



# ALTERNATIVE REVIEW PROGRAM (GRADING)

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING  
976 OSOS STREET • ROOM 200 • SAN LUIS OBISPO • CALIFORNIA 93408 • (805) 781-5600

*Promoting the Wise Use of Land • Helping to Build Great Communities*

## Agricultural Grading through the Resource Conservation District (RCD)

The Alternative Review process is intended to provide a collaborative review process for more complex grading projects. Projects which qualify for Alternative Review may either obtain a standard County Grading Permit, or may instead choose to follow the Alternative Review process.

This process allows the local Resource Conservation District (RCD) to perform the review, approval, and inspection duties in lieu of the County. There are two RCDs in the County, Upper Salinas-Las Tablas (north of the Cuesta Grade and Morro Bay) and Coastal San Luis (south of the Cuesta Grade, including the coast from Morro Bay southward). Each RCD is operated independently and is able to define its own procedure for Alternative Review. The County does not dictate what plans need to be submitted, the timing of the review, or the final inspection process – these are all decisions made by the RCD. Generally, the complexity of the process is directly related to the complexity of the proposed project. For example, building a wide road on steep slopes may require the involvement of a civil engineer to design the plans, while a smaller project (e.g. vegetation removal) might not even require the preparation of plans.

Just because your proposal qualifies for Alternative Review does not mean you must have the project processed through the RCD. If your project qualifies for Alternative Review, you still have the option to seek approval by applying for a County Grading Permit.

Most agricultural grading projects which do not qualify for “exemption” or “agricultural grading” status will qualify for alternative review:

- Grading for new orchards/vineyards on slopes of 30% or more
- Grading or vegetation removal for new rangeland on slopes of 30% or more
- Agricultural roads
- Ponds, dams, and reservoirs
- Streambank restoration or conservation projects (note: if another resource agency is reviewing, approving, and inspecting plans, this is exempt)
- Recreational trails
- Waste management systems

### Process:

1. Determine if your proposed project qualified for alternative review. You may contact your local RCD or the Department of Planning and Building for assistance.
2. Complete an application form which contains information that both the County and the RCD need. The Alternative Review form is attached to the handout. (For roads and ponds you will need to contact the Agricultural Commissioner's Office to initiate their review - the process cannot continue until the Agricultural Commissioner's Office has reviewed the request and determined that the request is for agricultural purposes.)
3. Submit the form to either the County Department of Planning and Building or to your local RCD.

4. If you have filed the application with the RCD, the RCD will transmit the application to County Department of Planning and Building for verification.
5. County Department of Planning and Building enters the information from the application form into our permit tracking system and a file number is assigned.
6. County Department of Planning and Building then verifies that the application can follow the alternative review process. If verified, this step is signed off in the permit tracking system and the RCD is notified.
7. The RCD will then decide whether or not they can process the application. The County must be notified of RCD's decision within 60 days of the date of County Planning's verification.
8. The RCD will work with the applicant to determine the scope of work and the appropriate practices. RCD will then authorize you to proceed with the grading. No grading can occur before the RCD authorizes the grading to occur.
9. The grading must be completed in accordance with RCD specifications. The RCD will approve and inspect the grading proposal.
10. The RCD will notify the County when work is satisfactorily completed.

**Alternative Review Fee:**

All fees for Alternative Review will be paid directly to the RCD. Questions regarding costs to process should be addressed directly to the RCD.

***Please see the handout "Guide to Agricultural Grading" dated June 2010 for more complete information.***

**Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource  
Conservation District**

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Templeton, Ca 93465

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**Coastal San Luis Resource  
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