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**MINUTES**

**November 20, 2025**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82239894144>

**Present**

Kevin Klein, District VII-Barley / Chair  
Ty Jessup, Position 2-Wheat Industry Rep / Vice Chair  
Brit Ausman, District III-Wheat / Treasurer  
Mike Carstensen, District I-Wheat  
Ben Barstow, District II-Wheat  
Ben Adams, District IV-Wheat  
Nicole Berg, District V-Wheat  
Art Schultheis, District VI-Barley  
Scott Steinbacher, WA ST Dept. of Agriculture Rep

**Absent**

Barley Industry Rep - *Vacant*  
Position 1-Wheat Industry Rep - *Vacant*

**Staff:**

Casey Chumrau, Chief Executive Officer  
Jake Liening, Market Development Specialist  
Sarah Marquez, Communications Manager  
Parker Dawson, Systems & Administrative Specialist

**Visitors:**

Industry, general public and media

**Call to Order** – Chair Kevin Klein called the regular meeting of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) to order at 9:00 a.m. on November 20, 2025.

**Administrative**

1. Additions to Agenda
  - a. Lind Research Station Proposal
  - b. Wheat 101 funding request
  - c. Correction: PNW Team to South Asia Report, not South America

**Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve the agenda.**

2. Introductions and Roll
3. Open Forum – Public Comment Period. No visitors addressed the board. Chairman Klein recognized Sheila McCrea for 36 years of service to the Washington Grain Commission. She will retire November 30. There was discussion and agreement on her outstanding job, especially with compliance.

**Motion was moved, seconded and unanimously passed to recognize Sheila McCrea and give her our ultimate thank you for her years of service to the Commission.**

4. Approval of Minutes – September 23-24, 2025. The minutes of the regular meeting were circulated to the members of the WGC prior to this meeting and included in the meeting packet.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve the minutes of the regular September 23-24, 2025 meeting as recorded.

5. Approval of Financials – Chair Kevin Klien reviewed the WGC financial statements for the months of September and October, 2025 with the board as follows:

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE GENERAL FUND  
October 31, 2025

Assets:

Checking – US Bank	243,225.22
Petty Cash	164.62
W – US Bank Saving	676,999.22
B – US Bank Savings	50,841.38
W – Robert W. Baird Mmkt Acct	2,821.72
W – Robert W. Baird Investments	17,476,927.29
B – Robert W. Baird Mmkt Acct	62,626.29
B – Robert W. Baird Investments	133,802.04
Assessments Receivable	<u>310,597.68</u>
Total Assets:	<u>\$18,958,005.46</u>

Liabilities:

Accounts Payable	41,509.66
ID Withholding Payable	179.00
Def Comp Payable	3,267.17
Medical Ins Payable	(133.00)
PERS Payable	7,333.67
WA Cares Fund	1,137.10
Lt Disability Prem Payable	(51.21)
Paid Family Medical Leave	564.75
L&I Premium Payable	320.81
Unearned Assessments Revenue	<u>310,597.68</u>
Total Liabilities:	\$364,725.63

Equity:

Retained Earnings-Current Year	571,323.66
Fund Balance (Unassigned)	8,801,612.17
Reserved Fund Balance (Committed)	6,400,000.00
Marketing Reserved Fund Balance (Committed)	1,500,000.00
WSU-WRF Reserved Fund Balance (Committed)	<u>1,320,344.00</u>
Total Equity:	\$18,593,279.83
Total Liabilities & Equity	<u>\$18,958,005.46</u>

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Transfers and disbursements were reported to the board for the periods of September and October 2025 and recommended that all disbursements be approved and authorized for payment. There were no voided Checks.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve ACH Transfers 290-308, and Checks #33128 - #33149 representing September 2025 expenditures, and ACH Transfers 309-336, and Checks #33150 - #33172 representing October 2025 expenditures.

6. Assessment Collections / Investments – CEO Casey Chumrau referred to the Analysis of Assessment Collection report which showed that as of November 13, the following amounts were received: barley assessments \$46,672; and wheat assessments \$2,437,639. By today's meeting date the amounts were approximately \$54,000; and \$2.6 million received, respectively. This collection amount is representative of more bushels being sold rather than higher prices.

