

Glossary



Abysal: referring to the deep sea or abyss

Bank: an undersea elevation rising from the continental shelf

Bathymetry: the measurement of depths of water in oceans, seas, and lakes

Bay: a small body of water set off from the main body, an inlet of the sea usually smaller than a gulf

Benthic: near or on the bottom

Canyon: a deep narrow valley with steep sides and often with a stream flowing through it

Cape: a point or extension of land jutting out into water as a peninsula or point

Continental Shelf: an old, wave-cut terrace gently sloping seaward

Continental Slope: beyond the shelf, the slope descends more steeply into the ocean shelf

Creek: a stream of water smaller than a river, often a tributary to a river

Davidson Current: warm ocean current flowing northward between the shoreline and the California Current along the West Coast of the U.S. during winter months

Degree: basic unit of measurement of latitude and longitude. There are 90 degrees of latitude between the equator and either pole, and there are 360 degrees of longitude that encircle the Earth

Detritus: particles of debris from decaying plants and animals

Ecology: scientific discipline involving interrelationships among organisms and their environments

Ecosystem: an ecological community together with its environment, functioning as a unit

Estuary: where river currents meet and are influenced by oceanic tides

Fan: (also called an alluvial fan) deposits from a stream that form gently sloping fan-shaped sediments, often seen at the base of a hill or gorge

Fathom: a unit of length equal to 6 ft and used principally in measuring depths in the marine environment

Geography: the science or the study of Earth and its life; a description of land, sea, air and the distribution of plant and animal life including people and cities

Geology: the science or the study of the Earth and its history as recorded in rocks

Gulf: a part of the ocean or sea extending into the land

Habitat: the environment where a particular plant or animal grows or is normally found

Hydrology: the science or the study of bodies of water, such as the measurement of flow in streams

Island: land surrounded on all sides by water and smaller than a continent

Knot: a unit of speed with a built in meaning per hour. One knot equals one nautical mile per hour, which is about 1.15 statute (or land based) miles per hour

Latitude: the angular distance north or south of the equator, measured in degrees along a meridian, a on a map or globe

Longitude: the angular distance on the Earth, as on a globe or map, east or west of the prime meridian at Greenwich, England, to the point on the Earth's surface for which the longitude is being ascertained, expressed in degrees, or in hours, minutes or second

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Meander: a turn or winding area of a stream

Monitoring: methods designed to detect changes in an ecosystem over time, such as changes in physical conditions, changes in distribution or abundance of organisms, or changes caused by human and natural events

Mount: a high hill

Midden: a refuse heap, a dump, especially referring to Indian kitchen middens

Nautical Mile: a unit of length used in sea and air navigation based on the length of one minute of arc of a great circle; an international and U.S. unit equal to 1,852 meters or about 6,076 ft.

Oceanography: study of the physics, chemistry, biology and geology of the world's oceans

Peak: the top of a hill or mountain ending in a point

Pelagic: refers to the open water of the oceans, lacking association with the shore or the bottom

Plankton: plants and animals that swim weakly, or not at all, and drift with ocean currents

Point: a projecting area of land or a sharp prominence

Predator: an animal that kills and eats other animals

Range: a series of mountains

Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV): an unmanned craft built to go beneath the ocean surface for the purpose of studying the marine environment. It is operated "remotely" from a ship

Ridge: (on land) a range of hills or mountains (on the ocean floor) an elongated elevation on the ocean bottom

River: a natural stream of water usually large and long

Sanctuary: a safe place of refuge and protection

Site Characterization: a study of an area that includes knowing the components of an ecosystem (such as algae, plants, animals, water temperature, etc.), the condition of the ecosystem in the past, its present condition, and enough understanding of how the ecosystem works to predict future conditions given certain variables

Sea Level: the level of the surface of the sea, a midpoint between the high and low tide

Seamount: a submarine mountain rising above the deep sea floor

Stakeholder: a citizen with a vested interest in a certain resource

Submarine Canyon: a long, narrow, steep-walled undersea valley

Submersible: a vehicle with or without a human inside that is capable of operating underwater and is used to explore the depths of the ocean

Substrate: any surface on which a plant or animal lives on, which a material sticks

Taxonomy: scientific classification of animals and plants

Transect: a monitoring research technique that marks a transverse along which measurements can be taken

Topography: a graphical representation of the physical features of a place or region on a map

Upwelling: a movement of nutrient-rich water to the surface, caused by wind-driven surface currents that carry water away from the continents

Valley: a long, low area of land usually between hills or mountains drained by a river

Watershed: a region or area connected by a body of water, rivers and drainage