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County of Sonoma
Permit & Resource Management Department

Initial Study & Mitigated Negative Declaration

Publication Date:
Public Review Period:
State Clearinghouse Number:
Permit Sonoma File Number: **PLP19-0047**
Prepared by: Jacob Sedgley
Phone: (707) 565-1931

Pursuant to Section 15071 of the State CEQA Guidelines, this proposed Mitigated 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: Use Permit Modification for Vinwood Cellars

Project Applicant/Operator: Jackson Family Wines, Inc. (Attn: Geoff Scott, VP)

Project Location/Address: 18700 Geyserville Ave, Geyserville, 95441

APN: 140-020-016

General Plan Designation: Land Intensive Agriculture - 20 acres per dwelling unit (LIA 20)

Zoning Designation: Land Intensive Agriculture - 20 acres per dwelling unit (LIA B6 20), Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion (Z), Floodplain (F2), Oak Woodland (OAK), Riparian Corridor (RC50/25), Scenic Resources – Community Separator and Scenic Corridor (SR), Valley Oak Habitat (VOH)

Decision Making Body: Planning Commission
Action by Planning Commission is appealable within 10 calendar days.

Appeal Body: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Project Description: Request for a Use Permit modification with Design Review for an increase in annual wine production capacity from 1,000,000 (UPE92-803) to 1,900,000 cases with the addition of a 4,100 square foot truck dock. The project proposes an increase of 6 employees for current operations and an increase in 8 employees during the harvest season.

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**
Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast)	Discharge or potential discharge to waters of the state	California Clean Water Act (Porter Cologne) – Waste Discharge requirements, general permit or waiver
State Water Resources Control Board	Generating stormwater (construction, industrial, or municipal)	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requires submittal of NOI
Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District (NSCAPCD)	Stationary air emissions	Emissions thresholds from 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

Table 2. **Agency**	**Activity**	**Authorization**
		Engines; and other BAAQMD administered Statewide Air Toxics Control Measures (ATCM) for stationary diesel engines
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)

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 measures into the project and plans.

Jacob Sedgley Digitally signed by Jacob Sedgley
Date: 2026.01.14 10:12:21 -08'00'

Prepared by: Jacob Sedgley Date

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Initial Study

I. INTRODUCTION:

Geoff Scott, Vice President for Jackson Family Wines, Inc., proposes to modify an existing use permit (UPE92-803) to increase annual wine production capacity from 1,000,000 cases per year to 1,900,000 cases per year, and to add a 4,100 square foot truck dock. The project proposes an increase of 6 employees for current operations and an increase in 8 employees during the harvest season. No new buildings are proposed. 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 Jacob Sedgley, Project Review Planner with Permit Sonoma, Project Review Division. Information on the project was provided by Geoff Scott. Technical studies were provided by qualified consultants to support the conclusions in this Expanded 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. Technical studies are also available digitally at this link.

Please contact Jacob Sedgley, Planner III, at (707) 565-1931, for more information.

II. EXISTING FACILITY

The subject site is located approximately 3 miles south of Geyserville and 2 miles north of the City of Healdsburg (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Vicinity Map

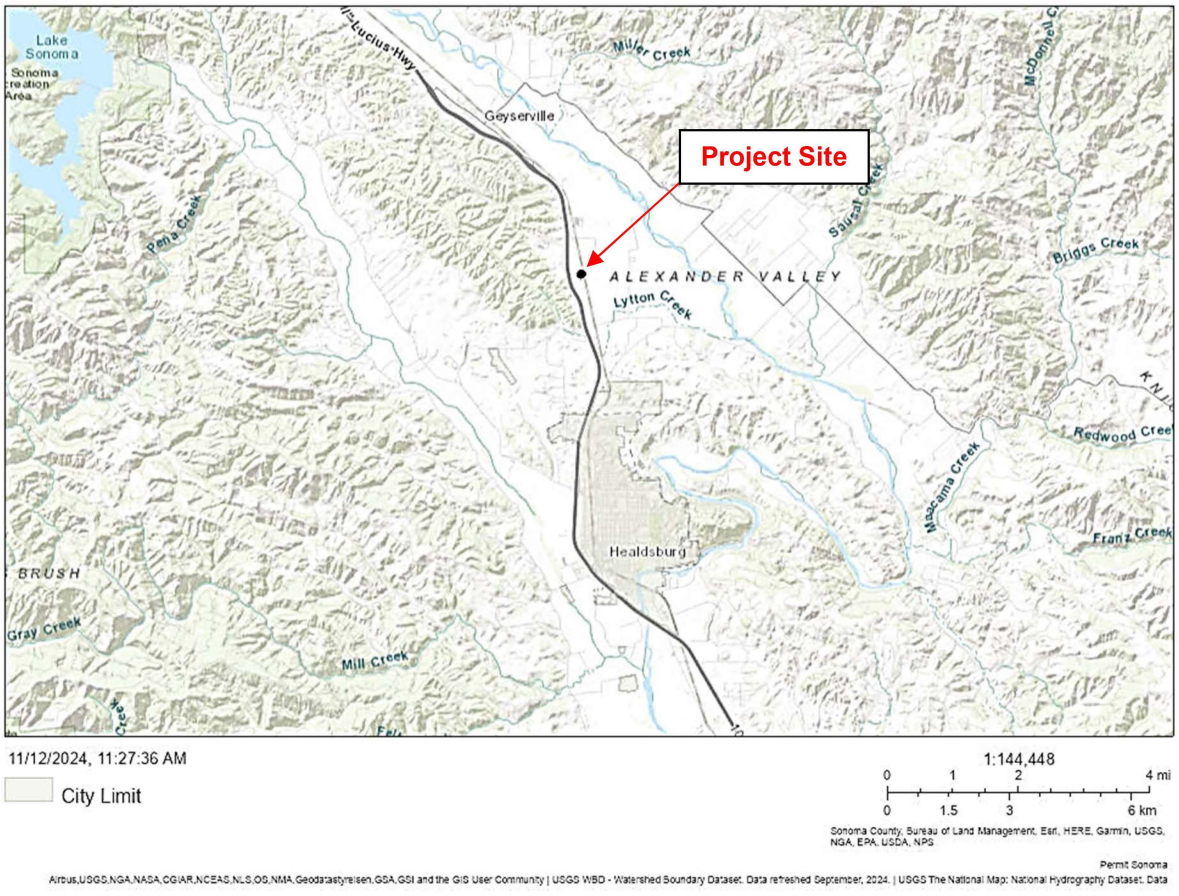


Figure 2: Subject Property and Surrounding Areas



The proposed project will utilize the existing Vinwood Cellars that is currently owned and operated by Jackson Family Wines, Inc. In March of 1993, the use permit proposed for modification (UPE92-803) was approved for a maximum annual production capacity of 1,000,000 cases and storage of 1,250,000 cases. The existing winery building on the parcel includes approximately 119,000 square feet of structures connected by a 25,000 square foot covered work area. The subject 21.85-acre parcel is currently planted with 8.45 acres of vines.

Geyserville Avenue runs north-south as a frontage road to US-101. Along the project frontage, the road has two 12-foot travel lanes. Sonoma County's Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, 2014, specifies a planned Class 2 bike lane on Geyserville Avenue. Traffic counts performed on October 10, 2024, indicate that the daily volume on Geyserville Avenue is approximately 600 vehicles per day.

An existing process wastewater treatment plant treats winery waste. The system includes a collection system, pretreatment, lift station, and a pond treatment system consisting of a 2.42-million gallon pond, and a 5.55-million gallon pond. Treated wastewater is either evaporated from the ponds or reused to irrigate adjacent pastures and vineyards. The approved irrigation dispersal field is 80 acres and is located on an adjacent parcel; however, only 20 acres are currently utilized. The system has a design capacity of 80,000 gpd and is currently permitted for an average daily flow of 32,000 gallons, and an average daily flow during the peak month of 64,000 gallons. Flow data from 2018 indicates that the current average daily flow is approximately 16,400 gpd and the average flow during the peak month was approximately 34,000 gpd. Based on current plant performance and projected flow, the treatment capabilities of the existing facility are adequate for the wastewater flow from the proposed project.

An existing septic system treats domestic waste from the existing facility; however, the system would not have capacity for the proposed additional employees. The applicant has proposed a new on-site septic system to treat domestic waste including a new leach field with capacity for peak day flow, and replacement area.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant has proposed an increase in the maximum annual production capacity to 1,900,000 cases

per year including fruit crush, juice, and wine storage and aging, bottling, and a new grape receiving area to accommodate the increase in production. Production increases will be achieved by modifying winemaking logistics and operations including:

1. Increased operation efficiencies:
    a. Receive greater diversity of grape varietals (e.g., allows for harvest to start earlier and extend longer).
    b. Increased turns of existing equipment (e.g., use existing tanks more times during harvest).
    c. Use existing grape receiving hoppers for both red and white varietals (e.g., hopper used for one varietal can be used for both, allowing for less equipment down time).
    d. Decrease press cycles (e.g., faster turn of presses allows for more fruit to be received).
    e. Reduction of on-site bottling & bulk storage allowing for use of existing infrastructure for additional wine production.
2. Future equipment improvements:
    a. Additional tanks within the existing buildings and canopies.
    b. Additional must / transfer lines (e.g., speed delivery of fruit to tanks).
    c. Replacement equipment with more efficient technology within the same footprint.
    d. Automated barrel line to expedite sanitizing, filling, and maintaining barrel inventory.
    e. Additional controls on existing tanks allowing for more efficient and reliable fermentation.
    f. Addition of a new grape receiving area (approximately 4,100 sf in size)

The proposal also includes operational changes compared to what was authorized under the prior use permit (UPE92-0803). Application and approval materials for UPE92-0803 indicate the facility was approved to crush and bottle approximately 600,000–650,000 cases, and to age, process, and blend 400,000 cases of juice crushed at other facilities. Under the current proposal, the facility would (1) crush and bottle 50,000 cases on-site, (2) crush, ferment, and age 555,000 cases on-site, and (3) conduct crush-only activities for 1,295,000 cases on-site. While the applicant states this operating model has been in place for some time, the proposal reflects a shift from what was primarily permitted as a grape crush and bottling operation to a facility focused primarily on crush activities—retaining the previously approved aging functions but reducing on-site bottling in favor of off-site facilities.

