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ACRONYMS

GSTC: Global Sustainable Tourism Council
GSTC-D: GSTC Destination Criteria V2
SCT: Sonoma County Tourism
Sonoma County Tourism, the nation’s first Destination Stewardship Organization, embarked on this assessment to understand Sonoma County’s compliance with the GSTC globally recognized destination Criteria. And, as such, is one of thirty-six destinations globally, who has embarked on the GSTC assessment.

The GSTC Destination Assessment is designed to introduce Sonoma County to the core elements needed for development of sustainable policies and practices by applying the GSTC Criteria. The Sonoma County assessment process allows a destination to participate directly in GSTC application of the Criteria to the destination, to understand Sonoma County’s sustainability status against the world’s leading standard, and to identify areas for improvement based on the GSTC Criteria.

The results and recommendations of this assessment supply context and suggested direction on how SCT can Lead, Partner, or Influence stewardship support as it relates to the recommended priorities among GSTC’s four destination pillars: Sustainable Management, Socio-Economic Sustainability, Cultural Sustainability, and Environmental Sustainability.

GSTC destination assessor, Dr. Kelly Bricker, completed this objective assessment of the management of Sonoma County’s compliance to the GSTC Destination Criteria (GSTC-D), the global standard for sustainable destinations.

Dr. Bricker led the assessment with the full support of Sonoma County Tourism. The assessment consisted of an extensive desktop analysis of current tourism activities and management approaches, and a four-day on-site visit involving interviews with local authorities and stakeholders to objectively verify evidence of compliance with the GSTC-D V2 Criteria. The findings of Dr. Bricker’s efforts are provided in this report.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The GSTC-D V2 consists of four pillars: (A) Sustainable management; (B) Socioeconomic impacts; (C) Cultural impacts; and (D) Environmental impacts. Sonoma County scored very well in the assessment. For example, within the A-Sustainable Management pillar, Sonoma County scored an average of 2.60, which shows “Excellent Performance” overall. Within the B-Socioeconomic and C-Cultural pillars, the averages were 2.53 and 2.42, respectively, demonstrating “Good Performance”. And, within the D-Environment pillar, Sonoma County scored 2.61, indicating “Excellent Performance” overall.
ABOUT THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council® (GSTC®) is an independent and neutral organization, legally registered in the USA as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that represents a diverse and global membership, including national and provincial governments, leading travel companies, hotels, tour operators, NGO’s, individuals, and communities—all striving to achieve best practices in sustainable tourism. It is a virtual organization without a head office, with staff and volunteers working from all six populated continents. Financial support from donations, sponsorship, and membership fees allows the GSTC to supply services at low costs and to create, revise, and make available the GSTC Criteria. GSTC is an ISEAL Community Member.

The GSTC establishes and manages global standards for sustainable travel and tourism, known as the GSTC Criteria. There are two sets: Destination Criteria for public policymakers and destination managers, and Industry Criteria for hotels and tour operators. The Criteria are the result of a worldwide effort to develop a common language about sustainability in tourism. They are arranged in four pillars: (A) Sustainable management; (B) Socioeconomic impacts; (C) Cultural impacts; and (D) Environmental impacts. Since tourism destinations each have their own culture, environment, customs, and laws, the Criteria are designed to be adapted to local conditions and supplemented by added criteria for the specific location and activity.

The GSTC Criteria form the foundation for the Accreditation for Certification Bodies that certify hotels/accommodations, tour operators, and destinations as having sustainable policies and practices.
practices in place. GSTC does not directly certify any products or services yet does supply an accreditation program through its partner Assurance Services International (ASI) to accredit Certification Bodies.

THE GSTC DESTINATION ASSESSMENT

The GSTC Destination Assessment is designed to introduce the destination management team to the core elements needed for development of sustainable policies and practices informed by the GSTC Criteria. The Assessment process allows a destination to take part directly in GSTC’s application of the Criteria to the destination, to understand the destination’s sustainability status against the world’s leading standard, and to identify areas for improvement based on the GSTC Criteria.

The GSTC Criteria aim to address “sustainability” from a holistic perspective—reviewing overall governance, socio-economic benefits to the destination, cultural and heritage preservation, and environmental performance. These factors all lead to a positive investment climate, keen sense of place, and high quality of life for both residents and visitors in the destination. The GSTC destination assessment is not an audit and does not constitute any kind of verification or endorsement of the destination’s policies, practices, or status by the GSTC. The goal of the assessment is to provide the destination an overview of current good practices and risk areas, a demonstration of practical application of the GSTC Destination Criteria (GSTC-D) for stakeholder capacity building purposes, and a tool for internal use to improve destination policy and practice to align with international best practice and the GSTC Criteria.

The GSTC-D have been built on decades of prior work and experience around the world, and they consider the numerous guidelines and standards for sustainable tourism from every continent. The GSTC-D v2.0 is the first revision to GSTC Destination Criteria. The GSTC-D v2.0 includes performance indicators designed to provide guidance in measuring compliance with the Criteria. Application of the Criteria will help a destination to contribute towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

In selecting the GSTC Destination Criteria as a guide for Sonoma County’s strategic development, Sonoma County joins an elite group of forward-thinking destinations that are prioritizing international best practices in sustainability and stewardship. As Sonoma County moves forward in adopting all the GSTC Destination Criteria, it will be better able to market itself to individuals who believe in and adopt sustainability practices. Based on the GSTC Destination Assessment, Sonoma County cannot claim GSTC’s endorsement of the destination or its policies. However, it would be right for Sonoma County to communicate that it participated in the GSTC assessment, and is committed, if true, to adopting the world’s leading sustainability criteria for tourism development.

It is recommended that findings and recommendations resulting from this GSTC assessment be used:

- To inform action on destination sustainability planning and project work,
- To catalyze decision maker support for a destination tourism sustainability agenda,
- As a training and education tool,
- For monitoring and evaluation of destination performance, and
- As an input into the master planning process that Sonoma County Tourism has underway for guidance on sustainable development in Sonoma County.
OVERVIEW OF SONOMA COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

SONOMA COUNTY TOURISM

MISSION
Inspire overnight travel to Sonoma County that bolsters the region’s economy and encourages responsible stewardship of the community’s abundant resources.

VISION
Sonoma County will be the premier destination in North America for responsible travelers who enjoy, protect and preserve the area’s bountiful natural and cultural resources.

VALUES

Strategic
SCT approaches all programs and opportunities with a foundation of research and structured with consideration for all potential program outcomes and impacts to the organization, key stakeholders and Sonoma County at large.

Transparent
All budgets and programs administered by SCT are done so within an environment of transparency. This helps ensure all stakeholders have a high level of understanding regarding the operational effectiveness of the organization and can champion the organization as an efficient steward of the funding provided.

Collaborative
SCT is successful only if its partners and stakeholders are successful. This occurs within a robust business-development environment offering opportunities for constituents to benefit from partnerships with the organization and gain business-driving benefits from the programs administered by the organization.

Inclusive
SCT is committed to ensuring persons of all backgrounds are included and welcomed throughout its internal operations and external audience outreach. A strong dedication to diversity, inclusion, and equity will guide the organization.

Entrepreneurial
SCT operates as an ambitious and nimble business seeking new opportunities for review and growth. SCT staffers work to find business development opportunities that drive revenue for partner businesses and generate new revenue for the organization.

Trusted
SCT will develop programs founded on research, driven by best-in-class execution and with results conveyed via various partner communications channels in a timely and truthful manner.
DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

At Sonoma County Tourism, our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is unwavering. We strive to ensure those in our workforce, and participation in our board and committees reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. We embrace diversity of identity, experience, and thought. We will elevate, provide access to, and intentionally integrate this abundance of input across our organization and within the stories we create that inspire travel to the region.

As an organization that resides in Sonoma County, we align with the County of Sonoma in recognizing that we are on the ancestral lands of the Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo who are the original caretakers of this area. We respectfully acknowledge the Indigenous peoples who have been stewarding and maintaining relationship on this land as knowledge keepers for millennia.

GEOGRAPHY

Located in Northern California, USA, Sonoma County is a world-class destination encompassing 1,575 square miles of diverse terrain and incredible scenery, some of which about the Pacific Ocean. The County is considered one of 36 globally significant “hotspots” because of its rich biodiversity and threats to maintaining this diversity (see https://www.conservation.org/priorities/biodiversity-hotspots). Biodiversity hotspots must meet two criteria, 1) having at least 1,500 vascular plants as endemics, and 2) having 30% or less of its original natural vegetation (Conservation International, 2022). Sonoma County falls within the California Floristic Province hotspot, noted for its giant
sequoias, the California Condor, and the fact that the region broadly generates approximately half of all the agricultural products used by US consumers (see https://www.cepf.net/our-work/biodiversity-hotspots).

An estimated 487,011 people call Sonoma County home, and live and work among three distinct regions—the Pacific coastline and sea villages, redwoods and rivers, and valleys and vineyards. Tourists are especially drawn to more than thirty quaint villages and small towns, including the foodie-focused communities of Healdsburg and Petaluma; the Russian River resort areas of Guerneville and Monte Rio; and the coastal communities of Bodega Bay and Jenner. Sonoma County is also well-known for its wines and vineyards, as well as organic produce and sustainable farming. In addition, outdoor recreation (e.g., hikes in redwood forests and paddling on the Russian River) and the arts and culture play a prominent role in attracting visitors. Sonoma County is often referred to as the “Valley of the Moon” because, from certain sacred places, the moon appears to rise and set seven times behind the peaks of the Mayacamas Range.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Sonoma County residents inhabit nine cities and a large unincorporated area, as well as many geographically isolated communities. Most of the county’s population lives within its cities, the largest of which are clustered along the Highway 101 corridor. Santa Rosa is the largest city with a population of 168,841 and is the service hub for the entire County with the three largest hospitals. The largest segment of the population in SC is made up of White, Non-Hispanics (64.2%), followed by Hispanics (25.6%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (5.2%), African Americans (1.7%), Indigenous people (1.0%), and persons reporting two or more races (2.3%). While Sonoma County’s population is less diverse than that of California as a whole, this is changing. The county’s Hispanic population, currently estimated at 129,057, is expected to grow to 168,290 and account for 31% of the total population. Other ethnic groups are projected to experience less dramatic growth. Source: California Department of Finance.

The rapid rise of Hispanic owned businesses, a 24% growth between 2007 and 2012, also stands for a pivotal economic contribution to Sonoma County and the North Bay region.

Sonoma County’s residents are slightly older than the general resident population in California: their median age is 39.50 years compared to 34.90 years amongst all California residents. Of note is the disparity in age between Sonoma County’s older White, Non-Hispanic residents and its more youthful Hispanic residents. For example, over 30% of Sonoma County’s Hispanic residents are twelve and under, as compared to 12% for White, Non-Hispanics. At the other end of the spectrum, 26.6% of White Non-Hispanics are seniors (age 60 and above) as compared with 7.1% of Hispanics. While most of Sonoma County’s residents are English-proficient, the latest U.S. Census estimated that 50,236 residents aged five and older, or 11.26% of total population, were “linguistically isolated” (i.e., speaking a language other than English at home and speaking English less than “very well”). Source: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/sonomacountycalifornia

SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS IN SONOMA COUNTY

Sustainability is core to the values of Sonoma County, when it comes to development, cultural and natural resource protection, healthy economies, and quality of life. Several initiatives, organizations (both public and private), programs, and individuals have recognized the importance of socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental sustainability as a foundational part of the current and future growth of Sonoma County.

In 2018, Sonoma County Tourism became the Nation’s first Destination Stewardship
Organization. Sonoma County Tourism (SCT) has many sustainability and stewardship initiatives that have been implemented with new ones currently underway. Currently SCT is planning and engaging businesses, residents, elected officials, and other stakeholders in developing the regions first ever Destination Stewardship and Resilience Master Plan. They currently have partnerships with Sonoma County Regional Parks, Leave No Trace, and the Kind Traveler Initiative for the purposes of empowering travelers to make environmentally conscious travel decisions, enhance stewardship, and support socially conscious initiatives throughout Sonoma County. Some of the key sustainability initiatives include:

1. The Sonoma County Green Business Certification Program was established in 1996 to promote a green economy through partnerships with small and medium-sized enterprises. The Program works with many industry sectors, including tourism, and focuses on environmental sustainability standards for saving water, conserving energy, preventing pollution, and minimizing waste.

2. The Energy and Sustainability Division is part of the General Services Department of the County of Sonoma. The Office is responsible for planning, evaluating, and administering County-wide energy management and sustainability programs, including free commercial energy and water audits and financing assistance; long and short-range energy and green procurement; effective and efficient energy use and sustainability practices; County employee commute reduction planning; and energy efficiency and water conservation education, programs, and services to all residents and business owners in Sonoma County. The Office holds many workshops throughout the year for businesses and residents.
3. Sonoma Water serves many roles in water conservation within Sonoma County, including programs for businesses to assist in water savings, water quality reporting programs, community outreach and education programs, hazard mitigation, protection of water supply systems, and healthy delivery of water to support the community.

4. Sonoma County Winegrowers established a sustainable wine label, which can only be placed on wine bottles comprised of wine made from certified sustainable grapes grown in Sonoma County.

Eighty-five percent of the grapes used to create the wine must be certified sustainable under one (or more) of the four accepted sustainability programs (i.e., Fish Friendly Farming, California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance, Sustainability in Practice, or Lodi Rules). Sustainability certification must be active within the last two years. Wine brands must be able to supply sustainability certification documentation from their growers in addition to internal documentation that tracks certified sustainable grapes throughout the wine making process: from crush, through storage and up to bottling. Wine brands bearing the label must commit to undergoing a Chain of Custody audit for each vintage and varietal(s) bearing the label. Wine brands and their processing facility must commit to taking part in random spot audits.

In addition, a new Climate Adaptation Certification project is underway in partnership with the California Land Stewardship Institute. In 2021 the institute launched a pilot program with twenty growers from Sonoma County Winegrowers representing nearly 1,900 vineyard acres. The project resulted in each pilot vineyard creating its own land management program to specifically address sequestration of nitrous oxide and carbon emissions, which will be checked and documented by the California Land Stewardship Institute (CLSI).

5. Sonoma Sustainable Tourism Observatory

The Sonoma County Sustainable Tourism Observatory is part of the UN World Tourism Organization’s "International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories" (INSTO). The aims of INSTO, as adopted by the Sonoma County Observatory, are to focus on:

- Continuity—To foster long-term commitment for regular monitoring, thus contributing to the sustainable growth of the sector at the destination-level.
- Engagement—To network and exchange information for improved collaboration, communication, and greater public accountability.
- Evidence—To establish a strong foundation of tangible information for well-informed decision making in tourism.
- Integrated approach—To provide a framework for the systematic, timely and regular monitoring of resource-use, and a better understanding of tourism impacts.
- Knowledge building—To highlight and share good practices and lessons learned.
- Performance measurement—To monitor the implementation of sustainable development plans, policies, and management actions.
- Stakeholder empowerment—To actively engage local stakeholders in the measurement of risks, costs, impacts, limits, and opportunities through an inclusive and participatory approach.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the sustainability efforts in Sonoma County. There is an excellent directory of members of the Sonoma County Conservation Council which highlight various groups and programs in agriculture and food, climate and energy, environmental justice, sustainability specific work, waste and recycling, wellness, biodiversity, coastal protection efforts, land use concerns, transportation, and clean water programs; a number of these will be highlighted throughout the assessment compared to pillars of the GSTC destination criteria. In addition, there are more than 3,000 non-profit/not for profit community benefit organizations working on environmental, social, cultural and economic initiatives throughout the region.
ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM IN SONOMA COUNTY

TRAVEL SPENDING IN SONOMA COUNTY

The tourism sector in Sonoma County saw marked improvement in 2021 over the devastating losses experienced during the pandemic in 2020. The pre-pandemic total (direct and indirect) visitor spending of $2.23 Billion in 2019 decreased by almost 50% to a low of $1.25 Billion in 2020. Visitor spending in 2021 grew to $1.97 Billion, which remains 12% below the total visitor spending in 2019.

SONOMA COUNTY SHARE OF REGIONAL TRAVEL SPENDING

As shown in Figure 2, in 2019, Sonoma County’s share of regional Bay Area travel spending was 5.8%. During the pandemic, this markedly increased to 8.1% of regional spending and in 2021, direct travel spending in Sonoma County contributed 9.2% of Bay Area regional travel spending.
SONOMA COUNTY TRAVEL SPENDING BY COMMODITY PURCHASED

California’s travel and tourism industry is represented by accommodations, transportation and rental cars, restaurants, retail stores, attractions, gasoline service stations, and other businesses that serve travelers. Figure 5 demonstrates that traveler spending benefits tourism providers across all industry segments. In 2020, visitor spending in the accommodations segment decreased by 40% relative to 2019 levels, and in 2021, the moderate recovery in the accommodations sector increased by 8.3% over 2019 levels. Visitor spending in the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation and Retail segments remain 19% and 18% below 2019 levels, respectively.

SONOMA COUNTY TRAVEL INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

The travel and tourism industry provides employment to nearly a million individuals in California. In Sonoma County, 85% of businesses employ fewer than 250 people. The hospitality industry contributes one out of every 10 jobs in Sonoma County, and according to the Sonoma County EDB, is ranked as one of top 10 job sectors in the County. Although the travel industry supported a moderate jobs recovery in 2021 (17,640 jobs), this still represents a 21% loss relative to 2019 job levels. According to Dean Runyan Associates, employment in the accommodations and food service sector remains 18% below the pre-pandemic peak of 11,210 jobs in 2019, and in the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation segment, an additional 28% gain in jobs growth would be needed to reach 2019 employment levels.
SONOMA COUNTY TRAVEL-RELATED EARNINGS

Direct travel-related earnings represent the total after-point of sales tax income from travel activity, including wage and salary disbursements and other earned income or benefits. In 2019, total travel-related earnings peaked at $863 million, and during the pandemic in 2020, resulted in a 24% loss in earnings with the most severe impacts occurring in the accommodations, arts, entertainment, recreation, and ground transportation segments. 2021 travel related earnings recovered to $739 million but remain 14% below 2019 levels.

TAX RECEIPTS GENERATED BY TRAVEL SPENDING

In Figure 8, total tax revenue represents both state and local taxes related to travel. State taxes include lodging taxes, motor fuel taxes and sales taxes, as well as business and personal taxes paid by employees of travel-related businesses. Local taxes include lodging taxes applied by cities, the County of Sonoma, and other applicable local sales tax. Total tax receipts related to travel in Sonoma County peaked at $204 million in 2019 and shrunk by 34% during the pandemic. In 2021, the tax revenue recovered, and remained just 3% below 2019 levels with the most significant contribution coming from a stronger recovery in the local tax base.

VISITOR PROFILE

Sonoma County offers a wide range of activities for tourists, from arts and culture, outdoor recreation, and whale watching, to experiences for foodies, including vineyards and wine tasting, and artisan foods. According to Longwoods International, in 2019, the region welcomed 10.3 million visitors.
As a result of the pandemic, the visitor volume decreased by 18% in 2020 and in 2021, still remained 3.9% below 2019 levels. In 2019, the average per person expenditure on domestic overnight person trips was $211; this declined by 21% during the pandemic in 2020 and in 2021, remained 12% below 2019 spending levels. Figures 9, 10, and 11 represent the breakdown of overnight and day person-trips between 2019 and 2021.

As an additional resource for industry partners, Sonoma County Tourism (SCT) also provides a dashboard on its website featuring monthly hotel and short-term rental occupancy, ADR, and RevPar, as well as aviation passenger data from Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport. The dashboard, powered by Symphony and Tourism Economics, highlights trends in the lodging segment as well as an annual visitor profile update from Longwoods International, which includes data on seasonal visitation, number of visitors, State and DMA of origin, visitor spending estimates, and top activities that sustain overnight and day visitation to Sonoma County.
The process of the GSTC Destination Assessment consists of the following phases as summarized below:

**Pre-Desktop Assessment**
- Stakeholder mapping, document mapping, onsite assessment planning, communication with destination liaison.

**Onsite Assessment**
- Introductory workshop, meetings and interviews with stakeholders, site visits, closing workshop with preliminary findings.

**Desktop Assessment**
- Review of all documents and information collected, create a report, peer review from destination.

**Report Submission**
-

**Pre-Desktop Assessment**

The two main tasks for pre-desktop assessment are stakeholder mapping and document mapping. These tasks are executed through close communication with a destination liaison. The ideal destination liaison consists of a team of local experts, particularly with tourism, environmental, social, and cultural expertise, or an individual from the public or private sectors. The liaison supports the GSTC Destination Assessor(s) with collecting relevant information and arranging online and offline meetings with stakeholders.

**Stakeholder Mapping:** In this task, key stakeholders from both the private and public sectors who should be involved in the assessment are identified. This task was completed by the Coraggio Group, who is simultaneously facilitating a master planning process with Sonoma County Tourism (SCT). The GSTC Assessor reviewed and confirmed the submitted stakeholder mapping summary. The list of stakeholders engaged during the “Get Clear” data gathering phase is reported in Appendix B.

**Document Mapping:** In this task, policy documents that address the GSTC Destination Criteria (e.g., relevant laws, regulations, guidelines) are named. Document mapping was reviewed and confirmed by the GSTC Assessor. The primary documents used in this task are listed within each criteria assessed.

**Onsite Assessment**

The onsite assessment took place from May 14th to 19th, 2022. Sonoma County’s operation, management, and cooperation systems were assessed based on the GSTC-D through interviews and meetings with a range of stakeholders and by visiting Sonoma County’s major sites. Interviews were planned with the help of SCT and based...
on earlier stakeholder mapping and the desktop assessment. The places visited were representative of Sonoma County’s travel and tourism industry and were thought to impact and represent sustainability efforts in the region. The onsite assessment concluded with a meeting with SCT staff as well as wine growers and vintners. During the meeting, a question-and-answer session was conducted and all in attendance discussed their impressions of sustainable tourism efforts and next steps for moving the SCT Destination Stewardship and Resilience Master Plan forward. All opinions and responses to the Assessors visit, were woven into the response information provided within the assessment Criteria collected through individual meetings.

DESKTOP ASSESSMENT

The GSTC Assessor drafted the report based on the results of the onsite assessment and secondary data analysis of materials. These included information sources obtained from documents collected by the SCT team, who took on the role of liaison with the Assessor. The information also included discussions with key partners in tourism (e.g., Sonoma County Regional Parks, State Parks, etc.) and web-based information sources related to Sonoma County and California state level policies, water regulations, and wildlife management which were publicly available.

Dr. Mihee Kang conducted a peer review of the report and associated materials to enhance the objectivity and rationality of the Assessor’s results. Dr. Bricker sent a draft report to the SCT team following the peer review. After analyzing and incorporating the feedback from SCT, Dr. Bricker completed and provided the final report to SCT.

GSTC ASSESSMENT TOOLS

EVALUATION CRITERIA
COMPLIANCE AND SCORING

Sonoma County was assessed against all GSTC Destination Criteria 2.0. The results are shown with distinct colors and scores. The evaluation starts with individual indicators. The compliance level of each criterion and pillar are calculated based on the average of the indicators and criteria, respectively.

FIGURE 12. The GSTC Destination Assessment Scoring Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliance with pillars (5 levels)</th>
<th>Average score of criteria per pillar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compliance with criteria (5 levels)</td>
<td>Average score of indicators per criterion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance with indicators (4 levels)</td>
<td>Score between 0–3 per indicator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Indicator Scoring:** Each indicator is evaluated based on evidence discussed, produced, or observed. Indicators are scored “0” if no documents or evidence exist, “1” suggests that documentation exists, but there is no evidence of implementation or ongoing work, “2” suggests there is evidence and implementation, and “3” states that there is evidence and implementation, as well as improving trends.

**Criterion Scoring:** Once indicators are reviewed, a score is calculated for each criteria. The criteria score supplies an overview of performance, ranging from “Areas of Risk” <1, “Areas of Moderate Risk” 1.00–1.49, “Needs Improvement” 1.50–1.99, “Good Performance” 2.00–2.49, and “Excellent Performance” ≥2.5.

**Pillar Scoring:** Each pillar score is calculated based on average criteria scores. The pillar score provides an overview of performance, ranging from “Level 1” <1 to “Level 2” 1.00–1.49, “Level 3” 1.50–1.99, “Level 4” 2.00–2.49, and “Level 5” ≥2.5.

**FIGURE 13. Indicator, Criterion and Pillar Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Scoring</th>
<th>Criterion Scoring</th>
<th>Pillar scoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No document exists</td>
<td>Areas of Risk &lt; 1</td>
<td>Level 1 &lt; 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document exists</td>
<td>Areas of Moderate Risk 1.00–1.49</td>
<td>Level 2 1.00–1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document and evidence of implementation</td>
<td>Needs Improvement 1.50–1.99</td>
<td>Level 3 1.50–1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document, evidence, and improving trends</td>
<td>Good Performance 2.00–2.49</td>
<td>Level 4 2.00–2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable in the destination</td>
<td>Excellent Performance ≥ 2.50</td>
<td>Level 5 ≥ 2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SONOMA COUNTY TOURISM ASSESSMENT TIMELINE**

- **Pre-desktop assessment, document and stakeholders mapping**
  - Feb–Apr 2022
  - Onsite assessment: site visits, group interviews, and one-on-one meetings

- **Destination assessment report draft**
  - May 2022
  - GSTC internal peer review of draft report

- **Final assessment report**
  - July 2022
  - August 2022
  - Nov 2022

**DESTINATION INVOLVEMENT**

The SCT staff served as the primary destination liaison team. Specifically, they responded and supplied documentation for each pillar based on questions asked by the GSTC Assessor. In addition, as part of their ongoing master planning process, they conducted several stakeholder meetings with individuals across a wide cross-section of businesses, industries, organizations, and residents in Sonoma County. The complete list of people contacted throughout this process is in Appendix B.
ASSESSMENT RESULTS
SECTION A: SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

Sustainable Management received an overall average score of 2.60 is based on an average of the overall scores of each of the eleven criteria.

Within the Sustainable Management pillar, four criteria were identified as exhibiting “Good Performance:”

- A4 Enterprise Engagement and Sustainability Standards
- A5 Resident Engagement and Feedback
- A6 Visitor Engagement and Feedback
- A7 Promotion and Information

In addition, seven criteria were identified as having “Excellent Performance:”

- A1 Destination Management Responsibility
- A2 Destination Management Strategy and Action Plan
- A3 Monitoring and Reporting
- A8 Managing Visitor Volumes and Activities
- A9 Planning Regulations and Development Control
- A10 Climate Change Adaptation
- A11 Risk and Crisis Management

TABLE A. Summary of Scoring for Criteria A: Sustainable Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Risk</th>
<th>Criteria A: Sustainable Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Risk &lt;1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Moderate Risk 1.00–1.49</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement 1.50–1.99</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Performance 2.00–2.49</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent Performance ≥2.50</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo credit: Sonoma County Tourism
A1. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

The destination has an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism, with involvement by the private sector, public sector, and civil society. This group has defined responsibilities, oversight, and implementation capability for the management of socio-economic, cultural, and environmental issues. The group is adequately funded, works with a range of bodies in delivering destination management, has access to sufficient staffing (including personnel with experience in sustainability), and follows principles of sustainability and transparency in its operations and transactions.

To assess Sonoma County against A1, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents were reviewed:

- A White Paper entitled “Future Funding Analysis”
- SCT Staff Page
- SCT’s Organizational Budget and Plan
- Sonoma County Partnership Initiatives
- SCT Strategic Plan, 21–23
- The Organizational Chart for SCT
- Three stakeholder engagement reports, including “Leave No Trace” Advisory Group Scoping Report, the Stakeholder Listening Sessions Report, and the Stakeholder Survey Report

SCT scored moderately high, with an overall score of 2.40 on Criteria A1, or “Good Performance.”

