

ONTARIO WINE
APPELLATION AUTHORITY



Ontario's wine
APPELLATIONS



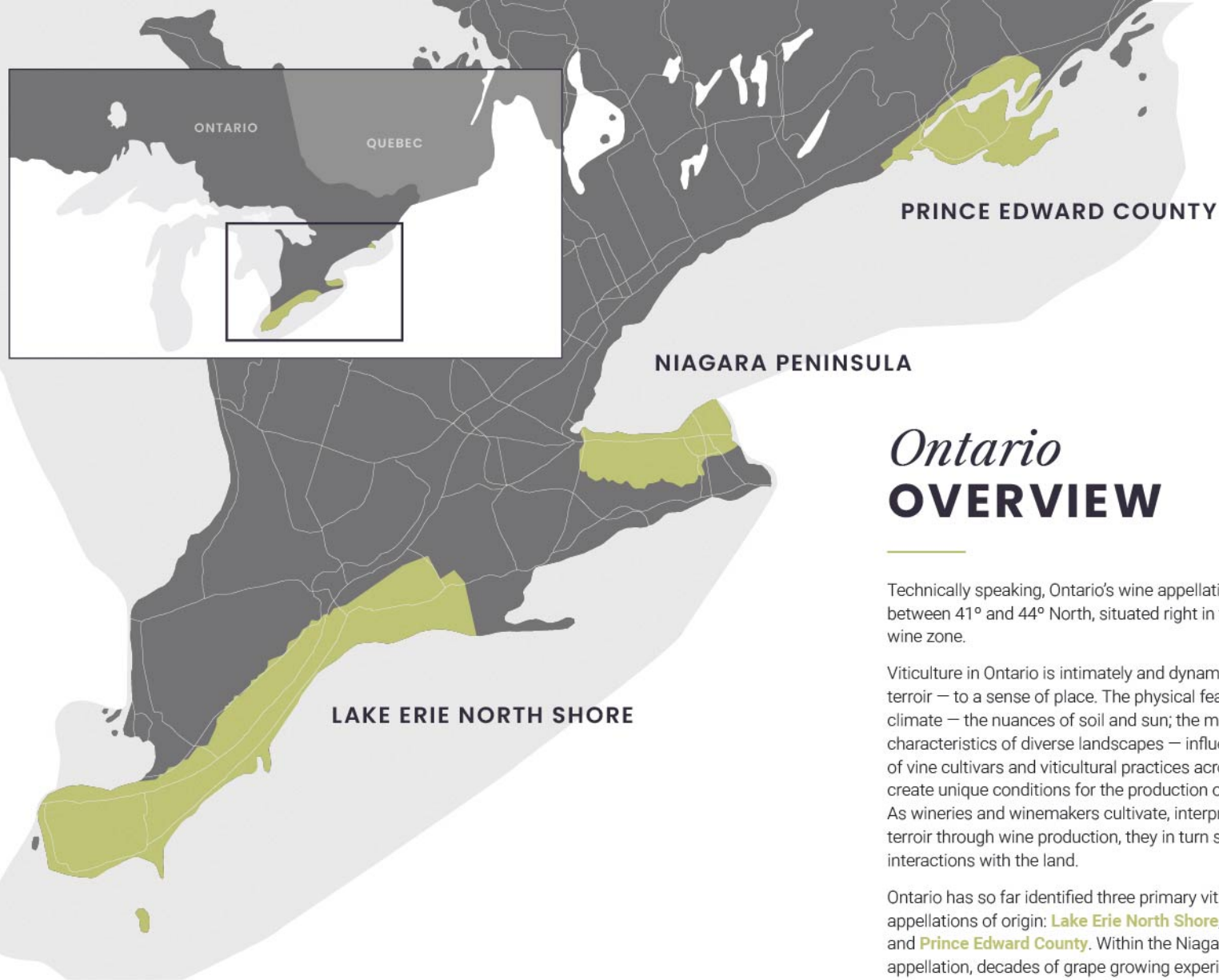
NOTE

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.

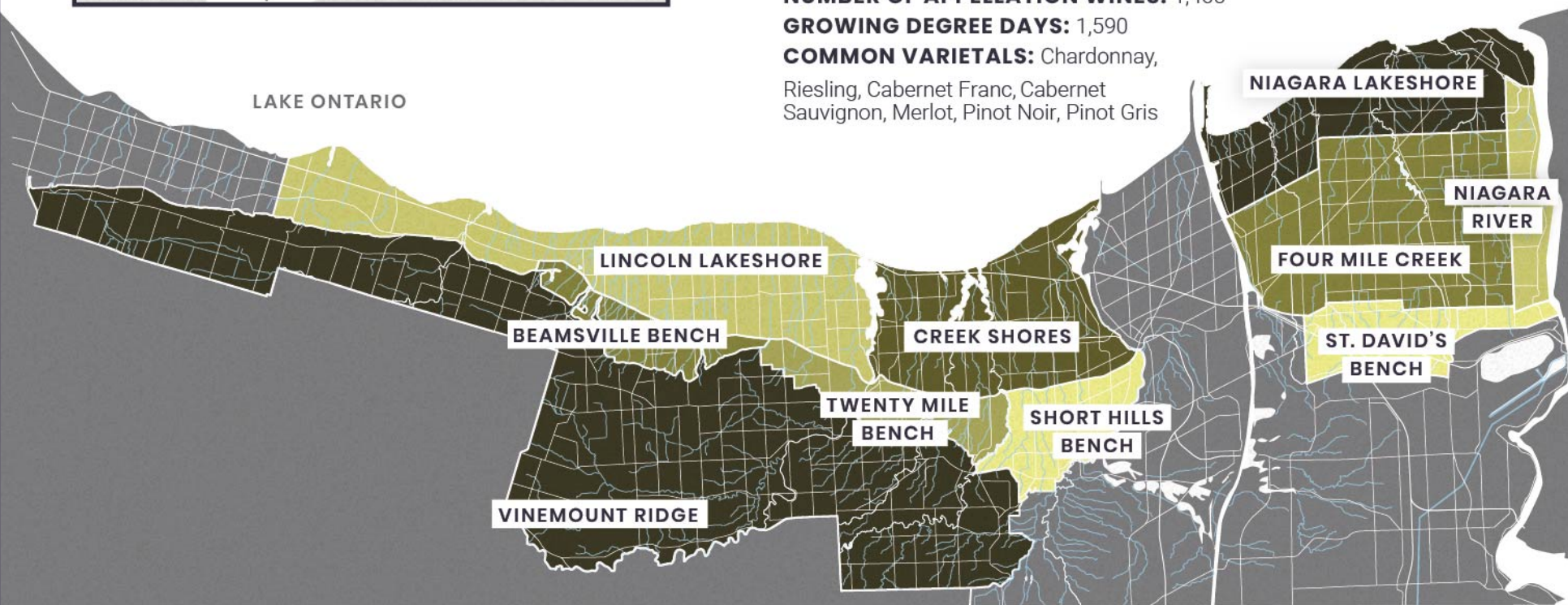
ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024-2025): 1,282,920 (9L cases)

