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 Lesson 1.1 Glossary

A

Acid rain – Rain or other precipitation that contains higher than normal amount of acid.

Acidification – To make or become acid; convert into an acid.

Analysis –A method of studying the nature of something or of determining its essential features and their relations.

B

Benefit – Something that is advantageous or good.

Bias – A particular tendency, trend, inclination, feeling, or opinion, especially one that is preconceived or unreasoned.

C

Carbon dioxide (CO2) – A colorless, odorless gas constituting 0.03 percent of unpolluted air. It is absorbed by green plants through the leaf stomata and is used as the source of carbon for manufacturing sugars, starches, proteins, and fats. The burning of fossil fuels has put so much CO2 in congested cities that the concentration may reach more than three times the background (normal) level. This is causing a “greenhouse effect,” resulting in a slow warming of the earth’s surface.

Climate – Physical properties of the troposphere of an area based on weather records over a long period.

Climate change – A long-term change in the earth’s climate, especially a change due to an increase in the average atmospheric temperature.

Combustion – The act or process of burning.

Conductivity – The property or power of conducting heat, electricity, or sound.

Contamination – Pollution; the process of being contaminated.

Credible – Worthy of belief or confidence; trustworthy.

D

Downwind – In the direction toward which the wind is blowing.

E

Economic – Pertaining to the production, distribution, and use of income, wealth, and commodities.

Extreme – Exceeding the bounds of moderation.

F

Fact – A truth known by actual experience or observation; something known to be true.

Fertility – The quality that enables a soil to provide the proper compounds, in the proper amounts and in the proper balance for the growth of specified plants, when other factors, e.g., light, temperature, and the physical condition of the soil are favorable.

Fertilizer – Any organic or inorganic material added to soil or water to provide plant nutrients and to increase the growth, yield, quantity, or nutritive value of the plants grown therein.

Filtration – To remove by the action of a filter.

G

Groundwater – Water within the earth that supplies wells and springs. Specifically, water in the zone of saturation, where all openings in soils and rocks are filled with water, the upper surface of which forms the water table.

I

Issue – A point in question or a matter that is in dispute, as between contending parties in an action at law.

M

Methane (CH4) – An odorless, colorless, asphyxiating gas that can explode under certain circumstances.

N

Nitric oxide (HNO3) – A strong mineral acid which, combined with metals or alkalis, forms nitrates. It is now made synthetically on a large scale by passing ammonia and air through a platinum gauze catalyst, whereby the ammonia oxidizes. Nitric acid is used in the production of nitrate fertilizer compounds, including nitric phosphates. Some nitric acid is used as an oxidant for carbonaceous material that causes the black color in liquid fertilizers made with commercial phosphoric acid.

Nutrient – An element or compound in a soil that is essential for the growth of a plant.

P

Percolation – The downward movement of water through the soil in response to the pull of gravity.

Pesticide – A substance used to control insect, plant, or animal pests. Pesticides include insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, nematicides, and rodenticides.

pH – Numerical value that indicates the relative acidity or alkalinity of a substance on a scale of 0 to 14, with the neutral point at 7.

Plant residue – Plant material, such as leaves, roots, straw, corn stover, grass, and weeds, left after harvesting; any plant material remaining after harvesting or any other process.

Precipitation – Water in the form of rain sleet hail and snow that falls from the atmosphere onto land and water.

Politics – Process through which individuals and groups try to influence or control government policies and actions that affect local, state, national, and international communities.

Problem – Any thing, matter, person, etc., that is difficult to deal with, solve, or overcome.

R

Radiate – Spreading from a common center.

Regulation – A law, rule, or other order prescribed by authority, especially to regulate conduct.

Risk – Exposure to the chance of injury or loss; a hazard or dangerous chance.

Runoff – The total stream discharge of water, including both surface and subsurface flow, usually expressed in acre feet.

S

Social – Of or relating to the life, welfare, and relations of human beings in a community.

Sulfur dioxide (SO2) – A compound produced by burning sulfur; it has a suffocating odor and is used as a fumigant for the control of certain insects, for the prevention of molds on dried fruits, and for bleaching wool, straw goods, etc.

T

Trace – An extremely small amount of some chemical component.

Tradeoff – A balancing of risk and benefits associated with choosing a course of action, giving up one thing in favor of another.

Troposphere – The innermost part of the air encircling the earth.

U

Unbiased – Not biased or prejudiced; fair; impartial.

V

Values – A person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life.

W

Water vapor – A dispersion, in air, of molecules of water.