Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration

County of Sonoma
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Publication Date:	September 14, 2026
Public Review Period:	September 14, 2026- October 15, 2026
State Clearinghouse Number:	
Permit Sonoma File Number**:**	**PLP25-00012**
Prepared by:	Jen Chard at
Phone:	(707) 565-2336

Pursuant to Section 15071 of the State CEQA Guidelines, this proposed Negative Declaration and the attached Initial Study, constitute the environmental review conducted by the County of Sonoma as lead agency for the proposed project described below:

Project Name:	Kosta Browne Winery and Tasting Room
Project Applicant/Operator:	Steve vonRaesfeld and Duckhorn Wine Company
Project Location/Address:	4151 and 4175 Slusser Road, Windsor
APN:	057-070-021 and 057-070-025
General Plan Land Use Designation:	Diverse Agriculture, 60 acre density
Zoning Designation:	Diverse Agriculture (DA), 60 acre density (B6 60), Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion (Z) with combining districts for Floodplain (F2), Oak Woodland (OAK), Riparian Corridor 50 and 100 ft setback (RC50/25 RC100/50) and Valley Oak Habitat (VOH)
Decision Making Body:	Planning Commission (PC). Action by PC is appealable within 10 calendar days.
Appeal Body:	Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Project Description: See Item III, below

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" or "Less than Significant with Mitigation" as indicated in the attached Initial Study and in the summary table below.

Table 1. Summary of Topic Areas

Topic Area	Abbreviation*	**Yes**	**No**
Aesthetics	VIS	X	
Agriculture & Forestry Resources	AG		X
Air Quality	AIR	X	
Biological Resources	BIO	X	
Cultural Resources	CUL	X	
Energy	ENERGY		X
Geology and Soils	GEO		X
Greenhouse Gas Emission	GHG		X
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	HAZ		X
Hydrology and Water Quality	HYDRO		X
Land Use and Planning	LU		X
Mineral Resources	MIN		X
Noise	NOISE		X
Population and Housing	POP		X
Public Services	PS		X
Recreation	REC		X
Transportation	TRANS		X
Tribal Cultural Resources	TCR	X	
Utilities and Service Systems	UTL		X
Wildfire	FIRE		X
Mandatory Findings of Significance	MFS		X

RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

The following lists other public agencies whose approval is required for the project, or who have jurisdiction over resources potentially affected by the project.

Table 2.**Agency**	**Activity**	**Authorization**
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers	Wetland dredge or fill Work in navigable waters	Clean Water Act, Section 401 Rivers and Harbors Act, Section 106
Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast or San Francisco Bay)	Discharge or potential discharge to waters of the state Wetland dredge or fill	California Clean Water Act (Porter Cologen) – Waste Discharge requirements, general permit or waiver Clean Water Act, Section 404
State Water Resources Control Board	Generating stormwater (construction, industrial, or municipal)	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requires submittal of NOI
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Lake or streambed alteration	Fish and Game Code, Section 1600

Table 2.**Agency**	**Activity**	**Authorization**
California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)	Impacts to natural resources, ground disturbance, vegetation removal, etc.	Protection of natural resources held in trust for the people of California; CA Fish & Game Code § 1802 (2024)
Bay Area Air District (BAAD)	Stationary air emissions	BAAQMD Rules and Regulations (Regulation 2, Rule 1 – General Requirements; Regulation 2, Rule 2 – New Source Review; Regulation 9 – Rule 8 – NOx and CO from Stationary Internal Combustion Engines; and other BAAQMD administered Statewide Air Toxics Control Measures (ATCM) for stationary diesel engines
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and or National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)	Incidental take permit for listed plant and animal species	Endangered Species Act
State Division of Aeronautics	Construction in airport safety zone	FAA Form 7460 letter of compliance
Native American Heritage Commission		
State Historic Preservation Office		

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDING:

Based on the evaluation in the attached Expanded Initial Study, I find that the project described above will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment, provided that the mitigation measures identified in the Initial Study are included as conditions of approval for the project and a Mitigated Negative Declaration is proposed. The applicant has agreed in writing to incorporate identified mitigation measure into the project plans.

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Prepared by: Jen Chard September 14, 2026

I. INTRODUCTION:

Duckhorn Wine Company propose a new Use Permit for Kosta Browne Winery including production of 90,000 cases annually with tasting and vineyard tours for 50 guests at one time with a maximum of 150 per day on a 155.8 acre parcel. A new 73,500 sq ft winery production facility, a new 3,600 sq ft tasting building and the conversion of a 3,900 sq ft existing barn to an additional tasting building is proposed. Tastings and Events would occur within the two tasting buildings, and their adjoining outdoor patios and courtyard. Tasting room hours of operation would be 7 days per week between 10:00 am and 5:00 pm, Monday through Sunday. The 24 agricultural events are proposed for up to 100 people any day of the week between 10:00 am and 10:00 pm and 4 industry wide events for up to 200 people. A referral letter was sent to the appropriate local, state and federal agencies and interest groups who may wish to comment on the project.

This report is the Initial Study required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The report was prepared by Jen Chard, Project Review Planner with the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department, Project Review Division. Information on the project was provided by Steve vonRaesfeld. Technical studies were provided by qualified consultants to support the conclusions in this Initial Study. Technical studies, other reports, documents, and maps referred to in this document are available for review through the Project Planner, or Permit Sonoma Records Section.

Please contact Jen Chard, Planner, at (707) 565-2336, for more information.

II. EXISTING FACILITY

The subject site is located 2.25 miles southwest of the Town of Windsor and 4.04 miles northwest of the City of Santa Rosa in unincorporated Sonoma County (Figure 1).

The proposed project will utilize a former agricultural farm and 14,000 case “experimental” pinot noir winery (UPE02-0134) accessed off Slusser Road approximately 0.88 mile north of the River Road and Slusser Road intersection. The site includes seven existing structures, including a single-family residence and six barns and support structures. These structures are currently used to support and store vineyard maintenance, harvesting equipment and the “experimental” winery equipment. Additionally, the site contains existing wells, an existing septic system for domestic wastewater disposal and an existing waste water treatment system. The property is currently planted with 119.3 acres of vineyards. There is an unnamed seasonal stream that transects the northern part of the property and several mature trees including Valley Oak trees. Access to the site is currently provided by a driveway off of Slusser Road.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map

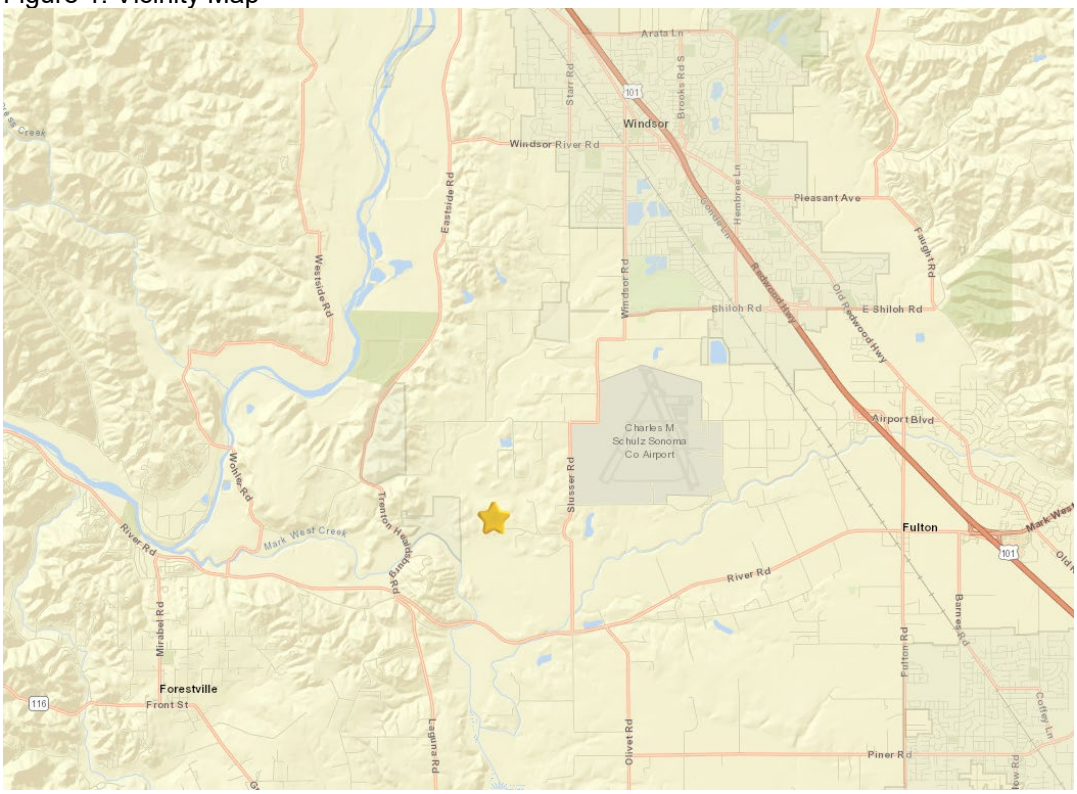


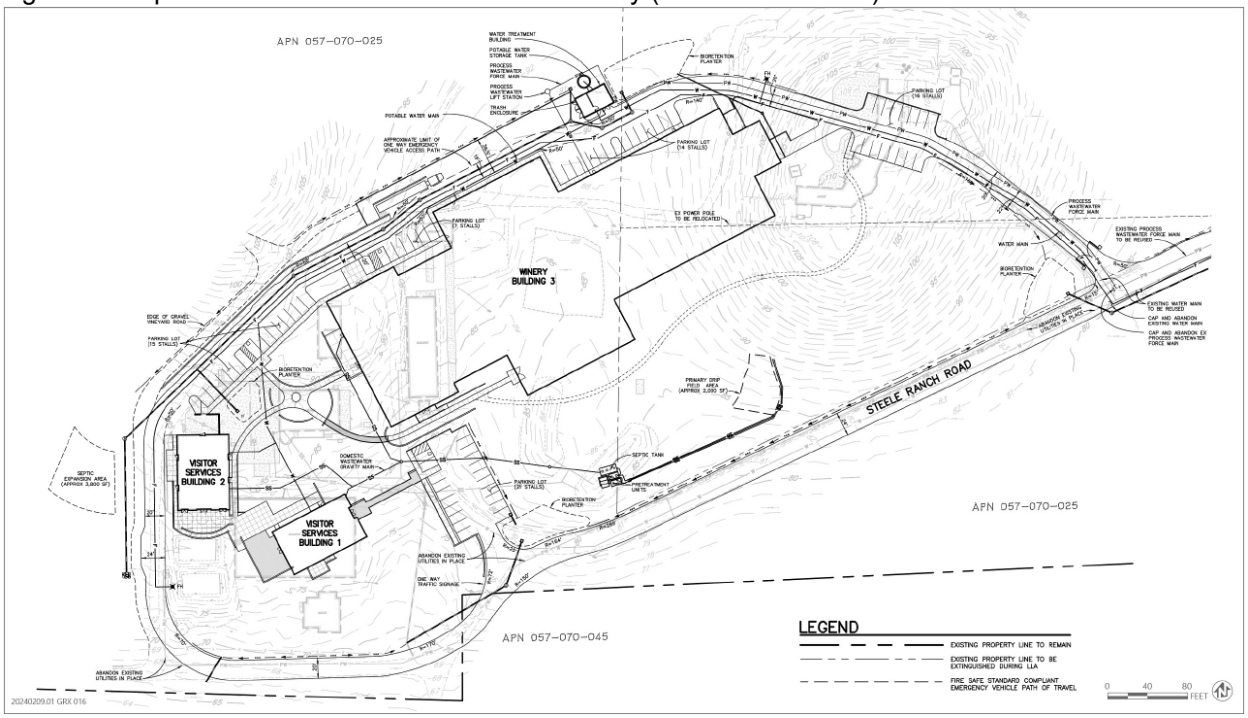
Figure 2: Subject Property and Surrounding Areas

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project is a request for: a Use Permit and Design Review for a new winery (Kosta Brown Winery)

including a new winery building used for production, storage, administration and two tasting room buildings with an annual production of 90,000 cases. The tasting rooms will serve up to 50 visitors at one time, up to 150 per day and hold up to 24 events per year with a maximum of 100 attendees and 4 industry wide events with maximum of 200 attendees on the 155.8 +/- acre parcel.

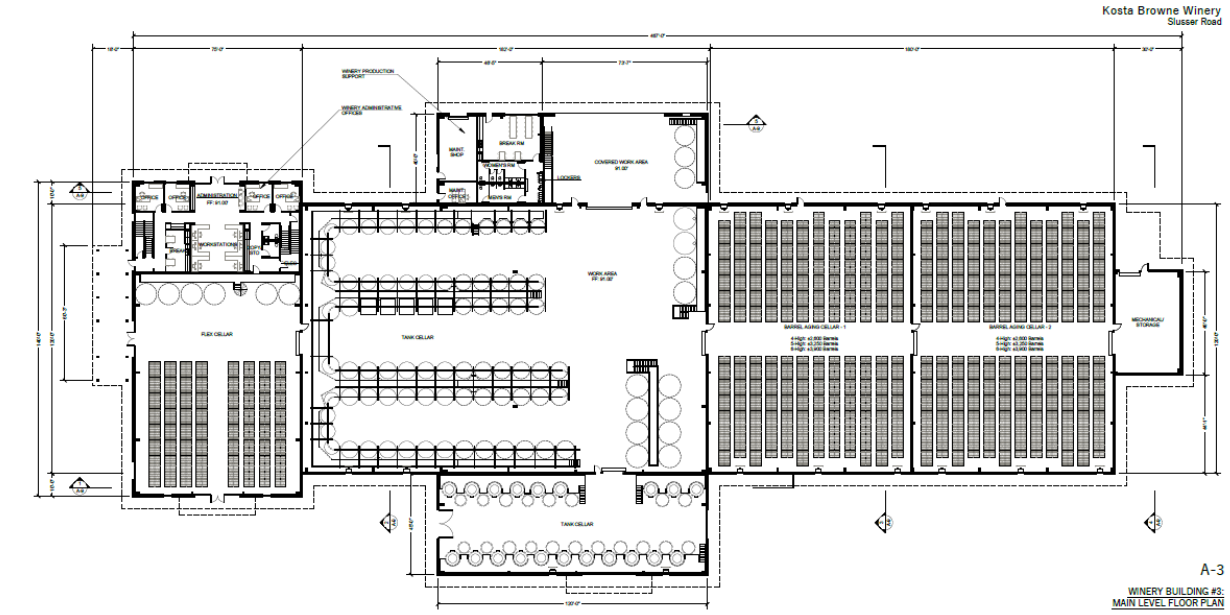
Figure 3: Proposed Site Plan for Kosta Browne Winery (See Attachment 1)



<u>Use Permit for Kosta Browne Winery</u>:

The Kosta Browne Winery proposes a new 73,500 square foot winery building (Figure 4). Single building consisting of approximately 66,000 square feet of building footprint which would include wine production, work and receiving areas; approximately 3,800 square feet of break room, lockers, toilets production admin, lab, and maintenance shop, 6,000 square feet of administrative offices, approximately 2,800 square feet of two levels of mechanical/electrical machinery, and approximately 1,100 square feet of exterior trellis area. The winery will have an annual wine production of 90,000 cases per year. A new tasting building (Figure 5) approximately 3,600 square feet on the main level, (±2300 sf public areas, and ±1300 back-of-house support areas) approximately, and approximately 2,800 square feet of mechanical and cellar/storage on the lower level (basement) and the restoration/remodel of an existing building will serve as a second tasting building (figure 6) approximately 3,900 square feet on the main level (ground floor), approximately 1,300 square feet on the upper floor, and approximately 500 square feet for a loading dock. The majority of this space is dedicated to back-of-house functions (approximately 2,400 square feet for storage, service, and food prep), and approximately 1,500 square feet use for sales or wine-trade activities. A new parking lot is proposed around the new building and will contain 73 paved parking spaces. The new tasting buildings are expected to accommodate 50 visitors per seating for a total of 150 guests per day.

Figure 4: Proposed Floor Plan for the New Winery Building (See Attachment 1)



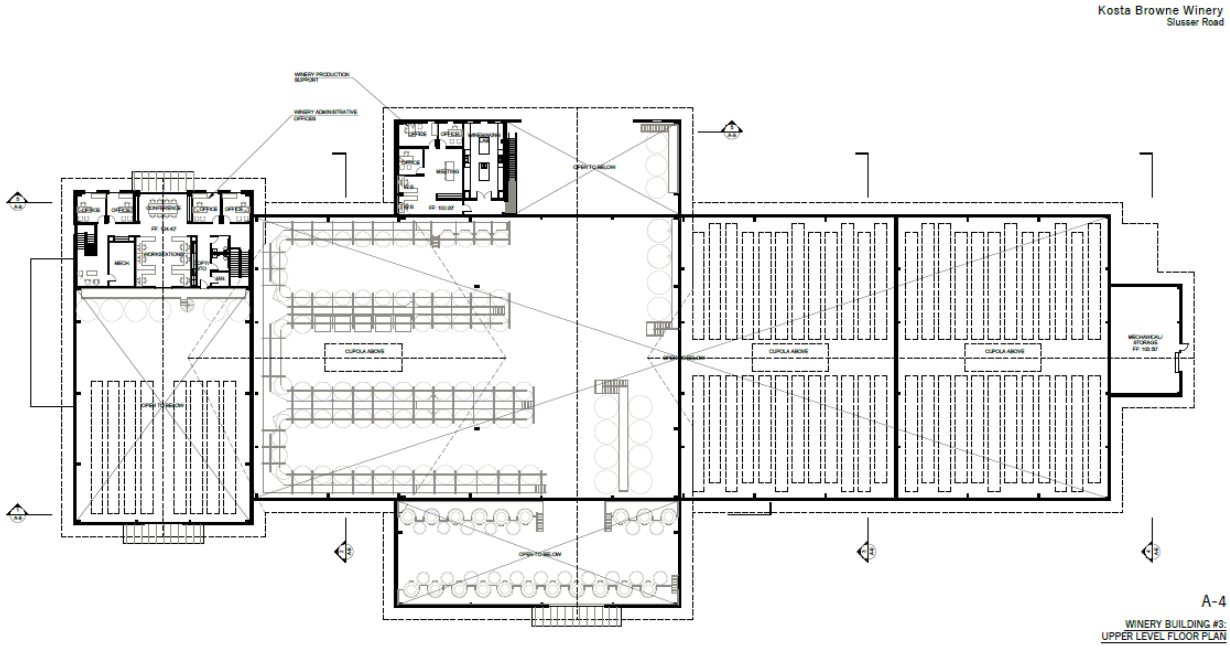


Figure 5: Proposed Floor Plan for the New Tasting Building (See Attachment 1)

