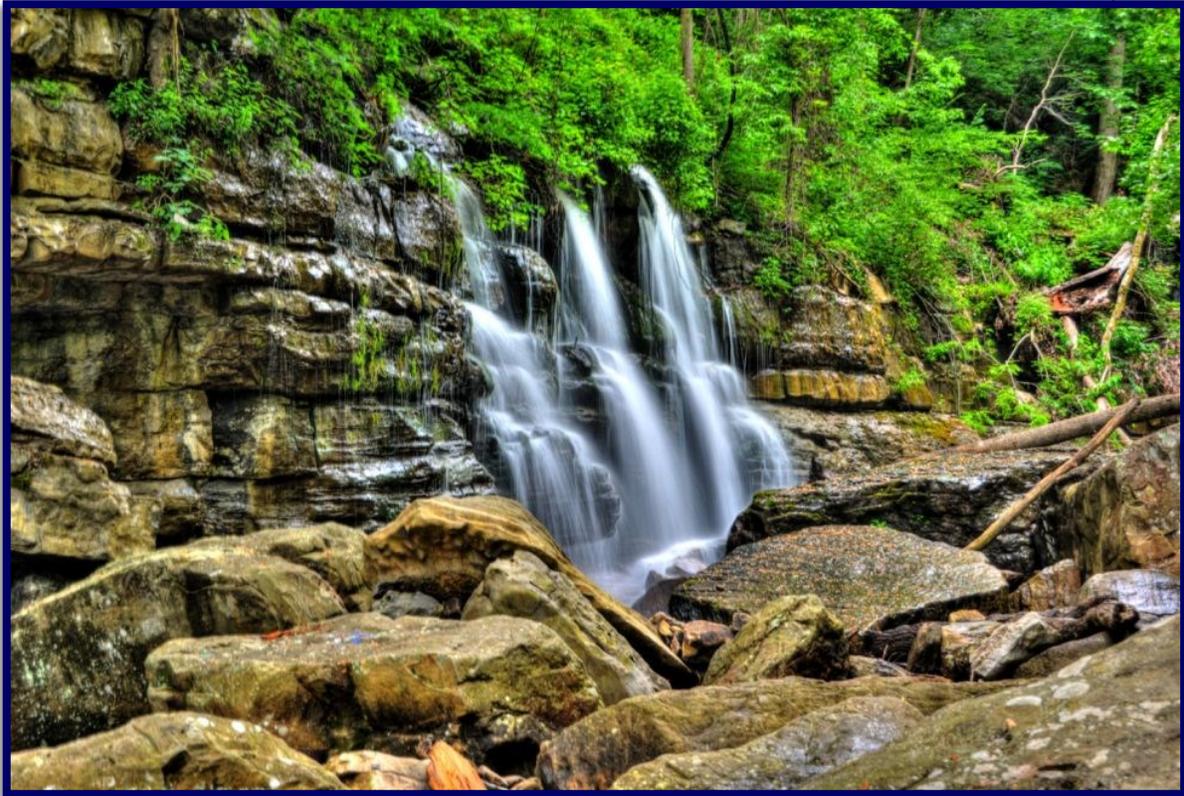




United States Board on Geographic Names

*Standardizing Geographic Names for the
Federal Government for More Than 125 Years*



Three Creeks Falls, Hamilton County, Tennessee. Name approved by the BGN in October 2015.

**Fiscal Year 2016: Annual Report to the
Secretary of the Interior**



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Cover Photography Credit: Three Creeks Falls waterfall by Steve Rogers.



