

# Geographic Names Standardization Policy for El Salvador

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 El Salvador 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 El Salvador as of July 2015 was 6,141,350 people. The largest single ethnic group is of mestizo or mixed Amerindian and European heritage, comprising approximately 86% of the population. The second largest ethnic group is white, comprising approximately 13% of the total population, and the rest are of Amerindian descent, comprising 1% of the overall population.<sup>1</sup>

### *b. Languages*

Spanish (ISO 639-3 language code 'spa') is the official language of El Salvador. Pipil (ISO 639-3 language code 'ppl'), part of the Nahuatl group of languages (ISO 639-3 language code 'nah'), is also a significant language spoken among a small number of Amerindians.<sup>2</sup> Other indigenous languages such as the Cacaopera (extinct, ISO 639-3 language code 'ccr') and the Kekchí (ISO 639-3 language code 'kek') have also contributed to the list of feature names found in Salvadoran sources.<sup>3</sup>

### *c. Geographic Names Standardization*

According to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), El Salvador (as of September 2012) does not have a national authority for geographic names.<sup>4</sup> However, most of the official geographic naming for cartographic purposes in El Salvador falls under the aegis of the *Instituto Geográfico y del Catastro Nacional (IGCN)*, formally the *Instituto Geográfico Nacional (IGN)* "Ingeniero Pablo Arnoldo Guzman," within the *Centro Nacional de Registros (CNR)*.

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<sup>1</sup> Central America and Caribbean: El Salvador. The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Online). URL: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/es.html> (Accessed 30 July 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Languages of El Salvador. Ethnologue: Languages of the World. URL: <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/SV/languages> (Accessed 3 August 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Summary List of Authorities, National Names Authorities, UNGEGN (Online). URL: [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/Summary\\_Authorities\\_list\\_September%202012.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/Summary_Authorities_list_September%202012.pdf) (Accessed 12 August 2015).

### 3. Toponymic Policies

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

Geographic names standardization policy will follow Spanish orthographic conventions. Please refer to orthographic reference materials such as *Ortografía básica de la lengua española* by the Real Academia Española (2012) and *Ortografía y ortotipografía del español actual* by José Martínez de Sousa (2004) for additional information.

The user of Salvadoran geographic sources should be aware that there exist variant place names in local languages other than Spanish, as well as various spellings as a result of rendering indigenous place names in harmony with Spanish orthographic rules.

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

Romanization is not required.

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

Diacritics are shown in standardized and variant names in conformance with native sources and Spanish orthography. Uppercase letters retain diacritics. In accordance with Spanish orthography, the below letter/diacritic combinations are those most commonly found in standardized name forms in El Salvador:

Character Name	Upper Case	Unicode Value	Lower Case	Unicode Value
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

#### ***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 to the GNDB. Generic terms are not collected for populated places.

Appendix A provides a partial list of common generic terms one may encounter in Salvadoran geographic names sources.

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

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

Definite articles such as *el, la, los, las* are generally capitalized when in initial position and should be collected as shown in the native source—for example, *El Júcaro*. 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. Definite articles that are preceded by a generic are oftentimes capitalized on native Salvadoran sources. If the article is capitalized on the native source, it becomes part of the proper name—for example, *La Presa, Quebrada*.

If the place name is written in all capital letters on the native source, the name is collected with all definite articles capitalized, including those in the non-initial position. When source evidence regarding the capitalization of the definite article is inconsistent, names of associated features (if present) can assist in deciding whether to accept or reject a particular name.

Conjunctions, such as *y* ('and') and prepositions, such as *de/del* ('of', 'from'), are collected in lower case, as in, *Punta del Toro Changallo*.

The chart below shows the proper capitalization of articles and conjunctions found in Salvadoran features:

Native Source Spelling	Collect as
Punta <b>de La</b> Curvinera	<b>La</b> Curvinera, Punta <b>de</b>
Loma <b>Las</b> Mesas	<b>Las</b> Mesas, Loma
Río <b>El</b> Muerto	<b>El</b> Muerto, Río
Loma <b>del</b> Balsamo	Balsamo, Loma <b>del</b>
Río <b>de Los</b> Pueblos	<b>Los</b> Pueblos, Río <b>de</b>
LAGUNA <b>DE</b> OLOMEGA	Olomega, Laguna <b>de</b>
MONTAÑA <b>EL</b> ZOPE	<b>El</b> Zope, Montaña

### ***f. Numbers***

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

- Arabic numbers are generally expanded in Spanish; i.e, *Finca Huiscoyol Número 2* (on source) should be written as *Finca Huiscoyol Número Dos*; *Aramuaca 1ero.* (on source) should be written as *Aramuaca Primero*.
- Roman numerals are retained throughout, although these are not commonly found in Salvadoran geographic names.

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

### ***g. Optional 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: *Departamento de Chalatenango* [long form]; *Chalatenango* [short form].

Long and short forms of names of populated places are approved when supported by official evidence. Example: *Ojo de Agua de Leon* [long form]; *Ojo de Agua* [short form].

