

Wyoming Agriculture

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FARM BUREAU® FEDERATION

Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation sets policy

Natural assets, water storage, and federal government overreach were among the many topics included in policies adopted at the 105th Annual Meeting of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB). Held Nov. 7-9, 2024 in Casper, Wyo., the meeting is an important step in the grassroots policy development process of the Farm Bureau Federation. The need for the protection of property rights and

individual freedoms resonated through the discussions as Farm Bureau Federation members developed policy.

“Our grassroots policy development process provides a solid foundation for the advocacy work we do for our members,” said Kerin Clark, WyFB Executive Vice President. “The work we do is guided by a process that begins with members discussing policy issues of concern at their county meet-

ings. The resolutions that are passed by voting delegates of each county are discussed and voted on again at the district meeting and again at the state meeting.”

WFBF SETS POLICY ... Page 20

Todd Fornstrom elected to ninth term as Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation President

BY CALLIE HANSON
FOR WYOMING AGRICULTURE

Laramie County Farmer Todd Fornstrom was elected to his ninth term as President of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) at the organization's 105th Annual Meeting held Nov. 7-9 in Casper.



Todd Fornstrom

“I look forward to the years ahead and to the next set of WyFB leadership. Thank you all for your faith in me, and I look forward to another good year of continuing to advocate for Wyoming's farmers and ranchers.”

PRESIDENT FORNSTROM ... Page 11

Jim Geesey honored with WyFB Distinguished Service Award

BY CALLIE HANSON
FOR WYOMING AGRICULTURE

Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company (MWFBI) President and CEO Jim Geesey was awarded the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) Distinguished Service Award at the organization's 105th Annual Meeting. Presented November 8, 2024 in Casper, the award is given to those who have gone above

and beyond in their service to agriculture.

WyFB President Todd Fornstrom noted the relationship between the Farm Bureau Federation and Mountain West Farm Bureau Insurance started in 1948 when Farm Bureau Federation members saw a need for, and started, an insurance company. Seventy-six years later the relationship remains strong.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ... Page 15



Jim Geesey (left) received the 2024 Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Distinguished Service Award. WyFB President Todd Fornstrom (right) congratulated Geesey. *KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.*

Wyoming Senator Cheri Steinmetz honored with WyFB Leadership Award

BY CALLIE HANSON
FOR WYOMING AGRICULTURE

Wyoming State Senator Cheri Steinmetz was awarded the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) Leadership Award at the organization's 105th Annual Meeting. Presented Nov. 8, 2024 in Casper, the award is given to those who have devoted much time to the betterment of agriculture in Wyoming through their leadership in the Farm Bureau Federation and beyond.

“When Farm Bureau lobbies for something at the legislature, I know it comes from the grassroots people of this state and that's why it's so important to me,” Steinmetz noted on her deep respect for the Federation and its mission.

With a strong background in agriculture, Senator Cheri Steinmetz has a deep connection to Wyoming's rural way of life, a passion for the land, and a love for the communities that make up her district and state.

LEADERSHIP AWARD ... Page 11



WyFB Director-at-Large Lane Hageman (left) presented Senator Cheri Steinmetz (right) with the 2024 WyFB Leadership Award at the 105th annual meeting of the organization. *KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.*

Wyoming Farm Bureau volunteers at food bank to give back to the community

BY CALLIE HANSON
FOR WYOMING AGRICULTURE

Members of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) joined forces to help their communities by volunteering at the Food Bank of Wyoming during the 105th annual meeting, following multiple successful volunteer ef-

forts through the Young Farmer and Rancher (YF&R) Committee.

The event was spearheaded by the WyFB YF&R committee, which has worked with the food bank in the past. The group's involvement is part of a broader mission to connect the Farm Bureau with community service outlets across Wyoming.

“Whenever we meet in Casper, we make time to volunteer at the food bank,” said YF&R Committee Member Cody Alps. “We've really enjoyed it, and they've enjoyed having us, so we wanted to offer the same opportunity to the rest of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation.”

VOLUNTEERS ... Page 21

WYOMING
FARM BUREAU® FEDERATION

UPCOMING Events

	<p><i>Young Farmer & Rancher Conference</i> Cody, Wyoming Registration Deadline-January 2</p>	<p>January 16-18 2025</p>
	<p><i>Young Farmer & Rancher Collegiate Discussion Meet</i> Cody, Wyoming Registration Deadline-January 2</p>	<p>January 16-17 2025</p>
	<p><i>Legislative Meeting</i> Cheyenne, Wyoming</p>	<p>January 29-30 2025</p>

www.wyfb.org

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 2025

- 2 Registration deadline for WyFB YF&R Conference
- 2 Registration deadline for WyFB YF&R Collegiate Discussion Meet
- 14 Wyoming Legislature General Session Convenes
- 16-18 WyFB Young Farmer & Rancher Conference-Cody
- 16-17 WyFB YF&R Collegiate Discussion Meet-Cody
- 24-28 American Farm Bureau Convention-San Antonio, Texas
- 29-30 WyFB Legislative Meeting-Cheyenne

February 2025

- 28 WyFB Scholarship application deadline

March 2025

- 7-10 AFBF YF&R/Fusion Conference-Denver, Colorado
- 28 "Ag Books for Kids" contests county deadline

April 2025

- 11 "Ag Books for Kids" contests district deadline

May 2025

- 30 WyFB Membership Committee Meeting-Casper

Visit wyfb.org for event updates

MEMBERS: Stay in the Loop!

Make sure to stay up-to-date with WyFB by signing up for notices. To sign up, please email your preferred email address and phone number to Brooke Settlemeyer at bsettlemeyer@wyfb.org.



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MISSION: To represent the voices of Wyoming farmers and ranchers through grassroots policy development while focusing on protecting private property rights, strengthening agriculture, and supporting farm and ranch families through advocacy, education, and leadership development.

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Agriculture on the Ballot

Zippy Duvall

American Farm Bureau Federation President



The policies that impact our daily lives are often shaped at the local level. Yes, state and national policies are very important, but I cannot help but notice that sometimes we lose sight of what's right in front of us in our communities. Take ballot initiatives for example. We have seen a rising number of efforts to dictate what we can and cannot do on our farms through the ballot initiative process. Across Farm Bureau, we have seen some great victories and some painful defeats. We don't always know where or when the next initiative will pop up, but there is no question that engaging with our communities and sharing agriculture's story is critical to keeping agriculture and our food supply secure.

Ag on the Ballot

While agricultural policy is top of mind for farmers and ranchers, most voters probably don't give much thought to how policy impacts our farms. This is where engagement across Farm Bureau, starting at the county level, is critical. A recent rise in local ballot initiatives crafted by activists who tout policies that ignore science and years of agricultural research serve as a warning. In the most concerning cases, activists use ballot initiatives to take complex issues, like how to care for sows, for example, and boil the issue down to an emotional soundbite.

They bank on the fact that most folks are not familiar with the ins and outs of farming or the varying injury rates among piglets in different housing environments. Sound familiar? Prop 12, a state ballot measure in California, is now dictating how farmers across the country care for certain animals. We're working to help lawmakers understand the unintended consequences for both animal care and interstate commerce, but reversing ballot initiatives is challenging. On the other hand, agriculture has successfully stopped several misguided initiatives. Just this November, back in California again, we saw a tremendous victory for animal agriculture. Let's look at a couple of lessons as we continue to engage.

Grassroots Movements Matter

Ballot initiatives come through a democratic process in more than half of the states in this country. This is where the people's voice can directly impact policy, and that means it's that much more important for voters to have the information they need when they enter the polling booth. And bringing key information and stories right to the people is just what Sonoma County Farm Bureau did. But they didn't do that alone. When they got word that signatures were being collected to put forth a ballot initiative (Measure J) to outlaw large farms

focused on raising livestock, they immediately got to work. They didn't panic: they strategized. A year before the election, they built a coalition to raise funds to counter the measure. They conducted public opinion polling to ensure their messaging addressed concerns and knowledge gaps in the community, and they advocated for a key change in language on the ballot initiative to make it more clear to voters what was being proposed. Sonoma County Farm Bureau and the coalition they formed found ways to engage the public on how this measure would impact their daily lives. They worked to build trust and understanding on animal care. And they succeeded. More than that, they won in a big way. They defeated Measure J with 85% of voters saying "NO" to this policy, which was bad for local agriculture and the business community.

Building Empathy on the Ballot

Although some ballot initiatives have gotten more aggressively anti-agriculture in recent years, we also have seen a number of successful pro-agriculture measures across the country over the last decade. Several state Farm Bureaus have advocated for right to farming measures and other initiatives supporting the economic sustainability of farms.

AG ON THE BALLOT... Page 10

Made for a time such as this

Kerin Clark

Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Executive Vice President



We are gathered at the table for a time such as this. I am humbled to serve as the next executive vice president of this great organization.

Serving Wyoming agriculture has been part of who I am since my early years. Growing up on a family ranch, the values of hard work, honesty, integrity and standing up for what you believe were instilled in me from a young age. I think back to my ancestors and the work they did to produce food when they founded the family ranch in 1887. It reminds me of the quote: "When people don't have food, they only have one problem...when people have food they have lots of problems."

This rings true today. When people have food it becomes easier to seek problems. Often times this can turn into unnecessary regulations impacting food production. We must continually advocate to keep agriculture strong in Wyoming and America.

Many of the issues resurface over time or come in new packages. You all are living these issues right now...from property rights to the push to make non-use a use on federal lands to the changing property

tax structure in Wyoming to endangered species to water and much more. We must remain diligent in our work.

Members...you make a difference. Gathering at the table makes a difference. You are a part of the grassroots efforts happening across the nation through the Farm Bureau family to chart the course for a strong agriculture.

The foundation of the grassroots structure of the Federation is solid. We need volunteers to continue building on the foundation of those who have come before us. Whether you find value in policy work, advocacy, education or leadership... it takes all types of volunteers to contribute to the agriculture advocacy work of the organization.

I have been blessed to work for this organization for 30 years and am honored to continue my service to agriculture through this new role with the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. The opportunity to impact the organization, Wyoming agriculture, WyFB members and staff and more as the executive vice president is one I take on with reverence for those who have made the organization what it is today.

It is important to note I am not replacing anyone. No one can be replaced. I am the next executive vice president of the organization, and I am so very honored to continue building on the strong foundation of our organization. To add the effect of my leadership is an incredible honor that my family and I do not take lightly.

My family's life verse is Proverbs 3:5. We will continue to trust in the Lord as he leads the way in this new role. As He leads the way in this new phase of life for our family, my priorities remain the same ... #1 My faith in Jesus; #2 My family; and #3 Farm Bureau.

I believe we are made for a time such as this. I am honored and humbled by the support of this organization and our members as we continue working to keep agriculture strong here in Wyoming.

As you gather around the table at your home and at Farm Bureau Federation meetings, I ask you to consider what your legacy will be as a Farm Bureau Federation member. We have an ability to make a difference and chart the course for the future.

We are truly made for a time such as this. Let's get to work. ■

National news updates

BY KELLY CARPENTER

Policy Priorities - National Scale

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) met in Casper in November to accomplish its most important job-setting policy from the grassroots level. The voting delegates passed policy to send to the national level at AFBF that could be impactful considering the upcoming lame duck and beginning of President-elect Trump's upcoming administration.

The Sustainability Targets in Agriculture to Incentivize Natural Solutions (SUSTAINS) Act was a very popular resolution topic. Several resolutions ranging from calling for its repeal to opposition to expanding United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary's authority over conservation programs, the clear theme surrounding the law was hardly favorable amongst the voting delegates. Other federally oriented bills include opposition to closing regional mail facilities in Wyoming and increases in the H2-A Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR). Additionally, support for freezing congressional wages if no federal budget is passed, enforcement of federal immigration laws, and reining in federal agencies and their respective employees in terms of instances of abuses of their power.

Rep Hageman introduces legislation to repeal SUSTAINS Act

On November 20, 2024, Representative Harriet Hageman introduced legislation to repeal the SUSTAINS Act. In a statement from Rep. Hageman, she states:

"The SUSTAINS Act, however, is a substantial departure from this system, empowering the outside organizations or individuals to direct federal programs and prescribe the terms for their share of the environmental service benefits developed on the land in which they invest. This new concept poses a serious risk to private property rights and encourages bad actors to weaponize conservation to lock up the productive use of lands in the name of climate change."

USDA and DOI Secretarial Nominees

President-elect Donald Trump has nominated North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum and longtime advisor Brooke Rollins as Department of Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture secretary nominees, respectively. These nominees are generally viewed as favorable toward the agricultural industry and we will continue to watch as their confirmation process continues.

Corporate Transparency Act

On December 3, 2024, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas issued a nationwide preliminary injunction against the enforcement of the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA) and its Beneficial Ownership reporting requirement. The WyFB applauds this ruling and encourages the Fifth Circuit to keep this injunction in place. ■

Legislative update

BY BRETT MOLINE

The Agriculture Committee is taking a bill forward which will take away the power of eminent domain from collector line construction firms. Collector lines are the lines that take the power from wind and solar electricity generation to the main power lines. Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) has policy supporting curtailment of eminent domain powers so will support this bill.

