

Oregon

‘Rocks District’ is newest viticulture area

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater in Eastern Oregon will be the newest American Viticulture Area, or AVA, a designation that provides a marketing edge to vineyards in the area and wine makers who use grapes from there.

The designation covers the alluvial fan of the Walla Walla River and refers to dark basalt cobbles that pocket the area and to the Oregon town of Milton-Freewater, part of which lies within the AVA. The stony soil is well-drained, which forces vines to root deep for water. Rocks exposed on the surface absorb heat, which promotes early season growth and late-season ripening. Despite being part of the Walla Walla Valley, the AVA is entirely within Oregon and will be the state's 18th. The area is known for producing high-quality Syrah wine but has seen recent plantings of Cabernet, another red wine grape.

Nineteen producers have vineyards within the Rocks District boundaries, which covers about 3,770 acres, only 250 acres of which is in



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Designation of a new viticulture area in Eastern Oregon may add to the wine industry's economic impact in the Pacific Northwest

commercial vineyard production.

The distinction will allow wineries, including those in Washington state that use a high percentage grapes from there, to put the AVA information on their labels, said Duane Wollmuh, executive director of the Walla Walla Valley Wine Alliance.

Washington's wine industry and the Oregon Wine Board backed the AVA designation. The Pacific Northwest has become internationally known for

producing fine wines, most notably the signature Pinot Noir of Oregon's Willamette Valley, and AVA information is significant to discerning consumers.

The combination of high-quality and consumer demand has paid off for both states. A January report said Oregon's wine industry produces an estimated \$3.35 billion economic impact, counting crop values and direct and related sales, jobs, services and products. A 2012 report estimated the Washington

wine industry has an \$8.6 billion annual economic impact.

The federal Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, a division of the U.S. Treasury Department, proposed the AVA at the request of eight growers in the region, headed by Steve Robertson of Delmas/SJR Vineyard. A 60-day comment period is required before the AVA can be approved. Kevin R. Pogue, a geology professor at Whitman College in Walla Walla, submitted the petition to the ATTB.

Helicopter company, pilot contest fine in S. Oregon case

By ERIC MORTENSON
Capital Press

A helicopter spraying company and a pilot who were each fined \$10,000 for spraying pesticides on rural homes in Southern Oregon have asked for an administrative hearing at which they will contest the penalty.

Pacific Air Research Inc. of White City and applicator Steven Owen were assessed the Oregon Department of Agriculture's biggest fines during 2014, and their pesticide licenses were revoked for a year.

However, because they have contested the department's findings, they have not yet paid the fine and are free to operate, said Dale Mitchell, manager of the department's pesticide program. A hearing will be held in April.

The original incident happened in October 2013, when residents of the Cedar Valley area near Gold Beach in Curry County complained they'd been sickened in a spraying operation intended for commercial timber. An ag depart-

ment investigation showed the company and pilot sprayed the wrong property, applied more than the label recommends of one product and filed multiple false records about pesticides used.

The department "absolutely" stands by its findings, Mitchell said.

The Pacific Air case was among 505 alleged pesticide violations investigated during the year. Another \$10,000 fine was levied against Glass Tree Care and Spray Service Inc., a Eugene company, for a 2014 incident in which an estimated 1,000 bees were killed when blooming linden trees at a Eugene apartment complex were sprayed with a neonicotinoid pesticide. Applicator James Mischkot Jr. was fined \$6,000.

The department issued 34 civil penalties totaling \$62,423 during the year, choosing "education and outreach" in the vast majority of cases, Mitchell said. The most common violations involve incomplete record-keeping, failing to have all employees properly licensed and applying pesticides in a manner inconsistent with label instructions or in a negligent manner, Mitchell said.

The following penalties were issued to companies using unlicensed pesticide applicators: TJW Croach LLC (PestFree) of Beaverton, \$2,775; Dobyms-Hart Pest Control, Pendleton, \$814 and applicator Chad Griffin, \$407; Northwest Landscape, Tualatin, \$814; All Natural Pest Botanical Solutions Inc., Redmond, \$407.

Penalties issued for applying a pesticide product inconsistent with its labeling: A&J Landscape Maintenance, Inc., Beaverton, \$555; Farmers Supply Cooperative, Ontario, and applicator Tyler Taylor, \$407 each.

Penalties for applying pesticides in a faulty, careless or negligent manner: Samuel Pollock, Hermiston, \$2,035; David Goracke, Shedd, \$555; Cascade Tree Farms, Estacada, and applicator Alfonso Mendoza, \$407 each; Applebee Aviation Inc., Banks, and applicator Patrick Hall, \$407 each; Willamette Valley Helicopters, Newport, \$407.

Oregonians for Food and Shelter group reorganizes

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Oregonians for Food and Shelter, an agribusiness industry group, has hired a lobbyist from the Oregon Farm Bureau as its new executive director.

Katie Fast, vice president of public policy for the Oregon Farm Bureau, will split her time between the bureau and OFS until the end of the 2015 legislative session.

Scott Dahlman, former executive director of OFS, will continue to serve the organization as its policy director.

The change was triggered by the announced retirement of Paulette Pyle, director of grass roots at OFS, who will leave at the end of the session, said Doug Hoffman, the group's chairman and CEO of the Wilco farm cooperative.

OFS is reorganizing due to Pyle's departure, with Fast serving as the group's public face while Dahlman works behind the scenes setting policy, said Hoffman.

"We're aligning skills where they need to go," he said.



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