



MONTANA FARM BUREAU News Brief

We Care for the Country

December 2021

TOP STORIES



The delegate session during the Montana Farm Bureau Annual Convention is the time to discuss and debate policy. First-time attendee Marianne Gartner, foreground, listens closely as the call to vote is given.

MFBF Convention time for setting policy

Montana Farm Bureau Federation voting delegates represented 30 county Farm Bureaus statewide at MFBF's 102nd Annual Convention Nov. 8-11 in Billings. During the Delegate Session, those members discussed and voted on policy for the coming year. The Delegate Session is what makes Farm Bureau a unique grassroots organization with farmers and ranchers developing policy during their county annual meetings in September. Those policies are then voted on at the MFBF Convention in November.

Due to concerns about raising taxes and Congressional "pay-fors," delegates passed a resolution to oppose shifting tax burdens onto rural communities or agricultural lands.

The delegates added policy that would provide extra financial protections against losses by wolves, grizzlies

and other predators. The policy supports covering reimbursement for animals that must be euthanized due to a predator attack; currently, only a confirmed death loss is reimbursed.

The delegates added language to provide more support regarding labor and flexible use of various immigration labor programs.

With much of Montana still reeling from a bad fire season, members spoke regarding coal seam fires by passing policy to use practical prevention methods to mitigate damages from coal seam fires.

This was the first convention for Marianne Gartner of Sidney. Gartner, a voting delegate, noted, "It was great listening to the discussions and hearing different viewpoints on the policies. It was so interesting meeting other farmers and ranchers from across the state. I really enjoyed the convention."

Campaign Seminar

Planning to run for office? Plan to attend the 2022 Montana Farm Bureau Campaign Seminar. The two-day, interactive, comprehensive seminar takes place February 10-11, 2022 at the Delta Colonial Inn in Helena. It covers everything from selecting your campaign theme and setting up your campaign structure along with how to manage money and how to win.

Registration and hotel deadlines are January 15, 2022. Call the Delta Colonial Hotel, 406-443-2100, and request the MFBF room block rate of \$129/night for hotel reservations. For more information or to register for the campaign seminar visit www.mfbf.org or contact Rachel Cone at 406-587-3153 or rachelc@mfbf.org.

Livestock Loss Board

The Livestock Loss Board is accepting loss prevention grant applications. Applications are due by January 31 and can be emailed to gedwards@mt.gov or by mail to P.O. Box 202005, Helena, MT 59620. Applications are available at www.llb.mt.gov. This is a new grant form, and organizations representing a livestock owner(s) will be required to complete a grant supplement form. Grants will be issued in March.

News Brief Plus

Want more information regarding articles in this *News Brief*? Check out the *News Brief Plus* online. The *December 2021 News Brief Plus* contains:

- WOTUS roundtable letter
- MFBF elections release
- Cloud seeding
- Growing grapes in Montana
- Wheat & Barley Committee News

Happy Holidays

The Montana Farm Bureau Board and Staff wish all of our members a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

MFBF elects new leaders

Cyndi Johnson, a wheat farmer from Conrad, has been elected as president of the Montana Farm Bureau Federation during the organization's 102nd annual convention Nov. 8-11 in Billings. Johnson will serve as the organization's first female president since its inception in 1919. Gary Heibertshausen, past District 5 Director and an Alzada sheep rancher, was elected vice president.

Darcia Patten, a cattle rancher from Broadus, was elected as MFBF District 5 Director. Re-elected to the MFBF Board of Directors were Craig Blevins, District 1, a purebred Angus breeder from Ronan; Kris Descheemaeker, District 3, a cattle rancher from Lewistown; Joy DePuydt, District 7, a small grains farmer and cattle rancher from Saco, and Scott Stoner, District 9, who raises horses in Montana City.

Carla Lawrence from Boyd was re-elected as the MFBF Women's Leadership Chair with J.M. Peck from Melrose re-elected as the MFBF Young Farmer and Rancher Committee Chair.