Another bill which will be sponsored by the Agriculture Committee will deal with mandatory electronic livestock identification. The bill directs the Wyoming Livestock Board to obtain MOU's with other states' livestock agencies so current ID systems will be accepted. WyFB will support this bill.

The Agriculture Committee worked several bills which were voted down by the committee. One bill would have changed eminent domain for collector lines. The companies associated with collector lines would have still had the power of eminent domain but it could not be used unless 85 percent of the land or 85 percent of the landowners had agreed to the construction of the collector lines.

Another bill topic that did not pass the committee related to temporary use of water. Currently, temporary uses can be used for a two-year time period, with no limits on

the number of time periods. A bill draft to allow temporary change in use for up to a five-year period, for a total of ten years, was defeated by the committee.

The committee discussed the topic of fencing of school trust lands. This topic was determined to be very complicated with no one size fits all solution. The committee indicated that this topic will be considered for the interim in 2025.

The Revenue Committee will take forward a committee bill to essentially eliminate property taxes on owner-operated houses for two years. WyFB will support this bill. This bill is very similar to a bill passed by the legislature in the 2024 session, but vetoed by the governor.

The Minerals Committee considered a bill to direct utilities to have a wildfire mitigation plan and it was defeated by the committee. This bill was in response to utilities not being able to get liability coverage in other states because of wildfire risks. WyFB is involved in this issue to ensure fire damaged agricultural land would be mitigated. Additionally, if utility companies cannot get liability coverage, at best rates would increase drastically.

The 2025 session will convene January 14, 2025. The Wyoming Legislature is scheduled for 37 days. ■

WYOMING FARM BUREAU® FEDERATION Member-CENTS

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation believes constitutional government, the competitive enterprise system, property rights and individual freedom are necessary components for a strong agriculture, a strong Wyoming and a strong America. We are a centennial grassroots organization that cares about your future. Whether you are a farmer, rancher or a consumer of food...membership is a good investment to secure stability of agriculture here in Wyoming. As a member, WyFB provides you with exclusive benefits as a way to say thank you. These benefits may pay your annual membership fee many times over.

Visit wyfb.org and click on the "Membership/Benefits" tab for a complete listing of value-added benefits.

Current members may access member benefits at www.wyfb.org and click on the "Membership/Benefits" tab. You may also utilize the Farm Bureau Member Benefits app on your phone to access your benefits. **Questions:** email bsettelmeyer@wyfb.org or call 307-721-7723.

FEATURED BENEFIT: Ford





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WyFB YF&R County Involvement Program Recognition

BY KERIN CLARK

The Niobrara County Farm Bureau Federation was recognized for completing two of the four steps (Steps 2 and 3) of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) County Involvement program.

The Farm Bureau Federation's strength is our grassroots involvement. The local level is where it all begins for the work we do for agriculture in Wyoming and across the nation. The WyFB YF&R Committee appreciates the work county Farm Bureau Federations do to surface young leaders in our organization. The County Involvement 4-step program is a way to recognize the counties for their work and encourage growth in county YF&R programs.

The four steps may be completed in any order.

Step 1: One new, regular YF&R member added

Step 2: Send one YF&R aged member to WyFB YF&R Conference and/or WyFB Annual Meeting

Step 3: Have one YF&R aged member actively involved on county level

Step 4: Hold one YF&R meet & greet and/or speaker activity each year.

Program applications are due each year by Nov. 1. Please contact a WyFB YF&R Committee member with questions or for assistance in growing your YF&R program at the county level. ■



WyFB YF&R Vice Chair Cody Alps congratulated Niobrara County FBF President James Kruse for the YF&R County Involvement program. KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.

Collegiate YF&R Discussion Meet competition in January

Being an advocate for agriculture is important and should be a part of everyone's business plan. Develop your leadership and advocacy skills and meet other young farmers and ranchers from around the state and around the nation by participating in the YF&R Collegiate Discussion Meet competition.

The competition will be January 16-17, 2025 in Cody, Wyoming just prior to the start of the WyFB YF&R Conference. Any Wyoming college student with an interest in agriculture is eligible to participate. A major in agriculture is not required for competition. The state winner receives a \$1,000 cash prize and an expense paid trip to

the AFBF national competition March 2025 in Denver, Colo. to compete for college scholarships.

Topics and rules are available at wyfb.org. Collegiate Discussion Meet applications are due Jan. 2, 2025. Contact WyFB YF&R Coordinator Kerin Clark at 307-534-6175 or kclark@wyfb.org with questions. ■

Retiring WyFB YF&R Committee members recognized

BY KERIN CLARK

YF&R is...Leadership Development. Future. Networking. Personal Development. Agriculture. Opportunity. People. Wyoming.

The goal of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) Young Farmer & Rancher program is to give young farmers and ranchers, serving as a committee within the organization structure, the opportunity to recommend programs and activities that will encourage participation of young farmers and ranchers in both the YF&R program and the Farm Bureau Federation. The WyFB YF&R Committee is composed of two members per district (five districts) and one at-large position. This year the WyFB YF&R Committee recognized two retiring committee member positions; Tucker Hamilton and Kelli & Shawn Chouinard who served from 2021-2024.

Both Hamilton and Kelli Chouinard served as WyFB YF&R State Chair during their tenure on the committee. This position gave them a seat on the WyFB Board of Directors.

Hamilton shared two top points as take aways from his experience with the YF&R Committee. "Those are my connections with the other young farmers and ranchers across the state of Wyoming and outside of the state, and my leadership skills that have been developed within the committee," Hamilton said.

"Being a part of YF&R is really an amazing experience. You get to travel, meet others who share your values, debate with inquisitive minds, and enjoy interesting ex-

periences with your friends," he continued. "The committee also gives you ample opportunity to develop your leadership skills, improve your public speaking, think in new ways, and springboard into other leadership roles after you leave the committee."

"I will continue to recruit YF&R members because I think it is an excellent opportunity for young people to develop themselves and have fun doing it," Hamilton concluded. "It is also a good introduction to the Farm Bureau Federation."

Chouinard explained that when she moved to Wyoming five years ago the WyFB YF&R program felt like the right fit. "I was able to step up and take on more leadership roles including the WyFB YF&R State Chair and with that was able to be a part of the board of directors for a year and that was very eye opening," Chouinard said. "I truly appreciate and value that experience on the board of directors."

She expressed that the people of Farm Bureau are a family and with that shared her excitement for continuing to see the next generation at annual meeting ready to step up and participate in the policy development process.

WyFB YF&R Committee members are provided with vast amounts of training on leadership qualities and issues briefings as well as honing other professional skills. The committee members are a dedicated group of volunteers who work hard to ensure the ideals of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation are upheld and continue to represent young farmers and ranchers throughout Wyoming. ■



The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) thanked two retiring WyFB YF&R Committee members for their service on the WyFB YF&R Committee. WyFB YF&R Vice Chair Cody Alps (right) recognized Kelli Chouinard at annual meeting. Not pictured: Shawn Chouinard and Tucker Hamilton. KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.

YOUNG FARMER & RANCHER CONFERENCE



THE HEART OF AGRICULTURE

JANUARY 16-18, 2025 • CODY, WYOMING



Conference Agenda

Thursday, Jan. 16, 2025

4 p.m. Collegiate Discussion Meet (First 2 rounds)

Friday, Jan. 17, 2025

- 8:15 AM Registration / Check-In
- 8:30 AM **Y-Tex and George Dairy Tours**
- 12:00 PM **Lunch**
- 1:00 PM Registration/Check-In
- 1:30 PM **Welcome**
- 1:45 PM **Mindshift**
Ron Rabou-Keynote Speaker

Drawing from his rich personal experiences in agriculture and diverse entrepreneurial ventures, Ron reveals how our traditional understanding of achieving success and accomplishment can often be misleading. He shares compelling stories and insights that challenge common perceptions, encouraging the audience to rethink their approach to personal and professional growth."

- 3:15 PM **Networking Break**
- 3:45 PM **Federal Environmental Policy Update**
Courtney Briggs, AFBF Senior Director of Government Affairs

Courtney Briggs, Senior Director of Government Affairs at the American Farm Bureau Federation will discuss many

of the environmental issues facing our industry. With a new Administration and the start of the 119th Congress, Courtney will outline AFBF's legislative and regulatory priorities ranging from the definition of "waters of the United States," PFAS liability and conservation issues.

- 4:30 PM **Collegiate Discussion Meet Final Round**
- 6:00 PM **Social/Dinner/Collegiate Discussion Meet Awards**

Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025

- 7:00 AM **Breakfast**
- 8:00 AM **Nutrition and Management Heading into Calving**
Steve Paisley,
University of Wyoming-SAREC
- 9:00 AM **Break**
- 9:15 AM **Using Your Financials to Measure Your Operational Health**
Robbie Alexander,
Farm Credit Services of America

Balance sheets are the score card of your operation and one piece of the financial picture. Balance sheets can also be a valuable tool to gauge if your operation is

Registration and Hotel Deadline - Jan. 2, 2025

The conference is hosted by the WyFB YF&R Committee for farmers and ranchers; all ages are welcome (no membership necessary).

The registration form is due Jan. 2, 2025. The registration fee is \$140. Any registrations after Jan. 2 will be \$165. Visit wyfb.org for the registration form.

The host hotel is the Holiday Inn in Cody. The reservation deadline is Jan. 2, 2025. Call the Holiday Inn Cody directly at 307-587-5555 and mention "ZYY-Young Farmer & Rancher Committee" for the conference rate of \$124 plus tax.

WyFB YF&R Stipend Application - Plank Stewardship Initiative

The Plank Stewardship Initiative is providing up to ten (10) \$400 stipends to cover registration, hotel and travel costs. The stipend is available to attendees residing in Crook, Weston, Niobrara, Converse, Campbell, Sheridan, Johnson and Natrona counties. The application is due Jan. 2, 2025 and is available at wyfb.org with the YF&R Conference event registration information.

growing or begging to face stress. We will take some time to give you the resources to build that information yourself and let it guide you to operational excellence. During our time together we will build a better understanding of working capital, owners' equity and financial ratios that affect you.

- 10:45 AM **Speed Table Talk with the WyFB YF&R Committee**
 - What is WyFB? Opportunities available through WyFB YF&R?
 - Grassroots Policy Development
- 11:15 AM **It's Weather, Not Climate**
Don Day, Meteorologist
- 12:00 PM **Networking Lunch**
- 1:15 PM **Agriculture Policy with the WyFB Policy Team**

What are the top issues impacting rural Wyoming and America? WyFB's policy staff will discuss agricultural issues that impact Wyoming farmers and ranchers. Discussion will also focus on how Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation policy is developed from the grassroots and implemented in our work to keep agriculture strong in Wyoming and America.

- 2:30 PM **Closing Keynote**
Caitlin and Jason Keck,
American Farm Bureau Federation
Young Farmer & Rancher
Committee Members
- 3:30 PM Closing Remarks-WyFB YF&R Committee

Funding provided by



Cody Alps elected as WyFB Young Farmer & Rancher State Chair

Cody Alps, of Yoder, will take the reins of the WyFB Young Farmer & Rancher Committee as the State Chair and is excited to get started. A farmer and rancher in Goshen County, Alps has been a part of WyFB YF&R since 2021. This position holds a seat on the WyFB Board of Directors.

"I started my YF&R experience in 2021 at a conference in Douglas, Wyoming. I got roped into attending by a friend...but jumped in feet first," Alps said. "One of my main goals as the newly elected state YF&R chair is to continue to grow participation at our winter conference." ■



Cody Alps, WyFB YF&R State Chair

Wyoming Livestock Board meeting

BY KELLY CARPENTER

The Wyoming Livestock Board (WLSB) hosted a full room in the Thyra Thomson Building in Casper on Nov. 15, 2024. The reason behind the strong turnout was the Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) implementation agenda item. Listed speakers for the ADT were Rep. Harriet Hageman, state Sen. Cheri Steinmetz and LeAnn Hunting representing the Utah Department of Agriculture

prior to taking public comment. Each speaker made the case to move forward with interstate Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to continue interstate commerce for cattle and bison producers while bypassing the federal electronic identification rule that went into effect Nov. 5.

The rule states that sexually intact cattle and bison 18 months and older must have an electronic ID ear tag in their ear. Many livestock industry stakeholders have remained concerned about the federal ADT rule and implications for states like Wyoming. Wyoming is one of few states in how its situated in the beef supply chain. Livestock producers in Wyoming are most often the cow/calf producer that sell to the background/feeder/out-of-state and slaughtered elsewhere. In-state producers are bearing the burden of the regulation of increased costs of ear tags and regulatory hurdles with interstate movement. Simply put, Wyoming is an export state and will be disproportionately impacted by implementation of the rule.

