

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 6, 2016

The Honorable John J. Manfreda  
Administrator  
Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau  
U. S. Department of Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington DC 20220

Dear Administrator Manfreda,

We are writing to urge you to move expeditiously to approve a final designation of the Lewis-Clark American Viticulture Area. Further delay of the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) to finalize the designation of this proposed American Viticulture Area (AVA) poses a considerable and unnecessary risk for the many stakeholders in the region. We urge that the designation be made final before April 20 to provide clarity and certainty for grape growers, wine producers and community stakeholders throughout the covered regions in Washington and Idaho.

The Lewis-Clark Valley consist of 300,000 acres in the surrounding region of the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers, and consists of parts of Asotin, Garfield and Whitman counties in Washington, as well as Nez Perce, Clearwater, Latah and Lewis counties in Idaho. With its unique climate, geography, vegetation and soil, the Lewis-Clark Valley has established its place in Washington and Idaho's winemaking economy and represents a new and distinct area for the production of wine.

Since 2009, the Lewis-Clark Valley Wine Alliance, which includes wine grape growers, wineries, economic development and tourism organizations as well as dozens of community stakeholders from both states, have been working to secure a formal AVA designation of the Lewis-Clark Valley. After submitting a petition for AVA designation, the TTB issued a proposed rule on the designation on April 13, 2015 and opened the rule for public comment through June 15, 2015. TTB provided opportunity for a second comment period for the proposal to consider input on a modification regarding a proposed realignment of the Columbia Valley AVA. This second comment period was concluded on November 27, 2015. Since that time, and despite overwhelming support expressed during both comment periods, stakeholders have waited patiently for TTB to finalize the petition.

In preparation for the AVA designation, stakeholders have worked tirelessly to leverage over \$135,000 in grant money and matching funds from local, state and federal government programs. These grants and matching funds are to be used for development of a formal organization, marketing, land development, modernization of the supply chain for 2016 bottling and to organize events to promote the new designation. However, as the deadline for 2016 bottling

approaches, the funding for these important activities have been put at risk as we wait for the Lewis-Clark AVA designation to become final. A loss of these resources resulting from further delay would be a major setback for economic development in the region.

In order to prevent this economic loss from being realized, we strongly urge you to move quickly to approve the AVA designation of the Lewis-Clark Valley before April 20.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Mike Crapo  
United States Senator