



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Planning, Building & Environmental Services

1195 Third Street, Suite 210
Napa, CA 94559
www.countyofnapa.org

Brian D. Bordona
Director

To: Patrick Elliott-Smith, 4500 Atlas Peak Road, Napa CA 94558 (via email)
Robert and Laurel Jones, 4570 Atlas Peak Road, Napa CA 94558 (via email)
Robert Saunders and Elizabeth Spahr Saunders, 4410 Atlas Peak Road, Napa CA 94558 (via email)
Elkington Setty Ranch LLC., c/o Michael Setty, 4398 Atlas Peak Road, Napa CA 94558 (via email)
Muktheswara Rao Meka, 848 Lincoln Blvd. Apt. K, Santa Monica, CA 90403
Applied Civil Engineering, 2160 Jefferson Street. Suite #120, Napa CA 94559 (via email)
California State Clearinghouse (via CEQA Submit portal)

From: Donald Barrella

Subject: Response to Comments - Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
Meka Vineyard
Agricultural Erosion Control Plan #P24-00065-ECPA
APN 032-540-034
SCH #2025090415

Date: January 5, 2026

Attached is a copy of the Response to Comments for the subject project. The report contains our responses to comments provided on the September 11, 2025, Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, which can also be accessed at <https://www.countyofnapa.org/2876/Current-Projects-Explorer>

The County could approve the Project on or after **January 5, 2026**.

Should you have any questions, please call Donald Barrella at 707-299-1338 or via e-mail to donald.barrella@countyofnapa.org

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Donald Barrella".

Donald Barrella
Principal Planner

cc: Brian Bordona, Director PBES (via email)
Patrick Ryan, Deputy Director PBES (via email)
Alexei Belov, Managing Engineer (via email)
Dana Morrison, Supervising Planner (via email)
Laura Anderson, Deputy County Counsel (via email)



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1195 Third Street, Suite 210
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(707) 253-4417

Brian D. Bordona
Director

TO: Application File #P24-00065-ECPA

FROM: Donald Barrella, Principal Planner

DATE: January 5, 2026

RE: Response to Comments – Meka Vineyard
Agricultural Erosion Control Plan #P24-00065-ECPA
4473 Atlas Peak Road, Assessor's Parcel Number 032-540-034
SCH #2025090415

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum has been prepared by the County Conservation Division to respond to comments received by the Napa County Department of Planning, Building and Environmental Services (Napa County) on the Proposed Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (Proposed IS/MND) for the Meka Vineyard, Agricultural Erosion Control Plan #P24-00065-ECPA (proposed project). An IS/MND is an informational document prepared by a Lead Agency (Napa County) that provides environmental analysis for public review. The agency decision-maker considers it before taking discretionary actions related to any proposed project that may have a significant effect on the environment. The Proposed IS/MND analyzed the impacts resulting from the proposed project and where applicable, identified mitigation measures to minimize the impacts to less-than-significant levels.

This memorandum for the Meka Vineyard #P24-00065-ECPA Proposed IS/MND, presents the name of the entities commenting on the Proposed IS/MND and responses to the received comments. This memorandum, in combination with the Proposed IS/MND, completes the Final IS/MND.

CEQA PROCESS

In accordance with Section 15073 of the CEQA Guidelines, Napa County submitted the Proposed IS/MND to the State Clearinghouse for a 30-day public review period starting September 9, 2025. In addition, Napa County circulated a Notice of Intent to Adopt the Proposed IS/MND to interested agencies, individuals, and property owners within 1000 feet of the subject property. The public review period ended on October 11, 2025. During the public review period, Napa County received four comments on the Proposed IS/MND that have been responded to in this memorandum. **Table 1** below lists the entities that submitted comments on the Proposed IS/MND. The comment emails and letters are attached as identified in Table 1.

TABLE 1 - COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE PROPOSED IS/MND

Comment/Attachment	From	Date Received
1	Patrick Elliott-Smith	September 16, 2025
2	Robert and Laurel Jones	September 21, 2025
3	Robert Saunders and Elizabeth Spahr Saunders	October 9, 2025
4	Elkington Setty Ranch LLC.	October 13, 2025

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15074(b), Napa County considers the Proposed IS/MND together with comments received, both during the public review process and before action on the project, prior to adopting the Proposed IS/MND and rendering a decision on the project. The CEQA Guidelines do not require the preparation of a response to comments for negative declarations; however, this memorandum responds to comments received. Based on review of the comments received no new potentially significant impacts beyond those identified in the Proposed IS/MND would occur, no new or additional mitigation measures, or project revisions, must be added to reduce impacts to a less than significant level, and none of the grounds for recirculation of the Proposed IS/MND as specified in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15073.5 have been identified. All potential impacts identified in the Proposed IS/MND were determined to be less-than-significant or less-than-significant with mitigation incorporated.

This Response to Comments Memorandum will also be provided to the owner/Permittee as **notice** of potential Local, State and Federal permit(s) or agreements necessary to implement and/or operate this project, or other CEQA requirements including filing fees, as identified within the attached agency comment letter.

Additionally, project approval if granted shall be subject to conditions of approval requiring the permittee to obtain any other Local, State and Federal permit(s) or agreements necessary, prior to the commencement of vegetation removal and earth-disturbing activities associated with #P24-00065-ECPA, to implement and/or operate this project.

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

Comment #1 Patrick Elliott Smith (Attachment 1)

Response to Comment #1.1:

These comments have been made part of the record. No further response is necessary.

Comment #2 Robert and Laurel Jones (Attachment 2)

Response to Comment #2.1:

These comments have been made part of the record. No further response is necessary.

