

CROOK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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In 1868, the Wyoming Territory was created. In 1885, Crook County was created. In 1890, the Territory of Wyoming obtained statehood. In 1906, the first national monument, Devils Tower, was established. The United States was the first country in the world to set aside its' most significant places as national park units so they could be enjoyed by all.¹

Over the centuries, many people have passed through or have inhabited the region now known as Crook County. The many Native American tribes who were in the area called the summit different names over time. By establishing the summit and the surrounding grounds as Devils Tower National Monument, the decision was made as to its official name.

The Crook County Commission would like to submit comments from the public it began to solicit since March 2015. A survey was developed and was inserted in the local newspapers, put on Crook County's website and each Commissioner hand delivered comment sheets throughout the county to the area businesses and town halls. We received comments from within the County and from around the world. As of August 3, 2015, we have received 954 comments about the summit: 34 approve the name change and 886 oppose the name change. For changing the name of the settlement called Devils Tower, we received 953 comments: 37 for the name change and 855 against it.

Crook County citizens believe the Tower is special. There is evidence that organized gatherings have taken place at the Tower since the first recorded climb of the Tower July 4, 1893. Citizens urged State and Federal officials to recognize the importance of this landmark and pressed for improved roads to the Tower in the early 1900's.² Since then, the Tower has been the site of numerous weddings, reunions, picnics, school outings and other important life events. Always, the Tower has been referred to with reverence. It is always called "Devils Tower" or "the Tower". We are

¹ Devils Tower National Monument press release Aug 2015 "Celebrating 99 years of National Parks and Monuments"

² "Pioneers of Crook County" published 1981 Crook County Historical Society. Copyright 1981, Crook County Historical Society, Sundance, WY. Published by State Publishing Co. 303 East Sioux, Pierre, SD.

not aware of any pet name or slang references used by local citizens. One definition of the word, "sacred", in Webster's Dictionary means "worthy of respect". By that definition, Devils Tower is sacred.

If the name is changed to "Bear Lodge", it will diminish the uniqueness of the site. This special place deserves more than a generic name. There is already the Bear Lodge Mountains east of the Monument. There is a rare earths mine being built in the Bear Lodge Mountains called the Bear Lodge Project. There is Bear Butte in Meade County, SD which is reportedly a sacred site to some Native Americans. By having so many places with "Bear" already in its name, it creates confusion for the over 400,000 annual visitors who come specifically to northeast Wyoming to see Devils Tower.³

Records show the name Devils Tower has existed officially for over 130 years. In the Bureau of Land Management Cadastral Survey Land Plats dated August 24, 1883, it is indicated that the summit was named Devils Tower. This is based upon field notes from 1881 and 1882. Those field notes dated July 23, 1883 state "A prominent land mark is a high peak in Section 7 called Devils Tower".⁴

Today is not the time to debate whether the site is sacred to some tribes or not. Anecdotal evidence exists that some tribes did avoid the area due to the "bad gods". Please see some of the comments submitted. For example, the Campstool Ranch was established by Lady Grace Esme MacKenzie in 1881. "The location of the ranch near the base of Devils Tower was chosen not due to its scenery but because the Native Americans were scared of it and would not go near it". This was in 1881.⁵ The Battle of the Little Bighorn was June 1876 and the Indian Wars continued until 1918.⁶

We do not believe that all elders, leaders and individual tribal members find the name of the summit highly offensive, insulting, etc., as stated in the petition. There is an organization called Devils Tower Sacred to Many People whose mailing address is Devils Tower, Wyoming which owns land near the Tower. This federally recognized non-profit exists to benefit the Native Americans who live on reservations. The international monetary supports this organization receives show many people recognize the name Devils Tower. The Native artists who sell their wares to the organization recognize the name also and support their efforts.

We do not believe the summit was given its name purposely due to white people finding cultural and faith traditions practiced by Native Americans "evil". It was the name commonly used by the people who lived in the area. That is why one name was

³ Annual visitation numbers at DTNM: 2012-416,994; 2013- 417,326; 2014-440,875. E-mail from Supt. Tim Reid, DTNM, to Crook County Commission, dated 9/1/15, per their request.

