

# Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Costa Rica

United States Board on Geographic Names – Foreign Names Committee



December 2012

# 1. Introduction

The principal objective of the standardization policies presented below is to ensure consistent treatment of geographic name spellings in U.S. Government databases, publications, maps and charts. These policies are also intended to satisfy the statutory requirement levied upon the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) in Public Law 242 of the 80<sup>th</sup> Congress (approved 25 July 1947)<sup>1</sup> to develop principles, policies, and procedures for geographic names standardization, and to promulgate decisions regarding geographic nomenclature and orthography. This document contains standardization policies limited to geographic names found in Costa Rica, and shall be applied to all Costa Rican geographic names and feature records in the Geographic Names Database (GNDB) maintained for U.S. Government use by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA).

## 2. Languages and Language Policy

### *a. Demographics*

The population of Costa Rica is currently estimated at 4,636,348 persons, with most Costa Ricans (94 %) categorized as white (including mestizo or mixed Amerindian and European heritage). Other ethnic groups in Costa Rica include black (3%), Amerindian (1%), Chinese (1%), and others (1%).<sup>2</sup>

### *b. Languages*

Spanish (ISO 639-3 language code ‘spa’) is the official language of Costa Rica, and spoken by approximately 4,195,914 persons, according to 1995 figures.<sup>3</sup>

Other languages spoken include several Amerindian languages that are part of the Chibchan language family (ISO 639-3 language code ‘chb’) and spoken by approximately 25,685 persons.<sup>4</sup> Chibchan-derived languages are also spoken in Colombia and sections of Nicaragua, Panama, Ecuador, and Honduras. Additionally, on the Caribbean coast, east of San José and south of Limón, Jamaican descendants (approximately 55,100, according to 1986 figures) speak Limón Creole English which is derived from the Jamaican Creole English (ISO 639-3 language code “jam”).<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Public Law 242-80<sup>th</sup> Congress. NGA GEOnet Names Server (GNS) website. URL: [http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/public\\_law\\_80\\_242.htm](http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/public_law_80_242.htm) (Accessed 13 August 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Costa Rica. The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). URL: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ec.html> (Accessed 14 August 2012).

<sup>3</sup> *Worldwide Spanish-Speaking Population*. SpanishSEO: *Worldwide Spanish-Speaking Population Statistics* (Online). URL: <http://www.spanishseo.org/resources/worldwide-spanish-speaking-population> (Accessed 12 October 2012).

<sup>4</sup> *Languages of Costa Rica*. Ethnologue: *Languages of the World* (Online). Paul M. Lewis (Ed.), 2009. 16<sup>th</sup> Edition, SIL International. URL: [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=CR](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=CR) (Accessed 14 August 2012).

<sup>5</sup> *Jamaican Creole English*. Ethnologue: *Languages of the World* (Online). Paul M. Lewis (Ed.), 2009. 16<sup>th</sup> Edition, SIL International. URL: [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=jam](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=jam) (Accessed 14 August 2012).

### ***c. Geographic Names Standardization***

According to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), Costa Rica (as of August 2011) does not have a national authority for geographic names.<sup>6</sup> However, the Instituto Geográfico Nacional (IGN) is officially in charge of geographic naming for cartographic purposes in Costa Rica.

## **3. Toponymic Policies**

### ***a. Orthography***

Geographic names standardization policy will follow Spanish orthographic conventions. Please refer to orthographic reference materials such as *Ortografía y Ortotipografía del Español Actual* by José Martínez de Sousa (2004) and *Ortografía Básica de la Lengua Española* by the Real Academia Española (2012) for additional information.

The user of Costa Rican geographic sources should be aware of the existence of variant place names in local languages other than Spanish, as well as various spellings resulting from attempts to render names in Amerindian and other minority languages in accordance with Spanish orthographic rules.

### ***b. Romanization***

Roman-script forms are used throughout; therefore, Romanization is not required.

