

New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa

The memorial markers of the landscape

The New Zealand Geographic Board is New Zealand’s national place naming authority, responsible for official place names.

We run a public process to decide what places should be called—recognising the relationship we have with the land and its connection with our identity.

The New Zealand Geographic Board:

- has a responsibility to safeguard the geographic naming traditions, culture and heritage brought to New Zealand by its various communities;
- ensures its geographic naming work contributes to a geographic information system that provides economic, cultural, and social value to all New Zealanders;
- is steward (kaitiaki) and custodian of New Zealand’s official geographic names;
- is principal adviser to the New Zealand government on geographic names (official and unofficial) - especially to Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand, Te Arawhiti (the Office for Māori Crown Relations) and the Department of Conservation;
- consults with New Zealanders to take account of their views in its decision making;
- ensures its decision making and advisory capabilities are deployed where they can most benefit the longer term interests of New Zealand;
- ensures its decision making is independent and based on robust processes



Why are geographic names important to New Zealanders?

- There are long term benefits to the nation - practical, administrative, social, cultural and historical - including national or cultural identity
- A geographic name is a fundamental part of address, along with road name and property number. Therefore, unique and usable geographic names form a key purpose to locate people and property, contributing to efficient government administration and linking data for a wide range of public and private purposes

Why have official place names?

- To provide practical, unambiguous, fundamental and unique location identification and navigation for the physical landscape we live in
- To recognise heritage and culture - to give a sense of place
- To provide a reliable and authoritative source for standardised, consistent and accurate names
- To demonstrate New Zealand’s jurisdictional interests
- To provide a fundamental data theme for geospatial data layers
- To ensure consistency in the use of place names
- To identify where we are as we go about our everyday business - they are a component of our infrastructure, and most importantly they matter in emergency responses
- To ensure that important names are preserved and restored

What is the standard proposal process?

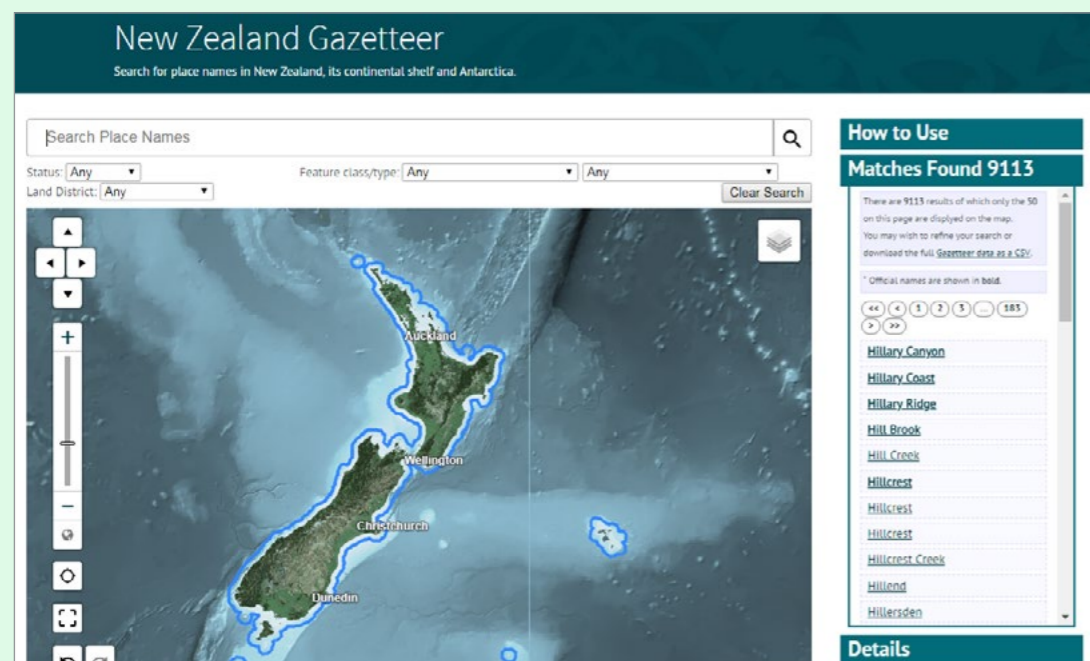


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What does the Board name?

- Places where people live, such as suburbs, town, localities and cities
- Physical geographic features of the landscape, whether natural or man-made
- Historic places where events occurred
- Undersea features on New Zealand's continental shelf
- Antarctic features in the Ross Dependency
- Crown protected areas (Department of Conservation reserves). If the Board does not concur then the Minister of Conservation makes the final decision
- Territorial Authority districts and regions



The New Zealand Gazetteer app

What does the Minister for Land Information need to do?

- Make final decisions on place name proposals when they're referred by the Board
- Receive the Board's Annual Report for tabling in the House
- Be the media spokesperson for controversial place name decisions
- Get advice from the Board on matters to do with official place names
- For local authority District and Region name alterations, recommend to the Governor General to amend the name of the relevant local authority to give effect to the alteration
- Appoint eight of the ten Board members:
 - four nominated by Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, New Zealand Geographical Society Inc, Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ Inc and Local Government New Zealand
 - two recommended by the Minister for Māori Development
 - two others of the Minister for Land Information's choice

Other Ministers who decide official place names:

- Minister of Conservation for Crown protected area names
- Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations for Treaty names

What is the Treaty Names process?

1. Proposal received

Te Arawhiti (the Office for Māori Crown Relations) gathers the required information from the claimant group and submits the Treaty name proposal to the Board. The story associated with the name is essential to determine correct orthography.

2. Review

Te Arawhiti (the Office for Māori Crown Relations) is advised of any immediate concerns.

3. Research

The Board Secretariat researches the history of any existing place names.

4. The Board consideration

The Board's recommendations are made to Te Arawhiti (the Office for Māori Crown Relations).

5. Final decision

The Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations makes the final decisions on name changes and restored names included in a list in the Deed Settlement. Settlement legislation is enacted making them official.

6. Post settlement

Official Treaty names are published in the *New Zealand Gazette* and newspapers. They are also added to the Board's Gazetteer. Treaty names are protected from future changes.



The Board

Anselm Haanen
Chairperson, Surveyor-General, ex-officio

Adam Greenland
National Hydrographer, Land Information New Zealand, ex-officio

Paulette Tamati-Elliffe
Nominated by Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu

Robin Kearns
Nominated by New Zealand Geographical Society Inc

Iaian Cranwell
Nominated by Local Government New Zealand

Cadence Kaumoana
Nominated by the Minister for Māori Development

Mahana Toka
Nominated by the Minister for Māori Development

Merata Kawharu
Appointed by the Minister for Land Information

Jenni Vernon
Appointed by the Minister for Land Information

Mick Abbott
Nominated by the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand

The Secretariat

Wendy Shaw
Secretary, Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand

Joanna Barnes-Wylie
Senior Advisor – Treaty Names, Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand

Ariarne Davy
Advisor, Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand

Christopher Stephens
Advisor, Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand

(the Secretariat researches, liaises, consults, engages and advises)

Committees/Komiti

Undersea Feature Names Committee Antarctic Names Committee

Komiti Taunahatanga Māori Updated March 2025