

**United States Geological Survey
Geographic Names Information System -- Geographic Names Files
National Crosswalk Service Center, March 2006**

Introduction

The U.S. Geological Survey's Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) contains names and location information for nearly two million physical and cultural features found throughout the United States and its territories. The National Crosswalk Service Center has downloaded the files for the individual states and territories and created a single geography file with over 1.9 million records. This document describes the structure and content of the file.

Source and Geographic Coverage

Individual state/area files were downloaded from the GNIS web site at <http://geonames.usgs.gov/stategaz/index.html>. Information from the file relates to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa (AS), Federated States of Micronesia (FM), Guam (GU), Marshall Islands (MH), Northern Mariana Islands (MP), Puerto Rico (PR), Republic of Palau (PW), U.S. Minor Outlying Islands (UM), and the U.S. Virgin Islands (VI).

File Structure

GNIS0306		
Column	Type	Description
fid	char(9)	Feature ID – Unique identifier.
st	char(2)	Two-letter state postal abbreviation
featurenam	char(100)	Name of the feature
type	char(9)	Type of feature (see list below)
county	char(15)	County name
stfips	char(2)	State FIPS code
cntyfips	char(3)	County FIPS code
latdms	char(8)	Primary latitude – Degrees, Minutes, Seconds (DDMMSS)
longdms	char(8)	Primary longitude – Degrees, Minutes, Seconds (DDMMSS)
latdeci	char(10)	Primary latitude – Decimal
longdeci	char(10)	Primary longitude – Decimal
slatdms	char(8)	Source latitude – Degrees, Minutes, Seconds (DDMMSS) – for linear features
slongdms	char(8)	Source longitude – Degrees, Minutes, Seconds (DDMMSS)
slatdeci	char(10)	Source latitude – Decimal
slongdeci	char(10)	Source longitude – Decimal
elevation	number(5)	Elevation in feet
population	number(6)	Population

Feature Types

The terms, counts and definitions follow:

- **airport** (18,990)- manmade facility maintained for the use of aircraft (airfield, airstrip, landing field, landing strip).
- **arch** (458)- natural arch-like opening in a rock mass (bridge, natural bridge, sea arch).
- **area** (2,559)- any one of several areally extensive natural features not included in other categories (badlands, barren, delta, fan, garden).
- **arroyo** (443)- watercourse or channel through which water may occasionally flow (coulee, draw, gully, wash).
- **bar** (5,840)- natural accumulation of sand, gravel, or alluvium forming an underwater or exposed embankment (ledge, reef, sandbar, shoal, spit).
- **basin** (4,295)- natural depression or relatively low area enclosed by higher land (amphitheater, cirque, pit, sink).
- **bay** (12,802)- indentation of a coastline or shoreline enclosing a part of a body of water; a body of water partly surrounded by land (arm, bight, cove, estuary, gulf, inlet, sound).
- **beach** (2,299)- the sloping shore along a body of water that is washed by waves or tides and is usually covered by sand or gravel (coast, shore, strand).
- **bench** (725)- area of relatively level land on the flank of an elevation such as a hill, ridge, or mountain where the slope of the land rises on one side and descends on the opposite side (level).
- **bend** (2,723)- curve in the course of a stream and (or) the land within the curve; a curve in a linear body of water (bottom, loop, meander).
- **bridge** (6,184)- manmade structure carrying a trail, road, or other transportation system across a body of water or depression (causeway, overpass, trestle).
- **building** (42,921) - a manmade structure with walls and a roof for protection of people and (or) materials, but not including church, hospital, or school.
- **canal** (20,511)- manmade waterway used by watercraft or for drainage, irrigation, mining, or water power (ditch, lateral).
- **cape** (16,244)- projection of land extending into a body of water (lea, neck, peninsula, point).
- **cave** (2)- natural underground passageway or chamber, or a hollowed out cavity in the side of a cliff (cavern, grotto).
- **cemetery** (129,780) - a place or area for burying the dead (burial, burying ground, grave, memorial garden).
- **channel** (4,100)- linear deep part of a body of water through which the main volume of water flows and is frequently used as a route for watercraft (passage, reach, strait, thoroughfare, throughfare).
- **church** (181,535)- building used for religious worship (chapel, mosque, synagogue, tabernacle, temple).
- **civil** (40,078)- a political division formed for administrative purposes (borough, county, municipio, parish, town, township).
- **cliff** (4,406)- very steep or vertical slope (bluff, crag, head, headland, nose, palisades, precipice, promontory, rim, rimrock).

