

# SUSTAINABLE WINE TOURISM: A FRAMEWORK FOR THE NORTH GEORGIA WINE REGION

By

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(Under the Direction of Shelley Cannady)

## ABSTRACT

The North Georgia Mountains are home to an emerging wine making industry with distinct regional character. Tourists are drawn to the mountains in search of a unique experience in wine tasting and the local scenery. Currently, the region has thirteen wineries. If more wineries are developed, this will increase tourism. It will be demonstrated that it is the quality of the entire event—the wine, the landscape, the route driven, the small towns visited, the people encountered—that form the tourist experience important for the success of emerging wine regions. This thesis will explore whether the wine tourism industry in North Georgia can be made stronger, hence more sustainable, by identifying unique regional offerings and aesthetic character via the community, economy and environment.

INDEX WORDS: emerging wine region, landscape architecture, North Georgia, regional planning, sustainable wine tourism, tourism.

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by

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family for their support and encouragement, to my colleagues who have been a true inspiration and to my professors, whose years of collective wisdom has served as harbinger of hope for the preservation of beautiful places.

With much gratitude, thank you.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Thesis Statement

Wine tourism in the northern portion of Georgia's wine growing region will be explored. More specifically, sustainable wine tourism will be examined to evaluate if its framework would be beneficial to this emerging wine region through the three goals of sustaining community, economy, and the environment. Wine landscapes are rural landscapes, containing history and heritage, and aesthetically pleasing scenery. Yet, these open spaces also play a role in the economy of their local communities. The North Georgia wine country offers a local product paired with unique aesthetic and cultural character. The concept of the unique local character in the context of the wine industry is called *terroir*. The environment of the grapevine, the place where the wine grape is grown, is the heart of *terroir*. Karen Neil, director of the wine program at the Culinary Institute of America in Napa Valley, California, describes *terroir* in this way:

*Terroir* is the total impact of any given site-soil, slope, orientation to the sun and elevation, plus every nuance of climate including rainfall, wind velocity, frequency of fog, cumulative hours of sunshine, average high and low temperatures, etc. (MacNeil 2001, 21).

Place is considered extremely important in viticulture because it is the soils and the climate, those elements that cannot be modified by humans that create the specific taste of the grape and hence the wine, making a region's wine unique.

North Georgia wines have a specific *terroir*; its mountains, soil, and climate all lend to a regionally distinct flavor that is part of the North Georgia wine industry's unique character.

Changes to North Georgia rural landscapes through development are inevitable. The concern is that these growth changes will not occur with sensitivity to the landscape and the communities of north Georgia in mind. While there is a financial requisite to attract people to this region of Georgia's Mountains, there is also a need to maintain traditional agricultural and viticultural practices as well as the lifestyles of the local community. To support planning for increased tourism, specific and holistic sustainable wine tourism guidelines will be proposed that will apply to the management of community, economy, and the environment of the North Georgia wine-growing region.

## **1.2 Methodology**

Scholarly research methods for this thesis are as follows:

1. Literature search on sustainable wine tourism, wine tourism, tourism, collaborative community development, rural tourism and preservation, land use patterns.
2. Interviews with many wine makers and growers in North Georgia.
3. Interviews with individuals who are on the periphery of the industry such as tourism directors, professors and extension agents.
4. The use of historic precedent to review wine tourism development in emerging wine regions of the U.S.

## **1.3 Literature Search**

Wine tourism is often viewed as a viable approach to enhance local economies.

Ironically, much of the literature to date has not focused on the regional context but on the wine

industry as a whole (Carlsen and Charters 2006). Research on sustainable wine tourism is minimal but does exist for communities in the Pacific Northwest such as Yamhill County in Oregon, the Yakima Valley in eastern Washington, the Central Okanagan district in British Columbia (Williams, et al. 2006), Walla Walla, Washington (Griffith May 2007) and Oliver, British Columbia (Poitras 2006). A literature search conducted on the University of Georgia's library website, <http://www.libs.uga.edu/>, provided one thesis, The Economic Impact and Importance of Georgia Wineries written in 2008 by Timothy Kyle Watts in the School of Agricultural Business and Economic Development at the University of Georgia (Watts and Georgia 2008). Watts's thesis utilized two surveys to provide an estimate of the economic impact of the wine industry in Georgia as well its association with agritourism.

The literature search exposed a need for further exploration and research to better understand the benefits and ramifications of applying sustainable wine tourism to the emerging wine region in northern Georgia.

#### **1.4 The Concern**

The wine tourism industry is relatively new in North Georgia. With increased development, it would be in the state's best interest to ensure the viability of one of its important tourist commodities, the agricultural landscape. With the state's newly adopted campaign of agritourism as a potential for tourism revenue, the vineyards of north Georgia fall under the umbrella of agritourism and have the potential to add economic revenue into the communities that support them (State of Georgia 2009).

A research study published online in November 2008 determined that, between 1982 and 2003, approximately 680,000 hectares (1,679,600 acres) of rural land were converted to either residential or commercial uses annually in the United States (White, Morzillo, and Alig 2009, 37). More specifically, the Southeastern region of the United States had the greatest “absolute increase and percentage increase [of developed land] of 2.6 million hectares or 58%” (White, Morzillo, and Alig 2009, 40). Between 1982 and 1997, Texas, Florida and Georgia saw the greatest increase in development with Georgia at 644,000 ha. The percentage basis of development during this time frame showed that Georgia experienced the greatest increase in developed areas at 67%.

Because the wineries are located in the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains, they enjoy many of their tourist visits from the nearby cities of Atlanta, Alpharetta, Kennesaw and Gainesville, Georgia. All these cities have experienced rapid growth in the last eighteen years. In table 1.1, the data provided by the United States Census Bureau, shows population changes in the above name cities.

Table 1.1 U.S. Census Data for Alpharetta, Atlanta, Kennesaw, and Gainesville, Georgia  
[http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en).

U.S. CENSUS DATA: ATL, Alpharetta, Kennesaw and Gainesville, Georgia			
ALPHARETTA	1990	2000	2008
Population	13,002	34,854	49,903
ATLANTA			
Population	394,000	416,474	537,958
KENNESAW			
Population	8,936	21,675	31,628
GAINESVILLE			
Population	17,885	25,578	35,668

According to Zhenhua Liu, professor at The University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, tourism is a “resource industry” in that natural landscapes are usually the most successful in attracting tourists and environmental assets are the very foundation on which most of tourism rests. This draw to the natural landscape can explain why the term *sustainable* is often attached to tourism development. In other words, natural landscapes equal tourist capital. In the case of north Georgia, wine landscapes set in the mountains are a tourist commodity (see Figure 1.1).

C. Michael Hall and Richard Mitchell, two respected authors in the field of tourism have written extensively about food and wine tourism. They argue that while food and wine are two important elements of rural or urban tourism, they are not the main motivators for travel to a region but instead play a “significant part in the overall attractiveness to a particular location and [the] experience [as a whole]” (Quoted in Novelli 2005). In addition to a natural resource such as the mountains, there must be the proper infrastructure (i.e. roads) to make the wineries



easily accessible. As well, there must be accommodation services, such as hotels, restaurants, and other proper facilities available to the tourist. And, finally, the local residents of a region must be available to interact with tourists (Liu 2003).

Rapid growth of metro Atlanta and the urban sprawl that has taken place since the 1980's is cause for concern that the natural character of the Blue Ridge Mountains and its agricultural landscapes located there may be in peril unless greater awareness to sensitive development of those host communities takes place.



Figure 1.1 A Misty Morning at Stack Vineyards, Tiger Mountain, Georgia. Photo courtesy of Leckie Stack.

The goal of this thesis is to describe a framework to plan for tourism and its potential side effect of growth in a way that is sensitive to the bucolic setting of the mountains, the people of these mountains communities, and the environment.

Joe Garner, longtime superintendent of the University of Georgia Mountain Experimental Station in Blairsville, Georgia, holds it is very important to promote agritourism in the state of Georgia. As of the summer of 2009, the Department of Agriculture now recognizes “agricultural tourist destinations” as tourism revenue generators (Gibson June 23, 2009). Garner states that there is a need to maintain as much agricultural land as possible. He notes that some of the residents in the mountains are supporting themselves through food production and this, in turn, supports the local community. Mr. Garner argues that these communities do need to “grow, [they] need legs and to flourish” (Garner December 17, 2009). He believes there needs to be opportunity for growth and change, and that economic diversity is the key.

### **1.5 The Landscape Architect’s Role in the field of Tourism**

The premise of this thesis, holds that utilizing the framework of sustainable wine tourism is a viable planning step for the emerging wine region of the North Georgia and the landscape architect can be an appropriate collaborator in that process. The three goals of sustainable wine tourism are as follows: including the community in the decision-making process early in the planning stages, maintaining economic viability for the host communities of the wine landscape and environmental preservation. One of the most important aspects of this process is that of collaboration between all stakeholders in the community to include wine makers and growers,

residents, law makers and key decision makers who shape the rich culture of a region such as the Blue Ridge Mountains. Landscape architecture is a profession that is appropriate to examine complex issues such as tourism development in a regional planning context based in unique physical and aesthetic environments. The profession has the ability to identify aesthetic characteristics of a 'locale' through practice and perception. Landscape architects have expertise in environmentally sensitive design methods and implementation. Many are trained to work at the community level (Urgo 2008). Landscape architects who work with communities are skillful collaborators for the nature of their job includes working with other experts in a given field to understand fully and to ensure sense of place for a positive outcome.

## **1.6 Projected Results**

The timeliness of discussing sustainable wine tourism in the context of the North Georgia wine region is at hand. It will be shown through the identification of regional aesthetic, cultural, economic and environmental factors that North Georgia's wine country is unique to the industry. The thesis will describe sustainable wine tourism, showing its potential application to North Georgia. At the end of the thesis, there will be a concluding discussion, detail of the limitations of this thesis research, and discussion of future research opportunities.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **HISTORY OF ALCOHOL AND WINE TOURISM IN NORTH GEORGIA**

#### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

The state of Georgia is as diverse geographically as it is culturally. The state offers residents and tourists alike the option of ocean vacations, urban excursions in Atlanta, or beautiful fall foliage in the Blue Ridge Mountains. In addition to the diverse landscape, Georgia also has a varied history; some may say even a legacy, when it comes to the production of alcohol. In the past, it was moonshine, while today it is wine. Presently, Georgia is home to thirty-four wineries. In this chapter, the focus will be on the northern wine region of the state, emphasizing the history of alcohol in Georgia as well as the history of the wine industry. The reader will be introduced to the history of wine tourism, the concept of sustainable wine tourism and end with a discussion of niche tourism as it relates to the North Georgia wine region.

#### **2.2 The Wine Country of the North Georgia Mountains**

The northern wine region in the state of Georgia is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains with most wineries being north of the small city of Gainesville, Georgia. The region is roughly 100 miles north to south from Towns County to Walton County respectively and 143 miles east to west from Rabun County to Walker County (see Figure 2.1).

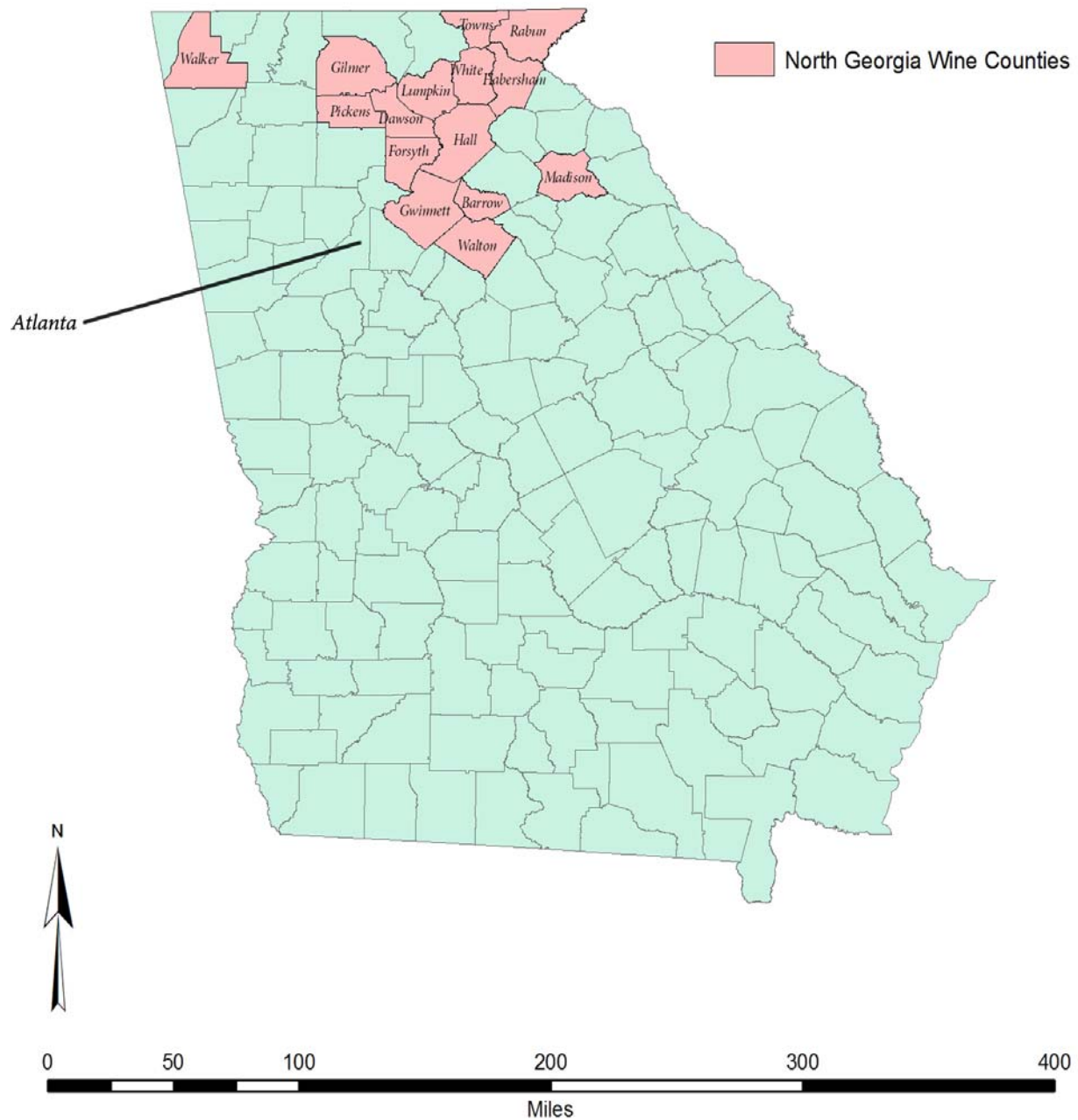


Figure 2.1. Map of North Georgia Wine Counties. The counties designated have a vineyard, winery or both. Data courtesy of Department of Community Affairs, Georgia, 2008.

Two prevalent species of wine grapes grown in North Georgia are French-American hybrid grapes and European wine grapes *Vitis vinifera*, the European wine grape with which most wine drinkers are familiar. For example, Chardonnay and Merlot are varieties of *Vitis vinifera*. This species thrives best above altitudes of 1300 feet in Georgia. At lower altitudes, the vines are subject to Pierce's disease, caused by the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa* that is carried by the glassy winged sharpshooter, a flying insect. The bacterium colonizes the xylem of the grape vine and cuts off the water supply to the plant (Piercesdisease.org). Growing *Vitis vinifera* in Georgia has proven to be most reliable in the North Piedmont region and in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The higher altitude in this region provides cooler temperatures, particularly at night. This allows the grapes to hang longer on the vines and produces an optimal balance of sugar, pH and acidity at harvest. The topography of North Georgia is characterized by hills and valleys with stimulating breezes, positive air flow, and many other aspects that are advantageous to growing wine grapes. *Vitis vinifera* requires well-drained soil. The topography, coupled with the sandy clay loam soil, offers excellent drainage for the grapes, even after a hard rain (Darugh and Darugh). In addition to varieties of *Vitis vinifera*, the wine grape *Vitis aestivalis* or "Cynthiana-Norton" is also cultivated by many growers in North Georgia. Some northern vineyards also grow *Vitis rotundifolia*, better known as muscadine, but most muscadine cultivation is observed in the southern part of Georgia. Currently the north region is home to thirteen wineries and multiple growers dedicated to growing wine grapes (www.GeorgiaWineCountry.com 2007).

According to Tim Dodd of the Texas Wine Marketing Institute at Texas Tech University and Michael Beverland of the Department of Marketing, Business and Economics at Monash University in Australia, the wine industry has a distinct evolutionary path with five key stages. These stages are winery establishment, winery recognition, regional prominence, maturity, and tourism decline (Dodd and Beverland 2001). According to the definitions of these stages (see Table 2.1), the northern region of Georgia's wine industry falls somewhere between winery establishment and winery recognition. The winery establishment stage is characterized by cellars door sales, small winery production facilities and local community awareness. The recognition stage is characterized by basic facilities, tasting rooms, restaurants and some brand awareness (Dodd and Beverland 2001, 15).

