

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN APPENDIX-D



GROVE STREET FIRE SAFE COUNCIL, INC.

FOR THE COMMUNITIES LOCATED ALONG THE GROVE STREET
CORRIDOR IN THE WEST SONOMA HILLS

Development

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was developed by the *Grove Street Fire Safe Council (GSFSC)* with guidance and support from Fire Safe Sonoma, the County of Sonoma, The California Fire Safe Council, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. This CWPP supplements the Sonoma County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. JULY, 2020

Grove Street Fire Safe Council Inc.
<http://grovestreetfsc.org/>

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HISTORICAL REFERENCES

Brief History of Southern Sonoma Valley and Western Grove Street

The Coast Miwok lived in the Sonoma and Petaluma Valleys and traversed Sonoma Mountain regularly. They climbed its flanks to harvest Black Oak acorns, one of their staple foods. They searched for obsidian to make arrowheads. They obtained water from the many streams, including Carriger Creek, and the springs on the Mountain. They utilized the 120° warm springs along Carriger Creek around 2140 and 2220 Grove Street. There was an archeological dig near that location where beads, shards and bones were found. The mountain, named Oona-Pa'is by the Coast Miwok, was revered as the center of their world. Unfortunately, a smallpox epidemic among other factors wiped out 90 percent of the area's Native people.

In the early 1800's the Spaniards arrived. The Sonoma Mission known as Mission San Francisco Solano was founded in 1823. Soon the Mexicans wrested control of the area from the Spaniards, and General Vallejo came to the area in 1830 to set up a Mexican military presence as a barrier against Russian expansion south from Fort Ross. General Vallejo was granted 66,000 acres between the Petaluma River and Sonoma Creek including the area where GSFSC is situated. Vallejo ran cattle, sheep and horses on his ranch.

In 1846 American settlers in Sonoma declared California a separate state from Mexico, calling it the Bear Flag Republic. The United States government declared California a territory of the United States within a couple of weeks, but they were still at war with Mexico over certain western territories. By 1848 the United States won the war with Mexico and Sonoma Mountain was officially part of the United States. About that time American settlers began to arrive in Sonoma Valley. The Gold Rush of 1849 added to the flow of settlers. This migration was sped up by the coming of the railroads to Sonoma in 1870's and 1880's. Sonoma Mountain was denuded of trees by 1900, which were used to build San Francisco and fuel development and transportation in the Bay Area. Over the ensuing 100 plus years the hardwoods and conifer forests have returned.

Grove Street was once a private road from El Rancho Rodeo up to the Anderson Ranch, but in order to maintain it as private it had to be closed one day each year. Rumor has it that one-year Bucky Anderson was indisposed and left his post, someone accessed the road and the road became public. Apparently, during Prohibition there was a still down in Carriger Creek by a horse barn opposite 2305 Grove Street. Additionally, there allegedly used to be a rattlesnake gun inside a glass box by the road posted, "In case of Rattlesnake break glass." And finally, there used to be so many steelhead in the Carriger Creek that the best way to fish for them was to take a pitchfork, spear the fish and throw them up on the bank. Those days are long gone, sadly.

Within the area there have been coal mines with attendant narrow gauge railroads up in the Diamond A Ranches. There have been quarries including the one north of Grove Street near the double right angle turns, and one on the George Ranch Community that provided cobblestones for San Francisco streets. There used to be a water company, the Yulupa Mutual Water

Company, that stored water in a large reservoir on what is now the Westerbeke Property and provided the water for El Verano

History of George and Anderson Ranches

The George Ranch

By Danny Kaplan, with a little help from Harold Marsh, Karen Everard and Steve Pease

Originally part of General Vallejo's land grant, the George Ranch entered modern history when in 1942 it was acquired by James P. George. Mr. George had been successful in the Oil and Gas business in Southern California but for the next 40 years lived on this property. He named it the Lazy Bar G and operated it as a cattle ranch. The 1000 acres was 3 miles west of Sonoma Plaza and varied in elevation from 400 to 1600 feet.

