

The SONOMA VALLEY WINERY GUIDELINES INTRODUCTION

Recommended Changes to the Draft Guidelines

The Winery Events Ad Hoc Committee of the SVCAC is recommending substantial changes to the draft Guidelines presented to the SVCAC on 11/18/20 by Permit Sonoma. The changes generally intend to further restrict frequency and size of events, increase wineries' responsibility to and communication with other members of the community, and increase County oversight of winery operations which include visitors. Following are the most significant changes to the draft Guidelines that are recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee:

- Identify the entirety of the Sonoma Valley Planning Area as over-concentrated
- Limit the total number of events to 12 per year per winery.
- Limit the concentration of wineries to two per half mile of roadway.
- Increase the minimum parcel size for tasting rooms from 10 acres to 20 acres.
- Limit the percentage of permanent structures to 20% for hospitality uses and to 10% for administrative uses.
- Require events to be cancelled when a red flag warning has been declared in the subject area.

Additional Recommendations to the County

In addition to reviewing and recommending changes to the draft Guidelines, the Ad Hoc Committee noted several recommendations that were included in the GHD Threshold Traffic Study that was presented to the SVCAC last year. These recommendations did not really fit in the Guidelines, but the Committee felt strongly that they should be pursued by the County. Three key elements were:

- A. Over concentration of wineries.**
- B. Traffic congestion.**
- C. The need for monitoring and management of permits once they are issued.**

A. Over concentration of wineries

The recommendation regarding overconcentration is based upon the following considerations:

- 1) While some areas of the Sonoma Valley have a higher concentration of wineries than other areas, the respective areas themselves are not clearly defined.
- 2) New wineries continue to be permitted, increasing the likelihood that there will be greater density of wineries throughout the Sonoma Valley.

Conclusion: The Ad Hoc committee proposes that the entirety of the Sonoma Valley be considered an area of high concentration with proximity of winery proposals being considered on a site by site basis.

B. Traffic congestion

This is the single most troublesome condition of winery operations for neighboring residents. The Ad Hoc committee makes some specific recommendations in the body of the Guidelines, as well as other recommendations included in this introduction.

The Guidelines are for use by the SVCAC, permit applicants, and Permit Sonoma staff in reviewing applications. While conducting the review, it became evident there are traffic related conditions which deserve attention that will need to be addressed by appropriate agencies, but are not currently required by permit applicants themselves.

In the Threshold Traffic Study prepared for the County, and presented to the SVCAC, the consultants made several recommendations the Ad Hoc Committee urges the County to implement. These recommendations include the following:

1) Improve County Road Design Standards

Improving current Sonoma County transportation design and engineering standards would address some of the primary roadway system transportation capacity, operations, and safety deficiencies. This would also include working with the State to widen roadway shoulders where necessary, and provide Class II Bike Lanes along Highway 12. However, factors including high improvement costs, increased travel speeds potential for environmental impacts, and effects on the rural character of Sonoma Valley and community values, are all considerations that make substantial improvements to the roadways a challenge.

2) Employ Highway Capacity methodologies for safety calculations

Continue to use the approved Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) methodologies for two-lane highways to calculate roadway capacities and traffic operational conditions (Level of Service). Roadway classifications and corresponding measures of effectiveness should be based upon HCM. The same HCM methodologies account for the effects of geometric, traffic, and environmental factors including travel lane width, shoulder width, travel speed, segment length, travel interruptions such as driveways and intersections, roadway horizontal and vertical curves, and delay due to passing restrictions. The Highway Capacity Software (HCS) implements the HCM methodologies and can be utilized to calculate this measure of effectiveness.

3) Improve Data Collection

Install, or coordinate the installation of, permanent traffic count stations within Sonoma Valley at strategic locations on State Highways and some primary County roads. The purpose of this effort is to start a long-term transportation database that allows monitoring of not only annual travel changes, but also Off-Peak and Peak Season travel fluctuations from month to month, and even from day to day. The database will serve as a resource for transportation studies.