- **crater** (245)- circular-shaped depression at the summit of a volcanic cone or one on the surface of the land caused by the impact of a meteorite; a manmade depression caused by an explosion (caldera, lua).
- **crossing** (8,214)- a place where two or more routes of transportation form a junction or intersection (overpass, underpass).
- **dam** (56,889)- water barrier or embankment built across the course of a stream or into a body of water to control and (or) impound the flow of water (breakwater, dike, jetty).
- **falls** (2,351)- perpendicular or very steep fall of water in the course of a stream (cascade, cataract, waterfall).
- **flat** (10,489)- relative level area within a region of greater relief (clearing, glade, playa).
- **forest** (1,279)- bounded area of woods, forest, or grassland under the administration of a political agency (see "woods") (national forest, national grasslands, State forest).
- **gap** (8,364)- low point or opening between hills or mountains or in a ridge or mountain range (col, notch, pass, saddle, water gap, wind gap).
- **geyser** (140)- eruptive spring from which hot water and (or) steam and in some cases mud are periodically thrown.
- **glacier** (1,092)- body or stream of ice moving outward and downslope from an area of accumulation; an area of relatively permanent snow or ice on the top or side of a mountain or mountainous area (icefield, ice patch, snow patch).
- **gut** (4,577)- relatively small coastal waterway connecting larger bodies of water or other waterways (creek, inlet, slough).
- **harbor** (664)- sheltered area of water where ships or other watercraft can anchor or dock (hono, port, roads, roadstead).
- **hospital** (10,829)- building where the sick or injured may receive medical or surgical attention (infirmary).
- **island** (20,290)- area of dry or relatively dry land surrounded by water or low wetland (archipelago, atoll, cay, hammock, hummock, isla, isle, key, moku, rock).
- **isthmus** (18)- narrow section of land in a body of water connecting two larger land areas.
- **lake** (67,900)- natural body of inland water (backwater, lac, lagoon, laguna, pond, pool, resaca, waterhole).
- **lava** (187)- formations resulting from the consolidation of molten rock on the surface of the Earth (kepula, lava flow).
- **levee** (517)- natural or manmade embankment flanking a stream (bank, berm).
- **locale** (131,705)- place at which there is or was human activity; it does not include populated places, mines, and dams (battlefield, crossroad, camp, farm, ghost town, landing, railroad siding, ranch, ruins, site, station, windmill).
- **mine** (34,070)- place or area from which commercial minerals are or were removed from the Earth; not including oilfield (pit, quarry, shaft).
- **military (historical)** (1,241) - place or facility formerly used for various aspects of or relating to military activity.
- **oilfield** (4,853)- area where petroleum is or was removed from the Earth.
- **other** (38)- category for miscellaneous named entities that cannot readily be placed in the other feature classes listed here.
- **park** (57,366)- place or area set aside for recreation or preservation of a cultural or natural resource and under some form of government administration; not including National or State forests or Reserves (national historical landmark, national park, State park, wilderness area).

