

EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

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Empire Ranch in New National Conservation Area!

More good news for the future of the Empire. The past few months have seen a flurry of activity at the Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area. That activity culminated on Dec. 6 when President Clinton signed into law a bill creating the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (NCA) and Acquisition Planning District, with the Empire Ranch at its heart.

The designation resulted from Congress' passage of H.R. 2941, sponsored by Representative Jim Kolbe and supported by Senator John McCain. It grew, in part, from collaborative efforts of the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership — a voluntary association of local citizens, conservation organizations, ranchers, recreationists, and government agencies — who spent the past five years developing a multi-use management plan for the area.

The Foundation Board has long supported actions to protect the historic ranch lands for posterity and to see the its ranching use continue into the future. Founda-

tion Board Member Jake Kittle, who actively supported the NCA designation said: "This is a great step forward toward our goal of preserving the historic Empire Ranch as a record of ranching in Arizona

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Millennium Grant Funds Matched and More!

This Fall's fundraising donations and additional contributed volunteer hours did the trick. Donations to match our *Save America's Treasures* Millennium Grant totaled over \$13,000, which at the Dec. 31 deadline was \$3,045 *more* than the amount required to complete our full matching grant target amount of \$95,300. All donations and the matching Millennium Grant funds soon to be awarded will be put to work in early 2001 on priority projects to stabilize and preserve the Empire Ranch House.

We also received an additional \$3,355 in unrestricted gifts, and a special gift of \$1,500 for repair of the ranch house windmill — most appreciated advances toward the new sums we need to raise in 2001 to continue funding of stabilization repairs.

Thanks to everyone for your wonderful support!

"Must Do" Dates for 2001

Because of the huge response to the combined Roundup and BBQ last year, these activities are being planned as separate events this year to maximize the pleasure and the fun!! "Brand" these dates on your calendar with magic marker, pardner!!

Saturday, May 19 – Spring BBQ and Trail Ride

Plan to eat your way to western heaven at a big time barbecue feast, with entertainment and with U.S. Representative Jim Kolbe as a special guest.

Opt to join a great trail ride through the Empire's landscape.

Saturday, Sept. 15 – Fall Roundup Open House & Art Show

Come out for another whole day of fun with ranch life demonstrations, entertainment, and an expanded western art show and sale.

(You won't starve on this day either!)

Volunteer Spotlight

During the year 2000, hundreds of hours were contributed by volunteers doing hands-on preservation work for the Empire Ranch House.

The value and importance of this direct help from volunteers simply cannot be overstated. It makes it possible to get critical project work done while reserving cash funds for contractor specialists, and it has been essential to making progress in stabilizing the ranch house and meeting our planning goals.

On Nov. 19 a group of volunteers made enormous progress on needed work for electrical systems and drainage. We thank them, and invite you to read the special spotlight article on their project work on page 3.

Working Calendar

March

- 1 Foundation intends to issue Request for Proposal for new stabilization contract
- 17 Board meeting
- 31 Foundation expects to award new contract to repair ranch house roof, foundation, and wall systems

April

- 21 Board meeting

May

- 19 Spring Barbecue and Trail Ride — Volunteers wanted!
- 19 Board meeting

June

- 16 Board meeting

July

- 21 Board meeting

August

- 18 Board meeting

September

- 15 Fall Roundup Open House and Art Show — Volunteers wanted!

Ongoing

Volunteer to help with historic preservation projects at the Empire. Contact Steve Boice (520/889-3451) for more information.

Preservation Projects Summary

Preservation of the Empire Ranch House and other buildings is a primary mission of the Foundation. Preservation projects recently completed, underway, or scheduled are summarized below. Projects shown as *complete* in our last issue are not repeated here.

- Remove contaminated soil above ceilings (~80% complete)
- Improve drainage conditions around foundations (*partially complete*)
- Plan for emergency stabilization of stone corral (*Spring 2001*)
- Complete emergency repairs to adobe haybarn foundation (*Spring 2001*)
- Complete emergency electrical wiring safety measures (*complete*)
- Begin roof system repairs to the ranch house (*Summer/Fall 2001*)
- Begin wall system repairs to the ranch house (*Summer/Fall 2001*)
- Manufacture adobe for use in 2001 preservation projects (*start Spring 2001*)
- Secure concrete chimney supports (*to be determined*)
- Create plan and stabilize the Ranch Hand's House (*to be determined*)
- Repair/replace lintel over south entry of Zaguan (*to be determined*)

Muchas Gracias!

Our sincere thanks to the 132 individuals, families, and organizations who donated over \$17,000 from mid-Sept. through Dec. 31, and made our Fall fund raising so successful.

The above contributions included generous gifts in remembrance of the Boice Family, Fay M. Hill, Carey Ingram, Julia Scribner Ruch, and John Woolley. We are most honored to receive these donations.

