

Missouri Board on Geographic Names Meeting Minutes

November 3, 2016 at 10 a.m.

James C. Kirkpatrick State Information Center

Voting Members Present: John Dougan (Chair), Chris Barnett (Vice Chair), Joseph Carter, Alan Foreman, Melanie Hans, Gary Kremer, Lynn Morrow, Frank Nickell, Tim Schmidt, Tony Spicci, Henry Sweets and Dwight Weaver

Voting Members on Conference Call: David Nail

Voting Members Absent: John Fisher, Joseph Gillman, Debra Greene and Jerry Vineyard

Non-Voting Members and Staff Present: Jane Messenger (Corresponding Secretary) and Brian Rogers (Executive Secretary)

Call to Order

Chair John Dougan called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. by welcoming everyone and asking if there were any necessary changes to the agenda. Jane Messenger stated she would like to make a few comments about her board status at some point during the meeting. Dougan replied that they would be most appropriate during the discussion of board appointments and vacancies.

May 2016 Meeting Minutes

John Dougan asked if there were any changes or corrections to the May 26, 2016 meeting minutes. Dwight Weaver replied that in the discussion of Missouri cave name designations, the Missouri Speleological Survey is incorrectly identified as the “Missouri Speleological Society.” No other changes or corrections were forthcoming. Executive Secretary Brian Rogers indicated he would make this correction. Henry Sweets moved the minutes be approved with the correction. Tony Spicci seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed. Motion approved.

Purpose of MOBGN Presentation

Jane Messenger went over the role of the MOBGN, indicating its primary task is to aid the United States Board on Geographic Names (USBGN) by answering queries and conducting research on proposed names and name changes, as well as providing the federal board with name recommendations. A secondary purpose is the identification of prospective new names and name corrections within Missouri. Messenger then outlined the history of the USBGN, its principles, policies and procedures, as well as the duties, objectives, processes and accomplishments of the MOBGN. She highlighted a 90% USBGN approval rate of those feature names/changes recommended by the MOBGN. The presentation was concluded with a list of MOBGN goals, including: 1) the maintenance of a board website; 2) the continued search for geographic feature name inaccuracies; 3) the submission of name proposals for geographic features not in the

Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) database; 4) public education on the role of the board; and 5) the hosting of a future Council of Geographic Names Authorities conference.

John Dougan asked Jane Messenger who of the current members has the longest service on the MOBGN. Messenger replied that Vice Chair Chris Barnett has the second longest board tenure, after herself.

Frank Nickell asked why Missouri has one of the few—if only—proactive state BGNs. Chris Barnett replied that most state BGNs exist simply to provide the USBGN with name proposal research, and do not serve as a conduit for new proposals. Jane Messenger then stated that most boards consist of just two or three members, so they do not have the time, or resources, to propose new geographic feature names.

David Nail asked if geographic feature name proposals have remained fairly constant over the last few years. Jane Messenger replied that the number of incoming proposals has remained fairly constant, but naming contests and submission flurries from individual counties/communities have occurred that temporarily increase the number of proposals coming to the board for review. Chris Barnett added that there was a backlog of proposals for the board to work through after its creation in 1995, but that since, proposal traffic has been fairly constant.

Frank Nickell asked Jane Messenger if other states have board members that work behind the scene, as does Jane, to prepare proposals for the state BGNs to review. Messenger replied that it varies. In some states there is a single individual, while in others, the BGN has a committee that researches proposals before bringing them to the full board. Chris Barnett interjected that the MOBGN has been very fortunate to have Jane Messenger serve in this capacity.

Chris Barnett thanked Jane Messenger for the presentation, indicating that it is good for the full board to go over this information every two or three years.

Board Member Replacements and Reappointments

John Dougan stated that Brett Chloupek has been vetted by Secretary of State Jason Kander's administration, and an MOBGN appointment letter will go out in the next few days. Chloupek is expected to attend the board's next meeting in May 2017. Citizen member reappointments have yet to be approved but board members are expected to serve until replaced. All citizen members with expired terms have agreed to serve again, so if reappointments do not occur before Secretary Kander leaves office, they will be pushed with incoming Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft. Lastly, Amy Moorman has taken a position with Wartburg College, so a new appointee from the Records Services Division will likely be taking her place at the May 2017 meeting.

