

CHAPTER THREE  
COUNTY PROFILE AND PLAN ADMINISTRATION

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#### 3.1 SETTING

Sonoma County, the most northerly of the nine counties in the San Francisco Bay Region, is located along the Pacific coastline about forty miles north of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge. The county covers just over 1500 square miles, making it the largest of the nine Bay Area counties.

Sonoma County is bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the west, Marin County and San Pablo Bay to the south, Solano, Napa and Lake Counties to the east, and Mendocino County to the north. Because of the geographic configuration and topography of the North Bay area, transportation linkages to adjacent counties are limited to a few routes. The U.S. Highway 101 Freeway is the major north-south route, connecting the county to San Francisco and Marin County to the south and to Mendocino County to the north. The major east-west route is State Highway 12 connecting the county to Napa County to the east and extending nearly to the Pacific Ocean to the west.

The county includes a diverse mosaic of land forms, environments, and human settlements. The broad, flat Santa Rosa Plain, which lies between the Sonoma Mountains on the east and low coastal hills on the west, contains the Cities of Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Cotati and the Town of Windsor. The sparsely settled western side of the county, along the Pacific coastline, includes the redwood and mixed conifer forests of the Mendocino Highlands in the north and rolling oak-studded hills, dairy lands, and coastal prairies in the south. The Mayacmas Range forms the eastern boundary of the county. Along with the Sonoma Mountain range, it encloses the Sonoma Valley or "Valley of the Moon," a scenic agricultural valley which extends from near Santa Rosa southeastward to the city of Sonoma and the marshlands of San Pablo Bay. In the north, the Mayacmas Range and Mendocino Highlands enclose the Alexander and Dry Creek Valleys. In the far northeast, the remote interior of the Mayacmas Range contains the Geysers geothermal steam field.

#### 3.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2000, the Cities of Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Healdsburg, Sonoma, Sebastopol, Cotati and Cloverdale and the Town of Windsor, contained a combined population of 308,049, about 67% of the total population of 458,614. Santa Rosa, the largest city, had approximately 147,595 residents. The 150,565 residents in unincorporated areas were concentrated in urban areas located just outside several cities, notably Santa Rosa and Sonoma, and in a number of rural communities. With a 2000 population of 22,744, the Town of Windsor, which incorporated in 1992, was considered a part of the unincorporated area in the 1990 population count.

The 2000 census, by race, shows that the county is predominantly white at 74.5%, followed by Hispanic at 17.3%, Asian/pacific islander at 3.2% and black at 1.3%. Other races account for 1.0% of the population. The county's communities vary substantially in their character, and their diversity contributes to the quality of life that is desired by many residents.

The county is expected to grow by about 7,200 persons annually between 1990 and 2005. The number of households is expected to increase from 149,011 in 1990 to about 189,000 in 2005. In this document the term household refers to the people living within a housing unit.

Residential growth is projected to increase from a total of 158,310 housing units in 1990 to 199,790 total housing units in 2005. The totals include year-round and seasonal housing units, with year-round housing units comprising 151,450 units in 1990 and 192,120 units in 2005.

Net immigration accounts for about 70% of the county's growth. In the nine cities, growth is the result of both immigration of new residents and annexations of existing households at the edges of the cities.

Sonoma County's household income range shows a majority of the population (73.1%) earning incomes between \$15,000 and \$75,000 per year, 16.6% earning less than \$15,000 per year and 10.3% earning more than \$75,000 per year.

Demographic information in this chapter is excerpted from the Sonoma County General Plan (March, 1989) and the 2000 census.

	1990 Census	2000 Census	2005*
Population	388,222	458,614	468,540
Total Households	149,011	172,403	189,000
Total Housing Units	158,310	183,153	199,790

\* Source: Sonoma County General Plan, Population and Housing Projections

### **3.3 TRANSPORTATION PATTERNS**

Transportation patterns in Sonoma County are greatly influenced by the proximity to the south of the San Francisco Bay metropolitan region. U.S. Highway 101 is the predominant link to the Bay Area and to northern coastal California.

The county's transportation system is composed of federal and state highways, county roads, urban arterials, local and regional transit systems, as well as air and rail systems. The county's roadway network includes U.S. Highway 101, State Routes 1, 12, 116, 121 and 128, and numerous locally maintained arterials, streets and roads.

### **3.4 SOLID WASTE INFRASTRUCTURE**

Various entities have jurisdictional responsibility for solid waste management in Sonoma County. The Sonoma County Waste Management Agency (SCWMA), formed by a Joint Powers Agreement among the County and the Cities, provides public information and education programs, diversion programs, implement regional composting, and countywide household hazardous waste programs. The SCWMA is also responsible for solid waste planning and maintaining the CoIWMP. The Cities are responsible for waste collection and diversion programs within their jurisdictions, and the County is responsible for collection in the unincorporated areas. The Sonoma County Department of Transportation and Public Works owns and operates all public solid waste disposal facilities in the county. A Local Task Force has been established to provide advice and assistance for the preparation of solid waste planning documents and is comprised of representatives appointed by the Board of Supervisors, City Councils, representatives of the solid waste and recycling industries, and representatives of environmental organizations. Enforcement of regulations pertaining to solid waste management is the responsibility of the Sonoma County Department of Health Services.

### **3.5 COUNTYWIDE ISSUES**

Several prominent issues are facing the County of Sonoma as it attempts to meet the mandates of AB 939. Full implementation of all proposed waste diversion programs and facilities will be especially challenging as the costs for additional diversion efforts increase. The County is also proposing to both expand the existing Central Landfill, and site a new landfill. This will surely be a contested issue as with any landfill siting process.

Illegal disposal in outlying areas, and illegal importation of waste into the county are ongoing issues for DTPW staff.

### **3.6 MARKET DEVELOPMENT**

The market for recycled materials has varied widely over the years. Without an adequate market, the short term cost of many recycling programs is greater than the cost of disposal. By virtue of its location in the San Francisco Bay Area, Sonoma County has the advantage of ready access to an international port system to market materials. However, marketing continues to be a high priority with the majority of the effort provided at the state level.