



## ***NOTICE OF EXEMPTION***

Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department  
2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
(707) 565-1900 Fax (707) 565-1103

Sonoma County proposes to carry out the following project. Pursuant to Section 23A-11 of the Sonoma County Code, it has been determined that this project is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):

**Project Title:** Minor and Technical Revisions to the County Code Provisions Governing New Vineyard and Orchard Development, Vineyard and Orchard Replanting, Agricultural and Construction Grading and Drainage, and Definitions for Water Well Construction Standards.

**Project Number:** N/A

**Lead Agency / County Agency of Filing:** Sonoma County

**Project Proponent (Applicant):** Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures and Permit and Resource Management Department (Permit Sonoma)

**Applicant Addresses:** 133 Aviation Blvd, Suite 110 (Agriculture) and 2550 Ventura Avenue (Permit Sonoma), Santa Rosa CA 95403

**Project Location:** Countywide

**Date of Approval:** December 8, 2020

**Exemption Filed With:** Sonoma County Clerk

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The Sonoma County Code is being amended to make minor and technical revisions to Chapter 36 (vineyard and orchard development and agricultural grading and drainage), Chapter 11 (construction grading and drainage) and Section 25B-3 (definitions for water well construction standards).

The revisions to Chapter 36 include establishing separate permits for new vineyard and orchard development and vineyard and orchard replanting, relocating the permit requirements applicable to vineyard and orchard replanting to the permit for vineyard and orchard replanting, and simplifying and clarifying the designation criteria for new vineyard and orchard development; clarifying that the requirement for biotic resource assessments for new vineyard and orchard development only applies to uncultivated land, and adding a requirement for focused species assessments for new vineyard and orchard development on cultivated land in designated critical habitat areas; clarifying the rules governing new permit applications filed after the expiration of permit applications; establishing a five year term for vineyard and orchard replanting permits and changing the term of agricultural grading and drainage permits from three years to five years; limiting the number of extensions of time for permits to one extension per permit; clarifying the rules governing new permits to recommence or commence work under expired permits; adding new standards for protection of listed species and agricultural road networks; clarifying the setback requirements for areas of slope instability, lakes, ponds, reservoirs, ridgetops, streams, and wetlands; clarifying the requirements for work during the rainy season; clarifying the requirements for winterization of sites; and making miscellaneous changes to definitions, including revising the definition of wetland to clarify that wetlands are those areas that meet either the federal definition of wetlands or the state definition of wetland, and that in the event of a conflict between the federal and state definitions, whichever definition is more protective shall control.

The revisions to Chapter 11 include adding an exemption from construction grading permit requirements for maintenance or restoration of existing ponds and reservoirs; clarifying the rules governing new permit to commence or recommence work under expired permits; and making miscellaneous changes to definitions, including revising the definition of wetland to clarify that wetlands are those areas that meet either the federal

definition of wetlands or the state definition of wetland, and that in the event of a conflict between the federal and state definitions, whichever definition is more protective shall control.

The revision to Section 25B-3 consists of revising the definition of wetland to clarify that wetlands are those areas that meet either the federal definition of wetlands or the state definition of wetland, and that in the event of a conflict between the federal and state definitions, whichever definition is more protective shall control.

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**REASON WHY THIS PROJECT IS EXEMPT:**

The proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA under Sections 15307 and 15308 of the State CEQA Guidelines (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources and the Environment). These exemptions cover actions taken by regulatory agencies as authorized by state law or local ordinance to assure the maintenance, restoration or enhancement of natural resources or the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for the protection of the environment. Construction activities and relaxation of standards allowing environmental degradation are not included in these exemptions. The proposed project is also exempt from CEQA under Section 15061(b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, because it can be seen with certainty that the project (ordinance) will have no significant impact on the environment. The basis for these determinations is that the proposed project only makes changes to clarify and strengthen permit requirements, standards, and definitions in Chapter 36, Chapter 11, and Section 25B-3 of the Sonoma County Code, and does not involve construction or any other activity that could physically change the environment.

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This Notice of Exemption is filed pursuant to the provisions of Section 15062 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

**Contact Person:**



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Management Department  
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**Project Proponent:**

  
Alex Rosas (Doc 15, 2020 17:32 PST)

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Permit and Resource  
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Storm Water and Grading Division  
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**Project Proponent:**



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Agricultural Commissioner  
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