- **pillar** (2,052)- vertical, standing, often spire-shaped, natural rock formation (chimney, monument, pinnacle, pohaku, rock tower).
- **plain** (307)- a region of general uniform slope, comparatively level and of considerable extent (grassland, highland, kula, plateau, upland).
- **po** (47,599)- (post office) an official facility of the U.S. Postal Service used for processing and distributing mail and other postal material.
- **ppl** (183,093)- (populated place) place or area with clustered or scattered buildings and a permanent human population (city, settlement, town, village).
- **range** (2,428)- chain of hills or mountains; a somewhat linear, complex mountainous or hilly area (cordillera, sierra).
- **rapids** (1,090)- fast-flowing section of a stream, often shallow and with exposed rock or boulders (riffle, ripple).
- **reserve** (1,266)- a tract of land set aside for a specific use (does not include forests, civil divisions, parks).
- **Reservoir** (74,762) - artificially impounded body of water (lake, tank).
- **ridge** (15,025)- elevation with a narrow, elongated crest which can be part of a hill or mountain (crest, cuesta, escarpment, hogback, lae, rim, spur).
- **school** (177,798)- building or group of buildings used as an institution for study, teaching, and learning (academy, college, high school, university).
- **sea** (12)- large body of salt water (gulf, ocean).
- **slope** (370)- a gently inclined part of the Earth's surface (grade, pitch).
- **spring** (38,256)- place where underground water flows naturally to the surface of the Earth (seep).
- **stream** (232,093)- linear body of water flowing on the Earth's surface (anabranh, awawa, bayou, branch, brook, creek, distributary, fork, kill, pup, rio, river, run, slough).
- **summit** (70,618)- prominent elevation rising above the surrounding level of the Earth's surface; does not include pillars, ridges, or ranges (ahu, berg, bald, butte, cerro, colina, cone, cumbre, dome, head, hill, horn, knob, knoll, mauna, mesa, mesita, mound, mount, mountain, peak, puu, rock, sugarloaf, table, volcano).
- **swamp** (7,427)- poorly drained wetland, fresh or saltwater, wooded or grassy, possibly covered with open water (bog, cienega, marais, marsh, pocosin).
- **tower** (16,600)- a manmade structure, higher than its diameter, generally used for observation, storage, or electronic transmission.
- **trail** (10,710)- route for passage from one point to another; does not include roads or highways (jeep trail, path, ski trail).
- **tunnel** (690)- linear underground passageway open at both ends.
- **unknown** (141)- unknown.
- **valley** (70,198)- linear depression in the Earth's surface that generally slopes from one end to the other (barranca, canyon, chasm, cove, draw, glen, gorge, gulch, gulf, hollow, ravine).
- **well** (38,710)- manmade shaft or hole in the Earth's surface used to obtain fluid or gaseous materials.
- **woods** (654)- small area covered with a dense growth of trees; does not include an area of trees under the administration of a political agency (see "forest").

Count of Features by Area

Area	Features	Area	Features
Alabama	56,881	New Mexico	55,312
Alaska	32,174	New York	38,832
Arizona	39,829	North Carolina	48,842
Arkansas	40,025	North Dakota	10,136
California	106,012	Ohio	60,616
Colorado	43,575	Oklahoma	34,884
Connecticut	17,801	Oregon	52,213
Delaware	4,365	Pennsylvania	49,360
District of Columbia	3,743	Rhode Island	5,670
Florida	33,774	South Carolina	33,244
Georgia	54,527	South Dakota	15,653
Hawaii	10,215	Tennessee	71,800
Idaho	29,644	Texas	98,335
Illinois	59,137	Utah	30,798
Indiana	24,865	Vermont	11,094
Iowa	37,111	Virginia	52,419
Kansas	16,884	Washington	31,725
Kentucky	32,629	West Virginia	35,621
Louisiana	34,763	Wisconsin	37,001
Maine	29,383	Wyoming	27,236
Maryland	28,343	American Samoa	902
Massachusetts	29,530	Federated States of Micronesia	3,788
Michigan	32,225	Guam	1,189
Minnesota	39,223	Marshall Islands	2,364
Mississippi	38,805	Northern Mariana Islands	580
Missouri	54,401	Republic of Palau	787
Montana	76,931	Puerto Rico	6,512
Nebraska	30,234	U.S. Minor Outlying Islands	103
Nevada	26,758	Virgin Islands	1,731
New Hampshire	13,489		
New Jersey	16,265		