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"Salish Sea:" WA inland waters name now official

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By InvestigateWest

The Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Strait of Georgia will collectively be known as the Salish Sea by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

The Bellingham resident who proposed the name change hopes that recognizing those 5,500 square miles of inland waters as a cohesive ecosystem will lead to enhanced protection of the Salish Sea as an internationally significant natural resource.

The name Salish Sea pays homage to the Coast Salish peoples who've lived on the shores of the waters from Olympia to Desolation Sound for thousands upon thousands of years. None of the passageways' existing names are to be changed.

The naming board's website is rather wonky so I've reposted their reasons for the rename in their entirety below:

> ***WASHINGTON***

> ***Salish Sea**: bay; 5,500 square miles; extends from the mouth of the Strait of Juan de Fuca eastward and northward to include Puget Sound and Georgia Strait, and their associated bays, coves, and inlets; Clallam County, Jefferson County, Island County, San Juan County, King County, Kitsap County, Pierce County, Snohomish County, Skagit County, Whatcom County, Thurston County, and Mason County, Washington; 49°00'00"N, 123°00'00"W; USGS map – Point Roberts 1:24,000 (center);*

> *Not: Sqelateses, Western Sea.*

> *http://geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gnis538/getgooglecoor?p_lat=49.000000&p_longi=-123.000000*

> *Proposal: new name for an unnamed feature*

> *Map: USGS Point Roberts 1:24,000 (center)*

> *Proponent: Bert Webber; Bellingham, WA*

> *Administrative area: Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge, Protection Island National*

> *Wildlife Refuge, San Juan Islands National Wildlife Refuge*

> *Previous BGN Action: None*

> *Names associated with feature:*

> *GNIS: No record*

> *Local Usage: Salish Sea (Friday Harbor Whale Museum; Padilla Bay National Estuarine*

> *Research Reserve; Western Washington University; Salish Sea Expeditions; the SeaDoc*

> *Society; People for Puget Sound; numerous organizations)*

> *Published: Salish Sea (Puget Sound Georgia Basin Research Conference, 2005, 2007,*

> *2009; Puget Sound Action Committee; The SeaDoc Society; Indian Country, 2008; Coast*

> *Salish Gathering 2008; Orcas, Eagles and Kings (Yates, 1992; AAA Travel magazine*

2007; Wikipedia; The Vancouver Province, 2007; Island Tides, 2008; American Cetacean

Society, 2007; The Casual Naturalist's Guide to the Salish Sea, 1999; Salish Sea: A Handbook for Educators, Parks Canada, 2005; Islands in the Salish Sea: A Community Atlas, 2005); others)

Case Summary: This proposal is to make official the name Salish Sea for an approximately 5,500 square mile body of water in the State of Washington and the Province of British Columbia. The inland bay extends from Olympia in the south, northward to the general vicinity of Campbell River.

It comprises the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Puget Sound, and Georgia Strait, and their associated bays, coves, and inlets, but would not impact or change any of those existing names. The proposal for Salish Sea was submitted by the Washington Board on Geographic Names on behalf of a resident of Bellingham, who states, "Georgia Strait, Puget Sound, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca together form an unnamed estuarine inland sea. This inland sea is an ecological entity different from the Pacific Ocean to the west of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the marine waters to the north of Georgia Strait. The inland sea and its shorelines support valuable resources that are used by over 7 million people living on and close to its shorelines. The governments of British Columbia and Washington State recognize as a priority the cooperative management of these resources." Further, "Recognizing that the Salish Sea is an integral unit will help us understand the ecological functions that are the foundations of its natural resources. Having a name will help us identify more clearly and

> *manage more effectively this ecological entity we call home," and, "Because of the international boundary that runs through the Salish Sea relatively few maps exist." The proponent continues, "Resource managers in Washington State, tribal governments, British Columbia and First Nation governments are responding to the degradation of the Salish Sea. Collaborative initiatives between these governmental entities are designed to halt [this] degradation and to restore its natural resources. These government groups now use the name Salish Sea to describe their study area. Officially naming the Salish Sea will promote and support these resource management initiatives."*

> *"The Salish Sea is used by people involved withresearch, education, resource management, the arts and commerce." Finally, "The tribes of Washington State and First Nations of British Columbia that live on or close to the Salish Sea are historically connected by language and are considered Coast Salish or Salish Straits people."*

