from river system stakeholders while they took a jet boat ride through Lower Granite Dam, toured fish research facilities, and visited the Port of Lewiston. The tour wrapped up with dinner at a local winery. Besides the Pacific Northwest, staffers represented congressional districts in Missouri, Florida, Nebraska, and Georgia, as well as the House Transportation and Natural Resources committees.

“The staffers that participate on the tour generally represent congressional offices that have some jurisdiction over the lower Snake River dams,” explained Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG). “On this tour, we demonstrate the absolutely vital role the dams play in our region. For many of these staffers, they have no real

understanding of this infrastructure until they go through the lock, see how much thought is given to fish passage, and hear directly from the people and communities whose livelihoods depend on the system.”

Besides WAWG, the tour was sponsored by The McGregor Company, Northwest RiverPartners, the Washington Grain Commission, and the Washington State Potato Commission.

The day began with an early morning river users’ panel so staffers had some context on what they were about to see. Hennings moderated the panel, starting it off by talking about how wheat growers use the river system to help keep transportation costs down, pointing out that more than 55% of all U.S. wheat exports move through the Columbia-Snake River System.

“This is a highway. Do you just remove a highway, like I-90? I don’t think so,” she said. “Today, we are going to show you why we need these dams.”

Jennifer Riddle, corporate communications and marketing manager at Tidewater Transportation and Terminals,



In August, Congressional staffers from across the U.S. descended on Lewiston, Idaho, to get a firsthand look at Lower Granite Dam and learn the role the four lower Snake River dams play in the region’s economy.

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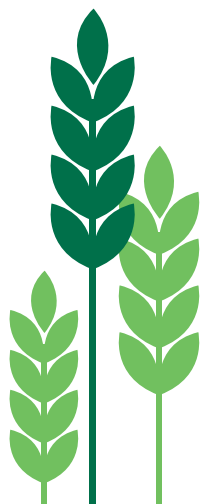


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talked about some of the products Tidewater barges on the system, including fuel, grain, solid waste, and fertilizer. She also pointed out that barges used on the system are purpose-built to fit through the system's infrastructure. Barge traffic moves 24 hours a day.

"The river system doesn't close down," she said.

Mark Freeman, Pacific Northwest government affairs manager for American Cruise Lines, said the company runs six ships from Astoria, Ore., to Lewiston, and it is investing in repair facilities and infrastructure in Lewiston. The cruise ship industry contributes millions of dollars to local economies all along the system.

Neil Maunu, executive director of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, touched on the history of dam litigation and the need for real data to refute anti-dam rhetoric.

On the bus ride to and from Lower Granite Dam, the group learned about the geology and history of Eastern Washington; how the dams make Washington potatoes some of the best in the world, thanks to irrigation; and how the timeliness of barges allows companies to bring in huge quantities of fertilizer to meet the planting needs of the region's farmers.

At the dam, Paul Ocker, chief of operations for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District, talked about the history of the dams, fish passage, and energy generation. Clark Mather, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, explained that hydropower accounts for nearly half of the power used in the Pacific Northwest. Mather said about 70% of the public supports hydropower, and more people have no opinion of hydropower than oppose it (8%).

The last stop of the day before dinner was at the Port of Lewiston. Scott Corbitt, executive director of the port, called the Lewis-Clark Valley "ground zero" if the lower Snake River dams were to be removed, explaining that infrastructure



One of the highlights of the tour of Lower Granite Dam was learning about the efforts that have been put into the fish passage system, such as this cooling tower that brings up cold water from the base of the dam to help keep surface temperatures cooler.

along the river is built to the "state of the river." If the river level changed, it would cost millions of dollars to rebuild, and many investments would be made obsolete.

"Removal (of the dams) would stop commerce from Pasco up," he said.

What did the staffers have to say?

At the end of dinner, staffers were asked what they'd be taking away from the tour:

"Something that I will take away is being able to see this infrastructure first-hand to actually know, when we're talking about this in legislation and committee hearings, what this stuff means, and what it does for different parts of the country."

"I think the most interesting part for me ... was the fish ladders and how that process works."

"I think the most interesting bit of it all was the dynamic between the different states and how Washington literally has people working at the dam and is fighting against the dam."

"It was neat to see (a dam) firsthand and see all the different issues that I work on, from salmon recovery to hydropower. It's one thing to read about (the dams) in D.C. and have hearings and meet with you when you are there, but it's a completely other thing to be out here on the ground."

"These issues are central to what we do on our subcommittee ... we need to be reminded that the policy we put down, it matters."

"In D.C., when we just see legislative text and summaries and emails, it's really easy to distance yourself, but these staff tours put faces to those emails, put families and businesses and communities to them."

"It was really refreshing to see how across Marine Highway 84, different stakeholders contribute to economic development for local communities. If that went away, you'd lose a lot of economic development opportunities in small communities that have no other way to stimulate their economies."

"The people we've met with and who we're having dinner with take ownership as stakeholders of the land and who care and are good stewards of that. Seeing that firsthand is awesome and reassures faith in what we do."

"The most impactful thing that I heard today was two farms per day going under (in Washington state). It is the most important thing that all of us can take away. These issues are complicated. They take a team to fix and work together to find solutions."

"Everyone I met today is the backbone of this industry, whether it's wheat, production, transportation, global economy. Everyone in this room is what drives this." ■

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Lower Snake River Dams Congressional Tour 2026



2026 election Q&A

THE CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES RUNNING TO REPRESENT EASTERN WASHINGTON FARMERS

In an effort to get to know more about the congressional candidates running to represent Eastern Washington, *Wheat Life* asked them to provide written answers to questions on issues important to wheat growers. Presented on the following pages with no editing (other than obvious grammatical errors) are what the following candidates had to say. (*Editor's note: Candidates submitted their responses before the farm bill passed the Senate Ag Committee on Sept. 16.*)

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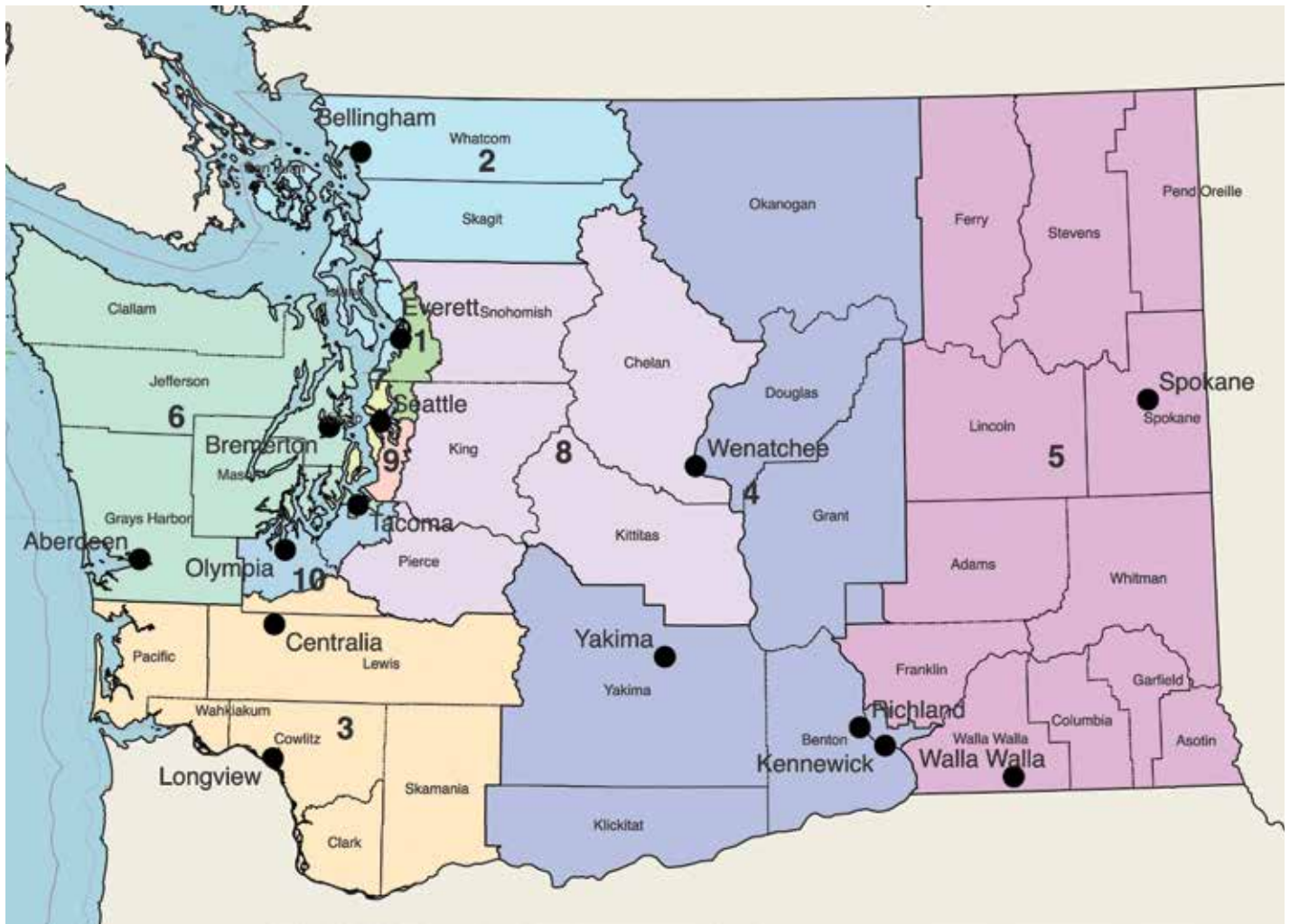
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What role should the federal government play in agriculture?

The federal government should be a partner to agriculture, not an obstacle. Farmers and ranchers know their land, their operations, and their communities better than bureaucrats thousands of miles away. Federal policy should provide a reliable safety net when producers face circumstances beyond their control, maintain access to international markets, invest in critical water and transportation infrastructure, support agricultural research, and ensure producers have access to a dependable workforce.

At the same time, Congress needs to rein in unnecessary regulations that increase costs without producing meaningful benefits. My default is local control. We should give farmers the freedom and certainty they need to make long-term decisions, invest in their operations, and pass those operations on to the next generation.

