



FALL 2025

# Business Update

## YOUR CHECKOFF AT WORK

### School and public facilities grant & education program approved

The Washington Turfgrass Seed Commission approved funds for a new program in 2026. The focus will be on a supporting public schools and parks departments in Washington.

“We have heard loud and clear from public facilities. Administrations feel natural grass is hard to maintain,” said Shane Johnson who serves as the WTSC administrator. With the proper design, new seed variety blends, and appropriate maintenance plans, natural grass fields provide a superior and safer environment for athletes and communities. Grass is safer, and it is cooler than artificial turf by more than 40° on a hot, sunny day. Real grass fights urban heat island effects by cooling the air throughout urban communities. It sequesters carbon, absorbs pollutants, and creates oxygen. It’s also similar in cost and maintenance to other options when factoring in replacement costs.

“Regardless of the facts, we fight the perception that plastic turf is the better option,” said WTSC’s communications lead, Kara Rowe. “This program will serve as a bridge between public administrations, staff education, and maintenance costs.”

The new program will consist of two elements — a maintenance grant program and an intensive training series.

The maintenance grant will include money from WTSC and industry partners. Schools and public facilities will apply for financial assistance with small maintenance projects, and selection will be decided by WTSC board members.

The intensive training series will be developed with input from selected school and public facility field managers. The WTSC will work with private industry to design a 3-day workshop to train public facility employees about proper turf management.

“Many of our field managers don’t have access to the proper education,” said Rowe. “Our goal is not only to train field managers, but to also give them the networking opportunity

with private industry to foster long-term relationships.”

The training series will be free to attendees. WTSC has also applied for a specialty crop block grant to help match funds.

## Research priorities discussed

At the September meeting, the Washington Turfgrass Seed Commission discussed their upcoming research priorities for the 2026 grant cycle. “We are always re-evaluating our highest needs,” explained Shane Johnson, the WTSC administrator.

Weed management continues to be the highest priority. With the recent resignation of WSU weed researchers Drew Lyon and Ian Burke, growers are left with a gap in the research. “We know that research positions can take awhile to fill,” said Johnson. “But we have a directive from the growers to continue our efforts to solve farm-level problems. We will continue to look for the best researchers who can bring value to our growers.”

Other areas of focus include vernalization, improved germination genetics, advanced technologies, production, markets for by-products, and benefits of turfgrass.



*Turfgrass seed grower, Travis Meacham, and staff member, Sara Good, represented the turfgrass industry at the recent WSU Women’s Soccer game in October. The WSU Lower Soccer Field is one of the best in the Pacific Northwest region.*

SINCE 1984

## Commission Purpose

The growers of turfgrass seed in Washington voted to establish the Washington Turfgrass Seed Commission for the purposes of funding research in the production, processing, or distribution of turfgrass seed-by-products, and establishing and conducting programs to develop markets for turfgrass seed and its byproducts, including straw utilization projects.

In accordance with the marketing order, the Washington Turfgrass Seed Commission collects assessments from growers to pursue its purposes.

### Your Commission

Jeff Tee (Chairman)  
Position 1, District 1, Director Appointed  
tee2102@aol.com

Derek Green  
Position 2, District 1, Elected  
derek95green@gmail.com

Jory Iverson  
Position 3, District 2, Elected  
jory@columbiariverseed.com

Jared Stevens  
Position 4, District 2, Director Appointed  
jaredmstevens@gmail.com

Michael Rainis (Treasurer)  
Position 5, Director Appointed  
michael@friehefarms.com

Paul Marienau  
Position 6 Handler, Board Appointed  
paul@fusionseed.us

Paula Moore  
Position 7, WSDA Representative  
pmoore@agr.wa.gov

Shane Johnson  
Administrator  
shanej@agmgmt.com



6601 W Deschutes Ave., Suite C-2  
Kennewick, WA 99336  
(509) 585-5460

[waturfgrass.org](http://waturfgrass.org)

## WTSC Meeting Schedule

Thursday, December 11 – 11:00am – Kennewick, WA

Thursday, February 5 – 11:00am – Spokane, WA

Thursday, June 4 – 9:00am – TBD

Thursday, September 10– 11:00am – Moses Lake, WA

## WTSA advocates against new Spokane plastic turf “all-weather” fields

This fall, citizens of Spokane will vote on a new levy titled “Together Spokane” which is a collaborative effort between Spokane Public Schools and Spokane Parks and Recreation to present a “shared vision for the future of our city’s parks, schools, and neighborhoods.” The effort includes artificial turf field projects they have labeled as “all-weather” fields. According to their campaign to voters, all-weather fields and turf infields will expand opportunities for off-season use and they claim they will require less maintenance and reduce watering needs and costs. SPS and Parks have currently identified several field locations to potentially serve the five SPS high school feeder pattern communities. Final locations would be determined with neighborhood input. Potential locations include:

- North Central’s athletic field
- Rogers’ athletic field
- Harmon Park (could serve Rogers High School)
- Dwight Merkel Sports Complex (will serve Shadle Park High School)
- Shadle Park athletic field
- Lewis & Clark’s Hart Field
- Ferris High School athletic field
- Southeast Sports Complex (could serve Ferris or Lewis and Clark High School)

The WTSA has written letters to SPS and Parks leadership explaining the benefits of real grass fields, and how they are the superior choice in our region.

“We understand that this is a challenge that many schools and parks departments face and we are willing and able partners,” explained WTSA president Travis Meacham. “With our private and public partners and dozens of sod and grass field maintenance experts throughout the PNW, we can help implement successful natural turfgrass maintenance programs at municipal parks, school districts, and other public greenspaces. Washington, and the Spokane region specifically, is home to some of the best sod and seed farms in the nation.”

*The WTSA mission is to advocate on behalf of the Turfgrass Seed Industry in Washington State by education, marketing and political outreach with the goal to grow the Turfgrass Seed industry in Washington State and beyond.*

