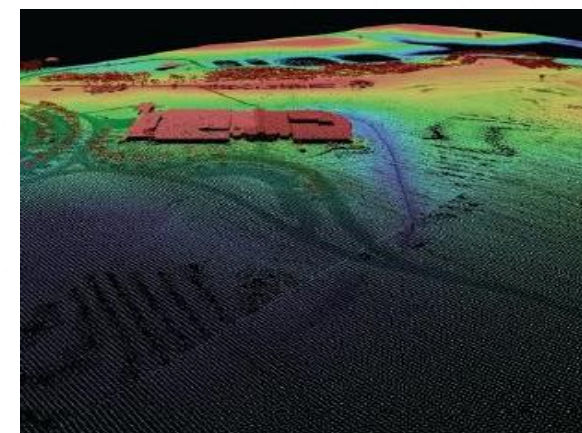
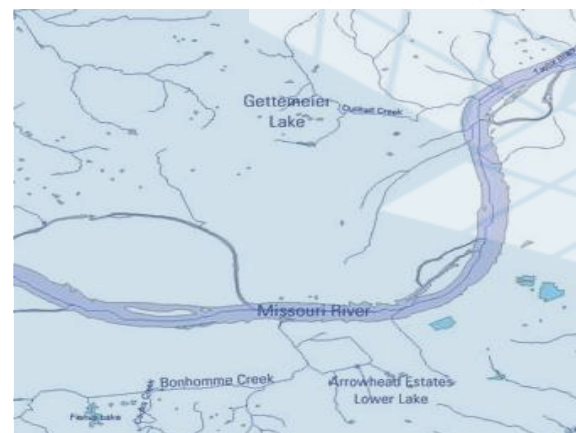
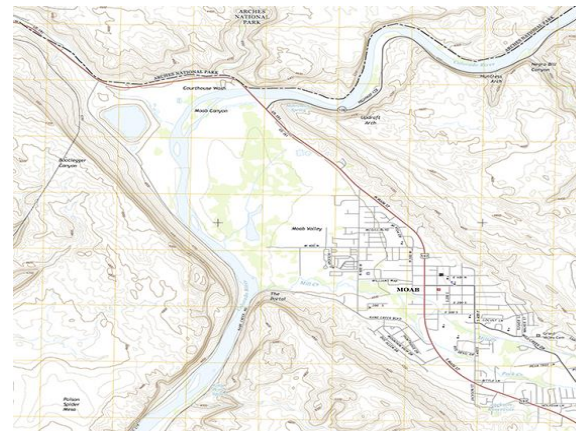




U.S. Efforts to Reconcile Derogatory and Offensive Geographic Names

U.N. WGIC - 2022



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Director, National Geospatial Program, U.S. Geological Survey
October 11, 2022

Hundreds of geographic feature names in the U.S. use a word that is considered derogatory by most indigenous Americans

The word is squaw.

It was stolen from the word for "woman" in one specific Indigenous language, I believe Algonquian. The word was then perverted - as so many Indigenous words and customs were - turning it into a broad racial slur, a caricature that removed individual identity and dignity from all women of Native American heritage

- Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior



*Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior
First Native American to serve as a cabinet secretary*

Haaland, Deb. "How we expunged a racist, sexist slur from hundreds of public lands." The Washington Post, 28 September 2022.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/09/28/remove-racial-slur-federal-land-native-american/>. Accessed September 28, 2022.

+ Challenge

The authority and process to rename features is complicated, and not intended to support bulk renaming

- The U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) has the authority – with the Secretary of the Interior – to name/rename *geographic* features for Federal use. These are interpreted to be natural features – creeks, mountains, canyons, etc.
- The BGN typically works on a case-by-case basis, and is proposal driven. Without a proposal, the BGN cannot change a name.
- The Sq___ word appears in names of towns, roads, parks, hills, creeks, etc. across the Nation.
- Town names, park names, roads, post offices, etc. all require varied authority to rename, often not within the Federal government.



