



Palouse Prairie Foundation

Promoting preservation and restoration of the Palouse Prairie ecosystem

PO Box 8952
Moscow, ID 83843



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Palouse Prairie Flyer

Newsletter of the Palouse Prairie Foundation Winter 2022–2023

Change of the Guard



Joe and Mary Hein with Jacie and Wayne Jensen (photo courtesy of Jacie Jensen)

In this issue we meet the Heins who are taking the reins of the native seed business on the Palouse to Rose Creek and about the future of growing native seeds from Jacie Jensen.

Along with new faces at Rose Creek, we have new Board members. Thank you to everyone who attended the Palouse Prairie Foundation annual meeting December 8. And thank you to our keynote speaker Juanita Lichthardt for her presentation on Palouse Prairie Remnants. Welcome, David Herbold to the 2023 Board of Directors.

Here's what's included in this edition of your newsletter:

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Native Seed Production on the Palouse: from Thorn Creek to Rose Creek

by Shelley Chambers Fox

Wheat was \$3 a bushel. Always looking to diversify and try new farming practices, Wayne and Jacie Jensen decided to try their hand at growing native plants for seed. Together they cultivate a third generation farm at the base of Paradise Ridge; wheat, barley, peas, lentils, garbanzos, canola, alfalfa, 800 acres of grass, both native and forage. The idea to diversify to include native plants came from botanist Trish Heekin. “You have some of the best Palouse Prairie in the area, and we have nowhere to get seed for restoration projects.” she said. Thorn Creek Native Seed Farm was born. Trish connected the Jensens with Dave Skinner, Palouse Prairie Foundation (PPF) founder and botanist with WSU’s Plant Materials Center. Dave helped Jacie and Wayne identify what grew on their land and which plants would be suitable for seed production. Jacie collected seed over the summer and fall of 2004, Trish and other Palouse Prairie Foundation members helped plant the seed in nursery tubes, and Dave Skinner monitored the seedlings’ progress over the winter. The next spring, the seedlings were planted in rows, initially on a half-acre field. Plantings were expanded as seeds were harvested and as new species were added, yarrow in 2006 and blanketflower in 2007. Like other plants they grow, native forbs and grasses must be rotated periodically to different fields to maintain soil health, and like other plants that are grown for seed, they must be walked and rogued to keep the field clear of weeds and the seed clean.



Dave Skinner and other PPF volunteers identifying prairie plants for cultivation in early 2004. (Photo courtesy of Jacie Jensen)



Trish Heekin and other volunteers sowing seeds at the Plant Materials Center in 2004. (Photo courtesy of Jacie Jensen)



PPF Volunteers planting native seedlings for the start of Thorn Creek Seed Farm in spring 2005. (Photo courtesy of Jacie Jensen)

Some characteristics of native forbs required modifications in their equipment. Most plant parts of Oregon sunshine dry more slowly than the seed so that when the seed is ready to harvest the rest of the plant does not separate easily from the seed. Wayne Jensen removed the bulk tank from their combine to manage this special circumstance. The Jensens do not grow every native species on their Palouse Prairie for seed. Some, like the iconic arrowleaf balsam root take so long (5 years) to flower that it is more practical to collect their seed from wild plants than from cultivated plants.

Growing native seeds has many rewards beyond the remunerative. The Jensens have helped many landowners with their Prairie restoration projects, both providing seed and their expertise in growing these plants. They have provided land and seed for research projects: National Resource Conservation Service/USDA scientist Pamela Pavek studied whether pollinator islands could be inserted into no-till fields or stands of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land to maintain a pollinator highway in agricultural areas. The City of Moscow has purchased seed to give out at the Farmers Market to encourage residents to grow low-water consumption gardens. The Jensens have also donated seeds and forbs to the Crock pollinator garden, a Palouse Prairie Foundation project along the Moscow-to-Troy trail.

This adventure is starting a new chapter. This November Joe and Mary Hein became the new faces of native plant seed production in the Palouse. They started to work with Wayne and Jacie in March, 2022 to learn the science and business of cultivating native plants. They purchased the business and re-established it on Smoot Hill near Rose Creek. Joe grew up in Pullman and when not cultivating native plants also composes music, while Mary grew up on Bainbridge Island. She came to the Palouse often when she was young because her cousins, the Clarks, live and farm here. Mary attended WSU, graduating in agricultural technology in 2017. Together Joe and Mary bring a variety of farming experience to their new endeavor, having previously been employed at Pioneer Produce, Zakarison Farms and Feed, and Seabold Farm, a dahlia operation on Bainbridge Island that they managed during the pandemic. Cousin Ian Clark mentioned to them that Jacie and Wayne were selling the Thorn Creek native seed business. This spring, they have been working with Jacie and Wayne to learn planting and harvesting

routines. In September they started to transplant some of the forbs into their 20 acres on Smoot Hill. They have been able to borrow a Truax drill from the Latah Soil and Conservation District to assist in the planting. They will plant 18 species of Palouse Prairie wildflowers and rotate them with alfalfa hay and triticale on their farm. The triticale is tall, reduces weed growth and improves soil health. The Heins will continue to harvest on Paradise Ridge for another year and anticipate harvesting their first Smoot Hill seed in 2024. Eventually they will include native grasses. They echo Jacie's observation that these plants require more labor to grow and special equipment to harvest. Prairie smoke seed is harvested by vacuum because the seed with its tail is so light that it wouldn't move easily through a combine.

