

## **PCG Staff, Officers Advocate in DC**

Friday, February 28, 2020

By Mary Jane Buerkle

A delegation of PCG staff members and volunteer leaders traveled to Washington, DC earlier this week and visited with more than 25 Congressional offices and agencies.

The group included PCG's Steve Verett and Kody Bessent; PCG President Stacy Smith of New Home; Secretary-Treasurer Martin Stoerner of Lockney; Chairman Johnie Reed of Kress; PCG Past President Shawn Holladay; and Executive Committee member Travis Mires of O'Donnell. Kevin Brinkley, President and CEO of Plains Cotton Cooperative Association, traveled with the group.

Members of the delegation continued direct dialogue with the USDA on the need for implementation of the Wildfires and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+). At press time, the USDA had just announced that the program would open and signups would begin at Farm Service Agency offices on March 23. WHIP+ is a disaster assistance program available to agricultural producers, including those impacted by drought (D3 level or above) and excess moisture. A complete news release with more information is at <http://bit.ly/WHIPPlus2020>.

Other topics of discussion with Congressional leaders and their staff included PCG's support for the signing of the recent Phase 1 agreement with China, and urging Members to monitor progress on the agreement and work with the USTR to ensure China is held to their commitments; and the current market situation, currently exacerbated by the Coronavirus outbreak, and the potential need for another financial assistance package to help producers through these market access challenges.

"Visits like these are critical to helping ensure that we have direct contact with Members of Congress and agency leaders to talk about these key priorities for cotton producers," PCG CEO Steve Verett said. "It's especially helpful when we have producers who can directly communicate their concerns. We appreciate everyone who took the time to meet with our group."

Photos from the week can be found on PCG's Facebook and Twitter feeds.

## **USDA Opens WHIP+ Disaster Assistance Program; Signup Begins March 23**

Friday, February 28, 2020

Information from the USDA

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced additional disaster assistance available to agricultural producers, including producers impacted by drought and excess moisture as well as sugar beet growers. Through WHIP+, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is helping producers recover from losses related to 2018 and 2019 natural disasters.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will open signup on March 23 for producers to apply for eligible losses of drought (D3 or above) and excess moisture. USDA is also entering into agreements with six sugar beet processing cooperatives to distribute \$285 million to grower members of those cooperatives who experienced loss.

"It's true that farmers and ranchers are no strangers to the impact natural disasters have on their operations, but disaster events the past two years have been atypically widespread, relentless and unforgiving," Secretary Perdue said. "In some instances, producers have suffered multiple disaster events in one year or in several years back-to-back. I am pleased that Congress has afforded USDA the authority to continue providing much-needed assistance to producers who have lost so much these last few years. President Trump has the backs of our farmers, and we aim to support them as they recover."

In June 2019, more than \$3 billion was made available through a disaster relief package passed by Congress and signed by President Trump. In December 2019, Congress passed, and President Trump signed the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020 that provides an additional \$1.5 billion for the continuation of disaster assistance program delivery.

### *WHIP+ New Qualifying Disaster Events*

The Appropriations bill added excessive moisture and D3 and D4 drought as qualifying losses for WHIP+ assistance.

Beginning March 23, producers who suffered either of these types of loss in 2018 and/or 2019 can apply for WHIP+ assistance at their local FSA office. For drought, a producer is eligible if any area of the county in which the loss occurred was rated D3 (Extreme Drought) or higher on the U.S. Drought Monitor during calendar years 2018 or 2019.

### *WHIP+ for Quality Loss*

In addition, producers have reported widespread crop quality loss from eligible disaster events that results in price deductions or penalties when marketing the damaged crops. The Appropriations bill expands WHIP+ to include assistance for crop quality loss. FSA is gathering data and input from producers and stakeholders regarding the extent and types of quality loss nationwide.

"Providing assistance for quality loss is complicated, and we are actively gathering data and input on how to administer quality loss assistance for producers," said Farm Production and Conservation Undersecretary Bill Northey.

## **PCG Annual Meeting**

Friday, April 3 • 9 a.m.

Lubbock Memorial Civic Center

### **Featured Speakers**

Reid Wilson, National Correspondent, The Hill

Bruce Atherley, Cotton Council International

U.S. Rep. Mike Conaway

Sponsored by Farmers Cooperative Compress

**More information: [plainscotton.org](http://plainscotton.org)**

*Eligibility*

To be eligible for WHIP+, producers must have suffered losses of certain crops, trees, bushes, or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation (primary counties only) for the following named natural disaster events; hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms, wildfires, and now excessive moisture that occurred in 2018 or 2019. Also, losses located in a county not designated by the Secretary as a primary county may be eligible if the producer provides documentation showing that the loss was due to a qualifying natural disaster event.

For drought, counties having a D3 or D4 Drought Monitor classification in any portion of the county anytime during calendar year 2018 or 2019 will also be eligible.

A list of counties that received qualifying hurricane declarations and designations is available at [farmers.gov/recover/whip-plus](http://farmers.gov/recover/whip-plus). The U.S. Drought Monitor is available at [droughtmonitor.unl.edu](http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu).

Because livestock losses are covered by other disaster recovery programs offered through FSA, these losses are not eligible for WHIP+.

**DEADLINES APPROACHING**

**March 15**

Sales Closing Date for Crop Insurance in Cotton in the PCG Service Area

**March 16**

Enrollment in ARC or PLC for 2019 Crop

**Upcoming Area Ag Conferences**

This list is run as space is available. A complete list is kept updated on the PCG website: <https://plainscotton.org/upcoming-area-ag-conferences/>.

