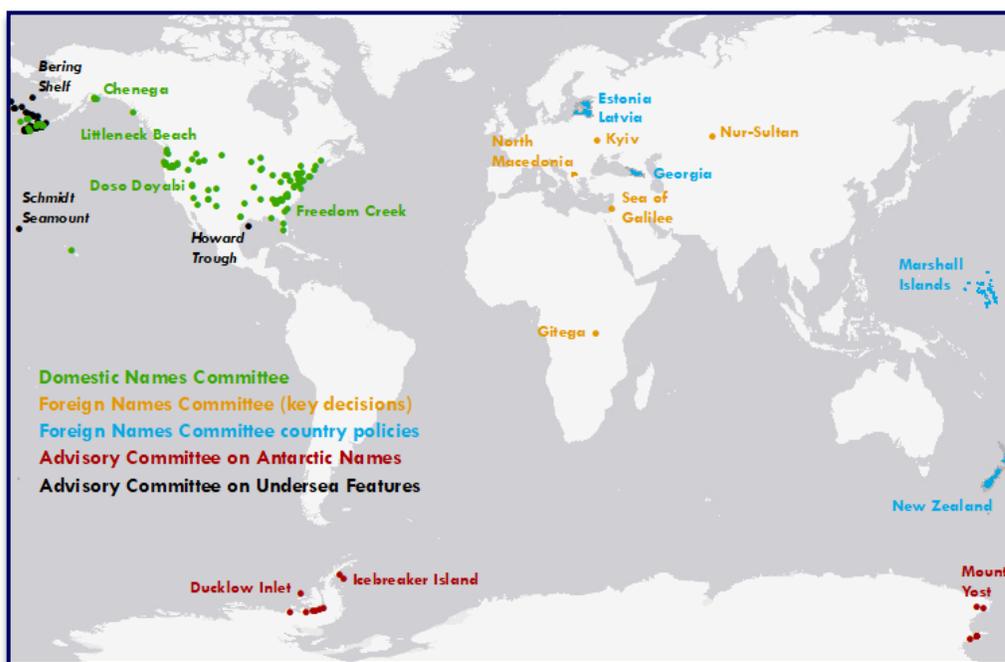




United States Board on Geographic Names

*Standardizing Geographic Names for
the Federal Government for 129 Years*



Committees of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names approved name proposals for geographic sites that spanned six continents in Fiscal Year 2019. A few are shown on the map above.

Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report to the Secretary of the Interior

Washington, DC



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Mission Statement and Introduction

The United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) approves and standardizes geographic names for the Federal Government. BGN decisions establish uniform usage of names for toponymic features in domestic, foreign, Antarctic, and undersea regions.

The BGN is an interagency body with members from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security, the Interior, and State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Government Publishing Office, the Library of Congress, and the Postal Service.

By working conjointly with the Secretary of the Interior (SOI), the BGN reduces duplication of work, personnel, and authority among its member agencies to foster clear and unambiguous communication within the Federal Government.

The BGN is a model of international coordination and cooperation with country names authorities, State names authorities, Tribes, and local communities, as well as with international bodies that promote geographic names standardization.



Domestic Names Committee

The Domestic Names Committee (DNC) standardizes the names of geographic features within the United States and its sovereign areas. For the first eight months of FY19, the Executive Secretary for Domestic Names was Mr. Lou Yost (U.S. Geological Survey); for the remainder of FY19, the position was vacant. The Chair of the DNC was Mr. Andrew Flora (Department of Commerce/Bureau of the Census). The DNC receives research and database support from the USGS.

Actions

The DNC met 11 times in FY19. The August meeting took place during the annual meeting of the Council of Geographic Names Authorities (COGNA), held in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and hosted by the Louisiana State Geographic Names Committee.

The DNC's four Quarterly Review Lists comprised 217 new name and name change proposals. In FY19, the DNC considered 165 proposals, of which 138 new names and changes were approved, and 27 were disapproved.

The DNC approved 16 new names proposed by the National Marine Fisheries Service/Alaska Fisheries Science Center for undersea features in the territorial waters off the coast of Alaska.

