

April 15, 2026



# BLACKHAWK NEWSLETTER

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## ***Letter from Blackhawk Ranch POA President***

Greetings to everyone,

This is a historic year- the 30th anniversary of Blackhawk Ranch. The Articles of Incorporation are dated March 8, 1996. I know there are a few long-time owners among us, even as there have been several parcels changing hands in just the last few months. Good for all of us, grabbing a piece of this legacy.

Editor: [Amber Laugesen](#)

Reporters: Anne Ebie, Susanne

Bloomfield

30 years isn't that long in the grand scheme of things, but it's long enough for a community to have established itself as a group of folks who care for the environment, who care about open space and security, and who care about living a little bit outside the box. It's good to be a part of BHR history and the trail of folks who have made it a part of their lives.

This year at the Annual Meeting (July 25, 2026) there will be three Board of Directors slots to fill due to end of terms. None of the slots are required to live full-time on the Ranch, but an individual's availability does play a part in each Board position.

One slot is now filled by Carol Ryan, Treasurer. She will be running again.

Another slot is now filled by Nancy Pasternack, Secretary. She will be running again.

The third slot is now filled by Jim Nance, ex-Road Chair and now temporary Vice President. Jim is not running again. (His Road Chair position has been assumed by Frank Horwich, ex-Vice President.)

If you have ever considered being a member of the BHR Board, this is an opportunity to do so. To run for a slot on the Board, please submit the following:

- A biography of pertinent information of your qualifications, and aspirations for your community.
- Your Lot number, lot status (home/camp/open space), how long you have owned the property, plans for building, if any, and what connects you to the land you own here (full-time resident, this is a 2nd home, etc.)

These write-ups will be included in the Annual Meeting Packet sent out prior to the meeting. This is a great chance to volunteer for your Ranch and see how things actually get done. You can email me ([president@blackhawkranch.org](mailto:president@blackhawkranch.org)), or the Board directly ([bhrpoaboard@blackhawkranch.org](mailto:bhrpoaboard@blackhawkranch.org)). Please submit your write-up no later than May 30, 2026.

We would like to ask for contributions to the Trusted Contractors list. If you have come across a good contractor that you would recommend, let us know. Likewise, if you have had any difficulties with anyone on the list, or if you know someone has retired, etc. The list is on the website under the Owner Resources tab; we'll get it updated with your input. Thanks.

Amber Laugesen has been the Editor of this newsletter since April of 2024. The creativity and resourcefulness she put into this publication you receive every other month has been inspiring. Amber, you have been the glue that held the newsletter together, and we appreciate you.

As you and your husband Adam are moving to explore opportunities elsewhere, know that you will be missed from the community. Good luck you guys, all the best.

If anybody out there knows a good rain dance, please perform it on behalf of the Ranch... We'd all appreciate it.

All the best to everyone,

Tim Kurtz  
President, Blackhawk Ranch POA

### ***The Ebie's Fire Mitigation Journey***

by Anne Ebie

With this last exceptionally warm, dry winter we've had on the ranch, I suspect many of us are even more concerned than usual about the risk of a wild fire on the ranch, and by extension about insurance costs for our homes. The POA board EMC has provided a great deal of helpful information over the years about what individuals can do to reduce the risk of losing a home to a wildfire, both through presentations by experts and links to fire mitigation documents. Through many mistakes, trial and error and finally fully understanding and following these recommendations Dan and I have ended up some pretty good results. We thought it might be helpful to others to share our story.

Dan and I bought our parcel in 1999, one of the three last in the initial Land Properties offering. When we bought it, our ridge was a combination of tangled half dead trees and scrub oak that was impossible to walk through, and stony, expansive soil plots where nothing grew. For several years, we just cut trails and a driveway, oblivious to any need for fire mitigation. Our first efforts in that direction ironically were not focused of fire mitigation, but on forest management. The POA board invited a Colorado forester to speak at the POA annual meeting about the need to manage the forests. He explained the with the combination of fire suppression and logging over the last hundred years or so, our area forests are in an unnatural and unhealthy state. An example is that healthy mature Ponderosa forest should have about 40 trees per acre, but many parts of the ranch have over 400. This forces the trees to fight for moisture and sunlight, and ensures none will be healthy and robust. Based on this expert input, we started the long process of thinning trees around our future house site. We noticed a few positive effects early on. We found we had a lot more usable space than we thought we had on our ridge and our views kept getting better. The remaining trees after thinning got a lot fuller and healthier. Grasses and wildflowers started appearing where there were none before. We even found that if we broadcast a shallow layer of wood chips from the trees we removed on the rocky, expansive soil areas, grasses and wildflowers would start to grow within a few years.

A few years later, as the 20 year mega drought began to take hold in the southwest, the POA board organized the first of many presentations on the importance of fire mitigation. The presentation was given by a county fire marshal. The two take aways I recall from this was the importance of using flame resistant building materials and the description of how juniper trees explode when they burn and should never be anywhere near your house. At this point we had built our barn, which was originally board and batten. We had also thinned the trees around the barn, but left seven or eight beautiful junipers in a grove to the southeast. One especially beloved juniper was right up against the corner of the barn and sheltered a hammock. We had many heartfelt discussions and finally decided that after hearing from an expert whose job it

was to fight fires, ignoring his advice would just be dumb. So with much regret we took out all the junipers near our barn. About this time we also noticed that the scrub oak was growing back fast and was already becoming a ladder fuel again. This was when we started brush mowing our cleared areas every fall with a walk behind brush mower rented in Trinidad. This kept the scrub oak and other taller vegetation to manageable heights.