What is your position on the lower Snake River dams?

I strongly oppose breaching the lower Snake River dams.

These dams are critical infrastructure for Eastern Washington and the entire Pacific Northwest. They provide reliable, affordable hydropower while supporting agriculture, irrigation, transportation, recreation, and communities throughout our region.

For wheat growers in particular, barging on the Snake and Columbia river system provides an efficient way to move our world-class agricultural products to export markets. Removing the dams would shift additional freight onto roads and rail, increase transportation costs, and put additional pressure on producers who are already operating on tight margins.

We can continue working to improve fish recovery through projects that do no harm to existing multi-benefit pieces of infrastructure like the Snake River dams without sacrificing the farmers, families, and communities that depend on them. In Congress, I will be a strong and unwavering voice for keeping the lower Snake River dams in place.

How can Congress help address rising fuel and fertilizer costs?

Congress needs to address the underlying costs of doing business rather than asking farmers to simply absorb them.

First, we need an American energy policy focused on

abundance. That means producing more domestic energy, protecting hydropower, expanding nuclear energy, strengthening our energy infrastructure, remove unnecessary regulatory and permitting barriers, and end the proliferation of environmental activist litigation that slows and exponentially increases project costs. Affordable and reliable energy directly affects the cost of operating farm equipment, transporting crops, manufacturing fertilizer, and nearly every other part of an agricultural operation.

We also need to strengthen domestic fertilizer production and supply chains so American agriculture is less vulnerable to international disruptions. Congress should pursue fair trade policies, reduce unnecessary regulatory costs, and make sure federal policies recognize that increases in fuel, fertilizer, equipment, labor, and transportation costs ultimately threaten the viability of family farms. Food security is National security.

What are your top three priorities if you get elected?

My first priority will be protecting Central Washington agriculture and our natural resources, especially our water. I have worked extensively on water policy at the local level, and I understand that reliable water, sound infrastructure, healthy forests, and responsible resource management are fundamental to our economy and way of life.

Second, I will work to lower costs and strengthen American energy independence. Families, farmers, and small businesses are paying too much for energy, fuel, equipment, and everyday necessities. We need to unleash American energy, reduce unnecessary federal regulations, and restore fiscal responsibility in Washington, D.C.

Third, I will fight to restore local control and accountability in the federal government. Too many decisions affecting our farms, public lands, water, and rural communities are made by federal agencies without enough consideration for the people who actually live and work here. If elected, I will make sure Central Washington has a strong voice when those decisions are being made.

What do you want Eastern Washington wheat farmers to know about you?



Agriculture isn't something I discovered when I decided to run for Congress. It is part of who I am.

My family has been farming in Central Washington for five generations, and I grew up understanding that agriculture is not simply an industry. It is a way of life built around hard work, stewardship, family, and the hope that you can leave something stronger for the next generation.

As a Yakima County Commissioner who serves on state and federal boards representing rural counties, I have worked on the issues that directly affect our agricultural communities, including water, infrastructure, wildfire, public lands, and federal regulations. I know that a policy decision made in Washington, D.C., can have very real consequences for a family farm in Eastern Washington.

If elected, wheat growers will have someone in Congress who will listen to producers, understand that agriculture is foundational to Central Washington, defend our dams and water resources, fight unnecessary federal regulations, and work every day to make sure family farming remains economically viable for the next generation. ■

Are you a WAWG member?

The Washington Association of Wheat Growers fights every day to ensure that Washington's family farms continue to prosper and grow.

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HOUSE 4TH DISTRICT • JOHN DURESKY

What role should the federal government play in agriculture?

For years, this was an easy question: promote and provide domestic and overseas markets for our agricultural products; provide stable oil reserves and ample fertilizer access to keep agriculture working; provide federally supported crop insurance; support small family farms to protect the resiliency of our agricultural production; and ensure adequate labor is available to meet the needs of farmers and workers. It appears the federal government is failing in many of these roles. I will do the work in DC to support our farmers here in central Washington.

What is your position on the lower Snake River dams?

The dams must stay. Climate change is real and removing a low carbon-emission source of power is foolish. We must make difficult choices and consider all options. I talked to irrigators and learned that removing the dams would cost approximately \$780 million to make them whole, in addition to infrastructure upgrades needed to compensate for the loss of barge traffic. Putting all that together makes dam removal a poor choice.

How can Congress help address rising fuel and fertilizer costs?

I jumped ahead on this topic. The Iran War, undeclared by Congress and not approved by the American people, has driven up fuel and fertilizer prices. Restoring trust and free navigation on the seas will not be easy. We will have to rebuild trust with the international community, remove the tariffs and stop the trade wars. We also need to build infrastructure here at home and start looking for alternate sources for fertilizer.

What are your top three priorities if you get elected?

Affordability isn't just a talking point or a buzzword. I've been all over this district; this is our lived reality. Orchardists tell me they are getting \$150 a box for apples that cost \$200 a box to pick. Wages aren't keeping up with rising prices. We are not producing enough good jobs. Healthcare is another huge issue — 55% of the people in WA-04 rely on Medicare or Medicaid. Reimbursement rates, rising premiums, and lack of access are impacting everyone. Finally, immigration enforcement and deportation are causing real problems with our whole labor force. All of these factors directly impact agriculture and wheat growers.

What do you want Eastern Washington wheat farmers to know about you?

While I'm not a farmer or in agriculture, I've lived around agriculture my whole life. I hoed beans and detassled corn as a teenager. I've rounded up cattle in Wyoming and hunted pheasants on center pivot fields. I've worked hard here in central Washington to learn the issues and the unique problems facing agriculture here. I've served my country under oath for 37 years, first in the Air Force for 24 years then in Civil Service. That oath is not to the President, nor is it to a political party. It is to the people of the United States and the U.S. Constitution. I aim to continue that service. ■



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HOUSE 5TH DISTRICT • MICHAEL BAUMGARTNER

What role should the federal government play in agriculture?

Food security is national security. Our farmers are the backbone of America and the heart of Eastern Washington. Our federal government plays an important role in ensuring a safe food supply and supporting the farm and ranch economy by providing financial safety nets to navigate extreme weather and market disruptions, promoting trade, and funding important agricultural research like the great work being done at Washington State University.

The Farm Bill is an important part of that, and I was proud to help pass the new Farm Bill through the House for the first time in 8 years. It is now with the Senate, and I'm following its progress closely. The Working Families Tax Cut Act (H.R.1), for which I voted, also included important provisions such as boosting crop insurance programs, increasing reference prices, protecting family farms from the estate tax and setting up a new ag trade program — overall, increasing agriculture-focused spending by \$65 billion over the next decade.

WSU is a leading institution for agricultural research, and I was proud to secure \$1 million funding to equip the new USDA-ARS Plant Biosciences Building in Pullman — a center for work in plant science, soil management, and crop systems critical to Washington's agricultural economy.

What is your position on the lower Snake River dams?

Our Snake River dams are essential to agriculture in Eastern Washington, and I have been doing everything in my power to protect them.

I was pleased that the current administration ended the Biden administration's "settlement agreement" with the Tribes and states. Its clear intent was a roadmap to removing the lower Snake River dams, and I also disagreed with the way it was secretly negotiated with the exclusion of key stakeholders.

I don't need to explain to wheat farmers why destroying the dams would be catastrophic.

Approximately 10% of all U.S. wheat exports travel by barge down the lower Snake River. Commodities including fertilizer are moved upstream. Transporting those products by rail and road would result in huge cost increases for local agricultural producers who are already on narrow margins, while substantially increasing congestion and pollution. Meanwhile existing rail services have been

cutting capacity and are not reliable.

Our dams provide low cost, zero-carbon energy that powers our homes and our economy — energy that can be flexed at times of high demand. Hydropower represents about 60% of Washington state's energy, creating thousands of jobs, mitigating floods, and keeping our energy costs at some of the lowest in the country.

The dams are still under attack. Earlier this year, activists secured a judicial ruling to increase spill levels at the dams, resulting in less hydropower generation and harming salmon populations. I am following this issue closely and appreciate the advocacy of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers.

How can Congress help address rising fuel and fertilizer costs?

I have been outspoken about my concern over the impact of tariff policy on Eastern Washington. Some of our trading partners have adopted unfair policies and those should be addressed, but our farmers need stability and predictability. The whole world would welcome it.

High input and fuel costs are putting pressure on farmers who already operate on thin margins.

State level policies play a big role in driving up the cost of fuel, and we need Olympia politicians to stop pushing through ineffective legislation like the Climate Commitment Act, which has forced up gas prices with little, if any, benefit.

I was glad that the current administration suspended some tariffs on specific imported fertilizers to try to bring down prices. I supported the \$12 billion Farmer Bridge Assistance Program announced last December to provide payments to help row crop producers through market disruptions and high costs.

I've also appreciated the USDA efforts to bring down costs through the \$500 million Fertilizer Investment and Expansion for Long-Term Domestic Supply (FIELDS) Program, which is focused on expanding domestic manufacturing of nitrogen, phosphate, and potash.

More generally, farmers need more certainty. Getting the new Farm Bill passed through the House was a



big step forward, and I particularly appreciated the input of State Representative Mary Dye helping draft my amendment to support Columbia Basin irrigation, which was included in the bill. The Farm Bill is now with the Senate.

What are your top three priorities if you get elected?

1) Keep taxes low. We need to help businesses grow and to make life more affordable for consumers. We need to lock in the gains of the Working Families Tax Cut Act and keep cutting the federal regulations that drive up prices.

2) Stabilize trade policy and foreign markets. As a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I have met with foreign leaders and investigated markets overseas. There are many imbalances that need correcting but more important for the coming term is to see stability and predictability with our trading partners.

3) Fight for Eastern Washington. I love Eastern Washington; I've been to places all over the world, and home is best. I am proud and eager to listen to our farmers and rural communities, support rural health-care, secure infrastructure dollars for needed local projects, and protect communities from impacts of proposed data centers on electricity and water supplies. During my first term, I have greatly appreciated the input of my Eastern Washington agriculture policy advisory committee led by State Senator Mark Schoesler, and involving local farmers and agricultural leaders, in helping inform policy positions. I will continue to listen and respond to those concerns.