C. Manage and Monitor Permits

1) Manage Industry-wide events.

The draft Guidelines pertain to some aspects of industry-wide events for individual permit applications, but do not address the overall permitting and operation of these events to manage them on behalf of affected neighborhoods. The County should work with the wine industry to adopt procedures and standards for the conduct of industry-wide events. Each such event should require prior County approval of a cultural event permit as it is presently codified in the Zoning Code. The County should also work with the wine industry to establish standards for the conduct of these events. The standards would build upon earlier industry efforts along these lines, but should include the following:

a. Larger events would be limited to off peak season and should be separated by at least a full month whenever they overlap a single geographic area to allow intermittent relief to the community of additional traffic impacts.

- b.** Public advertisements should be provided to the community so the impacted residents can plan for an increase in visitor impacts. Local newspaper, TV, radio and social media should be utilized to inform the public. The notification should identify all participating wineries. Portable message signing should be provided at least a week before the event.
- c.** The event sponsor should verify that all participating wineries have a valid permit for their participation.
- d.** The event should be coordinated with other large non-winery events such as auto races and bicycle events so as to avoid overlapping schedules
- e.** The event sponsor should limit the number of visitors at each winery to 50 persons at a time.
- f.** Each participating winery should have a traffic and parking management plan and require parking attendants on event days.
- g.** The event sponsor or participants should provide a shuttle bus plan each day of the event to minimize traffic.

2) Coordinate Events Calendar and Monitor Winery Tasting and Event Functions

While Permit Sonoma and the SVCAC can and must use the permitting process to set limits and use conditions for wineries to follow, the wineries' compliance with what is allowed in their Use Permit can be determined only by subsequent monitoring. At present most monitoring takes the form of complaints, usually generated by neighbors or others who are affected by such problems as traffic and noise.

A more standard method of monitoring and accountability must be established if the permitting process is to produce equitable and defensible results. The County should fund and maintain designated event coordinators and monitors, establish review periods, and introduce steps to improve winery compliance.

SVCAC Ad Hoc Committee Winery Event Guidelines Draft Resources

The information to prepare this draft of recommended Guidelines by the SVCAC Ad Hoc Committee was obtained from, but not limited to, the following sources:

- The Sonoma Valley Winery Event Guidelines draft presented to the SVCAC on 11/18/20.
- The GHD Threshold Traffic Study presented to the SVCAC on 1/27/21
- The Permit Sonoma workshop minutes from 2/18/21.
- The Dry Creek Draft Winery Guidelines
- The West County Principles document
- The noise standards document prepared for Sonoma County by Bollard Acoustical Consultants dated 11/12/16.
- Notes from the Wine Industry Events Working Group dated 2016- 2018.
- Existing County staff and codes

SONOMA VALLEY WINERY GUIDELINES--Approved 5.26.21

SVCAC WINERY GUIDLINES AD HOC COMMITTEE

Purpose

The Sonoma Valley Winery Guidelines (“Guidelines”) provide a local framework for evaluating use permit applications on land that is zoned Agricultural (DA, LIA, LEA). The intention of these Guidelines is to protect Agricultural Zones by advising how much winery-related activity is allowed on these lands, and by managing these uses in a way that minimizes cumulative impacts.

The Guidelines identify criteria that will be used by the Sonoma County Citizens Advisory Commission (SVCAC). The Guidelines affect applicants for a new winery or modification to an existing winery. The SVCAC will use the Guidelines to make recommendations to the Permit Sonoma staff, as well as the Board of Zoning Adjustments, Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

The Guidelines are also intended to advise applicants on the design of their projects. Each project is regarded as unique in the evaluation process, and each will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the SVCAC and by Permit Sonoma.

With respect to these Guidelines, the following should be noted:

1. While decision makers should make every attempt to follow the Guidelines, the circumstances of each particular application and site may suggest that deviations are appropriate.