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-on-the-Lake
**REGIONAL
APPELLATION**

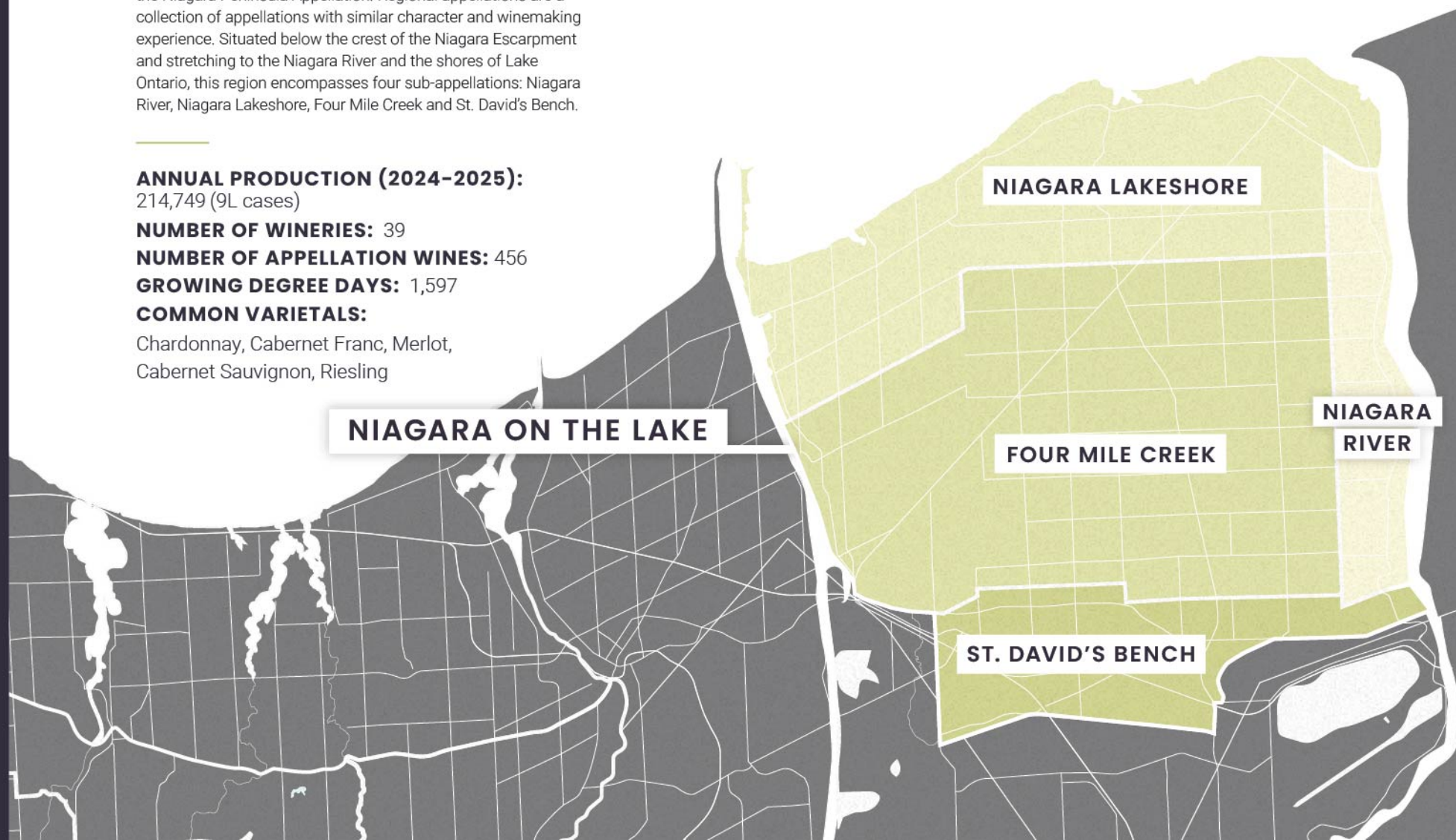
Niagara-on-the-Lake is one of two regional appellations within the Niagara Peninsula Appellation. Regional appellations are a collection of appellations with similar character and winemaking experience. Situated below the crest of the Niagara Escarpment and stretching to the Niagara River and the shores of Lake Ontario, this region encompasses four sub-appellations: Niagara River, Niagara Lakeshore, Four Mile Creek and St. David's Bench.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024-2025):

214,749 (9L cases)

NUMBER OF WINERIES: 39**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 456**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,597**COMMON VARIETALS:**Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Merlot,
Cabernet Sauvignon, Riesling**NOTABLE FEATURES**

Niagara-on-the-Lake is the heart of Ontario wine culture and a world-renowned wine country destination. The region is becoming well known for its annual celebrations of terroir-focused foods and wines.



NIAGARA PENINSULA

Niagara Lakeshore
SUB-APPELLATION**DOMINANT INFLUENCE OF LAKE ONTARIO,
LONG CONSISTENT GROWING SEASON FOR
FLAVOUR DEVELOPMENT**

Niagara Lakeshore follows the shoreline of Lake Ontario from the Welland Canal east to the Niagara River and inland for approximately 3 kilometres. The growing season is long, extending to late October, and supports the production of mature, full bodied wines, notably some later ripening varieties. The primary influence on this sub-appellation is the proximity of the Lake and its year round moderation of temperatures.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024-2025):
14,424 (9L cases)

