

Procedures for Changing Offensive or Insulting Geographical Place-names

I. Introduction

The North Carolina Geographic Information Coordinating Council (GICC) acknowledges that the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS), developed by the United State Geologic Survey in cooperation with the [U.S. Board on Geographic Names \(BGN\)](#), contains information about almost 2 million physical and cultural geographic features in the [United States and its territories](#). The federally recognized name of each feature described in the database is identified, and references are made to a feature's location by State, county, and geographic coordinates. The GNIS is our nation's official repository of domestic geographic names information.

II. Procedure

A. Any individual or agency may apply to the North Carolina Geographic Information Coordinating Council (GICC) to change a currently used place-name on grounds the name is offensive or insulting to the State's people, history, and heritage. The GICC or any of its subunits may initiate the procedure for changing an offensive or insulting place-name with the United States Board of Geographic Names (USBGN).

B. Requests for name changes should be in the form of an application to the GICC, which shall include the reasons why the present name should not be used. This procedure may not be used to change a place-name which is that of a historic person or event.

C. Upon receipt of a request to change an offensive or insulting name, the GICC shall refer the matter to the North Carolina Board on Geographic Names (NCBGN), which shall investigate the background of the current name.

1. The NCBGN shall contact the county governing body in which the purported place-name is located in order to:
 - a. notify the county that such application has been made,
 - b. ascertain the county governing body's position, if any, on the place-name in question,
 - c. inform the county governing body of the opportunity to be heard, per subparagraph E of this document.

2. After conducting its investigation and fact-finding, the NCBGN shall report its findings to the Statewide Mapping Advisory Committee, which shall review the NCBGN's findings regarding the application.

3. After reviewing the NCBGN's report, the Statewide Mapping Advisory Committee shall make a recommendation to the GICC regarding

whether application by the GICC to the USBGN to change the subject name is appropriate, including in the recommendation whether or not the place-name is offensive or insulting to the State's people, history or heritage. The Statewide Mapping Advisory Committee may seek input from the county governing body if it deems such input helpful or clarifying.

D. The GICC shall review the recommendation of the Statewide Mapping Advisory Committee. If the GICC finds that the subject place-name is offensive or insulting, then it shall notify the governing body of the county where the offensive or insulting place-name exists that the GICC intends to make application to the USBGN to change the place-name and shall request that the county governing body suggest a replacement name.

E. The county's governing body shall have no less than 90 days from receipt of notification from the GICC in which to respond. The GICC shall not take action to affect the change of the offensive or insulting place-name before it has reviewed the county's response or expiration of the 90 day period, whichever is sooner.

F. The GICC shall consider the response of the county governing body, if made within the appropriate time limit, and shall consider resolutions, if any, passed by the county's governing body regarding the change of the subject name.

G. After consideration of all properly submitted documentation, if the GICC determines by a vote of the Council that application to the USBGN to change the place-name is appropriate, then it shall apply to the USBGN to change the offensive place-name.

H. If the county's recommended replacement name is not deemed to be offensive or insulting by vote of the Council, then the Council shall make application to the U.S. Board of Geographic Names to change the offensive place-name to the name provided by the county governing body. If the county governing body fails to provide a replacement name within the specified time, or the provided name is deemed to be offensive or insulting by vote of the Council, then the Council shall make the application to change the offensive place-name to a name chosen within its discretion.

I. If the USBGN changes the offensive place-name, then the GICC shall notify the governing body of the county of that change within thirty (30) days of receiving notification of it.

Adopted May 20, 2004 by the NC Geographic Information Coordinating Council