What do you want Eastern Washington wheat farmers to know about you?

I grew up in Colton and Pullman, surrounded by the wheat fields of

the Palouse. My father was an extension professor for WSU, and my mother taught multiple generations of farm families as a kindergarten teacher.

My first "job" as a kid was selling Kool-Aid out of plastic Cougar cups to farmers going out to harvest. Some of my earliest memories include going pheasant hunting with my dad on the rim of the Snake River canyon, watching 8-man football on Friday nights, and enjoying the Uniontown Sausage Feed each spring.

I want wheat growers to know that I have a deep appreciation of the farmers and the rural communities that feed our region and our nation. In Congress, my door will always be open to wheat growers, and I will always fight for them.

I'm proud to be endorsed in my re-election to Congress by the Washington Farm Bureau PAC and prominent agricultural leaders like Sen. Mark Schoesler, Sen. Perry Dozier, Rep. Mary Dye, and Alex McGregor. ■



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HOUSE 5TH DISTRICT • CARMELA CONROY

What role should the federal government play in agriculture?

Three responsibilities, in order:

Pass a real Farm Bill instead of another extension. Growers make planting and borrowing decisions on multi-year horizons; they cannot do that while Congress keeps kicking reauthorization down the road. A complete bill holds crop support steady, protects the conservation and climate adaptation funding that can keep our soil productive through a dry decade, and funds the nutrition title. Funding nutrition benefits is not charity — some of the families in this district using food assistance are military families at Fairchild.

Protect the export market. Ninety percent of the wheat grown in Washington is sold overseas. That market was not an accident, it was built by growers who flew to Tokyo, Seoul, and Manila year after year, and by trade officers who spent decades keeping those doors open. I was one of those officers for nearly 30 years, so I know how long that trust takes to build and how quickly it can be thrown away.

Invest in the infrastructure that individual farmers cannot build, like the locks, dams, and rural highways the crop travels on before it ever reaches a barge. That is federally owned, federally neglected, and squarely Congress's responsibility.

What is your position on the lower Snake River dams?

Keep them and pay to maintain them.

The lower Snake River dams are aging federal infrastructure, and several are near the end of their useful life. If they silt up or fail, nobody wins. Not the fish, not the farms, not the ratepayers. What Eastern Washington needs is a serious federal investment that is designed for both fish and farms, not a fight where one side must lose for the other to win.

I have talked with farmers from Asotin County to Adams County who put their crops on barges. Ten percent of all U.S. wheat exports move through those dams. If the dams silt, the grain cannot stop. It will move by truck and rail instead. That means more diesel burned, more wear on rural highways that counties already cannot afford to maintain, and a higher cost per bushel that comes straight out of the grower's margin.

What I hear most often from folks is the fear of being left out of a deal cut by people who have never harvested

a field in their lives or thought of their concerns. That is a reasonable fear, and one I promise not to contribute to. Listening to farmers is a priority.

How can Congress help address rising fuel and fertilizer costs?

Three levers, and Congress controls all three.

End the tariff chaos. Tariffs on imports raise the price of everything a farm buys, from fertilizer to steel to equipment parts, and then invite retaliation against the crop they are trying to sell. Stopping it is the fastest relief available and costs the Treasury nothing.

Stop starting wars. Fuel price spikes track back to instability in places where the United States has troops or interests. I spent nearly 30 years as a diplomat watching that pattern repeat. Diplomacy is cheaper than war, and it is cheaper at the pump.

Build domestic capacity so growers are not hostage to somebody else's supply chain. Nitrogen fertilizer is made from natural gas, so every swing in the gas market lands on the fertilizer bill a few months later. Federal investment in alternative energy, plus support aimed directly at farm input costs, is the long-term fix.

What are your top three priorities if you get elected?

One. Pass a complete Farm Bill. Not an extension, not a partial. Crop support, conservation, export promotion, and nutrition, in one bill that growers can actually plan against.

Two. End the tariff chaos and get the export markets back. With ninety percent of Washington's wheat being sold overseas, when trade policy turns into a monthly guessing game, buyers in Asia go somewhere steadier. We cannot and will not lose the valuable trade relations built by and for farmers.

Three. Keep rural hospitals open. In this district, people already drive further and wait longer to see a doctor. A farm family is one bad accident from a two-hour ambulance ride. Restoring Medicare and Medicaid funding and letting federal health programs negotiate drug prices is the greatest tool for keeping rural hospitals open and out of the red while supporting hardworking families.



What do you want Eastern Washington wheat farmers to know about you?

My mother's aunt and uncle, Nora and Leroy Watson, farmed wheat outside Lind. In high school, I worked harvest with them. That is where I learned what dryland farming actually asks of a person: the faith it takes to put seed in dry ground, and the patience to wait on weather nobody can control.

I remember 1980, after Mount St. Helens blew, as everybody held their breath to see whether the crop would come through the ash. While the equipment took a beating, the harvest came in anyway.

I am a third-generation Eastern Washingtonian. My grandfather worked as a mason on Grand Coulee Dam, and my father worked on the railroad. I prosecuted cases in Spokane County, then spent nearly 30 years in the Foreign Service in Japan, Pakistan, Norway, Afghanistan, and New Zealand, working to get American products into international homes.

I know a little about what it takes to grow it, and a lot about what it takes to sell it overseas. I would like the chance to do that job for you in Congress. ■



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HOUSE 8TH DISTRICT • KIM SCHRIER

What role should the federal government play in agriculture?

As the representative for Washington's 8th Congressional District, I've had the opportunity to visit many family farms. What they've shared with me has informed my work in Congress. It is especially difficult to be a farmer right now. On top of the ever-present uncertainties about weather conditions and crop yields, family farms are struggling to stay afloat due to high fertilizer costs, H2A labor costs, transportation expenses, tariff wars, and being squeezed financially by grocery chain monopolies. Tariff wars have led to higher input costs for farmers, uncertainty, trade challenges, and economic anxiety that in turn lead to less consumer spending. Farming, like any business, needs certainty and stability to make sound decisions and succeed.

By repeatedly calling upon the former U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai, I successfully fought to repeal India's retaliatory tariffs on Washington apples. Right now, I am continuing to fight this administration's arbitrary and capricious levying of tariffs and re-assert Congress' authority to manage trade and tariffs in a sensible and predictable manner.

I have led work on the Farm Bill to ensure that the priorities of farmers in my district were represented. Though the Farm Bill the House passed was imperfect in many ways, I was proud to be among 14 Democrats to vote for the legislation. I secured six amendments in this year's Farm Bill to improve rural economies including the Agriculture Export Promotion Act, which increased funding for Market Access Programs that help farmers compete globally, and an amendment allowing the USDA to waive the matching funds requirement for specialty crop research.

Fundamentally, I also believe that food security is a matter of national security and that nutrition is fundamental to public health. The federal government has a large role to play in making sure family farms survive and thrive, that policies incentivize crops that positively impact human health, that we boost farm-to-food bank and farm-to-school programs, that we fund cutting-edge agricultural research, that we incentivize conservation programs and regenerative agriculture, and that we continue to strongly support the programs that preserve and expand international markets for Washington producers.

What is your position on the lower Snake River dams?

Through my work representing Washington's 8th Congressional District, I have spoken with wheat and pulse growers and exporters who depend on the Snake River dams for crop irrigation and barging, biologists and tribal leaders who express deep concern about the negative impacts of the dams on endangered fish species and our ability to meet treaty obligations, and energy experts who are concerned about the prospect of losing an important source of clean energy when our grid is already strained. All of these concerns are valid. That is why I spoke up and insisted on fair consideration of all viewpoints when some were left out of discussions with CEQ and Northwest governors during the last administration. I will continue to do my job to ensure all voices are heard, including the growers whose livelihoods depend on barge transportation made possible by the Snake River dams.

How can Congress help address rising fuel and fertilizer costs?

The cost of living has gotten out of control. The war with Iran, never approved by Congress, has put the lives of our servicemembers in harm's way. The subsequent blockades of the Strait of Hormuz have skyrocketed gas and fertilizer prices. And yet another trade war, this time with Canada, stands to raise fertilizer costs even more.

Finding an exit strategy from this war with Iran and ending unnecessary trade wars will help to lower input costs and diesel transportation costs. In addition, I will keep fighting to lower gas and fertilizer prices. I introduced the Gas Prices Relief Act to temporarily suspend the federal gas tax to give the American people some relief at the pump. I will continue to vote for the Bipartisan War Powers Resolution Act.

What are your top three priorities if you get elected?

Right now, the American people need relief from the untenable cost of living. Farmers, ranchers, and growers have faced the brunt of this inflation as international conflicts have increased input costs and made trade more challenging, and grocery monopolies have squeezed growers' profits. In Congress, I will continue to fight to lower costs through the Gas Price Relief Act, restoring reasonable



trade policies, cracking down on these corporate monopolies, addressing the housing affordability crisis, and increasing access to affordable healthcare — especially in rural areas.

I will also continue to champion common sense transparency measures like the Restore Trust in Government Act that will ban any Member of Congress, the President, the Vice President, and their family members from buying or selling stocks.

Healthcare costs are too high, so I've passed bills to cap insulin costs, give Medicare the power to negotiate lower prescription prices, and cap out-of-pocket costs for seniors. But this Congress, my Republican colleagues slashed your healthcare to give a tax break to billionaires. That's outrageous. We all need access to affordable healthcare. It is also a huge job creator and economic driver. The survival of rural hospitals is critical for healthcare and for the economy. I will continue to work to reverse the Medicaid (Apple Health) cuts and ACA tax credit cuts that have a disproportionate, negative impact on rural hospitals like Kittitas Valley Healthcare. I will always fight to lower costs and put doctors and patients back in the driver's seat, not insurance companies.

I will continue to advocate for projects in the 8th Congressional District and bring your tax dollars back home. In Kittitas County, I have secured funding for the Pearl Street Veterans Housing project, the Ellensburg Community Fieldhouse, I-90 widening, the new Emergency Operations Center, and the FISH Food Bank warehouse.

What do you want Eastern Washington wheat farmers to know about you?

