Geographic Names Standardization Policy
for Panama

United States Board on Geographic Names – Foreign Names Committee

March 2015

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 Panama 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 Panama as of 2013 was approximately 3.5 million persons. The largest single ethnic group is of mestizo (mixed Amerindian and white) heritage, consisting of approximately 70% of the population. The second largest ethnic group is of Amerindian and mixed (West Indian) heritage, constituting approximately 14% of the total population. An additional 10% is white, and 6% is Amerindian.[1]

b. Languages

Panama's official language is Spanish (ISO 639-3 language code: *spa*). English (*eng*) is the second most widely used language, used by approximately 14% of the population and taught in numerous schools. At least 12 other indigenous languages are also spoken in Panama, including Panamanian Creole English (*jam*) and Embera (*emp*).[2]

c. Geographic Names Standardization

Panama's Tommy Guardia National Geographic Institute (*El Instituto Geográfico Nacional "Tommy Guardia"*) was created in 1969 and is designated by the National Lands Administration Authority (*La Autoridad Nacional de Administración de Tierras*) as the technical authority in matters of photogrammetry, hydrography, geography, cartography, geodesy, and special studies. The institute's SIGNAL project (*El Sistema de Información Geográfico Nacional* or National Geographic Information System) aims to integrate and standardize geospatial information for official use by increasing data availability, creating a unified map base,

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[1] *Panama People Stats,* NationMaster; URL: www.nationmaster.com/country-info/profiles/Panama/People (Accessed 22 May 2014)

[2] *Mapa de las Provincias y Comarcas Indigenas de Panama.* Mapas del Mundo. URL: http://espanol.mapsofworld.com/continentes/norte-america/panama/provincias-y-comarcas-de-panama.html (Accessed 21 May 2014)

facilitating the dissemination of data, and establishing best practices.[3] The Tommy Guardia National Geographic Institute also houses a Geographic Names Authority (*Autoridad de Nombres Geográficos*) comprised of members of the institute, and supported by a consultative committee and working group with representatives from the Presidential administration, the Comptroller General, the University of Panama, and Panamanian staff from the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH).[4]

3. Toponymic Policies

a. Orthography

Geographic names standardization policy will follow Spanish orthographic conventions. The user of Panamanian geographic sources should be aware that native sources may contain variant place names in other languages, most commonly English, for example Bluefield Rock. Occasionally, the user may encounter 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.

Character Name	Character	Unicode Value
Capital A with acute accent	Á	00C1
Capital E with acute accent	É	00C9
Capital I with acute accent	Í	00CD
Capital N with tilde	Ñ	00D1
Capital O with acute accent	Ó	00D3
Capital U with acute accent	Ú	00DA
Capital U with dieresis	Ü	00DC
Small a with acute accent	á	00E1
Small a with dieresis	ä	00E4
Small e with acute accent	é	00E9
Small i with acute accent	í	00ED
Small n with tilde	ñ	00F1
Small o with acute accent	ó	00F3

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[3] Instituto Geográfico Nacional 'Tommy Guardia'. URL: http://ignpanama.anati.gob.pa/minstituto/quienesomos-9 (Accessed 22 May 2014)

[4] *Autoridad de Nombres Geográficos,Instituto Geográfico Nacional 'Tommy Guardia'*. URL: http://ignpanama.anati.gob.pa/mcomisiones/mnacionales/232-aautoridad-de-nombres-geograficos-2 (Accessed 23 May 2014)

Character Name	Character	Unicode Value
Small o with dieresis	ö	00F6
Small u with acute accent	ú	00FA
Small u with dieresis	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 added to the generic field of the GNDB. Generic terms are not collected for populated places. The table below contains a partial list of common generic terms one may encounter in Panamanian geographic names sources:

Generic	**Generic Designation**	**Designation Code**
Archipiélago	Islands	ISLS
Arroyo (A.)	Stream, Intermittent Stream	STM, STMI
Bahía	Bay	BAY
Cabo (C.)	Cape	CAPE
Cerro (C.)	Hill, Mountain	HLL, MT
Comarca	District	ADMD
Cordillera	Mountains/Mountain Range	MTS
Filo	Ridge	RDGE
Golfo	Gulf	GULF
Isla (I.)	Island	ISL
Lago (L.)	Lake	LK
Laguna (Lag.)	Lagoon	LGN
Playa, Playón	Beach	BCH
Puerto (P.)	Port	PRT
Punta (Pta.)	Point	PT
Río (R.)	River, Stream	STM
Serranía	Mountains/Mountain Range	MTS

e.   *Hyphenation, Capitalization, and Spelling*

Panamanian geographic names follow Spanish grammar and spelling conventions. Hyphenated place names are seldom found in Panama; 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, *Las Palmas, El Copé.*

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 with all articles capitalized, including non-initial articles.

