

B. Landmarks

1. Carol Black- Critical Areas Letter April 24
2. Jack Lien- Palouse County Photo Tours and Workshops
3. Photo- 9 mile radius around landmarks
4. Photo- 7 mile radius around landmarks
5. Denis Tracy Letter, RE: Setbacks Near Landmarks
6. Carol Black- December 1 Letter in Support of exclusion zones
7. Lava Ridge Wind Project
8. BLM Advances Lava Ridge Wind Project in Southern Idaho
9. BLM Rejects Massive Nev Wind Project
10. Jean Arnold Email- Comment on Harvest Hills Wind Farm Proposal
11. A Paradise Called the Palouse
12. Picture Perfect
13. The Palouse
14. NY Times 2025

December 1, 2025
From: Carol Black

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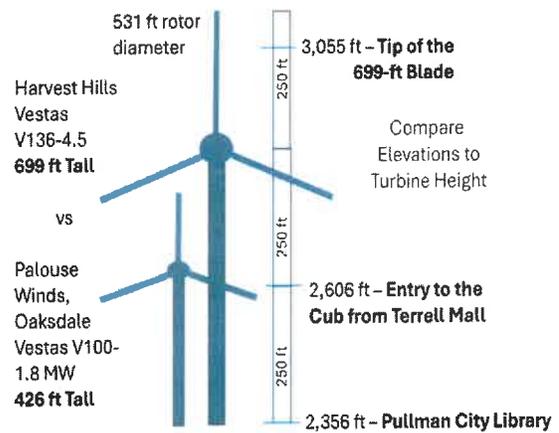
To: Planning Commission Members
CC: Alan Tompson, Mark Storey, Commissioners Handy, Swannack, Whetzel, and Attorney Tracey

Attachments: Critical Areas Letter April 24.

My name is Carol Black. I am 66 years old and have resided in Whitman County since 1984. I retired from WSU as their Pesticide Education Specialist. I have lived in my rural home east of Colfax for 33 years.

I strongly support the seven-mile exclusion zones around Kamiak Butte, Steptoe Butte, and Palouse Falls. The following are justifications to support your amended protections.

First, today's wind turbines are significantly different from those of 15 years ago. I appreciate your recognition of the need to update the code and the importance of considering the visibility zone affecting the rural landscape. The seven-mile exclusion zone around the Buttes and Falls helps protect the integrity of the open landscape, which is highlighted as very important in the Whitman County Comprehensive Plan. Moreover, the farmland within these two buttes' protected zones is highly productive, with an annual cropping system that yields over 90 bushels per acre of wheat. We must safeguard these areas to preserve both their visual appeal and agricultural productivity.



The Lava Ridge Wind Project received approval from the Biden Administration in 2024. After deliberations, a 9.5-mile setback was established to protect the Minidoka National Historic Site (NHS) and to prevent and minimize potential impacts, while maintaining the area's solitude and isolation, which are key resource features. The open and undeveloped landscape is essential to the historic character of designated sites. The National Park Service (per BLM's own renewable energy report) expressed concerns that a large wind project nearby could significantly change the "setting, feeling, and association" of Minidoka NHS. Part of Minidoka's historical integrity is rooted in its remote, undeveloped landscape — during WWII, the camp was purposely built in a secluded area. Turbine towers and spinning blades disrupt the visual integrity of our cultural resources. As noted in the Lava Ridge EIS, visual impacts lessen with distance from the siting corridors, where 0 to 2 miles are considered immediate foreground, 2 to 10 miles are foreground, 10 to 20 miles are middle ground, and 20 to 30 miles are background.

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ecological systems, five major "meaningful" landforms were identified: Moscow Mountain, Tomer Butte, Paradise Ridge, Kamiak Butte, and Steptoe Butte. Many families who own land on these special sites recognize their importance and want to protect these iconic landmarks for future generations.

Kamiak and Steptoe Buttes are important for both past and present communities. Kamiak Butte was named in honor of Chief Kamiaken's leadership, and the Palouse people's cultural practices are deeply tied to the larger landscape. Kamiak Butte functions as a physical symbol of his legacy and is situated within his traditional territory. Both serve as landmarks, ceremonial sites, and symbols of tribal identity, supporting the Palouse people's spiritual and cultural connections to the land. By establishing a 7-mile exclusion zone, the county protects the viewshed around and between the buttes, ensuring "landscape continuity" that is vital to tribal interests.

Whitman County is a rural county that attracts many visitors, including tourists, WSU alumni, students, visiting scholars, and more. The open landscapes of rolling hills are iconic. This is recognized and protected in other Whitman County Codes.

1. **19.10.60 Rural residence Use** – The county, over the years, maintained codes to protect the viewshed of hilltops and ridgelines. The County Planner has enforced these codes over the years; thus, we do not have houses located on ridgelines in the rural, agricultural area.
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Other Projects that Recognized Viewshed as Important.

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- US Dept. of Interior
 - avoids any siting near National Historic Sites, Monuments, Parks due to visual impacts, landscape values, and cultural/historical significance. National Organics Act of 1965.

- Whistling Ridge Energy Project
 - After two decades, the Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) officially deemed the project's permit expired in July 2024
 - The project also threatened severe impacts to scenic, cultural, and recreational resources. The project site is within three miles of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, the Oregon Pioneer National Historic Trail, the Historic Columbia River Highway (designated as a National Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as a National Historic Landmark), and the Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail.
 - The project was proposed along the boundary of the National Scenic Area. The immense, 430-foot-tall turbines would have loomed over the Gorge horizon and would have been visible for many miles in every direction. The project would have permanently altered the scenic landscape of the Columbia River Gorge and the Cascade Range, an area visited by tourists from all over the world for its unique qualities, including dramatic mountain vistas, steep cliffs, pastoral lands, and the Columbia River. Recreational resources also surround the project site in every direction on federal, state, and private lands.

- Castle Mountains (Nevada/California)
 - In 2018, the Bureau of Land Management denied a permit for the Crescent Peak Wind Project in Nevada, which would have been directly adjacent to the monument.

- Crescent Peak Wind Project (Nevada)
 - Proposed installing turbines on 9,100 acres near the preserve in Nevada. Opponents said it would harm golden eagles, bats, and sacred lands, and also ruin views from the preserve. In 2022, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) effectively stopped the project by assigning it a "low priority" status, meaning it was unlikely to get approval.

To: Whitman County Commissioners
Whitman County Planning Commission
Whitman County Planner-Alan Thomson, alan.thomson@whitmancounty.gov
Denis Tracy

Delivered by Email: Corey Mitzimberg, Clerk of the Board, coreym@whitmancounty.net
Whitman County Commissioners

Greetings.

My name is Jack Lien, a longtime resident of Whitman County and the owner and operator of Palouse County Photo Tours and Workshops. I am known in the photography tour industry as someone who has conducted more photography tours and workshops on the Palouse than anyone else.

My client list includes photographers from: China, South Korea, Canada, Germany, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Iceland, and from all corners of the United States.

Over the past 25-years I have witnessed the number of photographers coming to the Palouse region to photograph our one-of-a-kind landscape and rolling hills grow to over 10,000 photographers. Also, there is an estimated 40+ individual photo tour groups that bring their clients to the Palouse from around the world.

National Geographic published an article describing our part of the state, "A Paradise Called the Palouse".

The once unknown area, to outsiders, the Palouse, has now been ranked as one of the most desirable photographic destinations in the world.

Photographers describe the Palouse as the "Tuscany of North America", with limitless photographic opportunities. While standing on top of Steptoe Butte and Kamiak Butte, most photographers and tourist are in awe after looking out across the landscape at sunrise and sunset. They also comment that this is the only photographic destination with an unobstructed view and where you can look for miles and only see a few farmhouses and barns in the distance.

The popularity of the region has boosted the number of Facebook followers to the, "Photography of the Palouse" site, to a worldwide audience of over 57k. The followers view and share images captured on the Palouse.

Conservatively, phototourism generates over \$14m to \$17m dollars per year in direct revenue that benefits every community in our county.

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If you speak with local restaurants, motels, gift shops, rental car companies and gas stations in our region, they will tell you what an impact photographers and tourist have on their businesses and their survival.

The growing popularity of the Palouse among photographers is related to the vast unobstructed views from atop Steptoe Butte and Kamiak Butte.

I can state with certainty, **all photographers** that visit the Palouse spend a significant amount of time photographing from the top of Steptoe Butte (sunrise and sunset) capturing images in all directions; all directions with the exception of north towards the Palouse Wind Energy Farm.

Steptoe Butte and Kamiak Butte, are a major regional draw precisely because they offer sweeping views of the Palouse hills, a landscape often compared to a "sea of wheat" or a "living painting."

Photographers and tourists come here to capture the vast, uncluttered vistas. As a photography tour and workshop leader, while standing on Steptoe Butte, I instruct my clients to focus and photograph across the landscape towards Kamiak Butte, catching the morning and late afternoon light.

If a commercial wind energy facility is located anywhere closer than 7-miles to either Kamiak Butte or Steptoe Butte, obstructing the panoramic view, the **phototourism industry will no longer exist.**

The Palouse's iconic views, especially from elevated vantage points like Steptoe Butte and Kamiak Butte, encompass broad panoramic sweeps of the landscape. A single turbine array of the land could be visible in nearly all directions from such high points, dramatically altering the visual experience.

To illustrate the importance the importance of Steptoe Butte and Kamiak Butte, has on photography and phototourism, you need to only look back at the 2025 photography season.

- During this past 2025 prime photography season (May-October), Steptoe Butte State Park, was closed to repair the road. Of the known 40+ photography tour leaders, everyone including myself, cancelled our scheduled photo tours for 2025. This resulted in the **loss of millions of dollars** to local motels, restaurants, and other businesses.

Steptoe Butte, Kamiak Butte, and Palouse Falls are the top three photography sites visited by photographers and to allow commercial wind turbines in close proximity (less than 7-miles) will be devastating to the tourist industry and the local businesses.

Don't make the same mistake twice.

As I mentioned above, photographing north from Steptoe Butte, photographers are faced with commercial wind turbine obscuring the landscape. The vast majority of photographers do not attempt to capture the iconic Palouse landscape image with wind turbines rising above the horizon and you will never see breathtaking images with wind turbines in the scene.

Palouse Wind Energy Project - It is my opinion, misleading information was provided to the Hearing Examiner

The following conclusion and findings were reached by the Hearing Examiner in the Palouse Wind Energy Project based on misleading information:

“The Palouse Wind site (9,000 acres) is only 0.0045 percent of the total Palouse acreage (roughly 2 million acres). This leaves 99.9955 percent of the Palouse’s 2 million acres available for photography and phototourism.”

1. Irrelevant Conclusion

The claim assumes that because turbines physically occupy only a small percentage of land, the impact on photography is equally small. This is flawed reasoning. **Land coverage** is not the same as **visual impact**. Wind turbines are tall structures and highly visible across vast distances, especially in open landscapes like the Palouse. The proportion of land directly used is **irrelevant** to the broader **visual disruption** caused by their presence.

2. Fallacy of Composition

This fallacy occurs when one assumes that what is true of a part is true of the whole. Just because 99.9955% of the land is not directly built on doesn't mean that 99.9955% of views remain unaffected.

3. Misleading Use of Statistics

The 0.0045% figure might be technically accurate in terms of turbine footprint or lease area, but it obscures the nature of wind development, which typically involves **linear or scattered placement** of turbines across ridgelines and prominent high points. These locations are **visually dominant**, so even a small area of actual disturbance can lead to a disproportionately large aesthetic impact, especially in a region known for its uninterrupted, rolling landscapes.

4. Summary

Saying that 99.9955% of the land is still "available" for photography after siting turbines on 0.0045% ignores the **wide-ranging visual impact** of turbines and falsely assumes that **physical footprint equates to visual or aesthetic footprint**. This is a misleading argument that conflates land use with landscape experience.

Based on my many years conducting photo tours and workshops on the Palouse and having openly discussed with other photo tour leaders, it is our conclusion, if a commercial wind company builds a wind energy facility near Kamiak Butte (less than 7-miles), **phototourism will no longer exist.**

I am also attaching a conservative estimate of the economic benefits from photographers and tourists coming to the Palouse.

I am more than willing to discuss the content of this letter and the information I am providing.

Thank you,

Jack Lien (360) 481-4575 lienjw@comcast.net

The following is a conservative estimate of the economic benefits from photographers and tourists coming to the Palouse region. The figures are derived from a conservative estimate of 10,000 photographers.

Lodging

- Estimated number of photographers visiting each year: 10,000
 - Estimated number of motel nights: 5 nights each
 - Estimated nightly lodging rate: \$175 per night:
- Total: \$8,750,000 per year**

\$8,750,000	1-year
\$87,500,000	10-years
\$175,000,000	20-years
<u>\$262,500,000</u>	<u>30-years</u>

Restaurants, coffee shops, and coffee stands

- Estimated revenue to local restaurants: \$75 x 5 days x 10,000 **Total: \$3,750,000 per year**

\$3,750,000	1-year
\$37,500,000	10-years
\$75,000,000	20-years
<u>\$112,500,000</u>	<u>30-years</u>

Photographers not only frequent restaurants in Pullman but, also in Colfax, Palouse, St John, and Uniontown, supporting local businesses.

Total yearly income from lodging and restaurants: **Total: \$12,500,000 per year**

Total 30-year income from lodging and restaurants: **Total: \$375,000,000 - 30-years**

Estimated revenue to shops, stores, rental car companies, gas stations, and local vendors.

A conservative estimate, between: **\$400,000 to \$500,000 - per year.**

Total: \$15,000,000 – 30 years

Estimated revenue to photography tour leaders (both local and out of state):

Estimated 40 photography tours leaders: **Total: \$1,500,000 per year.**

Total: \$45, 000,000 - 30 years.

Other business that will be impacted by commercial wind facilities:

B&B, wedding venues, RV parks, and photography training facilities. Unable to estimate.

Total revenue listed above: **\$435,000,000 30-years**

This is direct revenue and not indirect revenue which would be 1.50 times to 1.75 times more.

