
United Nations Group of Experts on**Geographical Names****2021 session**

New York, 3 – 7 May 2021

Item 4(a) of the provisional agenda ***Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names**

Report of New Zealand

Submitted by New Zealand **

Summary

The 2021 report of New Zealand continues to build on information submitted in its reports to the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in 2007, 2012 and 2017, respectively, and the 2019 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographic Names. The national naming authority of New Zealand, the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa,¹ published its strategic plan for the period 2020–2025² in April 2020. Outreach is one of the four strategic goals of the Board and will be its focus in the immediate future. It includes several initiatives to raise the Board's profile, such as developing partnerships, improving the gazetteer, establishing an education programme and celebrating the Board's centenary in 2024. Current work priorities and initiatives, which will give practical effect to the fundamental standardization work of the Board, are also summarized.

* GEGN.2/2021/1

** Prepared by Wendy Shaw, Secretary, New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa

¹ "Memorial markers of the landscape".

² See www.linz.govt.nz/file/21892/.

Legislation

The New Zealand Geographic Board (Ngā Pou Taunaha) Act 2008³ (NZGB Act 2008) established the Board and set out its purpose, functions, duties, jurisdiction, *Gazetteer*, annual reporting requirements, processes, compliance, enforcement and membership. The Board:

- has a responsibility to safeguard the geographic naming traditions, culture and heritage that its various communities have brought to New Zealand;
- ensures its geographic naming work contributes to a geographic information system that provides economic, cultural, and social value to all New Zealanders;
- is steward (kaitiaki) and custodian of New Zealand’s official geographic names;
- is principal adviser to the New Zealand government on geographic names (official and unofficial) – especially to Land Information New Zealand, Te Arawhiti (the Office for Māori-Crown Relations) and the Department of Conservation;
- consults with New Zealanders and takes account of their views in its decision making;
- ensures its decision making and advisory capabilities are deployed where they can most benefit the longer term interests of New Zealand; and
- ensures its decision making is independent and based on robust processes and criteria.

Why are geographic names important to New Zealanders?

Alongside practical and administrative needs, geographic names provide social, cultural, heritage, identity, and language benefits, which contribute to our nation building and sense of place. As a fundamental part of an address, along with the road name and property number, unique and usable geographic names enable the location of people and property, contribute to efficient government administration and link data for a wide range of public and private purposes.

Why have official geographic names?

- To provide practical, unambiguous, fundamental, and unique location identification and navigation for the physical landscape we live in
- To recognise heritage and culture
- To provide a reliable and authoritative single source of truth
- To demonstrate New Zealand’s jurisdictional interests
- To ensure standardised, consistent and accurate geographic names
- To identify where we are as we go about our everyday business – they are a component of our infrastructure, and most importantly are needed in emergencies
- To ensure that important geographic names are preserved, restored and celebrated
- To uphold the Treaty of Waitangi principles of partnership, protection and participation.

Standardisation

Refer to agenda item 6(a) GEGN.2/2021/19/CRP.19 for New Zealand’s report on five geographic naming standards⁴ in English and Māori:

- the *Standard for New Zealand place names*,
- the *Standard for Antarctic place names*,
- the *Standard for altering Region and District names*,
- the *Standard for Crown Protected area names*, and
- the *Standard for undersea feature names*.

The New Zealand Geographic Board regularly reviews its operational guiding documents that support the process of making geographic names official. This is part of the Board’s programme of work and risk management.

³ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2008/0030/30.0/DLM1065412.html>

⁴ <https://www.linz.govt.nz/regulatory/place-names/propose-place-name/nzgb-naming-policies-principles-and-guidelines>

In May 2020, following agreement by the Minister of Conservation, version three of the *Standard for Crown protected area names* came into effect. This was needed because the Department of Conservation is responsible for managing and administering Wetlands, Ramsar⁵ Wetlands, and World Heritage Areas and Sites. These were added to the standard as approved generic terms so that Wairarapa Moana Wetland could be officially named.

Three other standards for New Zealand, Antarctica, and Region & District names were released for consultation in June 2020. They simplify and align the naming criteria for standardised, consistent and accurate place naming. All five of the Board's naming standards are published in English and Māori.