+ Background

Sq___ has been seen as derogatory for decades, but action to replace has been slow and not uniform

- Several individual States passed laws declaring the term derogatory
 - Maine (2009)
 - Minnesota (1995)
 - Montana (1999)
 - South Dakota (2009)
 - Oregon (2001)
- Yet, the BGN received only 261 proposals between 2001-2022 on which they could act
- More than 650 features with the term remained on the landscape



Distribution of Sq___ names across the lower 48 United States

- Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland Signed two Secretary's Orders (SO) on Nov. 19, 2021
 - SO 3404 - Declaring "Sq____" a Derogatory Term and Implementing Procedures to Remove the Term from Federal Usage
 - SO 3405 - Addressing Derogatory Geographic Names
- DOI began implementing these SO's immediately following signature

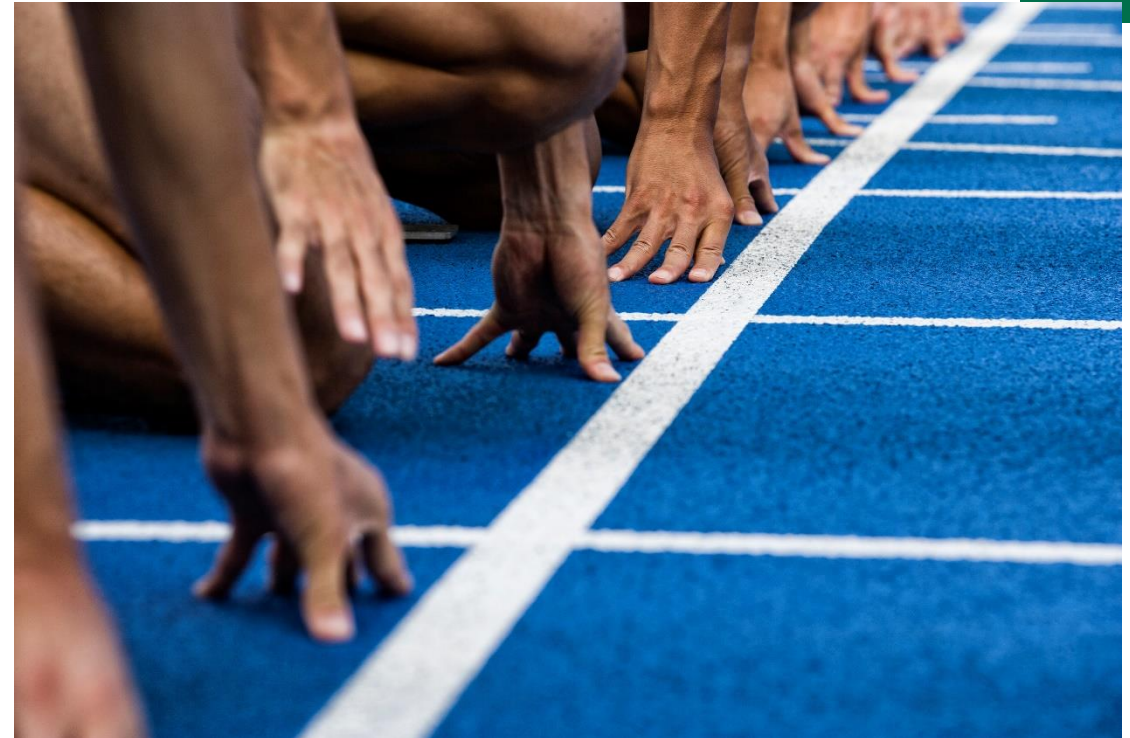


"Racist terms have no place in our vernacular or on our federal lands. Our nation's lands and waters should be places to celebrate the outdoors and our shared cultural heritage – not to perpetuate the legacies of oppression"

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland

+ Secretary's Order 3404

- Declares sq___ a derogatory term
- Creates Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force to implement
- Outlines plan to reconcile 650+ geographic features with sq___ in name
 - Development of candidate replacement names
 - Public comment period
 - Tribal Consultations
 - Sq___ name will remain as variant
- Task Force recommendation to BGN for vote