Palouse Falls

Radius: 9 mi

9 mile radius around:
Palouse Falls
Steptoe Butte
Kamniak Butte

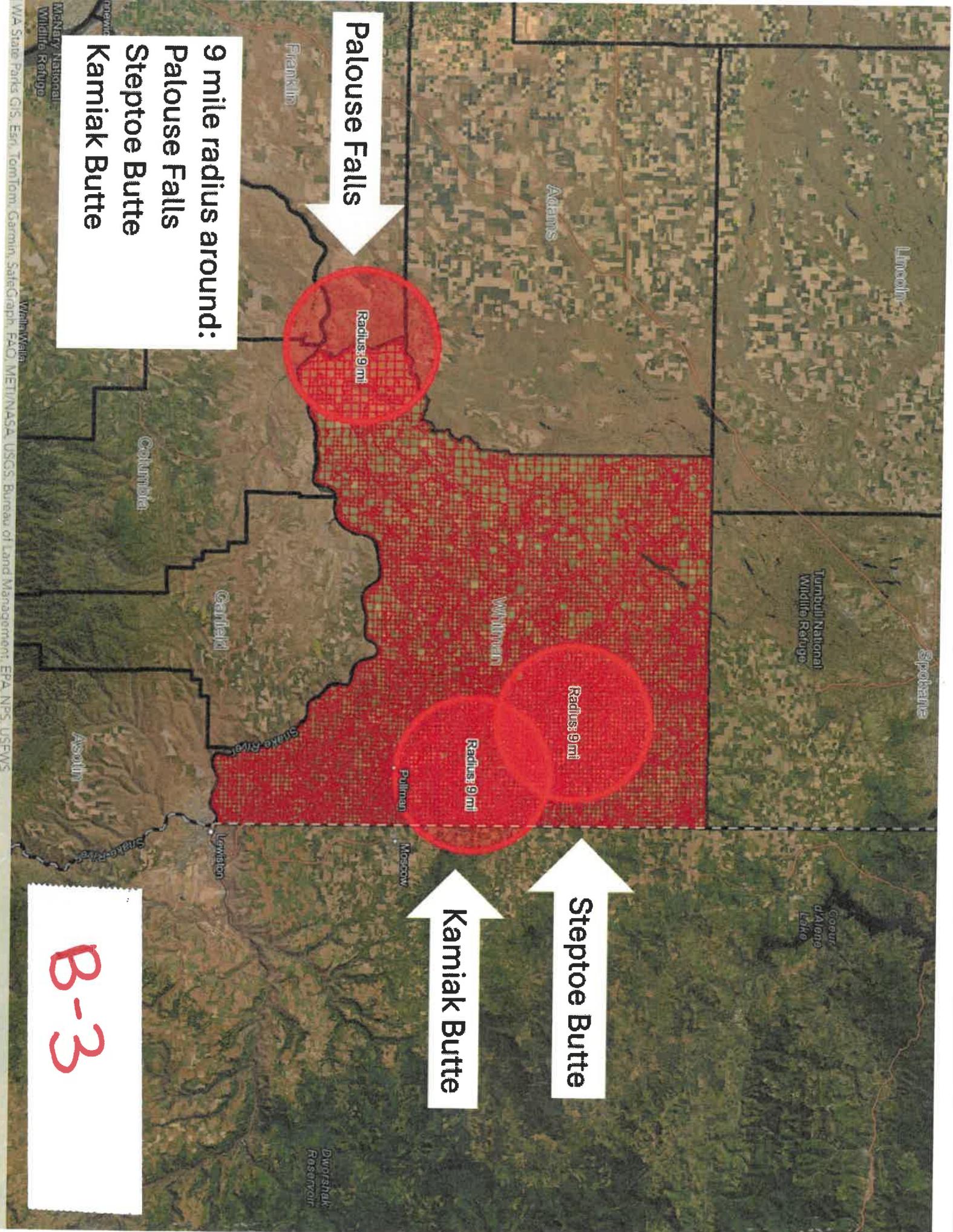
Radius: 9 mi

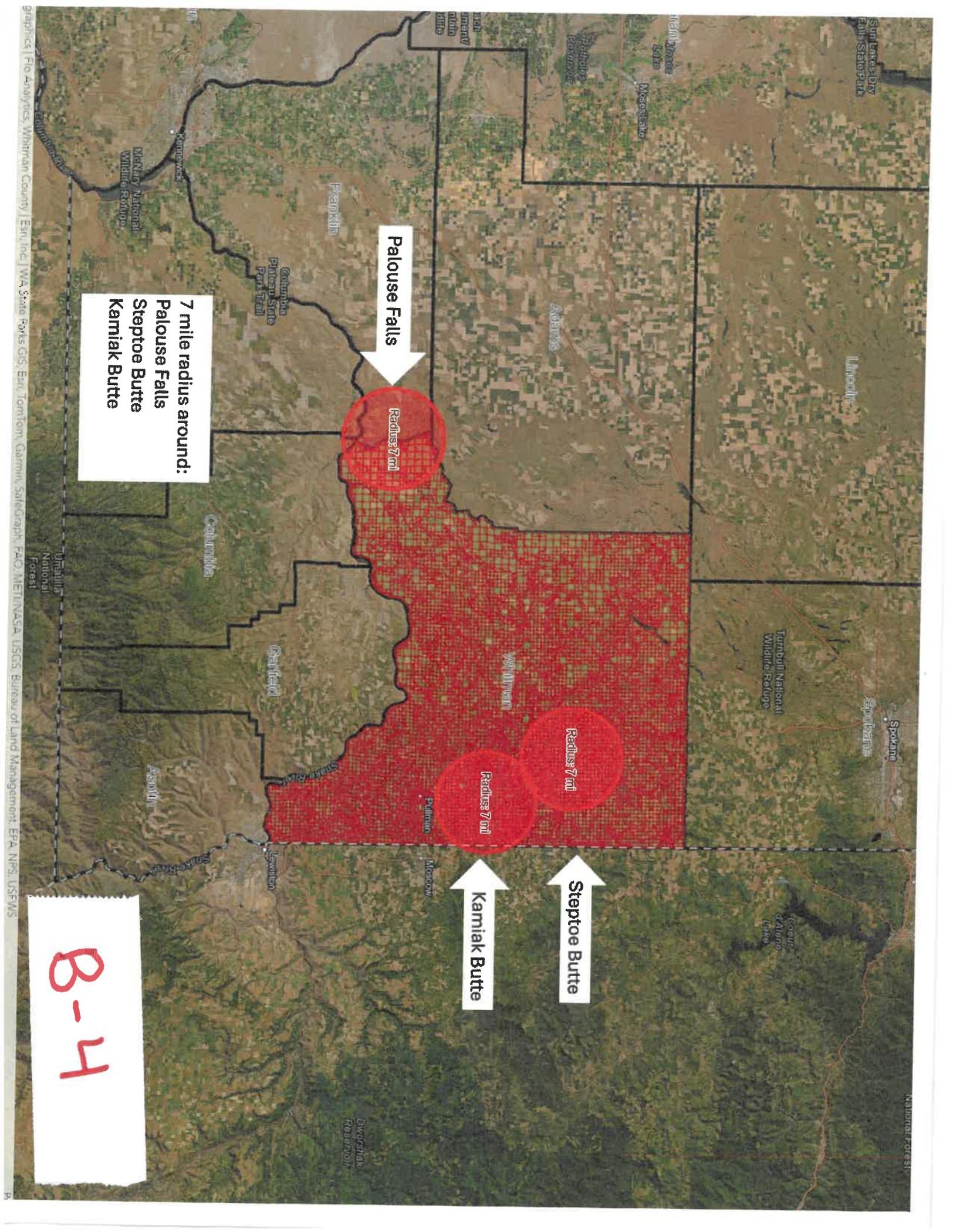
Radius: 9 mi

Steptoe Butte

Kamniak Butte

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7 mile radius around:
Palouse Falls
Steptoe Butte
Kamiak Butte

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WHITMAN COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

400 North Main Street - P.O. Box 30, Colfax, WA 99111-0030
voice (509) 397-6250 fax (509) 397-5659

October 14, 2025

To: Board of County Commissioners
Planning Commission
County Planner

Denis P. Tracy
Prosecuting Attorney

Memo Re Zoning Code for Commercial Windmills
-Setbacks Near Landmarks

Dan LeBeau
Chief Deputy Prosecutor

Question Presented

Can the County enact minimum setbacks from its National Natural Landmarks: Kamiak Butte and Steptoe Butte?

Wendy Lierman
Senior Deputy Prosecutor

Brief Answer

Yes. If the County (Planning Commission and/or Board of County Commissioners) find that these two landmarks are very significant to the public welfare and that siting large commercial windmills nearby would have a significant negative impact on that welfare, the County can enact minimum setbacks to keep the windmills a significant distance from the Buttes.

Tessa Scholl
Senior Deputy Prosecutor

Facts

In 1965 Kamiak and Steptoe Buttes were designated as National Natural Landmarks, as part of a program run by the National Parks Service. According to the Parks Service, the program recognizes and encourages the conservation of sites that contain outstanding biological and geological resources. Sites are designated by the Secretary of the Interior for their condition, illustrative character, rarity, diversity, and value to science and education. The program promotes conservation and appreciation of our nation's natural heritage.

Lindi Alcantar
Deputy Prosecutor

The top and much of the area surrounding both Buttes are parks. Steptoe Butte is a State Park and Kamiak Butte is a County Park.

Kristina Cooper
Office Administrator and
Victim/Witness Coordinator

Anticipated Facts

(Based on my review of the comments so far from the public and Planning Commission members, and what I believe will be expressed in upcoming meetings, I anticipate that the following are facts that the Planning Commission and/or the Board of County Commissioners could find, in support of any particular setback they find appropriate.)

Kamiak and Steptoe Buttes are unique natural features in the County. They are an outstanding geological resource for the County and our nation. They are rare. They have an extraordinarily beautiful visual character, both from the Buttes looking out and from the surrounding area looking towards the Buttes.

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The Buttes are located near the center of Whitman County, a county with about 2200 square miles of mostly rolling hills of farmland. Steptoe and Kamiak have stark, dramatic panoramic views of the surrounding farmlands, mountains and states. From the top of Steptoe, a person can see 200 miles to view Idaho and Oregon as well as surrounding mountains, including the Blue and Bitterroot mountains. Similar views can be had from the top of Kamiak.

The other landscape of the County is primarily rolling hills of the Palouse – a unique and dramatic landscape in itself. Steptoe and Kamiak Buttes stand out from the surrounding rolling hills of the Palouse. They are prominently visible for 50 miles or more from every direction. [I? many]

The views of the dramatically beautiful Palouse from the tops of the Buttes is critical to the character and quality of life of the residents of the County.

All of this results in the Buttes being very significant to the character and quality of life of all of the residents of the County. The Buttes are not just critically important to the County for the unmatched views from their tops, but also for the view of the Buttes from the surrounding communities.

The unobstructed views from, and towards, the Buttes also bring important tourism dollars to the County's residents.

It is critical for the general welfare of the County's residents to preserve and protect these visual resources and protect their visual quality from the adverse effects of wind energy facilities.

Current practices in Commercial Wind Energy Generation include generator towers that are about 700 feet tall (including the rotating blades). The towers are not installed in isolation or small groups of two or three. The towers are installed in large groups. These tall towers and blades cannot be screened with vegetation or any other means. There is no color of paint or finish that conceal them. A group of towers too near the Buttes will be starkly visible from the Buttes, as well as starkly visible from the surrounding area when looking towards the Buttes. Even if the grouping of towers does not dominate the whole view, it would still break up the nature of these national natural landmarks and the views from them and toward them. Just setting back a group of towers to a distance that makes them 'not dominant' is not nearly enough protection for the general welfare.

There is one group of commercial wind turbines that were installed over 10 years ago, set to the north and west of Steptoe Butte, and which are between 300 and 400 feet tall.

These towers are _____ miles away from Steptoe Butte. According to a majority of the public comment received during the consideration of this issue, the visual enjoyment of Steptoe Butte is reduced by the presence of these towers. Allowing even more towers, inside of a minimum setback noted below, would have a significant detrimental effect on the welfare of the citizens of the County.

For all of the above reasons, the minimum setback should be set at x.

(Note that you could set the distance as a certain number of miles or a certain multiple of the height of the tallest blade tip. You can also set the distance to be set back from the tallest point of the Butte or from the park boundaries. Since the park boundaries are at least somewhat subject to change, it may be simplest to designate the peaks as the points from which you are measuring the setbacks.)

Analysis / Process

Zoning is the exercise of the police power of the County to limit the rights of a property owner, to the extent it is reasonably needed for the protection of the life, safety, and welfare of the residents of the County. Zoning requires you to balance the owner's rights with the County's need to protect people. The extent to which the County may intrude on the property owner's right to develop their land depends on the harm the County is seeking to prevent. How severe would the harm be? How sure are you of that harm? What impact would your proposed fix to the harm have on the landowner? Would your proposed fix to the harm, or restriction on use of the land, result in the landowner not being able to use their land at all? Or would the restriction result in the land still being useful, but maybe not useful for a commercial windmill? As you answer these questions you then decide whether the particular restriction is appropriately justified.

For example, after you go through the questions above, the whole commission might decide the harm of numerous generators close to the Buttes is very great. You might decide that the impact on a landowner of being within a setback zone would be to deny the owner the ability to have a commercial wind turbine, but that the owner could still use their land as they have for generations – as agriculture or any other use allowed in the ag zone. You might then decide that the threatened harm outweighs the limited restriction on the landowner. But on the question of how close is too close, one commission member might decide that 5 miles is needed. Someone else might say 3 miles is sufficient. Maybe others would think that too far. There is no exact mathematical formula, most especially when the question is partly dependent on individual aesthetic judgment. The law requires you to act deliberately and carefully, consider the information presented to you, decide what weight to be given to the various pieces of information, and use your best judgment.

Conclusion

If the Planning Commission and/or BOCC finds certain facts that demonstrate the significant need, the Planning Commission / BOCC may require commercial windmills to be set back a certain minimum distance from Kamiak and Steptoe Buttes. The exact amount of that setback depends on the significance of the facts that are found to support the setback.

If any commissioner, commission member, or staff have any legal questions on this, please feel free to reach out.

Sincerely,

Denis Tracy

December 1, 2025
From: Carol Black

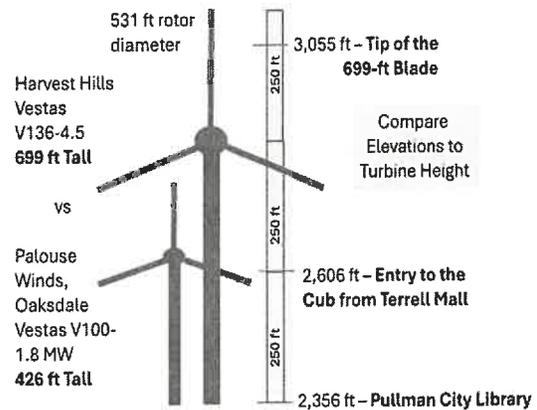
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 - In 2018, the Bureau of Land Management denied a permit for the Crescent Peak Wind Project in Nevada, which would have been directly adjacent to the monument.
- Crescent Peak Wind Project (Nevada)
 - Proposed installing turbines on 9,100 acres near the preserve in Nevada. Opponents said it would harm golden eagles, bats, and sacred lands, and also ruin views from the preserve. In 2022, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) effectively stopped the project by assigning it a "low priority" status, meaning it was unlikely to get approval.

**United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

**RECORD OF DECISION
DOI-BLM-ID-T030-2021-0015-EIS
Case File Number: IDID-105841803**

**Lava Ridge Wind Project
Final Environmental Impact Statement**

Jerome, Lincoln, and Minidoka Counties, Idaho

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Shoshone Field Office
400 West F Street
Shoshone, Idaho

December 2024

Mission

The Bureau of Land Management's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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objectives, and advances national policy objectives. The Selected Action is a product of extensive analysis, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning. In fact, the Selected Action is a direct response to comments made by cooperators and stakeholders on the draft EIS. The BLM has sought to reach a rational compromise of competing public interests by balancing the need for renewable energy development with the protection of natural, cultural, and socioeconomic resources.

Key factors also included balancing impacts to the Minidoka NHS, avoiding and minimizing impacts to big game migration and winter habitat, maintaining the continuity of grazing operations alongside the wind project, and addressing the effects on historic properties and environmental justice communities. As one example further detailed below, due to strategic placement and increased distance from the Minidoka NHS, the wind turbines will now only occupy about 15% of the total horizon and result in reducing visible impacts from major to moderate or minor. By thoroughly evaluating these factors and incorporating stakeholder feedback, the BLM has prepared a decision that upholds its mandate to protect public lands to the extent necessary while supporting the development of renewable energy infrastructure.

In addition to minimizing and avoiding impacts through the Selected Action's design and implementation of required measures, a critical aspect of the BLM's decision is the integration of required compensatory mitigation measures. The compensatory mitigation measures are designed to offset unavoidable impacts to key resources such as wildlife habitats, cultural sites, and local communities. The BLM has undertaken extensive consultations with Native American Tribes, local governments, and other stakeholders to identify and address concerns but recognizes residual impacts will occur. By incorporating compensatory mitigation, the BLM ensures that adverse effects are minimized and that a no loss or net conservation gain standard, as applicable, is met. This holistic approach underscores the BLM's commitment to sustainable development and stewardship of public lands, demonstrating that renewable energy projects can coexist with environmental conservation and cultural preservation.

4.1.2.1 Maintaining Important Visual Aspects of the Environmental Setting at Minidoka NHS

As alluded to above, significant factor considered in the decision to select the Selected Action for the Lava Ridge Wind Project is the project's ability to be implemented while maintaining an environmental setting that preserves the existing elements that convey the Minidoka NHS's remote setting with open views of fields and distant mountains. The project's potential effects on cultural resources at the Minidoka NHS, Japanese American and Minidoka-connected environmental justice communities, and the NHS's interpretive purpose are closely related. These effects are associated with the degree of visual change in landscape character and the addition of noise to the soundscape affecting the environmental setting surrounding the Minidoka NHS. By increasing the project's distance from the Minidoka NHS, the Selected Action reduces the degree of visual change in the landscape character, addressing the underlying source of effects to these interconnected concerns (EIS Section 3.19).

The Japanese American and Minidoka-connected communities, the NPS, and other organizations have highlighted many aspects of the Minidoka NHS that make it a nationally important historic property and an important site of conscience and healing. A prominent concern is the potential for the project to affect the unobstructed views that contribute to the site's sense of isolation and its environmental setting (EIS Section 3.16.1). The Selected Action is the result of the BLM's consultation with and extensive comments from the Japanese American and Minidoka-connected communities, other organizations, and the NPS. The Selected Action strategically avoids placing turbines within unobstructed viewing directions and maintains the significant setbacks from the Minidoka NHS. Instead, I find that the Selected Action largely places turbines within viewing directions already obstructed by preexisting infrastructure and disturbance.