### ***c. Diacritics***

Diacritics are shown in standardized name forms as they appear on native sources and in accordance with Spanish orthography. Uppercase letters in standardized name forms retain diacritics. In accordance with Spanish orthography, the following letter-diacritic combinations are encountered in standardized name forms in Costa Rica:

<b>Character Name</b>	<b>Character</b>	<b>Unicode Value</b>
Capital A with acute accent	Á	00C1
Capital E with acute accent	É	00C9
Capital I with acute accent	Í	00CD
Capital N with tilde	Ñ	00D1
Capital O with acute accent	Ó	00D3
Capital U with acute accent	Ú	00DA
Capital U with dieresis	Ü	00DC
Small a with acute accent	á	00E1
Small e with acute accent	é	00E9
Small i with acute accent	í	00ED
Small n with tilde	ñ	00F1
Small o with acute accent	ó	00F3
Small u with acute accent	ú	00FA
Small u with dieresis	ü	00FC

---

<sup>6</sup> Summary List of Authorities, National Names Authorities, UNGEGN (As of August 2011). URL: [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/Authorities\\_listAugust2011.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/Authorities_listAugust2011.pdf) (Accessed 14 August 2012).

#### ***d. Generic Terms***

A generic is a term used to describe a geographic feature. Examples include words such as ‘river,’ ‘hill,’ and ‘lake.’ Generics appearing in standardized name forms should be considered true generics. If the generic term does not identify the feature, the term should be considered a false generic and should not be added to the GNDB as a generic. Generic terms are not collected for populated places.

A glossary of generic terms found in Costa Rican sources is available in Appendix A.

#### ***e. Hyphenation, Capitalization, and Spelling***

The definite article (el, la, lo, los, las) is generally shown in approved names as found on native sources. In many instances, the source shows a definite article capitalized as part of the proper feature name, in which case it will be entered as shown in the source. Example: *Cerro Los Bayitos*. When source evidence regarding the capitalization of the definite article is mixed, names of associated features (if present) will be examined to assist in the decision whether to accept or reject a particular name. When a name is encountered in all capital letters, any definite article found beyond the initial position will be entered in lowercase when the standardized name form is derived. Example: RÍO DE LA MÁQUINA (on source) is entered *Río de la Máquina*. In the absence of conclusive evidence, definite articles found beyond the initial position are written in lowercase letters in the standardized name form. Example: *Agua de la Higuera*; *Corral de los Burros*.

#### ***f. Numbers***

Names containing cardinal or ordinal numerals as integral parts should be treated according to the following guidelines:

- Arabic numbers are generally expanded in Spanish. Examples: Hatillo No. 6 (on source) is entered *Hatillo Número Seis*; Silanti 2do. (on source) is entered *Silanti Segundo*; Estación No. 21 (on source) is rendered *Estación Número Veintiuno*.
- Roman numerals are retained throughout
- These guidelines apply to both initial and non-initial numerals

#### ***g. Optional Long and Short Forms***

Short forms are not added to variant names and should be removed from the GNDB when a formerly approved name becomes a variant name.

Administrative division names are accorded long and short forms. Example: *Provincia de Limón* [long form]; *Limón* [short form].

Long and short forms of names of populated places are approved when supported by official evidence. Example: *San Rafael de Guatuso* [long form]; *San Rafael* [short form].

Railroad station names that appear on official sources with the generic term *Estación* are given long and short forms as supported by the evidence. Example: *Estación Casiguana* [long form]; *Casiguana* [short form].

Where official maps show more than one populated place with the same name in the same *Cantón* (second-order administrative division), distinguishing long forms should be obtained from census lists and other official sources.

### ***h. Unique Linguistic Situations***

#### ***Names Containing the Conjunction “o”***

Some sources may show a feature with two or more names joined by the conjunction “o” (or). Example: *Quebrada El Rosario o Concepción*. For standardization purposes, only one name is selected as the official standard name. The name chosen as the approved name will depend on the weight of the available evidence. In the absence of additional evidence, the first name shall be used as the official standard name. In accordance with standard policy, the other names for the feature will be considered variant names.

