

From: Lea G [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 13, 2024 9:31 PM
To: NPS Reconciliation in Place Names Committee <reconciliation_committee@nps.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Derogatory Place Names

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To the Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names,

My name is Lea Gifford and as a concerned citizen I have been following the work of this committee for some time. I am a geographer and a Disability Rights advocate so much of my work is concerned with improving geographic spaces for people with disabilities like myself.

You can imagine my great disappointment to learn that only a few sites containing just one ableist, derogatory word were considered for reconciliation at the November 2023 meeting, despite specific reference to people with a “mental or physical condition” in your working definition of derogatory. There are many resources for identifying terms considered derogatory to the disabled and neurodivergent communities, including the Stanford Disability Language Guide that can be viewed here:

https://disability.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj26391/files/media/file/disability-language-guide-stanford_1.pdf.

According to the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS), the following derogatory labels from the Stanford Guide make up 603 place names in the United States: Blind, Crazy, Crip, Cripple, Deaf, Freak, Junkie, Lame, Mad, Midget and Mute. In the spirit of the Stanford Guide, I also suggest the addition of the following terms that make up 9 more place names: Dumb, Stupid and Idiot. All of these terms have either long been used with the intent to dehumanize, disrespect and disparage disabled and neurodivergent people or, in the case of Blind and Deaf, gain a negative connotation and become dehumanizing and derogatory when referring to a geographic feature instead of a person who belongs to one of these communities. I urge this committee to reevaluate the current list of place names and add all 612 sites where these 14 labels are used on the landscape. This country will be unable to fully reconcile with these marginalized communities as long as these names remain on the landscape.

Thank you for your time and I hope this committee will reconsider these erroneous exclusions.

Sincerely,
Lea Gifford