
Inventory of the Resources Agency - California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names Records

Collection number: R340

California State Archives
Office of the Secretary of State
Sacramento, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Resources Agency - California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names Records

Dates: 1961-2004

Collection number: R340

Creator: California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names

Collection Size: 2.25 cubic feet of textual records

Repository: California State Archives

Sacramento, California

Abstract: In 1961, the state geologist created The California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names within the Resources Agency. The committee began its work in July 1963, providing the federal government with advice in naming geographic features through researching local naming practices. Committee members contacted local area residents to learn what the residents called a geologic feature, and the committee advised the federal agency on what name to officially publish. The California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names Records consists of two and one-quarter cubic feet of textual material covering the years 1961 to 2004 with the bulk of the records covering 1961-1980.

Physical location: California State Archives

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access

Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names Records, R340.[Series Number], [box and folder number], California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento, California.

Acquisition and Custodial History

The California State Archives acquired the California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names Records according to state law.

Administrative History

In 1961, the assistant director of the United States Geological Survey discussed with the California State Geologist Ian Campbell the likelihood of establishing a state committee to aid the United States Board on Geographic Names in deciding on geographic names in California. As a result, the state geologist created the California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names within the Resources Agency. This committee was intended to continue the work of the state Board of Geographic Names, which lasted from 1928 until the mid-1940s. Campbell hoped to garner the State Legislature's approval for the Advisory Committee on Geographic Names through Senate Bill 774 (Farr, 1963) but the bill died in the Senate. Since then, the advisory committee has operated without a legislative mandate.

The California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names began its work in July 1963 with Ian Campbell as the chair. The committee consists of representatives from the Departments of Water Resources, Fish and Game, Parks and Recreation, Forestry and Fire Protection, and Conservation with each representative being responsible for a geographic region of California. The committee's task is to provide the federal government with advice in naming geographic features through researching local naming practices. Committee members contact local area residents to learn what the residents call a geologic feature and the committee advises the federal agency on what name to officially publish.

Scope and Content

The California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names Records consists of two and one-quarter cubic feet of textual material covering the years 1961 to 2004 with the bulk of the records covering 1961-1980. The collection is organized into three series: Committee Files; Conference Files; and Correspondence. The records primarily contain correspondence, meeting minutes, memorandum, reports, and maps. The scope of the committee records covers the organization and recommendations of the advisory committee. Topics include names of geographic features, geologic naming procedures, administrative procedures, the Council of Geographic Names Authorities annual meetings, and U.S. government official geographic names.

One area of controversy was the renaming of geographic features that included derogatory words or terms. Several local regions in California had named geographic features using racist or derogatory terms and the federal and state governments decided to remove the discriminatory words while embracing a multicultural history. The committee's usual response was to find a similar, non-offensive, name to the changed names or to use a historically appropriate name.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Geological formations

Geography

Place names

ID R340.01, Box 3, Series 1 **Committee Files 1961-1988**

Folders 1-2

Physical Description: 46 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically by year.

Scope and Content Note

Committee Files contain administrative documents establishing the committee's procedures for meetings and for communicating with the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, "Decisions on Geographic Names" quarterly reports from the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, committee member's analysis and findings on local geographic names, meeting minutes and agendas, and correspondence with the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. The most common topic was naming conventions and decisions on specific geographic feature names. Occasionally conflicts arose when the U.S. Board on Geographic Names refused to name a feature after a deceased person who had died within the previous five years. The suggesting party wrote the advisory committee inquiring about the refused name change. Following federal policy, the state committee made recommendations base upon local usage with the intent of honoring multicultural history, acknowledging Native American history, and preserving local history. The series contains files regarding the renaming of Mount McKinley to Mount Denali.

ID R340.02, Box 3, Series 2 Conference Files 2002-2004

Folders 3-5

Physical Description: 3 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note

Conference Files contain correspondence, information packets, reports, and U.S. Board on Geographic Names files from the 2003 Council of Geographic Names Authorities hosted by the California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names. The conference focused on expanding geographic naming to undersea formations as well as terrestrial features. The series includes four CD-ROMS relating to information presented at the conference.

ID R340.03, Box 3, Series 3 Correspondence 1975-1981

Folders 6-8

Physical Description: 3 file folders

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note

The series contains incoming and outgoing correspondence concerning various administrative aspects of the committee. The committee communicated frequently with the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. Several citizens wrote the committee inquiring the status of local geographic names as well as to suggest names of geological features. The series also includes memorandum on staffing issues and the chairmanship.