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- Glossary

Glossary Of Wetland Related Terms

Aerenchyma tissue – special tissue with pore spaces a plant has in its roots and stems to allow for the diffusion of oxygen.

Algae – simple plants which do not grow true roots, stems, or leaves and which live mainly in water, providing a base for the food chain.

Algal bloom – a heavy growth of algae in and on a body of water as a result of high nitrate and phosphate concentrations from farm fertilizers and detergents.

Alkalinity – a measure of the negative ions available to react and neutralize free hydrogen ions. Some of most common of these include hydroxide (OH), sulfate (SO₄), phosphate (PO₄), bicarbonate (HCO₃) and carbonate (CO₃)

Anaerobic – living, active or occurring in the absence of oxygen.

Assemblage – the set of related organisms that represent a portion of a biological community (e.g., benthic macroinvertebrates).

Benthic – pertaining to the bottom (bed) of a water body.

Bog – a wetland characterized by waterlogged soils and dominated by spongy mosses.

Brackish water – water that contains a mix of fresh and salt water.

Carolina Bay – wetlands found on the east coast of the US fed by rainwater and ground water.

Closed system wetland - is a wetland where there is little exchange of water, sediment, nutrients, pollution, organisms and energy with surrounding systems.

Community – a group of plants and animals inhabiting a given area.

Cypress swamp – a wetland environment common throughout the SE US in which cypress trees are a dominant species.

Delineate – to decide where something begins and ends.

Designated uses – state-established desirable uses that waters should support, such as fishing, swimming, and aquatic life. Listed in state water quality standards.

Dissolved oxygen (DO) – oxygen dissolved in water and available for living organisms to use for respiration.

Downstream – the direction the water is flowing

Dredge – to remove sediments from the streambed to deepen or widen the channel.

Ecoregion – geographic areas that are distinguished from others by ecological characteristics such as climate, soils, geology, and vegetation.

Effluent – an out-flowing branch of a main stream or lake; waste material (i.e. liquid industrial refuse, sewage) discharged into the environment.

Emergent plants – plants rooted underwater, but with their tops extending

above the water.

Endangered species – a life form that faces extinction

Erosion – the wearing away of land by wind or water.

Erosion Control – is the preventing of the wearing away or loss of material.

Estuarine – an area associated with an estuary

Estuary – the lower course of a river where the current is met by the ocean tides.

Eutrophication – the natural and artificial addition of nutrients to a water body, which may lead to depleted oxygen concentrations. Eutrophication is a natural process that is frequently accelerated and intensified by human activities.

Fen – low, flat swampy land. Also called a bog or marsh.

Fish kill – the sudden death of fish due to the introduction of pollutants or the reduction of dissolved oxygen concentration in a water body.

Floating plants – plants that grow free-floating, rather than being attached to the streambed.

Floodplain – a low area of land surrounding streams or rivers that holds the overflow of water during a flood.

Flow – the direction of movement of a stream or river.

Groundwater – a supply of fresh water under the earth's surface that forms a natural reservoir.

Groundwater Discharge – the outflow of water from the groundwater source.

Groundwater Recharge – the addition of water to the groundwater supply by natural filtration that tends to raise the water table.

Headwaters – the origins of a stream.

Herbaceous Layer – this layer consists of all vegetation except trees and shrubs. Examples of plants found in the herbaceous layer include: vines, grasses, and soft-stemmed plants.

Hydric Soil – soil characterized by the presence of water.

Hydrology – the study of the behavior of water in the atmosphere, on the earth's surface and underground.

Hydrophytes – water loving vegetation

Hypoxia – depletion of dissolved oxygen in an aquatic system.

Impoundment – a body of water contained by a barrier, such as a dam.

Lacustrine – having to do with lakes.

Land uses – activities that take place on the land, such as construction, farming, or tree clearing.

Leaching – the process in which material in the soil (such as nutrients, pesticides, chemicals) are washed into lower layers of soil or are dissolved and carried away by water.

Macroinvertebrate – organisms that lack a backbone and can be seen with the naked eye.

Marsh – a wetland characterized by soft, wet, low-lying land marked by herbaceous vegetation.

Nonpoint source pollution – pollution that cannot be traced to a specific point, but rather from many individual places (e.g., urban and agricultural runoff).

