



State of California
Department of Developmental Services
Re: Closure of the Sonoma Developmental Center 2018

July 18, 2015

Governor Brown, Executive Director Karen Faria, & Staff:

The Valley of the Moon Alliance is a Sonoma Valley non-profit that works to protect the Valley's natural and economic resources. We track the impacts of projects to community resources and the cumulative effects of development, particularly on agricultural lands and open space. We promote the preservation, protection, and maintenance of the agricultural character, natural resources, and rural beauty of the Valley.

The Sonoma Developmental Center was a model agricultural community when it was founded. It was designed to provide patients with a chance to do meaningful work in a farm setting. It has transitioned to a care facility for the severely disabled, but the benefits to the patients and the community remain the same: access to the land and a community setting. The people of Sonoma Valley look to the State of California to help us preserve the patient care, the land, and public access. And there is a need to address the infrastructure and economic benefits of a public-private partnership to do so.

We are concerned that the State may not be aware of the critical role the SDC acreage plays in Sonoma Valley. Through the SDC, Sonoma Creek runs year-round and drains approximately 50 square miles and is fed by numerous springs and seeps. SDC is identified as a potential groundwater banking site and a site for natural groundwater recharge. Half of Sonoma Valley's water supply comes from local groundwater and we look to the 2014 State Groundwater Legislation to help protect recharge areas as well as the critical riparian and wildlife corridors.

We are also concerned with the potential loss of open space and the alternate scenic corridor that the SDC currently provides through the Valley floor. Tourists marvel at the tree-lined avenue in the fall and locals play ball on the Center's fields. Non-profits have located their offices on the grounds. We strongly support efforts to promote SDC site uses that diversify and enhance the Valley's economy and establish a model for self-sufficiency. This would allow the current footprint to remain the same and transform the Center.

Sincerely,

The VOTMA Board

Linda Hale, Secretary

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