



## Congressional Districts

Congressional Districts of the United States boundary lines in EnviroAtlas are a USGS product acquired by the Office of Environmental Information for EPA.

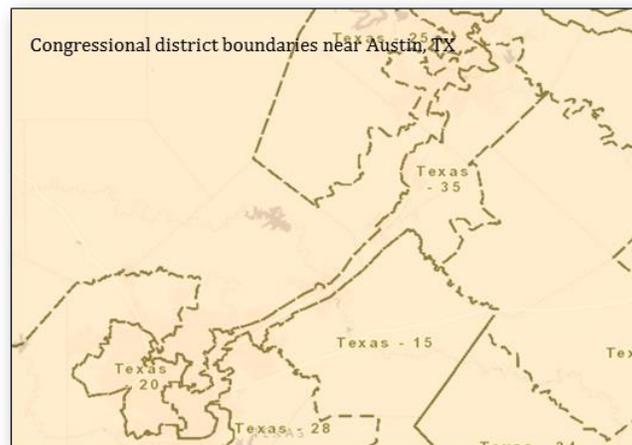
Congressional district lines can serve with other base layers to indicate locations and orient the viewer. Base maps may show roads, waterways, elevation, or relief. EnviroAtlas offers a choice of basemaps—from neutral gray to various combinations of topographic and roads basemaps to serve as a backdrop for ecosystem services metrics and data. Congressional district lines, because of their complexity, are best viewed, at least initially, with a neutral background.

Congressional district lines can be used to overlay the base imagery in EnviroAtlas to frame map themes or local issues that may have a political aspect or involve a request for assistance from congressional representatives. The base information provides a contextual backdrop to overlay demographic and environmental information. Users may want to explore how demographic changes affect representation or view the proportionate influence of environmental risks on districts of various racial composition or income levels.

Newly drawn congressional district lines typically take effect two years after the census (e.g., 2002, 2012). Though there are rules and guidelines that require that districts be drawn with a “compact” shape, partisan map-making efforts tend to create rambling districts that help to consolidate voter blocks, divide and disperse opposing voter blocks, ensure continued incumbency, and increase the number of House seats (a process called gerrymandering). In recent decades, computerized population grouping software has assisted this process to create more refined maps.

### Things to know before using these data:

During redistricting after each U.S. Census, each state delineates the lines that serve as both state legislative districts and U.S. Congressional Districts (for the House of Representatives; Senate voting is statewide). Some districts may remain unchanged, but states may gain or lose congressional districts if population gains or losses have occurred within the state. There are some guidelines and laws governing redistricting, but states are free to follow a number of methods, from strictly partisan efforts by the



majority party in the state legislature to independent and party-balanced citizen commissions.

### Where can I go for more information?

There is a wealth of information on redistricting Congressional Districts online and in political science journals, concerning, for example, recent attempts at [independent citizen commissions](#) and the contribution of redistricting to increased political [polarization](#) and decreased [competition](#) for congressional seats.

For additional information on data creation for various EnviroAtlas metrics, access the metadata found in the drop-down menu for each map layer listed in the EnviroAtlas table of contents and click again on metadata at the bottom of the metadata summary page for more details. Click [here](#) to view the congressional district boundary metadata; or view the [map service](#) (REST) page pertinent to the layers and attributes used for EnviroAtlas. To ask specific questions about this data layer, please contact the [EnviroAtlas Team](#).

NOTE: The data described in this fact sheet have not been prepared or reviewed by the EnviroAtlas team; they are sourced from publicly available external web services and as such are prepared, stored, and managed by the organization listed above. With current technology, the EnviroAtlas team has no control over the way these data display in our application. Please go to the sources listed here for more information.