The Board has also recently developed a generic terms policy⁶, which provides guidance when considering and applying generic terms to geographic names. The primary purpose of a generic term is to describe the landscape of a geographic name, for example, river or maunga⁷. A generic term is also valuable for the public's general use, but especially for safe navigation and emergency response. Part of the rationale for this policy was to advise that a Māori generic term (eg maunga, roto⁸, motu⁹) can be used in a Māori geographic name.

Te Rautaki | Strategy 2020-2025

The New Zealand Geographic Board finalised and published its *Te Rautaki | Strategy 2020-2025* in April 2020. This signals a broadening of the Board's work with increased attention to outreach and compliance. It also set some ambitious goals for making large numbers of geographic names official. The four strategic goals are:

1. Naming places
Officially naming features and places so that people can effectively communicate information about location and New Zealand's heritage and culture are preserved
2. Outreach
Making information including stories about geographic names readily available
3. Using official names
Organisations use official names so that people use them in everyday life
4. Improving capability and processes
Continuously improving capability and processes to achieve goals and objectives

Outreach

During 2020 the Board reviewed how its communications, engagement and consultation can better support and promote the outreach goal of its strategic plan.

The geographical naming 'landscape' has changed significantly in New Zealand and globally. A number of factors have contributed to the growing interest in New Zealand's national identity and cultural distinctiveness – New Zealanders welcoming the use of te reo¹⁰ Māori, and the Government's announcement that New Zealand history will be a compulsory part of the education curriculum from 2022¹¹. The principles behind the Black Lives Matter movement, have raised interest in changing societal norms in other ways too, including geographic name changes. Some of this is at pace, which highlights the need for the Board to be prepared and planned. Additionally, the work of the Board is a critical part of creating a sense of belonging, of connection with home, community, and place, which

⁵ New Zealand became a Contracting Party to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention) in 1976.

⁶ <https://www.linz.govt.nz/file/21634/download?token=SD1wWdOV>

⁷ Mountain

⁸ Lake

⁹ Island

¹⁰ The language

¹¹ <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/new-zealand-history-taught-in-every-school-2022-government-announces>

relates to wellbeing and can be aligned to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Geographic names are a tangible way of preserving and restoring New Zealand's unique heritage and culture.

The Board acknowledges the likelihood of increased demand, which may in turn overwhelm current resources and processes. Given this, its Outreach and Engagement Strategy is intended to lay the foundations by being prepared through building capacity, ensuring user-centricity, and relationships and reputation are strong. Currently, outreach outcomes are planned over a three year timeframe, however, this could be delivered sooner if budgets allow or risks to reputation become more concerning.

The strategic tactics are primarily focused on brand roll out, website content review/rebuild, next generation *Gazetteer* enrichment and public relations initiatives. They will also support reviewing the proposal and consultation processes; building key stakeholder relationships, especially iwi¹² and Local Government New Zealand, and undertaking baseline research as a way of monitoring.

The messages will include not only the announcement of geographic names made official but also the story/meaning behind them, the expertise of the Board, the process, and the importance of compliance and correct orthography (including spelling).

The Board may increase the size of the Secretariat team, with at least one additional person dedicated to its outreach work. This resource will work closely with Land Information New Zealand's Strategic Communications team for media (traditional/social) and ministerial support, and the Digital team for website advice/guidance, and offsetting budgets by collaborating with external providers.

A newly branded website will be developed. The first step will be to review and rewrite content currently on Land Information New Zealand's website to reflect the new brand. This content will then be transferred over to a new website, which will be the public face of the Board, reflecting its expertise and providing access to 'all you want to know about geographic names and the process of naming places'. It will host the *Gazetteer* and *Geographic Features* websites, as well as the stories/meaning behind geographic names.

The *Gazetteer* will be enhanced and promoted to widen its reach and realise the Board's strategic intents. Developing a 'new look' place for information, including stories, is critical for ensuring the experience promised to be delivered. It will be the key product and online engagement tool for the public, schools, researchers, iwi, Waka Kotahi¹³ and other compliance partners, as well as potential partners like Te Papa¹⁴, Air NZ, and Tourism NZ to support their own destination campaigns, etc. Workshops in 2020 helped to determine what the future of this key online product might look like and offer. All this work will align with the Board's new brand.

