

# The Newsletter of the Palouse Prairie Foundation

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

December 2010

The regular meeting date for the Palouse Prairie Foundation is the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month. Check the PPF website for updates and locations.

## **PPF Membership:**

Spring is on its way, and we hope that you will continue to be a Palouse Prairie Foundation member to keep the PPF working on your behalf.

As you know, the Palouse Prairie once covered a vast area in eastern Washington and northwestern Idaho, but now it covers less than 1% of its original area and is considered an endangered ecosystem.

Nevertheless, the remnant prairie still provides critical habitat for the Giant Palouse Earthworm, pollinators, birds and other critters, and every year it continues to rejuvenate us with its rich annual displays of flowers.

The PPF is a non-profit organization that relies on membership dues to carry out its mission. This includes:

- Raising public awareness about issues threatening the Palouse Prairie and opportunities to conserve it
- Developing educational materials and curricula for prairie conservation
- Supporting and conducting research
- Restoring degraded prairie lands locally
- Increasing seed for use in local restoration

PPF services and programs that your membership dues support include:

- Hosting an internationally recognized website
- Developing field guides, informational brochures and bibliographies
- Sponsoring a speaker series, often co-hosted with the Idaho Native Plant Society
- Providing technical support for restoration efforts
- Writing grants to fund a variety of PPF activities
- Leading field trips to local and disjunct Palouse Prairie

PPF membership dues are the primary source of funding for our mini-grant program. Recipients thus far are:

- Fosberg: Private landowner prairie restoration project
- Crock: Palouse Prairie restoration along the Latah Trail
- Lena Whitmore School: Native planting
- Moscow High School Environmental Club: Native plant information kiosk at Phillips Farm County Park
- Moscow High School Environmental Club: Native plant walk at Phillips Farm County Park
- Dickinson: Private landowner prairie restoration
- Haseltine/Baldwin: Private landowner prairie restoration
- Dumroese: Private landowner prairie restoration

We encourage you to fill out the form at <http://www.palouseprairie.org/memberform.html> and slip it into the mail with your check!

The PPF will make good use of it, and we look forward to seeing you at our meetings, presentations and field trips!

We thank those of you who have already sent your 2011 dues.

## Palouse Wind Farm:

The Boston-based company First Wind submitted the Palouse Wind draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) to the Whitman County Planning Division on November 18, 2010. First Wind intends to build a wind farm with up to 50 turbines along Naff Ridge outside Oakesdale, Washington. The 30-day comment period for the DEIS has already passed but the upcoming final EIS must consider all of the concerns expressed by the planning division and public comments. Much of the land in the proposed project is farmland or non-native grasses and weeds. There is some Palouse Prairie within the project area. PPF and several members submitted comments to the DEIS asking that the remnants of Palouse Prairie be avoided. When the final EIS is submitted, First Wind will then file for a conditional use permit (CUP) issued by Whitman County. There will be ample opportunity for citizen comment and involvement during the CUP process. The Palouse Wind DEIS is available at <http://www.whitmancounty.org/page.aspx?pn=Planning+Division>. Also see "Upcoming Events" below for more information.

## Featured Plant:

### Palouse goldenweed

Submitted by Dave Skinner



*Pyrrhocoloma liatris* (*Haplopappus liatris*) is a rare plant endemic to the grasslands of the Palouse region of southeast Washington and adjacent north Idaho where mean annual precipitation averages 18-22 inches. It is ranked G2 (imperiled) globally and S2 (imperiled) in both Washington and Idaho and is considered a "species of concern" federally under the Endangered Species Act. *Hoorebekia racemosa* is an older synonym. Recent cytogenetic work suggests that the plants growing on the Camas Prairie of Idaho are different enough from those growing on the Palouse to be considered a separate

species, *Pyrrhocoloma scaberula*. While *P. liatris* may often be found in Palouse Prairie remnants, it is much less common overall than the similar *P. carthamoides* because *P. carthamoides* has a much wider range, occurring in more diverse habitats from southern British Columbia to northern California and east to western Montana. *P. carthamoides* has wider basal leaves and the heads lack ray flowers.

