Glossary

Aerial drawing: A pictorial representation of earth as viewed from above.

Analyze: To study something by breaking it down into simpler parts.

Aquifer: A layer of underground rock or sediment that contains water.

Canyon: A deep, narrow river valley with steep slopes.

Cirque: A bowl-shaped hole in a mountain that has been carved out by a glacier.

Classify: To group things together because they share one or more properties.

Compaction: The process by which soil particles pack together.

Conclusion: A decision that is based on observations or on a study of data.

Condensation: The process by which a gas becomes a liquid. Water vapor turns into liquid water by condensation.

Constant: A condition that is not changed in a scientific experiment.

Controlled experiment: A scientific investigation in which one variable is changed and all the others are kept the same, or constant.

Crevasse: A deep crack in a glacier.

Data: Information, such as that gathered during an experiment.

Delta: An area of land where a stream drops sediment and other materials as it empties into the sea or another large body of water. Such an area is called a delta because it is often shaped like a triangle.

Deposition: The process by which water or a glacier lays down earth materials.

Divide: An imaginary line, usually along a ridge of land, that separates the drainage of two streams.

Drought: A long period of dry weather.

Ecosystem: A community that includes all the living and nonliving things found in a certain area.

Erosion: The process by which earth materials are broken down and moved from place to place.

Evaporation: The process by which a liquid becomes a gas.

Evidence: Something that offers proof.

Experiment: A procedure that is carried out to investigate a scientific question.

Flood: Overflow of a body of water beyond its banks or shore.

Flow: The amount of water or water-saturated material that passes a channel point in a given amount of time.

Fog: Very fine droplets of water suspended in the air at or near the surface of the earth.

Glacier: A huge mass of ice that moves very slowly over land.

Graph: A diagram used to show the relationship between things.

Ground cover: Trees, shrubs, grasses, plants, and decayed plant material.

Ground water: Water that has soaked into the soil.

Hanging glacier: A glacier that has broken off from a main glacier.

Horn: A sharp mountain peak.

Hydroelectricity: Electricity that is generated by waterpower.

Hydrologist: A scientist who studies how water circulates on the earth's surface, underground, and in the atmosphere.

Hypothesis: A prediction about how something works or how two variables are related.

Iceberg: A large piece of ice that has broken off a glacier and has moved into the water.

Irrigation: The process by which humans supply water to land by artificial means, such as pipes.

Landforms: The features of the earth's surface, such as mountains, plateaus, and plains.

Levee: A bank along a stream or river that is intended to prevent flooding.

Load: Something carried; for example, the sediment carried by a stream or river.

Meander: A large bend in a stream channel that develops when soil is eroded from one bank and deposited on the other.

Model: A small version of an object or a process that scientists use to study an actual thing or event. In this unit, your stream table is a model of the actual interactions between land and water.

Moraine: An accumulation of rocks and other earth materials that are deposited by the sides or end of a glacier.

Opinion: An expression of how one thinks or feels about something. An opinion is based on personal views, not necessarily on facts.

Oxbow lake: A lake that forms when a river breaks through the neck of a meander and moves straight onward.

Pattern: A repeating arrangement of shapes, colors, numbers, or other things.

Precipitation: Rain, snow, sleet, or hail.

Procedure: A set of steps that explains how to do something.

Property: Something about an object that helps identify it.

Reservoir: A place where large amounts of water are stored for future use. Reservoirs are like lakes; they may be natural or made by humans.

Soil: The top layer of earth. Soil is composed of organic materials (humus), inorganic materials (sand, silt, and clay), water, and air.

Solution: A mixture created when a substance is dissolved in a liquid, solid, or gas.

Surface water: Water that stays on the earth's surface rather than sinks into the soil.

Suspension: A liquid mixture in which the materials are not evenly distributed and can be seen.

Valley glacier: A glacier that forms in the V-shaped valley formed by a river.

Variable: An element in an experiment that can be changed.

Velocity: Rate of motion in a given direction; speed.

Water cycle: The process by which water moves through the ground, evaporates from earth into the air, forms clouds, and falls back to earth as rain or snow.

Water vapor: Water in its gaseous state.

Watershed: An area of land that is drained by a stream or river and its branches.

Wastewater: Water that has been used.

Weathering: The process by which earth materials are broken down by natural forces.

Weight: A measurement of how heavy something is.