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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA STATE GAZETTEERS

Submitted by Roger L. Payne, Executive Secretary
U.S. Board on Geographical Names
United States of America

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By Roger L. Payne
Executive Secretary
U.S. Board on Geographic Names
U.S. Geological Survey
523 National Center
Reston, Virginia 22092
U.S.A.

The National Gazetteer of the United States of America is available in both digital and conventional form. The conventional version is being published as U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 1200 with each State, territory, and outlying area to be published as a separate volume. Both forms of the National Gazetteer are products of the National Geographic Names Database which is the nation's official automated geographic names depository. The National Digital Gazetteer of the United States is a read only compact disk (CD-ROM) containing all the geographic names and associated locative attributes compiled for named features in the United States at the time the disk is created. Some entries also have descriptive text and name origin information. Also included as an integral part of the disk is the software enabling one to search, retrieve, analyze, and export the information. Data compilation for the National Geographic Names Database is accomplished in two phases. Phase I, begun in 1976 and completed in 1983, entailed the collecting and recording of most names and associated information from the large-scale topographic maps published by the U.S. Geological Survey, and the U.S. Forest Service as well as the charts of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, and the records of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. Approximately 2 million feature names and variant names are recorded and processed into the National Geographic Names Database.

Phase II, the compilation and collection of names and associated information from other sources, was begun in 1982 and has a projected completion date of 2002-2005.

Research and compilation in this phase is more comprehensive and, therefore, more time consuming. Instructions detailing the methodology for researching, compiling, and encoding names and associated information are provided in U.S. Geological Survey Circular 1011 (Orth and Payne, 1987). Checks and balances are part of the methodology as well as the data input software to ensure adherence to the principles and policies of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

Quality and detail are paramount in this effort; therefore, the assistance of local experts and interested organizations is solicited for compiling data for each State. Figure 1 shows the status of the second phase of compilation, completion of which leads to the publication of a State volume of the National Gazetteer. Depending upon the particulars of a State, the compilation effort requires approximately 3 to 4 years and about 6 months processing time before a State gazetteer is published.

