

Nathaniel Sargent Lake

Mason County - New Name

Township: 22N

Range: 3W

Section: 10,11,15

USGS Quad: Lilliwaup

Location Description: Lake; 10.5 acres, located 2.5 miles NE of the town of Tahuya at 47° 24' 17.539" N, 123° 2' 6.887" W.

Proposal Summary: Nathaniel Sargent Lake; lake; 10.5 acres, located 2.5 miles NE of the town of Tahuya at 47° 24' 17.539" N, 123° 2' 6.887" W.; Name commemorates Nathaniel Sargent (d. 1954) who was born into slavery. Nathaniel Sargent settled in Seabeck and was elected a justice of the peace in the late 19th century after homesteading there.; Mason County, Washington; Section 15, T22N, R3W, Willamette Meridian; 47° 24' 17.539" N, 123° 2' 6.887" W.; USGS Map - Lilliwaup 1:24,000.

The proposed name commemorates Nathaniel Sargent (d. 1954) who was born into slavery.

Nathaniel Sargent settled in Seabeck around the same time Rodney White came to Tahuya. Sargent was elected a justice of the peace in the late 19th century after homesteading there.

The proposed name would replace the current name of Grass Lake.

Proponent:

Alicia Charles & "Akuyea" Karen Vargas
Living Arts Cultural Heritage Project
14095 Central Valley Rd NW
Poulsbo, WA 98370

Proposal Received: 9/7/2022

Initial Consideration: 10/25/2022

Final Consideration: 01/19/2023

WA Committee Decision: Approved

WA Board Decision:

US Board Decision:

Opinions:

Mason County Board of Commiissioners - IN FAVOR

U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer - IN FAVOR

Ann Lovejoy - IN FAVOR

WASHINGTON STATE Geographic Name Application



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

Proposed Name: Nathaniel Sargent Lake

New Name

County: Mason

Controversial Name

Township: _____ Range: _____ Section(s): _____

Name Change

Lat. _____ N, Long. _____ W (Begin)

Location Clarification

Lat. _____ N, Long. _____ W (End)

Spelling Clarification

Description

Type of feature (lake, stream, etc.): Lake

Description of feature (location, length, depth, height, size and/or area covered): _____

N/A

If a stream, number of months it flows on a yearly basis: N/A

Is this feature identified by other names or spellings? Please list variant names: Grass Lake

Has it ever been signed, posted, or publicized? If so, when? Yes

History

Please provide a brief history of the feature and its immediate surroundings, this might include information on the following: 1 Native American; 2 First settlers; 3 Historical background pertinent to feature; 4 History on how the land is/was used; 5 Natural disasters (floods, fires, etc.) 6 Any significant cultural events. If appropriate, geology, flora and fauna. Cite sources. Use additional pages if needed.

Origin of name: See attached article

If a commemorative name, provide a brief summary of the ENTIRE life of the person including how and the length of time he/she was associated with the proposed feature: See attached article

Justification of Proposed Name


What is the usage of feature? N/A

Please state why the proposed name will best serve the public interest: Corrective/Restorative history to honor a black pioneer who didn't receive the recognition he deserved during his lifetime.

How long has the proposed name been in use? By whom? N/A

Please list all sources of information used for your research: (maps, books, articles, periodicals, etc. for background history relating to proposed name) <https://www.kitsapsun.com/in-depth/news/2022/08/04/tahuya-washington-slough-racist-rodney-white-history/7513342001/>

What type of support is there for the proposed name?
List all groups and persons who are familiar with the proposed feature and its usage. Please provide names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and his/her association with knowledge of the geographic feature:
KATY CRABTREE (SHE/HER) Deputy District Director Office of Representative Derek Kilmer (WA-6)
O: 360-373-9725 | C: 360-838-3156 345 6th St., Suite 500, Bremerton, WA 98337
Katy.Crabtree@mail.house.gov

Application submitted by:			
Name:	<u>Living Arts Cultural Heritage Project "Akuyea" Karen Vargas and Alicia Charles</u>		
Address:	<u>14095 Central Valley Rd NW</u>	City: <u>Poulsbo</u>	State: <u>WA</u> Zip: <u>98370-8181</u>
Phone #:	<u>360-616-7040 or 206-488-8225</u>	Email: <u>alicia_charles78@yahoo.com</u>	Date of Application: <u>9/26/2022</u>
I am aware that all information submitted is considered to be public information.			
Printed Name:	<u>Alicia Charles</u>		
Signature:		Date:	<u>09/26/2022</u>

Please mail completed form along with copies of any additional materials to:
WA State Board on Geographic Names
PO Box 47030
Olympia, WA 98504-7030
(Phone: 360-902-1280 - Fax: 360-902-1778 - Email: bogn@dnr.wa.gov)

A Tahuya slough, once named for the N-word, was farmed by Black pioneer born into slavery

Josh Farley Kitsap Sun

Published 6:00 AM PDT Aug. 4, 2022 | Updated 11:34 AM PDT Aug. 5, 2022

Editor's note: This story deals with past racism and contains a quote that includes a racist term. The term is obscured in the sentence but retained within a quote to directly acknowledge the historical context surrounding the location and the speaker's intentional use of the term to illustrate a piece of Kitsap's past and why the word is avoided today.

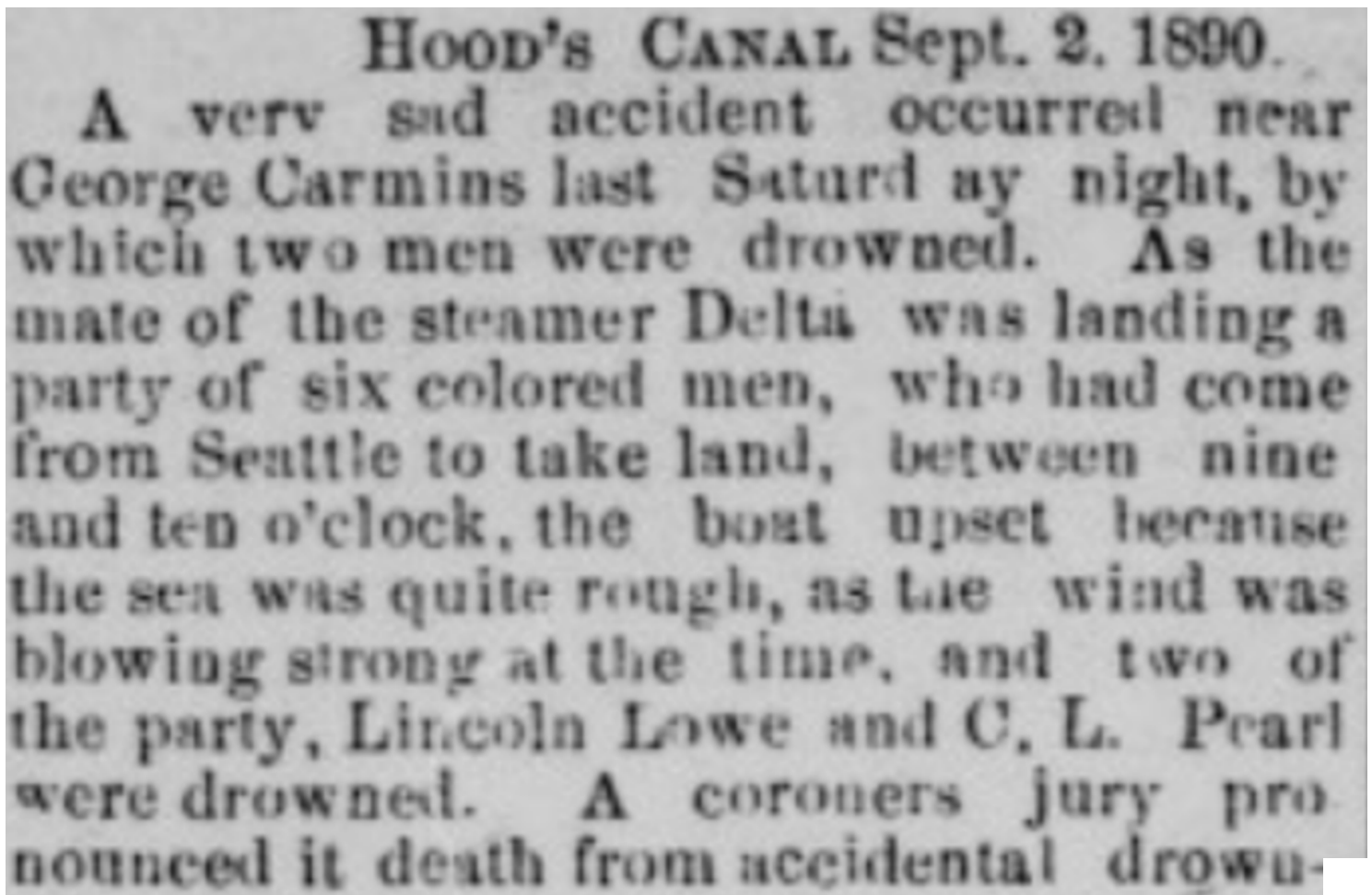
TAHUYA — Wind gusts whipped up saltwater whitecaps as night fell over the great bend of the Hood Canal on Sept. 2, 1890. The steamer Delta, capping a long arch of

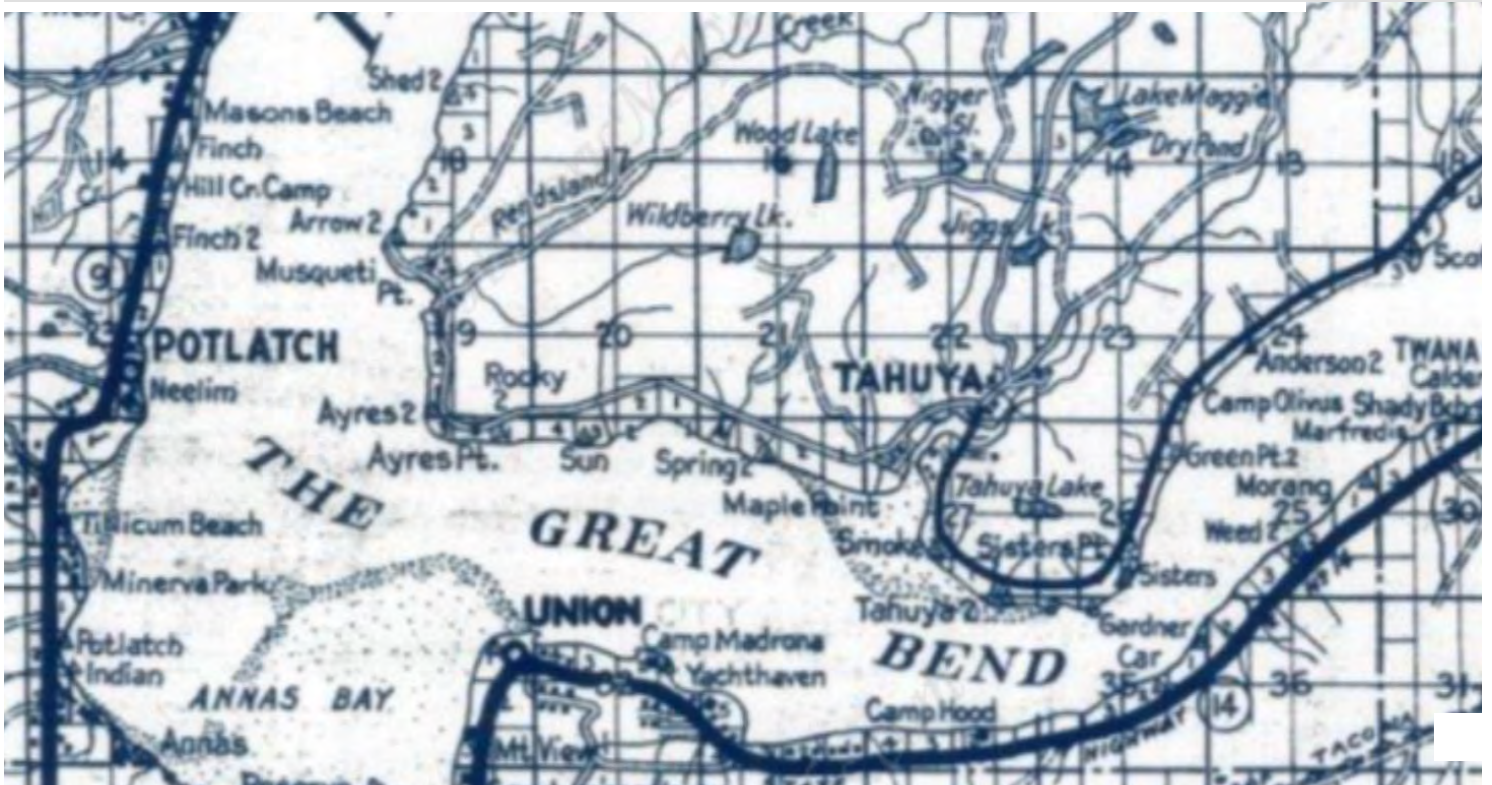
"... Between nine and ten o'clock, the boat upset because the sea was quite rough," a small article in the weekly Mason County Journal on Sept. 5 stated flatly. "... And two of the party ... were drowned."

