

# Missouri's New Ozark Highlands Spirits Region Protects a 200-Year Legacy of Distilling

*A new Missouri law protects consumer interest in high quality distilled spirits and the 200-year legacy of Ozark Highlands distilling.*

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EINPresswire.com/ -- A new Missouri law protects consumer interests in high quality and sustainable distilled spirits, and ensures the 200-year legacy of Ozark Highlands distilling is celebrated and safeguarded in the future.

During the 2022 legislative session, the Missouri Legislature recognized the Ozark Highlands spirits as a protected class of alcohol in Missouri law. This law was signed by Missouri Governor Mike Parson and went into effect on August 28. The law protects the long history of distilled spirits production in the Ozark Highlands and ensures that consumer and rural community interests are protected long term.

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*Mark Sutherland, President,  
Ozark Highland Distillers  
Guild*

The art of distilling Ozark Highlands spirits in the region has been a part of the culture and the economy for more than 200 years, since the first European settlers arrived in the region in the 1700s and early 1800s. Early settlers were pioneers who came west from the Southern Appalachians, descending from English and Scots-Irish immigrants, and were followed in the 1840s and 1850s by Irish and German immigrants.

In 1819, the US Government named the region the Ozark Highlands, and according to the USGS it is the most significant highland region in Central North America. In 2022, the Ozark Highland Distillers Guild was established to protect consumer



The Ozark Highlands Spirits Region

interests, educate the public about all the distilleries in the Ozark Highlands, and create opportunities for rural communities.

“The unique limestone base of the Ozark Highlands creates a neutral, almost mineral-like water that is a fantastic base ingredient for spirits,” Mark Sutherland, President of the Ozark Highland Distillers Guild, said. “I agree with Heather Greene, author of Whisk(e)y Distilled, who writes ‘most of the great whiskeys in the world are made with soft water, and that hard water can be made soft via limestone.’ That is why the water in the Ozark Highlands is the key ingredient and what creates a category of spirits that deserves to be protected and celebrated by Missouri.”

The Ozark Highland Distillers Guild is also tasked with [certifying products](#) as qualifying to use the Ozark Highlands regional certification. In order to receive certification as an Ozark Highlands spirit, a product must be produced and bottled in the Ozark Highlands, using chemical-free water from the Ozark Highlands; Additionally, whiskey must be aged in barrels manufactured in Missouri and aged for a minimum of 4 years in the Ozark Highlands. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources issued an [official map defining the Ozark Highlands Spirits Region](#).

“Currently we have two distilleries with certified product in Missouri, and we hope many more will apply,” Sutherland said. “There is no cost for certification, and we visit the distilleries, verify information on barrels and production, and then test the water used to ensure it contains no chlorine or fluoride.” Consumers can also [sign up to become Ozark Highlands Stewards](#) and



Stills at Nobletons Distilling House in the Ozark Highlands



Black Shire Distillery in Hermann, Missouri is one of many distilleries in the Ozark Highlands

function as Ambassadors for the region.

“Missouri has such a rich distilling history, and this legislation, combined with the previous legislation defining Missouri bourbon, preserves this history and elevates what current distilleries are doing in the industry today,” Steve Akley, VP of the Ozark Highland Distillers Guild and owner of the ABV Network, said. “The ultimate goal is to gain consumer’s attention about our past, while demonstrating our dedication to preserve and promote it moving forward.”

Today, 27 of Missouri’s 51 distilleries are located in the Ozark Highlands. You can learn more about the Ozark Highlands distillation history, the various distilleries in the region, and the certification process at [OzarkHighland.org](http://OzarkHighland.org).

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