NUMBER OF WINERIES: 12

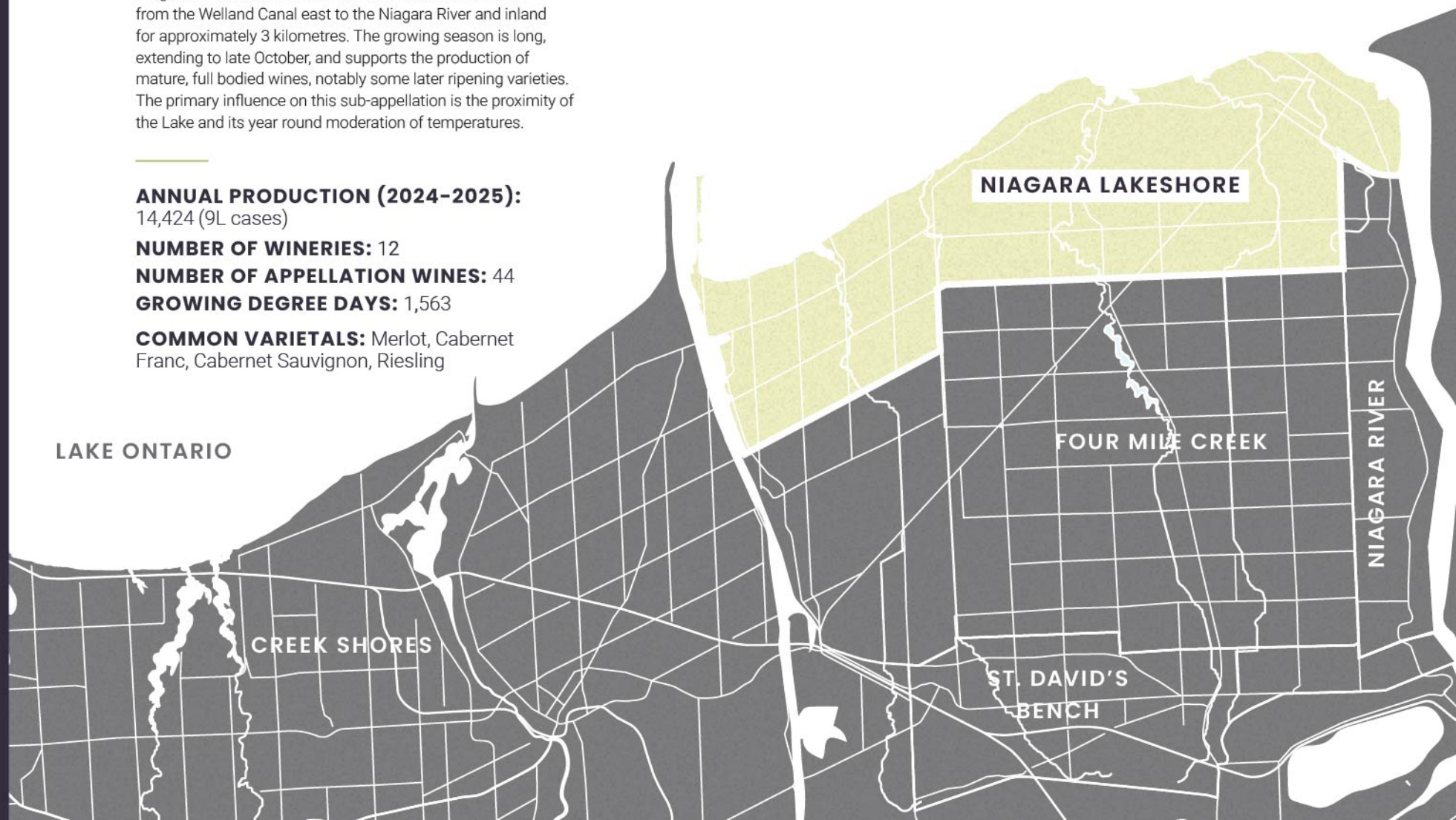
NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES: 44

GROWING DEGREE DAYS: 1,563

COMMON VARIETALS: Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Riesling

NOTABLE FEATURES

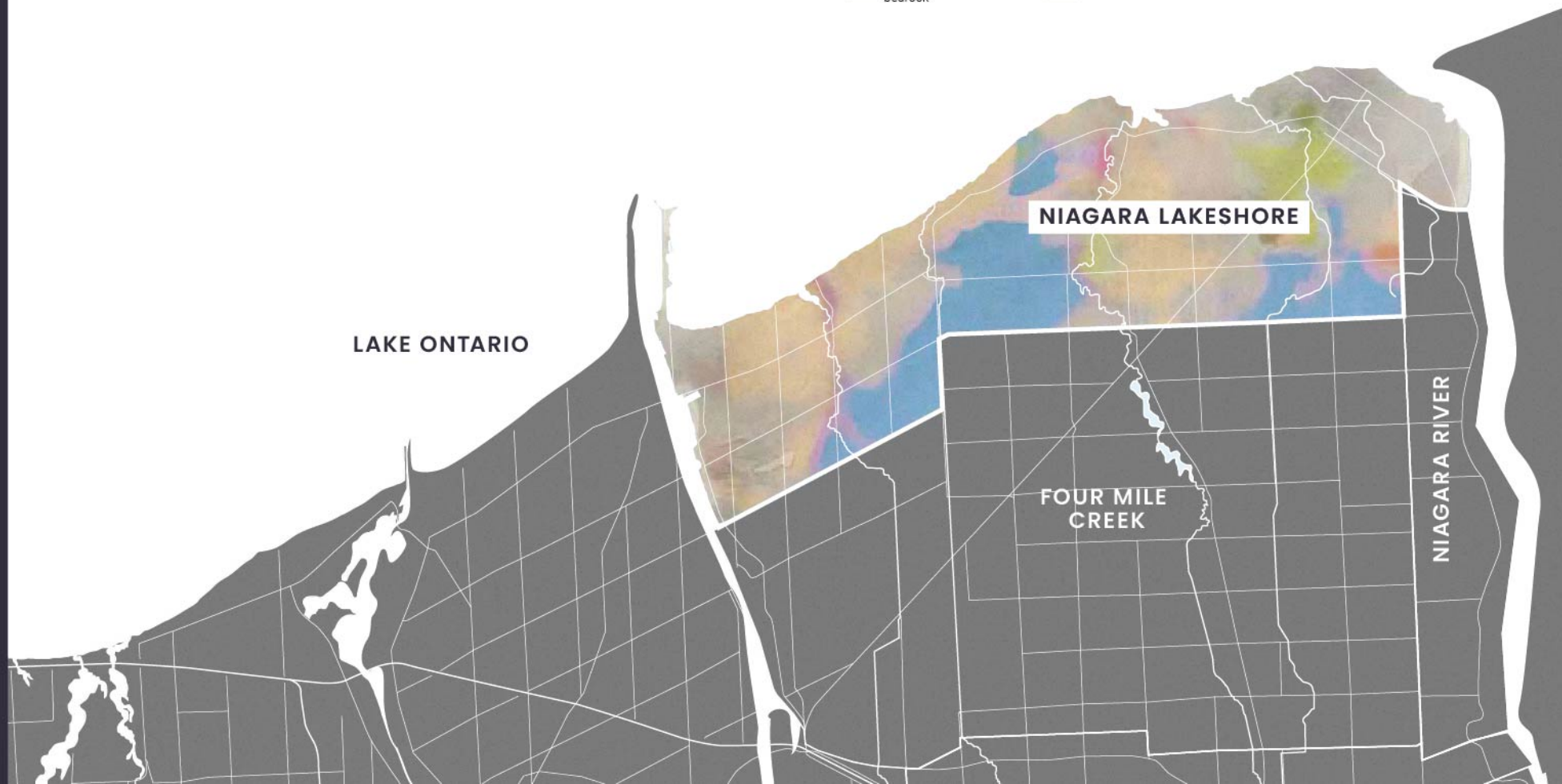
Lake Ontario has a substantial and immediate effect in moderating temperatures along the Niagara Lakeshore. In the summer, cooler lake air replaces rising warm air above the land, reducing daytime temperatures, while at night the reverse effect, with relatively warmer lake air replacing low-lying cool air to keep the air temperatures from falling.



