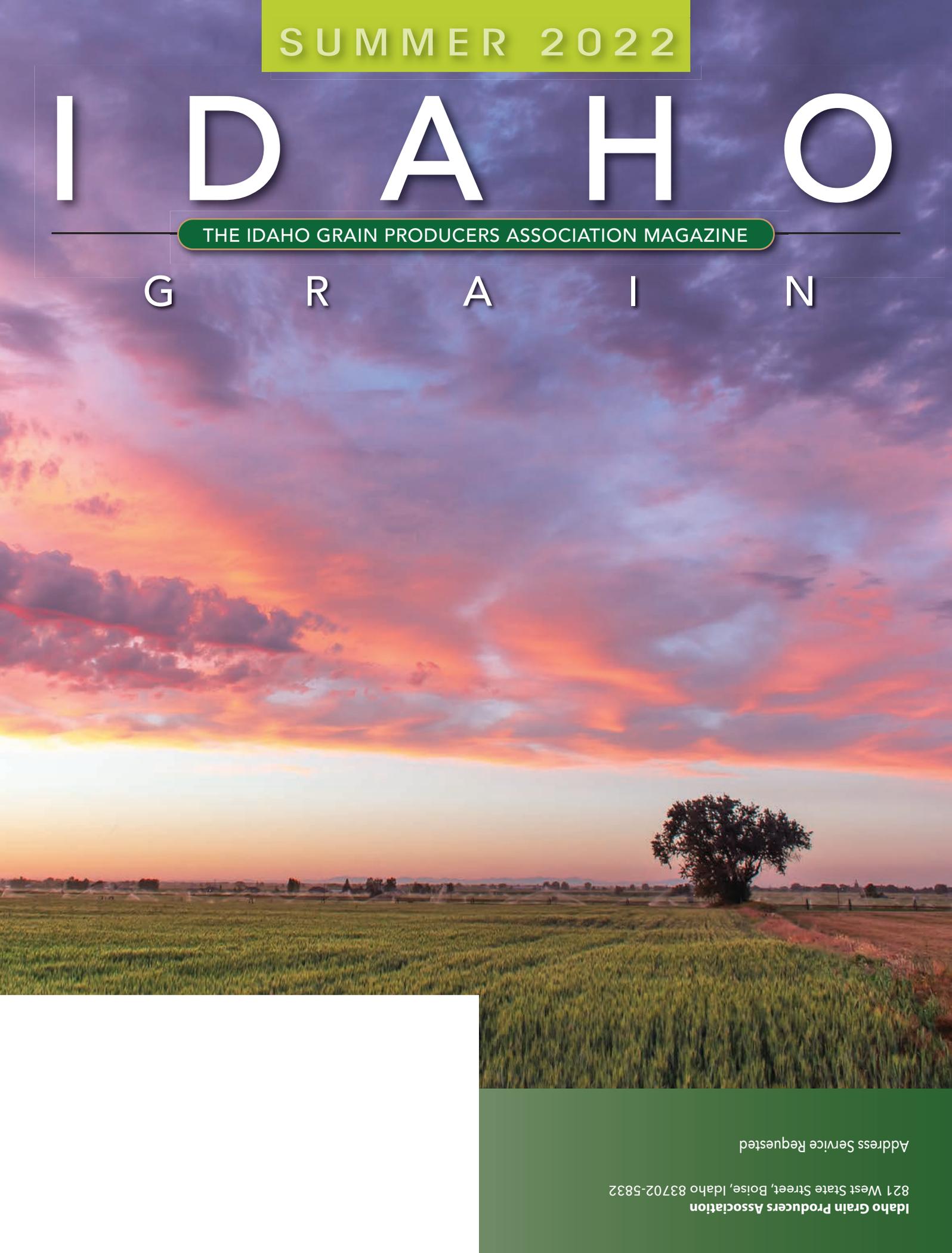


SUMMER 2022

IDAHO

THE IDAHO GRAIN PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE

GRAIN



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VIEWS



**BY LUCAS SPRATLING
PRESIDENT**

Summer is coming, and hopefully the spring rains have set us up for a fantastic crop this coming season. However, this season will not be without its challenges as the drought continues to persevere. I will say it was enjoyable to take a rain measurement in Southern Idaho this May after I finished planting.

I was having a conversation with some local farmers about the current state of our world. I do not know if I suddenly care more about the future of our country or if things are heading in such a critical direction that our full attention is required. No matter what is going on in the world, good or bad, we must always be prepared.

I believe that because of the many volunteers who put in long hours in organizations like the Idaho Grain Producers, we are more prepared for the volatility we're going to see and the food shortages that are predicted to occur. Had we as farmers not fought for critical farm programs to create an environment that was sustainable for our country to produce enough food to feed our own people and the world, things would be much worse. American is getting to watch firsthand why it is an issue of national security to produce food and fiber domestically, and why we have programs to help keep farmers farming. Supply chain disruptions and the global food shortage are happening and will likely continue to worsen. This is one of the reasons farmers have fought for international food aid. In this critical moment, thank goodness the infrastructure for moving food worldwide is already in place and ready to function.

Furthermore, it is up to us to make sure the inputs we need to farm are made here in America to create a more stable supply chain. Instead of taking infrastructure out, we need to be discussing ways to put more in and improve what we currently have. We are already seeing this happen as money is being allocated to assist companies in making the transition to creating products on our soil. Farmers are survivors, and all we can do is keep moving forward. As we go into this increasingly volatile time, I believe we are well prepared to answer the call to help fill the shortcomings with the equipment and programs already in place. We are prepared because of some tremendous forethought and action by those who have served before through the many farm organizations in Idaho and our nation.

What crazy times we live in, but all we can do is continue to advocate and be involved in the decision-making process, create change through our grassroots organizations, and, although painful at times, become involved in politics at the local and national levels. We, as Idaho farmers, have made and can continue to make significant changes to our future. ■

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Stacey Katseanes Satterlee Editor-in-Chief
Kellie Kluksdal Assistant Editor

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**IDAHO GRAIN PRODUCERS
ASSOCIATION**

821 West State Street
Boise, Idaho 83702-5832
(208) 345-0706
e-mail: ssatterlee@idahograin.org
e-mail: cprescott@idahograin.org
<http://www.idahograin.org>

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EDITOR'S
EDITOR'S NOTE
NOTE 



BY STACEY KATSEANES SATTERLEE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Agriculture is the single largest contributor to Idaho's economy, accounting for 18 percent of the state's total economic output. Your production puts Idaho wheat and barley on the map of the U.S., being a top producer of wheat and the top producer of barley. Agriculture is also the backbone of Idaho's rural communities. You buy groceries at local stores, your kids are being educated in rural schools, you drive local roads, and your families fill the stands at local sporting events. Idaho agriculture cannot be separated from Idaho's communities and culture.

For all these reasons, Idaho agriculture should have a voice at the Statehouse equal to its cultural weight and economic importance. This is where IGPA, and other groups representing Idaho agriculture (many of whom meet and coordinate regularly as members of Food Producers of Idaho), come in. And this is why your membership in IGPA is so important – it gives you representation and a voice with the state's legislature and the executive branch.

In addition to your membership in IGPA, Idaho's grain growers have an important tool that allows us to support ag-friendly candidates: the Idaho Wheat & Barley PAC. I'd like to thank all of you who have contributed to the PAC - it has grown significantly over the past five years, which allows us to have more of an impact and support more ag-friendly candidates. This is our best tool in terms of electing candidates who care about your livelihood and the agricultural community in Idaho as much as you do. What we don't need is out-of-state PACs, who have no connection to our values or way of life, throwing money at the candidates they believe should be in office in our state. We need our PAC that supports the values of hard-working Idahoans and tells the story of Idaho agriculture. May's primary election is a great example of the good work a PAC can do—many of the ag-friendly candidates we supported were successfully elected. Together, we can work to get good people elected.

In addition to advocating on your behalf in Boise, your membership in IGPA gives you representation in Washington, DC. Idaho wheat and barley growers should have a voice in DC equal to our cultural weight and economic importance here in the state as well as our importance to the grain industry nationally – and good news, we do! IGPA has board members in two agriculture trade associations, the National Association of Wheat Growers and National Barley Growers Association, who advocate on behalf of our growers and our industry with Congress and federal agencies.

We hope you find value in your IGPA membership – if you haven't joined for 2022, you can join at www.idahograin.org/membership today. Keep reading to hear from a former IGPA President and newly appointed State FSA Director Matt Gellings on page 11 - about the Department of Lands and what they have in common with you on page 4 - and NW River Partners, a group that IGPA recently joined as we continue to advocate and educate about bargaining on the Columbia Snake River System on page 14 - and about a camp in rural Camas County that's trying to serve all of Idaho's medically fragile children on page 8. ■



Idaho Department of Lands, Ag Producers, Have Much in Common

BY DUSTIN MILLER, DIRECTOR, IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF LANDS

At statehood, Congress granted Idaho a checkerboard of property, the 16th and 36th sections of each township creating a legal trust for the sole purpose of financially supporting nine beneficiaries, primarily public schools. The 2.5 million remaining acres from this grant are called Endowment Lands and may be found across every corner of Idaho.

