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FROM THE DESK OF...

Boyd Heilig, President

MY PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

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The last half of my month of January will always be a special time in my life as a member of Montana Grain Growers Association. We officers embarked on an eleven day journey to Washington DC for meetings with our national associations of wheat and barley. Every year we have annual meetings in DC to write policy and advocate for our grower beliefs on Capitol Hill.

This year had a whole different twist on it, as I was the lead member of the Montana delegation and had to start off each meeting with our members of the Senate and Congress. In years past, I would join along with the executive team and take my turn with priorities that we brought forth from the National Association. This year, I was able to introduce our officer team and start the hard conversations of what the new farm bill looks like and when Congress can expect to pass it. We are fighting for enhanced crop insurance, more equitable reference prices, and additional funding for our MAP (market access program) and FMD (foreign market development).

I have had the pleasure of learning the ropes with past presidents, Vince Mattson, Mitch Konen, Tryg Koch, and now Nathan Keane. They have always been a wealth of knowledge and open to any of my questions and concerns. As time goes by I can only hope that I can be a mentor for the incredible officers that follow me.

One more thing that was unique for our trip this year was that we invited Riley Slivka along to document what it is that Montana Grain Grower officers do when we visit Washington DC. Riley owns his own video production company and is, in my opinion, one of the brightest young people in our State. He followed us from start to finish. From NAWG committee meetings to Hill visits. From meetings with Senator Stabenow and Senator Boozeman to dinner meetings with the State of Idaho. All of you MGGGA members will get to see the finished product this spring, and we hope that it gives you a clearer view of what our trips stand for and how we represent you at a national level.

In closing, I want to thank all of our grower and associate members for having the faith in our officer team to represent our great state of Montana and have a seat at the table when it comes to farm policy and how it impacts each and every one of us.

MGGA has a long history of prominent representation and leading by example on a national stage, and I am very proud to continue that legacy. 🌱

2024 PRICES AND MARCH 15TH SALES CLOSING REMINDERS

By Korey Fauque, KW Insurance Inc



March 15th is a major deadline for your crop insurance. This is the last day you can change levels or programs for your 2024 spring crops, and while I'm writing this article the prices are also being averaged for your Revenue Protection crops.

If you seeded winter wheat that means that all your wheat is locked into whatever options and level you chose last fall, but the rest of the spring crops (including wheat if you didn't seed winter wheat) can be changed by this deadline.

A couple of important things to check on your policy before this deadline lapses is that you are in RP (Revenue Protection) not YP (Yield Protection) on all crops that offer RP. If you are an organic producer, you also want to make sure you have the CP (Contract Pricing) option on all your crops. The CP Option allows you to use organic contacts to increase your coverage.

This is also the deadline for adding SCO or ECO to your crops. I am a big proponent of these county-based programs so it would be well worth your time to talk to your agent about those options.

2024 Conventional Revenue Protection Prices						
Commodity	Type	Practice	State	Factor	Projected	
					Price	Volatility
Wheat	Winter	Conventional	MT	1	7.38	0.23
Wheat	Spring	Conventional	MT	1	6.87	0.15
Wheat	Durum	Conventional	MT	1.154	7.93	0.15
Canola	Spring	Conventional	MT	1	0.204	0.15
Oats	Spring	Conventional	MT	0.565	3.39	0.19
Barley	Spring	Conventional	MT	0.956	4.36	0.18

2024 Organic Revenue Protection Prices						
Commodity	Type	Practice	State	Factor	Projected	
					Price	Volatility
Wheat	Winter	Organic	MT	1	\$ 14.66	0.23
Wheat	Spring	Organic	MT	1	\$ 13.64	0.15
Wheat	Durum	Organic	MT	1.154	\$ 15.75	0.15
Canola	Spring	Organic	MT	1	\$ 0.20	0.15
Oats	Spring	Organic	MT	0.565	\$ 6.47	0.19
Barley	Spring	Organic	MT	0.956	\$ 9.31	0.18

*** Contracts may be used in Organic to increase this price if CP Option Elected

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This is also the deadline for picking your unit structure. I like using Enterprise Units for the huge premium discount and then stacking SCO and/or ECO (County based disaster programs) on top of that. To qualify for enterprise units, you have to have 20 or more acres of that crop or crop/type seeded in two different sections. You can do Enterprise Units by Type (ET) on both wheat and peas now so it would be good to check that you are in ET not EU on those crops. If it says EU next to those crops on your policy the wheat or pea types would all be combined into one enterprise unit rather than splitting the winter vs spring wheat or lentils vs peas into separate units for example.

The only other enterprise unit type to consider would be EP (Enterprise Units by Irrigation Practice). If you are an irrigated producer the EP option would keep the dryland separate from the irrigated and still get you the big discount. The one thing to consider when choosing EP is you can't keep crops separate by type when doing that so it would combine the winter, spring, and durum wheat together by irrigated practice and the same for the pulse crops. Be sure to talk to your agent if you are an irrigated producer about which options would fit the best.

Most of our spring crop prices are figured during the month of February. We can track where most of these are at as they average. The one exception to that are the pulse crop prices. Those are done by gathering reports of local sales and contracts and those prices are not released till March 5th.

I am writing this article on February 26th so the prices listed in the chart below are not completely done averaging, but we are far enough into the average now that they will be within a couple percent of the final prices. The volatility factor on this chart influences your premium a fair amount and is down from .30 last year on some crops, to .15 now, which means you will be paying less per \$ of coverage, which is always great news.

I hope you all have a great spring and as always feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have! 🌱

WORKING FOR YOU...

