

ECIA Conservation Committee Zoom Agenda September 6, 2022
7 - 9 pm

1. Call to Order by Chair, Paul Butt at _____ pm.
2. Attendees
 - Roll call of members and determination of quorum:
Carol Beidleman (excused absence) Thom Bredenberg Tom Brimacombe
Paul Butt John Parker
Quorum status: _____
 - Liaisons:
Jonathan Turkle (Board Liaison)
Mike Rogers (HOAMCO Liaison)
 - Meeting Assistance:
Jocelyn Rizo (HOAMCO Staff)
 - Guests:
3. Appointment of recording secretary: John Parker
For October meeting: _____
4. Approval of Agenda: Motion by: _____ 2nd by: _____
Vote: _____
5. Announcements:
Meeting is live and streamed on ZOOM with the following rules:
Guests are muted until recognized.
Guests should type in name and full address. If you wish to speak during the OPEN FORUM, please state your topic. Residents will be recognized on a first come, first served basis. Guests are limited to three minutes of discussion. For longer discussions, guests must notify the Committee Chair no later than seven days in advance of the Committee meeting, and the item will be placed on the agenda.
Private messaging during the meeting is disabled.
An audio recording of the Zoom meeting will be made, and will be available after the meeting upon request to conservationchair@gmail.com
6. Approval of August Minutes: Motion by: _____ 2nd by: _____
Vote: _____

7. Board Liaison Report by Jonathan Turkle:
8. HOAMCO Report by Mike Rogers:
9. Project status updates:
 - Updates, Volunteer Recruitment project (Thom Bredenberg, Paul Butt)
 - Update, Tr 201 "1st mile" maintenance projects
 - Wildfire Risk Mitigation in Eldorado (Paul Butt, preface for discussion during Open Forum)See attached documents for reference,
 - [EldoSafety EducationTask Group Rpt to Board_DDenker_220816.docx](#)
 - [question to ThBre re_Gallina Pk & Greenbelt WFR_PSB_220825.pdf](#)
 - [Brush removal SOP draft_PSB_210308.pdf](#)
 - [hazard fuel reports and follow-up procedural for the Eldorado Greenbelts_PSB_210329.pdf](#)
10. New Business:
 - Workday dates for September:
 - Tr 201-202 loop maintenance (1st mile project)
 - Tr 301-302 meadow project (propose scheduling workday late Sept/early Oct)
 - Tr 301 1st mile project workday sponsor?
 - Fuels Reduction in Greenbelts neighborhood organization? workday sponsor?
 - Selection of Chairperson for October & November
11. Old Business:
 - Follow-up report on Gallina Park Tumbleweed removal pilot (2020, Thom Bredenberg). Report is attached,
 - [Russian Thistle and Kochia in the Upper Gallina Park_ThBre_220825.pdf](#)
 - Committee administration (SOP, tools such as Google Platform)
12. Open Forum:
13. Motion to adjourn: Motion by: _____ 2nd by: _____
Vote: _____
Adjournment time: _____

Report to ECIA Board and Recommendations from Eldorado Safety Education Task Group

Revised August 16, 2022

Compiled by Debra Denker, Chair, with community input from soon-to-be members Naima Shea and Ben Greenberg, PsyD

I would also like to thank board member Jonathan Turkle for information on GIS (Geographical Information System), my GIS-professional friend Gail Morrison in Alaska for bringing me up to speed on GIS and making suggestions for our community, which she has visited, and Paul Butt and Carol Beidleman from the Conservation Committee. Special thanks to Carol for her detailed suggestions and explanations of the scientific rationale behind them.

Land Acknowledgement: We reside on Tewa and Tanoan land and have much to learn from indigenous perspectives on living in harmony with the land and its other residents.

Since its inception in early 2020, the Task Group, consisting of myself as chair and community input from Joe Newman, Naima Shea, Ben Greenberg, and others, have accomplished the following:

- 1) We sent a snail mail letter out to every resident at the beginning of the pandemic with resources and phone #'s so nobody would fall through the cracks if they didn't have internet.
- 2) We created fire safety resources and/or links to existing ones, which are on the ECIA site
- 3) We had a town hall in summer 2020, which Debra facilitated, about fire safety
- 4) I participated in other town halls, one with the Sheriff regarding general safety and crime rates, which I found reassuring, and the fire safety one that Mark Young ran.
- 5) As a result of the town hall with Sheriff Mendoza I researched and created resources about proactively avoiding fraud, which are on the website and were printed in "Vistas."
- 6) With community input I created an info sheet and downloadable flyer about the dangers of rodenticide use. EWAG (Eldorado Wildlife Advocacy Group) has now taken over that issue and has a lot of momentum (full disclosure: I am a member). It is important to continue work on this crucial issue of co-existing with wildlife through educating the community about the considerable dangers of rodenticides that pest control companies don't tell customers, and about both safe practices in cleaning up after rodents and the facts and statistics about the extreme rarity of plague and hanta virus infections.
- 7) Due to the power outages last year I created resources on Power Outage Tips that are on the website and were published in "Vistas." Hopefully these have been useful during the recent power outages.
- 8) Contacted Commissioner Hank Hughes about the failure of the Reverse 911 system to alert people of road closures on March 2 and June 4, and fire danger nearby on June 4. Commissioner Hughes replied July 19 that in the short term the Fire Department plans to use the existing system to issue alerts on both road closures and fire to a broader area, and in the long term to hire someone in the dispatch center, hopefully in the next few months, to manage alert systems and make sure the system covers all emergency situations including road closures.

Regarding ongoing fire danger to the Eldorado Community due to the continuing climate crisis, despite the recent welcome though spotty monsoon rains, we have the following recommendations, based on a holistic approach to balancing Firewise and Earthwise practices:

- 1) **Determine the best method of communication** to reach every single resident, or at least the maximum number. Snail mail probably remains the most effective way to reach every household, but mailings are expensive. What are the demographics of who receives *Vistas* (print or e-mail), who is signed up for the ECIA e-mail list, and how many households are on Nextdoor? While we recognize that Nextdoor can be toxic, we could explore using it as a way to make announcements and close discussion. Naima Shea has also volunteered to be a moderator specifically for ECIA posts to make sure discussion stays civil. We should also liaise with Neighborhood Watch and other existing organizations such as Neighbors Helping Neighbors whenever appropriate and possible in order to disseminate important information. We have wonderful resources on the ECIA website that few residents know about, such as recommendations for balanced and holistic firewise land management (though these should be periodically updated) and how to differentiate native vegetation from noxious invasive weeds.
- 2) Urge all residents to sign up for the County Reverse 911 system.
https://www.santafecountynm.gov/public_safety/recc
- 3) Make sure every resident is aware of the **home site visits offered by the fire department** to advise them on proactive fire safety for their unique residence and land, bearing in mind that fire professionals are not ecologists and will often advise purely from a fire safety standpoint rather than considering the tradeoffs with ecology and aesthetic value. Clarify if this service is still being offered by the Eldorado volunteer fire department or has been taken over by the County. The fire department has not yet returned my call.
- 4) Thanks to the board for hearing the community and bringing back the Tumbleweed Dumpster for the month of August. In future years, we suggest that ECIA determine the cost and feasibility of providing a dedicated Tumbleweed Roundup dumpster for all ECIA members on ECIA property for a longer period of time, or as needed. Providing a dumpster will encourage residents to clean up their property and safely dispose of tumbleweeds (Russian thistle, kochia, and other noxious non-native species that break off and tumble in the wind). We should observe and determine, advised by ecologists and the Conservation Committee, when the greatest need is, which might vary from year to year due to changing climatic conditions. Certainly it should be provided in early spring (now in early March) through the end of summer, so that residents are motivated to clean up dead, dry tumbleweeds from the previous year, and to pull out green tumbleweeds before they go to seed. It is always best and easiest to pull weeds when in their early vegetative state.
- 5) Encourage every resident to consider the best way to create a roughly 30 ft. defensible space around their homes, based on their unique siting on the natural land, and in the proper season. **Inform and educate** about the differences between careful selective weed whacking, preferably with an electric weed whacker leaving at least 4-6 inches of vegetation for wildlife food and cover, and aggressively mowing entire swathes of land to the bare dirt. Make sure residents understand the considerable environmental damage caused by mowing large swathes of land, or even one's entire property—loss of

contiguous habitat and corridors for the wildlife we value, decrease of biodiversity, erosion of soil, destruction of soil crust, removal of biomass that acts as a carbon sink, and disturbance of the small water cycle promoting desertification alternating with floods—with little efficacy in protecting homes given that embers can travel as far as a mile. It has been suggested by several people that Debra write an article for “Vistas” about this. This could then be posted permanently on the ECIA website.