When the native source has a generic term preceding an article, the article will be written in lower case, unless capitalized on the native source. If the article is capitalized on the native source, it becomes part of the proper name.

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

The chart below shows article and conjunction capitalization using the generic term *loma* (hill) as an example:

Native Source Spelling	Collect as
*Loma **l**as Matas*	*Matas, Loma **las***
*Loma **L**as Piedras*	***Las** Piedras, Loma*
*Loma de **l**as Mendozas*	*Mendozas, Loma de **las***
*Loma de **L**a Gloria*	***La** Gloria, Loma de*
LOMA DE QUITO	*Quito, Loma **de***

In the absence of conclusive evidence, definite articles, conjunctions, or prepositions found beyond the initial position are written in lowercase letters in the standardized name form, as in *Las Minas de Santa Rita.*

f.   *Numbers*

Names containing cardinal or ordinal numerals should be treated according to the following guidelines:
- Arabic numbers are generally expanded in the Spanish language; i.e., *1 Brazo del Rio Cochea* (on source) should be written as *Primer Brazo del Rio Cochea*; *Finca No.12* (on source) should be written as *Finca Número Doce*
- Roman numerals are retained throughout, although these are not commonly found in Panamanian geographic names.

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

g.   *Optional Long and Short Forms*

Long and short forms of names of populated places are approved when supported by official evidence; as in, *La Chorrerita Pista* (long form) – *La Chorrerita* (short form). Short forms are not added for variant names.

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 *o* ('or') e.g., *Rio Chepo o Bayano*. For standardization purposes, only one name is selected as the official standard name, but all names will be ranked in increasing order depending on the weight of the available evidence. If there is no further

evidence, one should use the first as the official standard name. In accordance with standard policy, the other names for the feature will be considered variants.

Alternate Names
Feature names in Panamanian sources may appear with alternate names in parentheses. The alternate name may appear in Spanish, English, or an indigenous language. English names especially are quite common, for example, *Panamá* (Panama City) and *Canal Puyadas* (Puyadas Channel). 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.

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

Abbreviated Form	Unabbreviated Form	Definition
A.	Arroyo	Stream
C.	Cabo; Cerro	Cape, Hill/Mountain
Corr.	Corregimiento	Township/ Locality
I.	Isla	Island
L.	Lago	Lake
Lag.	Laguna	Lagoon
P., Pta	Puerto; Punta	Port; Point
Prov.	Provincia	Province
R.	Río	River

4. Political Geography Policy

a.   Country Name and Capital

Country Name
Conventional long form: Republic of Panama
Conventional short form: Panama
Spanish long form: República de Panamá
Spanish short form: Panamá

Capital (PPLC)
Conventional: Panama City
Spanish: Panamá

b.   First-order Administrative Divisions

The Government of Panama has thirteen first-order administrative divisions: ten provinces (*provincias*) and three indigenous regions at the provincial level *(comarcas indigenas con nivel de provincia)*.

See Appendix A for a map depicting the first-order administrative divisions in Panama.[5]

Name	Generic	Seat	GEC	GENC
Bocas del Toro	Provincia	Bocas del Toro	PM01	PA-1
Chiriquí	Provincia	David	PM02	PA-4
Coclé	Provincia	Penonomé	PM03	PA-2
Colón	Provincia	Colón	PM04	PA-3
Darién	Provincia	La Palma	PM05	PA-5
Emberá-Wounaan	Comarca	Unión Chocó	PM11	PA-EM
Herrera	Provincia	Chitré	PM06	PA-6
Kuna Yala	Comarca	El Porvenir	PM09	PA-KY
Los Santos	Provincia	Las Tablas	PM07	PA-7
Ngöbe-Buglé	Comarca	Buabidi	PM12	PA-NB
Panamá	Provincia	Panamá	PM08	PA-8
Panamá Oeste[6]	Provincia	La Chorrera	PM13	PA-10
Veraguas	Provincia	Santiago	PM10	PA-9

c.   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

In the late 19th and early 20th century, Panama—then a province of Colombia—disputed the land and maritime border with Costa Rica. Initial arbitration attempts by French President Emile Loubet in 1900 remained disputed by Costa Rica. In 1914, United States Chief Justice E. Douglass White issued a follow-on arbitration ruling, which was not acceptable to Panama.[7] As tensions escalated, the unresolved dispute led to a 1921 war, prompting US political intervention. The dispute was resolved in 1941, when the present border was determined. Although occasional tensions remain today, Panama and Costa Rica maintain diplomatic and economic relations.[8,9,10]

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[5] República de Panamá Cabeceras de Provincias y Comarcas Instituto Geográfico Nacional "Tommy Guardia" (IGNTG) Map 2013.

