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## **FEBRUARY 2024**

## **Montana Grain Growers Association**

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## FROM THE DESK OF...

Klayton Lohr, Vice President

### **Help Is On The Way**



I hope this edition of the MGN is finding everyone well, with a nice break in frigid temperatures! I believe it was some time ago that I wrote an article for this publication discussing how our best laid plans always seem to get messed up somehow, and this time is no different. I was really excited to have the opportunity to write this month about our trip to Washington DC and fill you all in on that experience,

but then disaster struck. On the evening of Friday, January 15th, a fire broke out in a business on Main Street in Shelby. This business was directly next door to my mom's business, the Prairie Peddler. I watched with my parents as the smoke rolled out and the Shelby Volunteer Fire Department fought to extinguish the blaze. My mom's store suffered from some fire damage in the back and everything else suffered severe smoke and water damage. It's a tough thing to watch when a successful small business in a little town loses everything due to circumstances completely out of their control. We didn't know what was coming next through this whole process, but knew that as a family we could get through it.

Speaking of family, on the night of the fire, I shared the news via group text with the other officers and EVP Alison. One of the first responses I received was to tell me that if I felt that I needed to stay behind from DC and help my family, everyone would understand. That's a pretty special thing to hear. This group of officers have really developed into being like a family and that's an incredible asset to have in the leadership of an organization. Now you'll all notice from pictures of the guys in Washington DC that I did stay home from the trip to help my mom in every way I could. It turned out it was the right decision, as I was one of the many people who came down with Influenza A following the MAGIE and certainly wouldn't have been welcomed on the plane anyway! Even though I wasn't physically there, President Boyd Heilig took the time to call and put me on speaker phone for the Hill Visits. I was glad to be apart of the conversation and both Senators

**FEBRUARY 2024** 

Daines and Tester appreciated that I took the time to still be involved amongst everything going on here at home.

So why the title of this article, "Help Is On The Way?" It just seems like the most common theme around me the last 10 days. It all started with the volunteer firefighters. They did such an amazing job and were real heroes that night. Small town Shelby is so lucky to have them. Then soon after came the outpouring of offers to help in anyway possible with cleanup or anything else we might need. I can't tell you how many farmers reached out saying they had the pickups, trailers, and man power to get things done. That includes the farmers I'm so lucky to serve on this board with. Lastly, it's always important to reiterate just how much help farmers receive from the efforts put in by the leadership of MGGA. I wasn't able to be there in Washington DC, but everyone who was really stepped up to the plate and covered for me and for all of us. I'm very proud to be a member of the MGGA family and I thank all of you for being apart of it, too. If you follow our social media, you see a lot of the tagline "farmers helping farmers" and I just wanted the opportunity to let you all know just how accurate that is about this organization. Thank you all for the love and support, and here's to a prosperous year in 2024!

## STABENOW LAYS OUT POSSIBLE Farm Program Reforms to Senate Colleagues

On January 17, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) sent a letter to colleagues that outlines her vision and goals for the 2024 Farm Bill. Stabenow highlights her priorities of providing farmers choice and flexibility in the farm safety net, timely assistance, expanding the reach of programs, and addressing the emerging risks farmers face. She points to crop insurance as a tool that helps progress each of these goals and noted her interest in increasing premium subsidies for area-based crop insurance policies, which were included in the 2018 Farm Bill in the form of the Stacked Income Protection Plan (STAX) for cotton growers. The letter noted, "The next Farm Bill should give a similar option to all commodities." Stabenow also recognizes the "effective reference price" that the 2018 bill created for Price Loss Coverage (PLC), and wrote, "I am open to proposals that would make sure every covered commodity receives an increase under an "effective reference price." Stabenow concluded her letter, by writing, "This may be my last Farm Bill, but it's not my first. If we're going to get a Farm Bill done this spring to keep farmers farming, it's time to get serious. I look forward to continuing our bipartisan work to get it done." NAWG continues to advocate for changes to the Farm Bill and will have members in town next week visiting with Members of Congress discussing the need for a Farm Bill and regular appropriations process.



The newest LCS wheat geek

Bozeman local Zach Thibault grew up working his family's farm and has 5+ years experience helping Montana growers find the best seed for their wheat acres.



Talk to Zach 406.404.4911 Zach.Thibault@Limagrain.com

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## Working for You...

#### **EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS**

Each month we provide some key areas where MGGA leaders and staff have been working on your behalf. Here is a sampling of important issues and activities for January 2024:

- EVP Vergeront spent the first couple of weeks of January interviewing candidates for the Office Manager position.
- President Heilig, Vice President Lohr, and Treasurer Sheffels attended a reception with Governor Gianforte in Helena.
- President Heilig attended the Montana and Wyoming Sugar Beet and Malt Barley Symposium in Billings.
- Montana Grain Growers Association was a sponsor to the 2024 Barley Improvement Conference in San Diego. Mitch Konen attended this event where the focus was barley research with malting, brewing, and distilling industries.
- The executive officers met with EVP Vergeront for Operation Calibration. This was a day full of brainstorming for 2024, strategizing for the upcoming months and team photos.
- Thanks to Mitch Konen, Adam Billmayer, Trevor Wolery, Chase Brady, and Ken Johnson for helping the executive team staff the booth at MAGIE in Great Falls.
- President Heilig, Treasurer Sheffels, and Past President Keane attended the National Association of Wheat Growers Winter Conference in Washington, D.C. Our friend, Riley Slivka with AgriStudios joined us – stay tuned for a video to come.
- Treasurer Sheffels and Secretary Flikkema attended the last session of Bayer Leadership Training in Washington, D.C.

