

# Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Belize

United States Board on Geographic Names

Foreign Names Committee



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## 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 Belize for United States Government use. The BGN and its staff work to effect consistent treatment of geographic name spellings in US 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 Belize as of July 2016 was 353,858 people. The largest single ethnic group is of mestizo heritage, comprising approximately 53% of the population. The second largest ethnic group is of creole descent, comprising approximately 26% of the total population. The remainder of the population is of Maya (11.3%), Garifuna (6.1%), East Indian (3.9%), Mennonite (3.6%), white (1.2%), Asian (1%), and other descents.<sup>1,2</sup>

### *b. Languages*

Despite its small size, Belize is a linguistically-diverse country. The official language of Belize is English (ISO 639-3 code *eng*), spoken by approximately 63% of the population. Belize is the only Anglophone country in Central America. Spanish (ISO 639-3 code *spa*) is spoken by about 57% of the population, most notably in Corozal and Orange Walk districts.<sup>3</sup> Considered to be Belize's lingua franca, Beliz Kriol English (ISO 639-3 code *bzj*) is spoken by about 45% of the population. Other languages spoken include Maya (10.5%, ISO 639-3 code *map, yua*), Plautdietch (3.2%, ISO 639-3 code *pdt*) and Garifuna (2.9%, ISO 639-3 code *cab*).<sup>4,5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Belize." *CIA World Factbook*. Central Intelligence Agency, Web. <[www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bh.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bh.html)> (Accessed 30 November 2016).

<sup>2</sup> The percentages reflecting the ethnic makeup of Belize add up to more than 100% because census respondents were able to identify as more than one ethnic group. The Mennonite population can be distinguished from the greater white-identifying population as they typically speak Plautdietch instead of English.

<sup>3</sup> Merrill, Tim, Library of Congress. Federal Research Division, and Johnson Research Associates. *Guyana and Belize: country studies*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1993. Online Text. <[www.loc.gov/item/93010956/](http://www.loc.gov/item/93010956/)> (Accessed 30 November 2016).

<sup>4</sup> "Belize." *Ethnologue*, Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2016. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Nineteenth edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International, Web. <[www.ethnologue.com/country/BZ/languages](http://www.ethnologue.com/country/BZ/languages)> (Accessed 30 November 2016).

<sup>5</sup> "Belize." *CIA World Factbook*. Central Intelligence Agency, Web.

### ***c. Geographic Names Standardization***

According to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), Belize does not have a national authority for geographic names as of September 2016.<sup>6</sup> Belize's Land Information Center (LIS), which falls under the aegis of the Ministry of Natural Resources, is the main institution for GIS.<sup>7</sup> The majority of the mapping of post-colonial Belize was created by the British Directorate of Overseas Surveys for the government of Belize.<sup>8</sup>

## **3. Toponymic Policies**

### ***a. Orthography***

Geographic names standardization policy will follow English orthographic conventions. The user of Belizean geographic sources should be aware that native sources may contain variant place names in other languages, including Spanish (ISO 639-3 code *spa*), Maya (ISO 639-3 code *mop*, *yua*), and German or Plautdietch (ISO 639-3 code *deu*, *pd*).

### ***b. Romanization***

Romanization is not required.

### ***c. Diacritics***

Although uncommon in Belizean geographic names, the user may encounter occasional diacritical marks if place names are written in languages other than English. The list below contains diacritics that may be found in Belizean toponyms. Uppercase letters in standardized name forms retain diacritics.

<b>Character Name</b>	<b>Upper Case</b>	<b>Unicode Value</b>	<b>Lower Case</b>	<b>Unicode Value</b>
A with acute accent	Á	00C1	á	00E1
E with acute accent	É	00C9	é	00E9
I with acute accent	Í	00CD	í	00ED
N with tilde	Ñ	00D1	ñ	00F1
O with acute accent	Ó	00D3	ó	00F3
U with acute accent	Ú	00DA	ú	00FA
U with dieresis	Ü	00DC	ü	00FC

<sup>6</sup> "Authorities List." *UNGEGN*. United Nations, Web.

[unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/NNA/Authorities\\_list\\_September%202016\\_rev.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/NNA/Authorities_list_September%202016_rev.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> "Land Information Center." *Ministry of Natural Resources and Immigration*. The Government of Belize, Web. [mnra.gov.bz/natural-resources/land-information-system/](http://mnra.gov.bz/natural-resources/land-information-system/) (Accessed 4 October 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Parry, Robert; Perkins, Chris. *World Mapping Today*. Munich: K. G. Saur Verlag GmbH, 2002. 285. Print.

#### **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 feature, the term should be considered a false generic and should not be collected in the GNDB as a generic. Generic terms are not collected for populated places. With some exceptions, approved Belizean toponyms use English generic terms. Appendix A provides a partial list of common non-English generic terms one may encounter in Belizean geographic names sources.

#### **e. Hyphenation, Capitalization, and Spelling**

Belizean geographic names follow English grammar and spelling conventions. Hyphenated place names are seldom found in Belize; however, when hyphens are encountered on authoritative sources, they should also be included in the feature name.

Definite articles such as *the* (eng), *el, la, los, las* (spa) are generally capitalized when in initial position as part of the proper feature name; for example, *The Triangles, Los Altos*. 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, a non-initial definite article, conjunction or preposition will be in lower case when the standardized name form is derived, unless nearby associated features suggest otherwise.

Conjunctions, such as *and* (eng), *y* (spa) and prepositions, such as *of* (eng), *de, del* (spa), are collected in lower case as in, *Cut and Throw Away Creek, Valley of Peace, and Laguna de Cayo Frances*.

