

A new North America

The North American map is a familiar sight. It hangs in schools, offices and homes across the continent. But this June, a new map will be unveiled that will remain current even as new roads are laid and regional boundaries change.

That map, shown on the right, is the first map of North America to be drawn by all three North American countries. It's also the first "living" map of North America to be available online and updated as new information is available. Significantly, an official map of the continent has never before been available online in Mexico.

In producing the map, cartographers combined national data and carefully adjusted the line work so that roads and other markers connected at the correct position. The final product, they say, will serve as the foundation for future resource, environmental, social and economic maps.

"Gone are the days when maps are dated by the information they inaccurately present," says Carlos Valdés, informatics manager for the CEC. "This map will provide cartographers everywhere with an accurate and current base map so that data from all types of sources can be integrated to help better inform decision makers."

For example, the CEC has used maps to promote shade-grown coffee by showing a spatial relationship between coffee production and declining bird populations. The North American Terrestrial Ecoregions map (shown) also provided a spatial framework to link existing biodiversity data for areas of common conservation concern.

"The digital North America atlas will promote greater public access to environmental information," boasts Valdés. "Institutions and individuals are free to use the map to advance scientific research, environmental promotion and any number of applications."

The four groups behind the map—the CEC, Natural Resources Canada's Atlas of Canada, the US Geological Survey's US National Atlas and the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática*—plan to produce 30,000 print editions for distribution to cartographers, geological societies and schools, while an online version would allow general public access.

The new North American Atlas is set at a 1:10,000,000 scale. Data includes roads, railroads, populated places, political boundaries, hydrology, bathymetry, sea ice and glaciers.

"Base map" for North America

Populated Places

- 1 - 9,999
- 10,000 - 99,999
- 100,000 - 999,999
- 1,000,000 - 2,999,999
- 3,000,000 or greater

Transportation Routes

- Expressways
- Other roads
- Railways
- Ferries

Boundaries

- International
- Province, State, Territory
- Dividing Line (Canada & Kalaallit Nunaat)

Renewable Energy Capacity (Mw)

- 0
- 1 - 100
- 101 - 500
- 501 - 1000
- 1001 - 2000
- 2001 - 3001

Terrestrial Ecoregions

- 1.1 Arctic Cordillera
- 2.1 Northern Arctic
- 2.4 Southern Arctic
- 3.4 Taiga Shield
- 4.1 Hudson Plains
- 5.1 Softwood Shield
- 5.2 Mixedwood Shield
- 5.3 Atlantic Highlands
- 8.1 Mixedwood Plains
- 8.2 Central USA Plains
- 8.3 Southeastern USA Plains
- 8.4 Ozark and Ouachita – Appalachian Forests
- 8.5 Mississippi Alluvial and Southeastern Coastal Plains
- 13.5 Southern Sierra Madre
- 13.6 Central American Sierra Madre and Chiapas Highlands
- 14.2 Nothwestern Plain of the Yucatán Peninsula
- 14.4 Interior Depressions
- 14.5 Southern Pacific Coastal Plain and Hills
- 15.1 Gulf of Mexico Humid Coastal Plains and Hills
- 15.3 Sierra of Los Tuxtlas
- 15.4 Everglades
- 15.6 Coastal Plain and Hills of Soconusco