



Sonoma County Winegrape Commission's GSA Eligibility

The **Sustainable Groundwater Management Act** (SGMA) gives local jurisdictions the power to sustainably manage groundwater in various regions of the state. Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) are agencies eligible to implement and administer the new law and related regulations. The Sonoma County Winegrape Commission (SCWC) is a public agency known as a "local commission" and as such is eligible to act as a GSA for the Sonoma and Marin County regions.

The SCWC represents the 1,800 grape growers in Crush District 3 (Marin and Sonoma Counties). The mission of SCWC is to protect local agriculture and promote Sonoma County as a wine region. As a Local Commission we represent all grape growers in Sonoma County. We are the only public agency in Sonoma County that represents grape growers and agriculture, critical to any successful groundwater sustainability plan.

Background

The SCWC was created pursuant to Division 22, Chapter 12.7 of the California Food and Agricultural Code beginning at Section 74801. The law created a statewide winegrape commission (which was not implemented) as well as "local commissions" like the SCWC, the Lake County Winegrape Commission, and the Lodi Winegrape Commission. "Local commissions" are exactly that – local area public agencies charged with promoting a particular winegrape region within the state.

SCWC is Local

74861.1. There are, in state government, local commissions for producer regions. The producers in any producer region of this state may, pursuant to this chapter, establish a local commission composed of not less than five and not more than 10 producers and may include one public member. The provisions of this chapter that are applicable to the commission, except Sections 74828, 74861, 74862, 74867, 74871, 74922, 74923, 74926, 74927, 74928, and 74951, shall apply to any local commission established and certified as operative pursuant to this chapter regardless of the certification of the commission.

(a) A producer member who produces more than 25 tons of winegrapes in a producer region shall be eligible to serve on the local commission in that producer region.

(b) A public member may be appointed to the local commission by the secretary from nominees recommended by the local commission.

(c) The secretary, and other appropriate individuals as determined by the local commission, shall be ex officio members of the local commission.

(d) There may be an alternate member for each member of the local commission.

The name of a local commission shall contain the words "local commission" and shall identify the producer region represented by the local commission. No local commission shall use the term "California Winegrape Growers Commission" as part of its name.

SCWC's Role In Protecting Agriculture And Engaging In Issues That Affect Agriculture Such As Water:

74802. The maintenance and expansion of the winegrape industry of California and of its local, national, and foreign markets is necessary to assure the consuming public of a continuous supply of these products and needed levels of income for those engaged in the winegrape industry in this state. *(Water policy and management by law is within the purview of SCWG and serves the public interest)*

SCWC's Ability To Enter Into A Formal GSA Agreement With Other Local Agencies:

74893. The commission may administer and enforce this chapter and do and perform all actions and exercise all powers incidental to, in connection with, or deemed reasonably necessary for, proper or advisable effectuation of this chapter, including, but not limited to, entering into contracts for services with public and private agencies which are deemed necessary by the commission to carry out this chapter.

74898. The commission may establish offices, incur expenses, enter into any and all contracts and agreements, create liabilities, and borrow funds in advance of receipt of assessments as may be necessary in the opinion of the commission for the proper administration and enforcement of this chapter and the performance of its duties.

74901. The commission may accept contributions of, or match, private, local, state, or federal funds and employ or make contributions of funds to other persons or local, state or federal agencies for purposes of maintaining, promoting, and enhancing the winegrape industry.

California Rice Commission Precedent:

There is precedent for a commission representing agriculture in implementing and managing regulations. The California Rice Commission (CRC) represents the 2,500 rice farmers and handlers who farm and process rice produced in California by engaging in a range of comprehensive regulatory, research and education programs.

The CRC has taken responsibility for the State mandated pesticide monitoring regulations that have been required for rice growers since 1995.

Since then, the CRC has handled the State pesticide monitoring and reporting of pesticide levels for both surface and groundwater with the help of consultants, contractors and an auditor. The CRC also handles the database and the accounting for the program.

Clearly, an agricultural commission like SCWC has the authority to manage and administer regulations like those required by the SGMA. SCWC's local character and focus makes it well positioned to administer and implement a regulatory program affecting the local community.

Sonoma County Winegrowers Water Conservation Commitment, Outreach and Education

Not only is SCWC an eligible public agency to act as a GSA, it is critical to have agriculture at the table in order to successfully manage groundwater in Sonoma County. The SCWC is the primary outreach and education organization for grape growers in Sonoma County.

Growers have been focused on water conservation for years. Specifically for the past 2 years, SCWC has collaborated with local, regional and state agencies and other agriculture groups to educate growers on conservation best management practices and new technologies. SCWC has specifically assisted farmers to adjust farming practices (cover crop, pruning, cluster dropping) in order to conserve water.

Fortunately, grapes are very efficient crops and do not need much water. Still, ground water management among Sonoma and Marin county growers is key to their viability. Water use is focused on vine health and frost protection. Important to keep in mind that even when growers use water for frost protection, a large percentage of it goes back into the ground and recharges the aquifers (Sonoma/Marin counties receive 25 - 60+ inches of rain across growing areas on average. Grape irrigation is 3 - 6 acre-inches in Sonoma County. Soil moisture use may be 6 inches. The rest of rainfall is available for groundwater recharge, storage in reservoirs and runoff to streams.)

By definition and practice, vineyard water management is part of the hydrologic cycle of the basins. SCWC is excited to continue this collaboration and work alongside our community to

conserve water and contribute to the recharge designs. Here are some specific activities and practices.

