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Idaho

Idaho gets second wine AVA, more expected

By SEAN ELLIS
Capital Press

EAGLE, Idaho — Idaho has received a second federally designated wine region and industry leaders expect more to follow.

The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau on Nov. 25 accepted the establishment of an Eagle Foothills American Viticultural Area. AVAs are specific wine grape growing regions that have unique growing conditions, such as climate, soils and topography, and history.

Eagle Foothills joins Ida-

ho's first AVA, the Snake River Valley AVA, which was created in 2007.

Eagle Foothills was carved out of the Snake River Valley AVA and it's normal for these so-called sub-AVAs to spin off of over-arching AVAs after they're created, said winemaker and industry consultant Martin Fujishin.

"We may see a number of additional sub-AVAs within the Snake River Valley AVA over the next 10-12 years," he said.

Eagle Foothills will remain part of the Snake River Valley AVA and vintners there can

use both appellations on their wines.

Fujishin said the creation of the Snake River Valley AVA was a real turning point for the industry and put Idaho on the world's wine map.

"I think the creation of the Eagle Foothills AVA will be another one of those watershed moments," he said.

Eagle Foothills encompasses almost 50,000 acres immediately north of Eagle and 10 miles northwest of Boise. It includes nine commercial vineyards covering 67 total acres. According to the AVA petition, there are plans for an additional

seven vineyards and 472 acres within the next few years.

Martha Cunningham, co-owner of 3 Horse Ranch Vineyards, crafted the petition that was accepted by ATTTB and published in the Federal Register Nov. 25.

"It's great news for the state of Idaho and great news for us, of course," said Gary Cunningham, Martha Cunningham's husband.

To be accepted as an AVA, a region must show that it is distinctive from other wine grape growing regions.

In this case, Eagle Foothills adequately demonstrat-

ed to ATTTB that its region has different climatic and soil characteristics than the rest of the Snake River Valley AVA, which covers more than 8,000 square miles in Southwestern Idaho and part of Eastern Oregon.

"There's no doubt the Eagle Foothills AVA is geographically and climatically different than anywhere else in the Snake River Valley," Fujishin said.

The ATTTB has accepted for formal review a petition by wineries in north-central Idaho and part of Eastern Washington to create a Lewis-Clark Valley AVA. Vintners expect that AVA

to be created in the next few months.

The creation of an AVA is a real boost to a wine region, and the number of Idaho wineries has grown from 38 to 51 since the creation of the Snake River Valley AVA, said Idaho Wine Commission Executive Director Moya Dolsby.

With two AVAs, a third on the way and several more sub-Snake River Valley AVAs expected, "It's an exciting time for Idaho wine," Dolsby said. "It's another way to help people recognize that Idaho is making some great wines. It helps us tell our story"



Courtesy of Russell Patterson

Winter barley shows symptoms of barley yellow dwarf virus in this file photo. Barley yellow dwarf infections are widespread in early planted fall grains in Idaho fields ranging from Buhl to Blackfoot, a University of Idaho researcher said.

Barley yellow dwarf widespread in fall grain

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho — Barley yellow dwarf infections are widespread in early planted fall grains in Idaho fields ranging from Buhl to Blackfoot, said University of Idaho Extension cereals pathologist Juliet Marshall.

Marshall said Idaho may be poised for another season of severe pressure from the disease, which caused only isolated damage in the state prior to the 2013 season.

Marshall said this fall's infections are especially heavy in the vicinity of Blackfoot and American Falls.

Barley yellow dwarf is spread by aphids, and symptoms include stunting of plants and yellow or red discoloration of leaf tips, and shriveled grain. Young plants are most susceptible. Marshall said the majority of grain in Southern and Eastern Idaho was affected by the disease this season, reducing yields in fall grains by 10 to 15 percent. Timely moisture in May helped plants recover from the symptoms, she said.

"We won't know if (infections) are as bad as last fall until we see symptom development in the spring," Marshall said.

Marshall said barley yellow dwarf problems have been exacerbated in grains planted this fall by heavy growth of volunteer plants, providing hosts for the disease, and a long fall

without a killing frost.

"We've had a lot of volunteer wheat and barley from harvest," Marshall said. "We've seen a lot of barley yellow dwarf in weeds, like wild oats."

Marshall said growers can help protect their crops by delaying planting dates of fall grains to avoid the heaviest aphid pressure, though she acknowledges dryland growers must plant when there's soil moisture available for seeds to germinate.

She said many growers have started using insecticidal seed treatments on their fall grains this season for additional protection.

In a commercial field in Buhl, Marshall has planted wheat trial plots this fall to study how applications of foliar sprays two and three weeks after emergence may protect crops. She also intends to test some new insecticides, and she said a couple of growers have used foliar sprays in addition to seed treatments this fall, which should provide additional insight.

"We're trying to develop recommendations tailored to our environment and growing conditions," Marshall said.

In Buhl, Marshall has also planted some resistant wheat varieties developed by Kansas State University to determine if any grow well in Idaho, or if any offer promise for Idaho wheat breeders to use when making crosses for new resistant varieties.

Lewiston port resumes container service

Barges unload at Port of Morrow, move containers by rail to Seattle and Tacoma

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The Port of Lewiston, Idaho, has resumed container service after labor and shipper problems at the Port of Portland halted it eight months ago.

Container shipping lines Hapag-Lloyd of Germany and Hanjin Shipping of South Korea quit calling at the Port of Portland in April, citing long loading and unloading times.

