



July 5, 2019

**VIA EMAIL: [EJWILBERG@SOLANOCOUNTY.COM](mailto:EJWILBERG@SOLANOCOUNTY.COM)**

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

Department of Resource Management  
Planning Services Division  
Attn: Eric Wilberg, Planning Associate  
675 Texas Street  
Fairfield, CA 94533

**JULY 05 2019**

**STATE CLEARINGHOUSE**

Dear Mr. Wilberg:

NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR THE MONROE RANCH PROJECT, SCH# 2019069044

The Department of Conservation's (Department) Division of Land Resource Protection (Division) has reviewed the Notice of Intent to Adopt a Negative Declaration for the Monroe Ranch Project submitted by Solano County (County). The Division monitors farmland conversion on a statewide basis and administers the California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act and other agricultural land conservation programs. We offer the following comments and recommendations with respect to the proposed project's potential impacts on agricultural land and resources.

#### Project Description

The project involves the construction of a 4,000 square foot barn-styled accessory structure (event barn) to serve as a special event facility adjunct to the Suisun Valley Inn currently operating at the Monroe Ranch. The event barn would primarily host weddings on weekends during the summer months. A majority of the weddings are expected to have 150 or fewer attendees; however, some events would draw up to 250 persons. A wedding event at Monroe Ranch requires utilizing the entire facility which includes rental of the Suisun Valley Inn; therefore, the site is limited in capacity to host only one wedding per rented weekend.

In addition to weddings, the event barn would also accommodate other types of special events including corporate meetings and charitable events. These types of events would typically occur during a weekday with an anticipated attendance of up to 50 persons. The Suisun Valley Inn currently operates on-site as a Bed and Breakfast Inn. The Inn does not serve food, however, groups who rent the entire Inn may utilize the existing kitchen. The project would increase the available number of rooms for rent at the inn up to eight.

The subject site is located at 4400 Suisun Valley Road, two miles west of the City of Fairfield. The property is situated within an agricultural setting identified as the Suisun Valley Agricultural Region by the Solano County General Plan. Land surrounding the project is utilized for agricultural production, predominantly vineyard cultivation. The site borders agricultural land to the north and south, Suisun Creek to the east, and Suisun Valley Road to the west. The property is comprised of three parcels totaling 27.16 acres. Currently the project site is enrolled in a Williamson Act contract, and contains Prime Farmland, and Other Land as classified by the Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.<sup>1</sup>

### Department Comments

As stated in the Initial Study/Negative Declaration:

The existing Bed and Breakfast Inn, including the expansion from six to eight bedrooms, as well as the proposed special events facility are conditionally permitted land uses with the Suisun Valley Agriculture "A-SV-20" Zoning District.

The Suisun Valley Strategic Plan (Page 2-2) recognized that some of the land uses allowed under the County's General Plan and the Suisun Valley Zoning Regulations are not consistent with the Williamson Act. Such activities include, but are not limited to: bed and breakfasts, hotels, resorts, restaurants, bakeries, and cafes.

The Plan recommended that landowners with the Williamson Act seeking to operate such uses need to file for nonrenewal on portions of the property where these activities would take place. Nonrenewal has been filed on the 3-acre portion of the property where the event barn and parking are proposed.<sup>2</sup>

According to Government Code Section 51231, "...the board or council, by resolution, shall adopt rules governing the administration of agricultural preserves, including procedures for initiating, filing, and processing requests to establish agricultural preserves. Rules related to compatible uses shall be consistent with the provisions of Section 51238.1." Solano County has established its own set of Uniform Rules and Procedures Governing Agricultural Preserves and Land Conservation Contracts (Williamson Act rules).

As previously stated in the Initial Study/Negative Declaration, the County is already aware that its Williamson Act rules are inconsistent with its General Plan and the Suisun Valley Zoning Regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, California Important Farmland Finder, <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/CIFF/>, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Initial Study and Negative Declaration Monroe Ranch Use Permit U-18-03, <http://solanocounty.com/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=30448>, page 18.

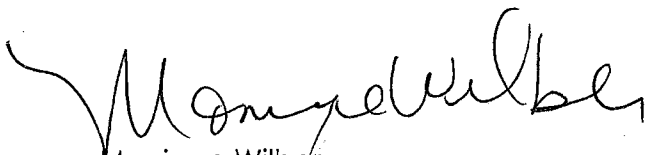
## Conclusion

The Department recommends the County consider the following prior to approving the proposed project:

- Compatibility of existing (Bed and Breakfast), and proposed (Event Facility) land use with County establish Williamson Act rules and procedures, and Government Code Section 51238.1; and
- Allow proposed project site to finish the Williamson Act Nonrenewal process before approving proposed land use; or
- Partial cancellation of Williamson Act contract on proposed project site, removing any doubt of compatibility with the Williamson Act.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Intent to Adopt a Negative Declaration for the Monroe Ranch Project. Please provide this Department with notices of any future hearing dates as well as any staff reports pertaining to this project. If you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Farl Grundy, Environmental Planner at (916) 324-7347 or via email at [Farl.Grundy@conservation.ca.gov](mailto:Farl.Grundy@conservation.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Monique Wilber  
Conservation Program Support Supervisor

