

Donald M. Hess, Founder



Nurture the Land,
and RETURN WHAT YOU TAKE

“Nurture the land and return what you take.” This philosophy brings with it a dedication to delivering wines that speak to their natural origins. The wines cultivated at The Hess Collection demonstrate the distinctive qualities of the Napa Valley, including the unique qualities of high altitude and Mount Veeder appellation wines.

We strive to protect these qualities by honoring our natural environment. By being responsible in our business and wine-growing practices we are able to return to the land what we ask for it to provide, now and for future generations.

Taking Action: The wine industry has taken a leadership role in the green movement of business standards. Wine industry leaders are working hand-in-hand with industrial, environmental and government agencies, and community partners to develop standards of “green” practices in winemaking.

The Hess Collection has been at the forefront of the green movement for several decades (see timeline below). “Sustainable” winemaking and businesses practices require a course of continual improvement. Participation in the Wine Institute and Napa Valley Vintners programs provides a measurable benchmark for The Hess Collection to improve upon and helps shape the future of the wine industry.

Wine Institute: “The Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices”

“The code helps assure that our wineries and vineyards continue to thrive alongside communities to produce world-class wines. Sustainable winegrowing not only improves wine quality, but helps us compete in the global marketplace, where consumers are increasingly interested in knowing that the foods and wines they enjoy are produced in an environmentally friendly manner.” Robert P. Koch, President & CEO of the Wine Institute. Our practices in our vineyards and winery fully support this code.

Napa Valley Vintners Association: Napa Green Certified Winery and Certified Green Land Programs

“Napa Green Certified Winery is a Napa Valley-specific set of sustainable and green business practices developed for wineries. The NVV is working closely with our partners at the Napa County Department of Environmental Management and the Association of Bay Area Governments as third party certifiers. Certified wineries demonstrate a commitment to conserving water and energy, reducing waste and preventing pollution. The efforts of Napa Green Certified Winery are aimed at reducing the carbon footprint of wine production facilities as part of the broader view of excellent business.” -Napa Valley Vintners Association.

1967

Artist Rolf Iseli refuses to sell his artwork to Donald Hess unless he adheres to environmentally friendly business practices. This is a turning point for Donald: “My philosophy for new business development is to deal only in those things that work in harmony with nature. Over the past three decades of The Hess Collection, I have worked hard to adhere to this philosophy and commitment.”

1978

Donald Hess acquires his first land on Mount Veeder, and completes purchase of 900 acres in 1982. Over 600 acres are set aside as undeveloped land to support wildlife corridors, fish friendly farming practices and biodiversity. The vineyards and winegrowing of The Hess Collection Winery utilize sustainable practices as defined by the Wine Institute.

1992

The Hess Collection hosts the first Natural Farming Symposium for vineyards in the United States. Over 100 vintners attended from Napa and Sonoma Valleys and the panel includes speakers from Europe, Australia and the US.

2002

The Hess Collection helps develop the Wine Institute’s “Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices,” a landmark code of best management practices promoting social responsibility and environmental stewardship.

2007

The Hess Collection sits on the Napa Valley Vintners Association steering committee to establish the “Napa Green” program to define best practices for Napa Valley winery facilities. The Hess Collection actively participates in the Wine Institute’s goal of establishing a standardized and certifiable definition of sustainable wine-growing practices.

2008

The Hess Collection Winery is among the first 10 wineries to receive certification for the Napa Green Winery program and participates in the Napa Green Land program. In spring, The Hess Collection purchases goats for ground clearing and underbrush management in our Mount Veeder estate vineyards. Now, the more than 150 goats are released into the vineyards prior to bud break to help with weed control, minimizing the use of tractors and tilling.

2010

The Hess Collection is among the first 17 wineries to be certified through the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA) by third party verification. Established by the Wine Institute and CA Association of Winegrape Growers, CSWA requires adherence to a “process of continuous improvement.” The Hess Collection receives Napa Green Land Certification. Goals are improvement of water quality, aquatic habitat restoration and soil erosion control projects and expand awareness of responsible management practices by grape growers.

2011

As 1% for the Planet members, The Hess Collection donates \$20,000 from annual sales to The Land Trust of Napa County and Napa County Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship (SLEWS) program. The Hess Collection joined 1% for the Planet in 2008.



