

Geographic Names Standardization Policy for The Bahamas

United States Board on Geographic Names
Foreign Names Committee



March 2022

1. Introduction

This geographic name standardization policy has been prepared as an aid to those geographic name experts who are the working staff for the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) in the standardization of the geographic names of **The Bahamas** 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 population of The Bahamas is estimated to be just under 390,000.¹ The largest ethnic group (90.6%) are those of African descent. White 4.7%, mixed 2.1%, other 1.9%, and unspecified 0.7% groups make up the balance of the population (2010 estimate). Over 95% of the population is affiliated with Christian religious groups (Protestant, Catholic and other). The remaining population claims other, none, or unspecified religious affiliation.²

b. Languages

English (ISO 639-3 code 'eng') is the official language. Haitian Creole (ISO 639-3 code 'hat') is spoken among Haitian immigrants.³

c. Geographic Names Standardization

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) web site does not list a national authority nor a point of contact for geographic names issues in The Bahamas.

3. Toponymic Policies

The Lucayan people (a branch of the Taino) were the indigenous inhabitants of what is now The Bahamas at the time of Columbus' arrival in 1492. A list of approximately 40 island names in what is believed to be Lucayan (in regularized Taino orthography) may

¹ The Bahamas Department of Statistics 2020 population projection of 389,410. Source: The Commonwealth of The Bahamas Population Projections 2010-2040, p.8: Microsoft Word - Final Population Projection Report 2010-2040_Toya.doc (bahamas.gov.bs).

² CIA World Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bahamas-the/>.

³ CIA World Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bahamas-the/>.

be found at http://www.thebahamasweekly.com/publish/bahamas-historical-society/Lucayan_Toponyms9510.shtml. These names have yet to be added to the GNDB.

a. Script and Orthography

Geographic names in The Bahamas are written in Roman script and orthography.

b. Romanization

Romanization is not necessary.

c. Diacritics

No diacritic marks are used in place names in The Bahamas.

d. Generic Terms

A generic is a term in a geographic name that describes a feature (e.g., 'river', 'hill', 'lake'). The generic term of a name typically precedes the specific term. If the term does not identify the actual feature, it should be considered a false generic and not be added to the generic field of the Geographic Names Database (GNDB). In The Bahamas, generic terms are typically English words.⁴

e. Hyphenation, Capitalization, and Spelling

The first letter of each word element, except for articles and prepositions is capitalized. British English spellings are found in words such as 'harbour.'

f. Long and short forms

Administrative division names are accorded long and short forms. Short-form names are ranked as the primary approved name and the long form as the secondary approved name. Short forms may also be found for islands.

g. Numbers

According to the BGN Numbers policy⁵, cardinal and ordinal numerals that occur in geographic names should usually be spelled out completely in BGN approved names.

⁴ The FNC staff does not capture English generics in the 'Generic Name' field of the Geographic Names Database (GNDB).

⁵ Approved at FNC meeting 406 (June 8, 2021).

4. Political Geography Policy

a. *Country Name*

Approved Long-form Name	Commonwealth of The Bahamas
Approved Short-form Name	The Bahamas

b. *Capital Name*

Approved Name	Nassau
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c. *First-order Administrative Divisions*

The Bahamas is composed of 31 districts. The districts serve as the local government unit and are the only level of administration below the national level. The island of New Providence, which contains approximately 70% of the country's population, is governed directly by the central government.⁶ The districts do not have identified seats (PPLA). At times, some towns are referred to as the capital of an island.

	Name	GEC	GENC
1	Acklins	BF24	BS-AK
2	Berry Islands	BF32	BS-BY
3	Bimini	BF05	BS-BI
4	Black Point	BF36	BS-BP
5	Cat Island	BF06	BS-CI
6	Central Abaco	BF37	BS-CO
7	Central Andros	BF38	BS-CS
8	Central Eleuthera	BF39	BS-CE
9	City of Freeport	BF25	BS-FP
10	Crooked Island and Long Cay	BF40	BS-CK
11	East Grand Bahama	BF41	BS-EG
12	Exuma	BF10	BS-EX
13	Grand Cay	BF42	BS-GC
14	Harbour Island	BF22	BS-HI
15	Hope Town	BF43	BS-HT
16	Inagua	BF13	BS-IN
17	Long Island	BF15	BS-LI
18	Mangrove Cay	BF44	BS-MC
19	Mayaguana	BF16	BS-MG
20	Moore's Island	BF45	BS-MI

⁶ New Providence (ISL) is assigned the GENC code of BS-NP.

	Name	GEC	GENC
21	North Abaco	BF46	BS-NO
22	North Andros	BF47	BS-NS
23	North Eleuthera	BF48	BS-NE
24	Ragged Island	BF18	BS-RI
25	Rum Cay	BF49	BS-RC
26	San Salvador	BF35	BS-SS
27	South Abaco	BF50	BS-SO
28	South Andros	BF51	BS-SA
29	South Eleuthera	BF52	BS-SE
30	Spanish Wells	BF53	BS-SW
31	West Grand Bahama	BF54	BS-WG

d. Conventional Names

Conventional Name	UFI	UNI	Designation
West Indies	-1544444	-2199263	ISLS

e. International Features

Name	UFI	UNI	Designation	Countries
Nicholas Channel	-1636229	-2305081	CHNM	BF, CU
Old Bahama Channel	-1636675	17202971	CHNM	BF, CU
West Indies	-1544444	-2199263	ISLS	AA, AC, AV, BB, BF, CJ, CU, DO, DR, GJ, GP, HA, JM, MB, MH, NL, NN, RN, RQ, SC, ST, TB, TD, TK, UC, VC, VE, VI, VQ

e. Unique Geopolitical Situations

For the latest country-specific boundary dispute information, consult the U.S. Department of State, Office of the Geographer and Global Issues <internationalboundaries@state.gov>

5. Source Material

The primary source of geographic names are the topographic maps published by The Bahamas Department of Lands and Surveys and hydrographic charts produced by the

U.K. Hydrographic Office. Much of the existing data was taken from U.K. topographic maps and hydrographic charts. The standard topographic map series are at the 1:10K and 1:25K-scale. Two 1:300K hydrographic charts cover the country. A 1:1M national map provides a good general base of the names of the most significant features.

The Bahamas National Geographic Information Systems Centre (<http://www.bahamas.gov.bs/bngisc>) could prove to be a useful source of maps and geographic names information. At last check, the site was not accessible.



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