In the late 1970's one of a group of Dutch investors, Mr. Nick Sandmann, contacted a boyhood friend, Mr. Pieter Everard, a Sonoma accountant. Pieter apprised him of the George property and after some negotiation Mr. George sold the Lazy Bar G Ranch to Damstraat Investors for \$2.1 million.

Damstraat Investors (named for a street in Amsterdam) then experienced a difficult few years involved in site evaluations, EIR's, and soil, geological and archeological evaluations. Finally, in 1982 the County of Sonoma approved a major subdivision of 56 lots to be developed in four phases. During this time a financial rearrangement had passed the property to Centennial Savings and Loan.

The County endorsed the developer's vision of a low density subdivision with underground utilities, private roads, scenic easements, and agricultural activities. Specifically, several large agricultural lots were delineated for cattle or sheep grazing and vineyards. Home building lots were prepared with scenic easements to preserve views from the valley floor and easements for hiking and equestrian trails. The open and natural concept included a recreational area with a pond and clubhouse.

When marketing began in 1983-84 the George Ranch consisted of 51 residential building lots varying from 3 to 20 acres. Two large properties, each several hundred acres were reserved for agricultural purposes and scenic preservation. Three other lots were reserved for vineyard development. The Georges kept their original farm house and its 15 acres and this parcel was only later incorporated into the George Ranch.

As a California Community Interest Development, the GR is governed by its homeowners through a five-person elected Board of Directors. The Board supervises several committees whose responsibilities include maintenance of common areas, management of the GR

Mutual Water Company and review and approval of building plans. Their mandate is to preserve the rural nature and aesthetic characteristics of the Ranch.

Today all but a few lots have been developed. Some homeowners are retired but many are active in various business and professional careers. The George Ranch is a beautiful and interesting area that has fulfilled the original concept of a low-density subdivision with a rural character, agricultural emphasis, environmental sensitivity and largely secluded homes.

The Anderson Ranch (Currently Diamond A Ranch Estates)

*by Beverly Perrin, John Barinaga and Helen Bates, edited by Bruce Hoadley
(2012)*

The largest subdivision on Sonoma Mountain is known as "Diamond A," a rural residential community accessed via Grove Street on the South East slope of our beautiful mountain. How did these 1,200 acres of paradise transition from Miwok hunting grounds, to a subdivision of 240 parcels, during the past two centuries? Who were the central characters in this history? Was there any public oversight of the subdivision process, or was it driven primarily by private interests? Could it happen again in the 21st century? These are the questions addressed in this brief history.

In 1769, when the Miwok Indians, of the Sonoma Coast, first came in contact with Europeans, they numbered about 1,500. Their hunting grounds included all of Sonoma Mountain. By 1930 the Miwok Indians numbered only about 500. The mountain had been divided into parcels, and passed through various owners. However, the coyotes, who the Miwok Indians believed to be their ancestors and Creator God, still prowl the mountain. They howl near the ridge line at night, ignoring the artificial boundaries that have been placed on the land.

From 1834 to 1857, the southern portion of Sonoma Mountain, from the Petaluma River to Sonoma Creek, was part of "Rancho Petaluma." According to the Petaluma State Historic Park website, Rancho Petaluma was a 44,000-acre land grant to General Mariano Vallejo in 1834. It was later extended to more than 66,000 acres. The Rancho stretched eastward from Petaluma Creek, over the hills, and down to Sonoma Creek, including all the land that lay between those two waterways, from the edge of San Francisco Bay to Glen Ellen. In 1857, Vallejo decided to sell his Petaluma Adobe and some of the land around it. By 1866, when the Rowe survey of the western portion of Rancho Petaluma was recorded, the 66,000 acres had been split into many parcels - some sold by General Vallejo, others taken by Anglo squatters.