Welcome new members

Carbon-Stillwater County – Leslie and Dawn Craft; *Fergus County* – Jack Styler • Luke Gee; *Gallatin County* – Mark and Emmanuelle McCarty; *Hill-Liberty-Blaine County* – Ted and Gail Solomon; *Lewis & Clark County* – Zach Coccoli; *Musselshell County* – John Moore; *Northwest Counties* – Joseph and Suzanne Downing • Benjamin and Heidi Rosemont • Peter and Christine Fuller • Denley Loge; *Powder River-Carter County* - Sophia and Corson Davis; *Southwest Counties* – Steven and Megan Ellis • Daniel and Janet Doornbos; *Sweet Grass County* – Cheyenne and Reiley McKenney • Mayzie Cremer; *Valley County* - Tim and Diana Logan

Two unique policies surface during convention

Although cloud seeding and growing wine grapes have nothing directly in common, during the Montana Farm Bureau Convention Delegates Session, those subjects surfaced in two policies that were discussed.

Rancher and Southwest Counties member Jim Hagenbarth explained the success of cloud seeding in Idaho. "Cloud seeding is a form of weather modification used in over 150 countries and nine surrounding states to enhance the natural precipitation process and generate up to 15% more precipitation from moisture-laden clouds passing overhead," Hagenbarth shared. "It was first recognized in the 1940s and has developed into a science-based and time tested technology that enhances high mountain snow pack, rainfall, hail abatement and fog suppression."

The delegate body opted to support research on the feasibility, effectiveness and safety of the practice.

Larry Robertson, Montana Grape and Winery Association, explained the policy he surfaced in their NW County FB meeting: Support fostering a positive agricultural business environment for the establishment of vineyards and other fruit to supply a Montana grown, value-added wine industry.

"Statewide support and understanding are needed for Montana-grown viticulture to expand," Robertson said. "We can grow quality grapes in this state. Vineyards and wineries are vastly different businesses bound together in a value-added chain. Supporting locally grown and produced wine will keep a greater amount of the profits and ancillary economic development in Montana."

Visit mfbf.org/News/News-Brief for detailed articles on both of these subjects.



Peck wins Discussion Meet

J.M. Peck, a young cattle rancher from Melrose, won the Montana Farm Bureau Young Farmer and Rancher Discussion Meet. He received the keys to a Polaris Ranger® 500 and will be eligible to compete in the national competition which will be held during the American Farm Bureau Convention in Atlanta in January. The Final Four competition of the Discussion Meet was held during the 102nd Montana Farm Bureau Annual Convention in Billings November 9.

Peck, who serves as MFBF YF&R Chair, said, "It's an honor to win the Discussion Meet. The competition was fierce and it's great to see so many young people engaging on the big issues impacting agriculture."

"I would love to give a big thank you to the participating Montana Polaris dealers, Montana Farm Bureau and all of the competitors for making the Discussion Meet possible," said Peck.

Calendar

AFBF Annual Convention
January 7-12, 2022—Atlanta, GA

People

Northern Ag Network interviewed outgoing MFBF President **Hans McPherson** and incoming president **Cyndi Johnson**. MFBF Senior Governmental Affairs Director **Nicole Rolf**, YF&R Chair **J.M. Peck**, MFBF District 9 Director **Scott Stoner** and ACE graduate **Tammy Copenhaver** were on NAN's Voices of Montana.

McPherson and ACE graduate **Aly Robins**, were interviewed by Western Ag Network.

KMON interviewed **Johnson** and State Governmental Affairs Director **Rachel Cone**.

The *Western Ag Reporter* covered thoughts on changing leadership roles with **McPherson** and **Johnson**.

Casey and **Tom Mott** have been selected for semi-monthly producer profiles in the *Prairie Star*.

The *Billings Gazette* covered mental health speaker **Frank King** during the MFBF Convention.

Shop local, save supply chain

In recent months, Market Inel has shared stories about crowded West Coast ports. Trade volume through these ports is breaking records and U.S. imports of manufactured goods were worth \$1.24 trillion. But the ports are struggling to keep this pace up, and the unevenness of deliveries is causing problems across our economy.

This holiday season, shop local. Enjoy what's close by to give ports and shippers a little breathing room to adjust. Read more at www.fb.org/market-intel.

Case IH offers great deals

Would you rather farm in one of Case IH's huge, awesome Maxxum tractors or handle something more maneuverable from the Vestrum line? They're both among the best on the market and come with powerful discounts for Farm Bureau members.

Save money by combining the Montana Farm Bureau incentive with other Case IH discounts, promotions, rebates, or available offers.

To download your discount certificate, visit mfbf.org/benefits.

American Farm Trail App

The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture introduces their new agritourism app. Called the American Farm Trail app, this innovative app allows farms and attractions to create their own profile showcasing their operation, history, products and more.

Whether it's a pick-your-own pumpkins venue or a dude ranch, the app can showcase—for free—your business to new visitors.

