



WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES COMMITTEE (WCPGNC)

POLICY FOR THE NAMING AND RENAMING OF GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

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1 INTRODUCTION

This policy framework has been compiled to guide the Western Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee in its naming and renaming of geographical features. The Committee accepts that any procedures executed in the naming process must be conducted in terms of the South African Geographical Names Council Act, 1998 (Act 118 of 1998) and the regulations in terms of this Act relating to the standardisation of geographical names. The Committee also subscribes to the policy guidelines set out by the United Nations Economic and Social Council's Group of Experts on Geographical Names – “United Nations Resolutions on the Standardisation of Geographical Names” and the guiding framework of the City of Cape Town's “Policy for Renaming Streets, and Naming and Renaming Public Places, Natural Areas and Council-owned Buildings, Facilities and Artefacts”.

The term “geographical names” refers to the names of any terrestrial features within the territorial limits of the Republic of South Africa which may be natural or adapted by human agency (South African Geographical Names Council Act, 1998). This policy document understands the term “**geographical names**” to include the names of:

- Towns, suburbs, human settlements, post offices, railway stations, highways, government dams, airports and harbours.
- Natural landforms such as mountains, hills, rivers, streams, bays, headlands, points, islands, passes, poorts, necks and national parks.

The guidelines presented in this policy are intended for use by civil society and official naming authorities in proposals:

- To amend an existing official geographical name;
- To change an existing official geographical name;
- To name a geographical feature that does not have an official name; and
- To provide official acknowledgement of geographical names not yet approved by the national Minister responsible for arts and culture.

2 FORMATION OF A PROVINCIAL GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES COMMITTEE

The Act stipulates that:

- 2.1 In order to facilitate the advisory function of making recommendations on naming and renaming of geographical entities, a Committee shall be established.
- 2.2 The Director-General of the province must, through the media and by notice in the *Provincial Government Gazette*, invite the public to nominate suitable persons over a period of 30 working days.
- 2.3 Nominations shall include the agreement of the nominee and must include the full details of the nominee including contact details, appropriate experience and credentials and a full motivation by nominator/s.
- 2.4 Nominees must be experienced/academically qualified in two or more of the following fields: linguistics, cultural history, history, land surveying and mapping, onomastics, toponomy, cartography/geography and religion.
- 2.5 The Panel shall consist of no fewer than 10 and no more than 15 members.
- 2.6 The Panel shall meet as often as necessary, but at least three times a year. The chairperson may convene a special meeting or postpone or cancel a meeting in accordance with the need for a meeting.
- 2.7 Members are appointed for a period of three years and may be reappointed for a further period of three years.
- 2.8 Members of the Committee must be paid from the funds of the Committee in respect of their functions as a member. Such allowances are determined by provincial policy.

3 POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The foremost objective of this policy is to assign the Western Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee an advisory function in the naming process and to provide guidelines and criteria for the consideration of applications to name geographical features; to amend or change existing geographical names; and to ratify geographical names that have not yet been approved by the national Minister responsible for Arts and Culture.
- 3.2 Geographical features and places are named through a need to identify and relate to the landscape. Geographical feature names serve as fundamental elements of geospatial data. Place names are also a significant contributor to, and source, of historical, linguistic and cultural heritage in South Africa. It is the intention of the Western Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee to honour this need to relate to the landscape, this functional purpose and this heritage function in its deliberations and recommendations.
- 3.3 The policy of the Western Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee is proposed as a tool for the preservation of place and feature names in the Western Cape as well as the naming and renaming of places and features in appropriate circumstances.
- 3.4 The Western Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee will, in its deliberations and recommendations, take the current legal and institutional framework into account.
- 3.5 The policy seeks to standardise geographical names in the Western Cape in order to:
 - 3.5.1 Ensure the unequivocal identification and location of geographical features and places in the Western Cape Province as part of a reference system for infrastructure, services and public administration;
 - 3.5.2 Certify a cooperative record of place names in the province which preserves distinctive settlement patterns and makes these accessible to the public;
 - 3.5.3 Collate geographical features and place names and their variants/modifications over time to facilitate the preservation of culture and heritage;
 - 3.5.4 Sanction toponyms for official purposes; and
 - 3.5.5 Issue directives on regulated usage, spelling and written form.

