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# **QGIS User Guide**

***Release 3.4***

**QGIS Project**

**Sep 11, 2019**



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## Contents

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<b>1 Preamble</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3 Conventions</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1 GUI Conventions . . . . .	5
3.2 Text or Keyboard Conventions . . . . .	6
3.3 Platform-specific instructions . . . . .	6
<b>4 Features</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 View data . . . . .	7
4.2 Explore data and compose maps . . . . .	7
4.3 Create, edit, manage and export data . . . . .	8
4.4 Analyze data . . . . .	8
4.5 Publish maps on the Internet . . . . .	8
4.6 Extend QGIS functionality through plugins . . . . .	8
4.7 Python Console . . . . .	9
4.8 Known Issues . . . . .	9
<b>5 What's new in QGIS 3.4</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>6 Getting Started</b>	<b>13</b>
6.1 Installing QGIS . . . . .	13
6.2 Starting and stopping QGIS . . . . .	14
6.3 Sample Session: Loading raster and vector layers . . . . .	15
<b>7 Working with Project Files</b>	<b>21</b>
7.1 Introducing QGIS projects . . . . .	21
7.2 Generating output . . . . .	23
<b>8 QGIS GUI</b>	<b>25</b>
8.1 Menu Bar . . . . .	26
8.2 Panels and Toolbars . . . . .	35
8.3 Map View . . . . .	36
8.4 3D Map View . . . . .	37
8.5 Status Bar . . . . .	39
<b>9 QGIS Configuration</b>	<b>41</b>
9.1 Options . . . . .	41
9.2 Working with User Profiles . . . . .	61
9.3 Project Properties . . . . .	63
9.4 Customization . . . . .	69

9.5	Keyboard shortcuts . . . . .	70
9.6	Running QGIS with advanced settings . . . . .	71
<b>10</b>	<b>Working with Projections</b>	<b>77</b>
10.1	Overview of Projection Support . . . . .	77
10.2	Layer Coordinate Reference Systems . . . . .	77
10.3	Project Coordinate Reference Systems . . . . .	78
10.4	CRS Settings . . . . .	79
10.5	On The Fly (OTF) CRS Transformation . . . . .	80
10.6	Coordinate Reference System Selector . . . . .	80
10.7	Custom Coordinate Reference System . . . . .	80
10.8	Datum Transformations . . . . .	82
<b>11</b>	<b>General Tools</b>	<b>85</b>
11.1	Context help . . . . .	85
11.2	Panels . . . . .	85
11.3	Nesting Projects . . . . .	94
11.4	Working with the map canvas . . . . .	95
11.5	Interacting with features . . . . .	105
11.6	Save and Share Layer Properties . . . . .	111
11.7	Storing values in Variables . . . . .	114
11.8	Authentication . . . . .	114
11.9	Common widgets . . . . .	116
<b>12</b>	<b>Managing Data Source</b>	<b>123</b>
12.1	Opening Data . . . . .	123
12.2	Creating Layers . . . . .	140
12.3	Exploring Data Formats and Fields . . . . .	152
<b>13</b>	<b>Working with Vector Data</b>	<b>161</b>
13.1	The Symbol Library . . . . .	161
13.2	The Vector Properties Dialog . . . . .	173
13.3	Expressions . . . . .	240
13.4	Working with the Attribute Table . . . . .	260
13.5	Editing . . . . .	281
<b>14</b>	<b>Working with Raster Data</b>	<b>307</b>
14.1	Raster Properties Dialog . . . . .	307
14.2	Raster Analysis . . . . .	318
<b>15</b>	<b>Working with Mesh Data</b>	<b>323</b>
15.1	Working with Mesh Data . . . . .	323
<b>16</b>	<b>Laying out the maps</b>	<b>333</b>
16.1	Overview of the Print Layout . . . . .	333
16.2	Layout Items . . . . .	347
16.3	Creating an Output . . . . .	380
16.4	Creating a Report . . . . .	387
<b>17</b>	<b>Working with OGC Data</b>	<b>405</b>
17.1	QGIS as OGC Data Client . . . . .	405
17.2	QGIS as OGC Data Server . . . . .	415
<b>18</b>	<b>Working with GPS Data</b>	<b>457</b>
18.1	GPS Plugin . . . . .	457
18.2	Live GPS tracking . . . . .	461
<b>19</b>	<b>Authentication System</b>	<b>467</b>
19.1	Authentication System Overview . . . . .	467
19.2	User Authentication Workflows . . . . .	476

19.3 Security Considerations . . . . .	487
<b>20 GRASS GIS Integration . . . . .</b>	<b>491</b>
20.1 Demo dataset . . . . .	491
20.2 Loading GRASS raster and vector layers . . . . .	491
20.3 Importing data into a GRASS LOCATION via drag and drop . . . . .	492
20.4 Managing GRASS data in QGIS Browser . . . . .	492
20.5 GRASS Options . . . . .	492
20.6 Starting the GRASS plugin . . . . .	492
20.7 Opening GRASS mapset . . . . .	493
20.8 GRASS LOCATION and MAPSET . . . . .	493
20.9 Importing data into a GRASS LOCATION . . . . .	493
20.10 The GRASS vector data model . . . . .	496
20.11 Creating a new GRASS vector layer . . . . .	496
20.12 Digitizing and editing a GRASS vector layer . . . . .	497
20.13 The GRASS region tool . . . . .	499
20.14 The GRASS Toolbox . . . . .	499
<b>21 QGIS processing framework . . . . .</b>	<b>509</b>
21.1 Introduction . . . . .	509
21.2 Configuring the Processing Framework . . . . .	509
21.3 The Toolbox . . . . .	512
21.4 The history manager . . . . .	520
21.5 The graphical modeler . . . . .	521
21.6 The batch processing interface . . . . .	527
21.7 Using processing algorithms from the console . . . . .	529
21.8 Writing new Processing algorithms as Python scripts . . . . .	537
21.9 Configuring external applications . . . . .	542
<b>22 Plugins . . . . .</b>	<b>549</b>
22.1 QGIS Plugins . . . . .	549
22.2 Using QGIS Core Plugins . . . . .	553
22.3 QGIS Python console . . . . .	584
<b>23 Help and Support . . . . .</b>	<b>589</b>
23.1 Mailing lists . . . . .	589
23.2 IRC . . . . .	590
23.3 BugTracker . . . . .	590
23.4 Blog . . . . .	590
23.5 Plugins . . . . .	591
23.6 Wiki . . . . .	591
<b>24 Contributors . . . . .</b>	<b>593</b>
24.1 Authors . . . . .	593
24.2 Translators . . . . .	594
<b>25 Appendix . . . . .</b>	<b>597</b>
25.1 GNU General Public License . . . . .	597
25.2 GNU Free Documentation License . . . . .	600
<b>26 Literature and Web References . . . . .</b>	<b>607</b>



# CHAPTER 1

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## Preamble

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This document is the original user guide of the described software QGIS. The software and hardware described in this document are in most cases registered trademarks and are therefore subject to legal requirements. QGIS is subject to the GNU General Public License. Find more information on the QGIS homepage, <https://www.qgis.org>.

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### Links in this Document

This document contains internal and external links. Clicking on an internal link moves within the document, while clicking on an external link opens an internet address. In PDF form, internal and external links are shown in blue and are handled by the system browser. In HTML form, the browser displays and handles both identically.

### User, Installation and Coding Guide Authors and Editors:

The list of the persons who contribute on writing, reviewing and translating the following documentation is available at [Contributors](#).

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# CHAPTER 2

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## Foreword

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Welcome to the wonderful world of Geographical Information Systems (GIS)!

QGIS is an Open Source Geographic Information System. The project was born in May of 2002 and was established as a project on SourceForge in June of the same year. We've worked hard to make GIS software (which is traditionally expensive proprietary software) a viable prospect for anyone with basic access to a personal computer. QGIS currently runs on most Unix platforms, Windows, and macOS. QGIS is developed using the Qt toolkit (<https://www.qt.io>) and C++. This means that QGIS feels snappy and has a pleasing, easy-to-use graphical user interface (GUI).

QGIS aims to be a user-friendly GIS, providing common functions and features. The initial goal of the project was to provide a GIS data viewer. QGIS has reached the point in its evolution where it is being used by many for their daily GIS data-viewing needs. QGIS supports a number of raster and vector data formats, with new format support easily added using the plugin architecture.

QGIS is released under the GNU General Public License (GPL). Developing QGIS under this license means that you can inspect and modify the source code, and guarantees that you, our happy user, will always have access to a GIS program that is free of cost and can be freely modified. You should have received a full copy of the license with your copy of QGIS, and you also can find it in Appendix *GNU General Public License*.

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**Tip: Up-to-date Documentation**

The latest version of this document can always be found in the documentation area of the QGIS website at <https://www.qgis.org/en/docs/>.

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# CHAPTER 3

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## Conventions

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This section describes the uniform styles that will be used throughout this manual.

### 3.1 GUI Conventions

The GUI convention styles are intended to mimic the appearance of the GUI. In general, a style will reflect the non-hover appearance, so a user can visually scan the GUI to find something that looks like the instruction in the manual.

- Menu Options: *Layer* → *Add a Raster Layer* or *Settings* → *Toolbars* → *Digitizing*
- Tool:  *Add a Raster Layer*
- Button : *Save as Default*
- Dialog Box Title: *Layer Properties*
- Tab: *General*
- Checkbox:  *Render*
- Radio Button:  *Postgis SRID*  *EPSG ID*
- Select a number:  
- Select a string: 
- Browse for a file: ...
- Select a color: 
- Slider: 
- Input Text: 

A shadow indicates a clickable GUI component.

## 3.2 Text or Keyboard Conventions

This manual also includes styles related to text, keyboard commands and coding to indicate different entities, such as classes or methods. These styles do not correspond to the actual appearance of any text or coding within QGIS.

- Hyperlinks: <https://qgis.org>
- Keystroke Combinations: Press `Ctrl+B`, meaning press and hold the Ctrl key and then press the B key.
- Name of a File: `lakes.shp`
- Name of a Class: `NewLayer`
- Method: `classFactory`
- Server: `myhost.de`
- User Text: `qgis --help`

Lines of code are indicated by a fixed-width font:

```
PROJCS [ "NAD_1927_Albers",
  GEOGCS [ "GCS_North_American_1927",
```

## 3.3 Platform-specific instructions

GUI sequences and small amounts of text may be formatted inline: Click `File` *QGIS* → *Quit* to close *QGIS*. This indicates that on Linux, Unix and Windows platforms, you should click the `File` menu first, then `Quit`, while on macOS platforms, you should click the `QGIS` menu first, then `Quit`.

Larger amounts of text may be formatted as a list:

- Do this
- Do that
- Or do that

or as paragraphs:

Do this and this and this. Then do this and this and this, and this and this and this, and this and this and this.

Do that. Then do that and that and that, and that and that and that, and that and that and that, and that and that.

Screenshots that appear throughout the user guide have been created on different platforms; the platform is indicated by the platform-specific icon at the end of the figure caption.

# CHAPTER 4

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## Features

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QGIS offers many common GIS functions provided by core features and plugins. A short summary of six general categories of features and plugins is presented below, followed by first insights into the integrated Python console.

### 4.1 View data

You can view combinations of vector and raster data (in 2D or 3D) in different formats and projections without conversion to an internal or common format. Supported formats include:

- Spatially-enabled tables and views using PostGIS, SpatiaLite and MS SQL Spatial, Oracle Spatial, vector formats supported by the installed OGR library, including GeoPackage, ESRI Shapefile, MapInfo, SDTS, GML and many more. See section [Working with Vector Data](#).
- Raster and imagery formats supported by the installed GDAL (Geospatial Data Abstraction Library) library, such as GeoTIFF, ERDAS IMG, ArcInfo ASCII GRID, JPEG, PNG and many more. See section [Working with Raster Data](#).
- GRASS raster and vector data from GRASS databases (location/mapset). See section [GRASS GIS Integration](#).
- Online spatial data served as OGC Web Services, including WMS, WMTS, WCS, WFS, and WFS-T. See section [Working with OGC Data](#).

### 4.2 Explore data and compose maps

You can compose maps and interactively explore spatial data with a friendly GUI. The many helpful tools available in the GUI include:

- QGIS browser
- On-the-fly reprojection
- DB Manager
- Print layout
- Overview panel
- Spatial bookmarks

- Annotation tools
- Identify/select features
- Edit/view/search attributes
- Data-defined feature labeling
- Data-defined vector and raster symbology tools
- Atlas map composition with graticule layers
- North arrow, scale bar and copyright label for maps
- Support for saving and restoring projects

## 4.3 Create, edit, manage and export data

You can create, edit, manage and export vector and raster layers in several formats. QGIS offers the following:

- Digitizing tools for OGR-supported formats and GRASS vector layers
- Ability to create and edit multiple file formats and GRASS vector layers
- Georeferencer plugin to geocode images
- GPS tools to import and export GPX format, and convert other GPS formats to GPX or down/upload directly to a GPS unit (on Linux, usb: has been added to list of GPS devices)
- Support for visualizing and editing OpenStreetMap data
- Ability to create spatial database tables from files with the DB Manager plugin
- Improved handling of spatial database tables
- Tools for managing vector attribute tables
- Option to save screenshots as georeferenced images
- DXF-Export tool with enhanced capabilities to export styles and plugins to perform CAD-like functions

## 4.4 Analyze data

You can perform spatial data analysis on spatial databases and other OGR-supported formats. QGIS currently offers vector analysis, sampling, geoprocessing, geometry and database management tools. You can also use the integrated GRASS tools, which include the complete GRASS functionality of more than 400 modules. (See section [GRASS GIS Integration](#).) Or, you can work with the Processing Plugin, which provides a powerful geospatial analysis framework to call native and third-party algorithms from QGIS, such as GDAL, SAGA, GRASS and more. (See section [Introduction](#).)

## 4.5 Publish maps on the Internet

QGIS can be used as a WMS, WMTS, WMS-C or WFS and WFS-T client, and as a WMS, WCS or WFS server (see section [Working with OGC Data](#)). Additionally, you can publish your data on the Internet using a webserver with UMN MapServer or GeoServer installed.

## 4.6 Extend QGIS functionality through plugins

QGIS can be adapted to your special needs with the extensible plugin architecture and libraries that can be used to create plugins. You can even create new applications with C++ or Python!

## 4.6.1 Core Plugins

Core plugins include:

1. Coordinate Capture (capture mouse coordinates in different CRSs)
2. DB Manager (exchange, edit and view layers and tables from/to databases; execute SQL queries)
3. eVIS (visualize events)
4. Geometry Checker (check geometries for errors)
5. Georeferencer GDAL (add projection information to rasters using GDAL)
6. GPS Tools (load and import GPS data)
7. GRASS 7 (integrate GRASS GIS)
8. MetaSearch Catalogue Client (interacting with metadata catalog services supporting the OGC Catalog Service for the Web (CSW) standard)
9. Offline Editing (allow offline editing and synchronizing with databases)
10. Processing (the spatial data processing framework for QGIS)
11. Topology Checker (find topological errors in vector layers)

## 4.6.2 External Python Plugins

QGIS offers a growing number of external Python plugins that are provided by the community. These plugins reside in the official Plugins Repository and can be easily installed using the Python Plugin Installer. See Section [The Plugins Dialog](#).

## 4.7 Python Console

For scripting, it is possible to take advantage of an integrated Python console, which can be opened with: *Plugins → Python Console*. The console opens as a non-modal utility window. For interaction with the QGIS environment, there is the `qgis.utils iface` variable, which is an instance of `QgisInterface`. This interface provides access to the map canvas, menus, toolbars and other parts of the QGIS application. You can create a script, then drag and drop it into the QGIS window and it will be executed automatically.

For further information about working with the Python console and programming QGIS plugins and applications, please refer to [QGIS Python console](#) and PyQGIS-Developer-Cookbook.

## 4.8 Known Issues

### 4.8.1 Number of open files limitation

If you are opening a large QGIS project and you are sure that all layers are valid, but some layers are flagged as bad, you are probably faced with this issue. Linux (and other OSs, likewise) has a limit of opened files by process. Resource limits are per-process and inherited. The `ulimit` command, which is a shell built-in, changes the limits only for the current shell process; the new limit will be inherited by any child processes.

You can see all current `ulimit` info by typing:

```
$ ulimit -as
```

You can see the current allowed number of opened files per process with the following command on a console:

```
$ ulimit -Sn
```

To change the limits for an **existing session**, you may be able to use something like:

```
$ ulimit -Sn #number_of_allowed_open_files  
$ ulimit -Sn  
$ qgis
```

### To fix it forever

On most Linux systems, resource limits are set on login by the `pam_limits` module according to the settings contained in `/etc/security/limits.conf` or `/etc/security/limits.d/*.conf`. You should be able to edit those files if you have root privilege (also via sudo), but you will need to log in again before any changes take effect.

More info:

<https://www.cyberciti.biz/faq/linux-increase-the-maximum-number-of-open-files/>   <https://linuxaria.com/article/open-files-in-linux>

# CHAPTER 5

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## What's new in QGIS 3.4

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This release contains new features and extends the programmatic interface over previous versions. We recommend that you use this version over previous releases.

This release includes hundreds of bug fixes and many new features and enhancements over [QGIS 2.18](#) that will be described in this manual. You may also review the visual changelogs at <https://qgis.org/en/site/forusers/visualchangelogs.html>.



# CHAPTER 6

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## Getting Started

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This chapter provides a quick overview of installing QGIS, downloading QGIS sample data, and running a first simple session visualizing raster and vector data.

### 6.1 Installing QGIS

QGIS project provides different ways to install QGIS depending on your platform.

#### 6.1.1 Installing from binaries

Standard installers are available for  MS Windows and  macOS. Binary packages (rpm and deb) or software repositories are provided for many flavors of GNU/Linux .

For more information and instructions for your operating system check <https://download.qgis.org>.

#### 6.1.2 Installing from source

If you need to build QGIS from source, please refer to the installation instructions. They are distributed with the QGIS source code in a file called `INSTALL`. You can also find them online at <https://htmlpreview.github.io/?https://raw.githubusercontent.com/qgis/QGIS/master/doc/INSTALL.html>.

If you want to build a particular release and not the version in development, you should replace `master` with the release branch (commonly in the `release-X_Y` form) in the above-mentioned link (installation instructions may differ).

#### 6.1.3 Installing on external media

It is possible to install QGIS (with all plugins and settings) on a flash drive. This is achieved by defining a `-profiles-path` option that overrides the default `user profile` path and forces `QSettings` to use this directory, too. See section `System Settings` for additional information.

## 6.1.4 Downloading sample data

This user guide contains examples based on the QGIS sample dataset (also called the Alaska dataset).

 The Windows installer has an option to download the QGIS sample dataset. If checked, the data will be downloaded to your Documents folder and placed in a folder called GIS Database. You may use Windows Explorer to move this folder to any convenient location. If you did not select the checkbox to install the sample dataset during the initial QGIS installation, you may do one of the following:

- Use GIS data that you already have
- Download sample data from [https://qgis.org/downloads/data/qgis\\_sample\\_data.zip](https://qgis.org/downloads/data/qgis_sample_data.zip)
- Uninstall QGIS and reinstall with the data download option checked (only recommended if the above solutions are unsuccessful)

  For GNU/Linux and macOS, there are no dataset installation packages available as rpm, deb or dmg. To use the sample dataset, download it from [https://qgis.org/downloads/data/qgis\\_sample\\_data.zip](https://qgis.org/downloads/data/qgis_sample_data.zip) and unzip the archive on any convenient location on your system.

The Alaska dataset includes all GIS data that are used for the examples and screenshots in this user guide; it also includes a small GRASS database. The projection for the QGIS sample datasets is Alaska Albers Equal Area with units feet. The EPSG code is 2964.

```
PROJCS["Albers Equal Area",
GEOGCS["NAD27",
DATUM["North_American_Datum_1927",
SPHEROID["Clarke 1866", 6378206.4, 294.978698213898,
AUTHORITY["EPSG", "7008"]],
TOWGS84[-3, 142, 183, 0, 0, 0, 0],
AUTHORITY["EPSG", "6267"]],
PRIMEM["Greenwich", 0,
AUTHORITY["EPSG", "8901"]],
UNIT["degree", 0.0174532925199433,
AUTHORITY["EPSG", "9108"]],
AUTHORITY["EPSG", "4267"]],
PROJECTION["Albers_Conic_Equal_Area"],
PARAMETER["standard_parallel_1", 55],
PARAMETER["standard_parallel_2", 65],
PARAMETER["latitude_of_center", 50],
PARAMETER["longitude_of_center", -154],
PARAMETER["false_easting", 0],
PARAMETER["false_northing", 0],
UNIT["us_survey_feet", 0.3048006096012192]]
```

If you intend to use QGIS as a graphical front end for GRASS, you can find a selection of sample locations (e.g., Spearfish or South Dakota) at the official GRASS GIS website, <https://grass.osgeo.org/download/sample-data/>.

## 6.2 Starting and stopping QGIS

QGIS can be started like any other application on your computer. This means that you can launch QGIS by:

- using  the Applications menu,  the Start menu, or  the Dock
- double clicking the icon in your Applications folder or desktop shortcut
- double clicking an existing QGIS project file (with .qgz or .qgs extension). Note that this will also open the project.
- typing qgis in a command prompt (assuming that QGIS is added to your PATH or you are in its installation folder)

To stop QGIS, use:

- the menu option *Project → Exit QGIS* or use the shortcut **Ctrl+Q**
- *QGIS → Quit QGIS*, or use the shortcut **Cmd+Q**
- or use the red cross at the top-right corner of the main interface of the application.

## 6.3 Sample Session: Loading raster and vector layers

Now that you have *QGIS installed* and a *sample dataset* available, we will demonstrate a first sample session. In this example, we will visualize a raster and a vector layer. We will use:

- the *landcover* raster layer (`qgis_sample_data/raster/landcover.img`)
- and the *lakes* vector layer (`qgis_sample_data/gml/lakes.gml`)

Where `qgis_sample_data` represents the path to the unzipped dataset.

1. Start QGIS as seen in *Starting and stopping QGIS*.

2. To load the files in QGIS:

- (a) Click on the Open Data Source Manager icon. The Data Source Manager should open in Browser mode.
- (b) Browse to the folder `qgis_sample_data/raster/`
- (c) Select the ERDAS IMG file `landcover.img` and double-click it. The landcover layer is added in the background while the Data Source Manager window remains open.

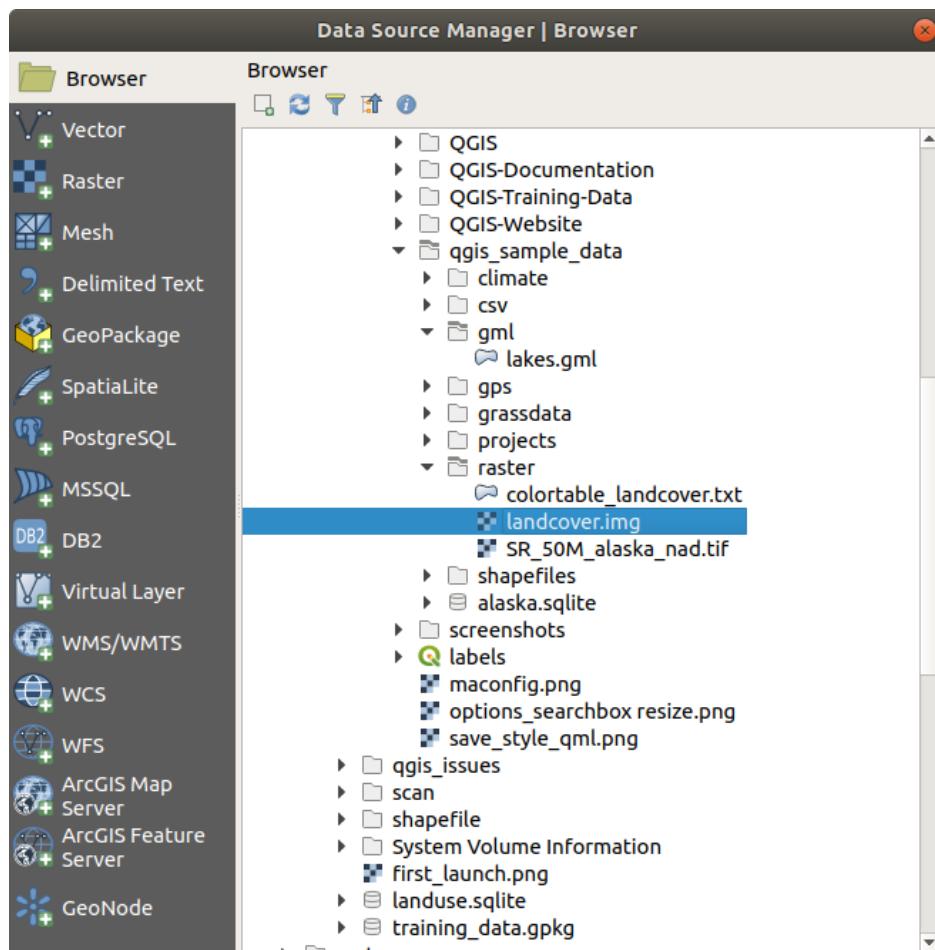


Fig. 6.1: Adding data to a new project in QGIS

- (d) To load the lakes data, browse to the folder `qgis_sample_data/gml/`, and double-click the `lakes.gml` file to open it.
- (e) A *Coordinate Reference System Selector* dialog opens. In the *Filter* menu, type `2964`, filtering the list of Coordinate Reference Systems below.

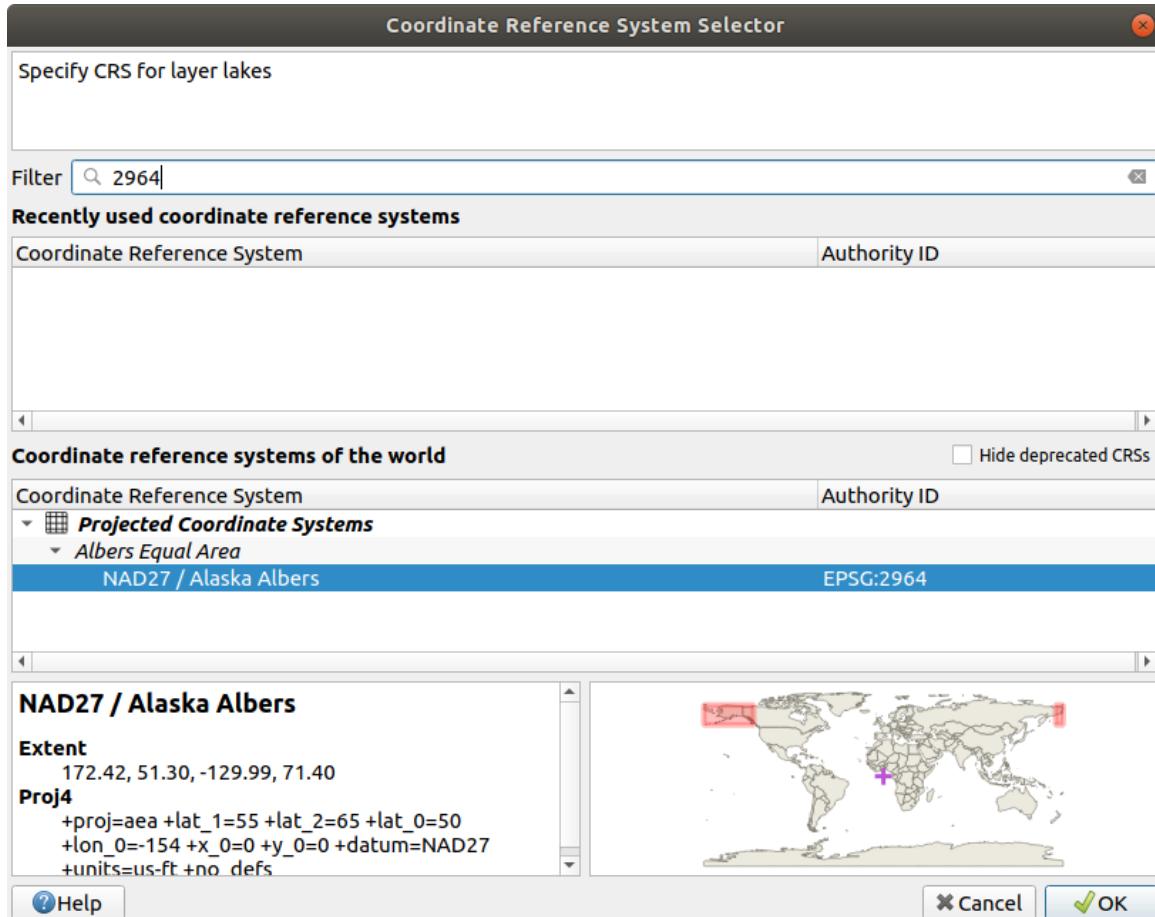


Fig. 6.2: Select the Coordinate Reference System of data

- (f) Select the *NAD27 / Alaska Albers* entry
- (g) Click *OK*
- (h) Close the Data Source Manager window

You now have the two layers available in your project in some random colours. Let's do some customization on the lakes layer.

1. Select the *Zoom In* tool on the *Navigation* toolbar
2. Zoom to an area with some lakes
3. Double-click the `lakes` layer in the map legend to open the *Properties* dialog
4. To change the lakes color:
  - (a) Click on the *Symbology* tab
  - (b) Select blue as fill color.
  - (c) Press *OK*. Lakes are now displayed in blue in the map canvas.
5. To display the name of the lakes:
  - (a) Reopen the `lakes` layer *Properties* dialog

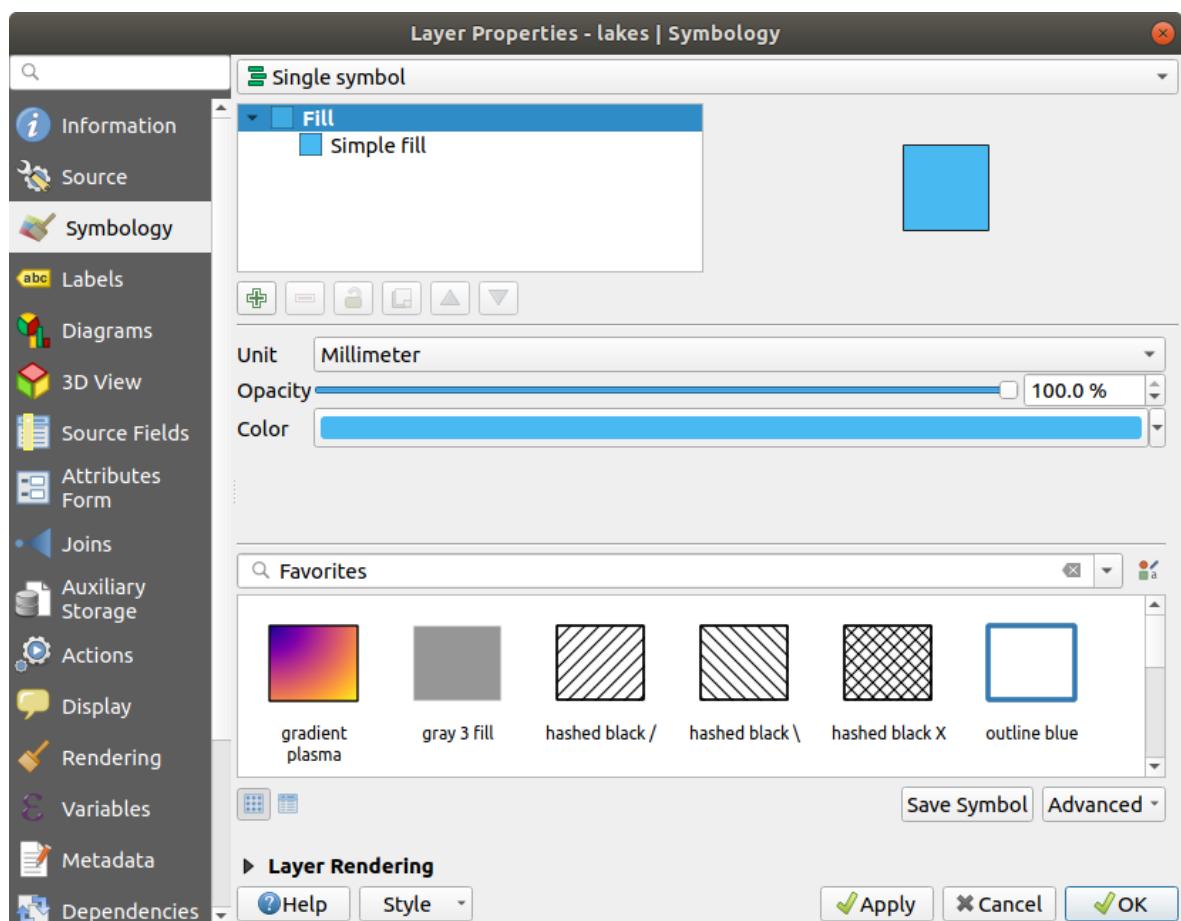


Fig. 6.3: Selecting Lakes color

- (b) Click on the *Labels* tab
- (c) Select *Single labels* in the drop-down menu to enable labeling.
- (d) From the *Label with* list, choose the NAMES field.

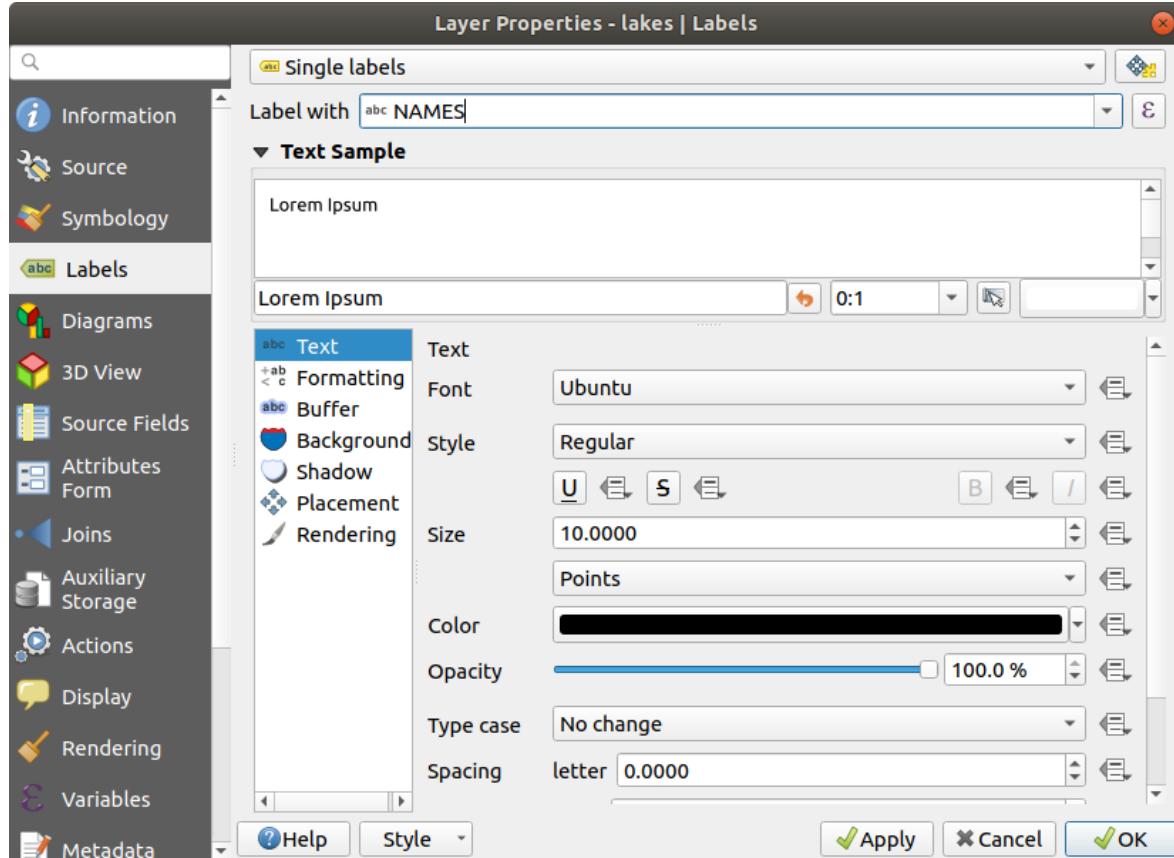


Fig. 6.4: Showing Lakes names

- (e) Press *Apply*. Names will now load over the boundaries.
- 6. You can improve readability of the labels by adding a white buffer around them:
  - (a) Click the *Buffer* tab in the list on the left
  - (b) Check  *Draw text buffer*
  - (c) Choose 3 as buffer size
  - (d) Click *Apply*
  - (e) Check if the result looks good, and update the value if needed.
  - (f) Finally click *OK* to close the *Layer Properties* dialog and apply the changes.

Let's now add some decorations in order to shape the map and export it out of QGIS:

1. Select *View* → *Decorations* → *Scale Bar* menu
2. In the dialog that opens, check  *Enable Scale Bar* option
3. Customize the options of the dialog as you want
4. Press *Apply*
5. Likewise, from the decorations menu, add more items (north arrow, copyright...) to the map canvas with custom properties.

6. Click *Project* → *Import/Export* →  *Export Map to Image...*
7. Press *Save* in the opened dialog
8. Select a file location, a format and confirm by pressing *Save* again.
9. Press *Project* →  *Save...* to store your changes as a *.qgz* project file.

That's it! You can see how easy it is to visualize raster and vector layers in QGIS, configure them and generate your map in an image format you can use in other softwares. Let's move on to learn more about the available functionality, features and settings, and how to use them.

---

**Note:** To continue learning QGIS through step-by-step exercises, follow the Training manual.

---



# CHAPTER 7

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## Working with Project Files

---

### 7.1 Introducing QGIS projects

The state of your QGIS session is called a project. QGIS works on one project at a time. Any settings can be project-specific or an application-wide default for new projects (see section [Options](#)). QGIS can save the state of your workspace into a project file using the menu options *Project* →  *Save* or *Project* →  *Save As...*.

---

**Note:** If the project you loaded has been modified in the meantime, by default, QGIS will ask you if you want to overwrite the changes. This behavior is controlled by the  *Prompt to save project and data source changes when required* setting under *Settings* → *Options* → *General* menu.

---

You can load existing projects into QGIS using *Project* →  *Open...*, *Project* → *New from template* or *Project* → *Open Recent* →.

At startup, a list of recently opened projects is displayed, including screenshots, names and file paths (for up to ten projects). This is a handy quick way to access recently used projects. Double-click an entry in this list to open the corresponding project. If you instead want to create a new project, just add any layer and the list disappears, giving way to the map canvas.

If you want to clear your session and start fresh, go to *Project* →  *New*. This will prompt you to save the existing project if changes have been made since it was opened or last saved.

The information saved in a project file includes:

- Layers added
- Which layers can be queried
- Layer properties, including symbolization and styles
- Projection for the map view
- Last viewed extent
- Print layouts
- Print layout elements with settings
- Print layout atlas settings

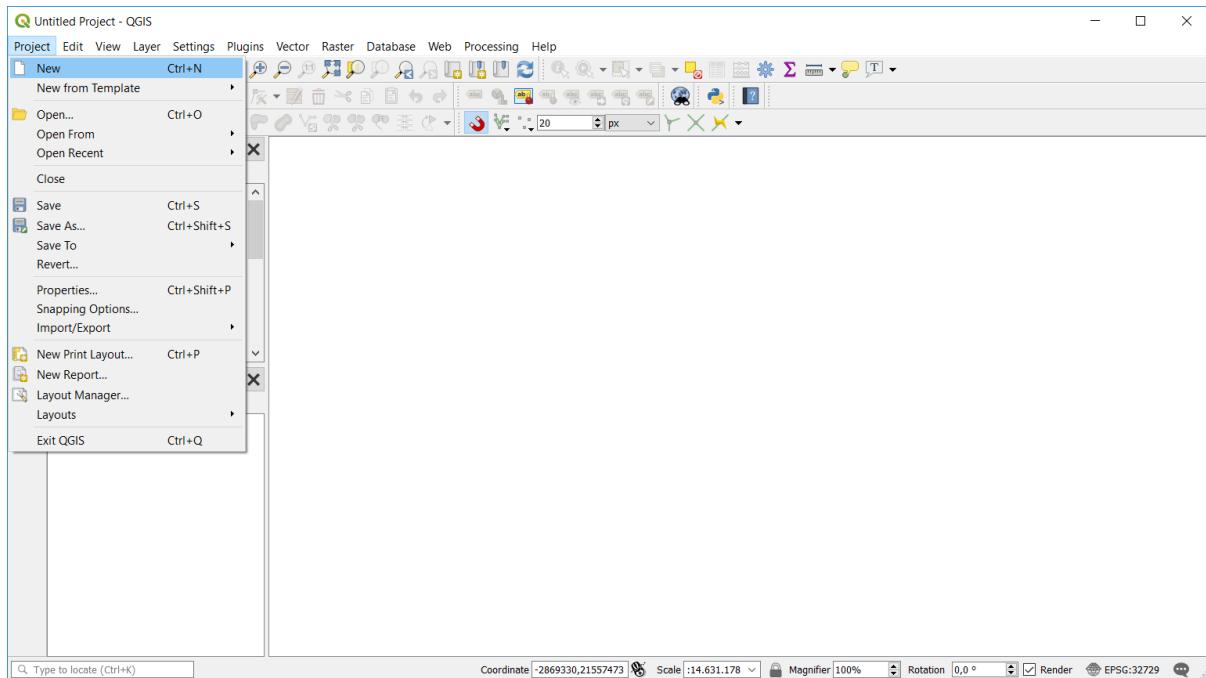


Fig. 7.1: Starting a new project in QGIS

- Digitizing settings
- Table Relations
- Project Macros
- Project default styles
- Plugins settings
- QGIS Server settings from the OWS settings tab in the Project properties
- Queries stored in the DB Manager

The project file is saved in XML format. This means that it is possible to edit the file outside of QGIS if you know what you are doing. The file format has been updated several times compared with earlier QGIS versions. Project files from older QGIS versions may not work properly any more.

---

**Note:** By default, QGIS will warn you of version differences. This behavior is controlled in *Settings → Options*. On the *General* tab, you should tick  *Warn when opening a project file saved with an older version of QGIS*.

---

Whenever you save a `.qgs` project in QGIS, a backup of the project file is created with the extension `.qgs~` and stored in the same directory as the project file.

The extension for QGIS projects is `.qgs` but when saving from QGIS, the default is to save using a compressed format with the `.qgz` extension. The `.qgs` file is embedded in the `.qgz` file (a zip archive), together with its associated sqlite database (`.qgd`) for *auxiliary data*. You can get to these files by unzipping.

---

**Note:** A zipped project may be particularly useful with the *Auxiliary Storage Properties* mechanism in order to embed the underlying database.

---

Projects can also be saved/loaded to/from a PostgreSQL database using the following Project menu items:

- *Project → Open from*
- *Project → Save to*

Both menu items have a sub-menu with a list of extra project storage implementations (currently just PostgreSQL). Clicking the action will open a dialog to pick a PostgreSQL connection name, schema name and project.

Projects stored in PostgreSQL can be also loaded from the QGIS browser panel (the entries are located within the schema they are stored in), either by double-clicking them or by dragging them to the map canvas.

## 7.2 Generating output

There are several ways to generate output from your QGIS session. We have already discussed saving as a project file in [Introducing QGIS projects](#). Other ways to produce output files are:

- Creating images: *Project → Import/Export →  Export Map to Image...* opens a file dialog where you select the name, path and type of image (PNG, JPG and many other formats). This will also create a world file (with extension PNGW or JPGW) that is saved in the same folder as your image. This world file is used to georeference the image.
- Exporting to DXF files: *Project → Import/Export → Export Project to DXF...* opens a dialog where you can define the ‘Symbology mode’, the ‘Symbology scale’ and vector layers you want to export to DXF. Through the ‘Symbology mode’ symbols from the original QGIS Symbology can be exported with high fidelity (see section [Creating new DXF files](#)).
- Designing print maps: *Project →  New Print Layout...* opens a dialog where you can layout and print the current map canvas (see section [Laying out the maps](#)).



# CHAPTER 8

## QGIS GUI

When QGIS starts, a GUI displays as shown in the figure below (the numbers 1 through 5 in yellow circles are discussed below).

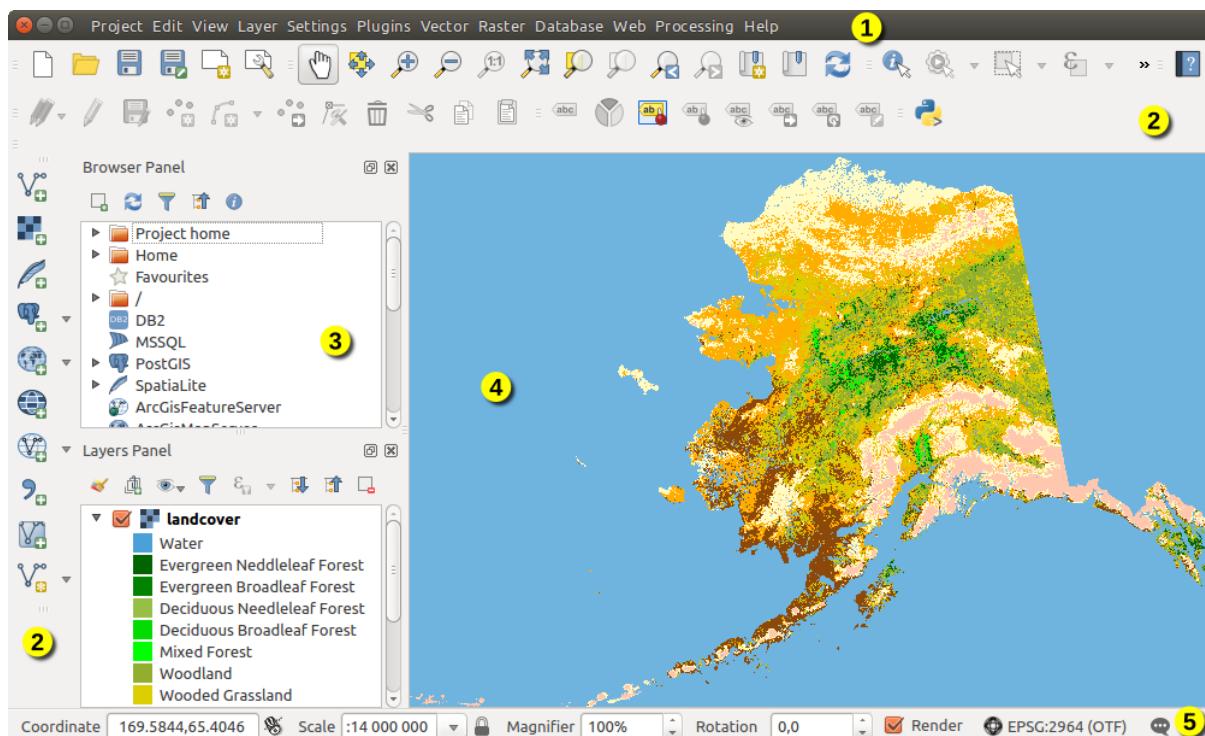


Fig. 8.1: QGIS GUI with Alaska sample data

**Note:** Your window decorations (title bar, etc.) may appear different depending on your operating system and window manager.

The QGIS GUI is divided into five components:

1. Menu Bar

2. Toolbars
3. Panels
4. Map View
5. Status Bar

Scroll down for detailed explanations of these features.

## 8.1 Menu Bar

The Menu bar provides access to various QGIS functions using a standard hierarchical menu. The Menus, their options, associated icons and keyboard shortcuts are outlined below. These keyboard shortcuts are the default settings, but they can be reconfigured using the *Keyboard Shortcuts* via the *Settings → menu*.

Most Menu options have a corresponding tool and vice-versa. However, the Menus are not organized exactly like the toolbars. The locations of menu options in the toolbars are indicated below in the table. Plugins may add new options to Menus. For more information about tools and toolbars, see [Toolbars](#).

---

**Note:** QGIS is a cross-platform application - while the same tools are available on all platforms, they may be placed in different menus on different operating systems. The lists below show the most common locations including known variations.

---

### 8.1.1 Project

The *Project* menu provides access and exit points of the *project file*. It provides you with tools to:

- Create a *New* file from scratch or using another project file as a template (see [Project files options](#) for template configuration)
- *Open...* a project file from either a file browser or PostgreSQL database
- *Close* a project or revert it to its last saved state
- *Save* a project in *.qgs* or *.qgz* file format, either as a file or within a PostgreSQL database
- Export the map canvas to different formats or use a *print layout* for more complex output
- Set the project properties and the snapping options when editing layers.

Menu Option	Shortcut	Tool-bar	Reference
 New	Ctrl+N	Project	<i>Introducing QGIS projects</i>
New from template →			<i>Introducing QGIS projects</i>
 Open...	Ctrl+O	Project	<i>Introducing QGIS projects</i>
Open from → PostgreSQL			<i>Introducing QGIS projects</i>
Open Recent →			<i>Introducing QGIS projects</i>
Close			<i>Introducing QGIS projects</i>
 Save	Ctrl+S	Project	<i>Introducing QGIS projects</i>
 Save As...	Ctrl+Shift+S	Project	<i>Introducing QGIS projects</i>
Save to → PostgreSQL			<i>Introducing QGIS projects</i>
Revert...			
Properties...	Ctrl+Shift+P		<i>Project Properties</i>
Snapping Options...			<i>Setting the Snapping Tolerance and Search Radius</i>
Import/Export →			
 Export Map to Image...			<i>Generating output</i>
 Export Map to PDF...			<i>Generating output</i>
Export Project to DXF...			<i>Generating output</i>
Import Layers from DWG/DXF...			<i>Importing a DXF or DWG file</i>
 New Print Layout...	Ctrl+P	Project	<i>Laying out the maps</i>
 New Report...			<i>Laying out the maps</i>
 Layout Manager...		Project	<i>Laying out the maps</i>
Layouts →			<i>Laying out the maps</i>
 Exit QGIS	Ctrl+Q		

Under  macOS, the *Exit QGIS* command corresponds to *QGIS → Quit QGIS* (Cmd+Q).

### 8.1.2 Edit

The *Edit* menu provides most of the native tools needed to edit layer attributes or geometry (see *Editing* for details).

Menu Option	Shortcut	Toolbar	Reference
 Undo	Ctrl+Z	Digitizing	<i>Undo and Redo</i>
 Redo	Ctrl+Shift+Z	Digitizing	<i>Undo and Redo</i>
 Cut Features	Ctrl+X	Digitizing	<i>Cutting, Copying and Pasting Features</i>
 Copy Features	Ctrl+C	Digitizing	<i>Cutting, Copying and Pasting Features</i>
 Paste Features	Ctrl+V	Digitizing	<i>Cutting, Copying and Pasting Features</i>
Paste Features as →			<i>Working with the Attribute Table</i>

Continued on next page

Table 8.1 – continued from previous page

Menu Option	Shortcut	Toolbar	Reference
Select →		Attributes	<a href="#">Selecting features</a>
Add Record	Ctrl+.	Digitizing	
Add Point Feature	Ctrl+.	Digitizing	<a href="#">Adding Features</a>
Add Line Feature	Ctrl+.	Digitizing	<a href="#">Adding Features</a>
Add Polygon Feature	Ctrl+.	Digitizing	<a href="#">Adding Features</a>
Add Circular String		Shape Digitizing	<a href="#">Add Circular string</a>
Add Circular String by Radius		Shape Digitizing	<a href="#">Add Circular string</a>
Add Circle →		Shape Digitizing	
Add Rectangle →		Shape Digitizing	
Add Regular Polygon →		Shape Digitizing	
Add Ellipse →		Shape Digitizing	
Move Feature(s)		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Move Feature(s)</a>
Copy and Move Feature(s)		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Move Feature(s)</a>
Delete Selected		Digitizing	<a href="#">Deleting Selected Features</a>
Modify Attributes of Selected Features		Digitizing	<a href="#">Editing attribute values</a>
Rotate Feature(s)		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Rotate Feature(s)</a>
Simplify Feature		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Simplify Feature</a>
Add Ring		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Add Ring</a>
Add Part		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Add Part</a>
Fill Ring		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Fill Ring</a>
Delete Ring		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Delete Ring</a>
Delete Part		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Delete Part</a>
Reshape Features		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Reshape Features</a>
Offset Curve		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Offset Curves</a>
Split Features		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Split Features</a>
Split Parts		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Split parts</a>
Merge Selected Features		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Merge selected features</a>
Merge Attributes of Selected Features		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Merge attributes of selected features</a>
Vertex Tool (All Layers)		Digitizing	<a href="#">Vertex tool</a>
Vertex Tool (Current Layer)		Digitizing	<a href="#">Vertex tool</a>
Rotate Point Symbols		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Rotate Point Symbols</a>
Offset Point Symbols		Advanced Digitizing	<a href="#">Offset Point Symbols</a>
Reverse Line		Advanced Digitizing	

Tools dependent on the selected layer geometry type i.e. point, polyline or polygon, are activated accordingly:

Menu Option	Point	Polyline	Polygon
<i>Move Feature(s)</i>			
<i>Copy and Move Feature(s)</i>			

### 8.1.3 View

The map is rendered in map views. You can interact with these views using the *View* tools (see [Working with the map canvas](#) for more information). For example, you can:

- Create new 2D or 3D map views next to the main map canvas
- [Zoom or pan](#) to any place
- Query displayed features' attributes or geometry
- Enhance the map view with preview modes, annotations or decorations
- Access any panel or toolbar

The menu also allows you to reorganize the QGIS interface itself using actions like:

- *Toggle Full Screen Mode*: covers the whole screen while hiding the title bar
- *Toggle Panel Visibility*: shows or hides enabled *panels* - useful when digitizing features (for maximum canvas visibility) as well as for (projected/recordered) presentations using QGIS' main canvas
- *Toggle Map Only*: hides panels, toolbars, menus and status bar and only shows the map canvas. Combined with the full screen option, it makes your screen display only the map

Menu Option	Shortcut	Toolbar	Reference
New Map View	Ctrl+M	<i>Map Navigation</i>	
New 3D Map View	Ctrl+Shift+M		<i>3D Map View</i>
Pan Map		<i>Map Navigation</i>	<a href="#">Zooming and Panning</a>
Pan Map to Selection		<i>Map Navigation</i>	
Zoom In	Ctrl+Alt++	<i>Map Navigation</i>	<a href="#">Zooming and Panning</a>
Zoom Out	Ctrl+Alt+-	<i>Map Navigation</i>	<a href="#">Zooming and Panning</a>
Identify Features	Ctrl+Shift+I	<i>Attributes</i>	<a href="#">Identifying Features</a>
Measure →		<i>Attributes</i>	<a href="#">Measuring</a>
Statistical Summary		<i>Attributes</i>	<a href="#">Statistical Summary Panel</a>
Zoom Full	Ctrl+Shift+F	<i>Map Navigation</i>	
Zoom To Layer		<i>Map Navigation</i>	
Zoom To Selection	Ctrl+J	<i>Map Navigation</i>	
Zoom Last		<i>Map Navigation</i>	
Zoom Next		<i>Map Navigation</i>	
Zoom To Native Resolution (100%)		<i>Map Navigation</i>	
<i>Decorations</i> →			<a href="#">Decorations</a>
<i>Preview mode</i> →			
Show Map Tips		<i>Attributes</i>	<a href="#">Display Properties</a>

Continued on next page

Table 8.2 – continued from previous page

Menu Option	Shortcut	Toolbar	Reference
 New Bookmark...	Ctrl+B	<i>Map Navigation</i>	<i>Spatial Bookmarks</i>
 Show Bookmarks	Ctrl+Shift+B	<i>Map Navigation</i>	<i>Spatial Bookmarks</i>
 Refresh	F5	<i>Map Navigation</i>	
 Show All Layers	Ctrl+Shift+U		<i>Layers Panel</i>
 Hide All Layers	Ctrl+Shift+H		<i>Layers Panel</i>
 Show Selected Layers			<i>Layers Panel</i>
 Hide Selected Layers			<i>Layers Panel</i>
 Hide Deselected Layers			<i>Layers Panel</i>
Panels →			<i>Panels and Toolbars</i>
Toolbars →			<i>Panels and Toolbars</i>
<i>Toggle Full Screen Mode</i>	F11		
<i>Toggle Panel Visibility</i>	Ctrl+Tab		
<i>Toggle Map Only</i>	Ctrl+Shift+Tab		

Under  Linux KDE, *Panels →*, *Toolbars →* and *Toggle Full Screen Mode* are in the *Settings* menu.

### 8.1.4 Layer

The *Layer* menu provides a large set of tools to *create* new data sources, *add* them to a project or *save modifications* to them. Using the same data sources, you can also:

- *Duplicate* a layer, generating a copy you can modify within the same project
- *Copy* and *Paste* layers or groups from one project to another as a new instance whose features and properties you can modify independently of the original
- or *Embed Layers and Groups...* from another project, as read-only copies which you cannot modify (see *Nesting Projects*)

The *Layer* menu also contains tools to configure, copy or paste layer properties (style, scale, CRS...).

Menu Option	Shortcut	Toolbar	Reference
 <i>Data Source Manager</i>	Ctrl+L	<i>Data Source Manager</i>	<i>Opening Data</i>
<i>Create Layer →</i>		<i>Data Source Manager</i>	<i>Creating new vector layers</i>
<i>Add Layer →</i>		<i>Data Source Manager</i>	<i>Opening Data</i>
<i>Embed Layers and Groups...</i>			<i>Nesting Projects</i>
<i>Add from Layer Definition File...</i>			<i>Layer definition file</i>
 <i>Copy Style</i>			<i>Save and Share Layer Properties</i>
 <i>Paste Style</i>			<i>Save and Share Layer Properties</i>
 <i>Copy Layer</i>			
 <i>Paste Layer/Group</i>			
 <i>Open Attribute Table</i>	F6	<i>Attributes</i>	<i>Working with the Attribute Table</i>
 <i>Toggle Editing</i>		<i>Digitizing</i>	<i>Digitizing an existing layer</i>
 <i>Save Layer Edits</i>		<i>Digitizing</i>	<i>Saving Edited Layers</i>
 <i>Current Edits →</i>		<i>Digitizing</i>	<i>Saving Edited Layers</i>
<i>Save As...</i>			<i>Creating new layers from an existing layer</i>
<i>Save As Layer Definition File...</i>			<i>Layer definition file</i>
 <i>Remove Layer/Group</i>	Ctrl+D		
 <i>Duplicate Layer(s)</i>			
<i>Set Scale Visibility of Layer(s)</i>			
<i>Set CRS of Layer(s)</i>	Ctrl+Shift+C		
<i>Set Project CRS from Layer</i>			
<i>Layer Properties...</i>			<i>The Vector Properties Dialog</i>
 <i>Filter...</i>	Ctrl+F		<i>Query Builder</i>
 <i>Labeling</i>			<i>Labels Properties</i>
 <i>Show in Overview</i>			<i>Overview Panel</i>
 <i>Show All in Overview</i>			<i>Overview Panel</i>
 <i>Hide All from Overview</i>			<i>Overview Panel</i>

## 8.1.5 Settings

Menu Option	Reference
<i>User Profiles →</i>	<i>Working with User Profiles</i>
 <i>Style Manager...</i>	<i>The Style Manager</i>
 <i>Custom Projections...</i>	<i>Custom Coordinate Reference System</i>
 <i>Keyboard Shortcuts...</i>	<i>Keyboard shortcuts</i>
 <i>Interface Customization...</i>	<i>Customization</i>
 <i>Options...</i>	<i>Options</i>

Under  Linux KDE, you'll find more tools in the *Settings* menu such as *Panels* →, *Toolbars* → and *Toggle Full Screen Mode*.

### 8.1.6 Plugins

Menu Option	Shortcut	Toolbar	Reference
 <i>Manage and Install Plugins...</i>			<i>The Plugins Dialog</i>
 <i>Python Console</i>	Ctrl+Alt+P	<i>Plugins</i>	<i>QGIS Python console</i>

When starting QGIS for the first time not all core plugins are loaded.

### 8.1.7 Vector

This is what the *Vector* menu looks like if all core plugins are enabled.

Menu Option	Shortcut	Toolbar	Reference
 <i>Coordinate Capture</i>		<i>Vector</i>	<i>Coordinate Capture Plugin</i>
 <i>Check Geometries...</i>		<i>Vector</i>	<i>Geometry Checker Plugin</i>
 <i>GPS Tools</i>		<i>Vector</i>	<i>GPS Plugin</i>
 <i>Topology Checker</i>		<i>Vector</i>	<i>Topology Checker Plugin</i>
<i>Geoprocessing Tools</i> →	Alt+O + G		<i>Configuring the Processing Framework</i>
<i>Geometry Tools</i> →	Alt+O + E		<i>Configuring the Processing Framework</i>
<i>Analysis Tools</i> →	Alt+O + A		<i>Configuring the Processing Framework</i>
<i>Data Management Tools</i> →	Alt+O + D		<i>Configuring the Processing Framework</i>
<i>Research Tools</i> →	Alt+O + R		<i>Configuring the Processing Framework</i>

By default, QGIS adds *Processing* algorithms to the *Vector* menu, grouped by sub-menus. This provides shortcuts for many common vector-based GIS tasks from different providers. If not all these sub-menus are available, enable the Processing plugin in *Plugins* → *Manage and Install Plugins...*.

