

John Merritt, Jr.
Sonoma Valley Vintners
Association
P.O. Box 1
Vineburg, CA

July 18, 1979

Mr. G.R. Dickerson
Director
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco
and Firearms
Department of the Treasury
Washington, D.C. 20226

Dear Mr. Dickerson:

The Sonoma Valley Vintners Association, on behalf of Sonoma Valley wineries and grape growers, hereby petition you to establish an American Viticultural Area to be designated Sonoma Valley. The following information is submitted in support of this petition.

I. Recognition of Current Boundaries of Sonoma Valley
Viticultural Area

The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, through its resolution 64034, has unanimously recognized the Sonoma Valley as a distinct Viticultural Area. See Appendix I for a copy of this resolution.

All local newspapers have given wide-spread publicity to the proposed viticultural area, thereby disseminating to the community at large and all grapegrowers in the area the exact delineation of the Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area. See Appendix II for copies of these articles.

II. Historical Significance of Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area

Sonoma Valley is generally acknowledged as the birthplace of California Viticulture. The last of the twenty one California missions, Mission San Francisco de Solano, was established at Sonoma in 1824. The mission fathers planted a vineyard of Mission grapes in 1825. With the secularization of the missions in 1833, the lands of the Sonoma Mission came under the ownership of General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo who expanded the plantings on his estate, Lachryma Montis, commencing in 1834.

American intrusion into Mexican California began in the 1840's culminating in the Bear Flag Revolt in 1846. The climactic event occurred at Sonoma when the Americans imprisoned General Vallejo, raised the Bear Flag and proclaimed California an independent republic. In 1848,

with the conclusion of the War with Mexico, California was ceded to the United States. The flow of American pioneers increased and with the discovery of gold in 1848 both population and agriculture substantially increased. In the late 1850's Jacob Gundlach and Count Agoston Haraszthy established major plantings of the European vine, *Vitis Vinifera*, the first such plantings in the United States. Later they established wineries which still exist today. By 1900, there were approximately 4,000 acres of vineyards in the Sonoma Valley producing hundreds of thousands of gallons of premium wine. These wines were well known and accepted not only in California but also in the Eastern United States and in Europe.

Sonoma Valley is also responsible for one of the most important technological advances in modern viticulture. It was in Sonoma Valley that Mr. Julius Dresel pioneered the first commercially successful grafting of vinifera vines onto native, disease resistant, root stock. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century this technique saved the California wine industry from extinction as phylloxera ravaged its vineyards.

This historical tradition of Sonoma Valley is treated with great pride and respect by the local community and the

Sonoma Valley. It is nurtured and commemorated by numerous events sponsored annually by local historical societies and the valley wineries. The establishment of the Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area will contribute to the preservation of this distinguished heritage.

III. Geographical Features of Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area

a. Topography

Sonoma Valley is an arm of the larger Santa Rosa Valley and Plains area of Sonoma County. See Appendix III for a map of Sonoma County. Sonoma Valley is southeast of Santa Rosa, the county seat. It is separated from the Santa Rosa Valley and Plains by a range of hills near the city of Sonoma. Rolling hills surround the Valley. The Sonoma Valley floor has elevations from sea level to approximately 400 feet. The enclosing western and eastern ranges average 2,000 feet with a maximum elevation of 2,730 feet above sea level. See the enclosed U.S.G.S. maps for detailed topographical data.

b. Soils

While there are fifteen soil associations in Sonoma County, only nine of these occur in Sonoma Valley.

