

Helping landowners assess site potential for viticulture

AT A GLANCE

Helping landowners assess viticulture potential within the new Lewis-Clark Valley AVA.

The Situation

The Lewis-Clark Valley AVA (American Viticulture Area) was formally designated in 2016. The AVA designation gives local wine makers a marketing distinction for wines produced from local grapes. This development has accelerated what was already a renaissance of the local wine industry, and is creating interest in viticulture by landowners within the AVA.

Existing wine makers in the area need more grape production within the AVA for their wines, and new wineries are opening up. This is creating new economic development opportunities and land use alternatives for the region. Nez Perce, Latah and Clearwater counties in Idaho, and Asotin and Whitman counties in Washington, all have land within the new AVA.

However, establishing a vineyard is an expensive endeavor, and the extensive labor and attention required for successful viticulture might not be suitable for all landowners, or their particular locations within the AVA. Landowners need information on how to assess their land's (and their) potential for successful viticulture production before they invest considerable capital in such a venture.

Our Response

To help landowners make an informed decision on whether viticulture is a viable alternative for them, UI Extension in collaboration with Coulter's Creek



Mike Pearson of Coulter's Creek explains the fine points of wine grape cultivation.

and Clearwater County Economic Development put on a presentation and tour of the Coulter's Creek vineyard near Juliaetta, Idaho in May — *Evaluating Your Land's (and Your) Suitability for Viticulture*. Melissa Sanborn, co-owner of Coulter's Creek, and a member of the Idaho Wine Commission, gave a presentation on the Idaho wine industry and the most important factors landowners should consider before going into the viticulture business. This presentation was followed by Melissa and her husband Mike Pearson taking attendees on a tour of their vineyard which included presentations on the art, and labor, of producing quality wine grapes.

Program Outcomes

We had an outstanding response to this program, with the attendance limit quickly being met resulting in having to turn away several landowners who wanted to attend. A total of 19 landowners, representing 1,406 acres of land, attended the Saturday

program, and reported an average 104 percent increase in knowledge of viticulture, with 100 percent reporting that the program lived up to their expectations.

We just toured Napa and Sonoma to learn about viticulture and this surpassed what we learned in CA.

Based on the response from the 2017 program we are planning a follow-up survey of attendees in 2018 to measure to what extent the program influenced attendee's decisions on whether or not to go forward with a viticulture operation on their property.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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