

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

South Kelowna Slopes GI

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to apply for approval of a South 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 South Kelowna/Lakeshore area in the Okanagan Valley.

This report has been prepared for a steering committee of wineries and growers including CedarCreek Estate Winery, St. Hubertus Winery, and Summerhill Winery, 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 South 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 glacial sediments which lay along north and west facing slopes of Lake Okanagan in the South Kelowna area, combined with the climatic effect of the moderating lake influence. The soils and slope aspect combined with lake proximity result in long, cool growing seasons conducive to quality production of Pinot Noir, Riesling, and Chardonnay among others.

The proposed area is roughly 800 ha in size and delineated in the North by Lake Okanagan, in the South and West by natural features including rock formations and Okanagan Mountain Park. On its Southern boundary, the proposed GI reaches above CedarCreek Estate Winery to an elevation of between 575m and 615m before dropping down to the property line of St. Hubertus Vineyards and the boundary of the Agricultural Land Reserve. The boundary passes around some mixed residential to terminate in the South East and East against neighbourhood and in the North East along Lake Okanagan and Bellevue Creek.

The geological parent material in this area was deposited during the most recent glaciation of Southern BC approximately 10,000 years ago. Glacial down wasting and till deposition combined with lake bed sedimentation after the formation of Lake Penticton form the bulk of parent material in the area. To the East and South, several creeks including Bellevue Creek deposited sand and gravel as outwash fans and terraces at approximately 400-500m elevation. Postglacial action has also created a variety of fan deposits at the current lake elevation below 360m, in addition to wind deposited sediments on gentle slopes and bedrock deposits from material weathering above 500m within the GI. Glacial till presence increases from east to west across the GI.

Soil development occurred under a mixture of pine forest and open grassland. The textures vary from clay to gravelly. Parent material range from glaciofluvial to glaciolacustrine depending on elevation and geological period of formation.

Slope and lake effect are important in consideration of the uniqueness of the GI. In general the slopes are between 5% and 15% and are northwest facing. These slopes promote cool air drainage and extend the growing season significantly. Additionally, Proximity to the lake provides protection against winter damage to vines during cold events. A combination of moderating lake effect and cool north-west aspect also result in moderate growing season with a later harvest and characteristic wine profile.

Commercially Viable

The proposed GI has demonstrated commercial viability for several decades – significant vineyard acreage was planted by the 1980s and into the early 1990s and CedarCreek, St. Hubertus, and Summerhill have all operated for several decades. The wineries within the proposed GI are a popular destination for wine tourism throughout the year, and many of the wineries have a strong presence in the retail market within British Columbia. Winery marketing focuses heavily on sustainable viticulture and winemaking, and emphasizes the varieties already established within the GI.

Increased interest in Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and other cool climate and aromatic white varieties in the North Okanagan Valley have prompted a focus on the quality of grape growing and winemaking within this region. The wineries within the area see the creation of a South Kelowna Slopes GI as a way to elevate the stature of their product by focusing storytelling around the vineyards and terroir, and ultimately to allow the wineries to command a higher price for wines produced from the GI.

Further vineyard expansion within the GI will be limited – a significant proportion of the GI has been developed into residential area and very little arable land remains unplanted. At 324 acres of producing vineyard, this area produces approximately 70,000 cases of wine with an economic impact of approximately twenty million dollars in direct economic activity in employment, tourism and sales.

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 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 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 South 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 soil type, aspect, and proximity to Okanagan Lake. 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 protecting it into the future.