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July 27, 2011

Mr. Lou Yost
Executive Secretary
Domestic Names Committee
United States Board on Geographic Names
523 National Center
Reston, VA 20192-0523

Dear Mr. Yost,

As Montana's State Geographic Names Authority, I recommend that the Domestic Names Committee should reject the proposal from Review List 405 to name a peak in Glacier County, Montana as "Yenne Peak".

The Montana State Library released a public notice regarding this proposal for a new peak name. Several newspapers published articles about it. We received thirty-six messages in support of the name. Nineteen of these messages, including one with fifteen signatures, were from people who identified themselves as acquaintances or relatives of Mr. Yenne. The messages generally support the proposal based on Mr. Yenne's many years of service to Glacier National Park, his legendary knowledge of and love for the park, and his earnestness in sharing his knowledge.

We received fifteen messages in opposition to the proposal. These messages cited the BGN and Park Service rules against naming wilderness features, expressed beliefs that features in Glacier National Park should only be named after Native Americans or something more generic than a single person, or suggested that there have been many park employees who deserve such recognition and the acceptance of this proposal may open the floodgates for other proposals.

The Glacier County Commission is opposed to the proposal. The chairman of the commission wrote:

The people I have talked to about this name find it offensive to the special meaning these mountain peaks have for the Blackfeet. They have been central to Blackfeet history and culture for thousands of years. To name it after someone who is not associated with the Blackfeet would continue an insult that has been a part of Glacier Parks history in Blackfeet Country. I say give it a Blackfeet name only.

Supporters of the proposal have criticized the BGN policy discouraging the creation of new names in wilderness areas and the application of the policy to the proposal's location in Glacier National Park, which is managed as wilderness but has not received official wilderness designation. George Ostrom, a prominent journalist and staff member of the

congressional committee that created the 1964 Wilderness Act, claims that Congress did not intend that unnamed features in wilderness areas should not be given names.

The BGN wilderness policy says “a fundamental characteristic of elemental wilderness is that features are nameless”, but it does not justify this statement or say how the application of names to features diminishes the primitive quality of a wilderness.

If this proposal were for a peak outside of an area of special significance to one of our continent’s First Nations, I believe I may have supported it. I have no doubt that it would be approved if it were outside of a National Park and wilderness. There are many features inside Glacier Park named after people with far less connection to the land than Mr. Yenne, and we continue to give names to features outside the Park to commemorate people who are no more deserving than Mr. Yenne.

I believe the State of Montana should oppose the proposal because it has been opposed by the county commission on the grounds that the commission perceives it as an insult to the Blackfeet Nation.

A summary of the correspondence we received as a result of our public notice is available at http://msl.mt.gov/geonames/comments/40502_Yenne_Peak.zip

Sincerely Yours,

Gerald J Daumiller
Montana State Library