

AgOrder - Ag Waiver

From: John Salisbury <john@salisburyvineyards.com>
To: <AgOrder@waterboards.ca.gov>
Date: 1/3/2011 1:48 PM
Subject: Ag Waiver

To: West Coast Water Board:

We are a small vineyard/winery operation on the coast of Central California that has been farming throughout California for over 160 years (1850). We are an organic operation that uses year around cover crops, no herbicides or insecticides, and have settling ponds and dams to capture silt and impurities that will be lined this summer. The USDA Soil Conservation advisors have looked at our operation and have been impressed with how we deal with water especially how we have cultivated and maintained native grasses. Part of our vineyard is next to a year around flowing creek. We never fertilize or irrigate (dry farmed) this parcel because of the rich soil. The only spray we use is a 1% organic mineral oil base in only 30 gallons of water per acre - three to four times a year. Because of this small amount of spray and heavy growth of wild vines, willows, Sycamore and Oak trees, none of this benign spray can physically reach the creek.

Because we are within 1,000 feet of this creek, we are automatically lumped into Tier 2 with no consideration for our organic farming practices. This field, because of its flat terrain, has no runoff into the creek. This extra cost of complying with your requirements as a Tier 2 grower plus whatever setback you get approved will mean we will probably have to take out 5 acres of winegrapes. This high quality block of Pinot Noir is now in its 11th year and just now becoming a profitable unit. It cost us over \$150,000 cash to install plus an additional \$15,000/year maintenance for 5 years until we got our first full crop. To force us to destroy this vineyard would be a travesty. What do you expect us to put on the property with a \$50,000 an acre purchase price - housing, equipment storage, horse-cow pasture? We surely are going to have to get something back on our investment.

The vineyard is the best possible and least polluting use of the property. If there are not going to be some sensible exemptions to this broad-brush and one size fits all approach to fix the problem, then I guarantee you will not have enough investigators or funds to police your requirements and the program will not achieve its goals. Because growers, like myself, who believe in pure common sense will fight you with everything we have to save our crops. We understand there is a general problem but don't punish those of us who are constantly trying to do the right thing. Please reconsider this Tier system and large setbacks that do not take into account special circumstances. Thank you,

John Salisbury

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