It appears only one of the survivors, Rodney White, found land to tend to in Tahuya. Born into slavery in Missouri, White went on to develop his own ranch and farm in Mason County while cutting roads through the peninsula that remain in use today.

But sometime following his death, the area where he pulled his team of oxen and raised an orchard was branded a racist title by others in the area. Part of the land is characterized as a "slough," defined by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as a "swamp or shallow lake system, usually a backwater to a larger body of water."

"They started calling it n----- slough," said Akuyea Vargas, cultural custodian of Bremerton's Living Arts Cultural Heritage Center.



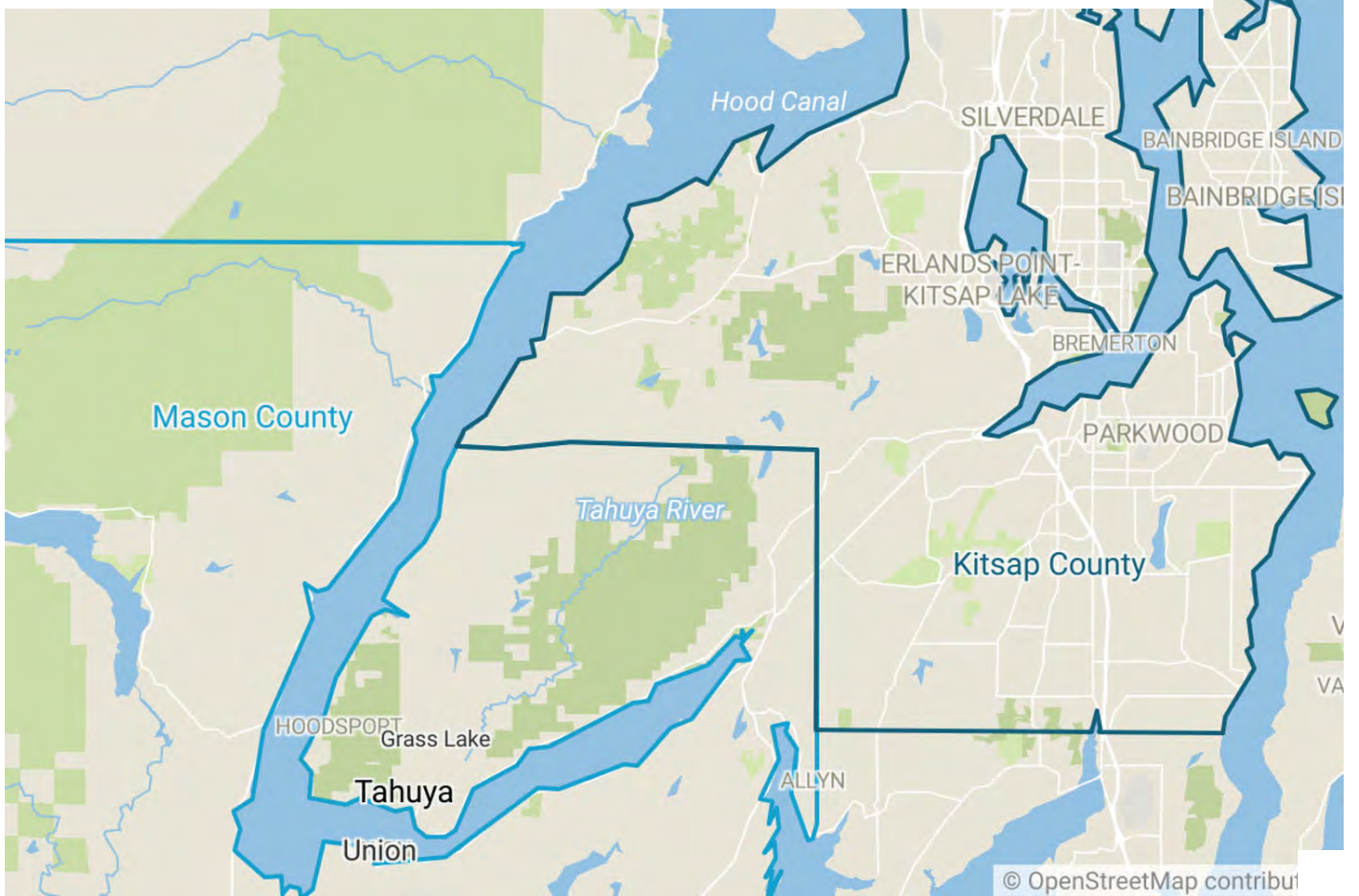


A short story in The Mason County Journal described the drownings of two men after a skiff capsized in Hood Canal on Sept. 2, 1890. It's likely Rodney White, a Black pioneer in the area, was on board and survived. | A 1947 Metsker Map shows a slough west of Maggie Lake named for a racial slur.

The name of the slough was printed on maps throughout the 20th century. And though the name has officially been changed, at least some longtime residents remember its use. It's unknown how often it goes spoken today.

Some believe White's life and legacy in Tahuya are what propelled others to use the phrase. But Vargas says the man, for his part in the history of the larger Kitsap Peninsula on which Tahuya is located, deserves better.

"These pioneers, like Rodney White — we're standing on the foundation they built, yet they've been erased," Vargas said. "We have to investigate, we have to unearth what has happened. Only then can we honor them."

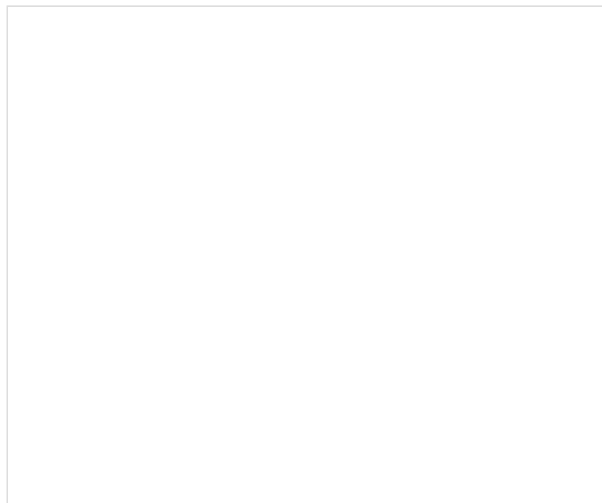


Map of the Kitsap Peninsula

DATAWRAPPER

White's legacy

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homestead out of the untamed wilderness from the time after the boat accident to his death in 1913.

With a "voice like a foghorn," he'd command his livestock, especially his two leading donkeys: "Get on, Baltimore, get on Babe," he would say to them. After White's death, the animals were transported to the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle to live out their days.

That's according to Frances Huson, whose family helped establish the Tahuya community. As a young girl, she remembered White and later told tales of his pioneering spirit to the Mason County Journal.

Interviewed in 1978, she told the paper of a more "cosmopolitan" time in Tahuya.

"We had blacks, Indians, Filipinos, Scots and Scandanavians all living together," she was quoted in the paper as saying. "... A person was either good and fair with you, or they weren't. Color didn't have a thing to do with it, one way or another."

White came to Tahuya seeking acreage under the federal Homestead Act, passed during the Civil War with the aim of distributing western lands. His "four forties," the nickname for the total of 160 acres, were divided between the area west of Maggie Lake and the Tahuya River valley.

“

These pioneers, like Rodney White — we're standing on the foundation they built, yet they've been erased. We have to investigate, we have to unearth what has happened. Only then can we honor them.

Akuyea Vargas, cultural custodian of Bremerton's Living Arts Cultural Heritage Center

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ultimately published by her descendants in the 1992 book "Tales from a Tahuya Log."

White built a barn, cabin, root cellar and chicken coop out of logs and farmed an orchard of fruits that included apples, prunes, pears and peaches, Knowlton wrote. She called him "one of the hardest working men we've ever known."

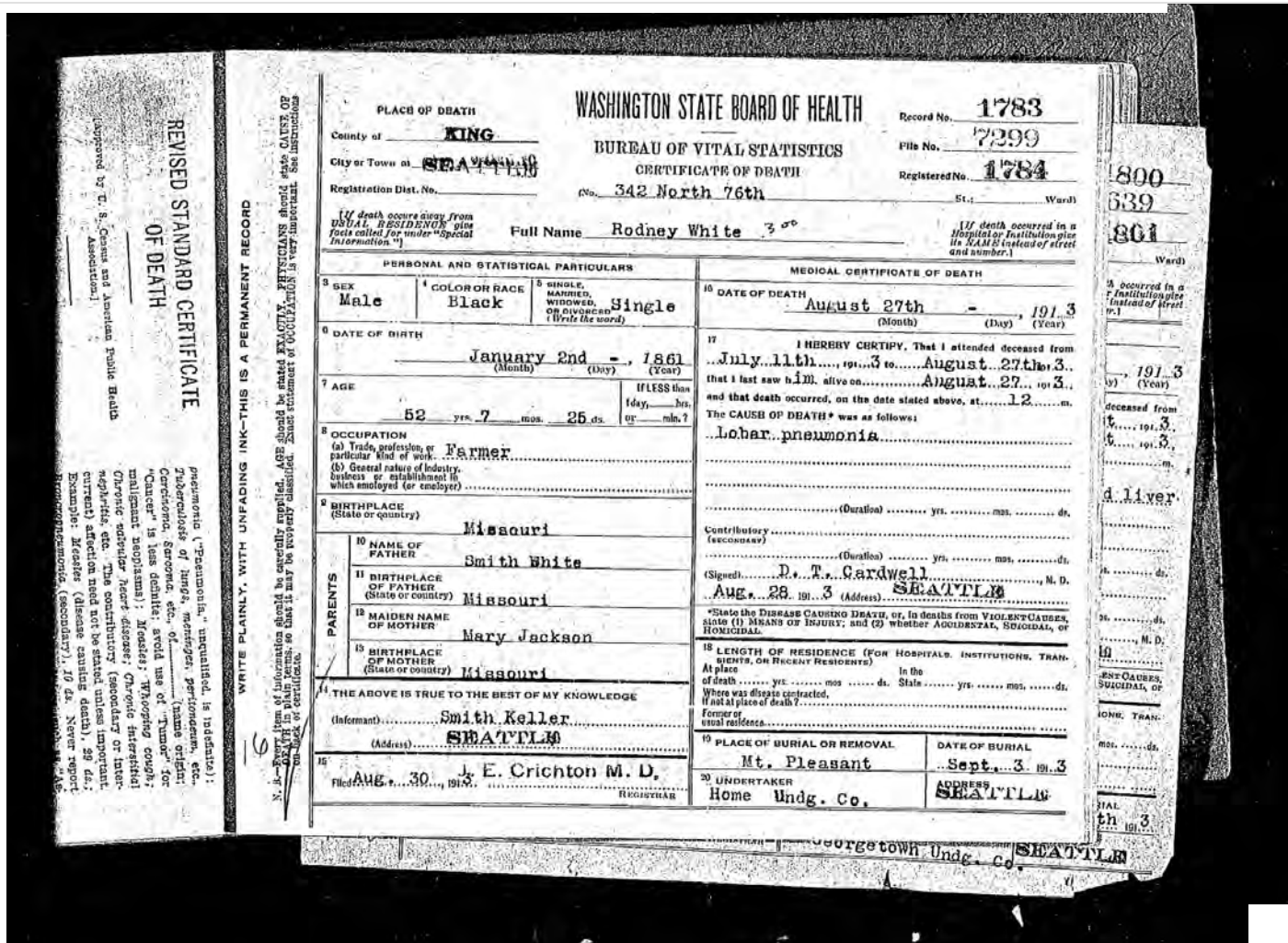
"A pair of kindly brown eyes softened a countenance that otherwise bordered on ferocious, and his face was practically hidden by a stubble of black beard," she wrote. "Rodney's strength seemed almost superhuman, and the work he accomplished with his powerful hands would have been beyond belief if not witnessed."

