

Just What You Need

Feature templates simplify editing workflow

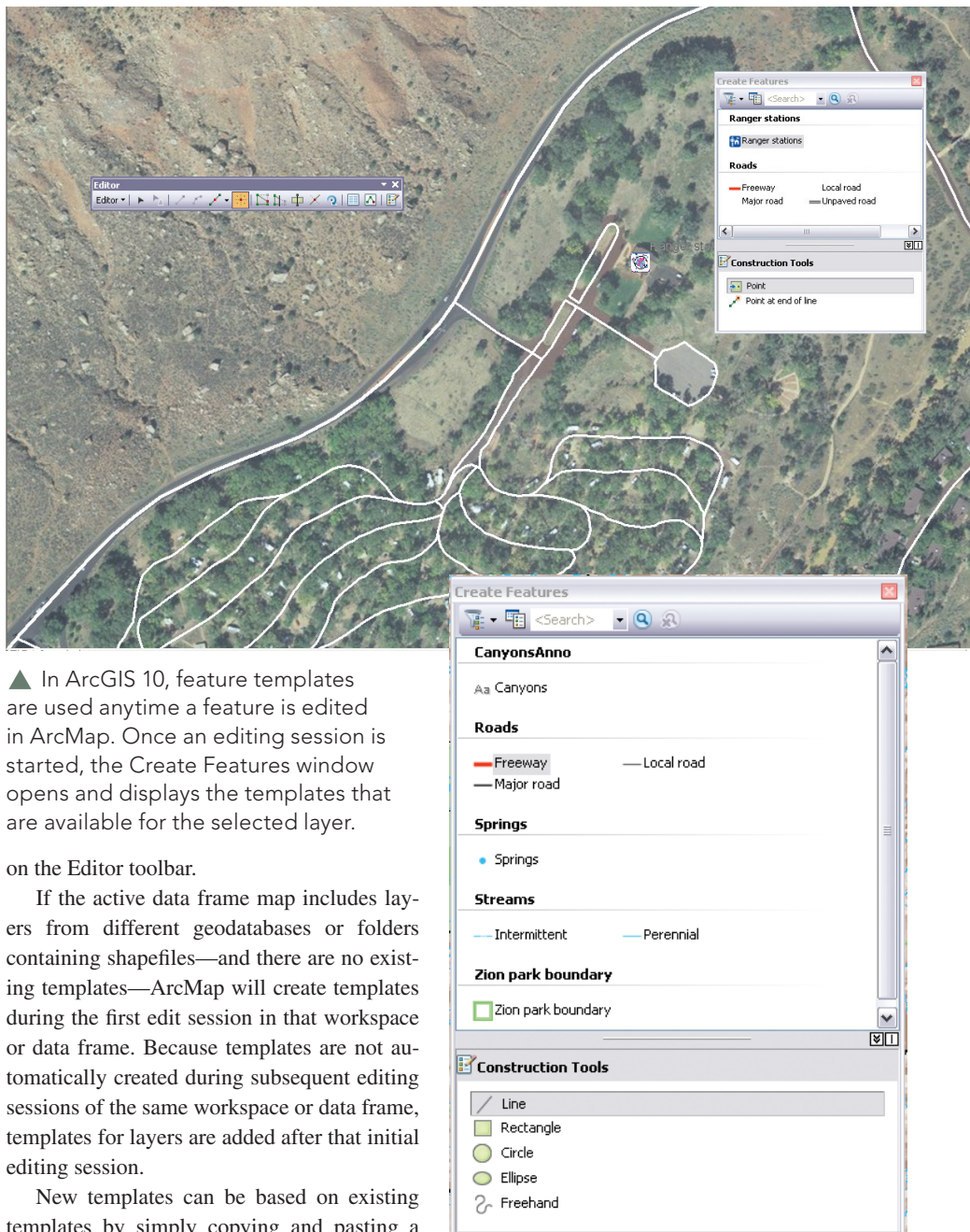
The feature template, new in ArcGIS 10, controls how new features are created by defining all the information required to create a feature. It controls the layer on which the feature will be stored, which attributes the feature will be created with, and the default tool that will be used to create the feature. Feature templates have names, descriptions, and tags so they can be more easily organized and located. This means fewer button clicks and simplified workflows that speed up editing tasks in ArcMap.

The Editor toolbar has been reconceptualized and reorganized. Some items previously accessed from the Task list have been converted to individual tools and placed on the Editor or Topology toolbar or in other parts of the interface so they could be combined with other tools that work in a similar environment. The Create Features window can be directly accessed via the Create Features button on the Editor toolbar.

Feature templates are used anytime features are edited and are based on the symbology of the layer, so there can be more than one feature template per layer. For example, when editing a roads layer, a new feature template would be created for each road type symbolized in that layer (e.g., freeway, major road, local road), because feature templates can have the same target layer property but different road type attributes. Using this example, creating a new feature using the freeway feature template would automatically assign the attribute for the road type as freeway, and the new feature would be correctly symbolized.

