



PEDAL TO THE METAL



MICHELLE HENNINGS

Age: 45
Occupation: Executive director, Washington Association of Wheat Growers
Hometown: Ritzville, Wash.
Family: Husband Scott ("I married my high school sweetheart"), daughter Harlee, 16, and son Hayes, 14
Hobbies: Rodeo, coaching youth basketball and softball, family time on the river
Website: <https://www.wawg.org/>

Red

Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, behind the wheel of the pickup truck she plans to race during the women's division pickup race as part of the Lind Combine Demolition Derby.

Washington wheat leader races at annual Lind event

By MATTHEW WEAVER
 Capital Press

RITZVILLE, Wash. — When the Lind Combine Demolition Derby returns in June with its truck races and other events, Michelle Hennings will be back behind the wheel of her Ford pickup, jockeying for the top spot.

Hennings, executive director for the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, has raced in the derby's "powder puff" women's division fast-dash car and pickup

trucks since 2015.

The derby was postponed for two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but resumes June 10-11 in Lind, Wash.

This year, Hennings will compete in the car races in addition to the pickup races, driving a purple 1981 Ford Mustang and a black 1977 Ford pickup, both modified for the event.

Family friend Randy Gray provides the vehicles she drives.

He races during the derby, too, and asked if Hennings wanted to compete.

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Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Michelle Hennings in the driver's seat of her specially modified pickup truck. She races the truck as part of the Lind, Wash, Demolition Derby celebration.

Machinery shortages hinder sales despite strong demand



Brayden Sechser, a farm equipment salesman, demonstrates a tractor at the Brim Tractor dealership in Salem, Ore.

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
 Capital Press

SALEM — It's not a great time for farmers who are "looky-loos" to shop for machinery, said salesman Brayden Sechser.

Equipment is disappearing quickly from dealership lots, and in some cases, it's pre-sold before even arriving, said Sechser, who works at Brim Tractor in Salem, Ore.

"It just moves too fast," he said.

Brisk sales would seem like good news for farm machinery dealers and manufacturers, but experts say supply shortages are preventing them from fully capitalizing on demand.

Dan Brim, who owns Brim Tractor's

eight dealerships in Oregon and Washington, said he simply can't keep popular products such as compact tractors and excavators in stock.

"We are constantly running out of the most popular types of equipment," Brim said. "I believe our sales would be 30% higher if we had a consistent flow of the right products."

That problem is widespread and it's reflected in industry statistics compiled by the Association of Equipment Manufacturers.

Compared to this time last year, unit sales during the first third of 2022 have decreased roughly 14% for two-wheel-drive tractors, 8% for four-wheel-drive tractors and 14.5% for self-propelled combines.

The drop in sales volume is entirely due to supply constraints, since farmers are eager to buy new machinery, said Kip Eideberg, AEM's senior vice president of government and industry relations.

"Demand is strong across all our sectors," Eideberg said. "It's unfortunate we can't take advantage of the situation because of these bottlenecks."

There's no immediate relief in sight for the supply chain problems that are throttling farm machinery availability, though legislation before Congress may offer longer-term solutions.

For now, though, a recent AEM survey found that 70% of manufacturers

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Diesel prices mostly flat, but up in California, Idaho

By DON JENKINS
 Capital Press

The U.S. Energy Information Administration reported Monday the retail cost of on-road diesel fell by a few pennies per gallon nationally and in most regions in the past week, but rose again in California, the leader in high fuel prices.

Diesel averaged \$5.57 a gallon in the U.S., down 4.2 cents from a week ago but up \$2.31 from a year ago.

In many regions, including the West Coast, prices topped \$6 a gallon.

California diesel cost \$6.50 a gallon, up 2.5 cents in the past week and \$2.45 in the past year.

In Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii and Nevada diesel averaged \$5.60 a gallon, down 1.16 cents from last week. A year ago, diesel in the region was \$2.20 less.

In Idaho and other Rocky Mountain states, diesel prices rose 3 cents to \$5.49 a gallon, up \$2.13



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

A Washington gas station posts a diesel price slightly higher than the national average May 23.

over the previous year.

The U.S. average price fell for the second week in a row. The biggest declines were 6 cents a gallon in New England and 7 cents in the Gulf Coast.

The EIA attributed diesel prices to the high price of oil and low stocks of diesel. Inventories were relatively low before Russia invaded Ukraine, which caused European countries to further draw on already low reserves.

The diesel shortage has been particularly sharp on the East Coast, which consumes more petroleum projects than it refines.

The region's capacity to refine diesel was reduced by 100,000 barrels a day when the Philadelphia Energy Solutions refinery closed in 2019 after an explosion, according to the EIA.

Diesel imports to East Coast ports over the previous seven weeks averaged 76,000 barrels a day, compared to 227,000 barrels a day in 2021, the EIA reported. Last Coast diesel inventories are 47% lower than last year.

As a result, East Coast diesel prices have risen more than other region since January, the EIA said Monday.

West Coast and Rocky Mountain diesel inventories, though down compared to a year ago, are much closer to average reserves over the previous five years.

Unadjusted for inflation, diesel prices are at record levels. Diesel will have to rise to about \$6.20 a gallon nationwide to break the inflation-adjusted mark set in June 2008.