



**Council of Geographic Names Authorities
COGNA 2025
Golden, Colorado**

“Reckoning with Historic Place Names from Peaks to Prairies”

Conference Dates
August 18 – 21st

**Hosted by the Colorado Geographic Naming Advisory Board
at the Denver West Marriott
1717 Denver West Marriott Blvd.
Golden, CO 80401**



Welcome to CoGNA – Golden 2025!

We thank you for joining us this year at CoGNA – in beautiful Golden, Colorado! We are indebted to our wonderful hosts on the Colorado Geographic Naming Advisory Board, who have worked for many months to help organize this conference at the Denver West Marriott and share their beautiful state with all of us!

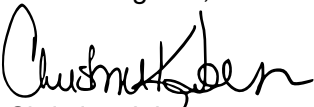
CoGNA is both a very large and simultaneously very small organization; we comprise state geographical representation from every state (and now territories), but that means usually less than 50 of us are having a conversation at any given time. We are working to ensure ALL 50 of states and participating territories are connected, and part of the national dialogue with regard to place name issues, and you being here and part of this conference is the foundation of growing this dialogue.

CoGNA works best if you are active in the organization. Please work with your own boards, local governments, and interested parties to ensure they are aware of CoGNA, and pass on the information learned at or through CoGNA to those you work with at the state and regional level(s). Many states have been active in the COGNA organization during the last year, with connections being made, requests for help and information shared, and general discussions over email is now happening – all a result of simply (re)connecting in this forum. We are glad you are here, happy to reconnect, and welcome you to what we hope will be many more annual meetings in the future.

I serve as the Executive Secretary for CoGNA, elected in November of 2021, and effective January of 2022, but 'found' CoGNA originally back in 2015 – when searching “geography conferences” online. When I arrived at the conference and realized what CoGNA was (and that my own state had not been active in years), I was quite surprised to realize I was an active member in this organization that I had never heard of until then. Since 2015, I've hosted and attended the subsequent conferences – many times on my own time and funding – just because the information and the networking is so helpful and meaningful. It is my hope that ALL states and territories will eventually be funded to perform the work they do as State Names Authorities (SNAs), which includes traveling to this conference to continue our conversations, learn from our colleagues in other states and within the USBGN, and build our networks of support, and broaden our connections with our Tribal communities and other stakeholders. Please share the information with your boards, your networks, and communities; be sure CoGNA is part of the institutional knowledge of your state teams, and let's keep this growing – and going!

It is my sincere pleasure to welcome you to the 2025 Annual Conference of the Council of Geographic Names Authorities. Thank you for the important work you do, and for joining us for what promises to be a productive, engaging, and memorable conference.

Kindest regards,



Christine Johnson
Executive Secretary, CoGNA
ckjohnson@cogna50usa.org
ckjohnson.nevada@gmail.com

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Monday, August 18th

Registration, COGNA Business, Opening Reception

Location: Keystone/Telluride Room

- Noon – 3:00pm: Registration Desk Open
2:45 – 3:00pm: Housekeeping/Online Connections
3:00 – 4:00pm: COGNA Business Meeting (open to all)
4:00 – 5:00pm: Special Session: Lifetime Achievement Award
(Wayne Furr 2024 & Jenny Runyon 2025)
5:00 – 7:30pm: Welcome Reception: (No host bar, Hors de 'oeuvres)

6:00 pm: Keynote Speaker: Rich Cimino, Grand County Commissioner

“Echoes of the Land: History Through Place Names”

Place names are more than coordinates on a map—they are living records of cultural memory, identity, and the complex histories of the people who have inhabited the land. This keynote presentation explores the rich tapestry of Colorado's history as told through some of its interesting geographic names. From Indigenous languages that shaped the landscape long before statehood, to Spanish colonial imprints, mining boomtowns, and frontier settlements, each name tells a story of migration, conflict, survival, and change. Commissioner Cimino will highlight some of the interesting names he has encountered during his experience working in place names and will highlight some of the interesting names he has come across internationally as well. This talk highlights how naming practices reveal broader social and political forces with examples from Colorado, the larger U.S., and internationally.

