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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION: OFFICE TREATMENT OF NAMES,  
ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF NATIONAL NAMES AUTHORITIES,  
TOPONYMIC GUIDELINES FOR MAP EDITORS AND OTHER EDITORS

Legislative and normative basis for the national standardization of geographical  
names in Russia

(Submitted by Russia)\*\*

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# LEGISLATIVE AND NORMATIVE BASIS FOR THE NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN RUSSIA

## RESUME

In 1992 political system of Russia was drastically changed. The new Constitution of the Russian Federation was adopted on the 12th of December 1993. In the new edition of the Constitution geographical names were classified as the subject of the federal jurisdiction. Thus, the State is responsible for managing the activity in the field of geographical names. This required a lot of efforts to develop legislative and normative basis for handling geographical names.

In 1994 under the special Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation the Inter-Department Commission on Geographical Names was established as permanent authority to form unified approach to geographical names in all branches of the national economy.

Under the Federal Law "On geodesy and cartography" adopted in 1995 the standardization, inventory and unification of name usage fell into the federal activity of the national significance and was funded by the federal budget.

The Federal Law "On naming geographical features" adopted in December of 1997 sets legislative foundation for naming and renaming of geographical features as well as for the standardization, usage, registration and storage of geographical names as a part of the historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of the Russian Federation.

The Paper deals with the basic statements of the Law and some other legal acts adopted by the Government of the Russian Federation to provide for the Law implementation. The legal and normative acts described in the Paper make up current legislative foundation for national standardization of geographical names.

In 1992 political system of Russia was drastically changed. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1992 the Declaration of the State Sovereignty of the Russian Federation was adopted. The new Constitution was developed and finally adopted on the 12th of December 1993.

In the new edition of the Constitution geographical names were classified as a subject of the federal jurisdiction. Thus, the State is responsible for managing the activity in the field of geographical names.

In May of 1994 the Government of the Russian Federation adopted the Decree "On measures to unify usage of geographical names in the Russian Federation". Under the Decree the Inter-Department Commission on Geographical Names was established as permanent authority to form unified approach to geographical names in all branches of the national economy, Start of the Commission work had a great impact on stimulation of the activity related to geographical names handling.

The Federal Law "On geodesy and cartography" adopted in November 1995 defined legislative foundation for the activity in the field. Namely, under the Law the standardization, inventory and unification of name usage fell into the federal activity of the national significance and was funded by the federal budget.

In 1996 the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography (Roscartography) submitted to the Government of Russia the draft law "On naming geographical features" approved by the Inter-Department Commission on Geographical Names. The Federal Law was adopted by the State Duma, then approved by the Council of the Federation and after this, in December of 1997, signed by the President of the Russian Federation. The Law sets legislative foundation for naming and renaming of geographical features as well as for standardization, usage, registration and storage of geographical names as a part of the historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of the Russian Federation.

The Law carries over to the activity in the field of recording, standardization, usage, registration, inventory and storage of geographical names of the Russian Federation, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone as well as the names of the features discovered or distinguished by the Russian explorers in the World Ocean and Antarctica. The Law does not carry over to the names of extraterrestrial bodies and features and urban features.

Under the Law the following issues of place-names handling come within jurisdiction of the Russian Federation:

- determination of the state policy in the field of geographical features naming;
- naming and renaming of geographical features;
- determination of unified requirements, norms and rules applied to geographical names;
- development and maintenance of the State Catalogue of Geographical Features;
- establishing special federal executive authority to be responsible for the activity in the field of geographical names;
- determination of the procedure for funding the activity related to geographical names;
- collaboration with other countries and international organizations in the field of geographical names.

Under the Law special federal executive authority sets procedure for obtaining available geographical names from official map, reference and other sources, from set-

tlers of the area, specialists engaged in study of history and geography of the appropriate area.