Since day one on the job, I have been committed to advocating for the farmers, growers, ranchers, and orchardists in my district. In 2022, I worked with the USDA and the Port of Seattle to secure a "pop-up port" to alleviate congestion at the port that had caused a 30% reduction in agricultural exports out of Washington state. I have been fighting to significantly increase funding for specialty crop agricultural research to provide farmers with the best information to address emerging challenges with the climate and markets. In 2022, I also hosted the House Agriculture Committee in Carnation for a House Agriculture Committee listening session about the Farm Bill. Farmers from across the state attended, and their testimony was entered into the permanent Congressional record. I was proud to have my bill, Whole Milk for Healthy Kids, which allows the sale of whole and 2% milk in public schools, signed into law by President Trump. In 2026, I brought together hay growers, the Northwest Seaport Alliance, and the Longshoremen to find common

sense solutions to a persistent logistics issue that ultimately reduces the number of containers our exporters can get to the Port of Seattle or Tacoma in one day. It is my honor to represent you and the needs of Washington Agriculture in Washington, D.C. I would be honored to earn your support. ■

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HOUSE 8TH DISTRICT • SPENCER MELINE

What role should the federal government play in agriculture?

The federal government's role should be to make sure American farmers can compete, produce, and pass their farms on to the next generation.

Congress has an important role in maintaining strong crop insurance and risk-management tools, opening and protecting export markets, investing in agricultural research and infrastructure, maintaining reliable transportation and energy systems, and ensuring farmers have access to a legal and dependable workforce.

I strongly support farmers' right to repair their own equipment.

A farmer can spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on a tractor, combine, or other piece of equipment. If that machine breaks during planting or harvest, they shouldn't be forced to wait days for an authorized dealer simply because the manufacturer has restricted access to diagnostic software, repair codes, tools, or information.

If you own the equipment, you should have the right to fix it or choose the independent mechanic you trust to fix it.

Congress should ensure farmers and independent repair shops have reasonable access to diagnostic tools, software, manuals, parts, and information necessary to repair agricultural equipment.

Agriculture is different from most industries. Farmers make enormous investments before knowing what the weather, commodity markets, fuel prices, or global economy will look like at harvest. Federal policy should recognize that reality.

Our goal should be simple: keep American agriculture productive, competitive, and in the hands of American farmers.

What is your position on the lower Snake River dams?

I support keeping the lower Snake River dams.

These dams are working infrastructure. They provide reliable hydropower and support a transportation system that Eastern Washington farmers use to move wheat and other agricultural products to export markets.

I don't believe tearing out productive infrastructure should be our starting point when we haven't exhausted solutions that allow agriculture, energy, transportation, and salmon recovery to coexist.

Eastern Washington farmers deserve certainty that the

infrastructure they built their operations around isn't going to disappear because of a political decision made thousands of miles away.

How can Congress help address rising fuel and fertilizer costs?

On fuel, America needs abundant and reliable domestic energy. Congress should support domestic energy production, refining capacity, pipelines, and the infrastructure necessary to keep diesel and transportation costs competitive.

On fertilizer, we need stronger domestic production and supply chains. America should not become unnecessarily dependent on foreign countries for an input as fundamental to our food supply as fertilizer.

I support policies that encourage additional American fertilizer production and competition, remove unnecessary barriers to expanding domestic capacity, and closely examine federal policies that unnecessarily increase farmers' input costs.

We also need to look at transportation. Every additional dollar required to move fertilizer onto a farm or wheat off of one ultimately affects the economics of farming.

Food security is national security. The United States should have the energy, fertilizer, infrastructure, and agricultural capacity necessary to feed ourselves and compete around the world.

What are your top three priorities if you get elected?

First, small businesses. Small businesses, farms, and family-owned operations are the backbone of our communities. I want to expand access to capital, simplify the SBA, reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens, improve the tax environment for startups and growing businesses, and make it easier to hire and keep American workers.

Second, public lands and wildfire. We need much more active management of our federal forests: prescribed burning, thinning, fuel reduction, strategic access for firefighters, and faster permitting so projects don't spend years tied up in bureaucracy. We can protect our wilderness and public lands while actively managing the National Forest lands surrounding our communities.



Third, energy and infrastructure. The cost of living is directly tied to the cost of energy. When electricity and fuel get more expensive, families pay more, businesses pay more, and those costs eventually show up in almost everything we buy. We need abundant, affordable, reliable American energy while modernizing our aging electrical grid, water systems, roads, bridges, and other critical infrastructure.

This isn't a rural or urban issue. Reliable energy and modern infrastructure benefit everyone. If we want a stronger economy and a lower cost of living, America needs to become a country that builds again.

What do you want Eastern Washington wheat farmers to know about you?

I want them to know that I understand what it means to build something where your livelihood depends on factors you can't always control.

I'm a small business owner and employer. I've dealt with rising labor costs, energy costs, insurance, taxes, supply-chain problems, government regulations, and years when circumstances completely outside your control change the economics of your business.

Farming magnifies all of those challenges.

My family also has roots in Washington agriculture. My grandfather farmed roughly 600 acres of wheat near Oakesdale. That connection has always given me an appreciation for the families who work this land and the communities built around agriculture.

I don't pretend that owning restaurants makes me a wheat farmer. It doesn't. That's why one of the most important things I can do as a representative is listen to the people who actually farm.

What I can bring to Congress is the perspective of someone who has signed the front of a paycheck, taken risks, created jobs, dealt with government regulations, and understands that you cannot regulate or tax a business without eventually affecting the people whose livelihoods depend on it.

To me, this is bigger than any one industry. It's about preserving the American Dream the idea that if you're willing to work hard, take risks, build something, and invest in your community, you should have the opportunity to succeed and pass something better on to your children.

Whether that's a family farm, a small business, or someone just getting started, I want the next generation to believe that opportunity still exists in America. ■

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2026 grain convention preview

Oregon, Washington small grains producers will gather for annual convention in November

By Trista Crossley

Editor, *Wheat Life*

Ring in the holiday season by celebrating with fellow Washington and Oregon small grains producers at the 2026 annual convention in the Tri-Cities on Nov. 30-Dec. 2.

“We want to celebrate the efforts of our Washington and Oregon farmers who help feed the world while facing high input costs and low commodity prices,” said Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG). “Join us to learn from top notch speakers, attend educational breakout sessions, and network with producers from both states. We’ll get some business done and honor the growers that keep working on behalf of all of us at our awards dinner.”

Keynote speakers will include:

- Fueled by peer-reviewed facts, sprinkled with cow puns, and served with the kind of Midwest “pull-up-a-chair” warmth that makes strangers feel like neighbors, Michelle Miller, also known as “The Farm Babe,” pairs lab-grade science with laugh-out-loud storytelling, proving you can be both the voice of reason and wildly entertaining.
- Chad Colby is known for making complex innovations approachable. He helps farmers, companies, and industry leaders understand how cutting-edge tools can transform their operations.
- Karen Eddington is a 20-year resilience researcher, keynote speaker, and author who teaches connection skills based on her research in The Under Pressure Project. She has been featured on ESPN for helping student athletes develop leadership skills.
- Shawn Hackett is an agricultural outlook expert, commodities specialist, and weather trend speaker covering long-term cycles related to climate, currencies, geopolitics, and global capital flows with an emphasis on their impacts on ag production and prices.

If you are a Washington producer under 40 who hasn’t attended convention before but would like to, there’s still room in the 15x40 program, which offers a free 2026 convention registration and hotel room, as well as a one-year paid membership if the producer isn’t a member of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers. This is a first-come, first-serve program. To register, call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610.



We want to see your photos of scenic farm life. Winning photos may be used in the 2027 convention marketing materials as well as in *Wheat Life*. Entries will be displayed at the 2026 convention. Contest is open to convention registrants only. Photos must have been taken within the last 12 months. Submissions should be emailed to kgilkey@wawg.org by noon on Nov. 5. Please include photographer’s name, contact, and caption information. ■

The Washington Wheat Foundation auction is always a convention highlight. Not only is it a great opportunity to get some early Christmas shopping done, but money raised through the auction benefits the Washington ag industry by funding research equipment, supporting public education efforts, and the Wheat Ambassador scholarships. The auction will take place on Tuesday, Dec. 1.

The annual convention is also an opportunity for WAWG members to review and update the organization’s resolutions during the all-committee meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 1. The resolutions help direct WAWG’s advocacy efforts for the coming year. Members that can’t attend the meeting are welcome to call the WAWG office at (509) 659-0610, and a staff member can submit comments on their behalf. A copy of the current resolutions can be downloaded at wawg.org under the “About” menu at the top of the page.

“Growers are invited to attend the all-committee meeting to participate in setting WAWG’s priorities for the coming year,” Hennings said. “WAWG is a volunteer-led organization, and our advocacy and lobbying efforts are directed by our members’ input. We want to hear from them.” ►



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

Why Support the Washington Wheat PAC?

Washington farmers are losing ground politically! The ability to protect our interests is slowly dwindling. Washington wheat producers need elected officials who know and understand the industry. Without these relationships our ability to remain competitive is at risk. Now is the time for the industry to join together and proactively influence legislation that directly impacts the Washington wheat producer.

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

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

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

DONATION PROMISE

Yes, I would like to join with the Washington Wheat PAC's vision and support their actions with my donation.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Donation amount: _____

When you make a donation to the Washington Wheat PAC, you are investing in the future of agriculture in Washington State.

Fill out form and send, along with payment, to PO Box 184, Ritzville, WA 99169. Checks should be made out to the Washington Wheat PAC.

Registration and a complete convention schedule are available on WAWG's website at wawg.org under the convention menu. Early registration ends Nov. 2. Here's a closer look at some of the breakout sessions scheduled for the 2026 convention:

Global Wheat Trade and Markets. U.S. Wheat Associates staff will help the audience to digest and better understand the news headlines of global wheat market outlooks and challenges.

DC Talk. Staff from the National Association of Wheat Growers will deliver an "inside the beltway" perspective about what farmers can expect from lawmakers moving into 2027. They will provide an update on the farm bill status as well as other federal issues.