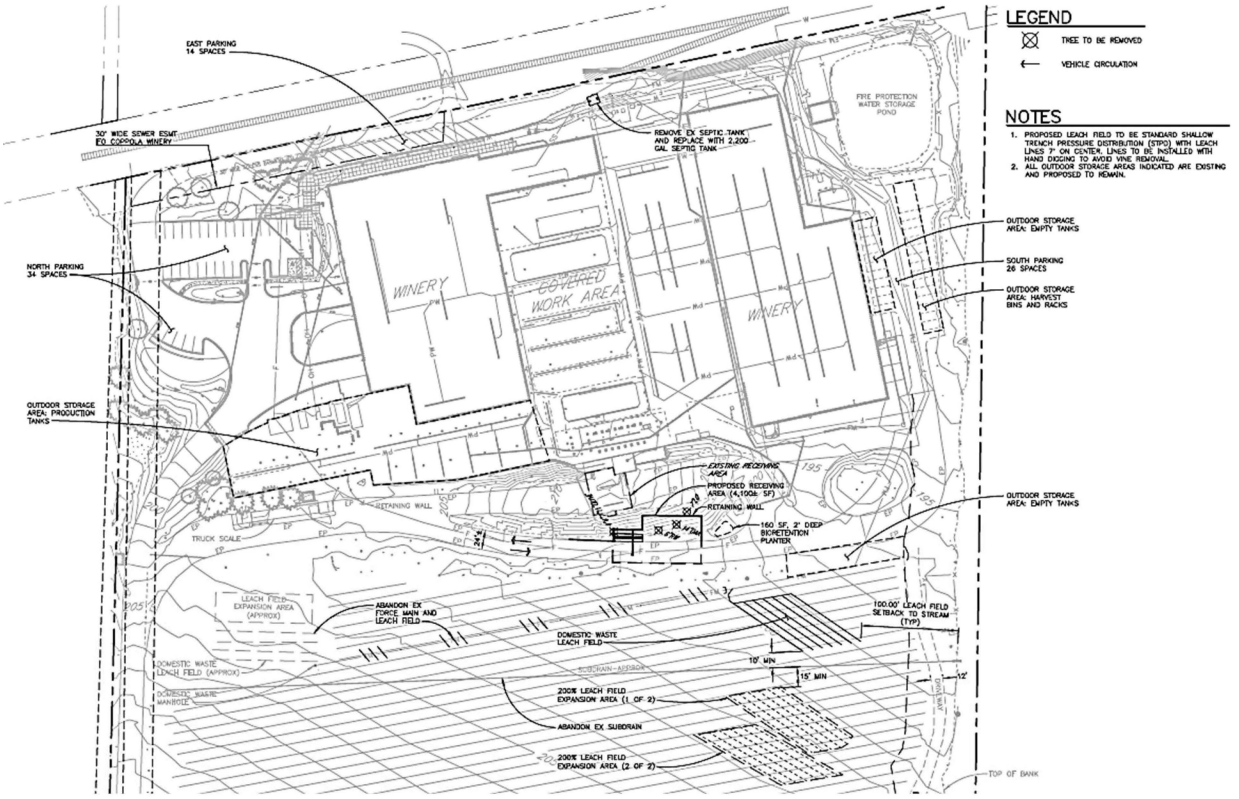
Employees & Traffic:

Under existing conditions, the winery employs 38 full-time, year-round staff and up to 84 seasonal harvest employees. The project would add 6 year-round positions, for a total of 44 employees during normal operations. Non-harvest season include approximately December through July of each year.

8 additional seasonal positions, for a maximum of 92 employees during the peak harvest season. Of these, no more than 40 employees would be on-site during any peak harvest day shift. Harvest season includes August through November of each year.

Based on the traffic analysis, this increase in staffing and associated activity is expected to generate an average of 22 additional vehicle trips per day outside of harvest, including 6 additional weekday a.m. peak-hour trips, 6 additional weekday p.m. peak-hour trips, and 6 additional trips during the weekend p.m. peak hour. During harvest, the project is expected to generate an average of 95 additional daily vehicle trips, including approximately 24 additional trips during each peak hour, compared to existing harvest operations.

Figure 3: Site Plan for Vinwood Cellars w/ Proposed Receiving Area (see Attachment 2)



Hours of Operation:
Year round, the facility is proposed to operate Monday through Friday from 7:30am – 3:30pm; during harvest, operations would occur seven days per week, 24 hours per day. The proposed hours of operation are a modification of those approved under UPE92-803 which included year-round operation Monday through Friday from 8:00am – 5:00pm, with additional harvest season operations occurring seven days per week from 6:00am to 2:00am. Harvest operations are proposed to include approximately 2-3 weeks where the facility may operation 24 hours per day to accommodate peak crush and pressing activities. An additional approximately 4-6 weeks may require extended shifts (6:00am to 12:00am) to manage increased grape intake, juice transfers, and logistics.

Parking & Access:
The facility is estimated to have a maximum of 92 employees working during the peak harvest season; however, no more than 40 employees will be on-site during a peak harvest day shift. There are 48 existing parking spaces on-site, where Sonoma County Code Section 26-18-260(E)(6) requires one parking space per employee. Given that there are no events or tastings proposed, the project would require 40 total parking spaces. The current site configuration meets and exceeds this requirement, and no additional parking is required to be developed.

Access to the parcel is provided by two driveways located on the parcel, one paved driveway located on the northernmost side of the parcel and another dirt road on the southernmost side of the parcel. The applicant has indicated that the dirt road may be paved in the future to provide a second means of ingress and egress to the parcel.

Sewage Disposal:
The existing septic system currently treats domestic waste from the facility. However, the system lacks adequate capacity to handle the additional flow anticipated from the increased number of employees. Based on a review of County records, the current capacity of the system appears to have been installed for 50 employees or 850 gallons per day. Under the new proposal, a total of 92 employees per day, with no more than 40 on-site at a time, is projected for peak days, resulting in a design peak flow of approximately 1,380 gallons per day. To accommodate this, a new on-site septic system is proposed for treating domestic waste and is to be locate in the existing vineyards directly west of the developed area. The existing septic tank will be replaced with a larger tank that conforms to County standards. The existing leach field and a portion of the force main will be abandoned. A new leach field, designed to accommodate peak day flow, is proposed. Wet weather groundwater testing for the proposed leach field area was conducted on March 20, 2019, under County record number WSR19-0205. A site review of four

profile holes was conducted with Permit Sonoma staff on September 27, 2023, and a pre-percolation report was submitted under County record number WSR23-0425.

In addition, an existing process wastewater treatment plant manages winery waste. The system includes a collection network, pretreatment, a lift station, and a pond treatment system consisting of a 2.42-million-gallon pond and a 5.55-million-gallon pond. Treated wastewater is either evaporated from the ponds or reused for irrigation on adjacent pastures and vineyards. The approved irrigation dispersal field covers 80 acres, although only 20 acres are currently in use.

According to the applicant, the system has a design capacity of 80,000 gallons per day (gpd) and is currently permitted for an average daily flow of 32,000 gpd, with an average daily flow of 64,000 gpd during the peak month. Flow data from 2018 indicates that the current average daily flow is approximately 16,400 gpd, with an average peak-month flow of 34,000 gpd. Following project completion, the estimated average daily flow is approximately 30,800 gpd, with a peak-month average daily flow of 66,000 gpd, remaining well below the system's design capacity. According to the applicant, based on current plant performance and projected flow, the treatment capabilities of the existing facility are to be adequate for the wastewater flow from the proposed project.

Water supply:
According to the applicant, the winery facility is served by a domestic well located on APN 140-010-006. Water from the well is treated with water softeners and stored in two approximately 12,000-gallon storage tanks. The existing system capacity is approximately 120 gallons per minute (gpm). The estimated peak domestic demand is approximately 300 gallons per day (gpd). The estimated process water demand during the peak month is approximately 66,000 gpd. Additional treatment capacity will be added to supply the anticipated peak demand of approximately 225 gpm.

IV. SETTING

The subject site is located approximately 3 miles south of Geyserville and 2 miles north of the City of Healdsburg. The majority of the surroundings include vineyards or undeveloped agricultural land. Highway 101 is located directly west of the subject parcel, across Geyserville Avenue. Geyserville Avenue is identified in the Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan as a proposed Class II bike lane. Directly east of the subject parcel is the right of way associated with the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit. General Plan Land Use designations in the area include Land Intensive Agriculture – 20 acre density located north, east, and south of the subject parcel, and Resources & Rural Development – 40 acre density, located west of the parcel across the US 101 highway.

V. ISSUES RAISED BY THE PUBLIC OR AGENCIES

On May 21, 2024, Permit Sonoma circulated a referral packet to inform and solicit comments from selected relevant local, state, and federal agencies, local tribes, neighbors within 300 feet of the project site, and special interest groups that were anticipated to take interest in the revised project. Comments were received from the following:

- Permit Sonoma Building Division
- Permit Sonoma Fire Prevention
- Permit Sonoma Natural Resources Division
- Permit Sonoma Grading &Stormwater Division
- Sonoma County Public Infrastructure (SPI), formerly the Department of Transportation and Public Works
- Sonoma County Environmental Health

Referral agency comments included recommended mitigated measures and standard conditions of approval for the project

Assembly Bill 52 (AB52) Project Notifications were sent to the Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians, the Dry Creek Rancheria of Pomo Indians, the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, the Guidiville Rancheria of California, the Guidiville Rancheria of California, the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria, the Lytton Rancheria, the Middletown Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California,, the Mishewal-Wappo Tribe of Alexander Valley, the Muwekma Ohlone Indian Tribe of the SF Bay Area, the Pinoleville Pomo Nation, and the Robinson Rancheria of Pomo Indians. No requests for

formal consultation pursuant to AB52 have been received.

No public comments on the proposed project have been received to date.

VI. OTHER RELATED PROJECTS

There are no known private or public projects in the area that may affect the proposed project.

VII. 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.

The project applicant, Geoff Scott, 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 Sonoma County General Plan does not explicitly identify scenic vistas, but does divide the scenic resources of Sonoma County into three categories: Community Separators, Scenic Landscape Units, and Scenic Corridors. The project site is within Sonoma County's Scenic Resource Combining District for a Community Separator.

All structures located within a Community Separator (CS) are subject to the standards in Zoning Code Section 26-64-020 and General Plan Policy ORSC-2d, which require that all structures within a CS 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 frontage of the parcel is located within a Scenic Corridor; however, no development is proposed within the Scenic Corridor.

New development will be limited to the addition of the grape receiving area as shown on the site plan. The development area will be fully screened from view by an existing group of trees located along the frontage of the parcel and a second row of large conifers located between the facility and the onsite vineyards near Geyserville Avenue.

The project has been evaluated using the Sonoma County Visual Assessment Guidelines and the impact has been found to be less than significant. The visual sensitivity of the location is considered to be maximum due to its location within the community separator and the scenic corridor that runs along the frontage of the parcel. The Visual Dominance of the project is considered inevident because the new grape receiving area will not be visible from public view due to existing vegetation that largely screens the entirety of the use.

Sensitivity	**Visual Dominance**			
	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 Impact

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

Comment:
The project site is located adjacent to US Highway 101, which is not designated as a state scenic highway in this area. No impacts to scenic resources will occur because the proposed grape receiving area is screened from public view by existing vegetation. Limited tree removal is proposed as part of the project, including one olive tree, one redwood tree less than 6 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH), one oak tree 7 inches DBH, and one oak tree 14 inches DBH. These removals are minimal and will not substantially affect the visual character of the area or damage scenic resources.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant 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 project site and surrounding lands is agricultural and rural development. As mentioned above, in item 1.a, using the County's Visual Assessment Guidelines, staff has found the project to have a less than significant impact.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:
The existing facility includes exterior lighting, and any additional lighting associated with the proposed grape receiving area will be limited and designed to comply with the California Building Code. A standard condition of approval requires that "all new exterior lighting 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 off automatically after closing, and security lighting shall be motion sensor activated. Prior to final approval of grading permits for the truck pad, the applicant will be required to demonstrate compliance with exterior lighting requirements by providing Permit Sonoma photograph documentation of all exterior light fixtures installed. With these standard conditions of approval in place, 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 Impact

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 21.85-acre site currently contains approximately 8.5 acres of vineyard. According to the Sonoma County Important Farmlands Map, the project site is designated as Prime Farmland and Urban and Built-Up Land. There are currently approximately 8.5 acres of important farmland on the site. The additional grape receiving area is located entirely within the Urban and Built-Up Land designation, and no important farmlands would have to be converted to develop the project beyond the 50' by 100' leach field area. No change in the land use or zoning is proposed.