Comment #3 Robert Saunders and Elizabeth Spahr Saunders (Attachment 3)

Response to Comment #3.1:

These comments have been entered into the record. Regarding the video that was submitted September 22, 2025, in advance of this comment letter, it is being maintained in the application record; however, it is not included as an attachment to this response to comments or the comment letter itself. Contact the project planner to obtain a copy of this video if necessary.

Regarding anticipated erosion, sedimentation, and runoff, as disclosed and analyzed in **Section VII (Geology and Soils)** and **Section X (Hydrology and Water Quality)** of the Proposed IS/MND the proposed project's soil loss and hydrologic modeling is anticipated to potentially reduce soil loss approximately 33% as compared to existing conditions, from 16.4 tons per year per acre to 11.01 tons per year per acre, and result in no changes to runoff rates: see **Table 7** and **Table 11** from the Proposes IS/MND below.

Table 7 – USLE Soil Loss Analysis

Vineyard Transect ID	Pre-project Soil Loss (tons/acre/year)	Post-project Soil Loss (tons/acre/year)	Difference	Percent Change (approximate)
Block A North	0.73	0.69	-0.04	-5%
Block A Mid	3.15	3.40	+0.25	+8%
Block A South	1.85	1.60	-0.25	-14%
Block B	0.86	0.70	-0.16	-19%
Block C East	5.79	2.16	-3.63	-63%
Block C West	4.05	2.46	-1.59	-39%
Total	16.43	11.01	-5.42	-33%

Source: February 2024, Soil Loss Analysis, (Exhibit D– of Proposed IS/MND).

Table 11 – Hydrologic Modeling Calculations (TR-55) Results: Runoff Rates

Watershed	Peak Discharge Flow (cfs) by 24-hour Storm Event Frequency Return Interval (cubic feet/second)			
	2-year	10-year	50-year	100-year
1				
Pre-project conditions	1.69	3.31	5.05	5.79
Post-project conditions	1.69	3.31	5.05	5.79
Change (cfs)	0	0	0	0
Change (%)	0%	0%	0%	0%
2				
Pre-project conditions	2.20	4.06	6.00	6.82
Post-project conditions	2.20	4.06	6.00	6.82
Change (cfs)	0	0	0	0
Change (%)	0%	0%	0%	0%
3				
Pre-project conditions	29.35	60.78	95.13	110.02
Post-project conditions	29.35	60.78	95.13	110.02
Change (cfs)	0	0	0	0
Change (%)	-0%	-0%	-0%	-0%

Source: February 2024 Hydrologic Analysis (Exhibit E – of Proposed IS/MND)

The erosion and hydrology analysis and modeling require site-specific and project-specific inputs that include rainfall for design storms, topographic definition of the project site and area catchments (or watersheds), and descriptions of vegetative cover and soils to determine soil loss and runoff characteristics. These site-specific and project-specific modeling inputs ensure results are specific to the impact analysis for the proposed project.

Engineering methods were used to estimate erosion rates (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA] Universal Soil Loss Equation) and runoff rates (USDA TR 55). Such methods are utilized in Napa County to provide quantitative estimates of erosion and runoff under both pre-project and post-project conditions to meet the County's standards of no increase in erosion or runoff as a result of a project.

Napa County Planning and Engineering staff and Registered Professional Engineer Michael R. Muelrath (RPE# 45102) of Applied Civil Engineering, verified the various modeling inputs, including pre-project conditions (as part of the site inspection) and post-project cover specifications to come to a consensus regarding modeling inputs and parameters to generate accurate project specific modeling to confirm technical adequacy (See Technically Adequacy Memorandum dated August 13, 2024 (**Attachment 5**)).

Furthermore, as disclosed in the **Section IV (Biological Resources)** of the Proposed IS/MND, approximately 19.6-acres (or 76%) of the project area is composed of non-native grassland, that is similar to the proposed cover crop management regime which specifies a permeant no-till cover crop maintained with minimum plant residue densities of 75% to 80%, that is anticipated to maintain existing soil loss and runoff levels at a minimum.

Further, this comment does not provide new or additional evidence demonstrating the potential level of impacts analyzed as a result of the proposed project would occur beyond what is disclosed in the Proposed IS/MND, nor do they raise a fair argument of the adequacy of the Proposed IS/MND.

Also see *Response to Comment #4.2 through #4.9* (incorporated herein by reference).

Response to Comment #3.2:

The proposed project does not include the importation or trucking of water to the property. As indicated in the Project Description and **Section X (Hydrology and Water Quality)** of the Proposed IS/MND, the proposed vineyard would be irrigated using groundwater, which would also be utilized to fill the proposed water tanks.

It was also disclosed that the proposed project, if approved, would be subject to the groundwater management condition of approval below to further protect groundwater resources and account for potential changing future conditions (*emphasis added*).

As disclosed in **Section X (Hydrology and Water Quality)** of the Proposed IS/MND a Tier 1 and 2 Water Availability Analysis (WAA) was prepared to determine if the proposed increase in groundwater water demand as a result of the proposed project would result in a potentially significant impact to groundwater supplies and neighboring wells (RCS and Associates, September 2023 and June 2024). The Tier 1 WAA estimates the on-site groundwater recharge and both existing and proposed groundwater use, and the Tier 2 analysis estimates potential well interference of well(s) within 500-feet of the project well(s). These analyses are intended to disclose and assess potential impacts on groundwater and well interference in accordance with the WAA Guidance Document adopted by the County on May 12, 2015, and the Interim Napa County Well Permit Standards and WAA Requirements (January 2024).

