



Research Committee/Wine Research Advisory Committee

Annual Meeting  
Thurston Wolfe Winery, Prosser  
June 10, 2025

Chair Linn Scott called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m.

WRAC Members Present: Chair Linn Scott, Dick Boushey, Brian Carter, Kade Casciato, Sara Del Moro, Katie Nelson, Patrick Rawn, Kay Simon, Scott Williams, Wade Wolfe, Mari Rossi (virtual)

WSWC Research Committee: Ryan Flanagan, Dick Boushey, Kade Casciato

Staff: Melissa Hansen, Kristina Kelley

Guests: Jean Dodson Peterson, Anneke Rachinski, Gwen Hoheisel and Dr. Lav Khot, WSU; Julie Pond, Northwest Center for Small Fruits Research

A quorum was in effect.

**WSU Gift Use Agreement:** Chair of WSU V&E Department Dr. Jean Dodson Peterson distributed her funding priorities for the WSWC Wine Science Excellence Fund held in a Gift Use Agreement account at WSU Tri Cities (see attached). WRAC later discussed the proposed priorities. The 2025 crop could be smaller than the current Wine Commission budget estimated at 110,000 tons, thus, the Committee will revisit the FY26 GUA commitment in 2026 when there is more clarity on the Wine Commission's budget. *MOVED by Wade Wolfe, SECONDED by Kay Simon, and UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED the WRAC recommendation that the WSWC Board of Directors approve for the FY24 and FY25 funds of \$400,000 already allocated for the Gift Use Agreement the following priorities:*

1. *Facility Generator and Battery Backup System for the Wine Science Center (estimated \$145,000).*
2. *Startup funds in place (\$150,000) when needed for the Winery Process Engineer faculty position.*
3. *Reconstruction of the Cold Storage and Experimentation Rooms (\$105,000)*

**AgWeatherNet Smart Farms Proposal:** Dr. Lav Khot and Gwen Hoheisel, WSU, presented an out of cycle, one-year project to advance private sensing networks for site specific vineyard management and gather data for AI-powered risk assessment models for heat stress and fruit color tracking. The urgency for supporting now is to take advantage of research personnel available this summer, build on recent advancements of a model under development and not lose a growing season of data collection. The Committee was very interested in funding the proposal of approximately \$19,000, however, some of the funds would cover hardware that is already installed in some vineyards that could be cooperators in the project. It was agreed to have additional dialogue with Khot and Hoheisel to identify if existing hardware is compatible and readjust the budget. Hansen will set up a meeting with WRAC members to further develop the proposal and bring new information back to the Committee.

**Red Mountain Areawide Leafroll Virus Pilot Program:** Hansen updated WRAC on the exploration of a pilot program for leafroll virus management on Red Mountain:

- Vineyard Management Areawide Plan (vMAP) – template for any pest was created by Michelle Moyer and Gwen Hoheisel at the request of the WSWC.

- vMAP tailored by Moyer and Hoheisel for leafroll virus, interactive workshop held in mid-January for Red Mountain growers/wineries to explore pilot program.
- Workshop findings summarized by Moyer, shared with the RM group.
- Summary highlighted key action areas: research; education and resources; components needed in areawide plan.

A key next step is WRAC review of the research gaps to prioritize needs for the next round of research proposals.

*WRAC Chair Linn Scott appointed a subcommittee of the vineyard WRAC members to meet in July to prioritize research gaps and approach Doug Walsh for inclusion in the FY27 research cycle.*

**WSWC Report:** WSWC Executive Director Kristina Kelley shared the budget forecast of 110,000 tons that the Commission Board will act on at the June 13 board meeting. This is an estimate and the 2025 crop that is picked and sold could be smaller. For reference, the 2024 crop was about 150,000 tons. All WSWC programs, including research, will have significantly reduced funds in the coming year.

