



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Media Contacts:**

Valerie Minton, Sonoma RCD

[VMinton@sonomarc.org](mailto:VMinton@sonomarc.org)

707/569.1448 ext. 102

## **On-The-Ground Water Quality Improvements Funded for Sonoma Creek Vineyards by LandSmart® Program**

**SANTA ROSA, CA (June 1, 2016)** – The Sonoma Resource Conservation District (RCD) was recently awarded two grants by the State Water Resources Control Board and the State Coastal Conservancy to fund LandSmart On-the-Ground for vineyards in the Sonoma Creek watershed, bringing in more than \$900,000. LandSmart is a regional collaborative program that helps land managers meet their natural resource management goals while supporting productive lands and thriving streams. In the Sonoma Creek watershed, the program is helping to prepare vineyards for a new regulation currently under development by the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board that would require grape growers to prepare farm water quality plans and implement management practices.

“Grants like these help the landowners we work with achieve conservation outcomes greater and faster than what might be achieved through regulation alone. We’re excited to work with proactive vineyard partners interested in going above and beyond to comprehensively manage the natural resources of their land,” said Valerie Minton, Program Director at the Sonoma RCD. “It’s wonderful to have the support and partnership of the Water Board and Coastal Conservancy, who through this funding are demonstrating their commitment to helping conservation happen on the ground.”

The grants will allow the Sonoma RCD to offer financial assistance to vineyards for the implementation of management practices that will protect and improve water quality. Funding will support a gamut of management practices such as storm proofing unpaved roads, implementation of erosion control measures, improving irrigation efficiency, removal of invasive riparian vegetation and re-vegetation with native plants, and implementation of practices to slow, spread and sink stormwater.

“Securing this funding to work side-by-side with grape growers in Sonoma Creek is a great achievement to support our region’s sustainability goals,” said Sonoma County Supervisor Susan Gorin. “Agricultural production and natural resource stewardship in our local watersheds are crucial to providing long term economic vitality for Sonoma County.”

In order to qualify for this financial assistance, vineyards must complete a LandSmart Plan, a comprehensive document that identifies the natural and agricultural resources of the site, documents existing practices that are used to protect natural resources, and identifies and prioritizes new management practices that could be used to improve the quality of natural resources on the property. LandSmart Plans are prepared by a vineyard manager or owner and RCD technical staff, and are designed to meet growers’ needs, comply with regulations, and promote innovative stewardship.

“The RCD’s approach to land stewardship is proactive, practical, and they are always able to work with me to find affordable, simple solutions for my projects,” said Sue Smith, a vineyard and ranch owner in the Sonoma Creek watershed.

The RCD prides itself on its long standing relationships with the local community, serving rural and agricultural landowners for over seventy years. During this time, the RCD has worked with vineyards and other agricultural

producers to address the most pressing natural resource issues while maintaining the viability of agricultural operations. The LandSmart program represents the RCD's most comprehensive and collaborative effort to date, and these grants will play an important role in moving the program forward.

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