#### **COVER PHOTOS**

**Top row:** Wood coins were handed out by Past President Keane at the NAWG Winter Conference as he's running for Secretary for NAWG. Past President Keane, Treasurer Sheffels and President Heilig outside Congressman Rosendale's office. Past President Keane, President Heilig and Treasurer Sheffels dressed for success at NAWG.

**Middle row:** Former MGGA President and current NBGA Vice President Mitch Konen and Director Ken Johnson represented MGGA at MAGIE in Great Falls. MGGA leadership presented a Wheat Advocate Award to U.S. Senator Jon Tester.

**Bottom row:** President Heilig prepared and ready to kick off committee work at NAWG. Former MGGA President Dale Schuler, Treasurer Sheffels and Former MGGA President Will Rhoehm caught up at MAGIE in Great Falls.

### **THE HEART OF THE TEAM**



I brought in the officer team for a one day full of fun! I dubbed it Operation Calibration as we bring on a new officer, settle in with new roles for current officers, and we're off running for 2024. We kicked off the day a fun icebreaker where we learned things like who enjoys a romantic comedy movie, who

enjoys deepening their relationship with God, who enjoys golfing, bowling, being a grandpa, and the list goes on. We brainstormed for what we want Q1 and Q2 to look like, discussed my performance review for 2023, and updated our officer photo.



As we wrapped up the day, we all started our vehicles and the wonderful Steve Sheffels jumped into clearing the snow off all of our vehicles. Bless his heart! As I went to get in my car, I noticed the officers rallying their vehicles around a pick up truck. Turns out one of them had a dead battery. It was well below ZERO degrees, some in dress slacks, ties and coats, and they're pulling up their vehicles and pulling out their jumper cables to help. They all stayed and helped. It didn't matter if one needed to get on the road, it didn't matter if one was cold, the only thing that did matter, was helping a fellow officer.

I saw all of this, because I wanted to share a snapshot of what the heart is like for this team. This team is a

family. We keep in constant contact with each other regarding work and play. We support each other through the celebrations and the struggles. There is no better team than the Montana Grain Growers Association team.

With all that said, we are calibrated and ready to take on 2024! We look forward to bringing on a new office manager in February. We look forward to taking Montana policy resolutions to the National Association of Wheat Growers Annual Meeting in hopes for Montana to shape national policy. We look forward to Past President Keane campaigning and striving to serve on that National Association of Wheat Growers officer team. We look forward to connecting with our sponsors, associate members, and farmers in the next year, in ways we've never before. And most of all, we look forward to working together in order to help improve the lives of Montana producers through collaboration, innovation, and influencing agricultural policy.

Agriculturally yours,

Alison Vergeront MGGA Executive Vice President



### **BIOTECHNOLOGY COMMISSION ANNOUNCES ITS FIRST REPORT TO CONGRESS**

The U.S. National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology released its first report on last month. The organization was created by Congress, and given the task to review advancements in biotechnology, and their impact on the department of defense. The interim report that was released gives recommendations for Congress and has multiple items for consideration with the Farm Bill reauthorization. This year, the Commission will continue to work towards its comprehensive report to be released in December 2024.

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## Get to know Secretary Dale Flikkema

#### Where did you grow up?

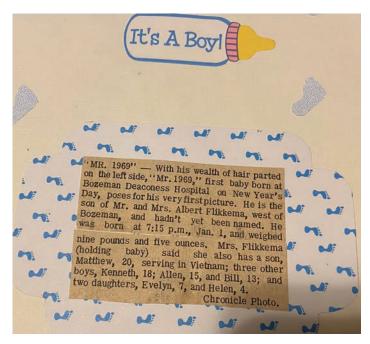
I was Mr. 1969. 1st baby born in Bozeman Deaconess Hospital around 7:15 pm. I grew up west of Bozeman on the family Farm.

#### How did you end up becoming a farmer?

Farming was a natural fit for me. I grew up riding in the tractor with my dad and brothers. Falling asleep and hitting my head multiple times on the back window of the John Deere 4430. Refusing to go home till the field was done or the guys went home.

#### What is your favorite thing about farming?

I love to see things grow. The smell of soil. The sound of a diesel engine. The sprout on recently planted seeds. Watching the crop pop up in rows. Scouting fields, Spraying, Seeing the mist and hearing the hammers hit the water on the irrigation equipment. There's something special about watching a pivot work. Smelling fresh cut hay, Making haystacks green as grass and straight as an arrow. Getting the hay stacked tarped before the rain. The busyness of harvest. Harvest dinners in the field. Watching the sun rise and watching the sun set. To help a first Calf heifer with her calf. Watching a newborn calf struggle with its first steps and first sips of milk. To see the white foam of milk on its face in the green grass of summer. To hear the rattle of an empty trailer. Turn to creaks and moans on the way to market. Everyday there's something new. Everyday, a new challenge. Everyday, what a blessing.



