

Growing Montana

FALL 2024



**2024 MABF
SCHOLARSHIP
WINNERS**

**2025 MABA/MGEA
ANNUAL CONVENTION
& TRADE SHOW**

**WASHINGTON,
D.C.
REPORT**

A Publication of
MONTANA AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

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Christopher Averill
 MABA Executive Director
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MABA OBJECTIVES:

- To encourage the proper use of all pesticides, plant food, seeds and other agricultural products.
- To promote educational programs to bring together those who are associated with the aforementioned practices and uses.
- To provide a means for an exchange of information and ideas among persons associated with agricultural business.
- To encourage and support research and educational programs.
- To cooperate with local, state, regional and national agencies, both public and private, in the solution of problems and/or in the proposal of legislation relating to all such practices.
- To sponsor desirable laws and law changes that would be beneficial to the Association and its members.
- To serve as a clearing house for the legislative requests of various organizations regarding programs affecting the Association.



MONTANA AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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A Message from the President

Sitting in my office writing this letter I can hear the rain pound against our office building. What a wonderful sound that truly is. Winter wheat planting was struggling along prior to this timely moisture but now it should explode in the next few days. Sure wish the price offered for the crop would rebound to a more livable level, and for that matter the input prices would settle to more manageable numbers. Lots of uncertainty in the Ag industry at this moment, complicated even more with a Presidential election in November as well. We could all use some good news.

Speaking of good news. The Montana Agricultural Business Association was fortunate enough to interview many wonderful and qualified candidates for our previously open Executive Director position. Ultimately, we made an offer to Benchmark Public Affairs to fill that position. Benchmark accepted and began working for MABA on September 1st. Benchmark is a tremendously talented and driven collection of individuals. They have a plethora of experience working on the Legislative side, both sides of the aisle, as well as association management experience. We as a board truly believed that Benchmark was the right fit for MABA, and a partner that would continue pressing our objectives, not only within the state but regionally and nationally as well. Although they are a triumvirate in nature, Chris Averill will be our and your primary point of contact with Melissa Shannon and Ella Currier will be there to support and take on task that maybe more in their scope of knowledge. We really are excited to bring them aboard and get them up and running with what MABA already has in the works as well learn some new ideas from them to continuously improve the association. So, if you have the chance, I encourage you to reach out to them at your convenience.

In November MABA will be co-hosting, with the Montana Department of Agriculture and Montana State University College of Agriculture, the annual Montana AgTech Innovation and Investment Summit. This year we are fortunate enough to have the summit take place on the Montana State University campus, during the Celebrate Ag celebration. We are excited to move this event to a venue that will certainly attract many potential investors as well as innovators. So mark your calendars for November 6th, 2024 at Inspiration Hall on the campus of Montana State University-Bozeman, and join us for a look into a potential future



Tanner R. Hoversland

President

*Montana Agricultural
Business Association*

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A Message from the Executive Director

Greetings, MABA Members! I'm honored to join this fantastic organization as your new Executive Director. The entire Benchmark team of Melissa, Ella and myself are excited to help you continue to be an effective and trusted voice for your industry.



Chris Averill

*Executive Director
Montana Agricultural
Business Association*

Already it's been a whirlwind – in a positive sense. I got to work quickly after my start date to help prepare this year's exciting MT Ag-Tech Innovation and Investment Summit, being held on the Montana State University campus on Wednesday, November 6. I encourage all of you to participate – there's more information on registering in this newsletter.

I then turned my sights to meeting with folks at the Montana Department of Agriculture. One of our shared priorities is helping implement part of the Montana Climate Pollution Reduction Plan, which the department is administering alongside DNRC, DEQ, and others. The state received a grant from the Federal government to pursue a number of policies and objectives, and the one that MABA will have a significant role in leading is the "Fertilizer Use Innovation for Improved Soil Health" portion. There will be more to come on this education and outreach initiative in the coming months, so stay tuned.

I then had the opportunity to join several MABA Board members for the annual Washington, DC Fly-In in late September. We participated in meetings with counterparts from Illinois and Nebraska, and met with all four members of the Congressional delegation and potential Congressman Troy Downing, who happened to be in town as well. We also had time with officials from the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee. This was our opportunity to let policymakers in DC know what's important to Montana's ag business industry.

After that it was a networking conference for state agribusiness associations from across the country in Louisiana, as well as the annual Western Regional Alliance meeting in Utah. As fruitful and productive as these meetings were, I was thrilled to finally be back in Montana by mid-October! I learned very quickly how well respected MABA is across the country, and I look forward to building on the work that Krista undertook during her many successful years as Executive Director.

My door is always open – please reach out to me any time. And if you're in Helena, let me know and I'll buy you a coffee or something a bit stronger, as needed.

All the best, Chris Averill ■



About Benchmark Public Affairs: www.benchmarkpublicaffairs.com

The team at Benchmark Public Affairs is excited about partnering with the Montana Agriculture Business Association (MABA) by providing association management and government affairs/lobbying services for the Association.

Growing up on a barley farm on the Greenfield Bench near Fairfield, our Founder and CEO, Melissa Shannon, was deeply instilled with the values of hard work, the importance of community, and being there for your neighbors. These principles continue to drive her today and are embodied in our company's name and logo, which reflect her roots in the barley fields and the picturesque views of the Rocky Mountain Front leading to the Benchmark trail.

The team at Benchmark Public Affairs knows how important the agriculture industry is to the state of Montana and we have key relationships with agriculture leaders and interest groups across the state. We look forward to leveraging those relationships on behalf of MABA.

Benchmark's team of lobbyists has considerable experience lobbying for diverse interests, with six successful legislative sessions under our belt. We take a slightly different approach than the other firms in Montana – we are bipartisan by design. We employ known Republican and Democratic lobbyists to maximize our reach and utilize relationships fostered over many years for our clients. We have found that this approach works exceptionally well, leading to an excellent win record for our clients.

We look forward to partnering with MABA as we look towards the 2025 session and beyond.

CHRIS AVERILL Vice President of Government Affairs and Communications, Benchmark Public Affairs



Chris will be serving as MABA's Executive Director and will be the primary point of contact for the MABA membership. While every member of the Benchmark team will work on behalf of MABA, Chris will be your point person.

Chris began his professional career working on campaigns in the state of Maine, where he helped incumbent U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe win re-election in 2006 with 74% of the vote. Following Snowe's victory, he joined her staff on the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship in Washington, D.C., focused first on research and policy, and

later on communications. He then served as Snowe's Communications Director before joining the office of U.S. Representative Sam Graves (R-MO), a farmer and general aviation pilot from Northwest Missouri who now serves as Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

After seven years on Capitol Hill, Chris joined a membership advocacy organization called The New England Council, which advocates for a variety of regional business interests at the Federal level. He mainly focused on advanced manufacturing, financial services, and taxation matters.

Prior to moving to Montana in 2021, Chris spent 3.5 years in the Executive Branch as a presidential appointee at the U.S. General Services Administration. While there, he was involved in promoting digital transformation and modernization efforts within the Federal government, and helped spearhead the

Benchmark continued on page 6



Benchmark continued from page 5

rollout of the 2018 President's Management Agenda, which included the launch of Farmers.gov to better serve customers of USDA's Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) mission area. He ended his Federal service as GSA's Regional Administrator for New England, leading an office of more than 330 employees focused on the regional management of Federal real estate and information technology.

Chris has worked on behalf of numerous Republican campaigns over nearly two decades and has served on policy and communications working groups for several Virginia gubernatorial candidates. He is currently advising several Montana Republican campaigns in the 2024 cycle.

In his spare time, Chris is finally putting his history degree to use, serving as Chair of the Montana 250th Commission, the Montana State Historic Preservation Review Board, and the Helena Lewis and Clark County Heritage Tourism Council. He is a graduate of Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, with a B.A. in History and a minor in Government and Legal Studies. He resides in the Helena Valley with his wife, Amanda, and two-year old son, Jack.

MELISSA SHANNON
Founder and CEO, Benchmark Public Affairs



For MABA, Melissa will be the lead lobbyist and will also assist Chris on other duties as needed. Melissa is the Founder and CEO of Benchmark Public Affairs. Her extensive track record of achievements in this field, coupled with her profound understanding of Montana politics, policymakers, and issues, solidifies her position as a leader in the industry.

