

PLP24-0012 Villa Vanto Farms

Additional information needed for PRMD analysis

October 28th, 2024

- **Number of agricultural employees managing the farm (or clarify which parts of the property are leased for grazing land)**
 - The current cattle grazing is leased to a Petaluma calf cow operation that breeds and raises beefmasters cattle for beef. The lessee comes to the property as needed to fix fence and tend to cattle. There are usually 1-2 people/employees who come as needed. See attached PDF that shows the area leased for grazing.
 - After CUP approval, we will have one farm manager living onsite who will help oversee all onsite agricultural operations. We will hire two employees to farm/process lavender, help with lambing, and perform other operations on a seasonal basis. In summary, we expect a range of 1-3 agricultural employees.
- **Number of sheep and head of cattle.**
 - Current: 0 sheep, 12-24 cattle on seasonal basis (leased land)
 - Future: 0 cattle, 40 Ewe's sheep + expected 30 lambs each season, five replacements, and 1 ram. = Total 76 head
- **Please complete the attached income statement. You can use the County's latest crop report to estimate the income that will be derived from future agricultural operations.**
 - Attached- shows the current/ past for 2024, and the future after CUP Approval for 2025
- **Clarification on how the 'preserved/undisturbed/restored grazing areas' will be managed as part of the commercial grazing operation.**
Identification and description of the existing and proposed infrastructure needed to support the different livestock operations.
 - 32.08 acres of hilly grassland will be utilized for grazing sheep. Please see the attached site plan showing the permanent fencing areas that show a solid line and the dashed line showing temporary fencing that will be moved as we rotate the herd.
 - Two Strand Temporary Electric fencing will be used for the dashed line
 - Permanent welded wire fencing around the perimeter of grazing areas.
 - Shade Structures made with hog panels and shade cloth to move around the property. We will have to replace all fencing as part of this project. We will move a portable water trough to each lot and fill it with a water buffalo.

- The herd will rotate around the property as shown in Lots 1-8. Each lot varies from 2-5 acres. The sheep will be able to graze in between the lavender fields at all times of the year.
 - We expect to average 30 lambs per year that will be sold to the auction house for meat production. We will use a livestock protection dog (i.e., Anatolian Shepherd) that will stay with the herd at all times to protect from predators. During lambing season, we will bring the herd into a lambing shelter. All routine doctoring and care will be easily done within the smaller fenced #7 areas.
 - All areas listed #7 are rotating pastures for the sheep to graze with permanent fencing.
 - We will split the preserved/undisturbed/restored grazing areas into 8 lots on which the sheep will graze for 30-60 days before being rotated to the next. This means each lot will be without animal activity for the majority of the year during rotational seasons, allowing for grass regrowth and improvement of soil health.
 - Note the #7 shows the X is a pasture that will be used for temporary overflow parking. This is incidental to the grazing area, and no permanent improvements that compromise the grazing will be installed.
- **Information on the horse breeding operation. Note, acreage devoted to horse pasture land does not count toward contract compliance.**
- The #7 that shows the single / line will occasionally be used for the horses to be turned out. The majority of the time, the horses will be in the barn, as shown in No. 6. There is no dedicated pasture for horse grazing, and the temporary horse grazing is inferential to the sheep grazing.
- **Acreage breakdown for each commercial agricultural operation (lavender, olive orchard, sheep grazing, cattle grazing).**
- The areas established by the Landscape Architect (Sovi Scapes, or Sovi Landscape Architecture) is the most accurate and will be the guide for all plantings and landscaping. Please see attached:
 - Lavender: 8.42 acres
 - Olive orchard: 5.88 acres - the olives will be used to produce olive oil which we will sell as an item on our retail products list. Excess fruit will be sold to local farms and oil processors.
 - Sheep grazing: 32.08 acres (areas with the number 19) +2.92 acres (areas identified by number 7), totaling 35 acres as depicted in the Sovi diagram.
 - Cattle grazing: 0 acres. This is not included in the future plans for this property.