Visit agfoundation.org/news.

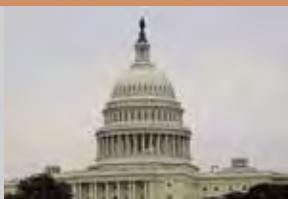
Farm Bureau speaks up on WOTUS

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall commented on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed rule to replace the Navigable Waters Protection Rule.

"AFBF is disappointed EPA is returning to an overly complicated interim water rule," Duvall said. "Over-reaching regulations create major permit backlogs for the federal government and result in long delays for farmers and ranchers who are working to keep America fed. It's troubling that EPA is putting a framework in place before completing the promised stakeholder engagement."

As for stakeholder engagement, MFBF Senior Governmental Affairs Director Nicole Rolf has submitted a list of 10 potential WOTUS roundtable participants to the EPA and Army (Civil Works.).

"These individuals represent agriculture, conservation, state regulatory agencies, drinking/wastewater management, natural resource and recreation industries, small business, local governments, and statewide elected officials who specialize in water policy," Rolf noted in the letter. "This roundtable represents the diverse interests and major economic drivers that are important in our entire region and will highlight the importance of a common sense waters of the U.S. definition."



Farm Bureau opposes Build Back Better

The American Farm Bureau Federation has sent a letter to the U.S. House of Representatives stating its opposition to the Build Back Better Act, also known as the reconciliation package.

"After watching months of contentious, partisan debate surrounding the Build Back Better Act, AFBF stands in opposition to the legislation," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall.

"While some elements of the reconciliation package would benefit agriculture, the massive amount of spending and tax increases required to pay for the plan outweigh the gains we would see in rural America," Duvall said. "We appreciate House efforts to protect farmers and ranchers by leaving key tax provisions untouched. Thousands of small businesses, however, would still be affected by tax increases, forcing them to pass increased costs to families across the nation."

Montana Farm Bureau President Cyndi Johnson, a Conrad small grains farmer, noted, "Montana Farm Bureau Federation stands with American Farm Bureau in opposition to the text of the Build Back Better reconciliation bill. As Montana farmers and ranchers, we appreciate the effort from both sides of the Congressional aisle to protect or prohibit those specific tax issues which could have impacted us so negatively – eliminating stepped up basis, estate and transfer taxes, and increased capital gains taxes. There are too many other provisions that remain in the bill which would be detrimental to agriculture and other small businesses in Montana including significant increases in income taxes to successful businesses, veiled Medicare tax increases, huge increases in OSHA fines for regulatory infractions, carbon/methane taxes on oil and gas production, and the immense increase in overall spending."

MFBF applauds infrastructure bill

The Montana Farm Bureau applauded the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act signed into law by President Joe Biden November 15, 2021.

"The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act invests in needed improvements to our roads, bridges, ports and other hard infrastructure that serve as avenues to keep commerce moving and our all-important export markets viable," said Montana Farm Bureau Federation President and Conrad farmer Cyndi Johnson. "There is investment into rural broadband which is essential to keeping our rural farming communities on an equal playing field with our urban neighbors. Additionally, important provisions regarding trucking of livestock, which make it more feasible to deliver our Montana cattle to feedlots and markets far from the home place were included. We appreciate the work that Senator Tester did to secure these provisions without using important tax provisions such as changes to the stepped-up basis, as a way to pay for this legislation."

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COUNTY NEWS

Counties capture President's Awards during MFBF Convention

During the Montana Farm Bureau Annual Convention county Farm Bureaus received Silver and Golden Windmill Awards for their programs. The best-of-the best received President's Awards for Group 1 (117 voting members or less) and Group 2 (118 voting members or more). A county Farm Bureau had to make membership quota to be considered for the President's Awards. Look for more convention photos and county news in the 2022 MFBF Winter Spokesman.



