

Winter 2006

A message from the President:

Idaho is one of the fastest growing states in the U.S. and Latah County is among the fastest growing counties in Idaho. Across the state line, Whitman County has too seen dramatic changes in land use in recent years. Counties to the north and south of us are also seeing substantial increases in residential and second home development. Changes in the land from traditional uses such as agriculture and forestry to residential use are of course inevitable. They do however impact the scenic and ecological values that many of us cherish on the Palouse. Land Trusts have grown in stature and importance throughout the U.S. because they offer a viable means, and often the only one, to conserve scenic, open space, and conservation values on privately owned lands in the regions they serve. The Palouse Land Trust was established over 10 years ago to provide that service to the residents of this region.

The Palouse Land Trust is the only land trust operating in this region of the Northwest. Because of this, its responsibilities cover a large geographic area. As approved by our Board of Directors, the primary geographic area of focus for the PLT are the Idaho counties of Latah, Benewah, Lewis, Clearwater, and Nez Perce, and Whitman County in Washington. Responding to inquiries that may be more than a 100 miles from Moscow can indeed tax the abilities of this all volunteer organization.

The PLT currently has a working board of directors of 11 individuals supplemented by a non-voting advisory board of six individuals. All are busy professionals in one field or another and the time they can commit to the PLT is therefore limited. I feel it is important that we expand the membership on both boards, and I encourage interested individuals to contact me. Of greatest need are representatives from the farming, ranching, and forest land owners on the Palouse who can in turn communicate with their colleagues about the existence of this organization and its goals and needs. Secondly we need individuals that have an interest in or experience in fund raising for non-profit organizations. Our long-term goal is to acquire a sufficient endowment that can be used to at least initially hire a full-time staff person to carry out the day to day duties of the PLT and who will be responsible for fund-raising to support that position in the future. This is an ambitious goal but it needs to happen if we are to go beyond an organization relying on the donated time of its volunteer board.

A Brief Outline of 2006 Activities

Late Winter

Finalized a conservation easement on 80 acres of wetlands bordering the St. Maries River owned by the Emerald Creek Garnet Company.

The board held a day-long workshop which updated our 2000 Strategic Plan, developed a

definitive list of criteria for our conservation easements, set up a committee to develop a n approach to monitor our easements and carry our stewardship responsibilities. The conservation easement are posted on our updated website PalouseLandTrust.org.

Worked with local groups and individuals to secure the continued protection and management of the Moscow Mountain cedar grove area. In these negotiations, we agreed to play a role in developing a management plan, participate in co-management if needed, and serve as an interim lease holder if necessary.

Spring-Summer

Worked with Idaho Department of Transportation officials on the creation of conservation easements on areas of native Palouse prairie as part of mitigation activities associated with Highway 95 construction.

Formally established an Idler's Rest Preserve Stewardship Group made up of land owners living adjacent to the preserve to better protect the resources and monitor and control adverse activities. As a result, we have updated the Preserve trail guide, added new signs, and developed plans for a visitor survey and posting of the perimeter boundary.

Fall

Conducted our first formal monitoring of selected easements in the Moscow area using formal protocols developed by board members. In doing this we were particularly attentive to the integrity of the boundary of the property, any adverse changes in plant community composition, and in retaking photographs from the original baseline - surprised at the changes, i.e., development that has occurred on the surrounding lands. This only served to emphasize the value of the easement.

Currently working with the Lands Division of Potlatch Corporation to acquire ownership, through donation, of a unique 10 acre land parcel on the St. Joe River above St. Maries, Idaho.

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