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Working Group of Undersea Features

- 1) Guidelines for name applications
  - 2) Definition of descriptive terminology
  - 3) Methods of recording and stabilizing underseas nomenclature
  - 4) Determination of methods of centralizing and dissemination
- General conclusions

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Undersea Features

1. GUIDELINES FOR NAME APPLICATIONS

This subject is taken as relating to the determination of what parameters might most suitably govern the "selection" of names for undersea features not presently named, or in need of more appropriate names than now applied.

It excludes consideration of the generic terms concerned, since these are to be dealt with in item 2 of the Group's terms of reference (Definition of Descriptive Terminology).

A distinction between the two is made by Fairbairn (Information Papers - Reference 11) in which he classes "nomenclature" as the procedures of giving specific names to unique features, and "terminology" as concerned with labels for classes of deep-sea topographical features, a series of submarine geomorphic terms. It should be noted that other authorities do not make this distinction. The term "nomenclature" is commonly used to include both terminology and specific name parts (Information Papers - c.f. Reference 6).

For convenience, one may refer to the first as "specific" terms and the second as "generic" terms. Therefore this paper concerns itself only with "specific" terms; in other words the uniquely identifying element in each name.

The literature on the selection of undersea feature names to which the writer has had access is not extensive. It consists in the main of a statement in the minutes of the International Committee on the Nomenclature of Ocean Bottom Features, Monaco 1953, Item C - Selection of Names, (Information Papers - Reference 1) which appears to be based on past practice; the proposals of Wiseman and Gray, 1953 and 1955, (Information Papers - References 2 and 4); directives by the Hydrographer of the Navy, Great Britain, (Information Papers - References 9 and 10); and further proposals.

by other authorities. Undoubtedly, instructions similar to those in use by the British Admiralty are in use in the hydrographic services of other countries.

In addition, there is the work of the two sub-committees of the Gebco organization - one dealing with Nomenclature of Ocean Bottom Features (apparently "terminology" in Fairburn's context) and the other with Geographic Names of Ocean Bottom Features (Fairburn's "nomenclature").

I do not have information on the work of either sub-committee, except as reflected in I.H.B. publications and on Gebco bathymetric charts.

Also, I would refer to the remarkably comprehensive article by Charles D. Rouse, Maritime Safety Division, United States Naval Oceanographic Office, printed on the reverse of Pilot Chart of the North Atlantic Ocean, dated August, 1969, which contains a section on Undersea Feature Names, and particularly, as pertinent to this paper, a brief statement on the selection guidelines followed by the Advisory Committee on Undersea Features, and to the United States Board On Geographic Names.

Finally, I mention the work and attitudes toward name selection of undersea features carried on by the Sub-committee On Undersea Features Names of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.

In reviewing all of these sources of information, and keeping in mind my lack of knowledge of the criteria, undoubtedly existent, of most other nations with maritime interests, I have concluded that this Working Group might put forward, subject to further individual emendations, guidelines for the selection and application of undersea feature names in the following terms:

Suggested Principles For The Selection Of  
Undersea Feature Names

1. Priority

- (a) Sealed feature names in use shall be respected, unless, by reason of duplication or inappropriateness, they are objectionable. Changes shall be made only by international agreement.
- (b) Sealed names within national sovereignties shall be accepted as established unless agreement for change can be arrived at with the nation concerned.

2. Identification

- (a) No feature shall be named unless reasonable identification of its character, extent and position is possible. Positions shall be given in terms of geographic co-ordinates.
- (b) Features lacking identification fully in terms of (a) shall be referred to by co-ordinates and generic only pending more complete information.

3. Acceptable Derivations

Now names should be selected on the following basis:

- (1) Geographically significant names for all major features.
- (2) Descriptive names for lesser features when appropriate.
- (3) Names of associated physical features.
- (4) For smaller features:
  - (a) commemorative names honouring notables in the field of oceanography,
  - (b) commemorative names honouring personages prominent in the history of the nation for features within or adjacent to its jurisdiction

(c) names of discovery vessels.

4. Personal Names

Names of living persons shall be accepted only in exceptional circumstances, in recognition of outstanding contribution to oceanographic science.

5. Languages

The specific part of a name shall be preserved unchanged when written in the Roman alphabet, with all appropriate diacritical signs.

The generic term may be in the language of the text of the document on which they are published.

Names written in other alphabets may be transliterated to the Roman alphabet. Names in the Roman alphabet may be transliterated into the appropriate script.

