

VERMONT BOARD OF LIBRARIES GEOGRAPHIC NAMES: PROCEDURE

The Board of Libraries (the Board) is the statutorily designated body to name Vermont geographic locations, including mountains, streams, lakes, and ponds. (10 V.S.A. § 151-154).

According to state statute, “The Board in choosing names shall give preference to historical events, historic persons, and flora and fauna native to Vermont; names characteristic to Vermont; and its traditions and local place names where long usage has made them appropriate and useful.” (10 V.S.A. § 154)

The Board will not name state roads, highways, bridges, or other transportation-related entities. These come under the jurisdiction of the Vermont Transportation Board.

The Board will not name city streets or town roads. These come under the jurisdiction of the municipalities.

Submitting a geographic naming petition for consideration by the Board

To initiate consideration of a new name or a name change of a Vermont geographic location by the Board of Libraries, a geographic naming petition signed by not less than twenty-five interested persons must be submitted to the Board. One individual must be named as the primary contact for the petition (the Petitioner).

The geographic naming petition must include written documentation to support the proposed geographic name consistent with 10 V.S.A. § 154. Such documentation may include historical information, government records, and any other documents or publications relevant to the proposed geographic name.

The Board encourages the Petitioner to propose a new name or name change of a Vermont geographic feature that is consistent with the Domestic Geographic Names Editorial Guidelines of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (USBGN).

The complete petition must also include:

- a description of the exact location of the geographic feature to be named,
- the Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates of the geographic feature, and
- a map with the geographic feature clearly labeled (photocopies acceptable).



The Board encourages the Petitioner to provide evidence of any published or verbal usage of the proposed name and to seek assistance in researching the proposed name from the Vermont Historical Society, local historical societies, local libraries, and the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration prior to submitting the petition.

Because local use and acceptance of a name is important, the Board strongly encourages the Petitioner to include written support for the proposal with the petition. Written support of the proposal may be solicited from:

- Federal, State, or local (municipal or county) agencies and governing bodies,
- Native American Tribes,
- Civic organizations, historical societies, libraries,
- Owner(s) of the property on which the geographic feature is located, and
- Others familiar with the geographic feature and the appropriateness of the proposal.

The Petitioner shall send the geographic naming petition and associated documentation in written form via U.S. Mail to:

Board of Libraries
c/o Vermont Department of Libraries
Attn: Geographic Names
60 Washington Street, Suite 2
Barre, Vermont 05641

The Petitioner should be aware that the entire petition is a public record and may be subject to public inspection and copying as well as subject to being published by the Department of Libraries.

Geographic name requests initiated by an administrative department of State government must be signed by the Agency Secretary or Department Commissioner. Requests initiated by an administrative department of State government do not require twenty-five signatures but do require complete documentation for consideration by the Board as described above.

Consideration of geographic name petitions by the Board

Upon receipt of a geographic naming petition as signed by not less than twenty-five interested persons or by petition of an administrative department of the State, the Board will initiate the process described below:

- I) The Department of Libraries will forward each complete geographic naming petition and associated materials to the Board.
- II) The Board may request assistance from the Department of Libraries in verifying documentation submitted by the Petitioner.



- III) The Board will not approve a name for any geographic feature or location that commemorates or may be construed to commemorate living persons.
 - a) A person must have been deceased for at least five years before a commemorative proposal will be considered.
 - b) A person in whose honor a naming is being proposed must have had strong ties to the feature in keeping with 10 V.S.A. § 154 or have made a significant contribution to the area or to Vermont.
 - c) Commemorative names for individuals with outstanding national or international reputation will be considered even if those individuals were not directly associated with the geographic feature or location.
- IV) The Board will not approve more than one name for any geographic feature or location.
- V) The Board will consider geographic naming petitions during its meetings.
- VI) The Department of Libraries will notify the Petitioner in writing of the date and location of the meeting at which the geographic naming petition will be considered by the Board.
- VII) The Department of Libraries will notify municipalities where the geographic feature is located, local media, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and the USBGN of the date and location of the meeting at which the geographic naming petition will be considered by the Board.
- VIII) The Board will allow for citizen comment on each geographic naming petition it considers.
- IX) The Board will follow citizen comment with discussion among the Board members. The Board may ask for additional comment or may have questions for persons including the Petitioner, those who provided citizen comment, and those with relevant information to the petition.
- X) The Board has the authority to determine whether it will take any action on a petition when no one appears at a meeting to comment either on behalf of or against the proposed geographic name.
- XI) The Board may request that the Petitioner provide additional information or documentation to support the petition.
- XII) If the Board requests that the Petitioner provide additional information or documentation to support the petition, the Petitioner shall provide this information within 90 days to keep the petition active. If no response is received within 90 days of the initial request, a final 30-day notice to respond will be sent by the Board. If no response is received within 30 days of the final notice, the Board may suspend the petition pending further review or vote to close the petition with the requirement that the Petitioner resubmit a new petition if they wish the Board to resume consideration of the proposed name.





- XIII) The Board may choose for any reason to postpone a vote on a geographic naming petition or to continue review of a petition at a future meeting.

- XIV) The Board will strive to name Vermont geographic features consistent with the Domestic Geographic Names Editorial Guidelines of the USBGN.

- XV) The State Librarian will issue a letter announcing the Board’s naming decision with the meeting minutes attached. The Department of Libraries will post the decision on its website and will send the decision to the following entities:
 - A. Petitioner
 - B. Clerk of municipality/municipalities where feature is located
 - C. Town Manager or Mayor or Chair of Selectboard of town(s) where feature is located
 - D. Executive Director, Enhanced 9-1-1 Board
 - E. Secretary of Administration
 - F. Secretary of State
 - G. Secretary, Agency of Natural Resources
 - H. Commissioner, Department of Public Safety
 - I. Vermont Center for Geographic Information
 - J. Office of Legislative Counsel
 - K. United States Geological Survey (USGS) Vermont representative
 - L. United States Board on Geographic Names (USBGN)
 - M. Secretary, Agency of Transportation
 - N. Executive Secretary, Vermont Transportation Board
 - O. Commissioner, Department of Buildings and General Services
 - P. Commissioner, Department of Public Service
 - Q. Executive Director, Vermont Historical Society
 - R. Chair, Natural Resources Board
 - S. Department of State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs
 - T. Commissioner, Department of Tourism & Marketing
 - U. Chief Marketing Officer, State of Vermont
 - V. Newspaper(s) in vicinity of the geographic feature
 - W. Green Mountain Club
 - X. State Historic Preservation Officer
 - Y. State Historic Sites Section Chief

- XVI) The Board will recommend to the USBGN that it not make official for use in or on any Federal publication any new name or name change for a Vermont geographic feature that has not yet come to the Vermont Board of Libraries for consideration and a decision.

Adopted by Vermont Board of Libraries, August 13, 1991.
Revisions adopted by Vermont Board of Libraries July 14, 2015.
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