Jacie Jensen expects the need for native seed producers to grow. There is a national effort to re-establish native grasses and forbs on public and private lands. The USDA's CRP program encourages use of native plantings in fields converted from annual crops through increased remuneration. Certainly, in municipalities across the West there is a concerted effort to encourage homeowners to plant drought-tolerant, native species rather than turf grass, which requires more water to maintain. Palouse Prairie plants are part of native landscapes as far east as the Dakotas and as far south as Oklahoma and Texas, making the market larger than the Palouse. In addition, there is a great need for seed producers to provide education to people growing native plants in the home landscape. There is more space between the plants than they encounter in the wild so there will be maintenance, there will be weeds, and some will grow well from seeds, others from starts. Thorn Creek Native Seed Farm has set the standard; Rose Creek Seed Farm will carry it into a new, exciting era.



Joe and Mary Hein at Rose Creek displaying their wares. (photo courtesy of Mary Hein)

Meet the 2023 Board of Directors



David Hall, President, earned two bachelor's degrees at the University of Idaho—one in Computer Science and one in Mathematics—and a master's degree in Computer Science. His father was a professor of geomorphology at UI, and the earth sciences rubbed off on David. He is retired from the U.S. Forest Service Research Station in Moscow where he programmed simulations of landslides and soil erosion effects following forest fires. David is interested in protecting the remaining native Palouse Prairie, and the region's groundwater resources. He has been involved with the Palouse Prairie Foundation since its founding in 2004.



Elisabeth Brackney, Vice President, moved to Moscow 32 years ago to obtain a master's degree in UI's College of Natural Resources. She worked for the Nez Perce Tribe as a Wetlands Ecologist before retiring. A large part of her work involved native plant identification. She was particularly intrigued by remnants of native prairie, found next to some of the wetlands she assessed. As a board member of the Palouse Prairie Foundation, she hopes to help protect and restore these special ecosystems on the Palouse.



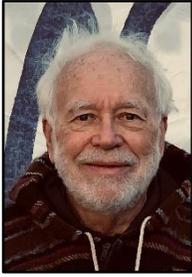
Joan Folwell, Treasurer, moved to the Palouse in 1968 from the prairies of Illinois. She is trained as a zoologist and is an enthusiastic, but undisciplined and naive, gardener. She lives north of Pullman on 20 acres. Since 2005, she and her husband, Ray, have been involved in a prairie restoration on what had been a wheat farm for nearly 100 years. She also actively participates in the preservation of prairie remnants in Whitman County.



Shelley Chambers-Fox, Secretary, developed her interests in gardening, weeds, and Palouse Prairie when she and her husband moved to their 24-acre farm located between Albion and Colfax. The untillable remnant of a homestead includes a small strip of Palouse Prairie. Through her training as a Master Gardener and what she learns from her involvement with the Palouse Prairie Foundation, Shelley hopes to restore the land to its former diversity and beauty.



Tom Besser, Member-at-Large, moved to the Palouse in 1981, working as a veterinarian and performing research at WSU until his retirement in 2019. In the past ten years, he was introduced to Palouse Prairie by field trips and presentations sponsored by the Palouse Prairie Foundation. Five years ago, with invaluable help of other local prairie enthusiasts, he started a 3.5-acre Palouse prairie reconstruction project on a former wheat field next to his home. As a board member, Tom is interested in protecting and restoring Palouse Prairie and sharing his enthusiasm for Palouse Prairie with others.



Ronnie Hatley, Member-at-Large, moved with his family to their farm in Union Flat in 1947. During his school years he helped his father clear the farm of hawthorn "brush" and pines increasing the 215-acre farm's cropland from 40 to 105 acres. Walking every day up the prairie hillside to fetch the cows to milk, he never saw a wildflower. A lifelong student of Indonesia, he lived and taught 16 years in Indonesia, 18 in Australia, and 14 at WSU and UI. Everywhere he's lived, he's been an active environmentalist. He is now transforming his 100-acre farm into a Palouse Native Plants preserve-restoration-production-research farm. In 2023, besides hosting Wild Palouse Flower Walks up the deer trails at Dogwood Creek Farm, he hopes to popularize Weeding-While-Walking Walks.



