



SIERRA
CLUB

Palouse News

Newsletter of the Sierra Club Palouse Group
Serving SE Washington and Central Idaho

Winter 2023/24

From Moscow to Mexico



In fall 2023, the Moscow High School Environment Club again travelled to Mexico to help with research and protection of sea turtles and their eggs.

Columbia River Treaty Update

by Rich Alldredge

You may remember that I wrote an article for the Spring 2023 PGSC newsletter updating the status of Columbia River Treaty negotiations.

The Columbia River Treaty is a 60-year agreement between the U.S. and Canada that controls the Columbia River's flow across the border. The current treaty, which expires in 2024, has an exclusive focus on maximizing hydro-power production and engineered flood control. The treaty has turned a living river into a machine that controls floods and produces energy. The existing treaty ignores indigenous rights, the needs of salmon and other species, and the health of the river.

After more than 20 rounds of negotiations between the U.S. and Canada there are rumors that an agreement in principle may be completed soon. The new treaty must include ecosystem health as a purpose to increase the river's resilience against impacts of climate change. Please be alert for opportunities to suggest improvements to the draft treaty before a final treaty is signed.

For more information I recommend a visit to: <https://truthout.org/articles/new-columbia-river-treaty-must-prioritize-local-tribes-and-ecological-concerns/>

Ready for Solar?

by Jim Frenzel

If you're like me, you're all ready to go "green", but not sure how, so I volunteered to survey some of our members who have done solar installations. Participants included three residential installations and one "commercial" - the beloved UUCP church in Moscow.

Two of the residential installations were in Pullman and both used Eco Depot out of Spokane. Based on their website, this company has been in operation since 1999 and focuses on solar energy. Eco Depot handled all aspects - designing, purchasing, and installation - and worked with the city and the power company for permits and hook-up. Both respondents were very happy with the service and performance of their systems. One respondent estimated that their system covered almost all their electrical needs from late spring to early fall, and roughly 35% over the entire year. (33 megawatts since 2011 and counting!) If they had it to do over, they would have bought additional panels, battery backup, and an EV charger.

Both Moscow installations used SkyGlow Solar, based in Moscow. SkyGlow handles the design, purchasing of all components (controllers, batteries, etc.), and installation of the panels and inverters. They then team up with Omega Electric for connection of the other electrical components. The Moscow residential installation was probably the most complex, with panel locations on two buildings, two battery backups, and real-time monitoring from your cell phone! The system has been bug-free and the owner very satisfied.

The church installation turned out to be a bit trickier, due to the pitch of the roof. The panel installations were done by Rock Solid Electric out of Lewiston and the electrical connections by Strom Electric. Because of the limitations of commercial billing, it's difficult to quantify the church's savings.

So, is now the time to buy? Absolutely! **Dollar for dollar** tax credits will reduce your federal taxes by 30% of the cost, with no maximum. Cha-ching! Hopefully, in 2024 the IRA rebates for those with lower incomes will be rolled out. So how long's the "payoff"? As prices continue to drop, the timeframe shrinks, but your solar provider should be able to give an estimate, based on the size and complexity of the system.

Hwy 95 Thorncreek to Moscow Update

by Al Poplawsky

The Palouse Group has been a member of the Paradise Ridge Defense Coalition (PRDC) since 2001. PRDC's main focus has been to convince the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) to pick the least environmentally damaging alternative for the highway project south of Moscow. Unfortunately, after twenty years of opposition, we have reached the end of the road. Despite several legal victories over the years, sustained efforts to force ITD to pick a less environmentally damaging alternative have failed. A year ago, we hired wetland biologists to analyze wetland site #1, and they found serious shortcomings in the ITD analysis of the site. This was the basis of our most recent lawsuit, where the judge ruled in our favor, and as a result the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) revoked ITD's Clean Water Permit. Subsequently, major construction was halted for most of 2023. However, ITD re-applied for, and was recently granted a new Clean Water permit by USACE. This last summer in a last-ditch effort, we hired wetlands biologists to analyze additional wetland sites, however they found no major problems with the ITD analysis. Additionally, our lawyers found no actionable items in the new Clean Water Permit. Thus, we have no legal basis to continue our opposition. Although we did force some route improvements to protect wetlands, overall ITD will continue with implementing the most environmentally damaging alternative. We regret that the Palouse Prairie remnants, wetlands communities, and other critters on Paradise Ridge will suffer as a result. Although we are all square with our lawyers, we still owe one of our biologists a few thousand dollars. If possible, please help us settle our debt by sending a contribution to the Paradise Ridge Defense Coalition, PO Box 8804, Moscow, ID 83843.

A Fall Hike to the Falls

by Mac Cantrell & Janice Boughton, Volunteers

What is the newest night spot for mushrooms?
What is worth less than a queen and hard to hold on to?

(Answers at the bottom!)

You might know the answers to those riddles if you had been on the Sierra Club hike in North Idaho to Elk Creek Falls in October!

Brand new friends and old friends had great conversations while walking through beautiful forest on a sunny, glorious fall day. And as if that wasn't enough, crazily colored mushrooms decided to put on a show. We saw club fungus, slippery jacks, ear fungi, elfin saddles, lobster mushrooms (and the Russula's which they transformed), witch's butter, and some beautiful translucent orange ones we had never seen before.

And then there were the three Elk Creek Falls, which would have made it a great hike by themselves. The trail was in perfect condition, the company was excellent and the sandwiches which the Sierra Club provided were delicious. This is a foray we should repeat next fall!