SCT is the official Destination Stewardship Organization dedicated to promoting overnight stays and creating a sustainable hospitality economy in Sonoma County, California. SCT is a private, non-profit 501(c)6 organization, staffed by professionals in the fields of sales, marketing, communications, and administration. It is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and receives input from committees, stakeholders, and the public. Sonoma County Tourism’s funding comes from two sources:

The Business Improvement Area assessment (BIA), and the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT).

Importantly, for every $1 that is applied from these funds towards SCT’s paid marketing, over $27 comes back to Sonoma County in tax revenue; this is a $262 return on investment in visitor spending for every advertising dollar spent (Longwoods International, Spring 2022 Campaign ROI study).

Beyond being a research-driven organization, the core values of SCT are rooted in the organization being strategic, transparent, collaborative, inclusive, entrepreneurial, and trusted. These values drive SCT’s strategic planning, and guide the decisions that impact business development, marketing, community engagement, and operations. In 2018, SCT made the strategic transition from being a DMO to the nation’s first Destination Stewardship Organization (DSO). To support the strategic platform that SCT developed, it contracted the Coraggio Group in February 2022 to develop Sonoma County’s first Destination Stewardship and Resilience Master Plan, which also includes this GSTC Assessment.

SCT has previously conducted listening sessions to understand and gain insight from various stakeholders on issues impacting the tourism sector in Sonoma County. As part of the current master planning process, SCT also hosted focus group sessions in May and June 2022 with cultural organizations; diversity-, equity-, and inclusion-focused organizations; media; financial services; government entities; educational institutions, and facilitated conversations with local elected officials. This effort also included outreach to engage important business segments in Sonoma County—tourism-centric organizations, wine/breweries/spirits, transportation, natural resources, and business associations.

Notably, SCT has developed a partnership with Sonoma County Regional Parks and Leave No Trace, along with innovative sales and marketing campaigns to aid in accomplishing its goals and addressing its priorities. In addition, SCT is currently developing a Destination Stewardship and Resilience Master Plan, which will include long-term tactics and objectives derived from insight gained during the stakeholder...
focus group listening sessions, community town halls, resident sentiment survey, the GSTC Destination Assessment Report, perception analysis, and a resilience assessment. According to SCT, key milestones and activities undertaken during the master planning process will be featured on the SCT website. The SCT Destination Stewardship and Resilience Master Plan will be designed to identify a responsible long-term approach for addressing and managing critical challenges and bolstering the local economy through responsible travel and tourism programs and activities.

A1. Recommendations

1. Continue to update/add bios to the SCT staff web page, showing their qualifications and the organization’s commitment to hiring and supporting individuals with a prominent level of experience.

2. Increase transparency, reporting on KPIs with respect to sustainability initiatives and plans, especially when it comes to internal operations, and contracting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Documentary evidence showing relevant make-up and responsibilities of the group.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B A financial plan and budget showing current and future funding sources.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Evidence of links and engagement with other bodies.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Records of permanent staff and contracted personnel, indicating relevant experience.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Management guidelines and processes that demonstrate awareness and adherence to sustainability principles and transparency in operations and letting of contracts.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.80
A2. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The destination has established and is implementing a multi-year destination management strategy and action plan that is publicly available, is suited to its scale, was developed with stakeholder engagement and is based on sustainability principles. The strategy includes an identification and assessment of tourism assets and considers socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues and risks. The strategy relates to and influences wider sustainable development policy and action in the destination.

To assess Sonoma County against Criteria A2, information from the following activities and documents was obtained:

- Accredited Hospitality Professional Program web page
- Article on Sonoma County Tourism and Climate Change
- Articles and press releases related to SCT’s involvement in sustainability initiatives
- Discussions with SCT and Coraggio on the current stakeholder engagement plan (May-June 2022)
- Sonoma County Partnership Initiatives
- The current SCT Strategic Plan, 2021–2023
- Three stakeholder engagement reports, including “Leave No Trace” Advisory Group Scoping Report, the Stakeholder Listening Sessions Report, and the Stakeholder Survey Report

SCT scored very high, with an overall score of 2.80 on Criteria A2, or “Excellent Performance.”

The SCT Strategic Plan outlined three priorities: Business Recovery—where research, sales, and marketing initiatives exist; Destination Stewardship or programming which is centred around encouraging responsible travel and helping ensure visitors can enhance rather than destroy Sonoma County’s resources; and Organizational Sustainability—critical initiatives designed to elevate the capacity of SCT to better serve tourism-facing businesses and, ultimately, the entire County.

The Plan includes several new programs, including the Accredited Hospitality Professional (a new business development initiative), partnerships with Sonoma County Regional Parks and Leave No Trace, and innovative sales and marketing campaigns. All new programming will help SCT accomplish its goals that are aligned with the three priorities documented in the SCT Strategic Plan. Through the development of the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Master Plan, SCT is addressing sustainable destination management in a comprehensive way. Therefore, the proposed recommendations should support the momentum ignited by SCT’s master planning process.

### TABLE A2. Destination Management Strategy and Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  A published document setting out the current destination strategy and action.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  The strategy/plan clearly visible and available on-line.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Evidence of stakeholder consultation, meetings etc. in developing the plan.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D  Reference to sustainability principles and an assessment of assets, issues, and risks, contained in the strategy and action plan.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E  Specific references in the strategy/action plan to wider sustainable development policy (including pursuit of the SDGs), and vice versa.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SCT scored very high, with an overall score of 2.80 on Criteria A2, or “Excellent Performance.”
A2. Recommendations

1. Demonstrate where tourism aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Implement a dedicated landing page that shows key milestones and outcomes associated with the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Master Plan.

3. Initiate the SCT Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan and include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that demonstrate implementation successes.

4. Publish recent stakeholder engagement meeting outcomes, as identified in SCT plans.
A3. MONITORING AND REPORTING

The destination is implementing a system to monitor and respond to socio-economic, cultural, and environmental issues and impacts arising from tourism. Actions and outcomes are regularly monitored, evaluated, and publicly reported. The monitoring system is periodically reviewed.

In addition to interviews and site visits, the following documents were reviewed to assess Sonoma County against A3:

- SCT Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Annual Report
- Sonoma County 2018 Outdoor Recreation Report
- Sonoma County Dean Runyan Economic Impact of Tourism Report 2021
- Sonoma County Leave No Trace Initiative, Five Year Stewardship Action Framework | 2022–2027
- SCT Strategic Plan, 21–23
- The Economic Impact of Travel—State of California State, Regional, County Impacts 2021
- Winery & Craft Beverage Industry Report 2021

The score for this Criteria was 3.00, which reflects Sonoma County’s commitment to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) compared to SCT’s sustainability and stewardship plan and stated aims.

Overall, SCT and its partners consistently present socio-economic impact reports. Specifically, The Sonoma County Leave No Trace Five Year Stewardship Action Framework (2022-2027) describes a detailed stewardship action framework, which includes a 12-month strategic focus and action steps, as well as long-term outcomes over the next 3-5 years. In addition, SCT’s Annual Report succinctly shows KPI’s and how these were achieved or are in progress. There are also excellent examples of monitoring and reporting by two specific industry areas—Wine & Craft Beverages and Outdoor Recreation Industry—as well as state, regional, and county level organizations.

The plans reviewed are notable and excellent examples of how Sonoma County is setting a pathway for destination stewardship, showing results and strategies for continuous action and initiatives underway. Based on the evaluation of SCT against Criteria A3, the following commendations are provided.

A3. Commendations

- SCT and the Sonoma County Leave No Trace Initiative have proven quantifiable socio-economic, cultural, and environmental indicators and targets (KPIs) and showing action through SCT’s Annual Reporting structure
- There are multiple timelines associated with KPIs, reported annually, and set up through the next 3–5 years
- A review of monitoring systems and schedules for future reviews and publicly available through the SCT Annual Reporting mechanism
- Industry initiatives and reporting are also underway within the Wine & Craft Beverages sector and the Outdoor Recreation Industry, as examples of sector level work

### TABLE A3. Monitoring and Reporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Specific quantifiable socio-economic, cultural, and environmental indicators and targets identified.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Measurement against these indicators, with results recorded and publicized at least annually.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Written evidence of monitoring and reporting of actions and outcomes.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Previous reviews of monitoring system and schedule for future reviews.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A4. ENTERPRISE ENGAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS

The destination regularly informs tourism-related enterprises about sustainability issues and encourages and supports them in making their operations more sustainable. The destination promotes the adoption of sustainability standards, promoting the application of GSTC-I Recognized standards and GSTC-I Accredited certification schemes for tourism enterprises, where available. The destination publicizes a list of sustainability certified enterprises.

To assess Sonoma County against A4, discussions with SCT and Coraggio on the current stakeholder engagement plan were held in May and June 2022 and the following documents were reviewed:

- Accredited Hospitality Professional Program
- Articles and press releases related to SCT’s involvement in sustainability initiatives
- California Green Lodging Program
- SCT Strategic Plan, 21–23
- Sonoma County Partnership Initiatives
- The Green Business Network
- Three stakeholder engagement reports, including “Leave No Trace” Advisory Group Scoping Report, the Stakeholder Listening Sessions Report, and the Stakeholder Survey Report

Sonoma County scored well, with an overall score of 2.00 on Criteria A4, or “Good Performance.”

Sonoma County Green Business Certification is a part of the California Green Business Network, whose mission is to help businesses in developing sustainable operations. The Network certifies small to medium enterprises in conserving resources and preventing pollution in both the facility and operations. These businesses follow environmental regulations in the areas of waste, energy, water, pollution prevention, and air quality.

The Energy and Sustainability Division works with local government agencies and supplies sustainability aid to small-to-medium sized businesses who choose to go through the process of certification. To certify, participants must follow all environmental regulations and meet program standards for saving water, conserving energy, preventing pollution, and minimizing waste. The types of businesses certified fall into a variety of categories, including farms, food & drink, lodging & travel, cafes & coffee shops, organizations, shopping & retail, and wineries. There is a complete list of certified businesses through this program.

In addition, there is the California Green Lodging Program which acknowledges and certifies environmentally conscious hotels in the lodging industry. It also encourages state and local government travelers to seek out and give preference to these certified “green” hotels. There are three levels of certification noted below, each requiring that hotels meet criteria related to waste minimization, reuse/recycling, energy efficiency, conservation and management, waste minimization, hazardous materials management, and environmentally and socially sensitive purchasing policies.

- **The Environmental Level:** This is the highest level of program participation. Environmental Level hotels have achieved a field survey score of 350 or more points. They have a written...
environmental policy in place and meet all seven of the program’s criteria.

- **The Leadership Level**: This is the second highest level of program participation. Leadership Level hotels have achieved a field survey score of 325 to 349 points. They may have an environmental policy in place and meet most of the seven of the program’s criteria. They have three years from their date of enrolment to demonstrate continuous improvement and elevate their rating to the Environmental Level.

- **The Participation Level**: This is the entry level for the program. Participation level hotels are building their “green” lodging programs. They have achieved a field survey score of 250 to 324. Participation Level hotels meet some of the seven program criteria and have three-years from their date of enrolment to show continuous improvement and elevate their rating to the Leadership Level.

There is also information available on certified hotels through this program. According to the California Green Lodging Program, there are currently eight properties in Sonoma County that are part of the California Green Lodging program.

There is evidence of the promotion of certified businesses. For example, on the “Sustainable Travel” portion of the SCT website there is promotion of sustainable winery experiences, sustainable shopping, and sustainable trip itineraries. There are also messages about being a responsible traveler, including the ability to calculate your travel carbon footprint.

There is support for tourism-related businesses through either the Green Business Certification program or the Accredited Hospitality Professional (AHP) program. The AHP program supplies the hospitality workforce with a comprehensive curriculum based on the unique features of Sonoma County. The foundational five topics include the power of tourism; customer service and visitor safety; wineries and AVAs; natural environment and sustainability; and art, history, and culture. Once accredited, hospitality workers have access to exclusive educational and networking opportunities as well as supplementary courses that will provide additional tools for their professional development.

As identified previously, SCT has held focus group listening sessions, met with stakeholder advisory groups, surveyed stakeholders, and gauged resident sentiment. Therefore, the proposed recommendations are to inspire initiatives that may enhance SCT’s current efforts related to criterion A4.

### A4. Recommendations

1. Explore additional programs to engage all types of tourism operations in sustainability initiatives, including the outdoor recreation industry, events and entertainment, and cultural heritage sites.

2. Explore GSTC-Accredited Certification programs to further engage sustainability initiatives for travel and tourism enterprises.

3. Track the number and percentage of businesses certified against tourism sustainability standards, with targets for wider outreach.

**TABLE A4: Enterprise Engagement and Sustainability Standards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E Evidence of regular communication of sustainability issues to tourism-related businesses (Media, meetings, direct contact etc.).</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Sustainability support and advice to tourism-related business – available and promoted.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Number and percentage of businesses certified against tourism sustainability standards (and whether GSTC recognized/accredited), with targets for wider outreach.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Evidence of promotion of certification schemes.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E List of tourism-related certified enterprises, kept up to date.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A5. RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

The destination enables and promotes public participation in sustainable destination planning and management. Local communities’ aspirations, concerns and satisfaction with tourism sustainability and destination management are regularly monitored and publicly reported, and action is taken in response to them. The destination has a system to enhance local understanding of sustainable tourism opportunities and challenges and to build the capacity of communities to respond.

To assess Sonoma County against A5, the following activities were undertaken:

- Discussions held with SCT and Coraggio on the current stakeholder engagement plan (May-June 2022); and
- Review of the current SCT Strategic Plan, 21–23

Sonoma County did well on resident engagement and feedback (A5) criteria with an overall score of 2.40.

When done correctly, tourism provides opportunities to generate wealth and conserve natural and cultural resources that might otherwise be destroyed or lost. Tourism can also evoke a sense of pride in local culture. Then again, the local population can suffer at the hands of tourist encroachment. Hence, the opinions of local community members should be closely monitored.

In 2017 SCT conducted a “Let’s Talk Tourism Campaign” which encompassed a series of conversations with community members on their experience with community issues affecting the local tourism industry. This was a pilot series intended to obtain feedback from residents and businesses and, ultimately, aid SCT in addressing collective issues impacting residents and the tourism sector in Sonoma County. The agenda for these meetings included the following:

- An overview of SCT, its mission, and its funding structure
- Local tourism’s role in:
  - Creation of jobs
  - Driving the local economy
  - Enhancing Sonoma County’s lifestyle and culture
  - Supporting local governments, community programs, arts and culture, public safety, scholarships, and infrastructure through the transient occupancy tax (TOT)

Several key issues were identified during the “Let’s Talk Tourism Campaign.” These included: traffic, homelessness, car pollution, road conditions, parking, affordable housing, trash/litter, emergency services funding and use, and over regulation. Each of the issues varied in intensity and were linked to specific locations within Sonoma County. There were also several solutions identified to address these issues that have informed the strategic actions that SCT has undertaken, including:

- Adapt SCT’s programs to address community concerns while continuing to educate the community on tourism’s positive impacts and provide current information on SCT’s programs and initiatives.
- Incorporate input to help inform the strategic plan.
- Work with elected officials, residents, associated chambers of commerce, and other key stakeholders to identify long-range strategies around key issues; and
As part of the data gathering phase of the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Master Plan, focus group listening sessions were held with a diverse group of stakeholders (including transportation, natural resources, climate resiliency, business associations, wine/breweries/spirits, etc.) in May and June 2022 and were facilitated by the Coraggio Group. A set of semi-structured questions were used to guide the interviews. In June 2022, SCT also organized two virtual community town halls to solicit input from as many diverse voices in Sonoma County. Between July and September 2022, SCT developed a resident sentiment survey that was made available in English and Spanish and promoted via diverse social media channels, including Facebook and NextDoor. A total of 595 Sonoma Countians completed the survey and provided valuable input that will guide the planning and implementation phases of the master planning process.

As identified previously, leading up to the current engagement with stakeholders during the focus group interviews, SCT has also previously sought input from the community through the Leave No Trace Stakeholder listening sessions and Let’s Talk Tourism meetings. The results of the meetings and reports include summaries of impacts, roadblocks to success, and proposed solutions.

Another initiative underway is the Accredited Hospitality Professional (AHP) program (see Accredited Hospitality Professional). This is an educational initiative designed to support the Sonoma County workforce with a comprehensive curriculum highlighting what makes Sonoma County unique. The curriculum is focused on five primary areas, the power of tourism, customer service and visitor safety, wineries and AVAs, the natural environment and sustainability, and art, history, and culture. Once accredited, participants have access to added resources and tools for continued professional development. Relevant to this Criteria, through the AHP program, SCT has conducted resident information sessions on sustainable tourism and the natural environment in Sonoma County.

Since 2017, SCT made a concerted effort to secure resident feedback and to act upon this feedback in the development of the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan. Therefore, the proposed recommendations are intended to ensure continuation and implementation of SCT’s current efforts related to criterion A5.

### A5. Recommendations

1. Continue resident information sessions through AHP and other partners.
2. Continue to update residents on current SCT initiatives.
3. Develop at least one mechanism to regularly obtain resident input and feedback.
4. Document level of resident participation in the mechanism(s) used to obtain input and make summaries of their input publicly available.
5. When the master plan is completed, clearly communicate, and demonstrate actions taken based on resident input to residents and the public.
6. Consider offering a webinar or another accessible channel for resident education, building upon the agenda used to guide the “Lets Talk Tourism” listening sessions.

### TABLE A5. Resident Engagement and Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**

- **A** Evidence of the promotion and facilitation of public participation in destination planning/management.
- **B** Information on the type and level of such participation.
- **C** Surveys of residents and other systematic feedback mechanisms, covering tourism issues.
- **D** Evidence of action taken in response to residents’ feedback.
- **E** Program of information, education and training on tourism provided for residents.

**Total Score/Average:** 2.40
A6. VISITOR ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

The destination has a system to monitor and publicly report visitor satisfaction with the quality and sustainability of the destination experience and, if necessary, to take actions in response. Visitors are informed about sustainability issues in the destination and the part that they can play in addressing them.

To assess Sonoma County against A6, the following documents were reviewed:

- Airport Visitor Reports, 2021 and 2022
- Charles M. Schulz Museum & Research Center Data
- Economic Impact of Travel 2021, Traveler Origin Data
- Kind Traveler
- Longwoods International, Travel USA Sonoma County Visitor Profile
- SCT Drought Toolkit
- SCT’s Strategic Plan, 21–23
- Sonoma Valley Museum of Art Data Summary
- Transcendence Theatre Company Visitation Data
- Travel Kindly

Sonoma County scored well, with an overall score of 2.25 on Criteria A6, and as a result, “Good Performance.”

As a service-oriented industry, tourism operators and destinations must continually strive to meet the demands and expectations of visitors in the provision of quality tourism products, experiences, and services. Visitors’ satisfaction is decided by a combination of perceived quality, expectations, and actual experience. A visitor’s overall satisfaction will influence the likelihood of repeat visitation, extended length of stay, increased expenditure, and word of mouth referrals.

SCT has utilized various data sources to understand its visitors, including the results of a Travel USA survey conducted by Longwoods International. Longwoods International invites a random sample of adults 18 years of age and older who are members of a consumer panel to take part in a travel focused survey. In addition, SCT accesses visitor information through a range of sources, including the Tourism Economics Symphony platform that supplies geolocation data sourced from Near, data gathered from area museums and events, and passenger data reported by the Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County airport.

SCT developed a strategic response to the visitor data collected through Longwoods International. It used the responsible visitor data to create a unique program called the Travel Kindly Program (see Figure 15) and to develop its sustainable/responsible tourism web page. Travel Kindly Pledge Travelers are empowered to make a positive impact on the local community and the environment when visiting Sonoma County because of a partnership with Kind Traveler, the world’s first socially conscious “Give and Get” hotel booking and education platform. Kind Traveler gives travelers an opportunity to make a positive difference in SC. For example, travelers can choose to give $10 a night to a local charity, which unlocks exclusive rates and benefits from Kind Traveler’s curated list of “Kind Hotels.” The $10-a-night donation goes to a designated local charity, positively impacting the destination.

Charitable Travel Supports Local Causes

Participating hotels (i.e., Farmhouse Inn, Timber Cove Resort, Vintners Resort, Hyatt Regency Sonoma Wine Country, Flamingo Resort, The Sandman Hotel, Hotel E) in Sonoma County offer exclusive rates and special benefits on Kind Traveler to empower travelers to support local causes.

The type of impact a $10 nightly donation will make is celebrated at the time of booking on Kind Traveler. Examples include:

- A $10 donation to Farm to Pantry helps provide KN95 protective masks for marginalized neighbors as needed
- A $10 donation to Redwood Empire Food Bank helps provide twenty meals. The Redwood Empire Food Bank is Sonoma County’s largest hunger-relief organization, serving 82,000 people
- A $10 donation to Russian Riverkeeper helps clean 250 pounds of trash out of the Russian River. The Russian Riverkeeper restores and sustains the health of Sonoma County’s popular Russian River
A $10 donation to Sonoma Land Trust helps maintain one mile of hiking trails. Sonoma Land Trust protects more than 50,000 acres of beautiful, productive, and environmentally significant land in and around Sonoma County.

In addition, travelers are encouraged to sign a Traveling Kindly Pledge, which embraces sustainability concepts.

Most recently, SCT also launched a Visitor Center research study that will evaluate internal (operational) and external (visitor) inputs at visitor centers throughout Sonoma County. This effort will directly help Sonoma County craft a funding strategy to sustain operations and technological and infrastructure improvements at the visitor centers to help amplify the visitor experience by better understanding this critical audience.

The following recommendations are intended to support SCT’s current efforts related to criterion A6.

**A6. Commendations**

1. The Travel Kindly program implemented and making a positive difference in Sonoma County.

2. The Visitor Center research project that will evaluate internal and external inputs as well as technological and infrastructure improvements that will enhance the visitor experience.

**A6. Recommendation**

1. Once all visitor feedback mechanisms are in place, clearly demonstrate and communicate actions taken based on visitor feedback to residents, businesses and the Sonoma County community.

**TABLE A6. Visitor Engagement and Feedback**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Visitor surveys (and other feedback mechanisms) – carried out and reported.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Surveys and feedback include visitor reaction to sustainability issues.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Evidence of actions taken in response to visitor survey/feedback findings.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Examples of visitor information that covers sustainability issues and how to respond to them.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 15. The Travel Kindly Program**

- **Leave No Trace:** pick up, pack up, recycle and say ‘yes’ to re-usable products
- **Tread Lightly:** stay on roads, footpaths, hiking trails and park in designated spots
- **Go Beyond:** spread your travel footprint and explore the road less traveled.
- **Think Local:** support local businesses, community festivals & events
- **Make an Impact:** respect local communities, volunteer or support a non-profit
- **Spread Kindness:** make a positive impact on your fellow travelers and local neighbors
- **Plan Ahead:** indulge your tastebuds, yet plan ahead and drink responsibly
- **Be Mindful:** stay aware of weather conditions, natural elements and advisories
A7. PROMOTION AND INFORMATION

Promotion and visitor information material about the destination is accurate regarding its products, services, and sustainability claims. Marketing messages and other communications reflect the destination’s values and approach to sustainability and treat local communities and natural and cultural assets with respect.

The documents reviewed for Criteria A7 included:

- A hard copy of the printed visitor’s map
- English and Spanish radio spots promoting responsible travel to Sonoma County
- SCT’s new destination video
- SCT’s YouTube Channel, which includes a vast collection of promotional videos such as the Cultivated Video Series featuring local artisans and makers who make Sonoma County unique
- SCT’s co-op with the airport, which features street pole banners on Airport Boulevard that highlight Sonoma County to visitors
- The Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter Inspiration Guide

Sonoma County scored well, with an overall score of 2.33 on Criteria A7, showing “Good Performance” in this area.

SCT audits business partner information regularly via its Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Simpleview, allowing the organization to stay up to date with partners on business advertising and promotion. The GSTC Assessor also personally saw consistent messaging with partners in parks and at the offices of NGOs and conservation organizations. However, missing from the messaging is content about cultural, museum, and Indigenous enterprises in Sonoma County.

The proposed recommendations are intended to ensure forward momentum that may enhance SCT’s current efforts related to criterion A7.

A7. Recommendations

1. Document the process for regularly checking accuracy and appropriateness of content promoted by SCT.
2. Provide mechanisms and evidence of consultation with the local community and cultural organizations on content and messaging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE A7. Promotion and Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicators Evaluated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | 2.33 |

Photo credit: Sonoma County Tourism
A8. MANAGING VISITOR VOLUMES AND ACTIVITIES

The destination has a system for visitor management which is regularly reviewed. Action is taken to monitor and manage the volume and activities of visitors, and to reduce or increase them as necessary at certain times and in certain locations, working to balance the needs of the local economy, community, cultural heritage, and environment.

To assess Sonoma County against A8, a variety of information was reviewed, including:

- English and Spanish radio spots promoting responsible travel to Sonoma County (https://www.sonomacounty.com/sustainable)
- Leave No Trace Stakeholder Listening Report
- SCT Partnership with Regional Parks—Press Democrat article
- SCT’s YouTube Channel, including a vast collection of promotional videos such as the Cultivated Video Series featuring local artisans and makers who make Sonoma County unique (see https://www.youtube.com/user/sonomawinecountry)
- Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter Inspiration Guide
- The current SCT Strategic Plan, 21–23
- The Travel Kindly Program

Sonoma County scored very well, with an overall score of **2.60** on Criteria A8, or “Excellent Performance.”

Visitor management plays an essential role in protecting the sustainability of natural and cultural areas by providing funding and business opportunities through tourism and ensuring visitors obtain a worthwhile experience while simultaneously taking measures to limit over-visitation.

As previously noted, SCT has utilized various data sources to understand visitors and has solicited stakeholder input through Leave No Trace Listening Sessions. The sessions provided feedback about the impacts of increased outdoor recreation in Sonoma.
County during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as perceptions of direct linkages between increased use of parks, parking issues, and general overuse. And, as a result, efforts to address some of the ‘hotspots’ within Sonoma County have been addressed along the Russian River, through river focused clean up efforts, and SCT is supporting these initiatives through responsible traveler focused messaging. This is an example of direct action taken to mitigate impacts and educate visitors and residents on how to recreate in Sonoma County in a responsible way.

SCT utilized Arrivalist in the past to monitor and evaluate visitor flows. SCT plans to enhance use of geolocation data for Sonoma County’s most popular locations in the future. Presently, SCT has intentional marketing programs to offset the busy or high season. From November through April, when fire season is reduced, and volumes of visitation are typically lower than summer and fall, international marketing efforts ramp up. From May through October, the marketing program switches to a focus on responsible travel. SCT also works with Leave No Trace and Kind Traveler to back up its marketing efforts during high visitor volume months.

The proposed recommendations are intended to ensure forward momentum that may enhance SCT’s current efforts related to criterion A8.

### A8. Commendation

1. SCT has identified strategic avenues and partnerships to improve messaging and action in minimizing impacts. This has occurred through strategic partnerships with Leave No Trace, Sonoma County Regional Parks, and monitoring visitor flows through use of geolocation data.

### A8. Recommendations

1. As planned, implement geo-tracking to accurately monitor visitor flows and volume throughout the year, which will assist with measuring impacts of activities and assessing destination needs.

2. Continue to communicate actions taken to support findings/results from visitor flow monitoring, addressing “hotspots” and hot topics (e.g., Russian River partnerships).

### TABLE A8: Managing Visitor Volumes and Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A The destination management strategy and action plan address seasonality and spread of visitation.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Variation in visitor volumes throughout the year is monitored, including in the most visited locations.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Impacts of visitor volumes and activities are identified through observation and community and stakeholder feedback</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Actions taken to manage visitor flows and impacts.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Marketing strategy and selection of target markets takes account of visit patterns, the impact of activities and destination needs.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Average: 2.60
A9. PLANNING REGULATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

The destination has planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies which control the location and nature of development, require environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impact assessment, and integrate sustainable land use, design, construction, and demolition. Regulations also apply to operations, including property rental and concessions for tourism purposes. The guidelines, regulations and policies were created with public participation and are widely communicated and enforced.

