

Le Colline: Walt Ranch Redux?

by Mike Hackett

The Le Colline Vineyard in Angwin, set on narrow Cold Springs Road, is causing trauma to nearby residents, much like the locals felt for years during the buildup for the Walt Ranch project. It is another potential development set on the county's eastern hills. Both are right in middle of the two watersheds for the city of Napa's drinking water reservoirs.

The proposed Le Colline vineyard project is located off a rural road where heavy earth-moving vineyard equipment will pass by a private elementary school, a daycare center, and many homes. We Angwin residents, are particularly concerned that we have already lost over 1,200 acres of forest conversion to vineyard in the very recent past.

The developer has touted this project as a "zero emissions" vineyard and sent a letter to the surrounding community's citizenry misleadingly stating that the Napa County Planning Department has already approved the project. **It has not been approved and has been appealed to the county Board of Supervisors.** His greenwashing message implies that deforestation will be an environmental benefit.

Who is the Developer?

David DiCesaris is a businessman associated with a Utah-based financial firm, Applied Financial, where he sold a "PRR" leasing/financial product, called "purchase, return or renewal". ***The Deseret News*** reports on this in depth and the links to the articles are provided below.

Mr. DiCesaris' project is another example of Napa County's lack of action regarding climate change and our ever-diminishing water resources. He is willing to rip out nearly 30 acres of pristine forest, majestically rolling beside Conn Creek and just above the Linda Falls nature preserve. The development's claim that it will act as a firebreak is unsupported. Recent wildland fires evidenced otherwise.

Le Colline will be checkerboard in design with separate blocks of vineyard. The effects on the area known to be a significant wildlife corridor for all species living on Howell Mountain will be devastating. This lack of connectivity will cause habitat loss and fragmentation of an area known for its natural beauty.

In the most basic sense, these remote areas are inappropriate for vineyards in many ways: tearing out carbon-sequestering trees puts us even further behind in our goal to fight the climate crisis. The carbon-friendly forest does the job naturally and cannot be "mitigated" by a vineyard. Two-thirds of the water recharged to the Napa Valley floor comes from the hillside forested land surrounding the Napa basin. Up to 70% of Napa city's water is taken from Lake Hennessey with Conn Creek as the primary water source. Le Colline will alter that flow. Napa residents should be very concerned and ready to voice their opposition to this potential project.

Joy Eldredge, Napa city water manager, says the Hennessey Reservoir already requires 400% more effort to ensure water quality and quantity. The Regional Water Quality Control Board states that greater than 50% of the problems related to sediment, pathogens, and nutrients are due to human intervention in the watershed. This cannot continue. Increased development, like Le Colline, will lead to the eventual collapse of this watershed as a source of water for the

city of Napa.

The biological studies, the erosion potential, the water use, and the impacts on surrounding properties make this a project with problems that cannot be mitigated. **This is a seriously flawed project on a piece of land not intended to be disturbed. As Angwin vintner Randy Dunn stated in a newspaper article, “This place ought to be a park.”**