



Washington Association of Wheat Growers

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Wheat growers to testify in Senate Ag Committee hearing on DNR lease language

On Thursday, Jan. 19, members and staff of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers will be testifying in front of the Washington State Senate's Agriculture, Water, Trade and Economic Development Committee during a public hearing on SB 5051, a bill relating to non-default termination provisions in state land leases for agricultural or grazing purposes.

Chad Smith and Nicole Berg, both wheat farmers from Benton County, and Diana Carlen, the lobbyist for the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, will be testifying on the effects of a decision last summer when with little advance notice, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources decided to terminate several leases in Benton County that were not set to expire until 2020 or later.

Sponsored by Senators Sharon Brown, Judy Warnick, Jim Honeyford, Randi Becker and Mark Schoesler, the bill would require the Washington State Department of Natural Resources to provide 180 days advance written notice before terminating an agricultural or grazing lease. The bill would also require the agency to provide written documentation to the lessee demonstrating that the department has included the leased land in a plan for higher and better use, land exchange or sale.

“Part of what we will be testifying about is the lack of transparency farmers are having with the Department of Natural Resources. The agency has not been very forthcoming on information, which doesn't make for a good relationship,” Berg said. “We want to create a partnership with the department, a more fair playing field, not this adversarial relationship we seem to have.”

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About WAWG: Education and outreach are the heart of Washington Association of Wheat Growers activity, all of which is aimed at helping Washington wheat families. Since 1954, WAWG has been dedicated to the enrichment of the Washington wheat industry as a nonprofit trade association, which depends on volunteers, membership dues and donations to carry out activities as representatives on the state and national levels. WAWG monitors state, transportation, research and natural resources policy and partners with the National Association of Wheat Growers to monitor national farm policy. Visit wawg.org for more information.