Introduced: 7/1/2026 **Current Status:** Agenda Ready

Version: 1 **Matter Type:** Planning Item

REF250009 - AGRICULTURAL AND WINERY CORRIDOR PLAN (2010 MONTEREY COUNTY GENERAL PLAN CHAPTER 9.J) WORKSHOP

Receive an informational presentation on the Agricultural and Winery Corridor Plan (Chapter 9.J of the 2010 General Plan) and required implementation actions .

Planning Area: Inland (non-coastal) unincorporated areas

Proposed CEQA action: An informational presentation is exempt per CEQA Guidelines Section 15262.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

1. Find that receipt of an informational presentation qualifies as a Statutory Exemption per Section 15262 of the CEQA Guidelines; and
2. Receive an informational presentation on the Agricultural and Winery Corridor Plan and required implementation actions.

SUMMARY:

On June 24, 2026 the Planning Commission continued a public hearing on the implementation of the Agricultural and Winery Corridor Plan (AWCP) to a date certain of August 12, 2026. Prior to acting on the motion to continue, the Planning Commission request that staff provide an overview of the AWCP and the required implementation actions prior to the August 12 hearing.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission receive an informational report consisting of an overview of the AWCP, outreach conducted to date and actions required to implement the AWCP in the Monterey County Code.

DISCUSSION:

Background

On October 26, 2010, pursuant to California Government Code Section 65350 *et seq*., the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey adopted a comprehensive update to the County General Plan, referred to as the 2010 Monterey County General Plan, for the unincorporated non-coastal area of the County ("2010 General Plan") (Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 10-291).

The Agricultural and Winery Corridor Plan ("AWCP") was envisioned to encourage the development of agricultural and winery-related uses within specifically designated areas of unincorporated Monterey County. The AWCP Area is intended to address viticulture-related uses in three specific Planning

Areas (Toro, Central Salinas Valley, and South County). The AWCP is divided into three segments that make up the broader AWCP: River Road, Jolon Road, and Metz Road. The AWCP is intended to provide additional detail for project approvals in these areas and, in certain instances, provide for simplified project approvals and environmental review. These simplified project approvals and environmental reviews were identified and analyzed as a part of the 2010 General Plan FEIR.

https://www.countyofmonterey.gov/government/departments-a-h/housing-community-development/planning-services/current-planning/general-info/2010-monterey-county-general-plan-adopted-october-26-2010/final-environmental-impact-report-feir

A significant portion of unincorporated Monterey County's agricultural land was utilized for grape production at the time the 2010 General Plan was adopted. Wine grapes were one of the top crops by value in the County and continue to be an important contributor to the County's agricultural economy. Recent trends in the wine industry have shown a decline in grape production in recent years. Adoption of implementing regulations for the AWCP would allow for streamlined approval of certain wine related uses and result in implementation of Chapter 9.J of the 2010 General Plan.

Overview of the AWCP

At the time of adoption of the 2010 General Plan, a significant portion of unincorporated Monterey County's agricultural land was utilized for grape production. Wine grapes were one of the top crops by value in the County and continue to be an important contributor to the County's agricultural economy. The AWCP encourages the development of grape production and appropriately manages the growth of the winery-related industry in Monterey County. The AWCP outlines development standards, design guidelines, and a special winery related event permit. Additionally, the AWCP provides regulations related to parking, artisan wineries, full-scale wineries, winery tasting rooms, restaurants, delicatessen, inns, business clusters, and visitor centers.

Overview of Zoning Code Amendments

As outlined in the General Plan, the AWCP was envisioned as a Combining District. The AWCP combining district would overlay on all existing zoning districts in the AWCP Area. The AWCP combining district would not change or alter the underlying zoning district. This already exists and is in effect as of General Plan adoption. Implementation actions include memorializing the AWCP in the County Code where applicable, including development of a new zoning chapter for the AWCP that regulates allowable uses and development standards that were adopted in the 2010 General Plan.

Specific uses in the AWCP are allowed subject to a "ministerial permit" if the use is consistent with the requirements of the AWCP. These projects would be reviewed for consistency with the criteria in the AWCP, including compliance with various development and design standards, for the Chief of Planning to approve the establishment of the use. Ministerial permits are not subject to any other zoning review by the County. As the County does not have a permit process in place for ministerial permits, part of the County's implementation actions include development of a new County Code chapter that regulates these types of approvals. This chapter may also allow for other ministerial permit approvals and future permit streamlining efforts.

Agricultural Advisory Committee Review
On April 24, 2025, the AWCP went before the Agricultural Advisory Committee ("AAC"). Staff received a recommendation from the AAC to bring the draft ordinance to the Planning Commission with minor edits and recommendations. Some of the edits and recommendations the AAC had were:

- Concerns were raised by the AAC regarding the number of units that an "Inn" could have. Members of the AAC that were present during the adoption of the 2010 General Plan recalled the intention of an "Inn" to be small and quaint. Some members of the AAC recommended a 10-room limitation.
- AAC recommended adding boutique cheese factories and small olive oil processing facilities as a visitor-serving use.
- AAC was concerned about the square footage not having a limitation on grocery stores.

CEQA:
This informational presentation is intended to provide an overview of the AWCP and required actions to implement the plan, and seek input from the Planning Commission prior to the public hearing on implementation actions required for the AWCP on August 12, 2026. This informational presentation qualifies for the statutory exemption from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies. Additionally, the informational presentation, and its outcome, is not a project as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:
The Office of the County Counsel has been involved in the development of the draft ordinance and regulations that will be presented at the Planning Commission hearing on August 12, 2026.

Prepared by: Katie Scariot, Assistant Planner (831) 796-6083
Reviewed by: Sarah Wikle, Principal Planner
Approved by: Melanie Beretti, AICP, Chief of Planning

The following Exhibits are on file with the HCD:
Exhibit A - Agricultural and Winery Corridor Plan Map
Exhibit B - Agricultural and Winery Corridor Plan (Chapter 9.J. of the 2010 General Plan)

cc: Katie Scariot, Assistant Planner; Sarah Wikle, Principal Planner; Melanie Beretti, AICP, Chief of Planning; Craig Spencer, HCD Director; Front Counter Copy; Land Use Advisory, Agricultural Commissioner Office; Agricultural Advisory Committee Interested Parties, AWCP Interested Parties List; Planning File **REF250009**.