

## **Santa fe Trail Ranch Property Owner Information**

### **Welcome!**

Welcome to Santa Fe Trail Ranch, a community of people who have moved here from all over the United States and a few countries beyond. Regardless of place of origin or reason for buying land on this ranch, you'll find that all property owners share a strong sense of adventure, a love of nature, and an appreciation for peace and privacy not possible in most other areas.

As a community, governed by covenants, and managed by an elected Board of Directors, we work together to take care of our ranch and to handle common challenges, such as wildland fires and noxious weeds. Many in our community are active in the surrounding communities, both as volunteers and as members of civic organizations. Many in our community are artists or are skilled in crafts and construction. We tend to share our talents and learn from each other. Many in our community came here to be alone and enjoy the opportunity to be left alone. All of us, either full or part-time residents, feel we have a little piece of heaven here.

We hope you benefit from the following pages of information which encompass how we've chosen to govern and organize ourselves, how to build structures for human habitation on the ranch, and how to live in harmony and respect with our wildlife neighbors, both flora and fauna.

We are pleased to have you join our community.

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## **Ranch Operations and Governance**

### **Website**

The Santa Fe Trail Ranch (SFTR) informational website, [santafetrailranch.com](http://santafetrailranch.com), is the best place to access “need-to-know” information about the ranch. It is not a social media site. Board meeting minutes, financial reports, governance documents, contact information, property owner listings, and articles of various interests are just a few of the items you will find on the SFTR website. As a property owner you will be, upon request, granted permission to access owner-restricted areas of the website. To apply, click on the “Property Owner User Guide for new SFTR website”, found on the home page. This will give instructions for logging in as well as how to use the website.

The ranch, its residents, and its governance, exist in an ever-changing environment; therefore, this document cannot contain details such as current board members and meeting notices. That information is available on the SFTR website. Throughout this document, you will be directed to specific areas of the website where you can obtain the desired information and/or documents. In addition, important Alerts (Fire Danger, Fire Ban, Road Conditions) and notifications of upcoming meetings and community events are continuously updated on the SFTR website, so it is incumbent upon all property owners who wish to keep abreast of the most current happenings to access the SFTR website frequently.

### **Property Owners Association**

The Santa Fe Trail Ranch Property Owners Association (POA) was incorporated in June 1990 by the developer, Charles Baldwin. The Board of Directors (BOD) - nine members who are elected by the POA members to three-year terms - manages the POA. The current BOD and their contact information can be found on the website under “POA/Officers”. Articles of Incorporation, Protective Covenants and By-Laws govern the POA and its Board. All of these documents are available on the website under “About/Legal Disclosures”.

### **Board Meetings**

The BOD generally meets every other month. The current schedule can be found on the website under “POA/Officers/Meetings”. The Annual Owners Meeting is usually scheduled in October, when annual elections take place.

### **Finance and Legal**

In order to provide necessary services to property owners, the BOD collects annual dues and oversees the expenditure of these funds for such activities as road maintenance and trash collection. The budget and dues amount for the next year are established at the last meeting of the previous year - usually in December. The annual dues are then billed in January. Financial statements and annual budget can be found on the website under “About/Legal

Disclosures/Documents". We will display 2-year financial information. It is important that property owners maintain their current contact information so that dues statements are properly billed. That can be done under "Search/Owner Update Info" once you log in to the website, or by contacting the current Finance Board Member.

It is also the responsibility of the BOD to enforce the Protective Covenants. Property Owners should take the time to familiarize themselves with the Covenants in order to avoid inadvertent breaches. A copy of the Covenants can be found on the website under "About/Legal Disclosures". The BOD has the authority to take legal action, when required, to protect POA interests and property owners' rights.

### **Committees**

The BOD has established various committees to oversee ranch activities. This information can be found on the website under "POA/Committees". Property owners are encouraged to join committees and participate in the decision-making process.

### **Contracted Services**

The POA contracts with various vendors to supply services to SFTR. For example, the POA contracts with a road contractor to maintain the roads and remove snow. We also have a refuse contractor for trash pickup at our dumpster areas. A property owner should contact the proper committee chairperson if there is an issue with the vendor's performances and/or service.

### **Metropolitan District**

In October 1997, the POA membership approved the formation of a Metropolitan District to oversee the funding and completion of the ranch water system.

There is some understandable confusion on the part of some property owners as to the difference between the POA and the Metro.

The POA is that association comprised of all the SFTR property owners. Its function is to manage and administer the affairs of the POA, through the elected Board of Directors, in accordance with the Governance Documents and the wishes of the owners.

The Metropolitan District (Metro) is a Special District formed under Title 32 of the Colorado Revised Statutes. It is a quasi-governmental entity, managed by a five-member Board of Directors, and was formed to manage and operate the ranch's water system.

While there is a symbiotic relationship between the two organizations, they are independent of one another.

The Metro Bond for financing the original installation was retired in March 2019. As of 2022, each lot is being charged \$35/month as an "Availability Fee", due to a need to increase the budget for many water repairs and maintenance.

