

Skyline Lakes Propertyholders Association
www.skylinelakes.org

Letter From the President

Dear members of the Skyline Lakes Propertyholders Association –

I'm happy to report that after a mild winter with little snowfall, trees and flowers on the mountain burst into full bloom in April. It was a beautiful sight of bright colors for several weeks until giving way to the traditional solid green summer foliage now blanketing the development. If you haven't been to Skyline Lakes since last fall, now is the time to renew ties with this lovely land.

I'd like to update you on three matters of general concern. First, the spring road maintenance campaign is about to kick off in late May and should be over by mid-June. Following an open bidding process involving a number of potential contractors, the Association selected the same road maintenance contractor it chose last year to do this work. The scope of work this year includes grading our roads, recovering gravel from road ditches, spreading new and recovered gravel onto roads while still soft enough to imbed stone, and installing about a half dozen new culverts throughout the development as well as attaching extensions to several more. As usual, the grass on road shoulders will be cut several times this summer for which the Maintenance and Improvements Committee recently purchased a capable bush hog that will be coupled to our refurbished tractor to provide improved cutting. Board member Andy Kent, an excavation contractor by profession, has led efforts to upgrade the Association's maintenance equipment and we should all be grateful to him for this assistance.

Second, in preparation for the SLPA annual general meeting in September and in accord with its bylaws, the Board established a Nominating Committee at its April 2012 meeting to identify and advertise qualified candidates to replace Board members whose terms will expire this year. Please see an article on this subject within this newsletter edition which solicits nominees from the community. The Nominating Committee members are current Board Secretary Jane Harrington and former Association Presidents Orv Lee and Scotty Skotzko. Following a period of nominee identification, the list of nominees with their resumes along with election ballots will be presented to the Association's membership in the Summer Newsletter in mid-August, or 30 days prior to the annual meeting. I urge all members to consider running for the upcoming Board vacancies and to make plans to attend the annual general meeting in September.

Lastly, I want to give you a brief update on the long-running Burns v. SLPA suit that is before the Circuit Court of Page County (Twenty-Sixth Judicial Circuit of Virginia). The suit is still active and awaiting an evidentiary hearing scheduled for 5 June 2012 which the presiding judge ordered so that he may make a ruling on the Association's motion to dismiss the suit. You may recall that the judge ruled in August 2011 in favor of the Association but offered plaintiff (Burns) the opportunity to file an amended complaint which was done. As a result, in early October the Association filed motions against the amended complaint and to dismiss the suit outright. Following a 14 February 2012 hearing on these motions, the judge wrote on 7 March to both parties stating that he was ready to rule but wanted to schedule an evidentiary hearing first on the motion to dismiss. As noted above, that hearing is scheduled for 5 June. I will advise you in the next Newsletter of the results of this hearing.

Regards to all of you in the larger Skyline Lakes family!

Eugene Skotzko, President
Skyline Laker Propertyholders Association

What are those green things that are sprouting?

Well it's spring (although hard to distinguish from the past winter), so lots of wonderful green things that are part of our well-loved mountain vegetation are making an appearance. But there are some other new green things along the roadsides this year at the entrance to many properties with residences. These are signs with house numerals to help emergency assistance personnel locate a property. (More than a year ago Page County issued notices to all homeowners that they must mark their property with such reflective signs or face a fine of \$250 – luckily, enforcement has been slow.) Now a majority of the residences in Skyline Lakes have been marked with house numerals. Thanks to the M&I committee for all their numeral bolting and stake pounding and to Orv Lee who worked to obtain a Firewise grant that provided the numerals. A new Firewise grant proposal will be submitted in the near future that requests the numerals needed for the 27 residences which remain unmarked.

SLPA's Firewise Program: History and Future

Skyline Lakes received its first grant for fire mitigation from the Virginia Department of Forestry in 2004. Under this program, initiated and supervised by Patrick Burns, we received a grant of \$21,000. A \$9,000 portion went to widening the road at Twin Creeks by 10 feet and replacing the small culverts with two large culvert pipes necessary to prevent this critical part of the road from being a choke point for egress to the gate for 80% of our owners. (Our experience at Twin Creeks intersection of Lake View and Park Line Road and the wash-out of the upper lake during the September '96 flood was one to be long remembered!) The larger \$12,000 portion of the grant went to widening the Lake Drive cul-de-sac to 45 feet and building a roadway along the lower lake to allow access for fire fighting equipment. In addition, the Forestry Department installed three 4' x 20' culverts to create a large overflow spillway to allow for future floods. The improvements made possible by this first grant were carried out in 2005 under what is now called the "Firewise Program." The Stanley Volunteer Fire Department, headed up by Fire Chief Terry Pettit, then installed a dry hydrant extending into Meadows Lake to replace the one previously existing in the upper, now vanished, lake.