It can be hypothesized that as regional recognition grows, greater numbers of people will want to experience wine tasting in northern Georgia. In the simplest of terms, wine tasting is a tourist activity. However, wine tourism in Georgia comprises more than just visiting wineries. It also encompasses recreation activities, restaurants, charming hotels, and historical and cultural heritage sites. As stated in the introductory chapter, wine alone is usually not the single entity that draws visitors to any region; this is especially true of emerging wine regions such as North Georgia (Hall 2000).

Table 2.1. Hypothesized Winery Tourism Life-Cycle Stages courtesy of T. Dodd and M. Beverland

	Winery Establishment	Winery Recognition	Regional Prominence	Maturity	Tourism Decline
Type of Tourism	Rural tourism	Industrial tourism	Special interest tourism	Entertainment, festivals and events	Bargain hunting
Visitors	Unintended visits	Connoisseurs	Aspiration & Connoisseurs	Beverage wine drinkers	Beverage and new wine drinkers
Facilities	Few facilities	Basic facilities	New facilities	Status quo on facilities	Some tourism facilities closed
Community	Local community awareness	Community pride	Community support especially by allied industries.	Growing resentment	Disillusionment with winery tourism
Networks	Little or none	Some tentative relationships developing	Public and private co-operating	Status Quo Waning interest in new projects	Little co-operation
Sales and pricing	Tasting room Mailing list Bargain pricing	Tasting room Restaurant boutique pricing	Major retail outlets Move to fixed price "channellers"	Major retail outlets, Convenience stores "channellers" Winery meets retail needs first.	Only "excess" product available at the winery
Size and structure	Small production Simple structure	Increasing production Specialized functions starting to emerge	High levels of production Functional departments	Increasing production Bureaucracy emerging	Level of production declining Bureaucratic
Strategy	Establishment	Production and quality	Build distribution network	Defending	Revitalization
Cellar door	Survival	Brand awareness	Brand enhancement	Increased percentage of sales	Survival
Brand awareness	Unknown	Becoming known	Known locally and internationally	Needs enhancement	Negative
Media	Largely unknown	Wine press Some general media	Wine press and general media interest strong. International recognition	Media saturation	Media coverage difficult to obtain.



### 2.3 History of the alcohol industry in Georgia

According to Bruce E. Stewart of the University of Georgia's Department of History, Georgians have made moonshine since the late eighteenth century (Stewart 2005). The production of moonshine for farmers was a practical enterprise. Farmers discovered that they could earn extra money by manufacturing excess yields of their crops into corn whiskey or apple and peach brandy, and selling it. While the practice of making moonshine has been documented throughout the entire state, it is mostly related to its mountainous region. Because the topography involved hilly terrain and inadequate roads, the farmers found it easier as well as more profitable to distill their crops before going to markets. Antebellum Georgians viewed these producers of alcohol as respected members of the community even though most farmers condemned the federal government's attempt to impose a liquor tax in the 1790's (Stewart 2005).

It was during the Civil War (1861-65) that moonshine received its name. After the U.S. Congress attempted to balance the national budget by creating the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to collect taxes on liquor, tobacco, and other 'luxuries' (Stewart 2005), Georgians who made moonshine returned to the South after the war and found themselves subject to this federal liquor tax. Many moonshine producers, mostly small farmers, either refused to stop their moonshine operations or to pay the tax on them. The production of moonshine was not itself illegal, however attempts to avoid paying the federal tax were. Such tax evaders became known as "moonshiners" because they operated their illegal stills at night which sparked much animosity in North Georgia between moonshiners and tax collectors. Historian Wilbur Miller

has estimated that in 1876, four-fifths of all federal court cases in the Georgia Mountains involved illegal liquor issues; this is more than any other 'mountain area' for any other state (Stewart 2005).

During the 1880's Temperance Movement, led by evangelicals, women, and journalists, Georgians were encouraged to refrain from drinking and to accept the federal liquor taxation as a means of decreasing alcohol consumption. These Prohibitionists increasingly portrayed moonshining mountaineers as violent criminals on the fringes of society. By 1900 many North Georgia communities had ceased supporting moonshining as an upstanding activity.

In the early twentieth century, the image of the moonshiner fell from skilled craftsman to greedy gangster. The Prohibition Era began with the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1919 and its implementation in 1920 through the Volstead Act, in which Congress declared all alcohol manufacturing and consumption illegal (Stewart 2005).

Prohibition increased the demand for moonshine. 'Gangsters' soon cornered the market, creating elaborate moonshining networks by forcing farmers to run stills for them. On July 30, 1907, Governor Hoke Smith announced that Georgia would enter Prohibition on January 1, 1908, a full twelve years earlier than the rest of the country. The Senate passed a bill 139 to 39 in favor of prohibiting the sale, distribution, and making of alcohol in the state of Georgia. At the time the bill affected only thirteen counties, with 135 already being considered "dry." The expected loss in revenue for the state and its municipalities was estimated at \$1,000,000 (Times 1907).

After the start of Prohibition, moonshiners of the mountain county of Dawson ran millions of gallons of whiskey into Atlanta. Other mountain counties, like Gilmer, Lumpkin, and Pickens, became major producers of moonshine in the 1930's and 1940's and a dangerous game of cat and mouse was played between moonshiners and tax collectors. In Dawson and Union counties, high-performance automobiles, called "tanker cars" (most often 1940 Fords) were engineered for tax evasion. These powerful cars and high-speed chases grew the sport known today as stock car racing or NASCAR (Stewart 2005).

In the 1960's, moonshining activity slowed considerably. Much of it migrated from the mountains to metropolitan areas, where producers found it easier to evade the federal liquor tax by placing stills in homes which the tax collectors needed a search warrant to enter. Today, any lost tax revenue from the sale of illegal liquor is of less concern to officials than the health threat posed by moonshine. Because moonshine contains impurities and toxins, especially lead, moonshine consumption can be deadly. Most moonshine is extremely inexpensive, and illegal distributors may target poor neighborhoods in which to sell their products (Stewart 2005).

A conversation with Mary Ann Hardman, wine maker and proprietor of Persimmon Creek Winery in Clayton, Georgia, raised the issue of moonshine in the mountains. Mrs. Hardman and her husband Sonny began operation of their vineyard in 1999. The farm is in Dr. Hardman's family, previously owned by his mother's ancestors. During operational setup for the vineyard, the Hardmans found a still on their property. It is not known if the still belonged to Dr. Hardman's ancestors, but given the time frame of moonshine history in the mountains of

Georgia, it would not be out of the question. Mrs. Hardman considers this to be a wonderful ironic aspect to the history of the alcohol in Georgia, given her occupation (Hardman June 23, 2009).



Figure 2.2. Pickens County Moonshiners, circa 1920. Courtesy of Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection.



Figure 2.3 Tax collectors and moonshine stills. Date unknown. Courtesy of Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

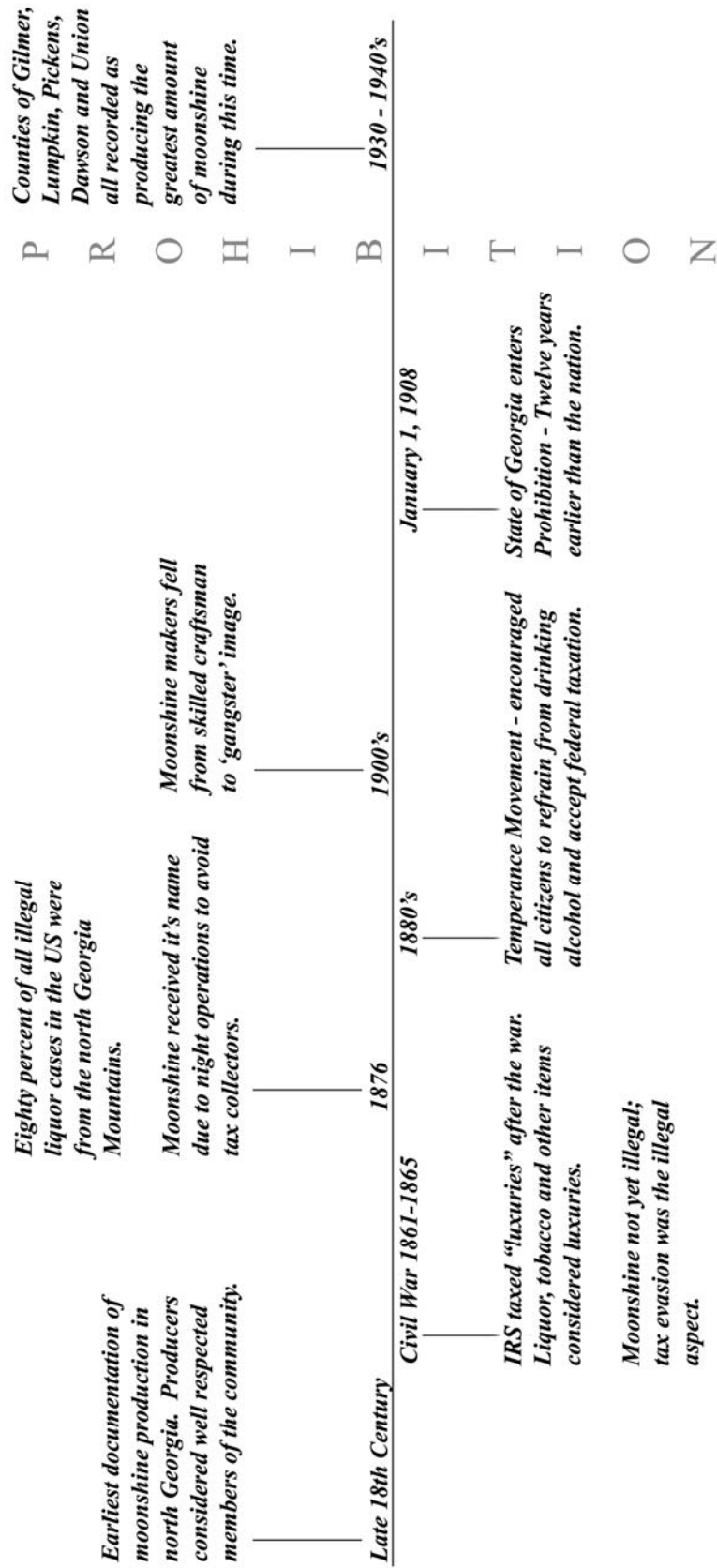


Figure 2.4. Timeline of alcohol production in Georgia.

## 2.4 History of the Wine Industry in Georgia

The wine industry in the state has a rather long history. In 1732, Englishman James Oglethorpe, founder of the state of Georgia introduced *Vitis vinifera*, to the Savannah area as part of his economic plan to sustain the new colony (Darugh and Darugh). Oglethorpe was not successful at his cultivation of *V. vinifera*. Oglethorpe did not know that this species of wine grape thrives best above altitudes of 1300 feet and would succumb to problems resulting from climate, insects and pathogens.

In 1886, Ralph L. Spencer, originally from Essex, Connecticut, moved to Tallapoosa, Georgia, in Haralson County. Always interested in wine, Spencer encouraged close to two hundred Hungarian families working the coal mines of Pennsylvania to migrate to Georgia. In 1893, they together established Budapest, Georgia, four miles east of Tallapoosa. Spencer established the Georgia Fruit Growing and Winery Association. It was in Budapest that the successful cultivation of wine grapes began. A map from 1896 shows 12,726 acres of vineyards alone in Haralson County. As Georgia entered the twentieth century, it is estimated that the state had over 20,000 acres of vineyards, and was the sixth largest viticultural area in the nation at that time (Darugh and Darugh). The wine was distributed and sold throughout the southeast for one dollar per gallon.



Figure 2.5. Pruning grapevines. Date unknown. Courtesy of UGA Extension, Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center, Blairsville, Georgia.



Figure 2.6. Haralson County vineyard, circa 1888, Haralson County, Georgia.  
<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gahchs//stories/Budapest.html>



Figure 2.7. Mules and Sprayer, date unknown. Courtesy of UGA Extension, Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center, Blairsville, Georgia.



In 1979, Gay Dellinger is said to be solely responsible for a second wave in Georgia's wine making history (Gibson June 23, 2009). Miss Dellinger lived on a farm between Cartersville and Dallas, Georgia. Here she grew five acres of *Vitis vinifera* quite successfully with no problems of Pierce's Disease. In 1982, she increased her vineyard to eight acres. In 1983, Dellinger felt her wine making skills should be put to the test and entered a competition at the annual Eastern Grape Growers Association in Washington D.C. Her Pinot Blanc received a silver medal, a premier for the state of Georgia's wine making history. Dellinger continued her devotion to the industry until 1995, at which time she donated her land to the North Metro Technical College in Acworth, Georgia, where it is used today by the college students as an environmental program area (Darugh and Darugh).

In 1983, Tom Slick established Habersham winery. Habersham is considered to be the first winery in the second wave of the wine industry in Georgia. In a conversation with Eric Seifarth, proprietor and wine maker at Cranes Creek Winery in Young Harris, Georgia, it was the wineries in the 1980's that paved the way for the current day vintners.

The second wave of growers in the early 80's paved the way for the third wave, where the second wave tended to be more roadside (wineries) and with very easy access. [The third wave] has become more of the experience . . . similar to Napa, get out the map, finding the winery...[it's all] part of the wine tasting experience (Seifarth July 7, 2009).

Mr. Seifarth feels that the growers and wine makers are now "agricultural based, less alcohol focused" (Seifarth July 7, 2009). Seifarth owes much gratitude to the early growers in the 1980's who helped pass the law in 1983 supporting farm wineries in the state. The law defines a farm

winery as a farm that grows fruit and has a winery located on its premises and is owned and operated by those engaged in fruit and wine production. Wine production is limited to less than 100,000 gallons annually; up to 24,000 gallons can be wholesale, if 100% of the wine was produced in Georgia. Georgia farm wineries can sell bulk or bottled wine to each other and can ship bulk wine in the amount up to 20% of their annual sales. The annual Georgia farm winery license costs fifty dollars (3-6-21.1 1983). The farm winery law also allows these wineries to offer wine tastings and gives them the ability to sell wine on Sundays in the state of Georgia.



Figure 2.8. Crane Creek Winery, Young Harris, Georgia. Photo taken by Leanne Wells, 2009.

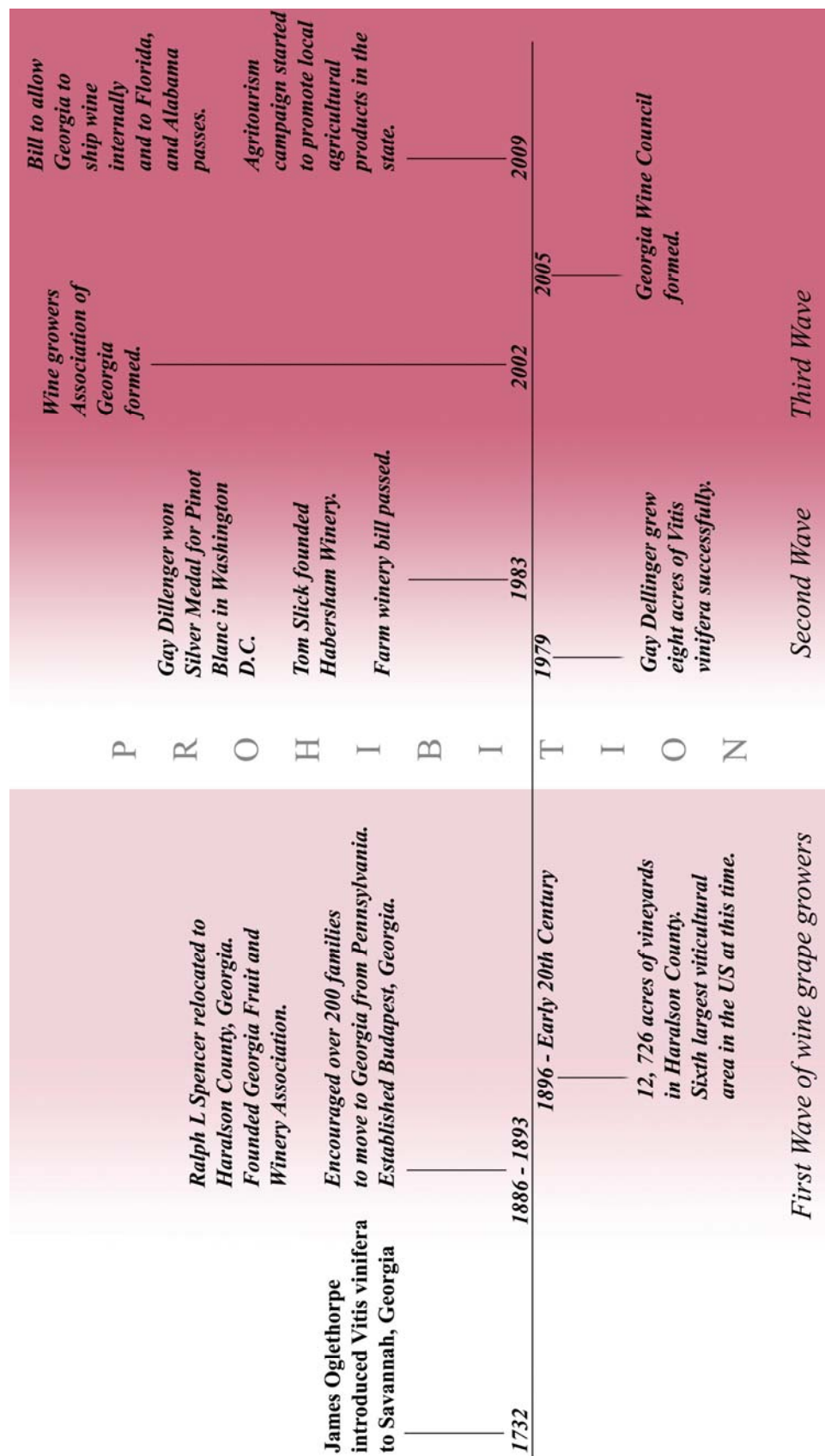


Figure 2.9. Timeline of wine production Georgia.