A soil association is a landscape that has a distinctively proportional pattern of soils. It normally consists of one or more major soils and at least one minor soil. While the same soil associations may appear in more than one area, the patterns of major and minor soils comprising the soil associations are unique to each area. This variation in soil associations results in Sonoma Valley's unique soil composition, which in turn contributes to the excellent quality of our wines. The enclosed map, Appendix IV, vividly illustrates the diversity of soils within Sonoma Valley.

c. Climate

The climate of Sonoma Valley is characterized by moderate temperatures with an average annual temperature of 56° F. Proximity of San Pablo Bay and the predominantly southerly winds combine to keep the Sonoma Valley fairly cool in the summer. In addition to keeping the area warmer in the winter. This moderating effect on temperature decreases as one moves north through the Valley. Therefore, temperature ranges are greater at the northern end of the Valley with more days over 100°F in summer and infrequent light snow, usually less than one

inch per year, at the higher elevations, in winter. In summer, Sonoma Valley is protected from the intense heat of California's Central Valley by the Coast Range Mountains to the north and east and by its proximity to San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean to the south and west. The Sonoma Mountains, a portion of the Coast Range to the west and northwest, protect Sonoma Valley from the fog intrusion which affects the climate of the Santa Rosa-Petaluma Valley and Plains area.

Sonoma Valley is the driest area of Sonoma County with average precipitation varying from less than twenty inches annually to more than fifty inches on the highest peaks surrounding the Valley. One year in ten only ten inches of rainfall is recorded on the Valley floor while, at the other extreme one year in ten, total precipitation exceeds thirty inches. The accompanying map, Appendix V, shows the average annual precipitation in Sonoma Valley as well as the average fog intrusion into the Valley.

IV. Specific Boundaries of Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area

Following is a description of the proposed boundaries of the Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area:

Beginning at the center line of Tolay Creek at the point at which said creek enters San Pablo Bay, thence northerly along said center line to the junction of Tolay Creek and State Highway 37, thence west along said highway to its junction with State Highway 121, thence in a straight line to Wildcat Mountain, thence continuing in a north-westerly direction in a straight line to Sonoma Mountain and in a straight line to Taylor Mountain, thence descending the flank of Raylor Mountain in a north-easterly direction to the point at which Los Alamos Road joins State Highway 12, thence easterly to the top of Buzzard Peak, thence easterly following the ridge top to Mt. Hood. thence easterly along said ridge top to a peak having an elevation of 2,530 feet above sea level located on the line dividing Sonoma County and Napa County. Said peak is located in the northeast quarter of Section 9, Township 7 north, Range 6 west, Mt. Diablo Base and Meridian. Thense south-easterly following the line dividing Sonoma and Napa County to Los Amigos Road, thence east along said Los Amigos Road to its junction with Duhig Road, thence south along Duhig Road to its junction with Ramal Road,

thence west along said Ramal Road to the line dividing Sonoma and Napa County, thence in a southwesterly direction along said county line to the point at which Sonoma Creek enters San Pablo Bay, thence southwesterly along the shore of said San Pablo Bay to the point of beginning.

V. United States Geological Survey Maps of Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area

Enclosed with this submission is one copy of each of ten U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute series maps. The Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area has been outlined on these maps. They are the largest scale maps covering the area.

The Sonoma Valley by virtue of its history, geography, climate, and soils is a distinct and unique viticultural area and is so recognized by those familiar with California viticultural areas. The Sonoma Valley Vintners Association respectfully requests your prompt affirmative consideration of this petition.

Yours very truly,

John Merritt, Jr.
Sonoma Valley Vintners Association

cc: Regional Director
San Francisco

THE WITHIN INSTRUMENT IS A CORRECT
COPY OF THE ORIGINAL ON FILE IN
THIS OFFICE.

ATTEST JUN 13 1979

EEVE T. LEWIS, County Clerk &
ex-officio Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
of the State of California, in & for the County
of Sonoma. By *[Signature]* Deputy

Resolution No. 64034

Administration Center
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Date June 12, 1979

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY
OF SONOMA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, ENDORSING THE SONOMA
VALLEY VINEYARD AREA APPELLATION

WHEREAS the Sonoma Valley Vintners Association has requested
the Board of Supervisors to endorse its proposal to the Treasury
Department, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to establish and
formally define the Sonoma Valley Appellation, and

WHEREAS the proposal has demonstrated an affinity and association
of climate, soil, history, and local recognition for the area proposed,
and

WHEREAS the proposal provides advantages for consumers, winemakers
and grape growers

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
endorses the boundaries as defined by the Sonoma Valley Appellation.