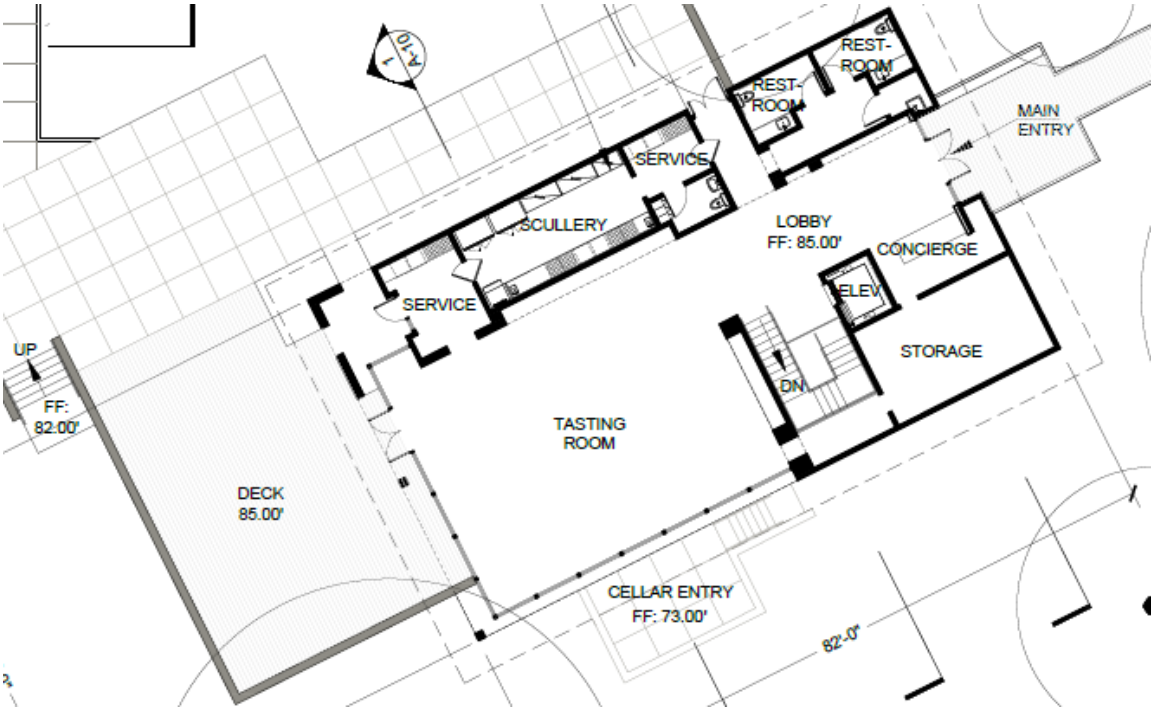
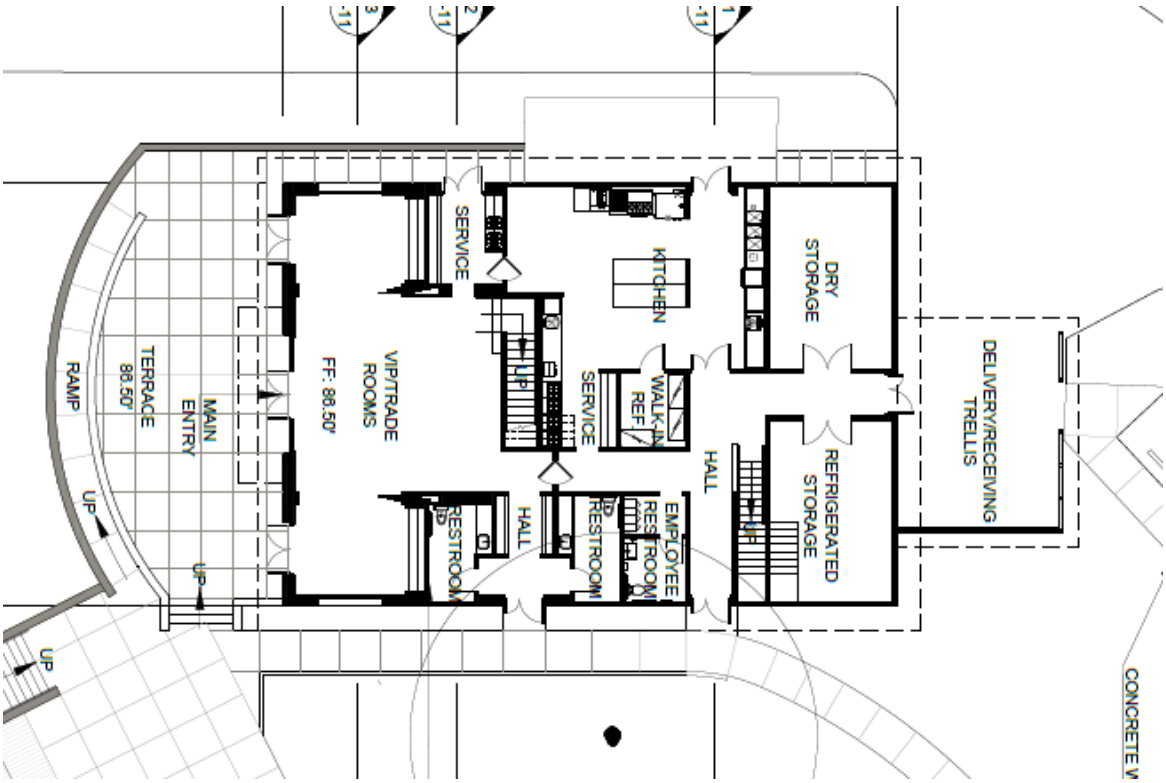


Figure 6: Proposed Restored/Remodeled Tasting Building (See Attachment 1)



Proposed Hours of Operation:

- *Winery operation* hours - 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, 7 days a week
- *Winery Harvest Season* hours - 24 hours per day, 7 days a week
- *Tasting room* hours - 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, 7 days a week
- *Event* hours - 10:00 am to 9:30 pm; cleanup by 10:00 pm

- *Tours* of the vineyards for the general public held during normal tasting room hours only.

Proposed Winery Events and Activities:

Event Type	Number of Events	Maximum Attendees	Time of Week	Time of Day	Food Service	Amplified Music
Wine Club Dinners	14	50	Weekend	Evening	Onsite	No
Promotional Events	4	50	Any Day	Evening	Onsite	No
Release Parties	6	100	Weekend	Daytime/Evening	Onsite	Yes
Industry Events	4	200	Weekend	Daytime	Catered	Yes
Wine Trade Activity Type	Number of Activities	Maximum Attendees	Time of Week	Time of Day	Food Service	Amplified Music
Winemaker Lunch	5	30	Any Day	Daytime	Onsite	No
Sales Events	14	50	Weekday	Daytime	Onsite	No

Proposed Food Service:

- *Food and Wine Pairings* (no meals) may be provided during permitted tasting hours as part of normal business activities. Food and wine pairing will be pre-prepared samples or tastes produced from food products from the local area. Food will be from a pre-fixed pairing menu and only during tasting room hours. There is no restaurant or deli service provided.

- Food on site will be prepared in the food preparation area within the tasting room building. Food can be provided for occasional employee lunches and employee harvest party. Appetizers or meals featuring local foods and food products may be prepared for occasional marketing or promotional activities that are not open to drop-in guests. Food must be consumed on site.

Proposed Employees:

- *Tasting room, Winery, and Events:* 24 full-time employees
- *Tasting room and Winery during harvest*: 43 full-time employees

Access and Parking:

Vehicular and emergency access to the winery site will be established via existing driveway off of Slusser Road. Seventy-three paved parking spaces for employees and guests will be located around the new buildings. Additional parking for special events would be accommodated by overflow parking between vineyard rows and along driveways. Shuttling is not anticipated to be used to support events. Parking attendants would be used to direct onsite traffic on event days. Enforcement of on-street parking restrictions are a condition of approval for the project.

Water, Wastewater, and Waste Disposal:

The water supply for the winery production and tasting room will be met via a connection to Town of Windsor water company or an existing groundwater well on the adjacent property. The total water usage for the project will be approximately 6.9-acre feet annually. Approximately 3.6 AFY of reclaimed process wastewater would be used to augment vineyard irrigation supplies, resulting in a net project groundwater demand of 3.3 AFY. Potable water treatment, a storage tank, and distribution pumping facilities would be located in and adjacent to a new water treatment building north of the winery building.

Domestic wastewater from the project site would be conveyed to an onsite wastewater treatment system consisting of a septic tank, pre-treatment units, and leach field southeast of the proposed winery building. The wastewater treatment system would be constructed and operated under a permit from Sonoma County. The existing mound-type leach field for domestic wastewater from the existing experimental pinot winery and nearby residence would be removed as part of the project.

Process wastewater from the proposed winery would be collected through floor and trench drains in the winery building and covered outdoor work areas and conveyed to a lift station containing two or more pumps. Winery process wastewater would be conveyed via approximately 3,000 linear feet of

force main to the headworks of the existing Sonoma Cutrer process wastewater treatment facility. The existing facility has significant excess capacity and will be able to accept flows from Kosta Browne with few, if any, modifications to the treatment facilities. The existing facility operates under Waste Discharge Requirements from the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. Effluent from the treatment facility would continue to be discharged into the existing effluent/irrigation storage pond south of the site and reused to irrigate vineyards. Effluent is currently supplemented with groundwater to meet vineyard irrigation demands. Reducing the volume of groundwater delivered to the pond will result in adequate capacity for the increased volume of effluent from Kosta Browne.

The septic system for the tasting room will be required to meet the needs of the 5th largest event peak sanitary waste. Events exceeding this peak sanitary waste will be conditioned to provide temporary sanitary facilities.

All solid waste disposal will meet county requirements and conditions of approval for the project will enforce requirements.

Energy:
The project will meet the most current requirements for renewable energy use under the California Energy Code (Title 24, Part 6).

Construction:
Construction will occur within two years after project approval. Before commencement of construction activities, the project applicant would be required to obtain construction permit approvals, including grading and building permits. Next, site work including rough grading and infrastructure (utilities and roadways) would be completed. Finally, construction of buildings would be completed and landscaping. Grading activities are anticipated to generally be balanced on the site.

IV. SETTING

The subject site is located 2.25 miles southwest of the Town of Windsor and 4.04 miles northwest of the City of Santa Rosa in unincorporated Sonoma County. Most of the surrounding parcels have similar development build outs, single family dwelling units, accessory structures, agricultural structures, vineyards, and wineries. All adjacent parcels share similar Agricultural Land Use designations and base zoning districts. Zoning including Diverse Agriculture (DA) and Land Intensive Agriculture (LIA) Land Use designations and DA and LIA base zoning districts.

V. ISSUES RAISED BY THE PUBLIC OR AGENCIES

On June 25, 2025, Permit Sonoma circulated a referral packet to inform and solicit comments from selected relevant local, state and federal agencies, local Tribes, neighbors within 1,000 feet of the project site; and to special interest groups that were anticipated to take interest in the revised project. Comments were received from:

- Permit Sonoma Building Division
- Permit Sonoma Fire Prevention
- Permit Sonoma Natural Resources Division
- Permit Sonoma Grading and Stormwater Division
- Sonoma Public Infrastructure formerly Department of Transportation of Public Works
- Sonoma County Health

Referral agency comments included recommended standard conditions of approval for the project.

Assembly Bill 52 Project Notifications were sent to the Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians, Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians, Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, Mishewal Wappo Tribe of Alexander Valley, Middletown Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians, Lytton Rancheria of California, Kashia Pomos Stewarts Point Rancheria and Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. No Tribe requested formal consultation on the proposed project. After reviewing the Cultural Resources Study for the project, one Tribe requested that a condition of approval be imposed to require onsite monitoring during ground-disturbing activities in native soils, but had no additional concerns or requests.

Public comment in support of this project has been received.

VI. EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This section analyzes the potential environmental impacts of this project based on the criteria set forth in the State CEQA Guidelines and the County's implementing ordinances and guidelines. For each item, one of four responses is given:

No Impact: The project would not have the impact described. The project may have a beneficial effect, but there is no potential for the project to create or add increment to the impact described.

Less Than Significant Impact: The project would have the impact described, but the impact would not be significant. Mitigation is not required, although the project applicant may choose to modify the project to avoid the impacts.

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated: The project would have the impact described, and the impact could be significant. One or more mitigation measures have been identified that will reduce the impact to a less than significant level.

Potentially Significant Impact: The project would have the impact described, and the impact could be significant. The impact cannot be reduced to less than significant by incorporating mitigation measures. An environmental impact report must be prepared for this project.

Each question was answered by evaluating the project as proposed, that is, without considering the effect of any added mitigation measures. The Initial Study includes a discussion of the potential impacts and identifies mitigation measures to substantially reduce those impacts to a level of insignificance where feasible. All references and sources used in this Initial Study are listed in the Reference section at the end of this report and are incorporated herein by reference.

Zach Rasmuson, Executive Vice President of Duckhorn Wine Company, has agreed to accept all mitigation measures listed in this Initial Study as conditions of approval for the proposed project, and to obtain all necessary permits, notify all contractors, agents and employees involved in project implementation and any new owners should the property be transferred to ensure compliance with the mitigation measures.

1. AESTHETICS:

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Comment:
The project site is within the Sonoma County's Scenic Resource Combining District for a Scenic Landscape Unit.

All structures located within a Scenic Landscape Unit (SLU) are subject to the standards in Zoning Code Section 26-64-020 and General Plan Policy ORSC-2d, which require that all structures within an SLU use natural landforms and existing vegetation to screen them from view from public roads. If necessary, Zoning Code Section 26-64-020 specifies that new landscaping used for screening should be comprised of native, fire resistant plants and trees.

The proposed development would be partially screened by existing topography and vegetation of coast live oaks and vineyards along River Road and Slusser Road. To further reduce the view from the public road, the proposed landscape plans include installing additional trees along the proposed driveway, and additional trees and shrubs surrounding the proposed parking areas, tasting rooms and winery production facility.

The total square footage of building footprints is approximately 73,613 square feet or 1.69 acres. Zoning standards for DA Zoning provide for a 5% maximum lot (building) coverage; the project will comply with this standard with one percent lot coverage. The project would also meet all zoning setback standards for new buildings from the property lines and the road centerline setbacks do not apply to this project given River Road

and Slusser Road are more than 3,000 feet away.

Pending final Design Review action, staff finds that the proposed design is generally consistent with the applicable Design Guidelines and design provisions within County Code. To ensure compliance with the Zoning Code's criteria for developing in a Scenic Landscape Unit, a mitigation measure has been incorporated into the project requiring final approval on the project site plan, building elevations, colors and materials, signage, lighting plan, noise attenuation wall, landscaping, and irrigation plans prior to any grading and building permit issuance.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation VIS-1:
Prior to issuance of building permits, the project site plan, building elevations, colors and materials, signage, lighting plan, landscaping, and irrigation plans shall be submitted for design review by Permit Sonoma Staff.

Mitigation Monitoring VIS-1:
Permit Sonoma shall not issue the Building Permit until the project site plan, building elevations, colors and materials, signage, lighting plan, landscaping, and irrigation plans have been reviewed by the staff and found to be consistent with County standards and compatible with the surrounding area. Permit Sonoma shall not sign off final occupancy on the Building Permit until a site inspection of the property has been conducted that indicates all development, including lighting improvements and landscaping, has been installed according to the approved plans and conditions.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

Comment:
The parcel is not located on a site visible from a state scenic highway.

Significance Level:
No Impact

c) In non-urbanized areas substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

Comment:
The character of the 153.55-acre site and surrounding lands is agricultural and rural development. Using the County's Visual Assessment Guidelines, staff characterized the project site as having High visual sensitivity because it is located in the Scenic Resources Combining District and classified as a Scenic Landscape Unit. The project's visual dominance can be categorized as Subordinate because the proposed buildings are designed to be similar in character to other agricultural structures in the area and screened by existing vineyards and proposed landscaping. Utilizing the Visual Assessment Guidelines' matrix (Attachment 2), the project's visual impact will be less than significant.

	Visual Dominance			
Sensitivity	**Dominant**	**Co-Dominant**	**Subordinate**	**Inevident**
Maximum	Significant	Significant	Significant	Less than significant
High	Significant	Significant	**Less than significant**	Less than significant
Moderate	Significant	Less than significant	Less than significant	Less than significant
Low	Less than significant	Less than significant	Less than significant	Less than significant

Significance Level:
Less than Significant

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime view in the area?

Comment:
The project will add new structures to the site and thus introduce new sources of light and glare. The County's standard development regulations under Article 82 of the Zoning Code (Design Review), minimizes the impact of new development by ensuring that exterior lighting is designed to prevent glare, and preclude the trespass of light on to adjoining properties and into the night sky.

The project will require exterior lighting as necessary to comply with the California Building Code. A standard condition of approval requires "All new exterior lighting to be dark sky compliant, low mounted, downward casting and fully shielded to prevent glare. Lighting shall not wash out structures or any portions of the site. Light fixtures shall not be located at the periphery of the property and shall not spill over onto adjacent properties or into the night sky. Flood lights are not permitted. Lighting shall shut of automatically after closing and security lighting shall be motion sensor activated. Prior to final occupancy, the applicant is required to demonstrate compliance with exterior lighting requirements by providing Permit Sonoma photograph documentation of all exterior light fixtures installed". By incorporating standard conditions of approval, the project will not result in a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant

2. AGRICULTURE AND FOREST RESOURCES:

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

Would the project:

a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

Comment:
The site currently contains approximately 119.3 acres of vineyard, approximately 81% of the parcel. According to the Sonoma County Important Farmlands Map, the entire project site is designated as Unique Farmland with areas of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance on the parcel but outside of the project site. The project proposes a new winery building, tasting room buildings and related improvements totaling approx. 2 acres. It is estimated that approximately 2 acre of unique farmlands would be converted to develop the project. The development area is located to eliminate any loss of existing vineyard. The primary use of the site would remain in agricultural production with related agricultural processing and agricultural promotional visitor serving uses. No designated farmland will be converted to non-agricultural use. The project would not convert a significant amount of important farmland to non-agricultural use and therefore potential impacts are less than significant.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or Williamson Act Contract?

Comment:
The project site is zoned DA (Diverse Agriculture) which allows Agricultural Processing, Tasting Rooms and Winery Events with a Conditional Use Permit and is subject to a Williamson Act contract.

Applicable Zoning Requirements:

Section 26-18-030 Ag Processing:
LIA, LEA, DA, AR zones: the use must be sized to accommodate, but not exceed, the needs of the on-site growing or processing operation. (general plan policy AR-5c). The proposed Winery does not propose any storage areas that would exceed the needs of the proposed 90,000 case production.

To approve an Agricultural Processing facility in the LIA, LEA, DA, or AR zone that processes products grown off-site, the review authority must find that the facility will be consistent with general plan policy AR-5g. The proposed Winery will be consistent with this policy with the proposed mitigation measure incorporated and as assessed in the visual assessment of the project.

