Turbidity Encyclopedia Article

Turbidity

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Turbidity

Turbidity is a characteristic of water that describes the amount of suspended solids in the water. Suspended solids can be **phytoplankton**, **sediment**, or **detritus**. **Anthropogenic** causes of turbidity include **dredging** activities, **runoff** from agricultural and urban areas, and shoreline **erosion**. Highly turbid water can prevent light from reaching plants on the bottom or phytoplankton in the water column, and can therefore reduce the amount of **primary productivity** in an aquatic system. High concentrations of suspended solids can settle onto **submerged aquatic vegetation** (SAV) and can smother shellfish beds and fish spawning grounds. Turbidity is measured as total suspended solids as milligrams of solids per liter, or with an instrument called a nephelometer, which measures the amount and angle of light scattering that is caused by particles suspended in the water.