

The Newsletter of the
Palouse Prairie Foundation

P.O. Box 8952. Moscow, ID 83843

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<http://www.palouseprairie.org/>

June, 2006

The members of the new Board of Directors for the Palouse Prairie Foundation for the coming year are:

Dave Skinner, president

Paul Warnick, vice president

Joan Folwell, secretary,

Mary Fauci, treasurer

Trish Heekin, at large member

The **June meeting** of PPF will be a business meeting held in the conference room of the Pullman Plant Materials Center. The PMC is located on the Pullman end of Airport Road. From Pullman, take SR 270 east toward Moscow. Turn left at the intersection of Airport Road and SR 270 at the traffic light. The PMC entrance is about 300 yards from the intersection on the right. It is the first road you will encounter after the highway intersection. Take the gravel road up the hill. At the top of the hill, take the second road into the building complex and park in the lot on the left. From Moscow, take SR 270 west toward Pullman. Turn right at the intersection of Airport Road and SR 270 at the traffic light. From there the directions are the same as above.

Plans for the July and August meetings are not yet formalized. Watch the PPF website for details.

Native plants at the U of I Arboretum

The Palouse Prairie plantings at the U of I Arboretum are beginning to mature and show the character of the local native plants. Most of the plantings are in one area of the xeriscape garden at the south end of the arboretum across the road from the barn. The Palouse Prairie planting is up the hill and across the gravel road to the east of the main garden. The planting is immediately north of the small grouping of Quaking Aspen trees. There is also a group of about 500 Camas planted further up the stream, just south of the first group of large willow trees. The Camas is planted right next to the



photo by Paul Warnick

stream on the west side. Some of the Camas was planted two years ago, and most of that planting bloomed very well this year. The rest of the Camas was salvaged from the Highway 95 construction site last spring. In spite of being moved at the wrong time of year, most of the bulbs seem to have survived, and many of them flowered this year as well. The other big

flowering news is that one of the Arrow Leaf Balsamroot flowered this year--it is the first one out of about 20 plants that were planted four years ago! Some of the deep tap rooted perennial flowers like Balsamroot and Mule's Ear can take five or more years to flower. The Mule's Ear plants in the Arboretum are now three years old, and they are only getting big enough this year to spot fairly easily, so it may be several more years before they flower. The Palouse Prairie planting is just coming into peak flowering now, and it should continue to be fairly showy for another two to three weeks, depending a little on the weather. The flowers on some of the earlier flowering plants like Camas and Wild Iris only lasted a few days this year because the unusually hot weather in Mid May.

The arboretum is located at 1200 W Palouse River Drive, Moscow, Idaho.

For more information on native Palouse Prairie plantings at the arboretum, see "Palouse Prairie Native Plants in the UI Arboretum and Botanical Garden" on the PPF website at http://www.palouseprairie.org/pubs/PP_Native_Plants_Arboretum.pdf

You can find out more about the U of I Arboretum at <http://www.uidaho.edu/arboretum/>

Restoration Methods Being Studied

In order to study methods for restoring Palouse Prairie on cropland, PPF has been cooperating with the Pullman Plant Materials Center to establish and evaluate a set of plots of different seeding techniques, times and species composition. Plots consist of four 20 foot long rows of each treatment, randomized and replicated 3 times. *Pseudoroegneria spicata* ssp. *inermis* cv 'Whitmar', and *Festuca idahoensis* cv 'Winchester' comprise the grass species. Forbs consist of *Achillea millefolium*, *Aster occidentalis*, *Gaillardia aristata*, *Galium boreale*, *Penstemon confertus*, *Potentilla arguta*, *Potentilla gracilis*, and *Solidago missouriensis*. These forbs comprise 8 of the 10 species identified by the Palouse Prairie Foundation as the most common and easily grown species for which to promote seed production, and thus are the most likely to be available for restoration efforts. The first plots were sown in the spring of 2004, and plans are to continue the seedings with spring and fall sowing thru 2007. If you would like to assist in the implementation and evaluation of these plots, we can always use more help.

Forb Spreadsheet Available

A database of landscaping characteristics for Palouse native forbs was compiled by Dave Skinner and Paul Warnick. It is a spreadsheet which allows one to sort by various plant characteristics such as family, flower color, mature height, bloom time, sun requirement, soil moisture requirement, longevity, and planting time. For further information on each species, you can refer to "Characteristics and Uses of Native Palouse Forbs in Landscaping" and "More Palouse Forbs for Landscaping" available on the PPF website. Much of the data in the database has been compiled from personal observations and data collection from plants growing on the Palouse. It is planned to post this database on the PPF website soon. In the meanwhile, if you would like a copy, please contact Dave Skinner. For those of you without computer access, we will send you a printed copy, but it won't have the sorting function.

Palouse Prairie Foundation Display

If you would like to have the Palouse Prairie display at a gathering or meeting, please contact us. The display consists of a free standing 4 panel poster explaining Palouse Prairie and a myriad of printed information regarding the prairie. A smaller version of the poster is also

available for more limited spaces. You can view the poster on the PPF website at <http://www.palouseprairie.org/display/>

Salvaged Seed Available

Last fall we salvaged some seed of *Heracleum lanatum* (cow parsnip) and *Lomatium dissectum* (fern-leaf lomatium) from plants that will be impacted by the new construction on SR 270 from Pullman to the Idaho state line. Seed is still available to members who have a place to plant it out. The Pullman PMC also has some seed of *Penstemon deustus* (hotrock penstemon) available for the same purpose. They expect some data to be returned in exchange for the seed, but don't let that scare you off. The data is easy to collect. Contact Dave Skinner if you are interested in any of these three species. All three species require stratification and should be fall sown.

Palouse Prairie Grasses

The two most common grasses of the Palouse Prairie are bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*, formerly *Agropyron spicatum*) and Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*). Together, these two grasses can comprise 80-150% of the total cover on a site (total cover can exceed 100% because species overlap each other).

Bluebunch wheatgrass is a wide ranging species of the western interior US where annual precipitation ranges from about 10-20 inches per year. The foliage is a blue-green color and the inflorescence is a spike. There are both awned (bearded) and unawned ecotypes, sometimes classified as separate subspecies. In the drier parts of its range, bluebunch wheatgrass is a true bunchgrass. On more moist sites such as the deep soils of the Palouse, bluebunch wheatgrass will develop rhizomes and remain mostly vegetative, producing very few seedheads.

Idaho fescue is a true bunchgrass throughout its range. It is not as drought tolerant as bluebunch wheatgrass and thus is not found in drier parts of the Inland Northwest. Plants are a deep green or blue-green with narrow, tightly rolled leaves and the seedhead is a panicle. It occurs on all exposures on the Palouse but is not generally found on shallow, rocky soils.

If you have ideas, suggestions, or contributions for the newsletter, please send them to Dave Skinner at <abbie1 at pullman.com> (you will need to replace "at" with the symbol "@" in the address line of your email program) or call him at 334-7009.