

National Mapping Program

US GeoData

Geographic Names Information System

Department of the Interior
U.S. Geological Survey
National Cartographic
Information Center (NCIC)

Geographic Names Information Available from the U.S. Geological Survey

The Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) is an automated data system developed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to standardize and disseminate information on geographic names. GNIS provides primary information for all known places, features, and areas in the United States identified by a proper name. The information in the system can be manipulated to meet varied needs. You can incorporate information from GNIS into your own data base for special applications.

GNIS is composed of five separate data bases. Each of these data bases provides different, but related, information on names for the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the territories in the United States.

The National Geographic Names Data Base

The National Geographic Names Data Base is the primary and largest data base in GNIS. This data base contains computer files on more than 2 million place names and features in the United States—from towns, schools, reservoirs, and parks to streams, valleys, springs, and ridges. Each State file contains the names found on USGS topographic maps. Many State and territory files currently contain information from a variety of other sources such as the National Ocean Service and the U.S. Forest Service.

For each geographic name listed in the data base, there are 15 descriptive elements such as the official name, type of feature, location of the feature (by county), geographic coordinates, and the name of the topographic map which shows the location of the feature. Federal status, elevation, size, bibliographic reference, and variant

names are also included. A variant name is any other, former or current name or spelling of the official name. In addition, population statistics are now being added.

The National Geographic Names Data Base information is useful in locating the names of manmade and natural features. For example, if you want to know where Lake Helena in Montana is located, the data base can quickly provide the county and geographic coordinates. If your request is more involved, it may require a specialized search. The information in this data base is used for local transportation planning, regional planning, product marketing, site selection and analysis, emergency preparedness, genealogical research, and solving problems requiring the use and analysis of geographic names.

Information from the data base is available as computer printouts, on microfiche, or on magnetic tapes. Specialized searches are done upon request; results are usually provided as computer printouts or on magnetic tapes, but spiral-bound books or microfiche can also be obtained. An interactive or online version, which facilitates retrieval, arrangement, manipulation, and analysis of information, is available for use at the USGS NCIC Headquarters office, its regional NCIC offices, the Public Inquiries Offices (PIOs), and the GNIS Manager's office. The USGS PIOs can also access GNIS through the Earth Science Information Network.

The product you purchase will be categorized either as Phase I or Phase II data. The difference is in the amount of editing and the quantity of information. Phase I data contain only names found on USGS topographic maps, and the data are edited by comparing the computer file with the accumulated records of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN). This edit compares names, on a one-to-one basis. Corrections and other information such as variant names and BGN data are added. Phase II data contain, in addition to the information from Phase I, the names of features not recorded on topographic maps, together with specific types of features

excluded from compilation during Phase I such as historical and variant names, names from other sources including maps, charts, texts, and historical sources. Phase I data are currently available for all States, but Phase II data are only available for some States.

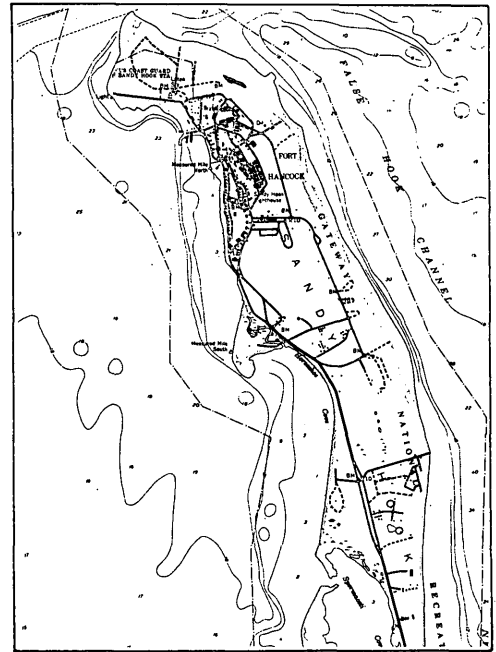
A formal publication titled *The National Gazetteer of the United States of America*, published as U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 1200, is presently available for a few selected States. Completion of the Gazetteer is expected in the next five to eight years. The National Gazetteer is a compendium of place, feature, and area names, published on a State-by-State basis. In addition to the information contained in the National Geographic Names Data Base, the Gazetteer includes a glossary of terms and abbreviations, a map of counties in that particular State, and an alphabetical listing of USGS topographic maps of the State. Also included are names of features from other historical and pertinent sources. Variant names are listed and cross-referenced to their official names.

The USGS Topographic Map Names Data Base

The USGS Topographic Map Names Data Base contains descriptive information and the official names of each published or planned individual 7.5- x 7.5-minute topographic map area in the USGS 1:24,000-scale or 1:25,000-scale topographic map series. The data base includes current and historical names of the map, geographic coordinates of the southeast corner, map scale, name of the State, and other descriptive information. If a 1:24,000- or 1:25,000-scale map is not published, then the name of the appropriate, next smaller scale map, which includes that area, is referenced. The data base also contains a file with similar information for all 1:250,000- and 1:100,000-scale topographic maps.

