

Dean Williams  
Willow Creek Viticulture Area  
Committee  
P.O. Box 183  
Willow Creek, CA 95573

Director  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,  
and Firearms  
Department of Treasury  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington D.C. 20226

Dear Sir:

The Willow Creek Viticultural Area Committee, on behalf of the Humboldt County wineries and Willow Creek grape growers, hereby petition to establish an American Viticultural Area to be designated Willow Creek. The following information is submitted in support of this petition.

Sincerely yours,



Dean Williams

Willow Creek Viticulture Area Committee

cc: Regional Director

San Francisco

916-

WILLOW CREEK VITICULTURE AREA COMMITTEE

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## WILLOW CREEK VITICULTURE AREA COMMITTEE

### I. Recognition of Viticultural Area

Willow Creek has long been known as a small geographic agricultural area located thirty one miles from the Pacific Ocean. For years the main crops of the area, peaches, apples and tomatoes, were widely sought by Humboldt County residents.

Willow Creek was first identified in 1851 by early miners and pack train drivers on their trips from Eureka, Arcata and Blue Lake to the interior valleys. They identified the area because of a heavy growth of willows around the mouth of the creek which emptied into the Trinity River. Other miners named the area China Flat in 1852 because of the heavy influence of the Chinese. This remained the name until 1912 when it was discovered that there was another China Flat in the mother lode area. At that time the name was changed back to Willow Creek in honor of those pack string drivers.(1)

Early agriculture started in the 1920's, when the Gambi family brought grape vines, peach trees and apples from Santa Cruz to the Willow Creek Valley. The Gambi's made wine from these early vines--mostly muscat. Other families started large orchards in the 1930's until there were approximately 150 acres in production. Eventually Willow Creek became famous throughout the county for its excellent produce and climate.

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### II. Historical and Current Evidence of Willow Creek Viticulture Area

The name Willow Creek is found on the United States geological survey maps. See Appendix IV U.S. G. S. map.

Grapes were first planted in Willow Creek around 1920 by the Gambi family for sale as eating grapes and personal wine making. The first commercial vineyard was planted in 1974. Now there are five existing vineyards in this small area.

Prior to 1976 there was one winery in Humboldt County. Now, due to the availability of local grapes, there are four. All of the growers in the Willow Creek area were members of the application committee. (See Appendix I for names of the growers.)

Currently two of the four wineries in Humboldt County, Fieldbrook Winery and Willow Creek Vineyards are using the term "Willow Creek" in conjunction with varietal designation for wine produced from the Willow Creek area.

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### III. Geographical Features:

#### Climate

The climate of the Willow Creek viticulture area is characterized by moderate temperatures with an average high temperature of 82.85 degrees, and an average low temperature of 47.04, during the growing months of April through October over the past five seasons.(Appendix II) The proximity of the Pacific Ocean 31 miles west and the warmer climate of the Sacramento Valley about 100 miles eastward combine to produce easterly winds keeping the Willow Creek Valley fairly cool during the summer and making freezes infrequent during the winter. The temperatures range to the infrequent temperature of 100 degrees during the summer and 19 degrees during the winter months.

The Sunset New Western Garden Book(3) places the proposed Willow Creek Viticulture area into a microclimate similar to the well known grape growing areas of California located at St Helena and Napa, in Napa County; Healdsburg, Cloverdale and Santa Rosa in Sonoma County; and Hopland and Ukiah in Mendocino County. This reference describes the climate as .."moderated by the effect of marine air on inland areas that otherwise would be colder in winter and hotter in summer"...

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Using the formulas presented by Robert J. Weaver(4) for determining heat degree days, a compilation of climate data for the past three years reveals the heat units for the area annually averages 3005.62.(APPENDIX III) This corresponds with Area II which tops' out at 3000 heat degree days, and the bottom of Area III which begins at 3000 heat degree days. These climatic regions are described in "Grape Growing"(4). The rainfall has averaged 49.9 inches per year during the past 38 years in this area.