*Phillips County - Group 1
Leadership, Membership Development
Left to right: County President Tom DePuydt
with MFBF President Hans McPherson.*



*Northwest Counties - Group 2
Membership Development
Left to right: County President Josh Senecal
with MFBF President Hans McPherson.*



*Cascade County - Group 2
Public Policy
Left to right: County President Jim Pribyl
with MFBF President Hans McPherson.*



*Southwest County - Group 2
Leadership Development
Left to right: County President J.M. Peck with
MFBF President Hans McPherson.*



*Chouteau County - Group 1
Public Relations, Public Policy, Ag Promotion &
Education
Left to right: Shay Richter, MFBF President
Hans McPherson, County President Jess Bandel*



*Yellowstone County - Group 2
Public Relations, Ag Promotion & Education
Left to right: Yellowstone Secretary Teddi Vogel,
YF&R Chair Spencer Drange, MFBF President
Hans McPherson, VP Jodie Drange and County
President Kathy Teter.*

Convenience on the Go



With the **Farm Bureau Member Benefits app**, your membership card and list of benefits are always at your fingertips! Search 'FB Benefits' on the App Store or Google Play and download the app today!

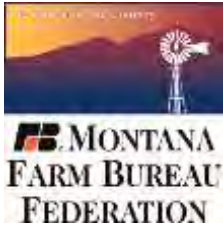
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Montana Farm Bureau Federation
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TO:

Jaime A. Pinkham, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), Department of the Army
Radhika Fox, Assistant Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460
Recommendation submitted electronically

RE:

Docket Number: FRL-6027.4-04-OW, Notification of Regional Roundtable Discussions Regarding "Waters of the United States"

Dear Mr. Pinkham and Ms. Fox:

Thank you for the opportunity to nominate qualified participants for a Roundtable discussion on the definition of Waters of the United States. This definition is important and relevant to a very diverse cross section of stakeholders in Montana. With that in mind, and also the Federal Register guidance on Roundtable make up, Montana Farm Bureau would like to put forth a well-rounded list of individuals to serve on one of these panels. Montana Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) is Montana's largest general agriculture organization, representing more than 20,000 farmer and rancher member families across the state of Montana. I, Nicole Rolf, Senior Director of Governmental Relations for MFBF, will serve as the point of contact for this Roundtable. My email address is nicoler@mfbf.org and phone number is 406-587-3153.

Roundtable Participants:

- Cynthia Johnson, President, Montana Farm Bureau Federation, 502 S. 19th Ave., Suite 104, Bozeman, MT 59718. cyndij@mfbf.org. 406-587-3153.
- Mitch Konen, President, Montana Grain Growers Association, 300 Park Dr S Suite 102, Great Falls, MT 59405. Irrigator31@gmail.com; 406-590-2649.
- Jay Bodner, Executive Vice President, Montana Stockgrowers Association. 420 N. California St., Helena, MT 59601. jay@mtbeef.org. 406-442-3420.
- Clayton Elliott, Conservation and Government Affairs Director, Montana Trout Unlimited, 15 S. Excelsior St., Butte, MT 59701. clayton@montanatu.org. 406-543-0054.
- Amanda Kaster, Director, Montana Department of Natural Resources, 1539 Eleventh Ave. Helena, MT 59601. Amanda.Kaster@mt.gov. 406-444-1948
- Montana League of Cities and Towns.

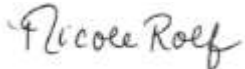
- Peggy Trenk, Executive Director, Treasure State Resource Industry Association. 800 N. Last Chance Gulch, Helena, 59601. ptrenk@tsria.net, 406-443-5541.
- Bridger Mahlum, Director of Governmental Relations, Montana Chamber of Commerce, 616 Helena Ave. Ste 300, Helena, MT 59624. bridger@montanachamber.com. 406-431-3248.
- Todd Devlin, Prairie County Commissioner, P.O. Box 525, Terry, MT 59349, mtdevlin@gmail.com. 406-852-0019
- Walt Sales, Senator, Montana Senate District 35. 3900 Stagecoach Trail, Manhattan, MT 59741. waltsales4montana@gmail.com. 406-282-7435.

Panelists in this group reside in, and represent groups that cover the state of Montana, which is part of the West, as designated by the EPA and the Corps. As you know, the state of Montana is large and geographically diverse, as are the groups represented by these proposed Roundtable members. From the arid plains in the east, to the high, tree covered peaks in the west, the state is comprised of many different landscapes, is home to the headwaters of many large, interstate rivers, and is utilized by citizens ranging from outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy our scenery and abundant wildlife to ranchers who work the lands to produce food for our nation. All of these interests are included on this panel.

The individuals in this group represent agriculture, conservation, state regulatory agencies, drinking and wastewater management, natural resource and recreation industries, small business, local governments, and statewide elected officials who specialize in water policy. This roundtable represents the diverse interests and major economic drivers that are important in our entire region and will highlight the importance of the waters of the U.S. definition from their unique standpoints.

