

Glossary of terms

Baseline survey: a survey designed to establish initial conditions against which changes over time can be compared.

Brackish: water with a salinity (salt content) between freshwater and seawater.

Chart datum: usually defined as the lowest astronomical tide observed at a nearby tide gauge.

Ecological: relation of living organisms with each other and their surroundings.

Environmental gradient: a gradual change in physical conditions over distance (e.g., from sand to mud).

Freshwater discharge: the volume of water flowing through a river or stream channel into an estuary or coastal region.

Hydrographic chart: a nautical chart showing water depth, nature of bottom sediment, and tides and currents in a given estuary or coastal area.

Isobath: a contour line connecting points of equal water depths on a chart.

Leachate: water escaping from a landfill or other polluted site, which may flow through groundwater to contaminate the streams and estuaries.

Pneumatophore: the air-breathing roots of some mangrove species that grow vertically out of the sediment.

Quadrat: a square or rectangular area within which sediments, plants, and animals are sampled, measured and/or counted.

Rhizome: a horizontal stem of a plant that is usually found underground, often sending out roots and shoots from its nodes.

Salinity: measure of the total concentration of dissolved salts in water.

Thalweg: the course along the longest branch of an estuary or river that represents the locations of maximum water depths in the channel.

Tidal prism: the volume of water exchanged (flowing in and out) of an estuary during an average spring tide.

Topographic map: a type of map showing detailed representation of the vertical and horizontal dimension of land surface, usually using contour lines, and showing the location of both natural and man-made features.

Transect: a line along which sampling sites are located. These sites may be located at equal distances along the line or at sites of interest.