Before founding Benchmark Public Affairs, Melissa was an Executive Vice President of Strategies 360

(S360). She served on the company's leadership team and ran the Montana office for nine years. Melissa established S360 in Montana as a leading firm offering government affairs, communications, public involvement, marketing, and campaign services. Some of S360's accomplishments under Melissa's tenure include winning the 6 Mill Levy for higher education campaign in 2018 by a historic margin, passing legislation that created the Coal Trust Multifamily Homes program, which funds affordable housing, assisting the Black Butte Copper project in securing their Mine Operating Permit, and passing legislation that allows agency liquor stores to be open on Sunday and holidays. Melissa has also led efforts to defeat legislation that would hurt her clients, including separate efforts three sessions in a row to increase taxes for renewable energy providers and deregulate the garbage industry in Montana.

Prior to her tenure at S360 in 2014, Melissa honed her strategic planning skills as the director of government affairs for Cablevision and Charter Communications. Her role involved overseeing legislation and policy in Montana, Colorado, and Wyoming, where she developed and executed strategic plans to advance legislative and regulatory policies, demonstrating her adeptness at navigating complex situations.

As a principal with Kountoupes Consulting in Washington, D.C., Melissa provided strategic counsel to a range of high-profile clients, including Fortune 500, high-tech, telecom, health care, and energy companies like Yahoo and Netflix. Her ability to craft and implement successful strategic plans to advance her clients' goals with the Administration, Members of Congress, and the public underscores her capacity to deliver results for every client.

Melissa's diverse experience includes working for senior members of Congress, an eight-year stint with the Speaker of the House, and roles in the Montana State Legislature, the Montana Office of Public Instruction, and several Montana and Congressional campaigns. This comprehensive understanding of the field assures her clients of her ability to handle any situation.



A native of Fairfield, Montana, Melissa is a proud former Lady Eagle basketball player. Melissa graduated with honors from the University of Montana with a degree in political science.

ELLA CURRIER

Director of Public Affairs, Benchmark Public Affairs



Ella will be assisting with graphic design, membership newsletters, website updates, and other internal and external communications needs.

As Director of Public Affairs at Benchmark Public Affairs, Ella leads dozens of communications and public relations projects, leveraging her diverse background

in advocacy, public involvement, and grassroots organizing to serve our clients.

Ella spent the last six years working at Strategies 360, where she managed the Montana office's largest client and successfully shepherded projects in the energy, transportation, housing, public safety, health-care, and technology spaces.

Ella was a staffer to Denise Juneau's historic U.S. Congressional campaign in 2016. Subsequently, she worked for various statewide organizations as a grassroots organizer, directing field operations, lead-

ing workshops, and lobbying the state Legislature. Specifically, Ella worked with the Montana Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee on legislative campaigns, opposition research, and campaign strategy, and for M+R Strategic Services on a ballot initiative campaign. She also helped run the successful campaign for Helena's biggest-ever school bond in 2017.

In 2017, Ella was named one of Montana's 25 most influential Montanans under 25 by premier civil advocacy organization, the Forward Montana Foundation. In 2019, she ran her own campaign for the local school board, endorsed by the Montana Federation of Public Employees.

Ella graduated with honors from Harvard University with a degree in International Relations, a minor in Government, and a certificate in Social Justice. She was also awarded the Reginald H. Phelps Prize for academic achievement and outstanding character. Ella is fluent in Spanish with a level C-1 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages certification.

Ella spent her childhood on her grandfather's dairy farm, and her fiancé is a fourth-generation Montanan whose family has farmed and ranched north of Great Falls for over 100 years. She has spent the last four summers learning how to work on the farm, drive a stick shift, and move cattle. ■



Photography graciously provided by Jared Unverzagt. Find him on Twitter and Instagram to see more of his great work. @jzagt





2025 MABA/MGEA Annual Convention and Trade Show

JANUARY 22-24, 2025 – HERITAGE INN, GREAT FALLS, MT

The Annual MABA/MGEA Convention will provide a great opportunity for MABA members to learn, share experiences, and collaborate with colleagues. If you've never been to the convention, you should certainly make plans to attend this year's event. The event is host to professional speakers from across North America and over 500 attendees that are active in Agricultural Business in Montana.

Here's what you can expect at the "Timeless Traditions Modern Ingenuity" conference:

- Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) Points
- MT Department of Agriculture Points
- Over 60 vendors participating in the trade show
- Outstanding speakers
- Information pertinent to your businesses and employees

MABA takes the needs of its membership very seriously and it is for this reason that the MABA ensures that there are Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) and Department of Agriculture points available for all the sessions!

The "Timeless Traditions Modern Ingenuity" agenda includes discussions on Herbicides, Biologicals, Micro Nutrients, Fungicide, Kochia Resistance, Adjuvants, See & Spray Technology, Soil Acidification,

Pasture and Right of Way Management Panel, Pivot Injection Systems, Agriculture Economic Outlook, Farm Equipment Selection and Practices, Rail Safety and Update from BNSF.

The MABA/MGEA Annual Convention also provides an exciting opportunity for new agriculture professionals through a meet and greet and luncheon. During the luncheon there will be an opportunity for veterans and new professionals to share challenges, concerns, opportunities and to create relationships to further build the professionalism of our industry. The **New Agriculture Professionals Meet and Greet** is scheduled for Thursday, January 23 at Noon.

The annual convention is a great opportunity for leaders in the Montana Agricultural Business Community to come together and share ideas, solutions, and challenges.

Each year, MABA and MGEA select an entity to receive the profits from the Thursday night social and auction. This year the proceeds will go to a worthy agriculture cause in Montana.

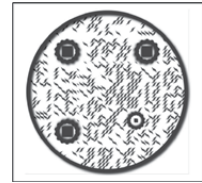
The MABA/MGEA Annual Convention brings together friends and acquaintances from across the state and country and provides a significant opportunity for networking. The breakout sessions are appropriate for management as well as employees and we look forward to seeing all of you in Great Falls in January!



To sign up to be a sponsor, vendor or to register for the “Timeless Traditions Modern Ingenuity” Convention please go to the www.mtagbiz.org website and click on the Convention banner or contact the office at agbusinessmt@gmail.com and we will get you all set up!

OR visit the appropriate registration site using the QR Codes to the right.

CONVENTION
SPONSOR/VENDOR



CONVENTION
ATTENDANCE
REGISTRATION



PESTICIDE RECERTIFICATION AND PROFESSION TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Wednesday morning of the MABA/MGEA Annual Convention and Trade Show is set aside for the Pesticide Recertification Workshop. The 2025 agenda does not disappoint and includes expert speakers and discussions related to Herbicides, Biologicals, Micro Nutrients, Fungicide. CCA and Department of Agriculture points will be offered for this event.



Dakota Auck



Maddie Devries



Marcus Evans

2024 MABF Scholarship Winners

The Montana Agribusiness Foundation (MABF) is thrilled to announce the winners of the 2024 Pam Langley Scholarships. At MABF, we encourage and support the leaders of tomorrow by providing scholarships to Montana's youth.

This year, Dakota Auck, Maddie Devries, and Marcus Evans stood out among 17 applicants and were each awarded \$2,500 to help them achieve their educational goals. These students embody the spirit of innovation and dedication that will shape the future of Montana agriculture.

We invite everyone to join us in congratulating Dakota, Maddie, and Marcus! MABF remains committed to supporting Montana's youth and fostering the next generation of agriculturalists. For inquiries about the foundation or donations, please contact us at mtagribusinessfoundation@gmail.com. We deeply appreciate your continued support in shaping the future of Montana agriculture.

We look forward to seeing many of you at events and conferences this fall and winter!

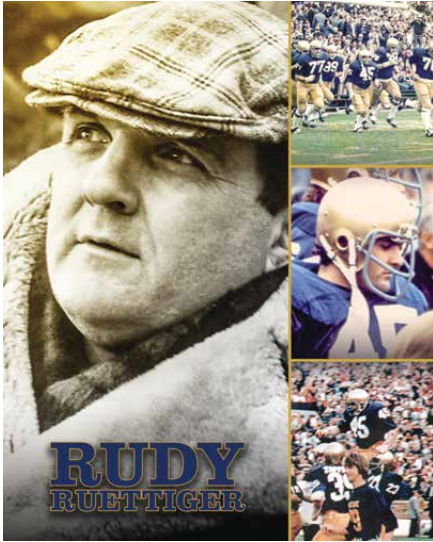
Amelia Siroky, MABF Board Member



2025 KEYNOTE SPEAKER: RUDY RUETTIGER

Motivational Speaker / Author

BECOME A PLATUIM, GOLD OR SILVER KEYNOTE SPEAKER SPONSOR TO GET YOUR MEET & GREET TICKETS!



