

Palouse Land Trust

2020 Newsletter

Celebrating 25 years of working with landowners and communities to conserve the lands we love, now and forever, and to enrich connections to the natural world



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Reflections on my Gift of Time with Palouse Land Trust

Recently, I stole a few quiet moments out of one slightly over-booked work day to slip away from the pressing issues of clients, COVID-19, and, politics. It was one of those days when I just needed to rest my mind and allow my thoughts to turn to something else aside from the problems du jour.



Like a homing pigeon, I headed directly to Berman Creekside Park, took up a stance near the creek, and let my thoughts do the rest. Thinking back on that scene, it reminds me of what author Lewis Carroll could have perhaps contemplated with the famous line out of his poem, *The Jabberwocky*: “So rested he by the Tumtum tree, And stood awhile in thought.” Indeed, there I stood in thought, on land once owned by one of the original supporters of the Palouse Land Trust, Katrina Berman, on land where PLT placed its inaugural conservation easement. I wonder if there is a Tumtum tree on that spot disguised as something else? Only Katrina would have known that answer.

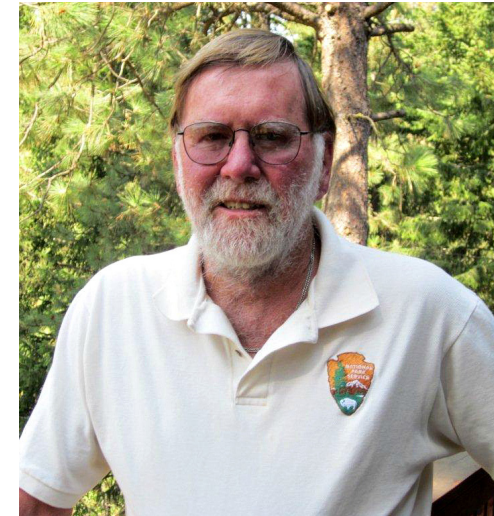
I thought about PLT founder, attorney John Norton, who introduced me to PLT as a beginning law student in 1996, not long after our incorporation in 1995. John conveyed such commitment and passion for the purpose and mission of the young organization, that it did not take any convincing for me to join the then advisory committee. Prior to arriving here on the Palouse to begin a new life with husband, Jack Hill, and to attend law school, I had been involved in California with coastal preservation and restoration projects. Land trusts like PLT were just beginning to come to life. Conservation was already in my blood, and, I found the place to contribute my enthusiasm and skills, to help grow an organization and ultimately to leave the most important message to future generations that I worked as a part of a committed group of individuals who actualized a vision to preserve land with all of its unique attributes.

I thought about the PLT board members and presidents who came before me with whom I have had the distinct pleasure through the years to work, each president weaving his own contributions into PLT’s very fabric, creating our rich history: John Norton; Archie George; Gerry Wright; Charles Burke; and John Bolles. I look back with a full heart on all of their tireless efforts as they raised and carried the flag for us. Each president advanced the organization steps closer to where we stand today as an accredited land trust holding twenty conservation easements and owning three properties outright, including Idlers Rest. Musing to myself I recalled a time when our early

(Continued inside)

Above: President, Janice Smith-Hill and the First Pup, Dashiel

Cover: © Kendall Rittenour



The Ending of an Era

This August, founding board member, past president, and champion for local land conservation Gerry Wright officially retired from the Palouse Land Trust board of directors after a remarkable term of 25 years. The entire Land Trust family cannot thank Gerry enough for his dedication, passion, leadership, and vision, taking PLT from an all-volunteer, grassroots organization to a professionally staffed and dynamic conservation leader.

“I’ll be the first to tell you, I didn’t know a darn thing about land trusts, or even what they were when I started, I don’t know if any of us actually did, aside from John Norton,” Gerry chuckled. “But we sure didn’t let that stop us.”

Twenty-five years ago, Gerry, and a handful of committed citizens, came together to form Palouse Land Trust to offer meaningful conservation options to landowners across the Palouse and North-Central Idaho. No offices, no employees, a special ring for land trust calls on Gerry’s home phone, and his living room as a gathering place were the humble beginnings of PLT.

“Gerry’s brought a thoughtful and invaluable perspective when reviewing prospective easements. And his opinions have helped guide us as an organization. He’s never wavered in his support of PLT’s mission, and he’s stuck with us through good times and bad. And... he was here for the first conservation easement. We’re going to miss his smiling face at the board meetings.”