- **Total Disturbed/Pervious/Impervious acreage used for paving, walls, future residence and future equestrian barn** Sovi landscape architecture dated 8/22/24.

All of these areas are incidental to the onsite agricultural activities. For example, the road will be used for tractors, harvesting, and access throughout the property. The processing barn and all of the hardscape support the agricultural operations.

- **Future Landowner Residence**

- The current primary residence will become an ag-employee or farm family housing if and when we decide to build another house, as shown in #14.



VILLA VANTO
4485 D ST
PETALUMA CA
94952

August 22, 2024

Subject: Ecological Benefits of Villa Vanto

To whom it may concern,

Our 57-acre property at 4485 D Street Extension in Petaluma currently consists of non-native grasslands across steep, hilly terrain. From the early 1920s to the 1980s, this was part of a larger parcel totaling 130 acres and was used as a dairy milking operation. According to the previous property owner, from the 1980s to 2018, the property was occasionally grazed, but realistically, the land has since lain barren, causing it to grow fallow and nutrient-lacking. Due to the Mediterranean climate of this area and the high proneness to drought, it poses a fire risk if left unmaintained. In 2023, 40 acres of our property caught fire due to a roadside spark. Approval of our application would significantly reduce the risk of fire. Our row crops will act as slow-burning and fire-resistant plants. With the large row spacing, regular mowing, and grazing in between rows, the 12 acres of row crops will act as a fire barrier. Additionally, **the remaining 35 acres will now be grazed by sheep regularly throughout the entire year instead of occasionally importing cattle.**

We plan on utilizing the entire property for agricultural uses. As depicted in the attached map provided by Madhavi Sonar, Landscape Architect, you will see that 55.7 of the 56 acres will be dedicated to agriculture in some capacity. The only non-agricultural use on the property is the two residential homes (0.3 acres), one occupied by seasonal farmworkers and the other by our family. There are no dedicated areas for promotional events, as every area supports the farm in some capacity. The processing barn will be used for processing, storing, packaging, and scent-making year-round, and when events are held, they will be held around the operation. All of the landscaping around the barn is a specific crop that will be incorporated into our agricultural and scent-making endeavors i.e. the rosemary around the barn will also be distilled and sold as perfumery.

The ecological benefits of the intended use of this land include but are not limited to: decreased non-native grasslands, increased food and habitats for bees and other pollinators; improved habitats for bats and owls, improved soil health due to compost use and plant diversity, use of recycled water and minimal interference with existing stream and watershed. You can read more about these benefits provided by experts in their fields in the letters from Huffman-Broadway and the University of California Collective Extension.

We believe we are fully transforming this property in a thoughtful and creative way to positively impact both the natural Sonoma County ecosystem and the people who live, work, and visit here.

Sincerely,

Mario & Katherine Ghilotti

4485 D ST
Petaluma CA 94952
Mario@vero-west.com
4157-760-1936

Ecological Benefits Outline

Prepared by Ellie Andrews

Specialty Crops Advisor

Sonoma, Marin, and Napa Counties

UC Cooperative Extension

August 21, 2024

Based on the provided documents describing the diversified farming plans at Villa Vanto, here is an outline of anticipated ecological benefits:

- 10 acres of lavender will increase the land area under pollinator-friendly, climate-resilient plants that provide food and habitat for pollinators for a relatively wide window of bloom time.
- Other flowers, herbs, seasonal/rotation crops, companion plants, cover crops, etc. will increase on-farm plant species diversity. This will provide above-ground benefits like food and habitat for pollinators, and diverse living roots in the soil will help conserve and improve soil health over time.
- Raised garden beds will increase on-farm crop diversity and allow soil health improvements over time through use of soil health practices such as compost.
- The olive grove and orchard will add on-farm crop diversity and habitat and store carbon in woody biomass.
- Bee hives will provide shelter for pollinators on site.
- Owl and bat boxes will increase predator habitat to encourage natural control of pests such as mosquitos and rodents.
- Recycled water will help conserve water which can benefit the local agroecosystem.
- Maintaining the riparian area and oak trees will provide natural habitat and ensure existing ecosystem services provided by these areas are protected.
- Farm-to-table dinners and other educational events will increase public awareness of ecological benefits of diversified farm systems.

