



# NEWSLETTER

## A QUARTERLY NEWSPAPER FOR SILVERHEELS RANCH OWNERS ASSOCIATION / VOL 48 / SPRING 2019

### Broadband Internet for Silverheels – Exciting News!

By Silverheels Broadband Committee

Access to consistent high-speed Internet service in the mountains is a real challenge! Today, folks in Silverheels may have DSL, satellite, or wireless. Each of these options has different significant disadvantages, including unacceptably low speed, vulnerability to weather disruptions, expensive data plans, and/or lack of availability throughout our subdivision.

Last fall, our SROA Board formed a Broadband Committee to investigate the possibilities for getting better broadband service that could be available to every lot in our subdivision. The Committee has reached out to all providers of broadband service in our area. After months of investigation, it has become clear to the Committee that South Park Telephone (“SPT”) offers by far the best choice for Silverheels as an internet provider. SPT is part of a national network but has a local presence, and it has the experience, capital strength, and commitment to Park County to provide high-speed broadband service for our entire Silverheels community not only now but into the future. Additionally, SPT can provide telephone service, offering the potential for reduced-cost “bundled” service.

Fundamentally, there are only two practical choices for providing higher speed broadband service into our community. One is tower-based, line-of-sight wireless. The other is fiber optic cable (“fiber”). SPT can provide either technology, but the better choice is clear.

Wireless broadband is simply impractical for our entire subdivision because it requires each residence to be able to “see” the tower sending out the signal through the air. With our various hills and valleys this is a real challenge. Signals can be bounced from various towers, but given the topography of our subdivision, we would need several towers around the subdivision, including some on private property. In addition, signal strength can be a real issue.

Alternately, fiber provides consistent and high broadband speeds, even exceeding 100 megabytes per second (Mbps) for upload and download. Compare that to the DSL currently in Silverheels, which produces about 1.3 Mbps. Fiber can be run along utility poles or underground. SPT can collaborate with Xcel Energy to lease access to Xcel’s existing utility poles for “aerial” stringing of the fiber at a much lower cost than trenching underground, but still with low maintenance requirements.

As you would expect, installation of a fiber system throughout the subdivision entails a significant cost. SPT’s current rough top estimate is on the order of \$930,000. Of course, if Silverheels had to pay this cost ourselves, the project would be out of the question. *But here is where we have a unique opportunity right now.* The State of Colorado has established a rural broadband initiative with the goal of bringing high speed Internet to underserved rural communities such as ours. As part of that initiative, the State will fund up to 75% of the cost of infrastructure for an approved project, with the remaining 25% to be paid by the internet provider. The provider must file the application with the State, but the most favored applications are those in which the community to be served contributes toward that 25% portion. In other words, applications are favored when the community has some “skin in the game”.

Based on this, the Committee recently recommended, and the SROA Board approved, taking the next steps with SPT toward submitting an application to the State agency administering the grant program. To demonstrate our commitment to this process, the SROA Board approved the Committee’s recommendation to fund \$2,500 of SPT’s initial engineering study, analysis, and plan for installation of fiber throughout our subdivision. Assuming things go as now contemplated, SPT would make its application to the State by July 15, and we would learn by this October whether the application has been approved. If it is approved, installation could begin next Spring and be completed by next Summer.

## **Broadband Internet for Silverheels – Exciting News! - continued**

The initial part of the project will be installation of fiber on the utility poles along the roadside of every parcel within our subdivision. Having high speed Internet available to every parcel in the subdivision has been shown to increase property values. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to the Committee and the Board to consider having our Association contribute a reasonable amount, yet to be determined, from its available reserves toward this project.

The second part of the project would be to run fiber from the utility poles to individual homes. It would be up to individual owners whether they want to have fiber; no one will be required to participate. Those who do could have it run either above ground or, for additional cost, buried underground. But the cost of tapping in during the project construction will likely be significantly less than later on. Subsequent engineering from SPT will give us the exact numbers, but we're anticipating that installation would not exceed a few hundred dollars as a one-time charge.

SPT's pricing for monthly internet will be competitive with other providers, but its fiber will have significant advantages over the other technologies, including minimum download/upload speed of 25/25 Mbps, but 50/50 or even 100/100 if desired. If enough Silverheels residents sign up for the SPT service, we expect that discounts off of SPT's customary monthly rates will be possible. And as noted, SPT can also bundle internet with phone service. More details on this should be available soon.

The key to this project is the possibility of having the State pick up 75% of the infrastructure cost. You can expect further communications about this – probably in the form of an e-mail blast to the entire community - when more news becomes available. In the meantime, if anyone has questions they are free to contact the Broadband Committee members – Harlan Stueven ([harlanstueven@gmail.com](mailto:harlanstueven@gmail.com)), Jim Burghardt ([burghardtjim@gmail.com](mailto:burghardtjim@gmail.com)), or Myron Anduri ([myronanduir@yahoo.com](mailto:myronanduir@yahoo.com)).



