



Media Release

North Coast Water Board makes historic move with vineyards to protect water quality, safeguard aquatic life

Order establishes waste discharge regulations for commercial vineyards throughout the North Coast

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SANTA ROSA – The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board voted to approve a first-of-its-kind order to protect waterways, groundwater and aquatic species by regulating waste discharge for about 65,000 acres of vineyards.

Known as the General Waste Discharge Requirements for Commercial Vineyards, the regulations are a major step forward in the effort to protect water resources from adverse impacts that commercial cultivation of winegrapes might cause. During storms, bare soil in vineyards can erode and contribute excess sediment to local rivers, which harms fish. The order establishes water quality regulations for owners and operators of commercial vineyards and requires them to implement on-farm practices to prevent or control discharges of sediment, nutrients and pesticides to surface water and groundwater.

Requirements in the order will go into effect when vineyards begin enrolling under the order in July 2028.

“In the North Coast region, vineyards are a highly valued agricultural industry that has a significant financial impact on Sonoma and Mendocino counties,” said Greg Giusti, vice chair of the North Coast Regional Water Board. “This historic Vineyard Order is a common-sense approach to protecting the water quality of our rivers while allowing vineyards to do business in an environmentally responsible way.”

Through widespread enrollment in voluntary sustainability programs, such as [Fish Friendly Farming](#), [Certified California Sustainable](#), [LODI RULES](#) and [Sustainability in Practice](#), over 80% of commercial vineyard owners and operators in the North Coast are likely already implementing practices to prevent or minimize waste discharges. The proposed order makes allowances for vineyard owners and operators to use these voluntary programs for compliance assistance. The Vineyard Order has been years in the making, and the final version reflects significant feedback and collaboration with



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vineyards, other interested parties and the general public. A draft order and [draft Environmental Impact Report](#) were released in June 2023, followed by a 60-day period to provide written comments. Regional board staff considered this input, observations made on site visits, and input during public outreach when developing revisions and preparing the final version of the order that the board approved.

The North Coast Water Board's mission is to develop and enforce water quality objectives and implement plans that will best protect the region's waters while recognizing our local differences in climate, topography, geology and hydrology.