Against all odds on a gridiron in South Bend, Indiana, Daniel "Rudy" Ruettiger in twenty-seven seconds, carved his name into history books as perhaps the most famous graduate of the University of Notre Dame and the nation's best example of a true underdog success story of defeating the odds through

perseverance. The son of an oil refinery worker and third of 14 children, Rudy rose from valleys of discouragement and despair to the pinnacle of success. Today, Rudy is one of the most popular motivational speakers in the United States. It took years of fierce determination to overcome obstacles.



Today, as an Emmy Award Winning and highly sought-after motivational speaker, Rudy entertains audiences with a unique, passionate, and heartfelt style of communicating. He speaks to corporations, universities, school children, sports teams and pro-

fessional athletes with the same enthusiasm, portraying the human spirit that comes from his personal experiences of adversity and triumph. His captivating personality and powerful message of "Dream Big & Never Quit" stays with his audiences forever. Rudy's opening remarks receive thunderous applause and standing ovations from audiences of 200 to 20,000 people who emotionally chant RU-DY, RU-DY!

Rudy has appeared on numerous nationally televised talk shows & radio shows across the country. He's also featured in national magazines and has been

honored with the key to many cities in the United States with special proclamations for his inspiration, commitment, and human spirit. Rudy received an Honorary Doctorate Degree from Our Lady of Holy Cross College and the Distinguished American Award. He also received a Proclamation from the Governor of Nevada granting an Official Rudy Award Day, was inducted into the Speakers Hall of Fame, and spoke at the White House during the presidencies of George W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

In addition to his motivational speaking, Rudy co-authored several books, including: RUDY'S INSIGHTS FOR WINNING IN LIFE, RUDY'S LESSONS FOR YOUNG CHAMPIONS, RUDY & FRIENDS, THE RUDY IN YOU, and RUDY: MY STORY. He co-founded the RUDY FOUNDATION, whose mission is to strengthen communities by offering scholarships in education, sports, and the performing arts. The Rudy Foundation makes a positive impact by bringing people together. The Rudy Foundation develops and supports programs that positively impact the lives of children cognitively, emotionally, physically and spiritually. The RUDY AWARDS™ program was created by the Rudy Ruettiger Foundation to recognize children who make an outstanding, exceptional effort to do their personal best every day, overcome obstacles, set goals, stay on track to reach their Dreams and build the qualities of Character, Courage, Contribution, and Commitment into their lives every day. The RUDY AWARDS™ is about a child's heart, the will to change, and desire for self-improvement. Rudy has two awesome children; Jessica Noel Ruettiger and Daniel Joseph Ruettiger.

Recently Rudy performed his one-man show, DREAM BIG – RUDY RUETTIGER LIVE ON BROADWAY at the Samuel Friedman theatre in New York. In addition, Rudy's new documentary titled, DREAM BIG – THE WALK ON won several Emmy

Rudy continued on page 29



2025 MABA – MGEA Convention & Pesticide Workshop



Heritage Inn – Great Falls, Montana

January 22– January 24, 2025



Company _____
 Contact _____ Phone _____
 Address _____ Fax _____
 City, State, Zip _____ Email _____

Refund Policy: A full refund will be given if the request is received in writing by fax, mail, or email at least one week before the convention begins. Beginning Monday of the convention week, no refund will be given except under unusual circumstances such as medical emergencies or death.

Convention AND Pesticide Workshop – \$200/person Meals are included with your registration.

Name	Address	Fee
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Please Enter Total (attach additional sheets as necessary)	Sub-Total	\$ _____
Additional Purchases or Contributions – <u>Meals are included with your registration.</u>		
Montana Ag Business Foundation Cash Donation		\$ _____
Silent Auction Cash Donation		\$ _____
Additional Wednesday Lunch Tickets (\$15 each)		\$ _____
Additional Thursday Lunch Tickets (\$15 each)		\$ _____
Additional Thursday Night Keynote Speaker and Dinner Tickets (\$50 each)		\$ _____
	Sub-Total	\$ _____
Total of registration package and additional items	TOTAL	\$ _____

Online registration is preferred at www.MTAGBIZ.ORG or use the QR codes.

Credit Card Payment (all credit card payments will be assessed a 3% fee):

Charge to Visa ____ Master Card ____ or American Express ____

Number: _____ Exp. Date _____

Name on card: _____ Address: _____

Zip Code: _____ 3 or 4 digit code _____ Signature _____

Please return to MABA/MGEA Convention, PO Box 4622, Helena, MT 59604/Email: mabamgea@gmail.com/Questions: Call Sydney 406.461.8500c//REGISTER ONLINE AT WWW.MTAGBIZ.ORG





2025 MABA-MGEA CONVENTION SPONSOR / VENDOR CONVENTION CONTRACT



Company _____

Name for Badge _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Fax _____

City, State, Zip _____ Email _____

MABA and MGEA will provide night security on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from 10pm to 6am but assume no liability for damage to or loss of exhibitors' property or for any losses in case of inability to provide exhibit space due to fire, earthquake, storm, riot, strike, civil insurrection or war.

TRADE SHOW Sub-Total \$ _____

Booths are \$450 if paid **by** Nov. 15, 2024; \$500 if paid **after** Nov. 15, 2024 o Please reserve our same booth(s) space

o We would like a different booth space. The booth numbers that I would prefer (written in order of priority) are:

o We are a new exhibitor. (With this layout, all booths get excellent traffic. We try to place space between competitors.) The booth numbers that I would prefer (written in order of priority) are:

SPONSORSHIP Sub-Total \$ _____

Sponsorship options are first-come, first-served. Options are listed on the MABA website at www.mtagbiz.org.

The option numbers that I would prefer (written in order of priority) are:

Registration is included for one person with each booth or sponsorship.

ADDITIONAL REGISTRATIONS Sub-Total \$ _____

For additional individuals, please enclose \$125/person if they are attending the convention only:

Name(s) _____ City _____

o Please check if additional persons are attending and write those names on a list and attach to this form.

CONTRIBUTION TO AUCTION Sub-Total \$ _____

Donation to Montana Agricultural Business Foundation Sub-Total \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Online Payment is preferred at www.mtagbiz.org or

o Check Enclosed o Check will be sent from my company headquarters

o Charge to: o VISA o Mastercard or o American Express

Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Name on card: _____ Address: _____

Zip Code: _____ 3 or 4 digit code _____

Signature: _____

MAIL TO: MABA-MGEA Convention • PO Box 4622 • Helena, MT 59604

EMAIL: mabamgea@gmail.com • **SIGN UP ONLINE:** WWW.MTAGBIZ.ORG



Participate in the Future of YOUR Association

The MABA/MGEA Annual Convention brings an opportunity for members to reconnect with colleagues as well as gain a better understanding and knowledge of the vast issues facing our industries. One of the most important agenda items that is often overlooked by members is the Annual Meeting! MABA exists to serve the needs of its membership, and it is critical that MABA membership provide feedback and guidance to the Board.



The MABA Annual Meeting will give you an opportunity to hear about the work conducted during the previous year, objectives for the upcoming years, financial health of the association, selection of board members, and a general discussion to bring everyone up to date.

Please become an ACTIVE member in YOUR association so that MABA can continue to thrive and represent Montana's agricultural businesses.

MABA ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday, January 22, 2025 – 3:00 PM
A/B/C Rooms – Heritage Inn, Great Falls

Montana Agricultural Business Association

BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATION FORM

The MABA Board of Directors works diligently to represent, support, and protect Montana's agricultural businesses and all the associated issues. Active participation from MABA Membership is crucial to having a board that represents all facets of this diverse and exciting industry.

