

The Newsletter of the
Palouse Prairie Foundation

P.O. Box 8952. Moscow, ID 83843

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

March, 2006

The Palouse Prairie Foundation held a business meeting on February 10, 2006. One of the decisions to come out of the meeting was to issue a quarterly newsletter to keep people informed of the various activities of the organization and its members. This is the very first issue of said newsletter. 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.

Many of you have probably already heard the news that the Giant Palouse Earthworm (*Drilolierus americanus*) was found by a University of Idaho graduate student on Smoot Hill last spring. The species is restricted to parts of eastern Washington and northern Idaho. It is found nowhere else in the world. Sightings of the worm have been few and far between. Not much is known about the species or its habitat requirements, but it is believed to be dependent on undisturbed Palouse Prairie and perhaps bordering forested areas. The earthworm had not been seen in 20 years and was feared extinct. Members of the Palouse Prairie Foundation are working to have the earthworm listed as an endangered species.

For more information on the Giant Palouse Earthworm take a look at the PPF website at <<http://www.palouseprairie.org/invertebrates/palouseworm.html>>

The March meeting of the Palouse Prairie Foundation will be held in the Edith Hecht Reading Room at Neill Public Library, 210 N. Grand Ave, Pullman WA. Maynard Fosberg, retired Soil Scientist from the University of Idaho, will talk about patterned ground. If you have ever wondered what caused the mounds of deeper soil surrounded by shallow rocky soils, come and listen to this presentation.

The April meeting of the Palouse Prairie Foundation has been cancelled/postponed to avoid a conflict with a presentation by the White Pine Chapter Idaho Native Plant Society. Juanita Lichthardt will be talking about basic grass identification. A follow-up field trip is planned for July 8th.

A decision on whether to hold the PPF meeting on another date or to cancel it altogether will be made later. Watch the PPF website for more news on the date and place.

Justin Rickert of Moscow had been hosting our website since the beginning, April 2001.

About a year ago, he warned us that he would no longer guarantee continued service if his server failed, which it did – the hard disk crashed on December 4, 2005.

David Hall, the PPF webmaster, was out of town on a ten-day trip at the time. When he returned, PPF arranged with First Step Internet to take over hosting. They offered us a good deal, but they seemed unable to move forward until after New Years.

On January 4, the PPF website was back up. The new server's capabilities are a bit different than Justin's were, and the software for the native plant database no longer works. We are working on a different approach to getting those 227 plant pages back online. Thank you Justin, for hosting our web site for almost five years!

If you are interested in using native plants in landscaping and gardening, you will want to take a look at two new documents developed by several of our members. "Characteristics and Uses of Native Palouse Forbs in Landscaping" and "More Palouse Forbs for Landscaping" are on the Landscaping with Palouse Natives webpage, <<http://palouseprairie.org/ppflandscaping.html>>.

If you are planning to plant a larger area, you might be interested in "Palouse Prairie Restoration" on the Pullman Plant Materials Center website at <http://www.wsu.edu/~pmc_nrcs/Technology.html>.

If you don't have internet access and would like a copy of any of these, call Dave Skinner at 334-7009 or write to him at 101 Pullman Airport Road, Pullman, WA. 99163 and he will be happy to send you copies.

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 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.

Do you know which of our many native forbs is the first to bloom each year? If you guessed sagebrush buttercup, grass widows, or spring beauty, you are close. They often bloom in March or early April, but are not the first to do so. Normally, it is a less noticeable species that has that honor. *Lomatium gormanii* (salt and pepper) makes its home on rocky outcrops where even cheatgrass has trouble making a living. Because this niche has very little soil to store moisture, *L. gormanii* has adapted to completing its life cycle during the wet part of the year. It will often bloom during a warm spell in January and occasionally even in December. It's a small plant with white petals and deep purple anthers, thus the common name of "salt and pepper." It also grows on sites with enough soil to support xeric grasses, but is more easily overlooked there because of its short stature. Look for it around rock outcrops, even in town. It's a great way to brighten a dreary winter day with the promise of spring.

You may soon be able to see some native plants used in landscaping in Pullman. Sarah Moore, a PPF member and a volunteer at Neill Public Library, is planning the landscaping around the new addition. She plans to use native plants and the library plans to incorporate the plantings into their outreach programs. Watch for more details as the project unfolds.