

# Water Resources Stewardship

Overview of Central Coast Vineyard Team Programs



Since 1994, the Central Coast Vineyard Team (CCVT) has been dedicated to educating and guiding growers towards more sustainable practices. Recognized by numerous government, academic, and environmental groups, CCVT's innovative programs have been a model for inspiring cultural and behavioral changes in agriculture that protect natural and human resources.

CCVT has always focused on the whole farm using an integrated framework for resource protection, which includes education on water conservation Best Management Practices (BMP's). Given the increased focus on groundwater resources based on declining water levels, CCVT is committed to prioritizing water conservation in its programs.

## Self-Assessment

CCVT has been collecting and analyzing self-assessment surveys since 1996 and has created a culture committed to on-going grower evaluation of their farming operations.

CCVT has refined the water resource content in its self-assessment protocol and will conduct water specific self-assessment workshops for local growers. Not only will this be educational for the participants, but after analyzing the confidential results, CCVT staff will prioritize topics for further education and outreach.

## Field Demonstration

Based on self-assessment data, CCVT will develop topic specific tailgate meetings, which are characterized by in field demonstrations. Tailgates highlight growers who are successfully implementing specific water BMP's and provide hands-on opportunities for attendees to refine their skills and knowledge. This grower-to-grower approach, coupled with input from technical advisors, is an extremely effective outreach method.

## Outreach and Education

In addition to the field demonstrations, CCVT will implement water focused outreach through its robust network.

Through its newsletters (2,000 recipients), website (5K unique monthly visitors), monthly eblasts (1,000 recipients), classroom style workshops, and the Sustainable Ag Expo, CCVT reaches a broad audience both within and beyond the CCVT member network.



## Best Management Practices Implementation

CCVT's 15 year history proves that combining self-assessment with demonstration and outreach affects growers' actions on the farm. The result of these programs will result in adoption and refinement of Best Management Practices.

Efficient water applications in vineyards revolve around matching the applied water to the crop needs in the most efficient manner possible:

- How much water does the plant need?
- When does it need it?
- How do we maximize uniformity of our applications to efficiently use water?

These questions are answered through a variety of tools and techniques:

- Monitoring the amount of effective rainfall
- Monitoring the weather and estimating the crop evapotranspiration
- Knowing the soil's water holding capacity
- Monitoring changes in soil moisture
- Monitoring changes in plant water status

- Translating the above information to hours of irrigation application
- Ensuring excellent system distribution uniformity through system maintenance, water treatment, pressure regulation, and system filtration

These represent a few broad examples of the BMP's as they relate to water conservation. How a grower successfully implements a specific practice at his/her individual vineyard requires more refined tools and information.

Demonstration and outreach programs address these tools and techniques with specific take home actions for individual growers.

### **Background**

The Central Coast Vineyard Team is a non-profit grower group dedicated to sustainable winegrowing since 1994. The award-winning Positive Points System (PPS) represented the first self-assessment system for evaluating the implementation of sustainable practices in winegrapes and has been replicated and modeled by other crops and groups.

More recently, CCVT launched the Sustainability in Practice (SIP) Certification program. This builds upon the strong framework of the PPS, but adds in documentation and third party audits to allow growers to be Certified Sustainable. However, there are many growers who do not have a need for 3<sup>rd</sup> party certification. The SIP Certification standards are currently being used by growers to continue their self-assessments outside of the Certification framework.

### **Qualifications**

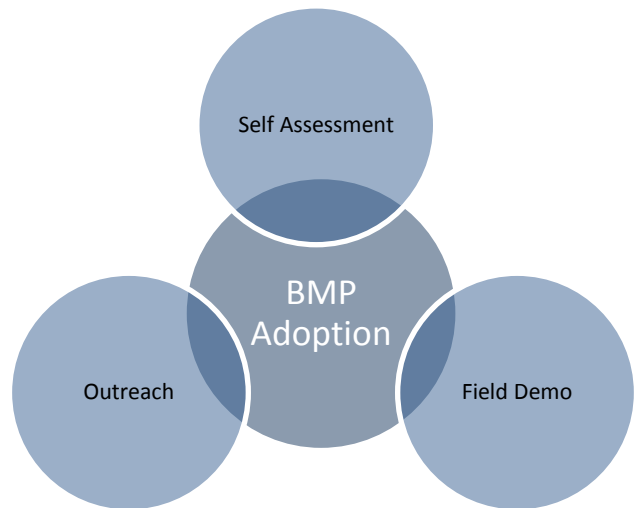
Prior to becoming Executive Director for CCVT, Kris Beal O'Connor conducted research at the Irrigation Training and Research Center at Cal Poly. With a Masters in Agriculture, specializing in Soil-Plant-Water Relations, Kris lectured at Cal Poly, SLO, consulted on the 1998 SLO County Master Water Plan, coordinated the Water Conservation Plan for the San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors, and co-authored a Fertigation textbook.

### **Awards**

- Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Environmental Protection Agency Sustained Excellence (2009)
- Department of Pesticide Regulation IPM Innovator Award (1998, 2010)

### **Stats**

- 300 members representing 80K acres
- Over 1,000 self evaluations collected
- 1,000 people reached annually through workshops and tailgates
- 2,000 people receiving quarterly newsletters
- 5,000 unique website visitors



*Central Coast Vineyard Team Model:  
Cycle of self-assessment, demonstration, and outreach to achieve BMP adoption*