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### Soil

The soil of the proposed Willow Creek Viticulture Area is made up of mostly Quarternary terrace gravels which provides for the excellent drainage of adjacent vineyards. The Trinity River being the center of this viticulture area enhances this drainage.

### Elevation

The elevation in the proposed Willow Creek Viticulture Area ranges from a low of 461 feet on the valley floor to an elevation of 1500. (Appendix IV)

### Physical Factors(Topography)

The proposed viticulture area is located approximately 31 miles from the Pacific Ocean slightly northeast of Eureka, California and about 109 miles west of Redding, California. The proposed area is 7 1/2 miles in length and 3 3/4 miles at its widest point. This area encompasses slightly more than 16 square miles.

The grape growing area of the proposed viticulture area is located on plateaus and benches above the Trinity River joined by the South Fork of the Trinity within the boundaries of the proposed viticulture area. The elevation ranges between approximately 500 feet at river level, to a height of 1500 feet. The viticulture area lies

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in a valley along the Trinity river and the topography surrounding the area is mountainous and mostly National Forest: At places the terrain rises sharply to higher elevations.

The mountainous areas surrounding the Willow Creek valley form a funnel for the ocean breezes 30 miles away drawing the costal breezes toward the warmer interior valleys providing the cooling effect described in the Sunset New Western Garden Book.



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IV. Specific Boundaries of Willow Creek Viticulture Area

The following is a description of the proposed boundaries of the Willow Creek Viticulture Area:

Starting at a point on the north where Kirkham Creek crosses Highway 96, then in an easterly direction in a straight line to Coon Creek, thence in a southeasterly direction to the fork of Brewer Creek, then southeasterly to a point at 1000 feet elevation at the Humboldt Trinity County line, thence southeasterly in a meandering line along the 1500 feet elevation line to a point on Sharbin Creek, then southeasterly to a point at 1500 feet elevation intersecting the easterly line of Sec 12 of the U.S.G.S. map, thence southerly in a straight line crossing the Trinity River and Highway 299 to the 1500 foot elevation, then westerly in a straight line to the southeast corner of Section 21, thence northwesterly in a straight line to a point at 1500 elevation at China Creek, thence northwesterly to Boise Creek campground, then northerly in a straight line to a point at 1000 feet elevation where two forks of Kirkham Creek meet, then following the creek to the point of beginning.

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APPENDIX I

I. HISTORIAN                    Maxwell C. Rowley

II. NAMES OF GROWERS

Robert Gardner

Edwin Oliveira

Tony Oliveira

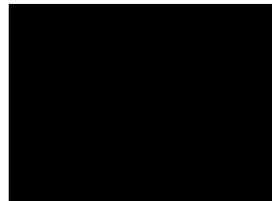
Garrett Watty

Dean Williams

III. WINERIES

Fieldbrook Winery            owners R & J Hodgson

Willow Creek Winery        owners D & J Williams



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APPENDIX II

Average High and Low Temperatures  
Last Five Years

YEAR	HIGH	LOW
1977	82.53	51.53
1978	82.88	48.47
1979	83.39	46.59
1980	82.23	44.79
1981	83.24	43.85
Average	82.85	47.04

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APPENDIX III

Heat Degree Days

Three Years

YEAR	TOTAL DAYS
1979	3213.91
1980	2899.87
1981	2903.08
TOTAL	9016.86 DIVIDED BY 3= 3005.62

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REFERENCES

- | Reference<br>Number | Name                                                                                      |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1                   | Maxwell C. Rowley, historian Humboldt<br>County                                           |
| 2                   | United States Geological Survey Map                                                       |
| 3                   | SUNSET NEW WESTERN GARDEN BOOK, Lane<br>Publishing Co.; Menlo Park, Ca; 1979;<br>pp. 8-35 |
| 4                   | Weaver, Robert J., GRAPE GROWING, John<br>Wiley & Sons, New York, 1976, pp 45-46.         |