

Antarctic naming guidelines
Approved by the GNBC 29 September 2000
Updated by the GNBC 18 October 2002

Introductory remarks

In the Antarctic, geographical names (place names, toponyms) are important elements of identification, orientation, localization, and navigation, providing an essential reference system for logistic operations (including search and rescue measures), and for international scientific research. They facilitate the exchange of information in the field, in scientific publications, and in administrative measures of the Antarctic Treaty System. Commemoration of expeditions or persons is a secondary consideration.

At present there are more than 40 signatory countries, including Canada, to the Antarctic Treaty, and geographical names appear in 15 or more languages and five scripts. Internationally agreed upon guidelines for proposing new names and for using existing geographical names have not as yet been set up. In many cases, unintentional multiple naming of features, and either translation or mistranslation of geographical names have caused ambiguity and confusion in their current usage in the Antarctic.

In the past, political and linguistic considerations precluded the adoption of a uniform system for Antarctic geographical names. It was common practice to translate a name from one language to another or to use a completely different name for that feature, usually in another language. For multi-national projects there is a problem of deciding in which language a name should be used, both for ease of communications during operations and usefulness of the resulting map products.

In recent years, Antarctic researchers have called for a standardized use of geographical names to ensure unambiguous usage during international collaboration. In keeping with the “one feature - one name” principle of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSSGN), it is suggested that the translation of existing and of newly-approved geographical names should be avoided.

The following guidelines have been set up in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Antarctic Treaty and in agreement with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The guidelines should encourage and support Antarctic scientists in their efforts to attain the principle of “one feature – one name”, to minimize ambiguity and confusion in the use of geographical names in the Antarctic.

The Working Group on Geodesy and Geographic Information (WG-GGI) of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) has compiled the *Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica* (CGA), 1998 for the dissemination of Antarctic geographical names.

I. Recommendations for the use of existing geographical names

- Priority should be given to the earliest approved or documented name of a feature, provided that the name is clearly defined and documented.
- A name should be written in the language in which it was originally proposed; all diacritical marks should be included.
- In adopting existing names, variation of any part of the names is not recommended.
- A name should not be translated either in whole or in part.
- Names in a non-Roman script should be transcribed or transliterated to the Roman script using a transcription system adopted by the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSSGN), the national names authority approving the name, or by the Geographical Names Board of Canada.
- Names already approved by national names authorities should be accepted by Canada if the names have been applied in conformance with internationally-accepted principles.

II. Recommendations for the use of new geographical names

Geographical nomenclature in Antarctica differs from that of any land area of comparable size. There are no permanent settlements. The continent has been visited and explored by the representatives of many nations. Most major features of Antarctica have been discovered and mapped, but a vast number of secondary features continue to be only partially delineated and remain unnamed. New technologies (e.g., remote sensing capabilities) also permit better delineation of features and the discovery of new features.

- New names shall not be applied to features that have already been named by a national naming authority.
- The importance of the specific element of a geographical name should be proportional to the size and significance of the feature.
- In the interests of both scientific clarity and operational safety, the general principle of ‘one name per feature’ should apply on the Antarctic continent as in other parts of the world.
- In keeping with long-established policies based upon trends in the normal evolution of geographical names, consideration will be given to brevity, simplicity, and unambiguity in selecting the form of names.
- Names with the same specific applied to associated features should agree in form and spelling.
- The generic element should be appropriate to the nature of the feature. However, it is not essential that a generic element be part of the name and the definite article may be used instead e.g., *The Palisades*.

Sources of names

Preferred sources of new names should be:

- descriptive words (shape, colour, etc.)
- names of explorers and scientists
- names of ships, aircraft, or vehicles operating in the Antarctic

- names related to science and scientific work
- historical events connected with the area
- other non-personal names that occupy a major role in Antarctic exploration or history because of their acknowledged importance

Regard should be paid to the possible advantage of a descriptive name rather than a personal one.

The adoption of a personal name during the lifetime of the person concerned should only be made in exceptional circumstances if they have made outstanding or fundamental contributions to research or have given other meritorious service in the Antarctic. However, because the Antarctic has been unveiled through the efforts of explorers, scientists, and others, it has been customary to apply the names of such persons to Antarctic features.

Inappropriate names

Names in the following categories will not be considered:

- names suggested because of friendship or relationship
- names of contributors of funds, equipment, and supplies
- names of products, sled dogs, or pets
- names combining both the given and the family name or using the given name only
- names of persons having the same surname should be applied to no more than one feature of a kind
- names containing acronyms
- names with two generic terms (e.g., *Dome Peak*)
- names with hidden generics (i.e., pleonastic names, such as *Lake Obersee*, where the 'see' = lake)
- names that are frivolous, commonplace, or in low taste
- descriptive names not unique or particularly appropriate and for which there are likely to be duplicates

Fields of knowledge

Below is a list of the fields of knowledge in which outstanding contributions may be considered justification for commemoration in an Antarctic feature name. This list has no order of priority.

