

## How to name a stream

1. Read the Principles, Policies, and Procedures of the Domestic Names Committee ([https://geonames.usgs.gov/docs/DNC\\_PPP\\_DEC\\_2016\\_V.1.0.pdf](https://geonames.usgs.gov/docs/DNC_PPP_DEC_2016_V.1.0.pdf)) for guidance.
  - a. If the name is to be a commemorative name, please clearly indicate who is to be honored and include birth (if available) and death dates of the individual to be commemorated, their association with the feature (mere ownership or dying on the feature generally do not meet the criteria) or local, regional, national, or international renown, and bibliographic information about the individual being honored. Remember that the individual being honored must have been deceased for five (5) years.
  - b. If the proposal is to change a commemorative name, be aware that the US BGN is reluctant to change commemorative names as this appears to them to be dishonoring the person from whom the feature was named.
  - c. Pet names are often treated by the US BGN in the same vein as commemorative names and have a tendency not to be approved by the current US BGN.
  - d. As you are aware, this US BGN doesn't appear to like "bumped together" words so try to avoid those.
  - e. What a feature name should be like:
    - i. Not duplicate of other names (especially other names in close proximity)
    - ii. Qualifying words (i.e., East, West, Middle, Lower) should be avoided where possible
    - iii. Short as possible
    - iv. Easily pronounced
    - v. Include appropriate generic term
      1. MOBGN requires that branches flow into branches or creeks, creeks flow into other creeks or rivers. This is not a US BGN requirement but one the MOBGN follows and is based on the DNR stream hierarchy
    - vi. Imaginative
    - vii. Relative distinctive
    - viii. Descriptive of topographic form
    - ix. Compatible with form of other names in the area
    - x. Suggested by
      1. Local history
      2. Folklore
      3. Incident
      4. Associated natural life or other phenomena
    - xi. No bad or derogatory words
      1. Cannot not use the pejorative form of the word for Japanese or Negro
      2. Squaw is frowned upon
2. Complete the Domestic Geographic Names Report (DGNR) with as much information as possible.
  - a. At a very minimum we need:
    - i. One and only one proposed name

- ii. Locative attributes (mouth and source, center of lake or area, etc. coordinates and indicate the format of these coordinates, please), including Section, Township, and Range
      - 1. Mouth is where the stream ends and flows into another body of water
      - 2. Source is the farthest upstream end of the drain – the point as far upstream as it is possible for the stream to begin
    - iii. County
    - iv. Administrative area (park, reserve, etc.)
    - v. Why the feature needs a name
    - vi. Justification for this proposed name
    - vii. Description of the feature
  - b. Additional information that would be most welcome:
    - i. Previous name(s) if known and the reason for changing the name
    - ii. If the proposed name is in use, how long it has been in use
    - iii. Letters of support and names of those individuals and organizations who/which support the proposed name
    - iv. If there is any opposition to the proposed name, who and why
    - v. Historical evidence for the proposed name if any is available
  - c. There is now a digital version of this proposal form which goes directly to the US BGN staff and then would come back to the MOBGN. It can be found at: <http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/index.html> and then clicking on Propose or Change a Name (found in the blue box on the left).
    - i. Submitting additional material is sometimes difficult and must be done either email or land mail.
    - ii. There sometimes is also a time limit on completing the form so if using this it might be best to the information completed in a word document, then cut and paste into the form
  - d. The easiest way would be to provide the same information required on the DGNR or on the online form and send it directly to me.
- 3. Research as much as possible to see if the stream already has a name in local use that is not listed in GNIS
  - a. If it does and the name appears in print, please provide a copy of the map record or a copy of the page in the document where the name is found along with its bibliographic reference. If this reference is a recognized source, then the name could be immediately entered into GNIS and not have to go through the full Board process.
  - b. If it doesn't please indicate so on the proposal.
- 4. A map showing the feature to be named would also be nice but not absolutely necessary. However, if part of the stream is underground (as often happens in highly urbanized areas) I would appreciate some indication of where underground it is, but at least an indication of as much of the flow (drain) as possible (i.e., an indication of where it goes underground and then where it resurfaces again)
- 5. Provide as much support for the proposed name as possible. The more support, the faster the process goes from the MOBGN side as well as the US BGN side. **Be certain that any letters of support spell the name as it is proposed.**

- a. County
- b. Local community
- c. State representatives, senators
- d. Historical societies
- e. Etc.

The MOBGN meets twice a year – once in May and once in November. However, this year (2010) our November meeting has been moved to October 5 to coincide with the Council of Geographic Names Authorities international conference being hosted by the MOBGN in Springfield, MO. We will have our fall meeting at that conference.

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