



Appendix A:

Hydrology Terminology

Baseflow: the portion of streamflow that is due to discharge from groundwater

Channel precipitation: precipitation that falls directly on the stream channel

Consumptive use: any water use that involves a substantial amount of evaporation (examples: irrigation, watering lawns or evaporative cooling)

Detention storage: water that is temporarily held or stored in the land surface before it runs off

Drainage area: the total surface area, upstream of a point on a stream, where the water from rain, snowmelt, or irrigation which is not absorbed into the ground flows over the ground surface, back into streams, to finally reach that point

Erosion: the process of detaching, transporting and depositing soil and rock material by water, wind or gravity

Evaporation: the process by which liquid water becomes vapor

Evapotranspiration: the summation of both evaporation and transpiration from a site

Flood (hydrologic): any level of a natural water body that exceeds its “normal” banks

GIS: Geographic Information System, a system for digitally storing and manipulating geographical information

Gullying: the formation of a small valley or ravine worn away by running water and serving as a drainage after prolonged or heavy rains

Hydrograph: a graph of the stage (height of water) over time

Hydrologic cycle: the cycling of water from the earth to the atmosphere and back again

Infiltration: process by which water passes through the soil

Interception: water that is “caught” by a tree, shrub, or other surface that is evaporated into the air before it reaches the soil



Hydrology Terminology



Permeability: the rate at which water moves through the soil

Precipitation: any form of water flowing from the atmosphere to the earth

Retention: water that is held on the land surface and does not run off

Runoff: water leaving the land (may be surface, subsurface or both)

Sedimentation: deposition of soil or rock material that has been transported by water, wind or gravity

Sheet flow: an overland flow or downslope movement of water taking the form of a thin, continuous film over relatively smooth soil or rock surfaces and not concentrated into channels larger than rills

Stage: the height of water in a stream, lake, etc. above a reference point

Stream, ephemeral: a stream that flows in a defined channel during and immediately following precipitation

Stream, intermittent: a stream that flows in a defined channel only during wet seasons of the year

Stream order: a system identifying streams by the number of tributaries they have. A first order stream has no tributaries, Second order streams have only first order streams flowing into them and are formed when two first ordered streams meet. Third order streams are formed when two second order streams meet, and so on.

Stream, perennial: a stream that flows in a defined channel nearly 100% of the time during most years

Streamflow: water flowing in a stream channel

Subsurface flow: water flowing downslope through the soil in unsaturated conditions

Transpiration: process by which liquid water in a plant becomes vapor and leaves the plant through its leaves or stems

Watershed: all the land that sheds water passing through a defined point



Hydrology Terminology



Water table: the interface in the ground between the zone of saturation and unsaturated soil

Water yield: the amount (volume) of water or runoff leaving a watershed in a given time period