

Domestic Geographic Name Report

1 Use this form to recommend a feature name or to suggest a name change.

2. For features on Federal lands, coordinate requests with the agency (U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, etc.) For the administrative area in which the land is located.

3. On the reverse side of this form give information on the local usage and authority for recommended name.

4. For more information about the Geographic Names Information System or the National Gazetteer Program, contact the U.S. Board on Geographic Names at 703-648-4544.

5. Return this form to:

Executive Secretary for Domestic
Geographic Names
U.S. Geological Survey
523 National Center
Reston, VA 22092

Action Requested

Proposed New Name: _____ **Recommended Name:** North and South Yuyang' Ch'ex (You-yonk Cheh)
Application Change: _____ **State:** Alaska
Name Change: X **County or Equivalent:** Municipality of Anchorage
Other: _____ **Administrative Area:** Chugach State Park

Specific Area Covered:

Latitude: 61 ° 2 ' 16 " N Longitude: -149 ° 33 ' 38 " W
Latitude: 61 ° 1 ' 46 " N Longitude: -149 ° 34 ' 28 " W
Center: _____ Heading End _____
Section(s) 13, 23, 24 Township(s) 11N Range 02W Meridian S Elevation ~5040

Type of Feature (stream, mountain, populated place, etc.): Mountain Peaks

Is the Feature identified (including other names), in the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS)?

Yes X No _____ Unknown _____ If Yes, how is it listed? North and South Suicide Peaks

Description of feature (physical shape, length, width, direction of flow, etc.):

These mountain peaks are located within Chugach State Park, approximately 15 miles Southeast of the City of Anchorage. Accessible via the McHugh trail and just East of Rabbit Lake. These peaks reach elevations of just over 5000 ft.

Maps and other sources using recommended name (including scale and date).

N/A

Other name (variants)

N/A

Maps and other sources using other name or application (including scale and date).

Chugach State Park Maps
By State of Alaska DNR 12/12/2009
Scale 1:80,000
Surveying and Mapping in Alaska
By Gerald Fitzgerald published by USGS 1951
Scale 1:250,000

Name information such as origin, meaning of the recommended name, historical significance, biographic data (if commemorative), nature of usage or application, or any other pertinent information:

Yuyanq' Ch'ex is a descriptive name proposed to replace "Suicide Peaks," the current name of two mountainous features located in a popular hiking area in Chugach State Park. While there is no local usage for the proposed name, the applicant considers the current name derogatory, hurtful, inappropriate, and not on message for the Chugach State Park. According to letters written by Dena'ina and Alutiiq elders, the word 'suicide,' while not being derogatory in its own right, does represent a tragic statistic in Alaska and can be a painful reminder to all too many Alaskans. The applicant suggests replacing the English name with the proposed Native name to honor and recognize the Dena'ina that traditionally inhabit this area, whom he notes, were likely not consulted when these peaks were named in 1951.

The peaks received their current name as the Anchorage area saw an influx of arrivals during and after World War II. It is commonly believed that Alaska Railroad or military personnel named the peaks, implying that it would be "suicide" to try to climb them. Orth's *Dictionary of Alaska Place Names* noted that the U.S. Geological Survey recognized the name "Suicide Peak" on maps by 1951. While the name of the two peaks has historical longevity, 76 years, there is no known connection to any historical event.

The proposed name is Yuyanq' Ch'ex, which translates in English to "Heaven's Breath" or "Breath from Above." Dena'ina speaker and language expert Helen Dick provided the new name and the reasoning supporting it. In addition, the proposer consulted Alaska Native leaders, Tribes, the Alaska Native Language Center, and other cultural experts for the renaming of these mountains. According to Anthropologist James Fall, "The proposed name, Yuyanq' Ch'ex is consistent with Dena'ina traditions that define certain mountains as places of mourning, remembrance, and respect for elders...I agree that the proposed name would honor the original people of Upper Cook Inlet." Through exhaustive consultation with historical, archeological, and linguistic experts and local Native communities, the proposer has exhaustively shown that while the local Dena'ina would likely have named these peaks, evidence of the original Native names has been lost to history.

Additionally, the proposer has gathered written community support from 20+ individuals, user groups, and organizations. These testimonies provide insight into the traditional way in which features are named by the Dena'ina people using descriptions of said features, aligning with current Geographic Naming standards for name proposals. The proposer includes petitions expressing broad support to change the mountain peaks from Suicide Peaks to Yuyanq' Ch'ex, thus demonstrating strong local support.

Is the recommended name in local usage? Yes No If Yes, approximately how many years? _____

Is there local opposition to, or conflict with the recommended name (as located)?

The Mountaineers Club of Alaska had opposed the previous proposal, as did the Chugach Advisory Board (CAB), which has since voted to support the name change. OHA has received other letters from the public expressing opposition to the name change. Reasons include the current usage is well-documented, the new name lacks historical usage, pronunciation difficulties, and "suicide" is not inherently a derogatory name. For safety reasons, the Chugach State Park suggested that the older name be placed in parentheses to avoid confusing park users, emergency providers, or the climbing community, for example, Yuyanq' Ch'ex (Suicide Peaks).

For proposed new name, please provide evidence that feature is unnamed: The mountains are currently named North and South Suicide Peaks.

Additional information:

These features reside on state land
Current name has been published on maps since 1951
and has likely been in local use predating Federal recognition.

Organizations for Consultation:

Alaska Native Languages Center
Center for Cross-Cultural Studies
Chugach State Park Citizens Advisory Committee
Cook Inlet Regional, Inc.
Cook Inlet Tribal Council

Eklutna Native Village
Municipality of Anchorage
Mountaineering Club of Alaska
State of Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Rec.
Tebughna Foundation

Copy submitted by: Name (first, M.I., last)	Title	Phone (day)	Date
William (Bill) Pagaran			4/7/2022

Company or Agency	Address (city, State, and Zip)
.Carry the Cure	

Copy Prepared by (if other than above)	Title	Phone (day)	Date
Jacobie L. Schwenke	NRS II	(907) 269-8749	4/8/2022

Company or Agency	Address (city, State, and Zip)
Alaska Department of Natural Resources/Office of History and Archaeology	550 West 7 th Ave., Suite 1310, Anchorage, AK 99501-3565

Authority for Recommended Name:	Mailing Address and Telephone	Occupation	Years in Area
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