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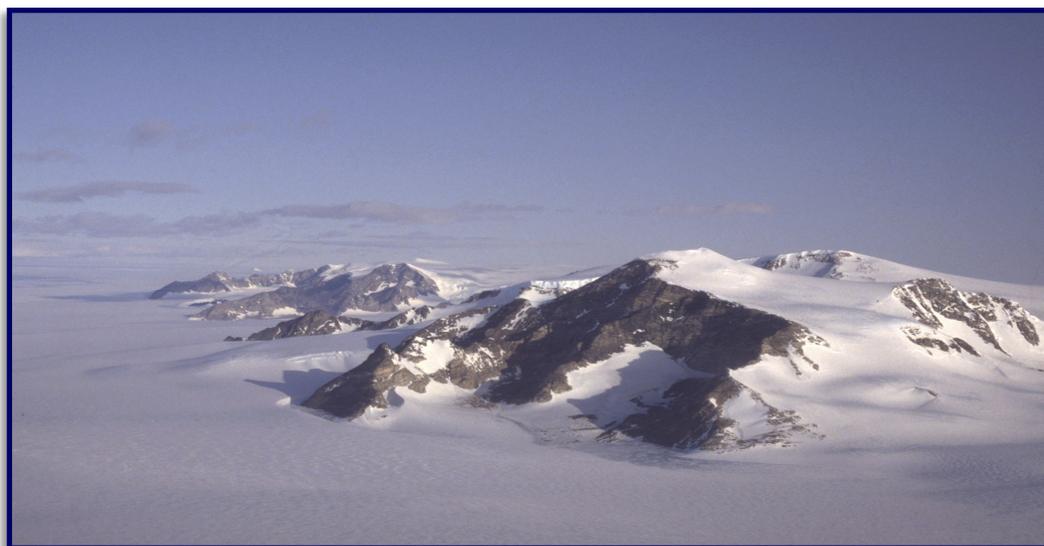
MISSION STATEMENT

Introduction

The United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) standardizes and approves geographic names for the Federal Government. The BGN's decisions involve names for domestic, foreign, Antarctic, and undersea features.

As an interagency coordinating body, the BGN includes members from the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of the Interior, the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Government Publishing Office, the Library of Congress, and the Postal Service. Working conjointly with the Secretary of the Interior (SOI), the BGN reduces duplication of work, personnel, and authority among its member agencies.

The BGN fosters clear and unambiguous communication within the Federal Government and remains a model of coordination and cooperation, working closely with Country Names Authorities, State Names Authorities, Tribes, and local communities, as well as with international naming bodies that promote geographic names standardization.



Mount Luyendyk, Marie Byrd Land, Antarctica. Name approved by the BGN in January 2016. Mount Luyendyk is named for Dr. Bruce Luyendyk, an emeritus professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara. His research made significant contributions to the knowledge of geology, geophysics, and the tectonic evolution of Antarctica. He led multi-year scientific expeditions in Marie Byrd Land and served as the chief scientist on marine geophysical investigations in the Ross Sea. Photography by Christine Siddoway.



DOMESTIC NAMES COMMITTEE

Actions, activities & issues

The Domestic Names Committee (DNC) standardizes geographic names within the United States and its sovereign areas. In FY16, the Executive Secretary for Domestic Names was Mr. Lou Yost (U.S. Geological Survey) and the Chair of the DNC was Ms. Elizabeth K. Kanalley (U.S. Department of Agriculture/Forest Service). The Domestic Names Committee receives research and database support from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

Actions

The DNC meets monthly and met 11 times in FY16. The May 5 meeting was held in conjunction with the Council of Geographic Names Authorities (COGNA) Annual Meeting in Reno, Nevada. The DNC's four Quarterly Review Lists introduced 155 new name proposals. During the year 162 proposals were considered, 135 were approved, and 27 were disapproved.

Activities

At its August meeting, the DNC approved a proposal to change the name of Harney Peak in the Black Hills National Forest in South Dakota to Black Elk Peak. The change was proposed by an Oglala Lakota elder who stated that the existing name was offensive to many tribes because of the actions of General William Harney. During FY16, the DNC approved name changes for 38 features in eastern Oregon that contained the word "Squaw."

Issues

In FY15, as a result of limited funding, the DNC scaled back the collection and maintenance of names of selected manmade features in the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) database. In FY16, the DNC continues to maintain this reduced set of features. Ongoing modernization efforts are progressing slowly, and as a result are negatively impacting the production and dissemination of domestic geographic names.

Database of the Domestic Names Committee

The Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) is the official database for federally approved domestic names. At the end of FY16, the GNIS contained 2,736,688 names associated with 2,274,472 features. In addition to the 135 names approved by the Domestic Names Committee in FY16, 4,233 new names and 504 new features were added, and 16,967 existing records were edited.

To access the GNIS, enter <http://geonames.usgs.gov> into a web browser and select "Search Domestic Names."