Public relations initiatives will focus on proactively identifying opportunities to build the perception and reputation of the Board and its work. This will help establish a positive environment of support and understanding – where New Zealanders welcome the opportunity to engage in/trust the process and endorse/accept changed or new geographic names.

For the Board's centenary commemorations in 2024 a number of initiatives are being considered such as:

- An article in the *NZ Geographer* magazine
- Banners/display material
- Focussed stories on iconic geographic names, for example, the longest geographic name
- Influential direction set by the late Sir Apirana Ngata and the late Johannes Carl Andersen
- An historic account of the Board, to be launched at an exhibition at the National Library

¹² Tribal groupings

¹³ NZ Transport Agency

¹⁴ National Museum of NZ

- Consideration of the impact of wartime and post war activities. Noting the focus on the Board's function to remove alien names in its 1946 legislation (fortunately not ever implemented)
- Consideration of the impact of the Ross Dependency of Antarctic being ceded to New Zealand in 1923 and any influence on the 1956 Cabinet Directive. What was the contribution or parallel work by Arthur Helm (Ross Dependency Place Names Committee)
- The relationship with the *Centennial Atlas* in the 1940s
- Consideration of the *Rules of Nomenclature Bulletin #1* published by the Honorary Geographic Board in 1934

Outreach initiatives will be phased in over three years, concluding in 2024 with the centenary, allowing the Board to build its Secretariat and incrementally gain funding to support change.

Consultation and Social Media

The Board follows the public notification provisions set out in NZGB Act 2008. However, it has looked for opportunities to consult more widely in a variety of different ways to extend its reach. Social media is a channel that the Board is becoming more proactive in, particularly through Land Information New Zealand's Facebook¹⁵ and Twitter¹⁶ pages. One of the most effective ways to reach the wider community remains through media releases, which have wide national and community syndication. The Board plans to consider opportunities to pitch directly to affected individuals and groups. When radio interviews or media questions arise, the Board takes full advantage to convey key messages.

Fast Track Process to Approve Geographic Names as Official

Section 24 of the NZGB Act 2008 sets out a fast track process for changing the status of recorded geographic names from unofficial to official, without consulting with the public. However, the Board does engage directly with territorial authorities and mana whenua¹⁷. The process can only be applied if there are no other recorded names for a feature and there is unlikely to be public objection. With over 30,000 recorded names in the *New Zealand Gazetteer*, the Board is applying the fast track process region by region. Information about the programme was posted online in October 2020¹⁸.

The Board also used the fast track process for a project to standardise Māori geographic names by adding macrons where necessary. Māori geographic names, like all geographic names, have stories behind them, so correcting them reflects their true meaning and helps to keep their stories alive.

The Board also uses the fast track process to collaborate with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and officially recognise the geographic names in their online cultural heritage atlas, *Kā Huru Manu*.

Geographic Features website

On the recommendation of its Māori Names Committee, the Board is strengthening its commitment to using Māori generic terms when appropriate. Easily accessible information was published on the Board's website¹⁹ on 11 September 2020. It includes drawings of the features as a visual aid for the terms. The site allows users to search for generic terms in both Māori and English and select from a range of images that depict those features. The site is built on a platform that could be used for a future Board website or web-based products and meets current web accessibility guidelines including alternative text for screen readers. The Board is exploring how best to integrate this new resource with the *Gazetteer*.


¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/landinformationnz>

¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/LINZLDS>

¹⁷ Māori people with authority over an area

¹⁸ <https://www.linz.govt.nz/regulatory/place-names/approving-recorded-unofficial-place-names-official>

¹⁹ <https://geographicfeatures.linz.govt.nz/>



New Zealand Geographic Features

Ko taku iwituaoroa tēnā

Search for images and descriptions of New Zealand's geographic features

Download PDF

taumata | crest

The highest point or summit of a hill or mountain or the highest line along a ridge or range.