The 1897 Illustrated Atlas shows the unmistakable shape of what was to become the Diamond A Ranch, labeled "Henry A. Hardin 1,240 acres". Henry Andrew Hardin was born in Kentucky in

1833. In 1852, he joined an ox-team train, which traveled from Missouri to Sonoma County. He bought and sold various parcels before buying the 1,240 acre Ranch in 1877 from Edward Halloran. Hardin owned this Ranch until his death in 1920. Three of his daughters sold the Ranch to the Felder family in 1934. The Felder family owned the Ranch for a few years, and then sold it to the Berrien Anderson family in 1938.

In 1961, Anderson sold the ranch to the developers, Thomas Burke & Jack Fisher, for \$400,000. Jack Fisher lived at 3775 Burke Place, in Unit #1 of the Diamond A Ranch Estates, until his death on March 12, 2003.

In 1965, the Preliminary Master Plan for the Diamond A Ranch Estates divided 1,220 acres into 482 home sites of 1.5 to 2.5 acres each. The plan included extensive recreation areas along Carriger Creek and on the steep wooded slopes. This Preliminary Master Plan showed Units 1 through 5, much as they were later developed. Of the 482 lots, 290 were not completed as shown. Instead, they were later consolidated into larger lots. T. E. Burke recorded the declarations for Unit 1 on 11/8/1962, and Unit 2 on 8/23/1962. They were recorded in the name of Kenleigh Homes Inc. Unit 1 had 25 lots, and Unit 2 had 28 lots. The original broker for the development was Robert Garlick. According to Robert Garlick's son, Dave, the Plans called for a multiphase development, which would include 500 to 600 lots ranging in size from 1.5 acres to 3 acres. Phase one included excavation and construction of the main road, leading from the old Van Hoosear Ranch, at the base of the Mountain, to the Diamond A entrance. A new road construction method was used. It allowed for a steep but straight approach up the hill. The old one-lane road was not steep, full of turns, and took about 20 minutes to navigate. The first two phases of the project went relatively well. Lots typically sold for \$6,000 to \$8,000. Many Bay Area residents fell in love with the magnificent views and beautiful hillsides. Live Oak, White Oak, and Pepperwood were in abundance. The golden hills turned purple and orange each spring, as lupine and poppies dominated the fields. The exclusive realtor was Bob Garlick, who worked out of the old ranch house.

After awhile, the undeveloped property changed hands. Two Stanford graduates fell in love with the property. They made an offer that Fisher and Burke could not turn down. These two developers were very much into promoting and marketing. San Francisco radio stations encouraged Bay Area residents to visit the Ranch. The visits included a tour in a Rolls Royce Jeep, conducted by "Trail Boss Bob" Garlick. Phase Three was started, and looked promising for the development.

Disaster hit in the late 1960's. The owner of one on the lots, located slightly below the old ranch house, undertook significant grading without permits. With the first winter rain, a landslide from this area caused significant damage to the road below. Red flags went up at the county. A moratorium on future building was put in place, until geologic and landslide studies were completed. This study concluded that 27 lots were high-risk, 65 were low risk, and 95 lots were intermediate risk. As a result, the county tightened foundation requirements. The process took a couple of years. This delay caused the developers to lose the Ranch through foreclosure. During those bleak years, the developers were trying to sell the remaining acres in one block.

One prospective buyer had big plans to develop a world-class golf course. Trail Boss Bob, in his Jeep, took the golf course developer to the highest point on the Ranch, to best view the undeveloped areas. The jeep was parked at the top of the hill. As they got out, the stick shift was accidentally knocked into neutral. Both men watched as the Jeep went down the hill and crashed into an oak tree. The walk out took about two hours. That was the end of the golf course plans. The remaining acres were finally sold to the highest bidder, at the steps of the county courthouse. From that point on, the development of the remaining acres took a different direction. The future phases included much larger lots ranging from 10 to 40 acres.