The project specific WAA found that the anticipated annual water use of existing and the proposed uses would be approximately 9.31 AF/yr (Acre-feet per year) which is below the anticipated annual groundwater recharge rate (or allocation) of approximately 18.0 AF/yr, and that the project well would not have a significant hydraulic effect on off-site well(s) or spring(s).

Regarding the pumping necessary to irrigate the vineyard including the storage of up to 100,000 gallons of irrigation water, as indicated in the Project WAA (RCS September 2023, **Exhibit E-1** of the Proposed IS/MND) it is anticipated that on an annual basis the vineyard may utilize 0.43 AF per acre per year, which equates to approximately 0.018 AF/ac per irrigation cycle based on a six month irrigation season irrigating the vineyard once a week. The owner/applicant has designed the vineyard to include the infrastructure necessary to support the vineyard and to allow for flexibility in farming practices.

Therefore, it was appropriately disclosed and assessed that the proposed project would result in less-than-significant impacts to groundwater supplies, groundwater recharge, and local groundwater aquifer levels.

Additionally, this comment does not provide any new or additional evidence demonstrating the potential level of impacts analyzed as a result of the proposed project would occur beyond what is disclosed in the Proposed IS/MND.

Groundwater Management, Wells – Condition of Approval:

- a. The Owner/Permittee shall be required (at the permittee's expense) to record well monitoring data (specifically, static water level no less than quarterly, and the volume of water no less than monthly). Such data shall be provided to the County upon request or if the PBES Director determines that substantial evidence indicates that water usage is affecting, or would potentially affect, groundwater supplies. If data indicates the need for additional monitoring, and if the owner/permittee is unable to secure monitoring access to neighboring wells, on-site monitoring wells may need to be established to gauge potential impacts on the groundwater resource utilized for the project. Water usage shall be minimized by use of best available control technology and best water management conservation practices.
- b. In order to support the County's groundwater monitoring program, well monitoring data as discussed above shall be provided to the County if the PBES Director determines that such data could be useful in supporting the County's groundwater monitoring program. The project well shall be made available for inclusion in the groundwater monitoring network if the PBES Director determines that the well could be useful in supporting the program.
- c. In the event that changed circumstances or significant new information provide substantial evidence that the groundwater system referenced in the Erosion Control Plan #P24-00065-ECPA would significantly affect the groundwater basin, the PBES Director shall be authorized to recommend additional reasonable conditions on the owner/permittee, or revocation of this permit, as necessary to meet the requirements of the Napa County Code and to protect public health, safety, and welfare.
- d. *No new on-site or off-site water sources (other than those evaluated as part of this ECPA) proposed to be used for the vineyard, including but not limited to wells, imported water, new or existing ponds/reservoir(s) or other surface water impoundments, to serve the vineyard, shall be allowed without additional environmental review, if necessary, and may be subject to a modification to this ECPA. A new Water Availability Analysis shall be required prior to approval of any new water source(s) on the property.*

Response to Comment #3.3:

As disclosed in the Project Description of the Proposed IS/MND and shown in the project plans wildlife exclusion fencing would be installed around the proposed vineyard blocks. Vineyard Blocks A and B would be fenced as a single unit with fencing generally being installed around the perimeter of the block except for an approximate 2.5-acre area in between the two blocks, and Vineyard Block C would be fenced as a single unit with fencing being installed around the perimeter of the block.

Thereby, as disclosed in **Section IV (Biological Resources)** the Proposed IS/MND most of the project site would remain undeveloped, including most of the site's California black oak forest in addition to some areas of chaparral. More specifically, a corridor of black oak forest oriented roughly north south would remain intact, resulting in direct connectivity with similar habitats on neighboring properties to the north and south. This on-site corridor would be approximately 750 feet wide at its narrowest point, which would be more than sufficient to allow for continued wildlife movement. From east to west existing movement patterns would generally be maintained because of Atlas Peak Road and existing vineyard abutting the eastern side of the

project site, and corridor areas would not be interrupted by proposed wildlife exclusion fencing as proposed. For these reasons the proposed project would not result in significant impacts on wildlife movement, habitat use, and availability.

It was also disclosed that to ensure that wildlife exclusion fencing is installed in a manner consistent with the proposed plan, the fencing conditions below would be implemented should the project be approved.

Staff discovered new wildlife exclusion fencing was installed along a significant portion of the property's frontage along Atlas Peak Road inconsistent with the proposed fencing plan: this fencing was installed after the County's site inspection in April 2024. Therefore, in accordance with General Plan Policy CON-18(e)¹ provision d shall be added to the fencing conditions (shown in underline below) so that the significance of potential impacts to wildlife movement as disclosed and assessed in the Proposed IS/MND remains consistent with the conclusion that there would be a less than significant impact to wildlife movement and use.

