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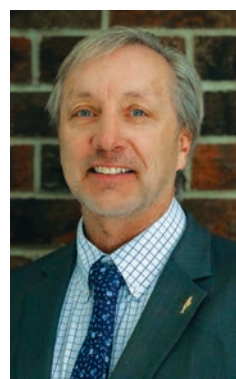
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FROM THE DESK OF...

Dale Flikkema, Secretary

WASHINGTON DC TRIP



Flying down the Potomac River and touching down at Regan International airport. A short ride on the DC Metro train and a short walk to the motel. The busyness of the city with all the cars and people moving in every direction, is something to behold. Among all of the commotion, there stood trees that were completely filled with white and red blossoms. The timing was perfect to witness the cherry trees in full bloom. The work of

our creator's hand, so much detail had a calming effect on everyone that took in the beauty of the trees. The joy of spring.

I was in DC for the US Canola Associations winter meetings. The majority of the meeting was filled with discussion on biofuels. How different oil seed crops fit into the GREET modeling system (Greenhouse gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy, use in Technologies). In my mind GREET is a confusing equation. It looks at the different oil seed crops that are made into biofuels and how they affect the environment. For example, soybeans get a positive score because it doesn't require any nitrogen fertilizer, but gets negative scores because it's only 20% oil and can only be grown on ground that has historically been used to grow food. Whereas canola gets positive numbers in the fact that it is 40-45% oil. It can also be grown on summer fallow acres in a wheat summer fallow rotation in the northern part of the country. It can also be grown in

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COVER PHOTOS

Top row: President Heilig and Treasurer Sheffels joins Voices of Montana, Vice President Lohr representing US Durum, Bing Von Bergen, Vice President Lohr, Governor Gianforte, First Lady Gianforte, Montana Wheat and Barley Executive Director Kent Kupfner and Boyd Heilig at the Governor's National Ag Day Reception.

Middle: Treasurer Dale Flikkema in D.C. advocating with U.S. Canola Growers, Montana Wheat and Barley Growers Director Dahlman, MSU Barley Breeder Jamie Sherman and National Barley Growers Association Vice President Mitch Konen advocated for National Barley Improvement Fly In and President Heilig, Treasurer Sheffels and NBGA Vice President Mitch Konen at March Madness in Bozeman.

Bottom row: New signage at the office in Great Falls and Directors Eric Hanson, Canon Bradley and Trevor Wolery on the Follow the Grain Tour.

the southern states as a winter crop without taking any ground out of food production. There has been a lot of investment in processing facilities from our industry partners in anticipation for the upcoming biofuel market. For example, the Calumet refinery in Great Falls is already making fuel from vegetable oils. The frustrating thing about the GREET modeling system is that there isn't any uniformity. For example, if we use the Canadian GREET modeling system, the California market could demand the entire Canadian export market of canola. However, the California GREET model keeps changing in favor of all electrical vehicles and away from biofuels.

Crop Insurance was another major topic. It sure looks like we will be getting more subsidies in crop insurance in the upcoming farm bill. Some favorable planting date changes for canola are coming. The Risk Management Agency is needing more data from growers. If you're growing canola in an uninsurable county, please ask for a written agreement from your crop insurance agent. Even if you don't accept the written agreement, this helps show a need for the insurance. I would also like for RMA to be able to take data from growers who chose not to take insurance.

Another area of concern for growers is the work the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is doing with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). A lot of our crop protection products are under review and in danger of not being renewed. Our industry partners pointed out the need for the EPA to be fully funded so they have the means to do the research needed to back the label on the crop protection products. Without full funding, the EPA makes blanket assumptions in their decision process without looking at the entire picture of what is really happening in the country. This really affects minor crops the most because there are not enough acres for industry to bring crop protection products to the market and still be profitable. We defiantly need to pay attention to this area and have more discussions about this issue. There is some positive movement in this area, for example the Baird-Newhouse letter to the EPA urging them to withdraw the Vulnerable Species Pilot Program and to renegotiate the deadlines with the courts.

I always enjoy the hill visits where we try to be part of the solution and share positive ideas from our members and industry organizations to help our profession. Over the past few years I've gone to many different congressional offices. Some of them are just going through the motion, but the Montana offices are always very welcoming. We have good conversations; they are very attentive, respectful, and aware of the issues we face. This year I had the honor to meet with the House and Senate Ag committees which was a little intimidating, but what a privilege to bring the concern of our grower groups to the highest levels of our government.

Soon we will be in the field planting our spring crops. I'm hoping everyone will have a great crop this year. I would like to encourage everyone to ask for a blessing for their work and to be very thankful for the opportunity that has been given to us. 🌱



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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 March 2024:

- ✦ Mitch Konen attended National Barley Improvement fly-in into Washington, D.C. (See Barley Mow on page 16)
- ✦ EVP Vergeront joined virtually to the Montana Pulse Crop Committee quarterly board meeting. Vergeront presented on current grant for the executive of the Pulse Crop Committee and advocated for a renewal for the upcoming year.
- ✦ EVP Vergeront met with Townsquare Media to discuss the success of the digital marketing campaign, radio ads and promotional opportunities. Vergeront also met with Northern Ag Network to discuss the 2024 radio and promotion agreement.
- ✦ EVP Vergeront and Office Manager Severson worked with our website host and designer to launch the updated Montana Grain Growers Association website. Visit www.mgga.org to see the update!
- ✦ EVP Vergeront participated in an online marketing training hosted by Sarah Bohenkamp, our strategic planner.
- ✦ EVP Vergeront and Office Manager Severson met with the Meadowlark Country Club to kick off planning for the 40th Annual Golf Tournament on June 6-7, 2024.
- ✦ President Heilig spoke at the Heartland Seed grower meeting in Lewistown.
- ✦ President Heilig and Treasurer Sheffels attended the March Madness: Research Review at Montana State University. Montana Grain Growers Association partnered with the Montana Grains Foundation as a cosponsor. We look forward to working with Montana Wheat and Barley Committee to carry on this event!
- ✦ President Heilig attended the Montana Wheat and Barley Growers board meeting in Bozeman. EVP Vergeront and President Heilig gave a membership and policy update.
- ✦ President Heilig, Vice President Lohr and EVP Vergeront attended the Ag Reception with Governor Gianforte to celebrate National Ag Day.
- ✦ Thanks to Duchscher Kapperud Insurance, we kicked off our Grains of Wisdom educational series in Rudyard. We heard a great crop insurance updates from Karston Donovan and Melissa Kapperud and a grain update from Cole Loboy from Columbia Grain.
- ✦ Voices of Montana joined us in Rudyard for a live radio show. President Heilig, Vice President Lohr and Treasurer Sheffels joined Tom Schutlz and chatted association business and ag policy.

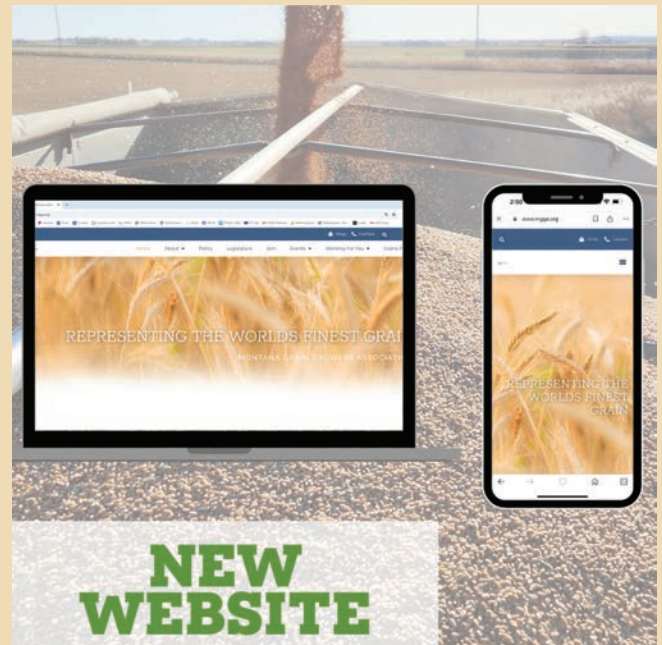
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS



NEW QUARTER – NEW WEBSITE



After months and months of work, we proudly launched our updated website! We are thrilled to check off another task of our strategic plan. Since our rebrand with a new logo in 2023, we knew it was only a matter of time until we needed to give our website a facelift.



