

## **Oregon Wheat Growers League and Oregon Wheat Commission Joint Meeting September 16, 2024, Minutes**

### **Call to Order:**

Pursuant to notice made by press release to newspapers of general and local circulation throughout the state and e-mailed to persons on the mailing list of the Commission a Joint Meeting of the Oregon Wheat Growers League (OWGL) and the Oregon Wheat Commission (OWC) was held at the Port of Morrow Riverfront Center in Boardman, OR with video/phone conference availability. President Bingaman and Chair Hansell called the meeting to order at 12:50 p.m.

OWGL Board members in attendance for all or part of the meeting include Wade Bingaman – President, Erin Hansell Heideman – Vice President, Thad Eakin, Secretary/Treasurer, Collin Crocker – Past President, Kyle Bender, Deacon Heideman, Jake Lindsay, Josh Macnab, Kurt Melville, Josh Duling, Bryan Bachelder and Ryan Rea. OWGL staff members present were Amanda Hoey and Jason Flowers.

Commissioners in attendance for all or part of the meeting included Tyler Hansell – Chair, David Brewer – Vice Chair, Jason Middleton - Secretary/Treasurer, Jerry Marguth, Dana Tuckness, Brent Martin and David Prybylowski. Commission staff members present were Amanda Hoey, Tana Simpson, and Corey Shrader.

### **Introduction of Visitors**

In addition to the above-listed OWGL Board members, Commissioners and staff, the following guests were in attendance for all or part of the meeting: Dave Losh, Jake Westlin, Tyllor Ledford, Neil Maunu, Anthony Peña, Abbi Russell and Tom Chastain.

### **CEO Report and Staff Update**

League Program Director Flowers reported on discussions with the Columbia Basin team for USDA Natural Resource Conversation Service and the Umatilla Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). In response to grower requests, they are considering an RCPP application for replacement of diesel engines.

*Discussion: The League Board discussed the applicability of the program and if it would be geographically constrained. Program Director Flowers noted that the initial application would likely be pursued in the Columbia Basin and could be taken up but other SWCD partners in the future.*

CEO Hoey provided a report for the League. She stated that the EPA has released the final Herbicide Strategy and is accepting comments on the draft Insecticide Strategy. She shared information on a letter developed by the American Soybean Association which is available to growers to express concerns about the complexity of the strategy, the cost of implementation and areas of vulnerability. CEO Hoey provided an update of the fertilizer situation and the impacts resulting from the Canadian rail strike. She stated that the League has scheduled a meeting for valley growers following the announcement of the permanent closure of the TEMCO-Irving facility in Portland. Pacifcor will be in attendance to talk through their available services for truck dumps at CET. CEO Hoey reviewed the line up for the Oregon day at the upcoming Tri-

state Grain Growers Convention.

CEO Hoey provided a report on Commission activities, including updates on recent trade teams, the completion of crop quality testing for the year, and the status of the Commission office move. She noted that the Commission has received approvals of our last two motions for summary judgement in the ongoing assessment enforcement and is now seeking a judgement returning our attorney fees.

CEO Hoey provided a communications report, noting that the League has contracted with ajae Communications for social media support, newsletter compilation and three magazine articles per issue. She requested contribution of photos and content for social media.

### **County and Commissioner Status Updates**

League board members and Commissioners generally reported some early seeding starting but most are still waiting for some moisture to plant. Overall production and quality of the crop was good across much of the state. The Willamette Valley reported delivery issues following the closure of the TEMCO-Irving facility, Central Oregon struggled with storms and weather timing throughout their crop year and Wallowa County reported that they are currently harvesting their spring wheat.

### **Trade and Markets Update**

Tyllor Ledford, U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) Market Analyst, reported on world wheat market and trade. She addressed the challenges with the current price of wheat and noted that since the peak at the start of the war in Ukraine, world wheat prices have been trending lower driven by Russia and we are seeing farmers around the world struggling with profitability. Total wheat demand is down 12 MMT and the overall supply is still out pacing demand by 8.1 MMT. The market remains concerned about the continued draw down in ending stocks. She reported that USW exports are up 31% over last year and exports to Asia alone are up over 20% with 55% of that coming through PNW ports. Soft White exports are up 65% over last year due to favorable spreads between white wheat and Australian wheat and we are recapturing some of the markets lost in 22/23. She noted that the U.S. Federal Reserve is expected to decrease interest rates which does put some upward pressure on prices but overall, a cheaper dollar typically supports increased exports. The managed money positions have created some volatility in the market as they cover short positions.

