Issues and Priorities for 2020

- Economic conditions in Oregon Wheat Country are very tough
  - Wheat prices are low, below the cost of production for many farmers
  - Costs are up across the board; higher wage and benefit costs, higher fuel costs, higher pesticide and fertilizer costs, higher equipment costs, and higher state taxes.
  - Conservation programs are providing less effective support
  - Higher regulatory burdens, demands for “sustainable” practices, lower carbon emissions, less access to pesticides
  - Compensation for trade disruptions have not made farmers whole
  - Economic sustainability is the foundation of environmental sustainability

- Farmers must continue to have access to Glyphosate
  - Glyphosate is an irreplaceable tool for farmers!
    - Single most important herbicide for no-till wheat farming
    - Very safe to use for both applicators and public
  - Glyphosate is a critical part of integrated pest management
  - Glyphosate and other pesticides are vital to precision agriculture and no-till farming, which are the two best strategies for wheat producers to reduce carbon emissions.
  - Monsanto’s poor public image is no reason to drive this product from the market.
  - Mob style litigation is creating uncertainty for suppliers and growers/applicators and creating concern for consumers, food producers, and export customers.
  - Some insurers are uncertain about covering farms and applicators who use glyphosate and are excluding glyphosate from coverage or raising premiums to include its use in farm policies.
    - Need administrative protection for suppliers, farmers, and applicators who use glyphosate!

- Resilient Dry and Farming Appropriation (RDLFA) - Funding
  - RDLFA will provide funding and new scientists needed for important research on dryland wheat production, soil health, precision farming, and enhanced water storage. ARS-Pendleton facility in the heart of the Columbia Plateau is the best place for this work.
  - Synergy with OSU researchers working on plant and soil pathology, weed resistance, and wheat breeding will be greatly enhanced by RDLFA.
- We need to fill the new ARS scientific positions on a priority basis to get the maximum benefit from RDLFA.

- **Rural Infrastructure Package**
  - Accelerate the buildout of rural broadband and ensure high data speeds and data security needed for precision ag equipment and applications is provided.
    - More cell towers and better coverage
    - Research facilities, including CBARC, need high speed coverage to handle “big” data
    - Data security is critical
    - Need better metric to determine when an area has broadband coverage – too many areas with coverage aren’t really meeting the needs of rural farms and residents.

- **Develop a crop insurance product to help growers manage the risk of administrative water withdrawals**
  - Growers are increasingly being impacted by administrative withdrawals of water for irrigation that are driven by changing water allocations, ESA requirements, and over-allocated basins, rather than declared drought emergencies.
  - Administrative withdrawals leave growers exposed to severe or total crop production losses, but no recourse to normal crop insurance coverage to help manage risk.
  - We would like legislative direction to USDA Risk Management Agency to do a study and develop a crop insurance product that could be made available to growers to help manage risk of loss from administrative water withdrawals.
    - Study should include consideration of premium cost to growers with and without shared cost of policy premium.
    - Recommend the Klamath Basin as a potential pilot study area

- **Complete work on a new Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) Rule**
  - New rule proposal provides significant improvements to existing rule
  - Definitions are easier to apply and provide more certainty for farmers
  - Need one rule for the entire country

- **Continue to seek solutions to high health insurance costs for family farms**
  - Premiums and deductibles for individual coverage are high and rising rapidly.
    - Premiums range from $300 to $1100/month, with most toward the higher end.
    - Deductibles range from $6,500 to $10,000.
    - Best way to reduce cost is through group coverage from a working spouse’s employer.
  - Close to the point where many individual farms can’t survive without non-farm source of health insurance coverage.
  - We would like to see how to make Association Health Plans more feasible for individual owner/operators.