Alternative/related Māori terms

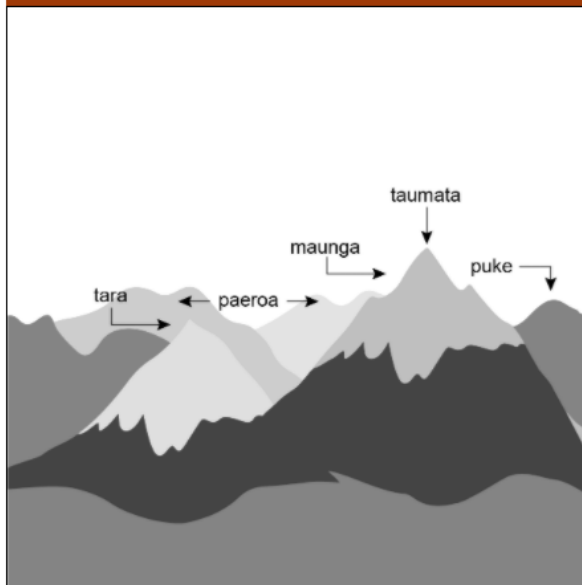
kaweka, tihi

Associated features

[tihi](#) | [summit](#)

maunga
paeroa
puke

tara
taumata



Gazetteer

The *New Zealand Gazetteer* is required under the NZGB Act 2008. Approximately 53,000 geographic names are in the *Gazetteer*, ~18,000 official, and ~34,000 unofficial. All official documents (as defined in the NZGB Act 2008) are required to use official geographic names. As part of its maintenance work, the Board is reviewing information on the history/origin/meaning of 8000 geographic names that were added to the *Gazetteer* in 2019. The *Gazetteer* has also been updated with extents for all islands, rivers and Crown protected areas.

Some Wikipedia entries have hyperlinks to the *Gazetteer* for New Zealand geographic names. In 2020 Wikipedia changed its policy to encourage the use of macrons for Māori geographic names on its site. The Board also notes that OpenStreetMaps™ and Google™ sometimes update their Māori geographic names that have macrons.

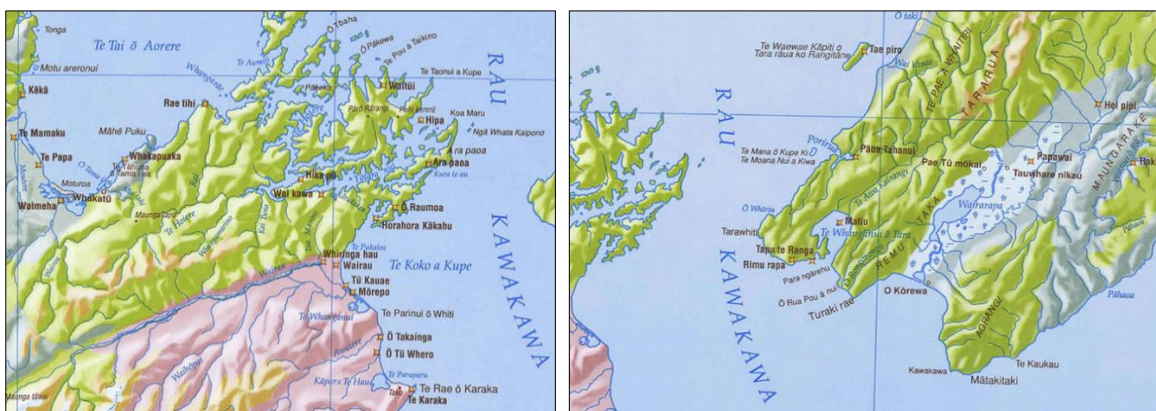
Several enhancements to the *Gazetteer* were completed in 2019 to improve administration and the user's experience. One important update was the addition of a continent wide Antarctic basemap developed in early 2019 by Land Information New Zealand. Users of the *Gazetteer* can now view nearly all of New Zealand's Antarctic geographic names at 1:50,000 scale, and undersea names in the Southern Ocean with 2km grid bathymetry.

Another enhancement allows users to apply colour and lineweight settings to assist those who are visually challenged – this meets the New Zealand government's accessibility standards. Several

smaller enhancements were also made, such as showing the extent of New Zealand's continental shelf, additional search filters, emphasis on official names, an option to show the extent of features, and a measuring tool.

Te Wai Pounamu, The Land and its People Te Ika a Māui, The Land and its People

These two maps were published in 1995. They are based on the draft maps first prepared for a 1941 *Centennial Atlas*. They show Māori geographic names that were known and in use circa 1840 across a landscape based on the 1976 *New Zealand Atlas* and various scientific papers. On the recommendation of its Māori Names Committee the Board began work in 2019 on second editions of these popular maps. The new maps will include standardised orthography (macrons, hyphens, etc) with additional geographic names sourced from Treaty of Waitangi settlements and *Kā Huru Manu* (Ngāi Tahu's cultural heritage atlas)²⁰.



