

Review List 444, July 8, 2021

Lark Island: island; 113 acres; on land managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in the Columbia River off the SE end of Tenasillahe Island; the name refers to the island's use as a nesting area for the Streaked Horned Lark; Sec 4, T8N, R6W, Willamette Meridian; Clatsop County, Oregon; 46°12'31"N, 123°26'05"W; USGS map – Cathlamet 1:24,000; Not Tenasillahe Island.

https://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/gazvector.getesricoor?p_lat=46.2085581&p_longi=-123.4348185

Proposal: to make official a name in local use

Map: USGS Cathlamet 1:24,000

Proponent: Andrew Emlen; Skamokawa, WA

Administrative area: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Previous BGN Action: None

Names associated with feature:

GNIS: No record

Local Usage: Lark Island (local residents)

Published: Lark Island (Washington Department of Natural Resources 2005; Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership)

Case Summary: This proposal is to make official the name Lark Island for a 113-acre uninhabited island in the Columbia River in Clatsop County, and across from Puget Island, Washington. The island, which is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, lies off the southeast end of Tenasillahe Island and is separated from the larger island by a navigable, unnamed slough.



The proposal was forwarded by the Oregon Geographic Names Board on behalf of a resident of Skamokawa, Washington, who wishes to make the name official for Federal use, in part to avoid confusion because many people assume the island is part of the larger Tenasillahe Island. (The latter is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a part of the Julia Butler Hansen

whereas the smaller island in question is outside the refuge and camping is allowed.) Secondly, “The hope of those who support this name proposal is that highlighting the presence of this endangered bird will encourage people, especially visitors to the island, to appreciate and protect it for future generations.”

The proponent reports that the island is one of the few remaining nesting areas for the Streaked Horned Lark, *Eremophila alpestris strigata*, the most colorful of the Horned Lark subspecies. He adds, “They once occupied open country from southern British Columbia through the Rogue and Umpqua valleys in Oregon. They have now been extirpated from most of their former range and number somewhere between 1170-1610 individuals (Altman, 2011). Among the last strongholds of the larks are the dredge material islands of the Columbia River. Since the bird was listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2013, [USACE] has managed the timing and placement of dredge material to benefit the larks, which thrive in the sparse prairies which emerge two to three years after the deposit of sandy dredge material. Unlike some other endangered species, the presence of Streaked Horned Larks has not been controversial, since they thrive on this disturbance from the primary economic activity on the islands.”

The proposed name has been used locally for over 20 years. The Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership’s map of the Lower Columbia River Water Trail lists Lark Island as a designated camping area, and a 2005 Washington Department of Natural Resources publication on the Streaked Horned Lark’s nesting success uses the name. eBird, described as “the largest international database documenting bird distribution, abundance, habitat use, and trends,” lists Lark Island as “a hotspot - a public area that is a good place to find birds.” The proponent is not aware of any opposition to the name, although he notes that “a large number of local people simply call the island ‘Tenasillahe.’”

Letters of support for the proposal were included in the packet from a couple who have lived on the western tip of Puget Island since 1979, directly across the shipping channel from “Lark Island” and who visit the island regularly; the Community Programs Director for the Columbia River Partnership; and the owner/guide of Columbia River Kayaking, who is “one of the most frequent visitors to ‘Lark Island.’”

The 1941 USGS topographic map did not show any evidence of an island or sandbar at this location. By 1955 the sandbar began to appear on the map, and in 1985 it was labeled as partially marshy and partially sandy. The most recent (2020) USTopo depicts the area as a marshy island.

NOAA charts have depicted the surrounding sandbar and a small island since the 1970s, with its name being recorded in GNIS as Puget Bar (*Oregon Geographic Names*; McArthur, 1992). However, evidence shows that the USACE dredging efforts have resulted in a loss of the sandbar, with the island becoming more permanent. The majority of the island has a current elevation of 40 feet. The 2013 nautical chart shows the island, with a sandbar extending to the east and northeast. Wetlands and cottonwood forest are found along the slough that separates it from Tenasillahe Island.