6. Conventional Names (Acronyms)

(a) Names established in several language forms for features outside national sovereignties may be used in harmony with the text of the document.

(b) Names within specific national sovereignties shall be accepted as established by the sovereignty concerned subject to translation of generic part if desired.

7. Non-Translation of Descriptive Names

The specific part of descriptive or common names shall not be translated, but used in the language having priority of establishment. To do otherwise constitutes the creation of a second name for a single feature.

8. Recognition of New Names

Newly applied or proposed undersea feature names should be submitted to the established United Nations authority for recording, dissemination among member states, and counter proposals by this Authority when appropriate.

Submissions should be accompanied by proper feature identification and description, and information as to origin or derivation of the name.

2. DEFINITION OF DESCRIPTIVE TERMINOLOGY

A survey of the available literature indicates that work on the definition of generic terms for seabed features has been underway for at least four decades on an international level.

A good review of this area is presented in the paper by Edvalson (Information Papers, Reference 12). Attached to his paper is a list dealing with 45 terms agreed upon at a meeting of the Gebco Advisory Committee in Monaco, May, 1954.

The list has been carefully reviewed by the Canadian Hydrographic Service, and it has been concluded that the terms as listed are acceptable as defined with the exception of no. 42 Strath, about which the Hydrographic Service had certain reservations.

It would appear that, for the purposes of the Working Group on Underseas Features, the recognition of this list (Information Papers - Reference 12) as a firm base of acceptably defined seabed descriptive terminology would be a useful initial recommendation.

It should be noted, however, that various authorities have used definitions which do not always coincide with those adopted by the Gebco Advisory Committee, and for the consideration of the Working Group, I have provided a comparison of usages (Information Papers - Reference 14) arranged in alphabetical sequence according to the term name.

This may be helpful in consideration of the acceptability by the Working Group of the Gebco list.

Definition of additional generic terminology will be undoubtedly necessary in the future, as well as possible modification of the definitions now approved by the Gebco Advisory Committee.

It is suggested that a further recommendation would refer to the establishment, between the United Nations Sub-Committee On The Standardization of Geographical Names and the Geog. Advisory Committee of the International Hydrographic Organization, of a close working arrangement concerning this matter to avoid duplication of effort or conflict in results.



3. METHODS OF RECORDING AND STABILIZING  
UNDERSEAS NOMENCLATURE

4. DETERMINATION OF METHODS OF  
CENTRALIZING AND DECENTRALIZING

It appears to the writer that these two items in the 'Terms of Reference' of the Working Group must, by their interlocked natures, be treated as one, and it is proposed to do so.

The natural sequence of events in the creation of geographic names is that they are proposed to some authority; considered, and if accepted; recorded; published in some form; and drawn upon as required for the various purposes for which geographic names are employed.

In the business of acceptance, normally some set of guiding principles is employed.

The geographic names of land surface features, including the names of the hydrography concerned, are normally within the jurisdiction of a particular nation.

The names of underseas features differ from those of surface topographic features in that, aside from settled names clearly within universal accepted areas of national sovereignty, e.g. within the three-mile limit, there is an increasing problem of jurisdiction, culminating in those identifying features under the open seas, over which no nation may claim control.

By virtue of this very fact, the need for some form of control, if chaos in underseas feature nomenclature is to be avoided, grows more urgent. This view was expressed early by Prof. A.M. Komkov, the U.S.S.R. delegate to the March, 1970, meeting of the Ad Hoc Group of experts in New York in his working paper no. 14.

In order to realize the ideal of a stable, recorded and universally recognized underseas feature nomenclature, the pre-requisites necessary to bring it about must be examined.

Reverting to the sequence in the creation mentioned previously, the situation in respect to underseas geographic nomenclature involves the following questions:

1. Who originates undersea feature names?
2. What is the extent of right to do so?
3. Must such originations be submitted to a supra-national authority?
4. What authority makes decisions?
5. How are such decisions recorded, published, disseminated?

At present, the answers would appear to be:

1. Undersea feature names originate in various ways - through the activities of the hydrographic surveys of nations, through the activities of the world scientific communities, functioning jointly or independently, and through the activities of commercial and private interests concerned in some way with the undersea environment.
2. The right to name underseas features is at present restricted only in relation to such commitments as certain nations may have in respect to Gecco under agreements with the International Hydrographic Bureau.
3. Aside from responsibility to comply with Gecco regulations (issued to member nations by the I.H.B. - current edition March, 1970) incumbent on member nations, no supra-national authority exists to which undersea

features names need be submitted.

