

ONTARIO WINE
APPELLATION AUTHORITY



Ontario's wine
APPELLATIONS



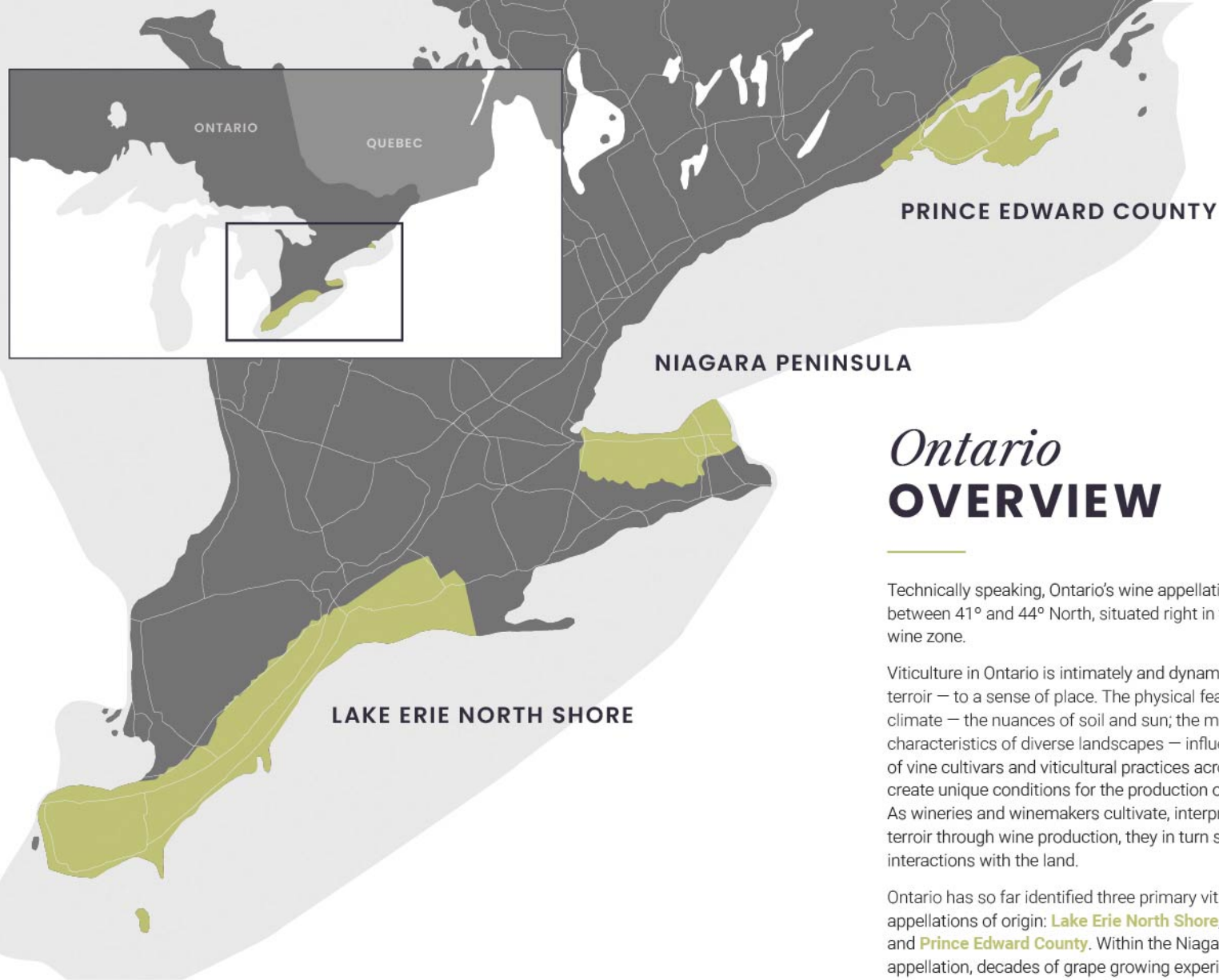
NOTE

Production statistics are based on the year April 1 2024 to March 31 2025. Statistics are updated annually on our website at www.vqaontario.ca.

Annual Production by geographical area includes VQA-certified wines that carry an appellation included in that geographical area. For example, Niagara Escarpment includes all wines that carry the following appellations: Niagara Escarpment, Beamsville Bench, Twenty Mile Bench, Short Hills Bench, St. David's Bench.

Common Varietals listed are the top varieties across all production (single varietals and blends) for each appellation.

For more information please email us at info@vqaontario.ca



NOTABLE FEATURES

Stretching along the centre of the world's cool-climate wine belt, Ontario appellations share similar growing season characteristics with some of the most recognized and respected wine-growing regions of the world.

Ontario OVERVIEW

Technically speaking, Ontario's wine appellations are located between 41° and 44° North, situated right in the world's fine wine zone.

Viticulture in Ontario is intimately and dynamically related to terroir — to a sense of place. The physical features of land and climate — the nuances of soil and sun; the minerality and taste characteristics of diverse landscapes — influence the choice of vine cultivars and viticultural practices across Ontario and create unique conditions for the production of grapes and wine. As wineries and winemakers cultivate, interpret and elaborate terroir through wine production, they in turn shape our tastes and interactions with the land.

Ontario has so far identified three primary viticultural areas or appellations of origin: **Lake Erie North Shore**, **Niagara Peninsula**, and **Prince Edward County**. Within the Niagara Peninsula appellation, decades of grape growing experience and extensive geographical research has identified ten distinct growing areas. These sub- appellations include areas on the plains close to Lake Ontario and the benchlands of the Niagara Escarpment.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024-2025):
3,123,379 (9L cases)

NUMBER OF WINERIES: 194

NUMBER OF VQA WINES: 2,290

NOTABLE FEATURES

One of the deepest of the Great Lakes, Lake Ontario's water mass moderates air temperatures year-round. In concert with the appellation's second notable feature, the Niagara Escarpment, this creates the perfect climate to nurture grape vines.