Supervisors

Kahn _____ Putnam _____ Esposti _____ Koenigshofer _____ Rudee _____

Ayes 5 Noes 0 Abstain 0 Absent 0

SO ORDERED.

APPENDIX I

Santa Rosa, Calif.

Wine-growing area officially mapped

Following a 1½ year study, the Sonoma Valley Vintners Association will submit an application to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to have the "Sonoma Valley" designated a bona fide viticultural area.

The approval is necessary if "Sonoma Valley" is to be used as the appellation of origin on a wine label, starting Jan. 1, 1983, when new federal regulations go into effect.

Revised federal wine label regulations demand that geographic grape-growing regions, such as the Sonoma Valley or Alexander Valley, be geographically defined.

Sonoma County, Mendocino County and California are areas with specific boundaries and used as the appellation of origin on a wine label without further definition. But, there are no exact boundaries for most historically significant viticulture areas like the Sonoma Valley and that's where the Bureau comes in. The federal watchdog agency of the wine industry wants it crystal clear where a viticultural area begins and ends.

And to come up with a boundary definition to receive federal blessing, Sonoma Valley vintners and vineyardists have outlined the geographical information including soil, climate, elevation and physical features which distinguish the Sonoma Valley from surrounding areas.

Tom Stutz, secretary of the Sonoma Valley Vintners Association and vineyard manager at Hanzell Vineyards, Sonoma, said the asso-



Tom Stutz, secretary of the Sonoma Valley Vintners Association, shows the area to be designated the "Sonoma Valley" viticultural area.

—Joe Price Jr.

ciation plans to submit its designation of the Sonoma Valley at the end of the month.

He said the association came up with the following definition of the Sonoma Valley's boundaries:

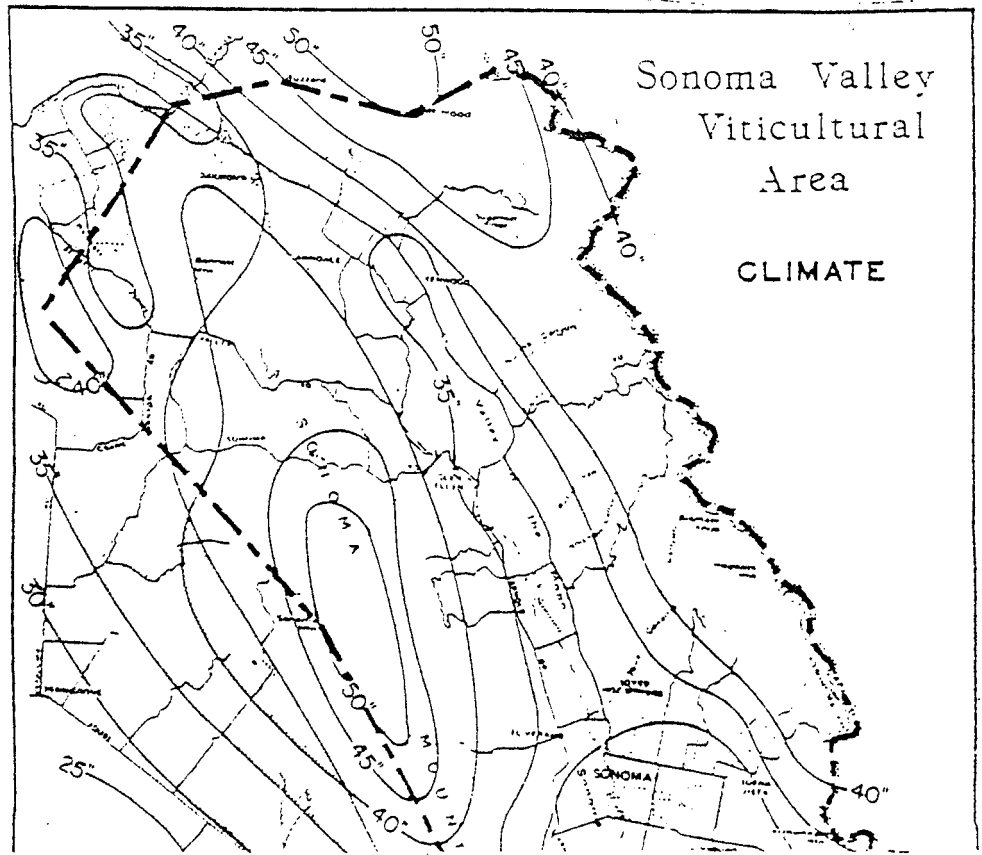
- The Sonoma Valley is a viticultural area running from Mount Hood east to the Napa-Sonoma county line, then following the Sonoma County line south to San Pablo Bay and circling Tubbs Island. The line cuts back at Sears Point and follows a series of peaks, the first being Wildcat Mountain. The boundary continues northwest to the peak of Sonoma Mountain and heads over Crane Canyon Road to Bennett Valley and continues northeast to Los Alamos Road and Highway 12.