Project Summary:

The Villa Vanto Farm, a 55.79 acre site is located in Petaluma, Sonoma County, California. In collaboration with civil engineers and environmental regulatory consultants the existing soil profiles, site hydrology and native plant communities are at the center stage of the project. The proposed project strives to restore and improve the existing micro-climate and environmental systems on the site.

The site comprises over 300 feet of grade changes, an existing pond and a creek with 7 different plant communities. Grade changes on the site provide both challenges and opportunities to not only to create unique spaces, but demonstrate different water conservation techniques throughout the site. Subtle proposed grades changes maintain the site hydrology by directing water to the existing pond and riparian stream that further connects to San Antonio Creek. Bioswales and a retention pond are proposed for ground water recharge and infiltration of potential nutrients from cultivation areas. A rainwater harvesting tank, integrated with retaining walls overflows into a bioswale, thereby demonstrating the rainwater cycle. These rainwater features will capture the run-off from neighboring properties and ensure the slow release of water into the creek reducing further erosion downstream.

The owner and design team are committed to understanding and implementing conservation agricultural principles, with an expectation that over time, there will be an improvement to food quality, flavor and nutrition in the area. The owner envisions that their project design will promote their produce and will encourage the next génération of farmers to similar sustainable farming solutions and practices in the area.

The proposed landscape around this barn is to include with edible flower garden. Vertical green screen trellises around the barn will provide support for seasonal vegetables. Raised beds will contain herbs. The plant palette is focused on edible, native/adaptive plants to the region. Lavender fields are carefully designed after analyzing slope and aspect of hills for suitability, attract pollinators and the enhancement of existing views. Bee hives will be situated close to the lavender fields to provide shelter to the pollinators for harvesting lavender honey. A proposed cover crop between lavender fields consists of a native seed mixs of Fescue and Clover which are part of the existing plant communities, with the addition of native Yarrow and California Poppy to attract more pollinators.

As an important part of the ecosystem, the existing preserved Coastal and Valley Oak trees provide food and hábitat for wildlife and ruminants. Both Oak tree varieties will be added to make up of any loss of existing oaks in the past. Based on the environmental report disturbed areas and grazing areas will be reseeded with native grasses from the plant communities throughout the site, with the intent of slowly replacing existing non-native species with native ones and restoring the habitat in the best possible way.

