

## **Grading, Drainage, Vineyard and Orchard Site Development Ordinance**

*Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner's Office – January 12, 2009*

The Board of Supervisors approved the Grading, Drainage, Vineyard and Orchard Site Development Ordinance on December 9, 2008, and the ordinance went into effect on January 8, 2009. The following is a summary of some of the changes from Vineyard Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance (VESCO), which is now superseded by the new ordinance.

- Orchard site development is now included along with vineyards, and requires a permit from our office.
- However, hobby vineyards and hobby orchards are exempt from obtaining a permit and are defined as one half acre or less. Best management practices should be used for proper site development for vineyards and orchards.
- Slope determination has been changed from average slope to natural slope. Natural slope is the tightest contour or steepest area. Project levels (Level I or II) and the criteria used to determine the levels (soil type and slope) remain the same.
- Blue line stream setbacks for Level I and II projects and replants remain the same. A new setback has been added for the unmapped/un-named streams. The setback requirement is 25 feet. The setbacks are no touch areas. However, there is the option to use vegetative filter strips in this area, which then can be used for turnarounds and avenues.
- Wetland setbacks have been added. Criteria for wetland determination are included in the ordinance. A 50 foot setback is required from the edge of the delineation with the option for part of the setback to be a vegetative filter strip and can be used for an avenue or turnaround.
- Grading and Drainage permits will be administered by the Agricultural Commissioner's Office starting spring of 2009.
- Soil disturbance and winterization dates have been changed for **new** vineyards/orchards from the old dates of April 1 thru November 1, to the new dates of April 1 thru October 15. There is no change in the dates for replants.
- Permits for planting and replanting will expire five years from the permit approval to completion of planting. If a project is not completed within the five-year timeframe, new application, plans, and fees will be required to complete the project.
- Grading for road maintenance, including vineyard avenues, repair or resurfacing of existing private roads continues to be exempt from a grading permit.

Outreach materials and workshops are being planned and developed for 2009. In addition, you may review the workshop presentation by Gail Davis at our annual grower workshop in December 2008 at the following link: [http://www.sonoma-county.org/agcomm/grower\\_workshop.htm](http://www.sonoma-county.org/agcomm/grower_workshop.htm)

Also, you may sign up to receive updated information under "What's New" on our department's website, by going to <http://www.sonoma-county.org/agcomm> and click on eSubscribe. This will allow you to receive the latest information on this and other important topics free of charge.

Many of these changes have voluntarily been included in new projects over the past eight years. As always, we look forward to working with you in designing your projects. Keep up the great work. It is being noticed!!!