## What is your least favorite thing about farming?

What's not to love about Farming? Paperwork.

#### In your free time, what can we find you doing?

My hobby is to farm. If I go to a party and no one wants to talk

farm, then it's not much of a party.

#### How did you find your way to MGGA?

My Big brother Matt Flikkema introduced me to MGGA.

#### What has MGGA done for you and/or your farm?

MGGA has shown me that there's more to farming than just the day to day activities of farming. Back in the day, the marketing clubs were the first example to me. To be successful in agriculture you needed to be more than just a good grower.

## How'd you make the decision to go through the chairs of MGGA?

Life has many stages. As babies, all we can do is learn. Well others take care of us, as time passes we continue to learn, but we start doing things. We start learning because we are doing things. Doing becomes the main thing in our lives and all of sudden things like sharing, helping, teaching, and leading creep into our lives. As life continues, our roles in life continue to shift. They turn into responsibilities. Running through the chairs of MGGA, I'm hoping I can help others. I'm hoping I can share my knowledge. Along the way, I hope to learn enough to be able to lead when my time comes.

#### Any books or movies you'd recommend?

Well I'm a very poor reader. Reading is a chore for me. So I can't recommend any books. Greeter and Facing the Giants, very inspirational. If you like dry humor. Then Spaceballs is one of the funniest ever.

## What is one goal of yours while serving as leadership with MGGA?

Try to get more people aware and involved in MGGA.

#### What is one thing you'd like MGGA to know about you?

One of my first memories in life was being strapped in a harness and tied to the clothesline. Begging my sisters to let me loose. Later in life, my mother explained to me that a passing truck driver stopped, removed me from the road, walked me back to the house. Then the next day she found me playing in the creek. She said to me, You've always had to learn the hard way.



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## **GLEANINGS FROM THE MONTANA** WHEAT & BARLEY COMMITTEE

By Kent Kupfner, Executive Director

#### **Barley Symposium**

Attending the Mountain States Crop Education Association (MSCEA) malt barley and sugar beet symposium in Billings was an excellent opportunity for MWBC to connect with an entirely new group of growers. Most of the growers in attendance, who we don't always see on a regular basis, were irrigated malt barely growers from the heavy production areas of southern Montana. We were invited to address the group and discuss malt barley-related marketing and research efforts MWBC conducts on behalf of Montana growers. We presented information outlining key research priorities, crop quality results, and hosting various trade teams. We also focused our message to highlight the growth of the private malt industry over the past 40-plus years. We finished by reviewing top-planted varieties and looked at 2023 weather, acreage, and production trends. This was a well-run program and there were many relevant topics on the agenda such as; fusarium head blight, the H2A program, brewing updates, weed management, drone applications, and yield mapping.

#### **MWBC** around the State

Education and outreach remain an important part of the MWBC mission, and to that end, we were pleased to join the Cascade and Chouteau County Farm Bureau booth at the MAGIE show. Our always popular malting plant display was a good conversation piece and a way for staff to network with growers and other agricultural community members.





MWBC staff Lori Wickett and Kent Kupfner joined board members Denise Conover and Lee Dahlman in DC for US Wheat Meetings.

MWBC was also in attendance at the Montana Agricultural Business Association-Montana Grain Elevator Association convention. We support the state's grain elevator industry and like to take advantage of the opportunity to network within the commercial grain industry. A close working relationship with Montana's grain industry is vital to our success and is important to the overall operations of MWBC.

#### Montana State University Variety Releases

Director Charlie Bumgarner and Sam Anderson attended the MSU variety release committee meeting during which several new varieties were reviewed and approved for public release. The committee continues to focus on improving end-use qualities and stress the importance of meeting quality characteristics demanded by our domestic and export customers. The committee released two spring wheat varieties and one winter wheat variety which hold the promise of improving returns to the Montana producer.

It takes one to two years to produce enough certified seed for widespread availability at commercial seed houses around the state. Watch for upcoming naming announcements and the motions for release can be found at https://plantsciences.montana.edu/foundationseed/ varietyrelease/. New MSU durum varieties such as MT Blackbeard and MT Raska as well as spring wheats MT Carlson and MT Dutton are available to growers and information can be found on the MSU Foundation Seed Program Facebook page.

#### Wheat Organizations in Washington DC

MWBC staff Kent Kupfner and Lori Wickett along with directors Denise Conover and Lee Dahlman, attended the joint board of directors meeting for US Wheat Associates (USW) and National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) in Washington DC. Lori was able to attend a USW Board Orientation. Other agenda



Board member Denise Conover along with MWBC staff Sam Anderson and Kent Kupfner at the Barley Symposium.

items included meetings with the long-range planning committee and the wheat transportation working group. Denise Conover chaired the wheat quality committee. A plenary policy session meeting which included members of Congress and consideration of USW's producer-funded operating budget for fiscal year 2024-25 were also part of the program. At the policy session, USDA Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agriculture, Alexis Taylor, expressed excitement about seven US agricultural trade missions planned for 2024. The Chairwoman of the US Senate Committee on Agriculture, Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, and Ranking Member Senator John Boozman of Arkansas, addressed Farm Bill legislation that is currently being considered in Congress. There is much to do, they said, but reconfirmed their commitment to work together to pass the bill as soon as possible.