Current investment details of certificates of deposit and federal notes for barley and wheat, which are tracked separately per RCW 15.115.280, were communicated to the board. Combined CD and FN investments for barley totaled \$141,576; and wheat investments totaled \$18,882,934. Interest rates for new investments options with Robert W. Baird & Co. (RWB) are falling and some securities are being called due. Continued efforts to reinvest any residual funds at the highest interest rates possible.

7. Office Operations – Chair Kevin Klein and CEO Casey Chumrau addressed the following:
  - a. Wheat Industry Rep Position 1 – A search process was completed to fill the open spot left by Brian Liedl. Based on previous input, emphasis was put on finding an export trader, preferably with a soft white focus, to provide diverse perspective from other commissioners. CEOs of the major PNW export companies were contacted for recommendations, as were several industry contacts.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to recommend Tony Benefiet of United Grain Corporation to Director Derek Sandison for the open Industry Representative position.

- b. WGC 2026 Meeting Dates -  
Following discussion, the below dates were chosen. For two-day meetings, Day 1 will start at 10:00 am and Day 2 will start at 8:30 am.
    - January 15: WGC Board Meeting 8:30 am @ TBD Pullman
    - March 17-18 WGC Board Meeting at WGC Office
    - May 13-14 at WGC Office
    - September 15-16 at WGC Office
    - November 12: 9:00 am at WGC Office

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to accept the 2026 meeting dates as presented.

- c. WGC Research Subcommittee – Jim Moyer reviewed the purpose of the committee and reported on the process to collect nominations. A call for nominations was distributed through an in-person announcement at the WAWG Board Meeting, Email to all County Presidents, WGC Newsletter 'Commission Matters', email to WSU researchers, and personal solicitations by Jim Moyer. Seventeen (17) nominations were received for 7 open spots, resulting in 10 interested candidates. A slate of names was presented for consideration, which met all the criteria requirements.
    - Austin Sievers

- Kurt Druffel
- Wyatt Koller
- Mark Thompson
- Garrett Moon
- Drew Bowdish
- Jim Moyer
- Ben Barstow
- Kevin Klein

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to accept the slate of names.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to provide travel authority and expense reimbursement for committee members.

#### **District Reports**

- Mike Carstensen (District 1: Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens) – Really good moisture, winter crop looks really good. Angst about input costs and low cost of wheat.
- Ben Barstow (District 2: Whitman) – North and east of Pullman has received below normal moisture levels. Wheat is out of the ground and looks good.
- Brit Ausman (District 3: Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla) – Fall crop looks good. There was opportunity for spraying recently.
- Ben Adams (District 4: Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Okanogan) – Winter wheat looks good. Received moisture in October and there has been a little patching in to improve stand. A little spraying going on but things are winding down.
- Nicole Berg (District 5: Benton, Franklin, Kittitas, Klickitat, Yakima) – Similar to District 4. Fall crop looks good.
- Art Schultheis (District 1 Barley: Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Klickitat, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima) – Lind had more rain than Colton in October. Got  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch last week. Crop looks good. Recrop wheat came up quick. Spraying last week. Colton 1" behind normal since Sept.
- Kevin Klein (District 7 Barley: Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Grant, Kittitas, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens) – Late farmers just finished seeding winter wheat. For most part wheat is up and looks good. More rain in November than normal.

#### **Industry and WSDA Reports**

- Ty Jessup (Position 2-Wheat Industry Rep) – Markets are flat. Lot of wheat in the world. Argentina has big crop. Australia has a top 4 crop. Russia has a big crop. When wheat is at \$5.90 we are competitive, at \$6.05 we are not competitive. Since Covid it has paid for the buyer to buy 'just in time'. China purchased 39 cargos of soybeans, still significantly short of 12M tons agreed to with Trump. Brazil is a lot cheaper – will have record crop. Chinese business explains a bit of the volatility in market the last two weeks. White wheat carry-out projection is starting to get heavy, Chinese or non-traditional business is needed. If China buys a lot of soybeans, markets will raise. Washington wheat supply is 60-70% sold – about average. US has sold a lot of corn. Traders usually hold back some corn for China but sold to anyone who was interested this year. Upper 7 dams on CSRS will be shut for 5 weeks in 2026. If there is normal demand during that period, it will be a non-event. Possibly more interesting depending on when China purchases.

- Scott Steinbacher (Eastern Washington manager of the Warehouse Audit/Grain Inspection Programs, Washington State Department of Agriculture) – Nothing to report.

