

# Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Venezuela

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 Venezuelan geographic names 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, and are intended to satisfy the statutory requirements levied upon the U.S. Board on Geographic Names 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 in Venezuela

### *a. Demographics*

Venezuela has a population of over 26 million. The population consists mostly of the descendents of Europeans and indigenous peoples, and Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion.<sup>1</sup>

### *b. Languages*

Spanish (ISO 639-3 code: spn) is recognized as the official language of Venezuela. According to the constitution, indigenous languages are official in indigenous villages.<sup>2</sup>

Wayuu (ISO 639-3 code: guc) is the largest indigenous language group in Venezuela. There are some 170,000 speakers with an ethnic population of 300,000 in Zulia State and on the Guajira Peninsula. Several other examples of indigenous languages include: Warao (ISO 639-3 code: wba) with 28,100 speakers, Guahibo (ISO 639-3 code: guh) with 11,200 speakers.<sup>3</sup>

### *c. Geographic Names Standardization*

The Comisión Nacional de Nombres Geográficos (National Commission of Geographical Names) was created in April 1992 as the national authority for place name standardization in Venezuela. However, in the records of United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), the standardization authority is the national mapping agency—the Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar<sup>4</sup> (IGVSB - [www.igvsb.gov.ve](http://www.igvsb.gov.ve)), formerly known as the Dirección de Cartografía Nacional. The level of coordination between the Comisión Nacional de Nombres Geográficos and the the Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar is currently unknown. There is no indication that IGVSB has been active in recent years in the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).

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<sup>1</sup> “Venezuela.” *The CIA World Factbook*. “Venezuela.” *The CIA World Factbook*.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>. 16 Oct 2009. 4 Jan 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela: <http://www.venezuela-oas.org/Constitucion%20de%20Venezuela.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, M. Paul (ed.), 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International.

<sup>4</sup> Contact information for the institute can be found here:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/Names%20authoritiescontactsNov06.pdf>.

### 3. Toponymic Policies

#### a. *Orthography*

Spanish orthographic conventions are to be followed. For more information, please refer to Spanish orthographic reference material such as *Ortografía y ortotipografía des español actual* by José Martínez de Sousa (2004).

#### b. *Diacritics*

Diacritics are shown in standardized name forms as they appear on native sources and in accordance with Spanish orthography. Uppercase letters in standardized name forms retain diacritics.

In accordance with Spanish orthography, the following diacritics are encountered in standardized name forms in Venezuela:

<u>Character Name</u>	<u>Character</u>	<u>Unicode Value</u>
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 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
Small u with acute accent	ú	00FA
Small u with dieresis	ü	00FC

#### c. *Generic Terms*

A generic is a term that describes a feature. Examples include words such as ‘river,’ ‘hill,’ and ‘lake.’ Except in cases in which the generic type differs from the feature type, generics appearing in standardized name forms should be considered true generics. Otherwise, the term is considered to be a false generic and should not be collected as a generic. Generics are not collected for populated places in Venezuela.

The following is glossary of generic terms that one may encounter in Venezuela. Please note that this list is incomplete and only represents the most frequently occurring generics.

<u>Spanish Generic</u>	<u>Designation Name</u>	<u>Designation Code</u>
acequía, canal	canal	CNL
alto, cerro, cuchilla, morro, montaña, serranía, sierra	mountain	MT
alto, cerro, loma, morro	hills	HILL
arroyo, caño, morichal, quebrada, río	stream	STM
bahía	bay	BAY
banco	bank	BNK
boca	estuary	ESTY
boca, ensenada	inlet	INLT
bosque, selva	forest	FRST
cabo	cape	CAPE
caño	tidal creek	CRKT
ciénaga	marsh	MRSH
ciénaga, laguna	lagoon	LGN
cuchilla, fila, filo	ridge	RDGE
delta	delta	DLTA
embalse, represa	reservoir	RSV
ensenada	cove	COVE
estado, distrito capital	first-order administrative division	ADM1, state, capital district
estero	wetland	WTLD
estrecho	strait	STRT
golfo	gulf	GULF
isla, islote	island	ISL
lago	lake	LK
llano, sabana	plain	PLN
mesa	mesa	MESA
municipio	second-order administrative division	ADM2, municipality
parque, parque nacional	park	PRK
paso	pass	PASS
península	peninsula	PEN
picacho, pico	peak	PK
puente	bridge	BDG
puerto	harbor	HBR
punta	point	PT
rapido, salto	waterfall	FLLS
sabana	grassland	GRSLD
tepuy	mesa	MESA

#### ***d. Capitalization***

The definite article (*el, la, lo, los, las*) is generally shown in approved names as found on native sources. When source evidence regarding the capitalization of the definite article is mixed,

names of associated features, if present, will be examined to assist in the decision. When a name is encountered in all capital letters, a non-initial definite article will be in lower case when the standardized name form is derived. In the absence of conclusive evidence non-initial definite articles are written in lowercase letters in the standardized name form.

