



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

September 7, 1966

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Mr. John H. Sutter, President
Citizens for Regional Recreation
and Parks in San Francisco Bay Area
126 Post Street
Room 607
San Francisco, California 94108

Dear Mr. Sutter:

Since writing to you in June on the Napa Valley National Vineyard proposal, Director Hartzog and members of his staff have given much further thought to the problem and the proposal. It has evoked much interest, as you can imagine, and we find ourselves automatically sympathetic to the basic conservation objective.

Our thoughts seem to run full circle when considering new tactics or possible formulae. Each time we come back to the need for strong grass roots participation and the realization that State and local guides, controls and planning are essential and must be depended upon for success.

The problem of urban sprawl exists in hundreds of places throughout the country, as you well know. Fortunately this problem has received considerable attention by all levels of government and by conservation organizations and private individuals. The problem has not been solved, but a number of techniques and methods have been advanced which may, if enthusiastically supported and applied, conserve open spaces near large metropolitan areas for recreation, agriculture, scenic beauty and so on.

You are doubtless aware that the California legislature passed a conservation easement (or development rights) enabling law in 1959, which permits county acquisition of interests and rights in real property. Thus it would seem that Napa County has the necessary authority to assure the preservation of the scenic rural landscape of the Napa Valley. Again, we come to the need for strong local support and action.

It may be that Federal grants are available for assisting the county in acquiring the development rights under the Open Space Land Program. The Urban Renewal Administration, in defining the San Francisco Bay urban area, included Napa County, or portions of it. Certainly the Open Space Land Program should be fully explored. One of its major purposes is to help curb urban sprawl.

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The Department of Agriculture has many on-going programs to help keep agriculture viable. While none, as far as we know, are aimed specifically at keeping agriculture in open space, nearly all have some applicability to the problem at hand. Some combinations of these programs help sustain farming operations in competition with urban use. These programs, too, require strong local "grass root" support.

The fall issue of "Cry California", sent to us by Mr. William Bronson, contains a report on the "Urban-Metropolitan Open Space Study" which was prepared under contract to the State Office of Planning. As it was pointed out in the article and in the study, the park concept is only one of the many open space necessities. Another open space function is "agriculture." We think that the application of the park concept to serve the "agriculture" function, or to serve as a protective device in order to prevent undesirable land uses, would result in the subversion of park principles. And it would, of course, bring forth an almost endless list of generally parallel areas and industries.

Certainly the goal of those who are supporting the Napa Valley National Vineyard proposal is laudable. The concept of agricultural reserves as suggested in the Napa Valley proposal is bold and imaginative, but we believe it falls outside the basic sphere of responsibility or authority of this Service. It would seem to be more closely related to the Open Space Land Program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Mr. Davis is generally familiar with the problem facing the Napa Valley and of the proposal to save the valley from development. He, too, has suggested that assistance may be available from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. What is needed to followup on this possibility is a direct request for such assistance, plus strong support of the property owners and county and local officials. If you wish to pursue this further, we suggest you address your efforts to the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Attention: Mr. Arthur Davis, Deputy Director, Land and Facilities Development Administration.

The enclosed draft report, "Keeping Agricultural Lands as Open Space in the Potomac River Basin", is a very recent study aimed at the very same problem your area now faces. It was devised as part of the President's aim to make the Potomac "a model of scenic and recreational values for the entire country" and may be useful to you.

We are very much interested in the conservation goal represented in the Napa Valley National Vineyard proposal. We hope you will keep us informed of your activities and progress. If you identify other ways in which we may be of help, please let us know. We appreciate your taking the time to call this proposal to our attention.

Sincerely yours,

(sgd) A. Clark Stratton
Acting Director

Enclosure

cc: Hon. Thomas H. Kuchel
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

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A PROPOSAL

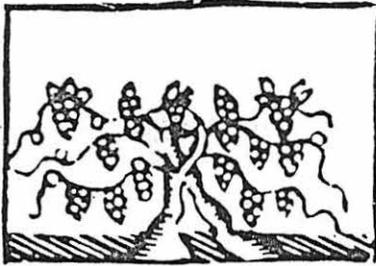
WILLIAM BRONSON

THE NAPA VALLEY NATIONAL VINEYARD

Among all of California's beautiful corners, the Upper Napa Valley is probably as precious as any in the land. It is a unique resource, praised and treasured not only for the wines and fruits produced in its vineyards and orchards, but for its glorious setting and for the beautiful green retreat it represents for the millions in crowded Bay Area cities. The quality of the fine wines produced there (about half of the nation's premium varietal table wines are made in Napa County) has brought the region international fame.