It was fun to review old photos, projects and language, while also researching other websites and layouts for just the perfect fit for us. Notice we added a “shop” button at the top right – where you can find our merchandise. With time, you’ll find more content there!

Enjoy!

Agriculturally yours,

Alison Vergeront
MGGG Executive Vice President

NEW



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GLEANINGS FROM THE MONTANA WHEAT & BARLEY COMMITTEE

By Kent Kupfner, Executive Director

MWBC Always on the Move

Wow, what happened to March! As we look forward to seeding season, MWBC staff and directors have been busy with plenty of industry related events.

Keven Bradley, MWBC director from Cut Bank; Lori Wickett, MWBC staff; and I joined a group of Montana growers and MSU's winter wheat breeder for an export and marketing workshop hosted by the Wheat Marketing Center in Portland. This was an excellent opportunity for the group to experience firsthand the importance of milling and baking characteristics as it relates to end-use products like crackers, noodles, bagels, and bread. An update on export markets and a grading demonstration by the Federal Grain Inspection Service provided valuable insight. Field trips to several bakeries, a tour of an export terminal and a visit to Shaver Transportation were also on the agenda. The opportunity to ride and drive a tugboat on the Columbia River was a highlight for everyone.

MWBC values our relationship with various statewide agricultural organizations, and in that vein, staff attended the March board meetings of the Montana Pulse Crop Committee and the Montana Grain Elevator Association.

MWBC Chair Terry Angvick and MWBC staff had the honor of attending an ag reception at Governor Gianforte's home. Highlighting and celebrating the importance



Montana Class of 2024 for the Wheat Marketing Center workshop; photo on Shaver Transportation's tugboat, "The Lincoln."

and economic value of Montana's wheat and barley production with an interested audience never gets old!

MWBC Director Lee Dahlman and Mitch Konen (MGGA) represented Montana growers as the National Barley Improvement Committee (NBIC) conducted its annual advocacy trip to Washington DC. Lee joined a team of nearly 30 barley growers and industry stakeholders that participated in over 100 Hill visits advocating on behalf of federal research funding for the industry.

I was invited to address the Montana Bankers' Convention to discuss global grain markets. The group of ag lenders were very interested in supply and demand projections, price trends, and export demand as well as wheat market fundamentals specific to the Montana marketplace. There was considerable discussion about spring seeding expectations around the state.

Montana Winter Wheat Conditions Promising

By the end of March, nearly half of the state's winter wheat crop was breaking dormancy. Precipitation levels across the state are below normal and most production areas are experiencing some sort of drought designation. However, the current crop ratings are promising and provide reason for optimism. Current conditions exceed the 5-year averages with 57 percent rated good-to-excellent, 39 percent fair and 4 percent poor-to-very poor.

March Madness

Our first annual March Madness Research Review held on the MSU-Bozeman campus was a hit. MSU students presented the premise and expected results of their research work in a fast pitch format. The audience had a chance to learn about cutting-edge research projects in the plant, soil, and insect realms. The evening event was well attended by students, research scientists and growers, all providing positive feedback. It was a fun event --rewarding the top presenters with scholarship money, matched by MGGA and the Montana Grains



Visiting Congressman Zinke; Jamie Sherman, MSU barley breeder far left; Konen, Dahlman far right.

Foundation, was a bonus. MWBC wrapped up our stay in Bozeman with the winter board meeting the next morning. Board meeting agendas and minutes are always posted on our website.

Upcoming Events

While seeding and spring field work will be the focus for Montana growers, MWBC will host the Consulate-General of Japan and an Economic Affairs Specialist from the Seattle office. We will be highlighting the close ties between Montana's wheat producers and the Japanese people. Japan remains a consistent and reliable buyer of Montana wheat and is the fourth largest overall buyer of US wheat.

We will be showing our support for the local Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee while attending a banquet where scholarships will be awarded to area college students majoring in agriculture.

Finally, we are working on a new series of videos that will feature the ongoing efforts of MSU scientists to further mitigate the damages caused by the wheat stem sawfly.

Be safe and best of luck this spring! 🌱

DOE RELEASES REPORT OUTLINING HOW AMERICA CAN SUSTAINABLY PRODUCE MORE THAN ONE BILLION TONS OF BIOMASS PER YEAR

The Department of Energy released an update to the Billion Ton Report, that outlines how America can sustainably produce more than one billion tons of biomass per year and meet the Administration's Sustainable Aviation Fuel Grand Challenge. Some of the highlights specific to agriculture are:

- Currently available but unused biomass resources can add around 350 million tons of additional biomass per year above current uses and double the US bioeconomy.
- Biomass resources, like energy crops, in a future mature market can provide more than 400 million tons of biomass per year above current uses.
- The report assesses the potential for biomass from agriculture and production shifts to accommodate the production of new energy crops, including the production of energy crops on 26 million acres of cropland, and 50 million acres of pastureland and 177 million tons per year of agricultural residues (wheat straw and corn stover) in the reference scenario at \$70 per dry ton. The report also includes additional sources from forestry, microalgae and other waste and byproducts. 🌱



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- Orion Chickpeas

YELLOW PEAS

- Salamanca

Spring Wheat

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- **NS Presser CLP** - High yielding Clearfield with sawfly tolerance
- NEW** ● **Rocker** - The best choice for sawfly, yield, and wheat quality combination
- **WB Gunnison** - A proven performer
- **WB 9668** - Highest yield and protein combination
- **WB 9719** - Good hollow stem dryland option
- **Dagmar** - New from MSU, adapted to dryland
- **Alum** - Adapted specifically for low pH soils/aluminum toxicity

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- Flax Seed

Canola



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Barley

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\$3900 AWARDED AT FIRST MARCH MADNESS: RESEARCH REVIEW

With Montana State's men's basketball team qualifying for The Dance, Monday's March Madness: Research Review rhymed with a sweet irony of the NCAA berth. Held in Bozeman, the first annual competition between MSU plant sciences students featured 19 competitors, vying for \$3900 in scholarships. Brandon Tillett took home first-place honors with his project focused on the effects of climate change on pollination timing in spring wheat. The Montana Wheat & Barley Committee (MWBC) hosted the event.

"MWBC invested \$2.3 million in research-related projects in our most recent grant cycle," said Kent Kupfner, MWBC executive director. "Traditionally in the spring, we ask faculty to brief our board on their project progress. Sam Anderson, our research and market development director, came up with the idea to instead involve the students who are behind the scenes." The lively competition mimicked Shark Tank with students pitching their projects in less than five minutes. MWBC board members and sponsors made up the judging panel.

Winners of March Madness are as follows:

First: Brandon Tillett, \$2000, Climate change effects to pollination

Second: Jared Lile, \$1000, Creating a model to predict end use quality traits

Third: Chloe Hinson, \$500, Identifying key genes for heat stress protection

Honorable Mentions:

Caleb Hale, \$100, Effects of TB1 on tillering

Lochlin Ermatinger, \$100, Satellite imagery to identify exact WSS infestation dates

Akshara Bathini, \$100, Enhancing stem pith production of solid stem

Jessica Williams, \$100, Relationships between stay-green and root traits

Kupfner said that the board and staff were pleased with the first year's attendance, but even more important, it was a good experience for students. "When they hit the ground running in professional life, they will need



Join the National Wheat Foundation's Wheat Yield Contest!

