

Acidification: To make a substance more acidic. Acidification also means that a substance loses its acid neutralizing capacity (ANC). ANC is a measure of the ability for water or soil to neutralize added acids.

Atolls: Coral islands consisting of a reef surrounding a lagoon.

Brackish: A mixture of salt water and fresh water.

Bulkhead: (1) A man-made structure separating land and water areas. (2) A structure or partition to retain or prevent sliding of the land. A secondary purpose is to protect the upland against damage from ocean waves.

Carbonic acid: The acid (H_2CO_3) that is formed when carbon dioxide dissolves in water.

Climate model: A simulation or representation of how the various parts of the climate system (e.g., atmosphere, oceans, ice, land surface, etc) interact with each other.

Coastal Shelves: Also known as coastal plains, coastal shelves are composed of a horizontal or gently sloping layer of gravel bordering the coast. The shelves are often formed by aggradation, the geologic process by which various parts of the surface of the earth are raised in elevation or built up by material transported by water or wind.

Coniferous: Cone-bearing trees, mostly evergreens that have needle-shaped or scale-like leaves. They produce wood known commercially as softwood.

Deciduous: Tree species that shed foliage in response to seasonal change. They produce wood known commercially as hardwood.

Embayment: An indentation in a coastline forming an open bay.

Estuary: The body of water at the end of a river where it flows into the ocean. Partly enclosed by land, the water in an estuary consists of both sea water and fresh water.

Evaporation: The process of a liquid changing into a vapor or gas.

Fauna: Refers to all of the animals of a particular geographic region or time period, as a whole. It is used to distinguish animal species from plant species.

Flora: Refers to all of the plants of a particular geographic region or time period. It is used to distinguish plant species from animal species.

Food web: The entire interaction and interdependence of the food sources and systems (e.g., predators and prey) existing among the organisms in an ecosystem.

Impervious: Any surface that cannot effectively absorb or allow water to pass through it; examples may include sidewalks, rooftops, roads, parking lots, and sea walls.

Montane: Pertaining to a mountainous region.

Permafrost: Soil that is always frozen. Typically found in the polar regions of the Earth.

Photosynthesis: A process by which some organisms convert the energy from sunlight to organic material to be stored and used later as energy.

Polyp: Most coral is made up of hundreds of thousands of individual polyps. Polyps are delicate, limestone-secreting animals that range in size from one to three millimeters in diameter.

Predation: A relationship between animals in which one organism captures and feeds on others.

Shoal: A shallow area or sandbar in a body of water.

Snow pack: Horizontal layers of accumulated snow, affected by weather events occurring over a span of time.

Steppe: An ecological region dominated by a semi-arid climate, grasses growing on open landscapes, and animals living and feeding on the grasses.

Submergent/depositional coast: A coast in which formerly dry land has been recently covered by water, either by land subsidence or a rise in sea level.

Subsidence: The sinking of a part of the earth's surface.

Terrestrial: Of or referring to land, as opposed to water. Forests, deserts, prairies, mountain ranges and wetlands are all examples of terrestrial ecosystems.

Turbidity: Refers to the amount of particulate matter that is suspended in water.

Zooxanthellae: A plant-like algae that has a symbiotic (mutually beneficial relationship) with virtually all reef-dwelling corals. The organism lives inside the coral polyps and performs photosynthesis, producing food which is shared with the coral. In exchange for the food, the coral provides the zooxanthellae with protection and access to light, which is necessary for photosynthesis.