***e. Numbers***

Names containing numerals as integral parts, both cardinal and ordinal, should be treated according to the following principles:

- Arabic numerals are expanded in Spanish. Examples: *4 Caminos* (on source) is rendered *Cuatro Caminos*; *2da Palma* (on source) is rendered *Segunda Palma*.
- Roman numerals are retained throughout.
- These principles apply to both initial and non-initial numerals.

***f. Optional Long and Short Forms***

Administrative division names are accorded long and short forms, e.g., Estado Aragua [long form]; Aragua [short form].

Long and short forms of names of populated places are approved when supported by official evidence, e.g., El Valle del Espíritu Santo [long form]; El Valle [short form].

Railroad station names that appear on official sources with the generic term *estación* are given long and short forms as supported by the evidence. Example: Estación Boca de Siquire [long form]; Boca de Siquire [short form].

Where official maps show more than one populated place with the same name in the same state, a special effort is to be made to obtain distinguishing long forms from census lists and other official sources.

***g. Unique Linguistic Situations***

*Names containing the conjunction "o"*

Some sources may show two or more names for a feature joined by the conjunction "o," meaning "or" (e.g., Río Rojo o Colorado). For the purposes of standardization, only one name will be selected as the official standard name. The choice of name as standard will depend on weight of evidence. If no conclusive evidence is available, the first name will be selected. In accordance with standard policy, the other names for the feature will be considered variants.

***h. Abbreviations***

The following is a list of abbreviations of generics which are regularly found on Venezuelan cartographic products. Abbreviations must be spelled out in the Geographic Names Database.

<u>Abbreviated form</u>	<u>Unabbreviated Form</u>
A.	Arroyo
B.	Bahía

Bco.	Banco
Bo.	Boca
C.	Cabo, Cayo, or Cerro
Co.	Cerro
Ca.	Cañada
Cdon.	Cordón
Cem.	Cementerio
Clla.	Cuchilla
Cord.	Cordillera
Dpto.	Departamento
Ensa.	Ensenada
Esc.	Escuela
Est.	Estación, Estero
Fte.	Fuerte
G.	Golfo
Hac.	Hacienda
I(s).	Isla(s)
Ilte(s).	Islote(s)
L.	Loma
L., Lag.	Lago or Laguna
Mo.	Morro
Mte.	Monte
Nvdo.	Nevado
P.	Playa, Presa, or Pico
Pco.	Pico
Pen.	Península
Pta.	Punta
Pte.	Puente
Pto.	Puerto
Pvcia.	Provincia
Q., Queb., Qda.	Quebrada
R.	Río
Reg.	Región
S.	Sierra
Serr.	Serranía
V.	Valle, Volcán

## 4. Political Geography Policy

### *a. Country Name and Capital*

#### *Country Name*

Conventional long form:	Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
Conventional short form:	Venezuela
Local official long form:	República Bolivariana de Venezuela
Local official short form:	Venezuela

*Capital*

Approved name: Caracas

***b. First-order Administrative Divisions***

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Generic</u>	<u>Seat</u>	<u>FIPS 10-4</u>	<u>ISO 3166-2</u>
1.	Amazonas	estado	Puerto Ayacucho	VE01	VE-Z
2.	Anzoátegui	estado	Barcelona	VE02	VE-B
3.	Apure	estado	San Fernando de Apure	VE03	VE-C
4.	Aragua	estado	Maracay	VE04	VE-D
5.	Barinas	estado	Barinas	VE05	VE-E
6.	Bolívar	estado	Ciudad Bolívar	VE06	VE-F
7.	Carabobo	estado	Valencia	VE07	VE-G
8.	Cojedes	estado	San Carlos	VE08	VE-H
9.	Delta Amacuro	estado	Tucupita	VE09	VE-Y
10.	Dependencias Federales			VE24	VE-W
11.	Distrito Capital	distrito capital	Caracas	VE25	VE-A
12.	Falcón	estado	Coro	VE11	VE-I
13.	Guárico	estado	San Juan de los Morros	VE12	VE-J
14.	Lara	estado	Barquisimeto	VE13	VE-K
15.	Mérida	estado	Mérida	VE14	VE-L
16.	Miranda	estado	Los Teques	VE15	VE-M
17.	Monagas	estado	Maturín	VE16	VE-N
18.	Nueva Esparta	estado	La Asunción	VE17	VE-O
19.	Portuguesa	estado	Guanare	VE18	VE-P
20.	Sucre	estado	Cumaná	VE19	VE-R
21.	Táchira	estado	San Cristóbal	VE20	VE-S
22.	Trujillo	estado	Trujillo	VE21	VE-T
23.	Vargas	estado	La Güaira	VE26	VE-X
24.	Yaracuy	estado	San Felipe	VE22	VE-U
25.	Zulia	estado	Maracaibo	VE23	VE-V

***c. Disputed Territories***

Note: For the latest country specific boundary dispute information, visit the U.S. Department of State's Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia, or B.A.S.E., at <http://base.us-state.osis.gov/>.