Nurture the Land, and RETURN WHAT YOU TAKE

DOING OUR PART

The Hess Collection strives to incorporate sustainable green practices into all aspects of our daily business. Below is a list of steps that we have taken as a company to lessen our impact on the environment. In addition, a percentage of our sales is donated to “1% for the Planet,” a growing global movement of companies that donate to a network of 2,466 environmental organizations worldwide.

VINEYARDS

COMPOSTING: Each fall grapes enter the winery to be crushed and the remains are recycled back to the soil. We compost all pomace, old grape vines and other vegetative materials. They are ground and aged for a year before being spread on the vineyards to maintain on-going soil and vine health.

COVER CROPS: Each fall we seed vineyard rows with cover crops such as yellow mustard, fescue, brome, and vetch. This benefits our soils by promoting soil life through erosion control, improved soil structure and soil moisture management. 600 of our 900 acres are left as open space and wildlife corridors, and our own herd of 150 goats (and growing) help with control of underbrush.

SOIL MANAGEMENT: Care is taken to maintain the health of the soil in the vineyards. Vines are matched to specific soil types to minimize soil nutrient depletion; no-till farming is used to help the soil retain carbon and avoid soil compaction.

BENEFICIAL INSECTS & OWLS: We encourage the presence of beneficial insects that are attracted to the variety of native wildflowers, wild mountain blackberries and other plants that are part of Mount Veeder’s natural habitat. These beneficial insects, such as wasps, praying mantis and ladybugs, prey on vineyard pests. Owl boxes are used to encourage bird population that helps control vertebrate pest populations, e.g., gophers and voles.

WATER CONSERVATION/DRY FARMING TECHNIQUES: Careful irrigation practices allow us to control vineyard canopies, which ensure small berries and concentrated flavors that yield the highest quality fruit. We allow for many vineyard blocks to be nearly dry-farmed as part of our efforts to conserve water.

EROSION CONTROL: Each fall efforts are made to “winterize” our vineyards to prevent erosion. This involves the use of cover crops, straw mulching, installing water bars on roads and maintenance of drainage systems. Taking care of our local watershed benefits everyone.

WINERY

RECYCLING: Systems are in place at all of our facilities to recycle paper, cans and bottles. Office notepaper and printer paper that is made from at least 30% post-consumer recycled materials are used. Packaging supplies for bottling come in containers that are completely recyclable, including shrink wrap, cardboard and plastic. Even the plastic backing on the wine labels is recycled.

CARBON FOOTPRINT: We keep all mountain grapes at our Mount Veeder winery and send our Napa Valley fruit to our facility in Napa in order to significantly reduce truck traffic. In-house shipping reduces our carbon footprint even more by shipping orders from our own facility, allowing us to bypass a third-party warehouse.

WATER CONSERVATION: Conservation of water is mandated. In addition to employee water conservation practices we are initiating a system for recycling hot water used during barrel washing and bottle line sanitizing that results in a savings of over a half million gallons of water per year. We continue to monitor our water use and look for innovative ways of implementing other water saving practices.

ENERGY USE: Lighting has been evaluated by a utilities analyst and there are now energy saving fluorescent lights in place. The cooling systems in the production area are also being upgraded to highly energy efficient systems that will result in significant reduction (20%) of energy used. This is an ongoing effort and additional energy saving measures are imminent.

CERTIFICATION: The president of The Hess Collection Winery sits on the board of directors for the Wine Institute and is involved in their development of “The Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices.” This is a standardized policy that establishes a set of sustainable standards for all The Hess Collection Winery is also one of the first seven wineries to enroll in the Napa Green certification program to be certified by ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments). The winery is also on the steering committee that established the “Napa Green” program.

PRODUCT PACKAGING

WINE CASES (BOXES): Product cases are produced from Kraft (unbleached, natural brown) cardboard to ensure an environmentally friendly and recyclable medium is used. Kraft cardboard is chlorine-free and has a higher percentage of recycled paper within the board than bleached white board products.

LABELS: Inks used for labels and cartons are water-based, not solvent based.

BOTTLES: Glass used for our Hess Select Wines (which represent a majority of our total production) use the lightest weight glass that is available in a punt style. All of our bottles are made with 35%-60% recycled glass.

CAPSULES AND CORKS: Our natural corks are biodegradable and renewable. Tin capsules, which are used for all of our Napa Valley wines, are recyclable.