

WICKERSHAM ROAD NEWS

WICKERSHAM RANCH ROAD ASSOCIATION

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before printing this document.

OCTOBER 22, 2022

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GATE COMBO CHANGE

FRONT GATE: **XXXX**

MIDDLE GATE: **XXXX**

DATE OF CHANGE:

10/30/22, SUN AFTERNOON

AND THIS SILLY BIT

For efficiency in communication everyone should assume that references to “Wickersham Road” also include the portion that was renamed “Tombs Creek Road.” It is tedious to type Tombs Creek Road / Wickersham Road every time we need to refer to the road in this newsletter and in other communications.

We will refer to Tombs Creek Road distinctly for issues pertaining only to that section of road or where there might be legal or technical implications.

But anytime we simply write “Wickersham Road” it will mean the entire road from the front gate to Mile 12.2 (or so...)

THANKS

Thanks to Owners or Guests who have cleared fallen trees over the summer. We’ve seen the remnants of several.

Thanks to those who occasionally trim or limb a tree along the road.

Thanks also to Owners who have sent notes or called about various road use issues including the front gate locking issues, reporting of recurring 2WD road use and other minor issues.

If you see something that looks funny or may be damaging to the road please call or send an email to one of the Road Committee members.

REMAINING ROAD WORK IN 2022

Culvert at 4.43

The pipes are fine. We are still delaying installation of the big culvert at 4.43 as other priorities remain.

The existing capacity is still adequate for likely flows and we are expecting a light winter (though there are never guarantees these days).

Should we have a light winter and no new demands emerge, we will install these pipes at the end of Summer 2023 once the creek is fully dry.

The Gap

After we completed the Spring grading project this year one of the worst sections of road for water absorption was the Gap (around 3.35). This section has always had substandard native rock that weathers quickly and holds water.

Our goal is to rock about 1/4 mile covering each side of the Gap so that we don’t have to deal with it for years.

The plan is to do this after we have some moisture so that new rock will bind with the existing base and normal traffic will compact it.

This may occur this year or early next year depending on several factors including: final rock source, proper moisture and labor availability.

Once the work is underway there may be slight delays but the road will generally be open during the work.

Signage

We will be installing informational signage just past the front gate as discussed in emails several months ago.

The purpose of the sign is to provide basic reminders about road use and to further clarify that all road use is at the users full risk.

The sign is aimed primarily at guests, vendors and neighbors who are not part of the Road Association. We assume all Owners are already familiar with the way the road works.

We have new Owners at the Front Ranch, new guests using the road often, vineyard crews that change all the time and, occasionally, new Owners at the Wickersham.

We are considering additional signage to include the following:

- Gate locking reminder at each gate
- 4WD / AWD reminders

LONG TERM ROAD WORK

General Plans for road projects over the next several years include the following. These are target goals:

2022: Rock the Gap

2023: Install big pipes at 4.43

2023: Structural grade changes at the “Hairpin” (mile 7.69)

2024: Incidental rock renovation on portions of Snot Hill. Additional rock beyond Mile 11.82

2024: Develop rock source at Front Ranch and rock key corners, road sections. Mile 0.60-0.80, 1.17.

2025: General grade maintenance at worst sections. May include rock application. May include structural changes near Mile 3.

2025: Replace several deficient culverts on 2 Mile Hill, Front Ranch

2026: Replace several deficient culverts on Snot Hill

2026: General grading refresh, approx 50% of road

All such plans depend on resources available and how much we need to spend on repairs should we have rough winters.

As always plans evolve and change and new priorities may arise. But this list reflects the most likely large tasks on the horizon as indicated in the Long Term Master Plan.

Incidental tasks will also be included or may take precedent.

ROADSIDE TREE WORK

Reminder: The roadside veg. management work we’ve been doing along the road has three main goals:

1. Creation of a shaded fuel break along the road to improve access by fire fighters should they need to get to properties deep in the ranch. This also improves access and operating clearance for equipment performing maintenance on the road.
2. Position the road as a useful control line (PCL) for wildfire

and prescribed burn management. By reducing fuel along the road, it becomes a useful place to set backfires should a serious fire approach. It also becomes a valuable burn boundary for prescribed burns occurring above or below the road.

3. Simple beautification. The road is choked with invasives that would normally be controlled by natural fire. Reducing tree density and removing invasives opens the woodland to more natural conditions, allows views into the woods and down to the stream courses, and makes it easier to see wildlife (and approaching vehicles...).

Fir Fest 2021

Our neighborhood effort in 2021 to address fuel loads along the road was a success and those who participated, both in the original cut and the cleanup several months later, did a lot of very hard work for the benefit of all of us.

Thanks again to the Owners and Neighbors who participated in both efforts. Thanks also to those who continue to cut or limb trees along the road to further advance the cause.

It was clear, however, that we needed a lot more work, and a lot more volunteers, to address the nearly six miles of road that require substantial fuel work.

Since improving the conditions along the Wickersham Road is of interest to most Owners as well as the larger neighborhood, we have decided to include these tasks as part of the Lake Sonoma West Planning effort.

The LSW plan will apply for a second grant in December 2022 to seek funds to include Wickersham Road in the present Ridgetop Fuel Break projects.

