

Serene Lakes Property Owners Association, Inc. (SLPOA)



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Construction Requirements and Recommendations

Overview

The material in this document is a combination of requirements from the Serene Lakes “Conditions, Covenants and Restrictions” (CC&Rs), Placer County Building Codes, and Placer County Ordinances and recommendations from your neighbors. Over the years members of the Serene Lakes Property Owners Association have experienced the gentle and not-so-gentle hand of Mother Nature as it caresses their cabins. In the event you haven't observed a winter at Serene Lakes, the advice in these pages will go a long way toward making the experience a happy one. If, after reading this document, you have additional questions please feel free to call or write. We'll do our best to get you an answer.

At the end of the document we have included addresses and phone numbers for agencies and companies (including SLPOA's) that may be useful during and after your construction activities. We've also included a SLPOA Membership form. Please join us, we'd love to have you as a member.

Requirements

Let's start with what's *required* in a construction project in Serene Lakes. These requirements apply to any development on any lot, to both new construction as well as additions and alterations, and includes snow tunnels, covered walkways and garages for all Ice Lakes (our original name) and Serene Lakes subdivisions. The requirements listed here are a distillation of material in the CC&Rs. These vary slightly with each subdivision and a copy, if not attached to your deed, may be obtained from the Placer County Recorder in Auburn.

Non-compliance with the CC&Rs can be subject to legal action by the home owners association or any property owner.

In addition, any property owner in Serene Lakes may oppose a variance request. You are strongly encouraged to discuss a variance with your neighbors in Serene Lakes prior to making application to the County in order to minimize or avoid misunderstandings.

SLPOA will vigorously oppose any request to Placer County for a variance from setbacks and other County regulations that has not been first presented to the SLPOA Architectural Review Committee.

- Each structure shall be a single family dwelling. Dwellings shall not be advertised as being used for commercial purposes.
- Placer County Building Ordinances require that:
 - Building height not exceed 35 feet as measured from the average ground elevation to the top of the roof. (See the Recommendations for more on building height.)
 - Building setbacks are from the property lines. The front setback *is not from the edge of the road*. The front setback is 30 feet, the rear is 10 feet and the side setbacks are 5 feet minimum for one side and 15 feet for the sum of both sides. To avoid disputes in the future you may wish to have a licensed Land Surveyor determine the exact locations of your property lines. (Again, see the Recommendations for more on setbacks.)
- No dwelling shall be constructed having less than 500 square feet of ground floor (living) space. Each residence shall have not less than two stories. Where a garage is incorporated on the ground floor, the second floor shall have not less than 500 square feet of living space.
- No change in the grade of a lot shall be made without prior approval of the Architectural Review Committee.
- No shed, tent, garage, trailer, motorhome or camper shall be used as a residence, except that a trailer, motorhome or camper may be used while the dwelling is under construction for a period not to exceed 180 days.
- Each owner shall remove all rubbish and trash regularly.
- No noxious or offensive activity shall occur on any building site or lot. Dog kennels, stabling of horses, etc. are not permitted.

Submittals

To assist us to assist you, you must provide the Architectural Review Committee with a copy of your building plans including a plot plan. We will annotate your plans with any suggestions or concerns we have and return them to you. Architectural Review will take a maximum of 30 days. Your plans and specifications should include:

- All exterior elevations (4 views minimum) with ground lines shown. Where finish grades are different from the natural grade show existing grades as a dotted line.
- The type and color of roofing material. Roofing should be a natural color or earth tone.
- The type of exterior siding and color. Siding should be a natural color or earth tone. Exposed foundation walls should be painted earth tones or covered with siding if the exposed portion is more than an average of two feet in height on any one side. Exceptions are allowed where a decorative or textured concrete block, stone veneer or special concrete treatment is to be used.
- A plot plan showing:

- Trees and rock outcroppings to be removed (if any).
- Trees larger than 6 inches in diameter and large rock outcroppings to remain.
- Lot property lines, lot number, subdivision unit, adjacent streets and local street address (if known), easements (including greenbelt) if any, building setbacks with distances from the property lines, North arrow and scale used.
- Contours at two foot intervals. Sectional views for proposed cuts and fills (if any).
- Location of utilities, water, sewer and underground electrical service.
- Location of propane tank (if any) and screening.
- Location of culverts and driveways. Encroachment permits must be obtained from Placer County prior to the construction of driveways or culverts.
- Location of any natural wetlands or stream channels, including intermittent streams.

