

WICKERSHAM ROAD NEWS

WICKERSHAM RANCH ROAD ASSOCIATION

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before printing this document.

MARCH 10, 2021

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DUES DUE

Annual Road Dues are due and payable. Amounts are still:

\$500 per parcel

\$500 for agricultural / industrial road use

Separate invoices are sent directly to each Primary Owner.

Thank you to the Owners who have already paid.

PAST DUE DUES STILL DUE

Several Owners are past due on Regular Dues as well as on Supplemental Assessment #1 from 2019.

Two parcels are behind for a total of \$4,500 in back dues. Since we spent a lot of money last year, we need all past due amounts paid ASAP.

Please note that DTA "loaned" the WRRRA resources to pay for all the culverts purchased last year. Payment of past due dues will allow the WRRRA to pay that amount back.

ROAD CONDITION UPDATE

The following is an overview of road conditions as of February 19.

The entire road is fully serviceable and in typical winter condition. There are surface gullies and incidental damage from travel during rainfall. There is light debris in the ditches and several small slides that are not consequential. Culverts are all serviceable with minimum debris (due to relatively little rainfall and generally calm storms).

We typically don't address incidental issues in winter if they pose no real threat to the road and are not likely to generate greater impacts later. All rural roads get a little tattered in winter.

Plus attempting to address every problem as it comes up is the least efficient way to use road resources. Instead, as always, we attempt to fold all road work into fewer projects of larger scale so that mobilization costs are minimized and basic construction efficiencies can be utilized.

2021 Projects

Additionally, as we have historically done, we are conserving resources this year for larger projects. The next project in the long term maintenance plan is the culvert at 4.43, estimated to cost \$13,000 - \$16,000.

The culvert at 4.43 is a substantial project. The existing crossing has two culverts in an over-under configuration. This is substandard but has worked adequately for a long time. The lower culvert was fully plugged for several years but is open now.

The proper condition is a single large culvert sized to fit the likely peak flow in the drainage. We have determined that a 72" culvert is appropriate.

Pricing for the culvert sections is \$8,000 and labor for installation will likely range from \$5,000 - \$8,000. This project will absorb a full year of revenue from road dues.

Should the winter remain calm and road damage minimized, we advise proceeding with this project in 2021. It will be coupled with incidental projects as they come up and will depend on full payment of dues by all Owners, as well as outstanding back dues.

It can be delayed for several years if necessary as long as both existing pipes remain open. As upper channel debris increases, so does risk of failure.

This project will require partial road closure for up to two days and will occur in late summer when the stream course is fully dry.

TREE WORK

We did not pursue a tree and brush cutting event last fall as there was little interest. We were all busy with many other things in 2020.

We have been performing incidental tree work along the road at various locations. Several owners have done selective tree work and I have been out on three occasions with a small crew.

The primary goals of road side tree work include:

- General travel clearance, visibility.
- Equipment Clearance: For equipment performing road work
- Aesthetics: Keeping the ranch beautiful
- Fuel management: Reducing ladder fuels immediately adjacent to roads.

Currently we are working selected stretches where vegetation density and intrusion are worst. We are piling debris at the side of the road for future chipping.

If Owners choose to participate and do some random tree work along the road please keep the goals above in mind, and please pile debris along the road (rather than throwing it over the side).

At some point in spring we will bring a chipper out and properly dispose of the material.

Additional work sessions will occur as time allows. We'll announce ahead of time so others can join as they are able.

ROAD COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

No nominations were received for Road Committee Membership at the last request. As noted last time, John Machado has volunteered to serve on the Road Committee. If there are no objections the Road Committee will be:

- David Katz
- Martin Dreiling
- John Machado

The next scheduled election is January 2022.

WILDFIRE PLANNING

Since last year's wildfires, many Owners have expressed increased interest in better addressing wildfire preparedness at the Ranch.

The following notes offer a brief perspective on wildfire planning issues relevant to the Ranch. These are by no means exhaustive and there is substantial information, resources and support available.

Fire is Fact

Wildfire is not a new issue out here. The various habitats that occur at the ranch are all fire dependent and fully fire adapted, and include species and arrangements that can handle fire well.

But... Fire is nature's housekeeper. The habitats at the Ranch have a normal fire frequency ranging from 10 - 30 years. That means they are healthiest if they burn regularly.

Most areas of the ranch have not seen fire in a very long time. I have been doing tree work on my parcels since I first arrived in 1998 and the majority of trees on my property have never seen fire.

Fire is Fuel

The recent increase in severe fires throughout the West is largely the result of fuel accumulations reaching critical mass. The problem has been building for a long time throughout California and the West resulting from a long term policy of fire suppression that persists today.

There are climate factors involved in fire severity. The most important are increasing frequency of late Summer lightning, the increased occurrence of Red Flag conditions in the Fall, and the increased severity of regular drought. Each of these factors would be far less important if natural fires occurred on a more regular cycle and resulting fuel loads were normal.

