

Proposed Procedure to Include National Park Service Input and Feedback in HBGN's Place Name Review Process

Issue:

The Hawaii Volcanoes National Park ("Park") expressed concern that place names within the Park are being reviewed by the Hawai'i Board on Geographic Names ("HBGN") and changed without their input prior to decision making. The issue centered around the spelling of the Pu'u 'Ō'ō summit in the Park, which the HBGN corrected to Pu'u'ō'ō. HBGN made its decision based on anecdotal evidence about the naming of the summit and in compliance with the 'Ahahui 'Ōlelo Hawai'i guidelines, which call for concatenation.

Background:

The HBGN is responsible for designating the official names and spellings of geographic features in Hawai'i. In its deliberations, the HBGN may solicit and consider the advice and recommendations of the appropriate government officials and, as appropriate, other knowledgeable persons.

The HBGN consists of the following persons or their representatives: the chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources, the chairperson of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the chairperson of the Department of Hawaiian Homelands, the director of the Office of Planning, the president of the University of Hawai'i, the State Land Surveyor, and the director of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum.

Project to correct spellings of Hawaiian place names:

In the late 1990's, the U.S. Geological Survey ("USGS") began updating the 1:24,000 quadrangle maps of Hawai'i. One of the features of the updated maps was the addition of diacritical marks to the Hawaiian names appearing on the maps. At the request of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names ("US BGN"), the HBGN, which is responsible for designating official names and spellings of geographic features in Hawai'i, began a multi-year project to review each of the over 10,000 names that appear on the quadrangle maps and/or in the U.S. Geographic Names Information System ("GNIS") and to add the 'okina and kahakō, or diacritical marks, as appropriate. Documents available on the HBGN website list the decisions that have been rendered so far by the HBGN.

Thus far, the HBGN has reviewed all of the names appearing on the USGS quadrangle maps, and is now reviewing additional names that appear in the GNIS. It should be noted that the HBGN has adopted a policy of adding diacritical marks only where there is solid evidence that there should be 'okina or kahakō. Therefore, there are many instances where no decision has been rendered and the HBGN has advised USGS to leave the name without any diacritical marks until further research can be conducted.

In making its decisions, the HBGN generally follows conventions developed by 'Ahahui 'Ōlelo Hawai'i in 1978. *"Place Names of Hawaii"* (Pukui, Elbert & Mookini) is considered the primary source for determining the appropriate use of 'okina or kahakō in individual place names. The HBGN has deviated from these sources when other experts, such as native Hawaiian speaking elders from a particular area, have provided alternative pronunciations. In 2014, the HBGN sought to further standardize and document decision making criteria by developing a publicly available style guide to be followed when

making decisions regarding use of ‘okina or kahakō in Hawaiian place names. The style guide was completed in January of 2015 and revised in February 2016. The *Guidelines for Hawaiian Geographic Names* can be downloaded from the HBGN website:
https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/op/gis/bgn/Guidelines_for_Hawaiian_Geographic_Names_v1.1.pdf

Most decisions fall into two categories:

- Spelling Corrections. Many of the changes that HBGN approves are spelling corrections to add ‘okina and kahakō or to otherwise conform to the ‘Ahahui ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i guidelines or to the style guide developed by HBGN, “*Guidelines for Hawaiian Geographic Names*.” Several references are consulted by the Board in making these decisions, including “*Place Names of Hawaii*” (Pukui, Elbert & Mookini); community input may also be solicited when appropriate. Upon review and approval by USGS staff, spelling corrections can be quickly adopted and input into the GNIS. However, if USGS staff interprets the corrections to be name changes instead, then HBGN will be notified and will either reconsider its decision or reprocess the recommendation as a name change.
- Names changes or new place names. These discussions are usually more extensive and often require input from the affected communities, including government stakeholders. Requests for name changes and adding new place names to the GNIS are subject to review and decision making by the US BGN.

Currently, HBGN is in the process of reviewing place names on each island that were deferred earlier or have been submitted for its review.

Recommendations:

1. HBGN include the Superintendents for all National Parks in Hawai‘i in electronic and other distribution lists for meeting notifications, agenda, and meeting packets.
2. To the extent that they are known, the place names to be reviewed at a meeting that are within National Park Service (“NPS”) boundaries will be identified. Likewise, place names to be reviewed that are known to be within designated Wilderness areas within NPS boundaries will be identified.
3. Superintendents or their designees may provide oral testimony or written testimony or documentation for any place names that are likely to be reviewed at an HBGN meeting, or they may provide written comments and concerns within 60 days after the meeting has taken place.
4. HBGN will reference the concerns or documentation provided by NPS in the comments section for the appropriate place name. If provided after-the-fact, the HBGN will notify USGS by email of the NPS concerns or documentation for a particular place name, and whether or not the HBGN plans to reconsider its decisions as a result.