Glossary

Acid rain — Rain with a higher than normal acid range.Caused when polluted air mixes with cloud moisture. The "acid" in acid rain comes from sulfur oxides and nitrogen oxides, products of burning coal and other fuels and from certain industrial processes. Acid rain can make lakes devoid of fish and damage human health and property.

Algal bloom — An unusual, sudden or excessive abundance of algae. Algal blooms can adversely affect water quality.

Aquifer — An underground layer of sand, gravel or rock that stores or conveys water below the surface of the soil.

Biological Oxygen Demand — The amount of oxygen required by aerobic microorganisms to decompose the organic matter in sample of water. Used as a measure of the degree of water pollution.

Dissolved oxygen — The concentration of molecular oxygen (O_2) dissolved in water, usually expressed in milligrams per liter (mg/L), parts per million, or percent of saturation. The DO level represents one of the most important measurements of water quality and is a critical indicator of a water body's ability to support healthy ecosystems. Levels above 5 mg/L are considered optimal, and most fish cannot survive for prolonged periods at levels below 3 mg/L. Microbial communities in water use oxygen to breakdown organic materials, such as manure, sewage and decomposing algae. Low levels of dissolved oxygen can be a sign that too much organic material is in a water body.