



APPROVED, 09/09/2021

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

Change Mulatto Run to Pass Run: stream; 5 mi. long; heads 0.3 mi. NE of Utz Hightop at 38°25'44"N, 78°19'58"W, flows generally ENE to enter the Robinson River 1.9 mi. NE of Beamers Head; the name dates to the 1730s and refers to a pass the stream flows through near Gaar Mountain; Madison County, Virginia; 38°26'40"N, 78°15'53"W; USGS map – Madison 1:24,000; Not: Mulatto Run.

Mouth: 38.4445712, -78.2647251 / Source: 38.4288889, -78.3327778

Proposal: to change name considered offensive

Map: USGS Madison 1:24,000

Proponent: Madison County Board of Supervisors

Administrative area: None

Previous BGN Action: None

Names associated with feature:

GNIS: Mulatto Run (FID 1471243)

Local Usage: None found

Published: Mulatto Run (USGS 1930, 1933, 1964, 1986, 1999; Madison County Place Names, 1978), Pass Run (Land Grants and Surveys of Madison County, Virginia, 1999; land grants 1730s, 1740s)

Case Summary: This proposal, to change the name of Mulatto Run in Madison County to Pass Run, was submitted by a county resident on behalf of the Madison County Board of Supervisors (BOS). The run is a five-mile-long tributary of the Robinson River.

The Madison County Historical Society (MCHS) suggested the name to the BOS in March 2020. In its February 9, 2021 resolution supporting the name, the BOS stated: 45 ‘Mulatto’ is considered by many to be a derogatory term. The original name of the stream was Pass Run, as documented in land grants that date back to the 1730s and 1740s. The stream was named Pass Run because it flows from the Blue Ridge Mountains [sic] down to the Robinson River through a pass around Gaar Mountain. The name was changed to Mulatto Run [because of] local usage about 1842 and is shown as Mulatto Run in Civil War maps. The original name of Pass Run has been confirmed by the [MCHS] and by Prof. Carole Nash of James Madison University.

In November 2020, the [BOS] sent letters to all owners of property along Mulatto Run soliciting their opinions. Articles also appeared in the digital Mad-Rapp Recorder and print Madison Eagle, and the BOS sent letters to churches and civic organizations. Finally, the BOS held a public hearing on February 9, 2021

The majority of responses from property owners and all responses from civic organizations who expressed an opinion to the [BOS], or in Letters to the Editor of the Madison Eagle weekly newspaper, support the name change.”

In an extensive proposal packet, the BOS provided the following documents:

- An excerpt from a 1999 work, “Land Grants and Surveys of Madison County, Virginia” which contains a 1940s map showing the extents of original land grants and original English

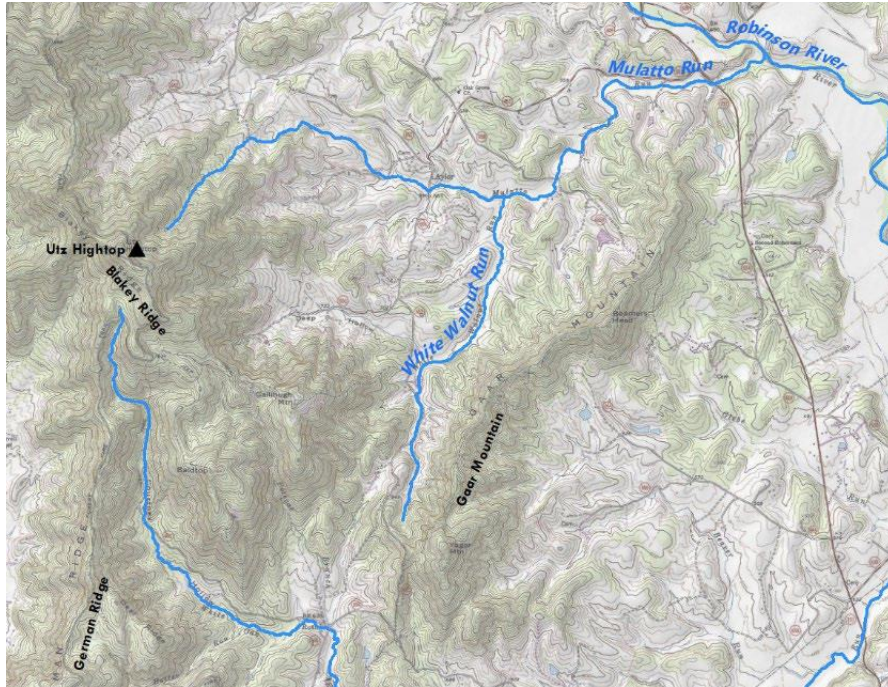
place names. In a “Landmark Overview list” it reports, but does not provide direct citations for:

- o “Pass—named around 1733 (pass around Garr [sic] Mountain” with “Mulatto” as the current name
- o “Mulatto Run—renamed around 1842 (formerly Pass Run)
- An excerpt from the 1978 Madison County Place Names which contains this entry for Mulatto Run:
 - o “rises on NE slope of Blakey Ridge, near 382545N, 781958W, flows . . . into Robinson River . . . near 382640N, 782555W . . . Probably named for usually dingy color of water . . . [variants:] Mulato Run, Pass Run”
- Statements from the Madison Equality Project, which conducted much of the local outreach
- Copies of the articles about the proposed change in The Mad-Rapp Recorder and The Madison Eagle
- Three letters to the editor in The Madison Eagle, two in support and one opposed
- One online comment to the BOS, opposed
- Letters from the BOS to 22 landowners along the stream; 34 Madison County churches and religious leaders; and 28 Madison County civic associations
- Responses from five landowners: two in support, one opposed (same individual who wrote an opposing letter to the editor), and two without objection (one of these last said that they felt the name Pass Run lacked character or history)
- Nine responses to the BOS in response to the newspaper articles or the letters to churches and civic associations, all in support
- BOS meeting minutes where the change was discussed, including detailed public comments

The 1880 Federal Census of Madison County listed at least one family classified as “mulatto.” Comments in support of the change referred to the derogatory nature of the term as a reference to a person of mixed African and European ancestry. Others suggested that the word referred to the color of the stream or to an early Black community in the area. Most were in agreement that Pass Run referred to a pass around Gaar Mountain or near the stream’s headwaters on Utz Hightop on top of Blakey Ridge.

The few comments opposed to the change stated that the name only referred to the stream’s color and was not chosen to be derogatory; that only some dictionaries list the word as derogatory or offensive; that no one sees any issue with the names of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or the United Negro College Fund; and that the current name has been in use for 170 years.

Maps from the 1860s labeled the name Mulatto Run along a tributary between Gaar Mountain and German Ridge that is now named White Walnut Run, rather than up the tributary currently named Mulatto Run.



Map of Culpeper, Madison and Rappahannock; Virginia Chief Engineer's Office, 1864 47

Source: Quarterly Review List 444 Released July 6, 2021 (<https://www.usgs.gov/us-board-on-geographic-names/dnc-review-lists>)