

Land Use and Land Cover

The terms “Land Use” and “Land Cover” are often used synonymously even though they are different, but closely related. “Land Use” specifically refers to the activity that occurs on a parcel of land. Those uses may include residential use, production of row crops or feed animals, industrial use and other activities. “Land Cover” refers to the characteristics of the vegetative material on the parcel. Those may include deciduous or evergreen forest, row crops, pasture, wetlands, and others. In analyzing a watershed, land cover is often used as an indicator of land use. The relationship is not perfect, but it is adequate for many analyses. Because land cover can be determined from processing of satellite imagery with a fairly high degree of accuracy, it is used in most regional studies that relate land use to environmental impacts.