



Scott R. Mason
Executive Director

New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

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May 25, 2023

Mr. Kenneth Gallager, Principal Planner
Office of Planning and Development
Department of Business and Economic Affairs
100 North Main Street, Suite 100
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Mr. Gallager,

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department would be opposed to changing the name of Mount Washington and Baker River. First and foremost, the agency is opposed due to safety concerns. As the agency responsible for inland search and rescue in New Hampshire, the first thing that strikes us about these proposals is that both locations, but especially Mt. Washington, have a multitude of search and rescue missions conducted in, on, or around them annually. Each year these locations receive thousands of visitors of all types including many from outside of NH and New England. Many of these visitors are hikers and kayakers. Many of these missions occur in winter months under severe weather conditions. Many, if not a majority of these outdoor enthusiasts carry satellite communication devices of varying sorts to assist in the event of an accident or unplanned event necessitating a rescue. Many of these devices send a distress signal when activated. Changing the name of a mountain or river would cause confusion and potentially interfere with lifesaving operations due to inaccurate information. These devices, which range from Global Positioning Systems (GPS units) to Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) would all have inaccurate information programmed into them, specifically geographic names. There are thousands of these devices in use today and all current ones would be rendered erroneous with these proposed name changes. Maps, whether paper or electronic, would be immediately incorrect once a name change occurs, causing confusion and inaccurate information. Mt. Washington, for example, is literally known throughout the world. According to Bryan Enberg, the Chair of the State Search and Rescue Coordinators Council, "I can say that anytime you change well-established place names, it opens the door to confusion when every moment counts. SAR (Search & Rescue) is inherently, a geo-spatial problem. Consistency when we are communicating location information is critical to what we do".

It is difficult to measure how changing these names would impact delays and mistakes in future search and rescue missions. NH is not interested in discovering this impact.

Aside from search and rescue, Mt. Washington and Baker River are state treasures. As one prominent author has correctly stated, Mt. Washington is one of the most well-loved and storied summits on earth. Reverend Manasseh Cutler bestowed the presidential name upon the mountain in the 1790's. Reverend Cutler was a prominent Federalist and the leading author of the Northwest Ordinance of 1878, particularly the parts prohibiting slavery. The petitioner states in the application, in part, that Mt. Washington and Baker River require name changes because it is inappropriate to name a geographical feature after a person and that Washington and Baker engaged in slavery. This would equate to NH renaming almost every mountain, river, and other geological features throughout the state. NH is home to dozens of mountains named after people including over 16 more in the Presidential Range alone. We can appreciate that Washington, as a member of the ruling class, was "complicit in slavery". However, will changing the name of Mt. Washington or the Baker River sanitize history? Will there be a benefit? Will those changes improve the lives of those that are affected by racism today? Particularly interesting is the fact that Mt. Washington received its presidential name from an ardent opponent of slavery. Reverend Cutler obviously knew more about what history tells us in that Washington was the only president who actually freed his slaves and ultimately the nation by leading the United States through the Revolutionary War.

Renaming a prominent geographical feature is an exceptional event that should be undertaken under compelling and egregious reasons. I do not see a compelling reason to make such costly changes. Changes that would include signage, markers, road signs, and kiosks. We feel that the negative effects of these name changes will far outweigh any benefits just like Washington's positive attributes and accomplishments far outweigh his negatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott R. Mason". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Scott R. Mason, Executive Director
NH Fish & Game Department