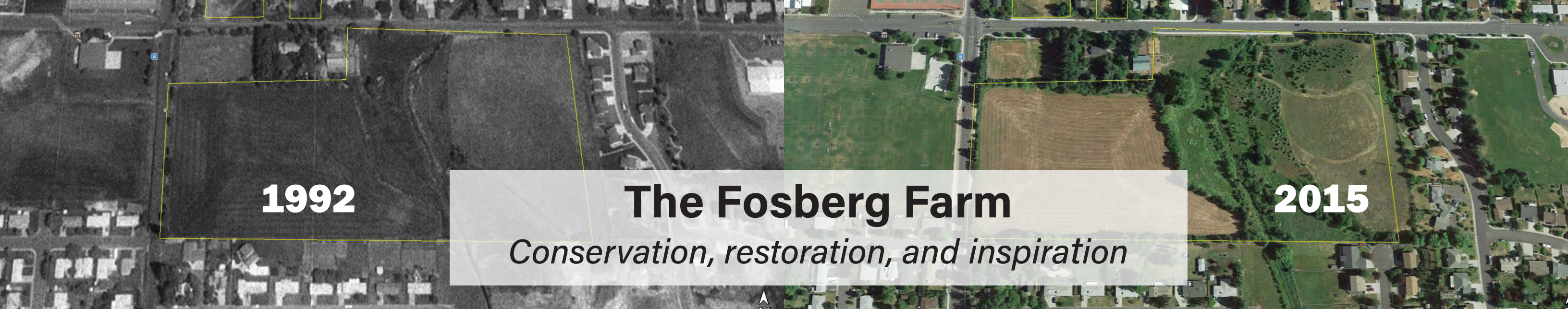
-Roger Blanchard

“In those early days, I really didn’t feel like we were making progress—making a difference—but to look back today—I cannot believe how far we’ve come. Our first projects were scattered and hardly anyone knew about what we were doing, or about us.

It wasn’t until we brought on Amy Trujillo as our first staff member in 2011 that we had our first news article published! Our annual event brought



Gerry and Amy Trujillo on a baseline document report visit at Maple K Forest conservation easement.



1992

The Fosberg Farm

Conservation, restoration, and inspiration

2015

Conservation

When Maynard and Margaret Fosberg bought their 25-acre property in 1951, it sat on the farthest outskirts of Moscow, ID. So far in fact, they couldn't even get milk delivered down the rutted, dirt road in what was then known as the dairy district. Today, that dirt road is one of the busiest arterials in Moscow, surrounded by urban development at the corner of D Street and Mountain View.

The property had been actively farmed and grazed for decades when the Fosbergs purchased it. As Moscow grew up around it, the lands became ideal for subdivision. But the Fosbergs wanted the

Below left to right: What was once 5 acres of over-worked hay field in 2004 has literally blossomed into a successful Palouse Prairie reconstruction, complete with native bunch-grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees. This special area serves as a prairie and conservation learning site for local students.



lands to remain as open space, wildlife habitat, and working agricultural lands.

In 1999, with your support, Maynard and Margaret were able to permanently conserve the farm with Palouse Land Trust. Today, it is an oasis for urban wildlife and birds, has benefited from multiple restoration and native Palouse Prairie reconstruction projects, and serves as an outdoor learning space for students at nearby McDonald Elementary School.

Restoration

Maynard and Margaret worked diligently to restore and improve the health and vitality of the land. Working with the Latah County Soil and Water Conservation District (LSWCD), hundreds of native trees and shrubs have been planted to cool Paradise Creek, which flows through the property, and to provide critical habitat for birds, fish, muskrats, rabbits, and all manner of small mammals. These restoration plantings have also stabilized and strengthened the stream banks, providing relief during seasonal flooding events.

In the early 2000s, the Fosbergs undertook an ambitious Palouse Prairie reconstruction

project, turning what was once an over-grazed hay pasture into an urban prairie paradise. Again working with the LSWCD and Thorn Creek Native Seed Farm, the Fosbergs reconstructed 5-acres of the property into a thriving native Palouse Prairie habitat, all in just over a decade.

But the restoration didn't stop there. Along D Street, the Fosbergs and LSWCD created a "pocket prairie" of native species in the right of way strip in 2012. This special planting is full of native flowers and shrubs, providing critical food and shelter for pollinators of all kinds, from beetles, to bees, to bats.

Inspiration

Maynard never wavered in his commitment, dedication, and love for the land right up until his passing in September of this year. He was not only an inspiration to the Land Trust family, but to the community as a whole. We are honored to celebrate his memory and legacy by continuing this good work for generations upon generations to come.