**Winter Wheat Entries due May 15. Spring Wheat Entries due August 1.
NEW! Pilot Digital Yield Category for Spring wheat in MN, MT, ND, SD**

Go online: wheatcontest.org to register, see all the rules and enter.



Brandon Tillett receives first place honors of \$2000 presented by MWBC Chair Terry Angvick.

to be able to communicate their work to others who don't necessarily understand all of the complicated science. They had the opportunity to strengthen their communication skills while learning more about what producers are looking for." That link was noted by many – connecting Montana farmers to students doing the lab work is critical to solutions in the field.

March Madness was moderated by Colter Brown of Northern Ag Network, including updates by Dr. Sreekala Bajwa, vice president, dean and director for MSU's College of Agriculture; Boyd Heilig, president of Montana Grain Growers Association (MGGA); and Terry Angvick, board chairman, MWBC. MGGA and Montana Grains Foundation provided matching dollars for scholarship awards. For more information regarding the event or the 2024 grant cycle, email wbc@mt.gov or call 406-761-7732. 🌱

USDA RELEASES MARCH WORLD AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY AND DEMAND ESTIMATES

The USDA released its World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates on March 8. Wheat was unchanged for supplies and domestic use with lower exports and higher ending stocks. Exports were reduced by 15 million bushels to 710 million with reductions for soft red winter and hard red winter. Ending stocks rose by 673 million bushels and are 18% higher than last year. The season-average farm price was reduced \$0.05 per bushel to \$7.15 per bushel. The global wheat outlook calls for larger supplies, consumption, and trade with reduced stocks. The higher government production estimates for Australia, Russia, and Argentina caused supplies to increase by 0.8 million tons which offsets the reductions for the European Union and Serbia. Global consumption was raised 1.5 million tons to 799 million tons based on higher feed and residual use in the EU, Kazakhstan, and Indonesia. World trade also increased 1.4 million tons to 212.1 million based on higher exports to Ukraine, Australia, and Turkey. Finally, global ending stocks were lowered by 0.6 million tons to 258.8 million which is the lowest since the 2015/2016 outlook. 🌱

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HOUSE AGRICULTURE HEARING: THE DANGER CHINA POSES TO AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

On March 20, the House Agriculture Committee held a joint hearing regarding the danger of China's to agriculture in the U.S. The American Soybean Association's President, Josh Gackle, testified to the committee, along with South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture Kip Tom, and the Chair and Ranking Member of the Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party. Additionally, both Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-PA-15) and Ranking Member David Scott (D-GA-13) emphasized the critical balance of protecting both agricultural exports to China and protecting national security. 🌱

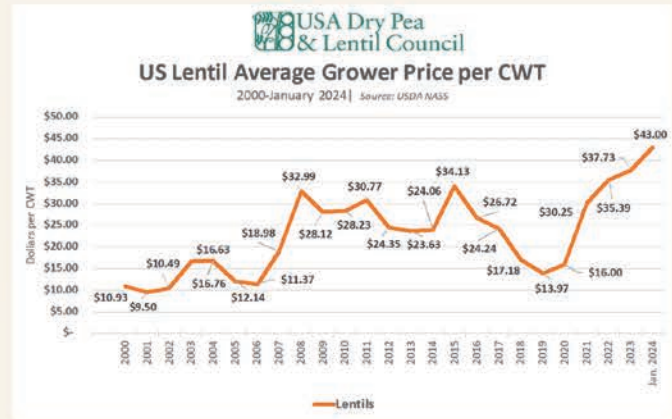
PRESIDENT BIDEN SIGNS FINAL APPROPRIATIONS PACKAGE FOR FY24

On March 23, President Biden signed H.R. 2882 into law, the final six-bill funding package that provided appropriations for agencies covered under the Defense, Financial Services, Homeland Security, Labor-HHS-Education, Legislative Branch and State-Foreign Operations bills. Early Saturday morning, the package passed the Senate by a vote of 72-24 to send the package to the President's desk after the bill passed the House by a 286-134 vote on Friday. The package ultimately funds the government until September 2024 and averted a potential government shutdown. In the White House press release, the President thanks Senate Leaders Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) and Representatives Kay Granger (R-TX-12) and Rosa DeLauro (D-CT-03) for their leadership in helping pass the bill. 🌱

MONTANA PULSE CROPS

A LEADER IN PRODUCTION, QUALITY AND INNOVATION

My travel schedule has recently slowed down, yet the pulse industry in Montana remains vibrant. Events like the NE Montana Farm Show in Plentywood, MT, and the Producer Shop Talk in Higham, MT, continue to foster advancements and educational events regarding chickpeas, lentils, and dry peas across the state. Moreover, there is a palpable sense of enthusiasm surrounding the current price of these nutrient-rich superfoods, particularly lentils.



The KATQ's NE Montana Farm Expo commenced on March 20, 2024, in Plentywood, Montana. Paul Kanning, the Vice-Chair of the Montana Pulse Crop Committee and a Flaxville-based producer, delivered a positive review of the two-day event.

Kanning expressed his satisfaction with the expo, noting the substantial attendance, overflow of vendor booths, and the quality of speakers and seminars. According to Kanning, there is a significant surge in lentil production this year, with reports of farmers intending to transition their entire farm to lentil production.

Given the low lentil stocks in the US, Canada, Spain, and the scarcity in India, coupled with record-high prices, the rise in lentil acreage estimates in Montana is unsurprising. The latest Prospective Planting report from NASS revealed an estimated 44% increase in lentil acreage, from 320,000 to 570,000 acres, for the 2024 crop year. On the other hand, dry pea planting decreased by 2%, estimated at 570,000 acres, while chickpea acreage remained steady at 174,000 acres.

Kanning cautioned that with the expansion of pulse crop cultivation, the incidence of root rot diseases is likely to rise. As outlined in the Lentil Disease Diagnostic Series hosted on the NDSU extension website, root rot is more prevalent in cool, compacted, and moisture-saturated soil with short rotations between pea and lentil crops. The longevity of root rot in the soil, up to ten years, renders affected cropland unusable for an extended period. For comprehensive information on identifying root rot disease in your soil, symptoms, and preventive measures, refer to:

NDSU Plant Pathology-Plant Diagnostic Lab website

**<https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/publications/lentil-disease-diagnostic-series>
or <https://www.montana.edu/extension/plantpath/resources/index.html>**

Carmen Murphy, Assistant Research Professor, at Montana State University offers free soil testing for Montana pulse producers. Contact Carmen at carmenmurphy@montana.edu or 406.994.5162

Report on Hingham Montana Producer Shop Talk

I would like to extend an appreciation to Jayson Hauer of Belle Pulses USA for the collaboration during the first Hingham Montana Producer Shop Talk. The event featured Janet Knodel, a distinguished Professor and Extension Entomologist from NDSU, who delivered an insightful presentation on Lygus Bug.

Tizianna Oppedisano, Assistant Professor of Entomology at the MSU Research Station in Conrad, MT, demonstrated the identification of lygus bugs in pulse crops using a microscope and bug-catching net, offering guidance on obtaining precise insect samples from crops.

Brett Melvin, the senior trader and president of Maviga NA, provided an optimistic market outlook for US pulse crops. Concluding the morning session, I shared updates from the Montana Pulse Crop Committee. Special thanks to Jayson Hauer and the Belle Pulses team for organizing this exceptional event, providing refreshments, and hosting lunch at the Highway Bar. Lastly, thank you to Montana Pulse Crop Committee members Todd Hansen and Jeff Winkler for representing the Montana Pulse Industry.



