



BULLETIN

Subject: NVV and Environmental Leaders Collaborate to Protect Woodlands and Watershed

Date: September 5, 2017

NVV is collaborating with local environmental leaders in support of a ballot initiative that will protect oak woodlands and the local watershed.

The [Napa County Watershed and Oak Woodland Protection Initiative of 2018](#) establishes enhanced water quality buffer zones and oak woodland protections in the Ag Watershed, without overburdening responsible property owners.

The initiative has been filed with the County Clerk's office for the June 2018 ballot. It comes following several months of thoughtful discussions and compromise between our leadership and Mike Hackett and Jim Wilson, co-authors of last year's similar initiative effort that did not qualify for the ballot due to a legal technicality. NVV actively opposed the 2016 proposal, which lacked industry input.

What Will the Initiative Accomplish?

Together, we identified common ground to enhance environmental protections in the Ag Watershed (AW):

- **Water Quality Buffer Zones:** Compromise on buffer zones around creeks and streams in the AW was achieved by looking back at 2004's Measure P, a stream setback ordinance championed by NVV and other industry partners. The new initiative will expand the definition of watercourses subject to stream setbacks by utilizing common stream classification definitions, compared to the county's current unique definition. Class 2 streams will have a 75' setback and Class 3 streams will have a 25' setback. Presently, setbacks are 35' to 150' based on slope.
- **Oak Woodland Protection:** Compromise on oak woodland preservation includes a new mitigation ratio for removal of oaks of 3:1, rather than the existing 2:1. A qualified professional must prepare the mitigation plan and at least 80 percent of the replanted trees must survive at least five years. The initiative does not include a new permit process for removal of oaks.
- **General Plan Projections Used to Limit Future Oak Woodland Removal:** The joint initiative proposes a limit on oak woodland acreage that can be removed within the AW. The limit is based on the amount of oak woodland removal associated with vineyard development envisioned through the lifetime of the current Napa County General Plan in 2030. With limited exceptions, further removal of oak trees above this limit would be precluded after that date, unless voters decided to increase it. Future vineyards could be developed in the same manner as now, provided this development didn't involve further removal of oak woodlands.

It's important to note that the initiative is forward-looking and will not affect vineyard replants.

Why Did We Do This?

Goal 2 of the NVV's Strategic Plan calls for us to "**Protect and enhance the Napa Valley, its wines, environment and community**" and to "Improve our environment" by "developing and advocating for strong conservation-based positions to protect and enhance natural resources." The joint initiative helps accomplish this goal and strategy.

Though the 2016 initiative, which we and other industry groups actively opposed, failed to qualify for the ballot, we never considered that a "win" for the wine industry. Rather, it inspired us to explore common ground and the chance to collaborate with the original petitioners, given they had publicly declared their intent to come back with a new ballot measure. Together, we found an approach that we believe will receive widespread support and eliminate the need for a potentially costly and divisive community campaign with an uncertain outcome.

When presented with the concept over the summer, **initial feedback from County leaders has been extremely enthusiastic.** They, too, recognize the value of industry and environmental leaders working together for common community benefit, as we have done in the past.

What's Next?

The Napa County Watershed and Oak Woodland Protection Initiative of 2018 will receive a Title and Summary from the County. This month, we'll begin a signature gathering campaign. Approximately 5,000 registered voters must sign on for the initiative to qualify for the June 2018 ballot. Concurrently, we will be reaching out to build a broad coalition of stakeholder and community support.

How Can You Help?

- If you are registered to vote in Napa County, be one of the 5,000 signatories to help this initiative qualify for the ballot.
- Spread the word to your friends, neighbors and colleagues on the win/win aspects of the initiative: enhanced environmental protection without undue burden on responsible property owners.

Leaders in our community have a long and successful history of collaboration and compromise for the greater good, going back to the establishment of the Ag Preserve a half century ago. There are numerous examples since. **This is the next step in that proud local tradition.**

We thank NVV Board Chair Michael Honig and NVV Community and Industry Issues Chair Russ Weis for the countless hours they have invested in this effort, as well as neighbors Mike Hackett and Jim Wilson for the spirit of collaboration demonstrated in this process.