To assess Sonoma County against A9, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents were reviewed:

- A Portrait of Sonoma (Socio-cultural impact report)
- Economic Impact of Travel—State of California State, Regional, County Impacts 2021
- Municipal development policies, including:
  - Cloverdale
  - Healdsburg
  - Petaluma
  - Rohnert Park
  - Santa Rosa
  - Sebastopol
  - Permit Sonoma County (unincorporated areas) (see https://permitsonoma.org/)
  - Public Process, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors (see https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx)
  - Sonoma County 2018 Outdoor Recreation Report
  - Sonoma County Dean Runyan Economic Impact of Tourism Report 2021
  - Sonoma County Strategic Plan (see https://socostrategicplan.org/)
  - Sonoma County Tourism Strategic Plan
  - Sonoma County Vacation Rentals—Standards and Requirements (unincorporated areas)
  - Winery & Craft Beverage Industry Report 2021

Sonoma County scored very well, with an overall score of 2.83 on Criteria A9, or “Excellent Performance.”

Within the County of Sonoma, each municipality has its own planning and development policies and standards, and vacation rental policy. Economic impacts are measured at the state, regional, and local levels, as evidenced by economic impact reports. In addition, Sonoma County was reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Specific policies/regulations/guidelines which control development – documented</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and identified by title and date.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Impact assessment requirements are set out, covering environmental, economic,</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and socio-cultural impacts, at sufficient scale to address long term issues for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the destination.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Specific regulations on property rental and operation for tourism, with</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evidence of their application and enforcement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Evidence of public participation in the development of policies/regulations/</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guidelines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Evidence of consultation with, and consent from Indigenous people or minority</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic groups when tourism development has been proposed or has occurred in their territories.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Evidence of communication and enforcement of the policies/regulations/guidance,</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at planning, development, and implementation stages.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the Portrait of California series report, “Portrait of Sonoma County.” This report, conducted every 7 years, explores the sociocultural factors affecting Sonoma County, then builds on previous agendas to address issues identified. With regard to future planning and development considerations in Sonoma County, as mentioned previously, SCT held several listening sessions to identify tourism impacts associated with specific geographic areas in Sonoma County and continues to include several minority and underrepresented groups in its community outreach efforts as well as promoting them on the SCT website. The long-term Destination Stewardship & Resilience Plan will include planning and development insights and identify areas of alignment with the tourism sector.

The proposed recommendations are intended to ensure forward momentum that may enhance Sonoma County’s current efforts related to criterion A9.

A9. Commendation

1. Sonoma County has policies, processes and guidelines in place to address sustainable development within Sonoma County.

A9. Recommendations

1. Consider venues for on-going/regular consultation with Indigenous people and minority ethnic groups to address social inequities specific to tourism, such as affordable housing, livable wages, and training and education opportunities to enhance job advancement.

2. Consider the addition of a permanent tribal representative to the SCT Board, for example, to ensure the continuation of open and regular communication.
A10. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

The destination identifies risks and opportunities associated with climate change. Climate change adaptation strategies are pursued for the siting, design, development, and management of tourism facilities. Information on predicted climate change, associated risks and future conditions is provided for residents, businesses, and visitors.

To assess Sonoma County against A10, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents were reviewed.

- Climate Action 2020: A Regional Program for Sonoma County Communities
- Climate Ready Sonoma County: Climate Hazards and Vulnerabilities December 2014
- Sonoma County 2016 Regional Climate Action Plan
- Sonoma County 2018 Climate Action Resolution
- Sonoma County Tourism Strategic Plan
- Sonoma County Water Climate Adaptation Plan 2021

It is quite clear Sonoma County has experienced direct effects of climate change and is keenly aware of these impacts. As such, Sonoma County scored very well on Climate Change Adaptation (A10), with an overall score of 2.60 or “Excellent Performance.”

Because tourism contributes to, suffers from, and potentially mitigates climate change, it must continuously address these issues for its own sustainability. The Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) coordinates countywide climate protection efforts. To accomplish this, the RCPA’s stated aim is “to foster collaboration, help to set goals, pool resources, formalize partnerships, and work across silos.”

Sonoma Water has also adopted a Climate Adaptation Plan that assesses climate risks to water supply, flood management, wastewater systems infrastructure, and operations. California requires Sonoma County to develop a Local Coastal Plan (LCP) to regulate land use, protect coastal resources, and guide coastal development. A significant component of the LCP includes an understanding of, for example, how to protect water resources, conserve coastal ecosystems, preserve agriculture, mitigate hazards, and become resilient to wildfire. The public review draft of the LCP includes several sub-areas relative to tourism, such as scenic and cultural resources, yet none explicitly address tourism.

Sonoma County has worked on climate actions for over 15 years, making some progress in various sectors within the County. Sonoma County recognizes continued and focused efforts in climate change prevention, coupled with mitigation and adaption through behavioral change and resiliency efforts is imperative. In February 2020, the Board of Supervisors created a Climate Ad Hoc committee to begin identifying the immediate, mid-range and long-term climate actions of Sonoma County” (p. 1, TABLE A10. Climate Change Adaptation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> The destination management strategy and action plan identify and addresses climate issues.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> Regulations, guidelines and zoning for tourism development and activities accommodate the consequences of climate change.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong> A climate risk assessment, covering current and future risks – undertaken and made publicly available.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong> Evidence of consideration of impact on, and contribution of, local ecosystems to climate change adaptation.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E</strong> Information on climate change that has been made publicly available.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sonoma County Climate Action Plan). Several goals outlined within the plan include:

1. Continue to invest in wildfire preparedness and resiliency strategies.
2. Invest in the community to enhance resiliency and become carbon neutral by 2030.
3. Make all County facilities carbon free, zero waste, and resilient.
4. Maximize sustainability and emissions reductions in all County fleet vehicles.
5. Maximize opportunities for mitigation of climate change and adaptation through land conservation work and land use policies.

Each goal is accompanied by objectives designed to create action and implementation.

SCT has climate action initiatives noted in the strategic plan, including:

Continue to integrate responsible travel, climate change initiatives and overarching destination stewardship programming that helps reduce visitor impacts, eliminate travel-related carbon emissions, and continues to message a sustainable destination in sales and marketing materials (p. 21, Sonoma County Tourism Strategic Plan, 2021-23).

This is noted as a KPI, yet no measures are clearly outlined within the current plan. SCT is in the process of developing a Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan that will provide greater alignment with current County initiatives. The proposed recommendation is intended to ensure forward momentum that may enhance SCT’s current efforts related to criterion A10.

A10. Recommendation

1. SCT is currently working on a Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan. As part of the plan, consider how to integrate with the Sonoma County Climate Action and Resilience Plan.
A11. RISK AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The destination has a risk reduction, crisis management and emergency response plan that is appropriate to the destination. Key elements are communicated to residents, visitors, and enterprises. Procedures and resources are established for implementing the plan and it is regularly updated.

To assess Sonoma County against A11, the GSTC Assessor met Dr. Nancy Brown, Community Preparedness Program Manager for Sonoma County’s Department of Emergency Management. She also reviewed the following documents:

- Sonoma County’s Emergency Operations Plan
- Sonoma County Strategic Plan

Sonoma County has exhibited “Excellent Performance” on Criteria A11, with an overall score of 3.00.

SCT has initiated a Crisis Management Blueprint to help partners handle large or small crises. The Blueprint is divided into three major sections:

1. **Introduction**—background information on how to lay the foundation for a crisis plan and some hints on handling the crisis once it occurs. The section also provides tips on managing media interviews and general media and stakeholder relations.

2. **Your Plan Template**—fill-in-the-blank crisis plan for partners to complete with information needed to customize the approach for the partner.

3. **Appendix**—a wealth of material including hints for handling the media, drafting prepared statement and press releases, and a very brief speakers training outline.

In addition, Sonoma County’s Emergency Operations Plan is the first in the state to include cultural competency and efforts to promote significant interagency coordination that ensures protection and awareness by residents and visitors. For 2022, recommendations incorporated into the Plan include:

- Clearly identifiable and trained translators at local assistance centers
- Elimination of questions regarding immigration status at evacuation shelters, a practice in alignment with federal policies
- Inclusion of immigrant and Spanish-speaking community members in future disaster response planning
- Simultaneous English and Spanish emergency alerts
- Social media and website information on emergency preparedness, response and recovery resources in English and Spanish, including information at local assistance centers
- Support for the development of Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) as a network for providing services

The Plan is reviewed and revised every three years or when notable updates warrant documentation, evaluation, or assessment. Several appendices

**TABLE A11. Risk and Crisis Management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A A documented risk reduction, crisis management and emergency response plan for tourism in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B The plan recognizes a wide range of risks, including natural disasters, terrorism, health, resource depletion, and others appropriate to the location.</td>
<td>3 3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Communication procedures identified for use during and after an emergency.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Program for local delivery of information and training on risk and crisis management.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
address a wide range of risks, including natural disasters, health, animals, oil spills, and more.

The proposed recommendations are intended to ensure forward momentum that may enhance Sonoma County and SCT’s current efforts related to criterion A11.

A11. Recommendations

1. Consider a Crisis and Emergency Preparedness Evaluation for the Tourism Sector and, if completed, fully integrate results/recommendations into the SCT Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan.

2. Continue to coordinate and promote the advances of the Sonoma County Disaster Resilience and Preparedness Office on advancements in communication (wireless emergency, radio information).

3. Promote and facilitate workshops identified by Sonoma County Disaster Resilience and Preparedness Office for every sector of the tourism industry.
Sonoma County’s Socio-Economic Sustainability scored an overall average of 2.53, which is based on an average of the overall scores of each of the eight criteria. One criterion, Access for All, was identified as an “area of moderate risk”. The remaining seven criteria received either “Good” or “Excellent Performance” ratings:

Two criteria were identified as “Good Performance” and included:

- B4 Support for Community
- B5 Preventing Exploitation and Discrimination

Five criteria were identified as “Excellent Performance” and included:

- B1 Measuring the Economic Contribution of Tourism
- B2 Decent Work and Career Opportunities
- B3 Supporting Local Entrepreneurs and Fair Trade
- B6 Property and User Rights
- B7 Safety and Security

### TABLE B. Summary of Scoring for Criteria B: Socio-Economic Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GSTC CRITERIA SCORING</th>
<th>Criteria B: Socio-Economic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Risk &lt;1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Moderate Risk 1.00–1.49</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement 1.50–1.99</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Performance 2.00–2.49</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent Performance ≥2.50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AREA OF FOCUS: DELIVERING LOCAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS

B1. MEASURING THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF TOURISM

The direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism to the destination’s economy is monitored and publicly reported. Appropriate measures may include levels of visitor volume, visitor expenditure, employment and investment and evidence on the distribution of economic benefits.

To assess Sonoma County against B1, the following documents were reviewed. This review was conducted in addition to interviews and site visits.

- Sonoma County 2018 Outdoor Recreation Report
- Sonoma County Dean Runyan Economic Impact of Tourism Report 2021
- SCT Strategic Plan, 2021–23
- The Economic Impact of Travel—State of California State, Regional, County Impacts 2021
- Winery & Craft Beverage Industry Report 2021

Sonoma County scored very well, with an overall score of 3.00 on Criteria B1, or “Excellent Performance.”

By monitoring tourism’s impact, policymakers can make informed decisions regarding the funding and prioritization of tourism development in Sonoma County. Economic data can also assist with monitoring the industry’s overall successes and future needs.

Economic data is widely available to the public through strategic planning efforts/reports and Sonoma County’s Annual Tourism Report. In addition, various industry reports available through the Sonoma County Economic Development Board such as the Wine & Craft Brewery Industry and the Outdoor Recreation Industry reports both provide valuable insights into these important intersections for Sonoma County.

B1. Commendation

1. Economic data is widely available and accessible to the public annually. Therefore, Sonoma County is commended on this reporting effort.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  Program of economic data gathering.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  Annual reports on the direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Data covering a range of measures of economic impact (e.g., volume, expenditure, employment, investment and spread of economic benefit in the destination).</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE B1. Measuring the Economic Contribution of Tourism
B2. DECENT WORK AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The destination encourages and supports career opportunities and training in tourism. The destination’s tourism enterprises commit to providing equality of opportunity for local employment, training and advancement, a safe and secure working environment, and a living wage for all.

To assess Sonoma County against B2, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents were reviewed:

- California Department of Industrial Relations Labour Enforcement Task Force
- Educational programs at several institutions, including Casa Grande High School, Windsor High School Hospitality Program, Cloverdale High Farm to Table, Santa Rosa Junior College, and Sonoma State University.
  - BS in Business Administration (Wine Business Strategies Concentration)
  - MBA Sonoma Professional Wine
  - MBA Sonoma Executive Wine
- Employment Training Panel, State of California
- Santa Rosa Junior College/Sonoma County Hospitality Association
- The Accredited Hospitality Program

Sonoma County was deemed to have “Excellent Performance” with an overall score of 2.50 on Criteria B2.

Travel and tourism is one of the largest and most dynamic sectors in the country. The economic contributions are significant. In non-pandemic times, the industry supports 10% of all economic activity on the planet and 8% of global employment. It is also a labor-intensive industry that does not require significant technical skill or major capital investment. To ensure tourism continues to have a positive impact on the local community, it is imperative that tourism businesses provide equal employment, training opportunities, occupational safety, and fair wages for all.

The SCT Accredited Hospitality Professionals program provides training on foundational elements that make Sonoma County unique. The curriculum covers five key areas: the power of tourism; customer service and visitor safety; wineries and American Viticultural Areas (AVAs); natural environment and sustainability; and art, history, and culture. The curricula provide professionals with critical tools for creating authentic engagement with visitors. Once accredited, professionals have access to educational and networking opportunities as well as supplementary courses that provide additional professional development tools. In addition, the Sonoma County Hospitality Association provides training seminars and professional development opportunities on a regular basis.

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1 An AVA is a designated wine grape-growing region, providing an official appellation for the mutual benefit of wineries and consumers.

### TABLE B2. Decent Work and Career Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Provision of relevant skills training program/courses, available locally.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Statements of commitment by tourism enterprises to the provision of decent work/ career opportunities.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Training and employment opportunities promoted to and taken up by local people, including women, young people, minorities, and people with disabilities.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Channels for checking working conditions and receiving/handling grievances (e.g., involvement of labor unions).</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Score/Average: 2.50
There are several high school- and college-based degree and certificate programs offered within Sonoma County. High schools also provide entry into the industry. For example, Analy High School provides work-based job and volunteer opportunities.

Beyond collegiate and high school training programs, Sonoma County has numerous initiatives focused on the development of work and career opportunities. For example, Becoming Independent is a community benefit organization serving the North Bay that helps people with intellectual and developmental disabilities live meaningful and productive lives. Through a network of community partnerships and authentic human connections, each year thousands of individuals are welcomed and provided with opportunities to be productive and engaged community members through three strategic initiatives: Education, Employment, and Supported Living.

Additionally, organizations such as the LIME Foundation serve as passionate and energetic advocates for disadvantaged people in the North Bay community. Through the NextGen Trades Program for example, students who may not have had the opportunity to attend college are provided training to gain well paying jobs in the construction industry. Graduates of the program are not only trained but are also provided with gainful employment (paid apprenticeships) which also contribute to enlarging the local contractor workforce.

At the County level, the Division of Employment and Training assists with a range of employment needs and challenges; the Employee Relations Division addresses working conditions, grievances, etc., for all types of employment. And, at the State level, the Department of Industrial Relations Labor Enforcement Task Force publishes rights for all workers in California; and there is a Commission on Human Rights.

B2. Recommendations

1. Promote the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry as a viable career path by utilizing the varied educational institutions in Sonoma County.

2. Work with the tourism industry to create ongoing industry opportunities in Sonoma County.
B3. SUPPORTING LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS AND FAIR TRADE

The destination encourages the retention of tourism spending in the local economy through supporting local enterprises, supply chains and sustainable investment. It promotes the development and purchase of local sustainable products based on fair trade principles and that reflect the area’s nature and culture. These may include food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.

To assess Sonoma County against B3, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents and initiatives were reviewed:

- Go Local Cooperative
- Hospitality Business Philanthropy Report
- Rewards for Rubbish Program
- SCT Cultivated Video Series
- Sonoma County Economic Development Board—Business Assistance Resources
- Sonoma County Partnership Initiatives
- Two stakeholder engagement reports, including “Leave No Trace” Advisory Group Scoping Report, and the Stakeholder Listening Sessions Report

Sonoma County is by its very nature comprised of small, local businesses that are branded as such; according to the California Labor Market Information Division, 85% of businesses in Sonoma County employ fewer than 250 people. As a result, there are several mechanisms in place to support small businesses and economic development in Sonoma County. For example, the Sonoma County Economic Development Board identified the CDFI Microloan Program as one of the most used financing programs in Sonoma County. The Program supports financing ranging between $5,000 - $100,000. This financing is based on 3 or 5-year loan terms and have interest rates ranging between 5% - 11%.

Within the context of Criteria B3—supporting local entrepreneurs, SCT has several initiatives to promote and elevate local artisans and makers. One initiative highlighted on the SCT website is the Cultivated Video Series. There are also several “Trail” Guides relative to supporting local artisans, such as Farm Trails, Art Trails, and the Sonoma-Marin Cheese Trail. The Go Local Cooperative promotes local businesses and events to support a local economy. Moreover, organizations such as Creative Sonoma provide professional development and active grant opportunities to help the local cultural arts community thrive. Their trainings are targeted towards individual artists, creative entrepreneurs, and arts educational professionals to help them do their work better (See www.creativesonoma.org).

B3. Commendation

1. There are significant integrated mechanisms to support local entrepreneurs and fair trade, as well as excellent examples of how to support local businesses in tourism in Sonoma County.

### Table B3. Supporting Local Entrepreneurs & Fair Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Advice, finance, or other support – available in the destination for tourism-related SMEs.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Assistance with market access for local tourism-related SMEs.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Action to encourage and assist local tourism enterprises to purchase goods and services locally.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Initiatives to help local farmers, artisans, and food producers to engage in the tourism value chain.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Local produce and crafts identified, promoted and available for sale to visitors in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sonoma County received an “Excellent Performance” score of 3.00 on Criteria B3.

Destinations that include local businesses, service providers, and farms within their value chains continue to strengthen the economic base of the community. Local businesses are also owned by people who live within the community and are more invested in the destination’s future.
**B4. SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY**

The destination has a system to enable and encourage enterprises, visitors, and the public to contribute to community and sustainability initiatives in a responsible manner.

Support for Community (B4) in Sonoma County was assessed based on interviews and site visits as well as a review of numerous documents, including:

- Accredited Hospitality Professional Program web page
- Hospitality Business Philanthropy Report
- Kind Traveler
- SCT partnership with Regional Parks—Press Democrat article
- Sonoma County Sustainable Partnerships
- Sonoma County Tourism Cares
- Sonoma County Tourism Strategic Plan, 21–23
- Spring 2022, Rewards for Rubbish Program
- Travel Kindly

Sonoma County scored well, with an overall score of **2.33** on Criteria B4, or “Good Performance.”

SCT provides support for tourism in general and for tourists specifically through the Kind Traveler and Travel Kindly Initiatives. These initiatives increase residents’, businesses’, and visitors’ awareness of County-wide efforts to enhance long-term sustainability of the region.

In addition, SCT commissioned a study to better understand the philanthropic contributions of the travel and tourism industry in Sonoma County. The study report identified several aspects of volunteer work as well as direct economic contributions by the travel and tourism sector. The Hospitality Business Philanthropy Report estimates that hospitality businesses contribute over $45 million in cash, in-kind, or through volunteerism efforts on an annual basis. Another $19 million is contributed through other business revenue based on non-profit employment and organization spending in the local economy (see [https://www.sonomacounty.com/sites/default/files/2019-04/sct-survey-report-nov-2017-final.pdf](https://www.sonomacounty.com/sites/default/files/2019-04/sct-survey-report-nov-2017-final.pdf) for more information). In other words, nine out of ten hospitality-related businesses give back to the community, supporting the equivalent of thirty-one non-profit organizations. With respect to volunteerism, the study report identified numerous hours and support of volunteer time by the industry.

**Sonoma County Tourism Cares**

Sonoma County Tourism formed Sonoma County Tourism Cares in 2017 to provide the local tourism and hospitality industries opportunities to give back to the community through participation in volunteer activities and donation drives. SCT has carried out 27 Sonoma County Tourism Cares events (not counting adopted road cleanups), helping to highlight just how much the Sonoma County tourism industry cares (The Sonoma County Tourism Cares program is not affiliated with the global ‘Tourism Cares’ nonprofit organization).

### TABLE B4. Support for Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  Support for local community and sustainability initiatives by local tourism enterprises is encouraged and facilitated.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  Schemes exist, and are promoted, for visitors to support local community and sustainability initiatives.</td>
<td><strong>3</strong> 2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Volunteering and engagement with the community does not involve intrusion or exploitation.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the state level, organizations such as California Volunteers is tasked with engaging Californians in service, volunteering, and civic action to tackle its most pressing challenges while mobilizing all Californians to volunteer and serve in their communities. Sonoma County is home to well over 3,000 registered non-profits that report more than $2 billion in annual revenue (See Press Democrat, Tax Exempt World, and Cause IQ, for additional information). Sonoma County is home to well over 3,000 registered non-profits that report more than $2 billion in annual revenue (See Press Democrat, Tax Exempt World, and Cause IQ, for additional information). They are involved in everything from health care to human services, and arts, entertainment, and culture. At the local and regional level, organizations such as the Center for Volunteer and Non-profit Leadership advance non-profits and volunteerism by strengthening leadership, encouraging innovation, providing leadership training in equity and inclusion, lunch and learns, and empower non-profit leaders in the North Bay community.

B4. Recommendations

1. As SCT gears up to explore its volunteer engagement programs, continue to partner with local organizations aligned with SCT’s initiatives.

2. Continue to support and cultivate case studies on sustainability successes and initiatives, such as the Sustainable Travel: Where Next? Documentary Series featuring the Sonoma County: Sunshine video.
B5. PREVENTING EXPLOITATION AND DISCRIMINATION

The destination upholds international standards on human rights. It has laws, practices, and an established code of conduct to prevent and report on human trafficking, modern slavery and commercial, sexual, or any other form of exploitation, discrimination, and harassment of or against anyone, particularly children, adolescents, women, LGBT, and other minorities. The laws and established practices are publicly communicated and enforced.

To assess Sonoma County against B5, the following documents were reviewed. The documents supplemented interviews and site visits.

› Labor Enforcement Task Force which publishes rights for all workers in California
› Office of the Attorney General, State of California
› State of California Protected Classification
› Verity Website

Sonoma County scored an overall score of 2.25 or “Good Performance” with respect to Criteria B5.

Inequalities can be deeply entrenched, including within the tourism sector. Combating exploitation and harassment in the tourism industry is an ongoing challenge that requires partnerships between all relevant stakeholders. The State of California has specific laws governing human/civil rights. Specifically, the State’s Civil Rights Enforcement Section is committed to strong and vigorous enforcement of federal and state civil rights laws. The Section addresses a broad array of civil rights issues including, but not limited to, discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, ancestry, national origin, disability, medical condition, genetic information, sexual orientation, citizenship, primary language, immigration status, and other protected classifications. Protected classifications include:

› Children’s rights
› Disability access
› Education, including equal access to higher education
› Employment and housing discrimination
› Hate crimes
› Human trafficking prevention under the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act
› Immigrant rights, including combating immigration consultant fraud
› Police practices, including the investigation of police misconduct
› Protection of free speech
› Reproductive rights
› Sexual assault on college campuses
› Voting rights
› Workers’ rights

Civil rights issues are also the focus of two specialized branches of the Civil Rights Enforcement Section. The Bureau of Children’s Justice, formed by then Attorney General Kamala Harris in February 2015, employs a broad array of tools to protect the rights of children and focuses the attention and resources of law enforcement and policymakers on the importance of safeguarding all children so that they can meet their full potential.

The Attorney General’s Underground Economy Unit works to protect California workers’ rights, legitimate businesses, and taxpayers by prosecuting violations of California’s labor laws, such as theft of wages, unpaid overtime, misclassification of employees as independent contractors, payroll tax fraud and evasion, workers’ compensation insurance premium fraud, serious safety violations, and the illegal avoidance of workers’ compensation coverage for employees.

The Civil Rights Enforcement Section takes a proactive role in identifying civil rights violations to be remedied by the Attorney General. It also works closely with the public; local, state, and federal government agencies; and civil rights and community organizations to identify potential civil rights initiatives. The Section provides advice and consultation services to the government agencies and represents them before state and federal trial and appellate courts. These agencies include, but are not limited to, the Department of Fair Employment and Housing, which is responsible for enforcing the California Fair Employment and Housing Act, and the Native American Heritage Commission, which is charged with enforcing the Native American
Heritage Act that protects Native American burial and sacred sites.

Additionally, the Civil Rights Enforcement Section educates the public about California and Federal civil rights laws to ensure that the public is aware of their rights and remedies under those laws. The Section engages in outreach to the civil rights community and the public to gather information to assist the Section in identifying appropriate subjects for investigation and/or litigation.

**Human Trafficking**

The following paragraph summarizes California law with respect to human trafficking:

“In 2013, the State enacted Senate Bill 1193 (Steinberg), which added Section 52.6 to the California Civil Code. Section 52.6 mandates that specified businesses and other establishments are required to post a human trafficking model notice created by the Attorney General’s Office. This model notice must include information related to support and services available to human trafficking victims and be posted in a conspicuous place in full view of the public. In 2017, two additional measures were enacted, Senate Bill 225 (Stern) and Assembly Bill 260 (Santiago). SB 225 required the model notice to include a specified number those victims can text for help, while AB 260 required that hotels, motels and bed and breakfast inns be added to the list of businesses required to post the model notice. In 2018, Assembly Bill 2034 (Kalra) increased access to human trafficking resources by allowing local agencies and school districts to seek reimbursement for certain costs mandated by the model notice posting requirement. In 2019, Senate Bill 630 (Stern) helped provide additional clarity on the role of local governments in adopting and enforcing rules at the local level to prevent slavery or human trafficking."

To promote an enhanced awareness of human trafficking within the lodging segment, in July 2021, Marriott International launched an updated version of its human trafficking awareness training with the goal of training “all its on-property associates to recognize and respond to potential indicators of human trafficking at hotels by 2025."

The pandemic increased more contactless and mobile hotel experiences, which can be difficult to spot potential indicators of trafficking. “The new training builds upon the original training’s foundation by featuring scenario-based modules, a mobile-friendly design, and increased guidance on how to respond to potential situations.” In Sonoma County, this training is provided by corporate management companies that require hotel staff to complete online training videos as a mandatory requirement.

Additionally, the Hyatt flagship that also operates in Sonoma County, played a role in developing the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance’s Position Statement on Human Trafficking and supports the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance’s Principles on Forced Labor. Through participation in the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, Hyatt works to gain insights and address potential risks related to human rights and forced labor in the industry. As a member of the Sustainable

### TABLE B5. Preventing Exploitation and Discrimination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Reference (title, date) to specific laws that pertain in the destination regarding human rights, exploitation, discrimination, and harassment.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Evidence of communication and enforcement of above laws and related good practice (including to tourism enterprises and visitors).</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Risk and impact analysis regarding human rights, including human trafficking, modern slavery, and child labor – conducted regularly.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Destination and key tourism players are signatories to the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hospitality Alliance, Hyatt is working with a variety of international agencies to support ethical recruitment practices in the industry, including a hospitality working group in the Middle East. Hyatt was also among the first hospitality brands to sign the End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT) Code of Conduct (The Code) in 2015 and supports the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Blue Campaign to end human trafficking."

B5. Recommendations

1. SCT could lead or partner with existing programs on an anti-human trafficking campaign, such as those seen in most international airports.