The water system has been functional since October 2004 and is accepting applications for residential service/connection. If you are interested in applying for water service, contact the Metro Business Office by clicking "contact" on the SFTR website. All of the application documents can be found, opened, and saved to your computer, from the SFTR website under "Metro/Metro info". Once the water is installed, you will be billed quarterly for water usage and maintenance fee.

### **Bridge Loan**

A 15-year bridge loan was obtained in 2016, and each property chose to either pay in one lump sum or make payments over the life of the loan. The bridge loan was obtained through the Metro District and any questions should be directed to the Metro Business Office.

## **Guidelines for Ranch Living**

Beyond property owners' individual parcels, we all share the use of many "common areas". These areas include over eighty miles of roads, 15 feet of easements on both sides of the roads, and various small parcels throughout the ranch where water tanks, mailboxes, etc. are located. Because we share the common areas, we must cooperate to maintain and protect those areas. This section explains the protocol and requirements of common area use.

### **Common Areas**

The only legal entrance to the ranch is across the concrete bridge at Exit 6. Security cameras at the bridge can record the car license numbers of all vehicles entering the ranch.

A parking area is located just south of the entrance for guests and others sharing rides. Temporary parking of small vehicles, motor homes, construction vehicles and recreation vehicles is permitted. Please be sure to park in the parking area and not in front of the bulletin board or the mailboxes.

The bulletin board is for the use of property owners.

The US Postal Service services the mailboxes which are provided by the POA. Residents acquire a ranch mailbox by signing up with the Postmaster in Trinidad. You must have a permanent dwelling to qualify. Please do not write your name or any other information on the mailboxes. There are also slots for misdirected mail and for mailing out mail.

## Dumpsters

The disposal of garbage and refuse is the responsibility of each property owner. The BOD contracts for the collection of household garbage and refuse from the designated collection site. The contract with the garbage collection company is strict. The dumpsters are for regular household trash **ONLY!** No toxic material such as car batteries or paint, no construction materials such as drywall or lumber, no tree cuttings, no tires, and no household items such as mattresses or furniture are allowed in or around the dumpsters. **Please break down any cardboard boxes.** It is each owner's responsibility to instruct their contractors and sub-contractors that they must remove their refuse from the ranch and not use the dumpsters. If disallowed materials are placed in the dumpsters, we face the possibility of having our trash collection contract voided. Any items outside of regular household trash must be taken to the city landfill located at the northwest end of Trinidad. The fees are very reasonable, and the hours are convenient.

No trash is to be left outside the dumpsters, and the lids must be secured to protect our bears. The dumpsters have "bear-proof" lids that must be handled with care due to their weight. After depositing your trash, please be sure to close and latch the lids.

## Roads

Our roads are fragile and sometimes dangerous. The largest portion of our POA budget is spent maintaining these roads. With years of thoughtful planning, the road committee is slowly improving the contouring and surfacing of our roads. The extreme weather conditions we experience can quickly deteriorate our roads.

Maintaining and improving our roads requires the cooperation of all residents, visitors and contract service providers. The road committee monitors road conditions and stretches the budget as much as possible, but road users must treat the roads with care. Maintain a reasonable speed at all times and stay off the roads as much as possible when they are wet. The best advice here is **SLOW DOWN!** The ranch's posted speed limit is **25 mph**, however, with blind spots, limited visibility and unexpected wildlife, it may be prudent to at times adjust your speed downward.

Road information tips and snow plowing can be found on the website under "POA/Committees/Road Subcommittee Charter".

## Obtaining an Address

Any new construction will be assigned an address number by the Address Committee. Article 5.1.1 of the Covenants details this process and requirements to display the address on the driveway.

## **Installing a Driveway/Culvert**

Driveway installations are considered an opening onto the roadways (which are POA common areas) to provide access to individual lots. To aid owners and their contractors in building driveways, the POA has set forth the following specifications and guidelines to minimize impact to the roadways. When in doubt, please contact the Road Committee.

- 1) Driveways should approach the roadway as close to 90 degrees as possible for maximum visibility.
- 2) Finished grade of any driveway shall be below the grade of the edge roadbed at the approach of the main road. The driveway approach shall not extend out into the main road. In no case shall the driveway approach impede the flow of traffic on the roadway, nor shall any driveway approach after the grade of the roadway nor shall any driveway approach alter the width or profile of the roadway.
- 3) Driveway approaches to the main roadway shall not impede the flow of water in the drainage ditches of the main road. A culvert must be installed in the drain ditch of the roadway to facilitate normal flows within the ditch.
- 4) Driveways shall not discharge water onto the main road. Property drainage ditches along the driveway shall channel drainage into roadway ditches. Driveway approaches shall be constructed with sufficient width to facilitate vehicles turning into and out of the approach. In no case shall the main roadway be altered to facilitate turning or altered to expand the turning radius into a driveway.
- 5) Driveway approaches to individual lots lying below the grade of the road shall not be cut out of the roadbed. The approach of such a driveway shall be filled with material from the individual lot to match the grade of the edge (shoulder) of the main road.
- 6) It is the homeowners responsibility to be certain that these guidelines are followed. Each property owner is encouraged to seek the assistance of a member of the Road Committee before putting in a driveway or a culvert that will impact a POA road. Should a driveway be improperly installed or modified, the POA may bill the owner for the expense of correcting the problem.

