

## Climate Change: A “Hot Topic” For Idaho Grain Producers

By Eric Hasselstrom, IGPA President

It is the middle of summer and, after a very wet spring, the transition to a scorcher was quick in the Pacific Northwest. For those Idaho farmers able to beat the preventative planting date, the wheat crop from our northern border with Canada to the Wyoming state line looks good.

The U.S. Congress is also experiencing its fair share of volatile weather this summer. The “hot” topic of recent weeks in our nation’s Capitol involves the debate to develop a national climate change policy to stem man-made greenhouse gas emissions.

On behalf of wheat growers, NAWG has engaged in the national debate from the outset - putting growers in the front seat of the climate change bus. As a director of the NAWG board and through my leadership role within NAWG, I have advocated for legislation that is comprehensive, science-based, and provides a net benefit to producers. It was clear to me, NAWG, and its member-states that the climate train was rolling fast down the legislative tracks.

In June, the train arrived at the station. Legislation (HR 2454) regulating carbon emissions in the United States passed the House of Representatives. After careful negotiations and hard work by key members in Congress and groups like NAWG, the final bill lessened the regulatory burden on agriculture while providing a net benefit to some grain producers.

In my current role as president of the Idaho Grain Producers Association, wrapping my arms around the climate change issue is difficult. Its complexity even causes renowned scientists to disagree with each other. In general, Idaho growers do not believe in the climate change theory and are concerned that the added costs of any legislation will outweigh the benefits. Regardless, my job is to represent the views of Idaho’s wheat growers within NAWG as best I can.

While the climate change issue has proved controversial in all facets, including within NAWG, I believe it has highlighted how critical our national organizations are in even finding a seat on the “bus”. If NAWG did not exist, wheat growers around the country would be at a major disadvantage in the deliberations of Congress. Thus, our livelihoods would be in jeopardy with only ourselves to blame.

The controversial issue of climate change will directly impact everyone – from the average consumer, to farmers, to manufacturers, our communities, and the ecosystems we live in. For the past few years, an international movement has successfully brought climate change to the forefront of the American public, that of Congress, and ultimately to the doorstep of farmers.

Thankfully the work of our national leaders and those producers simply active in their state associations has kept NAWG viable and proactive on our behalf. However our work is far from over. In September, the climate change bill will meet its next hurdle in the Senate. NAWG and other leaders from around the country will spend hours to get the best deal possible for wheat producers. I encourage more producers to make their voice heard.