35 pulse producers joined at the Old Hingham School Building for a morning of pulse education



Professor Tizianna Oppedisano explaining to producers how to identify and test for lygus bug in pulse crops.



From left to right Jayson Hauer, Brett Melvin, Tizianna Oppedisano, Liz Edmundson & Jean Greene



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



photo courtesy of Conover Farms

Montana Spring Wheat
VARIETIES

HOW CHOOSING THE RIGHT VARIETY
MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE FOR THE END USER

MONTANA WHEAT & BARLEY COMMITTEE



WORKING FOR THE BEST



ESTABLISHED 1967

How Montana Varieties STACK UP

For millers & bakers



Imagine sandwich bread that falls apart in your hands or a delicate pastry that's tough to chew -- no one wants that!

To understand your wheat's value to a miller or baker (end user), we need to use a measurement that tracks all wheat properties to help buyers isolate the right grain for their best product outcome. This guide compares varieties against one another to help Montana producers choose the best result for the field -- AND end use performance.

The United States preferred quality ranking is a 1.00 or better Wheat Quality Index (WQI) score. Varieties that display superior index scores can make a critical difference to buyers who are creating a wide range of wheat-based products.

The WQI score is determined by evaluating these milling and baking properties:



FLOUR YIELD
when more flour is extracted, margins increase for the miller



BAKE-WATER ABSORPTION
the amount of water required to make proper dough; increased amount of water results in higher baking yields



PROTEIN CONTENT
a collective of carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals and gluten that is valuable for the end product



MIXING TOLERANCE
the measure of gluten strength; this measurement tells the baker the appropriate mix ratio before gluten breaks down, preventing deflated baked goods



MIXING TIME
the length of time a baker can mix dough before it breaks down; an extremely long peak mix time is undesirable; higher protein reduces mix time



SINGLE KERNEL HARDNESS
helps millers adjust their tempering; too hard will take more energy to process



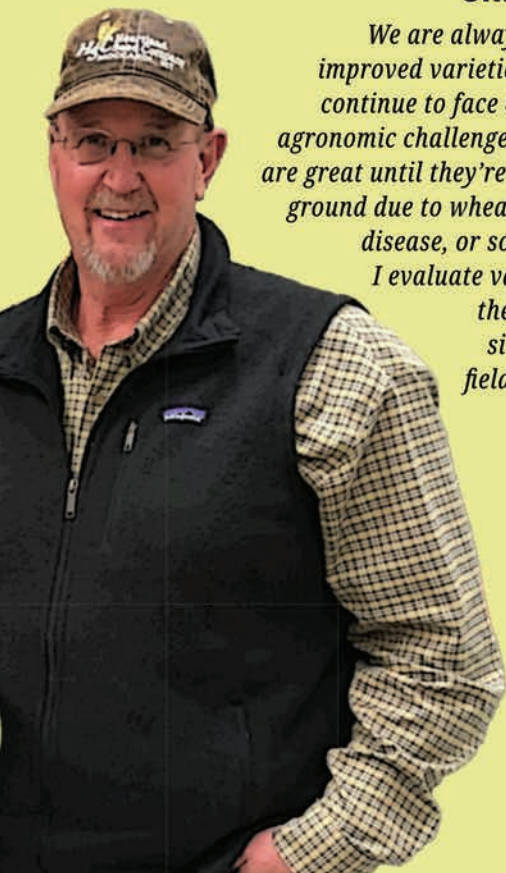
LOAF VOLUME
a vital aspect to consumer perception of value including aerated crumb and superior texture; a higher value helps a baker adjust loaf volume

Producers Weigh In:

**CHARLIE BUMGARNER
GREAT FALLS**

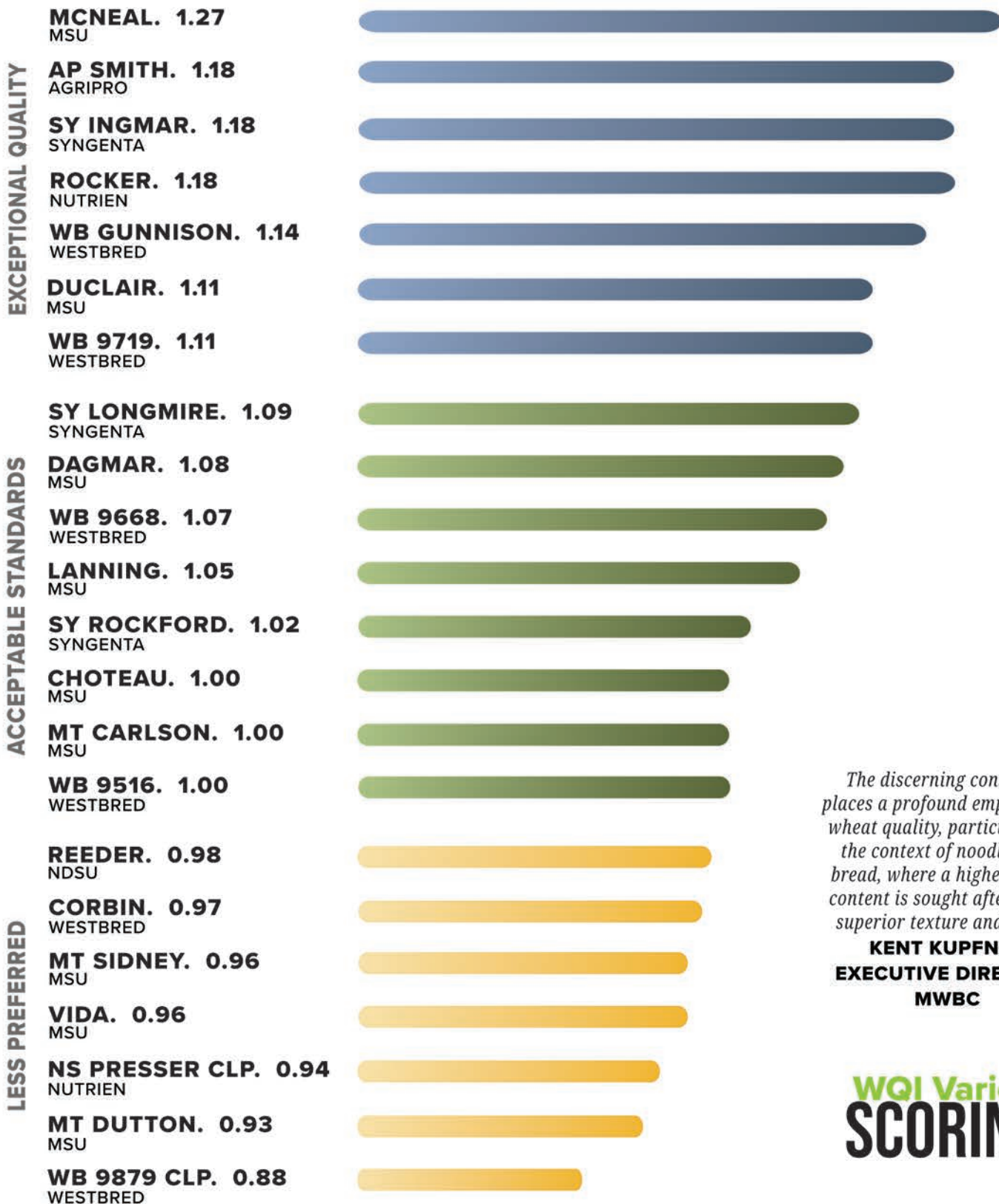
We are always looking for improved varieties because we continue to face economic and agronomic challenges. High yields are great until they're laying on the ground due to wheat stem sawfly, disease, or something else.

