MapX User Guide

Version 1.0

Section 1: Getting Started with MapX
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What is MapX?

MapX is an innovative spatial data platform to map and monitor the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources using the best available scientific data. It was developed jointly by UN Environment and GRID-Geneva, in partnership with the World Bank and the UN Development Programme. The MapX platform is open source and based on a cloud computing architecture. The goal of MapX is to ensure that different stakeholders have access to the best available data to improve monitoring and decision-making processes. It aggregates planetary data from trusted sources and offers a series of online tools for analysis, visualization and communication. MapX’s front-end can be fully customized and integrated in external web platforms. MapX hosts spatial data to support monitoring and decision making in a range of sectors, including biodiversity, extractives, chemicals and water.

The core mission of MapX is:

- To contribute to global sustainability by offering the possibility to share open, trustworthy data regarding natural resources;
- To increase the capacity of policy and decision makers to access and analyze maps for evidence-based dialogue and policymaking; and
- To be an impartial hub for trusted geospatial data backed by the neutrality of the United Nations.

Key Features of MapX

The MapX application has an easy-to-use toolkit for you to navigate on the latest and most trusted spatial data for natural resources planning.

1. **Spatial data catalogue**: a one-stop shop for countries and stakeholders to freely access and share the best available spatial data, brokered from premier institutions.
2. **Data workspace**: a collaborative, secure and private online space where it is possible to access, share and manage your datasets.
3. **Data downloading and reporting**: maps can be downloaded and integrated directly into reports. Additionally, the underlying data can be downloaded, streamed and integrated into existing platforms.
4. **Data dashboards**: bring information to life with customized data dashboards and charts. It allows you to monitor progress at a local, national or global level.
5. **Analytical tools**: visualize change over time using a time slider function and perform overlay analyses to identify conflicting land-uses or opportunities in a few clicks without any additional software.
6. **Story maps**: an innovative data storytelling tool which integrates narratives and multimedia such as photos and videos with interactive maps to reach a wider audience.
7. **Impartial data**: MapX is underpinned by UN impartiality and has the ability to act as a trusted broker of public and private data.
Disclaimer

This user guide provides instructions how to access, search, visualize and upload data, and conduct basic analyses, and download data layers and maps. It is designed for online and offline access. It was developed by the MapX technical team in February 2019 and will be updated on a regular basis (several times per year) to reflect changes occurring in the platform. If you notice any discrepancies between the MapX tool and the most recent user guide, please keep in mind that another version of the guidance may be launched soon, or don’t hesitate to contact us at support@mapx.org.

Purpose of this guide

The present guide represents the first part of a series of user guides to assist you in using MapX. The guide mirrors the user journey by first outlining how to access the MapX platform and increases gradually in complexity, outlining how to perform an overlap analysis and upload vector data to your project. This guide is organized in individual sections to allow easy access to the relevant information.

If you are new to MapX, start here. In this section we will review accessing, searching, exploring and downloading maps in the MapX web application. These functionalities are available for all users of MapX.
**Glossary**

MapX uses a specific vocabulary that users must be familiar with to interact with the platform. Here is a glossary to help you in your user journey:

**Abstract:** In MapX, abstracts describing the attributes that are being displayed are located below the legend and above the View Toolbar in each view.

**Attributes:** Attribute data is information which describes the *what, why, and how* in tabular format of spatial features. In MapX, when you click on a point, line, or polygon, the pop-up will contain attributes of that feature. MapX can only display single attributes from a spatial dataset at a time.

**Layer:** A layer is a category of visualized data which includes different categories of data: vector tiles, raster tiles, custom code and custom layers. It does not include story maps.

**Metadata:** A set of data that describes and gives information about other data. In MapX, complete metadata is essential to verify data integrity and accuracy. You can check the metadata of each dataset by clicking the small "I", for information, located beneath the abstract of each view.

**Project:** A project is a password-protected work environment in MapX. It is administered either by the MapX team or by the user itself. A project contains data already pre-populated or data that have been uploaded by the user.

**Source:** The data uploaded into projects by MapX users are called sources. These sources are then visualized into views that can be selected on the MapX web app. Please note that sources are not visible on the platform and require to be processed into views before they are seen by users.

**Story map:** A story map is a web application that combines a spatial data with narrative, usually involving text and multimedia content, including photos and videos. The MapX story map engine allows users and visitors of the platform to independently visualize story maps using live data that is streamed from MapX.