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

- ❧ Winter Board Meeting took place in Fairmont Hot Springs. (See article page 8)
- ❧ MGGG Executive Officers met with MSU College of Ag Dean Dr. Bajwa and Austin to hear updates at Montana State University.
- ❧ National Association of Wheat Growers policy committee meetings took place leading up to the annual conference in Houston. NAWG directors reviewed expiring policies and brainstormed future policies.
- ❧ Submitted a letter of support for former board director, Chad Forest, who is applying for the Montana Pulse Crop Committee.
- ❧ Reviewed and reapplied for another year for the Montana Pulse Crop Committee grant through the Montana Department of Agriculture.
- ❧ EVP Vergeront virtually joined American AgriWomen for a listening session on Agenda 21.
- ❧ EVP Vergeront met with Agweek to discuss future promotional opportunities.
- ❧ EVP Vergeront and Office Manager Severson met with Shortgrass to discuss building a membership database and program.
- ❧ EVP Vergeront caught up with Roger Hsieh with BNSF.
- ❧ EVP Vergeront and Past President Keane met with U.S. Senator Tester staff regarding international companies owning land in the United States. MGGG respects the intent to protect the United States, and also values the working relationships and opportunities with companies such as Syngenta who invest a great deal of time and money in crop research and development.

COVER PHOTOS

Top row: VP Lohr and Treasurer Sheffels checking out the green machine, President Heilig, Past President Keane and VP Lohr took in the Houston Rodeo, Secretary Sheffels, VP Lohr, Past President Keane and President Heilig checked out the Commodity Classic trade show in Houston.

Past President Keane as he handed out Donut Forget to Vote Keane goodies and Treasurer Sheffels, VP Lohr, President Heilig, Past President Keane stopped by the Crown Royal booth in the hotel lobby, President Heilig presenting Montana policy resolutions to the Environment and Research Committee meeting.

Bottom row: President Heilig and Past President Keane ready for the board of directors meeting and USDA Farm Service Agency Administrator Zach Ducheneaux, NRCS Chief Terry Cosby, and RMA Administrator Marcia Bunger speaking at NAWG.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS



A FULL FEBRUARY



After weeks of collecting resumes and interviewing candidates we are blessed to welcome Shawna Severson to the team as the Office Manager & Special Events Coordinator. Shawna is new to the ag industry but is no stranger to the Montana way of life and is eager to join the Montana Grain Growers

Family. She will be the lead on all events, handling membership, office duties, and more! Shawna will be an integral part in the associations growth and delivering excellent customer service. Feel free to drop by the office, email her at sseverson@mgsa.org, or give her a call to introduce yourself.

February brought us our winter board meeting. Tryg Koch and Klayton Lohr proposed the idea of hosting the board meeting at Fairmont Hot Springs and I'd say the board enjoyed the change in venue. It was encouraging to hear the director updates as most feel optimistic going into the '24 planting season. Our past leaders, Tryg Koch and Mitch Konen, provided an insightful perspective on best practices for a board member. We also heard updates from Townsquare Media who is handling our digital promotion, an economic security threat and homeland security resource brief, and an update from the Montana Grains Foundation.

This month, we mailed out our membership dues! While we originally planned to transition to a new online membership program, we made an audible, and decided to proceed with our original program for the time being. Associate Members, you'll notice the dues increased to \$250 after members approved the increase during resolutions session of Convention.

We wrapped up the month by heading to the Lone Star State for what felt like the Super Bowl for Montana Grain Growers. We weren't in Texas for a long time, but it was a good time! We returned with our Past President Keane elected as the National Association of Wheat Growers Secretary, Treasurer Sheffels elected to serve on the Budget Committee and we brought forward four of our state policy resolutions that worked through committee and approved by the board of directors, which is now part of the policy resolutions for National Association of Wheat Growers.

And...our Secretary Flikkema is now Grandpa Flikkema! It's been a FULL February and we look forward to what March brings us!

Agriculturally yours,

Alison Vergeront
MGGG Executive Vice President

FROM THE STATE CAPITOL

STATE OF AG

By Governor Greg Gianforte



We've had quite the year so far. With January and February behind us, we are inching closer and closer to spring.

Apart from the severe cold snap in January, this winter has been relatively mild and open. El Nino is still here, and more of the state is trending drier. Some predictions see a loosening of El Nino's hold as the year progresses, which is something that we all hope for as soil continues to dry out. As we continue monitoring the weather trends statewide, I encourage you to utilize the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) drought relief programs. MGGA does a great job of advocating for those programs.

Speaking of crops, I've been keeping a close eye on the grasshopper infestation predictions as made by the USDA-Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service's (USDA-APHIS). It appears we may face an influx this year. To support infestation management efforts, I recently sent a letter of support for the USDA-APHIS Rangeland Grasshopper and Mormon Cricket Program. In the letter, I requested Administrator Michael Watson prioritize funding for Montana's treatment cycle in the upcoming year. Although the program doesn't directly reimburse farmers for cropland treatments, the hope is that rangeland treatments will help manage and reduce the population numbers overall.

As some of you may already know, I have been highly engaged in the conversation surrounding the crisis at our southern border and ways the state of Montana can support Texas' efforts to secure it. President Joe Biden has left Americans and our country completely vulnerable with his failure to address the cartel-fueled surge in illegal immigration and drugs; Montana is evaluating how we can support efforts to stop the flow. It is important we protect our communities, while also supporting agricultural trade with Mexico. I was pleased to see the swift reopening of the El Paso and Eagle Pass freight crossings after their closures in December of last year, and it's important that we continue to work together to keep trade crossings functional, as any interruptions could have serious consequences for our economy.