Thank you again for the opportunity to recommend a Roundtable to discuss the definition of Waters of the United States. I am happy to provide additional information if necessary and respectfully ask you to consider selecting this Roundtable to provide essential input as you move forward with defining Waters of the United States.

Sincerely,



Nicole Rolf
Senior Director, Governmental Affairs

NEED MORE WATER? CLOUD SEEDING COULD HELP!

Article submitted by SW Counties member Jim Hagenbarth

Water is our lifeblood and sustains all amenities, entities and users in this state. Its future market value is immeasurable. All water resources begin with a drop of rain or a flake of snow. Water is a finite commodity and its availability is based on our ability to enhance and manage water use throughout the water cycle. We must enhance every aspect of its journey from the clouds to the ocean for the benefit of all users.

Drought unapologetically reminds us of water's importance to all life, but it also shows the resilience of the landscapes we live in. Rather than squabbling and point fingers we need to embrace precipitation and water management practices that make a difference in the long term. It all begins with the amount of precipitation received and how we manage our watersheds for yield and the impacts of evapotranspiration. Initially we need to get the precipitation into the soil profile where it becomes available as ground and surface water.

Once precipitation falls upon the landscape there are many practices that can be implemented to augment its benefits. Management for watershed yield, off stream and instream surface water storage, groundwater storage, return flows, conservation, efficiency, and water treatments supporting repeated use are some of the practices available. It takes insight and foresight to understand and apply objective analysis to determine the practicality and efficacy of these practices. Water use is only physically lost when it flows past its legal place of use or through evapotranspiration where water is transferred from the land to the atmosphere by evaporation from the soil and other surfaces and by transpiration from plants.

Cloud seeding is a form of weather modification used in over 150 countries and 9 surrounding states to enhance the natural precipitation process and generate up to 15% more precipitation from moisture laden clouds passing overhead. It was first recognized in the 1940's and has developed into a science-based and time tested technology that enhances high mountain snowpack, rainfall, hail abatement and fog suppression. Cloud seeding utilizes aircraft and/or ground seeders to introduce small inert silver iodide particles into specifically identified moisture laden clouds. This mimics microscopic dust particles causing water molecules to condense and fall as precipitation. Current research has proven the inert silver iodide agent used is environmentally safe. Only 1% of the moisture in a seeded cloud is harvested which limits negative downwind impacts to other users. Initiation of a cloud seeding program requires trained meteorological professionals to assess the potential of site specific areas proposed by interested entities. The additional water produced via this technology belongs to the state and is available for all water uses.

Idaho Power along with a collaborative group of 52 diversified local water users, and the Idaho Department of Water Resources have developed a cloud seeding program in four basins to increase high mountain snowpack. The benefit of this program increased the average unregulated runoff to over 1 million acre feet of additional water. This correlates to half the capacity of Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

SB 29 was introduced in the last session of the state legislature to amend current regulations allowing interested entities an opportunity to use cloud seeding as a method to increase high mountain snow packs in all Montana watersheds and especially those of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers and their tributaries. Similar to Idaho, Montana could experience an increase in precipitation if this technology was developed.

Per this legislation, applicants are responsible for environmental assessment, developing a well-run program managed by a certified meteorologist, following mandated suspension guidelines to mitigate risk, and providing insurance for negligent actions. The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is the managing agency and bears only the cost of developing and implementing the regulations.

This legislation failed because of misguided 30 year old biases and partisan politics. We can do better by researching, understanding, and supporting cloud seeding as a water management tool in the future. Montana must wake up and utilize all the practices available to enhance our water resources.

Wine Grapes in Montana

Wine grapes will grow anywhere in Montana, they just won't produce quality wine unless planted on prime sites that have enough growing site advantages. Montana does have a very limiting cold climate with generally fewer growing degree days (GDD) and shorter growing seasons. Prime sites are generally found in western Montana and down the lower half of the Yellowstone River Valley and tributaries. Western Montana GDD ranges from 1800 to 2300 while the Yellowstone can see 2800 to 3300. During winter the Yellowstone occasionally sees 40 below zero in low lying areas while the west rarely gets below 20. Good vineyard sites will usually avoid the worst of Montana's weather, as happened last October 2020 when the early subzero freeze caught many grapes, walnut, other trees and ornamentals by surprise. Only isolated prime areas near Eureka, Flathead Lake, lower Flathead/ Perma and Laurel were not affected.

