

Glossary

Algal blooms: Proliferation of one or several species of phytoplankton to high cell densities during favorable environmental conditions.

Biological controls: Control of pests through the use of organisms that are natural predators, parasites, or pathogens.

Bioswales: Vegetated filters for stormwater pollution.

Buffer zone: Vegetation strip maintained along a stream or lake to mitigate the impacts of actions on adjacent lands.

Dripline: The area surrounding a tree, where water drips off the tree.

Ecosystem: Any complex of living organisms interacting with nonliving chemical and physical components that form and function as a natural environmental unit.

Ephemeral: A seasonal stream or tributary, flowing only a short period of time.

Erosion: The wearing away of land surface by wind or water, intensified by land-clearing practices related to farming, residential or industrial development, road building, or logging.

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 of eutrophication the water body is choked by abundant plant life due to higher levels of nutritive compounds such as nitrogen and phosphorus. Human activities can accelerate the process.

Evapotranspiration: The combination of water that is lost from the soil through evaporation and through transpiration from plants as a part of their metabolic processes.

Floodplains: (1) Area adjoining a water body that becomes inundated during periods of overbank flooding and that is given rigorous legal definition in regulatory programs. (2) Land beyond a stream channel that forms the perimeter for the maximum probability flood. (3) Strip of land bordering a stream that is formed by substrate deposition. (4) Deposit of alluvium that covers a valley flat from lateral erosion of meandering streams and rivers.

High Gradients: Steep slope, or the change in vertical elevation per unit of horizontal distance, of the water surface in a flowing stream.

Impermeable: Refers to a layer of material of sufficient composition, density, and thickness that it does not permit passage of a liquid or a gas.

Leach: Removal of soluble material in the ground by percolating water.

Nutrient: Element or compound essential for growth, development, and life for living organisms, such as oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.

Permeability: Measure of the rate at which water can penetrate and pass through a medium such as soil or other substrate. The rate depends on the composition and degree of compaction of the substrate.

Porosity: Existence of interstices or “pores” in the soil or rock, and the ratio of the volume of pores to the total volume of solids plus voids. This also refers to the ease or speed with which water can move into or through the substrate.

Phosphorus: Key nutrient influencing plant growth which can contribute to the eutrophication of lakes and other water bodies.

Reclamation: (1) Most recently defined as any action that results in a stable, self-sustaining ecosystem that may or may not include introduced species. (2) Traditionally defined as the process of adapting natural resources to serve a utilitarian purpose. Historically this term included the conversion of riparian or wetland ecosystems to agricultural, industrial, or urban uses.

Riparian: Areas adjacent to rivers and streams with a differing density, diversity, and productivity of plant and animal species relative to nearby uplands.

Sediment Load: General term that refers to sediment moved by a stream in suspension (suspended load) or at the bottom (bed load). Sediment load is not synonymous with either discharge or concentration.

Sediment: Fragmented material from weathered rocks and organic material that is suspended in, transported by and eventually deposited by water or air.

Stream banks: Ground bordering a channel above the streambed and below the level of rooted vegetation that often has a gradient steeper than 45 degrees and exhibits a distinct break in slope from the stream bottom. The portion of the channel cross section that restricts lateral movement of water during normal streamflow. Right and left banks are determined while looking downstream.

Surface waters: Standing water above the substrate or water that flows exclusively across a land surface and includes all perennial and ephemeral water bodies.

Toe: The base of a slope along a bank or other geographic feature where a gentle incline changes abruptly to a steeper gradient.

Wastewater: Water carrying dissolved or suspended solids generated by human or animal activities.

Water table: Depth below which the ground is saturated with water; generally expressed as linear depth below the soil surface to the upper layer of groundwater.

Watershed: Region of area drained by surface and groundwater flow in rivers, stream, or other surface channels. A smaller watershed can be wholly contained within a larger watershed.

Wetlands: An area that is saturated by surface or ground water with vegetation adapted for life under those soil conditions, as swamps, bogs, fens, marshes, and estuaries.