Wheat Market Outlook. Gain valuable insights into the forces shaping today's wheat markets. Join The Money Farm's Allison Thompson for a look at U.S. and global wheat supply, demand, pricing trends, and the market factors producers should be watching in the year ahead.

Innovation Tools for a More Profitable Future. Innovation can help farmers find new ways to improve efficiency, manage risk, and strengthen profitability. This panel will feature businesses that offer innovative technologies, tools, and practical solutions designed to assist wheat farmers in making smarter decisions.

Natural Resources Conservation Service Update. Learn about conservation programs helping wheat farmers improve their land and productivity. Recent NRCS reorganization details to be discussed in addition to program updates and upcoming opportunities for funding.

Beyond the Commodity Market. Explore value-added opportunities for your grain beyond the traditional commodity markets. This session will highlight specialty



The 2026 Washington-Oregon Wheat Growers Convention will be held at Kennewick's Three Rivers Convention Center. The hotel room block is with the Hilton Garden Inn-Kennewick, conveniently located across the street from the convention center, and it has been recently renovated. Group room rates are \$159 per night. Call (509) 735-4600 to make reservations. Parking is free. Room block release date is Oct. 31. Call now to ensure rate and availability. ■

markets with insights into what these markets require, how they differ from the conventional markets, and what farmers should consider when evaluating potential partnerships.

From Farm Risk to Recovery. This session will examine current quality loss issues involving USDA's Risk Management Agency, discuss how these challenges are affecting farmers, and explore practical solutions that can help producers better manage risk, address losses, and strengthen farm resilience. ■



Growers enjoying a keynote presentation at the 2025 Grain Growers Convention.

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Separate board meeting room that seats 12

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at the Washington Wheat Foundation rental line

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Hope Grows Here



Join Us Nov. 30-Dec. 2, 2026

Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick

Early bird registration ends November 2, 2026, at wawg.org/convention



Michelle Miller, "Farm Babe"

Michelle pairs lab-grade science with laugh-out-loud storytelling—proving you can be both the voice-of-reason and wildly entertaining. She will be Tuesday's breakfast keynote speaker.



Chad Colby

Chad helps farmers, companies, and industry leaders understand how cutting-edge tools can transform their operations. He will be Tuesday's lunch keynote speaker.



Karen Eddington

Karen is a 20-year resilience researcher, keynote speaker, and author, who teaches connection skills based on her research in The Under Pressure Project. Karen will be our Wednesday breakfast keynote speaker.



Shawn Hackett

Shawn is an ag outlook expert, commodities specialist and weather trend speaker covering long-term cycles related to climate, currencies, geopolitics and global capital flows. He will speak at Wednesday's lunch.

Hotel Reservations

The Hilton Garden Inn Kennewick (701 N. Young St.) is a short walk from Three Rivers Convention Center and is recently renovated. Group room rates are \$159 per night. Call 509-735-4600 to make reservations. Parking is free. Room block release date is Oct. 31st. Call now to ensure rate and availability.

Dinner & AUCTION

Tuesday, Dec. 1st

Booker Auction Company
will be doing the
evening's auctioneering.



Mail, phone or go online at
www.wawg.org/convention
109 E. 1st Ave, Ritzville, WA 99169

Nov. 30 - Dec. 2, 2026
Three Rivers Convention Center
Kennewick, WA

Farm or Business Name _____

Name _____ Additional Registrant _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Cell Number _____

Email _____ State Affiliation (circle) WAWG OWGL

FULL REGISTRATION (includes meals)

	#ATTENDING	AMOUNT
Regular Registration	_____ x \$ 250	\$ _____
Additional Registration	_____ x \$ 250	\$ _____
After 11/02/2026	_____ x \$ 300	\$ _____
Non-Member	_____ x \$ 350	\$ _____
Onsite Convention Full Registration	_____ x \$ 350	\$ _____

***Note: FULL Convention Registration includes Tuesday & Wednesday meetings and all meals.**

SINGLE DAY REGISTRATION

Circle one:

Member Single Day	_____ x \$ 175	\$ _____ Tuesday/Wednesday (circle one)
Non-Member Single Day	_____ x \$ 275	\$ _____ Tuesday/Wednesday (circle one)

TUESDAY DINNER & AUCTION - Heads & Tails **Auction Fundraiser**

_____ x \$ 10 per person = \$ _____

ADDITIONAL Meal Tickets *Available to purchase ONLY with a Full Registration

___ Individual Breakfast	_____ x \$ 35	\$ _____
___ Individual Lunch	_____ x \$ 45	\$ _____
___ State Banquet	_____ x \$ 85	\$ _____
___ Dinner & Auction	_____ x \$ 85	\$ _____

___ **I will be attending all meals**

I will only be attending the following meals (Important for head count purposes):

___ Tuesday Breakfast	___ Opening Breakfast Wednesday	___ Washington Banquet (Wednesday)
___ Tuesday Luncheon	___ Luncheon (Wednesday)	
___ Dinner & Auction (Tuesday)	___ Oregon Banquet (Wednesday)	

Flags for your name tag describing your positions will be available at convention registration desk.

Registration cancellations will be accepted through Nov. 2, with a full refund. No refunds after Nov. 2.

___ Charge my MasterCard/VISA ___ Enclosed is my check-Payable to WAWG Total Paid \$ _____

Card Number _____ Exp. _____ 3 or 4 digit code _____

Name on Card _____

Signature _____



Passing through the locks at Lower Granite Dam during the congressional staffer tour in August. See story and photos beginning on page 26.

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



Just one more rain ...

By Kevin Klein
Chairman, Washington Grain
Commission

During harvest, one thought kept coming to mind: What would this crop have been like if we'd had just one more rain?

Overall, we had a good harvest. There were no major accidents, no large or expensive breakdowns, although the cost of parts remains outrageous, and my family and crew were still getting along and enjoying the season, even if we were all ready to be done by the end. At times, conditions were challenging, with visibility dropping to about a mile during some of the worst stretches.

Given this year's weather, the crop held up surprisingly well. We received less than half an inch of rain after seeding was completed, but fortunately, we also avoided extended periods of extreme heat. Yields ended up around average overall, with spring wheat coming in below average. Quality was surprisingly good, although my protein was all over the board; it generally averaged in the 9 to 10.5 range. Some of the spring crops were shorter than usual, and, as always, barley seemed to be the shortest. Stands were good overall, but hilltops, particularly in the clay soils, thinned out and didn't yield well. It was hard not to wonder what one more timely rain could have done.

And yes, I did mention barley.

I continue to keep barley in my rotation because of the benefits it provides beyond the crop itself. Barley helps break disease cycles and contributes to soil health, setting up the following crop for greater success. Those rotational benefits make it a valuable part of my operation, even as barley acres across Washington continue to decline.

Fewer barley acres also mean fewer assessment dollars coming into the Washington Grain Commission (WGC). That makes it increasingly important to ensure those dollars are used strategically to support growers, strengthen demand, and create opportunities for Washington barley. Despite declining acreage and assessments, the WGC continues to actively promote barley and build relationships throughout the industry.

This past season, the WGC helped plan and host the first annual Malting Summit in conjunction with the U.S. Grains and Byproducts Council, bringing malting experts, supply chain specialists, and brewers from around the world to Washington. The WGC also participated



Washington Grain Commissioner Kevin Klein (left) showing a visitor around one of his barley fields.

in the Grainmaker Fest in Spokane, where we shared information about barley and the work of the WGC with consumers.

Commissioner Art Schultheis and CEO Casey Chumrau represented Washington growers at the National Barley Growers Association summer board meeting in Great Falls, Mont. The WGC also worked with the Washington State Department of Agriculture to develop barley connections for upcoming events, helped facilitate a Korean feed barley team visit with the U.S. Grains Council, and strengthened its partnership with the U.S. Grains and Byproducts Council to explore new market opportunities.

Closer to home, the WGC supported Dry Fly Distillery's agriculture celebration with prizes and educational materials highlighting the connection between agriculture, barley, and the products consumers enjoy.

Barley may not command the acreage it once did in Washington, but it still has an important role to play, from the benefits it brings to our crop rotations to the opportunities it creates in malting, brewing, distilling, and feed and export markets. As growers, we know every crop in the rotation needs to earn its place. Continuing to invest in demand, relationships, and new opportunities for barley helps make sure it has the chance to do just that.

And after this harvest, I'm still left wondering what all our crops — barley included — might have done with just one more rain. ■

25/26 ANNUAL REPORT

YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK

The Washington Grain Commission is committed to enhancing the long-term profitability and competitiveness of Washington small grains and small grain producers through the responsible allocation of assessment funds for research, market development, and education.

Learn how we invested grower dollars to drive measurable results during the 2025/26 fiscal year.

FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



As we reflect on 2025/26, Washington grain growers continue to face significant challenges, with low commodity prices and high input costs putting pressure on farm families. The Washington Grain Commission (WGC) recognizes that every assessment dollar comes directly from growers and remains committed to investing those funds responsibly, transparently, and with a clear purpose.

This year marked the first full year under WGC's refreshed strategic plan, which established measurable goals across market development, research, education, and organizational success. The theme of this report, *Your Dollars at Work*, reflects our commitment to show growers how assessment dollars are invested, leveraged, and turned into results.

As directed by growers, strengthening demand remained a top priority this year. WGC engaged customers from more than 10 countries, explored new and higher-value uses for soft white wheat, advanced opportunities in aquaculture feed markets, and launched a noodle wheat exchange program in Korea. Through support from U.S. Wheat Associates and hosting six inbound trade teams, we continued building relationships that support long-term market growth. We also introduced the Crop and Quality Monitor, which provides customers with timely information and reinforces Washington's reputation as a reliable supplier.

Research remains essential to grower profitability. WGC invested more than \$2 million in research projects and expanded grower involvement through a new Research Advisory Subcommittee. We also helped support WSU's successful effort to secure \$10 million in additional agricultural research funding, demonstrating how grower assessments can leverage much larger investments.

