

Climate

The term "Russian River," as it applies to viticulture, refers to the cool temperatures and coastal fog that influence portions of the Russian River Valley. The expansion area has heavy fog, as noted on an undated map titled "Lines of Heaviest and Average Maximum Fog Intrusion for Sonoma County."

The petition and Treasury Decision ATF-159, which established the

Russian River Valley viticultural area, both refer to the Winkler degree-day (accumulated heat units) system used to classify grape-growing climatic regions (see "General Viticulture," Albert J. Winkler, University of California Press, 1975). As noted in Treasury Decision ATF-159, "The Russian River Valley viticultural area is termed 'coastal cool' with a range of 2000 to 2800 accumulated heat units."

The 767-acre expansion petition documented a degree-day study of three

vineyards from April 2001 through October 2001, which coincides with Winkler's growing season. Two of these vineyards are within the original Russian River Valley viticultural area, while the other is in the newly approved expansion area. This study measured air temperature, wind speed, precipitation, and humidity at the three area vineyards. Documentation is provided in the following table:

Vineyard	Degree-Days (accumulated heat units)
In the <i>established</i> viticultural area:	
Vino Farms Vineyard	2,477
Storey Creek Vineyard	2,736
In the <i>proposed</i> expansion area:	
LeCarrefour Vineyards	2,636

The results from the three vineyards studied show that all three are within the 2,000 to 2,800 accumulated heat units range found in the Russian River Valley viticultural area, as stated in Treasury Decision ATF-159. We independently confirmed that LeCarrefour Vineyards, at 4350 Barnes Road, Santa Rosa, California, is within the approved expansion.

Elevation

Elevations in the expansion area range from 130 feet to 160 feet, with a gentle rise from southwest to northeast, according to the two USGS topographic maps covering the expansion area. These elevations are similar to those found in the portion of the established Russian River Valley viticultural area immediately adjacent to the expansion area.

Soil

The predominant soils of the expanded Russian River Valley viticultural area are Huichica Loam, Yolo Clay Loam, and Yolo Silt Loam, as depicted on the Sonoma County Soil Survey map (USDA, 1972), sheet 74. These soils are also found within the originally-established Russian River Valley viticultural area in vineyards to the north of the expansion area, as noted on pages 57 and 66 of the maps developed by the USDA's, Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service in May 1972. Treasury Decision ATF-159, which established the Russian River Valley viticultural area, does not identify any predominant soils or indicate unique soils of the viticultural area.

Watershed

Both the original Russian River Valley viticultural area and the expanded area are in the large Russian River Valley watershed, as noted on the (California) Department of Fish and Game Inland Fisheries Division's "Russian River Watershed" map of April 1, 1997. This watershed includes the Russian River and the tributaries noted in Treasury Decision ATF-159.

Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

Comments

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Notice No. 965, requested comments from all interested persons concerning the expansion of the Russian River Valley viticultural area by March 10, 2003. TTB received six comments. Two comments supported the petitioned expansion, three opposed the expansion as petitioned, and one stated that this type of Government ruling is not in the public interest. These comments are posted on the TTB Web site under Notice No. 965 at <http://www.ttb.gov/alcohol/rules/index.htm>.

After careful evaluation of each comment, TTB has approved the 767-acre expansion of the Russian River Valley viticultural area in accordance with the August 2002 petition's proposed boundaries.

The first supporting comment, from a winemaker with 18 years of experience, states "the area between Fulton road and Hwy 101, proposed for inclusion in the RRV [Russian River Valley] in Notice 965 is very true-to-type for the RRV [Russian River Valley]." The commenter explains that the quality of grapes grown in the expansion area is on par with the nearby vineyards inside

the boundaries of the originally established Russian River Valley viticultural area. This commenter notes that in the future he will not hesitate to buy winegrapes from the expansion area and include them in his Russian River Valley-labeled wines.

The second favorable comment requested approval of the proposed expansion and notes that the expansion area "satisfies all the criteria outlined in Title 27 CFR 4.25a(e)(2) for proposing an American viticultural area (AVA)." The commenter states that the expansion area satisfies the principal distinctive characteristic of the Russian River Valley viticultural area with its "significant climatic effect from coastal fogs."

A comment, neither in favor or opposed to the Russian River Valley viticultural area expansion petition, states that this type of ruling is "not in the public interest and the government has no business in this." The comment continues that such rulings are for commercial purposes, do not directly benefit the public, and argues that the wine industry should be responsible for this action.

The FAA Act requires that alcohol beverage labels provide the consumer with adequate information regarding, among other things, a product's identity. TTB believes the use of viticultural area names as appellations of origin in wine labeling and advertising helps consumers identify the wines they may purchase.

The first opposing comment states, "If anything, the Russian River Valley AVA should be made smaller to reflect the uniqueness of that area." The commenter adds that since the 767-acre