

VOCABULARY

Students should have a working understanding of these terms as applied to aquatic studies.

Algae—Tiny, non-flowering plants including seaweeds and microscopic phytoplankton

Brackish—Water that ranges in salt content (salinity) from 33 parts per thousand (ocean water) to less than 1 part per thousand (fresh water). Less than 1% of the world's water is brackish.

Ecology—The study of living systems and the physical environment.

Ecosystem—A community of organisms and their interrelated physical environment.

Erosion—The process in which soil is washed away by rain and other natural forces.

Estuary—Ecosystems where fresh and saltwater mix to create brackish water. Estuaries have free access to the ocean.

Eutrophication—The process in which nutrients from the land and other sources fertilize surface waters.

Food Chain/Web—A complex arrangement of organisms in an ecosystem in which each member depends on others for nourishment.

Fresh Water—water that holds no salt in it. Fresh water makes up a little less than 3% of the world's water supply. Fresh water can be found in the atmosphere in the form of water vapor; frozen in the polar ice caps; in ponds, rivers, lakes, and streams; and in underground aquifers and ground water.

Habitat—The physical environment in which a plant or animal naturally grows or lives.

Nutrients—Generally, things which provide nourishment for living things. Specifically, phosphates, nitrates, and any other material which stimulates the growth of algae and other phytoplankton.

Photosynthesis—the process by which plants use energy from the sun to produce their own food.

Plankton—Drifting or weakly swimming organisms transported by currents. Includes plants (phytoplankton) and animals (zoo plankton).

Pollutant—Any substance produced by humans that, when discharged into the environment, alters the natural balance of the ecosystem.

Salt Water—Salt water (33 PPT) is found in a marine or ocean environment. Nearly all the water in the world is salty (about 97%). Salt is a natural mineral (sodium chloride) which is found all over the world.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)—rooted plant life which grows under water.

Watershed—a watershed or drainage basin is the specific area of land which collects water for or drains into a specific body of water. Each body of water has its own watershed which may be a part of a larger watershed. For example, the Susquehanna River watershed is a part of the larger Chesapeake Bay watershed.