The Idaho State Board of Land Commissioners oversees the management of Endowment Lands, with the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) tasked with managing a combined 2.5 million acres of forestland, rangeland and roughly nineteen thousand acres of farmland. The commissioner’s include Idaho’s Governor, State Controller, Attorney General, Secretary of State and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

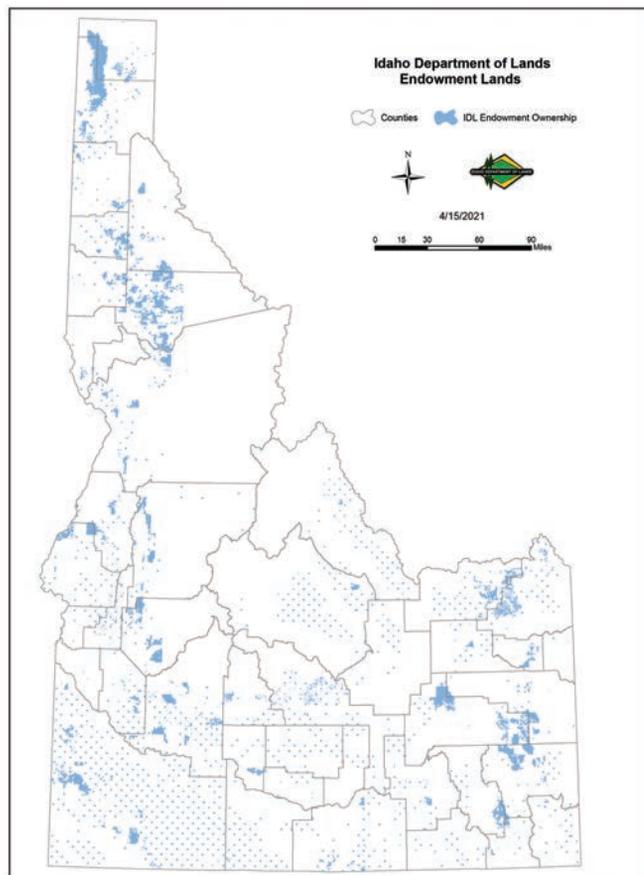
The Idaho constitutional requires that the Land Board maximize revenue earned from Endowment Lands to help support the beneficiaries. IDL’s approach is different than federal land managers who must always take into consideration a diversity of uses. IDL’s undivided loyalty is to the beneficiaries, and its mission is to make money to help support them.

Most of the revenue IDL generates from Endowment Lands comes from timber sales, a renewable “crop” managed under a sixty-to-eighty-year rotation. Land is also leased for communication sites, recreation, residential/commercial uses, conservation, mineral extraction, grazing and farming. Often, leases for compatible uses are stacked one upon another, amplifying the revenue potential of the land. For all Endowment Lands leased or sold, Idaho law requires dispositions to occur via public auctions.

Information how you can lease Endowment Lands is available online at www.idl.idaho.gov.

Wheat is grown on a slice of Endowment Land, about 2,300 acres under 17 leases. Last year, endowment lessees reported growing 1,761 acres of dryland wheat and 107 acres of irrigated wheat. Roughly 419 acres were laid fallow. In 2021 wheat producers averaged 42 bushels per acre from leased Endowment Lands.

Continued on next page



- Burn Permits are **REQUIRED** during closed fire season from May 10 through October 20.
- They're free and available online 24/7!
- For general debris burning visit BurnPermits.idaho.gov
- For crop residue burning visit <https://www.deq.idaho.gov/air-quality/smoke-and-burning/crop-residue-burning/>



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wildfire risks. Now, more than ever, all must do their part to prevent unwanted human-caused fires. Last year, 62% of fires on land protected by IDL were human caused, and all were preventable.

Continued from previous page

Idaho Department of Lands also protects 6.3 million acres of state, private and federal land from wildfire. While IDL’s primary fire responsibility is protecting forestland, the agency often fights fires on ag land within its fire protective districts. An example of this was last year’s Bedrock Fire near Lenore that burned more than eleven thousand acres of agricultural and timberland.

Severe fire seasons appear to be Idaho’s new norm. More people are moving into the wildland urban interface and adjacent to ag land, too. These trends combined with drought conditions and declarations in 34 counties should heighten everyone’s concerns about



Wildfire doesn’t respect property lines. A debris fire started on one piece of property can quickly spread to neighboring timber or ag land. Debris burning is one of the most frequent causes of wildfire on land protected by IDL. The risks posed by runaway debris or escaped burns on ag land is tremendous, because with just a little wind, fires can quickly engulf thousands of acres destroying valuable crops and killing livestock.

To help prevent fires during higher risk periods, Idaho law establishes a closed fire season from May 10 through October 20. During the closed season, Idahoans who live outside city limits are required to obtain a state fire burn permit from IDL before burning. Burning crop residue also requires a permit, but ag producers initiate the permit application process through the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. Permits for burning both debris and crop residue are free and available online via a self-service system.

Idaho’s burn permit system reduces the number of false alarms and allows fire crews to respond only when truly needed. IDL investigates all fires on land it protects and is required by law to seek reimbursement for suppression costs for negligent, human caused fires.

Like ag producers, IDL understands that land management decisions made today impact the productivity of Endowment Lands tomorrow. Future generations of endowment beneficiaries, namely school children, are counting on IDL to make wise decisions, and put the beneficiaries first. ■



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Learning About Community Through Hydropower Advocacy

BY KURT MILLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NW RIVER PARTNERS

My dad, the orphaned son of a German immigrant and his wife, grew up on cherry and filbert farm in Salem, Oregon. He was about six years old when my great aunt and uncle, who owned the farm, adopted him. They had no children of their own, and they didn't exactly see him as a bundle of joy. At that age, he wasn't a ton of help around the farm.

Of course, that all changed. He learned a strong work ethic, something that anyone who ever met him came to appreciate. Despite the responsibilities on the farm, my dad was one of the few farm kids who made it beyond his one-room schoolhouse and completed his high school education.

My childhood was much different. I grew up in a suburb, east of Portland, Oregon. We had nice neighbors and good schools, but I noticed it wasn't the same as the stories he shared with me from his youth about the farming community. Our suburb didn't have the same sense of togetherness.

The exciting thing for me is that I have gotten to experience that closer sense of community as the head of Northwest RiverPartners. We are a hydropower advocacy group representing community-owned, not-for-profit electric utilities and other supporters of clean energy, agriculture, and barging.

Most communities across the Pacific Northwest are very dependent on the benefits the hydroelectric system brings, which includes clean, renewable, and affordable electricity. About half of the region's electricity and almost 90% of its renewable energy is generated by hydropower. The hydropower system is the main reason we have the lowest cost for clean energy of any region in the United States.

Aside from electricity itself, our hydropower dams also include critical infrastructure for farming and agriculture, such as irrigation and locks at the dams, which allow for barging of wheat and other crops to ports. To put figures to it, nearly 8 million acres of Northwest farmland is irrigated with water provided by hydropower reservoirs, and the Columbia River is the nation's number one wheat export gateway in the world.

We partner closely with community-led organizations as part of our advocacy mission. The people who



work at these organizations live in the communities they represent, and they care deeply about the people they serve.

I feel very close to these partners because we have common goals for the well-being of the Pacific Northwest, and we are fighting for something important—to protect the Pacific Northwest's hydropower system and all of the benefits it provides.

Our work is necessary, as there are significant interest groups that would like to see the hydropower system dismantled. These groups have set their sights on lower Snake River dams, but we've also seen calls to remove Skagit River and lower Columbia River dams.

Some groups believe dams need to be removed to help threatened and endangered salmon species. Other groups believe all rivers should return to free-flowing condition. We recognize they are doing what they think is right.

We share the perspective that salmon are critically important, but strongly believe there are other ways to help salmon without harming the region. That belief is rooted in the research we've done and the biologists we regularly meet with.

The biggest challenge we face in our advocacy is the financial and political power behind dam removal efforts. Activist groups that submitted formal comments in favor of removing the four lower Snake River dams in 2020 had annual assets and revenues of \$1.6 billion.

These organizations are very well organized and sophisticated in their operations, and they bring a lot of

political clout to the table. As a result, even though the vast majority of Northwest residents do not want to see the lower Snake River dams removed, policymakers are continually pressured to take on the issue.

As evidence of this fact, consider the following activities and forums Northwest policymakers have initiated over the past few years:

2019

Governor Jay Inslee (D – WA) launched the Lower Snake River Dams Stakeholder Process. Many stakeholder groups were interviewed. A report was issued.

Governor Brad Little (R – ID) established Salmon Recovery Workgroup. While Governor Little declared the workgroup should not include lower Snake River dam removal in its recommendations, many participants still called for their removal.

2020

The Bonneville Power Administration, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the US Bureau of Reclamation completed and adopted the recommendations from the Federal Columbia River Power System Final Environmental Impact Statement. This is the first time the federal agencies examined a dam breaching (i.e., dam removal) option in 20 years.

