

Glenda Wiles

From: O'Donnell, Matthew (Contractor) <mjodonnell@contractor.usgs.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, April 3, 2019 7:53 AM
To: Chris A. Hoffman
Cc: Jeff Burrows; Greg Chilcott; Glenda Wiles
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Request for the Ravalli County Commissioners' opinion about a proposal to change the name of a stream

Dear Commissioner Hoffman:

Thank you for your response about the proposal to change the name of Kyke Creek to Steinberg Creek. I've noted your reply as "no opinion" about the proposal either way and will make the members of the Board aware of your comments about the ultimate nature of the name and the wish of the county to stay out of debates about name changes that erase history, even unsavory parts of history. Thank you also for sharing your personal views about the current name.

When the Board votes on the proposal, we will notify the County Commissioners of the decision.

Sincerely,

Matt O'Donnell

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On Mon, Mar 25, 2019 at 1:59 PM Chris A. Hoffman <CAHoffman@rc.mt.gov> wrote:

Dear Mr. O'Donnell,

Chairman Burrows has asked me to respond to your request for comment, and I am glad to do so. The subject was of interest to me, as the grandson of an Eastern European Jew who fled his home country, as I understand it, to escape persecution. On my mother's side, I am a 4th generation Bitterroot Valley resident.

Quite frankly, the name Kyke Creek has never given me pause. First, if the name was meant to refer to Mr. Steinberg in a derogatory fashion it was, I'm sure you realize, spelled incorrectly. The slur has always been

spelled KIKE. During my brief research, I was interested to find the Middle Dutch word, KYKE, defined as, (obsolete), To look steadfastly; to gaze.

While we can understand that Kyke Creek's proximity to Jew Mountain and Gentile Mountain might lead one to surmise that the name was simply misspelled, we cannot know that beyond a shadow of doubt, as those details are lost to history. What is easily researched, is the term KIKE, which appears to have been coined on Ellis Island, possibly by German Jews referring to Russian Jews. The word appears to have been "popularized" as a slur between 1901 and 1912.

In any case, as the Ravalli County Board of County Commissioners discussed the proposed name change on March 12th, we agreed that we, as a board, have never been approached by anyone complaining about this name place, and that the facts of its naming are part of the valley's lost history as far as we can tell. As such, we can offer no pertinent input on the subject. We choose not to become embroiled in the debate regarding the merits of erasing every shred of the more unsavory parts of our history, particularly in a case where we cannot be totally certain of the intent of the person who named the creek in question.

Sincerely,

Chris Hoffman

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