

Web Resources for Environmental Review

The invention of the Internet coupled with the development of Geographic Information System (GIS) software has revolutionized the way maps and aerial photographs may be obtained and compared during completion of the environmental review process. Instead of tracking down cumbersome paper maps and aerial photographs that must be copied and re-copied to accommodate scale differences when comparisons are made, many maps and aerial photographs may now be obtained from the Internet and re-scaled for comparison with a few keystrokes. Below is information on some websites that provide access to various maps and aerial photographs, as well as additional information that may be used to complete environmental reviews.

www.topozone.com

This website provides online access to US Geological Service (USGS) topographic maps. The free service allows properties to be located using coordinates or USGS Map place names. For a fee (\$49.95 annually for a single-user), users may locate properties using addresses, and obtain other types of maps as well as aerial photographs. Information for reading and understanding USGS Topographic maps may be found at <http://erg.usgs.gov/isb/pubs/booklets/symbols/index.html>.

http://www.mapquest.com

This website provides online access to traditional street maps, and directions to and from known locations. Properties may be located using addresses, coordinates, intersection descriptions, or business names and categories. For mapping purposes, this website is best used for locating new highway routes not shown on older USGS Topographic Maps or Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). However, in addition to obtaining maps, the “Find It” page allows users to obtain a list of businesses and public service centers near a property by clicking on the [See What’s in Your Neighborhood](#) link.

www.teraserver.com

This website provides free online access to aerial photographs and satellite images with resolutions of about 26-feet per pixel; however, viewing at higher resolutions requires a subscription (\$119.95 annually). Properties may be located using addresses and coordinates. TerraServer usage is somewhat limited, as users must purchase the images that they wish to use; however, if desired, the following may be purchased from the TerraServer website: digital images; image prints; and site reports with information on demographics, spending patterns, and traffic.

http://store.msc.fema.gov/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/FemaWelcomeView?storeId=10001&catalogId=10001&langId=-1

This is the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Flood Map Store website. This website provides a link to the Map Search database which allows for online viewing of official FIRMs. Properties may be located through Map Search by using property addresses or coordinates. Once a property has been located an official FIRMette may be created and printed for the purpose of documenting the property location relative to the 100- and 500-year floodplains. Directions for using Map Search and creating FIRMettes may be found by clicking on the [documents page](#) link under “Free How-To Guides Online”.

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ReferenceMapFramesetServlet?_lang=en

This website provides access to the US Census Bureau GIS database. This database may be used to produce maps showing the extent of census data boundaries for areas such as urban areas, census blocks, and voting districts; and the locations of major transportation facilities, and cultural features such as schools, hospital, and parks. Properties may be located using addresses and coordinates. Directions for using this database may be found by clicking on the Quick tips link.

<http://www.epa.gov/enviro/html/em/>

This website provides access to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) EnviroMapper maps and databases. The EnviroMapper maps and databases include: Window to My Environment, EnviroFacts, Superfund, the Environmental Justice Geographic Assessment Tool, and Brownfields. Window to My Environment is the most general database, allowing production of maps showing locations of EPA regulated hazardous waste sites and facilities, EPA monitoring sites, and major water bodies. However, the maps produced only show items at the town/city level of resolution. As indicated by their titles, the other EnviroMapper maps and databases are limited to the provision of specific information such as the locations of Superfund sites or EPA regulated hazardous waste generators.

<http://hud.esri.com/egis/>

This website provides access to US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) GIS databases. Clicking on the Map Your Community link provides access to a general database that may be used to produce maps showing the location of HUD funded activities; EPA documented hazardous facilities; FEMA flood boundaries; census data boundaries; major water bodies; major transportation facilities; and cultural features such as schools, hospital and parks. Properties may be located using addresses. Directions for using this database may be found by clicking on the Help icon on the “Map Your Community” toolbar.

<http://nmviewogc.cr.usgs.gov/viewer.htm>

This is the USGS’s National Map Viewer. The National Map Viewer database is a compilation of data from several sources including the USGS, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), and participating state agencies. The National Map Viewer database contains USGS topographic maps or aerial photographs that may be overlaid by USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps; BTS transportation facility maps; USGS feature name, vegetation, and waterbody maps; and, participating state agency GIS maps. Properties may be located using addresses, place names, and coordinates. In addition to the maps, other useful features in this database include a measuring tool for determining approximate distances between features, and links to state agencies maintaining Internet accessible GIS databases. Direction for using the USGS National Map Viewer database may be found by visiting <http://nationalmap.usgs.gov/nmjump.html>

<http://hazards.fema.gov/wps/portal>

This FEMA website, known as the Multihazard Information Portal, contains a link to the Map Viewer database. The Map Viewer database contains street maps, USGS topographic maps, and aerial photographs that may be overlaid with hazard maps, such as flood and earthquake zone maps; highway maps; and railway maps. Properties may be located using addresses and coordinates. Assistance for using the Map Viewer is provided within the database by clicking on the Question Mark icons.

In addition to the aforementioned sites, states, counties, and cities throughout the United States have begun using GIS databases to store and update maps and datasets used for conducting

planning and environmental studies. Some of these databases may be accessed on-line. On-line access to city or county databases may be found by visiting the selected local government's website and searching for a GIS database link, or accessing a state sponsored website with links to all local governments having on-line GIS databases.