2021

Representative Mike Simpson’s (R – ID) announced his concept to remove the dams and to try to secure \$33.5 billion in federal funding to help mitigate their loss. The concept was not included in the bipartisan infrastructure package.

The State of Oregon and other plaintiff groups filed a motion for injunctive relief against the 2020 EIS and Biological Opinion recommendations. Their motion calls for measures that would greatly reduce the cost-effectiveness of the hydropower system and the reliability of the power grid.

The White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) engages negotiations with dam removal groups about breaching the lower Snake River dams.

Senator Patty Murray (D – WA) and Governor Jay Inslee (D - WA) announce and launch a “Joint Federal-State Process” to examine lower Snake River dam removal.

The governors of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana convened stakeholders together to enhance salmon recovery. Several stakeholders have asked for lower Snake River dam removal to be a focus of this group.



This level of activity also creates a constant news cycle, which anti-dam activists leverage to promote their views. These views are often embraced by the news media which cover the lower Snake River dams’ debate.

Our challenge as an advocacy organization is to be heard among the noise. My group has written and placed scores of op-eds over the past two years. We also engage in government affairs, submitting written comments into governing processes and trying to educate policymakers about the implications of different energy and environmental related policies.

But, at the end of the day, we really have to ensure our messages are heard by the general public. Our data show that the more people know about hydropower, the more they support it.

That finding doesn’t come as a surprise to us. Hydropower is the superhero of renewable energy because it comes with its own built-in “batteries,” in the form of water held behind a dam. That water can be stored and then released when needed to power a hydroelectric turbine.

This ability is incredibly important as the region shuts down its fossil fueled generating plants to help combat climate change, replacing them with intermittent generating sources, like solar and wind power. Hydropower is critical to fill in the gaps and keep the grid operating reliably.

To ensure we get the message out, we hired a communications specialist to establish our social media presence. We’ve also raised funding for paid media campaigns over the past three years, so we can reach more people.

These efforts have been successful, but they don’t occur in a vacuum, as dam removal activists also fund their own campaigns—many of them.

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I feel a tremendous sense of pride and responsibility in my job because many people have trusted our organization to advocate for their towns, homes, and businesses. I feel like we're truly partners with them.

While my dad isn't still around for me to ask him, I'm guessing that sense of shared responsibility is part of what made his farming community so special to him. There is a strong sense of common cause and togetherness.

Speaking of togetherness, I'm convinced if we act together, we will be successful in preserving the hydropower system and the many benefits it brings the people of the Pacific Northwest. It will take time, energy, and resources, but we can do it.

If you'd like to learn more about our organization, please visit us at www.nwrivernpartners.org or follow us @nwrivernpartners on social media. 

Beyond Crop Rotation: Best Soil Health Practices for Idaho Grain Growers

BY TASHA PAUL, USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE RESOURCE SOIL SCIENTIST

Soil health practices have the potential to transform a farm, boosting yields and saving money, while addressing erosion and water scarcity concerns. The principles of soil health revolve around protecting soil from disturbance and erosion, while building up the soil as a dynamic, living system full of diverse microorganisms that drive nutrient cycling and disease suppression. Soil health is all about looking at a farm as a whole system and implementing as many management practices as possible to restore and build up soil rather than deplete it.

Idaho grain growers are very familiar with crop rotation as a means to break soilborne pest cycles. Rotation is one step towards healthier soil and is an excellent practice to incorporate more diversity in a system. So, what are other practices grain growers can implement to improve their soil's health and keep it functioning to its fullest potential?

Reducing tillage or using no-till can dramatically cut fuel costs on top of many other benefits. Minimizing soil disturbance helps retain organic matter and optimal structure for storing water throughout the growing season. In low-precipitation dryland farming areas, undercutter tillage is used to preserve seed-zone water during fallow while reducing the blowing and eroding of soils common to conventional tillage systems. An undercutter uses V-shaped blades to slice beneath the soil surface, severing capillary channels and halting upward movement of water, without causing much disturbance to the soil surface. A recent five-year study by Washington State University demonstrated



A Great Plains no-till drill owned by the Balanced Rock SWCD on display at a field day held June 2021 in Buhl, ID. Credit: Shanna Bernal-Fields, USDA-NRCS Resource Soil Scientist.

how no-till and undercutter tillage systems are equally profitable to tilled systems for producing winter wheat, with the added benefit of keeping your precious topsoil in the field.

Even better is to avoid fallow fields altogether and keep the soil covered throughout the entire year. Cover crops, such as mustard, canola, sunflowers, flax, and nitrogen-fixing legumes, are useful even in semi-arid environments, for a number of reasons. Cover crops suppress weeds in the springtime, prevent erosion by physically shielding the soil from wind and water, and

capture and hold nutrients in the root zone. Specifically, legumes enable you to “grow your own” nitrogen, reducing money spent on costly fertilizers. Replacing summer fallow with full season covers is a great way to add diversity to a predominantly wheat and barley rotation, particularly in areas receiving at least 18 inches of annual precipitation. Cover crops may seem less feasible in arid and semi-arid regions (those receiving less than 18 inches of annual precipitation), but a recent study on the topic discusses their overall positive impacts on ecosystem services. Cover crops in water-limited places do not typically increase cash crop yields, but do control erosion, reduce nitrate leaching, help control weeds, improve the water infiltration of soil, and feed the soil biology. Keeping living roots in the ground is ultimately how soil organic matter is built and doing so has very tangible results; every 1 percent increase in soil organic matter equates to the soil being able to hold 20,000 more gallons of water per acre. There are many factors to consider when planning cover crops, and the Pacific Northwest Cover Crop Selection Tool (available on line and through your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office) helps growers select cover crops best suited to their specific region and goals. Producers have also reported success with intercropping one cover crop or cash crop species along with a legume, achieving yields that are on par with monocrops but require fewer inputs to get there.

Cover crops provide an excellent opportunity for additional profits when grazing animals are brought in. Often, neighbors with cattle or small ruminants are in need of high-quality forage. The demand is particularly high in years when hay is expensive and difficult to find. Incorporating grazing animals into a system is hugely beneficial for soils, as the animals return partially decomposed organic matter, microbes, and nutrients to the ground in the form of manure and nitrogen-rich urine. Incorporating diversity, whether in the form of plants or animals, benefits the production system at large.

Another way producers have been keeping soils covered and discovering additional soil health benefits is by leaving stubble on the field. Residue management is a challenge in areas with limited moisture availability since the plant matter doesn't break down rapidly on the ground and too much residue makes planting difficult. Using a stripper header at harvest time leaves a manageable amount of residue behind on the field that helps prevent erosion until the next planting. This stubble can capture additional snowmelt and lead to more water stored in the soil compared to bare and tilled fields. Another strategy for soil cover is to use a chaff spreader to evenly distribute excess chaff and



Beans interseeded into a wheat crop near Twin Falls, ID, August 2021. Credit: Courtney Cosdon, University of Idaho Extension/ NRCS Soil Health Instructor.

straw behind the combine at harvest time. A no-till drill can be used to seed directly into the stubble or residue on the ground. In the end, crop residue becomes a resource rather than a nuisance requiring removal from the field.

More and more growers across Idaho are taking notice of the benefits of soil health practices. Many resources exist for those who are interested in learning more and trying out new practices on their own operation. Various kinds of equipment, such as no-till drills, are often available to rent through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. NRCS offers financial and technical assistance to growers interested in implementing soil health management systems, assisting with everything from cover cropping and reduced tillage practices, to nutrient management as soils become healthier and more effective at biologically cycling nutrients. NRCS also partners with University of Idaho Extension to share current research relevant to this region, soil health forums for sharing producers' experiences, educational field days, and other resources. On June 29, 2022, a field day is being hosted in the Magic Valley to share and demonstrate how soil health can save both dollars and water. Be sure to take a look at the UI Extension Soil Health website and Idaho NRCS Soil Health website for additional information.

Every farm is different, and best soil health practices that work for a producer will vary from place to place. Soil health is worth pursuing, not only to boost crop yields but also increase the resilience and longevity of operations for years to come. NRCS field offices throughout Idaho are always ready to discuss soil health options with local producers and start the process towards healthier soils, farms, and communities. ■



FSA 101

BY MATT GELLINGS, IDAHO STATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Have you ever noticed that 90 days comes around a little quicker than it used to - whether it was my operating line at the bank or the extension of that operating line because the money from the hay broker or grain company didn't come in when it should have? Well, that's how I am feeling in my new role as the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director in Idaho. The first month or so has been filled with training - "drinking from a fire hose" training - from ethics to human resources to farm policy, there's a lot to learn in just the first 60 days of employment. But I'm always up for a challenge and learning new things.

COVID-19 has played an active part in my first 90 days as well. The USDA agencies that are under Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) mission area follow the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines on staffing, masks, and travel. I am happy to report that the 29 FSA county offices around our great state are finally open for our farmers and ranchers to visit and conduct business in person.

USDA has offered the option of telework to our employees which some have chosen but we recognize that FSA is a customer service, customer-facing agency. As such, Idaho FSA is committed to having staff in our offices throughout the state to deliver federal farm programs and provide the level of service producers expect and deserve from FSA.