There were great challenges to farming in the 19th and early 20th centuries on the timber-covered Tahuya River valley, according to Don Cady, a longtime resident of Mason County. Logged or not, the stumps made it next to impossible to plant fields. So Cady said sometimes farmers, like White, would empty ponds and small lakes with the aim of farming their basins.

"They'd dig a ditch, and drain them," he told the Kitsap Sun in May.

Cady believed that was how White shaped the land in the area that became known as the slur-named slough.

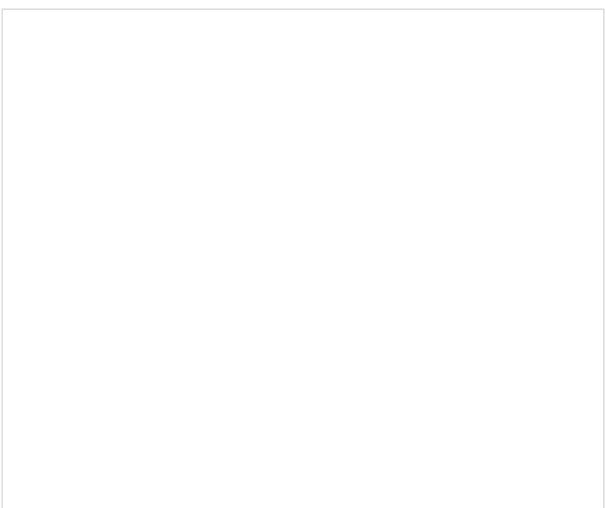
White's death



The death certificate of Rodney White, a single Black farmer, shows he died on Aug. 27, 1913, of lobar pneumonia, at 52. White was buried at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in Seattle.

WASHINGTON SECRETARY OF STATE

Advertisement



"These spells of inebriation were annual occasions and lasted all the way from one to three weeks — as long as the cash held out," she wrote.

It was one such session that led to an illness that caused his death, Knowlton wrote.

He died on Aug. 27, 1913, of lobar pneumonia, according to Washington State Department of Health records. He is buried at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in the Queen Anne Hill neighborhood.

Knowlton shared one more story of White in her log, this one in the realm of the supernatural. She remembered a time, not long after his death, that trappers visited his property and found him there felling trees and at a writing desk in his cabin. It so troubled the men that Knowlton wrote they fled Tahuya believing they'd seen his ghost.

Two years later, a family walked from Dewatto to Tahuya in search of the ghost, Knowlton wrote. While she said others did not find it, perhaps that tale traveled among the locals, embedding White's memory in the area further.

A more sinister reason?





Akuyea Vargas and Lonell Williams look down at Nathaniel Sargent's grave in the Seabeck

When it comes to the naming of the slough, Lonnell Williams worries something more sinister could have occurred. Williams, a retired Bremerton fire captain, has been investigating the life of another Black pioneer in Kitsap, Nathaniel Sargent.

Like White, Nathaniel Sargent was born into slavery. He settled in Seabeck around the same time White came to Tahuya. Sargent was elected a justice of the peace in the late 19th century after homesteading there.

But there is some mystery to Sargent's life and death. He is said to have been buried in the salal-covered Seabeck Cemetery after he died in 1954; yet for years no headstone stood over his grave. Only recently has one been added.

Williams thinks that an area known by the name of a racial slur would've meant something more nefarious happened to Blacks there, that the slough "is where they'd be 'dealt' with," he said.



Jay Allen looks down at the haying taking place in the field below his home as his dog Rosie sits in his lap on July 13.

MEEGAN M. REID/KITSAP SUN

Vargas, of the Living Arts Cultural Heritage Center, accompanied the Kitsap Sun in July to Tahuya. She has long been a leader in researching and bringing to light the area's Black history and made her own journey to West Africa in 2019 for the 400-year anniversary of enslaved Africans arriving in the Americas.

Vargas visited the place Knowlton lived and farmed. It's still a working farm, managed today by longtime residents Jay and Susie Allen.

Jay Allen, who also owns a tree farm, is certain the slur that came to be associated with the slough because that's where White lived, he told Vargas.

that title, she's not ruling out the possibility something worse happened there.

The name vanishes

But there is no slur-named slough in Mason County anymore.

In 1992, the [U.S. Board on Geographic Names](#) established a new name for the slough: Grass Lake.

The entry in its database notes the area was known by the previous name of "Negro Slough."

Missing is an explanation for the name change.

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"There's no documentation (on the database), which is very odd," according to Caleb Maki, the executive secretary of the state Committee on Geographic Names.

The Kitsap Sun requested but has not received a response from the U.S. Board on Geographic Names about the change.

Maki noted that the board decades ago altered any reference to the N-word, changing it to "Negro," and that may explain why it was in the federal system as such.

He noted that, should anyone feel compelled to change the name to honor White, they could do so by applying through the state Committee on Geographic Names.

Both Allen and Vargas would like to see White's name brought back from history, to grace his farm or the area in some way — so he is remembered, and not the slur.

Comments

Received



MASON COUNTY
BOARD
OF
COMMISSIONERS

1ST District
RANDY NEATHERLIN

2ND District
KEVIN SHUTTY

3RD District
SHARON TRASK

Mason County Building 1
411 North Fifth Street
Shelton, WA 98584-3400
(360) 427-9670 ext. 419
Fax (360) 427-8437

January 17, 2023

Washington State Board on Geographic Names
PO Box 47030
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: Geographic Name Proposals for Mason County


Dear Committee Members,

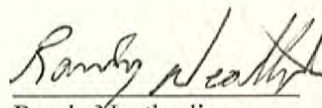
We are writing to express our support for the name changes proposed by the Living Arts Cultural Heritage Project for Mason County. Taking action on these proposals would help honor the memory of both Nathaniel Sargent and Rodney White, African American homesteaders and pioneers who were born into slavery and settled on the Tahuya Peninsula.

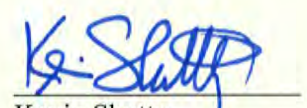
Both made lasting contributions to our community. Mr. Sargent was elected as Justice of the Peace while Mr. White contributed to the development of roadways still used today. In the case of Mr. White, renaming the slough in his honor would recognize a form of institutional racism by removing the racist name for the slough that was in use for decades, including on official mappings of the area. The name change alone cannot undo the damage caused by racism, but it would be a small step forward in our shared responsibility to provide healing and reconciliation.

We appreciate the Committee's consideration of the proposed changes and stand ready to assist in any way possible.

Kindest regards,


Sharon Trask,
Chair


Randy Neatherlin,
Vice-Chair


Kevin Shutty,
Commissioner

DEREK KILMER
6TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE
INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT,
AND RELATED AGENCIES SUBCOMMITTEE
ENERGY AND WATER
DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4706

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5916

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TACOMA, WA 98402
(253) 272-3515

345 6TH STREET
SUITE 500
BREMERTON, WA 98337
(360) 373-9725

www.kilmer.house.gov

January 17, 2023

WA Committee on Geographic Names
Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
P.O. Box 47030
Olympia, WA 98504-7030

To whom it may concern,

I write today to express my support of the renaming of Nathaniel Sargent Lake and Rodney White Slough in Mason County. I commend the Living Arts Cultural Heritage Project for their efforts in bringing to light the area's Black history. The missing history and lack of accurate information about African history and culture needs to be corrected, and thanks to the efforts Alicia Charles and "Akuyea" Karen Vargas, we have the opportunity to do that in our region.

Born into slavery in Missouri, Rodney White came to Mason County in 1890 and had a farm and ranch, and cut some of the roads in the area that are still used to this day. Rodney White was known as a hard worker by residents of the area, and is referenced in a book published in 1992, "Tales from a Tahuya Log". Nathaniel Sargent, also born into slavery migrated without his family to Kitsap County and lived in the county for 72 years. He was a passionate artist and writer and preferred life as a rancher, homesteading roughly 248 acres. He donated land for a school in the Seabeck-Crosby area and was elected Justice of the Peace in Seabeck.

The stories of Rodney White and Nathaniel Sargent are important, they made positive impacts on their communities, but they are not widely known. The efforts to rename these locations in Mason County provide the opportunity to recognize their contributions and impacts that might have been forgotten due to the color of their skin. Again, I am pleased to offer my support for Living Arts Cultural Heritage Project application for the renaming of Nathaniel Sargent Lake and Rodney White Slough in Mason County, and I urge your full and fair consideration of their proposal. Should you have any questions, please contact Katy Crabtree in my Bremerton Office at (360) 838-3156 or Katy.Crabtree@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

From: [Ann Lovejoy](#)
To: [MAKI, CALEB \(DNR\)](#)
Subject: Strongly support renaming the slough
Date: Thursday, January 5, 2023 10:37:49 AM

External Email

Hi Caleb

I am strongly in favor of renaming,
thanks for the opportunity to comment!

I vote for Nathaniel Sargent Lake
and

Rodney White Slough

Thanks again!

