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North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Notice of Preparation

TO: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

FROM LEAD AGENCY: North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
5550 Skylane Blvd., Suite A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

SUBJECT: North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Proposed General Waste Discharge Requirements for Vineyard Properties in the North Coast Region

Notice Date: August 8, 2022

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

AND

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT SCOPING MEETING FOR

GENERAL WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS FOR VINEYARD PROPERTIES IN THE NORTH COAST REGION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN That the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) as the Lead Agency, is planning to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Div. 6, Chap. 3).

Project Title: General Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) for Vineyard Properties in the North Coast Region (Vineyard Permit).

GREGORY A. GIUSTI , CHAIR | MATTHIAS ST. JOHN, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

5550 Skylane Blvd., Suite A, Santa Rosa, CA 95403 | www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast

Project Location: The proposed project is a Vineyard Permit which will apply to existing and future Vineyard Properties¹ in the North Coast Region including Mendocino, Humboldt, Trinity, Del Norte, and parts of Sonoma, Siskiyou, Modoc, Glenn, Lake, and Marin counties. The Vineyard Permit will be a General Order that applies throughout the entire geographic area within the Regional Water Board's jurisdiction. The Vineyard Permit would apply to Vineyard Properties where greater than or equal to 5 acres are planted in grapevines, or any parcel within an existing or new Vineyard Property where less than 5 acres are planted in grapevines that is deemed by Regional Water Board staff to discharge waste that could affect water quality.

The attached map (Figure 1) shows the distribution of vineyards in the North Coast Region. The majority of vineyards (approximately 99 percent) are located in Sonoma and Mendocino counties; however, there is the potential towards expansion of Vineyard Properties north of Sonoma and Mendocino counties due to economic benefits and climate related warming trends.

Project Summary: The proposed project consists of the Regional Water Board establishing General WDRs for Vineyard Properties to control discharges of sediment and stormwater runoff originating from Vineyard Properties located within the project boundaries shown in Figure 1. Vineyard Properties have the potential to discharge pollutants to surface water and groundwater from stormwater and irrigation runoff, the application of pesticides and fertilizer, erosion of sediment, and removal and suppression of riparian vegetation². The proposed Vineyard Permit will require Dischargers³ to assess, plan, and implement a suite of site-specific actions and best management practices (BMPs) targeted towards controlling discharges from Vineyard Properties including their:

- Related Vineyard Facilities¹,
- Road networks,
- Gullies and shallow landslides, and
- Points of concentrated stormwater runoff.

The project is described in more detail under the Project Description section on page 6 and in the attached Initial Study.

¹ A "Vineyard Property" is defined by a parcel or contiguous parcels under the same ownership, each of which has been developed to include a vineyard; and includes the vineyard facility as well as all roads on the property. The "Vineyard Facility" includes the permanent, semi-permanent, or temporary physical features of a vineyard, such as land, crops, drainage systems, roads, reservoirs, diversion structures/equipment, etc., that are established or maintained for the purpose of growing grapes. The vineyard facility does not include winery facilities subject to an industrial stormwater permit or other WDRs or conditional waivers of WDRs.

² Riparian vegetation grows along banks of a waterway extending to the edge of the floodplain.

³ Landowners and operators of Vineyard Properties discharging, or proposing to discharge, waste from a Vineyard Property are referred to as "Dischargers".

Purpose of the Notice of Preparation: This Notice of Preparation (NOP) serves to:

- 1) Solicit information on the scope of the environmental analysis for the proposed project,
- 2) Notify the public and regulatory agencies that the Regional Water Board will prepare a draft EIR to assess potential adverse environmental impacts that may result from implementing the proposed project, and
- 3) Describe potential adverse environmental impacts of the project.

SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS

The Regional Water Board is requesting comments from the public and public agencies on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. For public agencies, the Regional Water Board is interested in your views as to the scope and content of the environmental information, which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities, if any, in connection with the proposed project. Public agency responses and comments, as well as general public comments, must be postmarked or sent electronically within the 45-day comment period listed in this notice. Please send your comments to the Regional Water Board, as directed below, along with the name of a contact person, if you are a public agency. In order to be fully considered, written comments focusing on the issues related to the environmental analysis for the proposed project must be received by **5:00 pm on Thursday, September 22, 2022**.

Comments can be sent electronically to the following email address:

NorthCoast@waterboards.ca.gov

Attn: Vineyard Program

Written comments should be sent to the address below or by fax to (707) 523-0135.

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
5550 Skylane Blvd., Suite A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Attn: Vineyard Program

SCOPING MEETING

In order for the public and regulatory agencies to have an opportunity to submit oral comments on the scope of the EIR, a scoping meeting will be held during the 45-day NOP scoping period.