Celebrating National Agriculture Month in March with our producers, who make up our state's number one industry, is always a joy. Thanks to you, we are creating jobs, supporting innovation, and investing in Montana to preserve our way of life and make our communities stronger. 🌱



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GLEANINGS FROM THE MONTANA WHEAT & BARLEY COMMITTEE

By Kent Kupfner, Executive Director

Preferred Wheat Varieties

MWBC has been working on a publication that highlights the importance of selecting the right wheat variety considering agronomic returns to the grower and end use performance for the miller and baker. This is an important topic for all industry stakeholders and this effort should help advance the overall quality of Montana wheat. Look for a copy in next months publication and on the MWBC website.

Education and Outreach

We are continually striving to improve the quality and functionality of our website. We've made many changes and improvements, so please check out www.montanawbc.com. We also continue to focus our outreach efforts through social media postings and video content. With the objective of better describing the MWBC mission, we worked with Agri-Studios to create a new "About Us" video that has been well received. We're proud of the content and like the message it sends.

MWBC on the Move

This winter, MWBC staff and directors have attended meetings and events held at a multitude of locations around the globe. Supporting and promoting the importance of value-added processing facilities that utilize Montana's wheat supplies is always high on our list of priorities. Lori Wickett and Kent Kupfner joined Governor Gianforte and Department of Agriculture Director Clark for a tour of Montana Milling's Great



Charlie Bumgarner visits with US Sen. Jon Tester in Washington, DC.

Falls processing plant. Charlie Bumgarner represented Big Sky barley growers by joining a group of barley industry stakeholders in Washington, DC. Sam Anderson and Charlie also represented barley growers at the US Grains Council international marketing conference in Guatemala City. Promoting increased use of wheat domestically is also a key component of our marketing mission. In that vein, Lori and Denise Conover attended the Wheat Foods Council winter meeting in San Antonio, TX. MWBC also supports the Wheat Quality Council (WQC) and its efforts to improve wheat and flour quality. Max Cederberg and Sam represented Montana at the WQC annual meeting where they advocated for the development of new wheat varieties that improve the value of wheat for all parties in the supply chain.

Montana Winter Wheat Conditions

While the 2024 winter crop remains dormant, we are still monitoring conditions. Moisture conditions are far from ideal with 48% of topsoil rated adequate and 29% of subsoil in that category. Hopefully, we'll see additional winter moisture and then a wet spring. The crop certainly shows promise with condition ratings cited as 2% poor, 53% fair and 45% good-to-excellent.

Upcoming Events

March will be an active month for MWBC as we have a busy schedule of events. Lee Dahlman will be joining the National Barley Improvement Committee in DC. Lori and Kent will be leading a group of ten wheat growers from across the Big Sky to the Wheat Export and Marketing Workshop hosted by the Wheat Marketing Center in Portland. MWBC staff will also be attending board meetings of the Montana Grain Elevator Association and the Montana Pulse Crop Committee. Kent will be discussing the current state of global wheat markets during a presentation for the Montana Bankers Association convention. Finally, the MWBC "March Madness" research review and board meeting will take place in Bozeman on March 18 & 19.

Be safe, best of luck on the farm and watch out for spring fever! 🌱



Guests are briefed at Montana Milling prior to entering the plant. Gov. Gianforte and Kent Kupfner pictured.

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Fairmont Hot Springs is a great place to gather for a board meeting.



Great to have the group back together for a board meeting! (left to right) Treasurer Sheffels, Secretary Flikkema, VP Lohr, former officer Tryg Koch, President Heilig and Past President Keane.

USDA INVESTS APPROXIMATELY \$11.5 MILLION IN COMPOSTING AND FOOD WASTE REDUCTION PROJECTS IN 23 STATES, INCLUDING MONTANA

USDA is investing approximately \$11.5 million in 38 cooperative agreements that support innovative, scalable waste management plans to reduce and divert food waste from landfills. This includes three project(s) in Montana. The Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) cooperative agreements, which are funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, are part of USDA's broad support for urban agriculture. The CFWR program is jointly administered by USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). 🌱

MGGA WINTER BOARD MEETING

Winter Board Meeting took place in Fairmont Hot Springs. Directors reviewed the December financials, Convention financials, and look forward to a deeper review of our budget at the June meeting. Directors gave



Director at Large Mark Black with Malteurop, Director Canon Bradley, President Heilig and Director Shaud Schwarzbach catching up at the meeting.

reports that varied from no snow to decent amounts of snow, planning and preparing for the spring, and enjoyed director training from Tryg Koch and Mitch Konen. The evening was spent catching up with directors, adult beverages, and of course...the hot springs! We wrapped up the second day with updates from Montana Wheat and Barley Committee, travels from National Barley Growers Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Barley Improvement conference, and Bayer Leadership from Treasurer Sheffels and



New year, new copy of by-laws and policies.



Oh the places this hat goes...from the combine in the summer to the pools of Fairmont Hot Springs in the winter.

Secretary Flikkema. We also heard an update from Townsquare Media regarding our digital promotion along with an update from EVP Vergeront regarding membership, scholarships, and travel for Q1 and Q2 of 2024. A few internal policies and procedures were discussed and listened to an economic security threat & homeland security resource brief from Department of Homeland Security. We wrapped up the day with an update from Montana Grains Foundation. Overall, it was great to meet for two days, networking and grateful to utilize Zoom due to winter weather conditions for some of our directors. 🌿



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MONTANA PULSE CROPS

A LEADER IN PRODUCTION, QUALITY AND INNOVATION



A whirlwind of travel, learning, and leadership defined my recent endeavors. Following my participation in the Northern Pulse Growers Association Convention in January, I embarked on a journey to Washington, DC. During the initial week in the nation's capital, I engaged in the LAIB, Leadership At Its Best program.