Through partnerships with researchers, customers, industry organizations, and fellow Pacific Northwest commissions, WGC extends the impact of every assessment dollar. While the economic challenges facing agriculture remain significant, we are committed to staying focused, accountable, and aggressive in creating opportunities for Washington wheat and barley. These are your dollars at work, and we remain committed to earning your trust.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Casey J. Chumrau". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Casey J. Chumrau, CEO

COMMISSIONERS

DISTRICTS:

1. **Mike Carstensen**
2. **Ben Barstow**
3. **Brit Ausman**
4. **Ben Adams**
5. **Nicole Berg**
6. **Art Schultheis**
7. **Kevin Klein, Chair**

INDUSTRY REPS:

Ty Jessup, Vice Chair
Tony Benefiet

WSDA:

Scott Steinbacher

STAFF:

Casey Chumrau, CEO

Stephanie Dinning,
Director of Operations &
Organizational Success

Jessica Pupo, Market
Development Specialist

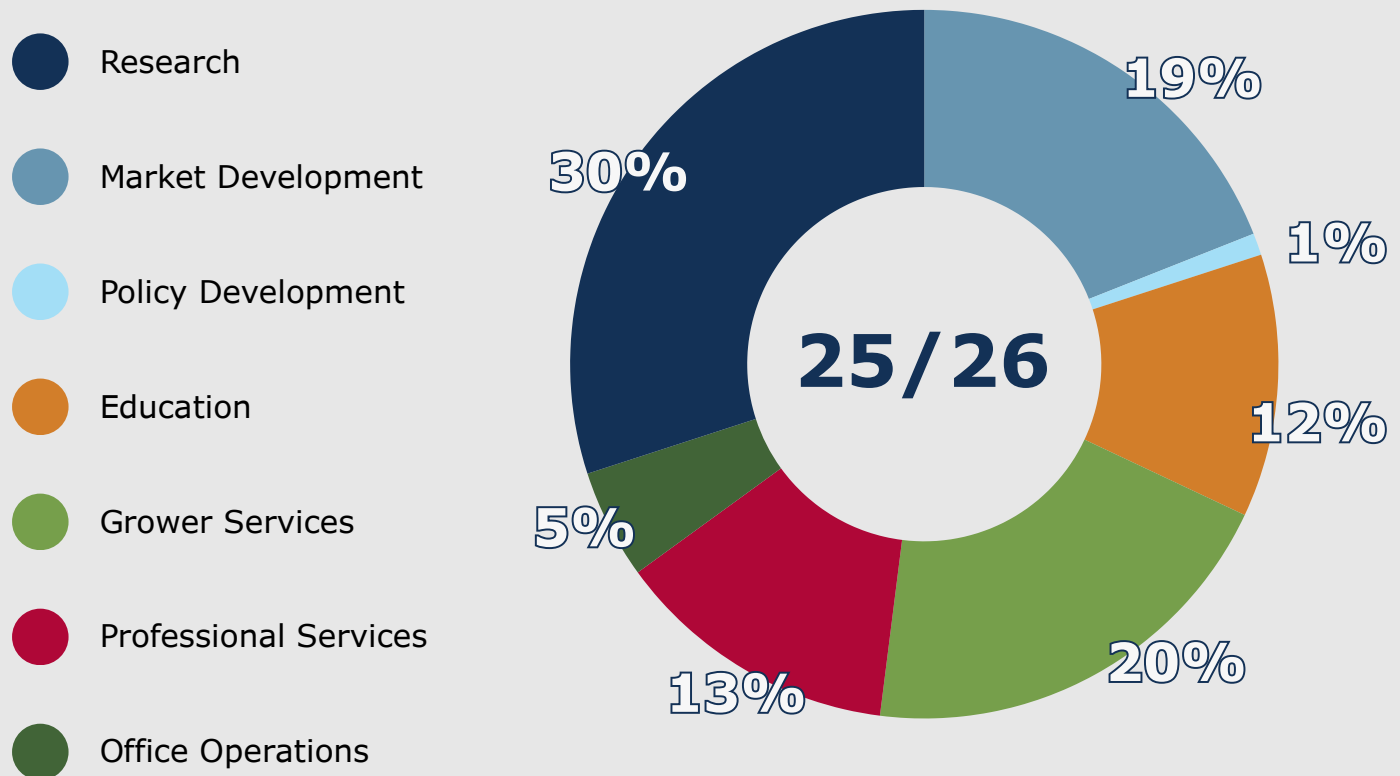
Shari McCarthy,
Office & Program
Support Specialist

Parker Dawson,
Records & Retention
Specialist

Bill Davenport,
Accounting Clerk

Maddison Dayton,
Communications &
Content Manager

FINANCIALS



25/26 Summary

Actual Expenditures

\$7,620,741*

91% of budget spent

Total Revenue

\$7,274,271

Wheat: \$6,298,403
Barley: \$104,670
Other: \$871,198

Total Ending Assets

\$17.6 M*

Asset Allocation:

26-27 Budget: \$8,217,820
General Reserve: \$6.4 M
Marketing Reserve: \$1.5 M
WRF Grant Match: \$990,258
Unallocated: \$491,928

***Unaudited, subject to change**

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Objective: to strengthen and sustain our market position as a Tier-1 global grain supplier, focusing on domestic and international markets.

KEY ACTIVITIES

TRADE TEAMS

6

trade teams
to WA



7

countries
represented



10

counties
visited



Trade teams help strengthen relationships with Washington's international wheat and barley customers by showcasing the dedication of local farmers. This season, visiting teams toured 10 Washington counties, met with farmers, and gained firsthand insight into the production of consistent, high-quality wheat while building customer connections.

MARKET TRIPS

16

marketing &
education trips



4

D.C. fly-ins



6

countries
visited



With a focus on research, education, and market development, WGC staff travel around the U.S. and the world to understand customer needs and to provide education. Trips provide an opportunity to understand regional challenges, market dynamics, and new areas of research.

END-USE QUALITY

17

Crop & Quality
newsletters sent



411

samples
collected and
tested



5

overseas crop
seminars delivered



Quality testing strengthens overseas confidence in PNW wheat and helps identify new customers. Using elevator samples, the USDA Western Wheat Quality Lab (WWQL) and international partners analyze key quality factors, then conduct milling and baking tests to demonstrate how Washington wheat performs in global food production.

SPOTLIGHT:

KOREAN NOODLE EXCHANGE

The Korean Noodle Wheat Exchange is a collaborative program involving the Washington Grain Commission (WGC), U.S. Wheat Associates (USW), USDA/ARS, and Korean milling partners, established to evaluate wheat quality and performance for noodle applications. The program focuses on comparing Washington-grown wheat with the Australian wheat commonly used in the Korean market. Through coordinated sample exchanges and laboratory testing, the project aims to provide technical data on flour quality to help breeders set targets for future wheat lines and ultimately enable Washington Wheat to be competitive in the Korean Noodle Market.

The program is currently in the initial testing and evaluation stage. Korean mills received a sample of SW Butch CL+ wheat in early July and are analyzing its quality characteristics in comparison with Australian Standard White (ASW) wheat, using a Wheat Quality Council-style evaluation.

At the same time, USDA/ARS is expected to test the Australian ASW sample provided by USW/Seoul for noodle applications. Once testing and analysis are completed on both sides, WGC, USW, USDA/ARS, and the Korean partners will review and compare the results and determine appropriate next steps for the program.



TRADE TEAM HIGHLIGHTS



*Visiting Wilke Farms
with Aaron Esser*



*Experiencing harvest
with the Mead Family*



*Welcoming our first
aquaculture team*

RESEARCH

Objective: to drive practical, forward-looking public and private grain research that improves crop performance, boosts production efficiency, and explores new uses for wheat and barley.

25/26 RESEARCH FUNDING

● Plant Breeding & Genetics ● Disease/ Insect Resistance ● Production Management ● Quality

54%

13%

6%

27%

RESEARCH ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE

The Research Advisory Subcommittee (RAS) was established in 2025 through a collaboration between the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) and growers to modernize the way research is evaluated, funded, and prioritized. The committee is made up of growers with a strong understanding of scientific research who help assess project proposals and outcomes. Current members were selected from nominations submitted by WGC, WAWG, county grower associations, and industry partners, with an emphasis on representation from diverse production practices and expanding opportunities for growers who are not currently serving in leadership roles.

RAS is responsible for developing annual research priorities, soliciting and reviewing funding proposals, supporting project leaders throughout the life of funded projects, and providing recommendations to the full WGC Commission.

The committee also reviews project progress, communicates research results to the grain industry, and helps strengthen connections between researchers and growers. Ultimately, the goal of RAS is to ensure research investments address industry needs while developing engaged, knowledgeable grower leaders for the future.

10

new members



6

counties
represented



3

meetings held



EDUCATION

Objective: to serve as a reliable source of information for farmers and the public and to educate key audiences on the importance of small grains production, food systems, communities, and economy.

GROWER ENGAGEMENT

13

grower meeting presentations



17

Portland Export Tour Participants



12

Commission Matters newsletters



In January and February 2026, WGC staff members traveled across Washington to provide an update on commission activities and to survey growers about where they want the WGC to invest grower funds.

WHEAT WEEK

10

WA counties participated



20

years of Wheat Week



Wheat Week, funded by the WGC and delivered by Franklin Conservation District, reached 25,097 students during the 25/26 school year. 68.5% of attendees live in Western Washington.



25/26 ONLINE OUTREACH BY THE NUMBERS

411%

increase in social media engagement

427%

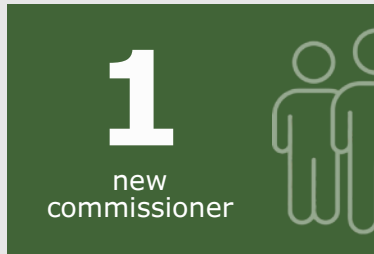
increase in social media followers

22d 13h

social media video watch time

ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS

Objective: to build a collaborative team of commissioners and staff who are well-equipped to carry out the Washington Grain Commission's mission and guide the industry toward long-term success.



FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

In 2025/26, the WGC built a dynamic team united by a shared vision. Moving forward with a focus on collaboration, transparency, and growth, our team is fully committed to working together to support the wheat industry. Through targeted development opportunities and team training, we will continue to invest in our commissioners and team to strengthen our skills.

Together, we will create momentum for a stronger, more connected team that will continue to serve the wheat and barley growers in Washington.

