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How This Wet, Wild Winter In California Wine Country Could Have Unexpected Benefits

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Unusual weather throughout much of the United States this winter has been the subject of speculation, consternation, and obsession across the country. Springlike heat in the Mid-Atlantic and flooding rains in the West have wreaked havoc across a wide range of industries. In the past two months, both the Napa River and the Russian River, the in Sonoma County, hit flood levels.

How, then, is this weather affecting the great wine regions of California? And what will the impact be for the 2017 vintage?

Fortunately, because of the natural cycles of vine growth and

vineyard-management practices, the heavy rains have not yet caused too much damage. At least, nothing that can't be fixed with the trellising and needling that was done before the vines were flooded (including the Russian River Valley), there hasn't been any damage at Ramey Wine Cellars, Da

Christian Gastón Palma says he hasn't experienced any significant damage," he wrote in an email. "Because the rains were late enough in the season, our cover crops had sufficient time to stabilize soils and avoid top soil erosion of our steepest slopes."

Not even the heavy rain by trees caused a slight to s

Overall, it's a good sign and grower procedures. President of the growing s

Christoph taking the

"Ironically, now that we have planted vineyards, we want nothing to change. But despite our best efforts, change is inevitable. Our cover crop has worked perfectly to prevent runoff and erosion. Thanks to our attentive crew, the surface drains have worked very well.



Crocker & Starr

"The heavy rains have shortened the time frame by which we prune," wrote Pam Starr, partner & winemaker at Crocker & Starr Winery. "Extra hands and [a] shift in schedule (if it wasn't raining Sundays the team would go out) was [needed] to prune. We have one seven-acre block near the winery where we are waiting to prune. This area was impacted by surrounding property runoff."

"[thankfully] the vines are still in their dormancy phase...the warmer rain is warming the soil, and if the soils remain super saturated, I imagine the vines might have a little 'spring sickness' when they wake." Spring sickness, she elaborated, "is basically the lack of oxygen in the root zone. Clay soils will be at higher risk than our alluvial soils on the west as clay holds onto water longer...Symptoms include yellowing of the leaves and shorter shoot growth in the early stages. [Fortunately], vines are resilient and grow out of this sickness."

California, like this one in the Russian River Valley, could actually benefit from the winter rains (ages).

it experienced any significant damage to the crops had sufficient

issue is the damage caused to the vineyard rows. That's a

that risk, many producers have implemented control practices and techniques. Remi Cohen, Vice President, says the water drains before the

the minds in the business, is not a problem," he wrote in an email.



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