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COOPERSTOWN BREWING COMPANY

Chief, Regulations and Procedures Division
Tax and Trade Bureau
P0 Box 50221
Washington, D.C. 20031-0221

RE: TTB Notice #4

Dear Chief of Regulations and Procedures:

The Cooperstown Brewing Company supports the proposed standard of composition for Flavored Malt Beverages ("FMB's"), as set forth by the Tax and Trade Bureau ("TTB") in TTB Notice No. 4 of March 2003. This proposal is essential to the beer industry as it clearly delineates the difference between beer and other alcohol beverages, requiring that the alcohol content in FMB's derived from distilled alcohol not exceed 0.5% in order to be classified as "beer."

We have been part of the revival in the U.S. brewing industry. This revival is predicated on renewed commitment to traditional processes and beer styles. This dedication on the art of beer has produced extensive investment in small businesses like ours and the emergence of a group of consumers who appreciate the unique properties of beer. Many of our customers do understand the attributes of beer and the consequences of this rulemaking process.

Continued success in the small brewing industry requires maintenance of an even playing field for all industry members claiming to produce beer or other malt beverages. Our company regards this proposed rule as a critical step towards consistent classification of alcoholic beverages. An orderly marketplace and consistency of laws and regulations establishing alcohol beverage categories are primary concerns of the brewing industry.

Federal leadership in this area is critical as state definitions of "beer," "malt beverage," and "spirits" are generally consistent with the definitions found in federal laws and regulations. Thus, the proposed rule will likely be followed at the state level, helping to maintain clear and distinct definitions that will guarantee consistent tax, licensing, and distribution policies for each category.

We support the proposed "0.5% standard" for FMB's. Its consistency with historical interpretations of federal regulations will help maintain an orderly marketplace and the integrity of the beer category.

Stanley E. Hall
President:

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