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**Wahluke Slope Becomes Washington State's Eighth AVA**  
*Unique Single Landform, Dry Climate, Challenging Soils Distinguish Wine Region*

**SEATTLE (December 19, 2005)**— Wahluke Slope, a geographically isolated, generally south-facing slope of land near the Saddle Mountains in southeastern Washington, will soon become the state's eighth federally recognized American Viticultural Area (AVA). Named "Wahluke," or "watering place" by the Native Americans who settled there, the 81,000 acre region features more than 20 vineyards, one winery and two wine production facilities, with plans for several new winery openings in the near future. Wahluke Slope will be awarded appellation status by the United States Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) on January 6, 2006.

"Wahluke Slope is one of the state's premier wine growing regions," said Robin Pollard, executive director of the Washington Wine Commission. "Government approval of the AVA will allow the industry to distinguish the quality fruit produced on Wahluke Slope and differentiate itself among global competitors."

The Wahluke Slope AVA lies in the center of the Columbia Valley AVA and is bounded on the west and southern ends by the Columbia River, on the north by the Saddle Mountains and on the east by federal lands of the Hanford Reach National Monument. It sits entirely within the established Columbia Valley appellation, approximately sixty miles north of the Tri Cities, Wash.

"The narrow opening of Sentinel Gap in the Saddle Mountains so dramatically focused glacial floods through the Wahluke Slope region that they created a singular growing environment that consistently produces full-bodied, flavorful grapes," said Alan Busacca, Ph.D., a certified professional soil scientist and registered geologist who spearheaded the AVA petition in partnership with the Wahluke Slope Wine Grape Growers Association. "No other AVA in Washington state is contained on a single landform with large areas of uniform sandy and gravelly soils over a large area. The fact that the area has one of the driest, warmest climates in the state makes Wahluke Slope an ideal place for growing wine grapes."

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With 5,205 bearing acres, Wahluke Slope represents nearly twenty percent of the total wine grape acreage in the state. Although the first plantings in the region began with white varieties such as Riesling, Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc, red wine grapes now make up 80 percent of total acreage, dominated by Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Well-known wineries sourcing grapes from Wahluke Slope include Forgeron Cellars, K Vintners, L'Ecole No. 41, Long Shadows Vintners, Powers Winery, Three Rivers Winery, Reininger Winery, and Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, among many others.

“From our first harvest on the Wahluke Slope during the early 1980’s, we’ve seen remarkable consistency across the varieties and vintages,” said Doug Gore, Senior Vice President of Winemaking and Vineyards for Ste. Michelle Wine Estates. “You can count on quality and decadent flavor intensity, with Merlot and Chardonnay as the particular stand-outs.”

Unique characteristics of the Wahluke Slope AVA include:

- **Topography** consists of a smooth and generally gently south-facing slope contained on one unique single landform created by giant glacial outburst floods. This expanse of land comprises the most isolated geographical area of wine grapes in the state. Elevation ranges from a low of 425 feet along the Columbia River on the southern border of the AVA to 1,475 feet atop the highest irrigated lands on the slope.
- **Temperatures** are among the highest in the state, with a mean annual precipitation as low as any other wine-producing site in Washington State. This gives viticulturists complete control of vine vigor and ripening through small, carefully timed additions of irrigation through drip systems.
- **Soils** are characterized by their uniformity over large areas, excessively well drained character, and coarse textures, which range from gravelly, to stratified sand, to loam. This promotes uniform quality and even ripening within vineyards.

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### **About the Washington Wine Commission**

The Washington Wine Commission is responsible for the promotion and development of the Washington wine industry, representing the state’s 370 wineries, 350 wine grape growers and more than 30,000 vineyard acres. For more information about Washington wines, touring, and tasting opportunities, visit [www.washingtonwine.org](http://www.washingtonwine.org) or e-mail [info@washingtonwine.org](mailto:info@washingtonwine.org).