I evaluate varieties and if they all perform similarly in the field, I'm going to choose the variety that performs the best for the end user.



When deciding between two varieties with similar agronomic characteristics and yield potential, choose the variety with a higher WQI score. Quality ratings are independent of yield, agronomic and disease traits, and may differ from quality evaluations conducted by other private or public entities. The data below is based on results from trials conducted by Montana State University over a three-year, multilocation average.

The Cereal Quality Lab at Montana State University scored 21 varieties planted by Montana growers using traits targeted by the US Wheat Quality Council. These properties are determined by millers and bakers across the US and are consistent with international buyer demand. As an industry, our goal is to support research that improves agronomic results while requiring higher end use scores.



The discerning consumer places a profound emphasis on wheat quality, particularly in the context of noodles and bread, where a higher gluten content is sought after for its superior texture and flavor.

KENT KUPFNER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MWBC

WQI Variety
SCORING

Sharpen THE SAW

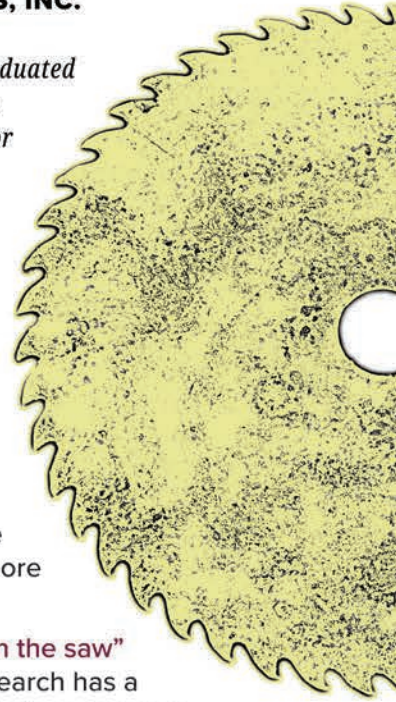
A word from end users on the imperative value of improving Montana varieties

JAPANESE FLOUR MILLERS ASSOCIATION TOKYO, JAPAN

Japan relies on imports for more than 90 percent of its wheat needs, with about half of that coming from the US to make bread, ramen, cookies and cakes. The reason we choose to use US wheat is because of its quality, particularly its gluten strength. We hope that we can continue to get consistently high quality and safe wheat from the US. A significant portion of our hard wheat supplies are shipped from Montana. We also believe that breeding high quality wheat and planting high quality wheat will increase US wheat demand and enrich Japanese food.

BILL HARP PLANT MANAGER, GENERAL MILLS, INC.

I grew up on a wheat farm in Kansas, graduated from Kansas State with a degree in Grain Science, and have worked in flour mills for 30 years. Montana by far produces some of the best wheat I've have ever seen, even on our worst years with drought and other challenges. Regardless, I think it is critical that we continue to improve our wheat quality and raise the bar for everyone who buys and uses wheat in all markets.



As wheat and barley industry leaders, Montana producers recognize our role in setting the bar for quality. Our opportunity has never been stronger to advance varieties which yield more bushels per acre but also meet higher quality standards demanded by our customers.

At the Montana Wheat & Barley Committee, we accept the challenge to constantly “sharpen the saw” in variety development. Producer checkoff dollars invested in Montana State University research has a long history of trait development that has increased productivity and financial results for Montana growers. All buyers are keenly in tune with end use data and they stay in contact year-round with MWBC keeping track of crop progression throughout the growing season.

Montana growers, through MWBC, provide market development funding to groups such as US Wheat Associates and the Wheat Marketing Center. These groups facilitate trade team visits to Big Sky Country, typically arriving during the summer production months.



Montana Wheat & Barley Committee
PO Box 3024
Great Falls, MT 59403
406.761.7732
montanawbc.com

THE BARLEY MOW

By Mitch Konen, Vice President, National Barley Growers Association

The first week of March found me once again in Washington D.C., for the third time in six weeks. This time was for a week of advocating for the National Barley Improvement Committee, (NBIC). Twenty-eight committee members stormed the hill and visited 110 congressional offices in two and a half days. After a Monday morning organizational meeting, teams of 3-5 members of the different barley industries from university breeders and researchers, industry associates, and barley producers, presented our FY25 barley priorities to congressional offices.

Barley is a relatively small crop that has an impact on the economy at several levels. Barley's initial economic impact has a \$1.07B crop value that gets used as a food, feed, whiskey, and seed. The brewing industry adds another \$409B of economic impact creating 2.37M jobs and \$63.8B worth of tax revenue. The U.S. is home to over 9000 breweries, over 120 malt plants, and over 1000 distilleries. Exports of barley, barley products, beer and whiskey add another \$2B to our nation's economy.

Research and development of this public sector crop of barley mostly occurs at state universities and USDA-ARS facilities, thus requiring public funding, which has plummeted by 30% since 2002, and is now at the lowest funding levels since the 1970's. One staggering fact of research funding is that for every dollar invested in agricultural research, \$20 of benefits are realized. Pretty good ROI. Another very disturbing observation concerning agricultural research funding is how our research funding has been declining while the European Union and most notably China have been increasing their agricultural research programs to almost double of what our research funding levels are. Just another race we seem to be losing.

Representing the U.S. barley community of growers, breeders, researchers, processors, users, and allied industries, the NBIC sets a list of priorities that outlines the goals to support the barley industry. A review of these presented priorities follows.

Resilient Barley Initiative (RBI); Establish and begin a fund towards an \$8M goal to research and address the increased resiliency of the barley crop through improved genetics and management practices. This initiative focuses on the abiotic stressors that impact yield and quality of the barley crop. Abiotic stressors are those related to climate and environmental conditions. This funding will be implemented through the USDA-ARS and land grant universities.

Barley Pest Initiative (BPI); We were asking for funding increases for FY25 to reach \$5.3M annually. This initiative has been appropriated by congress previously, first at \$1M, then \$2M and thankfully to \$3M in FY23. This initiative is focused on insect, viral, bacterial, and fungal

threats to the production of high-quality barley through management and genetic resistance.

U.S. Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative (USWBSI) and Small Grains Genomic Initiative (SGGI); This initiative is fully funded at \$15M and we are seeking an inflationary authorization to \$20M in the next farm bill. This funding supports work in 30+ states to address scab (Fusarium Head Blight). We are looking to maintain funding for SGGI at \$3.44M.

USDA-ARS, NASS & ERS; Incremental funding increases to cover mandatory pay costs and the rising cost of data collection. This ask is not only an inflationary consideration, but also increased wages and renovated facilities to retain the researchers that we educated within our universities.

USDA-NIFA; Incremental funding increases for NIFA Hatch Act and Smith Lever; These formula grants provide critical support to applied scientists, including crop breeders and extension personnel at state universities for practical research and programs of critical importance to farmers, end users, and consumers.

All the congressional offices we targeted with this advocacy were members of House or Senate Ag Appropriations Subcommittees, House or Senate Appropriations Committees, or the House or Senate Ag Committee. I felt we were very well received by all the offices we visited, and the staffers were very engaging.

