

Re. CORD responses to Mt. Washington and Baker River name change proposals, New Hampshire  
June 11, 2023

To BGN and NH BGN,

I note that the letters to you from the New Hampshire agencies that make up CORD contain many assertions unsupported by documentation. I expect that BGN expects a high level of scholarship and integrity in state agency responses to name change proposals.

None of the agencies claiming loss of tourism money or increased danger during rescues cited any data in support of these claims. For example, did renaming Mt. McKinley “diminish its significance as a renowned tourist attraction?” Have there been problems with rescues on Denali because it no longer formally designated as Mt. McKinley? Did the CORD agencies make any effort to find this information to support their claims? They are silent on this.

None of the agencies addressed the issue of the complicity of George Washington in the murder of Haudenosaunee people or the murder by Lieutenant Baker of Abenaki people.

- BEA (Business and Economic Affairs) Commissioner Taylor Caswell claims that “Changing the name would disregard the historical significance associated with Mt. Washington and erode the collective memory and identity of our state and nation.”

What this is supposed to mean is not clear. The history of Mt. Washington is well documented in many books, which will not disappear if the mountain’s name is changed. The petition for a name change does not aim to erode collective memory (is this different than individual memory? Does it mean what a lot of people know, or what a lot of people believe, whether these beliefs are true or not?) but rather increase people’s knowledge of who George Washington was by eroding the national myths that obscure clear thinking about him.

To acknowledge that naming a mountain after a slave-owner and what could now be called a war-criminal is not respectful, and to acknowledge that George Washington was both, would clean (somewhat) the identity of our state and nation and allow us to escape the current and dominant sloppy and shallow beliefs that make up of one small part of our history.

It is contradictory of BEA to claim that it “celebrates” Native American history in the Native American names that remain for some landmarks, but does not dishonor Native American (and Black) history by supporting naming Mt. Washington after a slave-owner who ordered the Sullivan Massacre.

If BEA is saying something other than ‘money trumps humanity,’ please clarify. I note that the amount of tourism dollars BEA claims would be lost if Mt. Washington’s name is formally changed to Agiocochook was not stated, even as an estimation.

- DAS (Department of Administrative Services) writes: “The applicant asserts without any support that: Allowing the mountain to be named after George Washington indicates federal and cultural approval of the practice of slavery. DAS strongly disagrees with the logical leap at the center of that bald assertion.” Does this mean that the statement is logical, or that, being a leap, the logical becomes

illogical? Presumably the latter, since DAS disagrees with it. Of what relevance is the 'baldness' of the statement? Perhaps 'bold' was the word intended.

“DAS believes that it is possible...to appreciate and celebrate the more favorable aspects of a prominent historical figure's life while clearly acknowledging and learning from their known shortcomings and faults without endorsing or taking responsibility for them.”

DAS presented no evidence that the State has clearly acknowledged, described and addressed George Washington's enslavement of other people. The only acknowledgment from the State that I am aware of is Ona Judge Staines Day, honoring the enslaved woman who escaped from George Washington.

DAS presented no evidence that the State has acknowledged the Sullivan Massacre.

DAS “notes from certain supplemental materials received with the name change application that this appears to be the first time an application has been filed to change the name of any geographic feature in the United States named after George Washington...” This is irrelevant to an assessment of the proposal.

DAS writes that: “Recent archeological (sic) discoveries have suggested that the Abenaki and other native Americans who predated European settlement [invasion] of North America also may not have been the original or first inhabitants of North America.”

Is DAS suggesting that it was acceptable for Europeans to engage in genocide against the Native Americans because “they may not have been the original or first inhabitants of North America” ?

“DAS does not believe that Mt. Washington was named after our country's first President as an endorsement of slavery.”

The application for a name change does not claim this.

DAS writes:”...there are many other nearby geographic features, places, tourist attractions, and businesses located within sight of Mt Washington that are named after it in one way or another... Therefore, changing the name of Mt. Washington could cause confusion among tourists and consumers and disassociation of those similarly named places, attractions and businesses from the highest summit of the nearby alpine massif.”

