

**Dr. Tom Herrington – Waves, Rip Currents,
& Beach-Wave Interactions Glossary**

TERM	DEFINITION
Accretion	The process of coastal sediment returning to the visible portion of a beach or foreshore following a submersion event.
Amplitude	One half the wave height; the magnitude of change in the wave from the crest or trough to the center point.
Crest	The point on the wave that exhibits the maximum amount of positive or upward displacement from the center position.
Current	The steady flow of ocean water in a prevailing direction.
Diffraction	The phenomenon of the apparent bending of waves around small obstacles and the spreading out of waves past small openings.
Erosion	The process by which sediment are removed by natural processes and then transported and deposited in other locations.
Fetch	The unobstructed distance of sea over which the wind blows.
Glacial Rebound	The rise of land masses that were depressed by the huge weight of ice sheets during the last glacial period, through a process known as isostasy.
Period	The time interval between two successive crests (or successive troughs) passing a fixed point.
Reflection	The change in direction of a wave at an interface between two different media so that the wave returns into the medium from which it originated.
Refraction	The change in direction of a wave due to a change in its speed, which results in a 'swinging' of a part of a wave crest to align parallel with the depth contours.
Storm Surge	The offshore rise of water associated with a low pressure weather system.
Swell	Waves that have been generated elsewhere and have travelled far from their place of origin.

Tide Gauge	The device for measuring the change in sea level relative to a datum.
Trough	The point on the wave that exhibits the maximum amount of negative or downward displacement from the center position.
Wave	A disturbance or oscillation that travels through space-time, accompanied by a transfer of energy.
Wave Height	Overall vertical change in height between the crest and the trough.
Wave Length	Distance between two successive crests (or successive troughs).
Wave Propagation	A phenomenon in which two waves superimpose to form a resultant wave of greater or lower amplitude.