**Policy**

1. WAWG Update – Gil Crosby, Washington Association of Wheat Growers president, reported that Olympia Days are January 18-20 and encouraged participation from the WGC. Farm bill was extended until September 2026. The new NAWG CEO has started. NAWG has a meeting in January at the White House to discuss MAHA. Gil provided an update on efforts on the national level and transportation. WAWG had 200 people register for convention and received very positive feedback from the event. WAWG updated their resolutions for 2026 and included support for the WGC Research Advisory Subcommittee and for updating gene editing regulation.
2. State Legislative Update – Mark Streuli, Streuli Public Relations, and Diana Carlen, Gordon Thomas Honeywell Governmental Affairs, provided updates on preparations for the upcoming legislative session and possible issues that could come up for debate. The governor's budget will provide insight into how the next year will
  - a. The board reviewed the draft 2026 legislative priorities document that was jointly drafted by WGC and WAWG and agreed with modifications.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve the 2026 Legislative Priorities for work to be conducted by the WGC's Lobbyists, Mark Streuli and Diana Carlen.

*See Attachment A at the end of these minutes.*

3. Government Relations – Mike Miller, Washington Genetics, reported on his recent CARET meetings. He suggested that endowment agreements should be reviewed and revised to ensure they are relevant in today's climate. Other major universities are revising endowments. He relayed that labor and immigration is the top priority for the Secretary of Ag. Discussions are ongoing about the future of Food Aid.  
The Board discussed potential next steps related to engagement with Bangladesh. It was noted that U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) has a clearly defined role and is performing it effectively. The opportunity in Bangladesh was described as having originated through a political agreement, and it was emphasized that engagement must proceed through the U.S. Embassy. It was noted that USW can provide technical training support, and discussion focused on identifying what additional role the Commission could play. The Board discussed whether the objective in Bangladesh should be immediate sales or longer-term market development, with emphasis placed on the importance of developing inelastic buyers over time. The role of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) in addressing trade barriers was also noted. Staff were directed to request analysis from the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) related to emerging market programs to support information gathering and help define next steps for the Commission. This analysis would include identifying economies projected to be of sufficient size within the next 10 years and that have access to deep-water ports. Additional next steps discussed included meeting with Derek Sandison and confirming with Joe S. that USW will participate in the Food and Beverage Show in April.

**Market Development**

1. USW – Mike Carstensen reported that the new CEO of the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) was at the fall meeting. A regional update from the South America Regional Director was also presented. In addition, the Board heard a team report detailing recent activities and observations from

Egypt and Morocco. Mark Johansen of Minnesota announced his candidacy for an officer position, he is currently chair of the Transportation Committee.

The Transportation Committee presented a resolution expressing opposition to railroad mergers unless such mergers are demonstrably beneficial to wheat producers.

The Long-Term Planning Committee discussed a potential restructuring of organizational regions, including a proposal to shift to four regions based on bushels sold or commodities grown. This proposal did not advance out of committee.

A presentation on hybrid wheat was provided, noting that initial implementation would focus on hard red winter (HRW) wheat. The presentation highlighted a newly developed method for producing hybrid wheat and separating seeds, which could improve the feasibility of hybrid wheat production.

The Global Stewardship Group reported on its efforts to assist both private and public entities in bringing genetically modified (GMO) products to market while avoiding regulatory and implementation issues. The State of Colorado indicated its intent to join the group.

An update from The Fertilizer Institute noted that China accounts for approximately 24% of global fertilizer use, followed by India at 15%, the United States at 10%, and Brazil at 10%. It was also reported that approximately 60% of the phosphorus used in the United States is produced domestically.

It was noted that a significant number of tree crops are being removed in California, with wheat production in the state increasing as a result.

An update was provided on international grain standards, indicating that China and the European Union are considering implementing ergot testing based on alkaloid presence rather than visual inspection.

The Board also discussed the need to strengthen domestic marketing efforts for wheat.

- a. PNW Team to South Asia Report – There was no report given. Trip reports are available for anyone interested.
- b. Crop Quality Seminars – Casey Chumrau participated in five crop quality seminars in South America in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile. CQ seminars are a critical part of the market development effort, providing an annual contact point with thousands of customers around the world and demonstrating the U.S. wheat industry's commitment to transparency. Data collection is a large joint effort, which takes a lot of time and resources, but well worth it. Having technical experts as part of the seminar presentation team is key to address all customer questions.

