

**Concerned Residents of Soda Canyon Road & Loma Vista Drive
In care of P.O. Box 5184
Napa, CA 94581**

April 7th, 2014

Subject:

Proposed 100,000 Gallon per Year Winery, Tourist Facility, and Underground Caves Located on Upper Soda Canyon Road

Dear Neighbors,

We are writing to inform you of recent activity in upper Soda Canyon that will affect all of us who live in the area. On February 18th of this year a letter was received by a handful of residents who live near the former Krupp residence and vineyard at 3265 Soda Canyon Road (please see the attached letter). This property was recently purchased by Mountain Peak Vineyards, LLC, and its development is being managed by “The Reserve Group”, www.thereservegroup.com/about.html, a company devoted to “Acquisitions, Sales and Turn-Key Management of Wineries, Vineyards & Estates” and “acting as the Owner Representative for Winery and Estate Development Projects”.

The proposal is to demolish the former Krupp residence, and develop and operate a 100,000 gallon per year winery production facility and tasting room with approximately 65,000 Square Feet (SF) of caves, two buildings totaling nearly 9,000 SF and a 15,000 SF covered crush pad. The total coverage area of the winery is expected be 84,500 SF, which will include an outdoor picnic area, 3 parking lots, two 100,000 gallon wastewater tanks and wastewater treatment plant, and accessory mechanical and equipment structures, all of which will be situated on a relatively small parcel in the heart of rural upper Soda Canyon Road.

Regarding proposed hours of operation and for visitors, the winery would be open seven days per week, with normal operating hours from **6:00am to 6:00pm**, with one “flexible-hours” work shift. The winery tasting room would host up to 80 people per day and 320 people per week for during its normal tasting hours, which would operate from **10:00am to 6:00pm**.

On top of these long tasting room hours there would be many additional “marketing events” throughout the year that appear to allow for hundreds of

additional guests on top of the 320 regular visitors per week, during which the winery will be open for business from **10:00am to 10:00pm**. Specifically, the proposal indicates there would be six (6) “Food and Wine Pairings,” that would allow an additional 108 people on-site per month. There would be four (4) “Wine Club/Release Events” per year that would allow an additional 75 people per event. Finally, there would be two (2) “Larger Wine Auction-Related Events” per year that will allow another 125 people per event. Since the people attending the Marketing Events do not count towards the allotted 320 regular visitors per week, it means there will be approximately 18,500 people **allowed** to visit the winery annually. It is important to note however that the winery is the only entity that would know the actual numbers of visitors and it is not difficult to surmise that more than the permitted ~18,500 people may well visit the winery on an annual basis.

The winery proposal anticipates 130 new trips on the road per day. By comparison, the two winery/tasting room permits (Relic and The Caves) that were recently approved on Soda Canyon Road have a combined output of 50,000 gallons of wine and approximately 50 new trips on Soda Canyon Road per day. The Mountain Peak Vineyards project would represent a **tripling** of the traffic impacts expected from those two projects. In combination, these three new projects will create close to 200 new trips on the road per day. Importantly, Mountain Peak Vineyards is located near the very end of Soda Canyon Road, meaning that the anticipated 130 new trips from Mountain Peak Vineyards will travel nearly the entire length of the approximately 7 mile long, narrow, windy, and severely degraded roadway.

As you might expect, some of us who live here are very concerned about the impact this proposed winery and its contemplated tourism would have on our remote neighborhood and rural way of life in Soda Canyon. Some of the greatest concerns include:

Increased traffic volume / Diminished traffic safety: Soda Canyon Road is a narrow, steep and winding road. The additional car and truck traffic resulting from approved, proposed and potential future developments is alarming. The proposed Mountain Peak Vineyards project alone will add 130 trips per day passing our homes and property, enough to triple the length of the current morning and afternoon caravans of vineyard employees. It will also add 20 daily commuters, plus the addition of at least 40 cars of tasters by day and many more at night. During the years of construction the daily commutes will also include dozens of workers and subcontractors and an abundance of large trucks carrying construction materials and heavy equipment.

Each additional vehicle presents a new hazard on the blind curves and especially on the narrow, steep winding grade above the fire station. The fact that many of these new drivers will be unfamiliar with the dangers of the road and that some will arrive with the intent to consume alcohol increases the traffic dangers exponentially. On this note, it is important to remember the proposed late tasting room hours (open until 6:00pm, 7 days per week) may result in Mountain Peak Vineyards being the last winery visited by tourists raising further concerns about the potential for over-consumption of alcohol and an increase in drunk drivers on our road.

The current condition of the road can be described as under-maintained at best, abysmal at worst. The roadway can also be expected to deteriorate more rapidly under such heavy use, further increasing traffic dangers for everyone.

Ground water depletion and pollution: This project proposes a 30% increase in current well output, to an amount near the County's theoretical allowable groundwater usage for a parcel of this size in a watershed area. The concern for nearby neighbors is not theoretical. Several neighboring wells lie within 1,000 feet of the project well. If their wells or springs go dry, they must prove that the cause was the new depletion, which is a very costly and difficult case to prove, especially because all water reports provided to the County by residents and wineries alike are ***self-reported***, leaving the potential for error or even deception as to the actual amount of water used.