Significance Level:
Less than significant impact.

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

Comment:
The project site is zoned Land Intensive Agriculture (LIA) which allows for agricultural processing with a Conditional Use Permit and is not under a Williamson Act Land Conservation contract. The primary use of the parcel is currently and will remain agricultural processing.

The proposed expansion of the winery facility to a production capacity of 1.9 million cases per year aligns with Sonoma County's zoning and General Plan policies. The facility will process grapes from 7,000 acres of vineyards within a 60-mile drive from the Vinwood Facility, demonstrating a strong connection to regional agriculture. Of these, 4,500 acres are in Sonoma County (64% of total acreage), with additional vineyards in Mendocino (2,000 acres, 29% of total acreage) and Lake County (350 acres, 5% of total acreage). Kendall-Jackson Wineries has an extensive portfolio, with 52 owned vineyards and 101 contract vineyards in Sonoma County, 10 owned vineyards and 49 contract vineyards in Mendocino County, and 4 owned vineyards and 2 contract vineyards in Lake County, has substantial holdings, including 66 vineyards under direct ownership (52 in Sonoma County alone), far exceeding the typical holdings of most wineries. The applicant has provided a sourcing map showing that all owned and contracted vineyards supporting this facility are within a 60-mile drive.

Local Area Interpretation

The General Plan uses the term “local area” but does not define it by county lines. Given the facility’s location in northern Sonoma County, proximate to and economically integrated with adjacent Mendocino and Lake counties, staff finds that the “local area” for grape sourcing is reasonably and objectively represented by a functional haul radius tied to perishable-crop logistics. Here, the documented ≤60-mile road distance, combined with the applicant’s substantial integrated holdings, supports a finding that sourcing from Sonoma, Mendocino, and Lake counties within this radius is “local” for purposes of Policies AR-5a and AR-5.3. The record (map and acreage percentages) demonstrates that the operation is proportional to, and sized for, this regional production.

Applicable Zoning and General Plan Requirements:
The expansion is consistent with the County’s zoning and General Plan policies. It reflects the substantial scale of the owner’s agricultural holdings, appropriately sizes the facility to support these operations, and respects the existing character and functionality of the region by limiting expansion to the existing footprint of the structure.

Section 26-18-030 Ag Processing:
Findings LIA, LEA, DA, AR Zones. 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-5c.

> *SCC Sec. 26-18-030(C)(1): “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)”*

General Plan Policy AR-5a:
Provide for facilities that process agricultural products in all three agricultural land use categories only where processing supports and is proportional to agricultural production on site or in the local area. The project supports General Plan Policy AR-5a, which prioritizes facilities that process agricultural products from local sources. The facility’s exclusive reliance on nearby vineyards demonstrates its integration into the local agricultural economy. By processing grapes from both owned and contracted vineyards, the project strengthens partnerships with smaller growers while maintaining proportionality to agricultural output in the area.

> *Policy AR-5a: Provide for facilities that process agricultural products in all three agricultural land use categories only where processing supports and is proportional to agricultural production on site or in the local area.*

General Plan Policy AR-5c:
Under General Plan Policy AR-5c, agricultural processing facilities must be sized to accommodate the needs of the growing and processing operation. The facility’s production capacity is designed to align with the extensive agricultural output generated by the owner’s significant vineyard holdings and contractual partnerships including 66 estate vineyards and 152 contract vineyards. Importantly, the facility is existing, with its physical footprint largely in place except for the proposed addition of one grape receiving area. This ensures that the project utilizes established infrastructure without introducing a significant increase in development scale.

> *Policy AR-5c: Permit storage, bottling, canning, and packaging facilities for agricultural products either grown or processed on site provided that these facilities are sized to accommodate, but not exceed, the needs of the growing or processing operation. Establish additional standards in the Development Code that differentiate between storage facilities directly necessary for processing, and facilities to be utilized for the storage of finished product such as case storage of bottled wine. Such standards should require an applicant to demonstrate the need for such on-site storage.*

General Plan Policy AR-5g:
The proposed expansion respects the rural character of the region and avoids conflicts with Policy AR-5g, which seeks to prevent detrimental concentrations of agricultural support uses. The facility has a history of successful operations at its current capacity of 1 million cases without significant traffic or water usage impacts. The expansion builds upon this proven framework while maintaining compliance with circulation and resource use objectives.

> *Policy AR-5g: Local concentrations of any separate agricultural support uses, including*

processing, storage, bottling, canning and packaging, agricultural support services, and visitor serving and recreational uses as provided in Policy AR-6f, even if related to surrounding agricultural activities, are detrimental to the primary use of the land for the production of food, fiber and plant materials and shall be avoided. In determining whether or not the approval of such uses would constitute a detrimental concentration of such uses, consider all the following factors:

(1) Whether the above uses would result in joint road access conflicts, or in traffic levels that exceed the Circulation and Transit Element's objectives for level of service on a site specific and cumulative basis.
(2) Whether the above uses would draw water from the same aquifer and be located within the zone of influence of area wells.
(3) Whether the above uses would be detrimental to the rural character of the area.

General Plan Objective AR-5.3:
The project supports General Plan Objective AR-5.3 by demonstrating that the proposed expansion is both necessary for and proportional to established agricultural production on site and within the defined local area. The requested 1.9 million case capacity is grounded in documented grape supply from approximately 7,000 acres of vineyards within a ≤60-mile haul radius, the majority of which are located in Sonoma County, with the balance in adjacent Mendocino and Lake counties. This acreage is comprised of a substantial portfolio of estate and contract vineyards under common control, indicating that the facility is designed to serve an existing production base rather than speculative or unrelated processing demand. Because the expansion relies on an existing processing footprint, adds only one grape receiving area, and maintains a clear quantitative relationship between vineyard acreage and processing capacity, the winery operates as an agriculture-related support use that is necessary for, and reasonably scaled to, agricultural production on site and in the local area, consistent with Objective AR-5.3.

Object AR-5.3: Ensure that agriculture-related support uses allowed on agricultural lands are only allowed when demonstrated to be necessary for and proportional to agricultural production on site or in the local area.

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 would not result in the loss of forest land or the conversion of forest land to non-forest use. The site is not zoned Timberland Production, and mapped forest land is not present within the development footprint. An Oak Woodland combining district occurs along the southern edge of the parcel; however, no disturbance is proposed within this mapped area. Limited tree removal would occur (two individual oaks—7-inch and 14-inch DBH—and one approximately 6-inch DBH redwood), which are not part of a forest stand and do not constitute conversion of forest land. Any protected tree removal would comply with the County's Tree Protection Ordinance (replacement or in-lieu fee), a standard condition of approval. Accordingly, the project would not convert forest land to non-forest use.

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, beyond the conversion of the 50' by 100' area to be used for the new domestic leach field. The project site will remain zoned Land Intensive Agriculture and the existing commercial vineyard will remain on the site.

Significance Level:
No 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 Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District (NSCAPCD). The NSCAPCD does not have an adopted air quality plan because it is in attainment for all federal and state criteria pollutants, although the District occasionally exceeds state standards for PM_{10}.

Significance Level:
No 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:
The project is within the Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District (NSCAPCD), which is in attainment for State and Federal criteria pollutants; winter PM10 exceedances have been recorded locally. NSCAPCD does not set CEQA thresholds and recommends using BAAQMD thresholds and standard mitigation as guidance. Construction of the ~4,100-sf truck dock could generate short-term dust; operational emissions are minimal and well below thresholds (Table AQ-1). With dust control, the project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of criteria pollutants.

Although the project will generate some ozone precursors from project trip generation, an average of 25 new daily vehicle trips, an average of 2 new daily winery truck trip during normal operations, and an average of 38 new daily truck trips during harvest, the project will not have a significant cumulative effect on ozone because it will not generate substantial traffic resulting in significant new emissions of ozone precursors (ROG and NOx, See table below). See discussion in 3 (a) above. An Air Quality Assessment prepared by Illingworth & Rodkin, Inc is provided as an attachment.

Table AQ-1:

Pollutant	Project Emissions (tons/yr)	NSCAPCD/BAAQMD Threshold (tons/yr)	Exceed?
ROG	**9.32** *	40	No
NOx	0.13	40	No
PM10	0.40	15	No
PM2.5	<0.1	10	No

* ROG is dominated by biogenic ethanol from fermentation, included in the memo for information.

Significance Level:

Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated (AIR-1).

Mitigation Measure AIR-1:
Implement the BAAQMD Basic Construction Mitigation Measures
Prior to the issuance of grading or building permits, Sonoma County shall ensure that BAAQMD's basic construction mitigation measures from Table 5-2 of the BAAQMD 2022 CEQA Guidelines (or subsequent updates) are noted on the construction documents. These basic construction mitigation measures include the following:

1) All exposed surfaces (e.g., parking areas, staging areas, soil piles, graded areas, and unpaved access roads) shall be watered two times per day.
2) All haul trucks transporting soil, sand, or other loose material off-site shall be covered.
3) All visible mud or dirt track-out onto adjacent public roads shall be removed using wet power vacuum street sweepers at least once per day. The use of dry power sweeping is prohibited.
4) All vehicle speeds on unpaved roads shall be limited to 15 miles per hour (mph).
5) All roadways, driveways, and sidewalks to be paved shall be completed as soon as possible. Building pads shall be laid as soon as possible after grading unless seeding or soil binders are used.
6) All excavation, grading, and/or demolition activities shall be suspended when average wind speeds exceed 20 mph.
7) All trucks and equipment, including their tires, shall be washed off prior to leaving the site.
8) Unpaved roads providing access to sites located 100 feet or further from a paved road shall be treated with a 6- to 12-inch layer of compacted layer of wood chips, mulch, or gravel.
9) A Construction Coordinator shall be designated by the project applicant, and a sign shall be posted on the site including the Coordinator's 24-hour phone number for public contact regarding dust, trackout, and air quality complaints. The Coordinator shall respond and take corrective action within 48 hours. The Coordinator shall report all complaints and their resolutions to Permit Sonoma staff.

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 residences. The nearest residence is over 1,000 feet from the project work area, and no schools, hospitals, or convalescent facilities are in the surrounding area. Construction could generate short-term dust that may affect nearby receptors; AIR-1 will reduce this impact to less than significant. No new stationary toxic air contaminant sources (e.g., boilers or diesel generators) are proposed; operational emissions are small and below thresholds (Table AQ-1). Therefore, the project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated (see Mitigation Measure AIR-1).

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

Comment:
BAAQMD's CEQA Air Quality Guidelines identify odor-complaint land uses (e.g., wastewater treatment plants, landfills, confined animal facilities, composting stations, food manufacturing, refineries, chemical plants). Construction equipment may generate short-term diesel odors; these would cease when construction ends and are considered less than significant. For operations, wineries can generate objectionable odors during crush (e.g., pomace) if not handled properly. The nearest residence is over 1,000 feet from the work area, and with implementation of the standard winery odor-control measure below, the project would not adversely affect a substantial number of people.

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 application 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:
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.

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).

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.

Valley Oak Habitat (VOH) Combining District

The VOH combining district is established to protect and enhance valley oaks and valley oak woodlands and to implement the provisions of *Sonoma County General Plan 2020* Resource Conservation Element Section 5.1. Design review approval may be required of projects in the VOH, which would include measures to protect and enhance valley oaks on the project site, such as requiring that valley oaks shall comprise a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the required landscape trees for the development project.