Thank you so much for investing in the future you wish to see for our community through conservation. Thanks to your support, visionary



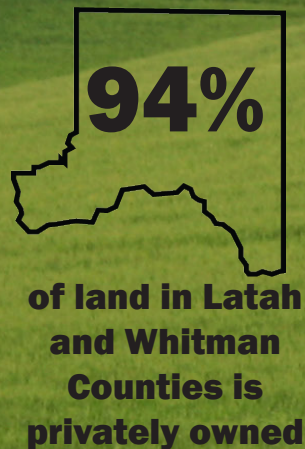
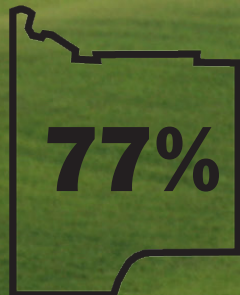
Above: Maynard Fosberg, 1999 (© Matt Dolkas)

landowners like the Fosbergs—and amazing partners like LSWCD and so many others—you're ensuring that generations to come will always have special places like the Fosberg Farm to inspire and encourage a love of nature in us all.

Below left to right: From the original 1998 site visit at the Fosberg Farm to today's view of Paradise Creek as it meanders through the property, what an incredible difference years and dedicated land stewardship can make!

Over the last 25 years, 757 passionate supporters like you have come together to ensure that the lands we all cherish will endure for today, tomorrow, and forever. Thank you for **all** you have made possible!

Since 1995, the populations of Whitman and Latah Counties have grown by **27%**



Working lands, open spaces, and wildlife corridors have faced increasing development and fragmentation pressure in the past 25 years

enriched **over 600 students** in nature's classrooms



2,040 acres permanently conserved across the Palouse through

connected **8,000+ visitors per year** to the joy of nature and outdoor recreation at Ider's Rest Nature Preserve



achieved **national accreditation** a sign of excellence and sustainability



25 conservation projects

protected **over 6 miles** of waterways



integrated **climate-based science** conservation planning to protect our most resilient lands

preserved **540** contiguous acres of native Palouse Prairie habitat

(Continued from inside front page).

boards worried about whether we would ever hold any additional future easements beyond our first few. As we continued our efforts with zeal, our reputation spread, and, the rest is making history. To this I say, thank you, thank you, merci and danke!

I thought about how PLT operated for many years solely as a volunteer-driven organization, and how those volunteers forged the organization's very essence. With their hands in the dirt and focus fixed on relationships with landowners, we moved ahead on our course of acquiring easements and supporters, many of whom have remained with us through the years as our loyal friends. I thrive on speaking with our supporters around town sharing our vision and gleaning ideas for future efforts. Then, one day it happened. PLT had grown to the extent of being able to hire our first executive director, Amy Trujillo, in 2011. I remembered the decision to hire Amy and how I handled the butterflies in my stomach. We truly flipped the switch at that point, continued ahead, and have not looked back. Staff members Nick Norton and Jaime Jovanovich-Walker joined us in 2015. Crank forward with Lovina Englund joining PLT as Executive Director in 2018, and, Karl Meyer replacing Nick in 2020. It was a proud day for PLT when I offered the position to Lovina on behalf of our Board of Directors.

I headed back to the office re-fueled by my time at Berman. With all candor, I can say that my precious time with PLT from advisory committee to board of directors to president, has been a true gift. I am so proud to serve as president as we continue our conservation efforts and face all challenges of modern land trusts, "enriching connections to the natural world." Whether working with private or public lands, PLT remains the steward into the future with vision and purpose – forever ready, forever your land trust.

Janice Smith-Hill
President, PLT Board of Directors

Native Palouse Prairie

From peril to protection

Ten years ago, you set into motion something truly extraordinary. What began as a single conservation easement turned into a full-fledged movement to protect the most critically endangered ecosystem in the lower United States, the native Palouse Prairie.

In 2010, your support made the Hill conservation easement a reality. Protecting 160-acres in total, the property is home to 42-acres of high quality native prairie. This special property was the first step in creating the largest contiguous swath of permanently protected Palouse Prairie habitat just south of Moscow.

Thanks to special funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the work of countless partners, agencies, landowners, and prairie advocates, two additional conservation easements were completed in 2016, protecting an additional 39-acres of high quality native prairie. Late that year, the Land Trust officially closed on the purchase of another 62-acres of exceptional quality prairie atop Paradise Ridge, now known as the Dave Skinner Ecological Preserve.

Over the last four years, through conservation

easements and the purchase of other important lands, the total protected Palouse Prairie corridor along Paradise Ridge has grown to over 540 acres! But the good work hasn't stopped there.

Your continued championing of this special landscape allows us to work with more landowners eager to protect their own prairie remnants, collaborate with more partners to advance the pace and impact of prairie conservation, and actively steward and care for the Dave Skinner Ecological Preserve. Thank you for assuring that this ecosystem not only survives, but thrives; for today, tomorrow, and forever.