Niagara Lakeshore SOIL MAP

COMMON PROPERTIES OF SOIL MAP GROUPS

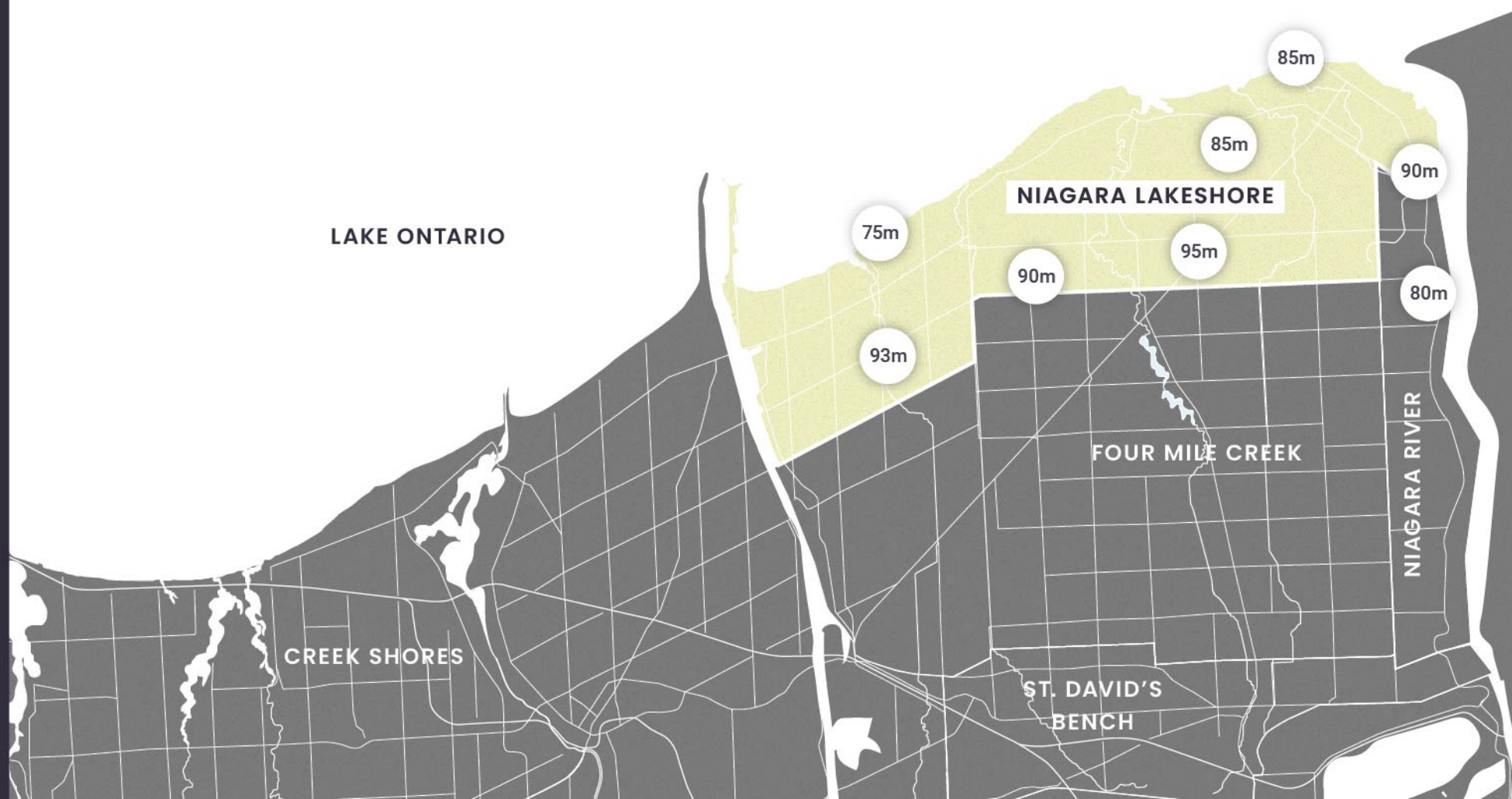
 Lacustrine silty clay	 Reddish-hued lacustrine Heavy clay	 Lacustrine silt loam
 Lacustrine heavy clay	 Clay loam till	 Lacustrine silty clay over clay loam till
 Sandy or loamy sediments over lacustrine clays or loams	 Eolian sands, sometimes duned	 Variable alluvial deposit on floodplains
 Lacustrine 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	



Niagara Lakeshore **TOPOGRAPHY MAP**

Ontario's Wine Appellations

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NIAGARA PENINSULA

Niagara River SUB-APPELLATION

EASTERLY FACING, GENTLE SLOPES, LONG GROWING SEASON MODERATED BY THE NIAGARA RIVER

The Niagara River sub-appellation is a small strip of land running along the river from John Street to Dee Road and inland approximately one kilometre. Soils in the area are primarily stratified fine sands, providing natural drainage and strong encouragement for vines to develop deep root penetration. The large and fast flowing Niagara River creates convectional currents that draw cooler air into the gorge, moderating vineyard temperatures and extending the growing season.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024-2025):

22,973 (9L cases)