As a consequence, this alternative results in the lowest levels of visual change in landscape character compared to other action alternatives (EIS Section 3.19).

The Selected Action has the smallest siting corridor footprint of all action alternatives and eliminates all turbine strings from the immediate-foreground (0-2 miles) and all but one string from the foreground (2-10 miles) from the Minidoka NHS. Compared to Alternatives B, C, and D, the degree of visual changes for viewers at the Minidoka NHS is reduced from major to moderate or minor (see EIS Table 3.19-2).

Under the Selected Action, turbines would be 9 or more miles away from the Minidoka NHS visitor center, with approximately 70% being more than 12 miles away (EIS Section 3.19.2.6). Compared to all action alternatives, turbines within the Selected Action are visible in the smallest range of vision (in a 55-degree arc) and across up to 12 miles of the horizon, occupying less than half of the human field of vision (120-degrees) when looking in the direction of the project and only about 15% of the total horizon. The increased distance from the Minidoka NHS to the wind turbine siting corridors reduces the apparent size of each turbine, better fitting within the existing landscape. Additionally, the lower maximum turbine height and strategic placement of siting corridors reduce the visual prominence of the turbines. The turbines will be spread across a limited portion of the horizon, further minimizing visual impacts (EIS Section 3.16.1). This strategic placement helps to ensure that the essential visual elements of the Minidoka NHS, which contribute to its historical and cultural significance, are preserved while accommodating renewable energy development (EIS Section 3.19).

The Selected Action carefully locates siting corridors so that they will be visually intermixed with existing development; will not be in locations that obstruct distant mountains, i.e., the Albion, Soldier, and Pioneer Mountains, or the open fields and rolling hills located within the extent of the historical residential area; and will be a distance that limits the visual intrusion. Although visual effects to the Minidoka NHS's environmental setting will potentially diminish the visitor experience when viewing in a direction where the integrity of the resource has already been lost, the effects will not significantly affect essential NHS physical elements or values as the elements that are existing and contributing to an expansive unobstructive view and a sense of remoteness and isolation are maintained under the Selected Action. As a result, I conclude that the Selected Action avoids and minimizes impacts and is balanced with advancing renewable energy goals.

4.1.2.2 Maintaining Big Game Migration and Wintering Habitats

A factor considered in the decision to select the Selected Action for the Lava Ridge Wind Project is the project's ability to be implemented while maintaining mule deer and pronghorn access to migration habitats and use of winter habitats. In reviewing the final EIS, it is clear that impacts to big game migration and wintering habitats are largely attributed to the project footprint. Alternative B represents the largest ground-disturbance footprint (9,114 acres) and involves the most new and improved access roads and fencing. The siting corridors would span a greater portion of the relatively undeveloped land in the center of the analysis area. And critical for this resource, Alternative B would substantially fragment remaining wildlife habitat, reduce habitat connectivity, and could greatly impair the ability of wildlife to move through the analysis area.

Alternative C reduces the project footprint to 6,953 acres and Alternative D further reduces the acres to 4,838. As a result, each of these alternatives requires fewer new or improved roads and fences. Alternative C would concentrate development in the eastern siting corridors and limit impacts in relatively undeveloped areas. Alternative D would go further and result in fewer impacts in areas with relatively intact native vegetation and as such, appears to have the fewest impacts to wildlife movement.

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BLM advances Lava Ridge Wind Project in Southern Idaho

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Final approval reflects 40% reduction of turbines from initial proposal; defers other projects in region

Organization: BLM

Media Contact: BLM Press - blm_press@blm.gov

Dec 6, 2024



TWIN FALLS, Idaho—The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today approved the Lava Ridge Wind Project northeast of Twin Falls, Idaho, which could power as many as 500,000 homes with clean energy, while creating hundreds of jobs and supporting local and regional economies. The project footprint reduces the area disturbed from the initial proposal by half, decreases the number of turbines from 400 to 241 (231 on BLM-managed lands and 10 on lands managed by the State of Idaho) and imposes a maximum height limit of 660 feet for turbines, consistent with extensive public and community feedback regarding the protection of sensitive natural and cultural resources.

The BLM's decision authorizes 231 wind turbines and related infrastructure, which are expected to disturb 992 acres within a 38,535-acre area of BLM-managed public lands in Jerome, Lincoln, and Minidoka counties. The project approval reflects a careful balance of clean energy development with the protection of natural, cultural, and socioeconomic resources on this historically significant landscape. The record of decision directs required mitigation measures to protect these values and defers future development proposals on over 212,000 acres in the area until the adequacy of the mitigation measures is assessed by the Bureau.

"The Interior Department is playing a pivotal role in tackling the climate crisis and boosting the clean energy economy to provide communities across the nation with clean, reliable energy," said Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management Dr. Steve Feldgus. "The Department recognizes the deep history and significance of this landscape and appreciates the tremendous collaborative effort that went into minimizing the project's impact on both the visual character of the area and the physical environment."

"The BLM spent hundreds of hours in the field and in conference rooms talking with Native American leaders, Japanese American community members, cooperating agencies, ranchers, and a broad range of people with deep ties to the Magic Valley, who all helped shape the proposal," said BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning. "Those discussions led to a final decision that balances clean energy development that the country needs and the protection of resources that are vital to the natural and cultural history of the West."

As part of the process, the BLM responded to a nomination for protection of the landscape's importance to the [Minidoka National Historic Site](#) by enacting interim measures to limit additional development and protect cultural resources found in the former Minidoka War Relocation Center on approximately 15,000 acres of

public lands. The interim measures will stay in place until the area is further considered for designation as an [Area of Critical Environmental Concern](#) during a formal planning process.

The Record of Decision adjusts the proposed project configuration so that the closest turbine to the [Minidoka National Historic Site](#) would be nine miles away. It also reduces potential impacts to sage grouse, large wildlife migration routes and winter concentration areas, cultural resources, Jerome County Airport and agricultural aviation uses, public land ranchers, and adjacent private landowners. The BLM's decision also reduces impacts by requiring seasonal restrictions during construction, private property setbacks, and ensuring the developer coordinates activities with the ranching community.

With today's announcement, during the Biden-Harris administration the Department has approved 43 renewable energy projects on public lands and exceeded the goal to permit 25 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2025 by reaching a total approved capacity of more than 33 gigawatts of power – enough to power more than 15 million homes. This year, the BLM also issued a final Renewable Energy Rule that will lower consumer energy costs and the cost of developing solar and wind projects, improve project application processes, and incentivize developers to continue responsibly developing solar and wind projects on public lands.

The Record of Decision and associated planning documents are available at the [BLM National NEPA Register](#). For more information, please contact Project Manager Kasey Prestwich at BLM_ID_LavaRidge@blm.gov or 208-732-7204.

The BLM manages about 245 million acres of public land located primarily in 12 western states, including Alaska, on behalf of the American people. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. Our mission is to

sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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BLM rejects massive Nev. wind project



The Bureau of Land Management has rejected a massive wind project in eagle and desert tortoise habitat near Mojave National Preserve. National Park Service

The Bureau of Land Management has rejected a large-scale wind power project that proposed to string together hundreds of wind turbines, more than 400 feet tall, in an area of western Nevada directly adjacent to the Mojave National Preserve and the Castle Mountains National Monument.

The decision comes just eight months after BLM announced it planned to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) analyzing the Crescent Peak Wind Project proposed on 32,531 acres of public lands 10 miles west of Searchlight, Nev., on the California border, just west of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area ([Greenwire](#), March 16).

The project proposed by Crescent Peak Renewables LLC — a subsidiary of Sweden-based Eolus Vind AB — would have had the capacity to generate 500 megawatts of electricity, or enough to power about 175,000 homes and businesses.

The *Las Vegas Review-Journal* first reported BLM's decision to reject the proposed wind project.

BLM issued a written statement Friday announcing it is "denying the right-of-way application" for the project, concluding it "would not conform with the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan."

The agency conducted "significant public scoping" for the proposed EIS, and it "engaged a number of cooperators, including Federal, county, and state governments, to provide information on potential project impacts."

That review, however, "identified multiple issues and concerns that prompted the agency's decision to deny the application." They included concerns the wind turbines "could interfere with radar at two regional air facilities — one military and one civilian."

There were also worries about "impacts to the visual landscape" of the area.

BLM had temporarily removed the 32,000 acres at issue from new mining claims while it evaluated the project. In BLM's statement, it listed among the areas of concern that "access to the turbines would potentially affect the development of more than 300 mining claims" in the region.

It's not clear what Eolus Vind will do next. Representatives with its La Jolla, Calif.-based subsidiary Eolus North America Inc., and Crescent Peak Renewables, could not be reached for comment.

But many of the concerns listed by BLM were raised by conservation groups and area leaders last March after the agency published in the *Federal Register* a notice

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of intent to prepare the EIS.

Critics complained the turbines would be visible from the Mojave National Preserve, and perhaps even the Lake Mead NRA, requiring BLM to amend the Las Vegas resource management plan to change the area's "visual resource management" criteria.

There were also concerns about the project's potential impacts to Mojave Desert tortoise and bighorn sheep habitat, as well as to golden eagles.

"We are very pleased that the BLM has issued this preliminary statement canceling the Crescent Peak Wind Project," said Kevin Emmerich, co-founder of the Nevada-based group Basin and Range Watch.

"The site is highly inappropriate for an industrial project of this magnitude," Emmerich added. "The impacts to wildlife, visual resources and cultural resources far outweighed any benefits this project could have produced."

He said the group hopes BLM will amend the Las Vegas resource management plan "to protect this special region from future potential impacts by designating it as a large-scale renewable energy-free zone or better yet, an Area of Critical Environmental Concern."

The area at issue near Searchlight has been a target of commercial-scale renewable energy developers.

Indeed, the Crescent Peak project was the second attempt in the past few years to build a major wind farm in the region.

A federal judge three years ago threw out the Obama administration's approval of the 200 MW Searchlight Wind Energy Project, which would have been the Silver State's largest wind power project. Proposed for more than 9,300 acres of federal land about 60 miles southeast of Las Vegas, the Searchlight Wind project would have generated enough electricity to power about 70,000 homes.

But U.S. District Judge Miranda Du for the District of Nevada issued a sharply worded order in October 2015 rejecting the final EIS conducted by BLM, as well as a biological opinion conducted by the Fish and Wildlife Service ([Greenwire](#), Nov. 4, 2015).

Du also rejected the record of decision (ROD) formally approving the project in March 2013 that was signed by former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

Legal experts told E&E News that Du's order marked the first time a court had formally ruled invalid a final EIS, biological opinion and ROD for a renewable energy project.

The order, based on a federal lawsuit filed by two groups — Basin and Range Watch and Friends of Searchlight Desert and Mountains — and three residents who lived near the proposed wind project site, ultimately led Charlottesville, Va.-based Apex Clean Energy Inc. to abandon the project ([E&E News PM](#), April 24, 2017).

Du, an appointee of President Obama, concluded in her order that "analytical gaps exist throughout the wildlife analyses underlying the ROD," as well as the biological opinion and the final EIS.

SITEMAP

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Landmark 3

Amanda Pelissier

From: Denis Tracy
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 11:02 AM
To: Amanda Pelissier
Subject: FW: Comment on Harvest Hills wind farm proposal

From: Alan Thomson <Alan.Thomson@whitmancounty.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 9:01 AM
To: Denis Tracy <DenisT@whitmancounty.gov>; gibney <gibney@pullman.com>
Subject: FW: Comment on Harvest Hills wind farm proposal

More for the record.

Alan.

From: Jean Arnold <arnoldjean123@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 8:02 PM
To: Alan Thomson <Alan.Thomson@whitmancounty.gov>
Subject: Comment on Harvest Hills wind farm proposal

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To Alan Thompson and the Whitman County Planning Commission:

I am writing to express my complete opposition to the proposed wind project near Kamiak Butte.

Farmers and others living in the proposed area have expressed many valid and important concerns about the impact to their property and agriculture, and I agree with them:

- flashing lights and flickering shadows
- the cumulative sound impact
- fire hazard
- pollution hazard (broken parts strewn across fields, oil leakage)
- roads
- property devaluation
- prime farmland removed from production
- aerial spraying impact
- etc.

My own personal concerns have to do with the ruination of the beauty of the Kamiak Butte area. The Kamiak Butte County Park is a local treasure, both for its splendid views at the top of the Butte and for its abundance of songbirds, raptors, and crows.

The trail to the top of the butte is one of my favorite hikes in this area.

I cringe in imagining the towering behemoths rising up to nearly the same height as the Butte.

I am an artist and have created numerous paintings from atop the Butte.

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Truly, this is a world-class hike -- the Butte's ambiance will be destroyed if this project is allowed to proceed.

Photographers travel from across the nation and the world to photograph the beauty of the Palouse.

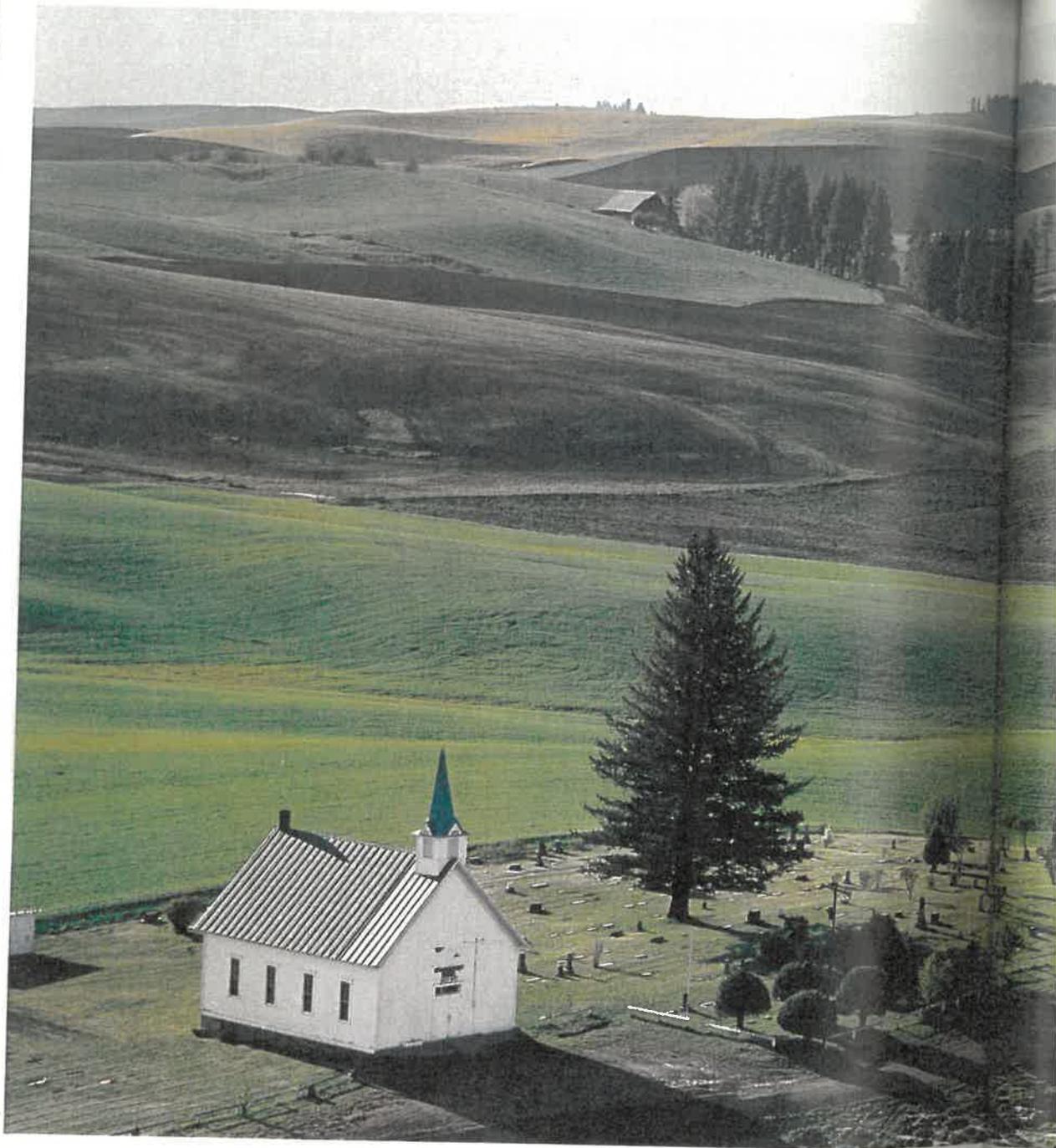
This proposal came forth because of weak and conflicting code in Whitman County.

