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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Wheat growers applaud support of federal CRISI grant to WSDOT**

The Washington Grain Commission (WGC) and the Washington Association of Wheat Growers (WAWG) applaud the support of members from the Washington State Federal Congressional Delegation, and their commitment to the state's agricultural industry, in response to the announcement that the Federal Railroad Administration selected the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to receive a substantial \$72.8 million Fiscal Year 2022 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) grant for capital improvements on the Palouse River and Coulee City (PCC) short line railroad.

"This grant will allow the grain industry to respond to a critical need for improved transportation infrastructure and is deeply appreciated," Washington Grain Commission CEO Casey Chumrau said. "The leadership of our Senators and Eastern Washington Representatives will secure reliable and competitive methods of transporting agricultural products and ensure the economic vitality of our state."

The PCC short line railroad is an essential component of the Eastern Washington agricultural supply chain, facilitating the movement of our state's high-quality wheat and barley to larger rail lines and on to both domestic and international markets.

"This badly needed funding was made possible with the cooperation of farmers, stakeholders, and our state and federal legislators," WAWG Executive Director Michelle Hennings said. "In order for Washington farmers to continue feeding the world, we must be able to get our product to market safely and quickly, and the short line railroads are absolutely a necessary piece in that system. We are eager to see the work started on this critical part of our transportation infrastructure."

The federal grant, coupled with state funding from the Move Ahead Washington transportation package, as well as local and private contributions, will result in a total project budget of \$112 million.

The project includes rehabilitation of sections of the railroad that traverses Adams, Grant, Lincoln, Spokane, and Whitman counties.

"We thank our partners for their help in securing this funding," WAWG President and Klickitat County grower Andy Juris said. "Wheat farmers have long been advocating for our short line rails, which are a vital part of Washington's transportation system. This grant will help ensure the longevity of the short lines by funding repairs to some of the most heavily used track, including those damaged by the wildfires in August."

The two wheat organizations extend sincere appreciation for the support of the following individuals, whose leadership played a significant role in securing this grant and their efforts in advocating for the wheat industry and fostering an environment that encourages the growth of our agricultural sector.

U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA)

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA)

U.S. Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)

U.S. Representative Dan Newhouse (R-WA)

“Thank you to our Congressional Delegation, for your outstanding commitment to our industry and for championing the cause of Washington agriculture,” WGC Chairman and Whitman County grower Ben Barstow said. “This project will undoubtedly enhance the reliability and efficiency of our transportation network, bolstering the long-term competitiveness of our state's small grain producers.”

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*The Washington Grain Commission (WGC) was created in 1958 by the Washington State Department of Agriculture with the support of Eastern Washington farmers. Barley came under the auspices of the organization in 2009. Our mission is to enhance the long-term profitability and competitiveness of Washington small grains and small grain producers through research, marketing, and education. The current commission board is made up of seven farmer members, two industry representatives and a representative of the state's Department of Agriculture. For more information, visit <https://wagrains.org>.*

*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 <https://www.wawg.org/> for more information.*

*Working together to serve and improve the small grains industry of Washington*