Oak Woodland Combining District (OAK)

The OAK combining district is established to protect and enhance oak woodlands including stands of native oak trees and their associated understory habitats, and to implement Sonoma County General Plan 2020 Resource Conservation policies related to oak woodland conservation. The OAK overlay applies to parcels in the unincorporated county, where oak woodlands have been mapped; within this overlay, removal or type conversion of oak woodland above defined thresholds requires zoning or use permit approval, with required avoidance and minimization of impacts where feasible and compensatory mitigation (such as replanting, long-term preservation, or in-lieu fees) for authorized conversions. These regulations, applied in coordination with the Sonoma County Tree Protection Ordinance, are intended to maintain the long-term extent, habitat functions, and ecosystem services of oak woodlands while allowing reasonable, carefully conditioned development and agricultural use of affected properties.

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: 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), and 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?

Comment:
Project activities are limited to a small truck-dock addition and minor work contiguous with the existing developed winery footprint, along with removal of four existing trees (one olive, one redwood, and two oak trees) adjacent to the dock area; no broader site clearing, grading, or new utility corridors are proposed. Removal of these trees is subject to applicable County tree protection regulations, which require replanting and/or payment of an in-lieu fee; compliance with these existing regulatory requirements is accounted for separately and is not considered mitigation under CEQA. Given the highly disturbed setting and the lack of new ground disturbance beyond the dock area, a stand-alone biological assessment was not warranted for this application. Potential biological effects are limited to temporary construction-period disturbance (e.g., vegetation trimming, tree removal, or noise) that could affect nesting birds protected under the California Fish and Game Code. With the nesting-bird avoidance and protection measure below, the project would not have a substantial adverse effect on special-status species.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation Measure BIO-1:
Prevent Disturbance to Nesting Birds. The following measures shall be implemented to avoid potential inadvertent destruction or disturbance of nesting birds on and near the project site as a result of construction-related vegetation removal and site disturbance:

a. To avoid impacts to nesting birds, all construction-related activities (including but not limited to mobilization and staging, clearing, grubbing, vegetation removal, fence installation, demolition, and grading) should occur outside the avian nesting season (generally prior to February 1 or after August 31). Active nesting is present if a bird is sitting in a nest, a nest has eggs or chicks in it, or adults are observed carrying food to the nest.

b. If construction-related activities are scheduled to occur during the nesting season (generally February 1 through August 31), a qualified biologist shall conduct a habitat assessment for nesting birds, including ground nesting species such as burrowing owl. Habitat assessments related to burrowing owl shall be performed following Appendix C of the CDFW Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (2012 CDFW Staff Report) and shall extend at least 150 meters (492 feet) from the Project site boundary and include burrows and burrow surrogates. If suitable habitat exists then a qualified biologist shall conduct pre-construction surveys for nesting birds, including ground nesting species such as burrowing owl, no more than fourteen (14) days prior to initiation of work. Specifically, if suitable burrowing owl habitat is determined to be present, then surveys shall be conducted following the methodology described in Appendix D (Breeding and Non-breeding Season Surveys) of the 2012 CDFW Staff Report. The qualified biologist conducting the surveys shall be familiar with local nesting bird and ground-nesting species including burrowing owl. Surveys shall be conducted at the appropriate times of day during periods of peak activity (i.e., early morning or dusk) and shall be of sufficient duration to observe movement patterns. Surveys shall be conducted within the project area and 250 feet of the construction limits for nesting non-raptors and 500 feet for nesting raptors and burrowing owls as feasible as disturbance distances vary dependent on species, time of year, and geographical location. If the survey area is found to be absent of nesting birds, no further mitigation is required. However, if project activities are delayed by more than seven days, an additional nesting bird survey shall be performed.

c. If pre-construction nesting bird surveys identify active nests and or burrows, no site disturbance (including but not limited to equipment staging, fence installation, clearing, grubbing, vegetation removal, demolition, and grading) shall occur until a qualified biologist has established a temporary protective buffer around the nest(s). For any raptor species, a Qualified Biologist, experienced in raptor behavior should be assigned to monitor the behavior of any raptors nesting within disturbance distance of Project activities. The buffer shall be of sufficient size to protect the nesting site from construction-related disturbance and shall be established by a qualified biologist. The Qualified Biologist shall have authority to order the cessation of all Project activities within disturbance distance of any raptor nest if the birds exhibit abnormal nesting behavior which may cause reproductive failure (nest abandonment and loss of eggs and/or young). No-work buffers are species- and site-specific, as determined by a qualified biologist. Typically, the no-work radius is 100-250 feet for songbirds and up to 1,000 feet for special-status raptors and owls. The nest buffer, where it intersects the project site, shall be staked with orange construction fencing or orange lath staking. Any active nests and burrows shall be monitored by a qualified biologist to ensure compliance with the relevant Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and California Fish and Game Code (CFGC) requirements. The biologist shall document monitoring efforts and provide documentation to the applicant and County. No-work nest protection buffers may be removed and/or reduced if the qualified biologist determines the young have fledged the nest, the nest has otherwise become inactive due to natural cause (i.e., storm events or predation), or if the qualified biologist determines in coordination with CDFW that construction activities are not likely to adversely affect the nest. The qualified biologist and CDFW may agree upon an alternative monitoring schedule depending on the construction activity, season, and species potentially subject to impact.

d. A report shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and submitted to the County prior to the initiation of construction-related activities that have the potential to disturb any active nests and or burrows. The report shall include recommendations required for establishment of protective buffers as necessary to protect nesting birds and ground nesting species. A copy of the report shall be submitted to the County and applicable regulatory agencies prior to the issuance of a grading or permit.

Mitigation Monitoring BIO-1:
Prior to construction and through completion of initial site disturbance, Permit Sonoma staff shall verify that all surveys have been conducted according to applicable protocols and shall review the results of all pre-construction surveys and any measures recommended by the biologist to avoid sensitive habitat or species and ensure compliance. If the survey determines 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.

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 USGS “blueline” streams are designated Riparian Corridors under Sonoma County General Plan Objective OSRC-8.1 and are protected by the County’s Riparian Corridor (RC) combining district; General Plan policies also guide protection of riparian vegetation within 50 feet of the top of bank where formal RC setbacks are not mapped.

Objective OSRC-8.1: Designate all streams shown on USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle topographic maps as of March 18, 2003, as Riparian Corridors and establish streamside conservation areas along these designated corridors.

Policy OSRC-8a: Classify “Riparian Corridors” designated in the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element as follows:

(1) “Russian River Riparian Corridor” is the corridor adjacent to the main stem of the Russian River, excluding lands located within the Urban Residential, Commercial, Industrial, or Public-Quasi Public land use categories or within the jurisdiction of a city.

(2) “Flatland Riparian Corridors” are the corridors adjacent to designated streams in the 1989 General Plan that flow through predominantly flat or very gently sloping land, generally with alluvial soil. This classification excludes areas located within the “Russian River Riparian Corridor” or within the Urban Residential, Commercial, Industrial, or Public/Quasi-Public land use categories.
(3) “Other Riparian Corridors” are the corridors adjacent to all designated streams not included in (1) or (2) above.*

Policy OSRC-8b: Establish streamside conservation areas along both sides of designated Riparian Corridors as follows, measured from the top of the higher bank on each side of the stream as determined by PRMD:
(1) Russian River Riparian Corridor: 200'
(2) Flatland Riparian Corridors: 100'
(3) Other Riparian Corridors: 50'*

At the Vinwood site, site plans identify a mapped Riparian Corridor Setback (50 feet) and top of bank along the on-site drainage; the proposed improvements (a small truck-dock addition and minor work contiguous with the existing developed winery yard) occur outside the mapped riparian setback and do not include riparian vegetation removal.

The project includes disturbed/vineyard lands with riparian habitat limited to the riparian corridor, and no expansion into that corridor is proposed under this use-permit modification. The work area is within an existing developed area; there is no new grading, utility corridor, or access road within riparian habitat. Standard County conditions (e.g., erosion and sediment control best management practices during any ground disturbance) will apply. As such, the project would not adversely affect riparian habitat or other sensitive natural communities.

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?

Comment:
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.

Staff Analysis

Project activities are confined to a truck-dock addition and minor site work contiguous with the existing developed winery footprint. Site plans map the on-site drainage, top of bank, and a 50-foot Riparian Corridor setback; the proposed improvements lie outside the mapped top-of-bank and riparian setback, and do not propose any culverts, fills, crossings, or vegetation removal within jurisdictional waters.

Given the above, the project would not result in direct removal, fill, or hydrologic interruption of state or federally protected wetlands. If field conditions encountered during construction were to indicate potential jurisdictional waters not previously identified, any necessary agency notifications and permits (e.g., USACE §404, RWQCB §401, and CDFW §1600, as applicable) would be required prior to any impact, consistent with standard regulatory practices.

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 project consists of a small truck-dock addition and minor work contiguous with the existing, developed winery yard. The work area lies within an already improved and fenced setting (e.g., existing roads and gates) and does not introduce new perimeter barriers or road/stream crossings that could fragment habitat or block movement.

A mapped top-of-bank and 50-foot Riparian Corridor setback occur on the site; proposed improvements are outside this setback and avoid the on-site drainage feature that provides localized movement for common wildlife. As designed, the project would not alter or constrict this movement area.

The broader landscape is predominantly agricultural/viticultural with scattered development; within this context, the subject property (and particularly the areas surrounding the existing buildings where work would occur) does not function as a regional corridor beyond routine, localized movement through disturbed areas. Avoidance of streams and riparian vegetation, together with the limited scope inside the established footprint, means the project would not interfere with wildlife movement or impede use of nursery sites.

Nesting birds (nursery sites) are addressed by Mitigation Measure BIO-1 (pre-construction nesting bird survey and buffers); with BIO-1 in place, construction noise/vegetation trimming would not result in nest failure or abandonment. (See BIO-1 text and monitoring in Section 4(a).)

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

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

Comment:
Sonoma County's Tree Protection Ordinance (County Code §26-88-015) establishes protections and mitigation standards for "protected" tree species (including oaks and redwood). In addition, Sonoma County's Oak Woodland Ordinance (Oak Woodland Combining District) establishes permitting and conservation standards for mapped oak woodland areas, requiring avoidance and/or offset of oak woodland conversion where applicable. Projects must avoid and/or offset impacts through replacement planting or other approved mitigation consistent with the applicable ordinance(s). Additionally, the Oak trees proposed for removal are not located within the mapped Oak Woodland boundary.

The proposal consists of a small truck-dock/receiving-area improvement and minor work within the existing developed winery yard. Site plans also map a 50-foot Riparian Corridor setback and top-of-bank; the proposed improvements lie outside this mapped setback, and wastewater/leach components maintain a 100-foot stream setback, demonstrating consistency with the County's

Riparian Corridor Ordinance and General Plan riparian policies.

Four trees will be removed to accommodate the receiving area: one olive, one redwood (≈6"), and two oaks (≈7" and 14" DBH). Protected trees to remain would be fenced and safeguarded (no stockpiling/parking within driplines; erosion and sediment controls to protect root zones). These elements are identified in the project statement and will be carried into permit conditions; removal of protected trees (oaks/redwood) will comply with the Tree Protection Ordinance (replacement or in-lieu per code). Compliance with existing standards is not considered mitigation; as such, impacts are considered less than significant. The project will be conditioned to comply and compliance will be verified through the issuance of the associated grading permit for the proposed work.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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 not located in an area subject to a habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.

