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**National standardization: Office treatment of names**

**The US Army Corps of Engineers Facilitating Communication  
Between Federal Agencies and the US Board on Geographic  
Names**

Submitted by United States of America \*\*

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## The US Army Corps of Engineers Facilitating Communication Between Federal Agencies and the US Board on Geographic Names

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**Summary:** The staff of the United States Board on Geographic Names solicits input from key stakeholders when proposals are received requesting additions or changes to officially-recognized geographic names. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) works with Federal land authorities when name proposals are related to either USACE properties or any property that falls under the Department of Defense, and facilitates communication with the national naming authority.

One of the important guiding principles of the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) is to recognize and preserve feature names that are used by local communities. Fulfilling this principle requires communication between the naming authority and local stakeholders, including Federal agencies, who may have interest in the name of a feature in question. Each Federal agency has unique processes and procedures for processing BGN requests for input, and this paper focuses on USACE.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) provides engineering expertise and services for both the military and civilian sectors, particularly in the management of water resources, civil engineering works, ecosystem restoration, and land management. Since the responsibility domains of USACE intersect with geographic features that may be the subject of geographic name proposals, USACE both participates in the work of the national naming authority as a member of the BGN, as well as provides input when domestic name proposals are of interest to either USACE or to the Department of Defense (DoD).

The BGN staff extensively researches each geographic name proposal to identify parties who may have an interest in the feature in question. If this research discovers that the feature may be of interest to either USACE or the DoD, BGN's research staff will ask for input from the USACE member of the BGN. BGN staff researchers take a broad view when locating and identifying stakeholders; a feature of interest may be within a military or USACE property, may be near it, or may interact with a feature of responsibility. For example, a proposed change to a name of a river may be of interest to USACE because of a hydroelectric power dam on the river.

If a geographic name proposal is of interest to USACE, a report is prepared by a USACE BGN member and sent to the USACE land manager of the property or a representative at one of the 39 USACE administrative districts. . The report includes a summary of the name request proposal, a map identifying the feature, a summary of related policies, and a request for an opinion on the proposal. Since local representatives are not usually familiar with naming processes and procedures, the report includes excerpts of BGN principles or policies that may be related to the proposal. The report also includes a form that allows the user to respond with one of four options: "No Opinion," "No Objection," "Support," or "Do Not Support." In the event a proposal is not supported, the respondent must provide a reason. This communication is done via electronic mail.

If a geographic name proposal is of interest to a military installation, the USACE BGN member will identify a point of contact who can represent the facility's official opinion. The member contacts the facility's Public Affairs Office, provides background on the BGN and the naming process, and asks for a point of contact with the authority to represent the installation. When communicating, the BGN member stresses the importance of the naming process, as it will determine the Federally-mandated name that the installation will be required to use in the future for the feature. When a representative has been identified, the USACE BGN member prepares and sends a report, consisting of summary of the name proposal, a map identifying the feature, any related naming policies, and a request for an opinion on the proposal.

In both the USACE and DoD installation cases, the USACE BGN member reviews the response to ensure that it conforms to official naming principles and policies. Usually the local representative's opinion will be considered the agency's opinion and will be sent to the BGN staff to become part of the naming proposal documentation and later presented to the Domestic Names Committee for the final naming decision. If the local representative does not appear to have understood the naming request or the naming principles, USACE's BGN member will discuss the response with the representative to see if a change is warranted. If the USACE BGN member and the representative still disagree, the USACE response will be coordinated with USACE Headquarters.

The USACE process for handling BGN staff requests for input on geographic names proposals respects the hierarchical nature of the federal agencies and the BGN's principle of respecting local feature name use by soliciting the opinions of local experts to the USACE or DoD officials who manage or have an interest in the geographic feature under consideration.