

SIP CERTIFIED PRESENTS



# SUSTAINABLE STORIES



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# SUSTAINABLE

# *Stories*



## HAVE YOU HEARD OF SUSTAINABLE WINE?

Sustainable wine is about crafting high-quality, tasty wine with care for people and the planet.



These Sustainable Stories share how SIP Certified sustainable winegrowers and winemakers bring sustainability to life from the block to the bottle.

While each story showcases just one of SIP Certified's 7 Values, each of these brands embody all seven of the values at the core of their daily business practices.





WHAT IS...

# *Sustainability*

Sustainability meets the needs of today while ensuring that future generations can successfully meet theirs.

In wine, we:

- Use practices that protect and preserve the environment.
- Consider the well-being of workers and the community.
- Conduct business responsibly to establish long-term prosperity.



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# *SIP Certified*

Sustainability In Practice (SIP) Certified® is a program for winegrowers and winemakers.

Certification shows that these businesses adhere to strict, measurable practices that are scientifically proven to protect and preserve the well-being of our human and non-human resources.



# THE 7 VALUES

## *of STP Certified*



### Social Responsibility

Competitive wages, medical insurance, training, and education.



### Water Management

Reduced/recycled water in the vineyards and winery.



### Safe Pest Management

Introduce beneficial insects, attract raptors, and plant enriching cover crops to manage pests.



### Energy Efficiency

Alternative fuels and energy sources like wind and solar; Minimal tractor usage; Enhanced insulation in the winery.



### Habitat

Create wildlife corridors and preserve open space.



### Business

Ethical practices; Treat employees and the community with care and respect.



### Always Evolving

Evolve as new science, technology, and research become available.



## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# Castoro Cellars

### SUPPORTING ARTS & COMMUNITY

The Whale Rock Music Festival is renowned for rocking the Central Coast every year with live music and family-friendly activities.

But the event has an even greater purpose: supporting Templeton High School musicians through the parent-volunteer organization, TIMBA.

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+\$150K  
GIFTED

#### FOLLOW ALONG!

@castorocellars  
castorocellars.com  
@whalerockmusicfestival  
whalerockmusicfestival.com



# SUPPORTING ARTS & COMMUNITY

What started as a 30th anniversary party to celebrate Castoro Cellars has grown into a beloved annual event for California's Central Coast.

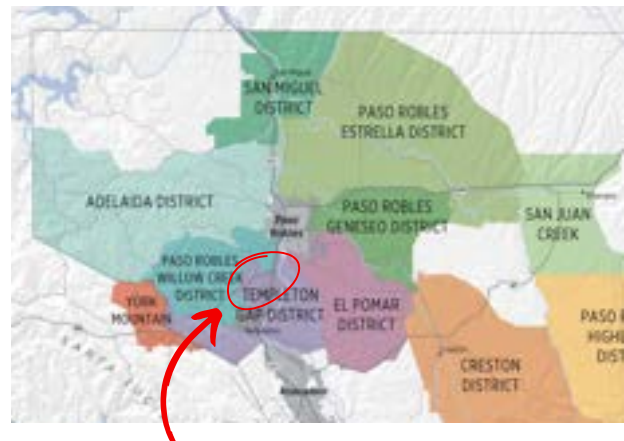
The **Whale Rock Music Festival** offers two days of family-friendly games, crafts, music, and more. Under the leadership of the Castoro Cellars family, many local volunteers, artists, and vendors work together to make each year's event memorable.

But it's more than a festival of fun – it's a benefit event for the **Templeton Instrumental Music Boosters Association (TIMBA)**, a parent volunteer organization dedicated to enhancing the experiences of Templeton High School musicians.

Music education boosts students' self-confidence and creativity, and can help them stay engaged in school. TIMBA volunteers know that a strong program means providing more than sheet music and instruments.

TIMBA **connects students with resources and leaders** to help them elevate their musical skills. They also organize volunteers for trips and fundraisers that make a lifelong impact on the students' lives.

To date, contributions from the Whale Rock Music Festival **exceed \$150,000!**





## WATER MANAGEMENT

# *Our Lady of Guadalupe*

### SOLVING THE SALTY DILEMMA

After discovering their high-salinity water was unsuitable for vineyard irrigation, the team at Our Lady of Guadalupe sought a creative solution. Inspired by farmers who use reverse osmosis, they partnered to design a system for their vineyard.