The boundary continues to the top of Buzzard Peak and back to the top of Hood Mountain.

Stutz says another group, the Sonoma County Winegrowers Association, "generally agrees with our map." He said the association expects little controversy over the designation but is seeking response from vineyardists and vintners within the area. Those with comments should contact John Merritt, president of the association and winemaker at Gundlach-Bundschu Winery.

There are about 4,000 acres of vineyards and 12 wineries in the Sonoma Valley.

Once the Bureau receives the application, a notice will appear in the federal register and public comment will be accepted for a 60-day period. The agency will then decide if a hearing is necessary.



Vintners seek valley label

The Sonoma Valley Vintners' Association is now completing an application to have the federal government declare Sonoma Valley an American viticultural area.

The association has been working on its application for 1½ years, it was said. The application is supported by three maps, including a soil map and a climate map.

John Merritt, of the Gundlach-Bundschu winery, has been in charge of the project.

A wine may be labeled with a viticultural area appellation if 35 percent of the wine is made from grapes grown within the area.

THE VINTNERS' application is to be sent to the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol,

Tobacco and Firearms.

The boundaries of the viticultural area are described as follows: starting from the peak of Hood Mountain in Kenwood, east to the Sonoma-Napa county line, then south until the Napa Slough, then west along the south side of Tubbs Island.

The line circles Tubbs Island and goes north from the intersection of Hwy. 37 and Hwy. 121 to follow the peaks of Wildcat Mountain to Sonoma Mountain to an unnamed peak just west of Bennett Valley; then northeast to the intersection of Los Alamos rd. and Hwy. 12 and then to the peak of Buzzard Peak and back to Mount Hood.

Comments from interested persons are being sought by the vintners'