Again, no evidence is offered in support of this concern over confusion. Does DAS not anticipate a slow shift from Mt. Washington to Agiocochook, with both names used for many years? Since Mt. Washington State Park and the Mt. Washington Auto Road are unlikely to change their names, would not these, along with the hotels like the Mt. Washington, serve to keep the former name in current use?

- DES (Department of Environmental Services) writes: ‘Modifying the names of these natural resources would create an innumerable number of hours of work which would divert substantial financial resources, personnel resources, and staff time away from other critical mapping and environmentally-focused priorities while causing unnecessary confusion and eliminating the centuries of branding that has been done for the current names’ No evidence from other name changes is given. It also states that “Any positive impacts of these name changes do not outweigh the negative impacts

that will be caused to our tourism industry, to our businesses, to our state agencies and employees, and to the cultural importance of these names to the State of New Hampshire.”

DES fails to list the possible positive impacts, cite evidence supporting its claim of negative impacts to tourism or describe what exactly the “cultural importance of these names to the State of New Hampshire” is.

DES fails to address the ethical issues presented in the application.

DES might have written:

*‘Positive impacts of these name changes include:*

*Educating the public about the suppressed history of Europeans’ invasion of North America, while acknowledging that the deliberate massacres of Native Americans by Lieutenant Baker and George Washington were criminal and that these men should not be honored by the State.*

*Acknowledging to the Native American/all communities in New Hampshire and elsewhere, that the State refuses to honor a man who collected a bounty on Native American scalps and another who was named “Town Destroyer” by the Iroquois/Haudenosaunee people.*

*Acknowledging to the Black/all communities in New Hampshire and elsewhere that George Washington’s enslavement of black people was unethical, destructive, and dehumanizing, and that the State refuses to avert its gaze from this knowledge.*

*Rejecting the national myths which delude us and our children by erasing unpleasant aspects of our past, an erasure which has meant erasing most of Native American and Black history.*

*However, the inconvenience of changing names and the negative impacts that might be caused to our tourism industry, to our businesses, and to our state agencies and employees, outweigh these benefits.*

1724

## **New Hampshire authorizes scalp hunting**

The New Hampshire colony pays 100 pounds for each male scalp, 50 pounds for a woman’s scalp, and 25 pounds for a child’s scalp.

<https://nativephilanthropy.candid.org/wp-content/themes/native-philanthropy/timeline.pdf>

<https://ictnews.org/archive/scalping-in-america>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/nov/15/new-england-once-hunted-and-humans-for-money-were-descendants-of-the-survivors>

Acts and Resolves passed by the General Court, Massachusetts (Resolves 1708-1719) records two bounties paid to Lieutenant Baker and his Party in 1712:

## CHAPTER 11.

### RESOLVE ALLOWING £.10. TO THO: BAKER & COMPANY.

*Resolved* that the Sum of Ten Pounds be allowed & paid out of the Publick Treasury to Thomas Baker Commander of a Company of Marching Forces in a late Expedition against the Enemy to Coassett, from thence to the West Branch of Merrimack & so to Dunstable in Behalf of him self & Company for one Enemy Indian besides that which they scalp'd, W<sup>ch</sup> seems very probable to be slain. [*Passed June 5.*]

Legislative  
Records of the  
Council, ix.,  
291.  

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Post, chap. 31.

## CHAPTER 31.

### RESOLVE ALLOWING TO THO: BAKER & COMP<sup>a</sup> £.20.

UPON READING a Petition of Lieut. Thomas Baker Commander of a Party in a late Expedition to Coassett & over to Merrimack River, Praying a further Allowance for more of the Enemy Indians killed by them than they could recover their Scalps, as Reported by the Enemy themselves; Concur'd with the Resolve pass'd thereon: Viz, That the Sum of Twenty Pounds be allowed & paid out of the Publick Treasury to the Petitioner & Company. [*Passed June 11.*]

Legislative  
Records of the  
Council, ix.,  
297.  

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Acte, chap. 11.  
Executive  
Records of the  
Council, v., 559,  
562.

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- The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, though their counsel, opposes the proposed name changes for Mt. Washington and the Baker River, yet provides no reasons for its position, nor does it examine the connection between racism and ill-health.