Stephanie N. Dinning

Stephanie Dinning,
Director of Operations and Organizational Development

NEW WGC TEAM MEMBERS



Stephanie Dinning
Director of Operations
& Organizational
Development



Tony Benefiet
Industry
Representative



Maddison Dayton
Communications and
Content Manager



Jessica Pupo
Market Development
Specialist



WHEAT WATCH

WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION

Wheat market's game of truth or dare



By Allison Thompson
Owner, The Money Farm

Wheat producers have become accustomed to uncertainty, but over the past months, the market has felt like a game of truth or dare.

The truth is that the wheat market had good reason to build risk premium around escalating trouble in the Black Sea. Commercial vessels, ports, and export infrastructure have all been drawn deeper into the Russia-Ukraine conflict, impairing grain movement from both countries. Russia and Ukraine remain major players in global wheat trade, and when either country has trouble moving grain, buyers from North Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere are left asking who will fill the gap.

Then came the dare. Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested there was a chance of reaching a peace agreement with Ukraine. As of this writing in early September, there was no signed deal, no ceasefire, no immediate reopening of Black Sea ports, and no proof that grain ships would return to normal operations. But the headline was enough. Algorithms scanning for news reacted immediately, and Chicago wheat reacted to every headline as the market repriced the possibility of peace before any real change had taken place.

That is wheat's game of truth or dare. The truth is that the Black Sea remains a dangerous place to move grain. The fighting has not stopped. Port and shipping disruptions have not suddenly disappeared. The physical flow of grain does not turn on and off with one sentence at an economic forum. The dare is that the futures market has to price what could happen next. It has to ask whether peace talks might gain traction, whether exports could normalize, and whether the risk premium built into wheat prices should be reduced. It has to make that decision before the facts are fully known.

For producers, that is frustrating. It can feel as if the market is being moved by people who have never seen a wheat field, a country elevator, or a storage statement. In some ways, it is. Computer systems are not waiting to understand the whole story. They are programmed to recognize key words, compare them to existing positions, and react in seconds. Funds then add another

layer. When they are carrying a sizable long position, any headline that challenges the reason for owning wheat can trigger a rush to take profits.

That does not mean the market is broken. It means the market is fast, and it increasingly trades possibility before certainty. We saw the same thing in reverse during the rally. Escalating attacks, threats to shipping, and mounting concern about Black Sea export capacity gave wheat a reason to move higher. The risk was real. So was the price response. Chicago wheat rallied over \$1.50 from its summer low into the recent high. That is a meaningful move for any wheat producer, especially after a long stretch in which the market struggled to reward patience.

The problem is that a rally built on risk can give back ground just as quickly. In one or two trading sessions, wheat can lose a large share of a move that took several weeks to build. The early September pullback was a reminder that nobody receives the secret text message before the next Putin comment, military strike, or diplomatic rumor hits the screen.

That is why wheat marketing cannot be built around waiting for certainty. Producers often feel caught between two uncomfortable choices. Make sales on a rally and risk watching the market continue higher or hold everything and risk seeing the rally disappear. After several years of volatile weather, high input costs, and lackluster wheat prices, that hesitation is understandable. There are producers who have worked through drought, quality issues, and disappointing basis levels. They know that a good futures price does not automatically translate into an easy marketing decision. But the choice does not have to be all or nothing.

The first job of a marketing plan is not to identify the exact high. It is to make sure a profitable opportunity does not vanish because we were waiting for the market to become comfortable. Markets rarely become comfortable at the top. The best-selling opportunities often arrive when the headlines are the loudest and the reasons to stay bullish sound the most convincing.

That is why selling into strength matters. It is why incremental sales matter. And it is why protection should improve when a rally gives us room to improve it. Take the recent Chicago wheat move as an example. December



futures rallied near the \$8 level before the peace headline knocked the top off the move. The market has since had to decide whether buyers are still willing to defend the rally or whether sellers are gaining control. Technical levels are not magic, and they do not guarantee a low. They are simply places where the market must make that decision. For a producer, that technical conversation should lead to a practical one: What is my plan if the market holds, and what is my plan if it does not?

If wheat rallies back toward a pricing objective, make the sale that fits your plan. Do not let the possibility of a few more cents keep you from addressing bushels that need to move at harvest or before storage costs begin to build. A sale made into a strong market does not have to be the final sale of the year. It can be one piece of a plan that reduces risk and keeps room to participate if the market extends higher.

That is where puts and calls can help. On a rally, rolling puts higher can improve the floor under unpriced bushels. It does not eliminate every risk, but it means a sharper downturn does not leave the entire crop exposed. If a producer makes a cash or futures sale and still wants upside participation, calls can provide re-ownership. The cost matters, and options are not a substitute for knowing your cost of production or delivery needs. But they are tools that can keep fear of missing the next move from preventing a sale.

The point is not that every producer should make the same sale at the same price. Farms have different yields, storage situations, cash-flow needs, and risk tolerance. The point is that wheat now moves too quickly to make decisions only after the next headline is clear. The Black Sea will remain important. A credible peace agreement would matter. So would a new escalation, a direct hit on export infrastructure, or another interruption to commercial shipping. Global wheat buyers will continue to watch Russia, Ukraine, Europe, Australia, and the U.S. for the next available supply. All those factors belong in the market outlook. But they do not change the producer's basic job.

You do not have to win wheat's game of truth or dare. You do not have to predict the next headline or guess what Putin knows before the rest of the world does. You just need a plan before the market makes the next move for you. Set price objectives. Make incremental sales on strength. Improve protection when a rally gives you the chance. Keep some upside open when it makes sense, but do not leave the entire crop exposed because the story still sounds bullish. No one gets the secret text message. A marketing plan is the next best thing. ■

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.

Meet Peanut

GRANT COUNTY FARMER PENS CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT A SKITTISH CATTLE HORSE

By Trista Crossley
Editor, Wheat Life

Peanut, a ranch horse that's afraid of cows, could soon give wheat a run for its money as Eastern Washington's most favored export — at least for children.

SaDonna Heathman and her husband, Lee, own Heathman Farms north of Hartline, Wash. They currently grow wheat and canola, but spent many years also raising cattle. In 2013, they bought a cutting horse named Peanut for their then 10-year-old son. Even though Peanut had been trained, he hadn't gotten much real-world experience, and it turned out he was afraid of cows.

"It wasn't just cows. It was everything — his reflection, shadows, flags, anything that moved or he hadn't seen before," Heathman said. "When you live on a farm, it's easy to attribute human qualities to animals because they have so much personality. Everybody's felt anxiety at one point in their life. Everybody's been fearful of something. It was interesting to watch Peanut work through those fears and eventually get to the point where he and my son could move cows and take part in a cattle drive together."

That experience became the inspiration for the children's book, "Cowboy Up, Peanut," written by Heathman and illustrated by Eastern Washington artist, Don Nutt.



The book was published in September and is available wherever books are sold online, including Amazon and Heathman's own publishing website, gallopbooks.com.

"I think children have big imaginations that can often make something seem bigger and scarier than it really is," Heathman said. "While Peanut's story is funny, underneath the humor is this idea that courage doesn't mean never being afraid. Sometimes courage is simply facing the things you're afraid of and taking that next step anyway."

"Cowboy Up, Peanut" is Heathman's second children's book. The story took shape over the course of nearly 10 years, as Heathman returned to it between other projects and raising the couple's three children: Ava, Garrett, and Zane. When it came time to illustrate the book, there was only one person Heathman really considered. Nutt is well known for his western-style paintings that are often based in the Eastern Washington landscape. He owns Cariboo

Trail Studio in Coulee City, Wash.

"Don and I have known each other for years. I knew he had illustrated children's books before, but I also knew that he was not necessarily looking to do another one. He was busy with his own business and other commitments," Heathman said. "But he had grandkids now, and I thought they might enjoy this story and get a kick out of seeing their grandpa's illustrations in the book."

Nutt agreed to do the watercolor illustrations for the book. The process took some time, not only because it had to happen around Nutt's commission work, but also because Nutt had to come up with a style that accurately reflected both the realistic parts of the story and the parts of the story that happen in Peanut's head.

"I've painted horses since I was a kid, but I've never painted some of the crazy things that Peanut does in the story," Nutt said. "I love caricatures. I love cartoons, but



SaDonna Heathman is the author of "Cowboy Up, Peanut," a children's book about a horse that learns to overcome his fear of cows. Heathman's family grows wheat and canola in Grant County on their multigenerational farm. The book was illustrated by Coulee City artist, Don Nutt. Nutt created more than 20 original watercolor illustrations for the book, including the one pictured here.



I've never really done them. The real difficult part was when Peanut faints in the story. I didn't want kids to think he's dead. Or, when he's imagining getting squished by a cow; you can't really do that. You have to make it whimsical, and it's out of my nature to be whimsical."

Heathman said she gave Nutt free rein to create the illustrations. They would spread the illustrations on tables in Nutt's studio and talk about how the story flowed, page turns, and the feelings they wanted to evoke in readers.

"It was a great experience. We live in a very rural area, so having someone just 15 minutes away to share that kind of creativity with was something I really enjoyed as a writer," she said.

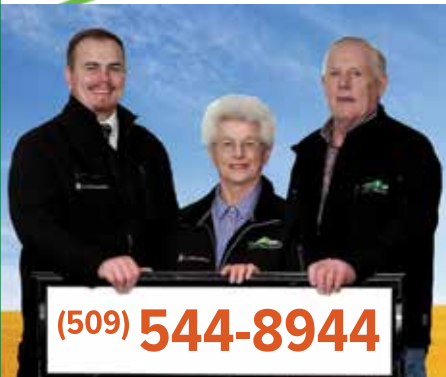
Nutt said his grandchildren have given positive reviews

of the book, especially because Peanut is a real horse and the book includes pictures of him in the backmatter pages.

To help celebrate the release of "Cowboy Up, Peanut," Heathman and Nutt will be signing copies of the book, which will be for sale, during Nutt's annual fall sale at Cariboo Trail Studio in Coulee City on Oct. 9, from 5–9 p.m., and Oct. 10, from 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Peanut still lives at Heathman Farms. Heathman said he and the other horses mostly spend their days roaming the pastures now, but whenever the Heathman kids are home, they'll saddle up the horses, including Peanut, and go for a ride.