2. SCT should encourage the development of a program to ensure key tourism entities/organizations are signatories on the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism.
B6. PROPERTY AND USER RIGHTS

Laws and regulations regarding property rights and acquisitions are documented and enforced. They comply with communal and Indigenous rights, ensure public consultation, and do not authorize resettlement without free prior and informed consent and fair and just compensation. Laws and regulations also protect user and access rights to key resources.

The Criteria on Property and User Rights (B6) were assessed based on interviews and site visits as well as a review of numerous documents and resources:

- California State lands Commission Tribal Policy
- Development and planning policies and standards, including those from the following municipalities:
  - Cloverdale
  - Healdsburg
  - Petaluma
  - Rohnert Park
  - Santa Rosa
  - Sebastopol
  - Sonoma
  - Windsor
- Governor’s Office of planning and Research
- Native American Heritage Commission
- Permit Sonoma County (unincorporated areas)
- Sonoma County General Plan 2020

Sonoma County scored very well, with an overall score of 3.00 on Criteria B6 and was deemed to be exhibiting “Excellent Performance.”

Policies and legislation regarding property acquisitions can help ensure that important landscapes within a destination remain protected and alive with the spirit of the past. New strategies and actions to protect, enhance, and interpret scenic, biological, and cultural values will help sustain destinations for years to come. There are many legislative programs that point to Sonoma County’s commitment to destination sustainability, and preservation of natural and cultural/historic heritage of the region. Specifically, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) generally requires state and local government agencies to inform decision makers and the public about potential environmental impacts of proposed projects, and to reduce those environmental impacts to the greatest extent feasible.

The laws and rules governing the CEQA process are contained in its statute (Public Resources Code Section 21000 and following), its guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 and following), published court decisions interpreting CEQA, and locally adopted CEQA procedures. This includes required public consultation procedures and processes.

As a foundational part of protecting Indigenous rights, the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) was established in 2011 to conduct tribal consultation with California Native American tribes to ensure communication and collaboration regarding the following:

1. Legislation that may affect California Native American tribes’ ability to protect California Native American cultural and sacred sites and burial sites and California Native American tribes’ access to those cultural resources on public property under the jurisdiction of the NAHC.

2. NAHC’s execution of its duties under Public Resources Code section 5097.94 and other statutes.

3. NAHC’s adoption of regulations, policies, and programs affecting California Native American tribes.

In addition to the NAHC, the California State Lands Commission Tribal Policy, briefly described below ensures consultation with tribes within the state to protect tribal cultural resources.

The Commission recognizes that Tribes offer both unique expertise regarding Tribal resources and continuing deep interests in the protection of Tribal culture, which are integral to preserving California’s Tribal heritage. Therefore, the Commission invites Tribes to consult with the Commission regarding proposed activities that may affect Tribal interests. The Commission commits to respecting the dignity of Tribes and tribal communities and making a good faith, reasonable effort to understand and consider tribal interests on State lands and involving resources under the Commission’s jurisdiction.
These consultations, whether they occur as formal government-to-government Consultation or as informal coordination at the staff level, are meant to foster long-term partnerships with Tribes and serve as opportunities to educate the Commission about Tribal cultural resources and help find alternatives or measures to prevent or mitigate further loss of those resources and values.

The Commission anticipates most of its Consultations will occur where there are proposed activities that may have a significant impact on Tribal Interests and the Commission is the lead agency under CEQA. CEQA provides specific requirements including timing of Consultation, the Consultation process, and examples of mitigation measures which the Commission will follow; this policy is meant to supplement these provisions for CEQA Consultations and provide additional guidance, procedures, and commitments for other Consultations not covered by the CEQA provisions.

The Commission also recognizes there are circumstances when coordination and dialogue would be mutually beneficial to address a particular issue or concern, program, or project even when formal Consultation (as defined above) is not required or desirable. This coordination may be at the staff or member level rather than at the chair or council member level and is appropriate for simple inquiries, coordination on ongoing processes or programs, projects of mutual interest, or other topics. For informal meetings, Commission staff with appropriate expertise and of a comparable level of authority to the Tribal representative will be assigned. These meetings will be referred to as coordination meetings and may be one-time or at regular intervals depending on the need and mutual agreement of the Tribe and Commission. These coordination meetings are valuable venues for clarifying respective responsibilities and jurisdictions, sharing data, or reaching agreement on data collection. These coordination meetings also provide opportunities for Tribes to provide input on development of policies or programs. Whether undertaking formal Consultation or informal coordination, the Commission and its staff will observe the following Policy Guidelines. These Guidelines incorporate the following themes of education, respect, confidentiality, communication, and timeliness.

A recent example of Sonoma County’s efforts in advancing property and user rights includes the development of a new strategic plan for Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART). While developing the plan, SMART held several listening sessions that involved conversations with key stakeholders, including a process for the public to voice their opinions. Such public engagement processes are in place throughout Sonoma County, and involve the Planning Commission, for example, the Municipal Advisory Council’s (MACs) that hold public hearing processes used to inform Planning Commission decisions and outcomes.

B6. Commendation

1. The state of California ensures public consultations and Tribal consultations on matters impacting the environment, heritage, and development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference (title, date) to specific laws that pertain in the destination regarding property rights and acquisitions and user and access rights to resources.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference in the above laws to communal and Indigenous rights, public consultation, and resettlement.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of enforcement of the above laws in the context of tourism development and activity.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of community consultation, consent, and compensation.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**B7. SAFETY AND SECURITY**

The destination has a system to monitor, prevent, publicly report, and respond to crime, safety, and health hazards that addresses the needs of both visitors and residents.

To assess Sonoma County against B7, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents and resources were reviewed:

- County of Sonoma Emergency Readiness, Response, & Recovery
- Sonoma County Department of Health
- Sonoma County Economic Development Board
- Sonoma County Public Health Division
- Sonoma County Sheriff’s Office

Sonoma County showed “Excellent Performance” on its safety and security (B7), receiving an overall score of **3.00**.

Perceived or real threats to visitor safety have immediate impacts on a destination’s reputation and can dramatically affect visitation. If visitor health and safety is not well managed, adverse incidents can significantly impact the profitability and sustainability of an individual business, community, or destination. If visitors feel threatened or unsafe during a trip, this may impact their length of stay and expenditures in a destination and decrease the likelihood of repeat visitation and word-of-mouth referrals.

In response to the pandemic, SCT maintains a dedicated web page on Coronavirus Updates with timely health-related information so that visitors can proactively plan their travels to Sonoma County. There are links to articles and other health focused resources, including the Department of Health, and how meetings, events, and weddings might be impacted by current guidance. COVID-19 testing locations are linked to the site as well as vaccination clinics, and many other important resources. SCT also provides a “Safe Travels Promise” document for all visitors, which asks visitors to be responsible and thoughtful during their stay.

Sonoma County Economic Development Board in collaboration with input from Sonoma County Tourism developed a self-certification process for businesses to safely re-open as part of their safety and protection plan (See Sonoma County EDB).

Another noteworthy program, the California Hotel and Lodging Association’s (CHLA) “Clean + Safe” guide was created well ahead of statewide reopening’s to provide time for hotels to implement their programs and ensure employees had the two essential elements needed for a hotel to successfully re-open – guidance for hoteliers and confidence for travelers.

For guests, the standards include new arrival procedures, availability of sanitation amenities, physical distancing recommendations and even how to use elevators, among other changes. For employees, the standards include COVID-19 trainings, use of personal protective equipment, handwashing, and safely engaging with guests. Currently, 28 properties in Sonoma County have been certified in the CHLA “Clean + Safe” Program.

To further demonstrate compliance regarding the safety and hygiene of tourism facilities in Sonoma County, restaurants and dining facilities receive an operating permit with an initial inspection that is performed within 30 days. All food facilities are inspected once or twice per year. Typically, inspections are not scheduled or announced. The inspection criteria used by food inspectors is outlined in the field inspection guide. Food facility inspection results are also publicly available with up to two years of inspection history.

**TABLE B7. Safety & Security**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  Security and health services are well established and active in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  The needs of visitors are identified and addressed in the delivery of security and health services.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Tourism facilities are inspected for compliance with safety and hygiene standards.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.00
Additional County level resources include the County of Sonoma Emergency Readiness, Response, and Recovery website, available in English and Spanish, which provides information on access and functional needs, preparation alerts, zone locations, planning, and emergency kit building resources.

B7. Commendations

1. CHLA’s “Clean + Safe” Program

2. Sonoma County Economic Development Board, collaboration with SCT, on the Business “Safely Re-open” self-certification program

B7. Recommendations

1. Consider, as part of visitor surveys, adding questions on safety and security, and knowledge of emergency response resources.

2. SCT should also provide access to the various programs, (e.g., “Clean + Safe,” Food Facility Inspection information, etc.) through its visitor communication materials.
B8. ACCESS FOR ALL

Where practical, sites, facilities, and services, including those of natural and cultural importance, are accessible to all, including persons with disabilities and others who have specific access requirements. Where sites and facilities are not immediately accessible, access is afforded through the design and implementation of solutions that consider both the integrity of the site and such reasonable accommodations for persons with access requirements as can be achieved. Information is made available on the accessibility of sites, facilities, and services.

To assess Sonoma County against B8, the following documents were reviewed in addition to Interviews and site visits:

- California Commission on Disability Access (CCDA)
- California State Parks, Access for All
- California’s Accessibility Standards

Sonoma County had an overall score of 1.17 on Criteria B8 and, as such, is deemed to be at "Moderate Risk."

Accessible Tourism, or “Tourism for All,” is making travel and tourism destinations, products, and information suitable for individuals who have accessibility needs, including mobility, vision, hearing, and cognitive dimensions of access, as well as parents traveling with children. Even though accessible tourism is not a new concept, it has only recently been brought to the forefront as tour operators, businesses, and destinations are beginning to take notice of the increasing demand for accessibility and the importance of this vital visitor audience.

Under state regulations, any ADA violation is considered a civil rights violation subject to a minimum penalty of $4,000, plus attorney's fees. If a lawsuit is filed, the person with a disability who was denied access because of an ADA or California Building Code violation is entitled to receive $4,000 in statutory damages. Since the ADA was enacted in 1992, there have been more than 20,000 ADA-related lawsuits in California, costing state businesses around $20 million a year.

California State Parks has a dedicated website, Accessible Parks for All, which identifies accessibility activities and parks with accessibility. In addition, there are links for wheelchair users who wish to visit coastal areas.

B8. Recommendations

1. Create accessibility resources generally within the inspiration guides and incorporate “Access for All” concepts in all SCT visitor promotion and guidance materials, creating a directory of accessible tourism businesses, amenities, experiences into one location easy to access and use.

2. Provide links to pages such as the CA Accessible Parks for All.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE B8. Access for All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicators Evaluated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Score/Average | 1.17 |
SECTION C: CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

Cultural sustainability scored an overall average of 2.42, which is based on an average of the overall scores of each of the seven criteria. One criterion, C5 Intellectual Property was identified as “Needs Improvement.”

Two Criteria C2 Cultural Artifacts and C6 Visitor Management at Cultural Sites were identified as having “Good Performance.” And, four criteria were identified as exhibiting “Excellent Performance” and included:

- C1 Protection of Cultural Assets
- C3 Intangible Heritage
- C4 Traditional Access
- C7 Site Interpretation

### TABLE C. Summary of Scoring for Criteria C:
Cultural Sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GSTC CRITERIA SCORING</th>
<th>Criteria A: Sustainable Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Risk &lt;1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Moderate Risk 1.00–1.49</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement 1.50–1.99</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Performance 2.00–2.49</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent Performance ≥2.50</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo credit: Sonoma County Tourism
AREA OF FOCUS: CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

C1. PROTECTION OF CULTURAL ASSETS

The destination has a policy and system to evaluate, rehabilitate, and conserve cultural assets, including built heritage and cultural landscapes.

Protection of Cultural Assets (C1) was assessed based on interviews and site visits as well as a review of numerous documents and resources:

- Key State Historic Preservation Laws: Summary & Quick Reference Guide
- North Bay Digital Collections
- Sonoma County Historic Preservation Program/Plan
- Sonoma County Tourism—Arts and Culture webpage

Sonoma County scored very well, with an overall "Excellent Performance" score of 2.67 on Criteria C1.

Sonoma County has a vibrant historic preservation program that is dedicated to protecting cultural heritage. A list of sites is maintained by the County of Sonoma and shared with visitors through the SCT website and other visitor information resources. Cultural heritage resources are available and listed on: https://permitsonoma.org/divisions/planning/historicresources/resources. Cultural heritage sites are supported through entrance fees, revenue generated through gift shops, and event use fees.

C1. Recommendations

1. Consider cultivating additional stories on the cultural heritage of Sonoma County and build upon the diverse representation of cultural and historical heritage experiences featured on the SCT website.

2. Continue to support cultural site visitation through inspiration guides, linking brochures to online sites such as the California State Park Historic Sites Visitor Information Guide to Visitor Sites.

### TABLE C1. Protection of Cultural Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Lists of cultural assets, including evaluation and indication of vulnerability.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Program of rehabilitation and conservation of assets.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Mechanisms for using income from tourism to support conservation of cultural assets.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo credit: Sonoma County Tourism
C2. CULTURAL ARTIFACTS

The destination has laws governing the proper sale, trade, display, or gifting of historical and archaeological artifacts. The laws are enforced and publicly communicated, including to tourism enterprises and visitors.

To assess Sonoma County against C2, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents were reviewed:

- Key State Historic Preservation Laws: Summary & Quick Reference Guide
- Sonoma County Historic Preservation Program/Plan
- State of California Native American Heritage Commission website

Sonoma County demonstrated “Good Performance” with an overall score of 2.33 on Criteria C2.

As mentioned earlier, the Sonoma County Preservation Program/Plan supports historic artifact preservation and protection. Following are some of the key historic preservation laws specific to cultural heritage and artifacts:

**California Administrative Code, Title 14, Section 4307**

No person shall remove, injure, deface, or destroy any object of paleontological, archaeological, or historical interest or value.

**California Code of Regulations, Section 1427**

Recognizes that California’s archaeological resources are endangered by urban development and population growth and by natural forces. The Legislature further finds and declares that these resources need to be preserved to illuminate and increase public knowledge concerning the historic and prehistoric past of California. Every person, not the owner thereof, who willfully injures, disfigures, defaces, or destroys any object or thing of archaeological or historical interest or value, whether situated on private lands or within any public park or place, is guilty of a misdemeanor. It is a misdemeanor to alter any archaeological evidence found in any cave, or to remove any materials from a cave.

**Senate Concurrent Resolution Number 43**

Requires all state agencies to cooperate with programs of archaeological survey and excavation, and to preserve known archaeological resources whenever this is reasonable.

§ 622: Destruction of Sites

Establishes as a misdemeanor the willful injury, disfiguration, defacement, or destruction of any object or thing of archaeological or historical interest or value, whether situated on private or public lands.

§ 623: Destruction of Caves (a)(2)

Establishes as a misdemeanor the disturbing or alteration of any archaeological evidence in any cave without the written permission of the owner of the cave, punishable by up to one year in the county jail or a fine not to exceed $1,000, or both.

The State of California Native American Heritage Commission publishes relevant laws and instructions on managing cultural artifacts. Yet it is unknown to what degree this information is communicated to the tourism industry.

### C2. Recommendations

1. Communicate support for artifact preservation and responsible behaviors towards artifacts and historic/cultural sites in the Kind Traveler and Leave No Trace stewardship materials. For example, create communication supporting artifact preservation and integrate with the Leave No Trace principle, “Leave it as you find it.”

2. Ensure relevant tourism enterprises connect with laws and resource guidance on cultural artifacts through the State of California Native American Heritage Commission.

**TABLE C2. Cultural Artifacts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  Reference to relevant laws relating to historical artifacts pertaining in the destination (title, date)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  Evidence of communication of relevant laws to tourism enterprises and visitors.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Evidence of enforcement of relevant laws.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C3. INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

The destination supports the celebration and protection of intangible cultural heritage, including local traditions, arts, music, language, gastronomy and other aspects of local identity and distinctiveness. The presentation, replication and interpretation of living culture and traditions is sensitive and respectful, seeks to involve and benefit local communities, and provides visitors with an authentic and genuine experience.

The following documents and resources were reviewed in addition to interviews and site visits to assess Sonoma County against C3:

- Longwoods International Travel USA® Visitor Profile Study
- SCT Cultivated Video Series
- Sonoma County Historic Preservation Program/Plan
- Sonoma County Inspiration Guides
- Sonoma County Tourism Arts and Culture webpage

Sonoma County exhibited “Excellent Performance” on Intangible Heritage (C3) with an overall score of 2.50.

Sonoma County possesses significant intangible heritage and SCT works to market these heritage experiences in its promotion materials, through local heritage festivals, and via inclusion in proposed development plans. These are expressed in the form of agricultural heritage experiences, meeting local vintners and winegrowers, and events highlighting Native American and Latino celebrations.

Furthermore, festivals and events are built around local artisans who are well steeped in Sonoma County’s rich cultural history.

To further demonstrate Sonoma County’s connection with its cultural heritage, the Longwoods International visitor profile study was reviewed, and there is some indication that overnight visitors experience the intangible heritage in Sonoma County, as documented through this consumer panel survey. The results showed Civil Rights/African American heritage sites/experiences were among the top 10 activities and experiences of overnight visitors to Sonoma County.

C3. Recommendation

1. Consider various ways to expand feedback from visitors and residents regarding their intangible heritage experiences.

2. Continue to promote the intangible heritage of cultural sites and artifacts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE C3. Intangible heritage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicators Evaluated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Identification and listing of intangible cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Examples of celebration and visitor experiences of intangible cultural heritage (events, distinctive products etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Evidence of involvement of local and Indigenous communities in developing and delivering visitor experiences based on intangible cultural heritage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Feedback from visitors and local communities on delivery of intangible heritage experiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. 2.50

Photo credit: Sonoma County Tourism
C4. TRADITIONAL ACCESS

The destination monitors, protects, and when necessary, rehabilitates or restores local community access to natural and cultural sites.

To assess Sonoma County against C4, the following documents were reviewed. Interviews and site visits were also conducted.

- California State Park System, Natural Resources and Sustainable Ecosystems Document
- Native Advisory Council, Pepperwood Preserve
- Pepperwood Preserve
- Sonoma County Tourism Article
- Sonoma County Tourism Arts and Culture webpage
- The Christensen Fund
- The Sonoma Mission 2000: Shaping a Commemoration

Sonoma County scored very well, with an overall score of 3.00 on Criteria C4, or “Excellent Performance.”

Many natural and cultural sites are subject to growing visitation. Maintaining these sites require visitor management strategies and protections while ensuring public access. Sonoma County prioritizes public access to sites and open spaces so residents and visitors alike can enjoy the beauty of the diverse coastal areas, redwoods, valleys, and rivers. Public lands access and restrictions are equally applied to locals and residents as well as visitors. All public lands and access are secured as part of the development entitlements process which in turn secures the public’s rights.

The California State Park System has specific land and cultural site acquisition guidelines and regulations. This protects landscapes and watersheds and allows for public processes associated with acquisitions to ensure community input and access.

Local tribes are increasingly involved in conserving and protecting ancestral lands, sacred sites, and biodiversity. An excellent example of these efforts can be found at the Pepperwood Preserve. The Native Advisory Council works with Pepperwood Preserve on the following objectives:

- To engage volunteer councilmembers in quarterly gatherings focused on updates and exchanges about current and proposed projects to support and maintain information flow between Pepperwood Preserve and local Indigenous communities.
- To develop joint projects that explore application of Native land stewardship practices as a resource for contemporary adaptive management of natural resources. The role of the Council is to review and prioritize proposals and to help provide connections to native peoples, knowledge, and resources to help strengthen programs at Pepperwood Preserve.

In addition to Pepperwood Preserve, there are several other efforts currently underway with Native Tribes of Sonoma County.

Just as Pepperwood Preserve is rethinking their approach to conservation based on the richness of traditional knowledge, local tribes are rethinking their own strategies for protecting ancestral lands. Some are working in partnership with private land owners to create cultural conservation easements to protect sacred sites and vulnerable biodiversity. Others are forming partnerships with major universities and regaining access (and even title) to lands expropriated from them during the devastations of colonization.

SCT highlights access to public lands and waters, providing resources for both residents and visitors alike. It also emphasizes “Leave No Trace” in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Monitoring of accessibility to natural and cultural sites for the local community.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Evidence of engagement with the local community regarding traditional access.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Specific action to protect and/or rehabilitate local community access.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C4. Commendation

1. There are many situations where traditional access is recognized, celebrated, and protected. In addition, Tribal members are present along with active leaders in land management and environmental work throughout Sonoma County.

C4. Recommendation

1. In consultation with Native Tribes, and as per their wishes, highlight in the curated area of the SCT website, the meaningful stories of cultural and traditional access efforts of Native Tribes within Sonoma County.
C5. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The destination has a system to contribute to the protection and preservation of intellectual property rights of communities and individuals.

“The intellectual property of the Native Americans is extremely important to them in their living and their culture. Therefore, to avoid the misuse that can cause a negative impact on the native people, anyone who wants to use the property must have authorization from the native people” (CSU Legal Resource Center, p. 1).

To assess Sonoma County against C5, the Copyright Act of 1976 for a complete list of what is covered under US Laws, the Responses from SCT Checklist, and examples that include information from Creative Sonoma were reviewed. These materials supplemented the interviews and site visits.

Sonoma County had an overall score of 1.67 on Criteria C5; thus, “Needs Improvement.”

United States Copyright laws protecting intellectual property (IP) are governed by the Copyright Act of 1976 and are some of the most stringent in the world. Relevant to the tourism industry, the Copyright Law of the United States tries to encourage the creation of art and culture by rewarding authors and artists with a set of exclusive rights. Copyright law grants authors and artists the exclusive right to make and sell copies of their works, the right to create derivative works, and the right to perform or display their works publicly. These laws are adhered to by those within the tourism sector to protect intellectual property rights or local individuals and communities within Sonoma County.

Locally, organizations such as Creative Sonoma embarked on a business planning process to grow their impact and influence the region as the primary organization supporting Sonoma County’s creative sector. Creative Sonoma also has a comprehensive Use and Privacy Policy that protects the proprietary or intellectual property rights of any third-party, including terms and conditions applicable to Online Commerce, Interactive Features, and Classified Advertising.

C5. Recommendation

1. Consult with and support Native Tribes in Sonoma County to ensure intellectual property uses of Indigenous cultural heritage are appropriate in Sonoma County tourism and businesses.

2. Expand ways to support intellectual property rights as relevant to the tourism sector, including webinars and distribution of information through various communication channels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE C5. Intellectual Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicators Evaluated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A  Monitoring of accessibility to natural and cultural sites for the local community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  Evidence of engagement with the local community regarding traditional access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Specific action to protect and/or rehabilitate local community access.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo credit: Lisha Riabinina on Unsplash
**AREA OF FOCUS: VISITING CULTURAL SITES**

**C6. VISITOR MANAGEMENT AT CULTURAL SITES**

The destination has a system for the management of visitors within and around cultural sites, which takes account of their characteristics, capacity and sensitivity and seeks to optimize visitor flow and minimize adverse impacts. Guidelines for visitor behavior at sensitive sites and cultural events are made available to visitors, tour operators and guides before and at the time of the visit.

To assess Sonoma County against C6, the Sonoma County Tourism Strategic Plan was reviewed, and the following site visits and interviews were conducted:

- Accredited Hospitality Professional Program
- Interview with Bert Whitaker, Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Interview with Don McEnhill, Russian Riverkeeper
- Site visit and interview with Eric Metz, Jack London State Historic Park

Having received an overall score of 2.00 on Criteria C6, Sonoma County exhibited “Good Performance” in the area of visitor management at cultural sites.

Visitor management plays an essential role in protecting the sustainability of natural and cultural areas by providing funding and business opportunities through tourism and ensuring visitors can obtain a worthwhile experience from their visit by taking measures to limit over-visitation. SCT includes this idea in its overarching KPIs which integrate responsible travel and the development of programming focused on stewardship to reduce visitor impacts. Monitoring of sites occurs as part of plans at individual sites. Certain organizations, such as the California Department of Parks and Recreation, have systematic programs in place.

The SCT Accredited Hospitality Professional program trains professionals in five areas, including: the power of tourism; customer service and visitor safety; wineries and AVAs; natural environment and sustainability; and art, history and culture. These courses and accreditation are available to all hospitality professionals and include training on sustainability principles at cultural sites.

Other cultural sites are monitored through Tribal organizations, non-profit organizations, or private entities/groups. Each municipality in the County of Sonoma has historic and cultural preservation committees (e.g., Cultural Heritage Board of Santa Rosa). Sonoma County’s unincorporated areas not designated as State or Tribal resources are outside of the County of Sonoma’s jurisdiction.

Guide training occurs on a site-by-site or organizational basis. Some parks, such as Jack London State Historic Park, are managed by non-

**TABLE C6. Visitor Use Management at Cultural Sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Monitoring of visitor flows and impact on cultural sites, with results shared across the destination.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Evidence of action to manage tourism-related impacts in or around cultural sites.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Existence and distribution of published guidelines on visitor behavior at sensitive sites and cultural events and periodic monitoring of compliance.</td>
<td>2 2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D A code of practice for tour operators and tour guides and/or other engagement with them on visitor management at cultural sites.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Provision of training for guides.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
profit organizations, and as a result run their own training programs. Jack London Park Partners emerged during a budgetary crisis in 2012 which would have shuttered many state parks. It was the first non-profit organization to take up management of a state park on behalf of the people of California and it has been successfully running Jack London State Historic Park ever since. Separately, California State Parks regularly publishes information about volunteer training programs and jobs. There are other groups including non-profit organizations that have taken on the role of site management as well.

For example, Park Partners is the outgrowth of Valley of the Moon Natural History Association, a citizens’ group established nearly a half-century ago to support the interpretive needs of three parks in Sonoma County, including Jack London State Historic Park. The Association has played a vital role in recruiting and organizing hundreds of volunteers who support all functions of each park. It contributes funds to advance cultural and recreation programs, and create educational exhibits, displays and signage at the park. Park Partner’s most noteworthy accomplishments are the award-winning restoration of the cottage Jack and Charmian London lived in after acquiring “Beauty Ranch”, plus the completely re-imagined House of Happy Walls Museum which interactively brings the story of Jack and Charmian to life.

Another example of guided training opportunities in Sonoma County, is Pepperwood Preserve. They provide guided training opportunities, such as their Learning Landscapes Outings that are open to participants by appointment only. Through this program, visitors can enjoy the privately-owned preserve in an intimate, naturalist-led experience while adhering to protective public health measures. Pepperwood Preserve ensures that they carefully control access, to minimize encounters with other visitors and avoid overcrowding.

C6. Recommendations

1. Develop a code of practice for tour operators, guides, and visitors.

2. Develop these codes of conduct through local community and expert (groups) or cultural NGO engagement and agreement.

3. Work with industry stakeholders, parks, Tribal organizations, and non-profits to develop a code of practice for those visiting cultural heritage sites.
C7. SITE INTERPRETATION

Accurate interpretative material is provided which informs visitors of the significance of the cultural and natural aspects of the sites they visit. The information is culturally appropriate, developed with host community collaboration, and clearly communicated in languages pertinent to visitors and residents.

To assess Sonoma County against C7, there were site visits to parks and places in Sonoma County. In addition, the following documents and resources were reviewed:

- California State Parks Interpretation Planning (see https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=28410)
- Sonoma County Environmental Education Collaborative (SEEC) (https://sonomacountyee.org/educator-resources/)
- Sonoma County Tourism Inspiration Guides

Sonoma County scored “Excellent,” with an overall score of 2.80 on Criteria C7.

