

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region
Staff Summary Report
June 12, 2025

ITEM: 4

SUBJECT:

Public Hearing to Consider Adoption of Proposed Order No. R1-2024-0056, General Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial Vineyards in the North Coast Region and Proposed Resolution No. R1-2024-0057, Certification of Environmental Impact Report, California Environmental Quality Act Findings of Fact, and Statement of Overriding Considerations. (Brenna Sullivan, Chris Watt, David Kuszmar)

BOARD ACTION:

The Board will consider adoption of proposed Order No. R1-2024-0056 (Proposed Vineyard Order) and proposed Resolution No. R1-2024-0057 (Certification of EIR).

BACKGROUND:

The Proposed Vineyard Order would regulate discharges from approximately 65,000 acres of commercial vineyards in the North Coast Region. Most North Coast Region vineyards are planted in the Navarro and Russian River watersheds, which are impaired for sediment and temperature and provide habitat for threatened and endangered salmonid species. Vineyard operations have the potential to impact water quality through discharges of waste (e.g., sediment, nutrients, and pesticides) to surface water and groundwater and affect other controllable water quality factors such as riparian shade. In 2000, the Navarro River Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) listed vineyards as one source of excess sediment through soil erosion during rain events and drainage networks.

The North Coast Water Board has a statutory obligation under the Federal Clean Water Act, the State Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, and the State Nonpoint Source Policy to regulate all nonpoint sources of pollution, including agriculture. The North Coast Region vineyards remain one of the last major agricultural sectors in California and one of the remaining large nonpoint sources (by acreage) in the North Coast Region to be regulated under WDRs.

In 2017, the North Coast Water Board directed staff to prioritize and develop a regulatory order for Vineyards and Orchards. In 2019, the Board narrowed the order's scope to vineyards only. In Summer 2023, a Draft Vineyard Order and Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) were posted for a 60-day public review period. In August 2023, staff held a public workshop during a meeting of the North Coast Water Board to inform and invite comments from Board members and the public.

The North Coast Water Board received over 250 comment letters on the Draft Vineyard Order and Draft EIR during the public review period. Staff considered these comments and conducted an extensive public outreach effort to develop revisions to the Draft Vineyard Order. All written comments, staff's response to written comments, and a summary of revisions to the Draft Vineyard Order can be found in [FEIR Attachment B: Summary of Revisions to Draft Vineyard Order and Response to Comments](#).

The public hearing to consider adoption of the Proposed Vineyard Order and certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report was held on December 4, 2024 and continued to June 12, 2025. During the December hearing, the Board directed staff to develop supporting materials to help Enrollees understand Order requirements and to summarize Order implementation. In response, staff developed an [Enrollee Help Guide](#) and [Implementation Timeline](#).

The Board also directed staff to continue to work with interested persons to address concerns raised at the hearing and in ex parte communication. Between December 2024 and June 2025, staff conducted public outreach which included three farm tours with growers, four in-field vineyard workshops, a field tour with TAG members with environmental interests, and meetings with industry representatives and prospective Third-Party entities. Staff also responded to ex parte communication received on the Proposed Vineyard Order between June 2023 and March 2025. A summary of public outreach conducted between December 2024 and June 2025, staff's response to written ex parte communication, and a summary of revisions made to the Proposed Vineyard Order can be found in [FEIR Attachment F: Summary of Revisions to Proposed Vineyard Order and Response to Comments](#).

DISCUSSION:

[Proposed Order No. R1-2024-0056](#), General Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial Vineyards in the North Coast Region would establish General Waste Discharge Requirements (GWDRs) that are consistent with the ILRP and would include: (1) enrollment and payment of fees; (2) implementation and adaptation of management practices; and (3) monitoring and reporting. The Proposed Vineyard Order covers all commercially-farmed vineyards over 5 acres¹ in the Big-Navarro-Garcia, Gualala-Salmon, and Russian River Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) HUC-8 watersheds.

