

Come One! Come All!
INVERNESS RIDGE ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL MEETING

Where? At the home of Allan and Sydne Bortel, 1 Lower Dover.

When? Saturday, January 10, 2015.

Time? 10:30 am. Lunch at Noon (or so).

Guest Speaker: Kim Thompson, Executive Director, Community Land Trust
Association of West Marin ("CLAM")

More Details: This is always a happy and successful event. It's open to all, whether or not IRA members. Salads, main courses and desserts are potluck, and history tells us that the food is really good. Beverages are on the house. Mark your calendar!

Special note: parking at this address is quite limited, so try to carpool, or leave your car at a distance and walk the final bit. Thanks.



Photo: Richard Blair

WHAT IS THE IRA?

Despite occasional rumors to the contrary, IRA is not a green-tinted terrorist organization. Rather, it is a critically important neighborhood association. Membership is open to everyone who lives or owns property in the forested corner of the Point Reyes peninsula accessed by way of Drakes view Drive. On official County records, this area is called Paradise Ranch Estates("PRE") (this may sound like Blackhawk, but it isn't).

For the benefit of newcomers, and as a reminder to forgetful old-timers, here are some details:

1. PRE is a subdivision approved during the haphazard 1950's. The approval was rubber-stamped. No one asked whether there would be decent roads, or a reliable water supply. No one questioned what might happen in the event of fire, flood, or earthquakes. There were none of the covenants or restrictions typical of today's gated communities.

2. All of these things were left to the individuals who bought lots in PRE for about \$5000 in the mid 50's. IRA was and is their response to the challenge. Early on, the association negotiated for a reliable water supply from the North Marin Municipal Water District (many non-PRE neighbors still depend on wells). Then we formed the PRE Road Advisory Board to maintain and improve our private (and still substandard) road system. All PRE owners tax themselves to do the job.

3. Then there is emergency preparedness. This is not a theoretical thing: in 1995 forty-plus PRE homes were destroyed by fire. Critical emergency access roads are regularly threatened with blockage by wash-outs, wind, and firestorms. IRA never stops badgering residents to maintain defensible space around homes, and the National Seashore to create fire buffers on the land which surrounds us on three sides. We have successfully sought over a half million dollars in grant money to help the process along.

IRA, then, is all of us. Membership is voluntary, and dues are modest (\$25/yr per household). Typically more than 90% of residents have joined.

BUT WE NEED 100%. IF YOU'RE NOT A MEMBER , PLEASE TEXT OR E MAIL ALICIA JACKSON (alicia@electrics.com).

WHETHER OR NOT YOU'RE A MEMBER, PLEASE ALSO COME TO OUR ANNUAL MEETING ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 10:00 AM, AT THE BEAUTIFUL HOME OF ALLAN AND SYDNE BORTEL, 1 LOWER DOVER. MORE DETAILS ON THIS EVENT ELSEWHERE IN THE NEWSLETTER.

History Buffs: Take Note

Every once in a while, people wonder how our little subdivision came to be. On the face of it, we shouldn't even be here. We are entirely surrounded by state and federal parkland. Lots are smaller than the legal minimum, and in many spots are clearly unbuildable. Our roads are sub-standard, and the risks are great of total isolation in case of fire, earthquakes, or other disasters.

For answers, you might take a look at a 1981 study of PRE by the Nature Conservancy. Done at the request of the County Board of Supervisors (and of the homeowners' association), the document may be found at:

http://www.marincounty.org/~media/files/departments/cd/planning/currentplanning/publications/communityandareaplan/paradise_ranch_estates_restoration_plan.pdf (please paste link into your browser)

The authors mince no words:

"PRE, finally established under court order in the late 1960s after years of complicated legal entanglements, was

subdivided without due consideration for the rugged topography, steep slopes, potential for slope instability, requirement for adequate road access, water supply, and waste water disposal.”

Lots of discussion follows, much still relevant. Examples include the desirability of lot mergers in some cases, the incorporation of unbuildable parcels into the national seashore, and the ever-present need for emergency access and fire protection.

We at IRA continue to grapple with this stuff , and welcome all the input we can get.

Disaster radio system urgently needs help!

The Point Reyes Station disaster communications system relies on residents to communicate via walkie-talkies. Inverness Park, Olema, Point Reyes Station, and Marshall make up the PRS-area network.

To organize the flow of information to emergency personnel about conditions during a disaster, Inverness Park is divided into the areas of IVP-North, -Middle, and -South. In the neighborhoods of each area, many of your fellow residents volunteer as part of the walkie-talkie system.

As some of you know, Bob Lundstrom is leaving his post as Area Coordinator for Inverness Park-Middle. The PRS Disaster Council thanks him greatly for his service.

It is urgent that someone volunteer to take Bob’s place.