Note that the list of the *Vector* menu tools can be extended with any Processing algorithms or some external *plugins*.

### 8.1.8 Raster

This is what the *Raster* menu looks like if all core plugins are enabled.

Menu Option	Toolbar	Reference
 <i>Raster calculator...</i>		<i>Raster Calculator</i>
<i>Align Raster...</i>		<i>Raster Alignment</i>
<i>Analysis →</i>		<i>Configuring the Processing Framework</i>
<i>Projection →</i>		<i>Configuring the Processing Framework</i>
<i>Miscellaneous →</i>		<i>Configuring the Processing Framework</i>
<i>Extraction →</i>		<i>Configuring the Processing Framework</i>
<i>Conversion →</i>		<i>Configuring the Processing Framework</i>
 <i>Georeferencer</i>	<i>Raster</i>	<i>Georeferencer Plugin</i>

By default, QGIS adds *Processing* algorithms to the *Raster* menu, grouped by sub-menus. This provides a shortcut for many common raster-based GIS tasks from different providers. If not all these sub-menus are available, enable the Processing plugin in *Plugins → Manage and Install Plugins...*.

Note that the list of the *Raster* menu tools can be extended with any Processing algorithms or some external *plugins*.

### 8.1.9 Database

This is what the *Database* menu looks like if all the core plugins are enabled. If no database plugins are enabled, there will be no *Database* menu.

Menu Option	Toolbar	Reference
 <i>DB Manager</i>	<i>Database</i>	<i>DB Manager Plugin</i>
<i>eVis →</i>	<i>Database</i>	<i>eVis Plugin</i>
<i>Offline Editing →</i>	<i>Database</i>	<i>Offline Editing Plugin</i>

When starting QGIS for the first time not all core plugins are loaded.

### 8.1.10 Web

This is what the *Web* menu looks like if all the core plugins are enabled. If no web plugins are enabled, there will be no *Web* menu.

Menu Option	Toolbar	Reference
 <i>MetaSearch</i>	<i>Web</i>	<i>MetaSearch Catalog Client</i>

When starting QGIS for the first time not all core plugins are loaded.

### 8.1.11 Processing

Menu Option	Shortcut	Reference
 <i>Toolbox</i>	Ctrl+Alt+T	<i>The Toolbox</i>
 <i>Graphical Modeler...</i>	Ctrl+Alt+M	<i>The graphical modeler</i>
 <i>History...</i>	Ctrl+Alt+H	<i>The history manager</i>
 <i>Results Viewer</i>	Ctrl+Alt+R	<i>Configuring external applications</i>
 <i>Edit Features In-Place</i>		<i>The Processing in-place layer modifier</i>

When starting QGIS for the first time not all core plugins are loaded.

### 8.1.12 Help

Menu Option	Shortcut	Toolbar
 <i>Help Contents</i>	F1	<i>Help</i>
<i>API Documentation</i>		
<i>Report an Issue</i>		
<i>Need commercial support?</i>		
 <i>QGIS Home Page</i>	Ctrl+H	
 <i>Check QGIS Version</i>		
 <i>About</i>		
 <i>QGIS Sponsors</i>		

### 8.1.13 QGIS

This menu is only available under  macOS and contains some OS related commands.

Menu Option	Shortcut	Reference
<i>Preferences</i>		
<i>About QGIS</i>		
<i>Hide QGIS</i>		
<i>Show All</i>		
<i>Hide Others</i>		
<i>Quit QGIS</i>	Cmd+Q	

*Preferences* and *About QGIS* are the same commands as *Settings → Options* and *Help → About*. *Quit QGIS* corresponds to *Project → Exit QGIS* under the other platforms.

## 8.2 Panels and Toolbars

From the *View* menu (or  *Settings*), you can switch QGIS widgets (*Panels* →) and toolbars (*Toolbars* →) on and off. To (de)activate any of them, right-click the menu bar or toolbar and choose the item you want. Each panel or toolbar can be moved and placed wherever you feel comfortable within the QGIS interface. The list can also be extended with the activation of *Core or external plugins*.

### 8.2.1 Toolbars

The toolbar provides access to most of the same functions as the menus, plus additional tools for interacting with the map. Each toolbar item has pop-up help available. Hover your mouse over the item and a short description of the tool's purpose will be displayed.

Every toolbar can be moved around according to your needs. Additionally, they can be switched off using the right mouse button context menu, or by holding the mouse over the toolbars.

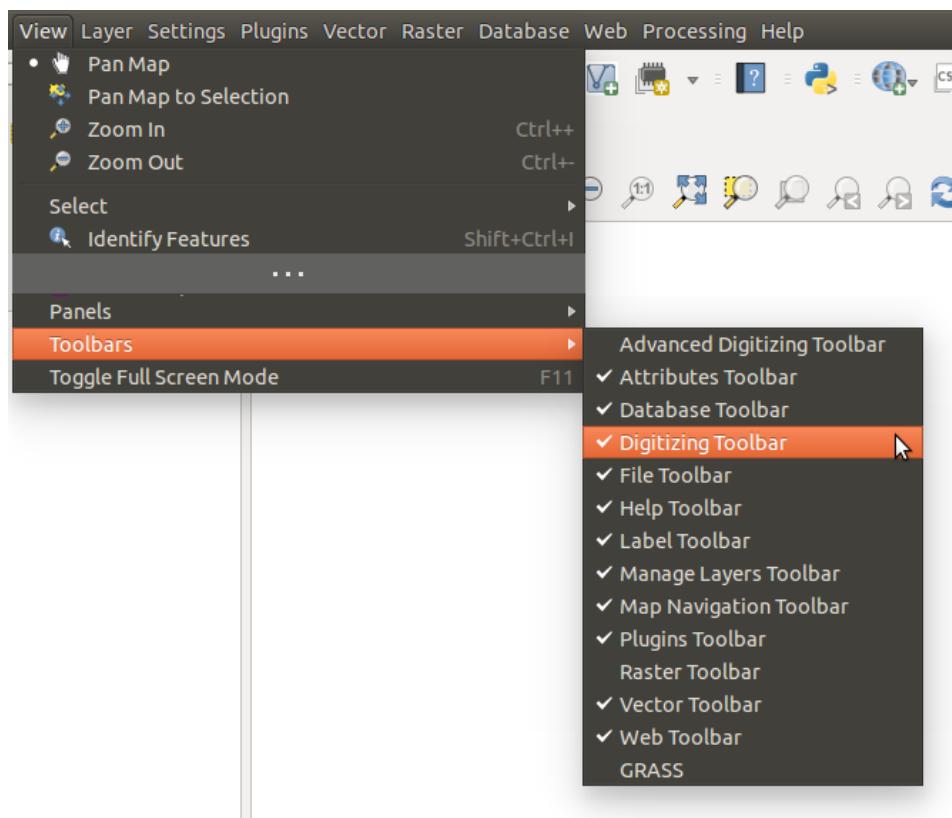


Fig. 8.2: The Toolbars menu

#### Tip: Restoring toolbars

If you have accidentally hidden a toolbar, you can get it back by choosing menu option *View* → *Toolbars* → (or  *Settings* → *Toolbars* →). If for some reason a toolbar (or any other widget) totally disappears from the interface, you'll find tips to get it back at [restoring initial GUI](#).

### 8.2.2 Panels

Besides toolbars, QGIS provides many panels to work with by default. Panels are special widgets that you can interact with (selecting options, checking boxes, filling values...) to perform more complex tasks.

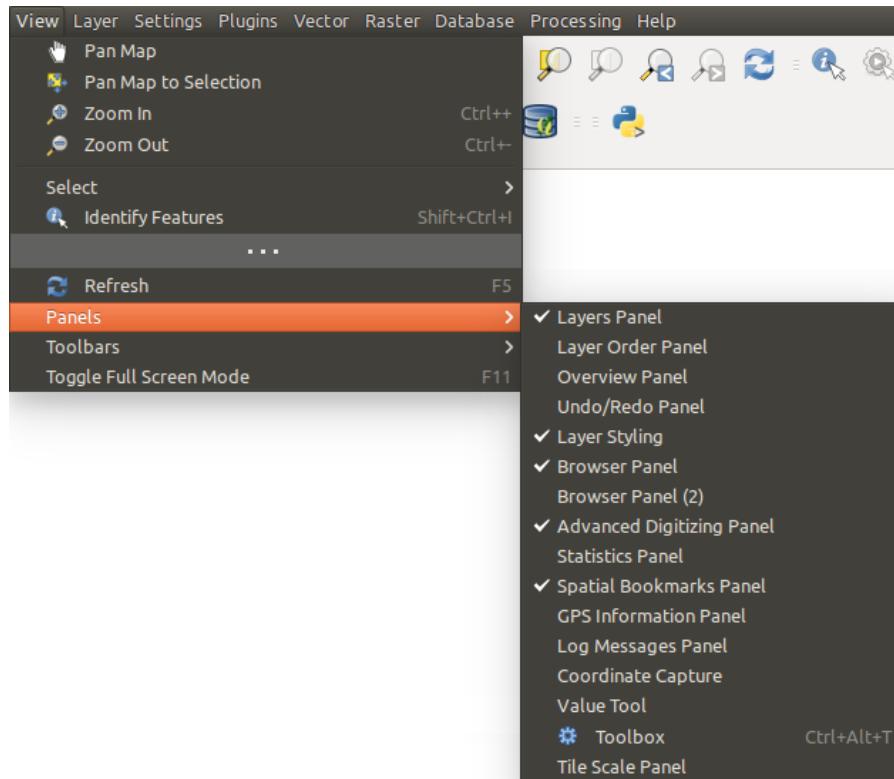


Fig. 8.3: The Panels menu

Below are listed default panels provided by QGIS:

- the *Layers Panel*
- the *Browser Panel*
- the *Advanced Digitizing Panel*
- the *Spatial Bookmarks Panel*
- the *GPS Information Panel*
- the *Tile Scale Panel*
- the *Identify Panel*
- the *User Input Panel*
- the *Layer Order Panel*
- the *Layer Styling Panel*
- the *Statistical Summary Panel*
- the *Overview Panel*
- the *Log Messages Panel*
- the *Undo/Redo Panel*
- the *Processing Toolbox*

## 8.3 Map View

Also called **Map canvas**, this is the “business end” of QGIS — maps are displayed in this area. The map displayed in this window will depend on the vector and raster layers you have chosen to load.

When you add a layer (see e.g. [Opening Data](#)), QGIS automatically looks for its Coordinate Reference System (CRS) and zooms to its extent if you start with a blank QGIS project. The layer's CRS is then applied to the project. If there are already layers in the project, and if the new layer has the same CRS as the project, its features falling in the current map canvas extent will be visualized. If the new layer is in a different CRS from the project's, you must *Enable on-the-fly CRS transformation* from the *Project → Properties... → CRS* (see [On The Fly \(OTF\) CRS Transformation](#)). The added layer should now be visible if data are available in the current view extent.

The map view can be panned, shifting the display to another region of the map, and it can be zoomed in and out. Various other operations can be performed on the map as described in the [Toolbars](#) section. The map view and the legend are tightly bound to each other — the maps in the view reflect changes you make in the legend area.

---

#### **Tip: Zooming the Map with the Mouse Wheel**

You can use the mouse wheel to zoom in and out on the map. Place the mouse cursor inside the map area and roll the wheel forward (away from you) to zoom in and backwards (towards you) to zoom out. The zoom is centered on the mouse cursor position. You can customize the behavior of the mouse wheel zoom using the *Map tools* tab under the *Settings → Options* menu.

---

#### **Tip: Panning the Map with the Arrow Keys and Space Bar**

You can use the arrow keys to pan the map. Place the mouse cursor inside the map area and click on the arrow keys to pan left, right, up and down. You can also pan the map by moving the mouse while holding down the space bar or the middle mouse button (or holding down the mouse wheel).

---

## 8.4 3D Map View

3D visualization support is offered through the 3D map view.

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**Note:** 3D visualization in QGIS requires a recent version of the QT library (5.8 or later).

---

You create and open a 3D map view via *View →  New 3D Map View*. A floating QGIS panel will appear. The panel can be docked.

To begin with, the 3D map view has the same extent and view as the 2D canvas. There is no dedicated toolbar for navigation in the 3D canvas. You zoom in/out and pan in the same way as in the main 2D canvas. You can also zoom in and out by dragging the mouse down/up with the right mouse button pressed.

Navigation options for exploring the map in 3D:

- Tilt and rotate
  - To tilt the terrain (rotating it around a horizontal axis that goes through the center of the window):
    - \* Drag the mouse forward/backward with the middle mouse button pressed
    - \* Press `Shift` and drag the mouse forward/backward with the left mouse button pressed
    - \* Press `Shift` and use the up/down keys
  - To rotate the terrain (around a vertical axis that goes through the center of the window):
    - \* Drag the mouse right/left with the middle mouse button pressed
    - \* Press `Shift` and drag the mouse right/left with the left mouse button pressed
    - \* Press `Shift` and use the left/right keys
- Change the camera angle

- Pressing **Ctrl** and dragging the mouse with the left mouse button pressed changes the camera angle corresponding to directions of dragging
- Pressing **Ctrl** and using the arrow keys turns the camera up, down, left and right
- Move the camera up/down
  - Pressing the **Page Up/Page Down** keys moves the terrain up and down, respectively
- Zoom in and out
  - Dragging the mouse with the right mouse button pressed will zoom in (drag down) and out (drag up)
- Move the terrain around
  - Dragging the mouse with the left mouse button pressed moves the terrain around
  - Using the up/down/left/right keys moves the terrain closer, away, right and left, respectively

To reset the camera view, click the  **Zoom Full** button on the top of the 3D canvas panel.

#### 8.4.1 Terrain Configuration

A terrain raster provides the elevation. This raster layer must contain a band that represents elevation. To select the terrain raster:

1. Click the  **Configure...** button at the top of the 3D canvas panel to open the *3D configuration* window
2. Choose the terrain raster layer in the *Elevation* pull-down menu

In the 3D Configuration window there are various other options to fine-tune the 3D scene. Before diving into the details, it is worth noting that terrain in a 3D view is represented by a hierarchy of terrain tiles and as the camera moves closer to the terrain, existing tiles that do not have sufficient detail are replaced by smaller tiles with more details. Each tile has mesh geometry derived from the elevation raster layer and texture from 2D map layers.

Configuration options and their meaning:

- *Elevation*: Raster to be used for generation of terrain.
- *Vertical scale*: Scale factor for vertical axis. Increasing the scale will exaggerate the terrain.
- *Tile resolution*: How many samples from the terrain raster layer to use for each tile. A value of 16px means that the geometry of each tile will be built from 16x16 elevation samples. Higher numbers create more detailed terrain tiles at the expense of increased rendering complexity.
- *Skirt height*: Sometimes it is possible to see small cracks between tiles of the terrain. Raising this value will add vertical walls (“skirts”) around terrain tiles to hide the cracks.
- *Map tile resolution*: Width and height of the 2D map images used as textures for the terrain tiles. 256px means that each tile will be rendered into an image of 256x256 pixels. Higher numbers create more detailed terrain tiles at the expense of increased rendering complexity.
- *Max. screen error*: Determines the threshold for swapping terrain tiles with more detailed ones (and vice versa) - i.e. how soon the 3D view will use higher quality tiles. Lower numbers mean more details in the scene at the expense of increased rendering complexity.
- *Max. ground error*: The resolution of the terrain tiles at which dividing tiles into more detailed ones will stop (splitting them would not introduce any extra detail anyway). This value limits the depth of the hierarchy of tiles: lower values make the hierarchy deep, increasing rendering complexity.
- *Zoom labels*: Shows the number of zoom levels (depends on the map tile resolution and max. ground error).
- *Show labels*: Toggles map labels on/off
- *Show map tile info*: Include border and tile numbers for the terrain tiles (useful for troubleshooting terrain issues)

- *Show bounding boxes*: Show 3D bounding boxes of the terrain tiles (useful for troubleshooting terrain issues)
- *Show camera's view center*

## 8.4.2 3D vector layers

A vector layer with elevation values can be shown in the 3D map view by checking *Enable 3D Renderer* in the *3D View* section of the vector layer properties. A number of options are available for controlling the rendering of the 3D vector layer.

## 8.5 Status Bar

The status bar provides you with general information about the map view and processed or available actions, and offers you tools to manage the map view. On the left side of the status bar, the locator bar, a quick search widget, helps you find and run any feature or options in QGIS. Simply type text associated with the item you are looking for (name, tag, keyword...) and you get a list that updates as you write. You can also limit the search scope using *locator filters*. Click the  button to select any of them and press the *Configure* entry for global settings.

In the area next to the locator bar, a summary of actions you've carried out will be shown when needed (such as selecting features in a layer, removing layer) or a long description of the tool you are hovering over (not available for all tools).

In case of lengthy operations, such as gathering of statistics in raster layers, executing Processing algorithms or rendering several layers in the map view, a progress bar is displayed in the status bar.

 The *Coordinate* option shows the current position of the mouse, following it while moving across the map view. You can set the units (and precision) in the *Project → Properties... → General* tab. Click on the small button at the left of the textbox to toggle between the Coordinate option and the  *Extents* option that displays the coordinates of the current bottom-left and top-right corners of the map view in map units.

Next to the coordinate display you will find the *Scale* display. It shows the scale of the map view. There is a scale selector, which allows you to choose between *predefined and custom scales*.

On the right side of the scale display, press the  button to lock the scale to use the magnifier to zoom in or out. The magnifier allows you to zoom in to a map without altering the map scale, making it easier to tweak the positions of labels and symbols accurately. The magnification level is expressed as a percentage. If the *Magnifier* has a level of 100%, then the current map is not magnified. Additionally, a default magnification value can be defined within *Settings → Options → Rendering → Rendering behavior*, which is very useful for high-resolution screens to enlarge small symbols.

To the right of the magnifier tool you can define a current clockwise rotation for your map view in degrees.

On the right side of the status bar, there is a small checkbox which can be used temporarily to prevent layers being rendered to the map view (see section *Rendering*).

To the right of the render functions, you find the  *EPSG:code* button showing the current project CRS. Clicking on this opens the *Project Properties* dialog and lets you apply another CRS to the map view.

The  *Messages* button next to it opens the *Log Messages Panel* which has information on underlying processes (QGIS startup, plugins loading, processing tools...)

Depending on the *Plugin Manager settings*, the status bar can sometimes show icons to the right to inform you about availability of  new or  upgradeable plugins. Click the icon to open the Plugin Manager dialog.

---

### Tip: Calculating the Correct Scale of Your Map Canvas

When you start QGIS, the default CRS is WGS 84 (EPSG 4326) and units are degrees. This means that QGIS will interpret any coordinate in your layer as specified in degrees. To get correct scale values, you can either manually change this setting in the *General* tab under *Project → Properties...* (e.g. to meters), or you can use the  EPSG:code icon seen above. In the latter case, the units are set to what the project projection specifies (e.g., +units=us-ft).

Note that CRS choice on startup can be set in *Settings → Options → CRS*.

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# CHAPTER 9

## QGIS Configuration

QGIS is highly configurable. Through the *Settings* menu, it provides different tools to:

- *Options...*: set global *options* to apply in different areas of the software. These preferences are saved in the active *User profile* settings and applied by default whenever you open a new project with this profile. Also, they can be overridden during each QGIS session by the *project properties* (accessible under *Project* menu).
- *Interface Customization...*: configure the *application interface*, hiding dialogs or tools you may not need.
- *Keyboard Shortcuts...*: define your own set of *keyboard shortcuts*.
- *Style Manager...*: create and manage *symbols and color ramps*.
- *Custom Projections...*: create your own *coordinate reference systems*.

### 9.1 Options

Some basic options for QGIS can be selected using the *Options* dialog. Select the menu option *Settings* → *Options*. You can modify the options according to your needs. Some of the changes may require a restart of QGIS before they will be effective.

The tabs where you can customize your options are described below.

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#### Note: Plugins can embed their settings within the Options dialog

While only Core settings are presented below, note that this list can be extended by *installed plugins* implementing their own options into the standard Options dialog. This avoids each plugin having their own config dialog with extra menu items just for them...

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#### 9.1.1 General Settings

##### Locale Settings

- Check  *Override system locale* if you want to use a language different from your system's and pick the replacement in *Locale to use instead* combobox.
- Information about active system locale are provided.

### Application

- Select the *Style (QGIS restart required)*  and choose between 'Oxygen', 'Windows', 'Motif', 'CDE', 'Plastique' and 'Cleanlooks';
- Define the *UI theme*  . It can be 'default' or 'Night Mapping';
- Define the *Icon size*  ;
- Define the *Font* and its *Size*. The font can be  *Qt default* or a user-defined one;
- Change the *Timeout for timed messages or dialogs*  ;
- *Hide splash screen at startup*;
- *Check QGIS version at startup* to keep you informed if a newer version is released;
- *Modeless data source manager dialog* to keep the *data source manager* dialog opened and allow interaction with QGIS interface while adding layers to project;
- *Use native color chooser dialogs* (see *Color Selector*).

### Project files

- *Open project on launch*  (choose between 'New', 'Most recent', 'Welcome Page', and 'Specific'). When choosing 'Specific' use the ... button to define the project to use by default. The 'Welcome Page' displays a list of recent projects with screenshot.
- *Create new project from default project*. You have the possibility to press on *Set current project as default* or on *Reset default*. You can browse through your files and define a directory where you find your user-defined project templates. This will be added to *Project → New From Template*. If you first activate  *Create new project from default project* and then save a project in the project templates folder.
- *Prompt to save project and data source changes when required* to avoid losing changes you made.
- *Prompt for confirmation when a layer is to be removed*
- *Warn when opening a project file saved with an older version of QGIS*. You can always open projects created with older version of QGIS but once the project is saved, trying to open with older release may fail because of features not available in that version.
- *Enable macros*  . This option was created to handle macros that are written to perform an action on project events. You can choose between 'Never', 'Ask', 'For this session only' and 'Always (not recommended)'.

## 9.1.2 System Settings

### SVG paths

Add or Remove *Path(s) to search for Scalable Vector Graphic (SVG) symbols*. These SVG files are then available to symbolize features or decorate your map composition.

### Plugin paths

Add or Remove *Path(s) to search for additional C++ plugin libraries*.

### Documentation paths

Add or Remove *Documentation Path(s)* to use for QGIS help. By default, a link to the official online User Manual corresponding to the version being used is added. You can however add other links and prioritize them from top to bottom: each time you click on a *Help* button in a dialog, the topmost link is checked and if no corresponding page is found, the next one is tried, and so on.

**Note:** Documentation is versioned and translated only for QGIS Long Term Releases (LTR), meaning that if you are running a regular release (eg, QGIS 3.0), the help button will by default open the next LTR manual page (ie. 3.4 LTR), which may contain description of features in newer releases (3.2 and 3.4). If no LTR documentation is available then the *testing* doc, with features from newer and development versions, is used.

## QSettings

It helps you *Reset user interface to default settings (restart required)* if you made any *customization*.

## Environment

System environment variables can now be viewed, and many configured, in the **Environment** group (see [figure\\_environment\\_variables](#)). This is useful for platforms, such as Mac, where a GUI application does not necessarily inherit the user's shell environment. It's also useful for setting and viewing environment variables for the external tool sets controlled by the Processing toolbox (e.g., SAGA, GRASS), and for turning on debugging output for specific sections of the source code.

- *Use custom variables (restart required - include separators)*. You can *Add* and *Remove* variables. Already-defined environment variables are displayed in *Current environment variables*, and it's possible to filter them by activating  *Show only QGIS-specific variables*.

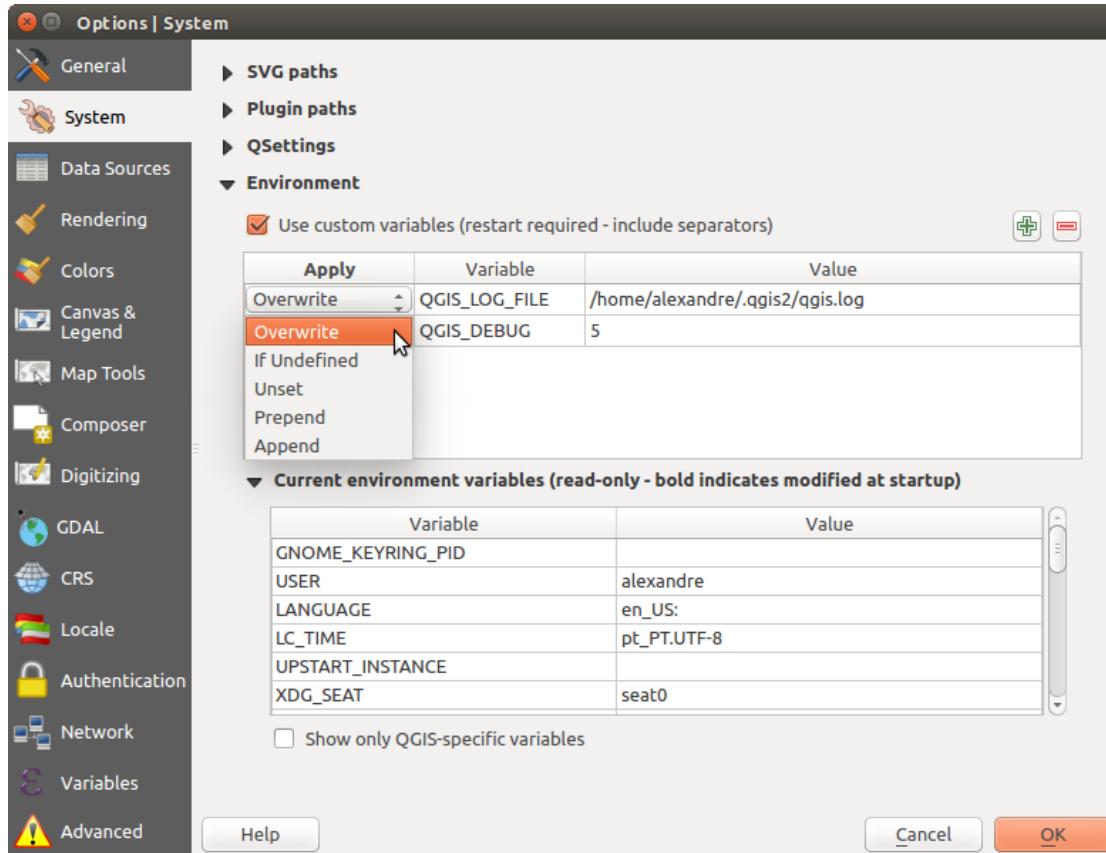


Fig. 9.1: System environment variables in QGIS

### 9.1.3 CRS Settings

#### Default CRS for new projects

There is an option to automatically set new project's CRS:

- *Use CRS from first layer added*: the CRS of the project is turned to match the CRS of the first layer loaded into it
- *Use a default CRS*: a preselected CRS is applied by default to any new project and is left unchanged when adding layers to the project.

The choice will be saved for use in subsequent QGIS sessions and in any case, the Coordinate Reference System of the project can still be overridden from the *Project → Project properties → CRS* tab.

#### CRS for new layers

This area allows you to define the action to take when a new layer is created, or when a layer without a CRS is loaded.

- *Prompt for CRS*
- *Use project CRS*
- *Use a default CRS*

#### Default datum transformations

In this group, you can control whether reprojecting layers to another CRS should be:

- automatically processed using QGIS default transformations settings;
- and/or more controlled by you with custom preferences such as:
  - *Ask for datum transformation if several are available*
  - a predefined list of datum transformations to apply by default. See [Datum Transformations](#) for more details.

---

**Note:** For more information on how QGIS handles layers projection, please read the dedicated section at [Working with Projections](#).

---

### 9.1.4 Data Sources Settings

#### Feature attributes and table

- *Open attribute table in a dock window*
- *Copy features as* ‘Plain text, no geometry’, ‘Plain text, WKT geometry’, or ‘GeoJSON’ when pasting features in other applications.
- *Attribute table behavior*  : set filter on the attribute table at the opening. There are three possibilities: ‘Show all features’, ‘Show selected features’ and ‘Show features visible on map’.
- *Default view*: define the view mode of the attribute table at every opening. It can be ‘Remember last view’, ‘Table view’ or ‘Form view’.
- *Attribute table row cache*  . This row cache makes it possible to save the last loaded N attribute rows so that working with the attribute table will be quicker. The cache will be deleted when closing the attribute table.
- *Representation for NULL values*. Here, you can define a value for data fields containing a NULL value.

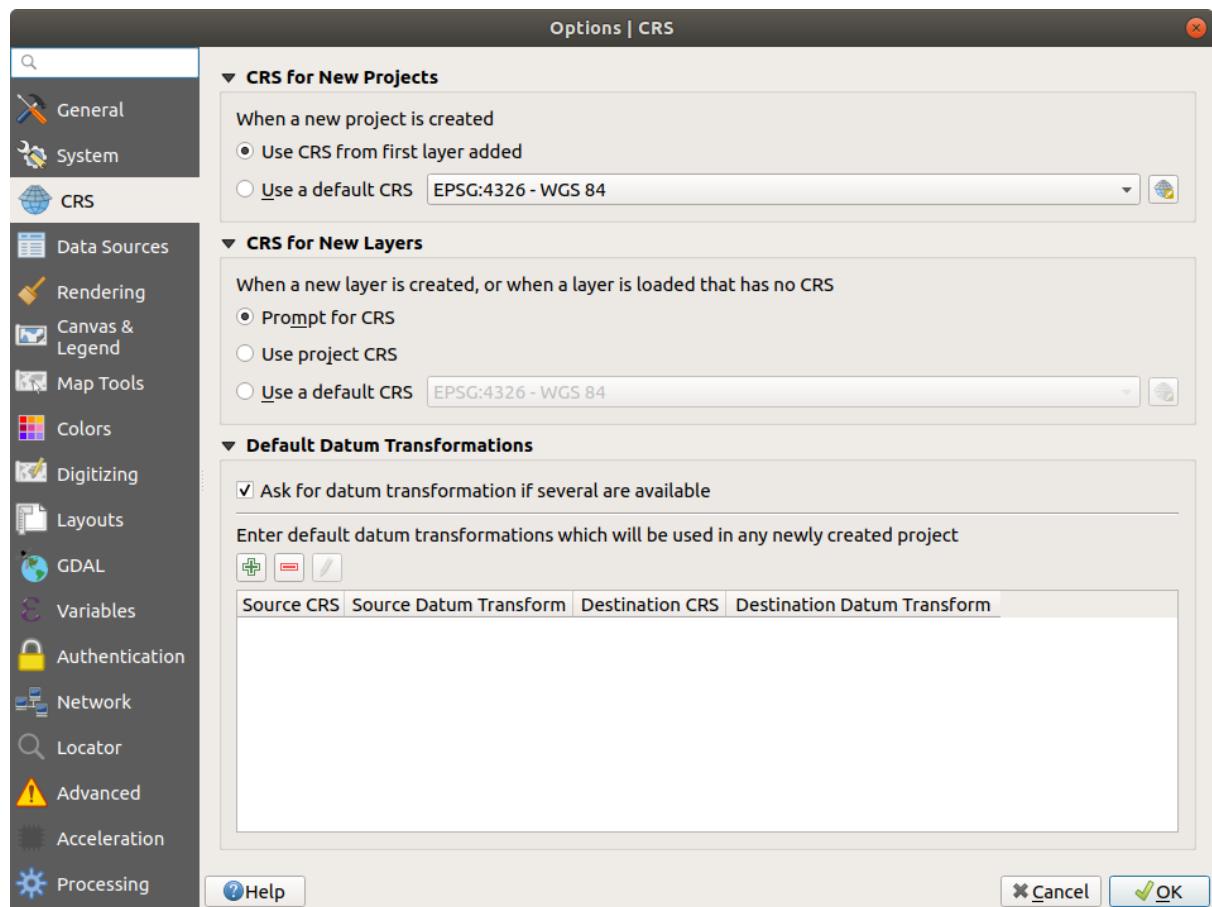


Fig. 9.2: CRS Settings in QGIS

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**Tip: Improve opening of big data attribute table**

When working with layers with big amount of records, opening the attribute table may be slow as the dialog request all the rows in the layer. Setting the *Attribute table behavior* to **Show features visible on map** will make QGIS request only the features in the current map canvas when opening the table, allowing a quick data loading.

Note that data in this attribute table instance will be always tied to the canvas extent it was opened with, meaning that selecting **Show All Features** within such a table will not display new features. You can however update the set of displayed features by changing the canvas extent and selecting **Show Features Visible On Map** option in the attribute table.

---

**Data source handling**

- *Scan for valid items in the browser dock* . You can choose between ‘Check extension’ and ‘Check file contents’.
- *Scan for contents of compressed files (.zip) in browser dock* defines how detailed is the widget information at the bottom of the Browser panel when querying such files. ‘No’, ‘Basic scan’ and ‘Full scan’ are possible options.
- *Prompt for raster sublayers when opening*. Some rasters support sublayers — they are called subdatasets in GDAL. An example is netCDF files — if there are many netCDF variables, GDAL sees every variable as a subdataset. The option allows you to control how to deal with sublayers when a file with sublayers is opened. You have the following choices:
  - ‘Always’: Always ask (if there are existing sublayers)
  - ‘If needed’: Ask if layer has no bands, but has sublayers
  - ‘Never’: Never prompt, will not load anything
  - ‘Load all’: Never prompt, but load all sublayers
- *Ignore shapefile encoding declaration*. If a shapefile has encoding information, this will be ignored by QGIS.
- *Add PostGIS layers with double click and select in extended mode*
- *Add Oracle layers with double click and select in extended mode*
- *Execute expressions on server-side if possible*
- *Evaluate default values* defines whether default values from database provider should be calculated when digitizing the new feature (checked status) or when saving the changes.

**Hidden Browser Path**

This widget lists all the folders you chose to hide from the *Browser panel*. Removing a folder from the list will make it available in the Browser panel.

## 9.1.5 Rendering Settings

**Rendering behavior**

- *By default new layers added to the map should be displayed*: unchecking this option can be handy when loading multiple layers to avoid each new layer being rendered in the canvas and slow down the process
- *Use render caching where possible to speed up redraws*
- *Render layers in parallel using many CPU cores*
- *Max cores to use*

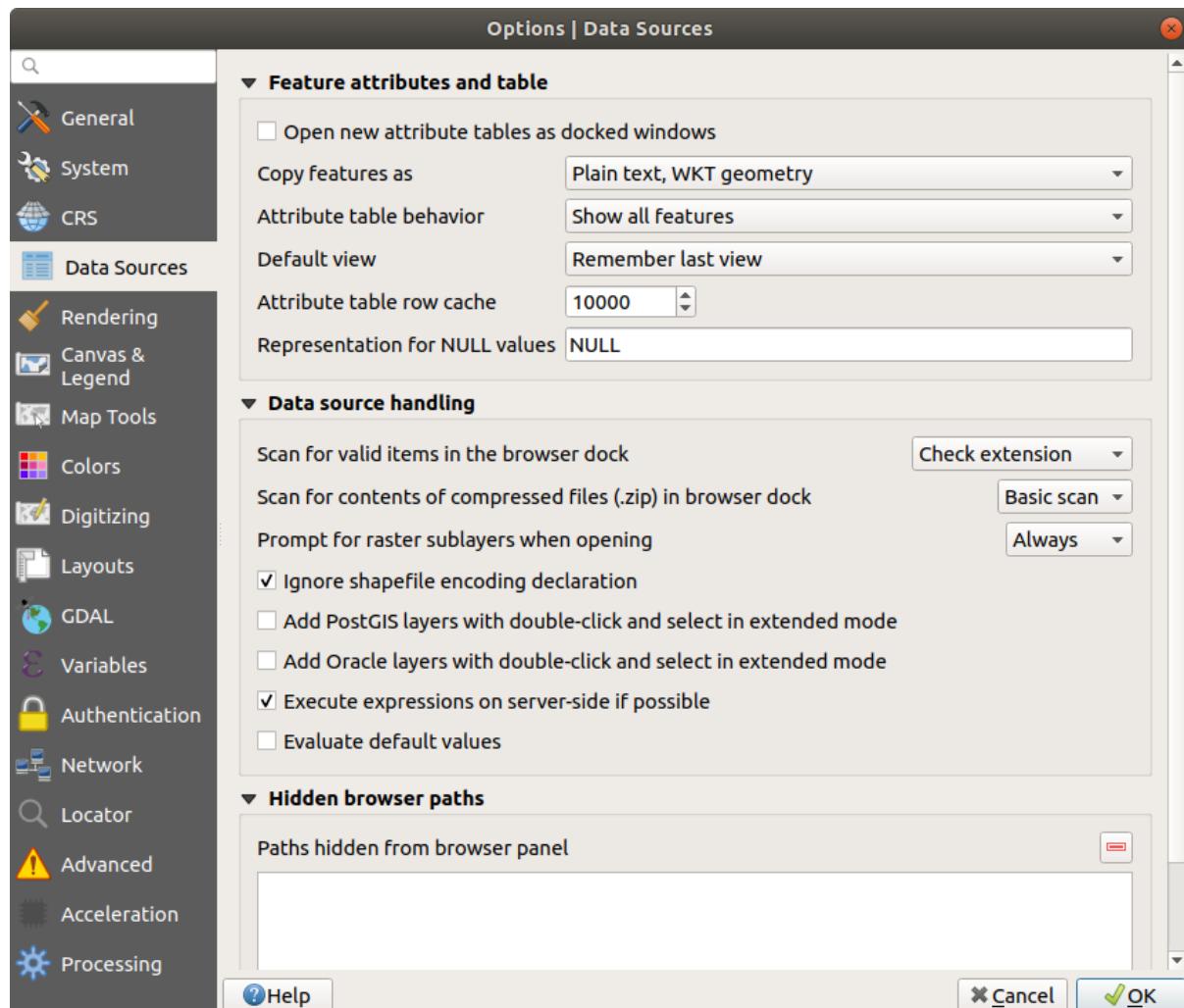


Fig. 9.3: Data Sources Settings in QGIS

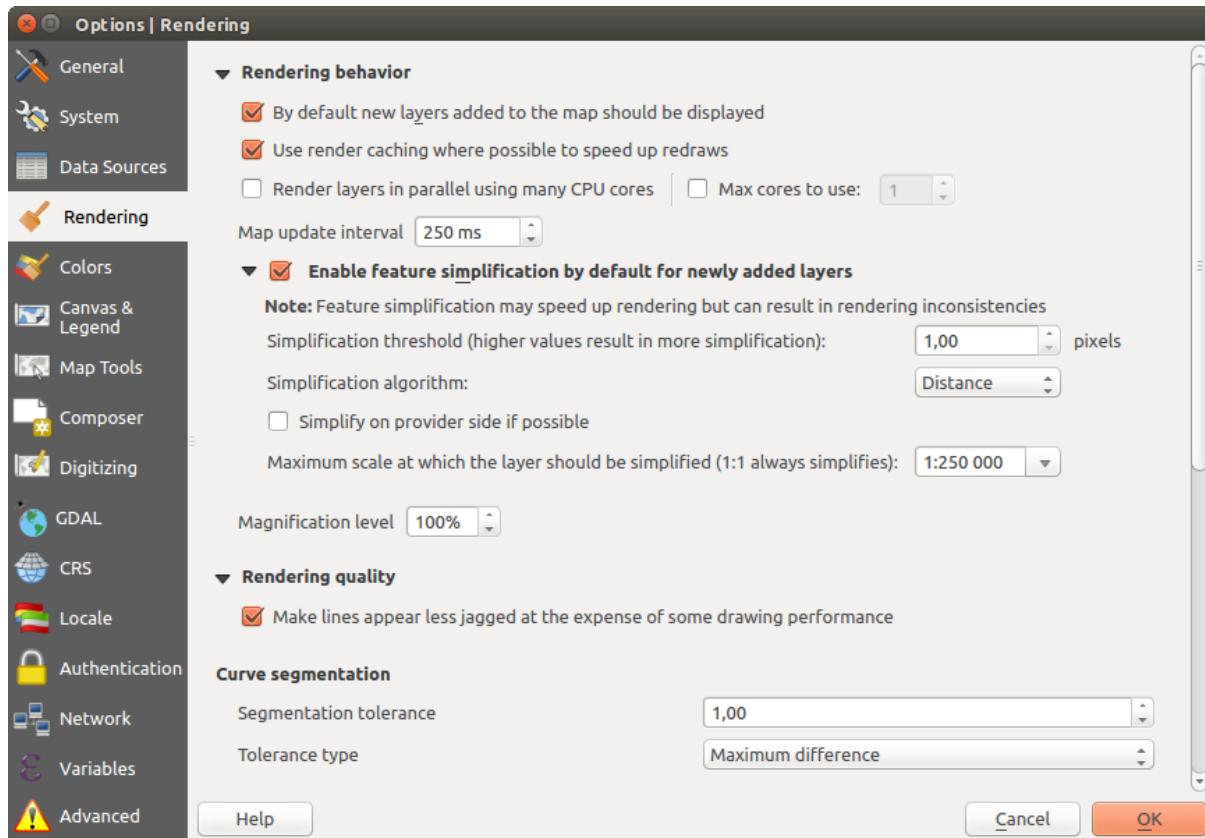


Fig. 9.4: Rendering tab of Project Properties dialog

- *Map update interval* (default to 250 ms)
- *Enable feature simplification by default for newly added layers*
- *Simplification threshold*
- *Simplification algorithm*: This option performs a local “on-the-fly” simplification on feature’s and speeds up geometry rendering. It doesn’t change the geometry fetched from the data providers. This is important when you have expressions that use the feature geometry (e.g. calculation of area) - it ensures that these calculations are done on the original geometry, not on the simplified one. For this purpose, QGIS provides three algorithms: ‘Distance’ (default), ‘SnapToGrid’ and ‘Visvalingam’.
- *Simplify on provider side if possible*: the geometries are simplified by the provider (PostGIS, Oracle...) and unlike the local-side simplification, geometry-based calculations may be affected
- *Maximum scale at which the layer should be simplified*
- *Magnification level* (see the *magnifier*)

**Note:** Besides the global setting, feature simplification can be set for any specific layer from its *Layer properties* → *Rendering* menu.

### Rendering quality

- *Make lines appear less jagged at the expense of some drawing performance*

### Curve segmentation

- *Segmentation tolerance*: this setting controls the way circular arcs are rendered. **The smaller** maximum angle (between the two consecutive vertices and the curve center, in degrees) or maximum difference (distance

between the segment of the two vertices and the curve line, in map units), the **more straight line** segments will be used during rendering.

- **Tolerance type:** it can be *Maximum angle* or *Maximum difference* between approximation and curve.

## Rasters

- With *RGB band selection*, you can define the number for the Red, Green and Blue band.

### Contrast enhancement

Contrast enhancement options can be applied to *Single band gray*, *Multi band color (byte/band)* or *Multi band color (>byte/band)*. For each, you can set:

- the *Algorithm* to use, whose values can be ‘No stretch’, ‘Stretch to MinMax’, ‘Stretch and Clip to MinMax’ or ‘Clip to MinMax’
- the *Limits (minimum/maximum)* to apply, with values such as ‘Cumulative pixel count cut’, ‘Minimum/Maximum’, ‘Mean +/- standard deviation’.

For rasters rendering, you can also define the following options:

- *Cumulative pixel count cut limits*
- *Standard deviation multiplier*

## Debugging

- *Map canvas refresh* to debug rendering duration in the *Log Messages* panel.

## 9.1.6 Canvas and Legend Settings

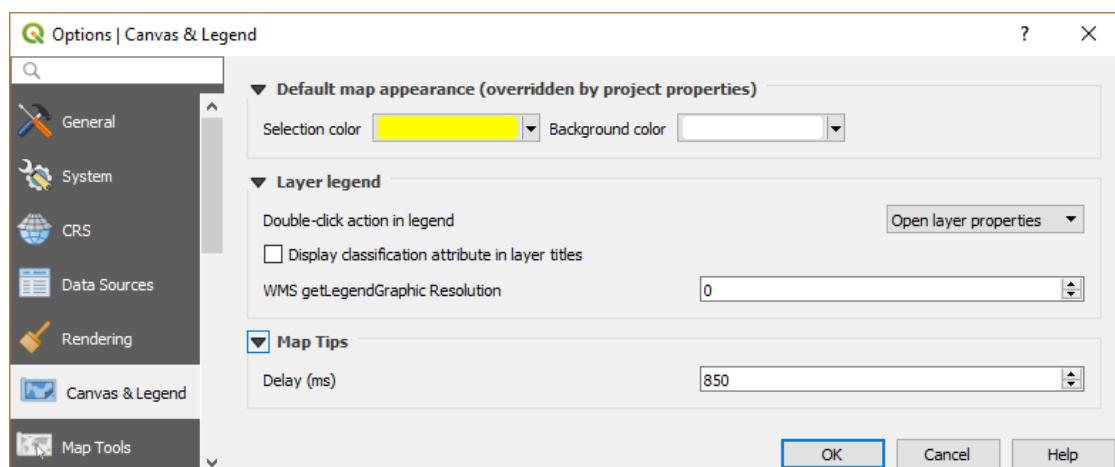


Fig. 9.5: Canvas and Legend Settings

These properties let you set:

- the **Default map appearance (overridden by project properties)**: the *Selection color* and *Background color*.
- **Layer legend** interaction:
  - *Double click action in legend*  . You can either ‘Open layer properties’, ‘Open attribute table’ or ‘Open layer styling dock’ with the double click.
  - *Display classification attribute names* in the Layers panel, e.g. when applying a categorized or rule-based renderer (see *Symbology Properties* for more information).
  - the *WMS getLegendGraphic Resolution*

- the *Delay* in milliseconds of layers *map tips* display

### 9.1.7 Map tools Settings

This tab offers some options regarding the behavior of the *Identify tool*.

- *Search radius for identifying features and displaying map tips* is a tolerance distance within which the identify tool will depict results as long as you click within this tolerance.
- *Highlight color* allows you to choose with which color should features being identified be highlighted.
- *Buffer* determines a buffer distance to be rendered from the outline of the identify highlight.
- *Minimum width* determines how thick should the outline of a highlighted object be.

#### Measure tool

- Define *Rubberband color* for measure tools
- Define *Decimal places*
- *Keep base unit* to not automatically convert large numbers (e.g., meters to kilometers)
- *Preferred distance units*  ('Meters', 'Kilometers', 'Feet', 'Yards', 'Miles', 'Nautical Miles', 'Degrees' or 'Map Units')
- *Preferred area units*  ('Square meters', 'Square kilometers', 'Square feet', 'Square yards', 'Square miles', 'Hectares', 'Acres', 'Square nautical miles', 'Square degrees' or 'Map Units')
- *Preferred angle units*  ('Degrees', 'Radians', 'Gon/gradians', 'Minutes of arc', 'Seconds of arc' or 'Turns/revolutions')

#### Panning and zooming

- Define a *Zoom factor* for zoom tools or wheel mouse

#### Predefined scales

Here, you find a list of predefined scales. With the  and  buttons you can add or remove your personal scales. You can also import or export scales from/to a .XML file. Note that you still have the possibility to remove your changes and reset to the predefined list.

### 9.1.8 Colors Settings

This menu allows you to create or update palettes of colors used throughout the application in the *color selector widget*. You can choose from:

- *Recent colors* showing recently used colors
- *Standard colors*, the default palette of colors
- *Project colors*, a set of colors specific to the current project (see *Default Styles Properties* for more details)
- *New layer colors*, a set of colors to use by default when new layers are added to QGIS
- or custom palette(s) you can create or import using the ... button next to the palette combobox.

By default, *Recent colors*, *Standard colors* and *Project colors* palettes can not be removed and are set to appear in the color button drop-down. Custom palettes can also be added to this widget thanks to the *Show in Color Buttons* option.

For any of the palettes, you can manage the list of colors using the set of tools next to the frame, ie:

-  *Add* or  *Remove* color

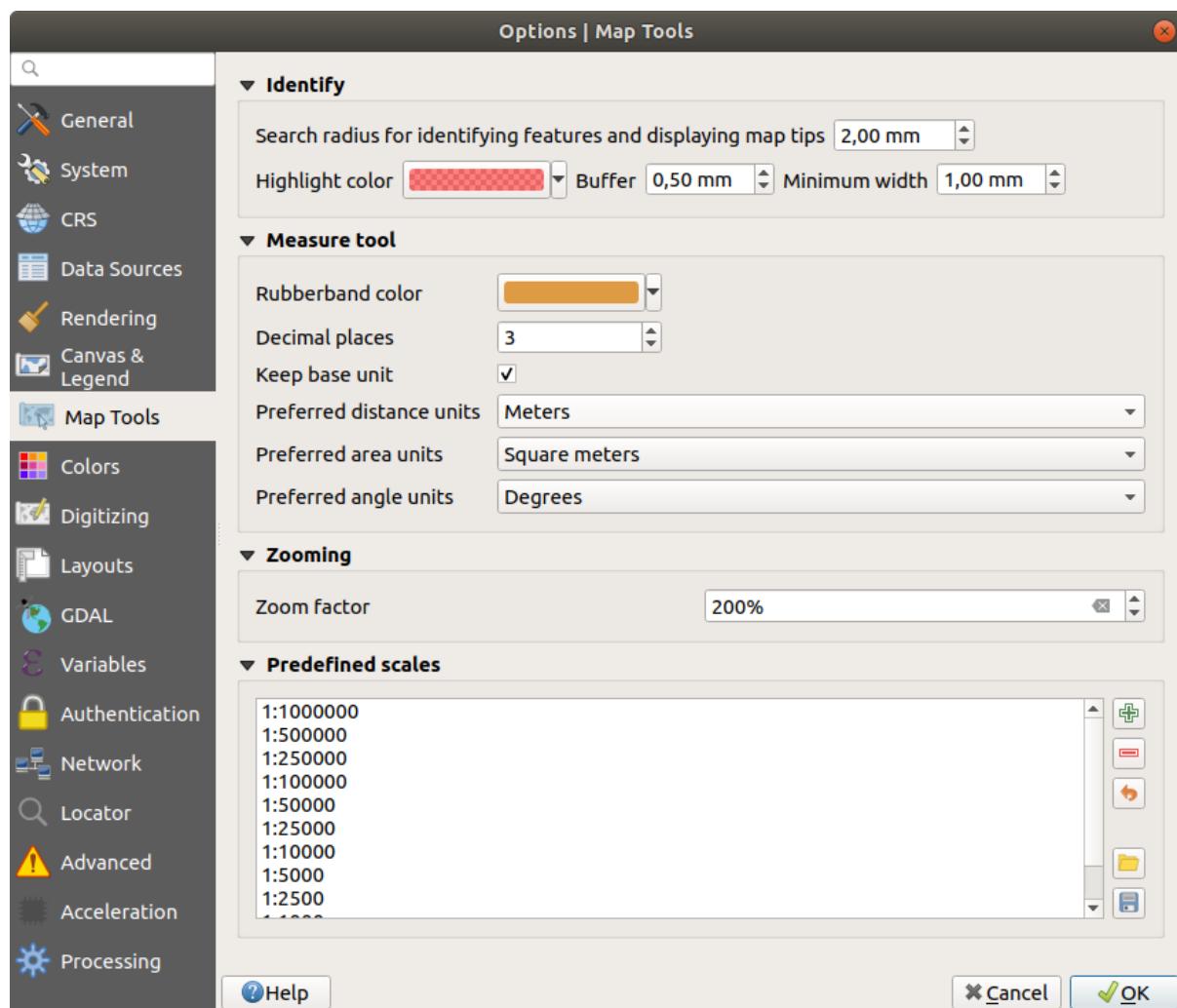


Fig. 9.6: Map tools Settings in QGIS

- *Copy* or *Paste color*
- *Import* or *Export* the set of colors from/to .gpl file.

Double-click a color in the list to tweak or replace it in the *Color Selector* dialog. You can also rename it by double-clicking in the *Label* column.

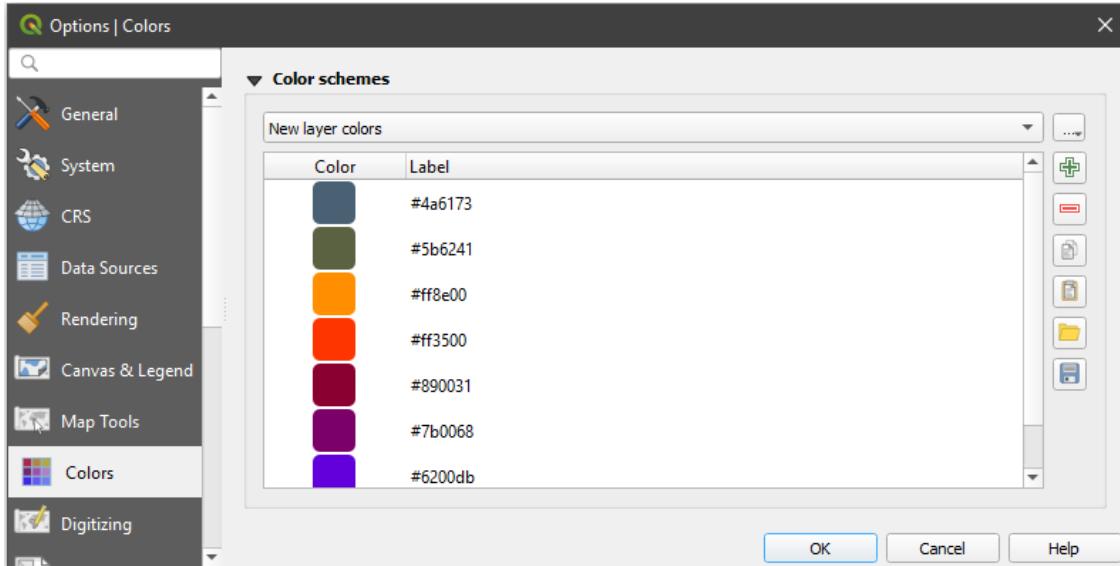


Fig. 9.7: Colors Settings

### 9.1.9 Digitizing Settings

This tab helps you configure general settings when *editing vector layer* (attributes and geometry).

#### Feature creation

- *Suppress attribute form pop-up after feature creation*: this choice can be overridden in each layer properties dialog.
- *Reuse last entered attribute values*.
- *Validate geometries*. Editing complex lines and polygons with many nodes can result in very slow rendering. This is because the default validation procedures in QGIS can take a lot of time. To speed up rendering, it is possible to select GEOS geometry validation (starting from GEOS 3.3) or to switch it off. GEOS geometry validation is much faster, but the disadvantage is that only the first geometry problem will be reported.
- *Default Z value* to use when creating new 3D features.

#### Rubberband

- Define Rubberband *Line width*, *Line color* and *Fill color*.
- *Don't update rubberband during vertex editing*.

#### Snapping

- *Enable snapping by default*
- Define *Default snap mode* ('Vertex', 'Vertex and segment', 'Segment')
- Define *Default snapping tolerance* in map units or pixels
- Define the *Search radius for vertex edits* in map units or pixels

- *Display main dialog as (restart required)*: set whether the Advanced Snapping dialog should be shown as ‘Dialog’ or ‘Dock’.
- *Snapping marker color*
- *Show snapping tooltips* such as name of the layer whose feature you are about to snap. Helpful when multiple features overlap.
- *Enable snapping on invisible features*

#### Vertex markers

- *Show markers only for selected features*
- Define vertex *Marker style*  (‘Cross’ (default), ‘Semi transparent circle’ or ‘None’)
- Define vertex *Marker size*

#### Curve offset tool

The next 3 options refer to the  Offset Curve tool in *Advanced digitizing*. Through the various settings, it is possible to influence the shape of the line offset. These options are possible starting from GEOS 3.3.

- *Join style*: ‘Round’, ‘Mitre’ or ‘Bevel’
- *Quadrant segments*
- *Miter limit*

### 9.1.10 Layouts Settings

#### Composition defaults

You can define the *Default font* used within the *print layout*.

#### Grid appearance

- Define the *Grid style*  (‘Solid’, ‘Dots’, ‘Crosses’)
- Define the *Grid color*

#### Grid and guide defaults

- Define the *Grid spacing*
- Define the *Grid offset*  for X and Y
- Define the *Snap tolerance*

#### Layout Paths

- Define *Path(s) to search for extra print templates*: a list of folders with custom layout templates to use while creating new one.

### 9.1.11 GDAL Settings

**GDAL** is a data exchange library for vector and raster files. It provides drivers to read and or write data in different formats. The *GDAL* tab currently exposes the drivers for raster formats with their capabilities.

#### GDAL driver options

This frame provides ways to customize the behavior of drivers that support read and write access:

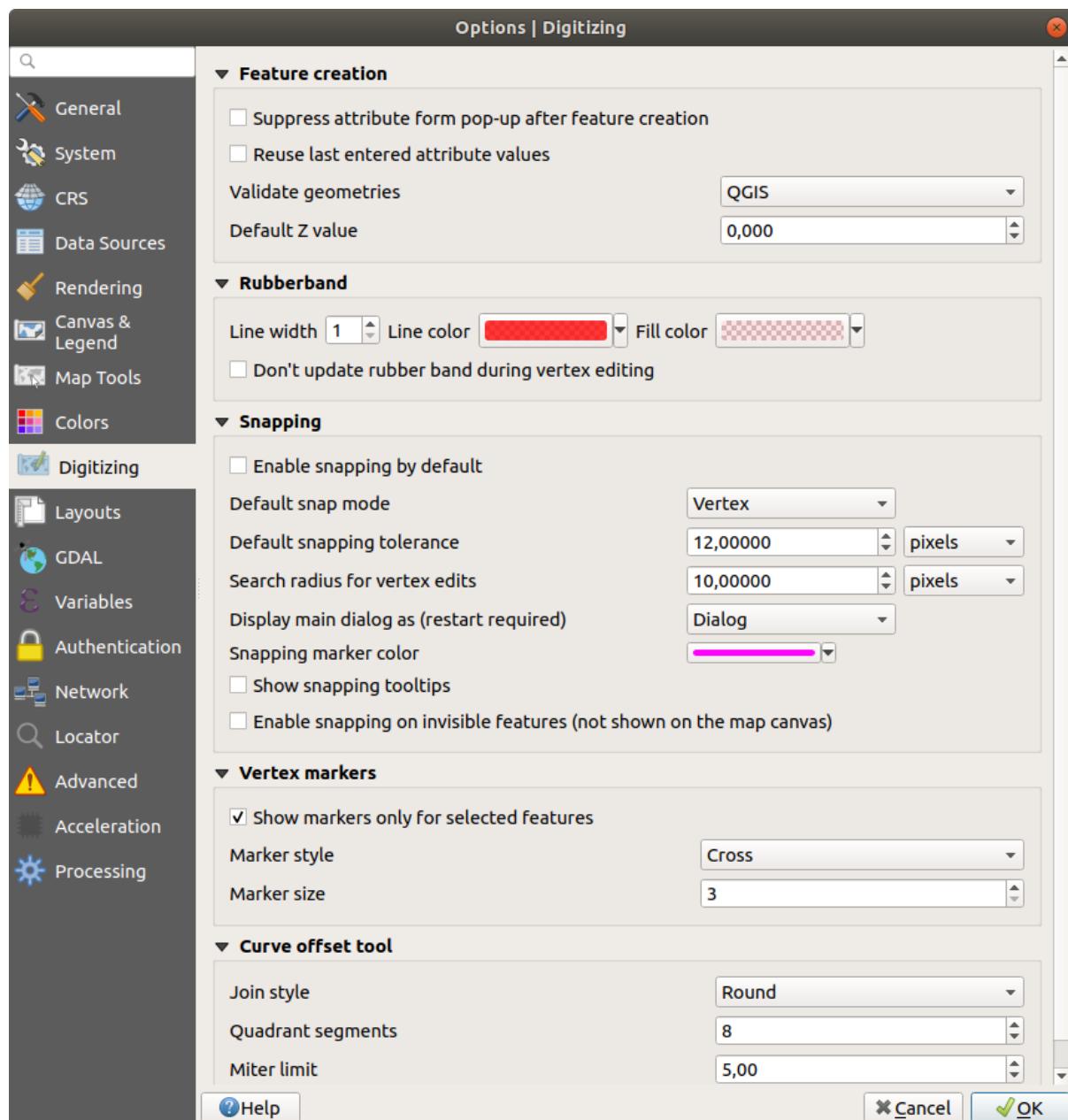


Fig. 9.8: Digitizing Settings in QGIS

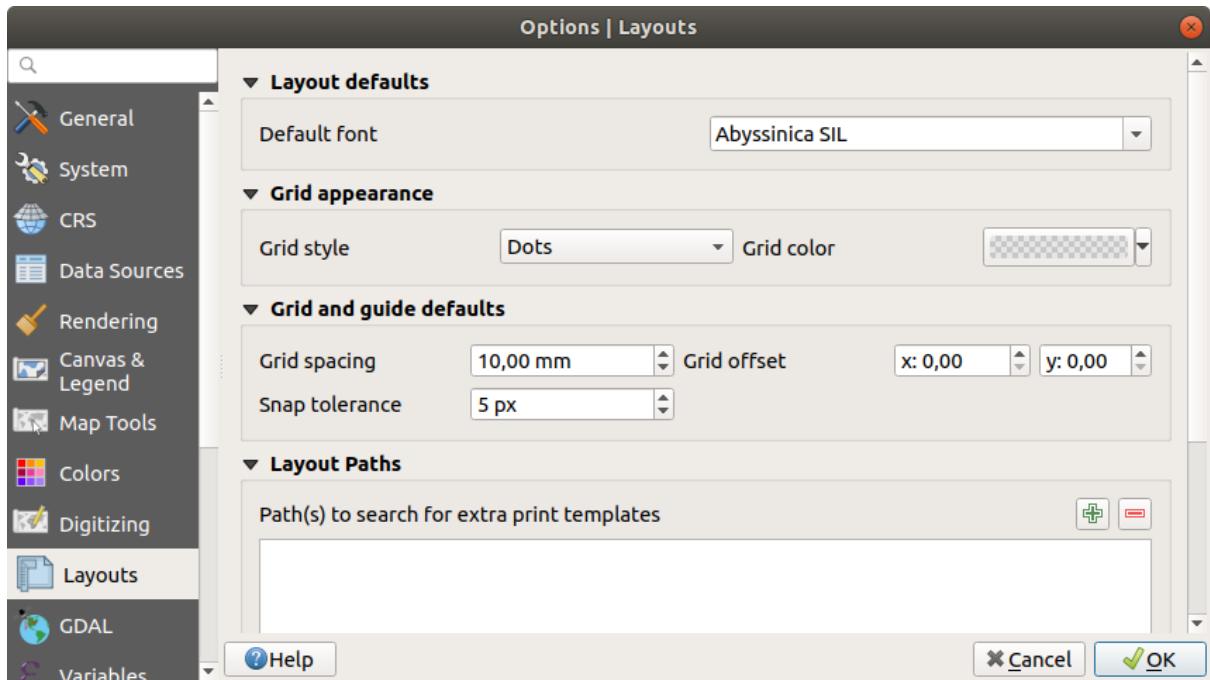


Fig. 9.9: Layouts Settings in QGIS

- *Edit create options*: allows you to edit or add different profiles of file transformation, i.e. a set of predefined combinations of parameters (type and level of compression, blocks size, overview, colorimetry, alpha...) to use when outputting raster files. The parameters depend on the driver.