This intensive five-day training regimen encompassed media literacy, leadership development, public speaking, interview readiness, and policy advocacy workshops. Subsequently, a day was dedicated to meetings with our state representatives on Capitol Hill. I enjoyed the opportunity to interact with 45 Agricultural Advocates hailing from various parts of the United States. Engaging in Washington, DC historical tours, and conversations with leaders in our industry were highlights. Notably, meeting our representatives on Capitol Hill and advocating for industry needs left a lasting impact. I express gratitude to Alison Vergeront of the Montana Grain Growers Association for nominating me for this enriching experience and to the National Association of Wheat Growers for endorsing my nomination.

Transitioning into the following week, the US Dry Pea & Lentil Council convened in Washington, DC. The week commenced with comprehensive training sessions guided by CEO Tim McGreevy, focusing on policy stances, industry updates, and appropriations in readiness for our advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill. Approximately 25 representatives from the pulse industry congregated to articulate our industry's asks. Montana was represented by Paul Kanning and Todd Hansen, growers from Flaxville and Gilford, respectively, alongside Jeff Winkler, our pulse industry liaison and the owner of Madoc Ag. Over five days, conversations were held with state representatives and their aides, a meeting was conducted with the House Ag Committee, and discussions took place with representatives affiliated with the World Feeding Program utilizing the PL-480 initiative. The USADPLC staff, did an excellent job organizing the 2024 DC Mission and connecting our industry representatives with as many Capital Hill contacts as possible in a weeks' time. **USADPLC Letter to congress and highlighted policy positions on the next page..**



Jeff Winkler, Todd Hansen, Senator Tester, Liz Edmundson and Paul Kanning

Liz Edmundson
Montana Pulse Crops
Executive Director
406.438.7570
pulse@mgga.org



Upcoming Shop Talks

March 28th, 2024 Hingham MT

Addressing Lygus Bug in Central Montana & Pulse Market Outlook Hosted by Belle Pulses and Montana Pulse Crops. More information to come on www.mtpulsecrops.org or call Liz 406.438.7570

www.mtpulsecrops.org

Subject: Policy Priorities for 2024

Dear Member of Congress:

Pulse crops are a special subgroup of the legume family that includes dry peas, lentils, chickpeas, and dry beans. Pulses are nutrient dense, good for your health and good for the soil. They are a good source of protein and an excellent source of fiber. They have a low carbon footprint, a low water footprint, a low glycemic index, they are affordable and most important they are delicious. Twelve Thousand (12,000) years ago, when our hunter-gatherer ancestors started to farm,

the first crops they grew were wild varieties of pulse crops. Pulses are an ancient solution to our present-day problems. Heart diseases and diabetes are two of the biggest killers in our country.

Research has shown that pulse crops improve blood sugar control, reduce cholesterol and blood pressure. Because they fix their own nitrogen in the soil, pulse crops are critical to improving soil health and lowering greenhouse gas emissions in our food system.

The health and environmental benefits of pulse crops is undeniable. We ask Congress to invest in the following priorities so we can provide the nutrient dense foods that people need to improve their health and the health of the soils that feed us all:

1) 2024 Farm Bill Priorities: We support the passage of a new Farm Bill and an increase in its budget baseline as an investment in food security at home and around the world.

Crop Insurance. Expand federal support for crop insurance programs that provide essential risk management tools for farmers facing unforeseen natural disasters. The industry supports increasing the coverage levels available and reducing the premium costs

ARC/PLC. Continue current de-coupled Title I programs providing maximum choice and flexibility. We recommend an increase to pulse reference prices that reflect the dramatic increase in input costs facing all pulse producers.

Base Acre Update. Pulse acres have expanded significantly since the last base acre update in 2014. We support an increase in base acres to 100% of planted acres on the farm and a voluntary reallocation of those base acres based on recent planting history.

Pulse Crop Health Initiative (PCHI). We support the reauthorization of the PCHI research program at \$25 million per year for five years to find solutions to the critical health and sustainability challenges facing our society through research on pulse crops.

School Pulse Crops Products Program (SPCPP). Increase authorization for the SPCPP to \$4 million per year for five years (\$20 million total) to ensure the introduction and adoption of pulse foods in school nutrition programs.

International Market Promotion Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD). The US bean, pea, lentil, and chickpea industry consists primarily of small, family-owned businesses that provide value-added jobs in rural America. Strong market promotion programs are critical to increasing the demand for our commodities around the world. We support doubling MAP funding from \$200 million to \$400 million and the FMD Program from \$34.5 million to \$69 million in the new Farm Bill.

Food Aid. Ongoing conflicts around the world continue to jeopardize food security. Providing food aid not only assists people in crisis; it creates the potential for future export markets. USA Pulses supports increased funding for the PL 480, McGovern-Dole, and Section 32 food aid programs in the new Farm Bill.

Rural Processor Disaster/Risk Management Tools. USA Pulses supports the expansion of disaster aid/crop insurance to rural processors to help them survive unforeseen natural disasters, supply chain disruptions, and pop-up trade barriers. Funding for disaster and risk management tools for US pulse processors would provide short-term assistance to ensure critical processing infrastructure in rural America.

THE BARLEY MOW

By Mitch Konen, Vice President, National Barley Growers Association

The meeting season is in full swing now. As your barley representative I made a trip to sunny San Diego early in January for the BIC (Barley Improvement Committee), as evidenced in last months Montana Grain News. And now the Washington DC circuit is in full swing. The first week of February found the National Barley Growers Association Board of Directors in winter meetings in Washington DC. This meeting includes a day and a half of board meetings intermingled with a day of hill visits with our congressmen.

The National Barley Growers Association board is made up of representatives from the 8 major barley producing states and their individual grower groups. Most are executives of their state grower organizations. Also included on the board are industry and associate supporters such as the American Malting Barley Association, Anheuser-Busch, Molson-Coors, and many more too numerous to mention here, but can be seen on the NBGA website, national-barley.com.

