

Chet Koblinsky - Presented to RSFA Board meeting, August 5, 2021

Intro – Good morning. As some of you know, my home is on the 7th hole and I've played the course many times. I walk my dog on the trails and enjoy conversations with trail-users. (Slide)

Today I'd like to address the loss of golf course trees over the years, the impacts of this loss, and some thoughts on how to improve our golf course forest. So, let's start with some numbers.

What percent of our golf course trees have been removed since the baseline count in the 2014 Master Plan? On both the front and back 9 holes, we could only locate about 50% of the trees. This is not a surprise. The 2001 and 2014 Plans together recommended removing 350 trees. And, our current renovation has already removed at least 40.

What percent of new trees approved in the past were actually planted and survived? The 2001 and 2014 Plans together approved planting 335 new trees. A visual survey suggests that only 25% of the approved trees were planted or survived.

Another important indicator of a sustainable forest is a broad age distribution of trees. In 2018, Dudek completed the Ranch Forest Health Study. They reported a healthy golf course forest with no dead trees and low fire risk. However, only 6% of the course trees were in the "immature" or youngest age category. Ideally, we should have 40% immature trees to ensure a future tree canopy and a healthy forest.

All these data indicate the critical need to plant new trees.

Now, I'd like to address changes in the appearance of the golf course due to tree loss. I will compare past and current photos of 3 course holes, all taken from the tee box and looking down the fairway. (Slide)

The 5th hole is a long par 4. The left photo was taken years ago and the right on Monday. The old course had skyline trees to frame the fairway, pose a golf challenge on the right side, and provide trail shade on the left side. Today, these trees are mostly missing. Previously, 22 eucalyptus trees were approved for planting on the left side of the fairway and none were planted. (Slide)

The 7th hole is a short par 3. Over the past 6 years all 13 skyline trees surrounding the fairway and green shown in the old photo on the left have been removed. The fairway framing, golf challenge, and trail shade are all gone now, producing a very barren look. (Slide)

The 8th Hole, is a long par 5. Previous golf reviews describe a thick grove of Eucalyptus bordering the right side of the hole, as shown in the left photo. The right photo shows that these trees are mostly gone today, along with trees that used to frame the fairway and provide trail shade. (Slide)

Our course is suffering from the impacts of a substantial tree loss. As a community, how do we want our future golf course to look and how do we ensure it benefits all our residents? (Slide)

We recommend planting 360 new trees over a 4-year period, starting now. While 360 may seem like a large number, previous plans approved one-year plantings of 400 trees in 1974, 231 trees in 2001 and 104 trees in 2014.

To achieve this goal of planting 360 of the “right trees in the right places”, we recommend establishing a diverse committee of community representatives from the Golf Club, Forest Health committee, and regular trail users, as well as Golf Club and Association staff, an arborist and a landscape architect.

The Committee would collaborate to develop a tree-planting plan that must pass through Art Jury and Association review and approval. We strongly recommend annual reporting and oversight of golf course trees by this new committee.

There are many benefits of this approach.

It encourages community engagement and collaboration between a diverse group of residents, tree experts, and staff.

The Plan also emphasizes transparency and accountability, and, it begins to increase our stock of immature trees.

Working together this committee can ensure the optimal impact of new trees on landscape design, course playability and trail quality now and more importantly for future generations of Ranch residents.

Thank you.