Best of luck to all as 2024 marches on. Let's hope everyone gets some moisture soon.

## T-YIELD UPDATES AND PRICES Released

#### By Korey Fauque, KW Insurance Inc



There is one important deadline that just passed by in crop insurance which was the Camelina sales closing date on February 1st. If you didn't get Camelina added by that date you will have to wait till next February to add it to your crop insurance policy. That being said, one more important thing to note is even if you have Camelina

on your policy, you must have a production contract in order to get insurance on that crop by July 15th (same as Mustard).



This is the time of year we get the county average (T-Yield) adjustments that have been made for the 2024 crop year. This year they left barley and canola unchanged but did make big changes to some county's wheat types, and the biggest change was to Triticale. This means that depending on which county you farm in, the county average yield for Triticale is 30% to 50% lower than it was just a year ago. For example, in Toole County the CC Triticale yield in Map area 4 dropped from 49 bu/acre last year all the way down to 30 bu/acre this year.

I have never seen this big of a shift in any crop that I can remember. If you are hoping to grow Triticale for grain, make sure you contact your agent for an updated quote on that crop as the coverage will be substantially lower than last year.

Flax also took a pretty big hit in most counties with the county average yields dropping an average of 20% year over year.

Now is a great time to go through your cropping plan for next year with your agent. This is probably the slowest time at the insurance office and is a great time to quote which crops have the highest potential guarantees for next year.

At the beginning of January, the harvest prices were released for the pulse crops. Smooth Peas went from \$.13/lbs. base price to \$.15 for the harvest price which means you would get a 15% increase in loss payout on that crop. Large Kabulis were unchanged and Small Kabulis started at \$.30/lbs. and ended up at \$.34/lbs. (13% increase). The biggest winner was the lentils which started at \$.28/lbs. and ended up with a \$.38/lbs. harvest price. That is a 35% increase to your initial loss payout on that crop which is a huge deal.

Next month the clock starts ticking towards the March 15th sales closing deadline so its time to start planning for the 2024 crop year. Hope you all have a blessed last month of winter! For the most part it has been one of the mildest winters I can ever remember and lets hope we have a wet spring.

# **MONTANA PULSE CROPS**

#### A LEADER IN PRODUCTION, QUALITY AND INNOVATION

grabbed my go-to coffee order, an 8 oz double shot white mocha with whip, and took a seat in a rather quiet area of the Denver Airport to catch up on emails I had missed from the day before. Within a half hour my quiet escape, was filled with chatter among college students and a sea of green and yellow was everywhere I looked, the Oregon Ducks Track & Field Team was headed to Bentonville, Arkansas, and had taken over Gate B62. The friendly banter among teammates reminded me of how much I enjoy a team environment. As a three-sport high school athlete, which eventually brought me to Montana State University on a track scholarship and then 10-year streak of coaching everything from t-ball to high school volleyball, I believe I will forever crave collaboration, teamwork, and striving for excellence. That is exactly what I have found working with our member organizations and with other agriculture organizations. That collaboration was highly emphasized over the last few days as I had the opportunity to attend the Northern Pulse Growers Association (NPGA) Convention in Minot North Dakota. NPGA, Executive Director Shannon Berndt, and Marketing Director, Erin Becker, put on an excellent lineup of speakers that addressed commodity economics, worldwide politics, farm bill 2024 or 2025, and the increased demand in the pulse ingredient market. USADPLC CEO, Tim McGreevy rolled out a rather lofty US goal of double pulse acres and production by 2030. Tim's report was followed by an eye-opening presentation from Nichole Hutchinson, Marketing Director, at Puris Foods. If pulse ingredients and the pulse innovation market continue to expand like Nichole believes it will, and our national organization is successful in influencing the change in dietary guidelines from the recommended 1.5 cups of pulses a week to 3 cups a week I am also hopeful of double duty by 2030!

However, none of the innovation, market development, and policy programming will be necessary if our growers are not successful in growing Montana Pulse Crops. (dry peas, lentils and chickpeas) Collaboration is key to our industry success and researchers, educators and industry affiliates are listening. Please take some time to scan the QR code, attend upcoming grower shop talks, and use the resources below to let your voice be heard. Growers Matter and we are listening!

Congrats to Paul Kanning on the 2024 NPGA Excellence Award and Thank You for your service to Montana Agriculture!



Paul operates a family farm in Flaxville Montana, specializing in the production of pulses, small grains, and oil seeds. Notably, Paul has served as an eastern district representative on the MT Pulse Crop Committee since 2017, and he is one of Montana's representatives on the board of the USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council. In 2024, he will take on the role of National Board President. Additionally, he is an active member of the Daniels Memorial Healthcare Center board and most recently became a regional director for the Montana Grain Growers Association. Beyond his professional pursuits, Paul enjoys walleye fishing, roasting coffee beans, and traveling.

#### **Upcoming Shop Talks**

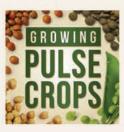
**February 14th, 2024** February 14th 9am to 1pm(ish) in Scobey, MT. Hosted by Jeannie Rude, ProCoOp and Uta McKelvy, MSU. This meeting will focus on root rot in peas and lentils, which was a major issue in Northeastern Montana last growing season.