For Example: A project applicant may have a parcel that he/she feels would make a good winery site even if the site does not meet the Guidelines for minimum parcel size. The application is for production and processing and does not include a tasting room or events. The site is very compatible with the neighborhood...good noise attenuation, etc. In a case like this the CAC may feel that the project could be recommended in spite of the smaller parcel size.

2. Where these Guidelines establish a maximum level of usage, the permit decision may not ultimately provide for that level.

For Example: A project applicant proposes a winery and tasting room with the maximum number of events allowed under the Guidelines. However, the site is constrained due to topography, nearby residences, parking, etc. etc. In a case like this,

the CAC may feel that a lesser number of events is necessary in order to minimize these problems.

3. A currently permitted project remains subject to the conditions of that permit and is not affected by these Guidelines.

For Example: A winery project that was previously approved with a smaller number of events than allowed under the Guidelines does not automatically get to hold the larger number based upon the new Guidelines. However, the owners could apply for a use permit to increase the number of events. Similarly, a project that was approved for a greater number of events would be able to continue at that level.

4. These Guidelines are intended to complement County regulations. Many issues pertaining to winery permits are addressed through existing County policies, codes, and practices and are not thought to necessitate further guidance in these Guidelines.

For Example: The Guidelines do not include some of the more common aspects of a project, such as septic capacity, building codes, and drainage requirements.

Definitions:

Event. A gathering of 30 or more people at a pre-scheduled date and time, whether or not a fee is required to attend. Gatherings of less than 30 people are considered to be regular day to day activities of the applicable use, unless otherwise identified in the use entitlements. Some events last for two or three days. In these cases, each day is counted as a separate event.

For Example: A tasting room that is open all day every day for walk-in customers would not be considered an event, regardless how many visitors were to attend during the open hours. However, a scheduled gathering...maybe a wine club release party or a charity fundraiser, say on a particular day or night, would not be an event unless it were to involve more than 30 people.

Agricultural Promotion Event. An event that is directly related to the sales and promotion of the agricultural product from the site or local area. Examples include wine club gatherings, wine club releases, wine trade gatherings, and regional tastings as part of Industry-Wide Events.

Industry-Wide Event. An agricultural promotion event that is sponsored by a recognized wine industry association involving multiple wineries or tasting rooms within a specified geographical area.

Private Event: An event other than an agricultural promotion event, such as fundraising for charities, ballot measures, political campaigns, and similar purposes, or parties, concerts, weddings, celebrations, etc.

Winery. An agricultural processing facility that produces wine from wine grapes. A winery may include crush areas, production rooms, case goods and barrel storage, tank rooms, warehouses, bottling lines, laboratories, and administrative offices.

Tasting Room. A visitor serving use accessory to the production and/or processing of agricultural products. A winery tasting room would include the sampling and retail sales of wine made from locally grown wine grapes and other wine related products.

Event Space. An indoor or outdoor part of a winery or tasting room used for hosting events.

Locally Grown Agricultural Products. Agricultural products that are primarily grown and produced within Sonoma County and/or at neighboring counties in close proximity to the proposed use.

Over-Concentration. Over-concentration of visitor-serving and recreational uses can occur where several wineries, tasting rooms, and events are located in the same area or along the same route. An over-concentration of uses occurs when:

1. road conflicts occur where traffic conflicts with pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists from the local neighborhoods;
2. traffic levels exceed General Plan objectives on a specific or cumulative basis;
3. groundwater drawn to serve the facilities negatively impacts the aquifer and surrounding neighbor's wells; and
4. the uses are detrimental to rural character of the area.
5. more than two (2) winery and/or tasting room facilities are located within a ½ mile stretch of road.

Siting Criteria

Winery Siting Criteria:

A. Access. Public roadways of at least 18' in width are required. The applicant must show that the design will address:

1. Ingress/Egress. Follow County standards for ingress and egress to the property.
2. Sight Distance. Follow ASHTO sight distance standards.
3. Parking. "No Parking" signs should be installed and enforced along adjacent County roads
4. Traffic. Traffic impact analyses shall assess impacts based on project-generated trips as well as a scenario where project-generated trips are inflated by 20% to account for cumulative impacts in the Sonoma Valley concentration area. No traffic backups on public roadways.
5. Potential evacuation guidance and routes shall be posted on site.