Prime sites have an upslope location which drains colder air and remains several degrees warmer than the valley floor. The fingers of rangeland above the irrigation canals on the north side of the Yellowstone River, downstream of Billings, face south and can be 10 degrees warmer during cold spells than the valley below. Upland sites with sloping south to southwest aspect are best. An indication of grape potential is apples or other fruit growing nearby that can ripen and withstand Montana winters. Nearby crops and land use may also affect successful vineyard and winery establishment.

Good, reliable irrigation water is needed to grow grapes in Montana. Cold hardy grape soil requirements are more flexible than for vinifera grapes (Cab Sav, Chardonnay, etc) and generally tolerate heavier soils if there is good soil water drainage. Montana's semi-arid climate benefits the bottom line and ecology by reducing the need for fungicides and other pesticides. Our dry climate is unique to the cold hardy grape world, Montana has the potential for growing some of the highest quality grapes and wine, on prime sites.

Marquette, a red grape that makes excellent wine, was released by the University of Minnesota in 2006 and tolerates 35-40 below zero, as do more than a dozen other cold hardy white and red varieties. North Dakota State in Fargo has a promising grape breeding program producing several prospects tolerant of 40+ below. Other varieties like Leon Millot, Marechal Foch and TP 2-3-51 (Tom Plocher unreleased red grape) only tolerate about 25 below, L'Acadie Blanc 29 below (a Nova Scotia white grape) can be grown successfully only in western Montana. With many more being grown and tested around the state, Montana has a great selection of grape varieties suitable on commercially viable vineyard sites.

Remember, even if grapes freeze down to the ground during a severe winter, you'll lose production just for that following year, it's no different from getting a grain crop hailed out. There could be 20-30 shoots coming up from an established root system the following spring, pruning them down to one or two shoots quickly grows new cordons so that production the next year is renewed and usually more productive than on the previous old cordon.

The Montana Grown wine industry need more grape vines planted to supply this newly recognized, value-added agricultural industry. To reach independent financial viability, a vineyard/winery typically requires a minimum of 6-7 acres of grape production and access to a retail market for the wines produced. A stand-alone vineyard requires +/- 20 acres to achieve economic viability but can provide the same for 3-4 wineries. Our goal is to establish 200 more acres of viable vineyards in Montana, that's enough to supply 35-40 new wineries.

The mission of the Winery Association of Montana (WAM) is to encourage the growth and development of Montana as a Grape Wine Region including establishing various AVA's (American Viticultural Area's), and encouraging commercial manufacturing wineries in Montana through the advancement and advocacy of sound public policy. WAM is working with the Montana Farm Bureau Federation and Montana Grape and Wine Association, state government and others to expand Montana's value-added agricultural base.

So many vineyards are pushing the envelope trying to grow, and ripen, wine grapes on their piece of Montana, usually without much success. There is plenty of information available for determining the productive viability of planting vines on anything other than prime sites is seldom commercially viable. Montana does have the potential to expand vineyards and develop a unique Montana Grown wine industry, and by learning from the successes and failures of other states we can avoid mistakes.

I recently retired from USDA/NRCS after 36 years, working with grapes and other fruit in western Montana since 2003. I have Flathead Lake Vineyard & Winery, am President of WAM and a founding member of the MT Grape and Wine Association. I believe in Montana Grown wine grapes and am offering a free vineyard site assessment to any Montana Farm Bureau member. Grapes can diversify your operation, and possibly help bring family back to the farm building a viable, sustainable agricultural business. If you are interested in finding out what vineyard potential you may have, please contact Larry Robertson at 406-253-9641, or larryrob22@gmail.com. Thank You.

As the days get shorter and the nights get longer, it is crazy to think that the holidays are already upon us.

Despite limited travel due to Covid, we have still managed to attend numerous conferences and have continued to meet with trade leaders from around the world. We understand the importance of maintaining these trade relationships and will continue to work diligently to do so. It is critical that Montana producers stay top of mind with current and potential buyers.

Transparency and communication are a major priority for us as here at the Wheat & Barley Committee. We want to make sure that those contributing to the checkoff know exactly how their hard-earned dollars are being invested. In this month's update you will find a breakdown of our outreach and activity from the month of November. Each month we are also going to bring you a featured article on one of the areas of research your checkoff dollars are helping support.

Your checkoff dollars at work

One of the most important projects funded by your checkoff dollars is the spring wheat breeding program at Montana State University.