Serving on the MABA Board is a great opportunity to increase your (or a coworker's) understanding of environmental, legislative, and regulatory issues facing Montana businesses! This is a great leadership opportunity that will benefit the individual board member but also the company that they represent. Please take a minute and nominate an individual to serve a 3 year term on the MABA Board of Directors.

Name: _____

Company: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

You can email this form to agbusinessmt@gmail.com, Mail to MABA, PO Box 4622, Helena, MT 59604;
OR simply fill out the form online at www.mtagbz.org.

Those elected will be the nominees receiving the most votes for the number of vacant positions and is not dependent upon the type of business or location of the business. All directors will be elected to serve 3-year terms. ■



4th Annual Golf Tournament Results

This is a very bitter sweet article to write, due to this being my last year on the board and helping head up this awesome event that we started four years ago on a whim, but now it is something a lot of folks look forward to every year. I want to give a big shout out to Burl Brawley for all his hard work and dedication to help make planning and organizing a cluster into a well-oiled machine. With that all being said let's roll into the summary of this years MABA golf tournament.

Our fourth annual golf tournament was held on July 25th at hickory swing golf course in Great Falls, we decided not to have a Calcutta the night before, but we were able to have higher pay outs for the top three placed teams in each flight due to an increase in teams that played this year. We teamed up with MABF again to raise money for scholarships and future giving opportunities for MABF, in which they provided breakfast for donations, and a 100-yard shot into a canoe on the pond to win prizes. We would like to say THANK YOU to everyone who supported our golf event this year, without you this great event wouldn't be possible. We had our best turn out we've ever had, which made for a very memorable and fantastic time. We had lots of compliments about the tournament, especially the quicker pace of play, the "garage sale" of free items from different companies, the 360 team photos, and most of all was the great atmosphere. If you have any suggestions, ideas, or if you'd like to volunteer for our board or next golf tournament, please reach out to us and let us know. I hope everyone has a great rest of their year and stay safe.

Here are our winners from each flight:

FLIGHT ONE WINNER: BASF

FLIGHT TWO WINNER: Hel-Fire Hackers



Become a MABA Member

I have been a member of the Montana Ag Business Association for nearly all of my 30 year long ag business career in Montana. I have seen first-hand the many different benefits of belonging to MABA though all aspects of my career as an applicator, crop advisor, ag retail manager, wholesale territory rep and chemical manufacture area rep. I am currently serving my second term on the MABA board of directors. Prior to being elected, I ran for the board 4 different times throughout my career. I did not get discouraged to run again often because I felt the desire to do more to protect and promote our industry. Board members need to want to be on the board to make a difference in the industry in which they work, not just as an item on a resume or an opportunity for a social outing. Many of you only associate MABA with the annual January convention and a way to pick up CCA or state pesticide license credits, but MABA offers our ag business members and our industry so many more benefits. Financial support to FFA and 4-H, recruitment of graduates entering the workforce to stay and work in Montana, promoting ag businesses in a positive light to our many state residents removed from the ag industry, promoting the ag entrepreneurial spirit and development of new ag technology through the Tech Summit, protecting our ag businesses through local, state and national lobbying for pro-ag business laws and legislation are just a few examples of what MABA does. I have spent the last 13 years of my career working first as a wholesale fertilizer sales rep and more recent as a technical sales manager for an adjuvant manufacturing company, covering the states of MT, ID, WA and OR. I have seen firsthand many different issues that affect ag business varying by state. I am also a member of other state and national ag business associations like Far West (ag business association for WA, ID & OR), ARA (Ag Retailers Association of America), and CPDA (Council of Producers & Distributors of Agrotechnology – a advocate for adjuvant, inert ingredient and post patent pesticide manufactures) . These ag business associations are critical for the long-term viability of our industry. I am currently an active member of the CPDA regulatory committee representing the northwest.

I have experienced firsthand the absurd regulation that states like Washington and Oregon have and continues to try to enact to restrict/ eliminate many of the tools our farmers need to economically produce their crops. What happens in our neighboring states could soon happen in Montana and we need a strong MABA board of directors to fight and retain our current way of work life.

Some of these associations have lost their focus on driving value for their members, in turn lose membership & support and are in jeopardy of disappearing from the industry which is not good! MABA remains a strong organization doing good things for ag business in Montana. I wanted to serve on the board of directors to help do my part and insure it stays a strong, member focused, association. I have been your MABA representative for the past three years, traveling to Washington DC to meet with national ag business groups and our Montana congressional delegation. These meetings bring forth the concerns and issues of our state ag business industry and allow a broader collective approach to defend our businesses and the role we all play in agriculture. I encourage you to consider volunteering time as a future board member and to also talk to your friends and associates working in this industry who aren't already members, to become a member of MABA.

The value of MABA membership includes but not limited to: *You need a watchdog advocate for ag business issues live, *A seat at the table representing our/your views, *The power of a collective voice and anonymity, *Collaboration & networking with other industry organizations, *State agency interaction and possibly intervention.

If you are interested in becoming more involved with MABA or running for a future board member position, please contact me! ■



Tim Tackes
*Board Member &
Governance/Nominations
Committee Chair*



EPA Finalizes First-of-its-Kind Strategy to Protect 900 Endangered Species from Herbicides

STRATEGY REFLECTS EXTENSIVE INPUT OF GROWERS AND OTHER PESTICIDE USERS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released its final Herbicide Strategy, an unprecedented step in protecting over 900 federally endangered and threatened (listed) species from the potential impacts of herbicide, which are chemicals used to control weeds. EPA will use the strategy to identify measures to reduce the amount of herbicides exposure to these species when it registers new herbicides and when it reevaluates registered herbicides under a process called registration review. The final strategy incorporates a wide range of stakeholder input, ensuring EPA not only protects species but also preserves a wide range of pesticides for farmers and growers.

“Finalizing our first major strategy for endangered species is a historic step in EPA meeting its Endangered Species Act obligations,” said Deputy Assistant Administrator for Pesticide Programs for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention Jake Li. “By identifying protections earlier in the pesticide review process, we are far more efficiently protecting listed species from the millions of pounds of herbicides applied each year and reducing burdensome uncertainty for the farmers that use them.”

The Biden-Harris Administration’s new approaches for protecting endangered species, which include the Herbicide Strategy, have resolved multiple lawsuits against EPA. For decades, EPA has tried to comply with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on a pesticide-by-pesticide, species-by-species basis. However, because this approach is very slow and costly, it resulted in litigation against the agency and uncertainty for users about the continued availability of many pesticides. At the beginning of 2021, EPA faced almost two dozen lawsuits covering thousands of pesticide products due to its longstanding failure to meet ESA obligations for pesticides. Some of these lawsuits resulted in courts removing pesticides from the market until EPA ensured the pesticides comply with the ESA. Now, all but one of those lawsuits has been resolved. Unlike EPA’s historic approach to

compliance, the Herbicide Strategy identifies protections for hundreds of listed species up front and will apply to thousands of pesticide products as they go through registration or registration review, thus allowing EPA to protect listed species much faster.

In July 2023, EPA released a draft of this strategy for public comment. EPA received extensive comments, with many reiterating the importance of protecting listed species from herbicides but also minimizing impacts on farmers and other pesticide users. In response to comments, EPA made many improvements to the draft, with the primary changes falling into three categories:

- Making the strategy easier to understand and incorporating up-to-date data and refined analyses;
- Increasing flexibility for pesticide users to implement mitigation measures in the strategy; and,
- Reducing the amount of additional mitigation that may be needed when users either have already adopted accepted practices to reduce pesticide runoff or apply herbicides in an area where runoff potential is lower.

EPA focused this strategy on conventional herbicides used in agriculture in the lower 48 states because the most herbicides are applied there. In 2022, approximately 264 million acres of cropland were treated with herbicides, according to the Census of Agriculture from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The number of cropland acres treated with herbicides has remained fairly consistent since the early 2010s. EPA is also focusing this strategy on species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) because herbicides generally impact those species. For species listed by the National Marine Fisheries Service, EPA is addressing pesticide impacts through a separate initiative with that agency.



