**Ecosystems Vocabulary**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Learn these words and their definitions. They are all important and will be used throughout this unit.

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| **abiotic factors** | nonliving things in an ecosystem such as light, air, soil, and temperature |
| **adaptation** | a change in order to fit in a new situation or use |
| **algae blooms** | too many algae crowd the water and block sunlight from reaching underwater grasses; caused by too many nutrients in water from sewer drainage and fertilizer run­off |
| **aquarium** | a glass or plastic container in which aquatic organisms can live and be observed |
| **aquatic** | having to do with water |
| **aquatic ecosystem** | includes freshwater areas, estuaries, marine areas |
| **bacteria** | helps in the natural recycling process, a decomposer |
| **balance** | equilibrium in an ecosystem |
| **biodiversity** | a wide variety of organisms |
| **biome** | complex ecological community, extends over a large geographic area , consists of many ecosystems |
| **biotic factors** | living things in an ecosystem, such as plants and animals; organisms depend on abiotic​ factors for survival  living components of an ecosystem (the organisms) |
| **carnivore** | a consumer which gets its energy by eating only meat/animal flesh |
| **co-exist** | living in the same environment |
| **community** | interaction of all living things in an area |
| **condensation** | change of a vapor of gas into a liquid (i.e. condensation on a glass of lemonade in the summer) |
| **conservation** | sensible use of the earth’s resources to avoid harming the environment |
| **consumer** | an organism that gets it energy by eating other organisms  types of consumers: herbivore, carnivore, omnivore |
| **control** | part of an experiment that does not change, serves as the standard to compare other observations, in this case, the ecocolumn that is not​ undergoing pollution, but all other variables (temperature, light, etc) stay the same |
| **deciduous** | trees lose leaves in autumn/fall |
| **decomposer** | an organism that gets its energy from breaking down decaying organic material; the role of decomposers is the recycling of nutrients throughout the ecosystem |
| **decomposition** | the breaking down of an organism back into nature |
| **degrade** | to make worse, harm |
| **dependent relationship** | relying on another; for example, plants rely on the sun for its light |
| **desert** | little rain, extreme temperatures, drought resistant grass  plants: sagebrush, cacti (adapted to conditions)  animals: kangaroo rat, snakes, lizards, some birds, spiders, insects |
| **ecology** | \* study of the relationships between organisms and their environment. \* an area of science focused on the relationship of living things to each other and their natural environment; a scientist in this area is called an ecologist. |
| **ecosystem** | all living things in an area and their habitat (includes living and nonliving)  abiotic factors + biotic factors = an ecosystem |
| **environment** | everything that surrounds an organism and influences it |
| **estuary** | where freshwater and salt water meet (coastal area) |
| **eutrophication** | increased nutrients in an ecosystem (i.e. too much fertilizer) |
| **fair test** | altering or changing only one variable in an experiment |
| **fertile** | rich in nutrients; often used to describe soil |
| **food chain** | \* a way to trace the Sun’s energy from one organism to another  \* a graphic which traces energy flow in an ecosystem; for example:  sun→ plants→ fish→ racoon |
| **food web** | system of food chains |
| **forest** | an area of land densely populated with trees |
| **freshwater ecosystems** | includes streams, rivers, lakes, marshes, swamps  Salt levels are low, important nutrient to land plants and animals, supports a wide variety of plant and animal life |
| **fungi** | helps in the natural recycling process, a decomposer |
| **germinate** | the process of a seed beginning to sprout or beginning to grow into a plant |
| **germination** | process by which seeds swell up and begin to sprout and develop roots |
| **grassland** | a large, flat area of land which is mostly populated by tall grasses and few trees; rainfall is low or seasonal, dominant plant life is grass |
| **habitat** | physical place where an organism lives |
| **herbivore** | a consumer which gets it energy by eating only plants and vegetation |
| **Interdependent relationship**  ***also known as interdependence*** | relying on one another; For example, elodea is a producer and provides food for a snail. It also provides shelter for hiding and laying eggs and adds oxygen to the water. The snail eats dead leaves and adds fertilizer in the form of feces. The snail also gives off carbon dioxide, which plants use for photosynthesis.  *the relationship between plants and animals in an ecosystem* |
| **isopods** | small animals with a segmented thorax, each part of the thorax has its own pair of legs |
| **marine ecosystems** | includes ocean areas and seas, high salt content, warmer, lots of sunlight near surface  (examples: coral reefs, tide pools, beaches, ocean floor) |
| **model** | representation of objects, processes, or phenomena that look like, function like, describe, or explain the real thing; simplified version of the real object which helps us understand how things work |
| **niche** | T\* he specific role an organism plays within its ecosystem  \* position of an organism in a community of plants and animals |
| **nutrients** | substance required to nourish an organism |
| **omnivore** | a consumer which gets it energy by eating both plants and meat/animal flesh |
| **organisms** | living things |
| **pH** | measured on a scale of 0-14, where 7 is neutral (distilled water), 0-6 includes acid (orange juice), 7-14 includes basic (fertilizer, ammonia) |
| **photosynthesis** | the process in which plants use carbon dioxide and sunlight to create sugar for themselves for food |
| **pollutant** | a harmful or unpleasant substance which can have negative effects on an ecosystem when spread through the air, water, or soil (i.e. acid rain, over-fertilization, road salt) |
| **pollution** | putting harmful things into the environment |
| **population** | a group of the same type of organism living in an area |
| **precipitation** | Liquid and solid forms of water from the atmosphere (examples: rain, snow, sleet, hail, drizzle, dew) |
| **predator** | an animal that eats another animal for food |
| **prey** | the animal that gets eaten |
| **primary consumers** | use plants for energy (anything that eats plants)  examples: insects, fish, lizards, mice, birds, deer |
| **producer** | an organism that can make its own food through the process of photosynthesis |
| **radiation** | a way that energy is transferred from the Sun to Earth |
| **recycle** | reusing materials |
| **scavenger** | feeds on dead organic matter that could have been killed by a predator |
| **secondary consumers** | get energy from primary consumers |
| **taiga** | located in parts of Canada, Europe and Asia; has evergreen *coniferous* forests (trees with cones), soil is acidic and difficult for plants to grow, ground covered in snow most of year, animals grow thick fur  animals: moose, deer, mice, porcupines, snowshoe hares |
| **temperate forest** | the biome where we live, deciduous trees (trees that lose their leaves), medium rainfall, foliage changes color in autumn (fall)  trees: redbud, oak, maple, pine, dogwood, pine  animals: squirrels, deer, foxes, bears |
| **terrarium** | a closed glass or plastic container in which terrestrial organisms can live and be observed |
| **terrestrial** | having to do with the land or the Earth |
| **tertiary consumers** | get their energy from secondary consumers |
| **toxin** | poison produced by a living organism |
| **trade off** | the act of giving up one thing in order to get another |
| **tropical rain forest** | abundant rainfall, very humid, trees have dense canopies, floor does not get much sunlight, many species of animals and plants  plants: vines, ferns, orchids, large and small trees  animals: orangutans, insects, sloths, jaguars |
| **tundra** | treeless biome, below the soil is a thin layer of permafrost (permanently frozen ground), located near the northernmost part of earth, summer temperatures are around freezing, grasses and small trees are present, mosses and lichens grow well animals: reindeer, caribou, polar bears, arctic wolves, ptarmigans |
| **variable** | the part of an experiment that is changed or tested; in this case, the variable is the addition of a pollutant (salt, fertilizer, vinegar) |
| **water cycle** | evaporation, condensation, precipitation; continual process |
| **water shed** | an area of land whose waters all drain into the same place |