B. Setbacks. Setbacks will be site specific and follow Sonoma County zoning standards from all applicable property lines. These setback standards will also apply to parking lots.

C. Noise Attenuation. When considering the proposed activity and intensity of use, the proposed use must meet the standards of the General Plan Noise Element. In addition, no outdoor amplified sound is allowed during events. Noise attenuation strategies, including setbacks from property lines and noise muffling interventions, may be combined to meet this standard, however permanent structures and installations for noise muffling must meet Scenic Resource requirements.

D. Visual Impacts. Facilities should be sited to minimize visual impact, especially in scenic areas/corridors. Setback distances shall be designed to ensure that the visual impacts of the new facilities are minimized.

E. Lighting. Nighttime lighting levels shall be limited to what is necessary to provide security and safety for users. Setbacks shall be sufficient to limit light visibility from public travel ways and to maintain the rural and scenic qualities of the Sonoma Valley. Exterior lighting shall be consistent with Dark Sky standards (e.g. low mounted, downward casting and fully shielded to prevent glare).

F. Maximum Winery Size. Winery size should be the minimum necessary to process the proposed level of wine grape production that will supply the winery.

For example: The extent of the processing operation should always be in proportion to the proposed production of wine grapes. This is a judgment call for CAC members, BZA members, or Board members as there is not a standard square footage that fits every project. Red wine is different from white wine in terms of the size of the facility. The key is to examine the specific uses of each portion of the facility and be satisfied that the proper relationship exists.

Tasting Room Siting Criteria

A. Tasting rooms are subject to the same Guidelines identified in subsections A-E above. Stand-alone tasting rooms are not allowed. Tasting rooms should be secondary and incidental to the proposed levels of production and processing.

For example: Similar to the previous example for winery size, the extent of facilities for visitor serving uses should be proportional to the extent of wine grape production and/or wine-making. A small production winery should not include a large tasting room or event space, but this is also a judgment call for CAC and decision makers. Again the key is to examine the specific uses of each portion of the facility.

B. Minimum Parcel Size. The minimum parcel size that is required to qualify for a tasting room is 20 acres. An exception may be made to this minimum when the applicant is a small agricultural producer.

C. Maximum Site Area for Tasting Room and Other Accessory Uses

The size of the facility should be secondary and incidental in proportion to the proposed production and/or processing of the winery.

Permanent structures for hospitality uses are limited to 20% of the total size of all of the non-residential buildings on site.

Permanent structures for offices and other administration purposes are limited to 15% of the total size of all of the non-residential buildings on site.

D. On-Site Parking. The following on-site parking is required for tasting rooms and events:

1. 1 space per 250 square feet of the winery production facility; plus
2. 1 space per 2.5 guests and 1 space per employee for the tasting room and events.
3. Where events are proposed that could exceed the parking provided on-site, shuttle service shall be provided to transfer guests to and from off-street parking locations. Shuttles from off-site public parking areas are required, for all events with over 50 guests.
4. No parking is permitted along any public or private roadways or on vineyard roads.

E. Separation Criteria. The entire Sonoma Valley is considered either to be over-concentrated or to become over-concentrated in the near future. Wineries and tasting rooms are limited to 2 per half mile.

F. Source of Wine Grapes. Wines offered for sale or tasting should be produced from at least 75% grown in Sonoma County.

Winery, Tasting Room, and Event Operating Standards

A. Hours of Operation. The hours of operation for wineries and tasting rooms shall be limited to 10 am-5 pm.

The hours of operation for Events shall be limited to 10am-9pm. All cleanup after the events shall occur by 10 pm.

The owner/host or other responsible party shall cancel events during any period when a red flag warning is in effect for the subject area.

B. Food Service. Food service is allowed for wine and food pairings or in conjunction with activities and events, provided that the primary activity in the tasting room shall be wine tasting related to wine sales and wine marketing, not dining.