FSA offers many programs of interest and benefit to wheat and barley growers including Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) which are the two programs that grain growers use the most. Both ARC and PLC are counter-cyclical meaning that when prices rise, the amount of safety net protection will decline and vice versa. In fact, producers in Idaho received more than \$49 million last year for 2020 crops that triggered an ARC-PLC payment. We will know if 2021 crops trigger a payment later this fall. The ARC-PLC programs represent one-third of the three-legged safety net that Congress has offered agricultural producers — the other two being crop insurance and marketing assistance loans.

FSA also offers commodity price support programs, farm storage facility loans, direct and guaranteed farm loans, conservation and disaster assistance programs.

There are 36 counties that have a drought disaster declaration in Idaho. Unfortunately, when this article comes out, there might be more. When there is a disaster declaration, it triggers FSA Emergency Loan assistance. Emergency loans can be used to meet various recovery needs including the replacement of essential items such as equipment or livestock, reorganization of a farming operation or the refinance of certain debts. Additionally, FSA has a variety of loan servicing options available for borrowers who are unable to make scheduled payments on their

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farm loan debt to FSA because of reasons beyond their control.

FSA traces its roots back to the Great Depression when the Farm Security Administration was created to help American farmers during a challenging time. While the Agency’s mission has expanded and evolved over the years, it’s commitment to helping farmers in good times and bad has not changed. FSA is unique in that the Agency offers producers a “grassroots voice” in how programs are administered. Since its inception, the Agency’s programs have been locally led, through producer-elected County Committees. These committees consider input from local farmers and ranchers on delivery of FSA’s critical programs. The FSA State Committee members, who are themselves involved in the agriculture industry and are appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, further amplify the voices of the producers in the state and ensure equitable and inclusive delivery of FSA’s federal farm programs.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. The Department was established by President Lincoln on May 15, 1862 during the Civil War. He called it the “Peoples’ Department.” I saw a quote the other day that really stuck with me. It read, “Public service is not about what you want to do. Instead, it’s about doing what others need you to do.” This sentiment strongly resonates for me personally. I am proud to serve the Peoples’ Department and our Idaho farmers and ranchers as FSA’s State Executive Director.

As a former IGPA President, I encourage our grain growers to get involved and take advantage of the leadership opportunities that are available to you. The average age of the American farmer is still 58 years old. I know it’s hard when you are raising a family and working hard to make a living and feed the World but try to make time to make a difference. It reminds me of the Robert Orben quote, “Time flies. It’s up to you to be the navigator.” 

Hidden Paradise - Healing Idaho's Kids

BY LONNI LEAVITT-BARKER, KEAN'S MOM AND CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR, CAMP RAINBOW GOLD/HIDDEN PARADISE

Even though my son is officially in remission, I've lost count of how many people have told me, "Oh, I could never handle having a child with cancer. I don't know how you did it." I always tell them, "You handle it because you have no choice." I'm not going to sugar coat it. It was brutal. Agonizing. A torturous roller coaster you never get off—even after the 1,157 days of chemotherapy are done.



My son Kean was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia a month shy of his 3rd birthday. The day we were told our sweet little Down syndrome baby had cancer was the day the earth shifted for our entire family.

Those of us in the cancer trenches know that when a child is diagnosed with cancer, their entire family is diagnosed. Life stops for everyone. In our case, our three little girls were thrust into the arms of friends, relatives, and neighbors while my husband and I numbly survived the grueling and grinding days, months, and years of watching our son fight, day in and day out.

Out of that darkness, our family experienced constant bursts of light in the form of a tremendous amount of love, support, and service on our behalf. One of the brightest lights during this journey was getting introduced to the children's cancer charity, Camp Rainbow Gold.

Camp Rainbow Gold started 39 years ago when a ten-year old boy was told "no." This young man was undergoing treatment for cancer, but he wanted to be like every other kid—to attend summer camp, tell silly jokes around a campfire, and make new friends. But no camp was willing to take the risk.

Twin Fall's doctor, David McClusky, heard the boy's story and decided to turn that no into a yes. Volunteers wrote a grant, recruited a team of supporters, and started Camp. Today, Camp Rainbow Gold serves approximately 400 Idaho family members—all free of



charge. Programs include college scholarships, family activities, monthly teen support groups, and what we are best known for, our camps; a children's cancer camp, a teen oncology camp, siblings camp, and two family camps.

Many of us parents share the same belief, "The doctors heal our children's bodies; Camp Rainbow Gold heals our souls." It's hard to put into words how safe, uplifting, and magical it is to be outdoors in our beautiful state, and surrounded by sunshine, instead of the harsh lights of a hospital room.

But here's the downside. As our state has grown, so has the demand for Camp Rainbow Gold. We outgrew all our options and turn away 30 to 50 children and families each year. This might surprise you but there are no camp facilities in the entire state of Idaho that are welcoming for children (or adults and veterans) in





wheelchairs or with other physical or medical challenges.

And get this, we are not alone. There are several other Idaho charities grappling with the same issues. So, when Camp Rainbow Gold purchased 172 acres in Camas County in 2019, the organization quickly realized their new home, Hidden Paradise, needed to be a medical camp to serve all of Idaho.

“We want to ensure every child, no matter the diagnosis or disability, gets the chance to be a kid; to play outside, explore Idaho, and be with peers at camp,” said Elizabeth Lizberg, Camp Rainbow Gold’s CEO and Executive Director.

When I had the opportunity to join the campaign to build Idaho’s Medical Camp, I jumped at the chance. I’m not only a camp mom and a cancer mom, I’m working every day to make this dream a reality.

The property we purchased is the old Soldier Mountain Ranch and Resort, a defunct golf course nestled on 172 acres with 26 buildings (many of them time-share cabins built for the resort in its heyday). The place had been shuttered for several years and was a bit “rough” until the pandemic forced Camp Rainbow Gold to really get creative. In 2020, like everyone else, Camp Rainbow Gold shut down all our programs and held camp “virtually.” Even though we had 200+ participants, our medical team told us we needed to figure out a way to hold face-to-face camps in 2021 and to expect COVID-19 to still be a factor.

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We got to work, remodeling 14 buildings, tearing out an old swimming pool to create an outdoor dining plaza, and putting in ramps and ADA bathrooms. And even though we were in the middle of a pandemic, a supply chain shortage, and a construction boom, we pulled off what some thought impossible and got the property ready for campers to arrive. Last summer, Camp Rainbow Gold hosted four camps — youth oncology, teen oncology and two siblings’ camps.

“You should have seen the huge smiles on the faces of the kids,” said Lizberg. “And the volunteers too. You can’t put magic into words. These kids need to be kids. They need to be around each other, and they need to be outside running around doing camp things—eating s’mores, putting on skits, getting in water fights, playing pranks, and having fun.”

As soon as the camps ended, we started back at it: getting ready for Summer 2022. And this summer is even bigger and better. Two years ahead of schedule, Camp Rainbow Gold will not only hold all five of our camps at Hidden Paradise, but we are also welcoming five other Idaho nonprofits to the site.

“We knew if we built it, they would come,” said Lizberg. “We have these five charities holding their own programs at Hidden Paradise this summer and fall, and we have groups reaching out and already signing up for next year.”

Hidden Paradise is filling a void, creating a safe, accessible place that will allow kids and kids at heart to experience the joys of camp — getting to be with peers who understand and don’t judge and getting to heal while taking in Idaho’s breathtaking beauty. The camp is nestled outside of Fairfield, with views of jagged mountains carving zig zags out of the horizon, blooming prairies, glistening ponds, and endless acres of fertile farmland. It’s no wonder the great outdoors is often referred to as healing.

“These are kids that live every day with the thought that ‘I could die, I could die from this treatment,’” said Dr. Nate Meeker, the medical director of St. Luke’s Children’s Cancer Institute, who has been going to Camp since 2010. “It is such a privilege to get a front row seat at Camp. It is a magical place where truly a lot of healing takes place.”



And while there’s a lot of healing already taking place at Hidden Paradise, there’s still a lot of work to do. A few highlights: Blue Cross of Idaho has donated \$2.1 million to build an on-site health center. Treasure Valley builder, Blackrock Homes, has donated the supplies, labor and building of 12 new, ADA cabins and 2 shower houses. We have already installed 3 mountain bike trails (2 are adaptive and accessible trails), a 9-element ropes course, archery, paddle boating, fishing and more. And we’ve done it with the tremendous support of many businesses and individuals across Idaho.

What’s next? Infrastructure. All the non-sexy stuff; power, water, septic, pathways, and roads. Hidden Paradise was built in the late ‘70s and early ‘80s and not only needs a lot of help bringing it back to life, but help building the necessary foundation to support all of the donated buildings and future construction.

We also don’t yet have a safe place to gather everyone inside during a weather event or other emergency. Several of our camps and some of the other nonprofit organizations have groups around or over 150—the existing lodge will only seat 50 (maybe 60 if you get real cozy).

So, we are still working to rally support. We hope you will be interested in picking up the ol’ proverbial hammer and joining us in Healing Idaho.

