

**Forest Service Handbook
National Headquarters - Washington Office
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Forest Service Handbook 7109.14 – Geographic Names Handbook

Chapter 2 - Forest Service Procedures

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2 - Forest Service Procedures

Methods of handling geographic name problems in the Forest Service are primarily determined in the light of the authority, objective, policy, and responsibility pertaining to geographic names as contained in FSH 7147.

2.1 - Name Case Investigations

Investigations of names are conducted for the purpose of preparing a background to support the Forest Service recommendation. The degree of investigation and manner of approach vary somewhat depending on which of the main classes of investigations are required. These are detailed in sections 2.11 through 2.12c.

2.11 - Classes of Investigations

2.11a - Docket List Referrals

Names are brought to the attention of Forest Service officers through recommendations to the Domestic Names Committee because they apply to areas of Forest Service interest. A large number of investigations arise from proposals referred by other agencies and individuals through the Domestic Names Committee. Many names require confirmation only. The amount of research for such cases is, in most instances, substantially less than for name cases originating in the Forest Service.

Investigations resulting in the confirmation or the compilation of alternative proposals for names submitted by other agencies include but are not necessarily restricted to the following:

1. Application of the name.
2. Extent of the feature.
3. Spelling and pronunciation of the name.
4. Verification of presented historical and other data.
5. Local plat and map usage.
6. Local signing practice.
7. Local text references.
8. Local acceptance in oral usage.
9. Confirming local findings by other agencies.
10. Degree of local advisory group participation.

11. Forest Service administrative history or preference.

Good judgment is used to determine the degree to which these points are covered. If the investigation confirms the name as referred, a report to the Washington Office covering the general results should be sufficient. However, if findings are in any way contrary to name proposals, full information should be furnished on the findings of the Forest Service investigation. Sources of information should also be furnished. This is necessary to enable the Forest Service representatives on the Board on Geographic Names to present fully and thoroughly the findings to the Board members for further discussion with the initiating mapping agency.

A name showing current Forest map usage, clear in application, simple in pronunciation, accepted by local people, and in agreement with Forest Service requirements, may be reported back promptly to the Washington Office by the Regional Office without further delay.

When proposed names are referred to the Regional Offices for investigation, a reasonable amount of time will be allowed for the submittal of a report. When this date cannot be met without undue interruption of other work, the request should be immediately acknowledged and the Washington Office advised of the date when the complete report will be mailed. This is necessary to justify requests for deferments in the Domestic Names Committee or to provide a basis for a prompt reply to an outside inquiry.

2.11b - Direct External Requests

Many new name proposals, a name change, or the existence of a discrepancy are brought direct to the attention of Forest Service officers with a request for information or corrective action. These should be investigated with emphasis on determining the previous usage in the area, written text, and map reference. Such questions as the following may be significant.

1. What are the objectives of the proponent?
2. How will interested persons in the community accept the new name or a change?
3. Is the case worth the time required?
4. How will Forest Service Regional Offices be affected?

In addition, the specified and pertinent areas of investigation listed under docket list referrals (sec. 2.11a) should be covered. Statements should be documented where appropriate and supporting exhibits furnished for Washington Office use.

2.11c - Map Editing

A Forest Service map manuscript may be in need of editorial completion, whereupon it may be submitted to the Forest and Ranger District for editing where all personnel should give careful consideration to possible name errors. Ranger District personnel, through their close association with their District area, will have the best opportunity to discover error. Any errors, omissions,

or obsolete or nonaccepted names that are found should be reported with pertinent details as soon as possible to the Regional Office on the Regional Office prescribed names report form. If further investigation is necessary, it will be initiated from the Regional Office.

General name investigation for manuscript editing purposes will follow a somewhat different line in the acceptance and careful use of all names free of question. Details of field check and completion on matters other than geographic name discrepancies will be covered in another handbook. A few names will evolve into discrepancies and new names will be proposed. These will be studied and recommended as discussed in section 2.12.