Significance Level:
No Impact

5. CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Would the project:

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

Comment:
A cultural resources investigation for the site (Origer & Associates, 2022) identified one built-environment resource within the study area, the John Long Barn (P-49-006741), and documents that it was moved to the parcel when U.S. 101 was widened, with associated outbuildings demolished and modern alterations made (e.g., perimeter concrete foundation, non-original windows/doors). Based on loss of location/setting and subsequent alterations, the study concluded the barn does not meet California Register (CRHR) eligibility criteria and therefore is not a historical resource for CEQA purposes. The existing winery complex is modern and not a historical resource. Project improvements consist of a small truck-dock addition and operational refinements within the already developed winery yard; no work would demolish, relocate, or substantially alter character-defining features of any listed or eligible resource, and no indirect effects on a historical resource are anticipated.

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 May 21, 2024, Permit Sonoma referred the project application to Native American Tribes within Sonoma County to request consultation under AB-52 (the request for consultation period ended June 21, 2024). No requests for consultation were received.

The archaeological study for the site included records checks, pedestrian survey, and limited subsurface borings. No surface archaeological sites were identified within the work area; however, one isolated chert flake was recovered at approximately 135 cm below ground surface in one of five auger borings. Based on that isolated find, the consultant characterized the potential for buried resources as high and, at the time of the report (when larger new buildings were contemplated), recommended additional subsurface work prior to broader development. The current project, by

contrast, is confined to a small truck-dock addition and minor grading within the already developed winery yard and installation of new leach lines within the existing vineyard, and the isolated find was not within the dock area. Given the limited, previously disturbed footprint, further pre-construction testing is not warranted for the current modification; however, to avoid any potential substantial adverse change if previously unknown resources are encountered during ground disturbance, the project incorporates the County's inadvertent discovery protocol (Mitigation Measure CUL-1) requiring immediate work stoppage, protection of the find, qualified evaluation, and appropriate treatment/tribal coordination consistent with CEQA Guidelines §15064.5.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

Mitigation Measure CUL-1:
All grading and building permits plans involving ground disturbing activities shall include the following notes:

"If paleontological resources or prehistoric, historic or tribal cultural resources are encountered during ground-disturbing work, all work in the immediate vicinity shall be halted and the operator must immediately notify Permit Sonoma – Planning Division staff of the find. The operator shall be responsible for the cost to have a qualified paleontologist, archaeologist or tribal cultural resource specialist under contract to evaluate the find and make recommendations to protect the resource in a report to PRMD. Paleontological resources include fossils of animals, plants or other organisms. Prehistoric resources include humanly modified stone, shell, or bones, hearths, firepits, obsidian and chert flaked-stone tools (e.g., projectile points, knives, choppers), midden (culturally darkened soil containing heat-affected rock, artifacts, animal bone, or shellfish remains), stone milling equipment, such as mortars and pestles, and certain sites features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe. Historic resources include all byproducts of human use greater than fifty (50) years of age including, backfilled privies, wells, and refuse pits; concrete, stone, or wood structural elements or foundations; and concentrations of metal, glass, and ceramic refuse.

If human remains are encountered, work in the immediate vicinity shall be halted and the operator shall notify Permit Sonoma and the Sonoma County Coroner immediately. At the same time, the operator shall be responsible for the cost to have a qualified archaeologist under contract to evaluate the discovery. If the human remains are determined to be of Native American origin, the Coroner must notify the Native American Heritage Commission within 24 hours of this identification so that a Most Likely Descendant can be designated and the appropriate measures implemented in compliance with the California Government Code and Public Resources Code."

Mitigation Monitoring CUL-1:
No permits for any construction activities shall be issued until the above note appears on the construction plans.

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

Comment:
No formal cemeteries are recorded on the parcel, and ground disturbance is limited to a small truck-dock addition within the previously developed winery yard. While the likelihood of encountering human remains is low, Mitigation Measure CUL-1 (inadvertent discovery) applies to all ground-disturbing work. If human remains are found, work in the vicinity shall immediately stop and the Sonoma County Coroner shall be notified pursuant to Health & Safety Code §7050.5. If the remains are determined to be Native American, the Coroner shall notify the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) within 24 hours to identify a Most Likely Descendant (MLD); appropriate treatment/avoidance shall be developed in consultation with the MLD and implemented prior to resuming work.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated (see Mitigation Measure CUL-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:
Construction would be limited to a small, approximately 4,100-square-foot truck-dock addition and associated minor improvements contiguous with the existing developed footprint. While construction uses non-recoverable energy (e.g., fuel for equipment), the scale and duration are limited and not indicative of wasteful or inefficient consumption.

Operationally, the project would incrementally increase electricity use (e.g., lighting and equipment at the dock) and modestly increase vehicle energy use from added trips (about 23 average daily trips, with seasonal peaks during harvest). These increases are typical of winery operations and are managed by applicable State efficiency and clean-transportation regulations (e.g., Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards; Low Carbon Fuel Standard; Clean Car/Low-Emission Vehicle programs), which reduce waste and improve energy performance over time.

Project design and existing facility features further avoid inefficient energy use: the project does not include new natural gas infrastructure; any new/modified building systems must meet current CALGreen/Title 24 requirements; the facility has on-site solar generation; and the applicant commits to meeting CALGreen Tier 2 EV-charging provisions. Collectively, these elements ensure electrical demand is efficiently met and that transportation energy use is minimized.

Accordingly, energy consumption during construction and operation would not be wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary

Significance Level:
Less than Significant

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

Comment:
The project would not conflict with state and local energy-efficiency and renewable-energy objectives. Any building/electrical work must meet current Title 24/CALGreen requirements, and the applicant commits to CALGreen Tier 2 EV-charging infrastructure; the project also avoids new natural-gas connections. The facility already implements efficiency and renewable measures including LED lighting upgrades, operational energy management, and on-site solar that supplied ~56.6% of 2022 electricity use, and has EV charging stations on site. These features are consistent with statewide programs and plans such as SB 100/Renewable Portfolio Standard, Title 24 code requirements, and the 2022 CARB Scoping Plan emphasis on building electrification and EV infrastructure.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant

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.**

Comment:

Existing geologic conditions that could affect new development are considered in this analysis (as a matter of County policy). The site is not within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone per the Sonoma County General Plan Safety Maps. The project consists of a small truck-dock addition within an already developed industrial footprint and does not introduce new occupied structures. Accordingly, the potential for fault rupture at the site is low. Any building permit work would remain subject to California Building Code requirements.

Significance Level:
No 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, Healdsburg-Rodgers Creek, and other faults. The site's proximity to the San Andreas fault indicates that the intensity of ground shaking and damage from anticipated future earthquakes in the project area is categorized as "Very Strong" according to the County's General Plan Public Safety Element (Figure PS-1a).

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 take into account soil properties, seismic shaking, and foundation type. Project conditions of approval require that building permits be obtained for all construction, which would ensure that CBC standards are followed, including all standard seismic and soil test/compaction requirements. The project would therefore not expose people to substantial risk of injury from seismic shaking and the impact would be less than significant.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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 project consists of a small truck-dock addition within an already developed yard. As stated above, structures are subject to engineering standards of the California Building Code, which require that the project meet all standard seismic and soil testing/compaction requirements. Therefore, the potential impact from liquefaction would be less than significant.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

iv. Landslides?

Comment:
Steep slopes characterize much of Sonoma County, particularly the northern and eastern portions of the County. Where these areas are underlain by weak or unconsolidated earth materials, landslides are a hazard. According to the General Plan Public Safety Element Deep-seated Landslide Hazard Areas Map (Figure PS-1d), the project site has a Slope Class of 0 (i.e., nearly flat) and is not located in a designated Landslide Hazard Area.

The proposed work (a small truck-dock addition and minor improvements) is located within the existing, developed winery yard on a relatively level pad; no new road cuts, hillside grading, or steep-slope work are proposed. Project submittals show only minor grading associated with the receiving/dock area (see Preliminary Grading & Drainage Plan) and no blasting or pile driving is needed. Site plans/elevations indicate gentle relief across the developed yard, consistent with low slope gradients.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact.

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

Comment
The project must comply with erosion and sediment control provisions of the Drainage and Storm Water Management Ordinance (Chapter 11 Construction Grading and Drainage and Chapter 11A Stormwater Quality, Sonoma County Code) and Building Ordinance (Chapter 7, Sonoma County Code) requires implementation of flow control best management practices to reduce runoff. The Ordinance requires treatment of runoff from the two-year storm event. Required inspection by Permit Sonoma staff ensures that all grading and erosion control measures are constructed according to the approved plans. These ordinance requirements and adopted best management practices are specifically designed to maintain potential water quantity impacts at a less than significant level during and post construction. If project construction were to occur during wet weather however, it is possible that stormwater could carry soil offsite into local storm drains. This impact can be reduced to less than significant by using standard construction erosion control measures at the project site.

In regard to water quality impacts, 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, are specifically designed to maintain potential water quality impacts at a less than significant level during project construction.

For post construction water quality impacts, adopted grading permit standards and best management practices require that storm water to be detained, infiltrated, or retained for later use. Other adopted water quality best management practices include storm water treatment devices based on filtering, settling, or removing pollutants. These construction standards are specifically designed to maintain potential water quality grading impacts at a less than significant level.

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 Impact

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. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), soils near the project site consist of Pleasanton gravelly loam (2-5% slopes), which has a low shrink-swell potential. Therefore, risks from expansive soils would be less than significant. In addition, the project is limited to a small truck-dock addition and minor grading within an existing, developed pad. Potential shrink-swell risks would be addressed through standard structural design and construction practices required by the California Building Code (e.g., engineered fills, moisture conditioning, slab/foundation design) and enforced through the County's permit review and inspection process.

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:
Sewer service is not available at the site. Wastewater is handled by two separate systems: (1) a domestic (sanitary) septic system for employee restrooms and similar uses, and (2) an off-site process-wastewater treatment plant for winery process flows. The use permit modification increases the maximum annual production capacity from 1,000,000 to 1,900,000 cases and adds a second grape receiving area; no public tasting/events are proposed.

Domestic septic system (sanitary sewage). The existing septic system treats only domestic waste. To accommodate added employees associated with the operational changes, the project proposes to replace the existing septic tank with a new 2,200-gallon tank, abandon the existing force main and leach field, and construct a new leach field sized for peak-day flow, with 200% expansion (reserve) areas. County records document wet-weather groundwater testing (WSR19-0205), a County staff site review of profile holes (Sept. 27, 2023), and a pre-percolation report (WSR23-0425). The new leach field maintains a 100-foot setback from the stream, consistent with County siting requirements. Based on the applicant's design criteria, peak domestic flow is ~1,380 gpd (92 peak-day employees). These sanitary system improvements will be reviewed and permitted by Environmental Health for conformance with the County OWTS standards (siting, percolation rates, setbacks, reserve area, and capacity).

Process wastewater (winery operations). Process wastewater is not directed to the septic system. It is managed by the site's existing process-wastewater treatment plant, which consists of a collection system, pretreatment, lift station, and two treatment/storage ponds (2.42 MG and 5.55 MG). Treated water is disposed by evaporation or reuse for irrigation on adjacent pastures/vineyards; an 80-acre land-application area is approved, with ~20 acres currently used. The system's design capacity is 80,000 gpd, with current permits for 32,000 gpd average daily flow and 64,000 gpd average during the peak month. 2018 data showed ~16,400 gpd average daily flow and ~34,000 gpd average in the peak month. With the proposed production increase, the estimated average daily process flow is ~30,800 gpd and ~66,000 gpd in the peak month—within or below the design envelope, and within the operational/permitting framework cited by the applicant. The applicant states that, given current plant performance and projected flows, treatment capabilities are adequate for the project.