1. A restaurant is prohibited.
2. Catering is acceptable and may include indoor, but not outdoor equipment such as stoves, wood-fired ovens and barbeques.
3. Sale of pre-packaged foods in conjunction with wine tasting is allowed per County standards.

C. Food and Wine Pairing. Daytime food and wine pairings may occur during tasting room hours, subject to the following conditions, and only with food prepared off-site. Food and wine pairing is allowed in the evening after 5pm only in conjunction with approved events, and the food and wine pairings must be selected by the winery, with no menu options allowed.

D. Private Guest Accommodations. Private marketing accommodations and agricultural farmstays are allowed as regulated by the Sonoma County Zoning Ordinance.

E. Agricultural Promotion Events. The purpose of agricultural promotional events is to promote local agricultural products grown or processed on-site or the local area. When phased projects are approved, the promotional events shall at all times be subordinate to the winery production itself. The owner/host, or other responsible party shall provide community notification of events.

F. Industry-wide Events. Industry-wide events are considered to be agricultural promotion events. Each participating tasting room is limited to the total number of events specified in the Use Permit. Industry-wide events shall:

1. meet the requirements, and follow the best practices, of the association sponsoring the event.
2. provide a plan for overflow parking
3. shall not allow parking along public roadways.
4. provide community notification of the event.

G. Private Events. Private events, such as fundraisers and concerts, typically occur on one day. Private events must end before sunset and shall provide community notification in advance of the event.

H. Maximum Number of Events. The total number of events, including agricultural promotion, industry-wide, and private events are limited to a maximum of 12 per year. In addition, events are limited to one per month, except that the one in a month may be an industry-wide event lasting up to 3 days.

I. Event Space. No permanent structure dedicated to events shall be constructed or maintained. Events may be held in any indoor or outdoor area that is commonly used for the winery or tasting room facility.

J. On-Site Coordinator. All activities and events must be hosted by the proprietor or have on-site management by the proprietor's staff. A designated person on the proprietor's staff must be available at all times during the events to address complaints or resolve problems. The On-Site Coordinator shall:

1. provide a telephone number listed on the winery's own website through which neighbors and members of the public will have a direct way to make any complaints; and
2. send out a notice to site neighbors to inform them that the "complaint hot line" is available should they wish to call.

K. Event Proposal. Event coordination is the key to improving the over-concentration problem in Sonoma Valley and should apply to all events. Each application shall clearly state the type of events, the number of events, and the number of attendees for each event.

