

# Vineyard Planting in Sonoma County

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Sonoma County Winegrape  
Commission



# VESCO

- Vineyard Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance since 2000
  - Ministerial permit
  - Obtained through Ag Commissioner
- Grading and drainage permits if needed
  - Obtained through PRMD
  - Ag and Construction obtained same permits

# Results Under VESCO

- Very few erosion control failures since 2000
- Widespread use of erosion controls on existing vineyards
  - Cover crops and straw mulch on exposed vineyard slopes, avenues and roads
  - Straw wattles to spread and slow water flows
- 25- or 50-ft setbacks on blueline streams
- Better vineyards and vineyard practices today!

# Ag Grading and Drainage

- 2008 Grading, Drainage, Vineyard/Orchard Site Development Ordinance
- Extends VESCO to cover ag grading and drainage reviews
- Ag Commissioner is permitting authority
- Permits are ministerial
  - If successfully challenged in court, revert to VESCO
  - A challenge has been filed

# Vineyard & Orchard Development

- All vineyards and orchards over ½ acre
- No planting on slopes over 50%
- Setbacks extended to unnamed streams
  - 25 feet from top of bank - No touch
  - Option to maintain 25-ft vegetated filter strip

# Vineyard & Orchard Development

- Level 1
  - Slopes < 15%
  - No highly erodible soils
  - **Or**
  - Slopes < 10%
  - Highly erodible soils
- Erosion Control Plan not required to be done by an Engineer
- Level 2
  - Slopes > 15%
  - No highly erodible soils
  - **Or**
  - Slopes > 10%
  - Highly erodible soils
- Engineered Erosion Control Plan required

# Replanting Vineyards

- Level 1
  - Slope <30%
  - Not highly erodible soils
  - **Or**
  - Slope <15%
  - Highly erodible soils
- Erosion Control Plan not required to be done by an Engineer
- Level 2
  - Slope >30%
  - Not highly erodible soils
  - **Or**
  - Slope >15%
  - Highly erodible soils
- Engineer Erosion Control Plan required

# Vineyard & Orchard Development

- Setbacks from Streams
  - 25 feet on Level 1 projects
  - 50 feet on Level 2 projects
- Setbacks from wetlands
  - 100 feet if designated wetlands
  - 50 feet from undesignated wetlands
    - Option for 25 feet to be maintained vegetated filter strip
- Dates for restricted soil disturbance
  - October 15 – April 1



# Ag Grading Permits

- Regular Grading
  - < 5000 cubic yds;
  - Cut < 2 feet or cut slope < 5 feet
  - Fill < 3 ft
  - Natural slope < 15%
- Grading Plan not required to be done by an engineer
- Engineered Grading
  - > 5000 cubic yds
  - Cut > 2 ft or cut slope > 5 feet
  - Fill > 3 ft
  - Natural slope > 15%
- Engineered plans required

# Ag Drainage Permits

- Regular Drainage Improvement
  - Cross section area  $< 2$  sq ft (18-inch diameter)
  - V ditch  $< 1$  ft deep and top width = 4 ft
- Drainage Plan not required to be done by an engineer
- Engineered Drainage Improvement
  - Cross section area  $> 2$  sq ft
  - V ditch  $> 1$  ft deep
- Engineered plan required

# Exemptions from Permits

- Routine agricultural cultivation activities
  - Clearing, grubbing, ripping, plowing, disking, tilling
  - Soil disturbance is less than 3 feet deep
- Grading
  - Road maintenance and repairs
  - Resurfacing existing roads
- Drainage
  - Maintain/repair existing drainage improvements
  - Minor pipe or V ditch swale system

# Conclusion

- Vineyard and orchard planting requires a ministerial permit in Sonoma County
  - Permits are administered by the Ag Commissioner
  - **And new plantings are possible!**
- Before initiating design, call Gail Davis to schedule a preliminary site visit
  - 707-565-2371



# Acknowledgments

- Gail Davis, Agricultural & Vineyard Conservation Coordinator
- Cort Munselle, Munselle Civil Engineering