"He's still very much part of the family, he just has a much easier job these days," she said. ■

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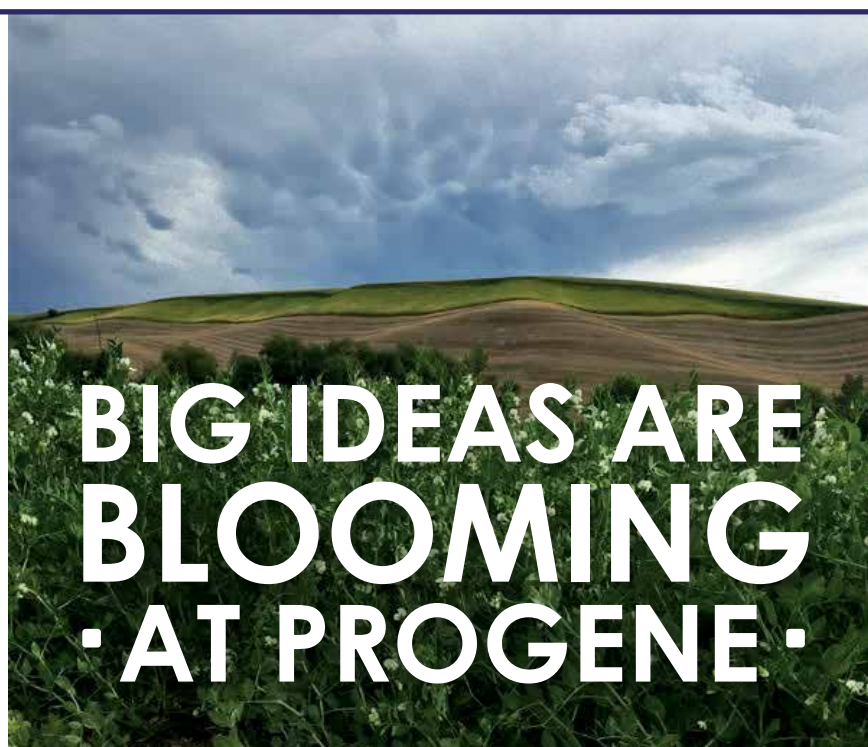
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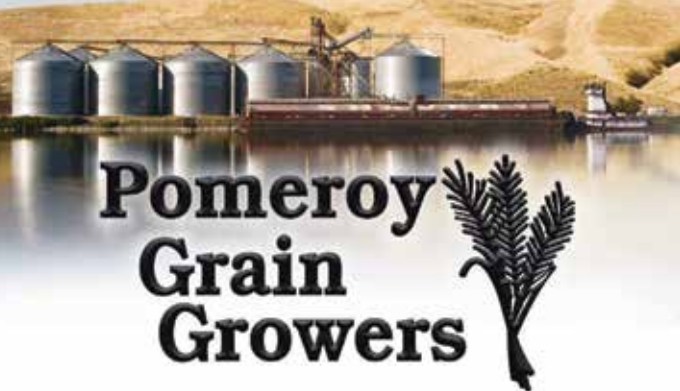
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THE BOTTOM LINE

Property ownership in estate planning

By Norm Brock

Attorney, Brock Law Firm

When this topic was proposed to me, I initially thought, “What the heck. Where did it come from, and how should I respond?” But after cogitating on the topic for some time, it finally hit me. This is a topic we deal with literally day in, day out!

In virtually every scenario we deal with, the client owns some parcel of property, from the smallest estate plan for the client (living or deceased) that owns a lot with a mobile home on it, to a lake property in Idaho, to time shares, to mineral rights in Texas, or to a farm client owning several thousand acres and wanting to hold the farm/ranch together for their heirs.

As I think about property ownership, whether in regards to intaking an estate, drafting a trust for the client, or forming a limited liability company (LLC), the first thing we do is have our real estate paralegal CHECK TITLE. She gets me an assessor’s printout on the parcel or parcels. Then she pulls title (deeds) on the property, all to ascertain EXACTLY how title is held.

I could go on and on about the disconnect between how the client says their title is held and how the deed of record shows title. We’ve learned the hard way; always check the title record.

Typically we order a title report on the property to ascertain how title is held. It is amazing to me how often title is NOT held as the client says, such as:

- The mobile home is not listed as real property, and the client can’t produce the certificate of title.
- Chain of title to the client is bad, i.e., a missing deed from the party from whom the client purchased the property (not returned by the bank escrowee years ago or misplaced by the client who forgot to or didn’t know he was supposed to go record the deed).
- A deed of trust that was never released when the client paid off the property 20 years ago, and now the trustee is unascertainable.

Get the idea? The client has a title

problem to one or more of their properties. So, before we can close the probate and convey title to an heir or contribute property to the new trust or complete a gift deed or contribute the property to the new LLC we want to form, we must CLEAN UP the title.

That may be as easy as scouring the client’s old files and finding the original, unrecorded deed or the original certificate of title to the mobile home, to tracking down the seller and obtaining a new or replacement deed. Sometimes, the title issue becomes more complex, requiring litigation, such as a quiet title action to clear title, which of course can be quite expensive to the client.

Once we’ve checked and cleaned up any and all title concerns TO your property, we’re ready to deal with how DO you want to hold title.

Assume you own an out-of-state property, such as a lake property in Idaho, a farm property in Oregon, or a mineral interest in Texas. Typically, our goal is to avoid an out-of-state probate (assuming you are a Washington resident) called an ancillary probate. We typically want to hold title either in a simple revocable trust or an LLC. Holding the title in a revocable living trust avoids probate and can provide for succession to your heirs as you want.

Be careful using an LLC, because if you are a Washington resident already having a substantial estate, the Washington estate tax law includes the full value of your out-of-state property held in an LLC, but not if title is held in a trust. It’s complicated.

Some states allow for special deeds that convey title to a surviving spouse (or named beneficiary), called a beneficiary deed. But remember, that doesn’t protect the deed if both spouses pass, which is why looking into a possible simple revocable trust or LLC might be a better option.

An LLC is typically my favorite entity of choice for holding title to your property, especially if dealing with farm/ranch property and, often, rental properties. An LLC can be structured pretty simply, such as a single member LLC to just hold title to property — the lake parcel, for example — where you have no intent to presently gift or

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include family members as owners. The LLC can also be more complex, containing provisions providing for matters such as:

- Control, i.e., successive managers.
- Control succession — permitted transfers/transferee provisions/prohibiting ownership by nonfamily, etc.
- Providing for a mechanism protecting value, such as a family member in bankruptcy, divorce, or improper succession planning.

I often include a call provision to give the original members (parents) the option to buy back LLC units gifted or bequeathed to future family members who become difficult to deal with (won't sign necessary FSA forms, etc.). I've been there, done that!

When setting up the LLC, the property owned by the LLC doesn't go through probate or require further transfer. The LLC units held by the decedent would, of course, be subject to probate (unless held in some type of trust).

Sometimes, clients want a "road map" for how some parcels are to be allocated or distributed amongst children when they are gone. We can easily provide this wording in the LLC operating agreement.

A "full blown" grantor revocable living trust is more and more desired by clients. This type of trust remains revocable by the grantors, so they are free to amend or revoke it, just like a will. While avoidance of probate concerns is usually the recited reason for such a trust, your living trust can be set up to contain provisions unique to you and your family heirs. Once title to your property is vested in your trust, it is not necessary to have to retitle it through the probate procedure.

We've written articles in past issues of *Wheat Life* on LLCs, which can be found at wheatlife.org/category/bottom-line/.

In conclusion, understand how you hold title to your property. Are there title issues that you should clean up and deal with rather than passing the problem(s) on to your heirs? Finally, what is the best way for you and your family (heirs) to hold title to your property? ■

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

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Checking spray tips before early morning spraying at Monson Brothers Farms in Dusty. Photo by Jason Monson.



Wildlife at an old CRP guzzler in Benton County.
Photo by Frank Berg.



Current farmhands and the 7th generation, Cash (5) and Willa (2) Noble, love visiting dad, Jake, in the field in Walla Walla. Photo by Sydney Noble.



Kyle Schultheis
direct-seeding soft
white spring wheat
into winter wheat
stubble just west
of Colton in March
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Ripening wheat
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HAPPENINGS

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

OCTOBER 2026

2-3 OKTOBERFEST. Bier gartens, food, music, vendors, kinderplatz. Leavenworth, Wash.

leavenworth.org/oktoberfest/

3 RIVERFEST. Celebrate our rivers and learn why they are so important to our region at this free, family-focused event. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Columbia Park in Kennewick, Wash. riverfestwa.com

9-10 OKTOBERFEST. Bier gartens, food, music, vendors, kinderplatz. Leavenworth, Wash.

leavenworth.org/oktoberfest/

10 FRESH HOP ALE FESTIVAL. Over 60 breweries, wineries and cideries, live music and food. State Fair Park in Yakima, Wash. freshhopalefestival.com

16-17 OKTOBERFEST. Bier gartens, food, music, vendors, kinderplatz.

Leavenworth, Wash.
leavenworth.org/oktoberfest/

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

NOVEMBER 2026

4-6 WASHINGTON STATE WEED ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE. Trade show, workshops, break-out sessions, credits requested. Wenatchee Convention Center, Wenatchee, Wash. Register at weedconference.org

12 WASHINGTON GRAIN COMMISSION BOARD MEETING. Meeting begins at 9 a.m. at the commission building at 2702 W. Sunset Boulevard, Spokane, Wash. Contact wgc@wagrains.org for more information or access to the virtual meeting.

12 WASHINGTON CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Northern Quest Casino,

Spokane, Wash. Register at washingtoncrop.com

28 CHRISTMAS AT THE END OF THE ROAD. An old-fashioned cowboy Christmas! Caroling, fireworks, and sleigh rides. winthropwashington.com/events/christmas-festival/

30-DEC. 2 WASHINGTON-OREGON GRAIN GROWERS CONVENTION.

Industry presentations, break-out sessions, exhibitors. Three Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, Wash. Register at wawg.org/convention/ ■

Submissions

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