I am at a loss to understand how someone is not allowed to build a home on top of a ridge, yet a wind turbine could be placed there? (Not that I'm suggesting the former should be allowed, either).

The fate of the Palouse-at-large hangs in the balance here. If code revisions allow the project to proceed, other areas of the Palouse will also end up on the chopping block.

Once it's gone, it's gone forever.

Thank you for your attention,
Jean Arnold

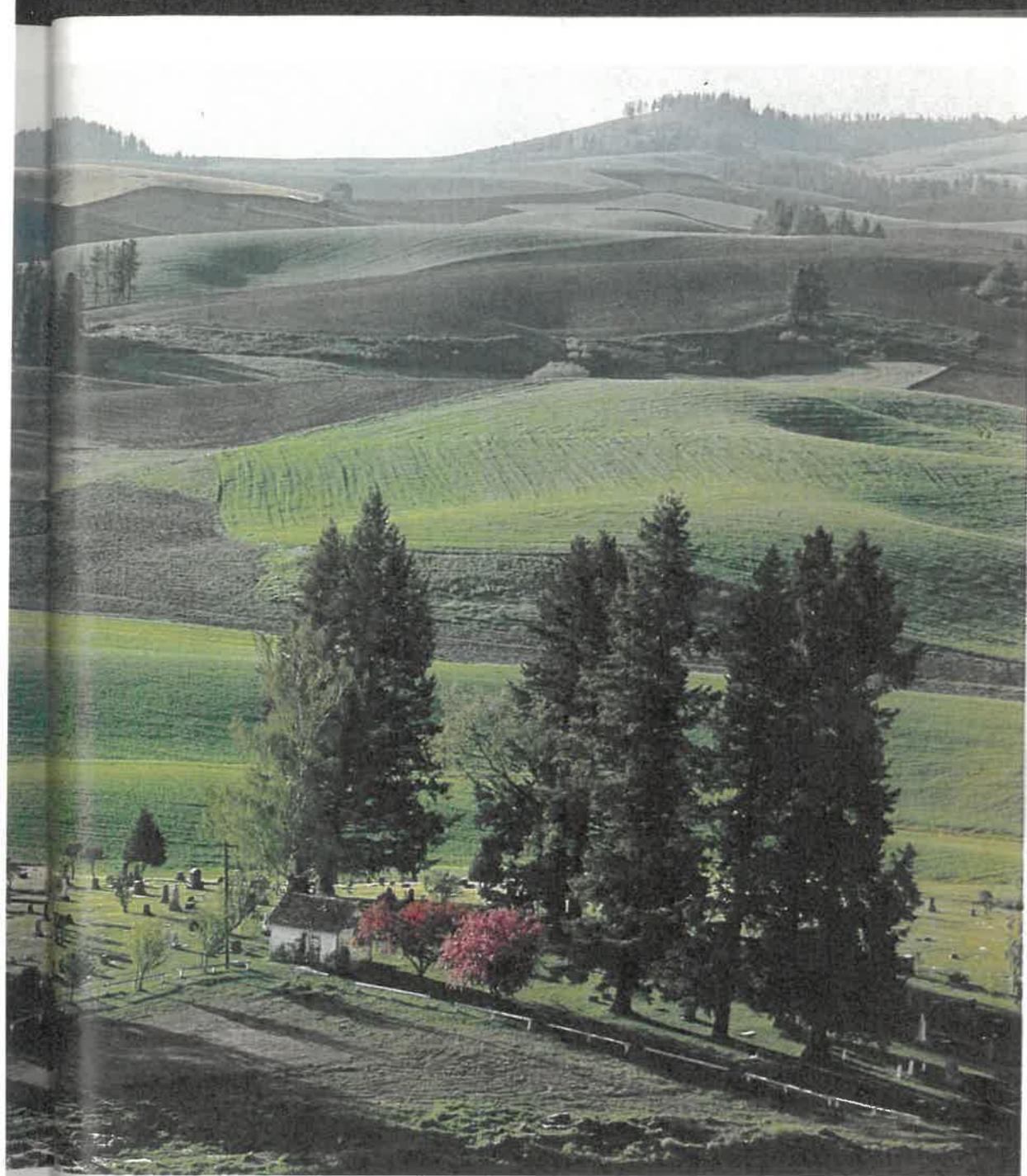


Stark simplicity of a country church near Potlatch, Idaho, seems akin to the rolling hills of the Palouse. Sprawling across the Idaho-Washington border, the 4,000-square-mile region embraces uncommonly rich

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farmland. With its often steep and hard-to-plow hills, the country challenged the settlers of a century ago. Today, Palousters maintain the initiative, resourcefulness, and down-to-earth character of their forebears.

the Palouse

By BARBARA AUSTIN Photographs by PHIL SCHOFIELD



I THOUGHT that the best way to feel the Palouse would be to hitch a plane ride with Pete Fountain, crop duster. He was in the Palouse and yet above it, riding so near it he could smell the changing seasons, and yet he could pull away from it a thousand feet or more. From up there he could see the expanse of this unique 4,000 square miles of Idaho and Washington—some of the steepest farmland in the country, but a gentle and soothing place too, where at twilight the shadows and the deer come out and lie down together in the deep blue draws.

I had been driving up and down rolling wheat and lentil fields all day, watching houses and red barns suddenly pop out of nowhere, only to disappear. Once I saw a rider on a leopard-patterned Appaloosa jump up at the edge of a bright green lentil field, but when I quickly turned my head, horse and rider were gone, and so was the hill of lentils. From the ground the Palouse was a land that revealed and concealed itself within oceanlike swells. I was too close to see it whole. I needed to feel it all in one swoop, as Pete did every day.

How was I to know that feeling the Palouse meant weightlessness, for those hills are so steep that when you fly them five feet off the ground at 60 miles an hour, the plane's path creates a temporary lessening of gravity and your stomach won't stay put.

"That's enough!" I yelled when I saw my notebook actually float up next to me.

"But I was going to take you under a power line!" Instead, Pete took me up high and leveled off to regain my stomach.

The fertile Palouse country that lay beneath in a plaid of brown fallow and pea green is an unusual oasis of farmland straddling the border between southeastern Washington and Idaho (map, page 803). It is not your ordinary hilly farmland either; rather, it is a land where, on the steepest slopes, 30-degree farming goes on.

Jack Morse, whose farm is adjacent to Pete Fountain's airport, told me, "There are

some hills I've used my combine on that I almost can't walk up. They're nearly as steep as a barn roof."

Yet Palousers actually till those hills, producing some of the highest wheat yields in the country. Whitman County in Washington has averaged 40 bushels of wheat per acre since 1934, compared to the average U. S. yield in those same years of 20 bushels. In good years, with the average 15 to 25 inches of rain or better, parts of the Palouse yield 100 bushels and as much as 150 in isolated draws. And there has never been a crop failure in its history.

Even fears of crop failure after the eruption of Washington's Mount St. Helens in May 1980 proved unfounded.* At Gary Morris's high-technology Gold Creek Ranch, about 260 miles from the volcano, I saw my boots covered with the fine gray talcum of its ash.

"The first thing we noticed after the volcano blew was that the soil seemed mellow," Gary told me, "almost as if the ash had mulched it. Then we had good rains, and when I harvested—instead of 60-bushel wheat, I got 100! The ash had helped retain moisture."

Gary, in his 50s, is a former Latah County, Idaho, commissioner and school-board member, but he looked just right in his frayed bib overalls. "I consider myself a gypso," he said as we jolted around his 5,000-acre farm in a pickup. The word comes from "gypsy," and is a lumberman's term for an independent operator. He had quilted his spread together from 35 stump farms chiseled out of forest on the fringe of the Palouse.

He drove me up to his secret place, where he comes to think—to get away from his computer, soil studies, and CB radios. From there we got a fine view of his velvety, undulating farm, Moscow Mountain, Steptoe Butte, and the Hoodoo Mountains. "I had a cattleman visit from Montana, and he stood

*The December 1981 GEOGRAPHIC carried Rowe Findley's report of Mount St. Helens' aftermath.

Young old-fashioned farmers Jim Day and Beatrice Moore shun modern agricultural technology on a 15-acre farm near Moscow, Idaho. Beatrice uses manual cutters to shear their sheep and Angora goats, then dyes the wool with extracts of goldenrod, sumac, and other native plants to make tapestries.

on one of my hills like this and looked down at some cows I had. 'My gosh,' he said, 'this country is so beautiful these cattle don't need nothing to eat, they can live on scenery.'"

Leaning on a lone ponderosa pine, Gary said, "The Palouse is special because of its unique farming practices. Kansas has rolling hills, but almost no one farms them."

When homesteaders first came to the region, they mostly settled and farmed in the valleys, but gradually they worked their way uphill, right to the top, as they discovered that the hills were just as fertile as valleys. Unlike midwestern hills, which have thin, easily erodible topsoil, the Palouse hills have as much as four feet of it. However, poor farming practices in the past century have led to serious erosion problems.

"In the 1890s some farmers were able to get the same yields that most of us get now, without any fertilizer or high-yield variety of wheat," Gary said. "Sixty-bushel wheat then and now. You can see why they wanted to call this area around Moscow 'Paradise.'"

He laughed. "Originally, they called Moscow 'Hog Heaven'—which it was, because pigs love all that camas root—but the ladies changed it to the more discreet Paradise." Then in the 1870s, a man named Samuel Neff settled here and probably named the place Moscow, because he had lived near a community with that name in Pennsylvania. Moscow (pronounced Mos-coh, not Ma's cow) is Idaho's Palouse capital, rivaled by Washington's Pullman eight miles away.

"All the early homesteaders needed to know was how to harvest wheat on a hill," Gary said as he drove me back down. First, stationary threshers were used. They were set on fairly level ground and the wheat was brought to them. Then in the 1930s hydraulic, self-leveling combines were developed.

PROTOTYPES of those hillside combines were tested on the Clyde Farm, nestled a few miles outside Moscow between two hills. A sign on a large white wagon wheel proclaims: "The Clyde Farm Since 1877."

Lola Clyde told me about the day Mount St. Helens blew. "It was Sunday, 2 p.m., and my whole family, four generations of Clydes, were together for a birthday party. The sky got darker and darker, and

everyone got worried. Then the ash began to fall like silver rain. It made a hissing sound. I said, 'This is the way the Palouse was formed in the beginning, and it won't hurt us now.'" She laughed. "And, lovebird, I was right! The ash made a mess, but it helped increase our crops."

Eighty-one years old, the daughter of the first Presbyterian minister sent to Moscow as a missionary, Lola declared that the Palouse has a history of unusual happenings—and of eccentric people—and she has seen and met most of them.

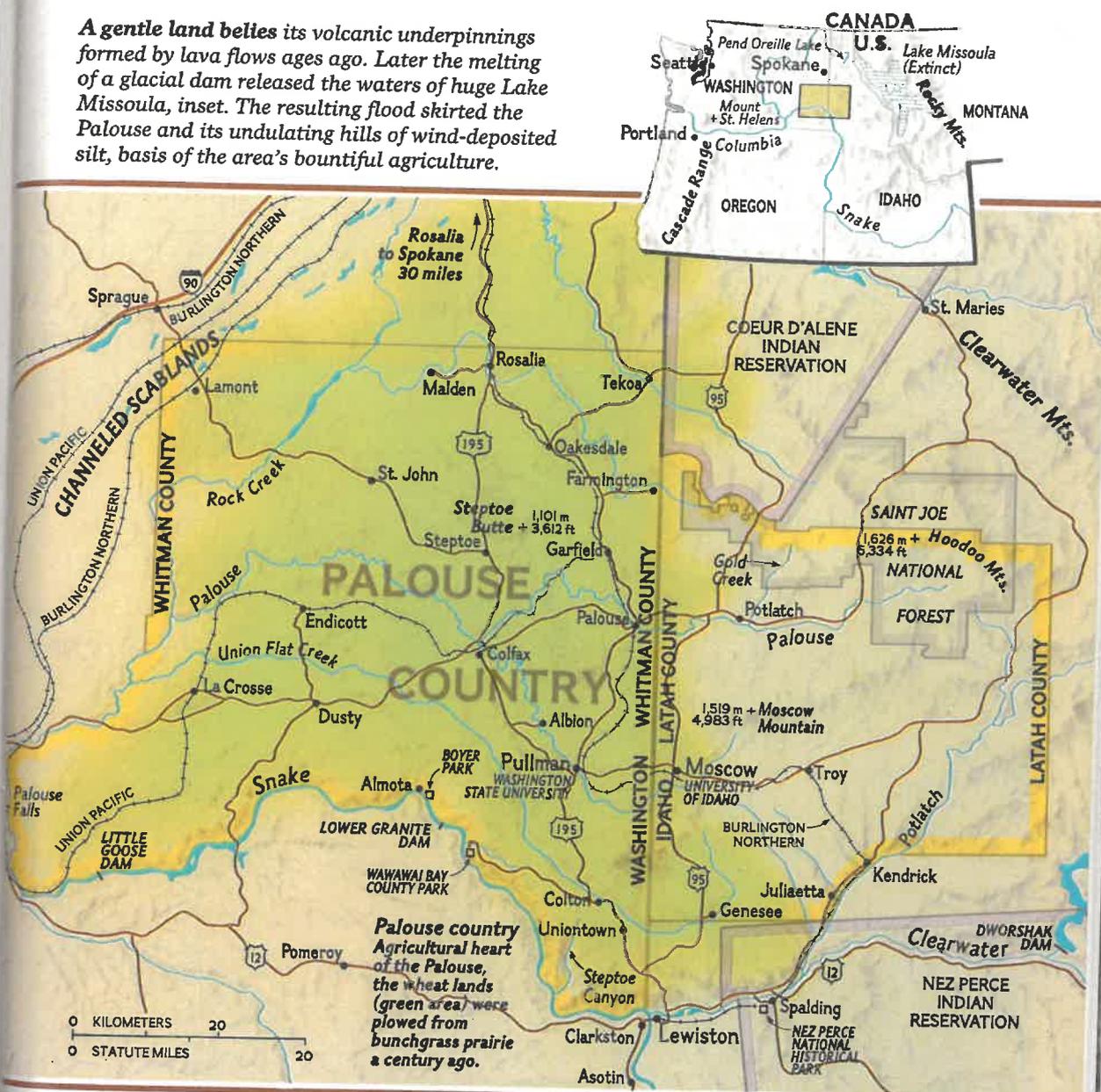
She knew Frank "Psychiana" Robinson, who advertised that he "actually and literally" talked with God. He ran a mail-order self-help religion in Moscow during the 1930s and '40s that promised health and prosperity through positive thinking. With a million sets of lessons mailed out, it may have been the largest mail-order religion in the world.

LOLA ALSO KNEW Frank Brocke, a president of the First Bank of Troy, which started in that little farming town in 1905 and now has 30 million dollars in assets. "Through all that growing, Frank never lost his sense of neighboring," Lola said. "He kept right on giving loans on the basis of a firm handshake, and most people paid them back. Once a man robbed the Bank of Troy, and after he got out of jail came to Frank for a car loan. Everyone else laughed, but Frank gave it to him, saying, 'This man has paid his dues.'"

Frank Brocke's kind of old-time Palouse neighboring is still going strong. While I was in the Palouse, a flash flood occurred in the Potlatch River area, endangering the barn and totally wiping out the pigsty, huge garden, and lawn of a recent widow. The highway department didn't feel it was their job to help her drain the water.