Of note, the DNC approved a proposal submitted by the Georgia State Senate to change the name of Runaway Negro Creek in Chatham County to Freedom Creek, and approved a proposal to change the name of Squaw Creek in Tillamook County, Oregon, to Nestucca Bobb Creek.

The DNC also approved 25 new names for cinder cones and similar volcanic features in Newberry Volcanic National Monument (Oregon).

Staff and DNC members attended the first session of the newly constituted United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), held April 29 through May 3, 2019, in New York, New York.

DNC staff continues to respond to inquiries from proponents submitting name proposals, State names authorities, the news media, and Federal, Tribal, State, and local officials.

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Domestic Names Committee, continued

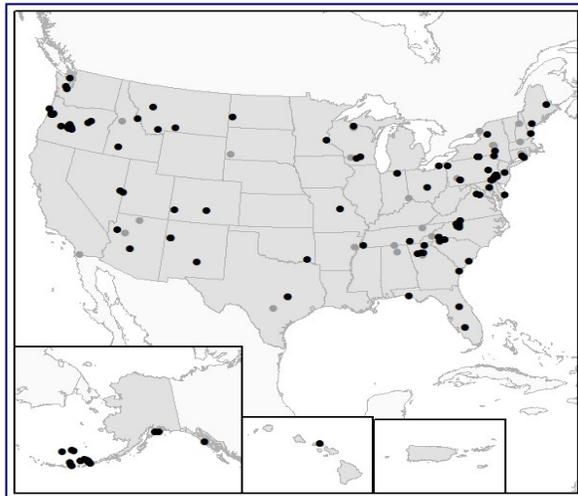
Database of the Domestic Names Committee

The Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) is the official database for federally approved domestic names. The GNIS staff completed 17,046 modifications to records in the database and has been working to attach scanned BGN case documents to GNIS records. The attachment project is on hold due to the retirement of key staff. GNIS staff also continues the collection of ridge, range, summit, valley, and arroyo landform features in U.S. Forest Service areas. GNIS staff continues to respond to inquiries from Tribal, Federal, State, and local officials and the general public.

During FY19, the staff converted the BGN website to the new Drupal website framework. Also, GNIS staff provided technical assistance to the US Census Bureau in its efforts to include Unicode characters in its databases and products. The collaborative effort added additional characters to the DNC character set.

Progress has been made on the development of new tools to replace the current suite for GNIS. This is a major effort that will continue into FY20.

To begin a feature search in the GNIS database of the USGS, please visit <https://usgs.gov/geonames/domestic-names>.



The map at right shows a selection of place name decisions approved by the DNC in Fiscal Year 2019. Map illustration by Matthew O'Donnell (USGS).



Foreign Names Committee

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. Mr. Trent Palmer (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency) served as Executive Secretary for Foreign Names during FY19. 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 met four times in FY19 and considered and approved 46 staff recommendations. The Foreign Names staff at NGA developed, and the FNC approved, six country policies: Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, the Marshall Islands, New Zealand, and North Macedonia. Country policies are reference documents that comprehensively address the linguistic and political situations affecting place name collection in a specific country. An updated historical features policy was approved this year as well.

Activities

Five BGN members from the Departments of Commerce, Defense, the Interior, and State participated in the first session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, New York, in April 2019. BGN staff and members have held and continue to hold leadership positions in the UNGEGN.

Two members of the Foreign Names staff based at NGA visited the staff of the UK's Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN) in London for a week-long technical exchange meeting in May 2019. Topics discussed included Armenia, Sri Lanka, sub-Saharan Africa, and the romanization of Arabic.

In FY19 the Foreign Names staff at NGA had several internal opportunities to raise awareness and promote its work in support of the BGN. In August, the highlights from the exchange with the PCGN staff were briefed to the NGA Director. Other outreach opportunities included a Geography Awareness Week briefing and a resumption of the publication of a summary report following each FNC meeting.

Continued on the next page.



Foreign Names Committee, continued

Issues

Several high-profile name changes and approvals occurred in FY19.

On February 15, 2019, the FNC approved the name “North Macedonia” for the former “Macedonia.”

On March 27, 2019, the FNC approved a name change from “Astana” to “Nur-Sultan” for the capital of Kazakhstan.

On April 11, 2019, “Gitega” was approved as a second capital city of Burundi.