As visitor demand has increasingly focused on the provision of tourism experiences rather than products, the importance of interpretation and education has grown. The interpretation of tourism attractions, products, stories, and history is an important part of providing a positive visitor experience as well as serving as an educational tool. Interpretation and education can be achieved through a range of methods including informative brochures, guided or self-guided tours, interactive displays, signage, media displays, audio information, and interpretive information boards. Sonoma County has over ninety different cultural heritage sites, and an equal number of organizations working to preserve them. A leader in this area, California State Parks has interpretive planning resources and information on developing interpretative plans, drawing from historical data and resources throughout the State.

The SCT website link, “Road Trip to the Top Historic Sites in Sonoma County,” has a three-day itinerary for historic sites from Santa Rosa to Sonoma (Day 1), Sonoma to Petaluma (Day 2), and Petaluma to Sonoma Coast (Day 3). The link supplies access to websites that focus on a range of individual historic sites and their conservation status and vulnerability. Examples of these sites include Jack London State Historic Park and its specific stewardship and restoration projects, and Buena Vista Winery, which was founded in 1857 and is the oldest commercial winery in the state. The winery’s original stone buildings remain and are now designated as a California Historic Landmark.

Other resources in Sonoma County include the Historical Society of Santa Rosa which has developed a listing of several historic buildings and historical collections in the city, and the Petaluma Historical Library and Museum. A comprehensive network of historical and cultural organizations is found on the Sonoma County Historical Society website.

Overall, there are several examples of excellent site interpretation at cultural heritage sites throughout Sonoma County, with ample resources to support accurate and comprehensive place meanings for visitors and residents alike.

C7. Recommendations

1. Identify areas of high visitation to increase the availability of interpretive information in Spanish (and additional languages) based on visitation.
2. Link interpretive and visitor information at one focused location for historic and cultural sites.

### TABLE C7. Site Interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Provision of informative interpretative material on site and in formats that are accessible pre-arrival.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Evidence that interpretative material has been well researched and is accurate.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Interpretation material that identifies the significance and sensitivity/fragility of sites.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Evidence of host community collaboration in preparation of relevant interpretative material.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Interpretative material available in relevant languages.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION D: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental sustainability scored an overall average of 2.61, which is based on an average of the overall scores of each of the twelve criteria. One criterion—D4 Species Exploitation and Animal Welfare—“Needs Improvement.”

Four criteria exhibited “Good Performance.” They included:

- D2 Visitor Management at Natural Sites
- D3 Wildlife Interaction
- D11 Low-Impact Transportation
- D12 Light and Noise Pollution

Seven criteria showed “Excellent Performance” and included:

- D1 Protection of Sensitive Environments
- D5 Energy Conservation
- D6 Water Stewardship
- D7 Water Quality
- D8 Wastewater
- D9 Solid Waste
- D10 GHG Emissions and Climate Change Mitigation

TABLE D. Summary of Scoring for Criteria D: Environmental Sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GSTC CRITERIA SCORING</th>
<th>Criteria A: Sustainable Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Risk &lt;1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Moderate Risk 1.00–1.49</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement 1.50–1.99</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Performance 2.00–2.49</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent Performance ≥2.50</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo credit: Sonoma County Tourism
**AREA OF FOCUS: CONSERVATION OF NATURAL HERITAGE**

**D1. PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS**

*The destination has a system to monitor, measure and respond to the impacts of tourism on the natural environment, conserve ecosystems, habitats, and species, and prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species.*

To assess Sonoma County against D1, the GSTC Assessor met with Don McEnhill, Russian Riverkeeper; Sloan Shinn, Pepperwood Preserve; Bert Whitaker, Sonoma County Regional Parks; and Justin Lindenberg, Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods. She also reviewed the following:

- 2022 Kind Traveler Impact Report (pp. 58 and 75)
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife website
- California Invasive Plant Program materials
- Pepperwood Preserve Adaptive Management Plan
- Sonoma Land Trust documents, Impact Report, and website

Sonoma County scored very well, with an overall score of 2.67 on Criteria D1, or Excellent.

Sonoma Land Trust is a local, non-governmental, non-profit organization funded largely by membership contributions. The Trust works closely with private landowners, Sonoma Ag + Open Space, other public agencies at all levels of government, non-profit partners, and foundations. It is a member of the California Council of Land Trusts and is accredited by the National Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Since 1976, Sonoma Land Trust has protected nearly 58,000 acres of beautiful, productive, and environmentally significant land in and around Sonoma County (see https://sonomalandtrust.org/about/).

Each year, Sonoma Land Trust produces an Impact Report, documenting the state of the environment, in addition to other programs and initiatives. The Trust also works with other entities to address various issues and environmental challenges. These partnerships have included CAL Fire, community-based organizations involved in increasing learning about and access to nature, state and federal organizations involved in wetland restoration, and local organizations focused on adding parks and protected lands as well as education on wildlife corridors.

In addition, Sonoma County Regional Parks offers more than 50 parks and beaches with access to trails, wild landscapes, playgrounds, and campgrounds. It also manages Sonoma County’s largest ocean marina and largest extracurricular environmental education center. According to its mission, “Regional Parks preserves irreplaceable natural and cultural resources and offers opportunities for recreation and education that enhance the quality of life and well-being of Sonoma County’s residents and visitors”; this includes protecting land, stewarding natural and cultural resources, and providing public access to outdoor

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**TABLE D1. Protection of Sensitive Environments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A List of natural heritage sites and assets, indicating type, conservation status and vulnerability.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Programs to conserve biodiversity and natural heritage.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Programs to eradicate and control invasive species.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Action to identify, monitor and mitigate tourism impacts on biodiversity and natural heritage.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Mechanisms for using income from tourism to support conservation of natural assets.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Communications with visitors and enterprises on reducing spread of alien species.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Score/Average:** 2.67
spaces. The organization provides information on natural resources and identifies issues related to climate change, biodiversity, invasive species, fuels, grazing, and restoration. Invasive species or alien species information can be found through the Regional Parks program, California Invasive Plant Council, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife sites.

The Sonoma County Conservation Council directory provides lists of organizations that work on environmental and social justice issues within Sonoma County. The directory includes organizations that address a wide range of environmental topics, including, agriculture and food, climate and energy, environmental justice, waste and recycling, biodiversity, coastal areas, forested areas, wellness, land use issues, transportation, and water.

SCT partners with Leave No Trace to assist in minimizing impacts by visitors and residents alike on natural environments. And, there are various mechanisms in place to use income from tourism and in-kind support for conservation in Sonoma County. Examples of initiatives and programs utilizing income from tourism to support conservation include organizations such as Russian Riverkeeper; they encourage visitors and residents to sign-up for monthly river cleanup events to help in picking up trash and remove invasive species. These efforts also support local charities that address tourism impacts and advance sustainability goals in a practical way.

Additionally, although not directly supported by tourism funding, specific projects such as the acquisition of land by Sonoma County Regional Parks at the Hood Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve directly resulted in preserving scenic views and wildlife habitat, offering new recreation opportunities, and supporting future wildfire defense. This expansion was made possible by the Parks for All Measure M sales tax and County Park Mitigation Fees, in addition to cost sharing with other non-profit organizations.

**D1. Recommendations**

1. Continue to engage in specific communication programs expanding responsible tourism messaging to address specific issues and resources related to alien species abatement and forest fire awareness in Sonoma County.

2. Continue to support environmental organizations through links and promotion, building on volunteer efforts to mitigate impacts of visitation on biodiversity at specific sites.
### D2. Visitor Management at Natural Sites

The destination has a system for the management of visitors within and around natural sites, which takes account of their characteristics, capacity and sensitivity and seeks to optimize visitor flow and minimize adverse impacts. Guidelines for visitor behavior at sensitive sites are made available to visitors, tour operators and guides before and at the time of the visit.

To assess Sonoma County against D2, interviews were conducted with:

- Bert Whitaker, Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Don McEnhill, Russian Riverkeeper
- Justin Lindenberg, Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
- Sloane Shinn (Community Engagement) and Michael Gillogly (Preserve Manager), Pepperwood Preserve

In addition, the following were reviewed:

- 2022 Kind Traveler Impact Report (pp. 58 and 75)
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife website
- California Invasive Plant Program
- Pepperwood Preserve Adaptive Management Plan

Sonoma County performed well on visitor management at natural sites (D2), with an overall score of 2.33.

In 2000, the California Department of Parks and Recreation received funding for natural resource staff who are be dedicated to developing and implementing an Inventory, Monitoring, and Assessment Program (IMAP or Program). As the Program title indicates, the purpose of the program is to inventory, monitor, and assess the condition of natural resources throughout the state park system. The IMAP has the following mission statement regarding natural resources:

Enable the Department of Parks and Recreation to account for natural resources in the State Park System, track changes to natural resources, and identify factors affecting natural resources for which the Department can adaptably manage.

The IMAP has the following major long-term goals:

- To inventory the natural resources and ecosystems on lands managed by the Department to determine their nature, location, and status.
- To monitor park ecosystems to better understand their condition, and to measure and evaluate the status and trends of environmental conditions.

### Table D2. Visitor Management at Natural Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Monitoring of visitor flows and impact on natural sites, with results shared across the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Evidence of action to manage and mitigate tourism-related impacts in or around natural sites.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Existence and distribution of published guidelines on visitor behavior at sensitive sites, and periodic monitoring of compliance.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D A code of practice for tour operators and tour guides and/or other engagement with them on visitor management at natural sites.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Cooperation with local conservation bodies to identify environmental risks associated with tourism and measures to reduce them.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Provision of training for guides.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Score/Average: 2.33
To establish natural resource inventory and monitoring as standard practice in the management of lands and waters under the Department’s stewardship responsibility. This includes the integration of monitoring into planning and management.

To maintain systemwide-monitoring and data management standards and systems that ensure, over time, the full usefulness of information obtained. This will allow for comparative analyses of ecosystems within and between parks.

To cooperate with other agencies and conservation organizations in sharing natural resource information to advance the understanding of natural resource systems and resource management needs.

Another program involved in monitoring ecosystems in Sonoma County is Pepperwood Preserve. Pepperwood Preserve is located within the traditional homeland of the Wappo People. Its 3,200 acres serve as a refuge for over nine hundred species of plants and animals. As leaders in ecosystem-climate research, the Adaptive Management Plan for Pepperwood Preserve details specific objectives related to reducing the impact of human activity from educational, research, and recreational activities.

At the County level, Sonoma County Regional Parks supports initiatives to ensure visitors follow guidelines for visiting natural areas, including interpretive signage at critical areas, such as sea lion nesting grounds. Although SCT has not issued its own code of practice for tourism operators visiting natural heritage sites, there are examples in Sonoma County. These include Jack London State Historic Park, which is managed by Jack London Park Partners, the first non-profit organization to manage a state park on behalf of the people of California. The Park provides opportunities for private tours as well as a self-guided informational packet that includes park policies and regulations and pre-arrival instructions for schools, camps, and other large tour groups. Another example is Sonoma State Historic Park, which has specific guidelines on recreating responsibly, including adhering to Leave No Trace principles, as well as prohibitions on collecting or destroying anything while using its facilities. Some of the parks have venues for docent training and offer many volunteer opportunities including activities such as maintenance of historic orchards planted during the Russian and Ranch eras, as well as monitoring of harbor seals and Steller Sea Lions on the shorelines just north of Fort Ross State Historic Park.

Russian Riverkeeper is featured on the Kind Traveler website as an organization that “inspires and educates the community to protect the Russian River through education, citizen action, scientific research, and expert advocacy.” As indicated on the Kind Traveler website, this mission is accomplished in several ways. For example, they identify Russian Riverkeeper as a local charity to contribute to via Kind Traveler; participate in environmental work through clean-ups restoration; and participate in efforts to conserve water, recycle and reduce energy consumption.

The Sonoma County Leave No Trace Five Year Stewardship Action Framework (2022-2027) has several provisions and activities to provide education programs for land managers, visitors, and tourism partners. Once these are implemented, Sonoma County will lead in this comprehensive effort to minimize impacts on Sonoma County’s natural assets.

D2. Recommendations

1. Implement Leave No Trace education programs, as outlined in the Leave No Trace 5-year Stewardship Action Framework (2022-2027) and monitor and promote the number of tourism enterprises participating in courses.

2. Promote guide training programs that currently exist at universities, colleges, and parks; through docent training programs and via commercial operators that support guide training.

3. Promote LNT principles for tour operators utilizing natural areas for facilitating visitor experiences (e.g., Backroads using Regional Parks).

4. Work with universities, community colleges, conservation organizations, and community parks departments to promote skill sets for tourism guides to natural areas.
D3. WILDLIFE INTERACTION

The destination has a system to ensure compliance with local, national, and international laws and standards for wildlife interactions. Interactions with free roaming wildlife, considering cumulative impacts, are non-invasive and responsibly managed to avoid adverse impacts on the animals concerned and, on the viability, and behavior of populations in the wild.

To assess Sonoma County against D3 interviews and site visits were conducted with:

- Bert Whitaker, Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Don McEnhill, Russian Riverkeeper
- Justin Lindenberg, Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
- Sloane Shinn, Community Engagement, and Michael Gillogly, Preserve Manager, Pepperwood Preserve

Additionally, the following documents were reviewed:

- 2022 Kind Traveler Impact Report (pp. 58 and 75)
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife website
- California Endangered Species Act
- California Invasive Plant Program
- California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act
- Pepperwood Preserve Adaptive Management Plan
- Sonoma Land Trust documents, Impact Report, and website

Sonoma County scored well on criteria D3, earning an overall score of 2.33 or a “Good Performance” rating.

The health of Sonoma County’s ecosystem is also a foundational part of its tourism industry. The flow of tourism dollars can provide an economic incentive and an additional awareness/education mechanism for wildlife and habitat protection and preservation.

Several laws in California provide protection of wildlife and habitat. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (see https://www.rivers.gov/wsr-act.php)
- California Endangered Species Act
- California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act
- Marine Protected Areas have special laws and regulations. Sonoma County is home to several MPAs including:
  - Bodega Head State Marine Conservation Area
  - Bodega Head State Marine Reserve
  - Del Mar Landing State Marine Reserve

### TABLE D3. Visitor Management at Natural Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Reference (title, date) to international, national, and local laws that apply in the destination regarding interaction with wildlife.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Endorsement of international standards for wildlife viewing for both marine and terrestrial species.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Distribution of a code of practice for wildlife interaction, including viewing, which reflects international standards.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D System for checking compliance with regulations, and code of practice amongst tourism operations.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Actions to monitor wildlife wellbeing and minimize disturbance, in locations where interactions occur.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Provision of information to visitors on harmful wildlife interaction, such as touching and feeding.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Estero Americano State Marine Recreational Management Area
- Gerstle Cove State Marine Reserve
- Russian River State Marine Conservation Area
- Russian River State Marine Recreational Management Area
- Salt Point State Marine Conservation Area
- Stewarts Point State Marine Conservation Area
- Stewarts Point State Marine Reserve
- Sonoma County Fish and Wildlife Commission

Refer to [https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs/Network/North-Central-California](https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs/Network/North-Central-California) for more information about special laws and regulations governing Marine Protected Areas.

Sonoma County also monitors its habitat and land use through the Sonoma Veg Map Program. The Sonoma Veg Map is a 5-year program to map Sonoma County’s topography, physical and biotic features, and diverse plant communities and habitats. It is a joint program of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and Sonoma Water. Contributing partners include the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the United States Geological Survey, the Sonoma County Information Systems Department, the Sonoma County Transportation and Public Works Department, The Nature Conservancy, the City of Petaluma, NASA, and the University of Maryland. The Program has produced a suite of fine scale data products including countywide LiDAR data which are freely available (see [https://sonomavegmap.org/](https://sonomavegmap.org/)).

There are other non-profit organizations such as the Sonoma Land Trust that educates visitors and residents about protected areas such as the Jenner Headlands, which are located adjacent to more than 13,000 acres of Sonoma Coast State Park. There are eight watersheds within the headlands, all priority creeks for steelhead trout, and an area that contains ten endangered and threatened species.

Additionally, the Sonoma County Regional Parks Strategic Plan references specific projects that will be implemented through Measure M funding for expanding the wildlife camera project, creating communications content on wildlife, and developing a white paper on recreation, wildlife, and parks.

Specific to tourism, the SCT website has a comprehensive listing of “wildlife you can spot each season” showcasing the vast biodiversity of Sonoma County with a call-to-action to protect and preserve wildlife by adhering to the Leave No Principles, which includes the “Keep Wildlife Wild” principle:

- **Give wildlife space (but not your food).** Observe or photograph wildlife and all grazing livestock from a distance. Getting close to photograph or feed an animal may seem harmless, but each one of these interactions can lead to far-reaching consequences, including injury to humans and wildlife. Bring a telephoto lens or binoculars to help observe from afar.

- **Protect wildlife—and your food—by securely storing your meals and trash.** Many park campgrounds in Sonoma County supply safe places to store food and trash.

- **Avoid unexpected encounters with black bears and mountain lions.** To be safe, watch for signs of these animals, keep a far distance when spotted and maintain a clean campsite—never bring food into your tent.

- **Pay big attention to small creatures.** From birds to wildflowers, you are bound to be amazed by Sonoma County’s biodiversity—but it’s important to be prepared. Rattlesnakes, ticks, and blue-green algae can have serious consequences for you, your friends, and pets. Learn about managing the risks before your adventure.

(Source: [https://www.sonomacounty.com/leave-no-trace-seven-principles](https://www.sonomacounty.com/leave-no-trace-seven-principles)).

**D3. Recommendations**

1. Create a feedback loop for understanding visitor impacts, assist organizations with messaging, and support efforts to minimize identified impacts.
2. Endorse standards and guidelines promoted by Marine Protected Areas, Leave No Trace, and the many non-profit organizations that support wildlife conservation, through website links, promotional endorsements, and communications outlets.
3. With sensitive areas, such as sea lion breeding areas, add seasonal cautions and guidelines consistent with regulations and guidance provided by relevant authorities.
D4. SPECIES EXPLOITATION AND ANIMAL WELFARE

The destination has a system to ensure compliance with local, national, and international laws and standards that seek to ensure animal welfare and conservation of species (animals, plants, and all living organisms). This includes the harvesting or capture, trade, display, and sale of wildlife species and their products. No species of wild animal is acquired, bred, or held captive, except by authorized and suitably equipped persons and for properly regulated activities. Housing, care, and handling of all wild and domestic animals meets the highest standards of animal welfare.

To assess Sonoma County against D4, the following documents were reviewed:

- 2022 Kind Traveler Impact Report (pp. 58 and 75)
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife website
- California Endangered Species Act
- California Invasive Plant Program
- California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act
- Marine Protected Areas in Sonoma County

- NOAA Wildlife Guidelines
- Pepperwood Preserve Adaptive Management Plan
- Sonoma Land Trust documents, Impact Report, and website

In addition, interviews and site visits were conducted with:

- Bert Whitaker, Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Don McEnhill, Russian Riverkeeper
- Justin Lindenberg, Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
- Sloane Shinn, Community Engagement, and Michael Gillogly, Preserve Manager, Pepperwood Preserve

Sonoma County “Needs Improvement” in this area. It scored a 1.71 on Criteria D4.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was introduced in 1975 and was the first to ensure that international trade in plants and animals does not threaten their survival in the wild. A state or country that has agreed to implement the Convention is called a Party to CITES. Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the U.S. Fish

TABLE D4. Site Interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Reference (title, date) to specific international, national, and local laws, standards and guidelines that apply in the destination regarding animal welfare and conservation of species.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Notification of laws, standards and guidelines to tourism enterprises and guides.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C A system for inspection of the conditions of captive wildlife and domestic animals, including their housing and handling.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Licensing and checking of qualifications of personnel responsible for captive wildlife.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Action to promote the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in the tourism sector and to ensure compliance with it.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Provision of information to visitors on avoiding trade in endangered species, e.g., in purchase of souvenirs derived from threatened species of wildlife notified by IUCN or CITES.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Enforcement of legislation to ensure that any hunting activity is part of a scientifically based, properly managed and strictly enforced approach to conservation.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.71
& Wildlife Service has been designated to carry out the provisions of CITES through the Division of Management Authority and the Division of Scientific Authority. It works with numerous partners including federal and state agencies, industry groups, and conservation organizations (Source: US Fish and Wildlife Service).

With respect to conservation of species, there are several entities that are engaged in protection. The Department of Natural Resources is the lead organization, with several agencies governing specific aspects of environmental quality and conservation. The following agencies play a role in conserving species:

**The California Department of Fish and Wildlife’s mission is** “To manage California’s diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public.” The Department is also responsible for the issuance of any licenses for captive wildlife and welfare related issues for wild species.

**The Department of Conservation**’s mission is to balance the needs of today with tomorrow’s challenges and fosters intelligent, sustainable, and efficient use of California’s energy, land, and mineral resources. It supports laws and regulations relevant to land use and conservation initiatives.

At the County level, animal welfare is overseen by Sonoma County Animal Services, which is responsible for creating a balance between the population of domestic animals and responsible homes to care for them. Specifically, this unit has the following general responsibilities:

- Educate the public about responsible domestic animal ownership
- Investigate and prosecute animal cruelty, abuse, and neglect
- Place adoptable animals into caring homes
- Protect the health and safety of people and animals
- Provide a safe environment for animals in need
- Reduce pet overpopulation through spay/neuter programs

With a few additions to promotional materials and resources for the industry, significant progress can be made on this Criteria, as all the tools are there, simply linking to the tourism industry is recommended.

**D4. Recommendations**

1. Ensure laws and regulations pertaining to wildlife protection are noted in resources for tourism enterprises and guiding organizations.

2. Promote the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) within the tourism industry and to visitors, possible strategies include:
   a. Actively promote responsible wildlife-based tourism—tell people who enjoy wildlife viewing not just to talk about it on social media, but to get out and experience it!
   b. Raise awareness among visitors, customers in tourism and affiliated businesses about illegal wildlife trade and how they can assist in the fight, including by not buying illegal or unsustainably sourced wildlife products.
   c. Educate staff about illegal wildlife trade. Encourage them to be the eyes and ears of the police and empower them to always report any illegal activities and to share information with enforcement authorities.
   d. Most importantly, continue to invest and support local initiatives to protect wildlife while enhancing the visitor experience in Sonoma County.
   e. Promote protection of endangered species at the local level, including those species endangered in the Russian River watershed (see https://www.sonomawater.org/endangered-species).

3. Provide information to visitors about how to avoid trade in endangered species, including the purchase of souvenirs.

4. SCT to provide links on their website to laws and regulations as well as agencies involved with wildlife protection.
AREA OF FOCUS: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

D5. ENERGY CONSERVATION

The destination has targets to reduce energy consumption, improve efficiency in its use, as well as increase the use of renewable energy. The destination has a system to encourage enterprises to measure, monitor, reduce, and publicly report their contribution to these targets.

To assess Sonoma County against D5, Energy Conservation, interviews and site visits were held, and the following documents were reviewed:

- Climate Ready Sonoma County: Climate Hazards and Vulnerabilities December 2014
- Sonoma County 2016 Regional Climate Action Plan
- Sonoma County 2018 Climate Action Resolution
- Sonoma County Strategic Plan
- Sonoma County Tourism Strategic Plan
- Sonoma Water Climate Adaptation Plan 2021

Sonoma County scored very well on D5, with an overall score of 3.00, or “Excellent Performance.”

Sonoma County Division of Energy and Sustainability provides energy saving incentives for residents and businesses, including energy audits, financing options, rebates, and project consulting for solar installations. The Division also offers a Green Business Certification to incentivize businesses to operate sustainably and profitably. The Certification is provided to businesses who comply with all necessary environmental regulations and meet program standards for conserving energy, saving water, preventing pollution, and minimizing waste. The Division works with the following sectors:

- Architect/Remodelling
- Auto Body/Auto Repair
- Cleaning/Janitorial Services
- Dental/Medical offices
- Garment cleaners (wet or CO2 systems only)
- Home office
- Hotel/Lodging
- Landscape design
- Maintenance
- Office/Retail
- Painters
- Printers
- Restaurants
- Small manufacturing
- Small schools
- Solar electric designers and installers
- Wineries/Breweries

The Division of Energy and Sustainability also provided a workshop series in Spring 2022 that covered a range of topics, including rebates and financing; home electrification basics; practical drought solutions at home; water-energy saving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Energy consumption targets are publicized and promoted.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Program to increase energy efficiency – e.g., promoting and supporting insulation.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Investment in renewable energy and percent of total provision/consumption.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Support and incentives for energy monitoring and reduction by enterprises.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
resources for multi-family property owners; solar power and battery back-up basics; and wildfire safety tips.

Because tourism contributes to, suffers from, and potentially mitigates climate change, it must continuously address these issues for its own long-term sustainability. The Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) coordinates countywide climate protection efforts. To accomplish this, the RCPA’s stated aim is “to foster collaboration, help to set goals, pool resources, formalize partnerships, and work across silos.”

Additionally, initiatives such as Sonoma County’s Energy Independence Program (SCEIP) “gives property owners the option of financing permanent energy efficiency, water conservation, renewable generation, wildfire safety, and seismic strengthening projects. PACE financing is repaid as an assessment on the property’s regular tax bill.”

A full range of programs are highlighted on Sonoma Clean Power’s website (see https://sonomacleanpower.org/customer-programs), including rebates for e-bikes; commercial energy assistance programs; DIY energy home toolkits; electric vehicle incentives and options; and solar installation and financing options.

Other examples include the Windsor PAYS® (Pay as You Save) initiative, which is helping Windsor residents save water and energy through efficient product installations. To illustrate the importance of renewable energy, these are a few examples in Sonoma County that are leading the way in renewable energy investments:

- Sonoma County has also adopted CALGreen and the California Energy Code. CALGreen is California’s Green Building Standards code and applies to all newly constructed buildings and includes water-energy saving measures.
- The solar energy project at Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport will offset the Airport’s greenhouse gas emissions by generating enough clean, renewable electricity to power 100% of airport operations. Additionally, in September 2021, the Airport announced a partnership with The Good Traveler; “a first-of-its kind carbon offset program that allows passengers to reduce the carbon footprint of their travel.”

County staff have worked on climate actions for over 15 years. “Sonoma County recognizes continued and focused efforts in climate change prevention, coupled with mitigation and adaptation through behavioral change and resiliency efforts is imperative. In February 2020, the Board of Supervisors created a Climate Ad Hoc committee to begin identifying the immediate, mid-range and long-term climate actions of Sonoma County” (p.1, Sonoma County Climate Action Plan). Several goals are outlined within the Plan and include:

- a. Investing in the community to enhance resiliency and become carbon neutral by 2030
- b. Making all County facilities carbon free, zero waste, and resilient
- c. Maximizing sustainability and emissions reductions in all County fleet vehicles
- d. Maximizing opportunities for mitigation of climate change and adaptation through land conservation work and land use policies

Each goal is accompanied by objectives designed to create action and implementation (see https://socostrategicplan.org/climate-action-and-resiliency/).

In addition, SCT’s website recently introduced a carbon footprint calculator powered through Sustainable Travel International that allows visitors to reach carbon neutrality by offsetting their carbon emissions while enjoying Sonoma County.

Another venue promoting energy conservation is The California Green Lodging Program, who lists lodging properties that have attained either “Participation Level,” “Leadership Level,” or “Environmental Level” certification. Several Sonoma County lodging properties are part of this initiative, some have attained the highest level—Environmental Level—through achievement of a field survey score of 350 or more points, writing and acting upon an environmental policy, and meeting all the Program’s criteria, including:

- Conservation and management
- Environmentally and socially sensitive purchasing policies
- Reuse/recycling energy efficiency
› Waste management/hazardous materials management

› Waste minimization

SCT has some direct climate action initiatives noted in its strategic plan, which include:

*Continue to integrate responsible travel, climate change initiatives and overarching destination stewardship programming that helps reduce visitor impacts, eliminate travel-related carbon emissions, and continues to message a sustainable destination in sales and marketing materials (p. 21, Sonoma County Tourism Strategic Plan, 2021–23)*.

As noted above, this is set as a KPI, yet no measures are clearly outlined within the current plan. SCT is in the process of developing a Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan that will define areas of alignment with current County initiatives.