Fuels accumulate from natural growth and from increased dead mass resulting from drought and, interestingly, disease that is exacerbated by lack of fire. Much of the pine blight in the West is linked to lack of fire coupled with climate factors. The most critical fuels at the ranch, however, are live plant materials at very high densities.

Normal fires that occur regularly tend to be lower intensity and often do not damage larger, older trees unless they are sick. They consume ground fuels, burn or singe the lower branches of trees and keep the forest floor and grassland areas below large trees clean. Normal fires may range widely and burn for weeks.

However, when a forest has not burned in a long time fires are more intense and can cause dramatic changes in the character of a forest. This is how grasslands expand at the forest edge and how openings deep in the forest occur.

Tending Our Lands

Our chore as land owners is NOT to prevent wildfire. Prevention over the last century is precisely the problem. Historically, California saw natural wildfire at the rate of one million to five million acres a year affecting grasslands, chaparral and forestlands on a recurring basis.

Instead our task is to prepare our lands for the reintroduction of fire on a regular basis and to modify the initial fires of that reintroduction so that their severity is reduced.

Such preparation is a substantial task that requires continual attention on all wildlands. The primary chore is fuel reduction and fuel management with the long term goal of allowing wildfire to do most of the heavy lifting.

Tools for the Task

There are a number of tools and strategies for accomplishing the task.

Ongoing fuel management via hand methods is the simplest and should be an avocation of anyone owning forest lands. We should all hear chain saws during winter, spring and much of summer.

Prescribed burns are valuable for surgical fuel management and specific asset protection. Treatment of large areas (approaching the quantities that should normally burn each year) is more complex, requires an organized, well planned effort and should be assessed carefully in terms of cost / benefit. Burns in mixed oak/grasslands are simpler. Burns in deep forest require substantial preparation including pre-treatments, possible road building and a sequenced approach that uses smaller burns to prepare for larger burns and natural burns.

It's important to assess your own properties with regard to wildfire. Such an assessment should include protection of assets and personal safety, as well as potential effects on, and from, adjacent properties. This should inform personal strategies for forest and grassland efforts to normalize fire.

There are also needs that occur at the community level and advantages that can be realized through community efforts. Fire hazard severity at the Ranch varies widely and some areas are at greater risk than others.

The most important tool is the re-introduction of normal wildfire cycles. Nature can clean land faster than people and has been doing so for millions of years. In very low density settings like the ranch the smart move is to protect our camps, strategically build fuel breaks that interrupt raging fires and the let regular fires take over.

Goals

In all considerations we each need to be clear on individual, as well as, community goals.

- Are we still imagining that we will prevent fire from

occurring at the Ranch?

- Do we accept that fire is a part of the Ranch but we imagine we can tame it and make it "friendly?"
- Are we willing to accept the risk that a severe wildfire will affect some or all of the Ranch?
- Are we willing to work hard to protect particular assets until fire is normalized?

In fact, all fire preparation is analog. You affect the land in a strategic way over many years with priorities that reflect what is actually possible. Year by year the threat of catastrophic fire can be reduced. To do it all at once is a substantial project beyond any of our means.

For some, hardening the camp and creating a light fuel zone around the camp is priority one.

Strategic fuel breaks at key locations that can modify an approaching fire are important starting with the low hanging fruit at forest edges, ridges and stream courses where natural fire breaks can be improved.

For overall fuel treatment, there are strategies on oak/grasslands that are different than deep forests. In grasslands, protecting individual trees and groves is relatively easy. Simply mimicking fire with a chainsaw achieves success.

In forests, treating "lenses" that make up as little as 30% of the stand area can slow fire movement and prevent it from moving toward high risk portions of the stand or high risk topography. Locating such lenses is a task of fire planning.

Full treatment at the scale of 160 acres (5,000 acres for the entire Ranch) will involve extensive efforts and lots of money. Unless we decide to let nature do some of the work.

Getting to Know Wildfire

The first task is to develop a good understanding of wildfire and how it actually behaves. The Walbridge Fire last year offered a tremendous example of the full range of possible fire effects, from low level ground fires that cleaned house quite nicely to hot, fast crown fires that stripped nearly everything from the landscape (though it rarely incinerated trees to the ground.)

The Walbridge Fire also offers tremendous insight right now as we can observe the resilience of the landscape and the various strategies that every species uses to recover. Some areas are well on their way to recovery. Other areas, where the extreme heat burned everything and damaged soils, will take longer. But ALL areas are already showing signs of natural recovery.

The Tubbs Fire in 2017 was an example of the unstoppable nature of a firestorm. There is almost nothing that can be done to manage such a fire while Red Flag conditions exist. Yet these fires move fast and jump around quite a bit often leaving many untouched areas behind. Those areas may back burn normally after red flag conditions subside.

In all considerations, it's important to view fire in an evolved

manner. During a wildfire the story on the TV is always one of devastation and destruction, repeated reports of how much land was lost, how much nature was harmed. Such reporting is more a reflection on a reporter's fear of fire and less an accurate account of fire and its mechanisms.

In fact, land isn't lost. It's simply changed and most of the time it's changed for the better.