"Tell you what I had here before the flood," Eula Johnson, 78, said as she showed me around her flooded place. "Asparagus, rhubarbs, horseradish. And fruit? I had persimmons, I had quince. Lookee here, I had nine different kinds of grapes." She stopped in the mud and glared at me, her white hair in tight braids. "First time the land ever been bad to me. Told George—this is my Garden

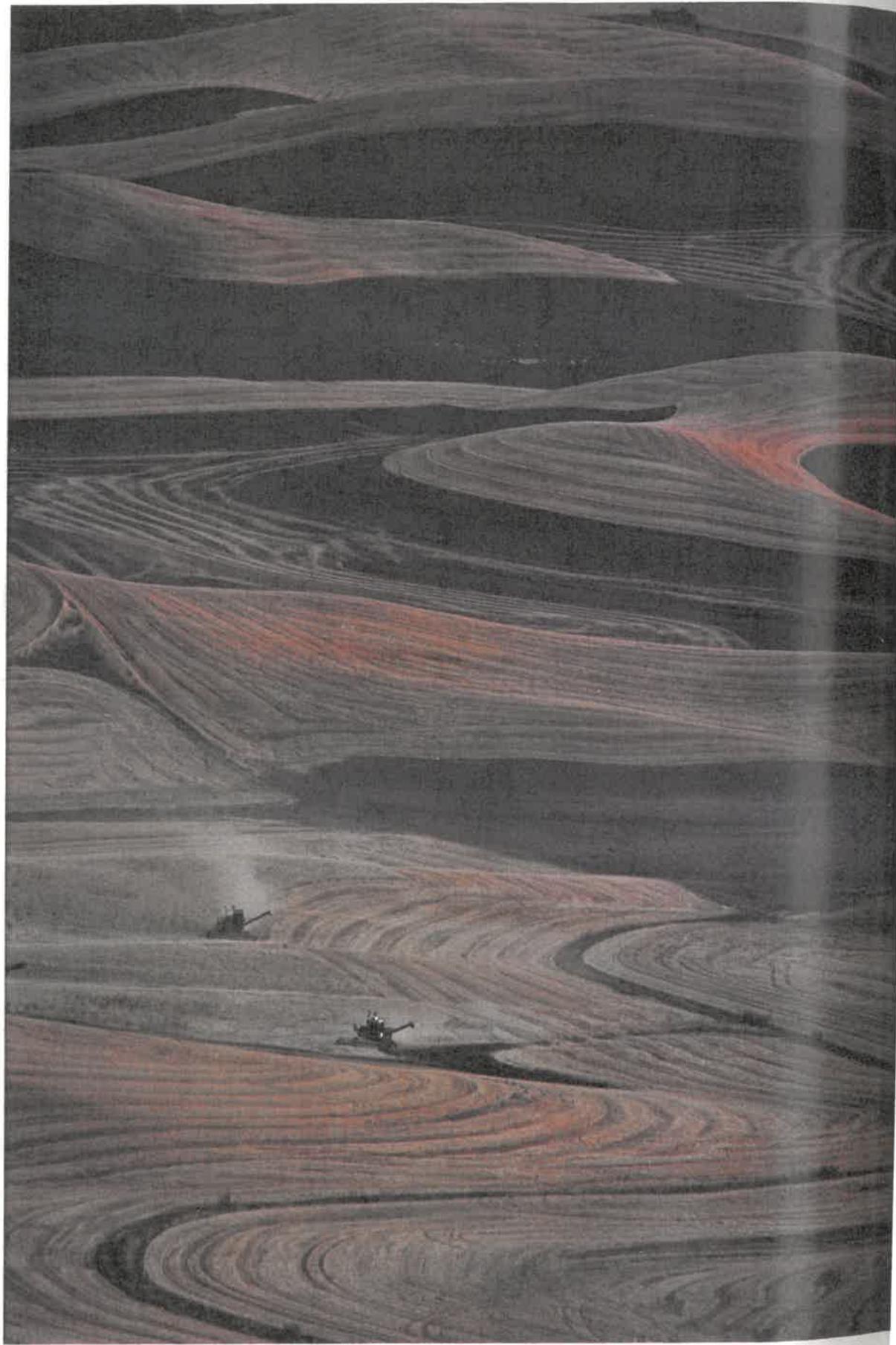
A gentle land belies its volcanic underpinnings formed by lava flows ages ago. Later the melting of a glacial dam released the waters of huge Lake Missoula, inset. The resulting flood skirted the Palouse and its undulating hills of wind-deposited silt, basis of the area's bountiful agriculture.



DRAWN BY ISKANDAR BADAY, COMPILED BY DONALD GARRICK NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ART DIVISION

of Eden. I can grow anything here.” Her husband, George, had died. “I get so lonely,” she said, “I stand up an ax handle and talk to it. Lawyer said I should sell. Sell? Where am I going? Where am I going? Out on a limb to sing to myself?” As we walked back to her house, she said, “Hell, I’m not goin’ to give up. I’d feel all right if I could just get someone to help out. My husband painted the barn jes’ before he died. We’ve got to save the barn.” A few days later some people at the Antelope Inn in nearby Kendrick talked it over,

rented a pump, and came down and saved the barn. They drained about 40,000 gallons of muddy water into a culvert and charged Eula nothing. They didn’t even know her. Recently I learned that Eula has found someone to help out. This summer she and her new husband, Mike Soto, will be working the farm together. Eula Johnson and Lola Clyde have lived in the Palouse almost as long as it has existed as a settled area. It wasn’t homesteaded until the 1870s. Some families came from the Midwest, like the Clydes, who fled the great





Combines wind their way around the curves of wheat-laden hills (left) during late summer harvest below Steptoe Butte in Washington. To contend with slopes that may have grades of as much as 30 degrees, combines are equipped with self-leveling mechanisms (above). In the fertile soil and ideal climate of the Palouse, wheat varieties that normally grow to heights of 30

inches can reach 60 inches, causing many plants to break over before harvest. Through crossbreeding, U. S. Department of Agriculture agronomist Orville A. Vogel (below), working at Washington State University, developed high-yielding, semidwarf varieties that have produced 100 bushels per acre and better. These varieties have increased yields in the Palouse as much as 50 percent.



...ague in Kansas. Others were
...the Palouse had been passed
...rants eager to settle fertile
...west. As those valleys filled
...s began moving back east and re-
...the high rolling hills could be farmed.
Until then, of course, the Palouse be-
longed to the Indians, a favorite summer
gathering place for the Nez Perce, Palouse,
and other tribes. They would dig the camas
root, which they cooked and formed into
cakes, and graze their lovely snowflaked
horses on the lush bunchgrass. When the
fur traders saw these spotted horses gallop
by, according to today's breeders, they
would say, "That's a Palousey!" This even-
tually became "Appaloosa," and that is why
today Moscow is the home of the Appaloosa
(not Palousey) Horse Club.

Before Indians and settlers the Palouse

was long in the making, and, as Lola pointed
out, volcanism played a part. It began 15
million years ago when flow upon flow of
lava from a series of fissure eruptions leveled
the area from the Rockies to the Cascades,
creating a basalt plateau. The wind currents
from the Pacific Ocean gradually carried
sediment across the basalt, piling on it layers
of silt, forming loess dunes. The loess is a
wind-deposited mixture of silt, clay, and
some volcanic ash, 40 to 60 feet deep, the ba-
sis of the rich Palouse topsoil.

BETWEEN 13,000 and 18,000 years
ago some of the greatest floods known
in geologic history occurred in this
area. A lobe of an ice sheet dammed a
river near the Idaho-Montana border, creat-
ing Lake Missoula, almost half the volume
of Lake Michigan and 2,000 feet deep at the



dam. The ice dam burst, sending 500 cubic miles of water at high velocities down the drainage system of the Columbia River and out across the basalt plateau, stripping away the loess. This process was repeated several times and had happened often before.

These floods made channeled scablands out of a good deal of eastern Washington but left unscathed the higher delta-shaped area of Palouse topography. With those barren scablands to the north and west, the rimland of the Snake River to the south, and the forested foothills of the Clearwater Mountains to the east, the lush Palouse became an entity unto itself, roughly 75 miles across. Its lushness may have given it its name. One view holds that when the French-speaking fur traders came, they found it covered with so much bunchgrass that they named it the *pelouse*, the lawn. Another explanation,

however, is that the name came from that of the main village of the local Indians.

Today, of course, the bunchgrass has been shouldered out by profitable crops—and not just grain. Moscow now calls itself the dry-pea and lentil capital of the world, center of an area producing virtually 100 percent of the United States' dry peas and lentils. But Moscow would rather brag on its culture than its cultivation. A bumper sticker reads, "The arts make Moscow special." And with a resident symphony orchestra and a ballet company that tours nationally, they do. The resulting atmosphere has attracted a thriving community of artists and back-to-rural-areas people.

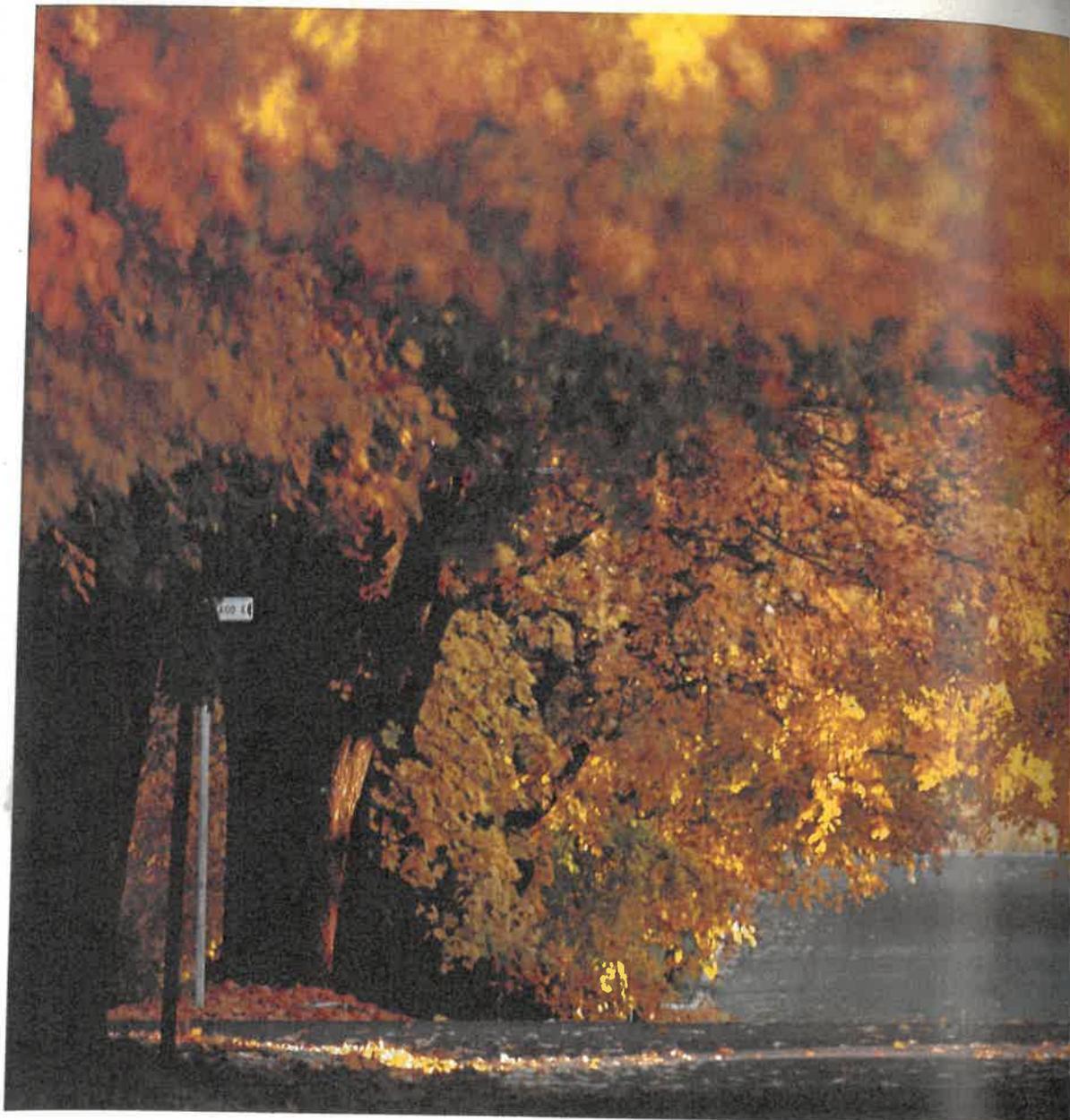
Pullman shares the symphony orchestra with Moscow, and matches that town's University of Idaho with its Washington State University. How heavily these two towns, the economic hub of the Palouse, are invested in education and culture can be judged from the fact that in their combined 43,000 population, 25,000 are students.

JUST OUTSIDE MOSCOW I stood in a hangar talking to one of the University of Idaho's successful graduates, Ron Fountain, 36. His father, Pete, the crop duster who had shown me the Palouse for the first time, had proudly taken me to meet him. Now co-owner of a small industrial park on the edge of Moscow, Ron is still heavily involved in crop-dusting.

"I'll tell you why," Ron said. "When I was a kid, the Palouse was God's country, you could walk anywhere. It's too restricted to do that any more. But I can fly anywhere. Crop-dusting forces me to get up at dawn, the most beautiful time of day. I can see things nobody else sees."

Pete laughed. "You see the little weevils come out of the peas." Then he walked out of the hangar, got into his Super Cub, and taxied down the field to his house. "That's

Double-edged windfall, volcanic ash clouds an alfalfa field near Palouse Falls after the 1980 Mount St. Helens eruption. Despite initial fears of crop loss and problems with clogged machinery, yields for some crops went up dramatically as the ash helped seal in soil moisture.



Autumn brings an explosion of orange to maples that canopy a Moscow

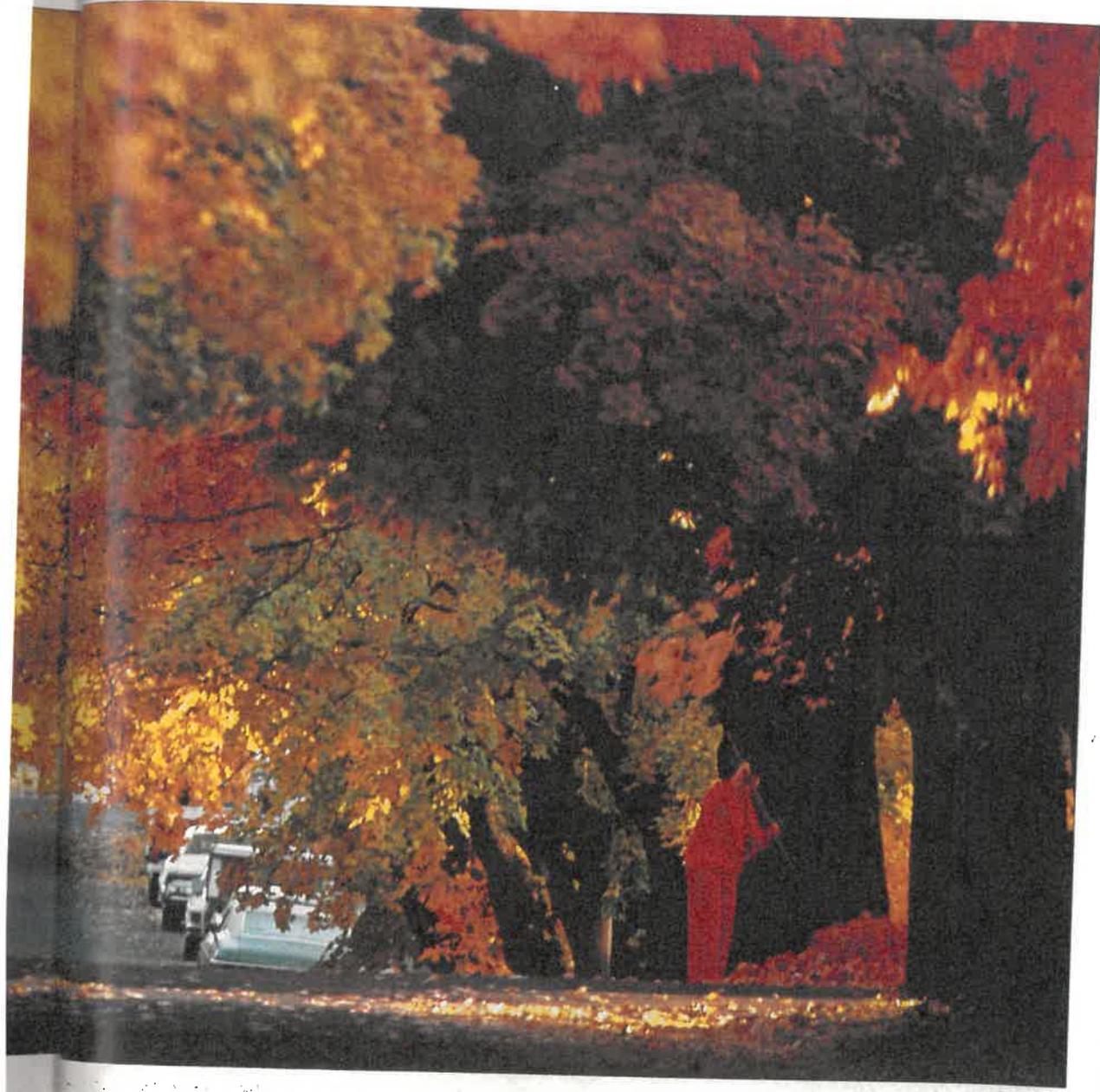
Dad's saddle horse," Ron said, smiling. "He's lost without it.

