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Pending Virginia Place Name Proposal before the Domestic Names Committee, USBGN

Change Mary Bird Branch to Mary Byrd Branch

Proposal Information

Proposed name	Mary Byrd Branch
Proposal type	change name to recognize family name
Current official name	Mary Bird Branch
GNIS ID	1470144
Proponent	Gregg Kneipp; Prince William Forest Park, Triangle, VA
Date proposed	6/5/2023
BGN case number	6067

Feature Details

Primary coordinates	38.56785, -77.36086
Secondary coordinates	38.5953976, -77.3808173
Feature class	stream
Feature size	2.3 mi. long
Feature description	heads 2 mi. SW of Lake Montclair, flows SE into South Fork Quantico Creek 1.9 mi. NW of Triangle
Name history	named for Mary Byrd (1879-1951), a Black midwife and an important member of the community of Hickory Ridge
USGS primary topo map	Quantico 1:24,000 (mouth)
State(s)	Virginia
County(s)	Prince William County
Land ownership	Prince William Forest Park [National Park Service]

BGN decisions

- None

Other Names

- Unpublished names: None found
- Published names:
 - o Mary Bird Branch: USGS 1952, 1957, 1966, 1982, 1986, 1994, 1997; NPS brochures since 1967
 - o Mary Bird Branch Creek: NPS webpage, 2023
 - o Mary Byrd Branch: NPS brochures 1959, 1962, 1964

Case Summary

This proposal is to correct the spelling of the name of Mary Bird Branch, a 2.3-mile-long tributary of South Fork Quantico Creek in Prince William County, to Mary Byrd Branch. The stream is in Prince William Forest Park (PRWI, a National Park Service unit). The stream is named for Mary Madeline Byrd (1879-1951), who was a Black midwife and an important member of the integrated community of Hickory Ridge. She is mentioned often

in oral histories from persons that lived in the community, and is buried at Neabsco Baptist Church Cemetery. Her death certificate lists her name as Mary Madeline Byrd.

The proposal was submitted by an NPS employee at PRWI, who states that “Prince William Forest Park has multiple references to the correct spelling. The park currently has signs in place showing the spelling BYRD. . . . To not properly spell her name is an affront to the local community with the knowledge of the area.” NPS webpages and documents report Mary Byrd’s prominence and importance in the Hickory Ridge Community; a webpage about the Hickory Ridge, Joplin & Batestown communities states: “Among the notable residents of Hickory Ridge was Mary Byrd, an African American midwife. People recognized Byrd throughout the Cabin Branch area for her skill and expertise. . . .”

The proponent specifically referenced two NPS documents, “Prince William Forest Park: the African American Experience” (2000) and “Conserving Place: Prince William Forest Park, 1900-1945” (2008). These included recollections of several long-time residents of the area who recalled Mary Byrd’s generosity, whether “helping to raise other people’s kids”; canning and donating food; “holding parties and dinners to raise a little money”; “If you got sick they [Mary and her sisters] would give you two or three dollars; and “. . . all of the people around Dumfries knew her good work habits.”

The PRWI webpage for Parking: Lot E states:

The Mary Byrd Branch Trail . . . heads down through the woods to Mary Byrd Branch, a tributary of Quantico Creek [sic]. The trail and stream are named for a highly respected, strong-willed woman who lived in this area in the 1800s.

Stakeholder Input

Local government	Prince William County
State Names Authority	Virginia
Federal Agency	National Park Service Support
Federally Recognized Tribes	All federally recognized Tribes contacted under Policy X
Other	

Source: Quarterly Review List 452, Released July 24, 2023 (<https://www.usgs.gov/us-board-on-geographic-names/dnc-review-lists>)