

WASHINGTON STATE HAY GROWERS ASSOCIATION

2001 POSITION STATEMENT

COST OF PUBLIC POWER

The Washington State Hay Growers Association encourages continuous public awareness of the rapidly rising cost of public power. We believe the public should more actively observe and speak out on the issues of wages and salaries of those employed in the public power industry and the rate and fees charged by public power. We support a more intensified effort within the Public Utility Districts to create greater cost efficiency.

We encourage research and public education on energy conservation and development of farm products, by-products, and waste as sources of energy.

We believe that the development of alternative sources of energy should be encouraged by a reduction of government red-tape and involvement. Research and development of alternative sources of power, such as nuclear power; hydro-electric, including low-head hydro; and wind power should be a priority.

We support the use of tax breaks and other incentives to encourage research and production of gasohol by the private sector and we support an expanded education program on the benefits of nuclear power.

Approved by the WSHGA Membership

January 24, 2001

Date

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TRADE AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

The Washington State Hay Growers Association supports programs that increase present market share or programs that develop new markets for our products. In trade between the U.S. and any other nation, we believe each should have equal access to the other's market. However, we should control importation of products from Canada or other exporting nations that are subsidized in a way that creates unfair competition to the Washington State hay industry.

We support any effort made by our State agencies and legislature toward dissolving barriers against Washington products. Trade between countries should be equal in regard to fair practices between nations in agriculture chemicals, inspections, regulations, grading, containers, and labeling requirements. Foreign companies that export products to the U.S. should be required by U.S. trade law to comply with the same social and environmental regulations required of domestic companies. In domestic and foreign markets, we believe the Washington State Department of Agriculture should be allowed to take a more active role.

We support legislation restricting wholesalers and retailers from discrimination against local farm products and we support fair agricultural practices legislation for all agriculture products.

We will oppose any unilateral action by the U.S. to eliminate import restrictions and subsidies without equivalent commitments by other countries.

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EXCESSIVE AUTHORITY

The Washington State Hay Growers Association believes that the Washington State Department of Ecology has been granted excessive authority in dictating and regulating uses of private land and water.

We urge the legislature to establish safeguards to ensure that private landowners' rights, including water rights, are not usurped by the Department of Ecology. In the absence of legislative action, we believe the Washington State Department of Ecology should be disbanded and its functions and responsibilities turned over to the Department of Natural Resources.

Landowners should have more influence on decisions impacting their land and water than the Department of Ecology. The Department of Ecology personnel should be representing landowners' rights, as well as those of other citizens.

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RIGHT TO FARM

The Washington State Hay Growers Association believes an agricultural, aquacultural, or forestry activity of operation shall not be deemed a private or public nuisance if it is determined that no hazard to human health exists and generally accepted good management practices are used in general conformance with the accepted practices of the area.

A separate qualified and unbiased third party should be utilized in the interpretation of each of the three requirements mentioned above.

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CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

The Washington State Hay Growers Association supports the continuation of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

We oppose the harvesting of CRP lands for private or public use because of the impact to the seasonal hay market price. We oppose allowing haying or grazing of any acreage under federal programs for which a grower has received compensation to not grow a crop.

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PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

The Washington State Hay Growers Association recognizes that all resources of this land are of great importance to mankind, both present and future generations. We believe that agriculture should be given equal opportunity to participate in formulating any plans along with the Department of Ecology, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and non-consumptive users. Participation should be from early stages of development of such plans and should continue as long as the plan exists.

We support the position that operators of agricultural lands be given freedom in emergency situations to protect the involved lands from erosion and/or destruction from excessive water flows or current charges.

We believe that agricultural production on private farm land has priority over recreational pursuits and ~~these~~ should be protected by appropriate governmental departments and agencies. We support legislation to help maintain the right to hold and manage private lands

We are opposed to any further conversion of public lands or taking of private property by executive order without Congressional and local approval, or by federally funded programs such as provided for in the American Heritage Trust or the Wild and Scenic River Acts.

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WILDLIFE AND HUNTING

The Washington State Hay Growers Association believes that the Washington State Department of Wildlife should make damage payments for the damage done to crops by wildlife.

Damage to agricultural crops due to wildlife is an ever increasing economic problem. The Department of Wildlife is currently liable for crop damage and should also be held responsible for all damage done to farm fences and equipment, with funds coming from the Wildlife general budget. At present, there is a lack of a viable process for determining crop and other farm asset loss. We request that the Department of Agriculture develop a procedure for assessing crop loss and equipment or fence damage due to wildlife so that just compensation can be made.

We further support compensation for damages to farm crops and other farm assets as a result of wildlife advancing onto private farmlands for the purpose of food sources. In areas where wildlife damage to crops, fences, and equipment is occurring, we support a dedicated impact fee on smaller non-agricultural landowners living in agricultural areas.

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USE OF CHEMICALS AND PESTICIDES

The Washington State Hay Growers Association supports an educational program to inform the American consumer of the advantages of judicious, reasonable, and safe use of pesticides in the production of agricultural products. We support research to determine the effects of pesticide exposure on farmers and their employees.

We believe that farmers should not be liable for adverse health effects incurred as a result of trespass on private lands. When crops have been treated with pesticides, the landowner should not be liable for anyone illegally entering the property and/or consuming treated commodities.

We believe that those responsible for all municipal, state, federal, and private lands must control noxious and aquatic weeds and pests in the same manner expected of farmers.

We oppose the removal of minor crop chemicals for which there are no safety concerns by the Environmental Protection Agency until a viable alternative is fully developed and re-registration fees are reduced.

We support legislation requiring that any mandated pesticide use reporting and applicator licensing requirements should apply to consumer applicators and all other users, as well as to agricultural applications. These requirements should also apply to organic pest control products.

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WATER RIGHTS

The Washington State Hay Growers Association supports a program of utilizing water resources within our state and favors the insurance of perpetual water permits. Water rights are a constitutionally recognized and protected property right.

We support preservation and recognition of existing water rights consistent with western water law and oppose any changes to water law or regulation that would impair existing water rights, including those changes that would expand water rights to be used in expanded amounts or expanded time frames.

In an consideration by state agencies regarding the allocation of ground and surface water, agriculture must be given first priority.

We are opposed to any attempt to remove water from the Northwest states to any other state or region, whether for agricultural industrial, domestic, or any other use.

We expect the State of Washington to protect and defend current water rights as property rights against takings by federal government agencies.

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RIVER MANAGEMENT AND IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE

The Washington State Hay Growers Association recognizes the value of irrigated agriculture to the economic stability of the State of Washington. We therefore support salmon recovery plans that base decisions on sound scientific data and take into account the economic impact to the current and future agricultural industry in Washington State.

We oppose any plan that is not based on sound, scientific research and economic impact studies.

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