March 2024 Hingham MT Addressing Lygus Bug in Central Montana Hosted by Jayson Hauer, Belle Pulses and Liz Edmundson, Montana Pulse Crops. More information to come on www.mtpulsecrops.org or call Liz 406.438.7570

#### **Producer Resources**

The science and business of farming chickpeas, lentils and dry peas, available in a podcast.

https://www.growingpulsecrops.com



Pulse Crop Working Group Growing Managment Resources
http://pulsecropsipm.org/resources/

#### Let your voice be heard! Grower Survey

Montana State University Seeks Your Input on the 2024 Pulse Crop Survey

Please fill scan the QR code

The Pulse Crop Survey is an annual survey of pulse crop growers and consultants about pulse crop pests (diseases, weeds, and insects) and their management, conducted by Montana State University.

Please consider participating in this survey. Your participation in this survey will help us identify research needs and resources needed to support economic and sustainable pulse crop production in the Northern Great Plains and Pacific Northwest. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and anonymous. This survey should only take 10 minutes of your time.

You will find the survey by scanning the QR code below or by clicking on this weblink: https://bit.ly/pulses2024





Liz Edmundson Executive Director 406.438.7570 pulse@mgga.org



## NAWG MONITORS HOUSE AND SENATE Work Towards Appropriations Bill

Early January, House and Senate negotiators reached a fiscal year 2024 appropriation deal in principle, after nailing down the final topline defense and nondefense spending limits. The deal will allow for the total level of spending laid out in last year's debt limit agreement, with \$886.3 billion for defense and \$772.7 billion for nondefense programs. While this is a significant step towards funding the government past the stop-gap appropriations bill that will expire on January 19, additional work needs to occur before floor consideration, including deals on a variety of policy riders. NAWG encourages lawmakers to pass a final FY2024 appropriations package to avert a government shutdown and maintain investments for ag research so Congress can start working on a long-term Farm Bill. **\$** 

## NAWG JOB ANNOUNCEMENT: DIRECTOR of Communications and Partnerships

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) seeks a dynamic, self-starter to manage the association's communications and media relations and work to strengthen and enhance our industry partnerships. Additionally, this position will serve as NAWG's lead staff person for our fall, winter, and annual conferences. The Director of Communications and Partnerships' main role is to oversee all media requests, publish the weekly newsletter and monthly podcast, communicate conference responsibilities, and help cultivate industry partnerships. The Director of Communications and Partnerships. The Director of Communications and Partnerships will work independently and in a team to fulfill organizational goals and initiatives.

### **CONGRESS PASSES A STOP GAP Appropriations Bill**

The Senate and then the House of Representatives passed a short-term appropriations bill, which averts a partial government shutdown that could have occurred later this week and impacted USDA operations. The short-term appropriation bill (H.R. 2872) would extend funding for USDA through March 1, 2024, and most federal agencies through March 8, 2024. The bill passed the Senate by a vote of 77 to 18 and the House by a vote of 314 to 108. The bill now heads to President Biden's desk to be signed into law. While a tentative appropriations deal was reached between Speaker Johnson and Leader Schumer, there remain a lot of issues to work through before the legislation can be brought to the floor for consideration. The federal government has been operating under a series of short-term continuing resolutions since September 30, 2023.

## THE NATIONAL WHEAT FOUNDATION AND BASF Award Scholarship

On January 11, the National Wheat Foundation and BASF announced the two college student recipients of the \$2,500 college scholarship, awarded to students pursuing degrees that will directly benefit the wheat industry. Thanks to a great partnership with BASF, the National Wheat Foundation is pleased to award these annual scholarships to undergraduate college students. "All the applicants were excellent and it was very difficult to select only two," said Ben Scholz, NWF Director and Scholarship Committee Chairman. "The next generation is responsible for the future of the wheat industry, and with applicants like these, the future is bright." Congratulations Grace Timm, junior at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Sophia Flikkema, junior at Mississippi State University from Bozeman, Montana. The National Wheat Foundation and BASF wish you well this semester and in your future endeavors. We are thrilled to award you these scholarships and look forward to your further contributions to the wheat industry.

Sophia Flikkema, a junior at Mississippi State University from Bozeman, Montana, is awarded a \$2,500 scholarship. Sophia is majoring in Economics and Asian Studies and plans to work in wheat merchandising. Sophia wants to tackle the global challenges that affect wheat growers and is studying the Chinese language in order to communicate and understand the United States' thirdbiggest trading partner. The National Wheat Foundation appreciates the work that Sophia is doing to prepare herself to keep the American wheat industry strong in the global marketplace. **\$** 

## JANUARY WORLD AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY AND DEMAND ESTIMATES

The first World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates report of 2024 was released on January 12, showing decreases in U.S. ending and beginning stocks, but increases in global wheat outlook and consumption. The projected U.S. wheat ending stocks were lowered 11 million bushels, and seed use was reduced 1 million bushels. U.S. all wheat feed and residual use for 2023/24 did not see any overall change. The global wheat outlook sees larger supplies, consumption, trade, and ending stocks. Increases in production for Russia, Ukraine, and Saudi Arabia more than offset a production decrease for China. Higher feed and residual use for India and the EU led global consumption to be raised 1.8 million tons. EU consumption increased due to higher projected imports from Ukraine, which partially offset the EU reduction in feed grain use. Higher exports from Ukraine, Russia, Australia and Canada caused world trade to be raised 2.4 million tons. 👙





