

Glossary of Terms

100-year Storm

A coastal storm that has a 1 percent probability of occurring in any given year.

Caisson

A large, watertight foundation structure used as part of the flood defense system.

Compartment

An area designed to be enclosed by a flood protection system, including shoreline structures, gates, and tie-ins to high ground.

Conveyance

The process of using gravity to move water from one location to another, like through sewer pipes.

Climate Change

A change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels.

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)

The discharge of a mix of excess stormwater and untreated wastewater into a waterbody caused by heavy rainfall.

Combined Sewer System

A network of sewers that are designed to collect rainwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater in the same pipe.

Datum

A datum is a reference system for consistently measuring sea level across regions, given local variation in tides.

Deployable Floodgate

Temporary flood barrier that can be installed in anticipation of a coastal storm and removed thereafter.

Design Flood Elevation (DFE)

The height of the flood defense measures selected for an area.

Floodwall

A type of flood defense infrastructure made up of a wall that can either be buried or built above ground.

Get-down

A ramp or set of steps to bring people closer to the water.

Heat Wave

A period of three days in a row where temperatures rise above 90°F or two consecutive days over 95°F.

Intertidal Zone

The space where water meets land between high and low tides.

Mean Higher High Water (MHHW)

The average of the highest tide recorded each day during the recording period.

Mean Monthly High Water (MMHW)

A metric that is the average of all monthly maxima in predicted astronomical tide levels.

Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW)

The average of the lowest tide recorded each day during the recording period.

Maritime

Structures relating to the water or sea; can include ferries, ships, vessels, piers, and other water-dependent structures.

New York City Panel on Climate Change (NPCC)

The body of leading climate and social scientists convened by the City and charged with making climate change projections for the metropolitan region.

Nature-based Solutions (NbS)

Measures that work with nature to protect, restore, and manage ecosystems to address and adapt to societal challenges.

Outboard

On the seaward side of the shoreline; in the water.

Passive Protection

Flood defense measures that do not require direct human interaction to activate once constructed.

Piles

Vertical structural elements of a foundation system that are driven deep into the soil or bedrock for stability.

Pumping / Pump Station

Pumping moves water from lower to higher ground. Pumps push water out against high tides and coastal storm surge conditions, ensuring water does not collect behind the flood defense system. A pump station can manage large volumes of combined sewage and stormwater to prevent flooding during heavy rainfall.

Sea Level Rise (SLR)

An increase in sea level caused by a change in the volume of the world's oceans due to temperature increase, melting glaciers, and ice melt.

Shoreline Extension

The process of creating new land in a body of water.

Sill

Submerged structure designed to break waves, made of rock, root wads, or other material.

Storm Surge

During a coastal storm, low atmospheric pressure and strong winds create a temporary increase in ocean levels, called storm surge, which is pushed onshore by winds. The force of the water and associated waves can lead to significant damage and risk to lives.

Stormwater

Water that originates from rain or melting snow that doesn't soak into the ground but runs into the sewer system and waterways.

Stormwater Management System

A series of practices and infrastructure used to collect, convey, detain, and retain stormwater.

Sub-tidal Zone

The area of the river that is below the intertidal zone and always submerged.

Tidal Flooding

Regular, persistent flooding from a higher tide in a coastal area that results from sea level rise.

Urban Heat Island Effect (UHI)

The tendency for higher air temperatures to persist in urban areas due to heat absorbed and emitted by buildings and asphalt, tending to make cities warmer than the surrounding suburban and rural areas.

Universal Access

An environment designed to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible; design that is focused on providing equitable access and experiences for people with disabilities.

Wastewater

Water that has been used in homes, businesses, industrial, or agricultural locations.

Waterborne Transportation

Transportation that is based on waterways. This includes passenger ferries and commercial vessels that run along the Hudson River, East River, and in the Upper Bay.

Wave Screen

Fence-like in-water wave attenuating structure that can be pile-supported, or attached to a pile-supported structure.