The Law requires that a name assigned to a geographical feature should reflect prominent characteristics of a feature or the area it is located in, or settlers of the area, their everyday life and occupations. A newly assigned name should not include more than three words and should fit the available system of geographical names. Geographical features could be named after people who have discovered, investigated, or founded a feature. Geographical features could be as well named after famous statesmen, public figures, men of science and culture after their death. It is not allowed to assign one and the same name to several features of the same type within one administrative unit.

The Law permits renaming in case:

- two or more features of the same type within one administrative unit have one and the same name and that complicates their identification;
- geographical feature is denoted with abbreviation, number or word combination that is not actually a geographical name.

Renaming of some geographical features is allowed to return their former names which have been widely known and used.

In documentation, cartographic products, books and other publications, standardized names of geographical features shall be used. The standardization of geographical names shall be carried out in compliance with the rules and traditions of place-names usage in the Russian language. The standardization of geographical names in the other languages of the peoples of Russia shall comply to the rules and traditions of the appropriate languages. Procedure for the standardization is determined by legal and normative acts of the Russian Federation in the field of geographical names. Procedure for approval and introduction of such legal acts is set by the Government of the Russian Federation.

According to the Law, on the territory of the Russian Federation geographical names are placed on road posts in Russian. If needed, place-names could be written in the other languages of the peoples of Russia with interests of local settlers being accounted for, and they could be duplicated with the Romanized forms as well.

The Law sets procedure for naming and renaming of geographical features. The state authorities of the Russian Federation and its subjects, local administrations, unions and associations, juridical persons, citizens of the country can submit proposals on naming or renaming of geographical features. The proposals should be addressed at the legislative (representative) body of the subject of the Russian Federation on the territory of which a feature locates. Proposals concerning naming or renaming of geographical features of the continental shelf, exclusive economic zone of the Russian Federation, as well as features in Antarctica or the World Ocean discovered or distinguished by the Russian explorers or scientists should be submitted to the special federal executive authority in the field of geographical names.

Legislative (representative) authorities in the subjects of the Russian Federation shall consider submitted proposals and in case of their approval they shall notify the population of the appropriate area on the costs the proposed naming or renaming might cause. The authorities shall be aware of the opinion of the local settlers about the proposed naming or renaming. After this all the material shall be submitted for an expertise to the special federal executive authority in the field of geographical names.

Renaming of republics, areas (krai), regions (oblast'), cities of federal status, autonomous regions, autonomous districts as well as of cities of the Russian Federation are approved by federal laws on representations made by the subjects of the Russian Federation.

Naming of capitals and administrative centers of the subjects of the Russian Federation or their renaming is made by the federal laws on representations made by the subjects of the country. Naming and renaming of other features is performed by the Government of the Russian Federation

Naming or renaming of geographical features of the continental shelf, exclusive economic zone of the Russian Federation, as well as of features in Antarctica or the World Ocean discovered or distinguished by the Russian explorers or scientists is made by the Government of the Russian Federation on representations made by the special federal executive authority on geographical names.

Available or newly assigned geographical names shall be recorded and registered by the federal Executives within their terms of reference.

In order to provide for unified and consistent usage of geographical names in Russia and their storage, the Law seeks to develop the State Catalogue of Geographical Names. The special federal executive authority on geographical names is charged with the task of the Catalogue development and maintenance.

The Federal Executives are vested with the right to compile and release gazetteers and references on geographical names, maps and atlases of the Russian Federation within their terms of reference.

The State authorities in the subjects of the Russian Federation can prepare and release lists, gazetteers and references on geographical names in the languages of the peoples of Russia accounting for the interests of population in the appropriate areas. Prior to releasing, the contents of these gazetteers and references shall be agreed to the special federal authority on geographical names.

The Law forbids unspecified replacement of one geographical name with another and use of distorted names. Violation of these statements will cause administrative penalty in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation.

Work on collection and standardization of geographical names, compilation and release of gazetteers and references in the Russian language is funded by the federal budget allocated for the Federal Executives.