Nathaniel Sargent Lake - Mason County



Nathaniel Sargent Lake

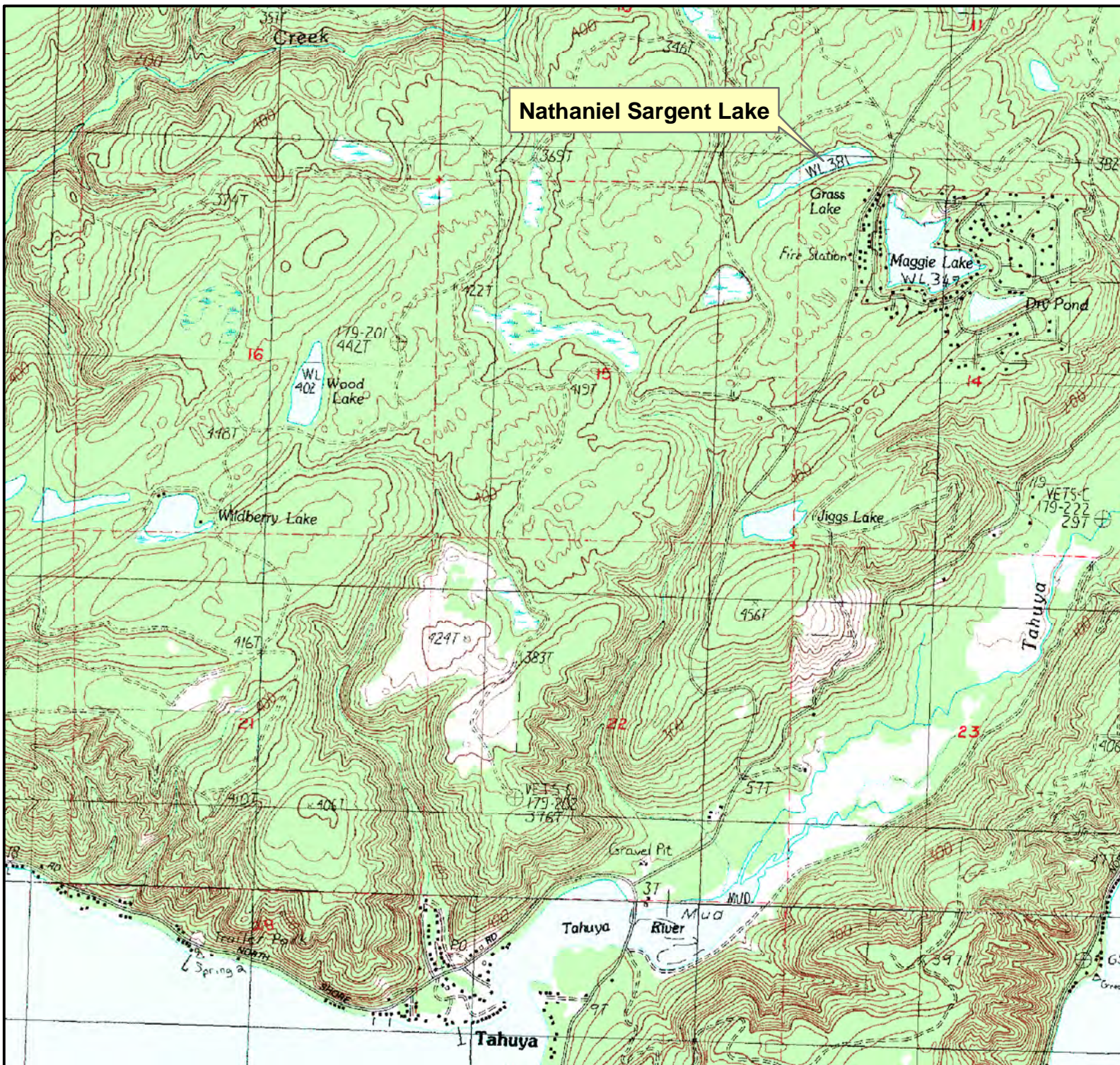
Lake; 10.5 acres, located 2.5 miles NE of the town of Tahuya at 47° 24' 17.539" N, 123° 2' 6.887" W.

The proposed name commemorates Nathaniel Sargent (d. 1954) who was born into slavery.

Nathaniel Sargent settled in Seabeck around the same time Rodney White came to Tahuya. Sargent was elected a justice of the peace in the late 19th century after homesteading there.



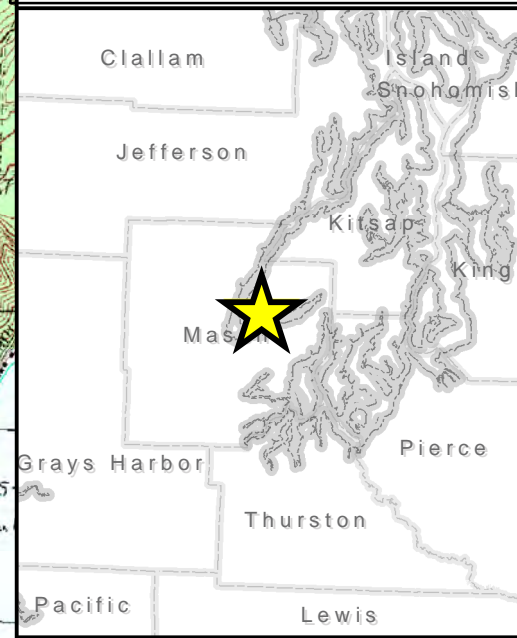
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Nathaniel Sargent settled in Sebeck around the same time Rodney White came to Tahuya. Sargent was elected a justice of the peace in the late 19th century after homesteading there.



Rodney White Slough

Mason County - New Name

Township: 22N

Range: 3W

Section: 15

USGS Quad: Lilliwaup

Location Description: Swamp; 18 acres, located 2 miles N of the town of Tahuya at 47° 23' 53.098" N, 123° 3' 10.473" W.

Proposal Summary: Rodney White Slough: swamp; 18 acres, located 2 miles N of the town of Tahuya at 47° 23' 53.098" N, 123° 3' 10.473" W.; Name commemorates Rodney White (d. 1913) who was born into slavery in Missouri. Rodney White came to Mason County in 1890 and had a farm and ranch, and cut some of the roads in the area that are still used to this day. Following his death, the area in which he had an orchard became known by the racist term of "N---- Slough", which appeared on a 1947 Metsker map of the area.; Mason County, Washington; Section 15, T22N, R3W, Willamette Meridian; 47° 23' 53.098" N, 123° 3' 10.473" W; USGS Map - Lilliwaup 1:24,000.

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U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer - IN FAVOR

Ann Lovejoy - IN FAVOR

WASHINGTON STATE Geographic Name Application



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

Proposed Name: Rodney White Slough

County: Mason

Township: _____ Range: _____ Section(s): _____

Lat. _____ N, Long. _____ W (Begin)

Lat. _____ N, Long. _____ W (End)

New Name

Controversial Name

Name Change

Location Clarification

Spelling Clarification

Description

Type of feature (lake, stream, etc.): Slough

Description of feature (location, length, depth, height, size and/or area covered):
N/A

If a stream, number of months it flows on a yearly basis: _____

Is this feature identified by other names or spellings? Please list variant names:
Grass Lake, Negro Slough, and Nigger Slough

Has it ever been signed, posted, or publicized? If so, when? _____

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Please provide a brief history of the feature and its immediate surroundings, this might include information on the following: 1 Native American; 2 First settlers; 3 Historical background pertinent to feature; 4 History on how the land is/was used; 5 Natural disasters (floods, fires, etc.) 6 Any significant cultural events. If appropriate, geology, flora and fauna. Cite sources. Use additional pages if needed.

Origin of name: See attached article

If a commemorative name, provide a brief summary of the ENTIRE life of the person including how and the length of time he/she was associated with the proposed feature: See Attached article

Justification of Proposed Name

What is the usage of feature? N/A

Please state why the proposed name will best serve the public interest:
Corrective history: reconciliation and healing of oppressive and harmful history that African Americans endured during that period.

How long has the proposed name been in use? By whom? N/A

Please list all sources of information used for your research: (maps, books, articles, periodicals, etc. for background history relating to proposed name) See attached article

What type of support is there for the proposed name?
List all groups and persons who are familiar with the proposed feature and its usage. Please provide names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and his/her association with knowledge of the geographic feature:
Representative Derek Kilmer

Application submitted by:			
Name:	<u>Living Arts Cultural Heritage Project, Alicia Charles and "Akuyea" Karen Vargas</u>		
Address:	<u>14095 Central Valley Rd NW</u>	City:	<u>Poulsbo</u> State: <u>WA</u> Zip: <u>98370</u>
Phone #:	<u>360-616-7040</u>	Email:	<u>alicia_charles78@yahoo.com</u> Date of Application: <u>9/7/2022</u>
I am aware that all information submitted is considered to be public information.			
Printed Name:	<u>Alicia Charles</u>		
Signature:	<u>Alicia Charles</u>	Date:	<u>9/7/2022</u>