Since that time Skyline Lakes has received grants from Firewise for chipping waste material, gleaned from our debris laden forest floor, and piled at the sides of the roads by our many volunteers, the latest group headed up by Carl Hallinan. From the most recent grant we also have reflective street numbers marking the location of most of the cabins and homes in Skyline Lakes.

Skyline Lakes is recognized by the Forestry Department as a Firewise Community, eligible for grants because of our vulnerability. According to Boyd Ritchie, who heads up the Firewise program in Page County, Skyline Lakes is especially susceptible to having a dangerous fire. Fire spreads rapidly in our steep mountainous terrain, which is heavily forested. Unfortunately, right now we are not viewed very favorably for receiving another Firewise grant because our forests are still a mess, having been cleaned up very little since the horrible Thanksgiving ice storm of 2006. The numerous dead and downed trees that remain would be tinder for a fire, which could sweep through our hillsides destroying cabins and houses. **We must get to work both for our own immediate safety and to demonstrate to the Firewise Program that we are an active community worthy of continued support.** Larry Austin and Andy Kent have been doing a real service by cutting trees and removing brush from roadsides. What is needed now is for individual property owners to clear open firebreak areas around their homes (if you don't live in the area, consider arranging with someone local to do the work). In a forest fire live trees burn readily, too, so clearing 30 feet or more from structures is recommended, especially on the downhill side, with removal of pine, spruce and other resinous trees/shrubs being emphasized. The Board is

working on arranging a common area where cleared materials can be piled to be burned by the Fire Department (NOT the entrance parking lot). Watch for information posting by the bath house.

The Forestry Department again has stimulus funding to be provided through the Firewise program for 2012/2013, and our Board of Directors plans to apply to take advantage of these hazard mitigation grants. The request would include funds for immediate completion of the house numeral marking project, chipping, extending culverts and enlarging more cul-de-sacs to 45 feet in diameter to allow fire trucks to turn around. However, we will have serious competition for another grant because there are 4,000 eligible Firewise communities in Virginia. **Please pitch in to the clearing effort to help Skyline Lakes look better for obtaining another much needed grant!**

Behold our Skyline Spring - By Loie Lee

For those of you who love flowers, but don't want to dig out the rocks, buy plants, ruin your knees in the dirt, haul water, fertilize and wish for sunshine and rain in the right amounts and at the right time, there are surprises awaiting you all year long on this glorious mountain. There exists in our immediate neighborhood an abundance of wild flowers to enjoy from spring until the snow flies and you don't even have to leave the road to observe Mother Nature's handiwork. For example, right beside the road the first flower to appear in the spring is the little yellow colt's foot. It resembles a dandelion, but loves to grow in the gravel. A week later, one of the most prolific flowers on our mountain, is the beautiful blood root. It flourishes on the steep sides of the road in bunches of blossoms, each flower with 10 to 14 white petals. Pick one and pinch the stem. Blood comes pouring out. They will cover the road bank for about two weeks and then watch for the black berry bushes to blossom, rivaled by the wild apple tree blossoms. It's as if someone has planted apple trees all over the mountain. You might also see a cherry tree in full bloom here and there. At the same time keep an eye out for the little yellow rag wart, again on the road banks. Then, how about the trilliums? Their three large petals vary in color from white to pale pink. The twin creeks area is loaded with them. They love the damp areas between the two creeks. The north slope above the missing lake will also be dotted with trilliums.

Now lilacs are not wild, but we have enough of them to believe that they are. From Jonny Housden's abundant supply at the beginning of Park Circle Road, down Park Line to the row of lilacs at White's place, then around by Foster's to the Lees at the end of Tracey Drive, the bushes, all with the big doubles, are gorgeous for about three weeks starting in early to mid April. I haven't mentioned the red buds. They are so abundant coming up Tanner's Ridge that everyone notices them. However they become quite rare by the time you reach our gate. They find it difficult to grow at our altitude.

So if you enjoyed the spring flowers you will be overjoyed at the great numbers of wild flowers that bloom in July and August. You will find over twenty varieties without even trying. I'll introduce you to them next issue.

Help Save Meadows Lake!

