



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

15-31 October 22, 2015

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## North Cascades National Park Service Complex News Release

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### **National Park Service to Recommend Renaming Lake in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area**

**Sedro Woolley, WA**– After reexamining historic records and uncovering previously overlooked evidence, the National Park Service will recommend that the U.S. Board on Geographic Names change the names of a lake and creek located in the Stehekin Valley within Lake Chelan National Recreation Area in Washington State from Coon Lake and Coon Creek to Howard Lake and Howard Creek.

Wilson Howard was an African American prospector, who held several mining claims near the lake in the 1890s. The National Park Service received evidence of those claims from the Washington State Bureau of Mines this month.

This issue of the lake and creek names first arose in 2007 when a Seattle resident petitioned the Washington State Board on Geographic Names to change the names of the features, asserting that they were named with derogatory intent in reference to Mr. Howard. The state board agreed, and adopted the new names of Howard Lake and Howard Creek.

In 2009, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names considered a petition to make the same change. An ensuing review of the evidence conducted by the National Park Service found no written documentation supporting a connection between Mr. Howard and the lake or creek, or the assertion that they were named as a racial slur. As a result of those findings, the National Park Service recommended that the U.S. Board not change the names. Recent references to that 2009 recommendation prompted the NPS to reexamine the record and have resulted in the National Park Service's change in position.

“In our current review of the historic record, we realized that our previous research had used a secondary source of documentation for the area’s mining claims, which the newly uncovered records indicate were incomplete and too vague to show the connection Mr. Howard had to the lake,” said Karen Taylor-Goodrich, superintendent of North Cascades National Park Complex.

“We recognize that our previous decision on this issue overlooked relevant information, and would like to offer our thanks to the citizens who researched and pursued this issue. It is our

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opinion now that recognizing Mr. Howard for his role in the development of the Stehekin Valley by renaming the lake and creek in his honor is entirely appropriate.”

The National Park Service will make its recommendation to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names in the near future.

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