

# Wheat Advantage



February 2026

SUSTAIN OUR FOOD FUTURE | GROW WHEAT

## Your Voice in Pierre — and Beyond

Every January, the focus in South Dakota shifts to Pierre as lawmakers gather for the legislative session. For wheat and grain farmers, what happens during these weeks can have a lasting impact — not just this year, but for years down the road.

That's where the South Dakota Wheat Growers Association comes in.

One of the main purposes of SDWGA is simple and important: to be the voice of South Dakota wheat farmers during the legislative process. When decisions are being made at the Capitol, we are there to make sure agriculture — and wheat producers specifically — are part of the conversation.

The 101st South Dakota Legislative Session kicked off on January 13 and runs through March 10. By the time you're reading this, we'll be about halfway through the session. These are busy weeks in Pierre, and SDWGA is fully engaged — tracking issues, attending hearings, building relationships with legislators, and making sure policymakers understand how proposed ideas translate on the farm.

Advocacy doesn't always happen at a microphone or in front of a committee. Much of the work takes place behind the scenes — answering questions, providing perspective, and serving as a trusted resource for lawmakers who want to understand how policy affects producers across the state. Our goal is to be steady, informed, and consistent — so wheat farmers have a seat at the table even when

*Continued on page 3*



The South Dakota State Capitol building on an unseasonably warm day right before the start of the 2026 Session. Photo credit: Jennifer Scharpe

## *My First 120 Days*

### *Directors*

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Vacant

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*Secretary/Treasurer*

**DISTRICT 3**

Tanner Handcock, Wall

**DISTRICT 4**

Doug Simons, St. Lawrence  
*Past President*

**DISTRICT 5**

Todd Mangin, Gettysburg

**DISTRICT 6**

Steve Rumpza, Webster  
*President*

**DISTRICT 7**

Paul Hetland, Mitchell  
*Vice President*

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Jennifer Scharpe

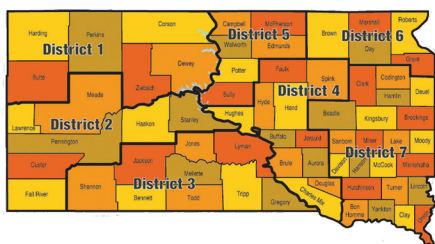
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**Pierre, SD 57501**

**Office: 605-224-4418**

**SDWGA.org**

**SDWGA@midco.net**



By the time this issue of *Wheat Advantage* reaches your mailbox, I'll have been on the job for just over 120 days. I am grateful for the welcome I've received since stepping into this role on October 1.

Last fall, I moved to Pierre from Denver — back to the Midwest and closer to my Minnesotan roots. While there was a lot to learn quickly, it didn't take long to feel at home. Agriculture has a way of doing that. The people, the pace, and the purpose all feel familiar, and I've truly enjoyed working on behalf of South Dakota wheat farmers.

In December, SDWGA Board Member Paul Hetland and I participated in the National Association of Wheat Growers' strategic planning process, including an in-person meeting in Minneapolis and follow-up discussions since then. It is exciting to be part of conversations focused on the future direction of the wheat industry and ensuring South Dakota's voice is well represented.

January marked the start of my first South Dakota Legislative Session. Being in Pierre during session has reinforced the importance of having a consistent, informed presence at the Capitol. I'm keeping a pulse on activity and working to ensure wheat growers are part of the conversation.

At the heart of all of this is membership. Your membership in SDWGA makes this work possible — at the state and national levels — and gives creditability to the voices speaking on your behalf. Just as important, it gives you a connection to the association.

As I settle into this role, I want to hear from you. I want to know what concerns you're seeing on your operation, what issues keep you up at night, and what direction you'd like to see SDWGA head in the years ahead. My door, phone, and inbox are open, and I truly value these connections.

I also encourage you to follow the South Dakota Wheat Growers Association on Facebook. It's where we share timely updates from Pierre, association news, and reminders between newsletter issues.