## 2.5 A Short History of Wine Tourism

In 1987 the term “sustainable development” became widely used by environmentalists, conservationists, and developers (Bloyer 2004). According to John Swarbrooke, academic director and lecturer in marketing communication at Cesar Ritz Colleges in Switzerland, sustainable development “was based on the idea that economic growth had to take place in a more ecologically sound and socially equitable manner” (Bloyer 2004, 2). Professors Anne Hardy and Robert Beeton in Australia, claim that sustainable development's origins are found in the convergence of economic development theory and environmentalism (Bloyer 2004, 2).

In 1992, the term “sustainable tourism” was used by the United Nations in Agenda 21. The U.N. developed a comprehensive plan of action to be adopted globally, nationally or locally by government agencies and major businesses where humans impact the environment (*Agenda 21*, 1992). The use of the term “sustainable tourism” became a “descriptive term for tourism that adhered to the principles of sustainable development (with) the two concepts fitting well together” (Bloyer 2004, 2). The World Tourism Organization describes sustainable tourism as:

...meeting the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic need can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (WTO 2001, 19).

Donald Getz, professor of Tourism and Hospitality Management at the University of Calgary, best describes the term wine tourism as the

[V]isitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors . . . it is a combination of consumer behavior, a destination development strategy, and marketing opportunity for the wine industry (Getz 2000).

In most parts of the United States, aside from the Napa Valley in California, wine tourism was treated as if in a vacuum: it was seen as a separate entity from surrounding communities, landscapes and the economies of those communities. A conscious effort was not made by key players in the wine industry to include surrounding communities until the late 1990's (Getz 1999). In 2003, tourism researchers Peter Williams and Karim Dossa at Simon Fraser University linked wine tourism and rural area tourism. They felt that rural tourism must

...incorporate the culture and character of the local community, landscapes and habitat as well as the rural economy. A viable tourism industry that is based on satisfying tourist experience, must develop an understanding, leadership and vision among decision makers who will work towards a balanced and diversified rural economy”(Williams and Dossa, 2003).

They elaborated that conserving the natural resource base in wine regions requires the collaboration and sound planning of the key stakeholders from any given community (Poitras 2006).

## **2.6 What is Sustainable Wine Tourism?**

As an introduction to sustainable wine tourism, the following excerpt from winebusiness.com written August 17, 2007, is helpful in explaining the complex nature of the multiple community relationships necessary for success in wine tourism:

...wine tourism can be challenging to implement. It requires strong cooperation and partnership within the community. Without restaurants, hotels, police, medical agencies,

local government for permits, environmental groups, employment services, road agencies and other infrastructure support, wine tourism cannot succeed. Neighbors must be consulted about increased traffic and potential noise pollution. Financial support must be obtained, and a marketing campaign designed which includes not only brochures and a website, but signage, event planning and evaluation. Most successful wine tourism efforts invest in a regional branding program and elect a board of directors to guide the process. **Finally, care must be taken to protect the environment and rural beauty of the vineyards [and their surrounding environment] so that the region maintains its charm and reason to be a wine destination** (Thach August 17, 2007).

According to Lisa Poitras, of the University of Calgary in Canada, many researchers in the field of tourism are becoming increasingly concerned about the sustainability of wine tourism. She argues that the wine industry can provide economic viability to small communities. The extreme case of Napa Valley, which may be the world's largest wine tourism region, is actually experiencing a de-marketing process in order to completely halt development (Poitras 2006). Their current goal is to actually encourage visitors to seek out other wine regions and activities besides Napa Valley in the state of California. Simply put, mass tourism and wine tourism are two completely separate entities (Poitras 2006, 426).

The term sustainable wine tourism was first used by the wine community in 2000 (Poitras 2006). To be successful, sustainable wine tourism depends on the fulfillment of three goals: community sustainability, economic sustainability and environmental sustainability. Each aspect of sustainable wine tourism will be explained in sections below.

### **2.6.1 Community Sustainability**

Tourism expert Lisa Poitras points out that “collaboration and consensus-building among stakeholders at the community level generates social capital” (Poitras 2006, 428). An

example of social capital would be including residents in important decision making meetings that will affect their community and possibly their livelihood. Local citizens will be much more receptive to change in their communities if included in the decision making processes that are involved in tourism. For example, citizens need assurance that wine tourism benefits them in a socially positive way. All citizens must be included in tourism planning, and conflicts should be resolved openly. In addition, creating new employment and business opportunities for residents is imperative for their well being. Finally, ensuring high levels of tourist satisfaction at wineries and supporting businesses is essential to retaining customers as well as bringing in new tourists and having them leave satisfied (Poitras 2006).

### **2.6.2 Economic Sustainability**

This criterion is defined by the long-term viability of wine and wine tourism businesses in a specific wine region. It also includes economically sustaining key stakeholders outside of the wine industry that can help support the economic health of a community as a whole. Examples of stakeholders vary by region but commonly include recreation managers, restaurants and hotels as well as historical and cultural heritage sites (Poitras 2006, 428).

### **2.6.3 Environmental Sustainability**

Environmental sustainability entails preserving and enhancing the regions natural physical systems. Examples of environmental sustainability related to the wine industry include: protecting hydrologic systems, preventing soil erosion reusing preexisting agricultural land, and

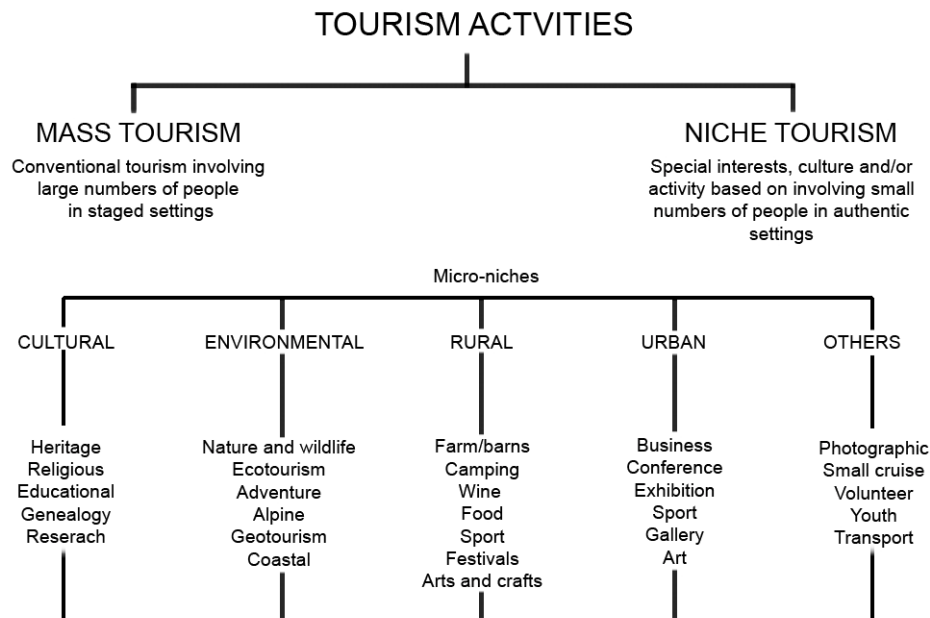
limiting chemical applications. Another example would be ensuring that development occurs in a pattern that preserve fragile ecosystems identified in the landscape (Poitras 2006, 427).

## **2.7 Niche Tourism and the wine industry of North Georgia**

It can be summarized that wine tourism and sustainable wine tourism are small scale examples of tourism as opposed to mass tourism, which is large in scale. Wine itself is a regionally distinct product by nature and has the potential to offer a unique travel experience and introduce local flavor to a traveler; it can be argued that sustainable wine tourism, is a niche in the tourism industry. A niche, as defined in the context of the business world is having specific appeal or having found a specific place in the market (Novelli 2005). Niche tourism, according to the World Tourist Organization (WTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) is beneficial to small host communities such as emerging wine regions as it can attract high-spending tourists compared to mass tourism (Novelli 2005).



Table 2.2 Niche tourism diagram. Table courtesy of Marina Novelli, 2005.



There is newness to niche markets and with novelty comes the unknown. This can be an exciting activity for the tourist, experiencing the amateur becoming an expert in action. As well, there is usually one on one time between proprietors and tourists. Tourism experts Hall and Mitchell point to the necessity of building “positive relationships . . . with customers” in food and wine tourism (Hall 2000, 85). This reinforces the relationship between the environment where the product comes from and the destination as a whole. The relationship of product, environment, proprietor and tourist creates a sensory experience for the visitor that has positive ramifications: the tourist will recall and likely revisit a place for many years after one visit due to the positive memories generated from just one experience (Novelli 2005). It can be argued that the wine industry in Georgia has the potential to establish its niche with the bucolic setting and the high quality product of wine produced in the region. For example, there are several wines

that have won awards from the North Georgia region. Victor and Mary Boutier of Boutier Winery in Danielsville, Georgia, have earned both national and international awards for their Chardonnay, Peach Chardonnay, Chambourcin, DeChaunoc and Baco Noir (Boutier May 18, 2009). Mary Ann and William Hardman have won West Coast competitions for their Riesling in 2008 (Hardman June 23, 2009). As well, their Cabernet Franc and Merlot varietals have placed second in national competitions for several years in a row. Habersham Winery in Helen, Georgia won first place in 2007 for its Viognier grown by David Harris of Blackstock in Dahlonega and Cabernet Sauvignon (Gibson June 23, 2009).

The question remains, is there enough appeal to the North Georgia wine industry to become an established niche? If the North Georgia Mountains are to succeed as an established wine region, all aspects of this market must incorporate the goals for sustainable wine tourism summarized in section 2.6.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

Indeed, Georgia has enjoyed a long history of alcohol production and is poised to become a leader of sustainable wine tourism in the future. Because of North Georgia's picturesque setting and long standing rural traditions, careful planning and development are important to maintain its bucolic setting and agricultural traditions. In the following chapters, the three criteria of community, economy and environment in sustainable wine tourism will be discussed in relation to the north wine region of the state.

## CHAPTER 3

### SUSTAINABLE WINE TOURISM: COMMUNITY

#### 3.1 Chapter Overview

A significant pattern became apparent in the 1980's, as tourism literature began including the concept of community in tourism planning. Residents themselves were being seen as part of the "hospitality atmosphere" and one of the key elements in tourism development (Simmons, 1994). As a result, recent literature reflects the importance of community when discussing tourism development and in particular wine tourism (Poitras 2006, Carlsen and Charters, 2006 and McCool, 2008). It has been argued that involving the community in tourism planning will lessen the likelihood that the residents will feel alienated and guard against changes in their community (Keogh, 1990). Unless sustainable tourism is available to all stakeholder groups, including the community, it may fail as a viable approach to sensitive development and positive economic gain for individuals of a community (Hardy, Beeton, and Pearson 2002). In other words, is sustainable tourism a process that will strike a balance between environment, economy and community or is it the community that will decide where the balance is?

The same concerns exist in regards to sustainable wine tourism. Wine tourism developers must demonstrate community benefits and deal proactively with potentially negative impacts on a community, and one way to do this is ensure local participation and support.

Possible negative impacts on host communities as a result of wine tourism development are increased traffic in small towns and on rural roads and wineries competing with local business in the food, entertainment, and lodging industry. In addition, large or landmark type wineries can be considered out of scale or inappropriate for the surrounding communities (Poitras 2006). Other community concerns are the loss of small town identity or exposure to a major shift in the sense of place. As well, real estate and land costs may become so high that local residents feel they cannot afford to live in their own communities (Griffith May 2007). Poitras points out that making sure the overall area has tourist amenities such as new restaurants, entertainment and hotels as well as main street beautification is a community issue for wine tourism (Poitras 2006). However, if these new additions take place, will residents be able to afford these amenities or will they feel excluded from their own communities?

### **3.2 The Role of Community in Sustainable Wine Tourism and the North Georgia Wine Region**

There are similar issues that can be seen across wine regions when it comes to communities and their role in the wine industry and sustainable tourism. While the North Georgia wine region is considered one region, there are many small towns that make up the area. Each could conceive of its own unique character in regards to tourism. This chapter will devote attention to six common issues as raised by individuals interviewed, mainly winery owners, and how they view their surrounding communities relative to the region, community and wine tourism. The six topics are traffic, competition with other local amenities such as

restaurants or bars, the price of real estate, main street beautification, attitudes about tourism development in North Georgia and a sense of place.

### **3.2.1 Traffic**

An increase in automobile traffic can create difficulties for many wine regions (Griffith May 2007). Wine festivals and the high season for winery visitation can cause frustration for tourists as well as winery owners and managers. But is this the case for the North Georgia wine region? The question was asked if the existing wineries experienced or if they knew of other winery owners that experienced traffic congestion on the main roads during regular visits or festivals. David Harris, owner and wine maker of Blackstock Winery in Dahlonega, Georgia, stated, “Parking can become an issue with the growth of a festival, but nothing that good planning and coordination can't handle. Blackstock had 1,200 attendees to our Georgia Fine Wine Festival [the] first weekend of June and parking went off without a hitch” (May 10, 2009). In an interview, Martha Ezzard, co-owner of Tiger Mountain Vineyards in Clayton, Georgia, states that traffic itself isn't an issue for her vineyard (June 22, 2009). Leckie Stack of Stack Vineyards in Tiger, Georgia, shared the same sentiments as Martha Ezzard and David Harris; traffic itself is currently not a problem at this time for the North Georgia wine region. As well, Cheryl Smith, regional tourism representative for the North Georgia Mountains has not heard of any of traffic problems in regards to the wineries. The reason for traffic being a non-issue at this time may be due to the scarcity of wineries in the area, and the North Georgia wine region is

still emerging. If more wineries develop, it can be hypothesized that traffic may become a concern for the area's business owners and citizens.

### **3.2.2 Competition amongst other amenities**

The potential issue of competition with other amenities in the north wine region was asked of the vintners. David Harris argues,

...everyone benefits tremendously more from wine tourism than without it. [This is] partly because there was nothing here before. Dahlonga had school buses doing gold tours on weekdays. Now it has Mercedes and Porsches coming for premium lodging, spa services, fine dining, entertainment, and wine (Harris May 10, 2009).

Martha Ezzard concurs, pointing out that:

Since [we at Tiger Mountain] don't serve food except at big parties, we are often thanked for sending tourists we attract to town. In fact, we are an advertised attraction by some of the lodges and bed and breakfast establishments (Ezzard June 22, 2009).

Leckie Stack, co-owner of Stack Vineyards in Tiger, Georgia agrees, "The prevailing feeling in North Georgia is that winery visitors visit the wineries and then stay to enjoy other tourism opportunities in North Georgia, including other bars and restaurants" (Stack July 27, 2009).

Debbie Gagliolo, executive director of the Alpine Helen/White County Convention and Visitors Bureau says that she has also not heard of any issues in regards to competition amongst vendors; the wineries "bring people in which in turn shop and eat at other businesses" (Gagliolo January 21, 2010). Thus, it can be concluded that the fear of new wineries adversely affecting existing businesses is currently unfounded.

### **3.2.3 The Price of Real Estate**

All of the winery owners interviewed share the same opinion regarding real estate and land prices in their respective counties of the North Georgia mountains: both housing and land prices have gone up regardless of what county they are in. Cheryl Smith, regional tourism representative for North Georgia Mountains says that

Absolutely, prices have definitely gone up. [This may be attributed to the] fact that many people come for a visit and decide they love it so they buy property/houses. Also, there is so much U.S. Forest land that private land is limited, which drives up the value (Smith June 5, 2009).

David Harris offered the most insight into this question:

...vineyard development has had a positive effect on real estate values, unquestionably. The Frogtown/Town Creek community—the epicenter of wine country, on the Lumpkin/White line was historically the poorest area of both counties (worst roads, least accessible, etc) and has now enjoyed the fastest growth in real estate values in this region (Harris May 10, 2009).

Clearly, it is the opinion of those interviewed that the presence of the wineries may have directly or indirectly increased the value of land and real estate prices in the North Georgia wine country.

### **3.2.4 Main street beautification**

The most intensive “main street” remodeling in the North Georgia Mountains took place in the small town of Helen, Georgia starting in 1969. Due to the timber industry in the center of downtown, Helen experienced great success until 1931. When all the timber was harvested, the logging companies left, and Helen was economically devastated. As the timber companies dispersed from the area, so did many of Helen’s citizens to pursue opportunities in other parts of

the state or country. More than thirty years later in 1968, local businessmen met to discuss the state of affairs in Helen. An artist in the community who had been stationed in Germany sketched buildings with gingerbread trim and brought an idea to the town's people for renewal in a Bavarian style (Figure 3.1). In 1969, construction began, and the small town has been successfully attracting tourists for over forty years (<http://www.helencvb.com/history/>).

