

Proposal for the Approval of a New Subdivision of the  
East Kelowna Slopes Geographical Indication

East Kelowna Slopes GI

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Prepared by Taylor Whelan on behalf of the Stakeholders in the proposed GI.

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to apply for approval of an East Kelowna Slopes Geographical Indicator as per Section 29 of the Wines of Marked Quality Regulation. The proposed GI has been identified as a unique area with respect to landform, landscape position, meso-climate, air drainage and soil materials. The combination of these particular characteristics is unique to the East Kelowna area in the Okanagan Valley.

This report has been prepared for a steering committee of wineries and growers including Sperling Vineyards, Tantalus Vineyards, and Kitsch Wines and with support from all the stakeholders in the proposed region. The scientific research relied upon in this report was prepared by Dr. Scott Smith of Eterna Consulting in conjunction with Dr. Pat Bowen, a Viticulture Research Scientist at PARC, and Deepa Filatow, BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

## The Regulation

Section 9(3) of the Regulation states:

(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 Defined Area

The proposed Geographical Indicator (GI) is geographically distinct as required by Section 9(3)(a) of the Regulation.

Dr. Scott Smith of Eterrna Consulting *et al.* evaluated the area outlined by the stakeholders in the East Kelowna Slopes Area. This area was delineated by the geographical formations that influence the climate and soil composition. In general the area is defined by mixed fluvial and glacial fluvial deposits in the form of an escarpment and its benches in the South East Kelowna area. Typically the premium vineyard sites show good air drainage and north or northwest slopes.

The proposed area is roughly 2500 ha in size and delineated in the North and North East by the Mission Creek valley, in the South East by the limit of arable land against elevation, and in the West and South West by a transition from the escarpment land formation into residential housing area. Efforts were made to prevent bisection of property lines in the delineation of the GI.

The main landform that the GI is based on is an escarpment created by the flow of Bellevue Creek and Mission Creek into a post-glacial lake called Lake Penticton, which sat at around 150m higher elevation than Okanagan Lake. The flow of water deposited materials in a fan which intermingled with finer sediments deposited by glacial wasting in the middle of the valley and by the settling of clay and silt deposition in the historical Penticton Lake. As the lake elevation dropped, Mission Creek began to cut through the fan to create the escarpment form found in the East, North, and West sections of the GI.

In the South and west sections of the GI, the geology is also associated with sediments deposited adjacent to ice water melt and by direct contact with ice. Hummocky and depressed landforms were caused by deposition of sediments by flowing water and also by deposition around more stable ice, resulting in depressions when the remaining ice melted. In general the South and West portions of the GI slope gently (<5%) towards Okanagan Lake to the West.

Soil textures vary from clay to gravelly. Common soil types are Gammil and Paradise which consist of gravels capped by a layer of silt in particular in the South and West extents of the GI. Rutland soils can consist of up to 60% stone and contribute to a good deal of the northern acreage. Glenmore soils are less common – these soils are composed of glaciolacustrine sediments focused mostly on clays and fine silts – but they play an important role due to water holding capacity.

Slope is important in consideration of the uniqueness of the GI. In general the slopes are less than 5% and are northwest facing. These slopes promote cool air drainage and extend the growing season significantly. Premium viticulture sites have consistent slope allowing for appropriate air drainage. Frost-free days are between 170 and 200, consistent with the Okanagan Valley average.

### **Commercially Viable**

The proposed GI of East Kelowna Slopes covers an area of 2500 hectares, with some of the oldest operating vineyards in the Okanagan Valley including Sperling and Tantalus. Given this fact alone, it is evident that the area is commercially viable. That being said, this GI shows great opportunity for growth. It is a large GI, with many good sites still unidentified or unplanted and significant other agricultural holdings which would suit themselves to planting of vineyards in the future.

Given this opportunity for growth and the current shortage of Kelowna area grapes on the market, in particular Pinot Noir, the introduction of a GI's is vital to protect the name of the region by identifying the prime area and preventing landholders of other vineyards in less favourable areas from trading on the East Kelowna name.

The planted area of the GI is approximately 203 acres, amounting roughly to 50,000 cases of wine production. The farming of this land and the wine produced from it generates approximately 15 million dollars in economic activity in employment, tourism, and sales. To ensure the continued success of this GI area and to protect the quality it has become known for, GI status is imperative.

### **Voting by Ballot**

It is understood that the British Columbia Wine Authority ("BCWA") will conduct a vote by ballot of the practice standards certificate holders within the proposed Sub- GI. All wineries and growers in the proposed Sub-GI have indicated their support for the application.

The authors of this section of the Act 9, 3 (c, d) made the assumption that all the stakeholders would be certificate holders and thus able to vote under these rules.

After consultation with all the stakeholders in the proposed Sub-GI it is hoped that the BCWA will hold the vote. With the manner in which the Act is written we believe we have the 2/3 majority of members and stakeholders comprising 2/3 of the volume of grapes and wine.

### **Consultations Within the GI**

The stakeholders in the proposed Sub-GI have been consulted throughout this process and have participated freely. The stakeholders intend to call a virtual meeting at which time there can be an open discussion with regard to any concerns or questions related to the proposal. Shortly after this meeting, a vote will be held to accept the GI proposal and forward it to the Ministry of Agriculture.

If the majority of the votes accept the proposal it is hoped the BCWA would submit this application for a East Kelowna Slopes GI to the Minister of Agriculture for amendment into the Wines of Marked Quality Act.

### **Conclusion**

The area delineated by the working group and investigated by Scott Smith of Eterrna Consulting has been shown to be both geologically and climactically unique due to a combination of unique soil type and aspect, combined with a moderate growing season ideal for quality wine production. The wineries and vineyard within the proposed GI have operated for several decades and stand to gain significantly by protecting the unique terroir they currently farm and further developing it into the future.