- Jennifer Scharpe, SDWGA Executive Director



### **SOUTH DAKOTA WHEAT COMMISSION**

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Suite 253

Brookings, SD 57006

Jon Kleinjan, Executive Director

Office: 605-697-8033

**Bryan Jorgensen, Chair**

**Tregg Cronin, Vice-Chair**

**Jamie Johnson, Treasurer**

**Leon Koeppe, Secretary**

**Levi Neuharth, Member At-Large**

Continued from page 1

you're back home running equipment, feeding cattle, or planning for the next season.

That voice doesn't stop at the state line.

South Dakota Wheat Growers are also represented at the national level through the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG). When you're a member of SDWGA, you're automatically a member of NAWG — ensuring South Dakota wheat farmers are part of national policy discussions that affect trade, research, conservation, and farm programs.

In January, SDWGA joined fellow wheat leaders in Washington, D.C. for Wheat Day on the Hill, held in conjunction with the NAWG and U.S. Wheat Associates winter conference. On Wednesday, January 28, we met directly with South Dakota's congressional delegation to share priorities and real-world perspectives from our farms and communities.

Whether it's Pierre or Washington, D.C., the mission is the same: to speak up for South Dakota wheat farmers and make sure your voice is heard where decisions are made.

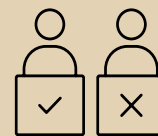
As the legislative session continues, SDWGA will remain engaged, accessible, and focused on representing you. Advocacy works best when it's built on relationships — and when it reflects the experiences of the farmers we serve.



South Dakota wheat growers will meet with legislators in D.C. during the NAWB / USW Winter Conference.

## Speak Up for Wheat — Together

Advocacy is more than just showing up during the legislative session. Here's how the South Dakota Wheat Growers Association works on behalf of members — and how you can be involved.



### What SDWGA Does

- Monitors legislative activity that could affect wheat and grain producers
- Attends hearings and meetings at the Capitol in Pierre
- Builds relationships with state and federal policymakers
- Shares producer perspectives to help lawmakers understand real-world impacts
- Works with national partners to advocate for wheat at the federal level

### How Members Can Help

- Stay informed through SDWGA updates and communications
- Respond when calls to action are issued
- Share concerns or issues you're seeing on your operation
- Be willing to provide real-life examples that help explain why an issue matters

### Interested in Testifying?

Hearing directly from farmers makes a difference. If you are willing to testify or share your perspective when issues arise, please reach out. Even a short conversation can help prepare effective advocacy.

Contact: Jennifer Scharpe, Executive Director, South Dakota Wheat Growers Association at [sdwga@midco.net](mailto:sdwga@midco.net) or 605-280-0795.



# South Dakota Wheat Commission Priorities

## Purpose

The South Dakota Wheat Commission was established pursuant to the enabling legislation known as the South Dakota Wheat Resources Act passed in 1961. The Act declared it to be the public policy of the state of South Dakota to protect and foster the health, prosperity, and general welfare of its people by protecting and stabilizing the wheat industry and the economy of the areas producing wheat.

The South Dakota Wheat Commission meets the objectives of this policy through its mission statement: To stabilize and improve South Dakota's wheat industry through research, market development, and promotion.

## Research

Research is the primary focus of the SD Wheat Commission with South Dakota State University being the largest recipient of funds. Typically, the Commission has prioritized the HRS and HRW breeding programs and genetic research followed by pathology/pest management research. Remaining funds for SDSU have been allocated to other projects involving production research, wheat quality evaluation, and value-added processing as the budget permits. In addition, the Commission sometimes contributes to special projects such as lab or field equipment (eg. plot combine) purchases or special projects involving SDSU affiliates (eg. Dakota Lakes Research Farm).

Other funds allocated to research are spent to support spring (~NDSU) and winter (~PGI) wheat quality surveys and wheat quality work through organizations like Northern Crops Institute and the Wheat Quality Council.

## Market Development

The primary use of funds for market development is the support of US Wheat Associates, which is responsible for developing export markets for wheat produced in the United States. While US-grown wheat is a premium product, constant

competition from competitors such as Canada, Australia, and Russia/Ukraine keep the US Wheat employees working very diligently to maintain (and hopefully increase) global market share.

Ongoing support for the Northern Crops Institute also assists in developing new types of wheat foods and products in the northern plains. Other market development projects such as hosting foreign trade teams or purchasing lab equipment for the Wheat Marketing Center or NCI have also materialized on occasion.

