



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

ORDER NO. 3404

**Subject:** Declaring “Squaw” a Derogatory Term and Implementing Procedures to Remove the Term from Federal Usage

**Sec. 1 Purpose.** The Department of the Interior (Department) is responsible for the stewardship and management of public lands. However, there are many geographic features across the Nation that bear names which are considered derogatory. This Order identifies the term “squaw” as derogatory and provides direction to the Board on Geographic Names (BGN) to replace it.

**Sec. 2 Authority.** The authority for this Order is established under 43 U.S.C. §§364-364f.

**Sec. 3 Background.** Pursuant to 43 U.S.C. §364d, the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) is required to “promulgate in the name of the Board [on Geographic Names] . . . decisions with respect to geographic names, and principles of geographic nomenclature and orthography . . . .”

The BGN is a Federal body established by Public Law 80-242 (61 Stat. 456) in 1947 to maintain uniform geographic name usage throughout the Federal Government. The BGN comprises representatives of Federal agencies concerned with geographic information, population, ecology, and management of public lands. Sharing its responsibilities with the Secretary, the BGN promulgates official geographic feature names in accordance with its principles, policies, and procedures.

The BGN’s guiding principle for the names of geographic features in the United States and its territories is to approve for Federal use the names found in present-day local usage (see Principles, Policies, and Procedures [2016], Principle II, Names in Local Use). An exception to this principle may occur when a name is derogatory to a particular racial or ethnic group, gender, or religious group. The BGN will not make official for Federal use a locally used name that has been determined by the Secretary to be derogatory. BGN guidelines also require that a replacement name be identified when removing a derogatory name from a feature.

From time to time, derogatory names have been identified by the Secretary or the BGN and have been comprehensively replaced. In 1962, Secretary Udall identified a pejorative term for “African-Americans” as derogatory, and directed that the BGN develop a policy to eliminate its use. In 1974, the BGN identified a pejorative term for “Japanese” as derogatory and eliminated its use. When referring to the pejorative term for “African-Americans”, Secretary Udall commented “[w]hatever the overtones of the word were in the past, unquestionably a great many

people now consider it derogatory or worse.” The time has come to recognize that the term “squaw” is no less derogatory than others which have been identified and should also be erased from the National landscape and forever replaced.

#### **Sec. 4 Declaration and Replacement of “Squaw” as a Derogatory Term.**

- a. The term “squaw” is hereby declared to be derogatory, and all existing Federal geographic names using the term will be treated in accordance with the BGN’s Policy V: Derogatory and Offensive Names.
- b. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) will develop a list of locations and select candidate replacement names drawn from a list of nearby associative topographic features, the names of which are already accepted and in local use. This list will be supplied to the task force created in section 4.c. no later than 30 days after the establishment of the task force created in section 4.c.
- c. 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.
- d. The Secretary will provide the task force with any additional staff members and technical assistance that the Secretary, after consultation with the task force, determines to be appropriate to enable the task force to carry out its duties.
- e. The task force will consider replacement names from the list of candidate names identified pursuant to section 4.b. using the following process:
  1. Within 60 days of receiving the list of candidate names, the task force will make the list of candidate names available for written public comment in the Federal Register for a period of no less than 30 days.

2. The task force will engage in Tribal consultation consistent with President Biden’s January 26, 2021, memorandum entitled, “Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships,” and existing Departmental Policy. Tribal consultation will be concluded 90 days after candidate names have been provided to the task force.
3. The task force will review all public feedback and will consider Tribal feedback in accordance with Departmental policy. The task force will submit the proposed name changes to the BGN within 90 days after conclusion of the public comment period and Tribal consultation.
  - f. The BGN will render a decision on all recommended name changes no later than 60 days following the submission of all proposed replacement names by the task force.
  - g. For each change, the former name will be retained as a variant for historical and archival purposes in the Geographic Names Information System.
  - h. The BGN’s Policy I that prevents the BGN from considering a name change due to pending congressional legislation will not apply to the actions resulting from this Order.

**Sec. 5 Effect of the Order.** This Order is intended to declare the term “squaw” derogatory and establish a task force to change existing geographic feature names currently containing that term.

**Sec. 6 Expiration Date.** This Order is effective immediately and will remain in effect until its provisions are implemented or until it is amended, superseded, or revoked, whichever occurs first.

  
Secretary of the Interior

Date: **NOV 19 2021**