⁴ The BLM Cadastral Survey Land Plats at www.blm.gov/cadasral/countyplats/crook/t53nr65w.pdf. Page 4 of pdf. Also see Field Notes Subdivision at Volume 188, pages 426-427 dated 7-23-1883.

⁵ "Barns of Crook County" display at Crook County Museum, 8/2015.

⁶ www.warpaths2peacepipes.com "Indian Wars and Battles".

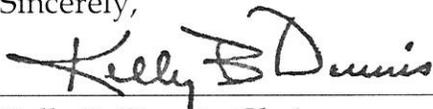
chosen for the summit and for the National Monument. Many tribes have their own historic name for the Tower. The United States Board on Geographic Names Case Brief cites approximately 94 different published names for Devils Tower. We do not believe that over twenty tribes who have potential cultural affiliation with the Tower have reached a consensus to support the proposal of one name for the summit. We believe each tribe will continue to use their traditional name for the Tower and Wyoming natives will do the same. Devils Tower has always been open to anyone to use as a respectful place to carry on their own traditions and we expect it to remain that way. The Tower can be shared by all.

The Crook County Commission questions what significant or historic benefit will be advanced by changing the name of the summit located at Devils Tower National Monument? Will the name change proposed by the petitioners benefit many, just a few, or will it cause more dissention? Therefore: We request the Wyoming Board on Geographic Names and the United States Board on Geographic Names retain the name of the summit as Devils Tower.

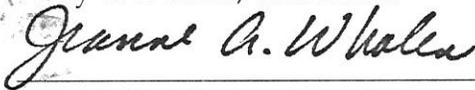
We question why the settlement of Devils Tower is being petitioned for change. There is a United States Post Office there and we have not received a recommendation from the USPS for a name change. Records show that particular Post Office has been in existence since 1925.⁷ Reading some of the comments we received from our Wyoming natives, we ask "How can people who do not even live in the area propose a name change to a populated place?" Numerous comments from the people who have Devils Tower as their mailing address mention the unnecessary distress of changing the name of their business and changing their address on passports, official documents and just receiving mail and packages.

Crook County received 855 comments to retain the name of the settlement of Devils Tower. Again we ask: what significant or historic benefit will be advanced by changing the name of the settlement? A name change should be proposed by the citizens it would most affect. Therefore, we request the name of the settlement be retained as Devils Tower, Wyoming.

