

9MR Spring Road Report

5/19/21

submitted by Kirk Johnson

Conditions Coming Out Of Winter

Winter and melt was about as gentle on the roads as we could possibly ask for; moisture soaked well into the ground and therefore allowed very little surface running water to cause erosion. This includes the benefit that very little ditching will need to be done this year, as long as other seasonal rains don't cause impactful erosion.

Continued Maintenance from Last Fall

As readers may recall from BOD meeting minutes and newsletters over the winter, freezing temperatures and snow set in early last fall which caused ceasing of scheduled road work at the time. So several uncompleted repair items have and will resume this season, including:

- washing through several plugged culverts (currently scheduled with work contractor to happen in the next few weeks).
- road and erosion shale gravel installed at the end of Wagon Wheel in Division 3 (completed).
- Fixing several dust spots on roads (Gold Rush and Point Drive), which has been ordered with a work contractor but is not firmly scheduled yet.

New Spring Work

In March and April we raked 11.5 miles of roads that were washboarded and needed crowing, which turned out great, and of course having our work contractor use the HOA's road rake to perform the work. This raking was the second time the rake has been used (once last fall also) and has produced the following noteworthy benefits:

- Prior to the Ranch having its own rake we had a very hard time being able to perform raking within those very short windows of time when road moisture conditions were good, contractors were available, and a rental rake was available. But this year we were able to jump on raking with just a day or two notice and get raking done in two different opportunities without hesitation.
- Prior to owning a rake we had to rent one; the cost to the HOA for rental and contractor labor for raking was about \$300 - \$330 per mile. But using our own rake has pushed the per-mile cost down to around \$107.00 per mile. So the cost savings from just last fall's raking and the recent raking alone have paid for 21% of the original purchase cost of the rake!

Due to a lack of funds because of the current inadequate annual assessment rate we will not be able to install enough replenishment gravel in the 2020/2021 fiscal year to replace the gravel worn away from annual traffic. Hopefully the membership will vote affirmatively in the coming June 19, 2021 election to raise the assessments enough to cover road gravel wear in the future.

Special Assessment Gravel Placement

As readers may recall in 2019 the membership voted in favor of a Special Assessment to purchase and install approximately \$54,000 worth of 'replenishment' gravel; this was to make up for a long history prior to 2018 of a lack of available funds to replace road gravel worn away from regular traffic wear.

Coming into this spring the HOA had approximately \$18,000 of those Special Assessment funds left to spend on gravel, which represents approximately (50) truck loads of gravel. As soon as county road weight restrictions were lifted in April we resumed placing gravel, which continues at this very moment. So far this spring, up to today, we've placed (30) truck loads of the following products in the following places:

- (27) loads of 5/8-minus dolomite true-crush gravel. This product is mechanically crushed from dolomite ore and is among the hardest, most durable gravel available on the planet. We are VERY fortunate by happenstance to have a local company who produces this gravel as a by-product of their natural mineral fertilizer operations; this provides us with the best possible topcoat gravel option at about 35% lower cost than other crushed rock available that provides a far less durable and stable gravel surface to drive on. These dolomite crushed gravel loads have been placed at the following locations:
 - (4) on Pine Bluff road at mile .42
 - (4) on Wagon Wheel at mile .15
 - (4) on Point Drive (south) at mile .9
 - (4) on Mallard Drive at mile .15
 - (6) on West Corral at mile .85
 - (1) on Old Tressle at mile .27
 - (2) on Corral Drive at mile .08
 - (2) on Allen Drive at the beginning of the road
- Also, (5) loads of 1 1/2"-minus shale gravel have been placed in two locations at the end of two short roads. This particular product was chosen because: 1) the road base at each location is composed of an exception amount of 'fines' – therefore needing larger diameter aggregate added to make a road bed more capable of supporting traffic weight and creating less mud/silt, 2) the product costs about 15% less than other types of gravels, and 3) over time with regular auto traffic it will reasonably bind in with the road base and to itself without needing mechanical compaction (saving money).
 - (2) loads on Wagon Wheel
 - (3) loads on Horse Trail Drive

Spring Weed/Growth Control Spraying

As the Road Committee has logged through road tour observations for the last two years, there are many spots on Ranch roads that have come to need pre-emergent sterilant spray. This process kills weeds and road vegetation growth before they can grow in substantial height, which is especially important for doing our best to prevent the road driving fire hazard of vehicle exhaust lighting tall growth on fire during the drier seasons. Succeeding at this requires diligently noting where to spray in prior seasons so in the spring – before the plants emerge – the areas can be sprayed. (18) specific locations were recently sprayed at a cost of \$3468.80 to the HOA.

Overall, weed and road growth control in general throughout the Ranch is in excellent shape due to very diligent spraying for the last three years. What used to be miles of large roadside outbreaks of noxious Russian thistle have been almost completely eradicated, and what's left is under easy control. Other county-cited noxious weeds have also been taken care of as well. Each year the Road

Committee, with a little supportive observational input from some owners, identifies the emerging weeds/growth several times during the growing season and orders specific spraying. It appears possible that the eradication and control is successful enough that this season's later spraying costs – and future years – may well be less expensive, as long as the Board/Road Committees in the future maintain good diligence.

Challenges With Work Contractors and Weather

Our HOA does not have the funds or necessarily the need to own and operate most of its own road maintenance equipment, facilities and employees, so we are reliant on hiring independent local professional contractors. This presents an interesting challenge; 9MRs needs are the size and scope like that of a small municipality, which is therefore a demand our HOA places on local contractors. To accomplish this the Road Committee uses virtually every local regional licensed and qualified contractor at some point throughout the maintenance season to achieve the repairs/work our HOA needs. This requires a lot of careful and persistent management throughout the season in order to get work accomplished for us, as qualified licensed local contractors are in high demand and have a short season to fulfill all of our and the overall private community's needs.

Adding to this road maintenance 'challenge' is that there are only a couple months during the year when the ground is not either frozen, too wet or too dry to be able to cost-effectively perform road maintenance and repairs, so contractors work very hard to fulfill our needs and all the rest of their client's needs during the same short wet season when we all need the work done. So sometimes we have to tolerate less-than-ideal desired scenarios and timelines, like waiting longer for raking or other work, limited gravel placement seasons, and sometimes newly placed gravel doesn't get to pack down fully with regular auto traffic with present moisture and therefore gets washboarded prematurely. However, in the long run these things work themselves out and costs stay within the limits our current HOA income allows.