

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

**Item 6
of the Provisional Agenda**

**REPORTS OF THE LIAISON OFFICERS, REGIONAL MEETINGS AND INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS**

Council of Geographic Names Authorities

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The Executive Committee of the Western States Geographic Names Council in session on 3 September 1998 in Cody, Wyoming approved (with one dissenting vote) the proposal to expand membership from States west of the Mississippi River to all States, Commonwealths, and Territories of the United States. This is the third expansion in the 22-year history of the organization. Originally founded in 1977 and made up of States in the Rocky Mountain area, the organization expanded in 1979 to include the Pacific Coast States and the State of Hawaii. A second expansion occurred in 1991 to include all States west of the Mississippi River.

The new name is the Council of Geographic Names Authorities (COGNA) and each State, Commonwealth, and Territory of the United States has one vote with the Federal Government as a member with two votes, the Chairman of the Domestic Names Committee of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names and the Executive Secretary of the Domestic Names Committee. Other Federal Agencies have non-voting observer status as do representatives of the Federal Governments of Canada and Mexico, and including one observer each from their respective Provinces (and Territories) and States. The purpose of the organization includes the following objectives:

- 1. Promote standardization of procedures in assigning or authorizing the names of geographic features within governmental jurisdictions in the United States;**
- 2. Promote cooperation among federal and state agencies that have some degree of responsibility in maintaining databases of names for geographic features and/or cultural entities as mandated by the United States Board on Geographic Names;**
- 3. Make available geographic name information to officials of governmental agencies and public and private enterprises (foreign and domestic), and the general public;**
- 4. Provide a professional and educational forum at which members of the Council, Federal Advisory Group, International Advisory Group, and interested citizens may present research papers and/or workshops and to learn about the "Principles, Policies, and Procedures" concerning geographic names and the naming processes within the United States;**
- 5. Co-sponsor an annual conference at which members of the Council may take appropriate actions or make recommendation to relevant federal and state agencies regarding purposes 1,2,3, and 4.**

The annual meeting of the Council in 1999 was held in Spokane, Washington, and in 2000, Saint Louis, Missouri will be the venue, and the conference will be hosted by the Missouri State Board on Geographic Names. The Conference in 2001 is scheduled for Boise, Idaho, and will be hosted by the Idaho State Board on Geographic Names. The conference in 2002 is scheduled for Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, and will be hosted jointly by the State Names Authorities in West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania as well as the Federal Government. A standard part of each year's agenda includes a meeting of the host State Board on Geographic Names, the monthly meeting of the Federal Board, and relevant papers as well as the very popular and often exciting State/Federal Roundtable.

For more information about COGNA, contact its Executive Secretary, Mr. Wayne Furr, at:

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