Niagara Peninsula APPELLATION

DIVERSE TERROIR, SHELTERED SLOPES, LAKESIDE VINEYARDS, A WORLD OF CHARACTER IN ITS WINES

The Niagara Peninsula has the largest planted area of all viticultural areas in Canada. Situated at approximately 43°N latitude this diverse appellation is characterized by rich, fertile soils and unique meso climates, which provide ideal conditions for producing wine grapes with more complexity and intense flavour than in many warmer climates.

The classic cool-climate varieties such as Riesling, Chardonnay, Gamay Noir, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Franc flourish here. The region supports a diversity in viticulture, boasting over 46 thriving varieties across 13,600 acres. The Niagara Peninsula continues to shape an expanding premium wine industry in Canada, being home to approximately 55% of Ontario's VQA wineries.

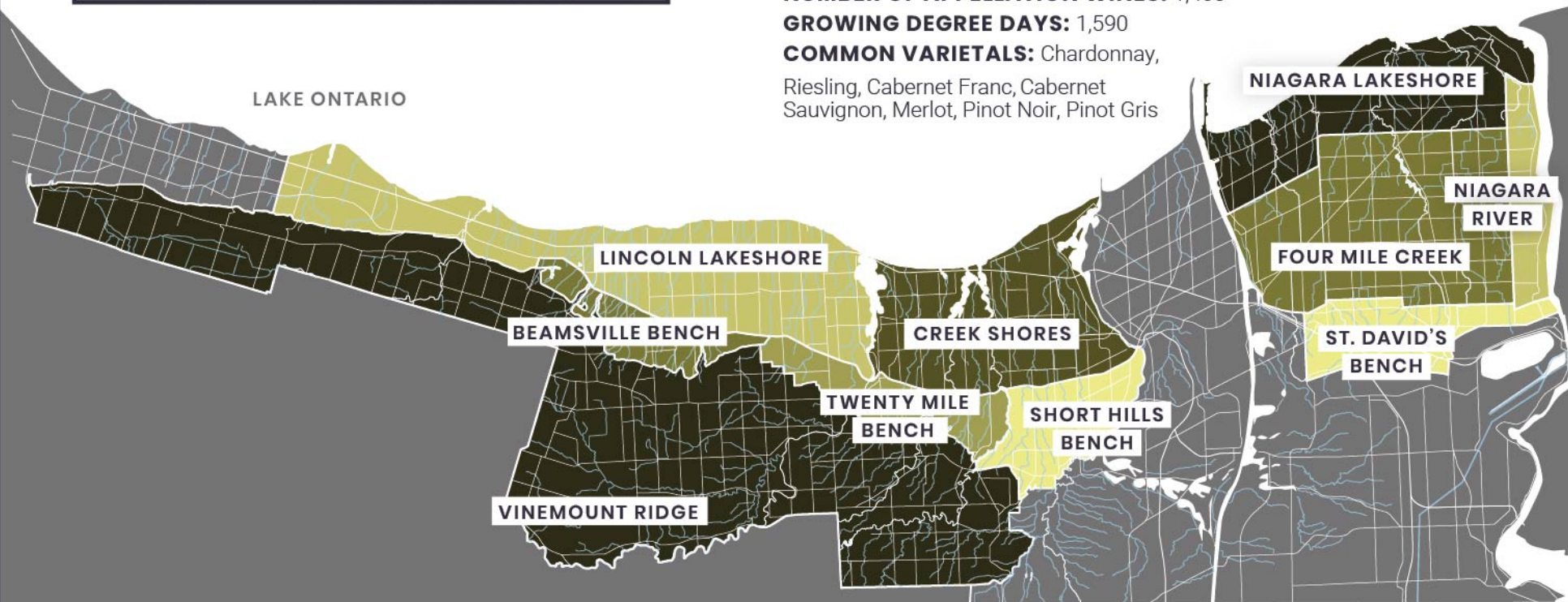
ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024-2025): 1,282,920 (9L cases)

NUMBER OF WINERIES: 105

NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES: 1,465

GROWING DEGREE DAYS: 1,590

COMMON VARIETALS: Chardonnay, Riesling, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris



NIAGARA PENINSULA

Niagara Escarpment **REGIONAL APPELLATION**

The Niagara Escarpment is one of two regional appellations within the Niagara Peninsula Appellation. Regional appellations are a combination of smaller appellations with similar character and winemaking experience. Representing the bench lands along the Niagara Escarpment, west of St. Catharines to Grimsby, this complex region encompasses three sub-appellations: Short Hills Bench, Twenty Mile Bench, and Beamsville Bench.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024-2025):

93,916 (9L cases)