I hope you find these articles helpful and informative. I know that too many numbers and acronyms are daunting sometimes. If you have any questions or thoughts about the barley industry, please feel free to contact me or the MGGA office and we can have a discussion about all things barley. Your voice counts, but only if it is heard. Cheers. 🌾

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NBGA SUBMITS COMMENTS ON TREATED SEED REQUIREMENTS

NBGA submitted comments in February regarding the importance of seed treatments and the EPA's review of requirements applicable to treated seed. 🌱

NBGA VP ATTENDS GROWER LEADER MEETING IN WASHINGTON, DC

NBGA Vice President Mitch Konen attended a forum of commodity group producer leaders hosted by National Corn Growers Association February 13-14. The meeting provided an opportunity for the producers to connect with each other and share perspectives for their commodity and their region of the country. Groups represented at the meeting included corn, soy, wheat, sorghum, barley, pulses, sugar, peanuts, pork, dairy, Farm Bureau, NFU. Producers discussed the biggest challenges and opportunities their respective commodities face. Trade was a big topic of conversation, citing the recent ag trade deficits, lack of new trade agreements, and China dynamics. Labor was also a common topic among many of the group. 🌱

NEW CBO BARLEY PRICE PROJECTIONS NOT AS LOW AS PREVIOUS FORECAST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) updated their Farm Bill cost and price projections with many crops, including barley, seeing higher prices compared to the previous versions. This could have an impact on the cost of the next Farm Bill. CBO is now forecasting the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program will cost \$28 Billion from 2024 through 2034. The forecast issued last May estimated \$33.1 Billion in PLC outlays. The Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) program is projected to cost \$15.6 billion, down from \$28.4 Billion. If congressional leaders use the new forecast and subsequent updates to the Farm Bill baseline, it could reduce the cost of raising Reference Prices under the PLC program. For barley, the estimates have the "all barley" price staying above the \$4.95 barley Reference Price every year through 2034. Previous projections had prices dipping below \$4.95 from 2027 through 2034, which would trigger PLC payments in those years. Similar upward movement in price projections occurred for other crops as well. 🌱



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BARLEY REPRESENTATIVES PARTICIPATED IN US GRAINS COUNCIL MEETING

The US Grains Council (USGC) held their meeting in Guatemala in mid-February. Several barley growers and state staff attended and NBGA representative Tom Hance attended the Barley Sector meeting virtually. The barley sector meeting included a review of the USGC RAPP proposal for barley export promotion, updates on barley markets, opportunities, barriers, and USGC activities in the various regions (China, Mexico, Japan, South Korea). 🌱



A LITTLE FUZZY

By Eric Hanson

Snarly stood there, tail tucked, teeth chattering, staring at his buddy Fuzz as he chewed away on an old cow pie. Those late spring sleet-wind-snow-sleet-sun-sleet storms can really come out of nowhere. In an attempt to rid his mind of his soaked hackles and muddy paws, he sparked up a conversation.

“You know Fuzz, I was a layin in that tall grass by the road sign down by the hawthorn place the other day, and old man Woolsey rolled up and stopped in that old half ton of his only feet away from me.”

Fuzz just stood there as if he hadn't heard anything of interest, still chewing away. Snarly continued.

“His windar was down and he was jawin away on that teler phone of his. Talkin all sorts a things. Talkin how all his cows were AI this year. Now we's got robot cows in the country with us. You believe that Fuzz? Robot cows!”

The wind howled and then died for a brief moment. The sun suddenly arrived, steam rising off their backs, a nice warm relief. And just as sudden it was gone to the clouds and the cold breeze.

“If'n you can believe that,” Snarly piped up, “He also said he'd been top-dressing all week, before the rain came.”

Fuzz finally spoke, even though his mouth was full. “So he wasn't wearin no pants?”

“Well Fuzz, it ain't really rained yet and all I could see was he was wearin a jacket, so I'ma guessing he was still just top-dressing.”

Fuzz went back to chewing.

“Stop chewin on that ol cow pie Fuzz, this cold wind is makin me feel sickly and watchin you ain't helpin a dern bit” snapped Snarly.

Fuzz snarled back, “I've told you many times, it's a sun baked organic 5-grain monster cookie, thank you very much!”

The sleet came down. They closed their eyes to the swirling snow. The sun came out for a handful of seconds, and then vanished into the wall of snirt blowing off the edge of the field. Snarly cracked his eyes to see Fuzz still standing there, eyes still closed to the storm, content and chomping away.

“You know ol man Woolsey sure talks like the wind round here, just never lets up. I dozed off for a bit there in the grass and when I woke up he was still jawin away. Talkin bout right and left wings into November, mad about haven to give wheat away that he hadn't pitched back at harvestin times, layoffs and low furs, heck, all sorts of things. What you reckon he meant by low furs Fuzz, you think he was talkin bout coyotes like us?”

Fuzz opened his eyes wide and stopped chewing for a brief moment, concern and thought on his face; his calm demeanor quickly returning. “Are you sure he didn't say layoffs and furloughs? You need to relax and have a bite of this organic cookie Snarly, it's about as good as one gets!”

I know at this point it's not breaking news, but all news these days has a 30 minute expiration date, so there's no point dwelling on that. You have probably been informed by one mean or another of the layoffs and furloughs that have continued to occur within some of the Class I railroads over the last few months. Of those, our lone railroad to service our Big Sky state, BNSF, has furloughed nearly 400 employees in Kansas, Nebraska, Texas, and Montana. The cutbacks came weeks after Warren Buffett, chairman of BNSF parent company Berkshire Hathaway, stated the railroad's 14% earnings decline in 2023 were deeper than expected. And according to the railroad, the freight market outlook for 2024 remains uncertain, warranting these reductions.

Farmers are no stranger to tactics of tightening the belt. As with most years, the outlook for 2024 most certainly remains uncertain for many of us in the agricultural sector of the world as well. Elevated inputs, dropping grain prices, lower export demand, and the fact that most of us continue to look at that drought map of pretty colors, have some of us getting ready to punch another hole in the leather.

Furlough has been a term associated with the railroad ever since the railroad came about. On day one they

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called it a railroad; day two brought the term furlough. It's obvious I'm exaggerating, but not by much. However, furlough is not a term commonly tied to farming. That's not saying we don't utilize this practice on account of certain economic conditions. In my neck of the prairie, we furlough half our dirt every year in fallow. It's temporarily suspended from its job, waiting for conditions to improve, before we bring it back to service. We furlough our machinery to the shed when there isn't sufficient work for it at certain times of the year, calling it back when the needs once again arise. Heck, some of the older generation voluntarily furlough themselves to warmer climates in the winter, only returning when the demand for a helping hand back home shows up with longer days and sunny rays. See you in the spring!

When profits for shareholders don't meet expectations, as this might appear, the means to an end in this case was just that; an end to many jobs. Many of these furloughs occurred in the mechanical department of a mechanical based industry. At a glance, this seems a bit absurd. Safe, efficient, and reliable service we've come to know from our grain-on-rail shipping partner is now under a bit more scrutiny. Certainly something to keep a sharp eye on.

As a tool used to reallocate resources in the dynamic ebb and flow of rail freight, this furlough was also that. Much like the practice of variable rate fertilizer on the farm, we put more where we need it, and less where we don't. Efficient use of resources doesn't always appear the way we think it should. It can be a little fuzzy.

Among the layoffs was the General Director of Agricultural Development. His wealth of knowledge was a great resource to answer the never ending rail questions from this podunk Montana dirt farmer. He is already missed in many discussions.

At the end of May, our lowered freight rate that went into effect on January 1st of this year will expire. With all aforementioned things considered, my gut feeling is these rates may very well be on the rise. Perhaps that's just the spicy enchiladas I had last night. Who's to say. For now it's unclear, but no need to start howling and yipping about it just yet. Time will tell.

Many topics and discussions in life end up at the dinner table at our house. Layoffs and furloughs, and the neighbor Mr. Woolsey thinking it was a late spring if the coyotes were eating cow pies were among the highlights the other evening. As my wife and I discussed the many things of the world, I had noticed my son was quietly sitting there having a stare down with his dinner; not a single bite being taken. I finally prodded him to get moving with that fork, asking what the holdup was about.

