

BONNY DOON

# Winery review mixed

## Project in the works for 269-acre ranch

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Plans for a new winery proposed for Bonny Doon are drawing support from some residents but others in the neighborhood are sour on the idea.

The proposal by property owners Bill and Robin Cunningham calls for construction of a winery complex consisting of three structures — a winery building, and wine-tasting and office buildings — at the 269-acre Redwood Meadow Ranch on Bonny Doon Road. Maximum production for the winery would be 100,000 gallons of wine per year.

Additional requests include permission for a wine-tasting room open to the public, a vineyard and olive grove, road improvements, parking for 85 cars, two 20,000-gallon water tanks, grading and permits allowing the business to hold up to 60 special events like weddings each year. The guest list would be limited to 200 for each event and a total of 8,340 people annually.

At a county Planning Commission discussion of the proposal Wednesday, residents were mixed on the idea though the Bonny Doon area already is home to numerous wineries.

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## Winery

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"There were a few people from the local wine industry who have concerns that policies passed regarding this project could impact their own related projects," said Cathleen Carr, county planner assigned to the project. "There were also some neighbors who had concerns with the overall project in general. The problem is that there's a few gray areas in the proposal."

A formal Planning Commission hearing on the proposal is set for Aug. 9.

The opposition focused on the special events, such as weddings and banquets. Carr said the commission has yet to develop policies regarding wineries and special events.

"All we have are regulations for wine tasting, but this is quite different," she said.

Longtime Bonny Doon resident Jodi Frediani said after the meeting she was concerned the winery would rely heavily on grapes that would be hauled into the site.

"They're planning to use the area primarily for hosting a number of events that are out of keeping with the rural nature of our community," Frediani said. "This is not about an agricultural operation, but rather a venue for entertainment, which will bring traffic, music and noise."

Property owner Bill Cunningham said those concerns are unfounded.

"We've conducted several noise and traffic studies and none of them has shown there will be a problem," Cunningham said. "No one can even see

the winery unless you're standing on our property, and as for traffic, there's only one house between our front gate and Highway 1. Who are we really going to bother?"

Cunningham said he hopes the winery will benefit the entire community.

"We've already told the volunteer firefighters association and elementary school that they could use our facility for fund-raising events," he said.

The closest neighbor, Gary Young, said he supports the winery proposal.

"Just as the Bonny Doon Winery has always been a good neighbor, I expect the new winery will be, too," Young said. "It's important to remember that Bonny Doon has long history of viticulture and using land here for production of grapes is a positive thing."

Valerie Ahlgren, co-owner of Ahlgren Vineyard, agreed.

"If you have a nice facility, it's an asset to the entire community," she said.

Ahlgren said she is concerned that pressure from residents could lead the Planning Commission to limit winery events, as well as the amount of grapes local wineries can purchase off-site.

"It's not possible for a winery of any size in this area to grow all their own grapes," she said. "If they adopt such a policy, they'll stop every winery in the county."

Carr said she doesn't expect the commission to find that issue pressing.

"The homeowners association is simply using this to try and limit the scale of development," she said.