**March 2** – Gray County All Crops Update, 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Gray County Annex, 12125 E. Frederic Ave., **Pampa**. Cost: \$20, includes lunch. RSVP and more info: Nick Simpson, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 669-8033, (806) 280-8010.

**March 2** – Auxin Certification Training, 10 a.m.-11 a.m., Floyd County Friends Unity Center, **Muncy**. Cost: \$10. More info: Dagan Teague, EA-IPM, (806) 983-4912.

**March 3** – Permian Basin Cotton Conference, 7:30 a.m. registration, auxin training 8-9 a.m., cotton program 9-12:30 p.m. G.C. Broughton Jr. Ag Complex, 2401 Echols St., **Big Spring**. Cost: \$20, includes lunch. Total of 4 CEUs available. More info: Tommy Yeater, CEA-AG/NR, (432) 264-2236.

**March 3** – Private Applicator Training, 8:30 a.m., Floyd County Extension Office, **Floydada**. Cost: \$60, limited to 10 people so please RSVP. More info: Dagan Teague, EA-IPM, (806) 983-4912.

**March 4** – “*Owning Your Piece of Texas: Agricultural Laws Texas Landowners Need to Know*” Workshop, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center, 6500 W. Amarillo Blvd., **Amarillo**. Cost: \$75. Preregistration is requested at <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/landowners> or by calling 979-

845-2604. More info: Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, J.D., (806) 677-5681 or [tdowell@tamu.edu](mailto:tdowell@tamu.edu).

**March 5** – Private Applicator Training, 8 a.m.-Noon, Gray County Annex, **Pampa**. Cost: \$75. More info: Nick Simpson, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 669-8033.

**March 5** – Auxin Certification Training, 10 a.m.-11 a.m., Deaf Smith County Extension Center, **Hereford**. Cost: \$10. More info: Rick Auckerman, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 364-3573.

**March 5** – Beginning Futures and Options Workshop, 10 a.m.-Noon, Ochiltree County Expo Center, **Perryton**. Cost: \$10, RSVP by March 2. More info: Scott Strawn, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 435-4501.

**March 9** – Auxin Certification Training, Registration 2:30 p.m., Follett United Methodist Church, **Follett**. Cost: \$10. More info: JR Sprague, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 862-4601.

**March 9** – Risk Management/FARM Assistance Program, 10 a.m., Hansford County Extension Office, **Spearman**. Cost: \$10, lunch provided. More info: Matt Whiteley, Hansford CEA-AG/NR, (806) 659-4130, or Kristy Slough, Hutchinson CEA-AG/NR, (806) 878-4026.

**March 9** – Private Applicator Training, 1 p.m., Hansford County Extension Office, **Spearman**. Cost: \$50, RSVP by March 2. More info: Kristy Slough, Hutchinson CEA-AG/NR, (806) 878-4026.

**March 10** – Estate Planning Seminar, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Gray County Annex, **Pampa**. Cost: \$25. Speakers: Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, J.D., and Dr. Justin Benavidez. More info: Nick Simpson, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 669-8033.

**March 10** – Auxin Certification Training, 10 a.m., Ochiltree County Expo Center, **Perryton**. Cost: \$10, 1 CEU. More info: Scott Strawn, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 435-4501.

**March 12** – Auxin Certification Training, 9 a.m. and again at 1 p.m., Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Office, **Levelland**. Please RSVP by noon March 11. More info: Kerry Siders, EA-IPM, (806) 894-3159.

**March 12** – Pesticide Training, 9 a.m., Hale County Extension Office, **Plainview**. Cost: \$60. More info: Andrew Dunlap, EA-IPM, (806) 647-4115.

**March 12** – Auxin Certification Training, 1:30 p.m., Hale County Extension Office, **Plainview**. Cost: \$20. More info: Andrew Dunlap, EA-IPM, (806) 647-4115.

**March 13** – Auxin Certification Training, 1:30 p.m., Castro County Extension Office, **Dimmitt**. Cost: \$20. More info: Andrew Dunlap, EA-IPM, (806) 647-4115.

**March 13, April 10, and May 8** – Auxin Certification Training, 9 a.m., Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center, 1102 E. FM 1294, **Lubbock**. One CEU in Laws & Regs. More info: (806) 746-6101, [pete.dotray@agnet.tamu.edu](mailto:pete.dotray@agnet.tamu.edu)

**March 13** – Auxin Certification Training, 9 a.m., Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center, 6500 W. Amarillo Blvd., **Amarillo**. More info: Dr. Jourdan Bell, Extension Agronomist, (806) 677-5663.

**March 17** – Private Applicator Training, 8:30 a.m., Potter County Extension Office, **Amarillo**. Cost: \$60. More info: Megan Eikner, CEA-AG/NR, (806) 373-0713.

To add your conference to this list, please email [maryjane@plainscotton.org](mailto:maryjane@plainscotton.org).

Editor's Note:

“Cotton News”, a weekly service of Plains Cotton Growers to the cotton industry and news media in the 41-county High Plains area, is mailed from Lubbock each Friday. Its contents are confined to news items and comments pertaining to the High Plains cotton industry which is so vital to U.S. all. Anyone interested in making comments about the contents of this column can call 806-792-4904 or Email PCG at: [editor@plainscotton.org](mailto:editor@plainscotton.org)