It should be further noted that names submitted for Cebco charts are supplied by the nation responsible for each chart, and are not basically furnished for a purpose other than representation on the chart concerned.

4. It would appear that no authority acts as a true arbiter in an international sense in respect to underseas feature names in the same way that many national name authorities do respecting national names.

5. The recording, publishing and dissemination of underseas feature names occur as follows:

(a) Recording

Done by particular hydrographic services in various countries in respect largely to names of national concern; also by national name authorities where these exist; also possibly by the Cebco sub-committees on the nomenclature and the geographic names of ocean bottom features.

This type of recording is neither uniform nor comprehensive.

(b) Publishing

Publication of underseas feature names occurs to a limited degree in gazetteers issued by a few national name authorities, usually of names of national interest; with even less frequency in commercial atlas and gazetteers; on bathymetric charts, particularly those constituting the Cebco series, but also on nationally produced

bathymetric charts and to some extent on navigation charts.

The only comprehensive gazetteer of undersea feature names of which I have knowledge is that produced to record the decisions of the U.B.G.M., Gazetteer no. 111, published June, 1969. A copy is attached.

I have been unable to verify the existence of the "Atlas of geographical names published in 1968 in connection with the production of the Gabco" mentioned in Prof. Komkov's working paper no. 14 submitted to the 1970 New York meeting.

Publication of particular names or groups of names also occurs in scientific papers and in popular press articles.

(c) Dissemination

The dissemination of undersea feature names as a result of the types of publication mentioned is by no means comprehensive or universal in respect to all who may be concerned.

There is no responsibility on a national agency to distribute beyond national borders, or on a private publisher to widen his market beyond what he finds profitable.

The closest attainment to world wide distribution is probably the distribution of Gabco charts to the 43 member states.

Statement Of Problem For This Working Party

Taking the foregoing into consideration, the problem for our purposes may be stated as follows:

What effective mechanism can be instituted under United Nations control which will:

- (a) undertake the compilation of all existing undersea feature names,
- (b) act as the receiver of proposed new names,
- (c) be capable of evaluating both existing and new names in terms of suitability, correctness of application, appropriateness, etc., in accordance with agreed principles,
- (d) render decisions acceptable to member states,
- (e) review and decide upon generic terminology for undersea features,
- (f) ensure universal recognition by publication of a continuing gazetteer and appropriate locational charts,
- (g) avoid conflict and duplication of effort with agencies engaged to a greater or lesser extent in similar work.

To accomplish such objectives, it would obviously be necessary to create a staff or bureau devoted to this work, presumably by an expansion of the functions of the Cartography Section of the Resources and Transport Division of the United Nations.

Obviously, also, the establishment of such a capability would conflict with or overlap the tasks now carried out by the Gebeo Committee of the International Hydrographic Bureau.

### Approaches To Problem Solution

Before accepting the hypothesis that a United Nations organization, or the expansion of an existing United Nations organization is mandatory to the solution of the problem as stated, the pertinent work carried out by other bodies should be more closely examined.

1. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (I.O.C.)

The writer has no knowledge of current work by this body directly pertaining to undersea nomenclature. Other members of our Working Group may be better informed.

2. The International Association of Physical Geographers (I.A.P.G.)

This authority has dealt with undersea nomenclature in the past, but it is my understanding that responsibility of the I.A.P.G. committee in this area was transferred to the Gebcoc Advisory Committee of the I.H.E.

3. International Hydrographic Organization - Gebcoc Advisory Committee and Sub-Committees of the latter

The Gebcoc Advisory Committee of the International Hydrographic Organization appears to be the principal body concerned, in international terms, with direct action relating to undersea feature generic terminology and specific undersea feature geographic names.

#### Work of Gebcoc

The Gebcoc Advisory Committee consists of an Editorial Committee and two sub-committees:

a sub-committee on the Nomenclature of Ocean Bottom Features (generic terms)

a sub-committee on Geographic Names of Ocean Bottom Features.

The role of Gebco is to act as the I.H.B.'s consultative body as far as the production of Gebco is concerned. (Gebco Regulations, March 1970 issued by the International Hydrographic Bureau).

These latter sub-committees are of particular concern in connection with the problem faced by our Working Group.