Plus, the Jose Grass that thrives on their wastewater reduces soil erosion and boosts biodiversity!

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GROWING  
SOLUTIONS

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[@olgwine](https://www.instagram.com/olgwine)

[ourladyofguadalupe.com](http://ourladyofguadalupe.com)





# SOLVING THE SALTY DILEMMA

After digging the well at Our Lady of Guadalupe Vineyard, Amy Whiteford's team discovered the water's high salinity made it **unfit for vineyard irrigation**.

Plants take up water and nutrients but leave salt behind in the soil. When salt builds up, vine growth, yield, and quality suffer.

Amy traveled to the Valle de Guadalupe in Baja California, where farmers face the same issue. She met an organic vegetable grower who used reverse osmosis (RO) to treat their water.

She returned to California inspired, and partnered with an avocado farmer in San Diego to **develop a proprietary RO system for Our Lady of Guadalupe Vineyard**.

While this solved her water quality issue, Amy had a new problem – *what would she do with the salt-laden wastewater?*

After considering various disposal options, Amy and her team found an innovative solution.

They ran trials with salt-tolerant plants and discovered that **Jose Grass thrives on their salty wastewater**.

Today, the vineyard's hillside thrives with Jose Grass, solving the wastewater disposal problem while also **reducing soil erosion** and **increasing biodiversity** across the property.



Amy Whiteford and her father, David Warnock





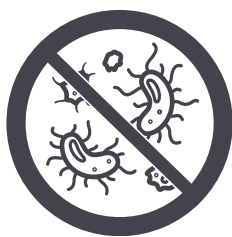
## SAFE PEST MANAGEMENT

# Shady Lane Cellars

## SOFTER WAYS TO FIGHT FUNGUS

Andy Fles, Vineyard Manager at Shady Lane Cellars, wanted to make his fungicide program even more sustainable. So, he set up an experiment that put “soft” materials head to head with his usual program.

While final results are pending, so far, the soft program is keeping pace with the conventional!



MASTERING  
MILDEW

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[shadylanecellars.com](https://www.shadylanecellars.com)



# SOFTER WAYS TO FIGHT FUNGUS

Fungal pressures are complex in Michigan State's humid continental climate. Andy Fles, Vineyard Manager at Shady Lane Cellars, uses a fungicide program that's about 50% organic, but he wondered if even softer products could keep diseases at bay.

Andy got a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant and set up an experiment to **test his usual program and softer products against four common fungal diseases:**

- Powdery Mildew
- Downy Mildew
- Sour Rot
- Botrytis

His conventional method included bacterium-based products and neonicotinoids, while his soft program leaned more on oils like stilet, neem, thyme, and orange; and a Lupin seed extract product.

Andy **counted infected leaves** to assess mildew pressure. To assess botrytis and sour rot, teams from Michigan State University, Rufus Isaacs Lab, and Tim Miles Lab **ran tests on clusters from each treatment.**

The project is ongoing, but results so far show that the **soft products are keeping pace with his standard program.**



Andy is grateful for the SARE funding that helped him achieve this project. He looks forward to raising awareness of how soft products can be effective for wet-climate vineyards.



Vine treated with Soft program





ENERGY EFFICIENCY

# Bon Niche Cellars

## HAPPY, HELPING HOOVES

When Melani stopped using herbicides at Bon Niche Cellars, she faced a battle with weeds.

She introduced goats, sheep, and pigs who now roam the vineyard, grazing weeds and lending their hands (hooves) in vineyard maintenance.

The animals' work has nearly eradicated the need for mowing or spraying!

