



Chem Fallow vs. Grazing

IAC Northwest Region

BIA in Umatilla County between the years 1995-2011 received over 25 million in conservation subsidies, disaster subsidies, and commodity subsidies, ranking third largest in Umatilla County, with Umatilla County being the largest recipient of subsidy programs in the State of Oregon. The Umatilla Tribes Farm Enterprise is farming over 6,000 acres in cereal grain production, inclusive of tribally owned, individual tribal member owned and tribal member undivided interest allotments.

The Umatilla Tribe has been reaping the benefits of No-till farming, a type of soil conservation farming, prepares the land for farming without putting a plow to the soil. There are countless benefits to the land, the Tribes and the environment from adopting a no-till system. Most beneficial is leaving the soil mostly undisturbed and leaving high levels of crop residues behind, soil erosion is almost eliminated through no-till farming. It is estimated no till farming is responsible for about a 43 percent reduction in soil erosion occurred in the United States between 1982 and 2003.



Volunteer wheat April 24, 2019



Chem Fallow May 23, 2019

The previous year's stubble, referred to as the crop residue, is baled into 4x8x8 bales and sold to straw brokers in the region. In the following spring the "volunteer wheat" comes in at times looking as good as if it had been planted the fall before. As you can see from the photos, it seems a shame to chem fallow all that forage, however it would take some time and effort through the leasing staff, tribal soil conservationists and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to help landowners and livestock producers to utilize this forage. However it can happen if the conservation plan has flash grazing (2-3 weeks intense) written into part of the lease, along with grazing rates at a fair market value. So if a Tribes Farm Enterprise were to do a test plot and amend one of their conservation plans to graze the volunteer wheat in the spring with a fair market value on the forage, a tribal landowner or a Tribe would then be able to make a profit on their land every year, versus every other year with just the income from a crop.