The proposed MOUs do not have many details clearly decided on to date, but they are in a strong conceptual format. The concept of these agreements would center around maintaining existing methods of livestock identification, whatever that looks like between states, and proceeding with interstate cattle and bison movement based on those agreed upon terms. States like Utah, according to testimony from Hunting, are concerned in a

similar manner to Wyoming producers that ADT will be more difficult for cow/calf states than more highly concentrated cattle feeder states.

Kerin Clark, Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) Executive Vice President (EVP), testified reiterating WyFB policy that "Farm Bureau opposes a government run, mandatory, individual animal identification system beyond the existing identification systems." Supporting WyFB policy by also being in attendance at the meeting were Brett Moline, Director of Governmental and Public Affairs, and Kelly Carpenter, National Affairs. All of the WyFB staff stressed the fact that we have existing animal traceability programs in place that can trace potential disease transmission.

In addition, Clark along with U.S. Representative Harriet Hageman, state Representative Chip Neiman and state Senator Cheri Steinmetz reiterated how burdensome the rule truly will be in terms of time and money to our state's ranching families.

Representative Hageman focused her comments on mandatory ADT in other countries and its devastating impacts on European ranching families. In those countries that have implemented ADT, taxes have been imposed on ranchers

based on how many head of cattle they have, or they are forced to cull some of their herd. Additionally, Rep. Hageman was able to provide information from the New Civil Liberties Alliance lawsuit challenging the USDA – APHIS on the rule on the grounds that they no longer have the deference to interpret the Animal Health Protection Act to mandate an electronic traceability rule.

Rep. Neiman added his background as a cattle producer to his comments, as well as the law that he got through the Wyoming Legislature in 2021 to maintain existing forms of livestock identification. He also brought up various aspects that states like Wyoming and Utah will be the "guinea pigs" of the federal ADT mandate and that we need to level the playing field across all states.

Sen. Steinmetz pointed out that there is at least one small independent metal tag maker that would be willing to continue to manufacture those types of tags if the demand persists among the mandate infringing on basic civil liberties.

Finally, the WLSB concluded their ADT discussion by passing two resolutions. The resolutions passed expressed the WLSB's request to move forward with exploring interstate MOUs and showing opposition to the current ADT rule. ■

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LEGISLATIVE MEETING

January 29–30, 2025

CHEYENNE, WYOMING

WyFB Legislative Meeting Jan. 29-30

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation 2025 Legislative Meeting will be in Cheyenne on Jan. 29-30 featuring a new format.

The Legislative Meeting will begin with a member dinner to include legislative updates and membership awards on Wednesday, January 29th in the evening at the Laramie County Community College Center for Conferences.

The meeting will move to the Wyoming

Capitol Building on Wednesday, Jan. 30. Members will have the opportunity to observe legislative committee meetings, tour the Capitol and watch the Legislature prior to a Legislative Luncheon. The luncheon is for the legislators and WyFB meeting attendees and will be held onsite at the Capitol. The meeting will adjourn that afternoon.

Agenda, registration and hotel information will be available at wyfb.org on the events tab. ■

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Regulations, resources, and rising stakes: Western ag's policy challenges

BY CALLIE HANSON
FOR WYOMING AGRICULTURE

Shelby Hagenauer, Senior Director of Government Affairs at the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), joined the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation to discuss how federal regulations are impacting farmers and ranchers across Wyoming and the greater Western region. She spoke to members attending the 105th annual meeting on Nov. 8, 2024 in Casper.

Hagenauer emphasized that ongoing advocacy is crucial to protecting agricultural interests. Hagenauer highlighted the importance of engaging more than ever in regulatory processes, stating, "We're making sure our voices are heard on issues affecting public lands and water."

With numerous changes on the horizon, she noted Farm Bureau is intensifying efforts to address the needs of ranchers and farmers facing evolving regulations. One of the pressing concerns involves the Bureau of Reclamation's post-2026 guidelines for the Colorado River, an issue critical for western water management.

These guidelines, set to expire in 2026, determine water flow and distribution down the Colorado River and affect millions of acres of agricultural land and urban water supplies across the basin. "These guidelines are crucial because they dictate how water is moved down the river, how much stays in Lake Powell and Lake Mead, and how it's delivered downstream," Hagenauer said.

Federal support for water infrastructure projects has grown recently, Hagenauer explained, with significant funds now available through bills like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. "This is unusual—when I worked at the Bureau, we often didn't have resources for all the needs for irrigation projects," she noted.

With funding now accessible, the Bureau of Reclamation is encouraging irrigation districts and stakeholders to reach out for assistance on projects that improve water efficiency, such as replacing open canals with pipes. Hagenauer stressed the importance of this opportunity: "This bipartisan support for funding means that money is available, and the Bureau is actively pushing it out the door."

Another area where Farm Bureau en-



AFBF Senior Director of Government Affairs Shelby Hagenauer addressed the members at annual meeting focusing on western agriculture policy issues. KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.

agement has increased is the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) new public lands rule. The rule has caused significant concern among ranchers and other public land users in the West. Hagenauer explained that the Farm Bureau recently filed a lawsuit against the rule, which she said could impact grazing rights and other traditional land uses.

The new rule includes provisions for restoration and mitigation leases, which aim to offset environmental impacts from renewable energy projects, such as solar and wind. However, ranchers worry about how these leases might affect their land use. "A solar project in the Southwest might seek a conservation lease to mitigate its environmental footprint, but the BLM has to ensure that grazing rights are respected," she noted.

A particular point of contention in the rule is the BLM elevating and promoting the establishment of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), which are intended to protect sensitive habitats but may restrict traditional uses like grazing. Hagenauer stressed the need for public input in ACEC designations, warning that

without it, these designations might not reflect the needs of those who rely on the multiple use of land for their livelihoods.

The recent elections could also shape congressional agriculture policy in the coming months, Hagenauer explained. A change in control of the Senate will allow Senate Republicans to set their own

priorities in committees and on the Senate floor, affecting agencies that oversee agriculture.

However, she noted, bipartisan support will still be required for major legislation, such as the Farm Bill, which remains critical for programs like crop insurance and farm programs that support agricultural stability.

Beyond immediate changes, Hagenauer touched on broader policy issues like border security, immigration, and tax cuts, which could impact agriculture. With the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act set to expire next year, she noted, this could have significant financial consequences for the industry.

"If those cuts aren't extended, we could see an impact on the sector in the billions of dollars," Hagenauer said, underscoring the Farm Bureau's ongoing advocacy to secure extensions. She also voiced concerns about an increasing regulatory burden, particularly in the West, where environmental and species protections could shift agricultural practices.

Hagenauer emphasized the importance of Farm Bureau members staying engaged and providing feedback, especially as these regulations evolve. "Your input is critical for our advocacy work," she said.

"Whether it's water infrastructure, land use rules, or tax policies, we're committed to representing the needs of our members in the West and across the country," Hagenauer concluded. ■

WYOMING FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION AUCTION

Silent and live auctions were held at the WyFB 105th Annual Meeting. All proceeds went to the Wyoming Farm Bureau Foundation. Contributions to the Wyoming Farm Bureau Foundation help support agriculture efforts in Wyoming. Visit the Foundation tab at wyfb.org to learn more.

TOTAL RAISED: \$10,110

A huge thank you to Andy Schwab for his auctioneer services, the County Farm Bureau Federations who donated items to the auction and the buyers who made this event a success!

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WyFB Membership Awards

BY KERIN CLARK AND BROOKE SETTELMAYER

Membership supports the Farm Bureau Federation's voice in the work we do to strengthen private property rights, strengthen agriculture and support farm and ranch families. Membership acquisition and retention is vital to the success of the Federation. WyFB recognized county Farm Bureau Federations for their membership work at the 105th annual meeting of the organization held in November.

The esteemed Bronze Boot and Bronze Hat awards are traveling trophies that recognize membership success. The Bronze Boot award is given to the first county to reach membership quota as well as sign one new regular member who is between the ages of 18-35. Big Horn County Farm Bureau Federation won this award for the fourth year in a row in 2024.

The Big Horn County Farm Bureau Federation also had the greatest increase in Century Club members from the previous year. They received the Bronze Hat award and will be able to display the traveling trophy for a year.

MWFBMIC VP Memberships Awarded to Counties

Specific membership achievements are recognized by awarding the Century Club memberships of MWFBMIC vice presidents to the winning county Farm Bureau Federations. In 1948, members of the Federation saw a need for farmers and ranchers to have good insurance, so they



Big Horn County Farm Bureau Federation was the first county to reach membership quota and acquire one new Regular member under the age of 35. WyFB Membership Committee Vice Chair Matt Stroh (left) and WyFB Membership Committee Chair Kevin Baars (right) presented the Bronze Boot membership award to Big Horn County Farm Bureau Federation President Tim Beck. This was the fourth year in a row for Big Horn County to win the award. KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.

formed an affiliated insurance company now known as MWFBMIC. WyFB appreciates the support of MWFBMIC in sharing the message of Federation's work for agriculture.

Hot Springs County won Jim Geesey's (MWFBMIC President & CEO) Life Dividend award for being the first county to reach quota.

Goshen County won Dan Bleak's (MWFBMIC Vice President of Analytics & Development) Century Club membership



WyFB Membership Committee Vice Chair Matt Stroh (left) and WyFB Membership Committee Chair Kevin Baars (right) presented the Bronze Hat membership award to the Big Horn County Farm Bureau Federation for having the greatest increase in Century Club memberships from the previous year. Receiving the award for Big Horn County are President Tim Beck and Vice President Zach Tippetts. KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.

for having the most (41) Century Club members.

Sheridan County won Erick Arens' (MWFBMIC Vice President of Sales & Marketing) Century Club membership for being the county with the MWFB agents who signed the most (113) new members.

Goshen County won Jeff Suloff's (MWFBMIC Vice President of Claims) Century Club membership for having the most (74) new Regular members.



Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company Vice President of Sales and Marketing Erick Arens (right) presented the Mountain West Vice President's Century Club Membership awards to county Farm Bureau Federations at the annual meeting. Sheridan County Ranch & Farm Bureau Federation received Erick Arens's Century Club Membership award for the county with the MWFB agents who signed the most new members. County President Andy Edwards accepted the award. KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.

Niobrara County won Jamie Terry's (MWFBMIC Vice President of Organizational Development) Century Club membership for retaining the greatest percentage (95%) of all members from the previous year.

Membership strengthens the work we do for agriculture and rural Wyoming. Thank you to all the volunteers and our affiliate insurance company for the work you do in sharing Federation's message through membership acquisition and retention. ■

Agent recognition for membership acquisition

In the 2024 membership year, the Wyoming agency force for Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company acquired 1,459 new memberships for the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. Thank you to these agents and their staff for their hard work to support Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation through their year-round membership acquisition.

Exemplary Category

Lloyd Meineke, Sheridan County: 113
Dave Craft, Sheridan County: 88

Sierra Booth, Uinta County: 83

Superior Category

Frank Kelly, Big Horn County: 67
Nick Smith, Johnson County: 67
David Gilliatt, Park County: 62
David Stauffer, Sweetwater County: 54
Grant Curry, Goshen County: 51
Lacey Bernard, Lincoln County: 46

Outstanding Category

Becky Pearson, Campbell County: 44
Justin Hatfield, Converse County: 41
Kris Mull, Washakie County: 41
Garth Simkins, Laramie County: 41
Jake Huhnke, Fremont County: 39

Cassidy Sottile, Sheridan County: 36
Tamey Peternal, Lincoln County: 35
Mark Whitt, Hot Springs County: 34
Luke Hopkin, Park County: 33
Andrea Robinson, Crook County: 32
Zack Jacobsen, Albany County: 29
Nathan Rayl, Laramie County: 28
Dallas Turnbow, Lincoln County: 28
Sammi Hegwer, Fremont County: 26
Shelby Labuda, Carbon County: 25

Excellent Category

Alex Bear, Sweetwater County: 22
Bobby Pickle, Natrona County: 22
Lauren Stelting, Teton County: 22

Jason Bell, Laramie County: 19
Justin Jeffers, Albany County: 19
Joshua Tangeman, Laramie County: 19
Seth Tangeman, Platte County: 19
Matt Thornton, Natrona County: 17
Jak Tanner, Sublette County: 16
Nacole Hanson, Teton County: 15
Rick Hughes, Carbon County: 14
Jeanna Kennedy, Park County: 14
Mike Smith, Campbell County: 14
Holly Borton, Weston County: 12
Jackson Ayala, Teton County: 11
Alex Botero, Fremont County: 11
Abby Raymer, Carbon County: 10 ■

Outstanding Membership Workers recognized

BY KERIN CLARK

Membership work is driven by individuals and county Farm Bureau Federations dedicated to the mission of the organization. The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation (WyFB) annually recognizes those individuals who share the message of the Farm Bureau Federation and thus grow and retain membership.

The 2024 WyFB Outstanding Membership Worker awards were presented Nov. 8 at the 105th annual meeting in Casper to: 1) Volunteer Category: Big Horn County Farm Bureau Federation and 2) Agent Category: Becky Pearson, Campbell County.