The Port of Portland, Port of Morrow, Tidewater barge company, Northwest Container Services and the Port of Lewiston partnered to return container service to Lewiston.

Under the agreement, containers are loaded on Tidewater barges in Lewiston and are unloaded at the Port of Morrow in Boardman, Ore. They then travel by rail to the Port of Tacoma or Seattle before being loaded onto container ships bound for international markets.

"We expect there to be strong demand over the next couple of months," said David Doeringsfeld, manager of the Port of Lewiston.

The initial shipment was 20 containers, all by one company, he said.



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson File

Loaded container trucks line up at the Port of Seattle in this 2015 file photo. A new arrangement allows containers from the Port of Lewiston, Idaho, to be transported to the ports of Seattle and Tacoma by way of the Port of Morrow, where they are transferred from barges to rail cars.

Full containers weigh 58,000 pounds, with 51,000 pounds, or 23.1 metric tons, devoted to product, he said.

Roughly 80 containers will leave Lewiston every other week. As demand increases, the service will shift to weekly, Doeringsfeld said.

"The constraint right now is the availability of heavy-haul rail chassis," Doeringsfeld said. Northwest Container Services is expanding its supply, he said.

At roughly \$1,400 per container, the new option is more expensive than barge service directly to Portland but less expensive than using trucks, Doeringsfeld said.

Shipping by truck to the ports of Seattle or Tacoma costs roughly \$1,600 to \$1,800 per container. Shipping directly to Portland cost about \$850 per container.

Of the 99 ports in the Pacific Northwest, only Seattle and Tacoma export containers, Doeringsfeld said.

"We're hopeful once manager-labor relations are resolved in Portland that steamship lines again provide service," he said. "Until that happens, this at least provides exporters alternative transportation."

The shipment of peas and lentils was particularly impacted. The industry ships roughly 55,000 to 60,000 metric tons of peas and lentils each year, said Tim McGreevy, CEO of the USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council.

When container service stopped at the Port of Portland, that cargo was trucked to the ports of Seattle and Tacoma, increasing road congestion and costs, McGreevy said.

The supply of trucks is small and the cost is higher, and many steamship lines accept containers only three to five days before the ship sails, Doeringsfeld said.

"Clearly it's good news that they have found at least a partial solution to this issue," McGreevy said. "We are happy with this solution, even though it would be nice to have full container service back at the Port of Portland. But that's maybe a way off."

The industry will continue to push for the return of container service to Portland, McGreevy said.

"This is a good first step, and we are looking forward to seeing how this works out. We are supportive of at least some movement that brings container service back to the Port of Lewiston," he said.

Idaho team places fourth in national FFA contest

By JOHN O'CONNELL
Capital Press

AMERICAN FALLS, Idaho — To prepare for an FFA competition, a team of American Falls High school students devoted a full year to research — interviewing agricultural producers, a federal judge and others with a stake in their topic.

They also enrolled in a junior-level class with the singular purpose of practicing for Agricultural Issues, which challenges FFA teams to present both sides of a current issue in agriculture, enabling audience members to form their own educated opinions.

The planning paid off, as American Falls won the Idaho state competition in April

and took fourth place among 44 teams during the recent national FFA convention in Louisville, Ky.

The team debated the merits of Idaho's Agricultural Security Act, commonly called the "ag gag law," which was declared unconstitutional in August by Chief U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winnmill. The statute, signed by Idaho Gov. Butch Otter, outlawed undercover investigations into animal welfare, food safety and worker safety within agricultural production facilities.

During a meeting with the high school team, Winnmill explained the law violated the Equal Protection clause under the 14th Amendment and free speech under the First Amendment.



John O'Connell/Capital Press

From left to right, Stockton Woodworth, Mercedes Hall, Kodee Vining, Melanie Jennings, Dawson Winder, Maddie Wagoner and Katie Ward, members of the American Falls FFA team that took fourth place in the national FFA convention Agricultural Issues competition, gather in their school's greenhouse. The students chose Idaho's "ag gag law" as their subject.

But the students also spent time with local agriculture sources who considered the law vital to protecting their businesses, including Greg Andersen, owner of Seagull Bay Dairy, and Marshall Jensen, general manager of Snake River Cattle Feeders.

Students said the business owners emphasized practices that may appear to be inhumane out of context often serve an animal's best interests.

"Marshall talked about euthanasia. When a cow can't get up, they usually shoot it in the head with a .22 (rifle) and try to get it out of their misery as soon as possible rather than torture the cow," said Maddie Wagoner, who supports the former law.

Based on what she's learned, Wagoner believes Idaho agriculture should reintroduce a more narrowly tailored version of the law to avoid constitutional challenges. She also suggests that food processors open their

facilities to more tours to improve public trust.

The team presented the topic in courtroom format, with Kodee Vining filling in for Winnmill as judge. Students chose to play characters from the actual court case, choosing sides based on their personal opinions. Dawson Winder played a witness with the Animal Legal Defense Fund. His Facebook updates at each stage of the national competition were widely followed by the community.

"One thing that helped me was our whole town was practically right behind us," Winder said.

Mercedes Hall was a Center for Food Safety witness. Katie Ward served as president of the Idaho Dairy Association, and Stockton Woodworth was an Idaho senator, supportive of agriculture. Wagoner and Melanie Jennings, a last-moment substitution on the team who had to make due with just a couple of days of practice, were the attorneys.

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