- 6) Encourage every resident to cover all roof vents are with metal mesh, and install spark arresters on all chimneys and stovepipes. This is also important for rodent exclusion from ceilings and thus discourages the use of toxic rodenticides.
- 7) Offer resources to residents so that they and any helpers they hire know the difference between invasive plants and native plants and preserve the latter while pulling out the former. There is a series of excellent articles on the ECIA website about this by Carol Beidleman, an ecologist, and Thom Bredenberg who are both on the Conservation Committee, but most residents are probably unaware of this resource.
[<https://eldoradosf.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Non-Native-Eldorado-Vegetation.pdf>]
- 8) Encourage residents to “rewild.” First choice is to gather mature native grass and forb seed from one’s yard (blue grama, sunflower family, etc.) to plant around any disturbed areas before moisture comes. Local nurseries may carry what they call “native seed”, but be cautious and ask questions as mixes may actually contain species not native to our area. John Reynolds recently posted a video on Nextdoor on this subject.
- 9) Should goats be reconsidered to clear weed overgrowth from Greenbelt commons? The Conservation Committee conducted a prior experiment using goats in the Greenbelts and found it to be ineffective in eliminating target noxious weed species, as well as expensive and logistically challenging, so it is up to those who believe it would work to demonstrate the efficacy and financial value of that approach.
- 10) Could the Conservation Committee or the Tree Samaritans expand their mission from the non-native and invasive Siberian elm to include knowledgeable Greenbelt clearance of non-native noxious weeds? Could there be organized volunteer work parties to do this (this is NOT the same as some residents taking it upon themselves as “volunteers” to mow the Greenbelts!)?
- 11) Due to legal concerns more data is needed in order to determine which Greenbelts to prioritize for fuel reduction projects. The GIS initiative can provide some of this type of data, including vegetation layers and information on wildlife habitat and corridors, which can be used along with on-site “walking the land” inspections. It is important to note that neither the ECIA nor most residents actually know where their property ends and Greenbelts begin unless they have had a recent survey done and can find the markers in amongst the brush. This task group can liaise with the GIS task group as they determine boundaries in the Greenbelts to facilitate management of the common areas. We support the use of GIS and Sim table technology to obtain the data the board needs to make proactive policy decisions and educate the community about the data used to make policy in a transparent manner.
- 12) Could a Mutual Aid initiative be set up privately by concerned citizens rather than the ECIA, to assist residents who are not able to do their own weed pulling and removal due to age, disability, health concerns, work schedule, or financial limitations? The ECIA Tumbleweed Roundup Dumpster is a great help because it does not require bagging,

which helps keep single-use plastic out of the landfill. People can be encouraged with a sign to dump tumbleweeds into the dumpster and reuse the bags.

- 13) Hire a Permaculture consultant, or if possible obtain a free evaluation, to determine the best Regenerative approaches to holistic management of common land. Many residents might choose to use these approaches on their own land once they are educated in the principles, methods, and importance of this approach.(Waiting to hear from Joel Glanzburg, who looked at my land three years ago, and from San Isidro Permaculture).
- 14) The Safety Education Task Group should remain independent and focused on communication and education, as that is the expertise of current group members. If it is deemed that a separate fire safety task group is needed, we will liaise with it in order to educate the community.

The above suggestions came out of conversations between Debra Denker and Eldorado resident Ben Greenberg, PsyD, who conducted informal surveys on Nextdoor of resident support for certain proactive Firewise measures, and Naima Shea.

Eldo Cons. Comm: Greenbelt wildfire risk mitigation, question for Thom

Hi Thom,
please let know what your summary take on the Gallina Park tumbleweed mowing project is.

All CC members & liaisons:

This is the second year after the eastern part of Gallina Park was mowed. The last time the topic came up in a CC meeting, that I recall, was about a year ago, and Jürgen Lehman's comment was that the project was a complete failure.

The question we may want to answer at the September CC meeting is, "Should we request that the area be mowed again?"