**View:** Views display a single attribute from a source dataset that have a spatial element. The difference between what you may know as a layer and we call a view, is that views can only show one attribute at a time, while typically layers in geospatial software can show multiple attributes. Each view is described with an abstract for that attribute and the metadata information of the source dataset from which it was created. User privileges of each view may differ from those of the source dataset.

**View Panel:** The view panel is the legend at the left of the MapX web page. It contains the list of views in each project, the language controls, and the search and filtering functions. To learn more about the view panel functions see [How do I explore data?](#)
**View Toolbar:** The view toolbar is the small collection of buttons that occurs horizontally beneath the abstract of each view. To learn more about the view toolbar functions, check the section What is the view toolbar?

**Toolbar:** The MapX toolbar is the collection of navigation buttons that lie horizontally across the top of the MapX web page. For a more in-depth look at what each one of these buttons does, check the section What are the Navigation Buttons?
Introduction to MapX

How do I access MapX?
MapX refers to the MapX platform and the UN Environment MapX program, which includes the various applications of the platform across different projects. Information about the MapX program can be accessed on the www.mapx.org website. The MapX platform app MapX can be accessed through the website under ‘Access Data’ or directly at https://app.mapx.org. The application is open source and can be used by everyone to visualize and analyze spatial data.

What browser works best with MapX?
We recommend using Google Chrome for both Windows and Mac computers. We are still working on optimizing MapX for other browsers.

Why do I have to register for MapX?
Anyone can view public datasets on MapX without an account. However, creating an account gives you greater access to the data and toolkit features, including the ability to download data, and access to a greater number of views that are accessible to registered users only.

How do I register or login for MapX?
1. Click the log-in icon in the top left corner of the toolbar (red circle) and enter your email. Do not close the window. Open another browser tab and navigate to your email inbox.

2. You should receive an email immediately from bot@mapx.org containing one-time use code via email. A randomly generated one-time code is how you will always log-in to the MapX platform. As MapX takes data security very seriously, we do not rely on user passwords that are vulnerable to hacking. Instead, unique passwords will be generated and sent to your email each time you log-in.

3. Enter this code into the pop-up box and you are logged in. At the end of your session, if you need to log out, click the log-in icon button again and click the “Log out” button underneath your user profile.
How to use the MapX platform?

How do I change the language of the display?
1. Open the view panel (red circle).
2. Select the language tab (red box).
3. Select your language in the view panel. Translated versions of the menu bars only are available in French and Spanish.
4. We are working to translate the full website to French and Spanish and anticipate that this will be ready in 2019. If you need language support, please contact us at support@mapx.org. We are committed to answering your emails within 48 hours.
**What are the Navigation buttons?**

Navigation buttons help the user navigate through all environments of the platform. They appear on the top of the window.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Button</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Show–hide navigation menu." /></td>
<td>Show–hide navigation menu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Login window (a secure single use code will be sent via email)." /></td>
<td>Login window (a secure single use code will be sent via email).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Show view panel in the current project. Views shown are dependent on the defined user status." /></td>
<td>Show view panel in the current project. Views shown are dependent on the defined user status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Will open the toolbox where users can perform overlap analysis, highlight tool configuration, share their map, create new views, upload and manage sources, control administrator privileges and configure themes of the map." /></td>
<td>Will open the toolbox where users can perform overlap analysis, highlight tool configuration, share their map, create new views, upload and manage sources, control administrator privileges and configure themes of the map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Close and open dashboard window." /></td>
<td>Close and open dashboard window.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Button</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Print current map view" /></td>
<td>Print current map view. Clicking this button will begin an automatic download of a zip file, containing a pdf of the current map extent and displayed layers, and separate png's of the legend, north arrow, scale bar, and map image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Fullscreen button" /></td>
<td>Fullscreen button.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Opens terms of use" /></td>
<td>Opens terms of use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Geolocalize tool" /></td>
<td>Geolocalize tool (pick user location and show it on map).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Switch theme between aerial photograph to OpenStreetMap B&amp;W image" /></td>
<td>Switch theme between aerial photograph to OpenStreetMap B&amp;W image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Zoom in" /></td>
<td>Zoom in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Zoom out" /></td>
<td>Zoom out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Highlight Vector features. Highlights where two selected vector layers overlap one another." /></td>
<td>Highlight Vector features. Highlights where two selected vector layers overlap one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Reset bearing to default" /></td>
<td>Reset bearing to default.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What dataset does MapX use to show country boundaries?
MapX displays administrative maps from Open Street Map, however, boundaries are provided by the UN cartographic unit. These boundaries are not available for distribution.
Where possible, GAUL boundaries are available in specific applications for redistribution of user-downloaded data. The red lines show the disputed state boundaries or territories of undetermined status, provided by Open Street Map. Please note that the boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

**How do I adjust the menus?**

1. Explore the map by clicking and dragging with your mouse or using your keyboard keys.

2. Zooms can be performed by scrolling the mouse’s wheel but also with buttons +/- on top left (yellow circles).

3. Increase or shrink the size of the view panel within the frame by dragging the arrow in the corner at the bottom right of the legend (green box).