Please mail completed form along with copies of any additional materials to:
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PO Box 47030
Olympia, WA 98504-7030
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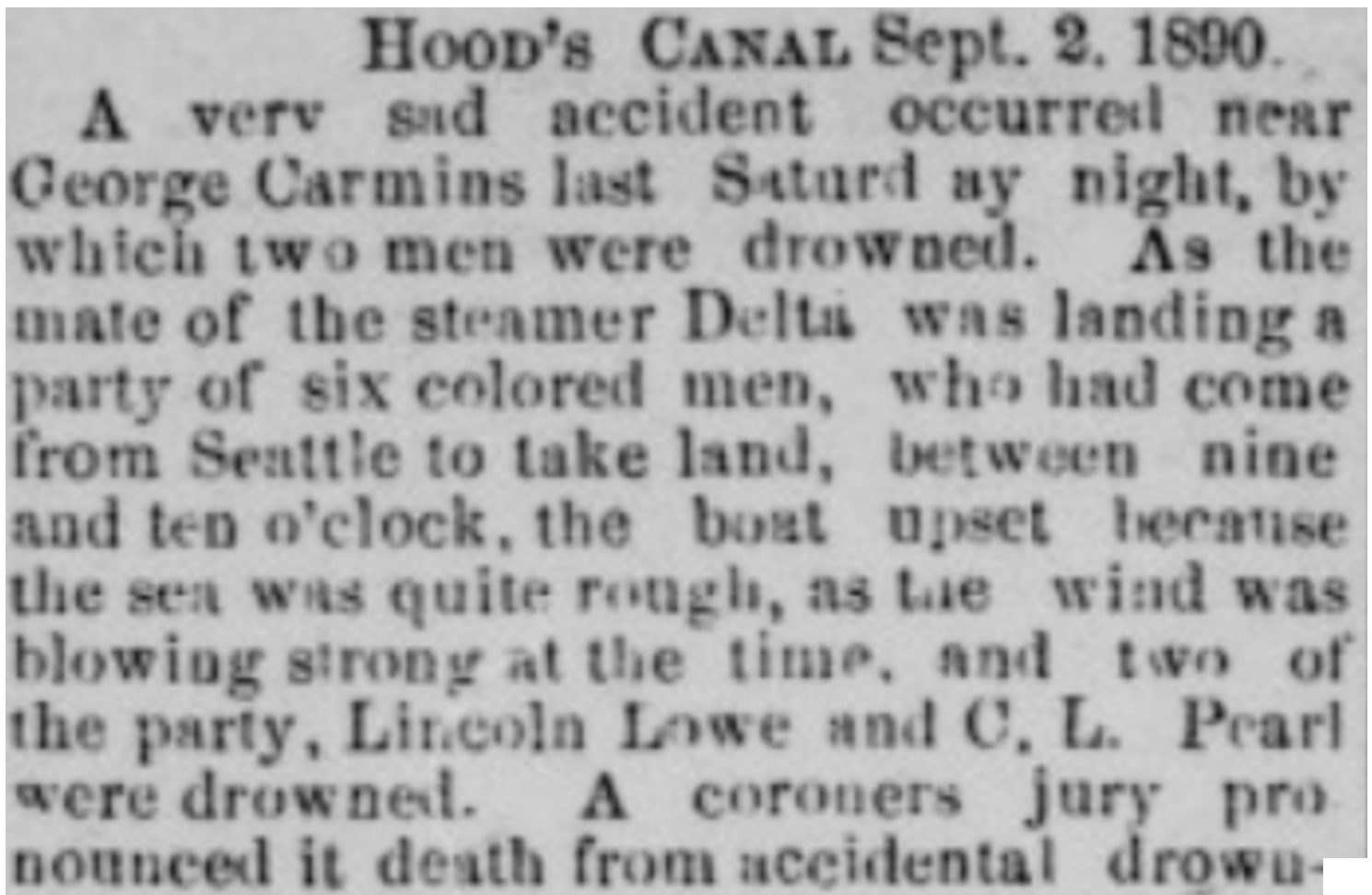
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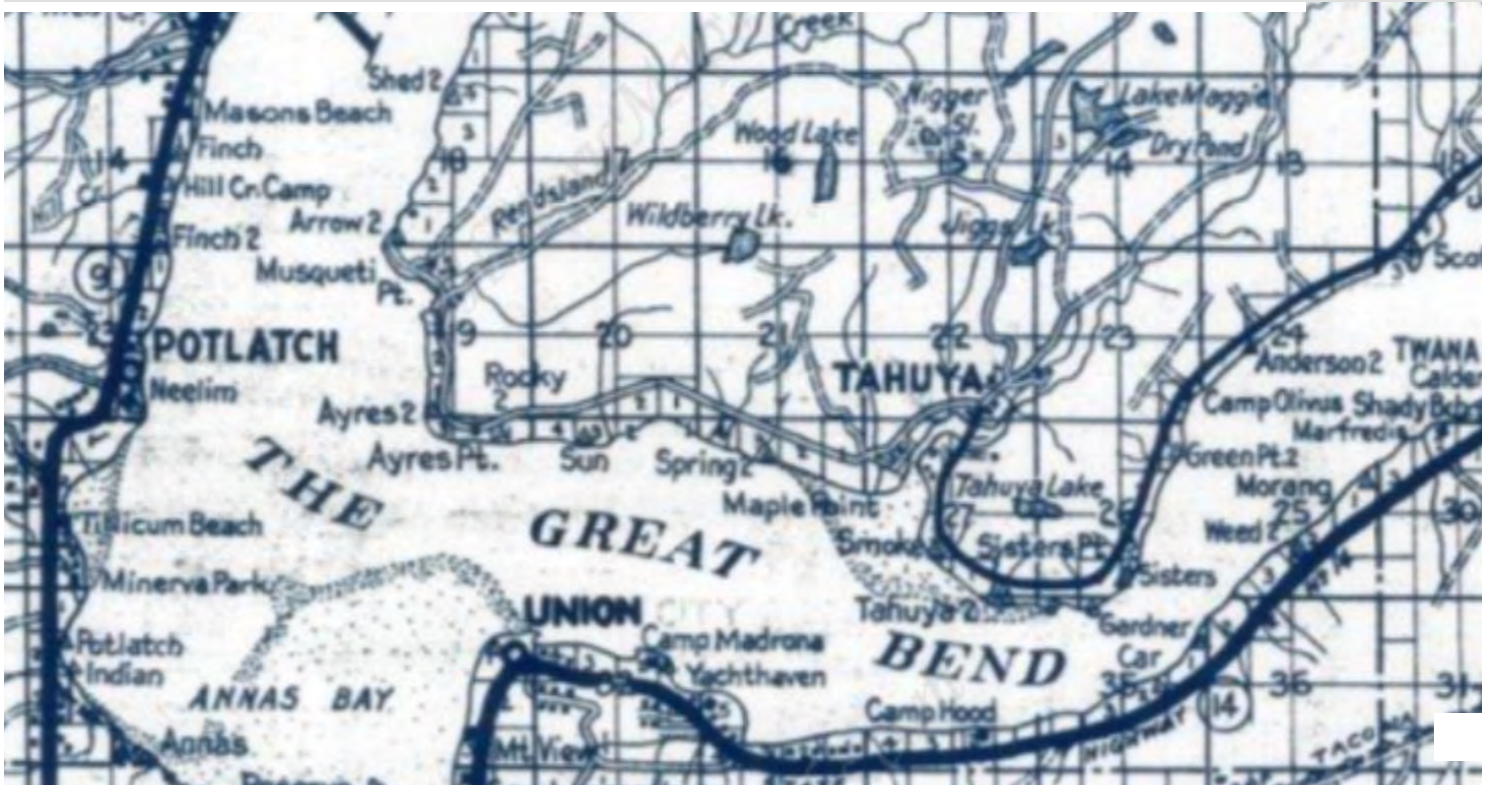
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"They started calling it n----- slough," said Akuyea Vargas, cultural custodian of Bremerton's Living Arts Cultural Heritage Center.



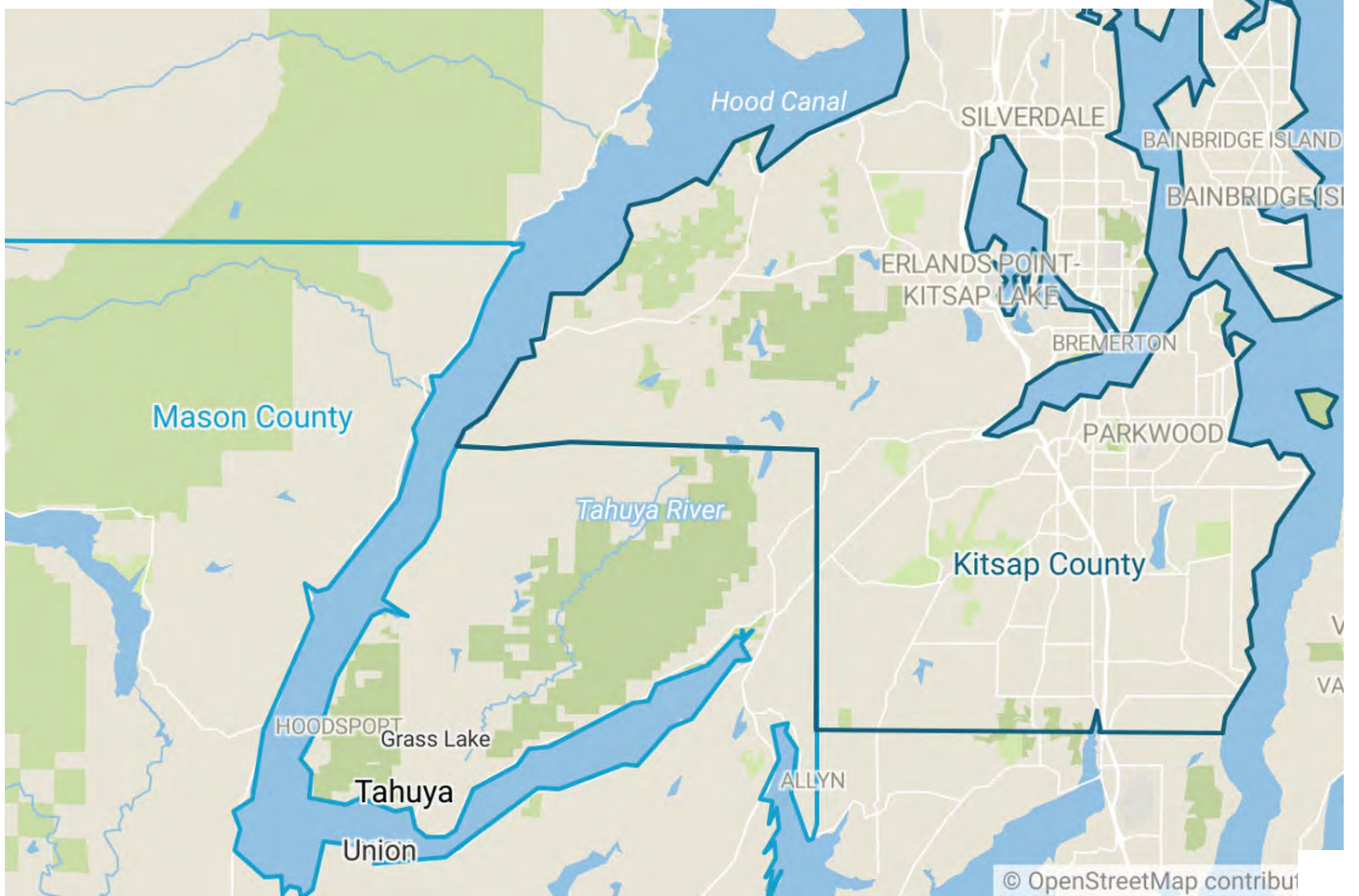


A short story in The Mason County Journal described the drownings of two men after a skiff capsized in Hood Canal on Sept. 2, 1890. It's likely Rodney White, a Black pioneer in the area, was on board and survived. | A 1947 Metsker Map shows a slough west of Maggie Lake named for a racial slur.

The name of the slough was printed on maps throughout the 20th century. And though the name has officially been changed, at least some longtime residents remember its use. It's unknown how often it goes spoken today.

Some believe White's life and legacy in Tahuya are what propelled others to use the phrase. But Vargas says the man, for his part in the history of the larger Kitsap Peninsula on which Tahuya is located, deserves better.

"These pioneers, like Rodney White — we're standing on the foundation they built, yet they've been erased," Vargas said. "We have to investigate, we have to unearth what has happened. Only then can we honor them."

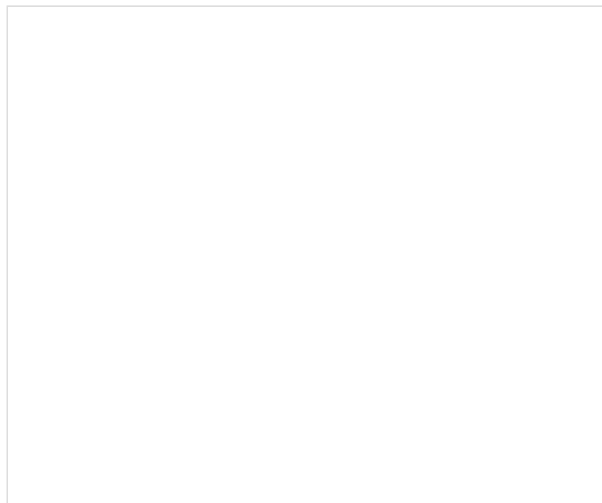


Map of the Kitsap Peninsula

DATAWRAPPER

White's legacy

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homestead out of the untamed wilderness from the time after the boat accident to his death in 1913.

With a "voice like a foghorn," he'd command his livestock, especially his two leading donkeys: "Get on, Baltimore, get on Babe," he would say to them. After White's death, the animals were transported to the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle to live out their days.

That's according to Frances Huson, whose family helped establish the Tahuya community. As a young girl, she remembered White and later told tales of his pioneering spirit to the Mason County Journal.

Interviewed in 1978, she told the paper of a more "cosmopolitan" time in Tahuya.

"We had blacks, Indians, Filipinos, Scots and Scandanavians all living together," she was quoted in the paper as saying. "... A person was either good and fair with you, or they weren't. Color didn't have a thing to do with it, one way or another."

White came to Tahuya seeking acreage under the federal Homestead Act, passed during the Civil War with the aim of distributing western lands. His "four forties," the nickname for the total of 160 acres, were divided between the area west of Maggie Lake and the Tahuya River valley.

“

These pioneers, like Rodney White — we're standing on the foundation they built, yet they've been erased. We have to investigate, we have to unearth what has happened. Only then can we honor them.

Akuyea Vargas, cultural custodian of Bremerton's Living Arts Cultural Heritage Center

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ultimately published by her descendants in the 1992 book "[Tales from a Tahuya Log](#)."

White built a barn, cabin, root cellar and chicken coop out of logs and farmed an orchard of fruits that included apples, prunes, pears and peaches, Knowlton wrote. She called him "one of the hardest working men we've ever known."