NUMBER OF WINERIES: 25

NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES: 247

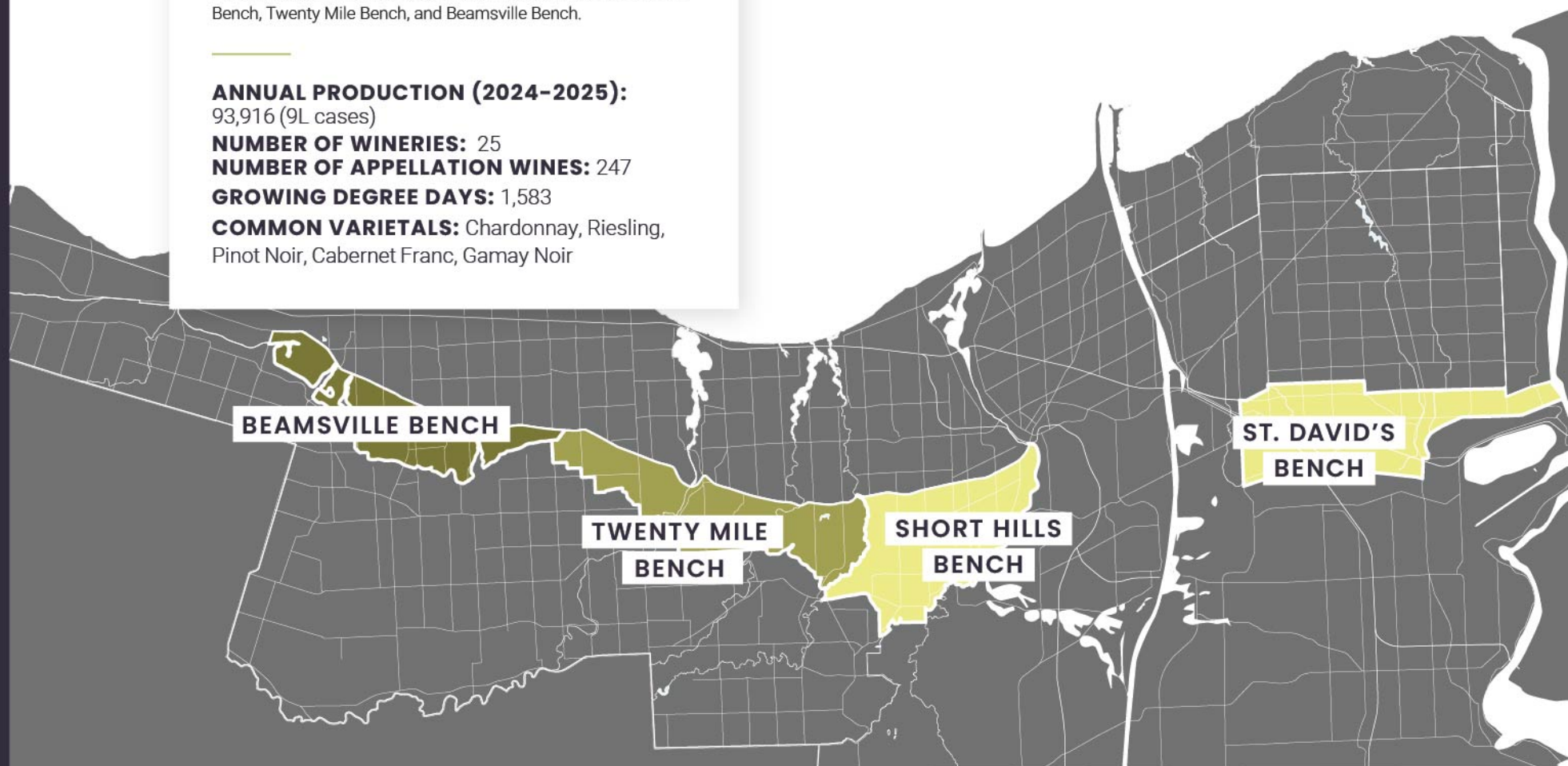
GROWING DEGREE DAYS: 1,583

COMMON VARIETALS: Chardonnay, Riesling,
Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc, Gamay Noir

NOTABLE FEATURES

Niagara Escarpment is recognized by UNESCO as a World Biosphere Reserve and has the most prominent topographic features of southern Ontario.

This regional appellation draws together the three appellations that share the fossil rich sedimentary soils and dramatic topography adjacent to the escarpment ridge. The Niagara Escarpment supports a vital ecosystem, with hundreds of unique species of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and flora, including 37 types of wild orchids.



NOTABLE FEATURES

The mineral rich soils and complex landscape of the Beamsville Bench provide ideal conditions for growing grapes. Sloping vineyards backed by the escarpment, moderating breezes and excellent drainage all contribute to the natural character of the wines from this appellation.

NIAGARA PENINSULA

Beamsville Bench SUB-APPELLATION

SLOPING BENCHLANDS, LIMESTONE ENRICHED SOILS, FRESH ELEGANT MINERALITY

The Beamsville Bench, running from the creek gully just west of Cherry Avenue to Park Road west of Beamsville, is the narrow plateau sloping gradually from the cliff of the Niagara Escarpment northwards to Regional Road 81, marking the bottom of the crescent-shaped Lake Iroquois Shore Bluff. To the west, the Bench rises into the moderate slopes of the Bell Terrace, where many of the area's vineyards are located, on steep slopes above deep, wooded ravines and on the sides of small ridges and slopes of the numerous streams that cut through the landscape. This sub-appellation reaps the benefits of the bench topography which provides the continuous air circulation that moderates temperature and results in consistent growing conditions. Soils are generally deep and well drained and numerous streams provide seasonal water supply.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024-2025):

59,574 (9L cases)