There are few who know the valley who would willingly ruin its beauty and productivity, yet as matters stand, destruction of the Upper Napa Valley as we know it today is imminent.

The San Francisco planning firm of Williams, Cook & Moccine revealed this year tentative plans for development of the 2,200-acre Stellings ranch, much of which is planted in choice wine grapes,



between Oakville and Rutherford. Seventy-five acres are designated for commercial development. Ultimately, 6,000 acres may be developed under the plan.

If Napa County allows large-scale subdivision and commercial development, it will effectively foreclose the possibility of keeping the Upper Napa Valley in agriculture. Development on this scale will, in fact, wreck the valley for anything but urban use. For as we have learned in one section after another in California—Santa Clara County, Alameda County, Los Angeles County, Orange County, to name the most obvious—once the process of converting agricultural lands to housing begins, it cannot be stemmed by any ma-

chinery we now possess. It's like the old saw, there's no such thing as being a little bit pregnant.

Those who argue for urban development often cite as a blessing, the "broader tax base" that results thereby. In one section after another, as urban development encroaches on agricultural land, the broadened tax base cry is heard, but when the developers move on, the local residents find that while the local tax base has indeed been broadened, the cost of serving the newly developed areas in most cases exceeds the amount that can be realized from new taxes. Under no circumstance should the people of Napa County bow to such discredited reasoning. The county now enjoys per-capita taxes close to the lowest in the state.

Preservation of the Upper Napa Valley in agriculture, essentially as it is now, is clearly in the public interest. The question is, how can it be done?

First off, no matter how well intended the private property owners are in their efforts to preserve the unique character of the Napa Valley, private resistance cannot, under present legal and economic realities, hope to forestall the inexorable advance of the developers. For with them come the tax assessors and tax rates which will drive even the best intentioned eventually to sell.

Second, zoning, even under "greenbelt" legislation which has worked to some good effect in Santa Clara County, is not the answer to the long-term problem. As Clarence Stein, the distinguished architect, among whose achievements is the splendid land planning for San Diego's Balboa Park, said in regard to greenbelting in 1956:

That zoning or similar restrictive methods will not serve this purpose is apparent in the present development of the San Fernando Valley. The City Planning Department of Los Angeles made a farsighted plan to prevent the continuous sprawl of population over the 212 square miles of the Valley. They separated the moderate sized communities from each other by green belts zoned as agricultural open areas. This has come to naught. For the practical house de-

velopers have had the green belts erased where most needed, that is between the growing communities. Zoning is only a temporary barrier or protection. It cannot stand up against the flood of monotonous commonplace nor the greed of land subdividers.

The only halfway effective tool we now possess is the California Land Conservation Act (also known as the Williamson Bill) which was passed in 1965. It may provide the basis for a longer-term holding operation, but it, too, may prove vulnerable to the blandishments and greenbacks of the speculator and the developer.

Under the act, a farmer may sign a contract with the county in which he agrees to hold the land in agriculture for 10 years in return for immunity from higher-than-agricultural tax rates. The contract is renewable each year, and although this gives both the county and the owner a good hold on the land for exclusive agricultural use, it is not designed to hold it thus forever.

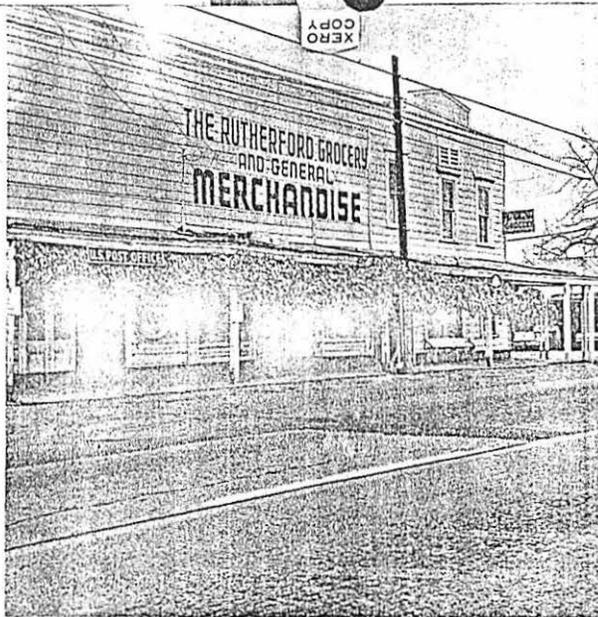
Furthermore, even if every acre now in grapes in Napa County were to be preserved for agriculture permanently, the Napa Valley would still be destroyed by urbanization. The vineyards occupy only about 25% of the land of the Upper Napa Valley and surrounding hillsides, and this acreage would be swallowed up and lost if the balance were developed. Recreational values would largely vanish and it is quite possible that smog generated by suburban masses would so damage the grapes as to materially affect the yield.