Discussion items at the board meeting included an ongoing review of the by-laws to keep them updated and understood by all. Our priority paper of policies to be presented to our congressmen was also discussed. This policy priority paper included any tweaks or changes to the upcoming farm bill and programs that we would like to see, such as a cost of production consideration in the establishment of reference price. The farm safety net and crop insurance programs are another priority that needs to be protected and bolstered as opposed to costly ad hoc disaster programs that are usually too little too late to protect our sustainability. Most of this discussion concerning federal policy updates was in the presence of “The Four Corners” of the ag committee’s staffers.

After attending the Montana Morning Coffee on the hill with our congressmen, it was a day of visiting with them individually as the day progressed. That evening, with support from the Beer Institute we hosted our annual “Barley, Brews, and Boots” reception in the Rayburn House office building. Invitations are sent to all congressional offices and their staffers. This has proven to be a great gathering for networking with other parts of the country and educating them about our barley industry.

Several presenters were also heard during the board meeting. Lester Jones with the National Beer Wholesalers Association is always one of my favorite speakers. As a chief economist he breaks down the supply and demand numbers of the industry, overlaid with the general economy numbers, in a rather comical way. His results show the continuation of the consumption of alcohol (ethanol) per capita of the population as remaining relatively stable annually at a little over 2.5 gallons consumed per person over 21, with fairly constant splits between beer, wine, and liquor.

Sadie Marks, manager of global strategies with U.S. Grains Council, gave us an update on trade issues and a strategy to replace the ATP (Ag Trade Promotion) program with a newer streamlined RAPP (Regional Agricultural Promotion Program), which focuses on export diversification into new markets to go along with increases in food promotion, sustainability issues, and other new uses of our products in the export markets.

Also heard was Scott Herndon, President of Field to Market, who gave an update on where we are at with the different sustainability, regenerative, and climate smart production models and hopefully the benefits derived from this research.

Several other discussions concerning ESA (Endangered Species Act) and EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) workplans were also heard. The mega settlements around glyphosate were also a topic of discussion along with all related concerns over chemicals.

A new proposal for a Domestic Agricultural Tax Credit was presented for future consideration that still needs some work before it is brought forward.

After 2 and a half days of a packed schedule we adjourned and returned home. Remember it is your voice as local members that gets brought forward to the national level and ultimately to the halls of congress to insure our industries survival.

February 14th found me once again in Washington DC after being invited to take part in a multi-commodity group grower leader forum, hosted by the National Corn Growers in their DC office. Commodities represented were corn, soybean, wheat, barley, sorghum, pulses, sugar, peanuts, pork, dairy, Farm Bureau, and National Farmers Union. Discussions revolved around our biggest challenges and opportunities facing our respective commodities. Recent ag trade deficit reports fueled discussions on trade issues. Sanitary and phytosanitary issues seem to be the big issue with trade agreements being met.

This meeting had quite a few of the past “Who’s Who” when it comes to farm bill and trade negotiations. Looking at my notes I noticed a lot of wisdom being thrown out into the discussions and will try to paraphrase and share as I close this article.

We have our hands in a lot of buckets that affect a lot of people. Out of 435 congressional districts, less than 40 are more rural than urban. Folks buy benefits! Focus on one issue that makes the policy viable, as compared to the whole big set of issues. Set aside disagreements and build alliances to push positive actions. We need everyone’s voice, not just your membership dollar. “This”, “These” groups are the difference between the U.S. and European and other agriculture. The country and the world need us in these fields. We need to involve our families in meetings within our organizations to foster the future of production agriculture.

NO BARLEY NO BEER 🍷

AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS BILL GETS ANOTHER TEMPORARY EXTENSION

OVER 360 AG GROUPS REITERATE SUPPORT FOR UNIFORM LABELING FOR PESTICIDES

The Agricultural Labeling Uniformity Act (HR 4288), supported by NBGA, reaffirms and clarifies provisions related to pesticide labeling and packaging. The bill is intended to ensure a uniform, consistent federal pesticide label and package to prevent an unworkable patchwork of state labels and disruptions to commerce. The letter supports provisions included in the FY2024 House Interior Appropriations bill that corresponds to H.R. 4288. 🌱

Congress again extended the FY2024 Ag Appropriations bill, this time through March 1. The Continuing Resolution (CR), the third one Congress has passed this fiscal year, avoided a government shutdown and gave more time for them to reach agreement and pass a full-year funding deal. House Speaker Johnson and Senate Majority Leader Schumer agreed to a \$1.7 trillion topline funding agreement earlier this month, and appropriations leaders are now working on funding levels for each agency. 🌱

NBGA JOINS AG GROUPS OPPOSING BUDGET CUTS FOR CROP INSURANCE

Agriculture groups have come together again to remind the Administration of the importance of crop insurance and urging against any cuts to the Federal Crop Insurance Program in the President's FY2025 budget proposal. 🌱




