

**Buto, Arthur J**

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**From:** jrunyon@usgs.gov on behalf of BGNEXEC, GS-N-MAC <bgnexec@usgs.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 24, 2016 11:18 AM  
**To:** Carol Kavanagh - NOAA Federal  
**Cc:** Troy Kitch - NOAA Federal; Louis Yost; Buto, Arthur J; Drew Decker  
**Subject:** Re: What is the official name of this state: "Hawaii" or "Hawai'i"

Dear Ms. Kavanagh,

The official name of the state is Hawaii, i.e. no diacritical mark. Only the U.S. Congress or the President can change the name of a state, and to date, no bill or executive order has been enacted to add the mark. All Federal products must continue to use the name Hawaii.

As it happens, the Hawaii Board on Geographic Names (HBGN) has recently been discussing this issue and it appears there may be some interest at the state level in approaching Congress to add the mark, but it has not happened yet. Furthermore, if the change should be enacted, the U.S. BGN would not be required to formally vote for approval. Any decision by Congress regarding the name of a state is automatically official for Federal use. All we can suggest is to continue to check GNIS periodically.

Regarding the other names on your list, usage within the state seems to be inconsistent at best. Each of those entries was compiled from an authoritative source over the past 15+ years. We're aware that usage varies and even two references to a single feature may not agree. The HBGN has been reviewing the list of names in GNIS, and where appropriate advising us when diacritical marks need to be added. It's very much an ongoing effort.

I've added the chair of the HBGN to this email, in case he has anything to add.

Many thanks for your interest and please don't hesitate to let us know if we can assist further.

Sincerely yours,

Jennifer Runyon, research staff

For Lou Yost, Executive Secretary

U.S. Board on Geographic Names

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On Wed, Aug 24, 2016 at 2:58 PM, Carol Kavanagh - NOAA Federal <[carol.kavanagh@noaa.gov](mailto:carol.kavanagh@noaa.gov)> wrote:

Mr. Yost,

We frequently refer to the State of Hawaii on our website, [oceanservice.noaa.gov](http://oceanservice.noaa.gov). We follow AP Style when referencing the state's name, which calls for the spelling without the diacritical mark. Sometimes we're asked to use the term "Hawai'i" when referencing the state and recently wondered what the U.S. government considers the official name to be. That brought us to you.

We queried place names by going to "Search" on <http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/index.html>. When the search results included the name of the state, the spelling was "Hawaii" without the diacritical mark. However, we found a number of instances in which a place name has the word "Hawaii" or "Hawaiian" and includes the diacritical mark.

East Hawai'i Cultural Center  
Hawai'i Volcanoes Wilderness  
Hawai'i Convention Center  
Hawai'i Nature Center

And other place names that do not include the diacritical mark:

Soka Gakki International Hawaii Cultural Center  
Hawaiian Volcano Observatory  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Library of Hawaii

According to the United States Board on Geographic Names, what is the official name of this state?

Thank you,

Carol Kavanagh

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Carol Kavanagh  
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