"After graduating from the U. of I. in the late '60s," Ron said, "I left home for a couple of years, traveled across the country, found everything to be alike, as if everyone had to copy each other—so I came back. People here have character."

We got into his truck and rode down the landing strip. He pointed out the homes of two of his brothers, Craig, 34, and Steve, 30, and the acreage that another brother, Tim,

26, farms. "It's kind of unusual for an entire family of five brothers and one sister to settle right next to their parents, and all be in business together, all happily involved in crop-dusting. With the grandchildren now, there's 22 of us."

He showed me the industrial park that he had built himself with help from his brothers and friends. "I learned independence from Dad. At my age, he wanted to make his living flying. So he came to the Palouse, bought ten acres, and single-handedly built an



street. In the largely treeless Palouse, such an abundance is a rare sight.

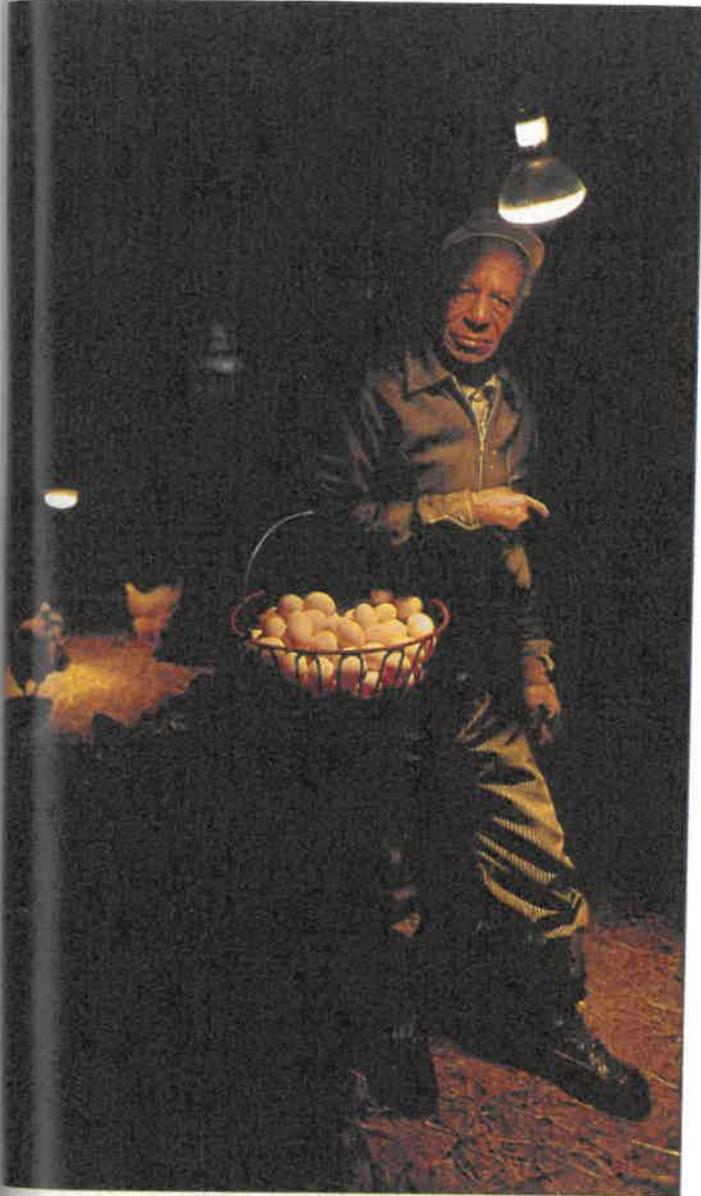
airport. His attitude of 'try it and see' is really the attitude of the Palouse. Here we think big but keep it simple."

That faith in imagination and hard work I found throughout the Palouse, and it has been handed to the young. Randy Smith, 27, his wife, Jamie, 25, and their daughter live on a leased 450-acre farm near Steptoe. Their first harvest was in 1980. They didn't own any equipment when they put in their crop but borrowed a tractor from one neighbor, drills from another, and a cultivator

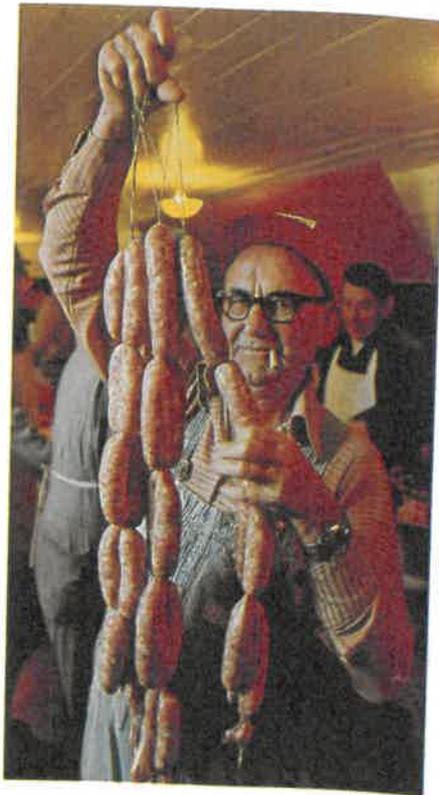
from a third. Randy paid his neighbors back by helping with their harvest and preparing the fields for their next crops.

Some say the Smiths are trying to accomplish the impossible, beginning small farming at a time when the average farm in Whitman County is more than 1,000 acres. "There's a lot of young people would like to farm," Randy said, "but it's harder and harder for them all the time. You see, a lot of farmers in the Palouse don't retire—70 years old and still farming. Maybe 60 percent of





Deeply rooted in the history of their land, Palouers take pride in their handiwork. Lola Clyde, 81 (facing page), bakes pies with apples picked from trees planted in 1878 by her husband's grandparents on the family farm near Moscow. Frank King (left) came to the Palouse in 1910 at the age of eight when his father homesteaded 160 acres of what was once part of the Coeur d'Alene



Indian Reservation.

Identical twins John and Joe Norrish (left) attended the University of Idaho together, dressed alike, and thought alike in setting up their business of constructing custom homes in the Moscow area.

A town savors its heritage when volunteers pack a ton of sausage for the annual sausage and sauerkraut feed in Uniontown, settled by German immigrants. "It's like a reunion," Roy Moneymaker (above) says of the event, which can swell Uniontown's population from 300 to 1,800.



the farmers are over 50 years old. Not much room for new blood. But it's a good life, and starting out in the Palouse, you don't have the chance of failure like you do in other places. In 1977 they had a drought here, and they still got 40 bushels an acre."

What worries Randy is the long haul. "Next 20 years, with fuel prices the way they are, you don't have 2,000 acres in the Palouse, it will be hard to survive."

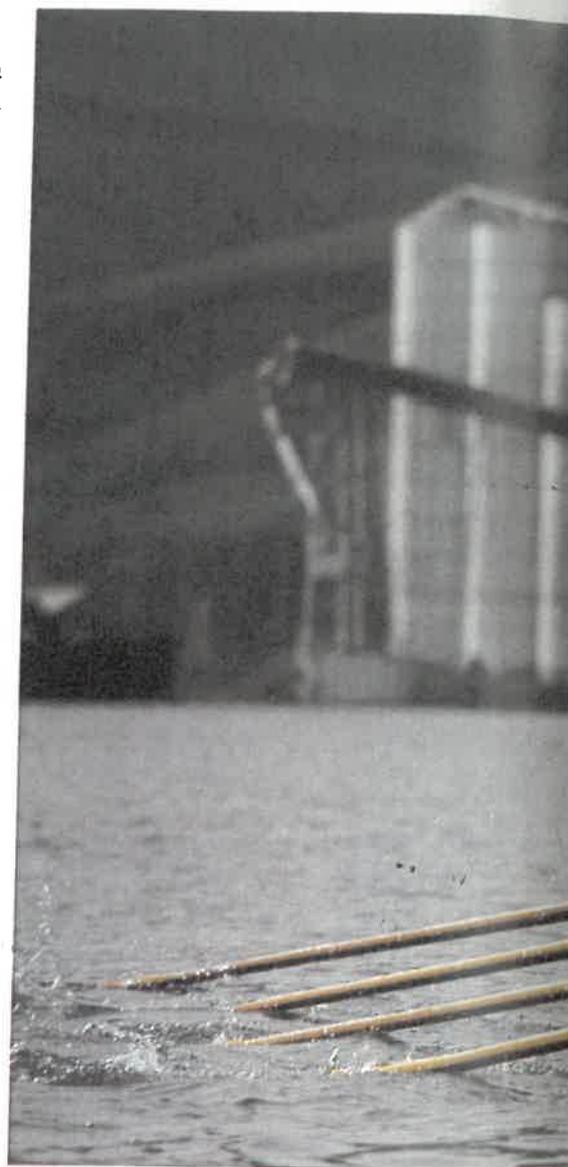
VIC MOORE, a sculptor who lives outside Pullman, owns only four acres, situated in a draw between two Palouse farms. He thinks he'll do fine: "Acre for acre I can beat the Palouse farmers' yield." He would, however, agree with Randy that "agribiz" is creeping up on the small farmer.

A stocky man, full of energy, with two large tattoos—one of a panther, the other of an eagle—each leaping off an arm, Vic expressed himself in no uncertain terms. "Some people around here think city slickers can't stand the rigors of rural life," he said, "but that's hogwash. I've owned these four acres for 18 years, and I've proved on them that artists can make great farm boys."

He then proceeded to show me. "For instance"—he pointed to an eight-foot-deep hole in his land—"going to fill that up with topsoil." He looked slyly up at the neighboring farmer's hill. "I'm just waitin' for a nice chinook wind"—a warming wind from the west—"to come along after a freeze to turn that ground up there to mud." He grinned. "I can figure every couple of years I'm going to get a lot of soil. You betcha." Four times within the past ten years he has dug out and spread around as much as eight feet of rich runoff mud.

Erosion is a serious problem in the Palouse. The tilling methods that predominate break up the soil into tiny bits. When the rain comes, it picks up the fine particles, sweeping them downhill and creating a network of rivulets on the slopes.

A more spectacular but less common type of erosion occurs when mud forms and then slides off the steep hills—in extreme cases to the tune of 300 tons per acre. This can happen in a one- or two-month period when, as Vic pointed out, a warm spell thaws the frozen saturated soil.



Gliding along placid waters, the women's crew of Washington State University works out along the Snake River near the Almota grain terminal. The Cougar Crew once showed its mettle by rowing 375 miles down the Snake and Columbia Rivers as part of a fund-raising drive.

Fast on their feet, the University of Idaho women's rugby team, who call themselves the Dusty Lentils in honor of the crop that flourishes in the region, try to cut off a determined runner from the Snake River Club team.

Interstate sports rivalries are keen, especially between the two universities, separated by only eight miles.



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Beauty queens and sweet treats attract folks to the annual ice-cream social in Colfax, Washington (left), sponsored by the county historical society. Proceeds helped finance the restoration of Perkins House, background, built by James A. Perkins, first permanent resident of Colfax.

An aspiring ballerina (right) practices in Ridenbaugh Hall at the University of Idaho in Moscow, home of the nationally recognized American Festival Ballet.

Each year as much as a third of the ten million tons of soil lost in the deep Palouse finds its way into streams and rivers.

The topsoil of the Palouse, an irreplaceable natural resource, took thousands of years to create; an incautious farmer can lose much of it in an hour. Without careful farming, the topsoil of the Palouse could vanish in the next hundred years.

Progressive farmers like Gary Morris at Gold Creek Ranch use several methods to prevent topsoil from running off. Gary uses a "no-till drill" developed specifically for the Palouse by Mort Swanson, a local farmer whose son now markets the drill nationally. Barely disturbing the topsoil, the drill cuts narrow grooves in the ground, so that there is less loose soil for water to wash away. It also leaves last year's crop stubble, which anchors the soil and acts as a mulch. Gary bolsters the effect of the drill by designing terraces to catch water and run it around hills on a contour, so that a conduit is formed, forcing runoff to flow into areas where it won't cause an erosion problem.

OFTEN IN DRIVING around the Palouse, I felt like a human runoff, forced into conduits I didn't want to be in, run around hills, and dumped out Lord knows where. Once, when I had again become totally disoriented, a stranger I asked for directions sympathized. "The Palouse is a good place to go crazy in," he said.

All the deep Palouse looks much the same:

Endless swelling hills, no trees, no mountains, no hedgerows—nothing breaks up the wave upon wave of wheat. Because fences are no longer needed (there are few animals), you cannot tell where one farm ends and another begins. Only the farmers remember.

If you're driving below the crests, where most of the roads run, there often is no sun, only silence and the wind. It is an eerie experience, and you can easily lose your bearings. Through this terrain Col. Edward Steptoe led his U. S. Army troops. In 1858 they were surrounded and trapped by young warriors of the Spokane, Palouse, Coeur d'Alene, and Yakima tribes.

Steptoe was hampered by the rolling land, and had to continually maneuver to keep on high ground. Although Steptoe Butte bears his name, the battle was actually fought on a hill 15 miles away at Rosalia. Colonel Steptoe and his men finally ran out of ammunition, left their equipment behind, and retreated at night, aided by the Nez Perces.

Helen McGreevy, 81, regards the Nez Perces with affection. Her family homesteaded by the rimland of the Snake River in the southern Palouse, and she lives nearby to this day, in the little farming town of Colton. We drove to Wawawai Bay County Park and climbed a hill to have a look at the Snake. Helen said, "When I was growing up, the Nez Perces would come along Union Flat Creek looking for camas and then camp here at Wawawai."

I looked for traces of the Indian encampment and saw instead Boyer Park and the

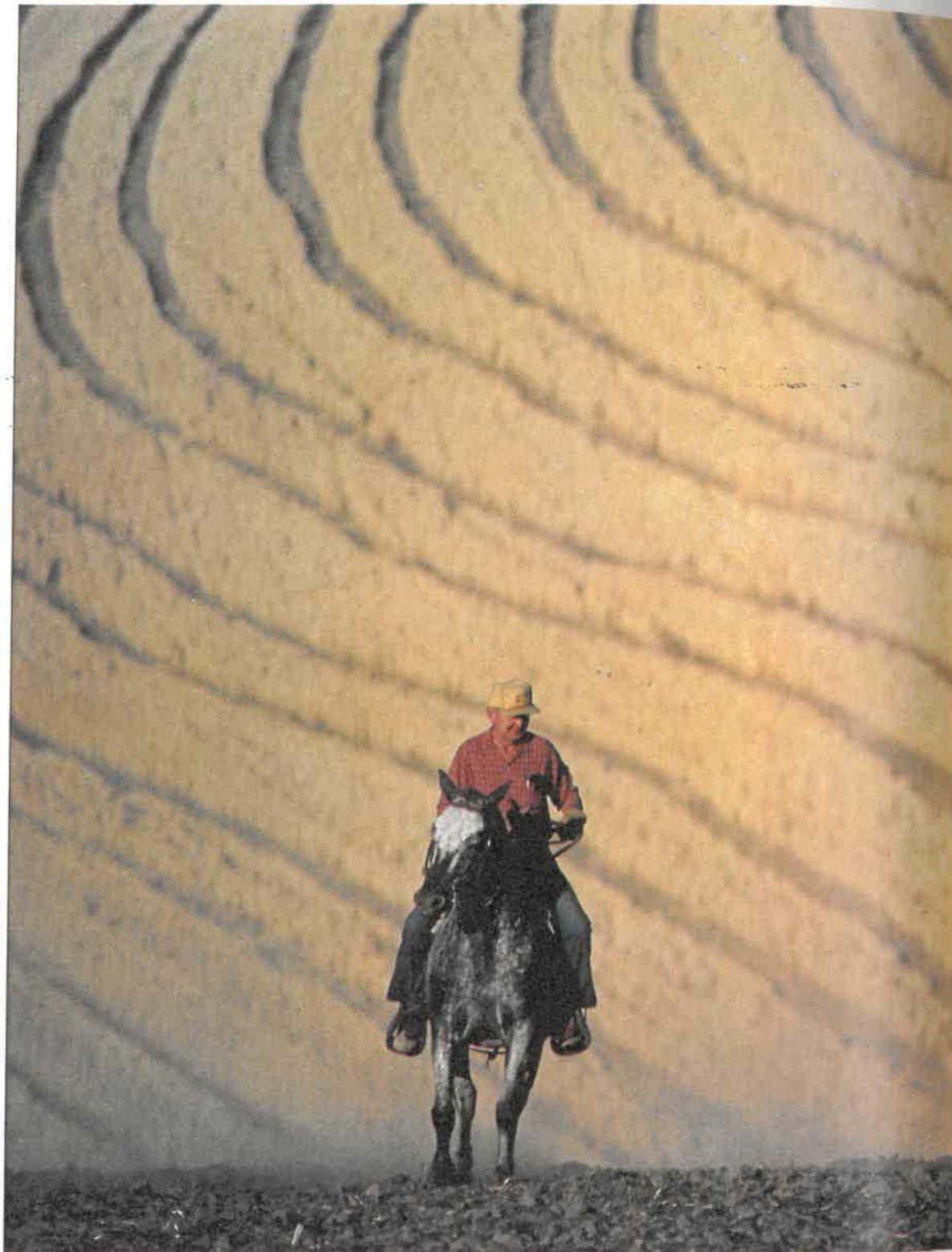


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Sweeping contours of fields near Dusty, Washington, provide a dramatic backdrop for Appaloosa horses ridden by Ben Krom and Kelley Marler, who run separate breeding stables. Prized for its stamina and gentle disposition,



the breed was introduced to Mexico by the Spanish and later spread northward. Because of its use by Indians in the Palouse region, the distinctively marked horse became known as "a Palousey," from which the modern name evolved.