For more information visit: www.healingidaho.org or reach out to Camp at info@camprainbowgold.org. ■

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Talking About Farm Stress

Q&A with Megz Reynolds, Executive Director, Do More Agriculture Foundation

BY ANNA LICKLEY, PROGRAM MANAGER, IDAHO FARM AND RANCH CENTER

Anna: Why is there a traditionally negative stigma around mental health in agriculture?

Megz: Agriculture is an industry with a foundation of deep rural roots, hard work, resilience, strength, and community. In order to uphold that image, those traits can also be the industry’s weakness as they become barriers for speaking up and seeking help. The stigma, both internal and external, surrounding mental health in agriculture is very strong. This stigma makes it hard to talk about mental health as talking about it is likened to showing weakness, to failing as a farmer.

A: What can we do to reduce that stigma in agriculture?

M: Raising awareness is the first step in ending the stigma surrounding mental health in agriculture. We need to normalize talking and asking questions about our mental health, normalize taking care of our mental health and normalize sharing our own stories and journeys.

A: What stressors most affect farmers and ranchers?

M: Farmers and ranchers are among the most vulnerable when it comes to mental health issues. Stress, anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, and burnout are all high among producers. Producers live where they work and are often in very rural areas that lack the support networks that are more readily available in larger urban centers. Some of the stressors farmers and ranchers face on a regular basis are having many of the factors required for success out of their control, like weather, commodity prices, input, feed and utility costs. Working with family, while rewarding, can also be very challenging,

Farmers and ranchers are among the most vulnerable when it comes to mental health issues. Stress, anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, and burnout are all high among producers. Producers live where they work and are often in very rural areas that lack the support networks that are more readily available in larger urban centers.

communication breakdowns and the fear of failing current and past generations on a multi-generational farm. Often farmers and ranchers link their sense of self-worth to their success on farm, this puts additional pressure to succeed especially when paired with the stigma that keeps producers from reaching for help or acknowledging that something is going on that they need assistance with.

A: What can producers do to stay mentally well during stressful seasons?

M: Taking care of our mental health and mental wellbeing can be very hard during the busy seasons, we are running short on sleep, not spending a lot of time with our families, need to go full out when the weather permits and are constantly managing stressful situations like breakdowns. Below are some little things that you can do during the busy seasons that can make a big impact on your mental health.

- Take a walk, even if it is just around the tractor or combine in the field or through the pasture checking calves.
- Reconnect with nature, for many farmers being connected with nature is important to their mental wellbeing, listening to the birds as the sun rises or stopping to watch the sunset

can be a great reminder that no matter what, the world keeps turning.

- Call someone you care about. Text messages have become our go to for communication but lack the connection that can come from hearing the voice or a loved one or good friend.



- Problems feel smaller when they are shared, it helps to talk it out with a family member or friend or write out your thoughts to assist in bringing clarity to them.
- Do things with others as there is strength in numbers, even the smallest problem can feel big when we are on our own. We are social animals and thrive when we are in the company of others.
- Take a break, this can be very hard to do during the busy season, but it could be a small disconnect like taking 5 minutes just to sit in the truck before heading into the house after coming from the field.



A: What are some symptoms to recognize if a farming friend or family member needs help?

M: One of the biggest symptoms that someone may be struggling are changes to their behavior, routine, or personality. Did they used to be active online and now seem to have stopped posting and commenting? Have they started turning down social events or showing up late to the farm? Are they faster to react and often their reaction seems over the top for the situation?

A: What can friends and family do to help those struggling with mental health?

M: It can be very hard to see someone struggling with their mental health and even harder when we are unsure how to help them. Showing someone that you are there for them and genuinely interested in how they are doing can help someone immensely. When someone is struggling it can be very difficult to open up, if you are able to share and be vulnerable about your mental or emotional state you can create a safe place for that other person to also share. If someone in your family or on your farm are going through a hard and stressful time, please assist them in reaching out to local support systems like crisis lines.

A: If a farmer wants to seek help from a counselor, what should they know before doing so?

M: It's completely normal to feel apprehensive or unsure about reaching out to a mental health professional, for most of us talking about our mental health is not something we are used to doing. Your first session with a counselor is most often an introduction session,

be prepared to share about your physical and mental state, your lifestyle and what you're dealing with. Therapy isn't only for talking about feelings. Farmers and ranchers deal with high amounts of stress for long periods of time, it is important for your counselor to work with you to learn coping strategies. Remember that you have the right to share as little or as much as you choose with your mental health clinician and that it may take a couple sessions for you to feel comfortable enough to fully share what is going on with you.

A: Why should good mental health be a priority for rural communities?

M: We cannot have a healthy agricultural industry or healthy farms and rural communities without healthy farmers and ranchers. ■

The Idaho Farm and Ranch Center is a program of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture that helps Idahoans start, manage, and transition farms and ranches. Learn more and find resources at <https://farm.idaho.gov/>

The Do More Agriculture Foundation champions the mental wellbeing of farmers and ranchers. Learn more and find resources at <https://www.domore.ag/>

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health or thoughts of suicide, call the FARM AID Hotline: 1-800-FARM-AID or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255.



A Look at U.S. Wheat in Food Aid

BY SHELBI KNISLEY, DIRECTOR OF TRADE POLICY, U.S. WHEAT ASSOCIATES

The United States sends more international food aid to those in need than any other country. U.S. food aid programs are managed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and include either commodity, cash or food voucher donations. U.S. wheat is typically the commodity utilized most through in-kind donations.

U.S. Food Aid Programs

The USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) coordinates the Food for Progress program, which prioritizes countries in need annually. Through the program, USDA purchases U.S. commodities that are donated to priority developing countries where the commodity is sold to support agricultural development projects in those countries.

However, most U.S. food aid is operated by USAID’s Food for Peace office. Title II of the Food for Peace Act is mostly an emergency food assistance program in which USAID purchases commodities from the United States at market price and donates it to meet the immediate nutritional needs of those facing hunger. In other cases, USAID will purchase and donate local or regionally grown commodities, or provide market-based food vouchers and cash. The type of assistance varies based on local circumstances and needs.

Currently, the two largest recipients of wheat under the Food for Peace program are Ethiopia and Yemen. Ethiopia receives U.S. hard red winter (HRW) wheat while Yemen receives U.S. soft white (SW) wheat, as these two wheat classes best meet the local demand.

USAID programs using SW wheat are most important to the Pacific Northwest, including Idaho. Wheat donations to Yemen represent approximately 30% of all U.S. wheat food aid donations. Although supplies have been tight for marketing year 2021/22 due to weather, the Pacific Northwest has remained a consistent supplier of food aid to Yemen when it is most in need.

Challenges

Under USAID’s food aid programs cash and vouchers represent most of the aid provided, surpassing in-kind commodity donations in recent years, which account for



40% of aid. USAID’s justification for this preference is that supplying cash and vouchers is more cost-efficient than shipping commodities.

This leads to another challenge in the U.S. food aid programs. Cargo preference policies currently require that 50% of food aid be shipped on U.S. flagged vessels, imposing additional costs on these programs. A study from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) states that cargo preference requirements on shipping commodities for food aid increased costs by about 23%, or \$107 million, from 2011 to 2014. As a result, this requirement limits the amount of funding that can be spent on purchasing U.S. commodities and reduces the amount of food aid that reaches those most in need. However, the costs of cargo preference policies were once offset by a reimbursement program from the maritime administration. This allowed the benefit of maintaining a U.S. flagged vessel fleet for the maritime industry while keeping more funding in USDA and USAID food aid programs. With the elimination of these reimbursements the additional costs have an impact on the amount of commodities being purchased for food aid programs.

Today’s Crisis and Tighter Wheat Supplies

In late February 2022, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine started a ripple effect of catastrophic events in the Black Sea region. The unjust attack on Ukraine and its people has increased the risk of food insecurity globally as many countries heavily rely on low-cost wheat from this region. Ports along the Black Sea in Ukraine have



The Black Sea port of Odessa, Ukraine, seen above in more peaceful times, was under fire by Russia at the time of writing.

remained closed due to these needless attacks, although Russia has continued to export. There have been some talks by a few European countries who have expressed willingness to help Ukraine export their grain supplies, notably Romania and some Baltic countries.

The Black Sea region supplies around 30% of the world's wheat exports. Many countries that depend on this region to meet their wheat demand are questioning where to import their supplies from and are faced with significantly higher costs. The European Union, United States, Canada and Australia are expected to pick up much of the demand. USDA-FAS also forecasts Indian wheat exports at a record 10 million metric tons to supply many of the price-conscious countries. Egypt recently approved Indian wheat that meets quality standards for import. It has been reported the first shipment will be in April.

On April 27, USDA and USAID announced the release of \$282 million from the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust (BEHT) to purchase U.S. commodities to send to those most facing food insecurity. An additional \$388 million will be provided by the Commodity Credit Corporation to cover transportation costs of these commodities.

The BEHT was created to hold U.S. commodities to respond to emergency food crisis when other options were not available. Those commodity stocks have been sold off and the Trust has held cash that can be used to purchase commodities when needed. Due to the current crisis in the Black Sea Region, the Secretary of Agriculture and the USAID Administrator worked together to determine if these funds should be released to help fund USAID's Title II programming.