Section 26-18-210 Tasting Rooms:
Shall not require the extension of sewer and water.
Must be consistent with general plan policy AR 6-d and AR 6-f. (see discussion in Planning and Land Use section)

The project has been determined to be consistent with the Zoning Ordinance as the project proposes a 90,000 case winery that processes grapes grown onsite and from Sonoma County. The proposed wine tasting room and events promote products processed on site and from the local area, is secondary and incidental to the agricultural production activities on site, and are compatible with existing uses in the area. The winery and tasting uses will not be detrimental to the rural character of the area.

Land Conservation Contract:
Williamson Act contract compliance requires the property is at least 10 acres in size for a prime agricultural operation, have 50% of the total parcel dedicated to a qualifying agricultural use, and meet the minimum income requirements. Any use of the land, other than permitted agricultural uses, must be a compatible use allowed under Rule 8.0 of the Uniform Rules.

Contract Compliance Analysis:
Staff find the property will maintain compliance with its Williamson Act contract and the Uniform Rules, as summarized below.

The project parcel subject to the contract is 155.8 acres in size and is subject to a Prime Land Conservation (Williamson) Act contract, recorded under Document No. 2003-241898. Prime agricultural land includes land used for fruit- or nut-bearing trees, vines, bushes, or crops which have a nonbearing period of less than five years and meet the minimum income requirements in Table 4-2 of these uniform rules. The property with adjusted property lines resultant of an approved lot line adjustment will have 119.3 acres of vineyards, therefore meeting the 50% requirement. As a condition of approval the applicants will be required to record the approved lot line adjustment to ensure the property remains compliant.

Pursuant to Uniform Rule Table 4-2 (Annual Income Requirements), prime contracted land is required to meet $1,000 gross total income per acre of production. Duckhorn agricultural operation is projected to provide sufficient income for prime agricultural land per applicant's statement of compliance the current operation income is approx. $3,000 per acre.

The Sonoma County Uniform Rules Rule 8.3 (Compatible Uses – Agricultural Contracted Land). allows for one single family dwelling, agricultural housing, agricultural processing, sale, marketing, and special events (see list below), provided that all compatible uses on the property collectively occupy no more than 15% of the contracted land as a whole, or 5 acres, whichever is less, excluding public roads, private access roads, and driveways. Note, accessory agricultural uses and structures (including structures used for storage, cleaning, and packaging agricultural commodities, storing equipment; irrigation infrastructure; and fencing, paddocks, etc.) are identified under Rule 7.2B. and are not counted toward the maximum compatible use threshold.

For this property, the 5-acre threshold applies. The proposed winery and tasting buildings, parking area, and outdoor landscaped areas, collectively occupy approximately 2 acres, which is less than the maximum 5-acre allowed under contract.

Uniform Rule 8.3B "Compatible Uses" (not an exhaustive list):

- A single-family dwelling occupied by the landowner or farm operator.

- Residential accessory uses and structures including private garage, workshop, patios, decks, gazebos, and similar structures.
- Processing of agricultural commodities beyond the natural state, including processing by pressing, pasteurizing, slaughtering, cooking, freezing, dehydrating, and fermenting. This use includes facilities for processing and storage of agricultural commodities beyond the natural state such as wineries, dairies, slaughterhouses, and mills.
- Sale and marketing of agricultural commodities in their natural state or beyond, including winery tasting rooms, promotional activities, marketing accommodations, farmer's markets, stands for the sampling and sale of agricultural products, livestock auction or sale yards, and related signage.
- Wells, septic systems, and wastewater treatment ponds necessary for agricultural support uses.
- Special events, when directly related to agricultural education or the promotion or sale of agricultural commodities and products produced on the contracted land, provided that: the events last no longer than two consecutive days and do not provide overnight accommodations; and no permanent structure dedicated to the events is constructed or maintained on the contracted land.

The proposed project does not conflict with the previously established Land Conservation (Williamson) Act contract because the existing winery and proposed tasting and agricultural promotional event uses are listed as compatible uses, under the Sonoma County Uniform Rules for the Land Conservation Act Program, and the property will continue to be maintained in qualifying prime agricultural uses.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 4526) or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g)?

Comment:
The project site is not under the TP (Timberland Production) zoning district, therefore the project will not conflict with, or cause the rezoning of, forest land or timberland zoned Timberland Production.

Significance Level:
No Impact

d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

Comment:
The project does not result in a lost of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use as the project site does not contain forest land nor any timber resources.

Significance Level:
No Impact

e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

Comment:
The project does not involve other changes in the environment that could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest use. The project site will remain zoned Diverse Agriculture, over 119 acres of the existing commercial vineyard will remain on the site, and all proposed development supports the agricultural production.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

3. AIR QUALITY:

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.

Would the project:

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

Comment:
The project is within the jurisdiction of the Bay Area Air District (BAAD) (check map at http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Air-Quality/Air-Quality-District-Boundaries/), which is currently designated as a nonattainment area for state and federal ozone standards, the state PM 10 standard, and the state and federal PM 2.5 standard. The District has adopted an Ozone Attainment Plan and a Clean Air Plan in compliance with Federal and State Clean Air Acts. These plans include measures to achieve compliance with both ozone standards. The plans deal primarily with emissions of ozone precursors (nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds, also referred to as Reactive Organic Gases (ROG)). The project will not conflict with the District's air quality plans because the proposed use is well below the emission thresholds for ozone precursors or involve construction of transportation facilities that are not addressed in an adopted transportation plan (see discussion in 1 (b) below.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable Federal or State ambient air quality standard?

Comment:
An Air Quality Assessment dated May 23, 2025, prepared by Ascent Environmental, Inc (Attachment 3) provided the following analysis.

Operations and construction related impacts of the proposed project were assessed in accordance with BAAQMD recommended methodologies (BAAQMD 2022). Under a project-level analysis, the BAAQMD CEQA Guidelines identifies whether a project would violate any ambient air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation through average pounds per day significance thresholds.

Operation:
Operational emissions of criteria air pollutants and precursors were estimated using project-specific information, where available, and default values in CalEEMod based on the project's location and land use. Mobile-source emissions were modeled in CalEEMod Version 2022.1 using project-generated VMT estimated in the W-Trans transportation analysis, Traffic Impact Study for the Kosta-Browne Winery Project, of 2,730,273 yearly VMT from 542 added daily trips (ADT). Project operational emissions are associated with maintenance application of paint and architectural coatings and landscape maintenance activities estimated to occur during the first year of operation, 2028. The below table identifies operational emissions for the proposed project.

Emissions Source	lb/day			
	ROG	NO_X	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$
Mobile Sources[1]	2	3	5	1
Area Sources[2]	2	<1	<1	<1
Energy	<1	<1	<1	<1
Propane Boiler	<1	<1	<1	<1
Total Average Daily Emissions	4	3	5	1
BAAD Thresholds of Significance	54	54	82	54
Exceeds BAAD Threshold?	NO	NO	NO	NO

Notes: lb/day = pounds per day; ROG = reactive organic gases; NO_X = oxides of nitrogen; PM_{10} = respirable particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 micrometers or less; $PM_{2.5}$ = fine particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5 micrometers or less;

Totals may not sum exactly due to rounding.

1. Mobile-source emissions were estimated using VMT to support the transportation analysis prepared by W-Trans

2. Area-source emissions include emissions from landscape maintenance activity, the application of architectural coatings as part of regular maintenance, and consumer products.

As shown in the above Table, operation of the project would not result in long-term operational emissions of ROG, NOx, PM10, or PM2.5 that exceed the thresholds recommended by BAAD, exceedance of which would indicate that proposed operation would be considered to have the potential to generate a significant quantity of air pollutants.

Thus, long-term operational emissions of criteria air pollutants and precursors would not result in cumulatively considerable net increase that would substantially contribute to changes in regional air quality or expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations resulting in an increase in potential adverse health impacts from exposure to ozone and particulate matter.

Construction:
Short-term construction-related emissions of criteria air pollutants and precursors were calculated using the CalEEMod Version 2022.1 computer program (CAPCOA 2025). Construction modeling was based on project-specific information, where available; reasonable assumptions based on typical construction activities, and default values in CalEEMod based on the project's location and land use type. The modeling assumed that project construction would occur over a 13-month period beginning in October 2026. Retail market conditions would ultimately determine the actual timing and rate of construction.

Criteria air pollutants and precursors would be emitted during all planned construction phases of the proposed project. The table below identifies construction emissions for the proposed project.

Construction Phase	Average Daily Emissions (lb/day)			
	ROG	NO_X	PM_{10}[1]	$PM_{2.5}$[1]
2026	<1	2	<1	<1
2027	3	5	<1	<1
BAAD Threshold of Significance	54	54	82	54
Exceeds BAAD Threshold?	NO	NO	NO	NO

Notes: lb/day = pounds per day; NO_X = oxides of nitrogen; PM_{10} = respirable particulate matter; $PM_{2.5}$ = fine particulate matter; ROG = reactive organic gases.

1. PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ categories represent exhaust emissions only. BAAD recommends the implementation of best management practices for fugitive dust control.

BAAQMD recommends fugitive dust control mitigation measures to be adopted as part of the project design. Because BAAQMD's recommended best management practices (BMPs) for fugitive dust control are not included in the project design, they would be required as Mitigation Measure AIR-1. The absence of these or similarly intended measures during periods of construction where dry soil conditions exist could potentially result in higher concentrations of fugitive PM10 and PM2.5 than allowable under NAAQS and CAAQS thresholds. Dust control may be particularly important during the grading phase of construction, as the project will be required to seek a grading permit and County recommended BMPs for construction. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AIR-1 would meet the BAAD's Best Management Practices threshold for fugitive PM10 and PM2.5 dust emissions during project-related construction.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation Measure AIR-1:
The following dust control measures shall be included in the project:

1. A Construction Coordinator shall be designated by the project applicant, and a sign shall be posted on the site including the Contractor's 24-hour phone number for public contact regarding dust, trackout, and air quality complaints. The Contractor shall respond and take corrective action within 48 hours. The Contractor shall report all complaints and their resolutions to Permit Sonoma staff.
2. Water or alternative dust control method shall be sprayed to control dust on construction areas, soil stockpiles, and staging areas during construction as directed by the County.
3. Trucks hauling soil, sand, and other loose materials over public roads shall cover the loads, or shall keep the loads at least two feet below the level of the sides of the container, or shall wet the load sufficiently to prevent dust emissions.
4. Vehicle speeds on unpaved areas shall be limited to 15 miles per hour.
5. Final surfacing (i.e., pavement or concrete, gravel, landscaping) shall be completed as soon as possible after earthwork is finished, unless seeding or soil binders are used.
6. Idling time of diesel-powered construction equipment shall be limited to five minutes. Signs shall be posted reminding workers of this idling restriction at all access points and equipment staging areas during construction of the proposed project.
7. All construction equipment shall be maintained and properly tuned in accordance with manufacturer's specifications and shall have a CARBcertified visible emissions evaluator check equipment prior to use at the site.
8. Trackout shall not be allowed at any active exit from the project site onto an adjacent paved public roadway or shoulder of a paved public roadway that exceeds cumulative 25 linear feet and creates fugitive dust visible emissions without cleaning up such trackout within 4 hours of when the Construction Coordinator identifies such excessive trackout, and shall not allow more than 1 quart of trackout to remain on the adjacent paved public roadway or the paved shoulder of the paved public roadway at the end of any workday.
9. Visible emissions of fugitive dust shall not be allowed during cleanup of any trackout that exceeds 20 percent opacity as determined by the Environmental Protection Agency in Method 203B - Opacity Determination for Time Exception Regulations (August 2017).

   Trackout is defined by BAAQMD in Regulation 6, Rule 6: Prohibition of Trackout (August 2018) as any sand, soil, dirt, bulk materials or other solid particles from a site that adhere to or agglomerate on the exterior surfaces of vehicles (including tires), and subsequently fall or are dislodged onto a paved public roadway or the paved shoulder of a paved public roadway on the path that vehicles follow at any exit

Mitigation Monitoring AIR-1:
Building/grading permits shall not be approved for issuance by Permit Sonoma staff until the above notes are printed on all construction plans, including plans for building and grading.

c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Comment:
Sensitive receptors include hospitals, schools, convalescent facilities, and residential areas. The nearest sensitive receptor is a residential area located approximately 160 feet away from the winery production site.

Although there will be no long term increase in emissions, during construction there could be significant short term dust emissions that would affect nearby residents. Dust emissions can be reduced to less than significant by the mitigation measure described in item 3b above.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation: See Mitigation Measure AIR-1

d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

Comment:
The BAAQMD's CEQA Air Quality Guidelines (2022) identifies land uses associated with odor complaints to include, but are not limited to, wastewater treatment plants, landfills, confined animal facilities, composting stations, food manufacturing plants, refineries, and chemical plants.

Construction equipment may generate odors during project construction. The impact would be less than significant as it would be a short-term impact that ceases upon completion of the project.

The proposed Winery may generate objectional odors due to the pomace from grape crushing which can create objectionable odors if not handled properly. This impact would be reduced to less than significant by including odor controls as described in the following mitigation measure.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation Measure AIR-2:
Implement Odor Controls for Winery Operations.
Pomace and other waste products from processing of grapes shall be disposed of within two days of processing in a manner that does not create nuisance odor conditions, or attract nuisance insects or animals. Disposal options include composting and land applied and disced into the soil on vineyards or agricultural land owned or controlled by the project applicant or immediate off-site disposal (no storage of waste product on site).

Mitigation Monitoring AIR-2: Permit Sonoma staff to verify installation of odor control measures prior to final occupancy. If Permit Sonoma receives complaints regarding objectionable odors, staff will investigate the complaint. If it's determined by Permit Sonoma staff that complaints are warranted, the permit holder shall implement additional odor control measures as determined by Permit Sonoma. (Ongoing)

4. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES:

Regulatory Framework

The following discussion identifies federal, state and local environmental regulations that serve to protect sensitive biological resources relevant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review process.

Federal

Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA)

FESA establishes a broad public and federal interest in identifying, protecting, and providing for the recovery of threatened or endangered species. The Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of Commerce are designated in FESA as responsible for identifying endangered and threatened species and their critical habitat, carrying out programs for the conservation of these species, and rendering opinions regarding the impact of proposed federal actions on listed species. The USFWS and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) are charged with implementing and enforcing the FESA. USFWS has authority over terrestrial and continental aquatic species, and NOAA Fisheries has authority over species that spend all or part of their life cycle at sea, such as salmonids.

Section 9 of FESA prohibits the unlawful "take" of any listed fish or wildlife species. Take, as defined by FESA, means "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such action." USFWS's regulations define harm to mean "an act which actually kills or injures wildlife." Such an act "may include "significant habitat modification or degradation where it actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding or sheltering" (50 CFR § 17.3). Take can be permitted under FESA pursuant to sections 7 and 10. Section 7 provides a process for take permits for federal projects or projects subject to a federal permit, and Section 10 provides a process for incidental take permits for projects without a federal nexus. FESA does not extend the take prohibition to federally listed plants on private land, other than prohibiting the removal, damage, or destruction of such species in violation of state law.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)

The U.S. MBTA (16 USC §§ 703 et seq., Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 10) states it is "unlawful at any time, by any means or in any manner, to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill; attempt to take, capture or kill; possess, offer for sale, sell, offer to barter, barter, offer to purchase, purchase, deliver for shipment, ship, export, import, cause to be shipped, exported, or imported, deliver for transportation, transport or cause to be transported, carry or cause to be carried, or receive for shipment, transportation, carriage, or export any migratory bird, any part, nest, or egg of any such bird, or any product, whether or not manufactured, which consists, or is composed in whole or in part, of any such bird or any part, nest or egg thereof…" In short, under MBTA it is illegal to disturb a nest that is in active use, since this could result in killing a bird, destroying a nest, or destroying an egg. The USFWS enforces MBTA. The MBTA does not protect some birds that are non-native or human-introduced or that belong to families that are not covered by any of the conventions implemented by MBTA. In 2017, the USFWS issued a memorandum stating that the MBTA does not prohibit incidental take; therefore, the MBTA is currently limited to purposeful actions, such as directly and knowingly removing a nest to construct a project, hunting, and poaching.

The Clean Water Act (CWA)

The CWA is the primary federal law regulating water quality. The implementation of the CWA is the responsibility of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, the EPA depends on other agencies, such as the individual states and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), to assist in implementing the CWA. The objective of the CWA is to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." Section 404 and 401 of the CWA apply to activities that would impact waters of the U.S. The USACE enforces Section 404 of the CWA and the California State Water Resources Control Board enforces Section 401.

Section 404.

As part of its mandate under Section 404 of the CWA, the EPA regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into "waters of the U.S.". "Waters of the U.S: include territorial seas, tidal waters, and non-tidal waters in addition to wetlands and drainages that support wetland vegetation, exhibit ponding or scouring, show obvious signs of channeling, or have discernible banks and high-water marks. Wetlands are defined as those areas "that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions" (33 CFR 328.3(b)). The discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S. is prohibited under the CWA except when it is in compliance with Section 404 of the CWA. Enforcement authority for Section 404 was given to the USACE, which it accomplishes under its regulatory branch. The EPA has veto authority over the USACE's administration of the Section 404 program and may override a USACE decision with respect to permitting. Substantial impacts to waters of the U.S. may require an Individual Permit's Projects that only minimally affect waters of the U.S. may meet the conditions of one of the existing Nationwide Permits, provided that such permit's other respective conditions are satisfied. A Water Quality Certification or waiver pursuant to Section 401 of the CWA is required for Section 404 permit actions (see below).

Section 401.

Any applicant for a federal permit to impact waters of the U.S. under Section 404 of the CWA, including Nationwide Permits where pre-construction notification is required, must also provide to the USACE a certification or waiver from the State of California. The "401 Certification" is provided by the State Water Resources Control Board through the local Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The RWQCB issues and enforces permits for discharge of treated water, landfills, storm-water runoff, filling of any surface waters or wetlands, dredging, agricultural activities and wastewater recycling. The RWQCB recommends the "401 Certification" application be made at the same time that any applications are provided to other agencies, such as the USACE, USFWS, or NOAA Fisheries. The application is not final until completion of environmental review under the CEQA. The application to the RWQCB is similar to the pre-construction notification that is required by the USACE. It must include a description of the habitat that is being impacted, a description of how the impact is proposed to be minimized and proposed mitigation measures with goals, schedules, and performance standards. Mitigation must include a replacement of functions and values, and replacement of wetland at a minimum ratio of 2:1, or twice as many acres of wetlands provided as are removed. The RWQCB looks for mitigation that is on site and in-kind, with functions and values as good as or better than the water-based habitat that is being removed.

State

California Endangered Species Act (CESA)

Provisions of CESA protect state-listed threatened and endangered species. The CDFW is charged with establishing a list of endangered and threatened species. CDFW regulates activities that may result in "take" of individuals (i.e., "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill"). Habitat degradation or modification is not expressly included in the definition of "take" under the California Fish and Game Code (CFGC), but CDFW has interpreted "take" to include the killing of a member of a species which is the proximate result of habitat modification.