Send the above to:

SLPOA - Serene Lakes Property Owners Association
PO Box 669 Soda Springs, CA 95728
(530) 426-0802

What do we do with this information? Well, we are not acting as the arbiters of “cabin look correctness”. We aren't the “style police”. First, we look for design features that might cause you or your neighbors problems - the same kinds of things that the Recommendations deal with - a roof that dumps its load of snow directly on your deck or driveway, a cabin that sits so low that there will be a serious problem with access, or a propane tank that may be inaccessible in the winter. Second, we look at the positioning of the cabin with respect to natural features and greenbelt areas. If the plan calls for significant removal of trees, grading or disturbance or wetlands or streams, we may make suggestions to help minimize damage to the environment and the amount of work you have to do. Third, we look for potential problems with snow storage from the driveway and roads. Finally, we look at the materials you specify for the roof and exterior finish. Will they work well under the severe conditions on the Summit or will they be a maintenance nightmare? When we're done we return your plans with our comments and suggestions. The process provides you and your neighbors with a FREE! evaluation of the plan before the project is so far along that changes become real expensive. You get the benefit of the experience of people who have lived in the area for years in a structured and rational way.

Recommendations

You'll enjoy Serene Lakes, especially in the winter, a lot more if you take these recommendations into consideration while you're planning and building your cabin.

Remember, the less time you spend moving snow and repairing damage, the more time you have to ski, snowshoe, hike, swim, canoe, sail or just relax.

If you are using an architect, *especially one not familiar with our area*, you may want to keep these recommendations in mind as you review the plans. We urge you to choose the designer of your cabin with care. The average snowfall at Serene Lakes is on the order of 450 inches - that's nearly **40 feet!** That much snow poses some serious stresses for a building and some unique problems in the placement of doors, decks and the design of rooflines.

General Design Considerations

- Design the structure for mountain weather and in keeping with the environment. (See the [Snow section](#) in the Photo Gallery for an example of what happens when you ignore this recommendation.)
- Consider placing your main living areas on the upper level for more light, better views and easier access during the winter months. During a normal winter we have 10 to 12 feet of snow on the ground, more where the snow from your driveway has been added to the natural depth. You can imagine what your view will be from a ground floor living room!
- Avoid gable type dormers (known locally as “glacier makers”). The snow will build up between those beautiful gables and not slough off. Eventually it turns to a mass of ice and exerts tremendous sideways pressure on the dormers. Then, in the spring, that not-so-little glacier comes crashing down on your driveway or deck (or, worse yet, you, your dog or your car). Keep your roof line as simple as possible.
- Install the chimney and other vents as close to the peak or ridge of the roof as possible. Install a snow splitter to minimize sliding snow damage. As a preview, look at roofs as you drive around Serene Lakes. Those broken chimneys, stovepipes and smashed vents are proof of the power of 450 inches of “light, fluffy snow”!
- Provide sheltered storage for firewood. It's hard to get enthusiastic about a romantic fire when you have to dig through 10 feet of snow to feed it.
- Disturb existing soil and vegetation as little as possible. Both are very fragile and take a long time to recover. The Sierra Lakes Water District has a document which includes recommendations for limiting erosion during construction. Lakes such as Serena and Dulzura may be described as “meadows in the making”. Over time, erosion of the surrounding soils fills the lakes, creating a beautiful mountain meadow. However, we'd like to delay that moment as long as possible! You can help by stabilizing your lot during and after construction.

Second Story Access

With 10 to 12 feet of snow on the ground you may want to provide access at the second story level. While your driveway may be cleared by a plow service that last six feet will

be difficult since your shovel or snowblower is snug and warm *inside the garage!* That same access will serve you well as an emergency exit.

Deck and Stairway Locations

Picture four feet of snow on your roof. Now picture that same amount of snow immediately after it moves from your roof to your deck, stairway or driveway. Remember, that's four feet of snow multiplied by the area of your roof that sheds onto those areas. At minimum it'll make using those areas impossible until you shovel it off. Most likely the snow will remove things that get in it's way - like your deck rails (if not the deck itself!). We **strongly** recommend that your roof design take into consideration the location of your doors, decks and driveway. Decks and landings should be sheltered by a roof overhang. The roof should never shed onto the driveway for your and your guests' safety. During the other three seasons those roof overhangs are pretty nice at keeping the rain from drip, drip, dripping down your collar. See the [Snow section](#) in the Photo Gallery for an example of what happens when you ignore this recommendation.

Railings

During heavy snow years the weight of the snow pack will break 2X6 boards and bend 1 ½ inch steel pipe. We previously recommended making the railings removable. However, county ordinances prohibit the use of removable railings as a safety hazard. You should shovel (or contract with someone to do the shoveling for you) your deck and railings throughout the winter.

Roofing

Metal roofing provides a surface that will allow snow to slough off rather than building up. It also provides good protection from fire. The roofing you choose should have a matte finish (not shiny). Steel roofing panels seem to hold their finish much longer than aluminum. If your roof design incorporates a prow or bow shape at the rake edges metal top-set edge flashing should not be used. It will be torn off in the first winter as the snow pack slides off the roof. If you ever take a close look at a metal roof you'll notice that the snow pack can catch on an area as small as the screw heads that fasten the roofing to the roof deck. You can tell because some of them are sheared off or pulled out of the roof deck!