Chris Barnett asked John Dougan if any progress has been made in obtaining a seat on the board for a Missouri Department of Agriculture designee. Dougan replied no, but that he believes the Office of the Secretary of State will file a bill creating said seat during the 2017 legislative

session beginning in January, and that Gary Kremer has indicated he and the State Historical Society of Missouri would also support the measure.

Jane Messenger provided a report on her board status, indicating that her supervisor is now allowing her only two hours a year to work on MOBGN business. The majority of her involvement with the board moving forward will have to be done on her own time and correspondence should be directed to her home email address. Additionally, all naming inquiries she receives that do not directly relate to her research for the USBGN must be forwarded to her supervisor for reply. This is an effort on her supervisor's part to standardize the inquiry/proposal submission process.

Chris Barnett stated that these new restrictions on Jane Messenger's part will lead to changes in the way the board operates, particularly the Executive Committee. He asked Messenger if she had yet to identify which duties will have to be shifted to other members of the board. Jane replied that she has not yet, but will draft a document shortly and distribute it to the Executive Committee for review. John Dougan indicated a need to establish communication between the MOBGN and Messenger's USGS supervisor, as well as the types of information with which board will need to provide her.

Joseph Carter asked Jane Messenger to explain how she will now handle incoming proposals. Messenger replied that she will do what research she can from home, but that she will not have the same resources available to her as she does when at work. Her findings and a case summary will be forwarded to the Executive Committee, who will then assign any remaining tasks to the board.

John Dougan asked Chris Barnett if he has the same capabilities available to him that Jane Messenger has on her United States Geological Survey (USGS) computer. Barnett replied that he does.

Chris Barnett stated that naming proposals can either be submitted to the MOBGN or the USBGN. Jane Messenger indicated that she is only able to work on a proposal in her official capacity with USGS if she is assigned the case. Tony Spicci replied that we should direct all inquiries to the USBGN so they can be officially assigned to Messenger.

Brian Rogers asked Jane Messenger to whom at USGS proposals and inquiries should be directed. Messenger replied that they should be sent to jrunyon@usgs.gov, while GNIS questions should be directed to mlmccormick@usgs.gov.

Gary Kremer expressed displeasure with the USGS for limiting Jane Messenger's MOBGN involvement, stating that it will place a heavy burden on the board. Messenger acknowledged this, but stated she plans to retire from the USGS within the next five years and move away from Missouri, so despite the position of the USGS, it would behoove the board to plan ahead put a new protocol in place for the acceptance of name inquiries and proposals.

John Dougan thanked Jane Messenger for continued service on the board.

Dwight Weaver then stated that Jerry Vineyard is stepping down from the MOBGN following this meeting due to health concerns. Brian Rogers indicated he received a message from Vineyard confirming his resignation.

Missouri Cave Name Database Discussion

Chris Barnett asked Dwight Weaver to summarize the situation surrounding the Missouri Speleological Survey's cave name database. Weaver explained the Missouri Speleological Survey began collecting information on Missouri caves in 1960, and that it was eventually used to create a cave name database. The physical files and the database are now housed by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in Rolla. When Weaver stepped away from the Survey in 2000, the cave database contained information on approximately 5,000 caves. Since that time, 2,000 records have been added, raising the total number of documented caves in the database to 7,000. He believes the documentation of these new caves is suspect, however, as there is now no standard process by which information is added. This has led to confusion about which of these newly identified caves are in the GNIS database. Further, there is uncertainty about whether DNR will continue to maintain the Missouri Speleological Survey's files.

Chris Barnett stated that he is not sure action on the part of the MOBGN will aid the reconciliation of the Missouri Speleological Survey's database with GNIS, and that perhaps the Survey would have more success working directly with the USGS. Jane Messenger stated she cannot access cave information through GNIS because it is restricted, but that she provided Dwight Weaver with the contact information of the USGS employee overseeing the GNIS database in an effort to reconcile the two databases following the MOBGN's May 2016 meeting.