"I heard mom say this was fur loaf and I don't think I like fur loaf. It's no fair the coyotes get to eat pie for dinner."

I chuckled and agreed, I didn't think I was fond of fur loaf either.

"There's no pie for supper, but I bet if you eat all your dinner, mom baked some delicious looking monster cookies that I promise aren't organic."

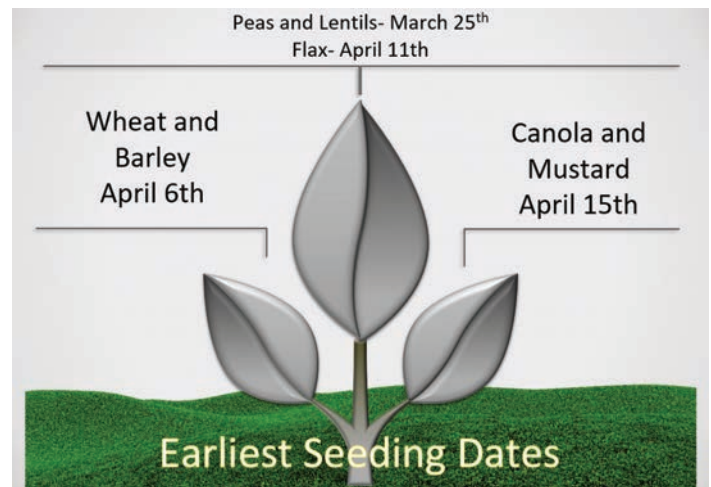
He got a wiley smile, threw back his ears, and started chomping. 🌱

SPRING UPDATE VIDEO AND REMINDERS

By *Korey Fauque, KW Insurance Inc*



April marks the start of seeding for most of us, and with that comes early seeding dates for your crop insurance. These are the earliest dates you can start seeding and still qualify for a replant payment if there are emergence issues with your crop. Once the crop is established, even if you seeded before the Early Seeding Date, you will have coverage on that crop for all the other perils.



As I am sure most of you are getting busy with spring field work, below is a QR code for our spring update meeting that you can listen to or watch while seeding. This video covers most of the important stuff for the coming crop year and rules you may not be familiar with. This is a great way to get a refresher on crop insurance for the 2024 crop year and catch some potential issues before they come up in a claim.



I hope you have an awesome spring. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you have with the crop insurance program. 🌱

NAWG JOINS INDUSTRY IN 2024 FEEDING THE ECONOMY IMPACT STUDY

On March 19, the 2024 Feeding the Economy Report was released, which was previewed at Agri-Pulse's Ag and Food Policy Summit the day prior. NAWG and 31 other food and agriculture groups released the eighth annual Feeding the Economy report, a historic farm-to-fork economic impact study that helps to estimate the direct and indirect economic contributions of the food and agriculture industries on jobs, wages, economic output, and business taxes. "The research completed by Feeding the Economy is instrumental in the work commodity organizations do to advocate for growers. The \$3.4 billion generated from the agricultural industry from food agriculture, manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing, accounts for 18.48% of the national economy output. These numbers show the importance of supporting farmers through Federal Crop Insurance programs, one of the many programs the National Association of Wheat Growers advocates for. NAWG is proud to support the work done by Feeding the Economy," said Chandler Goule, CEO of the National Association of Wheat Growers. 🌾

NAWG RESPONDS TO THE STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

On March 7, President Joseph Biden delivered his third State of the Union remarks to Congress. NAWG CEO Chandler Goule provided the following statement in response:

"While the President addressed many issues of importance to the American people – such as inflation, food prices, and food security – the costs of on-farm inputs and equipment remain high and concern many farmers. Currently, we are operating under a one-year farm bill extension, and coming off NAWG's annual meeting, passing a long-term farm bill that supports farmers is one of our priorities and is at the top of our wheat growers' minds. The 2018 farm bill was a high watermark for bipartisanship. As Congress and the Biden Administration continue to work on a long-term farm bill, we must build upon the 2018 Farm Bill by strengthening the farm safety net, enhancing our trade promotion programs, and supporting the voluntary conservation programs that work for wheat growers.

"NAWG will continue to work with Congress and the Biden Administration on policies that support farmers and recognize the uniqueness of wheat." 🌾



NAWG STAFF AND OFFICER TRAVEL

NAWG CEO Chandler Goule traveled to Denver, Colorado this week to attend Commodity Classic Affiliate Council (CCAC) meetings and visit NAWG's hotel for the 2025 Commodity Classic. NAWG is one of the five organizations that make up the CCAC, along with the National Corn Growers Association, American Soybean Association, National Sorghum Producers, and American Equipment Manufacturers. NAWG Treasurer and Idaho wheat farmer Jamie Kress and Government Relations Representative Jack Long attended the Agriculture Rail Business Council meetings at BNSF facilities in Fort Worth this week. The meetings consisted of touring BNSF headquarters and learning about current issues and innovative research they are conducting. 🌾

NAWG VISITS CAPITOL HILL WITH NATIONAL WHEAT IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

On March 19-20, the National Wheat Improvement Committee (NWIC) was on Capitol Hill advocating for the wheat industry's fiscal year 2025 appropriations priorities. NWIC represents the wheat research community, producers, and processors, and there were 22 representatives in Washington, DC, who met with nearly 40 offices in the Senate, House of Representatives, and US Department of Agriculture. The group advocated for increased funding for the Wheat Resiliency Initiative, which seeks to address critical challenges related to wheat stem sawfly, Hessian fly, bacterial leaf streak, and rust diseases. Additionally, the group continued advocating for full funding for the U.S. Wheat and Barley Scab and Small Grains Genomic Initiative. 🌾

NAWG ELECTS NEW OFFICERS WITH KEEFF FELTY AS PRESIDENT

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) elected Keeff Felty as President during their 2024 Annual Conference in Houston, Texas. Felty is a fourth-generation farmer in the Altus area of Oklahoma. He farms cotton, sesame, and pastureland along with his wheat crops. He brings experience from his time with the Oklahoma Wheat Growers Association and the Oklahoma State Support Committee Cotton Incorporated, and he has served on various commodity committees within the American Farm Bureau Federation and the Oklahoma Farm Bureau.

“I am looking forward to working with wheat growers and lawmakers to ensure wheat voices are heard during the renewal of the Farm Bill,” said NAWG President and Oklahoma wheat farmer Keeff Felty. “As we continue into 2024, it is critical that industry continue to urge lawmakers to consider a Farm Bill that protects crop insurance, strengthens the farm safety net, and increases funding for our trade promotion programs. It is an honor to be elected as president of NAWG, and I look forward to working with commodity leaders to support agriculture and rural America.”

NAWG’s Board of Directors elected its new board of officers with Pat Clements of Kentucky elected as Vice President, Jamie Kress from Idaho as Treasurer, and Nathan Keane of Montana as the new Secretary. Brent Cheyne of Oregon transitioned into the Past President position. Steve Sheffels of Montana was also elected to the NAWG budget committee.

“We appreciate the time and commitment Brent Cheyne dedicated during his time as NAWG President. Brent

delivered excellent testimonies before both the Senate and House Agriculture Subcommittees this past Spring, highlighting the importance of the farm safety net,” said NAWG CEO Chandler Goule. “He continued to be a champion for NAWG’s Farm Bill priorities during our July, September, and January meetings on Capitol Hill. We look forward to continuing the work Brent led during his presidency as we look to Congress to pass a 2024 Farm Bill.”

