

# NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

NAPA COUNTY PLANNING, BUILDING, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPT.  
1195 THIRD STREET, SUITE 210, NAPA, CA 94559  
(Filed in compliance with Section 21108 or 21152 of the Public Resources Code)

To:  Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

Napa County Clerk  
900 Coombs St  
Napa, CA 94559

Project Title: St. Supery Dollarhide Project

Project Applicant: Joel Dickerson, Madrone Engineering / St. Supery Inc.

Project Location – The project site is located at 2326 Dollarhide Rd, St. Helena in Pope Valley near the intersection of Hardin Rd on a 568.63-acre parcel zoned AW (Agricultural Watershed) (APN: 018-160-034-000 / 38°36'29.83"N 122°21'19.5"W).

Project Location - City: N/A

Project Location - County: Napa

## Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The application is for a Grading Permit and the proposed project is considered replacement or reconstruction of agricultural structures, and would remove existing buildings within the project area and install six buildings and a solar structure across a flat area with slopes falling in the range of 0-5 percent. The project will require relatively light grading across the premise to form a level pad for the structures. The work areas will also include temporary stockpile locations as well as a project staging area. The project includes bioretention for stormwater management. There is an existing gravel road, which serves as a portion of Dollarhide Road, and will be used as access to the work site.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: County of Napa

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Joel Dickerson, Madrone Engineering (707) 302-6280

## Exempt Status: (check one):

- Ministerial (Sec. 15268 & 15022(a));
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. It has been determined that the Verizon Canyon Road Telecommunication Facility Site Plan Approval Modification project will not have a significant effect on the environment and is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Appendix B of Napa County's Local Procedures for Implementing CEQA (Additional Categorically Exempt Projects in Napa County), Item No. 2 – Existing telecommunication facilities: Modification and renewal of the permits thereof.

**Reasons why project is exempt:** The project is statutorily exempt from CEQA under Section 15300.1 and categorically exempt from CEQA under sections 15300.2, 15302, 15304 and 15311. Please see attached CEQA Exemption Memorandum for more details.

## Lead Agency

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (707) 302-6280

Contact Person: Andrew Amelung, Planner II

## If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?  Yes  No

Signature:  Date: September 5, 2024 Title: Planner II

Note: Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.  
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Revised 2011



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A Commitment to Service

**Planning, Building & Environmental Services**

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**Brian D. Bordona**  
Director

To: Brian D. Bordona, PBES Director      From: Andrew Amelung, Planner II

Date: September 5, 2024      Re: ENG23-00059 St. Supery Grading Permit  
Categorical Exemption Determination  
2326 Dollarhide Rd, St. Helena  
APN: 018-160-034-000

**Background:**

The proposed project consists of two primary project sites – a western section and an eastern section, both of which lie between Dollarhide Road and the riparian zone of Maxwell Creek. An existing dirt road to the north also connects these two project areas.

The proposed project is considered replacement or reconstruction and would remove existing buildings within the project area and install six buildings and a solar structure across a flat area with slopes falling in the range of 0-5 percent. The project will require relatively light grading across the premise to form a level pad for the structures. The work areas will also include temporary stockpile locations as well as a project staging area. The project includes bioretention for stormwater management. There is an existing gravel road, which serves as a portion of Dollarhide Road, and will be used as access to the work site.

The proposed work areas are outside of the top of bank from both Maxwell and Hardin Creek zones as well as outside of their riparian zones.

**Existing Conditions and Environment Setting:**

The proposed project is located within the St. Supery vineyard at Dollarhide Ranch, and the site as well as much of the surrounding area has been heavily modified by decades of vineyard operations. The site includes existing farm management offices, barns, equipment and material storage, as well as associated agricultural buildings that are highly trafficked and used for storage and repair. According to St. Supery’s submitted Farm Management Information Form, the Dollarhide Ranch contains over 500 acres of developed vineyard on a combined 1,535 total acres of land. The structures to be rebuilt were pre-existing when the properties were purchased in 1982 and are now inadequate to store and maintain modern farm equipment. All of the existing barns and the office are being replaced with this project to adequately maintain and manage the vineyards. The same area is being used that has historically

housed the barns and offices. The applicant also grows over 1,200 heirloom fruit and olive trees in order to provide produce for local restaurants and farmers markets.