[6] Panamá Oeste is the most recently formed province, created by the enactment of Panamanian Law #119 on 13 December 2013. For more information, please see the Geopolitical Entities and Codes (GEC) Update 16 (June 2014), available at http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/gazetteers2.html

[7] Anderson, Chandler P. "The Costa Rica-Panama Boundary Dispute," *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol 15. No. 2 (April 1921), pp. 236-240 Published by: American Society of International Law. Article DOI: 10.2307/2187683 Article Stable URL: www.jstor.org/stable2187683

[8] Meditz, Sandra W. and Dennis M. Hanratty, eds. "Relations with Central America". *Panama: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1987. URL: http://countrystudies.us/panama/64.htm (Accessed 24 May 2014)

5. Sources

The preferred authority for Panamanian map and chart sources is the Panamanian National Authority for Lands Administration (*Autoridad Nacional de Administración de Tierras*), which oversees the Tommy Guardia National Geographic Institute.

Other preferred references include those produced by the Cartography Department of the National Statistics and Census Institute (*Seccion de Cartografia, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo*) which falls under the Panamanian Comptroller General's office[11]. Academic sources, such as the Panamerican Institute of Geography and History (*Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia*), and the University of Panama (*Universidad de Panamá*), may be used, in addition to UN and US government agencies. However, these sources are not considered authoritative unless they contain a caveat that the information contained was produced for the Panamanian government.

a.   *Preferred Sources*

The following list of preferred sources is not all-inclusive, but it highlights the best sources for geographic name selection.

1:250,000 scale maps *Panamá*, Series E562, Sheets 1-12 *(Bocas del Toro, David, Isla de Coiba, Donoso, Santiago, Chitré, Darién, Panamá, Golfo de Panamá, Ustupo, La Palma, Jaqué, Bahía de Panamá)*. *El Instituto Geográfico Nacional* "Tommy Guardia" (IGNTG). (1974-2003).

Other authoritative sources are listed below, although provinces demarcated on these sources do not include the newly created Panamá Oeste:

National Cartographic Atlas:
Atlas Nacional de la República de Panamá, El Instituto Geográfico Nacional Tommy Guardia (IGNTG), Panamá Ministerio de Obras Públicas. 2007. Available at the NGA Map Library.

Provincial Level (ADM1)
1:250,000 scale map, *División Política de La República de Panamá, por Provinicas y Comarcas*, *Año: 2010,* Sección de Cartografía, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo, Contraloria General de La República. http://www.contraloria.gob.pa/INEC/archivos/0.5547556Div_Politica.pdf

District Level (ADM2)

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[9] EFTA States Sign Free Trade Agreement with Costa Rica and Panama. European Free Trade Association (EFTA). 24 June 2013. URL: http://www.efta.int/free-trade/free-trade-news/2013-06-24-central-america (Accessed 24 May 2014)

[10] "Costa Rica-Panama Boundary" *International Boundary Study* No. 156, Office of the Geographer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, US Department of State. 2 July 1976.

[11] *Panamá en Mapas*, Contraloría General de la República de Panamá. http://www.contraloria.gob.pa/INEC/Mapas/Default.aspx (Accessed 9 December 2015)

1:250,000 scale map, *División Política de La República de Panamá, por Distritos, Año: 2010* Sección de Cartografía, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo, Contraloria General de La República. Available at http://www.contraloria.gob.pa/INEC/archivos/0.3232691Distrital.pdf

Additional series exist; however, they have not been procured for BGN use. These include,

1. 1:500,000 scale map *Mapa Político de la República*, El Instituto Geográfico Nacional "Tommy Guardia" (IGNTG). Available for purchase at http://ignpanama.anati.gob.pa/mproductosyservicios/mlistadoproductosservicios

2. 1:250,000 scale map, *Mapa General de la República de Panamá a Escala 1:250000* El Instituto Geográfico Nacional "Tommy Guardia" (IGNTG). Available for purchase at http://ignpanama.anati.gob.pa/mproductosyservicios/mlistadoproductosservicios

3. 1:500,000 scale map, *Mapa de la División Politica Administrativo 1:500 000* El Instituto Geográfico Nacional "Tommy Guardia" (IGNTG). Available for purchase at http://ignpanama.anati.gob.pa/mproductosyservicios/mlistadoproductosservicios

Appendix A. First-order Administrative Divisions of Panama

Original map from: Instituto Geográfico Nacional "Tommy Guardia" 2013. Unofficially edit in February 2015, to reflect new province Panamá Oeste per Law 119 of December 13, 2013. Everything else remains as the original map.