The U.S. Wheat Industry's Commitment

As food costs continue to rise, the impact of a global pandemic continues, and now a war in an important

The History Behind U.S. Food Aid



The current war in Ukraine has century-old roots, dating back almost exactly one hundred years, to when one of the worst famines in history swept across Russia following World War I, leaving Russia to depend on Ukraine for supplies of wheat and other commodities. The United States was a key player in relief efforts then, as they are today, under the direction of a surprising champion: Herbert Hoover.

It started in the autumn of 1914, when the Germans occupied Belgium. Belgium depended almost solely on outside sources to feed the seven million people who lived in the country. Herbert Hoover, working in London as a mining engineer, was tapped to lead the Commission for Relief in Belgium, an international effort delivering food – especially flour – to residents of Belgium and to Belgian refugees living in France. When the United States entered the war in 1917, Hoover ran the United States Food Administration, a federal organization that managed food consumption in the United States as well as food shipments to Allies during the war.

Americans began to "Hooverize" or ration their food, eating more peanut butter for protein and fat, cutting out meat on Mondays and participating in "Wheatless Wednesdays." The war ended in 1919 but a severe drought hit Russia in 1920, which led to a famine in 1921. The residual disruptions from the war and the Soviet government in Russia resulted in an estimated 5 million Russians who are believed to have starved to death. Hoover, now running the American Relief Administration, intervened, arranging for the Soviets to purchase wheat seed from the American Midwest. By the summer of 1922, American efforts were feeding 11 million Soviet citizens every day.

Hoover's post-World War I food relief programs provided a model for the United States' leadership in global humanitarian emergencies and aid efforts, a critical piece of the global dynamic even a century later.

wheat production region, will likely push more people into food insecurity across the globe. U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) and the Food Aid Working Group (FAWG), a joint working group between USW and the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG), take pride in the wheat provided through these food aid programs and believe that commodities should be kept in these programs. The U.S. wheat industry is committed to food assistance that impacts the most vulnerable populations to provide food security. ■



End-Use Quality Starts at Planting

BY CASEY CHUMRAU, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IDAHO WHEAT COMMISSION

What characteristics do you prioritize when choosing which wheat variety to plant? Yield, maturity, height, pest or disease resistance? Do you consider end-use quality?

When consumers “eat wheat”, it is rarely in the kernel form that leaves your farm. There are at least two major steps required before enjoying a wheat product: milling and baking. The end-use quality of wheat varieties is critical to both. Millers and bakers throughout the United States and around the world are increasingly particular and stringent about specific end-use qualities they require. Thoughtful variety selection on the farm is important to maintaining demand for Idaho wheat, both domestically and abroad.

Over the last fifteen years, our international competitors have greatly improved their wheat quality standards and our fellow wheat states are investing more in developing wheat varieties with traits that are sought after by millers, bakers, and food processors. Fortunately, Idaho and the Pacific Northwest states have long emphasized milling and baking quality in wheat breeding and variety selection. The three states publish a Preferred Variety List every year to indicate where varieties rank with specific characteristics, such as threshing ease and millability, and maintaining that focus is more important than ever.

We asked two key industry partners to help explain how end-use quality characteristics affect the milling and baking process. Reuben McLean is the Senior Director of Quality & Regulatory at Grain Craft, a significant user of Idaho wheat in southern and eastern Idaho, and a major influence on variety adoption in the region. Grain Craft publishes its own preferred variety list each year. Dr. Jayne Bock is the Technical Director at the Wheat Marketing Center (WMC) in Portland, Oregon. WMC works with end-product manufacturers around the globe, demonstrating how U.S. wheat can meet changing consumer demands.

What quality parameters are most important to millers and why?

Three primary parameters of wheat are critical to flour millers. These include: the flour yield derived from the wheat, the ability to make quality finished

flour, and finally, consistency in flour processing and bake performance.

Quality traits for finished flour are evaluated by milling a small sample of the wheat and testing the flour for its functional characteristics, including moisture content, protein content, ash content, falling number, and farinograph.

Consistency in flour processing and bake performance is thoroughly evaluated to test the flour’s water absorption, dough strength, mixing characteristics, and final bake. High performing flour typically shows optimal water absorption, increased stability, strong mixing tolerance, and favorable mix times.

Why is test weight important?

Test weight is the official weight of one bushel of wheat. It is a grading factor set by the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) and a common specification in wheat purchasing contracts. Test weight is an indication of potential flour yield. In general, a higher test weight means flour millers can expect a higher volume of flour from one bushel of wheat.

Why do I get price discounts for low falling number wheat?

A low falling number usually indicates the presence of alpha amylase, which has a negative effect on the baking process. There are two causes of low falling number: the first is a rain event near harvest that causes pre-harvest sprout damage, which starts germination of the seed. The second is large temperature swings during the grain filling period, which induces the production of late maturity alpha amylase. When you bake a product, especially bread or cakes, the presence of alpha amylase means the starch won’t set properly during baking and you will lose the structure of the product. Your bread or cake will essentially collapse.

Low falling number wheat cannot simply be blended with sound wheat, or high falling number wheat, to correct the problem. Even significant amounts of sound wheat blended with low falling number wheat does not guarantee the blended product will pass falling number tests. Therefore, trying to negate the problem of low falling number through blending is not advisable.



Is protein a factor in wheat quality?

Absolutely, especially for hard and spring wheat classes. Wheat's bread baking potential is derived largely from the quantity and quality of its protein content. Generally, higher protein content will always deliver better absorption, dough strength, and bake performance. That said, established market targets for various classes of wheat seem to be more than sufficient – Hard Red Winter (12.0%), Hard White Winter (12.0%), Hard Red Spring (14.0%), Soft White Winter (10.0%).

Why should farmers consider end-use quality in their selection?

Unlike many other commodity crops, wheat's primary use is for food products rather than animal feed. Therefore, the quality of these wheat-based food products is highly dependent on the flour, and quality flour can only be achieved using quality wheat.

Grower commitment to end-use quality guarantees continued market demand for each unique class of wheat. For example, poor quality hard red winter wheat may result in mills having to incorporate hard red spring wheat to compensate for quality, thereby reducing total demand for hard red winter wheat varieties. Environment and management on the farm contribute roughly 70% to the quality of the crop, while the other 30% can be attributed to variety/genotype. Nobody can control mother nature, but millers and bakers do have the ability to encourage use of varieties with more consistent and acceptable end-use quality. Thanks to Idaho's unique growing climate and the amount of research done in the Pacific Northwest through variety trials and breeding, farmers have the opportunity, resources, and technology to choose wheat varieties and on-farm management practices that will produce the most desirable end-use qualities for millers, bakers, and food processors here at home and around the globe. ■

Advertorial

MAKE VARIETY INFERENCES FROM THE COMBINE

By Trenton Stanger, WestBred® Technical Product Manager, Idaho Region

Harvest is right around the corner and choosing varieties for the next planting doesn't have to wait until 2022 trial data becomes available. At harvest, use the combine as a tool to help you make key variety observations. Let's work under two assumptions:

1. You are growing multiple winter and spring wheat varieties and you will keep the best and switch out the worst for a new variety.
2. You can only make on-combine inferences on varieties you have planted.

From the combine, answer these questions:

- **Crop Appearance:** How does the crop appear from the combine cab?
- **Lodging:** What is the lodging situation – erect, flat or having just a bit of a lean?
- **Grain Quality:** When you pull samples or look in the semi – are there yellow bellies indicating nitrogen shortage or shrunken kernels indicating scab?
- **Threshability:** How is the wheat threshing – easy with relatively little engine power or hard with greater engine exertion?
- **Profitability:** How fast is your combine traveling? What's the difference in profitability, fuel, time and labor when combining at 1.5 vs. 3.0 mph?

Determining answers to these questions can help you make good variety decisions for the next crop. As harvest begins in July across Idaho, start making 2022/2023 variety plans from the combine cab.

For additional information on WestBred® Wheat varieties, contact WestBred Regional Business Managers:

Nathan Clemens, 509-570-8696
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Ukraine and a Global Wheat Supply

Within hours of Russian military forces invading Ukraine on February 24, news outlets were abuzz with data and statistics relating to how much wheat is grown and exported from the Black Sea region and how many agriculture-dependent inputs are exported from Russia and Ukraine. The Idaho Wheat Commission received several questions about the state of global wheat supplies and what Russia’s invasion of the resource-rich country would mean for the wheat industry here in Idaho.

Casey Chumrau, Idaho Wheat Commission Executive Director, and Britany Hurst Marchant, Idaho Wheat Commission Communications and Grower Education Manager, sat down to answer some of the most frequently asked questions on this topic. What follows is the adapted transcript of our podcast episode that aired March 31.

We hear that Russia and Ukraine are referred to as “the breadbasket of the world”. How much wheat really comes out of Russia and Ukraine?

