

Geographical names authorities - some concluding comments

10 thoughts on functioning of an authority/board
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- (1) **Each country can chose its own path** for authorization of geographical names, benefitting from experiences and best practices of others.
- (2) No authority (so by default the Mapping Agency) can work, **but authorities provide a basis for more than mapping**; they are less personal in the decision making; and less biased towards cartographers.



Assuming an authority exists ...

(3) Members of the Board. **Some countries will need high level participants on the Board**

to encourage general acceptance of decisions. Among government members include those involved in the decisions (e.g. National Parks) as well as user groups (e.g. Archives). Commitment of members is important.



(4) Some kind of **legal framework** should exist for the Board. Develop a clearly stated mandate, strong guidelines, principles, and precedents for decision-making. Particular attention to indigenous, minority and regional language issues will be significant in many countries.

(5) **Arrange for appropriate advice** from linguists, historians and other experts. Establish working groups, as needed.

(6) **Public involvement** is essential – local usage; perhaps advertising of decisions and providing opportunity for objections.



(7) **Documentation must be well prepared for the Board;** Board decisions/recommendations must be clear and unambiguous. If more than one name (in bilingual or multilingual areas) is to be approved, information on when and how to use the names nationally and internationally should be included. Today, a name decision should include the limits of features being named.

- (8) **Publicize the work of the Board** and make available forms for public submissions.
- (9) If the Board is decentralized, some **national umbrella organization** should exist to coordinate policies and data at the national level.

General

- (10) **Disseminate the decisions widely.** Have the geographical names data entered into a database that is publicly available and linked into mapping requirements – on the web, if possible. Maintain cross-references to old or variant names.

