

Fen Glossary

Allogenic- involving processes that are external to the system but influence how the system functions (compare with autogenic).

Autogenic- involving processes that only function within the system itself; self-generated, self-produced (compare with allogenic).

Bog- a peat-accumulating wetland that has no significant inflows or outflows of water; all water inputs are from precipitation (snow and rain).

Bryophyte- a group of plants lacking vascular tissue (xylem and phloem), the system of cells that act like a circulatory system for carrying water, nutrients, and food throughout the plant. Most bryophytes are mosses, but there are also two smaller groups of bryophytes known as hornworts and liverworts.

Circumneutral- having a pH that is near the neutral pH of 7.0.

Climax community- the final stage in a successional series; its nature is determined largely by the climate and soil of the region.

Ericaceous- referring to members of the plant family Ericaceae, the heath family, which includes blueberries and cranberries. The members of this group often have leathery evergreen leaves.

Evapotranspiration- the loss of water through evaporation from the environment together with the loss of water vapor from plants (transpiration).

Hollow- a low area within a bog or fen that is wetter than surrounding hummocks and usually less acidic.

Hummock- a raised area within a bog or fen that is generally drier than nearby hollows and more acidic. Hummocks are often formed around the roots of trees or shrubs or by a fallen tree trunk.

Hydrogeologic- an approach that uses a combination of hydrology and geology

Hydrogeologic Classification System (HGC)- a system of classification, in this case specifically applied to fens, based on characteristic hydrology and geological settings.

Hydrogeomorphic- an approach that uses a combination of hydrology and geomorphology (the science of surface landforms and their interpretation on the basis of geology and climate); a study of water and surface landforms.

Hydrology- the study of water on and within the land. In a wetland, hydrology usually refers to a combination of water depth, flow patterns, and duration and frequency of flooding. One way to describe hydrology is to develop a water budget for a site, where the change in the volume of water within the wetland is a function of precipitation, evapotranspiration, surface and ground water inflows and outflows, and tidal flows (if any).

Graminoid- general term for grass plants, or grass-like plants such as sedges and rushes.

Marl- an unconsolidated deposit of calcium carbonate mixed with clay, usually formed in freshwater lakes, but also deposited by decomposing algae in very alkaline wetlands

Medium fen- a moderately minerotrophic fen, intermediate between rich and poor fens, fed by moderately mineralized water, generally with a slightly acidic pH (about 4.5-6.5)

Minerotrophy/minerotrophic- groundwater-fed; areas influenced by groundwater that has been in contact with soil or bedrock and is richer in mineral nutrients than rainwater.

Ombrophilous- peatlands that are never subject to flowing groundwater, whose only source of water is rainwater. These are true bogs and are usually more acidic than poor fens.

Palustrine- nontidal wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergents, or emergent mosses or lichens, or tidal wetlands where salt concentrations are less than 0.5 parts per thousand. Also includes unvegetated wetlands that are less than 10 hectares, lack wave-formed or bedrock shoreline features, and are no deeper than 2m.

Peat- an accumulation of relatively undecomposed dead plant matter that forms in wetland environments, specifically bogs and fens. Peat only forms when

oxygen levels are low, slowing decomposition, which is typical in wetland soils that are continually saturated with water.

Peatland- a general term referring to wetlands with a peat substrate.

Physiography- physical geography.

Poor fen- a weakly minerotrophic fen fed by waters that are weakly mineralized, generally with an acidic pH (about 3.5-5.0)

Rheophilous- peatlands under the influence of flowing groundwater derived from outside the immediate watershed of that peatland.

Rich fen- a strongly minerotrophic fen fed by waters rich in minerals, generally with a circumneutral pH

Succession- the orderly progression of changes in community composition that occurs during the development of vegetation in any area, from initial colonization to the attainment of the climax community typical of a particular geographic area.

Transition- peatlands under the influence of flowing groundwater derived solely from the immediate watershed of that peatland.

Water table- the water level below ground or the surface of water aboveground.

The water table is usually below ground and would be marked by the interface of the zone where water fills the spaces between soil particles (saturated zone) and the zone where air fills the spaces between soil particles (aerated zone). When it is below ground, the level of the water table can be measured in a well. In wetlands, the water table is often above the soil surface.