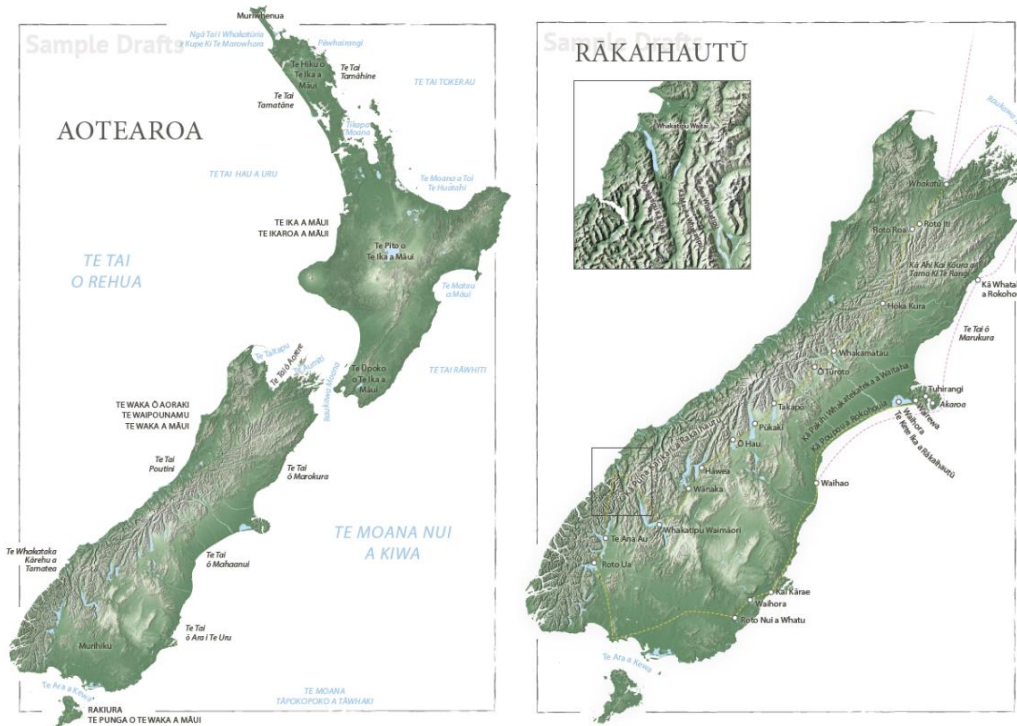
2nd editions of: A Māori Oral History Atlas²¹ and The Survey Pegs of the Past²²

The Board originally published these books in 1990 to accompany a series of maps based on the collection and works of the late Sir Āpirana Ngata, and to tell the stories of some Hawaiki geographic names. The Board is working towards a second edition of both books, with additional stories and maps for the Atlas planned for Moki, Kahawai, Haunui-a-Nanaia and Aoraki.

²⁰ <https://www.kahurumanu.co.nz/atlas>

²¹ *He Korero Pūrākau Mo Ngā Taunahanahatanga a Ngā Tūpuna, Place Names of the Ancestors, A Māori Oral History Atlas*

²² *Ngā Tohu Pūmahara, The Survey Pegs of the Past, Understanding Māori Place Names*



Concluding Remarks

The Board sees real value in strengthening and growing New Zealand’s pride and sense of place through its responsibility for naming and recording the geographic markers that make up our home – on the land, seafloor, offshore islands and in the Ross Dependency of Antarctica. These markers and the stories behind them are how New Zealanders feel connected to and identify with, culture, history, and language. It is how geographic names have real meaning to communities, to the people who live there, and to those who visit. Through New Zealand’s naming processes, and through making geographic name information readily available, the Board can deliver significant value to a stronger and more connected New Zealand.

Contact

For more information about geographic naming in New Zealand contact:

Wendy Shaw

Secretary for the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa

c/- Land Information New Zealand

Radio New Zealand House

155 The Terrace

PO Box 5501

Wellington 6145

New Zealand

Phone +64 4 460 0581

Mobile +64 27 4807 082

Email wshaw@linz.govt.nz