The Outstanding Membership Worker Award in the volunteer category was presented to the Big Horn

County Farm Bureau Federation Board Members. Their nomination read: The Big Horn County Farm Bureau Board has been very good at coming up with several innovative ideas to serve and increase their membership. They are very supportive of the youth ag organizations, ensuring they rotate support of every community in their county. They have purchased jackets, welders and equipment for FFA, serve pie at county fair, give add-ons to members children at the fat stock sails and bought a rototiller for the Buff Ranch-a Greybull FFA project which produces plants and animals which they sell to the community. They also won the Bronze Boot award three consecutive years.

OUTSTANDING WORKERS ... Page 10



Big Horn County Farm Bureau Federation Board Members accepted the Outstanding Membership Worker-Volunteer Award for 2024 from WyFB Membership Committee Chair Kevin Baars and Vice Chair Matt Stroh. From left to right: Tim Beck; Baars; Zack Tippetts; Cannon Cook; John Adams; Keith Hamilton and Stroh. KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.



Agent Becky Pearson (right), of Gillette, received the 2024 Outstanding Membership Worker-Agent Award from WyFB Membership Committee Vice Chair Matt Stroh (left). KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.

Remaining relevant

BY CALLIE HANSON
FOR WYOMING AGRICULTURE

As our food system and society continue to evolve, the need for trust between consumers and farmers and ranchers with a growing divide has never been more evident. Terri Moore, Vice President of Communications for American Farm Bureau Federation pointed out we have more tools than ever before to build trust and relationships with consumers.

“Today’s food system is more affordable, available, and sustainable than ever before,” Moore began, “yet consumers are more skeptical.” She attributed this skepticism to the diminishing number of farmers, shrinking rural communities, and a general disconnect between the public and agricultural realities. With fewer elected leaders coming from agricultural backgrounds, there is a growing challenge to make the voices of rural America heard.

Moore noted agriculture has struggled to keep up with fast-evolving communication channels, particularly social media. “While you all were out on the farm from sunup to sundown, some critics of agriculture were building strong networks and mastering multimedia approaches to tell their version of our story.”

While critics may have gotten a head start, producers should not be quick to throw in the towel. “For a long time, the feeling was, ‘It’s none of their business [how I farm],’” she said. “But we’re realizing it is their business—they’re putting our products in their bodies, so it is their business. As producers, we should be proud to tell that story.”



American Farm Bureau Vice President of Communications Terri Moore addressed members at the 105th annual meeting of the organization discussing trends and opportunities to communicate about agriculture. Moore also was the featured keynote speaker at the county presidents and vice presidents breakfast. She presented key insights on Farm Bureau brand awareness and shared ideas of what county leaders can do with communications to maximize Farm Bureau's effectiveness. *KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.*

The communications landscape across the country has shifted drastically. Where it took Twitter nearly 6 years to reach 100 million users, it only took Tik Tok 9 months. Moore pointed out many members of the younger generations, particularly Gen Z, rely on social media as a primary news source.

“There’s a huge opportunity there,” Moore said. “We may not fully trust TikTok, but if we ignore it, we’re at risk [of missing a chance to connect with Gen Z].”

Generational gaps can provide a number of challenges as producers struggle to gain and maintain trust from the general public. Moore pre-

sented data indicating Gen Z’s trust in farmers falls significantly compared to other age groups.

“It’s not that they dislike farmers,” Moore clarified, “but they just don’t know us.” She emphasized the impact of personal connections in building trust: “Just meeting a farmer raises trust by 30% for Gen Z and 20% for the general public. That’s powerful.”

Moore pointed to one of many successful Tik Tok accounts highlighting days in the life of farmers. In particular, she noted an account, known as Farmer John, has gained a large following by simply posting a daily photo of his Arizona farm.

“Now he’s got 350,000 followers on TikTok and 13 million likes,” she said. “Think about how many young people now have a positive view of agriculture because they see him every day.”

Outside of agriculture, the use of influencers has become common practice for social media campaigns. Moore pointed out in recent studies, Gen Z trusts influencers as much if not more than scientists. At the American Farm Bureau, Moore has spearheaded initiatives to leverage social media and engage influencers to reach younger audiences.

“For every convention, we contract influencers to attend and share their experiences,” she said. “During the Farm Bill debate, we worked with influencers—two out of three had no direct agricultural connection, yet they became advocates after understanding its importance.”

A key difference between Gen Z and older generations is they are much more likely to buy products and join organizations that align with their own values and contribute positively to society.

REMAINING RELEVANT ... Page 10



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AG ON THE BALLOT... *From Page 2*

There's no sign of the ballot initiative trend slowing down, and whether the goal is to defeat an anti-agriculture measure or support pro-farming initiatives, the keys to success are the same.

- Start early
- Build strong coalitions
- Understand public concerns and values at stake

- Share your story
- Engage grassroots

Our Farm Bureaus can lead the way—and we have—but none of us can do it alone. We need to engage across agriculture and the local business community. We need every grassroots member stepping up. Taking action on ballot initiatives—and succeeding—means everyone joining in from making calls, knocking on doors, showing up at local townhall meetings and

posting on social media. And even if there's not a ballot initiative on the horizon in your county or state, sharing your story helps to build public trust and good will.

The best person to share the story of American agriculture is the American farmer—and it can make all the difference. Our research shows that the already high trust consumers have in farmers goes up about 20% when they have the opportunity to engage with a farmer. It's pretty power-

ful to learn how impactful it is to the public to simply meet a farmer. So, how can you help bridge the gap and share agriculture's story? From your neighbor down the road to your lawmakers on Capitol Hill, we need to keep reaching outside our fencerows to help folks understand the work that farmers and ranchers do every day to take care of our animals and the environment while keeping nutritious food on our tables and in our pantries. ■

OUTSTANDING WORKERS... *From Page 8*

The Outstanding Membership Worker Award in the agent category was presented to Becky Pearson of Gillette. Her nomination noted she attends Campbell County Annual Meetings and makes sure to keep the Campbell County FBF informed and involved on the local level. The nomination continued: She is a Wyoming native who shares the work of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation with enthusiasm. Becky makes sure her office is well equipped with WyFB information such as brochures or other marketing materials. This past year she gained 44 new members for the Campbell County Farm Bureau Federation.

"We appreciate the membership work of the Big Horn County board members and Becky," said WyFB President Todd Fornstrom. "Their dedication to sharing the benefits of membership in the Federation is appreciated."

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation is a grassroots advocacy organization founded in 1920. In 1948, members of the Federation saw a need for farmers and ranchers to have insurance, so they formed an affiliated insurance company now known as Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company (MWFBMIC). MWFBMIC is a separate entity. Policyholders are not required to have a Federation membership or vice versa. However, membership in the Federation offers benefit discounts to MWFBMIC policyholders. ■

Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation scholarship opportunities

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation scholarship deadline is Friday, Feb. 28, 2025. Nine college scholarships are offered each year. Scholarships are available for

high school graduates and for those students who are continuing their college education. Applications are available at www.wyfb.org; click on the "Get Involved/Education" tab.

Applications are also available at county Farm Bureau offices. For questions, contact Diane "Dee" Brewer at 307-721-7719 or dbrewer1@wyfb.org. ■

REMAINING RELEVANT... *From Page 9*

"They want to know that we care about the land, our animals, and the world we're leaving behind," Moore said. "To us, that's obvious; it's our livelihood. But to them, it needs to be communicated."

Beyond generational gaps, Moore pointed out the growing rural-urban divide. To illustrate, she cited data from a recent survey showing that rural and urban adults largely agree that farmers deserve support to ensure food affordability and sustainability. "Over 80% of urban residents agree," she said. "There's a lot of untapped support if we just reach out."

On the flip side, Moore noted, rural adults are less inclined to

view strong urban communities as essential, highlighting a bias on both sides. "If we think of urban residents as folks who don't understand us and can't help us, then the divide will only grow," Moore said. Instead, she urged her audience to find opportunities for collaboration and understanding.

Moore noted Farm Bureau and other agencies have been tracking trust for some time, and the trust the general public has in farmers is more positive than one might think.

"We've been tracking trust levels since 2020, and it's stayed high—in the 80s and 90s. In 2021, you were the most trusted profession in America, and today you're just behind doctors and nurses." This

trust, Moore suggested, provides a solid foundation upon which farmers can build.

"We can't afford to sit back. Opinions of farmers are being formed online, often by people who've never set foot on a farm. That's the reality. But the upside is, any one of you can reach millions of people from your phone. Take that as an opportunity to show what agriculture really is. Our values—your values—will resonate if we take the time to share them."

Moore addressed the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation during their annual meeting held in Casper Nov. 7-9. Her address was titled, "Remaining Relevant in a Changing World: Trends and Opportunities" ■

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FARM BUREAU FINANCIAL SERVICES

PRESIDENT FORNSTROM... *From Page 1*

Voting delegates elected Goshen County Farmer Cole Coxbill to his ninth term as WyFB Vice President.

Coxbill mirrored Fornstrom's enthusiasm for the coming year.

"I want to thank you all for the support in my role as WyFB VP. It's truly an honor to serve under Todd—he's an incredible leader, well-respected at the AFBF level and a great promoter for our cause. I'm always open to chat, so please don't hesitate to reach out."

Weston County Rancher Matt Stroh was elected to his first term as the Director-at-Large. Although Stroh is a fresh face in state board leadership for the Federation, he is no stranger to the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation.

"We (Stroh and his family) were kind of arm-twisted to get to the annual meeting years ago. We made it, and ever since then, we've been hooked. I think out of the last 21 or 22 years we've missed two annual meetings, and it's just been a great ride."

Stroh noted he has been a Farm Bureau volunteer for some time. "I've had the opportunity to volunteer at just about every level and every position at the state, and so now being a part of the board, it's just going to be another part of the fun adventure."

With an eye on membership, Stroh is excited to put his efforts towards recruiting new members and further developing the vitality of the organization.

In addition to these statewide elections, the state board includes five District Directors and the Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) Committee State Chair.

Goshen County Farmer and Rancher Cody Alps will take the reins of the YF&R Committee and is excited to get started. Alps has been a part of the WyFB YF&R since 2021.

"I started my YF&R experience in 2021 at a conference in Douglas, Wyoming. I got roped into attending by a friend...but jumped in feet first. One of my main goals as the newly elected state YF&R chair is to continue to grow attendance and participation at our winter conference."

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors is rounded out by District Directors Raenell Taylor (Northeast District), Kevin Baars (Southeast District), Tim Pexton (Central District), Thad Dockery (Northwest District), and Justin Ellis (Southwest District).

As the state's largest general agriculture organization, the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation held the 105th annual meeting from Nov. 7-9, 2024, to establish policies for the upcoming year. ■

The mission of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation is to represent the voices of Wyoming farmers and ranchers through grassroots policy development while focusing on protecting private property rights, strengthening agriculture, and supporting farm and ranch families through advocacy, education, and leadership development.



The 2025 WyFB Board of Directors and WyFB Executive Vice President. Front row: Cole Coxbill, Vice President; Kerin Clark, Executive Vice President; and Todd Fornstrom, President. Back row: Kevin Baars, Southeast District Director; Thad Dockery, Northwest District Director; Matt Stroh, Director-at-Large; Justin Ellis, Southwest District Director; Tim Pexton, Central District Director; and Cody Alps, YF&R State Chair. Not pictured: Raenell Taylor, Northeast District Director. JENNIFER HOWDESHELL PHOTO.

LEADERSHIP AWARD... *From Page 1*

"I'm a farm girl from Goshen County, so agriculture is near and dear to my heart, and I understand the battles we're facing from the federal government and the fiscal challenges that face us right now," Steinmetz said upon receipt of her award.

Senator Steinmetz proudly represents Goshen, Niobrara, and Weston counties in the Wyoming State Senate. Since her election in 2019, she has served on the Appropriations Committee, ensuring that Wyoming's resources are carefully managed for the benefit of our communities and future generations. Her legislative career, however, began long before the State Senate.

From 2015 to 2018, she represented House District 5, where she quickly became known as a principled and effective leader. Senator Steinmetz has served in the Wyoming Legislature since 2015 building a legacy of service.

In his nomination letter, Lane Hageman noted her tenure has not been without its challenges. Her district has faced multiple natural disasters, including a canal tunnel collapse, a canal breach, and devastating wildfires.

"She is a leader in efforts to protect and preserve agriculture and is a champion of private property rights and individual freedom. She has responded to these events with compassion for those affected and leadership to effectively and efficiently handle the problems at stake," Hageman said.

Throughout her legislative career, Senator Steinmetz has contributed her skills and passion across numerous committees. She previously served on the Senate's Agriculture, State and Public Lands and Water Resources Committee; the Transportation, Highways, and Military Affairs Committee; the Select Committee on Legislative Facilities, Technol-

ogy and Process; the Travel, Recreation, and Wildlife Committee; and the Committee on Capitol and Finance.