Fencing – Conditions of Approval:

The owner/permittee shall revise Erosion Control Plan #P24-00065-ECPA prior to approval to include the following components in the fencing design notes and details:

- a. New fencing shall use a design that has 6-inch square gaps at the base (instead of the typical 3-inch by 6-inch rectangular openings) to allow small mammals to move through the fence.
- b. Exit gates shall be installed at the corners of deer fencing to allow trapped wildlife to escape.
- c. Any modifications to the location of wildlife exclusion fencing as specified in Erosion Control Plan #P24-00065-ECPA pursuant to the Vineyard Fencing Plan required by this condition shall be strictly prohibited and would require County review and approval to ensure the modified wildlife exclusion fencing location/plan would not result in potential impacts to wildlife movement.
- d. The owner/permittee shall provide a Wildlife Exclusion Fencing Plan for #P24-00065-ECPA, to be reviewed and approved by the PBES Director, that shall be incorporated into Erosion Control Plan #P24-00065-ECPA. The revised Deer Fencing Plan shall be approved prior to the commencement of vegetation removal and construction activities associated with #P24-00065-ECPA. New wildlife exclusion fencing shall generally be limited to the periphery of Vineyard Blocks A and B as a fenced unit and the periphery of Vineyard Block C as a fenced unit as shown in the #P24-00065-ECPA plans dated June 2024. The Fencing plan shall also show any, and all, wildlife exclusion fencing installed after April 3, 2024, and necessary modifications to that fencing, including removal, to achieve consistency with General Plan Policy CON18(e) to maintain adequate wildlife movement as disclosed and assessed in the Project's environmental review document and determination.

It should also be noted that **Mitigation Measure BIO-3(a)** requires a 'Preservation Area' totaling a minimum of 6.3 acres of oak woodland, as shown on Sheet C1 in **Exhibit A-3** of the Proposed IS/MND, designated in a deed restriction, mitigation easement or other means of permanent protection for continued wildlife movement use. The Preservation Area will be taken into consideration when reviewing the Wildlife Exclusion Fencing Plan described above.

¹ General Plan Policy CON-18(e): To Reduce impacts on habitat conservation and connectivity, the County shall require new vineyard development to be designed to minimize the reduction of wildlife movement to the maximum extent feasible. In the event the County concludes that such development will have a significant impact on wildlife movement, the County may require the applicant to relocate or remove existing perimeter fencing installed on or after February 16, 2007 to offset the impact caused by the new vineyard development.

Comment #4 Elkington Setty Ranch LLC. (Attachment 4)

Response to Comment #4.1:

These comments have been entered into the record: see *Response to Comment #4.2 through #4.10 and #3.1* (incorporated herein by reference).

The comment letter was also forward to the County Public Works Department regarding the comments related to damaged culverts within the right-of-way: see *Response to Comments #4.6* (incorporated herein by reference).

Response to Comment #4.2:

As indicated is Section VII (**Geology and Soils**) of the Proposed IS/MND, should the proposed project be approved, it would be subject to the conditions below to ensure that erosion control measures are installed according to plan specifications (*emphasis added*). These conditions include annual inspection and reporting by the plan preparer (Michael R. Muelrath, RPE# 45102) prior to the first winter rains after construction begins, and each year thereafter until the proposed project has received a final inspection from the county, in addition to maintaining a no-till cover crop.

Further the plan preparer is also obligated to inspect the project annually pursuant to NCC Section 18.108.135(A), and pursuant to NCC Section 18.108.135(E)(1) each erosion control plan that has not received a final inspection shall be inspected by the county after the first major storm event of each winter until the project has been initiated and completed and is stable for three years.

Also see *Response to Comments #3.1*: incorporated herein by reference.

Erosion and Runoff Control (i.e., Hydromodification) Installation and Operation – Conditions of Approval: The following conditions shall be incorporated by reference into Erosion Control Plan #P24-00065-ECPA pursuant to NCC Chapter 18.108 (Conservation Regulations):

- Permanent Erosion and Runoff Control Measures: Pursuant to NCC Section 18.108.070(L) installation of runoff and sediment attenuation devices and hydromodification facilities including, but not limited to, silt fence and/or straw wattle sediment barriers, erosion control blankets, water bars, straw mulch, rolling dips, rock rip-rap, energy dissipaters, and a permanent cover crop (or adequate mulch cover applied annually), shall be installed no later than September 15 during the same year that initial vineyard development occurs. This requirement shall be clearly stated on the final Erosion Control Plan. Additionally, pursuant to NCC Section 18.108.135 “Oversight and Operation” *the qualified professional that has prepared this erosion control plan (#P24-00065-ECPA) shall oversee its implementation throughout the duration of the proposed project, and that installation of erosion control measures, sediment retention devices, and hydromodification facilities specified for the vineyard have been installed and are functioning correctly. Prior to the first winter rains after construction begins, and each year thereafter until the proposed project has received a final inspection from the county or its agent and been found complete, the qualified professional shall inspect the site and certify in writing to the planning director, through an inspection report or formal letter of completion verifying that all of the erosion control measures, sediment retention devices, and hydromodification facilities required at that stage of development have been installed in conformance with the plan and related specifications, and are functioning correctly.*

- Cover Crop Management/Practice: The permanent vineyard cover crop *shall not be tilled (i.e., shall be managed as a no-till cover crop) for the life of the vineyard* and the owner/permittee shall maintain a plant residue density of a permanent cover crop to achieve minimum densities of 85% for proposed vineyard Blocks A and B, and 75% for proposed vineyard Block C. Cover crop may be disced between rows and sprayed under vines or otherwise cultivated after April 1; after three years a permanent, no-till cover shall be established. Should the permanent no-till cover crop need to be replanted/renewed during the life of the vineyard, cover crop renewal efforts shall follow the County “Protocol for Replanting/Renewal of Approved Non-Tilled Vineyard Cover Crops” July 19, 2004, or as amended.

