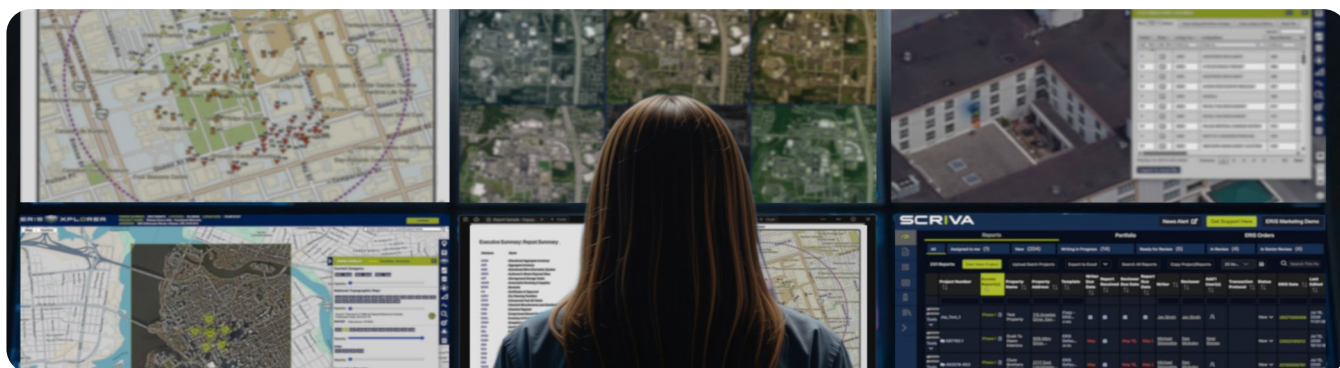


WHAT DOES “DEFENSIBLE DATA” REALLY MEAN IN ENVIRONMENTAL DUE DILIGENCE?

JULY 2026 | DIANA SACCONI, COO & CTO, ERIS



Defensible data. It's a term that's used frequently but rarely defined with much specificity.

In environmental due diligence, the difference isn't only about having access to 'data' — it's the breadth of data you receive AND most importantly, it's the rigor, processes, quality controls, and transparency behind it. After 27 years working with environmental data, here's what defensible data means to me...

- How the data is collected
- How it is processed
- How it is standardized
- How it is searched
- How it is quality controlled
- How its limitations are communicated

“...the difference isn't the data itself — it's the rigor, processes, quality controls, and transparency behind it.”

These are the factors that ultimately determine whether the data can be relied upon to support informed decisions.

At ERIS, our approach to defensible data is grounded in several key principles:

Investment and Expertise in Data Management – Data is at the core of our business. Our focus on the data function underpins these principles. ERIS' organizational structure is intentionally designed to support expertise in regulatory interpretation, data collection and loading, and the technology and processes required to manage information effectively and produce consistent reporting outcomes.

Reliable & Consistent Sourcing – The reliability of any report is dependent on the reliability of its source data. ERIS maintains relationships with authoritative data agencies and applies defined processes for evaluating new sources, source changes, and emerging contaminants. This approach helps ensure consistency, traceability, and continuity across our datasets.

Standardized Methodologies – Data processed using consistent, repeatable approaches to support reliable results. Standardization reduces variability and helps ensure records are interpreted and presented consistently across reports, reducing the risk that relevant information is missing due to inconsistent processing or methodology.

Accuracy & Quality Control – Robust QA/QC practices designed to reduce errors and increase accuracy. Quality assurance is not a single checkpoint, but an ongoing process involving validation, process monitoring, and continuous improvement that begins with data collection, through data processing and standardization, and to final report production and delivery.

Current & Maintained Data - And Data That No Longer Exists Anywhere Else – Continuous monitoring, updating, and validation as source information changes. Environmental due diligence relies on data being refreshed on scheduled cycles but also relies on historical data that we maintain but that the agencies no longer pass along with their updates. For example, agencies have had data losses and/or have their own retention rules that meet their needs but not the needs of environmental professionals fulfilling property risk assessments. Preserving this historical data, even though the agency may have removed it from its record, is critical to provide a complete picture of the property's history to prevent environmental risks being missed.

Transparency – Clear communication about data

coverage, historical depth, and limitations. Users should understand not only what information is included, but where gaps exist and how those limitations could affect decision-making. Ambiguity should never be mistaken for confidence.

Liability Reduction Through Better Decisions –

Confidence in the data you are provided. When environmental professionals can rely on the quality, consistency, and transparency of the underlying data, they are better positioned to identify potential risks, support due diligence conclusions, and reduce stakeholders' exposure to unforeseen environmental liabilities.

In environmental due diligence, defensibility isn't just about data access. It's about trust in the processes, standards, quality controls, and transparency behind the data.

The next time you hear someone refer to "defensible data," ask them what that actually means — and more importantly, ask how they support that claim.

Please reach out to [Diana](#) directly to discuss any aspects of this article. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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For over 27 years, Diana has helped guide the company's growth from a Canadian startup to a leading provider of environmental data and technology solutions supporting environmental due diligence across North America. Throughout her career, she has championed the creation of leading-edge products and scalable SaaS solutions, while leading day-to-day operations and continued growth and expansion. Diana is passionate about leveraging technology, data, and innovation to improve business performance, enhance customer experience, and support informed decision-making in environmental due diligence. She holds an Honours BA in Environment & Resource Management from the University of Toronto, a Certificate in Applied Digital Geography & GIS, and an Executive Leadership Certificate from the University of Toronto Rotman School of Management.

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