Soils/adequacy finding. Domestic OWTS improvements (new tank and leach field with reserves) are sited on the west side of the winery building and were planned with groundwater and percolation investigations under County oversight. The plans delineate setbacks (including the 100-foot stream setback for the leach field) and LID stormwater controls (e.g., a bioretention planter) that protect infiltration areas from runoff and sedimentation. Considering the soils testing history, reserve area provisions, and Environmental Health's permit review for final design, soils at the designated OWTS areas are expected to adequately support the upgraded domestic system. Process wastewater will continue to be managed by the existing dedicated treatment system with adequate storage/disposal capacity, separate from the septic system. Accordingly, the project would not result in impacts related to soils being incapable of supporting septic or alternative wastewater systems.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:
The project consists of a small truck-dock addition and minor improvements within the existing, developed winery yard. There are no known unique geologic features on the site, and no paleontological resources have been recorded for the work area. Ground disturbance would be limited and largely confined to previously disturbed soils associated with the existing facility. In the unlikely event that a fossil or other paleontological resource is unearthed during excavation, the County's standard inadvertent-discovery note (Mitigation CUL-1) requires immediate work stoppage in the vicinity of the find, notification of Permit Sonoma, and evaluation by a qualified paleontologist (or other appropriate specialist) with recommendations to protect the resource before work can resume. This measure is printed on grading/earthwork plans and enforced through permit review and

field inspections.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. See Mitigation Measure CUL-1.

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:

Regulatory Setting

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
        i. The project will not include natural gas appliances or natural gas plumbing (in both residential and nonresidential development).

ii. 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
   i. 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:
      a. Residential projects: 15 percent below the existing VMT per capita
      b. Office projects: 15 percent below the existing VMT per employee
      c. Retail projects: no net increase in existing VMT
   ii. 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 an Air Quality and GHG Analysis prepared by Illingworth & Rodkin, Inc. and the project was analyzed under threshold A above and discussed below.

Buildings.

Construction is limited to a ~4,100-sf truck dock with no installation of natural gas appliances or natural gas plumbing.

Construction.

Construction is limited to a ~4,100-sf truck dock; GHG from such a small, short-term scope would be quite small/negligible and is not the focus of BAAQMD's 2022 guidance (which emphasizes operations).

Transportation related to Operations.

Under typical conditions, the project adds ~22 daily trips (125 daily trips under existing conditions versus 147 daily trips under proposed conditions) and fewer than 25 peak-hour trips; during harvest (about three months), the project adds ~95 daily trips with conservative peak-hour assumptions, although actual peak-hour employee trips would likely be lower due to staggered shifts (Transportation Impact Study for the Vinwood Winery Expansion Project, W-Trans, November 4, 2024). These volumes screen out for detailed VMT analysis using OPR's "small project" criterion (<110 daily trips), and Sonoma County has not adopted more stringent thresholds for similar projects. Heavy truck miles are not included in CEQA VMT per §15064.3/OPR Technical Advisory (automobile = passenger cars/light-duty trucks).

Electricity.

As described in the Technical Memorandum on Air Quality and GHG Assessment submitted for the project (Illingworth & Rodkin, January 25, 2025), the facility already produces ~942,491 kWh/yr via on-site solar. With the project, annual grid electricity is estimated at ~3,674,509 kWh, an increase of ~874,509 kWh/yr, using PG&E ~160 lb CO_2/MWh for delivered power in the GHG calculation. Any building/electrical improvements must meet current energy-efficiency codes (Title 24/CALGreen), which the memo treats as part of Threshold A compliance.

Process emissions (informational). The memo quantified biogenic CO_2/VOC from fermentation/aging to provide a complete picture; these biogenic emissions are not toxic air contaminants and are disclosed for context.

Because the project does not propose the use of natural gas, would use minimal energy, does not include new residential, office, or retail uses, would generate low 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 requirements for energy efficiency.
    b. LED lighting systems are used.
    c. Lighting timers and dimmers are utilized.
    d. Night air cooling would be utilized as there would be no new air conditioning use.
2. Increase renewable energy use.
    a. The facility generates a substantial amount of solar power.
3. Electrical energy usage.
    a. EV charging stations are installed at the facility.
    b. Project uses electrically powered off-road equipment.
4. Reduce travel demand through focused growth.
    a. Project would provide bicycle parking facilities.
    b. The project would generate traffic below 110 trips daily and would be below screening thresholds for vehicle miles travelled impacts.
5. Increase solid waste diversion.
    a. The project is compliant as it would meet the County and local recycling goals.
    b. All pomace is hauled offsite by a local vendor and turned into compost.

In addition, the applicant has proposed:

1. No new natural-gas infrastructure (fully electric improvements).

2. Avoid wasteful/inefficient electricity use via compliance with current Title 24/CALGreen.

3. Provide CALGreen Tier 2 EV charging, supporting transportation electrification over time.

4. Low VMT/traffic generation (≈22 ADT typical; <25 peak-hour; harvest ≈95 ADT for ~3 months), which screens out under OPR's small-project criterion.

In addition, the facility already produces ~942,491 kWh/yr with on-site solar, and operational electricity demand is subject to contemporary energy-efficiency standards, further aligning with State policy to decarbonize the grid and end-use energy.

By (a) committing to all-electric design, (b) complying with Title 24/CALGreen, (c) installing Tier 2 EV infrastructure, and (d) generating low daily trips that pass the VMT screen, as documented in the project's AQ/GHG analysis and TIS, the project would not conflict with a plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions and, in fact, is supportive of those policies.

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. There will be no substantial increase in traffic as a result of this project, thus an increase in exposure due to the risks of transporting hazardous materials will not change as a result of the project.

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 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.

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 site is not within the Airport Referral Area as designated by the Sonoma County Comprehensive Airport Land Use Plan (ALUC).

Significance Level:

No 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:
Fire hazard severity zone designations for the parcel include moderate, high, and very high designations. The project consists of a small truck-dock addition and minor improvements within the existing, developed winery yard. It does not alter the public roadway network, change the functional classification of any road, or reconfigure intersections. Primary site access remains from Geyserville Avenue using existing driveways; no road closures or lane reductions are proposed as part of construction. Construction staging and worker parking would occur on-site, so public travel lanes and shoulders are not anticipated to be occupied. If any temporary work were to occur in the public right-of-way, standard encroachment-permit requirements (e.g., a basic traffic control plan with flagging and cones/signage) would maintain through access and emergency vehicle movement.

Operationally, the project adds a small number of daily trips under typical conditions and a seasonal increase during harvest, but volumes remain low and do not create new bottlenecks or access constraints. Driveway operations and sight distance meet County standards, and the project does not trigger turn-lane warrants. Emergency vehicle access to on-site facilities will continue to comply with Fire Code requirements (e.g., clear 20-foot fire apparatus access, 13′-6″ vertical clearance, maintained fire lanes/hydrants). No new gates or barriers are proposed that would impede emergency ingress/egress; any future gate hardware or geometry must comply with Fire Code (e.g., Knox access, clear width, setbacks from the roadway).

The County's emergency planning framework (e.g., County Emergency Operations Plan and multi-jurisdiction hazard/evacuation planning) relies on preserving roadway capacity and maintaining driveway/roadway sight distance and turning movements. Because the project: (1) keeps construction activity and staging on-site; (2) does not close or re-stripe public travel lanes; (3) maintains compliant driveway sight distance and turning movements; and (4) preserves Fire-Code-compliant emergency access on site, it would not interfere with an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan.

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?

Comment:
Construction is limited to a small (~4,100-sf) truck-dock addition and minor grading within the existing, developed winery yard. The disturbed area is well under one acre. Regardless, County grading/building permits require construction best management practices (BMPs) that prevent sediment, concrete washout, fuels, and other pollutants from entering stormwater. As conditioned and through standard stormwater notes on the grading plans, construction would not violate water-quality

standards or waste-discharge requirements or otherwise degrade water quality.

Operationally, the project maintains two distinct wastewater systems:

- Domestic (sanitary) sewage. Domestic wastewater from employee restrooms is served by an onsite wastewater treatment system (OWTS). As part of the use-permit modification, the applicant proposes replacement/upgrades to the domestic system (new septic tank and a new leach field with required reserve area) in a location that observes standard stream setbacks (≥100 feet) and is supported by County-reviewed soils/groundwater testing. Final OWTS design, siting, capacity, and setbacks are subject to Environmental Health review and approval prior to building/occupancy. With these upgrades and permit conditions, domestic wastewater disposal would remain compliant with County standards and protective of water quality.

- Winery process wastewater. Process wastewater (e.g., from crush/cleaning) is not directed to the domestic septic system. It continues to be collected and treated in the site's dedicated process-wastewater treatment system with lined/storage ponds and land application/evaporation capacity sized for the permitted flows. Treated process water is disposed by evaporation and/or approved land application on designated irrigation areas; no discharge to waters of the state is proposed. The production increase does not change the basic process-wastewater handling approach. Ongoing operation remains subject to applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board requirements (e.g., waste discharge requirements or waiver/notice conditions), including keeping all discharges within the approved land-application areas, maintaining setbacks from surface waters, and operating/monitoring the ponds and irrigation system in accordance with permit conditions.

Stormwater/LID. The dock and associated pavement are within the already developed yard; site drainage is maintained and treated through low-impact development (LID) features (e.g., a bioretention planter serving the paved area) sized per County standards. No work is proposed in the mapped riparian setback or at/within top-of-bank. As such, the project would not introduce new sources or pathways for polluted runoff.

Given (1) the limited construction footprint and required BMPs (GEO-2), (2) OWTS upgrades subject to Environmental Health approval with protective siting/setbacks, (3) continued use of the existing process-wastewater treatment and land-application system in compliance with water-board requirements, and (4) provision/maintenance of LID stormwater controls within the developed yard, the project would not violate water quality standards or waste-discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade water quality.

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:
Potable and process water would continue to be supplied by existing on-site wells within the Alexander Valley alluvium. The applicant's water-use memo (Brelje & Race, May 23, 2025) estimates total groundwater demand at full operation of approximately 12.4 million gallons/year (~38 AFY), based on a process ratio of ~2.2 gal/gal and non-process uses (employees, chiller makeup net of rainwater capture, limited landscape irrigation). Historic metered use averaged ~35 AFY (2008–2015) and ~24 AFY (2016–2024) following conservation upgrades; the current permit allows 36 AFY, so the proposal represents a ~2 AFY / ~5% increase over the existing allowance.

I The hydrogeology memorandum identifies the site within the Alexander Area Subbasin (DWR 1-054.01), a very-low priority basin under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), which does not require a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). Long-term hydrographs for nearby wells show no progressive decline; depths are generally ~10–20 feet below ground surface, and the Winery Well static level measured ~7.6 feet below ground surface (March 2025), indicating stable conditions. Based on these data and the modest incremental demand, the memo concludes the project would not substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere with recharge.

Process wastewater would continue to be collected and treated in the existing on-site process-wastewater system with storage ponds and disposal by evaporation and/or approved land application to designated irrigation areas; this provides in-lieu irrigation supply that reduces net groundwater demand at the property scale. Domestic (sanitary) wastewater is handled by a separate OWTS, with planned replacement/upgrades reviewed by Permit Sonoma's Well and Septic Division.