NUMBER OF WINERIES: 5

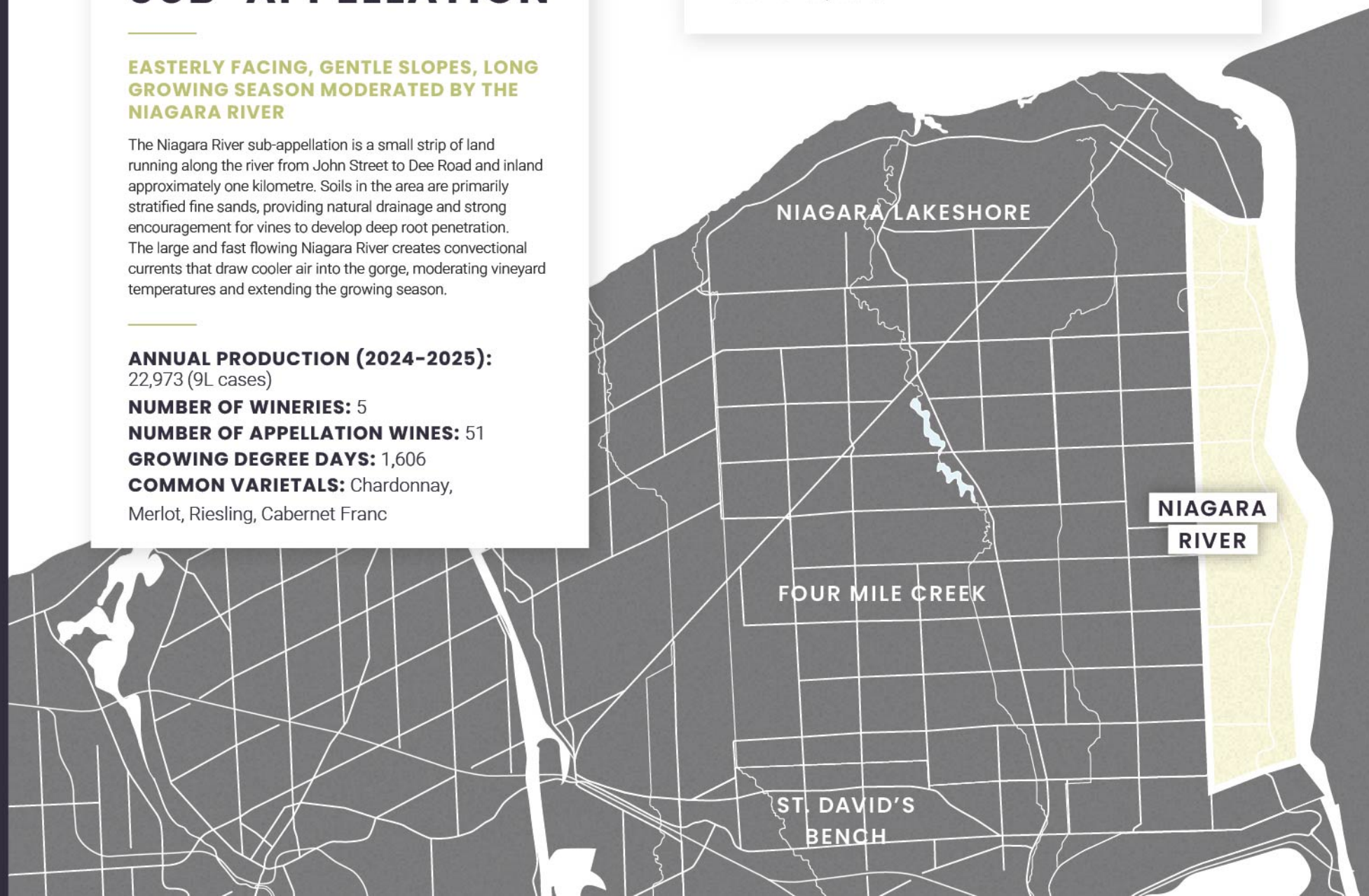
NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES: 51

GROWING DEGREE DAYS: 1,606

COMMON VARIETALS: Chardonnay,
Merlot, Riesling, Cabernet Franc

NOTABLE FEATURES

The Niagara River sub-appellation is characterized by east facing slopes and the effect of the mighty Niagara River. Together they influence the microclimate and play an important role in developing this appellation's distinct and crisp wines.



Niagara River SOIL MAP

COMMON PROPERTIES OF SOIL MAP GROUPS

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

LAKE ONTARIO

NIAGARA LAKESHORE

NIAGARA
RIVER

FOUR MILE CREEK

CREEK SHORES

Niagara River **TOPOGRAPHY MAP**

Ontario's Wine Appellations

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NIAGARA PENINSULA

Four Mile Creek SUB-APPELLATION

EXPANSIVE VINEYARDS, ABUNDANT FULL SUNLIGHT, WARM INTENSE GROWING CONDITIONS

Four Mile Creek is the fertile plain that makes up central Niagara-on-the-Lake. It lies slightly inland from the lake and below the bench of the Niagara Escarpment, providing for warm days and cool nights during the growing season. The relatively flat topography leads to abundant exposure to sunshine and warm days giving growers the opportunity to grow many varieties.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024-2025):
30,446 (9L cases)

