

Section 5: Capitalization Help

Capitalization decisions are sometimes complex and subjective. The footnotes to the following table provide guidance for some of the thornier decisions. If a term is not addressed in the guide and you need to make a subjective decision, make sure you follow it consistently throughout the document and apply it consistently to other similar capitalization decisions.

Sources are listed at the end of this section.

Word	(Form) Example of Usage	Source ¹
A		
Arctic	capitalized when referring to the region— the <i>Arctic Circle</i> is lowercase when used as an adjective aligned with cold— <i>arctic weather</i> is	C 8.49; CSE 9.7.3; G 332
attorney general ²	<i>Attorneys General</i> Johnson and Smith the <i>attorneys general</i> met	C 8.30; G 312, 313
B		
bay	(see <i>sound</i>)	
board ³	the <i>board</i> met last week the <i>Board of Game</i> listened to	C 8.48; G 327
bush	the term <i>rural</i> is preferred.	
C		
capital improvement projects	<i>capital improvement projects</i> are	C 8.68; G 306
Central Alaska ^{4, 8}	in <i>Central Alaska</i> there are the <i>Central Region</i> has <i>central Alaska Range</i>	C 8.49; G 341
Chinook salmon	capitalize <i>Chinook</i>	G 309b
commissioner ²	when <i>Commissioner</i> Smith was Smith, <i>commissioner</i> of ADF&G <i>the commissioner</i> will not attend	C 8.25; G 312
Congress	capitalize	C 8.67; G 325
constitution	lowercase unless proper name: <i>U.S. Constitution</i> , or <i>Constitution of the State of Alaska</i>	C 8.86; G 346
council ³	(see <i>board</i>)	
D		
Delta Bison Range	bounded placename; see <i>hunt</i>	C 8.49; G 303

Word	(Form) Example of Usage	Source ¹
department ³	the <i>Department</i> of Fish and Game staff <i>department</i> staff recommended another <i>department</i> was created	C 8.68; G 326, 327
director ²	(see <i>commissioner</i>)	
district	the <i>district</i> catch was the <i>District 15</i> catch was the <i>Security Cove District</i> catch was	C 8.68; G 331
division ³	(see <i>department</i>)	
Donut Hole	harvests from the <i>Donut Hole</i> were	C 8.57; G 333a
drainage	lowercase	G 309b
Dungeness	capitalize	

E

east	(placename) cities in the <i>East</i> are (compass direction) the sun rises in the <i>east</i>	G 338
east side ⁵	(proper name) the <i>Eastside</i> gillnet fishery (n) the gillnet fisheries on the <i>east side</i> (adj) the <i>eastside</i> gillnet fisheries	C 8.49; G 338
elect	he was the <i>governor-elect</i> (always lowercase)	G 317
emergency order	when <i>Emergency Order 1-Y-10-87</i> was the <i>emergency order</i> closed the	G 346
ex-	ex-Governor Hickel left the <i>ex-governor</i> left office (see Section 6, <i>ex/former</i>)	G 317, 1101

F

fax	the <i>fax</i> arrived at 5:30 p.m.	G 356
federal	the <i>federal government</i> was the <i>Federal Reserve Board</i> lowered	G 328, 329
federal aid	lowercase unless used with proper title of program; i.e., <i>Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration</i> (can introduce an abbreviation)	G 328
federal aid contracts	we mailed out the <i>federal aid contracts</i>	G 328
First Nation	capitalize; informal term used for indigenous inhabitants in Canada (e.g., <i>Tagish First Nation</i>)	G 348
First Nations	capitalize; legal treaty term for indigenous inhabitants (e.g., <i>Canadian First Nations</i>)	G 348
fiscal year	the <i>fiscal year</i> will end	G 308
Fish and Game Fund	revenue will come from the <i>Fish and Game Fund</i>	G 308
fishery	when the <i>gillnet fishery</i> was when the <i>False Pass fishery</i> was	C 8.2
fund	When referring to fiscal funds named in the state budget, capitalize: <i>Fish and Game Fund</i>	C 8.58; G 308

