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SHAPING A NEW FARM BILL



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press
Nicole Berg, president of the National Association of Wheat Growers, on her farm near Paterson, Wash.

NAWG president Nicole Berg wants to keep farm families in business



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Nicole Berg talks about a new farm bill and crop insurance.

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

PATERSON, Wash. — Nicole Berg is the best person to sit next to during a wheat industry meeting.

She's quick with a laugh, a joke or good-natured teasing. It has a calming effect on the rest of the room.

Perhaps Berg is so at ease because she knows what she's talking about during the serious moments: She can easily shift gears and talk to decision makers about what crop insurance or high input prices mean to farmers.

A fourth-generation farmer in Paterson, Wash., Berg farms with her father and two

brothers. They grow dryland and irrigated wheat, bluegrass seed, field corn, sweet corn, sweet peas, green beans and alfalfa.

Berg, 51, took over as president of the National Association of Wheat Growers in March. She will serve a one-year term.

"Nicole is a transformational and fearless leader for our organization and the industry," said Chandler Goule, NAWG's CEO. "She challenges the industry to explore innovative and creative approaches to different issues and uses her diverse farming and crop insurance background to bring a unique perspective to the industry and policy conversations."

NAWG recently identified its priorities for the next farm bill. Among them are

See Berg, Page 11

NICOLE BERG

Age: 51

Occupation: Farmer; president, National Association of Wheat Growers

Hometown: Paterson, Wash.

Education: Bachelor of science degree in agricultural communications, Washington State University

Family: Farms with her father and two brothers

Hobbies: Travel, cooking

Website: <https://wheatworld.org/>

Reclamation sues over irrigation water diversions by Klamath Drainage District

By **GEORGE PAVLEN**
Capital Press

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. — The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is suing an irrigation district in the Klamath Project for allegedly making illegal water diversions in the midst of a multi-year drought that has left the basin exceptionally dry.

Earlier this year, Reclamation announced it would provide a limited water allocation for the Project, which serves roughly 200,000 acres of farmland in Southern Oregon and Northern California. That included zero water for districts with junior rights.

However, Reclamation argues the Klamath Drainage District in Klamath Falls, Ore. is taking water despite its status as a junior contractor.



George Pavlen/Capital Press

Upper Klamath Lake

A complaint was filed July 5 in U.S. District Court in Medford, Ore., seeking an injunction against

KDD to halt the "unauthorized diversions." "KDD is bound by contract to

respect Reclamation's allocation determinations," the lawsuit states. "Reclamation has clearly communicated to KDD that (the district) is not currently authorized to make any diversions during the 2022 irrigation season, but KDD has refused to cease its diversions."

Reclamation claims it first learned of KDD's diversions on or around May 1. The agency had previously issued its 2022 operations plan for the Klamath Project in April, allocating 50,000 acre-feet of water for irrigators — just 15% of normal demand.

Project operations must also account for several species of endangered fish, providing water for suckers in Upper Klamath Lake and coho salmon in the lower Klamath River.

Three consecutive years of

drought has made it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to meet all Project objectives, Reclamation acknowledged. According to hydrologic records, 2021 was the region's driest year in terms of inflows to Upper Klamath Lake.

The Klamath Tribes already sued the federal government in May, claiming that any water diversions for the Project this year will further threaten the survival of endangered suckers, known as C'waam and Koptu.

In turn, Reclamation claims that KDD's diversions interfere with the agency's obligations under the Endangered Species Act and decrease the amount of water that will be available later this summer for senior rights holders.

See Water, Page 11

Pacific NW wheat harvest delayed

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

The cold, wet spring has delayed the Pacific Northwest wheat harvest, industry leaders say.

"We are 10 days to three weeks behind, depending on the farmer," said Casey Chumrau, executive director of the Idaho Wheat Commission. "Normally, we would have already started at this time."

The delay increases the risk of rain, hail or thunderstorms, but Chumrau said wheat quality and production can be just as good as a normal season.

USDA's Natural Agricultural Statistics Service



Casey Chumrau



Amanda Hoey



Glen Squires

rates 64% of the Idaho winter wheat crop, 70% of the Washington winter wheat crop and 75% of the Oregon winter wheat crop as good to excellent, and 66% of the Oregon spring wheat crop, 68% of the Idaho spring wheat crop and 98% of the Washington spring wheat crop as good to excellent.

A few farmers have

"The impact is mostly beneficial, given the fact that we did have that additional precipitation in that key time frame," Hoey said. "We'll expect to see that bump in yield, especially over what we saw in 2021."

The region's wheat harvest was reduced about 32% last year due to drought.

Harvest start in Washington is delayed about a week and a half or so, said Glen Squires, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission.

"Washington is in much better shape than last year for sure," Squires said. "Topsoil is now about 73% adequate to surplus, mostly adequate, and subsoil moisture is 82% adequate to surplus, mostly adequate."

The increased moisture means some weed and disease pressure, the leaders say, citing stripe rust and some freeze damage.

"I think a lot of farmers still feel they would like a little bit more" moisture,

Chumrau said. "The crops are looking good, so we can't complain too much."

Wheat prices have declined from a \$12 per bushel peak in mid-May. Soft white wheat ranged from \$9.30 per bushel to \$9.75 per bushel on the Portland market.

"Nine dollars looks a lot lower after the more recent highs, but historically, we need to be very happy with \$9 wheat as something that helps us cover the cost of production, even though we have had elevated input costs," Chumrau said.

Prices are up from \$8.07 per bushel at the same time last year, Squires noted.



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