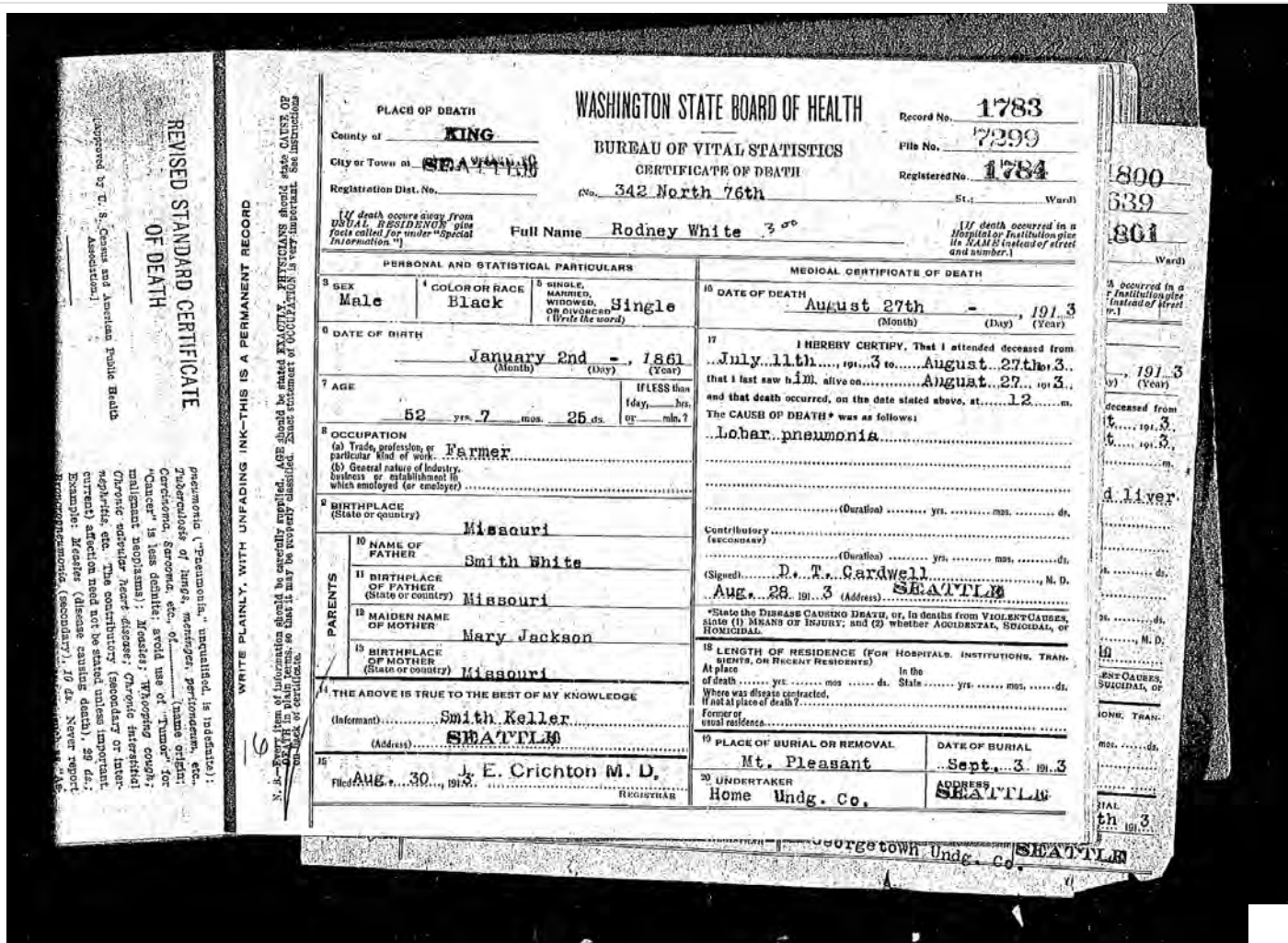
"A pair of kindly brown eyes softened a countenance that otherwise bordered on ferocious, and his face was practically hidden by a stubble of black beard," she wrote. "Rodney's strength seemed almost superhuman, and the work he accomplished with his powerful hands would have been beyond belief if not witnessed."

There were great challenges to farming in the 19th and early 20th centuries on the timber-covered Tahuya River valley, according to Don Cady, a longtime resident of Mason County. Logged or not, the stumps made it next to impossible to plant fields. So Cady said sometimes farmers, like White, would empty ponds and small lakes with the aim of farming their basins.

"They'd dig a ditch, and drain them," he told the Kitsap Sun in May.

Cady believed that was how White shaped the land in the area that became known as the slur-named slough.

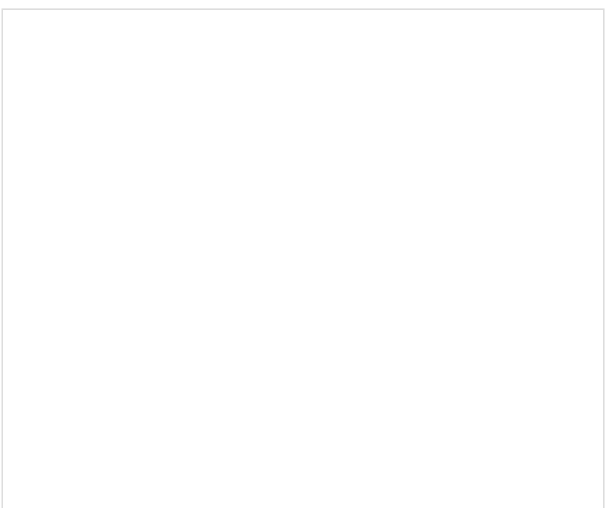
White's death



The death certificate of Rodney White, a single Black farmer, shows he died on Aug. 27, 1913, of lobar pneumonia, at 52. White was buried at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in Seattle.

WASHINGTON SECRETARY OF STATE

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"These spells of inebriation were annual occasions and lasted all the way from one to three weeks — as long as the cash held out," she wrote.

It was one such session that led to an illness that caused his death, Knowlton wrote.

He died on Aug. 27, 1913, of lobar pneumonia, according to Washington State Department of Health records. He is buried at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in the Queen Anne Hill neighborhood.

Knowlton shared one more story of White in her log, this one in the realm of the supernatural. She remembered a time, not long after his death, that trappers visited his property and found him there felling trees and at a writing desk in his cabin. It so troubled the men that Knowlton wrote they fled Tahuya believing they'd seen his ghost.

Two years later, a family walked from Dewatto to Tahuya in search of the ghost, Knowlton wrote. While she said others did not find it, perhaps that tale traveled among the locals, embedding White's memory in the area further.

A more sinister reason?





Akuyea Vargas and Lonell Williams look down at Nathaniel Sargent's grave in the Seabeck

When it comes to the naming of the slough, Lonnell Williams worries something more sinister could have occurred. Williams, a retired Bremerton fire captain, has been investigating the life of another Black pioneer in Kitsap, Nathaniel Sargent.

Like White, Nathaniel Sargent was born into slavery. He settled in Seabeck around the same time White came to Tahuya. Sargent was elected a justice of the peace in the late 19th century after homesteading there.

But there is some mystery to Sargent's life and death. He is said to have been buried in the salal-covered Seabeck Cemetery after he died in 1954; yet for years no headstone stood over his grave. Only recently has one been added.

Williams thinks that an area known by the name of a racial slur would've meant something more nefarious happened to Blacks there, that the slough "is where they'd be 'dealt' with," he said.



Jay Allen looks down at the haying taking place in the field below his home as his dog Rosie sits in his lap on July 13.

MEEGAN M. REID/KITSAP SUN

Vargas, of the Living Arts Cultural Heritage Center, accompanied the Kitsap Sun in July to Tahuya. She has long been a leader in researching and bringing to light the area's Black history and made her own journey to West Africa in 2019 for the 400-year anniversary of enslaved Africans arriving in the Americas.

Vargas visited the place Knowlton lived and farmed. It's still a working farm, managed today by longtime residents Jay and Susie Allen.

Jay Allen, who also owns a tree farm, is certain the slur that came to be associated with the slough because that's where White lived, he told Vargas.

that title, she's not ruling out the possibility something worse happened there.

The name vanishes

But there is no slur-named slough in Mason County anymore.

In 1992, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names established a new name for the slough: Grass Lake.

The entry in its database notes the area was known by the previous name of "Negro Slough."

Missing is an explanation for the name change.

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"There's no documentation (on the database), which is very odd," according to Caleb Maki, the executive secretary of the state Committee on Geographic Names.

The Kitsap Sun requested but has not received a response from the U.S. Board on Geographic Names about the change.

Maki noted that the board decades ago altered any reference to the N-word, changing it to "Negro," and that may explain why it was in the federal system as such.

He noted that, should anyone feel compelled to change the name to honor White, they could do so by applying through the state Committee on Geographic Names.

Both Allen and Vargas would like to see White's name brought back from history, to grace his farm or the area in some way — so he is remembered, and not the slur.

Comments

Received



MASON COUNTY
BOARD
OF
COMMISSIONERS

1ST District
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2ND District
KEVIN SHUTTY

3RD District
SHARON TRASK

Mason County Building 1
411 North Fifth Street
Shelton, WA 98584-3400
(360) 427-9670 ext. 419
Fax (360) 427-8437

January 17, 2023

Washington State Board on Geographic Names
PO Box 47030
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: Geographic Name Proposals for Mason County

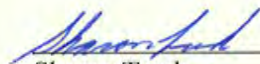
Dear Committee Members,

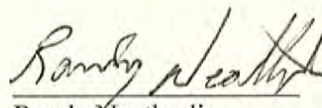
We are writing to express our support for the name changes proposed by the Living Arts Cultural Heritage Project for Mason County. Taking action on these proposals would help honor the memory of both Nathaniel Sargent and Rodney White, African American homesteaders and pioneers who were born into slavery and settled on the Tahuya Peninsula.

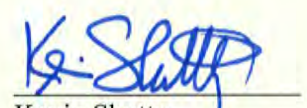
Both made lasting contributions to our community. Mr. Sargent was elected as Justice of the Peace while Mr. White contributed to the development of roadways still used today. In the case of Mr. White, renaming the slough in his honor would recognize a form of institutional racism by removing the racist name for the slough that was in use for decades, including on official mappings of the area. The name change alone cannot undo the damage caused by racism, but it would be a small step forward in our shared responsibility to provide healing and reconciliation.

We appreciate the Committee's consideration of the proposed changes and stand ready to assist in any way possible.

Kindest regards,


Sharon Trask,
Chair


Randy Neatherlin,
Vice-Chair


Kevin Shutty,
Commissioner

DEREK KILMER
6TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
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INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT,
AND RELATED AGENCIES SUBCOMMITTEE
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www.kilmer.house.gov

January 17, 2023

WA Committee on Geographic Names
Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
P.O. Box 47030
Olympia, WA 98504-7030

To whom it may concern,

I write today to express my support of the renaming of Nathaniel Sargent Lake and Rodney White Slough in Mason County. I commend the Living Arts Cultural Heritage Project for their efforts in bringing to light the area's Black history. The missing history and lack of accurate information about African history and culture needs to be corrected, and thanks to the efforts Alicia Charles and "Akuyea" Karen Vargas, we have the opportunity to do that in our region.

Born into slavery in Missouri, Rodney White came to Mason County in 1890 and had a farm and ranch, and cut some of the roads in the area that are still used to this day. Rodney White was known as a hard worker by residents of the area, and is referenced in a book published in 1992, "Tales from a Tahuya Log". Nathaniel Sargent, also born into slavery migrated without his family to Kitsap County and lived in the county for 72 years. He was a passionate artist and writer and preferred life as a rancher, homesteading roughly 248 acres. He donated land for a school in the Seabeck-Crosby area and was elected Justice of the Peace in Seabeck.

