

Maynard Fosberg was honored by the Latah Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors with the 2011 Conservation Stewardship Award. He was formally recognized by the board, along with Robert Clyde, at the April 3, 2012 board meeting.



2011 Latah Soil and Water Conservation District Conservation Stewardship Award

Presented to Maynard Fosberg on April 3, 2012

Maynard Fosberg came to the Palouse for a teaching job at the University of Idaho in 1949. Ever since his arrival, Maynard and his wife Margaret have been very important to the Moscow and University of Idaho communities. Maynard was a soils professor at the University of Idaho for 41 years while Margaret worked at Gritman Medical Center for 13 years. She then became the head nurse at the University Health Clinic where she stayed until her retirement 31 years later. Many students will never forget the candid lectures Margaret gave on family planning to campus living groups.

Maynard continues to expand his conservation legacy as a Palouse Prairie restoration pioneer and his work has helped us all learn about Palouse Prairie restoration techniques and methods.

Maynard Fosberg was born on July 7, 1919 in Turlock, California to Helen Rose and Axel Peter Fosberg. Maynard's parents homesteaded at Cougar Gulch near Coeur d' Alene in 1905. His four older brothers were born in Spokane, WA, and he and his twin sister Eva were born in Turlock after the family moved there in 1916 and began farming. After high school, he spent two years attending Modesto Junior College and then enlisted in the Air Force in 1940. His service from 1940-1945 took him from California to Colorado and then on to Georgia where he met Margaret at a USO function. Maynard and Margaret were married in 1947 and have 2 children, Stephanie and Mark.

When the war ended Maynard went to school at the University of Wisconsin to study soils. His mother was very conservation oriented and instilled in Maynard a conservation ethic which fueled his interest in

botany and, eventually, soils. After receiving a Master's degree in soils, Maynard was offered a job as an Assistant Professor with the University of Idaho in 1949. He returned to the University of Wisconsin a few years later to complete a PhD.

Maynard has many legacies in the Moscow community. For one, he has instructed hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Idaho. He also helped collect over 200 soil monoliths from around the United States, making the University of Idaho's monolith collection one of the largest in the world. The monoliths are on display at the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and you can learn more about this fascinating collection on the internet at the College of Agriculture's website (<http://soils.cals.uidaho.edu/pedology/monolith/index.htm>). In addition, several of his monoliths are on display as part of the traveling Smithsonian soil exhibition, which is in Spokane through the end of this month (April 2012).

Maynard's research with Minh Hironaka and Edwin Tisdale on soil and plant relationships in forest and range ecosystems is a highlight of his career. He especially enjoyed studying patterned ground formations in sagebrush systems. This research took him to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, where he looked at the early stages of patterned ground formation. His work there helped him to solidify his theory about how patterned ground formed in the western United States. When Hironaka and Fosberg began their research, there were only 2 species of sagebrush described. Following 20 years of their collaborative research, many more species were described as a result of the differing soil types that the sagebrush was associated with. Maynard also enjoyed working on soil surveys for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which he did for many years.

Maynard "retired" from the University of Idaho in 1990 at the age of 71. He continued to do consulting work, however, and also oversaw the Land Judging Contest for the Idaho high schools for 18 years. Maynard now works tirelessly to restore a former pasture in Moscow to native Palouse Prairie vegetation. He began this endeavor in 2003 and despite his age (93), Maynard remains strongly and enthusiastically committed to continuing to manage and improve this project into the future. The 5-acre pasture, which was once dominated by smooth brome, now supports an excellent stand of native grasses and wildflowers, making it a haven for pollinators and other wildlife. Maynard continues to add

diversity to the project site by adding seedlings of many native wildflower species.

Maynard's prairie restoration project site is part of a 22-acre conservation easement. The Fosbergs also have a 120-acre conservation easement on Margaret's family's land in Georgia. Maynard explained that the land trust in Georgia was very excited about this easement as the land represents an intact portion of the Piedmont Plateau. Setting aside easements in both Georgia and Idaho exemplifies the commitment that the Fosbergs have to land preservation for future generations.

In June 2011, Maynard showed his prairie project during the spring Palouse Prairie Restoration Tour, where he highlighted the trials and successes he has had throughout the restoration process. Maynard also attended the Restoration Roundtable in fall 2011 where he was recognized, along with Bob Clyde, as one of the region's restoration pioneers. His expertise and dedication to Palouse Prairie restoration are contagious and his presence at these events always helps to increase interest and enthusiasm for these projects.

In addition to continuing to fight the weeds and add diversity to his prairie, Maynard also has plans to develop a strip of his property near a busy Moscow intersection into a pollinator planting, using native forbs and shrubs. He hopes that the planting will inspire other people to use more native plants in their landscaping. Future plans also include a riparian restoration project along Paradise Creek.

Maynard's perspective as a soil scientist makes him uniquely qualified to critique the impacts his restoration efforts are having on the soils in his project site. He believes that the soil is improving through the addition of organic matter from the deep roots and litter produced by these native grasses and wildflowers. He explained that the addition of organic matter will eventually cause the soil to be more granular, which controls erosion. Maynard is very interested in collecting a soil monolith from his land and is looking forward to getting that done with the help of NRCS, a backhoe, and some willing volunteers.

When asked what advice he would give to others starting a similar project he said "good site preparation." He encourages two full growing seasons for site preparation to ensure a clean slate prior to reintroducing the natives. This advice was followed quickly by "First, you need to know the soils you're working with."

Thank you, Maynard, for blazing the trail for others interested in Palouse Prairie restoration. We are honored to work with such a dedicated conservationist.