

Skyline Lakes Property-holders Association

www.skylinelakes.org

President's Letter

Greetings and best wishes to all of you! Normally at this time of year I would extol the beautiful winter landscape at Skyline Lakes but snowfall this year has been minimal. We've seen more rain and mud with freezing and thawing of the roads than real snow accumulation. Fortunately from a budget perspective, snow plowing has also been minimal so far but winter isn't over and we might yet have a significant storm.

Roads: As noted, repeated instances of freezing and thawing during this winter have left the roads squishy and vulnerable to serious surface damage from heavy vehicles or overly-fast driving. As always in the winter, please don't venture onto Skyline Lakes roads without a four wheel drive vehicle and keep chains in reserve. Renting owners: please warn any winter renters of these common sense requirements for driving on the development's roads and recall that the Association has no obligation to rescue snow bound renters. As always, snow removal operations will commence once three inches of snow have accumulated. The Association will be erecting a sign at the entrance to the development warning winter visitors of conditions and the need for four-wheel drive vehicles. Looking forward, we expect the spring road maintenance effort later this spring will repair any winter damage and will continue the steady effort to improve the overall quality of SLPA roads.

Equipment shed: The SLPA Board is discussing the erection of a permanent equipment shed to be centrally located in the development where our tractor, its implements, and numerous other tools and equipment can be safely stored. Planning is in the early stages and I will keep the membership informed of progress on this matter.

SLPA records archival project: This long overdue project to digitize SLPA's paper records is underway. Former treasurer Jane Skotzko is working her way through more than a half-dozen boxes of paper records which document Association activity all the way back to its founding over 40 years ago. This is a very large job and the Board is grateful to Jane for volunteering to do it.

Regards and I hope to see each of you around the development soon.

Eugene Skotzko
President, SLPA

Looking ahead on the roads

Our roads have held up well through the winter. A solid road bed has been established and most of the roads are now well formed with a good center crown. Spring road maintenance in April/May will emphasize restoring ditches and doing some additional grading where needed. The M&I committee plans for 2013 will focus on culverts: extending a few; replacing ones with too small a carrying capacity; and adding new ones. Culvert pipe is expensive so just a few will be purchased each year as part of the ongoing campaign to improve drainage and keep water from eroding our roadways. Work will also be done on widening and enhancing cul-de-sacs.

Let's keep clearing – and FIGHT THOSE VINES!

Right now in late winter/early spring (we hope) is a great time to work outdoors, clearing woodlots. Days can be pleasantly warm but the bugs aren't yet swarming and being a nuisance. Leaves aren't yet back on the trees and annual plants in the understory have died back so it's easy to see what you're doing. Several community members put time in to clearing efforts last year. If you were among them, good work and keep on truckin' ! If not, please join their numbers and turn your hand to some clearing this year. Fallen limbs or downed trees as well as some still standing but partly snapped off in the great Thanksgiving ice storm of November 2006 are just so much tinder should there ever be a forest fire on our slopes.

Those broken off but not fallen trees are posing another problem: they serve as ramps for the growth of vines. **Vines have run amok and are killing trees throughout Skyline Lakes.** Virginia Creeper may turn a lovely crimson color in fall but that is its only redeeming value. Left unchecked, it can reach a tree crown, growing thicker and thicker to eventually overpower a tree's own foliage. Other nasty climbing culprits include Grapevines, Bitter Sweet, Poison Ivy, Greenbrier and even Honeysuckle. Bitter sweet, especially, is becoming increasingly pervasive throughout our community. All of the afore-mentioned vines are perennials, meaning the individual plants persist from year to year, growing thicker and stronger on the trees. There is also a fast growing annual with white flowers. It dies each fall and has left unsightly shroud-like messes, especially on trees along the roadsides. Seeds from this annual are abundant so it returns in greater numbers the following year. In some areas these various vines have come to form hanging curtains or tents so thick that passage of deer is obstructed.

True eradication of these climbers will take repeated efforts and strong measures including poisoning with brush clearing agents and/or pulling and digging of roots (digging the roots of prickly Greenbrier is especially challenging since they form large knotted masses, which can't be cut through with a shovel). However, it doesn't take much effort to at least liberate trees from these stranglers. Simply cut through a vine in one or two places along its length close to the base of the tree, pulling down what parts of it that you can above the cuts. Everything that has formed a strangle hold above the cuts will die. After you have severed the vines, if you close your eyes and stand quietly, you might even hear a tree sighing with relief!