At its 398th meeting on June 11, 2019, the FNC removed the conventional name “Kiev,” leaving “Kyiv” as the sole approved name for the capital of Ukraine.

Also at the 398th meeting, a series of name changes were instituted based on the President’s Proclamation recognizing the Golan Heights, formerly part of Syria, as part of Israel.



St. Volodymyr's Cathedral stands in the center of Kyiv.

At the 399th meeting on September 10, 2019, “Abidjan” was approved as a second capital city (seat of government) of Côte d’Ivoire.

Database of the Foreign Names Committee

The GEOnet Names Server (GNS), hosted on the NGA website, is the single source for federally approved foreign names. At the end of FY19, it contained 12.97 million names associated with 7.95 million features.

In FY19, 225,815 new names and 106,909 new features were added. Numbers were lower than last year due to software upgrades and staff turnover. Most of the names added to the database were for features in Yemen, China, Iraq, South Korea, Guatemala, Russia, Brazil, Iran, Egypt, North Korea, Germany, Norway, and Switzerland.

To begin a feature search in the GNS database of the NGA, visit <https://usgs.gov/geonames/foreign-names>.

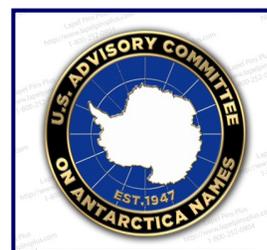


Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names

The Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names (ACAN) standardizes geographic names in Antarctica, an area with no permanent population and no officially recognized government. In FY19, the Chair of ACAN was Dr. Scott Borg (National Science Foundation). Mr. Roger Payne served as Secretary.

Actions

In June, ACAN recommended by electronic vote the approval of seven names submitted by the United Kingdom–Antarctic Place-name Committee for previously unnamed ice streams in the vicinity of George VI Ice Shelf and Stange Ice Shelf. The features were named for the satellites used to understand the behavior of the fast-moving glacial features.



ACAN also recommended approval of 10 names for ponds located south of Ross Island, submitted by the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa.

ACAN met once during FY19. A number of proposals submitted by individuals and organizations in the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand were considered and recommended for approval.

Activities

The ACAN staff participated in a meeting of the Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information (SCAGI) of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), which occurred during the meeting of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) in New York, New York. SCAGI reviewed and revised the guidelines for International Toponymy for Antarctica.

ACAN continues to work with the Polar Geospatial Center at the University of Minnesota on an effort sponsored by the National Science Foundation to enhance geographic coordinates for features in Antarctica.

Database of the Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names

GNIS is the official database for federally approved Antarctic names.

To begin a feature search in the GNIS database of the USGS, please visit <https://usgs.gov/geonames/antarctic-names>.

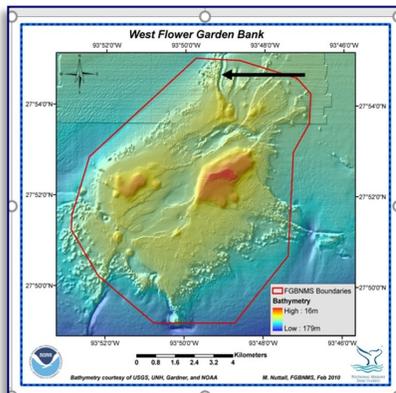


Advisory Committee on Undersea Features

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 FY19, Mr. Gerry Walter (NGA) continued as Chair, and Mr. Bobby Jovanovski (NGA) replaced Mr. Jimmy Nerantzis as the Secretary.

Actions

ACUF meets on an as-needed basis and met twice in FY19. The committee recommended adopting 20 new name proposals, and updates to another 26 existing features. Name proposals were submitted by individuals at Texas A&M University and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). These proposed names and updates were approved by the BGN Full Board.



The arrow on the bathymetric chart (located to the left) points to the location of Howard Trough, a name recommended by ACUF and approved by the BGN in FY19. Located in the Gulf of Mexico offshore of Galveston, Texas, Howard Trough is named after the late Matthew K. Howard, Ph.D., a geosciences research scientist at Texas A&M University Oceanography Department and the data management manager for the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System.

The bathymetric chart was provided by the USGS, the University of New Hampshire, James Gardner, Ph.D., and NOAA.