“The overall poverty rate for individuals in New Hampshire during the 2014-2018 time period was 7.9 percent. For non-Hispanic white individuals, the poverty rate was 7.2 percent, while Hispanic individuals of any race faced a poverty rate of 17.8 percent in New Hampshire. The poverty rate for individuals identifying as Black or African American was estimated to be 19.8 percent, or roughly one in five individuals living with incomes below poverty levels, nearly three times the poverty rate of non-Hispanic white individuals. Those who were Asian, identifying with two or more races, or born outside the United States also experienced higher poverty rates than the state as a whole.[vi]

<https://nhfpi.org/resource/inequities-between-new-hampshire-racial-and-ethnic-groups-impact-opportunities-to-thrive/>

“American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian (AI/AN/NH) communities are less likely than other U.S. groups to have access to public health resources that support individuals and communities in building the skills to manage overall health, including chronic conditions, nutrition, physical activity, self-advocacy, and preventing falls. The lack of access to resources in indigenous communities is especially critical due to both a high prevalence and severity of chronic conditions including diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and unintentional injuries, among others.”

<https://www.nicoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/1-FINAL-REPORT-Evidence-Based-Health-Promotion-Among-AIANNH-Communities.pdf>

- DNCR (Department of Natural and Cultural Resources) Commissioner Sarah Stewart writes:

“The DNCR’s mission is to protect, promote and manage the State’s natural and cultural resources, supporting New Hampshire’s high quality of life (minimum wage \$7.25, child poverty rate 8.9%) and strengthening (what does this mean?) the experiences of our residents and guests. A top priority of the work we do is safety and to achieve this we collaborate with other state and local, agencies every day. In consulting with our sister agencies, it is clear that a name change for these popular outdoor destinations would cause significant challenges in search and rescue efforts. (no evidence given in support of this statement) Changing names of internationally known landmarks, such as Mt. Washington will lead to many unintended consequences beyond safety. For example, there are economic impacts to consider as many New Hampshire businesses are associated with these well-known places. (no evidence given in support of this assertion. Again, experiences of businesses at Denali could provide information) There is also a legacy of art that stems from the White Mountains region of New Hampshire that is cherished and celebrated worldwide. Paintings of New Hampshire’s White Mountains from the early to mid-1800s sparked interest and ultimately promoted the region as a beautiful, rugged, place to escape (?) and explore. (How this could be relevant to the name change proposal is not explained. Is DNCR suggesting that people who see 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings of Mt. Washington will be unable to figure out what mountain is shown, if a name change is approved, and thus lose access to “a legacy of art that stems from the White Mountains region of New Hampshire”?) The many name changes of New Hampshire artistic landmarks such as Hooket/Mt. Lafayette, Haystack/Mt. Garfield, Mt. Pleasant/Mt. Eisenhower, North Whiteface/Passaconaway, Mt. Pleasant/Lincoln, Mt. Lincoln/Mt. Field, Kearsarge North/Pequawket, are part of New Hampshire history. The history of names is one of the pleasures of research and several books address this history, for example ‘Place Names of the White Mountains’ by Robert and Mary Julyan, and ‘The 4000-Footers of the White Mountains’ by Steven Smith and Mike Dickerman.)

At the DNCR we work to protect and provide access to these timeless (?) outdoor places that have captured the imagination of all who have visited. (see Marsden Hartley; *New England on the Trapeze*) Changing the name of these sites does not seem necessary. (Commissioner Stewart fails to address the issues of slavery and genocide as they relate to the “names of these sites”) Interpreting the full history of these sites, however, is a goal of ours and is an effort that we welcome input and support for. (A goal is not a commitment. Will DNCR place informational markers on Ona Judge Staines and the Sullivan Massacre at Mt. Washington State Park? Why did DNCR choose not to mention that the New Hampshire Commission on Native American Affairs supports the name changes?)

- DOS (Department of Safety) cites concerns with safety/rescues if the names of the Mt. Washington and the Baker River are changed. Again, no data in support of this is offered, nor is the likelihood of a very gradual adoption of the names considered. We see this with Mt. McKinley/Denali. Both names are used and cited;

“Denali State Park was established in 1970 and expanded to its present size in 1976. Its western boundary is shared with its much larger neighbor, Denali National Park and Preserve, formerly Mt. McKinley National Park.”