**Leftover Funds from Closed Project Accounts:** Hansen shared that when research project accounts are closed by WSU, the process is set up for WSU to send leftover funds to the WSWC. Last year, WSU closed accounts prior to the Research Review, which enabled WRAC to re-spend about \$17,000 in the next research cycle. This year, WSU closed the accounts in May, too late for any re-spend unless it is designated to sit in a holding account for spending the following year. Because monies include funds from other research program contributors, such as the Auction of WA Wines, the funds should not be commingled with Wine Commission dollars. One option for the funds would be to send any funds to the V&E Department to support service contracts on research equipment, an annual cost of about \$100,000 that is currently funded by the wine certificate program.

*MOVED by Wade Wolfe, SECONDED by Kay Simon, and UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED that the Washington State Wine Commission work with WSU to use closed research project funds for research equipment service contracts.*

## **WRAC ANNUAL BUSINESS**

**Intent to Serve:** All WRAC members indicated their intent to serve for FY 26 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026). (Scanned document attached.) The need to be geographically diverse was discussed, with a research gap in Walla Walla, Lake Chelan, Ancient Lakes identified. The Committee suggested that an additional member could be added to bring the total to 13, which is allowed in the WRAC organizational structure. Hansen will work with WRAC leadership to identify several candidates for WRAC nomination.

**Election of Officers:** Linn Scott and Scott Williams shared their willingness to continue serving as chair and vice chair, respectively.

*MOVED by Sarah Del Moro, SECONDED by Dick Boushey and UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED to nominate Linn Scott as WRAC chair for FY 26.*

*MOVED by Kade Casiato, SECONDED by Katie Nelson and UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED to nominate Scott Williams as vice chair for FY 26.*

**Research Funding Cycle Review and Timeline:** To lock in the best rate, the Wine Commission signed a three-year subscription with Wizehive, the grant management software and research portal. The final payment on the three-year subscription is in July 2025. Overall, the portal and system has worked, but in recent months, technical support has diminished. Exploration of other grant management systems should be undertaken to learn if an easier-to-navigate program is available. Dates for the FY 27 Research Grant cycle were decided. The timeline will be sent to WRAC in July, with calendar invites. No changes were suggested for the Research Review timing, location or process.

**Research Priorities:** The Committee reviewed results of the 2025 Research Survey that incorporated

several questions for the WA Wine Technical Group to increase survey participation and reduce industry surveys that tend to go out near the same time. Industry participation improved slightly from past years to reach 70. Industry awareness of the Wine Commission's research program was 91%, the highest ranking of all surveys. Vineyard Sustainability ranked slightly higher than Pest Management and Fermentation ranked slightly higher than, Wine Aroma and Compounds. The open-ended comments of the survey were reviewed, many of which are areas already studied through research or are examples of extension. The committee had no changes to make to the current Research Priorities list.

*MOVED by Wade Wolfe, SECONDED by Katie Nelson, and UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED that the Research Priorities of FY25 remain in place for FY26.*

**Northwest Center for Small Fruits Research:** Julie Pond, Northwest Berry Foundation, provided an update on the NWCSFR and status changes at the Corvallis Unit of USDA-Ag Research Service. From the early retirement/staff buyout offered to all federal employees, Corvallis lost four scientist positions: precision viticulturist, nematologist, wine chemist and biometrics. Additionally, a post doc hired to carry on virology work has left. Many technicians are also gone. The scientist positions are still open, and it is hoped that they may be filled in the future. NW Berry Foundation was contracted to facilitate and organize the annual research conference, manage the research grant program, and communicate research results of the funded projects. Their contract was recently approved, so their work for the Center will continue. Approximately \$1.5 M is annually appropriated from Congress to fund research grants between berries and grapes, and wine, which will fund 38 projects in 2025. Of the 38, 19 are related to grapes and wine and 9 support WSU scientists. Funds have not yet been released for these projects. The 2025 NWSF Research Conference will be held in November in the Columbia Gorge region.

**New Business:** Hansen shared her plans to retire at the end of December, 2025.

There being no further business, *MOVED by Kade Casiato, SECONDED by Brian Carter, and UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED to adjourn the meeting.*

WRAC Chair Linn Scott adjourned the meeting at 2:12 p.m.

