

PAIGH U.S. National Section Monthly Meeting – August Meeting Notes

Tuesday, August 12, 2025

Meeting attendees: Jorge Bajo Sanchez, Deirdre Dalpiaz Bishop, Dana Caccamise, Emily Carlson, Josh Coutts, Emily Day, Len Kne, Erick Langer, Lidia Lopez, Gustavo Maldonado Davila, Miriam Olivares, Roger Payne, Paul Riley, Sergio Rodriguez, David Salisbury, James Siekmeier, Diana Sinton, Charlotte Smith, Mike Tischler, Tim Trainor, Eric van Praag, Shellie Zahniser.

1) Welcome - Deirdre welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2) 26th General Assembly Update

- The 26th PAIGH General Assembly will take place October 13–17, 2025 in Tegucigalpa, Honduras:
 - October 13–14: Technical Commission meetings.
 - October 15–17: General Assembly.
- Registration and hotel details are not yet available. Paul expects to receive this information in the coming weeks and will share it as soon as it becomes available.
- Paul and Deirdre will need to provide a list of attendees to the PAIGH Secretariat by September 12, 2025. They will draft an accreditation memorandum to send to the U.S. State Department and then once it is approved the Department of State will send a diplomatic note to the General Secretariat. To allow time to draft this memorandum, Paul and Deirdre ask that those interested in attending express their interest to them no later than August 19, 2025.
- Participation in both the technical meetings and General Assembly is encouraged. Even those attending only the technical sessions must be on the official list.
- No virtual attendance option is available; attendance is in-person only.
- Paul will contact PAIGH Commission Leads to confirm if additional presentations can be proposed for the agenda.

3) UN-GGIM Update

- Before providing the UN-GGIM update, Deirdre emphasized the significant leadership role the United States holds within PAIGH. USNS member Patricia Solís has served as the first woman President of PAIGH for the past four years. For the upcoming election cycle, the U.S. Department of State has nominated Deirdre as the U.S. candidate for Vice President of PAIGH.
- USNS members participated in UN-GGIM and related high-level meetings in New York, August 3–8, 2025:
 - International Advisory Committee (Aug 3) – Deirdre attended.
 - HLG-IGIF Meetings (Aug 4–5) – U.S. delegates participated in strategy and coordination sessions.
 - 15th Session of the Committee of Experts (Aug 6–8) – Official plenary meetings.
- Strong U.S. interagency presence from Census, USGS, NGA, DOT, NOAA, NASA, plus university and private sector partners. Mike Tischler served as the alternate head of delegation.
- Side event topics included geodesy, leadership development, climate resilience, and the evolving digital geospatial landscape.
- There were 80 Member States in attendance, which gave USNS members on the U.S. Delegation a great opportunity to connect with others around the world. The formal meetings of the 15th Session of UN-GGIM can be viewed [here](#).
- Secretary General Campuzano was in attendance and offered numerous interventions on behalf of PAIGH.

- Lidia raised a question about global use of Esri vs. open-source GIS tools.
 - Many countries are adopting hybrid approaches.
 - Concerns raised around security, support, and cost.
 - Members highlighted Esri's strong support model; others emphasized increasing open-source usage.
 - Initiatives of note:
 - Mapping Africa: Led by UAE, Esri, and Microsoft to create foundational topographic data for Africa.
 - SDG Data Hubs: Supported by Esri and partners, focusing on integrating geospatial and statistical data, especially in Small Island Developing States.
 - Informal conversations raised the need to monitor Esri's global partnerships and explore how U.S. efforts align or diverge from these initiatives.
 - Miriam noted that when working with a colleague at a university in India, many of their Esri licenses were not even activated.
 - Tim highlighted a recent milestone: Saudi Arabia signed the first national-level single license agreement with Esri, which could serve as a model to watch.

4) Geographic Names Update

- Paul invited Shellie from the USGS to give an update on the activities of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN).
- The BGN has developed a new proposal form that allows external stakeholders to suggest new geographic names or changes to existing names.
- The form was developed over the past year with input from both internal and external stakeholders, including members of the Council on Geographic Names Authorities (COGNA).
- The form was officially published on the BGN website on July 14, 2025, and can be accessed [here](#).
- The webpage is intentionally structured:
 - Informational content appears at the top, guiding users through the naming policies and considerations.
 - The proposal form is located at the bottom to encourage users to review guidelines before submitting.
 - The page also includes guidance on using tools like the Geographic Names Information System to support submissions.
- The BGN is undertaking a 3–6-month evaluation period to see how the form is working and solicit feedback on the new form. Shellie invited USNS members to review the form and share comments or suggestions. Feedback can be submitted via email at: bgnexec@usgs.gov.
- Shellie had previously presented the idea of the form to COGNA last year and received preliminary feedback.
 - Over the past year, she maintained engagement with the council to ensure their evolving needs were reflected.
 - She plans to present the final version of the form at next week's COGNA meeting and gather additional feedback.
- Paul acknowledged Shellie's leadership on the proposal form and highlighted a related intervention made by the PAIGH Secretary General at the recent UN-GGIM session.
 - The Secretary General recognized the Republic of Korea for its support in building geographic names capacity across the Americas.