Sincerely,



Kelly B. Dennis, Chairman



Jeanne A. Whalen, Vice-Chairwoman



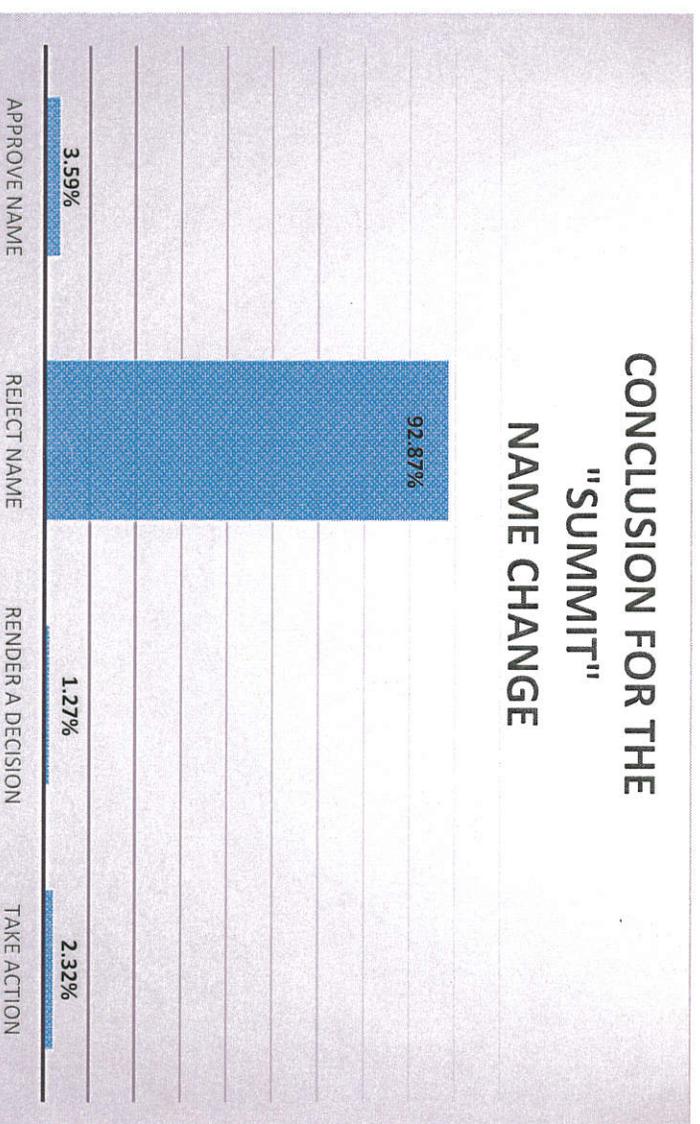
Steve J. Stahla, Member

⁷ www.postalhistory.com "A Checklist of WYO Post Offices" Jim Forte Postal History.

PROPOSED GEOGRAPHIC NAME CHANGE FROM DEVILS TOWER TO BEARLODGE

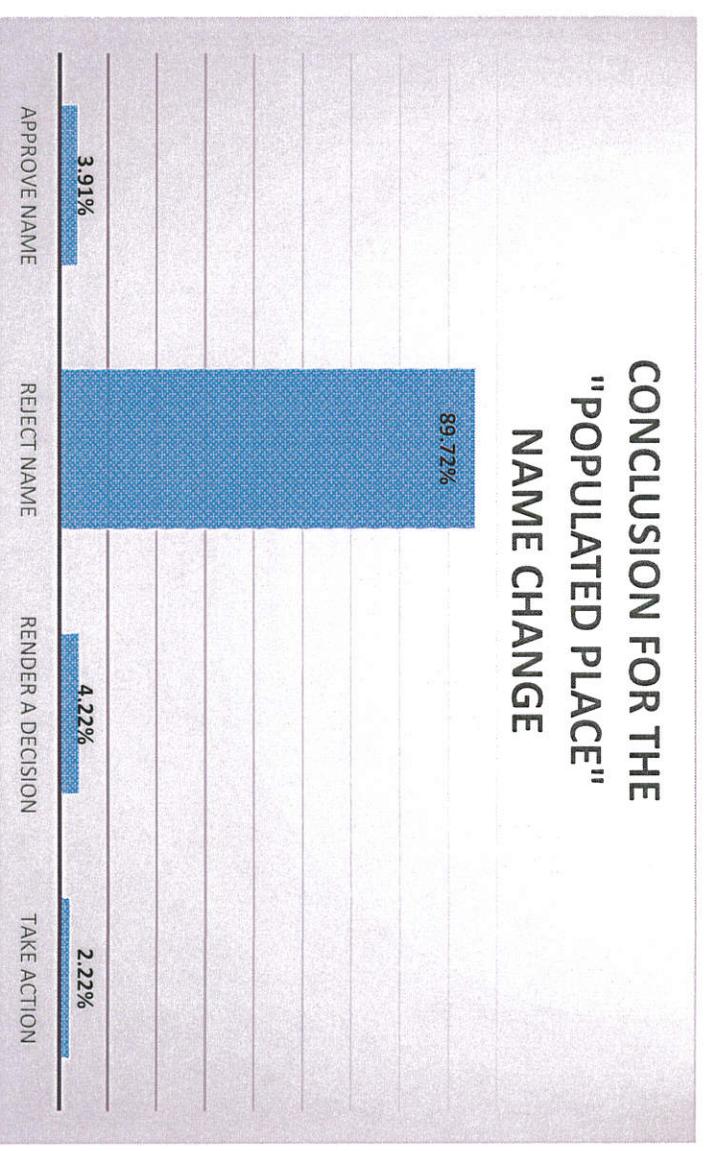
FOR THE "SUMMIT" TO BECOME BEARLODGE

APPROVE NAME	REJECT NAME	RENDER A DECISION	TAKE ACTION
34	886	12	22



FOR THE "POPULATED PLACE" TO BECOME BEARLODGE

APPROVE NAME	REJECT NAME	RENDER A DECISION	TAKE ACTION
37	855	40	21



APPROVAL COMMENTS: (For both the Tower and the Populated area)

