

Thank heaven for spring!



April 2024



FROM YOUR PRESIDENT GLENN GROTHE.....

Community Resiliency: Preparing for and Mitigating Risk: The mountains! What a great place to live! We all have our reasons to live here; and we can agree that it is beautiful—but not without its risks. Whether from a dangerous wildfire or getting snowed in for a few days, there are risks and challenges to mountain living. The 2024 snowstorm at the Ranch has made all of us rethink our preparedness, not just for snowstorms, but any kind of emergency situation that could occur at Ranch of the Rockies. Let's face it: outside of a fire or police response, we're often on our own for emergency situations, especially in our remote community. We've all decided that the beauty, the seclusion, and the opportunities associated with mountain living, whether as a full-timer or part-timer, are worth the risk. So how can we mitigate this risk or become more resilient? Broadly speaking, resilience is the ability to 'bounce back' when encountering the challenges that are an inevitable part of life. There are a lot of factors that go into resiliency, including having a purpose, being self-aware, being mindful and having positive relationships. We also need to manage risk. What we can do is use the resources available to enable and enhance the recognition, communication of, and planning for risk. We can also empower ourselves and communities to make informed risk management decisions necessary to adapt to, withstand, and quickly recover from future incidents.

The reality is that if we get a heavy snowstorm, plan on staying home for 2-3 days. Take some time to think through your own situation and make a plan for what you need to do if you're unable to get in or out for several days.

The same goes for fire prevention - be prepared! Keep up with fire mitigation on your property. Have a plan for your personal evacuation. At a recent forum I attended, I heard that one of the lessons learned from the Camp Fire (which destroyed the town of Paradise, CA) was that residents waited too long to evacuate. We need to plan for a possible fire up here. Where would you go, and more importantly, when do you go? Do you wait for some sort of formal evacuation order or do you leave when you get a pre-evacuation order? We each have to be responsible for this decision and it is best to think about it before you see smoke over the ridgeline. We're all in this together, so get to know your neighbors, and have that discussion with them. Then, if there is an evacuation, check up on each other.

Different parts of the country experience different emergency weather conditions, and they plan accordingly. When you live in the mountains, you should plan too. Neither the county nor the state is going to provide enough services on a timely basis to keep you mobile during a big snowstorm or tell you when to leave when a fire threatens. Plan now and avoid the frustration later! The US Forest Service has a great evacuation [checklist](#). We all must be prepared for the challenges and risks associated with mountain living.



FROM YOUR VICE PRESIDENT GARY NESBITT.....



Well, Mother Nature was kind and your newbie Board members had an enlightening experience. We successfully burned the burn pit on February 9th. Most folks probably don't think much about burning the burn pit beyond: "Get it done so we can use it next season." or, "We got snow. Light it; how hard could it be?" When it came time that snow was here, some of us were under the silly assumption that the fire department would take the lead on setting and monitoring this campfire on steroids. But to our surprise, the responsibility is left to the Ranch Board, who may or may not have any experience dealing with fire, exposures, wind effects, ember drift, etc. That being said, the liability exposure was on us if something went wrong. And maybe because 35 years in the fire service makes me a little overly cautious,

we took a conservative approach to ensure conditions were favorable for a safe and successful outcome.

We now have a written procedure for future managers and Board members which establishes guidelines on when, how and what safety factors to consider before, during and after burning the pit. Highlights of safety factors include:

- Wind speed and direction over a 10-day extended forecast,
- Adequate snow coverage in the pasture area to sustain coverage for several days,
- Monitoring the pit 24/7 during the initial burn phase,
- Watching smoke and ember drift,
- Safety guidelines for on-site personnel.

Oh, and a bottle of antacid and Tylenol for every increase in wind speed and direction.

Our thanks to Hartsel Fire for supplying a brush truck on site for most of the first day as a precaution; and thanks to our very own volunteer fire fighter and board member Glenn Grothe for staffing the unit for the safety of our neighborhood and surrounding area.

Now it's time for spring clean-up. Trim the trees and shrubs; remove any dead or downed trees, and we will see you at the burn pit. Opening day will be posted on the Ranch web site when available.

FROM YOUR TREASURER, TODD ERIKSON....

RORA financial status: We are well into the new year, and so far the Ranch's financial health looks better than ever. We are still waiting for March financials, but as of the end of February, the Ranch has exceeded our annual revenue goals already by \$33,576. Expenses also remain on-budget. If this trend continues, we should have no problem meeting our annual budgetary goals.



We have also made great progress towards meeting our reserve account budget. The Ranch contributes to reserve accounts, which are essentially savings accounts for future expected or contingent costs. Establishing and funding these reserve accounts is an essential part of prudent HOA management. An HOA organization's ability to borrow money is very limited. Any capital purchases or unexpected expenses over and above those budgeted could result in a mid-year assessment to members to cover inadequate reserves to address those expenses. The Ranch Board's Reserve Budget goal is currently \$1,045,000, and includes such items as saving for a replacement liner for our reservoir, which guarantees our legal ability to obtain well water on the Ranch. Other items include replacement of the Ranch pickup truck as well as improvements for buildings and grounds. As of the end of 2023, we have \$736,509 saved towards our goal (70 percent). This is up from the previous year's \$499,750 (48 percent). Another two years of good financial management should result in fully funded reserve accounts.

We also have two other initiatives started around fiscal governance: we have begun the first-ever audit of the Ranch's books by the accounting firm of McNurlin, Hitchcock and Associates. In addition, we have retained Association Reserves to perform a reserve study. We have heard the members' requests for greater board transparency around financial activities. These two actions will provide third-parties' verifications of our financial status. The board expects the results of these two actions to be available by late summer. The results will be made public for full financial transparency.