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## **Less Hazardous County**

#### By Eric Hanson

The southern twang of the theme music continued to grow louder, drowning out the cherry bomb mufflers roaring behind the large displacement V8. The transformation was sudden. The old fuel pickup I had just been cruising down the road in was now brilliant orange. As the proximity of the crossing ahead shortened, I caught a glimpse of an O1 on the door in the drivers side mirror. I squared up with that ramp, my right foot got heavy, and I grabbed another gear. That old freight train wasn't going to hold me up today! Dirt sure does fly when an old farm truck does an aerial maneuver over a train. It's highlighted by the mid air pause, as you hear the calm voice-over narrating the spectacle; "You know them north country farm boys never was much on waiting."

The clang and zing of train cars going by pulled me from my musing. I turned up Waylon on the scratchy speaker. On occasion, I must admit, I've dreamt of launching over some box cars. The specific occasion I speak of, would be every single time I get held up by a darn train. And it's a rather common occurrence. I'm certain I could pull it off even in this old fuel pickup. My pals, Bo and Luke, showed me exactly how to facilitate these sorts of manuevers throughout my youth. I suppose one should probably strap down a few things though. Aw heck, a whole box of old tools, a spare tire, a hi-lift jack, and an air compressor all simultaneously performing death defying stunts out back might be quite an addition to the theatrics of landing!

You may be thinking to yourself, jumping a train sounds like a hazard to one's health. And I'm sure it is. In the same line of thought, so can the act of simply crossing railroad tracks. Most of my life, the only way to reach the highway, the most direct route to civilization, was across the main rail line. The crossing we used the most, the west crossing, can be a dangerous endeavor. I like to refer to it as the hazard county crossing.

Hazards are just part of growing up and living in farm country; none of us are strangers to it. We have poisonous snakes, and PTOs, and tractors that will flip over on top of you in a ditch. Everywhere you look something is trying to kill you! I've had my fair share of close calls with all of the above. We learn to be aware of the dangers, but unfortunately, at times, we also grow complacent. There are warnings for all that silly stuff too, if'n you are into reading signs and labels and things of that sort. Lucky or not, it seems there's always someone out there worried about protecting us from ourselves. And I suppose sometimes for good reason. We've got roll over protection structures (ROPS), them power take-off plastic spinnyprotecty-thing-a-ma-tubes, and shrill shrieks of terror from your spouse. Yep, sounds like there's a snake over there, guess I'll take a wide berth!

The hazard county crossing is what they call an uncontrolled, or passive crossing. Simply put, there are no active warning devices. Instead, there are just crossbucks and yield signs. Thus, leaving the responsibility of observing and yielding to any approaching trains up to us folk out traipsing about the countryside. This is not uncommon, especially in rural Montana, where crossings of this nature make up for about half of the crossings throughout the U.S.; with more than 130,000 passive crossings nationwide. This means that some Montana producers presume a certain amount of risk everyday, crossing railroad tracks in order to produce their crops, deliver their grain, and simply carry out their daily activities while living the rural life.

In addition to it being uncontrolled, the tracks at the hazard county crossing quickly crest and turn to the north, allowing for a short opportunity to see a train coming from that direction. Especially one at a high rate of speed or in inclement weather. During certain busy seasons, added factors such as long hours, high amounts of stress, equipment challenges, increased traffic rates, and even inexperienced help, can all alter focus from an already hazardous crossing. And it has. This crossing has presented many close calls and collisions, not only for myself and my family, but many others in our farm community. And one that cost a young man his life on a cold December afternoon back in 2015.

Late last summer, I took notice of some dirt work at the hazard county crossing. As I crossed it many times throughout harvest and into fall seeding, it became clear that BNSF was working on installing lights and gates. In the first week of December, 2023, I witnessed it in operation for the first time. I must admit, I was as excited as the two youngsters in the back seat to see all the lights flashing in the dark. I also felt a bit of relief. This is one place I agree with a little help in protecting us from ourselves. And partly because it won't be long before those two little ones in the back will be new to the drivers seat, bouncing across this rail.

I thought all boots had non marking soles these days. Go figure. For some unknown reason, my athletic hood slide when leaving the field didn't impress my dad even a little bit. Later, as I stood there trying to polish the scuffs off of the fuel pickup hood, I reckoned it was a good chance to call my local ombudsmen. I wanted to extend a thank you from my family, and our community, for taking a little bit of hazard out of our county. As for the hood slides and thoughts of jumping trains, I believe upper management would appreciate if I'd just leave the good ol boys antics to my day dreams! 🕏

## **THE BARLEY MOW**

#### By Mitch Konen, Vice President, National Barley Growers Association

The second week of January found much of the barley industry researchers and advocates in San Diego for the Barley Improvement Conference. This conference is usually a biennial event that hasn't come together since before the recent pandemic. The conference brought together close to 100 of the barley industry's leading university barley breeders, researchers, and advocates, from across the country. Some of the attendees were industry personnel from the malting and brewing industry as well as producers and industry advocacy groups.

Topics surrounding barley industry improvement ranged from breeding programs, genetics, pest mitigation, cropping systems, nutrient management, and abiotic stress resiliency.