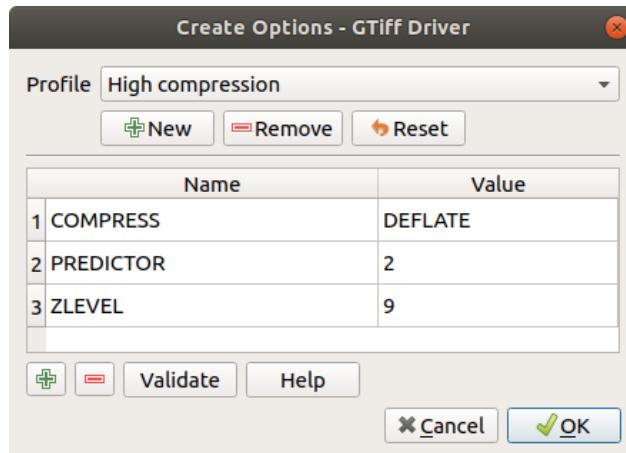


Fig. 9.10: Sample of create options profile (for GeoTiff)

The upper part of the dialog lists the current profile(s) and allows you to add new ones or remove any of them. You can also reset the profile to its default parameters if you have changed them. Some drivers (eg, GeoTiff) have some sample of profiles you can work with.

At the bottom of the dialog:

- The button lets you add rows to fill with the parameter name and value
- The button deletes the selected parameter
- Click the *Validate* button to check that the creation options entered for the given format are valid
- Use the *Help* button to find the parameters to use, or refer to the [GDAL raster drivers documentation](#).

- *Edit Pyramids Options*

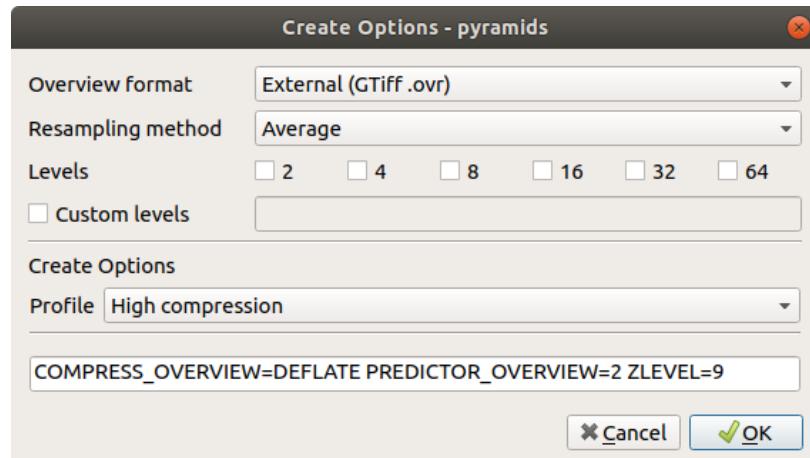


Fig. 9.11: Sample of Pyramids profile

## GDAL drivers

In this frame, you can define which GDAL driver is to use to read and/or write files, as in some cases more than one GDAL driver is available.

---

**Tip:** Double-click a driver that allows read and write access (`rw+ (v)`) opens the *Edit Create options* dialog for customization.

---

## 9.1.12 Variables Settings

The *Variables* tab lists all the variables available at the global-level.

It also allows the user to manage global-level variables. Click the button to add a new custom global-level variable. Likewise, select a custom global-level variable from the list and click the button to remove it.

More information about variables in the *Storing values in Variables* section.

## 9.1.13 Authentication Settings

In the *Authentication* tab you can set authentication configurations and manage PKI certificates. See *Authentication System* for more details.

## 9.1.14 Network Settings

### General

- Define *WMS search address*, default is `http://geopole.org/wms/search?search=%1&type=rss`
- Define *Timeout for network requests (ms)* - default is 60000
- Define *Default expiration period for WMS Capabilities (hours)* - default is 24
- Define *Default expiration period for WMSC/WMTS tiles (hours)* - default is 24
- Define *Max retry in case of tile or feature request errors*

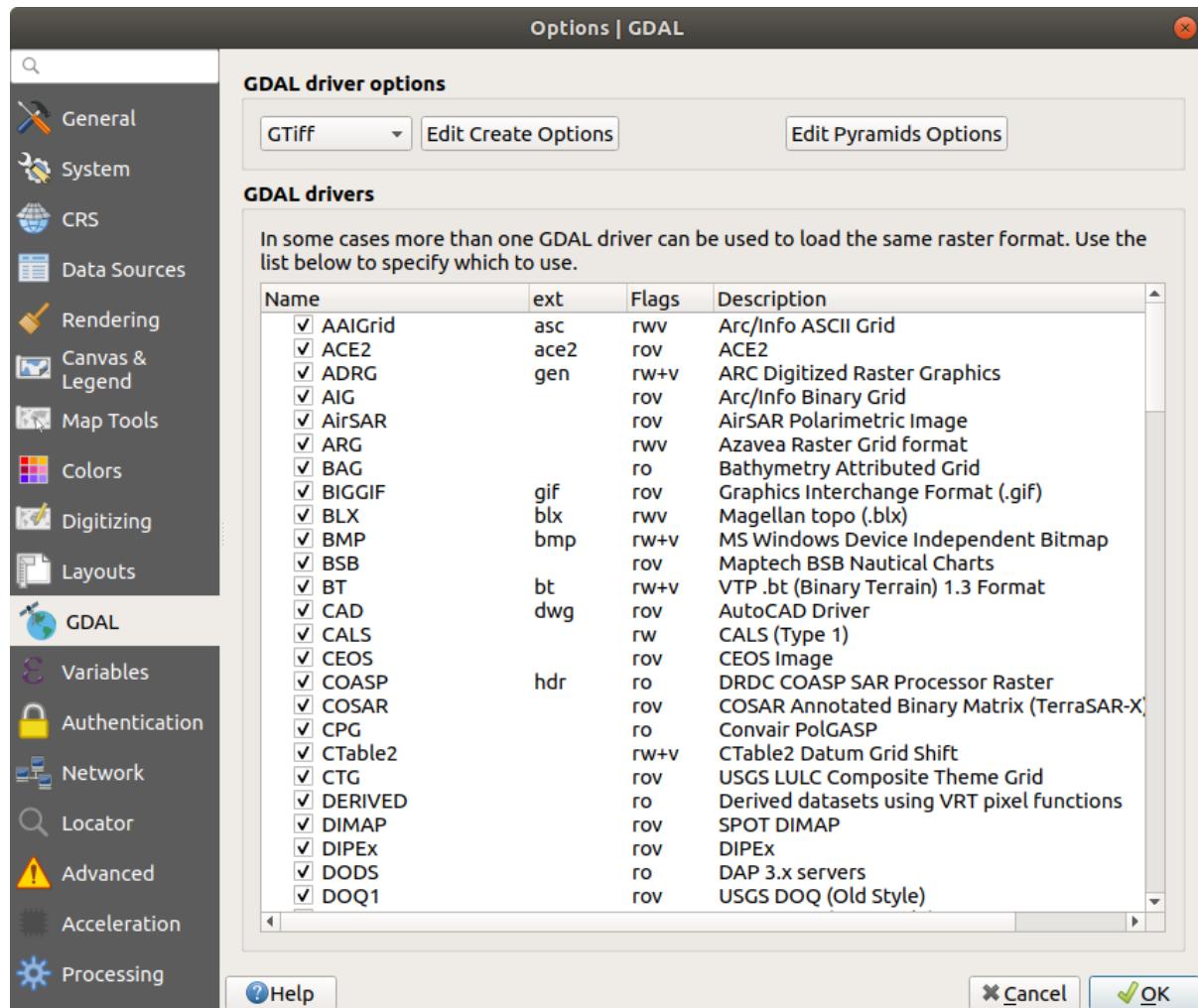


Fig. 9.12: GDAL Settings in QGIS

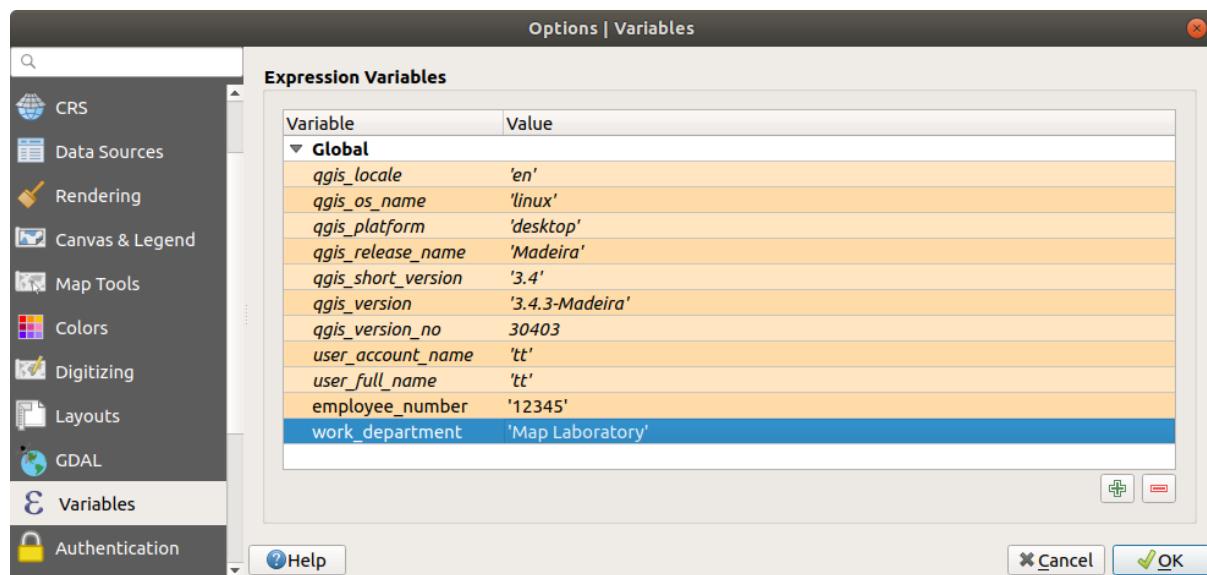


Fig. 9.13: Variables Settings in QGIS

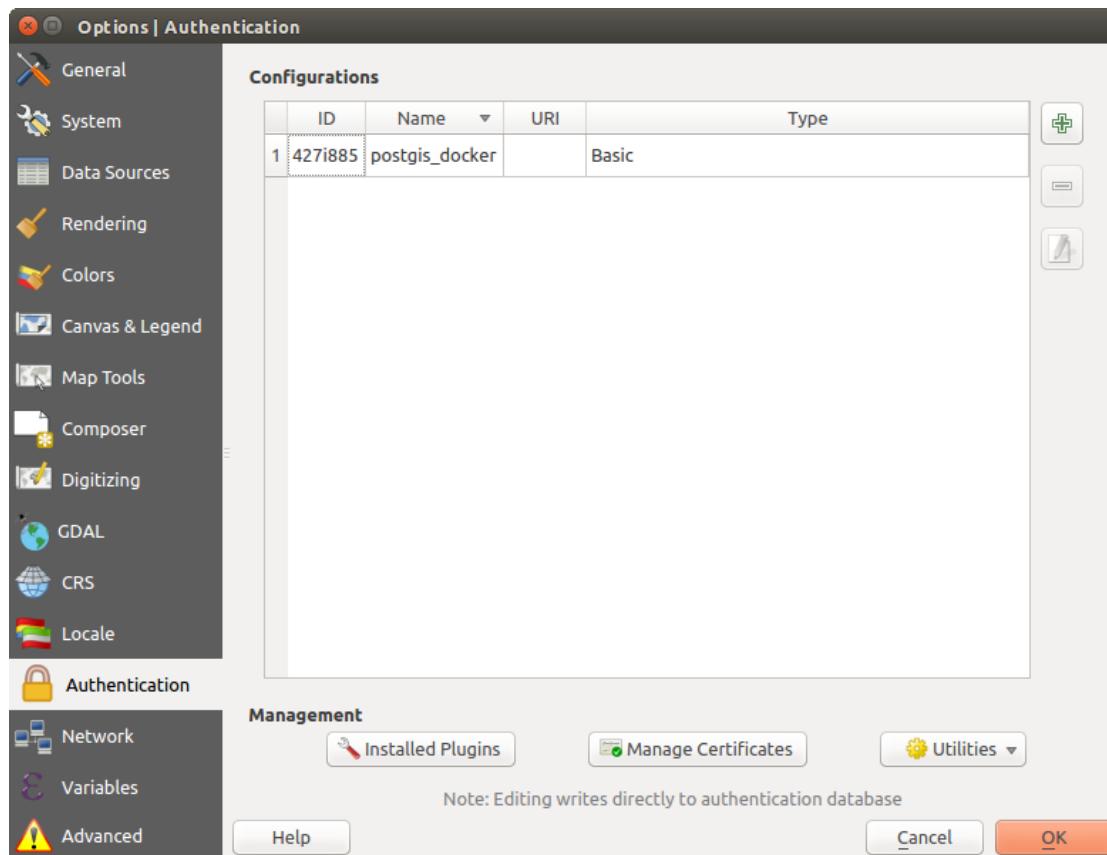


Fig. 9.14: Authentication Settings in QGIS

- Define *User-Agent*

#### Cache settings

Defines the *Directory* and a *Size* for the cache. Also offers tools to *automatically clear the connection authentication cache on SSL errors (recommended)*.

#### Proxy for web access

- *Use proxy for web access*
- Set the *Proxy type*  according to your needs and define ‘Host’ and ‘Port’. Available proxy types are:
  - *Default Proxy*: Proxy is determined based on system’s proxy
  - *Socks5Proxy*: Generic proxy for any kind of connection. Supports TCP, UDP, binding to a port (incoming connections) and authentication.
  - *HttpProxy*: Implemented using the “CONNECT” command, supports only outgoing TCP connections; supports authentication.
  - *HttpCachingProxy*: Implemented using normal HTTP commands, it is useful only in the context of HTTP requests.
  - *FtpCachingProxy*: Implemented using an FTP proxy, it is useful only in the context of FTP requests.

Credentials of proxy are set using the *authentication widget*.

Excluding some URLs can be added to the text box below the proxy settings (see *Figure\_Network\_Tab*).

If you need more detailed information about the different proxy settings, please refer to the manual of the underlying QT library documentation at <https://doc.qt.io/qt-5.9/qnetworkproxy.html#ProxyType-enum>

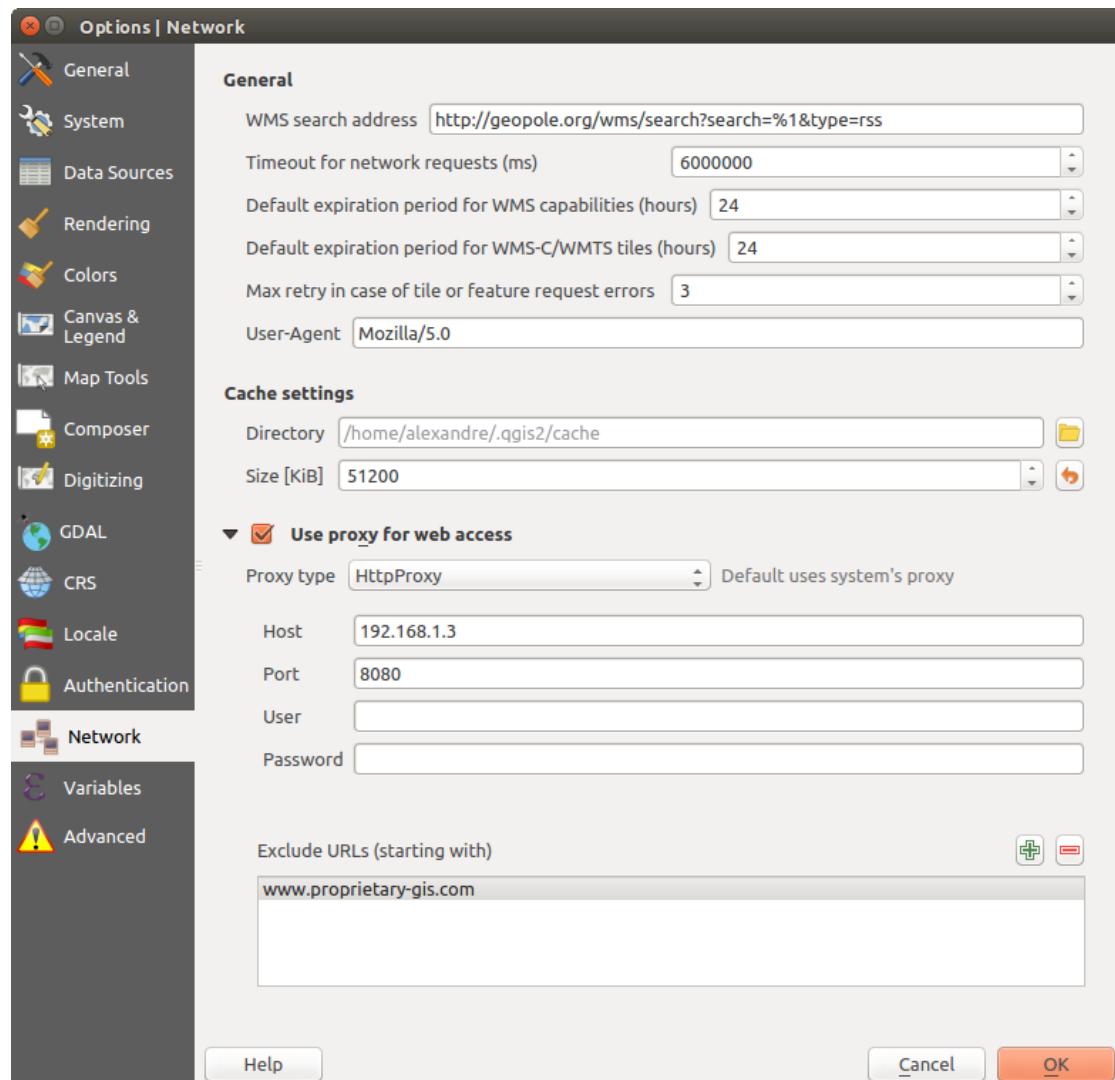


Fig. 9.15: Proxy-settings in QGIS

---

**Tip: Using Proxies**

Using proxies can sometimes be tricky. It is useful to proceed by ‘trial and error’ with the above proxy types, to check if they succeed in your case.

---

### 9.1.15 Locator Settings

 The *Locator* tab allows to configure the *Locator bar*, a quick search widget available on the status bar that helps you perform searches anywhere in the application. It provides some default filters (with prefix) to use:

- Project layers (l): finds and selects a layer in the *Layers* panel.
- Project layouts (pl): finds and opens a print layout.
- Actions (.): finds and executes a QGIS action; actions can be any tool or menu in QGIS, opening a panel...
- Active layer features (f): searches for matching attributes in any field from the current active layer and zooms to the selected feature.
- Features in all layers (af): searches for matching attributes in the *display name* of each *searchable layers* and zooms to the selected feature.
- Calculator (=): allows evaluation of any QGIS expression and, if valid, gives an option to copy the result to the clipboard.
- Spatial bookmarks (b): finds and zooms to the bookmark extent.
- Settings (set): browses and opens project and application-wide properties dialogs.
- Processing (a): searches and opens a Processing algorithm dialog.
- Edit selected features (ef): gives quick access and runs a compatible *modify-in-place* Processing algorithm on the active layer.

For each filter, you can customize the filter, set whether it is enabled by default or not. The set of default locator filters can be extended by plugins, eg for OSM nominatim searches, direct database searching, layer catalog searches.

The locator search bar can be activated pressing `Ctrl+K`. Type your text to perform a search. By default, results are returned for all enabled locator filters but you can limit the search to a certain filter by prefixing your text with the locator filter prefix, ie. typing `l cad` will return only the layers whose name contains `cad`. Click on the result to execute the corresponding action, depending on the type of item.

Searching is handled using threads, so that results always become available as quickly as possible, regardless of whether any slow search filters may be installed. They also appear as soon as each result is encountered by each filter, which means that e.g. a file search filter will show results one by one as the file tree is scanned. This ensures that the UI is always responsive even if a very slow search filter is present (e.g. one which uses an online service).

---

**Tip: Quick access to the locator's configurations**

 Click on the  icon inside the locator widget on the status bar to display the list of filters you can use and a *Configure* entry that opens the *Locator* tab of the *Settings → Options...* menu.

---

### 9.1.16 Advanced Settings

Depending on your OS, all the settings related to QGIS (UI, tools, data providers, default values, plugins options...) are saved:

-  in a text file: `$HOME/.config/QGIS/QGIS2.conf`

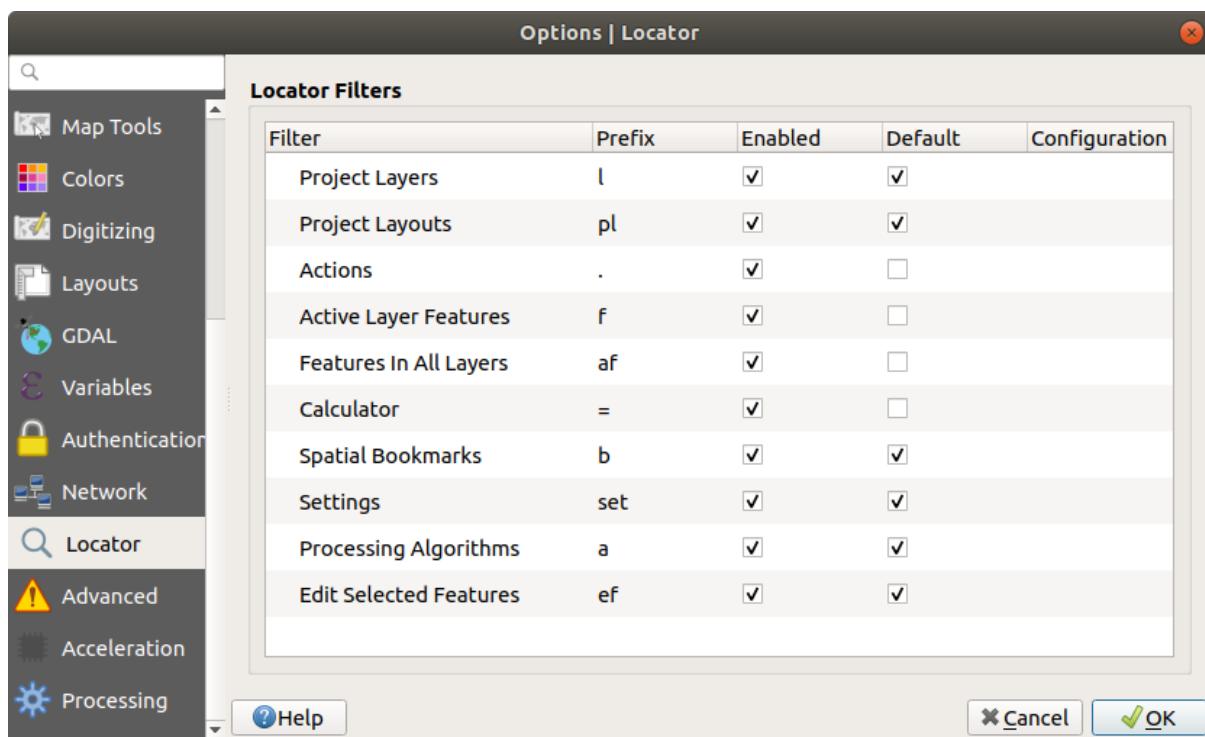


Fig. 9.16: Locator Settings in QGIS

- in the properties list file: \$HOME/Library/Preferences/org.qgis.qgis.plist
- in the registry under: HKEY\CURRENT\_USER\Software\QGIS\qgis

The *Advanced* tab offers you in a single place, regardless your OS, means to manage these settings through the *Advanced Settings Editor*. After you promise to be careful, the widget is populated with a tree of all QGIS settings, which you can directly edit.

**Warning: Avoid using the Advanced tab settings blindly**

Be careful while modifying items in this dialog given that changes are automatically applied. Doing changes without knowledge can break your QGIS installation in various ways.

### 9.1.17 Processing Settings

The *Processing* tab provides you with general settings of tools and data providers that are used in the QGIS Processing framework. More information at [QGIS processing framework](#).

## 9.2 Working with User Profiles

The *Settings → User Profiles* menu provides functions to set and access user profiles. A user profile is a unified application configuration that allows to store in a single folder:

- all the *global settings*, including locale, projections\*, authentication settings, color palettes, shortcuts...
- GUI configurations and *customization*
- installed *plugins* and their configurations
- project templates and history of saved project with their image preview

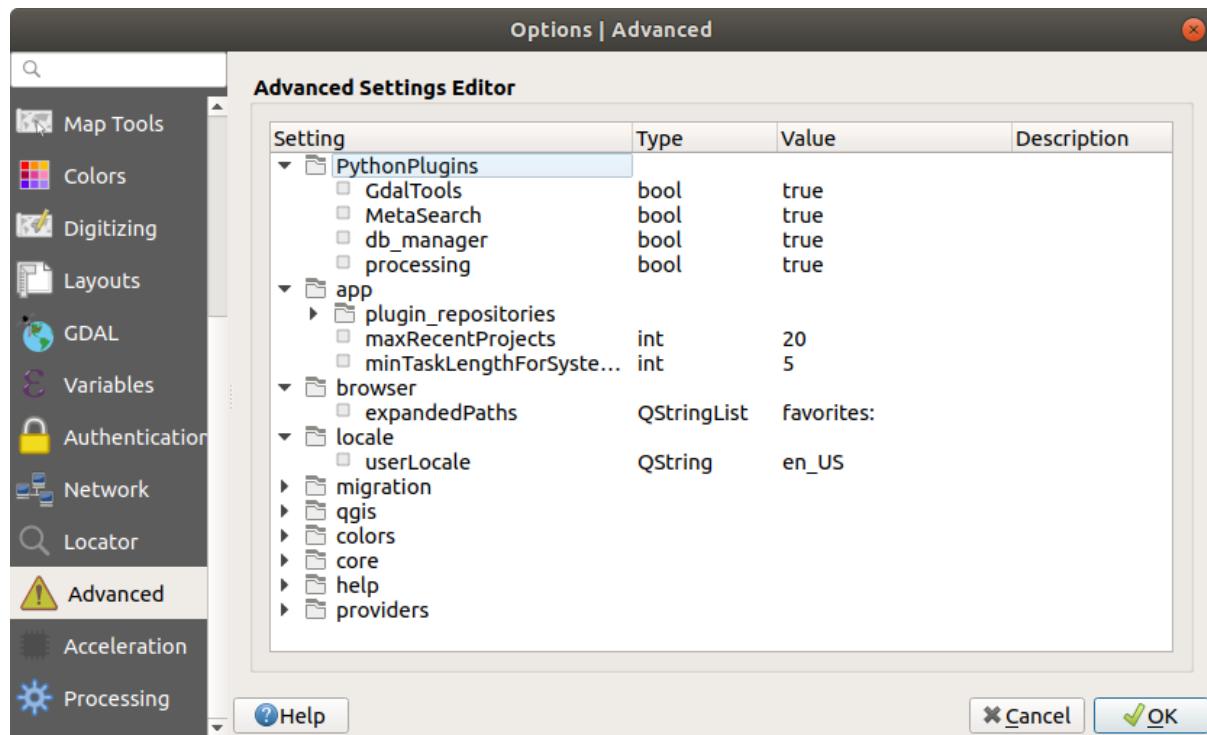


Fig. 9.17: Advanced Settings tab in QGIS

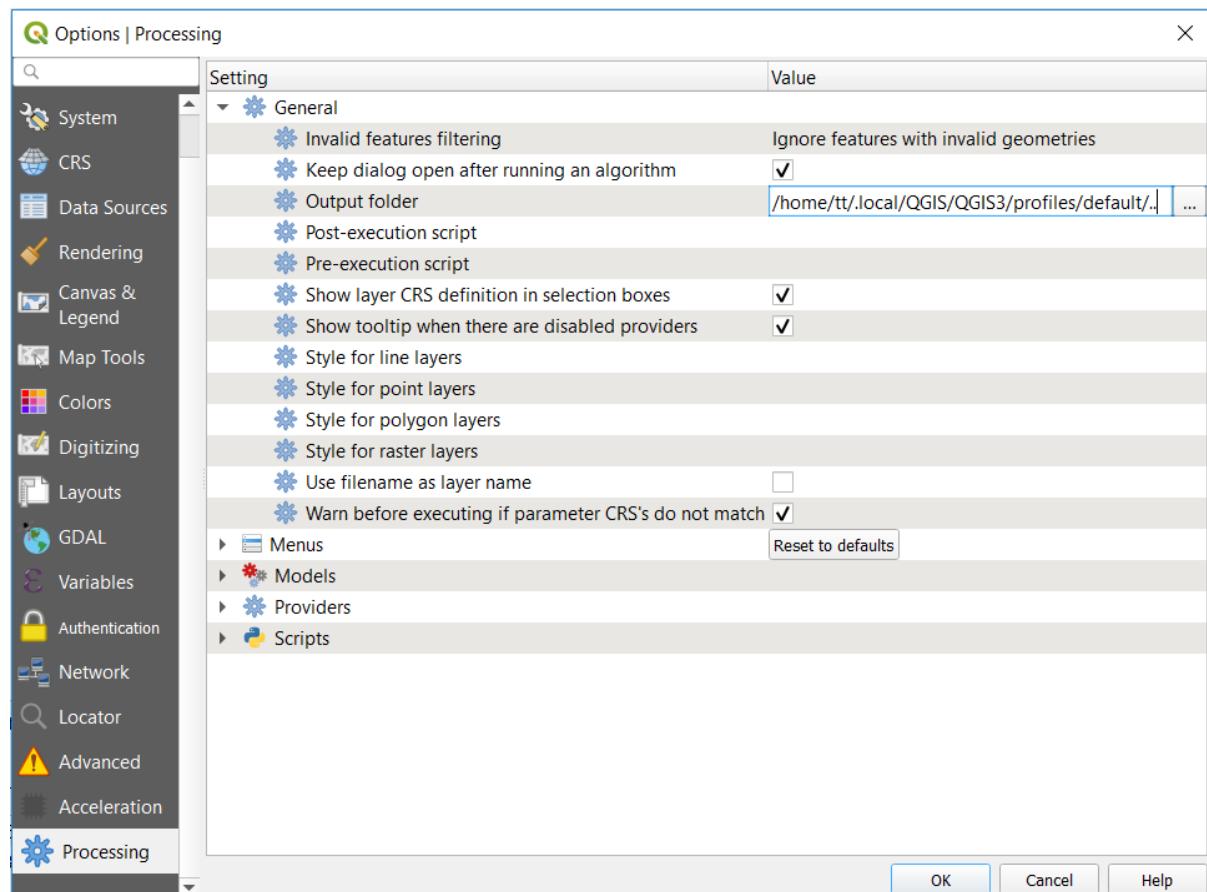


Fig. 9.18: Processing Settings tab in QGIS

- *processing settings*, logs, scripts, models.

By default, a QGIS installation contains a single user profile named `default`. But you can create as many user profiles as you want:

1. Click the *New profile...* entry.
2. You'll be prompted to provide a profile name, creating a folder of the same name under `~/<UserProfiles>/` where:
  - `~` represents the **HOME** directory, which on Windows is usually something like `C:\Users\ (user)`.
  - and `<UserProfiles>` represents the main profiles folder, i.e.:
    - `.local/share/QGIS/QGIS3/profiles/`
    - `AppData\Roaming\QGIS\QGIS3\profiles\`
    - `Library/Application Support/QGIS/QGIS3/profiles/`

The user profile folder can be opened from within QGIS using the *Open Active Profile Folder*.

3. A new instance of QGIS is started, using a clean configuration. You can then set your custom configurations.

As each user profile contains isolated settings, plugins and history they can be great for different workflows, demos, users of the same machine, or testing settings, etc. And you can switch from one to the other by selecting them in the *Settings → User Profiles* menu. You can also run QGIS with a specific user profile from the *command line*.

Unless changed, the profile of the last closed QGIS session will be used in the following QGIS sessions.

---

#### **Tip: Run QGIS under a new user profile to check for bug persistence**

When you encounter weird behavior with some functions in QGIS, create a new user profile and run the commands again. Sometimes, bugs are related to some leftovers in the current user profile and creating a new one may fix them as it restarts QGIS with the new (clean) profile.

---

## 9.3 Project Properties

In the properties window for the project under *Project → Project Properties*, you can set project-specific options. The project-specific options overwrite their equivalent in the *Options* dialog described above.

### 9.3.1 General Properties

In the *General* tab, the *General settings* let you:

- see the location of the project file
- set the folder for the project home (available in the *Project Home* item in the browser). The path can be relative to the folder of the project file (type it in) or absolute. The project home can be used for storing data and other content that is useful for the project.
- give a title to the project beside the project file path
- choose the color to use for features when they are selected
- choose the background color: the color to use for the map canvas
- set whether the path to layers in the project should be saved as absolute (full) or as relative to the project file location. You may prefer relative path when both layers and project files can be moved or shared or if the project is accessed from computers on different platforms.

- choose to avoid artifacts when project is rendered as map tiles. Note that checking this option can lead to performance degradation.

Calculating areas and distances is a common need in GIS. However, these values are really tied to the underlying projection settings. The *Measurements* frame lets you control these parameters. You can indeed choose:

- the *Ellipsoid*, on which distance and area calculations are entirely based; it can be:
  - None/Planimetric**: returned values are in this case cartesian measurements.
  - a **Custom** one: you'll need to set values of the semi-major and semi-minor axes.
  - or an existing one from a predefined list (Clarke 1866, Clarke 1880 IGN, New International 1967, WGS 84...).
- the *units for distance measurements* for length and perimeter and the *units for area measurements*. These settings, which default to the units set in QGIS options but then overrides it for the current project, are used in:
  - Attribute table field update bar
  - Field calculator calculations
  - Identify tool derived length, perimeter and area values
  - Default unit shown in measure dialog

The *Coordinate display* allows you to choose and customize the format of units to use to display the mouse coordinate in the status bar and the derived coordinates shown via the identify tool.

Finally, you can set a *Project predefined scales* list, which overrides the global predefined scales.

### 9.3.2 Metadata Properties

The *Metadata* tab allows detailed metadata to be defined, including (among the others): author, creation date, language, abstracts, categories, keywords, contact details, links, history. There is also a validation functionality that checks if specific fields were filled, anyway this is not enforced. See [vector layer metadata properties](#) for some details.

### 9.3.3 CRS Properties

The  *CRS* tab helps you set the coordinate reference system to use in this project. It can be:

- No projection (or unknown/non-Earth projection)*: this setting can be used to guess a layer CRS or when using QGIS for non earth uses like role-playing game maps, building mapping or microscopic stuff. In this case:
  - No reprojection is done while rendering the layers: features are just drawn using their raw coordinates.
  - The ellipsoid is locked out and forced to *None/Planimetric*.
  - The distance and area units, and the coordinate display are locked out and forced to “unknown units”; all measurements are done in unknown map units, and no conversion is possible.
- or an existing coordinate reference system that can be *geographic*, *projected* or *user-defined*. A preview of the CRS extent on earth is displayed to help you select the appropriate one. Layers added to the project are on-the-fly translated to this CRS in order to overlay them regardless their original CRS. Use of units, ellipsoid setting are available and make sense and you can perform calculations accordingly.

The  *CRS* tab also helps you control the layers reprojection settings by configuring the datum transformation preferences to apply in the current project. As usual, these override any corresponding global settings. See [Datum Transformations](#) for more details.

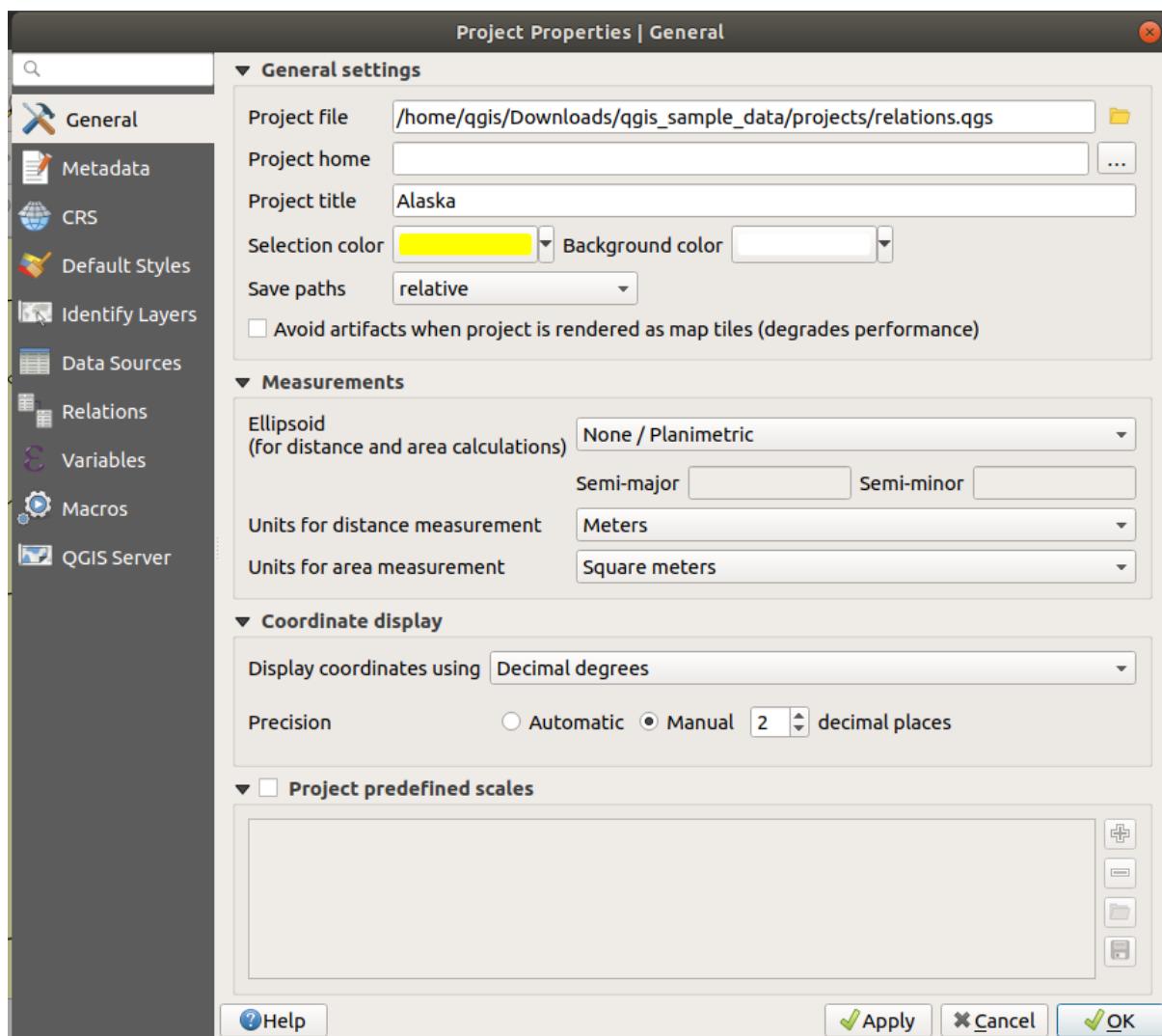


Fig. 9.19: General tab of Project Properties dialog

### 9.3.4 Default Styles Properties

The *Default Styles* tab lets you control how new layers will be drawn in the project when they do not have an existing .qml style defined. You can:

- Set default symbols (*Marker*, *Line*, *Fill*) to apply depending on the layer geometry type as well as a default *Color Ramp*
- Apply a default *Opacity* to new layers
- *Assign random colors to symbols*, modifying the symbols fill colors, hence avoiding same rendering for all layers.

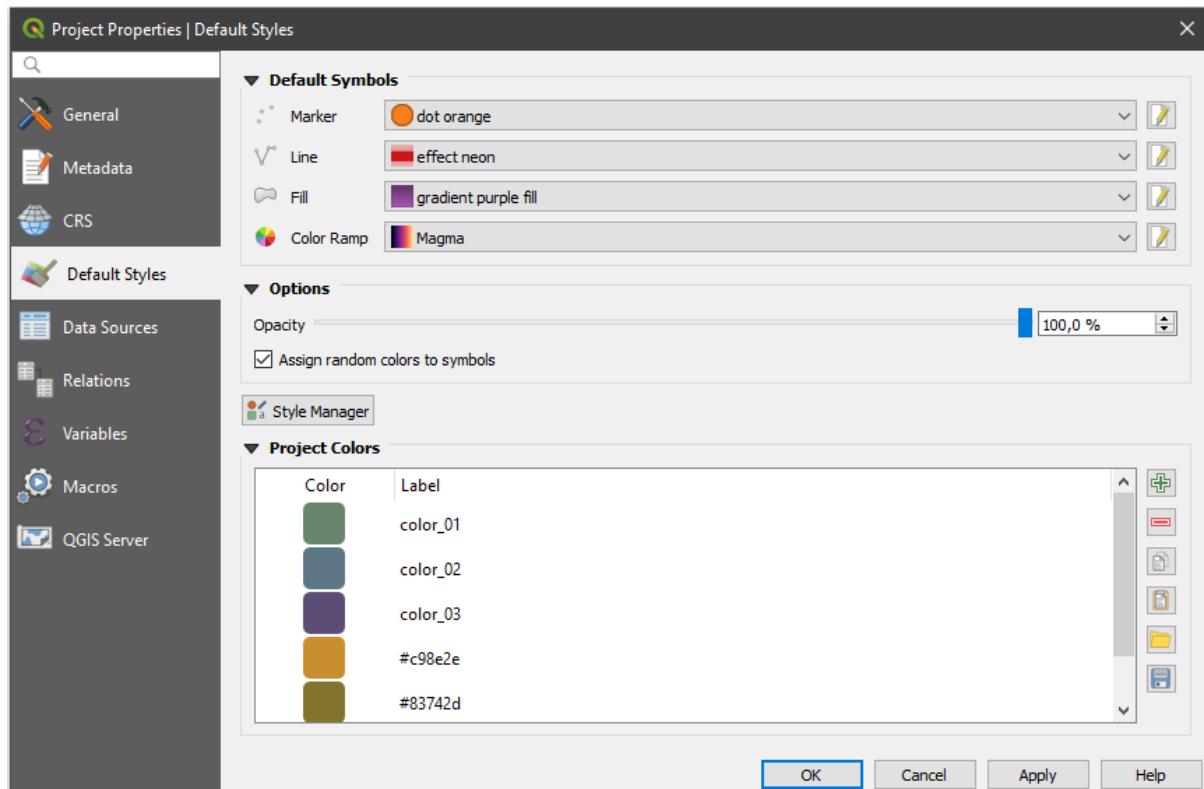


Fig. 9.20: Default Styles tab

Using the  *Style Manager* button, you can also quickly access the *Style Manager* dialog and configure symbols and color ramps.

There is also an additional section where you can define specific colors for the running project. Like the *global colors*, you can:

-  *Add* or  *Remove* color
-  *Copy* or  *Paste* color
-  *Import* or  *Export* the set of colors from/to .gpl file.

Double-click a color in the list to tweak or replace it in the *Color Selector* dialog. You can also rename it by double-clicking in the *Label* column.

These colors are identified as *Project colors* and listed as part of *color widgets*.

**Tip:** Use project colors to quickly assign and update color widgets

Project colors can be referred to using their label and the color widgets they are used in are bound to them. This means that instead of repeatedly setting the same color for many properties and, to avoid a cumbersome update you can:

1. Define the color as a project color
  2. Apply it using the `project_color('color_label')` expression in color *data defined override widget*
  3. Update the color once in a *Project colors* list
  4. And the change is reflected EVERYWHERE.
- 

### 9.3.5 Data Sources Properties

In the *Data Sources* tab, you can:

- *Automatically create transaction groups where possible*: When this mode is turned on, all (postgres) layers from the same database are synchronised in their edit state, i.e. when one layer is put into edit state, all are, when one layer is committed or one layer is rolled back, so are the others. Also, instead of buffering edit changes locally, they are directly sent to a transaction in the database which gets committed when the user clicks save layer. Note that you can (de)activate this option only if no layer is being edited in the project.
- *Evaluate default values on provider side*: When adding new features in a PostgreSQL table, fields with default value constraint are evaluated and populated at the form opening, and not at the commit moment. This means that instead of an expression like `nextval('serial')`, the field in the *Add Feature* form will display expected value (e.g., 25).
- *Trust project when data source has no metadata*: To speed up project loading by skipping data checks. Useful in QGIS Server context or in projects with huge database views/materialized views. The extent of layers will be read from the QGIS project file (instead of data sources) and when using the PostgreSQL provider the primary key unicity will not be checked for views and materialized views.
- Configure the *Layers Capabilities*, i.e.:
  - Set (or disable) which layers are `identifiable`, i.e. will respond to the *identify tool*. By default, layers are set queryable.
  - Set whether a layer should appear as `read-only`, meaning that it can not be edited by the user, regardless of the data provider's capabilities. Although this is a weak protection, it remains a quick and handy configuration to avoid end-users modifying data when working with file-based layers.
  - Define which layers are `searchable`, i.e. could be queried using the *locator widget*. By default, layers are set searchable.
  - Define which layers are defined as `required`. Checked layers in this list are protected from inadvertent removal from the project.

The *Layers Capabilities* table provides some convenient tools to:

- Select multiple cells and press *Toggle Selection* to have them change their checkbox state;
- *Show spatial layers only*, filtering out non-spatial layers from the layers list;
-  *Filter layers...* and quickly find a particular layer to configure.

### 9.3.6 Relations Properties

The *Relations* tab is used to define 1:n relations. The relations are defined in the project properties dialog. Once relations exist for a layer, a new user interface element in the form view (e.g. when identifying a feature and opening its form) will list the related entities. This provides a powerful way to express e.g. the inspection history

on a length of pipeline or road segment. You can find out more about 1:n relations support in Section [Creating one or many to many relations](#).

### 9.3.7 Variables Properties

The *Variables* tab lists all the variables available at the project's level (which includes all global variables). Besides, it also allows the user to manage project-level variables. Click the button to add a new custom project-level variable. Likewise, select a custom project-level variable from the list and click the button to remove it. More information on variables usage in the General Tools [Storing values in Variables](#) section.

### 9.3.8 Macros Properties

The *Macros* tab is used to edit Python macros for projects. Currently, only three macros are available: `openProject()`, `saveProject()` and `closeProject()`.

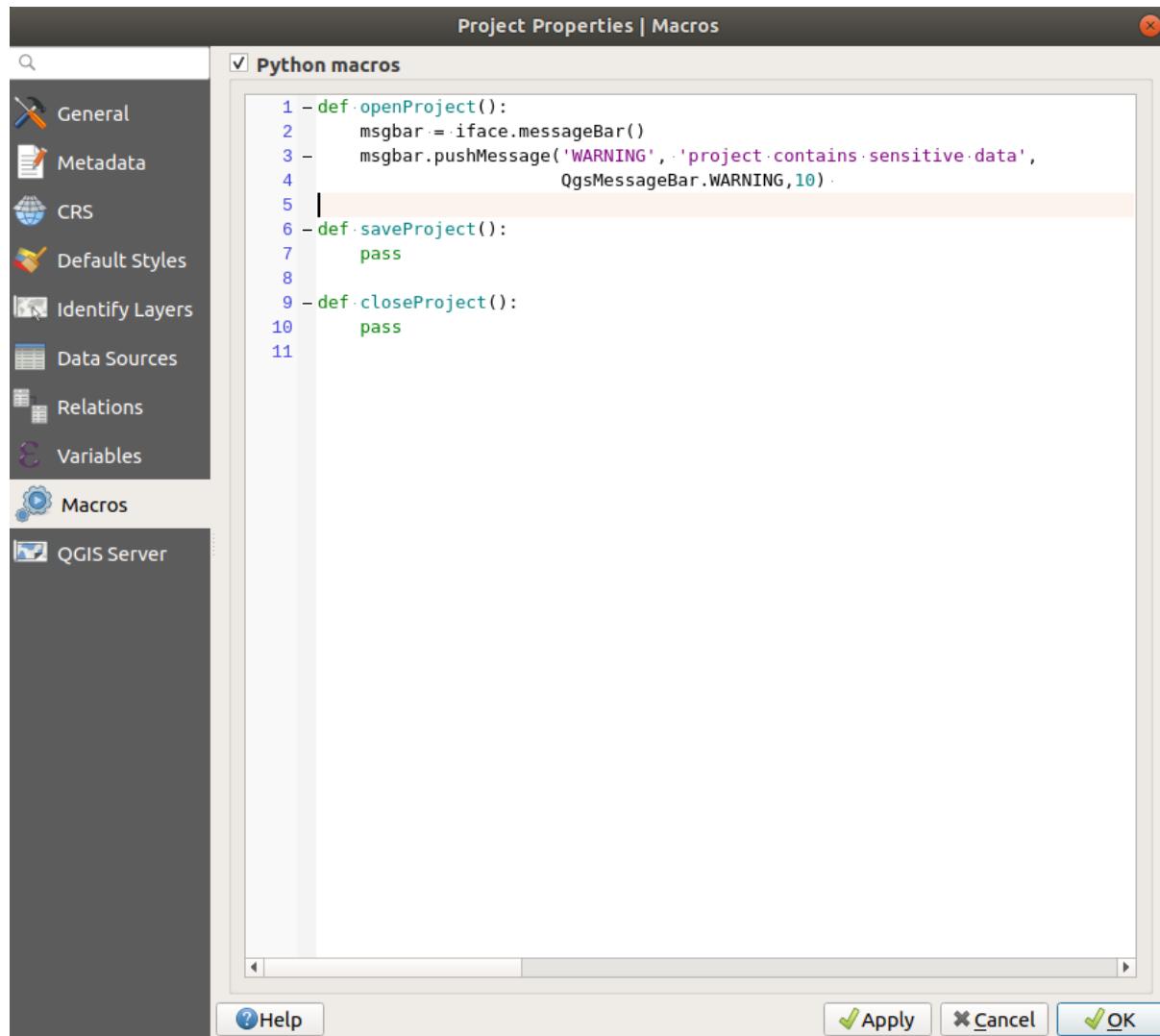


Fig. 9.21: Macro settings in QGIS

### 9.3.9 QGIS Server Properties

The tab *QGIS Server* allows you to configure your project in order to publish it online. Here you can define information about the QGIS Server WMS and WFS capabilities, extent and CRS restrictions. More information available in section [Configure your project](#) and subsequent.

## 9.4 Customization

The customization dialog lets you (de)activate almost every element in the QGIS user interface. This can be very useful if you want to provide your end-users with a ‘light’ version of QGIS, containing only the icons, menus or panels they need.

---

**Note:** Before your changes are applied, you need to restart QGIS.

---

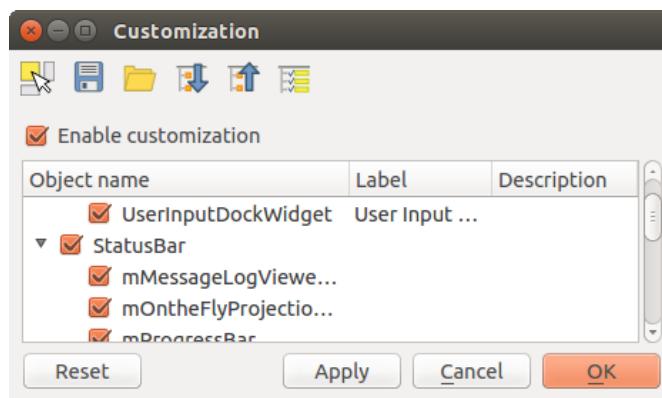


Fig. 9.22: The Customization dialog

Ticking the  *Enable customization* checkbox is the first step on the way to QGIS customization. This enables the toolbar and the widget panel from which you can uncheck and thus disable some GUI items.

The configurable item can be:

- a **Menu** or some of its sub-menus from the *Menu Bar*
- a whole **Panel** (see *Panels and Toolbars*)
- the **Status bar** described in *Status Bar* or some of its items
- a **Toolbar**: the whole bar or some of its icons
- or any **widget** from any dialog in QGIS: label, button, combobox...

With Switch to catching widgets in main application, you can click on an item in QGIS interface that you want to be hidden and QGIS automatically unchecks the corresponding entry in the Customization dialog.

Once you setup your configuration, click *Apply* or *OK* to validate your changes. This configuration becomes the one used by default by QGIS at the next startup.

The modifications can also be saved in a `.ini` file using Save To File button. This is a handy way to share a common QGIS interface among multiple users. Just click on Load from File from the destination computer in order to import the `.ini` file. You can also run *command line tools* and save various setups for different use cases as well.

---

**Tip: Easily restore predefined QGIS**

The initial QGIS GUI configuration can be restored by one of the methods below:

- unchecking  *Enable customization* option in the Customization dialog or click the  *Check All* button
- pressing the *Reset* button in the **QSettings** frame under *Settings → Options menu, System tab*
- launching QGIS at a command prompt with the following command line `qgis --nocustomization`
- setting to `false` the value of *UI → Customization → Enabled* variable under *Settings → Options menu, Advanced tab* (see the [warning](#)).

In most cases, you need to restart QGIS in order to have the change applied.

## 9.5 Keyboard shortcuts

QGIS provides default keyboard shortcuts for many features. You can find them in section [Menu Bar](#). Additionally, the menu option *Settings → Keyboard Shortcuts...* allows you to change the default keyboard shortcuts and add new ones to QGIS features.

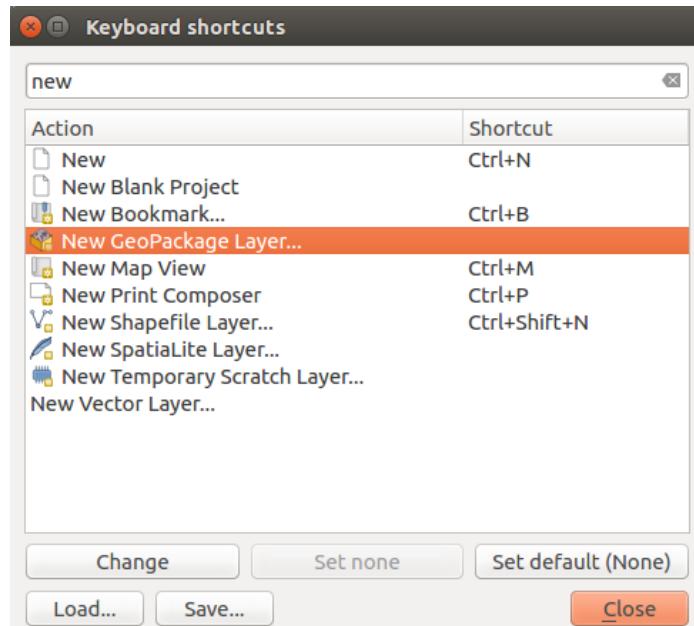


Fig. 9.23: Define shortcut options

Configuration is very simple. Use the search box at the top of the dialog to find a particular action, select it from the list and click on :

- *Change* and press the new combination you want to assign as new shortcut
- *Set None* to clear any assigned shortcut
- or *Set Default* to backup the shortcut to its original and default value.

Proceed as above for any other tools you wish to customize. Once you have finished your configuration, simply *Close* the dialog to have your changes applied. You can also *Save* the changes as an `.XML` file and *Load* them into another QGIS installation.

## 9.6 Running QGIS with advanced settings

### 9.6.1 Command line and environment variables

We've seen that *launching QGIS* is done as for any application on your OS. QGIS provides command line options for more advanced use cases (in some cases you can use an environment variable instead of the command line option). To get a list of the options, enter `qgis --help` on the command line, which returns:

```
QGIS is a user friendly Open Source Geographic Information System.
Usage: /usr/bin/qgis.bin [OPTION] [FILE]
OPTION:
  [--version]           display version information and exit
  [--snapshot filename] emit snapshot of loaded datasets to given file
  [--width width]      width of snapshot to emit
  [--height height]    height of snapshot to emit
  [--lang language]    use language for interface text (changes existing)
  ↵override)
  [--project projectfile] load the given QGIS project
  [--extent xmin,ymin,xmax,ymax] set initial map extent
  [--nologo]            hide splash screen
  [--noversioncheck]   don't check for new version of QGIS at startup
  [--nopugins]          don't restore plugins on startup
  [--nocustomization]  don't apply GUI customization
  [--customizationfile path] use the given ini file as GUI customization
  [--globalsettingsfile path] use the given ini file as Global Settings
  ↵(defaults)
  [--authdbdirectory path] use the given directory for authentication
  ↵database
  [--code path]         run the given python file on load
  [--defaultui]         start by resetting user ui settings to default
  [--hide-browser]     hide the browser widget
  [--dxf-export filename.dxf] emit dxf output of loaded datasets to
  ↵given file
  [--dxf-extent xmin,ymin,xmax,ymax] set extent to export to dxf
  [--dxf-symbology-mode none|symbollayer|feature] symbology mode for dxf
  ↵output
  [--dxf-scale-denom scale]      scale for dxf output
  [--dxf-encoding encoding]     encoding to use for dxf output
  [--dxf-map-theme maptheme]    map theme to use for dxf output
  [--take-screenshots output_path] take screen shots for the user
  ↵documentation
  [--screenshots-categories categories] specify the categories of
  ↵Screenshot to be used (see QgsAppScreenShots::Categories).
  [--profile name]            load a named profile from the user's profiles
  ↵folder.
  [--profiles-path path]      path to store user profile folders. Will create
  ↵profiles inside a {path}\profiles folder
  [--version-migration]      force the settings migration from older version if
  ↵found
  [--openclprogramfolder]     path to the folder containing the sources
  ↵for OpenCL programs.
  [--help]                   this text
  [--]                      treat all following arguments as FILES

FILE:
  Files specified on the command line can include rasters,
  vectors, and QGIS project files (.qgs and .qgz):
  1. Rasters - supported formats include GeoTiff, DEM
  and others supported by GDAL
  2. Vectors - supported formats include ESRI Shapefiles
  and others supported by OGR and PostgreSQL layers using
  the PostGIS extension
```

---

**Tip: Example Using command line arguments**

You can start QGIS by specifying one or more data files on the command line. For example, assuming you are in the `qgis_sample_data` directory, you could start QGIS with a vector layer and a raster file set to load on startup using the following command: `qgis ./raster/landcover.img ./gml/lakes.gml`

---

**--version**

This option returns QGIS version information.