> *There is some evidence that some Native peoples living in the area referred to part of the Georgia Strait as Sqelateses, but no formal proposal for that name has been submitted. In the 1950s the Coast and Geodetic Survey uncovered some local usage of the name Western Sea, but it was not widely adopted. In 1988, the Washington State Board received a proposal to change the name of Puget Sound to The Wulj, another Native name (also spelled Whulje or Whulj), but citing a lack of widespread use or support, it was not given formal consideration.*

> *An online search for the name Salish Sea has yielded considerable local and regional use of the name already. These range from the Friday Harbor Whale Museum; the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research*

Reserve; and Western Washington University, to local maritime organizations and groups focused on coastal issues, such as Salish Sea Expeditions; the SeaDoc Society; People for Puget Sound; and the Puget Sound Partnership. Publications that refer to the name are also numerous, including those of the Puget Sound Georgia Basin Research Conference, the Puget Sound Action Committee; AAA Travel magazine, Indian Country, 2008, and Parks Canada. The Coast Salish Gathering of 2008 referred to the name in numerous situations, and many Federal agencies affiliated with that event mentioned the name. These include NOAA, USGS, EPA, FWS, A 2009 Department of the Interior press release announced that the Secretary of the Interior had presented a "Partners in Conservation Award to the Coast Salish-USGS Tribal Journey Water Quality Project for their work in the Salish Sea, Puget Sound and Georgia Basin." A Coast Salish gathering, hosted in 2005 by the Swinomish Office of Planning and Community Development, focused on "the sustainability of the Salish Sea Region."

Because of the bay's location in both the U.S. and Canada, and the existence of a Transboundary Agreement between both nations, the naming authorities of the U.S. and Canada, as well as those of the State of Washington and British Columbia, agreed to jointly conduct research and solicit input from interested parties. This effort was led by the British Columbia Provincial Names Office, which compiled a list of local municipalities, tribal and First Nation groups, regional, State, and Provincial offices, and Federal agencies that might have an interest in the proposal. Approximately 200 letters of inquiry were sent, with a request that comments be submitted in time for the August 2009 Geographical Names Board of Canada meeting. 29 responses in favor of the name were received.

Three letters of objection were submitted, and 16 organizations indicated they were neutral on the issue. Those who opposed the proposal did not offer specific reasons, other than one office that questioned the "huge expense" and the lack of a compelling need for the name. Local governments which expressed support include the Island County Board of Commissioners, the San Juan County Council, and the Pierce County Council. The Ecology Manager for the Washington Department of Ecology, the Island County Historical Society, the Kitsap County Historical Society, and the Skagit County Historical Museum also recommend approval. Tribal groups that responded in favor of the name include the Business Council of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; the Shoalwater Bay Tribe; the Stillaguamish Tribe of Washington; the Suquamish Indian Tribe of the Port Madison Reservation, and the Swinomish Indians of the Swinomish Reservation. It was noted that the name "acknowledges the traditions of the region's Salish speakers" and "[it is] important to recognize the connectivity of the ecosystem."

In addition to the solicited comments, three dozen individuals provided input, comprising 30 who endorsed the name and five who are opposed. Negative comments ranged from "[the] name is made up; no cultural relevance; motivated by [political correctness]; not a "sea"; a diversion from the real effort," to "not necessary to change names." Recent media coverage of the issue seems to suggest there is still some confusion as to whether the proposal constitutes a name change or a new name, but those who support the name recognize that it would be a new collective name for a feature that has never been named officially.

> *The Washington State Board has also received numerous letters of support for the proposal, ranging from local residents, boaters, and fishermen, to a USGS geologist, a representative of the Washington State Department of Ecology/Marine Monitoring Unit, the Executive Director of the Friday Harbor Whale Museum, and a Parks Interpretive Specialist at Lime Kiln Point State Park, The State has also received several letters of objection, most objecting to any effort to change longstanding existing names. Others suggest the name is simply an effort to be "politically correct," or they believe that the lack of a name for the body of water thus far confirms that no name is needed now.*

