

Dry Creek Valley

Guidelines for New Use Permits with Visitor Serving Agricultural Uses

Section 1. Scope

The purpose of this document is to provide a set of definitions and preferred guidelines for use by the Dry Creek Valley Citizens Advisory Council (DCV CAC) in investigating, discussing and considering applications for new use permits that include visitor serving agricultural uses in agricultural and resource zones in the Dry Creek Valley watershed (map attached). The DCV CAC will provide advisory recommendations to the County of Sonoma and its Permit and Resource Management Department, Board of Zoning Adjustments, Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

These guidelines will help to establish clear expectations, so applicants and neighbors have a basis for more open dialogue and common understanding. The guidelines are a pilot program to assess the value of setting standards locally and will also help to inform future actions by the Board of Supervisors on visitor serving agricultural uses.

Section 2. Goals

1. Support agriculture and related agricultural promotion on a scale that best fits the character of Dry Creek Valley.
2. Establish a set of clearly defined guidelines for use by the Dry Creek Valley Citizens Advisory Council in considering use permits that include new visitor serving agricultural uses.
3. Communicate the guidelines so applicants, neighbors and County representatives have clear expectations and a basis for open dialogue and understanding.
4. Favorably consider new applications where the overall project is substantially consistent with the guidelines.

Section 3. How to Use this Guidance Document

These guidelines are specifically intended to be used in evaluating new use permit applications that request visitor serving agricultural uses (e.g. tasting rooms, promotional activities or events) and for modifications to add visitor serving uses to existing permits that were approved for agricultural processing only.

We recognize that all projects are unique. As such, each will continue to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis considering the specific aspects of the project, property, location, and planned mitigations. The Guidelines provide consistent definitions and a framework for identifying and evaluating important aspects of each project.

There are several categories listed in this document, and for each category, there is associated guidance as to what could be considered appropriate and could contribute to a favorable decision by the DCV CAC. It is not expected that any application would meet each of the preferred guidelines. A less than favorable condition in any one category would not necessarily equate to an overall unfavorable decision. In general, the overall

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combination of more and less favorable conditions will be used by CAC members to evaluate the use permit application.

Section 4. Guidelines

1. Access and Traffic

1. Access to the parcel on public roadways of at least 18 feet in width is preferred for use permits with visitor serving agricultural uses.
2. There is adequate ingress and egress to the property, including adequate site distances to the entrance and distance from crossroads and other driveways. The highest volume of expected visitors can enter and exit the property safely without traffic backup on public roadways.

2. Site

1. Parcels of at least 20 acres are preferred for use permits with visitor serving agricultural uses.
2. The majority of the usable land is in agriculture, some portion of which is pertinent to the visitor serving agricultural uses. However, it is not the intent to encourage the removal of woodlands or planting of crops on steep hillsides.
3. There is sufficient water on the parcel to support all new visitor serving agricultural uses without negatively impacting neighboring properties.
4. All parking is on-site. There is no parking along public roadways.
5. Parking plans that utilize road easements have the written agreement of all neighbors who share those easements.
6. Parking in vineyard rows and avenues may be inadequate in wet conditions.

3. Activities and Events

1. All activities and events will promote agricultural products grown or processed in the local area.
2. All activities and events will be hosted by the proprietor, with on-site management by the proprietor's staff. The facility will not be rented out for use by a 3rd party and no rental fees will be charged.
3. New use permits that support the guidelines below will be viewed as more favorable. See Section 6 for the Definitions of Activities and Events Definitions.

Activities and Events	Guidelines
Public and Direct Sales Activities During regular hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited to the Maximum Persons at One Time set in the use permit• Limited to the hours of 10am – 5pm

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Activities and Events	Guidelines
Direct Sales Activities Outside of regular hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50 visitors at one time, or the Maximum Persons at One Time set in the use permit, whichever is less• Maximum of 12 times a year• Maximum of two per month• Limited to the hours of 8am – 10pm
Trade Marketing Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited to the Maximum Persons at One Time set in the use permit• Limited to the hours of 8am – 10pm
Association Sponsored Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 15 event days per year• Traffic and parking plans required if Maximum Persons at One Time is exceeded• Limited to the hours of 10am – 5pm
Agricultural Promotional Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximum of 2 days per quarter• Events outside of regular hours limited to 2 event days per year• Limited to the hours of 8am – 10pm

4. Noise Impact

Noise impact is one of the most complex categories in Use Permits with Visitor Serving Uses. We encourage applicants to pay close attention to the Sonoma County General Plan 2020 Noise Element, particularly Policy NE-1c, when crafting their use permit application. Requests for outdoor amplified music, especially after 5pm, will typically require noise studies and mitigation measures and may not be appropriate for some projects.

1. All noise impact conforms to the Sonoma County Noise Standards as set forth in the General Plan.
2. Applicant has noted the distances in each direction from the visitor serving areas to the neighboring residences and indicated noise mitigations, if necessary. Projects with greater than required distances from property lines and existing residences are more favorable.
3. All outdoor amplified music ends by 9pm.

