



OREGON WHEAT GROWERS LEAGUE

115 SE 8th Street 📍 Pendleton, OR 97801 📞 541.276.7330 🌐 www.owgl.org
Blake Rowe, *Outgoing* Chief Executive Officer, browe@oregonwheat.org
Amanda Hoey, *Incoming* Chief Executive Officer, ahoey@oregonwheat.org

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.