The truth is, time has run out. It will take heroic measures to save the valley, but we are a nation rich enough and, I would like to think, gutsy enough to figure out a way to save this small, but irreplaceable asset.

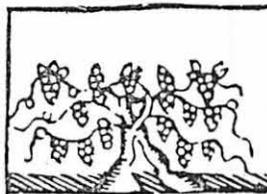
The late Congressman Clem Miller privately expressed the idea that the Napa wine country was such a glorious resource that it deserved protection in some kind of park status.

Why couldn't the federal government establish a Napa Valley National Vineyard? We have created national seashores, national historical monuments, national recreational areas, national parks and wilderness areas. Why should we not set aside national agricultural reserves. And where better could we begin examination of the national responsibility in this field.

This is not a new idea, by any means. In 1958, the Santa Clara County Planning Department under Karl Belser proposed establishment of national agricultural land reserves; James Carr, now San Francisco Public Utilities chief, and former Under Secretary of the Interior, a few



The pervasive rural character of the Upper Napa Valley is illustrated by the Rutherford General Store. Rutherford, like Oakville and Yountville, is merely a wide place in the road; each has a character of its own.



Below, another example of the fine architectural detail to be found in the wineries and towns of the Upper Napa Valley. Below center, one of many pear and walnut orchards which interlace the vineyards of the Upper Napa Valley. Below right, young grape plants not yet bearing, were set out to meet the growing demand for fine varietal wines.



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years back proposed the creation of a national orange grove in Los Angeles County; and Donald de la Peña, now with the Santa Clara County Planning Department, called for government purchase of development rights of all San Francisco Bay Area vineyard lands in 1960. These are but a few of many similar serious proposals.

But nothing has been done. We have not yet learned the bitter truth that our richest lands will continue to fall under the developer's ax in the absence of firm land-use policy and laws to back it up.

What would a national vineyard be?

The essentials of the proposal are simple. To begin with, it would encompass 40,000 or 50,000 acres covering all of the valley lands from Dry Creek Road, or perhaps Yountville, to north of Calistoga, and sufficient foothill lands on either side to protect agricultural and esthetic values.

There is no reason the government need purchase one acre of land outright, but it is absolutely necessary that development rights on all the property must be acquired—by gift or negotiation or, if need be, by condemnation. Development rights would be recorded but the land would remain in private ownership, in fee simple, and would be used for whatever non-urban use the owner may wish to put it to.

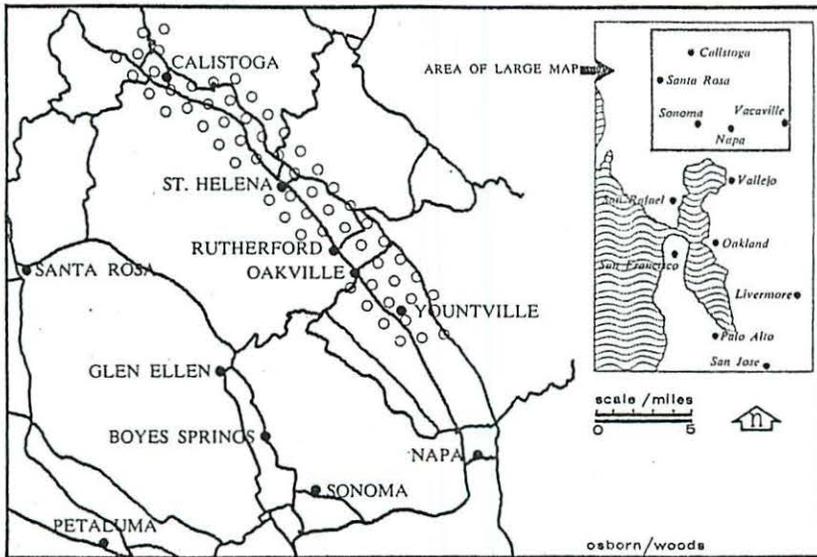
Private landholders would still be able to buy and sell land, plant whatever they wished to, make their wines and sell them without any restriction, and at the same time remain protected from the threat of higher taxes. If a man wanted to pull up his grapes and plant cotton, there would be nothing to stop him. But I believe that the growing demand for high-quality varietal wines, which flourish so luxuriantly in this region, will increase the acreage in grapes. (Today Napa County has about 11,500 acres in wine grapes, and indications are that an additional 1,500 acres will be planted in the next few years.)