**--snapshot**

This option allows you to create a snapshot in PNG format from the current view. This comes in handy when you have many projects and want to generate snapshots from your data, or when you need to create snapshots of the same project with updated data.

Currently, it generates a PNG file with 800x600 pixels. The size can be adjusted using the `--width` and `--height` arguments. The filename can be added after `--snapshot`. For example:

```
qgis --snapshot my_image.png --width 1000 --height 600 --project my_project.qgs
```

**--width**

This option returns the width of the snapshot to be emitted (used with `--snapshot`).

**--height**

This option returns the height of the snapshot to be emitted (used with `--snapshot`).

**--lang**

Based on your locale, QGIS selects the correct localization. If you would like to change your language, you can specify a language code. For example, `qgis --lang it` starts QGIS in Italian localization.

**--project**

Starting QGIS with an existing project file is also possible. Just add the command line option `--project` followed by your project name and QGIS will open with all layers in the given file loaded.

**--extent**

To start with a specific map extent use this option. You need to add the bounding box of your extent in the following order separated by a comma:

```
--extent xmin,ymin,xmax,ymax
```

This option probably makes more sense when paired with the `--project` option to open a specific project at the desired extent.

**--nologo**

This option hides the splash screen when you start QGIS.

**--noversioncheck**

Skip searching for a new version of QGIS at startup.

**--nopugins**

If you have trouble at start-up with plugins, you can avoid loading them at start-up with this option. They will still be available from the Plugins Manager afterwards.

**--nocustomization**

Using this option, any existing *GUI customization* will not be applied at startup. This means that any hidden buttons, menu items, toolbars, and so on, will show up on QGIS start up. This is not a permanent change. The customization will be applied again if QGIS is launched without this option.

This option is useful for temporarily allowing access to tools that have been removed by customization.

**--customizationfile**

Using this option, you can define a UI customization file, that will be used at startup.

**--globalsettingsfile**

Using this option, you can specify the path for a Global Settings file (`.ini`), also known as the Default Settings. The settings in the specified file replace the original inline default ones, but the user profiles' settings will be set on top of those. The default global settings is located in `your_QGIS_PKG_path/resources/qgis_global_settings.ini`.

Presently, there's no way to specify a file to write settings to; therefore, you can create a copy of an original settings file, rename, and adapt it.

Setting the `qgis_global_setting.ini` file path to a network shared folder, allows a system administrator to change global settings and defaults in several machines by only editing one file.

The equivalent environment variable is `QGIS_GLOBAL_SETTINGS_FILE`.

**--authdbdirectory**

This option is similar to `--globalsettingsfile`, but defines the path to the directory where the authentication database will be stored and loaded.

**--code**

This option can be used to run a given python file directly after QGIS has started.

For example, when you have a python file named `load_alaska.py` with following content:

```
from qgis.utils import iface
raster_file = "/home/gisadmin/Documents/qgis_sample_data/raster/landcover.img"
layer_name = "Alaska"
iface.addRasterLayer(raster_file, layer_name)
```

Assuming you are in the directory where the file `load_alaska.py` is located, you can start QGIS, load the raster file `landcover.img` and give the layer the name ‘Alaska’ using the following command:

```
qgis --code load_alaska.py
```

#### **--defaultui**

On load, **permanently resets** the user interface (UI) to the default settings. This option will restore the panels and toolbars visibility, position, and size. Unless it’s changed again, the default UI settings will be used in the following sessions.

Notice that this option doesn’t have any effect on *GUI customization*. Items hidden by GUI customization (e.g. the status bar) will remain hidden even using the `--defaultui` option. See also the `--nocustomization` option.

#### **--hide-browser**

On load, hides the *Browser* panel from the user interface. The panel can be enabled by right-clicking a space in the toolbars or using the *View → Panels (Settings → Panels* in  Linux KDE).

Unless it’s enabled again, the Browser panel will remain hidden in the following sessions.

#### **--dxf-\***

These options can be used to export a QGIS project into a DXF file. Several options are available:

- `-dxf-export`: the DXF filename into which to export the layers;
- `-dxf-extent`: the extent of the final DXF file;
- `-dxf-symbology-mode`: several values can be used here: `none` (no symbology), `symbollayer` (Symbol layer symbology), `feature` (feature symbology);
- `-dxf-scale-denom`: the scale denominator of the symbology;
- `-dxf-encoding`: the file encoding;
- `-dxf-map-theme`: choose a *map theme* from the layer tree configuration.

#### **--take-screenshots**

Takes screenshots for the user documentation. Can be used together with `--screenshots-categories` to filter which categories/sections of the documentation screenshots should be created (see `QgsAppScreenshots::Categories`).

#### **--profile**

Loads QGIS using a specific profile from the user’s profile folder. Unless changed, the selected profile will be used in the following QGIS sessions.

#### **--profiles-path**

With this option, you can choose a path to load and save the profiles (user settings). It creates profiles inside a `{path}\profiles` folder, which includes settings, installed plugins, processing models and scripts, and so on.

This option allows you to, for instance, carry all your plugins and settings in a flash drive, or, for example, share the settings between different computers using a file sharing service.

The equivalent environment variable is `QGIS_CUSTOM_CONFIG_PATH`.

**--version-migration**

If settings from an older version are found (*e.g.*, the `.qgis2` folder from QGIS 2.18), this option will import them into the default QGIS profile.

**--openclprogramfolder**

Using this option, you can specify an alternative path for your OpenCL programs. This is useful for developers while testing new versions of the programs without needing to replace the existing ones.

The equivalent environment variable is `QGIS_OPENCL_PROGRAM_FOLDER`.

## 9.6.2 Deploying QGIS within an organization

If you need to deploy QGIS within an organization with a custom configuration file, first you need to copy/paste the content of the default settings file located in `your_QGIS_PKG_path/resources/qgis_global_settings.ini`. This file already contains some default sections identified by a block starting with `[]`. We recommend that you keep these defaults values and add your own sections at the bottom of the file. If a section is duplicated in the file, QGIS will take the last one from top to bottom.

You can change `allowVersionCheck=false` to disable the QGIS version check.

If you do not want to display the migration window after a fresh install, you need the following section:

```
[migration]
fileVersion=2
settings=true
```

If you want to add a custom variable in the global scope:

```
[variables]
organisation="Your organization"
```

To discover all possibilities of the settings INI file, we suggest that you set the config you would like in QGIS Desktop and then search for it in your INI file located in your profile using a text editor. A lot of settings can be set using the INI file such as WMS/WMTS, PostGIS connections, proxy settings, maptips...

Finally, you need to set the environment variable `QGIS_GLOBAL_SETTINGS_FILE` to the path of your customized file.

In addition, you can also deploy files such as Python macros, color palettes, layout templates, project templates... either in the QGIS system directory or in the QGIS user profile.

- Layout templates must be deployed in the `composer_templates` directory.
- Project templates must be deployed in the `project_templates` directory.
- Custom Python macros must be deployed in the `python` directory.



# CHAPTER 10

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## Working with Projections

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A Coordinate Reference System, or CRS, is a method of associating numerical coordinates with a position on the surface of the Earth. QGIS has support for approximately 7,000 standard CRSs, each with different use cases, pros and cons! Choosing an appropriate reference system for your QGIS projects and data can be a complex task, but fortunately QGIS helps guide you through this choice, and makes working with different CRSs as transparent and accurate as possible.

### 10.1 Overview of Projection Support

QGIS has support for approximately 7,000 known CRSs. These standard CRSs are based on those defined by the European Petroleum Search Group (EPSG) and the Institut Géographique National de France (IGNF), and are made available in QGIS through the underlying “Proj” projection library. Commonly, these standard projections are identified through use of an authority:code combination, where the authority is an organisation name such as “EPSG” or “IGNF”, and the code is a unique number associated with a specific CRS. For instance, the common WGS 84 latitude/longitude CRS is known by the identifier EPSG: 4326, and the web mapping standard CRS is EPSG:3857.

Custom, user-created CRSs are stored in a user CRS database. See section [Custom Coordinate Reference System](#) for information on managing your custom coordinate reference systems.

### 10.2 Layer Coordinate Reference Systems

In order to correctly project data into a specific target CRS, either your data must contain information about its coordinate reference system or you will need to manually assign the correct CRS to the layer. For PostGIS layers, QGIS uses the spatial reference identifier that was specified when that PostGIS layer was created. For data supported by OGR or GDAL, QGIS relies on the presence of a recognized means of specifying the CRS. For instance, for the Shapefile format this is a file containing the Well-Known Text (WKT) representation of the layer’s CRS. This projection file has the same base name as the .shp file and a .prj extension. For example, alaska.shp would have a corresponding projection file named alaska.prj.

Whenever a layer is loaded into QGIS, QGIS attempts to automatically determine the correct CRS for that layer. In some cases this is not possible, e.g. when a layer has been provided without retaining this information. Whenever QGIS cannot automatically determine the correct CRS for a layer, it will prompt you to manually select the CRS. Selecting the correct choice is crucial, as a wrong choice will place your layer in the wrong position on the Earth’s

surface! Sometimes, accompanying metadata will describe the correct CRS for a layer, in other cases you will need to contact the original author of the data to determine the correct CRS to use.

## 10.3 Project Coordinate Reference Systems

Every project in QGIS also has an associated Coordinate Reference System. The project CRS determines how data is projected from its underlying raw coordinates to the flat map rendered within your QGIS map canvas. Behind the scenes, QGIS transparently reprojects all layers contained within your project into the project's CRS, so that they will all be rendered in the correct position with respect to each other!

It is important to make an appropriate choice of CRS for your QGIS projects. Choosing an inappropriate CRS can cause your maps to look distorted, and poorly reflect the real-world relative sizes and positions of features. Usually, while working in smaller geographic areas, there will be a number of standard CRSs used within a particular country or administrative area. It's important to research which CRSs are appropriate or standard choices for the area you are mapping, and ensure that your QGIS project follows these standards.

The project CRS can be set through the *CRS* tab of the *Project properties* dialog (*Project → Properties...*). It will also be shown in the lower-right of the QGIS status bar.

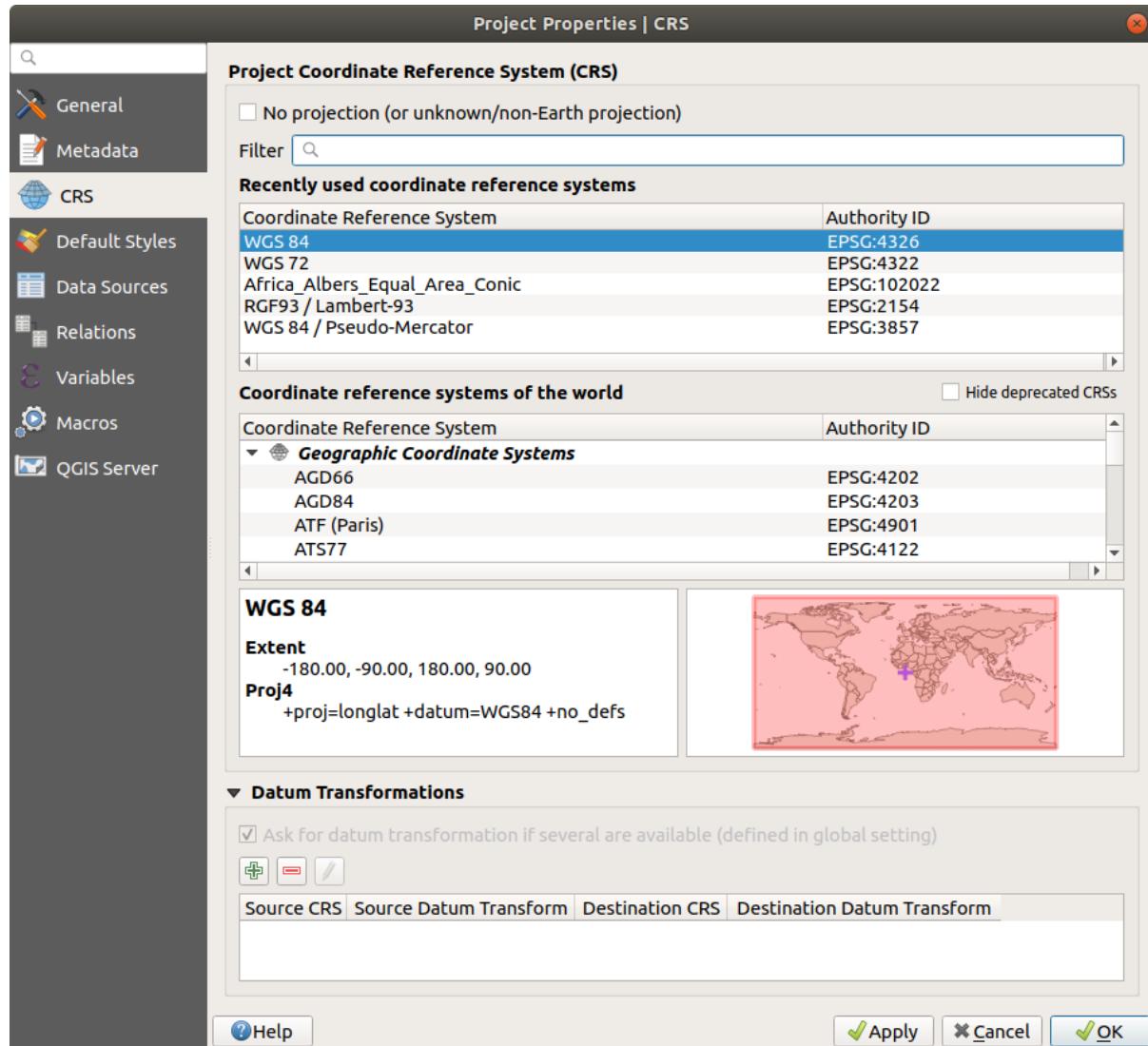


Fig. 10.1: Project Properties Dialog

The *CRS* tab also has an optional setting for *No projection*. Checking this setting will disable ALL projection

handling within the QGIS project, causing all layer and map coordinates to be treated as simple 2D Cartesian coordinates, with no relation to positions on the Earth's surface.

Whenever you select a new CRS for your QGIS project, the measurement units will automatically be changed in the *General* tab of the *Project properties* dialog (*Project → Properties...*) to match the selected CRS. For instance, some CRSs define their coordinates in feet instead of meters, so setting your QGIS project to one of these CRSs will also set your project to measure using feet by default.

## 10.4 CRS Settings

By default, QGIS starts each new project using a global default projection. This default CRS is EPSG:4326 (also known as “WGS 84”), and it is a global latitude/longitude based reference system. This default CRS can be changed via the *CRS for New Projects* setting in the *CRS* tab under *Settings → Options*. There is an option to automatically set the project’s CRS to match the CRS of the first layer loaded into a new project, or alternatively you can select a different default CRS to use for all newly created projects. This choice will be saved for use in subsequent QGIS sessions.

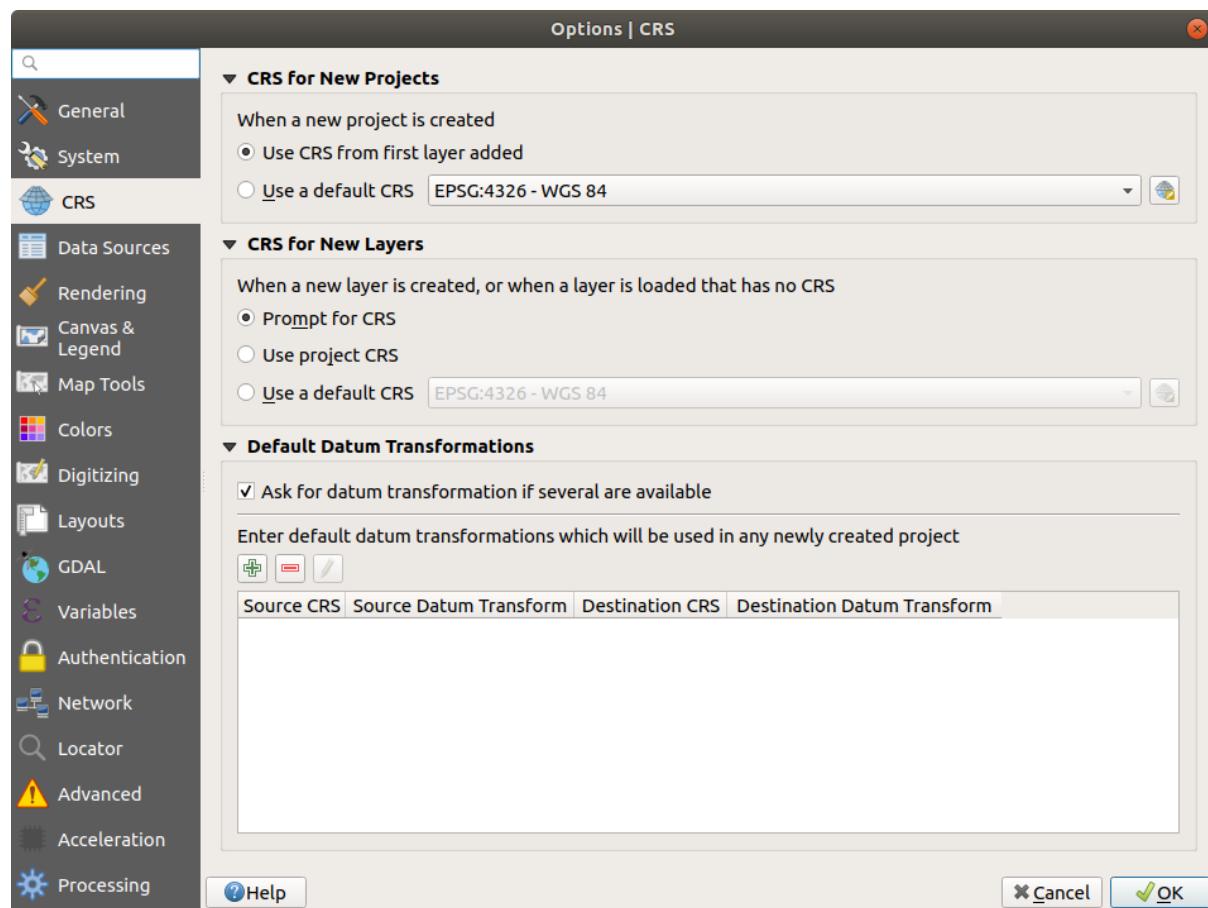


Fig. 10.2: The CRS tab in the QGIS Options Dialog

When you use layers that do not have a CRS, you can define how QGIS responds to these layers. This can be done globally in the *CRS* tab under *Settings → Options*.

The options shown in *figure\_projection\_options* are:

- *Prompt for CRS*
- *Use project CRS*

-  *Use a default CRS*

If you want to define the Coordinate Reference System for a certain layer without CRS information, you can also do that in the *Source* tab of the raster and vector properties dialog (see [Source Properties](#) for rasters and [Source Properties](#) for vectors). If your layer already has a CRS defined, it will be displayed as shown in [Source tab in vector Layer Properties dialog](#). Note that changing the CRS in this setting does not alter the underlying data source in any way, rather it just changes how QGIS interprets the raw coordinates from the layer in the current QGIS project only.

---

**Tip: CRS in the Layers Panel**

Right-clicking on a layer in the Layers Panel (section [Layers Panel](#)) provides two CRS shortcuts. *Set layer CRS* takes you directly to the Coordinate Reference System Selector dialog (see [figure\\_projection\\_project](#)). *Set project CRS from Layer* redefines the project CRS using the layer's CRS.

---

## 10.5 On The Fly (OTF) CRS Transformation

QGIS supports “on the fly” CRS transformation for both raster and vector data. This means that regardless of the underlying CRS of particular map layers in your project, they will always be automatically transformed into the common CRS defined for your project.

## 10.6 Coordinate Reference System Selector

This dialog helps you assign a Coordinate Reference System to a project or a layer, provided a set of projection databases. Items in the dialog are:

- **Filter:** If you know the EPSG code, the identifier, or the name for a Coordinate Reference System, you can use the search feature to find it. Enter the EPSG code, the identifier or the name.
- **Recently used coordinate reference systems:** If you have certain CRSs that you frequently use in your everyday GIS work, these will be displayed in this list. Click on one of these items to select the associated CRS.
- **Coordinate reference systems of the world:** This is a list of all CRSs supported by QGIS, including Geographic, Projected and Custom coordinate reference systems. To define a CRS, select it from the list by expanding the appropriate node and selecting the CRS. The active CRS is preselected.
- **PROJ text:** This is the CRS string used by the PROJ projection engine. This text is read-only and provided for informational purposes.

The CRS selector also shows a rough preview of the geographic area for which a selected CRS is valid for use. Many CRSs are designed only for use in small geographic areas, and you should not use these outside of the area they were designed for. The preview map shades an approximate area of use whenever a CRS is selected from the list. In addition, this preview map also shows an indicator of the current main canvas map extent.

## 10.7 Custom Coordinate Reference System

If QGIS does not provide the coordinate reference system you need, you can define a custom CRS. To define a CRS, select  *Custom CRS...* from the *Settings* menu. Custom CRSs are stored in your QGIS user database. In addition to your custom CRSs, this database also contains your spatial bookmarks and other custom data.

Defining a custom CRS in QGIS requires a good understanding of the PROJ projection library. To begin, refer to “Cartographic Projection Procedures for the UNIX Environment - A User’s Manual” by Gerald I. Evenden, U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 90-284, 1990 (available at <ftp://ftp.remotesensing.org/proj/OF90-284.pdf>).

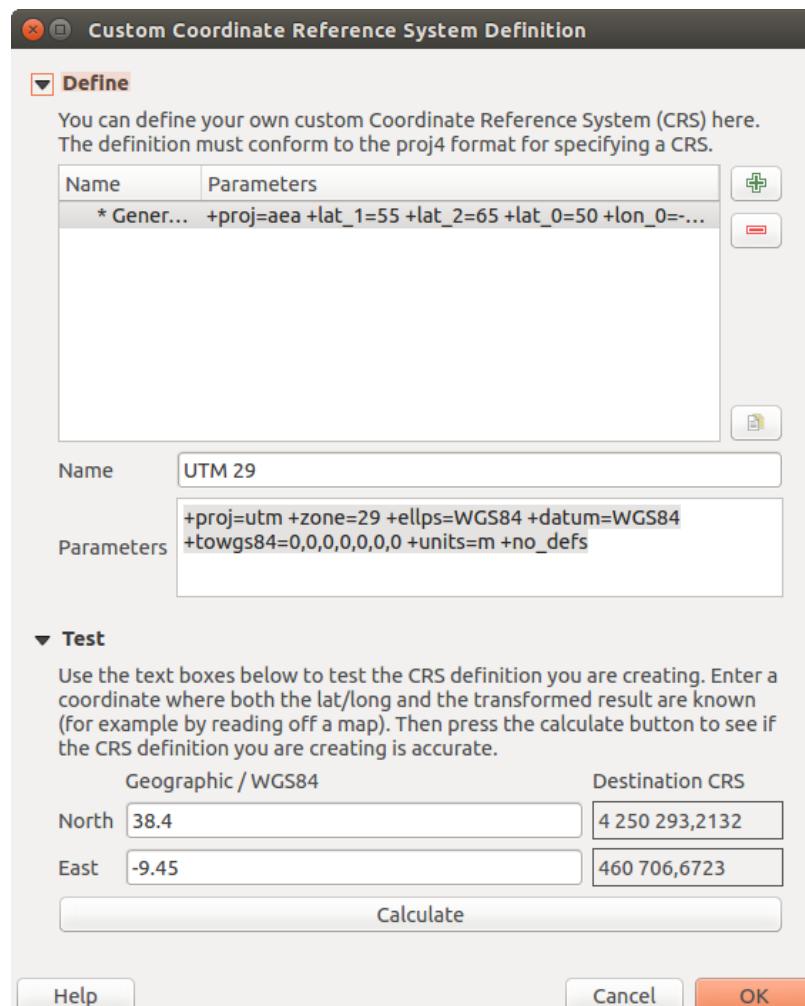


Fig. 10.3: Custom CRS Dialog

This manual describes the use of `proj` and related command line utilities. The cartographic parameters used with `proj` are described in the user manual and are the same as those used by QGIS.

The *Custom Coordinate Reference System Definition* dialog requires only two parameters to define a user CRS:

1. A descriptive name
2. The cartographic parameters in PROJ format

To create a new CRS, click the  Add new CRS button and enter a descriptive name and the CRS parameters.

Note that the *Parameters* must begin with a `+proj=` block, to represent the new coordinate reference system.

You can test your CRS parameters to see if they give sane results. To do this, enter known WGS 84 latitude and longitude values in *North* and *East* fields, respectively. Click on *Calculate*, and compare the results with the known values in your coordinate reference system.

### 10.7.1 Integrate an NTv2-transformation in QGIS

To integrate an NTv2 transformation file in QGIS you need one more step:

1. Place the NTv2 file (.gsb) in the CRS/Proj folder that QGIS uses (e.g. `C:\OSGeo4W64\share\proj` for windows users)
2. Add **nadgrids** (`+nadgrids=nameofthefile.gsb`) to the Proj definition in the *Parameters* field of the *Custom Coordinate Reference System Definition* (*Settings* → *Custom Projections...*).



Fig. 10.4: Setting an NTv2 transformation

## 10.8 Datum Transformations

In QGIS, ‘on-the-fly’ CRS transformation is enabled by default, meaning that whenever you use layers with different coordinate systems QGIS transparently reprojects them to the project CRS. For some CRS, there are a number of possible transforms available to reproject to the project’s CRS! QGIS optionally allows you to define a particular transformation to use, otherwise QGIS uses a default one.

This customization is done in the *Settings* →  *Options* → *CRS* tab menu under the *Default datum transformations* group:

- using  *Ask for datum transformation if several are available*: when more than one appropriate datum transformation exists for a source/destination CRS combination, a dialog will automatically be opened prompting users to choose which of these datum transformations to use for the project;
- or predefining a list of the appropriate default transformations to use when loading layers to projects or reprojecting a layer.

 Use the  button to open the *Select Datum Transformations* dialog. Then:

1. Indicate the *Source CRS* of the layer, using the drop-down menu or the  Select CRS widget.
2. Likewise, provide the *Destination CRS*.
3. Depending on the transform grid files (based on GDAL and PROJ version installed on your system), a list of available transformations from source to destination is built in the table. Clicking a row shows details on the settings applied (epsg code, accuracy of the transform, number of stations involved...).

You can choose to only display current valid transformations by checking the  *Hide deprecated* option.

- Find your preferred transformation, select it and click *OK*.

A new row is added to the table under *CRS → Default datum transformations* with information about ‘Source CRS’ and ‘Destination CRS’ as well as ‘Source datum transform’ and ‘Destination datum transform’.

From now, QGIS automatically uses the selected datum transformation for further transformation between these two CRSs until you  remove it from the list or  replace it with another one.

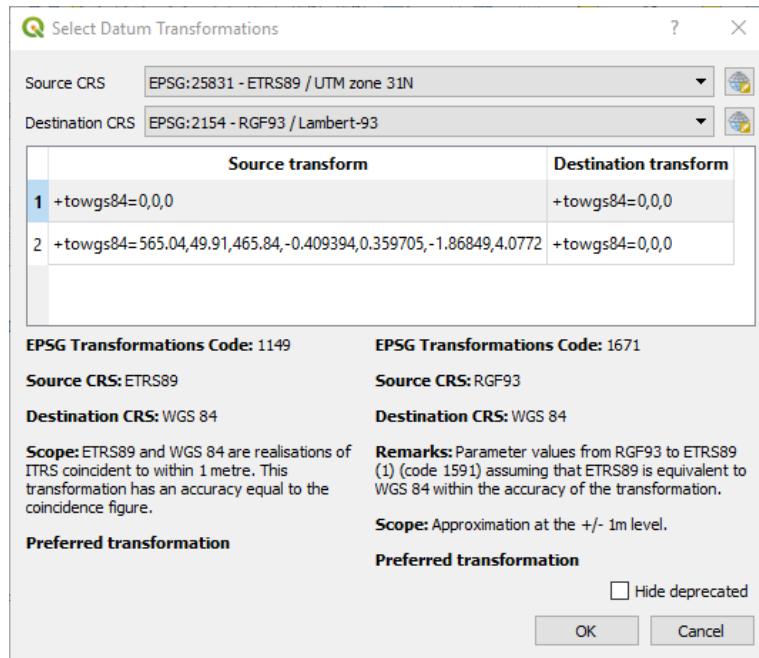


Fig. 10.5: Selecting a preferred default datum transformation

Datum transformations set in the *Settings → Options → CRS* tab will be inherited by all new QGIS projects created on the system. Additionally, a particular project may have its own specific set of transformations specified via the *CRS* tab of the *Project properties* dialog (*Project → Properties...*). These settings apply to the current project only.



# CHAPTER 11

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## General Tools

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### 11.1 Context help

Whenever you need help on a specific topic, you can access the corresponding page in the current User Manual via the *Help* button available in most dialogs — please note that third-party plugins can point to dedicated web pages.

### 11.2 Panels

By default, QGIS provides many panels to work with. Some of these panels are described below while others may be found in different parts of the document. A complete list of default panels provided by QGIS is available via the *View → Panels →* menu and mentioned at *Panels*.

#### 11.2.1 Layers Panel

The *Layers* panel (also called the *map legend*) lists all the layers in the project and helps you manage their visibility. You can show or hide it by pressing *Ctrl+1*. A layer can be selected and dragged up or down in the legend to change the Z-ordering. Z-ordering means that layers listed nearer the top of the legend are drawn over layers listed lower down in the legend.

---

**Note:** The Z-ordering behavior can be overridden by the *Layer Order* panel.

---

At the top of the *Layers* panel, a toolbar allows you to:

- Open the layer styling dock (F7): toggle the layer styling panel on and off.
- Add new group
- Manage Map Themes: control visibility of layers and arrange them in different map themes.
- Filter Legend by Map Content: only the layers that are set visible and whose features intersect the current map canvas have their style rendered in the layers panel. Otherwise, a generic NULL symbol is applied to the

layer. Based on the layer symbology, this is a convenient way to identify which kind of features from which layers cover your area of interest.

- **Filter Legend by Expression**: apply an expression to remove styles from the selected layer tree that have no feature satisfying the condition. This can be used to highlight features that are within a given area/feature of another layer. From the drop-down list, you can edit and clear the expression currently applied.
- **Expand All** or **Collapse All** layers and groups in the layers panel.
- **Remove Layer/Group** currently selected.



Fig. 11.1: Layer Toolbar in Layers Panel

---

**Note:** Tools to manage the layers panel are also available for map and legend items in print layouts

---

### Configuring map themes

The **Manage Map Themes** drop-down button provides access to convenient shortcuts to manipulate visibility of the layers in the *Layers* panel:

- **Show All Layers**
- **Hide All Layers**
- **Show Selected Layers**
- **Hide Selected Layers**
- **Hide Deselected Layers**

Beyond the simple control of layer visibility, the **Manage Map Themes** menu allows you to configure **Map Themes** in the legend and switch from one map theme to another. A map theme is a **snapshot** of the current map legend that records:

- the layers set as visible in the *Layers* panel
- **and** for each visible layer:
  - the reference to the *style* applied to the layer
  - the visible classes of the style, ie the layer checked node items in the *Layers panel*. This applies to *symbologies* other than the single symbol rendering
  - the collapsed/expanded state of the layer node(s) and the group(s) it's placed inside

To create a map theme:

1. Check a layer you want to show
2. Configure the layer properties (symbology, diagram, labels...) as usual
3. Expand the *Style* → menu at the bottom and click on *Add...* to store the settings as *a new style embedded in the project*

---

**Note:** A map theme does not remember the current details of the properties: only a reference to the style name is saved, so whenever you apply modifications to the layer while this style is enabled (eg change the symbology rendering), the map theme is updated with new information.

---

4. Repeat the previous steps as necessary for the other layers
5. If applicable, expand or collapse groups or visible layer nodes in the *Layers* panel
6. Click on the *Manage Map Themes* button on top of the panel, and *Add Theme...*
7. Enter the map theme's name and click *OK*

The new theme is listed in the lower part of the drop-down menu.

You can create as many map themes as you need: whenever the current combination in the map legend (visible layers, their active style, the map legend nodes) does not match any existing map theme contents as defined above, click on *Add Theme...* to create a new map theme, or use *Replace Theme* → to update a map theme. Use the *Remove Current Theme* button to delete the active theme.

Map themes are helpful to switch quickly between different preconfigured combinations: select a map theme in the list to restore its combination. All configured themes are also accessible in the print layout, allowing you to create different map items based on specific themes and independent of the current main canvas rendering (see *Map item layers*).

### Overview of the context menu of the Layers panel

At the bottom of the toolbar, the main component of the Layers panel is the frame listing vector or raster layers added to the project, optionally organized in groups. Depending on the item selected in the panel, a right-click shows a dedicated set of options presented below.

Option	Vector Layer	Raster Layer	Group
<i>Zoom to Layer/Group</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Zoom to Selection</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Show in Overview</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Show Feature Count</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Copy Layer/Group</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Rename Layer/Group</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Zoom to Native Resolution (100%)</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Stretch Using Current Extent</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Update SQL Layer...</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Add Group</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Duplicate Layer</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Remove Layer/Group...</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Move Out of Group</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Move to Top</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Continued on next page

Table 11.1 – continued from previous page

Option	Vector Layer	Raster Layer	Group
<i>Check and all its Parents</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Group Selected</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Open Attribute Table</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Toggle Editing</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Current Edits →</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Filter...</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Set Layer Scale Visibility...</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Zoom to Visible Scale</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Set CRS →</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
• <i>Set Layer/Group CRS...</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Set Project CRS from Layer</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Set Group WMS Data...</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Mutually Exclusive Group</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Check and all its children (Ctrl-click)</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Uncheck and all its children (Ctrl-click)</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Make Permanent</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Export →</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Save As...</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
• <i>Save Features As...</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
• <i>Save Selected Features As...</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
• <i>Save As Layer Definition File...</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• <i>Save As QGIS Layer Style File...</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Continued on next page

Table 11.1 – continued from previous page

Option	Vector Layer	Raster Layer	Group
<i>Styles →</i>			
• <i>Copy Style</i>			
• <i>Paste Style</i>			
• <i>Add...</i>			
• <i>Rename Current...</i>			
<i>Properties...</i>			

Table: Context menu from Layers Panel items

For GRASS vector layers, *Toggle editing* is not available. See section [Digitizing and editing a GRASS vector layer](#) for information on editing GRASS vector layers.

## Interact with groups and layers

Layers in the legend window can be organized into groups. There are two ways to do this:

1. Press the icon to add a new group. Type in a name for the group and press Enter. Now click on an existing layer and drag it onto the group.
2. Select some layers, right-click in the legend window and choose *Group Selected*. The selected layers will automatically be placed in a new group.

To move a layer out of a group, drag it out, or right-click on it and choose *Move Out of Group*: the layer is moved from the group and placed above it. Groups can also be nested inside other groups. If a layer is placed in a nested group, *Move Out of Group* will move the layer out of all nested groups.

To move a group or layer to the top of the layer panel, either drag it to the top, or choose *Move to Top*. If you use this option on a layer nested in a group, the layer is moved to the top in its current group.

The checkbox for a group will show or hide all the layers in the group with one click.

Enabling the **Mutually Exclusive Group** option means you can make a group have only one layer visible at the same time. Whenever a layer within the group is set visible the others will be toggled not visible.

It is possible to select more than one layer or group at the same time by holding down the `Ctrl` key while clicking additional layers. You can then move all selected layers to a new group at the same time.

You may also delete more than one layer or group at once by selecting several items with the `Ctrl` key and then pressing `Ctrl+D`: all selected layers or groups will be removed from the layers list.

## More information on layers and groups using indicator icon

In some circumstances, icons appear next to the layer or group in the *Layers* panel to give more information about the layer/group. These symbols are:

- to indicate that the layer is in edit mode and you can modify the data

- to indicate that the layer being edited has some unsaved changes
- to indicate *a filter* applied to the layer. Hover over the icon to see the filter expression and double-click to update the setting
- to identify an *embedded group or layer* and the path to their original project file
- to remind you that the layer is a *temporary scratch layer* and its content will be discarded when you close this project. To avoid data loss and make the layer permanent, click the icon to store the layer in any of the OGR vector formats supported by QGIS.

### Editing vector layer style

From the Layers panel, you have shortcuts to change the layer rendering quickly and easily. Right-click on a vector layer and select *Styles* → in the list in order to:

- see the *styles* currently applied to the layer. If you defined many styles for the layer, you can switch from one to another and your layer rendering will automatically be updated on the map canvas.
- copy the current style, and when applicable, paste a copied style from another layer
- rename the current style, add a new style (which is actually a copy of the current one) or delete the current style (when multiple styles are available).

---

**Note:** The previous options are also available for raster layers.

---

Whether the features in the vector layer all have the same unique symbol or they are classified (in which case the layer is displayed in a tree structure with each class as a sub-item), the following options are available at layer level or class level:

- *Edit Symbol...* to open the *The Symbol Selector* dialog to change any properties of the layer or feature symbol (symbol, size, color...). Double-clicking on a feature also opens the *Symbol Selector* dialog.
- *Color Selector* with a **Color Wheel** from which you can click a color to update the symbol fill color automatically. For convenience, **Recent colors** are available at the bottom of the color wheel.
- *Show All Items* and *Hide All Items* to toggle on or off the visibility of all the classes of features. This avoids (un)checking items one by one.

---

#### Tip: Quickly share a layer style

From the context menu, copy the style of a layer and paste it to a group or a selection of layers: the style is applied to all the layers that are of the same type (vector/raster) as the original layer and, for vector layers, have the same geometry type (point, line or polygon).

---

### 11.2.2 Layer Styling Panel

The *Layer Styling* panel (also enabled with `Ctrl+3`) is a shortcut to some of the functionalities of the *Layer Properties* dialog. It provides a quick and easy way to define the rendering and the behavior of a layer, and to visualize its effects without having to open the layer properties dialog.

In addition to avoiding the blocking (or “modal”) layer properties dialog, the layer styling panel also avoids cluttering the screen with dialogs, and contains most style functions (color selector, effects properties, rule edit, label substitution...): e.g., clicking color buttons inside the layer style panel causes the color selector dialog to be opened inside the layer style panel itself rather than as a separate dialog.

From a drop-down list of current layers in the layer panel, select an item and:

- Set raster layer *Symbology*, *Transparency*, and *Histogram* properties. These options are the same as those in the [Raster Properties Dialog](#).
- Set vector layer *Symbology*, *3D View* and *Labels* properties. These options are the same as those in the [The Vector Properties Dialog](#).
- Manage the associated style(s) in the *Style Manager* (more details at [Managing Custom Styles](#)).
- See the *History* of changes you applied to the layer style in the current project: you can therefore cancel or restore to any state by selecting it in the list and clicking *Apply*.

Another powerful feature of this panel is the *Live update* checkbox. Tick it to render your changes immediately on the map canvas: you no longer need to click the *Apply* button.

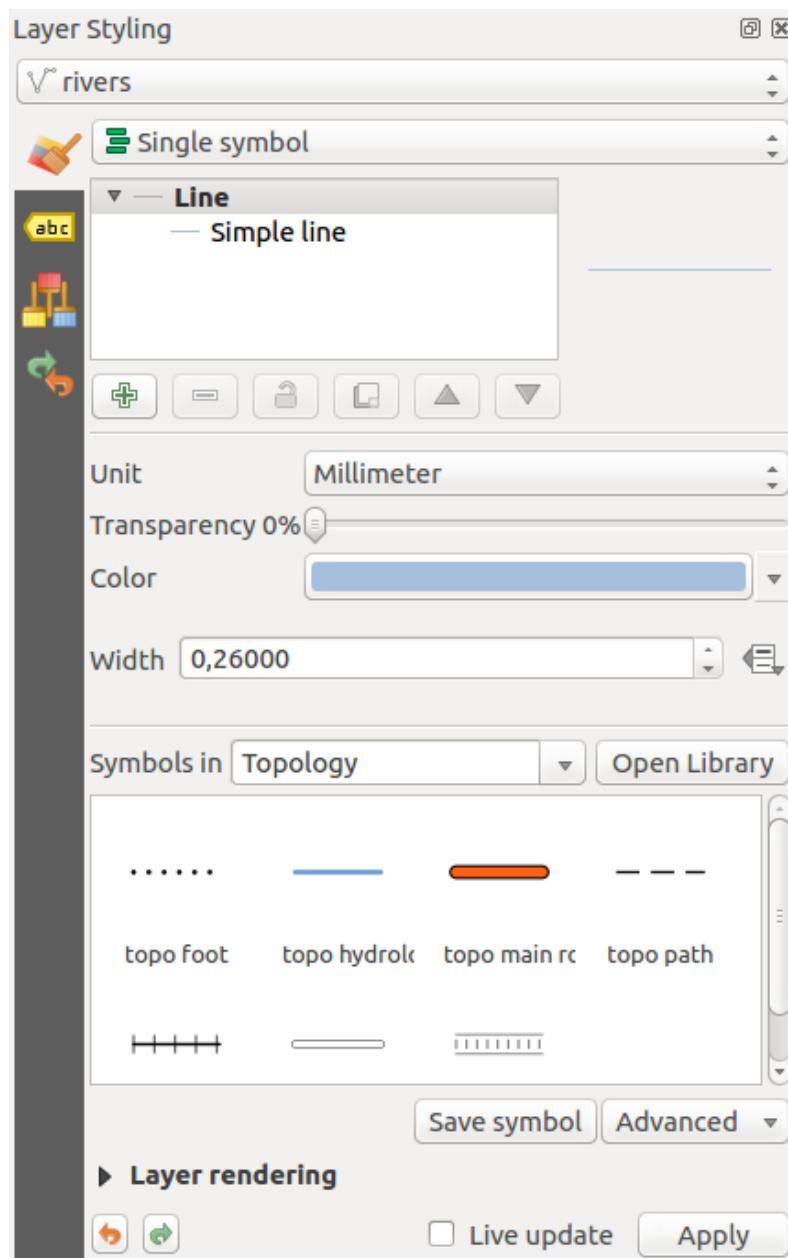


Fig. 11.2: Defining a layer's symbology from the layer styling panel

**Tip:** Add custom tabs to the Layer Styling panel

Using PyQGIS, you can set new tabs to manage layer properties in the Layer Styling Panel. See <https://nathanw.net/2016/06/29/qgis-style-dock-part-2-plugin-panels/> for an example.

### 11.2.3 Layer Order Panel

By default, layers shown on the QGIS map canvas are drawn following their order in the *Layers* panel: the higher a layer is in the panel, the higher (hence, more visible) it'll be in the map view.

You can define a drawing order for the layers independent of the order in the layers panel with the *Layer Order* panel enabled in *View → Panels →* menu or with *Ctrl+9*. Check  *Control rendering order* underneath the list of layers and reorganize the layers in the panel as you want. This order becomes the one applied to the map canvas. For example, in *figure\_layer\_order*, you can see that the *airports* features are displayed over the *alaska* polygon despite those layers' respective placement in the Layers panel.

Unchecking  *Control rendering order* will revert to default behavior.

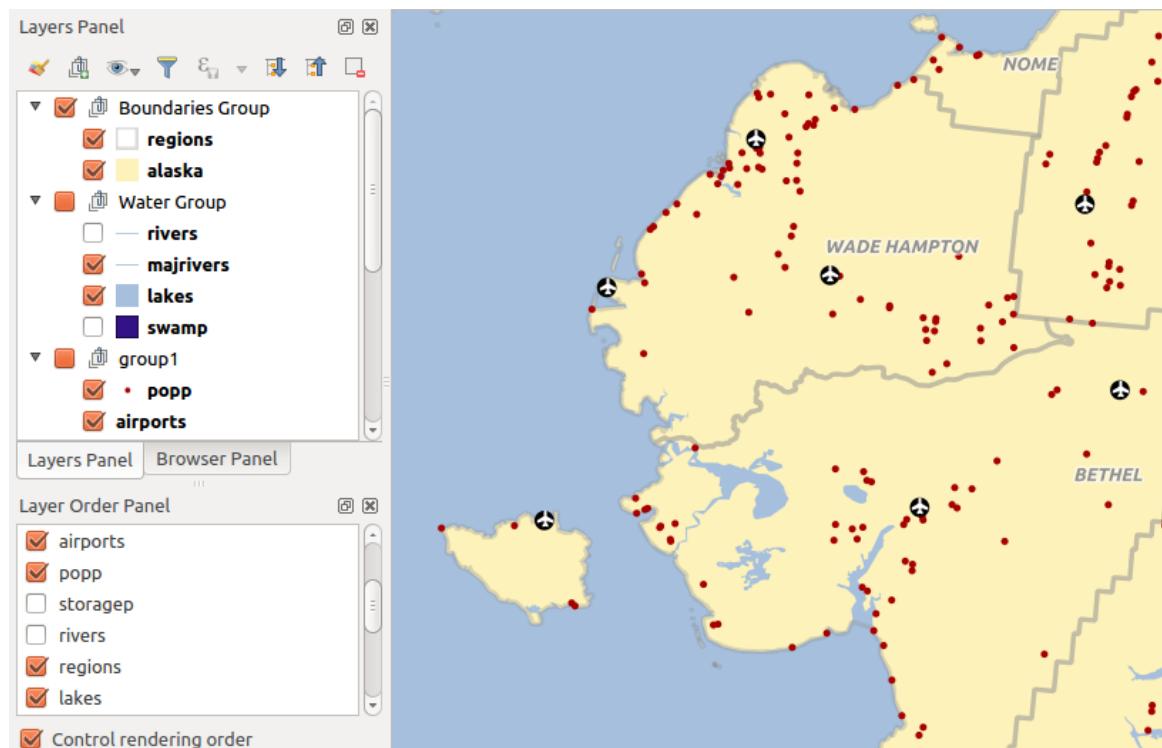


Fig. 11.3: Define a layer order independent of the legend

### 11.2.4 Overview Panel

The *Overview* panel (*Ctrl+8*) displays a map with a full extent view of some of the layers. The Overview map is filled with layers using the *Show in Overview* option from the *Layer* menu or in the layer contextual menu. Within the view, a red rectangle shows the current map canvas extent, helping you quickly to determine which area of the whole map you are currently viewing. If you click-and-drag the red rectangle in the overview frame, the main map view extent will update accordingly.

Note that labels are not rendered to the map overview even if the layers used in the map overview have been set up for labeling.

## 11.2.5 Log Messages Panel

When loading or processing some operations, you can track and follow messages that appear in different tabs using the  *Log Messages Panel*. It can be activated using the most right icon in the bottom status bar.

## 11.2.6 Undo/Redo Panel

For each layer being edited, the *Undo/Redo* (`Ctrl+5`) panel shows the list of actions carried out, allowing you quickly to undo a set of actions by selecting the action listed above. More details at [Undo and Redo edits](#).

## 11.2.7 Statistical Summary Panel

The *Statistics* panel (`Ctrl+6`) provides summarized information on any vector layer. This panel allows you to select:

- the vector layer to compute the statistics on
- the column to use, or an  *expression*
- the statistics to return using the drop-down button at the bottom-right of the dialog. Depending on the field's (or expression's values) type, available statistics are:

Statistics	String	Integer	Float	Date
Count	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Count Distinct Value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Count Missing value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sum		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Mean		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Standard Deviation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Standard Deviation on Sample		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Minimal value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Maximal value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Range		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Minority		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Majority		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Variety		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
First Quartile		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Third Quartile		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Inter Quartile Range		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Minimum Length	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Maximum Length	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

Table: Statistics available for each field type

The statistical summary can be:

- returned for the whole layer or  *selected features only*
- recalculated using the  button when the underlying data source changes (eg, new or removed features/fields, attribute modification)

- copied to the clipboard and pasted as a table in another application

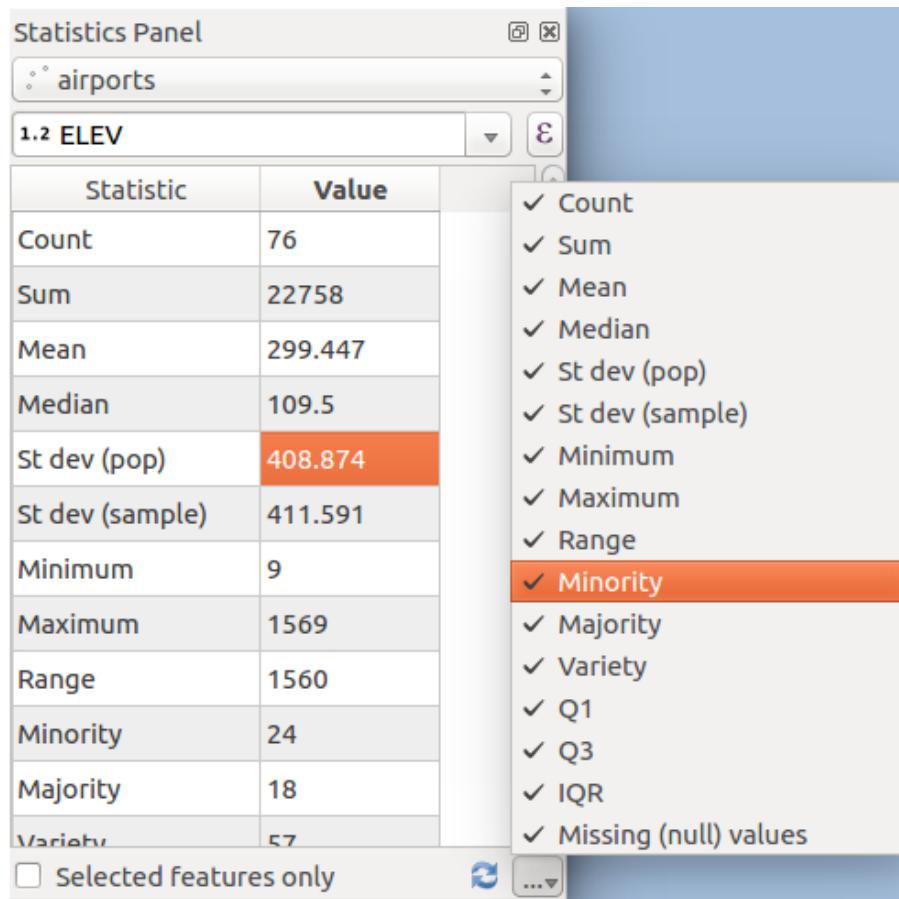


Fig. 11.4: Show statistics on a field

## 11.3 Nesting Projects

Sometimes, you'd like to keep some layers in different projects, but with the same style. You can either create a *default style* for these layers or embed them from another project to save time and effort.

Embed layers and groups from an existing project has some advantages over styling:

- All types of layers (vector or raster, local or online...) can be added
- Fetching groups and layers, you can keep the same tree structure of the “background” layers in your different projects
- While the embedded layers are editable, you can't change their properties such as symbology, labels, forms, default values and actions, ensuring consistency across projects
- Modify the items in the original project and changes are propagated to all the other projects

If you want to embed content from other project files into your project, select *Layer → Embed Layers and Groups*:

1. Click the ... button to look for a project: you can see the content of the project (see [figure\\_embed\\_dialog](#))
2. Hold down `Ctrl` (or `Cmd`) and click on the layers and groups you wish to retrieve
3. Click *OK*

The selected layers and groups are embedded in the *Layers* panel and displayed on the map canvas. An icon is added next to their name for recognition and hovering over displays a tooltip with the original project file path.

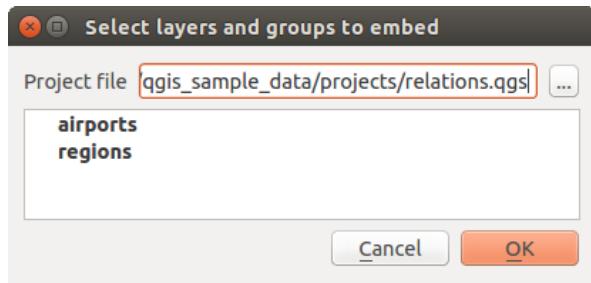


Fig. 11.5: Select layers and groups to embed

Like any other layer, an embedded layer can be removed from the project by right-clicking on the layer and clicking Remove.

---

#### Tip: Change rendering of an embedded layer

It's not possible to change the rendering of an embedded layer, unless you make the changes in the original project file. However, right-clicking on a layer and selecting *Duplicate* creates a layer which is fully-featured and not dependent on the original project. You can then safely remove the linked layer.

---

## 11.4 Working with the map canvas

### 11.4.1 Rendering

By default, QGIS renders all visible layers whenever the map canvas is refreshed. The events that trigger a refresh of the map canvas include:

- adding a layer
- panning or zooming
- resizing the QGIS window
- changing the visibility of a layer or layers

QGIS allows you to control the rendering process in a number of ways.

#### Scale Dependent Rendering

Scale-dependent rendering allows you to specify the minimum and maximum scales at which a layer (raster or vector) will be visible. To set scale-dependent rendering, open the *Properties* dialog by double-clicking on the layer in the legend. On the *Rendering* tab, tick *Scale dependent visibility* and enter the *Minimum (exclusive)* and *Maximum (inclusive)* scale values.

You can also activate scale dependent visibility on a layer from the Layers panel. Right-click on the layer and in the context menu, select *Set Layer Scale Visibility*.

The Set to current canvas scale button allow you to use the current map canvas scale as boundary of the range visibility.

---

**Note:** When a layer is not rendered in the map canvas because the map scale is out of its visibility scale range, the layer is greyed in the Layers panel and a new option *Zoom to Visible Scale* appears in the layer context menu. Select it and the map is zoomed to the layer's nearest visibility scale.

---

## Controlling Map Rendering

Map rendering can be controlled in various ways, as described below.

### Suspending Rendering

To suspend rendering, click the *Render* checkbox in the bottom-right corner of the status bar. When *Render* is not checked, QGIS does not redraw the canvas in response to any of the events described in the section *Rendering*. Examples of when you might want to suspend rendering include:

- adding many layers and symbolizing them prior to drawing
- adding one or more large layers and setting scale dependency before drawing
- adding one or more large layers and zooming to a specific view before drawing
- any combination of the above

Checking the *Render* checkbox enables rendering and causes an immediate refresh of the map canvas.

### Setting Layer Add Option

You can set an option to always load new layers without drawing them. This means the layer will be added to the map, but its visibility checkbox in the legend will be unchecked by default. To set this option, choose menu option *Settings → Options* and click on the *Rendering* tab. Uncheck *By default new layers added to the map should be displayed*. Any layer subsequently added to the map will be off (invisible) by default.

### Stopping Rendering

To stop the map drawing, press the `Esc` key. This will halt the refresh of the map canvas and leave the map partially drawn. It may take a bit of time between pressing `Esc` for the map drawing to halt.

---

**Note:** It is currently not possible to stop rendering — this was disabled in the Qt4 port because of User Interface (UI) problems and crashes.

---

### Influence Rendering Quality

QGIS has an option to influence the rendering quality of the map. Choose menu option *Settings → Options*, click on the *Rendering* tab and select or deselect *Make lines appear less jagged at the expense of some drawing performance*.

### Speed-up rendering

There are some settings that allow you to improve rendering speed. Open the QGIS options dialog using *Settings → Options*, go to the *Rendering* tab and select or deselect the following checkboxes:

- *Use render caching where possible to speed up redraws*.
- *Render layers in parallel using many CPU cores* and then set the *Max cores to use*.
- The map renders in the background onto a separate image and each *Map Update interval*, the content from this (off-screen) image will be taken to update the visible screen representation. However, if rendering finishes faster than this duration, it will be shown instantaneously.

- With  *Enable Feature simplification by default for newly added layers*, you simplify features' geometry (fewer nodes) and as a result, they display more quickly. Be aware that this can cause rendering inconsistencies.

## 11.4.2 Zooming and Panning

QGIS provides tools to zoom and pan to your area of interest.

Apart from using the  pan and  zoom-in/ zoom-out icons on the toolbar with the mouse, you can also navigate with the mouse wheel, spacebar and arrow keys. A *Zoom factor* can be set under the *Settings → Options → Map tools* menu to define the scale behavior while zooming.

### With the mouse wheel

You can press the mouse wheel to pan inside of the main window (on macOS, you may need to hold down the cmd key). You can roll the mouse wheel to zoom in and out on the map; the mouse cursor position will be the center of the zoomed area of interest. Holding down `Ctrl` while rolling the mouse wheel results in a finer zoom.

### With the arrow keys

Panning the map is possible with the arrow keys. Place the mouse cursor inside the map area, and click on the arrow keys to pan up, down, left and right.

You can also use the space bar to cause mouse movements temporarily to pan the map. The `PgUp` and `PgDown` keys on your keyboard will cause the map display to zoom in or out following the zoom factor set. Pressing `Ctrl++` or `Ctrl+-` also performs an immediate zoom in/out on the map canvas.

When certain map tools are active (Identify, Measure...), you can perform a zoom by holding down `Shift` and dragging a rectangle on the map to zoom to that area. This is not enabled for selection tools (since they use `Shift` for adding to selection) or edit tools.

## 11.4.3 Spatial Bookmarks

Spatial Bookmarks allow you to “bookmark” a geographic location and return to it later. By default, bookmarks are saved on the computer, meaning that they are available from any project in the same computer. If you wish to store the bookmark in the project file (`.qgs`) then you can do this by selecting the *In Project* checkbox.

### Creating a Bookmark

To create a bookmark:

1. Zoom or pan to the area of interest.
2. Select the menu option *View → New Bookmark* or press `Ctrl+B`. The *Spatial Bookmarks* panel opens with the newly created bookmark.
3. Enter a descriptive name for the bookmark (up to 255 characters).
4. Check the *In Project* box if you wish to save the bookmark in the project file.
5. Press `Enter` to add the bookmark or click elsewhere.

Note that you can have multiple bookmarks with the same name.

## Working with Bookmarks

To use or manage bookmarks, select *View → Show Bookmarks* or press *Ctrl+7*. The *Spatial Bookmarks* panel allows you to:

- Zoom to a Bookmark: select the desired bookmark and then click *Zoom To Bookmark*. You can also zoom to a bookmark by double-clicking on it.
- Delete a Bookmark: select the bookmark and click *Delete Bookmark*. Confirm your choice.
- Import or Export a bookmark: To share or transfer your bookmarks between computers you can use the *Import/Export Bookmarks* drop-down menu to export all bookmarks to an *.xml* file or import bookmarks from such a file.

You can also zoom to saved bookmarks by typing the bookmark name in the *locator*.

### 11.4.4 Decorations

Decorations include Grid, Copyright Label, North Arrow, Scale Bar and Layout Extents. They are used to ‘decorate’ the map by adding cartographic elements.

#### Grid

 Grid allows you to add a coordinate grid and coordinate annotations to the map canvas.

1. Select *View → Decorations → Grid* to open the dialog.

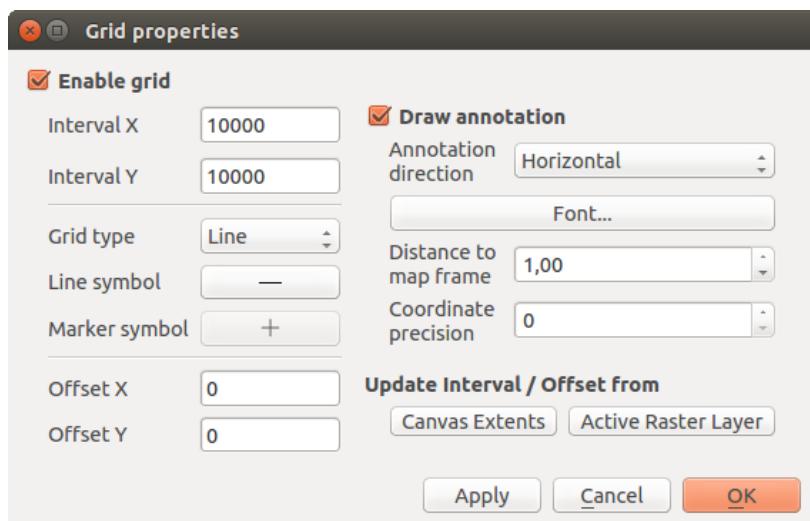


Fig. 11.6: The Grid Dialog

2. Tick  *Enable grid* and set grid definitions according to the layers loaded in the map canvas.
3. Tick  *Draw annotations* and set annotation definitions according to the layers loaded in the map canvas.
4. Click *Apply* to verify that it looks as expected or *OK* if you’re satisfied.

#### Copyright Label

 Copyright label adds a copyright label to the map using your choice of text.