The proposed commendation and recommendation are intended to ensure forward momentum that may enhance SCT’s current efforts related to criterion D5.

**D5. Commendation**

1. Sonoma County is to be commended for its excellent work with respect to energy conservation.

**D5. Recommendation**

1. Clearly define energy conservation measures within the tourism industry as part of the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan.
D6. WATER STEWARDSHIP

The destination encourages enterprises to measure, monitor, publicly report and manage water usage. Water risk in the destination is assessed and documented. In cases of high-water risk, water stewardship goals are identified and actively pursued with enterprises, to ensure that tourism use does not conflict with the needs of local communities and ecosystems.

To assess Sonoma County against D6, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents were reviewed.

- California Water Boards
- Sonoma County Strategic Plan
- Sonoma County Tourism—Drought Toolkit
- Sonoma Water
- Sonoma Water Climate Adaptation Plan 2021

Sonoma County showed “Excellent Performance,” earning an overall score of 2.80 on Criteria D6.

Water is at the core of sustainable development and is critical for socio-economic development, healthy ecosystems, and for human survival. Water, especially fresh water, is one of the most critical natural resources. The tourism industry generally overuses water resources for hotels, swimming pools, golf courses, and tourists’ personal use. This can result in water shortages, degradation of water supplies, and a greater volume of wastewater.

Sonoma Water manages the water supply and maintains the water transmission system to nine cities and special districts. It provides drinking water to the following cities and special districts: City of Cotati, Marin Municipal Water District, North Marin Water District, City of Petaluma, City of Rohnert Park, City of Santa Rosa, City of Sonoma, Valley of the Moon Water District, Town of Windsor.

Sonoma Water also manages Sonoma County sanitation zones and districts, which provide wastewater collection/treatment, and recycled water distribution/disposal services for approximately 22,000 residences and businesses. The zones include Airport/Larkfield/Wikiup, Geyserville, Penngrove and Sea Ranch. The sanitation districts include the Occidental, Russian River, Sonoma Valley, and South Park County Sanitation Districts.

Sonoma Water also provides flood protection partnering with federal agencies to help build and manage a variety of flood protection projects, including Warm Springs Dam, Spring Lake, Coyote Valley Dam, Matanzas Creek Reservoir, Piner Creek Reservoir, Brush Creek Middle Fork Reservoir, and Spring Creek Reservoir. They also manage a proactive stream maintenance program that maintains more than 80 miles of creeks throughout their service area.

In addition, Sonoma Water partners with local water suppliers to supply water use efficiency programs that help save water by using it more efficiently and effectively. It provides environmental

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Provision of guidance and support for monitoring and reduction of water usage by enterprises.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Program to regularly assess water risk.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Setting, publication and enforcement of water stewardship goals, where water risk has been assessed as high.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Monitoring and control of sources and volume of water used for tourism purposes and its effect on local communities and ecosystems. Promotion and checking of adherence to goals by tourism enterprises.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Visitor information on water risk and minimizing water use.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
services related to compliance with environmental laws and regulations. In addition, the environmental staff works to improve the native fish resources of the Russian River and its tributaries by conducting and coordinating fishery enhancement projects.

Ensuring transparency and communications is prioritized by Sonoma Water. Its Community and Governmental Affairs Department manages public outreach and information, governmental affairs, water education, and water conservation functions.

Aquifer Storage and Recovery Project

Sonoma Water has also led the way in implementing an Aquifer Storage and Recovery Project (ASRP) that involves storage of highly treated surface water. The goal of the pilot study was to increase groundwater levels and improve groundwater quality; both groundwater quality and groundwater levels improved. The ASRP is the first of its kind in the North Bay region, and its success provides a blueprint for future permanent projects in the region. The ASRP also provides added resiliency during extreme droughts when water supplies are low.

Additionally, the North Bay Water Reuse Authority coordinates efforts of three counties and ten water and sanitation agencies to adopt source diversification approaches from a watershed perspective. Member agencies are invested in several recycled water projects to offset drinking water demands throughout the North Bay.

The County of Sonoma Department of Health Services and the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board employ ongoing monitoring of blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) along the Russian River. Currently, there are educational health advisories in place and the river is open to visitors. If conditions change and harmful algae blooms (HAB) and cyanobacteria increase, information will be posted on the County of Sonoma’s webpage to recommend added precautionary measures. Results of algal mat samples are posted on the County of Sonoma’s website for the Russian River, Salmon Creek Beach, and Gualala River. The county also posts healthy water habits for visitors for safe recreational water use.

In addition to ongoing monitoring of blue-green algae along the Russian River, the Department of Health Services Environmental Health & Safety Division also monitors bacterial levels in water at beaches along the Russian River. Weekly water samples are collected between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Sonoma Water posts responses to “Frequently Asked Questions” about Sonoma County water quality on their website. This posting also includes a comprehensive webpage of Sonoma Water’s commitment to water quality monitoring in the aftermath of fires, which dramatically increase the likelihood of flash floods, mud flows, and debris flows.

The latest Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) adopted by Sonoma Water includes a comprehensive list of water contingency goals and water conservation reduction targets. Sonoma Water lists various cities and water districts that provide a detailed list of water quality testing, including:

- City of Petaluma
- City of Rohnert Park
- City of Santa Rosa
- Town of Windsor

In addition to the Urban Water Management Plan, the Sonoma-Marin Saving Water Partnership has launched a public outreach campaign to encourage water conservation in the North Bay. To support its messaging, a regional tag line “Drought is still here. Save water.” has been adopted to advance water conservation goals. Some key accomplishments of the Partnership include:

- 177,850 square feet of lawn removed via cash for grass/mulch madness
- 13.5 million gallons of water saved through sustained reduction
- 3,863 gallons of rainwater harvesting capacity added
- 15,000 students reached at community outreach events

The Partnership also offers water conservation tips, a water savings calculator, and additional rebates and incentives for businesses and residents. The Sonoma-Marin Saving Water Partnership also reports regional changes in gallons per capita per day (GPCD). While California’s Water Conservation Act called for a 20% reduction in statewide urban per capita water use by 2020, the regional partnership...
set a target of 142 GPCD and achieved a 100 GPCD in 2015, exceeding the interim target. The achievement was recognized by the State’s Department of Water Resources (DWR). The 2020 target of 129 GPCD was reported in the 2020 UWMP.

The tourism industry’s involvement in water reduction programs includes Sonoma County’s Tourism’s Drought toolkit webpage that amplifies the “Drought is still here. Save water.” campaign and provides an expanded list of resources for its partners, including water conservation tips, and free on-site water conservation surveys. In addition to the Tourism’s Drought toolkit webpage, SCT’s partner, Russian Riverkeeper, frequently communicates the safety of swimming in the river through articles and frequently asked questions on its website (see https://russianriverkeeper.org/safe-to-swim/).

Additionally, Sonoma County Regional Parks also posts water quality testing results at popular locations such as Spring Lake (chlorinated and circulated throughout the swimming season) and Russian River beaches on its website.

D6. Commendation

1. Sonoma County is to be commended for its water stewardship. Several organizations collaborate on water quality, monitoring, risk, and information, including tourism, parks, and community organizations, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to water related issues, challenges, and protection in Sonoma County.

D6. Recommendation

1. The tourism sector could engage with the water sector and its stakeholders’ to track water stewardship goals and impacts on local communities and ecosystems within Sonoma County.

Photo credit: Sonoma County Tourism
D7. WATER QUALITY

The destination monitors water quality for drinking, recreational and ecological purposes using quality standards. The monitoring results are publicly available, and the destination has a system to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues. The destination monitors water quality for drinking, recreational and ecological purposes using quality standards. The monitoring results are publicly available, and the destination has a system to respond in a timely manner to water quality issues.

To assess Sonoma County against D7, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents were reviewed:

- California Water Boards (see https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/)
- Sonoma County Strategic Plan (see https://socostrategicplan.org/)
- Sonoma County Tourism (see http://Sonomacounty.com/partners/drought)
- Sonoma County Water Climate Adaptation Plan 2021
- Sonoma Water (see https://www.sonomawater.org/Drought)

Sonoma County received an “Excellent Performance” score of **3.00** on Criteria D7.

An increase in use and overcrowded conditions due to tourism can lead to water quality issues—which is a threat to health and safety. Sonoma County is committed to maintaining water quality and regular reporting. Further, Sonoma Water publishes a website on water quality and posts answers to frequently asked questions concerning water quality, testing, and other information available through the County of Sonoma Department of Health Services (see https://www.sonomawater.org/water-quality). The water quality monitoring is done in real-time and communicated daily, with summary reports submitted monthly.

In addition, the State Water Board publishes information on what is measured and acceptable levels of various elements within drinking water for the entire state (see https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/programs/index.html).

SCT provides information on water quality which is linked via its Partner Tool Kit (also publicly available through Sonoma Water), as well as other partners such as Russian Riverkeeper and Sonoma County Regional Parks.

D7. Commendation

1. Sonoma County supports transparency and regular reporting on water quality, has regular and sustained monitoring, and communicates results to residents and visitors alike. This information is shared widely across many organizations, including government and non-profit organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  Program of water quality monitoring.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  Existence of data and reports on water quality.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Monitoring bathing water, with certification and identification of sites reaching set standards.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D  Evidence of actions to improve water quality.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E  Information for visitors on quality of local drinking water, to encourage use as alternative to bottled water.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Score/Average:** 3.00
AREA OF FOCUS: MANAGEMENT OF WASTE & EMISSIONS

D8. WASTEWATER

The destination has clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance, and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems. The destination ensures that wastes are properly treated and reused or released safely without adverse impacts on the local population and the environment.

To assess Sonoma County against D8, the following sites and documents/websites were utilized in this review:

- Sonoma Water (see https://www.sonomawater.org/sanitation)
  - Airport/Larkfield/Wikiup Sanitation Zone
  - Geyserville Sanitation Zone
  - Occidental County Sanitation District
  - Penngrove Sanitation Zone
  - Russian River County Sanitation District
  - Sea Ranch Sanitation Zone
  - Sonoma Valley County Sanitation District
  - South Park County Sanitation District

Sonoma County received an “Excellent Performance” score with an overall score of **3.00** on Criteria D8.

Construction of hotels, recreation sites, and service facilities often leads to increased sewage pollution. Wastewater has polluted seas, lakes, and rivers surrounding tourist attractions, damaging the health of the environment. Sewage runoff has the potential to cause harm in both freshwater and marine environments. Changes in salinity and siltation can have widespread impacts on coastal environments. And, sewage pollution can threaten the health of all living beings.

Sonoma Water manages and operates eight sanitation districts in Sonoma County. Sonoma Water’s Environmental Services Division implements pollution prevention and source control programs throughout all its districts and zones. The aim of these programs is to keep treatment facilities in regulatory compliance and prevent pollutants from reaching waterways through Sonoma Water’s facilities. The Division does this by providing outreach and education to the users of its facilities and by conducting inspections, reviewing building plans, and requiring pre-treatment at industrial and commercial facilities.

Sonoma Water follows set sanitation codes and standards which are uniform requirements for contributors to the wastewater collection and treatment systems of Sonoma Water, and enables Sonoma Water to comply with all applicable state and federal laws required by the Clean Water Act of 1977, as amended, and the General Pre-treatment Regulations (40 CFR Part 403) which are on file at Sonoma Water’s administrative office (see https://www.sonomawater.org/sanitation-codes).

**D8. Commendation**

1. Sonoma County supports transparency and regular reporting on wastewater management, has regular and sustained monitoring, and communicates results to residents and visitors. This information is shared widely across many organizations, including government and non-profit organizations.

### TABLE D8. Wastewater Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Program of water quality monitoring.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Existence of data and reports on water quality.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Monitoring bathing water, with certification and identification of sites reaching set standards.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Evidence of actions to improve water quality.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Score/Average:** 3.00
D9. SOLID WASTE

The destination measures and reports on its generation of waste and sets targets for its reduction. It ensures solid waste is properly treated and diverted from landfill, with provision of a multiple-stream collection and recycling system which effectively separates waste by type. The destination encourages enterprises to avoid, reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste, including food waste. Action is taken to eliminate or reduce single-use items, especially plastics. Any residual solid waste that is not reused or recycled is disposed of safely and sustainably.

To assess Sonoma County against D9, the following sites, documents, and websites were utilized in this review.

- Recology Sonoma Marin
- Sonoma Garbage Collectors (Within Sonoma City Limits)
- Sonoma County Resource Recovery (within Windsor city limits)
- Zero Waste Sonoma

Sonoma County scored very well. It received an overall score of 2.75 on Criteria D9, or “Excellent Performance.”

Solid waste generation is considered one of the most relevant environmental impacts from tourism activities, especially since many establishments that make up the tourism sector, such as hotels, bars, and restaurants, use large quantities of expendable single-use consumer goods within their operations. In addition, tourists are not always aware of how waste management functions within a specific region. Due to the relatively short stay of most tourists, education is critical to understanding local recycling and solid waste management programs in a practical way.

Zero Waste Sonoma, Sonoma County’s waste management agency, is the joint powers authority for the unincorporated area and nine cities and towns in Sonoma County. Zero Waste Sonoma is the local government entity for all things related to household hazardous waste, organics, municipal composting, public education, and planning for recycling and solid waste disposal. Zero Waste Sonoma helps residents and businesses in Sonoma County to reduce, reuse, recycle, and discard all materials in the safest and most environmentally responsible way possible.

Although not specific to tourism enterprises, Zero Waste Sonoma has an online “Zero waste shout out form” to recognize businesses that are...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Waste monitoring program, with results and targets published.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Coordinated campaign advice/support with tourism enterprises on waste management, including food waste.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Campaign to reduce/eliminate single use items, especially plastics.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Waste management program for public offices and facilities.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Provision of a collection and recycling system, with at least four streams (i.e., organic, paper, metal, glass, and plastic).</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Provision of sustainable system for disposal of residual waste.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Campaign to eliminate dropping of litter, including by visitors, and to keep public spaces clean.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Adequate bins for separated waste disposal.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall score for D9 is 2.75.
leading the way in recycling, reusing materials, and repairing products. Its website also includes a non-compliance reporting form for reporting use and sale of disposable food service ware and other products containing polystyrene foam, with the goal of banning the sale of certain polystyrene foam products and limiting the use of non-recyclable or non-compostable disposable food ware, and food ware containing fluorinated chemicals. The ordinance states:

Any person who, while on county premises, willfully possesses, gives, receives, lends, offers, or exposes for sale, uses, delivers, furnishes, transfers, or disposes of any polystyrene foam food packaging is guilty of an infraction, punishable by a fine not exceeding two-hundred fifty dollars ($250.00).

At the organizational level, SCT empowers adoption of waste minimization principles through several initiatives:

1. **Adopted Roads**

In 2021, Sonoma County Tourism adopted five one mile stretches of road throughout Sonoma County (one in each supervisorial district). Our three-year agreement with Sonoma County Transportation and Public Works will see SCT hold a minimum of 10 roadside cleanups a year. Additionally, SCT encourages our hospitality partners to join us in adopting roads of their own through Sonoma County Transportation & Public Works.

   a. **District 1 (Glen Ellen):** Arnold Drive  
      Hwy 12 exit through Chauvet Road Map

   b. **District 2 (Penngrove):** Main St./Petaluma Hill Road  
      E. Railroad Ave through Woodward Ave Map

   c. **District 3 (S. Santa Rosa):** Petaluma Hill Road  
      Old PHR/Winterhaven through Hopi Trail Map

   d. **District 4 (N. Santa Rosa):** Airport Blvd.  
      Aviation Blvd. to Flightline Dr. Map

   e. **District 5 (Guerneville):** Armstrong Woods Road  
      Main Street/River Road to Armstrong Court Map

2. **Rewards for Rubbish**

   - Sonoma County Tourism is running a pilot program called Rewards for Rubbish, which incentivizes volunteers to collect litter in exchange for treats and prizes.
   - Participating businesses display a poster promoting the program, and when customers ask to take part, the businesses direct volunteers to sign an e-waiver on sonomacounty.com before issuing volunteers a trash bag and gloves. Volunteers then pick up trash, returning the bags to the businesses in exchange for a small reward.
   - Participating businesses have the option of issuing volunteers rewards provided by Sonoma County Tourism, or items produced by the business (a cookie, pastry, etc.) with SCT compensating businesses, at-cost, for the incentives issued.
   - Businesses joining the Rewards for Rubbish program agree to participate for one year, or until the business has reached fifty volunteers, whichever comes first.
   - The pilot program is limited to 20 businesses, 10 of those located along the coast and 10 within the Russian River area.
   - If successful, the program may expand beyond the coast and Russian River, or may increase the number of participating businesses in those areas.
   - Although created, managed, and funded by SCT, Rewards For Rubbish is promoted as a co-venture with the **Russian River Confluence** for businesses within the Russian River area.

3. **Leave No Trace**

SCT’s website lists the “Trash your trash and pick up pet waste,” one of the seven Leave No Trace principles:

If you bring it into the outdoors, take it back with you. Discarded to-go containers, soda cans, plastic floats, etc. all have far-reaching, negative impacts on wildlife and the environment. Don’t forget about responsibility when it comes to human and pet waste.

   - Pack it in, pack it out. Trash hurts wildlife and contaminates waterways. Pack out everything you pack in—or be a hero and pick up other trash and litter to leave the place better than you found it.
   - If a trash can is full, pack it, don’t stack it. Don’t contribute to overflowing trash cans in parks.
Take your garbage with you until you can dispose of it properly.

- Take your raft or tube home with you. You brought it along—don’t leave it behind. When left on shore or in the water, rafts, tubes and other floats harm wildlife and the river ecosystem.

- Keep water clean. Soap, food, human or pet waste in lakes or streams causes harm to wildlife and contaminates waterways. Be at least 200 feet or 70 big steps away from all water sources when cleaning or using soap.

- When you must go, use restrooms or outhouses. Going to the bathroom off trail or by the side of the road in a neighborhood may lead to area closures.

- Pick up pet waste and dispose of it in a trash can. Compared to wildlife or grazing animals, pet waste contains harmful bacteria that cause human illness and contaminate the natural environment.

- Pack out all fishing lines and hooks. Discarded fishing line and hooks cause unnecessary harm to birds and other aquatic wildlife. An accidentally swallowed fishing hook can lead to suffering and death.

SCT also has marketing initiatives that highlight waste minimization include the Cultivated Series, for example, featuring renowned chef Duskie Estes, Executive Director of Farm to Pantry, who is committed to reducing food waste while realizing that “every farm produces more than it actually needs in order to have enough to sell in the marketplace.”

Additionally, County of Sonoma Department of Transportation and Public Works announces community roadside cleanup events, with the goal of cleaning up litter along county roads made possible by various non-profit organizations and community partners.

**D9. Commendation**

1. Sonoma County supports a coordinated trash management program and partners non-profit efforts with public efforts to reduce waste and encourage recycling.

**D9. Recommendations**

1. SCT could support an industry campaign with respect to food waste, waste management, and educational efforts.

2. SCT could support an industry wide campaign to reduce, if not ban plastics.
D10. GHG EMISSIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

The destination has targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implements and reports on mitigation policies and actions. Enterprises are encouraged to measure, monitor, reduce or minimize, publicly report, and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation (including from suppliers and service providers). Offsetting of any remaining emissions is encouraged.

To assess Sonoma County against D10, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents were reviewed:

- Climate Action 2020: A Regional Program for Sonoma County Communities
- Climate Ready Sonoma County: Climate Hazards and Vulnerabilities December 2014
- Sonoma County 2016 Regional Climate Action Plan
- Sonoma County 2018 Climate Action Resolution
- Sonoma County Strategic Plan (see https://socostrategicplan.org/)
- Sonoma County Tourism Strategic Plan
- Sonoma County Water Climate Adaptation Plan 2021

Sonoma County received an overall score of 3.00 on Criteria D10, or “Excellent Performance.”

The tourism industry is closely linked to climate change as it involves the movement of people from their homes to other destinations and accommodating and servicing these people in host locations prior to their returning home. Many aspects of this business cycle are accompanied by a heavy carbon footprint. As more time and money are dedicated to leisure, the tourism industry is playing a larger role in global greenhouse gas emissions. Mitigation in the tourism sector can be achieved by reducing energy use through changes in travel behavior, improving energy efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy, carbon offsetting strategies, and changes within business operations and practice.

The Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) highlights Sonoma County’s emissions reduction targets and highlights these in the Climate Action 2020 Plan. The RCPA partners with the scientific community to understand the local implications of climate change. Together they work to model and monitor climate trends with the North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative, Pepperwood Preserve, the Sonoma Ecology Center, the US Geological Survey, Sonoma Water, and the Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. The Climate Hazards and Vulnerabilities Report provides an overview of what is known about local climate impacts.

SCT has a page on its website devoted to information about how to be a good steward when visiting Sonoma County. A carbon footprint calculator provides a way for visitors to calculate and offset emissions. Additionally, SCT meets and collaborates with Sustainable Travel International to deepen their relationship and explore incentive programs to offset visitors’ carbon footprint with the goal of making Sonoma County a carbon neutral destination. Travelers flying through Sonoma County’s Charles M. Schulz airport have the option of purchasing offsets for their flight using the “The Good Traveler” carbon offset calculator.

D10. Commendation

1. Sonoma County has experienced first-hand the impacts of climate change and is taking great strides to reduce GHG and support adaptation as well as reduction efforts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Published target for percentage of emissions reduction by specified date.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Annual climate report, including monitoring and mitigation actions.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Supported campaign or other engagement with tourism enterprises on reduction and mitigation of emissions.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Action to reduce emissions from public sector operations.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Information for enterprises and visitors on offsetting schemes that meet recognized standards.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sonoma County Tourism | www.gstcouncil.org
D11. LOW-IMPACT TRANSPORTATION

The destination has targets to reduce transport emissions from travel to and within the destination. An increase in the use of sustainable, low-emissions vehicles and public transport and active travel (e.g., walking and cycling) is sought to reduce the contribution of tourism to air pollution, congestion, and climate change.

To assess Sonoma County against D11, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents were reviewed:

- Climate Action 2020: A Regional Program for Sonoma County Communities
- Climate Ready Sonoma County: Climate Hazards and Vulnerabilities December 2014
- Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District
- Sonoma Clean Power
- Sonoma Climate Mobilization Strategy
- Sonoma County 2016 Regional Climate Action Plan
- Sonoma County 2018 Climate Action Resolution
- Sonoma County Strategic Plan (see https://socostrategicplan.org/)
- Sonoma County Tourism Strategic Plan
- Sonoma County Water Climate Adaptation Plan 2021

Sonoma County obtained an overall score of 2.33 on Criteria D11, or “Good Performance.”

Sustainable, low-impact transportation systems make positive contributions to the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the communities they serve. These systems limit emissions and waste and use renewable resources at or below their rates of generation while minimizing impact on land use and generation of noise. According to the Strategy,

Emissions from the burning of fossil fuels to power Sonoma County’s transportation system contributed approximately 60 percent of its total greenhouse gas emissions in 2018. Transportation emissions have increased from 1.9 million metric tons carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO2e) in 1990 to over 2 million MTCO2e in 2018—an increase of 7 percent. Almost 93 percent of the 2018 transportation sector emissions were from on-road transportation (cars, motorcycles, trucks, and buses). Most of the remaining 7 percent consisted of emissions from off-road equipment such as construction and farm equipment. Less than 1 percent of total transportation emissions were from the SMART diesel-powered commuter rail system, which began service in 2017. Between the greenhouse gas inventory base year of 1990 and the 2018 inventory, total county population increased by 29 percent and vehicle miles traveled per capita increased 18 percent. During the same time, per capita greenhouse gas emissions from on-road transportation decreased by approximately 14 percent. The decrease in emissions is attributed to improvements in vehicle fuel efficiency and an increasing shift toward hybrid, plug-in hybrid, and battery electric vehicles. The strategies in this section focus on increasing transportation options, reducing vehicle miles traveled, and shifting from fossil fuels to electricity. (p. 13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Investment in more sustainable transport infrastructure, including public transport and low emissions vehicles.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Information promoted to visitors on alternative transport options to and within the destination</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Data on visitor use of alternative transport modes.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Improvement and promotion of cycling and walking opportunities.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Prioritization of visitor markets accessible by short and more sustainable transport options.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Public sector and tourism enterprises prioritize low-impact transportation in their own operations.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE D11. Low Impact Transportation**

Sonoma County obtained an overall score of **2.33** on Criteria D11, or “Good Performance.”
Sonoma County has undergone several initiatives to address low-impact transportation needs. There are many examples of these initiatives. For example, Sonoma Clean Power provides a comprehensive listing of electric vehicle incentives, including clean fuel rebates, clean vehicle rebates, and federal tax credits. Additional benefits include quick access to the carpool lane using the clean air vehicle decal. In addition, the Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District provides incentives for residents and businesses to expand their charging infrastructure, which contributes to reduction of GHG and pollution.

The Sonoma County Transportation Authority’s Annual 2021 Report provides status-to-date program updates on the expansion of the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) District, and Bicycle Pedestrian Projects (see 2021 SCTA Annual Report).

Objectives of the Sonoma Climate Mobilization Strategy’s EV Access for All Partnership Goal are to:

- Create an accessible and affordable EV assistance service to connect low-income residents, students, and seniors with existing EV incentives, financing, and education initiatives

- Develop a package of local ordinances and other actions to address remaining permitting barriers for installing charging equipment, while also limiting permitting of new fossil fuel infrastructure

- Increase the use of heavy-duty EVs, such as public transit buses, school buses, and refuse collection trucks through infrastructure planning at central yards and support for state and federal incentive applications

- Support the use of electric bicycles and other lightweight electric utility vehicles through an awareness campaign and incentives strategically focused on specific media market segments that best reach members of frontline communities

- Work with regional partners and local businesses to develop over 10,000 public and workplace charging stations in Sonoma County by 2027, emphasizing the installation of charging stations in rental properties in frontline communities

Sonoma County’s Drive Less Sonoma County Campaign has the goal of “making it easier to get around Sonoma County without a car.” It has the objective of implementing a broad network of low-stress bike and pedestrian facilities (e.g., pathways, bike lanes, sidewalks) connecting to major bus and rail transit hubs, schools, employment centers, medical facilities, and other key destinations as identified in the SCTA Travel Behavior Study.

SCT provides a comprehensive list of transportation options on its website. It also highlights alternative transportation options such as the SMART train. Additionally, the Friends of Smart, a citizens advocacy group is dedicated to furthering reliable public transportation in Sonoma County.

Innovative companies such as Pushpak Motors, Inc. offer 3- and 5-hour micro mobility electric transportation (three-wheel) tours to experience Sonoma County wine and culture. Organizations such as EcoRing advocate for an 84-mile Sonoma-Marin Adventure Trail that links from bayside Sausalito to the Russian River redwoods at Cazadero. The proposed Trail will traverse rolling oak woodland hills, bucolic farmlands, ancient forests, and provide views of San Francisco Bay and Tomales Bay. The low impact transportation pathway would wind through Marin and Sonoma Counties and provide alternative ways of experiencing Sonoma County and its diverse landscape. Other businesses such as Getaway Adventures & Rentals provides biking, hiking, and kayaking adventures in Sonoma County.

D11. Commendation

1. Sonoma County supports a range of alternative transportation mechanisms to visit and experience the area. Hence, recommendations are focused on expanding the move from individual fossil fuel transportation to low-impact transportation.

D11. Recommendations

1. Demonstrate and tell the story of prioritizing Sonoma County’s low-impact transportation operations.

2. Prioritize alternative low-impact transportation on the SCT website, perhaps categorizing sustainable options.

3. When campaigns are initiated, monitor data on visitor’s use of alternative transportation modes through surveys, geotagging, etc.
D12. LIGHT AND NOISE POLLUTION

The destination has guidelines and regulations to minimize light and noise pollution. The destination encourages enterprises to follow these guidelines and regulations.

