

# Glossary

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**aquifer:** A formation of underground permeable rock or loose material that produces useful quantities of water when tapped by a well; may range in size from a few hectares to thousands of square kilometres, and in thickness, from a few metres to hundreds of metres.

**bog:** A peat accumulating wetland that traps precipitation as its only source of water. Acidic, low in plant nutrients and often covered by sphagnum mosses. Common plant species include black spruce, tamarack, shrubs and sedges; most common in northern latitudes.

**bud:** A small, immature flower or leaf attached to the stem of the plant.

**canopy:** More or less continuous cover of branches and foliage formed by the crowns of trees.

**carbon sink:** A place where carbon accumulates, such as a forest (which converts carbon dioxide from the air into carbon-containing sugars and plant fibre).

**climate change:** An ongoing process of large-scale and long-term weather changes due to planetary warming or cooling, which may involve many unpredictable effects.

**conservation:** The study, protection, sustainable utilization, restoration and enhancement of natural resources, with a long-term perspective.

**deforestation:** Clearing an area of forest for another long-term use, such as golf courses, parking lots, buildings and roads.

**fen:** A peat-accumulating wetland that generally receives water from groundwater sources, surface runoff and direct precipitation. Has higher plant nutrient levels than bogs and is usually alkaline or slightly acidic. Characteristic plant species include sedges and grasses.

**filtration:** A process in the water cycle by which groundwater flows through soil particles and root systems; microbial action, plants and soil particles filter out pollutants.

**groundwater:** Water that is found almost everywhere underground in the spaces between soil particles and in cracks in the rock.

**habitat:** The arrangement of food, water, shelter and space.

**invasive species:** A species that has moved into an area and reproduced so aggressively that it has replaced some of the original species.

**litter:** Uppermost, slightly decayed layer of organic matter on the forest floor.

**marsh:** A tract of soft, wet, low-lying land characterized by grassy vegetation. Tends to develop in zones that include riparian areas, areas of dense emergent plant growth, and open water; generally neutral or slightly alkaline and rich in nutrients and species diversity.

**native species:** An indigenous species that is normally found in Canada.

**natural resources:** Naturally occurring assets such as trees, minerals and water.

**photosynthesis:** The light-driven process in green plants that converts water and carbon dioxide into sugar, water and oxygen.

**riparian zone:** A distinct area between land and water (excluding ocean) featuring specific vegetation types; these trees and plants are important for wildlife habitat and food, sediment control and erosion prevention.

**sediment:** Fine particles of solid matter suspended in water or settled on the bottom of a pond, lake, river or stream.

**species-at-risk:** A species identified by COSEWIC that is of special concern, threatened, endangered (facing imminent extinction) or extirpated (extinct in certain areas of previous inhabitation).

**stakeholder:** A person or organization that has an investment and concern in a particular item or endeavour; stakeholders wish to be included in the sharing of information and contribute to decision-making.

**sustainable:** Describes practices that allow for controlled consumption so that a renewable resource remains at basically the same level.

**swamp:** A wetland dominated by shrubs and trees including red maple, cedar, alder and willow; soils are saturated and may be periodically inundated; often neutral and slightly acidic.

**transpiration:** The process used by plants wherein water is absorbed by the roots and pulled up through the stem/trunk and shoots/branches by evaporation from the leaves/stem (water is used by the plant in photosynthesis and other cellular processes).

**understorey:** The middle layer of smaller trees and shrubs located under the forest canopy (e.g., dogwood, sumac).

**watershed:** The region or area bounded peripherally by a divide and draining ultimately to a particular watercourse or body of water; regardless of where you are, you are in a watershed.

**watershed restoration:** The process of returning a watershed area to a more productive and natural state; may involve planting vegetation and re-introduction of species.

**water table:** The level below which the ground is saturated with water.

**wetland:** A distinct wet area of habitat featuring varying degrees of water and specific types of vegetation and soil; includes swamps, bogs, fens and marshes.