Fish and Game Code 1600-1602

Sections 1600-1607 of the CFGC require that a Notification of Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (LSAA) application be submitted to CDFW for "any activity that may substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow or substantially change the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake." CDFW reviews the proposed actions in the application and, if necessary, prepares a LSAA that includes measures to protect affected fish and wildlife resources, including mitigation for impacts to bats and bat habitat.

Nesting Birds

Nesting birds, including raptors, are protected under CFGC Section 3503, which reads, "It is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation made pursuant thereto." In addition, under CFGC Section 3503.5, "it is unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds in the orders Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds-of-prey) or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto". Passerines and non-passerine land birds are further protected under CFGC 3513. As such, CDFW typically recommends surveys for nesting birds that could potentially be directly (e.g., actual removal of trees/vegetation) or indirectly (e.g., noise disturbance) impacted by project-related activities. Disturbance during the breeding season could result in the incidental loss of fertile eggs or nestlings, or otherwise lead to nest abandonment. Disturbance that causes nest abandonment and/or loss of reproductive effort is considered "take" by CDFW.

Non-Game Mammals

Sections 4150-4155 of the CFGC protects non-game mammals, including bats. Section 4150 states "A mammal occurring naturally in California that is not a game mammal, fully protected mammal, or fur-bearing mammal is a nongame mammal. A non-game mammal may not be taken or possessed except as provided in this code or in accordance with regulations adopted by the commission". The non-game mammals that may be taken or possessed are primarily those that cause crop or property damage. Bats are classified as a non-game mammal and are protected under the CFGC.

California Fully Protected Species and Species of Special Concern

The classification of "fully protected" was the CDFW's initial effort to identify and provide additional protection to those animals that were rare or faced possible extinction. Lists were created for fish, amphibians and reptiles, birds, and mammals. Most of the species on these lists have subsequently been listed under CESA and/or FESA. The Fish and Game Code sections (fish at §5515, amphibians and reptiles at §5050, birds at §3503 and §3511, and mammals at §4150 and §4700) dealing with "fully protected" species state that these species "…may not be taken or possessed at any time and no provision of this code or any other law shall be construed to authorize the issuance of permits or licenses to take any fully protected species," although take may be authorized for necessary scientific research. This language makes the "fully protected" designation the strongest and most restrictive regarding the "take" of these species. In 2003, the code sections dealing with "fully protected" species were amended to allow the CDFW to authorize take resulting from recovery activities for state-listed species.

California Species of Special Concern (CSC) are broadly defined as animals not listed under the FESA or CESA, but which are nonetheless of concern to the CDFW because they are declining at a rate that could result in listing or because they historically occurred in low numbers and known threats to their persistence currently exist. This designation is intended to result in special consideration for these animals by the CDFW, land managers, consulting biologists, and others, and is intended to focus attention on the species to help avert the need for costly listing under FESA and CESA and cumbersome recovery efforts that might ultimately be required. This designation also is intended to stimulate collection of additional information on the biology, distribution, and status of poorly known at-risk species, and focus research and management attention on them. Although these species generally have no special legal status, they are given special consideration under the CEQA during project review.

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

The intent of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Porter-Cologne) is to protect water quality and the beneficial uses of water, and it applies to both surface and ground water. Under this law, the State Water Resources Control Board develops statewide water quality plans, and the RWQCBs develop basin plans that identify beneficial uses, water quality objectives, and implementation plans. The RWQCBs have the primary responsibility to implement the provisions of both statewide and basin plans. Waters regulated under Porter-Cologne, referred to as "waters of the State," include isolated waters that are not regulated by the USACE. Projects that require a USACE permit, or fall under other federal jurisdiction, and have the potential to impact waters of the State are required to comply with the terms of the Water Quality Certification Program. If a proposed project does not require a federal license or permit, any person discharging, or proposing to discharge, waste (e.g., dirt) to waters of the State must file a Report of Waste Discharge and receive either waste discharge requirements (WDRs) or a waiver to WDRs before beginning the discharge.

Local

Sonoma County General Plan

The *Sonoma County General Plan 2020* Land Use Element and Open Space & Resource Conservation Element both contain policies to protect natural resource lands including, but not limited to, watershed, fish and wildlife habitat, biotic areas, and habitat connectivity corridors.

Riparian Corridor Ordinance

The RC combining zone is established to protect biotic resource communities, including critical habitat areas within and along riparian corridors, for their habitat and environmental value, and to implement the provisions of the General Plan Open Space and Resource Conservation and Water Resources Elements. These provisions are intended to protect and enhance riparian corridors and functions along designated streams, balancing the need for agricultural production, urban development, timber and mining operations and other land uses with the preservation of riparian vegetation, protection of water resources, floodplain management, wildlife habitat and movement, stream shade, fisheries, water quality, channel stability, groundwater recharge, opportunities for recreation, education and aesthetic appreciation and other riparian functions and values.

Oak Woodland (OAK) and Valley Oak Habitat (VOH) Combining Districts

The OAK and VOH combining districts are established to protect, preserve, and enhance oak trees and oak woodlands in Sonoma County for the benefit of present and future generations and to implement Sonoma County General Plan Policies OSRC-7l, related to oak woodlands, and OSRC-7m, related to valley oak habitat. Where proposed valley oak or oak woodland removal is subject to a discretionary permit process, mitigation measures to address loss of trees would apply, such as measures to ensure no net loss of oak woodlands or, for the highest quality woodlands, would provide a unique public benefit equal to or greater than the value associated with removed oaks.

Sonoma County Tree Protection Ordinance

The Sonoma County Tree Protection Ordinance (Sonoma County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 26, Article 88, Sec. 26-88-015) establishes policies for protected tree species in Sonoma County. Protected trees are defined (Chapter 26, Article 04, Sec. 26- 04-020) as the following species:

1) Hardwoods: Big Leaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), Black Oak (*Quercus kelloggii*), Blue Oak (*Quercus douglasii*), Boxelder (*Acer negundo*), California Black Walnut (*Juglans californica*), California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), Canyon Live Oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*), Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), Cottonwood species (*Populus fremontii, P. trichocarpa*), Interior Live Oak (*Quercus wislizenii*), Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*), Oregon Ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*), Oregon Oak (*Quercus garryana*), Red or White Alder (*Alnus rubra, A. rhombifolia*), Valley Oak *(Quercus lobata*), Willow species (*Salix laevigata, S. lucida*)
2) Softwoods: Cypress species (*Hesperocyparis macrocarpa, H. macnabiana*), Grand Fir (*Abies grandis*), Pine species (*Pinus attenuata, P. contorta, P. lambertiana, P. muricata, P. ponderosa, P. sabiniana*), Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*)

Project Analysis

Would the project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Special-Status Species

Special-status species include those plant and wildlife species that have been formally listed, are proposed as endangered or threatened, or are candidates for such listing under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) or California Endangered Species Act (CESA). These acts afford protection to both listed and proposed species. In addition, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Species of Special Concern, which are species that face extirpation in California if current population and habitat trends continue, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (The Service) Birds of Conservation Concern, and CDFW special-status invertebrates, are all considered special-status species. Although CDFW Species of Special Concern generally have no special legal status, they are given special consideration under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In addition to regulations for special-status species, most birds in the United States, including non-status species, are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Plant species on California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants with California Rare Plant Ranks (Rank) of 1 and 2 are also considered special-status plant species and must be considered under CEQA. Bat species designated as "High Priority" by the Western Bat Working Group (WBWG) qualify for legal protection under Section 15380(d) of the CEQA Guidelines. Species designated High Priority" are defined as "imperiled or are at high risk of imperilment based on available information on distribution, status, ecology and known threats.

Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (16 USC 1531 *et seq*.) was enacted to provide a means to identify and protect endangered and threatened species. Under the Section 9 of the ESA, it is unlawful to take any listed species. "Take" is defined as harassing, harming, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, or collecting a listed species. "Harass" is defined as an intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of injury to wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering. "Harm" is defined as an act which actually kills or injures fish or wildlife and may include significant habitat modification or degradation which actually kills or injures fish or wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, spawning, rearing, migrating, feeding, or sheltering. Actions that may result in "take" of a federal-listed species are subject to The Service or National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) permit issuance and monitoring. Section 7 of ESA requires federal agencies to ensure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out by the agency is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat for such species. Any action authorized, funded, or carried out by a federal agency or designated proxy (e.g., Army Corps of Engineers) which has potential to affect listed species requires consultation with The Service or NOAA Fisheries under Section 7 of the ESA.

Critical Habitat

Critical habitat is a term defined in the ESA as a specific geographic area that contains features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and that may require special management and protection. The ESA requires federal agencies to consult with the USFWS to conserve listed species on their lands and to ensure that any activities or projects they fund, authorize, or carry out will not jeopardize the survival of a threatened or endangered species. In consultation for those species with critical habitat, federal agencies must also ensure that their activities or projects do not adversely modify critical habitat to the point that it will no longer aid in the species' recovery. In many cases, this level of protection is similar to that already provided to species by the ESA jeopardy standard. However, areas that are currently unoccupied by the species but which are needed for the species' recovery are protected by the prohibition against adverse modification of critical habitat.

Essential Fish Habitat

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) is regulated through the NMFS, a division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Protection of Essential Fish Habitat is mandated through changes implemented in 1996 to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) to protect the loss of habitat necessary to maintain sustainable fisheries in the United States. The Magnuson-Stevens Act

defines Essential Fish Habitat as "those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity" [16 USC 1802(10)]. NMFS further defines essential fish habitat as areas that "contain habitat essential to the long-term survival and health of our nation's fisheries" Essential Fish Habitat can include the water column, certain bottom types such as sandy or rocky bottoms, vegetation such as eelgrass or kelp, or structurally complex coral or oyster reefs. Under regulatory guidelines issued by NMFS, any federal agency that authorizes, funds, or undertakes action that may affect EFH is required to consult with NMFS (50 CFR 600.920).

Staff Analysis:
A Biological Resource Assessment (Attachment 4) was prepared by Darren Wiemeyer of Wiemeyer Ecological Sciences in 2025 for the proposed project. The study finds potential impacts to native trees, Tiger Salamander, nesting birds, Burrowing Owls, bats and American Badger as discussed further below.

Special Status Plant Species:

Protocol-level special-status plant surveys were conducted on March 25 and May 1, 2025, and a plant inventory was compiled. No special status plant species were observed during surveys. The study determined that the project area is composed entirely of either developed areas, landscaped herbaceous areas, or managed vineyards, which are all terrestrial habitats not considered sensitive by the CDFW or Sonoma County. The study concluded that there was no potential for special status plant species within the project footprint and that no impacts would occur to special status plant individuals or their potential habitat.

The proposed project would result in loss of 5 trees that are designated as protected trees under the Sonoma County Tree Protection Ordinance at the construction site (3 redwoods and 2 oaks). Protected trees to be removed have a total Arboreal Value of 16 per County Code Sec. 26-88-015(E). Replacement plantings of 8-24" box *Quercus agrifolia* will satisfy the mitigation replacement equal to 16 arboreal points. The construction area is not situated within and is greater than 1,000 feet from designated Oak Woodland (OAK) or Valley Oak Habitat (VOH) areas, so will not impact either of these habitats.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1 would reduce any potential impacts to protected trees to a less-than-significant level by requiring replacement planting consistent with the Tree Ordinance and by establishing a protected perimeter around all retained protected trees, with the protected perimeter having a radius at least 1.5 times the distance from the trunk to the outermost extent of canopy.

Special Status Wildlife Species

California Tiger Salamander

Project activities on the project site, including ground disturbance, vegetation removal, and grading, could result in disturbance or direct loss of California tiger salamanders if present, and direct impacts on designated critical habitat. The loss of potentially suitable upland aestivation habitat for CTS at the project site has been calculated to be 4.4 acres (California Tiger Salamander Habitat Mitigation Exhibit).

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-2 would reduce potential impacts on California tiger salamander to a less-than-significant level through the purchase of habitat mitigation credits in accordance with the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy.

Nesting Raptors, Special-Status Birds, and Birds

Habitat for nesting raptors, special-status birds, and common birds is present in and around the project site, including habitat for white-tailed kites and burrowing owls. The project site is outside of the breeding range for burrowing owl, but within the winter range for the species. Tree removal and ground disturbing activities, including grading, trenching, or vegetation removal on the project site could result in disturbance or loss of nesting raptors and other birds if present on the project site. Additionally, presence of heavy machinery or construction crews could result in indirect disturbance to nesting birds if present, and potentially result in nest abandonment, nest failure, or mortality of chicks or eggs.

Implementation Mitigation Measure BIO-3 would reduce impacts on nesting raptors, special-status birds, and common birds because preconstruction surveys would be conducted,

and active raptor and other bird nests would be protected from construction activities.

Burrowing Owl

Suitable overwintering habitat for burrowing owls is present in and around the project site. Ground disturbing activities, including removal of vegetation and operation of heavy machinery, could result in disturbance or direct loss of burrowing owl overwintering habitat (burrows) or individuals.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-4 would reduce impacts on burrowing owls to a less-than-significant level because preconstruction surveys would be conducted and active burrowing owl overwintering sites would be avoided.

Special-Status Bat Species

All special-status bat species, including several bat species which do not have special status, but have potential to occur in habitats at the site, have been included in this evaluation of habitat suitability and discussion of potential impacts. All bat species have state protection during nesting and roosting seasons. The following bat species are included in this habitat assessment: Pallid Bat (Antrozous pallidus), Townsend's Big-Eared Bat (Corynorhinus townsendii) and Western red bat (Lasiurus blossevillii)

Bats are known to utilize a vast variety of habitat types for foraging and several types of structures for nesting and roosting including trees, cliffs, rock outcrops, buildings, bridges, caves and mines. The habitats at the site provides suitable foraging habitat for bats. Several of the larger trees at the site within the valley oak woodland and riparian woodland provide potentially suitable habitat for roosting as they exhibit cavities, fissures or exfoliating bark. Some of the agricultural structures could also provide suitable roosting habitat. There is some likelihood that bat species roost in the larger trees that exhibit these habitat features at the site, especially the large eucalyptus trees and large valley oak trees.

There are several CNDDB occurrences of special-status bat species within 5-miles of the site. These species include pallid bat and Townsend's big eared bat. It is somewhat likely that several of the other special-status bat species utilize habitats within the vicinity of the site. Bat species were not observed at the site. The larger trees at the site exhibited suitable roosting habitat in the form of cavities and flaking bark.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-5 would reduce impacts on special-status bats to a less- than-significant level because preconstruction surveys would be conducted, and active bat roosts would be protected from construction activities.

American Badger

American badgers typically occur in open pastures and grasslands and are most abundant in drier open stages of most shrub, forest, and herbaceous habitats with friable soils on uncultivated ground. Suitable habitat for American badger is present at the project site. No large burrows were observed on the project site, but medium sized burrows were observed and appear to be inactive fox burrows and digs. However, it is possible that an American badger could occupy the project site prior to construction activities. Ground disturbing activities, including removal of vegetation and operation of heavy machinery, could result in disturbance or direct loss of American badgers and occupied dens.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-6 would reduce impacts on American badgers to a less-than-significant level because preconstruction surveys would be conducted, and active badger dens would be protected from construction activities.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation Measure BIO-1:
Replacement tree planting consistent with the County Tree Protection Ordinance will be required to compensate for the loss of 5 protected trees (3 redwoods and 2 oaks). Planting will consist of eight 24-inch box live oaks (*Quercus agrifoilia*).

A protected perimeter will be established around all retained protected trees, with the protected perimeter having a radius at least 1.5 times the distance from the trunk to the outermost extent of canopy. Before the start of any clearing, excavation, construction, or other work on the project site, every tree designated for protection shall be clearly delineated with a substantial barrier (e.g., chain link fencing, orange construction fencing), at the protected perimeter or limits established during the permit process. No storage or dumping of oil, gasoline, chemicals, or other potentially harmful substances shall occur within the protected perimeter of any tree. Where development or other work must encroach upon the protected perimeter of a protected tree, special measures shall be incorporated to allow the roots to obtain oxygen, water, and nutrients. No changes in existing ground level shall occur within the protected perimeter unless a drainage and aeration scheme approved by a certified biologist. No burning or use of equipment with an open flame shall occur near or within the protected perimeter, excluding authorized controlled burns.

Mitigation Monitoring BIO-1:
Prior to issuance of any building or grading permit(s), the Project Review Division shall confirm all protection measures shall be noted on the final project construction plans. Prior to issuance of building or grading permits, the Project Review Division shall verify that tree protection measures are in place, either through photographic documentation or a site visit, at the discretion of staff. Prior to building permit final or operation of the use, the Project Review Division shall verify that replacement tree planting has been completed, either through photographic documentation or a site visit, at the discretion of staff.

Mitigation Measure BIO-2:
To mitigate for the loss of potential upland estivation habitat for the California tiger salamander in compliance with the requirements of the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy, the applicant shall purchase mitigation credits for the temporary and permanent loss of land cover designated under the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy as having "potential for presence of California tiger salamander" at a minimum mitigation ratio of 0.2:1, or 0.2 acre of California tiger salamander credits for every 1 acre of temporary or permanent impacts on the project site. The total minimum credit requirement is calculated at 0.9 acre-credits for the proposed 4.4-acre impact area (credits are sold in increments of 0.1 acre).

Mitigation Monitoring BIO-2:
Prior to issuance of any building or grading permit(s), the applicant shall submit evidence (such as a bill of sale) to Project Review Division staff that CTS mitigation credits have been purchased in compliance with the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy. Credits shall be purchased for the total acreage of land disturbance, currently proposed to be 4.4 acres, at a ratio of 0.2:1 for a total purchase of 0.9 acre-credits.

Mitigation Measure BIO-3:
To minimize the potential for impacts on nesting raptors and other birds, the applicant shall implement the following pre-construction measures before, and during, construction:

a. To minimize the potential for impacts on nesting raptors and other birds, project activities, including vegetation removal, ground disturbance, and use of heavy equipment shall only occur during the nonbreeding season (September 1 through January 31), if feasible. If all nesting habitat is removed during the nonbreeding season, no further mitigation shall be required.

b. If conducting project activities during the nonbreeding season is not feasible, then prior to removal of vegetation, ground disturbing activities, or use of heavy equipment between February 1 and August 31, a qualified biologist shall conduct preconstruction surveys for nesting raptors and other birds and shall identify active nests within the project site and accessible areas adjacent to the project site. The survey buffers shall be 0.25 miles for white-tailed kites and 500 feet for other raptors and special-status birds, and 100 feet for common, non-raptor birds. Inaccessible areas adjacent to the project site (e.g., private property) shall be surveyed using binoculars or spotting scopes.

c. Impacts on nesting birds shall be avoided by establishing appropriate buffers around active nest sites identified during preconstruction surveys to prevent disturbance to the nest. Activity shall not commence within the buffer areas until a qualified biologist has determined that the young have fledged, the nest is no longer active, or reducing the buffer will not likely result in nest abandonment. No-disturbance buffers shall be 0.25 miles for white-tailed kites, 500 feet for raptors, at least 100 feet for other special-status birds.

d. The size of buffers for common native birds shall be determined by a qualified biologist and shall be of sufficient size to avoid disturbance to the nest based on the species, project activity, nest height, existing disturbance level, and other relevant factors. The buffer may be adjusted if a qualified biologist determines that such an adjustment would not be likely to adversely affect the nest. For white-tailed kite and other special-status birds, this determination shall be made in consultation with CDFW. Monitoring of the nest by a qualified biologist during and after construction activities shall be required if the activity has potential to adversely affect the nest.

e. Trees shall not be removed during the breeding season for nesting raptors unless a survey by a qualified biologist verifies that there is not an active nest in the tree.

