

Wisconsin Geographic Names Council Meeting

January 30th, 2023, 10:30 am – 12:00 pm

Meeting minutes

Attendance: In-person: Carroll Schaal, DNR; Alix Burke, DNR Legal Counsel; Howard Veregin, UW – State Cartographer’s Office; and Eric Carson, WGNHS. Virtual: Dawn Vick, DOA; Christine Koeller, DOT; and Kris Goodwill, DNR.

Call to order approximately 10:34 am. Meeting minutes from November 18, 2022, were approved.

SO3405 - Addressing Other Derogatory Geographic Names

A DNR work group is being formed to review state and federal data bases and develop a list of candidate feature names that may be derogatory. Then, after GNC input and review, identified names will be submitted as recommendations to the SO3405 federal Task Force. The work group is dividing up the lists by county and each member taking a block of counties to review. There is no comprehensive state names list that includes all geographic features, but the DNR has databases for lake and stream names that should largely track with the federal list.

Howard asked how others could participate in the work group, noting that the federal GNIS data base has 18,000 names. Kris responded that the DNR would be happy to take suggestions or help from others and any interested parties could directly contact the department by email. The work group could also do an announcement in DNR’s staff newsletter and solicit additional input.

Review of proposals that do not meet minimum criteria.

The Council reviewed and affirmed the following denials which do not meet the naming criteria established by the US Bureau of Geographic Names and the Wisconsin Geographic Names Council. Carroll asked the Council if the fact that Burnett County was going to name these lakes in their county system regardless of the Council’s decision made a difference in the Council’s application of the minimum criteria for naming. It did not.

- a. Naming J&A Soulmate Brook, Price County – less than minimum length, naming after living persons (construed).
- b. Naming Lake Palmer, Washburn County – naming after living property owners.
- c. Naming Weaver Creek, in Florence County - naming after living property owners; less than minimum length.
- d. Naming Crombeny Lake, Burnett County – less than minimum size
- e. Renaming Sanks Lake to Crystal Lake, Burnett County – creates a duplicate County name. Also, changes an established name with no justification. Could retain as a “variant” name.

- f. Naming Little Godfrey Lake, Burnett County - less than minimum size.
- g. Naming McBride Lake Burnett County - less than minimum size.
- h. Naming Peterson Lake, Burnett County - less than minimum size.
- i. Naming Pumpkin Seed Lake, Burnett County - less than minimum size.
- j. Naming Long Lake, Burnett County - less than minimum size; creates a duplicate name in the County.

Discuss relevant policy updates

Regarding the above discussion on proposals that do not meet the minimum criteria, Carroll asked if there were suggestions for how we could better inform proponents that these projects will not be considered. The federal BGN does not have minimum size or length thresholds as the state does (10 acres for a lake and 5 miles for a stream lake excepting if there is direct public access), and these minimum criteria screen out the most proposals. Additionally, many of the applications received by the Council have very little supporting information for the proposed name change, despite the suggestions listed on the Council's website. This makes reviewing cases difficult. Howard, the longest serving Council member, said the size thresholds were in place when he became a member and the Council agreed they should remain. Some suggestions for assisting applicants included putting the minimum criteria higher up or more prominently on the application form, highlighting the criteria more on the website, or perhaps providing an example "ideal" proposal.

Carroll reviewed the updated GNC website and asked in general if anyone had trouble accessing the application files or had comments for website improvements. Council members did not have any trouble navigating to the meeting materials.

Carroll reported that the Council has received a local response from Oneida Co. regarding a proposal that will be on the March agenda. They rejected the name stating that the applicant did not pay the required fee per the County ordinance to publicly notice the proposal. Previously, they have indicated they could not provide a response if the fee was not paid. Discussion followed. Alix suggested the Council set up a meeting with representatives from the County to see if the way the Council is now noticing the proposals on the DNR webpage and allowing 60 days for a response would change their position. Kris suggested the Council could also do a statewide press release for these meetings to further get the word out about meetings and other deadlines.

There is a DNR Manual Code that describes internal DNR workflows, role and responsibilities that is very out of date. Kris asked Alix if there would be legal support available to update the code by summer. Alix will follow up with legal services and report back to the Council.

Christine shared a message DOT had sent to its mapping group about the replacement names for Sq*** features that were approved by the federal BGN last fall, noting she had not seen a follow up from DNR that they had also initiated the changes. Carroll

stated that DNR GIS (24K hydrolayer) had made the changes and he thought had communicated that to its statewide users as well. Christine mentioned she did not recall hearing anything through SAGIC (State Agency Geospatial Information Committee). Carroll will follow up a report back.

Develop March 2023 meeting agenda

This meeting will be to review the 15 full proposals that met minimum criteria and have been sent out for local recommendations. Carroll solicited conflicting dates such as spring break that would interfere with a meeting. He will send a Doodle Poll for the blocks of time that least interfere.

Meeting adjourned approximately 12:04 PM

DRAFT