In terms of production, about 10-15% of total global production comes out of that region. However, it’s 25-30% of total exports. Any country that is a net-importer is relying on other countries that have excess wheat to export, and 30% of that comes from those two countries. It really is a significant portion of our world supply, and one of the things we’re concerned about is where that wheat goes and if there is going to be enough to supply those countries. Also, countries supply their own people first and then export what is left over, so the 25-30% that we are talking about is just wheat for export, not what is used domestically by the people who live in Russia and Ukraine.

Where does the wheat go?

Most of the wheat from Russia and Ukraine is going to countries that are more price-sensitive and closer to food insecurity, like northern Africa and the Middle East. Food security is one of the major concerns of this entire conflict – what is going to happen to the



food supply in those countries if Russia and Ukraine are not available to provide exports, or if the prices are significantly higher to import from other countries, or if there isn’t enough wheat to make up for that lost 30%. That is why so many people are watching this so closely and keep talking about Russia and Ukraine as the breadbasket of the world.

Is there a shortage of wheat?

The short answer is no, but it really is a complicated question. Total global supply, according to estimates from USDA, are still much larger than global demand or global consumption. However, much of that supply is wrapped up in countries that do not export, such as China, so that wheat is not available in the traditional export channels. We’ve seen a lot of production issues the last few years, starting probably four years ago in Australia with severe drought that reduced production

across that country, and then what we saw in the northern hemisphere this last year, including Idaho, with a drought and high temperatures that affected our production and reduced it by 30%. We are still producing a lot of wheat in the world, but the location of that wheat makes it a little bit more difficult to make up for the unexpected in the export transportation and logistics with this conflict in Ukraine.

Casey Chumrau

“In Ukraine, most of the wheat has been planted because they are a winter wheat country, for the most part, but we don’t know that anybody is going to be there to harvest that crop in the coming months or what crop quality and field conditions will be that far down the road.”

Continued on next page

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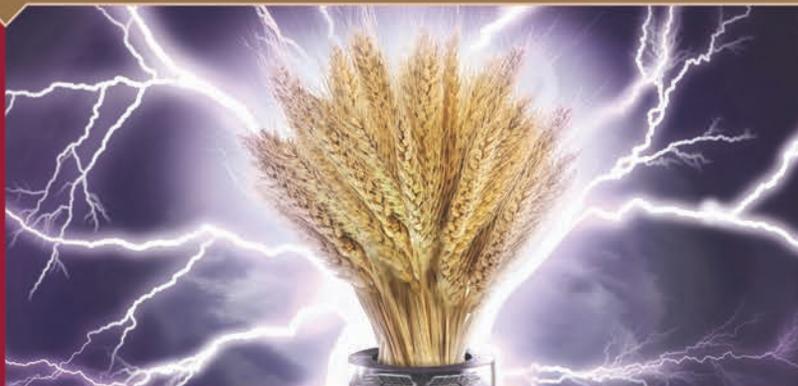
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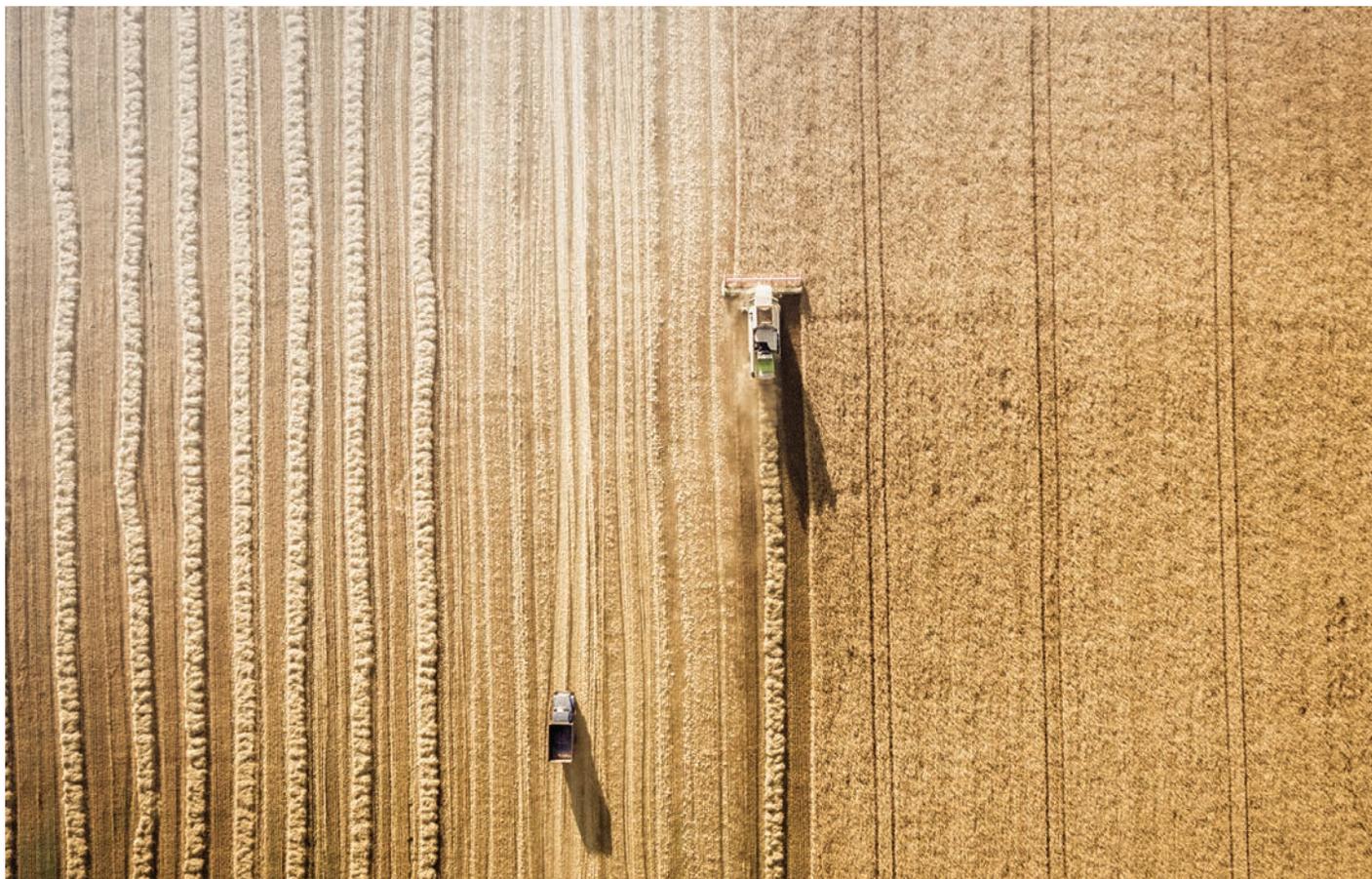
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Is/was there enough seed for wheat to be planted this year?

Yes. 60% of Idaho’s wheat crop is winter wheat, so that seed was already in the ground before anything happened in Ukraine, so we know there was enough seed for that. According to the U.S. National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), we did see a larger planted area in Idaho. In terms of spring wheat, there was plenty of seed to go around, and NASS did predict that some farmers would choose to plant more spring wheat this year.

If there are disruptions in the supply, it will be a few months before we see the results?

Yes. Most of the wheat that is exported out of the Black Sea, in this case Russia and Ukraine, tends to be exported just after harvest and then those exports start to trail off. This part of the year, fortunately, is where there are fewer exports. Of course, they’re still significant exports, but as they start to harvest, which is the same time as our harvest here, that’s when we will

really start to see major disruptions, especially in the supply. In Ukraine, most of the wheat has been planted because they are a winter wheat country, for the most part, but we don’t know that anybody is going to be there to harvest that crop in the coming months or what crop quality and field conditions will be that far down the road.

30% is a significant amount of wheat. Is there a way for other wheat-producing countries in the world to make up the difference?

Certainly, the higher prices pushed some farmers to plant more wheat this year than they were planning to plant. Maybe they were going to plant a different commodity or leave some fields fallow but decided to plant wheat instead of their usual rotation. Of course, the winter wheat was planted in the fall, long before Russia invaded Ukraine. We were seeing higher prices then as well, so we did see some farms shift rotations to winter wheat then, but it is likely that we will see higher planted acres to wheat here in Idaho.

And can that wheat be logistically transported to countries like Egypt and the Middle East; countries



that would normally get their wheat out of the Black Sea region?

It has happened. In the past, the United States has been a much larger supplier to that region of the world than current export data illustrates. Not too long ago, Russia was a net importer of wheat, meaning they imported more wheat than they exported, so over the last several years the countries closer to Russia geographically have shifted more towards that Russian and Ukrainian wheat. In Idaho we export about 50% of our wheat, so we do have the infrastructure and transportation through the river system to get our excess wheat to port very easily. If we were to produce more here, that could possibly open more wheat in other parts of the country that could be exported as well.

There are about 22 million acres of crop land that are reserved in government conservation programs. Is that available to be planted, or are they held back by government red tape? What are the hurdles to utilizing that land for crop production?

