

VIRTUAL EXPLORATION OF GEORGIA'S COASTAL WETLANDS

Glossary of terms

Abiotic - Physical rather than biological; not derived from living organisms.

Baseline Data - Observations taken over a long period of time aimed to identify seasonal or daily changes in the measured environment. These data are taken before changes are made to an area.

Biodiversity - The variety of life in the world or in a particular habitat or ecosystem. Provides functioning ecosystems that supply oxygen, clean air and water, pollination of plants, pest control, wastewater treatment and many other ecosystem services.

Biotic - Relating to or resulting from living things, especially in their ecological relations.

Brackish - Water having a salt content somewhere between fresh (0.0 ppt) and open ocean (35 ppt).

Community - A group of living things sharing the same environment.

Dissolved Oxygen - The amount of oxygen present in water. Water bodies receive oxygen from the atmosphere and aquatic plants. Running water, such as that of a swift moving stream, dissolves more oxygen than still water in a pond or lake.

Drought - A lack of moisture leading to social, environmental or economic effects.

Ecosystem - A biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.

Ecosystem Services – Benefits nature provides for free, such as pollination and clean water.

Estuary - The tidal area of a large river, or where the river meets the ocean.

Green Infrastructure – An approach to water management that protects, restores or mimics the natural water cycle.

Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) - The rapid growth of algae or cyanobacteria which can cause harm to people, animals or the local ecology.

Impervious - Not allowing water to pass through (like concrete or asphalt).

Invertebrate - Organism that lacks a backbone.

Macroinvertebrate - Organism without a backbone that can be seen with the naked eye.

Metric - A standard of measurement. In water quality, it is often used interchangeably with parameter.

Microorganism - Organism that can only be seen with a microscope.

Monitoring - Observing and checking the progress or quality of something over a period of time.

Municipality - A city or town that has corporate status and local government.

Nutrient - A substance that provides nourishment essential for growth and the maintenance of life.

Parameter - A measurable factor. Examples include dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH and salinity.

Pervious - Allowing water to pass through (like gravel or sand).

pH - A measure of how acidic or basic water is. The range goes from 0 to 14, with 7 being neutral. A pH of less than 7 indicates an acid, whereas a pH greater than 7 indicates a base. The pH of water is an important water quality measurement.

Productivity – The amount of energy in the form of biomass produced in an area over time. *Primary productivity* refers to plant growth, including phytoplankton (plant-like microorganisms at the bottom of the food chain).

Qualitative Data - Measurements that describe qualities or characteristics, like color, smell or taste.

Quantitative Data - Measurements that can be counted or compared on a number scale.

Resilience - The ability for a community, ecosystem or environment to revert back to its original state after a disruption.

Resource - Something that can be used for benefit or profit.

Salinity - The amount of salt in a water body.

Sea Level Rise - The current phenomenon of rising ocean levels caused by increasing global temperatures, melting ice caps and thermal expansion of sea water.

Stakeholder – An individual or group with a shared interest in something.

Survey - A general view, examination or description of something.

Transect - A straight line or narrow section across earth's surface along which observations are made or measurements are taken.

Vertebrate - Organism with a backbone.

Watershed - An area of land over which all precipitation received drains to the same point, like a river, stream or lake.

Wetland - Land saturated by water, like marshes or swamps.