

WATER QUALITY

Glossary

Acid precipitation	all forms of precipitation that have an acidity lower than normal rainfall (pH 5.6)
Acid rain	see acid precipitation
Aquifer	ground water stored in porous layers of rock or soil
Bank	the sloping ground along the edge of a river or stream
Bed	the bottom of a river or stream
Branch	a tributary of a river or stream
Chlorine	a chemical used for purifying water
Clarity	the clearness of water
Condensation	the change from a gas or water vapor into a liquid
Dissolved oxygen	a measure of the concentration of oxygen in the water
Downstream	the direction toward the mouth of a river or stream
Evaporation	to change from liquid water into a gas or vapor
Fecal coliform	a measure of bacteria found in water that indicates the presence of harmful pathogens, which carry diseases
Floodplain	a low area of land, surrounding streams or rivers that holds the overflow of water during a flood
Freshwater	water that contains less than one-half of one percent salt (less than 5 parts salt per 1,000 parts water)
Gas	a state of matter distinguished from a solid or liquid by very low density and great expansion
Ground water	a supply of fresh water under the earth's surface that forms a natural reservoir



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H₂O	scientific symbol for water — a molecule of water is two hydrogen atoms bonded to one oxygen atom
Headwaters	the source or beginning of a stream
Icecaps and glaciers	moving, frozen masses of fresh water in the form of ice and snow
Impurities	anything that contaminates or pollutes water
Infiltration	the soaking of water into the land
Litmus paper	a piece of treated paper used as an acid-base indicator
Liquid	a state of matter that exhibits a characteristic readiness to flow
Meandering	the “wandering” action of a river as it changes its channel within its floodplain
Mouth	the point at which a stream or river flows into a larger body of water
Natural resource	something that occurs in nature and is important for human life
Nitrate	a plant nutrient that can enter water in excessive amounts due to runoff from fertilizer spread on farm fields and lawns
pH	the measure of the acidity or alkalinity of a substance like water
Phosphate	a plant nutrient that can enter water in excessive amounts due to runoff from fertilizer spread on farm fields and lawns
Pollutant	anything that is thrown out as waste and not properly disposed of
Precipitation	water that reaches the earth in the form of rain, snow, or ice from the atmosphere
Purify	to rid of impurities, to cleanse
Rapids	a stretch of river characterized by relatively accelerated speed, caused by a constriction of the channel and/or a significant increase in the river’s gradient



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Reservoir	a body of water collected and stored for future use in a natural or artificial lake
River	a large stream of water that flows into a larger body of water
River system	the watershed area and all streams, channels, and valleys through which water travels on its way to the ocean
Saltwater	water that contains at least one-half of one percent salt (greater than 5 parts salt per 1,000 parts water)
Sediment	a particle in water that floats or settles to the bottom
Solid	a state of matter that is not a liquid or gas
Source	the beginning of a river or stream
Spring	a continuous natural flow of water from under the surface of the ground
Stream	any water that moves across the ground in a channel
Surface water	water that remains on the surface of the land, such as rivers, streams, reservoirs, lakes, ponds, oceans
Temperature	a measure of how warm or cold something is
Toxin	something that harms or pollutes resources
Transpiration	the release of water vapor into the atmosphere from trees and other plants
Tributary	a river or stream that contributes its water to a larger stream or river
Turbidity	the measure of the relative clarity of water or the amount of suspended particles in the water
Water	a colorless, odorless, transparent liquid found on Earth as rivers, lakes, oceans, glaciers, and ground water



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Water cycle	the process by which the Earth's water supply is moved from the Earth's surface into the atmosphere and back to the Earth
Water recreation	water used for activities such as boating, rafting, kayaking, swimming, and fishing
Water quality	the condition of the water in a stream, river, pond, lake, wetland, or ground water is such that it can support aquatic life and is clean enough for drinking, bathing, swimming, agriculture, wildlife management, and recreation
Water table	the upper level of ground water
Water vapor	water diffused into the atmosphere as a gas
Watershed	the land area from which water drains to a stream or river or natural basin
Wetlands	any area regularly wet where the water table stands at or above the land surface at least part of the year, i.e., swamps, marshes, bogs