¹ Enrollees may be exempted from enrolling if their combined owned holdings in the applicable HUC-8 watersheds do not exceed 5 acres of commercial vineyards.

The Proposed Vineyard Order requires Enrollees to implement management practices in their vineyards, appurtenant agricultural roads, and Streamside Areas to control agricultural discharges. Enrollees must monitor management practice effectiveness and conduct adaptive management in response. The Proposed Vineyard Order also includes statewide precedential ILRP requirements for groundwater monitoring and nutrient management.

As is consistent with the ILRP, Enrollees may enroll individually or through an approved Coalition, which manages fees and may conduct monitoring and reporting on behalf of Enrollees. Individual Enrollees conduct monitoring and reporting on their own and report directly to the North Coast Water Board. Monitoring and Reporting requirements for Individual Enrollees are located in [Attachment A: MRP For Individual Enrollees](#). Coalitions are expected to conduct representative surface and groundwater monitoring on behalf of their Enrollees. Monitoring and Reporting requirements for Enrollees in a Coalition are located in [Attachment B: MRP For Enrollees in a Coalition](#).

The Proposed Order conditionally allows Enrollees to utilize participation in Voluntary Programs (which may include programs such as Fish Friendly Farming, Certified California Sustainable Winegrowing, LODI RULES, and Sustainability in Practice) for compliance with certain requirements. Requirements for Coalitions and Voluntary Programs are located in [Attachment C: Third Party Requirements](#).

The [Final Environmental Impact Report](#) (FEIR) evaluates environmental impacts from implementation of the Vineyard Order. The FEIR found a significant and unavoidable impact to Agriculture and Forestry Resources due to Streamside Area Buffers through the potential conversion of Important Farmland to non-ag use and potential conflict with zoning for Williamson Act contracts. [Proposed Resolution No. R1-2024-0057](#) includes a list of environmental impacts from implementation of the Order, mitigations to lessen those impacts, and a Statement of Override that finds that the Order's overall benefit to the public and environment outweighs the significant and unavoidable impacts to Agriculture and Forestry Resources.

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt Order No. R1-2024-0056 as proposed. Adoption Resolution No. R1-2024-0057 as proposed.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. [Proposed Order No. R1-2024-0056, General Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial Vineyards in the North Coast Region](#)
 - a. [Attachment A: MRP For Individual Enrollees](#)
 - b. [Attachment B: MRP For Enrollees in a Coalition](#)
 - c. [Attachment C: Third Party Requirements](#)
 - d. [Attachment D: Methodologies and Procedures](#)
 - e. [Attachment E: CEQA Mitigation Measures](#)
 - f. [Attachment F: Templates](#)
2. [Proposed Resolution No. R1-2024-0057, Certification of Environmental Impact Report, California Environmental Quality Act Findings of Fact, and Statement of Overriding Considerations](#)
3. [Final Environmental Impact Report](#)
 - a. [FEIR Attachment A: Proposed GWDRs for Commercial Vineyards in the North Coast Region](#)
 - b. [FEIR Attachment B: Summary of Revisions to Draft Vineyard Order and Response to Comments](#)
 - c. [FEIR Attachment C: Draft GWDRs for Commercial Vineyards in the North Coast Region](#)
 - d. [FEIR Attachment D: Draft Environmental Impact Report](#)
 - e. FEIR Attachment E: Comment Letters (available upon request)²
 - f. [FEIR Attachment F: Summary of Revisions to Proposed Vineyard Order and Response to Ex Parte Communication](#)
4. [Notice of Public Hearing](#)
5. Supporting Materials
 - a. [Vineyard Order Enrollee Help Guide](#)
 - b. [Vineyard Order Implementation Timeline](#)

² Please contact northcoast@waterboards.ca.gov to receive copies of written comment letters on the Draft Vineyard Order and Draft Environmental Impact Report submitted to the North Coast Water Board during the public review period.