Activities

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 ACUF. Mr. Trent Palmer, the ACUF Executive Secretary, is a Member of SCUFN representing the International Hydrographic Organization. SCUFN held its 32nd annual meeting from August 5 through 9, 2019, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Continued on the next page.



Advisory Committee on Undersea Features, continued

Activities, continued

ACUF and the Japanese Committee on Undersea Feature Names (JCUFN) submitted a joint proposal for nine feature names to SCUFN 32. All were approved.

New Members

Dr. Ginger Barth accepted the nomination to serve as a member of ACUF, replacing the seat formerly held by Dr. Kristin Ludwig. Dr. Barth currently serves with USGS in Menlo Park, California.

Dr. John R. Smith accepted the nomination to serve as a member of ACUF, replacing the seat formerly held by Dr. Alexander Shor. Dr. Smith currently serves at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, Hawaii. Both candidates' nominations were approved by the Full Board at the BGN 276th quarterly meeting on July 16, 2019.

Database of the Advisory Committee on Undersea Features

The NGA GEOnet Names Server (GNS), hosted on the NGA website, is the single source for federally approved undersea feature names. At the end of FY19, it contained 10,124 names associated with 5,215 features.

To begin a feature search in the GNS database of the NGA, visit <https://usgs.gov/geonames/undersea-features>.

The screenshot shows the GeoNames Search interface with the following search criteria:

- Country: United Arab Emirates (selected), United Kingdom, United States
- ADM1 Names: UPO0 Undersea Features (general)
- Name: Bering Shelf
- Search criteria: Match Any of the Selected Name Types, Unique Feature Id

The search results window displays the following table:

Name (Type)	Geopolitical Entity Name (Code)	First-Order Administrative Division Name (Code)	Latitude-Longitude DMS (DID)	MGRS	Feature Designation (Code)	Display Location (Link)
Bering Shelf (Approved-N)	None	Undersea Features (General) (UPO0)	60° 07' 41" N, 170° 40' 57" W (60.12806, -170.6825)	02VNM1208565693	undersea shelf (SHFL)	Google Maps MapQuest

A GNS search, above, shows undersea feature “Bering Shelf,” a name approved by the BGN in FY19.



Special Committee on Communications

The Special Committee on Communications (SCC) focuses on outreach initiatives specifically related to the BGN and geographic names. SCC membership is open to all BGN members serving on a committee. Membership in the SCC is not subject to approval by the Full Board.

Ms. Jacqueline Nolan (Library of Congress) served as SCC Chair through December 2018 and Ms. Brenda-Anne “B.C.” Forrest (Government Publishing Office) served as Vice Chair through March 2019. At the Full Board meeting in April 2019, the BGN selected Ms. Forrest to succeed Ms. Nolan as SCC Chair and selected Ms. Susan Lyon (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) as SCC Vice Chair.

In December 2018, Ms. Nolan retired from the Geography and Map Division at the Library of Congress after 28 years in Federal service. The SCC wishes Ms. Nolan great success and invites Ms. Nolan to contribute to upcoming BGN events and archival-related journals and chronicles.

Activities

The SCC meets on an as-needed basis and, as a result of the transition in the committee leadership, the SCC opted to not meet in FY19. In lieu of holding meetings, the SCC Chair and Vice Chair decided to attend and participate in BGN standing and advisory committee meetings and events in an effort to gather input, suggestions, and strategies to develop ideas for future SCC projects.

BGN events attended included a Foreign Names Committee (FNC) meeting at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) in Springfield, Virginia; a Domestic Names Committee (DNC) meeting at the annual Council of Geographic Names Authorities (COGNA) conference, held in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; a presentation by Mr. Gerry Walter (NGA), Chair of the Advisory Committee on Undersea Features (ACUF), at the NOAA Nautical Cartography Open House in Silver Spring, Maryland; and the monthly meetings of the DNC in Washington, DC. The result: To initiate a review and plan an update of BGN resources for the public.



The SCC completed publication of the BGN FY18 Annual Report, which features activity reports of all BGN standing and advisory committees. The Resources page of the BGN website hosts Annual Reports dating back to FY13.

