

## Glossary of Water Words

**Adhesion:** the attraction of water molecules to other materials as a result of hydrogen bonding

**Aquifer:** underground layer of soil or rock that is saturated with water known as groundwater.

**Atmosphere:** layers of gases which surround the Earth. Although the atmosphere may not be a great storehouse of water, it is the superhighway used to move water around the globe.

**Clean Water Act:** water pollution control laws based upon the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 with amendments passed in 1977, 1981, and 1987; main objective is to restore and maintain the "chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters."

**Climate:** the weather conditions prevailing in an area in general or over a long period.

**Cloud:** a visible mass of condensed water vapor floating in the atmosphere, typically high above the ground.

**Cohesion:** the attraction of water molecules to each other as a result of hydrogen bonding

**Condensation:** the process of water vapor in the air turning into liquid water. Water drops on the outside of a cold glass of water are condensed water. Condensation is the opposite process of evaporation.

**Dry dam:** a dam constructed for the purpose of flood control. Dry dams typically contain no gates or turbines, and are intended to allow the channel to flow freely during normal conditions. During periods of intense rainfall that would otherwise cause floods, the dam holds back the excess water, releasing it downstream at a controlled rate.

**Density:** the amount (mass) of a material in a specific space (volume).

**Discharge:** the volume of water that passes a given location within a given period of time. Usually expressed in cubic feet per second.

**Ecosystem:** a community of living and nonliving things in an area.

**Effluent:** water that flows from a sewage treatment plant after it has been treated.

**Erosion:** the process in which a material is worn away by a stream of liquid (water) or air, often due to the presence of abrasive particles in the stream.

**Evaporation:** the process of liquid water becoming water vapor, including vaporization from water surfaces, land surfaces, and snow fields, but not from leaf surfaces.

**Evapotranspiration:** the sum of evaporation and transpiration.

**Freshwater:** water that contains less than 1,000 milligrams per liter (mg/L) of dissolved solids.

**Glacier:** a huge mass of ice, formed on land by the compaction and recrystallization of snow, that moves very slowly downslope or outward due to its own weight.

**Great Lakes:** the biggest freshwater bodies of water in the world, located in the United States.

**Greenhouse gas:** gases in the atmosphere that absorb solar heat reflected by Earth's surface, contributing to warming of the atmosphere.

**Groundwater:** water found in an aquifer.

**Headwaters:** the small streams that come together to form a river.

**Humidity:** the amount of water vapor in the air

**Hydrologic cycle:** the cyclic transfer of water vapor from the Earth's surface via evapotranspiration into the atmosphere, from the atmosphere via precipitation back to earth, and through runoff into streams, rivers, and lakes, and ultimately into the oceans.

**Ice:** water in its solid state; water turns to ice at 32 degrees Fahrenheit

**Infiltration:** flow of water from the land surface into the subsurface.

**Lake:** a body of water that is surrounded by land

**Ocean:** Earth's largest bodies of water are called oceans. They divide Earth's continents and contain saline water.

**Outfall:** the place where a storm sewer discharges to a receiving water body.

**pH:** a measure of the relative acidity or alkalinity of water. Water with a pH of 7 is neutral; lower pH levels indicate increasing acidity, while pH levels higher than 7 indicate increasingly basic solutions.

**Pathogen:** a disease-producing agent; usually applied to a living organism. Generally, any viruses, bacteria, or fungi that cause disease.

**Permeability:** the ability of a material to allow the passage of a liquid, such as water through rocks. Permeable materials, such as gravel and sand, allow water to move quickly through them, whereas impermeable material, such as clay, don't allow water to flow freely.

**Pollutant:** any substance of such character and in such quantities that when it reaches a body of water the effect is to degrade the receiving water perhaps to a point rendering it unfit for some specified designated use.

**Potable water:** water of a quality suitable for drinking.

**Precipitation:** rain, snow, hail, sleet, dew, and frost.

**Recharge:** rainfall or surface water that seeps down into an aquifer.

**River:** a natural stream of fresh water of considerable volume, larger than a brook or creek.

**Runoff:** water from precipitation that drains across a surface rather than infiltrating.

**Safe Drinking Water Act:** Established in 1974, with amendments in 1986 and 1996, to protect our drinking water. This law focuses on all waters actually or potentially designed for drinking use, whether from above ground or underground sources.

**Sanitary sewer:** a system of underground pipes that collect wastewater and deliver it to a treatment facility.

**Storm sewer:** a system of underground pipes that collect rainwater and runoff and direct it to outfalls that discharge into a water body.

**Stormwater:** rain or snowmelt that has runoff into a storm drain and enters the storm sewer.

**Surface tension:** the attraction among water molecules at the surface of a liquid; creates a skin-like barrier between air and underlying water molecules.

**Surface water:** water that is on the Earth's surface, such as a stream, river, lake, or reservoir.

**Temperature:** the level of heat or cold, measured by a thermometer.

**Transpiration:** process by which water that is absorbed by plants, usually through the roots, is evaporated into the atmosphere from the plant surface, such as leaf pores.

**Vapor:** created when a substance (such as water) is in a gas state. Particles of the substance will be suspended or diffused in the air.

**Volume:** the amount of space that a substance (such as water) occupies.

**Wastewater:** water that has been used in homes, industries, and businesses that is not for reuse unless it is treated.

**Water Cycle:** the circuit of water movement from the oceans to the atmosphere and to the Earth and return to the atmosphere through various stages or processes such as precipitation, interception, runoff, infiltration, percolation, storage, evaporation, and transportation.

**Watershed:** the land area from which surface runoff drains into a stream channel, lake, reservoir or other body of water; also called a drainage basin.

**Weather:** describes the state of the atmosphere, and it includes atmospheric pressure, temperature, humidity, cloudiness, precipitation, and wind.

**Well:** an artificial excavation put down by any method for the purposes of withdrawing water from the underground aquifers.