David Herbold, Member-at-Large, grew up in the Pacific Northwest. He has always loved being outside. In 2008 he found his way to Idaho to enroll at the University of Idaho in pursuit of an MFA in Fine Art (sculpture). In 2013 a career change led him to Thorn Creek Native Seed Farm (TCNSF). During his 8 years at TCNSF he got a good education in Palouse Prairie and farming, which he is forever thankful for! He now works for himself, doing building and planting. As a Palouse Prairie Foundation Board member, he looks forward to contributing his experience with prairie restoration, cultivating native species, and outreach to our local population (especially the youth) about the Palouse Prairie and how one might interact with prairie cooperatively and respectfully.

Are You Eligible for a Mini-Grant?



The Palouse Prairie Foundation (PPF) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the preservation and restoration of native Palouse Prairie ecosystems in Whitman County, Washington, and Latah County, Idaho. To this end, PPF supports the following efforts:

- Raising public awareness about issues threatening the prairie and opportunities to conserve it.
- Developing educational materials and curricula for prairie conservation.
- Conduct research regarding the prairie.
- Restoring degraded local prairieland.
- Increasing seed availability for use in local prairie restoration.

The Palouse Prairie once extended over hundreds of thousands of acres. The region's deep fertile soils supported such highly productive agriculture that it was converted to cropland beginning in the 1800s, and less than one percent of the original prairie remains in native plants today. The rare remnant patches of prairie continue to harbor native plants that serve as seed sources, including rare species such as Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*), Jessica's aster (*Aster jessicae*), and Palouse thistle (*Cirsium brevifolium*). In addition, the remnants provide superlative carbon sequestration; excellent pollinator habitat; and habitat for rare animals such as the giant Palouse earthworm (*Driloleirus americanus*). Many people value its intrinsic beauty. PPF is committed to helping individuals and organizations to conserve and restore these prairie remnants to increase habitat connectivity and long-term sustainability of the ecosystem.

PPF has a mini-grant program available to the public for the conservation and restoration of Palouse Prairie. The maximum grant is \$1,000. Visit the PPF web site (PalousePrairie.org) for information about some of the mini-grants that have been awarded and how to apply.

To apply, submit the following information to secretary@palouseprairie.org or mail to Palouse Prairie Foundation, P.O. Box 8952, Moscow, ID 83843.

1. Organization name.
2. Organization mailing address.
3. Name, email address, and phone number of primary contact person.
4. Description of the proposal, including the following information:
 - a. Description of the project and how it supports the mission of PPF.
 - b. Approximate start and end dates and significant stages of project progress.
 - c. Requested funding level, maximum \$1,000.
 - d. Proposed budget, including a short list of budget items.
5. If this application is part of a larger proposal or project with another funding source, briefly describe.



Support the Palouse Prairie Foundation by renewing or starting your membership. Memberships are on a calendar year basis.

PRESERVE – PROTECT – PROMOTE

Why should you support the Palouse Prairie Foundation with your 2023 membership?

In 2022, the Palouse Prairie Foundation:

- Conducted a weeding party at Whelan Cemetery with the help of our great volunteers; continued the removal and surveillance of invading lilac bushes partially funded by a Washington Native Plant Society grant; supported the successful award of a three-year grant to the Palouse Conservation District to continue maintenance of the on-site Spalding’s catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*) population.
- Continued to develop the John Crock Native Plant and Pollinator Garden along the Latah Trail by controlling weeds; planted 225 native forbs and scattered native plant seeds mostly donated by Thorn Creek Native Seed Farm with the efforts of Elisabeth Brackney and other board members and volunteers; monitored the development of previously planted shrubs and native grasses.
- Awarded a \$1,000 mini-grant to The Phoenix Conservancy that assists with their native seed collecting and growing program. The seeds are planted in their greenhouse and will provide forbs for native planting sites in Pullman.
- Provided access to University of Idaho graduate students and researchers studying the interaction of pollinating insects with native plants at Whelan Cemetery.

Your support of PPF is a direct benefit to **YOU**:

- Receive invitations to local-area field trips.
- Get direct access to the expertise and experience of other restorers and protectors of the Prairie.
- Participate in the activity of your choice to help preserve this important ecosystem.
- The Palouse Prairie Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and **donations are tax deductible**.

Email messages are the primary way that members are notified of all events and news. Please pay [online](#) via credit card or PayPal, or provide the membership information requested below and send it with your payment to:

Palouse Prairie Foundation, P.O. Box 8952, Moscow, Idaho 83843-1452.

THANK YOU!

Membership Information

Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip

E-mail Address

- Student \$10
- Individual \$20
- Family \$35
- Lifetime \$250
- Donation \$ _____
- TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

I'm interested in: John Crock Garden Whelan Cemetery Prairie Habitat Kits