The stories of Rodney White and Nathaniel Sargent are important, they made positive impacts on their communities, but they are not widely known. The efforts to rename these locations in Mason County provide the opportunity to recognize their contributions and impacts that might have been forgotten due to the color of their skin. Again, I am pleased to offer my support for Living Arts Cultural Heritage Project application for the renaming of Nathaniel Sargent Lake and Rodney White Slough in Mason County, and I urge your full and fair consideration of their proposal. Should you have any questions, please contact Katy Crabtree in my Bremerton Office at (360) 838-3156 or Katy.Crabtree@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

From: [Ann Lovejoy](#)
To: [MAKI, CALEB \(DNR\)](#)
Subject: Strongly support renaming the slough
Date: Thursday, January 5, 2023 10:37:49 AM

External Email

Hi Caleb

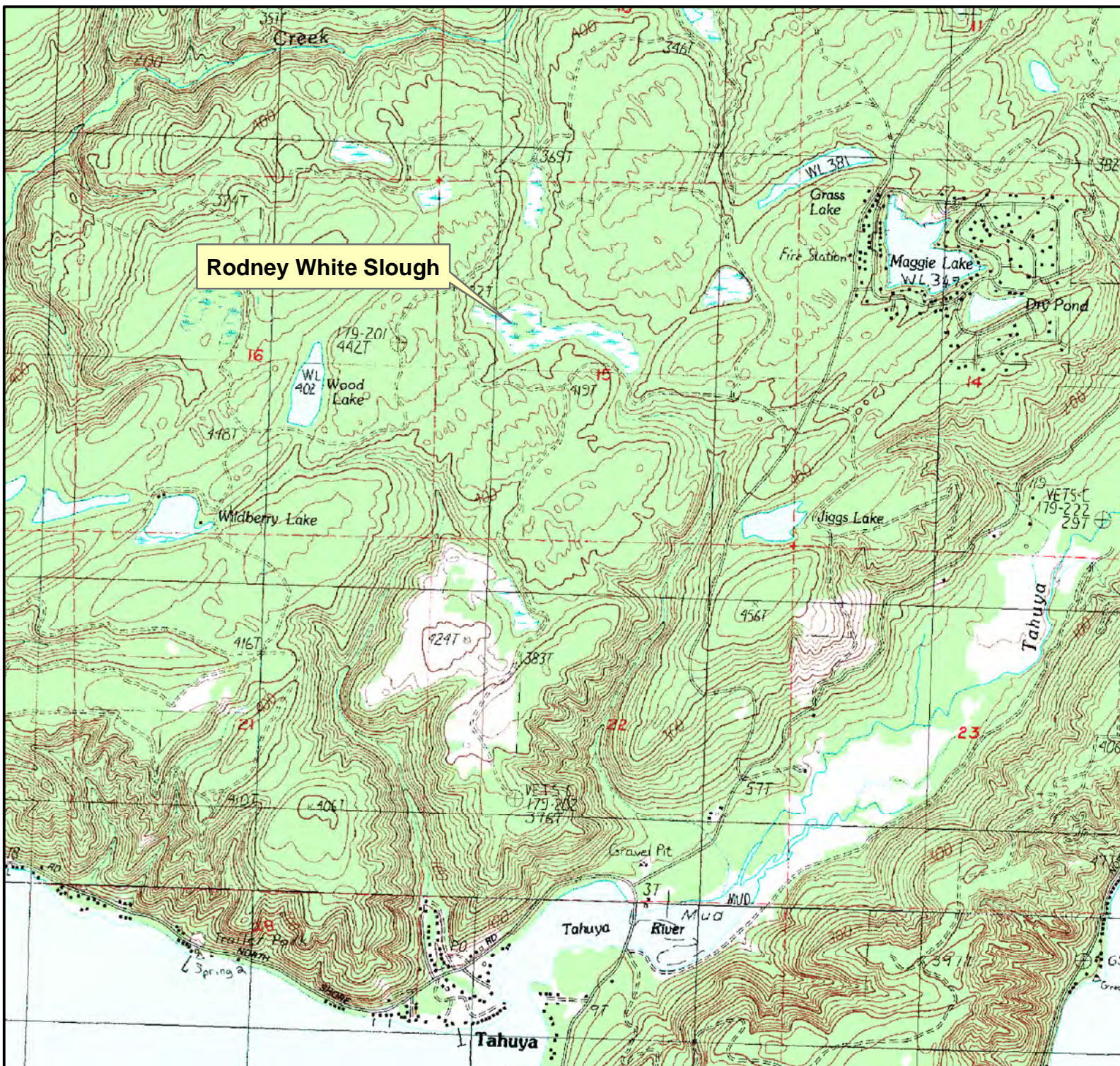
I am strongly in favor of renaming,
thanks for the opportunity to comment!

I vote for Nathaniel Sargent Lake
and

Rodney White Slough

Thanks again!

Rodney White Slough - Mason County

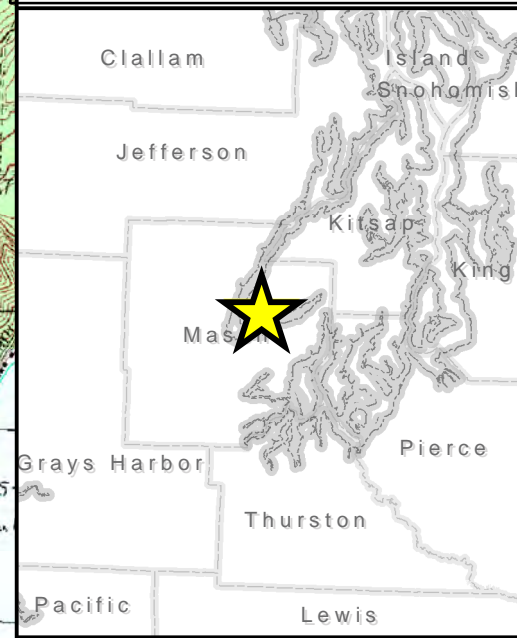


Swamp; 18 acres, located 2 miles N of the town of Tahuya at 47° 23' 53.098" N, 123° 3' 10.473" W.

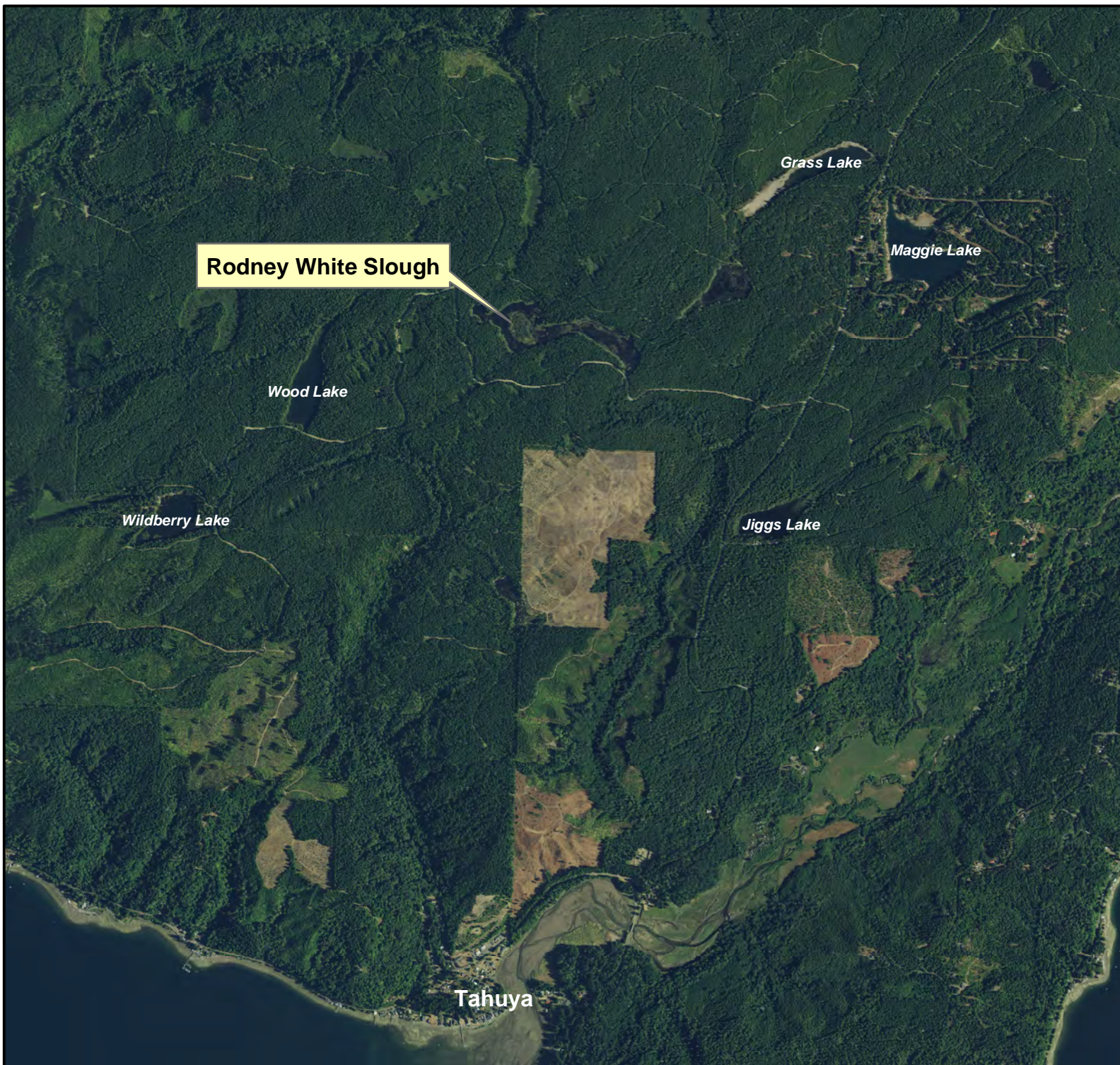
The proposed name commemorates Rodney White (d. 1913) who was born into slavery in Missouri.

Rodney White came to Mason County in 1890 and had a farm and ranch, and cut some of the roads in the area that are still used to this day. Rodney White was known as a hard worker by residents of the area, and is referenced in a book published in 1992, "Tales from a Tahuya Log".

Following his death, the area in which he had an orchard became known by the racist term of "N----- Slough", which appeared on a 1947 Metsker map of the area.



Rodney White Slough - Mason County



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South Tucannon Spring

Garfield County - Name Change

Township: 8N

Range: 42E

Section: 31

USGS Quad: Diamond Peak

Location Description: Spring; located in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness area in the Umatilla National Forest at 46° 7' 26.50" N, 117° 35' 11.24" W.

Proposal Summary: South Tucannon Spring: spring; located in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness area in the Umatilla National Forest at 46° 7' 26.50" N, 117° 35' 11.24" W.; The name was selected by the U.S. Dept. of Interior as part of an effort to replace feature names containing the word "squaw"; Garfield County, Washington; Section 31, T8N, R42E, Willamette Meridian; 46° 7' 26.50" N, 117° 35' 11.24" W USGS Map - Diamond Peak 1:24,000.

The name was selected by the U.S. Dept. of Interior as part of an effort to replace feature names containing the word "squaw".

Proponent:

Secretarial Order 3404

Proposal Received: 5/17/2022

Initial Consideration: 7/26/2022

Final Consideration: 01/19/2023

WA Committee Decision: Approved

WA Board Decision:

US Board Decision:

Opinions:



Press Releases

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Interior Department Announces Next Steps to Remove “Sq___” from Federal Lands

Engagement to include Tribal consultations and public comment period

2/22/2022

Last edited 2/22/2022

Date: Tuesday, February 22, 2022

Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

WASHINGTON — The Department of the Interior today announced a [list of candidate replacement names](#) for more than 660 geographic features with the name “squaw,” which was officially declared a derogatory term as a result of [Secretary’s Order 3404](#). The Department has initiated [Tribal consultations](#) and an opportunity for public comment to recommend and review proposed replacement names.

