

Neritic Zone Encyclopedia Article

Neritic Zone

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Neritic Zone

The portion of the marine **ecosystem** that overlies the world's continental shelves. This subdivision of the **pelagic zone** includes some of the ocean's most productive water. This productivity supports a food chain culminating in an abundance of commercially important fish and shellfish and is largely a consequence of abundant sunlight and nutrients. In the shallow water of the neritic zone, the entire water column may receive sufficient sunlight for **photosynthesis**. Nutrients are delivered to the area by terrestrial **runoff** and through resuspension from the bottom by waves and currents. Runoff and dumping of waste also deliver pollutants to the neritic zone, and this area is consequently among the ocean's most polluted.