ID NUMBER - 34006438
 NAME - Sandy Hook
 TYPE OF FEATURE - cape
 STATE/COUNTY FIPS CODE - 34025
 GNIS MAP NO - 0073
 GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES - 402635N0735925W
 VARIANT NAME(S) - Sandy Point (NJ-T14/Map 13), Sandy Pointe, Sant Punt (NJ-T14/Map 9), Godyns Punt (NJ-T14/Map 9), Goodwins Point (NJ-T14/Map 3), Grady's Point (NJ-T14/Map 6)
 USGS QUADRANGLE CODE - 40073-D8
 COUNTY NAME - Monmouth
 FEDERAL STATUS - BGN
 MAP OR CHART NAME - Sandy Hook
 CENTER OF AREAL FEATURES/MOUTH OF LINEAR FEATURES - 402635N0735925W

7.5-minute topographic map of Sandy Hook, N.J.-N.Y. (not reproduced at true scale) and accompanying National Geographic Names Data Base computer listing.



Generic Data Base

The Generic Data Base provides information on every generic feature found in compiling the National Geographic Names Data Base. There are a total of 63 broad categories of feature types to facilitate searching and retrieving information about related features. For example, the generic term stream is used for all rivers, creeks, brooks, branches, runs, and so on.

About 1,100 types of features have been cross-referenced to these 63 broad categories. The Generic Data Base defines these feature types and describes unusual generics. An unusual generic may be a distinctive word or use of a word; for example, the word slough is used in different geographic areas to convey different meanings. The Generic Data Base provides the location, application, and reason for unusual application of these generics. This data base is also the GNIS bibliographic information depository, and it contains complete annotated entries for source materials other than USGS topographic maps utilized in the compilation of the National Geographic Names Data Base, a reference for abbreviations used on topographic maps, and definitions of cartographic, geographic, and linguistic terms.

The National Atlas Data Base

The National Atlas Data Base contains information about the geographic names in the USGS *National Atlas of the United States of America*. Available information includes name, type of feature, reference to the location of the feature on the maps in the National Atlas (by State), geographic coordinates, National Atlas page number, 1980 population statistics, and the name of the State or county in which the feature is located.

This data base is the basis for a condensed version of *The National Gazetteer of the United States of America*, to be published in late 1984.

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names and The Board on Geographic Names Data Base

The Board on Geographic Names (BGN) was established in 1890 to be responsible for establishing and maintaining uniform name usage throughout the Federal Government. Working with the Secretary of the Interior, and in cooperation with State names authorities, the Board develops policies, principles, and procedures governing the spelling and application of geographic names on Federal maps and in other publications. It also rules on name controversies, new names, and name changes. BGN policy for names in the United States and the territories is to follow present-day local usage whenever possible. If there is confusion or duplication of local names, or if a name is derogatory, the BGN may or may not approve the name and may seek other local names for the feature. It also is guided by policy of not approving new names for Federal use that honor living persons.

The USGS furnishes staff support for domestic BGN activities. Any person may inquire about or request the Board to rule on proposed new names, proposed name changes, or names that are in conflict.

The Board on Geographic Names Data Base will provide information resulting from the investigations and decisions of the Domestic Names Committee of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. Currently, the data base contains information collected since the Board's creation in 1890 through the first quarter of 1959. Each entry in this data base may also be found in the National Geographic Names Data Base, but the entries in this data base contain the reference and associated detailed information as researched and compiled by the BGN staff. Activities of the Board from 1959 through the present are currently being incorporated into the Board on Geographic Names Data Base, which is scheduled for completion in 1984.

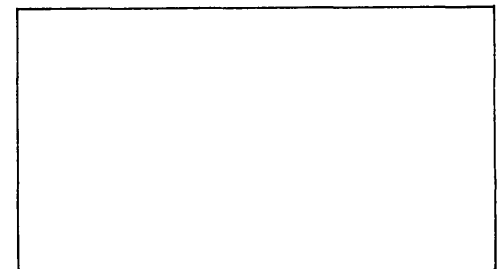
Available Products and Ordering Instructions

GNIS information is available as spiral-bound books, microfiche, and magnetic tape. Special searches are also performed upon request. Products in any format from data bases other than the National Geographic Names Data Base are considered special searches. Contact the National Cartographic Information Center (NCIC) for more information or to order GNIS products.

National Headquarters or Manager, GNIS

National Cartographic Information Center	U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. Geological Survey	523 National Center
507 National Center	Reston, VA 22092
Reston, VA 22092	703-860-6261
703-860-6045	FTS 928-6261
FTS 928-6045	

Or contact the following office:



To purchase volumes of *The National Gazetteer of the United States of America*, contact Eastern Distribution Branch, Text Products Section, U.S. Geological Survey, 604 South Pickett Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22304.