New on Park Line Road

Skyline Lakes has new neighbors on Park Line Rd. Right next to the little cabin on those great rocks owned by Evans Painter a new two story cabin is under construction and largely finished. It is owned by David (“Blue”) Gray and Alice Fendley and word has it that Blue did the majority of the construction single-handedly and very speedily before winter set in last fall. The cabin backs to the Park and at that height surely offers magnificent views, especially from the second story porch/deck. As soon as the weather warms just a bit more, it’s likely we’ll see the finish siding go on rapidly. In fact, it will probably seem to be done almost overnight, if the pace of Blue’s prior work is any indicator.

Finally we have road signs and house address numerals

All of our roads are now marked with signage including Raven’s Roost Ct, the name chosen by Jon and Beth Cayer for the road where they are building. These signs are important for emergency response teams to be able to find the location of a problem should the need ever arise. New blue signs seem to be appearing elsewhere in the county, too. For example, have you noticed Mindrolling Dr to the left off Pine Grove Rd shortly before you turn to come uphill on Tanner’s Ridge Rd? Hmm...

And, thanks to the persistence of Crystal Liebenow, we finally have green reflective house address numerals for all the relevant properties in Skyline Lakes. It was quite a saga that began with half of the first set of numerals going missing. As part of our most recent award, Firewise agreed to replace the missing half. That was the good news. The bad news was that when the new set arrived they were the wrong numbers. Recently, yet another replacement set has arrived and, once the ground thaws to a sufficient depth, M&I Committee members will be installing them in positions visible to emergency crews but removed from the path of snow plowing. Bolts and sturdy posts for the numerals were purchased from SLPA’s budget and donations from home owners to defray that cost are heartily encouraged. Come spring all the houses will be labeled in compliance with those notices from Page County. So no one in Skyline Lakes will be subject to that potential fine of \$250, which we’ve been warned about several times but luckily have escaped thus far.

My Love for Wildflowers

(contributed by Loie Lee)

Spring is upon us and it's time to watch for the first wildflowers to show their colors. The very first spring flower you will see in abundance is bloodroot, a beautiful daisy-like white flower, which covers the roadside banks everywhere in Skyline Lakes. If you wish to know where its name came from just break off a stem and watch the blood flow. It and the wild geranium, which blooms in August to cover the hillsides all over our mountain, are the two most prominent wildflowers we have. Most of the others appear in areas most suited to their particular soil, water and sunny conditions. Some love shady areas, some wet spots, some western slopes and some full sun. For instance you will find the trilliums most abundantly in the damp area around the twin springs area where Lake View Drive and Park Line Road meet. Spotted touch-me-not loves the damp upper side of Short Cut Road. Mountain laurel is almost exclusively on the western slope overlooking Price Ridge Road. Beautiful white and pink dame's rocket appears in mid-summer in abundance on the east side of Park Heights Road. Common milkweed is made beautiful when it is covered with butterflies. Look closely and you may find the black and yellow caterpillars about ready to become monarch butterflies. One flower sprinkled through the woods is black cohosh, or snake root. The lovely blue flowered chicory, used to flavor Louisiana's coffee, likes to grow right beside the road. Common in late fall are yarrow and Queen Anne's lace, always accompanied by that hated ragweed.

Among my favorites are the flowers that occur, often alone on our mountain, such as the lady's slipper, columbine, Dutchman's breeches, ox-eye daisies, wild azalea, wild lupine, May apples, and turtle heads. Goldenrod, which grows to six feet, with those big yellow flowers, is so abundant in my front yard that it has become a pest.

There are now 45 wildflowers on my list that I have identified and maybe a dozen other beauties I have not identified. Everywhere I have traveled I have never seen the variety of wildflowers that exist right here on our mountain. Perhaps it is because the area was once a 500 acre cattle grazing land. In addition we have fairly good soil, if you can separate it from the rocks.

Motion passed at the 10 February 2013 SLPA Board meeting:

- That the previously specified tax return monies from Page County plus funds from the sale of unused equipment at auction be reserved for use in periodic roadside clearing and removal of limbs overhanging roadways.

2013 SLPA Board of Directors

Gene Skotzko (President)
(703) 939-7624; (540) 778-2633
eskotzko@verizon.net

Joyce Richards (Vice President)
(703) 361-5677
ucjoyce@yahoo.com

Jane Harrington (Secretary)
(540) 778-3009
janegoneelsewhere@gmail.com

Crystal Liebenow (Treasurer)
(703) 743-5115
cliebenow@comcast.net

Andy Kent (M&I Committee Chair)
(703) 929-2481

Regina Austin
(540) 778-3486

Jimmy Painter
(540) 778-3141
jphunt4ever@aol.com

Evans Painter
(540) 778-3894

Doug Southers
(540) 778-1312
worksforfaith@yahoo.com

Assistant Treasurer: Jane Skotzko (non-voting)
(703) 242-8828, jskotzko@verizon.net

Accountant: Sue Dawson (540) 778-1150