In addition, certain architectural and sign controls should be designed, and for lack of a better idea, there is no reason that national park architectural and sign standards wouldn't serve as a beginning. Obviously, these would have to be very flexible, but all geared to preserve the unique physical characteristics we now know. By establishing park status, the federal government could then prevent the State Division of Highways from ruining the Napa Valley with the six-lane freeway up the middle it now has in the works.

Further, city boundaries of Calistoga and St. Helena should be frozen and reserved for whatever urban expansion is necessary to support the agricultural and tourist industries.

The net economic effect of the creation of a national vineyard, I suspect, will be that land prices will rise steadily within the cities, and that agricultural lands will trade at prices which do not reflect development potential. This is, of course, not to say that the price of agricultural land will not continue to rise.

There are those who argue—among them professional planners, I'm sorry to say—that vineyards as vineyards are unimportant. To me, this is absolute nonsense. Where, in all the nation, do the combination of warm days, cool nights, deep,



General area of proposed Napa Valley National Vineyard.

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rich soils, and high ground water combine to produce premium wines like those produced in the Napa Valley?

Only three other regions are known. Alameda and Santa Clara Counties' dwindling wine grape acreage is largely in varietals; ten percent of Sonoma County's acreage is in varietals; new vineyards in Monterey and San Benito Counties have been put in varietals, but the truth is that we have precious little land which meets the demanding requirements of the fine wine grapes. As our tastes mature and our affluence grows, the demand will accelerate, and even if this were not so, sheer population increase will overtake the supply.

If we can create an Upper Napa Valley National Vineyard, we will have saved the valley for all the good things it is, and this is in my judgment a sufficient value to justify the act in its own right.

In addition, however, the possibility of serving a far greater purpose lies within such a plan. By creating a national vineyard, we will focus public attention on California's most compelling long-term problem, namely, how to preserve its diminishing arable lands. The Upper Napa Valley National Vineyard would serve, in effect, as a pilot study in this field. The details of my proposal can be debated, but I don't think the goal can.

Politically, the cities would continue to elect their own officials, and the county would continue to service the non-incorporated areas. The tax assessor, however, would be blocked from taxing the lands for anything but agricultural use. Aside from simple architectural and sign control regulations which will generally enhance values, life would go on largely as it does today. The overall effect of creation of the Upper Napa Valley National Vineyard would be to freeze this precious part of our earth in its best use for the benefit of all our society, today and tomorrow.

If we really want to save the valley, it is going to take a step as bold as that which I have outlined.

In 1884, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote the *The Silverado Squatters* in which he celebrated the joys of Napa County. Of the wine county he wrote:

The beginning of vine-planting is like the beginning of mining for the precious metals: the wine-grower also "prospects." One corner of land after another is tried with one kind of grape after another. This is a failure; that is better; a third best. So, bit by bit, they grope about for their Clos Vougeot and

Lafite. Those lodes and pockets of earth, more precious than the precious ores, that yield inimitable fragrance and soft fire; those virtuous Bonanzas, where the soil has sublimated under sun and stars to something finer, and the wine is bottled poetry: these still lie undiscovered; chaparral conceals, thicket embowers them; the miner chips the rock and wanders farther, and the grizzly muses undisturbed. But there they bide their hour, awaiting their Columbus; and nature nurses and prepares them. The smack of Californian earth shall linger on the palate of your grandson.