She has chaired both the Agriculture, State and Public Lands and Water Resources Committee and the Select Water Committee. Through her leadership in these roles, she has championed Wyoming's agricultural industry, consistently defended private property rights, and protected the individual freedoms of her constituents.

Beyond her work in the legislature, Senator Steinmetz has been deeply involved in her local community. She has served as the secretary of the Goshen County Republican Women, on the Goshen County Farm Bureau Federation board, and as a precinct committee woman for the Wyoming Republican Party.

"Senator Steinmetz's principles are grounded in a strong sense of faith, trustworthiness, and a genuine passion for doing what is right. Her unwavering dedication to her constituents has earned her deep respect, not only for her work in the Legislature but also for her personal integrity and commitment to the people of Wyoming," Hageman said in his presentation of the award.

"With an agricultural background she has a deep appreciation for agriculture and rural communities and is a true leader in representing the best interests of agriculture across the state," Hageman concluded. "She is a leader who embodies what it means to serve with honor, and we are grateful for her hard work, integrity, and dedication to Wyoming."

WyFB President Todd Fornstrom echoed Hageman's comments and added "We are proud to recognize and thank Wyoming State Senator Cheri Steinmetz for her strong leadership for agriculture here in Wyoming."

"It is an honor to name Senator Steinmetz the 2024 WyFB Leadership Award recipient," Fornstrom concluded. ■

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GATHER AT THE TABLE

WYOMING
FARM BUREAU® FEDERATION

105th Annual Meeting
November 7-9, 2024
Casper, Wyoming

Photo Gallery

STORIES BY KERIN CLARK
PHOTOS BY KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY / KADRA CLARK

Wyoming farmers and ranchers rolled up their sleeves for business at the 105th annual meeting to develop policy to guide the organization in the coming year. While working hard on policy development, they also took opportunities to celebrate, lead, serve and learn with their fellow farmers and ranchers.

Collegiate Farm Bureaus

University of Wyoming Collegiate Farm Bureau and Sheridan College Collegiate Farm Bureau members attended the 105th annual meeting. The members participated and contributed to several areas of the meeting from serving as parliamentarian to mic runners during policy discussion to a meeting intern to assisting with the foundation auction.



University of Wyoming Collegiate Farm Bureau from left to right: Lilly Stewart; Aspen Gair; Courtney Bean; WyFB President Todd Fornstrom; Kyla Pacher; Rhiannon Cole; and Hailey Cooper. They meet on campus every other Wednesday during the school year. Follow them on Instagram at uwyo_cfb.



Sheridan College Collegiate Farm Bureau members from left to right: Jacob Pesicka; Cole Goertz; Luke Durfee; Tagg Mickelsen; Brand Terrell; Becka Nutting; Cora Turner; Megan Sagner; Victoria Ramos; and Advisor Angel Sparkman.



Staff Longevity

WyFB Executive Vice President Kerin Clark (left) was congratulated by WyFB President Todd Fornstrom for celebrating her 30th anniversary with WyFB on July 28.



Northern Ag Network Broadcast

Northern Ag Network recorded a broadcast show during the WyFB Annual Meeting. The broadcast team of Colter Brown, Andy Schwab and Brett McRae interviewed six members and staff and then presented a market report. Shown in this picture is Sheridan County Ranch & Farm Bureau Federation President Andy Edwards (left) talking to Brown about fire impact on his ranch.



U.S. Congresswoman Harriet Hageman

United States Congresswoman Harriet Hageman spoke to members about critical issues important for national security. "Energy security is national security. If we tackle the energy issue, everything else falls into place—from energy to poverty to our food supply," Rep. Hageman noted at the Thursday luncheon. Representative Hageman also attended Ken Hamilton's retirement celebration to share her appreciation for Ken's work on policy issues for agriculture.



Taproom Trivia

Taproom Trivia Night: Ag trivia was open to the public and presented by Northern Ag Network's Andy Schwab with help from Colter Brown and Brett McRae. Thanks to Gruner Brothers Brewing Company in Casper for providing the location. The winning team members were Paul, James and Will Ward and Cole Coxbill. From left to right: James Ward; Paul Ward; Brown; Schwab; Coxbill; Will Ward; and McRae.



United States Senator John Barrasso

Retiring with a message in the Congressional Record...United States Senator John Barrasso presented retired executive vice president Ken Hamilton with an appreciation message printed in the United States Congressional Record.



Feed the Need

Following the great leadership workshop, members switched gears to community service. The Harvest for All program is a longstanding YF&R program geared towards serving others. Members joined the WyFB YF&R Committee and packed 216 boxes at the Food Bank of Wyoming. Shown here are Carson Ellis and his sister Joni of Uinta County and Corey Forman of Park County.



Parliamentarian

University of Wyoming Collegiate Farm Bureau Member Hailey Cooper served as the annual meeting parliamentarian. From Cheyenne, Cooper is pursuing a degree in agriculture education. She has a strong foundation in parliamentary procedure gained through her participation in the High Plains FFA Chapter and is also a member of the American Institute of Parliamentarians.



Make it Magnetic

Learning and laughing at the "Make it Magnetic" workshop held as part of the WyFB Foundation Seminar. AFBF's Margee Wolff led members in an interactive session on volunteer engagement.

Wyoming Classifieds

ALL CLASSIFIED ADS must be received by the 10th of each month to appear in the next issue. Members may place two (2) complimentary ads, up to 40 words each, per issue. Real estate sales not included. Complimentary ads will run for three issues unless requested otherwise. Non-members may submit an ad at a minimum rate of \$5 per ad (50 cents per word). The appearance of any ad in *Wyoming Agriculture* does not constitute an endorsement or approval of the product or service offered.

TO SUBMIT ADS, send your ad along with your name, phone number and member number or member county to kclark@wyfb.org or mail to WyFB, ATTN: Classifieds, P.O. Box 1348, Laramie, WY 82073.

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New Members

ALBANY

Jake Novak, Laramie; Mario Rampulla, Laramie; Peyton Eckerling, Laramie; Kyla Pachner, Akron, CO; Sydney Duncan, Laramie; Reed Stafford, Riverton; Marlene Vialpando, Laramie; Emma Considine, Laramie; Aspen Gair, Laramie; Kyra Doud, Laramie; Raymi Rogers, Laramie; Morgan Rouge, Laramie; Lilly Hasenauer, Laramie; Courtney Beene, Laramie; Casey Stayman, Jelm; Connie Coca, Laramie; Cory Neumeyer, Laramie; Brandon Swick, Laramie

BIG HORN

Devan & Jason Fink, Lovell; Robin Nichols, Basin; Barbara Steinheimer-Hart, Powell; Clayton Brown, Basin;

Heidi Dowling, Greybull; Russel Bogers (REG), Lovell; Tina Winkelman, Lovell; Sadie Allen, Burlington; April Cunningham, Greybull; Deja Bennett (REG), Otto; Kip McInstosh, Greybull; Wayne Rea, Greybull; Cynthia Cullison, Hyattville; Linda Knutson, Greybull

CAMPBELL

Steve Wangler, Gillette; Jeff Holland (REG), Arvada; Kelly & Aaron Cannon, Gillette; Tammy & Randy Capicotto, Gillette; Julie & Mike Cross, Gillette

CARBON

Clyde & Albert Johnson (REG), Elk Mountain; Kim Starr, Saratoga; Michael McGraw, Hanna; Victoria Harris, Sinclair; Larry Dauwen, Wamsutter; Kristy & Brad Martin, Linda & Perry Goodrich, Hanna

CONVERSE

Jaime Webb, Douglas; Whitney & Nick Ladd, Glenrock; Vicki Horn, Douglas; Darold Moss, Glenrock; Kayla & Andrew Kennedy, Casper; John Werner (REG), Douglas; Anthony Pack, Glenrock

CROOK

Paul Lagel (REG), Hulett; Jordan Boylan, Beulah; Nathan Wilen, Aladdin; Kristen & Curt Laduke (REG), Buffalo; Edwin Hopton, Sundance; Casseday & Lance Marshall (REG), Sundance; Barbara Wesley (REG), Devils Tower; Brandon Ackerman/ Ackerman Ranch LLC, Hulett; Donna Richards, Sundance; Leslie & Crystal Sherrard, Beulah

FREMONT

Loni & Terry Freese, Riverton; Jennifer Dilts, Riverton; Matt Richardson (REG), Kinnear; Kinsy Hall, Riverton; Jess Corbett 9REG), Pavillion; Clair Ware (REG), Fort Washakie; Stephanie & Timothy Bales, Lander; Jeanie & Kerry Cooper (REG), Shoshoni; Nadine Graham (REG), Lander; Bradley Greer, Lander; Cynthia Estrada, Lander; Tammy & Tim Hugus, Riverton; Marty Cassidy, Lander; Enequina Vasco & Joshua Green (REG), Riverton; Wade Werbelow, Riverton; Sally Miller (REG), Riverton; Craig Bromley, Lander; Nicholas Twist, Lander; Tom Heil, Lander; Christine Rink (REG), Riverton; Richard Denke (REG), Pavillion; Robert Shellard (REG), Lander

GOSHEN

Dewey Clapp (REG), Torrington; Linda & Robert Butler, Fort Laramie; Brandt Herbst (REG), Torrington; Joyce Deines, Torrington; Tylyn Craig, Lingle; Cheryl Alps (REG), Yoder; Karen & William Murphy, Torrington; Carla Haskins, Douglas; Amy & Waldon Smith (REG), Hawk Springs; Monica & Jay Teichert, Torrington; Thomas Slusher, Torrington

HOT SPRINGS

Leslie Mikkelsen, Thermopolis; JW Courter, Thermopolis; Billie & Jason Norsworthy (REG), Thermopolis; Mark Mortimore, Thermopolis; Harold Hansen, Thermopolis

JOHNSON

Jeanine Briscoe, Buffalo; Anne Knighten, Buffalo; Angela & William

Webber, Buffalo; Berva Brock, Banner; Deborah & Casey Tippetts, Buffalo; Jolene & Richard Hallcroft, Sheridan; Linda Buell, Buffalo; Luana Powell, Buffalo; Leslye & Travis Pearson, Buffalo; Tyler Carmichael, Buffalo; Amy Miranda, Buffalo; Hannah Fraley, Laramie; Karen Buffington, Buffalo; Justin Arnold (REG), Buffalo; KNC LLC (REG), Buffalo; Bernadette & Terry Powell, Buffalo; Desirae & Tyler Light (REG), Buffalo; Cristy Kinghorn, Buffalo; John Zorbas, Buffalo; Tieggan Rouleau, Buffalo; Trevor Scantling, Buffalo; Kristen & Clayton Ledoux, Kaycee; Faddis Kennedy Cattle Co (REG), Sheridan; Tana Kinchen (REG), Kaycee

LARAMIE

Kim Sakurai, Cheyenne; Leeann Charpentier, Burns; Elaine & Arthur Renfro, Cheyenne; Beverly & Ronald Blunn, Cheyenne; Jerry Withers, Cheyenne; Cindy Smith, Cheyenne; David Loetscher (REG), Burns; Peter Kline, Cheyenne; Jose Vargas, Cheyenne; Bradley Tilton, Laramie; Logan Romsa, Albin; Ronald Lebeaumont, Cheyenne; Deeanna & Mark Mumaugh, Cheyenne; Krista & Randy Cooke, Cheyenne; Allesa & Robert Statham, Cheyenne; Emily Vogl, Laramie; Rhonda & Michael Lobatos, Cheyenne; Rachael & Nathaniel Krueger, Cheyenne; Nola & Juan Rocha, Cheyenne; Jon Moore, Albin

LINCOLN

Lynn Veigel (REG), Afton; John Davies, Star Valley; Rickey Roundy, Star Valley; Cindell & Toby West (REG), Grover; Roxanne Miller, Afton; Sheryl Dawson, Smoot; Linda & Kurtis Weber (REG), Freedom; Melanie & Lance Robinson (REG), Afton; Joe Draskovich, Alpine; Patricia & Jason Brooks, Cokeville; Susan & Jeff Atwood, Alpine; Jesse Trujillo, Bedford; Mercedes Raffelson, Etna; Mitchell Brown, Etna; Samuel Gwin, Alpine; Jill Eischen, Afton; Kyle Riley (REG), Alpine; Dustin Nelson, Afton; Ashley & Darin Neuenschwander, Afton; Rafael Bravo, Alpine; Cheryl Reeves, Smoot; Debra Heiner, Thayne; Brandon Headrick, La Barge; Mari Headrick, La Barge

NATRONA

Monty Jaure, Bar Nunn; Mary Strand, Evansville; Christine Squires, Evansville; Eric Beeson, Evansville; Larry Griffith, Casper; Mike Antonovich, Bar Nunn; Whitney & Damien Ponce, Casper;

NEW MEMBERS ... Page 15



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NEW MEMBERS... From Page 14

NATRONA (CONTINUED)

