

# WICKERSHAM ROAD NEWS

WICKERSHAM RANCH ROAD ASSOCIATION

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SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

## IN THIS ISSUE:



Thanks  
Summer Work  
The Culvert Situation  
Road Funding  
Combo Change  
Fire Safety  
Rules and Reminders

## NOVEMBER TREE AND BRUSH PARTY

Saturday, November 7 starting at 8:00 am.  
Meeting place and details to follow.

Thanks to everybody who responded and showed  
interest.

To those who can't make it, don't worry. We'll do it  
again.

## THANKS

Thanks to Peter Beall for contributing water for the grading project this summer  
and for other support of the project.

Thanks to Tony Machado and his guests for the rapid response when their  
vehicle caught fire on Snot Hill. Their quick phone calls and hard labor  
prevented what might have been a disastrous fire. Thanks also to CalFire for  
their equally rapid response.

## SUMMER GRADING

As everyone knows we did a substantial summer grading project this year on the  
first 6 miles of road. We typically try to avoid annual grading of the entire road  
as that eats up key resources that are needed for longer term projects (projects  
that also reduce long term maint. costs.)

This has allowed us to make advances in long term road correction over the last  
few years and to start replacing substandard culverts.

We do anticipate a general grading task every 5-8 years for the whole road with  
incidental grading and repairs in between. With last year's severe storms the  
surface damage to the entire road brought it due for a grading project and we  
chose to go ahead with the front ranch section of the road.

Grading occurred from the front gate to mile 6.4 at the Tombs Creek Bridge.  
Work included surface grading only with no major changes to the road geometry.

The surface is now stable and, absent severe damage this year, will not be  
touched for some time.

Regardless of rumors, we did not initiate this grading project to facilitate the  
event on Peter's parcel. We did however ensure that the schedule for the work  
occurred before the event as a neighborly gesture. I assume we would all do the  
same. Peter, kindly, offered to assist with some of the cost and we should all  
appreciate that greatly.

Several owners have also asked about the condition of the road on the back  
part of the ranch. Our intention was to do that section next year because we are  
nearly out of resources this year(after absorbing the cost of the big culvert at  
6.9.)

After closer inspection of the road, however, there are some areas that need  
winter prep to prevent more severe damage should we get heavy rains this year.  
For this reason we are coordinating a limited grading project for portions of  
the back ranch that will occur in October or early November (depending on  
rainfall.) We are hoping to have some moisture in the ground as water trucks are  
expensive and eat up precious funds.

We will advise when that work is going to occur so that impacts to owners are  
minimized.

## THE CULVERT SITUATION

### Work Complete

As most everybody also knows the culvert at mile 6.9 has been replaced. Construction was initially held up until the creek was dry enough for sensible work. By that time our road vendor was busy with other projects so we had to wait a little longer.

The new 60" pipes were installed with proper banding and proper bedding so they should last for at least 50 years. (And both pipes are the same size this time...)

## ROAD FUNDING

While discussing the road grading strategy with several owners (and in response to an e-mail inquiry we received ) we think it's timely to remind everyone about some basic assumptions built into the Road Agreement and the way we have been managing the road.

All public roads in America are funded based on usage as measured by number of trips. The roads that experience more trips get more funding (and usually get enlarged as well.)

All Federal and State maintenance funding has a relationship with traffic counts, either actual or projected, and this determines a lot about the level of maintenance, repairs and expansion the road might see. Traffic counts are also a key metric in determining safety levels. Roads less traveled have fewer safety features.

Some of this is practical: higher road use equals higher road maintenance costs. We see that on our own roads. The roads on our own properties show a different wear pattern from the first mile or two of the Wickersham Road.

Some is political: Roads that are more heavily traveled generate more complaints that make their way up to lawmakers and result in higher levels of attention. Luckily we don't have this situation at the ranch. Everyone is pretty reasonable about their concerns for the amount of work done each year and the amount of money we spend doing it.

We do, however, spend more near the front of the ranch than we do at the back. The road at the front does serve more people and experiences higher use and higher levels of degradation, especially in winter.

The Road Committee has always tried to balance resources in such a way that the overall road is in generally the same level of repair and service, with minor fluctuations of course.

Several years ago we did a major grading project on the last mile of road that only serves a handful properties. That section is now in need of some repairs and we will probably address those within two years (and catch some of the problems this year hopefully.)

We should also remember that the owners at the front ranch, who use our road, do not participate in road funding. Originally there was no substantial use generated by the front ranches. But as they have been subdivided and used more for residential purposes, traffic has increased. That means we are maintaining a road on other people's property and those people have in the past, and may in the future, have demands that are not aligned with our interests. This could affect our funding mechanisms and the amount we need to spend each year

We welcome the thoughts of any of the owners on these matters. We keep every suggestion, idea, complaint and comment and look at all of them each year as we fine tune the long term maintenance and improvement strategy that has been in place.

## SOME REMINDERS (BELOW)

Reminders are annoying to those of us who already have it figured out and do the right things whenever we can. To you we apologize ahead of time and thank you for treating our common road with care and consideration.

But here are some reminders anyway...