Response to Comment #4.3:

As indicated in *Response to Comment #3.1* (incorporated herein by reference) and **Section VII (Geology and Soils)** and **Section X (Hydrology and Water Quality)** engineering methods were used to estimate erosion rates (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA] Universal Soil Loss Equation) and runoff rates (USDA TR 55). Such methods are utilized in Napa County to provide quantitative estimates of erosion and runoff under pre-project conditions and post-project conditions that meet County standards of no increase in erosion or runoff². Because the project has been designed to these standards and that erosion and runoff from the project site are not anticipated to increase over existing conditions as a result of the project, or otherwise materially change, it is not necessary to include off-site conditions in the project’s modeling to appropriately and adequately disclose and assess potential impacts.

As disclosed in **Section IV (Biology)** of the Proposed IS/MND and in the project’s Biological Resources Reconnaissance Survey (WRA February 2024 – **Exhibit B-1** of the Proposed IS/MND) WRA biologists assessed biological resources present or potentially present in the project site. The surveys focused on the proposed development area and immediate surrounding habitat to document the presence of, and potential impacts to, federal or state protected wetlands and waters of the U.S. among other things. Field surveys were conducted by qualified biologists familiar with the resources of Napa County and surrounding counties with the goal of identifying and the presence of any other sensitive natural resources protected by local, state, or federal laws and regulations such as wetlands, among other things. These surveys did not identify any wetlands within the project area.

Additionally, this comment does not provide any new, additional, or substantial evidence demonstrating the potential level of impacts analyzed as a result of the proposed project would occur beyond what is disclosed in the Proposed IS/MND. Also see *Responses to Comments #3.1* and *#4.9* (incorporated herein by reference).

Response to Comment #4.4:

This comment provides commentary and details of the existing off-site drainage pattern(s) to the south and east of the project site. See *Responses to Comments #4.3* and *#4.5* through *#4.9* (incorporated herein by reference), no further response necessary.

² General Plan Conservation Policy CON-48: Proposed developments shall implement project-specific sediment and erosion control measures (e.g., erosion control plans and/or stormwater pollution prevention plans) that maintain pre-development sediment erosion conditions. Technical reports and/or erosion control plans that recommend site-specific erosion control measures shall meet the requirements of the County Code and provide detailed information regarding site specific geologic, soil, and hydrologic conditions and how the proposed measure will function. General Plan Conservation Policy CON-50(c): The County shall require discretionary projects to meet performance standards designed to ensure peak runoff in 2-, 10-, 50-, and 100-year events following development is not greater than predevelopment conditions.

Response to Comment 4.5

The pool on 4410 Atlas Peak Road (APN 032-540-036, Lands of Saunders) was constructed under Building Permit #10125 in 1968. The associated pool house and walls were constructed under Building Permit #21194 in 1976. Review of these building permits and available plans from the County's OnBase record system do not show that there is a stream in the area. Additionally, there are no indications of an existing stream occurring in the southeastern portion of the project site as indicated in the Project's Biological Resources Reconnaissance Survey (WRA Environmental Consultants, February 2024, **Exhibit B-1**).

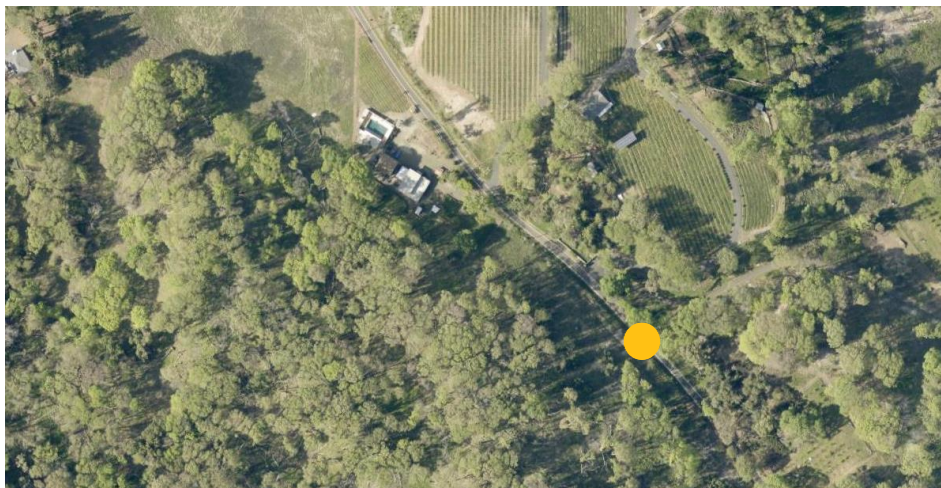
The comment does not provide substantial evidence documenting whether there is a stream in the area or that otherwise conflicts with the disclosures in the Project's Biological Resources Reconnaissance Survey and County Sensitivity maps that there is a stream in this area. The comments are generally opinion and commentary in nature and speculative on negative effects the project may have: the comments do not provide any new or substantial information that demonstrates the potential level of impact that would occur beyond what is identified in the Proposed IS/MND. Also see *Response to Comment #3.1* (incorporated herein by reference). No further response is necessary.

See *Response to Comment #4.6* (incorporated herein by reference) for additional discussion of drainage culverts.

Response to Comment #4.6:

On October 20, 2025, the Elkington Setty Ranch LLC., comments were forwarded to the County Public Works Department to research and assess the assertion that the culverts under Atlas Peak located in the immediate vicinity of the project site were damaged due to the 2023 repaving project.

On October 27th Public Works Department staff inspected the area and found the two culverts identified in the letter. After field observations and confirming with the Culvert Master Data on the County GIS sensitivity maps, it was determined that the culvert located south of the Schwartz driveway (4400 Atlas Peak Road, APN 032-540-037) is the only county-maintained culvert in the immediate area (identified by the yellow dot in the image below).