April & Jonathan Zurn, Casper; Jenny & James Hunter, Casper; Kyle Johnson, Evansville; Renee & Marc Smith, Casper; Marcus Hoversland, Casper; Marc Daugherity, Casper; Ronald Konen, Casper; Senah Selby, Casper; Vickie & Steve Elledge, Casper; Steven Huckfeldt, Casper; Jackie Lapp, Evansville; Heather Hanson, Casper; Jack Rhyan, Evansville; Jennifer Shobak, Bar Nunn; Mark Chapman, Midwest; Sheryl Lockard, Casper; Jennie & Will Whitlock, Alcova; Lisa Collins & Robert Cogar, Casper; Patricia & Brian Rohrbeck, Casper

PARK

Christopher Kenney, Cody; Nancy & Carrol Bell, Cody; David Reich, Cody; Debbie Urick, Cody; Kaci & Travis Sessions, Powell; Gary Cooper (REG), Cody; George Goodrich (REG), Cody; Christopher LeBlanc, Powell; Dave Barton, Cody; Gary McGary (REG), Powell; Candace & Scott McNeil, Cody; Ramona Model, Cody; Karen Smith (Reg), Powell

PLATTE

Thirty-One Bar Ranch, Wheatland; Blake Balzan, Wheatland; Bonnie & Ronald Millikin, Glendo; Nina Mehl, Wheatland; Haldey Paisley, Wheatland

SHERIDAN

Bradford Townsend, Sheridan; Jared Eriksen, Banner; Lamar Charlson (REG), Ranchester; Brand Terrell (REG), Sheridan; Michael Townsend, Sheridan; Kimberly & Jimmy Siler, Surprise, AZ; Daniel Lindly, Sheridan; Lindsay Tope, Sheridan; Eliza Cederberg, Sheridan; Beth & Larry Harman, Clearmont; Rose Martinez, Ranchester; Gina & Scott Pehringer, Buffalo; Terry Denton, Story; Sarah & Dakota Gali (REG), Sheridan; Shannon Cline, Sheridan; Ann Sweeny, Sheridan; Casey Mott, Sheridan; Melissa & David Cox, Sheridan; Doyle Hodgson, Sheridan; James Marchese, Banner; Julie Jolley, Sheridan; Marla Gariffa, Sheridan; Nathan Olson, Sheridan; Nicole Stewart, Sheridan; Richard Costello, Ivins, UT; Jason Kennedy, Banner; Michael Ellenwood (REG), Banner; Jeannette Meckle, Sheridan; Malinda & Anthony Fairbanks, Ranchester; Colin Hardy, Sheridan; Leslie & David Belus (REG), Sheridan; Daniel Miller, Buffalo; Mikayla Lindberg, Sheridan; Tracy Hamil, Sheridan; Tyler Kukuchka, Sheridan; Esther Reece, Sheridan; Todd Schuster, Sheridan; Jeff Holsinger, Sheridan; Patricia Sherman, Sheridan; Margaret & Eddie

Pilch, Sheridan; Pete Karajanis, Sheridan; Ben Wetzel, Sheridan; Chad Quarterman, Sheridan; Chuck Barbula, Sheridan; Anita & Cliff Fisk, Sheridan; Jill DeLapp, Sheridan; Michael Fordyce, Decker, MT; Bennet Sheldon, Clearmont; Steven Dean, Sheridan; Deana & Dean Cole (REG), Sheridan; Elwin & Pamela Phillips Trust (REG), Banner

SUBLETTE

George Kahrl (REG), Big Piner; Lora & Nick Nichols (REG), Boulder; Justin Sandner, Pinedale; Marvene & Jeff Alexander, Pinedale; Consuelo Ensminger, Boulder; Walt Robertson, Bondurant

SWEETWATER

Janell Flack, Rock Springs; Cory & Kyle Darlington, Rock Springs; Barbara & Martin Besso, Rock Springs; Rebecca Thoman (REG), Farson; Arron Mortensen, Rock Springs; Lacey & Jeffrey Wheeler, Rock Springs; Jacob Smith, Farson; Johnna Lacore, Rock Springs; Katherine & Joseph Pfeiler (REG), Farson; Shae Sandry, Rock Springs; Anthony Crosby, Rock Springs; Travis Weerheim, Rock Springs; Bettylou & Jerry Tripp (REG), Granger; Patty Burton (REG), Farson; Melanie & Greg Hutchison, Lyman; Daniel Prine, Rock Springs; Elizabeth Lempp, Rock Springs

TETON

Deeann & Klay Mangis (REG), Jackson; Randall Woodford (REG), Jackson; Kristeen Hand, Jackson; Michael Glover, Jackson; Corbin Johnson, Jackson

UINTA

Theresa & Andrew Clarke (REG), Lyman; Eardley Ranch (REG), Mountain View; Travis Lamb, Green River; Jill & Christopher Kellum, Mountain View; Sallie Waters (REG), Evanston; Sarah & Gary Dean, Evanston; Dean Gregory, Lyman; Abigail & Carson Ellis (REG), Lyman; Aspen Long, Lyman; Louis Potter, Mountain View; Ruban Rosas (REG), Diamondville; Merlin Hysell, Mountain View; Deborah & Craig Welling (REG), Evanston; Nancy Beck (REG), Lyman; Jared Nelson, Evanston; Carol & Jon Cantlin, Mountain View; Arlene Sweat, Fort Bridger; Ethan Cantlin, Fort Bridger; Chloe & Ryan Sadler, Robertson; Sheila & Frank Adams, Surprise, AZ

WASHAKIE

Christa Willcuts, Worland; Teresa & Robert Harrington, Worland

WESTON

Casandra & Wade Perino (REG), Newcastle; Nicole & Preston Perino (REG), Newcastle; Justin Tystad, Newcastle ■



Cooking with the Modern Ranch Wife

COCONUT BALLS

A RECIPE BY JANE BROOKS AND CONNIE WERNER

Ingredients

- 1 bag powdered sugar
- 2 sticks of butter, softened.
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 7 ounces of shredded coconut
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 1 pound chopped pecans
- 1 1/2 large packages of semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 block of parafin candy wax

These are a great for Christmas or anytime of year. They can be made ahead and frozen.

Directions

- Melt butter and pour into a mixer. Add 1/2 bag of the sugar. Add milk and rest of the sugar. Add nuts, coconut, and vanilla. Mix well.
- Refrigerate overnight
- In a double broiler melt chocolate chips and wax
- Shape nut mixture into balls. Using a fork or toothpick dip into the chocolate mixture and place on waxed paper or aluminum foil
- Store in the fridge in an airtight container

FOR MORE RECIPES, VISIT WWW.MODERNRANCHWIFE.COM

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE... From Page 1

“Tireless in his endeavors to serve Wyoming, Geesey has been a member of the Farm Bureau Federation throughout his nearly 40 years of service,” Fornstrom said. “He has worked tirelessly to maintain the connection between the insurance company and federation sides throughout those years.”

“I think of the people before me who have received this recognition and I don’t know that I deserve it by any means, so all I really have to say is thanks,” Geesey said upon his acceptance of the award.

In his letter of nomination, Tim Pexton noted Geesey holds a deep understanding of the ties between the insurance company and the federation.

“Under his leadership, the Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company shares more than the name and logo of Farm Bureau,” Pexton said.

Geesey is no stranger to service to his home state of Wyoming. At MWFBI, he has served as an agent, agency manager, vice president of marketing, and currently serves as the president and CEO.

A proud University of Wyoming graduate with a degree in Industrial Management, Geesey has taken on numerous leadership positions, each with significant impact. He has served as director of the Laramie Economic Development Corporation, president of the University of Wyoming Alumni Association, president of the Wyoming Association of Insurance and Financial Ad-

visors, and board member for the Laramie Area Chamber of Commerce.

He has also served as a Park County school board trustee, president of both the Kemmerer Chamber of Commerce and the Kemmerer Lions Club, and chairman of the Lincoln County Republican Party.

Geesey continues to be active in his community and professional circles. He serves on the Wyoming Business Alliance Steering Committee and sits on the board of the Ivinson Memorial Hospital Foundation. Notably, he is also involved in furthering his leadership skills by participating in the Leadership Academy, a branch of Leadership Wyoming.

His commitment to his community goes beyond official roles. He’s shown dedication to causes like United Way and Hospice of Laramie, always ready to give back and help those around him.

At the heart of Geesey’s life is his family. He has two sons, Paul and Robert. Robert is married to Jackie, and they have a daughter, Cora. Cora is his first grandchild. Geesey also enjoys the outdoors. He is an avid skier, a fly fisherman and enjoys golf.

“We are proud to recognize Jim Geesey with the 2024 Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Distinguished Service Award,” Fornstrom concluded. “With this award we celebrate not only his many achievements, but also his lasting impact and unwavering commitment to the strong relationship between the federation, the insurance company, and the people of Farm Bureau here in Wyoming.” ■

Annual meeting highlights: Veteran Services Center's 'Buddy Check Woobie' program

BY LILLY STEWART, WYFB INTERN

Annual meetings are always a pleasure to connect with fellow Wyoming farmers and ranchers! This year, we were fortunate to have Director Marty Martinez and Program Coordinator Sr. Joshua Hepworth from the Marna M. Kuehne Foundation Veterans Services Center (VSC) at the University of Wyoming join us for a presentation on their newest program designed to support veterans. The VSC offers various services to the veteran student population, including free coffee and snacks, a computer lab, regular events with meals provided, scholarship information, VA work-study opportunities, and assistance with disability support services and financial aid.

Their recent initiative, the "Buddy Check Woobie" program, was developed to help prevent veteran suicide, a crisis that affects the nation. "Wyoming stands as the highest, per capita, suicide rate in America, and that standing is further reflected in its Veteran population," said Hepworth. In the United States, 22 veterans die by suicide every day, a tragic statistic that resonated deeply with Martinez, who shared that he had lost one of his veteran students to suicide during the COVID-19 lockdown. The student had fallen into isolation during the lockdown, which led to his tragic decision. Martinez expressed that the loss was particularly painful because this young man, who had so much to live for, felt alone, and lost dealing with the psychological effects of combat. "Unfortunately, many other veterans feel the same way daily," Martinez added.

In response to this issue, the Veterans Services Center created the "Buddy Check Woobie" program. Martinez and Hepworth explained through this program, the veteran is introduced to a unique interaction of building new connections, communicating, supporting, and rebuilding the sense of team with brothers, sisters, and friends from their service-connected community.

The program centers around a distinctive camo hoodie made from fabric identical to military-grade sleeping bags

and blankets. According to Martinez and Hepworth, the blankets, originally made from wool, are commonly referred to as "woobies," a term that also "evokes warmth, comfort, security, and safety." This hoodie serves as a symbol of reassurance, providing veterans with a tangible reminder that they are not alone, and that support is always available.

Martinez and Hepworth detailed the significance of each element of the hoodie. The hoodie design features the American flag on the right shoulder, mirroring the placement of the flag on active-duty military uniforms. On the left shoulder, a custom design created by University of Wyoming veteran students is displayed—a horseshoe with a check mark and the letter "B," symbolizing the importance of checking in on one's buddy. On the chest, the numbers "1" and "2" are printed to represent the two core promises the recipients must recognize before receiving the hoodie: (1) "you are loved and part of a family," and (2) to "check on your buddy."

These hoodies are available free of charge to veterans who agree to uphold the two promises. Non-veterans can purchase the hoodies to support the program, with proceeds helping fund additional free hoodies for veterans. Martinez and Hepworth emphasized that "even if the hoodie saves just one life, it has made a difference." The program's goal is to activate "memories of warmth, comfort, security, and safety while inspiring an emotional and empathetic connection to fellow Veterans and family." The VSC hopes to soon have an online store option, but right now all purchases are made in person. "We hope this will become the mantra of every Wyoming Veteran, and by it, as a family, we can be the warmth, comfort, security, and safety for each other that the Woobie reminds us of," Hepworth concluded.

If you wish to learn more about the program or donate, please contact Marty Martinez or Joshua Hepworth directly. Marty Martinez, 307-766-6909, mmarti77@uwyo.edu and Joshua Hepworth, 307-766-6908, jhepworth@uwyo.edu. ■



Thank You Veterans! UW Veterans Services Center staff Marty Martinez (left) and Joshua Hepworth (right) presented fellow veteran Fred Correll with a "Buddy Check Woobie" hoodie at the WyFB annual meeting on Nov. 9. KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.

Bayla Berger, from Carbon County, opened Saturday's General Session with a tribute to Veterans. Bayla is the 14-year-old daughter of Kyle and Stacy Berger.

She wrote this poem when she was 12-years-old.



Happy Veterans Day!

By Bayla Berger

You gave us freedom by risking your life,
 You fought enduringly through much toil and strife.
 Our freedom had rested in your brave hands,
 You fought for the people, the country, and the land.
 You suffered through things only you can explain,
 For the people of America to not be held back by chain.
 You fought so bravely with The Lord by your side,
 Against human armies and evil's rising tide.
 You fight for The Lord as well as your people,
 You fight for the church's open doors and proud steeple.
 The debt that we owe you, we can never repay,
 To all the brave veterans, Happy Veteran's Day!