SO 3404 Started a 9 month sprint to reconcile nearly 650 names

+ Task Force Composition

- 6 experienced BGN members across two Departments, and BGN Exec Secretary
- Focal points
 - Representation of diverse backgrounds
 - Tribal experience
 - Inclusion of Land Management Agencies
- Coordinated with Asst. Sec of Water and Science, and Office of the Secretary
- No additional resources provided; leveraged admin expertise from other bureaus

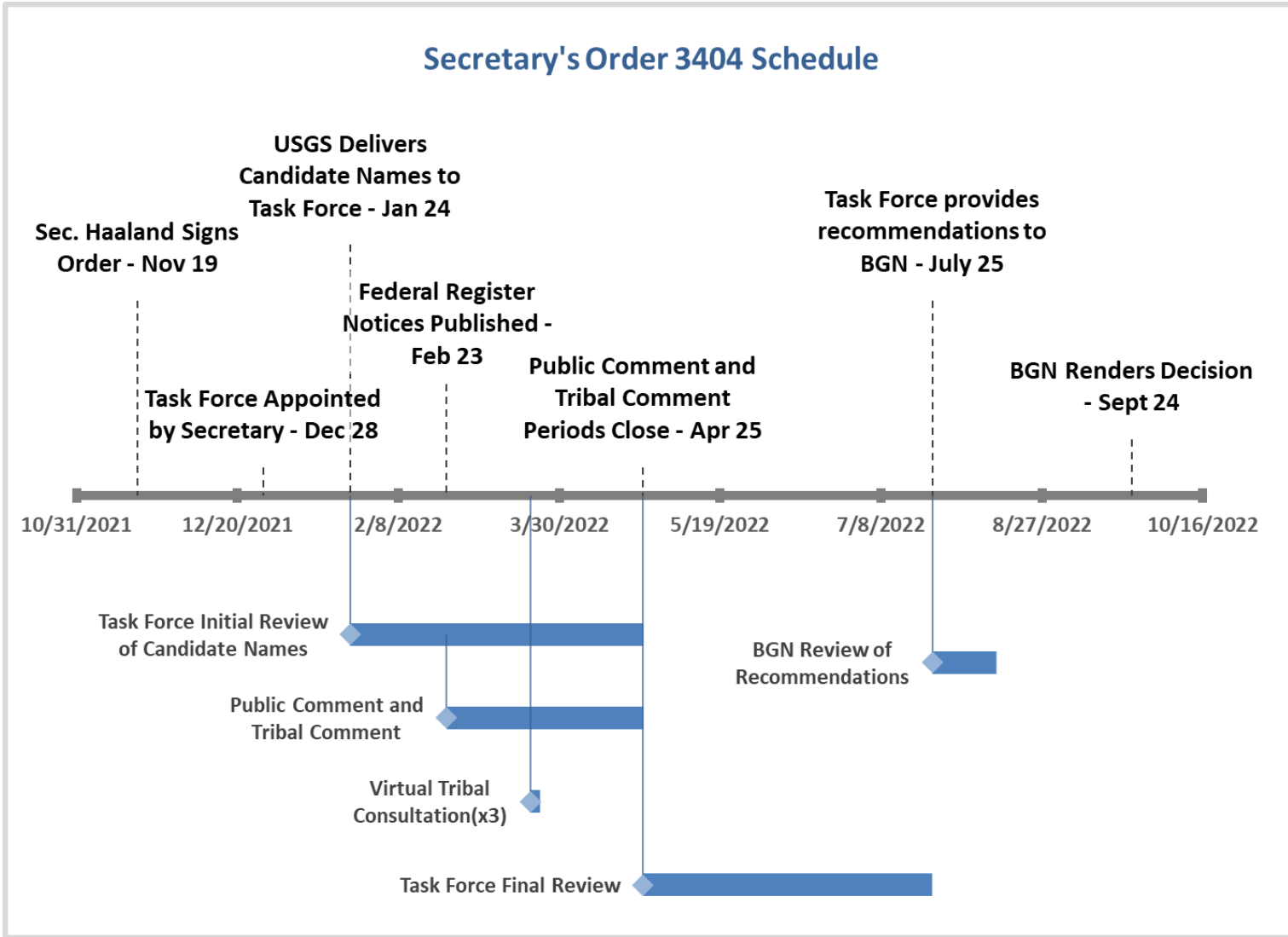
A task force chaired by the USGS will be created no later than 30 days after the issue of this Order. This Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force (task force) will include 13 representatives selected by the Secretary from the BGN primary Federal land management agencies and diversity, equity, and inclusion experts from the Department, as follows:

1. Seven BGN representatives, one each from the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, USGS, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and BGN Executive Secretariat;
2. Six additional representatives as selected by the Secretary, as follows:
 - (a) One representative from the Office of Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs;
 - (b) One representative from the Department’s Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Civil Rights; and
 - (c) Four representatives from Department’s Bureaus representing diverse backgrounds and experience.

Secretary’s Order 3404 Section 4(c) describing composition of Task Force



Secretary's Order 3404 – Task Force Schedule



Milestones

Date	Event
11/19/2021	Sec. Haaland Signs Order - Nov 19
12/28/2021	Task Force Appointed by Secretary - Dec 28
1/24/2022	USGS Delivers Candidate Names to Task Force - Jan 24
2/23/2022	Federal Register Notices Published - Feb 23
4/25/2022	Public Comment and Tribal Comment Periods Close - Apr 25
7/24/2022	Task Force provides recommendations to BGN - July 25
9/24/2022	BGN Renders Decision - Sept 24

There is recognition that

- Priority is removal of derogatory names
 - The recommendations provide replacement names that allows the removal to take place (i.e., can't unname a feature)
 - Communities may not agree with recommended replacement names
 - Future BGN proposals will allow for iteration to an “equilibrium”
- Process is accelerated, and imperfect – but realizes the goal of SO3404
- The SO3404 TF process is largely outside of the BGN



+ USGS Generation of Candidate Names

- For Sq___ features to be removed, must have a replacement name for each feature
- No easy 1-for-1 swap
- U.S. Geologic Survey used quantitative process to generate 5 candidate names for each sq___ feature based on spatial proximity

Finding the five nearest candidate GNIS names

Within Target Distance

- 25 miles
- Vast majority are < 5 miles

Use feature geometry where available (lines | polygons) →
Use GNIS points where feature geometry not available

NHD: streams, lakes, etc.
GNIS landforms: valley, range, summit, etc.

Ignore certain GNIS feature classes from all results →

Canal	Crossing	Populated Place
Census	Levee	Sea
Channel	Locale	Unknown
Civil	Military	