Additional details will be shared under the LSW banner.

WILDLAND FIRE PLANNING

Work on the Lake Sonoma West Wildland Fire Management Plan continues.

As you know we have recently initiated the Lake Sonoma West mail list for easier communication of planning progress. Since the LSW effort extends well beyond our Wickersham neighborhood, most LSW planning information will be shared there.

There are some aspects of the LSW plan that are Wickersham specific and some areas that may be of greater interest to the Wickersham Owners than to the rest of the LSW owners.

Wickersham Specific Notes:

Grant Applications:

Our application to Sonoma County Ag & Open Space was approved earlier this year. That application was for funds to

proceed on the Gualala / Russian River Ridge Fuel Break, Phase 1. The grant amount was \$250,000.

That work will occur mostly on Fornage and Baxter properties where ridge top fuel loads are most impacted. Our Forester Heather Morrison is currently preparing CEQA documentation for the work and DTA is preparing bid documents in preparation for seeking a contractor for the work.

Our goal is to initiate physical work in December on Phase 1.

Phase 2 will address other properties reaching out to Rockpile Rd. and result in a completed functional fuel break / control line running north/south through the LSW planning unit.

As part of Phase 2 we are seeking a second grant to include Wickersham Rd. There are about 6 miles of variable needs along Wickersham Rd. Inclusion of these areas will result in a functional fuel break / control line running east/west (more or less) through the south portion of the planning unit and will complement Rockpile Rd. (which has already been treated).

Together these control lines will greatly improve firefighter access during a fire event throughout the planning unit.

Meetings:

We have had two introductory meetings, specific to Wickersham Ranch, where we have presented basic strategies for better dealing with Wildland Fire. These were successful but many neighbors were not able to attend.

Wickersham Neighborhood Workshop

Our next meeting will be a workshop where we all sit around and fiddle with maps and talk about the kinds of projects that could happen on our various properties in more detail, the kinds of support that might be available for such projects and the things individual Owners will want to do as a match for external resources.

This meeting will likely occur in early 2023, preferably in late January / early February. It will occur at Clary Hall and will work best as a Saturday morning workshop.

Please start sharing preferences for Saturdays around those times. We will also need volunteers to coordinate food / beverage.

In The Meantime...

Since the LSW planning effort and implementation of potential projects may occur over a number of years, preparation and normalization of wildland fire around our camps remains a high priority. This normally involves the creation of Defensible Space.

I have been working long and hard this summer on a more detailed and robust model of Defensible Space that is particularly relevant to properties such as ours.

Regular Defensible Space standards are primarily aimed at the WUI: suburban settings with small parcels ranging from 1 - 20 acres. These standards seek to “harden” buildings and provide a somewhat fire-safe zone out to 100’ from home sites.

For larger parcels that are remote a different strategy is warranted. Simply hardening a 100’ circle around a home site means a catastrophic fire may still pass by your cabin within 100 ft. That’s too close and still too unpredictable when surrounded by so much untreated land.

I’m working on an extended pattern of tactical fuel treatments that reach out to 1000 ft. from the home site but are less aggressive and easier to maintain than hard Defensible Space. This is a strategy aimed at pushing catastrophic fire much further away from settlements but tolerating simple ground fires within that range. The goal is to ensure that a crown fire approaching a camp self-modifies to a ground fire before it gets too close.

In fact simple ground fires become one of the best ways to treat such Defensible Space and maintain it as ready for the time when a big fire burns through.

Such modified Defensible Space simply becomes a normal, open, well maintained forest where fire is not a problem. This not only helps mitigate fire risks, but results in a more beautiful and healthy forest around camps and home sites.

We’ll share details of that approach under the LSW banner.

For Wickersham Owners and Neighbors, I’m happy to share the work I’m doing and visit any property to talk about such strategies. Anyone who wants to see the approach I’m taking is welcome to visit anytime I’m up. Let me know.

“Personals”

BTW, such Defensible Space work should be considered the responsibility of each Owner and not something that would be funded / supported by the larger LSW plan. The effort is aimed at protection of personal assets and not at affecting fire for the larger neighborhood. Thus we refer to these as “personals.”

GATE LOCKING

Recently we’ve had a few occasions where the Front Gate was left in various states of “unlocked.” This appears to be a convenience issue for the Front Ranch and we are talking about solutions.

The red gate does belong to the Wickersham Ranch Road Association and is controlled by us. It is clearly our preference that the gate remain locked at all times.

As we get to know the new Owner at the Front Ranch we’ll keep talking about how we resolve such issues. The likely solution includes renovation of the automatic gate by the new owner so that they can enter and leave conveniently.

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 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 at the Park and Ride area. Contact:

Hugh Reimers

hugh.reimers@outlook.com

831 682 0245

Please park at the Park and Ride area near mile 0.20. This way the Owner/Tenants 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.

RESOURCES

**NORTHERN SONOMA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
(NORTHSoCo FIRE)**
707 857 3535

FIRE CAMERAS: ALERT WILDFIRE
<https://www.alertwildfire.org/region/northbay>

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/>

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

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Road Committee:

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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.