2. Barley Update – There was nothing new to report since the last meeting.
3. Wheat Marketing Center – Brit Ausman stated that the building is gaining tenants and a new funding structure is being considered for wheat industry members.

### **Communications and Education**

1. Portland Grower Tour – Jake Liening provided a summary of the completed PNW grower tour to Portland, OR on December 2-4. It was a very successful activity. There were 17 grower participants. The group visited Bonneville Dam, where they received a guided tour by an Army Corps Ranger of the power generators, lock, fish passage and hatchery. The group received a tour of Mondelez Bakery(Nabisco), who gets a percentage of their flour from ADM Cheney. The tour included the Columbia Export terminal where a barge was being unloaded and an ocean vessel was being loaded. The group spent an afternoon at the Wheat Market Center learning about wheat and flour quality tests, and got demonstrations of different end product production. Additional presentations from the PNW Waterways Association; Shaver Transportation tour, FGIS and USW all helped participants gain a full picture of marketing chain.
2. Collaboration Opportunity – Dry Fly Distilling:

An opportunity was presented to partner with Dry Fly Distilling (Spokane) on a limited-edition whiskey made with Washington-grown wheat. The bottle would feature the WGC logo or a co-designed label that highlights Washington wheat and our producers' leadership in premium grain production. This farm-to-bottle story connects consumers to the value of Washington wheat in a recognizable, high-quality product. This project aligns with the WGC Strategic Plan for Education—to educate key audiences on the importance of small grain production and to ensure Washington's producers are recognized as leaders in sustainable, high-quality grain production. WGC staff asked for commissioner approval to investigate the opportunity further. The consensus was that it is an appropriate collaboration and should be explored.

3. Wheat 101 – The National Wheat Foundation is seeking funding to support the annual Wheat 101 congressional education reception held in DC the week of the USW/NAWG joint board meeting. It is a well attended reception, including by many members.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to fund the 2026 Wheat 101 for \$5000 with the National Wheat Foundation.

## Research

1. **WSU Report** – The deadline has been set for the WGC Research Proposals to be received by January 5; with the new and renewal proposals to be presented at the Research Review on February 19.
2. WSU/ARS Committee Reports – No committees met since the last meeting.
3. Research Pre-Proposals – The WGC reviewed and discussed the eight preproposals presented, with input from RAS chair Jim Moyer. It was determined that a seven should go forward to full proposal, one should not move forward, one should move forward but with comments and questions from WGC, and the final one needs to clarify multiple things before it will be recommended to go forward to a full proposal at the Research Review on February 19 in Pullman. A discussion about the research review format suggested changing the project ranking to a Y/N system, which allows people who can't stay all day participate.
4. Lind Research Station Proposal - The WSU Lind Dryland Research Station requested support to remodel and upgrade its primary meeting room. This space is used by WSU researchers and breeders, Washington wheat growers, industry partners, and visiting faculty and stakeholders during meetings, field days, and work sessions. An updated, functional meeting room will better support collaboration around dryland wheat research, variety development, and management practices that directly benefit Washington producers. Grant money has already been used to upgrade the research stations and equipment.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to fund \$18,000 from Research Special Projects to upgrade and remodel the meeting rooms at the Lind Dryland Research Station.

## Other Topics

1. **Center for Sustainability and Working Rivers** – Leslie Druffle and Adam Ratliff An update was provided on the impact of the organization's first year of work. It was reported that 174 unique pieces of content were produced and distributed across four platforms. In addition, 12 in-person presentations were delivered in Oregon, Washington, and Montana. Collectively, this content generated approximately 15.5 million views, representing a significant level of engagement.

It was noted that a video focused on the Lower Granite Dam is now the top result when searching for “Lower Granite Dam” on YouTube. Previously, the top search results had been exclusively pro-breach content. This placement was achieved organically and was not supported by paid promotion. Facebook was identified as an unexpected area of strong performance, with a high level of content sharing.

Staff reported that work is underway on a full-length documentary focused on Dworshak Dam. Additional projects in development include analysis of the impacts of proposals to lower water levels, as well as a series highlighting how grain is transported downriver. Outreach efforts are also being made to the power and utility industries to support fundraising.

The presenter thanked the Board for its input, ideas, and financial support, noting that ongoing efforts are focused on producing sufficient content to influence platform algorithms. It was reported that audience comments on content are approximately 40% anti-dam and 60% pro-dam, and that Adam actively engages in dialogue with commenters.

