



## ***Road Report***

***July 20, 2024***

*written by Kirk Johnson, Road Manager*

### ***General Comments/Summaries***

- In late May our contractor placed the last of the (57) truck loads of topcoat replenishment gravel for the 23/24 fiscal year. Those placements in general can be viewed at [this link](#).
- At the July 13, 2024 board meeting the Board approved the release of \$26,666.00 to the Road Committee to start placing the (51) truck loads of replenishment gravel for fiscal year 24/25. These loads will be placed from here forward as the gravel becomes available from our supplier and as our contractor(s) get time. It is typical that supplier and contractor limitations cause us to use the full fiscal year of time to accomplish all scheduled placements. Members can click [HERE](#) to see the schedule of placements.
- Last winter's runoff and damage was relatively light. All identified and planned spring road work was completed by May 2024, which included:
  - minimal ditching and culvert clearing (see [this report](#))
  - 25.25 miles of raking to crown roads and remove washboard. Most of the raking was rather deep, which is becoming the regular standard in recent years in order to remove washboard completely.
  - various spontaneous removals of excessively large boulderheads sticking up in the road driving planes (whenever we send a contractor with a backhoe down a road for other repair reasons we try to have them pop some boulderheads on their way... efficient and cost-effective). This action reduces winter plowing truck damage, makes roads easier to rake/grade, and makes roads much more pleasant to drive on.
- In May and June we completed an \$11,489.45 road base and topcoat gravel repair at .62 Corral Drive in Division 6. The Road Committee's spring road assessment yielded the observation that the road section had become too unstable/soft to avoid repairing any longer, as the Committee had known for many years that it was a vulnerable area. There have been two recent member residences built down that road also, which caused a higher priority in making sure the road remained stable. So upon a 580' long road section we installed 6" thick 1.5"-minus base gravel and 3" thick 5/8"-minus topcoat gravel on top of that, and the road section is now stable for regular expected use. Also of note about this: the project came in \$2450.00 under budget, so those excess funds were able to be directed to other 'capital improvements' road improvements as discussed in the next bullet below.

- At the July 13, 2024 BOD meeting the Board approved the release of \$9026.00 from the HOA Capital Improvements reserve fund to repair the 2200' long 'no-plow' road section at the end of Mallard Drive in Division 5 such that the road can thereafter be snow plowed just like other Ranch roads. Earlier this year the Board resolved to raise the per-Lot assessment rate by 10% in order to start funding the several specific road improvements needed throughout the Ranch that are for short road sections that have been too steep, rough or narrow to allow winter snow plowing, thus denying about 15 lots their CCR-guaranteed access during winter at times.

Members may recall that in 2021 and 2023 the Board asked the membership to fund these projects through a one-time special assessment but both times the membership voted it down. The Board is still obligated in law to secure the funds and make the improvements by using any fiscal management tools they can, hence the BOD raised the annual assessment rate by 10% as they are allowed to do per the CCRs.

The Mallard Drive improvement project will involve 2 aspects:

- Have our road contractor go along and pop out the worst of the boulderheads in the entire road stretch and fill the holes with proper sized road gravel.
  - Then cover about 2/3 of the road stretch with 3" thick PCI 5/8" minus road gravel, which will elevate the road surface spots above the remaining boulderheads.
- Members may recall that we crown and grade Ranch roads primarily using a commercial road rake that the HOA purchased in 2019 via a member-approved one-time special assessment. The intended benefits of the purchase were:
    - to allow us to be able to rake/grade roads at the precise moments when road moisture conditions are appropriate, such advantage which we were not getting prior to the rake purchase when we were reliant upon renting a rake in competition with other users in the region.
    - to save HOA funds once the original rake purchase price was paid for from the savings from not having to rent a rake any longer.

So here is a current summary of the cost-benefit analysis:

- The rake purchase cost to the HOA was \$18,560.09.
- We've used the rake 5 times.
- Percent of the original rake purchase cost we've paid for each time we've used it so far:
  - 2020: 7%
  - 2021: 12%
  - 2022: 9%
  - 2023: 17%
  - 2024: 13%
- To date a total of 58% of the original rake purchase cost has been paid for with the savings we've experienced by owning the rake.

