

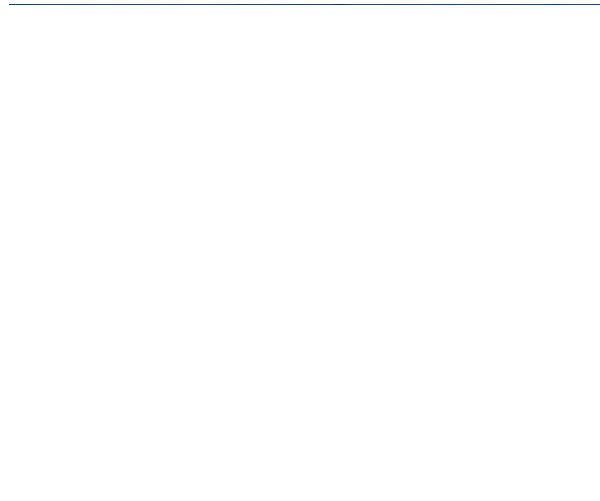
Our View: Credit due for preservation of Palouse and its landscapes

By Craig Staszkw, for the editorial board Jul 15, 2019 Updated 1 hr ago

Anyone who has spent time on the Palouse — be it for a weekend visit, four years of college or birth to final breath — knows the place is special.

What makes it so?

The people? Yes. Them. The universities? Definitely. The farmers markets? Certainly. The parades? The breweries? Cougar football Saturdays? All wonderful.



Yet all are insufficient answers to our question.

What makes the Palouse truly special, as we've discovered this past week, is the Palouse itself. More than who we meet and what happens when we meet them, life here is mystically and undeniably tied to the magic and allure of the land. The people who nurture and preserve it deserve our thanks.

In Thursday's edition of the Daily News, we read about Maynard Fosberg of Moscow. He owns 26 acres of land near the intersection of Mountain View Road and D Street. Seven decades ago, the property was farmland perhaps destined for development.

Today, standing on the edge of his property looking west and north, Fosberg can witness the hustle and bustle of a middle school, see the flags from high atop the community swimming pool slide and listen to the cruise and crunch of boards and bodies at the city's skate park.

Yet, should he turn and walk east, he steps back in time and, oddly, into Moscow's future.

Two decades ago, Fosberg and his wife, Margaret, converted most of his property to a conservation easement with the Palouse Land Trust, which means this piece of Palouse landscape will never be bulldozed for residential or commercial development.

As we stated in 1999 on this Opinion page, when the easement was first announced, “... the acreage is home to songbirds, pheasant, ducks, geese, raccoons, cottontails, muskrats, and the Fosberg's horses — a source of delight to visiting neighborhood children.”

The land remains for us — and our children, and their children — to enjoy as unspoiled open space. It's a piece of regenerated Palouse magic tucked into a neighborhood and city growing older around it.

In Friday's Daily News, we learned the Washington Department of Natural Resources will purchase 437 acres near Steptoe Butte to be managed and preserved. The land near the iconic butte is believed to be the largest portion of pristine Palouse Prairie left in Washington. Today, a little more than 1 percent of the once-vast prairie remains — which means it is one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world.

The land was recently purchased by a small coalition of Pullman residents — Kent Bassett and his late wife, Elaine, and Joan and Ray Folwell. The group found preservation would be best handled by the state. Joan Folwell said it is their hope that the sale will ensure Steptoe Butte and the native

prairie land in its shadow remains a landmark to be enjoyed for generations to come.

So we return to our original question. What makes the Palouse so special?

It's the land.

But, darn it, it's also the people — people like the Fosbergs and the Bassetts and the Folwells — for being stewards of that land and ensuring it is forever available to appreciate, enjoy, and gleefully revisit once we've been away.

— Craig Staszko, for the editorial board