Where official maps show more than one populated place with the same name in the same *Municipio* (second-order administrative division), distinguishing long forms should be obtained from census lists and other official sources.

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

### ***Names Containing the Conjunction “o”***

Some sources may show a feature with two or more names joined by the conjunction “o” (or). Example: *Loma El Pajarito o El Carretero*. For standardization purposes, only one name is selected as the official standard name. The name chosen as the approved name will depend on the weight of the available evidence. In the absence of additional evidence, the first name shall be used as the official standard name. In accordance with standard policy, the other names for the feature will be considered variants.

### ***i. Abbreviations***

The following is a list of abbreviations of generics which are commonly found on cartographic products of El Salvador. This list is not exhaustive, and other abbreviations may be found. Any abbreviations must be spelled out.

<b><u>Abbreviated Form</u></b>	<b><u>Unabbreviated Form</u></b>
Bo.	Balneario, Barrio
C.	Cabo, Cerro
Cem.	Cemetery
Col.	Colonia
Crío.	Caserío
Ctón.	Cantón
Depto.	Departamento
Fca.	Finca
Hda.	Hacienda
I.	Isla
L.	Lago
Lag.	Laguna
M.	Monte
Mun.	Municipalidad, Municipio
P.	Punta
Q., Qda.	Quebrada
R.	Río

## 4. Political Geography Policy

### *a. Country Name and Capital*

#### **Country Name**

Conventional long form:	Republic of El Salvador
Conventional short form:	None
Approved long form:	República de El Salvador
Approved short form:	El Salvador

#### **Capital (PPLC)**

Approved name:	San Salvador
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### *b. First-Order Administrative Divisions*

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

<b>Name</b>	<b>Generic</b>	<b>Seat</b>	<b>GEC</b>	<b>GENC</b>
Ahuachapán	Departamento	Ahuachapán	ES01	SV-AH
Cabañas	Departamento	Sensuntepeque	ES02	SV-CA
Chalatenango	Departamento	Chalatenango	ES03	SV-CH
Cuscatlán	Departamento	Cojutepeque	ES04	SV-CU
La Libertad	Departamento	Santa Tecla	ES05	SV-LI
La Paz	Departamento	Zacatecoluca	ES06	SV-PA
La Unión	Departamento	La Unión	ES07	SV-UN
Morazán	Departamento	San Francisco	ES08	SV-MO
San Miguel	Departamento	San Miguel	ES09	SV-SM
San Salvador	Departamento	San Salvador <sup>5</sup>	ES10	SV-SS
Santa Ana	Departamento	Santa Ana	ES11	SV-SA
San Vicente	Departamento	San Vicente	ES12	SV-SV
Sonsonate	Departamento	Sonsonate	ES13	SV-SO
Usulután	Departamento	Usulután	ES14	SV-US

### *c. Unique geopolitical situations*

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/>.

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to being the seat of *Departamento de San Salvador*, San Salvador is the capital of El Salvador.

### ***International Disputes***

**El Salvador-Honduras:** In 1992, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled on delimiting *bolsones* (disputed areas) along the El Salvador-Honduras boundary as well as two islands in the Gulf of Fonseca (Isla Meanguera, Isla del Tigre). This decision was followed by an Organization of American States survey and a final ICJ ruling in 2003. An agreement was finally reached by the two countries in 2006.<sup>6</sup>

**Gulf of Fonseca:** The 1992 ICJ ruling, which settled long-standing territorial disputes between El Salvador and Honduras, did not establish a maritime boundary in the Gulf of Fonseca. Instead, the court ruled that the Gulf of Fonseca represents a ‘condominium’, with control being shared by El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua. The decision allowed for the possibility that the three nations could divide the waters at a later date if they wished to do so, while advocating Honduran free passage to the Pacific Ocean. However, El Salvador continues to claim *Isla de Conejo* off Honduras in the Gulf of Fonseca. This tiny island was not included in the 1992 judgment by the ICJ.<sup>7</sup>

## **5. Source Material**

The preferred mapping authority for El Salvador is the *Instituto Geográfico y del Catastro Nacional* (National Geographic and Cadastral Institute) which possesses a catalog of maps covering that country. The Institute’s information as of November 2015:

Address: 1a Calle Poniente y 43 Avenida Norte, No. 4310  
 San Salvador, El Salvador  
 Telephone: (503) 2260-8000 / (503) 2261-8400  
 Website: [www.cnr.gob.sv](http://www.cnr.gob.sv)

Other preferred references include those produced by Salvadoran government agencies such as the *Dirección General de Estadística y Censos* (Statistics and Census Administration). Sources produced by Salvadoran academic institutions and UN and US government agencies may be used; however, these sources are not considered authoritative unless they contain a caveat that the information contained was produced for the Salvadoran government.

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<sup>6</sup> Central America and Caribbean: El Salvador. The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Online).  
 URL: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/es.html#top> (Accessed 30 July 2015).