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2023 Spring Wheat Data

FEATURED PRODUCTS	Variety						Yield				2023 Grand Means	Dryland 3 Yr Avg	Irr 3 Yr Avg
	Variety	Plt Ht	Lodging	Sawfly	Protein	TWT	Bozeman	Chester	Conrad	Fort Benton			
• Rocker - NEW! Widest adaptability for Sawfly, yield, & quality	Vida	24.3	7.0	1.5	14.5	56.5	112.1	32.5	45.8	71.9	50.1	43.8	115.3
	Rocker	23.8	4.5	1.2	14.5	57.6	118.1	31.8	47.9	71.0	50.2	43.7	118.1
• NS Presser CLP Clearfield® Plus Technology (2 gene)	NS Presser CLP	24.7	7.5	1.5	14.4	54.6	107.4	29.2	44.2	68.1	47.2	41.5	104.3
	WB GUNNISON	22.8	6.0	1.0	13.6	57.7	107.0	34.5	43.2	63.2	47.0	40.7	111.7
	WB9719	22.2	4.5	1.5	13.5	58.2	107.0	31.2	41.4	67.7	46.8	40.1	118.0
	WB9668	20.1	2.0	2.5	14.5	56.9	111.5	35.9	44.4	61.1	47.1	39.8	118.1
• Certified Alzada Premium contracted Durum	WB9879 CLP	24.1	3.0	1.2	14.3	56.6	117.5	29.4	40.8	67.1	45.8	39.7	119.1
	AP Gunsmoke CL2	22.7	6.5	2.5	15.2	57.5	116.3	35.8	45.7	60.2	47.2	39.0	116.6
	Alum	23.3	7.0	2.5	13.8	55.7	103.4	29.3	33.2	61.2	41.2	38.2	108.1
• WB Gunnison Best variety for heavy sawfly pressure	Alzada	23.4	8.0	1.2	14.2	57.7	108.8	36.7	48.8	72.9	52.8	-	-
	YUM816-065	22.1	9.0	1.5	13.0	57.1	97.1	30.9	48.0	68.0	49.0	-	-
	Dagmar	24.3	4.5	1.8	14.6	58.1	121.0	37.5	51.7	62.8	50.7	-	-
	MT Raska	21.7	1.0	1.0	14.5	58.3	109.7	30.9	47.2	61.5	46.5	-	-
	WSU Hale	23.8	7.0	4.5	13.8	57.9	106.1	33.3	40.0	58.6	44.0	-	-
	LCS Hammer AX	22.9	1.0	4.2	13.7	57.7	120.5	39.5	39.5	58.1	45.7	-	-
	Holmes	21.6	1.5	3.2	14.0	57.5	122.8	38.3	43.8	57.2	46.5	-	-

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JUST AN OLD FOOL

By Eric Hanson

Every year we run a couple heavy trap lines from late October through the better part of April. It has weaseled its way into becoming a family tradition for what's probably been almost a century now. Not only has it provided us many hours of entertainment, it's also taught many life lessons and a learned skill set you can't find in a traditional classroom. Each generation learning, improving, and continuing on with the traditions handed down. It may not be our vocation, but this ain't no hobby neither. We take this serious, and this season, I've brought the next generation into the fold.

Being in this trapping game for so long, we've tried every contraption under the sun. Wood traps. Plastic Traps. Box traps. Even some home built Rube Goldberg devices. But my favorite, and most successful rig, is a simple Victor MO35 with a synthetic swiss pan, unbaited, with a custom file job on the wire trip for hair trigger sensitivity. Runway trapping is our go-to set, but we aren't afraid to get creative. And no better than some young blood to bring a new eye to the line.

The pure joy of a child might be one of the most delightful things one can be afforded in this world. Second only to the pure joy of a child that has just shrieked with excitement of eyeing the most despised vermin known to man in a trap—mice!

The other day while working the line, and continuing to see where spring steel has ended so many pattering feet, I received a question from one of the crew.

"Dad, where do these mice come from?"

Being one to never pass at an opportunity to teach my children about the world we live in, I jumped at the request. And, being we were so close to the first day of April, I wanted to make sure they got the precise and most accurate information one could be afforded.

"Well son, they come from mouse seed."

The look I got could easily have been confused with that of youthful skepticism, perhaps even disbelief, but I'm almost certain it was the look of deep interest. One of

those oh please do tell me more kind of looks. They had devoured the ruse.

"I don't think I've ever seen mouse seed before," my daughter remarked.

I decided to show them with a quick field trip. We tramped through the crested wheat grass, down the draw, finally arriving in the junk yard. Upon opening the door of the sad old '56 Ford F600 grain truck, smothering the floorboards, were thousands and thousands of black mouse seeds.

"Behold! Right there, I'd have to say is probably, one—maybe two bushels of mouse seed. Think of the acres of mice we could seed this spring!" I exclaimed.

The embellishment continued. I told them how the railroad brought the first mouse seed to this country when the homesteaders came out west by rail. After all their belongings and supplies were dropped off in town, they would sweep out the rail cars. Unbeknownst to anyone, that single action would plant the first mouse seed in this country. A few mice would grow from this seed and spread out into the country. The fib was growing.

We hiked over and through the heaps of scrap steel to an old van brunt drill, basking in the sun. After throwing open the lid and showing them the mouse seed in the bottom, I continued with my story about the homesteaders. In a haste to get their crop in the ground, they would fill their old wooden box drills with wheat seed, forgoing the necessary cleaning of accumulated mouse seed, much like we were seeing in front of us. And as they toiled to plant their wheat crop, they would inadvertently sow those mouse seeds across acres and acres of the newly broken prairies of Montana, propagating the variety we still curse to this very day—Field Mice.

"I don't believe you dad." She said it with such monotone authority. "I'm going back to the house." As I watched her march away, her little brother trying to keep up behind her, I yelled out to her, "That's why they're called Field Mice. Cause they were planted in a field. You know, kinda like field corn!". She wasn't buying it. She yelled back, matter of factly, without even turning around; "That's mouse poop, dad! And that wasn't a shriek of excitement. Mice are gross!" So much for tradition.

Maybe my kids didn't buy it, but it's not that hard to believe how something like that could take place. It wouldn't be the first invasive species that railways have provided a mechanism through which to thrive. It happened in Europe and Australia, and it's happened right here in our own state. Many invasive species have been known to grow and spread along railways, including noxious weeds like spotted knapweed and phragmites. Not only noxious weeds, but straight up obnoxious weeds as well. I had to stop last summer and take pictures of a few Boone & Crockett Kochia along the railroad right of way. This corridor cuts through fields of bounty, and had become an overgrown thicket of fireweed for miles. It's a real crock and Mr. Boone should not be proud. I'm glad

to have gotten those momentos for posterity, as most of the giants have blown away across field and glen.