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Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation wraps up 105th Annual Meeting

BY CALLIE HANSON
FOR WYOMING AGRICULTURE

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation hosted its 105th Annual Meeting at the Ramkota Hotel in Casper Nov. 7-9. Members were given the chance to discuss and vote on issues, participate in elections, attend workshops, volunteer, and socialize with members from across the state.

The meeting saw members from across the state come together. While some members are seasoned veterans of WyFB, there was a large turnout of collegiate members.

University of Wyoming (UW) Collegiate Farm Bureau and the Sheridan College Collegiate Farm Bureau were well-represented by members eager to learn and grow. UW Collegiate Farm Bureau member Courtney Bean said, "I learned a lot and I have a lot to take back to our collegiate Farm Bureau that we can apply on a collegiate level to get more members involved."

Natrona County member Aletta Grauberger was eager to participate in policy development and meet new people.

"I'm always interested in policy development, and my expectations have been fulfilled. I've met a few new people, which is also great, so I'm leaving with a full cup," Grauberger said.

Volunteering

The Young Farmer and Rancher Committee (YF&R) built upon their existing partnership with the Food Bank of Wyoming. Eager to expand their contributions to the community, YF&R committee members were excited to include the membership of WyFB at this volunteer opportunity.

"Whenever we meet in Casper, we make time to volunteer at the food bank. We've really enjoyed it, and they've enjoyed having us, so we wanted to offer the same opportunity to the rest of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation," said Cody Alps, WyFB YF&R State Chair.

Headquartered in Casper, the Food Bank of Wyoming serves all 23 counties in Wyoming.

"Through our partnership with the Wyoming Farm Bureau, we're able to strengthen our communities and nourish our neighbors. Together, we are not just feeding people—we're fostering a spirit of collaboration and support that uplifts neighbors across Wyoming," said Danica Sveda, Director of Development for the Food Bank of Wyoming.

An eye on recruitment and retention

The meeting kicked off with a workshop from Margee Wolff, American Farm Bureau Federation Vice President of Leadership, Education, and Engagement. Wolff's "Make it Magnetic" workshop prepared attendees to attract and retain effective volunteers.

Attendees were given the opportunity to participate in various exercises and learn to navigate the challenges of recruiting and retaining volunteers. Wolff's key takeaway was for members to be honest with themselves and understand the various reasons people are compelled to volunteer.

Legislative Issues

United States Representative Harriet Hageman and Wyoming State Senator Cheri Steinmetz attended the meeting and



AFBF's Margee Wolff led an interactive workshop on volunteer engagement as part of the WyFB Foundation seminar. Attendees left the workshop energized to apply new and re-learned ideas to their county Farm Bureau Federation work. KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.

discussed key issues affecting Wyoming farmers and ranchers. In an address to the Federation, Hageman noted many issues are interrelated and all important.

"We need to focus on the big issues: energy security, food security, making sure that we secure our borders, and addressing inflationary pressures," Hageman said.

Across the country, ranchers continue to fight poor forest management decisions magnifying existing fire dangers.

"There's been such bad forest management policies coming out of Washington D.C. that it makes it difficult to plan when you have a fire season like we've had this year," Hageman said. "Proper forest management would help prevent the kind of catastrophic fires we've seen."

Both Hageman and Steinmetz are adamant opponents to electronic ID (EID) for cattle.

"I have been adamantly opposed to the USDA imposing an electronic identification ear-tag mandate against our cattle and bison producers," Hageman proclaimed. "If the agency doesn't have the authority to do it, it shouldn't be doing it."

Steinmetz has similar sentiments surrounding mandated EID. "Farm Bureau has policy against the EID mandate," Steinmetz said. "We are currently running a bill against it because in Wyoming we have voluntary traceability laws that rely on USDA rules from 2013. This fight is critical, as it impacts the supply chain with increased costs, regulations, and loss of property rights."

Celebrating leadership

The week before annual meeting, Ken Hamilton wrapped up his final days

with the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation after 41 years. Members and guests gathered for a retirement celebration to share fond memories of his tenure with the organization.

In a tribute to Hamilton at his retirement party, Sen. John Barrasso commended Hamilton on his extensive commitment to Wyoming agriculture.

"Ken embodies the cowboy code to the fullest. His incredible contributions and positive strides within the agriculture industry are remarkable. He represents the best of Wyoming agriculture," Barrasso said.

Representative Hageman also commended Hamilton for his knowledge and work on policy issues for agriculture.

Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company Jim Geesey presented Hamilton with an appreciation gift from the company thanking him and recognizing the strong relationship between the federation and insurance company.

Looking forward

Eager to continue advocating for agriculture and building on the strong foundation of the organization, Kerin Clark addressed the membership as she stepped into her new role as Executive Vice President.

"As we gather at the table, I believe we are made for a time such as this," Clark said. "I challenge you to consider what is your legacy...We have an ability to make a difference, and by gathering here at the table today we're continuing to set the course to keep agriculture strong." ■

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WFBF SETS POLICY... From Page 1

Voting delegates expressed their unwavering support of all property rights stressing that natural assets on private land are private property. They passed policy emphasizing this point and expressing opposition to natural processes being listed as a wealth asset or a federal asset.

“The push for natural assets to be monetized and listed as an asset for companies encroaches on property rights, controls lands use and threatens the stability of food production,” Clark said.

“Earlier in 2024, a proposed rule was withdrawn that had attempted to list Natural Asset Companies on the New York Stock Exchange,” she continued. “Then the implementation of the SUSTAINS Act this year brought forth more concerns for the attempt to take land out of production.”

“Our members continue to oppose government overreach that threatens property rights,” Clark said.

Water is vital to agriculture in Wyoming. Farm Bureau Federation members discussed water storage in Wyoming, which is essential in order to manage this important resource. Voting delegates passed policy asking the state of Wyoming to maximize the storage capacity of existing reservoirs by shaping the bottom terrain to increase the storage capacity within the existing footprint. The policy also requests Wyoming Water Development funds be prioritized for this purpose.

Delegates passed policy regarding potential recreation easements. “Discussion centered around the Bighorn River Blueway Trail and called for any new or expanded recreation easements to be negotiated between the surface landowner and the easement holder,” Clark said.

Delegates raised concerns over abuse of power and overreach of investigative departments of any United States executive branch agencies. This concern moved to the forefront of discussion with recent federal criminal



WyFB Vice President Cole Coxbill kicked off the resolutions process during general session as voting delegates “Gathered at the Table.” The grassroots policy development process truly starts with farmers and ranchers gathering at the table and speaking up on issues that impact farming and ranching. The WyFB Annual Meeting was the culmination of the policy development process at the state level. From county meetings to district meetings to the 105th annual meeting... Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation members set the course for the organization in the coming year. *KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.*



Park County Farm Bureau Federation Voting Delegate Josh Christofferson during the general session of the WyFB Annual Meeting. *KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.*

indictments against a ranching family in South Dakota related to a Forest Service allotment.

Regarding agriculture labor, delegates called for support of congressional efforts to freeze the H-2A wage rate at January 2023 levels until a more permanent solution can address the impacts of the Adverse Effect Wage Rate.

WyFB supported Wyoming legislation that passed in 2024 for state land payments to be accepted based on postmark dates. This action led to a policy calling for all state agencies to accept applications,

forms and/or payments based on postmark date instead of date of receipt.

In a related discussion about postmark dates and postal services, members adopted policy supporting keeping regional mail facilities in the state of Wyoming.

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation has always stood on the principles of individual freedoms, the competitive enterprise system and constitutional government. “Our members strongly believe individual freedoms and market driven solutions are vital to keeping our communities strong,” Clark concluded.

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation is the state’s largest general agriculture organization. The purpose of the 105th annual meeting held Nov. 7-9, 2024, was to develop policy to guide the organization in the coming year. ■

The mission of the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation is to represent the voices of Wyoming farmers and ranchers through grassroots policy development while focusing on protecting private property rights, strengthening agriculture, and supporting farm and ranch families through advocacy, education, and leadership development.



Carbon County Ranch & Farm Bureau Federation Voting Delegate Quade Palm during the general session of the WyFB Annual Meeting. *KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.*



Converse County Farm Bureau Federation Voting Delegate Rachel Grant during the general session of the WyFB Annual Meeting. *KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.*



The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation Young Farmer & Rancher (YF&R) Committee is in its 22nd year of the “Harvest for All” project. The project raises funds and volunteers to help those facing hunger in Wyoming. Twenty WyFB members packed 216 food boxes in a short period of time as part of the 105th annual meeting in Casper. *KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.*

VOLUNTEERS... From Page 1

“Through our partnership with the Wyoming Farm Bureau, we’re able to strengthen our community and nourish our neighbors. Together, we are not just feeding people—we’re fostering a spirit of collaboration and support that uplifts neighbors across Wyoming,” said Danica Sveda, Director of Development for the food bank.

The mission of the Food Bank of Wyoming is to ignite the power of community to nourish people facing hunger. Food Bank of Wyoming provides food and necessities to people in need through signature programs and by teaming up with over 150 Hunger Relief Partners to serve communities across the state.

Food Bank of Wyoming believes for a community to thrive, every member must have the resources they need to flourish, and they strive to provide equitable access to proper nourishment for all.

WyFB members recognize the value of giving back to their local communities. “It’s always great to give back to the community in a meaningful way,” Alps said. “Just having a presence in the community is great for Farm Bureau as a whole.

For YF&R Committee Member Seth Allen, the food bank experience is about more than just volunteering—it’s about friendly competition. “I’m competitive, so I enjoy it,” said Allen. “If we can box out food and beat some of the other companies or organizations that come in, I think that’s pretty neat too.” This enthusiasm adds an element of fun to the event, with participants taking pride in their contributions.

The process at the food bank is straightforward, though it involves a team effort. “They have everything set out and ready for us to work,” Alps explained. “We do all the work from taking the boxes out of the little bands they’re stacked in, folding the boxes, taping them up, and passing them down a conveyor belt line. Everyone just takes their spot and fills each box with whatever pair of food items they have at their station.”

Once the food is boxed up, it’s distributed throughout the state, with community members receiving it via local food



Campbell County Rancher Lex Geer (left) made and donated a handcrafted coffee table for the Harvest for All raffle. WyFB YF&R Sub-Committee Chair Hannah Guild (standing) thanked Geer and congratulated Washakie County’s Angus Powell (right) for winning the raffle. *KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.*

trucks and mobile pantries. “They take it to counties, food trucks, and they disperse it as needed,” Alps said.

While the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation volunteers typically pack food, the food bank also prepares other essential items, such as soaps and clothing, for those who may require more than just food. These items are packed for people who are struggling not only with hunger but with other day-to-day needs.

WyFB is no stranger to community involvement, specifically involving reducing hunger throughout Wyoming. Since 2002, the WyFB YF&R Committee has partnered with Farm Bureau members to raise 6,044 pounds of food, \$36,278 and 122 hours of volunteer time to help those facing hunger in Wyoming.



Uinta County Rancher Hannah Guild chairs the sub-committee that oversees the Harvest for All program. Guild interviewed with a Casper television station during the volunteer event at the Food Bank of Wyoming. *KADRA MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY/KADRA CLARK PHOTO.*

Looking ahead, the YF&R Committee hopes to continue its volunteering with the food bank and find opportunities for other members to get involved as well. “We’ve built a pretty good connection with them, so I don’t see that changing in the future,” Alps concluded. “As far as other opportunities, there’s always places that we could fill in, jump in, and lend a hand.”