NUMBER OF WINERIES: 14

NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES: 111

GROWING DEGREE DAYS: 1,582

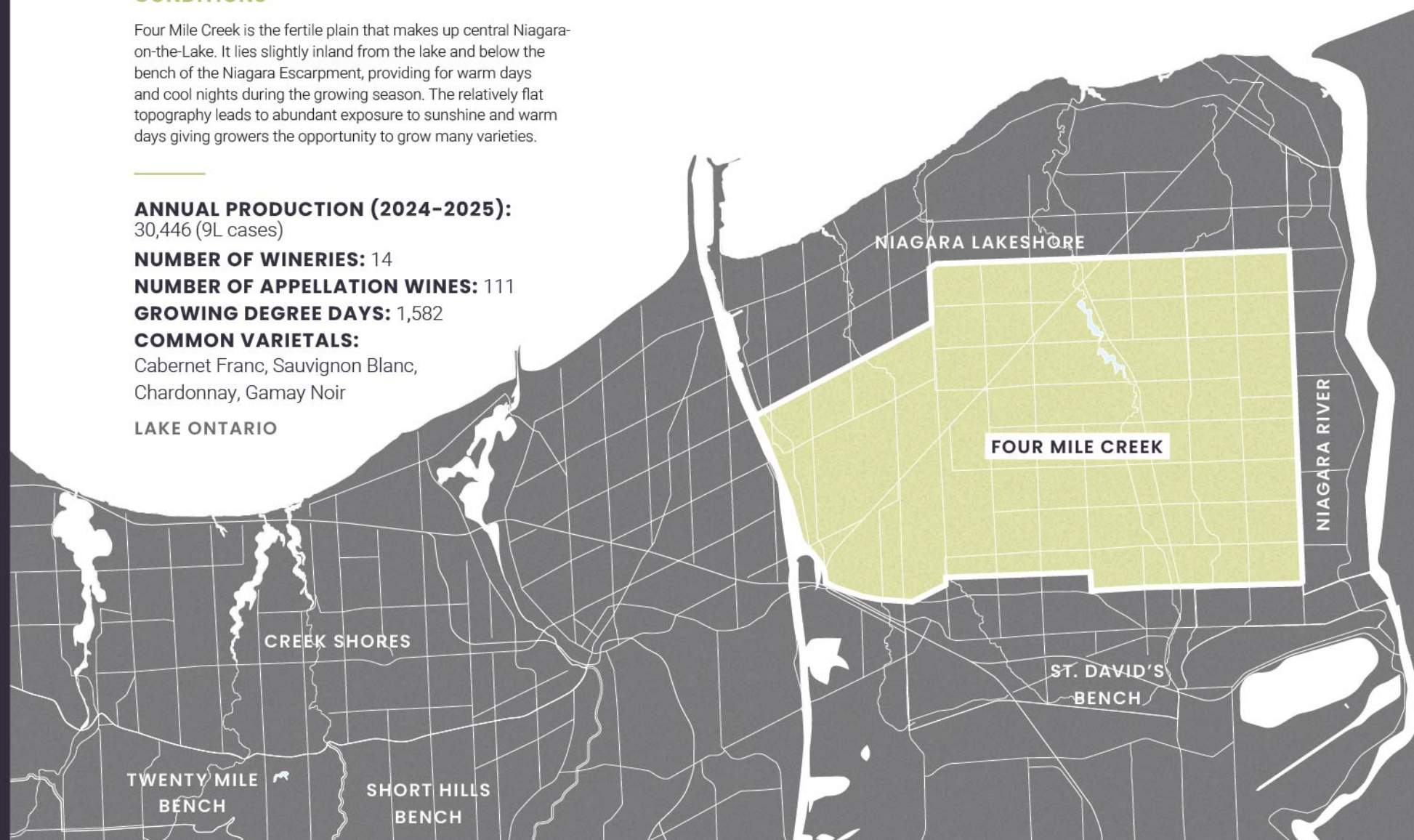
COMMON VARIETALS:

Cabernet Franc, Sauvignon Blanc,
Chardonnay, Gamay Noir

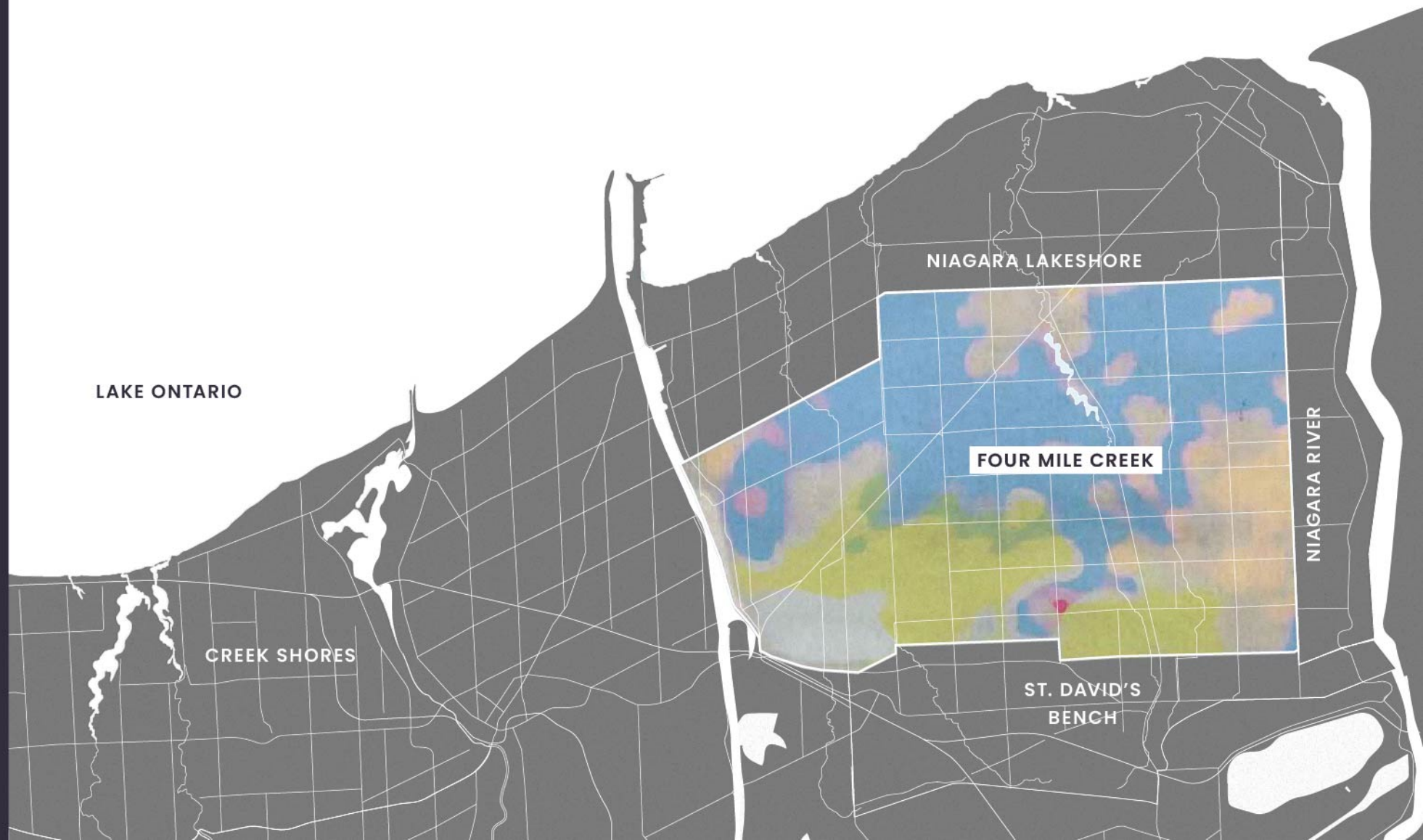
LAKE ONTARIO

NOTABLE FEATURES

Four Mile Creek is the largest sub-appellation in the Niagara Peninsula, accounting for a significant portion of premium grape production. With excellent sun exposure, this appellation is known for full bodied red varieties.