- With minimal regular maintenance the rake is expected to serve us for more than 30 years, so we expect to see significant cost savings as the future unfolds.
- At the July 13, 2024 BOD meeting the Board approved engaging a contract with Okanogan Plowing to be the HOA's sole snow plowing provider for the coming 24/25 winter season.

Members may recall that in recent years the HOA has used two plowing companies simultaneously – 24/7 Property Maintenance and Okanogan Plowing – to ensure timely/reasonable plowing response for the whole Ranch. While they did provide quality service, 24/7 Property Maintenance could not make Nine Mile Ranch a priority plowing customer given their extensive prior-existing commitments to plow major private businesses throughout Okanogan county. So the Road Committee cultivated Okanogan Plowing becoming capable to priority-plow for Nine Mile Ranch. Okanogan Plowing had the same capability and desire in mind, and the following services features have been established with Okanogan Plowing:

- They operate out of Oroville, so their response time is optimized.
- They will use (2) trucks to plow except when plowing orders are small.
- They will plow the same day/night when a plowing order comes to them from 9MR before 6:00AM.
- A major financial obstacle for local plowers like Okanogan Plowing is to pay up-front the significant cost of a plowing insurance policy that a customer like the size of 9MR requires. Added to this is also the risk of whether 'nature' will snow enough over any given winter for a plowing company to financially justify spending the funds for an insurance policy and be able to make back the cost through providing enough plowing services (this happened last winter... we had among the lowest plowing expenditures in the Ranch's history). So an agreement was reached where our HOA will pay up-front the proportionate amount of Okanogan Plowing's insurance premium to plow for us for the winter season, and as each plowing event is billed to us the plower will credit us a proportionate amount of the policy cost. This is calculated to have the plower 'pay us back' for the whole premium once the gross plowing services during the season reach our historical average amount. So if the 'average' is not reached then the plower is not obligated to pay back the remaining proportionate amount of the policy cost.

This arrangement achieves two very important needs: 1) ensures that Nine Mile Ranch receives the plowing service it needs in spite of being an unusually large anomalous plowing client for the local region, and 2) plowers do not have to take all the financial risk to provide that service, which in turn makes sure that we attract and keep quality and satisfied plowers to plow for us.

- Update about weed and road growth control maintenance:
  - To date since the beginning of the spring maintenance season there have been (2) major sprays conducted throughout Ranch roads; an initial main spray and then a follow-up touch up some weeks after that.
  - Our current (and long-time) commercial sprayer is also used by private 9MR members to

spray their Lots, so our spray contractor very conveniently/efficiently carries out regular spontaneous spot spraying for our HOA when they coincidentally travel Ranch roads to go spray private Lots.

- Overall the weed growth this year has been relatively low, and overall control has been being maintained optimally, so we are pleased with the success of overall weed growth and control.
- During a road assessment drive in June the Road Committee made notice of and created a specific schedule of road sections throughout the Ranch that will need general steriltant spraying in the next spring. Here are some background facts about this important subject:
  - The HOA is required by the CCRs to maintain passable roads for regular traffic. This necessarily includes keeping vegetation from substantially growing on the general driving plane width of the roads so cars don't start fires from car exhaust igniting tall road vegetation growth.
  - Once the growth appears and grows tall enough during a season it is too late at that point to eliminate it and reduce the fire hazard. So the Road Committee makes notes of what is observed in a growth season and then orders steriltant spraying for those identified areas for the following spring before the growth emerges. If this process is adhered to each year then the road growth can be reasonably controlled.
  - Most roads throughout the Ranch are traveled regularly enough to already prevent road vegetation growth simply from tire traffic. But some roads are traveled too narrowly or too infrequently to keep the growth worn low or eliminated, so these are the areas that the Road Committee keeps watch over and orders steriltant spraying for when necessary.