A major emphasis with some of the research revolves around the development of winter barley. Winter barley

is grown in the Midwest, east and west coasts as a rotational crop, and in double cropping systems. Montana and northern tier winter hardiness has not been found yet, but is being researched.

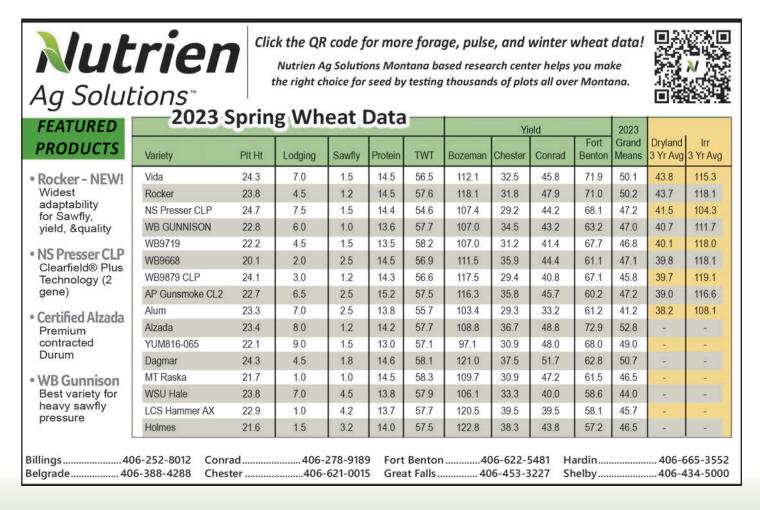
Pest resistance, be it insects or disease, was another topic presented and discussed. Work is constantly being done to maintain developed resistant levels in varieties as these pests mutate and new pests appear.

Abiotic stresses of climate and environmental conditions were another agenda topic and discussed concerning the creation and ask of congress for funding of a Resilient Barley Initiative to combat these stresses. Examples of these include cold tolerance, drought resistance, and pre-harvest sprouting.

Barley quality issues were also discussed when it comes to the malting and brewing processes as well as its use in the food and feed industries.

All in all, this was a very informative conference concerning all things barley. Most of it was high level institutional information and discussion and very educational about the development and future of barley and its value within our food supply chain.

NO BARLEY NO BEER 🕏



## **Ted Schwinden 1925–2023**

"A Montana Story" born on family homestead, veteran, legislator, Montana Grain Growers Association President and 19th Governor of Montana

Ted was born on the family homestead north of Wolf Point, Montana in 1925. He began his education in a one-room school where he and his future wife Jean were the only two in their grade-for eight years. In high school he won the State Spelling Bee and finished second in the State in Oratorical Declamation contest. He graduated Valedictorian



from Wolf Point High School and immediately enlisted in the Army, where he was a veteran of both the European and Pacific theaters. Once, under fire, his cheek was grazed by a German sniper bullet. His buddy said, "That's your purple heart." The 18- year-old replied, "Nope, those are for the Gls who get seriously wounded!"

He went on to college and graduate school on the GI Bill. Lacking only his Ph.D. thesis, he interrupted academics to manage the family farm after his father's heart attack.

During the farming years, Ted didn't slow down. He served



on the local School Board. He was elected President of the Montana Grain Growers in 1963. He organized the nation's first "unit" train, in which every car was filled with Montana grain bound for the West Coast and Japan. He served two terms in the Montana Legislature and lost his bid for a third term. A lifelong believer in the competency of the electorate, he accepted the judgment of the voters and maintained that the "people were right-all three times!" His political savvy was known to newly elected Governor Forrest Anderson who appointed him State Land Commissioner in 1968.

Ted was elected Lt. Governor in 1976 and Governor in 1980. After the election, he and Jean moved into the Governor's mansion where they set up the "family room" and his office in a back bedroom. This was the Governor's home office for eight years. He typically rose at 6:30, sat at his desk, and responded personally to every letter-even if he just scribbled, "thanks, Ted." He and Jean opened the rest of the mansion to public tours while showcasing different Montana artists every month in the hallways.

Committed to being the people's governor, Ted had a listed home phone number during his eight years in officesomething no Governor, in any state, before or since, has had the courage to do. When NPR picked up on this story and published his home number, he received a few "skeptical" calls, mostly from out of state. A fraternity in Michigan called one night and tried to verify that he really was the governor. He chatted with them for a few minutes and finally told them it was time for them to hit the books and hold off on the beer. When Ted was on the phone, it was impossible to tell if he was talking to the Governor of Oregon or a custodian at the Capitol. Every caller warranted his respect and full attention.

Ted Schwinden loved Montana and its people. They showed their appreciation by re-electing him in a landslide in his second term. He enjoyed talking with people wherever he met them. His uncanny ability to remember names made it easy to build friendships. He greeted them by their name, and they called him "Ted."

Ted's eight years in office were characterized by hard work, honesty, and integrity-not a whiff of a scandal in his office nor his cabinet. One hallmark of his tenure was his ability to work with Republican legislators as well as those from his own Democratic party. His relationship with the GOP leadership was based on long friendships, mutual respect, and trust. It helped him develop a mutually beneficial "Sister State" trade relationship with Kumamoto, Japan.