Two of the National Wheat Foundation’s directors, Jeff Blackwood and Scott Brown, were also re-elected to serve their second term. The National Wheat Foundation elected Bernard Peterson, KY, as Chairman; Gary Broyles, MT, Vice Chairman; and Scott Brown, ID, Secretary/Treasurer. 🌾

NEW NAWG PRESIDENT’S GOAL PASSAGE OF A BETTER FARM BILL

On March 13, the Capital Press published the following article on NAWG President Keeff Felty’s goals for a 2024 Farm Bill. “Everybody wants to get this farm bill done, but it’s got to be an improvement, it’s got to be better,” said Keeff Felty, of Altus, Okla. “We don’t want to do it just for the sake of saying we got it accomplished.” Felty emphasized that crop insurance is the cornerstone of the Farm Bill, and maintaining and improving this area is a top priority for NAWG. Regarding his time as President, Felty said that he is looking forward to working with the entire industry, and furthering wheat’s footprint, voice and activities in the U.S. 🌾

NAWG UPDATES ON FY2024 APPROPRIATION BILLS

On March 9, President Biden signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 (H.R. 4366) into law, which included six Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriation bills, including the agriculture appropriation bill. H.R. 4366 was passed by the Senate the day prior by a vote of 75 to 22 vote, and by the House of Representatives last Wednesday, by a vote of 339 to 85. Specifically, the agriculture appropriations component maintains the FY2023 funding levels. However, of interest included in the package is funding for one of NAWG’s appropriations priorities, the Wheat Resiliency Initiative (WRI), which increases federal funding for pest and disease challenges facing producers. Additionally, the bill maintains funding for the US Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative and Small Grains Genomic Initiative. “NAWG is glad to see the FY2024 appropriations package includes several wheat priorities, including initial funding for the first time the Wheat Resiliency Initiative,” said NAWG Vice President of Policy and Communications Jake Westlin. “Next week, NAWG will be back on Capitol Hill to discuss FY2025 appropriations and will work to continue to build a coalition to enhance funding for wheat research needs.” 🌾

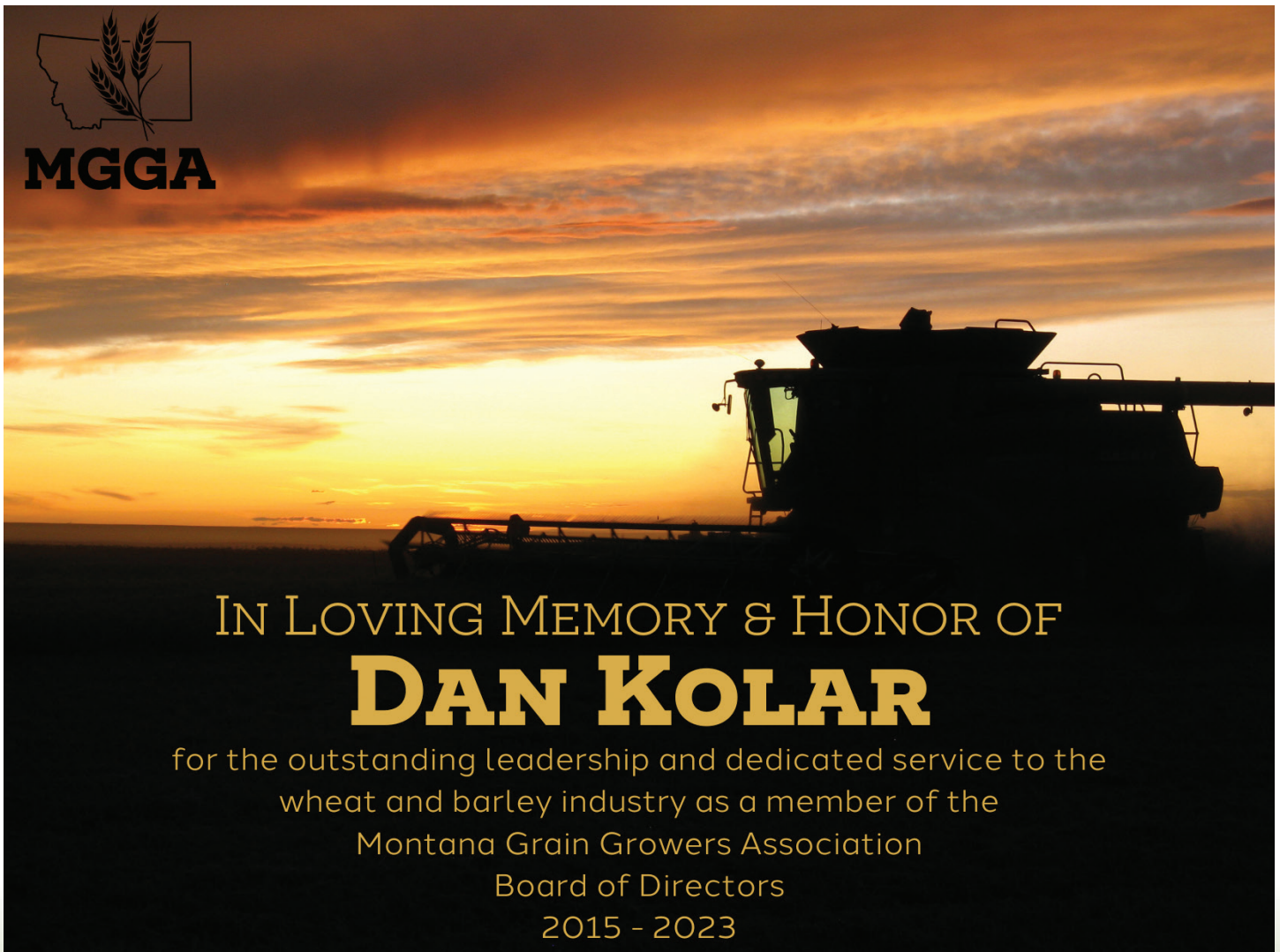


PRESIDENT BIDEN RELEASES THE 2025 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT FOLLOWING STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Following the State of the Union Address, President Biden released the U.S. government's budget for 2025. Agriculture funding includes \$29.2 Billion in discretionary funding for the USDA, which is a \$2 Billion increase from the 2023 funding level. In the budget, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) sees a 7-percent increase above the 2023 enacted level, or \$67 Million increase. The budget also provides \$3.8 Billion for agricultural research, education, and outreach. To this end, the budget includes a \$733 Million increase for climate-related funding and a \$365 Million increase to American research and innovation in agriculture. It also proposes no policy-driven cuts to crop insurance, and proposed permanent authorization of a Cover Crop Incentive Program at \$5/acre. 🌾

WHEAT YIELD CONTEST OPEN FOR 2024: NATIONAL WHEAT YIELD CONTEST FEATURES NEW CATEGORY AND WEBSITE FOR 2024

On March 7, Progressive Farmer, the official media outlet for the National Wheat Yield Contest, announced that the 2024 National Wheat Yield Contest is now taking entries. As in previous years, the deadline to enter for winter wheat categories is May 15, and August 1 for spring wheat categories. This year, there is a new digital yield category for dryland spring wheat growers in Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. "NWF and our partners want to continue to expand the reach of the contest and the Digital Yield category is one way we hope more growers will be interested in giving it a try," said Bernard Peterson, NWF chairman and a Kentucky wheat grower. "We look forward to learning from contestants who are interested in helping the contest improve and take advantage of the great digital technologies that many wheat growers have adopted." 🌾



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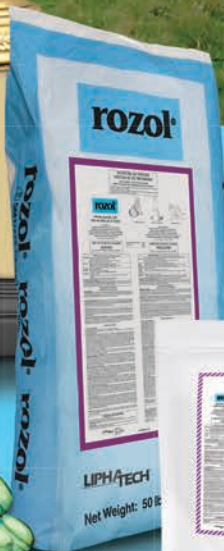
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