Exclude all results from the same GNIS feature class

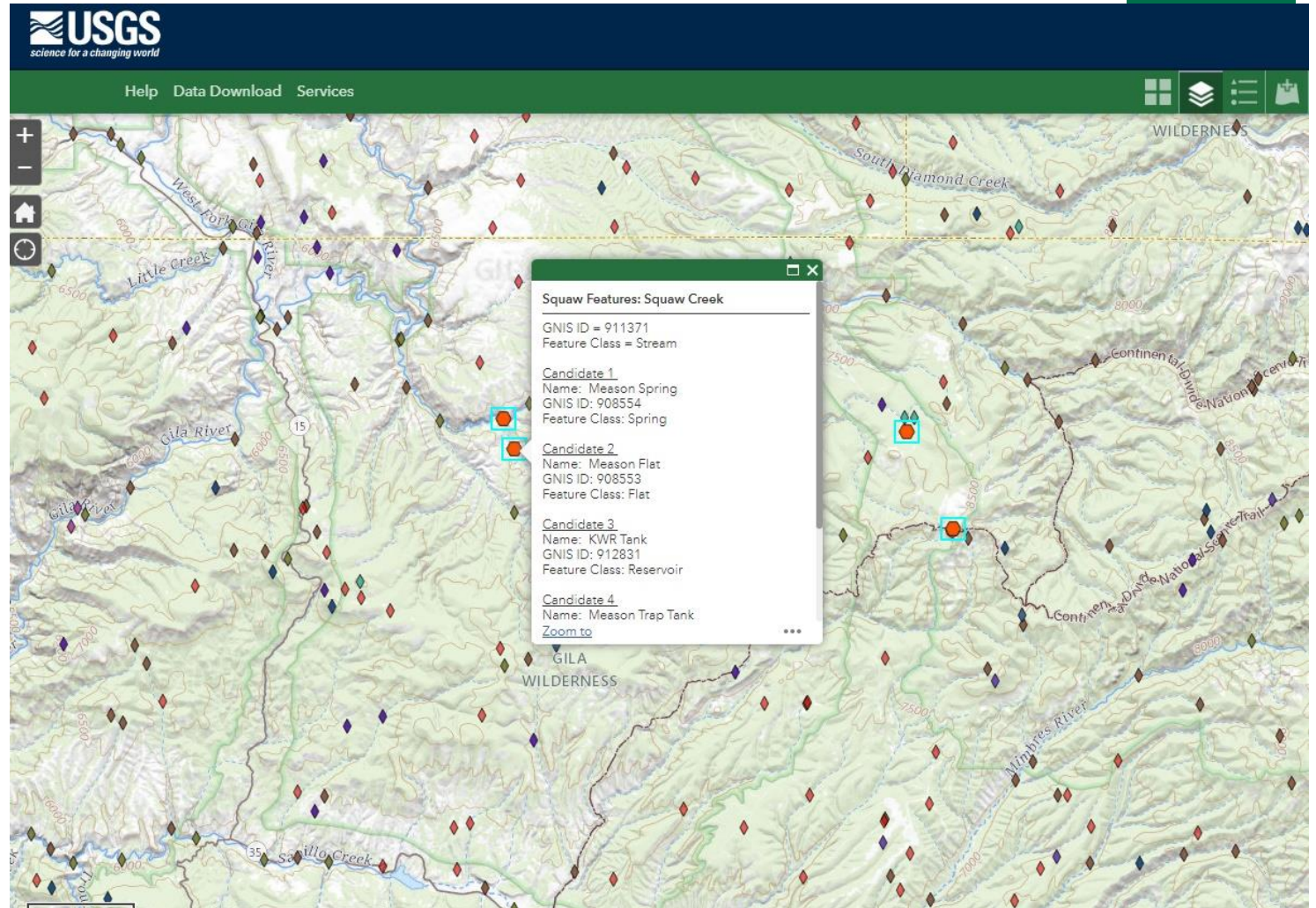
—streams ignored for streams | summits ignored for summits | etc.

Also exclude results for certain similar GNIS feature classes →

target	ignore these	
Area	Flat	
Basin	Valley	
Cliff	Slope	
Flat	Area	
Pillar	Summit	
Stream	Lake	Valley
Valley	Stream	

+ USGS Generation of Candidate Names

- Organized in web map
- Provided repeatability and consistency in generating candidate names
- Relied on names already in use
- Meant that TF did not have to “come up with” names



+ Public Comment Period

- Requested feedback
 - Recommendations for replacement name
 - Comment on 5 candidate names
- Announced in Federal Register on Feb. 23, 2022
- Public comment period open for 60 days until April 25, 2022
- Comments allowed through
 - Regulations.gov
 - Written (USGS Mailstop)
- Public comments not privileged – considered available to public