1. Select *View → Decorations → Copyright Label* to open the dialog

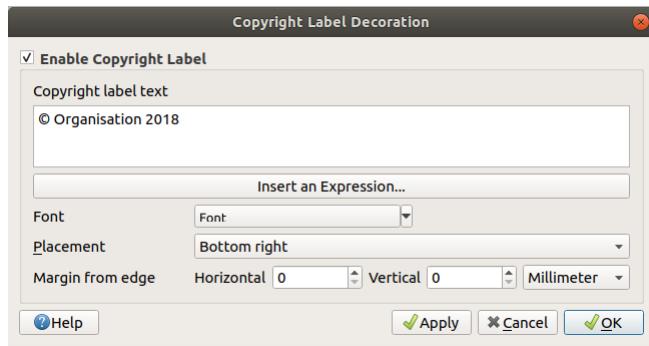


Fig. 11.7: The Copyright Dialog

2. Make sure  *Enable Copyright Label* is checked.
3. Enter the text you want to place on the map. You can include expressions (using the *Insert an Expression...* button).
4. Choose the font for the label from the *Font* combo box. Set the font color and opacity by clicking the black arrow to the right of the font combo box.
5. Choose the placement of the label from the *Placement* combo box.
6. Refine the placement of the item by setting a horizontal and/or vertical *Margin from Edge*. These values can be in **Millimeters** or **Pixels** or set as a **Percentage** of the width or height of the map canvas.
7. You can change the color to apply
8. Click *Apply* to verify that it looks as expected or *OK* if you're satisfied.

In the example above, which is the default, QGIS places a copyright symbol followed by the date in the bottom-right corner of the map canvas.

## North Arrow



*North Arrow* adds a north arrow on the map canvas, with options for style and placement.

To add a north arrow:

1. Select *View* → *Decorations* → *North Arrow* to open the dialog.
2. Make sure  *Enable north arrow* is checked
3. Optionally change the color and size, or choose a custom SVG.
4. Optionally change the angle or choose **Automatic** to let QGIS determine the direction
5. Optionally choose the placement from the Placement combo box
6. Optionally refine the placement of the arrow by setting a horizontal and/or vertical *Margin from (Canvas) Edge*. These values can be in **Millimeters** or **Pixels** or set as a **Percentage** of the width or height of the map canvas.
7. Click *Apply* to verify that it looks as expected and *OK* if you're satisfied.

## Scale Bar

*Scale Bar* adds a simple scale bar to the map canvas. You can control the style and placement, as well as the labelling of the bar.

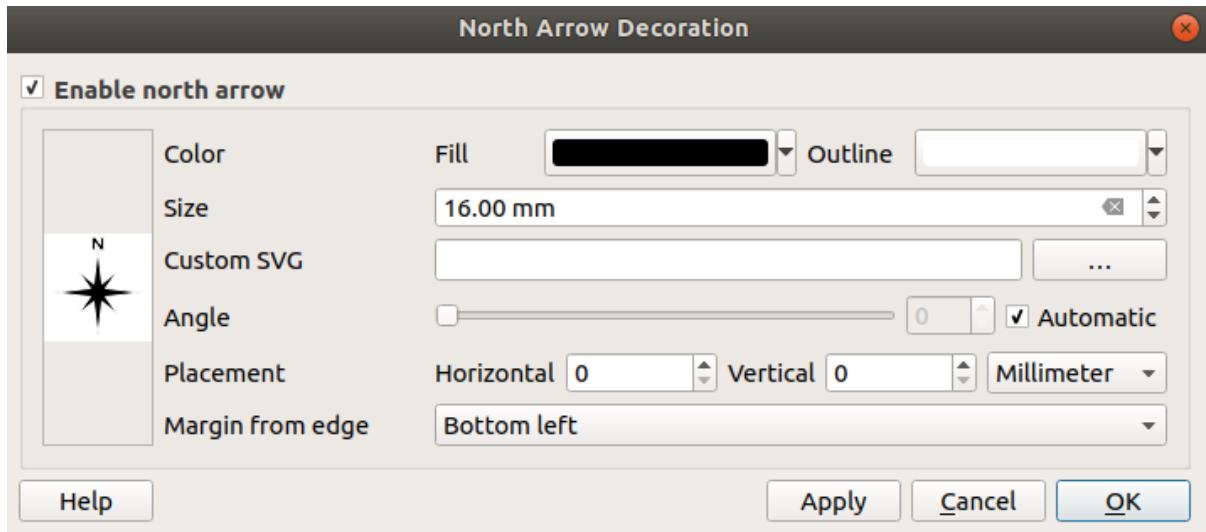


Fig. 11.8: The North Arrow Dialog

QGIS only supports displaying the scale in the same units as your map frame. So, if the units of your project's CRS are meters, you can't create a scale bar in feet. Likewise, if you are using decimal degrees, you can't create a scale bar to display distance in meters.

To add a scale bar:

1. Select *View → Decorations → Scale Bar* to open the dialog

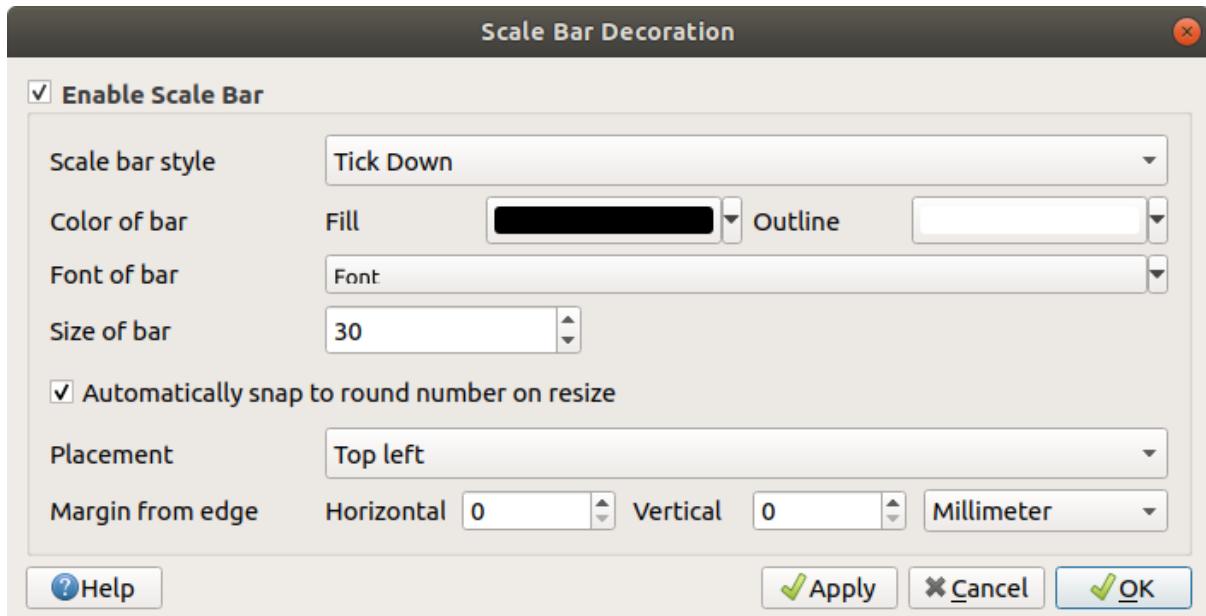


Fig. 11.9: The Scale Bar Dialog

2. Make sure  *Enable scale bar* is checked
3. Choose a style from the *Scale bar style*
4. Select the *Color of bar* by choosing a fill color (default: black) and an outline color (default: white). The scale bar fill and outline can be made opaque by clicking on the down arrow to the right of the color input.

5. Select the font for the scale bar from the *Font of bar*  combo box
6. Set the *Size of bar* 
7. Optionally check  *Automatically snap to round number on resize* to display easy-to-read values
8. Choose the placement from the *Placement*  combo box
9. You can refine the placement of the item by setting a horizontal and/or vertical *Margin from (Canvas) Edge*. These values can be in **Millimeters** or **Pixels** or set as a **Percentage** of the width or height of the map canvas.
10. Click *Apply* to verify that it looks as expected or *OK* if you're satisfied.

## Layout Extents

 Layout Extents adds the extents of *map item(s)* in print layout(s) to the canvas. When enabled, the extents of all map items within all print layouts are shown using a lightly dotted border labeled with the name of the print layout and map item. You can control the style and labeling of the displayed layout extents. This decoration is useful when you are tweaking the positioning of map elements such as labels, and need to know the actual visible region of print layouts.

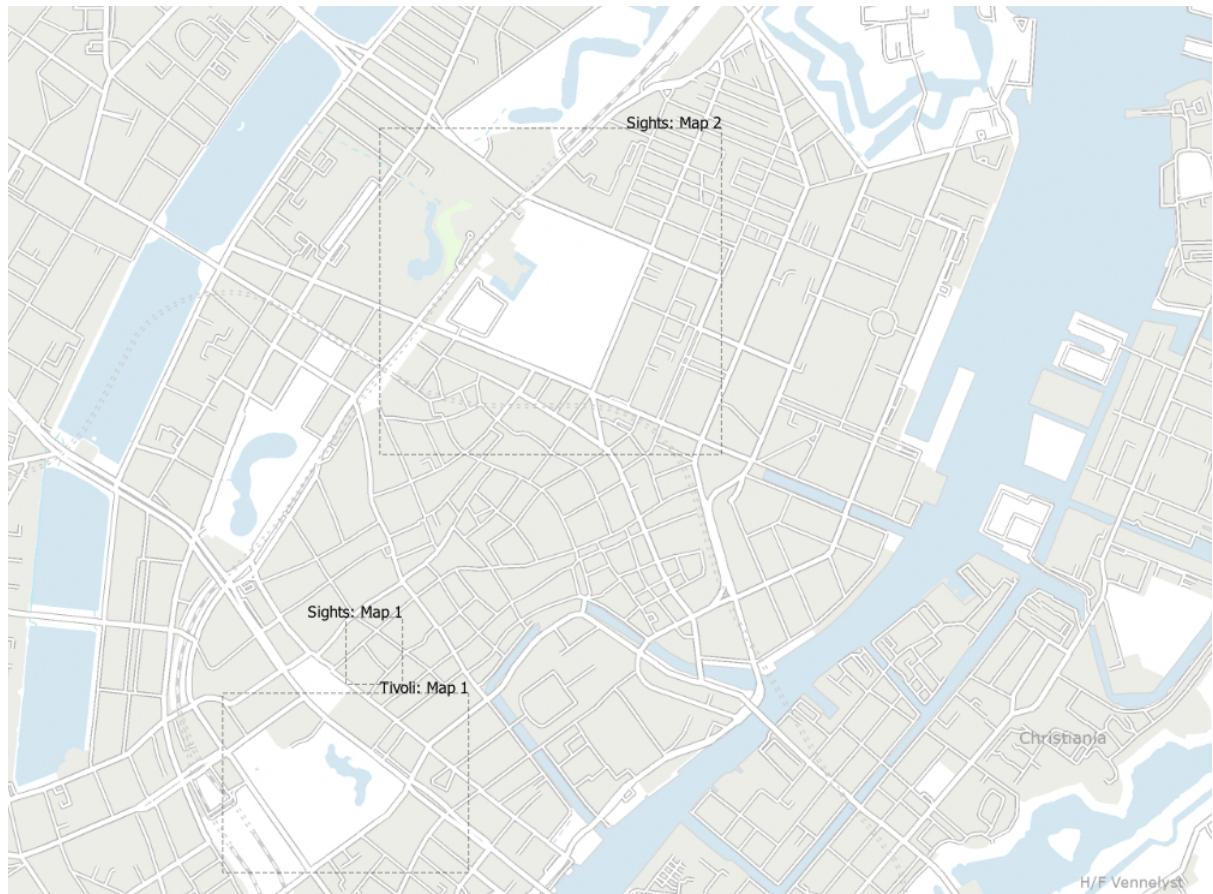


Fig. 11.10: Example of layout extents displayed in a QGIS project with two print layouts. The print layout named ‘Sights’ contains two map items, while the other print layout contains one map item.

To add layout extent(s):

1. Select *View* → *Decorations* → *Layout Extents* to open the dialog
2. Make sure  *Show layout extents* is checked

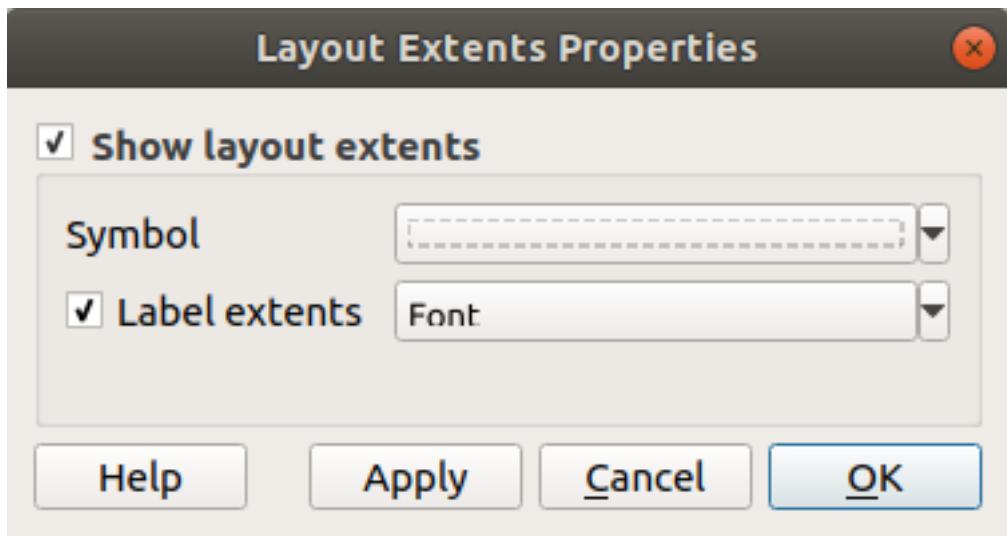


Fig. 11.11: The Layout Extents Dialog

3. Optionally change the symbol and labeling of the extents
4. Click *Apply* to verify that it looks as expected and *OK* if you're satisfied

**Tip: Decorations Settings**

When you save a QGIS project file, any changes you have made to Grid, North Arrow, Scale Bar, Copyright and Layout Extents will be saved in the project and restored the next time you load the project.

#### 11.4.5 Annotation Tools

Annotations are information added to the map canvas and shown within a balloon. This information can be of different types and annotations are added using the corresponding tools in the *Attributes Toolbar*:

- **Text Annotation** for custom formatted text
- **HTML Annotation** to place the content of an html file
- **SVG Annotation** to add an SVG symbol
- **Form Annotation**: useful to display attributes of a vector layer in a customized ui file (see [figure\\_custom\\_annotation](#)). This is similar to the *custom attribute forms*, but displayed in an annotation item. Also see this video <https://youtu.be/0pDBuSbQ02o?t=2m25s> from Tim Sutton for more information.

To add an annotation, select the corresponding tool and click on the map canvas. An empty balloon is added. Double-click on it and a dialog opens with various options. This dialog is almost the same for all the annotation types:

- At the top, a file selector to fill with the path to an html, svg or ui file depending on the type of annotation. For text annotation, you can enter your message in a text box and set its rendering with the normal font tools.
- **Fixed map position**: when unchecked, the balloon placement is based on a screen position (instead of the map), meaning that it's always shown regardless the map canvas extent.
- **Linked layer**: associates the annotation with a map layer, making it visible only when that layer is visible.
- **Map marker**: using *QGIS symbols*, sets the symbol to display at the balloon anchor position (shown only when *Fixed map position* is checked).

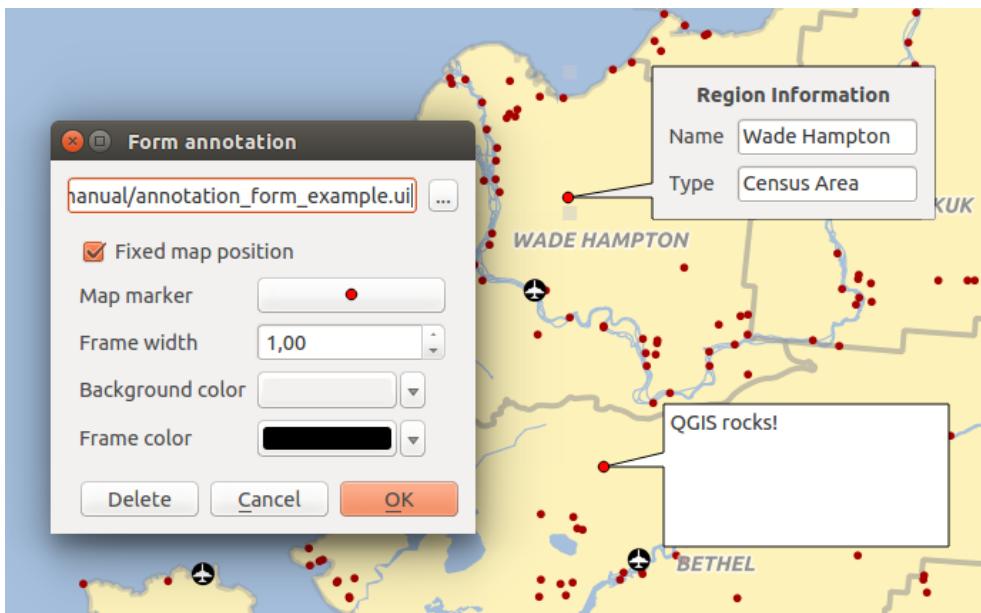


Fig. 11.12: Customized QT Designer annotation form

- *Frame style*: sets the frame background color, transparency, stroke color or width of the balloon using QGIS symbols.
- *Contents margins*: sets interior margins of the annotation frame.

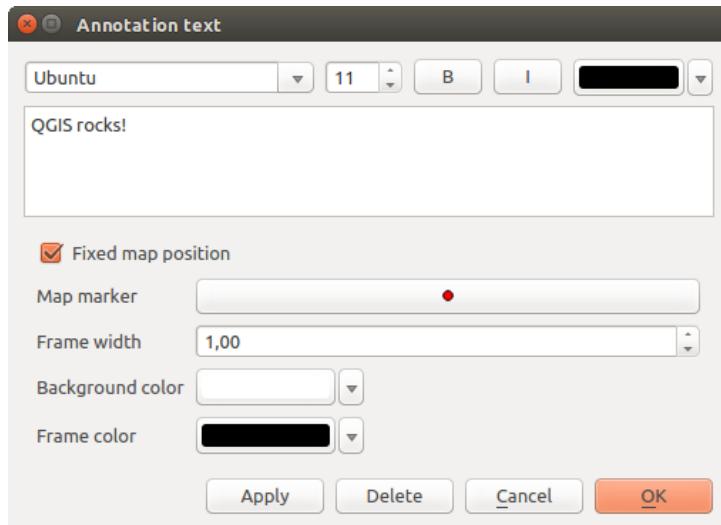


Fig. 11.13: Annotation text dialog

Annotations can be selected when an annotation tool is enabled. They can then be moved by map position (by dragging the map marker) or by moving only the balloon. The  **Move Annotation** tool also allows you to move the balloon on the map canvas.

To delete an annotation, select it and either press the **Del** or **Backspace** button, or double-click it and press the **Delete** button in the properties dialog.

---

**Note:** If you press **Ctrl+T** while an *Annotation* tool (move annotation, text annotation, form annotation) is active, the visibility states of the items are inverted.

---

**Tip: Layout the map with annotations**

You can print or export annotations with your map to various formats using:

- map canvas export tools available in the *Project* menu
  - *print layout*, in which case you need to check *Draw map canvas items* in the corresponding map item properties
- 

## 11.4.6 Measuring

### General information

QGIS provides four means of measuring geometries:

- interactive measurement tools 
- measuring in the  Field Calculator
- derived measurements in the *Identifying Features* tool
- the vector analysis tool: *Vector* → *Geometry Tools* → *Export/Add Geometry Columns*

Measuring works within projected coordinate systems (e.g., UTM) and unprojected data. The first three measuring tools behave equally to global project settings:

- Unlike most other GIS, the default measurement metric is ellipsoidal, using the ellipsoid defined in *Project* → *Properties...* → *General*. This is true both when geographic and projected coordinate systems are defined for the project.
- If you want to calculate the projected/planimetric area or distance using cartesian maths, the measurement ellipsoid has to be set to “None/Planimetric” (*Project* → *Properties...* → *CRS*). However, with a geographic (ie unprojected) CRS defined for the data and project, area and distance measurement will be ellipsoidal.

However, neither the identify tool nor the field calculator will transform your data to the project CRS before measuring. If you want to achieve this, you have to use the vector analysis tool: *Vector* → *Geometry Tools* → *Add Geometry Attributes...*. Here, measurement is planimetric, unless you choose the ellipsoidal measurement.

### Measure length, areas and angles interactively

Click the  icon in the Attribute toolbar to begin measurements. The down arrow near the icon switches between  length,  area or  angle. The default unit used in the dialog is the one set in *Project* → *Properties...* → *General* menu.

---

**Note: Configuring the measure tool**

While measuring length or area, clicking the *Configuration* button at the bottom of the widget opens the *Settings* → *Options* → *Map Tools* menu, where you can select the rubberband color, the precision of the measurements and the unit behavior. You can also choose your preferred measurement or angle units, but keep in mind that those values are overridden in the current project by the selection made in the *Project* → *Properties...* → *General* menu, and by the selection made in the measurement widget.

All measuring modules use the snapping settings from the digitizing module (see section *Setting the Snapping Tolerance and Search Radius*). So, if you want to measure exactly along a line feature, or around a polygon feature, first set its layer snapping tolerance. Now, when using the measuring tools, each mouse click (within the tolerance setting) will snap to that layer.

By default,  **Measure Line** measures real distances between given points according to a defined ellipsoid. The tool then allows you to click points on the map. Each segment length, as well as the total, shows up in the measure window. To stop measuring, click the right mouse button.

Note that you can use the drop-down list near the total to change the measurement units interactively while working with the measure tool ('Meters', 'Kilometers', 'Feet', 'Yards', 'Miles', 'Nautical miles', 'Centimeters', 'Millimeters', 'Degrees', 'Map units'). This unit is retained for the widget until a new project is created or another project is opened.

The *Info* section in the dialog explains how calculations are made according to the CRS settings available.

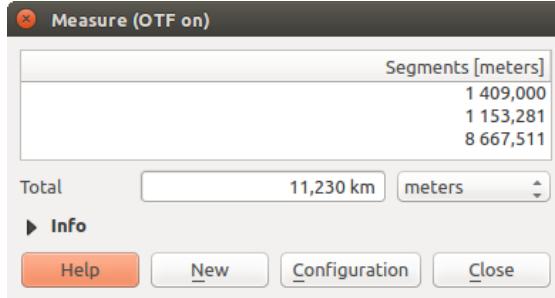


Fig. 11.14: Measure Distance

 **Measure Area**: Areas can also be measured. In the measure window, the accumulated area size appears. Right-click to stop drawing. The Info section is also available as well as the ability to switch between different area units ('Square meters', 'Square kilometers', 'Square feet', 'Square yards', 'Square miles', 'Hectares', 'Acres', 'Square centimeters', 'Square millimeters', 'Square nautical miles', 'Square degrees', 'Map units').

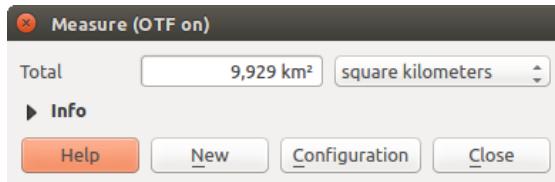


Fig. 11.15: Measure Area

 **Measure Angle**: You can also measure angles. The cursor becomes cross-shaped. Click to draw the first segment of the angle you wish to measure, then move the cursor to draw the desired angle. The measurement is displayed in a pop-up dialog.



Fig. 11.16: Measure Angle

## 11.5 Interacting with features

### 11.5.1 Selecting features

QGIS provides several tools to select features on the map canvas. Selection tools are available in the *View* → *Select* menu or in the *Attributes toolbar*.

---

**Note:** Selection tools work with the currently active layer.

---

### Selecting manually on the map canvas

To select one or more features with the mouse, you can use one of the following tools:

-  Select Features by area or single click
-  Select Features by Polygon
-  Select Features by Freehand
-  Select Features by Radius

---

**Note:** Other than  Select Features by Polygon, these manual selection tools allow you to select feature(s) on the map canvas with a single click.

---

---

**Note:** Use the  Select Features by Polygon tool to use an existing polygon to select overlapping features. Right-click in the polygon and choose it from the context menu that shows a list of all the polygons that contain the clicked point. All the overlapping features from the active layer are selected.

---

While using the  Select Feature(s) tool, holding Shift or Ctrl toggles whether a feature is selected (ie either adds to the current selection or remove from it).

For the other tools, different behaviors can be performed by holding down:

- Shift: add features to the current selection
- Ctrl: subtract features from the current selection
- Ctrl+Shift: intersect with current selection, ie only keep overlapping features from the current selection
- Alt: select features that are totally within the selection shape. Combined with Shift or Ctrl keys, you can add or subtract features to/from the current selection.

### Automatic selection

The other selection tools, also available from the *Attribute table*, perform a selection based on a feature's attribute or its selection state (note that attribute table and map canvas show the same information, so if you select one feature in the attribute table, it will be selected on the map canvas too):

-  Select By Expression... select features using expression dialog
-  Select Features By Value... or press F3
-  Deselect Features from All Layers or press Ctrl+Shift+A to deselect all selected features in all layers
-  Select All Features or press Ctrl+A to select all features in the current layer
-  Invert Feature Selection to invert the selection in the current layer

For example, if you want to find regions that are boroughs from regions.shp of the QGIS sample data, you can use the  Select features using an Expression icon. Then, expand the *Fields and Values* group and choose the field that

you want to query. Double-click the field ‘TYPE\_2’ and also click *All Unique* in the panel that shows up. From the list, choose and double-click ‘Borough’. In the *Expression* field, write the following query:

```
"TYPE_2" = 'Borough'
```

From the expression builder dialog, you can also use *Function list → Recent (Selection)* to make a selection that you have used before. The dialog remembers the last 20 expressions used. See [Expressions](#) for more information and examples.

#### Tip: Save your selection into a new file

Users can save selected features into a **New Temporary Scratch Layer** or a **New Vector Layer** using *Edit → Copy Features* and *Edit → Paste Features* as in the desired format.

### Select Features By Value

This selection tool opens the layer’s feature form allowing the user to choose which value to look for for each field, whether the search should be case-sensitive, and the operation that should be used. The tool has also autocompletes, automatically filling the search box with existing values.

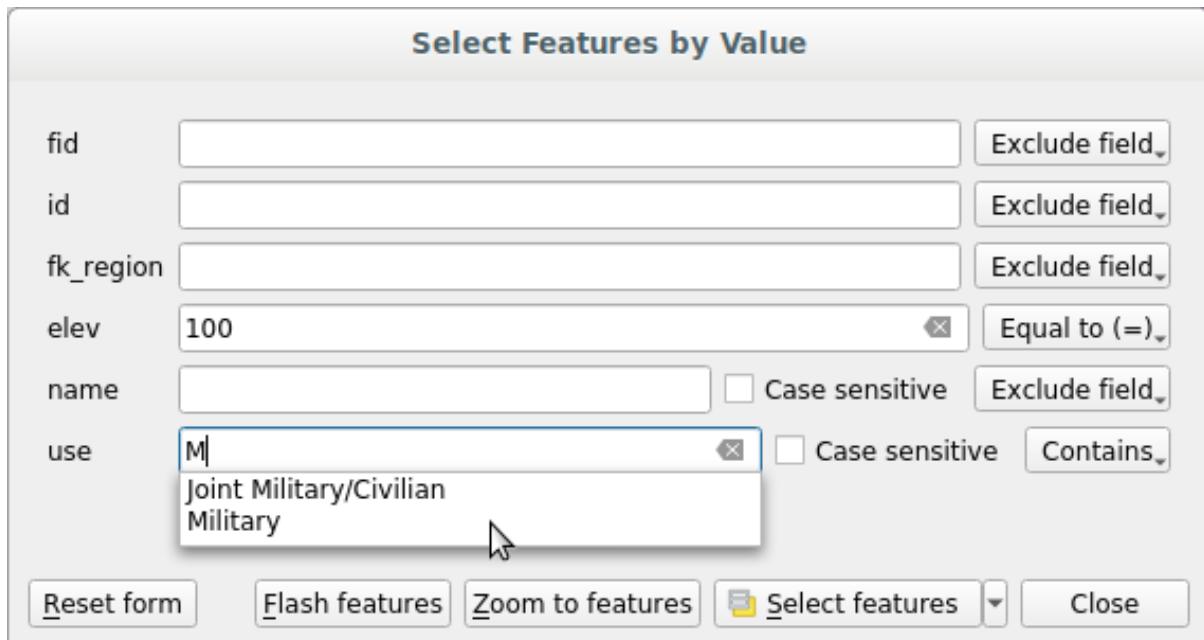


Fig. 11.17: Filter>Select features using form dialog

Alongside each field, there is a drop-down list with options to control the search behaviour:

Field search option	String	Numeric	Date
<i>Exclude Field</i> from the search	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Equal to (=)</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Not equal to ()</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Greater than (&gt;)</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Less than (&lt;)</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Greater than or equal to ()</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Less than or equal to ()</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Between (inclusive)</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Not between (inclusive)</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Contains</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Does not contain</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Is missing (null)</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Is not missing (not null)</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Starts with</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>Ends with</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

For string comparisons, it is also possible to use the  *Case sensitive* option.

After setting all search options, click *Select features* to select the matching features. The drop-down options are:

- *Select features*
- *Add to current selection*
- *Filter current selection*
- *Remove from current current selection*

You can also clear all search options using the *Reset form* button.

Once the conditions are set, you can also either:

- *Zoom to features* on the map canvas without the need of a preselection
- *Flash features*, highlighting the matching features. This is a handy way to identify a feature without selection or using the Identify tool. Note that the flash does not alter the map canvas extent and would be visible only if the feature is within the bounds of the current map canvas.

## 11.5.2 Identifying Features

The Identify tool allows you to interact with the map canvas and get information on features in a pop-up window. To identify features, use:

- *View → Identify Features*
- **Ctrl+Shift+I** (or **Cmd+Shift+I**),
-  *Identify Features* icon on the Attributes toolbar

## Using the Identify Features tool

QGIS offers several ways to identify features with the  Identify Features tool:

- **left click** identifies features according to the *selection mode* and the *selection mask* set in the *Identify Results* panel
- **right click** with *Identify Feature(s)* as *selection mode* set in the *Identify Results* panel fetches all snapped features from all visible layers. This opens a context menu, allowing the user to choose more precisely the features to identify or the action to execute on them.
- **right click** with *Identify Features by Polygon* as *selection mode* in the *Identify Results* panel identifies the features that overlap with the chosen existing polygon, according to the *selection mask* set in the *Identify Results* panel

---

### Tip: Filter the layers to query with the Identify Features tool

Under *Layer Capabilities* in *Project → Properties... → Data Sources*, uncheck the *Identifiable* column next to a layer to avoid it being queried when using the  Identify Features tool in a mode other than **Current Layer**. This is a handy way to return features from only layers that are of interest for you.

---

If you click on feature(s), the *Identify Results* dialog will list information about the feature(s) clicked. The default view is a tree view in which the first item is the name of the layer and its children are its identified feature(s). Each feature is described by the name of a field along with its value. This field is the one set in *Layer Properties → Display*. All the other information about the feature follows.

## Feature information

The Identify Results dialog can be customized to display custom fields, but by default it will display the following information:

- The feature *display name*;
- **Actions:** Actions can be added to the identify feature windows. The action is run by clicking on the action label. By default, only one action is added, namely *View feature form* for editing. You can define more actions in the layer's properties dialog (see *Actions Properties*).
- **Derived:** This information is calculated or derived from other information. It includes:
  - general information about the feature's geometry:
    - \* depending on the geometry type, the cartesian measurements of length, perimeter or area in the layer's CRS units
    - \* depending on the geometry type and if an ellipsoid is set in the project properties dialog for *Measurements*, the ellipsoidal values of length, perimeter or area using the specified units
    - \* the count of geometry parts in the feature and the number of the part clicked
    - \* the count of vertices in the feature
  - coordinate information, using the project properties *Coordinates display* settings:
    - \* X and Y coordinate values of the point clicked
    - \* the number of the closest vertex to the point clicked
    - \* X and Y coordinate values of the closest vertex (and Z ` / ` M if applicable)
    - \* if you click on a curved segment, the radius of that section is also displayed.
- **Data attributes:** This is the list of attribute fields and values for the feature that has been clicked.

---

**Note:** Links in the feature's attributes are clickable from the *Identify Results* panel and will open in your default web browser.

---

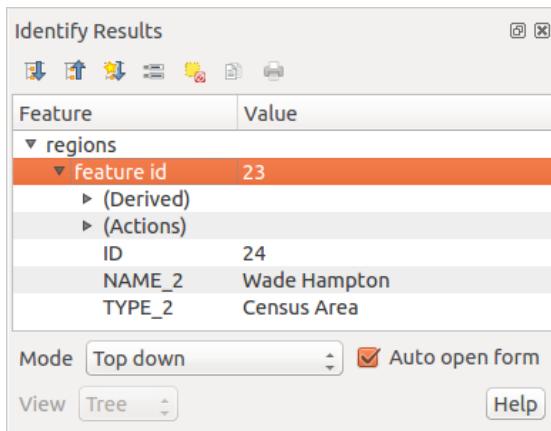


Fig. 11.18: Identify Results dialog

### The Identify Results dialog

At the top of the window, you have a handful of tools:

- Open Form of the current feature
- Expand tree
- Collapse tree
- Expand New Results by Default to define whether the next identified feature's information should be collapsed or expanded
- Clear Results
- Copy selected feature to clipboard
- Print selected HTML response
- selection mode to use to fetch features to identify:
  - Identify Features by area or single click
  - Identify Features by Polygon
  - Identify Features by Freehand
  - Identify Features by Radius

---

**Note:** When using Identify Features by Polygon, you can right-click any existing polygon and use it to identify overlapping features in another layer.

---

At the bottom of the window are the *Mode* and *View* comboboxes. *Mode* defines from which layers features should be identified:

- **Current layer:** only features from the selected layer are identified. The layer need not be visible in the canvas.

- **Top down, stop at first:** only features from the upper visible layer.
- **Top down:** all features from the visible layers. The results are shown in the panel.
- **Layer selection:** opens a context menu where the user selects the layer to identify features from, similar to a right-click. Only the chosen features will be shown in the result panel.

The View can be set as **Tree**, **Table** or **Graph**. ‘Table’ and ‘Graph’ views can only be set for raster layers.

The identify tool allows you to  *Auto open form*. If checked, each time a single feature is identified, a form opens showing its attributes. This is a handy way to quickly edit a feature’s attributes.

Other functions can be found in the context menu of the identified item. For example, from the context menu you can:

- View the feature form
- Zoom to feature
- Copy feature: Copy all feature geometry and attributes
- Toggle feature selection: Add identified feature to selection
- Copy attribute value: Copy only the value of the attribute that you click on
- Copy feature attributes: Copy the attributes of the feature
- Clear result: Remove results in the window
- Clear highlights: Remove features highlighted on the map
- Highlight all
- Highlight layer
- Activate layer: Choose a layer to be activated
- Layer properties: Open layer properties window
- Expand all
- Collapse all

## 11.6 Save and Share Layer Properties

### 11.6.1 Managing Custom Styles

When a vector layer is added to the map canvas, QGIS by default uses a random symbol/color to render its features. However, you can set a default symbol in *Project → Properties... → Default styles* that will be applied to each newly added layer according to its geometry type.

Most of the time, though, you’d rather have a custom and more complex style that can be applied automatically or manually to the layers (with less effort). You can achieve this by using the *Style* menu at the bottom of the Layer Properties dialog. This menu provides you with functions to create, load and manage styles.

A style stores any information set in the layer properties dialog to render or interact with the layer (including symbology, labeling, fields and form definitions, actions, diagrams...) for vector layers, or the pixels (band or color rendering, transparency, pyramids, histogram ...) for raster.

By default, the style applied to a loaded layer is named `default`. Once you have got the ideal and appropriate rendering for your layer, you can save it by clicking the  *Style* combobox and choosing:

- **Rename Current:** The active style is renamed and updated with the current options
- **Add:** A new style is created using the current options. By default, it will be saved in the QGIS project file. See below to save the style in another file or a database
- **Remove:** Delete unwanted style, in case you have more than one style defined for the layer.

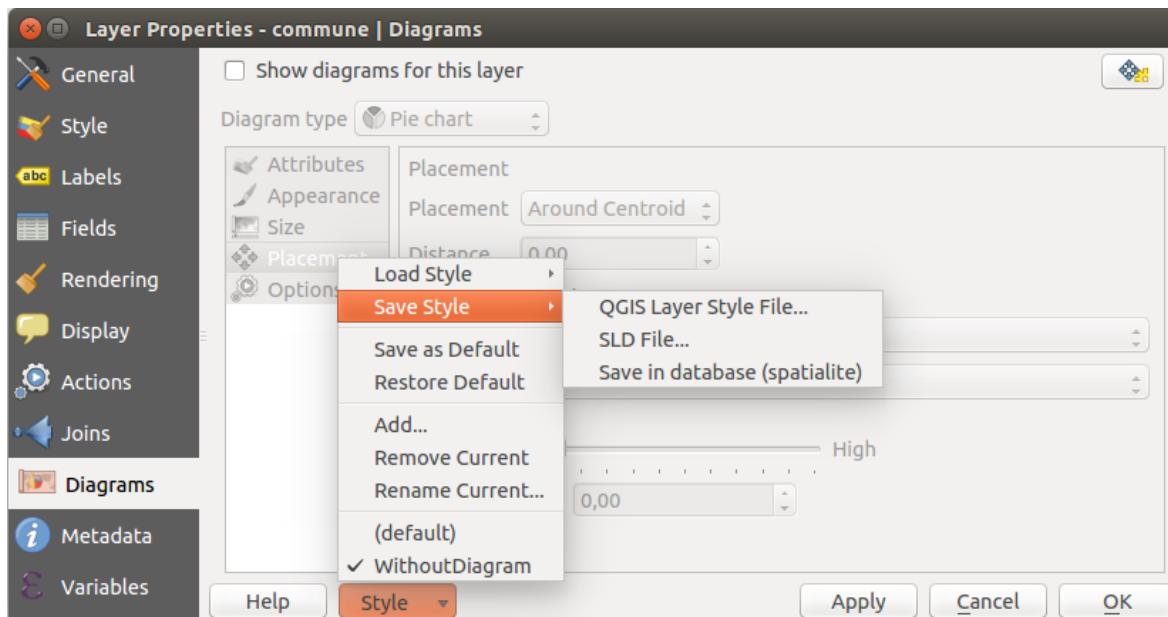


Fig. 11.19: Vector layer style combobox options

At the bottom of the Style drop-down list, you can see the styles set for the layer with the active one checked.

Note that each time you validate the layer properties dialog, the active style is updated with the changes you've made.

You can create as many styles as you wish for a layer but only one can be active at a time. In combination with *Map Themes*, this offers a quick and powerful way to manage complex projects without the need to duplicate any layer in the map legend.

---

**Note:** Given that whenever you apply modifications to the layer properties, changes are stored in the active style, always ensure you are editing the right style to avoid mistakenly altering a style used in a *map theme*.

---

#### Tip: Manage styles from layer context menu

Right-click on the layer in the *Layers* panel to add, rename or remove layer styles.

---

## 11.6.2 Storing Styles in a File or a Database

While styles created from the *Style* combobox are by default saved inside the project and can be copied and pasted from layer to layer in the project, it's also possible to save them outside the project so that they can be loaded in another project.

### Save as text file

Clicking the *Style* → *Save Style*, you can save the style as a:

- QGIS layer style file (*.qml*)
- SLD file (*.sld*), only available for vector layers

Used on file-based format layers (*.shp*, *.tab...*), *Save as Default* generates a *.qml* file for the layer (with the same name). SLDs can be exported from any type of renderer – single symbol, categorized, graduated or rule-based – but when importing an SLD, either a single symbol or rule-based renderer is created. This means

that categorized or graduated styles are converted to rule-based. If you want to preserve those renderers, you have to use the QML format. On the other hand, it can be very handy sometimes to have this easy way of converting styles to rule-based.

### Save in database

Vector layer styles can also be stored in a database if the layer datasource is a database provider. Supported formats are PostGIS, GeoPackage, SpatiaLite, MSSQL and Oracle. The layer style is saved inside a table (named `layer_styles`) in the database. Click on *Save Style...* → *Save in database* then fill in the dialog to define a style name, add a description, a `.ui` file if applicable and to check if the style should be the default style.

You can save several styles for a single table in the database. However, each table can have only one default style. Default styles can be saved in the layer database or in the QGIS local database, a SQLite database in the `~/.qgis2/` directory (where QGIS stores its local settings).

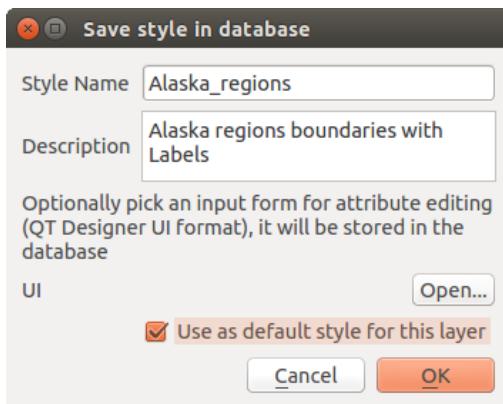


Fig. 11.20: Save Style in database Dialog

---

#### Tip: Sharing style files between databases

You can only save your style in a database if the layer comes from such a database. You can't mix databases (layer in Oracle and style in MSSQL for instance). Use instead a plain text file if you want the style to be shared among databases.

---

**Note:** You may encounter issues restoring the `layer_styles` table from a PostgreSQL database backup. Follow [QGIS layer\\_style table and database backup](#) to fix that.

---

### Load style

When loading a layer in QGIS, if a default style already exists for this layer, QGIS loads the layer with this style. Also *Style* → *Restore Default* looks for and loads that file, replacing the layer's current style.

*Style* → *Load Style* helps you apply any saved style to a layer. While text-file styles (`.sld` or `.qml`) can be applied to any layer whatever its format, loading styles stored in a database is only possible if the layer is from the same database or the style is stored in the QGIS local database.

The *Database Styles Manager* dialog displays a list of styles related to the layer found in the database and all the other styles saved in it, with name and description.

---

#### Tip: Quickly share a layer style within the project

You can also share layer styles within a project without importing a file or database style: right-click on the layer in the *Layers Panel* and, from the *Styles* combobox, copy the style of a layer and paste it to a group or a selection

of layers: the style is applied to all the layers that are of the same type (vector vs raster) as the original layer and, in the case of vector layers, have the same geometry type (point, line or polygon).

---

### 11.6.3 Layer definition file

Layer definitions can be saved as a `Layer Definition File (.qlr)` using *Export → Save As Layer Definition File...* in the active layers' context menu. A layer definition file (`.qlr`) includes references to the data source of the layers and their styles. `.qlr` files are shown in the Browser Panel and can be used to add the layers (with the saved style) to the Layers Panel. You can also drag and drop `.qlr` files from the system file manager into the map canvas.

## 11.7 Storing values in Variables

In QGIS, you can use variables to store useful recurrent values (e.g. the project's title, or the user's full name) that can be used in expressions. Variables can be defined at the application's global level, project level, layer level, layout level, and layout item's level. Just like CSS cascading rules, variables can be overwritten - e.g., a project level variable will overwrite any application global level variables set with the same name. You can use these variables to build text strings or other custom expressions using the @ character before the variable name. For example in print layout creating a label with this content:

```
This map was made using QGIS [% @qgis_version %]. The project file for this map is: [% @project_path %]
```

Will render the label like this:

```
This map was made using QGIS 3.4.4-Madeira. The project file for this map is: /gis/qgis-user-conference-2019.qgs
```

Besides the *preset read-only variables*, you can define your own custom variables for any of the levels mentioned above. You can manage:

- **global variables** from the *Settings → Options* menu
- **project variables** from the *Project Properties* dialog (see *Project Properties*)
- **vector layer variables** from the *Layer Properties* dialog (see *The Vector Properties Dialog*);
- **layout variables** from the *Layout* panel in the Print layout (see *The Layout Panel*);
- and **layout item variables** from the *Item Properties* panel in the Print layout (see *Layout Items Common Options*).

To differentiate from editable variables, read-only variable names and values are displayed in italic. On the other hand, higher level variables overwritten by lower level ones are strike through.

---

**Note:** You can read more about variables and find some examples in Nyall Dawson's [Exploring variables in QGIS 2.12, part 1](#), [part 2](#) and [part 3](#) blog posts.

---

## 11.8 Authentication

QGIS has the facility to store/retrieve authentication credentials in a secure manner. Users can securely save credentials into authentication configurations, which are stored in a portable database, can be applied to server or database connections, and are safely referenced by their ID tokens in project or settings files. For more information see *Authentication System*.

A master password needs to be set up when initializing the authentication system and its portable database.

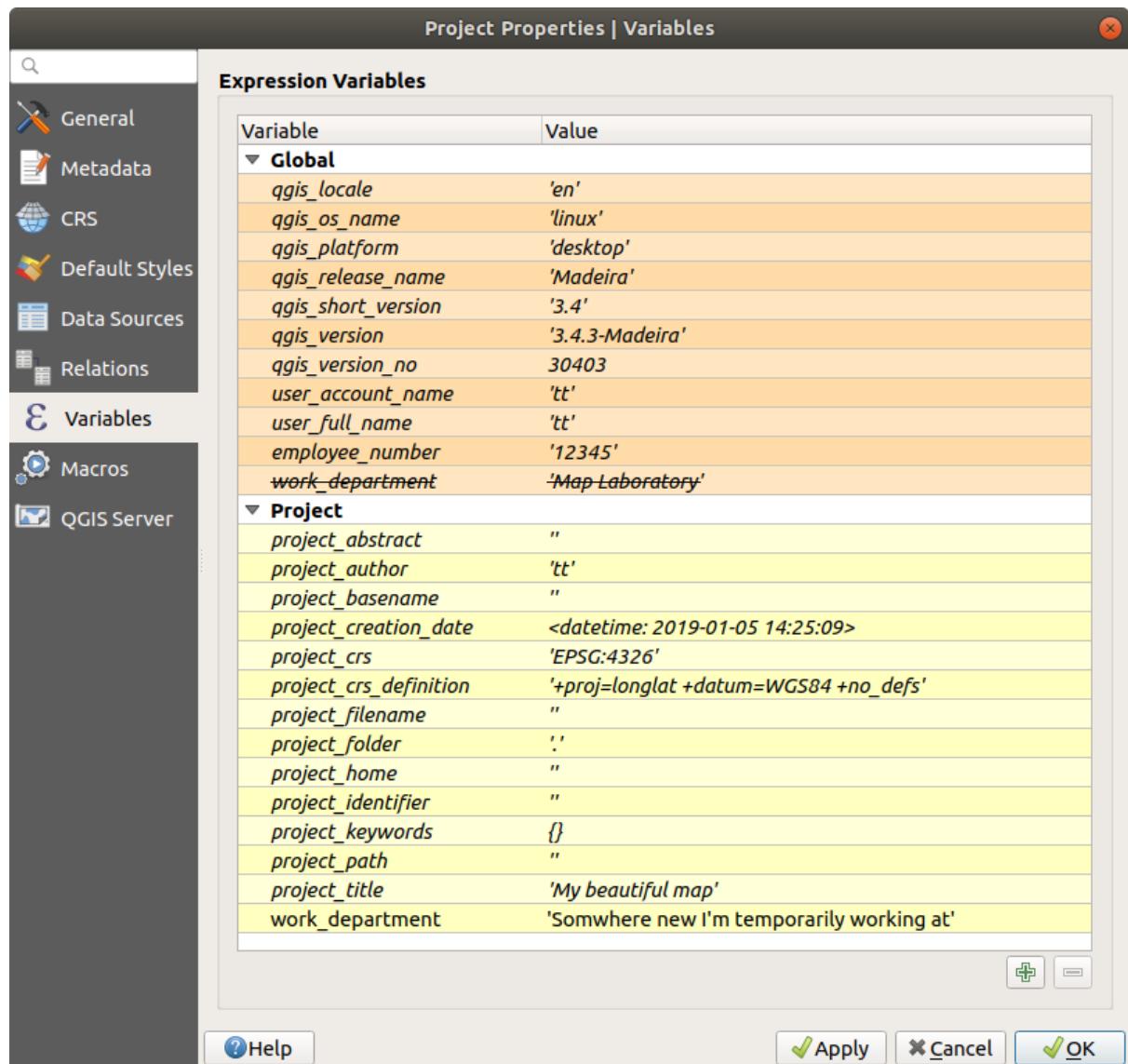


Fig. 11.21: Variables editor at the project level

## 11.9 Common widgets

In QGIS, there are some options you'll often have to work with. For convenience, QGIS provides you with special widgets that are presented below.

### 11.9.1 Color Selector

#### The color dialog

The *Select Color* dialog will appear whenever you click the  icon to choose a color. The features of this dialog depend on the state of the *Use native color chooser dialogs* parameter checkbox in *Settings → Options... → General*. When checked, the color dialog used is the native one of the OS on which QGIS is running. Otherwise, the QGIS custom color chooser is used.

The custom color chooser dialog has four different tabs which allow you to select colors by  **Color ramp**,  **Color wheel**,  **Color swatches** or  **Color picker**. With the first two tabs, you can browse to all possible color combinations and apply your choice to the item.

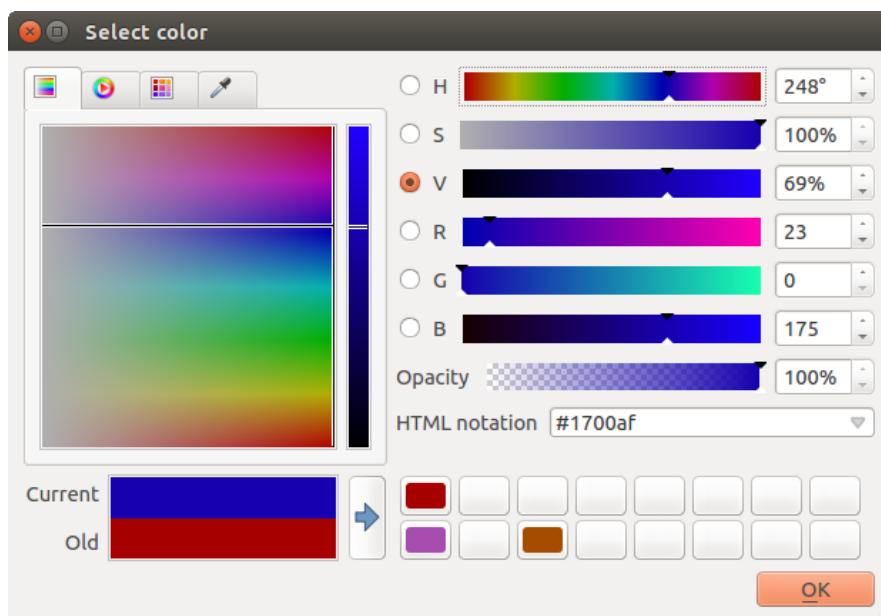


Fig. 11.22: Color selector ramp tab

In the  **Color swatches** tab, you can choose from a list of color palettes (see *Colors Settings* for details). All but the *Recent colors* palette can be modified with the  **Add current color** and  **Remove selected color** buttons at the bottom of the frame.

The ... button next to the palette combobox also offers several options to:

- copy, paste, import or export colors
- create, import or remove color palettes
- add the custom palette to the color selector widget with the *Show in Color Buttons* item (see [figure\\_color\\_selector](#))

Another option is to use the  **Color picker** which allows you to sample a color from under your mouse cursor at any part of the QGIS UI or even from another application: press the space bar while the tab is active, move the

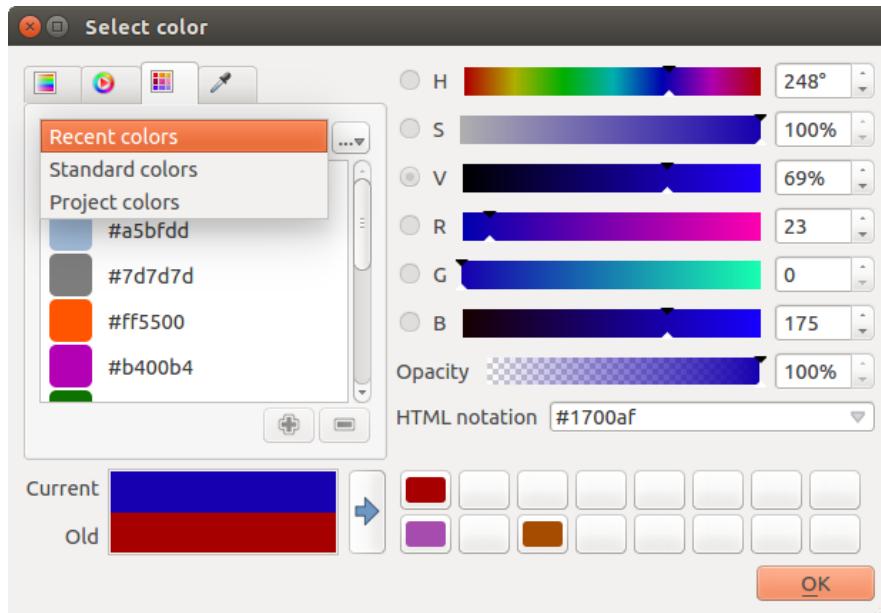


Fig. 11.23: Color selector swatches tab

mouse over the desired color and click on it or press the space bar again. You can also click the *Sample Color* button to activate the picker.

Whatever method you use, the selected color is always described through color sliders for HSV (Hue, Saturation, Value) and RGB (Red, Green, Blue) values. The color is also identifiable in *HTML notation*.

Modifying a color is as simple as clicking on the color wheel or ramp or on any of the color parameters sliders. You can adjust such parameters with the spinbox beside or by scrolling the mouse wheel over the corresponding slider. You can also type the color in HTML notation. Finally, there is an *Opacity* slider to set transparency level.

The dialog also provides a visual comparison between the *Old* color (applied to object) and the *Current* one (being selected). Using drag-and-drop or pressing the Add color to swatch button, any of these colors can be saved in a slot for easy access.

#### Tip: Quick color modification

Drag-and-drop a color selector widget onto another one to apply its color.

#### The color drop-down shortcut

Click the drop-down arrow to the right of the color button to display a widget for quick color selection. This shortcut provides access to:

- a color wheel to pick a color from
- an alpha slider to change color opacity
- the color palettes previously set to *Show in Color Buttons*
- copy the current color and paste it into another widget
- pick a color from anywhere on your computer display
- choose a color from the color selector dialog

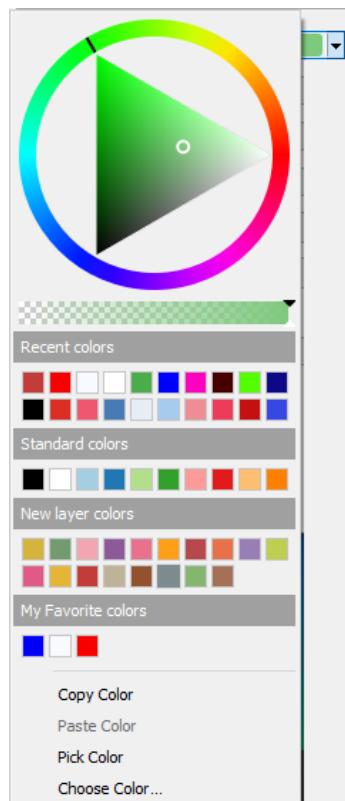


Fig. 11.24: Quick color selector menu

### The color ramp drop-down shortcut

Color ramps are a practical way to apply a set of colors to one or many features. Their creation is described in the [Color Ramp](#) section. As for the colors, pressing the  color ramp button opens the corresponding color ramp type dialog allowing you to change its properties.

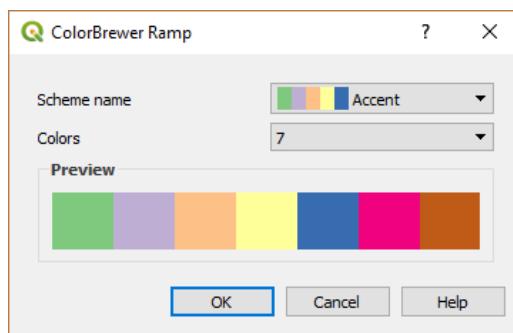


Fig. 11.25: Customizing a colorbrewer ramp

The drop-down menu to the right of the button gives quick access to a wider set of color ramps and options:

- *Invert Color Ramp*
- a preview of the gradient or catalog: cpt-city color ramps flagged as **Favorites** in the *Style Manager* dialog
- *All Color Ramps* to access the compatible color ramps database
- *Create New Color Ramp...* of any supported type that could be used in the current widget (note that this color ramp will not be available elsewhere unless you save it in the library)
- *Edit Color Ramp...*, the same as clicking the whole color ramp button

- *Save Color Ramp...*, to save the current color ramp with its customizations in the style library



Fig. 11.26: Quick color ramp selection widget

### 11.9.2 Blending Modes

QGIS offers different options for special rendering effects with these tools that you may previously only know from graphics programs. Blending modes can be applied on layers and features, and also on print layout items:

- **Normal:** This is the standard blend mode, which uses the alpha channel of the top pixel to blend with the pixel beneath it. The colors aren't mixed.
- **Lighten:** This selects the maximum of each component from the foreground and background pixels. Be aware that the results tend to be jagged and harsh.
- **Screen:** Light pixels from the source are painted over the destination, while dark pixels are not. This mode is most useful for mixing the texture of one item with another item (such as using a hillshade to texture another layer).
- **Dodge:** Brighten and saturate underlying pixels based on the lightness of the top pixel. Brighter top pixels cause the saturation and brightness of the underlying pixels to increase. This works best if the top pixels aren't too bright. Otherwise the effect is too extreme.
- **Addition:** Adds pixel values of one item to the other. In case of values above the maximum value (in the case of RGB), white is displayed. This mode is suitable for highlighting features.
- **Darken:** Retains the lowest values of each component of the foreground and background pixels. Like lighten, the results tend to be jagged and harsh.
- **Multiply:** Pixel values of the top item are multiplied with the corresponding values for the bottom item. The results are darker.
- **Burn:** Darker colors in the top item cause the underlying items to darken. Burn can be used to tweak and colorize underlying layers.
- **Overlay:** Combines multiply and screen blending modes. Light parts become lighter and dark parts become darker.
- **Soft light:** Very similar to overlay, but instead of using multiply/screen it uses color burn/dodge. This is supposed to emulate shining a soft light onto an image.
- **Hard light:** Hard light is also very similar to the overlay mode. It's supposed to emulate projecting a very intense light onto an image.
- **Difference:** Subtracts the top pixel from the bottom pixel, or the other way around, in order always to get a positive value. Blending with black produces no change, as the difference with all colors is zero.

- **Subtract:** Subtracts pixel values of one item from the other. In the case of negative values, black is displayed.

### 11.9.3 Data defined override setup

Next to many options in the vector layer properties dialog or settings in the print layout, you will find a  icon. Using *expressions* based on layer attributes or item settings, prebuilt or custom functions and *variables*, this tool allows you to set dynamic values for parameters. When enabled, the value returned by this widget is applied to the parameter regardless of its normal value (checkbox, textbox, slider...).

#### The data defined override widget

Clicking the  Data defined override icon shows the following entries:

- *Description...* that indicates if the option is enabled, which input is expected, the valid input type and the current definition. Hovering over the widget also pops up this information.
- *Store data in the project:* a button allowing the property to be stored using to the *Auxiliary Storage Properties* mechanism.
- *Field type:* an entry to select from the layer's fields that match the valid input type.
- An entry to list the *Variable* available.
- *Edit...* button to create or edit the expression to apply, using the *Expression String Builder* dialog. To help you correctly fill in the expression, a reminder of the expected output's format is provided in the dialog.
- *Paste* and *Copy* buttons.
- *Clear* button to remove the setup.
- For numeric and color properties, *Assistant...* to rescale how the feature data is applied to the property (more details *below*)

---

#### Tip: Use right-click to (de)activate the data override

When the data-defined override option is set up correctly the icon is yellow  or . If it is broken, the icon is red  or .

You can enable or disable a configured  data-defined override button by simply clicking the widget with the right mouse button.

---

#### Using the data-defined assistant interface

When the  Data-defined override button is associated with a numeric or color parameter, it has an *Assistant...* option that allows you to change how the data is applied to the parameter for each feature. The assistant allows you to:

- Define the *Input* data, ie:
  - the attribute to represent, using the Field listbox or the  Set column expression function (see *Expressions*)
  - the range of values to represent: you can manually enter the values or use the  Fetch value range from layer button to fill these fields automatically with the minimum and maximum values returned by the chosen attribute or the expression applied to your data

- *Apply transform curve*: by default, output values (see below for setting) are applied to input features following a linear scale. You can override this logic: enable the transform option, click on the graphic to add break point(s) and drag the point(s) to apply a custom distribution.
- Define the *Output* values: the options vary according to the parameter to define. You can globally set:
  - the minimum and maximum values to apply to the selected property (in case of a color setting, you'll need to provide a *color ramp*)
  - the *Scale method* of representation which can be **Flannery**, **Exponential**, **Surface** or **Radius**
  - the *Exponent* to use for data scaling
  - the output value or *color* to represent features with NULL values

When compatible with the property, a live-update preview is displayed in the right-hand side of the dialog to help you control the value scaling.