<https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/aspunits/matsu/denalisp.htm>

The National Park Service gracefully, or perhaps diplomatically, addressed the change:

“On the eve of the National Park Service’s 100th anniversary in 2016, the name of the highest peak in North America changed from “Mount McKinley” to “Denali.”

The timing of the change not only helped mark the agency’s centennial, it shines a light on the long human history of the park, and illuminates a naming debate that has lasted more than 100 years.”

<https://www.nps.gov/dena/learn/historyculture/denali-origins.htm>

- Department of Education Commissioner Frank Edelblut wrote:

“Changing the name of such a well-known peak in the northeast, which has held the title (?) of Mt. Washington since 1874, is not in the best interest of the state and its tourists that have traveled to the top of the mountain for more than 150 years. (no documentation in support of this claim or explanation of what “best interest” might be.) Mt. Washington not only honors a Founding Father, George Washington, but is one of more than a dozen summits within the Presidential Range – all of which are named after U.S. presidents such as Franklin Pierce, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams [not a president] and John Quincy Adams. (No explanation of why this is relevant. If we accept thirteen as the number of summits in the Presidential Range, they would perhaps be:

[Mount Webster](#) — after [Daniel Webster](#) [not a president]

[Mount Jackson](#)\* — after [Charles Thomas Jackson](#) (19th-century geologist)

[Mount Pierce](#)\* — after [Franklin Pierce](#) (formerly Mt. Clinton — after [DeWitt Clinton](#))



[Mount Eisenhower](#)\* — after [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#)

[Mount Franklin](#) — after [Benjamin Franklin](#) [not a president]

[Mount Monroe](#)\* — after [James Monroe](#)

[Mount Washington](#)\* — after [George Washington](#) (a general at time of naming in 1784, and only later a president)[3]

[Mount Clay](#) — after [Henry Clay](#) (State of New Hampshire changed name to [Mount Reagan](#) after [Ronald Reagan](#); U.S. government still recognizes Clay name) [not a president]

[Mount Jefferson](#)\* — after [Thomas Jefferson](#)

[Mount Sam Adams](#) — after [Samuel Adams](#) [not a president]

[Mount Adams](#)\* — after [John Adams](#)

[Mount Quincy Adams](#) — after [John Quincy Adams](#)

[Mount Madison](#)\* — after [James Madison](#)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential\\_Range](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_Range)

“I urge the U.S. Board of Geographic Names to reject the proposal to change the title of such an infamous mountain – the highest in New Hampshire – that pays tribute to the first president of the United States, a military general and grand hero.”

Commissioner Edelblut’s sentence here is confusing. Mt. Washington is the present name of the mountain, not its “title.” Infamous means “well known for some bad quality or deed,” “wicked, abominable,” not ‘very famous’. The height of Mt. Washington is irrelevant to the proposal for a name change. No evidence is presented to support the description of George Washington as a “grand hero” nor is this claim reconciled with his enslavement of Ona Judge Staines and the other slaves he considered his property, or his ordering the Sullivan Massacre.

- Fish & Game Director Scott Mason wrote: “Changing the name of a mountain or river would cause confusion and potentially interfere with lifesaving operations due to inaccurate information. These devices, [used by some hikers] which range from Global Positioning Systems (GPS units) to Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) would all have inaccurate information programmed into them, specifically geographic names”

PLB: “After receiving your transmission, the satellite system relays your distress call to a network of response agencies, which ultimately results in your plea for assistance reaching a local search and rescue organization. PLBs also utilize another satellite network to get a **location fix**. In addition, most

PLBs today can provide rescuers with **GPS-provided coordinates** to pinpoint your location even more precisely.” (emphasis added) <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/personal-locator-beacons.html>

Again, where is the data from Denali and other locations where name changes have occurred? Since the SPOT and other PLBs provide location/GPS coordinates, how are these used with geographical names and other broad descriptions, eg. Tuckerman’s Ravine, Left Gully, Dry River Valley somewhere? Where is a description of a rescue and how GPS coordinates and names of mountains and features are used in a rescue? Where is data from rescues on Denali?