There are many differing opinions regarding the town of Helen and the aesthetic appropriateness of a Bavarian village in the mountains of Georgia. However, the town has done quite well economically as a thriving tourist attraction. Habersham Winery is located in Helen, and there are a number of winegrowers in close proximity.



Figure 3.1. Building façades in Helen, Georgia. Date unknown. Photo courtesy of [www.wrensnestonline.com](http://www.wrensnestonline.com)



Many of the mountain wineries are near small towns. And many of these small towns need a more welcoming appearance if attracting tourism is their goal. Often, main streets are the entrances that tourists and visitors alike witness when first entering a town. They can be visually disappointing if businesses are dated and nothing but car dealerships and out-of-scale mega stores flank their edge. According to Leckie Stack of Stack Vineyards, both Toccoa and Clarkesville, Georgia, have experienced main street renewal with great success in the last twenty years (Smith June 5, 2009). While these towns are near the north wine region of Georgia, they do not serve as the main host communities to any of the mountain wineries.

Cleveland, Georgia, is a town near several wineries that could benefit from main street beautification on Highway 129. Along this southern entrance, amenities are provided, such as a grocery store, gas stations, and hotels, but they are outdated and aesthetically unappealing. For many tourists, this is their first impression of the “gateway to the mountains”, as Cleveland’s welcome sign claims. While this entrance to Cleveland is not considered its main street, it is a heavily travelled road for tourists and residents alike. The town’s location is ideally positioned near five wineries: Three Sisters Winery, Frogtown Cellars, Blackstock Winery, Habersham Winery, and Yonah Mountain Winery, located west to east respectively (see Figure 3.2). Travelers coming from the south up Highway 365 through Gainesville to Highway 129 will pass through Cleveland. On Highway 129, just south of Cleveland the topography of the area changes from bucolic rolling hills to unappealing buildings and strip malls. This creates an

anonymous, unattractive entrance to the city that is regionally indistinct. Blackstock Winery owner David Harris states:

...Cleveland needs it [main street beautification] the most and stands poised to eclipse everyone by reinventing itself...The Cleveland Better Business Hometown has progressive tourism-friendly ideas but is limited in power (Harris May 10, 2009).

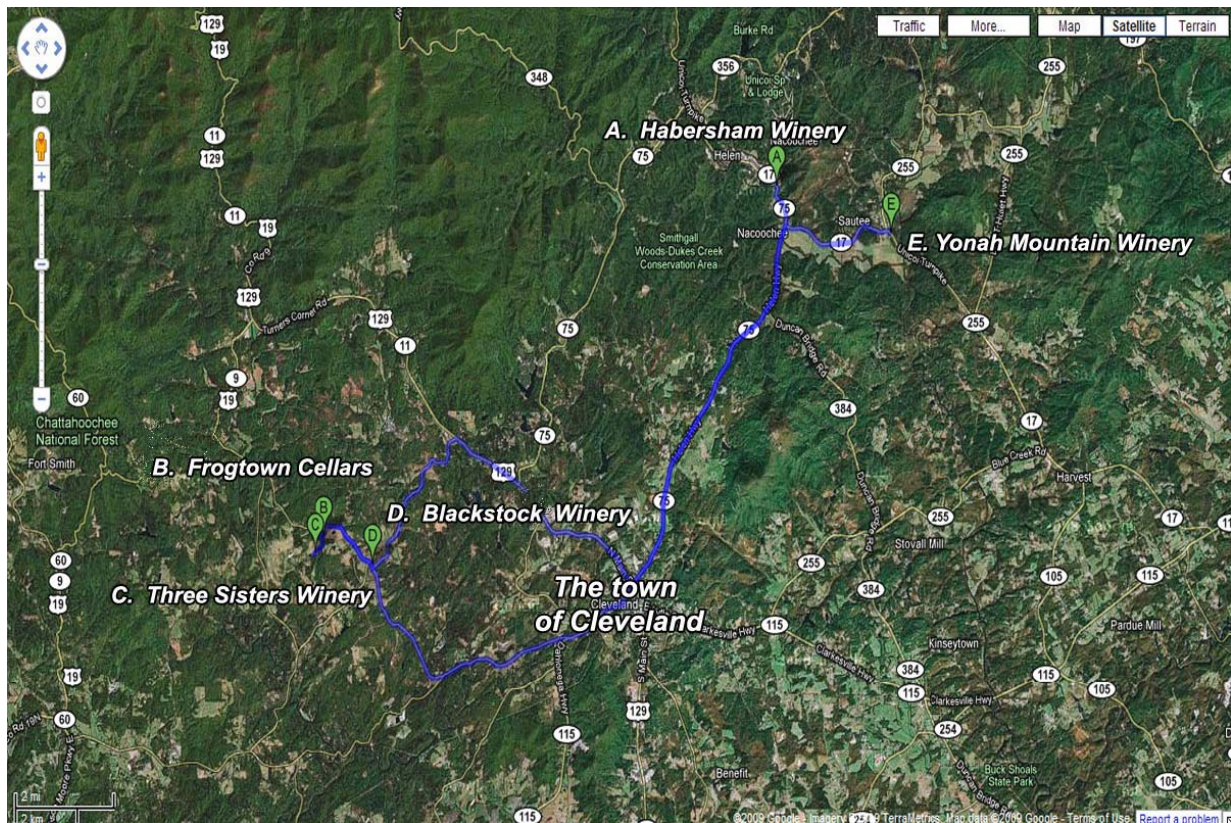


Figure 3.2. Five wineries near Cleveland, Georgia. [www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com)

The Cleveland Better Hometown is a non-profit organization whose mission is to “provide direction and leadership of the Old Courthouse Business Center and Downtown Area”

([www.clevelandbetterhometown.org/index.html](http://www.clevelandbetterhometown.org/index.html)). However, the organization addresses only the

named business district, which is a very small area that already enjoys historic preservation by the White County Historical Society.

### **3.2.5 Attitudes toward development in the North Georgia wine region**

Joe Garner, superintendent of the University of Georgia Mountain Experimental Station in Blairsville, Georgia, understands the balancing act that takes place in a rural community. While many of the residents want to maintain a rural lifestyle in the small mountain towns, Garner knows that this can only be accomplished by diversifying the economy in a way that people can actually make a living. Allowing residents a variety of commercial opportunities will provide growth and change (Garner December 17, 2009). However, new businesses may not be accepted right away. Eric Seifarth of Crane's Creek Winery in Young Harris experienced resistance from his neighbors when first establishing his winery. He stated that his neighbors were concerned about alcohol sale and consumption. The Crane Family had been respected in Young Harris, and often newcomers (Seifarth's) were looked upon suspiciously. In order to show that the Cranes would not be forgotten, Seifarth undertook restoration of the family farm house (see Figure 3.3), paying tribute to the family's property and showing respect by keeping the look of the architecture in sync with the existing aesthetic of an early Appalachian farm house (Seifarth July 7, 2009). In addition to the aesthetic appeal, the Seifarth's host a family reunion every year for the Crane family. Thus, it seems new businesses may fare better by showing a respectful attitude towards the region's history.





Figure 3.3. Crane Creek Tasting Room. Photo taken by Leanne Wells. July 2009.

Speaking of her community in Clayton, Georgia Martha Ezzard of Tiger Mountain Winery states that “our winery is viewed as a community asset and the vineyards as an aesthetic and conservation advantage” (Ezzard June 22, 2009). Leckie Stack has lived in the North Georgia Mountains for over thirty years. She stated that there “have always been some long time local residents who have resisted any change” in particular during the past two years (Stack July 27, 2009). However Rabun County has “become much more interested in promoting anything that brings tourism dollars to help the local economy” (Stack July 27, 2009). David Harris offers the statement below when asked about the attitudes of development in and around White County and if there has been opposition.

...just the vocal minority who never wanted anything to happen or have always been anti-alcohol of any sort, be it more wineries, restaurants etc. We are a long way from too many of either. Restaurants tend to cull themselves with wineries. How can you be militantly against agriculture, green-space preservation, clean industry, job creation from agriculture to production to hospitality, an economic impact that ripples in a multitude of directions from significantly boosting the local tax base with alcohol permit fees and excise tax on product, hardware supplies, growing supplies, office supplies, etc? It's bringing tourism dollars to lodging (and hotel/motel tax) gas (and fuel tax revenue) with them, and it's distributing a product that carries a story about the region from which it comes—a bottle of wine is like a little hospitality ambassador for the region. Even at our relatively infant stage, we have fostered a number of new businesses into the area that are here specifically to exploit the wine tourism (deli's, spas, fine dining, limo/transport services, wedding services, photography services, art galleries, new lodging, etc.) (Harris May 10, 2009).

### **3.2.6 A Sense of Place**

In discussing change to any community, an important consideration is sensitivity to the overall essence of a region. This essence is the combination of the physical and cultural aspects that make an area unique. Sense of place is defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as: “those things that add up to a feeling that a community is a special place, distinct from anywhere else” (<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/community-revitalization/>). Kent Ryden, associate professor of American and New England studies at the University of Southern Maine describes sense of place as “a place that results gradually from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing history within its confines” (Ryden 1993). Geographer J.B. Jackson offers a more textured definition in that “it is a permanent position in both a social and topographical sense that gives us our identity” (Jackson 1984).

Regarding the potential for tourism development to alter a community's sense of place, interviewees were asked if the small towns in the North Georgia mountain communities have noticed a shift in place since the wineries have become established. David Harris commented:

...the charm of the square in Dahlonega has improved exponentially. As it has become a "cooler" town to be in, even North Georgia College has seen a major increase in popularity, and with good leadership in place, certainly has made the most of the opportunity for expansion. I think we will see the quality of what Helen/Sautee has to offer improve dramatically in the next 10 years and Cleveland eventually . . . it will be a triangle of wine towns holding wine country in its collective bosom. With the area's natural and well-preserved beauty through an abundance of National and State parks with hiking, waterfalls, beaches, and camping opportunities in a mountain setting, it is a little slice of heaven on earth. Our challenge is to control growth, not in the tourism and hospitality industry, but limit the blight of the multi-lane highways retail smorgasbord of outlet malls, Wal-Marts, fast food joints, etc. These mountains have a fragility that should be preserved as well. We should not try to support unbridled housing development . . . how many septic tanks can you approve on one mountainside? This should limit growth, and a good mountain protection plan is in place, but political ploys abound, always angling to corrupt the process (Harris May 10, 2009).

In regard to honing a sense of place, Martha Ezzard of Tiger Mountain Winery states that her family farm is important. It is the fifth generation of her husband's land and feels it's important to maintain traditions. They grow blueberries for picking each year and plant trees in the name of each grandchild (Ezzard June 22, 2009). Steve Gibson of Habersham Winery in Helen, Georgia, offers that Habersham is "big on traditions and heritage of place" (Gibson June 23, 2009). They (Habersham) believe in preserving greenspace and feel that vineyards can accomplish part of this goal. Gibson states that they sell over 3000 cases of muscadine wine each year, the native southeastern wine grape that appeals to "the palette of southerners, it's truly a southern taste" (Gibson June 23, 2009). Eric Seifarth of Crane's Creek in Young Harris argues

“regionalism is very, very important” (Seifarth July 7, 2009). It is for this reason they purchased the land. The farmhouse was built in 1886 by the Crane family “so it is historically connected” (Seifarth July 7, 2009). Leckie Stack of Stack Vineyards (Figure 3.4) puts it quite simply; the region she lives in is the south Appalachian Mountains (Stack July 27, 2009).



Figure 3.4. Stack Vineyards, Tiger, Georgia. Photo taken by Leanne Wells. July 2009.

### 3.3 The Community of the North Georgia Wine Industry

In the previous section, six issues that can impact a community at large were discussed in relationship to the North Georgia wineries. While these issues can affect the community as a whole due to wine tourism, wineries themselves are influenced by entities that drive their allegiance to one another as well as their communication with the communities they serve. For example, most of the North Georgia wineries are members of the Wine Growers Association of Georgia (WAG) formed in 2002. In order to be a member of this association, vineyards must produce either 1000 cases of wine from a *Vitis vinifera* or French-American hybrid varietal or grow five acres of a European varietal in a given growing season ([www.georgiawine.com](http://www.georgiawine.com)). Wine grape growers in the southern part of the state that grow *Vitis rotundifolia* cannot join this association unless the above stipulations are met. There are several reasons for WAG's restrictive membership guidelines but their overarching premise is described best by Eric Seifarth of Crane Creek Winery:

...the Wine Growers Association is a good thing for the state. It's been very helpful for the Georgia wine perception [the stigma of the Muscadine grape] and is moving those in the "club" the direction they want to go. It has helped decades of misconception about Georgia wine (Seifarth July 7, 2009).

The misconception that Seifarth mentions has to do with the stereotype of Southern wine having only a sweet palette which comes from the Muscadine grape.



General Manager, Steve Gibson of Habersham Winery has been in the North Georgia wine industry longer than any of the vintners in the region. He offers sage advice when asked if there is a sense of community among the wine makers in North Georgia:

[I] see this as the biggest obstacle, having the sense of community. They [winemakers] can be really competitive . . . instead of the growers/winemakers working against each other they should really see the competition of Georgia against the rest of the world. This [Wine Growers Association] was done for marketing to customers and exchange of information and to get them on the map and be supportive of growers in this part of the state. WAG is a non-subsidized organization . . . the next step is to have the state come in and create a STATE wide body for ALL growers in Georgia (Gibson June 23, 2009).

While it is unknown why state support does not exist, one hypothesis may be that a greater number of wineries need to be in operation.

However, there is some ambivalence towards the Wine Growers Association. Oliver Asberger, vineyard manager at Monteluca Winery in Dahlonega, has many years of experience as a wine maker from Germany and spent over a decade in the state of Michigan working the Traverse City wine region before relocating to Georgia and Monteluca in Dahlonega. He states simply, “There is too much bickering and still too many egos [amongst the wine makers]”

(Asberger July 7, 2009). When asked if Monteluca was a member of the Wine Growers Association he gave the following explanation:

[Monteluca] used to be a part of this but then the Wine Highway weekend in March caused them to separate. All money made from that weekend was to be split amongst the members equally. Monteluca made \$7000 that weekend while some of the smaller wineries made \$200. The owners felt this was just not fair. [In regards to the organization itself and exclusion of members who do not grow European varieties]... If someone wants to make raspberry wine they shouldn't be excluded (Asberger July 7, 2009).

In response to the Wine Growers Association of North Georgia, another organization has been formed. The Georgia Wine Council was formed in 2005 by Doug Paul of Three Sisters Winery in Dahlonega. The guiding premise of this organization is to include any wine maker in the state of Georgia, regardless of the fruit it is made from. The association's mission statement is as follows:

Whether it is wine made from Georgia Grown peaches to blueberries or traditional Muscadine wines or wines made from American and European wine grapes, Georgia has something for every taste. The Georgia Wine Council is dedicated to preserving the broad diversity of the Georgia wine industry. From Savannah, Statesboro and Albany in south Georgia to Dahlonega, Young Harris and Ringgold in North Georgia and everywhere in between . . . The Georgia Wine Council welcomes all Georgia farm winery and associate supporters to our membership (<http://georgiawinecouncil.org/>).

According to wine tourism authors C. Michael Hall et al., it is not uncommon for emerging wine regions to have an intense competitive spirit (Hall 2000). This statement is certainly true for the wine industry of North Georgia.

In the following section, two examples of well-functioning winemaking associations in emerging wine regions are discussed. The first is the wine region in southwestern Michigan, followed by Yamhill County in Oregon.

### **3.4 Models for Community in Sustainable Wine Tourism: Southwest Michigan and Yamhill County, Oregon**

#### **3.4.1 Southwest Michigan**

The southwestern shore in Michigan holds a 150 year history of growing wine grapes for wine production. The region enjoys the "lake effect" from Lake Michigan, which allows for warming

winds off the lake in the winter, slight variation between night and day temperatures, a slow rise in temperature in the spring, and an equally slow frost in the fall ([www.miwinetrail.com](http://www.miwinetrail.com)).

Historically, farmers in Southwest Michigan have grown the indigenous wine grape *Vitis labrusca*, but in the last twenty years began cultivating varieties of *Vitis vinifera*; this is similar to the historic development of North Georgia's wine industry.

Wineries in Southwest Michigan are guided by an organization called the Lake Michigan Shore Wine Trail. In 2001, the wineries in the Lake Michigan American Viticulture Area (AVA) formed the organization to promote the area's unique experience of wine on the shores of Lake Michigan. The concept is to promote all the wineries collectively, which the vintners feel creates a larger draw for wine tourists (Wargenau and Che 2006). The philosophy of the organization is that each Southwest Michigan winery has a unique product based on fruit production. This distinctiveness is what drives sales, according to one winery operator, who said "if we don't have a product a customer is looking for, we send them to where we think they will find it" (Wargenau and Che 2006, 50). The organization is aware that wine tourism alone cannot drive the economy of the area. This belief is reflected on their website, which lists multiple stakeholders in the tourism industry of the area that benefit from the wineries' presence, such as places to sleep, eat, or book tours of the area as well as other tourist organizations of southwest Lake Michigan area. The attitude is all community members can benefit from each other, including the present wineries.