From left to right: The first Palouse Prairie easement, the Hill property; Arrowleaf balsamroot blooms on the French easement; Native flowers explode across the Dumroese prairie remnant; A gorgeous spring day atop the Dave Skinner Ecological Preserve.



Fall, atop the Skinner Preserve

Embracing Legacy, Looking Forward

A small group of friends gather in a living room. Each person shines with a warm glow tendered not only by the wine being poured into the glass balanced in their hand, but also by the sense that they are gathered together in solidarity around one thing that unites them – their love of land and community. Articles of incorporation have been signed and a fledgling organization now exists with merely a post office box key and a new phone (announced by a special ring) sitting idle on the shelf in the next room.



Twenty-five years ago, this was what our founding board members experienced – full of hope and uncertainty. Little did they know then how their gifts of time and talent shaped a future where thousands of acres are now protected across the region. One fundamental challenge in those days was finding early-adopters, landowners like our dear late Maynard Fosberg, who embraced land protection and stewardship on an enviable level. He and others set into motion a powerful example of how voluntary conservation can shape communities, complement existing growth strategies, and offer profound natural benefits. Gone are the days of the idle phone. Protecting vital working lands and conserving natural areas that are rugged, diverse, and teeming with wildlife remains core to our mission. Now more than ever, we see the transformative value of lands that connect us to nature to improve our health and wellbeing, of strong local economies, of healthy local food systems and land-based youth education.

Today, our work is nuanced by complex, dynamic, and evolving challenges as new problems and solutions arise. Across the nation, an ever-increasing urgency for land conservation is fueled by the climate crisis and exponential land loss. Populations are expanding, and the lifeblood of wild places and agricultural roots are threatened. Together, we can remain responsive to address these pressing challenges in our local communities. The iron is hot. Join me in raising a glass to 25 years! And THANK YOU for being part of the resilient outcomes of a community more rooted in the land.

Lovina Englund, Executive Director





YOU make it all possible. Your generous support this year - and for the past 25 years - is connecting more people of all ages and abilities to the power of nature and to our amazing landscape. You're ensuring that the special ecosystems, iconic landscapes, healthy fish and wildlife habitat, working farms and forests, and opportunities for outdoor recreation are protected for today, for tomorrow, and forever.

Thank you for championing conservation across the Palouse and North-Central Idaho!

Join our mighty team of Conservation Heroes to support conservation all year-round with monthly gifts or payroll deductions at work. It's simple, easy, and a great way to support the lands you love each and every day. Sign up at palouselandtrust.org/conservation-heroes.

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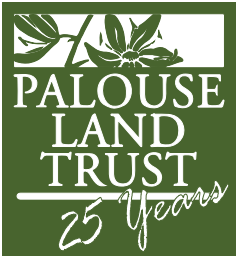
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Thank you to these supporters who have given so generously during fiscal year 2020 (7/1/2019 - 6/30/2020). If you believe you have been omitted from this list in error, please contact Jaime at 208-596-4996 or jaime@palouselandtrust.org



Working with landowners and communities to conserve the lands we love, now and forever, and to enrich connections to the natural world.

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Conservation Excellence

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An idle place to rest, always and forever

Even before the land was public, “Idler’s Rest” first showed up on maps in the early 1900’s. A site for Boy and Girl Scouts to meet and practice outdoor skills; the perfect setting for a peaceful classic rock festival; Kenjockey, a quiet place away from the noise and bustle of town. Idler’s Rest has served as a beloved outdoor space for over a century, but it’s only thanks to our community that Idler’s Rest Nature Preserve is a protected space for today, tomorrow, and forever.

In the mid-1960’s, the land on which Idler’s Rest is located was privately owned. The owner was happy to allow access and use, but the property was more valuable for development and he made plans to sell. And that’s when the community stepped up.

Outdoor clubs, youth groups, academic departments, and individuals across Latah and Whitman Counties bought Idler’s Rest, one acre at a time. With the help of the Nature Conservancy,

Idler’s Rest officially became a public nature preserve in 1968. PLT has been the proud owner and caretaker since 2004.

Your continued support has made Idler’s Rest one of the most treasured outdoor spaces in our region. Today, your commitment has paved the way for significant accessibility and amenity improvements, which will allow more members of our community to access and experience the space, regardless of age or ability.

Fast forward to 2020. More owners of private lands are happy to allow access and use. This year design and construction began on two new public access projects on PLT-conserved property. Keep your eye out for updates on a new loop trail coming to the Neuman Easement in Troy, as well as a special project with our friends at MAMBA. The conservation ethic is growing and spreading, all thanks to you.

Above: Undated photo of visitors to Idler’s.