Tuesday, August 19th

Opening remarks, Presentations, Federal training, Business meeting

Location: Keystone/Telluride Room

- 8:30 - 9:00am: Registration and packet pick up. Location: Lobby of Keystone/Telluride Room
9:00 – 9:15am: Introductions and Opening Remarks, Christine Johnson - COGNA,
Anna Stout - Chair of Colorado Geographic Naming Advisory Board
9:15 – 10:15am: **Lecture: “Always Begin Right Here”** Jason Hanson, History Colorado
10:15 – 10:30am: Break
10:30 – 11:15am: **Lecture: “The Creation of the General Map of Virginia”** Cassandra Farrell,
Virginia Board on Geographic Names
11:15 – Noon: **Lecture: “Enhancing User Experience on Google Maps with Geographic
Names”** Holli Howard, Geospatial Industry Lead - Google Maps, Dieter Laskowski,
Technical Lead - Google Maps, & Francisco Moneo, Product Manager - Google
Maps
Noon – 1:30pm: Lunch on your own
1:30 – 2:15pm: **Lecture: “Introduction to U.S. Geological Survey Map Ready Data”**
Marcelle Caturia, Dynamic Mapping Specialist, USGS National Geographic
Technical Operations Center
2:15 – 3:15pm: **Lecture: “A batch proposal for Nineteen Ahtna Place Names for officially
unnamed features in and around Glacial Lake Atna.”** James Kari, Linguist &
Professor Emeritus, University of Alaska Fairbanks
3:15 – 3:30pm: Break
3:30 – 4:30pm: **Lecture: “National Renaming Efforts and the Mount Blue Sky Campaign”**
**Jim Ramey & Jessica Lambert – Wilderness Society, Ruben Hamelink – Atlas
of Derogatory Names**
4:30pm: Q&A for the day, Announcements, Daily Wrap-up, Evening Preparations

Wednesday, August 20th

Executive Committee Meeting, State Naming Authorities Reports, Federal-State Roundtable Q&A's, Training

Location: Keystone/Telluride Room

- 8:30 – 9:00am: Registration and Packet pick up. Location: Lobby of Keystone/Telluride Room
- 9:00 – 9:15am: **CoGNA 2026 Announcement** (Araceli Moreno, California Geographic Naming Advisory Board)
- 9:15 – 10:00am: **Lecture: “Working Efficiently with Partners: New Proposal Form Feedback and 1 Year of Office Hours”** Shellie Zahniser, PhD - Executive Secretary, USBGN
- 10:00 – 10:15am: Break
- 10:15 – 11:00am: **Lecture: “An Inside Look at Recent Name Changes”** – Mike Tischler, PhD – Acting Associate Director for Core Science Systems Mission Area at USGS
- 11:00 – Noon: **Lecture: “Tribal Involvement in the Naming of Geographical Features”** – Chris Hammond, USBGN
- Noon - 1:30pm: Lunch on your own
- 1:30 - 2:00pm: **Overview of State Reports:** Christine Johnson, Executive Secretary, COGNA
- 2:00 – 3:15pm: **Training Session for SNAs: Federal/State Roundtable Workshop**
- 3:15 – 3:30pm: Break
- 3:30 – 4:30pm: **Training Session for SNAs: Federal/State Roundtable Workshop (cont'd)**

Thursday, August 21st

Toponymic Session

Location: Meet at 8:30am outside the Denver West Marriott Hotel

9:00am-5:00pm: Toponymic Session

Join Colorado Geographic Advisory Board members on this Toponymic Session as they share information on historic names and places in this historic region. Departing from beautiful Golden, Colorado, the bus will head toward Idaho Springs, and include a discussion of the historical geography of the Golden area before arriving at Courtney Ryley Cooper Park for a tour of the nearby Argo Gold Mill and Tunnel and a visit to the Historical Society of Idaho Springs. The afternoon will feature narration of notable sites along the way as the tour heads for Georgetown and a guided tour of the Hotel de Paris Museum and a later visit to the Echo Lake Lodge for a discussion on Mount Blue Sky. Wear comfortable clothing and sturdy footwear for this session.

Requires registration for the toponymic session – be sure to register for **full conference with toponymic session at initial registration, or register separately on the website for any additional attendees. Registration for toponymic session can be made as individual reservation as well at conference registration site. Register at (site link to come) or contact Christine Johnson at ckjohnson@cogna50usa.org for more information. Reservations for this session must be made prior to 8/8/2025.