2.11d - In-Service Investigation

Forest Service personnel, in the course of their administrative or technical duties, should note and report unnamed features, duplication, errors, unsuitable names, or inappropriate names.

2.12 - Investigation Procedures and Methods

The responsibilities and procedures to be followed for geographic name investigation are provided in sections 2.12a through 2.12c.

2.12a - Responsibility

Any level of the Forest Service may initiate investigation when action is clearly justified in order to resolve name conflicts or fulfill the need for a new name. However, the Regional Office in whose area the name occurs has primary responsibility for preparing the final recommendation to the Washington Office. When the area shown by a National Forest map overlaps the area of interest for a neighboring Region, the latter has a secondary interest in names appearing on that portion of the map. The Region producing the map will in those instances request recommendations from the Region overlapped. Recommendations from both Regions will be transmitted to the Washington Office by the map-producing Region.

Forest officers should consult with the Regional Office before initiating names investigations that may entail extensive areas or that may deal with names of obscure interest. The Geological Survey (GS), Topographic Division, is currently mapping many National Forest areas that have not had previous GS coverage. Current programs are available from the Regional Office. Advice of GS planned activities should avoid a duplication of effort in names research. Advance prints of GS maps in or adjacent to the National Forests will be distributed to all Forest Service levels for comment. All discrepancies should be immediately brought to the attention of the Regional Office through the Regional report form.

2.12b - Local Boards or Advisory Groups

Ordinarily, names proposed for the attention of the Domestic Names Committee will have had the necessary clearance through the local geographic name authority or a request for this concurrence would have been made simultaneously with the preparation of the docket list item.

Name proposals originating outside the docket lists or within the Forest Service will be cleared, wherever possible, through the local committees and State offices having active and effective existence in reviewing and accepting the proposals prior to the preparation of the case for the attention of the Washington Office.

Certain of these advisory boards or committees have official status as a part of a State government. Others are more unofficial in nature but may carry considerable prestige as local historical or civic groups.

When a Forest Service recommendation is in conflict with a local or State advisory group or with another agency with competent facilities for a field investigation, the Forest Service recommendation must be fully documented with signed statements, map samples, photographs (aerial and otherwise), and any other material that will provide a strong presentation to the Domestic Names Committee.

2.12c - Field Procedures

The first step in a name investigation is to assemble all available records that pertain to the feature. If the investigation is initiated at some Forest Service level other than that to which the fieldman belongs, the information of record will be placed at that person's disposal. This does not relieve the fieldman from responsibility for searching for information from other sources. These sources include Forest Service maps, GS maps, National Ocean Survey charts, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) plats, State maps, private maps, and others.

1. Local Usage. After the record sources have been reviewed, the next step is to determine what the local usage is for the feature. Ordinarily, the local usage will determine the name. This means that investigators must personally contact local individuals. Among usually reliable sources are the county assessor, county sheriff, city officials and the postmaster. Other reliable sources are the ranch owners and foremen, landowners residing adjacent to the feature, lumbermen or stockmen working in or near the feature, local historical societies or the local historian, and the old-timers of the area. Often one contact will lead to another and more reliable informant. Valuable record information may be available in the county deed records to assist in determining name history and proper spelling.

Diplomacy must be used in questioning people about names to avoid giving the impression that they are answering to an exacting official inquiry, thereby causing them to hesitate or to become indecisive. Strive to make the inquiry follow the lines of an ordinary conversation between two people with a mutual point of interest. At the end of the conversation, however, ascertain the spelling of the geographic name as the individual knows it, and ask that person's name, address, and occupation. These facts should be written down at time of the interview.

In order to competently make contact with individuals, the investigator should be fully acquainted with the record information, and should have a personal knowledge of the area adjacent to the feature in question. It will sometimes be difficult for the fieldman to determine if the fieldman and the informant are speaking of the same feature. A large-scale detailed map, preferably a USGS 1:24,000 or smaller scale topographic map or Forest Service primary series

map, and an aerial photograph will be invaluable, in most cases, to establish the identity of the feature.