Word	(Form) Example of Usage	Source ¹
G		
general fund	the <i>general fund</i> shortfall	G 308
governor ²	Jones, the <i>governor of Alaska</i> , was <i>Governor-elect</i> Jones traveled the <i>governor</i> signed into law (see Section 6, <i>ex/former</i>)	C 8.25; G 312, 313
H		
herd	the Alaska Peninsula caribou <i>herd</i> (see Section 3.3)	G 309b
hunt	the Delta bison <i>hunt</i> was	G 309b
I		
Inside Passage	the ship traveled the <i>Inside Passage</i>	C 8.51; G 333a
Interior Alaska	species in <i>Interior Alaska</i> are <i>the Alaska Interior</i> is largely <i>the Interior</i> is largely	C 8.49 G 332
Internet	Last year, <i>Internet</i> use increased	G 303
ivermectin	refers to a class of broad spectrum antiparasitic medications, not a brand name	W
L		
legislature	<i>the legislature</i> adjourned on the <i>Alaska State Legislature</i> passed SB 513 the <i>1996 legislature</i>	G 327
lower ⁵	(actual placename) stocks in the <i>Lower Yukon River</i> (general area) the <i>lower</i> portion of the Yukon River	C 8.51, 8.58; G 337b
M		
N		
native	<i>natives of Alaska</i> (those born in Alaska) stocks <i>native to this area</i> were	G 348 C 8.41
Native	for indigenous inhabitants use: <i>Native American(s) or Alaska Natives; Canadian First Nations; Tagish First Nation</i>	G 348
news release	when <i>News Release 1-Y-10-87</i> was the <i>news release</i> closed the	G 346
north	(see <i>east</i>)	
North Atlantic/ Pacific/Pole	<i>North Pacific</i> populations are	C 8.51; G 341
North Pacific Rim	the maritime people of the <i>North Pacific Rim</i>	
North Slope	the populations on the <i>North Slope</i> were	C 8.51; G 333a

Word	(Form) Example of Usage	Source ¹
northern Alaska ⁴	the <i>northern Alaska</i> climate is	C 8.48, 8.51; G 341
northern Pacific Ocean ⁴	those in the <i>northern Pacific Ocean</i>	C 8.48, 8.51; G 341
northwest	direction of travel is <i>northwest</i> , <i>northwestern Alaska</i>	C 8;48, 8.49; CSE 14.1.1.4

P

Pacific Northwest	the <i>Pacific Northwest</i> coastal region reported a	C 8.49, 8.51; G 341
Pacific Rim	trading with <i>Pacific Rim</i> countries	C 8.51; G 333a
Panhandle, Alaska	the ship made stops in the <i>Alaska Panhandle</i>	C 8.51; G 333a
permanent fund	an individual can receive one <i>permanent fund dividend</i> the <i>Permanent Fund Dividend Division</i> <i>Permanent Fund Dividend Program</i> <i>Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation</i>	G 308

Q

R

range	the <i>Delta Bison Range</i> was the <i>range</i> east of Tok	G 303, 331; C 8.58
refuge	the <i>Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge</i> <i>the refuge</i> was selected because	G 331
Region	capitalize when used as a proper name: the <i>Central Region</i> has	C 8.49 C 8.57
river ⁶	(common noun) the flow in the <i>river</i> was (actual river name) the <i>Yukon River</i> flows west (applied to two or more names) the <i>Chilkat and Chilkoot rivers</i> flow	C 8.57
river basin/mouth system ⁶	compound noun, always lowercase; the <i>Yukon river system</i> , the <i>Yukon river mouth</i> ; <i>Yukon river basin</i>	C 8.57

S

scuba	no longer capitalized (abbreviated for <i>self-contained underwater breathing apparatus</i>)	G 522a
section	A weir in the Northwest Stepovak <i>Section</i> The Ilnik and Port Heiden <i>sections</i> were	
sound	the <i>Prince William Sound</i> harvest was oil deposits in the <i>sound</i> were	G 331
south	(see east)	
Southcentral Alaska ^{4,8}	moose in <i>Southcentral Alaska</i> are deer found in <i>southcentral</i> areas of the range were	C 8.49; G 338, 341
Southeast Alaska ^{4,8}	the deer in <i>Southeast Alaska</i> are deer on the <i>southeastern</i> side of the mountain are deer in <i>Southeast</i> are	C 8.49; G 338, 341 G 332