4. Experiment with collapsing and expanding the left sidebar so that the map is full screen or hiding the panel of views using the view icon in the top toolbar (red circle).

![Fig 4: MapX platform, view panel button](image)

**How do I change the orientation of the map?**

By holding down the right click button on your mouse, you can change the orientation of your view (see map below). To reset the bearing to default and re-orient the map to the north, use the reset bearing button (red circle).
How do I explore maps?

The default base map shows country limits and morphological features in a simple and light way. The top of the app is the toolbar (red box) that help the user access mapping features. Projects can be selected from the drop-down menu in the top left corner (blue box). On their first visit to MapX, users will be brought to the “World” project which contains the most comprehensive catalogue of public data layers on the platform. Other projects created by individual users and the MapX team can be explored (depending on their public access status) by selecting the relevant project from the drop-down menu in the top left corner (blue box). It is important to note that only publicly available views will be available for public users. Views appear in the view panel (green box).

Fig 5: MapX platform, map orientation button

Fig 6: MapX platform, general toolbar (red), project menu (blue), and list of available views (green)
Interact with the MapX data

How do I explore the data?
Data can be visualized by clicking on the circle button beside the view. Each view displays one spatial attribute of a source dataset. The views can be ordered by title, date, (green box) or searched by keyword by typing into the “Filter views” box (red box). Selecting the “Filter activated views” button will remove all the views from the panel except for the ones you have selected (blue box).

Fig 7: MapX platform, search box (red), order button (green), and “filter activated views” button (blue)

How do I filter data by tags?
Users can further filter information by selecting the “Filter Views by Tag” option at the bottom of the view panel. Parameters can then be filtered according to three categories, Types of views: custom code, custom style, dashboard, layer, raster tile, story map, time slider, vector tiles, overlap (red box); Themes: category of data (blue box); or Collections: group of views that are related to a common subtopic (green box).
Fig 8: MapX platform, filter menu in the view panel
### Why do different data layers have different colours?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vector Data</th>
<th>Raster Data</th>
<th>Story map</th>
<th>Custom code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The colour of the button denotes the type of data that created the view: green for vector data, purple for raster data, blue for story map, and red for custom code. Explanations for each follow below.

### What is the difference between vector and raster data?

Vector and raster data are two fundamentally different ways of representing spatial data. Raster data is broadly thought of as data that represents things that exist on a range of values across space, such as a map of temperature, land cover, population density. In the below example, the Biodiversity Intactness Index is a raster view in which every pixel has a continuous value. The attribute of raster data is a value within a pixel (or grid cell) and can represent categorical values (such as a land cover classification) or continuous values such as elevation.

*Fig 9: MapX platform, example of a raster data*
Conversely, vector data is data that represents linear or area features on a map, such as highways (lines), cities (points), or protected areas (polygons). Vector data will normally contain not just a feature on a map but will also have other data associated with it called attribute data. Attributes can be many things, such as place names, the area of a feature, etc. In this example, for each feature in the Ecoregions2017 dataset there is an attribute for that feature’s Ecoregion (a finer scale land classification), as well as its Biome (a more generalized land classification). The below example shows the Ecoregion attribute. Try comparing two datasets, one with a purple button and one with a green button, by clicking on the map features.

![MapX platform, example of a vector data](image)

**What is a custom code layer?**

The red buttons denote a geospatial dataset that is stored in external repositories and directly streamed into the MapX. For example, the World Database on Protected Areas is the largest database of legally defined protected areas on the planet, which is updated every month. These updates are reflected immediately in MapX.
What is a story map?
Story maps are innovative storytelling tools which combine spatial data on the MapX platform with narrative and multimedia (such as photos and videos) to communicate messages to wider audiences. In the MapX view panel, story maps have a blue button beside the title. To play the story map, click the play button in the view toolbar.
What are the buttons in the view toolbar? Why are they different in different views?