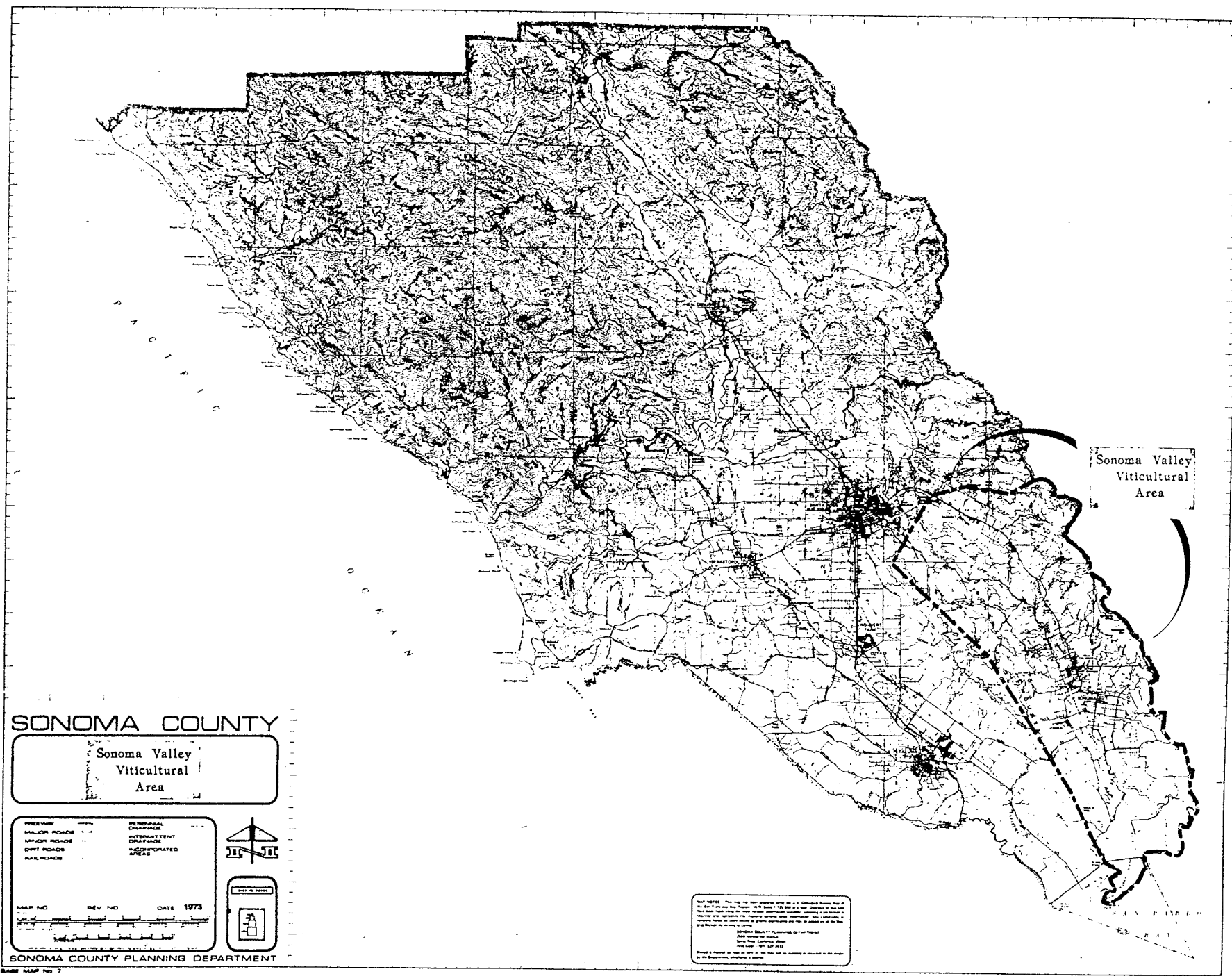
association. Merritt may be reached at 938-5277.

THE PRESIDENT of the association is John Sheeia of the Kenwood Winery. His number is 833-5891.

The vintners are seeking the new appellation so that their label will give the consumer a better guide as to what he is buying.

At the present time not all Sonoma Valley wines so labeled have 35 percent of grapes from this area. And theoretically, a winery in Santa Rosa could offer a Sonoma Valley wine.

The members of the vintners' association include the following wineries: Buena Vista, Chateau St. Jean, Grand Cru, Gundlach-Bundschu, Hacienda, Hanzell Vineyards, Kenwood, Matanzas Creek, ZD.