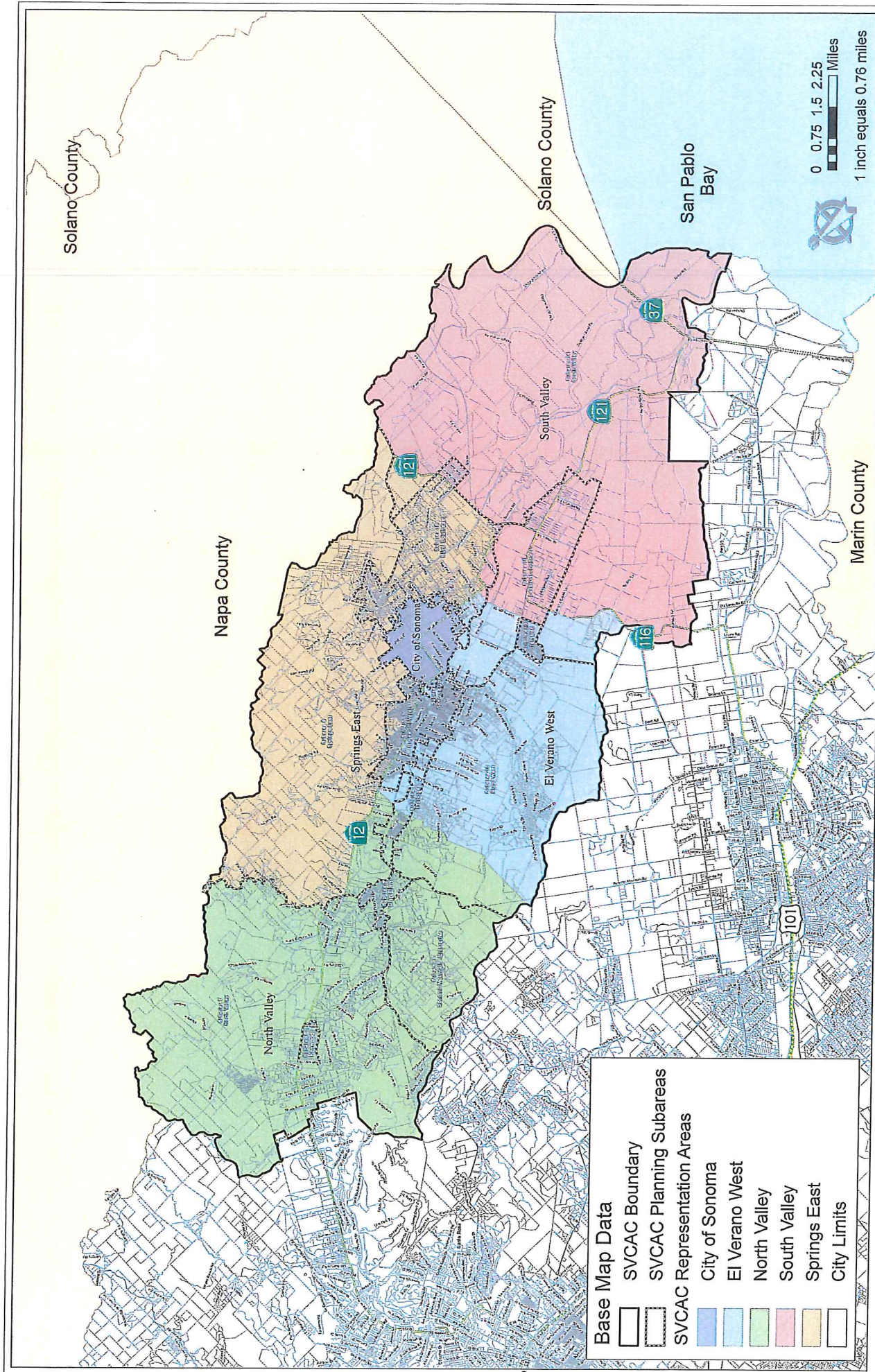
Since the mid-1990s, the County has included a condition in all Use Permits for all newly approved wineries that requires the winery to comply with any event coordination program that may be adopted in the future. All new winery permits also carry this condition. The combined effect is that all winery-related use permits issued from the 1990s through the present already have this particular condition of approval.

The approved event plan should be clearly set forth as a standard Condition of Approval in all new use permits and should include provisions for event coordination.

In order to monitor the effects of the permit, and to confirm that it is being followed, the Use Permit should require that data regarding the numbers of visitors from each winery event and the total tasting room attendance for the previous year be submitted to the County annually.

L. Traffic Management Plan. Traffic management and parking plans are standard conditions of approval for new and modifications of winery use permits. These plans should take into account the maximum number of people visiting the tasting room during tasting room hours as well as during any event.

M. Over-concentrated Area Map. The attached map of the Sonoma Valley Planning Area is the area that is considered to be over-concentrated. [Permit Sonoma to provide map]



Sonoma Valley Citizen Advisory Commission Area

Map Scale and Reproduction methods limit accuracy in physical features displayed. This map is for illustrative purposes only, and is not surveyed or professionally drawn. The parcels contained herein are not intended to represent warranty deeds. Site-specific studies are required to draw precise boundary conditions.

For more current parcel data contact the County of Sonoma Assessment Office.