In the state of Michigan, all sixty-four wineries fall under the auspices of the Michigan Grape and Wine Council, a chapter of the Department of Agriculture in the state of Michigan. The priorities of the council are to “encourage the growth of the industry, promotion of Michigan wines, fund research to support wine grape growing in Michigan and sponsor training opportunities for industry development” (<http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0>). The benefits to the wineries falling under the umbrella of the Department of Agriculture are state financial support and scientific support to viticulture.

### **3.4.2 Yamhill County, Oregon**

Yamhill County is located forty-two miles southwest of Portland, Oregon. The region is known for producing many delicious wine varieties including one in particular for which it has become well known, Pinot Noir. The concept of community based wine tourism in Yamhill County, Oregon, has taken a different approach than Southwest Michigan’s use of the wine trail and the governing body of the Department of Agriculture. What this region has done is organize itself in regards to wine tourism via land use management policies for viticultural and agricultural land. In the state of Oregon, wineries and vineyards are considered exclusive farm uses. Land use policy does permit the wineries to have buildings for residential, retail or commercial as long as they are sited on marginally productive land, i.e. poor soils. Yamhill County is considered to be progressive in its land use policy. The county functions in a “culture of deregulation” as long as the state’s land use plan is respected. It is the local stakeholders that drive the land use policies. It was the “perspective to the local winery owners and stakeholders

that drove incremental changes...all were guided by a locally nurtured and commonly held vision of the intent of the county comprehensive plan, wine tourism and land use [in general]” (Carlsen and Charters 2006, 41).

Between 1999 and 2004, Yamhill County experienced an increase in wineries from thirty-five to eighty-one; an increase of 231% (Carlsen and Charters 2006). It has focused on small scale, farm focused wineries instead of large industrial wineries, very similar to the North Georgia wine region. Interestingly, 41% of the wineries did not offer regular tasting hours. This traditional wine tourist activity was offset by the community’s development of other tourism commodities such as retail outlets, gift shops, accommodations, and restaurants. In other words, the tourism focus for many of the Yamhill County wineries was on making wine and growing grapes, not cellar door sales (Carlsen and Charters 2006, 34). Wine tourists have exerted some pressure on the vintners and on county planners and commissioners to offer cellar door sales along with other types of wine related tourism activities.

### **3.5 Collaboration as Key in Sustainable Wine Tourism**

Throughout this chapter the concept of including community in sustainable wine tourism has been examined. Inherent in working with communities is the concept of collaboration. Tazim Jamal and Donald Getz of the University of Calgary in Canada published a paper in 1995 regarding the collaborative aspect of tourism and its importance in working with communities in regards to tourism planning. Collaboration in community based tourism and planning can be defined as “...a process of joint decision making among autonomous, key stakeholders of an

inter-organizational, community tourism domain to resolve planning problems of the domain and/or to manage issues related to the planning and development of the domain” (Jamal and Getz 1995). Jamal and Getz contend the process of collaborative planning for tourism is well suited for regional level planning. Involvement of the community in tourism planning can be strengthened by inclusion of key stakeholders throughout a region that represent various public interests and view points (Jamal and Getz 1995).

The concept works well with the framework of sustainable wine tourism in that the region where wineries are located, the product of wine, the wine makers, the people of the small towns, the supporting businesses and various professionals that will be involved in development all play a key role in deciding the direction of success and rate of growth for a wine region (see Figure 3.5).

Collaboration does take place for the vintners in North Georgia Mountains. In addition to traditional tourism development, there is also collaboration of marketing and alliance with other businesses in their communities. Tiger Mountain Vineyards in Clayton, Georgia, works with lodging venues, local food producers, Georgia Forest Watch (a non-profit that protects, preserves and restores the forests of North Georgia), Grow! Cook! Eat! (a Rabun County event where eleven restaurant in the area prepare meals from local foods) and the Northeast Georgia Art Tours (Ezzard June 22, 2009). Steve Gibson of Habersham Winery states that “Absolutely, [the winery] is a big time collaborator with local businesses” (Gibson June 23, 2009). He is a member of the Chamber of Commerce in Helen and is involved in many community activities.

The winery also does co-operative marketing with most businesses in the town of Helen. The same is true for Crane Creek's Eric Seifarth. He holds three festivals a year; in spring with local artists for Crane Creek's opening season, in late summer a tomato festival and in fall for the October harvest. He says that he caters to the locals mostly and has a "very loyal base" (Seifarth July 7, 2009). Most of his traffic comes from Chattanooga, Asheville, and Atlanta. While he markets his business in Atlanta, he concentrates more on the inns and bed and breakfasts in his area. Leckie Stack from Stack Vineyards is strongly aligned with the local food movement. She is a supporter of Slow Food – Atlanta, and Appalachian Grown.org based out of Asheville, North Carolina. As well she coordinates with local recreation activities in the area such as rafting and hiking (Stack July 27, 2009).

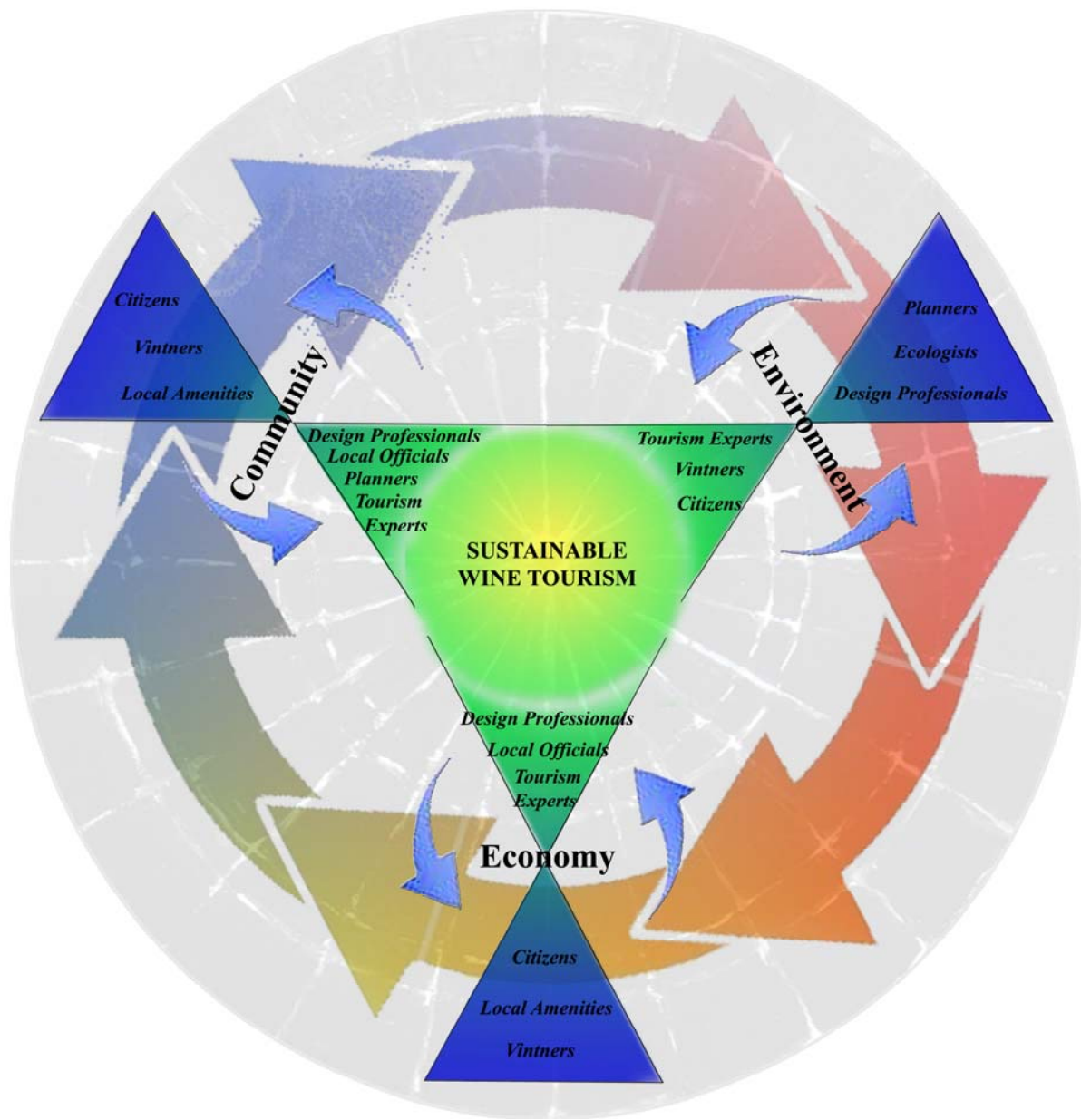


Figure 3.5 Diagram of collaborative efforts involved in sustainable wine tourism. The large multi-colored arrows indicate the three goals are in constant interaction with one another. The smaller blue arrows indicate interaction amongst the key players involved in each goal.



### 3.6 The Landscape Architect's Role with Communities in Sustainable Wine Tourism

Randy Hester, professor of landscape architecture at University of California, Berkeley, is a long time proponent of community involvement in design. In an article for Places, a journal for landscape architects, Hester wrote about his experience working with the small coastal community of Manteo, North Carolina. He was hired to redesign the village waterfront and “help the residents identify and preserve their valued life-styles and landscapes in the face of change” (Hester 1985, 10). The town of Manteo was experiencing increased tourism due to its historical value as a fishing village and its beautiful setting in the Outer Banks of North Carolina, north of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Hester used a method he describes as “Sacred Structure” (Hester 1985, 11). The essence of this concept is helping the residents of the community identify the places and spaces of their town “as being important because they represented home or provided roots” (Hester 1985, 11). What Hester uncovered for the town’s residents was that the landscape and the lifestyles led by the citizens were deeply intertwined. While the residents wanted economic development, they were also clear in their intention to preserve their small town atmosphere. Discussions with city officials and community representatives revealed that the goals of economic development and emotional attachment to place were the same.

Hester and his team observed daily behavioral patterns of the locals, and after several months of gathering information, a mapping process of the “Sacred Structure” was developed. The following excerpt from the article describes Hester’s concept:

...sacred structure would be those places-buildings, outdoor spaces, and landscapes-that exemplify, typify, reinforce, and perhaps even extol the everyday life patterns and special rituals of community life, places that have become so essential to the lives of the residents through use or symbolism that the community collectively identifies with the places. The places become synonymous with residents' concepts and use of their town. The loss of such places would reorder or destroy something or some social process familiar to the community's collective being (Hester 1985, 15).

The manner of teasing out the important places of a community is subtle process. To be successful, it takes time, patience and putting aside one's own design agenda. Hester points out that identifying structures and places is "particularly [helpful] in reconciling tourism with existing community mores and rituals...[It is an] important mechanism for any neighborhood or city in rapid transition that wishes to maintain valued life-styles and places...[It is] essential to a community's healthy survival" (Hester 1985, 21).

Glenn Thomas, lecturer in landscape architecture and the School of Planning, Landscape Architecture and Surveying in Queensland, Australia at the University of Technology, speaks about the relevance of landscape architecture in working with cultural landscapes. Thomas engaged three towns in a study with graduates of the Queensland landscape architecture program from 1994-1995. The towns, while all uniquely situated, were dealing with issues in regards to tourism, urbanization and indigenous tribal issues. All towns had experienced ad hoc development, and two had very few trees planted. The students of the program engaged each town's relative stakeholders during a fifteen week time frame to the help the community understand their individual needs and to educate the public in making more informed decisions regarding their futures (Thomas 2007, 220). The students gained real life experience in working

as landscape architects at the community level. The largest lesson was that in reality, the public has diverging interest groups. It is not the role of the landscape architect to sway a particular group in any one direction; it is to listen to the issues raised, develop ideas, and then educate the existing stakeholders about their options so those individuals can discuss the merits of each option. Thomas concludes “the outcome is a more informed community that is empowered to take a more proactive role in deciding [the direction] the future environment will take” (Thomas 2007, 221). Thomas’ research demonstrates that regardless of the public setting, the landscape architect can be beneficial in helping communities make informed decisions regarding their futures. The North Georgia wine region is an example where this type of community based design work would be appropriate.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

At this time, there is no evidence that wine tourism will create traffic problems in North Georgia. However, because tourists and residents have yet to be interviewed, their perspective on traffic may be different. The research also disputed the claim that new wineries will compete with existing amenities. Rather, new wineries will complement established businesses in the area.

Land prices have risen in most counties of the North Georgia wine region. David Harris of Blackstock Winery views this development as positive. However, there is a concern that development may occur in a way that is not sensitive to the existing economic status of the

community. There may be potential for some members of the community to be “priced out” of their homes due to land price increases.

The research demonstrated the residents of Cleveland, Georgia, would stand to benefit financially and socially through community alliance via main street beautification along the southern entrance to the town on Highway 129. In regards to the sense of place, it appears that the wineries have provided a positive contribution, especially evident in the town of Dahlonega, Georgia. Maintaining this sense of place will be paramount if wine tourism continues in North Georgia.

Indeed, the landscape architect can play a key role in sustainable wine tourism for the region. The early stages of planning for businesses and residential communities with the use of the charrette as a visioning tool may help guide the residents of the North Georgia wine community. The city that could benefit the most from the landscape architect’s role is Cleveland, Georgia. As the “gateway to the mountains” the town must articulate its options in relation to tourism growth, if indeed there is to be more growth. According to all of the vintners interviewed, the hope is that more wineries are developed in the wine region. More wineries mean more tourists, and more tourists mean greater financial gain for the small mountain communities. If North Georgia has the goal to grow as a wine region, it has one valuable commodity already, that of the people who live there, and they must be included when making decisions that affect their community.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SUSTAINABLE WINE TOURISM: ECONOMICS**

#### **4.1 Chapter Overview**

In 2008, research on the economic impact of all wineries in the state of Georgia was completed in the School of Agricultural Business and Economic Development at the University of Georgia by Kyle Watts (Watts and Georgia 2008). This economic impact survey provides critical information for this chapter in understanding the role of the North Georgia wineries and how they contribute to the economic base of the state. In addition, scholarly writings by several wine tourism experts, landscape architect Randy Hester, and Belgian geographer Marc Antrop will be instrumental in discussing the economic aspect of sustainable wine tourism. Because the concepts of economy and community in sustainable wine tourism overlap, there is some repetitive use of terms from chapter three.

#### **4.2 North Georgia Wine Industry's Economic Impact**

The average wine tourist in the state of Georgia is 47.9 years old. Fifty-six percent are female, 66% travel less than one hundred miles to reach a North Georgia winery, and most earn an average annual salary of \$105,000 (Watts and Georgia 2008, Getz 1999, Watts2008, McCool 2008). For the entire state of Georgia, a total of \$44,790,364 in wine sales occurred in 2007. The North Georgia wineries alone contributed \$31,165,207 to the above number. State wide, the wineries employ 430 people, with 292 in the North Georgia wine region (Watts and Georgia

2008, 86 and 92). Clearly, the wineries of the state of Georgia, and in particular North Georgia, have an impact on the state's economy.

#### **4.3 The Role of Economy in Sustainable Wine Tourism**

According to Stephen McCool, professor in the School of Forestry at the University of Montana in Missoula,

Sustainable tourism is the linking of culture and environment with one type of economic development. Each of these players is dependently linked. Sustainable tourism is . . . viewed as a tool of social and economic development and as a method of protecting our cultural and natural heritage. What tourism should sustain is a negotiated and agreed upon outcome of the collaborative planning process. Through the involvement of interested and affected participants, a clear vision of sustainable development goals then drives future development decisions (McCool 2008, 290).

McCool emphasizes the strong connection between economy and community. At a minimum, what tourism should sustain is the community that supports it. There are categories of capital, other than financial, that must be sustained. Marc Antrop calls this natural capital. A

geographer in Belgium, Antrop has written extensively about matters of landscape, sustainability and geography. In a journal article for *Landscape and Urban Planning* titled Sustainable

Landscapes: Contradiction, Fiction or Utopia? Antrop describes natural capital as:

...the natural resources and the ecological systems that provides vital life-support services to all economic activities. Basically, the term refer(s) to the potential utilities natural resources can offer. These services are of immense economic value. Many are literally priceless since they have no known substitutes. Yet current business practices and public policies typically ignore their value and focus on the consumption of resources only (Antrop 2006, 191).

Hence, there is a paradox that exists between tourism, which can be seen as consumption of resources, and the preservation of landscape or natural capital. Untouched landscapes are

attractive to many people for tourism and recreation. One obvious type of natural capital is mountainous areas and their fragile ecosystems. This type of landscape can be greatly affected by tourism, so the potential for loss of natural capital is obvious.

What is not so obvious can be the loss of a third type of capital: the social and local traditions of a community, otherwise known as human capital (Antrop 2006, 188). Therefore, the role of economy in sustainable wine tourism is to contribute not only to the financial aspect but to remain sensitive to the more subtle components of a community's economy, i.e. the culture and traditions, that are invaluable and deem a place unique. Often the economic impetus that encourages community development is the very thing that will degrade its store of heritage capital, both natural and human.