The purpose of a scoping meeting is to seek input from public agencies and members of the public on the range of project actions, alternatives, reasonably foreseeable methods of compliance, significant impacts to be analyzed, cumulative impacts if any, and mitigation measures that will reduce impacts to a less than significant level as part of the

development of the proposed Vineyard Permit; and to eliminate from detailed study issues found not to be important. Scoping may also assist in resolving concerns of affected federal, state, and local agencies, the proponent of the action, and other interested persons. Early public involvement assists Regional Water Board staff in refining the scope of the project and determining the range of environmental information and potential impacts the proposed project might have on the various categories of environmental resources such as water quality or geologic stability.

Two scoping meetings will be conducted - one in-person meeting and one virtually (via Zoom). Both meetings will include a presentation about the draft Vineyard Permit and potential adverse environmental impacts associated with implementation of the permit. Agencies and the public will have the opportunity to provide oral comments during the CEQA scoping meeting and/or by submitting written comments any time during the 45-day scoping period.

MEETING INFORMATION:

The in-person meeting will be conducted on:

**Thursday, September 1, 2022, 3:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.
Regional Water Quality Control Board
David C. Joseph Room 5550 Skylane Blvd., Suite A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403**

The virtual meeting will be conducted on:

**Thursday, September 8, 2022, 3:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.
Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://waterboards.zoom.us/j/98039016132?pwd=TFJBMG41SIEwaTVQaXJmaERFY2x5QT09>

**Meeting ID: 980 3901 6132
Passcode: 328909**

**Call-in Number: 1-669-900-9128
Meeting ID: 980 2901 6132
Participant ID: 494005
Passcode: 328909**

Agencies and the public will be able to provide oral comments directly through the online platform or by calling the number listed above.

A recorded video and audio broadcast of the virtual scoping meeting will be available on the Regional Water Board Website ten business days after the scoping meeting at:

[Vineyards and Ochards | California Northcoast Regional Water Quality Control Board \(https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/agricultural_lands/Vineyards/\)](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/water_issues/programs/agricultural_lands/Vineyards/)

Following the meetings, staff will review written and oral comments in preparation of the draft CEQA document, which will be released for public review. All CEQA Scoping comments received will be included in the final administrative record for this proposed Vineyard Permit.

Accessibility

Anyone requiring special accommodations, including language interpretation services, are requested to call (916) 322-4265 by **August 18, 2022**. Telecommunications Device for the Deaf users may contact the California Relay Service at (800) 735-2929 or voice line at (800) 735-2922.

Project Description

The project involves the development of General WDRs for the control of discharges of pollutants, including but limited to sediment, and stormwater runoff from Vineyard Properties in the North Coast Region. The purpose of the project is to facilitate compliance with water quality related requirements for discharges associated with Vineyard Properties to ensure the maintenance, protection, and restoration of beneficial uses and controllable water quality factors related to waters of the state.

The project proposes to regulate discharges from Vineyard Properties to implement the Statewide Nonpoint Source (NPS) Policy and the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region (Basin Plan). The proposed Vineyard Permit would require implementation of BMPs and/or other treatment technologies to control waste (or pollutant) discharges to surface waters and groundwater; identify, prioritize, and implement BMPs treating sediment, agrochemical⁴, and stormwater discharges; incentivize water conservation measures; and control riparian area vegetation management to achieve compliance with general and category-specific permit conditions. Additional project description information can be found in the attached Initial Study.

Potential Environmental Effects

The attached Initial Study provides an initial evaluation of potential environmental impacts from the proposed Vineyard Permit. The environmental analysis may determine that the proposed project would not impact or have significant impacts to many of these areas. However, if any significant adverse environmental impacts are identified through this environmental analysis, feasible mitigation measures to avoid and/or minimize the impacts will be identified and will be required as part of Vineyard Permit.

⁴ Agrochemicals are chemical products comprised of fertilizers, plant-protection chemicals or pesticides, and plant-growth hormones used in agriculture.

Project Alternatives

A reasonable range of potentially feasible project alternatives, in addition to the no project alternative, will be developed and evaluated in the EIR. The Regional Water Board will consider comments of responsible and trustee agencies and the public provided during the scoping period in the development of project alternatives.

Future Notices

Any change in the date or time of the scoping meeting will be publicly noticed on the Regional Water Board website and through the Project email list. Any persons desiring to receive future notice concerning the proposed Vineyard Permit must sign up for the Project email list. Please note, the Regional Water Board will provide future notifications through the Project email list and website.

To sign up for the Project (Agricultural Lands Discharge Program) email list, access the [Agricultural Lands Discharge Program Email List Subscription Page](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/req1_subscribe.html) at the web address listed below, check the box for "Agricultural Lands Discharge Program" (https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/req1_subscribe.html)

Contact Information

Please direct questions about the Vineyard Permit to Brenna Sullivan at 707-576-2699 or via email at: Brenna.Sullivan@waterboard.ca.gov.

Matthias St. John
Executive Officer

Attachments:

Figure 1 – Project Area Boundary
Attachment 1 – Initial Study

Figure 1. Map of Vineyard Operations in the North Coast Region.