To assess Sonoma County against D12, interviews and site visits were conducted, and the following documents were reviewed:

- Sonoma County Airport—Sonoma County Ordinance, Chapter 3, Airport; Article III: Noise Control
- Sonoma County light ordinances
- Sonoma County noise limits (Vacation Rentals)
- Sonoma County noise ordinances
- Sonoma County Ordinance—Sec 23-12: use and operation of motorboats at acceptable noise levels on the Russian River
- Sonoma County Zoning Ordinances for developments

Sonoma County scored well, receiving an overall score of 2.33 on Criteria D12, or a rating of “Good Performance.”

The inappropriate or excessive use of artificial light—known as light pollution—inhibits the observation of stars and planets and can also have serious environmental consequences for humans, wildlife, and the climate. Noise pollution refers to unwanted sound that either interferes with normal activities such as sleeping, conversation, or disrupts or diminishes one’s quality of life. Both factors can be detrimental to the experiences provided in a tourism destination.

Sonoma County has several ordinances that address light and noise pollution depending on how the area is zoned. There are also noise ordinances specific to vacation rentals. Noise ordinances also apply to the Russian River Valley concerning the operation of motorized craft. While several ordinances are in place and protect soundscapes and dark sky as resources, tourism can play a greater role in supporting them through education and the promotion of dark sky guidelines.

D12. Commendation

1. Sonoma County Ordinances address noise and light pollution as well as limits for commercial enterprises and developments.

D12. Recommendations

1. Consider developing partnerships with the International Dark Sky Association.
2. Develop guidelines on light and noise pollution specifically for tourism enterprises in line with County Ordinances.
3. Support training and education focused on maintaining Sonoma County’s dark sky assets, like the Leave No Trace partnership, and protect dark skies and soundscapes through monitoring and continued collaboration with tourism enterprises.

### TABLE D12. Light and Noise Pollution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators Evaluated</th>
<th>Score/Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Guidelines on light and noise pollution – produced and promoted to tourism enterprises.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Identification and monitoring of potential sources of noise and light pollution related to tourism.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Mechanisms to enable residents to report noise and light pollution, with follow-up action.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

Sonoma County is advancing and in some cases pioneering sustainable tourism in the destination in many ways. As the nation’s first Destination Marketing Organization to transition to a Destination Stewardship Organization, it embraced stewardship and sustainability as a foundational part of its brand. SCT is partnered with the Sonoma County Regional Parks (a government agency) in a program with Leave No Trace that provides a practical list of principles SCT and Regional Parks customized to integrate the issues and opportunities specific to this region. Through this partnership with Leave No Trace, an additional partnership with Mendocino and Marin Counties has begun, creating a three-county commitment to reducing litter and waste in coastal regions and watersheds. As SCT continues its sustainability, stewardship, and resiliency building in the region, the following recommendations should help it to prioritize its focus and partnership engagement within the framework of the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Master Plan.

RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES

SECTION A. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT (OVERALL SCORE, 2.60)

Sonoma County is well on its way to ensuring a viable management system for destination level sustainable tourism work. The primary areas to focus on within this pillar are as follows:

- Monitoring and Reporting
- Resident Engagement and Feedback
- Visitor Engagement and Feedback

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations are made with respect to the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan. Even though SCT cannot lead the way in this entire initiative, it may be able to accomplish these recommendations through partnerships.

A. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT—SCT LEAD

1. Initiate a SCT Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan to include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that demonstrate implementation successes.

2. Implement a dedicated landing page that demonstrates key milestones and outcomes associated with the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan.

3. Continue to update bios to the SCT staff web page, demonstrating their qualifications and the organization’s commitment to hiring and supporting individuals with a prominent level of experience.

4. Publish recent stakeholder engagement meeting outcomes, as identified in SCT plans.

5. Demonstrate where tourism aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. Explore GSTC-Accredited Certification programs to further engage sustainability initiatives for travel and tourism enterprises.

7. Explore additional programs to engage all types of tourism operations in sustainability initiatives, including the outdoor recreation industry, events and entertainment, and cultural heritage sites.

8. Track the number and percentage of businesses certified against tourism sustainability standards, with targets for wider outreach.

9. When the master plan is completed, clearly communicate, and demonstrate actions taken based on resident input to residents and the public.

10. Continue to update residents and provide information sessions through AHP and other partners, on SCT initiatives.

11. Develop at least one mechanism to regularly obtain resident input and feedback.
12. Once all visitor feedback mechanisms are in place, clearly demonstrate and communicate actions taken based on visitor feedback to residents, businesses and the Sonoma County community.

13. Consider offering a webinar or other accessible channel for resident education, building upon the agenda used to guide the “Let’s Talk Tourism” listening sessions.

14. Provide mechanisms and evidence of consultation with the local community and cultural organizations on content and messaging.

15. Document the process for regularly checking accuracy and appropriateness of content promoted by SCT.

16. As planned, implement geo-tracking to accurately monitor visitor flows and volume throughout the year, which will assist with measuring impacts of activities and assessing destination needs.

17. Demonstrate actions taken to support findings from visitor flow monitoring.

18. Consider venues for on-going/regular consultation with Indigenous people and minority ethnic groups to address social inequities specific to tourism, such as affordable housing, livable wages, and training and education opportunities to enhance job advancement.

19. Consider the addition of a permanent tribal representative to the SCT Board for example, to ensure the continuation of open and regular communication.

A. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT—SCT PARTNER

1. Document level of resident participation in the mechanism(s) used to obtain input and continue to document and make summaries of their input publicly available.

2. Continue to communicate actions taken to support findings/results from visitor flow monitoring, addressing “hotspots” and hot topics (e.g., Russian River partnerships).

3. SCT is currently working on a Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan. As part of the plan, consider how to integrate with the Sonoma County Climate Action and Resilience Plan.

4. Continue to coordinate and promote the advances of the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) office on advancements in communication (wireless emergency, radio information).

5. Promote and facilitate workshops identified by SCDRP (DEM) for every sector of the tourism industry.


SECTION B. SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY (OVERALL SCORE, 2.53)

Two areas to focus on within the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan are “Access for All” and “Preventing Exploitation and Discrimination.” Based on this analysis, the following recommendations are made with respect to the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan.
B. SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY—SCT LEAD

1. As SCT gears up to explore its volunteer engagement programs, continue to partner with local organizations aligned with SCT’s initiatives.

2. Continue to support and cultivate case studies on sustainability successes and initiatives, such as the Sustainable Travel: Where Next? Documentary Series featuring the Sonoma County: Sunshine video (e.g., cultivate sustainability initiatives through storytelling).

3. SCT should encourage the development of a program to ensure key tourism entities/organizations are signatories on the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (see https://www.ecpatusa.org/code).

4. SCT should also provide access to the various programs, (e.g., “Clean + Safe,” Food Facility Inspection information, etc.) through its visitor communication materials.

5. Consider, as part of visitor surveys, adding questions on safety and security, and knowledge of emergency response resources.

B. SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY—SCT PARTNER

1. Promote the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry as a viable career path by utilizing the varied educational institutions in Sonoma County.

2. Work with the tourism industry to create ongoing industry opportunities in Sonoma County.

3. SCT could partner with existing programs on an anti-human trafficking campaign, such as those seen in most international airports.

4. SCT should encourage the development of a program to ensure key tourism entities/organizations are signatories on the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism.

5. Incorporate “Access for All” concepts in all SCT visitor promotion and guidance materials, creating a directory of accessible tourism businesses, amenities, experiences, into one location easy to access and use.

6. Create accessibility resources generally within the inspiration guides and provide links to pages such as the CA Accessible Parks for All.

SECTION C. CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY (OVERALL SCORE, 2.42)

Three areas to focus on within the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan are as follows:

- Cultural Artifacts
- Intellectual Property
- Visitor Management at Cultural Sites

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations are made with respect to the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan.

C. CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY—SCT LEAD

1. Continue to support cultural site visitation through inspiration guides, linking brochures to on-line sites such as the California State Park Historic Sites Visitor Information Guide.

2. Consider cultivating additional stories on the cultural heritage of Sonoma County and build upon the diverse representation of cultural and historical heritage experiences featured on the SCT website.

3. Communicate support for artifact preservation, and responsible behaviors towards artifacts and historic/cultural sites in the Kind Traveler and stewardship materials.

4. Continue to promote the intangible heritage of cultural sites and artifacts.

5. Consider various ways to expand feedback from visitors and residents regarding their intangible heritage experiences.

6. In consultation with Native Tribes, and as per their wishes, highlight in the curated area of the SCT website, the meaningful stories of cultural and traditional access efforts of Native Tribes within Sonoma County.
7. Expand ways to support intellectual property rights as relevant to the tourism sector, including webinars and distribution of information through various communication channels.

8. Link interpretive and visitor information at one focused location for historic and cultural sites.

9. Identify areas of high visitation to increase the availability of interpretive information in Spanish (and additional languages) based on visitation.

C. CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY—SCT PARTNER

1. Work with industry stakeholders, parks, Tribal organizations, and non-profits to develop a code of practice for those visiting cultural heritage sites.

2. Develop a code of practice for tour operators, guides, and visitors.

3. Develop these codes of conduct through local community and expert (groups) or cultural NGO engagement and agreement.

SECTION D. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY (OVERALL SCORE, 2.61)

Species Exploitation and Animal Welfare should be focused upon in the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan.

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations are made with respect to the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan:

D. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY—SCT LEAD

1. Continue to engage in specific communication programs expanding responsible tourism messaging to address specific issues and resources related to alien species abatement and forest fire awareness in Sonoma County.

2. Continue to support environmental organizations through links and promotion, building on volunteer efforts to mitigate impacts of visitation on biodiversity at specific sites.

3. Work with universities, community colleges, conservation organizations, and community parks departments to promote skill sets for tourism guides to natural areas.
4. Develop a code of practice for tour operators utilizing natural areas for facilitating visitor experiences (e.g., Backroads using regional parks).

5. Promote guide training programs that currently exist at universities, colleges, and parks; docent training programs; and via commercial operators that support guide training.

6. Create a feedback loop for understanding visitor impacts, assist organizations with messaging, and support efforts to minimize identified impacts.

7. Endorse standards and guidelines promoted by Marine Protected Areas, Leave No Trace, and the many non-profit organizations that support wildlife conservation, through website links, promotional endorsements, and communications outlets.

8. Provide links on SCT’s website to laws and regulations as well as agencies involved with wildlife protection.

9. Ensure laws and regulations pertaining to wildlife protection are noted in resources for tourism enterprises and guiding organizations.

10. Promote the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) within the tourism industry and to visitors.

11. Provide information to visitors about how to avoid trade in endangered species, including the purchase of souvenirs.

12. Clearly define energy conservation measures within the tourism industry as part of the Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan.

13. The tourism sector could engage with the water sector and its stakeholders’ to track water stewardship goals and impacts on local communities and ecosystems within Sonoma County.

14. SCT could support an industry campaign with respect to food waste, waste management educational efforts.

15. Prioritize alternative low-impact transportation on the SCT website, perhaps categorizing sustainable options.

16. When campaigns are initiated, monitor data on visitor’s use of alternative transportation modes through surveys, geotagging, etc.

17. Demonstrate and tell the story of prioritizing Sonoma County’s low-impact transportation operations.

D. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY—SCT PARTNER

1. SCT could influence an industry wide campaign to reduce if not ban plastics.

2. Continue to utilize tourism entities, enterprises, and information channels to prepare visitors for responsible travel, providing guidance on safety, alien species, wildlife, and other important information contributing to environmental stewardship.

3. Work with universities, community colleges, conservation organizations, and community parks departments to promote skill sets for tourism guides.

4. Promote LNT principles to tour operators utilizing natural areas for facilitating visitor experiences (e.g., Backroads using Regional Parks).

5. Promote guide training programs that currently exist at universities, colleges, and parks; through docent training programs and via commercial operators that support guide training.

6. Implement Leave No Trace education programs, as outlined in the Sonoma County Leave No Trace Five Year Stewardship Action Framework (2022-2027), monitor and promote the number of tourism enterprises participating in courses.

7. With sensitive areas, such as sea lion breeding areas, add seasonal cautions and guidelines consistent with regulations and guidance provided by relevant authorities.

8. Ensure laws and regulations pertaining to wildlife protection are noted in resources for tourism enterprises and guiding organizations.

9. Promote the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) within
the tourism industry and to visitors, possible strategies include:

a. Actively promote responsible wildlife-based tourism—tell people who enjoy wildlife viewing not just to talk about it on social media, but to get out and experience it!

b. Raise awareness among visitors, customers in tourism and affiliated businesses about illegal wildlife trade and how they can assist in the fight, including by not buying illegal or unsustainably sourced wildlife products.

c. Educate staff about illegal wildlife trade. Encourage them to be the eyes and ears of the police and empower them to always report any illegal activities and to share information with enforcement authorities, and

d. Most importantly, continue to invest and support local initiatives to protect wildlife while enhancing the visitor experience in Sonoma County.

e. Promote protection of endangered species at the local level, including those species endangered in the Russian River watershed (see https://www.sonomawater.org/endangered-species).

9. Provide information to visitors about how to avoid trade in endangered species, including the purchase of souvenirs.

10. Develop guidelines for light and noise pollution specifically for tourism enterprises in line with County Ordinances.

11. Consider developing partnerships with the International Dark Sky Association.

12. Support training and education focused on maintaining Sonoma County’s dark sky assets, like the Leave No Trace partnership, and protect dark skies and soundscapes through monitoring and continued collaboration with tourism enterprises.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: FINDING OF GOOD PRACTICE

A. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

A2. DESTINATION STRATEGY AND ACTIONS PLAN

The SCT Strategic Plan outlined three priorities: Business Recovery—where research, sales, and marketing initiatives exist; Destination Stewardship or programming which is centred around encouraging responsible travel and helping ensure visitors can enhance rather than destroy Sonoma County’s resources; and Organizational Sustainability—critical initiatives designed to elevate the capacity of SCT to better serve the tourism-facing businesses and, ultimately, the entire County.

The Plan includes several new programs, including the Accredited Hospitality Professional (a workforce development initiative), partnerships with Sonoma County Regional Parks and Leave No Trace, and innovative sales and marketing campaigns. All the innovative programs are expected to help SCT accomplish its goals and to align with the three priorities documented in the SCT Strategic Plan. In addition, SCT is currently in the process of developing a Destination Stewardship and Resilience Plan, which includes securing insight from stakeholder engagement focus groups, a resident sentiment survey, the GSTC Destination Assessment Report, sentiment analysis (competitive benchmarking related to sustainability, outdoor recreation and product development), and a resilience assessment. The SCT Destination Stewardship & Resilience Master Plan will identify a responsible long-term approach for addressing and managing key critical challenges and bolstering the local economy through travel and tourism programs and activities.

A11. RISK AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Sonoma County Tourism has initiated a Crisis Management Blueprint to help partners handle large or small crises. The Blueprint is divided into three major sections and includes:

1. Introduction—background information on how to lay the foundation for a crisis plan and some hints on managing the crisis once it occurs. The section also provides tips on managing media interviews and general media and stakeholder relations.

II. Your Plan Template—fill-in-the-blank crisis plan for partners to complete with information needed to customize the approach for the partner.

III. Appendix—a wealth of material including hints for managing the media, drafting prepared statement and press releases, and a very brief speakers training outline.

In addition, Sonoma County’s Emergency Operations Plan is the first in the state to include cultural competency and efforts to promote significant interagency coordination that ensures protection and awareness by residents and visitors. For 2022, recommendations incorporated into the Plan include:

- Clearly identifiable and trained translators at local assistance centers
- Elimination of questions regarding immigration status at evacuation shelters, a practice in alignment with federal policies
- Inclusion of immigrant and Spanish-speaking community members in future disaster response planning
- Increased education about alert and warning systems for the Spanish-speaking community
- Simultaneous English and Spanish emergency alerts
- Social media and website information on emergency preparedness, response and recovery resources in English and Spanish, including information at local assistance centers
- Support for the development of Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) as a network for providing services

The Plan is reviewed and revised every three years or when notable updates warrant documentation, evaluation, or assessment (see https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/administrative-support-and-
Several appendices address a wide range of risks, including natural disasters, health, animals, oil spills, and more.

**B. SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY**

**B3. SUPPORTING LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS AND FAIR TRADE**

Sonoma County is by its very nature comprised of small, local businesses with 85% of businesses employing fewer than 250 people. As a result, there are mechanisms in place to support small businesses and economic development in Sonoma County. For example, the Sonoma County Economic Development Board identified the CDFI Microloan Program as one of the most used financing programs in Sonoma County. The Program supports financing ranging between $5,000 - $100,000. This financing is based on 3- or 5-year loan terms and have interest rates ranging between 5% - 11% (see https://www.workingsolutions.org/loan-program).

Within the context of supporting local entrepreneurship, SCT has several initiatives to support and elevate local artisans and makers. One initiative highlighted on the SCT website is the Cultivated Video Series. There are also several “Trail” Guides relative to supporting local artisans, such as Farm Trails, Art Trails, and the Sonoma-Marin Cheese Trail. The Go Local Cooperative (https://sonomacounty.golocal.coop/) promotes local businesses and events to support a local economy.

**B6. PROPERTY AND USER RIGHTS**

Policies and legislation regarding property acquisitions can help ensure that important landscapes within a destination remain protected and alive with the spirit of the past. New strategies and actions to protect, enhance, and interpret scenic, biological, and cultural values will help sustain destinations for years to come. There are many legislative programs that point to Sonoma County’s commitment to destination sustainability, and preservation of natural and cultural/historic heritage of the region. Specifically, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) generally requires state and local government agencies to inform decision makers and the public about potential environmental impacts of proposed
projects, and to reduce those environmental impacts to the extent feasible.

The laws and rules governing the CEQA process are contained in its statute (Public Resources Code Section 21000 and following), its guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 and following), published court decisions interpreting CEQA, and locally adopted CEQA procedures. This includes public consultation procedures and processes required.

The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) was established in 2011 to conduct Tribal Consultation with California Native American tribes to ensure communication and collaboration regarding the following:

1. Legislation that may affect California Native American tribes’ ability to protect California Native American cultural and sacred sites and burial sites and California Native American tribes’ access to those cultural resources on public property under the jurisdiction of the NAHC.
2. NAHC’s execution of its duties under Public Resources Code section 5097.94 and other statutes; and
3. NAHC’s adoption of regulations, policies, and programs affecting California Native American tribes.

In addition to the NAHC, the California State Lands Commission has the California State Lands Commission Tribal Policy, ensures consultation with tribes within the state.

A recent example of Sonoma County’s efforts regarding property and user rights includes the development of a new strategic plan for Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) (https://sonomamarintrain.org/node/449). While developing the plan, SMART held several listening sessions that involved conversations with key stakeholders, including a process for the public to voice their opinions. Such County processes are in place throughout Sonoma County, and involve the Planning Commission, for example, and the Municipal Advisory Council’s (MACs) that hold public hearing processes used to inform Planning Commission decisions and outcomes.

C. CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

C4. TRADITIONAL ACCESS

Many natural and cultural sites are subject to growing visitation. Maintaining such sites requires adequate practices to guarantee environmentally sound management and protections while simultaneously ensuring that local communities benefit and have access.
Sonoma County prioritizes public access to sites and open spaces so residents and visitors alike can enjoy the beauty of the diverse coastal areas, redwoods, valleys, and rivers. Public lands access and restrictions are equally applied to local/resident use as well as visitor use. All public lands and access are secured as part of the development entitlements process that in turn secures the public’s rights.

The California State Park System has specific land and cultural site acquisition guidelines and regulations (https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=22305). This protects not only landscapes and watersheds and allows for public processes associated with acquisitions to ensure community input and access (see https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=980).

Local tribes are increasingly involved in conserving and protecting ancestral lands, sacred sites, and biodiversity. An excellent example of this effort is found at the Pepperwood Preserve. The Native Advisory Council works with Pepperwood Preserve on the following objectives:

- To engage volunteer councilmembers in quarterly gatherings focused on updates and exchanges about current and proposed projects to support and maintain information flow between Pepperwood Preserve and local Native communities.

- To develop joint projects that explore application of Native land stewardship practices as a resource for contemporary adaptive management of natural resources. The role of the Council is to review and prioritize proposals and to help provide connections to native peoples, knowledge, and resources to help strengthen Pepperwood Preserve’s programs.

In addition to Pepperwood Preserve, there are several other efforts currently underway with Native Tribes of Sonoma County (see https://www.christensenfund.org/2015/02/16/california-native-americans-reclaiming-role-expert-land-managers/).

C7. SITE INTERPRETATION

Sonoma County has over 90 different cultural heritage sites, and an equal number of organizations working to preserve them. A leader in this area, California State Parks has interpretive planning resources and information on developing interpretative plans, drawing from historical data and resources throughout the State.

The SCT website link, “Road Trip to the Top Historic Sites in Sonoma County,” has a three-day itinerary for historic sites from Santa Rosa to Sonoma (Day 1), Sonoma to Petaluma (Day 2), and Petaluma to Sonoma Coast (Day 3). The link provides access to websites that focus on a range of individual historic sites and their conservation status and vulnerability. Examples of these sites include Jack London State Historic Park and its specific stewardship and restoration projects, and Buena Vista Winery, which was founded in 1857 and is the oldest commercial winery in the state. The winery’s original stone buildings remain and are now designated a California Historic Landmark.

Other resources in Sonoma County include the Historical Society of Santa Rosa which has developed a listing of several historic buildings and historical collections in the city, and the Petaluma Historical Library and Museum. A comprehensive network of historical and cultural organizations is found on the Sonoma County Historical Society website.

Overall, there are several examples of excellent site interpretation at cultural heritage sites throughout Sonoma County, with ample resources to support accurate and comprehensive place meanings for visitors and residents alike.

D. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

D5. ENERGY CONSERVATION

Sonoma County Division of Energy and Sustainability provides energy saving incentives for residents and businesses, including energy audits, financing options, rebates, and project consulting for solar installations. The Division also offers a Green Business Certification to incentivize businesses to operate sustainably and profitably. The Certification is provided to businesses who comply with all necessary environmental regulations and meet program standards for conserving energy, saving water, preventing pollution, and minimizing waste. The Division works with the following sectors:

- Architect/Remodelling
- Auto Body/Auto Repair
A full range of programs are highlighted on Sonoma Clean Power's website (see https://sonomacleanpower.org/customer-programs), including rebates for e-bikes; commercial energy assistance programs; DIY energy home toolkits; electric vehicle incentives and options; and solar installation and financing options.

Other examples include the Windsor PAYS® (Pay as You Save) initiative, which is helping Windsor residents save water and energy through efficient product installations.

To illustrate the importance of renewable energy, these are a few examples in Sonoma County that are leading the way in renewable energy investments:

*The solar energy project at Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport will offset the Airport’s greenhouse gas emissions by generating enough clean, renewable electricity to power 100% of airport operations. Additionally, in September 2021, the Airport announced a partnership with The Good Traveler; “a first-of-its kind carbon offset program that allows passengers to reduce the carbon footprint of their travel.”*

Sonoma County has also adopted CALGreen and the California Energy Code. CALGreen is California’s Green Building Standards code and applies to all...
newly constructed buildings and includes water-energy saving measures.

County staff have worked on climate actions for over 15 years. Sonoma County recognizes continued and focused efforts in climate change prevention, coupled with mitigation and adaption through behavioral change and resiliency efforts is imperative. In February 2020, the Board of Supervisors created a Climate Ad Hoc committee to begin identifying the immediate, mid-range and long-term climate actions of Sonoma County” (p. 1, Sonoma County Climate Action Plan, https://socostrategicplan.org/climate-action-and-resiliency/). Several goals are outlined within the Plan and include:

a. Investing in the community to enhance resiliency and become carbon neutral by 2030
b. Making all County facilities carbon free, zero waste, and resilient
c. Maximizing sustainability and emissions reductions in all County fleet vehicles
d. Maximizing opportunities for mitigation of climate change and adaptation through land conservation work and land use policies

Each goal is accompanied by objectives designed to create action and implementation (see https://socostrategicplan.org/climate-action-and-resiliency/). Further, SCT’s website recently introduced a carbon footprint calculator (see https://www.sonomacounty.com/sustainable) powered through Sustainable Travel International that allows visitors to reach carbon neutrality by offsetting their carbon emissions while enjoying Sonoma County.

The California Green Lodging Program lists lodging properties that have attained either “Participation Level,” “Leadership Level,” or “Environmental Level” certification. Several Sonoma County lodging properties are part of this initiative; some have attained the highest level—Environmental Level—through achievement of a field survey score of 350 or more points, writing and acting upon an environmental policy, and meeting all the Program’s criteria, including:

- Conservation and management
- Environmentally and socially sensitive purchasing policies
- Reuse/recycling energy efficiency
- Waste management/hazardous materials management
- Waste minimization

SCT has some climate action initiatives noted in its strategic plan, which include:

Continue to integrate responsible travel, climate change initiatives and overarching destination stewardship programming that helps reduce visitor impacts, eliminate travel-related carbon emissions, and continues to message a sustainable destination in sales and marketing materials (p. 21, Sonoma County Tourism Strategic Plan, 2021-23)

D10. GHG EMISSIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

The Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) highlights Sonoma County’s emissions reduction targets and highlights these in the Climate Action 2020 Plan (see https://rcpa.ca.gov/projects/climate-action-2020/). The RCPA partners with the scientific community to understand the local implications of climate change. Together they work to model and monitor climate trends in partnership with the North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative, Pepperwood Preserve, the Sonoma Ecology Center, the US Geological Survey, the Sonoma Water, and the Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. The Climate Hazards and Vulnerabilities Report provides an overview of what is known about local climate impacts (see https://rcpa.ca.gov/data-and-reports/).