In addition to this physical inspection, Public Works staff reviewed the pre-paving project inspection report from 2022, which indicated that the inlet was already buried and near the surface of the road. On the same day (October 27th) Public Works Roads Crew staff also inspected the culvert and found that the inlet was

plugged with AC (asphalt concrete) from the paving project but was not crushed. Subsequently the Roads Crew removed the AC blockage.



The culvert located north of the Schwartz property driveway noted in the comment letter is a private culvert that goes under the rock wall into a private ditch and under the Schwartz property driveway entrance (see image below). The HDPE (high density polyethylene) culvert pipe was approximately 80% buried and outside of the paving limit. Because this culvert is not a county-maintained culvert no further action was taken.



Because the comment does not provide any new or substantial information that demonstrates the potential level of impact would occur beyond what is identified in the Proposed IS/MND, no further response necessary.

Response to Comment #4.7:

The comment provides general commentary on off-site drainage patterns and other drainage improvements (detention facilities and impoundments) and their perceived/anecdotal functioning and operational condition/quality. No new or additional evidence has been provided that demonstrates the potential level of impact would occur beyond what is identified in the Proposed IS/MND, or that the analysis would need to be revised or otherwise updated to appropriately or adequately disclose and analyze; therefore, no further responses are necessary.

Also see *Responses to Comments #3.1, #4.3, #4.5, and #4.6* incorporated herein by reference.

Response to Comment #4.8:

This comment provides commentary and opinion on potential damage and costs should there be a major flooding event in the area. The comment does not provide any evidence or other supporting documentation associated with these speculative events and costs: the comment only provides anecdotal evidence and does not provide any new or substantial evidence that that demonstrates the potential level of impact would occur beyond what is identified in the Proposed IS/MND.

Also see *Responses to Comments #3.1, #4.3, #4.5, and #4.6* incorporated herein by reference.

Response to Comment #4.9: requests

As indicated in *Response to Comment #4.3* (incorporated herein by reference) no wetlands have been identified within the project area. Further, as indicated in *Response to Comment #3.1 and #4.3* (incorporated herein by reference), because the project has been designed to the standard that runoff from the project site not be increased over existing conditions as a result of the project, it is not necessary to include off-site conditions in the project's modeling to appropriately and adequately disclose and assess potential runoff impacts. Therefore, reducing the project area or modifying the modeling area and inputs/values to assess off-site patterns or improvements is not necessary and is beyond the scope of project specific modeling.

No new or additional evidence has been provided that demonstrates the potential level of impact would occur beyond what is identified in the Proposed IS/MND, or that the analysis would need to be revised or otherwise updated to appropriately or adequately disclose and analyze; therefore, the Proposed IS/MND has adequately and appropriately disclosed and assessed runoff impacts of the proposed project and found them to be less than significant.

As indicated in *Response to Comment #4.6* (incorporated herein by reference) these comments have been provided to the County Public Works Department; therefore, they are aware of the request to work with the Upper Atlas Peak residents on drainage issues in the area: no further response necessary.

Response to Comment #4.10:

Comment noted, no further response necessary.

List of Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Patrick Elliott Smith email dated September 16, 2025

Attachment 2 – Robert and Laurel Jones email dated September 21, 2025

Attachment 3 – Robert Sundres and Elizabeth Spahr Saunders letter dated October 8, 2025

Attachment 4 – Elkington Setty Ranch LLC., letter dated October 13, 2025

Attachment 5 – Engineering Division Memorandum dated Aughts 13, 2024

Attachment 1

From: [Patrick Elliott-Smith](#)
To: [Barrella, Donald](#)
Subject: Meka vineyard project, 4473 Atlas Peak Rd.
Date: Tuesday, September 16, 2025 11:52:22 AM

[External Email - Use Caution]

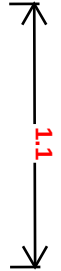
Dear Don,

I own the property North of the proposed Meka project, at 4500 Atlas Peak Rd, and have resided there since 1983.

I want to voice my support for the Meka project. Rao Meka has been a very considerate neighbor and is committed to being a responsible steward of his land.

Best regards,

Patrick Elliott-Smith



Attachment 2

From: robertjones@baysubway.com
To: [Barrella, Donald](#)
Cc: robertjones@baysubway.com
Subject: Meka Vineyard, Vineyard Conversion
Date: Sunday, September 21, 2025 4:15:39 PM

[External Email - Use Caution]

Hi Donald,

We are writing to express our approval and support of the Meka Vineyard project located at 4473 Atlas Peak Road. We live at 4470 Atlas Peak Road. Our property borders the Meka property on the northwest side.

We have known Rao Meka for over 25 years both professionally and as a friend. We believe Rao will be a good vineyard operator and a good steward of the land.

Sincerely,

Robert and Laurel Jones

4570 Atlas Peak Rd.

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Attachment 3

October 8, 2025

Mr. Donald Barrella
Principal Planner
Planning, Building and Environmental Services
Napa County

Dear Mr. Barrella,

We need to express our concerns about the environmental impacts of the proposed Meka Vineyard conversion. Our first concern is with Block B. Block B is the lowest elevation on the property. The runoff with the accompanying sediment and silt all collects in this low basin during the rainy season and is filtered by the undisturbed vegetation. The water levels continue to rise until the ground is so saturated the water begins to runoff as illustrated by the video we submitted for the record. This substantial annual runoff lasts days to weeks at a time. It is understandable that your department, the plan preparer and the plan sponsor/property owner were unaware of the runoff situation since none of you actually live up here. My in-laws, Bill and Jean Spahr bought the property located at 4410 Atlas Peak Road in 1950. My wife, Liza, was born in 1953 and grew up here and she remembers playing in the runoff as a child.