The responsibility of the spring wheat breeding program is to develop improved spring wheat varieties for Montana wheat producers as well as meet the requirements set by end-users.



The program is led by Montana native Dr. Jason Cook who grew up on a farm in Northcentral Montana. Dr. Cook has worked as a breeder in both the private and public sectors and is no doubt an expert in the field of genomics. Montana boasts a high percentage of acreage planted to MSU developed varieties, thanks to a long history of great researchers.

“With the support of Montana producer check off dollars, Dr. Cook is able to leverage those funds to secure seven figure USDA grants and multiply your investment in the program by ten times every year,” said Montana Wheat and Barley Vice President Cassidy Marn. “The wheat genome is one of the most complex known to man, five times larger than the human genome. It takes a highly experienced scientist to breed a Montana adapted variety that satisfies the producer and the end user,” Marn went on to say.

The primary breeding objectives include:

1) Develop spring wheat varieties for Montana producers and end-users.

The most immediate impact of this project is to release new spring wheat varieties for Montana growers. Lanning, with strong gluten strength, aluminum tolerance and good yield potential will be an important variety for Montana growers and international customers. The new variety Dagmar is a stay-green, semi-solid stem variety coupled with an early heading date and high grain protein content is currently undergoing seed increase. Dagmar also has stronger gluten strength than the leading varieties Vida and Reeder.

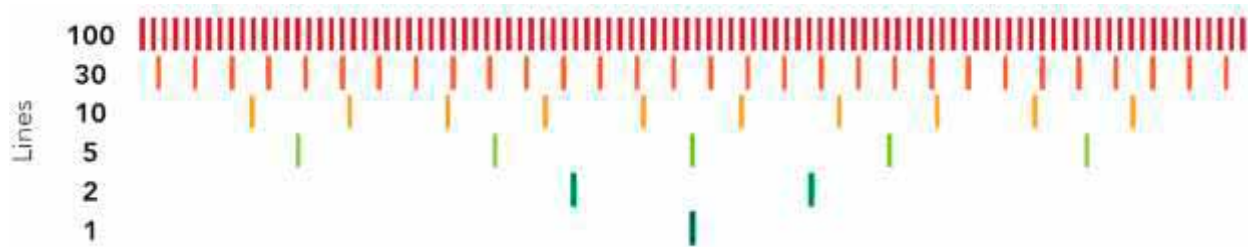
2) Coordinate the state-wide spring wheat testing program.

State-wide spring wheat variety testing is coordinated through the Advanced Yield Trials (AYT) and is grown at multiple locations across the state. The work of planting and harvesting the trials outside of Bozeman is conducted by the Montana Agricultural Experiment Stations (MAES) and private contract testing firms. Data is used by Montana State University (MSU) and private companies for variety release decisions. Additionally, variety performance data is posted online and published in farm periodicals to help growers decide what variety is best for them.

3) Conduct applied research in wheat breeding and genetics.

Applied research is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee (MWBC) to improve the breeding efforts of the spring wheat breeding program. Current research projects are focused on identifying novel sources of wheat stem sawfly (WSS) resistance, understanding the genetic architecture controlling important yield component and end-use quality traits, and implementation of new breeding technologies such as genomic selection. Genomic selection is a tool that uses sequence and field data information to predict experimental line performance during the early stages of cultivar development.

The breeding program screens over 2500 lines each year and takes 8 years to release a new variety.