FOREIGN NAMES COMMITTEE

Actions, activities & issues

The Foreign Names Committee (FNC) standardizes names for geographic features located outside the United States and its sovereign areas, as well as the names of oceans and seas. In October through June FY16, the Acting Executive Secretary for Foreign Names was Mr. Marcus Allsup (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency). Mr. Trent Palmer (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency) served as Executive Secretary for Foreign Names for the remainder of FY16. The Chair of the FNC was Mr. Leo Dillon (Department of State). The FNC receives research and database support from the staff of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA).

Actions

The FNC meets quarterly; in its 4 meetings in FY16 it addressed 48 staff recommendations, all but 2 of which were approved. The Foreign Names staff at NGA developed, and the FNC approved, 15 country policies, a one-year record. Country policies are reference documents which comprehensively address the linguistic and political situations affecting place name collection in a specific country. For FY16, the following country policies were approved: Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cuba, Denmark, El Salvador, Haiti, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Serbia, and Spain.

Activities

During much of FY16 the work on the FNC Principles, Policies, and Procedures (PPP) document was put on hold due to resource constraints. Work on the "Procedures" section resumed at the end of the FY.

The staff of the British Permanent Committee on Geographical Names visited the Foreign Names staff based at NGA's St. Louis, Missouri, facility for a week-long technical exchange meeting, the first to be held at this location.

The Foreign Names staff at NGA continues to steadily add to the number of non-Roman script geographic names in the Geographic Names Database (GNDB).

Donetsk (Approved - N)	Bet 'Ezra (Approved - N)	Examples of non-Roman script names in the Geographic Names Database.
Донецк (Non-Roman Script - NS)	בית עזרא (Non-Roman Script - NS)	
Kutaisi (Approved - N)	Al Fallūjah (Approved - N)	
קוטאისი (Non-Roman Script - NS)	الفلوجة (Non-Roman Script - NS)	

Continued on the next page.



FOREIGN NAMES COMMITTEE

Actions, activities & issues, continued

Activities, continued

This capability was not possible in the early days of automation. Over the past decade, the addition of these names has greatly facilitated the work of the analysts and adds considerable value to the users of the data.

Issues

The Foreign Names staff and the FNC continue to work out how to include foreign names in the GNDB that are more user-friendly to an English-speaking audience. Current BGN policy calls for the approval of geographic names in their native form, and other than a modest number of well-established conventional names (such as Moscow vs. Moskva and Aleppo vs. Ḥalab), most geographic names in the GNDB have only a native form approved name. An “Anglicized variant” name policy has been enacted to allow some less well-known features to have an English language variant name for use.

Jihočeský Kraj (Approved - N)
<u>Kraj (Generic)</u>
<u>South Bohemia (Anglicized Variant - VA)</u>

Example of an Anglicized variant name for an administrative region in Czechia (Czech Republic).

The Foreign Names staff is working on a project to improve and update the Oceans file in the GNDB. This effort will add variant names, remove duplicate entries, and make needed corrections to the names of features in the world’s oceans and seas.

Database of the Foreign Names Committee

The Geographic Names Database (GNDB), hosted on the NGA website, is the single source for federally approved foreign names. At the end of FY16, it contained 11.7 million names associated with 7.3 million features. In FY16, 703,340 new names and 414,946 new features were added. Most of the names added to the database were for features in Morocco, India, China, Mexico, Pakistan, Lithuania, Armenia, South Korea, Iran, and Japan.

To access the GNDB, enter <http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/> into a web browser.



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ANTARCTIC NAMES

Actions, activities & issues

The Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names (ACAN) standardizes geographic names in Antarctica, an area with no permanent population and no officially recognized government. In FY16, the Chair of ACAN was Dr. Scott Borg (National Science Foundation). Mr. Roger L. Payne (USGS, retired) served as Secretary.

Actions

ACAN meets on an as-needed basis, and met once in FY16 because fewer proposals were submitted during the year. At the meeting, the committee considered 3 United States proposals, 2 of which were approved by ACAN and BGN; 10 United Kingdom proposals, 7 of which were approved by ACAN and BGN; and 1 New Zealand proposal, which was approved by ACAN and BGN.

