

Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Guyana

United States Board on Geographic Names – Foreign Names Committee



December 2014

1. Introduction

This geographic names standardization policy has been prepared as an aid to those geographic names experts who are the working staff for the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) in the standardization of the geographic names of Guyana for United States Government use. The BGN and its staff work to effect consistent treatment of geographic name spellings in U.S. Government databases, publications, maps, and charts. The country policies are intended to satisfy, in part, the statutory requirements levied upon the BGN in Public Law USC 80-242 to develop principles, policies and procedures for geographic names standardization, and to promulgate decisions with respect to the principles of geographic nomenclature and orthography.

2. Languages and Language Policy

a. Demographics

The estimated population of Guyana according to preliminary results from the 2012 national census was 747,884 persons¹. The largest single ethnic group is of Indo-Guyanese heritage, consisting of approximately 43% of the population. The second largest ethnic group is of African descent, constituting approximately 30% of the total population. An additional 17% is of mixed descent, 9% are Amerindian, and 1% self-identify as 'other.'²

b. Languages

The *de facto* official language of Guyana is English (ISO 639-3 code *eng*). The second most widely-spoken language is Guyanese Creole (*gyn*). Several indigenous languages are still spoken in small numbers, as is Caribbean Hindustani (*hns*), although many are threatened with extinction.³

c. Geographic Names Standardization

Within Guyana's Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, the Lands and Surveys Commission, established in 2001, has a Land Information and Mapping Division responsible for providing "relevant geographic information for informed land decisions." The Commission also publishes the National Gazetteer of Guyana, the National Map Atlas, and a number of digital and hardcopy map, imagery, and land survey products.^{4,5}

¹ *Guyana Population & Housing Census 2012, Preliminary Report*. Guyana Bureau of Statistics. Georgetown, Guyana. Available at <http://www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/pubs.html> (Accessed 5 December 2014)

² Ivelaw Lloyd, *Guyanese Strategic Culture: Leaders Leveraging Landscapes*. Griffith Florida International University, Applied Research Center. December 2011 Available online at: <http://www.fvsu.edu/files/pdf/FIU-ARCS-Guyanese-Strategic-Culture-Findings-Report-by-Ivelaw-Lloyd-Griffith-December-2011.pdf> (Accessed 5 Dec 2014)

³ Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig eds. "Guyana" *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Seventeenth edition*. 2013, Dallas, Texas: SIL International (Online), URL: <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/GY/status> (Accessed 14 May 2014).

⁴ *Guyana Lands & Surveys Commission* URL: <http://www.lands.gov.gy/index.php> (Accessed 8 May 2014)

In recent years, the government of Guyana has emphasized the need to create Geographic Information Systems (GIS)-ready datasets, and has published several policies and policy updates on this topic.⁶ Guyana, however, has not been an active participant in the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), and did not attend the most recent 28th Session held in 2014.⁷

3. Toponymic Policies

a. Orthography

Geographic names standardization policy will follow English orthographic conventions. The user of Guyanese geographic sources should be aware that native sources may contain variant place names in other languages, including Dutch (ISO 639-3 code *nld*), French (ISO 639-3 code *fra*), Spanish (ISO 639-3 code *spa*), and Portuguese (ISO 639-3 code *por*).

b. Romanization

Romanization is not required.

c. Diacritics

Diacritics are not used in approved Guyanese geographic names, however the user may encounter occasional diacritical marks if variant place names are written in languages other than English. The below list is not exclusive, but contains a reference of common diacritical marks.