Outside of the work area are existing vineyards on level ground and gentle slopes. Directly adjacent to the project site to the west is Hardin Creek and to the north is Maxwell Creek. Hardin Creek merges with Maxwell Creek, just northwest of the western section of project site. Both creeks are intermittent with relatively narrow riparian zones dominated by oak, walnut, and willow. The channels experience high, fast water events associated with prolonged or heavy rainfall. The substrate of both creeks is generally large cobble with sections of exposed bedrock.

After the merger of Hardin Creek, Maxwell Creek generally flows northeast approximately 2.1 miles before merging with Pope Creek, which runs approximately 3 miles south before flowing into Lake Berryessa.

The project is located at the center of an approximate 1,477-acre holding located at the terminus of Dollarhide Road approximately one mile southeast of its intersection with Hardin Road along the northern side of Pope Valley. This cluster of parcels generally extends from the periphery of the valley floor to the northeast into the southwest facing foothills and higher elevations of the interior mountains that separate Pope Valley from Pope Creek Valley and Lake Berryessa located approximately two miles to the northeast. Elevations range from approximately 500 feet to 1,000 feet. General topography of the area is similar to the subject property: consisting of the Pope Valley floor surrounded by hillsides, ridges and valleys and higher elevations.

Land uses within one mile of the immediate vicinity predominately consist of agricultural operations, scattered rural residential uses, and undeveloped woodlands and grasslands. The nearest residences are located approximately one mile to the northeast as well as southwest of the project site. There are no producing wineries in the immediate area, with the nearest wineries located approximately 1.5 miles to the west of the subject property. The nearest schools and public airport are located in Angwin which is over four miles to the west.

The vegetation types of the area and the subject property generally consist of California annual grasslands, oak woodland, shrubland, and vineyard. Vegetation types within the subject property consists of approximately: 530 gross acres of existing vineyard, 347 acres of Semi-natural Herbaceous Grassland, 252 acres of oak woodland, 172 acres of shrubland, 120 acres of reservoirs, and 13 acres of developed area made up of roads, buildings, and orchard. The vicinity also includes 42 acres of riparian woodland associated with Hardin Creek, Maxwell Creek, and four other unnamed blue-line tributaries to these creeks.

No major active fault lines have been mapped on the parcel or within the project area. The nearest active fault lines are the West Napa fault and the Rogers Creek Fault which are located over 15 miles to the south and on the opposite side of the Vaca Mountain Range.

Soils of the project area, as classified in the United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service's Napa County Soil Survey, consist of Maxwell clay 2-9 percent slope which exhibits slow runoff and slight erosion potential and Tehama silt loam 0-5 percent which exhibits medium runoff and

slight erosion potential. Soils in the surrounding area include Bressa Dibble complex 30-50 percent which exhibits rapid runoff and moderate to severe erosion potential, as well as areas of Riverwash soil located along sections of Maxwell Creek to the north.

**Entitlement History:**

Existing entitlement records for the property include various building and well permits dating back to 1977. Site plans on record (31351) from 1982 document the locations of the existing structures on the property. In 1983 a Use Permit (U-38384) was issued for the construction of a 1,920 square-foot structure for farm labor housing, and in 1994 a temporary use permit was approved to utilize two collapsible trailer units to house up to eight farmworkers for a maximum period of nine months. A Track I Erosion Control Plan was approved in 2013 (P13-00113), which included an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration. In 2015 a public hearing was held by the Board of Supervisors to consider and tack action on amending or establishing the boundaries of Agricultural Preserves under the Williamson Act for this parcel and 12 other parcels in the general vicinity of the project site.

**CEQA Exemption Criteria and Analysis:**

As a ministerial permit the proposed project falls under the following exemptions from the California Environmental Quality Act:

15300.1 – Relation to Ministerial Permits

Section 21080 of the Public Resources Code exempts from the application of CEQA those projects over which public agencies exercise only ministerial authority. Since ministerial projects are already exempt, Categorical Exemptions should be applied only where a project is not ministerial under a public agency’s statues and ordinances. The inclusion of activities which may be ministerial within the classes and examples contained in this article shall not be construed as a finding by the Secretary for Resources that such activity is discretionary.

15300.2 Exceptions (to 15300.1)

- (a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.

Staff Response:

Under CEQA Section 15268, ministerial projects are exempt from the requirements of CEQA. The determination of what is “ministerial” can most appropriately be made by the particular public agency involved based upon its analysis of its own lays, and each public agency should make such determination either as part of its implementing regulations or on a case-by-case basis.