Setbacks

Under the **Requirements** section we listed the minimum setbacks. Folks, those are truly **minimums!** We've tried to describe the damage snow can do as it falls off your roof. Those same forces are at play when your house is so close to your neighbors that the snow has no place to go. Two houses too close together have the same effect as two dormers side-by-side. The snow builds up between them and, if the snow fills the area between the houses, the roof can no longer slough the accumulated snow. If the weight becomes too much doors won't close and windows jam. The answer is to have your roof

shoveled - at a price (in 1995) of from \$700 to \$1,750 dollars! Further, if you or your neighbor happens to have a deck or walkway in the line of the falling snow it'll probably be crushed. So don't push that building envelope to the absolute maximum, leave a little safety margin.

Of late, Serene Lakes has been experiencing another side effect of cabins completely filling the lot, leaving only minimum set backs- a lack of snow storage. The snow from the road and your driveway has to go somewhere. As Serene Lakes approaches build out we're just plain running out of places to put the snow. The county plow folks have been doing a great job of trying to handle it but they need our help. If your lot is 70 feet wide and you have a 2-car driveway there is effectively only about 46 feet by 30 feet (the county setback) in which to store the snow from your driveway and the road in front of your house. That's 1,380 square feet to store 4,220 square feet of snow-covered surface or 3 times the depth of snow that falls. Remember that beautiful view out your front window? Wonder where it went in the winter?

Some people apply for variances from the 30-foot minimum set back and wonder why SLPOA opposes them. It's simple physics- we MUST have room to store the snow from the roads or the county will A) raise our taxes to pay to have the snow hauled away in trucks or B) quit plowing the streets. Option A is very, very, very unlikely and would be REAL expensive. Option B is much more likely.

For all of those reasons, when you're laying out your cabin give some thought to snow storage. **Don't build to the maximum footprint** – be respectful of your neighbor, be smart about the loads you put on your house and be sure to leave room for snow storage. If you don't you may have the pleasure of owning a very large cabin that you have to ski to in the winter. Of course, that would free up the garage for guest accommodations during the winter...

Orientation

If possible orient your cabin so the roof is in a predominately North/South direction. This will help avoid uneven loading of your roof when the sun melts the snow off one side. When the lot requires that the roof ridge run East/West the design should incorporate a number of cross walls built as shear walls. A shear wall has plywood or other shear resistant material under the sheetrock to form a rigid element that can resist sideways forces.

Window Guards

Windows below the eaves may be susceptible to breakage from falling snow and ice. You may wish to use window guards or shutters over those windows. The guards also act as protection from ice and rocks thrown by county or private snow blowers. You can use spaced horizontal boards set in frames, shutters, individual boards in tracks or Plexiglas sheets. Individual boards or removable panels can be stored during the summer months.

Vertical wooden tracks at the sides of the windows or shutters can remain in place throughout the year and should match the cabin trim color.

Plumbing

To prevent the freezing of water pipes during the winter months slope all water lines to a low point and provide a valve there for draining the lines from within the cabin. Avoid installing pipes in exterior walls. Install a pressure relief valve to minimize extremes in water pressure. You should determine whether back-flow prevention devices are necessary for your cabin.

Propane Tank

If you will be using propane for heating or cooking you're going to have a propane tank. Pick the location for the tank carefully. While appearance may be your first concern you should consider safety and winter access also. The tank should be placed so that should a leak occur the propane (which is heavier than air) won't flow into your cabin. Be a good neighbor and try to place it so that a leak won't flow into their cabin, either. Because of the number of fires and explosions involving propane tanks in mountain areas, the Fire Department has increased their scrutiny of propane tank placement and marking, the protection necessary for the regulator and signs indicating the location of the outside shut off valve. Check with the Fire Department, Placer County and your propane supplier for the latest regulations.

In the middle of winter, when your 500 gallon propane tank runs dry, what do you do? Well, first, you dig it out from under 12 feet of the heaviest snow known to man - or at least to you. You see, the propane suppliers don't fill tanks they can't get to and their prices don't include snow removal. So, when you're picking that perfect tank location, give some consideration to your back. Maybe a place right next to the driveway would be good - why dig down 12 feet when you only have to dig in about 4?

A device known as a "regulator" is installed between the propane tank and your house to control the pressure in the lines leading to your appliances. Regulators are subject to freezing if left buried under snow for long periods. It should be placed so that it is protected from being covered or broken by accumulating snow and its location prominently marked for the Fire Department.