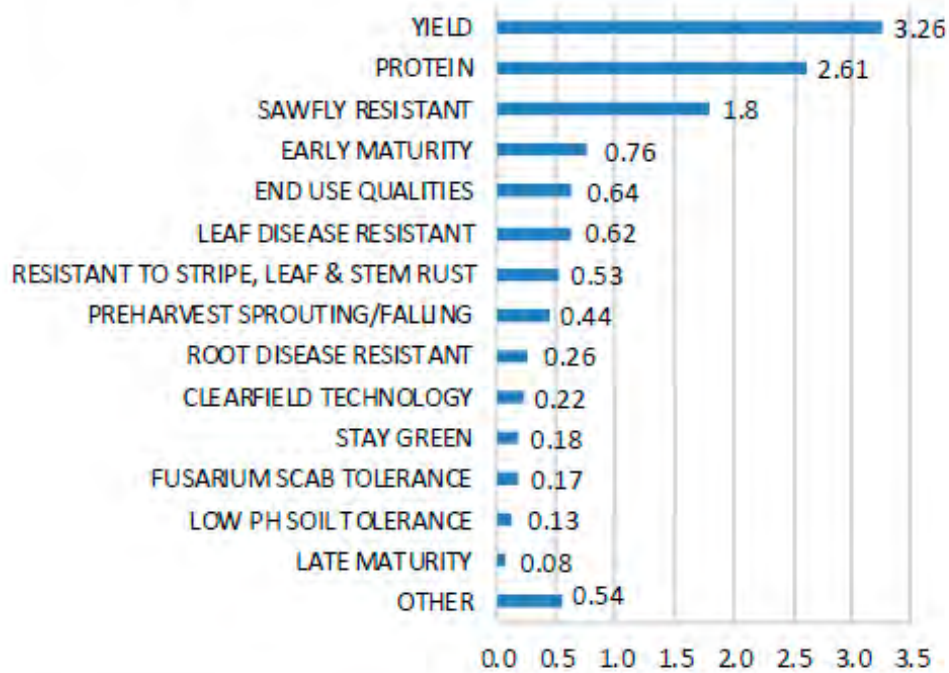


Thanks to our collaborators at MAES, the spring wheat field testing program has expanded to acquire additional high-quality data that will help improve our predictions of how well an experimental line performs in Montana's diverse environments. More data may also shorten the breeding cycle because the additional information can improve confidence in predicting how well an experimental line performs in a grower's field thus enabling an earlier release date.

In addition to increasing field testing, MSU utilizes a winter nursery located in Yuma, AZ. A winter nursery provides an opportunity to gain an additional field growing season/year that produces large quantities of seed that can be used for yield trials or seed purification purposes.

Last year, MWBC, in cooperation with the National Ag Statistics Service (NASS), developed a modern varietal survey, with an innovative trait index. This trait index allows growers to rank the characteristics they value the most when selecting a wheat variety. Over 2000 Montana producers responded in 2021. This allows Montana growers to voice what they need and provides excellent feedback to the breeding program.

Spring Wheat Trait Index Montana: 2021



Premier Partner Spotlight

Japan

Montana is known around the world for producing high quality wheat and barley. We have the best growers, the best varieties, and trading partners who appreciate quality over price. The Montana Wheat and Barley Committee has focused efforts on market development, as we

restrictions. Japan has very high standards of cleanliness and uniformity, and consumers are very sensitive of chemical residue and genetically modified wheat. Since the mid-2000's, shipments are checked for 47 chemical residues, plus DON (deoxynivalenol) and aflatoxin. Additionally, contamination due to tame buckwheat in bulk shipments is a major concern for Japanese importers. Tame buckwheat is a severe allergen for many Japanese consumers, and shipments are carefully monitored from the farmgate through the supply chain to avoid disruption.

About 95% of wheat imports are handled by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). MAFF typically extends weekly tenders three times per month for US origin, Canadian origin, and Australian origin. During CY20, Japan imported a total of 5.37 million metric tons (MMT) of wheat, with 2.63 MMT (49%, and over 96 million bushels!) from the US, 1.94 MMT (36.1%) from Canada, and 797 MMT (14.8%) from Australia and others. With the Japan Free Trade Agreement going into place in January 2020, the US has been able to increase imports, as we are now on equal tariff ground with both Canada and Australia, which had favorable rates in 2019 due to their participation in CPTPP.

There are currently 72 flour milling companies in Japan, with the top four mills and their affiliates accounting for about 80% of total market share. Nisshin, the largest miller, holds the top market share at around 39%, with Nippon, who owns Pasta Montana, at 24%, Showa-Sangyo at 9%, and Nitto-Fuji at 7%. These mills have invested funds to increase efficiency, and boast an operating ratio of 89%, compared to the industry standard of 73%. The overall outlook favors large mills, and they continue to diversify into food processing, and are aggressively deploying plants internationally for flour milling in developing countries in order to continue growth despite an aging and declining Japanese population. Additionally, pasta consumption in Japan is increasing, and there is opportunity to grow our durum market share as we develop new varieties with their end-use needs in mind.

We are very grateful for the continued partnership with Japan and recognize the important role they play. Each year the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee meets with the top milling companies, and hosts many major buyers, as there is special interest in what is happening in our state. Our Japanese friends value these trusted relationships and love the opportunity to jump on a combine and see what our farmers do. We appreciate their feedback, as this input has really helped to drive our breeding program. We look forward to next year and hope to have better and in person news for our trading partners soon!