Under CEQA Section 15022(a), each public agency shall adopt objectives, criteria, and specific procedures consistent with CEQA and these Guidelines for administering its responsibilities under CEQA, including the orderly evaluation of projects and preparation

of environmental documents. The implementing procedures should contain at least provisions for:

- (1) Identifying the activities that are exempt from CEQA. These procedures should contain:
  - (A) Provisions for evaluating a proposed activity to determine if there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment.

Napa County's Local Procedures for Implementing CEQA includes an outline for ministerial exempt projects and determines if a grading permit is ministerial based on proximity to environmentally sensitive areas, the slope of the project site, the amount of grading, and the development of new driveways.

The proposed grading and building permits fall within the relation to ministerial permits exemption, however due to exception 15300.2(a) and the project's proximity to Maxwell Creek, a critical environmental concern exists. According to the Biological Resource Assessment completed by Zentner Planning & Ecology and submitted in May 2024 and revised in August 2024, a biological reconnaissance survey was completed and critical species, sensitive plant communities, and wildlife corridors were analyzed.

The report concluded that no special status species were observed or known to occur within the project site. It also concluded the foothill yellow-legged frog (FYLF) are known to occur within Maxwell Creek, which lies adjacent to the site and is separated by a riparian habitat. It states that the FYLF are not very likely to occur in the developed and ruderal habitats of the site, but there is some potential for FYLF to move through the site, and therefore avoidance and minimization measures are recommended.

Recommendations in the report also include measures for the prevention of impacts to bat roosting areas, however no bats or indications of use by bats were observed during the survey. It was determined that the existing structures were an unlikely roosting area as they are a source of too much constant and relatively loud activity for bats to take up residence. Further recommendations include the preconstruction surveys for migratory birds on both the structures to be removed as well as the three-nonnative locust trees that will be removed. The preconstruction survey can be issued as a condition for the issuance of the grading permit.

Erosion control best management practices are required for all grading permits with or without the existence of a critical environmental concern, and in the case of this project silt fencing will be required along the northern parameter of the project site in order to prevent erosion and runoff from impacting the water quality of Maxwell Creek. This silt fencing can also serve as a protective, wildlife exclusion barrier and can prevent the FYLF from moving through the construction site for the temporary duration of construction. This fencing will be installed around the entire work area and will be minimum of 42-inches tall with the bottom 6 inches buried when feasible to adequately secure the prevention of any crawling under the fence.

In terms of slope, the project is located in a relatively flat area that is 1-5 percent, well under the 10 percent slope threshold. With adjusted and unadjusted quantities of cut and fill earthwork taken into consideration, with an adjusted 635 cubic yards of cut and an adjusted 415 cubic yards of fill. The project is expected to have an overall estimated net earthwork of 345 cubic yards for export, with excess soil to be off hauled to a location approved by Napa County.

Due to these aspects of the proposed project, exception 15300.2 does not apply and the project is exempt from CEQA under to the Relation to Ministerial Permits exemption 15300.1.

#### 15302 – Replacement or Reconstruction

Class 2 consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced, including but not limited to:

- (b) Replacement of a commercial structure with a new structure of substantially the same size, purpose, and capacity.

#### Staff Response:

The proposed project is considered a replacement and reconstruction of mostly agricultural structures, with the reconstruction of office space that is more commercial in existing nature and use, and as such the project is exempt from CEQA under the Replacement or Reconstruction categorical exemption 15302.

#### 15304 – Minor Alterations to Land

Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. Examples include but are not limited to:

- (a) Grading on land with a slope of less than 10 percent, except that grading shall not be exempt in a waterway, in any wetland, in an officially designated (by federal, state, or local government action) scenic area, or in officially mapped areas of severe geologic hazard such as an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone or within an official Seismic Hazard Zone, as delineated by the State Geologist.

#### Staff Response:

The proposed project is located on a relatively flat area with a slope of 0-5 percent, and while adjacent to a riparian area, it is not within a waterway, wetland, or designated scenic area, nor is it within a severe geologic hazard area or a Seismic Hazard Zone, therefore the project is exempt from CEQA under the Minor Alterations to Land categorical exemption 15304.

15311 – Accessory Structures

Class 11 consists of construction, or replacement of minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities.

Staff Response:

Some of the structures to be reconstructed qualify as accessory in nature to the primary agricultural operation and can be considered appurtenant to institutional facilities. These structures are exempt from CEQA under the Accessory Structures categorical exemption 15311.

**Conclusion:**

The project is statutorily exempt from CEQA under Section 15300.1 and categorically exempt from CEQA under sections 15300.2, 15302, 15304 and 15311.