Mitigation Monitoring BIO-3:
Permit Sonoma staff will not issue permits for ground disturbing activities between February 1st and August 31st until the site has been surveyed by a qualified biologist to ensure proper fencing and buffers are in place prior to issuance. If pre-construction surveys determine protective buffers are necessary, ground-disturbing activities shall not be initiated until the applicant provides evidence that nest protection buffers are flagged and fenced off and active nest monitoring has been initiated. A final monitoring report shall be submitted to the County within 30 days of the completion of ground-disturbing activities.

Mitigation Measure BIO-4:
The project applicant shall implement the following pre-construction measures for burrowing owl, with one survey occurring not less than 14 days prior to initiating ground-disturbing activities.

If proposed activities are implemented in habitat suitable for burrowing owls, a qualified biologist shall conduct surveys for burrowing owls in areas of habitat suitable for the species on and within 1,640 feet (500 meters) of the project site. Inaccessible areas (e.g., adjacent private property) will not be surveyed directly, but the biologist may use binoculars or a spotting scope to survey these areas.

A minimum of four surveys shall be conducted to determine whether burrowing owls occupy the site. Surveys shall be conducted according to Appendix D of the 2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation prepared by the California Department of Fish and Game (now CDFW) (CDFG 2012) or any subsequent updated guidance. If feasible, at least one survey should be conducted between February 15 and April 15 and the remaining surveys should be conducted between April 15 and July 15, at least three weeks apart. Because burrowing owls may recolonize a site after only a few days, one of the surveys, or an additional survey, shall be conducted no less than 14 days before initiating ground disturbance activities to verify that take of burrowing owl would not occur.

If no burrowing owls are found, the qualified biologist shall submit a report documenting the survey methods and results to the applicant and Sonoma County, and no further mitigation shall be required.

If a burrow occupied by a burrowing owl is found during the surveys, the project applicant shall establish and maintain a buffer around the occupied burrow and any identified satellite burrows (i.e., non-nesting burrows that burrowing owls use to escape predators or move young into after hatching) to prevent take of the burrowing owls.

During the non-breeding season (September 1 through January 31), the minimum buffer distance shall be 164 feet (50 m).

The buffer may be adjusted if, in consultation with CDFW, a qualified biologist determines that an alternative buffer shall not result in take of burrowing owls because of particular site features (e.g., topography, natural line-of-sight barriers), level of project disturbance, or other considerations. If the buffer is reduced, a qualified biologist shall monitor the behavior of the burrowing owls during all project activities within 1,640 feet of the burrow. If the owls are disturbed or agitated (e.g., vocalizations, bill snaps, fluffing feathers to increase body size appearance, drooping wings and rotating them forward, crouching and weaving back and forth) by the project activities, the biologist shall have the authority to halt the activities and re-establish a buffer consistent with the first bullet until the agitated behavior ceases and normal behavior resumes.

The buffer shall remain in place around the occupied burrow and associated satellite burrows until a qualified biologist has determined through noninvasive methods that the burrows are no longer occupied by burrowing

owl. A previously occupied burrow will be considered unoccupied if surveys demonstrate that no owls have used the burrow for seven consecutive days.

Locations of burrowing owls detected during surveys shall be reported to the CNDDB.

If implementation of a buffer to prevent take of burrowing owl is not feasible, the project applicant shall consult with CDFW and obtain an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) prior to commencing project related ground-disturbing activities. The impacts of taking burrowing owl shall be minimized and fully mitigated.

The project applicant shall compensate for the loss of burrowing owl by establishing permanent protection and perpetual management on land that provides burrowing owl habitat. Habitat management lands for burrowing owl may be established by conservation easement or fee title or credits may be purchased from a CDFW-approved conservation or mitigation bank. The compensatory mitigation shall satisfy permit conditions and all other permit conditions shall be implemented.

Mitigation Monitoring BIO-4:
Prior to issuance of any building or grading permit(s), the Project Review Division shall review the results of the recommendations submitted by a qualified biologist and ensure that measures recommended by the biologist or CDFW to avoid sensitive habitat or species are followed. All protection measures shall be noted on the final project construction plans. If pre-construction surveys determine protective buffers are necessary, ground-disturbing activities shall not be initiated until the applicant provides evidence that nest protection buffers are flagged and fenced off and active nest monitoring has been initiated. A final monitoring report shall be submitted to the County within 30 days of the completion of ground-disturbing activities.

Mitigation Measure BIO-5:
To minimize the potential for impacts on bats, the applicant shall implement the following pre-construction measures before, and during, construction:

Within 14 days before any tree removal or removal of abandoned buildings, a qualified biologist familiar with bats and bat ecology, and experienced in conducting bat surveys, shall conduct surveys for bat roosts in suitable habitat (e.g., large trees, crevices, cavities, exfoliating bark, foliage, buildings) on and adjacent to the project site.

If no evidence of bat roosts is found, the qualified biologist shall submit a report summarizing the results of the survey to the applicant and Sonoma County, and no further study shall be required.

If evidence of bat maternity roosts or hibernacula is observed, the species and number of bats using the roost shall be determined by a qualified biologist using noninvasive methods. Bat detectors (i.e., acoustic monitoring) or evening emergence surveys shall be used if deemed necessary to supplement survey efforts by the qualified biologist.

A no-disturbance buffer of 250 feet shall be established around active pallid bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, or western red bat maternity roosts or hibernacula, as well as substantial maternity roosts or hibernacula of other bat species considered to be a wildlife nursery by the qualified biologist, and project activities shall not occur within this buffer until after the roosts are unoccupied as determined by a qualified biologist.

If roosts of pallid bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, or western red bat are determined to be present and must be removed, the bats shall be excluded from the roosting site before the tree is removed. A program addressing compensation, exclusion methods, and roost removal procedures shall be developed in coordination with CDFW before implementation. Exclusion methods may include use of one-way doors at roost entrances (bats may leave but not reenter) or sealing roost entrances when the site can be confirmed to contain no bats. Exclusion efforts may be restricted during periods of sensitive activity (e.g., during hibernation or while females in maternity colonies are nursing young). The loss of each roost (if any) resulting from the project shall be replaced in coordination with CDFW and may require construction and installation of bat boxes suitable to the bat species and colony size excluded from the original roosting site. If determined necessary during coordination with CDFW, replacement roosts shall be implemented before bats are excluded from the original roost sites. After the replacement roosts are constructed and it is confirmed that bats are not present in the original roost site by a qualified biologist, the roost tree or building may be removed. For roost trees, a two-step tree removal process supervised by a qualified biologist shall be implemented, including removal of all branches that do not provide roosting habitat on the first day, and removal of the remaining portion of the tree on the following day.

Mitigation Monitoring BIO-5:
Prior to issuance of any building or grading permit(s), the Project Review Division shall review the results of the recommendations submitted by a qualified biologist and ensure that measures recommended by the biologist or CDFW to avoid sensitive habitat or species are followed. All protection measures shall be noted on the final project construction plans. If pre-construction surveys determine protective buffers are necessary, ground-disturbing activities shall not be initiated until the applicant provides evidence that roost protection buffers are flagged and fenced off and active roost monitoring has been initiated. A final monitoring report shall be submitted to the County within 30 days of the completion of building demolition and ground-disturbing activities.

Mitigation Measure BIO-6:
To minimize the potential for impacts on American badger, the applicant shall implement the following pre-construction measures before, and during, construction:

Within 14 days before any ground disturbing activities, a qualified biologist familiar with American badgers and American badger ecology, and experienced in conducting American badger surveys, shall conduct surveys for badgers and badger dens in areas of suitable habitat (e.g., grasslands, open woodland, pastures) on and adjacent to the project site.

If no evidence of American badgers or American badger dens are found, the qualified biologist shall submit a report documenting the survey methods and results to the applicant and Sonoma County, and no further mitigation shall be required.

If an active American badger den is detected during preconstruction surveys, a no-disturbance buffer of at least 500 feet shall be established around the den, and no ground disturbing activity will occur within this buffer until the den is no longer occupied as determined by a qualified biologist.

The buffer may be adjusted if, in consultation with CDFW, a qualified biologist determines that an alternative buffer shall not result in take of American badger because of particular site features (e.g., topography, natural line-of-sight barriers), level of project disturbance, or other considerations. If the buffer is reduced, a qualified biologist shall monitor the behavior of the American badgers during all project activities within 500 feet of the den.

The buffer shall remain in place around occupied dens until the qualified biologist has determined through noninvasive methods that the dens are no longer occupied by American badger.

Locations of American badger dens detected during surveys shall be reported to the CNDDB.

If implementation of a buffer to prevent take of American badger is not feasible, the project applicant shall consult with CDFW and obtain an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) prior to commencing project related ground-disturbing activities. The impacts of taking American badgers shall be minimized and fully mitigated.

Mitigation Monitoring BIO-6:
Prior to issuance of any building or grading permit(s), the Project Review Division shall review the results of the recommendations submitted by a qualified biologist and ensure that measures recommended by the biologist or CDFW to avoid sensitive habitat or species are followed. All protection measures shall be noted on the final project construction plans. If the survey determines protective buffers are necessary, ground-disturbing activities shall not be initiated until the applicant provides evidence that den protection buffers are flagged and fenced off and active den monitoring has been initiated. A final monitoring report shall be submitted to the County within 30 days of the completion of ground-disturbing activities.

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Comment:
All blueline streams shown on the USGS maps are designated for protection in the Sonoma County General Plan. Streamside Conservation Areas have been established in the riparian corridor overlay zone to protect riparian habitat. Removal of vegetation must comply with General Plan and Riparian Corridor Ordinance policies that govern riparian corridors for a distance of 50 ft. from the top of the highest bank.

The RC Combining Zone includes the applicable stream setback distance for development and as shown in the Table 1, below.

Table 1. Riparian Corridor (RC) Setback Distances	
Riparian Corridor Category	**RC Development Zoning Setbacks (in feet)**
Russian River and some Area Plan streams	RC-200
Designated Flatland	RC-100
Other Flatland	RC-50
Upland	RC-50
Urban Areas	RC-50

The property includes a portion of an unnamed perennial stream and its surrounding Riparian Corridor. The small seasonal drainage intersects the northern portion of the parcel has a designated 50-foot setback. The project location is more than 1,200 feet from the channel.

Aa described in section 4(a) above, the project site does not contain and would not impact any sensitive natural communities identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Significance Level:
No Impact

c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

Regulatory Framework

The Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) regulates "Waters of the United States", including adjacent wetlands, under Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act. Waters of the United States include navigable waters, interstate waters, territorial seas and other waters that may be used in interstate or foreign commerce. Potential wetland areas are identified by the presence of (1) hydrophytic vegetation, (2) hydric soils, and (3) wetland hydrology. All three parameters must be present, under normal circumstances, for an area to be designated as a jurisdictional wetland under the Clean Water Act. Areas that are inundated for sufficient duration and depth to exclude growth of hydrophytic vegetation are subject to Section 404 jurisdiction as "other waters" and are often characterized by an ordinary high water mark (OHWM). The discharge of dredged or fill material into a Waters of the U.S. (including wetlands) generally requires a permit from the Corps under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

"Waters of the State" are regulated by the Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) under the State Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. Waters of the State are defined by the Porter-Cologne Act as any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the State. RWQCB jurisdiction includes "isolated" wetlands and waters that may not be regulated by the ACOE under Section 404 (such as roadside ditches). Section 401 of the Clean Water Act specifies that any activity subject to a permit issued by a federal agency must also obtain State Water Quality Certification (401 Certification) that the proposed activity will comply with state water quality standards. If a proposed project does not require a federal permit, but does involve dredge or fill activities that may result in a discharge to Waters of the State, the Water Board has the option to regulate the dredge and fill activities under its state authority through its Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR) program.

Comment:

The proposed new construction of the new winery and tasting buildings, access improvements, and parking are outside state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.). The small drainage channel is approximately 1,200 feet from the proposed construction area, and no secondary impacts are anticipated. Although no impact is expected, Conditions of Approval requiring Best Management

Practices during ground disturbance associated with the proposed project improvements will provide further protection.

Significance Level:
No Impact

d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

Comment:
The property is located within a much larger tract of agricultural/viticultural and lightly developed land southwest of urban development in Windsor. The property includes an unnamed stream and the surrounding Riparian Corridor presumably serves as a movement and habitat corridor for an array of wildlife, and provides a linkage between the baylands of Sonoma and Napa Counties and other rural areas to the north.

While a (very small) component of this greater landscape setting, the property itself does not provide corridor functions beyond connecting similar agricultural/viticultural land parcels to the south, east, west and north. Within this context, agricultural expansion and/or limited development on the property is in and of itself unlikely to result in any significant impacts to local wildlife movement or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.

Ephemeral streams (even when dry) and associated vegetation within the property presumably provide very localized movement and shelter habitat for common wildlife species. The small drainage channel is approximately 1,200 feet from the proposed construction area, The proposed project does not include tree removal in these designated areas and is designed to avoid streams and wetlands on the property and therefore is not anticipated to interfere with the movement of wildlife.

The previous Mitigation Measures BIO-1, BIO-2, BIO-3, BIO-4, BIO-5 and BIO-6 will reduce impacts to a level that would be less than significant.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation
See Mitigation Measures BIO-1, BIO-2, BIO-3, BIO-4, BIO-5 and BIO-6

Mitigation Monitoring
See Mitigation Monitoring BIO-1, BIO-2, BIO-3, BIO-4, BIO-5 and BIO-6

e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as tree preservation policy or ordinance?

Comment:
The project parcel does not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as the Riparian Corridor Ordinance, Sonoma County Tree Protection Ordinance, or the Sonoma County Oak Woodland Protection Ordinance. Project construction is approximately 1,200 feet from onsite riparian areas, and is greater than 1,000 feet from oak woodland and valley oak habitat; no oak woodland occurs in the area of construction on the parcel. Five trees protected by the Sonoma County Tree Protection Ordinance located around the construction area will be removed to accommodate the new construction and will be mitigated by new plantings as described in 4(a). Mitigation Measure BIO-1 and standard Condition of Approval requiring compliance with the County Tree Protection Ordinance will further reduce the impact.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation
See Mitigation Measures BIO-1

Mitigation Monitoring
See Mitigation Monitoring BIO-1

f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state Habitat Conservation Plan?

Comment:
Habitat Conservation Plans and natural community conservation plans are site-specific plans to address effects on sensitive species of plants and animals. The project site is located within the boundaries of and subject to the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy. See section 4(a) above for a discussion of potential impacts and mitigation for California tiger salamander in compliance with the Strategy.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation
See Mitigation Measures BIO-2

Mitigation Monitoring
See Mitigation Monitoring BIO-2

5. CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Would the project:

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in §15064.5?

Comments:
A Cultural Resource Study was performed by Evans & De Shazo on March 8, 2025 and updated on June 1, 2026 (Attachement 5). The built environment identified within the project area consist of a 1906 hops barn, a ca. 1920 cottage, ca. 1970 ancillary building, a ca. 1975 ranch building, ca. 1975 ancillary building, ca. 1997 ancillary building, ca. 1997 greenhouse, ca. 1960 well, ca. 1960 house, ca. 1970 inground swimming pool, and associated landscape, ranging in age from the 1906 to ca. 1997. A Historical Resource Evaluation determined that no onsite structures are eligible for listing under Criterion 1 through 4 of the California Register of Historic Resources because the property does not convey significance and several buildings do not individually retain integrity did not maintain its integrity. As a result, the onsite historic built environment is not considered historical resources for the purposes of CEQA. Therefore, the implementation of the project would result in a less-than-significant impact on historical resources.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?

Comment:
On July 31, 2025 Permit Sonoma staff referred the project application to Native American Tribes within Sonoma County to request consultation under AB-52. On May 4, 2026 a representative for the Gratton Rancheria Tribe requested consultation and additional information for this project). Consultation with Gratton Rancheria Tribe concluded when both parties agreed to construction monitoring Mitigation Measure TRC-1, which is also included as a Condition of Approval of the project.

There are no known archaeological resources on the site, but the project could uncover such materials during construction. Consistent with the CEQA Guidelines the following mitigation measure has been incorporated into the project.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporate

Mitigation
See Mitigation Measure TCR-1

Mitigation Monitoring
See Mitigation Monitoring TCR-1

c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

Comment:
The project site is not located within vicinity of any known unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic. As described in Section 5.b) above, mitigation measures are in place to protect any paleontological resources or prehistoric, historic or tribal cultural resources that may be encountered during ground-disturbing work.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation
See Mitigation Measure TCR-1

Mitigation Monitoring
See Mitigation Monitoring TCR-1

6. ENERGY:

Would the project:
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

Comment:
The project will not result in significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation. Standard construction practices will be used.

Construction:
Energy would be required to operate and maintain construction equipment and transport construction materials. The one-time energy expenditure required to construct the infrastructure associated with the projects would be nonrecoverable. Most energy consumption would result from operation of off- road construction equipment and on-road vehicle trips associated with commutes by construction workers and haul trucks trips. The energy needs for project construction would be temporary and are not anticipated to require additional capacity or substantially increase peak or base period demands for electricity and other forms of energy. Associated energy consumption would be typical of that associated with winery projects of this size in a rural setting. Although the one-time energy expenditure required to construct the project would be nonrecoverable, it would not be consumed in a wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary manner.

Operational:
Operation of the project would require energy consumption in the form of electricity for building and facility operations and fuel for vehicle-based visitation to the project. The project would be built according to the latest Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards and CA Green Building Standards. The project would meet State and local building code requirements for energy efficiency. Operation of the project would be typical of tasting room and winery operations, requiring electricity for lighting and climate control, and miscellaneous appliances. Transportation energy demand from the implementation of the project would be reduced by federal and State regulations including the Low Carbon Fuel Standard, Clean Car Standards, and Low Emission Vehicle Program. The site would also include onsite renewable energy generation from photovoltaic solar panels to supplement the project's energy demand as well as EV charging facilities. Any additional energy use would be supplied by Sonoma Clean Power, which provides increased levels of renewable energy sourced energy from typical energy supplied by an investor-owned utility. Furthermore, the project would not use natural gas or propane as primary energy sources. Propane will be used in standard winery processing operations per State Standards.

