

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND CONSERVATION



JUDY MARTZ, GOVERNOR

1625 ELEVENTH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE (406) 444-2074
FAX: (406) 444-2684

PO BOX 201601
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

August 9, 2004

Mr. Roger L. Payne
Executive Secretary
U.S. Board on Geographic Names
U.S. Geological Survey
523 National Center
Reston, Virginia 20192-0523

Handwritten note:
17 August

Dear Mr. Payne:

This is in response to a proposal before the U.S. Board on Geographic Names to rename Saint Regis Pass, a pass which lies on the Montana/North Idaho border. The proponent, a Mr. Paul McDermott, is asking that the name be changed to Sohon Pass, which is in keeping with its original designation. The Trust Land Management Division of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation supports this name change; Water Resources is also showing some interest, albeit reserved. (see enclosures)

However, we are reminded by your transmittal to the proponent (6-11-03) that historical precedence is not, in and of itself, sufficient reason for a name change. In contrast to the aforementioned evidence of support, there seems to be a lacking of acceptance at the local level. Interestingly, while the proponent reasons that there is no local opposition to the proposal; in fact, Mineral County does oppose this placename change (see enclosure). McDermott would also have us believe Sohon Pass is, and has been in local usage for the past 153 years. This stands in contrast to the current placename (Saint Regis Pass) which has been recognized as the name for that geographic feature for at least one hundred or more years.

Further, it is our understanding that the U.S. Forest Service has some specific anxiety with this proposal. If indeed this is correct, it only underscores the concern we have relative to its approval. While we acknowledge that support versus non-support for this proposal may appear to be neutralizing; nonetheless, it is our belief the proponent relies heavily and almost exclusively upon the effort to redress an historical inaccuracy without the benefit of broad local support. Thus he ignores, or at the very least fails to recognize significant elements of contemporary local and regional opinion. (*his only apparent independent support comes from a descendant of Sohon and a mining museum in Idaho*)

As a footnote to these considerations, is there not called into question a sense of propriety as a result of Ron Grim's collaboration and association with the proponent? I frankly don't know the answer; I'm only asking the question. However, I do believe the BOGN should decide on appropriateness, if indeed it has not already done so.

Finally, in view of the apparent mixed review toward this proposal, as well as the long-standing official credence ascribed to Saint Regis Pass; the State of Montana respectfully asks that the adoption of Sohon Pass, 'sans possessive' or otherwise, not be approved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "DC Howard".

Donald C. Howard
Department of Natural Resources
and Conservation

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HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

August 5, 2003

Re: 'Sohon Pass'

This is in reference to a geographic placename change proposal located in Mineral County along the Montana-Idaho border. Currently listed as Saint Regis Pass; a proposal to change the name to Sohon Pass. As per a phone call to this office on August 5, 2003 from Commissioner Judy Stang; in which, Commissioner Stang indicated the Mineral County Commission is opposed to this namechange. Any further inquiry should be directed to:

Board of County Commissioners
Mineral County
300 River Street
P. O. Box 550
Superior, Montana 59715-4576

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. C. Howard".

Donald C. Howard
Montana Department of Natural Resources
and Conservation

Memorandum

To: Tom Schultz, Administrator
Trust Land Management Division

From: Donald Howard
Information Services Section, DNRC

Date: October 10, 2003

Re: U.S. Board on Geographic Names (Sohon Pass)

Enclosed please find a proposed geographic placename change for a site in Mineral County. If you or your division personnel could offer an opinion as to this proposed change, I would appreciate your assistance.

Thank you for your consideration.

- Not Opposed to Name Proposal (documentation optional)
- Opposed to Name Proposal (please document below)
- Support Name Proposal (please document below)

Signature



Date

10/14/03

To: Cindy Forgey, DNRC - WKD - cc. Bill Mussalla RD

Memorandum

To: Jack Stults, Administrator
Water Resources Division

From: Donald Howard
Information Services Section, DNRC

Date: October 10, 2003

Re: U.S. Board on Geographic Names (Sohon Pass)

Enclosed please find a proposed geographic placename change for a site in Mineral County. If you or your division personnel could offer an opinion as to this proposed change, I would appreciate your assistance.

Thank you for your consideration.

- Not Opposed to Name Proposal (documentation optional)
- Opposed to Name Proposal (please document below)
- Support Name Proposal (please document below)

Signature



Date

10/10/03