- * Would be nice to honor Native Americans.
- * The land around what is known as "Devils Tower" has been used by the Native Americans for generations. If they feel that the name offends them then we should respect their wishes as the first people to populate the area. We are only recent visitors.
- * I think the name should respect the tradition of Native Americans. To them it was the "Bear Lodge".
- * I think the name change would be great to honor the Native American legacy.
- * Changes would have no economic impact on me, my family, or friends. Signage has to eventually be changed anyway.
And new signs often increase awareness in a business, community or feature.

APPROVAL COMMENTS: (For the "Summit")

- * I believe that this name change would reflect sensitivity to the Native American cultures which is very often neglected.
- * We took their land violating the 1868 treaty. The least we can do is let them have the name back.
- * It makes sense to return to a more historically correct name.

APPROVAL COMMENTS: (For the "Populated Place")

- * The two should be together. If the "Tower" becomes the "Bearlodge" then the surrounding structure names should also include the words.
- * Have some historical accuracy, but leave the "Tower" as it is.

RENDER A DECISION COMMENTS: (For the "Populated Place")

- * The individual residents living within this populated area should have more of a weighted input into this name change.
- * The folks who live there can decide, but I see no point in two names.
- * We feel that the people who are most affected (business owners and residents of the immediate area) should have their opinions considered first and foremost.

TAKE ACTION COMMENTS:

- * The Native American Indians have several names for "Devils Tower". If "Bearlodge" is the final name, add it in parenthesis after Devils Tower, with an explanation in future printed material and on signage.
- * Make no change unless an overwhelming majority of commenter's request it.
- * Everyone here calls it "The Tower" why not shorten it to that name as well. It will not be so much of a change for businesses. But it would be confusing to call it "Bearlodge" since that's what we call the Pass.
- * If you cannot accept "Devils Tower" find another name. Bearlodge is used to frequently for places over the county.
- * Consult the residents of Devils Tower regarding any name change, not an outside group.
And then distribute them in business in each of towns in crook county.
every county office so people see it. Plus households should get more than one copy.

REJECTION COMMENTS: (For the "Summit and/or the "Populated Place".)

- * Keep the name, just recognize that us Native Americans called it Bearlodge.
- * It will be very costly. Many places will have to change the name.

- * We feel that it would be a poor use of taxpayer money given the sign changes and map updates that would be required.
- * While it is important to recognize the role the Tower plays in multiple cultures, its current name is recognized far and wide, both nationally and internationally.
- * While I can appreciate the view of those who want the change, I feel it is totally unnecessary and inappropriate. After all, it is our nation's first National Monument, and was so designed as Devils Tower.
- * How would it affect the people who live there? We would have to change our address, drivers license, credit cards, and any other legal papers. Personally I take pride in being from "Devils Tower", Wyoming.
- * While I do realize there is a claim of importance to the Native American Indians, it is our backyard, our heritage, and part of our culture for over 100 years.
- * A change would mean tons in new marketing cost; replace the historical significance of the name Devils Tower and take years to implement.
- * Changing the name itself will not make it less or more "sacred" and doesn't change history.
- * Devils Tower is recognized by many more than just area residents. Even if the original "translation" was flawed the name is now historical.
- * Devils Tower is iconic, globally recognized designation. A name change would reduce visibility and international recognition.
- * The Bearlodge has always been associated with the road out of Sundance to Warren peak. This change would be very confusing to people reading maps.
- * Having lived 90 years (64 of them in Crook County), I have learned you can't change history. Misinterpreted or not it is still "History".
We can note it, but a name change will not make it any different.
- * We already have the Bearlodge Mountains. Naming Devils Tower Bearlodge would confuse people.
- * Do you understand all the economic ramifications? Advertising, name recognition, costs to change over 100 years worth of brochures, maps, etc...
- * Renaming the tower "Bearlodge" makes it seem rather anonymous since it will be amongst the Bearlodge Mountains.
- * I have lived here all of my life and consider Devils Tower as a part of my heritage. It is the First National Monument of the United States.
How can we change history?
It was called Devils Tower before Teddy Roosevelt named it a National Monument. It and Yellowstone are the two most known places in Wyoming for the tourist trade.
- * Any geographic name has roots in the past. The questions to be asked are how far into the past should we look and what matters most now.
- * I would be concerned about the confusion for emergency personnel in determining whether the emergency in in the Bearlodge Mountains or at the "The Tower".
- * It is my understanding that over 20 affiliated tribes to Devils Tower call the landmark names other than Bearlodge. Changing the name would open the way to calls for other name changes in the future.
- * Every year for the last 10 years or so we (Abate Club) have had a memorial run and ride to the Tower. All of the Fallen Brothers and Sisters are remembered at this time and shirts with names and a Flag with names are used. It would be a shame to loose all these names because of a Tower name change.