Thus, the projects' energy consumption from construction, building operation, and transportation would

not be considered wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

Comment:
As noted above, the projects' facilities and buildings would comply with the latest Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which are intended to increase the energy efficiency of new development projects in the state and move the State closer to its zero-net energy goals. The project would be automatically enrolled as a member of the SCP, which serves as the Community Choice Aggregate (CCA) for the County. SCP works in partnership with PG&E to deliver GHG-efficient electricity to customers within its member jurisdictions. The project would also be all electric and provide EV charging facilities consistent with state efforts (e.g., 2022 Scoping Plan Update) for energy efficiency and fossil fuel use reduction. Implementation of the projects would not conflict with or obstruct a State or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impacts

7. GEOLOGY AND SOILS:

Would the project:

a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.

Existing geologic conditions that could affect new development are considered in this analysis. Impacts of the environment on the project are analyzed as a matter of County policy and not because such analysis is required by CEQA.

Comment:
The site is not located in an Alquist-Priolo fault zone or on a known fault based on the Safety Maps in the Sonoma County General Plan. The Uniform Building Code has been developed to address seismic events in California and development which complies with the Code will result in buildings which should withstand the most severe reasonably anticipated seismic event.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

ii. Strong seismic ground shaking?

Comment:
All of Sonoma County is subject to seismic shaking that would result from earthquakes along the San Andreas, Rodgers Creek, and other faults. Predicting seismic events is not possible, nor is providing mitigation that can entirely reduce the potential for injury and damage that could occur during a seismic event. However, by applying geotechnical evaluation techniques and appropriate engineering practices, potential injury and damage from seismic activity can be diminished, thereby exposing fewer people and less property to the effects of a major damaging earthquake.

The design and construction of new structures are subject to engineering standards of the California Building Code (CBC), which takes into account soil properties, seismic shaking, and foundation type. Project conditions of approval require that building permits be obtained for all construction and that the project meet all standard seismic and soil test/compaction requirements. The project would, therefore, not expose people to substantial risk of injury from seismic shaking.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant

iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

Comment:
Strong ground shaking can result in liquefaction, the sudden loss of shear strength in saturated sandy material, resulting ground failure. Areas of Sonoma County most at risk of liquefaction are along San Pablo Bay and in alluvial valleys. The subject site is not identified on the map in Safety Element (PS-1c) as Very High, High, or Medium Liquefaction Hazard Area.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

iv. Landslides?

Comment:
There are no landslides on or adjacent to the project site. The site is mapped in an area of greatest relative stability due to low slope inclination. The risk of landsliding at the site is low.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant

b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Comment:
The project includes grading, cuts and fills which require the issuance of a grading permit. Unregulated grading, both during and post construction, has the potential to increase the volume of runoff from a site which could have adverse downstream flooding and further erosion impacts, and increase soil erosion on and off site which could adversely impact downstream water quality.

County grading ordinance design requirements, adopted County grading standards and best management practices (such as silt fencing, straw wattles, construction entrances to control soil discharges, primary and secondary containment areas for petroleum products, paints, lime and other materials of concern, etc.), mandated limitations on work in wet weather, and standard grading inspection requirements, will be applied to the project, and are specifically designed to prevent soil erosion and loss of topsoil.

The County adopted grading ordinances and standards and related conditions of approval which enforce them are specific, and also require compliance with all standards and regulations adopted by the State and Regional Water Quality Control Board, such as the Standard Urban Stormwater Mitigation Plan (SUSMP) requirements, Low Impact Development (LID) and any other adopted best management practices. Therefore, no significant adverse soil erosion or related soil erosion water quality impacts are expected given the mandated conditions and standards that need to be met.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a

result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?

Comment:
The project site is subject to seismic shaking and other geologic hazards as described in item 6.a.ii, iii, and iv, above.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant

d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?

Comment:
Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code is an index of the relative expansive characteristics of soil as determined through laboratory testing. For the proposed project, soils at the site have not been tested for their expansive characteristics. However, compliance with standard Building Code requirements would ensure that potential soil expansion at the project site would be mediated through professional engineering design and practice. Therefore, risks from expansive soils would be less than significant.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?

Comment:
The project site is not in an area served by public sewer. Preliminary documentation provided by the applicant and reviewed by a Permit Sonoma Environmental Health Specialist indicates that the soils on site could support a replacement septic system and the required expansion area.

Significance Level:
No Impact

f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

Comment:
The project site is already significantly disturbed by an active farming operation and related infrastructure. Required ground disturbance is mostly contained within already disturbed areas on site. There have been no unique geologic features identified on site. In addition, the County standard "Accidental Discovery" Condition of Approval applies to all projects with ground disturbance (see Section 5b), which would further reduce any potential impact to less than significant.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

8. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS:

Would the project:

a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

Comment:
Section 15064.4 of the State CEQA Guidelines assists lead agencies in determining the significance of the impacts of GHG emissions. Section 15064.4 gives lead agencies the discretion to assess emissions quantitatively or qualitatively. The CEQA Guidelines do not establish a threshold of significance. Lead agencies are granted discretion to establish significance thresholds for their respective jurisdictions, including looking to thresholds developed by other public agencies or other experts, so long as any threshold chosen is supported by substantial evidence.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District's (BAAQMD) 2022 Justification Report: CEQA Thresholds for Evaluating the Significance of Climate Impacts from Land Use Projects acknowledges that evaluating climate impacts under CEQA can be challenging because global climate change is inherently a cumulative problem, rather than the result of a single source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. With that in mind, the BAAQMD has recommended thresholds of significance as to whether a proposed project would have a "cumulatively considerable" contribution to the significant cumulative impact on climate change.

For land use development projects, the BAAQMD recommends using an approach which evaluates a project based on its effect on California's efforts to meet the State's long-term climate goals. Using this approach, a project that is consistent with and would contribute its "fair share" towards achieving those long-term climate goals can be found to have a less-than-significant impact on climate change under CEQA because the project would, in effect, help to solve the problem of global climate change. Applying this approach, the Air District has analyzed what will be required of new land use development projects to achieve California's long-term climate goal of carbon neutrality by 2045.

Because GHG emissions from the land use sector come primarily from building energy use and from transportation, these are the areas that the BAAQMD evaluated to ensure that a project can and will do its fair share to achieve carbon neutrality. With respect to building energy use, the BAAQMD recommends replacing natural gas with electric power and eliminating inefficient or wasteful energy usage. This will support California's transition away from fossil fuel–based energy sources and will bring a project's GHG emissions associated with building energy use down to zero as the state's electric supply becomes 100 percent carbon free. With respect to transportation, the BAAQMD recommends that projects be designed to reduce project-generated Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and to provide sufficient electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure to support a shift to EVs over time.

The BAAQMB has found, based on this analysis, that a new land use development project being built today either must be consistent with a local GHG reduction strategy that meets the criteria under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15183.5(b), or must incorporate the following design elements to achieve its "fair share" of implementing the goal of carbon neutrality by 2045:

A. Projects must include, at a minimum, the following project design elements:
    1. Buildings
        a. The project will not include natural gas appliances or natural gas plumbing (in both residential and nonresidential development).
        b. The project will not result in any wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary energy usage as determined by the analysis required under CEQA Section 21100(b)(3) and Section 15126.2(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines.
    2. Transportation
        a. Achieve a reduction in project-generated vehicle miles traveled (VMT) below the regional average consistent with the current version of the California Climate Change Scoping Plan (currently 15 percent) or meet a locally adopted Senate Bill 743 VMT target, reflecting the recommendations provided in the Governor's Office of Planning and Research's (OPR) 2018 Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA:
            i. Residential projects: 15 percent below the existing VMT per capita
            ii. Office projects: 15 percent below the existing VMT per employee
            iii. Retail projects: no net increase in existing VMT

b. Achieve compliance with off-street electric vehicle requirements in the most recently adopted version of CALGreen Tier 2.

There is currently no applicable local GHG reduction strategy, such as an adopted Climate Action Plan, for Sonoma County. Therefore, the applicants provided a detailed project description and the project was analyzed under criterium A above and discussed below.

Buildings: As discussed in the Energy Section 6a, the project does include new construction. Plans for the building do not include the use of natural gas appliances or natural gas plumbing. The new 73,500 sq ft winery building, new 3,600 sq ft tasting building and remodeled 3,900 sq ft tasting building will require compliance with the latest Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards. The project also proposes the use of Sonoma Clean Power as their utility provider. Therefore, impacts due to energy consumption would be less than significant.

Transportation: The tasting room and winery project does not include new residences, office buildings, or commercial retail, and therefore, does not contribute any VMT to these three land use categories of concern. (Note that "commercial retail" refers to commercial retail spaces, not to a small ancillary retail space associated with another land use). The project would include commercial use of the 73,500 sq ft winery building, new 3,600 sq ft tasting building and remodeled 3,900 sq ft tasting building.

As discussed in the Transportation Section 17b, VMT refers to the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project. The County of Sonoma has not yet adopted specific VMT policies or thresholds of significance. The County's approach to analyzing VMT impacts and establishing thresholds relies upon the guidance contained in the Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA, California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), December 2018 (OPR Technical Advisory). The OPR Technical Advisory includes recommended VMT significance thresholds for residential, employment, and retail land uses. It does not, however, address winery or visitor-based uses, indicating that lead agencies may develop their own thresholds or assess impacts on a case-by-case basis.

A Greenhouse Gas Study was prepared by Ascent Environmental, dated May 23, 2025 (Attachment 3). The following analysis provides the analysis to demonstrates a reduction of at least 15% in VMT compared to the area average.

The project team developed significance thresholds to be applied to the project, relying on available data and resources as well as guidance contained in the OPR Technical Advisory. Following are the significance thresholds established for this project by the County of Sonoma:

- Employment VMT: The project's employees would generate 85 percent or less of the regional average rate of VMT per Employee.
- Patron VMT: The vehicle trip lengths associated with the project's patrons/visitors is 15 percent or more below the countywide (including regional trip adjustments) tourism average trip length (miles).

The 15 percent standard was applied to average VMT per employee and patron to derive the applied thresholds of significance. Based on projections obtained from the SCTM19 model for the traffic analysis zone (TAZ) encompassing the project site, the project's employment component is anticipated to generate 8.1 VMT per employee, which falls below the applied significance threshold of 14.4 VMT per employee. Tourism-related trips generated by the proposed project are anticipated to have an average length of 14.1 miles, which falls below the applied significance threshold of 18.4 miles per vehicle trip. Accordingly, the project will have a less-than-significant impact on VMT for both employment and patron-related travel.

Therefore, the project is expected to have a less than significant VMT impact.

The latest California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) was published in 2022 and went into effect on January 1, 2023. The 2022 CALGreen Tier 2 requirements for EV changing stations apply to

new non-residential buildings and require that off-street EV capable spaces be provided for a new non-residential development project with 10 or more parking spaces (note there are separate EV requirements for residential projects). Per the provided GHG analysis the applicant is committed to complying with measures for providing electrical vehicle charging stations.

The BAAQMD 2022 guidance does not propose construction-related climate impact thresholds, stating that GHG emissions from construction represent a very small portion of a project's lifetime GHG emissions, and that land use project thresholds are better focused on addressing operational GHG emissions, which represent the vast majority of project GHG emissions. Therefore, construction related GHG would not exceed established thresholds.

Because the project would not use natural gas or propane as primary energy sources. Propane will be used in standard winery processing operations per State Standards., would use minimal energy, does not include new residential, office, or retail uses, would generate below average VMT, and meets 2022 CALGreen requirements for EV charging stations, the project would contribute its "fair share" towards achieving the State's long-term climate goals, and therefore, would have a less-than-significant impact on climate change.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

Comment:
The County does not have an adopted Climate Action Plan but has adopted a Climate Change Action Resolution (May 8, 2018) which resolved to reduce GHG emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, and noted twenty strategies for reducing GHG emissions, including increasing carbon sequestration, increasing renewable energy use, and reducing emissions from the consumption of good and services. The project has proposed to incorporate many GHG reduction strategies, including:

1. Increase building energy efficiency.
    a. The project is compliant as it would meet any appropriate State and local building code requirement for energy efficiency.
    b. LED lighting systems would be installed.
    c. Lighting timers and dimmers will be utilized.
2. Increase renewable energy use.
    a. Sonoma Clean Power will be the electrical utility provider for the site, which has a greater reliance on renewable power sources.
3. Electrical energy usage.
    a. EV charging stations will be installed at the parking lots, in accordance with County guidelines.
4. Reduce travel demand through focused growth.
    a. The project is a local winery that will use onsite fruit and sources local fruit to produce wine on site.
    b. The project is anticipated to generate traffic below the applied significance threshold.
5. Increase solid waste diversion.
    a. The project is compliant as it would meet the County and local recycling goals
6. Reduce water consumption.
    a. The project would include low flow water fixtures and water efficient irrigation systems.
    b. Any new landscape would be drought tolerant.
    c. The landscaping plan will meet the County's WELO requirements.
7. Increase carbon sequestration.
    a. The current site has limited amount of vegetation. The project landscaping will increase productive vegetation that sequesters carbon.

By incorporating these GHG reduction strategies, the project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.

Significance Level:
No Impact

9. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS:

Would the project:

a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

Comment:
Small amounts of potentially hazardous materials will be used on this project such as fuel, lubricants, and cleaning materials. Proper use of materials in accordance with local, state, and federal requirements, and as required in the construction documents, will minimize the potential for accidental releases or emissions from hazardous materials. This will assure that the risks of the project uses impacting the human or biological environment will be reduced to a less than significant level.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

Comment:
The project proposes construction for a new 73,500 sq ft winery production facility, a new 3,600 sq ft tasting building, the conversion of a 3,900 sq ft existing barn to an additional tasting building and subsequent site improvements to support the new uses. The project would not generate or produce substantial quantities of hazardous material or unsafe conditions. During construction activities there could be spills of hazardous materials. To address this possibility, the project is required to comply with all applicable hazardous materials handling and storage requirements and would use qualified contractors for construction. See Item 9.a. above.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

Comment:
The project does not involve hazardous emissions or handle hazardous materials. There is not an existing or proposed school within 0.25 miles of the site.

Significance Level:
No Impact

d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

Comment:
The project site was not identified on, or in the vicinity of, any parcels on lists compiled by the

California Environmental Protection Agency, Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the CalRecycle Waste Management Board Solid Development Waste Information System (SWIS). The project area is not included on the list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

Significance Level:
No Impact

e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

Comment:
The project was reviewed by the Sonoma County Airport Land Use Commission on August 31, 2025. The Commission found that the project would be consistent with the Comprehensive Airport Land Use Plan. Their comments are attached under Attachment 10.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

Comment:
The project would not impair implementation of, or physically interfere with the County's adopted emergency operations plan. There is no separate emergency evacuation plan for the County. In any case, the project would not change existing circulation patterns significantly, and would have no effect on emergency response routes.

Significance Level:
No Impact

g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

Comment:
According to the Safety Element of the General Plan, the project site is not located in a high wildland fire hazard area. The construction of new structures in accordance with current building standards would decrease the fire risk to structures on the project parcel. The County Fire Marshal's fire safe requirements require that new structures be installed with fire sprinklers with the intent to contain or prevent fires from spreading. In addition, standard conditions of approval include that the facility operator shall develop an emergency response plan consistent with Chapter 4 of the 2013 California Fire Code with safety plans, emergency procedures, and employee training programs; shall provide for safe access for emergency fire apparatus and civilian evacuation concurrently, and shall provide unobstructed traffic circulation during an emergency; shall provide emergency water supply for fire protection available and accessible in locations, quantities and delivery rates as specified in the California Fire Code; and establish defensible space. All of the fire safe conditions of approval will ensure that the winery and tasting rooms projects would reduce the exposure of people and property to fire hazards to a degree the risk of injury or damage is less than significant. The project would not expose people to significant risk from wildland fires.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

10. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY:

Would the project:

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?

Comments:
With regard to wastewater discharge requirements, the project site is not located in an area served by public sewer. Septic systems and leachfields would be installed to treat domestic wastewater for the proposed winery and tasting room. These systems would comply with the Building Regulations listed in Chapter 7 of the Sonoma County Code of Ordinances which would require that approval be obtained from the well and septic section of Permit Sonoma for any onsite disposal system. The septic systems and leachfields would be subject to the provisions of the County of Sonoma OWTS Manual which provides the regulations, procedural and technical details governing septic tanks, including soil capability. The site would be evaluated for soil depth, depth to groundwater, soil percolation rates, and other soil properties related to septic systems. In addition, the septic systems would also be subject to the County's Sewers and Sewage Disposal Ordinance, Chapter 24 of the Sonoma County Code of Ordinances. The ordinance requires that the septic tank meet the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials PS-1 design standard and would require a permit for maintenance and cleaning of the system. These requirements have been developed to ensure protection of groundwater resources, human health, and the environment.

Project conditions require that an application for additional wastewater discharge requirements be filed by the applicant with the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. Documentation of acceptance of a complete application with no initial objections or concerns by the Regional Water Quality Control Board must be submitted to the Project Review Health Specialist prior to building permit issuance.

With regard to water quality, standard permitting procedures require a Grading Permit and associated Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control Plan for the proposed improvements and other movement of soils, to which all applicable standards and provisions of the Sonoma County Grading and Drainage Ordinance would apply.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

Comment:
The project is located in the Santa Rosa Plain groundwater basin that is managed by the Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency in accordance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. The Groundwater Sustainability Agencies are currently developing Groundwater Sustainability Plans which will got into effect January 31, 2027 and will provide a regulatory framework for managing groundwater use. The County requires preparation of a groundwater study to assess impact of projects that include new groundwater use.

A water supply report titled "Water & Wastewater Systems Conceptual Design Basis" prepared by Brelje & Race Consulting Engineers dated May 22, 2025 (Attachement 6) was

submitted and reviewed. Additional information was requested in a review letter dated August 15, 2025. In response the applicant provided additional information pertaining to available public water and recycled water in a letter from Korman Development , Inc. dated December 10, 2025.

The water supply sources for the project parcel include public water from the Town of Windsor, groundwater from a private well, and recycled water from the Airport Larkfield Wikiup Sanitation Zone (ALWSZ). The applicant has contacted the Town of Windsor to determine if the existing service could be modified to support the proposed use. Water from the Town of Windsor is the preferred source for potable demand of the winery. However, if the Town of Windsor is unable to serve the project, the applicant will pursue formation of a separate public water system served by an existing groundwater well.

Per the December 10, 2025 letter by Korman Development Inc., existing onsite and nearby vineyards under common ownership are irrigated using groundwater and recycled water. Recycled water from the ALWSZ treatment plant is provided to the Sonoma Cutrer properties through a 2024 agreement between Sonoma Water and Duckhorn Wine Company, which specifies a Committed Use of 200 acre-feet per year for irrigation of 260 acres of vineyards. Recycled water is delivered to the property through a turnout and stored in the Sonoma Cutrer irrigation reservoir. Effluent (recycled water) from the Sonoma Cutrer treatment plant is also stored in the irrigation reservoir and, as such, is also proposed to store the treated wastewater from the proposed winery. Meter data from 2018 through 2024 indicates that recycled water volumes received from the ALWSZ have ranged from less than 30 acre-feet to more than 300 acre-feet per year, with a reported average for the five-year period between calendar year 2020 and 2024 is 179.53 acre-feet per year.