Several recommendations from the WGC board were presented, including identifying potential collaborators in the Mississippi River region, engaging with college clubs, and presenting at science teacher conventions. Additional content focused on Hoover Dam was suggested as a means of expanding the audience. It was also recommended to engage growers and grower organizations in fundraising efforts, using peer-to-peer outreach to encourage donations, with WorkingRivers.org identified as a resource.

A funding request of \$40,000 for the next fiscal year was presented, with consideration given to a potential multi-year funding commitment.

## Calendar & Travel Authority

## 1. Approve Travel Authority

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve and authorize travel and virtual attendance as follows:

## Retroactive Travel

September 16-19 Nippon Greenfield Mill Opening, Richmond, UT  
Mike Carstensen

## Future Travel

December 7-11 KSU-IGP Milling Course, Manhattan, KS  
Art Schultheis

December 11 MAFF/JFMA Meeting, Portland, OR  
Brit Ausman / Casey Chumrau

January 18-20 WAWG Legislative Days, Olympia  
Commissioners / Staff

January 26-30

USW Board Meeting, Washington, D.C.  
Mike Carstensen / Ben Barstow / Nicole Berg / Staff

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

An Executive Session was called by Chair Kevin Klein at 4:05 p.m. for 1 hour to discuss personnel issues (RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)).

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to adjourn the public meeting at 4:05 p.m. and go into Executive Session for 1 hour.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to adjourn the Executive Session at 5:05 p.m. and to reconvene the public meeting at 5:06 p.m.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to accept the CEO's recommendations for salary adjustments and holiday office hours.

**Date/Place Next Meeting**

Chair Kevin Klein designated January 15, 2026 as the date of the next regular meeting of the commission to be held at the Marriott Residence Inn, 1255 NE North Fairway Road, Pullman.

**Adjourn**

There being no further business before the commission, this meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to adjourn the public meeting at 5:08 p.m.

**Minutes Approval Signature**

Upon passage of minutes by board at subsequent meeting



1/15/26

Kevin Klein, Chair

Date

Attachment A

## 2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

**Primary Issues for WGC**

1. **Marketing:** Promote and ensure quality of wheat and barley by addressing marketing related issues with state and government agencies/legislature.
2. **Agricultural Research:** Encourage and support research and facilities to optimize grower, buyer and end user benefits for wheat and barley.

**Joint Initiatives (WGC/WAWG)**

Expanding Understanding/Support for Agriculture Statewide: Promote and provide education that recognizes grain growers as producers of quality, healthy products and good stewards of the land.

1. **Transportation:** Maintain a robust transportation system for wheat and barley.
  - a. **Short-Line Rail Funding:** Support state and industry efforts that provides effective and efficient transportation. Ongoing M & O to WSDOT (Transportation Budget)
  - b. Advocate/monitor Class I Railroads to provide available, timely, cost effective/competitive service.
  - c. Support preservation and expansion of river navigation system as key part of state freight capacity.
  - d. Monitor legislative and administrative effort regarding dams and thus river navigation.
2. Work on annual "All Ag" legislator/staff tours with financial support from all state ag groups (WAWG)
3. Build and implement stakeholder outreach plan with other ag groups.
  - a. Public Ports
  - b. Chambers of Commerce/EDC's
  - c. Legislative Dam Tour(s) – 2025 TBD
  - d. Media Related
  - e. Legislative day efforts

**Secondary Issues for WGC (WAWG lead)**

1. **Ag Viability in Washington State**
2. **Water quality/non-point regulations**
3. **Pesticides**
  - a. Regulations/Compliance (pre-application notice, use reporting, buffers, etc.)
  - b. Farm worker training funding to WSDA
  - c. Support expanded pesticide testing options and availability legislation
4. **Cap and Invest**
  - a. Full implementation of agriculture's exemption

- b. Potential new legislation, including new energy

**5. Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)**

- a. County planning funding (Operating Budget)
- b. Landowner cost-share (Capital Budget)
- c. Buffers

**6. Agricultural Tax Incentives**

- a. Ag Wholesale B&O Exemption
- b. Sales Tax Exemption on Fertilizers and Pesticides
- c. Off-Road Fuel Exemption
- d. Ag Equipment Repair Parts Exemption

**7. Labor**

- a. Flexibility/Relief from Agriculture Overtime