The acres wrapped up in federal conservation programs are harder to unwind. There are fields, especially here in Idaho, that are left fallow or unplanted on purpose to regenerate the nutrients in the soil and produce a better crop the following year. Those fields, obviously, would be easier to plant outside their regular rotation. A lot of those fields are covered with brush or perennial grasses that would need to be cleared, but it's a lot easier today, with modern technology, to make that land available. It is up to the government, however, to decide if they will take some acres out of their conservation reserve programs, not only to combat the need for more wheat, but also combat some of the higher prices.

Since the airing of this episode, USDA Secretary Vilsack has said that the acres held out in conservation programs will not be released to be planted.

This really is a problem for all commodities, not just wheat.

Corn, soy, sunflower, and wheat are affected the most as far as exports by the war in Ukraine, but the prices have affected all commodities. All the commodity prices are high now from rising input costs and logistical issues that have stemmed from the pandemic and are now being compounded by the war in Ukraine.

What are some of the things driving input costs? Oil out of Russia, obviously, and fertilizer, but what else?



A classroom in the Donetsk region of Ukraine stands in ruins after a bombing by Russian forces earlier this year.

The input costs were rising significantly long before the war in Ukraine because of logistical issues that stem from the pandemic, lack of availability of some inputs and shortages of fertilizer. Not necessarily that there's a shortage of supply in the world, but we have seen problems getting those inputs from where they are to where they need to be. Russia is also a larger producer of fertilizer, more than 40% of fertilizer components are produced in Russia, including natural gas, so that supply being cut off through sanctions is increasing input costs.

What do you say to people who say the wheat farmers are the ones setting the prices on wheat?

We always say that farmers are price takers not price makers. The farmer never sets the price. They go to their elevator and whatever the price is that day, they can decide to sell. Luckily, for right now, wheat prices have been able to keep up with rising input costs, but that doesn't mean that at the end of the year, when farmers pencil out how much it cost per acre to grow their wheat that they then get to say, 'Okay, this is what we're asking.' There is a lot of risk right now for farmers. If they decide to plant wheat, at the end of the year are they going to get the price that they need to cover the expense of growing the wheat? If farmers want to lock in those prices now by selling on future contracts, will they be able to produce the yield to cover those contracts, considering the risk that we are still short water? It's great to see high prices, but it doesn't really make the farmer's job easier. In fact, there's a lot more risk and it's much more challenging right now because of those input costs. ■



Idaho Barley Commission Emphasizes Research to Support Idaho Growers

Research funding is the largest budget area for the Idaho Barley Commission. IBC commissioners met in February for the annual IBC Research Review and evaluated research proposals for the 2022-2023 fiscal year to begin July 1, selecting 22 projects for funding, for a total of \$316,459 contributed with grower dollars received from Idaho's 3-cent per hundredweight barley assessment. Commissioners awarded funds to projects based on their potential to provide important information and solutions to help Idaho growers and advance the barley industry in Idaho.

In addition, the Idaho Barley Commission supports the efforts of the National Barley Improvement Committee (NBIC), which represents the U.S. barley community of growers, researchers, processors, users, and allied industries, and focuses on coordinated efforts for federal funding for barley-related research. NBIC conducted over 50 congressional office visits in March, virtually and in-person, to provide information to congressional staff on the importance of federal barley research funding.



Mike Wilkins, IBC Grower Commissioner and NBIC Member



Jason Boose, IBC Industry Representative Commissioner and NBIC Member

NBIC's top priority this year was the Barley Pest Initiative (BPI). The BPI is a nation-wide effort to strengthen research capacity to address insects and diseases that impact barley yield and quality through development of new resistant varieties and management strategies.

The BPI work began in 2021 across fourteen states, including Idaho, with the initial appropriation of \$1 million, and was bolstered by the fiscal year 2022 federal appropriation increase of an additional \$1 million annually, bringing the total to \$2 million. NBIC discussed additional increases in fiscal year 2023 to reach the \$5.3 million needed annually to address these pest challenges with partners at the



IBC Executive Director Laura Wilder, far right, joined NBIC efforts in Washington D.C. in March. Other industry representatives pictured (L-R) Wade Malchow, Molson-Coors, Montana, Gary Beck, North Dakota Barley, and Scott Heisel, American Malting Barley Association.

USDA Agricultural Research Service and network of partnering land grant universities.

Barley pests cause 5 to 15% yield reductions annually, resulting in losses of \$36 to \$118 million a year nationwide to growers. The BPI strengthens the capacity of the national public sector barley research infrastructure to address 20 major insect, viral, bacterial, and fungal threats to the production of high-quality barley. The Initiative focuses on improved environmental sustain-

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FY2023 IDAHO BARLEY COMMISSION RESEARCH PROPOSALS FUNDED

Title and Principal Investigator	IBC Amount Funded
Barley Agronomy Program Technician (UI: J. Spackman)	\$20,000
Pre-plant Burndown Herbicide Efficacy and Barley Crop Safety (UI: A. Adjesiwor, & J. Spackman)	\$4,000
Biochemical Characterization of a High Beta-Glucan Barley Mutant (UI: Z. Hong, et al.)	\$25,000
Does Barley-Pulse Intercropping Improve Grain Quality in Southern Idaho? (UI: Z. Kayler & X. Liang)	\$4,000
Exploring Traits for Lodging Resistance in Barley Genotypes (UI: X. Liang)	\$10,000
Evaluating Freeze Tolerance of Winter Barley Genotypes with Diverse Genetic Backgrounds (UI: X. Liang)	\$10,000
Investigating Nitrogen Translocation and Grain Protein Accumulation in Spring Barley Genotypes of High and Low Grain Protein (UI: X. Liang)	\$10,000
Small Grains Research Report - Bringing in the Grower for Cereal School Attendance (UI: J. Marshall, et al.)	\$500
Education for Idaho Barley Production: Extension Cereal Nurseries (UI: J. Marshall and K. Schroeder)	\$20,000
Support for Pathology Diagnostic and Extension Projects (UI: J. Marshall & J. Woodhall)	\$14,784
Screening for Resistance to Cereal Cyst Nematode in Current Barley Varieties (UI: J. Marshall)	\$5,000
Evaluating the Impact of an Idaho Invasive Cereal Aphid, <i>Metopolophium festucae cerealium</i> on Malting Barley Quality (UI: A. Rashed, & S. Eigenbrode)	\$6,000
A Survey of Idaho Wireworm Species and Evaluating Ecological and Chemical Approaches to Maximize Barley Production (UI: A. Rashed, J. Marshall, & X. Liang)	\$3,000
Support Scientist Funding - Education for Idaho Barley Production in Northern Idaho: Extension Cereal Nurseries (UI: K. Schroeder)	\$12,675
Evaluation of Elite Barley Lines in Northern Idaho (UI: K. Schroeder)	\$4,000
Active Canopy Sensors to Prescribe In-Season Supplemental Nitrogen for Barley (UI: J. Spackman, O. Walsh & A. Adjesiwor)	\$15,000
UI Barley Agronomy Endowment	\$70,500
UI Idaho Center for Plant and Soil Health – Parma	\$5,000
Aberdeen Barley Breeding Program (USDA-ARS: G. Hu)	\$10,000
Barley Yield and Protein Response to Nitrogen and Sulfur Fertilization (UI: J. Spackman, Z. Hong & J. Marshall)	\$32,000
Assessing Residue Source and Management Practices for Improving Fertilizer Recommendations in Cereal-based Cropping Systems (USDA-ARS: C. Rogers)	\$10,000
Soil Health Sampling for Updating Barley Fertilizer Guide (UI: O. Walsh, J. Spackman, A. Adjesiwor, & E. Nambi)	\$15,000
TOTAL FUNDED	\$316,459



Growers view Barley Extension Test Plots Near Bonners Ferry with IBC funded scientist Dr. Kurt Schroeder of the University of Idaho.

Continued from previous page

ability and economic returns to barley growers, while meeting the needs of domestic and export end-users for high-quality barley. Scientists are working to develop management and genetic resistance strategies to mitigate or eliminate the substantial negative economic impact of major barley pests. This enhances the competitiveness of the barley crop, promoting a robust and high-quality supply of domestic barley for various end-users, thus minimizing industry reliance on global imports.

The locations receiving funding through the BPI are (updated annual funding):

USDA-ARS facilities:

- Aberdeen, Idaho (\$213,846)
- Ames, Iowa (\$171,154)
- Fargo, North Dakota (\$291,923)
- Ft. Detrick, Maryland (\$96,154)
- Lincoln, Nebraska (\$55,385)
- Pullman, Washington (\$128,462)

- Raleigh, North Carolina (\$128,462)
- St. Paul, Minnesota (\$291,923)
- Stillwater, Oklahoma (\$213,846)

Universities:

- Cornell University (\$21,538)
- Montana State University (\$43,077)
- North Dakota State University (\$43,077)
- Ohio State University (\$21,538)
- Oregon State University (\$21,538)
- University of California-Davis (\$43,077)
- University of Idaho (\$43,077)
- University of Minnesota (\$85,769)
- University of Nebraska (\$21,538)
- Virginia Tech (\$21,538)
- Washington State University (\$43,077)

Idaho Barley Commissioners Mike Wilkins and Jason Boose represent Idaho barley growers on NBIC and participated in the March congressional visits, along with IBC Executive Director Laura Wilder. ■

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