- Paul noted the substantial efforts the U.S. has invested in coursework and training related to geographic names and suggested exploring ways to revitalize those efforts—potentially to complement the Republic of Korea’s efforts—at the upcoming PAIGH General Assembly.
- Paul invited Mike to provide insights as a member of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).
 - Mike shared details about a collaborative project with Indonesia aimed at capturing best practices between mapping agencies and naming authorities.
 - He plans to coordinate more closely over the coming year with UNGEGN divisions and UN-GGIM Regional Committees, particularly UN-GGIM: Americas, to strengthen efforts around capacity building and stakeholder engagement.
 - He emphasized the value of linking geographic names awareness with broader geospatial development initiatives.
- Lidia asked whether there is a way to view current or past name submissions.
 - Shellie responded that once a proposal is formally accepted by BGN for processing, it appears in the Quarterly Domestic Names Committee Review Lists on the same webpage.
 - All decisions on finalized proposals are also recorded in the Geographic Names Information System database.
- Lidia followed up by asking whether there are plans to conduct a “lessons learned” session based on the new form.
 - Shellie shared that the team is currently working on a revision of the Principles, Policies, and Procedures (PPP)—last updated in 2016.
 - This revision will incorporate lessons learned since the last version.
 - She is assembling working groups to support the improvement of the PPP framework.
 - Shellie also expressed interest in developing a more robust data management system that could:
 - Track proposals in real time.
 - Allow submission of counterproposals.
 - Improve transparency and engagement across stakeholders.

5) USNS Annual Report

- It is time to begin preparing the 2025 USNS Annual Report, which will cover USNS activities and membership from October 2024 through September 2025.
 - The final report will be submitted to the PAIGH General Secretariat at the upcoming General Assembly.
- Commission Contributions
 - A major portion of the report will be the Commission reports.
 - Traditionally, each Commission Lead provides a general overview of their group’s accomplishments over the past year.
 - This year, we are requesting that all USNS members, and their work be featured, regardless of whether the activities are directly related to PAIGH.
 - This broader inclusion will provide the PAIGH Secretariat with a comprehensive view of USNS membership and engagement.
- Timeline for Submissions:

- USNS members should send a summary of their work from the past year to their Commission Leads by August 26, 2025.
- Commission Leads should submit their finalized Commission reports to Emily Day by September 12, 2025.
- This will allow sufficient time for compilation and editing ahead of submission to PAIGH.
- A review of the USNS membership directory revealed that several members have not participated in monthly or annual meetings in the past three years.
 - Emily will send a list of these inactive members to each Commission Lead for review.
 - Commission Leads will be asked to determine whether those individuals should remain in the directory or be removed.
- Importance of Documentation
 - Paul shared that he and Erick Langer have been reviewing and preserving historical USNS documents as part of an effort to build a documented history of the USNS.
 - The annual report plays a key role in this initiative.
 - Deirdre uses this documentation to reinforce the value and impact of USNS engagement within broader intergovernmental efforts.
- Charlotte asked for clarification on the reporting period and submission deadline. Emily confirmed that the report will cover activities from October 2024 to September 2025, and that member summaries should be submitted to Commission Leads by August 26, 2025.

6) Walk on Topics

- Eric van Praag has been working with Hermann Manríquez (PAIGH Geography Commission Lead) and Max Lobo (PAIGH Cartography Commission Lead) to determine what they can do with the current PAIGH-Esri Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Hermann came up with a plan to create a spatial portal on natural disasters. The project is in early stages; there is currently a concept plan and a list of pilot countries to work with initially. He looks forward to sharing this project with the group once it is finalized and vetted by PAIGH authorities. Paul mentioned that he had received an inquiry for access to the Central American Project's work on the Americas Geoportal. Since that's the prototype Esri built, it may be a good template for the spatial portal.

7) Next Meeting: September 9, 2025