5. Food Service

1. Food service is allowed for wine and food pairings and in conjunction with activities and events, however operating as a restaurant is prohibited. More specifically:

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- the predominate activity in the tasting room is wine tasting, wine sales and related wine marketing, not dining
 - meal service is not available to the general public on a regular basis
 - no cooked-to-order food is served.
2. Catering and commercial kitchens are acceptable, including indoor or outdoor equipment such as stoves, wood-fired ovens and barbecues.
 3. Wine and food pairing offered to the general public is allowed between the hours of 10am and 5pm. Showcasing site or locally grown foods is encouraged.
 4. Sale of pre-packaged foods is allowed.
 5. All food service requires appropriate health permits under existing County regulations.

6. Facilities

1. Visitor serving areas: The area under roof dedicated to public tasting facilities does not exceed 2500 square feet. This does not include outdoor areas or space dedicated to uses such as kitchens, bathrooms, barrel rooms, storage or seated tasting.
2. New projects with proposed case production that fits with the scale of existing wineries in the Dry Creek Valley will be viewed favorably. Permitted case production for existing wineries in the Dry Creek Valley ranges from 500 cases to 350,000 annually. Eighty percent of the wineries in Dry Creek Valley fall in the range of 3,600 to 30,000 permitted cases. Larger projects will be considered based on compensating factors such as parcel size, road access and proximity to major highways.
3. Facilities are sited to minimize visual impact. Projects with buildings and landscaping that are of an appropriate scale to the area will be considered favorably.
4. Nighttime lighting levels are at the minimum necessary to provide for security and safety of the use and users. Exterior lighting that minimizes glare and spillover onto neighboring parcels will be considered favorably.
5. Marketing accommodations for private guests are allowed, provided that the use promotes, or markets agricultural products grown or processed on the site, the scale of the use is appropriate to the production and/or processing use and no commercial use of private guest accommodations is allowed (i.e. rental fees are not charged).

7. Local Focus

The community of Dry Creek Valley is dedicated to promoting local agriculture and wine grape processing. Projects that acquire agricultural products grown locally, specifically from Dry Creek Valley and Sonoma County, are preferred.

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1. New wineries that use at least 75% of grapes from Sonoma County will be viewed favorably.
2. Projects that use local foods from Dry Creek Valley and Sonoma County for visitor serving uses and projects that dedicate acreage for diversified agriculture will be viewed favorably.

8. Concentration

Different areas within the Dry Creek Valley are distinct in terms of concentration of residents, wineries and other developed uses, so it is difficult to establish specific limits. Requests for new use permits that take density into consideration and seek to reduce the impact on nearby existing wineries or residences will be viewed more favorably. Such factors as the proximity to other wineries, residences and intersections will be considered. In general, projects that are not clustered around existing developed uses or are closer to major highways will be viewed as more favorable.

Section 5. Suggested Best Practices

The applicant has met or offered to meet at least once with neighbors to describe and hear reactions to their plans.

1. This includes all neighbors who are likely to be impacted by the project.
2. Best practice suggests that multiple meetings over the course of the planning process are most effective, with one meeting very early in the project before plans are developed in detail.

Section 6. Definitions

A. Maximum Persons at One Time

The Maximum Persons at One Time is defined in each use permit as the total visitors on the site at one time. This number is set on a case-by-case basis in each use permit using a combination of the following factors:

1. Septic system capacity
2. On-site parking as follows:
 - a. 1 space for each employee
 - b. 1 space for every 2.5 visitors
3. Road access
4. Building occupancy levels as authorized by the Fire Department

B. Activities

1. **Public Sales Activities** are defined as wine tasting, tours, wine and food educational pairings, seminars and other hospitality related activities supporting the promotion of wine sales that are open to the public.

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- a. Will not exceed the Maximum Persons at One Time limit established in the use permit.
 - b. Do not require an invitation.
 - c. A fee may be charged.
 - d. May be advertised to consumers.
2. **Direct Sales Activities** are defined as by-invitation activities such as winemaker lunches or dinners, release days or pickup parties designed to promote the sale of agricultural products.
- a. Will not exceed the Maximum Persons at One Time limit established in the use permit.
 - b. A fee may be charged.
 - c. Invitations may be issued using such methods as mail, email, websites or social media.
3. **Trade Marketing Activities** are defined as by-invitation activities for staff, trade or distribution partners.
- a. Will not exceed the Maximum Persons at One Time limit established in the use permit.
 - b. Are not advertised to the consumers.

C. Events

1. **Association Sponsored Events** (often referred to as Industry Events) are defined as events sponsored by a recognized organization to promote wine sales and tourism, conducted across multiple sites within a specified geographic area.
 - a. Events will meet the requirements and follow the best practices of the association sponsoring the event.
 - b. Have adequate mitigation plans for septic and parking if they exceed the Maximum Persons at One Time limit.
 - c. Parking along public roadways is not allowed.
 - d. Limited to tasting room hours only.
2. **Other Agricultural Promotional Events** are those events that are expected to exceed the Maximum Persons at One Time limit.
 - a. Invitations may be issued (using such methods as mail, email, websites or social media).
 - b. Must be explicitly requested in the use permit specifying the number of events annually and the maximum size of each event.
 - c. Require adequate mitigation plans for septic and parking if the visitors expected exceed the Maximum Persons at One Time limit. Parking along public roadways is not allowed.