NUMBER OF WINERIES: 12

NUMBER OF APPELLATION WIN ES: 113

GROWING DEGREE DAYS: 1,588

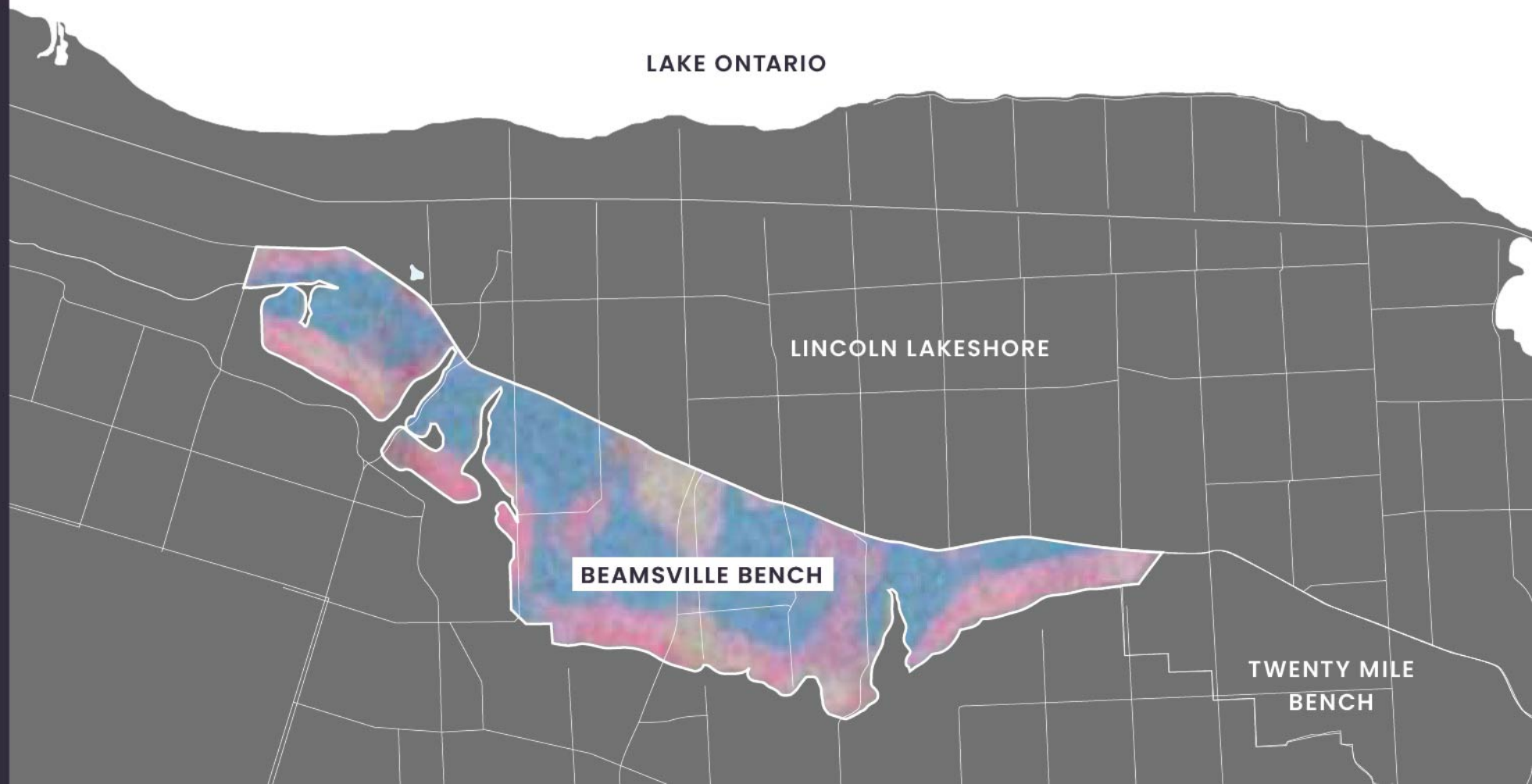
COMMON VARIETALS: Riesling, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir



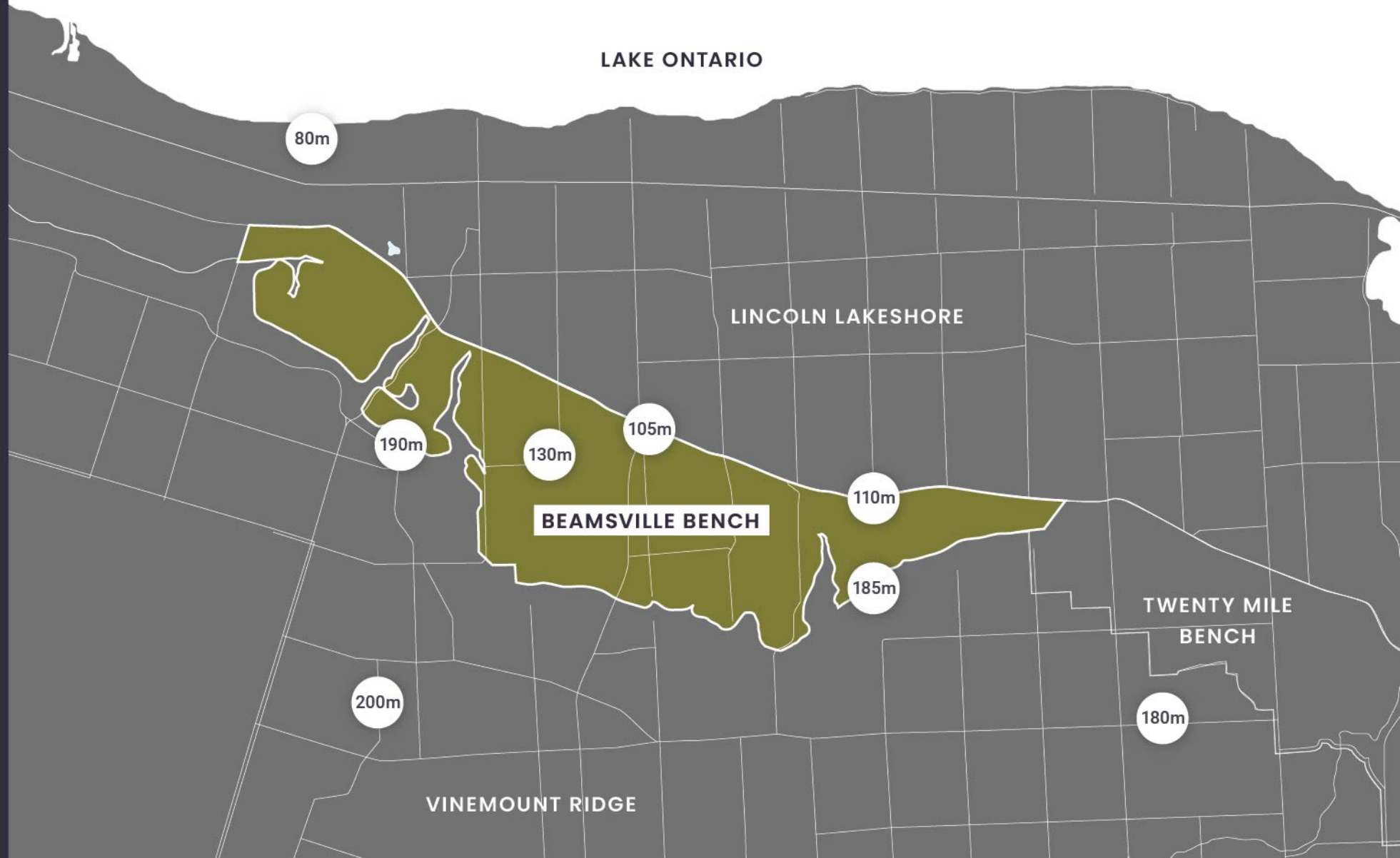
Beamsville Bench SOIL MAP

COMMON PROPERTIES OF SOIL MAP GROUPS

 Lacustrine silty clay	 Reddish-hued lacustrine Heavy clay	 Lacustrine silt loam	 Sandy or loamy sediments over lacustrine clays or loams
 Lacustrine heavy clay	 Clay loam till	 Lacustrine silty clay over clay loam till	 Lacustrine very fine sandy loam, loamy sand & sand
 Eolian sands, sometimes duned	 Variable alluvial deposit on floodplains	 Organic soils	 Misc. Natural land units
 Reddish-hued coarse sandy loam & gravelly sand	 Shallow soils over dolostone bedrock	 Reddish-hued silty clay over queenston shale bedrock	 Misc. Man-modified land units



Beamsville Bench **TOPOGRAPHY MAP**



NOTABLE FEATURES

With its relatively high elevation, and double bench formation, Twenty Mile Bench enjoys long periods of sun exposure during the summer and fall. Lake breezes pushing up against the Escarpment circulate the warm air and extend warm daytime temperatures into the evening, encouraging an even and continuous ripening process.

NIAGARA PENINSULA

Twenty Mile Bench SUB-APPELLATION

COMPLEX TOPOGRAPHY, DOUBLE BENCHES, DEEP SOILS, REFLECTIVE WINES

The Twenty Mile Bench stretches east to west from Fifteen Mile Creek to west of Cherry Avenue. Bisected by Twenty Mile Creek, it has a complex topography with a distinctive double bench formation west of Twenty Mile Creek, and short, varied slopes that roll to the brow of the escarpment. The sheltered north-facing slopes and the air circulation from Lake Ontario provide for year round temperature moderation, setting up an ideal growing season for quality grapes.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024–2025):

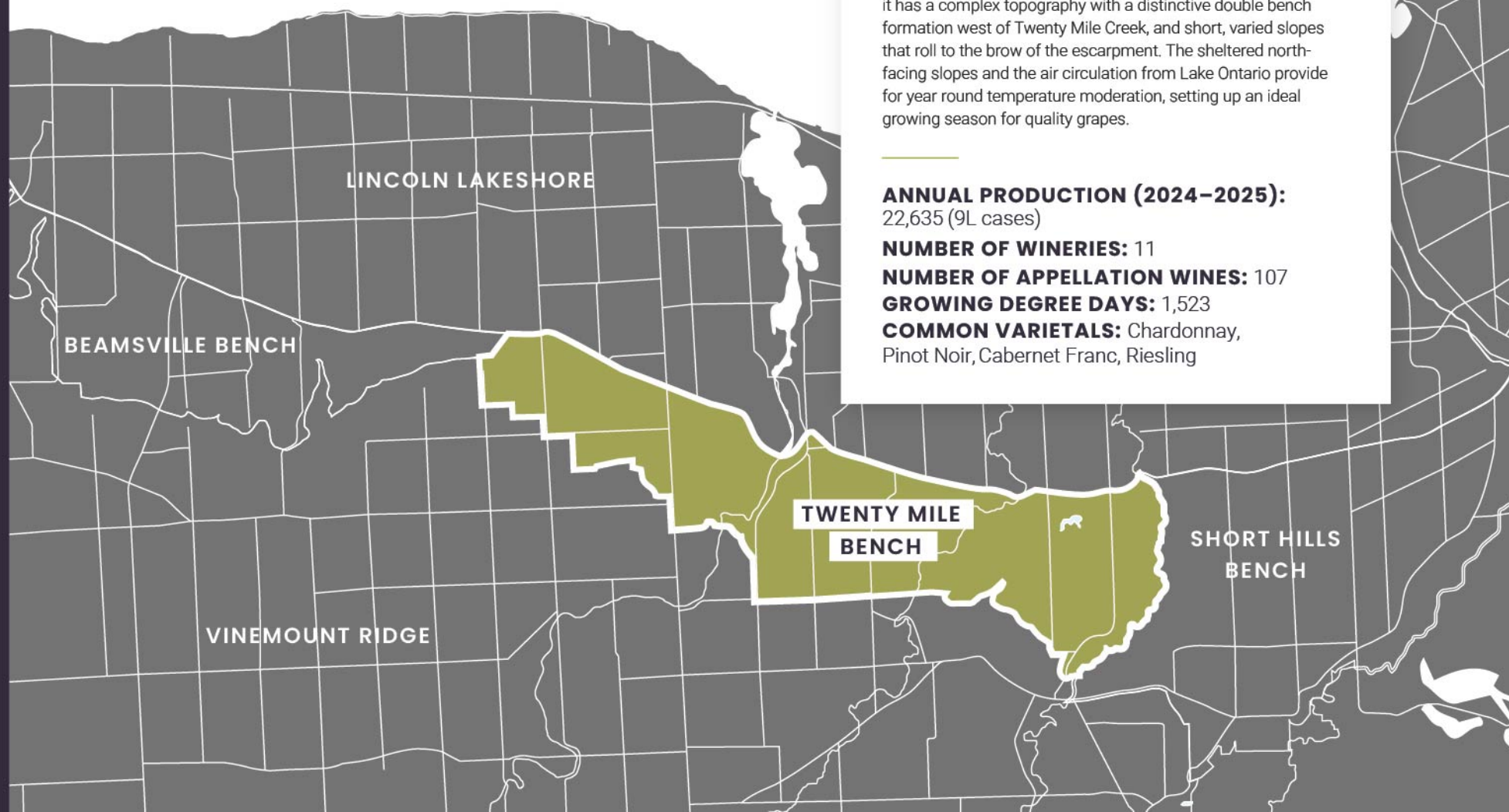
22,635 (9L cases)