John Dougan stated that instead of Dwight Weaver contacting the USGS regarding the database reconciliation, perhaps it should come from Joseph Gillman, the MOBGN's DNR designee. Chris Barnett then asked Jane Messenger if the USGS could provide DNR with a full list of Missouri caves in GNIS. Messenger replied that she was uncertain if this is possible due to privacy concerns surrounding ownership of the land on which the caves sit.

Chris Barnett asked Dwight Weaver who with the Missouri Speleological Survey is in charge of updating the database. Weaver responded that he is not certain. Barnett then stated that perhaps the MOBGN should withhold any action on reconciling the two databases until it is known who from the Survey will need to work with the USGS.

Melanie Hans asked Dwight Weaver if the Missouri Speleological Survey wanted to add to GNIS those caves now found only in the Survey's database. Weaver replied in the affirmative. Messenger said that even if the new caves were added to GNIS, they would not be made available to the public. Hans stated that at least the data would be backed up. Chris Barnett said that the process would involve determining which caves in the Survey's database are not in

GNIS and adding those caves not found, as well as adding supplemental information from the Survey's database to the existing GNIS cave records. Hans said that this would be a very labor intensive process.

John Dougan asked Melanie Hans where the United States Forest Service (USFS) obtains cave information. Hans replied that she is not certain, but believes it is from GNIS. Chris Barnett stated that because of scenarios such as this, there would be value in merging the two datasets. Jane Messenger added that emergency responders should also have access to the most comprehensive available data.

John Dougan stated that a comprehensive list of Missouri caves should be the final goal, and that the best way to start the compilation process would be for DNR to compare their list with that of the Survey and then fill in any information gaps. Melanie Hans replied this may require resources that do not currently exist. Dwight Weaver responded that DNR has an individual that should be tasked with this responsibility.

Tony Spicci indicated that the Heritage Database, maintained by the Missouri Department of Conservation, could be used as a model for the cave database. The Heritage Database is restricted because it contains information on endangered species habitat, but, through research agreements, outside individuals/entities can submit queries to the Department of Conservation. Non-restricted information is then relayed back to the individual/entity that submitted the inquiry.

Joseph Carter asked if control of the cave database could be transferred to the Missouri State Archives. John Dougan replied that it is possible, but no matter where the database and files reside, they will still remain closed to the public. Carter agreed, but then stated that at least the database and files would be in control of the Archives and not at risk. Dougan indicated that this very well could happen, but that he is not certain of the MOBGN's role in such a process.

Chris Barnett suggested that, in the short term, Dwight Weaver contact the USGS for advice on how to proceed with the cross referencing of caves on the Missouri Speleological Survey's list, with those now found in GNIS. Then, in the longer term, name conflicts should be identified and the MOBGN should make new name and name change recommendations to the USBGN. John Dougan stated that variant names could be submitted to the USBGN as administrative changes. Messenger then stated that GNIS may not maintain name variants. Dougan then asked Tony Spicci if the Heritage Database maintains feature name variants. Spicci replied that he believes it does. Dougan asked if the Department of Conservation would want the information on 7,000+ caves now contained in the Survey's database. Spicci replied in the affirmative. Dougan then indicated that perhaps the Heritage Database could serve as a backup if GNIS does not maintain variant names.

Chris Barnett indicated that no board action is necessary at this time and recommended Dwight Weaver contact the GNIS working group for advice on how to proceed cross checking the Missouri Speleological Survey's list of caves with those currently in GNIS.

Powder Creek Discussion

Jane Messenger explained that the proposed Powder Creek is a short stream in Jasper County that runs through a Dyno Nobel explosives plant just southeast of Brooklyn Heights. Only 2.3 miles long, the stream is currently an unnamed tributary of Center Creek. The proponent is an employee of the Dyno Nobel plant. Although there are currently 14 Missouri features in GNIS that include "powder" in their names, none are located in Jasper County. Joseph Carter mentioned that there is a nearby Black Powder Lane, but that it should not impact the board's recommendation on this feature. Chris Barnett asked if the entirety of the stream is located on land owned by Dyno Nobel. Messenger replied she is uncertain, but that she did send a letter to the Jasper County Commission asking for comment, to which they never replied, implying that the county had no qualms with the naming of the stream. Tim Schmidt indicated that the stream does cross a property boundary, but tapers off quickly after so doing. Gary Kremer moved to recommend to the USBGN the stream be named "Powder Creek." Tony Spicci seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed. Motion approved.

