ALASKA NATURAL LANDSCAPES

1 VISUAL CHARACTER TYPES

May 1978
Commission Study 33
Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission
Scale: Series E; 1:2,500,000

Map 1 presents visual character type units, which are areas interrelated, uniform, or have consistently similar visual characteristics. They are defined by: location, by region; relief, indicating large-scale shape of the land surface; and landform, the features and texture of that surface (partly a function of vegetation).

PHYSIOGRAPHIC DIVISIONS OF ALASKA

I TUNDRA LOWLANDS
- A Arctic
  - (1) Arctic Lowlands
  - (2) Arctic Foothills
- B Western

II BROOKS RANGE
- A North Slope
- B South Slope

III INTERIOR
- A Coastal Influence

IV ALEUTIAN RANGE
- A Aleutian Mountains
- B Aleutian Islands

V PACIFIC MOUNTAIN SYSTEM
- A Coastal Influence

VI GULF OF ALASKA COAST

LEGEND

VISUAL CHARACTER TYPES

note: Numbers and letters on map refer to index at right. Example: 2Mt means gentle uplands; ridges with sloping trend. Related discussion on visual character types begins on page 15 of the text.

Location:

MAJOR PHYSIOGRAPHIC DIVISIONS

OTHER PHYSIOGRAPHIC SUBDIVISIONS

PHYSIOGRAPHIC DIVISIONS	PREDOMINANT VEGETATION
I TUNDRA LOWLANDS	Tundra
A Arctic	Tundra
(1) Arctic Lowlands	Tundra
(2) Arctic Foothills	Tundra
B Western	Tundra
II BROOKS RANGE	Tundra; boreal forest
A North Slope	Tundra
B South Slope	Boreal forest
III INTERIOR	Boreal forest
A Coastal Influence	Transition: Boreal forest to tundra
IV ALEUTIAN RANGE	High brush; tundra
A Aleutian Mountains	High brush*
B Aleutian Islands	Tundra
V PACIFIC MOUNTAIN SYSTEM	Boreal forest
A Coastal Influence	Transition: boreal to coastal forest **
VI GULF OF ALASKA COAST	Coastal forest

*While high brush occurs as a subordinate type within nearly all vegetation communities, its degree and dominance and wide extent makes it visually dominant in this subdivision.

**This transitional zone, which includes the lower slopes of Susitna Valley and Cook Inlet, is visibly transitional primarily due to a more luxuriant understory and greater presence of grasslands.

Relief:

Indicated by Number.

1. Plains and Lowlands
2. Gentle Uplands
3. Lower Mountains and Hills
4. Higher Mountains
5. Very High Mountains

Landform:

Upper case letter indicates the primary characteristic; the following lower case letter indicates the most significant secondary characteristic.

Flat to gently rolling lowlands.
- F Flat, few ponds.
- Fp Flat, many ponds.
- Fo Flat, oriented ponds.
- Fg Glacial deposition, gently rolling, many ponds.

Erosional environments, generally of low to moderate relief.
- Eo Outcrops and rough irregular hilly surface.
- El Long ridges on undulating plain.
- Er River incised or dissected.
- Eg Gorges, hogbacks, domes, i.e. gentle canyonlands topography.
- Eb Badlands.
- Em Mountains of mesa and canyon character, relatively greater relief.

Mountains:
Mountains generally of rounded form or wide spacing.
- M Generally rounded mountains with little or no glacial carving.
- Mw Bedrock shaped and dissected by flowing water.
- Mt Ridges with sloping trend.
- Ms Mountains or ranges widely spaced on uplands.
- Mb Narrow basin within mountains.

Igneous intrusive mountains, generally glacial-carved and rugged.
- I Crystalline mountains, moderately rugged, some glaciers.
- Ir Rugged crystalline mountains, glaciers generally widespread.
- Ig Sheer granite peaks and cliffs, often exfoliating.

Sedimentary (depositional) mountains.
- S Mountains of sedimentary rocks, in some cases lightly metamorphosed.
- Sv Valleys and troughs exceptionally wide, in above type.
- Sr Ruggedly glacier-carved sedimentary mountains.
- Se Ruggedly eroded sedimentary mountains, predominantly limestone.

Volcanic mountains or lava flows, of single type or with other types of mountains.
- V Volcanoes and lava flows.
- Vo Irregular volcanic islands or uplands with outcrops.
- Vi Volcanoes with igneous intrusive mountains.
- Vs Volcanoes with sedimentary and layered metamorphic mountains.

Glacial
- G Glacier and icefield dominated environments.

River-shaped topography and riparian zones.
- R River dominated environments.

Coastal landscapes. Note that only selected types of coastlines and coastal landscapes which are particularly distinctive have been delineated. Others are considered to be merely the edges of the types of landscapes adjacent to them, for the purposes of this study.
- Cm Coastal marshes, spits, and low islands.
- Cb Beach and forest coast.
- Ci Bay and inlet coast.
- Cs Bay and inlet to fiord coast set into banded sedimentary rocks, in many cases mixed with volcanic rocks.
- Cf Fiord coast.
- Cg Fiord coast set into sheer granite (Ig) mountains.

ARCTIC OCEAN
BEAUFORT SEA
BERING SEA
PACIFIC OCEAN
GULF OF ALASKA
BRISTOL BAY
NORTON SOUND
KUSKOKWIM BAY
ANADYR GULF
BERING STRAIT
KOTZEBUE SOUND
DIXON ENTRANCE
HECATE STRAIT