Members also donated equivalent of 6,177 meals through raffle

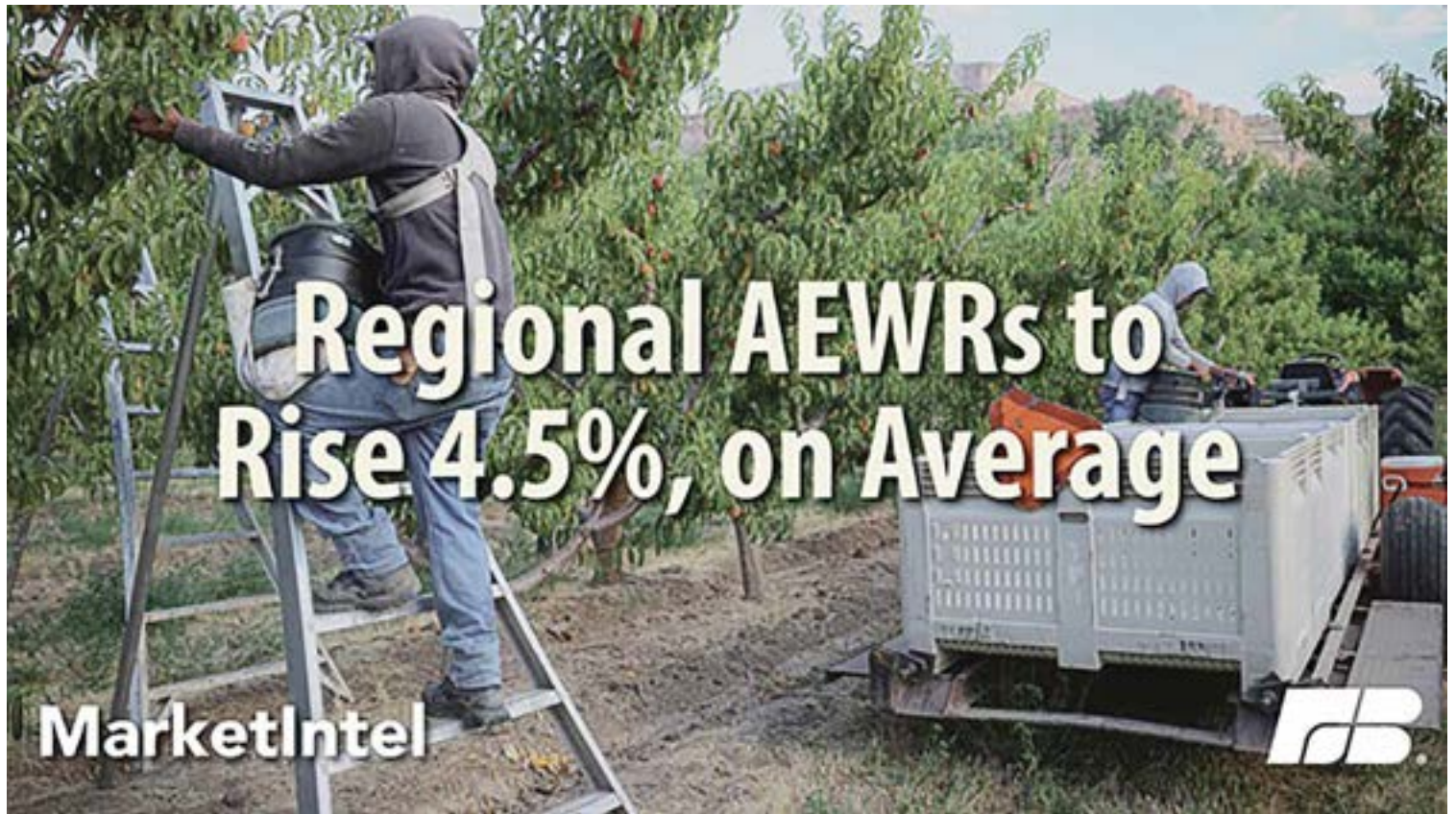
Wyoming families facing hunger received a boost mid-November with the WyFB YF&R Committee “Harvest for All” fund drive and raffle. The 22nd annual fund drive and raffle to benefit the Food Bank of Wyoming raised \$2,059 which is the equivalent of 6,177 meals for Wyoming families facing hunger. ■

2025 AEW R – Labor costs continue to climb

BY SAMANTHA AYOUN, AFBF ASSOCIATE ECONOMIST
AFBF MARKET INTEL
WWW.FB.ORG/MARKET-INTEL
NOVEMBER 21, 2024

The USDA-National Agricultural Statistics Service's Farm Labor report, released on Nov. 20, offers a glimpse into future operational expenses for American farmers.

Each year, the Department of Labor (DOL) uses the "field and livestock workers' combined" wage rate reported in the November Farm Labor report (based on the Farm Labor Survey or FLS) to establish most H-2A workers' minimum wage, known as the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR). This year, the combined field and livestock worker wage rate nationally is \$18.12, up 3.2% from the 2023 release. Regional wages increased an average of 4.5%, but this reflects wide ranges of change across the country. The new wages become official when DOL publishes them in the Federal Register in December. But this wage increase isn't the only hurdle H-2A users will have to clear in 2025.



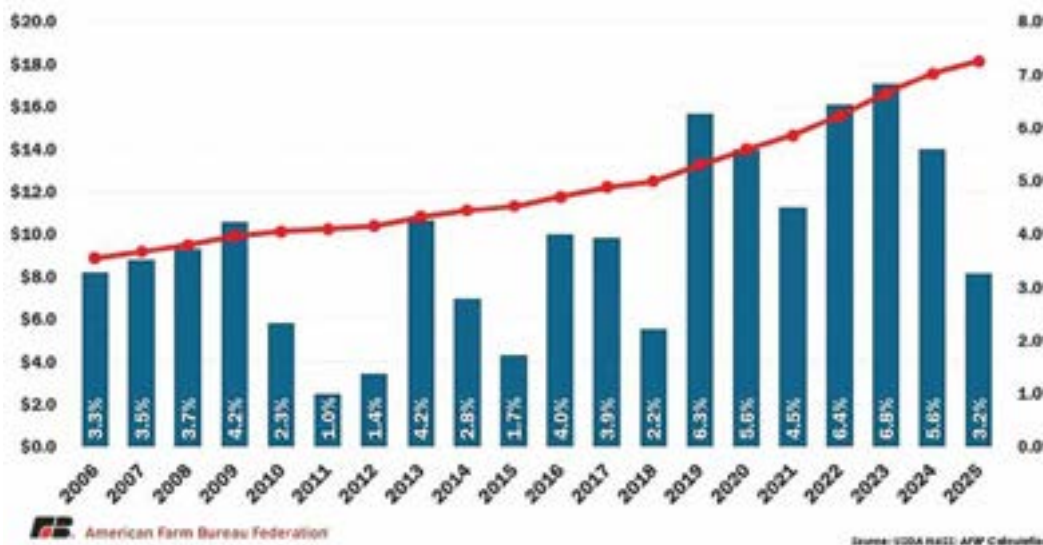
What to Expect in 2025

The FLS collects data twice a year – every month in California – through voluntary farm surveys in every state except Alaska. These surveys collect employment and wage data for 1 week each quarter – in January, April, July and October. The November FLS reports the annual average combined field and livestock wage for 15 regions and three states – California, Florida and Hawaii. The combined field and livestock wage in the FLS includes six Standard Occupation Classifications (SOCs) – graders and sorters; agricultural equipment operators; farmworkers: crop, nursery, and greenhouse; farmworkers: farm, ranch, and aquacultural animals; packers and packagers; and agricultural workers, all others. Over 96% of H-2A workers fall into these SOCs. The remaining employment contracts that include any job requirements outside of these SOCs, including five of the top 10 fiscal year 2024 H-2A occupations, and any Alaskan employers will update their AEW R when the respective state's May 2024 Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics is released in early April 2025.

The national average combined field and livestock worker wage released in this report had the lowest growth rate since 2018, but no employers pay the national wage, as they pay the regional wage for their state. On average, AEW Rs will rise 4.5% from 2024, but where an employer is located will have big impacts on their wage change. Regional wages vary substantially, ranging from \$14.83 in the Delta region – Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas – to \$20.08 in Hawaii.

Eleven of the 15 regions will see an increase in wages larger than the national growth rate. The Southeast – South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama – and Florida can expect a 10% increase in 2025, over \$1.40 more per hour. In comparison, nonfarm wages rose only 4% from October 2023 to 2024. Florida began raising its state minimum wage \$1 per hour each year in 2020 until it

National Average AEW R and Year-over-Year Change, 2006-2025

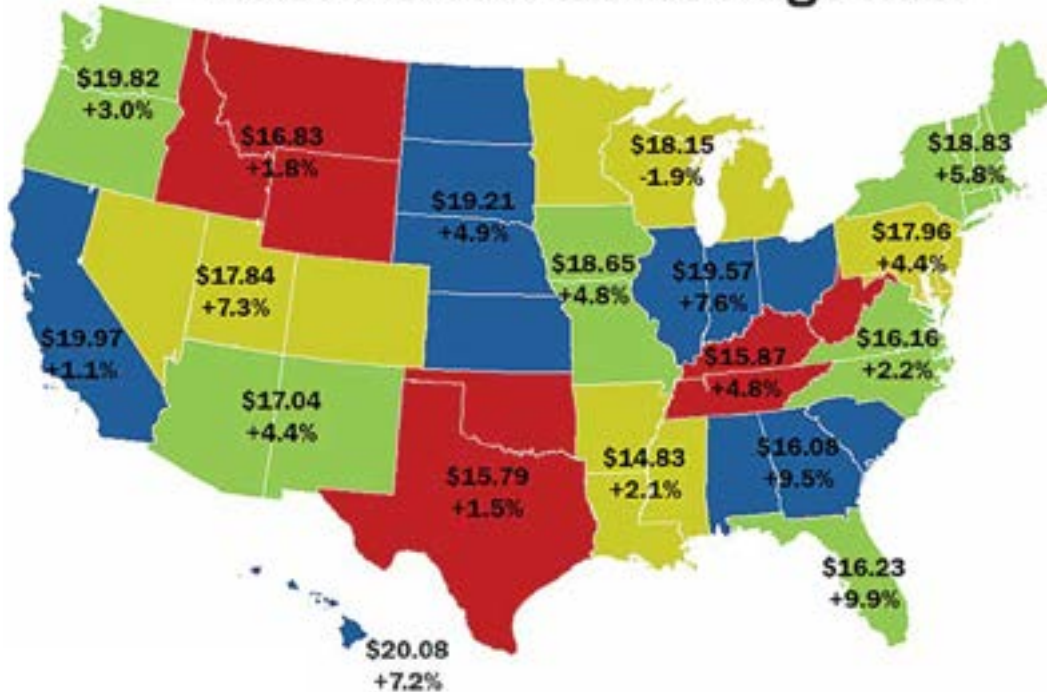


reaches \$15 per hour in 2026 which may be contributing to spikes in farm wages.

California's wage increased only 1% this year, a relief after averaging an increase of 7.3% each year for the last five years. After five years with the highest AEW R, California will fall to second with an hourly wage of \$19.97, following only Hawaii, where farmers will be required to pay \$20.08 per hour, up 7.2% from 2024. However, California is the third-largest employer of H-2A workers with 37,511 certified positions in fiscal year 2024, while Hawaii had only 251 positions certified in the same year.

Interestingly, the Lakes region – Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota – had a decrease in the combined field and livestock wage rate in 2024. It is possible that declining response rates in the Lakes region have affected the data collection. Michigan has also seen decreases in the number of H-2A employers in their state in fiscal year 2024. This may indicate that higher paying employers, including those utilizing H-2A, are exiting the program in response to rising production expenses, including labor. It is also possible that shrinking net farm incomes have reduced the ability of farmers to offer incentive pay, such as a piece rate. Since the FLS collects gross wages that include bonus compensation, a decrease in incentive pay would lead to an overall wage decrease. While the FLS results are typically copied and pasted into the new AEW R announcement, DOL has the authority to establish other wages. So, H-2A employers in the Lake region will have to wait until December to see if their minimum wage rates will follow the survey down.

2025 Adverse Effect Wage Rate



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and best wishes for a wonderful 2025 from the WYFB Staff!

WYOMING FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

LABOR COSTS... From Page 22

Implementation Inconsistencies

The timeline to implement the new 2025 AEWR will vary depending on where the employer is located. DOL finalized a new Farmworker Protection Rule in April 2024 that, in addition to many other provisions, removed the traditional 14-day implementation period for employers to begin paying the new AEWR. Seventeen states – Georgia, Kansas, South Carolina, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia – sued DOL over the rulemaking, and as of August 26, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia granted a temporary halt

of the rule in the filing states. Rather than pausing implementation of the rules across the country, DOL now has different requirements for employers in just those 17 states. While 48% of H-2A workers are employed in the states who filed for an injunction, for most states, this is the first year that employers will be required to immediately begin paying the new AEWR upon certification in December. Navigating the divided DOL guidelines and having to immediately alter business operations to accommodate new wages has added to the administrative burdens of employing H-2A workers.

Conclusion

Fruit and vegetable farmers, the largest users of H-2A, spend 38% of their farm expenses on labor, and that share will con-

tinue to grow if wages grow as they have in recent years. Rising farmworker wages are a considerable challenge to American specialty crop producers competing with farmers in other countries who can hire at a fraction of the cost.

DOL's methodology of directly using the average wage rates from the FLS as the minimum H2A wage has raised concerns among users of the program, especially since it does not account for the substantial additional costs of transportation and housing, as well as the direct and indirect administrative costs of using the program.

Nevertheless, H-2A workers have become vital to American food production as the domestic workforce continues to move away from agricultural labor. ■

Editor's Note: Read more about the H-2A program at fb.org/market-intel/debunking-h-2a-myths

Here is an excerpt from that Market Intel report from November 15, 2024:

The H-2A Temporary Agricultural Workers program – commonly known as H-2A – is the leading source of temporary and seasonal farmworkers in the U.S. H-2A workers, who come from many countries but mostly Mexico, are vital to many types of farms, particularly for specialty crops that are not machine-harvested. This Market Intel addresses some of the most common myths about the H-2A program, drawing directly from the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) that authorized the program in 1952.

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