Nutrient – substance that is necessary for growth of all living things (i.e. phosphorous, nitrogen and carbon).

Open system wetland – is a wetland where the exchange of water, sediment, nutrients, pollution, organisms and energy with surrounding systems occurs naturally/easily.

Organic Waste - wastes derived from living organisms.

Palustrine – having to do with small non-tidal wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergents or emergent mosses and lichens.

Permeable – porous; having openings through which liquid or gaseous substances can penetrate.

Pesticide – a chemical that kills insects and rodents. Pesticides can poison aquatic life when they reach surface waters through runoff.

pH – a numerical measure of the hydrogen ion concentration used to indicate the alkalinity or acidity of a substance. Measured on a scale of 1.0 (acidic) to 14.0 (basic); 7.0 is neutral.

Phosphorus – a nutrient that is essential for plants and animals.

Photosynthesis – the chemical reaction in plants that utilizes light energy from the sun to convert water and carbon dioxide into simple sugars. This reaction is facilitated by chlorophyll.

Point source pollution – a type of pollution that can be tracked down to a specific source such as a factory discharge pipe.

Pollutant – something that makes land, water or air dirty and unhealthful.

Reagent – a substance or chemical used to indicate the presence of a chemical or to induce a chemical reaction to determine the chemical characteristics of a solution.

Rhizosphere – a zone of increased microbial growth and activity that surrounds the roots of a plant.

Riparian – of or pertaining to the banks of a body of water.

Riparian Wetland – a wetland that typically occurs or grows along the banks of rivers and streams.

Riparian zone – the vegetated area on each bank of a body of water.

Riverine – associated with rivers, streams and their floodplains.

Runoff – water, including rain and snow, which is not absorbed into the ground but instead flows across the land and eventually runs into streams and rivers. Runoff can pick up pollutants from the air and land, carrying

them into the stream.

Salt Water Intrusion – the movement of salt water into a wetland that is predominately fresh water.

Saturated – inundated; filled to the point of capacity or beyond.

Sediment – soil, sand, and materials washed from land into waterways. Other pollutants may attach to sediment and be carried into the stream.

Sedimentation – when soil particles (sediment) settle to the bottom of a waterway.

Septic tank – a domestic wastewater treatment system into which wastes are piped directly from the home; bacteria decompose the organic waste, sludge settles to the bottom of the tank, and the treated effluent flows out into the ground through drainage pipes.

Submergent plants – plants that live and grow fully submerged under the water.

Substrate – refers to a surface. This includes the material comprising the streambed or the surfaces to which plants or animals may attach or upon which they live.

Surface water – precipitation which does not soak into the ground or return to the atmosphere by evaporation or transpiration and is stored in streams, lakes, wetlands, and reservoirs.

Swamp – a saturated lowland or seasonally flooded bottomland characterized by trees and wood vegetation.

Taxon (plural taxa) – a level of classification within a scientific system that categorizes living organisms based on their physical characteristics.

Taxonomic key – a quick reference guide used to identify organisms. They are available in varying degrees of complexity and detail.

Threatened Species – a life form that is still abundant in the wild, but is likely to become endangered due to threats it faces in its wild.

Tolerance – the ability to withstand a particular condition, e.g., pollution-tolerant indicates the ability to live in polluted waters.

Topography – surveying the physical features of a region often to create topographical maps that note elevation across a given landscape.

Toxic substances – poisonous matter (either chemical or natural) which causes sickness, disease and/or death to plants or animals.

Transect – marked line along which scientific sampling or surveying is done.

Tributaries – a body of water that drains into another, typically larger, body of water.

Turbidity – murkiness or cloudiness of water, indicating the presence of some suspended sediments, dissolved solids, natural or man-made chemicals, algae, etc.

Upstream – opposite direction of the water flow.

Water cycle – the cycle of the earth's water supply from the atmosphere to

the earth and back which includes precipitation, transpiration, evaporation, runoff, infiltration, and storage in water bodies and groundwater.

Water Purification – filtering of water to trap pollution and excess nutrients

Water roots – roots that are produced above the soil line that grown down into the water.

Water table – the upper level of groundwater.

Watershed – land area from which water drains to a particular water body.

Waterway – a natural or man-made route for water to run through (such as a river, stream, creek, or channel).

Wetland – an area of land that is regularly wet or flooded, such as a marsh or swamp.