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## Disputed wine region proposal changed

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JILLIAN JONES jjones@napanews.com Napa Valley Register | Posted: Tuesday, September 7, 2010 12:00 am | (0) Comments

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A dispute over the naming rights to a swath of land in the Mayacamas mountains appears to have reached its conclusion.

Winegrape growers in northern Sonoma and southern Mendocino counties have agreed to amend their petition for a new American Viticulture Area on the western flank of the Mayacamas.

Rather than the “Pine Mountain-Mayacmas” designation originally proposed to the federal government, the area’s 13 growers will now ask to name their proposed AVA “Pine Mountain-Cloverdale Peak.”

The compromise appears to have satisfied Napa vintners, who expressed alarm over the original name proposed to the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau five years ago.

Pine Mountain’s winegrape growers had hoped to capitalize on the unique characteristics of the area by asking the federal government to let them print the “Pine Mountain-Mayacmas “ designation on their labels.

Use of the mountain range name was necessary, they said, to specify where Pine Mountain is located.

“When we were doing our application five years ago, we were advised that Pine Mountain is a relatively common name in the United States, and we would need a modifier,” said Barry Hoffner, a winegrape grower at Silverwood Ranch on Pine Mountain.

“Given that Pine Mountain was part of the Mayacamas Mountain range, we added that name without thinking it would cause any confusion. We just looked at it as a modifier,” Hoffner said.

Vintners in other areas of the Mayacamas, however, worried that the name could lead to confusion among

consumers.

For one thing, critics argued, the petition used the U.S. Geological Survey's name for the range, "Mayacmas," rather than the more commonly known "Mayacamas." That alone was enough to cause confusion, they said.

Further, the Mayacamas Mountain range encompasses portions of Mendocino, Sonoma, Napa and Lake counties, but the proposed AVA only covers 46,000 acres of Mendocino and Sonoma land.

Critics warned that using the name "Mayacmas" for such a small portion of the mountain range could trick consumers into thinking the winegrapes came from elsewhere in the range. There are three sub-appellations in Napa Valley alone located entirely within the Mayacamas: Spring Mountain, Diamond Mountain and Mt. Veeder.

Representatives from the Napa Valley Vintners, which led the charge against the name, insisted that they did not object to the establishment of the appellation itself. It was simply the use of the word "Mayacmas" that had them worried, they said.

Given the concern, Pine Mountain growers announced recently that they will swap out the modifier — "Mayacmas" — for "Cloverdale," the city over which Pine Mountain looms.

"We made the decision in order to not have any contentious disputes," Hoffner said. "'Pine Mountain' was the important part of the name for us."

Rex Stults, industry relations director for the Napa Valley Vintners, calls the new proposal "an elegant solution."

"You have a better idea of where the application is than you did previously," he said.

Stults added that Napa vintners are "extremely supportive of this new direction and appreciative of the petitioners' willingness to work with us."

"Time will tell if the (Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau) will reward the industry for working out solutions on its own," Stults said.

Hoffner said Pine Mountain growers expect a ruling from the bureau this year.

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