In the near future the Maintenance and Improvements Committee will be focusing on what needs to be done to improve and sustain the lower lake. Most immediately, eroded spots in the dam's face need to be filled and a partial blockage of the overflow grate must be cleared. Longer range plans include deciding how best to drain and dredge the lake and possibly building a new dock.

However, without everyone's help, the M&I Committee's work could be wasted. The dam may look like a road but it definitely isn't. Driving and parking on the dam, which lacks the compacted base structure of a road, contributes to breaking down the dam. If you were unaware

of this softer base nature of the dam and have been driving onto the surface of the dam, please stop doing so. And, if you see any guests or other people who may not understand the problem doing so, please politely explain and ask them to stop. The M&I Committee has stabilized the posts and replaced the chain to the lake area as a reminder.

The Board would also like to remind everyone to restrict building fires and fire rings to the gravel parking lot area (several have been built in restricted areas, including one that blocked emergency access to the Dry Hydrant). Please also be mindful that setting snares to trap animals in the common area of the lake is unsafe and prohibited.

Thanks for your help! Together, barring another disastrous hurricane, we should be able to maintain and enjoy Meadows Lake.

Sad News

Except for the big snow surprise in the end of October, weather-wise it was a mild and gentle winter for Page County. But otherwise, it was rough winter for the Skyline Lakes family. In the past few months we have suffered the loss of three members of the Association, all in the original group of property owners: William Atkins, Francis Cole, and Irene Faubion. Additionally, Brenda Breeden of Tanner's Ridge Rd —not a current Skyline Lakes property owner but still a dear and integral part of our community – died recently. Those who knew and loved these people mourn them and even members of Skyline Lakes who never met them are saddened and regret the loss to our community.

Welcome to the Newcomers

We have new property owners, who have plans to be homeowners. Jon and Beth Cayer hail from Maryland but they want to build a second home in Skyline Lakes and ultimately to retire here. They recently purchased four lots from the Thompson estate and so far have managed to have a septic system installed. More clearing of some of the land, a well and house construction are in the future. They often can be found on weekends close to the entrance of Skyline Lakes in the cul-de-sac that was known as "Jack's Turn." However, that road has been renamed Raven's Roost Ct, now marked with a new blue road sign (Page County required renaming because "Jack's Turn" was too close to another name, "Jackie's Place."). So, if you see activity on a weekend, stop and say hello. Jon and Beth are excited about being here and want to get more involved in the community.

Remember to Let the Board Know When Properties Change Hands

When properties in Skyline Lakes are sold the realtors are supposed to inform the Association of changes in ownership. This sometimes happens – but not always. And, in instances of a direct sale by an owner without using a realtor, it's not uncommon for SLPA to be left in the dark about the transfer. So the only truly reliable way of knowing about new property owners joining our community is for the selling property owner to inform the Board/Treasurer about the transaction. Please remember to do this and help keep our records up to date.

Time to be Thinking About New Board members.

It's hard to believe another year has gone by. But, indeed, it has and it's time to start thinking about election of three new (or the same) Board members, as the current terms of Regina Austin, Jimmy Painter, and Joyce Richards will expire in September with the Annual Meeting. With this in mind, at its 22 April 2012 meeting the Board established a Nominating Committee consisting Jane Harrington and Orv Lee. Since then Scotty Skotzko has kindly agreed to join the committee. Anyone wishing to suggest nominees for the 2012 election should bring the names of candidates to the attention of the Nominating Committee. Alternatively, let any member of the Board know of suggestions, but do remind that member to inform the committee ASAP.

Motions passed at the 4 February 2012 SLPA Board Meeting:

That Ron and Beth Cayer, (new owners of lots A-53, 54, 55, and 56) be allowed to meet county building restrictions by using more than one lot for a building site, providing that they agree to pay a double SLPA assessment (2 lots) for that county recognized site.

That the Board authorize the treasurer to form a committee to undertake a Capital Reserve and Needs Study and report their progress back to the Board.

Motions passed at the 22 April 2012 SLPA Board Meeting:

That the Board authorize new property owners Ron and Beth Cayer to tap into the Association-owned well, which is located near Mat May's property, following their negotiation with the five current users about access and sharing of costs.

That the Board express strong appreciation to Andy Kent and Larry Austin for all their efforts, especially the time committed recently to repair and servicing of the tractor.

That, in light of excessive wear and tear noted on the tractor, further use of the Association's maintenance equipment be restricted to individuals designated by the M&I Committee.

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