A Paradise Called the Palouse

Lower Granite Dam. The area is now part of an inland waterway that links the Palouse to Portland and other international ports, whence Palouse wheat goes to Japan, Korea, India, and Egypt.

But Helen was seeing it as it used to be, before the valley was flooded. "The Nez Perces came here every year to graze their Appaloosas and fish for salmon in the Snake. They stayed most of the summer, fishing and smoking their catch. Came right by our farm.

"When I was five, during the harvest of 1906, a Nez Perce knocked on our door. It was 5:30 a.m.; the family had just sat down to breakfast. The Indian couldn't speak English, but he signed—kept pointing to his chest, then our cow. My father finally understood. Needed milk for the papoose—the mother was dry.

"My dad asked my mother to get the milk; then he noticed two hungry-looking little boys on the back of the squaw's horse. The Nez Perce father signed that they could wait, but my dad wouldn't give him the milk till the boys got fed. Mother gave them sandwiches and cookies.

"The next year about the same time in August, my dad found a salmon on the back stoop. He asked all the neighbors, but no one knew a thing about it. Then at the next harvest the same thing happened, and my dad understood. It was the Nez Perce. As long as we lived there, we always got a salmon at the same time each year."

LIKE HELEN, Henry Fitch, former mill worker, gyppo logger, politician, and dedicated stump farmer, had long memories, but not long enough to suit him. Henry's father bounced west from Iowa, tried several places, and finally settled here with his family when Henry was just a boy. Yet, when I met him last year, Henry maintained, "I haven't been in the Palouse long enough."

"When did you come?"

"Nineteen eleven."

At 77, Henry was still handsome, with kind eyes and smile, barely a wrinkle on his face. He showed me around his 307-acre farm, then invited me to lunch at his home, set peacefully among ponderosa pines above the Palouse River. His wife, Grace, served a delicious beef stew.

While we were eating, Murray Benjamin, Henry's 80-year-old friend from the Potlatch lumber mill, came to visit. Murray used to test samples at the mill; Henry, who started at the mill at 14, became a foreman.

"We were jes' greenhorns. Didn't know any better than to work," Murray said.

"Just pine savages from I-dee-ho," Henry agreed. "We put everything we had into it."

"A foreman said about the two of us, 'If I had a full crew of those two boys, I'd be out of a job.'"

I COULD HEAR the Potlatch mill whistle blow; lunchtime was over. Still I listened to two old men talking of gyppo logging, of how Henry worked 26 years and never applied for his pension from the mill: "Never would be a public nuisance."

They recalled how the Wobblies, the leftist Industrial Workers of the World, tried to organize the mill about 1917. Henry was listening to long-ago voices: "'One more meeting and the mill will close,' the boss said. So Potlatch workers accepted another union, the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen." Henry stared off. "I can't get over the gift of seeing into things, and how they came to be." All the while Grace stood over him slowly combing his hair with her fingers.

Henry was an understatement, like the landscape of the Palouse itself. A few months later he died. I could easily have missed meeting him. And that's true of the Palouse too. I could have missed it until I learned from Henry Fitch and his neighbors—Eula and the strangers who helped her beat the mud, Frank Brocke, who gave the very man who robbed his bank a loan—"the gift of seeing into things," which in the Palouse means neighboring. □

A thin powder of early snow accents furrows holding the promise of a fruitful spring: seedlings of hardy winter wheat. Palouse soil—40 to 60 feet deep—absorbs the gentle rains and snows that bring an average of 20 inches of precipitation a year, a perennial blessing on a land richly endowed.



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picture perfect

Story by Beth Hawkins

Photos courtesy of Neal Rantoul

Steptoe Butte at moonrise. A combine harvesting wheat along a steep hillside at dawn. These are some of the unique photographic opportunities that draw amateur and professional photographers from across the United States—and the world—to the alluringly photogenic hills of the Palouse.

Touted as the “Tuscany of North America” by those who’ve visited—and been charmed by—the rolling wheatlands of our area, an influx of visitors are finding out about the area through word-of-mouth experiences, as well as signing up for tours specifically catering to photographic expeditions.

Jack Lien is the owner of Palouse Country Photo Tours out of Colfax, and offers five-day tours in the spring and fall for photo buffs who seek the area’s best photographic venues. “It’s a landscape photographer’s dream,” Jack says of the Palouse. A good percentage of his tour company’s clients hail from the East Coast and Canada, but he has also hosted visitors from as far away as Germany and Japan.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ALLURE

“I ask my clients what attracted them to the Palouse,” Jack says. “They all have the same answer: They pick up a publication and see photos of the area. They decide they have to see it. As a photographic destination, it offers an ever-changing landscape of things to shoot. Every day, crops are

ripening or farmers are plowing. There’s always something going on.”

Jack estimates that 2,000 to 2,500 photographers visit the Palouse area each year for the specific intent of capturing its beauty through the lens of a camera. This includes amateurs on their own as well as guided tours and visits by professional photographers.

As for Jack’s mix of clientele: “About half of my clients are professional photographers—what they want from me is to get them into the locations where the lighting is ideal. About a quarter of my clients are advanced amateurs—the remainder are new folks who have recently picked up a camera.”

Each season has its own unique beauty in the region, and Jack explains that many who experience the Palouse’s photographic opportunities in one season often come back during a different time of year. “Fall offers harvest time with the combines in the fields, and then there’s springtime and its greens. It’s just a wonderful place.”

VASTNESS, BEAUTY & SCALE

Neal Rantoul, a professional photographer and educator at both Harvard and Northeastern University, has been capturing images of the Palouse for 16 years. Rantoul published a book titled “Wheat: An

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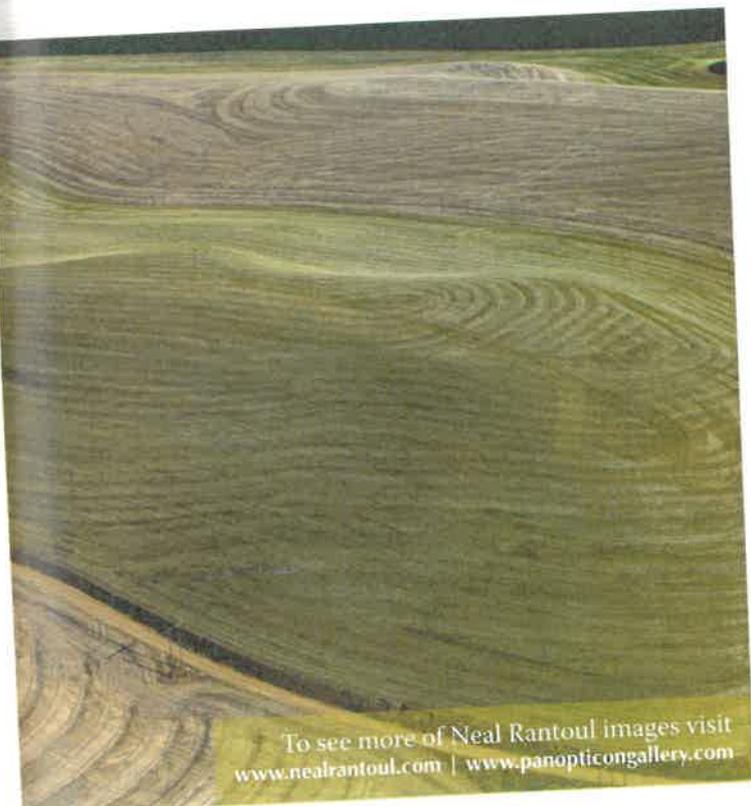
American Series" and is drawn to the region's simplistic beauty.

"The area is remarkable on many levels but absolutely unique is the sheer vastness, beauty and scale of the Palouse," Neal says. "As a career professional artist and educator, the region is about perfect for me in terms of a place to work."

Neal has photographed the Palouse from the ground as well as from the air, and finds that beyond the obvious seasons of springtime and harvest, there's rare beauty to be found during other times of the year as well. "I've found that May, October and November can be very beautiful as well," he says. "The growth is either just planted or cut down to a stubble, and the forms of the hills are laid bare."

Neal was brought up in southern Connecticut where, he says, "Trees confined the landscape and the horizon was never far away. This contrasts to the Palouse where the horizon seems infinite and the landscape is spread out before you. The area is remarkable on many levels."

Neal has expanded his photographic work beyond the obvious hillside scenery. "One of my most important series is of the cemetery just outside of Oakesdale," he says. "Perched on a hill surrounded by fields of wheat, the cemetery embodies for me something essentially American and containing our core values."



To see more of Neal Rantoul images visit
www.nealrantoul.com | www.panopticongallery.com

AN ECONOMIC BOOM

The influx of photographers eager to expand their skills by coming to the Palouse hasn't gone unnoticed by Vicki Leeper, Director of Tourism and Special Events for the Pullman Chamber of Commerce.

Vicki says photography is fast becoming a big draw for many visitors to the area. In fact, the chamber touts the Palouse's photographic charm with advertisements of magazines such as *Sunset* and *Outdoor Photographer*. She adds that the advertising is a shout-out to readers, saying 'Hey, this area's here—come and see it.'

"We get groups on buses, or those who come in through a photographer," Vicki says. "It's definitely a popular attraction for this area because of our unique geography."

And more photographers in the area is a definite plus for local businesses. "When they come in, they're here for three or four days," Vicki says. "They rent vans, eat out, rent airplanes—those are dollars in our economy."

HANDS ON EXPERIENCE

Tour owner Jack Lien, who's been operating his business for 12 years, is noticing more and more articles and pictures about the Palouse. He's happy with the fact that the area is garnering so much interest, but for him it's all about letting his clients really experience the region from a local's point of view.

"I try to get my clients to ride in a combine," he says, having established a respectful rapport with many area farmers. "I try to emphasize for my clients to 'tell a story' with their photos. From the combines on the fields, to unloading grain on the trucks, to going to the barges—they're leaving with a story."

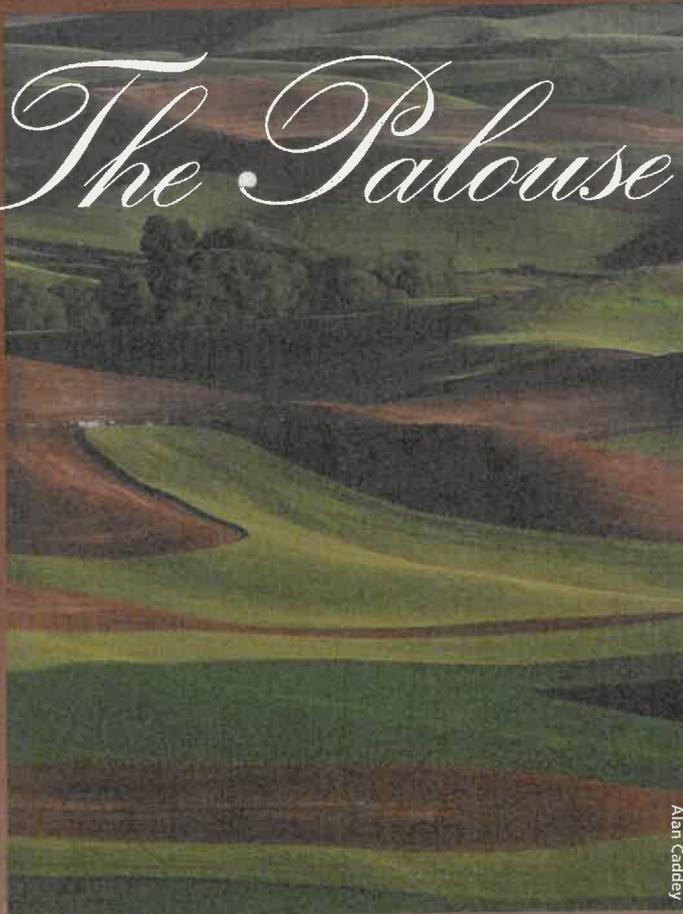
Jack especially appreciates the farmers' generosity with this entire process. "The farmers, in particular, who allow me to pull up onto their land with a car full of people, let me stand amongst the combines, and it's very special. It gets me into the locations that I couldn't otherwise do."

On Jack's web site, FourSeasonsPhotoTours.com, clients share their praise for the many aspects of the tour as well as the region's hospitality and beauty. Many visitors are overwhelmed by the simplicity and the friendly nature of local residents. As Jack explains, "They're not used to driving down the roads and having people wave to them."

For Jack, the best feedback of all comes from experiences made after the photography sessions have ended. "I had one lady who came here to take photos, and when she went back home she took first place in her camera club," he says with a laugh. "I also encourage clients to send me their very best photos when they get back, which can take a while since the average person takes about 4,000 images while they're here." Jack's been known to take particularly good images from clients, make prints, and hand-deliver them to the farmers who hosted the photography group.

So in this vast expanse of rolling hills and wheatland beauty, what is Jack's favorite place to take clients? Although he has a number of locations that he likes to return to again and again, he stays mum on choosing just one. "That's like me trying to say which of my children is my favorite." ■■■

The Palouse



Alan Caddey



Jerry Probst - National Lentil Festival



Jerry Probst - City of Pullman



Artisans at the Dahmen Barn

FIND OUT MORE!

PULLMAN-WHITMAN COUNTY

Pullman Chamber of Commerce
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Mesmerizing fields of wheat and barley greet visitors throughout the Palouse, but there's gold well beyond the region's hills. Historic churches, courthouses and barns, plus a battlefield, local wineries and breweries and a PAC-12 university all call out for exploration.

Capture that college town spirit in Pullman, the pulse of the Palouse. The largest city in the region is home to several popular museums, fine arts, the **National Lentil Festival** in August, and **Washington State University**. Unique shops, pubs and eateries complement the many cultural activities throughout the year. **Palouse Ridge Golf Club** was named the ninth best new venue in the world in 2008 by *Travel and Leisure Golf* magazine, and attracts golfers from across the Northwest to its 350 acre, Scottish Links style championship golf course.

Cougar athletics is a major drawing card, and WSU welcomes nationally known football **Coach Mike Leach** to the Cougar team. **Ferdinand's** in the WSU creamery serves rich ice cream and legendary **Cougar Gold Cheese** in a can. A stop by the **Bear Research Facility** on the edge of campus gives visitors a chance to view grizzly bears up close.

On campus, the **WSU Performing Arts**

host popular cultural events, concerts, and plays in various theaters. Before any event or campus tour, a recommended stop is the **Cougar Depot** on Grand Avenue, a former Union Pacific Railroad passenger terminal that is now WSU's Visitor Center, offering campus maps and parking permits.