SCT has a page on its website devoted to information about how to be a good steward when visiting Sonoma County. A carbon footprint calculator provides a way for visitors to calculate and offset emissions (see http://www.sonomacounty.com/sustainable). Additionally, SCT meets and collaborates with Sustainable Travel International to deepen its relationship and explore incentive programs to offset visitors’ carbon footprint with the goal of making Sonoma County a carbon neutral destination. Travelers flying through Sonoma County’s Charles M. Schulz airport have the option of purchasing offsets for their flight using the “The Good Traveler” carbon offset calculator.
APPENDIX B: COMPLETED ASSESSMENT MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Scoring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No document exists</td>
<td>Areas of Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document exists</td>
<td>Areas of Moderate Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document and evidence of implementation</td>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document, evidence, and improving trends</td>
<td>Good Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable in the destination</td>
<td>Excellent Performance</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Scoring</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Areas of Risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Areas of Moderate Risk</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
<td>1.50–1.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Performance</td>
<td>2.00–2.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent Performance</td>
<td>≥ 2.50</td>
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SECTION A: SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

AREA OF FOCUS: MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE & FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1. Destination management responsibility</td>
<td>a  Documentary evidence showing relevant make-up and responsibilities of the group.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b  A financial plan and budget showing current and future funding sources</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c  Evidence of links and engagement with other bodies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d  Records of permanent staff and contracted personnel, indicating relevant experience.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e  Management guidelines and processes, which demonstrate awareness and adherence to sustainability principles and transparency in operations and letting of contracts.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2. Destination management strategy and action plan</td>
<td>a  A published document setting out the current destination strategy and action.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b  The strategy/plan clearly visible and available online.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c  Evidence of stakeholder consultation, meetings etc. in developing the plan.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d  Reference to sustainability principles and an assessment of assets, issues and risks, contained in the strategy and action plan.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e  Specific references in the strategy/action plan to wider sustainable development policy (including pursuit of the SDGs), and vice versa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>A3. Monitoring and reporting</td>
<td>a  Specific quantifiable socio-economic, cultural and environmental indicators and targets identified.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b  Measurement against these indicators, with results recorded and publicised at least annually.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c  Written evidence of monitoring and reporting of actions and outcomes.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d  Previous reviews of monitoring system and schedule for future reviews.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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## AREA OF FOCUS: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A4. Enterprise engagement and sustainability standards</strong></td>
<td>a. Evidence of regular communication of sustainability issues to tourism-related businesses (media, meetings, direct contact etc.).</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Sustainability support and advice to tourism-related business—available and promoted.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Number and percentage of businesses certified against tourism sustainability standards (and whether GSTC recognised/accredited), with targets for wider outreach.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Evidence of promotion of certification schemes.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. List of tourism-related certified enterprises, kept up to date.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A5. Resident engagement and feedback</strong></td>
<td>a. Evidence of the promotion and facilitation of public participation in destination planning/management.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Information on the type and level of such participation.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c. Surveys of residents and other systematic feedback mechanisms, covering tourism issues.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Evidence of action taken in response to residents’ feedback.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e. Program of information, education and training on tourism provided for residents.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A6. Visitor engagement and feedback</strong></td>
<td>a. Visitor surveys (and other feedback mechanisms)—carried out and reported.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Surveys and feedback includes visitor reaction to sustainability issues.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Evidence of actions taken in response to visitor survey/feedback findings.</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Examples of visitor information that covers sustainability issues and how to respond to them.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A7. Promotion and information</strong></td>
<td>a. Current information and promotional material with appropriate content.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. A process exists for checking the accuracy and appropriateness of destination promotion and information.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Evidence of consultation with local communities and environmental and cultural bodies on communications content and delivery.</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>
## Area of Focus: Managing Pressure and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A8. Managing visitor volumes and activities</strong></td>
<td>a The destination management strategy and action plan addresses seasonality and spread of visitation.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>2.60</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Variation in visitor volumes throughout the year is monitored, including in the most visited locations.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Impacts of visitor volumes and activities are identified through observation and community and stakeholder feedback</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d Actions taken to manage visitor flows and impacts.</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Marketing strategy and selection of target markets takes account of visit patterns, the impact of activities and destination needs.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A9. Planning regulations and development control</strong></td>
<td>a Specific policies/regulations/guidelines which control development—documented and identified by title and date.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>2.83</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Impact assessment requirements are set out, covering environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts, at sufficient scale to address long term issues for the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Specific regulations on property rental and operation for tourism, with evidence of their application and enforcement.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Evidence of public participation in the development of policies/regulations/guidelines.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Evidence of consultation with, and consent from Indigenous people or minority ethnic groups when tourism development has been proposed or has occurred in their territories.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f Evidence of communication and enforcement of the policies/regulations/guidance, at planning, development and implementation stages</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A10. Climate change adaptation</strong></td>
<td>a The destination management strategy and action plan identifies and addresses climate issues.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>2.60</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Regulations, guidelines and zoning for tourism development and activities accommodate the consequences of climate change.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c A climate risk assessment, covering current and future risks—undertaken and made publicly available.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Evidence of consideration of impact on, and contribution of, local ecosystems to climate change adaptation.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Information on climate change that has been made publicly available.</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A11. Risk and crisis management</strong></td>
<td>a A documented risk reduction, crisis management and emergency response plan for tourism in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>3.00</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b The plan recognises a wide range of risks, including natural disasters, terrorism, health, resource depletion, and others appropriate to the location.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c Communication procedures identified for use during and after an emergency.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Program for local delivery of information and training on risk and crisis management.</td>
<td>3</td>
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## SECTION B: SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

### AREA OF FOCUS: DELIVERING LOCAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS

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<tr>
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<th>Average per Criteria</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B1. Measuring the economic contribution of tourism</strong></td>
<td>a Program of economic data gathering.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Annual reports on the direct and indirect economic contribution of tourism in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Data covering a range of measures of economic impact (e.g. volume, expenditure, employment, investment and spread of economic benefit in the destination).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B2. Decent work and career opportunities</strong></td>
<td>a Provision of relevant skills training programs/courses, available locally.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Statements of commitment by tourism enterprises to the provision of decent work/career opportunities.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Training and employment opportunities promoted to and taken up by local people, including women, young people, minorities and people with disabilities.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Channels for checking working conditions and receiving/handling grievances (e.g. involvement of labour unions).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B3. Supporting local entrepreneurs and fair trade</strong></td>
<td>a Advice, finance or other support—available in the destination for tourism-related SMEs.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Assistance with market access for local tourism-related SMEs.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c Action to encourage and assist local tourism enterprises to purchase goods and services locally.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Initiatives to help local farmers, artisans and food producers to engage in the tourism value chain.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Local produce and crafts identified, promoted and available for sale to visitors in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
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### AREA OF FOCUS: SOCIAL WELLBEING AND IMPACTS

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B4. Support for community</strong></td>
<td>a Support for local community and sustainability initiatives by local tourism enterprises is encouraged and facilitated.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Schemes exist, and are promoted, for visitors to support local community and sustainability initiatives.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Volunteering and engagement with the community does not involve intrusion or exploitation.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Criteria</td>
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<td>Average per Criteria</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5. Preventing exploitation and discrimination</td>
<td>a  Reference (title, date) to specific laws that pertain in the destination regarding human rights, exploitation, discrimination and harassment.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b  Evidence of communication and enforcement of above laws and related good practice (including to tourism enterprises and visitors).</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c  Risk and impact analysis regarding human rights, including human trafficking, modern slavery and child labour – conducted regularly.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d  Destination and key tourism players are signatories to the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6. Property and user rights</td>
<td>a  Reference (title, date) to specific laws that pertain in the destination regarding property rights and acquisitions and user and access rights to resources.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b  Reference in the above laws to communal and Indigenous rights, public consultation and resettlement.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c  Evidence of enforcement of the above laws in the context of tourism development and activity.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d  Evidence of community consultation, consent and compensation.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B7. Safety and security</td>
<td>a  Security and health services are well established and active in the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b  The needs of visitors are identified and addressed in the delivery of security and health services.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c  Tourism facilities are inspected for compliance with safety and hygiene standards.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B8. Access for all</td>
<td>a  The existence of any regulations and standards regarding the accessibility of visitor sites, facilities and services.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b  Consistent application of accessibility standards in public facilities.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c  Data on the extent/proportion of visitor sites and facilities that are accessible.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d  Evidence of programs to improve access for people with a range of access needs.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e  Information on accessibility included in communications about the destination as a whole.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f  Details of accessibility included in visitor information about key sites.</td>
<td>1</td>
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## SECTION C: CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

### AREA OF FOCUS: PROTECTING CULTURAL HERITAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<th>Average per Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>C1. Protection of cultural assets</strong></td>
<td>a Lists of cultural assets, including evaluation and indication of vulnerability.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Program of rehabilitation and conservation of assets.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Mechanisms for using income from tourism to support conservation of cultural assets.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C2. Cultural artifacts</strong></td>
<td>a Reference to relevant laws relating to historical artifacts pertaining in the destination (title, date)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Evidence of communication of relevant laws to tourism enterprises and visitors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Evidence of enforcement of relevant laws.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C3. Intangible heritage</strong></td>
<td>a Identification and listing of intangible cultural heritage</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Examples of celebration and visitor experiences of intangible cultural heritage (events, distinctive products etc.).</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Evidence of involvement of local and Indigenous communities in developing and delivering visitor experiences based on intangible cultural heritage.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Feedback from visitors and local communities on delivery of intangible heritage experiences.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C4. Traditional access</strong></td>
<td>a Monitoring of accessibility to natural and cultural sites for the local community.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Evidence of engagement with the local community regarding traditional access.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Specific action to protect and/or rehabilitate local community access.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C5. Intellectual property</strong></td>
<td>a Reference to laws on intellectual property pertaining in the destination (title, date).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.67</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Communication of intellectual property rights to tourism stakeholders.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Evidence that intellectual property rights are protected in the development of cultural experiences for visitors.</td>
<td>1</td>
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### AREA OF FOCUS: VISITING CULTURAL SITES

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>C6. Visitor management at cultural sites</strong></td>
<td>a) Monitoring of visitor flows and impact on cultural sites, with results shared across the destination.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Evidence of action to manage tourism-related impacts in or around cultural sites.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Existence and distribution of published guidelines on visitor behaviour at sensitive sites and cultural events and periodic monitoring of compliance.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d) A code of practice for tour operators and tour guides and/or other engagement with them on visitor management at cultural sites.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e) Provision of training for guides.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C7. Site interpretation</strong></td>
<td>a) Provision of informative interpretative material on site and in formats that are accessible pre-arrival.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Evidence that interpretative material has been well researched and is accurate.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) Interpretation material that identifies the significance and sensitivity/fragility of sites.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d) Evidence of host community collaboration in preparation of relevant interpretative material.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Interpretative material available in relevant languages.</td>
<td>2</td>
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### SECTION D: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

### AREA OF FOCUS: CONSERVATION OF NATURAL HERITAGE

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D1. Protection of sensitive environments</strong></td>
<td>a) List of natural heritage sites and assets, indicating type, conservation status and vulnerability.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Programs to conserve biodiversity and natural heritage.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) Programs to eradicate and control invasive species.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d) Action to identify, monitor and mitigate tourism impacts on biodiversity and natural heritage.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e) Mechanisms for using income from tourism to support conservation of natural assets.</td>
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<td>f) “Communications with visitors and enterprises on reducing spread of alien species.”</td>
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<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Indicators</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D2. Visitor management at natural sites</strong></td>
<td>a Monitoring of visitor flows and impact on natural sites, with results shared across the destination.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Evidence of action to manage and mitigate tourism-related impacts in or around natural sites.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Existence and distribution of published guidelines on visitor behaviour at sensitive sites, and periodic monitoring of compliance.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d A code of practice for tour operators and tour guides and/or other engagement with them on visitor management at natural sites.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Cooperation with local conservation bodies to identify environmental risks associated with tourism and measures to reduce them.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f Provision of training for guides.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D3. Wildlife interaction</strong></td>
<td>a Reference (title, date) to international, national and local laws that apply in the destination regarding interaction with wildlife.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Endorsement of international standards for wildlife viewing for both marine and terrestrial species.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c Distribution of a code of practice for wildlife interaction, including viewing, which reflects international standards.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d System for checking compliance with regulations, and code of practice amongst tourism operations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e Actions to monitor wildlife wellbeing and minimize disturbance, in locations where interactions occur.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f Provision of information to visitors on harmful wildlife interaction, such as touching and feeding.</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D4. Species exploitation and animal welfare</strong></td>
<td>a Reference (title, date) to specific international, national and local laws, standards and guidelines that apply in the destination regarding animal welfare and conservation of species.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Notification of laws, standards and guidelines to tourism enterprises and guides.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c A system for inspection of the conditions of captive wildlife and domestic animals, including their housing and handling.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Licensing and checking of qualifications of personnel responsible for captive wildlife.</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Action to promote the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in the tourism sector and to ensure compliance with it.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f Provision of information to visitors on avoiding trade in endangered species, e.g. in purchase of souvenirs derived from threatened species of wildlife notified by IUCN or CITES.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g Enforcement of legislation to ensure that any hunting activity is part of a scientifically based, properly managed and strictly enforced approach to conservation.</td>
<td>3</td>
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### AREA OF FOCUS: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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<tr>
<td><strong>D5. Energy conservation</strong></td>
<td>a Energy consumption targets are publicised and promoted.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Program to increase energy efficiency - e.g. promoting and supporting insulation.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Investment in renewable energy and percent of total provision/consumption.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Support and incentives for energy monitoring and reduction by enterprises.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D6. Water stewardship</strong></td>
<td>a Provision of guidance and support for monitoring and reduction of water usage by enterprises.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>2.80</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Program to regularly assess water risk.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Setting, publication and enforcement of water stewardship goals, where water risk has been assessed as high.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Monitoring and control of sources and volume of water used for tourism purposes and its effect on local communities and ecosystems. Promotion and checking of adherence to goals by tourism enterprises.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Visitor information on water risk and minimising water use.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.80</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D7. Water quality</strong></td>
<td>a Program of water quality monitoring.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>3.00</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Existence of data and reports on water quality.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Monitoring bathing water, with certification and identification of sites reaching set standards.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Evidence of actions to improve water quality.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e Information for visitors on quality of local drinking water, to encourage use as alternative to bottled water.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### AREA OF FOCUS: MANAGEMENT OF WASTE AND EMISSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Average per Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D8. Wastewater</strong></td>
<td>a Written guidelines and regulations on wastewater treatment.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>3.00</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b System of enforcing guidelines amongst enterprises.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c Monitoring/testing of released wastewater.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d Provisional of sustainable municipal water treatment systems, for use by the tourism sector, where practical and appropriate.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Criteria Indicators Score Average per Criteria

#### D9. Solid waste

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Waste monitoring program, with results and targets published.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Coordinated campaign advice/support with tourism enterprises on waste management, including food waste.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Campaign to reduce/eliminate single use items, especially plastics.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Waste management program for public offices and facilities.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Provision of a collection and recycling system, with at least four streams (i.e. organic, paper, metal, glass and plastic).</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Provision of sustainable system for disposal of residual waste.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>Campaign to eliminate dropping of litter, including by visitors, and to keep public spaces clean.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>Adequate bins for separated waste disposal.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### D10. GHG emissions and climate change mitigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Published target for percentage of emissions reduction by specified date.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Annual climate report, including monitoring and mitigation actions.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Supported campaign or other engagement with tourism enterprises on reduction and mitigation of emissions.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Action to reduce emissions from public sector operations.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Information for enterprises and visitors on offsetting schemes that meet recognised standards.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### D11. Low-impact transportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Investment in more sustainable transport infrastructure, including public transport and low emissions vehicles.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Information promoted to visitors on alternative transport options to and within the destination</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Data on visitor use of alternative transport modes.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Improvement and promotion of cycling and walking opportunities.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Prioritization of visitor markets accessible by short and more sustainable transport options.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Public sector and tourism enterprises prioritise low-impact transportation in their own operations.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### D12. Light and noise pollution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Guidelines on light and noise pollution – produced and promoted to tourism enterprises.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Identification and monitoring of potential sources of noise and light pollution related to tourism.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Mechanisms to enable residents to report noise and light pollution, with follow-up action.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Total Criteria per category**

- A=11
- B=8
- C=7
- D=12

**Total Indicators per category**

- A=51
- B=32
- C=26
- D=65

**Total Criteria**

- 38

**Total Indicators**

- 174
# APPENDIX C: GSTC ASSESSOR SITE VISIT SCHEDULE

## DR. KELLY BRICKER VISIT TO SONOMA COUNTY

**GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL ASSESSMENT ITINERARY MEETINGS AGENDA, MAY 14–19, 2022**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, May 14 and Sunday, May 15</strong></td>
<td>12:00 pm</td>
<td>Arrive at Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport on 5/14 Kelly to arrange meeting with Pamela Lanier, Sonoma Sustainable Tourism Observatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/14 and 5/15 at Vintner's Resort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, May 16</strong></td>
<td>10:30 am – 12:00 pm</td>
<td>Meeting with Bert Whitaker, Sonoma County Regional Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/16–5/19 at Flamingo Resort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 pm – 4:00 pm</td>
<td>Meeting with Eric Metz, Director of Operations, Jack London State Historic Park</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, May 17</strong></td>
<td>9:00 am – 10:30 am</td>
<td>Meeting with Don McEnhill, Russian Riverkeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Riverkeeper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 pm – 3:00 pm</td>
<td>Meeting with Dr. Nancy Brown, Sonoma County Disaster Resilience and Preparedness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 pm – 4:30 pm</td>
<td>Meeting with SCT Team; SCT Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, May 18</strong></td>
<td>10:00 am – 11:30 am</td>
<td>Meeting with Justin Lindenberg, Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luther Burbank Home &amp; Gardens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 pm – 2:00 pm</td>
<td>Sustainability perspectives: conversation with wineries over lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday, May 19</strong></td>
<td>12:00 pm</td>
<td>Depart from Charles M. Schulz, Sonoma County Airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma County Airport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## MAY 2022 FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

### SONOMA COUNTY TOURISM—DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP & RESILIENCE MASTER PLAN

| Monday, May 16 | 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm | Bob Pullum—Creative Director, Guerneville Bank Club  
|                | Tourism           | Chris Vomvolakis—formerly with Visit Santa Rosa  
|                |                   | Debbie Osborn—formerly Senior Program Director, Sonoma County Hospitality Association  
|                |                   | Edward Roe—General Manager, Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn  
|                |                   | Keo Hornbostel—General Manager, Safari West  
|                | 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm | Beth Costa—Executive Director, Wine Road  
|                | Wine/Breweries/Spirits | Herlinda Heras—Co-host, Brew HaHa; Craft Beer Hour Radio Show  
|                |                   | Karissa Kruse—President, Sonoma County Winegrowers  
|                |                   | Michael Haney—Executive Director, Sonoma County Vintners  
| Monday, May 23 | 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm | Ed Skapinok—Chief Marketing Officer, Makr Hospitality  
|                | Tourism           | Marie McCusker—Executive Director, Petaluma Downtown Association & Visitors Program  
|                |                   | Randy Johnson—CEO, Getaway Adventures  
|                | 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm | Eddy Cummins—General Manager, SMART  
|                | Transportation    | Eris Weaver—Executive Director, Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition  
|                |                   | Jennifer Buffo—COO, Pure Luxury Transportation, Inc.  
|                | 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm | Caroline Shaw—Senior Director, Marketing & Communications, E. & J. Gallo Winery  
|                | Tourism           | Eric Fraser  
|                |                   | Kristen Madsen—Director, Creative Sonoma  
|                |                   | Liza Graves—President, Beautiful Places  
|                |                   | Rick Coates—Executive Director, EcoRing  
| Tuesday, May 24 | 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm | Neena Hanchett—Cloverdale Chamber of Commerce Director & Board Member  
|                | Tourism           | Susan Lee Vick—COO, formerly with Hugh Futrell Corporation  
| Thursday, May 26 | 8:00 am – 9:30 am | Jon Stout—Airport Manager, Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport  
|                | Transportation    | Suzanne Smith—Executive Director, Sonoma County Transportation Authority  
|                | 10:00 am – 11:30 am | Cynthia Murray—President/CEO North Bay Leadership Council  
|                | Business Associations | Ethan Brown—Interim Executive Director, Sonoma County Economic Development Board  
|                |                   | Peter Rumble—CEO, Santa Rosa Metro Chamber (via a Zoom online meeting)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Thursday, June 2** | 10:30 am – 12:00 pm | Multi-segmented group                       | Andriana Duckworth—Interim Executive Director, Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance  
Andy Shepherd—Marketing Manager, Green Music Center, Sonoma State  
Anita Wiglesworth—VP, Programs & Marketing, Luther Burbank Center for the Arts  
Gina Huntsinger—Museum Director, Charles M. Schulz Museum & Research Center  
Paul Matlock—VP, Summit State Bank |
|                   | 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm | Climate Resiliency & Emergency Preparedness | Barbara Lee—Sonoma County Director of Climate Action & Resiliency  
Nancy Brown, PhD—Sonoma County Emergency Management and Community Preparedness Program Manager |
| **Monday, June 20** | 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm | Natural Resources – virtual only           | Craig Anderson—Executive Director, LandPaths  
Justin Lindenberg—Executive Director, Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods  
Neal Ramus—Community Engagement Director, Sonoma Land Trust |
| **Wednesday, June 22** | 2:30 pm – 3:30 pm | SCT Board of Directors (virtual only)      | SCT Board of Directors (virtual only) |
| **Thursday, June 23** | 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm | Cultural/Economic Development              | Judy Groverman Walker—Event Producer, California Artisan Cheese Festival  
Mary Jane Dean—Communications Manager, Museum of Sonoma County  
Raissa De La Rossa—Economic Development Director, City of Santa Rosa  
Renee Donmon-Chaussee—Membership Director, Charles M. Schulz Museum & Research Center |
|                   | 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm (virtual only) | NAACP stakeholder focus group with NAACP members | Kirstyne Lange—Board member, SCT, and President, NAACP Santa Rosa-Sonoma |
### Friday, June 24

**Tourism**
- **10:00 am – 11:30 am**
  - **Aphrodite Caserta**—Director of Communications, Safari West
  - **Brian Applegarth**—Founder, California Cannabis Tourism Association (via Zoom)
  - **Margaret Grahame**—Board member, SCT
  - **Tallia Hart**—CEO, Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce

**Government**
- **12:00 pm – 1:30 pm**
  - **Peggy Flynn**—City Manager, City of Petaluma (via Zoom)
  - **Peter Martin**—Deputy Director, Water Resources, City of Santa Rosa

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**
- **2:30 pm – 4:00 pm**
  - **Alegria De La Cruz, JD**—Director, Sonoma County Office of Equity
  - **Herman Hernandez**—Chair, Los Cien
  - **Jen Klose, JD**—Executive Director, Generation Housing
  - **Frank Chong, PhD**—President, Santa Rosa Junior College

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Three planned meetings in July and August 2022 were facilitated in coordination with The Coraggio Group, including:
- District 1, Supervisor Susan Gorin
- District 3, Supervisor Chris Coursey
- District 5, Supervisor Lynda Hopkins

SCT is also reached out to Mayors of cities of Cloverdale, Cotati, Healdsburg, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Sonoma, and Windsor during July and August 2022 for an opportunity to gain their insights as part of the master planning process.
Accredited Hospitality Program: https://www.sonomacounty.com/partners/sonoma-county-ahp-program

California Department of Finance Demographics: https://dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/

California Endangered Species Act: https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CESA


California State Parks Interpretation Planning: https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=28410

California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act: https://www.watereducation.org/aquapedia/california-wild-and-scenic-rivers-act


Conservation Biodiversity Hotspot: https://www.conservation.org/priorities/biodiversity-hotspots

County of Sonoma Department of Health Services: https://www.sonomawater.org/water-quality

County of Sonoma Emergency Readiness, Response, & Recovery: https://socoemergency.org/

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund Biodiversity Hotspots: https://www.cepf.net/our-work/biodiversity-hotspots

Department of General Services Green Lodging Program: https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OFAM/Travel/Services/Page-Content/Services-List-Folder/Appify-for-Green-Hotel-Certification

Department of Industrial Relations Labor Enforcement Task Force: https://www.dir.ca.gov/letf/What_are_your_rights_as_a_worker.pdf

El Molino High School: https://www.wscuhsd.org/o/el-molino/page/career-technical-education-course-offerings


Go Local Cooperative: https://sonomacounty.golocal.coop/

Governor’s Office of Planning and Research: https://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/

Green Business Network: https://greenbusinessca.org/

Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act: https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/HREA

Healdsburg development policies: https://healdsburg.gov/348/Planning-Building


International Dark Sky Association: https://www.darksky.org/our-work/lighting/lighting-for-citizens/lighting-basics#:~:text=IDA%20recommends%20using%20lighting%20that,are%20rich%20in%20blue%20light

Key State Historic Preservation Laws: https://permitsonoma.org/divisions/planning/historicresources

Kind Traveler: https://www.kindtraveler.com/content/kind-destination-sonoma-county-tourism

Labor Enforcement Task Force: https://www.dir.ca.gov/letf/What_are_your_rights_as_a_worker.pdf

Marine Protected Areas in Sonoma County: https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs/Network/North-Central-California

Native Advisory Council, Pepperwood Preserve: https://www.pepperwoodpreserve.org/about-us/native-advisory-council/


North Bay Digital Collections: https://northbaydigital.sonoma.edu/digital/collection/nbhpres/search/searchterm/ Sonoma%20County%20Preservation%20Project/field/sourca/node/exact/conn/and
Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District: https://nosocoair.org/incentives/


Pepperwood Preserve: https://www.pepperwoodpreserve.org/

Permit Sonoma County (unincorporated areas): https://permitsonoma.org/

Permit Sonoma historic resources: https://permitsonoma.org/divisions/planning/historicresources

Petaluma development policies: https://cityofpetaluma.org/planning-commission/

Recology Sonoma Marin: https://www.recology.com/recology-sonoma-marin/

Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) Climate Action 2020 Plan: https://rcpa.ca.gov/projects/climate-action-2020/

Rohnert Park development policies: https://www.rpcity.org/city_hall/departments/development_services

Russian River Keeper: https://russianriverkeeper.org/safe-to-swim/

Santa Rosa cultural heritage board: https://srcity.org/585/Cultural-Heritage-Board

Santa Rosa development policies: https://srcity.org/533/Developments-Initiatives

Santa Rosa Junior College: https://de.santarosa.edu/hospitality-program

SCT Cultivated Video Series: https://www.sonomacounty.com/cultivated

Sebastopol development policies: https://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/City-Government/Departments-Services/Planning/Planning-Information

Sonoma Clean Power: https://sonomacleanpower.org/programs/drive-ev


Sonoma County Board of Supervisors: https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx

Sonoma County Conservation Council: https://envirocentersoco.org/directory/

Sonoma County Demographics: https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/about-us/demographics

Sonoma County Department of Health: https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services

Sonoma County development of employment opportunities: https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/sonoma-developmental-center-statement

Sonoma County Economic Development Board: https://sonomaedb.org/

Sonoma County Employee Relations Division: https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/administrative-support-and-fiscal-services/human-resources/divisions-and-units/employee-relations/labor-agreements-and-salary-resolution/labor-faqs


Sonoma County Environmental Education Collaborative (SEEC): https://sonomacountyee.org/educator-resources/


Sonoma County Historic Preservation Program/Plan: https://permitsonoma.org/divisions/planning/historicresources/todaysgeneralplanprogram

Sonoma County Inspiration Guide: https://www.sonomacounty.com/sonoma-county-now

Sonoma County Leave no Trace Seven Principles: https://www.sonomacounty.com/leave-no-trace-seven-principles

Sonoma County Parks: https://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/

Sonoma County Public Health Division: https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/divisions/public-health

Sonoma County Resource Recovery: https://www.sonomacorr.com/

Sonoma County Share of Regional Spending: https://industry.visitcalifornia.com/research/economic-impact?sort=county&region=Sonoma

Sonoma County Sheriff’s Office: https://www.sonomasheriff.org/


Sonoma County Strategic Plan: https://socostrategicplan.org/


Sonoma County Tourism Inspiration Guides: https://sonomalandtrust.org/about/

Sonoma County Tourism: https://www.sonomacounty.com/

Sonoma County Transportation Authority’s Annual 2021 report: 2021 SCTA Annual Report

Sonoma County Vacation Rentals Permit Website (unincorporated areas): https://permitsonoma.org/regulationsandinitiatives/vacationrentals/vacationrentalsordinance/codeforvacationrentals

Sonoma County Travel Kindly: https://www.sonomacounty.com/blog/6-easy-ways-travel-kindly-sonoma-county

Sonoma development policies: https://www.sonomacity.org/departments/planning/

Sonoma Garbage Collectors: https://www.sonomagarbage.com/

Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART): https://sonomamarintrain.org/node/449

Sonoma State University B.S. in Business Administration (Wine Business Strategies Concentration): http://sbe.sonom.edu/business/wine-business-strategies-concentration

Sonoma State University M.B.A Sonoma Executive Wine: http://sbe.sonoma.edu/mba/sonoma-embba-wine-business

Sonoma State University M.B.A. Sonoma Professional Wine: http://sbe.sonoma.edu/mba/sonoma-professional-wine-mba

Sonoma Sustainable Tourism: https://sonomasustainabletourism.weebly.com/about-us.html

Sonoma Water: https://www.sonomawater.org/

Sonoma Wine County: https://www.youtube.com/user/sonomawinecountry

State of California human/civil rights law: https://oag.ca.gov/civil

State of California Protected Classification: https://www.senate.ca.gov/content/protected-classes

State Water Board: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking-water/programs/index.html

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife: https://wildlife.ca.gov/

The Department of Conservation: https://www.conservation.ca.gov/index/Pages/About-Us/aboutUs_Vision_Mission.aspx

The Sonoma Mission 2000: Shaping a Commemoration: https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=29955

Verity: https://www.ourverity.org/human-trafficking/

Visit California Economic Impact: https://industry.visitcalifornia.com/research/economic-impact?sort=county&region=Sonoma

Working Solutions loan program: https://www.workingsolutions.org/loan-program.

Zero Waste Sonoma: https://zerowastesonoma.gov/