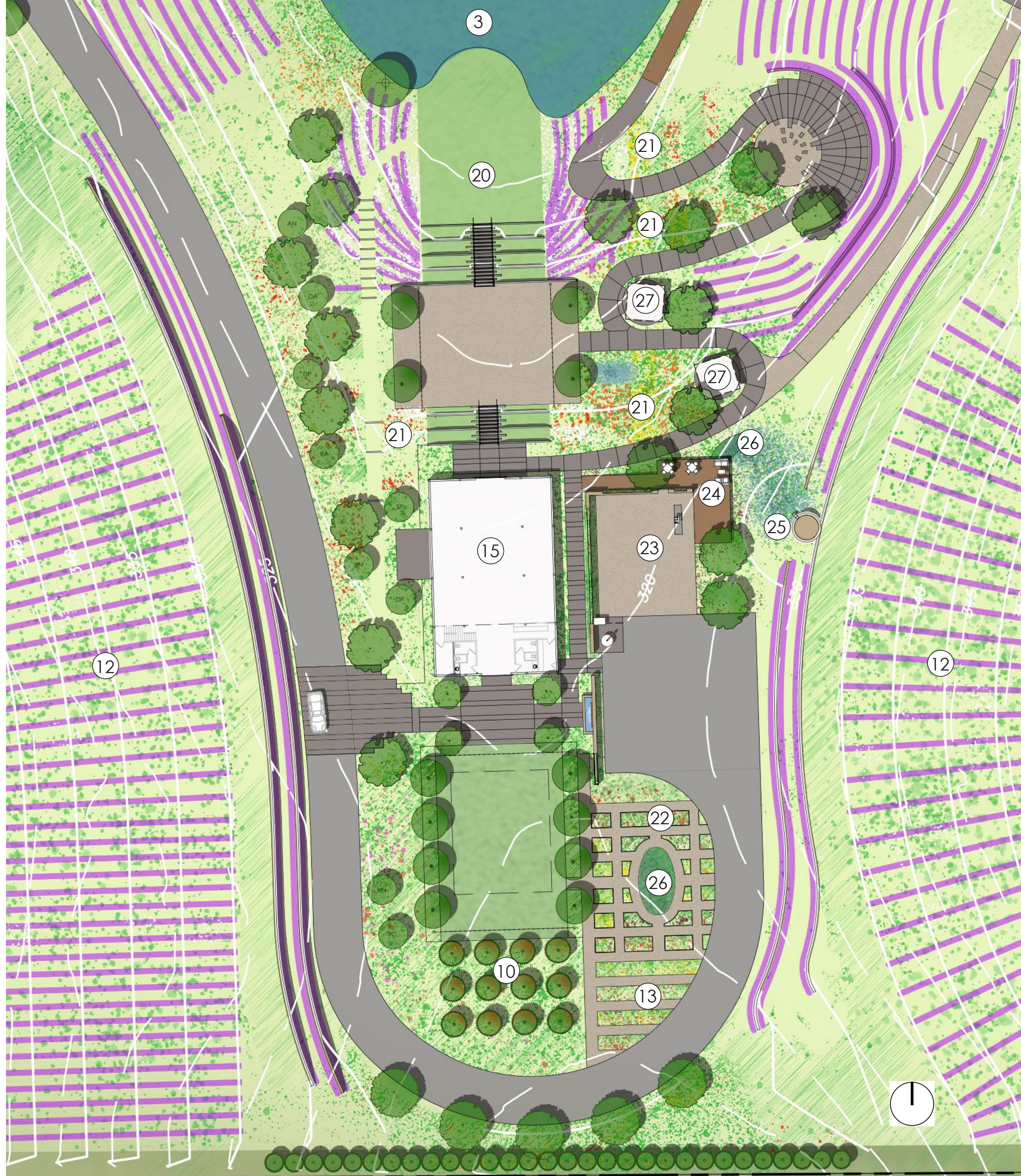


LEGEND

- 1 MAIN ENTRANCE
- 2 EXISTING CREEK/ RIPARIAN AREA
- 3 EXISTING POND
- 4 SECONDARY ENTRANCE/ EXIT
- 5 RESIDENCE (FORMER BARN) WITH PROPOSED BACKYARD
- 6 FUTURE EQUESTRIAN BARN
- 7 ROTATIONAL GRAZING FENCED PASTURES
- 8 HORSE DRINKING FOUNTAIN
- 9 OAK TREE ALLEY
- 10 ORCHARD
- 11 OLIVE GROVE
- 12 LAVENDER FIELDS WITH COVER CROP
- 13 SEASONAL/ ROTATION CROP
- 14 FUTURE RESIDENCE
- 15 NEW BARN- LAVENDER PROCESSING
- 16 PROPOSED BRIDGE
- 17 EXISTING NATIVE OAK FOREST
- 18 FUTURE BOARWALK
- 19 UNDISTURBED OPEN GRAZING AREAS
- 20 PROPOSED POND

AREA TABULATION

	DESCRIPTION	AREA
12	LAVENDER FARMING	366,607 sf. (8.42 acre.)
9 10 11 13	ORCHARDS, ALLEYS AND CULTIVATION AREAS	256,497 sf. (5.88 acre.)
17 19	PRESERVED/ UNDISTRUBED/ RESTORED GRAZING ARES	1,396,590 sf. (32.08 acre.)
7	ROTATIONAL GRAZING FENCED PASTURES	127,205 sf. (2.92 acre.)
2 3 20	POND AND CREEK	126,354 sf. (2.90 acre)
15	BARN- PROCESSING SPACE	4,000 sf. (0.09) acre.
5 6 14	EXISTING AND FUTURE STRUCTURES	10,726 sf. (0.24)
	IMPERVIOUS PAVING, WALLS	138,944 sf. (3.18 acre.)
	PERVIOUS PAVING	13,070 sf. (0.30 acre.)
	AG. TOTAL	2,439,359.8 sf. (55.76 acre)
	NON-AG. TOTAL	10,726 sf. (0.24 acre)
	TOTAL AREA	2,439,360 sf. (56 acre)