NUMBER OF WINERIES: 11

NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES: 107

GROWING DEGREE DAYS: 1,523

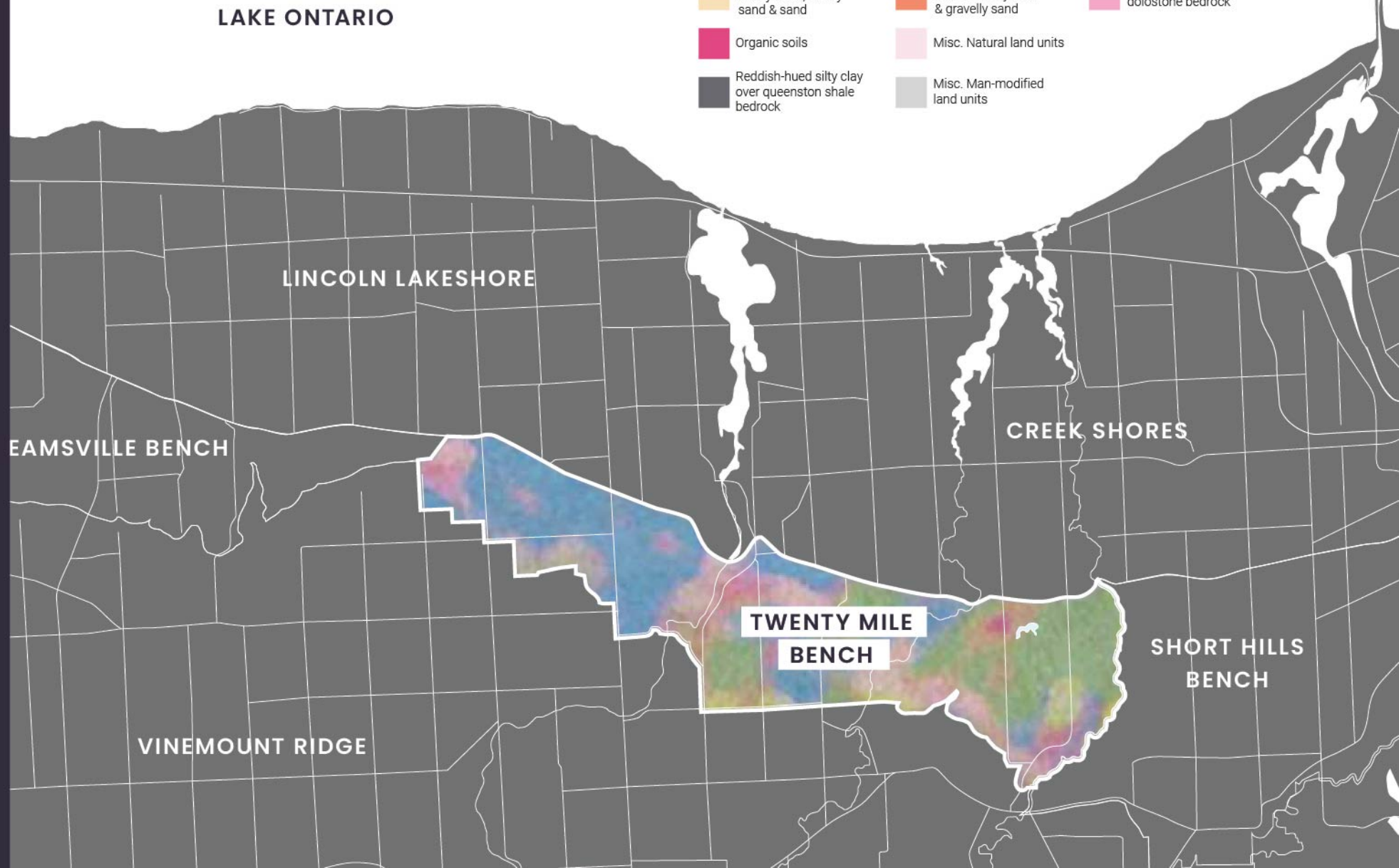
COMMON VARIETALS: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc, Riesling



Twenty Mile Bench SOIL MAP

COMMON PROPERTIES OF SOIL MAP GROUPS

 Lacustrine silty clay	 Reddish-hued lacustrine Heavy clay	 Lacustrine silt loam
 Lacustrine heavy clay	 Clay loam till	 Lacustrine silty clay over clay loam till
 Sandy or loamy sediments over lacustrine clays or loams	 Eolian sands, sometimes duned	 Variable alluvial deposit on floodplains
 Lacustrine very fine sandy loam, loamy sand & sand	 Reddish-hued coarse sandy loam & gravelly sand	 Shallow soils over dolostone bedrock
 Organic soils	 Misc. Natural land units	
 Reddish-hued silty clay over queenston shale bedrock	 Misc. Man-modified land units	

