

Watersheds Alliance for Atlas Peak (WAAP)

Halt Walt! Hall Wines is planning to build vineyards on Atlas Peak: The Walt Ranch. They have filed their Environmental Impact Report (EIR) with the Napa County Planning Department. We only have until November 21 to review and comment upon this EIR. This review requires us to hire a land-use attorney and several experts such as a geohydrologist. Therefore, we need your support and contributions NOW to get these experts under way.

- Walt Ranch is a 350-acre vineyard development on 2,300-acre parcel owned by Hall Wines/Hall Brambletree Associates LP (Frisco, TX)

Property stretches from Circle-S Ranch on Atlas Peak to Circle Oaks Community

- Vineyard will ultimately consume 70 million gallons of water per year

This is equivalent to more than doubling the entire populations in Atlas Peak, Soda Canyon and Circle Oaks; the water used is equal to typical of 600 homes occupied by 3 people each

- EIR hydrologists admits in EIR that water available to support project only a best guess and modeling is based upon assumptions such as an average of 35 inches of rain per year in that area! We are now in a situation where the rainfall is the lowest since 1908 (5" in 2012/13).
- Existing vineyards in Atlas Peak Appellation are 1,500 acres (per APA web site) making this development over a 23% increase in total vineyards in the area
- Water will be pumped into storage reservoirs for use because water demand exceeds well pump volume at times such as frost protection. Wells and reservoir are in Milliken Creek watershed/drainage basin (Atlas Peak). If their pumps operate 18 hours/day, pumping will occur for 239 days a year.

Little water on Circle Oaks side so all water will be pumped from Atlas Peak resident's aquifer

- Water for frost protection represents over 20% of projected annual water usage

Low flow frost protection systems available as are other choices – don't waste water

- 28,000 trees over 5-inch diameter will be cut in addition to brush

Cuttings will be slashed and burned per EIR, not chipped – this is environmentally friendly?

- Significant grading and soil disturbance draining into Milliken reservoir and other watersheds

Current soil erosion prevention techniques will be implemented, but none are 100% effective

- Forget the romance of wine – this is an industrial for profit enterprise by a Texas corporation

Think of Coombsville and Mt Veeder where vineyard development has sucked resident's wells dry forcing them drill deeper wells, add water storage tanks or resort to trucking in water!

- County has not studied the total impact of all the vineyards and visitors today, we don't really know how much the valley can really support in terms of water or infrastructure – it isn't unlimited
- Circle Oaks Homeowner's Association, the Sierra Club, and the Living Rivers Council are each mounting campaigns and need our financial support

We need everyone's support to 'Halt Walt' or at least reduce its scope. What can you do? Get active:

● Spread the word to your friends ● Call or write to your elected officials ● Attend County meetings and voice your concerns ● Donate money ● Come to our next meeting ● If you don't help yourself – who will?

Comments

- This should not be a 'Not In My Backyard' (NIMBY) issue. If the plan was to dry farm without irrigation or frost protection water use, there wouldn't be the same concern. It's mainly about the water.

Whether you like vineyards or not, the land is designated agricultural/watershed use

- We must focus efforts on stopping this project.
- County officials tend to support development in general, especially wine related. A very strong public opposition is required to counter this tendency. Letters, emails and showing up at meetings do make a difference.

Follow the money, it is in the County's best interests to foster growth and increased tax revenue, not to mention elected officials key donors such as the Hall's being some of Dodd's biggest supporters financially and with fundraisers

- Focus on the facts, not the intangible when stating your concerns. Anything that smells of NIMBY will be ignored in general.
- Whether one believes in Global Warming or not, one should at least notice the climate is changing in Napa to hotter and drier and windier. Historical rainfall data may no longer apply and water use needs to be reevaluated.
- Have you, or do you know a neighbor, who has had to increase the depth of their well in the past five years? It will be important to have this information.
- ***The County got us into water shortages in Coombsville and Mt Veeder with uncontrolled vineyard growth approval. Why should we assume they learned their lesson for Atlas Peak?***

WAAP-September 1, 2014