

Change General Creek to dukMé?em wá?a

Proposal Information

Proposed name	dukMé?em wá?a
Proposal type	change name considered offensive and to apply native name
Current official name	General Creek
GNIS ID	260516
Proponent	Washoe Tribe of Nevada & California
Date proposed	5/10/24
Submitter	California Department of Parks & Recreation
Date submitted	11/5/24
BGN case number	6383
Quarterly Review List	458

Feature Details

Primary coordinates	39.0551853, -120.113243
Secondary coordinates	38.98169, -120.16169
Feature class	stream
Feature size	9.5 mi. long
Feature description	heads 1.5 mi. W of Stony Ridge Lake, flows NW then NE into Lake Tahoe
Name history	Washoe name meaning “Wave Creek,” which refers to archaeological evidence and traditional Washoe ecological knowledge of a historical seiche (lake tsunami) event
USGS primary topo map	Meeks Bay 1:24,000 (mouth)
State(s)	California
County(s)	El Dorado County
PLSS	Tps14-13N, Rgs17-16 W, Mount Diablo Meridian
Land ownership	Ed Z'berg Sugar Pine Point State Park / Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (USFS)

BGN decisions

- General Creek (BGN 1895)

Other Names

- Unpublished names: None found
- Published names:
 - o General Creek: USGS 1891, 1893, 1895, 1940, 1955, 1977, 1992
 - o Phipps Creek: *The Lake of the Sky*, George Wharton James, 1915
 - o Sugar Pine Creek: Wheeler survey, 1877; CA State Engineer map, 1882

Case Summary

This proposal is to change the name of General Creek (BGN 1895), a 9.5-mile-long stream in El Dorado County, to dukMé?em wá?a. The stream flows into Lake Tahoe and is in Ed Z'berg Sugar Pine Point State Park and the U.S. Forest Service's Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

The proposal states:

California State Parks is submitting this request after receiving it from The Washoe Tribe of Nevada & California, a federally recognized Indian Tribe. The creek is located within Ed Z' Berg Sugar Pine Point State Park, in traditional Washoe territory. The stream is currently named for William Phipps, nicknamed "General," who received a land grant in 1869 including the mouth and much of the course of the stream. Little is known of Phipps' life prior to his arrival in California during the Gold Rush. It appears he was not a general and there is no record of his military service; the nickname appears to have derived from a drinking contest he won and a pun on the word "gin."

Phipps is remembered by the Tribe and in the historical record for his antagonism toward Native people, and may have committed serious crimes in the process of appropriating their ancestral lands. A history of the Tahoe area published in 1957 describes Phipps murdering a man called "One-Eyed John" (likely a Washoe ancestor), stealing his beaded footwear and leaving his body to be eaten by wolves. Tribal oral history confirms that Washoe people stayed away from Phipps' land during his lifetime, even though they visited and worked for his immediate neighbors to the north and south. He was quoted as saying "I saved this hyar [here] great country of ours from the clutches of the [derogatory term for Native people]."

The stream is known in the Washoe language as dukMéʔem wáʔa, meaning "Wave Creek." Archaeological evidence and traditional ecological knowledge held by the Tribe suggest that the traditional name commemorates a historical Seiche (lake tsunami) event. "General" is a spurious title attributed to a man whose behavior was likely abhorrent. California State Parks has enacted the change in our facilities names because it better reflects the natural and cultural history of the area and will provide visitors with better access to the park's natural and cultural resources.

Chairman Serrell Smokey, Washoe Tribe of Nevada & California, submitted a letter with the proposal in which he wrote:

Washoe elders discussed this area has experienced large waves during the windy weather. One story is "a Wa-siw Man with wegeléyu had a vision of a Tidal wave generating from the North shore Tahoe going across the lake to the South. In his Vision, there is a large Boulder on a ledge under of the water a few hundred feet and there will be an earthquake that will make it fall and cause this to happen."

Again, thank you for your consideration to rename this creek to geographically name known to the Washoe Tribe.

In 1895, the U.S. Geological Survey asked the BGN to decide on the official name of the stream because there were two names found in published use: General Creek on USGSS topographic maps and Sugar Pine Creek on Wheeler Survey map. The BGN decided that General Creek would be the official name; there is no evidence that they considered the origin of the name in their decision.

Four nearby features have names that include "Phipps" and are reportedly named for William Phipps: [Phipps Creek](#) (labeled on USGS maps since 1955), [Phipps Lake](#), [Phipps Pass](#), and [Phipps Peak](#). The peak was first labeled on USGS maps in 1889 and the others since 1955.

Several sources published information about the name General Creek and William Phipps. These are noted in chronological order.

The Lake of the Sky by George Wharton James (1915) reported that the stream was called Phipps Creek, “named on the map General Creek, from General [George] Phipps. At the mouth of the creek this pioneer located on 160 acres. . . .”

The July 23, 1944 *Oakland Tribune*’s “Knave” editorial column noted the stream as “General’s Creek” which was:

Named for Gen. William Phipps and in nearby country are Phipp’s Lake and Phipp’s Peak, 9300 elevation. General Phipps as he was known to everyone . . . came to Georgetown in 1854, a native of Kentucky, and a veteran of the Indian wars where he won his title of General. He was well known and highly esteemed. Noted for his marksmanship with a rifle he knew every nook and corner of the Sierras from Amador County to the Southern Pacific Railroad. He was 74 years of age when he died March 15, 1887 and was buried in the cemetery at Georgetown. . . .”

Tahoe Place Names by Barbara Lekisch (1988) reported that “the Washoes fished at the mouth of the creek, which they called *dukhmE’EmwO’tha*, but never camped there for long. [citing Freed, Stanley A. “Washo Habitation Sites In the Lake Tahoe Area,” *Reports of the University of California Archaeological Survey. Notes on Western Nevada Archaeology and Ethnology* 66, February 1966: 73-83.]” Lekisch reported that Phipps Peak and Phipps Pass were also named for William Phipps.

California Place Names (Erwin G. Gudde and William Bright, 1988) reported the basic information from the 1944 “Knave” column; the same information was provided in earlier editions of the book.

Stakeholder Input

Local government	El Dorado County Board of Supervisors	
State Names Authority	California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names	
Federal Agency	U.S. Forest Service	
Federally Recognized Tribes	All federally recognized Tribes contacted under Policy X	
	Washoe Tribe of Nevada & California [proponent]	Support
Other	California Department of Parks & Recreation [submitter]	Support



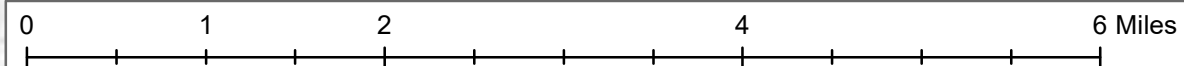
General Creek, El Dorado County

Sugar Pine Point State Park
California State Parks

GeneralCreek_Map.pdf

dukMé?em Creek Proposed
General Creek Current

Class: Stream (#260516)



- State Park Road
- State Park Trail
- Local Road
- Natural Preserve
- Park Boundary