Poster Session

U.S. Geological Survey Map Ready Data – How to Display Multi-Scale Name Labels to Make Better Maps Marcelle Caturia

Dynamic Mapping Specialist, Cartographic Applied Research Section (CARS)
USGS National Geographic Technical Operations Center (NGTOC) – Denver

Poster Abstract: Map Ready Data (MRD) is a concept to cartographically enable data that allows the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to improve its topographic map cartographic quality and production efficiency. MRD is expanding to an automated data preparation platform that enables geographic names to use enriched content and generalization rules in support of their accurate display at appropriate map scales. For example, how to best determine which place names, sourced from the USGS Geographic Names Information System, remain labeled on a topographic map when it is zoomed out from 1:24,000 to 1:100,000 map scale? This poster illustrates how these new enrichments and rules can be used to improve the cartographic quality of USGS topographic maps.

Presentation Abstracts

Echoes of the Land: History Through Place Names

Place names are more than coordinates on a map—they are living records of cultural memory, identity, and the complex histories of the people who have inhabited the land. This keynote presentation explores the rich tapestry of Colorado's history as told through some of its interesting geographic names. From Indigenous languages that shaped the landscape long before statehood, to Spanish colonial imprints, mining boomtowns, and frontier settlements, each name tells a story of migration, conflict, survival, and change. Commissioner Cimino will highlight some of the interesting names he has encountered during his experience working in place names and will highlight some of the interesting names he has come across internationally as well. This talk highlights how naming practices reveal broader social and political forces with examples from Colorado, the larger U.S., and internationally.

Making the General Map of Virginia Cassandra Farrell

This presentation covers Virginia's ambitious 19th-century mapping project that resulted in the publication of the first official map of the Commonwealth. The Library of Virginia's senior map archivist, Cassandra Farrell, will discuss the efforts and surveying teams involved in producing the detailed manuscript maps for each county that were required to create the Virginia state map — often called "the general map" in correspondence from the time.

Enhancing User Experience on Google Maps with Geographic Names Holli Howard, Dieter Laskowski, Francisco Moneo

This presentation highlights how Google Maps has enhanced user experience by providing comprehensive and localized geographic name data. We will go through improvements in language support, data coverage, and touch on how partners can contribute.

Introduction to U.S. Geological Survey Map Ready Data Marcelle Caturia

Map Ready Data (MRD) is a concept to cartographically enable data that allows the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to improve its topographic map cartographic quality and production efficiency. MRD is expanding to an automated data preparation platform that enables geographic names to use enriched content and generalization rules in support of their accurate display at appropriate map scales. For example, how to best determine which place names, sourced from the USGS Geographic Names Information System, remain labeled on a topographic map when it is zoomed out from 1:24,000 to 1:100,000 map scale? This presentation introduces these new enrichments and rules and details how they can be used to improve the cartographic quality of USGS topographic maps.

A batch proposal for Nineteen Ahtna Place Names for officially unnamed features in and around Glacial Lake Atna

James Kari

Kari 2019 presented Dene geolinguistic evidence that a group of about 20 names called 'The Nen' Yese' Ensemble" were coined by Ahtna/Dene speaking eyewitnesses during the Susitna R-Copper R drainage shift in the first half of the 11th millennium. A theory known as the Proto-Dene Lex Loci" is introduced with a selection of 67 Dene place in three temporal stages: prior to, during and after the GLA drainage shift. In 2013 the name Nen' Yese' Ridge became official (2680026). This was an island at the western outlet of GLA 11kbp.

In summer 2025, Kari is preparing a batch name submission to the USBGN of 19 Ahtna place names for unnamed features that surround Copper River Basin. All of these names have been on record since 1983 with the same spellings, locations, and similar literal translations. The selected names illustrate features of the rule-driven auto-instructional Dene Generative Geography. The batch name proposal is both informative and time-effective for various state, federal and borough governments, as well as for Ahtna Inc. and local tribal governments and corporations. As official names in the GNIS, these names can promote Dene language studies, several subfields of interdisciplinary prehistory, and landscape tourism. Kari's May 5, 2025 talk on the name proposal can be seen at: <https://uaf-accap.org/event/ahtna-place-names/>

National Renaming Efforts and the Mount Blue Sky Campaign

Jessica Lambert, Jim Ramey, Ruben Hamelink

Thousands of racist and derogatory place names stain the beautiful landscapes of the United States. This session outlines movements to change these derogatory names as a path towards healing the land. From the local community-driven campaign to rename Mount Blue Sky to national-level coalition-building, Federal policy efforts, and education campaigns we explore successes, challenges, and opportunities for future engagement in this critical work.

