

Water Words

M

Management Agency Agreement (MAA):

An agreement between the State or Regional Board and another state agency to use each agency's authorities in a coordinated fashion to implement at a specific water quality management plan.

Mariculture:

The cultivation of plants and animals in marine waters.

Marsh:

A type of wetland that does not accumulate appreciable peat deposits and is dominated by herbaceous vegetation. Marshes may be fresh or saltwater, tidal or non-tidal. (See Wetlands)

Matching funds:

Money that equals the percentage of contributions required by federal or state law to be matched with the recipient's own funds.

Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL):

The maximum permissible level of a contaminant in water delivered to any user of a public system. MCLs are drinking water standards that are primarily enforced by the Department of Health Services (DHS).

Measure of effect/measurement endpoint:

A measurable characteristic of an ecological entity relative to an assessment endpoint; e.g., a laboratory test for eight species meeting certain requirements may serve as a measure of effect for an assessment endpoint, such as survival of fish, aquatic, invertebrate or algal species under acute exposure.

Measure of exposure:

A measurable characteristic of a stressor (such as the specific amount of mercury in a body of water) used to help quantify the exposure of an ecological entity or individual organism.

Mechanical aeration:

Use of mechanical energy to inject air into water to cause a waste stream to absorb oxygen.

Medium-size water system:

A water system that serves 3,300 to 50,000 customers.

Mercury (Hg):

Heavy metal that can accumulate in the environment and is toxic if breathed or swallowed. (See Heavy metals)

Mesotrophic:

Reservoirs and lakes that contain moderate quantities of nutrients and are moderately productive in terms of aquatic animal and plant life.

Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether (MTBE):

An additive originally put in gasoline to reduce air pollution, but later found to be a source of groundwater pollution. The State of California ordered a phase-out of its use in California gasoline by the end of 2003.

Methoxychlor:

Pesticide that causes adverse health effects when found in domestic water supplies. It is also toxic to aquatic life.

Methyl orange alkalinity:

A measure of the total alkalinity in a water sample in which the color of methyl orange reflects the change in level.

Migration

1. Movement of a substance from one place to another through natural processes; 2. Movement of a bank, shoreline, bar, or other geomorphic feature over time.

Milligram (mg):

One-thousandth of a gram.

Million Gallons Per Day (mgd):

A measure of water flow.

Mining of an aquifer:

Withdrawal of ground water at a rate that exceeds the aquifer's recharge rate. (See Overdraft)

Mining waste:

Residues left over from the extraction of raw materials from the earth.

Mission:

A brief statement (usually one sentence) of the purpose of, or reason for, an agency, organization, or program that describes what, why, and for whom (the customer). It is the unique reason for the existence of the agency, organization, or program.

Mitigate:

To make less severe.

Mixed liquor:

A mixture of activated sludge and water containing organic matter undergoing treatment in an aeration tank.

Mixing zone:

A limited volume of receiving water that is allocated for diluting a wastewater discharge without causing adverse effects to the overall water body.

Moisture content:

1. The amount of water lost from soil upon drying to a constant weight, expressed as the weight per unit of dry soil or as the volume of water per unit bulk volume of the soil. For a fully saturated medium, moisture content indicates the porosity. 2. Water equivalent of snow on the ground; an indicator of snowmelt flood potential.

Moisture holding capacity:

The amount of liquid that can be held against gravity, by waste materials or soil, without generating free liquid.

Molecule:

The smallest division of a compound that still retains or exhibits all the properties of the substance.

Monitoring well:

A well used to obtain water quality samples or measure groundwater levels.

Monomictic:

Lakes and reservoirs that are relatively deep, do not freeze over during winter, and undergo a single stratification and mixing cycle during the year (usually in the fall).

Mudballs:

Round material that forms in filters and gradually grows when not removed by backwashing.

Multiple use:

Use of land for more than one purpose; e.g., livestock grazing, watershed and wildlife protection, recreation, and timber production. Also applies to use of bodies of water for recreational purposes, fishing, and water supply.

Municipal discharge:

Discharge of effluent from treatment plants that receive wastewater from households, commercial establishments, and industries. Combined sewer/separate storm overflows are included in this category.

Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4):

A system of pipes, ditches or gullies that is owned/operated by a municipal government entity for collecting and conveying stormwater and is separate from the collection system for municipal wastewater.

Municipal sewage:

Wastes (mostly liquid) originating from a community. (See Municipal discharge)

Municipal sludge:

Semi-liquid residue remaining from the treatment of municipal water and wastewater.