Activities

ACAN continued its collaboration with the Polar Geospatial Center (PGC) at the University of Minnesota. The beta version of a web-based program for quality assurance was rolled out in FY16. The system continues to be tested with enhancements requested by ACAN and implemented by PGC. The system will allow ACAN members and staff, under the direction of the Executive Secretary, to conduct necessary work for improvement of the precision of geographic coordinates. Approximately 1,000 updates have been reviewed and made by the ACAN staff, and an additional 6,000 enhanced coordinates are ready for examination under the new tiered system of confidence. PGC is refining the remaining 7,000 coordinates.

Issues

None.

Database of the Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names

The Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) is the official database for federally approved Antarctic names. At the end of FY16, it contained 18,637 names associated with 14,138 features.

To access the Antarctic names of the GNIS, enter <http://geonames.usgs.gov/antarctic/index.html> into a web browser and select "Search Antarctica Names."



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON UNDERSEA FEATURES

Actions, activities & issues

The Advisory Committee on Undersea Features (ACUF) standardizes geographic names for undersea features beyond the 12 nautical mile limit of the territorial sea of all nations. In FY16, Mr. Gerry Walter (NGA) continued as Chair, and Mr. Jimmy Nerantzis (NGA) continued as Secretary.

Actions

ACUF meets on an as-needed basis and met one time in FY16. Three name proposals were submitted to and approved by the Full Board.

- ◆ Falkor Seamount; located in the North Pacific Ocean, south of the Northern Mariana Islands, and south of the Mariana Trench. Coordinate of “summit”: 11° 51' 15.56"N, 144° 52' 24.88"E. Submitted by the Schmidt Ocean Institute.
- ◆ Engineer Ridge; located in the North Pacific Ocean, just south of the Mariana Trench. It is located within the vicinity of Falkor Seamount. Coordinate of central point: 11° 16' 15"N, 144° 28' 10"E. Submitted by the Schmidt Ocean Institute.
- ◆ White Seamount; located in the northeast Pacific basin, about 500nm west of Washington State. Coordinate of “summit”: 47° 12' 49.76"N, 136° 24' 34.26"W. Submitted by the U.S. Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command.

Activities & International Coordination

ACUF continued to work closely with the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) (the international counterpart to the BGN/ACUF), participating in the 2016 annual SCUFN meeting held in Boulder, Colorado. The ACUF Chairman and Secretary attended as Observers and also as experts on undersea feature name standardization.

Issues

None.

Database of the Advisory Committee on Undersea Features

The Geographic Names Database (GNDB), hosted on the NGA website, is the official database for federally approved undersea feature names. At the end of FY16, it contained 10,354 names associated with 5,300 features.

To query data: (a) select <http://geonames.nga.mil/namesgaz/>; (b) for “Country Name”, select “Undersea Features”; and (c) select “Search Database.”



SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS

Description & activities

The Special Committee on Communications (SCC) focuses on outreach initiatives, specifically related to the BGN and geographic names. The SCC meets on an as-needed basis and met three times in FY16. The SCC was chaired by Mr. Douglas Caldwell (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).

Activities

During FY16, the SCC established a website highlighting the BGN's 125th Anniversary Celebration at the Library of Congress, which was held on September 18, 2015. The website, hosted by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, features presentation slides and videos from the Symposium, as well as an exhibit list and bibliography from the Open House. It is located at <http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/BGN125th.html>.

The BGN commissioned a new logo for the BGN's 125th Anniversary Celebration and the logo was formally approved in FY16 for use on all BGN documents and publications. The new logo maintains the key content of the earlier logo, but features a clean and modern appearance.



Finally, the SCC began an update of the Domestic Names Committee's (DNC) history from 1990–2015. This new publication will supplement Donald Orth's original publication, "United States Board on Geographic Names, 1890–1990 100 Years of Service, Diary of Actions, Policies, and Events: 1890–1990." Based on the DNC minutes, the publication documents key events, decisions, and policies. Publication is expected late in 2017.



