

**Twentieth Session
New York, 17 – 28 January 2000**

Item 18
of the Provisional Agenda

**IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS AND THE AIMS AND FUNCTIONS OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES**

National Standardization Office Treatment of Names

**Geographical Names Data Compilation Program of the
United States of America (Domestic)**

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Roger L. Payne (USA)

The Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) is the automated database of geographical names of the United States, and the data are being compiled in two distinct phases. The first phase is complete for States and areas under United States jurisdiction, and entailed the collection of most feature names printed on the 1:24,000-scale topographic maps published by the Geological Survey and the Forest Service as well as the charts of the Office of Coast Survey. The second phase is a long-term project to gather additional names information from official State and local materials, as well as a wide variety of historical documents. This project is being accomplished on a State-by-State basis.

The GNIS staff receives a large volume of data in electronic format on a monthly basis, and uses a suite of software to analyze further and verify the information. Finally, a small percentage of information is actually verified against the source document to assure that established procedures are being followed. Once all aspects of quality assurance are complete, the information is submitted to the database and is immediately available for use by Federal agencies, and to the user community through the Internet.

The dynamic nature of a program of applied toponymy requires a strong maintenance program to assure quality and integrity, as well as the most current information. A network of Federal agencies has been established to assure that the database is maintained accordingly. These agencies use web-based software designed specifically for this purpose, and the GNIS staff apply the same procedures of quality assurance as those used in the data compilation program. Federal agencies presently in the program include Board on Geographic Names, Geological Survey, Forest Service, Office of Coast Survey, Census Bureau, and the National Park Service. The Bureau of Land Management soon will join the program.

**GEOGRAPHIC NAMES INFORMATION SYSTEM
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC NAMES DATA COMPILATION PROGRAM
JANUARY 2000**