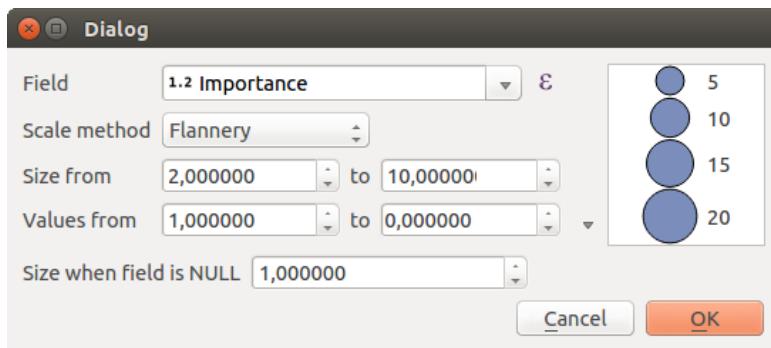


Fig. 11.27: The data-defined size assistant

The values presented in the varying size assistant above will set the size ‘Data-defined override’ with:

```
coalesce(scale_exp(Importance, 1, 20, 2, 10, 0.57), 1)
```



# CHAPTER 12

---

## Managing Data Source

---

### 12.1 Opening Data

As part of an Open Source Software ecosystem, QGIS is built upon different libraries that, combined with its own providers, offer capabilities to read and often write a lot of formats:

- Vector data formats include ESRI formats (Shapefile, Geodatabase...), MapInfo and MicroStation file formats, AutoCAD DWG/DXF, GeoPackage, GeoJSON, GRASS, GPX, KML, Comma Separated Values, and many more... Read the complete list of [OGR vector supported formats](#).
- Raster data formats include ArcInfo Binary Grid, ArcInfo ASCII Grid, JPEG, GeoTIFF, ERDAS IMAGINE, MBTiles, R or Idrisi rasters, ASCII Gridded XYZ, GDAL Virtual, SRTM, Sentinel Data, and many more... Read the complete list of [raster supported formats](#).
- Database formats include PostgreSQL/PostGIS, SQLite/SpatiaLite, Oracle, DB2 or MSSQL Spatial, MySQL...
- Support of web data services (WM(T)S, WFS, WCS, CSW, ArcGIS Servers...) is also handled by QGIS providers (see [QGIS as OGC Data Client](#)).
- You can also read supported files from archived folders and use QGIS native formats such as virtual and memory layers.

As of the date of this document, more than 80 vector and 140 raster formats are supported by the [GDAL/OGR](#) and QGIS native providers.

---

**Note:** Not all of the listed formats may work in QGIS for various reasons. For example, some require external proprietary libraries, or the GDAL/OGR installation of your OS may not have been built to support the format you want to use. To have a list of available formats, run the command line `ogrinfo --formats` (for vector) or check *settings* → *Options* → *GDAL* menu (for raster) in QGIS.

---

In QGIS, depending on the data format, there are different tools to open it, mainly available in the *Layer* → *Add Layer* → menu or from the *Manage Layers* toolbar (enabled through *View* → *Toolbars* menu). However, all these tools point to a unique dialog, the *Data Source Manager* dialog that you can directly open with the  button available on the *Data Source Manager Toolbar* or by pressing `Ctrl+L`. Indeed, the *Data Source Manager* dialog offers a unified interface to open vector or raster file-based data as well as databases or web services supported by QGIS. It can be set modal or not with the  *Modeless data source manager dialog* in *Settings* → *Options* → *General* menu.

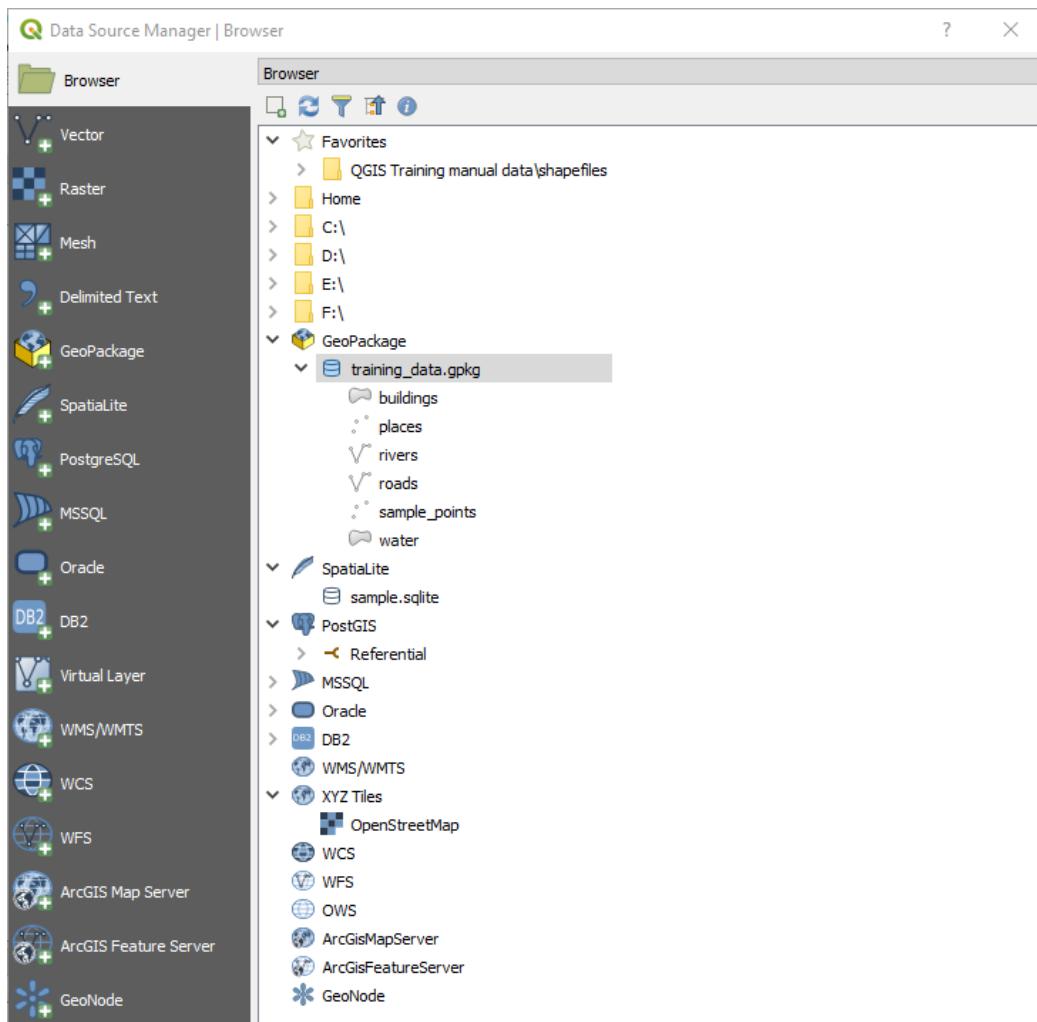


Fig. 12.1: QGIS Data Source Manager dialog

Beside this main entry point, you also have the  *DB Manager* plugin that offers advanced capabilities to analyze and manipulate connected databases. More information on DB Manager capabilities are exposed in [DB Manager Plugin](#).

There are also many other tools, native or third-party plugins, that help you open dedicated data formats.

This chapter will describe only the tools provided by default in QGIS to load data. It will mainly focus on the *Data Source Manager* dialog but more than describing each tab, it will also explore the tools based on the data provider or format specificities.

### 12.1.1 The Browser Panel

The *Browser* is one of the main ways to quickly and easily add your data to projects. It's available as:

- a *Data Source Manager* tab, enabled pressing the  *Open Data Source Manager* button (**Ctrl+L**);
- as a QGIS panel you can open from the menu *View → Panels* (or *Settings → Panels*) or by pressing **Ctrl+2**.

In both cases, the *Browser* helps you navigate in your file system and manage geodata, regardless the type of layer (raster, vector, table), or the datasource format (plain or compressed files, database, web services).

To add a layer into a project, using the *Browser* interface:

1. Enable the *Browser* as described above. A browser tree with your file system, databases and web services is displayed. You may need to connect databases and web services before they appear (see dedicated sections).
2. Find the layer in the list.
3. Double-click its name or drag-and-drop it into the *map canvas*. Your layer is now added to the *Layers panel* and can be viewed in the map canvas.

---

#### Tip: Open a QGIS project directly from the browser

You can also open a QGIS project directly from the Browser panel by double-clicking its name or by drag-and-drop into the map canvas.

---

Once a file is loaded, you can zoom around it using the map navigation tools. To change the style of a layer, open the *Layer Properties* dialog by double clicking on the layer name or by right-clicking on the name in the legend and choosing *Properties* from the context menu. See section [Symbology Properties](#) for more information on setting symbology of vector layers.

At the top of the Browser panel, you find some icons that help you to:

-  **Add Selected Layers**: you can also add data into the map canvas by selecting **Add selected layer(s)** from the layer's context menu;
-  **Refresh** the browser tree;
-  **Filter Browser** to search for specific data. Enter a search word or wildcard and the browser will filter the tree to only show paths to matching DB tables, filenames or folders – other data or folders won't be displayed. See the Browser Panel(2) example on the [figure\\_browser\\_panels](#). The comparison can be case-sensitive or not. It can also be set to:
  - **normal**: return any item containing the search text;
  - using **wildcard(s)**: fine tune the search using ? and/or \* characters to specify the position of the search text;
  - using a **regular expression**.
-  **Collapse All** the whole tree;

-  **Enable/disable properties widget**: when toggled on, a new widget is added at the bottom of the panel showing, if applicable, metadatas of the selected item.

Right-click an item in the browser tree helps you to:

- in case of file or table, display its metadata or open it in your project. Tables can even be renamed, deleted or truncated;
- in case of folder, bookmark it into your favourites, hide it from the browser tree. Hidden folders can be managed from the *Settings → Options → Data Sources* tab;
- create connection to databases or web servers;
- refresh, rename or delete schema.

You can also import files into databases or copy tables from one schema/database to another one with a simple drag-and-drop. There is a second browser panel available to avoid long scrolling while dragging. Just select the file and drag-and-drop from one panel to the other.

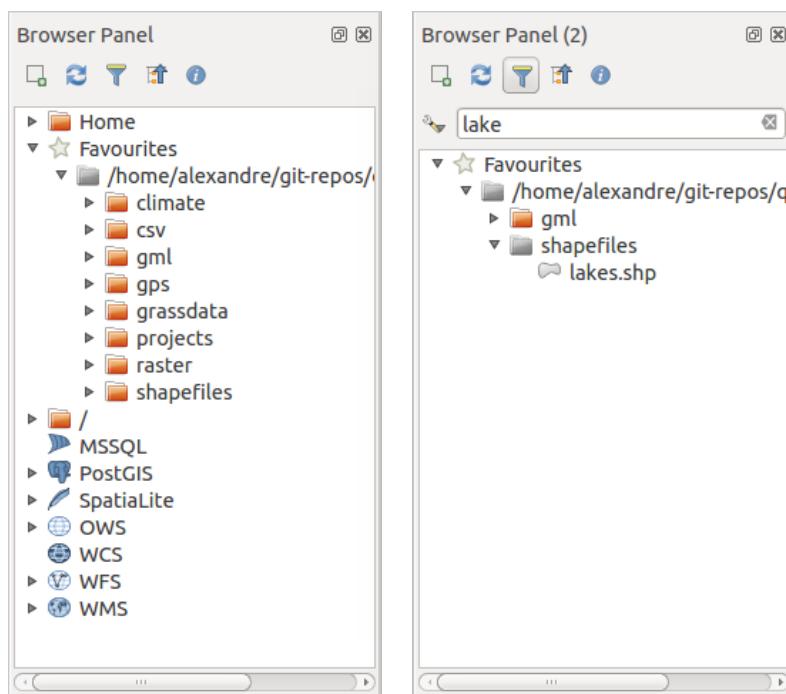


Fig. 12.2: QGIS Browser panels side-by-side

#### **Tip: Add layers to QGIS by simple drag-and-drop from your OS file browser**

You can also add file(s) to the project by drag-and-dropping them from your operating system file browser to the *Layers Panel* or the map canvas.

### 12.1.2 The DB Manager

The *DB Manager* Plugin is another one of the main and native tools to integrate and manage spatial database formats supported by QGIS (PostGIS, SpatiaLite, GeoPackage, Oracle Spatial, MSSQL, DB2, Virtual layers) in one user interface. It can be activated from the *Plugins → Manage and Install Plugins...* menu.

The  **DB Manager** Plugin provides several features:

- connect to databases and display its structure and contents;
- preview tables of databases;

- add layers to map canvas, either by double-click or drag-and-drop;
- add layers to a database from the QGIS Browser or from another database;
- create and add output of SQL queries to the map canvas;
- create *virtual layers*.

More information on DB Manager capabilities are exposed in [DB Manager Plugin](#).

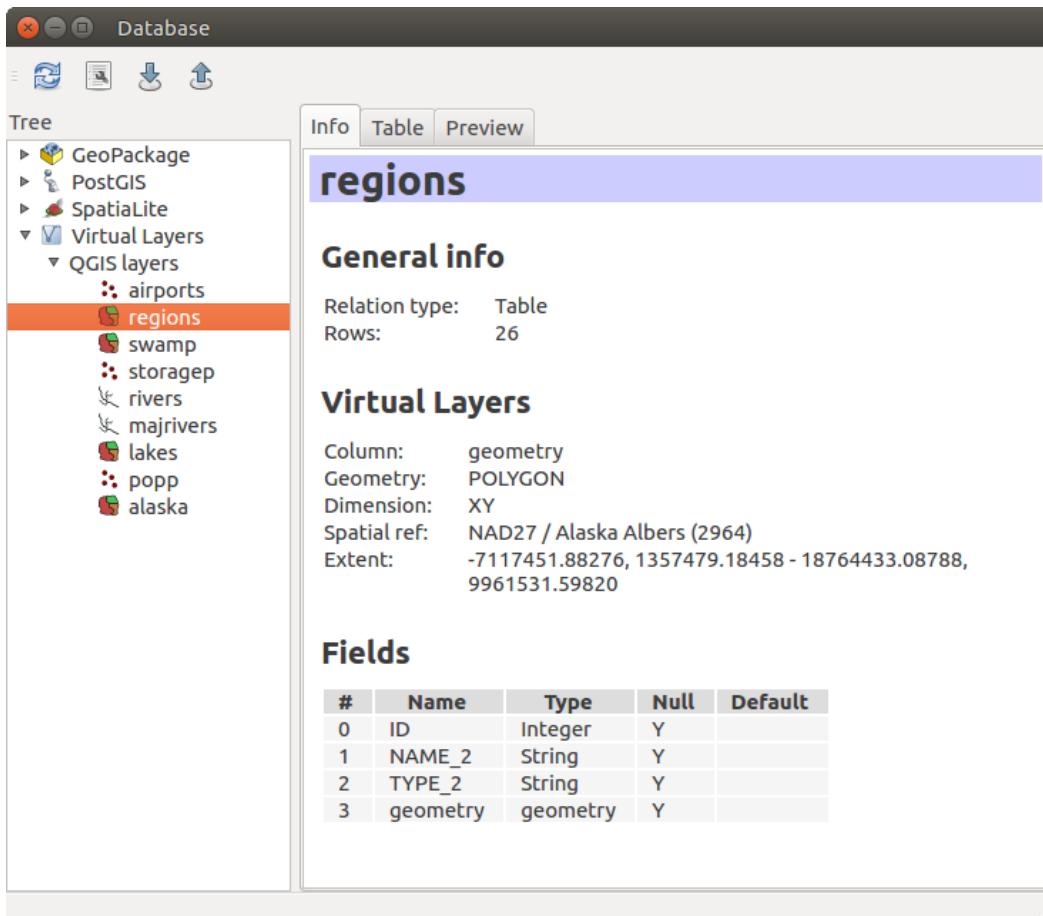


Fig. 12.3: DB Manager dialog

### 12.1.3 Provider-based loading tools

Beside Browser Panel and DB Manager, the main tools provided by QGIS to add layers regardless the format, you'll also find tools that are specific to data providers.

---

**Note:** Some *external plugins* also propose tools to open specific format files in QGIS.

---

#### Loading a layer from a file

To load a layer from a file, you can:

- for vector data (like Shapefile, Mapinfo or dxf layer), click on Add Vector Layer toolbar button, select the *Layer → Add Layer → Add Vector Layer* menu option or press **Ctrl+Shift+V**. This will bring up

a new window (see *figure\_vector\_add*) from which you can check File and click on *Browse*. You can also specify the encoding for the file if desired.

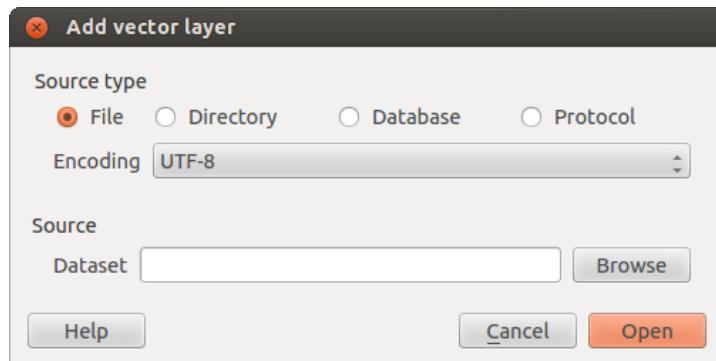


Fig. 12.4: Add Vector Layer Dialog

- for raster layers, click on the Add Raster Layer icon, select the *Layer* → *Add Layer* → Add Raster Layer menu option or type *Ctrl+Shift+R*.

That will bring up a standard open file dialog (see *figure\_vector\_open*), which allows you to navigate the file system and load a shapefile, a geotiff or other supported data source. The selection box *Filter* allows you to preselect some supported file formats. Only the formats that have been well tested appear in the list. Other untested formats can be loaded by selecting *All files (\*.\*)*.

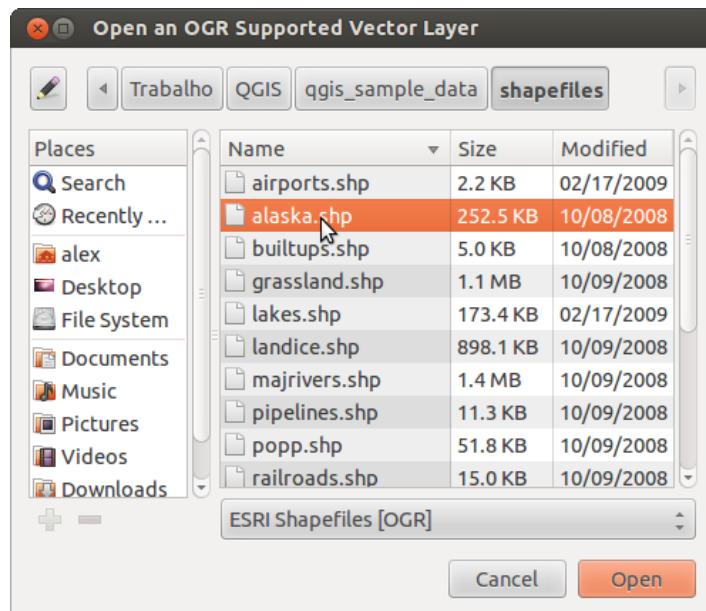


Fig. 12.5: Open an OGR Supported Vector Layer Dialog

Selecting a file from the list and clicking *Open* loads it into QGIS. More than one layer can be loaded at the same time by holding down the *Ctrl* or *Shift* key and clicking on multiple items in the dialog. *Figure\_vector\_loaded* shows QGIS after loading the *alaska.shp* file.

---

**Note:** Because some formats like MapInfo (e.g., *.tab*) or Autocad (*.dxr*) allow mixing different types of geometry in a single file, loading such format in QGIS opens a dialog to select geometries to use in order to have one geometry per layer.

Using the tool:

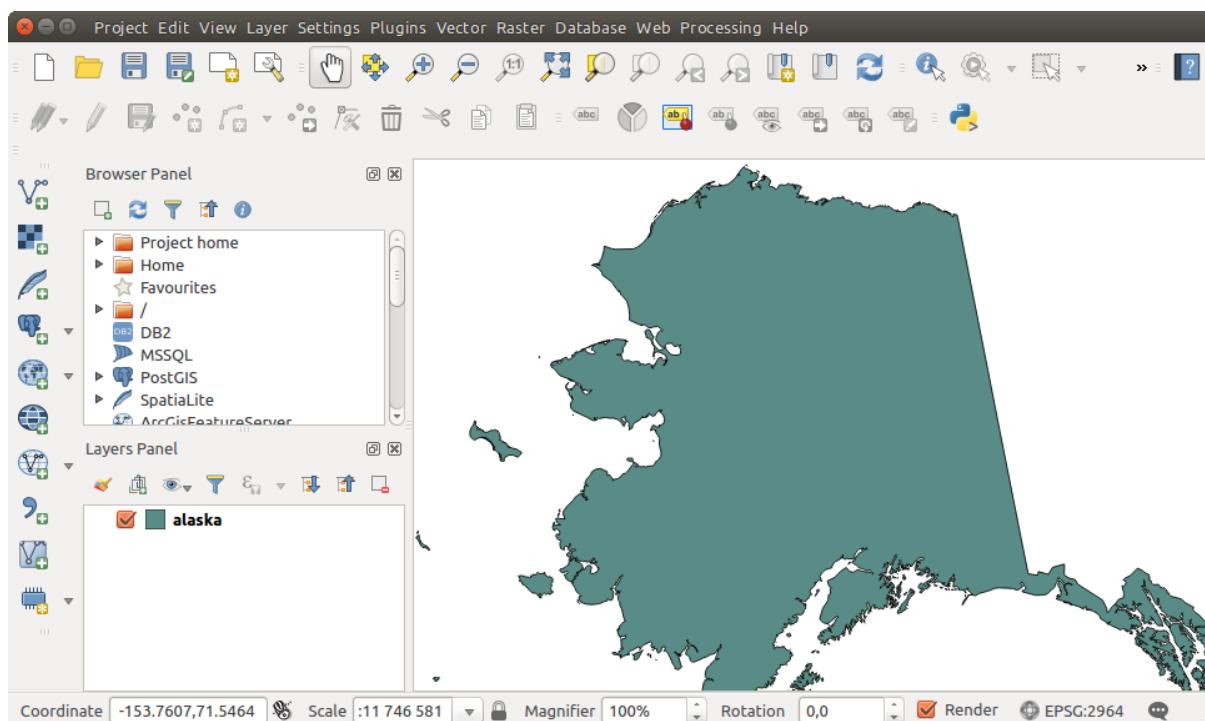


Fig. 12.6: QGIS with Shapefile of Alaska loaded

- You can also load specific formats like ArcInfo Binary Coverage, UK. National Transfer Format, as well as the raw TIGER format of the US Census Bureau or OpenfileGDB. To do that, you'd need to select  *Directory* as *Source type*. In this case a directory can be selected in the dialog after pressing *Browse*.
- With the  *Database* source type you can select an existing database connection or create one to the selected database type. Available database types are ODBC, OGDI Vectors, Esri Personal Geodatabase, MySQL as well as PostgreSQL or MSSQL.

Pressing the *New* button opens the *Create a New OGR Database Connection* dialog whose parameters are among the ones you can find in [Creating a stored Connection](#). Pressing *Open* you can select from the available tables for example of the PostGIS enabled database.

- The last source type,  *Protocol*, enables to open data from the web using for example GeoJSON or CouchDB format. After selecting the type you have to fill URI of the source.

---

#### Tip: Load layers and projects from mounted external drives on macOS

On macOS, portable drives that are mounted beside the primary hard drive do not show up as expected under *File* → *Open...*. We are working on a more macOS-native open/save dialog to fix this. As a workaround, you can type `/Volumes` in the *File name* box and press *Enter*. Then you can navigate to external drives and network mounts.

---

#### Importing a delimited text file

Delimited text file (e.g. `.csv`, `.txt`) can be loaded in QGIS using the tools described above. However, loaded this way, it'll show up like a simple table data. Sometimes, delimited text files can contain geometric data you'd want to visualize; this is what the  *Add Delimited Text Layer* is designed for.

Click the  Open Data Source Manager icon to open the *Data Source Manager* dialog and enable the  Delimited Text tab, as shown in [figure\\_delimited\\_text](#).

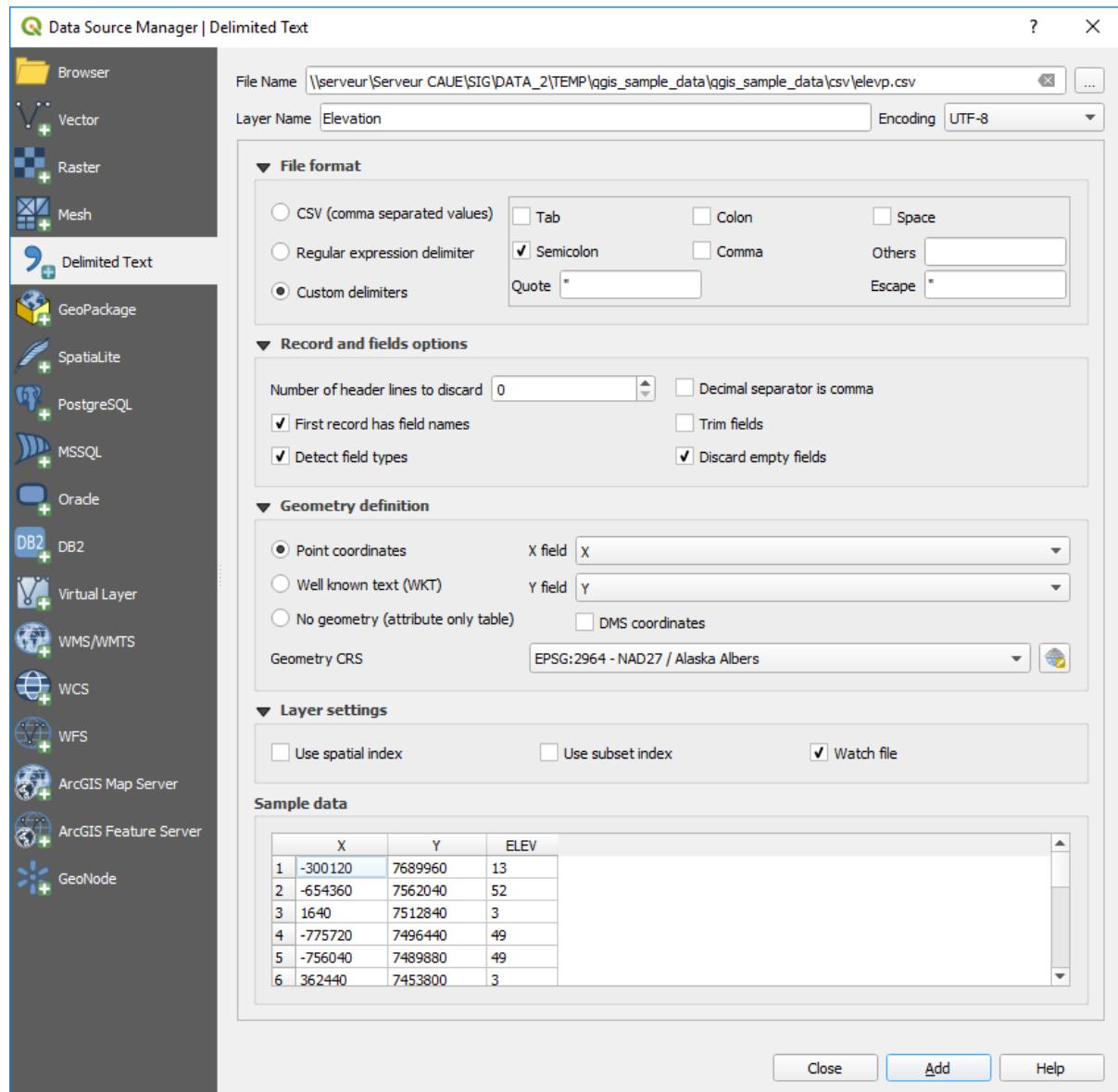


Fig. 12.7: Delimited Text Dialog

First, select the file to import (e.g., `qgis_sample_data/csv/elevp.csv`) by clicking on the *Browse* button. In the *Layer name* field, provide the name to use for the layer in the project (e.g., `Elevation`).

### File format

Once the file is selected, QGIS attempts to parse the file with the most recently used delimiter, trying to identify fields and rows. To enable QGIS to properly parse the file, it is important to select the correct delimiter. You can specify a delimiter by activating:

- *CSV (comma separated values)* to use the comma character;
- *Custom delimiters*, choosing among some predefined delimiters like comma, space, tab, semicolon...;

- or  *Regular expression delimiter* and entering text into the *Expression* field. For example, to change the delimiter to tab, use \t (this is a regular expression for the tab character).

## Records and fields

Other than settings to identify rows and fields in the data, some convenient options can be used to tweak the data recognition:

- *Number of header lines to discard*: convenient when you want to avoid some lines to show in the import, either because those are blank lines or with another formatting.
- *First records has field names*: values in the first row of data are used as field names, otherwise QGIS adds a fields row of a type field\_1, field\_2...
- *Detect field types*: automatically recognizes the field type. If unchecked then all attributes are treated as text fields.
- *Decimal separator is comma*: if necessary, you can force a comma to be the decimal separator.
- *Trim fields*: allows you to trim leading and trailing spaces from fields.
- *Discard empty fields*.

As you set the parser properties, a sample data preview updates at the bottom of the dialog.

## Geometry definition

Once the file is parsed, set *Geometry definition* to

- *Point coordinates* and provide the *X field* and *Y field* if the layer is of point geometry type and contain such coordinate fields. If the coordinates are defined as degrees/minutes/seconds, activate the  *DMS coordinates* checkbox;
- *Well known text (WKT)* option if the spatial information is represented by WKT: select the *Geometry field* containing the WKT definition and choose the appropriate *Geometry field* or let QGIS auto-detect it;
- If the file contains non-spatial data, activate  *No geometry (attribute only table)* and it will be loaded as an ordinary table.

Besides the features geometry information, you can also set the layer's *Geometry CRS* using the  Select CRS widget.

## Layer settings

Additionally, you can enable:

- *Use spatial index* to improve the performance of displaying and spatially selecting features;
- *Use subset index* to improve performance of *subset filters* (when defined in the layer properties);
- *Watch file* to watch for changes to the file by other applications while QGIS is running.

At the end, click *OK* to add the layer to the map. In our example, a point layer named `Elevation` is added to the project and behaves like any other map layer in QGIS. However, this layer is the result of a query on the `.csv` source layer (hence, linked to it) and would require *to be saved* in order to get a spatial layer on disk.

## Importing a DXF or DWG file

DXF and DWG files can be added to QGIS by simple drag-and-drop from the common Browser Panel. You'll be prompted to select the sublayers you'd like to add to the project. Layers are added with random style properties.

---

**Note:** DXF files containing several geometry types (point, line and/or polygon), the name of the layer will be made from <filename.dxf> entities <geometry type>.

---

To keep the dxf/dwg file structure and its symbology in QGIS, you may want to use the dedicated *Project → Import/Export → Import Layers from DWG/DXF...* tool which allows you to:

1. import elements from the drawing file into a GeoPackage database.
2. and add to the project any of the imported elements.

In the *DWG/DXF Import* dialog, to first import the drawing file contents:

1. Input the location of the *Target package*, i.e. the new GeoPackage file that will store the data. If an existing file is provided, then it will be overwritten.
2. Specify the coordinate reference system of the data in the drawing file.
3. Check  *Expand block references* to import the blocks in the drawing file as normal elements.
4. Check  *Use curves* to promote the imported layers to a curved geometry type.
5. Use the *Import* button to select the DWG/DXF file to use (one per geopackage). The GeoPackage database will be automatically populated with the drawing file content. Depending on the size of the \*CAD file, this could take some time.

After the .dwg or .dxf data is imported into the GeoPackage database the frame in the lower half of the dialog is populated with the list of layers from the imported file. There you can select which layers to add to the QGIS project:

1. At the top, set a *Group name* to group the drawing files in the project.
2. Check *layers to show*: Each selected layer is added to an ad hoc group which contains vector layers for the point, line, label and area features of the drawing layer. The style of each layer is setup so that it resembles the look it originally had in \*CAD.
3. Check whether layer should be visible at opening.
4. Alternatively using the  *Merge layers* option places all layers in a single group.
5. Press *OK* to open the layers in QGIS.

## Importing OpenStreetMap Vectors

In recent years, the OpenStreetMap project has gained popularity because in many countries no free geodata such as digital road maps are available. The objective of the OSM project is to create a free editable map of the world from GPS data, aerial photography or local knowledge. To support this objective, QGIS provides support for OSM data.

Using the *Browser Panel*, you can load a .osm file to the map canvas, in which case you'll get a dialog to select sublayers based on the geometry type. The loaded layers will contain all the data of that geometry type in the file and keep the osm file data structure.

## SpatiaLite Layers

 The first time you load data from a SpatiaLite database, begin by:

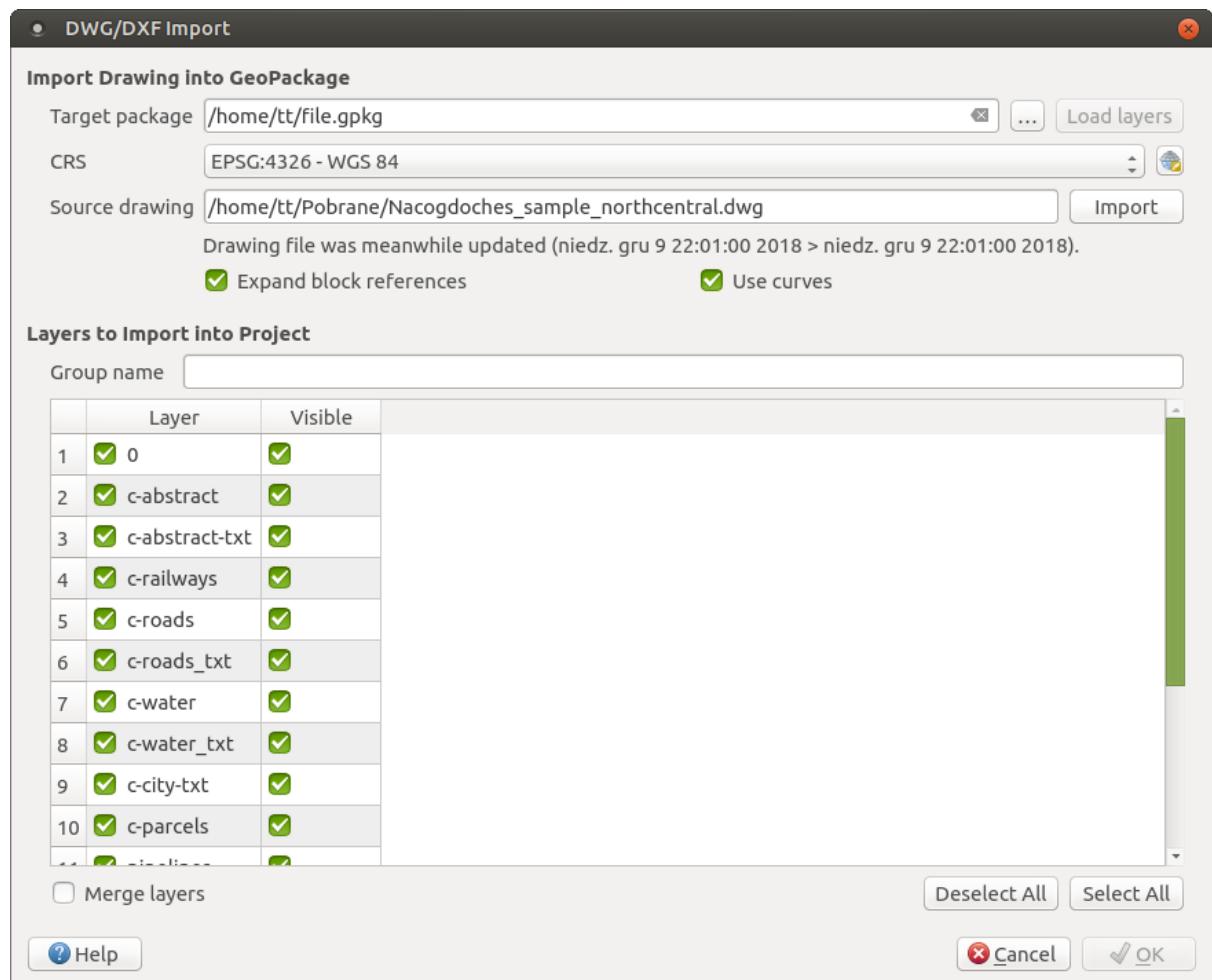


Fig. 12.8: Import dialog for DWG/DXF files

- clicking on the  **Add SpatialLite Layer** toolbar button;
- selecting the  **Add SpatialLite Layer...** option from the *Layer → Add Layer* menu;
- or by typing **Ctrl+Shift+L**.

This will bring up a window that will allow you either to connect to a Spatialite database already known to QGIS, which you can choose from the drop-down menu, or to define a new connection to a new database. To define a new connection, click on *New* and use the file browser to point to your Spatialite database, which is a file with a **.sqlite** extension.

QGIS also supports editable views in Spatialite.

## GPS

Loading GPS data in QGIS can be done using the core plugin: **GPS Tools**. Instructions are described in Section [GPS Plugin](#).

## GRASS

Working with GRASS vector data is described in Section [GRASS GIS Integration](#).

## Database related tools

### Creating a stored Connection

In order to read and write tables from the many database formats QGIS supports you'll need to create a connection to that database. While [QGIS Browser Panel](#) is the simplest and recommended way to connect and use databases, QGIS provides other tools to connect to each of them and load their tables:

-  **Add PostGIS Layer...** or by typing **Ctrl+Shift+D**;
-  **Add MSSQL Spatial Layer** or by typing **Ctrl+Shift+M**;
-  **Add Oracle Spatial Layer...** or by typing **Ctrl+Shift+O**;
-  **Add DB2 Spatial Layer...** or by typing **Ctrl+Shift+2**.

These tools are accessible either from the *Manage Layers Toolbar* or the *Layer → Add Layer →* menu. Connecting to Spatialite database is described at [Spatialite Layers](#).

---

### Tip: Create connection to database from the QGIS Browser Panel

Select the corresponding database format in the Browser tree, right-click and choose connect will provide you with the database connection dialog.

---

Most of the connection dialogs follow a common basis that will be described below using the PostGreSQL database tool as example. For additional settings specific to other providers, you can find corresponding description at:

- [Connecting to MSSQL Spatial](#);
- [Connecting to Oracle Spatial](#);
- [Connecting to DB2 Spatial](#).

The first time you use a PostGIS data source, you must create a connection to a database that contains the data. Begin by clicking the appropriate button as exposed above, opening an *Add PostGIS Table(s)* dialog (see [figure\\_add\\_postgis\\_tables](#)). To access the connection manager, click on the *New* button to display the *Create a New PostGIS Connection* dialog.

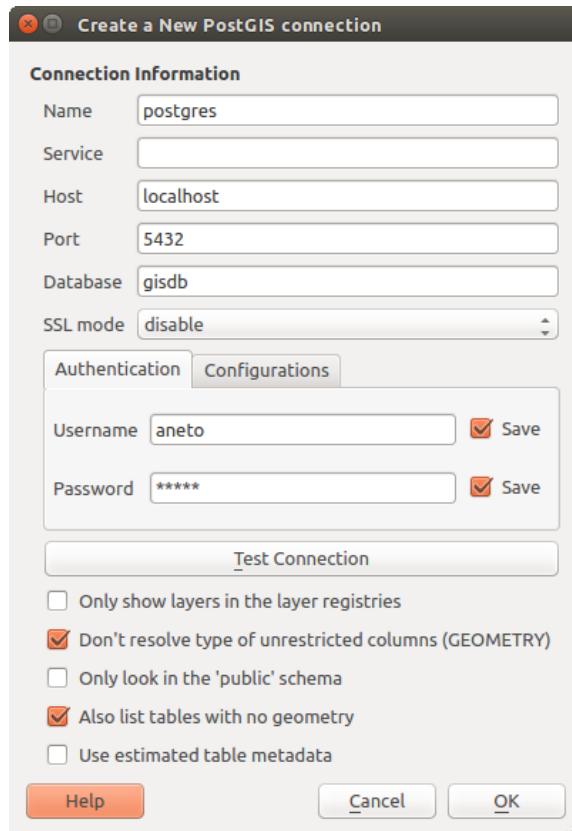


Fig. 12.9: Create a New PostGIS Connection Dialog

The parameters required for a PostGIS connection are exposed below. For the other database types, see their differences at [Particular Connection requirements](#).

- **Name:** A name for this connection. It can be the same as *Database*.
- **Service:** Service parameter to be used alternatively to hostname/port (and potentially database). This can be defined in `pg_service.conf`. Check the [PostgreSQL Service connection file](#) section for more details.
- **Host:** Name of the database host. This must be a resolvable host name such as would be used to open a TCP/IP connection or ping the host. If the database is on the same computer as QGIS, simply enter *localhost* here.
- **Port:** Port number the PostgreSQL database server listens on. The default port for PostGIS is 5432.
- **Database:** Name of the database.
- **SSL mode:** How the SSL connection will be negotiated with the server. Note that massive speed-ups in PostGIS layer rendering can be achieved by disabling SSL in the connection editor. The following options are available:
  - *Disable*: Only try an unencrypted SSL connection;
  - *Allow*: Try a non-SSL connection. If that fails, try an SSL connection;
  - *Prefer* (the default): Try an SSL connection. If that fails, try a non-SSL connection;
  - *Require*: Only try an SSL connection.
- **Username:** User name used to log in to the database.

- **Password:** Password used with *Username* to connect to the database.

You can save any or both of the `username` and `password` parameters, in which case they will be used by default each time you need to connect to this database. If not saved, you'll be prompted to fill the missing credentials to connect to the database in next QGIS sessions; meanwhile the connection parameters you entered are stored in a temporary internal cache and returned whenever a `username/password` for the same database is requested, until you close the current QGIS process.

#### Warning: QGIS User Settings and Security

In the *Authentication* tab, saving `username` and `password` will keep unprotected credentials in the connection configuration. Those **credentials will be visible** if, for instance, you shared the project file with someone. Therefore, it's advisable to save your credentials in a *Authentication configuration* instead (*Configurations* tab - See [Authentication System](#) for more details) or in a service connection file (see [PostgreSQL Service connection file](#) for example).

Optionally, depending on the type of database, you can activate the following checkboxes:

- *Only show layers in the layer registries*
- *Don't resolve type of unrestricted columns (GEOMETRY)*
- *Only look in the 'public' schema*
- *Also list tables with no geometry*
- *Use estimated table metadata*
- *Allow saving/loading QGIS projects in the database:* more details [here](#)

---

#### Tip: Use estimated table metadata to speed up operations

When initializing layers, various queries may be needed to establish the characteristics of the geometries stored in the database table. When the *Use estimated table metadata* option is checked, these queries examine only a sample of the rows and use the table statistics, rather than the entire table. This can drastically speed up operations on large datasets, but may result in incorrect characterization of layers (eg. the feature count of filtered layers will not be accurately determined) and may even cause strange behaviour in case columns that are supposed to be unique actually are not.

---

Once all parameters and options are set, you can test the connection by clicking on the *Test Connection* button or apply it hitting *OK*. From the *Add PostGIS Table(s)*, click now on *Connect* and the dialog is filled with tables from the selected database (as shown in [figure\\_add\\_postgis\\_tables](#)).

#### Particular Connection requirements

Because of database type particularities, provided options are all the same for all the databases. Below are exposed these connection specificities.

#### PostgreSQL Service connection file

The service connection file allows PostgreSQL connection parameters to be associated with a single service name. That service name can then be specified by a client and the associated settings will be used.

It's called `.pg_service.conf` under \*nix systems (GNU/Linux, macOS etc.) and `pg_service.conf` on Windows.

The service file looks like:

```
[water_service]
host=192.168.0.45
port=5433
dbname=gisdb
user=paul
password=paulspass

[wastewater_service]
host=dbserver.com
dbname=water
user=waterpass
```

**Note:** There are two services in the above example: `water_service` and `wastewater_service`. You can use these to connect from QGIS, pgAdmin etc. by specifying only the name of the service you want to connect to (without the enclosing brackets). If you want to use the service with `psql` you need to do something like `export PGSERVICE=water_service` before doing your `psql` commands.

You can find all the parameters [here](#)

---

**Note:** If you don't want to save the passwords in the service file you can use the `.pg_pass` option.

---

On \*nix operating systems (GNU/Linux, macOS etc.) you can save the `.pg_service.conf` file in the user's home directory and the PostgreSQL clients will automatically be aware of it. For example, if the logged user is `web`, `.pg_service.conf` should be saved in the `/home/web/` directory in order to directly work (without specifying any other environment variables).

You can specify the location of the service file by creating a `PGSERVICEFILE` environment variable (e.g. run the `export PGSERVICEFILE=/home/web/.pg_service.conf` command under your \*nix OS to temporarily set the `PGSERVICEFILE` variable)

You can also make the service file available system-wide (all users) either by placing the `.pg_service.conf` file at `pg_config --sysconfdir` or by adding the `PGSYSCONFDIR` environment variable to specify the directory containing the service file. If service definitions with the same name exist in the user and the system file, the user file takes precedence.

**Warning:** There are some caveats under Windows:

- The service file should be saved as `pg_service.conf` and not as `.pg_service.conf`.
- The service file should be saved in Unix format in order to work. One way to do it is to open it with [Notepad++](#) and *Edit → EOL Conversion → UNIX Format → File save*.
- You can add environmental variables in various ways; a tested one, known to work reliably, is *Control Panel → System and Security → System → Advanced system settings → Environment Variables* adding `PGSERVICEFILE` and the path of the type `C:\Users\John\pg_service.conf`
- After adding an environment variable you may also need to restart the computer.

## Connecting to Oracle Spatial

The spatial features in Oracle Spatial aid users in managing geographic and location data in a native type within an Oracle database. In addition to some of the options in [Creating a stored Connection](#), the connection dialog proposes:

- **Database:** SID or SERVICE\_NAME of the Oracle instance;
- **Port:** Port number the Oracle database server listens on. The default port is 1521;

- **Workspace:** Workspace to switch to.

Optionally, you can activate following checkboxes:

- *Only look in metadata table:* restricts the displayed tables to those that are in the `all_sdo_geom_metadata` view. This can speed up the initial display of spatial tables.
- *Only look for user's tables:* when searching for spatial tables, restricts the search to tables that are owned by the user.
- *Also list tables with no geometry:* indicates that tables without geometry should also be listed by default.
- *Use estimated table statistics for the layer metadata:* when the layer is set up, various metadata are required for the Oracle table. This includes information such as the table row count, geometry type and spatial extents of the data in the geometry column. If the table contains a large number of rows, determining this metadata can be time-consuming. By activating this option, the following fast table metadata operations are done: Row count is determined from `all_tables.num_rows`. Table extents are always determined with the `SDO_TUNEEXTENTS_OF` function, even if a layer filter is applied. Table geometry is determined from the first 100 non-null geometry rows in the table.
- *Only existing geometry types:* only lists the existing geometry types and don't offer to add others.
- *Include additional geometry attributes.*

---

#### Tip: Oracle Spatial Layers

Normally, an Oracle Spatial layer is defined by an entry in the `USER_SDO_METADATA` table.

---

### Connecting to DB2 Spatial

In addition to some of the options described in [Creating a stored Connection](#), the connection to a DB2 database (see [DB2 Spatial Layers](#) for more information) can be specified using either a Service/DSN name defined to ODBC or using the driver, host and port information.

An ODBC **Service/DSN** connection requires the service name defined to ODBC.

A driver/host/port connection requires:

- **Driver:** Name of the DB2 driver. Typically this would be IBM DB2 ODBC DRIVER.
- **DB2 Host:** Name of the database host. This must be a resolvable host name such as would be used to open a TCP/IP connection or ping the host. If the database is on the same computer as QGIS, simply enter `localhost` here.
- **DB2 Port:** Port number the DB2 database server listens on. The default DB2 LUW port is 50000. The default DB2 z/OS port is 446.

---

#### Tip: DB2 Spatial Layers

A DB2 Spatial layer is defined by a row in the `DB2GSE.ST_GEOMETRY_COLUMNS` view.

---

**Note:** In order to work effectively with DB2 spatial tables in QGIS, it is important that tables have an INTEGER or BIGINT column defined as PRIMARY KEY and if new features are going to be added, this column should also have the GENERATED characteristic.

It is also helpful for the spatial column to be registered with a specific spatial reference identifier (most often 4326 for WGS84 coordinates). A spatial column can be registered by calling the `ST_Register_Spatial_Column` stored procedure.

---

## Connecting to MSSQL Spatial

In addition to some of the options in [Creating a stored Connection](#), creating a new MSSQL connection dialog proposes you to fill a **Provider/DSN** name. You can also display available databases.

## Loading a Database Layer

Once you have one or more connections defined to a database (see section [Creating a stored Connection](#)), you can load layers from it. Of course, this requires having available data. See e.g. section [Importing Data into PostgreSQL](#) for a discussion on importing data into a PostGIS database.

To load a layer from a database, you can perform the following steps:

1. Open the “Add <database> table(s)” dialog (see [Creating a stored Connection](#)).
2. Choose the connection from the drop-down list and click *Connect*.
3. Select or unselect  *Also list tables with no geometry*.
4. Optionally, use some  *Search Options* to reduce the list of tables to those matching your search. You can also set this option before you hit the *Connect* button, speeding this way the database fetching.
5. Find the layer(s) you wish to add in the list of available layers.
6. Select it by clicking on it. You can select multiple layers by holding down the *Shift* key while clicking.
7. If applicable, use the *Set Filter* button (or double-click the layer) to start the *Query Builder* dialog (See section [Query Builder](#)) and define which features to load from the selected layer. The filter expression appears in the *sql* column. This restriction can be removed or edited in the *Layer Properties → General → Provider Feature Filter* frame.
8. The checkbox in the *Select at id* column that is activated by default gets the features ids without the attributes and speeds in most cases the data loading.
9. Click on the *Add* button to add the layer to the map.

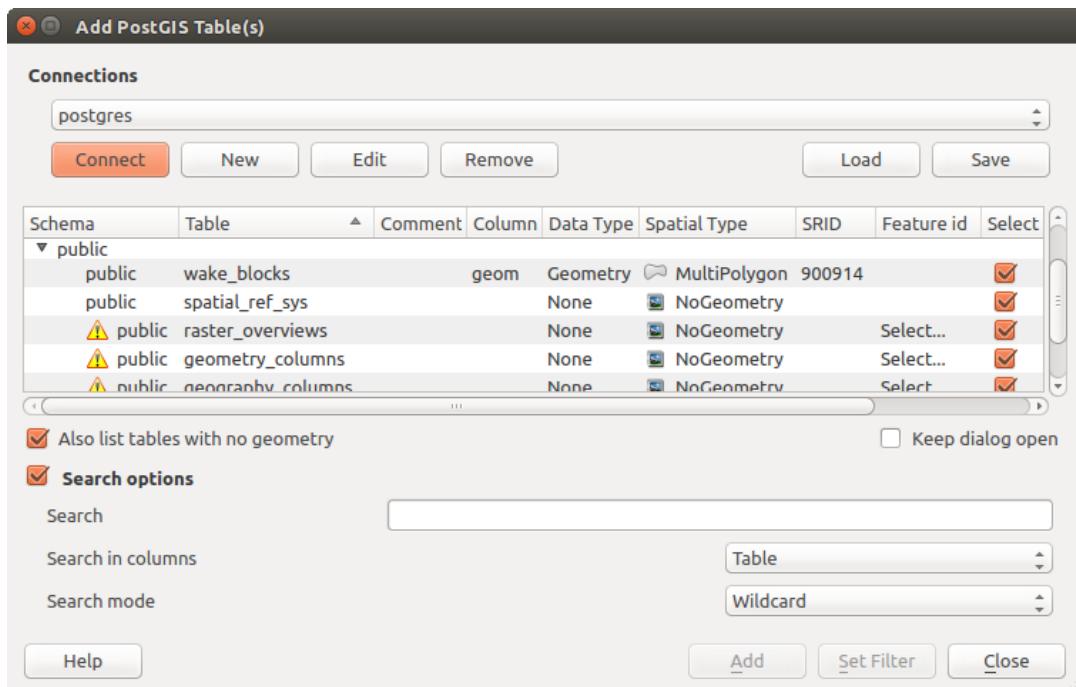


Fig. 12.10: Add PostGIS Table(s) Dialog

---

**Tip: Use the Browser Panel to speed up loading of database table(s)**

Adding DB tables from their ad hoc tab of the *Data Source Manager* dialog to QGIS may sometimes be time consuming as QGIS fetches statistics and properties (e.g. geometry type and field, CRS, number of features) of each table beforehand. To avoid this, once *the connection is set*, it's better to use the *Browser Panel* or the *DB Manager* to drag and drop the database tables in the map canvas.

---

## 12.1.4 QGIS Custom formats

QGIS proposes two custom formats you can load in the application using their own loading tool:

- Temporary Scratch Layer: a memory layer that is bound to the project it's opened with (see *Creating a new Temporary Scratch Layer* for more information)
- Virtual Layers: a layer resulting from a query on other layer(s) (see *Creating virtual layers* for more information)

## 12.1.5 Connecting to web services

With QGIS you can have access to different types of OGC web services (WM(T)S, WFS(-T), CSW ...). Thanks to QGIS Server, you can also publish these services. Description of these capabilities and how-to are provided in chapter *Working with OGC Data*.

# 12.2 Creating Layers

Layers can be created in many ways, including:

- empty layers from scratch;
- layers from existing layers;
- layers from the clipboard;
- layers as a result of an SQL-like query based on one or many layers: the *virtual layer*.

QGIS also provides tools to import/export different formats.

## 12.2.1 Creating new vector layers

QGIS allows you to create new Shapefile layers, new SpatiaLite layers, new GPX layers and new Temporary Scratch layers. Creation of a new GRASS layer is supported within the GRASS plugin. (Please refer to section *Creating a new GRASS vector layer* for more information on creating GRASS vector layers.)

### Creating a new GeoPackage layer

To create a new GeoPackage layer go to *Layer → New →  New GeoPackage Layer...*. The *New GeoPackage Layer* dialog will be displayed as shown in *figure\_create\_geopackage*.

The first step is to select an existing GeoPackage or create a new one. This can be done by pressing the ellipses ... button at the right of the Database field. Then, give a name for the new layer, define the layer type and specify the coordinate reference system with *Specify CRS*.

To define an attribute table for the new GeoPackage layer, add the names of the attribute columns you want to create with the corresponding column type, and click on the *Add to Fields List* button. Once you are happy with the attributes, click *OK*. QGIS will automatically add the new layer to the legend, and you can edit it in the same way as described in section *Digitizing an existing layer*.

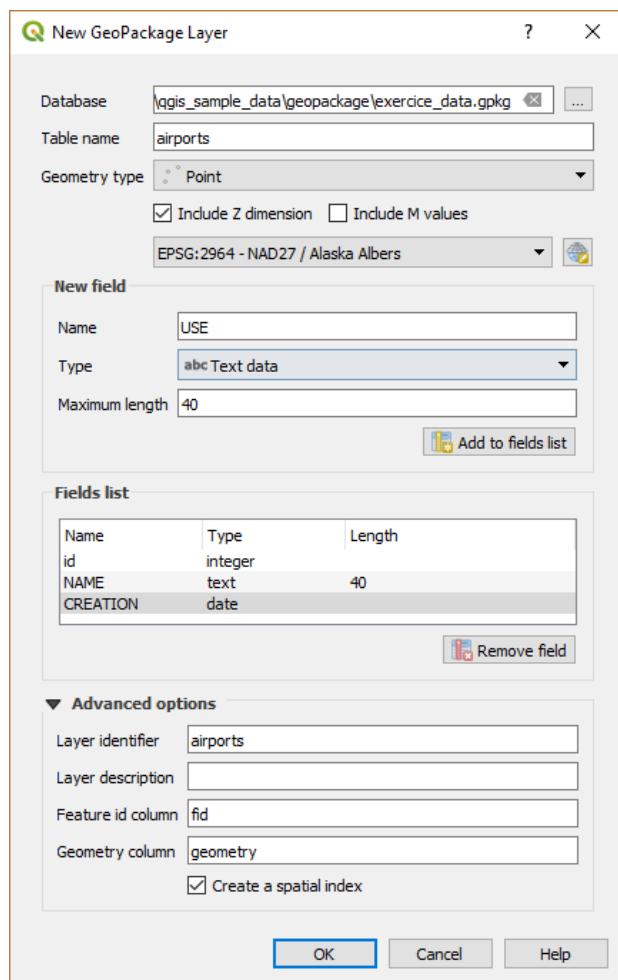


Fig. 12.11: Creating a New GeoPackage layer dialog

## Creating a new Shapefile layer

To create a new Shapefile layer, choose *Create Layer* →  *New Shapefile Layer...* from the *Layer* menu or select it from the *Data Source Manager* toolbar. The *New Shapefile Layer* dialog will be displayed as shown in [figure\\_create\\_shapefile](#). The first step is to provide a path and name for the Shapefile. QGIS will automatically add the .shp extension to the name you specify. Next, choose the type of layer (point, line or polygon) and optional Z or M dimensions, as well as the CRS (coordinate reference system).

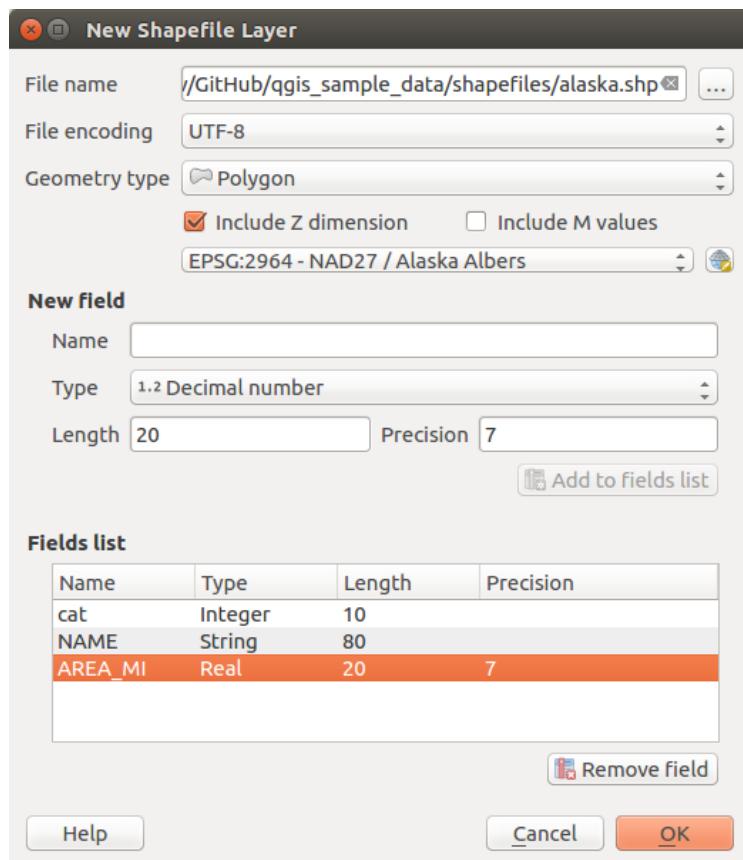


Fig. 12.12: Creating a new Shapefile layer dialog

To complete the creation of the new Shapefile layer, add the desired attributes by specifying a name and type for each attribute and clicking on the *Add to Fields List* button. A first ‘id’ column is added by default but can be removed, if not wanted. Only *Decimal number* , *Whole number* , *Text data*  and *Date*  attributes are supported. Additionally, depending on the attribute type, you can also define the length and precision of the new attribute column. Once you are happy with the attributes, click *OK*. Once the Shapefile has been created, it will be added to the map as a new layer, and you can edit it in the same way as described in section [Digitizing an existing layer](#).

## Creating a new SpatiaLite layer

To create a new SpatiaLite layer for editing, choose *Create Layer* →  *New SpatiaLite Layer...* from the *Layer* menu or select it from the *Data Source Manager* toolbar. The *New SpatiaLite Layer* dialog will be displayed as shown in [Figure\\_create\\_spatialite](#).

The first step is to select an existing SpatiaLite database or to create a new SpatiaLite database. This can be done with the ... button at the right of the database field. Then, add a name for the new layer, define the layer type, and specify the coordinate reference system with *Specify CRS*. If desired, you can select  *Create an autoincrementing primary key*.

