



# Friends of the Gualala River

*An affiliate of the Redwood Coast Watersheds Alliance (RCWA)*

P. O. Box 1543, Gualala, California 95445

[GualalaRiver.org](http://GualalaRiver.org)

<http://www.codorniu.es/contacto.html>

March 16, 2012

Señor Xavier Pages, Director General  
Señor Luis Sierra-Rey, Marketing Director  
CODORNIU, S.A.  
Edificio Alta 1  
Barcelona, Catalonia 08950  
E S P A Ñ A

Dear Señor Pages and Señor Sierra-Rey:

Almost a year ago, Friends of the Gualala River and over twenty prominent national U.S. and California State environmental organizations wrote to you with a respectful request to withdraw the controversial Artesa proposal to destroy redwood forestlands for construction of a new vineyard in Sonoma County, California. Many circumstances in the last year have changed, some very recently. We believe these changes seriously impair the feasibility of this proposal, and substantially increase the liability of this controversial project to the esteemed Codorniu and Artesa names, as we anticipated. Please carefully review the well-documented facts in context and revisit the strategic value or liability of this Artesa Sonoma Project to Codorniu.

First, the local Sonoma County government has recently (January, 2012) approved a **moratorium on conversion of forests to vineyards**

(<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20120131/ARTICLES/120139916>) This has occurred in part because of the high political controversy and public disapproval of large forest-to-vineyard conversion projects like Artesa's. The local County government's agricultural commissioner is scheduled to propose permanent legislation that includes restrictions on tree removal for vineyards later this spring. The County has asserted that these restrictions will apply to the Artesa Project (<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20120131/ARTICLES/120139916>). The underlying political strength of the motivation for these new legislative actions, and its publicity, should not be underestimated. (<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20120126/ARTICLES/120129572>)

Second, three federally recognized **California Indian tribes** (Kashia and Point Arena Pomo and Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria) have officially approved strongly worded **resolutions firmly opposing the Artesa Sonoma vineyard conversion project**, which they assert "threatens our watershed, forests, sacred sites, archaeological sites and tribal cultural resources that are of **cultural and religious importance to the Tribe**" (emphasis added). Public awareness of these resolutions has only recently begun, and we anticipate that our national media will again give increased attention in coming months to Artesa and Codorniu proposals in the context of tribal culture, tribal religious values, and unacceptable threats to them.

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Third, as you know, a **national on-line petition** initiated by an independent California citizen (who was inspired by Los Angeles Times news reports of the Artesa project: <http://www.change.org/petitions/stop-wineries-from-destroying-ca-redwoods-and-native-american-heritage> ) generated over **92,000 signatures**. This petition reflects **extraordinary national U.S. public disapproval** of this notorious project in association with Codorniu and Artesa. A related local on-line petition generated over 1,800 signatures for the limited purpose of demanding that public comments be accepted by the lead California permit agency for the Project. (<http://www.gualalariver.org/vineyards/artesa.html>).

Fourth, the final **Environmental Impact Report** required for the permit approval of the Artesa Project is **deeply flawed** in many important technical respects, and is **ripe for challenge** on many environmental and cultural resource issues, with support from recognized experts. For example, the Tribal resolution complaints against Artesa and Codorniu are strongly supported by the scientific expertise of an authoritative Professor of Archaeology and Anthropology. These disputes will inevitably contribute to protracted controversy and adverse publicity (<http://www.gualalariver.org/vineyards/ArtesaVineyards-Facebook.html> ).

Finally, we hope you are by now fully aware of the **intense national and California media attention** generated jointly by the Artesa Project and the Preservation Ranch vineyard conversion proposals. A series of very prominent front page and feature articles on this pair of Sonoma vineyard conversion projects has appeared in the Los Angeles Times ([http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-0825-redwoods-vineyards-20110825\\_0\\_3104451\\_full\\_story](http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-0825-redwoods-vineyards-20110825_0_3104451_full_story) ), and in hundreds of leading newspapers carrying an Associated Press syndicated article, (<http://www.google.com/search?q=Plan+to+cut+forest+for+vineyards+faces+opposition> ), as well as intensive critical coverage in financial journals (Financial Advisor – <http://www.fa-mag.com/fa-news/9789-vintage-capital.html>) and in Northern California Wine Country magazines and newspapers (Bohemian – <http://www.bohemian.com/northbay/fall-of-the-redwood-empire/Content?oid=2200342> ; North Bay Biz – [http://www.northbaybiz.com/General\\_Articles/General\\_Articles/Into\\_the\\_Woods.php](http://www.northbaybiz.com/General_Articles/General_Articles/Into_the_Woods.php) ; Santa Rosa Press Democrat – <http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20110731/ARTICLES/110739987/1334/news?p=all&tc=pgall> ). We fully expect media coverage to surge again to greater levels during inevitable objections or challenges to the final permits for the Artesa project.

Is this outdated proposal from the speculative Pinot Noir frenzy of 2001 still sufficiently valuable and feasible for Codorniu to risk the effects of intense, media-based, negative publicity this notorious project poses to the Codorniu name and Artesa brand? Given that the project has not advanced in approval after over 10 years since its inception, and given that it faces further significant delay and adverse publicity due to opposition and challenge, is this single project still a sufficiently reasonable investment and marketing strategy for you to pursue? Please consider this question in the context of the availability of alternative sites, due to many vineyards for sale during a period of industry consolidation in Northern California. (<http://www.northbaybusinessjournal.com/32213/wine-industry-conference-2011-questions-for-the-ma-panel/> )

We hope you share our sincere wish to avoid needless costly conflict and controversy over this project. We offer an alternative, cooperative course of action. We would be willing to endorse and facilitate Codorniu's effort to sell the parcel to a consortium of conservancy and land trust organizations who are dedicated to conserving the important natural and cultural resources of the project site. We would publicly support praiseworthy actions by Codorniu to benefit for the fish and wildlife resources of the Gualala River's forested watershed and for the protection of California Indian tribal uses and cultural heritage. This would turn the controversy into a marketing benefit for Artesa, and enable them to reinvest in productive wine grape land located in Friends of the Gualala River [www.gualalariver.org](http://www.gualalariver.org)

established, proven agricultural areas with no impacts of forest conversion. We would be pleased to work with you in finding interested conservation buyers at fair market value of the land. Again, we offer to promote widespread endorsement of Codorniu's environmental stewardship and positive publicity for Artesa if you pursued this alternative in collaboration with us and our allied conservation organizations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Poehlmann". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Chris Poehlmann

President, Friends of the Gualala River  
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cc:

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