#### **4.4 The Role of Economy in Sustainable Wine Tourism for the North Georgia Wine Industry**

As detailed by Watts in his economic impact study, the North Georgia wineries are enjoying financial success. To date, the growth in the amount of wineries in the area has been steady. During Watts' interview process with winery owners, all mentioned welcoming the prospect of more wineries coming to the area. Watts, through psychographic investigation of the Georgia wine tourist, revealed that on average, wine tourists prefer to visit more than one winery per wine tasting outing (Watts and Georgia 2008, 69). If more wineries are developed in the North Georgia wine region, the likelihood is that more tourists will spend more time per visit and

hence more money. According to tourism professor Donald Getz, it is not the amount of people necessary for the success of an emerging wine region:

Small numbers of high-yield tourists (i.e. those who travel specifically for wine-related reasons, stay overnight...and spend the most) can suffice. Large volumes will generate large wineries, sales and high prices, as in Napa Valley, but small-scale wine tourism can be a good strategy in that it avoids problems of congestion and over-commercialization (Getz 1999, 29).

Getz also discusses the benefit of multiple small wineries in a wine region:

One winery on its own is unlikely to attract many tourists. Research in Victoria, Australia, linked winery visits as a trip motivation with the number of wineries in each area - the more wineries there are, the higher the percentage who gave “visiting wineries” as their main trip motive. The conclusion was that a critical mass of wineries in an area is needed to generate a high level of special-purpose wine tourism (Carlsen and Charters 2006, 25).

According to Watts’ impact assessment, 38% of the wineries in North Georgia have plans to expand in the next three years by adding some type of lodging to their property (Watts and Georgia 2008, 57). This will increase the length of stay by the wine tourist and potentially increase the amount of people who are willing to travel to the North Georgia Mountains from farther away than one hundred miles. New lodging may potentially increase the amount of tourists’ taking part in recreation activities in the mountain region. All of these developments suggest a greater influx of money into the area in the near future.

#### **4.4.1 Road Signage for Wineries**

This section and the next, discuss specific economic attributes of the North Georgia wine region. Evident throughout wine tourism literature is the importance of accessibility and visual cues, especially for emerging wine regions (Carlsen and Charters 2006, Getz 1999, McCool 2008,



Poitras 2006, Watts 2008). In general, way-finding is accomplished via road way signage provided by a wine region or state.

Tourism to the mountain wineries in Georgia requires road signage due to the likelihood that those visiting the region will not be familiar with the area. Getz states that “remoter wine regions must ensure that accessibility is good, and that road signs and other information for visitors are readily available” (Getz 1999, 24). In 2001, Senate Bill 155 passed, granting authority to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Transportation to designate areas for the placement of winery signs. Ironically, many of the North Georgia vintners feel they still do not have the support from both local and state governments in this regard as there are too few signs, and many of the existing signs are not placed for optimal visibility.

In August 2009, the Department of Agriculture began its agritourism campaign for the state to highlight the businesses that contribute to the state agriculturally and recommend road signage be provided for those that receive tourists, including wineries (see Figure 4.1).

A one-time fee of \$250 entitles the vintner to the State of Georgia Agritourism road signage.

Julie Akins-Daugherty, Area Marketing Coordinator for the Department of Agriculture in the state of Georgia, explains the process of sign placement for each agritourism attraction: once the initial application for the attraction has been approved by the Department of Agriculture, the attraction (in this case the winery) requests the preferred placement for the signage. In addition to the agritourism logo, the name of the winery will be placed with an arrow indicating which

way for the driver to turn. The signs are similar in size to a stop sign. Once the application is approved it is forwarded to Georgia's Department of Transportation for a route study. When the route proposal is approved, the D.O.T. will place the sign within seven to eight business days. (Akins-Daugherty February 2, 2010). However, Martha Ezzard of Tiger Mountain Winery in Clayton, Georgia paid the fee one year ago and no signs have appeared (Ezzard June 22, 2009). In a phone conversation with Julie Akins-Daugherty on February 2, 2010, she stated that while the designated seven to eight day waiting period is the best case scenario, she realizes that this goal has not been met. Because the cooperation of two government agencies is required, the Department of Agriculture and the D.O.T., and that this can create a slow process. However, she is confident many of the initial problems have been worked out since the agritourism campaign started last summer (Akins-Daugherty February 2, 2010).



Figure 4.1. New Agritourism sign, Department of Agriculture. Image courtesy of Georgia Department of Agriculture. 2009.

In addition to the agritourism signage provided by the state, many of the vintners in the mountain region feel that “a greater push by the government to promote the industry in the form of public awareness would greatly benefit the industry” (Watts and Georgia 2008, 59). Most of the winery operators feel government involvement and support is the number one action that could help promote the industry. Marketing in the form of signage could attract a greater number of winery visitors. In addition, proper signage would attract more people who are traveling through the area for other reasons, e.g. hiking or fishing in the mountains (Watts and Georgia 2008, 59).

#### **4.4.2 The North Georgia Wine Highway**

Wine routes are roadways placed with signage alerting tourists or nearby wineries. Many emerging regions use the wine route as a marketing tool to assure tourist visitation. Authors Luis Correia and Mario Passos Ascencao, lecturers at the University of Portugal and University of Finland, respectively, discuss the wine route of Bairrada in Portugal. Similar to North Georgia, Bairrada is an emerging wine region. Correia and Ascencao link the wine route to more than a marketing tool:

...wine routes [play an important role in]...reaching those who have an interest in wine and are fascinated by the country's natural and cultural heritage. [They] have become important tourism products world wide, as well as acting as a tourism promotions tool...they contribute to both development and promotion of regional wine tourism (Carlsen and Charters 2006, 245).

A region in the U.S., that successfully uses the wine route to support wine tourism, is southwest Michigan. Formed in 2002, the Lake Michigan Shore Wine Trail has twelve wineries

currently in its membership ([www.miwinetrail.com](http://www.miwinetrail.com)). The overarching premise of the organization is one of allegiance rather than competition because “each winery has a niche which fosters working together to build the Southwest Michigan Wine Trail and the wine region's reputation” (Wargenau and Che 2006, 46). The southwest Michigan wineries use the wine trail organization not only as a means for alliance but also as a means to educate the wine tourist and provide information about other tourist attractions of the area. The trail's location (Figure 4.2) is of major benefit to the vintners: home to more than eight million residents, the metro Chicago area is only ninety miles away (Wargenau and Che 2006, 51). This is very similar to North Georgia, where metro Atlanta lies ninety miles south of the wine region.



Figure 4.2. Southwest Michigan Wine Trail sign. Image courtesy of Lake Michigan Shore Wine Trail. 2010.

While North Georgia does have a wine route, it is a common sentiment of the vintners interviewed for this thesis that the route is the primary need for the emerging industry. A simple internet search for wineries in North Georgia produces information from two websites. Currently the North Georgia wine route is governed by the Winegrowers Association of Georgia. The organization's website is [georgiawine.com](http://georgiawine.com). The second informational website is [georgiawinecountry.com](http://georgiawinecountry.com). It is not clear who maintains this website. This website conveys information about the entire state's wineries and vineyards as opposed to just the northern region. The maps distributed by the two websites can be seen below in figure 4.3.

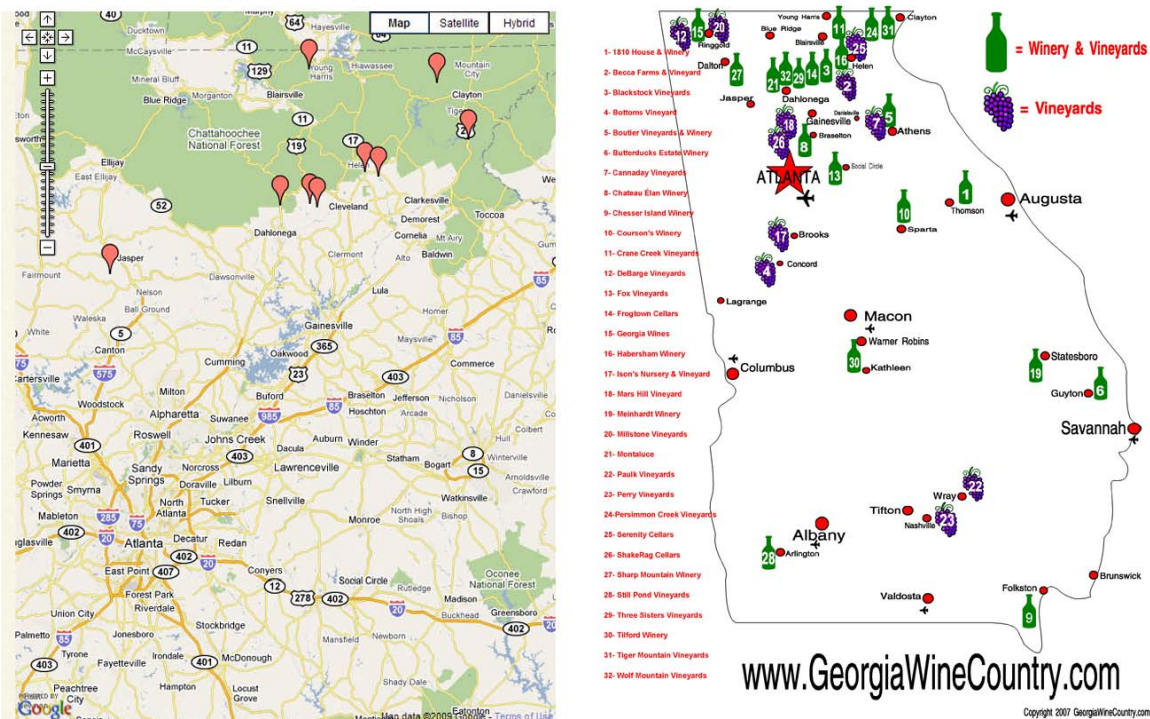


Figure 4.3. Winegrowers Association of Georgia Map and Georgia Wine Country map. Maps courtesy of Winegrowers Association of Georgia and [georgiawinecountry.com](http://georgiawinecountry.com). 2010.

A third map exists from georgiawine.com as part of the Winegrowers Association brochure (Figure 4.4). It fails to show Highway 441, an important part of the wine route. This is a major thorough-fare connection to two of the area's wineries, Tiger Mountain and Persimmon Creek, both in Clayton, Georgia.

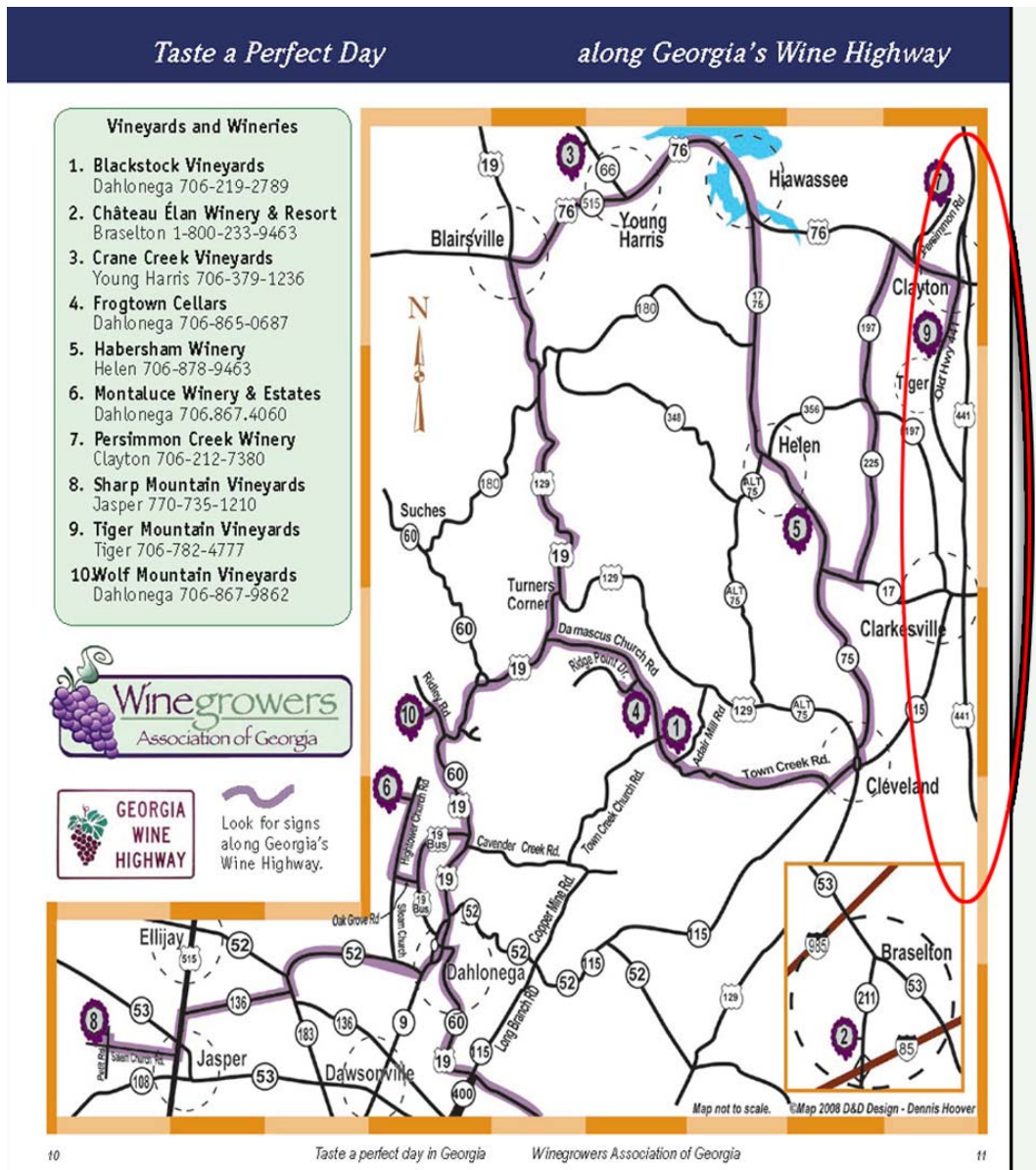


Figure 4.4. Wine trail map from Winegrowers Association. Courtesy of georgiawine.com, Winegrowers Association of Georgia. 2009.



In email communication on January 31, 2009, Martha Ezzard, states:

The original GA Wine Highway signs have been posted for a couple of years but, for us, they have never been in the most important spots (Figure 4.5). In addition, they simply say winery with an arrow –no name of the winery. There is only one of those [signs] on the new 441 and it is north of Clayton. The problem is that most of our visitors are coming from Atlanta (Ezzard, email communication January 31, 2009).



Figure 4.5. Georgia Wine Highway signage. Image courtesy of Winegrowers Association of Georgia. 2009.

North Georgia has the road infrastructure in place for a well-defined wine route. If the responsibility of the route continues to lie with the Winegrowers Association, there is need for communication pathways to be enhanced between the vintners and the D.O.T.

According to C. Michael Hall and Richard Mitchell, customary links between tourism and wine, and especially the creation of wine routes, have existed since the first half of the twentieth century. For example, wine trails have been a part of the German tourism industry since the 1920's with the use of *Weinlehrpfad*, an instructional wine path. This demarcation has helped elucidate and therefore sell German wine. By the end of the 1970's almost all of the

eleven wine regions in Germany had their own *Wienstraben* or wine routes. Recently, Eastern European countries, such as Hungary, have begun to establish wine routes in an effort to attract Western European tourists (Hall 2000, 448).

Well-managed wine routes support wine tourism, and wine tourism can play a significant role in regional sustainable tourism development through its contribution to sustaining the economic and social bases of regions through the creation of jobs and the sale of local merchandise. The wine route can act as the primary means of attraction for many smaller wineries. Wine routes connect producers and consumers and can contribute to education about wine making, viticulture, local culture and the landscape (Hall 2000, 449).

#### **4.5 The Landscape Architect's Role in the Economy for Sustainable Wine Tourism**

The role of the economy has been discussed in relation to sustainable wine tourism in the North Georgia Mountains. In this section the role of the landscape architect will be explored to demonstrate that the profession can be of great value to possible development in regards to sustainable wine tourism.

In chapter three, Randy Hester, a landscape architect who worked with the community in Manteo, North Carolina observed that there was an interesting overlap of goals. The small seaside town was in need of and desired economic development. What Hester discovered through his "Sacred Structure" process of identifying the places that were precious to its citizens was that the economic goals desired by town officials and the subconscious attachment citizens had to specific places concurred. For example, the desire to preserve the small town atmosphere



of Manteo and maintain the ability to walk everywhere in town were aligned with the town's economic goals (Hester 1985, 11). Hester's ability to welcome input from all citizens allowed for what he calls "social nuances" to inform his design process and assured the success of Manteo's waterfront (Hester 1985, 11).

The landscape architect is uniquely suited to work collaboratively with tourism development professionals. It is the landscape architect who will bring the ability to develop unique landscapes in these sacred places by revealing the connection between community and economy while promoting and preserving cultural heritage (Urgo 2008, 73). Through a combination of working with the community stakeholders and understanding that economic viability is essential, the landscape architect can assist in identifying and promoting the preservation of the cultural nuances and heritage place makers inherent in all communities. Finally, because landscape architects typically develop collaborative relationships in the design process, they have the ability to play an important role in the planning, development, and management of wine tourism communities.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The North Georgia wine region contains a wealth of ecological, historical and aesthetic value. These components together can create an economic resource for the state but must be managed in a way that is prudent and responsive to the existing amenities, the communities, and the environment of the region. Eric Seifarth of Crane Creek in Young Harris fervently described

his sentiment on the North Georgia wine tourism economy in this way: “If one winery succeeds, we all succeed. If one fails, we all fail” (Seifarth July 7, 2009).