The view toolbar is located below the abstract of every view and contains tools to customize the way you can interact with the view, including taking a screenshot or viewing the metadata. Each view toolbar is customized to the capabilities of that view – for example, you will not be able to download data that has a restricted view-only license, and you cannot “zoom to selected features” with a raster dataset. For story maps, the only features that are available are the “play” and “share” buttons.

Fig 13: MapX platform, view toolbar

Vector data view toolbar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Button</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Move view up or down</td>
<td>Move view up or down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoom to all features</td>
<td>Zoom to all features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoom to selected features</td>
<td>Zoom to selected features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reset the view</td>
<td>Reset the view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settings</td>
<td>Settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display metadata</td>
<td>Display metadata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Download the data</td>
<td>Download the data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a screenshot</td>
<td>Take a screenshot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share view</td>
<td>Share view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open original project</td>
<td>Open original project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Raster data view toolbar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Button</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Move view up or down</td>
<td>Move view up or down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settings</td>
<td>Settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to the metadata</td>
<td>Link to the metadata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a screenshot</td>
<td>Take a screenshot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share view</td>
<td>Share view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open original project</td>
<td>Open original project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do I view multiple data layers?
You can use the arrows at the far-left side of the view toolbar, located beneath the legend in each view, to layer certain activated views over one another. The arrows on the far-left side (red circles) will move the view either to the top or the bottom of the current view legend. Use the “Filter Activated Views” button to clarify the order of your activated views.

![Fig 14: MapX platform, up/down buttons](image)

How do I filter vector data on the map?

Using the legend:
To filter features using the legend, simply click on an item in the legend. A “ = “ symbol will appear indicating that only features with that attribute are turned on. You can select more than one feature type at a time by clicking on multiple legend entries. Clicking on the legend entry again will remove that feature type from the filter, and the “ = “ symbol will disappear. If no features are filtered, then all features are turned on again.
Fig 15: MapX platform, interactive legend to filter the data

**Using the “Settings” button**

Click the “Settings” button, located beneath the view in the View Toolbar (red circle). You can use the “Filter Values” field (green rectangle) to select or de-select values you would like to filter the dataset with. Click the backspace button to remove values.

Fig 16: MapX platform, filter values parameters
Using the interactive data attributes:
Click on a feature in a vector view on the map, which will open a pop-up window. The pop-up window will show all the primary and secondary attributes for the view. Nothing is filtered by default, but if we click any attribute, all other features in the view that do not share that attribute value will be turned off. You can select multiple attributes this way to filter data.

Fig 17: MapX platform, interactive pop-up window

Fig 18: MapX platform, interactive pop-up window activated
How do I change the transparency of views?
Changing the transparency of views is useful when you have multiple colorful views activated at once, especially using raster data. To change the transparency of any dataset, click the “Settings” button (red circle) in the View Toolbar beneath the view you would like to use. You can select your transparency below (green rectangle).

![MapX platform, transparency parameters](image)

How do I visualize data over time (where timeslider is available)?
For vector layers that have timeslider functionalities enabled, it is possible to filter the visualization live based on date (red box). To access this time filter, toggle the settings button in the view toolbar (red circle) and adjust the sliders to your desired range. By clicking in the middle of the slider and dragging it, it is possible to interactively change the date across values.
I've found data I like, how do I download it?

To download a layer, click on the download cloud icon in the view panel (red circle). In the pop-up box (green box) select the output format you wish to download from the available formats (ESRI shapefile, GeoJson, GML, GPKG, KML, SQLite, DXF and CSV), the country you wish to download, projection and a filename. Confirm to download.
Whether a layer is downloadable depends on license agreements between MapX and data providers. Currently only vector data is available for download from the platform. If a layer is not downloadable the below pop up will appear.

Fig 21: MapX platform, “not downloadable” message

How do I make a map?
You can download maps of your viewing extent. Once you have the correct view in place, click the “Take a screenshot” or “Print” button (red circles) to automatically begin a download of a zip file to your computer. This zip file will contain 4 elements: 3 png’s with the scale, map, and legend, and 1 PDF with all of the elements combined.
Fig 22: MapX platform, buttons to generate a map

Fig 23: Content of the zip folder containing the map elements

If you have multiple views visible, only the legend that you click “Take a Screenshot” underneath will be included in the zip file. You can take a screenshot of the others by using a selective screenshot tool on your computer such as the Windows Snipping Tool. Remember, if you choose to arrange the png elements yourself, you must re-size the scale bar at the same time.