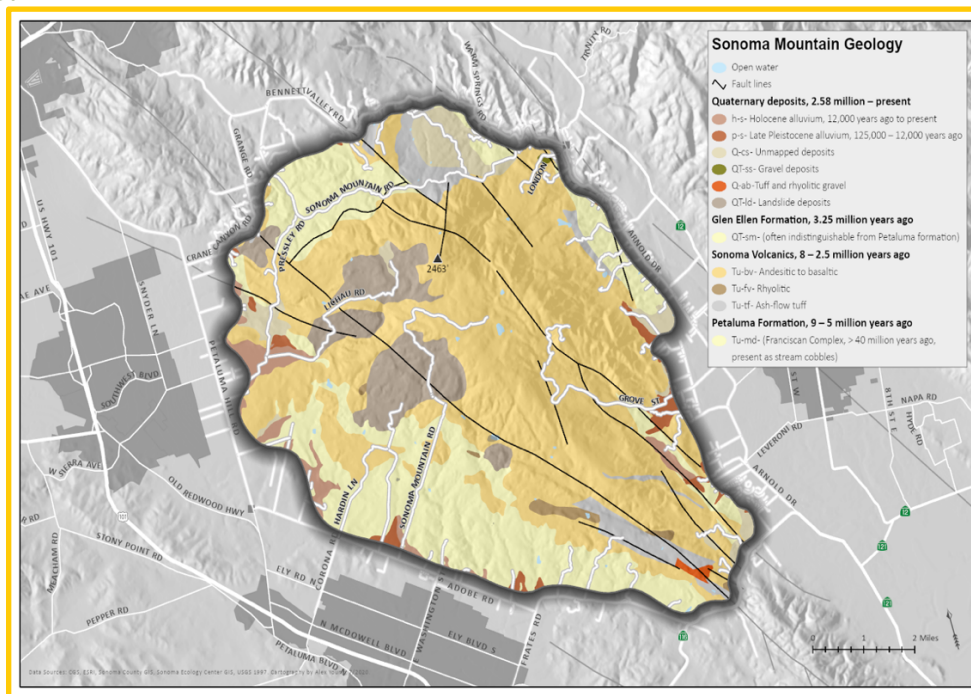
On February 18, 1965, the declaration for Unit 3, with 56 lots, was filed in the name of Fisher and Burke, Inc. by T. E. Burke, President and Jack Fisher, Secretary Treasurer. On October 29, 1965, William J. Troy, President of the Sonoma Land Corporation, filed the declaration for Unit 4, with 4 lots. On December 29, 1966, the Sonoma Development Corporation President, William J. Troy, filed the declaration for Unit No 5, with 71 lots. On December 23, 1976, the Piombo Corporation filed a declaration to divide the northeast sector of the Ranch into lots 1 through 16, to be named Diamond A Ranches.

As a result of all these declarations, the old Anderson Ranch evolved into two subdivisions: [1] The Diamond A Ranch Estates, and [2] The Diamond A Ranches. Over time, the leftover pieces were further subdivided and some were built. In a 1999 count, the lots on the old 1,221-acre Ranch were: [1] Diamond A Ranch Estates subdivision with 190 lots (1962-1966), [2] Diamond A Ranches subdivision with 16 lots (1976), and [3] The balance divided into 34 lots. There are a total of 240 lots. This is about half of the 482 lots in the 1965 Preliminary Master Plan. Out of the 240 lots in the 1999 count, 188 had been built, and 52 had not been built. Several lots have been built since 1999. Our 2007 telephone directory lists 199 households. Note, in some cases, there is more than one household per lot.