The first sub-committee, that on Nomenclature of Ocean Bottom Features, as a result of a meeting at Monaco in May 1961, agreed on a list of terms (generic), and definitions of those terms (see list in Information Papers - Reference 12).

The second sub-committee, that on the Geographic Names of Ocean Bottom Features, under the presidency of Dr. T. Matsuzaki, Chief Hydrographer of Japan, has undertaken to collect the geographic names and resolve contradictions.

According to information on the files of the Canadian Hydrographic Service, Dr. Matsuzaki acquired a list of all proper names of ocean bottom features shown on past and present Gebco charts. (Communication dated January 1, 1965). Whether this list is comparable to the content of U.G.B.G.N. Gazetteer 111 is not known.

This sub-committee solicits from member states of I.H.B. and I.A.P.O. comments and suggestions on undersea feature names, suitable for Gebco charts.

In May, 1968, the I.H.B. referred to the efforts of Dr. Matsuzaki to compile a world list of seamounts, and indicated that a comparison of seamount names and identification data for those compiled by Dr. Matsuzaki for the area of Japan revealed many discrepancies in names, locations and elevations in comparison with the list of world seamounts prepared by Dr. G. Udintsev of the U.S.S.R.

(This may be the work referred to in Prof. Korhonen's working paper no. 14).

From the above summary, it may be seen that the two Gebco sub-committees are most active in the fields laid down as terms of reference for our working group. It may further be inferred that, since the Gebco involves the majority of maritime nations, that the conclusion in Prof. Komarov's paper that the attempts of I.O.C., I.A.P.O. and I.H.B. "to eliminate the existing discord of geographical names ..... have failed" may be too stringent. While the whole objective has not yet been accomplished, progress is being made, and may yet prove successful.

SUMMARY

It may be concluded that, in the field of underseas features names, respecting

- \*guidelines for name applications
- definition of descriptive terminology
- methods of recording and stabilizing
- determination of agency or agencies best suited
- to centralize and disseminate such information"

(Report of Ad Hoc Group of Experts ESA/RT/C/EN/1 April 29, 1970)

the only agency clearly involved on an international level at present is the Gebco Advisory Committee.

This Committee collects data on underseas feature names, defines and establishes generic terminology of underseas features, and disseminates underseas feature names through 43 member states, thereby substantially contributing to the universal recognition of this nomenclature.

It does not appear to have established formal selection principles for underseas feature geographic names, although related activities have produced certain statements of this kind (see Information Papers - References 2 and 3).



## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Recommendations, in my view, which might be appropriate for a report to the Ad-Hoc Group of Experts February meeting, in the light of the considerations advanced in papers 1 to 3 are as follows:

1. That there is a need for the establishment of adequate guiding principles in the selection and application of the geographic names of undersea features. Those proposed in Paper # 1, or a modification of them as a consensus of the opinions of the Working Group, may serve this purpose.
2. That the work already accomplished by the Gabco Advisory Sub-Committee on generic terms may be regarded as satisfactory in respect to those terms now agreed upon by the Gabco member-states.
3. That further generic terms remain to be created and defined.
3. That the recording, stabilizing, and dissemination of undersea feature names appears to be carried out at present chiefly by one agency of international character, the Gabco Advisory Committee, with contributory activities by various national organizations.
4. That new undersea feature names are proliferating through the need for such names on the increasing numbers of bathymetric charts produced by various countries of contiguous coastal areas (c.f. Bathymetric Charts 891, 892, Canadian Hydrographic Service), and that the undersea feature names newly established on such charts are not necessarily co-ordinated through any international authority.

Therefore, that a standing committee under United Nations auspices could be established, to be responsible for

- (a) the interpretation of accepted Guiding Principles in the evaluation of undersea feature names,
- (b) the examination of the undersea names and generic terms on existing bathymetric and navigational charts, and related literature, for compliance with such Principles,
- (c) the establishment of such facilities as may be requisite to act as a central agency for the reception of proposals relating to new undersea geographic names and new or revised undersea generic terms from whatever sources,

- (d) the assurance of dissemination of decisions on the widest possible basis through the direct or delegated publication of undersea names and nomenclature in the form of gazetteers or other suitable media,
  - (e) co-ordination with other agencies doing related work through absorption, consolidation or co-operation.
5. That further study of the problems involved in the implementation of these recommendations is needed, and this should be delegated to the present Working Group or such other group as may be designated.