

Table 5.3. Common beach features with capital letters referring to the labels in Fig. 5.12. Not all beaches will have all of these features.

Backshore

The beach area between the foreshore and the foot of the dunes. This zone is between the shoreline and coastline. Normally the backshore is dry; waves only reach this area during storms. (H)

Bar (Sandbar)

An embankment of sand, gravel, or other particles deposited in shallow water by waves and currents that are parallel to the shore. Bars may be submerged or emerged. There can be several rows of bars. (M)

Beach (Shore)

Zone of loose sand, gravel, and other material that extends landward from the low tide waterline to the coastline. (B)

Beach Berm

Long wedge of sand parallel to the shoreline that is normally in the backshore of the beach. Berms have different slopes on their seaward and landward sides; the steep side of a berm faces the ocean, the side that faces land has a more gentle slope or is flat. Beach berms are formed by waves depositing material. Berms can resemble terraces, with several beach berms on a beach. Or, a beach may have no berms. (J)

Breaker Zone

Area where deep-water waves touch bottom and become shallow-water waves, changing from rounded swells to unstable, peaked waves that start to break. (K)

Coast

A strip of land of indefinite width (up to several miles) extending from the coastline inland toward the first major change in land features that are not influenced by coastal processes. (A)

Coastline

The line that forms the boundary between the coast (land) and the beach (shore). It is marked by the start of permanent vegetation or where there is a marked change in substrate or landform morphology (shape), for example, from a relatively flat beach to hilly dunes. (E)

Dunes

Ridges or mounds of loose, windblown material, usually sand. Dunes are often vegetated, that is, they have plants growing on them. (G)

Foreshore

That part of the beach (shore) between the water level at low tide and the upper limit of the wave wash at high tide (the shoreline). (I)

High tide

The highest water level of each rising tide. (L)

Low tide

The lowest water level of each falling tide. (N)

Nearshore

The zone extending seaward from the water level at low tide (the foreshore) to beyond the breaker zone. This area is indefinite and is affected by nearshore currents. (C)

Offshore

The direction seaward of the nearshore zone. (D)

Shoreline

The line formed when the water touches the beach at high tide. The shoreline divides the beach into the foreshore and backshore. (F)