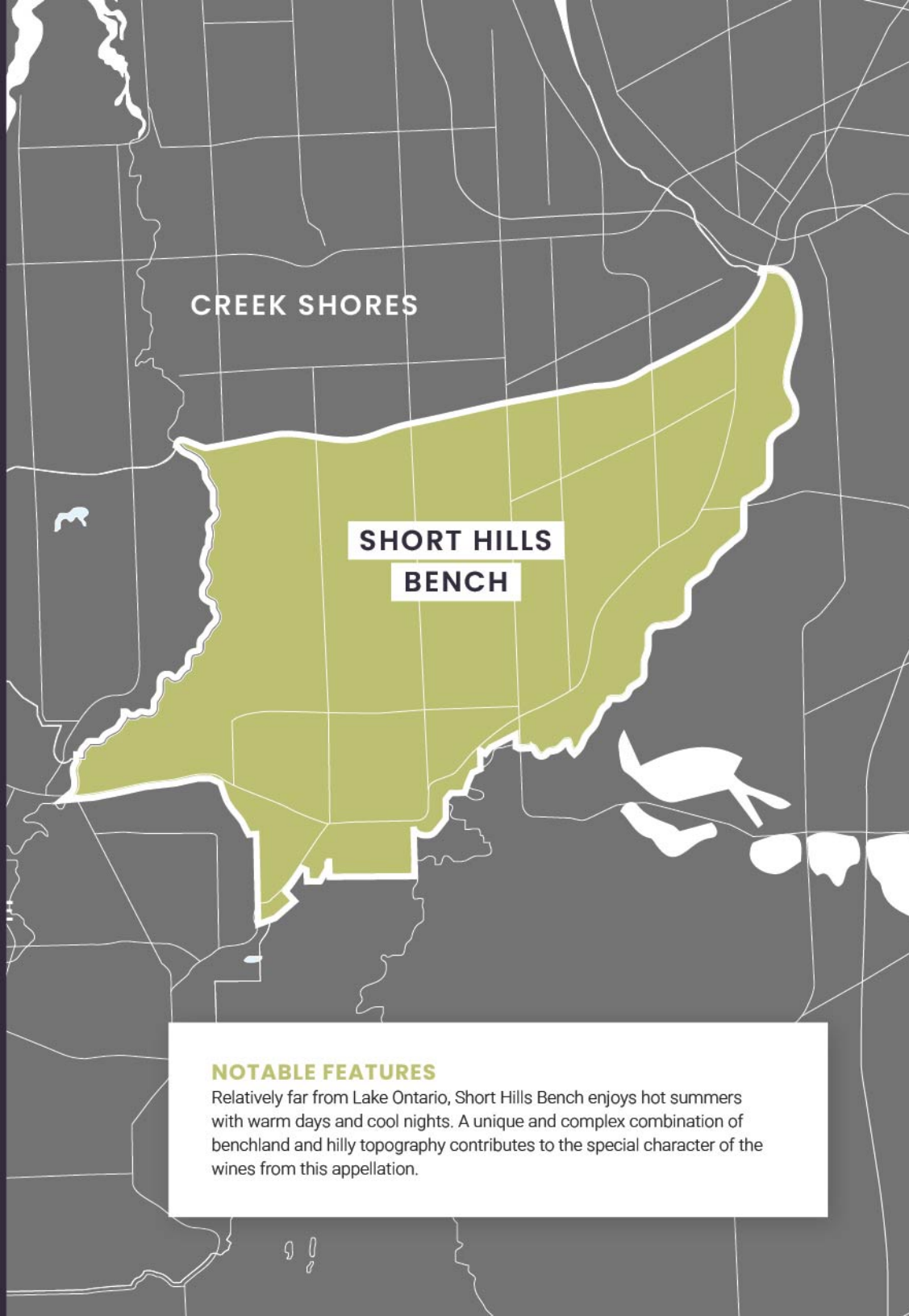


Twenty Mile Bench **TOPOGRAPHY MAP**

Ontario's Wine Appellations

ONTARIO WINE APPELLATION
AUTHORITY





CREEK SHORES

SHORT HILLS
BENCH

NOTABLE FEATURES

Relatively far from Lake Ontario, Short Hills Bench enjoys hot summers with warm days and cool nights. A unique and complex combination of benchland and hilly topography contributes to the special character of the wines from this appellation.

NIAGARA PENINSULA

Short Hills Bench SUB-APPELLATION

**WARM SUNNY DAYS, COOL NIGHTS,
COMPLEX SOILS, INTENSE GRAPE
FLAVOURS**

Short Hills Bench is the most easterly of the sub-appellations located within the Niagara Escarpment. It encompasses the land rising up from the plain of the peninsula (south of Regional Road 81) to the Escarpment Brow and is situated between Twelve Mile Creek and Fifteen Mile Creek. The undulating hills and valleys of the Short Hills, which rest on an ancient buried valley that once cut through the Niagara Escarpment and connected the basins of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, provide long gentle slopes with excellent drainage and sun exposure.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024-2025):
4,446 (9L cases)