Block B will collect all the additional sediment generated by the tilling and planting of Blocks A and C and filter it through the undisturbed vegetation where it settles and remains so once the runoff takes place the water flowing in the Capell Creek Upper Reach Drainage to Lake Berryessa is clear and pure.

We believe Block B should remain in its natural state to continue to function as the environmental safeguard that it is. Block B is the smallest of the proposed vineyard Blocks and therefore would have the least economic impact on the property owner but the greatest environmental impact. At the very least development of Block B needs to be delayed pending further analysis and review.

We need to question the necessity for two 50,000 thousand gallon water storage tanks. If these tanks are approved for the Meka vineyard will the

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water to initially fill them be trucked in or will the aquifer take an immediate 100,000 gallon depletion? This is not only excessive but also totally disregards the water needs of property owners downstream on the aquifer. Certainly one 50,000 tank should be sufficient to meet their irrigation needs. By comparison, neighboring vineyard Au Sommet has two 10,500 gallon water storage tanks. I hope there is no possibility of creating another Coombsville situation up here.

3.2 Cont.

Pet peeve! Wildlife exclusionary fencing aka deer fencing has already been installed on properties here on upper Atlas Peak where it is unwarranted and not necessary. Most of these areas are steep and rugged, unusable for agriculture, but wildlife is completely fenced out. The ancient migration patterns of deer and predators alike have been destroyed. There are no wildlife corridors where animals can migrate up from Capell Valley to the top of Atlas Peak as they did forever. Our concern is that while Napa County's intentions for the use of deer fencing are well meaning and admirable for the preservation of wildlife, the reality is that it seems to be merely lip service. Property owners are seemingly allowed to install deer fence as they please disregarding the directions set forth in the vineyard permits issued by Napa County.

3.3

Elizabeth Spahr Saunders

Robert E. Saunders

*4410 Atlas Peak Rd.
Napa, CA 94558*



Attachment 4

Elkington Setty Ranch LLC
4398 Atlas Peak Road
Napa, CA. 94558
(707) 666-5108 (707) 666-5312
Sharon439@proton.me msetty@publictransit.us
Sharon A. Setty Michael D. Setty

VIA EMAIL

October 13, 2025

RE: P24-00065 - Meka Vineyard 4473 Atlas Peak Rd, Napa | APN: 032540034000

Mr. Don Barrella, <Donald.BARRELLA@countyofnapa.org>

Please be informed that our concerns about this project revolve mostly around hydrology and the impact of the runoff from the proposed Meka Vineyard.

We understand that one of the major conditions for approval of the project is that the property owner and vineyard manager maintain a permanent cover crop in the vineyard. We wholeheartedly agree with this, and hope that the County of Napa routinely monitors the compliance with this condition on a timely annual basis.

While some vineyard managers still till their soil to bare dirt on the dubious theory that a cover crop competes with the vines, we believe the benefits of permanent cover crops greatly outweigh such concerns. Cover crops reduce erosion, help put water back into the soil, and greatly help improve and maintain the biological health of grapevines.

We are concerned, however, that the hydrographic study only looked at Meka Vineyard property itself, and not the impact of the proposed land use changes on downstream properties, specifically those owned by Robert and Liza Saunders, impacts on several hundred feet of County-owned Atlas Peak Road, the John and Carrie Schwartz property, and my sister Sharon A. Setty and my property.

It was alarming to read that estimated 50-year flood event flows from the Reka Vineyard property would be the “same” at around 50-60 cubic feet per second (CFS), and up to 110 CFS during a 100-year flood event. Obviously, such flows may be higher if the Reka Vineyard manager fails to properly maintain a permanent cover crop. This is one of our major concerns, and hopefully Reka Vineyard will not have exposure on this issue.

We also believe the hydrography study missed an important feature of the Reka Vineyard property. Specifically, during the rainy season, the southern two-thirds of proposed vineyard Block B acts as a seasonal wetland, collecting and absorbing significant portions of the property’s runoff, particularly during the first portion of the rainy season. We refer to ISMND Exhibit F – Hydrology Analysis.pdf, Location Map, p. 38 of 40 (PDF document page numbering).

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Historically, this portion of the Atlas Peak area receives significant rainfall before sufficient water volume collects and runs off downstream directly through the Saunders property, alongside and often over Atlas Peak Road, through the ditches and culverts developed on the Schwartz property.

Then the stream runs down a ditch on the north side of the Elkington Setty Ranch LLC paved road access (easement) thru the Schwartz property (4400) to the vicinity of their lower truffle orchard, then in a small streambed to the north of the truffle orchard, then into a pond on Elkington Setty Ranch, and finally into a gully below the pond dam that passes through to an access road to our northern part of our property, and to adjacent property to the north that is owned by Natenstedt et al.

