



Wine Research Advisory Committee
Annual Meeting Minutes
June 3, 2026
Thurston Wolfe Winery, Prosser

WRAC members present: Dick Boushey, Brian Carter, Kade Casciato, Sarah Del Moro, Jason Magnaghi, Katie Nelson, Patrick Rawn, Linn Scott, Kay Simon, Scott Williams, Wade Wolfe

WRAC members absent: Kevin Corliss, Mari Rossi

Staff: Kristina Kelley, Julie Tarara

Guests: Jean Dodson Peterson (WSU V&E), Julie Pond (Northwest Center for Small Fruits Research)

Linn Scott called the meeting to order at 11:00 am

A quorum was present.

WSWC Budget presentation for FY27: Executive Director Kristina Kelley shared the expectation to retain the research reserve balance at \$200K. The group was reminded that the Commission is required to keep 3 months of operating expenses in reserve. Any FY26 funds remaining in research by June 30 will roll into the research contingency. The Commission is forecasting assessments based on 100,000 tons for the 2026 harvest. The budget will be shared with the Commission Board on June 12.

NGRA/USDA update: Research Program Manager Julie Tarara shared that the National Grape and Wine Research Alliance began three initiatives in 2026: 1) VitisGEM, led by Cornell University, will investigate interactions of genetics, environment, and management practices on grapevine trait expression; 2) Robotic pruning, led by Cornell university; 3) Drought-tolerant rootstocks, led by UC-Davis. The key news for USDA-ARS is that the agency is reorganizing, with all plant sciences research across the US to be administered from Stoneville, MS. This reorganization underscores the importance of building strong relationships with ARS leadership. USDA-ARS Prosser soil scientist is relocating to Corvallis, Oregon effective July 1. Several grape-related vacancies and a number of associated administrative positions in the PNW remain unfilled.

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. WRAC later discussed the proposed priorities. *MOVED by Wade Wolfe, SECONDED by Brian Carter, and UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED the WRAC recommendation that the WSWC Board of Directors approve for the FY26 funds of \$200,000 already allocated for the Gift Use Agreement for the following priority:*

- *Two banks of 8-fermenter controllers for the WSC Research Winery (estimated \$240,000). WSU will seeking alternate fundraising or a staggered request for the outstanding \$40,000.*

Gift Use Agreement Progress Report (FY26):

- Power/generator project: cost totaled \$220K. WSWC contributed \$145K. WSU-TC contributed the balance. Will be complete by the end of July
- Cold storage mold abatement: \$105K estimated cost. WSWC contribution \$105K. In design phase currently and will go out to bid December 2026. To be completed by spring 2027. Currently using the space with short-term mold abatement.
- Winery Process Engineer faculty position start-up funds: \$150K contributed by WSWC. Hiring process held up by university-wide pause. Have now made an offer to desired candidate.

Northwest Center for Small Fruits Research: Julie Pond reported that in 2025, \$1.1M was awarded for competitive projects, of which \$530,000 were for projects related to grapes. Because of congressional action, only 85% of the funded amounts were disbursed. Over the past 6 years, NCSFR has supported \$4M in grape-related research. Fact sheets have been written for completed projects and are posted on the NCSFR website under "Research Library." The NCSFR annual meeting will be held on November 16-18 in The Dalles, Oregon. USDA-ARS leaders from the new Plant Sciences administration unit (Stoneville, MS) will attend. Other small fruits groups will combine attendance. The Center expects to fully fund (3 years) 9 new projects for 2026. Funds require more approvals at the USDA level before they can be released to PIs.

WRAC ANNUAL BUSINESS

Intent to serve: All WRAC members present indicated their intent to serve for FY27 (July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027; scanned document attached). Tarara agreed to follow up with the absent members. The Committee discussed how they should approach succession planning.

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

MOVED by Wade Wolfe and SECONDED by Kade Casciato and UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED to nominate Linn Scott as WRAC chair for FY27.

MOVED by Wade Wolfe and SECONDED by Kade Casciato and UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED to nominate Scott Williams as WRAC vice chair for FY27.

Research Funding Cycle Review and Timeline: The committee discussed the possibility to run the pre-proposal portion of the research review process before harvest rather than after harvest. It was requested that Tarara contact the research community to gather input on the feasibility of doing so. The committee's project 'Lead' assignments will be reviewed annually at the pre-proposal review. Because of expense (nearly \$9,000) and withdrawal of technical support by WizeHive, the Wine Commission cancelled renewal of the contract for the Zengine review portal. Patrick Rawn volunteered to work with Tarara to build out a custom portal. The committee verbally approved the plan.

Research Priorities: The committee reviewed the results of the 2026 Research Survey that incorporated several questions for the WA Wine Technical Group to increase survey participation and reduce the number of industry surveys that tend to be distributed at the same time. Industry participation improved over the past few years to 94 respondents. As in 2025, 91% of respondents indicated an awareness of the Wine Commission's research program. Smoke exposure, leafroll/mealybug management, rootstocks, and tannin management all

garnered multiple responses as being of very high priority. The committee had no changes to make to the current priority list. Tarara will distribute the list to the research community.

New Business: One idea for WAVE 2027 is to follow up on the HiRes Vineyard Nutrition SCRI project that is now completed.

There being no further new business, *MOVED by Wade Wolfe, SECONDED by Sarah Del Moro, and UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED to adjourn the meeting.*

WRAC Chair Linn Scott adjourned the meeting at 2:00 pm