Character Name	Character	Unicode Value
Small e with acute accent	é	00E9
Small e with grave accent	è	00E8
Small i with acute accent	í	00ED
Small n with tilde	ñ	00F1
Small u with dieresis	ü	00FC

⁵ *Products and Services Catalogue*, Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, Land Information and Mapping Division; 2006, p. 36

⁶ *National Policy on Geographic Information (Draft)*, Government of Guyana, 18 August 2012, URL: <http://www.nre.gov.gy/PDF/Policy%20on%20Geographic%20Information.pdf> (Accessed 12 May 2014)

⁷ *List of Participants, Twenty-Eighth Session, New York 28 April-2 May 2014 GEGN/28/4*, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names URL: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/28th-gegn-docs/gegn/GEGN-28-4_UNGEGN_LoP_2014%20-%20Final.pdf (Accessed 5 December 2014)

d. Generic Terms

A generic is a term used to describe a geographic feature, such as ‘river,’ ‘hill,’ and ‘lake.’ If the generic term does not identify the actual feature, the term should be considered a false generic and should not be added to the generic field of the Geographic Names Database (GNDB).

Generic terms are not collected for populated places. Approved names for Guyana contain generic terms only in English; however, generics from other languages may be found in variant names. The below table contains a reference of common generic terms which the user may encounter.

English	Dutch	French	Spanish	Portuguese
hill, mountain	<i>heuvel, berg</i>	<i>colline, mont</i>	<i>cerro, montaña</i>	<i>cerro, montanha</i>
lake	<i>meer</i>	<i>lac</i>	<i>lago</i>	<i>lago</i>
stream, creek	<i>rivier, kreek</i>	<i>rivière, crique</i>	<i> río, arroyo</i>	<i>rio, enseada</i>
waterfall	<i>waterval</i>	<i>cascade</i>	<i>salto, cascada</i>	<i>cachoeira</i>

e. Hyphenation, Capitalization, and Spelling

Guyanese geographic names follow English grammar and spelling conventions.

Hyphenated place names occur frequently in Guyana, for example, *Vive-la-Force*, *Mashive-Wau*, and *Maripa-Yaund Island*. Hyphens should be included in the feature name when present in the feature name on authoritative native sources.

Definite articles such as *the* (eng), *el, la, los, las* (spa), *de, den* (nld), or *le, l', la, les* (fra) are generally capitalized when in initial position as part of the proper feature name; for example, *The Jib, De Witte Swaan, L'Esperance*. If the place name contains more than one article, only the initial one should be capitalized, unless it is also capitalized on the native source. If the place name is written in all capital letters on the native source, the name is collected while capitalizing each word, including non-initial articles.

Conjunctions, such as *and* (eng), *en* (nld) and prepositions, such as *of* (eng), *met* (nld), are collected in lower case as in, *Dunkeld and Perth, Zorg en Vlygt*.

f. Numbers

Names containing cardinal or ordinal numerals should be treated according to the following guidelines:

- Arabic numbers are generally expanded in English; i.e., *Helena No. 1* (on source) should be written as *Helena Number One*; *Number 41* should be written as *Number Forty-One*.
- Roman numerals are retained throughout; i.e., *King George V Falls*

These guidelines apply to numerals in both initial and non-initial positions.

g. Long and Short Forms

Each of Guyana's ten first-order administrative division names is accorded a long form, but is sometimes referenced to in its short form in official documents. For instance, *Mahaica-Berbice Region* (GY-15) may be referred to as *Mahaica-Berbice*. Long and short forms of names of

populated places are approved when supported by official evidence; as in, *Chapman’s Grove* (long form); *Grove* (short form). Variant names shall not have short forms in the GNDB.

h. Unique Linguistic Situations

Names Containing the Conjunction “or”

Some sources may show a feature with two or more names, not necessarily in the same language, joined by the conjunction *or* (eng) e.g., *New Forest or Saint Jan*. For standardization purposes, both names may be selected as approved names, but will be ranked in increasing order depending on the weight of the available evidence.

Alternate Names

Feature names in Guyanese sources often appear with alternate names in parentheses. The alternate name may appear in English, Creole, Spanish, French, Dutch, Portuguese, or an indigenous language; for instance, *D’Edward (Sir James)*; *Trafalgar (No. 30)*. In this case, the first name will be chosen as the approved name, while the name in parentheses will be rendered as the variant name, unless overwhelming evidence suggests otherwise.