My current thoughts on Greenbelt wildfire risk mitigation are developing along the following lines, none of which are likely to be popular:

- As individuals & Conservation Committee members, we are dead-set against wholesale removal of vegetation, regardless of means (mechanical or chemical).
- Until someone can provide quantitative evidence and cost/benefit analysis showing that using goats to control weeds is effective, they can be presumed not to be, based on our actual experience. It's not our responsibility to refute the suggestion; it's the responsibility of those promoting this approach to give good evidence that it's effective and economically justifiable.
- The real risk from wildfire is to people's homes and other buildings. That's where community wildfire risk mitigation effort should be directed. The greenbelts are secondary (at most).
- However, encouraging property owners to manage their weeds is not only a problematic concept to me, given the methods people may elect, it is clearly not part of the Conservation Committee's charter, nor should it be.
- Susan Will took up the "hazardous fuels removal" initiative. Since her resignation from the Committee earlier this month, we need to see if there's Committee consensus that this should move forward as a Committee project, and if so, who will lead.
- You may recall I drafted [Brush removal SOP draft_PSB_210308.docx](#) and [hazard fuel reports and follow-up procedural for the Eldorado Greenbelts_PSB_210329.docx](#) in March 2021, but there was no interest at the time to implement these as a collaborative effort between CC volunteers and HOAMCO maintenance staff.

Perhaps it's time to revisit/redo these.

- Thom joined me on the experimental "weed-pull" at Trailhead Four on 8/09. We now have an assessment of how many tumbleweeds (*Salsola*) seven people can pull/hour (a lot) and how excited HOAMCO maintenance crew were to participate (moderately, and fading after an hour). I took photos, and as we discussed, will re-photograph the site in the coming months to try to determine whether this weed management approach is effective.
- My own feeling is that the Conservation Committee may wish to consider sponsoring a neighborhood-powered weed-pulling work session in September, with the following objectives:
 - Provide neighborhood volunteers with brief instruction on what/why pull weeds in the greenbelts.
 - Develop consensus that, until the seeds begin to mature, the weeds be scattered as they are pulled, first of all as a "green manure" that improves soil health, and second, to eliminate the need for gathering them and hauling them away.
 - Document with before, after and follow-up photos.
 - Given the issues with knowing where the greenbelt boundaries are so that ECIA-sponsored activities don't encroach on private property, the two areas that are suitable for such a project are in Los Alamos Park, between Ave. Torreon and the Rail Trail, and in Gallina Park, in the area east of Enebro Pl.

Paul Butt
ECIA Conservation Committee Chair

Draft SOP

For use by ECIA maintenance staff or authorized volunteers

Protocol for differentiating woody/brushy habitat from hazardous fuel accumulations in the Greenbelts, for wildfire risk management

- No removal of standing dead trees or bushes
- No removal of stumps from when the ranchers pulled up the Junipers
- No removal of partially buried logs
- Only dead brush **piled** on the ground is to be removed.

[hazard fuel reports and follow-up procedural for the Eldorado Greenbelts_PSB_210329.pdf](#)

ECIA Conservation Committee: standardized approach for managing hazardous fuel accumulations in the Greenbelts

Nancy Sulzberg has renewed her request for action to mitigate wildfire risk in the Eldorado Greenbelts.

My understanding of the consensus of the Conservation Committee members is that their involvement in those efforts should consist of establishing standards to ensure that:

- the Greenbelts' primary function as floodplain easements is not compromised
- the Greenbelts' secondary functions as habitat, viewscape and walkable/bikeable open space are not degraded

In the March CC meeting, the fundamental question of what constitutes a "hazardous fuel accumulation" was discussed and on 3/09 I sent out a draft standard operating procedure (SOP) to define what should and should not be identified as such and removed from the greenbelts.

At the time, there was some discussion via email of the what the procedures should be for identifying potential problems, establishing whether they constitute a hazard; if so, then determining whether they are in the Greenbelts or on private property and finally, removing them and in the case of material on private property, ensuring that corrective action was taken.

I think Committee input to defining an SOP to manage these steps is appropriate under the terms of the Conservation Committee Charter, insofar as it states that

"The Greenbelts (are) under the general oversight of the Conservation Committee..." (Section 2)

I also think the Committee's continued involvement is essential in order to ensure that a facts-based, balanced approach is taken during any wildfire risk mitigation effort. With that in mind, I have prepared the following draft SOP:

Management of Possible Hazardous Fuel Accumulations in the Community Greenbelts

1.) Ongoing educational effort:

A.) primary response to wildfire risk in Eldorado is for property owners to educate themselves about creating and maintaining a "defensible space" around their dwellings and other buildings. Santa Fe County Fire Department has a webpage and other resources dedicated to the topic.

B.) ECIA covenants, section 14 (Nuisances clause) prohibits storage of "trash or debris," etc., which is interpreted as covering piles of branches or other vegetation.