Presenter Biographies

Marcelle Caturia

Marcelle Caturia is a Dynamic Mapping Specialist with the Cartographic Applied Research Section (CARS) at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) National Geospatial Technical Operations Center (NGTOC) in Denver, Colorado. Her work focuses on improving the cartographic quality of USGS topographic map and data products. She has also served on the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) Partner Support, Geographic Names, and Map Production Services teams.

Rich Cimino

Rich Cimino graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1994 with a B.S. in Geography! He later earned an MBA from New Mexico State University in 2000, and a Master of Science in Strategic Intelligence from the National Intelligence University (NIU) in Washington D.C. in 2008. He went on to teach at NIU for three years. Rich retired from the Air Force after 21 years as an intelligence Office. Riche's assignments included Satellite Imagery Operations for the National Reconnaissance Office and deployments to the Middle East delivering maps and imagery to combat forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Uzbekistan, Djibouti, and the U.A.E.

Cassandra Farrell

Cassandra Farrell graduated in 1996 from Bryan College with a BA in history and earned her Master's degree in history from Old Dominion University in 1999. In 2022 she began her career with the Library of Virginia and began working with the map collection in 2005. She's curated two map exhibitions at the LVA, *From Williamsburg to Wills's Creek: The Fry-Jefferson Map of Virginia & Mapping the Commonwealth, 1816-1826*. Cassandra spent 13 years as an adjunct instructor in history in the Virginia Community College system and has been pursuing her doctorate in history at George Mason University since 2020 - she hopes to be a PhD candidate by the end of 2025.

Christopher Hammond

Chris is the head of USGS's Office of Tribal Relations, which builds partnerships with Native American and Alaska Native governments and tribal organizations. He also manages STEP-UP, a program that provides volunteer opportunities to students with disabilities (ages 18-22) to support their educational and professional goals.

Before coming to USGS in 2019, Chris worked at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management as its Director of the Executive Secretariat and held management positions in the Agency Compliance and Evaluation division, including its Voting Rights Program, which recruits, trains, and deploys federal observers under authority of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. His federal career has included stints at USDA, DHS, and HHS.

Ruben Hamelink

Ruben Hamelink is a self-taught photographer and filmmaker from Rotterdam, The Netherlands. In his work, he examines how people interact with the historical context of their environment and explores how history shapes the identity of a country and its inhabitants and vice versa. By documenting the world around him, he aims to challenge assumptions, disrupt stereotypes, and prompt viewers to consider their own place in the larger narrative of human experience.

He strives to approach each project with empathy and sensitivity, recognizing that the stories he tells belong not only to the past, but also to the present and future.

Ruben Hamelink (continued): In 2014 Ruben published the photobook; '*Vietnamese Veterans*', about the men and women who defended Vietnam in four different wars. In 2017 Ruben won the Celeste 'In Conflict' Prize for his photo project '*The Free Runners of Gaza*'. With his work 'Living History' he won the 2019 Zilveren Camera International Documentary prize. Through this photography and film project he explored the role of collective national history in relation to American Civil War re-enactments and Slave-Rebellion re-enactments in shaping contemporary American society and the identities of its citizens. As camera operator Ruben has worked on documentary films including 'Stateless Democracy' (2017, New World Summit and Jonas Staal) about the radical democratic movement in Rojava, West Kurdistan, and 'Monumental Crossroads' (2018, Tim van den Hoff) about the removal of the Confederate Monuments in New Orleans and the discussions regarding this contested heritage.