4. Political Geography Policy

a. Country Name

Short Form: Guyana

Long Form: Co-operative Republic of Guyana

b. Capital Name

Approved Name: Georgetown

c. First-order Administrative Divisions

Guyana has 10 regions, which are its first-order administrative divisions. Please see [Appendix A](#) for a map produced by the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission that depicts the first order administrative divisions.

<i>Region Number</i> ⁸	<i>Name</i>	<i>GEC</i>	<i>GENC</i> ⁹	<i>Seat</i>
1	Barima-Waini	GY-10	GY-BA	Mabaruma
7	Cuyuni-Mazaruni	GY-11	GY-CU	Bartica
4	Demerara-Mahaica	GY-12	GY-DE	Paradise
6	East Berbice-Corentyne	GY-13	GY-EB	New Amsterdam

⁸ Regions are listed as officially numbered in the 2002 Guyanese National Census. Please see www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/census.html for more information.

⁹ *GENC Geopolitical Entity E4: Guyana*, National System for Geospatial-Intelligence Standards Registry ISO Exceptions and Extensions. URL: <https://nsgreg.nga.mil/blue/view?v=204331&month=5&day=21&year=2014>; (Accessed 21 May 2014)

3	Essequibo Islands-West Demerara	GY-14	GY-ES	Vreed-en-Hoop
5	Mahaica Berbice	GY-15	GY-MA	Fort Wellington
2	Pomeroon-Supenaam	GY-16	GY-PM	Anna Regina
8	Potaro-Siparuni	GY-17	GY-PT	Mahdia
10	Upper Demerara-Berbice	GY-18	GY-UD	Linden
9	Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo	GY-19	GY-UT	Lethem

d. Disputed Territories

For the latest information on country-specific boundary disputes, please visit the Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia (B.A.S.E.), U.S. Department of State (Online), URL: <http://base.us-state.osis.gov/home.asp>.

The Essequibo region, a territory administered by Guyana since 1899, is claimed by Venezuela in a long-standing dispute.¹⁰ This large tract of land constitutes approximately 62% of Guyana and is located between the Essequibo River and the mouth of the Orinoco River. When the British Government acquired British Guiana (now Guyana) by an 1814 treaty with the Netherlands, the western boundary of the territory was not demarcated. A new boundary was established, named the Schomburgk Line (after its surveyor); however, Venezuela disputed the delineation and continues to do so.¹¹ Guyana and Venezuela maintain diplomatic relations and agree to receive recommendations from a representative of the UN Secretary General. All geographic features within the Essequibo region are to be assigned Guyana's country code.

On the southeastern side of the country, neighboring Suriname has made claims to the New River Triangle and to the Corentyne River. Despite the boundary disputes, Guyana and Suriname also maintain diplomatic relations.^{12,13} All geographic features within areas of Guyana claimed by Suriname are to be assigned Guyana's country code.

The United States Government has adhered to a policy of not taking a position on either claim. State Department guidance requires all maps that depict international boundaries in this region to carry the following disclaimer: *Boundary alignment is not necessarily authoritative.*¹⁴

[Appendix B](#) provides maps showing the approximate disputed areas.

¹⁰ *UN Envoy Meets with Ministers of Guyana, Venezuela to Help Solve Border Dispute*. UN News Centre, 21 October 2013. URL: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=46301>; (Accessed 13 May 2014)

¹¹ *Venezuela Boundary Dispute, 1895- 1899*. US Department of State Office of the Historian. URL: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/venezuela>; (Accessed 13 May 2014)

¹² *Guyana (05/07)* US Department of State Background Note. URL: <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/guyana/85054.htm> (Accessed 14 May 2014)

¹³ Diplomatic Relations List, Guyana. Republic of Guyana Ministry of Foreign Affairs. URL: www.minfor.gov.gy (Accessed 14 May 2014)

¹⁴ Guidance Bulletin, No. 27, US Department of State, Office of the Geographer and Global Issues. 23 March 2007. URL: <http://base.us-state.osis.gov> (accessed 31 July 2014)

