

WILDWOOD HIGHLANDER

SUMMER 2013

The *Wildwood Highlander* is a periodic newsletter providing information to property owners in Wildwood Highlands, near Datil, NM. Hard copy is mailed to all owners. Published at least annually in Datil, NM by the Wildwood Highlands Landowners' Association, POB 87, Datil, NM 87821-0087. For further information contact any member of the WHLA Board of Directors (BoD), listed below. Also consult the WHLA website at www.wildwoodhighlands.org

2013 ANNUAL MEETING: The 2013 WHLA annual meeting was held on 18 May at the Datil Well Campground Pavilion, starting at approximately 10 AM MDT. Attendance was slim, as it usually is when there are no contentious issues afloat. Full details are in the meeting minutes, posted on the website. Highlights were:

- ✓ Total lots represented (including ballots submitted by mail) were 33, whereas the 96 lots whose owners were in good standing at the time required a quorum of 48, so the initial called meeting was closed and a second, requiring a quorum of 24, was called.
- ✓ Most of the discussions centered on roads, roads maintenance, roads improvements, and the Firewise program.
- ✓ The two current BOD members on the ballot (Tom Cook and John Schaefer) were re-elected. Past treasurer Judi Kennel chose to not run for re-election. Full-time resident Amber McIntosh was elected to fill the remaining open position.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING 19 MAY: The new Board met the day following the general meeting. Four Board members retained their previous positions (see list with contact information on last page). Our new member, Amber McIntosh (Lot 93), was elected treasurer. Meeting minutes are posted on the website.

FROM THE PRESIDENT: From BOD President Tom Cook (Lot 7) – Elsewhere in this newsletter is an article by Mike Fuson concerning road maintenance. He brings up a good point, namely: our continual need to maintain our roads and the cost to do so. As a concerned landowner he has started a discussion that, I hope, will be continued and will lead to improvements that will benefit all landowners. It seems to me that there are at least two things that help continue the discussion. One would be that those who have ideas that would help improve our roads bring them to the next scheduled board meeting, which is 4 PM, September 8 at my house. The other concerns the increase in our annual assessment over and above the increase in the annual cost of living that Mike proposes. According to Section 4.11.3 of our bylaws “an increase in the amount of assessment in excess of the Federal Cost of Living Index Rate must be proposed by the Board, and approved at the annual meeting, by an affirmative vote of members in good standing having two thirds or more of the votes entitled to be cast at such meeting.” I can’t speak for the entire Board but, given a good, workable plan for improvement I would support a proposal by the Board to increase the annual assessment.

ROADS REPORT: BOD vice-president Fred Shepherd (Lot 11) reports –

On July 22 we will start, and hopefully complete, a small project to extend the culvert located on Agua Fria Trail about two hundred feet east of the intersection of Rock Springs Circle and Agua Fria Trail. We will be adding about twelve feet to the culvert on the downhill side. This addition will allow us to widen Agua Fria Trail. Most of the work will take place on the south side of the road so we expect that should there be any traffic delays, such delays will be of short duration. We thank our residents in advance for their patience.

THE DROUGHT CONTINUES (UNTIL JULY)!: Our good neighbor and resident weatherman, Chuck Baker (Lot 3) has the latest weather –

WEATHER REPORT July 6, 2013

The first six months of 2013 have continued the pattern seen for the same period last year – dry, dry, and drier. From Oct 1, 2012 through July 1, 2013 there has been scant rainfall (.52") during the months warm enough for rain, and below average snowfall (12.25") during the months cold enough for snow. The slightly more than a foot of snow fell during 16 separate events producing an average of about $\frac{3}{4}$ " per snowfall. This snow did little to alleviate the moisture content of the ground and vegetation. As a result NM once again has experienced an intense wildfire season in 2013, and although Wildwood Highlands has seen some smoke drift in from both the Silver Fire near Kingston (currently almost 140k acres) and fires across the border in AZ, it has had relatively minor impact compared to the big fires of 2011 (Wallow Fire in AZ) and 2012 (Whitewater Baldy Complex Fire in the Gila Wilderness).

Fortunately, the summer monsoon arrived on time and I have recorded 1.13" of rain starting July 2nd through July 5th, including a frogstrangler of .48" that fell within 15 minutes around 5:30PM on July 5th. I expect more rain to be recorded between the time I submit this and you get to read it so we should start to see things get a lot greener around here by the end of the month. This further rainfall should also result in the current Stage 2 Fire Restrictions for the Cibola National Forest to be lifted later this month.

Temperature-wise, it has been slightly cooler overall the first half of 2013, although there have been some brief warmer than average periods. January and February were well below normal: Jan avg low = 17.5°, Jan avg high = 41.4° and Feb avg low = 19.6°, Feb avg high = 43.7°. The lowest temp I recorded this winter was -4°, which occurred in mid-January during a period when the daily high did not get above freezing for nearly five days. This is the longest prolonged sub-freezing period I have seen in the 14 years I have been keeping records. May and June temps were similar to last year with a yearly high of 102° recorded on June 27th of this year vs. a yearly high of 103° recorded on June 28th of last year.