How do I change the colors of a map?

If you would like to customize the colors of the map before you download it, navigate to the toolbox, which is in the top toolbar (red circle). Scroll down to the bottom of the toolbox. Under theme configuration, you can adjust the colors of your map, including the text, boundaries, and other elements which may come in useful when generating maps. These changes are temporary and will be reset when you refresh your browser.
How do I share views?
The share button is located in the view toolbar. You can choose which views or projects you would like to share, and whether you would like a direct link to the view within MapX, or an html code for an iframe (for a website or a blog). An iframe will essentially insert a frame into your online platform containing the view, so it can be viewed without leaving your website. You can adjust the width and height of the iframe within the code. There is also an option to tweet the view directly.

NB: Before sharing a link with another user, make sure this person has the rights to see this data; in other words, make sure the person you’re sharing the link with has already been added to the project as an administrator, publisher, member, or is registered user if the project is public (see section 3 of the user guide: introduction to the project workspace). If the project is not public and the user has not been already invited to join the project, the link will show an empty MapX page.

Advanced spatial features and functionalities
Ready for more advanced functionalities? Try creating an overlap or calculating the area of your data visualization.

How do I calculate the area of visible feature in my map?
Only vector data which is composed of polygons can be used to calculate area. This is because point and line data do not take up areas. Raster data also wouldn’t work because raster data is continuous, meaning that every pixel has a value (and the calculation would be redundant).
To calculate the area of visible features, click the toolbox button in the toolbar (red circle). Click the “Area of Visible Features” button (red box) which will return the values of the vector features (polygons) visible in your layer. The area calculation, in square kilometers, is the total area (land or sea) in the features that are visible within the frame of the map. Try zooming in and out and re-calculating the area.

![MapX platform, surface calculation tool](image)

**Fig 23: MapX platform, surface calculation tool**

**How do I overlap multiple layers?**

There are currently two methods for displaying the overlap of different layers on map and calculating the resulting area extent of the resulting features. One method, which highlights overlap areas, is publicly available for all users. One method, which creates a new view out of overlapping vector layers, is only available in the project environment for publishers and administrators.

**Highlight areas of overlap**

The first method is based on the “Highlight vector overlap” tool, one of the navigation buttons found in the top toolbar of the MapX webpage. This is a preview tool that highlights the areas on the map where vector data overlap. To activate or deactivate this tool, click the “Highlight vector features” navigation button, which is the second from the left. By default, the preview tool will show all activated features on the map. To define different settings, for example an overlap, navigate to the toolbox panel, which is accessed through the top toolbar (red circle). Click on the “Select highlight mode” and choose the option of your choice. For instance, to see only the results of the overlap of all the data on the map, select “Highlight zones where all layers overlap”.

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This tool can also be coupled with the calculation of area extent of the overlapping features, simply tick the box “Enable overlap area estimation”.

Fig 24: MapX platform, highlight features tool

Fig 25: MapX platform, settings of the highlight features tool
**NB:** This calculation is based on an approximated geometry of the spatial layers that depends on the level of detail of the features that the user displays on map. It is intended for a preview use and **shouldn’t** be used for official reporting due to high potential approximation of the geometries of the data that are employed.

**The overlap set of tools**

⚠️ (for project publishers and administrators only, see user guide n°2 “Introduction to the project workspace”)

The second method is based on the broader ensemble of “Overlap utilities” (red box) that can be accessed from the Toolbox (red circle) area of each project. This method performs a precise calculation of the overlapping areas of different source layers and provide their area extent. Select the layers you wish to overlap (blue box). Select the country you wish to do the analysis. By ticking “Create a new source based on the result”, the geometries of the overlapping features can be saved into the project as a source layer and visualized with a view.

**NB:** The tool is currently under development and only offers limited usability compared to its potential use. In order to guarantee the stability of the platform, the tool will only be available for publishers and administrators of each project and will limit the number of layers to be overlapped to a maximum of 3.

![Fig 26: MapX platform, overlap tool](image-url)
Next steps

Congratulations! You now know how to access the MapX platform, interact with the data, and perform basic analysis. But there is still much to learn about MapX! If you would like to find out more about the MapX project workspace, check out the “Introduction to the Project Workspace” user guide. If you are working with a MapX project workspace and would like to start uploading and visualizing data in it, after you learn about project configuration, you can move onto our third user guide “Uploading spatial data into a MapX project”.

Questions?

Don’t hesitate to contact us at support@mapx.org