<sup>7</sup> *Maritime Boundaries: Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia* (B.A.S.E.), U.S. Department of State (Online),  
 URL: [http://base.us-state.osis.gov/maritimeBHome.asp?mode=details&pairDetailsId=176&pair=EL+SALVADOR\\_HONDURAS&pairFIPS=ES\\_HO](http://base.us-state.osis.gov/maritimeBHome.asp?mode=details&pairDetailsId=176&pair=EL+SALVADOR_HONDURAS&pairFIPS=ES_HO)  
 (Accessed 30 July 2015).

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

The following list of preferred sources is not exhaustive. Some maps series listed below have been produced jointly by the ICGN and NGA and its predecessor organizations, NIMA and DMA.

1. 1:100,000 ADM1 Maps, 2005-2006, ICGN (El Salvador)
2. 1:100,000 ADM1 Maps, 1999, IGN (El Salvador)
3. 1:50,000-scale maps, Series E753, 1983-1989, IGN (El Salvador)
4. 1:25,000-scale maps, Series E853, 1986, IGN (El Salvador)
5. 1:500,000-scale map, United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations., 2004, URL: <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/elsalvad.pdf>
6. 1:500,000-scale map, Official Map of El Salvador, 2004, IGN (El Salvador)
7. Instituto Geográfico y del Catastro Nacional (ICGN) (National Geographic and Cadastral Institute) El Salvador (Online), URL: [http://www.cnr.gob.sv/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=97&Itemid=138](http://www.cnr.gob.sv/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=97&Itemid=138)

### ***b. Other Sources***

1. El Salvador Maps, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin (Online), URL: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/el\\_salvador.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/el_salvador.html)
2. Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia (B.A.S.E.), U.S. Department of State, URL: [http://base.us-state.osis.gov/images/El\\_Salvador\\_504510.pdf](http://base.us-state.osis.gov/images/El_Salvador_504510.pdf)
3. El Salvador, Frommer's Maps, URL: <http://www.cons-int.net/i/maps/el-salvador1.pdf>
4. El Salvador Country Study Guide, Oleynik, Igor; Alexander, Natasha. 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 2006, International Business Publications, USA

## Appendix A. Glossary of Generic Terms

The following is a partial list of common generic terms one may encounter in Salvadoran geographic names sources:

<b><u>Generic</u></b>	<b><u>Feature Designation Name</u></b>	<b><u>Designation Code</u></b>
aeropuerto	airport	AIRP
aldea	populated place	PPL
área arqueológica	ancient site	ANS
arrecife(s)	reef(s)	RF
arroyo	stream, intermittent stream	STM, STMI
bahía	bay	BAY
balneario	resort	RSRT
barra	bar, sandbar	BAR
barranca(s), barranco(s)	ravine(s)	RVN
barrio	section of populated place	PPLX
bocana	estuary	ESTY
brazo	stream, intermittent stream	STM, STMI
borde	levee	LEV
cabo	cape	CAPE
campamento	camp	CMP
campo	field	FLD
canal	canal	CNL
cantón	village	PPL
cascada(s)	waterfall(s)	FLLS
caserío	populated place	PPL
cayo(s)	island(s)	ISL(S)
cementerio	cemetery	CMTY
cerro(s)	hill(s)	HLL(S)
colonia	section of populated place	PPLX
cueva(s)	cave(s)	CAVE
cumbre	peak	PK
departamento	first-order administrative division	ADM1
embalse	reservoir	RSV
embarcadero	pier	PIER
ensenada	cove	COVE
estación	railroad station	RSTN
estero	estuary	ESTY
faro	lighthouse	LTHSE
finca	farm	FRM
granja	farm	FRM
gruta(s)	cave(s)	CAVE
golfo	gulf	GULF
hacienda	ranch	RNCH
huerto	orchard(s)	OCH
isla(s), islote(s)	island(s)	ISL(S)

<b><u>Generic</u></b>	<b><u>Feature Designation Name</u></b>	<b><u>Designation Code</u></b>
lago	lake	LK
laguna, laguneta	lagoon	LGN
loma(s)	hill(s)	HLL(S)
lotificación	estate	EST
manglar	marsh	MRSH
mina	mine	MN
montaña(s)	mountain(s)	MT(S)
monte(s)	hill(s)	HLL(S)
muelle	pier	PIER
municipio, municipalidad	municipality, second-order administrative division	ADM2
pantano	swamp	SWMP
parcelamiento	estate	EST
parque	park	PRK
paso	pass, mountain pass	PASS
pista de aterrizaje	airfield	AIRF
playa	beach	BCH
poza	pool	POOL
pozo	well	WLL
presa	dam	DAM
puente	bridge	BDG
puerto	port	PRT
punta	point	PT
quebrada	stream, intermittent stream	STM, STMI
ranchería	populated place	PPL
reservación	reserve	RES
residencial	section of populated place	PPLX
riachuelo, río	stream	STM
ruina(s)	ruin(s)	RUIN
salina(s)	salt evaporation pond(s)	MFGN
sierra	mountains, mountain range	MTS
sierra	ridge	RDGE
toma	stream, intermittent stream	STM, STMI
urbanización	section of populated place	PPLX
vado	ford	FORD
valle	valley	VAL
volcán	volcano	VLC
zanjón	ditch	DTCH
zona	area, locality	LCTY