90% of the Walbridge fire was beneficial to the landscape. The 10% that was devastating was partly just a fact of the fire, partly because the forest had been mismanaged, and partly because people chose to build houses deep in the woods. The part that burned next to my house was highly beneficial. The part that burned a mile away was hot, fast and thorough.

But if you can look at fire and separate fear from fact, there are many lessons to be learned.

As I've said before, I highly recommend a much closer relationship with fire. When they are burning, get out and watch them. Not on TV, but in person. After the fire, tour the sites and look closely at what's gone and what's left.

Mill Creek Road, Big Ridge Road and Chemise Road are worth seeing right now as Spring unfolds. The Geysers Road gives a pretty good view of the Kincade Fire nearly two years later. The Tubbs/ Nuns/ Atlas fires (2017) can all be observed easily in Sonoma and Napa Counties. That was a genuine firestorm and the results are fascinating.

I've given a number of "fire porn" tours and am happy to do so for anyone interested.

Resources

There are many resources for fire knowledge out there today. Some are focused on safety only. Many are focused on forest health. Some seek to game nature the way we did when we suppressed fire. Some seek to let nature get back to work in a more practical way.

CalFire is an active agent in fire preparation as we all know. Marshall Turbeville is a good neighbor and an advocate for aggressive preparation for the re-introduction of fire.

<https://www.readyforwildfire.org/>

Other sources include:

<https://copenorthernsonomacounty.com/>

<https://www.firesafesonoma.org/>

<https://calpba.org/good-fire-alliance>

<https://www.fireforward.org>

My company is doing increased consulting on wildfire preparations and land use policy in the WUI. I'm happy to share our knowledge with my neighbors at any time.

For deeper knowledge about wildfire and forest land management I recommend the following:

Between Two Fires: A Fire History of Contemporary America

Stephen J. Pyne

We will likely be talking a lot more about wildfire as a community over the coming years.

It's also increasingly likely that we will see a wildfire of some sort at the ranch. While that possibility is gripping, we should also know that it won't destroy the Ranch. It will change it and, should we allow normal fires to burn on a more frequent basis, it will improve the Ranch for the long term and ensure that it's a beautiful place for a very long time.

Just my opinion

mld

ROAD USE REMINDERS

The following is the regular reminder about use of the Road. Please share this with all guests and vendors.

Please advise all road users that the road crosses private property and is maintained for access and egress only. All safety is the responsibility of the road user and no liability is assumed by any property owner or any member of the Road Association or the Road Committee.

All road use is explicitly at your own risk. Opening of the front gate and entry by any property owner, their guests, or any other individual constitutes acceptance of these terms.

Please remind all guests that the road crosses private property and that there is no hunting allowed from the road on the properties of others, unless specific permission has been given by the property owner.

The Usual Stuff:

- Always lock the gate, regardless of whether it was unlocked when you got there.
- Make sure the combo is NOT left on the lock or the lock will not lock. Spin the numbers before locking and test the

RESOURCES

SONOMA COUNTY EMERGENCY INFORMATION (SoCoALERT)

<https://socoemergency.org/>

CAL FIRE INCIDENT INFORMATION

<http://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/>

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/>

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/regulations/>

SONOMA COUNTY SHERIFF

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

PACIFIC WATERSHED ASSOCIATES

Experts in rural road management as a watershed stewardship strategy.

<http://www.pacificwatershed.com/>

(website resources still available)

SONOMA RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

<https://sonomarc.org/>

(707) 569-1448

KEYS FOR THE BIG IRON GATE

Keys are available for the Big Iron gate from the Road Association. The cost is \$10.00 each. Please contact Martin Dreiling or Dave Otero if you'd like one.

INFORMATION

WICKERSHAM RANCH ROAD ASSOCIATION

c/o

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Road Committee:

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David Katz, Parcel 25
davidkat@sonic.net

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cynmachado@comcast.net

Ranch Website (by Tami Bobb, David Otero)
“<http://www.wickershamranch.com>”

Thanks to Tami and Dave for their efforts in sharing space on their personal ranch site for our benefit.

lock to make sure that it is locked.

- If you wish to leave the gate open for a car that may be following, please wait at the gate while it is open.
- Please pick up litter and debris that does not belong on the road. If you are at the Front Gate and see litter, please assist in picking it up, even if it's not yours. This makes the Front Gate more attractive for all users.
- Please remove rocks or trees that have fallen onto the road. (If you remove a large tree or perform other substantial work in keeping the road open, please advise the Committee so we can say thanks.)
- Please get permission from the Owners of the front ranch to park cars inside the front gate. Contact:

Hugh Reimers

hugh.reimers@outlook.com

831 682 0245

Please park between the front gate and the second green-post and chain fence. This way the Owner can tell that you are a guest and not a trespasser.

- Please drive slowly and carefully.

Keep our Road Washboard Free

- All vehicles using the road should be All Wheel Drive or 4WD. Please use 4WD or set your All-Wheel Drive to 4WD/ increased traction mode. (This may require you to turn a knob to a picture of trees or a snowflake on some cars...) Don't let the vehicle decide or you may still have micro-slips that generate washboards.