In addition, there is the potential for pollution of ground water due to the construction of the underground caves. Note that there is NO large hillside to be dug into on this property. Instead, the caves must be dug almost straight down and then underground. This means there will be even more potential disturbance to the underground water sources, as well as significantly more dirt or "tailings" to be removed from the ground to make the caves. On top of this, Mountain Peak Vineyards has specifically requested that it be able to leave the dirt and tailings on its property and NOT truck it off the mountain. While this may be good news for the road, it may very well cause severe damage to our underground water sources as any chemicals or other pollutants used during removal of these materials will remain on the property and potentially leach into the ground water. Additionally, the creation of huge tailings piles (conveniently located at the very edge of Mountain Peak Vineyards' property and within feet of the nearest neighbors) are sure cause enormous amounts of dust and debris that will pollute and cause harm to nearby homes, cars, animals, and crops, as well as increase the probability of sediment accumulating in the adjacent blue-line creek that feeds ecologically sensitive Rector reservoir.

As more winery tourism projects are approved and should our climate remain dry, other residents of Soda Canyon Road may also find their water supplies negatively affected. Promoting projects that increase water usage during a time of drought makes no sense and should be of great concern to us all.

Noise and light pollution: One of the greatest, and often underappreciated, pleasures of living in a remote rural area is the near-complete lack of noise and light pollution. That absence means that noises are perceived louder and lights are perceived brighter than they might be elsewhere. These projects will impose upon nearby residents the hum of fans, air conditioners and pumps, the comings and goings of dozens of vehicles, the chatter of picnickers and tasters by day and revelers by night. Our darkness will be lost to brightly lit tasting rooms and crush pads, parking lot lights, walkway lights and the vehicle headlights that sweep across our properties. At some point the Milky Way will become difficult to observe and enjoy on a clear night.

Fire safety: Soda Canyon is an extremely hazardous fire zone. We have legitimate fire safety concerns about the vastly increased number of visitors who may be unaware or unconcerned about the risks of a cigarette carelessly flicked from an open car window. In addition, in the event of a fire the possible need for evacuation will be significantly impaired by the large number of employees, vineyard workers, and tasting guests on the Mountain Peak Vineyards property which is located near the end of Soda Canyon Road. Such a large concentration of people in such a remote area would slow evacuation and could hamper rescue efforts.

Prolonged construction: The proposed project promises several **YEARS** (possibly up to 3 or even 5 years) of phased construction. For neighbors near the project, this means years of the rumble and hammering and backup warning beeps of heavy equipment, of trucks and equipment blocking roadways and gates, of blasts and drilling from the digging of massive caves, and of dust from the earth being excavated and repositioned, covering homes, cars, animals, and crops in layers of fine, airborne dust.

Future projects on Soda Canyon Road/Loma Vista

Until only recently, two wineries on the road have been permitted to allow tasting, the small-scaled and unobtrusive White Rock Vineyards and Antica which is set well inside of its one-thousand plus acres and even then on a very limited basis. Since the advent of the 2010 amendment of the Winery Definition Ordinance, development of winery tourism venues has accelerated in the County and the interests of existing residents appear to be weighed with less importance by our elected officials and their appointees, the Planning Commission. The net effect on Soda Canyon Road has been the

approval of *The Caves at Soda Canyon* and of *Relic Winery*, and now the consideration of the much larger Mountain Peak Vineyards project, each on small parcels adjacent to private residences. If approved, the Mountain Peak Vineyards project will encourage the development of other projects of equal or even greater scale. The rural remoteness that we currently enjoy will be lost.

Most of us live here because we value the privacy and tranquility that a rural area provides. The time is right to start pushing back against winery tourism in remote, rural settings. This is a pivotal moment to send a message to our elected officials that we strongly assert the need for representation of **our** interests in keeping Soda Canyon rural and to oppose those who wish to profit from the natural beauty that would ultimately be lost.

You can access public documents pertaining to the Mountain Peak Vineyards project at the Napa County Planning Division located at 1195 Third Street in Napa or you can contact us at info@sodacanyonroad.org.

Please join your Soda Canyon/Loma Vista neighbors in opposing this project by signing the attached petition and mailing it in the self-addressed stamped envelope at your earliest convenience. It would be extremely helpful if you can also enclose a brief personal letter to the Planning Commission expressing your concerns or a printed copy of your email to that appointed body. Their email addresses and the procedure for emailing these public officials can be found at www.countyofnapa.org/Commission/ Please feel free to copy us on such communications by Cc'ing us at info@sodacanyonroad.org.

Finally we enclose an **invitation to an important neighborhood meeting** on **Saturday, April 19th at 2:00pm** at the home of Bill Hocker and Mui Ho at 3460 Soda Canyon Road, which is adjacent to the proposed Mountain Peak Vineyards project. (Note: The road numbers are non-sequential but the gate is about 400 yards down the gravel road at the top of Soda Canyon Road, just behind the Stagecoach Rock at 3267 Soda Canyon Road).

With our kind regards,

Concerned Residents of Soda Canyon Road and Loma Vista Drive