Finally, the SCC recognizes Ms. Maria McCormick, of USGS, for the redesign of the BGN website. Unveiled April 29, 2019, the site provides new features and visual enhancements, with helpful links to assist navigating to the sections and databases mentioned in the BGN committee reports.



BGN Committees and Members

Full Board (Representatives from all committees)

Chair: Leo I. Dillon
Department of State

Vice Chair: Tara Wallace
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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: Tara Wallace
Vice Chair, BGN Full Board
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Members:

Leo I. Dillon
Chair, BGN Full Board
Chair, Foreign Names Committee
Department of State

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

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

Andrew H. Flora
Chair, Domestic Names Committee
Bureau of the Census

Domestic Names Committee (Standing)

Chair: Andrew H. Flora
Bureau of the Census
Vice Chair: Jacqueline Nolan
Library of Congress

Foreign Names Committee (Standing)

Chair: Leo I. Dillon
Department of State

Advisory Committee on Antarctic Names (Advisory)

Chair: Dr. Scott Borg
National Science Foundation
Secretary: Roger L. Payne
U.S. Geological Survey, retired

Advisory Committee on Undersea Features (Advisory)

Chair: Gerard J. Walter
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Secretary: Jimmy Nerantzis
NGA, held office until Sept. 2018

Secretary: Bobby Jovanovski
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Representative to International Astronomical Union

Secretary: Rose Hayward, USGS, held office until Mar. 2019
Secretary: Tenielle Gaither
U.S. Geological Survey

Special Committee on Communications

Chair: Jacqueline Nolan, Library of Congress, held office until Dec. 2018

Vice Chair: Brenda-Anne C. Forrest
GPO, held office until Mar. 2019

Chair: Brenda-Anne C. Forrest
Government Publishing Office

Vice Chair: Susan Lyon
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department Members for October 2017 - 2019 Term

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

Central Intelligence Agency
(Foreign Names):
R. David W. (last name abbreviated)

Department of Commerce
(Domestic Names and Foreign Names):
Tara Wallace,
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Department of Defense
(Domestic Names and Foreign Names):
Marcus Allsup,
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Government Publishing Office
(Domestic Names):
Brenda-Anne C. Forrest

Department of Homeland Security
(Domestic Names and Foreign Names):
Michael Karau

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

Library of Congress
(Domestic Names and Foreign Names):
Paulette Hasier

U.S. Postal Service
(Domestic Names):
Earl Johnson

Department of State
(Foreign Names):
Leo I. Dillon

For a complete list of Members and Deputy Members of the BGN, please see <https://usgs.gov/geonames/membership>.



The Full Board and BGN Resources

The Full Board of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names is composed of voting members from six Cabinet-level departments, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Government Publishing Office, the Library of Congress, and the Postal Service. In FY19, Mr. Leo I. Dillon (Department of State) served as Chair of the Full Board and Ms. Tara Wallace (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) served as Vice Chair. The BGN Full Board is scheduled to meet on a quarterly basis and met three times in FY19.

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.

The BGN website, <https://usgs.gov/geonames/resources>, provides links for Domestic, Foreign, Antarctic, and Undersea Feature Names, as well as a member directory, brochures, and fact sheets. Links to the Principles, Policies, and Procedures document, Quarterly Review Lists, meeting minutes, Frequently Asked Questions, the GNIS database, and the GNS database are also featured.

Leo I. Dillon, Chair
United States Board on Geographic Names

The BGN Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019 was made possible by contributions from Marcus Allsup (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency), Dr. Scott Borg (National Science Foundation), David de Hosson (NGA), Leo I. Dillon (Department of State), Andrew Flora (Bureau of the Census), Brenda-Anne C. Forrest (Government Publishing Office), Bobby Jovanovski (NGA), Susan Lyon (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), Maria McCormick (U.S. Geological Survey), Jacqueline Nolan (Library of Congress), Matthew O'Donnell (USGS), Trent Palmer (NGA), Roger Payne (USGS, retired), Jennifer Runyon (USGS), Mike Shelton (National Park Service), Tara Wallace (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Gerry Walter (NGA), and Lou Yost (USGS).

BGN Annual Report design by Brenda-Anne "B.C." Forrest (GPO).

Cover cartography by Matthew O'Donnell (USGS).