## **Conservancy**

The Greenlands reserve owns the five platted lots along Gallinas Canyon. These 180 acres are then leased back to the POA primarily for the visual enjoyment of this open space and as a wildlife habitat. To a limited extent, certain recreational activities such as hiking are allowed for the enjoyment of POA members.

Absolutely no motorized vehicles are allowed in this area. If you are enjoying this area, please keep your pets on a leash.

## **Rancher Lease**

The POA annually enters into a contract with a local cattle rancher who brings in cattle for grazing. The cattle, besides helping to keep the potential fire hazardous grasses under control, also maintains the ranch's agricultural status. Since Colorado is a "fence out" state, it is up to the individual property owners to erect adequate fencing if they wish to keep the cattle away from their gardens, home sites, etc.

The Grazing Committee works with state agencies to evaluate the number of cattle at SFTR, when the cattle will come, and how long they will be on the ranch.

## **Community Preparedness Handbook**

The SFTR Community Preparedness Committee has put together a "Community Preparedness Handbook" with suggestions to help all ranch residents deal with community-wide emergencies, such as a wildland fire. The Handbook is available on the website under "POA/Committees/Community Preparedness". It is recommended that all fulltime and part-time residents of the ranch read the handbook and develop a plan to deal with such emergencies.

## **Women's Group**

The Women's group provides camaraderie for SFTR women as well as fundraising efforts for the benefit of the ranch. Meetings are normally held once a month at the MOC or a member's home, and are casual and informal. The Women's Group takes leadership roles in such activities as the SFTR annual picnic, Fall ranch dinner, SFTR logowear sales, various other fundraising activities, the distribution of welcome kits to new ranch residents, and other similar ranch community activities. Minutes of the meetings are posted on the website under "POA/Meeting Minutes". Membership is open to all SFTR property owners.

## **Wildfire Mitigation**

All SFTR property owners are strongly encouraged to understand the importance of their role in wildland fire prevention. Santa Fe Trail ranch is a "Firewise Community" which means many of us are working toward reducing (mitigating) the fire hazards that exist on our properties and creating a defensible space around our structures. The local forester is a great help in helping property owners assess their fire hazards and determining how best to mitigate that danger. Contact for the local forester and fire departments are listed on the contact page of the website. Owners should also keep track of mitigation activities they do including hours, activities, tools used, and dollars spent as this information can be used on tax deductions, and for help in obtaining ranch grants. Mitigation can be helpful in obtaining better home insurance rates as well. The FHWM (Forest Health and Wildfire Mitigation) ranch committee can direct you to brochures and information as well.

## **Fire stages and bans**

The Fire Danger of our community will be noted on the announcement board you see when you cross the bridge onto the ranch. We do have a **perpetual fire ban on SFTR** with no open fires permitted. This includes: no open burning, no charcoal fires, no fireworks, no campfires, and no cigarettes discarded on the ground.

## **Wildlife**

Santa Fe Trail Ranch is blessed with an abundance of wildlife including bears, mountain lions, bobcats, ring-tailed cats, wild turkeys, deer, elk, rattlesnakes and a wide variety of birds. A few things we should know in order to safely enjoy this wildlife are:

- 1) Do not feed the animals. When you feed a wild animal, you make them more dependent on, and less afraid of, people. This can put you and the animals at risk. This is also a violation of State game laws.
- 2) Keep any attractants out of reach of animals. Put away your barbeque grill after each use, keep your garbage inside your garage, and think about closing first floor windows at night and locking doors, especially if you have paddle style door knobs. Screens will not stop a bear that smells something in your kitchen.
- 3) Learn what you should and shouldn't do in the event you have a close encounter with a potentially dangerous animal. An excellent source of information is our local Department of Wildlife Officer. This contact information can be found on the website under "Contacts". We keep brochures on the bulletin board by the mailboxes as well.
- 4) Be sure to view the website under "About/ Our Wildlife" and "Articles/Wildlife" for some informative information and photographs from our ranch.

## **Noxious Weeds**

Noxious Weeds, primarily the Canada Thistle, are problems here on the ranch. These plants can eventually ruin the grazing for cattle and wild animals. The Canada Thistle is a creeping perennial that has an extensive root system. Horizontal and vertical roots may extend 15 feet. Tillage breaks up roots and stimulates growth. Each plant usually produces 1,000 to 1,500 seeds each year that are easily transported to new areas. Seeds may remain viable in the soil for up to 20 years.

The Common Area Committee has an ongoing program to spray the Canada Thistle and other noxious weeds in all common areas. However, for the program to be 100% effective, property owners should also spray noxious weeds on their own property.

The best time to control the Canada Thistle is when the plants are actively growing in the spring or summer, at the early bloom stage of growth or after fall rains have caused the plants to resume active growth.

There is a great article on the website under "Articles/Plants and Gardening" about noxious weeds, and watch for announcements on the website about spraying activities.