Total water demand (excluding vineyard irrigation) is estimated to be 6.9 acre-ft per year. Winery process water demand is estimated to be 3.9 acre-feet per year. Water for domestic uses is estimated to be 0.9 acre-feet per year. Landscape irrigation water demand is estimated to be 2.1 acre-feet per year. Winery process water will be treated at the existing wastewater treatment plant for Sonoma Cutrer winery and stored in the existing Sonoma Cutrer irrigation reservoir southeast of the project site that is used for recycled water storage and irrigation of surrounding vineyards.

The current proposal specifies that groundwater will be used for landscape irrigation surrounding the winery. The previous review letter from August 15, 2025 requested a discussion of the feasibility of using recycled water for landscape irrigation. The applicant's response letter did not rule out this possibility, but summarizes that because recycled water is often fully utilized by vineyard demands alone, use of recycled water for landscape irrigation will not necessarily increase the amount of recycled water used, and that additional groundwater may be needed to fill the irrigation reservoir. This statement has been considered and it is understood that in certain years when recycled water is limited that irrigation demand will be supplemented with groundwater. However, it appears from provided information that there would be sufficient recycled water to meet all irrigation demands of vineyards and landscapes if the ALWSZ Committed Use of 200 acre-feet is delivered. In addition, available recycled water will increase by due to the project generated process wastewater. Given the apparent feasibility of using recycled water, recommended conditions require that new landscaping for the project be connected to a system that is augmented by recycled water.

A hydrogeologic report titled "Groundwater Resources Impact Assessment" prepared by Formation Environmental LLC. (FEL) dated May 23, 2025 (Attachment 7) was provided. The FEL Report was reviewed and is found to be generally sufficient. The FEL Report used the water demand estimates of the B&R Report and estimated septic and irrigation return flows. Gross groundwater extraction was estimated to be 6.9 acre feet per year.

After accounting for recycled water reuse and septic/agricultural return flow, consumptive groundwater use under proposed conditions was estimated to be 3.3 acre feet per year. The FEL report analyzed and discussed various potential impacts and found little potential to significantly impact groundwater levels or interconnected surface waters. Findings of the

FEL Report were reviewed and are considered reasonable.

Note, the FEL Report analyzed the project assuming use of groundwater for potable demand. However, should the project connect to the Town of Windsor public water system, then the project will result in zero net increase in groundwater use, and no impact to groundwater resources would be expected.

As described above, preliminary hydrogeologic studies prepared for new winery and tasting rooms indicate that under worst-case groundwater pumping scenarios no offsite wells would be affected. Finally, the hydrogeologic studies prepared for the project would be subject to review and approval by the Sonoma County Water Agency to ensure that the project meets the provisions Sonoma County General Plan Policy WR-2e and does not result in a local or cumulative adverse effect to groundwater. For these reasons, the potential for the new winery and tasting rooms to result in a substantial decrease in groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project impedes the sustainable groundwater management of the basin would be less than significant.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

i. would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

ii. substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;

iii. create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or

iv. Impede or redirect flood flows?

Comment:
Construction activities associated with the proposed project are not anticipated to alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area in a way that would result in downstream erosion and/or sedimentation. The small portion of the project site south of the tasting room is within a classified flood hazard zone. All ground disturbance and construction activities require a grading and building permit prior to commencement of these activities. Standard conditions of approval for the project require prior to grading permit issuance, the applicant submit a drainage report prepared by a civil engineer and demonstrate drainage improvements are designed in accordance with the Sonoma County Water Agency Flood Management Design Manual. Drainage improvements are required to maintain off-site natural drainage patterns, limit post-development storm water quantities and pollutant discharges in compliance with Permit Sonoma's best management practices guide and all other applicable regulations. Existing drainage patterns must be maintained, to the maximum extent practicable, to not adversely impact adjacent properties or drainage systems. Proposed drainage improvements shall not adversely impact adjacent properties or drainage systems.

Additionally, the project would comply with Sonoma County LID standards requiring 100 percent onsite infiltration of the design storm (1 inch of rain over 24 hours). The infiltration features incorporated in the site designs would capture the stormwater runoff for most small to moderate precipitation events throughout the year as shown in Appendix A. In accordance with Sonoma County Code (Section 36.16.030) the projects drainage systems would be designed to maintain pre-project drainage patterns and to convey the 25-year design storm without causing on or offsite flooding. The drainage systems would be engineered to the specification of the Sonoma County Flood Management Design Manual (SCWA 2019a) and would undergo a comprehensive review by the Sonoma County

Water Agency before permit approval. This review would ensure that the hydrologic analysis for the project considers the prescribed design storm, local precipitation rates, rainfall intensity, and runoff coefficients, and that the applicant has used and appropriate hydrologic baseline. The proposed drainage improvements must also demonstrate that the projects would not cause adverse flooding or drainage effects to existing or proposed structures or to adjacent properties. Because the Sonoma County permitting process includes protections through the drainage system design and review, the potential for the potential for the projects to result in on or offsite flooding would be less than significant.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

Comment:
The County used FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps to map flood hazard areas in General Plan 2020 in order to guide the placement of housing outside of flood and other natural hazard areas. According to Figure PS-1e of the General Plan, the majority of the proposed development is outside the 100-year Flood Hazard Area. Development within the hazard area is limited to improvement of an existing access driveway.

Existing flood hazards that could affect new development are considered in this analysis. Impacts of the environment on the proposed project are analyzed as a matter of County policy, not because such analysis is required by CEQA.

The proposed project creates approx. 74,000 sf of new impervious surface, which could affect the quantity and/or quality of storm water run-off. However, the proposed project has been designed and/or conditioned to prevent and/or minimize the discharge of pollutants and waste after the proposed project is constructed (post-construction). There are numerous post-construction storm water best management practices that can be utilized to accomplish this goal. These range from project designs and/or Low Impact Development best management practices that minimize new impervious surfaces, disperse development over larger areas, and/or that create areas that allow storm water to be detained, infiltrated, or retained for later use. Other post-construction storm water best management practices include storm water treatment devices based on filtering, settling or removing pollutants.

Low Impact Development is a site design strategy that seeks to mimic the pre-development site hydrology through infiltration, interception, reuse, and evapotranspiration. Low Impact Development techniques include the use of small scale landscape-based Best Management Practices such as vegetated natural filters and bioretention areas (e.g. vegetated swales and raingardens) to treat and infiltrate storm water runoff. Low Impact Development also requires preservation and protection of environmentally sensitive site features such as riparian buffers, wetlands, steep slopes, valuable trees, flood plains, woodlands, native vegetation, and permeable soils. The applicant provided an Initial Storm Water Impact Development Submittal (Attachment 8)

The proposed project has been designed to address water quality through storm water treatment Best Management Practices and to also address water quantity through storm water flow control best management practices. Storm water treatment best management practices shall be designed to treat storm events and associated runoff to the 85 percentile storm event. Storm water flow control best management practices shall be designed to treat storm events and associated runoff to the channel forming discharge storm event which is commonly referred to as the two year 24 hour storm event.

Storm water treatment best management practices and storm water flow control best management practices are subsets of post-construction storm water best management practices. However, there is overlap between the two subsets. Post-construction storm water best management

practices should utilize Low Impact Development techniques as the first priority.

The County has identified the preliminary location, type and approximate size of post-construction storm water treatment and flow control best management practices necessary for the proposed project. The location of the storm water best management practices are site specific and predicated by the development. The type and approximate size of the selected storm water best management practices are in accordance with the adopted Sonoma County Storm Water Low Impact Development Guide.

Proper operation and maintenance of post-construction storm water best management practices is needed to achieve the goal of preventing and/or minimizing the discharge of pollutants. Standard Conditions of Approval from Grading and Stormwater ensures all regulations are followed and result in less than significant impacts.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

Comment:
As discussed in (a) and (b) above this project is expected to be consistent with the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Plan and Groundwater Sustainability Plan.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

11. LAND USE AND PLANNING:

Would the project:

a) Physically divide an established community?

Comment:
The project would not physically divide a community. It does not involve construction of a physical structure (such as a major transportation facility) or removal of a primary access route (such as a road or bridge) that would impair mobility within an established community or between a community and outlying areas.

Significance Level:
No Impact

b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

Comment:
The General Plan Land Use Designation on the project parcel is Diverse Agriculture. This land use designation is intended to enhance and protects land where soil, climate, and water conditions support farming but where small acreage intensive farming and part-time farming activities are predominant, and where farming may not be the principal occupation of the farmer. The primary use of any parcel within one of the three agricultural land use categories must involve agricultural production and related processing, support services, and visitor serving uses. Within the Diverse Agriculture Zoning designation agricultural crop production and cultivation is principally permitted use, which is proposed to be the primary use of the parcel.

The proposed uses of the agricultural processing (winery), tasting room and proposed events are considered accessory to the primary use. The secondary use of agricultural processing has been found consistent with the applicable Zoning Code sections and applicable General Plan Policies. See above section 2: Agriculture and Forest Resources. The secondary use of tasting room has been found consistent with the applicable Zoning Code sections and applicable General Plan Policies. See above section 2: Agriculture and Forest Resources.

The proposed project will allow agricultural processing of grapes to wine, tasting room and events on site and therefore would not impede on existing or future agriculture operations on site because the secondary uses are in direct conjunction of the onsite agricultural processing. The proposed project will align the existing use with Policy AR-4a by creating visitor serving uses in conjunction with the primary agricultural production use. No conflicts with other general plan policies related to scenic, cultural, or biotic resource protection, noise, or transportation have been identified.

No conflicts with Development Criteria or Operating Standards have been identified and no exceptions or reductions to standards would be necessary to approve the project. Therefore, the project would not conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

12. MINERAL RESOURCES:

Would the project:

a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

Comment:
The project site is not located within a known mineral resource deposit area (Sonoma County Aggregate Resources Management Plan, as amended 2010). Sonoma County has adopted the Aggregate Resources Management Plan that identifies aggregate resources of statewide or regional significance (areas classified as MRZ-2 by the State Geologist). Consult California Geologic Survey Special Report 205, Update of Mineral Land Classification: Aggregate Materials in the North San Francisco Bay Production-consumption region, Sonoma, Napa, Marin, and Southwestern Solano Counties, California (California Geolgocial Survey, 2013).

Significance Level:
No Impact

b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?

Comment:
The project site is not located within an area of locally-important mineral resource recovery site and the site is not zoned MR (Mineral Resources) (Sonoma County Aggregate Resources Management Plan, as amended 2010 and Sonoma County Zoning Code). No locally-important mineral resources are known to occur at the site.

Significance Level:
No Impact

13. NOISE:

Would the project:

a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?

Comment:
A noise monitoring survey was performed at the site in May 2025, conducted for the applicant by Ascent Environmental, Inc (Attachment 8). The study included on-site noise monitoring and modeling for projected noise conditions based on the proposed project. The study specifically measured noise levels at two sensitive receptors (existing single-family dwellings) at the shared property lines. Both single-family dwellings are more than 1,200 feet from the project site.

The study found that the existing noise environment at the site results primarily from ambient noises related to vehicular traffic on River Road and Slusser Road.

The future noise environment at the project site would include parking and onsite visitor traffic, winery truck traffic, winery operations and seasonal production activities, maintenance and forklift operations, tasting room activities and promotional event and activity noise.

Key findings of the noise study in consideration of the proposed project determined the following:

- Parking lot noise levels during daytime and nighttime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.
- On-site truck operations noise levels during daytime and nighttime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.
- Mechanical equipment noise levels during daytime and nighttime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.
- Crush related noise levels during daytime and nighttime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.
- Bottling related noise levels during daytime and nighttime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.
- Forklift and maintenance noise levels during daytime and nighttime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.
- Wine tasting activity noise levels during daytime and nighttime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.
- Outdoor event noise levels during daytime and nighttime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.
- Indoor event noise levels during daytime and nighttime hours will not exceed the County's NE-2 noise standard at the nearby residences.

Noise-related impacts associated with the implementation of the project are expected to be less-than-significant. Therefore, mitigation measures to mitigate noise-related impacts are not necessary.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Comment:
The project includes construction activities that may generate minor ground borne vibration and noise. These levels would not be significant because they would be short-term and temporary, and

would be limited to daytime hours. There are no other activities or uses associated with the project that would expose persons to or generate excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

Comment:
The project was reviewed by the Sonoma County Airport Land Use Commission on August 31, 2025. The Commission found that the project would be consistent Comprehensive Airport Land Use Plan (CALUP) Noise Policies because the project site is not in a designated CNEL Noise Contour for the Sonoma County Airport.

Significance Level:
No Impact

14. POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Would the project:

a) **Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?**

Comment:
The proposed project does not include the construction of new housing, nor would it generate significant new demand for housing in the area (approximately 24 full-time employees year-round with up to 19 employees during harvest are proposed). This increase in employment opportunities is not anticipated to result in an indirect increase in population as it is anticipated that employees would be existing residents of the area. Therefore, the project would not induce substantial population growth in the area.

Significance Level:
No Impact

b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

Comment:
No housing will be displaced by the project and no replacement housing is proposed to be constructed.

Significance Level:
No Impact

15. PUBLIC SERVICES:

Would the project:

a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service rations, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

Comment:
Construction of the project would not involve substantial adverse physical impacts associated with provision of public facilities or services. The proposed project does not propose new housing, nor would it generate significant new demand for housing in the area (approximately 24 full-time employees year-round with up to 19 employees during harvest are proposed). This small increase in employment opportunities is not anticipated to result in an indirect increase in population requiring construction of new or altered government facilities. Therefore, the project would not necessitate or facilitate construction of new public facilities.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

i. Fire protection?

Comment:
Sonoma County Code requires that all new development meet Fire Safe Standards (Chapter 13). The County Fire Marshal reviewed the project description and requires that the expansion comply with Fire Safe Standards, including fire protection methods such as sprinklers in buildings, alarm systems, extinguishers, vegetation management, hazardous materials management and management of flammable or combustible liquids and gases. This is a standard condition of approval and required by county code and impacts would be less than significant. Fire protection services will continue to be provided by the Fire Department.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

ii. Police?

Comment:
The Sonoma County Sheriff will continue to serve this area. There will be no increased need for police protection resulting from this project.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

iii. Schools?

Comment:
The project itself would not contribute to an increase in the need for expanded or additional schools.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

iv. Parks?

Comment:
The project itself would not contribute to an increase in the need for expanded or additional parks.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

v. Other public facilities?

Comment:
The project itself would not contribute to an increase in the need for expanded or additional public facilities.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

16. RECREATION:

Would the project:

a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

Comment:
The proposed project would not involve activities that would cause or accelerate substantial physical deterioration of parks or recreational facilities. The project will have no impact on the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities.

Significance Level:
No Impact

b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

Comment:
The project does not include a recreational facility and is of a project-type that does not require the construction or expansion of a recreational facility.

Significance Level:
No Impact

17. TRANSPORTATION:

Would the project:

a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

Comment:
Three transportation-related plans have been adopted in Sonoma County: the Sonoma County General Plan 2020 Circulation Element, the Sonoma County Transportation Authority Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2009), and the Sonoma County Bikeways Plan. The project will not conflict with any of these plans.

The applicant submitted an initial Draft Traffic Study dated May 28, 2025, after peer review by

Sonoma County Public Infrastructure, a Final Traffic Study was submitted December 24, 2025. The traffic study findings are as follows:

- An analysis of the collision history indicates that all study intersections had collision rates below the statewide average for similar facilities and therefore have no demonstrated safety concerns.
- The project is anticipated to generate a total of 542 daily trips, including 42 during the weekday p.m. peak hour and 56 during the Saturday peak hour.
- The project would not impact current or planned alternative mode facilities.
- It is expected that the project would have a less-than-significant impact on VMT given the site's proximity to the Town of Windsor and City of Santa Rosa, which would reduce the lengths of potential employee and tourist trips compared to the Bay Area and Countywide averages, respectively.
- Sight lines at the project driveway are adequate based on the critical speed determined through a radar survey. A left-turn lane at the project driveway is not warranted based on project volumes.
- The project would not cause queues to exceed storage capacity at any intersection that would not do so without the project.
- The project would not impede emergency access or response and would therefore have a less-than significant impact on emergency response.
- Project volumes would be expected to have an adverse effect on operation on the southbound approach to River Road/Slusser Road under Existing Conditions due to delay increasing by more than five seconds as the intersection is already operating unacceptably. Once signalized, which has been required of an approved winery project, the intersection would operate acceptably. All other study intersections would operate at an acceptable service level with or without project volumes added to existing volumes.
- Under Future Conditions, the southbound approach to River Road/Slusser Road is expected to operate at an unacceptable service level. Upon the addition of project volumes, delay would increase by more than five seconds and therefore have an adverse effect. Similarly to Existing Conditions, the intersection would operate acceptably once signalized. Project volumes would not have an adverse effect at any other study intersection.
- The proposed parking supply at the project site (73 improved spaces plus overflow parking between vineyard rows and along onsite driveways) would be sufficient to meet demand for regular winery operations and events.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b) (evaluation of transportation impacts of land use projects using vehicle miles traveled)?

Comment:
Sonoma County does not have a congestion management program but LOS standards are established by the Sonoma County General Plan Circulation and Transit Element. See Item 17(a) above for a discussion of traffic resulting from project operation.

Senate Bill (SB) 743 established the change in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the metric to be applied to determining transportation impacts associated with development projects. As of the date of this analysis, Sonoma County has not yet adopted thresholds of significance related to VMT. As a result, project-related VMT impacts were assessed based on guidance published by the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) in the publication Transportation Impacts (SB 743) CEQA Guidelines Update and Technical Advisory, 2018. The OPR Technical Advisory includes recommended VMT significance thresholds for residential, employment, and retail land uses. It does not, however, address winery or visitor-based uses, indicating that lead agencies may develop their

own thresholds or assess impacts on a case-by-case basis. Accordingly, the project is expected to have a less-than- significant impact on VMT for both employment and patron-related travel.

A customized approach to assessing winery VMT was developed by W-Trans in collaboration with County of Sonoma staff, SCTA staff, and County counsel for the Nunes Tasting Room and Saralee South Winery project. The Nunes and Saralee projects are located just under a mile from the proposed Kosta-Browne project, and all aspects of the VMT approach and data sources remain directly applicable. Accordingly, the same approach and significance thresholds were applied in this analysis. It is noted that the applied approach is consistent with the guidance provided by OPR, which indicates that projects not falling into conventional residential, employment, or retail categories may be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. Following are the significance thresholds established for this project by the County of Sonoma:

- Employment VMT: The project's employees would generate 85 percent or less of the regional average rate of VMT per Employee.
- Patron VMT: The vehicle trip lengths associated with the project's patrons/visitors is 15 percent or more below the countywide (including regional trip adjustments) tourism average trip length (miles).