## Info, Education, and Promotion

The Commission promotes domestic markets by supporting organizations such as the Wheat Foods Council, the Home Baking Association, and EatWheat.org (KSU). The ultimate goals are to increase the per capita consumption of wheat products in South Dakota and the USA and inform the public of the nutritional value of wheat foods.

Promotions/communications occur through the website ([sdwheat.org](http://sdwheat.org)), social media (via McCracken Consulting), Dakota Farm Talk radio, and other various programs and media outlets. The goals of communications are to create a positive image and awareness of the wheat industry for the general public and keep producers informed of Commission activities.

Education activities include support for organizations such as the SD Soil Health Coalition, SDARL, FFA and 4-H. In addition, the Commission provides scholarships for several higher education institutions in SD including SDSU, Lake Area Tech, and Mitchell Tech.

## Policy and Government Affairs

The Commission has a contractual agreement with the South Dakota Wheat Growers Association for assistance in education and both state and national policy development. The SDWGA monitors state legislation and reviews for potential impacts on SD wheat producers.



# Your **wheat checkoff** funds research and expands markets.



## Research

Supporting SDSU wheat breeding programs for hard red spring, winter, and white wheat

Funding studies to improve pest, disease, and stress resistance

Investing in soil health, crop rotation, and fertility research

Analyzing wheat quality, from planting to harvest, to meet end-user needs

Exploring value-added uses like biodegradable plastics and new wheat-based products

## Domestic Markets

Your checkoff keeps South Dakota wheat in demand across the U.S. by:

Supporting programs that develop new wheat-based foods and products.

Funding promotions that highlight wheat's nutritional value to U.S. consumers.

Working with millers, bakers, and buyers to match South Dakota's high-quality wheat with specialty market needs.

Partnering with organizations to increase U.S. wheat consumption.

## International Markets

Over half of U.S. wheat is exported every year.

Your investment connects South Dakota wheat to markets around the world:

Hosting international trade teams and overseas quality seminars.

Funding training seminars on milling and baking techniques using U.S. wheat.

Defending our market share from global competitors like Canada and Australia

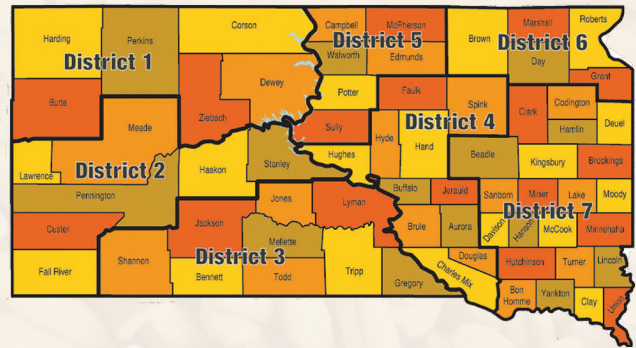
# SDWGA Announces Winners of 2025 Wheat Yield Contest

The South Dakota Wheat Growers Association (SDWGA) has announced the winners of the 10th Annual South Dakota Wheat Yield Contest, recognizing wheat producers across the state for outstanding yields and strong management practices.

The annual contest highlights the innovation, productivity, and stewardship of South Dakota wheat farmers who are willing to open their fields and share real-world production data.

"We appreciate every farmer who took the time to participate in this year's contest," said Jennifer Scharpe, executive director of the South Dakota Wheat Growers Association. "Their willingness to share information helps showcase the strength of South Dakota wheat production and provides valuable insights that benefit the entire industry."

First-place winners in each district receive a plaque and \$500, while second-place finishers receive a plaque and \$200. Awards are presented across seven districts statewide.



SDWGA extends its thanks to the contest sponsors whose support makes the program possible: CHS River Plains, Agtegra, Oahe Grain Corporation, Sioux Nation, and Dakota Mill & Grain.

Details for the 2026 South Dakota Wheat Yield Contest will be announced soon. Producers are encouraged to watch for updates on the SDWGA website, follow the association on Facebook, and look for additional information in the next issue of the Wheat Advantage newsletter.

