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Item 10 of the provisional agenda

Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology

Undersea Feature Terminology

Submitted by USA*

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Summary

There is a growing inventory of undersea feature terminology glossaries. IHO-IOC Publication B-6 provides standardized glossaries in seven languages. Additional resources are also extant. National toponymic authorities are encouraged to develop and share information on undersea feature terminology with the international community.

Background

During the first decade-plus of the existence of the UNGEGN there was considerable attention paid to the development of standardized terms and definitions for undersea features. Several Resolutions are relevant, to include I/8B, I/19, II/26, III/22, and V/6. The UNGEGN Working Group on Undersea and Maritime Feature Names (under this and other names) existed from 1970 until its disestablishment in 1984. At that time UNGEGN judged that the work could most capably be handled by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), with which liaison was established.

Progress

Under the auspices of the IHO and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) bears responsibility for the development of standardized undersea feature terminology. SCUFN was established in 1975 as the Sub-Committee on Geographical Names and Nomenclature of Ocean Bottom Features (SCGN). Its name changed in 1993. As stated in the International Hydrographic Organization report, the IHO-IOC Publication B-6, edition 4.1.0, *Standardization of Undersea Feature Names (Guidelines, Proposal Form Terminology)* provides a listing of international standardized undersea feature terminology. B-6, published by SCUFN, is available in the following languages: English/French, English/Spanish, English/Russian, English/Japanese, English/Korean, and English/Chinese (listed in order of date of first publication). The glossary terms are not romanized in the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian versions of B-6. The Japanese, Korean, and Russian versions are currently in alignment with B-6 edition 4.0.

Other National Activities

The United States Board on Geographic Names (USBGN) is involved in undersea feature name standardization with guidance from its Advisory Committee on Undersea Features (ACUF). Glossaries of undersea feature terminology were prepared for the BGN's series of hard-copy gazetteers. The final hard-copy gazetteer of undersea feature names was published in 1990. The terminological glossaries may now be accessed at the site of the BGN's GEOnet Names Server (GNS) ([link below](#)).

The USBGN glossary is, with several exceptions, in close alignment with B-6. The USBGN generally avoids terms with genetic implications (e.g., caldera), but there are a few exceptions. *Discussions have started concerning attempts to harmonize the terminology between USBGN and SCUFN. (I am verifying if this is a true statement)*

In 2009 a draft "Expanded Glossary of World Bathymetric Terms" was posted on the GNS. This listing was based on the premise of the 1970 publication, *A Glossary of World Bathymetric Terms and Their English Language Equivalents* ((U.S.) Naval Research Laboratory Report

7094) by Mr. Norman Z. Cherkis. NRL Report 7094 contains terms from twenty-seven languages and was an early and valuable resource for the undersea feature names community. The “Expanded Glossary” adds terms from two additional languages and adds non-Roman script for Japanese, Korean, and Russian. The Expanded Glossary has never been formally published and requires update. Neither of these lists contain definitions.

The author is aware of numerous national authorities’ interest in establishing standardized undersea feature terminology. One example is Poland’s *Polskie Nazwy Geograficzne Świata: Część IV: Oceany I Morza (Polish Geographical Names of the World, Part IV: Oceans and Seas) (1994)*, which includes thirteen Polish undersea feature terms and their definitions. A 2013 update to the series was reported in Working Paper 64/14 at the Twenty-eighth session (2014).

Invitation

The author invites and encourages experts from other national authorities to consider development of undersea feature glossaries in alignment with B-6. Short of that, the author would appreciate being made aware of other existing undersea feature glossaries.

Links

International Hydrographic Organization <http://www.iho.int/>

IHO Bathymetric Publications http://www.iho.int/iho_pubs/IHO_Download.htm#B-6

U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN): <http://geonames.usgs.gov/>

GEONet Names Server (GNS) <http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html>

Commission on the Standardization of Geographical Names Outside of Poland
http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/wpngs_en.php
