

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names' (BGN) Advisory Committee on Undersea Features (ACUF) since 1962 has mandated the seafloor names worldwide for use by all employees and agencies of the U.S. government. Composed of agency scientists and geographical specialists, the committee meets as necessary (commonly four or five times yearly at the Defense Mapping Agency in Washington, D.C.) to deliberate on proposed or contested or already-published-but-unreviewed names. Proceedings are noted; at intervals the Board's compiled decisions are promulgated in BGN gazetteers — most recently, *Gazetteer of Undersea Features*, third edition, Defense Mapping Agency, Washington, D.C. — that set forth criteria and serve as source documents. ACUF ideally works from historically impeccable proposals submitted to it in an orderly way prior to outside dissemination of a name; much more often it is responding in a magisterial role to queries and controversies. Many U.S. 'civilian' marine scientists don't or won't recognize the writ of such a group. Some are on an ego trip or a paper-of-the-week schedule and just can't be bothered; others choose to use names to make career goodie points or to 'immortalize' their children or mates or current guiding stars.

On the international side, and not subject to government control, is the Monaco-based General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) organization founded at the beginning of this century. It too has a scientifically oriented panel — currently one each from Brazil, France, New Zealand, the Soviet Union, and the United States — charged with historical awareness and the solicitation, researching, and reviewing of proposals for all the names that may appear now or in the future on the 18 1:10,000,000 GEBCO world bathymetric charts and on similar series published by member hydrographic agencies. Mostly it must work by mail, with an occasional clearing-house session in Monaco; in the interim it stays in close contact with BGN/ACUF, with which it very occasionally agrees to disagree.

In this matter of offhand naming and the graceless result, editors of journals such as *Geology*, as well as other literary/scientific arbiters, can be of immediate benefit to the profession. A short statement or admonition in the instructions for contributors to journals, backed up with the informed flexing of editorial muscle in the cause of coherence, nonproliferation, and good taste would be most helpful. Specifically, *Geology* authors could be requested most strongly to make out the proposal/documentation for each name of submarine features they have 'discovered' and/or 'named' in their paper and send it through either the U.S. Board on Geographic Names' Advisory Committee on Undersea Features or the GEBCO subcommittee. Given suitable, not exhaustive, documentation and reasonable preparation by staff, panel decisions can be made at a sitting (ACUF) or by a similar date by the far-flung GEBCO subcommittee. If authors knew this was the drill, they — or their associates — could prepare and submit such a proposal while writing the manuscript and designing the illustrations, somewhat prior to speeding the paper off to *Geology*, say, for publication. Lack of a timely decision by either nomenclature panel would not hold up publication of a scientifically acceptable manuscript. Such a practice could encourage a becoming humility, some historical enrichment and perspective, and a heartening sense of the continuity in contribution in today's explorers pioneering on — or, with satellites, hundreds of kilometres above — an apparently trackless sea.

For the record, the contacts for those panels are:

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