Finally, make sure the pad the tank sits on will not sink into the ground under the load of the tank, propane and snow. If it does you'll have, at minimum, a broken propane line and at worst a large fire. Most problems have occurred when two small pads at the ends of the tank are used. A single pad slightly larger than the horizontal dimensions of the tank works well in most soils.

Site Drainage

A number of lots in Serene Lakes have less than perfect drainage. Some of them fit the technical definition of wetlands. Have an engineer evaluate the foundation design for protection from drainage and frost heave damage. You may wish to have the first floor raised to avoid drainage and flooding. Flooding sometimes occurs even on level and high ground when the snow pack freezes and forms ice dams.

Off Street Parking

From November 1 to May 1 there is **absolutely no** on-street parking in Serene Lakes. If you intend to use your cabin during the winter you must provide off-street parking adequate for you and your guests' cars. Be sure to park well off the road to avoid damage from snow removal equipment and from thrown or pushed snow.

What's the first sound you hear after your plow service clears your driveway? The gentle roar of the county plow as it neatly places a 3 foot berm across your nice clean drive. That berm is your responsibility to clear. You might want to park one car behind the other - that way you only have to clear one lane to get out of the drive.

Night Lighting

Since Serene Lakes, thankfully, does not have street lights lighting your drive becomes a homeowner responsibility. Install light(s) to illuminate your driveway using a photo cell control that turn the lights on at night and off during the day. In fact, the best combination is a floodlight with a photo cell device and motion detector. That way you don't pay for lighting the driveway all night and we preserve the wonderful views of the night sky. The motion detector should be set so it "sees" movement in and just outside of your driveway. That lets the snow removal crews know where your cabin is when they're blowing snow off the streets. It tends to extend the life of your front windows when the blower operator can see what's in the way of all that snow they're blowing.

Sodium and mercury vapor lamps, while inexpensive to operate, are overkill for the amount of lighting required. Unless they are installed with a lot of shielding they spill into the night sky and shine into you and your neighbor's windows. For those reasons we recommend you not use those fixtures.

For additional information go to the [California Chapter of the International Dark-Sky Association](#) web site.

Greenbelt Easements

If your lot has a greenbelt easement, the easement area must be preserved in its natural state. No portion of your cabin may project into this easement and no trees removed from it. If you feel a tree in a greenbelt area may be a hazard please consult the Architectural Review Committee for the procedure to have the hazard removed. Special permission must be obtained prior to removing any tree within greenbelt areas.

Bears and Other Things that go Growl in the Night'

Yes, we have bears and mountain lions and coyotes and a bunch of other wildlife in Serene Lakes. And they sometimes develop a palate for garbage. For that matter, domestic dogs have been known to relish a snack from your ultimate leftovers. All of those create a mess as well as a danger. So, when we require rubbish and trash to be removed regularly it isn't just that we're neat freaks. For your own safety and health you should contract for garbage service or pack your trash home with you. Garbage pickup is (currently) on Monday morning. Be sure you use a secure container - not just trash bags - or your trash will be placed on display for the whole world to see and for you to clean up upon your return to your cabin. You should place your garbage cans well out of the range of county and private snow blowers during the winter. If it gets covered by snow and the blower ingests it - well, it gets blown back onto your lot. And, as the mountain wildflowers peek out from the snow banks, they'll see you, picking up the remains of your New Year's party - for the second time!

While on the subject of animals, Placer County has (and enforces) a leash law. So please keep your pets under control. SLPOA maintains dispensers with disposable plastic bags for cleaning up after your pet at three locations around the lake. If you forget to bring your own on your walk with Rover feel free to take as many as you need. **Please pick up your pet's feces - the lakes are your drinking water!**

Contact Appendix

Here are addresses and phone numbers for other agencies you may need to contact.

Serene Lakes Property Owners Association, Inc. (SLPOA, pronounced
'slowpa')
PO Box 669
Soda Springs, CA 95728 (530) 426-0802

Placer County Planning Division
DeWitt Center
Auburn CA 95603 (530) 889-7470

Placer County Building Department
DeWitt Center
Auburn, CA 95603 (530) 889-7490

Placer County Building Inspector
565 W Lake Blvd.
Tahoe City, CA (536) 581-6200

PG & E (800) 743-5000
Pacific Bell (800) 310-2355

Sierra Lakes County Water District
PO Box 1039
Soda Springs, CA 95728-1039 (530) 426-7800

USA Media (Cable TV)
Auburn, CA (530) 367-3784

Donner Summit Fire Department (530) 426-3000

Propane Suppliers:
Ameri Gas (530) 587-3578
Bi-State Petroleum (530) 587-4730
Truckee Tahoe Propane (530) 587-2382

Garbage/Trash Removal:
Tahoe Truckee Sierra Disposal Company
645 W Lake Blvd.
Tahoe City, CA (530) 583-0148