

Groundwater Glossary

aquifer: the geologic formation of sand, soil and gravel where groundwater is stored

biodegradable: capable of being broken down by living things like microorganisms and bacteria

compost: fertilizing material consisting of organic, decaying matter

condensation: stage of the water cycle when water transforms from a gas into a vapor and becomes suspended in the atmosphere, visually represented by clouds

conservation: not wasting, using something wisely

contamination: an impurity in air, soil or water that can cause harm to human health or the environment

depletion: occurs when water is used faster than it is replaced; can cause a shortage

discharge: to expel; water that naturally moves from an aquifer to a surface stream or lake

drought: an extended period of dry weather

evaporation: stage of the water cycle when water transforms from a liquid into a gas

fertilizer: any chemical used to improve soil and promote plant growth

groundwater: water contained under the ground's surface, between particles of and in the cracks of sand, soil and gravel; a common source of water for drinking and irrigation

groundwater flow: the movement of groundwater beneath the earth's surface

hazard: something that is dangerous; unsafe

hydrologic cycle: see water cycle

infiltration: see recharge

irrigation: to supply water to crops, parks, golf courses and lawns

landfill: a low area of land that is filled in with layers of garbage and soil

overuse: using more than necessary; wasteful

permeable: any material that allows water to penetrate through

pollution: see contamination

precipitation: stage of the water cycle when water vapor molecules become too large and heavy to remain in the atmosphere and fall to the ground in the form of rain, snow, sleet, hail, etc.

quality: to be at a high degree of excellence; something that is good or well done

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recharge: to increase the amount of groundwater through precipitation or surface water that absorbs into the aquifer, also called infiltration

recycle: to produce a new item from an old item; to reuse parts of

runoff: water that does not become absorbed by the earth but flows across the surface of the land into a stream or lake

saturation zone: the area where water fills the spaces between soil, sand and rock underground

seepage: to leak from

septic system: underground pipes and tanks that store and dispose of human waste

storage tank: container that stores potentially hazardous chemicals above or below ground

water cycle: the never-ending movement of water through the atmosphere, ground and back again; also called the hydrologic cycle

water table: the top of the saturation zone

well: a hole or shaft drilled into the earth to pump water to the surface