

GLOSSARY

anadromous fish Fish that migrate inland from the oceans to fresh water to spawn (lay eggs). Their young hatch and eventually return to the sea.

algae Simple plants with no true roots, leaves, or stems. Includes seaweeds and microscopic green water plants (e.g., diatoms).

diatoms Single-celled plants surrounded by perforated shells (of glasslike silica). They are particularly abundant in polar surface waters.

dredge A machine that scoops earth from the bottom of water bodies (e.g., harbors). Dredging disturbs the ecosystem at the bottom of the water body and may cause silting that can be harmful to aquatic life.

filter feeders Animals that feed by filtering their food from water (e.g., blue whales filter krill from water).

intertidal zone The area along a shoreline that is covered by water at high tide and is exposed at low tide.

nutrients Parts of food necessary for the growth of living things (e.g., nitrogen, phosphorous, oxygen, carbon).

organism A living thing.

offshore drilling A method of getting below the ocean floor to pump oil to the surface of the water.

plankton Drifting or floating organisms that live in water. They may be plants (phytoplankton--e.g., diatoms) or animals (zooplankton--e.g., krill). These organisms are the basis of marine food webs.

salinity Amount of salt present in water. The average salt content of the oceans is 3.5%.

tidal marsh An area of low, wet land (often fringing the shore of an estuary) that is periodically flooded by the tides. These areas are rich in plant and animal life, especially salt-resistant grasses.

water cycle The constant movement of water between the land, the oceans, and the air. Water changes forms during the cycle (e.g., rain, snow, vapor, ice).