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+ Tribal Consultation

- 574 Federally Recognized Tribes invited to formal Government-to-Government Consultation
 - Notification
 - Federal Register on Feb. 23, 2022
 - 3 “Dear Tribal Leader Letters” issued by BIA to all Federally Recognized Tribes
 - 3 consultation sessions open to all Tribes - March 21, 22, and 23
 - Individual consultation conducted as necessary
 - Allowed 30 days following consultation for written feedback
- Requested feedback
 - Recommendations for replacement name
 - Comment on 5 candidate names
- Consultation led by Senior Counselor to the Secretary and coordinated through Assistant Secretary
- Comments allowed through
 - Oral delivery – during consultation
 - Electronic - email to ASWS
 - Written – ASWS
- Comments provided are part of consultation process, and not available to non-consultation parties



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+ Initial Task Force (TF) Review

- USGS provided candidate names to TF on Jan. 25, 2022
- TF divided into 4 workgroups (WGs) based on location of sq___ names, with each WG led by a current BGN member
- WG leads coordinated as necessary with their own bureaus, and with each other
- From Jan. 25-Apr. 25 the TF reviewed candidate names to provide initial recommendation. Goal was to have single recommendation by end of public comment and Tribal Consultation period, which was met



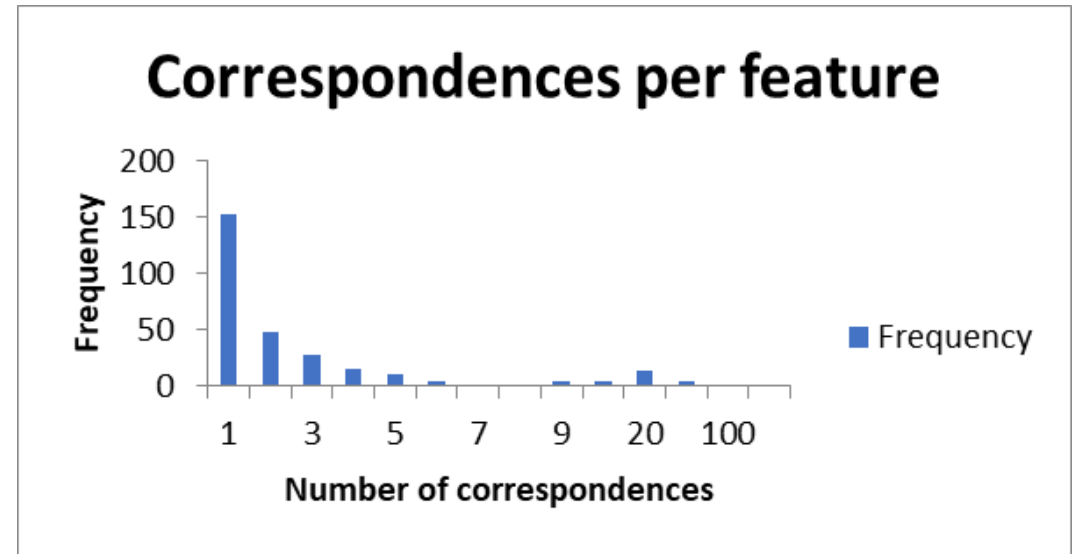
+ Initial Task Force Review

- TF Chair and BGN Staff, with input from WG leads, developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
 - Provide consistency in developing recommendations
 - Inform/assist those with no experience in geographic naming
 - Carry relevant BGN policies and practices into TF recommendations (i.e., commemorative names, long names, duplicative names, etc.)
- As questions or complications arose (i.e., UPPL's), consulted with DOI leadership as necessary for additional guidance



+ Public Comment Results

- More than 6600 public correspondences received
 - 95%+ supported the effort, or engaged in process (i.e., provided recommendation)
 - 3.2% voiced dissent/disagreement
 - 82% followed format of a form letter developed by The Wilderness Society that broadly supported the effort
 - 1000+ recommendations across 290 features



*A very small number of features received a large number of public comments.
Most features received less than five comments.*

+ Tribal Consultation Results

- 66 Tribal Governments engaged in 3 virtual tribal consultations
- Consultations resulted in 337 recommendations across 304 features under review
- Additional time was granted to few tribes unable to meet 30-day period
- Received many native-language recommendations



