

Areas, contains the list of approved viticultural areas.

#### *Definition of an American Viticultural Area*

Title 27 CFR 4.25a(e)(1) defines an American viticultural area as a delimited grape-growing region distinguishable by geographic features whose boundaries have been delineated in subpart C of part 9.

#### *Requirements*

Section 4.25a(e)(2) outlines the procedure for proposing an American viticultural area. Anyone interested may petition ATF to establish a grape-growing region as a viticultural area. The petition must include—

- Evidence of local and/or national name recognition of the proposed viticultural area as the area specified in the petition;
- Historical or current evidence that the boundaries of the proposed viticultural area are as specified in the petition;
- Evidence of geographical characteristics, such as climate, soils, elevation, physical features, etc., that distinguish the proposed area from surrounding areas;
- A description of the specific boundaries of the proposed viticultural area, based on features reflected on maps that are approved by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and of the largest applicable scale; and
- A copy or copies of the appropriate USGS-approved map(s) with the boundaries prominently marked.

#### *Impact on Current Wine Labels*

If this NPRM is approved, bottlers who use brand names like the name of the viticultural area may be affected. Such bottlers must ensure that their existing products are eligible to use the name of the viticultural area as an appellation of origin. For a wine to be eligible, 85 percent of the grapes in the wine must have been grown within the viticultural area(s). See 27 CFR 4.25a(e)(3).

If the wine is ineligible, the bottler must change the brand name of that wine and obtain approval of the new label. Different rules apply if a permittee labels a wine in this category with a label approved as of July 7, 1986. See 27 CFR 4.39(i).

#### **Alexandria Lakes Petition**

ATF has received a petition from Robert G. Johnson on behalf of Carlos Creek Winery, proposing to establish “Alexandria Lakes” as an American viticultural area. The proposed American viticultural area is located in

Douglas County, Minnesota and encompasses approximately 17 square miles. Six fresh water lakes surround the area.

#### *Name Evidence*

The petitioner submitted the following as evidence that the area is locally and nationally known as Alexandria Lakes:

- The 2002 *Official Visitors Guide* for the Alexandria Lakes area published by the Alexandria Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce. This guide refers to the area as the “Alexandria Lakes Area.”
- Several brochures that refer to the proposed area as the “Alexandria Lakes Area.”
- A letter from the Alexandria Lake Area Sanitary District referring to the proposed area as the “Alexandria Lake Area.”

#### *Evidence of Boundaries*

The petitioner has submitted the following as boundary evidence:

- U.S.G.S. Map (Alexandria West, Minn. 1966 (revised 1994));
- U.S.G.S. Map (Alexandria East, Minn. 1966 (revised 1994));
- U.S.G.S. Map (Lake Miltona West, Minn. 1969); and
- U.S.G.S. Map (Lake Miltona East, Minn. 1969).

The proposed Alexandria Lakes viticultural area is located in Douglas County, Minnesota. The proposed boundaries do not encompass the entire land mass known by that name. According to the petitioner, current viticulture and a unique microclimate limit the boundaries to those proposed. He also indicates that the area’s geographic features help define the proposed viticultural area’s borders. We will discuss these features further below.

#### *Geologic Features*

The petitioner states that glacial activity formed the proposed area at the end of the last ice age, 10,000 years ago. The soil is unique because the glacial activity gouged it from the surrounding areas. The steep glacial erosion produced a geographically isolated area that the region’s deepest glacial lakes surround. These lakes are not only the deepest, but by volume, they are largest in the region.

The petitioner states that the most abundant soil found in the petitioned area is of the Nebish-Beltrami association. This association is very unique in that it makes up only 5% of the county. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service (USDASCS) defines this soil as deep, well and moderately well drained. The

petitioner states that vegetation in the proposed area must survive on poorer soils and must have broader root systems than vegetation grown in the surrounding regions. According to the petitioner, the higher concentration of hardwood trees in the proposed area evidence this.

By contrast, the USDASCS defines the opposing lakeshores’ soil, just west and north of the proposed area, as belonging to the Waukon-Flom association, which they describe as poorly drained. The petitioner indicates that these are alluvial wash plains containing heavy lomis soils and low wetlands.

The USDASCS defines the soil associations on the opposing shores just south and east of the proposed areas as belonging to the Arvilla-Sverdrup association. These soils formed in sand or sand and gravel outwash material and are described as excessively drained.

#### *Geographic Features*

According to the petitioner, the proposed area’s geographic features further distinguish it from surrounding regions. Six fresh-water lakes almost completely surround the proposed area. To the north lies Lake Miltona, which is the largest lake in Douglas County. To the east is Lake Carlos, which is, according to the Alexandria Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, the largest lake in the Alexandria Lakes chain. South of the border are two small lakes, Lake Louise and Lake Alvin, and a medium size lake, Lake Darling. West lies Lake Ida, which is one of the largest lakes in the area.

#### *Climate*

The petitioner provided climate data for the years 1992 through 2001 from the University of Minnesota Meteorological Department’s Web site. The data indicates that the proposed area receives on average more precipitation than the surrounding regions. The petitioned area’s average precipitation is approximately 23.65 inches per year. By contrast, Osakis, Wadena, and Ashby Counties, which are located east, north, and west, respectively, of the petitioned area, all received between 1 to 3 more inches of precipitation per year. The petitioner states the difference is due to the seasonal southern winds that blow through the petitioned area producing moisture updrafts that result in rain clouds generally north and east of the area.

The petitioner states that the proposed area receives less annual snowfall than the surrounding regions. The petitioned area’s average snowfall is approximately 47.67 inches per year. By