



ElDoradoWines.org

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New Winery Ordinance Guides Growth of El Dorado Wine Industry

Ordinance represents years of review, discussions

Placerville, CA -- The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors today voted 4-1 to update the county's Winery Ordinance, setting in place new restrictions for the wine industry while striking a balance between agricultural and residential concerns.

"The new ordinance represents a reasonable compromise that will continue to support the growth of the local wine industry, its nearly \$200 million economic impact on the local community, and the quality of life that agriculture offers to all those who live in, and visit, El Dorado County — now and in the future," said Paul Bush, owner/winemaker of Madroña Vineyards in Camino.

The ordinance governs the development of wineries to ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses, while supporting the economic viability of the local agricultural industry. It limits the number and types of events that wineries can host, and covers details such as winery parking, setbacks, signage and picnic areas. The ordinance passed at today's meeting replaces one that has been in place since 2001.

John Smith, owner/winemaker of Oakstone Winery in Fair Play, said, "This ordinance provides for the orderly growth of wineries with reasonable constraints on facility size, location and events, while providing protection for those who live near these activities."

"For the past several years, El Dorado County's winery owners, farmers and community members worked with the county to amend this ordinance. The goal was to draft a document that promotes El Dorado County's unique agriculture and agri-tourism industries, while preserving the rural atmosphere in this county," added Bush.

As a way to address potential concerns of adjacent property owners, winery owners will limit events to no more than 48 special event/days a year, compared to the unlimited number previously allowed. These events include special regional wine marketing events such as El Dorado's Passport Weekends, as well as facility rentals for wedding receptions or group events that are hosted by some wineries. Additional events or those exceeding 250 guests at one time will require a conditional use permit.

(more)

El Dorado County Winery Ordinance 2-2-2

Members of the El Dorado Winery Association, the Fair Play Winery Association and other agricultural groups applauded the vote as well as the decision-making process, which included multiple reviews by county agencies, and dozens of meetings and public hearings involving stakeholders and public officials.

John Smith added, "It is the result of extraordinary efforts by local wineries to regulate themselves and work closely with the county's government agencies. Exceptional measures were taken to ensure stakeholder input was collected and a wide range of viewpoints were heard."

The new ordinance was previously reviewed and recommended by both the El Dorado County Planning Commission and the Agricultural Commission. Although an Environmental Impact Report was initially considered during the review process, a revised and more restrictive version of the ordinance addressing environmental concerns such as traffic, noise and air quality allowed for a mitigated negative declaration instead.

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Editor's Note:

A copy of the Winery Ordinance with Amendments Proposed by the Agricultural Commission on November 12, 2008 — as recommended by the Planning Commission on December 11, 2008 (with Mitigation Measures) — including a colored matrix that outlines the uses allowed for wineries, is available at: <http://www.co.el-dorado.ca.us/ag/>

According to estimates by the El Dorado County Department of Agriculture in its most recent crop report:

- The impact of agriculture on El Dorado County's economy was approximately \$440 million in 2007.
- The wine industry's economic impact was estimated at \$187 million in 2007 and \$220 million in 2006.
- Wine grapes are the region's third largest crop.
- There are more than 50 bonded wineries operating in El Dorado County.