FINAL HERBICIDE STRATEGY

The final strategy includes more options for mitigation measures compared to the draft, while still protecting listed species. The strategy also reduces the level of mitigation needed for applicators who have already implemented measures identified in the strategy to reduce pesticide movement from treated fields into habitats through pesticide spray drift and runoff from a field. The measures include cover crops, conservation tillage, windbreaks, and adjuvants. Further, some measures, such as berms, are enough to fully address runoff concerns. Growers who already use those measures will not need any other runoff measures. EPA identified these options for growers through its collaborations with USDA under its February 2024 interagency MOU and through over two dozen meetings and workshops with agricultural groups in 2024 alone.

The final strategy also recognizes that applicators who work with a runoff/erosion specialist or participate in a conservation program are more likely to effectively implement mitigation measures. These conservation programs include the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service practices and state or private stewardship measures that are effective at reducing pesticide runoff. The strategy reduces the level of mitigation needed for applicators who employ a specialist or participate in a program. Geographic characteristics may also reduce the level of mitigation needed, such as farming in an area with flat lands, or with minimal rain such as western U.S. counties that are in the driest climates. As a result, in many of those counties, a grower may need to undertake few or no additional runoff mitigations for herbicides that are not very toxic to listed species.

The final strategy uses the most updated information and processes to determine whether an herbicide will impact a listed species and identify protections to address any impacts. To determine impacts, the strategy considers where a species lives, what it needs to survive (for example for food or pollinators), where the pesticide will end up in the environment, and what kind of impacts the pesticide might have if it reaches the species. These refinements allow EPA to focus

restrictions only in situations where they are needed.

The final strategy will also expedite how EPA complies with the ESA through future consultations with FWS by identifying mitigations to address the potential impacts of each herbicide on listed species even before the agency completes the consultation process for that herbicide—which in many cases, can take five years or more. Further, EPA and FWS expect to formalize their understanding of how this strategy can inform and streamline future ESA consultations for herbicides.

The final strategy itself does not impose any requirements or restrictions on pesticide use. Rather, EPA will use the strategy to inform mitigations for new active ingredient registrations and registration review of conventional herbicides. EPA understands that the spray drift and runoff mitigation from the strategy can be complicated for some pesticide users to adopt for the first time. EPA has also developed a document that details multiple real-world examples of how a pesticide applicator could adopt the mitigation from this strategy when those measures appear on pesticide labels. To help applicators consider their mitigation options, EPA is developing a mitigation menu website that the agency will release in fall 2024 and plans to periodically update with additional mitigation options, allowing applicators to use the most up-to-date mitigations without requiring pesticide product labels to be amended each time new measures become available. EPA is also developing a calculator that applicators can use to help determine what further mitigation measures, if any, they may need to take in light of mitigations they may already have in place. EPA will also continue to develop educational and outreach materials to inform the public and help applicators understand mitigation needs and where descriptions of mitigations are located.

The Final Herbicide Strategy and accompanying support documents are available in docket EPA-HQ-OPP-2023-0365 at the Regulations.gov page.

Visit EPA's website to learn more about how EPA's pesticide program is protecting endangered species. ■



MABA FALL UPDATE: MDA - Ag Services Bureau



CHANGES TO MDA'S PESTICIDE CONTAINER RECYCLING PROGRAM ARE UNDERWAY

The Montana Department of Agriculture's pesticide container recycling program provides pesticide applicators with the means to recycle their clean and rinsed HDPE plastic pesticide containers at collection days across the state. The mobile grinding unit nicknamed "Russel," a yellow Kenworth day cab pulling a diesel generator and plastic granulator on a 40ft drop down trailer, will be making regular visits to scheduled locations across Montana. For the safety of our recycling staff, it is required that all pesticide containers be rinsed of product, adjuvants, and oils; that the containers are clean and dry and lids, foil seals, and label booklets have been removed. Larger pesticide containers like 30- and 50-gallon drums are accepted but must be cut into 1/8th sections to fit into the granulator. Totes and crate container plastic are not accepted.

This program originally consisted of unsupervised container drop off sites. Unfortunately, due to the repeat issue of unrinsed or partially full pesticide containers being left at many recycling collection sites, MDA had to restructure the program due to concerns of pesticide exposure to staff and the environment. This year the Department began conducting recycling events at scheduled locations, where applicators can bring their cleaned and pre-

pared containers, meet our staff and quickly unload directly into our conveyor. We can already observe an improvement in equipment maintenance that has resulted – cleaner containers leave less residue, which results in less cleaning needed for internal granulator parts.

The Pesticide Container Recycling Program is also expanding container recycling infrastructure in Montana by developing stationary granulator locations, beginning in areas with historically high volumes of container collection. In collaboration with the Lake County Weed District, the Flathead Biological Research Station and the EPA's Toxic Waste Reduction Lead Grant, the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program is providing funding for the first stationary granulator near Polson, MT at the Lake County Weed District's facility. This pilot project gives the Pesticide Recycling Program the opportunity to develop strategies for construction and contracting that are necessary for the deployment of stationary granulators at other locations across the State.

The stationary granulator is a shipping container modified to house a plastic size reduction granulator, like the truck mounted unit currently used to collect plastic with the mobile grinding truck. Future sites will consist of a 20 foot container next to a 20 foot cement pad, with a total footprint of 400 square feet. The vortex separator stands outside the con-



tainer, on the concrete pad, where super bags are filled with the plastic regrind. A roller door is added to the side of the container facing the cement pad, so that bags of plastic regrind can be stored in the container while waiting for pickup with the mobile grinding truck. Each super bag can hold more than 2,000 plastic pesticide containers and the shipping container will have room for at least four palletized super bags, for a total capacity of over 8,000 containers – an estimated 5,200 lbs. of recyclable plastic. These stationary granulators will be open on a weekly schedule to increase applicator opportunities to recycle their rinsed pesticide containers, and bag pickups will be incorporated into the recycling trucks existing six-week route rotations.

With the single mobile recycling truck, the Pesticide Recycling program collected an average of 80,000 lbs. of plastic every season, although restructuring the program has reduced that average. We hope to build back to that annual average quickly and to further grow those totals as we add more options for applicators to participate in the recycling program. The Agricultural Container Recycling Council (ACRC) estimates that over 300,000 lbs. of recyclable agricultural plastic containers are generated in Montana annually. With the continued collaboration of local Weed Management and Extension Districts to aid in site location decisions, operation, and outreach to communities about the stationary granulators, the Pesticide Container Recycling Program aims to develop four more stationary granulators in coming years and divert 240,000 lbs. of agricultural container plastic from local landfills.

The pesticide container recycling program is possible due to the support of the Agricultural Container Recycling Council. The ACRC is a not-for-profit 501(c)(6) trade association that works to facilitate the collection and recycling of one-way rigid HDPE plastic agricultural crop protection, animal health, specialty pest control, micronutrient, biologicals, fertilizer, and/or adjuvant product containers. This is done through member funding of cost-effective programs that fosters public health and safety,

environmental protection, resource conservation and end-user convenience. Montana's Agricultural Applicators have been providing the ACRC with high quality recycled material since 2009 through their hard work and diligence of maintaining clean and ready containers for the recycling program.

To find a pesticide container recycling collection day near you, visit the Montana Department of Agriculture's web page and scrolling down to "Featured Services" header, choosing the "Pesticide Programs" tab and then "Container Recycling". The QR code below will connect you directly to the pesticide container recycling event calendar.



APPLICATOR/DEALER LICENSE RENEWAL IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER – DO YOU HAVE THE RECERTIFICATION CREDITS YOU NEED?

MDA's pesticide training program has two events left before the end of the recertification cycle. The trainings will be in Belgrade on October 30th and Helena on December 11th. To register for either event or for more information visit the MDA pesticide certification and training webpage. For additional "last chance" credit opportunities please use MDA's pesticide course locator to find opportunities near you.

Categories renewing this year include Ag Plant Pest, Aerial, Mosquito Abatement, Public Health Pest, Ag Animal Pest, Sewer Treatment, Animal Contraceptive and Biocide. Applicators in those categories need 12 recertification credits to renew their classifications or will need to retest. If testing is the preferred option for you, contact your local field office: <https://agr.mt.gov/About/Office-Locations/ASB-Field-Offices>. ■



Governor Gianforte Announces \$50 Million Investment in Montana Forests and Agricultural Lands

FRUSTRATED THE EPA DENIED \$49 MILLION FOR SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS



LEADING THE
**MONTANA
COMEBACK**

PRESS RELEASE ON JULY 22, 2024

Governor Greg Gianforte today announced the State of Montana received a nearly \$50 million investment in Montana’s working and natural lands from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Montana is one of just 25 recipients across the nation to be awarded funding.

