

Coastal Seas

Shared Understandings

Here are some shared understandings of ‘coastal seas’ curated through our Living Glossary workshops with our community of practice. These can be used as starting points in your work and projects.

A Coastal Sea is:

- 1) The area of the marine environment that is measurably affected by land-based processes and vice versa, which can vary over time and space
- 2) That stretch of shallow salt water next to the land that is visible to the horizon, which forms most people’s interaction with the ocean (though this varies depending on perspective, such as whether it is viewed from the shore or from a boat)
- 3) Includes, but is not limited to, estuaries, near shore environments, the habitats and species found there, and the human communities that rely on the ongoing functioning of the system
- 4) The portion of a saline water body influenced by ecological and hydrodynamic coastal processes
- 5) The coming together of the sea (a body of salt water between two coasts or between a coast and an ocean) and the coast (a place, person, area or identity that is made by the sea and/or related physical processes)

Further Reading

- Dauvin, J.C. (2008) The main characteristics, problems, and prospects for Western European coastal seas. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 57(1-5), 22-40.
- Hossain, M.S., Gain, A.K. & Rogers, K.G. (2020) Sustainable coastal social-ecological systems: how do we define “coastal”? *International journal of sustainable development & world ecology*, 27(7), 577-582.
- Kurtz, J.C., Detenbeck, N.D., Engle, V.D., Ho, K., Smith, L.M., Jordan, S.J. & Campbell, D. (2006) Classifying coastal waters: current necessity and historical perspective. *Estuaries and Coasts*, 29(1), 107-123.
- Leyshon, C. (2018) Finding the coast: Environmental governance and the characterisation of land and sea. *Area*, 50(2), 150-158.

Etymology

Coastal is a derivation of the word coast, which is borrowed from the **Old French** term *coste*. This in turn equates to terms that stem from the **Latin** *costa*, meaning the rib, flank or side of certain things.

In English, the adjective coastal is noted as first appearing in the late 19th century, pertaining to the coast in transport and military contexts through references to coastal 'traffic' and coastal 'defence.' It also later came into use as a noun in the early to mid-20th century, with a ‘coastal’ referring to a defence ship, as well as a Royal

Air Force command that operated over the seas from coastal bases during World War Two (Source: Oxford English Dictionary).

Seas (or sea) is inherited from **Germanic** and has been suggested to be cognate with collective terms for ponds or marshes, as well as a sense of flowing down, sinking or descending.

Its earliest recorded use in English is noted as occurring in **Old English** (circa mid-5th to mid-12th centuries). Originally referring to a large body of water in a general sense, the term's usage expanded to encompass specific geographical regions (e.g. the Red Sea) and astronomical features, such as the lunar 'seas' observed on the moon. It also took on figurative meanings, appearing in proverbs as well as being used to convey a vast and overwhelming mass, expanse, or quantity of something (Source: Oxford English Dictionary).