### ***i. Abbreviations***

The following is a list of abbreviations of generics which are commonly found on Costa Rican cartographic products. Any abbreviations must be spelled out in the GNDB.

<b>Abbreviated Form</b>	<b>Unabbreviated Form</b>
C.	Cabo, Cerro
Cdla.	Ciudadela
Cem.	Cementerio
Col.	Colegio
Coop.	Cooperativa
Cord.	Cordillera
Esc.	Escuela
Est.	Estero
F.	Finca
H., Hda.	Hacienda
I.	Isla
Igl.	Iglesia
L.	Lago
Lag.	Laguna
P.	Punta, Playa
Pto.	Puerto
Q., Queb.	Quebrada
R.	Río
Tr.	Torre
Urb.	Urbanización

## 4. Political Geography Policy

### *a. Country Name and Capital*

#### Country Name

Conventional long form:	Republic of Costa Rica
Conventional short form:	None
Approved long form:	República de Costa Rica
Approved short form:	Costa Rica

#### Capital (PPLC)

Approved name:	San José
----------------	----------

### *b. First-Order Administrative Divisions*

Please see Appendix C for a map depicting first-order administrative divisions in Costa Rica.

Name <sup>7</sup>	Generic	Seat	FIPS 10-4 <sup>8</sup>	ISO 3166-2 <sup>9</sup>
1. Alajuela	provincia	Alajuela	CS01	CR-A
2. Cartago	provincia	Cartago	CS02	CR-C
3. Guanacaste	provincia	Liberia	CS03	CR-G
4. Heredia	provincia	Heredia	CS04	CR-H
5. Limón	provincia	Puerto Limón	CS06	CR-L
6. Puntarenas	provincia	Puntarenas	CS07	CR-P
7. San José	provincia	San José	CS08	CR-SJ

### *c. Disputed Territories*

For the latest information on country-specific boundary disputes, please visit the Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia (B.A.S.E.), U.S. Department of State, URL: <http://base.us-state.osis.gov/home.asp>.

#### *International Disputes*

The status of the international boundary between Costa Rica and its neighbors Nicaragua and Panamá is ratified according to the U.S. Department of State's Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia.<sup>10</sup> However, certain areas remain in dispute.

**Río San Juan Dispute:** Costa Rica and Nicaragua have had a dispute over the river Río San Juan (which separates the two countries) since their independence from Spain in 1821. Disputes continue concerning navigational rights. In September 2005, Costa Rica brought a case against Nicaragua in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague claiming that Nicaragua had continually restricted Costa Rica's use of the river since the 1990s. Although Costa Rica

<sup>7</sup> Provinces of Costa Rica. Statoids, URL: <http://www.statoids.com/uec.html> (Accessed 14 August 2012).

<sup>8</sup> *Countries, Dependencies, Areas of Special Sovereignty, and their Principal Administrative Divisions*, Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS), Publication 10-4 (1995), URL: <http://www.itl.nist.gov/fipspubs/fip10-4.htm> (Accessed 14 August 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Provinces of Costa Rica. Statoids, URL: <http://www.statoids.com/uec.html> (Accessed 14 August 2012).

<sup>10</sup> *International Land Boundaries*. Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia (B.A.S.E.), U.S. Department of State, URL: <http://base.us-state.osis.gov/landBHome.asp?letter=>. (Accessed 20 August 2012).

recognizes Río San Juan as Nicaraguan territory, it demands unlimited navigational access to the segment of the river that runs along Costa Rica's northern boundary with Nicaragua.<sup>11</sup>

**Isla Calero (Isla Portillos) Dispute:** Isla Calero (also identified as Isla Portillos) is part of Costa Rica; however, Nicaragua claims the northernmost portion of that island. In early February 2011, Nicaragua released a new map published online by the Instituto Nicaragüense de Estudios Territoriales (Nicaraguan Institute of Territorial Studies) depicting the northernmost portion of the island as part of Nicaragua's Caribbean coastal territory. On March 8, 2011, the ICJ issued an order containing provisional measures that will remain in effect until a final ruling is emitted.<sup>12</sup>

Please see Appendix B for a map depicting the Costa Rican territory in dispute.

