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Facilities Survey Report: Water and Energy Conservation

Michael S. Lasky

EVEN WITH THE PROSPECT of a strong El Niño, the optimism for a heavy water year was dashed when the good soaking from autumn and winter storms all but vanished with little or no rain in March. Although there were localized, modest improvements in drought intensity, overall it remains obvious that the multi-year drought in the western United States continues.

The unrelenting drought throughout California and much of the western United States makes the questions asked in this year's **Wine Business Monthly** Facilities Survey about what wineries are doing to conserve water and energy use all the more salient. Because of the lack of substantial, revitalizing rain water, more than 60 percent of respondents said they have depended on subsurface (ground) water, but surprisingly less than a quarter of all respondents said they monitor how much they pump. Yet when it comes to monitoring winery energy use, only half of all responding wineries said they do.

Solar Power Gains Wider Acceptance

While the Facilities Survey did not specifically ask if wineries have installed solar energy panels, optional comments from numerous respondents suggest that solar installations are on the rise.

DeLoach Vineyards in Sonoma County reports that it gets electricity through hundreds of solar panels installed on its rooftop. In addition, it has more solar panels in its parking lot which conveniently double as shade for automobiles.

But DeLoach is merely one of more than 100 wineries throughout California relying on solar power. **WineCountryGetaways.com** has an ever-growing list which gives a solid indication that solar-powered wineries are a popular solution for energy conservation.

On the East Coast, **Whitebarrel Winery** in Virginia has also let the sun provide its energy needs. Owner-winemaker **Rik Obiso** noted, "We are passive solar and have moved to 'ancient' winemaking techniques. We have no glycol, no chillers now. We only use manual presses now, too. We are nearly off the grid in wine production." **WBM**