BGN COMMITTEES

And department members

Full Board (Standing)

Chair: Tony N. Gilbert
U.S. Government Publishing Office

Vice Chair: Leo Dillon
Department of State

Executive Secretary for Domestic Names
Lou Yost
U.S. Geological Survey

Executive Secretary for Foreign Names
Trent Palmer
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Executive Committee (Standing)

Chair: Leo Dillon
BGN Vice Chair
Department of State

Members:

Tony N. Gilbert
BGN Chair
U.S. Government Publishing Office

Lou Yost
Executive Secretary for Domestic Names
U.S. Geological Survey

Trent Palmer
Executive Secretary for Foreign Names
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Elizabeth K. Kanalley
Chair, Domestic Names Committee
U.S. Forest Service

Leo Dillon
Chair, Foreign Names Committee
Department of State

Domestic Names Committee (Standing)

Chair: Elizabeth K. Kanalley
U.S. Forest Service

Vice Chair: Andrew H. Flora
Bureau of the Census

Foreign Names Committee (Standing)

Chair: Leo Dillon
Department of State

Vice Chair: Bruce Johnson
Library of Congress

Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names (Advisory)

Chair: Dr. Scott Borg
National Science Foundation

Secretary: Roger Payne
USGS, retired

Advisory Committee on Undersea Feature Names (Advisory)

Chair: Gerald Walter
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Secretary: Jimmy Nerantzis
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Representative to International Astronomical Union

Rose Hayward, Secretary
U.S. Geological Survey

Special Communications Committee

Chair: Douglas Caldwell
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department Members For October 2015–2017 Term

Department of Agriculture (Domestic Names)
Member: Emilee Blount
U.S. Forest Service

Central Intelligence Agency (Foreign Names)
Member: R. David Wert

Department of Commerce (Domestic Names and Foreign Names)
Member: Curtis C. Loy
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Department of Defense (Domestic Names and Foreign Names)
Member: Douglas Caldwell
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Government Publishing Office (Domestic Names)
Member: Tony N. Gilbert

Department of Homeland Security (Domestic Names)
Member: Eric Berman
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Department of the Interior (Domestic Names)
Member: Michael Tischler
U.S. Geological Survey

Library of Congress (Domestic Names and Foreign Names)
Member: Ralph Ehrenberg

U.S. Postal Service (Domestic Names)
Member: Gail L. Milton

Department of State (Foreign Names)
Member: Leo Dillon

For a complete list of BGN Members and Deputy Members, see http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/member_directory.htm.



FULL BOARD *Activities & issues*

The Full Board of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names is composed of voting members from six Cabinet-level departments, as well as the Central Intelligence Agency, the Government Publishing Office, the Library of Congress, and the Postal Service. Mr. Tony N. Gilbert (U.S. Government Publishing Office) served as Chair of the Full Board in FY16. The BGN Full Board is scheduled to meet on a quarterly basis, and in FY16 met three times.

Activities

The Full Board of the BGN continues to serve our Nation by maintaining and promoting the standardization of geographic names in cooperation with international naming authorities, State Names Authorities, American native entities, and local communities.

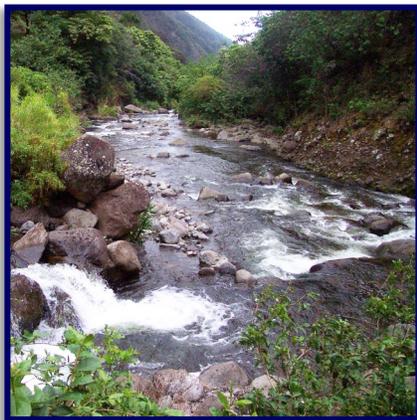
Issues

Reduced staff and resources hamper the BGN's ability to fully address the demand for standardized geographic names. Due to budget and travel restrictions, the ability to coordinate names standardization activities has been limited.

RESOURCES

For your information

To access the BGN website, enter <http://geonames.usgs.gov> into a web browser. The website contains links for Domestic, Foreign, Antarctic, and Undersea Features Names, as well as a member directory, brochures, and fact sheets. Links to the Principles, Policies, and Procedures, Review Lists, Meeting Minutes, Frequently Asked Questions, and the GNIS and GNDB databases can also be found on the BGN website.



Wailuku River, Maui, Hawaii. Name approved by the BGN in November 2015. The naming of the Wailuku River restored the traditional and historical name to this culturally significant feature. Photography by Marcia Berkowitz.

Tony N. Gilbert, Chair
United States Board on Geographic Names