In general, wine tourism is found in rural areas. Bernard Lane, director and senior lecturer in the School of Rural Tourism and Architectural Preservation at the University of Bristol in the U.K., has written extensively about sustainable rural tourism. He states that for a viable rural economy, communities cannot overemphasize one aspect of their region, and that taking a pro-nature and extreme conservationist stance is not a realistic approach for economic sustainability of that community. Rural tourism must incorporate “the culture and character of the local community, landscapes and habitat...a viable tourism industry based on satisfying tourist experiences, and the development of understanding, leadership and vision among decision makers who will work towards a balanced and diversified rural economy” (Lane 1994, 426).

Poitras and Getz point out that sustainable wine tourism depends on the identification and management of issues pertaining to the resources and goods used such as agricultural land, water, labor, capital, infrastructure and the equipment necessary for grape growing and wine making (Poitras 2006). In addition to those resources, Antrop indentifies “human capital” as being a paramount economic factor for consideration in tourism development. Because changes to rural areas have been linked to developments in both global and local economies, tourism has emerged as one of the predominant means by which rural areas reconcile themselves economically, socially, and politically in a competitive global economy (Hall 2000, 448).

## CHAPTER 5

### SUSTAINABLE WINE TOURISM: ENVIRONMENT

#### 5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter explores the role of the environment in sustainable wine tourism in relationship to landscape ecology and landscape patterns observed in the North Georgia wine region. The chapter also examines sustainable viticulture and its role in North Georgia, the Mountain Protection Act of White County, Georgia and, finally, the role of the landscape architect in regard to the environment and sustainable wine tourism.

Geographically, the North Georgia wine region is located in one of the most biologically diverse, temperate regions of the world, the Southern Appalachian Mountains. (<http://www.sabionline.org/sabihome.html>, 4). The diversity is attributed to the antiquity of the mountain range as well as its topography:

...wide arrays of habitats and microhabitats for both flora and fauna have contributed to the high levels of diversity and endemism that is unparalleled in the temperate zone. Fungi, mosses, liverworts, terrestrial snails, freshwater mussels, spiders, many insect groups, freshwater fishes and salamanders are all terrifically diverse within this region (<http://www.sabionline.org/sabihome.html>).

Currently, there are more than 2,000 species of plants that grow in the Southern Appalachian region. As well, the region is home to forty-seven known and six new species of salamanders; nearly 10% of global salamander diversity (<http://www.sabionline.org/sabihome.html>). A contributing factor for the region's biodiversity is the temperate climate. It is this temperate

climate and the altitude of the North Georgia that allows European wine grapes, *Vitis vinifera*, to be cultivated. While vineyards in Georgia's Blue Ridge Mountains are a relatively new introduction to the landscape; the landuse of agriculture is not. A farmer's field that once grew corn or hay may now display even rows of wine grapes.

In February 2009, Daniel Ngugi, with North Dakota Human Services in Bismarck, Jeff Mullen, and John Bergstrom, professors in the Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics at the University of Georgia, presented a paper in Atlanta, Georgia at the Southern Agricultural Economics Meeting regarding the effects that population growth in North Georgia has had on water quality in the ecosystem. The authors framed their discussion in this way: "Ecosystems play an important role in providing commodities (functions and services) beneficial to society. To a great extent, the quality and quantity of these benefits is determined by the pattern of land use in the ecosystem" (Ngugi 2009, 1). Their study area was composed of the Upper Chattahoochee River Basin (UCRB). The river is a source of drinking water for the city of Atlanta as well as more than 4.1 million people in the states of Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. In North Georgia, the UCRB ecosystem incorporates a national forest and major recreational areas. The UCRB also contributes water for agricultural, industrial, recreational, and sewage disposal purposes in a number of Georgia counties (Ngugi 2009, 3).

Through a series of structural time series models (STSM), the research concluded that,

The population of North Georgia has continued to rise drastically over the last two decades with associated conversion of land from forests and farms to urban development...1974 and 2005, the proportion of available land (excluding government forest, water, wetlands) in the

area of study that was under residential/urban use increased from 2.4% to 14%. This urban growth was mainly at the expense of forest that decreased from 79.4% in 1974 to 65.6% by 2005. Farmland increased marginally from 18.2% to 20.4% during the same period (Ngugi 2009, 4).

Their study took into account three scenarios forecasting land use change from 2006-2030; all land use models forecast the loss of forested lands due to urbanization. Interestingly, they found that the loss of farm land is mitigated by the how the community deals with urban growth (Ngugi 2009, 23). The authors conclude their discussion, stating that

Water quality problems can be ameliorated by concerted efforts including introducing best management practices, reducing impervious surfaces, reducing urban sprawl so as to conserve the forest, and other activities that involve the community in watershed management. Such approaches are likely to cost less than the cost of defensive behavior or ecosystem restoration after the fact (Daniel Ngugi 2009, 24).

In other words, the importance of planning and good design is paramount in the North Georgia wine region to offset suburban sprawl because metro Atlanta is only ninety miles from the region.

In regard to tourism, if development occurs with no planning, the emerging wine region may include careless development that reveals an inability to foresee how a region's valued resources may succumb to development practices that are myopic, with only financial gain as the goal. In the best situation, development will include responsible agricultural techniques and aesthetic appeal by preserving the character of rural places while considering the needs of the affected community.

## 5.2 Landscape Ecology in the North Georgia Wine Region

Landscape ecology addresses a variety of spatial landscape scales and the ecological effects of spatial patterning of ecosystems. It considers the development and dynamics of spatial heterogeneity, interactions and exchanges across heterogeneous landscapes; the influences of spatial heterogeneity on biotic and abiotic processes; and the management of spatial heterogeneity (Turner 1989, 172). According to Joan Nassauer, professor of landscape architecture at the University of Michigan, landscape ecology “investigates landscape structure and ecological function at a scale that encompasses the ordinary elements of human landscape experience: yards, forests, fields, streams and streets” (Nassauer 1997, 4). Understanding landscape patterns is essential to the practice of landscape ecology. German geographer Carl Troll first used the term landscape ecology in 1939 (Nassauer 1997). He was responding to the new technology of aerial photography, which displayed the landscape in patterns of fields, mountains, forests, rivers and roads. In examining the photographs, Troll hypothesized that the arrangement of the pieces in the landscape affected the overall ecology of the area. Today, in addition to the overarching theme of the landscape patterns interacting with one another, humans respond to these patterns by either maintaining a given ecosystem or changing it (Nassauer 1997).

Because landscape ecology focuses on patterns and their engagement with one another in regard to water, animals, plants, mineral nutrients and ecological changes over time, these patterns create interaction among multiple disciplines, such as ecology, planning and landscape

architecture. By considering landscape ecology concepts, the design process becomes influenced by crucial ecological processes, functions and patterns. The function of those patterns is critical to assuring ecosystem sustainability for planned landscapes (Botequilha Leitão and Ahern 2002). Further, results from landscape ecological studies show that a broad-scale approach to landuse planning for the creation or protection of sustainable landscapes is strongly suggested, and that an interdisciplinary approach highlights greater potential for the success of these landscapes (Turner 1989, 190).

#### **5.2.1 The Aesthetic of Landscape Patterns in the North Georgia wine region**

The Blue Ridge Mountains have distinct visual landscape patterns. Open fields are flanked by the mountains. Some of these fields are prairie-like in appearance, with indigenous grasses; others are cultivated with corn; while some are planted with stately apple orchards. Upon closer examination, enveloped in some of these valleys, small vineyards appear. The vineyards are not readily apparent (many are planted further back on a proprietors property) and do not appear frequently (some vineyards are twenty to thirty miles apart) but their presence is visually appealing and often intriguing, presenting a visual cue that something is being cultivated and nurtured. The landscape pattern follows a certain flow—from the Blue Ridge Mountain range to individual hillsides covered with trees—to fields planted methodically with grapevines, and finally to a water source such as a small pond or river. There is a gentle transition for the viewer; the eye adjusts easily from a general frame of reference to one that is more specific. In essence, the North Georgia wine region is a pattern determined by scale, a landscape pattern that is a

visual tapestry woven by mountain, hillside, valley, and vineyard or other small pockets of agriculture (see figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). While these landscape patterns are visually appealing, they are also ecologically beneficial to the region. For example, the mountain ranges create watersheds that feed the rivers. The valleys can act as flood plains, habitats for animals, or for agriculture production.



Figure 5.1. Pattern of the viticulture landscape at Blackstock Winery, Dahlonega, Georgia. June 2009. Photo taken by Leanne Wells.





Figure 5.2. Gradual elevation change at Tiger Mountain Winery, Clayton, Georgia. June 2009. Photo taken by Leanne Wells.



Figure 5.3. Valley of Persimmon Creek Winery, Clayton, Georgia. June 2009. Photo taken by Leanne Wells.

### 5.2.2 Landscape Patterns and Wine tourism development in North Georgia

Spatial patterns observed in any landscape result from “complex interactions between physical, biological, and social forces” (Turner 1989, 174). Given that the nature of wine tourism development often takes place in a rural setting, it would be unlikely that its development would not contact several spatial patterns in the landscape. The examination of landscape patterning has not been incorporated into tourism planning; for wine tourism, it is completely novel. North Georgia is a region that could benefit from the application of a landscape patterning tool to assure sensitive development, encompass environmental aspects of the region and incorporate the human element included in landscape ecology.

It is imperative to identify the main patterns in a landscape and the main processes that are attached to those patterns to understand how an entire ecosystem functions. With this understanding - the relationship between patterns and function - spatial change can be predicted in the landscape (Botequilha Leitão and Ahern 2002). In the North Georgia wine region, seven landscape patterns have been identified along with their functions in relationship to water, people, and wildlife. These were placed in a matrix to show their relationships (see Table 5.1 and Figure 5.4). For example, the roadway patterns function for people as a means of transportation to the mountains but a roadway also operate as a conduit for stormwater runoff, potentially increasing erosion, and the potential to cause habitat fragmentation for wildlife. Roadways also bring more pollution to the mountain region. As well, the landscape pattern of a vineyard, while functioning as a source of livelihood, tourism and viable food crop for people,

also functions as a potential habitat obstruction for wildlife. Table 5.1 below, is just an example of patterns and their functions; there are an infinite number of combinations that exist for the North Georgia wine region.

Table 5.1. Matrix of landscape patterns and functions in the North Georgia wine region. Table derived from Ahern and Botequilha. 2002 p.72.

Landscape Patterns	Landscape Functions		
	Water	People	Wildlife
Mountain	Watershed creation	Recreation, Aesthetic	Habitat
Forest	Filtration, Infiltration, Water cycle	Timber, Recreation, Aesthetic	Habitat
Valley	Movement, Wetland creation	Homestead, Towns, Agriculture	Animal movement, water access
Field	Infiltration	Homestead, Towns, Agriculture	Animal movement, Subterranean habitat
Vineyard	Irrigation	Livelihood, Agriculture, Tourism	Habitat Fragmentation
Road	Run off, Erosion, Car pollution	Transportation, Recreation	Habitat Fragmentation, Barrier, Source of Perturbation, Facilitates people and pollution disturbance
River	Water movement, flood control	Consumption, Recreation, Research, Aesthetic	Habitat

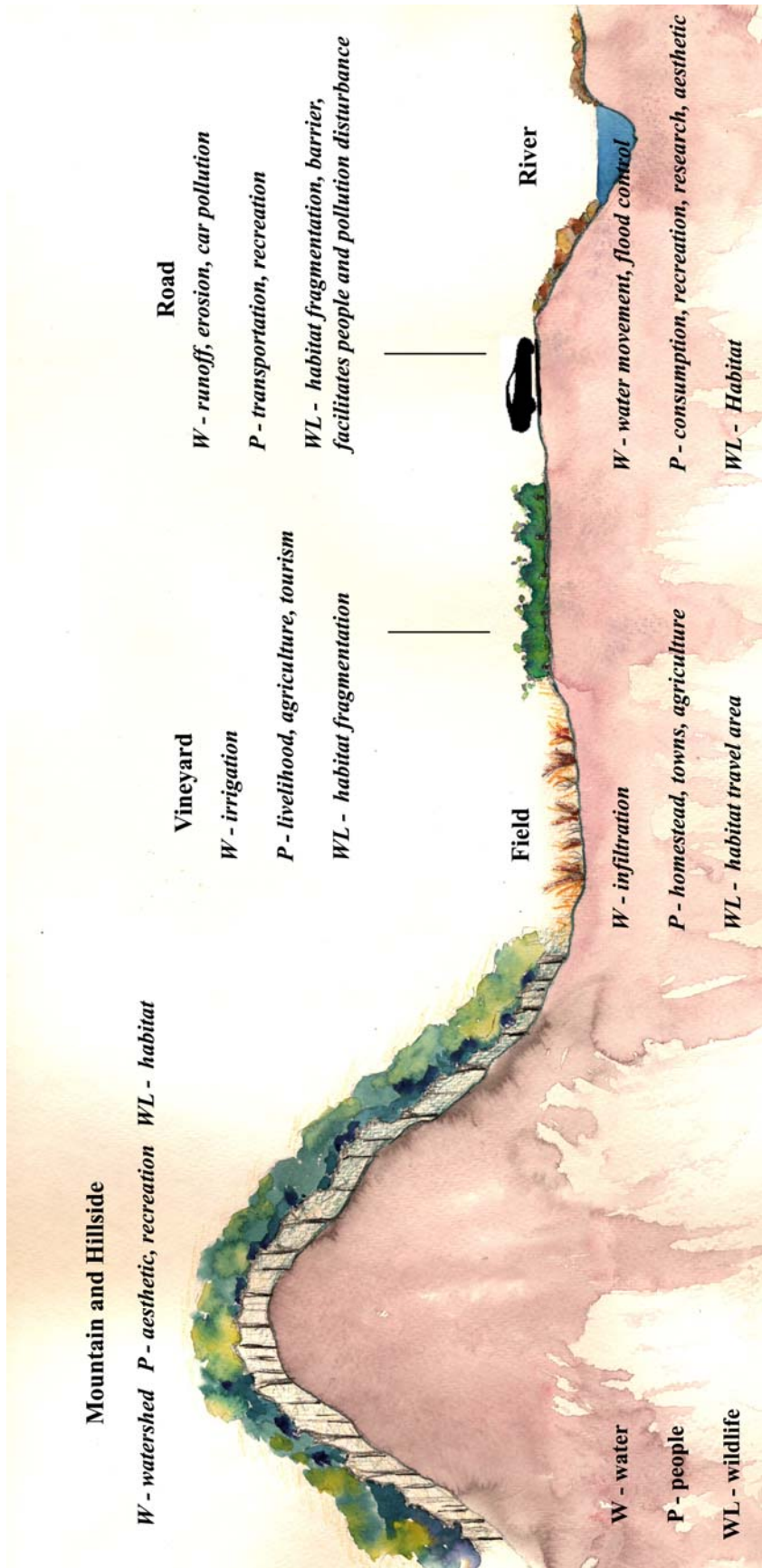


Figure 5.4 Landscape profile showing North Georgia wine region landscape patterns and functions. Leanne Wells. 2010



### 5.3 Sustainable Viticulture in North Georgia

When discussing environmental sustainability in wine tourism, the topic of sustainable viticulture is important. Sustainable viticulture can be defined as a “long term approach to managing wine grapes which optimizes wine grape quality and productivity by using a combination of biological, cultural and chemical tools in ways that minimize economic, environmental, and health risks” (Ohmart 2004). Sustainable agriculture is the leading principle from which sustainable viticulture has been developed. As described in chapter one, sustainable agriculture consists of a three pronged approach for its success: environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity (<http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu>). It is important to recognize that sustainable agriculture is measured on a continuum and is practiced in degrees along the continuum. Sustainable viticulture lays its foundation on soil building, integrated pest management (IPM), minimal use of chemicals, and maximizing economic welfare while minimizing health risks.

*Vitis vinifera* has enjoyed only relatively recent success in its cultivation in the mountains of North Georgia. Before vineyards were established in the North Georgia Mountains, the land they occupy was used for agriculture. The land use is still agriculture; but with a different crop being cultivated. The region enjoys cooler temperatures, less humidity and more moderate rainfall than the Piedmont area of Georgia. At these higher altitudes, winters are colder which is advantageous for guarding against certain pests in agriculture. According to Oliver Asberger, vineyard manager at Monteluce Winery in Dahlonega, there are many environmental factors

that affect growing the European wine grape species. Three of the biggest concerns are spring frost, too much or not enough rain, and disease (Asberger July 7, 2009). Mary Ann Hardman of Persimmon Creek in Clayton, Georgia, states that “Viticulture is not stagnant—it is working with the soil, sun, wind, rain, snow, hail, mildew, and mold. Every site, every block of vineyard is different” (Hardman June 23, 2009). In a phone conversation on February 9, 2010, Steve Gibson from Habersham Winery in Helen, Georgia, said that the weather of North Georgia is his biggest concern in growing wine grapes.

