

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: an international plan of action developed by the United Nations in 2015 to build on the Millennium Development Goals with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Generally, the agenda seeks to address global challenges like poverty and promote sustainable development for the betterment of people and the planet.

algal blooms: rapid growths of algae in aquatic systems that can have severe impacts on human and ecosystem health. They are often caused by nutrient pollution from human activities.

anthropogenic: caused or influenced by humans, often referring to human impacts on the environment or pollution produced by our activities.

aquaculture: the breeding, rearing and harvesting of plants and animals in all types of water environments.

booms: floating, physical barriers deployed to slow or contain the spread of oil or other pollutants in water environments.

bottom trawling: a fishing technique in which vessels drag large, heavy nets on the ocean floor, often scraping and damaging sea plants and animals.

bycatch: the unintentional injury or capture of wildlife during fishing operations.

coral bleaching: a loss of color in corals that occurs when changes in the environment such as temperature, light or nutrients cause them to expel the symbiotic algae that live in their tissues. When corals lose their algae, they lose their major source of food and become more vulnerable to disease.

dead zone: an area of oxygen-depleted water uninhabitable for fish, caused by eutrophication.

destructive fishing practices (DFP): fishing techniques such as blast and cyanide fishing and muro-amni nets that pose a significant threat to fish and other marine wildlife.

ecosystem: a community of living organisms that interacts with each other and their physical environment.

fish aggregation devices (FADs): artificial structures deployed in oceans to attract schools of fish for harvesting. They can be made of various materials including bamboo, plastic, palm fronds, and fishing nets.

fish kill: the sudden and unexpected death of a number of fish or other aquatic animals over a short period of time and often within a particular area in the wild.

greenhouse gas (GHG): a gas which allows sunlight to enter the atmosphere freely, then absorbs infrared radiation and traps heat in the atmosphere. Common examples include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, chlorofluorocarbons, and ozone.

in situ burning: the controlled burning of oil spilled at sea that, in certain conditions, can significantly reduce the amount of oil on the water and its impacts on ecosystems.

land subsidence: the gradual settling or sudden sinking of the Earth's surface because of the movement of underground material. Subsidence is often caused by removing water, oil, natural gas, or mineral resources out of the ground.

longlining: also called long line fishing, a commercial fishing technique that connects hundreds of hooks to a single line that is typically 50-100 km long. Longlining can have a huge impact on ocean life, endangering any species that bites the baited hooks.

nonpoint source pollution: a combination of pollutants from a diffuse area rather than specific sources, mostly as a result of contaminated runoff.

nuisance flooding: also called high tide flooding, flooding that causes public inconveniences such as road closure and other compromised infrastructure, mostly in coastal areas. As sea levels rise due to climate change, the frequency and intensity of these floods is increasing.

overfishing: fishing beyond the capacity of a population to replace itself through natural reproduction.

photic zone: the upper layer of water that can be penetrating by sunlight, allowing photosynthesis to occur.

phytoplankton: microscopic algae living in water that, like terrestrial plants, have chlorophyll to capture sunlight and use photosynthesis to turn it into energy. They are the base of many aquatic food webs, providing nutrients for whales, snails, jellyfish, and many other marine species.

purse seining: a fishing technique that uses a giant net to encircle and capture a large school of fish. Fisherman locate a school of fish, set the net around the school, then close off the bottom and trap the fish - called pursing because it is like pulling the drawstring of an old-fashioned purse.

red tide: this term refers to harmful algal blooms that turn coastal waters a reddish color. The phenomenon is caused by microscopic algae that produce toxins that kill fish and make shellfish dangerous to eat.

sustainable yield: the amount of a renewable resource that can be taken without reducing the available supply.

top predators: species at the top of their “food chain” who, as key predators, play an important role in ecosystem balance.

upwelling: a natural process that occurs when winds push surface water away from the shore and deeper water rises to fill the gap.

wetlands: an area of land saturated with water (salt, fresh or in between) for all or parts of the year, such as marshes, estuaries, peatlands, rivers, and flooded forests. Wetlands act as water filters, control floods and erosion, and serve as habitat for a variety of plant and animal species among other essential ecosystem services.