

# Mission Springs Outdoor Education Vocabulary List

**Abiotic:** Nonliving things such as minerals, weather, water, and soil.

**Biotic:** Living things such as animals, plants, fungi, bacteria and algae.

**Biodegradable:** Anything that is able to be broken down and absorbed into the ecosystem. Wood, for example, is biodegradable, while plastics are not.

**Biodiversity:** A large number and big variety of animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms. Biodiversity is good for all species living in an ecosystem.

**Community:** A group of living things within a particular type of area (*forest, stream, chaparral, etc.*).

**Condensation:** Formation of drops of water from water vapor.

**Decomposition:** The breaking down of dead organic matter by (*mostly*) bacteria and fungi that recycles life energy back through an environment.

**Ecology:** The study of the relationships between organisms and their environment.

**Ecosystem:** Group of animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms that interact with their non-living environment.

**Energy:** The capacity to do work. (*i.e. To change the physical state or motion of an object*)

**Erosion:** The wearing away of land by wind, water, organisms, and other forces.

**Evaporation:** The process of changing liquid water into water vapor.

**Food Chains:** A food chain is a simple diagram that shows how energy flows through an ecosystem. A food web combines these chains together.

**Habitat:** The place where an organism naturally lives and grows.

**Igneous Rock:** Rocks created from the cooling of magma or lava. If molten rock cools slowly beneath the surface of the earth, it forms coarse grained rocks like granite. Rapid cooling magma above the surface produces fine-grained rocks like basalt, or glassy rocks like obsidian.

**Infiltration:** The process of water seeping into the soil, pores and hollows of rocks.

**Invertebrate:** An animal that does not have a backbone.

**Landfill:** A place where waste is dumped, compacted, and covered with dirt. The energy and natural resources needed to produce the items in the landfill cannot be recovered. Compaction of the products makes it very difficult for decomposition because there is little oxygen.

**Metamorphic Rock:** Rocks created when pre-existing rocks are exposed to intense heat and/or pressure.

**Metamorphosis:** Rapid change from larva to adult. There are two types of metamorphosis; complete with four stages and incomplete that is only three stages.

**Nonrenewable Resource:** A resource that exists in a fixed amount in various places in the Earth's crust. We classify these resources as nonrenewable because we are using them much faster than the earth can replenish them.

**Organic farming:** Farming that is free of chemical use including pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. As alternatives, crop rotation and natural pest control are some methods that are used.

**Phloem:** The part of a plant that transports food down from the leaves to the rest of the plant.

**Photosynthesis:** The process whereby plants capture light energy from the Sun and use it to produce glucose by combining carbon dioxide and water and giving off oxygen.

**Precipitation:** Rain, snow, sleet or any other form of water that falls from the clouds in the sky.

**Reduce:** Using less of a particular item or simply not buying an item anymore because it can not be recycled or reused.

**Renewable Resource:** Energy sources that can be used without depletion if carefully managed.

**Resource:** Environmental building block used by a living organism.

**Respiration:** The process of "burning" food, in which bound energy is released for use by an organism.

**Run-Off:** That part of precipitation, snow melt, or irrigation water that runs off the land into streams or other surface water.

**Sedimentary Rock:** Rocks created by the compaction or and cementation of sediment.

**Transpiration:** The evaporation of water from plant surfaces, especially through the microscopic holes on the underside of the leaf (*stomata*).

**Xylem:** The part of the plant that moves water up from the roots to the leaves.