Oklahoma Board on Geographic Names

The Oklahoma Board on Geographic Names (OKBGN) was created by State Legislation in 1965 and has the statutory responsibility for determining the most appropriate names for geographic features within the State of Oklahoma and making the official recommendations to the United States Board on Geographic Names regarding Oklahoma names for official use in federal publications. The duty to act on the State’s behalf was assigned to the Oklahoma Geological Survey: HB 810, section 310 (b), (4).

Oversight – United States Board on Geographic Names

Created by Executive Order in 1890, President Benjamin Harrison established the United States Board on Geographic Names (USBGN). The Board’s authority was extended by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 and established in its present form by an act of Congress in 1947. The USBGN is responsible by law for establishing and maintaining uniform name usage throughout the Federal Government. The Board also rules on name controversies, new names, and name changes.

Working in cooperation with state names authorities the USBGN developed the Principles, Policies and Procedures: Domestic Geographic Names governing the spelling and application of geographic names on Federal maps and other publications. Because it is the responsibility of the OKBGN to make the State’s official recommendation the Board relies on these guidelines in an effort to avoid numerous problems of duplicate names and one name for state use and a different name for federal use.

http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/policies.htm

Charge:

The charge of the OKBGN is to assist and cooperate with the USBGN by evaluating all proposals concerning name changes, new names, and name controversies of geographic features and places in the State then make official recommendations to the USBGN. The OKBGN functions under State statutes governing Boards: a simple majority is quorum. The OKBGN members receive no additional compensation. Support is supplied by the Oklahoma Geological Survey.

Before making recommendation the OKBGN seeks opinions from County Commissioners, City Councils, State agencies, interested individuals, and groups in the area where the feature in questions is located. In addition the USBGN staff seeks out the opinions of any Native American tribal group that may have had a historical interest to the feature. For Oklahoma this means that for every case tribal authorities have to be contacted. Some which no longer reside in the State. The entire process from initial submission of a request to the final decision by the USBGN and signature by the Secretary of the Interior is very time consuming often taking One to three years, sometimes more.

Since the creation of the USBGN there have been close to three hundred decisions on the names of features and places within the State of Oklahoma. Actually the form “State of
Oklahoma” is one of those decisions that changed an earlier decision of the USBGN, 1954. On average the OKBGN handles one or two cases a year.

Members of the Oklahoma Board on Geographic Names:

Mr. T. Wayne Furr, Executive Secretary

Dr. Kenneth Luza, Chairman

Dr. Randy Keller, Ex Officio

Dr. Thomas Stanley, Member

Mr. Brian Cardott, Member

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