*Picture submitted by Tim Gile*

**A copy of this Newsletter and lots of other important up-to-date information is always available on the SROA website:**

**[www.silverheels.org](http://www.silverheels.org).**

All emails sent from SROA Board will say from: *Silverheels Ranch Owners Association* [board@silverheels.org](mailto:board@silverheels.org)

## **Improving our Silverheels Roads – Let's Come Together**

By Silverheels Roads Committee

All of us who own in Silverheels Ranch are aware that our roads have been deteriorating over the years. During our annual meeting last year, a volunteer road committee was formed, that gathered input from the residents to identify specific problem areas. The committee met in early February with the County Public Works Director and his managers. (A report of that meeting was emailed to everyone on February 8). While the meeting was instrumental in bringing about a repair of major damage caused by the ice flow across Little Baldy Road – it also reminded us again of the limited funds as well and ongoing manpower shortage with which Public Works must maintain and repair 1600 miles of dedicated county roads in our sprawling mountain community of 2200 square miles!

## Improving our Silverheels Roads – Let’s Come Together - continued

The Public Works Department receives an average of only \$3.25 per land parcel from our property taxes! The majority of the Public Works Department funding comes from a share of the state’s Highway Users Tax Fund – gas taxes, and our county’s vehicle registration fees.

Voters in our last statewide election failed to pass Proposition 110 which proposed a .062 (62 cents per \$10) sales tax increase projected to raise \$767M in the first year – from which 20% would go to Colorado counties, potentially doubling or tripling Park county’s road funding!

While the long-term outlook to remedy this problem is dismal, there are actions we can take as residents to become part of the solution - from being conscientious, responsible property owners and neighbors, to becoming more vocal at a county and even state level to advocate for better funding. Some suggestions follow:



Foss Smith clearing out his culvert  
Picture by Linda Rulli

- 1) Owners are responsible for maintaining their own driveway entrances and drainage culverts. You must prevent water and ice from flowing onto the county road. If necessary, hire help to thaw or clear a clogged culvert, ask a neighbor - or perhaps contact the SROA and let them know you need assistance – we have some awesome folks living here and it is quite possible someone may lend you a hand. Do we hear any volunteers?
- 2) Register your vehicles in Park County - even if you live in the metro area - it provides funding for our Public Works. And could save you money!
- 3) SLOW DOWN.....PLEASE!! Our speed limit – 25mph – is not just for safety, but dust control – a health hazard. AND those higher speeds erode and disperse whatever binding material is left on our roads, creating those jarring washboards which are costly to your vehicle maintenance! Be a considerate neighbor. *Slow down – enjoy the beauty of this place!*
- 4) THIS IS IMPORTANT: If you see a problem area in our roads, contact the Public Works Department. It helps them immensely because they simply don’t have the staff or time to patrol 1600 miles of roads. Be a respectful, but squeaky wheel - until you see a result. They are good folks, working under serious constraints, but will do their best to respond. Contact info: 719 836-4277, or to email, go to: [www.Parkco.us](http://www.Parkco.us) - click on “Departments” - then “Public Works”. Their email link is at the top upper right corner. The Little Baldy Road repair in early February was a result of several residents urgent calls and emails to them that week. And a special thanks goes to Road Committee member Laura Biewick for following up with them. It all made a difference!
- 5) Attend County Commissioners meetings and voice your concerns about our roads and advocate for support. Go to [parkco.us](http://parkco.us) to find their meeting schedule.
- 6) Write to our State lawmakers – inform them of the rural challenges of living and working in our mountain counties and the fact that our roads need funding help!
- 7) If you know of skilled blade operators who would like to live and work in Park County, inform them of the Public Works Department’s manpower shortage. They badly need more qualified operators!
- 8) Finally, we need innovative solutions to fix our problem road areas. This might include some form of funding partnership with the county. If you have ideas, we’d like to hear them.....send them to any of our Board members. Let’s see if we can work together to keep our roads safe and sustainable for the future.

## Let's Keep Silverheels Tidy!

By SROA Board of Directors

Just a reminder to all landowners and residents to respect our covenants regarding our responsibility to keep our property looking neat and well kept.

**Covenant #1. INTENT:** *“It is the intent of these covenants to protect and enhance the value, desirability and attractiveness of said property. Restrictions are kept to a minimum while keeping in constant focus the right of property owners to enjoy their property in attractive surroundings free of nuisances, undue noise, and danger. Further it is intended that the natural environment be disturbed as little as possible.”*

To that end, if each of us would do our best to keep our property maintained by adhering to these following covenants, your neighbors will be very appreciative.