Word	(Form) Example of Usage	Source ¹
state ⁷	and the <i>state</i> (or <i>State</i>) of Alaska was however, <i>New York State</i> (or <i>state</i>) was the <i>state</i> (or <i>State</i>) requested that	C 7.40, 8.58
stock	When <i>Togiak stock</i> entered the	G 309b
Styrofoam	trademark name, capitalize; use the term <i>polystyrene</i> unless referring specifically to the trademark product	G 356
subdistrict	(see <i>district</i>)	
Super Cub	capitalize; a <i>Super Cub</i> was used for the survey	Piper Aircraft
T		
Tanner crab	capitalize	
trans-Alaska pipeline	the <i>trans-Alaska pipeline</i> opened	C 7.90(3)
treaty	lowercase unless part of title: <i>Pacific Salmon Treaty</i> the <i>treaty</i> for U.S./Canada	G 346a
U		
upper ⁵	(see <i>lower</i>)	
V		
valley	Yukon River <i>valley</i> , Kahiltna and Sustina river <i>valleys</i> , Fraser River <i>valley</i> , Fraser <i>Valley</i> , Nile <i>Valley</i> ; the <i>valley</i> ; the Mississippi River <i>valley</i> , Death <i>Valley</i> , the Hudson River <i>valley</i>	C 8.58
village	the location of the <i>village of Kobuk</i> (not part of proper name); however, <i>Kobuk Village</i> employment (part of proper name)	G 334
Visqueen	capitalize; We used <i>Visqueen</i> in camp include disclaimer as this is a brand name for polyethylene film	G 356
W		
weir	the Chilkat River <i>weir</i> was	G 309b
west	(see <i>east</i>)	
western Alaska ⁴	The Seward Peninsula is in <i>western Alaska</i>	C 8.50; G 341
west side ⁵	(see <i>east side</i>)	
Westward ^{4, 8}	in the <i>Westward Region</i> there are in <i>Westward</i> there are	G 332
World Wide Web	always capitalize	G 303

X

Xerox	trademark name, always capitalize; avoid using as a verb in technical writing, use <i>photocopy</i> instead	G 356
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¹ Sources:

C *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition. University of Chicago Press (2003). The section number is in parentheses.

G *The Gregg Reference Manual*, 10th edition. McGraw-Hill (2005).

W *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*. Merriam Webster, Inc. (2002).

- ² Do not customarily capitalize titles of state officials when used alone (e.g., *commissioners*, *senators*, *attorneys general*), except when title is part of an individual's name (e.g., *Director Green*). These titles alone may be capitalized when there is a need for special emphasis; however, be consistent. Capitalize most high-ranking federal titles.
- ³ Normally, short forms of names of state or local governmental groups like *board*, *division*, *department*, *village*, and *council*, when used alone as a common name, are not capitalized. However, the short forms of national and international bodies and their major divisions, such as *Council* for NPFMC are capitalized. Whether upper- or lowercase, be consistent within a document (for more discussion see *The Gregg Reference Manual*, sections 326 and 327). Also, per *Chicago Manual of Style* 8.3, many proper names combine a given name with a generic term. After first mention, an official name is often replaced by the generic term alone, which (no longer strictly a proper name) may safely be lowercased. The Alaska Board of Fisheries can be referred to in direct context as the "board" and The Alaska Department of Fish and Game can be, in direct context, referred to as "the department."
- ⁴ Nonspecific (unbounded) regions or areas of Alaska and similar proper geographic names are generally lowercase—e.g., *central Brooks Range*; *southeastern*, *western*, and *northern Alaska*; *northern Pacific Ocean*. However, some regions, especially those with geographic distinctiveness, have developed placename status; these include *Southeast Alaska*, *Interior Alaska* (*the Interior*), *Central Alaska*, and *Southcentral Alaska*. ADF&G administrative regions are always capitalized because they are proper names: *Southeast Region*, *Southcentral Region*, *AYK Region*, *Westward Region*.
- ⁵ Capitalizing words like *upper*, *lower*, *east*, *middle*, etc., depends on whether they are part of an actual placename or simply denote a general area or location. If, for example, the upper area of the Yukon River had established boundaries representing a very specific region of the river, then *Upper Yukon* would be appropriate. If it were more of a general area, then it would be best to use *upper Yukon*. The same holds true for *west side* and *east side*.
- ⁶ *River* can be a common noun (lowercase) or part of a river's proper name (capitalized). When the generic term *river* comes second and applies to two or more names, it is lowercased (*Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers*). However, *river system*, *river basin*, or *river mouth* are compound common nouns (lowercase) and are never part of a river's proper name. In the example, *Yukon river system*, *Yukon* is a proper-name adjective (capitalized) modifying the common compound noun *river system* (lowercase). Additionally, *Yukon* is actually a truncation of *Yukon River*, so to avoid redundancy, one should say *Yukon river system* instead of the *Yukon River river system* (*river mouth*). The proper name *River* is dropped rather than the common name *river*.
- ⁷ Use "state of Alaska" for all uses except when referring specifically to the governmental body; for example, *The State of Alaska is considering a comprehensive health plan for residents*, or *The State of Alaska must place at least 25 percent of all oil royalties in the permanent fund*. The short form, *state* alone, should not be capitalized unless the lack of capitalization would produce ambiguity. *In the state of Alaska, many communities can be accessed only by boat or airplane*.
- ⁸ The stand-alone form should not be used in technical or formal writing.