

WAC 332-160-040 Factors to consider for all name proposals. What factors will the committee and board on geographic names consider when reviewing geographic name proposals? There can be no set formula applied to determine whether a specific proposal should be approved or denied; however, there are certain factors that should be considered. This section describes considerations of the board and committee on geographic names as well as how these factors influence the naming decision.

(1) Proposals containing the following characteristics are generally favored:

(a) Dominant local usage - Names that are in dominant local usage and are strongly supported by local residents will be favored. Proponents should submit appropriate evidence of local usage and resident support for their proposal.

(b) Historical significance - Names that are significant to the early history of Washington state, such as names of prominent Native Americans or pioneers, or pertinent foreign origin will be favored. Proponents should provide appropriate evidence of the historical significance of the proposed name as well as its relationship to the geographic feature.

(c) Use of the Roman alphabet - Proposed geographic names must be written in the Roman alphabet as normally used for writing the English language. Diacritical marks, however, may be added to names as specified below. Proposed names should be as short as possible and easily pronounced. The pronunciation should be apparent from the spelling.

(2) Proposals containing the following factors will be disfavored:

(a) Derogatory names - The committee on geographic names will deny any proposal that it deems to be derogatory toward any racial, ethnic, gender, or religious group.

(b) Diacritical marks - The use of diacritical marks in proposed names is disfavored because they are almost never used in English and because they are not easily reproducible on maps, signs, or other documents. On the other hand, diacritical marks may be especially important if their omission would result in a significant change in the meaning of the name in the parent language. A spelling that includes diacritical marks might be approved if, in the judgment of the committee, there is substantial evidence of active local use, such as official records, maps, and signs, in the area where the feature is located, or overriding significance.

(c) Duplicate names - The use of duplicate names for similar types of geographic features within a county or in close proximity to each other should be minimized or avoided unless overridden by other considerations such as dominant local usage.

(d) Commercial names - Proposals containing clear commercial overtones are strongly disfavored, including names proposed to improve advertising of a site for an individual, group, or organization.

(e) Hyphens and apostrophes - Hyphens and apostrophes are not easily reproducible on signs, maps, and other documents and thus are disfavored. These symbols should only be retained when necessary for the meaning of a name. Apostrophes suggesting possession or association are not to be used within the body of a proper geographic name (Longs Pond: Not Long's Pond). One example of an exception might be where an apostrophe is necessary to preserve correct spelling of family names (e.g., O'Brian Creek), but the committee will consider each proposal on a case-by-case basis.

(f) Long names - If the length of a name makes it difficult or cumbersome to use in written or spoken form, the proposed name will be disfavored and will not be approved unless there are overriding considerations. Full commemorative names may be approved by the committee and board where more than just the surname is necessary to make it unambiguous who the referent is. And, when naming a branch of a stream (or segment of any other geographic feature), reference to the name of the main geographic feature along with the branch name might be necessary for clarity.

(g) Wilderness names - A goal of federal wilderness area administration is to minimize the impacts and traces of people, including the naming of features. Within wilderness areas, proposals will not be approved unless an overriding need exists, such as for purposes of safety or area administration. Proponents of an unnamed feature in a wilderness area must attempt to coordinate their proposal with the federal agency responsible for the administration of the area. The application for a name change should include the result of this effort, including any documentation supporting a federal agency finding of overriding need.

(3) Commemorative names: Proposals assigning the name or nickname of a deceased person to geographic features will be considered by the committee on geographic names and will be neither favored nor disfavored as a general class. These proposals will be assessed in consideration of all other naming factors. Additionally, commemorative name proposals must be consistent with the following standards:

(a) The person being commemorated must be deceased for at least five years before a proposal will be considered;

(b) The person being honored should have had either some direct or long-term association with the feature or have made a significant contribution to the area in which it is located unless the commemorated person had an outstanding and significant national or international reputation;

(i) Examples of "direct or long-term association" or "significant contribution" include early or long-term settlers of more than twenty years, donor of land to the state or federal government, or a person who played a large part in protecting the land for the public benefit;

(ii) A person's ownership of or death on land where a feature is located will normally not be sufficient on its own to satisfy the "direct or long-term association" criterion.

(c) Proposed commemorative names that may be construed to commemorate a living person are disfavored;

(d) Proposals to commemorate living or deceased pets are disfavored; and

(e) As part of a commemorative name proposal, proponents should submit evidence of local support for the name, provide evidence of historical significance when applicable, and design their proposal to address the other decision factors in this rule.

(4) Names located on tribal reservations: The committee will not review name proposals where a geographic feature is located entirely on a tribal reservation, instead deferring to the tribal government.

(5) Generic terms: When a proposed geographic name includes both a specific and generic element, the generic term (creek, ridge, lake, etc.) should be appropriate to the feature and should normally be consistent with generic terms already used and understood in the area in which the feature is located.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.30.293. WSR 16-15-074, § 332-160-040, filed 7/19/16, effective 8/19/16.]