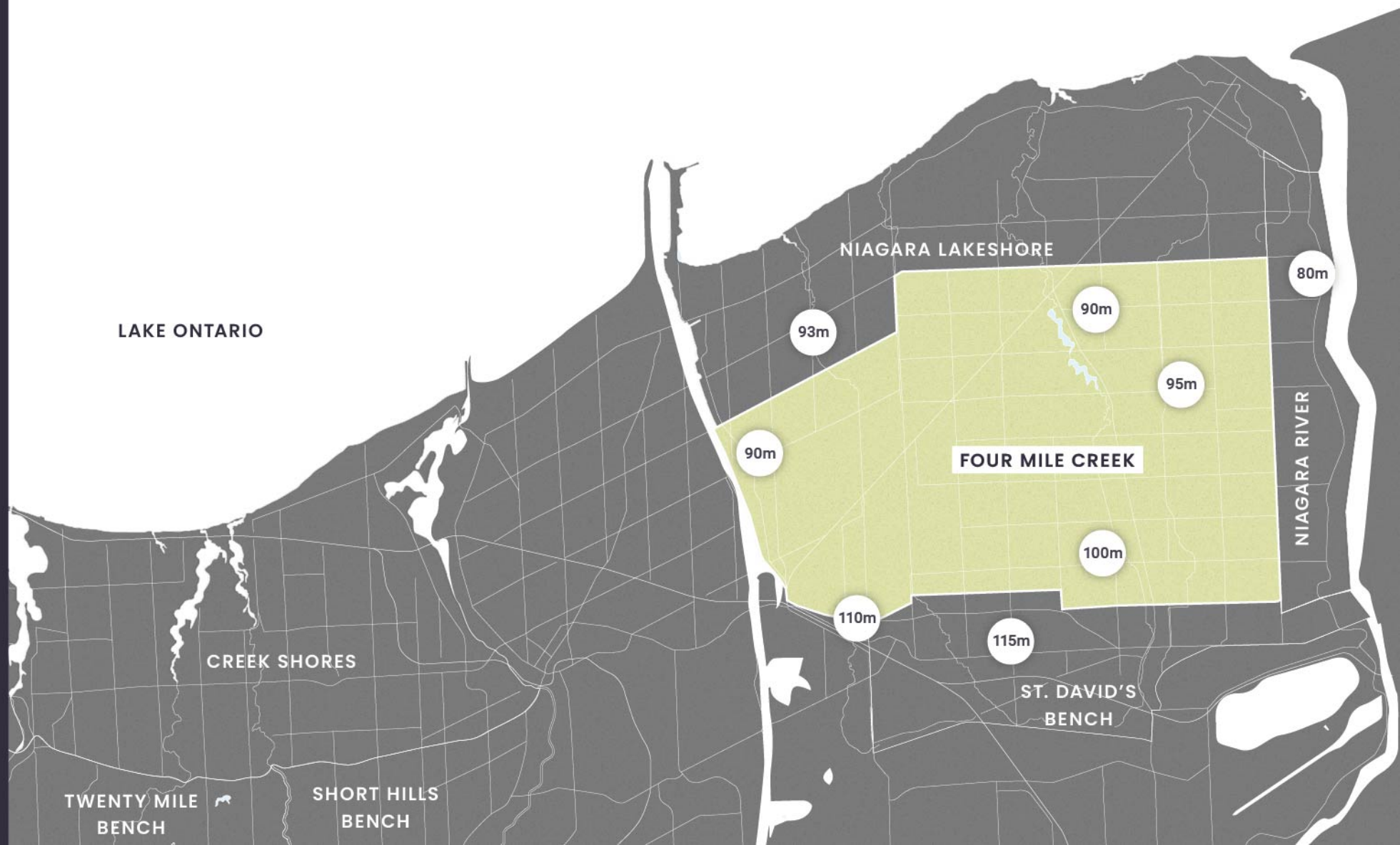
	Lacustrine silty clay		Lacustrine silt loam		Eolian sands, sometimes duned		Organic soils
	Lacustrine heavy clay		Lacustrine silty clay over clay loam till		Reddish-hued coarse sandy loam & gravelly sand		Reddish-hued silty clay over quenson shale bedrock
	Reddish-hued lacustrine Heavy clay		Sandy or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