**Covenant #4. REFUSE and RUBBISH:** *“Rubbish, garbage or other waste shall be kept and disposed of in a sanitary manner, and containers shall be kept in a clean, sanitary condition. No trash, litter or junk shall be permitted to remain exposed upon the premises and visible from public roads or adjoining or nearby premises. ...”*

Please remove your trash containers from the road in a timely manner after trash pick-up. Leaving them in the roadway impedes snow removal as well as being an eyesore. Store them near your home as inconspicuously as possible. Be sure they are secured from animals, especially as spring approaches, as bears can be a problem here – and coyotes are always around. And be a considerate neighbor - remove exposed junk and other litter.

**Covenant # 7: NUISANCE:** *“Nothing shall be done or permitted on any tract which may be or become an annoyance or nuisance to the neighborhood. Storage of junk or old automobiles on lots is prohibited. ....”*

Kindly remove unused vehicles and equipment - or if infrequently used, move them to a location on your property not as exposed or visible from our public roads or your neighboring properties.

As winter slowly comes to an end, see if a little spring cleaning to neaten our properties is required, so we can keep Silverheels Ranch looking as beautiful as the mountain environment that surrounds us – which is one of the joys of living here, right?

## Board & ACC Members 2018–2019

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### Architectural Control Committee Jimmy Brown

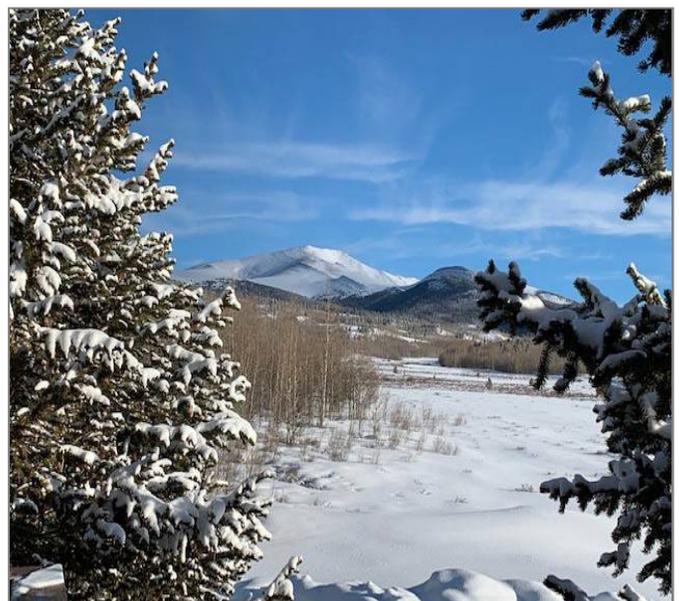
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Picture by Linda Rulli

## LOW COST TREE SEEDLINGS

If you have open spaces on your lot where trees have come down and left 'holes', or spots you would like to fill in, here is your chance to do just that. The Colorado State Forest Service Nursery provides landowners with the opportunity to purchase low-cost container and bare root seedlings to help successfully achieve conservation goals.

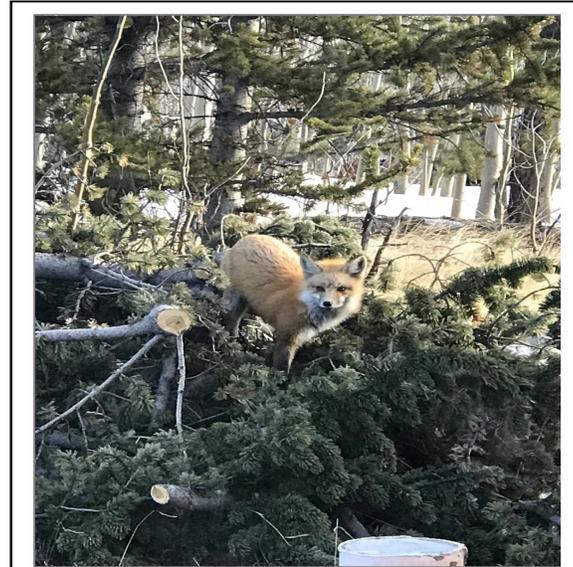
Evergreens suitable for our elevation are still available, (and some shrubs as well), but supply is diminishing. If you are interested in this program, you should get your order in soon. Cost is reasonable: from \$1.04 to \$9.00 per seedling. Seedlings are sold in lots of 20-30, or large potted trees are available in boxes of 4. You can order online or by phone. Deadline to order is May 1. Seedlings can be picked up on May 22 at the Park County Fairgrounds in the Community Center.

Proceeds benefit the 4-H Youth Development Program and CSU Extension in Park County. There is much more information on this program on the Colorado State Forest Service website. To order online see [csfs.colostate.edu-buying-seedling-trees/](http://csfs.colostate.edu-buying-seedling-trees/) or you can call the Park County CSU Extension Office at 719/836-4296.

## Pictures in this Newsletter

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Send your great pictures taken within our subdivision for publication in the newsletter to [board@silverheels.org](mailto:board@silverheels.org)



Picture by Kerry Houghton



Picture by Sonnie White