### **River System Update**

Neil Mauna, Executive Director for PNWA, Anthony Peña, Government Relations Manager for PNWA and Abbi Russell, River Values Campaign Manager with Maul, Foster and Alongi updated the group on the Columbia-Snake river system. Neil provided an overview of the activities and membership of PNWA as a nonpartisan/nonprofit organization focused on keeping the river operable. They have been effective in engage in federal advocacy, including for the Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA) which authorizes Corp of Engineers projects on the river system, working to ensure that the funding and policies are in place to manage the river system.

PNWA has been very involved in the negotiations of the Columbia River Treaty and there is currently an agreement in principle. The current tentative agreement will likely have effects on

river flows from year to year but the impacts to river operations are still unknown.

Anthony Peña reported on the PNWA's engagement on the Lower Snake River Dam issues. Any consideration of dam breaching would require an act of Congress. While there are currently several studies exploring the impacts of dam breaching, PNWA is monitoring these explorations and is working proactively to avoid any attempts at breaching. PNWA has also made an effort this year to expand the Columbia River system issues to a national platform as they are applicable to other river systems as well.

Abbi Russell reported on the River Values Campaign. The campaign started in the 1990's with the goal of reaching and educating people who were previously unaware of river issues. In recent years, the focus has moved to social media and video exclusively. They found significant success in Tik Tok outreach for reaching younger viewers.

### **County and Commissioner Status Updates (Continued)**

League Vice President Hansell-Heideman introduced some of the activities the League is pursuing in preparation for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. She asked growers to consider outreach activities that may be effective for the coming year. The group discussed ideas that would engage and educate both the local wheat growing communities but also the general public.

### **Research and OSU**

CEO Hoey reported on the variety release for hard white wheats Millie and Irv. They had been previously approved for release, but the PVP paperwork was never completed. Dr. Krause contacted CEO Hoey to discuss the feasibility of continuing with release given the changing market conditions. When initially approved, they were anticipated for segregation and delivery to the Pendleton Flour Mill. With the loss of the facility, it is unlikely the program could recoup the cost of the PVP expense and release could complicate wheat handling. Consensus was to not proceed further with the PVP application and remove the varieties from active release publications, until conditions change.

Tom Chastain, Department Head of the Crop and Soil Science, reported that the Department is doing very well with enrollments up 24% over 2023 which is much better than the University as a whole. They are also in the process of filling several positions including his position. They have selected his replacement, with an anticipated start date of December 1, 2024. They have also filled the Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist in Weed Science with a start date of today. He stated that there will be some budget cuts to Faculty Research Assistant (FRA) funding support that will affect five positions in the cereal research programs. The Department, and specifically Dr. Margaret Krause, have been very prolific in grant writing to fund their efforts this year. The Department is still in discussions with Dr. Kruase about the feasibility of continuing the barley breeding program.

*Discussion: The Commission pressed Tom Chastain for information on the timeline in which cuts to the FRA will occur. The Commission noted that the protection of core programs and positions is critical and expressed concerns with the lack of communication in advance of budget cuts which does not allow programs to prepare for changes. Tom noted that concerns should be expressed to the Department Head, Dean Simonich and Associate Dean Donkin. Tom expressed that the department is working to*

*ensure the funding, collected through royalties are retained in the breeding program and following discussion with CEO Hoey, has made the formal request that dollars currently at the Department be shifted directly to the wheat breeder.*

**Adjourn**

President Bingaman adjourned the meeting at 3:56 p.m.

**Approved**

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Wade Bingaman, OWGL President

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Tyler Hansell, OWC Chair

*Prepared and submitted by OWC Associate Administrator, Tana Simpson*