

from [enyart@sonic.net](mailto:enyart@sonic.net)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

COURT ORDERS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR JESS JACKSON'S  
KNIGHTS VALLEY PROJECT

Santa Rosa, CA June 21, 2010 - The Superior Court of California, Sonoma County, ruled in favor of the public in protecting natural resources by ordering that a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) be completed for the Pelton House Winery and Events Center proposed by Jess Jackson and Barbara Banke in Knights Valley.

In response to the 4-1 vote on March 24, 2009 by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, who approved the precedent-setting development in the Knights Valley Agricultural Preserve despite pleas from the public for the county to pursue an EIR before making its decision, the Maacama Watershed Alliance (MWA) filed suit. This group consists of local residents, growers, ranchers, and business owners concerned with the county's consistent lack of thorough analysis and resource protections before approving commercial development in the county's rural areas.

The court order provides a significant public benefit by ensuring protection of the environment and upholding the local resource protections of the Franz Valley Area Plan established in 1979 for lands within the Maacama and Mark West Creek Watersheds of northeastern Sonoma County. As the lead agency reviewing discretionary development applications, Sonoma County is required to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and

demonstrate that the development will have no significant impacts on the environment and natural resources, and no cumulative impacts on water supply and quality.

"This ruling serves notice to Sonoma County to protect our lands and water supply by complying with CEQA instead of approving projects without proper review," said Craig Enyart, speaking on behalf of the Maacama Watershed Alliance.

The Writ of Mandate states: "The court finds that substantial evidence supports a fair argument that the project may have a significant effect on the environment and thus requires an environmental impact report, while Respondents [Sonoma County] have improperly deferred both study and mitigation."

The project is in the biologically diverse Kellogg Creek drainage basin that supports steelhead trout and Coho salmon habitat which is dependent on tributaries to the Russian River that flow through the property. Yet major use of water for hundreds of acres of vineyard on the property under diversion permits still pending with the state was not considered by the county to add to the cumulative impacts on the environment. There is also concern that neighborhood wells will be negatively affected by the project.

The court granted the Petition for a Writ of Mandate based on every issue which MWA raised, finding MWA persuasive on all points, including impacts on water supply, effects on fish species, potential

mercury and asbestos contamination, and improper plans for wastewater systems.

Contact: Craig Enyart

415-385-2385