If the name applies to the higher of two nearby peaks of apparently equal elevation, the proper peak should be circled and named on the map and photograph. If a stream being named extends beyond the edge of the map, the name should also be placed on the adjacent map and underscored, even though only a short segment of the stream occurs on the adjacent map.

2. Signs. The relationship between posted signs and map names is necessarily very close. Posted signs are important evidence of local usage. Any person engaged in name research depends heavily on a posted sign for name determination. If, however, a sign is contrary to indicated local usage, further checking is required as to basis for the sign, the posting agency, length of time it has been in existence, previous signing, etc. Certainly nothing can be more confusing to the map user than disagreement between a sign and the map, particularly if both are the same agency.

3. Reporting. The investigator will furnish all the essential information on Form FS-7100-48, Proposal of Name for an Unnamed Domestic Feature (ex. 1) or Form FS-7100-49, Domestic Name-Change Proposal (ex. 2), as appropriate. The investigator should realize that the information will be subjected to close scrutiny by numerous individuals and organizations while a decision is being reached.

It is of particular importance that the origin or history of a name be given as completely as possible on the name report. If the name originates from an historical event, this should be explained. A descriptive name should be commented upon as to its suitability for the feature. If the name is derived from a language other than English, the history, meaning, and pronunciation must be as clearly set forth as possible. For new or proposed names, an explanation should give the reasons for the choice. Local support, if any, from organizations or individuals outside the Forest Service should be stated.

Proposed new names for geographic feature require strict evaluation before they are recommended. The name of a deceased person of prominent association with the feature may be used but often this is a difficult determination to make and extensive investigation may be required. If the name of a person is being considered, a history of the individual and their relationship to the feature must be given. Definite date of their death must be stated. New names should be short, preferably one word, appropriate, and euphonious. The use of such words as big and little should be avoided whenever possible.

The generic part of a name should be appropriate for the feature or area. The use of the word creek for a watercourse might not be correct in an area where a watercourse is usually called a gulch. Local usage will be the most reliable guide in selecting the generic name. The suitability of the generic name should be commented upon in the name report to avoid questions (sec. 1.3).

The fieldman will attach the best available map to the report form. This should be of sufficient scale to show the feature without doubt or confusion. The map will show, in colored pencil, the name lettered as the fieldman would like it to appear on the published map. The feature will also be colored or outlined to show extent of the application.

Specific questions on the report must be answered as fully as information permits.

The two standard reporting forms so far found satisfactory for reporting new geographic names and discrepancies are forms FS-7100-48 and FS-7100-49. These forms are shown in exhibit 1 and 2. These may be secured through request to the Regional Office. Docket list investigations will be reported by memorandum. Such cases are too numerous and dissimilar for reporting on established forms.

2.12c – Exhibits 01 & 02 are in a separate document.

2.2 - Standards for Submitting Name Cases

2.21 - Case Preparation Required

Cases requiring submission of a report to the Board on Geographic Names are as follows:

1. Proposed names for previously unnamed features. The question here is whether the feature has a name. In more remote areas, a relatively small amount of local usage will, if consistent, amount to an established name. Generally, if the local usage is fragmentary and not recognized by the better informed members of the community and there is no map usage, the feature will be considered unnamed. If there is early map usage of some 40 years prior to the date of research and no corresponding local usage, the feature may be considered unnamed. Such early map usage may even carry a Board decision, but still will remain unnamed if not locally or regionally accepted.
2. New names for features that previously had some other name. The field cartographer or other Forest Service source may find where an earlier name has map usage, local usage, and may even have a Board decision but circumstances have been such that a new name seems more acceptable. All the people in the community recognize the new name and it is used in newspapers, local directions, and up-to-date compilations, such as the better quality road maps.
3. Old names now obsolete in application. During the course of time a name may have perfect appropriateness and usage but due to altering circumstances; such as, more intensive cultural development, the use of the name with reference to the original feature becomes confusing and it is found that the approved and previously accepted usage must be altered.

