

Proposal for the Approval of a New Subdivision of the
Okanagan Valley Geographical Indication

LAKE COUNTRY SUB GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

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Prepared by Sandra Oldfield, Elysian Projects, on behalf of the region's stakeholders

Introduction

This document summarizes the case for a sub geographic indicator for the Okanagan Valley called “Lake Country”. Under section 9 of the Wines of Marked Quality Regulation (the “Regulation”), the factors making this region unique from a grape growing perspective are characterized. Within this report are a summary of Lake Country’s geology and landforms, soil properties, climate and its viticultural characteristics.

The technical report has been prepared for the stakeholders in the proposed area by Dr. Scott Smith, Eterna Consulting, Dr. Pat Bowen, Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre Summerland and Sandra Oldfield, Elysian Projects. The technical report attached is a part of this final submission.

The Regulation

The Regulation as set out in Section 9(3) specifies the characteristics needed for application of a new sub geographic indicator (sub-GI) in British Columbia:

(3) If the administrator intends to recommend to the minister new subdivisions of geographical indications for the purpose of section 56 (1) [geographical indications], the administrator must first ensure that all of the following criteria are met with respect to the geographical area represented by the proposed new subdivision:

(a) the area must be geographically distinct and have clearly defined boundaries;

(b) appropriate consultations must have taken place in the area and the region surrounding the area, with no credible objections made on the basis that the area is not geographically distinct;

(c) grape production in the area must be commercially viable;

(d) the administrator must hold a vote, by ballot, with respect to the proposal, and the proposal must be supported by at least 2/3 of the following:

(i) the practice standards certificate holders who process, in the area, at least 2/3 of the total wine processed from grapes grown in that area;

(ii) the registered grape growers who grow at least 2/3 of the total volume of grapes grown in that area by registered grape growers.

The Lake Country Defined Area

The proposed sub-GI meets the requirements of being distinct with clearly defined boundaries.

Dr. Scott Smith of Eterna Consulting characterized the Lake Country area's western boundary following 20 km of the eastern shore of Lake Okanagan and its eastern boundary rising up from the lake slopes to a maximum elevation of 650 metres. The northern line follows the Lake Country municipal boundary up to 600m and the southern boundary extends south to the border with McKinley Beach residential properties. A great deal of effort has been taken to include in all arable land but to exclude land once it becomes too steep, includes rocky ridges or cuts individual properties.

As for the soil, vineyards below 425 metres in this area include soils of fine sand, silt and clay due to late stage deglaciation while above this elevation the soils are deposits of stony till and wind-blown (eolian) sand. In addition, As stated in the attached technical report by Dr. Smith, "One unique geological feature of the GI is the occurrence on the slopes above Okanagan Centre of much older sediments that pre-date the last glaciation...These sediments...consist of pre-glacial gravels, a till deposit related to a glaciation some 70,000 to 50,000 years ago and a soil that developed in eolian sands during the inter-glacial (i.e. between glaciations) period some 50,000 to 25,000 years ago...the slopes in this area of Okanagan Centre are composed of very old pre-glacial and inter-glacial sediments."

More specifically, the most common soils in this sub-GI are organized into four groups:

- The finer textured silt and clay glaciolacustrine parent materials found mostly at lower elevations in the sub-GI
- Morainal (till) parent materials mostly weathered parent material of wind-blown sediments found mostly on upper slopes above 100m in elevation above lake level
- Soils formed on glaciofluvial materials with gravelly subsoils and sandy or loamy surface cover, found mostly in the southern portion of the area
- Shallow soils formed over bedrock, generally non-arable portions of the southern rocky uplands

Climate has been characterized mainly by slope aspects, angles and elevation throughout the sub-GI. The area is mainly sloped to the west but also includes areas facing south to northeast in range. These slopes allow for better cold air drainage minimizing damage by frost. The elevation influences climate as well with sites higher in elevation being slightly cooler than those at lower elevations which are moderated by the lake's influence.

Lake Country's ancient soils, gentle slopes, and position next to the north end of Okanagan lake make it distinct and the technical report map (figure 1) show it has clearly defined boundaries, both satisfying section 9(3a) of the Regulation.

Consultations

The winery stakeholders have been consulted from the very beginning of the process to establish this Lake Country sub-GI. Meetings have been held with all of the winery stakeholders each time there was the need for a decision to be made, a boundary to be changed or discussed or any other factor that would influence the application. A large amount of the farmed acres in the region are owned by these winery stakeholders. In addition, the winery and winery/growers in the area understand that the British Columbia Wine Authority (BCWA) will be naming each growers found within the sub-GIs borders and holding an informational meeting as to the process, the application and the voting to determine if it will approved by these stakeholders. The stakeholders who have driven this process welcome such a meeting and look forward to being able to vote on the proposal. Section 9(3b) will be fully satisfied after all the registered grape growers are able to review and exercise their opinion on the proposal.

Commercially Viable

The proposed Lake Country sub-GI is roughly 2,500 ha in size with 100 ha of that currently in high quality grape production, supporting an estimated 50,000-75,000 case production. Currently the area supports six (6) wineries, a robust tourism industry, numerous businesses that relate to wine and grape production and many independent grape growers. In addition, the area has supported grape growing for half a century. Section 9(3c) is satisfied.

Voting by Ballot

The stakeholders understand that the British Columbia Wine Authority (BCWA) will conduct a vote by ballot of the practice standards certificate holders within the proposed Lake Country sub-GI. All wineries within the sub-GI have indicated their support and independent, registered grape growers will be informed of the proposal and any concerns will be addressed before voting occurs. It is also understood that in order for the proposal to pass, 2/3 of the practice standards certificate holders in the area and 2/3 of the registered grape growers in the area must support this sub-GI proposal.

Conclusion

This proposed Lake Country sub-GI is a unique, 2,500 ha region of the larger Okanagan Valley. Its establishment will allow for better consumer recognition of the unique qualities that Lake Country wines embody, a strengthening of the notion of truth in labelling and a shared viticultural story. This application is respectfully submitted to the British Columbia Wine Authority and its approval is greatly anticipated.