

California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names CHARTER

I. OFFICIAL DESIGNATION

California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of the California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names (CACGN) is to advise the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) and other organizations regarding geographic names to be used on maps published by federal agencies.

This charter sets forth the roles, responsibilities and terms of engagement for the CACGN. The charter explains the CACGN's functions and processes and establishes opportunities for expert input and public participation. The role of committee members and the chairperson is also defined in this charter.

III. BACKGROUND

The BGN is a federal body created in 1890 by executive order and established in its present form by Public Law 80-242 (43 U.S.C. 364-364f) in 1947 to maintain uniform geographic name usage throughout the government. The BGN is housed within the U.S. Geological Survey (commonly known to as "USGS") and comprises representatives of federal agencies concerned with geographic information, population, ecology, and management of public lands. Sharing its responsibilities with the Secretary of the Interior, the BGN promulgates official geographic feature names with locative attributes as well as principles, policies, and procedures governing the use of domestic names, foreign names, Antarctic names, and undersea feature names.

The CACGN was established in 1963 as a committee housed within the California Natural Resources Agency (Agency) and composed of designees from the Department of Conservation, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Water Resources. It was chaired by the State Geologist.

Additional members, including the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the State Lands Commission, were added in subsequent years. In 1997, the chair of the committee became a rotating position among CAGN members for a two-year term.

IV. PROCESS

As noted above, the BGN is a federal body charged with maintaining uniform geographic name usage throughout government. It considers proposals, suggestions and concerns associated with geographic names, and forwards those related to California to the CACGN for an initial review.

The CACGN reviews and researches each proposal, then solicits input from a diverse array of interested community members, and then votes at a public meeting on whether to recommend that the BGN approve or disapprove the proposal. Based on the committee vote, the CACGN provides its recommendation to the BGN, which has the ultimate authority for determining each name change proposal. Only those names officially approved by BGN become an official name of a geographic feature.

To enable Californians to more easily track the status of geographic name proposals and recommendations forwarded to the BGN, the CACGN will maintain a publicly accessible database that will be located online at <https://cacgn.ca.gov/> and managed by the California Natural Resources Agency.

Geographic Name Change Proposal – Vetting Process

1. All geographic name proposals forwarded from the BGN to the CACGN will be reviewed and researched to identify historical context, any association with discrimination and violence, geography, relevance, and impacted stakeholders.
2. Input will be solicited from tribal communities, relevant community members, experts, and land managing agencies.
 - a. In accordance with [Executive Order N-15-19](#), the CACGN will seek “meaningful input into matters that may affect tribal communities” from representatives of tribal governments. In coordination with the Native American Heritage Commission, the CACGN will invite relevant tribal communities to a formal consultation.
3. The CACGN will consult legal counsel to review geographic name change proposals, as appropriate.
4. Findings will be presented at the CACGN committee meetings for committee review.

V. COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The CACGN shall consist of the following persons as committee members with voting authority:

1. Designee from the California Department of Water Resources
2. Designee from the California Department of Parks and Recreation
3. Designee from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife
4. Designee from the California Department of Conservation

5. Designee from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
6. Designee from the Native American Heritage Commission
7. Designee from the California State Library
8. Designee from the California African American Museum

The CACGN shall also include the following persons as ex-officio members:

1. Designee from the California Department of Transportation
2. Member or designee of the Select Committee on Native American Affairs
3. Member or designee of the Legislative Black Caucus
4. Member or designee of the Latino Legislative Caucus
5. Member or designee of the Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus
6. Member or designee of the Legislative LGBTQ Caucus
7. Member or designee of the Legislative Women's Caucus

VI. COMMITTEE MEMBER TERMS

Committee and ex-officio members shall serve at the pleasure of their departments or legislative caucus, which shall designate their member in a letter to the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency. Members shall be reviewed by their department or legislative caucus no less often than every two years. Members may be re-designated with a letter to the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency.

Members and terms can be found on <https://cacgn.ca.gov/>.

VII. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Committee Members

- Vote on a Chairperson every two years to nominate for consideration by the Secretary for Natural Resources (ex-officio members excluded). The Secretary makes the final appointment.
- Attend committee meetings and come prepared to discuss agenda items.
- Assist in identifying relevant and interested community members, experts, and land managing agencies to provide input on geographic name changes.
- Provide research and review support when applicable to a committee member's expertise.
- Discuss name change proposals to evaluate whether geographic names have been associated with discrimination and violence.
- Vote, request further review and outreach, or abstain from a vote if a conflict of interest is identified (ex-officio members excluded).

Committee Chairperson

The CACGN chairperson serves the committee and the BGN at the pleasure of the Secretary for Natural Resources. The chairperson is nominated by members of the committee, and the Secretary makes the final appointment. The chairperson serves for a term of two years and may serve up to three terms. Nomination criteria for the chairperson are as follows:

- Must be a current member of the CACGN and a full-time employee of the agency they represent.
- Must be nominated by another committee member and receive a minimum of two supporting votes from other committee members.

Once appointed, the chairperson will take on the following responsibilities for the CACGN:

- Open and close each committee meeting.
- Facilitate meetings with assistance from support staff.
- Develop and distribute meeting agendas in advance of committee meetings to both committee members and the public.
- Approve a meeting summary following each committee meeting.
- Communicate committee recommendations on geographic name proposals to the BGN.
- Regularly communicate with and update the California Natural Resources Agency.

Committee Meetings

- Committee meetings will be open to the public.
- Committee members will meet approximately, but not limited to, three times a year.
- Meeting agendas will be shared with all committee members and posted online for public review prior to each meeting.
- There will be an opportunity for public comment at each meeting.
- Meeting summaries focused on key outcomes will be produced and made available to the public on the CACGN website.

VIII. AGENCY OFFICIAL TO WHOM THE COMMITTEE REPORTS

The CACGN shall provide regular updates to a representative designated by the Secretary in the California Natural Resources Agency.

IX. ESTIMATED ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS

The CACGN will rely on existing staff and resources until such time as the State may allocate funds.

X. ALLOWANCES FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Members of the CACGN will serve without pay. However, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services of the CACGN, members, to the extent funding is available, may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence.

XI. AMENDMENTS TO THIS CHARTER

Amendments to this charter may be updated as needed by the Secretary for Natural Resources in consultation with the members of the CACGN.