A \$1,000 "Christmas gift" from the Southwestern Foundation (a previous grantor of funds for treatments of ranch house windows and doors) especially warmed our hearts.

Jesse Juen Headed for Washington Position

It is both exciting and sad news that Jesse Juen, since 1992 the Manager of the BLM Tucson Field Office, has been promoted to be Group Manager for BLM's Monuments and National Conservation Areas Group, and will be leaving Tucson to assume his new Washington-based position. It's an important and exciting new position for Jesse, but he will be missed by his many friends and associates in the Tucson area.

Jesse Juen's creative talents for facilitating collaborative action have been of tremendous benefit to the region. His love of outdoors and working with people helped him facilitate the 1996 establishment of the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership which addresses public land issues and management throughout the Sonoita Valley.

And, closer to home, in 1997 he envisioned and fostered the establishment of the Empire Ranch Foundation and its partnership with BLM to assure preservation of Empire Ranch structures and history for future generations. We will miss his presence and his ongoing contributions, but take some comfort in knowing his interest and advocacy for the Empire and Las Cienegas will continue through his new responsibilities for National Conservation Areas.

Our best wishes to Jesse, and our deep appreciation. Mar. 2 will be his last day at the Tucson Field Office, but he's promised to join us at our Spring Barbecue on May 19.

Board Elections Report

At the Nov. 18 Board meeting, all current officers were reelected for one-year terms: Steve Boice (President), Marion Hyland (Vice President), Laurel Wilkening (Secretary), Sherry Buzzard (Treasurer).

Members Jake Kittle, Lea Ward, Laurel Wilkening, and Jane Woods were each reelected for an additional three-year term.

Two new directors were elected: Gerald Korte of Tucson, a former Foundation President and Empire Ranch cowboy during the Boice ownership; and Dodie Green of Sonoita, a nationally known trainer of working stock dogs. Biographical introductions to these valued new Board members will be provided in a future issue of ERF News.

Master Plan for Empire Ranch Western Heritage Site and Educational Center Takes Shape

It's still in draft, but the Empire Ranch Headquarters Master Plan continues to take shape and definition, as illustrated by the newly coined institutional name "Empire Ranch Western Heritage Site and Educational Center."

In several extended group sessions this winter, Foundation Board members and BLM staff reviewed and revised a draft Master Plan now totaling nearly 100 pages. The three broad programs envisioned within the Master Plan (Restoration of the Empire Ranch House, Establishment of a Heritage Trail, and Education on the Empire) were briefly described in the Nov. 2000 issue of ERF News.

The Master Plan under development documents philosophies, specifics, and phases for each program, laying the groundwork for development priorities,

funding approaches, and action plans.

Shela McFarlin, an experienced BLM project planner, prepared the working draft after extensive collaborative discussions with the Board, and has facilitated the animated review and revision sessions.

In February, our goal is to finalize the Master Plan as our proposed broad blueprint. This Plan or summaries of it will be available for review and comment this Spring by interested parties. While the public review is underway, the Foundation/BLM team will proceed with more detailed planning for specific programs.

The objective is to have necessary planning in place and accepted by mid-2001, ready to guide projects for adaptive reuse of the Headquarters once emergency stabilization repairs are completed.

Ranch House Repair Plan Nearly Final

The Foundation has completed its review of an exhaustive Action Plan to guide stabilization and repair of roof, drainage, and foundation systems at the Empire Ranch House. The detailed report was prepared under contract to the Foundation by Statistical Research, Inc., a recognized historic preservation firm.

SRI is revising and expanding selected aspects of the report in response to comments from the Foundation and from outside professionals, BLM specialists, and the

Arizona State Historic Preservation Office. The final Action Plan will be completed by Spring and will form the basis for executing this critical work during 2001.

The Foundation's goal is to issue a Request for Proposals for this work by Mar. 1 and to award a contract for work to begin Mar. 31, utilizing the Foundation's remaining balance of donated funds and Millennium Grant matching funds. Look for more details and progress to be reported in the next issue of ERF News.



Electrician Xavier Valles prepares area where conduit will exit from south wall of Room 18.

Volunteers Take to the Trenches

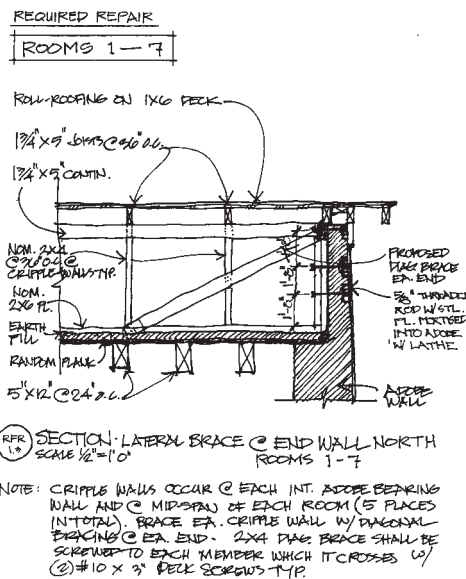
On Nov. 19, a cadre of volunteers (Steve Boice, Terry Piper-Moreno, Dick Daggett, and Terry Majewski) worked wonders, together with electrical and construction subcontractors from Statistical Research, Inc., to break ground for some essential electrical and drainage tasks.