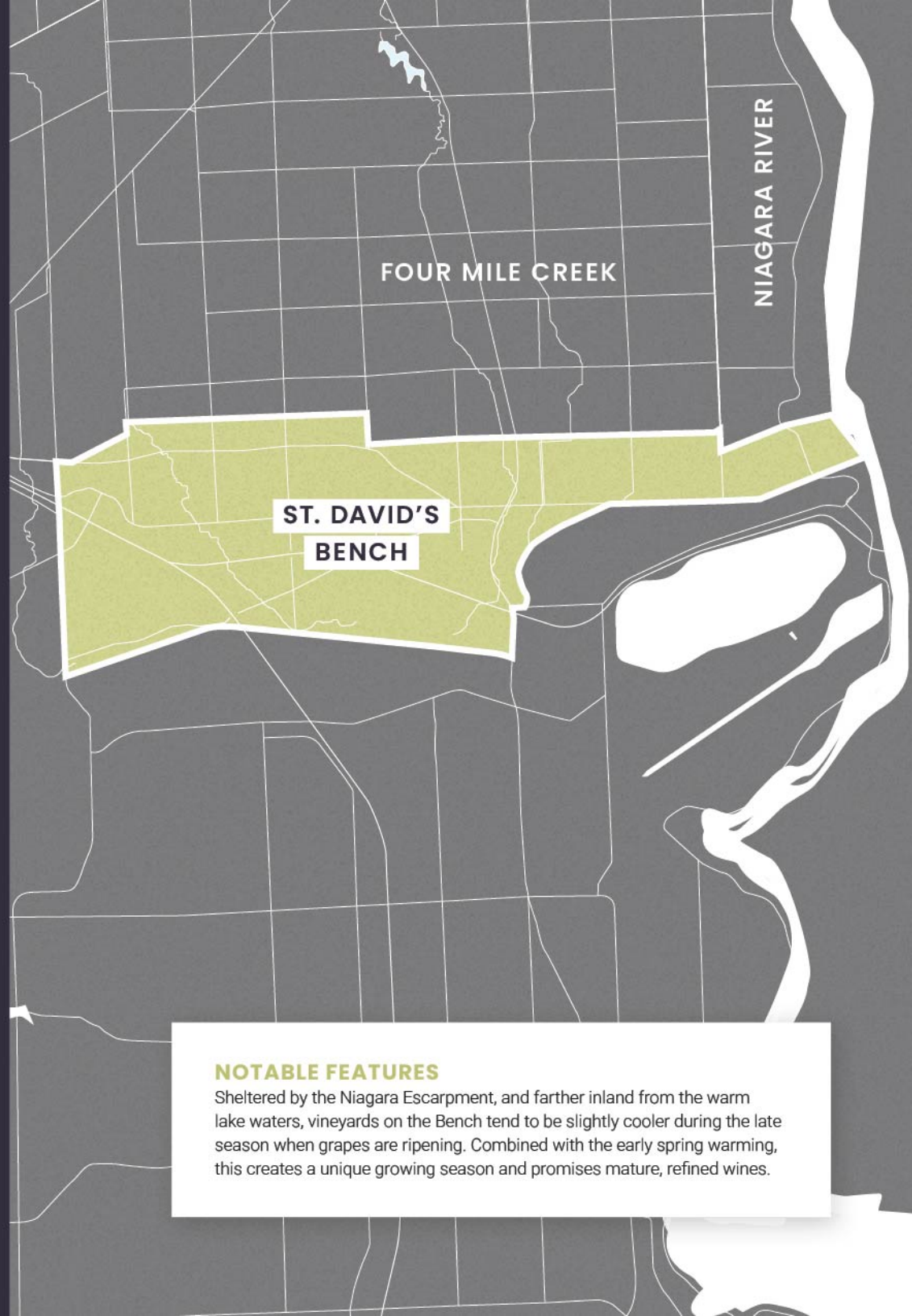


Four Mile Creek **TOPOGRAPHY MAP**

Ontario's Wine Appellations

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**ST. DAVID'S
BENCH**

NOTABLE FEATURES

Sheltered by the Niagara Escarpment, and farther inland from the warm lake waters, vineyards on the Bench tend to be slightly cooler during the late season when grapes are ripening. Combined with the early spring warming, this creates a unique growing season and promises mature, refined wines.

NIAGARA PENINSULA

St. David's Bench
SUB-APPELLATION

**EARLY WARMING IN SPRING,
GENTLY SLOPING BENCH, GENEROUS
PRECIPITATION**

St. David's Bench lies 10 kilometres south of the shore of Lake Ontario and several metres above the Lake Iroquois Plain. This bench, formed when glaciers carved out the Niagara Escarpment, rises from the historic shoreline of Lake Iroquois towards the base of the escarpment. Vineyards in St David's Bench are mostly located on north-facing slopes on the upper portion of the bench and along its southern boundary at the Lake Iroquois Shore Bluff.

ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2024-2025):
35,679 (9L cases)

NUMBER OF WINERIES: 8

NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES: 70

GROWING DEGREE DAYS: 1,637

COMMON VARIETALS: Chardonnay,
Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon

St. David's 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
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 Organic soils	 Misc. Natural land units	
 Reddish-hued silty clay over queenston shale bedrock	 Misc. Man-modified land units	

CREEK SHORES

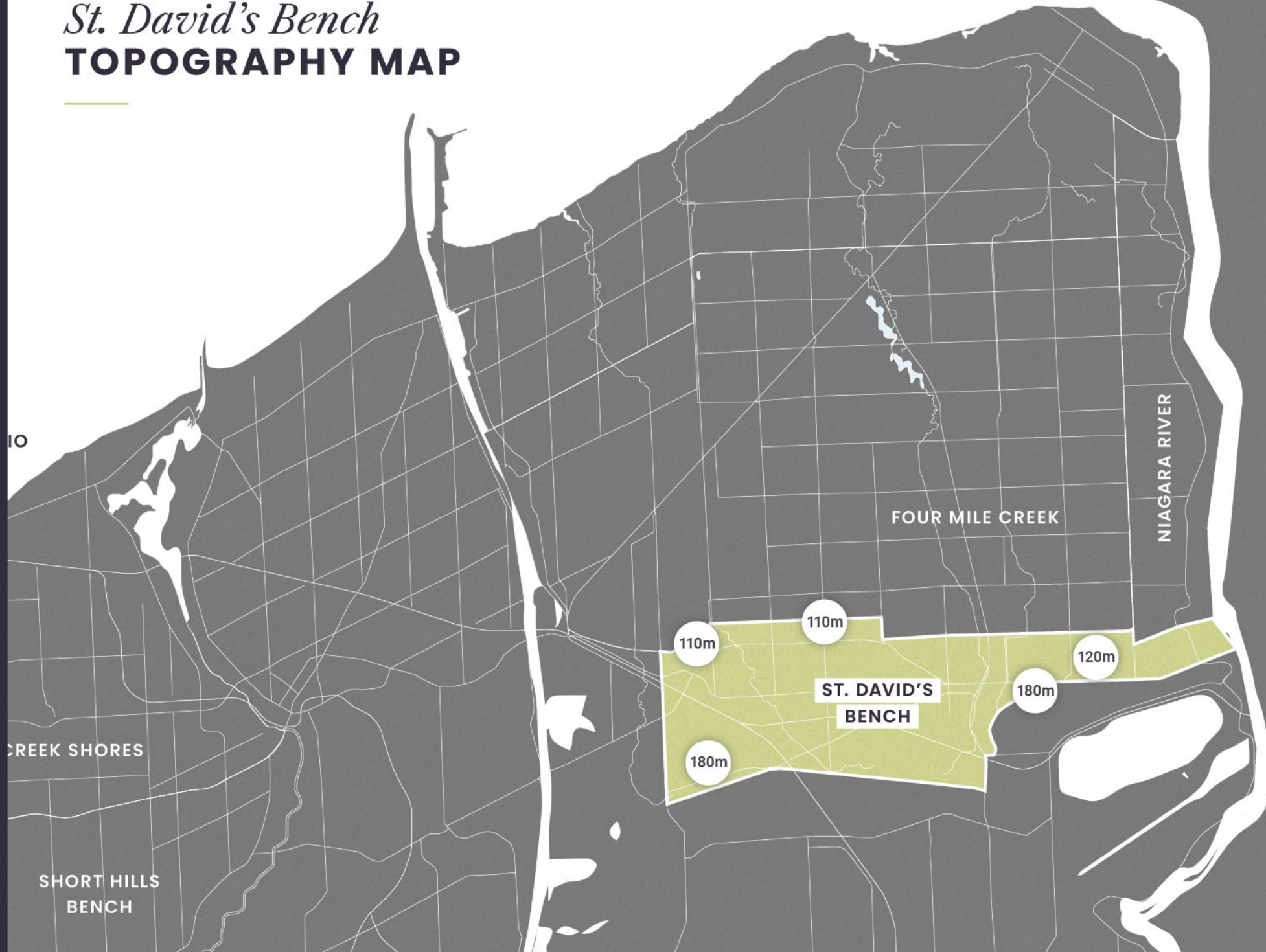
SHORT HILLS
BENCH

FOUR MILE CREEK

NIAGARA
RIVER

ST. DAVID'S
BENCH

ONTARIO WINE APPELLATION AUTHORITY



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