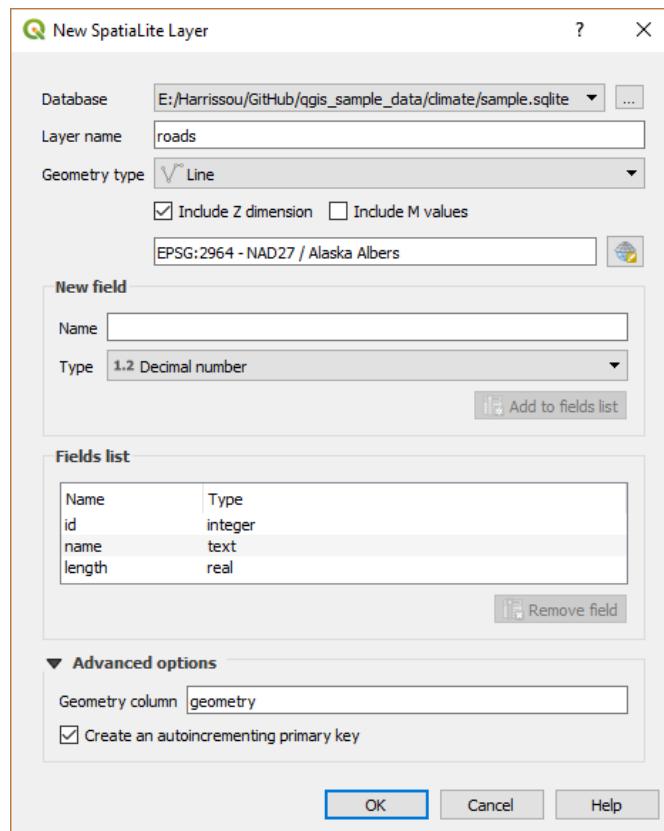


Fig. 12.13: Creating a New Spatialite layer dialog

To define an attribute table for the new Spatialite layer, add the names of the attribute columns you want to create with the corresponding column type, and click on the *Add to Fields List* button. Once you are happy with the attributes, click *OK*. QGIS will automatically add the new layer to the legend, and you can edit it in the same way as described in section [Digitizing an existing layer](#).

Further management of Spatialite layers can be done with the DB Manager. See [DB Manager Plugin](#).

### Creating a new GPX layer

To create a new GPX file, you need to load the GPS plugin first. *Plugins →*  *Plugin Manager...* opens the Plugin Manager Dialog. Activate the  *GPS Tools* checkbox.

When this plugin is loaded, choose *New →*  *Create new GPX Layer...* from the *Layer* menu. In the *Save new GPX file as* dialog, choose where to save the new file and press *Save*. Three new layers are added to the *Layers Panel*: waypoints, routes and tracks with predefined structure.

### Creating a new Temporary Scratch Layer

Temporary Scratch Layers are in-memory layers, meaning that they are not saved on disk and will be discarded when QGIS is closed. They can be handy to store features you temporarily need or as intermediate layers during geoprocessing operations.

Empty, editable temporary scratch layers can be defined using *Layer → Create Layer →*  *New Temporary Scratch Layer* or  *New temporary scratch layer* button from the *Data Source Manager Toolbar*. Here you can create a:

- No geometry type layer, served as simple table,

- Point or MultiPoint layer,
- LineString/CompoundCurve or MultiLineString/MultiCurve layer,
- Polygon/CurvePolygon or MultiPolygon/MultiSurface layer.

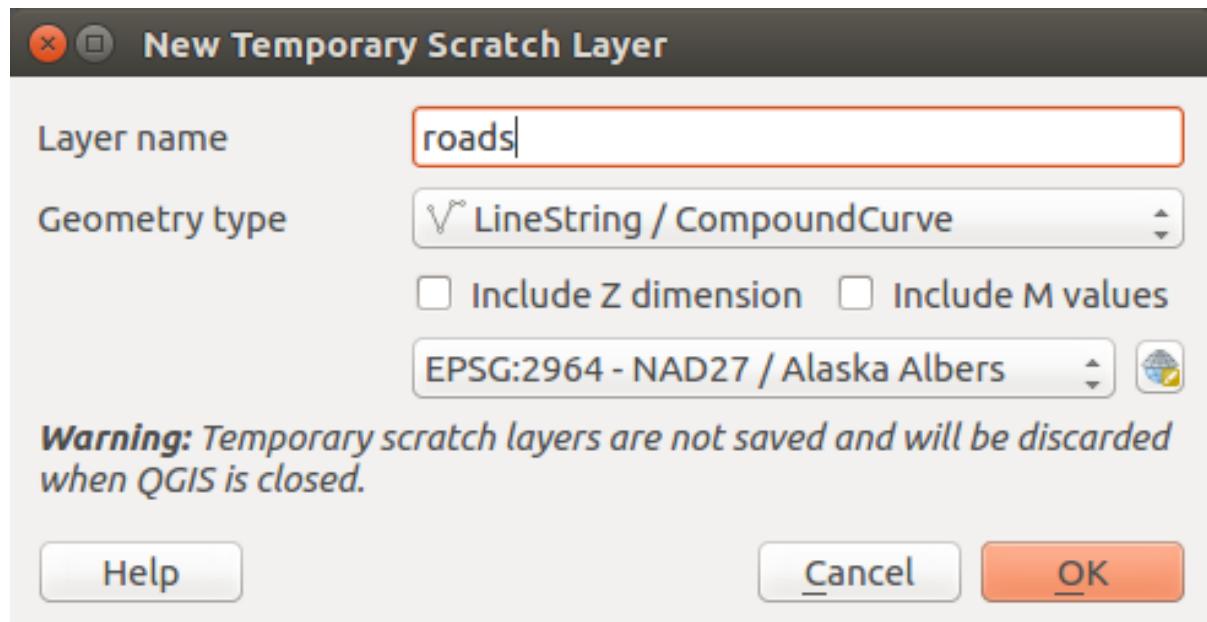


Fig. 12.14: Creating a new Temporary Scratch layer dialog

By default, a new temporary scratch layer is created without any attribute. But you can also create prepopulated temporary scratch layers using e.g. the clipboard (see [Creating new layers from the clipboard](#)) or as a result of a Processing algorithm.

#### **Tip: Permanently store a memory layer on disk**

To avoid data loss when closing project with temporary scratch layers, you can save these layers to any vector format supported by QGIS:

- clicking the  indicator icon next to the layer;
- selecting the *Make permanent* entry in the layer contextual menu;
- or as of any other vector layer, using the *Export →* entry from the contextual menu or the *Layer → Save As... menu*.

Each of these commands prompts the *Save Vector Layer as* dialog exposed in [Creating new layers from an existing layer](#) section and the saved file replaces the temporary one in the *Layers panel*.

### 12.2.2 Creating new layers from an existing layer

Both raster and vector layers can be saved in a different format and/or reprojected to a different coordinate reference system (CRS) using the *Layer → Save As...* menu or right-clicking on the layer in the *Layers panel* and selecting:

- *Export → Save As...* for raster layer
- *Export → Save Features As...* or *Export → Save Selected Features As...* for vector layer.
- Drag'n drop layer from the layer tree to the PostGIS entry in the *Browser Panel*. Note that you should have already a PostGIS connection in the *Browser Panel*.

## Common parameters

The *Save Layer as...* dialog shows several parameters to change the behavior when saving the layer. Among the common parameters for raster and vector are:

- *File name*
- *CRS*: can be changed to reproject the data
- *Add saved file to map*: to add the new layer to the canvas
- *Extent* (possible values are **layer**, **Map view** or **user-defined extent**)

However, some parameters are specific to raster and vector formats:

## Raster specific parameters

Depending on the format of export, some of these options may not be available:

- *Output mode* (it can be **raw data** or **rendered image**)
- *Format*: exports to any raster format GDAL can write to, such as GeoTiff, GeoPackage, MBTiles, Geospatial PDF, SAGA GIS Binary Grid, Intergraph Raster, ESRI .hdr Labelled...
- *Resolution*
- *Create Options*: use advanced options (file compression, block sizes, colorimetry...) when generating files, either from the *predefined create profiles* related to the output format or by setting each parameter.
- *Pyramids* creation
- *VRT Tiles* in case you opted to  *Create VRT*
- *No data values*

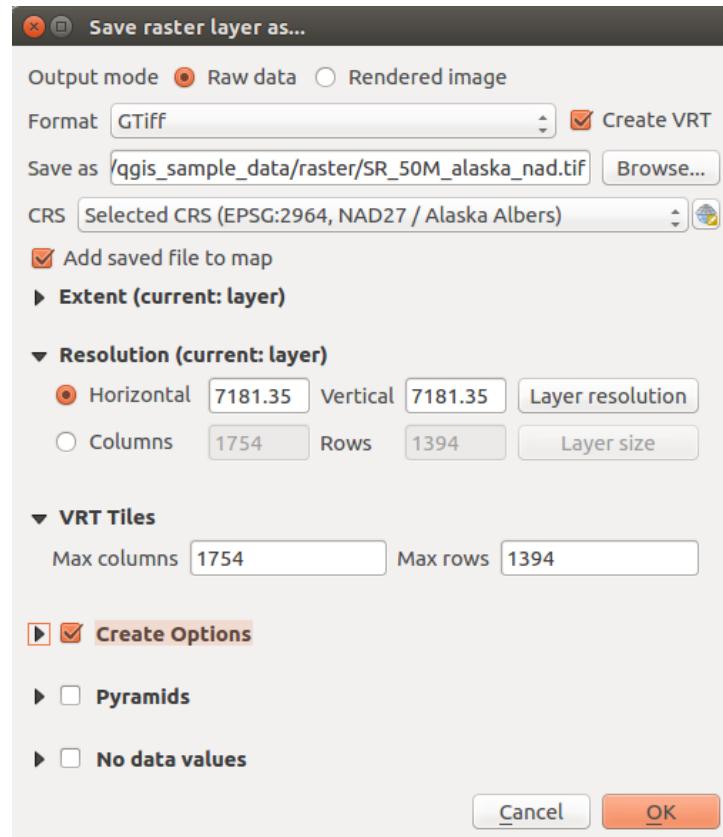


Fig. 12.15: Saving as a new raster layer

## Vector specific parameters

Depending on the format of export, some of these options are available or not:

- *Format*: exports to any vector format GDAL can write to, such as GeoPackage, ESRI Shapefile, AutoCAD DXF, ESRI FileGDB, Mapinfo TAB or MIF, SpatiaLite, CSV, KML, ODS...
- *Layer name* depending on the selected format
- *Encoding*
- *Save only selected features*
- *Select fields to export and their export options*. In case you set your fields behavior with some *Edit widgets*, e.g. `value map`, you can keep the displayed values in the layer by checking  *Replace all selected raw fields values by displayed values*.
- *Symbology export*: can be used mainly for DXF export and for all file formats who manage OGR feature styles (see note below) as DXF, KML, tab file formats:
  - **No symbology**: default style of the application that reads the data
  - **Feature symbology**: save style with OGR Feature Styles (see note below)
  - **Symbol Layer symbology**: save with OGR Feature Styles (see note below) but export the same geometry multiple times if there are multiple symbology symbol layers used
  - A **Scale** value can be applied to the latest options.

---

**Note:** *OGR Feature Styles* are a way to store style directly in the data as a hidden attribute. Only some formats can handle this kind of information. KML, DXF and TAB file formats are such formats. For advanced users, you can read the [OGR Feature Styles specification](#) document.

---

- *Geometry*: you can configure the geometry capabilities of the output layer
  - *geometry type*: keeps the original geometry of the features when set to **Automatic**, otherwise removes or overrides it with any type. You can add an empty geometry column to an attribute table, remove the geometry column of a spatial layer.
  - *Force multi-type*: forces creation of multi-geometry features in the layer.
  - *Include z-dimension* to geometries.

---

**Tip:** Overriding layer geometry type makes it possible to do things like save a geometryless table (e.g. `.csv` file) into a shapefile WITH any type of geometry (point, line, polygon), so that geometries can then be manually added to rows with the  [Add Part](#) tool.

---

- *Datasources Options, Layer Options or Custom Options* which allow you to configure some advanced parameters. See the [gdal-ogr](#) driver documentation.

When saving a vector layer into an existing file, depending on the capabilities of the output format (Geopackage, SpatiaLite, FileGDB...), the user can decide whether to:

- overwrite the whole file
- overwrite only the target layer (the layer name is configurable)
- append features to the existing target layer
- append features, add new fields if there are any.

For formats like ESRI Shapefile, MapInfo .tab, feature append is also available.

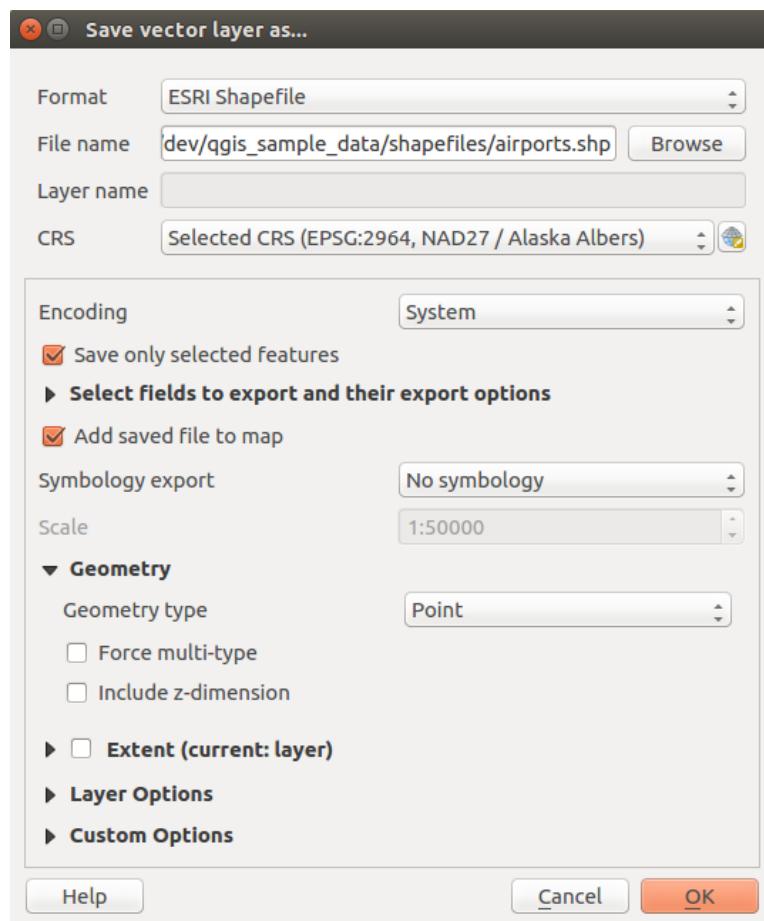


Fig. 12.16: Saving as a new vector layer

### 12.2.3 Creating new DXF files

Besides the *Save As...* dialog which provides options to export a single layer to another format, including \*.DXF, QGIS provides another tool to export multiple layers as a single DXF layers. It's accessible in the *Project → Import/Export → Export Project to DXF...* menu.

In the *DXF Export* dialog:

1. Indicate the destination layer file.
2. Choose the symbology mode and scale (see the *OGR Feature Styles* note) if applicable.
3. Select the data *Encoding*.
4. Select the *CRS* to apply: the selected layers will be reprojected to the given CRS.
5. select the layers to include in the DXF files either by checking each in the table widget or automatically pick them from an existing *map theme*. The *Select All* and *Deselect All* buttons can also help to quickly set the data to export.

For each layer, you can also choose whether to export all the features in a single DXF layer or rely on a field whose values are used to split the features in generated destination layers in the DXF output.

Optionally, you can also choose to:

- *Use the layer title as name if set* instead of the layer name itself;
- *Export features intersecting the current map extent*;
- *Force 2d output (eg. to support polyline width)*;
- *Export label as MTEXT elements or TEXT elements*.

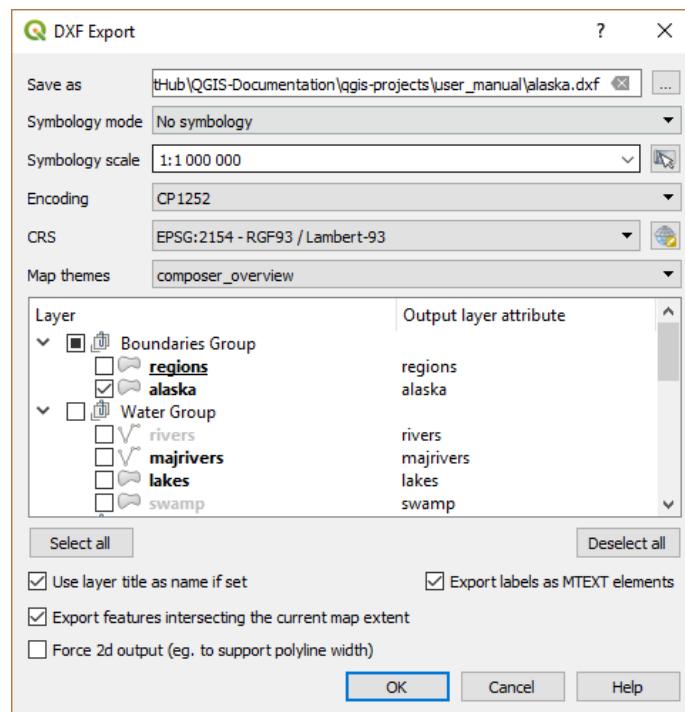


Fig. 12.17: Exporting a project to DXF dialog

## 12.2.4 Creating new layers from the clipboard

Features that are on the clipboard can be pasted into a new layer. To do this, Select some features, copy them to the clipboard, and then paste them into a new layer using *Edit → Paste Features as...* and choosing:

- *New Vector Layer...*: you need to select the layer CRS, popping up the *Save vector layer as...* dialog from which you can select any supported data format (see *Creating new layers from an existing layer* for parameters);
- or *Temporary Scratch Layer...*: you need to select the layer CRS and give a name.

A new layer, filled with selected features and their attributes is created and added to map canvas if asked.

---

**Note:** Creating layers from clipboard is possible with features selected and copied within QGIS as well as features from another application, as long as they are defined using well-known text (WKT) string.

---

## 12.2.5 Creating virtual layers

Virtual layers are a special kind of vector layer. They allow you to define a layer as the result of an SQL query involving any number of other vector layers that QGIS is able to open. Virtual layers do not carry data by themselves and can be seen as views to other layers.

To create a virtual layer, open the virtual layer creation dialog by:

- clicking  *Add Virtual Layer* option in the *Layer → Add Layer* → menu;
- enabling the  *Add Virtual Layer* tab in the *Data Source Manager* dialog;
- or using the *DB Manager* dialog tree item.

The dialog allows you to specify a *Layer name* and an *SQL Query*. The query can use the name (or id) of loaded vector layers as tables, as well as their field names as columns.

For example, if you have a layer called `airports`, you can create a new virtual layer called `public_airports` with an SQL query like:

```
SELECT *
FROM airports
WHERE USE = "Civilian/Public"
```

The SQL query will be executed, regardless of the underlying provider of the `airports` layer, even if this provider does not directly support SQL queries.

Joins and complex queries can also be created, for example, to join airports and country information:

```
SELECT airports.*, country.population
FROM airports
JOIN country
ON airports.country = country.name
```

---

**Note:** It's also possible to create virtual layers using the SQL window of *DB Manager Plugin*.

---

## Embedding layers for use in queries

Besides the vector layers available in the map canvas, the user can add layers to the *Embedded layers* list, which he can use in queries without the need to have them showing in the map canvas or Layers panel.

To embed a layer, click *Add* and provide the *Local name*, *Provider*, *Encoding* and the path to the *Source*.

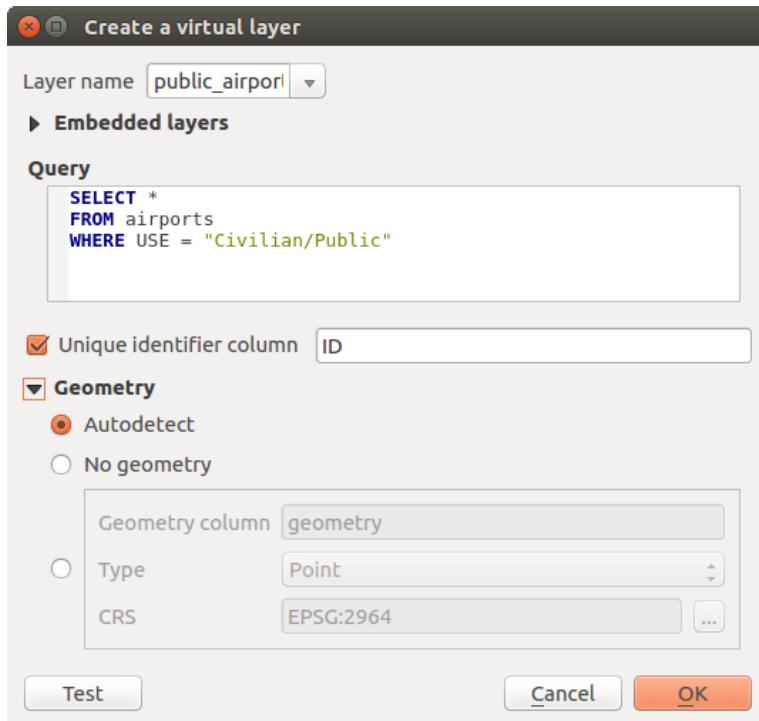


Fig. 12.18: Create virtual layers dialog

The *Import* button allows adding layers loaded in the map canvas into the Embedded layers list. This allows to later remove those layers from the Layers panel without breaking any existent query.

### Supported query language

The underlying engine uses SQLite and SpatiaLite to operate.

It means you can use all of the SQL your local installation of SQLite understands.

Functions from SQLite and spatial functions from SpatiaLite can also be used in a virtual layer query. For instance, creating a point layer out of an attribute-only layer can be done with a query similar to:

```
SELECT id, MakePoint(x, y, 4326) AS geometry
FROM coordinates
```

*Functions of QGIS expressions* can also be used in a virtual layer query.

To refer the geometry column of a layer, use the name `geometry`.

Contrary to a pure SQL query, all the fields of a virtual layer query must be named. Don't forget to use the `as` keyword to name your columns if they are the result of a computation or function call.

### Performance issues

With default parameters set, the virtual layer engine will try its best to detect the type of the different columns of the query, including the type of the geometry column if one is present.

This is done by introspecting the query when possible or by fetching the first row of the query (LIMIT 1) at last resort. Fetching the first row of the result just to create the layer may be undesirable for performance reasons.

The creation dialog allows to specify different parameters:

- *Unique identifier column*: this option allows specifying which field of the query represents unique integer values that QGIS can use as row identifiers. By default, an autoincrementing integer value is used. Defining a unique identifier column allows to speed up the selection of rows by id.
- *No geometry*: this option forces the virtual layer to ignore any geometry field. The resulting layer is an attribute-only layer.
- *Geometry Column*: this option allows to specify the name of the column that is to be used as the geometry of the layer.
- *Geometry Type*: this option allows to specify the type of the geometry of the virtual layer.
- *Geometry CRS*: this option allows to specify the coordinate reference system of the virtual layer.

## Special comments

The virtual layer engine tries to determine the type of each column of the query. If it fails, the first row of the query is fetched to determine column types.

The type of a particular column can be specified directly in the query by using some special comments.

The syntax is the following: `/*:type*/`. It has to be placed just after the name of a column. `type` can be either `int` for integers, `real` for floating point numbers or `text`.

For instance:

```
SELECT id+1 as nid /*:int/
FROM table
```

The type and coordinate reference system of the geometry column can also be set thanks to special comments with the following syntax `/*:gtype:srid*/` where `gtype` is the geometry type (point, linestring, polygon, multipoint, multilinestring or multipolygon) and `srid` an integer representing the EPSG code of a coordinate reference system.

## Use of indexes

When requesting a layer through a virtual layer, indexes of this source layer will be used in the following ways:

- if an = predicate is used on the primary key column of the layer, the underlying data provider will be asked for a particular id (FilterFid)
- for any other predicates (>, <=, !=, etc.) or on a column without a primary key, a request built from an expression will be used to request the underlying vector data provider. It means indexes may be used on database providers if they exist.

A specific syntax exists to handle spatial predicates in requests and triggers the use of a spatial index: a hidden column named `_search_frame_` exists for each virtual layer. This column can be compared for equality to a bounding box. Example:

```
SELECT *
FROM vtab
WHERE _search_frame_=BuildMbr(-2.10,49.38,-1.3,49.99,4326)
```

Spatial binary predicates like `ST_Intersects` are significantly sped up when used in conjunction with this spatial index syntax.

## 12.3 Exploring Data Formats and Fields

### 12.3.1 Raster data

Raster data in GIS are matrices of discrete cells that represent features on, above or below the earth's surface. Each cell in the raster grid has the same size, and cells are usually rectangular (in QGIS they will always be rectangular). Typical raster datasets include remote sensing data, such as aerial photography, or satellite imagery and modelled data, such as an elevation matrix.

Unlike vector data, raster data typically do not have an associated database record for each cell. They are geocoded by pixel resolution and the X/Y coordinate of a corner pixel of the raster layer. This allows QGIS to position the data correctly in the map canvas.

QGIS makes use of georeference information inside the raster layer (e.g., GeoTiff) or in an appropriate world file to properly display the data.

### 12.3.2 Vector Data

Many of the features available in QGIS work the same, regardless the vector data source. However, because of the differences in formats specifications (ESRI Shapefile, MapInfo and MicroStation file formats, AutoCAD DXF, PostGIS, SpatiaLite, DB2, Oracle Spatial and MSSQL Spatial databases, and many more), QGIS may handle differently some of their properties. This section describes how to work with these specificities.

---

**Note:** QGIS supports (multi)point, (multi)line, (multi)polygon, CircularString, CompoundCurve, CurvePolygon, MultiCurve, MultiSurface feature types, all with Z and/or M values.

You should note also that some drivers don't support some of these feature types like CircularString, CompoundCurve, CurvePolygon, MultiCurve, MultiSurface feature type. QGIS will convert them to (multi)polygon feature.

---

#### ESRI Shapefile

ESRI Shapefile is still one of the most used vector file format in QGIS. However, this file format has some limitation that some other file format have not (like GeoPackage, SpatiaLite). Support is provided by the [OGR Simple Feature Library](#).

A Shapefile format dataset consists of several files. The following three are required:

1. .shp file containing the feature geometries
2. .dbf file containing the attributes in dBase format
3. .shx index file

A Shapefile format dataset can also include a file with a .prj suffix, which contains the projection information. While it is very useful to have a projection file, it is not mandatory. A Shapefile format dataset can contain additional files. For further details, see the ESRI technical specification at <https://www.esri.com/library/whitepapers/pdfs/shapefile.pdf>.

#### Improving Performance for Shapefile format datasets

To improve the performance of drawing a Shapefile format dataset, you can create a spatial index. A spatial index will improve the speed of both zooming and panning. Spatial indexes used by QGIS have a .qix extension.

Use these steps to create the index:

1. Load a Shapefile format dataset (see [The Browser Panel](#)).
2. Open the *Layer Properties* dialog by double-clicking on the layer name in the legend or by right-clicking and choosing *Properties...* from the context menu.
3. In the *Source* tab, click the *Create Spatial Index* button.

### Problem loading a .prj file

If you load a Shapefile format dataset with a `.prj` file and QGIS is not able to read the coordinate reference system from that file, you will need to define the proper projection manually within the *Layer Properties → Source* tab of the layer by clicking the  `Select CRS` button. This is due to the fact that `.prj` files often do not provide the complete projection parameters as used in QGIS and listed in the *CRS* dialog.

For the same reason, if you create a new Shapefile format dataset with QGIS, two different projection files are created: a `.prj` file with limited projection parameters, compatible with ESRI software, and a `.qpj` file, providing the complete parameters of the used CRS. Whenever QGIS finds a `.qpj` file, it will be used instead of the `.prj`.

### Delimited Text Files

Delimited text file is a very common and widely used format because of its simplicity and readability – data can be viewed and edited even in a plain text editor. A delimited text file is a tabular data with each column separated by a defined character and each row separated by a line break. The first row usually contains the column names. A common type of delimited text file is a CSV (Comma Separated Values), with each column separated by a comma. Such data files can also contain positional information (see *Storing geometry information in delimited text file*).

QGIS allows you to load a delimited text file as a layer or ordinal table (see *The Browser Panel* or *Importing a delimited text file*). But first check that the file meets the following requirements:

1. The file must have a delimited header row of field names. This must be the first line of the data (ideally the first row in the text file).
2. If geometry should be enabled, the header row must contain field(s) with geometry definition. These field(s) can have any name.
3. The X and Y coordinates fields (if geometry is defined by coordinates) must be specified as numbers. The coordinate system is not important.
4. If you have any data that is not a string (text) and the file is a CSV file, you must have a CSVT file (see section *Using CSVT file to control field formatting*).

As an example of a valid text file, we import the elevation point data file `elevp.csv` that comes with the QGIS sample dataset (see section *Downloading sample data*):

```
X;Y;ELEV
-300120;7689960;13
-654360;7562040;52
1640;7512840;3
[...]
```

Some items to note about the text file:

1. The example text file uses ; (semicolon) as delimiter. Any character can be used to delimit the fields.
2. The first row is the header row. It contains the fields X, Y and ELEV.
3. No quotes ("") are used to delimit text fields.
4. The X coordinates are contained in the X field.
5. The Y coordinates are contained in the Y field.

### Storing geometry information in delimited text file

Delimited text files can contain geometry information in two main forms:

- As coordinates in separate columns (eg. `Xcol`, `Ycol...`), compatible with point geometry data;
- As well-known text (WKT) representation of geometry in a single column, for any geometry type.

Features with curved geometries (CircularString, CurvePolygon and CompoundCurve) are supported. Here are some examples of such geometry types as a delimited text with WKT geometries:

```
Label;WKT_geom
LineString;LINESTRING(10.0 20.0, 11.0 21.0, 13.0 25.5)
CircularString;CIRCULARSTRING(268 415,227 505,227 406)
CurvePolygon;CURVEPOLYGON(CIRCULARSTRING(1 3, 3 5, 4 7, 7 3, 1 3))
CompoundCurve;COMPOUNDCURVE((5 3, 5 13), CIRCULARSTRING(5 13, 7 15,
9 13), (9 13, 9 3), CIRCULARSTRING(9 3, 7 1, 5 3))
```

Delimited Text supports also Z and M coordinates in geometries:

```
LINESTRINGZ(10.0 20.0 30.0, 11.0 21.0 31.0, 11.0 22.0 30.0)
```

### Using CSVT file to control field formatting

When loading CSV files, the OGR driver assumes all fields are strings (i.e. text) unless it is told otherwise. You can create a CSVT file to tell OGR (and QGIS) what data type the different columns are:

Type	Name	Example
Whole number	Integer	4
Decimal number	Real	3.456
Date	Date (YYYY-MM-DD)	2016-07-28
Time	Time (HH:MM:SS+nn)	18:33:12+00
Date & Time	DateTime (YYYY-MM-DD HH:MM:SS+nn)	2016-07-28 18:33:12+00

The CSVT file is a **ONE line** plain text file with the data types in quotes and separated by commas, e.g.:

```
"Integer", "Real", "String"
```

You can even specify width and precision of each column, e.g.:

```
"Integer(6)", "Real(5.5)", "String(22)"
```

This file is saved in the same folder as the .csv file, with the same name, but .csvt as the extension.

*You can find more information at [GDAL CSV Driver](#).*

### PostGIS Layers

PostGIS layers are stored in a PostgreSQL database. The advantages of PostGIS are its spatial indexing, filtering and querying capabilities it provides. Using PostGIS, vector functions such as select and identify work more accurately than they do with OGR layers in QGIS.

#### Tip: PostGIS Layers

Normally, a PostGIS layer is defined by an entry in the geometry\_columns table. QGIS can load layers that do not have an entry in the geometry\_columns table. This includes both tables and views. Defining a spatial view provides a powerful means to visualize your data. Refer to your PostgreSQL manual for information on creating views.

This section contains some details on how QGIS accesses PostgreSQL layers. Most of the time, QGIS should simply provide you with a list of database tables that can be loaded, and it will load them on request. However, if you have trouble loading a PostgreSQL table into QGIS, the information below may help you understand any QGIS messages and give you direction on changing the PostgreSQL table or view definition to allow QGIS to load it.

## Primary key

QGIS requires that PostgreSQL layers contain a column that can be used as a unique key for the layer. For tables, this usually means that the table needs a primary key, or a column with a unique constraint on it. In QGIS, this column needs to be of type int4 (an integer of size 4 bytes). Alternatively, the ctid column can be used as primary key. If a table lacks these items, the oid column will be used instead. Performance will be improved if the column is indexed (note that primary keys are automatically indexed in PostgreSQL).

QGIS offers a checkbox **Select at id** that is activated by default. This option gets the ids without the attributes which is faster in most cases.

## View

If the PostgreSQL layer is a view, the same requirement exists, but views do not always have primary keys or columns with unique constraints on them. You have to define a primary key field (has to be integer) in the QGIS dialog before you can load the view. If a suitable column does not exist in the view, QGIS will not load the layer. If this occurs, the solution is to alter the view so that it does include a suitable column (a type of integer and either a primary key or with a unique constraint, preferably indexed).

As for table, a checkbox **Select at id** is activated by default (see above for the meaning of the checkbox). It can make sense to disable this option when you use expensive views.

## QGIS layer\_style table and database backup

If you want to make a backup of your PostGIS database using the pg\_dump and pg\_restore commands, and the default layer styles as saved by QGIS fail to restore afterwards, you need to set the XML option to DOCUMENT before the restore command:

```
SET XML OPTION DOCUMENT;
```

## Filter database side

QGIS allows to filter features already on server side. Check the *Settings → Options → Data Sources → Execute expressions on postgres server-side if possible* checkbox to do so. Only supported expressions will be sent to the database. Expressions using unsupported operators or functions will gracefully fallback to local evaluation.

## Support of PostgreSQL data types

Most of common data types are supported by the PostgreSQL provider: integer, float, varchar, geometry, timestamp, array and hstore.

## Importing Data into PostgreSQL

Data can be imported into PostgreSQL/PostGIS using several tools, including the DB Manager plugin and the command line tools shp2pgsql and ogr2ogr.

## DB Manager

QGIS comes with a core plugin named  DB Manager. It can be used to load data, and it includes support for schemas. See section [DB Manager Plugin](#) for more information.

## shp2pgsql

PostGIS includes an utility called **shp2pgsql** that can be used to import Shapefile format datasets into a PostGIS-enabled database. For example, to import a Shapefile format dataset named `lakes.shp` into a PostgreSQL database named `gis_data`, use the following command:

```
shp2pgsql -s 2964 lakes.shp lakes_new | psql gis_data
```

This creates a new layer named `lakes_new` in the `gis_data` database. The new layer will have a spatial reference identifier (SRID) of 2964. See section [Working with Projections](#) for more information on spatial reference systems and projections.

---

### Tip: Exporting datasets from PostGIS

Like the import tool **shp2pgsql**, there is also a tool to export PostGIS datasets in the Shapefile format: **pgsql2shp**. This is shipped within your PostGIS distribution.

---

## ogr2ogr

Besides **shp2pgsql** and **DB Manager**, there is another tool for feeding geodata in PostGIS: **ogr2ogr**. This is part of your GDAL installation.

To import a Shapefile format dataset into PostGIS, do the following:

```
ogr2ogr -f "PostgreSQL" PG:"dbname=postgis host=myhost.de user=postgres password=topsecret" alaska.shp
```

This will import the Shapefile format dataset `alaska.shp` into the PostGIS database `postgis` using the user `postgres` with the password `topsecret` on host server `myhost.de`.

Note that OGR must be built with PostgreSQL to support PostGIS. You can verify this by typing (in )

```
ogrinfo --formats | grep -i post
```

If you prefer to use PostgreSQL's **COPY** command instead of the default **INSERT INTO** method, you can export the following environment variable (at least available on  and ):

```
export PG_USE_COPY=YES
```

**ogr2ogr** does not create spatial indexes like **shp2pgsql** does. You need to create them manually, using the normal SQL command **CREATE INDEX** afterwards as an extra step (as described in the next section [Improving Performance](#)).

## Improving Performance

Retrieving features from a PostgreSQL database can be time-consuming, especially over a network. You can improve the drawing performance of PostgreSQL layers by ensuring that a PostGIS spatial index exists on each layer in the database. PostGIS supports creation of a GiST (Generalized Search Tree) index to speed up spatial searches of the data (GiST index information is taken from the PostGIS documentation available at <https://postgis.net>).

---

**Tip:** You can use the DBManager to create an index to your layer. You should first select the layer and click on *Table* → *Edit table*, go to *Indexes* tab and click on *Add Spatial Index*.

---

The syntax for creating a GiST index is:

```
CREATE INDEX [indexname] ON [tablename]
  USING GIST ( [geometryfield] GIST_GEOMETRY_OPS );
```

Note that for large tables, creating the index can take a long time. Once the index is created, you should perform a VACUUM ANALYZE. See the PostGIS documentation (POSTGIS-PROJECT [Literature and Web References](#)) for more information.

The following is an example of creating a GiST index:

```
gsherman@madison:~/current$ psql gis_data
Welcome to psql 8.3.0, the PostgreSQL interactive terminal.

Type: \copyright for distribution terms
      \h for help with SQL commands
      \? for help with psql commands
      \g or terminate with semicolon to execute query
      \q to quit

gis_data=# CREATE INDEX sidx_alaska_lakes ON alaska_lakes
gis_data=#   USING GIST (the_geom GIST_GEOMETRY_OPS);
CREATE INDEX
gis_data=# VACUUM ANALYZE alaska_lakes;
VACUUM
gis_data=# \q
gsherman@madison:~/current$
```

### Vector layers crossing 180° longitude

Many GIS packages don't wrap vector maps with a geographic reference system (lat/lon) crossing the 180 degrees longitude line ([http://postgis.refractions.net/documentation/manual-2.0/ST\\_Shift\\_Longitude.html](http://postgis.refractions.net/documentation/manual-2.0/ST_Shift_Longitude.html)). As result, if we open such a map in QGIS, we will see two far, distinct locations, that should appear near each other. In [Figure\\_vector\\_crossing](#), the tiny point on the far left of the map canvas (Chatham Islands) should be within the grid, to the right of the New Zealand main islands.



Fig. 12.19: Map in lat/lon crossing the 180° longitude line

A work-around is to transform the longitude values using PostGIS and the **ST\_Shift\_Longitude** function. This function reads every point/vertex in every component of every feature in a geometry, and if the longitude coordinate is < 0°, it adds 360° to it. The result is a 0° - 360° version of the data to be plotted in a 180°-centric map.

### Usage

- Import data into PostGIS ([Importing Data into PostgreSQL](#)) using, for example, the DB Manager plugin.
- Use the PostGIS command line interface to issue the following command (in this example, "TABLE" is the actual name of your PostGIS table): `gis_data=# update TABLE set the_geom=ST_Shift_Longitude(the_geom);`
- If everything went well, you should receive a confirmation about the number of features that were updated. Then you'll be able to load the map and see the difference ([Figure\\_vector\\_crossing\\_map](#)).

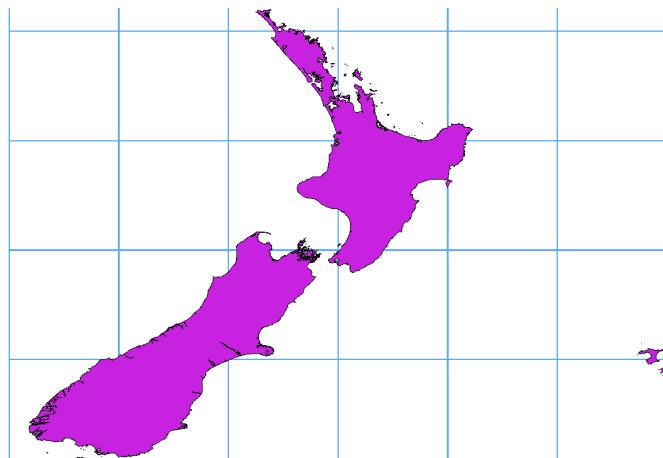


Fig. 12.20: Crossing 180° longitude applying the **ST\_Shift\_Longitude** function

## SpatiaLite Layers

If you want to save a vector layer to SpatiaLite format, you can do this by right clicking the layer in the legend. Then, click on *Save as...*, define the name of the output file, and select ‘SpatiaLite’ as format and the CRS. Also, you can select ‘SQLite’ as format and then add `SPATIALITE=YES` in the OGR data source creation option field. This tells OGR to create a SpatiaLite database. See also [https://www.gdal.org/ogr/driv\\_sqlite.html](https://www.gdal.org/ogr/driv_sqlite.html).

QGIS also supports editable views in SpatiaLite.

If you want to create a new SpatiaLite layer, please refer to section [Creating a new SpatiaLite layer](#).

---

### Tip: SpatiaLite data management Plugins

For SpatiaLite data management, you can also use several Python plugins: QSpatiaLite, SpatiaLite Manager or [DB Manager](#) (core plugin, recommended). If necessary, they can be downloaded and installed with the Plugin Installer.

---

## GeoJSON specific parameters

When *exporting layers* to GeoJSON, this format has some specific *Layer Options* available. These options actually come from GDAL which is responsible for the writing of the file:

- `COORDINATE_PRECISION` the maximum number of digits after the decimal separator to write in coordinates. Defaults to 15 (note: for Lat Lon coordinates 6 is considered enough). Truncation will occur to remove trailing zeros.
- `WRITE_BBOX` set to YES to write a bbox property with the bounding box of the geometries at the feature and feature collection level

## DB2 Spatial Layers

IBM DB2 for Linux, Unix and Windows (DB2 LUW), IBM DB2 for z/OS (mainframe) and IBM DashDB products allow users to store and analyse spatial data in relational table columns. The DB2 provider for QGIS supports the full range of visualization, analysis and manipulation of spatial data in these databases.

User documentation on these capabilities can be found at the [DB2 z/OS KnowledgeCenter](#), [DB2 LUW KnowledgeCenter](#) and [DB2 DashDB KnowledgeCenter](#).

For more information about working with the DB2 spatial capabilities, check out the [DB2 Spatial Tutorial](#) on IBM DeveloperWorks.

The DB2 provider currently only supports the Windows environment through the Windows ODBC driver.

The client running QGIS needs to have one of the following installed:

- DB2 LUW
- IBM Data Server Driver Package
- IBM Data Server Client

To open a DB2 data in QGIS, you can refer to *The Browser Panel* or *Loading a Database Layer* section.

If you are accessing a DB2 LUW database on the same machine or using DB2 LUW as a client, the DB2 executables and supporting files need to be included in the Windows path. This can be done by creating a batch file like the following with the name **db2.bat** and including it in the directory **%OSGEO4W\_ROOT%/etc/ini**.

```
@echo off
REM Point the following to where DB2 is installed
SET db2path=C:\Program Files (x86)\sqlllib
REM This should usually be ok - modify if necessary
SET gskpath=C:\Program Files (x86)\ibm\gsk8
SET Path=%db2path%\BIN;%db2path%\FUNCTION;%gskpath%\lib64;%gskpath%\lib;%path%
```



# CHAPTER 13

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## Working with Vector Data

---

### 13.1 The Symbol Library

#### 13.1.1 The Style Manager

The *Style Manager* is the place where users can manage and create generic symbols and color ramps to be used in several QGIS projects. You can open that modeless dialog:

- with the  *Style Manager* button of the Project toolbar;
- from the *Settings* →  *Style Manager...* menu;
- or from a vector *Layer Properties* → *Symbology* tab (using the  *Style Manager* button in a *symbol property* dialog).

The dialog allows you to:

- create, edit and remove symbols and color ramps;
- organize symbols and color ramps in custom groups;
- export and import symbols and color ramps.

#### Organizing symbols and color ramps

The *Style Manager* dialog displays in its center a frame with previewed items organized into tabs:

-  *All* for a complete collection of point, linear and surface symbols as the following items allow only to display a single item group;
-  *Marker* for point symbols;
-  *Line* for linear symbols;
-  *Fill* for surface symbols;
- and  *Color ramp*

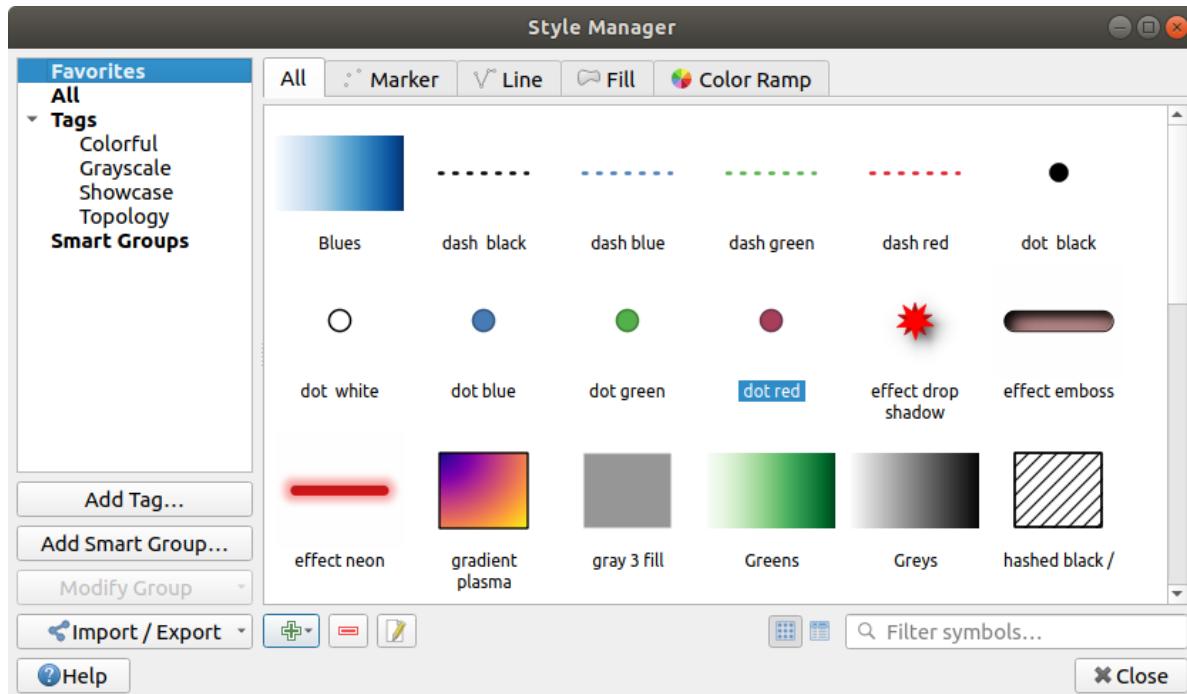


Fig. 13.1: The Style Manager

For each family of items, you can organize the elements into different categories, listed in the panel on the left:

- **Favorites:** displayed by default when configuring an item, it shows a set of default symbols and color ramps you can extend;
- **All:** listing all the installed symbols and color ramps;
- **Tags:** shows a list of labels you can use to identify the items. A symbol or color ramp can be tagged more than once. Select a tag in the list and you'll see the items that belong to it for each type of item. To create a new tag you could later attach to symbols or color ramps, use the *Add Tag...* button or select the *Add Tag...* from any tag contextual menu;
- **Smart Group:** a smart group dynamically fetches its symbols according to conditions set (see eg, [figure\\_smart\\_group](#)). Click the *Add Smart Group...* button to create smart groups. The dialog box allows you to enter an expression to filter the items to select (has a particular tag, have a string in its name, etc.). Any symbol or color ramp that satisfies the entered condition(s) is automatically added to the smart group.

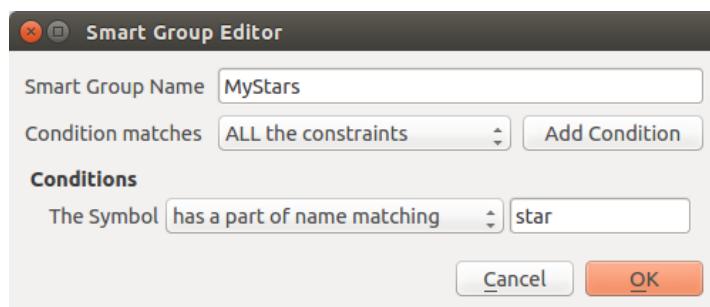


Fig. 13.2: Creating a Smart Group

Tags and smart groups are not mutually exclusive: they are simply two different ways to organize your symbols and color ramps. Unlike the smart groups that automatically fetch their belonged items based on the input constraints, tags are filled by the user. To edit any of those categories, you can either:

- select the items, right-click and choose *Add to Tag* → and then select the tag name or create a new tag;

- select the tag and press *Modify group...* → *Attach Selected Tag to Symbols*. A checkbox appears near each item to help you select or deselect it. When selection is finished, press *Modify group...* → *Finish Tagging*.
- select the smart group, press *Modify group...* → *Edit smart group...* and configure a new set of constraints in the *Smart Group Editor* dialog. This option is also available in the contextual menu of the smart group.

To remove a tag or a smart group, right-click on it and select the *Remove* button. Note that this does not delete the items grouped in the category.

### Adding, editing or removing an item

As seen earlier, symbols and color ramps are listed under different tabs whose contents depend on the active category (tag, smart group, favorites...). For each type of symbols (*Marker*, *Line* or *Fill*) and color ramp, when the tab is enabled, you can:

- Add new items: press the *Add item* button and configure the item following *symbols* or *color ramps* builder description.
- Modify an existing item: select an item and press *Edit item* button and configure as mentioned above.
- Delete existing items: to delete a symbol you no longer need, select it and click *Remove item* (also available through right-click). The symbol will be deleted from the local symbols database.

Right-clicking over a selection of items also allows you to:

- *Add to Favorites*;
- *Remove from Favorites*;
- *Add to Tag* → and select the appropriate tag or create a new one to use;
- *Clear Tags*: detaching the symbols from any tag;
- *Remove Item(s)*;
- *Edit Item*: applies to the item you right-click over;
- *Export Selected Symbol(s) as PNG...* (not available with color ramps);
- *Export Selected Symbol(s) as SVG...* (not available with color ramps);

### Sharing symbols and color ramps

The *Import/Export* tool, at the left bottom of the Style Manager dialog, offers options to easily share symbols and color ramps with others. These options are also available through right-click over the items.

### Exporting items

You can export a set of items to an .XML file:

1. Expand the *Import/Export* drop-down menu and select *Export Item(s)...*
2. Choose the symbols and color ramps you'd like to integrate. Symbol selection can be done with the mouse or using a tag or group previously set.
3. Press *Export* when ready. You'll be prompted to indicate the destination of the saved file. The XML format generates a single file containing all the selected symbols. This file can then be imported in another user's style library.

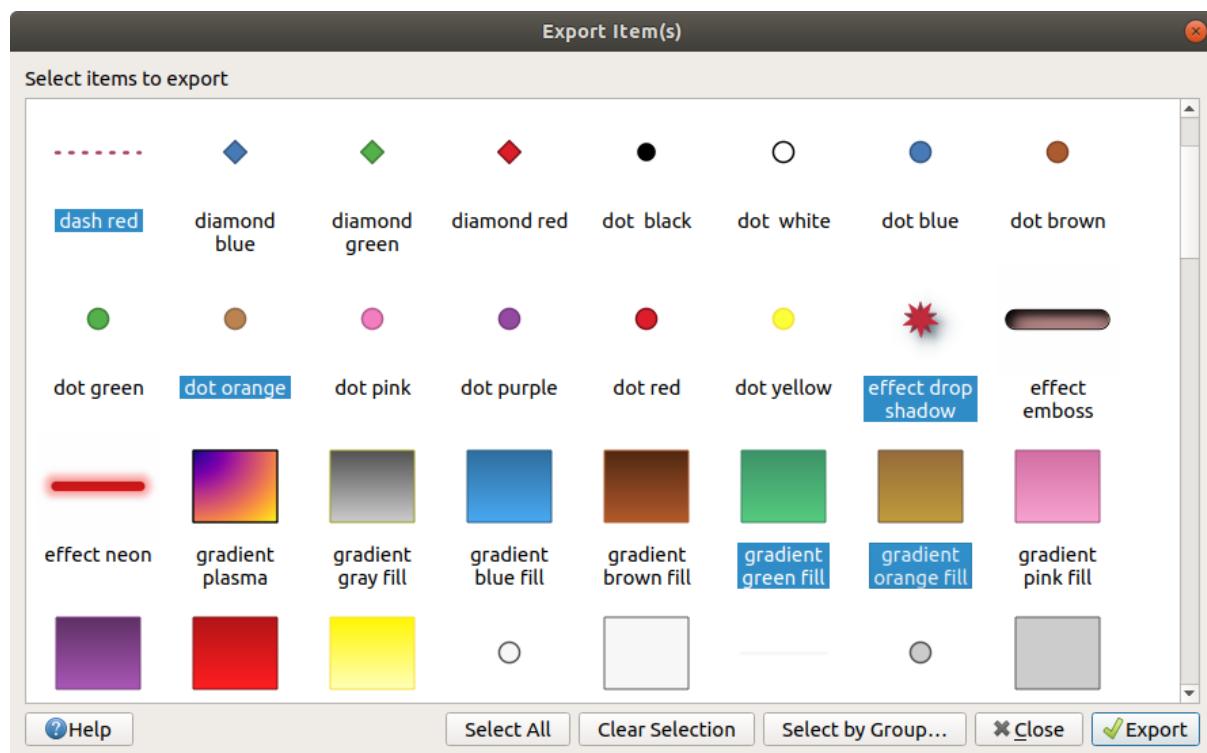


Fig. 13.3: Exporting symbols and color ramps

When symbols are selected, you can also export them to .PNG or .SVG. Exporting to .PNG or .SVG (both not available for color ramp symbols) creates a file for each selected symbol in a given folder. The SVG folder can be added to the *SVG paths* in *Settings → Options → System* menu of another user, allowing him direct access to all these symbols.

## Importing items

You can extend your symbols library by importing new symbols:

1. Expand the  *Import/Export* drop-down menu and select  *Import Item(s)* at the left bottom of the dialog.
2. In the new dialog, indicate the source of the symbols (it can be an .xml file on the disk or a url).
3. Set whether to  *Add to favorites* the items to import.
4. Check  *Do not import embedded tags* to avoid the import of tags associated to the items being imported.
5. Give the name of any *Additional tag(s)* to apply to the new items.
6. Select from the preview the items you want to add to your library.
7. And press *Import*.

## Color Ramp

The Color ramp tab in the *Style Manager* dialog helps you preview different color ramps based on the category selected in the left panel.

To create a custom color ramp, activate the Color ramp tab and click the  *Add item* button. The button reveals a drop-down list to choose the ramp type:

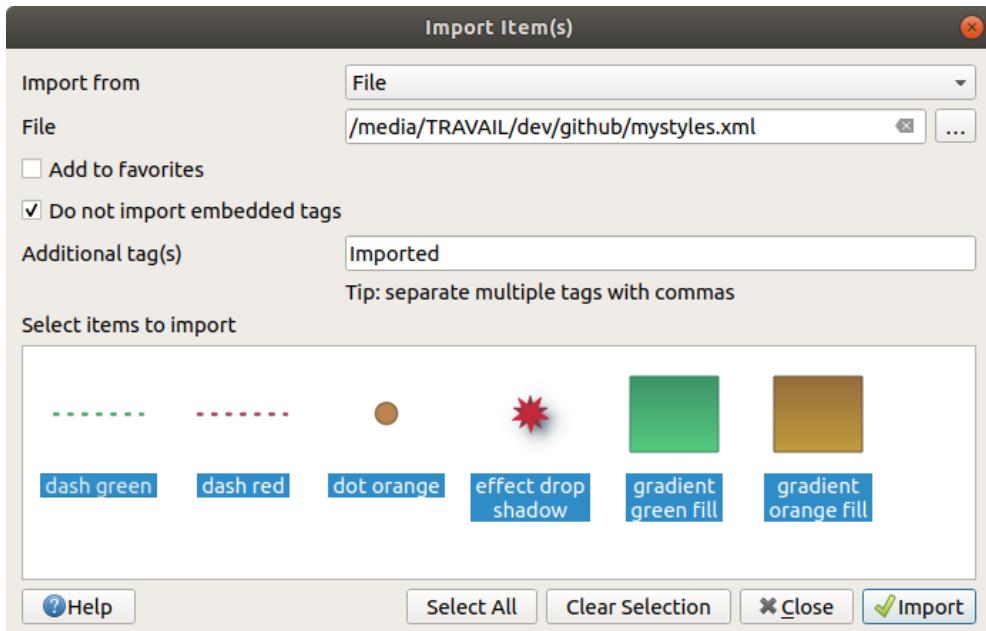


Fig. 13.4: Importing symbols and color ramps

- *Gradient*: given a start and end colors, generate a color ramp which can be **continuous** or **discrete**. With double-clicking the ramp preview, you can add as many intermediate color stops as you want.
- *Color presets*: allows to create a color ramp consisting of a list of colors selected by the user;
- *Random*: creates a random set of colors based on range of values for *Hue*, *Saturation*, *Value* and *Opacity* and a number of colors (*Classes*);
- *Catalog*: *ColorBrewer*: a set of predefined discrete color gradients you can customize the number of colors in the ramp;
- or *Catalog*: *cpt-city*: an access to a whole catalog of color gradients to locally *save as standard gradient*. The *cpt-city* option opens a new dialog with hundreds of themes included ‘out of the box’.

#### Tip: Easily adjust the color stops of the gradient color ramp

Double-clicking the ramp preview or drag-and-drop a color from the color spot onto the ramp preview adds a new color stop. Each color stop can be tweaked using the *Color Selector* widgets or by plotting each of its parameters. You can also reposition it using the mouse, the arrow keys (combine with *Shift* key for a larger move) or the *Relative position* spinbox. Pressing *Delete stop* as well as *DEL* key removes the selected color stop.

### 13.1.2 The Symbol Selector

The Symbol selector is the main dialog to design a symbol. You can create or edit Marker, Line or Fill Symbols.

Two main components structure the symbol selector dialog:

- the symbol tree, showing symbol layers that are combined afterwards to shape a new global symbol
- and settings to configure the selected symbol layer in the tree.

#### The symbol layer tree

A symbol can consist of several *Symbol layers*. The symbol tree shows the overlay of these symbol layers that are combined afterwards to shape a new global symbol. Besides, a dynamic symbol representation is updated as soon as symbol properties change.