*P. liatris* is a perennial forb belonging to the family Asteraceae, usually 12-28 inches tall and growing from a caudex. It has a composite head containing both yellow ray flowers and yellow disc flowers, blooming in July and August. The disc flowers are perfect and the ray flowers are pistillate or neutral. The fruit is an achene with an attached pappus to aid in wind dispersal of the seed. There are 161,740 seeds/lb. Reproduction is strictly from seed, vegetative reproduction does not occur. Bumblebees, small bees and wasps, orange skippers, and rove beetles visit the flowers but it is not known how effective each is in pollination. Diploids only are known and  $2n=36$ .

The plants need full sun and mesic growing conditions with some soil moisture available during the flowering period. The seeds do not require stratification, but fall seedlings are generally more successful than spring seedlings. Containerized plants are best transplanted in the spring. They will flower in the year following transplanting. Individual plants are not long-lived.

You should grow this plant only if you can get seeds from another gardener. It is a rare species and natural populations should be left alone and enjoyed where they are.

There is one protocol for *P. liatris* in the Native Plant Network

<http://nativeplants.for.uidaho.edu/Network/ViewProtocols.aspx?ProtocolID=2213>

For more information on *Pyrrocoma liatriformis* see:

Specimen data and digital resources from The Consortium of Pacific Northwest Herbaria

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

Plant Profile from the USDA NRCS PLANTS Database

<http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=PYLI>

Species page from the University of Washington Herbarium (WTU)

<http://biology.burke.washington.edu/herbarium/imagecollection.php?Genus=Pyrrocoma&Species=liatriformis>

Species description from Flora of North America

[http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora\\_id=1&taxon\\_id=250067425](http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=1&taxon_id=250067425)

Fact sheet from the Washington Natural Heritage Program

<http://www1.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/fguide/pdf/hali.pdf>

There is some information on *P. liatriformis* in “More Palouse Forbs for Landscaping” at

[http://www.wsu.edu/~pmc\\_nrcs/Docs/More\\_Forbs\\_for\\_Landscaping.pdf](http://www.wsu.edu/~pmc_nrcs/Docs/More_Forbs_for_Landscaping.pdf)



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## **Upcoming Events:**

**Tuesday, January 11**, at 7 p.m., the Pullman League of Women Voters will host a public presentation, entitled **Land Use Planning 101: Permitting a Commercial Wind Project**, in the Whitman County Library in Colfax, Washington. Speakers include Alan Thomson, the Whitman County planning director, and Mike Denny, a Walla Walla County Conservation District coordinator. They will explain the permitting processes and opportunities for public participation in decisions about wind energy facilities development. Mr. Thomson will address environmental impact statements and conditional use permits, and Mr. Denny will discuss technical advisory committees, which generally consist of representatives of public agencies and organizations, individual citizens, and the project company. The technical advisory committee provides guidance to the project team, offers answers to the public, and resolves emerging issues. They also prepare and produce useful reports about ongoing project operations and their effects. Everyone interested in this issue is welcome to attend.

## **Palouse Prairie Foundation Display**

If you would like to have the Palouse Prairie display at a gathering or meeting, please contact us. The display consists of a free standing 4 panel poster explaining Palouse Prairie, and a myriad of printed information regarding the prairie. A smaller version of the poster is also available for more limited spaces. You can view the poster on the PPF website at <http://www.palouseprairie.org/display/>

If you would like to give a presentation about some aspect of Palouse Prairie or know of someone whom you would like to hear talk about Palouse Prairie, or you have an idea for a field trip this spring and/or summer, please contact a board member.

Copies of past issues of the Newsletter of the Palouse Prairie Foundation are available online on the PPF website at <http://www.palouseprairie.org/pppubs.html>

If you have ideas, suggestions, or contributions for the newsletter, please send them to Dave Skinner at abbie48 at roadrunner dot com (you will need to replace “at” and “dot” with the appropriate symbols) or call him at 208-874-3205. Look for the next newsletter in March 2011.