In historic **Colfax**, the seat of Whitman County, signs point to the **Codger Pole**, a chainsaw-sculpted totem that depicts a famous local gridiron battle of long ago. More history is found in the **Perkins House**, one of the Whitman County Historical Societies many museums.

Twelve miles north of Colfax is **Steptoe Butte State Park**, a photography destination. It rises more than a thousand feet above the rest of the Palouse. A drive to the top of this quartzite mound offers a panoramic view of 3 states.

Along State Route 27, the town of **Tekoa** is proud of its newly restored **Empire Theater**. Connect to the west on State Route 271 to **Rossalia** to see the renovated 1920's **Texaco Filling Station**. Further south on 27, the community of **Palouse** offers distinctive art galleries, shops and restaurants and the **Roy M. Chatters Newspaper & Printing Museum**, one of the only showcases in the west for old newspapers

and printing. Just outside of Palouse, **Kamiak Butte** offers an array of hiking trails, wildlife viewing and vistas.

In **Uniontown**, near Whitman County's southern flank, visitors can explore an artisan bakery, antique shops, the late 19th century **St. Boniface Catholic Church** and the **Artisans at the Dahmen Barn** surrounded by a famous fence of more than 1000 iron wheels. Farther north in **Colton** visit **St. Galls' Catholic Church** dating from 1904.

In 2003, more than 200 miles of former Indian trails, wagon roads and railroads joined the Washington State Scenic Byways. **The Palouse Scenic Byway** is a hub-and-spoke network providing paved access to the charming communities and meandering miles of a rural Americana that's rapidly disappearing elsewhere. Driving the serpentine blacktop of the Palouse you will see turn-back-the-clock towns, the colors and shadows of rolling wheat fields, and the markers of a time gone by. Near the Byway's western extreme, **Palouse Falls State Park** offers a fabulous view of the Palouse River cascading 198 feet into a round salt-rock canyon.

Visitors soon understand why this is one of the Northwest's most photographed regions.

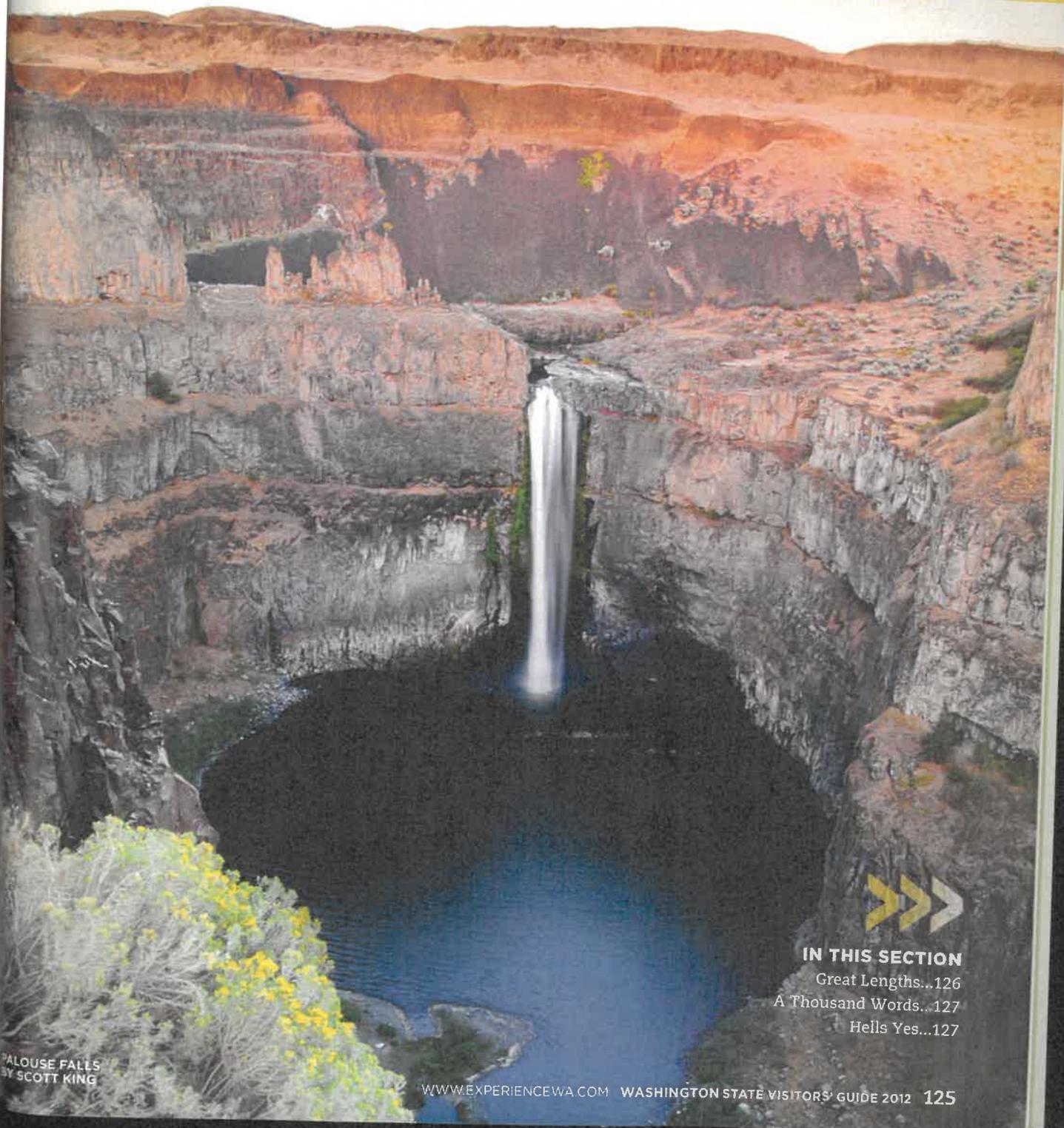
B-13

Not just another pretty place!



SOUTHEAST

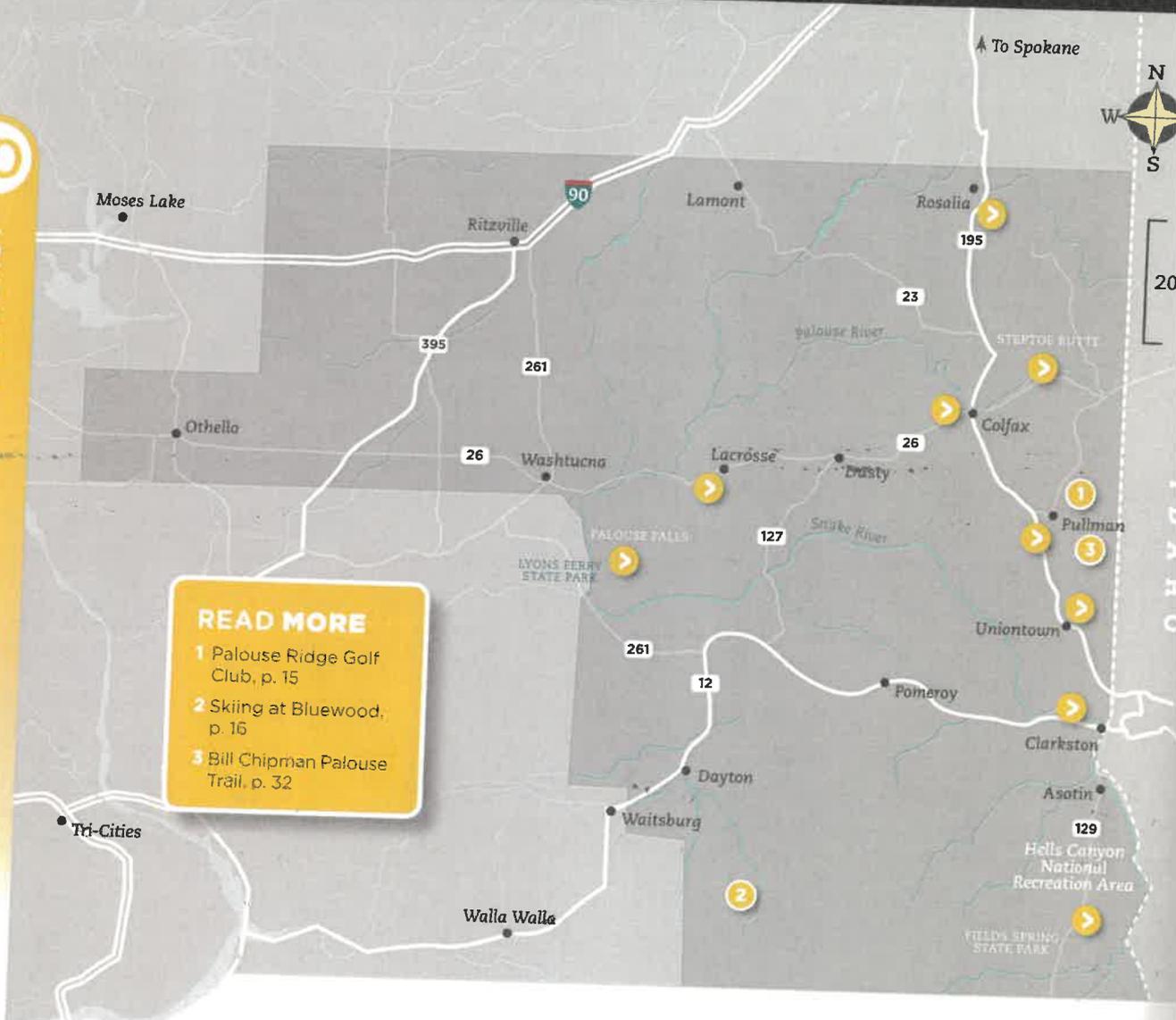
The Palouse and Snake River Country



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PALOUSE FALLS
BY SCOTT KING



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> DID YOU KNOW

Great Lengths

KNOWN FOR its fertile rolling hills and land-grant universities, the southeastern region has more to offer than just amber waves of grain. In 2009 Tyler Bradt set the world record for the highest waterfall run, diving a daring 189 feet down Palouse Falls. Washington State University in Pullman is home to a sloth of grizzly bears, living in a roomy 2.2-acre research enclosure. In August, Pullman also hosts the annual National Lentil Festival (lentilfest.com), a great legume-centered celebration involving lots and lots of lentil chili.

Colfax, population 2,000, is home to the Codger Pole, the tallest chainsaw carving in the world. There are six little stone houses in LaCrosse, built more than 70 years ago and still standing—one of them is even occupied. Erected in 1904, Uniontown's St. Boniface Catholic Church was the first consecrated church in the state, and it still holds all the original stained-glass windows, altars, paintings, and pews. The 25-foot tall Steptoe Battle-



field Monument, set on a hill overlooking Rosalia, marks the location of the last Indian victory over the U.S. Army, in 1858. Just north of Uniontown is Dahmen Barn (artisanbarn.org), a dairy barn transformed into studio and performing space for local artists, surrounded by a 1,000-wagon-wheel fence. —ANNE LARKIN



A THOUSAND WORDS

Touring the Palouse with camera in hand

DURING SPRING and summer months, the Palouse region of southeastern Washington bustles with caravans of shutterbugs. Photographers from around the world flock to the region each year for a chance to capture the fertile palette of the Palouse—a feast of gold, sienna, and green with endless rolling hills, craggy geological effigies, abandoned barns, and aging farm equipment. It is a landscape photographer's mecca.

Palouse local Jack Lien, owner of **Palouse Country Photo Tours** (fourseasonsphototours.com) and a shooter with more than 30 years of landscape and wildlife photography experience, spends his days shuffling these amateur and professional shutterbugs around the Palouse's rolling hills, and offering them an insider's view of the region, along with some lessons.

Spring and harvest tours—slated for June and August respectively—are popular among photographers for the opportunity they present to capture the colors of the region's fertile landscape, and the farmers who cultivate it, though custom tours and workshops may be arranged year-round for those interested in shooting something else altogether. Six-person tours, which include one-on-one instruction, typically span five-days with shoots beginning as early as 4:30 a.m. in order to capture ideal light.

On such tours photographers have the opportunity to click away at a vast array of subjects ranging from sunrise on Steptoe Butte to ripening canola fields, from rustic barns to crop dusters. With a reverence for the region's still-functioning agricultural lifestyle, Lien guides his clients along miles of well-examined back roads—often more than 100 miles per day—providing some surprising vantage points, such as riding in a combine or wheat truck during harvest, along the way.

Every mileage pays off with the end result. Photo tours in the Palouse can offer a lifetime experience, netting participants thousands of photos, and a check of story. —HEATHER CARO

BUFFALO EDDY



HELLS CANYON

Hells Yes

PUNCTUATED BY ANCIENT rock formations, roaming wildlife, and reminders of days gone by, **Hells Canyon National Recreation Area** (fs.usda.gov/wallowa-whitman), located near the Washington-Idaho border and stretching along 75 miles of the Snake River to the Oregon border, is deeper than the Grand Canyon—and nearly as remote. Geologists believe the picturesque canyon was carved by the Snake River during the last ice age, and it is stippled with evidence of the Nez Perce people who populated the area for thousands of years.

Today the canyon is largely accessible only by boat, and much of the craggy terrain is designated as “wild” or “scenic” land. Those wishing to experience the pristine beauty need not despair. The Lewis-Clark Valley is the gateway to Hells Canyon and offers visitors accessible adventure.

The best way to explore Hells Canyon is to get your feet wet—literally. Visitors can lounge on a sandy beach, hop aboard one of the many tour boats that frequent riverways, go water rafting, fish, or take a jet boat tour of the canyon. The town of Clarkston offers marinas and parks.

Adventurers who prefer dry land can walk, jog, or bike the more than 25 miles of paved Lewiston-Clarkston Levee Pathway, near Hells Canyon Resort, lining the Clearwater and Snake Rivers. Historians may enjoy a visit

to **Buffalo Eddy**, 18 miles south of Asotin, which features more than 240 ancient petroglyphs and pictographs. —HC

TRIP TIP

Some of the local tour operators are listed at hellscan.yonvisitor.com.

Denis,

The following are just a few articles written in national magazines.

National Geographic Magazine Vol. 161, No. 6 June 1982. "A Paradise Called the Palouse" page 755-819. It is my understanding, National Geographic has since returned to the Palouse but I do not have a copy of that publication. It is a lengthy article that has captured the interest of photographers from around the world. I will bring you a copy of that magazine for your review.

Washington State Visitor's Guide 2012 – "The Palouse" page 124-127. The article includes an interview with me, page 127, "A Thousand Words-Touring the Palouse with a camera in hand". This publications is made available online, by mail, and is distributed at all airports in Washington State including Seattle-Tacoma Airport, where they distribute thousands of copies. Each year, the **Washington State Visitor's** includes and promotes visitors to the Palouse.

The **Washington State Visitor's Guide** is the Official Publication of the Washington Tourism Alliance.

- I will bring you a copy.

Outdoor Photographer Magazine ran a monthly advertisement promoting photography for over a decade. I had a photographer from Germany who claimed to have seen my photo tours in this publications and registered for a Palouse County Photo Tour with me. Since that time he returned twice to photograph the Palouse with me and even brought someone from New Zealand with him.

Sunset Magazine ran a quarterly advertisement believed to be paid for the Pullman Chamber.

New York Time - A version of this article appears in print on Nov. 1, 2025, Section C, Page 8 of the New York edition with the headline: Get Behind a Wheel, Then Cruise the West.

Washington - Palouse Scenic Byway

NY Times 2025
- see next page

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The Palouse Scenic Byway, south of Spokane, Wash., draws visitors with its vistas of undulating green and golden hills. Credit...H. Mark Weidman/Alamy

Undulating green and yellow hills of wheat **draw nature photographers and amateur shutterbugs alike to the [Palouse Scenic Byway](#)**, which encompasses several highways south of Spokane, Wash.

Visitors will find prime viewing areas of this striking landscape between Oakesdale and Uniontown. Catch breathtaking views at [Steptoe Butte State Park Heritage Site](#) (parking, \$10; closed until at least the end of October because of roadwork) or [McCroskey State Park](#), just across the border in Idaho (free).



Brightly painted farm buildings adorn side roads in the Palouse region. Credit...Schnehe/

While you're driving, check out the brightly painted farmhouses that adorn the dirt side roads.

In the university town of Pullman, animal lovers will find the [WSU Bear Center](#), a research and conservation site for a handful of grizzlies. Between roughly April and October, before the bears hibernate, visitors can watch about a dozen adults and cubs of both sexes in their exercise area at no charge.