### *International Disputes*

Venezuela has a dispute with Guyana regarding the territory west of the Essequibo River. The disputed area accounts for 62% of Guyanese territory.<sup>5</sup> (See Appendix B for a political map of Venezuela showing the “zona en reclamación.”) There is also a managed dispute with Venezuela over maritime boundary and Venezuelan-administered Los Monjes Islands near the Gulf of Venezuela.<sup>6</sup>

### *Domestic Disputes*

Territorial disputes exist between the following first-order administrative divisions<sup>7</sup> (See Appendix B for a political map of Venezuela showing the domestic disputed territories):

- Falcón and Yaracuy
- Cojedes and Portuguesa
- Lara and Portuguesa
- Falcón, Lara, Trujillo, and Zulia
- Merida and Zulia
- Táchira, Merida and Zulia

Features within the disputed areas will receive the administrative code VE99.

The Library of Congress’s Venezuela Country Policy provides the following description of Venezuela’s international territorial disputes:

“Venezuela has territorial disputes with both its western and eastern South American neighbors. Colombia and Venezuela dispute substantial maritime territory lying off the Guajira Peninsula and in the Golfo de Venezuela (Gulf of Venezuela). Although this dispute is being resolved through bilateral negotiations, elements of national prestige have made it a national issue in both countries in recent decades. Venezuela claims two-thirds of Guyana, or all of the 146,000-square-kilometer area lying west of the Essequibo, Guyana’s longest river, which runs north to the Atlantic Ocean and provides a natural dividing line through the small, English-speaking enclave. This claim precludes any discussion of a maritime boundary with Guyana. In October 1999, in response to Guyana’s granting of oil and mineral contracts to foreign companies to operate in the Essequibo region, Venezuela’s legislature voided the 1899 Tribunal of Arbitration Treaty that determined boundaries between the two countries.

“Venezuela also has a territorial dispute with Dominica and its Eastern Caribbean neighbors—Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines—over Aves (Bird) Island, which is located 568 kilometers north of Venezuela and 113 kilometers

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<sup>5</sup> James, Patrick. Externalization of Conflict: Testing a Crisis-Based Model. *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*. Vol. 20, No. 3 (Sept 1987), p. 583-584.

For more information of the dispute’s historical backgrounds, refer to the following publication : Davies, John. Guyana – Venezuela Border Conflict. Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland. <<http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/pic/initiatives/guyana-venezuela/guyana~2.pdf>>. Accessed: 28 Feb 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Colombia. Transnational Issues. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/co.html>> 17 Nov 2010.

Colombia: Learning the Foreign Policy Process. Rekonja-Kornat, Gerhard. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*. Vol 25, No 2 (May 1983).

Realism and Internationalism in the Gulf of Venezuela. George, Larry N. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*. Vol 30, No 4 (Winter 1988-1989).

<sup>7</sup> Disputed territories are depicted in maps produced by Venezuela’s mapping agency.



west of Dominica. France, the Netherlands, and the United States recognize Venezuela's claim that the 0.35-square-kilometer isle sustains human habitation and therefore creates a Venezuelan exclusive economic zone/continental shelf extending over a large portion of the Caribbean Sea."<sup>8</sup>

## 5. Source Material

### *a. Preferred Sources*

The following is a listing of source material, prioritized according to recommended usage for geographic name selection. Other Venezuelan government and private agencies may produce useful sources as well.

1. 1:100,000-scale map series, 1980-1992, Dirección de Cartografía Nacional.
2. Map series of various scales, 1980's and 1990's, Dirección de Cartografía Nacional and other government agencies.
3. 1:250,000-scale map series, 1980's, Dirección de Cartografía Nacional and other government and private agencies.
4. 1:2,000,000-scale map of Venezuela, 2000, Servicio Autónomo de Geografía y Cartografía Nacional.
5. Gacetilla Digital de Nombres Geográficos de Venezuela, Servicio Autónomo de Geografía y Cartografía Nacional, 1995.
6. 1:2,000,000-scale map of Venezuela, 1989, Dirección de Cartografía Nacional.
7. Atlas de Venezuela, 1979, Dirección de Cartografía Nacional.

### *b. Other Sources*

1. BGN Gazetteer of Venezuela, 1993.
2. Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar Website: [www.igvsb.gov.ve](http://www.igvsb.gov.ve)
3. Ethnologue. [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=VE](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=VE)
4. CIA World Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>
5. Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Political Division Maps. [http://www.igvsb.gov.ve/web2010/vistas/mapas\\_div.php](http://www.igvsb.gov.ve/web2010/vistas/mapas_div.php)

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<sup>8</sup> Library of Congress – Federal Research Division Country Profile: Venezuela, March 2005. <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Venezuela.pdf>