



Jancis Robinson addresses attendees of the RISE Climate & Wine Symposium in St. Helena, CA.

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Together

RECAPPING THE RISE CLIMATE & WINE SYMPOSIUM BY PAM STRAYER

On the opening day of sustainable-winegrowing organization Napa Green’s RISE Climate & Wine Symposium in St. Helena, California, in April, keynote speaker Jancis Robinson talked about her visit to a glass factory and bemoaned heavyweight bottles. Across the street at Beringer Vineyards, Domaine Carneros CEO Remi Cohen led a workshop on how to build self-sufficient energy systems known as microgrids. And over at Charles Krug, electric-tractor maker Solectrac staged a tractor-charging demo.

The next day, renowned groundwater-depletion expert Jay Famiglietti talked about how California’s groundwater depletion accelerated at a rate of 31% over the past two years of drought.

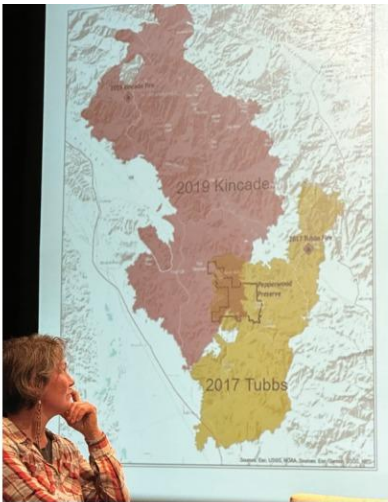
Two weeks later, Oregon regenerative-agriculture authority Mimi Casteel brought down the house with an inspirational speech about the need to think more holistically about production, for instance by considering hydrology cycles every bit as much as carbon.

Part teach-in and part call to action, RISE (risegreen.org) is only in its second year but has already become a hub for those seeking intelligent solutions to the challenges of warming temperatures, wildfire smoke, and other environmental impacts. The name stands for Resilience, Innovation, Sustainability, and Empowerment.

“Beyond the fires, the biggest climate-change impacts are drought and [the] increasing frequency and

intensity of high-heat days. There is also rising pest pressure . . . [plus] there’s the cost of the smoke taint in 2020, with most people only making [no more than] 20% of their vintage. There [are] also the impacts of climate change in terms of rising rates of eco-depression among youth,” said Anna Brittain, executive director of Napa Green, who co-founded RISE with Martin Reyes, MW, in 2022.

She advocates for a broader definition of sustainability that goes beyond focusing on the environment. “All too often, sustainability is simply equated with environmental stewardship, but in fact sustainability rests on three pillars: people, planet, and prosperity,” Brittain said by way of defining the standards



A map shows the reach of recent California wildfires.

for Napa Green’s certification program, which cover six areas that each merited a half-day of programming at RISE: energy efficiency and savings; water efficiency and savings; waste prevention and supply chain; proactive farming, soil health, and biodiversity; social justice, diversity, and inclusion; and climate action and regenerative agriculture.

As a world-class wine region, Napa is uniquely positioned to be a leader in climate resilience, Brittain explained in a promotional video for RISE. “We have market sway because of the sexiness and the spotlight that is on Napa County and the Napa Valley. Our commitment to sustainability sets a standard that is recognized by the global wine industry . . . and the marketplace.”

The uniquely structured event included a wide variety of gatherings,

Groundwater-depletion expert Jay Famiglietti lunches with Saintsbury Winery’s David Graves.



from speeches by big names to more intimate talks about adopting new technologies or practices to demonstrations by local specialists. This enabled attendees to pick and choose, as at a buffet: They could dip into an event and not have to take several days away from their day job, or they could take a deep dive for a rich experience. Either way, a key goal was to help attendees develop relationships that extend over time to deepen learning and grow knowledge networks.

“We bring in the doers and the thinkers and bring them together to bridge the gap that is sometimes lost between the research and the implementation,” said Ben Mackie, Napa Green’s vineyard program manager. “And sometimes those conversations can bring people

beyond their comfort level. . . . That’s really where people are most likely to learn and grow.”

Each day featured a marquee address, hands-on workshops, and more along with a vendor fair representing the latest technology in support of the day’s theme. After the sessions, there was a free lunch to encourage more connection and collaboration. Attending in person enables more social interaction and community building, organizers noted; that said, videos of the talks are posted online for anyone to view (napagreen.org/events-workshops).

For Martin Reyes, MW, that community building is both the root and the reinforcer of sustainability and change. “I initially thought, ‘Oh, gee, a lot of people are doing great work, let’s get them all together. Let’s get them talking. . . . Let’s not work in silos. Let’s break down barriers. That was the initial thing. And that’s still true,’” Reyes said. “[But] I found the bigger power, the bigger strength of this is . . . the sense that we’re in this together—that we’re part of something larger. . . . What [fuels] us is the friendships and relationships that hadn’t been there before or had been more tenuous.”

Added Brittain, “RISE is that opportunity to leverage the platform that we have here . . . to bring together powerful voices from well beyond Napa County and to really spread our message and spread our leadership and help inspire others to achieve ever-higher levels of sustainability and climate action.”



Electric-tractor manufacturer Solectrac holds a vehicle-charging demo.