The drainage problems downstream from the Meka Vineyard property are potentially catastrophic, particularly at estimated 50-year and 100-year flood event flows. These are:

1. Severe damage to the Saunders residence, a garage, and swimming pool. We're not sure why the Saunders swimming pool was built almost directly in the indicated stream flow shown on Location Map by earlier property owners. Then there is likely flood flow under the current house, and through the front yard/driveway area. The entire flat, eastern half of the Saunders property would likely flow in the 50- and 100-year scenarios, and often has minor flooding in wet rainy years.
2. After flowing through the Saunders property, a 50- or 100-year flood event flow would flow on and over Atlas Peak Road for several hundred feet. This could cause washout(s) and damage the two currently clogged, undersized culverts, and then run into the natural streambed locations on the Schwartz property.
3. With a major flood event, the Saunders' drinking water supply well could be damaged and overwhelmed, and made unsafe to use.
4. Currently there are two culverts under Atlas Peak Road, both we believed were crushed by the 2023 repaving project. One is located about 100-150 feet north of the Schwartz driveway entrance, the second about 100 feet south of this location. The first culvert nominally connected to a ditch on the east side of the road, then into a culvert installed by Schwartz running under their entrance, and then into a ditch alongside the entrance road into our property (4398).
5. The second County culvert—with its end crushed apparently during the road repaving—feeds into a ditch aimed at our road, then under a short culvert into the main ditch alongside our road on the northside until it separates towards the truffle orchard. It is difficult to discern the capacity of this ditch—which drains the entire area—but I doubt it is more than few CFS.
6. The streambed carrying the runoff away from our road to the north of the Schwartz truffle orchard and into the pond on our property is small, and probably only a capacity of a few CFS, at best.
7. In addition, the streambed north of the truffle orchard is at significantly higher elevation than the pristine spring that Elkington Setty Ranch and residences obtain our drinking and other domestic water. A major flood event could send floodwaters “down the hill” to this spring, which is across the property line from Schwartz about 300-350 feet from the ,aom drainage channel.

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8. The gully carrying the runoff from the Meka Vineyard, Saunders, and Schwartz properties is one of several. We have had a few incidents in wet years where flash flood runoff from that gully and others feeding the pond severely taxed the capacity of the dam's spillway and almost overtopped the dam once or twice in the past two decades.
9. The pond and dam were constructed by one of our second cousins six decades ago in the 1960's, as far as we know without a permit (we don't know if any were required at that time). However, our facility is duly registered and regulated with the Putah Creek Watermaster et al, as required by state law. However, its condition is "mediocre" as we can best describe it. We doubt the structure could withstand a 50- or 100-year flood flow event.
10. All of this is highly problematic. Major flood events originating on the Meka Vineyard property could
 - (a). Damage the Saunders property to the tune of \$1 million or more;
 - (b). Cause major damage to Atlas Peak Road, we'd think a significant concern to the County of Napa Public Works Department if relatively cheap mitigations could prevent such damages;
 - (c). Wash out the Schwartz's main driveway entrance and the Elkington-Setty Ranch roadway entrance, which I estimate at minimum cost of \$500,000 or more if complete reconstruction was needed;
 - (d). Wash out the existing pond and dam, at unknown cost.
 - (e). Wash out the access road below the pond and dam, at a cost of \$100,000 or more.

Our requests of the County of Napa on the Meka property are as follows:

- A. Require as a condition of approval that **the Meka Vineyard property to abandon their proposal to install a vineyard in the low-lying portion of Block B**, which we estimate to be about two acres, due to the fact the area we believe is functionally a seasonal wetland, helping mitigate potential flooding downstream on our and adjacent properties.
- B. Require as a condition of approval that **the Meka Vineyard property environmental work be adequate by expanding the scope of the hydrographic study to include downstream impacts and potential flooding scenarios**, especially if the roughly two acres that we believe is a seasonal wetland is developed.
- C. **Develop a plan, that in case of a catastrophic flood event, the Saunders' drinking water supply well and our domestic water supply spring are protected.**
- D. Regardless of the outcome of the Meka Vineyard development process, **we request that the County of Napa work with the Upper Atlas Peak neighbors to resolve these potential flooding issues focusing on preventing possible washouts of Atlas Peak Road at the locations specified, and as soon as feasible, replace and enlarge the two damaged culverts which will provide some mitigation of the hazards—and clean up a long-standing mess on the road.**

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on Meka Vineyard project that impacts all of us on Upper Atlas Peak, not just Elkington Setty Ranch. I can be reached at (707) 666-5312 or msetty@publictransit.us.

/Signed/

MICHAEL D. SETTY

VIA EMAIL



Attachment 5



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Planning, Building & Environmental Services

1195 Third Street, Suite 210
Napa, CA 94559
www.countyofnapa.org

Brian D. Bordona
Director

MEMORANDUM

To:	Donald Barrella Conservation Division	From:	Alexei Belov Engineering Division
Date:	August 13, 2024	Re:	Permit No. P24-00065 APN: 032-540-034 4473 Atlas Peak Road (Meka Vineyard) Erosion Control Plan – Track I

The Engineering Division has reviewed the technical studies for the proposed 4473 Atlas Peak Road (Meka Vineyard) – Erosion Control Plan (ECP) application, P24-00065, located on Assessor parcel number 032-540-034. The proposed plan requests to plant approximately 19.8 net acres of vineyard.

The Engineering Division has determined the following technical studies to be technically adequate with respect to Napa County's Conservation Regulations Chapter 18.108, Napa County's General Plan Policies CON-48 and CON-50(c), and Napa County's Interim Well Permit Standards and WAA Requirements dated January 2024:

1. Revised Soil Loss Analysis, February 2024, prepared by David Steiner, CPESC, CPSWQ.
2. Revised Hydrology Analysis, February 2024, prepared by David Steiner, CPESC, CPSWQ.
3. Water Availability Analysis, September 2023, prepared by Anthony Hicke, PG, CHG, of Richard C. Slade & Associates LLC.

Any changes in use or design may necessitate additional review and approval. If you have any questions regarding the above items please contact Alexei Belov from the Napa County PBES Department Engineering Division at (707) 299.2177 or via e-mail at Alexei.Belov@countyofnapa.org.