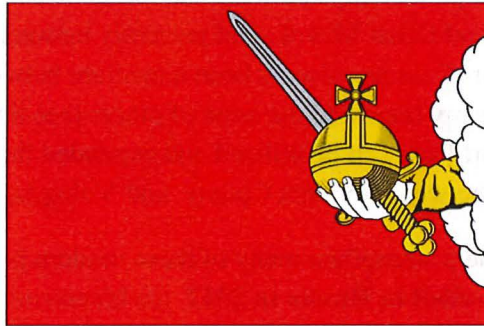


Sonoma County-Vologda Region Sister City Proposal

Prepared for Sonoma County Board of
Supervisors

12/1/2018



This initial proposal has been several years in the making, and the following report is the culmination of the work of many individuals who care deeply about honoring shared heritage and striving to create better prospects for the future of citizen diplomacy and cross-cultural understanding.

Vologda-Sonoma County Sister City Partnership

Dear Sonoma County Board of Supervisors:

Sonoma County has been host to many Russians through the years, beginning with the first Russian influences and partnerships in California with the Russian American Company at Fort Ross. *Enhydra Lutra*—the common sea otter—are adorable mammals of the sea known for being curious and playful. Yet beneath their frolicking cover, these keystone mammals are creatures of collaboration, partnerships, friendships, and in fact the catalyst of cultural exchanges. The sea otter, a mammal which inhabits waters from California to Alaska, was the star of the show with the Russian fur trading colonies along the western North American seaboard. Fort Ross, also known during 1812 to 1841 as Colony Ross, was the first enterprise and business in what we now call Sonoma County. This history includes many people from many nations, then as well as today. Fort Ross has been a perpetual center of diversity and partnerships between the foregone colonial Russians, Alaskans, Creole's, Kashaya's, and Coast Miwok, and presently between these same people and also international interests. Fort Ross has always been a medium between different cultures, countries, and peoples. It is my hope and the hope of others (see list of support below) that this unique power of Fort Ross can be utilized and expanded through the creation of a sister-city partnership between Sonoma County and Vologda, Russia.

In order to help strengthen many of these modern partnerships, **a delegation from Sonoma County travelled to Russia in 2012**, the bicentennial of Fort Ross. One of the locations they visited was the Vologda Region, which includes Tot'ma—the birthplace of Ivan Kuskov, the founder of the Ross Colony. In 2013 during a visit to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors Chambers, the Sonoma County Museum, and to Fort Ross, the Governor of Vologda as well as the mayor of Totma suggested a Sister City partnership with Sonoma County **in large part because of their shared connection with Fort Ross**. It has been important to many passionate people in the recent history to cultivate person-to-person relationships in order to create a greater mutual understanding between citizens of Russia and the United States. Furthermore, in late October, 2014, many of us were a part of a delegation of Kashaya, Coast Miwok, academics, and other related partners of this history to further these relationships created long ago at Fort Ross. We met with Vologda city leaders regarding this proposed relationship, and they expressed their support for the mutually-beneficial arrangement.

A team of Sonoma County volunteers and I have already been running a sister-city like program for several years, hosting delegations from Vologda a number of times the past two years, with plans to host again in the near future. These programs have been organized and run without any city or county money--relying on grants, donations, local volunteers, and fundraisers. Adding the official stamp to this relationship as a sister city would make it easier to procure funding for such programs, allowing us to sustain many partnerships.

Today, Sonoma County has an opportunity to showcase this history and partnership by forming this Sister City bond with Vologda. This project is important for Sonoma County. This is a wonderful opportunity for Sonoma County to learn from and engage with our Russian counterparts and also for our Russian counterparts to learn from our county and city. It is a critical time for all of us to continue citizen diplomacy. **People to people, youth to youth, friends to friends, businesses to businesses—furthering these relationships is what really matters.**

There would be many benefits of such a relationship including:

- Increased tourism, academic exchanges, and interest for Sonoma County
- Future Museum exhibition exchanges
- Cultural exchanges and festivals, such as youth exchanges and programs
- Educational partnerships
- Cultural monuments and park showcasing this great history
- Creating better opportunities for grants to work on specific projects
- Unifying the many areas that make up Sonoma County through a better understanding of the place names, i.e. Russian River, Bodega Bay area, Fort Ross area, Healdsburg and the Santa Rosa valley area.

Strategic partnerships have transformative power. Never was this more apparent than at the Russian settlement of Fort Ross, and never has there been a sister-city partnership with so much potential. **I truly believe that this is a worthwhile opportunity for the mutual cultural and economic development of not only the people of Sonoma County, but of Vologda as well.**

We will be reaching out to many members of our community for support once we get initial support from Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. These include:

1. State Senator – Mike McGuire
2. State Assembly member Jim Wood
3. The Russian Ambassador of Washington DC
4. Sister Cities International
5. Sonoma County Museum
6. Governor of Vologda
7. Sonoma County Tourism Bureau
8. Clover-Stornetta Company
9. Santa Rosa JC and Sonoma State University

Shared similarities:

Both Vologda and Sonoma County have a rich history that continues to influence their respective populations today, both are cultural hubs in their respective region, and boast great diversity. The connection of Fort Ross is only the façade of the many commonalities between the two regions, including similar industries, long-term economic and cultural goals, and urban growth prospects.

- a. Universities and local colleges including Vologda State Technical University, Vologda State Pedagogical University, N.V. Vereschagin Vologda State Dairy Academy, the Vologda Institute of Law and Economy of the Federal Penal Service, and the Vologda Institute of

Business. Moreover, the committee currently has an agreement for educational cooperation between Vologda State Technical University and a university or college in or near Sonoma County. This agreement was personally given to us by the Vologda State Technical University President and has already been signed and approved by all the necessary officers and parties of the Vologda State Technical University.

- b. Wine Industry is very strong and of utmost importance to each region
- c. Active tourism industry
- d. Dairy industry: a world-renowned dairy and butter industry. **Vologda is world-famous for its dairy enterprises and butter.** The recipe of Vologda butter is preserved by technologists and specialists trained in Vologda Dairy Farming Academy - the first higher educational institution of Russia in the dairy farming sphere. It is named after Nikolai Vereshchagin, inventor of Vologda butter.
- e. high-tech industry
- f. Vologda is the lace capital of Russia, known for its world-famous lace industry.
- g. Over 50 historic domes throughout the city along with other historical architecture make tourism an up-and-coming industry in Vologda, similar to Sonoma County history and architecture.

Costs associated with on-going Sister City committee operations, travel, and travel-related expenses, including insurance for visitations between sister cities will not be borne by Sonoma County.

- a. We can assure that none of the costs of the operations and other related activities of the partnership shall be borne by Sonoma County. All activities held previously as a part of this partnership were funded through grants and private donations. These methods have been used to entirely fund two multi-week trips to Russia, one in 2012, 2014, 2016, and likely more in the future.
- b. The only thing we ask is support of this project via a resolution which we will send to Vologda once agreed.
- c. In the future the involvement will be showing up at events and an occasional meeting.

Next steps:

- i. Garner support from the Board of Supervisors
- ii. Showcase the local support with support letters
- iii. County Board of Supervisors – Resolution for Sister City International title
- iv. Letter from Governor of Vologda sharing support

Please join us as we strengthen our partnership with Russia today with a very meaningful non-political program. Thank you for your consideration and attention to this matter.

Regards,



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