



Vineyard conversions in Annapolis replace or recontour formerly forested ridgetops, spreading agricultural impacts in the redwood coast watershed. Photo courtesy of Jamie Hall, Annapolis.

lead agency. The County Permits and Resource Management Department is working on contracting preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

PR is a flagship project of Premier Pacific Vineyards (PPV), a major Napa-based vineyard developer. It was funded with major investment in PPV by CalPERS, the state employee retirement fund system.

The Preservation Ranch design includes 17 ridgetop vineyard blocks totaling nearly 1700 acres, about a quarter of which would be on slopes as steep as 30 to 38%. It also includes filling nearly 10 miles of Class III (seasonal) streams, 40 new reservoirs up to 49 acre-feet in size, and over 85 miles of 8 ft wildlife fencing, as described in the Initial Study for the project.

PPV coined the "Preservation Ranch" title for the forest-to-vineyard conversion -- a name its critics ridicule as Orwellian doublespeak. The 1700 acre vineyard project is promoted as a financial engine for "restoration" of the remaining over-cut forestlands within the 19,000 acres of former Longview Tract (Padula) lands now owned by PPV. Restocking over-cut slopes with planted trees, fixing or closing roads, conservation easements, and other environmental benefits are claimed by PPV to more than offset the impacts of vineyard conversion.

To date, however, no environmental organizations or independent scientific experts are buying the sales pitch of "Preservation Ranch" as a public conservation benefit. River and forest advocates criticize the claimed forest restoration benefits as hollow distractions that redirect public attention from fundamental water diversion, pesticide, and development impacts of the project on fish, forests,

wildlife, and the quality of human life in the watershed. These real impacts, they argue, are not offset by PPV's promises to plant more trees on the slopes that are too steep to plant with grapes, and "protect" them with conservation easements.

The developer, PPV, has also come under fire for its past conservation easements after the Land Trust of Napa County discovered that a promised wildlife corridor on another one of its projects did little to restrict development or protect wildlife.

To help the controversial "Preservation Ranch" sail through public comments and the environmental review and permitting process, PPV hired an and development-oriented environmental consultant and attorney, Tom Adams, and Sonoma County real estate/land use attorney and former county Supervisor Eric Koenigshofer, to defend and promote the project. Koenigshofer was a key campaign advisor for new Sonoma County supervisor Efrén Carillo, who defeated rival Rue Furch, a county planner opposed to Preservation Ranch. Carillo's fundraising base has been reported to be mostly developers, loggers, Russian River gravel miners (including Syar), and industrial agriculture.

As vineyards encroach and fragment extensive forest or woodland landscapes, they create new wildlife-human conflicts. Vineyards are the largest source of requests for depredation permits (permission to kill bears, deer, turkeys, and other unwelcome wildlife consumers of wine grapes, according to Eric Larson of the California Department of Fish and Game. Vineyard owners were the reason state law was changed

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