



BRIAN THOMAS JONES/MALIBU ROCKY OAKS

Newly Annotated Malibu Coast AVA Cannot Plant More Vines

The Malibu Coast American Viticultural Area can no longer plant vines—news that arrived just six weeks after the **Tax and Trade Bureau** (TTB) approved the new AVA.

In April, the **Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors** proposed a ban on new grapevine plantings in the AVA through its Local Coastal Program (LCP) planning. Supervisor **Zev Yaroslavsky** led the fight against the vineyards, arguing that the ban prevents:

1. Erosion;
2. Pesticide run-off entering streams in the Santa Monica Mountains;
3. Excessive water use in a state in critical need of preserving its supplies;
4. Destroying the natural beauty of the mountains' chaparral.

The defenses to these concerns are:

1. Many home and landowners in the area planted vineyards to control erosion. Vines send their roots deep into the earth, securing it on steep hillsides better than some native plants. Additionally, vineyards serve as firebreaks, a clear advantage in a region prone to wildfires. Fire-swept land is highly susceptible to erosion.
 2. Organic and biodynamic farming are common in the AVA. Organic farms were allowed at the eleventh hour, but vineyards were excluded. This could have been a bridge to compromise, but there was no exception to allow non-organic vineyards time to align with new farming principles.
 3. Grapevines need minimal water to make high quality wine, which is the AVA's aim. As in all major wine-growing areas, irrigation is applied through highly efficient drip systems. Making wine requires much more water. However, LA County regulations ban wineries. So, grapes are trucked to Ventura, San Luis Obispo or Santa Barbara for processing. However, equestrian facilities, which use enormous quantities of water, continue to be permitted.
 4. This highly subjective point is ironic considering the tourists flocking to wine regions around the globe to enjoy the beauty of vineyards.
- This news, however, shouldn't give the impression this AVA may be a flash in the pan. Investing in vineyards is investing in time. The members of the AVA now need to invest in better organization. **Elliott Dolin**, owner of Dolin **Malibu Estate Vineyards**, attributes the equestrian groups' success to being highly organized and proactive. The **Recreation and Equestrian Coalition**

and the **Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council** began their protectivist campaigns immediately when the **California Coastal Commission** approved changes to the Land Use Plan in April. The vintners didn't activate until two weeks prior to the vote.

"We had to hand someone's head to the environmentalists," said Dolin. "Honestly, I never paid much attention to county politics until this issue came up."

The growers now have time to mobilize behind the scenes. Supervisor Yaroslavsky will be forced out of office by term limits in November. While the two candidates vying for Yaroslavsky's position supported his work, the grape growers will have Supervisor **Michael Antonovich** in their corner through 2016. Antonovich was the sole supervisor who voted against the plan, arguing the ban infringes on private property rights. It should also help that the AVA now has the attention of the **California Association of Winegrape Growers** and the **Wine Institute**.

The vintners have options. They may seek to have the provisions amended. This would require going back to the California Coastal Commission, and it would likely be a drawn-out and tedious process. They could also litigate, but this is an expensive route. For now, the Malibu Coast AVA grape growers are out in their vines, collecting their 2014 harvest.

— Christy Canterbury, MW

Sonoma Harvest Wine Auction Raises \$4 Million, Shatters Record



ODNEY STRONG/ROCKY OAKS

More than \$4 million was raised at the **Sonoma Harvest Wine Auction** at **Chateau St. Jean** sponsored by **Tax and Trade Bureau** (TTB) on Sunday, Aug. 31. The total raised was a record-breaking 2013.

More than 700 guests gathered with vintners and numerous children in attendance. The **Fund for Child Literacy**, received more than doubling the \$700,000 donated in 2013. The auction of the day was **Hamel Family Winery** featured a private dinner at the newly constructed winery for with six top **James Beard Award** winning chefs. Twenty-five couples bid \$10,000 each to experience bringing the lot total to \$250,000. The largest individual lot was **Gallo Family's "Amazing Africa"** featuring a luxurious safari to various destinations, which sold for \$220,000 to two bidders bidding \$110,000. It was closely by honorary chair **Odney Strong Vineyards' "Rocky Oaks"** with celebrity chef **Hu** which generated \$2

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\$2014 Salary Survey REPORT

Salary Increases Back to Pre-Recession Levels **5.4%**

Average Increase in Base Salaries

Year	Average Increase in Base Salaries (%)
2007	~4.5
2008	~4.5
2009	~4.5
2010	~3.5
2011	~3.5
2012	~3.5
2013	~3.5
2014	5.4

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