

Ranch HOA Tree Cutting Guidelines and Policies

Background.

The Board of the Ranch HOA has compiled this document to help members understand the Covenants and Bylaws of the HOA in regards to tree cutting on your property. We have had a number of issues with members taking too many trees down in the past and we do not wish to repeat past mistakes. Past mistakes/actions/in-actions by either the HOA or members do not constitute or provide a precedent for any other member to take or request a similar action. With the writing of this document, you have been given due notice of our policy going forward. Sections 4-8 and 5-1 of the Bylaws clearly state that no clear-cutting and prior written consent is expected. Therefore at the end of this document is a request form you can print out and submit with your request for tree removal.

Recent Beetle Kill and Measures We are Taking (2020 and on)

In the past few years, we have seen many trees killed by the pine beetle in the Ranch. Any and all coniferous trees are subject to beetle infestation. If there was an affordable way to spray our trees, we would; however, spraying is extremely costly and not affordable for all trees (it is not warranted if you don't spray every tree). Further, the board does not feel that mandating this costly and questionably viable treatment is warranted.

However, because we are losing so many trees, we are not willing to approve the removal of older growth trees for aesthetic reasons. The board presently feels that we will be forced to remove many dead trees as it is and wishes to limit the taking of healthy trees purely for aesthetic reasons (views, larger play areas, etc.).

Exceptions.

When a tree is dead, clearly dying, or leaning towards a structure, it may be removed. In the case of live trees leaning towards a structure, please ask permission and give an HOA board member time to review it with you as a common courtesy. Most of the time, we will simply agree with you and consent to the felling of the tree(s). But asking first avoids.

New Home Construction.

You may not clear a property prior to construction without first going through the Ranch HOA's ARC review process, submittal of plans, and deposit for construction. Do not start and ask for permission later. Further, the building of driveways, and other clearing is not allowed until full approval has been granted in writing by the HOA/ARC.

Prior to clearing for a home, the homesite must be clearly staked out and trees that are to be felled within the home's footprint must be clearly marked. The bylaws also state that the setback may not be cleared and trees must be left within the setback. The ARC may approve selected trees if they are deemed to be too close to the home after construction, but that decision is the HOA/ARC's decision. Clear staking of the homesite footprint and setbacks is the easiest way to allow a clear decision to be made.

Thinning and Fire Safe Guidelines.

Our bylaws also state that members are to maintain a fire safe perimeter and thin trees and brush accordingly. This includes the removal of undergrowth, fallen trees, and debris that pose a fire risk if a fire were to start in the vicinity of your property. If you are thinning the trees on your property, there are a number of things to keep in mind:

First, you still need HOA/ARC written approval. This means you need to submit a plan and request for said thinning. If you have used a licensed arborist to create your plan, that will help the HOA/ARC understand the nature of the thinning much more and avoid conflicting views.

Second, you need to clearly mark every tree to be felled with either spray paint or ribbons.

Third, all work must be done during regular work hours (quiet hours must be respected along with Sundays and national holidays).

The removal of underbrush, dead or fallen debris generally does not require prior written approval, but it is a good idea and courtesy to let the HOA know that you or your contractor will be performing the debris removal prior to the work commencing. Again, it is your responsibility to let all contractors know about our bylaws and rules for noise, road damage, etc.

Additionally, we will be taking into account beetle kill issues and err on the conservative side expecting some trees to be killed naturally over time. So don't be surprised if we disagree or do not approve the felling of every tree you request.

We understand the thinning of smaller trees. But what constitutes a small and large tree? At this time, we are saying any tree under 4 inches in diameter at 3 feet above the ground is a small tree. Any tree over 5 inches is considered a large tree and warrants more careful selection. Large trees over 10 inches will be considered protected and carefully discussed and decided upon by the ARC. Again, dead, dying, diseased trees and/or those posing a threat to structures will be more likely to be approved, but all should have written permission.

Trees in Green Spaces Road Right-of-Way.

The Ranch HOA owns a number of areas deemed green space. From time to time, trees may die within those areas. If members have a desire to take those trees for firewood, we simply require that the member ask permission and understand that they are then responsible for all cleanup and that no motorized equipment (other than chainsaws) is allowed in the greenspace (e.g. you are not allowed to drive a four-wheeler or other vehicle into the greenspace to collect wood). You are also expected to haul out all branches which may be left on the community burn pile. You cannot leave a pile of branches in the middle of the green space as it attracts rodents and is a fire danger. Know that our insurance does not cover you for any injury or liability should any damages result from your actions (you are liable for any personal or property damage/liability).

The Ranch HOA is also responsible for all trees that are within the road right-of-way which is 60 feet wide or 30 feet from the center of the road. Please note that the road was not paved in exactly the correct area in all places, so the easement may be off by as much as 5-10 feet. These [dead/diseased/leaning] trees are considered the same as trees in the green space and may be taken if a member wishes to fell and clean up all debris. Please ask permission prior to starting and know that our insurance does not cover you for any injury or liability should any damages result from your actions (you are liable for any personal or property damage/liability).

Finally, when trees are within the right-of-way and deemed to pose a threat to traffic or safe passage, the HOA has the right to have them taken without your permission. If trees are within 30 feet of the center of the paved road and pose a risk of falling, leaning, bending or otherwise posing a threat to traffic, we may elect to either have the tree(s) trimmed or removed.

Sample Form:

Please fill out the request form below and submit it to trees@ranchhoa.org

Contractor:

The Ranch HOA and many residents have used Fred Buck (406) 261-8363 for brush and tree removal for many years. Fred and his brother Al understand the HOA's goals regarding tree and brush removal and can help guide you towards proper planning, fire safety, etc.

As always, if you have questions, please call or email us. We are happy to answer questions and avoid conflict prior to your project starting. You may use the same email listed above.

Ranch HOA Tree Cutting Request Form

Name:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Type of Cutting:	<input type="checkbox"/> Dead/Diseased/Dangerous to property (leaning tree) <input type="checkbox"/> Brush/Undergrowth Mitigation (for fire safety) <input type="checkbox"/> Thinning of existing small tree(s) (under 4 inches at 3 ft off ground) <input type="checkbox"/> Thinning of large tree(s) for aesthetic reasons
Work to be done by:	<input type="checkbox"/> Homeowner <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor (contact info):

Map of Property showing location of home/driveway/trees to be taken (roughly). All trees should be marked clearly with paint or flagging tape/ribbon.

Sample Ranch HOA Tree Cutting Request Form

Name:	John Q Smith
Address:	123 Ranch Dr
Phone:	(406) 555-1234
Email:	johnqsmith@email.com
Type of Cutting:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dead/Diseased/Dangerous to property (leaning tree) <input type="checkbox"/> Brush/Undergrowth Mitigation (for fire safety) <input type="checkbox"/> Thinning of existing small tree(s) (under 4 inches at 3 ft off ground) <input type="checkbox"/> Thinning of large tree(s) for aesthetic reasons
Work to be done by:	<input type="checkbox"/> Homeowner <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contractor Fred Buck (406) 261-8363 (contact info):

Sample Map:

It doesn't have to be perfect...it helps us know where to look for your marked trees.