2.) Periodic call for residents to report possible hazardous fuel accumulations in the Greenbelts. Call should include request for location and photos. Call should include the definition of what a hazardous fuel accumulation consists of - per "Brush Removal" SOP, as finalized.

3.) Reports for Greenbelts to be made to Conservation Committee Chair. Reports for private property to be made to ECIA Covenants enforcement.

A.) Mis-directed reports to be forwarded as necessary.

4.) When a report is received by the Conservation Committee Chair, a Committee member or other volunteer will make an assessment within 30 days. Follow-up communication will be made to the person reporting the matter. If the report is deemed valid, it will be referred to the HOA property management staff for action:

A.) When property boundaries are not already clearly marked in the area where a hazardous fuel accumulation has been identified, HOA property management staff will coordinate with ECIA/Roads Committee volunteers to locate the pertinent boundary markers. If volunteers with the necessary equipment are not available, a licensed surveyor is to be contracted to locate the markers. Costs to be drawn from the Open Space Fire Risk Mitigation budget line (6925).

B.) If the material is in the Greenbelts, HOA maintenance will be directed to chip/scatter the material on-site per "Brush Removal" SOP, as finalized.

C.) If the material is on private property, the matter will be referred to ECIA Covenants enforcement for action.

Russian Thistle and Kochia in the Upper Gallina Park_ThBre_220825.pdf

Russian Thistle and Kochia in the Upper Gallina Park, a brief history of Intervention and Observation by the ECIA Conservation Committee

The area under observation is approximately 5 acres and lies within the Gallina Park, west of the railroad tracks and east of Avenida de Compadres, north of Enebro Way and south of Fonda Court .It should be noted there are also many small plots of native grasses and forbs in this area and that it is not entirely dominated by undesirable vegetation. A popular biking trail connecting Compadres Park to the Rail trail runs through this area, but current vegetation may have obscured it.

This area was selected as a goatscaping site in April and May of 2018, the last time ECIA employed goatscaping. Due to a number of factors, including that the optimal time for goatscaping is now recognized as June through October, the results were not satisfactory.

In the summer of 2020 the Board requested the Committee's recommendations for greenbelt areas to be considered for fuel reduction. The Committee recommended this area.

In October of 2020 the area was surveyed to assure it was entirely within ECIA's boundaries..

In November of 2020, HOAMCO mowed the area under the supervision of the Committee.The mowing removed much of the dead Russian Thistle and kochia, but it left what some considered a visual blight..

In spring of 2021 Libby MacClaren organized an event where residents brought weeds from their property to the Compadres Park, where they were taken by HOAMCO staff to the SFC transfer station. The staff also cleared culverts on Dovela and Espira Road of very old dead Russian thistles blocking them. This event was repeated in Spring of 2022. HOAMCO staff also cleared the Enebro Place access corridor of tumbleweeds under junipers.

From April through September, 2021, I took fortnightly photos of the area from a point in the area about 50 yards in from the greenbelt access on Enebro Place. The area slowly filled in with kochia and Russian thistle which were 6 inches high by July 1. With the onset of the monsoons in mid-July (which resulted in some greenbelt flooding,) they grew quickly, reaching a diameter of 3 feet by the end of August. They started to turn brown in September. Briefly, the Russian thistles of 2021 were more numerous but smaller than those of 2020, some of which had a diameter over 5 feet..

This spring I went out to the point again. It was difficult to walk through last year's dense chest high vegetation . Currently, cowpen daisies are blooming in profusion and the area is visually appealing from a distance.

Conventional methods of range management (cattle grazing, herbicides, controlled burning) have been deemed unacceptable in the subdivision. Whether the interventions employed (goats and mowing) were "a complete failure", as noted by a former Committee member, would depend on the objective.

Mowing was a success insofar as it temporarily removed fuel from the greenbelt as the Board had requested. Beautification was not an objective, for 6 months, the area looked worse than before the mowing.

Controlling the spread of invasive vegetation in the greenbelts is a separate objective and mowing in November may have broadcast mature seed . The Committee has yet to reach consensus on the best practices to remove Russian thistle and kochia without encouraging propagation. The HOAMCO community tumbleweed dumpster is a promising development that could possibly be expanded into autumn and spring..

Based on history, we may have employed both the goats and the mower too late in the season to be effective. Goatscaping in August and mowing before September on a limited experimental basis could still be considered..

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