

Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission



JUNE 2001

LODI RALLIES AGAINST COASTAL PETITION -

At its April 3rd meeting the winegrape commission Board of Directors voted to oppose the California Coast petition now being considered by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. A letter of opposition was sent to BATF during the public comment period that closed on April 26.

Policy matters are not usually the commission's focus. According to Commission Chair Joe A. Cotta, but this petition is potentially so devastating to our growers that we could not ignore it. It claims that California's quality wines come from the coastal regions only, ignoring what the industry has come to recognize - that Lodi is now counted among California's fine wine regions. This petition is deceptive to consumers and we vigorously oppose it.

The petition seeks to link the existing North, Central and South Coast American Viticultural Areas (AVA's) into one giant appellation encompassing some 22,000 square miles covering 14 million acres. Some

68 individual AVA's already exist within the proposed boundaries. The petition does a disservice to the distinctiveness of those AVA's and makes a mockery of the AVA system. Asserts Cotta.

BATF revealed that it received over 400 letters regarding the petition, all but 7 were in opposition to it. Over 200 letters originated in Lodi - from growers, wineries, City Council members, the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and private citizens.

A submission from the Lodi District Grape Growers contained climate data that showed that the North Coast and South Coast regions have more similarity to adjacent Central Valley locales than they do to each other. Wine Institute also submitted extensive data refuting the claims in the petition.

BATF has not set a date for publishing its ruling on the matter, but the California wine industry has voiced its opposition loudly and clearly.

LWWC wins Good Citizenship Award

An advisory group of North Coast California vintner and grower subscribers to Rich Cartiere's Wine Market Report have awarded this year's Wine Community Good Citizenship and Environmental/Social Responsibility Award to the Lodi Woodbridge Winegrape Commission. According to Cartiere, this decision is specifically intended as acknowledgement by Sonoma, Napa, and Mendocino winegrape growers and wine producers of the efforts of the winegrape commission, especially Dr. Cliff Ohmart, in spurring Lodi-Woodbridge's leadership role in developing its good citizenship and environmental/social activities.

The award was presented before an audience of 150 wine industry members at the Wine Market Outlook Conference held in Santa Rosa on May 2. Debra Blodgett of Assemblymember Pat Wiggins office

presented a California State Assembly Resolution of Commendation honoring the commission's efforts. The commendation cited the commission's IPM program achievements since its inception in 1991, including being the first to receive the Dept of Pesticide Regulation's IPM Innovator Award and EPA's Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Award. It also acknowledges Dr. Ohmart's national prominence in the field of sustainable agriculture.

Dr. Ohmart and Mark Chandler were on hand to receive the award and gave credit to the growers in the Lodi district who have dedicated their time and resources to environmental leadership. Congratulations to Cliff and all Lodi growers!



Wine & Visitor Center Update

The Lodi Wine and Visitor Center continues to draw a diverse stream of visitors and wine enthusiasts through its doors.

The general public responded well to two widely publicized special events. The Grand Opening of the Tasting Room drew 450 people to sample Lodi's finest on the weekend of April 28 & 29. Also the Visitor Center was one of the stops on the Vines to Wines Passport Tour May 19 & 20. Many of our guests are locals showing off the center to their friends and families from out of town, so the word-of-mouth promotion is building.

Wine and food related industry visits to the center continued a steady rise over the last two months. We were graced with a group of 70 students on a California tour from New York's Culinary Institute of America. Wine Institute included the visitor center on a tour for a dozen Korean wine buyers, and wineries such as Turner Road Vintners also came to show off the center and familiarize produc-

tion and marketing staff with Lodi's wine industry and its long term potential. The rapidly growing Lodi Amateur Vintners Association, headed by Tom Hoffman, has also begun to hold its monthly meetings on site. In addition wine and grape grower groups from Armenia and Romania found their way here via Cal State Sacramento

Speaking of Sacramento, the Sacramento Rotary Club rented two full size buses to bring 70 of their members for a tour and tasting at the center. You can count on the word spreading through the Capitol City now!

Civic groups have also discovered the center. The Lodi City Council held a working session at the center to consider funding for the Conference and Visitor Bureau, and the Lodi Arts Commission sponsors a monthly poetry reading under the magnificent Vineyard Scene Along the Mokelumne mural.

Quality Enhancement Program

Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission and The Rhone Rangers cosponsored a Quality Enhancement Program: Exploring Syrah & Viognier on April 26, 2001. Nearly 120 growers participated in the program listening to some of California's leading Rhone vintners discuss quality production of these emerging varietals.

