State and County Boundary Lines

State and county boundary lines in EnviroAtlas come from the U.S. Census Bureau's Master Address File/ Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (MAF/TIGER) Database. TIGER was the first nationwide digital map of roads and administrative boundaries created for the 1990 U.S. Census.

County and state line TIGER data (2010) overlay the base imagery in EnviroAtlas. A basemap provides basic information 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. The default basemap in EnviroAtlas is a satellite imagery map that shows a locationally-accurate view of surficial features.

The base maps and county and state boundary lines provide a reference layer on which to overlay other data to create thematic maps. TIGER data and base maps provide a contextual backdrop for demographic and environmental information. EnviroAtlas provides hundreds of data layers in 7 ecosystem services categories (Clean Air, Clean and Plentiful Water, Natural Hazard Mitigation, Climate Stabilization, Recreation, Culture, and Aesthetics, Food, Fuel, and Materials, and Biodiversity Conservation) for use by professionals, laypeople, and students.

Things to know before using these data:

TIGER cartographic boundary files are simplified representations that are specifically designed for small scale thematic mapping. State and county boundaries fit within a generalized U.S. boundary. TIGER data was originally developed specifically to assist in the decennial U.S. Census. After 1990, applications of TIGER data expanded widely to various unrelated uses, even though the data are not appropriate for all applications.

Smaller geographic areas may be excluded from the data. Boundary lines may not align perfectly with TIGER data from other years. The boundaries should not be used for legal decisions or geographic analyses such as area or perimeter calculations.

Where can I go for more information?

The TIGER Cartographic Boundary Shapefiles for states and counties are available on the U.S. Census Bureau data download page.

The EnviroAtlas Community component uses the census block group (each composed of 4–10 census blocks) as a unit of analysis. Descriptions of urban and rural classifications and census block shapefile downloads are available at the U.S. Census Urban and Rural Classification website.

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 TIGER boundary metadata. 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.