

commentletters

LATE COMMENT

From: Hilary Avalon <hilary.avalon@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 18, 2015 1:19 PM
To: Rabbit, David@Sonoma; Susan.Gorin@sonoma-county.org; Shirlee.Zane@sonoma-county.org; James.Gore@sonoma-county.org; Efren.Carrillo@sonoma-county.org; commentletters
Cc: Vesta Copestakes; ann maurice; Shepherd Bliss; guy.kovner@pressdemocrat.com
Subject: Drought action, Coho Salmon, water conservation, Water Boards decision, SonCo Vineyards



Dear Folks:

Under normal circumstances, I would be in favor of water conservation efforts, but in the case of yesterday's decision by the California Water Boards on the Proposed Drought Emergency Regulation Requiring Enhanced Water Conservation, I am disappointed. It completely missed an obvious way water is used in Sonoma County: viticulture.

Whereas I understand there is a severe drought in California, and whereas it is true Governor Brown declared a state of emergency and directed water agencies to institute conservation efforts, and whereas I understand the waterways important to the Coho salmon and other salmonids are threatened, and whereas the effort underway by the Russian River Coho Salmon Captive Broodstock Program to reestablish salmon in the affected watersheds is severely undermined by the dearth of water in these waterways, and whereas I agree "ornamental" landscapes are not a requirement for a home or business, and whereas I believe it is a good idea to monitor rural wells so we can all be aware of how much ground water is actually being used, I must say I am absolutely appalled that, while the concerned agencies are asking the residents to conserve and monitor their water consumption, the County of Sonoma continues to grant permits for new vineyards in these areas and at this time.

I am a resident landowner and business woman here in Sebastopol, and I am ready, willing and able to do my part to preserve the environment, conserve water, and save the fish, but if new vineyards are going to continue to be approved to take up as much space as they do adjacent to threatened waterways, build as many buildings as they do, and use as much ground water as they do to irrigate a crop that is used for the making of a luxury product that is not food, and is not even available for consumption by Americans under the age 21, then I must protest.

The notice I received about the action take by the Water Boards was received in my mail box on the afternoon of June 17th, which is the same day the Board voted in Sacramento. I was not given time to comment or even give thought to what I might say before the vote was already complete. Again, I protest.

I care about the environment and would love to believe I am making a difference in this fight to save Coho and the environment, but the approval of more and more vineyards in Sonoma County is profoundly working against everything individuals can do to conserve water. If we are making one step forward, then they are taking at least five steps back. Average American homes use 2800 gallons of water per week. Average vineyards use 7 to 36 gallons per week per vine, and with even the most widely spaced vineyards containing over 2500 vines per acre, that adds up to a minimum of 17,500 gallons per week on a one acre vineyard. I am aware grape production is a lucrative business, but we do not need these vineyards. We need water. Sonoma County already is home to almost 60,000 acres of vineyards and over 400 wineries. I like wine, but really - can this stop now?

Please see the below article where vineyards have been banned in Southern California in response to the drought. Since when is Southern California more conservative with water than Northern California?

Please stop allowing Big Agribusiness to entice us with money to be complicit in their destruction of our environment. Too many vineyards are going to drain our precious water, ruin our rural landscape, tear apart our communities, and kill our fish. Change must happen now, or it will be too late.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-county-vineyards-ban-20150616-story.html>

<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/4082224-181/state-regulators-approve-water-restrictions>

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/26/us/26bcsalmon.html?_r=0

<http://www.practicalwinery.com/novdec01p42.htm>

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hilary Avalon

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