5. Sources

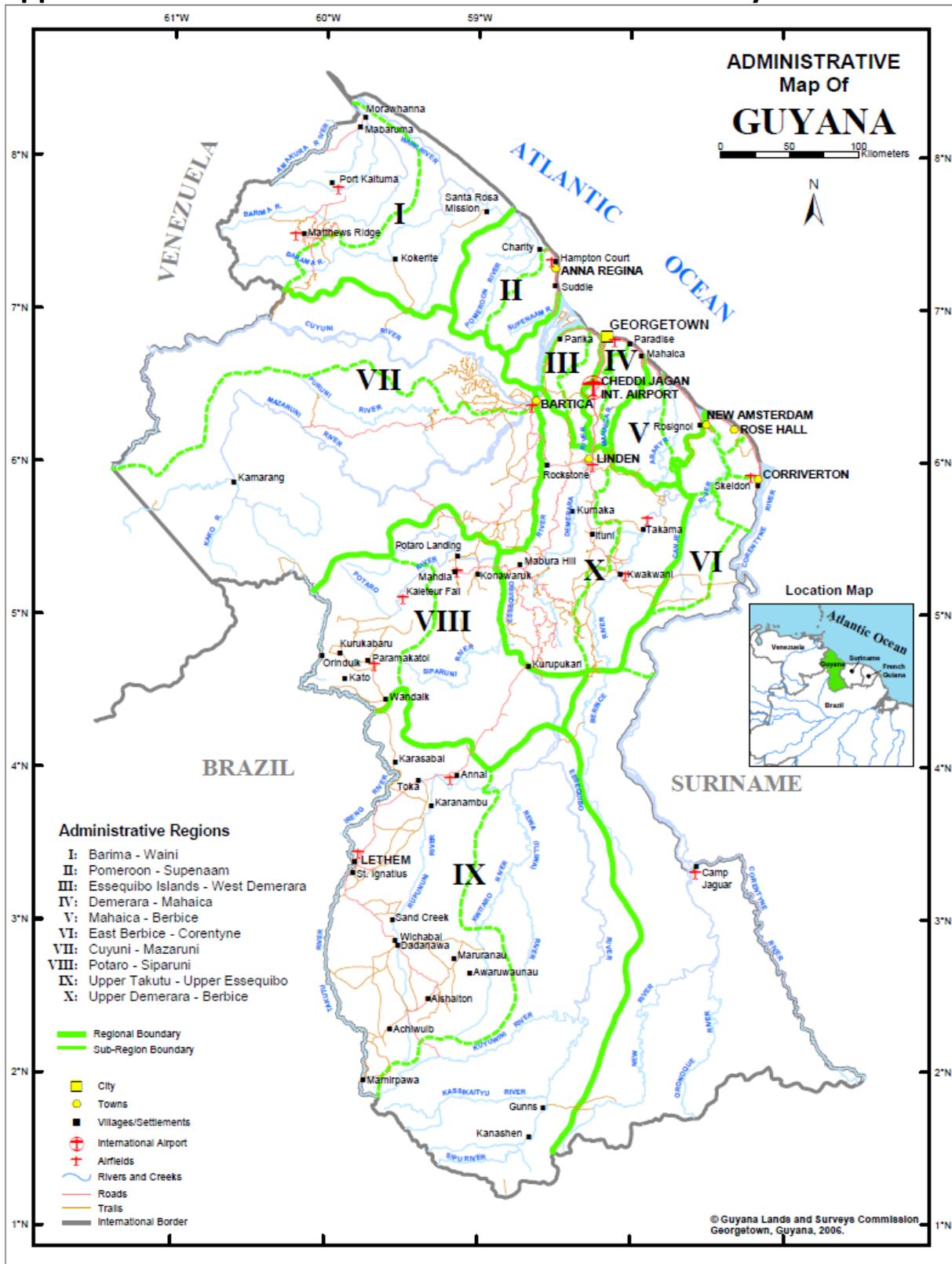
The preferred authority for Guyanese map and chart sources is the Land Information and Mapping Division of the Lands and Surveys Commission, which resides within the Guyana Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment. Other preferred sources include those produced by other Guyanese government agencies, including the Bureau of Statistics which administers the nationwide census. Academic institutions and commercial vendors may be used for reference; however, these sources are not authoritative unless they contain a caveat that they are produced for the Guyanese government.

a. Preferred Sources

The following is a list of preferred sources for geographic name selection.