- SCWC is committed to **grower outreach and education**. We host over 50 grower education programs a year which reaches approximately 3,000 growers and agriculture stakeholders.
- We have a **weekly e-blast** that is sent to over 2000 growers and wineries. In the e-blast, we include updates on the water issues, new technologies, education opportunities, etc. This communication will continue and can provide an outlet for the county, state and other organizations to reach growers with key initiatives and messages.
- **Commitment to Sustainability:** Over 64% of vineyard acres in Sonoma County have already engaged in a sustainability program and have completed their Sustainability assessment. The Code of Sustainability includes the following best management practices (BMPs) for water conservation. Growers who have completed the sustainability assessment are doing some or all of these best practices and are tracking them. Growers who have not completed the Sustainability assessment may also be doing a number of these, but have not documented their practices. Best management practices from the Code of Sustainability for vineyard include:
 1. Use a low-flow sprinkler irrigation system in the vineyard.
 2. Test the distribution uniformity of the irrigation system (at least every 5 years) and visual monitoring occurred across the blocks to make necessary correction and protect from overwatering.
 3. Inspect and clean water filters in the irrigation system when pressure differences are found.
 4. Use Soil and/or Plant moisture monitoring devices to determine irrigation needs.
 5. Initiate irrigation as late as possible in the season on a block by block basis.
 6. Limit irrigation to between 8pm and 6am.
 7. Use evapotranspiration data from CIMIS (California Irrigation Management Information System) stations to approximate vine water demand over a given time period.
 8. Apply irrigation water at 50-65% of ET or less on Red Grapes and 70-80% of ET or less on White Grapes.
 9. Coordinate application of water among adjacent blocks or neighboring landowners so that instantaneous usage rates are spread out by withdrawing water at different times.
 10. Utilize information from the National Weather Service Enhanced Frost/Heat Forecast Information System for the Russian River to improve and coordinate water management in advance of heat wave events.
 11. Manage soil to increase permeability and design vineyards to slow, spread and sink rain water.

SCWC Has A History of Public/Private Partnerships for Water Conservation:

North Bay Water Sustainability Coalition

A public awareness and education campaign was launched in Sonoma County in 2015 sponsored by a unique partnership involving local winegrape farmers, the business community, the Sonoma County Water Agency and the Sonoma Marin Saving Water Partnership to educate and inform the community on how to conserve and reduce water use. Named the North Bay Water Sustainability Coalition, the group has helped lead the public discussion about the drought and ways everyone in the community can do their part to conserve water.

Winegrape Growers in Sonoma County Voluntarily Committed to Conserve Water by 25% in Four Critical Water Sheds

In August of 2015, Sonoma County's winegrape growers voluntarily committed to conserve water by 25% from 2013 levels consistent with the required reductions associated with rural residential water use in the four key water sheds – Mark West Creek, Green Valley Creek, Dutch Bill Creek and Mill Creek. In these four water sheds, there are 130 identified parcels of land with vineyards and through outreach from the growing community, 68 parcels representing approximately 2,000 acres of land enrolled in this voluntary water reduction plan.

Proven Track Record: Sonoma County Winegrape Growers Respond To Russian River Frost Protection Regulation By Creating North Coast Water Coalition

On September 20, 2011 the State Water Board adopted a Frost Protection Regulation for the Russian River Watershed. The Regulation provides that, with exception of diversions upstream of Warm Springs Dam in Sonoma County or Coyote Dam in Mendocino County, any diversion of water from the Russian River stream system, including the pumping of hydrologically connected groundwater for purposes of frost protection from March 15 through May 15, shall be diverted in accordance with a board-approved Water Demand Management Program (WDMP). The diversion of water in violation of this regulation would be an unreasonable method of diversion and use and a violation of Water Code section 100. The Regulation requires any WDMP to manage the instantaneous demand on the Russian River stream system during frost events to prevent stranding and mortality of salmonids.

Through the outreach and collaboration of the SCWC, the North Coast Water Coalition was founded in December, 2014 to work with individual landowners, members of the Russian River Property Owners Association (RRPOA), and the Russian River Water Conservation Council

(RRWCC) to comply with the California State Water Board's Russian River Frost Protection Regulation.

The NCWC began providing services to vineyard owner/ managers for compliance with the Russian River Frost Protection Regulation in January of 2015. Consistent with a request from the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) the NCWC created a single, collective Water Demand Management Program (WDMP) for enrolling Sonoma County vineyards that use water for frost protection.

Quick Facts About The Sonoma County Winegrape Commission

Commission Stakeholders

- There are approximately **1,800 grape growers** in Sonoma County who are represented by SCWC.

Land Usage

- There are one million acres of land in Sonoma County. 58,280 acres are planted to grapes (approximately 6% of the county). With the majority of these acres located within the basins identified in SGMA.
- For every 4 acres of grapes that Winegrape growers have planted, they have an additional acre of **diversified agriculture** such as crops and pastures including almonds, dairies, figs, hay, hazelnuts, lavender, limes, oranges, pears, and walnuts.

Vineyard Composition

- The majority of vineyards in Sonoma County are family-owned (approximately 86%). In fact, multi-generational and family owned vineyards are key components of the Sonoma County agricultural landscape.
- The majority of vineyards in Sonoma County are small businesses.
 - 40% of vineyards are less than 20 acres
 - 80% less than 100 acres
 - Average vineyard size in the county is 40 acres

Sustainability Commitment

- In January 2014, SCWC committed to becoming the nation's first 100% sustainable winegrowing region by 2019.

- Only two years into the five year goal, over 65% of the vineyard acres in Sonoma County have gone through a sustainability assessment and over 50% have been certified sustainable by a third party auditor.

GSA's must be government agencies that are local and that have the ability to successfully implement and administer the SGMA. The Sonoma County Winegrape Commission is specifically local by definition in its enabling statute. With over 1800 growers in Sonoma and Marin counties under its jurisdiction and a local infrastructure already in place to reach out to the community, SCWC is eligible and perfectly suited to act as a GSA to implement and administer the SGMA.