“We’re known in Montana for our innovative spirit and our strong history of conservation,” Gov. Gianforte said. “I’m grateful we worked together to secure this historic investment to improve the resilience of our forests, agriculture industry, and waterways through innovative, incentive-based projects.”

Last year, Gov. Gianforte secured \$3 million in federal planning funds, and charged the Montana Department of Environmental Quality to identify and develop project concepts through a broad public process. As a result of the planning, state agencies will now receive \$49,769,891 to implement many of the projects identified through the process. These projects will boost Montana’s resilience, reduce emissions, and support thriving Montana communities through innovation, not regulation.

Through the investment, the Montana departments of Agriculture (MDA), Environmental Quality (DEQ), and Natural Resources and

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Conservation (DNRC) will support reforestation and wildfire mitigation, the expansion of urban and community forests, coal seam fire identification and mitigation, the reduction of nutrient pollution and nuisance algal blooms, adaptive strategies to improve soil health through grazing management, and incentivize innovation in the cattle and beef industry.

State agency directors welcomed the news and are eager to deliver innovative solutions. “As stewards of our natural resources, DNRC implements forest management that is vital to protect and restore ecosystems while building resiliency to drought and wildfire risk,” said DNRC Director Amanda Kaster. “These funds will bolster our established seedling and forest management programs, while also providing new resources to manage coal seam fires facing Eastern Montana.”

“Montana’s farmers and ranchers deserve so much credit for responsibly stewarding Montana’s agricultural landscapes, and we are very pleased the importance of producer led conservation practices are recognized,” said MDA Director Christy Clark. “The department, along with our industry partners, are eager participate in this effort to further the implementation of innovative ideas and new technology in agriculture.”

“All Montanans know what it feels like to watch our big skies turn smoky during summer months,” said DEQ Director Sonja Nowakowski. “I am excited to put this funding to work for Montana – to implement projects that will protect our most vulnerable residents from smoke and harmful algae, and help our communities continue to thrive.”

Along with this grant funding, the state was expecting to receive nearly \$49 million for infrastructure improvements to Montana schools through the Energy Infrastructure and Efficiency Upgrade Project. The EPA, however, did not select this critical project for funding which would have invested in enhancing energy efficiency in Montana’s schools, among other priorities.

Expressing frustration with the denial of investment for school infrastructure improvements, the governor added, “Our state agencies work diligently to serve Montanans, and ensure we maintain the best environments to live, work, and learn. Our states deserve better coordination from the federal government to best serve our communities and our students.”

For more information on the program, including a summary of the successful projects, visit deq.mt.gov/about/Climate-Resilience. ■



Congressional Comments



Jon Tester

*United States Senator
For the State of
Montana*

U.S. SENATOR JON TESTER

The catastrophic failure earlier this summer on the St. Mary Canal rocked producers across the Hi-Line. About 120,000 acres of irrigated land along have been impacted – and irrigators and agricultural businesses are counting on a timely, permanent fix in order to protect their bottom line.

After the failure, I pushed the Administration and the Bureau of Reclamation to utilize emergency spending to get dirt moving as soon as possible, and I worked to get my Fort Belknap Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act passed in the Senate.

If that bill is passed by the House, it will provide \$275 million to fix the St. Mary siphon and prevent future breakdowns. I don't have to tell you we've got to get this done.

In the meantime, I worked with my colleagues on the Senate Appropriations Committee to secure additional funding for the Milk River Project in the 2025 government funding bill at no cost to local communities. These federal dollars are critically important because irrigators can't afford to foot the bill for a replacement of this scale. It's Congress' job to deliver a long-term funding solution to pay for this work, and provide certainty for irrigators who rely on the Milk.

The good news is, as we speak, a Montana-based contractor is already at work. They're working fast, and right now they've got enough funding to keep this project moving through the end of the year thanks to the additional emergency funding we recently secured from BOR.

So we're making good progress, but we've still got a long way to go before this project is wrapped up and folks have the long-term certainty they need. Just know I'll be monitoring the project every step of the way and keeping my ears to the ground, taking feedback from Montana's agricultural community, including the Montana Agricultural Business Association, about how we can best support the agricultural industry and make agricultural producers whole.

Thank you for all that you do, and please remember my door is always open.

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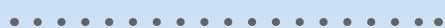
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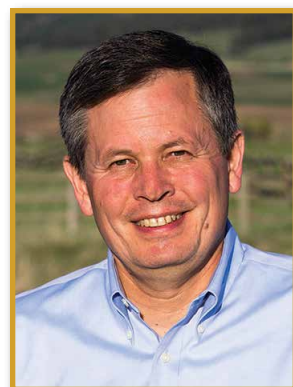
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U.S. SENATOR STEVE DAINES

As a fifth-generation Montanan and a lifelong advocate for our state’s rich ag heritage, I understand that agriculture isn’t just the mainstay of our economy – it’s the very lifeblood that sustains our families and communities. Farmers and ranchers across the state continue to demonstrate their resilience, and bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. owe it to you to stay out of the way.



Steve Daines

*United States Senator
For the State of
Montana*

Back in June, the St. Mary siphon out of Babb was breached, underscoring the importance of the Fort Belknap Water Compact and the need for clean and reliable water sources along the Hi-Line. I was also proud to see the Fort Belknap Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act pass through the Senate and move one step closer to becoming law. This legislation will provide \$1.3 billion dollars to improve infrastructure and economic development for the Fort Belknap Indian Community and improve the efficiency of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Milk River Project, which helps irrigate approximately 121,000 acres of Tribal and non-Tribal land. The bill is supported by Governor Gianforte, the Fort Belknap Community, local counties and ag producers and is a win-win for Montana.

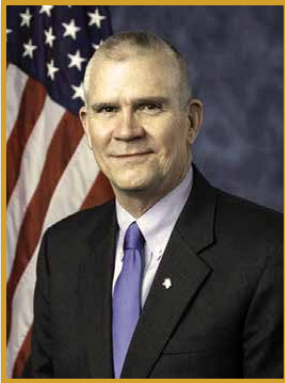
As we look at the state of the next Farm Bill, it continues to be a work in progress as the likely timeframe to vote on its passage gets pushed back further. With the expiration date of the current Farm Bill set to September of 2024, another extension is necessary, so government programs should expect to continue operations until the new package is finalized. While the bill advanced out of the House Agriculture Committee with bipartisan support, the process in the Senate has not been as smooth, as Senate Democrats continue to prioritize their climate agenda and other partisan issues having nothing to do with our farmers and ranchers. It is time for lawmakers to do their jobs and pass a comprehensive package that keeps more farm in the Farm Bill and supports our partners across Montana and the country.

When it comes to fighting for a favorable tax climate for Montana ag producers, I am on special working groups as a member of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee to make the Trump tax cuts permanent. If these provisions are allowed to expire, it will mean a \$6 trillion tax hike. I will also continue working to make bonus depreciation permanent and repeal the death tax for good.



SUSTAINING MEMBERS

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE MATT ROSENDALE



Matt Rosendale
*US Representative
For the State of
Montana*

Fall is here! Just because temperatures will be cooling off soon doesn't mean you should let fire safety fall by the wayside.

One of the most beautiful sights our state has to offer are beautiful waves of grain in the Golden Triangle. However, dry wheat can create fields of fuel that can potentially catch fire. To prevent fires from starting in the first place, make sure you are avoiding behaviors which can lead to an uncontrolled blaze. Some examples are not parking hot cars or other machines in dry grass, making certain when burning debris that you have water nearby, and if building a campfire, doing it in an open location far from flammables.

I hope everyone has a safe and successful harvest this year! If you or anyone you know needs help with the problems caused by fires or navigating federal government programs, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or my office.

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE RYAN ZINKE



Ryan Zinke
*US Representative
For the State of
Montana*

Throughout my time in office, I have been a strong voice for the farmers and ranchers in Montana. As you know, we have the Farm bill reauthorization on the horizon this year.

