



EPA Waters Data: Assessed and Impaired Waters

Under Sections 303(d) and 305(b) of the [Clean Water Act](#), states, territories, and authorized tribes are required to assess and report on the status of water resources every two years (305[b] report) and from the assessment develop a list of impaired waters (303[d] list). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) compiles the information from submitted reports into a national summary for Congress.

During the assessment, waterbody condition is evaluated for seven designated beneficial uses (such as aquatic life habitat, drinking water supply, fish consumption, and water contact recreation). If water quality in an assessed waterbody has been degraded and does not meet the standards for beneficial uses, the water body may be designated as impaired or threatened, depending on the severity of the degradation.

Reporting agencies are then required to develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for assessed waterbodies to determine the maximum amount of a pollutant a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. Establishing TMDLs is a prerequisite for subsequent restoration and recovery of impaired waters. TMDLs may be calculated for a range of pollutant impacts such as excess nutrients, sediment, or metals. EPA has created a [TMDL Results Analysis Program](#) to search for spatial patterns and trends in national TMDL data. This analysis helps to gauge whether the TMDL process leads to the improvement or recovery of impaired waters.

EnviroAtlas depicts assessed and impaired waterbodies for the conterminous United States. Both data types are represented by point, line, and area features in EnviroAtlas: blue symbols for assessed waters and red symbols for impaired waters as shown in the accompanying image. Combining data layers such as these with National Hydrography Dataset ([NHDPlusV2](#)) flowlines and surface water landmarks allow the user to investigate possible causes of water resource impairment.

Things to know before using these data:

Assessed and impaired waters appear on the EnviroAtlas map at a scale appropriate to the level of detail and density of locally sampled waterbodies. Legend items are grayed out and map symbology is not evident until the appropriate scale has been reached.



Where can I go for more information?

EPA's Office of Water presents a list of questions and answers on how states assess and report [water quality](#) from establishing designated uses and water quality thresholds, conducting surveys, and determining sources of impairment.

A comprehensive list of regional information and data related to impaired waters and [TMDLs](#) is available from EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds.

EPA provides a [search tool](#) for information and data on assessed and impaired waters and TMDLs reported to EPA by individual states. Scroll down through the website for a national summary of state information listing impaired waters by state, causes, and probable sources of impairment.

For more information on data creation, access the metadata for [assessed](#) waters and [impaired](#) waters.

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.