

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 23, 2015

Mr. Lou Yost  
Executive Secretary  
United States Board on Geographic Names  
523 National Center  
Reston, VA 20192

Dear Executive Secretary Yost:

With the recent announcement that the National Park Service (NPS) will recommend recognition and acceptance of the State of Washington's naming of Howard Lake, we write to urge the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) to act expeditiously to recognize and implement this change.

In 2007, the Washington State Committee on Geographic Names voted unanimously to change the name of the fifteen acre lake located in the Stehekin Valley of the North Cascade mountain range and contained within the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area from "Coon Lake" to Howard Lake. This change was made in recognition of Wilson Howard, an African American prospector who staked mining claims around the lake approximately 125 years ago.

During the state board's review of the proposal to change the name, it was agreed that renaming the lake was a better way to remember Mr. Howard and his connection to the lake, and would stop enshrining the prior name of the lake, which is widely considered a racial slur. After the lake's name was changed by Washington State, the notification of the change was sent to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN).

We were pleased to learn recently that the National Park Service would support this name change. After eight years pending before the federal government, and given the widespread support by a range of citizens, local groups, property owners, and the Chelan County Board of Commissioners, it is important that BGN act expeditiously to finalize this name change.

Washington State already recognizes Howard Lake as the lake's proper name on its maps and official records and it is well past time that the federal government follows the state's lead to stop prolonging the use of a racial term on federal lands and instead recognize the unique and proud heritage of the area.

We urge the BGN to right this wrong and make our national lands welcoming to all people.

Sincerely,

  
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Dave Reichert  
Member of Congress

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Adam Smith  
Member of Congress