Work on collection and standardization of geographical names in the other languages of the peoples of this country is funded from budgets of the subjects of the Russian Federations interested in such work.

Renaming of a geographical feature in the Russian Federation on representations made by the legislative (representative) authority of the subject of the country is funded from the budget of the respective subject. If a proposal on renaming of a geographical feature is submitted by the Federal Executive, it is funded from the federal budget.

To ensure implementation of the Federal Law "On naming geographical features" and to detail some of its statements, the Government of the Russian Federation adopted a number of special decrees.

In February of 1998 the Government of the Russian Federation determined the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography of Russia (Roscartography) as special federal executive authority in the field of collection, standardization, use, registration, inventory and storage of geographical names and adopted the program for preparation of legal acts to implement the Law statements.

In its special direction Roscartography stated that its facilities should be guided by earlier developed instructions, conventions, regulations and other normative acts on geographical names if they did not contradict to the Federal Law "On naming geographical features" till they were updated and released as normative acts.

In the past decades more than 100 normative and methodic documents on collection, recording, standardization, naming and renaming of geographical features have been developed and approved in this country. The guidelines, manuals and gazetteers involve the stuff for about 200 states and territories and 140 languages of the world. Since then, much has been changed in a political arrangement of the world, new realities and new approaches to the standardization of geographical names have been developed. Normative acts related to geographical names of Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States are apt to revision in the first turn.

In March of 1999 by its decree the Government of the Russian Federation approved new Statute of Inter-Department Commission on Geographical Names. Per the Statute the Commission is constantly operating authority that coordinates activities of various industries in the field of geographical names. It shall develop unified approach to place-names handling, their recording, registration and inventory as well as to preservation of geographical names as a part of historic and cultural inheritance of the peoples of Russia. Varied activity of the Commission could be conventionally split into two large portions:

- based on the gained experience in handling geographical names the Commission shall determine high priority issues, consider drafts of legal and, normative acts of the Russian Federation pertaining to geographical names and investigate execution of the already approved legal acts. It shall collaborate with authorities of different levels, the concerned Russian and foreign juridical persons and agencies on the issues of geographical names. The Commission shall prepare appropriate stuff for the Russian participants of the UN Conferences and other international organizations on place-name issues.

- the Commission is responsible for consideration of proposals on naming and renaming of geographical features on the territory of the Russian Federation, continental shelf, exclusive economic zone of the Russian Federation, as well as of features in Antarctica or the World Ocean discovered or distinguished by the Russian explorers or scientists. It shall coordinate development and support of the State Catalogue of Geographical Names, compilation and release of gazetteers, references and bulletins on geographical names.

Within its terms of reference, decisions of the Commission are mandatory for the federal Executives and authorities represented in the Commission as well as for agencies and institutes acting within the field of responsibility of the above mentioned federal Executives.

Per a direction of Roscartography, the Central Research Institute of Geodesy, Air Survey and Cartography is responsible for scientific and methodical support of the activity in the field of geographical names.

The Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation adopted in May 1999 states that legal act drafts which determine unified approaches, norms and conventions in relation to geographical names and which deal with the issues within the terms of reference of the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography shall be first considered by the Inter-Department Commission on Geographical Names and then approved by the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography. Only after this they shall get state registration and become valid. The same Decree determines the procedure for considering proposals on naming and renaming of geographical features and their expertise. Based on the Decree, in July 1999 Roscartography sent "List of documents and information required to expertise proposals on naming and renaming of geographical features" to the federal executive bodies, authorities in the subjects of Russia, facilities of Roscartography, departments and agencies concerned. The proposals submitted for an expertise shall comprise the following documents:

- application from the state authority of the subject of the Russian Federation addressed at the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography. The application shall include the following attachments:

- copy of the resolution adopted by the legislative (representative) authority in the subject of the Russian Federation where the feature to be named or renamed is located. The resolution shall approve the proposed naming or renaming.