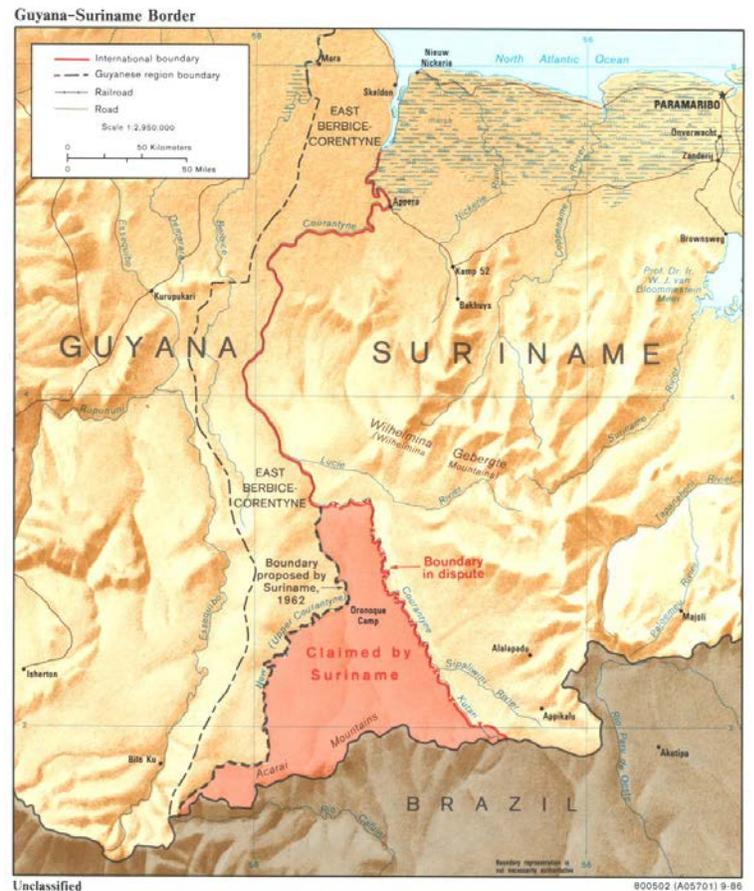
1. 1:100,000-scale map, Base Map of Guyana, Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, Land Information and Mapping Division. Available for purchase at <http://www.lands.gov.gy/maps.html>
2. 1:50,000-scale map, Topographic Maps of Guyana, Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, Land Information and Mapping Division. Available for purchase at <http://www.lands.gov.gy/maps.html>
3. 1:100,000-scale map, Operational Navigation Chart Series, K-27, L-27, L28, Edition 6, US Defense Mapping Agency, 1982. Available online at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/onc/latin_america.html
4. *The Gazetteer of Guyana*, Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, Land Information and Mapping Division. 2007. Available for purchase at <http://www.lands.gov.gy/maps.html>

Appendix A. First-order Administrative Divisions of Guyana ¹⁵



¹⁵ *Administrative Map of Guyana*; Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, Georgetown, Guyana 2006

Appendix B. Disputed Areas of Guyana^{16,17}



Essequibo River Dispute: The above map from the US Department of State depicts the disputed region between Venezuela and Guyana, demarcated by the Essequibo River on the East and Guyana’s 1966 boundary at independence on the West.

New River Triangle Dispute: The above map from the US Department of State depicts the disputed region between Suriname and Guyana, demarcated by the Corentyne River on the East and the New River on the West.

¹⁶ *International Land Boundary: Guyana-Venezuela.* US Department of State Boundary Report. June 2006. Available at <http://base.us-state.osis.gov> (Accessed 31 July 2014)

¹⁷ *International Land Boundary: Guyana-Suriname.* US Department of State Boundary Report. June 2006. Available at <http://base.us-state.osis.gov> (Accessed 31 July 2014)