

FOREST ECOLOGY OF THE ALASKA TAIGA

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ABSTRACT

The relationship of the Alaska taiga to subdivisions proposed for the boreal forests of Canada and Eurasia is discussed. The main vegetation types are classified and arranged on a temperature-moisture gradient.

Of special importance to taiga ecology is the complex relationship of vegetation and permafrost. Wildfire is also an important environmental factor in the Alaska taiga, and present-day vegetation mosaics reflect past fire history. Forest succession following fire is complex, whereas succession on newly deposited silt bars on river flood plains follows a simpler pattern.

In the past the Alaska taiga forests have been only lightly harvested for local use. Increased demands for wood fiber, accompanied by changes in ownership patterns resulting from the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, are increasing pressures on the taiga forests. An overall land plan is needed to insure continued production and preservation of the many resources of the taiga.