Consistent with County practice for Class 1 groundwater areas and General Plan Policy WR-2d, Natural Resources recommends conditions to track and manage groundwater use over time. Key elements include: (1) annual well-monitoring fee; (2) an access easement for County staff to read meters/levels; (3) a dedicated monitoring well (or approved substitute) and equipping wells for level measurements; (4) totalizing meters on production wells; (5) submittal of Water Resources Monitoring (PJR-147) with surveyed locations and elevations; (6) annual reporting (levels, volumes), five-year meter calibration, and adaptive conservation if local declines are identified; (7) a use cap of 38 AFY with adaptive-management triggers (update conservation plan if the 3-year average increases >0.5 AFY; potential BZA review if the 3-year average exceeds the approved plan estimate by >10%); and (8) compliance with any applicable Groundwater Sustainability Agency requirements. These conditions provide enforceable monitoring and adaptive-management tools to ensure use remains within the evaluated envelope.

Considering (a) projected total groundwater use of ~38 AFY in a very-low priority subbasin with stable water-level trends, (b) a small (~5%) increase over the current allowance, (c) continued reuse of treated process water for irrigation, and (d) the monitoring, metering, and adaptive-management conditions summarized above, the project would not substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge.

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?

Comment:
Work is limited to a ~4,100-sf truck-dock addition within the existing developed yard; no channel realignment is proposed, and all improvements remain outside the mapped top-of-bank and 50-ft riparian setback. Site drainage is maintained with on-site LID features (including a bioretention planter) that treat/pause runoff before discharge. During construction, an approved Erosion and Sediment Control Plan with BMPs will be implemented. These features avoid changes that would cause on- or off-site erosion/siltation.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:
Project construction is confined to the existing developed winery yard (e.g., a small truck-dock) and would add only a modest amount of impervious surface relative to the large, previously graded complex. No new drainage courses are proposed or modified. As part of grading/building permits, the project must prepare County-compliant grading and drainage plans and implement post-construction stormwater/LID measures (e.g., bioretention/infiltration, stabilized outfalls) so that runoff is properly managed and water-quality treatment is provided consistent with Permit Sonoma standards. Given the limited footprint and standard LID requirements, the project would not create or exacerbate on-site ponding or off-site flooding. This conclusion is further supported by the overall project scope described in County Natural Resources' review (facility additions within an established site).

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:
Site work is limited to a ±1,200-sf truck dock and minor improvements contiguous with the existing developed winery yard; no new off-site storm drain connections are proposed. These improvements would not materially change the site's overall drainage pattern or appreciably increase peak runoff. Any grading/building permits must comply with the County's Grading & Drainage Ordinance and standard construction BMPs/LID measures reviewed at permit stage and enforced through field inspections. With these requirements in place, the project would not exceed the capacity of existing stormwater systems and would not create substantial additional sources of polluted runoff. The limited scope is reflected in the project description (e.g., dock size and work remaining within the developed yard).

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

iv. Impede or redirect flood flows?

Comment:
Improvements are confined to the existing developed winery yard (the small truck-dock area) and occur outside the mapped top-of-bank and 50-foot Riparian Corridor setback. No grading, fill, structures, or culverts are proposed within the on-site drainage, and the project does not modify channel geometry or conveyance features. As a result, the project would not encroach into a floodway/corridor or otherwise impede or redirect flood flows.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:
Project improvements are confined to the existing developed winery yard and a small truck-dock addition. The site is inland and not located in a tsunami hazard zone or adjacent to a large enclosed water body where seiche effects are a concern. Routine winery materials (e.g., cleaning agents, sanitizers, small fuel/oils) are stored and used within existing buildings or designated service areas that include standard housekeeping and secondary containment practices required by County code and the Fire Code. Process wastewater is handled by the on-site, permitted winery process-water treatment and land application system, and domestic wastewater is conveyed to the new proposed septic system; neither system involves chemical storage that would be expected to mobilize offsite under rare inundation scenarios. With compliance with existing hazardous materials storage/containment standards and stormwater BMPs, the project would not create a substantial risk of pollutant release due to inundation.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:
The project would not conflict with, or obstruct implementation of, applicable water-quality or groundwater management programs.

Water quality control plan. The site discharges no process wastewater to waters of the state: winery

process water is collected and treated in the off-site system, with disposal by evaporation and/or approved land application on designated irrigation areas; domestic sewage is handled by a separate, code-compliant OWTS sited with standard stream setbacks (≥100 feet). Post-construction drainage remains within the developed yard and is treated/managed with LID (including a bioretention planter) per County standards. With these practices, there is no proposed discharge that would conflict with the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board's Basin Plan implementation (e.g., prohibitions, treatment/land-application requirements).

Groundwater (SGMA). The project pumps from on-site wells in the Alexander Area Subbasin (DWR 1-054.01), which is a very-low priority basin under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) (no Groundwater Sustainability Plan required). The hydrogeologic memo documents stable long-term water levels in nearby wells (generally ~10–20 feet below ground surface; Winery Well ~7.6 feet below ground surface in March 2025). Total projected pumping at full operation is ~38 AFY, a small (~5%) increase over the current 36-AFY allowance. Permit Sonoma's Natural Resources Division has recommended conditions of approval that provide enforceable monitoring and adaptive-management to ensure ongoing consistency with SGMA's objectives. Accordingly, the project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of SGMA.

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 project site is designated Land Intensive Agriculture – 20 acre per unit density (LIA 20) by the Sonoma County General Plan. Wineries are consistent with LIA when authorized by use permit as Agricultural Processing: "facilities for the processing of any agricultural product grown or produced primarily on-site or in the local area, storage of agricultural products grown or processed on-site, and bottling or canning of any agricultural product grown or processed on-site." Existing vineyards on-site and extensive surrounding vineyards support the agricultural setting. The Zoning Code confirms that LIA allows agricultural processing with a use permit, subject to sizing and compatibility standards (County Code §26-18-030). The proposal is a modification of an existing winery—principally a small truck-dock addition and operational refinements within the already developed winery yard—with only a small increase in water use and no new public/visitor facilities.

The proposal is consistent with the General Plan's Agricultural Element Goals, Objectives and Policies, which include the following:

> **Policy AR-4a**: *The primary use of any parcel within the three agricultural land use categories shall be agricultural production and related processing, support services, and visitor serving uses. Residential uses in these areas shall recognize that the primary use of the land may create traffic and agricultural nuisance situations, such as flies, noise, odors, and spraying of chemicals.*

The project site is within the Land Intensive Agriculture land use designation, which is one of the three Agricultural Land Use categories, and the proposed use is an agricultural processing facility. No

visitor-serving components are proposed.

> **Goal AR-5**: *Facilitate agricultural production by allowing agriculture related support uses, such as processing, storage, bottling, canning and packaging, and agricultural support services to be conveniently and accessibly located in agricultural production areas when related to the primary agricultural production in the area.*

The proposed location is related to and serves primarily the agricultural activity of vineyards, which are prevalent in the surrounding area. The request is for continued winery processing with minor physical expansion (truck dock) within an existing complex; no redesignation or extension of urban services is required.

> **Policy AR-5c**: *Permit storage, bottling, canning, and packaging facilities for agricultural products either grown or processed on site provided that these facilities are sized to accommodate, but not exceed, the needs of the growing or processing operation. Establish additional standards in the Development Code that differentiate between storage facilities directly necessary for processing, and facilities to be utilized for the storage of finished product such as case storage of bottled wine. Such standards should require an applicant to demonstrate the need for such on-site storage.*

The use permit seeks to increase maximum annual production from 1.0 million to 1.9 million cases, and the physical work consists primarily of a small truck-dock/receiving improvement and related yard logistics within the existing developed footprint. The dock is an operational accommodation to the higher throughput, more efficient loading/receiving and circulation, but it does not add large new case-storage buildings, retail floorspace, or third-party distribution facilities. Any incremental case storage remains incidental and proportional to on-site processing needs (bottling/packaging of wine produced at the facility). As such, the project would not conflict with AR-5c's requirement that storage/bottling/packaging be sized to accommodate, but not exceed, the needs of the processing operation.

> **Policy AR-5g**: *Local concentrations of any separate agricultural support uses, including processing, storage, bottling, canning and packaging, agricultural support services, and visitor-serving and recreational uses as provided in Policy AR-6f, even if related to surrounding agricultural activities, are detrimental to the primary use of the land for the production of food, fiber and plant materials and shall be avoided. In determining whether or not the approval of such uses would constitute a detrimental concentration of such uses, consider all the following factors:*
> *(1) Whether the above uses would result in joint road access conflicts, or in traffic levels that exceed the Circulation and Transit Element's objectives for level of service on a site specific and cumulative basis.*
> *(2) Whether the above uses would draw water from the same aquifer and be located within the zone of influence of area wells.*
> *(3) Whether the above uses would be detrimental to the rural character of the area. In cases where the proposed processing use would process only products grown on site, such use would not be subject to this concentration policy.*

This proposal is an expansion of an existing winery use focused on operational throughput (increasing annual production from 1.0 to 1.9 million cases) with no expansion of primary buildings—only a small truck-dock addition and operational changes within the existing structure/yard. Trip generation remains low under typical conditions, with seasonal peaks accommodated on the established driveway network; no new access points, turn lanes, or reconfiguration are proposed, and driveway sight distance meets County standards, minimizing the potential for joint-access conflicts or localized LOS effects. Groundwater demand reflects a modest (~5%) increase over the existing allowance (from 36 AFY to ~38 AFY) and is managed through on-site wells with County monitoring/metering and usage controls; long-term regional data indicate stable groundwater levels, reducing the likelihood of well-to-well influence concerns. Because the improvements are confined to the existing facility footprint aside from the additional truck dock, no visitor-serving uses are proposed, and the project entails only a modest increase over the existing water allowance, the project would not contribute to further concentration of agricultural support uses in the local area.

> **Policy AR-5f**: *Use the following guidelines for approving zoning or permits for agricultural support services:*
> *(1) The use will not require the extension of sewer or water,*

(2) The use does not substantially detract from agricultural production on-site or in the area,
(3) The use does not create a concentration of commercial uses in the immediate area, and
(4) The use is compatible with and does not adversely impact surrounding residential neighborhoods.

The proposed project will not require the extension of sewer and water, as it relies on existing-site well and wastewater systems. The proposal entails no ground disturbance that would impact agricultural production on the site or in the area. The proposal is contained within an existing structure and would not further contribute to a concentration of commercial uses in the area beyond what already exists. The use does not impact residential neighborhoods, as there are none in the nearby area.

Overall, the winery use is consistent with applicable land use and agriculture policies and regulations set forth in the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

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 site is an existing winery within the Land Intensive Agriculture (LIA) designation and is not mapped within a designated mineral resource area (e.g., ARM combining district or MRZ-2 aggregate resource zones). No mineral extraction occurs on the parcel, no mining rights exist to the applicant's knowledge, and no mining is proposed. The physical work (a small truck-dock addition and operational refinements) is confined to the already developed winery yard and would not preclude access to any known off-site mineral resource areas or haul routes.

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:
Per the County's Noise Guidelines screening, a project-specific noise study was not required for this use-permit modification. The proposal is limited to a small truck-dock addition and operational expansion through refinements within the existing winery footprint; no new public/visitor uses or

outdoor event areas are proposed. Typical operational noise sources (intermittent truck loading/unloading at the dock, forklift movements within the service yard, and existing indoor production/mechanical equipment) occur in an already developed, mostly paved setting where existing buildings and yard walls provide line-of-sight shielding toward the surrounding area. The nearest residence is over 1,000 feet away, and the intervening distance, existing structures, and low surrounding ambient activity collectively reduce the potential for off-site noise effects. The topography at the developed yard is relatively level and does not create an amphitheater effect or other sound-focusing condition.