1. Navigation and astronomy
2. Oceanography and hydrography
3. Surveying, photogrammetry, and cartography
4. Meteorology and climatology
5. Geodesy and geophysics
6. Glaciology and ice physics
7. Radio, radar, and allied fields
8. Geology, volcanology, and seismology
9. Geography
10. Botany and its subdivisions
11. Zoology and its subdivisions
12. Engineering research and applications

Language and form of the names

- A name should be written in the language in which it was originally proposed; all diacritical marks should be included in the spelling.
- Names should not be translated to another language, not even the generic element of the name. If a name is proposed in French, it will be approved in that language. If a name is proposed in English, it will be approved in that language.
- Duplication of names should be avoided if confusion may result.
- Names should be euphonious and in good taste.
- Consideration will be given to brevity, simplicity, and unambiguity in selecting the form of names.
- The generic term should be appropriate to the nature of the feature.
- Duplication of names well known in other parts of the world is undesirable even if qualified by adjectives such as "new", "upper", "nouveau", "south", and "little."

Other criteria of appropriateness

Proposed names will be considered according to the following criteria:

- chronological priority of discovery, naming, or other relevant action
- actual association of the person, ship, organization, event, etc., with the feature
- association of the person, ship, organization, event, etc., with other polar exploration
- contribution of the person to the knowledge of Antarctica
- contribution of the person to relevant fields of knowledge
- previous recognition through a geographical name in Antarctica

III. How to propose a new name

Except in unusual circumstances the Geographical Names Board of Canada does not initiate naming. Most new names approved are received from the general public and from organizations.

A proposer should submit proposals for new names to the GNBC for approval. New proposals should be for particular geographical features. Selection of an alternate location if the first location is unacceptable is up to the proponent.

Individuals or organizations contemplating a publication including geographical names which are not yet official, should submit proposals well in advance of publication dates. The consideration of new names may require considerable time. The publication of unauthorized names will not necessarily result in their official recognition. A five-year waiting period must pass following the death of individuals who meet the naming criteria before a commemoration proposal can be considered.

Proposals for new names should include the following information:

- reason for proposal

- location by latitude and longitude, either geographical coordinates or Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) grid coordinates
- location relative to other features
- a clear description of the feature
- specific limits must be recorded on a map
- photographs or sketches
- origin and meaning of the name proposed
- other reliable, preferably documented information on the use of the name

A proposed geographical name should not be used in official or unofficial publications unless it has been approved by the GNBC.

IV. How to propose alteration of an existing name

Reliable, preferably documented, information concerning corrections in the use, spelling, or application of toponyms on maps and charts and in other publications is welcomed.

A geographical name, once it has been approved, should not be changed or altered, except for the following reasons:

- to avoid confusion and ambiguity
- when there is no precise definition of the named feature
- to standardize spelling
- when the original form of the name is inconvenient and unnecessarily long

The same type of information required to accompany proposals for new names should accompany requests to change or alter geographical names.

If the Geographical Names Board of Canada needs to change a geographical name that it had originally approved, information explaining that change will be circulated to other national names authorities and/or national Antarctic mapping centres or SCAR member countries.

V. Where to send the proposals

Proposers should use the Proposal Form (see Annex A) to submit names for consideration. Proposals for new geographical names and requests for changing or altering existing geographical names should be sent to the:

Secretariat,
 Geographical Names Board of Canada
 Room 634, 615 Booth Street
 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0E9
 Telephone: 613 - 992-3892
 Fax: 613 – 943-8282

E-mail: geonames@NRCan.gc.ca

VI. Acceptance and publication of geographical names

To ensure wide international acceptance of a geographical name, close liaison *should be / has been* established primarily between national names authorities (or Antarctic mapping centres) of SCAR member nations, so that all relevant information is available **before** decisions on new names are made.

The GNBC will seek the advice of the Canadian Committee for Antarctic Research (CCAR) in making decisions on proposals.

All names approved or altered and documented by the Geographical Names Board of Canada will be regularly supplied to SCAR (through CCAR) for publication in the *SCAR Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica* <http://www.pnra.it/SCAR_GAZE>. In addition, such names will be publicized in *Canoma* and on the Geographical Names web site <<http://geonames.NRCan.gc.ca/english/Home.html>>.

Source documents

Principles and procedures for geographical naming, 1999

Proposed International Toponymic Guidelines for the Antarctic (prepared by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research's (SCAR) Working Group on Geodesy and Geographic Information, 31 August 1994)

"Policy Covering Antarctic Names", *Geographic Names of the Antarctic*, 2nd ed., 1995 and at

<<http://mapping.usgs.gov/www/gnis/antex.html>>, 13 April 1999

"Annex D", *Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica*, Vol. 1, March 1988