### *Domestic Disputes*

None reported.

Please note that Costa Rica owns Isla del Coco in the Pacific Ocean; and Provincia de Puntarenas includes the southeastern part of Península de Nicoya, Isla Chira and other islands in the Gulf of Nicoya, and Isla del Caño.

## **5. Source Materials**

### *a. Preferred Sources*

The most authoritative maps and charts covering Costa Rica are produced by the Instituto Geográfico Nacional (IGN) of Costa Rica. The following list of preferred sources is not exhaustive, but it includes those to be used for geographic name selection. Some map series listed below have been produced jointly by the IGN, NGA and NGA's predecessor organizations NIMA and DMA.

Instituto Geográfico Nacional (IGN) [National Geographic Institute]-Costa Rica, URL: [http://www.mopt.go.cr/ign/geografia\\_litorales\\_fronteras.html](http://www.mopt.go.cr/ign/geografia_litorales_fronteras.html)

1. 1:10,000-scale maps, Series E961, 1972-1991, IGN (Costa Rica)
2. 1:15,000-scale maps, Series 21BHA, 1973-1995, IGN (Costa Rica)
3. 1:25,000-scale maps, Series 3000, 1955-1962, IGN (Costa Rica)
4. 1:50,000-scale maps, Series E763, 1956-1998, IGN (Costa Rica)
5. 1:200,000-scale maps, Series E562, 1970-1988, IGN (Costa Rica)
6. 1:500,000-scale map, Political Map of Costa Rica, 1995, IGN

---

<sup>11</sup> *Internal Administrative Boundaries-Costa Rica-Nicaragua*. Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia (B.A.S.E.), U.S. Department of State, URL: [http://base.us-state.osis.gov/landBHome.asp?mode=details&pairDetailsId=198&pair=COSTA+RICA\\_NICARAGUA&pairFIPS=CS\\_NU](http://base.us-state.osis.gov/landBHome.asp?mode=details&pairDetailsId=198&pair=COSTA+RICA_NICARAGUA&pairFIPS=CS_NU). (Accessed 20 August 2012).

<sup>12</sup> *Internal Administrative Boundaries-Costa Rica-Nicaragua*. Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia (B.A.S.E.), U.S. Department of State, URL: [http://base.us-state.osis.gov/landBHome.asp?mode=details&pairDetailsId=198&pair=COSTA+RICA\\_NICARAGUA&pairFIPS=CS\\_NU](http://base.us-state.osis.gov/landBHome.asp?mode=details&pairDetailsId=198&pair=COSTA+RICA_NICARAGUA&pairFIPS=CS_NU). (Accessed 20 August 2012).

### ***b. Other Sources***

Additionally, other Costa Rican government agencies and private companies produce high-quality maps and charts, however, commercial sources are not authoritative unless they contain a caveat that they are produced for the Costa Rican government.

1. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC) [National Institute of Statistics and Census]-Costa Rica, URL: <http://www.inec.go.cr/>
2. Consejo Nacional para Investigaciones Científicas y Tecnológicas (CONICIT) [National Council for Scientific and Technological Investigations]-Costa Rica, URL: [http://163.178.205.6/boletin/boletin84/Atlas\\_digital.html](http://163.178.205.6/boletin/boletin84/Atlas_digital.html)
3. Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia (B.A.S.E.), U.S. Department of State, URL: <http://base.us-state.osis.gov/home.asp>
4. Costa Rica Maps. Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin, URL: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/costa\\_rica.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/costa_rica.html)
5. Mapoteca Virtual [Virtual Map Library, National University School of Geographic Sciences] - Costa Rica, URL: <http://www.mapoteca.geo.una.ac.cr/index.php/home.html>
6. Languages of Costa Rica. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Paul M. Lewis (Ed.), 2009. URL: [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_map.asp?name=CR&seq=10](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_map.asp?name=CR&seq=10)