The project will not increase transportation noise at off-site receptors because it does not reconfigure public roadways, shift travel lanes closer to homes, or generate a permanent increase in traffic volumes that would measurably change roadway noise; all circulation changes are internal to the site. Short-term construction of the dock is limited in scale and duration and will follow standard County practices (e.g., daytime hours, well-maintained equipment, no unnecessary idling), which are adequate given the distance to the nearest residence.

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 site is not within an airport land use plan as designated by Sonoma County.

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 (an increase of 14 maximum daily employees (78 existing employees during harvest would increase to 92 during harvest), including full-time and part-time staff, is proposed). This small 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 (an increase of 6 employees over existing staffing is proposed, for a total of 44 employees during normal operations, and an increase of 8 employees during harvest, for a total of 92 employees in harvest season).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:
No Impact

i. Fire protection?

Comment:
The Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District will continue to serve this area. There will be no increased need for fire protection resulting from the minor truck-dock addition and operational changes within the existing winery footprint (no new residents or visitor-serving facilities). Building/grading permits will ensure compliance with California Fire Code and County access/water requirements.

Significance Level:
No 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 the minor truck-dock addition and operational changes confined to the existing winery footprint (no new residents, no visitor-serving facilities, and no change to public roadway operations).

Significance Level:
No Impact

iii. Schools?

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

Significance Level:
No Impact

iv. Parks?

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

Significance Level:
No 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:
No 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 proposed project does not include any residential use and as such would not lead to an increase in the use of existing neighborhood or 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 proposed project does not involve construction of recreational facilities. See item 15.a. above.

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.

Using the screening criteria established by the County of Sonoma Guidelines for traffic studies, which states that Permit Sonoma and Sonoma County Public Infrastructure are both responsible for the review and condition of private development projects. Traffic related conditions must be based on an analysis of the potential traffic impacts that establish a reasonable nexus between the impacts of the project and the required improvements or conditions. The applicant submitted a traffic study (see "Transportation Impact Study for the Vinwood Winery Expansion prepared by W-Trans, dated November 4, 2024) that met these guidelines and determined that the project would not cause a significant traffic impact to the study intersections.

The applicant submitted an initial Draft Traffic Study dated May 18, 2021, after peer review by Sonoma County Public Infrastructure and a Final Traffic Study was submitted and accepted on November 4, 2024. The traffic study findings are as follows

- The proposed project is expected to generate an average of 22 net-new trips per day (average daily trips will increase from 125 trips per day to 147 trips per day), including 6 weekday a.m. and p.m. peak hour trips and 6 trips during the p.m. peak hour on weekends. During harvest, the project is expected to generate an average of 95 net new daily trips including 24 trips during each peak hour.
- The project is consistent with County policy regarding transportation facilities so it would have a less-than significant impact on these facilities.
- The project would have a less-than-significant VMT impact given that it is expected to generate fewer than 110 net new vehicle trips per day.

Sonoma County Public Infrastructure provided Conditions of Approval for this project that require the applicant adhere to these recommendations.

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 construction and operation. Under §15064.3(b), transportation impacts are evaluated based on Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). The project is a minor modification to an existing winery (small truck-dock addition and operational refinements within the developed footprint) and would generate well under the "small project" screening level of 110 net new daily trips under typical conditions (about 22 ADT, with seasonal harvest activity of about 95 ADT for roughly three months). Because it screens out at the project level, a detailed VMT analysis is not required. The project does not add new visitor-serving uses, housing, or office space that would meaningfully shift trip-making patterns, and it does not reconfigure the public roadway network in a way that would increase VMT. Consistent with §15064.3 and State technical guidance, automobile VMT refers to passenger cars and light trucks; heavy-duty truck miles associated with goods movement are not included in the VMT impact determination. On this basis, the project would not conflict with or be inconsistent with §15064.3(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 Department of Fire and Emergency services Fire Inspector during the building permit process to ensure compliance with emergency access issues. Refer to discussion in item 17(d), above.

Significance Level:
No Impact

18. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Would the project:

a) **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.

Comment:
On May 21, 2024, Assembly Bill 52 Project Notifications were sent to the local tribes. These Native American tribes were invited to consult on the project pursuant to Public Resources Code sections 21080.3.1 and 21080.3.2. One tribe requested more information about the project area, while others had no comment or did not respond. No requests for consultation were received.

Although no requests for consultation were received and no Tribal Cultural Resources were identified or are anticipated to be impacted, implementation of CUL-1 for “accidental discovery” would address any potential resources discovered during project grading and construction and would further reduce any potential impacts.

The cultural study completed for the site included records checks, a field survey, and limited subsurface borings. No archaeological site indicators were observed at the surface; however, a single chert flake was recovered at approximately 135 cm below ground surface in one of five auger borings, and the consultant characterized the potential for buried resources as high and recommended subsurface investigation prior to additional development to determine whether an archaeological site is present and, if so, its extent relative to proposed work areas. However, the report was prepared when the proposal included several new warehouse buildings, which are no longer proposed. The find was located away from the proposed truck dock, and the revised proposal does not warrant further subsurface investigation, as it’s located within a heavily disturbed area. The AB 52 referral reflected the revised proposal that only includes the truck dock and operational expansion, and no requests for consultation or further studies were received.

The NAHC Sacred Lands File search returned positive results at the township/range scale, and the consultant contacted tribes identified by NAHC. Written responses included “no comment at this time” from the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria and a request for more information from the Mishewal-Wappo Tribe of Alexander Valley, with others not responding as of the report date. Given the sensitive regional context and the isolated buried flake, the potential exists—albeit limited by the highly developed nature of the winery yard—for inadvertent discovery during minor ground disturbance.

Project ground disturbance is limited to a small truck-dock addition and minor grading within the established yard. To avoid a substantial adverse change to any tribal cultural resources that could be present below ground, the project includes unanticipated discovery procedures consistent with CEQA Guidelines §15064.5 and standard County practice (immediate work stoppage, protection of the find, notification, and evaluation by a qualified archaeologist; coroner/NAHC notifications if human remains are encountered; and tribal notification/consultation, with avoidance and/or treatment if a resource is identified). In addition, pre-construction contractor briefing on recognition/response to cultural finds and the availability of a qualified archaeologist on an on-call basis during initial ground disturbance in dock work areas can be used to ensure rapid implementation of the procedures. These measures, focused on the limited work footprint, reduce the potential for a significant effect to a tribal cultural resource determined significant by the lead agency.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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 new leach fields in the existing vineyard.

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 served by existing wells. 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 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 employees on-site.

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:
Project operations would continue to comply with federal, state, and County solid-waste

requirements. Applicant materials describe an established waste-diversion program that emphasizes recycling, composting, and re-use including returning pallets/unused packaging and other materials to suppliers and specifically note that "pomace […] makes up 91% of our waste by weight," and that 100% of pomace is composted onsite and diverted from landfill. This existing program, together with standard County requirements for solid-waste collection and disposal, ensures that solid-waste handling for the proposed expansion would remain compliant with applicable statutes and regulations.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

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

Comment:
Sonoma County has access to adequate permitted landfill capacity to serve the proposed project.

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:
The project is in a Local Responsibility Area (LRA) on a parcel mapped with very high, high, and medium fire hazard zones. The winery complex sits on a relatively flat developed pad surrounded by agricultural row crops, Highway 101, open lands, and a riparian corridor. The site is approximately 2.8 miles from the Northern Sonoma County Fire Station (Geyserville), supporting rapid response times. There is no separate County emergency evacuation plan; nevertheless, this use-permit modification would not impair emergency response or evacuation because construction and operations are confined to the existing footprint aside from a small truck-dock addition, no public road or driveway is reconfigured, and staging/worker parking remain on-site to keep public travel lanes clear.

With respect to wildfire risk, the project does not add new occupied buildings, extend development into wildland fuels, or introduce high-risk ignition sources beyond existing winery activities. Routine Fire Code compliance through building/grading permits (maintained fire-apparatus access, hydrant/flow as applicable, Knox access, vegetation management/defensible space, ignition-resistant features where required) will continue to govern site safety in an area that is already largely paved/maintained and buffered by cultivated fields and highway right-of-way. The project also does not require new or expanded off-site infrastructure (e.g., roads, fuel breaks, overhead utilities, emergency water sources) that could increase fire risk; minor electrical/EV upgrades occur within the existing utility service envelope.

Runoff and post-fire hazards are not expected to change materially. The small dock and associated hardscape do not alter regional drainage patterns or involve channel work; low-impact development (LID) features continue to manage on-site stormwater, and standard erosion/sediment controls are

implemented during construction (per approved grading/erosion control plans). No steep-slope grading is proposed, and the flat, previously graded yard does not present conditions associated with post-fire slope instability, downslope flooding, or debris flows.

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:
Project activities are confined to a small truck-dock addition and minor work contiguous with the existing, developed winery footprint; no broader site clearing, grading, or new utility corridors are proposed. The work area lies outside the mapped top-of-bank and 50-foot Riparian Corridor setback and does not encroach on wetlands or other sensitive natural communities. Potential biological effects are limited to temporary construction-period disturbance (e.g., vegetation trimming or noise) that could affect nesting birds protected under the Fish and Game Code; Mitigation Measure BIO-1 (pre-construction nesting-bird survey, buffers, and monitoring) is incorporated to avoid nest failure or abandonment. Limited tree removals (one olive, one redwood, two oaks) will comply with the County's Tree Protection Ordinance. The project would not impede wildlife movement given its location within an already improved yard and the absence of new barriers, road/stream crossings, or riparian work. No Habitat Conservation Plan applies.

With respect to cultural resources, a built-environment feature (John Long Barn) was determined not eligible for listing, and there are no other known historical resources that would be altered by the proposed work. While one isolated, deeply buried chert flake was identified elsewhere on the property during earlier subsurface reconnaissance (when larger buildings were contemplated in less developed areas), the current work is limited to the heavily disturbed yard. To protect against inadvertent discovery of previously unknown archaeological or tribal cultural resources, the project includes Mitigation Measure CUL-1 (stop-work, protect, notify, evaluate, and Coroner/NAHC/tribal procedures as applicable). AB-52 notifications were issued and no requests for consultation were received.

Given the limited, in-place scope; avoidance of riparian/wetland resources; compliance with the Tree Protection Ordinance; and incorporation of AIR-1, BIO-1 and CUL-1, the project would not degrade environmental quality, reduce or threaten special-status species or communities, or eliminate important examples of California history or prehistory.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated

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 projects in the vicinity of the proposed project area that might have over-lapping or cumulative impacts. No other projects were identified in the vicinity. The project would contribute to impacts related to air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, greenhouse gas emissions, and hydrology and water quality, 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 air quality, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality, transportation, and noise) were analyzed, and would be less than significant with the mitigations identified in the Initial Study incorporated into the project.

Significance Level:
Less than Significant Impact

Attachments

1. Revised Project Statement and Site Plans dated May 3, 2024
2. Site Plans dated February 2024
3. Visual Assessment Guidelines
4. Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Assessment dated January 24, 2025
5. Estimated Water Demand Memo dated May 23, 2025
6. Qualitative Hydrogeologic Analysis date June 2, 2025
7. Traffic Impact Study dated November 4, 2024
8. 2023 Grape Sourcing

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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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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

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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