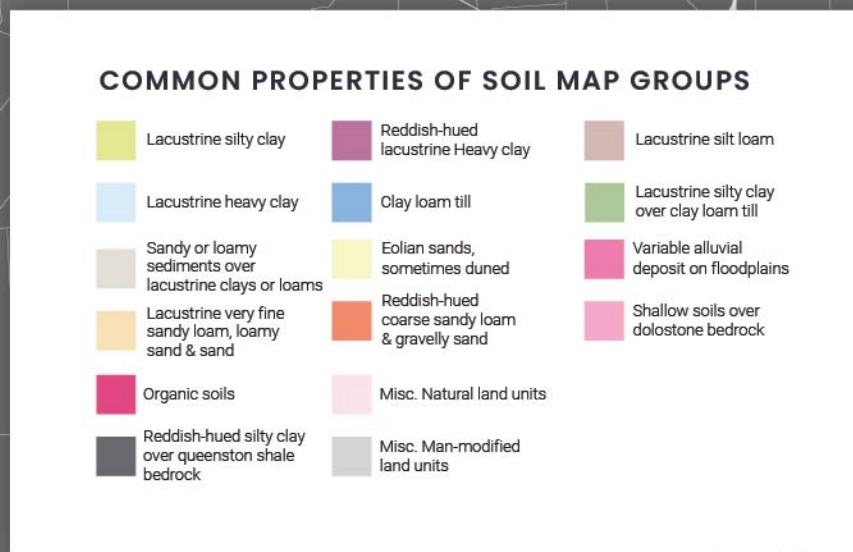
NUMBER OF WINERIES: 2

NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES: 9

GROWING DEGREE DAYS: 1,561

COMMON VARIETALS: Chardonnay,
Pinot Noir, Riesling

Short Hills Bench SOIL MAP



LINCOLN
LAKESHORE

CREEK SHORES

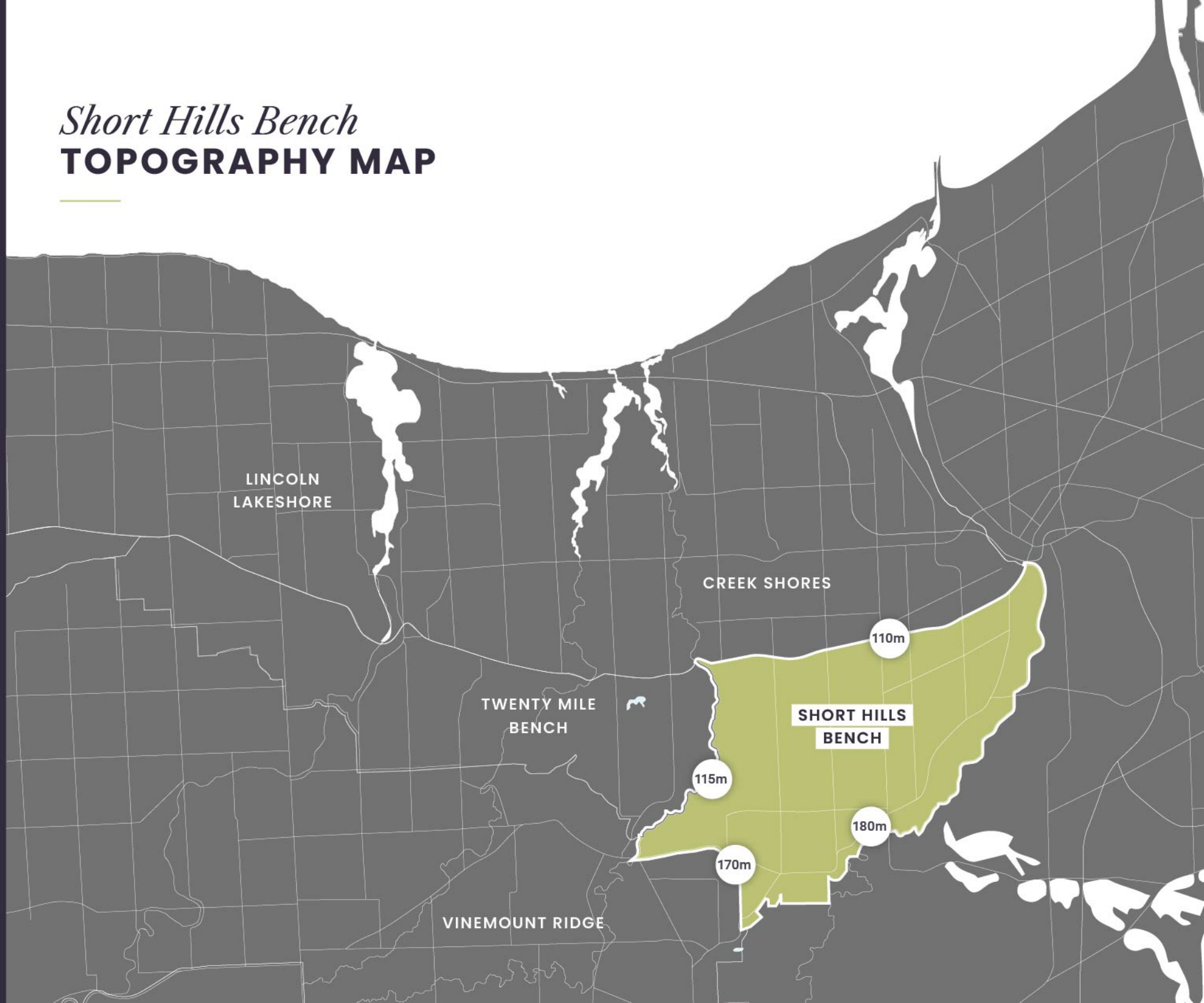
TWENTY MILE
BENCH

SHORT HILLS
BENCH

Short Hills Bench **TOPOGRAPHY MAP**

Ontario's Wine Appellations

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ONTARIO WINE

APPELLATION AUTHORITY



VQA is the starting point for every authentic wine of origin and quality in Ontario. The Ontario Wine Appellation Authority is the regulatory agency responsible for the integrity of local wine appellations, enforcing wine composition and labelling standards, and ensuring consumers have the information they need to make an informed choice when buying VQA certified wines.

Ontario Wine Appellation Authority

5775 Yonge St., Suite 1220

Toronto, ON M2M 4J1

VQAONTARIO.CA