County of Sonoma
State of California

Date: July 9, 2026

Item Number: 2026-0405

Resolution Number: _____

☐ 4/5 Vote Required

Resolution Of The Board Of Supervisors Of The County Of Sonoma, State Of California, Congratulating Iron Horse Vineyards Upon Receiving The Sonoma County Farm Bureau's 2026 Luther Burbank Conservation Award

Whereas, Iron Horse Vineyards, a family-owned and operated vineyard located in the Green Valley viticultural region of Sonoma County, has been selected as the 2026 recipient of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau's Luther Burbank Conservation Award in recognition of its outstanding commitment to land stewardship, conservation, and agricultural sustainability; and

Whereas, located just 13 miles from the Pacific Ocean atop Rainbow Ridge, Iron Horse Vineyards is rooted in the natural beauty, climate, soils, and agricultural heritage of West County, including the famed Goldridge soil first identified by Luther Burbank; and

Whereas, the Luther Burbank Conservation Award honors those who reflect Burbank's belief that by working with nature rather than against it, agriculture can support innovation, environmental care, and the long-term health of the land; and

Whereas, Iron Horse Vineyards has carried this philosophy forward since 1976, when Barry and Audrey Sterling purchased the property and began building a family business that would become known for estate-grown still and sparkling wines, as well as a deep commitment to preserving the ecosystem surrounding the vineyard; and

Whereas, under the leadership of the Sterling family, including partner and Chief Executive Officer Joy Sterling, Iron Horse Vineyards has remained dedicated to farming with intention, resilience, and care for future generations; and

Whereas, Iron Horse Vineyards is certified sustainable and regenerative by Sonoma County Winegrowers, reflecting the vineyard's ongoing work to balance high-quality wine production with practices that protect soil, water, habitat, and the broader environment; and

Whereas, one of Iron Horse Vineyards' most significant conservation efforts is the recently completed Salmon Habitat Improvement Project, completed in partnership with the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District and PCI Ecological to create a more natural corridor for native Coho salmon and support connected habitat essential to their life cycle; and

Whereas, Iron Horse Vineyards has also embraced precision agriculture through a partnership with the Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California, using technology such as soil, air, weather, and water pressure sensors, drones, artificial intelligence, and digital mapping to better understand vineyard conditions, conserve resources, and support research and education; and

Whereas, Iron Horse Vineyards' stewardship practices include constructing a reservoir, combating erosion with cover crops, allowing creek beds to return to their natural state, using recycled water since 1990, turning vineyard prunings into mulch, avoiding systemic pesticides, and serving as a base for fire watch cameras; and

Whereas, the Sterling family's commitment to conservation extends beyond the vineyard rows and into the broader community through charitable giving wines that support organizations including the Redwood Empire Food Bank, Heal the Bay, and the Disabled American Veterans Foundation; and

Whereas, Iron Horse Vineyards' work reflects an understanding that environmental stewardship is inseparable from love of the land, care for community, and responsibility to those who will inherit Sonoma County's agricultural future; and

Whereas, fellow growers and community members recognize the Sterling family for their long-term commitment to leaving the land better than they found it, restoring habitat, protecting natural resources, and strengthening the character of Green Valley and Sonoma County agriculture; and

Whereas, 2026 marks a milestone year for Iron Horse Vineyards, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Sterling family's stewardship of the property, family matriarch Audrey Sterling's 95th birthday, and the Year of the Horse in the lunar zodiac; and

Whereas, Iron Horse Vineyards continues to look toward the future with a vision of remaining a viable, innovative, and family-farmed Sonoma County agricultural operation for generations to come;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma hereby congratulates Iron Horse Vineyards upon receiving the Sonoma County Farm Bureau's 2026 Luther Burbank Conservation Award and expresses its sincere appreciation for the Sterling family's leadership in conservation, innovation, regenerative farming, and agricultural stewardship.

Be It Further Resolved that the Board of Supervisors joins the Sonoma County Farm Bureau in honoring Iron Horse Vineyards as a true steward of the land whose work protects Sonoma County's agricultural heritage while helping shape a more sustainable future.

Supervisors:

Rabbitt: Coursey: Gore: Hopkins: Hermosillo:

Ayes: Noes: Absent: Abstain:

So Ordered.