#### **f. Long and Short Forms**

Short forms are not added to variant names in the GNDB.

Administrative division names are accorded long and short forms. Example: *Orange Walk District* [long form]; *Orange Walk* [short form].

Long and short forms of names of populated places are approved when supported by official evidence; as in, *Orange Walk Town* (long form); *Orange Walk* (short form).

#### **g. Numbers**

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

- Arabic numbers are generally expanded in English; i.e., *Doctor Young No. 1* (on source) should be written as *Doctor Young Number One*; *Number 5 Cave* should be written as *Number Five Cave*.
- Roman numerals are retained throughout.

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

## ***h. Unique Linguistic Situations***

### ***Alternate Names***

Feature names in Belizean sources may appear with alternate names in parentheses. In these cases, 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***

Approved name: Belize

### ***b. Capital Name***

Approved name: Belmopan

### ***c. First-order Administrative Divisions***

Please see Appendix B for a map depicting first-order administrative divisions in Belize.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Generic</b>	<b>GEC</b>	<b>GENC</b>	<b>Seat</b>
Belize	District	BH01	BZ-BZ	Belize City
Cayo	District	BH02	BZ-CY	San Ignacio
Corozal	District	BH03	BZ-CZL	Corozal Town
Orange Walk	District	BH04	BZ-OW	Orange Walk Town
Stann Creek	District	BH05	BZ-SC	Dangriga
Toledo	District	BH06	BZ-TOL	Punta Gorda

### ***d. Conventional and Anglicized Names***

There are no conventional or Anglicized Names in Belize.

### ***e. Unique Geopolitical Situations***

For the latest country-specific boundary dispute information, consult the US Department of State.

### ***Disputed Territories***

In a long standing dispute, Guatemala has staked claims over Belizean territory, ranging from the land south of the Sibun River, to the entirety of the country. This dispute dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when present-day Guatemala and Belize were part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. Under the Treaty of Paris of 1763, the Spanish Government granted Great Britain logging concessions in an ill-defined area occupying part of modern-day Belize while still maintaining

Spanish sovereignty over the land.<sup>9</sup> The Treaty of Versailles of 1783 reinstated these concessions while better defining the terms of the agreement to an area that today occupies northeastern Belize, between Río Hondo and the Belize River. In 1786, the British concession was expanded further south, reaching the Sibun River. Although New Spain was later dissolved, the newly-formed Guatemala sought to maintain the entirety of Spain's former sovereign rights.

The 1859 Anglo-Guatemalan treaty ceded the lands south of the Sibun River to Great Britain on the condition that Great Britain construct a road connecting Guatemala to the Caribbean Sea. Today, Guatemala considers this treaty null and void as Great Britain never fulfilled the obligation of building the road. As the former colony of British Honduras became today's independent Belize, Guatemala has continued to assert its claims over parts of the territory while at the same time recognizing the sovereignty of Belize in 1991. Geographic features within areas of Belize claimed by Guatemala are assigned Belize's country code.

### ***Undesignated Sovereignty***

The grouping of islands collectively known as the Sapodilla Cays constitutes an area of undesignated sovereignty. Located off the southeastern coast of Belize, the islands are claimed by Honduras in their constitution. The area is currently a joint marine reserve managed by Belize. The GNDB features in the chart below fall within the area of undesignated sovereignty and are not to be modified until the State Department supplies the necessary policy statement.

<b>Name</b>	<b>UFI</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Frank's Cay	-1149388	ISL
Hunting Cay	-1149555	ISL
Hunting Cay Light	-1149556	LTHSE
Lime Cay	-1149653	ISL
Nicholas Cay	-1149907	ISL
Nicholas Cut	-1149908	CHNM
Northeast Sapodilla Cay	-1149921	ISL
Ragged Cay	-1150093	ISL
Sapodilla Cays	-1150344	ISLS
Sapodilla Cut	-1150346	CHNM
South Cay	-1150464	ISL

## **5. Source Material**

The preferred authority for Belizean map and chart sources is the Land Information Center division of the Land and Surveys Commission, which resides within the Belizean Ministry of

<sup>9</sup> "Belizean History: The 1763 Treaty Between Spain And Britain." *Belize*. N.p., Web. <[www.belize.com/belizean-history-the-1763-treaty-between-spain-and-britain](http://www.belize.com/belizean-history-the-1763-treaty-between-spain-and-britain)> (Accessed 12 May 2016).

Natural Resources. Other preferred sources include those produced by other Belizean government agencies and those produced by the U.K. Ordnance Survey International for the Government of Belize. Sources produced by Belizean academic institutions, UN and US government agencies, and international organizations like the Organization of American States (OAS) may be used; however, these sources are not authoritative unless they contain a caveat that the information contained was produced for the Belizean government.

### ***a. Preferred Sources***

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

1. 1:250,000-scale map, Belize, Land and Surveys Department, Land Information Centre, 2005.
2. 1:50,000-scale map series, Belize, Ordnance Survey International, 1992-1993.
3. 1:750,000-scale map, Belize, Ordnance Survey International, 1991.

## Appendix A. Glossary of Generic Terms

The following is a partial list of common non-English generic terms one may encounter in Belizean geographic names sources:

<b>Generic</b>	<b>Feature Designation Name</b>	<b>Designation Code</b>
arroyo	intermittent stream	STMI
boca	stream mouth(s)	STMM
catarata	waterfall(s)	FLLS
cerro	hill	HLL
crique	stream(s)	STM
montañas	mountains	MTS
punta	point(s)	PT
río	stream(s)	STM



## Appendix B. First-order Administrative Divisions of Belize