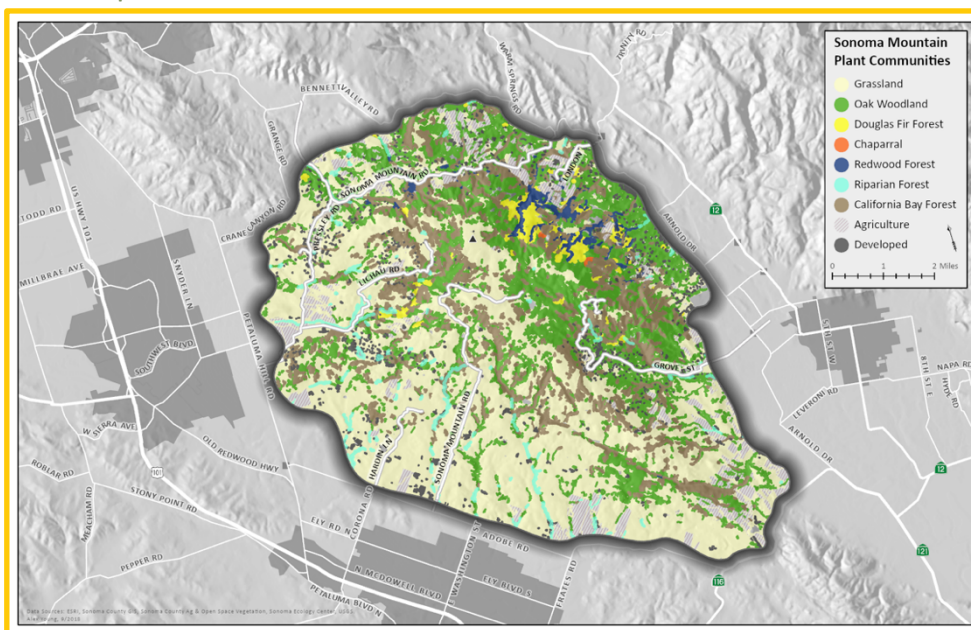
From this history it seems that there was little planning or oversight by the County until Mother Nature intervened in the form of a landslide. As a result of these interventions, the original developers lost the land, and Sonoma Mountain was spared from a much denser development on its eastern flank. Could a subdivision like Diamond A happen again? Probably not. Sonoma Mountain Preservation helped enact Guidelines for Development in 1998. These guidelines are now closely monitored by Sonoma County and Sonoma Mountain Preservation.

RELEVANT MAPS (For other maps see Appendix-C)