For safety reasons, all electrical power will eventually be disconnected at the ranch house until it can be rewired to meet safety requirements. Meanwhile, during ongoing preservation work, minimal power sources will be maintained out of the Storage and Pantry (Room 18), including a power source at the Tackroom for use by the ranchers who currently lease the Empire Ranch from the BLM for cattle grazing.

The task for the day was to dig an east-west trench from just south of Room 18 to the northwest corner of the Tackroom. The trench had to be extra deep to accommodate two PVC pipes, one for electrical conduit and another to carry rainwater away from the area east of the Nursery (Room 25).

Volunteers really got into it. Steve expertly excavated the trench with a small

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Action Plan's detailed diagrams specify repair requirements for roof, drainage and foundation systems.

New Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (cont'd from p. 1)

and an example of the best, modern ranching practices.”

The new 42,000-acre Las Cienegas NCA consists entirely of public lands managed by the BLM's Tucson Field Office and includes all of the Empire Ranch Headquarters. The Empire Ranch Headquarters area is expected to become the management center of the Las Cienegas NCA, according to Jesse Juen, BLM's Tucson Field Office Manager.

Activities that were permitted on BLM lands before the designation of the NCA are still permitted except for the filing of new mining claims and mineral leasing, and off-highway vehicle use is limited to designated routes. The uses permitted are compatible with the plans of the Empire Ranch Foundation to preserve the Empire Ranch

historic Headquarters and establish the Empire Ranch Western Heritage Site and Educational Center.

The new NCA is bordered on the north and east by lands within the Acquisition Planning District. Combined, the NCA and Acquisition Planning District total 142,800 acres owned and/or managed by the BLM, Pima County, National Audubon Society, State of Arizona, and numerous private landowners.

Cienega Creek, with its perennial flow and lush riparian corridor, forms the lifeblood of the NCA, a scenic landscape of vast desert grasslands and rolling oak-studded hills connecting several “sky island” mountain ranges. The area is home to diverse plant and animal life, including several threatened or endangered species. Pro-

tection of this regionally significant open space safeguards an ecological network extending south of Interstate 10 to protected lands in northern Sonora, Mexico.

Empire Ranch Foundation Honorary Board member John Donaldson said, “The Empire-Cienega Valley is an unusual resource worth saving. It can be used for grazing if managed carefully to continuously improve the resource.” During his tenure as the grazing lessee on the ranch, he and his partners have put much effort into conserving the grassland resources. Donaldson also expressed his hope that the establishment of the NCA would end some of the uncertainty around the future uses of the Empire Ranch lands.

Diane Drobka, BLM, and Laurel Wilkening, Empire Ranch Foundation

Notes From the Past: The Cottonwood Grove

The cottonwood grove north of the Empire Ranch House is a pure pleasure to behold.

From a distance it appears as an island of green in the grasslands, and up close it stands as a tall green sanctuary from the sun.

Where did the cottonwoods come from? There is a story. In notes relating to an Aug. 1957 radio interview (KNOG, Nogales), Mary Boice, the wife of Empire rancher and owner Frank Boice, presents the tale she was told:

“Blas Lopez, an old man who lived here as a boy, said he & his father planted 5 ‘cottonwood switches’ in the Cienega below the house. He was about 80 years old when he told us, and we’ve been here 28 years. So, in [a] span of over 100 years those switches have grown into a large grove of trees.”

Many thanks to Mr. Lopez for his far-sighted planting, and to Mrs. Boice for saving the story for us.

Volunteers (cont'd from p. 3)

backhoe, while the others worked with shovels and trowels to clean it up and sift through the excavated soil for artifacts. Archaeologist Terry Majewski also monitored excavation of the trench, in case cultural materials, or artifacts, were recovered (we found horseshoes, bricks, some bits of pipe, and lots of roots!). A hole was made in a deteriorated portion of the south wall of Room 18 to permit conduit originating in that room to be “threaded” into the first PVC pipe.

Volunteers also began work on drainage problems associated with the east side of Room 25. Gutter will be installed along the east roof line of the room and connected to a rain leader to drain into a second pipe that will be placed in the newly dug trench, above the PVC pipe that contains the electrical conduit.

Everyone then turned to digging into the delicious lunch that Steve Boice provided for all of the volunteers and contract workers. Our thanks to him and to the entire group.

Volunteer projects always seem to take more time than planned, but this one will be completed by the time you receive your copy of this newsletter.

Cottonwood grove beyond horse pasture northwest of Empire Ranch House, circa 1923. (Photo courtesy L.V. Ingram)