We feel that these two letter sum up the feelings of the people of Crook County.

Letter 1: I have read through most of the reasoning for the name change and find it quite amazing that we would in this time, when we have wars all around the globe, hunger in many countries, people in our own country unemployed, some homeless and also hungry. Troops away from their families, their families struggling without their loved one, single moms working to be both mom and dad to their children, that we would after 109 years even worry about a rock that was named whether correctly or not.

If the various American Indians are strong in their faith, beliefs, and customs as I am sure they are, this name should mean very little to them. They hold the truth in their heart regardless of a name that was given to a rock years ago. I have seen their prayer clothes, small rocks and it is inspiring to me to know that this place that we all enjoy holds such a deep spiritual meaning for them and that we share in that when we slowly walk the path of their prayer. I have NEVER associated their strong faith and culture with the actual name of the Tower. So in that vein, can we please focus on the more important things in my first paragraph instead of a rock which was named whether appropriately or not.

I write this on Memorial day weekend and while in church we heard that more than a million of our soldiers have died in wars in this country, isn't keeping this wonderful County Free far more important than the name change of a massive rock? What about changing our focus from the differences we have in this country to a focus of what we do agree on... a wonderful free country, kept that way by men willing to give all. When will we all become that one Nation once again?

Letter 2: Since the idea better called 'request' has come up again after quite a few years to change the name of 'Devils Tower' I thought I would give my thoughts 'again' on the subject just to let people know that Devils Tower is very special and rather sacred to more than one culture. These are much the same words I voiced in the last go around of the name changing.

I am a native of Crook County, and have spent my entire life in Crook County. My father before me, Harold Wells was born here well 100 years ago. His father before him had homesteaded just a little south east of Devils Tower and my Father was raised in the shadow of the Tower. He told us many stories of his childhood days playing on the "Big Rock" and how he would be cautioned by his Mother when he was sent to get the cows that he didn't have time to climb around on the "Big Rock" that day.

The Devils Tower played a big part in the lives of our family and extended family as it was the place where we went when relatives and friends came from afar to have a Family Reunion'. We picnicked in winter or summer, a tradition I carried on with my own children and we went several times a year. However we witnessed many changes over the years and the changing of campground officials made it a little difficult for our large camping group sometimes. We persevered though and always went back.

One story from my Father. As young man he broke horses for the Army at Fort Keough in Montana. He made friends with a young American Indian. My father admired him as he had acquired a good education and spoke fluent English. Father invited him home to visit his parents at their homestead near Devils Tower, of course this included a planned ride over to the 'Big Rock'. His friend declined and told my Father the place was 'taboo'. He didn't consider it sacred and he didn't want to go anywhere near it.

I know the American Indian has not been treated right but I also know that you can't go back and change history. All Native Americans, both Indian and white have made a lot of mistakes but you can't make amends by spending a lot of money on a silly name change. This money could better be used for the betterment of both cultures.

I grew up knowing all these names for this landmark and it hasn't had any effect on my love and respect of this place. Every time I visit this place I stand in awe of it and I don't know anyone who could look upon this massive wonder and not feel spiritual. Go walk around this 'Big Rock', meditate in your own way, call this place by whatever name you want to and leave the trail clean and un-littered for those who want to make the trip in their own way and for their own reasons and think of it by one of the many names it is known by.

I am a Crook County, Wyoming Native American and have never lived anyplace else in my 80 plus years.