FROM YOUR SECRETARY JEFF MORGAN.....

Greetings RORA friends - the weather is warming and the anticipation of a busy summer on the Ranch is in the air. Our Ranch Manager is in the process of getting the burn pit ready (note new gravel driveway), opening the restrooms and the RV dump station (new gravel there too!).

To Review: We have completed the annual review of the RORA Policies, Procedures and Rules. The draft is posted on the RORA website. Please review and send us your questions and comments before May 10th.

RV Storage: If you want to store an RV or trailer or something else in the RORA RV Storage Lot, please stop by the Ranch Office to sign the rental agreement, pay the fee (\$10/month), and get an assigned slot. If you need help parking your rig, let the Ranch Manager know and he will be happy to help.



We are in the process of figuring out how to dispose of the abandoned RV's, trailers and other items in the RV lot. There are about 27 items that can't be traced to an owner and haven't paid rent for at least two years. Our Ranch Manager has pulled these abandoned items to the back to make room for member vehicles. If you know who these belong to, please call the Ranch Manager.

Volunteer Opportunities: There are a number of projects and volunteer opportunities on the Ranch this summer. We'll be replacing the stakes at the RV lot with pavers. We're looking for volunteers to paint numbers on the pavers and set them in place. Also, some of the horse stables need to be torn down and replaced. If you really feel like tearing something up, this is a project for you! More information as we get these projects scheduled.

Please also consider running for the RORA Board of Directors. The work is interesting. You get to meet a lot of members and help move RORA forward with leadership, sound financial decisions, tackling current issues and contributing to the successful continuity of the Ranch community. There are many talented members on the Ranch - please share your talents!

FROM YOUR MEMBER-AT-LARGE, LINDA STARR....

Happy Spring neighbors! I'm really looking forward to the end of mud season and some spring weather! You, too? Just a couple of safety reminders for all members:

Please slow down on the ranch roads. We've had a couple fences taken out, a roll-over and several crashes due to speed. You wouldn't think the condition of the roads would allow anyone to drive fast, but it happens way too often. PLEASE SLOW DOWN! Now that the weather is getting nice, many members are out for walks, taking their horses out for a ride, or just coming and going.

Every Tuesday morning, our trash service brings an empty trash container and replaces the full one. It's usually very early in the morning, between 6:30am and 10:00am. Please steer clear of the area when the exchange is taking place. The empty bin has to be unloaded; the full one loaded, and the empty one put in place. These movements need space and freedom from dodging people trying to slip in with their trash. Please do not drive into the trash area, try to drop off trash or in any way hamper the operation of loading and unloading the heavy containers. Please plan around these times when you drop off your trash.



At the annual meeting this year, we'll be electing two board positions. I have thoroughly enjoyed my first 9 months as the Member at Large! I've had the wonderful opportunity to meet new people, assist people through the Hammersmith transition and work on a number of successful RORA projects. Our community depends on members getting involved - whether it be volunteering at the burn pit, in the Ranch Office or as a Board Member, it takes a village to make it all work smoothly! Your input counts! Consider running for a Board position! If you're interested but not sure how to go about it, contact Jeff Morgan or me and we'll help you get started!

Our new Office Assistant, Tammy Gallegos, started in early April! Stop by and introduce yourself! As Tammy gets up and running, she will be available to assist you with trash cards, fishing cards, RV lot slots, and how to navigate Hammersmith. Please help us welcome Tammy to the Ranch Office!



The Manager's Corner

by Larry Hartley

While we still fix fences, repair mailboxes and relocate lost cows during the winter months, I try to spend time planning and preparing for the spring/summer/fall activities so we're ready to go when the weather cooperates. Here's a recap of the preparations completed during the last 3 months:

- Burning the Burn Pit
- Annual Water Augmentation Plan documentation prep: updating the well report, deeds and declarations report, plan for spring water release
- Researching how to dispose of 27 abandoned vehicles in the RV Storage Lot
- Remapping RV Storage lot to add additional slots
- Gathering estimates for spring gravel projects
- Exploring options to bring back recycling to RORA
- Scheduling clean-up projects at the Reservoir
- Reviewing maintenance needs for walking trails on RORA

We moved a lot of snow this winter from the Ranch Office/House, mailboxes, and other vital areas. Melting took a toll on the Ranch roads and our member services areas. I'm looking forward to graveling the RV Storage Lot, RV dump station, mailboxes, Ranch Office/House drives, and the Burn Pit drive. This will greatly improve access to these areas.

I fixed a lot of fences so far this year. Most of the fence repair was due to cars running through the fence because of slippery roads, avoiding wildlife, or just speeding. Due to the weather, these fixes were temporary until I can get out there with a more permanent repair. If you see RORA fence in need of repair, please call me. The average fence repair costs Members about \$500-\$1000. Slowing down will help us reduce those expenses.

We finally got the trash area access system repaired, thanks to Board Member Gary Nesbitt. Many thanks to our Member-at-Large Linda Starr for her assistance to members with Hammersmith access issues, dues questions, violations payments and much more. Our Board Secretary, Jeff Morgan, is working with Park County Roads for much needed work. We should be seeing them move in materials and equipment soon.

As the weather improves and our projects get scheduled, I'll send out notices for volunteers! Looking forward to seeing you all this summer!



RANCH OF THE ROCKIES ASSOC.

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