MOBGN Representation at 2017 Council of Geographic Names Authorities Conference

Jane Messenger explained that the 2017 Council of Geographic Names Authorities (COGNA) Conference is scheduled for May 8-12 in Williamsburg, Virginia. Chris Barnett asked Messenger if she could represent the MOBGN at the conference. Messenger replied that she can attend the business meeting as a representative of the USBGN, but is uncertain if she will be allowed to go to the conference due to budget concerns. Gary Kremer asked Chris Barnett if he plans to attend. Barnett replied that he is uncertain as well and asked if anyone else is in a position to represent the board at the conference. No replies were forthcoming. Chris Barnett then indicated that if Messenger is allowed to go, she could represent Missouri, but would not be allowed to vote on any decisions. Barnett then asked Messenger when she will know if she can attend. Messenger responded that the decision will not be made until April. Brian Rogers asked what sorts of issues the group votes on. Messenger replied that it is generally limited to bylaw changes and the location of next year's conference. Barnett indicated that budgetary items are also considered.

Gary Kremer recommended that the chair or vice chair attend the 2017 conference, in addition to Jane Messenger. Chair John Dougan indicated that the Office of the Secretary of State out-of-state travel funding restrictions prohibit him from attending. Vice-chair Chris Barnett stated he has several possible funding avenues he will pursue, but that at this point, he cannot guarantee his attendance. Gary Kremer moved that if the funds present themselves, Chris Barnett represent the MOBGN at the 2017 COGNA Conference. Tony Spicci seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed.

Discussion of Hosting the 2021 Council of Geographic Names Authorities Conference

Gary Kremer indicated that he would like to see the MOBGN host the 2021 COGNA Conference during the Missouri bicentennial celebration. Additionally, he is interested in the board pursuing statehood bicentennial activities. Chris Barnett asked Kremer if he was interested in the board partnering with the State Historical Society of Missouri. Kremer responded that that was a possibility. Jane Messenger asked Kremer where in Missouri he envisioned hosting the 2021 COGNA Conference. Kremer recommend somewhere in the bootheel due to its topography and geology. Chris Barnett stated that COGNA prefers hosting cities to be close to an international airport. Tim Schmidt indicated that the Memphis airport was close to the bootheel. Frank Nickell stated Cape Girardeau will have a new convention center by 2021. Kremer indicated he was open to other suggestions as well. Jane Messenger stated that when the conference was held in Springfield, many of the attendees would have preferred it have been in Kansas City to save driving time from the airport. John Dougan suggested we add a further discussion of hosting the 2021 COGNA conference, as well as ways to commemorate the statehood bicentennial, to the May 2017 meeting agenda.

Melanie Hans asked how many people generally attend a COGNA conference. Chris Barnett responded that COGNA conferences used to attract roughly 100 attendees, but that attendance is now around 60 due to budget cuts. He then indicated that at some point in the future, the MOBGN should form a committee to look into issues surrounding hosting the 2021 COGNA conference and a possible toponymic tour.

Frog Rock Follow Up

Per discussion at the May 2016 meeting of the MOBGN, Joseph Carter obtained a letter from the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) stating their support of a proposal to officially name a seven-foot pillar on MoDOT land just outside Waynesville as “Frog Rock.” The letter is now filed with the other official proposal paperwork.

Discussion of Next Meeting

Chris Barnett stated that the MOBGN bylaws indicate the board will next meet in May 2017. John Dougan recommended either Thursday, May 4 or Thursday, May 18. Melanie Hans stated that if the meeting were scheduled for May 18, the board representative to the 2017 COGNA conference would have an opportunity to give a report.

John Dougan asked the board if anyone would object to a meeting being held in Rolla. No objections were forthcoming. Dougan suggested so doing may result in less overall board member travel time. Further, it would increase board visibility. Melanie Hans indicated the USFS office in Rolla is willing to host. Chris Barnett then stated that the next meeting of the board will be Thursday, May 18 in Rolla, with the Office of the Missouri Secretary of State in Jefferson City serving as a backup.

Adjournment

Lacking further business, Vice-Chair Chris Barnett called the meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.