To use feature templates, simply start editing in ArcMap by right-clicking a layer in the table of contents and choosing Edit Features > Start Editing; the Create Features window opens.

With an editing session started, choose a feature template from the Create Features window and begin editing features by choosing a construction tool from the Create Features window. The bottom panel of the Create Features window lists the tools available to create features based on the feature type and feature template currently selected. If a point layer is being edited, only construction tools for creating points will be available. Save the edits by choosing Stop Editing from the Editor menu



▲ In ArcGIS 10, feature templates are used anytime a feature is edited in ArcMap. Once an editing session is started, the Create Features window opens and displays the templates that are available for the selected layer.

on the Editor toolbar.

If the active data frame map includes layers from different geodatabases or folders containing shapefiles—and there are no existing templates—ArcMap will create templates during the first edit session in that workspace or data frame. Because templates are not automatically created during subsequent editing sessions of the same workspace or data frame, templates for layers are added after that initial editing session.

New templates can be based on existing templates by simply copying and pasting a template and making slight changes to its properties. Carefully setting a feature template's default properties—particularly the default tool—will save time and improve accuracy.

Templates are synchronized with the table of contents. If a layer is not visible because it is turned off, does not satisfy a definition query, or is out of display scale perimeters, its feature template will not be available. Before creating a

▲ Feature templates can share the same target layer. The Roads layer has templates for Freeway, Major Road, and Local road features. Using the feature template for the Freeway layer, new features are automatically assigned freeway as road type and are correctly symbolized.

feature template, make sure that layer is visible.

Open the Organize Feature Template dialog box before creating a new template to determine if any templates already exist for this layer. This avoids duplication of existing templates. If ArcMap automatically created templates for layers that will not be used for editing, use the Organize Feature Templates window to identify and delete them so it will be easier to find the templates that will be used.

Give templates clear and descriptive names so they can be easily located. Also, enter a description of the template's contents and intended use. This description will appear as a ToolTip when the cursor hovers over a template in the dialog box.

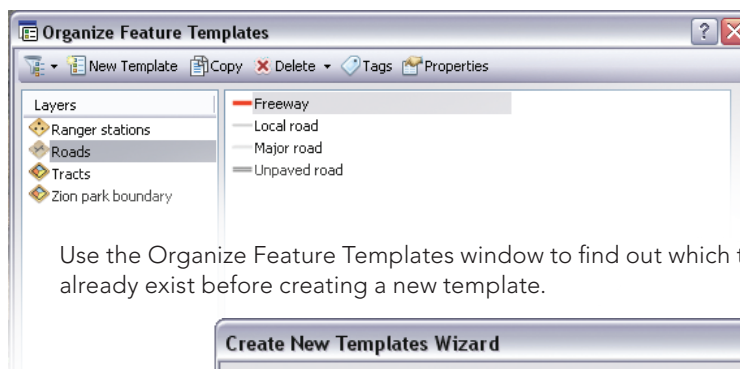
Tags (e.g., keywords, metadata) can also be added to templates to categorize them so they will be filtered in searches. This can also be used to limit the template list displayed in the Create Features dialog box.

Templates are saved in the map document (.mxd) and the layer file (.lyr). They are used only when a feature is being created. If the default attribute values of a template are subsequently changed, those changes are not retroactively applied to existing features that used the template.

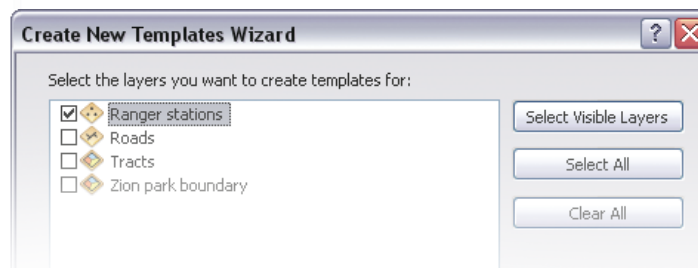
If a layer's symbology is significantly changed, a new template should be created for that layer. If rendering of several layers in a map document has been changed, deleting all the associated templates may be the easiest method for synchronizing the templates with the map document. Then, use the Create New Templates wizard to create templates only for layers that will be edited.

To avoid this situation, a better practice would be to carefully prepare the map and its symbology before editing and creating templates. If the map will be edited by others, either directly on the desktop or as a map served by ArcGIS Server, make sure layers and symbol labels are clearly named, because these names are used to identify feature templates in the Create Features window.

For more on editing in ArcGIS 10, see the ArcGIS Desktop Help available from arcgis.com.



Use the Organize Feature Templates window to find out which templates already exist before creating a new template.



Although ArcGIS automatically creates templates during the first edit session in a workspace or data frame, to create additional templates, use the Create New Templates wizard, which is available from the Organize Feature Templates window.


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