Geology of GSFSC Area



Vegetation Map

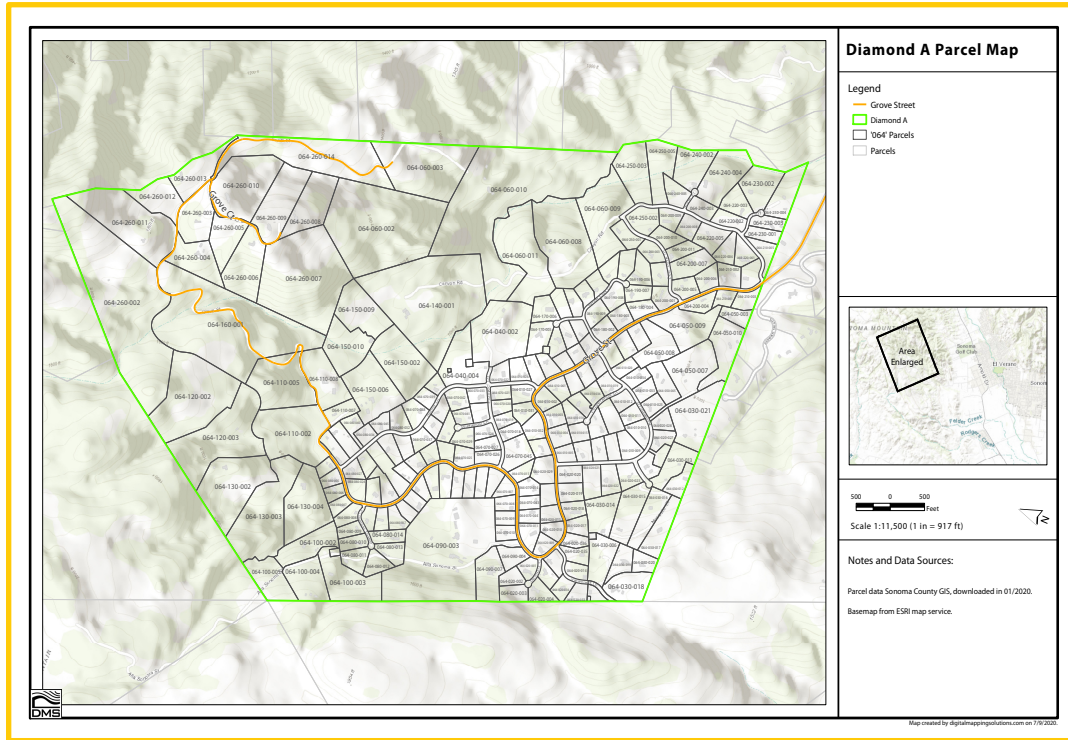


Map of Topography of GSFSC

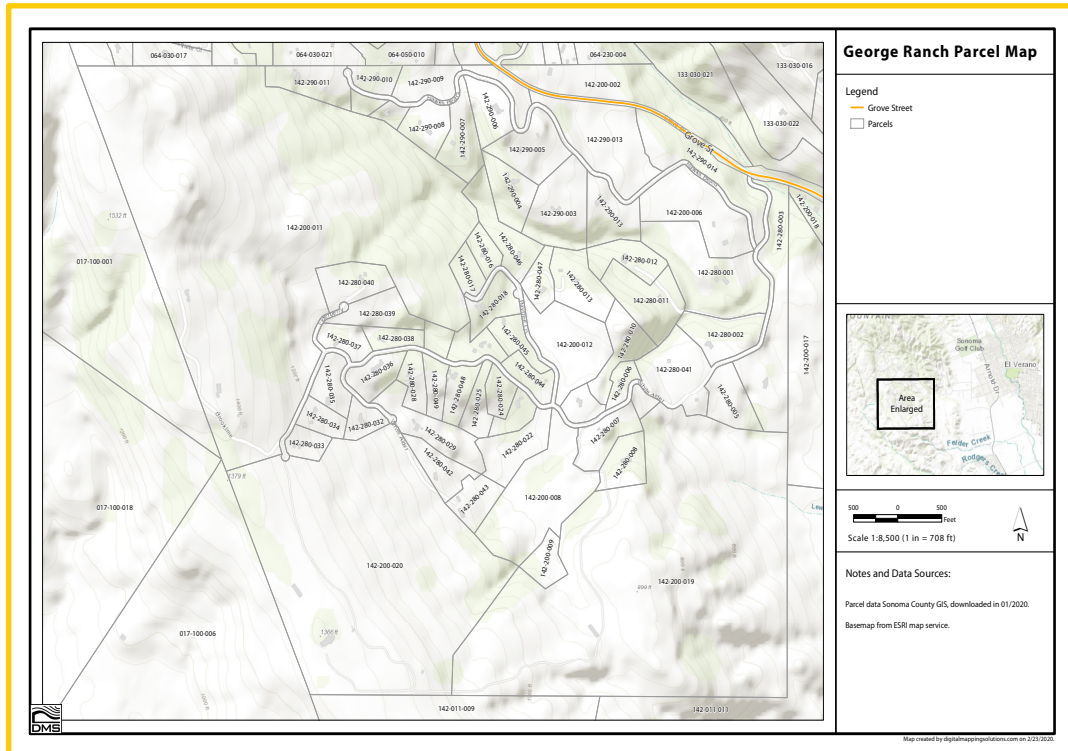


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Diamond 'A' Community Map



George Ranch Community Map



Map of Lower Grove Street Community