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- From May 13 – July 22 TF incorporated public and tribal comments into recommendations
 - Public and Tribal recommendations, and pending proposals, were prioritized above 5 candidate names
 - Best judgement, often with consultation of several TF members, was applied in complex situations (i.e., competing names)
 - Rarely no suitable candidate names or recommendations existed, and TF provided alternative recommendation
- TF provided 645 recommendations to BGN Staff on July 22



TF Recommendations allowed the BGN to proceed to vote

+ Decision

The US BGN voted on Sept 8 to rename 643 derogatory feature names

I am grateful to the members of the Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force and the Board on Geographic Names for their efforts to prioritize this important work. Together, we are showing why representation matters and charting a path for an inclusive America.

- Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior



*Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior
First Native American to serve as a cabinet secretary*

Department of the Interior. September 8, 2022. Interior Department Completes Removal of "Sq___" from Federal Use [Press Release].
<https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/interior-department-completes-removal-sq-federal-use>

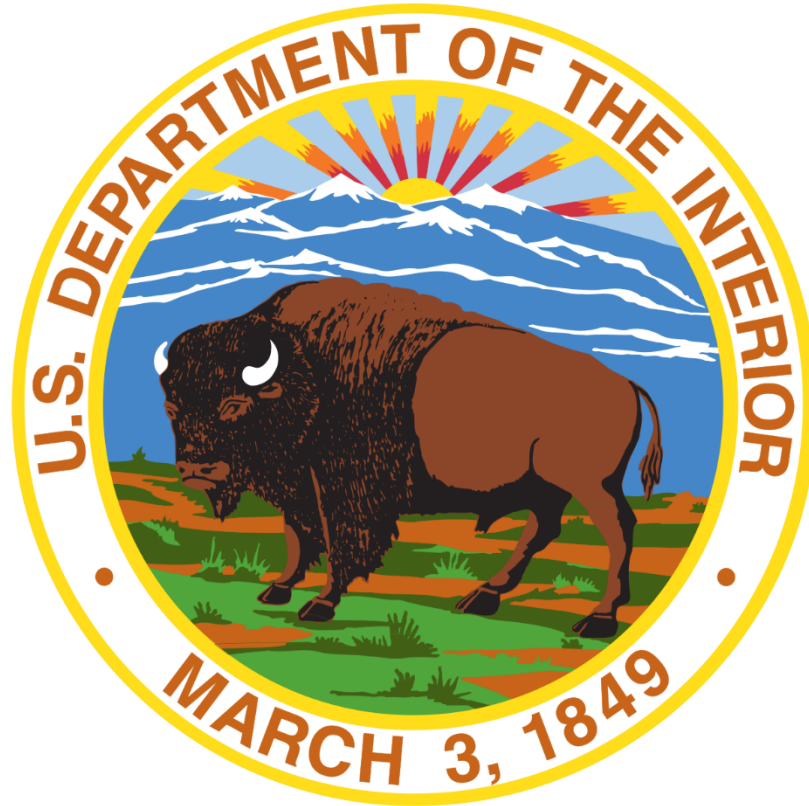
+ Secretary's Order 3405

- Creates a Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) to consider:
 - Additional derogatory terms, other than sq_____
 - Federal land unit (i.e., national parks, refuges, etc.) names in addition to geographic features
 - Process for reconciling derogatory names
- The Secretary of the Interior has appointed the members of the Advisory Committee and signed its charter. Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, and DOD are ex officio member
- SO3405 is the appropriate process for comments, concerns, questions regarding derogatory terms other than sq_____

+ Lessons Learned

Much is possible, but requires dedication and creativity

- Do not be boxed in by existing processes, and be aware of creative alternatives within policies and authorities
- Executive champion is critical. Very difficult to do bottom-up.
- Outreach and communication is important. Public, State/local governments, and Tribes want to be part of the process, but require time to make a considerate contribution
- There are many details to track, check, and address. Resources are required, especially subject matter experts and analysts.



Thank you!