

north of Roseburg and rise to more than 5,000 feet near the California border. This high mountain barrier prevents marine air from freely moving inland into the proposed area. This mountain barrier also casts an ever-larger rain shadow to the proposed area's south and east.

In contrast, according to the petition, the cooling effect of maritime weather systems flowing east from the Pacific Ocean through the Van Duzer Corridor, a gap in the Coast Range, greatly affect the Willamette Valley area to the proposed area's north. This contrast becomes more apparent, the petition states, as one travels from the north into Southern Oregon since each succeeding valley lies at a higher elevation. Most Willamette Valley vineyards lie only a few hundred feet above sea level, while many vineyards in the Umpqua Valley are above 1,000 feet, and those in the Rogue Valley are typically at elevations of 1,200 feet to 2,000 feet.

Soils

The petition states the soils of the proposed Southern Oregon area evolved slowly from ancient rocks with little contribution from more recent silts and sediments, like those that formed the Willamette soils to the north. Specifically, the petitioner provided reference material that suggests the soils in the proposed Southern Oregon viticultural area come mainly from the 200 million year-old Klamath Mountains, which lie to the area's west. These ancient mountains, which extend up from California to the latitude of Roseburg, OR, are comprised of sedimentary rocks. Over time, the petition notes, a slow and complex geologic process crushed, metamorphosed, and modified these rock substrates.

In contrast, the petition asserts that the Willamette Valley formed in recent geologic time (25 million years ago) as an extension of the ocean or perhaps as multiple interconnected bays, which gradually filled with sediments and occasional basalt lava flows. The glacial Lake Missoula flood also deposited silts and sediments in the Willamette Valley, which help explains much of its flatness. The petition also indicates that the Pacific coastal zone's soils differ from Southern Oregon's soils since they are more highly weathered and consist of a mix of soils from older volcanoes and accreted terrains of oceanic crust. The soils found in the Cascade Mountains and eastward, which vary from mostly young volcanic soils to arid desert and prairie soils, also differ from those found in the proposed area.

Temperature

According to the petition, the proposed Southern Oregon viticultural area provides the warmest growing conditions in the state of Oregon and allows the practice of "warm climate viticulture." This is significant, the petition asserts, because of the dramatic impact a warm growing season has on harvest date, fruit quality, and varieties of grapes grown. The petition notes the 1999 Oregon Agricultural Statistics report showed that 99% of the Merlot grapes and 82% of the Cabernet Sauvignon grapes growing in Oregon were found in Umpqua and Rogue Valley vineyards. Despite the demonstrated ability of the Rogue and Umpqua Valleys to produce warm climate grapes, the petition also notes that many growers search out cool microclimates within Southern Oregon's many and varied hillsides and valleys. This places the proposed area in the unique position of being able to produce both warm and cool climate wine grape varieties, according to the petitioners.

The petition states that the general climate structure in Southern Oregon is much different than that in the surrounding areas. For example, the proposed area averages 2,508 growing degree days with an average growing season temperature of 61 degrees. By contrast, the coastal region averages 1,369 degree days and an average growing season temperature of 56 degrees, the Willamette Valley averages 2,034 degree days and a growing temperature of 59 degrees, while Eastern Oregon averages 1,625 degree days and a growing temperature of 55.5 degrees.

In addition, the petition relates that the climate of the Willamette Valley is cooler and wetter than that of Southern Oregon, while the coastal area, despite having the longest growing season, does not accumulate enough heat to ripen most grape varieties and, due to high rainfall amounts, subjects grapes to risk of mildew and botrytis. Finally, the Eastern Oregon region exhibits a cooler and shorter growing season climate due to its elevation and distance from the Pacific Ocean. The cold winters east of the Cascades leave vines vulnerable to frost kill, and the short growing season is insufficient to ripen fruit. Harvest time in the proposed Southern Oregon area, the petition states, may start up to 10 days earlier than in the Willamette Valley for identical varieties such as Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris. Further, varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot will ripen up to 3 weeks earlier in Southern Oregon than they would in the Willamette Valley, if they ripen at all, according to the petition.

Rainfall

The petitioner states that the proposed Southern Oregon viticultural area receives significantly less rainfall than the coastal region (about 140% less on average) to its east and 40% less than the Willamette Valley to its north. Annual rainfall averages 35 inches in the Rogue Valley and 32 inches in the Umpqua Valley. By comparison, the Coastal Range, and Willamette Valley, average 77 and 47 inches of annual rainfall, respectively, while eastern Oregon averages 20 inches of annual precipitation.

Maps and Boundary Description

See the list of maps and the narrative boundary description for the petitioned viticultural area in the proposed regulation published at the end of this notice.

Public Participation

Comments Sought

We request comments from anyone interested. Please support your comments with specific information about the proposed area's name, growing conditions, or boundaries. All comments must be legible, reference this notice number, and include your name and mailing address.

Although we do not acknowledge receipt, we will consider your comments if we receive them on or before the closing date. We will consider comments received after the closing date if we can. We regard all comments as originals.

Comment Confidentiality

We do not recognize any comments or other submitted material as confidential. All comments are part of the public record and are subject to disclosure. Do not enclose in your comments any material you consider confidential or inappropriate for disclosure.

Where Should I Submit Comments?

You may submit comments:

- *By mail:* You may send written comments to TTBA at the address listed in the **ADDRESSES** section.

- *By facsimile:* You may submit comments by facsimile transmission to 202-927-8525. Faxed comments must—

- (1) Be on 8.5 by 11-inch paper;

- (2) Contain a legible, written signature; and

- (3) Be five or less pages long. This limitation assures access to our fax equipment. We will not accept faxed comments that exceed five pages.

- *By e-mail:* You may e-mail comments to nprm@ttb.gov. Comments transmitted by electronic-mail must—