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Subject: LSJ name change info
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From Erika:

In order to change the name of a geographic area it will be necessary to contact the Department of the Interior and specifically the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (the "Board"). Pursuant to Public Law 80-242, geographic names not in the National Geographic Name Database must be submitted to the Board for approval before they can be used on Federal maps, charts, and other publications. Each name change proposal is submitted to the Board and upon submission the Board evaluates the change based on a number of factors. These factors include the following:

- established usage,
- historical usage,
- legal usage,
- legislated usage,
- local usage,
- unnamed feature,
- verbal usage,
- and written usage.

In addition, the board follows specific domestic geographic names principles. The underlying principle of the Board for establishing official geographic names and their applications is recognition of present-day local usage or preferences. Exceptions to this principle occur when local spoken or written usage is in conflict with Board policy. Well established documented names and names with historical significance are given strong consideration. **In general the Board does not encourage name change and will not initiate changes on its own except in rare cases such as derogatory or duplicate names.** The Board often stands by its policy to not approve of a name change without good reason. The proposed name changes will be evaluated in cooperation with the local governments, their authoritative bodies, and the public. It is the policy of the Board to follow present-day local usage whenever possible.

The Board also considers commemorative naming and sets out established policies and principles in these decisions as well. A commemorative name will not be chosen if a person is living and the person must be dead at least 5 years in order for the Board to consider the name. The person being honored should have some long-term connection or have made a significant contribution to the area in which the name change is being proposed. The name may also be considered if the person had an outstanding national or international reputation. In all other cases it is unlikely that a commemorative name change will be made.

In order to get local approval the naming authority of the community in which the name change is being proposed must be consulted. In the absence of a naming authority the local county board must be consulted. In the Virgin Islands there is no naming authority or a board that would be in charge of the naming/changing of name of an island. Therefore, it is likely be the legislature

or governor that would be responsible for the changing of the name. The proposed name of the island would have to be used and accepted by the community and it will therefore be unlikely that the legislature or governor would give approval for the name change because there would be little acceptance of a private owner of an island changing a name of an island that had been used for many years. Moreover, even if the community in the Virgin Islands were to accept the name change it would still have to get passed the Board at the Federal level and again would likely fail because of their policy against name changing. The privately owned islands in the Virgin Islands are not duplicative and are not derogatory and therefore would not satisfy the requirements of change. Further, if the name of the island were to be commemorative the person in which the name is commemorating must have been dead 5 years and had significant ties to the community. The proposed name is uncertain but it would likely not satisfy the requirements to be commemorative.

With warm regards,

Cecile

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