



Glossary of Stormwater Terms

Aquifer: An area where water is stored under the ground, in the soil. When rain water soaks into the ground, it can fill an aquifer. This underground water is called groundwater (see definition below). This water can then be withdrawn for human use through wells and springs.

BMP: This stands for Best Management Practice. A Best Management Practice is a behavior or action that a person performs that protects the health of the environment.

Deposition: The process where sediment, soil, and rocks are moved and collect on another part of the landscape.

Detention pond: A small, man-made pond that collects the rain water that runs off of hard surfaces in developed areas, such as streets and buildings. The detention pond temporarily stores this rain water and releases it gradually back into the environment, usually over a few hours or days.

Dry Well: A drainage pit lined with loose stonework for the leaching of liquid wastes.

Erosion: The carrying away or displacement sediment, soil, rock, and other solids, usually by wind, water, or ice by down-slope movement in response to gravity or by living organisms. (OSPI)

Evaporation: The process where water becomes a gas (vapor) from a liquid.

Filtration: A process where water moves slowly through the soil, removing pollutants that are in the water.

Groundwater: the water found underground in the cracks and spaces in soil, sand and rock. Groundwater is found in aquifers. (groundwater.org)

Habitat: An ecological or environmental area that is inhabited by a particular species. It is the natural environment in which an organism lives or the physical environment that surrounds a species population. (OSPI)

Headwaters: The area where a creek, stream, or river begins - the source of that waterway.

Impervious surface: A type of land or ground covering that is hard and prevents rain water from soaking into the soil. Common impervious surfaces include, but are not limited to, roof tops, walkways, patios, driveways, parking lots, buildings, concrete or asphalt paving, gravel roads, and hard-packed dirt.

Infiltration: A process where water moves slowly through the soil.

Model: In science models are used to represent a system. They can be diagrams, physical replicas, mathematical representations, analogies, and computer simulations. (Next Generation Science Standards- Appendixes).

Native Plants: Plants that occur naturally in a certain region and are adapted to that climate.

Nonpoint source (NPS) pollution: A type of water pollution which occurs when rain runs off farmland, city streets, construction sites, suburban lawns, roofs, and driveways before entering the waterway. This is pollution that does not come from a single source, or point. Instead, this pollution comes from many different sources, and is collected as rain water runs over the surface of the land.

Optimize: Improving a design to make the design function better, cost less, be more efficient or other criteria. This involves trading off less important features for those that are more important. (Next Generation Science Standards- Appendixes)



Pervious Surface: A type of land surface that allows water to soak in.

Pollutant: A substance introduced into an environment that has undesired, harmful, or destructive effects on organisms and/or resources in the environment. (EPA)

Polluted stormwater runoff: The byproduct of stormwater runoff and the pollutants in the environment through which it runs. Pollution makes the stormwater unclean and harmful to the organisms in the waterway.

Retention: The process of collecting and holding storm water runoff.

Riparian: Describes the area of land directly next to river, lake or other body of water, such a shoreline or river bank.

Rain Garden: A garden with spongy soils and plants which is used to collect and filter stormwater.

Stakeholder: Individuals or groups with interests related to an issue or outcome.

Storm drain system: The system of gutters, pipes, streams, or ditches used to carry surface and storm water from surrounding lands to rivers, lakes, or the Puget Sound.

Stormwater: is precipitation (rain, snow, or hail) and ice melt. Stormwater can soak into the soil (infiltrate), be held on the surface and evaporate, or runoff and end up in nearby streams, rivers, or other water bodies.

Stormwater Engineer: A person who designs solutions for problems created by too much surface water runoff and pollution in stormwater.

Stormwater Runoff: Water from rain, or other precipitation, that is not absorbed into the ground. Instead, the water runs off the surface of roofs, streets and lawns and enters natural waterbodies, such as rivers, lakes and Puget Sound, either directly or through storm drains. Also see definition of runoff above.

Surface water: Water found about the land, including oceans, estuaries, lakes, rivers, streams, and ponds.

Surface Runoff: Water from rain, or other precipitation, that is not absorbed into the ground. Instead, the water runs off the surface of roofs, streets and lawns and enters natural waterbodies, such as rivers, lakes and Puget Sound, either directly or through storm drains.

Swale: A shallow, line-shaped depression in the ground, like a canal, that can collect water. Swales can be man-made and are usually less than 30 cm deep.

Transpiration: The process by which water evaporates from plant tissues.

Toxic: Poisonous or otherwise directly harmful to life.

Water Filter: A device to remove pollutants or unclean substances from water.

Watershed: The entire land area from which water drains into a particular surface water body.

Wetland: An area covered by shallow water most of the time, where vegetation grows that is adapted to the wet conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.