> *The British Columbia Names Office, in recommending approval of the name "in principle," cited the fact that "Salish Sea is already in common use among resource management professionals; is already in general public use; has been endorsed by the Coast Salish Gathering, a regional tribal organization; has generated positive public feedback, and would not alter existing names." The Geographical Names Board of Canada also voted "in principle" to approve the name, although will defer any formal announcement until after the BGN renders its decision.*

> *Several Federal agencies have sought and obtained input from their regional offices. NOAA received 24 responses, with 11 opposed ("unnecessary confusion if/when existing names are changed") and 13 in favor ("name is well known and used"). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers both indicated no objection to the name.*

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AUTHOR

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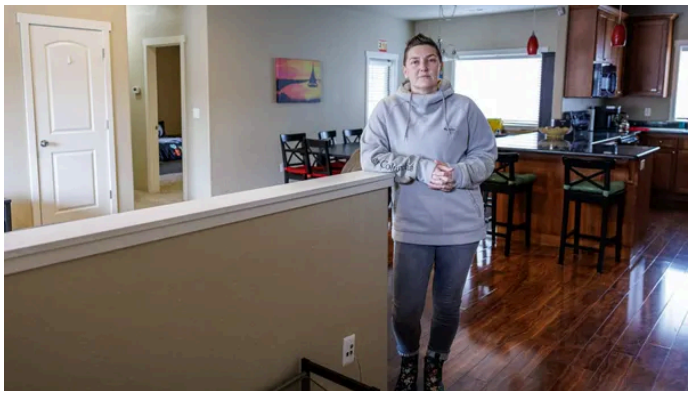
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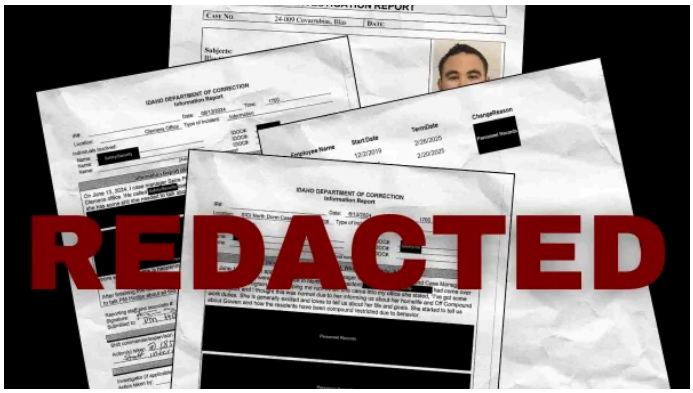


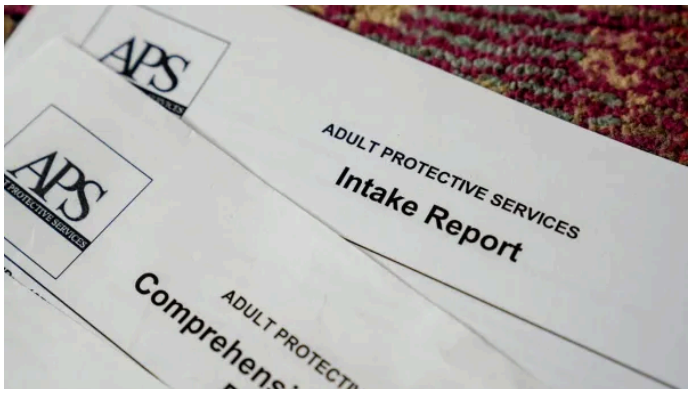


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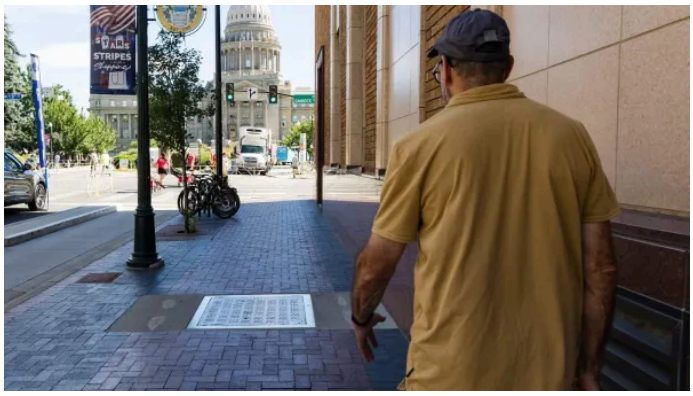
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