- copies of all the submitted documents which have been considered by the legislative (representative) authority in the subject of the Russian Federation where the feature to be named or renamed is located. They shall include copies of:

- proposals on naming or renaming with the appropriate substantiation..

- protocols of meetings held by the local settlers to discuss a proposal and express their opinion on it.

- resolutions of the administration of the area a feature to be named or renamed is located.

- maps or plans of the area a feature to be named or renamed is located.

Proposals on naming or renaming submitted for the expertise shall contain the following:

- generic term of a feature;

- location of a feature;

- proposed name;

- substantiation of a proposed name;

- information on homonymous place-names within the same area, district or region, and for large features – within the Russian Federation

- information on agencies, citizens who made a proposal.

In case the proposed names are proper names of people, a proposal shall include brief description of their lives and activities.

Forms of the documents submitted for the expertise as well as samples of their filling are developed by the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography of Russia.

The Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography notifies the legislative (representative) authority on the results of the expertise of their proposal. If the conclusion of the expertise is positive, a proposal is forwarded to the Government of the Russian Federation together with a draft of a respective resolution.

In July 2000 " Statute of registration and inventory of geographical names, release of gazetteers and references on geographical names, development and support of the State Catalogue of Geographical Names" was adopted by the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation. Geographical names are registered and recorded to preserve them as a part of historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of the Russian Federation.

The Decree states that registration and recording of geographical names in the Russian language is carried out by the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography and other federal executive authorities within the terms of their reference. At the same time the state authorities in the subjects of the Russian Federation are allowed to record and register geographical names in other languages of the peoples of the country with the interests of local settlers being accounted for.

To register and record geographical names the unified registration forms will be used which allow developing and maintaining the State Catalogue of Geographical Names.

The users shall be supplied with official information on standardized geographical names, with gazetteers and references on geographical names prepared with the data obtained from the State Catalogue of Geographical Names. The Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography and other federal executives within their terms of reference are charged with the task to compile gazetteers and references on geographical names. It is emphasized that the gazetteers and references could be prepared and published not only in Russian but in other languages of the peoples of Russia. They shall be agreed to the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography.

The mentioned Decree determines the aims and procedures to develop and support the State Catalogue of Geographical Names. The Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography is responsible for development of the Catalogue based on the available legislative acts devoted to naming and renaming of geographical features, maps, references and other sources. To store, update, process and output the data from the Catalogue at the users' queries, the data retrieval system is being developed.

In addition to the above mentioned legal and normative acts which make up legislative basis for the standardization of geographical names, the following papers were developed:

- draft of the Federal Law "On making changes and complimenting the Civil Code of the Russian Federation " that provides for amenability for infringements of the legislation of the Russian Federation in the field of geographical names;
- draft of the Federal Law " On making changes and complimenting articles 5 and 13 in the Federal Law "On general principles for local self-government in the Russian Federation" concerning the issues of naming and renaming of populated places and administrative units;
- draft of the Federal Law "On making changes and complimenting the Federal Law "On naming geographical features" in relation to handling foreign geographical names, urban names and renaming.

The mentioned legal and normative acts make up current basis for the national standardization of geographical names. Since the Federal Law "On naming geographical

feature” becoming valid, three laws which approve renaming of the cities in the Russian Federation have been adopted. Novgorod got the name of Velikij Novgorod, the city of Skalistyj became Gadžievo and the capital of the Ingush Republic was assigned the name Magas. In addition, 36 Decrees of the Government of the Russian Federation devoted to naming and renaming of more than 250 features were prepared and adopted. Considerable experience in application of the Law “On naming geographical features” was gained. With an aim to give better notion of the Law to the civil community, the Comments to the Law are almost completed by now. The Comments account for the released decrees of the Government of Russia and other documents aimed at the implementation of the Law.