Regardless of the climactic and pest issues to which North Georgia vintners are accustomed, many of the vintners interviewed for this thesis do practice sustainable growing techniques and all are interested in sustainable stewardship of their land and surrounding community. For example, the use of cover vegetation is one method of soil protection and building. Every vineyard visited in North Georgia had planted a ground cover between the grapevine rows to prevent soil erosion. IPM is another sustainable technique also being practiced by many of the vintners. This method of pest management that combines biological, cultural, and chemical tools in a way that minimizes economic, environmental, and health risks (Ohmart, 3). In regard to maximizing economic welfare, minimizing the use of chemicals is a cost-saving method. Asberger from Monteluca explains that in the vineyard he “practices IPM, only sprays when he has to, (and) scouts for diseases everyday” (Asberger July 7, 2009).

There are common elements that lend to sustainable practices of growing wine grapes in the industry. This aspect of sustainable wine tourism is paramount; if there are no wine grapes,

there is no wine. If there is no wine, there will be no wine tourism. How the grape is cultivated can play an important role in assuring its success and longevity. For North Georgia, many growers practice sustainable growing techniques; however this is not to be confused with organic viticulture. Due to the area's climate and a variety of other variables in the region, there are no organic wine grape growers in the state of Georgia. Nevertheless, a vineyard is planned for decades of productivity and is a relatively permanent landscape requiring minimal soil intervention. Compared with other types of agriculture, this permanence adds to the sustainable viticulture argument. While other agriculture requires replanting and entire plant harvest each growing season, grape vines are perennial.

#### **5.4 North Georgia Environmental Legislation: The Mountain Protection Act, White County, Georgia**

The north mountain region in Georgia has an aesthetic identity often referred to as "Appalachian" or "Southern". Zell Miller, governor of Georgia from 1991-1999, spent his childhood Young Harris, Georgia. Governor Miller shares his sentiment of concern for the mountain environment;

It has been said that Americans cannot enjoy anything without spoiling it, and it is a source of concern for natives like me that such not happen to our beloved mountains...Zoning and planning are anathema to the independent mountain spirit, but I love the mountains and the desire to protect them are even stronger sentiments which, I believe...will prevail in the form of laws...to local governments in planning and directing growth (development)...for protecting and preserving nature's balance and beauty (1985, p 155).

If sustainability of the current character of North Georgia is to be achieved, this "independent mountain spirit" must be understood. The livelihoods of many people in the region depend on



tourist visitation. Development or growth can adhere to a certain aesthetic that supports environmental function. This will help maintain a perceptible essence of place in the Blue Ridge without destruction of hillsides or offensive construction, one that reflects the current regional character of the south Appalachians.

The Mountain Protection Act of White County is an ordinance crafted to protect the hillsides of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Passed in 2004, the Act has effectively regulated growth on terrain above 1700 feet, slopes greater than 25%, or both. Clearing of the land is limited in these areas; there are strict regulations on sewage disposal, light pollution, and the size of development. In the extreme case, if a large amount of land is cleared, landowners are required to present a detailed reforestation plan to remediate environmental effects such as soil erosion (Smith June 15, 2009). In addition to restrictions of growth on sloped mountain sides, the intent of the Act was to protect the existing topography, to prevent inappropriate development, to preserve the aesthetic and scenic attributes of the area, and to ensure public safety, health, and general welfare (Chapter 30, Article 5, Mountain and Hillside Protection Ordinance: White County 2004). This describes the full intent of its protection:

The provisions of this chapter are intended to prevent developments that will erode hillsides, result in sedimentation of lower slopes, cause damage from landslides or create potential for damage from landslides, flood downhill properties, or result in the severe cutting of trees or the scarring of the landscape. It is the intent of this chapter to encourage a sensitive form of development and to allow for a reasonable use that complements the natural and visual character of the community. These purposes cannot be met fully with existing development codes, such as soil erosion, grading, tree protection, and flood damage prevention. This chapter is considered the minimum necessary to attain these purposes (Chapter 30, Article 5, Mountain and Hillside Protection Ordinance: White County 2004, 4) .

Further, the Act lists the professions that are encouraged to abide by the guidelines:

These regulations are also intended to encourage the application of principles of civic design, landscape architecture, architecture, planning, and civil engineering to preserve the appearance and protect the resources of mountains and hills. Guidelines are also provided to encourage imaginative and innovative building techniques and to encourage building designs compatible with natural mountain and hillside surroundings (Chapter 30, Article 5, Mountain and Hillside Protection Ordinance: White County 2004, 4).

In February 2007, Jackson County in North Carolina, northeast of Rabun County in Georgia followed suit by passing a moratorium on subdivision development in order to devise guidelines for the area's future growth.

The Mountain Protection Act of White County is a move in the direction to assure that the county's development will not deteriorate the mountains and hillsides surrounding the area.

The Act affects the types of buildings and the placement of those buildings on vineyard property. Also, the Act provides guidelines for placement of roadways and driveways (Chapter 30, Article 5, Mountain and Hillside Protection Ordinance: White County 2004, 17).

While the Mountain Protection Act applies only to White County, which is home to three wineries and eight vineyards, the language of the Act could be adopted by other mountain counties for development protection and guidelines.

## **5.5 The Landscape Architect's Role in the Environment for Sustainable Wine Tourism**

Landscape architecture is one of the professions that can deal most effectively with issues of design in sensitive environment. Human impact on the landscape can influence the structure and processes of landscape patterns, which in turn influence land development. Ecological

systems function in tandem and reliance with other ecological systems. The field of landscape ecology incorporates human presence in the ecosystem and how human needs must be considered in ecological planning and design. Nassauer states that “Every possible future landscape is the embodiment of some human choice. Science can inform us; it cannot lead us” (1997, p 5). Human activities must be considered part of ecological systems. The engagement of citizens by design professionals is imperative to understanding and assuring that development decisions are made in a sensitive manner to landscape.

There is potential for detrimental development and design to take place given that North Georgia has many counties that do not have zoning ordinances to check development and growth. Many key stakeholders both in the wine industry and supporting businesses have a vested interest in the economic success of this emerging wine industry. Because the region is considered to be emerging in the wine tourism development cycle, experts in mountain tourism, ecologists, landscape architects and planners must ensure that solid decision making take place in all realms of wine tourism development (Dodd and Beverland 2001).

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter the physical environment has been discussed in relation to sustainable wine tourism.

Broad concepts such as biodiversity of the South Appalachian Mountains, landscape ecology and visual landscape patterns in the Blue Ridge Mountains, sustainable viticulture, the White County

Mountain Act, and the landscape architect's role in development has been explained as having an impact on the environment of the wine industry.

Economically, sensitivity to landscape patterns can reduce costs in the planning and analysis stages of design by preventing ecological damages prior to development rather than causing restoration at a later stage. According to Ahern and Leitao, professors in landscape architecture at the University of Massachusetts, "The best form of mitigation is avoidance through proper site [analysis procedures] and design" (Botequilha Leitão and Ahern 2002, 79). If wine tourism is to continue to develop, as forecasted by Watts and the University of Georgia (2008) it is essential that the host environment be developed responsibly. Sustaining the landscape that surrounds the northern wine region requires a deep understanding of all the ecological processes in the area to assure a proper and dynamic land mosaic that will withstand pressure of change over time. The involvement of all key professionals and stakeholders in the wine region should be included for proper decision-making and implementation to prevent future problems, policies should be proactive, not reactive, regarding stewardship of the land.

The landscape itself could be described as the main character in the sustainable wine tourism trio of community, economy and environment, and one could argue that wine tourism relies on this bucolic setting for success. Sustainable wine tourism can be used as a framework to act with sensitivity to the surrounding environment for many generations to come.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

#### 6.1 Conclusion

The primary goal of the thesis is to identify the unique qualities of the North Georgia wine country and examine the issues for sustainable wine tourism in the region. As well, the thesis opens discussions regarding sensitive planning and design methods if wine tourism development continues. The role of sustainable wine tourism in the community, the economy and the environment is examined. It is hypothesized that three goals of sustainable wine tourism will commission the region's success. To achieve this accomplishment, the thesis takes into account that multiple professionals such as planners, experts in tourism, landscape architects and key stakeholders from the community should all be involved in discussions surrounding wine tourism development in North Georgia.

Apropos to the discussion of sustainable wine tourism in a regional setting is the inclusion of landscape architecture and its practice for honing sense of place through design and perception. As collaborators in tourism development, landscape architects can insure that details of a specific community are not overlooked simply for the sake of commerce. The landscape architect is especially crucial to the success of this emerging industry by offering a clear aesthetic vision to guide development, helping to preserve and foster a sense of place.

As stated in chapter two, the North Georgia wine region is an emerging wine region falling between the stages of winery establishment and winery recognition (Dodd and Beverland, 2001). As the region gains popularity, it can be hypothesized that with greater recognition, there will be greater numbers of people who will want to experience the uniqueness of the Georgia wine landscape and product. Agritourism and, therefore, wine tourism development in general, is recognized as important in sustaining the communities, the physical environment, and the rural character of North Georgia.

Because wine is crafted to express local character, it emphasizes the uniqueness of place. No more would a vintner in North Georgia aim for his or her wine to taste like that of another vintner than would one small town strive to replicate the aesthetic of another small town. Tourists seek unique experiences. An authentic, honest aesthetic should be preserved that conveys a distinct regional feeling of the Appalachians and the South. Summed up best by Martha Ezzard of Tiger Mountain Winery, “We are not California. We are something different.”

In chapter three, the discussion of including community in sustainable wine tourism development showed that there has been great success in acceptance of a wine industry in small communities if the local citizens are included in the early stages of the planning process. The region where wineries are located, the wine makers, the people of the small towns, the supporting businesses, and various professionals should all be involved in the tourism development process. Landscape architect Randy Hester has done much work with small

communities and points out that identifying structures and places is “particularly [helpful] in reconciling tourism with existing community mores and rituals...[It is an] important mechanism for any neighborhood or city in rapid transition that wishes to maintain valued life-styles and places...[It is] essential to a community's healthy survival” (Hester 1985, 21).

Chapter four explains the role of the economy in relation to sustainable wine tourism. Tourism expert Stephen McCool (McCool, 2008) emphasizes the strong correlation between the economy and community in tourism development. Wine tourism development, if it is to be sustainable and profitable for the community, must be negotiated in a collaborative planning process. Antrop further defines the economic aspect of sustainable tourism to include natural capital as part of the framework in that a region’s natural resources are essentially what give life to most tourism sectors. North Georgia is a small wine region. Keeping a wine region small in scale has benefits for the natural capital that Antrop discusses (Antrop, 2006).

Chapter four also discussed the importance of a well-managed wine route as critical for success in sustainable wine tourism. An established route sustains the economic and social basis of a region, and promotes the sale of local merchandise. Additionally, well-placed signage leads the tourist to the winery with ease. Signage alone is an excellent marketing tool; it communicates a positive experience and is critically important for a wine region such as North Georgia in establishing its unique identity.

Because the North Georgia wine region is rural, it lacks a diversified economic base. As Bernard Lane pointed out, for a viable rural economy, communities cannot overemphasize one

aspect of their region, and focusing on environmental preservation alone is not a realistic approach for longevity of that community (Lane, 1994). Rural tourism must also incorporate the culture and community character of an area in order to remain viable in the industry. For a balanced and varied rural economy, all these qualifications must be taken into account when considering development by key decision makers and community stakeholders.

Chapter five discusses the role of the physical environment in relation to sustainable wine tourism. The entire Blue Ridge Mountain range in Georgia could act as the primary attractant of sustainable wine tourism. Because of the region's beauty, sustainable development and agricultural practices are critical.

Landscape ecology illustrates how the landscape pattern of the vineyard fits into the existing landscape pattern of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Aesthetically, the vineyard does not distract from the Blue Ridge Mountain landscape but complements the visual aspect of the region. In addition to landscape ecology, sustainable viticulture and the White County Mountain Protection Act were explained as part of the 'whole' when it comes to the North Georgia wine region.

Because all types of tourism affect the surrounding culture, wine tourism in North Georgia has the potential to educate the community as well as the tourist. It is a choice, however, how a community wishes that educational message to be conveyed. The North Georgia wine region is ripe for discussion regarding tourism development, which should be under the leadership of experts and community members. It is this asset, the citizen's viewpoint,



which is invaluable in the planning and design process of tourism development because of the ability of local residents to reveal “Sacred Structure.”

There is large responsibility that accompanies wine tourism planning and development. More research is needed on successful as well as unsuccessful wine tourism development before regional planning occurs and before any changes or actions are implemented. Poor landuse decisions can wreak havoc on an ecosystem, are often irreversible, and can fragment and ultimately damage the character of place and community.

North Georgia produces a distinctive local product of wine, unlike that of anywhere else in the world. The goal is to sustain that product via the environment that supports it through proper planning and cooperation with the communities and local businesses. In North Georgia, growing wine grapes is new but shows promise as a magnet for tourism that can serve as one means to preserve the rural landscape.

## **6.2 Future Research**

Analysis of sustainable wine tourism and its application to the wine landscape in North Georgia required a break-down of the three goals delineated for sustainable wine tourism to be successful. Further, research supports application of the principles of landscape ecology to assess landscape patterns and the functions of an ecosystem. To date, landscape ecology has not been applied to wine tourism development but has been written about extensively, at least in theory, in regard to its usefulness to the field of regional planning. As an initial step towards achieving sustainable wine tourism in North Georgia, a regional planning meeting or a design

charrette would be beneficial to identify concerns surrounding tourism development for the area. The importance of identifying concerns regarding economic, environmental and community issues is paramount for the success of the emerging wine region. Ideally, this meeting would include those stakeholders mentioned throughout the thesis such as mountain tourism experts, regional planning officials, the winegrowers of North Georgia, local business owners, citizens of the community, landscape architects, as well as other design professionals and ecologists.

In addition to a regional planning meeting, more interviews are needed in order to assess the views of the wine tourist. As well, interviews with members of the mountain communities would be extremely beneficial to understanding a local perspective regarding wine tourism development in North Georgia. Landuse perceptions vary accordingly to an individual's experience. Understanding the values underlying belief systems can only assist planners and landscape architects in development decisions that are socially responsible and supportive to the aesthetic of the regional landscape.

Finally, the role of the state of Georgia, in particular the Department of Agriculture, could be enhanced, not only for North Georgia, but for the entire state's wine industry. Support from an educational and scientific aspect, such as having a state viticulturist, would benefit the farm wineries horticulturally and could also help to build a stronger camaraderie amongst the growers. An example of having one governing body for the wine industry was detailed by Wargenau and Che in their discussion of the Southwest Michigan wineries (2006). One

governing body would take pressure off the growers and allow them to concentrate on the cultivation and wine-making tasks of their chosen profession. Increasing support to the vintners will in turn lend to sustainability of rural communities. In addition, studies showing the economic impact of agritourism in Georgia would supply beneficial information for future landuse.

It is up to the citizens of the North Georgia region, the wine industry and those on the periphery to decide how they want to proceed in terms of tourism growth and how growth will impact their surrounding landscapes. It is the author's belief that the interested parties of the North Georgia mountain region should embrace the principles of sustainability in wine tourism.

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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – NORTH GEORGIA VINTNERS AND WINE GRAPE GROWERS

1. Do you feel there is a sense of community amongst the growers/winemakers in Northeast Georgia?
2. Do you think the wine trail/route that currently exists helps your customers find you location? Is signage adequate for this?
3. Do you currently collaborate with other key stakeholders to enhance the wine tourist experience? For example, local food growers, restaurants, lodging, outdoor activities?
4. Currently, how do you gauge what your customer base is looking for in a Georgia wine experience? What are some of the items you have discovered?
5. In your mind, what would encompass a sense of place in regards to Georgia wine country and the landscapes that surround them?
6. Does the concept of agritourism appeal to you? (working on in the vineyards, classes to educate the public etc.)
7. What is your opinion on the idea of developing wine regions/appellations for Georgia as a way of branding there by adding to a sense of place, a uniqueness of place?
8. How big a role do you think your winery plays in contributing the local economy? In what way does it contribute? Jobs? Tourism?
9. In regards to development and land protection/preservation – do you feel an agricultural reserve; similar to Napa Valley would benefit growers in this region? Do you think the recent passage of the Mountain Protection Act in White Co. could be a guideline for other northeast counties?
10. Can you elaborate about your thoughts about the decision by the Wine Growers Association to only allow those that grow vinifera belong to the association?

11. Do you feel supported by the DOT, Dept of Ag. Dept of Tourism, the governor in your efforts as specialty crop producers that lures a lot of the people to the region?
12. How do you think this area of Georgia could enhance the tourist experience and allow for a larger number of visitors each year? What do you see would need to happen for this to be so?

## APPENDIX B

### WINE GRAPES GROWN IN NORTH GEORGIA

Black Beauty	Nesbit
Blanc du Bois	Niagara
Cabernet Franc	Noble
Cabernet Sauvignon	Norton
Carlos	Pam
Chambourcin	Petite Verdot
Chardonnay	Pinot Gris
Chardonnay	Pinot Noir
Corot Noir	Primitivo
Cowart	Riesling
Creek	Roussanne
Cynthiana	Sangiovese
Fry	Sauvignon Blanc
Gewurztraminer	Seyval Blanc
Granny Val	Syrah
Higgins	Tannat
Magnolia	Touriga Nacional
Malbec	Trebbiano
Marsanne	Vidal Blanc
Merlot	Villard Noir
Black Beauty	Viognier

Table courtesy of Watts and University of Georgia 2009.