The next phase of our journey had to do with revisiting the building materials and construction techniques we should be using. The first change we made was after learning about ember storms in a document put out by the EMC. The gist was that fire driven winds could blow embers for miles, where they would lodge in any flammable nook and start a fire. We looked at our board and batten barn and realized we had a wood building covered with kindling. Our fix for this was to pull the battens off and cover it with metal. It's not totally fire proof (nothing is), but at least would have a better chance of surviving an ember storm.

It was about this time that we first got insurance on the



barn. We had to go with a high risk pool as it was just an out building and we did not live on site, so it was pretty expensive even for a low level of coverage. With this experience, when we started looking at building our house,

one of our prime criteria was to make it as fire resistant as possible. As the number of catastrophic fires around the country increased, we saw at least one news story after every major fire about a “miracle house” that survived in a neighborhood otherwise totally destroyed by fire. Of course, these houses were not miracles, just houses built to [firewise construction specifications](#). As such we designed our house with a steel roof and rock/stucco exterior and tile porch with no external vents.

When we were (mostly) finished with our house in 2019, we went to get insurance. Only one company came out to inspect our property and declined to insure it. Others just cited the general area or distance from a fire station and declined. We finally found one that was willing to insure us for around \$4000 a year, more than we hoped, but at least we were insured. The next year they informed us that they would not be insuring us again when our policy ran out in December. We didn't know if we could find a company to insure us at all, and if we could afford it if we did, so we were seriously thinking we may have to go without insurance. With this in mind, we started looking at any way we could to give our home the best chance of surviving a wildfire as possible.

Around this time we went to yet another presentation presented by a local Fire Chief. Although we thought we knew a lot about defensible spaces, we found that we were mistaken in a few key areas. We had thinned trees out to about 100 feet from our house but found at the presentation that the



distance needed to be extended according to slope. Since we were on the top of a hill, we actually needed to mitigate 200 to 250

feet out. We also discovered that we had misunderstood the spacing requirements between trees or groups of trees. We thinned trees based on the distance between trunks, not canopies. As such we realized we needed to remove a lot more trees (about 200) than we already had. We did so in the intervening summer. We mowed our place in the fall before we started contacting insurance companies. A couple were not even willing to talk to us because of our area, but we finally got one to come out to inspect the property. The inspector walked around the perimeter of the house, then around the 200 foot perimeter of the ignition zone, came back up and said "this is exactly what we want to see". We got an insurance quote of \$1800 a few days later. In the last several years it's actually gone down a little.

We do realize that we were lucky in that we found an insurance company that actually prioritized the value of mitigation, but [this new law](#) may make this more widespread in the insurance industry. That being said, the same company has quoted much higher rates to neighbors who have not completed the mitigation recommended by [National Fire Protection Association](#). Besides, if we have a choice, we would prefer that our home survive a wildfire rather than being compensated by insurance, which is the core reason for the fire wise recommendations.

We have a pretty good mitigated area, but it requires ongoing maintenance. Trees, grass and scrub oak continue to grow at a good



pace every summer. We now use a brush mower on our tractor to knock it back in the fall. This has an unexpected bonus that the mowed areas seem to come back greener every summer. The brush mower creates mulch, which grass and wild flower seeds seem

to like. There are some areas that are too steep to run the brush mower. We've been cutting back the scrub oak and tree saplings by hand every five years or so, which works but is very labor intensive. We recently bought a hedge trimmer to see if it will help. We are also continuing to thin trees and remove dead wood outside of the requisite ignition zone. We are doing this with an eye to forest health as opposed to fire mitigation, so we are not removing nearly as many trees. It does seem to make the remaining trees healthier and the wildlife happier.

Finally, to answer a couple of questions people have asked:

1. Does cutting this many trees has cause erosion, since we are up on a steep hill? The answer is generally no, as the terrain is rocky and the scrub oak and grasses hold any soil in place. There were, however, a few washes that preexisted the tree cutting. We used some of the logs from the tree trimming. We've found that soil and seeds will collect behind the logs and turn the wash into a stabilized green area.
2. How do we dispose of the cut trees and brush? We used our chipper for the areas easily accessible and the lop and scatter technique further down the hill. We've found that if we cut brush into 2 foot sections and scatter it around so that each piece contacts the ground, it breaks down in a couple of years.

We hope sharing our experience may help in all of our ongoing efforts to mitigate. Please contact the EMC for more information, they have some great documentation and resources!

## ***A Spring Reminder about Noxious Weeds***

by Susanne Bloomfield, Weeds Chair

Just a reminder to BHR property owners that the Common Mullein and Musk Thistle, the most prevalent noxious weeds on Blackhawk, are beginning to awaken. Pictured are the early stages of these two outlaw weeds. More photos and information on common noxious weeds can be found in the [April 15, 2024 newsletter](#). They are most easily eradicated in their early stages, usually beginning in May.

Although all property owners are responsible for the inspection and control of noxious weeds on their own properties, several Blackhawk volunteers on the Weeds Committee have assumed the responsibility of spraying noxious weeds along both sides of about 34 miles of BHR roads (30 feet from the center of the road on each side) twice a year. Current volunteers who have agreed to help my husband and me include Art and Wendy Jackson, Brad and Marian Brooks, Nancy Pasternak, Ron Lovely, and Cricket Sutter. More volunteers are always welcome on the committee to help keep BHR roadways beautiful.

Individual property owners may rent a POA sprayer filled with Milestone herbicide to help control weeds on their own properties. Please email me if you wish to rent one or volunteer to help the committee: [stbloomfield@hotmail.com](mailto:stbloomfield@hotmail.com).