For the employment component of the proposed project, VMT impacts are assessed by analyzing the projected VMT per employee. This performance metric represents the VMT associated with home-based commute vehicular travel, measured in miles, divided by the projected number of employees generating the travel. The OPR Technical Advisory indicates that employment-based VMT in unincorporated county areas should be compared to a regional average, which for Sonoma County corresponds to the nine-county Bay Area, as directed by County Staff.

The SCTM19 travel demand model includes detailed land use and multimodal network coding within the County of Sonoma. While the model accounts for regional travel and VMT extending beyond the County, it does not include detailed modeling data for the entire nine-county Bay Area. Accordingly, for the purposes of establishing an appropriate regional VMT per Employee benchmark, SCTA has recommended that this metric be obtained from the 2019 Transportation Authority of Marin Travel Demand Model (TAMDM), which does include the entire Bay Area region and calculates VMT per Employee using a methodology that is compatible with the values output from SCTM19. The TAMDM-reported regional average VMT per Employee is 16.9 miles (as cited in the City of San Rafael Transportation Analysis Guidelines, City of San Rafael, 2021).

As directed by the County in accordance with guidance contained in the OPR Technical Advisory, the VMT significance threshold established for employment uses is 85 percent or less of the regional average. The applicable significance threshold is therefore equal to 14.4 VMT per employee.

As noted above, the OPR Technical Advisory contains no guidance on the analysis of visitor-serving uses. Further complicating the selection of an appropriate visitor-focused VMT significance threshold, few models can produce visitor-specific VMT projections, though the SCTM19 model can produce winery tourism-related trip length data. In reviewing potential threshold options for the Nunes Tasting Room and Saralee South Winery project that is adjacent to the project, County Staff determined that the SCTM19 model's winery tourism projections constitute the best-available information to assess the project's visitor VMT characteristics. While the use of a significance threshold based on average trip lengths is uncommon, it remains a reasonable proxy to VMT since VMT levels are directly influenced by trip lengths. Leveraging the SCTM19 model's tourism trip length data that is averaged both at countywide and project area "traffic analysis zone" (TAZ) levels also allows the geographic context of a project site to be reflected in results, consistent with the VMT assessment methodologies applied for other land uses.

The VMT significance threshold applied for the project's patrons, including persons visiting tasting rooms and attending events, is set at 15 percent below the countywide average tourism trip length. Average tourism trip lengths function as a performance metric since they correspond to the vehicle travel distances associated with each vehicle trip made by patrons and visitors; they also correspond

to the “miles” in vehicle miles traveled and are proportional to VMT.

The 15 percent below average significance threshold applied for patron trip lengths aligns with the OPR Technical Advisory VMT threshold recommendation for other land uses and is based on substantial evidence cited in the OPR Technical Advisory linking to greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets established by the State of California. The CEQA Thresholds for Evaluating the Significance of Climate Impacts From Land Use Projects and Plans, Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD),2022, further supports the use of a 15-percent reduction factor when analyzing the transportation impacts associated with land use projects. The BAAQMD report also notes that “CARB is currently updating this analysis for the 2045 carbon neutrality target in connection with its 2022 Scoping Plan Update. Although that work is ongoing and CARB has not finalized its revised analysis, CARB has suggested that it will use the same 15-percent-per-capita VMT reduction threshold that it derived in connection with the 2050 target. Specifically, in October 2021, CARB updated its Mobile Source Strategy, an important constituent of the Scoping Plan, using the same 15-percent reduction target as used in previous plans (CARB 2021b:105). The Air District therefore recommends that lead agencies use OPR’s 15-percent per-capita VMT reduction threshold for evaluating land use projects” (p. 18).

In describing the development of the 15-percent VMT reduction target, BAAQMD notes that “CARB has developed an analytical methodology for determining the level of VMT reduction that will be necessary to achieve California’s long-term GHG emissions goals. This methodology calculates the total statewide VMT that California can accommodate and still hit its emissions targets and then divides that total statewide VMT by the State’s projected population as of the target year” (emphasis added). Importantly, this 15-percent target was established considering the State’s total VMT, which consists of the vehicle miles of travel generated by all sources and all land use types (not just residential and office land uses as noted by OPR in the Technical Advisory), including the VMT generated by recreational and visitor-based auto travel. Applying this 15-percent reduction target to the VMT generated by “other” land uses (beyond residential and office) can therefore be tied to the CARB calculations and established GHG reduction targets. Accordingly, the County’s stipulation that patron VMT be assessed using a significance threshold tied to a level of 15 percent below the existing countywide average tourism trip length aligns with State requirements and is supported by substantial evidence.

As noted above, based on output obtained from the SCTM19 travel demand model, the average countywide tourism trip length is 21.6 miles. The applicable significance threshold of 15 percent below this value is 18.4 miles.

Based on projections obtained from the SCTM19 model for the TAZ encompassing the project site, the project’s employment component is anticipated to generate 8.1 VMT per employee, which falls below the applied significance threshold of 14.4 VMT per Employee. It is noted that while the project site is located in an agricultural area, it is also close to the Town of Windsor and City of Santa Rosa, which positively influences employee commute distances, and results in per-employee VMT levels that are lower than winery and tasting room facilities in more distant locations of the County. Tourism trip lengths are similarly influenced. Tourism-related trips generated by the proposed project are anticipated to have an average length of 14.1 miles, which falls below the applied significance threshold of 18.4 miles per vehicle trip. Accordingly, the project is expected to have a less-than significant impact on VMT for both employment and patron-related travel. A summary of the VMT analysis provided in Table below.

Table 5 – Vehicle Miles Traveled Analysis Summary				
Project Component	Geographic Average	Significance Threshold	Project Rate (TAZ 46)	Resulting Significance
Employees	16.9 VMT per Employee (Bay Area Average)	14.4 VMT per Employee	8.1 VMT per Employee	Less than Significant
Patrons	21.6 Miles per Tourism Auto Trip (Countywide Average)	18.4 Miles per Tourism Trip	14.1 Miles per Tourism Trip	Less than Significant

Significance Finding – The project would be expected to have a less-than-significant impact on vehicle miles traveled, and would not conflict with CEQA Guidelines §15064.3, subdivision (b).

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

c) Substantially increase hazards due to geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

Comment:
The project would not increase hazards, since it maintains the existing alignment of the roadway.

Significance Level:
No Impact

d) Result in inadequate emergency access?

Comment:
Development on the site must comply with all emergency access requirements of the Sonoma County Fire Safety Code (Sonoma County Code Chapter 13), including emergency vehicle access requirements. Project development plans are required to be reviewed by a Sonoma County Fire Prevention staff during the building permit process to ensure compliance with emergency access issues. Additionally, standard conditions of approval require submittal of a written Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan (as required by Section 403 and 404 of the California Fire Code) to Fire Prevention staff for approval. No impacts to emergency access are anticipated.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

e) Result in inadequate parking capacity?

Comment:
As discussed in the traffic study recommendations and conclusions above in section 17 (a), the proposed parking is adequate.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

18. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES:

State Regulations

CEQA requires that a lead agency determine whether a project could have a significant effect on historical resources and tribal cultural resources (PRC Section 21074 [a][1][A]-[B]). A historical resource is one listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR, PRC Section 21084.1), a resource included in a local register of historical resources (PRC

Section 15064.5[a][2]), or any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript that a lead agency determines to be historically significant (PRC Section 15064.5[a][3]).

If a project can be demonstrated to cause damage to a unique archaeological resource, the lead agency may require reasonable efforts to permit any or all these resources to be preserved in place or left in an undisturbed state. To the extent that resources cannot be left undisturbed, mitigation measures are required (PRC, Section 21083.2[a], [b], and [c]).

Impacts to significant cultural resources that affect the characteristics of any resource that qualify it for the NRHP or adversely alter the significance of a resource listed in or eligible for listing in the CRHR are considered a significant effect on the environment. These impacts could result from physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15064.5 [b][1]). Material impairment is defined as demolition or alteration in an adverse manner [of] those characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion or eligibility for inclusion in the CRHR (*CEQA Guidelines* Section 15064.5[b][2][A]).

California Public Resources Code

Section 5097.5 of the California PRC states:

No person shall knowingly and willfully excavate upon, or remove, destroy, injure or deface any historic or prehistoric ruins, burial grounds, archaeological or vertebrate paleontological site, including fossilized footprints, inscriptions made by human agency, or any other archaeological, paleontological or historical feature, situated on public lands, except with the express permission of the public agency having jurisdiction over such lands. Violation of this section is a misdemeanor.

As used in this PRC section, “public lands” means lands owned by or under the jurisdiction of the State or any city, county, district, authority, or public corporation, or any agency thereof. Consequently, local agencies are required to comply with PRC 5097.5 for their own activities, including construction and maintenance, as well as for permit actions (e.g., encroachment permits) undertaken by others.

Codes Governing Human Remains

The disposition of human remains is governed by Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 and PRC sections 5097.94 and 5097.98 and falls within the jurisdiction of the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). If human remains are discovered, the county coroner must be notified within 48 hours, and there should be no further disturbance to the site where the remains were found. If the coroner determines the remains are Native American, the coroner is responsible to contact the NAHC within 24 hours. Pursuant to PRC Section 5097.98, the NAHC will immediately notify those persons it believes to be most likely descended from the deceased Native Americans so they can inspect the burial site and make recommendations for treatment or disposal.

Would the project:

Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California native American tribe, and that is: i) listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5030.1(k); or ii) a resource determined by the lead agency. In its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code § 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code § 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

On , July 21, 2025, Permit Sonoma staff referred the project application to Native American Tribes

within Sonoma County to request consultation under AB-52. After reviewing the Cultural Resources Study for the site, a subsequent amendment and addition of a monitoring plan, on August 5, 2026, a representative for the Graton Rancheria Tribe requested that a condition of approval be imposed to require onsite monitoring during ground-disturbing activities in native soils but had no additional concerns or requests. Mitigation Measure TCR-1, which is also included as a Condition of Approval of the project, will reduce the impact to Tribal Cultural Resources to less than significant.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation Measure TCR-1:
A Tribal or Archaeological Monitor is required to be present onsite during all initial grading and ground disturbance work. Prior to issuance of a Grading Permit or any other ground-disturbing activity, the applicant shall provide proof of a contract with a qualified consultant to monitor ground-disturbing activities to Permit Sonoma and the Tribal Representative for Graton Rancheria Tribe.

All building and/or grading permits shall have the following note printed on grading or earthwork plan sheets:

NOTE ON PLANS:
"A Tribal or Archaeological Monitor is required to be present during all initial grading or other ground-disturbing work. The Monitor must be present on site before the start of any ground-disturbing work, including scraping. In the event that cultural resources are discovered at any time during grading, scraping, or excavation within the property, all work shall be halted in the vicinity of the find and the Monitor and Permit Sonoma shall be notified immediately. Artifacts associated with prehistoric sites may include humanly modified stone, shell, bone or other cultural materials such as charcoal, ash and burned rock indicative of food procurement or processing activities. Prehistoric domestic resources include hearths, firepits, or house floor depressions whereas typical mortuary resources are represented by human skeletal remains. Permit Sonoma staff shall consult with the appropriate tribal representative(s) from the tribes known to Permit Sonoma to have interests in the area to determine if the resources qualify as Tribal Cultural Resources (as defined in Public Resource Code § 21074). If determined to be a Tribal Cultural Resource, Permit Sonoma would further consult with the appropriate tribal representative(s) and project proponents in order to develop and coordinate proper protection/mitigation measures required for the discovery. Permit Sonoma may refer the mitigation/protection plan to designated tribal representatives for review and comment. No work shall commence until a protection/mitigation plan is reviewed and approved by Permit Sonoma. Mitigations may include avoidance, removal, preservation and/or recordation in accordance with California law. Evaluation and mitigation shall be at the applicant's sole expense.

If human remains are encountered, all work must stop in the immediate vicinity of the discovered remains and Permit Sonoma Staff and County Coroner must be notified immediately pursuant to State law so that an evaluation can be performed. If the remains are deemed to be Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission must be contacted by the Coroner so that a ''Most Likely Descendant'' can be designated and the appropriate provisions of the California Government Code and California Public Resources Code would be followed.''

Mitigation Monitoring TCR-1:
Building/grading permits shall not be approved for issuance by Permit Sonoma staff until the above notes are printed on the building, grading, and improvement plans. Prior to issuance of a Grading Permit or any other ground-disturbing activity, staff shall verify that a monitoring contract acceptable to the Tribal Representative for Graton Rancheria has been obtained.

19. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS:

Would the project:

a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

Comment:
The project would not contribute to the need for construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities, other than construction of a replacement private onsite septic system.

Significance Level:
No Impact

b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

Comment:
The property is not served by a public water system and is instead served by an existing well. Permit Sonoma staff Geologist has determined the site contains sufficient onsite water supplies available for the project. See section 10 above for a more detailed analysis.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

Comment:
The property is not served by a public sewer system and is instead served by a private septic system. The domestic wastewater systems for the site will be sized in accordance with the County of Sonoma OWTS Manual. The onsite septic would have sufficient capacity to treat the maximum domestic daily demand generated by the winery and tasting room.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

d) Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

Comment:
Sonoma County has a solid waste management program in place that provides solid waste collection and disposal services for the entire County. The program can accommodate the permitted collection and disposal of the waste that would result from the proposed project. Active permitted regional landfills include the Redwood Sanitary Landfill (26 million cubic yards remaining capacity), Potrero Hills Landfill (13.9 million cubic yards remaining capacity), Vasco Road Landfill (7.4 million cubic yards remaining capacity), and Keller Canyon Landfill (63.4 million cubic yards remaining capacity) (CalRecycle 2016). Solid waste generated during construction and operation of the project would represent a small fraction of the daily permitted tonnage of these facilities.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

Comment:
No applicable federal solid waste regulations would apply to the project. At the State level, the Integrated Waste Management Act mandates a reduction of waste being disposed and establishes an integrated framework for program implementation, solid waste planning, and solid waste facility and landfill compliance. Sonoma County has access to adequate permitted landfill capacity and reduction, reuse, and recycling programs to serve the proposed project. Construction and operational waste generated as a result of the project would require management and disposal in accordance with local and state regulations. The project would not conflict with or impede implementation of such programs.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact.

20. WILDFIRE:

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire severity zones, would the project:

a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?

c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk of that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

Comment:
According to the Permit Sonoma GIS mapping tool, the project site is not located in a moderate non-wildland fire hazard area. The project is located in a Local Responsibility Area and is outside of the wildland high and very high fire hazard zones. The project is located in a relatively flat area and surrounded by developed agricultural vineyard and row crops, some open lands, riparian corridors, and rural residential uses. The winery and tasting buildings would add population to the site in the form of guests and employees, including 24 full-time employees year-round with up to 43 employees during harvest, up to 150 visitors per day for tasting, and up to 200 visitors during the four largest events.

There is no adopted emergency evacuation plan for the County; however, the project would not change existing circulation patterns or affect emergency response routes. The site is roughly 5 miles from the Sonoma County Fire District Station #7, ensuring rapid response times in the event of an emergency. To facilitate locating an emergency and to avoid delays in emergency response, the project has been conditioned to require safe access for emergency fire apparatus and civilian evacuation concurrently, and unobstructed traffic circulation during an emergency. No impacts to emergency access are anticipated.

Additionally, development on the site must comply with all emergency access requirements of the

Sonoma County Fire Safety Code (Sonoma County Code Chapter 13), including emergency vehicle access requirements. Project development plans are required to be reviewed by a Sonoma County Fire Prevention staff during the building permit process to ensure compliance with emergency access issues. Standard conditions of approval require submittal of a written Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan (as required by Section 403 and 404 of the California Fire Code) to Fire Prevention staff for approval. New construction on the site must conform to County Fire Safe Standards building requirements including fire sprinklers, fire apparatus access roads, door panic hardware, emergency water supply, and defensible space. The construction of new structures in accordance with current building standards would decrease the risk to structures on the project parcel and ensure that the project would reduce the exposure of people and property to fire hazards.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

21. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

Comment:
Potential project impacts on special status plant and fish/wildlife species and habitat are addressed in Section 4. With the implementation of the required mitigation measures BIO-1, BIO-2, BIO-3, BIO-4, BIO-5 and BIO-6, impacts to the habitat of a fish or wildlife species would be less than significant.

Potential adverse project impacts to cultural resources are addressed in Section 5 and Tribal Cultural Resources in Section 18. Implementation of the required measure TCR-1 (requiring an archeological or Tribal monitor), and standard condition of approval for accidental discovery would reduce these potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?

Comment:
Section 15355 of the CEQA Guidelines state: *Cumulative impacts refers to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts*. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. A search was undertaken to identify reasonably foreseeable future projects in the vicinity of the proposed project area that might have over-lapping or cumulative impacts. None were identified.

The project would contribute to cumulative impacts related to aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, and Tribal cultural resources, but County standards, BMPs, and mitigations would ensure that the project's cumulative contributions would not be considerable.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

Comment:
Proposed project operations have the potential to cause substantial adverse impacts on human beings, both directly and indirectly. However, all potential impacts and adverse effects on human beings (resulting from aesthetics, air quality, biological resources and tribal cultural resources) were analyzed and would be less than significant with the mitigations identified in the Initial Study and County standards incorporated into the project.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

Attachments:

1. **Applicant Prepared Project Description and Plan Set**
2. **Visual Assessment Guidelines**
3. **Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas and Energy Technical Study**
4. **Biological Assessment**
5. **Cultural Resource Study and Historical Resource Evaluation**
6. **Water Wastewater Systems**
7. **Groundwater Resource Impact Assessment**
8. **Noise Technical Study**
9. **Transportation Impact Study**

References

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2. Assessor's Parcel Maps, County of Sonoma

3. BAAQMD CEQA Guidelines; Bay Area Air Quality Management District; April 1999; California Air Resources Board (CARB) http://www.arb.ca.gov/

4. California Natural Diversity Database, California Department of Fish & Game. ADD LINK

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11. Standard Specifications, State of California Department of Transportation, available online: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/esc/oe/specs_html

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13. Best Management Practices: Tree Pruning, International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), 2008.

14. Valley Oak Protection Ordinance, County Code Section 26-67; Sonoma County, December 1996.

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18. Evaluation of Groundwater Resources, California Department of Water Resources Bulletin 118; 2003. http://water.ca.gov/groundwater/bulletin118/publications.cfm

19. Sonoma County Congestion Management Program, Sonoma County Transportation Authority; December 18, 1995.

20. Sonoma County Aggregate Resources Management Plan and Program EIR, 1994.

21. Sonoma County Bikeways Plan, Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department, August 24, 2010.

22. Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department and Department of Transportation and Public Works Traffic Guidelines, 2014

23. Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department, Visual Assessment Guidelines, (no date)

24. Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department Noise Guidelines, 2017

25. Sonoma County Water Agency, Sonoma Valley Groundwater Management Plan, 2007 and annual reports. http://www.scwa.ca.gov/svgw-documents/

26. Sonoma County Water Agency, Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Management Plan, 2014. http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/docs/GWMP/NC-5_SRP_SonomaCoWaterAgency_GWMP_2014.pdf