Sonoma Valley
Viticultural
Area

SONOMA COUNTY

Sonoma Valley
Viticultural
Area

PRIME VIEW	UNIMPROVED
MAJOR ROAD	INTERMITTENT
MINOR ROAD	DEVELOPED
DRY ROAD	UNINCORPORATED
RAILROAD	AREAS

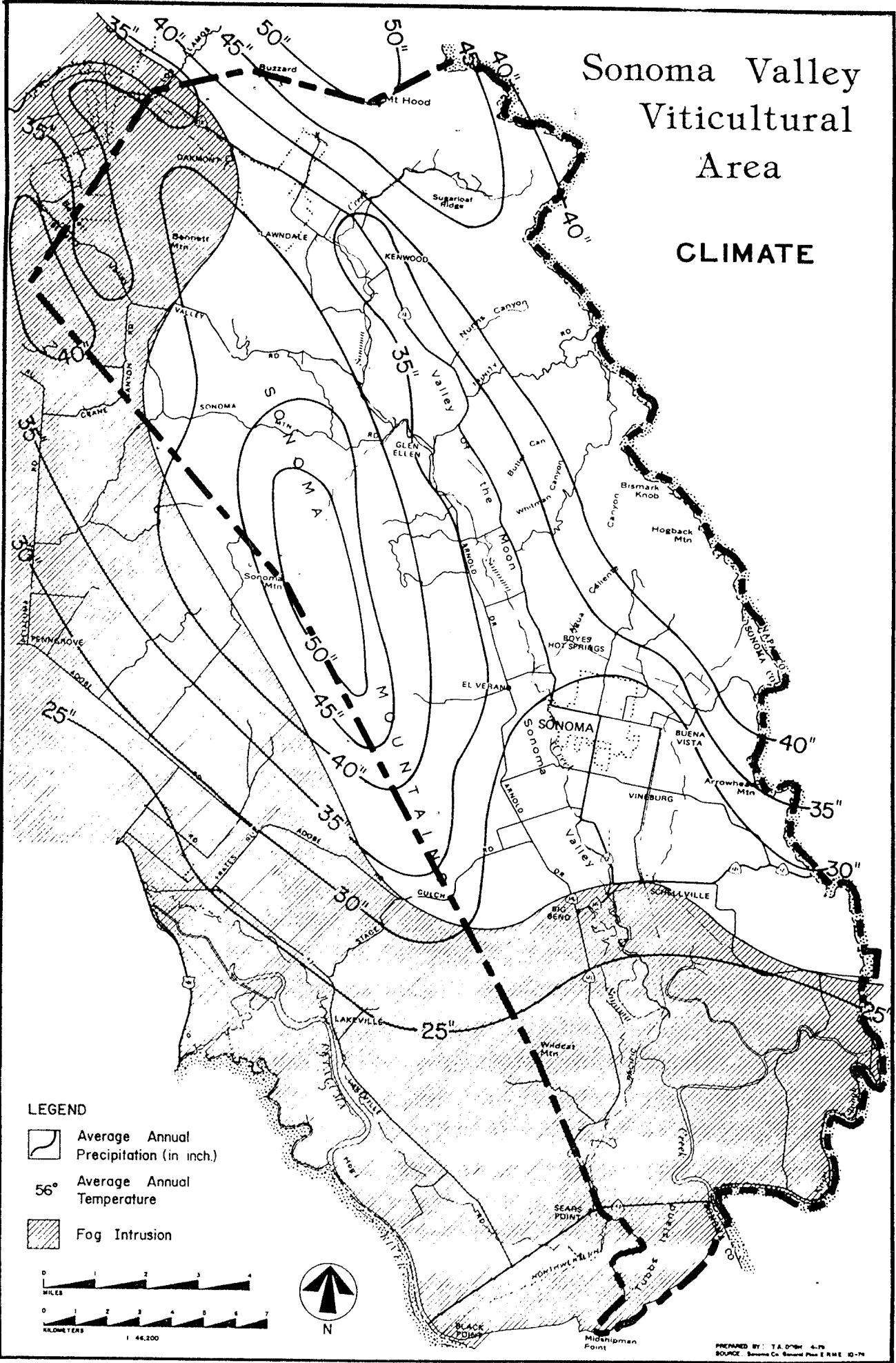


MAP NO. REV. NO. DATE 1973

SONOMA COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Map No. 1111. This map was prepared under the direction of the Planning Department of Sonoma County, California. It is based on the 1973 aerial photograph and the 1973 topographic map of Sonoma County, California. The map is a generalization of the original data and is not intended to be used for legal purposes. The map is the property of Sonoma County and is loaned to the user. It is to be returned to the Planning Department of Sonoma County upon completion of the user's project. The map is not to be reproduced or distributed without the written permission of the Planning Department of Sonoma County.

Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area CLIMATE



Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area SOILS