### FREE COMPACTION

The rain we had last week was gentle and could not have been better for the road. Except for a few trips during and after the rain that damaged the new road surface slightly, the trips that occurred more than 12 hours after the rain stopped did a great job of compacting the surface and burning in the recent grading work. This will help the road survive the winter with less damage and will push out the next grading job even further.

So thanks for all the free compaction.

As always, please stay off the road during and within 12 hours after a rain fall. It's best to let the road see a sunny day before driving on it after a rain. Anybody who does drive on it during a storm does more damage to the road, increasing maintenance costs for everybody, than just about any other kind of use. We don't close the road during a rain but we ask that everybody consider their neighbors and take it easy on the road during rainy season.

### STAY IN THE MIDDLE !!

As with all of our grading and construction work we do not spend excess money on compaction at all the peripheral areas of work. When berms are cut or material is side cast these areas are often soft for the first year until repeated rain and drying cycles have compacted them naturally. Natural compaction is an important part of our road program because it reduces costs dramatically.

The middle of the road is generally more sound to begin with

and it compacts quickly with regular traffic.

So we ask all drivers to stay in the middle of the road until we have been through a complete winter. If you drive too close to the edges, banks that are not fully compacted may rut or even collapse, shortening the life of the work and creating erosion problems.

All drivers should drive strategically for the benefit of the road surface by doing the following:

- Avoid the soft edges the first year after a project.
- Avoid potholes and existing gullies
- Drive in such a way that you mash ridges and help compact the road as it dries. A day after a rain, the wet spots benefit from car tires hitting them broadly (as though you were one of the grading contractors. )

## FIRE SEASON NOTES

It's a little late but it's always good to think about fire safety at the ranch. Especially after what saw last week.



Several notes have come from Owners regarding driving on open grass land. They have seen tracks on their properties out to viewpoints where vehicles have driven through open grass.

In these hot dry conditions even a hot muffler can start a fire and fire in these grasses can be explosive. The Valley fire expanded in part because of the volatility of grasses among the forest lands allowing the fire to leapfrog far faster than it was actually moving through the forest.

So even if you have permission please do not drive vehicles of any kind out into the grassy areas. Please stick to roads that already exist. In particular the ridges at the top of Snot Hill and along the main ridge should be considered off-limits as the owner's of those properties have politely requested that we stay on the road.

Also, please remind your guests, workers, vendors and delivery people to avoid smoking anywhere on the ranch, especially while driving. One lit cigarette tossed out by someone not familiar with rural conditions can start this whole thing ablaze.

It probably won't be one of us that lights the place on fire. It will

most likely be a stranger doing something without thinking.

## FIRE SEASON GEAR

As an added precaution, everybody should be in the habit of carrying one or two shovels and a fire extinguisher in their vehicle while on the ranch road. While it won't stop a forest fire, most forest fires are caused by incidental fires related to human activity and a couple of small tools can make the difference between a funny story and a big fire.

I had a guest who's transmission blew a seal and the hot oil ignited under the vehicle. The ability to put that kind of fire out cuts a whole lot of fire opportunities out of the picture.

It's also pretty useful to carry a shovel and a mattock in the winter to help with small road problems before they get big.

## OTHER 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 lock to make sure 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 for removal. 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

## RESOURCES

### SOTOYOME RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

<http://sotoyomercd.org>

(707) 569-1448

### CAL FIRE

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

### SONOMA COUNTY SHERIFF

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

### CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

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

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

### PACIFIC WATERSHED ASSOCIATES

Experts in rural road management as a watershed stewardship strategy.

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

## KEYS FOR THE BIG IRON GATE

Keys are available for the Big Iron gate from the Road Association. The cost is \$5.00 each. Please contact me (Martin) if you'd like one.

## INFORMATION

### WICKERSHAM RANCH ROAD ASSOCIATION

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#### Road Committee:

Martin Dreiling

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Rob Weinstock

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Ranch Website

"<http://www.wickershamranch.com>"

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

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:

**Dean and Kelly Falkenberg**

**(707) 431-1517**

**[dktfalken@aol.com](mailto:dktfalken@aol.com)**

- 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.

#### Guests:

- Please advise guests that they are traveling over private property and that they should respect the privilege to do so. It is not appropriate to stop for sightseeing or personal relief on other's property.
- Please advise your guests regarding Road Etiquette including basic driving methods for rural roads and basic courtesies.
- Please ask guests to say "Hello" and readily identify themselves and who they are visiting when meeting someone on the road. (It's always nice when I encounter a stranger on the road and they tell me who they are without me having to ask.)
- Please advise all of your guests regarding the importance of locking the gate. It is your responsibility to ensure that your guests understand how to operate the gate.
- Please advise guests not to litter the area around the gates. (I pick up trash there almost every time I enter. This is not road trash but it came from people using the gate.)
- Please advise guests to assist with Road maintenance by removing rocks or trees that are in the path of travel should they encounter them.

#### Also note:

The chain at the Big Iron Gate does not have to be tight for the gate to do its job. It's OK to leave a little slack in the chain and it will make it that much easier for the next person to open the lock.