In a few weeks, the fervor of spring planting will set about, and our state will begin to green up. It will be green lawns, gardens, and beautiful green fields. But a diligent eye for potential green invaders must be kept; in flower pots, below bird feeders, down county ditches, and perhaps even along railroad tracks.

An old trapper has lots of time to think while he's out on the line. Especially when he's all alone. I may be the only fool that's worried about these kinds of things on beautiful April days. And you're probably saying, "That old coot is a loon, all that thinking and worrying about a whole lot of nothing." Heck, you're probably right. Weeds are just weeds. Well if you'll buy that, I've got some certified mice seed I'll sell ya! 🌱

WHEAT FOODS COUNCIL WINTER MEETING

By Lori Wickett, Montana Wheat and Barley Committee

When a person thinks of San Antonio, the first thing that might come to mind could be the Riverwalk, or maybe the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo. San Antonio has worked hard to attract visitors, which is how Wheat Foods Council (WFC) wound up holding their winter board meeting there in February. Denise Conover, past chair of the Montana Wheat & Barley Committee (MWBC) and Lori Wickett, communications director, went to Texas for the latest WFC updates, bakery tours and education at the Culinary Institute of America.

The purpose of WFC is to be the educational arm of the domestic wheat industry. Situated somewhat like the Beef Council, except without a direct checkoff, WFC relies on membership funds to promote the healthful aspects of wheat in our foods. Membership is a critical function for WFC's operations; however, a number of industry stakeholders have dropped their membership in the past 10 years. This led to a lengthy discussion regarding "the why" behind their departure.

Enter the Grain Foods Foundation (GFF). This newer organization is a subsidiary of the American Baking Association with a mission to serve the grain foods manufacturing, flour milling and allied trades industries. They focus intently on research with a plethora of scientists from the nutrition and medical communities. This group researches many of the myths about wheat nutrition and gut health, and as a result has made some interesting discoveries many times opposite of what you read on social media.

There is apparent confusion in the industry regarding the difference in missions between WFC and GFF. It seemed quite clear, at least from what was presented, that GFF is of entirely different purpose than WFC. We should encourage the groups to forge a closer relationship



Touring bakeries in downtown San Antonio gave the group a good idea of how the baking industry is focusing on quality, fresh goods. The consumer presentation was essential.

with one another, while building a stronger awareness campaign about the benefits of wheat in American diets.

So on that note, last year WFC hired the marketing agency, SRG, to examine the existing education programming for wheat foods. As so many of our fellow farmers and ranchers know, handling the myth maze is an ever-present battle – what might've been a good approach five years ago may need a shift today.

SRG has a two-prong approach to their messaging strategy: elevating education of personal trainers (which includes yoga, dance, swim and karate instructors) while improving the image of enriched wheat foods through the food service sector. In particular, they are tackling the barrier belief, "wheat is a carb-filled indulgence one should avoid" with hard data proving that pasta doesn't lead to weight gain – and other nutrition myths debunked.

It is essential to have a seat at the table with those entities promoting wheat, regardless of the group. End users need quality wheat that is consistent – whether those buyers are in Kansas City or Tokyo – and consumers demand a quality noodle, loaf or pizza crust. It will be important to follow these groups we support to ensure producer dollars are getting the return expected. 🌱

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CAPITOL COMMENTS



US SENATOR JON TESTER

As winter wraps up, I've had the pleasure of sitting down with a number of Montana Grain Growers as many of you have visited my office in Washington, and I want to thank you for making the trip. In our meetings, you made it loud and clear that we needed a Farm Bill done months ago and I agree.

It's critically important that we've got a bill that works for doing business in 2024, not 2018. We've got a good blueprint to work off with the previous Farm Bill, but there's some targeted improvements we need to make to boost reference prices and relief programs for unexpected obstacles like flooding, drought, and pests like grasshoppers.

Speaking of grasshoppers, Sharla and I have firsthand experience dealing with this issue on our farm.

This year is shaping up to be a tough one, with Eastern Montana especially looking to be hit hard. Look at USDA's predictions of hoppers this year and it'll write you a better story than I can – Montana is lit up like a stoplight.

The bottom line is this: the way we've been dealing with hoppers in years past just isn't going to cut it anymore.

It's clear that the government needs to step up its approach to this infestation. We need more resources and we need a more cohesive strategy. That's why I've been calling for more funding in the appropriations process to help take on these pests, and I've been in constant contact with the USDA on how we can best get ahead of this season.

So please, keep sending me your input, and I'll keep working hard to make a Farm Bill that works for Montana's producers and get you what you need to fight hopper outbreaks this year and beyond.



US SENATOR STEVE DAINES

The work Montana farmers put in every day fuels our state's economy and helps feed families in our local communities and around the world. Wheat and barley are not just commodities, they are integral components of our Montana way of life, dating back to our homesteaders' era and adding to our state's cultural identity. While the Treasure State is known for its vibrant natural resources, our famers' fields full of amber waves of grain make for unmistakable landmarks for anyone passing by.

When it comes to Montana ag on a global scale, it's no secret our ag products are envied around the world. With approximately 80 percent of Montana's wheat being exported outside of the United States, it's important that we maintain good relationships overseas to cultivate these trade markets. To stay competitive on the world stage, fighting for lower tariffs on Made-in-Montana and Made-in-the-USA products, encouraging export growth and advocating for favorable market access is key. I will continue to advocate for Montana ag products whether that be in the United States Senate or overseas, encouraging leaders to lower tariffs and reduce barriers to trade. I'm also strongly opposed to proposals that would breach Snake River dams as they support Montana agriculture and ensure our commodities can get to market.

