



Washington Association of Wheat Growers

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Wheat growers take on Washington D.C. and national policy

Trade, the 2018 Farm Bill and crop insurance top the list of priorities leadership and staff of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) will focus on during their advocacy trip to Washington, D.C., this week. The wheat growers will be meeting with many of Washington state's federal delegation, as well as several of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's agencies and key leadership in the House and Administration.

"Work is shifting into high gear on the 2018 Farm Bill, and we need to make sure that the wheat industry has a seat at the table so we can fight for the best interests of our growers," said Michelle Hennings, executive director of WAWG. "We will also be discussing the importance of trade deals, including TPP and NAFTA, and educating legislators on the vital role crop insurance plays in helping growers recover from a natural disaster such as drought or a late spring snowstorm."

With more than 90 percent of Eastern Washington's wheat crop exported, the need for stable, effective trade agreements is extremely important. Equally important is funding that helps develop and maintain those overseas markets. WAWG is advocating an increase in the Market Access Program (MAP) and the Foreign Market Development (FMD) program. Research shows these programs generate a return of more than \$28 for every \$1 spent.

"A strong agricultural industry protects and creates American jobs and should be considered an important national interest," said Marci Green, president of WAWG and a grower from Fairfield, Wash. "We make these trips on behalf of our grower members to establish relationships with legislators so they better understand the issues faced by farmers. We want to make sure we can continue to grow the crops that give American consumers the world's safest, most abundant food supply."

Conservation is another area that WAWG will be addressing with legislators. WAWG strongly supports working lands conservation programs, including the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. WAWG is also in support of increasing the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage cap to allow for both continuous and general sign-ups. In Washington state, more than 400,000 acres are set to expire from CRP through 2020, and offers are not being processed due to the 24 million acre federal cap established under the last farm bill. This will have a negative impact on the effectiveness of key land stewardship tools used to protect land, water and wildlife.

Budget negotiations continue and WAWG, as well as the National Association of Wheat Growers, continue to advocate for falling numbers research funding and common-sense solutions when it comes to reporting requirements. Hennings added, "This is an important time in national policy to stay in front of our national legislators and agencies. WAWG is committed to make the voice of our grower members heard."

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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.