- ③ EXISTING POND
- ⑩ ORCHARD
- ⑫ LAVENDER FIELDS WITH COVER CROP
- ⑬ SEASONAL/ ROTATION CROP
- ⑮ NEW BARN- CONSTRUCTED IN 2021/ LAVENDER PROCESSING
- ⑳ NEW STEPS WITH GRASSES
- ㉑ EDIBLE FLOWER GARDEN
- ㉒ RAISED PLANTER HERB GARDEN
- ㉓ OUTDOOR KITCHEN WITH GREEN SCREEN PLANTED WITH SEASONAL PRODUCE
- ㉔ DECK FOR COOKING LESSONS AND SEATING
- ㉕ RAIN WATER HARVESTING TANK
- ㉖ BIOSWALE
- ㉗ SEATING AREAS

DATE: 8/22/2024

Villa Vanto Farm

Huffman-Broadway Group, Inc.

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORY CONSULTANTS

11015TH AVE, STE 205, SAN RAFAEL, CA 94901 • 415.925.2000 • www.h-bgroup.com

August 20, 2024

Sent via Email

Josh Miranda
County of Sonoma
Permit & Resource Management Department
2550 Ventura Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Subject: Ecological Benefits: Villo Vanto Farms Project; UPE21-0064, 4485 D Street, Petaluma, APN: 020-130-037

Dear Mr. Miranda:

The Villa Vanto Farms property consists of 55.79 acres of agricultural land with a farmhouse, livestock pens, barn, and stock pond with surrounding pastureland. Agricultural and dispersed residential land uses are present on all sides of the property. The subject Villo Vanto Farms Project (Project), if approved, would affect a total of 17.09 acres (Project Site) resulting from 17.01 acres of modifications to non-native grasslands and existing urban areas, < 0.2-acre of temporary impacts and < 0.0007-acre of permanent alterations to stream habitat resulting from the construction of a clear span bridge crossing, and the removal of 4 valley oak trees (0.07 acre of oak woodland habitat) as a result of road construction. The loss of valley oak trees will be mitigated by planting additional oak trees and insuring their long-term survival. The proposed Project would result in replacing a major portion of the 17.09 acres of non-native grasslands with 11.5-acres of Lavender cropland. The remaining 5.59 acres would be impacted by urban development. The cropland will be situated near an unnamed ephemeral stream corridor where the surrounding side slopes are dominated by non-native grassland and the underlying soils are highly erodible, as evidenced by the presence of erosion rill and head cut areas. The proposed 11.5-acre Lavender cropland will restore the land surface where erosion is occurring and prevent future erosion and sediment transport to the stream. This has significant water quality benefit to the downstream San Antonio Creek Watershed. Lavender is adapted to our regional Mediterranean climate and does not require much water. The 11.5-acre of Lavender cropland will provide a significant long lasting food source for pollinators to include bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects, and hummingbirds. Lavender cropland will also become especially important to the survival of pollinators when the region experiences drought conditions. The existing non-native grasslands are a poor and short-lived habitat for pollinating insects. The proposed Project will introduce rotational grazing with livestock and sheep grazing to the remaining approximately 35 acres of non-native grasslands within the Villo Vanto Farms property. Livestock grazing has the benefit of reducing fuel load in this fire prone area of the County, enables native species to better compete, and allows for the potential for native grassland ecosystem restoration.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Terry Huffman, PhD
Wetland Regulatory Scientist/ Plant Ecologist

Huffman Broadway Group, Inc., is a California Certified
Small Business and a Veteran-Owned Small Business.