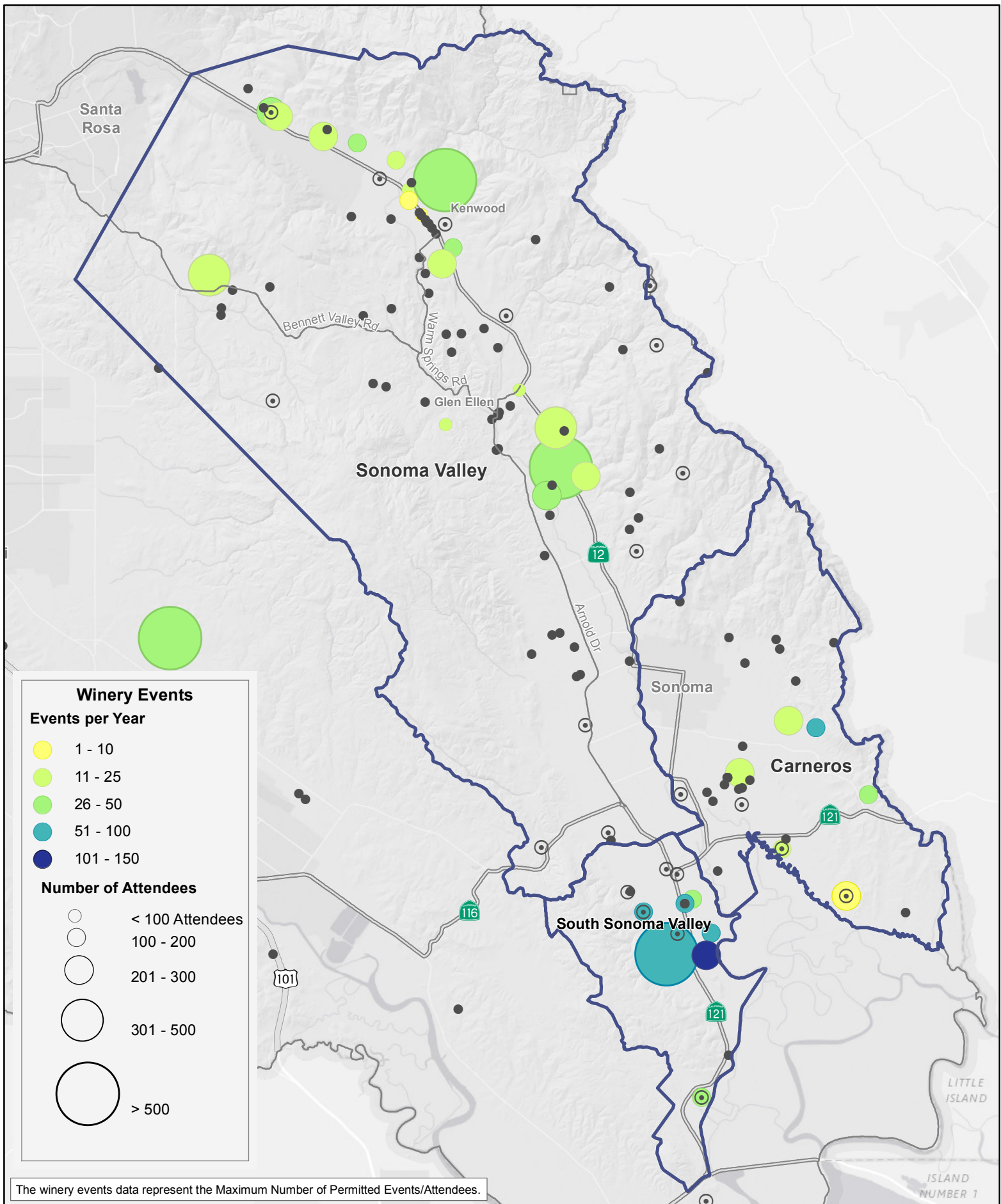
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Winery Event Concentration - Sonoma Valley

- Approved Winery
- Pending Winery
- Winery Event Concentration Area
- US Federal Highway
- State Highway
- Road



0 0.5 1 2 Miles
1 inch = 2.37 miles



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