

RESOURCES

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abiotic Factor – A non-living part of an ecosystem.

Adaptation – The behaviors and physical characteristics of species that allow them to successfully live in their environments.

Algae – Simple, one-celled or many-celled plants that grow in sunlit water, capable of photosynthesis.

Amphibian – A class of cold-blooded vertebrates that include frogs, toads, or salamanders.

Aquatic – Living mostly or all the time in water.

Bacteria – The microscopic single-celled organisms that derive nourishment from dead or decaying matter.

Biome – A group of ecosystems with similar organisms, location, and climate.

Biotic Factor – A living part of an ecosystem.

Catch Basin – The opening in a curb or gutter that catches water and directs it to stormdrains.

Community – The different organisms that live and interact with each other in an area.

Condensation – The conversion of vapor (gas) into water (liquid).

Consumer – An organism that obtains energy by feeding on other organisms.

Contamination – The introduction into water, air, and soil of microorganisms, chemicals, toxic substances, wastes, or wastewater in a concentration that makes the medium unfit for its intended use.

Crustacean – A member of the subphylum of the arthropods characterized by mandibles, antennae, and modified appendages. They include lobsters, crayfish, crabs and shrimp.

Data – Recorded observations from investigations or experiments.

Decomposer – An organism that breaks down wastes and organic matter.

Decomposition – The breakdown or decay of organic matter through the digestive processes of microorganisms.

Dissolved Oxygen – Gaseous oxygen (O₂) dissolved in an aqueous solution.

Downspout – A vertical pipe used to drain water from a roof.

Ecosystem – A dynamic set of living organisms (plants, animals, microorganisms) all interacting among themselves and with the environment in which they live (soil, air, climate, water, light).

Environment – An organism's living (biotic) and non-living (abiotic) surroundings that affect and influence its development and survival.

Estuary – The mouth or lower course of a river where the river current meets the sea's tide.

Evaporation – The conversion of water (liquid) into a vapor (gas).

Fertilizer – Nutrients used by plants for growth.

Freshwater – Water that is not salty.

Fungus – Any of a major group of spore-producing organisms that include molds, mildew, and mushrooms.

Glacier – A huge mass of ice and snow that moves slowly over the land.

Graph – A way to organize or represent quantities mathematically.

Groundwater – The freshwater that fills the cracks and pores beneath the earth's surface, which supply wells and springs.

Gutter – A channel for draining off water.

Hazardous Waste – Products that contain chemicals that are harmful to humans and the land.

Invertebrates – Animals without backbones.

Investigation – The process of using inquiry and examination to gather facts and information in order to solve a problem or answer a question.

Land Pollution – The trash dropped on the land, such as gum, food wrappers, cans, paper, and plastic bags. It also includes pet waste, and oil dripped from cars.

Microorganism – A form of life too small to be seen by the naked eye.

Organism – Any living thing.

Pesticide – Chemicals used to kill pests. Pests may include ants, termites, mice, rats, and agricultural pests.

Photosynthesis – The process of constructive metabolism in which green plants utilize the energy of sunlight to manufacture carbohydrates from carbon dioxide and water in the presence of chlorophyll.

Polluted Runoff – Sometimes referred to as nonpoint source pollution is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground picking up pollutants along its journey to lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters, and even our underground sources of drinking water. Some of these pollutants are natural and others are man-made. In urban areas, polluted runoff is referred to as stormwater pollution or stormwater runoff.

Pollution – A change in the environment that eventually affects living things.

TEACHER RESOURCES

Precipitation – Water deposited on the earth as hail, mist, fog, rain, sleet, or snow.

Prediction – A guess based on information and experience.

Producer – Species that carry out photosynthesis, thereby producing trapped sunlight energy for the rest of the species in the community; members of the trophic level.

Rain gutter – A channel along the roof that collects and carries away rainwater.

Reservoir – A natural or artificial lake that stores water for human use.

Runoff – Water that flows over the ground because it cannot seep into the soil, evaporate, or transpire through plants. It finds its way into streams and rivers as surface flow, and may pick-up contaminants, such as trash and fertilizer, along the way.

Sanitary Sewer System – An underground system of pipes that carries waste water from homes and businesses to treatment plants where it is cleaned, solids and pollutants are removed, and the water is discharged into the ocean.

Sediment – Soil and rock materials removed by erosion and transported by water, wind, ice, and gravity.

Self Purification – The reduction of contamination concentrations in the environment through the use of natural processes.

Stormdrain – Above ground or below ground pipes and channels that transport stormwater to the ocean for flood control purposes.

Stormwater – Created when trash, cigarette butts, animal waste, pesticides, motor oil and other contaminants left on the ground are washed or thrown directly into storm drains. This toxic soup mixes with millions of gallons of rainwater and flows untreated into local creeks, rivers and the ocean – polluting our waterways, as well as degrading neighborhoods and other natural resources. In rural areas, stormwater is referred to as polluted runoff or nonpoint source pollution.

Task – An assigned piece of work to be finished within a certain time.

Timeline – The amount of time allowed for a project.

Toxic Substance – A chemical or mixture of chemicals that may cause harm to human health or to the environment.

Vertebrates – Animals with backbones.

Wastewater Treatment Plant – The set of structures where water goes through a purification process.

Water Pollution – The addition of any substance that has a negative effect on water and the living things that depend on water.

Watershed – The land area that directs water to a drainage or river system.

Wetland – An area of land that is covered by a shallow layer of water during some or all of the year.