

Water Words

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Ecosystem:

The interacting system of a biological community and its non-living environmental surroundings. 2. In the context of instream beneficial use assessment application, a complex system composed of a community of fauna and flora, and taking into account the chemical and physical environment with which the system is interrelated.

Effluent:

Wastewater — treated or untreated — that flows out of a treatment plant, storm sewer, or industrial outfall, or any other point sources. Generally refers to wastes discharged into surface waters.

Effluent limitation:

Restrictions established by a State or regional Water Boards in an NPDES permit on quantities, rates, and concentrations in wastewater discharges.

Electrical conductivity:

The relative ability of water to conduct electrical current. Conductivity depends on the ion concentration and temperature and can be used to approximate the total dissolved solids in the water.

Electrodialysis:

A process that uses electrical current applied to permeable membranes to remove minerals from water. Often used to desalinize salty or brackish water.

Eligible costs:

The construction costs for wastewater treatment works upon which U.S. EPA grants are based.

Enclosed bays:

Indentations along the coast that enclose an area of oceanic water within a distinct headlands or harbor works.

Endangered species:

(See Threatened species)

Enforceable requirements:

Conditions or limitations in permits that, if violated, could result in the issuance of an administrative civil liability, civil or criminal action, or other legal remedies provided under state law. If a permit has not been issued, the term includes any requirement that would be included in the permit when issued.

Enjoin:

To prohibit, forbid, or mandate especially by legal action.

Enrichment:

The addition of nutrients (e.g., nitrogen, phosphorus, carbon compounds) from sewage effluent or agricultural runoff to surface water. Enrichment greatly increases the growth potential for algae and other aquatic plants.

Entrain:

To trap bubbles in water either mechanically through turbulence or chemically through a reaction.

Environment:

The sum of all external conditions affecting the life, development and survival of an organism.

Environmental equity/justice:

Equal protection from environmental hazards for individuals, groups, or communities regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status. This applies to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies, and implies that no group should be forced to shoulder a disproportionate share of negative environmental impacts because it lacks political or economic strength.

Environmental indicator:

A measurement, statistic or value that provides evidence of the effects of environmental management programs or of the state or condition of the environment.

Environmental Impact Report (EIR):

A document required by the 1970 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) that assesses the environmental effects of a project.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):

Required by the National Environmental Policy Act, this document analyzes the effects of major federal projects on the environment. It must be filed with the President and the Council on Environmental Quality, and made available to the public.

Environmental medium:

An environmental category that surrounds or contacts humans, animals, plants, and other organisms (e.g., surface water, groundwater, soil or air) and through which chemicals or pollutants move.

Environmental Outcome:

Condition or state of the environment or human health as a result of implementing strategies to achieve environmental goals and objectives.

Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA):

Federal regulatory agency responsible for protecting environmental quality throughout the nation. It acts in an oversight role to state environmental agencies that carry out federal laws.

Environmental site assessment:

A process of determining whether contamination is present on a parcel of real property. The American Society for Testing and Materials' document entitled "Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessment: Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment Process" describes such a process.

Environmental sustainability:

Long-term maintenance of ecosystem components and functions for future generations.

Erosion:

The process in which a material is worn away by precipitation, a stream of water, glaciers, winds and waves.

Estuary:

Region of interaction between rivers and near-shore ocean waters, where tidal action and river flow mix fresh and salt water. Such areas include bays, mouths of rivers, salt marshes, and lagoons. These brackish water ecosystems shelter and feed marine life, birds, and wildlife.

Eutrophic lakes:

Shallow, murky bodies of water with concentrations of plant nutrients causing excessive production of algae.

Eutrophication:

The slow aging process during which a lake, estuary, or bay evolves into a bog or marsh and eventually disappears. During the later stages, the water body is choked by plant life because of high levels of nutritive compounds such as nitrogen and phosphorus.

Evaporation ponds:

Areas where sewage sludge is dumped and dried.

Evapotranspiration (ET):

The loss of water from the soil by evaporation and by transpiration from the plants growing in the soil.

Exempted aquifer:

Underground bodies of water defined in the Underground Injection Control Program as aquifers that are potential sources of drinking water, and thus are exempted from regulations barring underground injection activities.