During his terms in office, Ted insisted on "straight talk" and he refused to pander to audiences-his straight talk sometimes disappointed. At a "Capital for a Day" event in a rural Montana town, he was responding to questions with his usual frankness. A frustrated rancher in the audience was overheard saying to his neighbor, "I don't agree with Ted, but I trust the sonofabitch!"

A fiscal conservative, Ted always said, "It's easy to spend other people's money." He was reluctant to do that. As *Continued on page 18* 



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#### Continued from page 16

Governor, he drove himself around in a 4-cylinder Mercury. When the Governor's mansion was scheduled for new drapes, he and Jean went to the mall and found some on sale. At a White House dinner for the nation's governors, a yellow Volkswagen waited in line with the limousines bearing other Governors. The Marines told the driver to turn around, he was in the wrong line. Eventually the driver explained that he had Montana's Governor in the car.

Ted Schwinden was once asked by Chuck Johnson, a reporter he had long respected, what he brought to the Governor's office. He said he hoped he was a "healing" governor-one who could restore the publics' confidence in their elected leaders by listening, being open, and responsive.

For Ted, it was never about money or prestige. While Governor, he gave all his honorariums to the Montana Special Olympics. When Joe Robbie, owner of the Miami Dolphins, invited him to sit with him at the next Super Bowl, Ted checked his calendar and said, "I can't, I made a commitment to speak to a high school class (in a rural community school). Growing up on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Ted forged lifelong friendships with his Native American neighbors who, after a two-year process, adopted him into the Red Bottom Clan of the Assiniboine Nation.

Of the many things written or said about him, his favorite was overheard by his son, Dore. Ted was standing, sport coat flapping in the frigid northern Montana wind, on the back of a pickup, speaking to a group of farmers and ranchers on a blustery, winter day. One farmer turned to his neighbor and said, "That Schwinden is a tough old bird!"

Ted declined to run for a third term even though polls showed he would have won handily. He kept the promise he had made eight years earlier that he would only serve two terms. He retired to his Helena home, taught a few college courses, turned down offers to be a lobbyist, and began writing down memories from his childhood to preserve for his grandchildren. When Jean developed cancer, he was her constant caregiver.

After she died, with politics behind him, he thrived in his role as Gramp. The reassuring voice and broad smile that the three of us grew up with were in abundant supply for his grand- and great-grandchildren. To them he was just "Gramp" - someone who helped them with homework, taught them to make his famous chili, or shuttled them to after school activities.

During his time in office, Ted Schwinden frequently referred to his native Montana as the "Last of What Is Best." It could be said of him that he too was among the last of what is best-as a politician and a man.

Montana Grain Growers Association sends thoughts and prayers to his three children, Mike Schwinden (Plymouth, MA), Chrys Schwinden Anderson (Phoenix, AZ), and Dore Schwinden (Helena, MT), six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

# 2024 ARCPLC ELECTION AND ENROLLMENT

The 2024 ARCPLC election revision and enrollment period began December 18, 2023, and will continue through **March 15, 2024**. Eligible participants must take action to ensure that their farms are enrolled by the signup deadline. Producers may change their ARCPLC election for program year 2024, if desired, but all paperwork must be finalized at FSA by March 15, 2024.

Information that may be helpful when making your 2024 ARCPLC election decision is found below:

#### Effective Reference Prices for 2024 PLC Purposes:

- Wheat \$5.50/bushel
- Barley \$4.95/bushel
- Oats \$2.76/bushel
- Corn \$4.01/bushel
- Dry Peas \$0.1100/lb
- Lentils 0.1997/lb
- Safflower \$0.2015/lb
- Large Chickpeas \$0.2261/lb
- Small Chickpeas \$0.2108/lb

#### <u>Revenue Guarantees and Maximum Payment Figures for</u> 2024 ARC-CO Purposes

Admin Unit	Сгор	Unit of Measure	ARC-CO Yield Designation	ARC-CO Revenue Guarantee	Maximum Payment Rate Per Acre
А	Barley	Bushel	Irrigated	\$458.56	\$53.32
А	Barley	Bushel	Nonirrigated	\$219.32	\$25.50
А	Canola	Pound	All	\$200.11	\$23.27
А	Chickpeas_	Pound	All	\$330.52	\$38.43
А	Dry Peas	Pound	All	\$157.30	\$18.29
А	Flaxseed	Bushel	All	\$177.69	\$20.66
А	Lentils	Pound	All	\$222.70	\$25.90
А	Oats	Bushel	All	\$94.56	\$11.00
А	Safflower	Pound	All	\$148.06	\$17.22
А	Wheat	Bushel	Irrigated	\$403.75	\$46.95
А	Wheat	Bushel	Nonirrigated	\$243.53	\$28.32
В	Barley	Bushel	All	\$200.57	\$23.32
в	Canola	Pound	All	\$196.83	\$22.89
В	Chickpeas_	Pound	All	\$318.84	\$37.07
в	Dry Peas	Pound	All	\$177.90	\$20.69
В	Flaxseed	Bushel	All	\$177.69	\$20.66
в	Lentils	Pound	All	\$208.84	\$24.28
В	Oats	Bushel	All	\$81.01	\$9.42
В	Safflower	Pound	All	\$177.70	\$20.66
В	Wheat	Bushel	All	\$267.03	\$31.05

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