

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

SUMMERLAND BENCH SUB GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

MAY 21, 2021

Submitted by Rick Thrussell on behalf of the Summerland Bottleneck Drive Winery Association and grape growers in the District of Summerland

Introduction

This document puts forth the case for a sub geographical indication for the Okanagan Valley called Summerland Bench. Under section 9 of the Wines of Marked Quality Regulation (the “Regulation”), the factors making this region unlike any other from a grape growing perspective. This report also provides a summary of Summerland’s geology and landforms, soil properties, climate and its viticultural characteristics.

We have secured support letters from her worship Tony Booth Mayor of Summerland, MLA Dan Ashton and MP Dan Albas included, along with our application.

The technical report has been prepared for the stakeholders in the proposed area by Dr. Scott Smith, Eterra Consulting, Dr. Pat Bowen, Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre Summerland and Rick Thrussell past president of Summerland’s Bottleneck Drive Winery Association. The technical report attached is a part of the final submission.

The Regulation

The Regulation as set out in Section 9(3) specifies the characteristics needed for application of a new sub geographic indication (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

Summerland Bench Defined Area

The central concept of this Sub GI is to encompass the landscape composed of terraces and undulations of primarily glaciofluvial sediments that surround Giant's Head Mountain. The vineyards are located at mid-elevation and experience a range of climatic conditions that are determined by elevation, aspect and topography. These conditions generate an array of sites suitable for a wide range of both red and particularly white *Vitis vinifera* cultivars. Tree fruits, predominantly apples and cherries, dominate the cultivated landscape. Vineyards cover a relatively small area, about 60 ha with most vineyards located east and south of Giant's Head Mountain.

Most of the soils used for wine grape production in the Sub GI are coarse textured, either formed in sandy sediments or are stratified with a loamy surface texture underlain by gravel at some depth. These coarse textured, well drained soils enable vigour control through deficit irrigation, which balances fruit yields relative to vigour and optimizes the exposure of developing clusters to sunlight.

In Summerland the frost-free period usually begins in the middle of April and runs until late October and produces a growing season length of over 190 days, long enough for most *vinifera* grape varieties. The occurrence of frost is very site-specific. Interannual variation is significant but with a trend toward slightly longer growing seasons in recent years.

Within the context of the Okanagan Valley, the 21 year average growing-degree-day total average of 1334 represents intermediate growing season heat, cooler than the south Okanagan (where degree-day totals typically exceed 1500) but warmer than areas in Kelowna and to the north. Summerland's ancient soils, gentle slopes, and position next to the southern 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 the Summerland Bench Sub GI. Meetings have been held with all of the winery stakeholders including the BCGA as the need for a decision to be made, a boundary to be changed or discussed or any other factor that would influence the application. Most of the farmed acres in the region are owned by the winery stakeholders who put forth this application. The winery and winery/growers in this area understand that the British Columbia Wine Authority (BCWA) will be naming each grower found within the Sub GI borders and holding an informational meeting as to the process, the application and the voting to determine if it will be 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 Summerland Bench defined area currently comprises of 60 ha (148 acres) of planted vines, the first of which were established in 1976, and the most recent in 2020, with new plantings coming online every year. There are currently 10 wineries with operating tasting rooms, with another opening in 2022. Apple growers are currently replanting with grapes, adding to the growth of the grape growing and winery industries, and cementing the region's reputation for quality and commercial viability. Many of the vineyards in Summerland Bench are certified organic, with many others undergoing transition, also reflecting a long-term commitment to sustainable viticulture practices and care for the land. The area also supports a diverse tourism industry, hotels, resorts, restaurants as well as ancillary businesses such as tour operators, private chauffeurs and designated drivers. They are well positioned to offer a multi-faceted service to wine savvy consumers from around the world who visit our region annually.

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 Summerland Bench 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

The proposed Summerland Bench Sub GI is a very unique region of the Okanagan Valley. Its establishment will allow for better consumer recognition of the unique qualities that the wines made and grown within this defined region represent. The notion of place and terroir and a shared viticultural story is what this unique region is all about. It is the essence of what brings people to this valley and as we move our industry forward we are building the foundation for why the world is starting to pay attention to this rapidly developing wine region. On behalf of the Summerland stakeholders, our wineries and growers we submit this application for this distinct Sub GI to the British Columbia Wine Authority. We look forward to joining the other regions in the province who have previously submitted applications and have been granted approval.