

# Glossary Of Ecosystem Accounting Terms

**Biochemical Oxygen Demand:** The measure of dissolved oxygen required to biologically decompose organic matter in water.



**Bio-diversity:** Also known as biological diversity, this is the variety of life on Earth. It is the variety within and between all species of plants, animals and micro-organisms and the ecosystems within which they live and interact.

## Carbon Sequestration:

The process by which carbon sinks remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.



**Carbon Sink:** Natural systems such as plants, oceans and forests that absorb carbon dioxide produced by the burning of fossil fuels. Plants, for example, use carbon dioxide from the atmosphere for photosynthesis.



**Closed Forests:** Where the trees in various storeys and the undergrowth cover a high proportion (>40 percent) of the ground and do have a continuous dense grass layer. They are either managed or unmanaged forests, primary or in an advanced state of reconstruction and may have been logged over one more or more times, having kept the characteristics of forest stands, possibly with modified structure and composition. Typical examples of tropical closed forest formations include tropical rainforest and mangrove forest.

**Ecosystems:** A dynamic complex of plants, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.



**Ecosystem Capacity:** In general terms, the concept of ecosystem capacity refers to the ability of a given ecosystem asset to generate a set of ecosystem services in a sustainable way into the future.

**Ecosystem condition:** Ecosystem condition reflects the overall quality of an ecosystem asset, in terms of its characteristics such as extent, configuration, landscape forms, and climate and associated seasonal patterns.



## Ecosystem degradation:

The decline in an ecosystem asset over an accounting period due to economic and other human activity. It is generally reflected in declines in ecosystem condition and/or declines in expected ecosystem service flows.

**Ecosystem services:** The contributions of ecosystems to benefits used in economic and other human activity such as flood control and air filtration.

**Effluents:** Liquid waste flowing out of a factory, farm, commercial establishment, or a household into a water body such as a river, lake, or lagoon, or a sewer system or reservoir.



**Emission:** Waste discharged into air is called emission. Greenhouse Gas, sometimes referred to as GHG, greenhouse gases are any of various gaseous compounds that trap heat in the atmosphere and thus contribute to the greenhouse effect or global warming.

**Land Cover:** Refers to the observed physical and biological cover of the Earth's surface and includes natural vegetation, abiotic (non-living) surfaces and inland water bodies such as rivers, lakes and reservoirs.



**Open Forest:** Formations with discontinuous tree layer but with a coverage of at least 10 percent and less than 40 percent. Generally, there is a continuous grass layer allowing grazing and spreading of fires.

An example of an open forest would be the wooded savannas and woodlands in Africa.

## Sources:

For a more comprehensive listing of common ecosystem terms, check the Glossary of Terms found in the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) 2012 at [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/eea\\_white\\_cover.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/eea_white_cover.pdf)

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