Panelists focused on identifying viticultural characteristics and farming practices that they believe lead to high quality wines, while also discussing the various winemaking practices and techniques being used in the winery. It was recognized, both through the tasting and comments that the potential quality of these Mediterranean varietals in Lodi is outstanding. Properly grown and optimally matured Syrah and Viognier exhibit intense varietal character in Lodi. However, market conditions may inhibit future growth. Panelists agreed that Viognier produces lively aromatic wines, but that it will remain a niche variety in the marketplace for the foreseeable future. Syrah's potential in Lodi, both as stand-alone varietal, and as a blending variety, shows great promise, however future growth will come at the direct expense of Australian Shiraz.

The Winegrape Commission would like to thank the following vintners for participating: Thomas Coyne, Thomas Coyne Winery; David Akiyoshi, Woodbridge by Robert Mondavi; Charlotte Madison and Tony Vlcek, Delicato Vineyards, Tim Spencer, St. Amant Winery; Owen Smith, RH Phillips; and Nick DeLuca and Chuck Barr, Sable Ridge. Special thanks go to Education Committee Chair Craig Rous of Bear Creek Winery who moderated this excellent panel.

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Strategic Plan Guides Future Efforts

A new century for Lodi growers is upon us, and a new home for the winegrape commission is now open to the public. To make the best of these opportunities board members gathered recently to participate in two lively strategic planning sessions to chart Lodi's future in the world of wine, grapes and tourism. One of the meetings was conducted jointly with the new Lodi Appellation Winery Association.

Lead the Category

Facilitator Paul Wagner of Balzac Communications encouraged members to think of points of distinction in which Lodi leads the category. What do we do best that others can't do as well?

Items that come to mind are: Zinfandel, especially Old Vines; our Northern California location, which is close to Sacramento, the North Coast and the Bay Area; our casual, rural charm; our leadership in environmentally friendly farming; and the unity of the grower and winery community.

Goals and Strategies

Several goals for the commission were derived from the discussions:

- Goal 1. A. Increase price and demand for Lodi winegrapes;**
- B. Improve quality image both perceived and actual**

Strategies:

- Identify points of uniqueness (e.g. Old Vine Zin, IPM, etc.)
- Maintain unified grower community.
- Increase number of wineries in the region, or buying from the region
- Maintain positive individual relations with the wineries

Goal 2. Improve image and recognition of the region:

Strategies:

- Press relations & media

outreach

- Continue mailing samples of Lodi wines to wine media
- Conduct VIP tours of Lodi for writers, publisher, & editors
- Get Lodi wines into tastings/reviews/books
- More and better wines (and grapes) from Lodi appellation
- Growers diversify market and customer base
- Encourage farmscaping throughout the region
- Participate in internet chat boards

Goal 3. Establish independence in the market

Strategies:

- Develop more buyers to separate Lodi from commodity
- Encourage the development of more small wineries
- Facilitate winery development and decrease regulation

Goal 4. Increase Wine Related Tourism

Strategies:

- Increase awareness within locals and visitors
- Increase infrastructure of restaurants, hotels, wineries, downtown
- Make Lodi a travel destination events, sports tourneys, festivals
- Create vineyard signage of farm name, grape varietal, LWWC logo
- Create a circuit w/ Kirkwood, Delta, Sacramento, etc.
- Contact travel planners and concierges (especially Sacramento)

Most of these goals we have been working on already, however some of the strategies are new. The specific tactics are being developed and implemented now. Growers wishing to bring ideas, activities and energy

Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Location	Contact Info.
June 11	Irrigation Workshop	Wine & Roses,	Ballroom
Call 367-4727, Cliff Ohmart	June 13	Vineyard Economics	Seminar
DoubleTree Hotel, Rohnert Park	Call 707.255.9222 for registration information	June 27 -30	American Society of
Enology & Viticulture	Annual Conference	San Diego	Call 530.753.3142 for registrion information or
www.asev.org	July 12	Wine Vision Annual	Strategic Plan Conference
Doubletree Hotel, Rohnert Park	Call 707.255.9222 for more information or	Lodi Woodbridge Winegrape Commission	July 9-13
OIV Wine Marketing	Short Course dDemand,	Production & Regulation	UC Davis
Call 800.752.0881 or	www.university extension.ucdavis.edu.	Highly recommend for aspiring wineries.	July 16-20

*Lodi Woodbridge Winegrape Commis-
sion
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