



Protected Areas Database (PADUS): GAP Status Code

The U.S. Protected Areas Database ([PADUS](#)) was developed by a consortium of federal, state, and nongovernmental agencies to inventory protected areas across the nation and to create a single, comprehensive database that will be updated as new protected areas are added. For PADUS, protected areas are defined as lands dedicated to and actively managed for the preservation of biological diversity, recreation, and cultural uses.

GAP Status Code (pictured in figure right) is one of three PADUS data layers included in EnviroAtlas under Protected Lands. Land protection status areas are mapped as one of three U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) GAP Analysis [GAP Status Codes](#)—areas where 1) ecological disturbance events are allowed to proceed (dark green on map, top); 2) ecological disturbances such as fire are suppressed (light green); and 3) resource extraction and off-road vehicle travel are allowed (gray). Another map of protected lands uses the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Protection Categories Ia and Ib through VI. GAP Status 1 generally corresponds to [IUCN Category](#) Ia, Ib, and II, and GAP Status 2 to IUCN Categories III through VI.

The nationwide PADUS data layer is useful as a reference for local recreational use and trip planning. It is also an important tool for land management and conservation land acquisition. Knowing the distribution of existing protected areas helps land managers to prioritize potential conservation land purchases and to more consciously balance conservation with economic development. In addition, knowledge of protected land distribution may be valuable now and in the future for planning climate change refugia for resident biota.

Things to know before using these data:

The PADUS dataset is constantly changing as new areas are added or as existing boundaries are corrected or refined. As a result, the protected areas depicted in the EnviroAtlas data layers represent PADUS as it existed at the time the layers were created.

Users should be aware of the broad range in levels of protection represented by the areas in the GAP Status Code data layer—from city and county parks that may endure heavy recreation pressure and a high incidence of invasive species to undisturbed wilderness areas with high



biointegrity. Resource extraction (logging, mining, and grazing) conducted in Protection Level 3 also affects the distribution, productivity, and sustainability of wildlife as well as the incidence of invasive, non-native species.

Where can I go for more information?

Protected Areas [data](#) are available nationally, by region, or by state. A full [metadata](#) report, including use constraints, is also available from the U.S. Geological Survey.

A consortium of government agencies and non-governmental organizations produced a [report](#) on their development of the Protected Areas databases. USGS provides a [summary](#) of the relationships between GAP status codes and IUCN protection categories. Users can compare EnviroAtlas maps of IUCN protection categories with GAP status.

To ask specific questions about these data, 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 publically available external web services and as such are prepared, stored, and managed by the organizations listed above. 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.