Jason Hanson

Jason Hanson is with History Colorado, Jason L. Hanson is the chief creative officer and director of interpretation and research at History Colorado. Some of his previous articles for *The Colorado Magazine* include "[Colorado Is My Classroom: What Earlier Pandemics Can Teach Us About School](#)" (2020), "[The First Draft: Colorado History Over a Few Beers](#)" (2019), "Women's Work in Utopia: How the Women of the Colorado Cooperative Company Sought Utopia by Doing What They'd Always Done" (2016), "Brewers Want the Best: Growing a Brewing Industry in the Centennial State" (2015). He is also the author of *Game Changers: 100 Years of Negro League Baseball* ([History Colorado](#), 2020) and coauthor of *A Ditch in Time: The City, The West, and Water* with Patty Limerick (Fulcrum Publishing, 2012).

Holli Howard

Holli is the Google Maps Engagement Lead focused on building connections with the geospatial industry. She has championed the power of maps in various roles including humanitarian mapping for USAID, national security for NGA and urban planning in Washington, DC. She recently joined the UN-GGIM Private Sector Network for Google and serves on the National Geospatial Advisory Committee.

James Kari

James Kari is a linguist and Professor Emeritus with the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) specializing in the Dene (a.k.a. Athabascan languages) of Alaska. He served on the faculty of UAF from 1973 to his retirement in 1997. Kari continues to work on numerous Alaska Native language projects. He is the author or editor of more than 200 publications, including more than 4000 pages of bilingual texts in seven Dene languages. He is the most prolific contributor to the Alaska Native Language Archive (with more than 1000 entries as of 2019). His special interest is Dene ethnogeography. Kari has compiled or documented more than 14,000 place names in fourteen Alaska or Canadian Dene languages.

Jessica Lambert

Jessica Lambert (she/her) is an enrolled citizen of the Choctaw Nation, a first-generation descendant of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and a descendant of the Chickasaw Nation. As a Native Lands Partnerships Specialist for The Wilderness Society, she works to ensure Tribal Nations are prioritized in conservation and land management policies. She also serves on the steering committee of the Coalition for Outdoor Renaming & Education.

Dieter Laskowski

Dieter Laskowski is a Technical Lead for Google Maps' Geopolitical team, which deals with the representation of countries, borders, and disputes on Google Maps and across Google surfaces. Dieter has represented Google at the United Nations, participating and presenting at UNGEGN on the subject of how to represent names and their cultural heritage on maps.

Francisco Moneo

Francisco Moneo is a Product Manager on Google Maps' and works on the Geopolitical team, which deals with the representation of countries, borders, and disputes on Google Maps and across Google surfaces. Francisco has represented Google at the United Nations, participating and presenting at UNGEGN.

Jim Ramey

Jim Ramey serves as Colorado State Director for The Wilderness Society based in Grand Junction, Colorado where he manages TWS' campaigns across the state. Prior to becoming Colorado State Director, Jim was an Outreach Manager for the Energy & Climate Campaign, where he worked to advance policies to reduce air pollution from the oil and gas industry and protect spectacular public lands. In his spare time, you can find him hiking, backpacking, running, and taking pictures of Colorado's spectacular places with his wife Lindsey and their dogs Jeffrey and Bunny Lebowski.

Mike Tischler

Dr. Michael Tischler is the Acting Associate Director for Core Science Systems (CSS) Mission Area at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). In this position, Dr. Tischler provides strategic leadership in science planning and direction. He oversees efforts to characterize and understand complex Earth and biological systems through research, modeling, mapping, and the production of high-quality data. In this role, he manages and coordinates a broad range of programs, including the National Geospatial Program, the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program, the Science Synthesis, Analysis, and Research Program, the National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program, and the National Land Imaging Program. Dr. Tischler also oversees both the Earth Resource Observation and Science (EROS) and National Geospatial Technical Operations Centers (NGTOC).

As Director of the National Geospatial Program, Dr. Tischler provides management oversight and direction to the NGP including The National Map, the National Geospatial Technical Operations Center, the 3D Elevation Program, the National Hydrography Dataset, the US Topo Map Series, research activities performed at the Center of Excellence for Geospatial Information Science (CEGIS), and geospatial data and information in response to natural disasters. Dr. Tischler also serves as the Department of the Interior representative to the Domestic Names Committee of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. Prior to joining the USGS, Dr. Tischler worked as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Geospatial Research Laboratory in Alexandria, VA providing strategic and technical oversight to a variety of basic and applied geospatial research projects.