4 PROPOSED POLICY

4.1 Underlying principles

- 4.1.1 The Western Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee will work within the current legal and institutional framework, namely the South African Geographical Names Council Act, 1998 and the regulations in terms of this Act relating to the standardisation of geographical names.
- 4.1.2 Modifications and changes to existing geographical names should be made only when these are necessary.

- 4.1.3 Each individual geographical feature or entity should have one official name.
- 4.1.4 Decisions about name changes must take due notice of the implications in respect of identity, transformation, administrative implications and cost.

4.2 Possible grounds for proposing a geographical name change

- 4.2.1 Giving official recognition to an existing geographical name that has never been officially recognised.
- 4.2.2 Amending an official geographical name that is incorrectly spelled.
- 4.2.3 Amending an official geographical name that is a distorted form of a name from a language other than English.
- 4.2.4 Amending an official geographical name that does not comply with the current orthography of the language in which it is written.
- 4.2.5 Changing an official geographical name from a dialectal form into the standard form of a language.
- 4.2.6 Amending or changing an official name which does not conform to the rules established by the South African Geographical Names Council.
- 4.2.7 Amending or changing an official name that is historically incorrect.
- 4.2.8 Changing an unacceptable official place name to a more acceptable place name.

4.3 Guidelines to be considered when reviewing names

- 4.3.1 When consideration is given as to whether an original name should be restored, preference should be given to names that have historical and local significance.
- 4.3.2 The use of names of living persons should generally be avoided unless exceptional circumstances prevail. Naming geographical entities after persons should only be considered when the person has an appropriate stature in society.
- 4.3.3 When naming a feature after a person, place, event or characteristics related to the environment, the following guidelines should be considered:
 - 4.3.3.1 To commemorate events and/or people of cultural, local, historical significance in the Western Cape.
 - 4.3.3.2 To honour notable individuals who have contributed positively to the political and socio-cultural identity of the area.

4.3.3.3 To fortify community identity and spirit and promote cultural diversity in the Western Cape.

4.3.3.4 To associate proposed names with flora and fauna and natural characteristics endemic to the Western Cape.

4.3.3.5 To promote the identity of an area and the human need to relate to a landscape.

4.3.3.6 The name should be appropriate for the feature type – whether human-made or natural.

4.4 Geographical names that should be avoided

4.4.1 Names that have been approved for other features/places in South Africa should be avoided. There should preferably be no duplication of names of human-made or natural features within 5 km of each other.

4.4.2 Names of features and places in other countries and names of countries.

4.4.3 Names whose spelling or pronunciation is similar to that of existing names, and which may give rise to confusion.

4.4.4 Names that are discriminatory with respect to race, colour, creed, gender, political affiliation or other social factors.

4.4.5 Names that are derogatory, blasphemous, embarrassing, indecent, offensive or vulgar.

4.4.6 Names that are clumsily compounded and too long to be easily comprehensible in speech and writing.

4.4.7 Names consisting of personal names without a generic element (e.g. park).

4.4.8 Names that may be regarded as an advertisement for a particular commercial service, firm or product.

4.5 Policy for the renaming of “human-made” geographical features

[The term “human-made settlements” includes but is not limited to towns, suburbs, any form of human settlement, post offices, railway stations, highways and government dams.]

4.5.1 Ordinarily, the renaming of human-made geographical features will only be considered for good reasons.

4.5.2 Applications may be made for an existing geographical name to be changed when an applicant considers the existing name to be noncompliant with the policies and principles of the South African Geographical Names Council.

- 4.5.3 The renaming of an existing feature may be considered in instances where the name undermines local values and/or belief systems.
- 4.5.4 Renaming may be proposed when any cultural group considers the current name to be offensive.
- 4.5.5 Setting a proposed renaming process into motion requires public notification and the public participation process referred to in the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 2000 (Act 3 of 2000), as well as advertising the proposed name change and providing 90 days for interested and affected parties to respond.

4.6 Policy for the renaming of natural features

[Natural features include mountains, hills, rivers, streams, bays, headlands and points, islands, passes, poorts, necks and national parks]

- 4.6.1 Renaming of natural features should generally be avoided, unless exceptional circumstances prevail.
- 4.6.2 Renaming should be considered if the proposed new name would improve the place orientation and identity of a particular area.
- 4.6.3 Setting a proposed renaming process into motion requires public notification and the public participation process referred to in the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 2000, as well as advertising of the proposed name change and providing 90 days for interested and affected parties to respond. The same policy framework set out in the guidelines for naming and renaming of human-made geographical features applies to the renaming of natural features.

