

Stories of the Mima Corridor published

There are two well known prairie conservation areas in Thurston County. One is the Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve owned by Department of Natural Resources and the other is the Glacial Heritage Preserve owned by Thurston County. All the other prairie lands, whether in the mile stretch directly between the two preserves, or in the surrounding countryside are privately owned.



The Nature Conservancy has been working to inform and assist many of these 'Mima Corridor' landowners in caring for and restoring their prairies. Outreach and Education has been a major part of that effort. In March a heritage meeting was held in the Possie Hall in Littlerock, WA to bring the community together to learn about what makes the prairie such a special place.

Thurston County prairies are one of the rarest landscapes in western Washington with only 3% of the large stretches of historic prairie remaining. The prairies and oak woodlands of this area support all kinds of rare and special creatures from the endangered golden paintbrush plant to the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly to the western gray squirrel and the western bluebird. It is not only the unique ecology of these places that make them special. The prairies have a rich cultural heritage as well. From the earliest days of the prairie when Native peoples maintained the landscape with fire, to the lives of Washington pioneers straight on through time to today's landowners, people seem to gravitate towards these open rolling plains. We can determine some of the history of people's use of the prairies, but what about the people living there today? What makes the prairie special to them?

That was the question the Nature Conservancy posed to some of the landowners in the corridor. A booklet of their stories, *Voices of the Prairie*, has just been published and is available by contacting gbyrne@tnc.org.