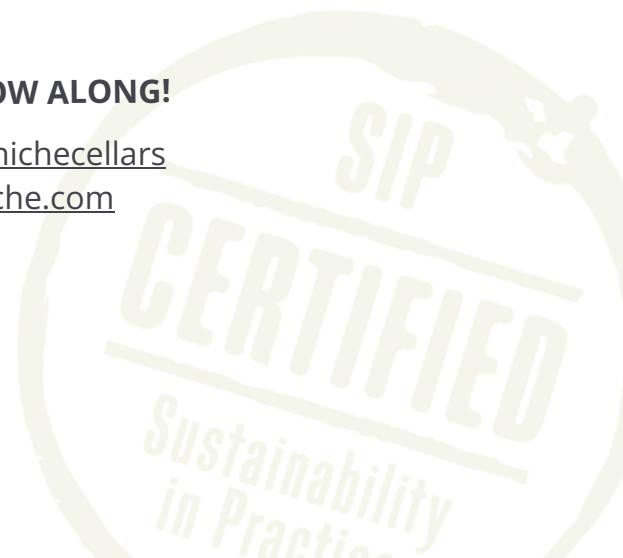
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**NATURE'S LAWN  
MOWERS**

### FOLLOW ALONG!

[@bonnichecellars](https://www.instagram.com/bonnichecellars)  
[bonniche.com](http://bonniche.com)



# HAPPY, HELPING HOOVES

Weeds challenge farms of all sizes. When Melani Harding, Owner and Winemaker at Bon Niche Cellars, decided to stop using herbicides, weeds got out of hand and she looked for **more sustainable control methods**.

She adopted **Nigerian dwarf goats**, who promptly began cleaning up the property. But since they'll gladly eat budding and maturing grapes, they can only free-roam the vineyard between harvest and bud break.

**Babydoll sheep** joined the crew next. They are the perfect height for removing excess vine leaves... which also means they can reach the fruit! They also must leave the vineyard at bud break and are welcome back with the goats after harvest.

Melani wanted to achieve year-round weed control. After some research, she found the perfect solution: **Kunekune pigs** with short stature and a natural inclination for grazing. In 2021, Gilbert the Pig joined the farm and quickly became a local celebrity.

Over the years, Melani has established a **grazing schedule that keeps her animals happy and her vineyard healthy**.

Between the animals, going no-till, and using vermicompost tea, she has **nearly eradicated the need for mowing or spraying** at Bon Niche Cellars: "I love sipping on a glass of wine, watching my cute animals do all the work for me!"



Petunia the Kunekune Pig





HABITAT

# McIntyre Vineyards

## PLANTING FOR POLLINATORS

The native hedgerow project at McIntyre Vineyards began as a passion project to help protect monarch butterflies.

Today, the hedgerow thrives with little maintenance, provides habitat for pollinators, helps with erosion control, and attracts more beneficial birds and wildlife to the farm.



**147 NATIVE  
PLANTS**

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[@tastemcintyre](https://twitter.com/tastemcintyre)  
[mcintyrevineyards.com](https://www.mcintyrevineyards.com)  
[montereypacific.com](https://www.montereypacific.com)



# PLANTING FOR POLLINATORS

Sara Frazer, Sustainability Manager at Monterey Pacific, learned something in 2019 that moved her deeply: **the monarch butterfly was on the brink of extinction.**

She felt inspired to act, and saw the CDFA's Healthy Soils Initiative grant as the perfect opportunity.

With help from the Xerces Society and local nurseries, Sara initiated a project to help **support the monarch's habitat.**

They planted a hedgerow at McIntyre Vineyards with **147 native plants:**

- Plants with **staggered bloom schedules** to provide nectar year-round
- Native woody shrubs that are more **drought- and deer-tolerant**
- Narrow-leaf milkweed – the plant that **monarch butterflies depend on** for their lifecycles

The hedgerow provides habitat for monarchs and other pollinators, helps with erosion control, and attracts even more beneficial life to the farm.

Sara was surprised at how quickly life was drawn in and how easy it has been to maintain.

"It's a joy walking by and seeing monarch cocoons and bees buzzing around lilac flowers, and birds eating the elderberries," says Sara. "**This vitality is infectious** and creates a whole new dimension to the overall vineyard."





BUSINESS

# *Foxen Vineyard & Winery*

## FROM REMOTE TO RELIABLE

Foxen Vineyard and Winery lacks reliable cell service, posing safety risks for their vineyard crew.

To solve the issue, they installed a solar-powered Wi-Fi access point on a telescoping pole in the vineyard.

