

YOUR WASHINGTON STATE POTATO COMMISSION

by
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The Washington State Potato Commission was established by a vote of the growers and authorized by the Washington State Legislature on July 23, 1956 (Chapter 16-516 WAC Washington Potatoes).

"The Commission is a creature of the Legislature and has only the authority provided by the statute which established it. That statute generally authorizes commissions and marketing orders to provide for advertising, sale and market promotion, research, labeling requirements, and prevention of unfair trade practices."

Washington State Attorney General

The WSPC does not have the authority to negotiate processor/grower contracts, establish prices, control acres planted, or volume marketed.

The WSPC has five districts. Districts are determined by grower representation, production, geographical location or boundaries and irrigation districts.

There are nine grower members, elected by growers in the district they represent. Each of the four eastern Washington districts (districts 1-2-3-4) have two grower members and the western Washington district (district 5) has one. The nine grower members elect the four at-large members. Each member is elected for a three year term. Elections are conducted in February and March each year. The Washington State Director of Agriculture or his designee serves as an Ex-official member of the Commission.

Chapter 16-516 WAC, authorizes an assessment be collected on all potatoes marketed (fresh or processed). Potatoes for livestock feed and charity are exempt from an assessment.

The assessment rate is approved by the growers. An increase in the rate must be approved by a vote of the growers. The assessment is paid by the growers and is collected by the first handler (fresh packer or processor). Processors or fresh shippers do not pay any part of the assessment.

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In 1956 and continuing until 1980 the rate of assessment was \$.02/cwt. In 1980 the growers voted a \$.01/cwt. increase which continued until 1990. A vote of the growers in 1990 increased the rate by \$.01/cwt to the current rate of \$.04/cwt.

1956 - the first year of WSPC operations

825 growers
39,000 acres
262 cwt/acre
\$108,000 - Budget
\$.02/cwt. - Assessment rate
99% - Fresh market
\$1.58/cwt. - Average price

Budget Breakdown

10% - Advertising & Promotion
23% - Research
23% - Office & Operations
44% - Reserve

1997 - 41 Years Later

351 Farm Entities/435 growers
147,000 acres
595 cwt/acre
\$2,877,588 - Budget \$.04/cwt. - Assessment rate
13% - Fresh market
87% - Processed
N/A - Average price

The WSPC budgeting process begins in early January each year. In 1997/98 the WSPC surveyed the growers and industry for input on how the WSPC can better serve the Washington potato industry. The results of the survey will give strong guidance to the 1998/99 WSPC budget.