Director Mason states that “Mt. Washington and Baker River are state treasures... Mt. Washington is one of the most well-loved and storied summits on earth” but does not explain how this is relevant to the name change proposal. He does not explain the relevance of Reverend Manasseh Cutler’s involvement in the Northwest Ordinance to the name change proposal, unless he is implying that since Cutler opposed slavery, yet is generally cited as the man who named Mt. Washington, that changes Washington’s status as a slave-owner. Director Mason fails to mention that “Several tribes of Native Americans, including the Delawares and Wyandots, called the Northwest Territory home, and while they initially greeted the New Englanders, relations between the two groups quickly strained. A series of battles between the Native Americans and the U.S. military ensued; hundreds would die before the Treaty of Greenville, which further displaced the local tribes, was signed in 1795.”

<https://www.cpr.org/2019/05/08/the-pioneers-dives-deep-into-lives-of-northwest-territory-settlers/>

Director Mason does not explain how changing the names of Mt. Washington and the Baker River would ‘equate to NH renaming almost every mountain, river, and other geological features throughout the state.” Director Mason asks whether changing the name of Mt. Washington and the Baker River will “sanitize history.” This is not the intent of the name changes, as clearly stated in the application. The intent is to acknowledge that the commonly known histories of George Washington and Captain Baker have been sanitized, to increase common knowledge of these men, and to acknowledge that naming a mountain and river after them is not respectful of Native Americans, black people, or anyone who finds slavery, genocide and sanitized history unacceptable.

Director Mason asks if there will be a benefit to those affected by racism today, but give no evidence that he consulted with local Indigenous groups, the NAACP, those involved in establishing Ona Judge Staines Day, or the NH Commission on Native American Affairs, for answers to this question.

What does Director Mason mean when he states that “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”? Does he mean that Reverend Cutler knew more than history tells us? If so, that information is unavailable. George Washington did not free his slaves, as the application notes:

“By the standards of his day, Washington treated his enslaved workers better than most. But he expected more from them than the average slave, especially as he began to use his plantation as a kind of efficiency experiment. The future president tried out new farming techniques, closely monitored his enslaved workers’ production in connection with the farm’s yield. He whipped, beat, and separated people from their families as punishment. Washington also relentlessly pursued escaped slaves and



circumvented laws that would allow his enslaved workers freedom if they did manage to escape to neighboring states.

Over the years, Washington's thinking on slavery evolved. During the Revolutionary War, he became more uncomfortable with the thought of purchasing and owning other human beings. But though he supported abolition in theory, he never tried it in practice. His plantation, his wealth and his position in society depended on enslaved workers. And, as noted in Erica Armstrong Dunbar's book, *Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge*, when one of Martha's enslaved workers fled to freedom in 1796, Washington spent the last three years of his life trying to force her to return.

In the words of historian Henry Wiencek, his contradictory attitudes towards slavery are "one of the mysteries of his life." Those contradictions made it into his will, too. Though the will contained the unheard-of order to free his enslaved workers, it stipulated that they remain with Martha for the rest of her life.

Freeing them, he wrote, would "be attended by such insuperable difficulties by their intermixture with the dower Negroes, as to excite the most painful sensations...to manumit them." Translation: It would be too complicated to free the enslaved people, so instead they would be owned by Martha as long as she wished.

Since he didn't technically own the enslaved people Martha had inherited, he didn't say they should be freed. Instead, he used them to justify the continued enslavement of the others. By the time George died, he owned 123 enslaved people outright. After Washington's death, Martha freed just one person: William Lee, a Revolutionary War celebrity who was the only enslaved person George said should be immediately given his freedom. But she didn't free the others—until she became convinced that they were plotting against her.

After at least one fire and a rumor that an enslaved person wanted to poison her, she freed the rest of George's enslaved workers about a year after his death. It was just too risky to keep "restive" enslaved people who longed for freedom among those she had inherited, she implied to friends like Abigail Adams." <https://www.history.com/news/did-george-washington-really-free-mount-vernons-slaves>

The Mt. Vernon site states: "Washington wrote his will several months before his death in December 1799. In the document, Washington left directions for the eventual emancipation of enslaved people he owned after the passing of Martha Washington."

<https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/slavery/ten-facts-about-washington-slavery/>

- The Department of Transportation "reconsidered its position and opposes the proposed name changes" yet provides no reason for its change or opposition.

These agency documents fail in honesty, respect, ethics, clarity of thought and quality of research.