4.7 Recognition of names not previously approved

- 4.7.1 Names that are already well established and in common use should be submitted to the South African Geographical Names Council for approval. Names that have been approved by a parastatal body or the government of an independent state or self-governing territory now incorporated into South Africa may also be submitted for recognition.
- 4.7.2 Names that are incorrectly spelled may be rectified without undergoing the process for renaming described in this policy.

4.8 Procedures to be following by provincial departments when naming buildings and facilities of the Western Cape Government

- 4.8.1 Government Immovable Asset Management Act, Act 19 of 2007
- 4.8.2 Western Cape Land Administration Act, Act 6 of 1998
- 4.8.3 Western Cape Provincial Languages Act, Act 13 of 1998
- 4.8.4 Western Cape Health Facility Boards Act, Act 7 of 2001

- 4.8.5 The delegated authority for the approval for the naming or renaming of buildings and facilities of the Western Cape Government is the Provincial Minister of Transport and Public Works.
- 4.8.6 Line function departments should inform the Department of Transport and Public Works timeously of its intention to embark on renaming or naming a building or facility
- 4.8.7 Line function departments to following the PAJA procedures on public consultation as set out in Chapter 2 of the Regulations.
- 4.8.8 Once a line function department has completed this process, a submission with the recommendation/s regarding the proposed renaming or naming of a building or facility as well as all evidence of the public consultation processes attached be prepared and circulated to the following:
 - 4.8.8.1 Head of Department of the relevant line function department (support of the recommended name change)
 - 4.8.8.2 Provincial Minister of relevant line function department (support of the recommendation)
 - 4.8.8.3 Legal Services (to certify compliance with PAJA regulations)
 - 4.8.8.4 Head of Branch Public Works of the Department of Transport and Public Works (support of the recommendation)
 - 4.8.8.5 Head of Department of Transport and Public Works (support of the recommendation)
 - 4.8.8.6 Provincial Minister of Transport and Public Works (approval of the proposed name change)

5 PROCEDURE FOR THE APPROVAL OF A GEOGRAPHICAL NAME

- 5.1 Procedure by which naming and/or renaming shall take place
 - 5.1.1 Any person, community, government department, provincial government, local authority, the South African Post Office, property developers and any other organisation may propose a new name or change of an existing geographical feature name as stipulated by the Western Cape Provincial Languages Act (Act 13 of 1998), and the City of Cape Town's Policy for Renaming Streets, and Naming and Renaming Public Places, Natural Areas and Council-owned Buildings, Facilities and Artefacts.
 - 5.1.2 Proposals may be made for an existing geographical name to be changed if the applicant considers that it does not comply with the policies and principles of the national naming authority (the South African National Geographical Names Council) and the Policy Guidelines of the provincial advisory body (the Western Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee).
 - 5.1.3 Proposals submitted for the naming of a *new* or *existing* geographical entity – human-made or natural feature – shall be completed on the same form and so

specified. All applications should be accompanied by a detailed motivation, supporting documentation (where possible) and evidence that stakeholders, including the community and professionals, have been consulted. If a submission cannot be made on the prescribed application form due to illiteracy or other exceptional circumstances, the Committee should be informed in advance. Under these conditions, the Panel may request oral submission according to the rules for public hearings.

- 5.1.4 Signage must be in accordance with the prescripts of the Way-finding & Signage Manual of the Department of Transport and Public Works.
- 5.1.5 All supporting documentation and the application form shall be considered fairly, and the Western Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee reserves the right to come to its own recommendation about whether to accept or reject the proposal.
- 5.1.6 Applications shall generally be considered three times per year, depending on the number of applications received and/or the nature of applications, or more frequently should the Chairperson so decide.
- 5.1.7 Applications will be received and processed by the provincial committee (Western Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee).
- 5.1.8 In the proposed renaming of a geographical entity, stakeholders should be notified by way of public advertisement and notices in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 2000.
- 5.1.9 The applications received by the Panel and the recommendations made will be sent to the South African Geographical Names Council.
- 5.1.10 Applicants should take note that the Western Cape Provincial Geographical Names Committee is an *advisory* body established to advise the provincial Minister responsible for arts and culture on the standardisation, and where necessary, the transformation, of geographical names in the Western Cape for official purposes. The national Minister will take the final decision on any proposed naming or renaming application.

2012 - 08 – 08

Revised and edited:23 October 2013

17 October 2014

25 February 2015