Secretary’s Order 3404 established the 13-member Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force, which includes representatives from the Department’s Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Safety and

Environmental Enforcement, National Park Service, Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation, and U.S. Geological Survey. The Department of Agriculture’s U.S. Forest Service is also a member. The Task Force’s first action was to finalize a decision to replace a full spelling of the derogatory term with “sq___” for all official related communications.

“Words matter, particularly in our work to make our nation’s public lands and waters accessible and welcoming to people of all backgrounds. Consideration of these replacements is a big step forward in our efforts to remove derogatory terms whose expiration dates are long overdue,” said **Secretary Deb Haaland**.

“Throughout this process, broad engagement with Tribes, stakeholders and the general public will help us advance our goals of equity and inclusion.”

Prior to the implementation of the Task Force, changes to derogatory names for geographic features were submitted as a proposal to the Board on Geographic Names, which then worked through its deliberative process. The BGN has received 261 proposals to replace geographic features with sq___ in the name in the past 20 years.

Under SO 3404, the Task Force will recommend replacements for more than 660 geographic features to the BGN in a matter of months, starting from a list of five candidate names for each individual feature. This process stands to significantly advance and accelerate the name change process across the nation.

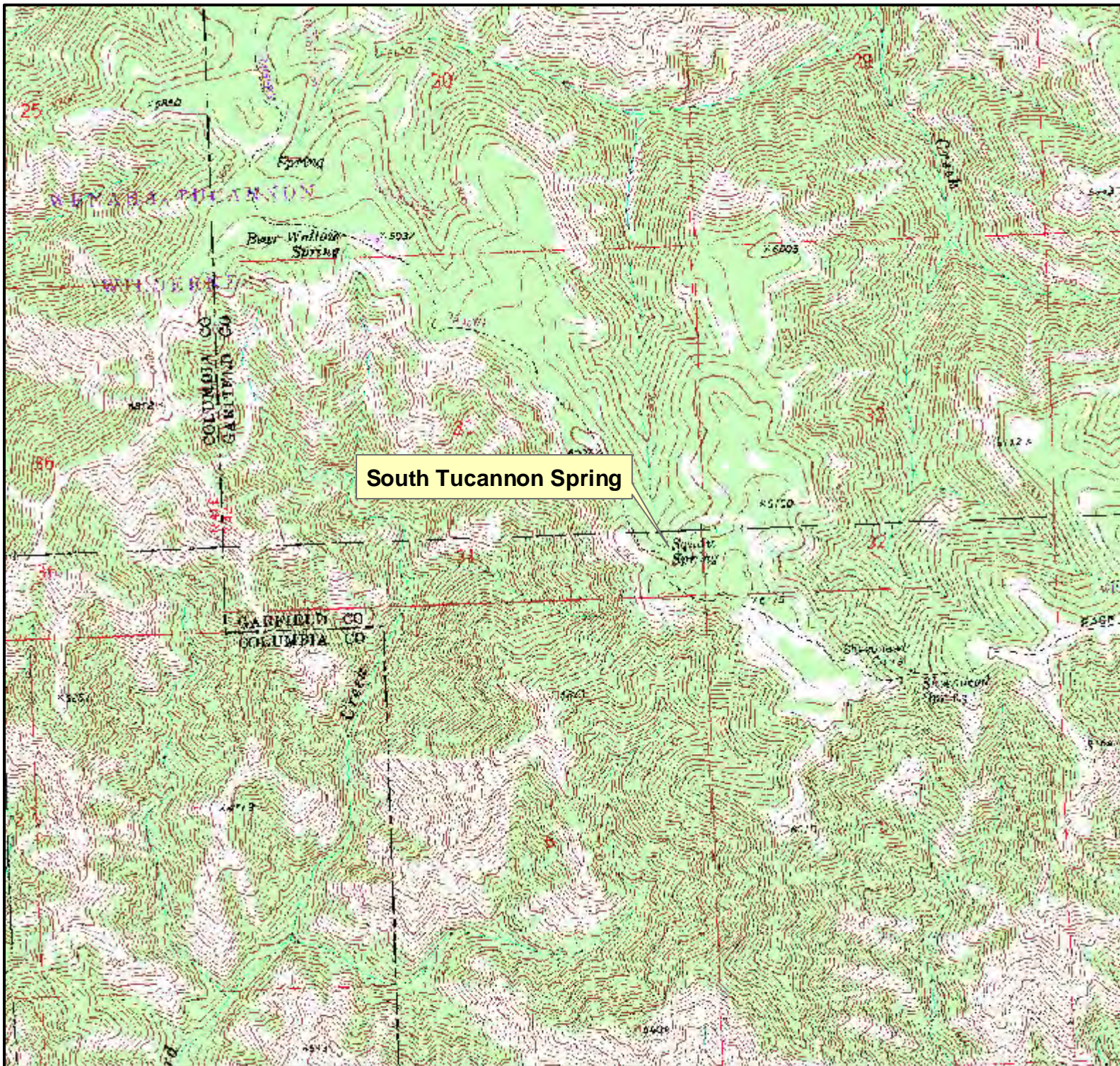
Tribal consultations and public comment period announced in the *Federal Register* today will give the Task Force the chance to seek additional candidate names and feedback from Tribes and the public. The Task Force will prioritize these names in its review and provide a final recommendation for the BGN to vote on when it convenes later this year.

###

Was this page helpful?

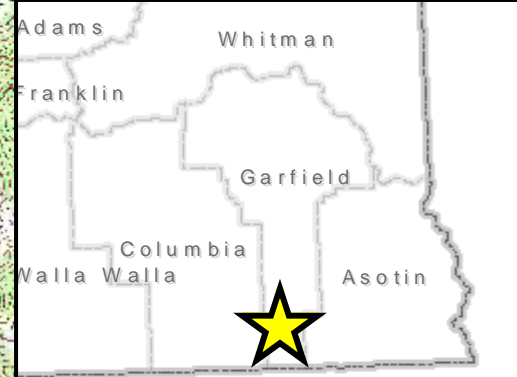
Yes

South Tucannon Spring - Garfield County



Spring; located in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness area in the Umatilla National Forest at 46° 7' 26.50" N, 117° 35' 11.24" W.

The name was selected by the U.S. Dept. of Interior as part of an effort to replace feature names containing the word "sq___".



Gooseberry Creek

Okanogan County - Name Change

Township: 36N

Range: 30E

Section: 36

USGS Quad: Bailey Creek

Location Description: Stream; 2 miles long; heads at 48° 35' 18.16" N, 119° 0' 6.49" W and flows S to enter Frosty Creek at 48° 33' 52.70" N, 119° 0' 17.00" W 1.5 miles W of the town of Aeneas.

Proposal Summary: Gooseberry Creek: stream; 2 miles long; heads at 48° 35' 18.16" N, 119° 0' 6.49" W and flows S to enter Frosty Creek at 48° 33' 52.70" N, 119° 0' 17.00" W 1.5 miles W of the town of Aeneas.; The name was selected by the U.S. Dept. of Interior as part of an effort to replace feature names containing the word "squaw".; Okanogan County, Washington; Section 17, T31N, R30E, Willamette Meridian; 48° 10' 58.99" N, 119° 3' 52.09" W USGS Map - Bailey Creek 1:24,000.

The name was selected by the U.S. Dept. of Interior as part of an effort to replace feature names containing the word "squaw".

Proponent:

Secretarial Order 3404

Proposal Received: 5/17/2022

Initial Consideration: 7/26/2022

Final Consideration: 01/19/2023

WA Committee Decision: Approved

WA Board Decision:

US Board Decision:

Opinions:



Press Releases

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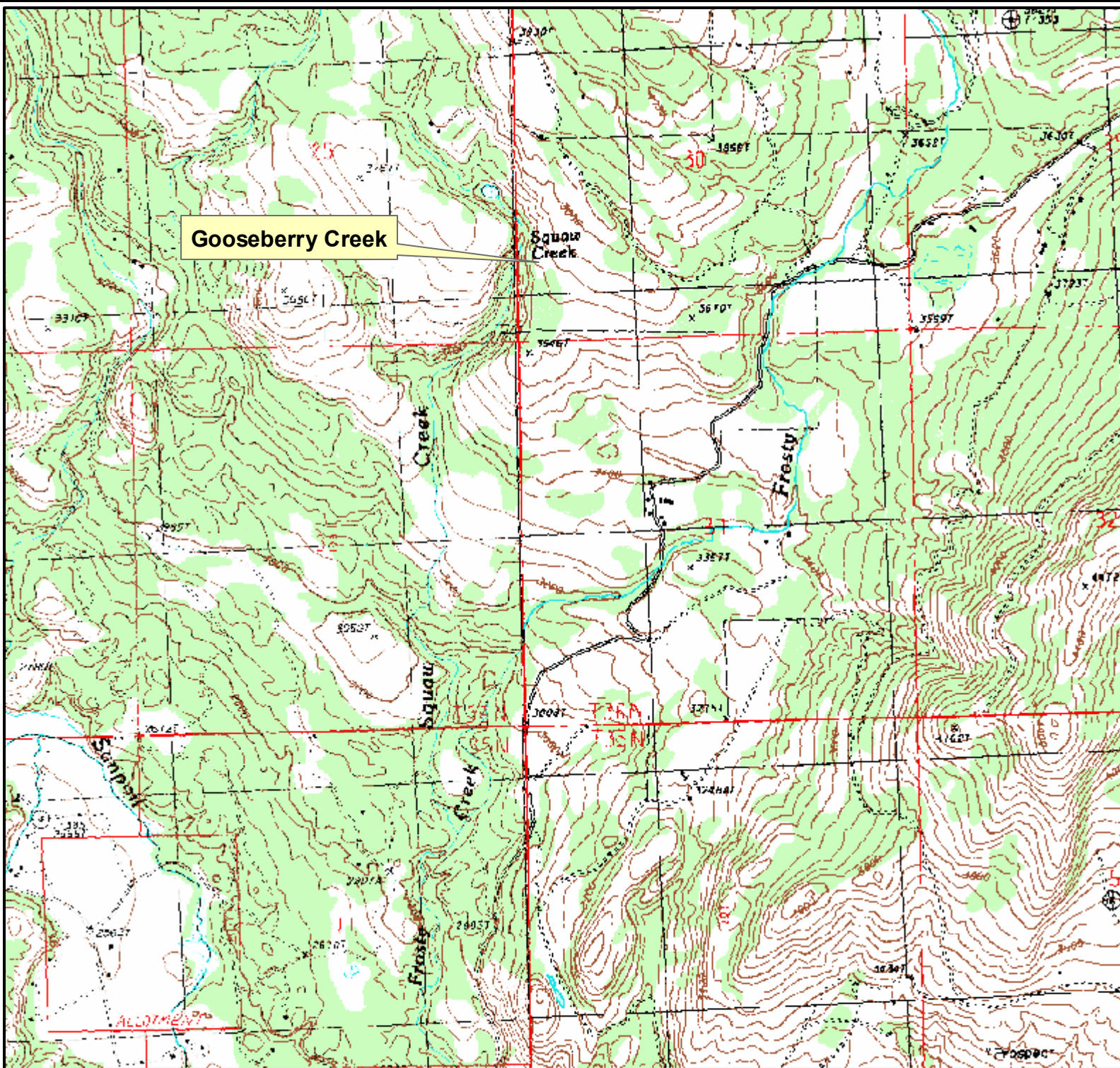
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