I appreciate your continued advocacy and feedback when it comes to advancing policies that will work for you, not against you. Eliminating erroneous federal estate taxes, strengthening risk management tools, combatting labor shortages and minimizing barriers to entry for folks starting out in the ag industry are among my top priorities in Congress. It's imperative that the next Farm Bill includes sufficient protections for ag producers that will support them in times of disaster. I'll keep fighting for worthwhile investments in our safety net programs, and I encourage you to reach out and share your feedback if you've got ideas on how to strengthen the next Farm Bill.

I am committed to protecting and promoting Montana agriculture to ensure prosperity for future generations of farmers. Thanks for your work to safeguard Montana's food and fiber system as it drives our state's economy forward.

CAPITOL COMMENTS



US REPRESENTATIVE MATT ROSENDALE

Farm and food security is national security. By failing to pass a Farm Bill in 2023, Congress failed to do its job in protecting the American people.

Immediately after his election as Speaker, I sent Speaker Mike Johnson a letter congratulating him and urging him to prioritize his commitment to the American farmer. Americans enjoy the most abundant, safe, and affordable food supply in the world. This would not be possible without the tireless work of Montana's farmers. It is imperative that Congress work diligently to help Treasure State grain growers by passing a strong Farm Bill in 2024. My four main priorities for the bill will go a long way in protecting both farmers and our national security.

First, we must secure a strong crop insurance program that gives producers certainty. At the same time, it must protect taxpayers from crisis spending when natural disasters inevitably strike.

Second, we must stop the Chinese Communist Party and other hostile foreign countries from purchasing U.S. farmland. To help in this mission, the Farm Bill should include my Land and National Defense Act which would prohibit the Chinese Communist Party from buying farmland in our country. It is unacceptable for our adversaries to continue threatening our national security by purchasing American farmland to spy on us and gain control over our agricultural production.

Third, we must fix the disastrous 2015 Cottonwood decision by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. Congress can do this by passing my Forest Information Reform (FIR) Act in the next Farm Bill. This legislation is a common-sense solution that will reverse the decision and provide that the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior are not required to reinitiate consultation on land management plans or land use plans when a species is listed as threatened or endangered. This will stop the perpetual cycle of litigation that surrounds forest management and will benefit Montanans by beginning a new era of efficient forest management.

Finally, we must create a separate regulatory framework for industrial hemp by including my Industrial Hemp Act in the bill. Industrial hemp is a staple commodity crop for many Montana farmers. Unfortunately, burdensome regulations are preventing hardworking farmers from taking full advantage of this booming agricultural market. The bipartisan Industrial Hemp Act will remove red tape that's holding the industry back and will create good-paying jobs for the people of Montana. I will continue to fight tirelessly to ensure Congress passes a much-needed Farm Bill for 2024. It is a critical piece of legislation for grain growers, farmers, and ranchers across the state. Washington must not fail in ensuring producers have the resources they need to continue feeding America.



US REPRESENTATIVE RYAN ZINKE

In February, Congressman Ryan Zinke announced the introduction of the bipartisan Public Lands in Public Hands Act at a roundtable discussion in Bozeman with representatives from Montana's leading outdoor recreation, sportsmen and conservation organizations. Zinke partnered with Democrat Congressman Gabe Vasquez from New Mexico on the legislation.

"In Montana public lands are our way of life. It's not just Yellowstone and Glacier, it's also the BLM and Forest Service areas where a kid fills their first tag, a lake in the Beartooths that is the perfect picnic spot, and the trail just down the road that helps you clear your head after a long workday," Rep. Ryan Zinke said. "Public lands must remain public, and the federal government has a responsibility to manage and ensure access to those lands. As Secretary I prioritized opening up land-locked parcels of public lands and expanding hunting and fishing opportunities on federal lands. The Public Lands in Public Hands Act is the next step in ensuring our public lands are publicly accessible for future generations. I'm grateful for the collaboration of Montana's leading recreation, sportsmen and conservation organizations and appreciate Congressman Vasquez's bipartisan teamwork on the bill. It's good to know things can still get done in DC beyond political party lines."

GET TO KNOW SHAWNA

Office Manager & Special Events Coordinator

Where did you grow up?

Great Falls, MT

What could we find you doing in your off time/free time?

Going to concerts, family time/ events, party/event planning, volunteering for various community organizations and am an active board member advocating for children, enjoying the various great Montana outdoor activities, and watching movies. Football season is my favorite season!



How did you find your way to MGGA?

I saw a job posting for the Office Manager/Event Coordinator position on Indeed and jumped at the opportunity to apply. I had never heard of this organization before so I went onto the website and started reading about MGGA and knew this organization was something I could hopefully be a part of.

Any books or movies you'd recommend?

Book - "Verity" by Colleen Hoover

Movies - Top Gun: Maverick, Goodfellas, A Walk to Remember, and pretty much anything with Julia Roberts, Sandra Bullock, or James McAvoy



What is one goal of yours while working at MGGA?

Membership communication ensuring our members feel connected with the organization on a personal level. Our producers are the heart of MGGA and I want to get to know as many as I can throughout the year. Listening and learning the needs of our producers and advocating for them along with our Directors, Officers, and staff is a main goal as well.

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

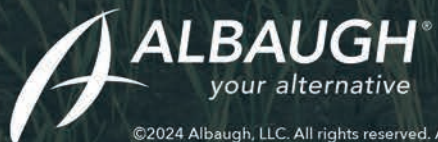
I will find any excuse to connect with people, throw a party, and eat cake. 🍰



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