

Eagle Ridge Estates Update

One year ago today I was reading a letter from Scott C. Ferguson, Chief, Enforcement and Special Projects Unit, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, about the Eagle Ridge project on Grass Valley Road in Lake Arrowhead. Developer Rob Roy had defaulted, causing First Centennial Bank to take over the loan. "Winterizing" the site became the first priority because of the unpaved roads, slopes and soil stockpiles all subject to erosion. Run-off across and under Grass Valley Road and into Grass Valley Creek could contaminate the creek and Grass Valley Lake with construction effluent and sediment. Luckily, we got more snow than rain last winter and the erosion control measures that First Centennial (and three other banks) bankrolled to the tune of \$600,000 worked.



Sign at entrance of the abandoned Eagle Ridge site. Graffiti painted on the sign asks "Why?"

Fast-forward to today; the leaves are off the trees, and we have had two light rainstorms recently while the abandoned project's visual blight increases. The sand bags put in for erosion control are disintegrating and the fencing is giving way. Unfortunately for us all, it is not a Chamber of Commerce photo opportunity.

First Centennial Bank of Redlands is now out of the picture, having failed because it funded too many similarly risky loans. Three other banks are now sharing the note, but what is the property's current value in relation to the 11 million dollar default? And what is the County of San Bernardino doing about the abandoned state of the property? A County Planning official recently stated the project is "in limbo." With winter rapidly approaching, it is unclear whether last year's



Wall and disintegrating sand bags at Eagle Ridge site.

erosion control is satisfactory or not. SOFA has asked the Lahontan Board to physically inspect the site and enforce all required steps to stabilize it for the wet weather season ahead.

Acquisition of the site by a land trust, or a conservation-minded philanthropist or organization could preserve the site for public use and enjoyment and even return the site to its 1980's status as part of the San Bernardino National Forest.

--Hugh Bialeki

FOREST CARE AND THE ARROWHEAD LAKE ASSOCIATION

Sometimes things happen in Lake Arrowhead that make one wonder what happened to common sense, good judgment and good will. This is certainly how some new homeowners feel after purchasing a house near the lake last summer.

During routine tree work near the house, it was determined that there were also many trees on the property that posed a fire hazard under the county hazardous fuel abatement ordinance. Since Forest Care is here to help with ordinance compliance, Forest Care was recommended to the homeowner, who quickly signed up with this extraordinary cost share program.

A Forest Care professional forester then visited the property and marked a total of 38 trees for removal, 19 of which were between the house and the lake. To this point, the owners seemed to be following common sense and were doing what is best to protect our precious forest environment and stay in compliance with the law. Unfortunately there was one unknown obstacle. This was the "Reserve Strip" to which the Arrowhead Lake Association (ALA) claims ownership, which in this case comes all the way up to the back of the house.

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Important Membership Notice

SOFA encourages everyone to renew as a current member. February is our annual membership renewal month, so please send in your application and renew your membership today. If you have received this newsletter but are not a current member please consider re-joining SOFA to help us sustain the good fight – we need all the assistance we can get to preserve the mountain environment for future generations.

PLEASE take the time right now to complete the renewal form below and return it along with your membership contribution. The future of this fragile forest environment depends on your commitment. THANK YOU. We hope to see you soon. –Dennis Walsh, Treasurer.

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FOREST CARE (Continued from page 2)

Forest Care, using an official county property boundary map that shows the property as an elongated rectangle, and the homeowners, faithfully believing their property would extend almost to the lake trail, made an understandable mistake in their assessment of the property lines. So Forest Care and the owners were guilty of "removing trees without ALA authorization from the reserve strip." This offense can carry a really serious fine, which in this case could have amounted to \$275,000. The fact that these trees had been determined to be a fire hazard under county code and by Forest Care made no difference.

After well over two months of discussion, this conflict culminated in a special ALA hearing where the fine was reduced to \$2,500 plus an additional \$1,350 for an official ALA property survey. This despite the fact that ALA benefited significantly from the property owner's

effort in removing the hazardous trees, because ALA is now in code compliance – at least on this small part of its "Reserve Strip".

What are the lessons learned from this unfortunate series of events? First, Forest Care should develop a strong memorandum of understanding with ALA, which should prevent such unnecessary confrontations. Secondly, ALA should become a team player with other organizations more knowledgeable in matters pertaining to trees and fire safety, and take advantage of these resources. And thirdly, for homeowners the lesson is simple. Do not take anything for granted, even when it comes from Forest Care. Forest Care's cost-sharing program can work wonderfully, but if property boundaries are not clearly defined, it can become very expensive, as this example shows.

-Bernhard Voelkelt

Join us in celebrating the Season!

SOFA HOLIDAY PARTY

Saturday, December 12th, 6:00 pm.



At the Mountains Community Senior Center
675 Grandview Road, Twin Peaks

Potluck: Bring a favorite dish to share, SOFA will provide beverages

There will be both a silent and live auction of great gifts for the holidays.
Everyone will receive a free raffle ticket for a fantastic door prize.

Live Christmas Music by Senara & Friends

This is a wonderful opportunity to share holiday cheer
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