Now, Wi-Fi calling is available in the upper vineyard block and worker communication and safety has improved.

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**SAFETY  
SOLUTION**

### **FOLLOW ALONG!**

[@foxenwines](https://twitter.com/foxenwines)  
[foxenvineyard.com](http://foxenvineyard.com)





# FROM REMOTE TO RELIABLE

While Santa Barbara's Foxen Canyon area is known for its natural beauty, reliable cell service is not one of its amenities.

Like many agricultural operations, Foxen Vineyard and Winery has Wi-Fi in its main building. Their vineyard crew, however, often works **out of range**.

This posed a big safety risk. Without Wi-Fi or cell service, their crew **couldn't use their phones for emergencies**, and their families had no way to reach them in urgent situations.

Riley Wathen Slack, Vice President of Operations and Finance, found a solution through a personal connection. Her husband, a network engineer, saw their setup and **knew he could improve their coverage**.

They raised a **telescoping pole in the vineyard** to hold a solar-powered Wi-Fi access point.

The device picks up the signal from the tasting room's roof and **broadcasts it across the vineyard**.

Now, Wi-Fi reaches a large portion of their vineyard and their crew can be reached via Wi-Fi calling. They even **marked vineyard posts to show the coverage range** so their crew knows where to go when they need to make a call.



Photos by Heather Daenitz, Craft & Cluster





ALWAYS EVOLVING

# Vineyard Professional Services

## EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT

VPS expanded their Personal/Professional Development program to encourage employees to prioritize continuing education.

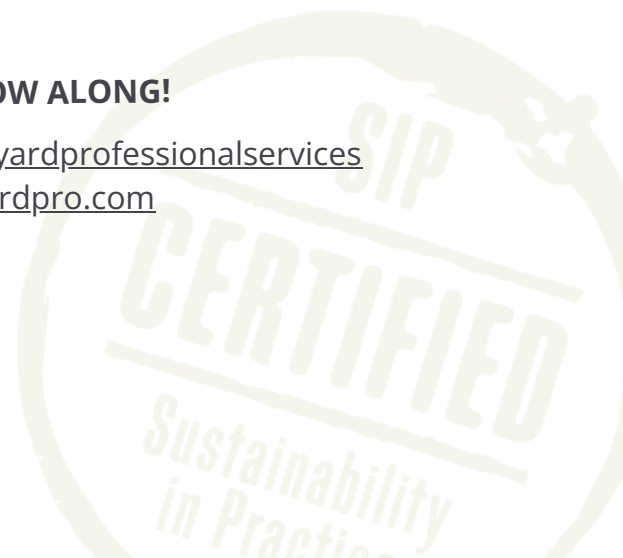
In 2023, the company covered class fees, offered paid time off, and provided regular check-ins for 14 employees who pursued development opportunities.



14 GROWTH  
PLANS

### FOLLOW ALONG!

[@vineyardprofessionalservices](https://www.instagram.com/vineyardprofessionalservices)  
[vineyardpro.com](https://www.vineyardpro.com)



# EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT

Randy Heizen, President of Vineyard Professional Services (VPS), always **encourages his team to pursue continuing education**. But he noticed that employees didn't always make it a priority.

In 2023, he and Jon Winstead, Vice President of Vineyard Operations, **expanded their One-Year Personal/Professional Development Program**. Staff could set a goal to achieve by harvest of 2024 and VPS would:

- Cover class fees
- Grant paid time off
- Conduct regular check-ins

Jon met with 14 interested employees to **plan for success**. The meetings weren't about assigning goals, but empowering employees to **choose what would help them grow**.

Employees got PCA licenses, took UC Davis programs, and completed sustainability courses. For many, the experience was transformative. Some completed their goals, others did not, but **everyone felt supported**.

Oliver Matthews, Vineyard Manager, completed the UC Davis Wine Executive Program: "I was exposed to a wide range of aspects and issues in the industry. It was a great way to **see the industry from a 10,000-foot view**."

VPS's approach is ongoing—employees always can seek growth support from Randy and Jon.



Randy Heizen, President



Jon Winstead, VP of Vineyard Operations



*SIP Your Best Life*

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Learn more at [sipcertified.org](http://sipcertified.org)