Shellie Zahniser

Dr. Shellie Zahniser serves as the Executive Secretary for the Domestic Names Committee under the U.S. Board on Geographic Names representing the U.S. Geological Survey. Shellie oversees the processing and management of domestic geographic name proposals and changes, helping ensure consistency across the U.S. Board on Geographic Names and the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS). She co-authored a USGS report for the United Nations on Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors with focus on promoting standardizing name use globally.

WELCOME TO

CALIFORNIA



COGNA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

*HOSTED BY THE CALIFORNIA
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
GEOGRAPHIC NAMES AND THE
NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY*

MORE DETAILS TO COME

**Join us in beautiful
California in 2026!**



Future Hosts of COGNA

- 2027 – Salt Lake City, Utah
- 2028 – Fargo, North Dakota
- 2029 – Lake Tahoe, Nevada

CoGNA 2025 – Colorado would like to thank the following for their generosity and support:



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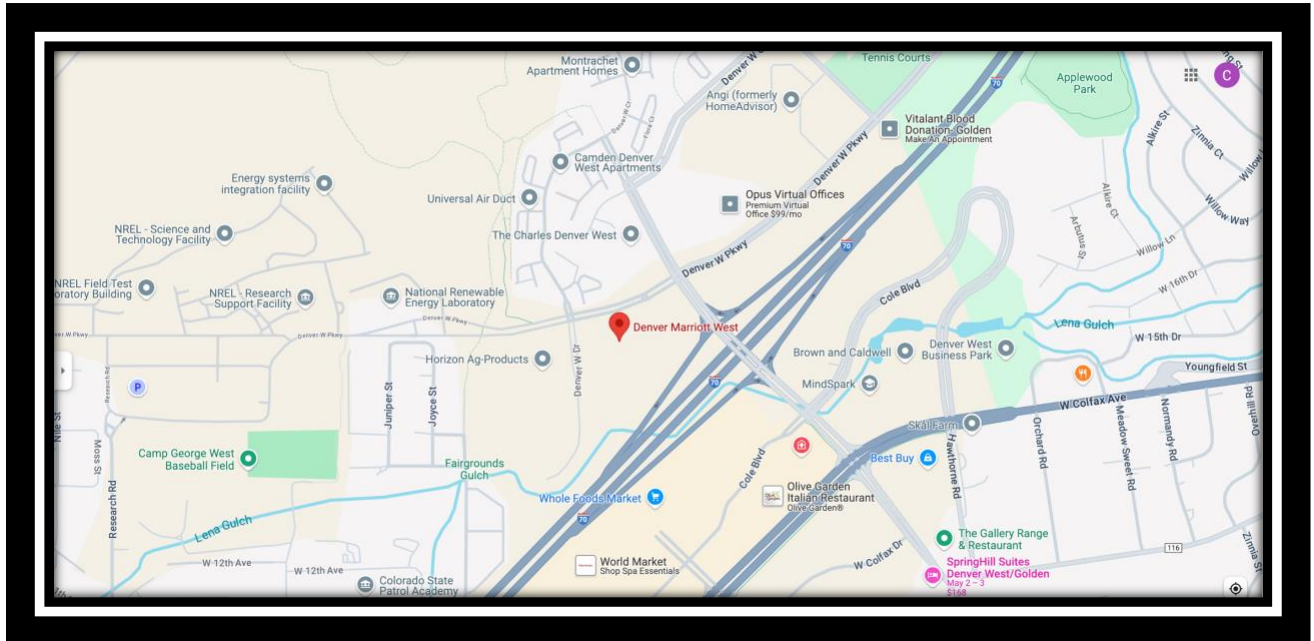


**The
Wilderness
Society**



Map and Parking Directions

The Denver West Marriott Hotel is in Golden, Colorado at
1717 Denver West Marriott Blvd
Room Reservations can be made [HERE](#)
See map below for more information.



PHYSICAL ADDRESS

Denver West Marriott Hotel
1717 Denver West Marriott Blvd.
Golden, CO 80401

Parking

There is plenty of free parking around the conference site and hotel area.

CoGNA2025
Golden, Colorado

A Few Things to Do and Places to Eat:



Opens in Google Maps