For example, the original application may have been to an entire feature whereas present conditions and usage have reduced the application to only a portion of the feature.

4. Names where spelling is at variance with existing decisions. A Board decision may spell a name more or less in perfect agreement with the derivation source but its use locally may have completely lost this earlier form and significance. If the local usage is consistent and of long standing, the Forest Service should prepare a recommendation for

Board action. In most cases the Board will tend to confirm and retain a family name in its original form regardless of subsequent changes.

5. Names of features too frequently repeated. Too many "Mud Lakes," "Clear Creeks," "Red Mountains," etc., in a National Forest can cause clerical confusion and unnecessary administrative expense. It is generally advantageous to reduce duplications when reasonable uniform concurrence and acceptance by local interests can be expected.
6. Names used incidentally in Federal or State legislation which affects a geographical feature not in accordance with local usage, map usage, or a Board decision.
7. Names of places which are different from the railroad station or post office therein.

2.22 - Case Preparation Not Required

Below are listed the principal circumstances under which it is not necessary to submit a case for Board approval, provided such names do not in some related way fall in one of the preceding classifications requiring a decision.

1. Names for which there are existing affirmative decisions by the Board.
2. Names indicated as the approved form in published lists of names.
3. Names that have been specifically adopted by a name enactment of Congress.
4. Names that have been formally approved by a State board in conformity with the principles of the Board on Geographic Names insofar as they apply to features wholly within the jurisdiction of the State board and for use only in publications under the State's jurisdiction.
5. Official names of post offices, insofar as they apply only to the names of the post offices.
6. Names of civil divisions, as adopted by the Bureau of the Census.
7. Names that are in use on the latest issue of a Government geographic name base series map published no earlier than 15 years prior to the date of investigation; which, after reasonable research, appear not to be in conflict with other published material or local usage and to be in conformity with the principles of the Board.
8. Names not geographic, usually ephemeral, and generally applicable to man-built structures.
9. Names in generally accepted use for such features as dams, railroads, highways, bridges, lighthouses, ranger stations, and other structures, which have been officially adopted by the organization, legal authority, or civil unit which controls the feature, insofar as the name applies to the structure and not to the neighboring features.

10. Names in undisputed local use not at variance with any of the principles adopted by the Board.
11. Names that are in good standing, but do not agree with names obviously misspelled or applied in error.
12. Names of minor features too small or insignificant to warrant map usage at the intended scale, unless there is some other need for an approved name.

2.23 - Case Preparation Invited But Not Required

Below is a list of circumstances under which a proposal to the Board on Geographic Names is invited but not required.

1. Names in undisputed local use, which conform to the general practice of the Board in the consideration of old names, but which may not conform to all the rules which the Board would apply for new names.
2. Names of natural features, as distinct from places, which are likely to cause confusion through duplication.
3. Names on which there are existing decisions made in conformity with a general rule which the Board has modified.
4. Names on which there are existing decisions inconsistent with later decisions on related or similar names.
5. Names on which there are existing decisions but concerning which important new evidence has been brought forth which was not available or not considered when the original decisions were rendered.
6. Names on which there are existing decisions or names in undisputed use, that are not spelled in accordance with their derivation or that are objectionable because they are awkward, misleading, or difficult to spell or pronounce, provided they are not so well established that it would be impractical to try to change them.

2.3 - Name Report Preparation

It will be the responsibility of the Regional Office to determine if a name requires decision by the Board on Geographic Names. After the report of the investigation is received from the Supervisor's Office, the Regional Office will check all its records for further information. The checker will carefully review current cases and those already approved to avoid duplications. Simple errors brought about by misunderstandings, draftsmen's errors, etc., may be treated as map corrections and corrected within the Forest Service, provided the error has not been perpetuated by a subsequent map.