(Answers: 1. Club Fungus 2. Slippery Jack)

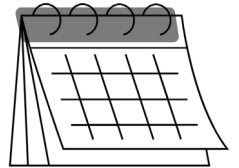
Upcoming PGSC events

Wild and Scenic Film Festival

Friday, January 19, 2024 at 6:30 PM
Kenworthy Performing Arts Centre

Annual Winter Snow Retreat

Palouse Group of the Sierra Club
and Friends of the Clearwater
Palouse Divide Lodge
January 27, 2024



Meet Julian Matthews North Idaho Chapter Staff

We'd like to welcome Julian Matthews of Pullman, Washington as the new Wildlife and Lands program Coordinator for the Idaho Chapter of the Sierra Club. An enrolled member of the Nez Perce Tribe, he works for the Sierra Club part-time, and also part-time for Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment.

He is currently focusing on Snake River Dam issues for Salmon restoration, Treaty Rights, and Wolf and Grizzly issues here in the Pacific Northwest.

Do YOU know someone who is not a PGSC member yet, but might be interested in becoming one?

Instead of recycling this issue of your "Sierra Club Palouse News" after you read it (and after you've noted our outings and events on your calendar), **PASS IT ALONG!** The executive committee is setting a friendly goal of 25 new members in 2024. Help us reach it!



Palouse Group Sierra Club
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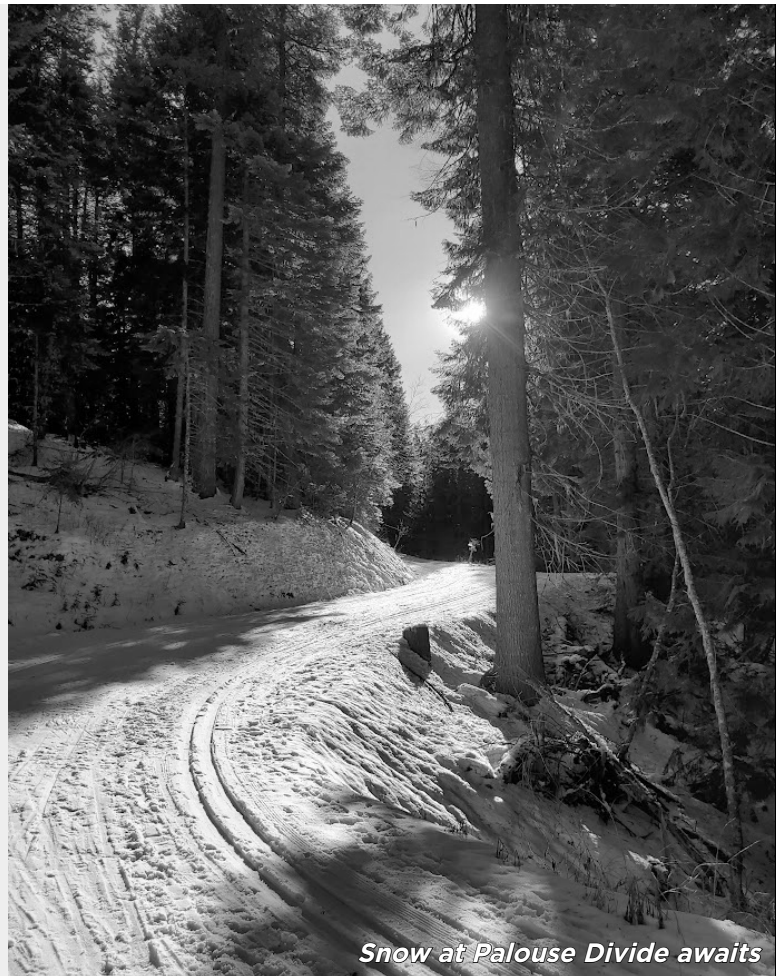
SAVE THE DATE!
Annual Winter Snow Outing
January 27th
Palouse Group of the Sierra Club
and Friends of the Clearwater

Why was the snowman rummaging through the bag of carrots? *(Keep reading to find out!)*

Are you interested in our winter outing—skiing, snow shoeing, or just hanging out at the Palouse Divide Lodge? Put it on your calendar for Saturday, January 27th, and check our Facebook page soon for registration and more details as they are posted. Palouse Divide is getting snow, the Palouse Divide Nordic Ski Club did awesome grooming on the trail system, and their new grooming equipment will improve their grooming capabilities even more this year!

If you want to join us for a cross-country ski or snowshoe tour, we'll be meeting in the lodge parking lot that Saturday morning. Or, if you would rather enjoy the day on your own, you can join us at the lodge in the late afternoon to hang out, have some hot drinks, or stay for dinner and join in our evening discussions.

To stay overnight Friday or Saturday, reserve rooms with Shirley at the Lodge (208-245-3552). Email Mac Cantrell (macantr18@gmail.com) with any questions. *(Answer: He was picking his nose!)*



Snow at Palouse Divide awaits

 **VOTE!**

Al Poplawsky: I have been a member of the Group ExComm and Chair of the Group for several years. I would like to continue in this role and emphasize the following activities:

- 1) Continuing our involvement in Climate Action Plans and implementation for Palouse government entities.

K'den Bledsoe: I'm a junior at Moscow high school and am very involved to climate activism. I am the treasurer of the Moscow high school environmental club and co-president of Moscow climate Justice League.

- 2) Continuing our role in Palouse Aquifer concerns.
 - 3) Maintaining our role in Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest issues.
 - 4) Maintaining efforts to restore salmon to the Snake River ecosystem.
- I would appreciate your support.

Note: Each member of a joint membership may vote, each using one of the two columns. Please tear off ballot and mail within 30 days to:

Palouse Group Sierra Club
POB 9932
Moscow, ID 83843.

For Executive Committee (vote for up to two):

Voter 1

Voter 2

K'den Bledsoe

Al Poplawsky



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