For more information about the Wheat Yield Contest or SDWGA programs, visit [www.sdwga.org](http://www.sdwga.org).

## 2025 Wheat Yield Contest Winners

Winner	Type	District	Bushels per Acre	Placing
Adam Roseth	Spring Wheat	District 2	51.99 bu/acre	1st Place
Adam Roseth	Winter Wheat	District 2	59.74 bu/acre	1st Place
Adam Roseth	Winter Wheat	District 2	58.40 bu/acre	2nd Place
Marv Schumacher	Spring Wheat	District 4	91.60 bu/acre	1st Place
Robert Holzwarth	Spring Wheat	District 7	88.97 bu/acre	1st Place
Jim Thyen	Winter Wheat	District 7	101.62 bu/acre	1st Place

**Congratulations to SD wheat grower Robert Holzwarth from Hazel for placing 1st in SD and 3rd overall in the National Wheat Yield Contest! His Spring Wheat-Dryland entry was a Hard Red variety from Limagrain Cereal Seeds and yielded 87.86 bushels per acre, grown in Hamlin County.**



# South Dakota Wheat Growers Association Elects 2026 Officers

The South Dakota Wheat Growers Association (SDWGA) elected its officers for the coming year during the Board of Directors meeting held January 7. These individuals will help guide the association's work as SDWGA continues to advocate for wheat farmers and position the organization for the future.

Elected officers include Steve Rumpza of Webster as President, representing District 6; Paul Hetland of Mitchell as Vice President, representing District 7; Adam Roseth of Midland as Secretary/Treasurer, representing District 2; and Doug Simons of St. Lawrence as Past President, representing District 4.

Additional members of the SDWGA Board of Directors include Tanner Handcock of Wall, representing District 3, and Todd Mangin of Gettysburg, representing District 5. The District 1 board seat is currently open.

The SDWGA board plays an important role in setting priorities, guiding policy positions, and helping ensure the association remains relevant and effective for South Dakota wheat farmers. Board members bring a wide range of perspectives from across the state, reflecting the diversity of operations and growing conditions

that make up South Dakota agriculture.

As SDWGA looks ahead, the association is actively encouraging members to consider stepping into leadership roles. In addition to the open District 1 seat, several other district positions will be coming open in the next couple of years as current board members reach the end of their terms. New ideas, new energy, and new voices are essential as the organization continues Growing Forward.

That theme—Growing Forward—reflects both optimism and opportunity. Wheat remains a critical part of South Dakota crop rotations, contributing to soil health, risk management, and long-term farm profitability. Strong leadership and engaged membership help ensure that wheat's role remains front and center, both in the field and in policy discussions.

South Dakota Wheat Growers Association is proud to be led by farmers, for farmers—and the organization looks forward to continuing to grow, together. If interested in serving on the SDWGA Board of Directors, please contact a current board member or Jennifer Scharpe, SDWGA executive director.



Please cut on the dotted line and mail.

## SDWGA MEMBERSHIP FORM



Please select membership level:

- Grower \$100**
- Landlord \$100**
- 3-Year Member \$250**

Return with payment to:

**SDWGA**  
**PO Box 667**  
**Pierre, SD 57501**



SCAN ME

Or go to **SDWGA.org** or scan the QR code to pay online.

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**Farm/Business:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_

**State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**County:** \_\_\_\_\_

# AG HORIZONS CONFERENCE

# Thank You!

On behalf of the seven conference hosts, the South Dakota Wheat Growers Association extends its sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of the 2025 Ag Horizons Conference. We appreciate the speakers, exhibitors, sponsors, and especially the farmers who took time away from their operations to attend. Like many events across agriculture, Ag Horizons has evolved in recent years, but it continues to provide a valuable opportunity for education, networking, and connection. SDWGA is grateful for the continued support of this conference and is already looking ahead to ways to strengthen and grow Ag Horizons to better serve South Dakota producers in the years ahead.

## EXHIBITORS

Air Seeder Repair Services: 701-532-4544

Engelbrecht Ag: 605-450-1509

Grossenburg Implement: 605-224-1631

SD Crop Improvement Association: 605-688-4604

SD Soil Health Coalition: 605-280-4190

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