

Our Coast, Our Future

Student Glossary of Terms

Below you will find definitions of some important words and terms that are used in the *Our Coast, Our Future* project.

A

Adaptation: adaptation usually means “changing to better fit a changing or new situation”; climate adaptation means looking for strategies to withstand climate changes that are already happening.

B

Beach: an area by an ocean or other body of water covered by sand, gravel, or larger rock fragments

BIPOC: an acronym that stands for “Black, Indigenous, People of Color”.

C

Climate change: significant and long-lasting change in the Earth's climate and weather patterns associated with global warming.

Climate justice: climate justice approaches the challenges and effects of climate change from the perspective of human rights, equality, and equity. Climate justice acknowledges that some people experience more severe impacts of climate change and that those people are often the focus of other historic injustices (such as BIPOC peoples).

Coastal: the land near a shore or coast or describing land near a shore or coast.

Community: a group of people often living in a particular defined area (such as a city, town, state, or region) who also may share common interests and goals.

Criteria: standards on which a judgment or decision may be based, the singular form is criterion.

E

Equity: the idea that an individual may need to experience or receive something different (not equal) in order to maintain fairness and access. It is different from equality which means ‘sameness’.

Erosion: the removal of surface material from Earth’s crust, primarily soil and rock debris, and the transportation of the eroded materials by natural forces (such as water or wind) from the point of removal.

Essential services: classes or types of jobs and occupations (such as hospitals and healthcare, utilities such as electricity and water supply, law enforcement and firefighting, and food services like grocery stores) that are considered necessary for the healthy functioning of a community and its residents.

F

Frontline community: a community that is anticipated to be the first to face the worst climate change challenges or is already facing those challenges. Frontline communities are also often made up of majority BIPOC peoples.

G

Greenspace: a community space made up of land (such as parks) rather than buildings.

H

Hazardous sites: an area that may be contaminated with hazardous waste, which is a waste with properties that make it dangerous or capable of having a harmful effect on human health or the environment.

Heat island: an area in which significantly more heat is absorbed and retained than in surrounding areas, often cities with a lot of buildings and paved surfaces.

Heat wave: a period of unusually hot weather lasting for three days or more.

I

Identity: the distinguishing character or personality of an individual; an individual may have many identities, for example a person might identify themselves as being a student, a musician, an athlete, and a nature lover. Each one of these identities helps form how a person sees themselves and what they care about. Identities can also change and grow over time.

Impervious surface: ground covering surfaces (such as concrete or asphalt) that do not allow for rain and other precipitation to absorb into the ground and instead cause water to run off into other areas or contribute to flooding.

Infrastructure: the system of public works of a country, state, or region such as roads, bridges, dams, the water and sewer systems, electric and power utilities, railways and subways, airports, and harbors. These are generally government-built and publicly owned by a community.

M

Mitigation: mitigation usually means “the process or result of making something less severe, dangerous, painful, harsh, or damaging”. Climate mitigation means looking for ways and solution strategies to limit the emission of greenhouse gases that will continue to worsen climate change.

Municipal: relating to the places, actions, and rules of a major political unit such as a town or city.

N

Nor’easter: a severe storm common to the northeastern coast of the United States of America associated with heavy rains or snow, flooding near coasts and on roadways, and strong northeast winds that sometimes reach hurricane force speeds (75 miles per hour or greater).

O

Object of care: a person, place, cause, idea, or thing that is an object of attention and value to an individual or community.

P

Perspective: a position or perspective from which something is considered or evaluated.

Policy: rules or guidelines established by people/organizations in authority.

Practices: habits and behaviors, basically things people do and the way they act in situations.

R

Resiliency: the ability or tendency to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change. Climate resilience refers to the ability of a natural ecosystem or human community and infrastructure to adapt to climate change challenges so as to avoid severe damage.

S

Scenario: an account or outline of a possible course of action or events. A scenario can be imaginary so individuals can use it as an example to plan out solutions to problems.

Sea level rise: ocean expansion and the rising of the level of water in coastal areas due to the melting of glacial ice caused by global warming.

Seawall: a wall or embankment built to protect the shore from erosion or to act as a breakwater.

Socioeconomic: relating to, or involving a combination of social and economic factors.

Stakeholder: an individual or group who is involved in or affected by a course of action or decision.

StoryMap: ArcGIS StoryMaps is a digital story-telling application that can include maps, storytelling text, lists, images, videos, embedded items, and other media.

Strategy: a careful plan or method. A climate strategy is a plan to apply a solution or solutions to climate change issues and challenges.

T

Transportation: means of travel from one place to another such as buses and trains.

U

Utilities: also known as public utilities, it is a service (such as light, power, or water) provided by a public department. It is also the equipment or a piece of equipment to provide a utility service (such as power lines).

V

Vulnerability: open to attack or damage. Climate vulnerabilities are areas of natural habitats or human infrastructure that are open to damage by the effects of climate change.

W

Wetland: land or areas (such as marshes or swamps) that are covered often intermittently with shallow water or have soil saturated with moisture. Saltmarshes are an example of a wetland in coastal areas.

Definitions adapted from the following resources:

Merrium-Webster Dictionary, web

Encyclopedia Britannica, web

epa.gov

Morton, B. and Fasching-Varner, K. (2015). "Equity." Encyclopedia of Diversity and Social Justice. Vol. 1. (Ed. S. Thompson). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. p. 303-4.