

Proposal for the Approval of a New Subdivision of the
Vancouver Island Geographical Indication

COWICHAN VALLEY SUB-GI

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Prepared by Bailey Williamson on behalf of all the Stakeholders in the proposed region.

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to apply for approval of a Cowichan Valley Sub-Geographical Indication ("Sub-GI") as per Section 9 of the Wines of Marked Quality Regulation ("Regulation"). The proposed Sub-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 Cowichan Valley.

This report has been prepared for Bailey Williamson, Blue Grouse Estate Winery and Vineyard, with support from all the stakeholders in the proposed region. The scientific research relied upon in this report was prepared by Dr. Scott Smith, until recently, a soil scientist with the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre ("PARC") in Summerland in conjunction with Dr. Pat Bowen, a Viticulture Research Scientist at PARC, and Elizabeth Kenny, Elizabeth A. Kenny Consulting, one of the original soil scientists mapping soils for this area. Their scientific summaries are attached at the end of this Application.

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 Sub-GI is geographically distinct as required by Section 9(3)(a) of the Regulation.

Dr. Scott Smith of Eterrna Consulting (in consultation with Dr. Pat Bowen of the Summerland Research and Development Centre, Agriculture and Agri-Foods Canada, including Elizabeth Kenny) evaluated the area outlined by the stakeholders in the Cowichan Valley. This area was delineated by the geographical formations that influence the climate and soil composition. Generally the ocean to the east, the Malahat to the south, Mt Provost in the north and the narrow valley extending toward Cowichan Lake in the east. After detailed evaluation of this large heterogeneous area, Dr. Smith determined that the biogeoclimatic zone of the Coastal Douglas Fir moist maritime (CDFmm) was the dominant factor influencing the drawing of the boundaries. This area comprises the majority of the two dominant watersheds, the Koksilah and the Cowichan Rivers.

Dr. Smith concluded that: "The Cowichan Valley is a cool climate wine region. The valley has a Mediterranean-like climate with cool, wet winters and warm, dry summers. A strong maritime influence moderates seasonal temperature variation, unlike the more continental conditions in the major grape-growing areas of the southern interior of British Columbia." This coupled with the distinct Exotic Terrane of Vancouver Island creates a unique growing sub-region for grapes and their development. This Exotic Terrane is geologically distinct from the rest of the North American land mass and thus represents an entirely unique growing medium. The dominant parent material for the soils were the result of glacial advance and retreat beginning about 19,000 years ago lasting roughly 7,000 years. The retreating glaciers left behind Marine sediments, Glacialfluvial sediments and Morainal (till) sediments, the concomitant effect of this glacial retreat was the uplift of the land mass which is estimated to be approximately 100 m. during deglaciation.

A copy of the map showing the proposed Cowichan Valley Sub-GI's defined boundaries as well as the justification for the boundaries are contained in Dr. Smith's report which is attached to this Application.

Commercially Viable

The wine and grape growing industry in the Cowichan Valley supports not only the people but the greater tourism sector, which in turn supports the market farmers and other craft beverage producers. The proposed Sub-GI covers an area approximately 350 sq. km. There are 14 wineries representing approximately 150-175 acres, including growers. This equates to roughly 50,000 cases of wine or 500,000 L. The requirement of Section 9(3)(b) is satisfied.

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. The proposed area for the Sub-Gi is comprised of 14 wineries, and approximately 6 commercial growers. Of these there are 5 certificate holders and another 4 grower members.

After consultation with all the stakeholders in the proposed Sub-GI it is hoped that the BCWA will hold the vote and allow all non-certificate holders to vote in an effort to show broad consensus for this initiative. 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 Sub-GI

The stakeholders in the proposed Sub-GI have been consulted throughout this process and have participated freely. The stakeholders intend to call a meeting at which time there can be an open discussion with regard to any concerns or questions related to the proposal. It is hoped that there could be a vote after this meeting and the BCWA could tabulate the results and inform us in writing of the results.

If the majority of the votes accept the proposal it is hoped the BCWA would submit this application for a Cowichan Valley Sub-Gi to the Minister of Agriculture for amendment into the Act.

Conclusion

As noted in the report prepared by Dr. Smith, the proposed Cowichan Valley Sub-GI is a unique and distinctive region within Vancouver Island and the classification of this region as a Sub-GI will help consumers identify with the grapes and wines grown within this region. It is respectfully requested that this application be approved.