This year's Farm Bill includes some big wins for Montana such as; substantially increased funding for Market Access Programs and Foreign Market Development programs, resources for new, young, beginning, and veteran farmers in their transition to farming and ranching, expanding Crop Insurance premium assistance, and voluntary restoration and enhancement of wildlife habitat connectivity and wildlife mitigation corridors as critical conservation

areas under RCPP with increases the CRP payment limitation from \$50,000 to \$125,000 per year. These accomplishments will be significantly helpful to Montana's farmers and ranchers. I have also introduced the Fort Belknap Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act, among other things, the bill includes \$300 million to rehabilitate the St. Mary Canal and Dodson South Canal, part of the federal Milk River Project, for non-tribal water users in northcentral Montana, \$250 million for an upstream wastewater treatment facility, and \$416 million

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to rehabilitate, modernize, and expand the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) Fort Belknap Indian Irrigation Project and to restore and develop irrigation systems.

One bill I recently co-sponsored is H.R. 6441 the Ranching Without Red Tape Act. I am proud to co-sponsor this bill because would allow ranchers to make minor range improvements to existing, structural improvements, including fences and fence lines, wells, water pipelines, and stock tanks, without renegotiating their permit. The bill would also instruct USFS or BLM to expedite permittee requests for the agency to carry out improvements. This bill will be a great step to helping ensure that our farmers and ranchers can do their job without unnecessary government overreach.

We all know that the policies only go so far and that it's the people behind them at the government agencies that decide whether or not to make a program work for the American people. When I was secretary, we moved the BLM to Colorado to be near the land and people it worked with. We appointed ranchers, private property attorneys, and actual Westerners to important positions that oversaw western landscapes – and it made a difference. As the Trump team prepares for potentially a second administration, I am always looking for talented and service-minded professionals to recommend. Please don't hesitate to reach out to my office if you have a great candidate in mind.

Finally, if there is anything that I or my staff can do to help you, do not hesitate to reach out. Whether it's help with a federal agency or a letter of recommendation for a service academy, I am eager to help. My door is always open. ■

SAFETY LETTER

As we just got harvest wrapped up, we bail right into winter wheat seeding. The producers that we deal with are very resilient, with their ability to adapt to the changes that seem to effect all of us on a day to day basis. The stress load can get very hard to do deal with at times, and that stress seems to get cascaded down. Whether it's with co-workers, customers, or family members. Having the ability to manage that stress is very critical in any industry. Myself, I struggle everyday in finding ways to cope with it.

So, I'll keep this short. Being able to have that ability to handle tough situations is a great attribute. As an industry, I know there are people in place to reach out to for a little advice on this topic, hopefully we utilize these resources when needed.

Stay safe, Don Soper

Points to Ponder

BY CHRIS AVERILL

Typically, this column is filled with advice and reflection from an ag business industry perspective, with wisdom from a MABA Board member who is in the trenches like you every day. For this column, I thought I'd bring a slightly different perspective – but an equally important one as we gear up for a new Legislative session.



Chris Averill
Executive Director
Montana Agricultural
Business Association

I probably have a different career path than many of you. I grew up in a suburb of Boston, far away from any tangible connection to the agricultural business industry. I was a history nerd, prodding my family members to take me to Lexington and Concord battlefields or Plymouth Rock for “fun” on weekends. In college, that love of history hit a realization that history majors don't really earn good livings, so I tacked on a minor in government and legal studies, which led me to a fascinating 20 years in and around politics and government.

As I was trying to find my way as a lowly staffer on Capitol Hill, my colleagues discovered that I had a good grasp of communications, particularly writing. And so, I was pegged as the “comms guy.” It wasn't really a conscious choice that I made but an opportunity that others helped form for me.

Over the years, I've been on both sides of discussions. I've been the one staffing the elected officials as individuals and groups would come to the office and try to lobby us on this, that, or the other thing, and I've been the individual doing the lobbying and persuading. And so, as we look to call on MABA members to actively weigh in on legislation and policy with their local and statewide officials during the Legislative session, I thought I might present a few lessons learned (or “points to ponder,” if you will) regarding smart and effective communications with government officials.

First, it's important that, to the extent possible, your first meeting with your local state representative or senator isn't when you're asking for something. These officials are people, too; they're often your neighbors. Get to know them now, as they're running for office, and establish a relationship, even if it's just a simple introduction. If you need help connecting, reach out to me – it's part of our job to know these folks and have our own relationships with them.

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Second, when you reach out to the official or come to a meeting in Helena, start with your “headline” – what’s the hook that’s going to grab their attention and clearly convey the purpose of the meeting or call. Then, be ready to explain why they should care – what is the impact on their constituents, their community, and their bottom line. Shorter is always better for the attention span – let them ask the follow-ups they want to. It will take some preparation in advance to get this right.

Thirdly, be prepared to explain your industry in clear and concise terms. There’s a lot of technical jargon and misunderstandings about the role you play in agriculture (some elected officials even believe you are farmers). As part of the theme of less is more, consider innovative ways to communicate the challenges you face in succinct, relatable terms. This will empower you to effectively convey your message and make a lasting impact.

Finally, be authentic. Tell your story in a way that draws upon your reality. Don’t try to pretty it up or make it sound fancier than it is. As a public relations CEO, Lisa Osborne Ross, said, “People want direct, clear, honest communication. If you try to spin or bullshit me, I’m out.” Remember, your audience values honesty and authenticity. Don’t get lost in the fluff. Be real, be you, and you’ll earn the trust and respect of your audience.

Some of this may sound very common sense. But I find that, for most people, this is easier said than done. It takes practice and commitment to communicate effectively in an age where people value their time and seem to have diminishing attention spans.

I look forward to working with all of you to tell the story of the agricultural business community in Montana to our legislators, your clients, and the public at large. ■

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Registration Now Open for Second Annual Montana Ag Technology Innovation & Investment Summit

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: MTAGTECHINVEST.IO

Registration is now open for the second annual Montana Ag Technology Innovation & Investment Summit. In coordination with the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Montana State University, the Montana Agricultural Business Association (MABA) is proud to bring the event to Bozeman, MT, on November 6th, 2024.

The Montana Ag Technology Innovation & Investment Summit is honored to join Montana State University's Celebrate Ag week this November. The second annual summit event is a strategic opportunity to bring cutting-edge agriculture technology and innovation to the forefront of North America's agriculture economy. Building on last year's inaugural event, the 2024 summit explores the nexus between research, innovation, and investment opportunities through a compelling sector that has the power to alter the course of the global food and agriculture system.

"We are very excited to bring the Montana Ag Technology Innovation and Investment Summit to the Montana State University campus during the annual Celebrate Ag week. The collaboration and innovation that stem from this event are vital to the success and growth of the agricultural ecosystem here in Montana," said Christy Clark, Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture.

To learn more, register, or view a tentative agenda, please visit: mtagtechinvest.io/.

"The Montana Agricultural Business Association is proud to partner with the Montana Department of Agriculture and Montana State University to lead this important conversation on investing in Mon-

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tana-built ag innovation. After a compelling inaugural summit, we can't wait to see the kinds of connections made this year that will have a lasting impact on the Montana agriculture landscape," said Chris Averill, Executive Director of MABA.

Join researchers, entrepreneurs, capital allocators, fund managers, and agribusiness executives to network, collaborate, learn, raise capital, and lean into developing the ag technology and innovation ecosystem. The full-day agenda is packed with networking opportunities, educational seminars surrounding artificial intelligence, climate mitigation strategies, innovation, and more.

The Summit Committee is still accepting sponsorship support. To request more information on sponsorship opportunities, please email mtagtechsummit@gmail.com.

The Montana Agricultural Business Association advocates for sound science-based policies that protect the crop and fertilizer industries. MABA currently has registered members from more than 230 companies, including retailers, distributors, seed companies, and fertilizer suppliers. Visit mtagbiz.org to learn more.

The Montana Department of Agriculture is serving Montana Agriculture and growing prosperity under the Big Sky. For more information on department programs and services, visit agr.mt.gov. ■

Rudy continued from page 10

Awards for Best Director and Best Documentary. The link is available on Amazon Prime (Search "Rudy Ruettiger: The Walk On.")

In Celebration of the 25th ANNIVERSARY of the Movie RUDY, the film was presented on the big screen at the Microsoft Theatre in LA while the musical score was performed live by the Hollywood Orchestra.

