

**Part B**  
**A-16 Lead - Names (USGS)**

1. Program/Activity Name: **Geographic Names Information System (GNIS).**
2. What are the specific federal programs this data supports? **Public Law 242 mandates the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (USBGN) to standardize geographic names for use throughout the Federal Government, and to promulgate these standardized names. The USBGN has authorized the GNIS to be its mechanism for promulgating official domestic geographic names. Therefore, GNIS supports all Federal products that use geographic names. Specifically, GNIS is a layer in *The National Map*, it supports topographic map revision projects in the USGS; the Single Edition Quad project, and revision of visitor maps in the U.S. Forest Service (USFS); National Ocean Service (NOS) production of charts; and enhancement of National Park Service brochures, as well as other related products.**
3. Uses of Data: How does your data benefit customers and support agency missions? **The GNIS benefits customers by allowing them to access the official geographic name of features over the Internet. GNIS is a general research tool used by Federal, State, county, local, and commercial sector employees in such fields as geography, history, toponymy, and others. It is also used by the general public for numerous commercial applications as well as genealogical research.**

**It is essential to the bureau's mission of describing the earth, since the names of geographic features are frequently used to relate reference points. The use of non-standard names and their applications would at least lead to confusion, if not chaos. GNIS has been used for emergency preparedness and search and rescue thereby fulfilling another aspect of the USGS mission "to minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters."**

**GNIS supports *The National Map* in two ways. Coordination and planning is ongoing to establish GNIS as an active layer in *The National Map* for geographic features not available from other Federal, State or local sources, and to utilize GNIS as a gazetteer search capability in *The National Map* public viewer.**

4. Charter/Plan: Do you have a current charter or plan for collection? If so - please describe (include how recently the charter/plan was implemented and whether it is in need of update). **GNIS has had a plan for collection since its inception in 1973. Phase I of data compilation consisted of collecting all the names that appeared on 1:24,000-scale, or the largest scale USGS topographic map covering an area at the time. Phase Ia included the collection of the names of geographic features that were named on USFS maps, and NOS charts, but not named on USGS maps. The Phase II data compilation program was initiated as a 30 year program in 1982 to contract by competition, and usually with State agencies and universities on a State by State basis to collect the names of features named on State, local, and historical maps and text, but not named on Federal maps. This program is either complete or in progress for all States and territories except Alaska, Kentucky, Michigan, and New York. We already had plans in place for Federal mapping agencies and State Geographic Names Authorities to maintain GNIS in anticipation of *The National Map* in some form. Through *The National Map* pilot projects and related activities, we are actively seeking additional partnerships with Federal, State, and local sources to coordinate our data and to add or revise data in GNIS.**
5. Metadata Status: Is metadata discoverable and served through the NSDI Clearinghouse? What percentage of this theme's data has metadata and is in a

Clearinghouse node? **Not at this time, but metadata is available at the website. In planning for this year.**

6. Standards: What is the status of this theme's data, process, transfer, and classification standards? **We are participating in the development of the OGC standard for web feature gazetteer service, and planning has begun to implement such a service on GNIS this year.**
7. Progress: List FY 2001/2002 activities/progress to date (quantify where possible). **In fiscal year 2001 a Phase II contract was awarded for the southern half of the State of Texas, but for the first time since 1982 funds were not available for a fiscal year 2002 project contract yet only four States remain. Also in FY02 the GNIS database redesign was completed and locational data converted to geospatial format. The database allows access and utilization of the data by GIS web applications, including all standard geospatial queries. A new public GNIS web application has been designed and is in development. It includes geographic query and display capabilities.**
8. Policy: Do you have a formal agency policy in place for full and open access or data sharing? Are you able to fulfill this policy and provide public access with your current agency financial resources as allocated or are you in pursuit of collaborative federal partnerships to support data access? **Yes, there is a formal agency policy in place, however we are falling behind in this respect with our current financial resources. We are continuing to pursue collaborative Federal and State partnerships to support data access through our existing network of BGN agencies, and the Council of Geographic Names Authorities, which is the umbrella organization for State Geographic Names Authorities. We are also actively seeking collaboration with *The National Map* pilot projects.**
9. Are there areas or issues regarding lead responsibilities for spatial data themes that require attention, or lessons-learned that you would like to share with others? Please describe. **Not at this time.**