When a Board decision is necessary, the Regional Office will submit the required report to the Washington Office. All such reports and attachments should be submitted in duplicate.

Normally when the recommendation is of Forest Service origin, it is not referred again to the Regional Office unless there is a significant change in the description. However, other selected agencies are given an opportunity to review the name before a final decision is made.

2.31 - Geological Survey and Board on Geographic Names Guidelines

The Geological Survey of the Department of the Interior and the Board on Geographic Names has published a booklet entitled "Guidelines for Preparing and Submitting Proposals Regarding Domestic Geographic Names." This booklet was issued primarily for the purpose of assisting Government agencies, but it is also a means of informing the public on these matters. The booklet has been distributed to all Regional Foresters, Directors, and Forest Supervisors for their information and use supplemental to this handbook. Copies have been furnished also to other Department of Agriculture offices interested in standardizing geographic names. This publication may be used to inform the public regarding procedure and requirements applying to geographic name case preparation.

2.4 - Geographic Name Index

An up-to-date record must be maintained in the Regional and Washington Office to show all decisions rendered by the Board on Geographic Names. This record will be filed in the Geomtronics Group of the Division of Engineering.

2.41 - Contents

As a minimum requirement, the index will consist of a binder containing the latest Forest secondary base series or USGS topographic quadrangles of the Region.

2.42 - Posting and Maintenance

All name changes or additions approved by the Board on Geographic Names will be entered on the map and underscored in red ink as they occur. Recommended names rejected by the Board will be crossed out on the index.

A copy of the Sixth Report of the Board on Geographic Names and all subsequent decision lists issued by the Board are furnished to the Regions and should be readily accessible in the Geomtronics Group. The report is out of print but may be secured on loan from the Washington Office.

Names which the Regional Office is authorized to approve without reference to the Board will be entered and underscored in green. A page with suitably headed columns could be advantageously added in the binder opposite each map to show reference to correspondence, progress of actions, and final disposition of the case.

It is mandatory that all revisions of Forest Service maps conform with the most recent decisions on geographic names appearing on the maps.

2.43 - Forest Supervisors

Forest Supervisors will be promptly notified by the Regional Office of new decisions issued by the Board on Geographic Names, as well as names on which action has been taken by the Regional Office. All personnel will make text and other references in conformity with approved names.

2.5 - Furnishing Name Information

During mapping by other agencies in or near Forest or Grassland areas, Ranger District personnel will be asked for name information. These questions should be referred for answer to the District Ranger. The District Ranger should use the latest available primary or secondary base series as the guide to answering questions; except that more recently published GS quadrangles supersede earlier primary or secondary base series in case of disagreement on names. If necessary to disagree with the map, discuss new names, or justify posted signs that carry names that do not appear on the map, the Regional Office must be advised immediately. Other agencies view field offices of the Forest Service as authorities for local names. However, the Regional Office must be instantly informed when field offices give geographic name information at variance with names shown by official maps in order to avoid highly embarrassing situations where Regional Offices are corresponding with other agencies about those names.

More important, such embarrassment is magnified in the Domestic Names Committee when full circumstances of the discrepancy are not available to the Forest Service representative in Washington.

Equally strict coordination with District Ranger action in giving name information is essential in the Forest Supervisor's Office. The Forest engineer or other well-qualified person should be designated to handle local geographic names inquiries for the Forest Supervisor's Office. The Forest Supervisor also must be kept advised of name information given by District Rangers.

Whether discussing a feature with mapping personnel or answering inquiries from State geographic boards or other sources, the Forest Supervisor and Regional Office should always be promptly informed of any error in the name, spelling, or other information shown in name proposals or reports on name proposals submitted by District Rangers. The availability of this information in the files of the Regional Office Geomtronics Group is of great importance in providing answers promptly to questions frequently asked by the Washington Office and by mapping agencies.