Millions have been inspired by the movie RUDY, now let the man behind the movie inspire YOU! ■

President continued from page 3

of agriculture in Montana. There are several other events that week, culminating with a football game on Saturday. Make a week of it and come Celebrate Ag in Bozeman.

Thank you all for your continued support of MABA and if we don't see you in November I look forward to catching up in January at the annual convention in Great Falls. Be on the lookout for registration and sponsorship opportunities in the near future. ■





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NEWS & NOTES

EPA Releases its Final Herbicide Strategy

DRIFT REDUCTION ADJUVANTS ARE INCLUDED

In a major scientific and policy victory for CPDA members, EPA released its final Herbicide Strategy, which includes Drift Reduction Adjuvants (DRAs) as an approved mitigation measure.

By way of review, EPA's Endangered Species Act Workplan dictates what EPA must do during the pesticide registration or registration review process. If a product "may affect" a listed species, EPA must consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (the Services), as applicable. During consultation, the Services provide EPA with measures, where needed, to avoid jeopardy to listed species and adverse modification of critical habitats from a pesticide. To better protect listed species, EPA is working to improve how EPA assesses effects to listed species in its pesticide evaluations and consultation processes. One of these processes is the use of various "strategies" to protect listed species, including the Herbicide Strategy.

The Herbicide Strategy is designed to protect over nine hundred listed species from the potential impacts of herbicides. The final strategy includes more options for mitigation measures compared to the draft, including DRAs. The strategy also reduces the level of mitigation needed for applicators who have already implemented measures identified in the strategy to reduce pesticide movement from treated fields into habitats through pesticide spray drift and runoff from a field. The measures include cover crops, conservation tillage, windbreaks, and DRAs and other adjuvants.

The final strategy itself does not impose any requirements or restrictions on pesticide use. Rather, EPA will use the strategy to inform mitigations for new active ingredient registrations and registration review of conventional herbicides. EPA recognized that the spray drift and runoff

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mitigations from the strategy can be complicated for some pesticide users to adopt for the first time.

EPA has developed a guide that outlined multiple real-world examples of how a pesticide applicator could adopt the mitigation from this strategy when those measures appear on pesticide labels. To help applicators evaluate mitigation options, EPA will release a mitigation menu website this fall.

CPDA distributed a press release commending the inclusion of adjuvants in EPA's final Herbicide Strategy which was picked up by *The Scoop*. ■

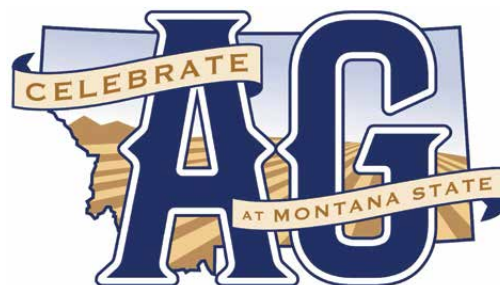
MABA To Participate in Celebrate Ag Week 2024

Celebrate Ag Week is being held the week of November 4th this year, and MABA is gearing up to participate in the festivities once again. Montana State University will be hosting a number of events, including Ag Olympics, departmental open houses, and social activities.

In addition to our AgTech Innovation and Investment Summit on November 6th, MAGA is teaming up with the Montana Stockgrowers Association to participate in the Ag Alley Tailgate on Saturday, November 9th before the Montana State University Bobcats' game against the Sacramento State Hornets.

Dubbed "Ag Alley," the collection of booths and main tailgating tent will be located at the southwest corner of Dyche Field near Kagy Avenue across the street from Bobcat Stadium. The tailgate will include snacks and beverages, family-friendly activities and demonstrations from MSU's agriculture-focused student groups.

MABA will be providing a Bloody Mary Bar starting at 10am, until supplies are gone, so plan to join us for this fun opportunity to Celebrate Ag in Montana! ■



MABA Washington DC Trip

SEPT 23-26, 2024



Tim Tackes
Board Member
Montana Agricultural
Business Association

With the search for a new MABA Executive Director occurring this summer, I was not sure we would have a new person in place for the 2023 DC Fly-in. I am a veteran of the MABA delegation attending the previous three DC trips, so I volunteered to take the lead and set up the trip. Fortunately, Chris Averill was hired several weeks before the DC trip and was able to attend. Chris hit the ground running and utilized his DC contacts to make this year's trip even more beneficial and productive than those of the past. Chris, Burl, Danny, and I represented MABA on this year's Washington DC Fly-In from Sept 23 to Sept 26th, 2024. We were fortunate enough to take a tour of the Capitol and the White House with Senator Daines' staff – what a humbling and awe-inspiring experience!

The one thing that is still apparent, is that our government is very polarized, divided along party lines, and not very functional right now. Far too many conversations I overheard seemed to be about blaming the other party, or their own parties' views and rarely was it focused on the American people.

There was an incredible focus on the upcoming election and that took center stage in a lot of conversations. The week we were in DC was the last week of the congressional session and both the House and Senate were focused on extending the spending budget to avoid a government shutdown. Congress would not reconvene again until after the election.

The 1st full day in DC we teamed up with the Nebraska Ag Business Association, Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association and

their representatives to meet with CropLife America (CLA), Council of Producers & Distributors of Agro Technology (CPDA) Ag Retailers Association (ARA) and The Fertilizer Institute (TFI). We heard what issues these groups are fighting for on our behalf in DC and then we got to give them input on issues important to agribusiness in our states.



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In the past while meeting with these national organizations, there was one message that was loud and clear – We all need to work together to enact any kind of change. This year the message was a bit different. Every national organization stressed the importance of having “boots on the ground” meaning every conversation needs to start with local people and groups like MABA working through our local and state government officials. They stressed that change needs to start from the ground up and personally asked us to have discussions with our congressional representative on issues affecting not just our states but all of US agriculture.

It is awesome to have these meetings along with other states’ ag organizations, like Nebraska and Illinois. Even though Montana doesn’t raise much corn or soybeans, we all have related ag business issues and voicing concerns as unified state organizations does pull some weight.

New to the MABA Washington DC agenda this year were meetings with the House and Senate Ag Committees and their staff. This was a great opportunity to hear what they are working on and just like the earlier meetings with the national trade associations, they asked us to talk to our state representatives and senators concerning what they have been working on. This year the main topic was the passage of a new farm bill. It sure looks like this could be kicked down the road and possibly not even occur until 2026. That said there is an effort underway to pass a Farm Bill between the election and the swearing in of a new Congress, and the committees and starting to talk more frequently to one another as the financial services and lending community starts calling the Hill to tell them they are going to be hesitant to lend to growers next year





given the dire conditions. Let's hope that spurs action.

That evening we attended a social for the potentially incoming eastern region MT representative, Troy Downing, who was in DC. How about hitting up a future representative on MT Ag Business issues before he is even elected!!!

The next day we had meetings scheduled with Senator Daines, Senator Tester, Congressman Zinke, and Congressman Rossendale. Unfortunately, due to congress cramming all votes and meetings for the remainder of the week into one day so they could break session early, we were not able to meet with any of them. We were fortunate in seeing all of them in the congressional hallways for a brief hello and a picture. We were able to meet with each representative's and senators' individual staffs to discuss our Montana Ag Business issues. They assured us everything would be passed on and discussed with the senators and representatives.

We presented current topics we felt were important to the future of Ag Business in Montana:

- The importance of passing a new Farm Bill and the contents that pertain specifically to the ag business industry.
- Endangered Species Act and re-registration of all pesticides. Monitor the newly adopted Herbicide strategy as it is implemented through product reviews. Elevate our concerns over future draft insecticide, fungicide, and rodenticide strategies to ensure the EPA takes into account the concerns of all stakeholders before issuing final strategies.

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- Defend FIFRA and the science-based review of all pesticides. Support the Agricultural Labeling Uniformity Act (H.R. 4288) as a way to stop individual states regulating pesticides based on emotion and not on scientific data.
- Transportation and Canadian Border issues affecting Ag Business in Montana

It was an incredible week. I am grateful Chris is onboard with MABA and was able to attend the DC Fly-in. Chris is very well connected in DC. He will make sure the voices of our Montana Ag Businesses are heard through the national trade associations, our Montana congressional delegation and those of our neighboring states. I urge you to get involved and be heard! MABA does make a difference for our members. ■





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