

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

Zero Code

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Superseded Directive:

Approved by:

Date approved:

Responsible Staff:

Explanation of changes:

In this handbook the term "geographic names" is concerned with that portion of toponymy relating to physical features and populated places. The difference between a geographic name of interest here and the names of certain cultural features is sometimes indistinct.

The name of a lake or reservoir impounded back of a dam is properly a responsibility of those working with geographic names while the name of the dam may be the responsibility of the sponsor or builder.

Cases exist where the name of a road has geographical significance. Canals are cultural features, but may be considered to have geographic names. Sometimes a place-name will have application almost entirely to a cultural feature, such as a church, school, store, or depot. However, the principal generics encountered will be rivers, creeks, streams, lakes, ponds, mountains, ridges, peaks, towns, villages, and other items of ready definition and acceptance as geographic names.

The Forest Service is one of several map-producing agencies of the Federal Government. As such, it is obligated to use the same care and thoroughness in the matter of names as in the application of all other elements of the map.

The widespread interest in geographic names is indicative of their importance. State boards on geographic names and advisory committees review and correlate name data. Historical societies, county and city officials, local historians, and interested individuals contribute and appraise name data over large and small areas according to their interest.

Names have a serious significance to any map user. Erroneous names are apparent to even the most inexperienced user. Personal place names are often a source of pride to a family or a community and the misspelling, misapplication, or omission of a name may cause resentment that will impair the character of an otherwise excellent map and damage the reputation of the agency responsible. In a broader sense, the strength, consistency, and appropriateness of names are marks of the vigor, growth, and permanence of a nation and a society.

To those depending on a map in performance of duty, an erroneous name can be both irritating and confusing. Incorrect names may cause serious mistakes in such activities as fire control and recreationist use. In view of the importance of accurate map names, it is essential that all Forest Service personnel diligently endeavor to submit complete and correct name information.