

Federal Land Management Agency Geographic Name Panel

Possible discussion topics

1. What is expected of Federal agencies in investigating the propriety of name proposals on land they manage?

What is appropriate for an “agency position”? Perhaps it should go no further than the collection of evidence relevant to the PPP. It is the job of the Board, not the agency, to evaluate that evidence and make a decision. Lacking instruction from agency staff familiar with geographic names procedures, field personnel tasked to formulate a recommendation are tempted to present their personal opinion.

In the majority of the country that lacks large areas of Federal land, State names authorities and Tribes have the sole responsibility for performing names investigations. States can solicit help from county and local governments, whose cooperation and thoroughness must vary considerably throughout the country. Local government personnel are probably unfamiliar with the names process. Federal land management agencies (at least the Forest Service) are expected to ask field personnel to conduct thorough field investigations of name proposals, interviewing the public, reviewing records, etc., which seems to involve an effort that can exceed what is accomplished outside of Federal lands. Is it appropriate that this much energy be expended on Federal lands when in a majority of the country much less effort is expended?

2. State vs. Federal roles. States having large areas of Federal land often have Federal names personnel serving on State Boards. Even if State Boards lack Federal membership, State Boards can await a Federal recommendation before making one themselves, or vice versa. Federal and State investigation activities can be duplicated.

3. How should agency (especially field) personnel respond when asked for an opinion by a name proponent?

4. The draft PPP provides that new wilderness names will not be approved unless the administrating agency asserts that there is an "overriding need" for the name. What would your agency consider to be an overriding need?

5. New names can become ingrained into local usage through their appearance in private publications or other advocacy by private individuals, yet Federal employees are prohibited from using a name in a document unless it is official. Is this constraint on Federal employees practical or even appropriate?

6. What is the relationship between land management agency geographic name personnel and the Tribes?

7. Does the agency have a policy or process for employees submitting name proposals as official agency proposals?

8. Other topics of interest to the audience or panel members.