The precipitation predictions for NM in the coming years indicate a continued pattern of drier times such as we have been experiencing over the last several years. This is in contrast to the above-average moisture that NM received 1975-2000, during which time there was a large increase in population growth and development of rural subdivisions. It remains to be seen if such growth and development can be maintained with a decreasing moisture pattern. On a positive note, the little rain we did get in May apparently was enough to stimulate the Pinon Pines to produce cones (this

typically only happens in years with rain in May) so we may be able to harvest pinon nuts this fall if the Pinon Jays, chipmunks, and ground squirrels don't beat us to them.

EDITOR'S NOTE (as of 15 July): Since Chuck submitted his report, we have had several rains, including a beautiful all-night-long event last week that deposited over 1" with almost no run-off: that ground was thirsty!

WILDFIRE RISK MITIGATION PROGRAM: From Firewise

Committee chair Mike Noguera (Lot 58) – The original committee formed last October consists of Mike Noguera, Mike McCarty, Alma Manthey, and Chad Morrow. Active cutting of dead trees due to beetle kill was carried out on several lots towards the end of the Highlands near the border with Sugarloaf, including Lots 58 (Noguera), 56 and 57 (Manthey/McCarty), 75 and 76 (Mike and Kathy Kaiser, and 77 and 81 (Kopman). Cutting is currently suspended due to extreme fire danger.

George Barreras, Catron County Firewise Coordinator, participated in 5 days of chipping slash piled along the road to remove the material. George will be scheduled to do a sand table demonstration with topographic projection for any interested residents. Contact Mike Noguera for more information 575-772-5191.

Any residents willing to produce 7 cords of wood (over 5" rounds and under 23" long) will be eligible for \$1000 reimbursement.

FROM A CONCERNED HIGHLANDS LANDOWNER: Resident Mike Fuson (Lot 34) offers these thoughts –

THE HIGH COST OF PINCHING PENNIES.

I'm sure it goes without dispute that the road that we travel into and out of Wildwood Highlands is rapidly deteriorating. This is the grade on Agua Fria in Wildwood that has become so covered with washboard that some vehicles can barely get enough traction to negotiate the hill, while others are literally shaking themselves apart trying to get to higher ground.

It would be easy to blame poor or infrequent maintenance on the problem. One could also say that poor timing of grading, such as grading immediately after a rain, is the culprit. The fact is that this association has fallen into the age-old concept that money spent on maintenance is wasted – "why not wait until it breaks, then we'll fix it, or buy a new one".

This illusion is evidenced by the reluctance of the residents to allow for an increase in the annual association fees. These fees are used primarily, and nearly exclusively, for the maintenance of the roads within Wildwood Highlands plus the part of Agua Fria that leads to Wildwood Highlands.

Here are the cold facts. In the last ten years the association fees have increased by 24%. The cost of materials needed to maintain the roads has doubled (a 100% increase). The cost of grading the roads has also doubled. This means that as of now, the association barely has a fund adequate to provide routine road maintenance. This also means that at this rate in the near future the situation will become worse and, ultimately there won't be enough money available to provide year round road maintenance.

What's the solution? Invest in the road maintenance now rather than face an insurmountable expense down the road. An increase of \$30 a year in the annual fees is merely \$2.50 a month. This would give the association the opportunity to grade at more appropriate times, more often, and would provide funds for improvements, such as the introduction of gravel to slow deterioration. Most of us would recover that amount in the additional wear that the poor maintenance is inflicting on our vehicles. Also, property values realize substantial increases in communities with well-kept roads.

At a time when costs of living are spiraling out of control, no one wants to increase their own expenses. But, at the same time, when we find that we have to "bite the bullet" and pay the increased cost of some necessities anyway (gasoline being an example), why not include in these necessities our most important asset, our property. \$2.50 a month spent on ourselves is a small amount compared to what we are forced to spend on other necessities of life.

This writer would like to see a proposal presented to the Wildwood Highlands Board of Directors addressing this issue. It is with the sincerest hope that others will share their opinions regarding this dilemma.

NOTES REGARDING THE WHLA WEB SITE: (Repeat) The WHLA web site has been updated. It now contains all known (and available) meeting minutes, pertinent maps, and important documents such as our subdivision Covenants and Restrictions and the WHLA Bylaws. Give it a look; it's at www.wildwoodhighlands.org .

CALENDAR for 2013-2014: Here is the calendar for the rest of the business year -

Board of Directors Meeting – September 8

Board of Directors Meeting – December 8

Board of Directors Meeting – March 9

Board of Directors Meeting – May 18

General Meeting – May 17

MEMBERS NOT IN GOOD STANDING: Currently we have 2 members not in good standing, as follows:

Lien in effect due to non-payment of past dues, late fees and interest: Lot 71

Lien; landowner periodically reducing balance of late fees and interest: Lot 72

BoD MEMBERS & CONTACT INFORMATION:

PRESIDENT:	Tom Cook	575-772-5350	tomcook(at)gilanet.com
VICE-PRESIDENT:	Fred Shepherd	575-772-5603	shepherd(at)gilanet.com
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