Each Area Coordinator radios information received from the neighborhood teams to the Communications Center at the PRS firehouse. The firefighters review these reports to prioritize their responses.

If you know of anyone you think might want to volunteer-or if you would like to-please let me or Richard know. If you’re already involved and have a chat with a neighbor or friend you think could do this, we can follow up.

Special skills are not needed. Richard Dillman will show you how to use the radio, and he’s available if you need help. There are also practice drills.

IVP-Middle is described as Paradise Ranch Estates and Drakes Highlands. It extends along Sir Francis Drake from Laurel to Drakes View and includes Lower & Upper Roberts, Baywood Place, Kyleswood, Douglas Dr., Dover Rd., Sunnyside, Carlton, Sunshine Ct., Pinecrest, Behr Ln., Elizabeth Place, Buck Point.

IVP-North’s Area Coordinator is Nancy Hemmingway. The Area Coordinator for IVP-South is Susan Deixler.

Thank you,

Lynn Axelrod, Coordinator
PRS Disaster Council
663-8400 (h & w)
lynnaxelrod@hotmail.com

Richard Dillman, Transmission Wrangler
Inverness Park
663-8982 (h & c)
rdillman@kwmr.org

Living with Nature on the Ridge

I was talking to a friend and neighbor, Sandy Jacobs, who just had his 90th birthday last month about his experiences on the ridge. He made the point that people don't realize how wild a place this is. He asked me, "Name big cities to the north of us that are on the coast?" I thought about it. "Mendocino, Fort Bragg, hmm, not that big, maybe Portland, Seattle", I replied. Sandy's point is that we live in a contiguous forest which basically goes to Alaska.

It is a pretty wild place. Strong winter storms, the forest reproduces by fire, earthquakes keep things moving along every so often. So while we residents think of this place as a nature preserve, we are really living in a powerful ecosystem, and one that has been pretty resistant to human change. The old hotels-they burnt down. The railroad-now a path in a park. And trees just keep growing because that is simply what they do.

I have been reading about neighbors' concerns about living with wild animals on Inverness Ridge. There have been numerous sightings of coyotes, rarer glimpses of mountain lions, which are sometime seen on remote cameras such as resident Tom Anderson's and the park's wildlife monitoring cameras.

This is in addition to the usual characters: raccoons, deer, skunks, wood rats, mice, bobcats, opossums and other creatures which live in the woods around us. These animals are here because this is their habitat, as well as ours. It is rare to have such an abundance of wildlife nearby, and it is a treat to see these animals, just like visitor's wildlife sighting in the national seashore we adjoin.

I was once an employee of Yosemite National Park, where during the summer, I lived in a tent cabin. I had a dog, a male German shepherd, Zephyr, who was interested in eating small mammals, especially ground squirrels. I kept him on a longish leash, and sometimes he would forget about the leash and go flying after a critter, only to almost choke when the leash stopped him mid-air. Other times he would try to go after bears and coyotes, which he hated. Since it was my responsibility to teach people to keep their pets from disturbing wildlife, I did my best to keep Zephyr leashed.

Some of you have outside cats, who are very good at catching birds. A huge number of birds are killed each year by outside cats, and people sometimes put a bell on a cat's collar to warn birds that they are being stalked. A local naturalist joked that a bell was good, but tying a frying pan around a cat's neck was even more effective.

My dog, and other pets who are predators, love to hunt, each in their own way, dogs in packs, cats by stealth. They are trying to get food from prey. But since we have larger, more skilled wild hunters in our neighborhood, the **hunters become the hunted**, and hence we see signs for lost animals go up on our telephone poles and message boards.

I hope that your animal is on an adventure, or just lost, rather than being preyed upon! But in order to keep your beloved pet safe, please keep it inside, or leashed or under voice command when it is outside. I believe that this is our responsibility to do so-for the safety of both the pets and our wild creatures.

There is also a certain risk of an encounter with a mountain lion (also known as puma, cougar) However, consider the millions of hours of hikers using the back country trails of Point Reyes-no one has been injured by a mountain lion. This is good news for us. I am extra alert when hiking a trail at dusk, and it is smart to go with a group of people when taking a remote hike, for safety, in case of a lion being nearby and in case of a mishap like a strained ankle. Mountain lions add an edge to hiking here, but the risk of being attacked is so very low.

Please don't call for control to these wild animals living with us in and out of the park. We are privileged to be around them. They are beautiful members of our beautiful land.

Richard Blair
Ex -President
Inverness Ridge Association



Photo: Richard Blair

p.s. I have resigned from the IRA board because of time constraints and health problems. Kathleen and I are going to continue to publish a newsletter of our photographs of the ridge with essays about living here. If you would like to get a photo newsletter about West Main please email me. I'll send it out quarterly.

Click on: richardblairphotography@gmail.com