We are the grandchildren of the generation Stevenson wrote for. More than a hundred years have been spent developing the unique virtues of the Napa wine country and the gifts of this patient labor are ours to enjoy today. I would like to think that the smack of this precious Californian earth will linger on the palates of our grandchildren someday. We alone have the opportunity to save it.

A dozen wineries in the valley invite the public to sample their premium wines. The quiet of the valley, the beauty of the hillsides, the tranquility of the general scene, and the cool retreat the wineries afford, bring hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.



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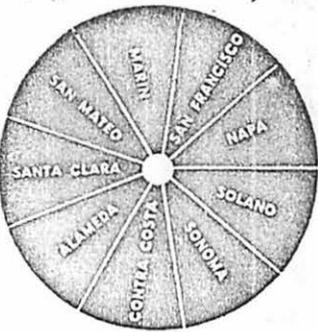
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CITIZENS FOR REGIONAL RECREATION AND PARKS

IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

August 9, 1966



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Business Address

126 Post Street
Room 607

Honorable Thomas H. Kuchel
United States Senate
Senate Office Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Senator Kuchel:

It was most heartening to all of us to receive your letter of July 12, 1966, indicating your interest in the NAPA VALLEY NATIONAL VINEYARD.

The suggestions contained in your letter pertaining to SB 3035 and Report No. 1363 on the preservation of historic properties were discussed at our Executive Meeting on July 28th.

This legislation does not fit in any way our proposal for a NAPA VALLEY NATIONAL VINEYARD. We are enclosing a copy of "Cry California" which explains the idea and which you asked us to send.

True, there are several very famous wineries, Christian Brothers, Krug, Martini, Beaulieu, from fifty to one hundred years old, which, as buildings, could qualify for the category of landmarks. But our concern is to preserve the land itself, 50,000 acres of it, in its present production. We need to find some new method stronger than local zoning to do this. We think that the destruction of prime agricultural land in the Bay Region is sufficiently far advanced and horrifying to make national protection a timely and crucial issue.

We also think that the National Park Service has already taken some steps along this line and might be the appropriate national agency to initiate such a new policy. For example, the suggestions being made at this time concerning farms in Pt. Reyes National Seashore and the practice of permitting functioning ranches in Jackson Hole. True, these are parks. An agricultural preserve to protect and maintain unique productive land would not be a park. But just as we preserve unique areas like Yosemite for park purposes, we could quite logically extend that principle to the protection of unique scenic farm land, particularly in metropolitan areas now so desperately in need of open space just to look at.

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It is this aspect of farm land serving also as OPEN SPACE in metropolitan areas, which was the force behind the legislation enacted at the end of the last World War, (in 1946, 1947 and 1948) by the northern countries of Europe, England, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Holland, when the parliaments of these countries passed the famous "Greenbelt Acts".

Today, Copenhagen has wedges of green farm land penetrating the city at five points which will always be there. London has a Greenbelt of farm land now encircling it ten miles deep. Beyond this, London's Greenbelt, some twenty new towns have come into being to take care of the London growth. All other English cities are also in the process of getting their Greenbelts of farm land through local plans and public hearings. This national policy of preserving farm land and metropolitan open space is implemented by the imposition of this Greenbelt Zoning. If the property owners feel that they have been injured financially by this public action, they can take their case to court and if they can prove their case they are recompensed from funds appropriated for that purpose. It is something like the purchase of development rights by the government with the farmer still having title to his land and full liberty to sell, bequeath, or do anything he wants to, except change the use to urban or industrial use.

We are citing this Greenbelt innovation in northern Europe merely to show that this policy is already in existence in the most advanced countries of the Western World where the pressure of the population on the land is even more severe than it is with us. But it is probably that very fact which has impelled them to meet this problem before we do.

In any case, what we hope that you and the National Park Service will consider, is indeed an extension of the Park Service into this new field. Europe has done it one way. We might do it in another way. But this new policy could be the logical outcome of present practices and therefore quite acceptable to the public generally as the general public would certainly benefit.

As the destruction of prime agricultural land is most acute in California, we hope that you will give this

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matter your particular attention and perhaps sponsor the legislation necessary to initiate a new policy to meet this crisis.

We wish to express our appreciation for anything you can do. So will the future!

Cordially,

John H. Sutter, President

John H. Sutter, President
Central Building
Oakland, California