## Appendix A. Glossary of Generic Terms

The following is a non-exhaustive list of common generic terms one may encounter in Costa Rican geographic names sources:

Generic Term	Generic Designation	Designation Code
acueducto	aqueduct	CNLA
aeródromo	airfield	AIRF
aeropuerto	airport	AIRP
aldea	populated place	PPL
alto	mountain, hill	HLL
arrecife	reef	RF
bahía	bay	BAY
barra	bar	BAR
barrio	section of populated place	PPLX
boca	cove	COVE
cabo	cape	CAPE
campo de aterrizaje	airfield	AIRF
cantera	quarry	MNQR
cantón	second-order administrative division	ADM2
cascada(s)	waterfall(s)	FLLS
cayo(s)	island(s)	ISL(S)
cementerio	cemetery	CMTY
cerro(s)	hill(s), mountain(s)	HLL(S), MT(S)
ciénaga	marsh	MFGM
ciudadela	fort, garrison, military installation	FT, INSM
colegio	school	SCH
colina(s)	hill(s)	HLL(S)
colonia	populated place	PPL
comuna	populated place	PPL
cooperativa	populated place	PPL
cordillera	mountains, mountain range	MTS
cumbre	peak	PK
embalse	reservoir, dam	RSV, DAM
embarcadero	pier	PIER
escuela	school	SCH
estación	railroad station	RSTN
estero	estuary	ESTY
estuario	estuary	ESTY
faro	lighthouse	LTHSE
fila	ridge	RDGE
finca	farm, ranch	FRM
golfo	gulf	GULF
hacienda	farm, ranch	FRM
iglesia	church	CH

isla(s)	island(s)	ISL(S)
lago	lake	LK
laguna	lagoon	LGN
llano	plain	PLN
loma(s)	hill(s)	HLL(S)
manantial	spring	SPNG
manglar	mangrove	MGV
marisma	dry stream, wash	SBED
meseta	plateau	PLAT
mina	mine	MN
muelle	pier	PIER
pantano	marsh, reservoir	MFGM, RSV
paso	pass, mountain pass	PASS
playa	beach	BCH
poza	pool	POOL
pozo	well	WLL
provincia	first-order administrative division	ADM1
puerto	port, harbor	PRT
punta	point	PT
quebrada	stream, intermittent stream	STM, STMI
rancho	ranch	RNCH
río	stream	STM
rompiente	bar	BAR
ruina(s)	ruin(s)	RUIN
sabana	plain	PLN
salina(s)	salt evaporation pond(s)	QUAY
salto(s)	waterfall(s)	FLL(S)
sierra	mountains, mountain range	MTS
torre	tower	TOWR
urbanización	housing development	DEVH
vado	ford	FORD
yolillal	mangrove	MGV
yurro	dry stream, wash	SBED

## Appendix B. Area In Dispute-Isla Calero (Isla Portillos)<sup>13</sup>



<sup>13</sup> Map of Isla Calero - Costa Rica. Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia (B.A.S.E.), U.S. Department of State, URL: <http://base-us-state.osis.gov/images/Mapa%20Costa%20Rica%20hoja%20Punta%20Castilla.JPG> (Accessed 25 October 2012)

# Appendix C. First-Order Administrative Divisions of Costa Rica<sup>14</sup>



<sup>14</sup> Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia (B.A.S.E.), U.S. Department of State, URL: [http://base.us-state.osis.gov/images/Costa\\_Rica\\_801014.pdf](http://base.us-state.osis.gov/images/Costa_Rica_801014.pdf) (Accessed 20 August 2012).