

**[Public Comment emailed by Jackie Ostfeld, Outdoors for All Campaign Director, Sierra Club, on December 9, 2024]**

Dear Secretary Haaland,

We are writing to urge you to swiftly implement the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names (ACRPN). As a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to making the outdoors more inclusive for everyone, we - the Coalition for Outdoor Renaming and Education (CORE) - recognize the tremendous positive impact that implementing these recommendations would bring. Our nation's landscapes are stained with thousands of names that perpetuate prejudice. Implementing the ACRPN's recommendations would be a significant step toward making all people feel welcome, included, and represented in the outdoors.

We are impressed and grateful for your work as a champion for changing derogatory place names. Your renaming of more than 650 places named with a slur against Indigenous women, along with the creation of the ACRPN, represents a historic investment in this issue. Over the last several years, the ACRPN has identified over a thousand places with names that are racial, sexual, ableist, and other slurs or are blatantly derogatory. These dehumanizing names have no place in the outdoors. We urge you to swiftly begin working with local communities to identify replacement names and finalize these renamings as soon as possible. If replacement names are not immediately available, we recommend adopting neutral, temporary place names in the interim. CORE is more than happy to help organize and distribute information about this process to communities, as appropriate.

In addition, the ACRPN has recommended renaming Devil's Tower to Bear Lodge, a place that 20 Tribes have ties to and consider the current name to be derogatory. We fully support this name change and urge you to implement it immediately.

The ACRPN has also recommended improvements to the [U.S.] Board on Geographic Names' naming proposal process. These recommendations would increase transparency of the naming process and make it more accessible for all people pursuing name changes. Many of these recommendations would require little to no funding and could be implemented quickly and easily. The [US]BGN should:

**Address the most harmful names quickly**, demonstrating a commitment to reconciliation and healing while creating opportunities for community-led decisions. This can be done by prioritizing derogatory name change proposals, favoring the restoration and preservation of Indigenous names, and leveraging temporary "unnaming" places to immediately address harm while engaging Tribal Nations and impacted communities to identify culturally significant names.

**Improve transparency and community engagement of the [US]BGN's renaming process** by making information about the USBGN's monthly meetings public (including publishing the list of proposals under consideration, links to monthly meetings, and monthly meeting agendas). In addition, working with CORE and other organizations to develop an online training and education series on how to

complete an application for a place name change and scheduling a series of in-person and virtual town hall briefings with DOI staff in communities near geographic features identified on the ACRPN's list of places to rename.

**Align naming standards with an inclusive framework** by adopting the ACRPN's expanded definition of "derogatory," removing the term "primitive" from the USBGN's Policies and Procedures, and adding a content warning to GNIS to alert users about the possibility of encountering derogatory words. Together these actions will create a more equitable and respectful standard for geographic naming, reduce harm to historically marginalized communities, and promote cultural sensitivity in the [F]ederal naming process.

**Hire more staff for the USBGN to enhance capacity, outreach, and research**, enabling [it] to process renaming proposals more efficiently and engage more effectively with affected communities. This investment will reduce delays, accelerating the removal of harmful names and fostering trust and progress in renaming work.

Thank you again for your leadership on the issue of derogatory place names and for championing this important work. We look forward to the implementation of these changes, which will make our country's landscape more welcoming and inclusive of all people.

Sincerely,

Coalition for Outdoor Renaming & Education  
AISES – Advancing Indigenous People in STEM  
American Association of Geographers  
Atlantic Black Box  
Color My Outdoors  
D Daye Hunter Designs LLC  
Disabled Hikers  
IslandWood  
Junior North American Indian Women's Association,  
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Chapter  
Just-Trails  
Kentucky Heartwood  
Melanin Base Camp, LLC  
Mountain Surf Creative LLC  
National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers  
National Parks Conservation Association  
Native American Rights Fund  
Native Organizers Alliance  
Next 100 Coalition  
Oregon Natural Desert Association  
Pacific Education Institute  
Sierra Club  
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy

**Tali Elohi  
Tewa Women United  
The Wilderness Society  
West End Revitalization Association - WERA**