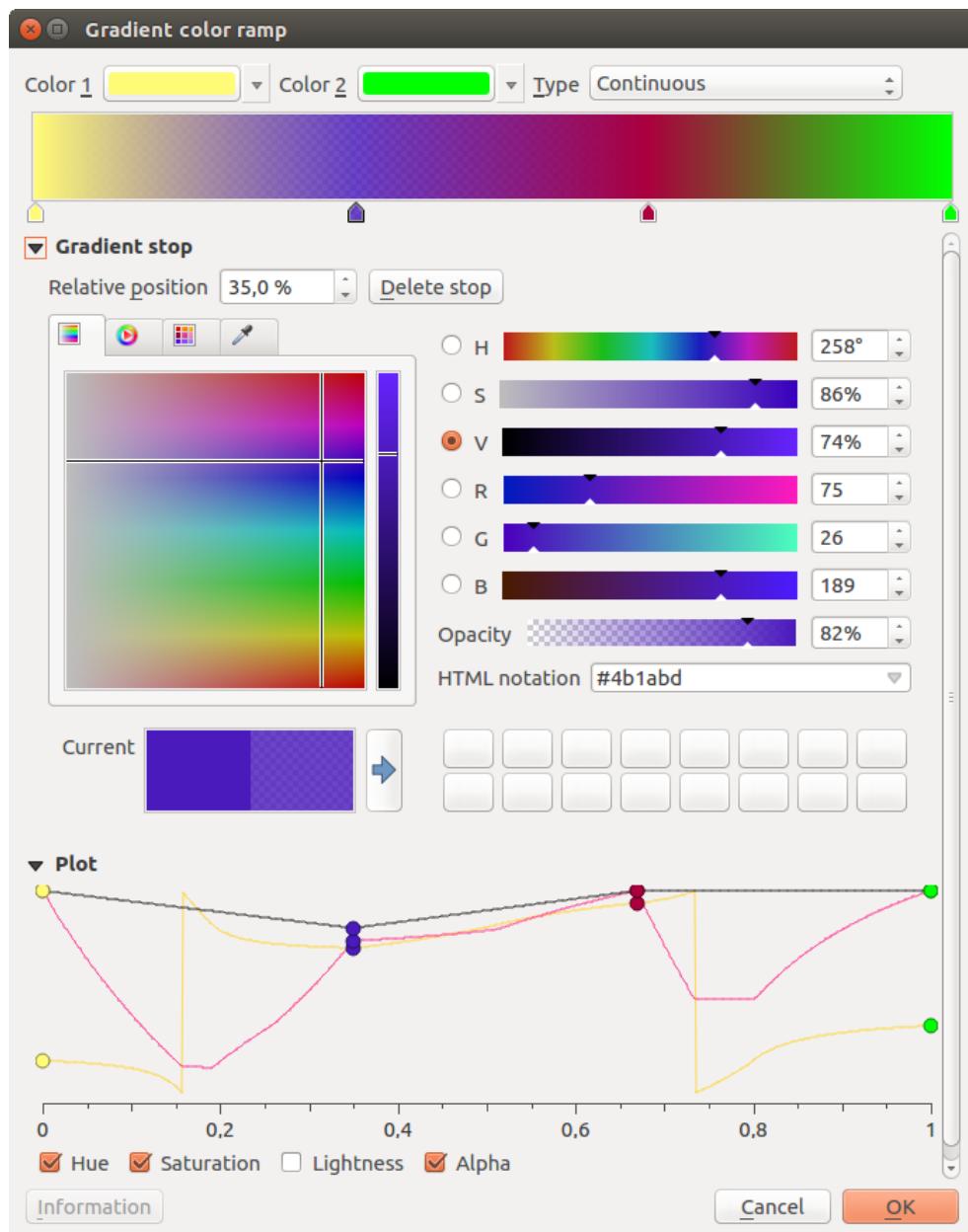


Fig. 13.5: Example of custom gradient color ramp with multiple stops

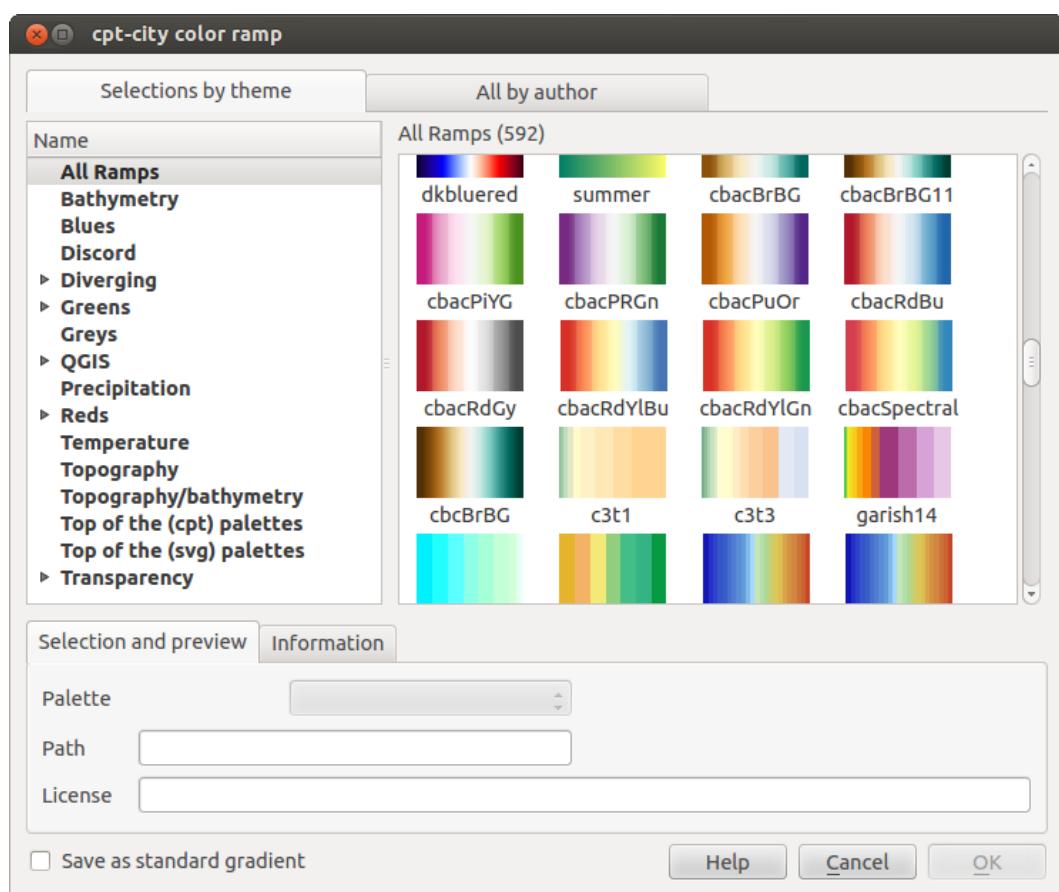


Fig. 13.6: cpt-city dialog with hundreds of color ramps

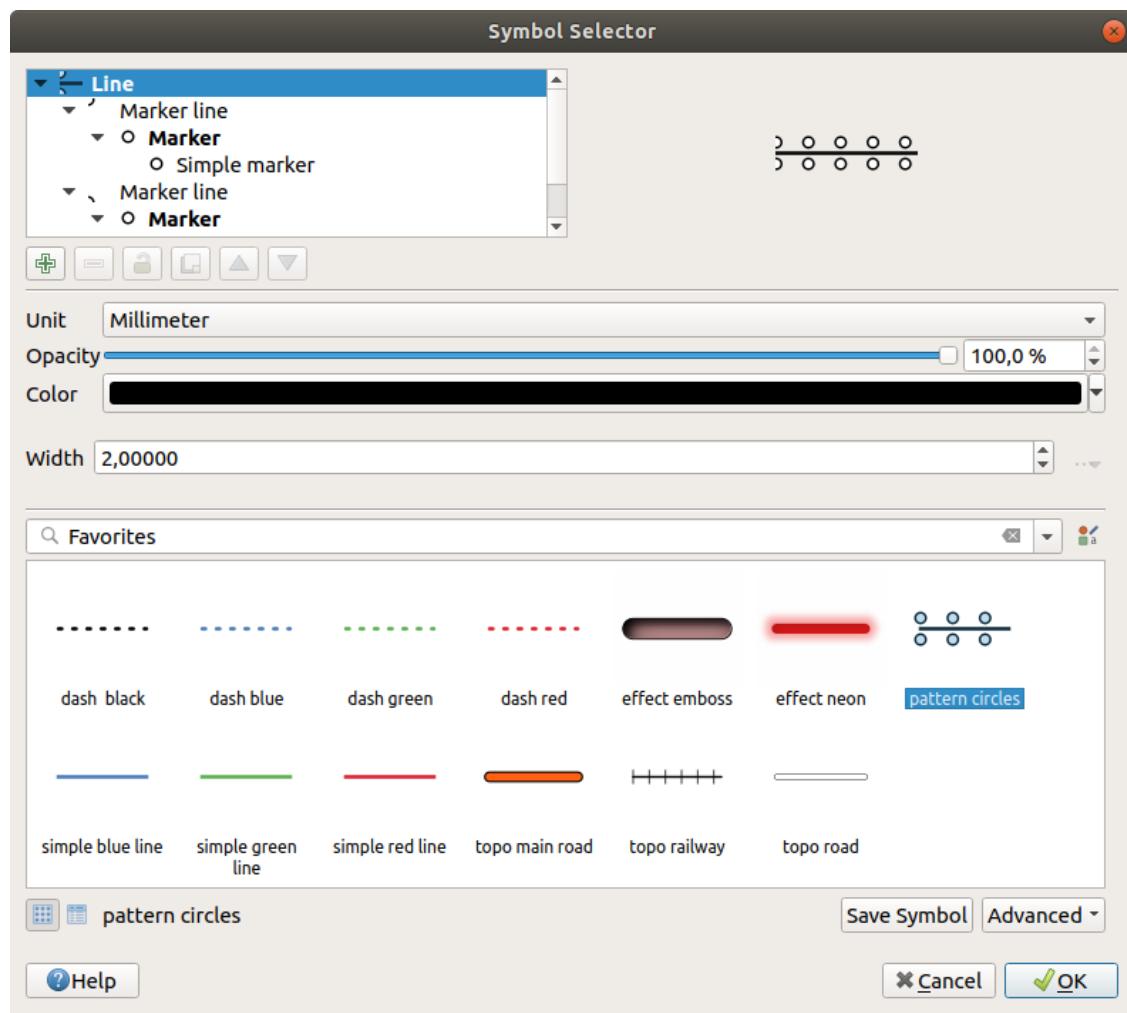


Fig. 13.7: Designing a Line symbol

A set of tools is available to manage the symbol tree items and according to the level selected, you'll get enabled different tools at the bottom of the dialog to:

- add new symbol layer: you can stack as many symbols as you want
- remove the selected symbol layer
- lock colors of symbol layer: a locked color stays unchanged when user changes the color at the global (or upper) symbol level
- duplicate a (group of) symbol layer(s)
- move up or down the symbol layer

When a symbol layer is selected in the tree, you can also:

- control its visibility with the *Enable layer* option. Disabled symbol layers are not drawn, but are saved and can be enabled at a later stage. This makes it easier to customize parts of the symbol based on the feature attributes or to tweak symbol appearance without having to totally delete a symbol layer;
- apply *rendering effects* using the *Draw effects* button.

## Configuring a symbol

In QGIS, configuring a symbol is done in two steps: the symbol and then the symbol layer.

### The symbol

At the top level of the tree, it depends on the layer geometry and can be of **Marker**, **Line** or **Fill** type. Each symbol can embed one or more symbols (including, of any other type) or symbol layers.

You can setup some parameters that apply to the global symbol:

- **Unit:** it can be **Millimeter**, **Points**, **Pixels**, **Meters at Scale**, **Map unit** or **Inches**
- *Transparency*
- *Color:* when this parameter is changed by the user, its value is echoed to all unlocked sub-symbols color
- *Size* and *Rotation* for marker symbols
- *Width* for line symbols

---

**Note:** The *Data-defined override* button beside the last layer-related parameters is inactive when setting the symbol from the Style manager dialog. When the symbol is connected to a map layer, this button helps you create proportional or multivariate analysis rendering.

---

The symbols used at this level are items you can pick from the *symbols library*. Available symbols of the corresponding type are shown and, through the editable drop-down list just above, can be filtered by free-form text or by *categories*. You can also update the list of symbols using the *Style Manager* button and open the eponym dialog. There, you can use any capabilities as exposed in *The Style Manager* section.

The symbols are displayed either:

- in an icon list (with thumbnail, name and associated tags) using the *List View* button below the frame;
- or as icon preview using the *Icon View* button.

Press the *Save Symbol* button to add any symbol being edited to the symbols library. With the *Advanced* option, you can:

- set the **symbol levels**: defining the way symbol layers are connected to each other in the map canvas (see [Symbol levels](#) for more information)
- and for line and fill symbols, **clip features to canvas extent**.

---

**Tip:** Note that once you have set the size in the lower levels of the *Symbol layers* dialog, the size of the whole symbol can be changed with the *Size* (for marker symbols) or the *Width* (for line symbols) menu in the first level again. The size of the lower levels changes accordingly, while the size ratio is maintained.

---

## The symbol layer

At a lower level of the tree, you can customize the symbol layers. The available symbol layer types depend on the upper symbol type. You can apply on the symbol layer  [paint effects](#) to enhance its rendering.

Because describing all the options of all the symbol layer types would not be possible, only particular and significant ones are mentioned below.

## Common parameters

Some common options and widgets are available to build a symbol layer, regardless it's of marker, line or fill sub-type:

- the [color selector](#) widget to ease color manipulation
- *Units*: it can be **Millimeter**, **Points**, **Pixels**, **Meters at Scale**, **Map unit** or **Inches**
- the  [data-defined override](#) widget near almost all options, extending capabilities of customizing each symbol (see [Data defined override setup](#) for more information)

---

**Note:** While the description below assumes that the symbol layer type is bound to the feature geometry, keep in mind that you can embed symbol layers in each others. In that case, the lower level symbol layer parameter (placement, offset...) might be bound to the upper-level symbol, and not to the feature geometry itself.

---

## Marker Symbols

Appropriate for point geometry features, marker symbols have several *Symbol layer types*:

- **Simple marker** (default);
- **Ellipse marker**: a simple marker symbol layer, with customizable width and height;
- **Filled marker**: similar to the simple marker symbol layer, except that it uses a [fill sub symbol](#) to render the marker. This allows use of all the existing QGIS fill (and stroke) styles for rendering markers, e.g. gradient or shapeburst fills;
- **Font marker**: use installed fonts as marker symbols;
- **Geometry generator** (see [The Geometry Generator](#));
- **Vector Field marker** (see [The Vector Field Marker](#));
- **SVG marker**: provides you with images from your SVG paths (set in *Settings* → *Options...* → *System* menu) to render as marker symbol. Width and height of the symbol can be set independently or using the  [Lock aspect ratio](#). Each SVG file colors and stroke can also be adapted.

---

**Note:** Requirements for a customizable SVG marker symbol

To have the possibility to change the colors of a *SVG marker*, you have to add the placeholders `param(fill)` for fill color, `param(outline)` for stroke color and `param(outline-width)` for stroke width. These placeholders can optionally be followed by a default value, e.g.:

```
<svg width="100%" height="100%">
<rect fill="param(fill) #ff0000" stroke="param(outline) #00ff00" stroke-width=
  ↪"param(outline-width) 10" width="100" height="100">
</rect>
</svg>
```

For each marker symbol layer type, you can set some of the following properties:

- *Size*
- *Fill color* using all the capabilities of the *Color Selector* widget, extended by a shortcut to apply a *Transparent fill* in the drop-down menu;
- *Stroke color* using all the capabilities of the color selector widget, extended by a shortcut to apply a *Transparent stroke* in the drop-down menu;
- *Stroke style*
- *Stroke width*
- *Join style*
- *Rotation*
- *Offset*: You can shift the symbol in the *X* or *Y* direction;
- *Anchor point*.

In most of the marker symbols dialog, you also have a frame with previews of predefined symbols you can choose from.

## Line Symbols

Appropriate for line geometry features, line symbols have following symbol layer types:

- **Simple line** (default): available settings are:
  - *Color*
  - *Stroke width*
  - *Stroke style*
  - *Join style*
  - *Cap style*
  - *Offset*
  - *Use custom dash pattern*: overrides the *Stroke style* setting with a custom dash.
- **Arrow**: draws lines as curved (or not) arrows with a single or a double head with configurable width, length and thickness. To create a curved arrow the line feature must have at least three vertices. It also uses a *fill symbol* such as gradients or shapeburst to render the arrow body. Combined with the geometry generator, this type of layer symbol helps you representing flow maps;
- **Geometry generator** (see *The Geometry Generator*);
- **Marker line**: displays a marker symbol along the line. It can be at a regular distance or based on its geometry: first, last or each vertex, on central point or on every curve point. You can set an offset along the line for the marker symbol, or offset the line itself. The *Rotate marker* option allows you to set whether the marker symbol should follow the line orientation or not.

## Fill Symbols

Appropriate for polygon geometry features, fill symbols have also several symbol layer types:

- **Simple fill** (default): the following settings are available:
  - *Fill color* using all the capabilities of the *Color Selector* widget, extended by a shortcut to apply a *Transparent fill*
  - *Fill style*
  - *Stroke color* using all the capabilities of the color selector widget, extended by a shortcut to apply a *Transparent stroke*
  - *Stroke width*
  - *Stroke style*
  - *Join style*
  - *Offset*: You can shift the symbol in the *X* or *Y* direction;
- **Centroid fill**: places a marker symbol at the centroid of the visible feature. The position of the marker may however not be the real centroid of the feature because calculation takes into account the polygon(s) clipped to area visible in map canvas for rendering and ignores holes. Use the geometry generator symbol if you want the exact centroid.

The marker can be placed on every part of a multi-part feature or only on its biggest part, and forced to be inside the polygon;
- **Geometry generator** (see *The Geometry Generator*);
- **Gradient fill**: uses a radial, linear or conical gradient, based on either simple two color gradients or a predefined *gradient color ramp* to fill polygon layers. Gradient can be rotated and applied on a single feature basis or across the whole map extent. Also start and end points can be set via coordinates or using the centroid (of feature or map);
- **Line pattern fill**: fills the polygon with a hatching pattern of line symbol layer. You can set the spacing between lines and an offset from the feature boundary;
- **Point pattern fill**: fills the polygon with a hatching pattern of marker symbol layer. You can set the spacing between lines and an offset from the feature boundary;
- **Raster image fill**: you can fill polygons with a tiled raster image. Options include (data defined) file name, opacity, image size (in pixels, mm or map units), coordinate mode (feature or view) and rotation;
- **SVG fill**: fills the polygon using *SVG markers*;
- **Shapeburst fill**: this option buffered a gradient fill, where a gradient is drawn from the boundary of a polygon towards the polygon's centre. Configurable parameters include distance from the boundary to shade, use of color ramps or simple two color gradients, optional blurring of the fill and offsets;
- **Outline: Arrow**: uses a line *arrow symbol* layer to represent the polygon boundary;
- **Outline: Marker line**: uses a marker line symbol layer to represent the polygon boundary;
- **Outline: simple line**: uses a simple line symbol layer to represent the polygon boundary. The *Draw line only inside polygon* option helps polygon borders inside the polygon and can be useful to clearly represent adjacent polygon boundaries.

---

**Note:** When geometry type is polygon, you can choose to disable the automatic clipping of lines/polylines to the canvas extent. In some cases this clipping results in unfavourable symbology (e.g. centroid fills where the centroid must always be the actual feature's centroid).

---

## The Geometry Generator

Available with all types of symbols, the *geometry generator* symbol layer allows to use *expression syntax* to generate a geometry on the fly during the rendering process. The resulting geometry does not have to match with the original geometry type and you can add several differently modified symbol layers on top of each other.

Some examples:

```
-- render the centroid of a feature
centroid( $geometry )

-- visually overlap features within a 100 map units distance from a point
-- feature, i.e generate a 100m buffer around the point
buffer( $geometry, 100 )

-- Given polygon layer1( id1, layer2_id, ... ) and layer2( id2, fieldn...)
-- render layer1 with a line joining centroids of both where layer2_id = id2
make_line( centroid( $geometry ),
            centroid( geometry( get_feature( 'layer2', 'id2', attribute(
                $currentfeature, 'layer2_id' ) ) )
        ) )
```

## The Vector Field Marker

The vector field marker is used to display vector field data such as earth deformation, tidal flows, and the like. It displays the vectors as lines (preferably arrows) that are scaled and oriented according to selected attributes of data points. It can only be used to render point data; line and polygon layers are not drawn by this symbology.

The vector field is defined by attributes in the data, which can represent the field either by:

- **cartesian** components (x and y components of the field)
- or **polar** coordinates: in this case, attributes define Length and Angle. The angle may be measured either clockwise from north, or Counterclockwise from east, and may be either in degrees or radians.
- or as **height only** data, which displays a vertical arrow scaled using an attribute of the data. This is appropriate for displaying the vertical component of deformation, for example.

The magnitude of field can be scaled up or down to an appropriate size for viewing the field.

## 13.2 The Vector Properties Dialog

The *Layer Properties* dialog for a vector layer provides general settings to manage appearance of layer features in the map (symbology, labeling, diagrams), interaction with the mouse (actions, map tips, form design). It also provides information about the layer.

To access the *Layer Properties* dialog:

- In the *Layers* panel, double-click the layer or right-click and select *Properties...* from the pop-up menu;
- Go to *Layer → Properties...* menu when the layer is selected.

The vector *Layer Properties* dialog provides the following sections:

-  *Information*
-  *Source*
-  *Symbology* (also available in the *Layer styling panel*)
-  *Labels* (also available in the *Layer styling panel*)

-  [Diagrams](#)
-  [3D View](#) (also available in the *Layer styling* panel)
-  [Source Fields](#)
-  [Attributes Form](#)
-  [Joins](#)
-  [Auxiliary Storage](#)
-  [Actions](#)
-  [Display](#)
-  [Rendering](#)
-  [Variables](#)
-  [Metadata](#)
-  [Dependencies](#)
-  [Legend](#)
-  [QGIS Server](#)
-  [Digitizing](#)
- and optionally, new tabs added by *external plugins* you have installed. Those are not presented below.

---

**Tip:** **Share full or partial properties of the layer styles**

The *Style* menu at the bottom of the dialog allows you to import or export these or part of these properties from/to several destination (file, clipboard, database). See [Managing Custom Styles](#).

---

**Note:** Because properties (symbology, label, actions, default values, forms...) of embedded layers (see [Nesting Projects](#)) are pulled from the original project file and to avoid changes that may break this behavior, the layer properties dialog is made unavailable for these layers.

---

### 13.2.1 Information Properties

 The *Information* tab is read-only and represents an interesting place to quickly grab summarized information and metadata on the current layer. Provided information are:

- based on the provider of the layer (format of storage, path, geometry type, data source encoding, extent...);
- picked from the *filled metadata* (access, links, contacts, history...);
- or related to its geometry (spatial extent, CRS...) or its attributes (number of fields, characteristics of each...).

### 13.2.2 Source Properties

 Use this tab to define general settings for the vector layer.

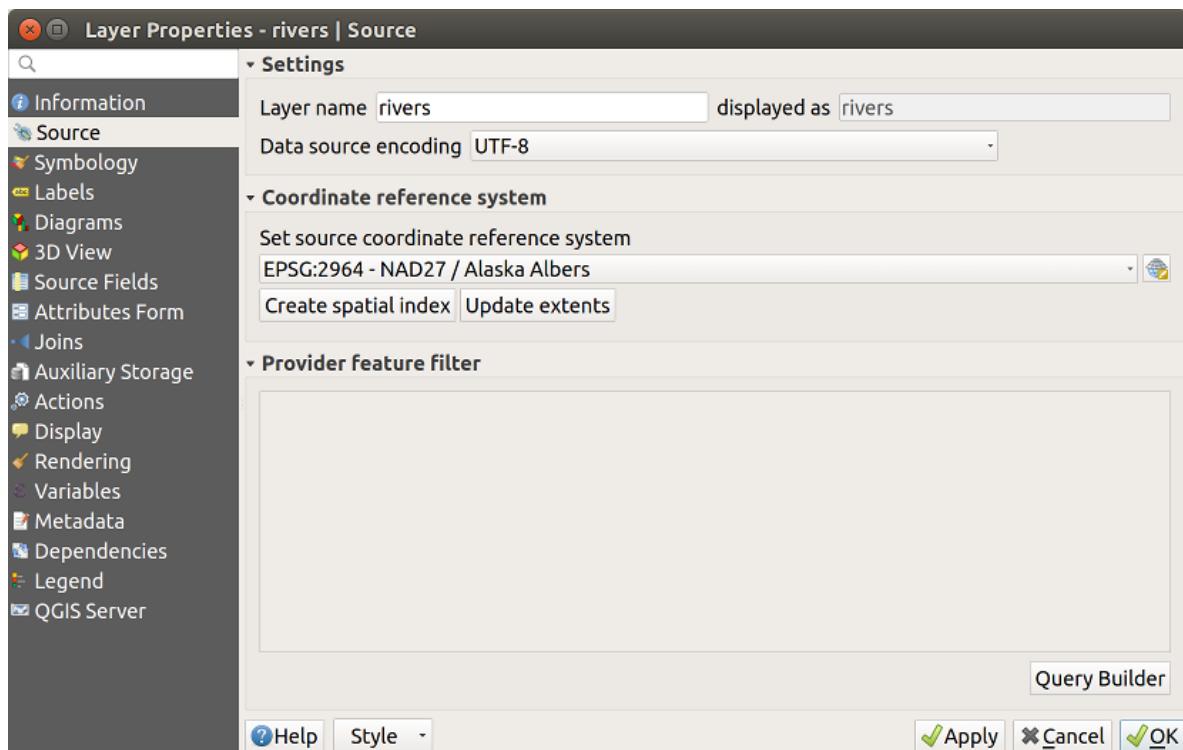


Fig. 13.8: Source tab in vector Layer Properties dialog

Other than setting the *Layer name* to display in the *Layers Panel*, available options include:

#### Coordinate Reference System

- Displays the layer's Coordinate Reference System (CRS) as a PROJ.4 string. You can change the layer's CRS, selecting a recently used one in the drop-down list or clicking on  Select CRS button (see [Coordinate Reference System Selector](#)). Use this process only if the CRS applied to the layer is a wrong one or if none was applied. If you wish to reproject your data into another CRS, rather use layer reprojection algorithms from Processing or [Save it into another layer](#).
- *Create spatial index* (only for OGR-supported formats).
- *Update extents* information for a layer.

#### Query Builder

The *Query Builder* dialog is accessible through the eponym button at the bottom of the *Source* tab in the Layer Properties dialog, under the *Provider feature filter* group.

The Query Builder provides an interface that allows you to define a subset of the features in the layer using a SQL-like WHERE clause and to display the result in the main window. As long as the query is active, only the features corresponding to its result are available in the project. For example, using the TYPE\_2 field of the regions layer from the QGIS sample data, you could constrain the file to display only regions that are of borough type in the project (see [Figure\\_vector\\_querybuilder](#) for such an example). The filter is made at the data provider (OGR, PostgreSQL, MSSQL...) level.

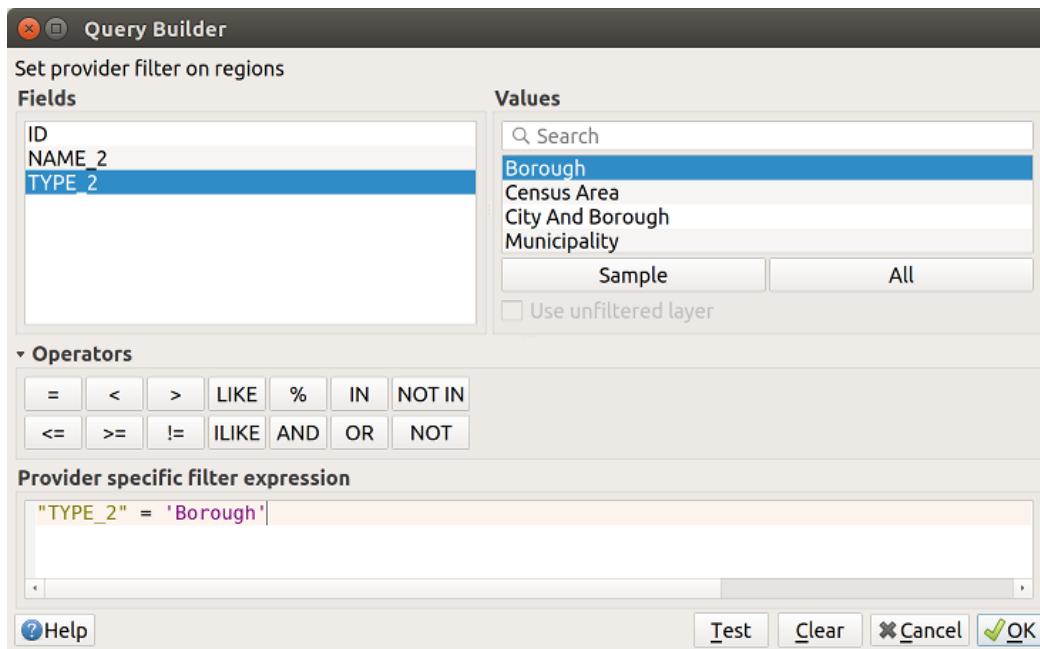


Fig. 13.9: Query Builder

You can also open the *Query Builder* dialog using the *Filter...* option from the *Layer* menu or the layer contextual menu. The *Fields*, *Values* and *Operators* sections in the dialog help you to construct the SQL-like query exposed in the *Provider specific filter expression* box.

The **Fields** list contains all the fields of the layer. To add an attribute column to the SQL WHERE clause field, double-click its name or just type it into the SQL box.

The **Values** frame lists the values of the currently selected field. To list all unique values of a field, click the *All* button. To instead list the first 25 unique values of the column, click the *Sample* button. To add a value to the SQL WHERE clause field, double click its name in the Values list. You can use the search box at the top of the Values frame to easily browse and find attribute values in the list.

The **Operators** section contains all usable operators. To add an operator to the SQL WHERE clause field, click the appropriate button. Relational operators ( $=$ ,  $<$ ,  $>$ ,  $\dots$ ), string comparison operator (LIKE), and logical operators (AND, OR,  $\dots$ ) are available.

The *Test* button helps you check your query and displays a message box with the number of features satisfying the current query. Use the *Clear* button to wipe the SQL query and revert the layer to its original state (ie, fully load all the features).

When a filter is applied, QGIS treats the resulting subset acts as if it were the entire layer. For example if you applied the filter above for ‘Borough’ (`"TYPE_2" = 'Borough'`), you can not display, query, save or edit Anchorage, because that is a ‘Municipality’ and therefore not part of the subset.

---

**Tip: Filtered layers are indicated in the Layers Panel**

In the *Layers* panel, filtered layer is listed with a  icon next to it indicating the query used when the mouse hovers over the button. Double-click the icon opens the *Query Builder* dialog for edit.

---

### 13.2.3 Symbology Properties

 The Symbology tab provides you with a comprehensive tool for rendering and symbolizing your vector data. You can use tools that are common to all vector data, as well as special symbolizing tools that were designed for

the different kinds of vector data. However all types share the following dialog structure: in the upper part, you have a widget that helps you prepare the classification and the symbol to use for features and at the bottom the *Layer rendering* widget.

---

#### Tip: Switch quickly between different layer representations

Using the *Styles → Add* menu at the bottom of the *Layer Properties* dialog, you can save as many styles as needed. A style is the combination of all properties of a layer (such as symbology, labeling, diagram, fields form, actions...) as you want. Then, simply switch between styles from the context menu of the layer in *Layers Panel* to automatically get different representations of your data.

---

#### Tip: Export vector symbology

You have the option to export vector symbology from QGIS into Google \*.kml, \*.dxf and MapInfo \*.tab files. Just open the right mouse menu of the layer and click on *Save As...* to specify the name of the output file and its format. In the dialog, use the *Symbology export* menu to save the symbology either as *Feature symbology* → or as *Symbol layer symbology* →. If you have used symbol layers, it is recommended to use the second setting.

---

## Features rendering

The renderer is responsible for drawing a feature together with the correct symbol. Regardless layer geometry type, there are four common types of renderers: single symbol, categorized, graduated and rule-based. For point layers, there are a point displacement and a heatmap renderers available while polygon layers can also be rendered with the inverted polygons and 2.5 D renderers.

There is no continuous color renderer, because it is in fact only a special case of the graduated renderer. The categorized and graduated renderers can be created by specifying a symbol and a color ramp - they will set the colors for symbols appropriately. For each data type (points, lines and polygons), vector symbol layer types are available. Depending on the chosen renderer, the dialog provides different additional sections.

---

**Note:** If you change the renderer type when setting the style of a vector layer the settings you made for the symbol will be maintained. Be aware that this procedure only works for one change. If you repeat changing the renderer type the settings for the symbol will get lost.

---

## Single Symbol Renderer

 The *Single Symbol* renderer is used to render all features of the layer using a single user-defined symbol. See *The Symbol Selector* for further information about symbol representation.

---

#### Tip: Edit symbol directly from layer panel

If in your **Layers Panel** you have layers with categories defined through categorized, graduated or rule-based symbology mode, you can quickly change the fill color of the symbol of the categories by right-clicking on a category and choose the color you prefer from a  color wheel menu. Right-clicking on a category will also give you access to the options **Hide all items**, **Show all items** and **Edit symbol**.

---

## No Symbols Renderer

 The *No Symbols* renderer is a special use case of the Single Symbol renderer as it applies the same rendering to all features. Using this renderer, no symbol will be drawn for features, but labeling, diagrams and other non-

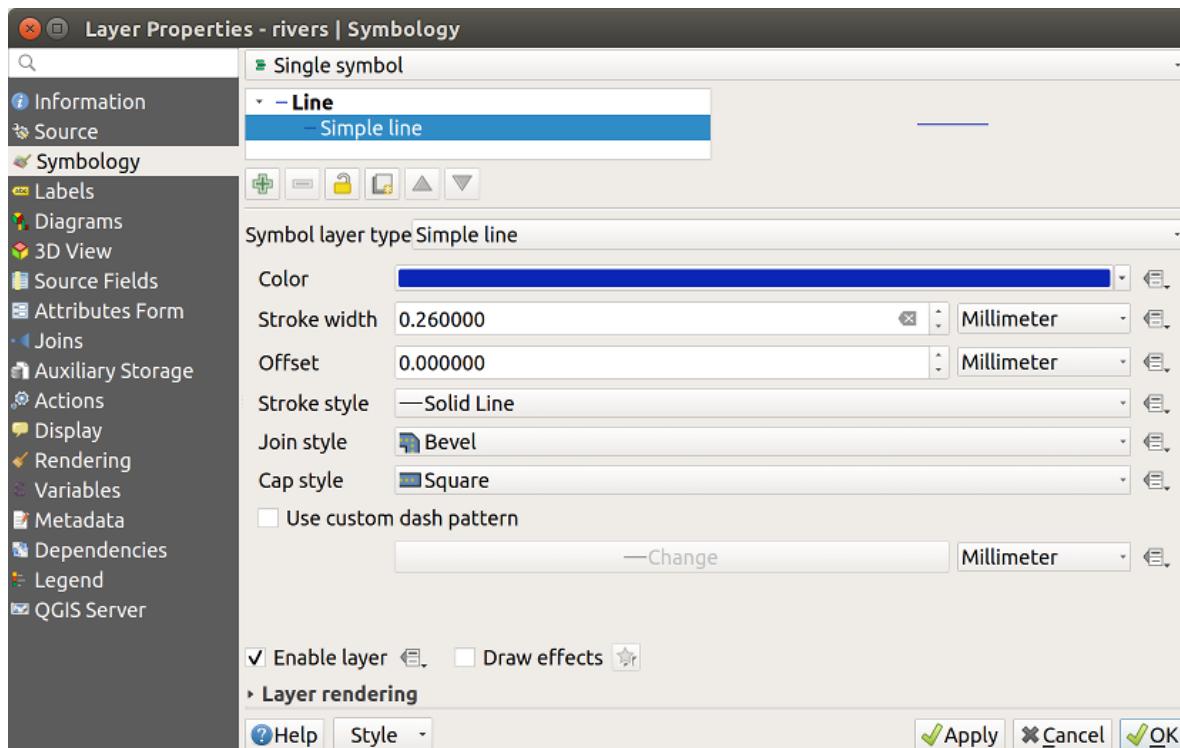


Fig. 13.10: Single symbol line properties

symbol parts will still be shown.

Selections can still be made on the layer in the canvas and selected features will be rendered with a default symbol. Features being edited will also be shown.

This is intended as a handy shortcut for layers which you only want to show labels or diagrams for, and avoids the need to render symbols with totally transparent fill/border to achieve this.

### Categorized Renderer

The  *Categorized* renderer is used to render the features of a layer, using a user-defined symbol whose aspect reflects the discrete values of a field or an expression. The Categorized menu allows you to

- select an existing field (using the Column listbox) or
- type or build an *expression* using the  Set column expression. The expression used to classify features can be of any type; it can for example:
  - be a comparison, e.g. `myfield >= 100, $id = @atlas_featureid, myfield % 2 = 0, within( $geometry, @atlas_geometry )`. In this case, QGIS returns values 1 (**True**) and 0 (**False**).
  - combine different fields, e.g. `concat( field1, ' ', field2 )` particularly useful when you want to process classification on two or more fields simultaneously.
  - be a calculation on fields, e.g. `myfield % 2, year( myfield ) field_1 + field_2`.
  - be used to transform linear values in discrete classes, e.g.:

```
CASE WHEN x > 1000 THEN 'Big' ELSE 'Small' END
```

- combine several discrete values in one single category, e.g.:

```
CASE
WHEN building IN ('residence', 'mobile home') THEN 'residential'
WHEN building IN ('commercial', 'industrial') THEN 'Commercial and
    ↵Industrial'
END
```

**Note:** While you can use any kind of expression to categorize features, for some complex expressions it might be simpler to use *rule-based rendering*.

- the symbol (using the *The Symbol Selector* dialog) which will be used as base symbol for each class;
- the range of colors (using the Color ramp listbox) from which color applied to the symbol is selected.

Then click on *Classify* button to create classes from the distinct value of the attribute column. Each class can be disabled unchecking the checkbox at the left of the class name.

To change symbol, value and/or label of the class, just double click on the item you want to change.

Right-click shows a contextual menu to **Copy/Paste**, **Change color**, **Change transparency**, **Change output unit**, **Change symbol width**.

The example in [figure\\_categorized\\_symbology](#) shows the category rendering dialog used for the rivers layer of the QGIS sample dataset.

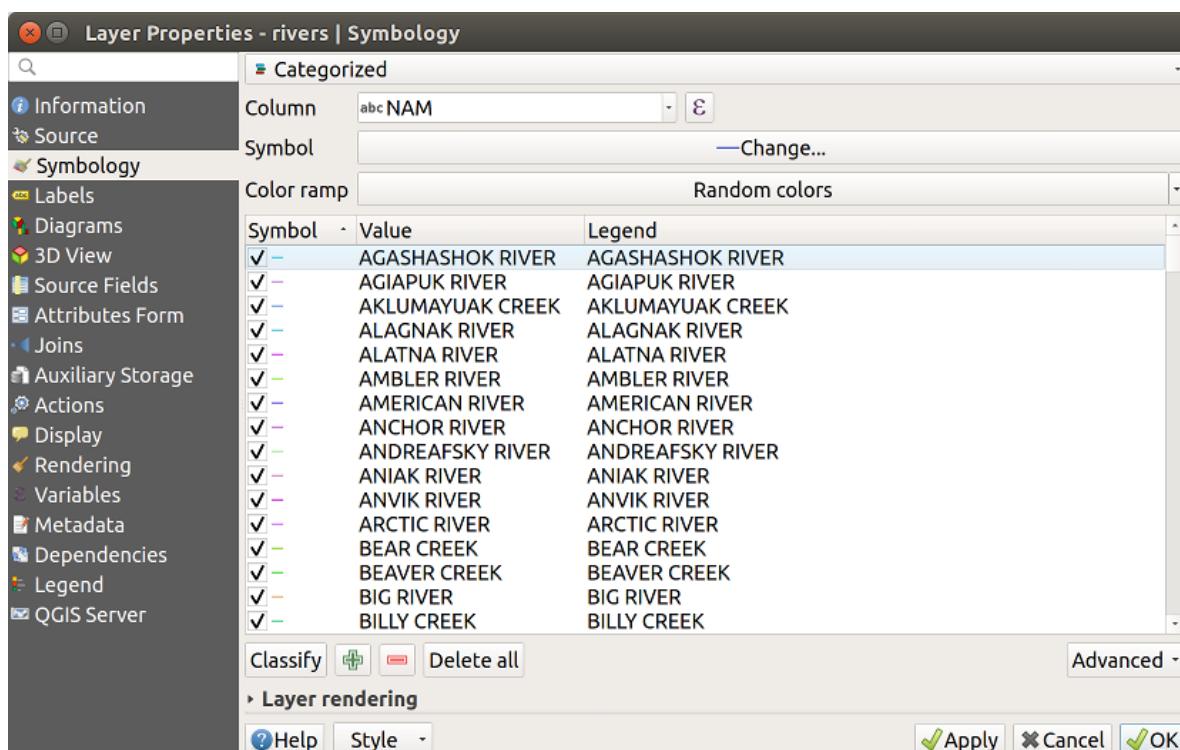


Fig. 13.11: Categorized Symbolizing options

#### Tip: Select and change multiple symbols

The Symbology allows you to select multiple symbols and right click to change color, transparency, size, or width of selected entries.

#### Tip: Match categories to symbol name

In the [Advanced] menu, under the classes, you can choose one of the two first actions to match symbol name to a category name in your classification. *Matched to saved symbols* match category name with a symbol name from your *Style Manager*. *Match to symbols from file* match category name to a symbol name from an external file.

---

## Graduated Renderer

The  *Graduated renderer* is used to render all the features from a layer, using an user-defined symbol whose color or size reflects the assignment of a selected feature's attribute to a class.

Like the Categorized Renderer, the Graduated Renderer allows you to define rotation and size scale from specified columns.

Also, analogous to the Categorized Renderer, it allows you to select:

- The attribute (using the Column listbox or the  *Set column expression* function)
- The symbol (using the Symbol selector dialog)
- The legend format and the precision
- The method to use to change the symbol: color or size
- The colors (using the color Ramp list) if the color method is selected
- The size (using the size domain and its unit)

Then you can use the Histogram tab which shows an interactive histogram of the values from the assigned field or expression. Class breaks can be moved or added using the histogram widget.

---

**Note:** You can use Statistical Summary panel to get more information on your vector layer. See [Statistical Summary Panel](#).

---

Back to the Classes tab, you can specify the number of classes and also the mode for classifying features within the classes (using the Mode list). The available modes are:

- Equal Interval: each class has the same size (e.g. values from 0 to 16 and 4 classes, each class has a size of 4).
- Quantile: each class will have the same number of element inside (the idea of a boxplot).
- Natural Breaks (Jenks): the variance within each class is minimal while the variance between classes is maximal.
- Standard Deviation: classes are built depending on the standard deviation of the values.
- Pretty Breaks: Computes a sequence of about  $n+1$  equally spaced nice values which cover the range of the values in  $x$ . The values are chosen so that they are 1, 2 or 5 times a power of 10. (based on pretty from the R statistical environment <http://astrostatistics.psu.edu/datasets/R/html/base/html/pretty.html>)

The listbox in the center part of the *Symbology* tab lists the classes together with their ranges, labels and symbols that will be rendered.

Click on **Classify** button to create classes using the chosen mode. Each classes can be disabled unchecking the checkbox at the left of the class name.

To change symbol, value and/or label of the class, just double click on the item you want to change.

Right-click shows a contextual menu to **Copy/Paste**, **Change color**, **Change transparency**, **Change output unit**, **Change symbol width**.

The example in [figure\\_graduated\\_symbology](#) shows the graduated rendering dialog for the rivers layer of the QGIS sample dataset.

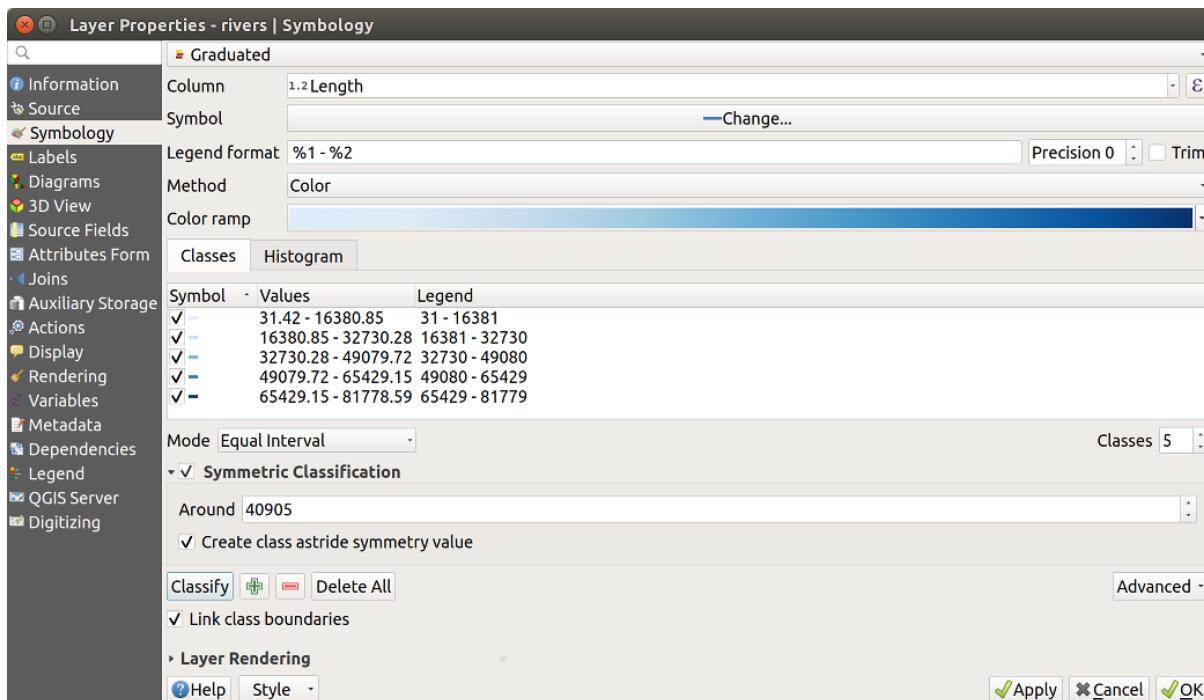


Fig. 13.12: Graduated Symbolizing options

### Tip: Thematic maps using an expression

Categorized and graduated thematic maps can be created using the result of an expression. In the properties dialog for vector layers, the attribute chooser is extended with a [Set column expression](#) function. So you don't need to write the classification attribute to a new column in your attribute table if you want the classification attribute to be a composite of multiple fields, or a formula of some sort.

## Proportional Symbol and Multivariate Analysis

Proportional Symbol and Multivariate Analysis are not rendering types available from the Symbology rendering drop-down list. However with the [data-defined override](#) options applied over any of the previous rendering options, QGIS allows you to display your point and line data with such representation.

### Creating proportional symbol

To apply a proportional rendering:

1. First apply to the layer the [single symbol renderer](#).
2. Then set the symbol to apply to the features.
3. Select the item at the upper level of the symbol tree, and use the [Data-defined override](#) button next to the *Size* (for point layer) or *Width* (for line layer) option.
4. Select a field or enter an expression, and for each feature, QGIS will apply the output value to the property and proportionally resize the symbol in the map canvas.

If need be, use the *Size assistant...* option of the menu to apply some transformation (exponential, flannery...) to the symbol size rescaling (see [Using the data-defined assistant interface](#) for more details).

You can choose to display the proportional symbols in the [Layers panel](#) and the [print layout legend item](#): unfold the *Advanced* drop-down list at the bottom of the main dialog of the *Symbology* tab and select **Data-defined size legend...** to configure the legend items (see [Data-defined size legend](#) for details).

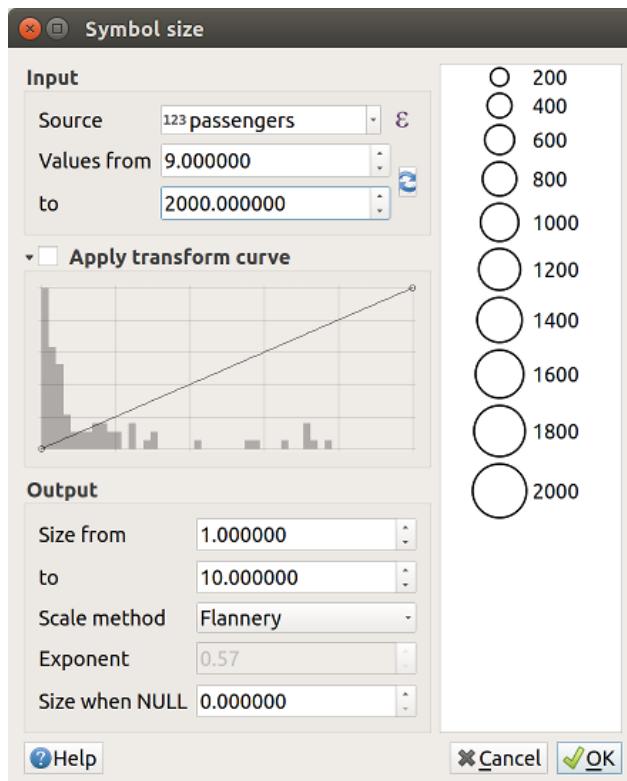


Fig. 13.13: Scaling airports size based on elevation of the airport

### Creating multivariate analysis

A multivariate analysis rendering helps you evaluate the relationship between two or more variables e.g., one can be represented by a color ramp while the other is represented by a size.

The simplest way to create multivariate analysis in QGIS is to:

1. First apply a categorized or graduated rendering on a layer, using the same type of symbol for all the classes.
2. Then, apply a proportional symbology on the classes:
  - (a) Click on the *Change* button above the classification frame: you get the *The Symbol Selector* dialog.
  - (b) Rescale the size or width of the symbol layer using the *data defined override* widget as seen above.

Like the proportional symbol, the scaled symbology can be added to the layer tree, on top of the categorized or graduated classes symbols using the *data defined size legend* feature. And both representation are also available in the print layout legend item.

### Rule-based Renderer

The *Rule-based* renderer is used to render all the features from a layer, using rule-based symbols whose aspect reflects the assignment of a selected feature's attribute to a class. The rules are based on SQL statements and can be nested. The dialog allows rule grouping by filter or scale, and you can decide if you want to enable symbol levels or use only the first-matched rule.

To create a rule:

1. Activate an existing row by double-clicking it (by default, QGIS adds a symbol without a rule when the rendering mode is enabled) or click the *Edit rule* or *Add rule* button.

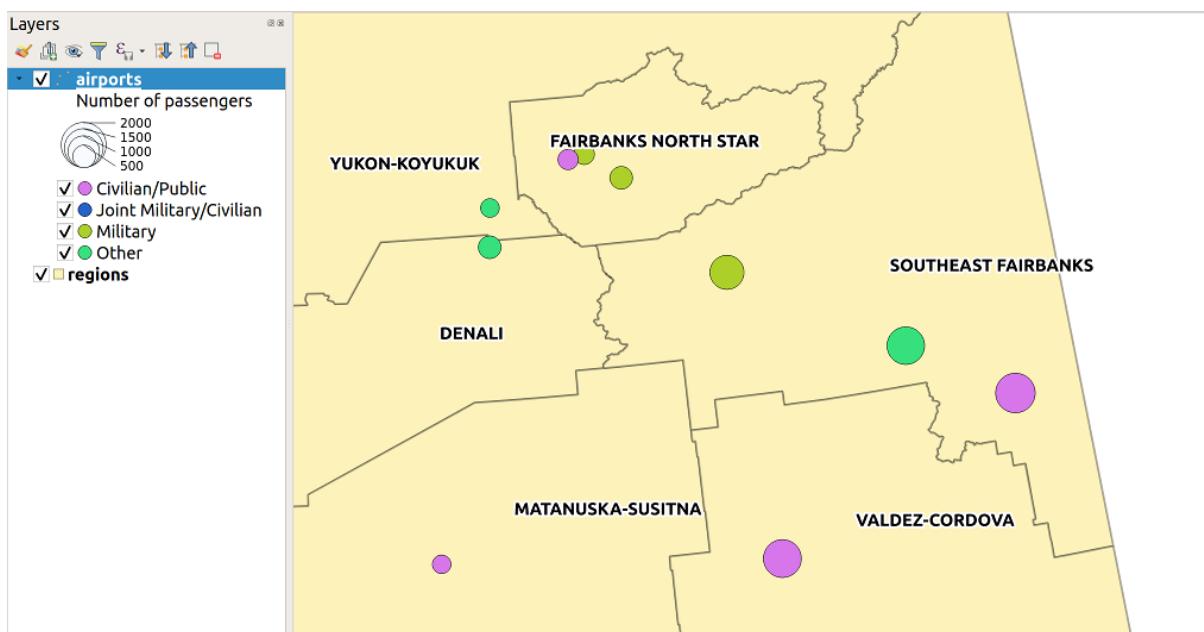


Fig. 13.14: Multivariate example with scaled size legend

2. In the *Edit Rule* dialog that opens, you can define a label to help you identify each rule. This is the label that will be displayed in the *Layers Panel* and also in the print composer legend.
3. Manually enter an expression in the text box next to the *Filter* option or press the button next to it to open the expression string builder dialog.
4. Use the provided functions and the layer attributes to build an *expression* to filter the features you'd like to retrieve. Press the *Test* button to check the result of the query.
5. You can enter a longer label to complete the rule description.
6. You can use the *Scale Range* option to set scales at which the rule should be applied.
7. Finally, configure the *symbol to use* for these features.
8. And press *OK*.

A new row summarizing the rule is added to the Layer Properties dialog. You can create as many rules as necessary following the steps above or copy pasting an existing rule. Drag-and-drop the rules on top of each other to nest them and refine the upper rule features in subclasses.

Selecting a rule, you can also organize its features in subclasses using the *Refine selected rules* drop-down menu. Automated rule refinement can be based on:

- **scales**;
- **categories**: applying a *categorized renderer*;
- or **ranges**: applying a *graduated renderer*.

Refined classes appear like sub-items of the rule, in a tree hierarchy and like above, you can set symbology of each class.

In the *Edit rule* dialog, you can avoid writing all the rules and make use of the *Else* option to catch all the features that do not match any of the other rules, at the same level. This can also be achieved by writing *Else* in the *Rule* column of the *Layer Properties → Symbology → Rule-based* dialog.

The created rules also appear in a tree hierarchy in the map legend. Double-click the rules in the map legend and the Symbology tab of the layer properties appears showing the rule that is the background for the symbol in the tree.

The example in [figure\\_rule\\_based\\_symbology](#) shows the rule-based rendering dialog for the rivers layer of the QGIS sample dataset.

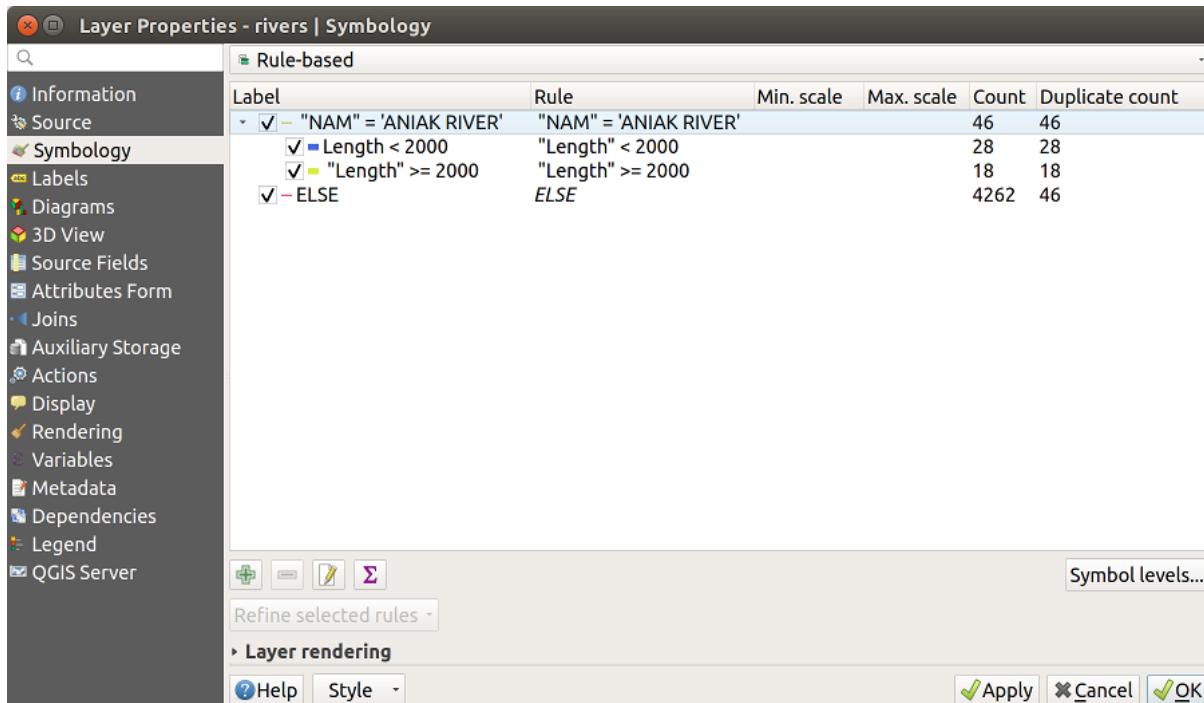


Fig. 13.15: Rule-based Symbolizing options

## Point displacement Renderer

 The *Point Displacement* renderer works to visualize all features of a point layer, even if they have the same location. To do this, the renderer takes the points falling in a given *Distance* tolerance from each other and places them around their barycenter following different *Placement methods*:

- **Ring:** places all the features on a circle whose radius depends on the number of features to display.
- **Concentric rings:** uses a set of concentric circles to show the features.
- **Grid:** generates a regular grid with a point symbol at each intersection.

The *Center symbol* widget helps you customize the symbol and color of the middle point. For the distributed points symbols, you can apply any of the *No symbols*, *Single symbol*, *Categorized*, *Graduated* or *Rule-based* renderer using the *Renderer* drop-down list and customize them using the *Renderer Settings...* button.

While the minimal spacing of the *Displacement lines* depends on the point symbol renderer's, you can still customize some of its settings such as the *Stroke width*, *Stroke color* and *Size adjustment* (eg, to add more spacing between the rendered points).

Use the *Labels* group options to perform points labeling: the labels are placed near the displaced position of the symbol, and not at the feature real position. Other than the *Label attribute*, *Label font* and *Label color*, you can set the *Minimum map scale* to display the labels.

---

**Note:** Point Displacement renderer does not alter feature geometry, meaning that points are not moved from their position. They are still located at their initial place. Changes are only visual, for rendering purpose. Use instead the Processing `qgispointsdisplacement` algorithm if you want to create displaced features.

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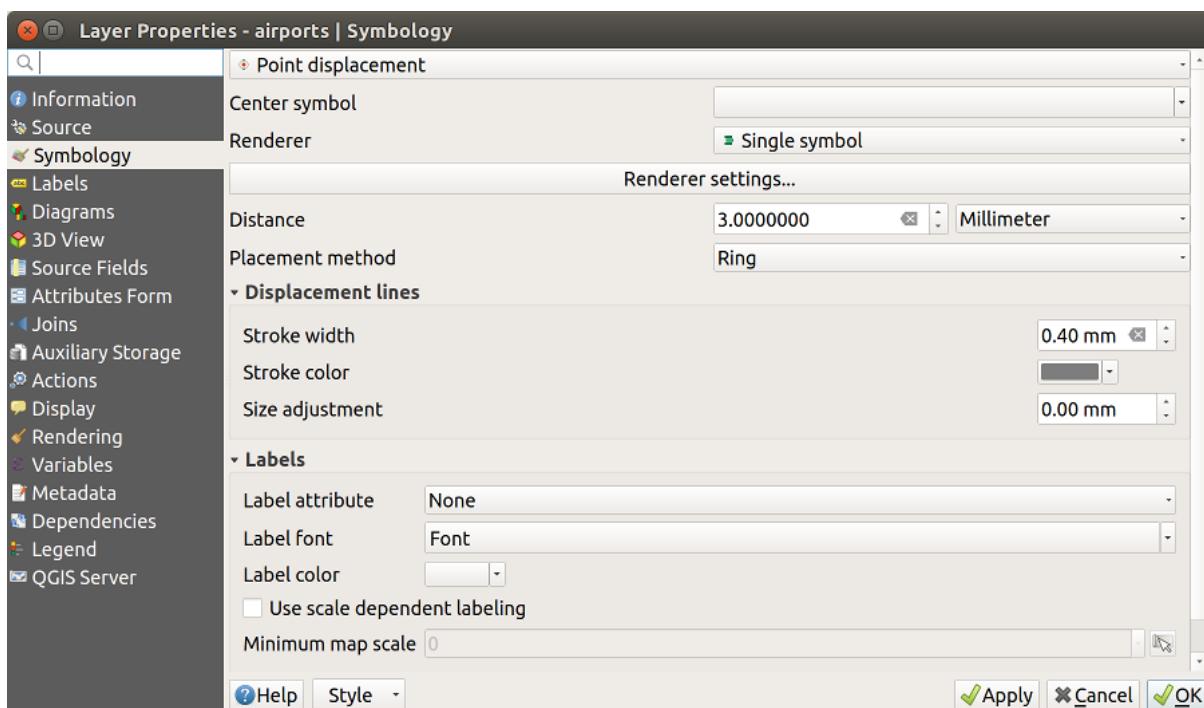


Fig. 13.16: Point displacement dialog

## Point Cluster Renderer

Unlike the  *Point Displacement* renderer which blows up nearest or overlaid point features placement, the  *Point Cluster* renderer groups nearby points into a single rendered marker symbol. Based on a specified *Distance*, points that fall within from each others are merged into a single symbol. Points aggregation is made based on the closest group being formed, rather than just assigning them the first group within the search distance.

From the main dialog, you can:

- set the symbol to represent the point cluster in the *Cluster symbol*; the default rendering displays the number of aggregated features thanks to the `@cluster_size` variable on Font marker layer.
- use the *Renderer* drop-down list to apply any of the other feature rendering types to the layer (single, categorized, rule-based...). Then, push the *Renderer Settings...* button to configure features' symbology as usual. Note that this renderer is only visible on features that are not clustered. Also, when the symbol color is the same for all the point features inside a cluster, that color sets the `@cluster_color` variable of the cluster.

---

**Note:** Point Cluster renderer does not alter feature geometry, meaning that points are not moved from their position. They are still located at their initial place. Changes are only visual, for rendering purpose. Use instead the Processing qgiskmmeansclustering or qgisdbscancustering algorithm if you want to create cluster-based features.

---

## Inverted Polygon Renderer

The  *Inverted Polygon* renderer allows user to define a symbol to fill in outside of the layer's polygons. As above you can select subrenderers, namely Single symbol, Graduated, Categorized, Rule-Based or 2.5D renderer.

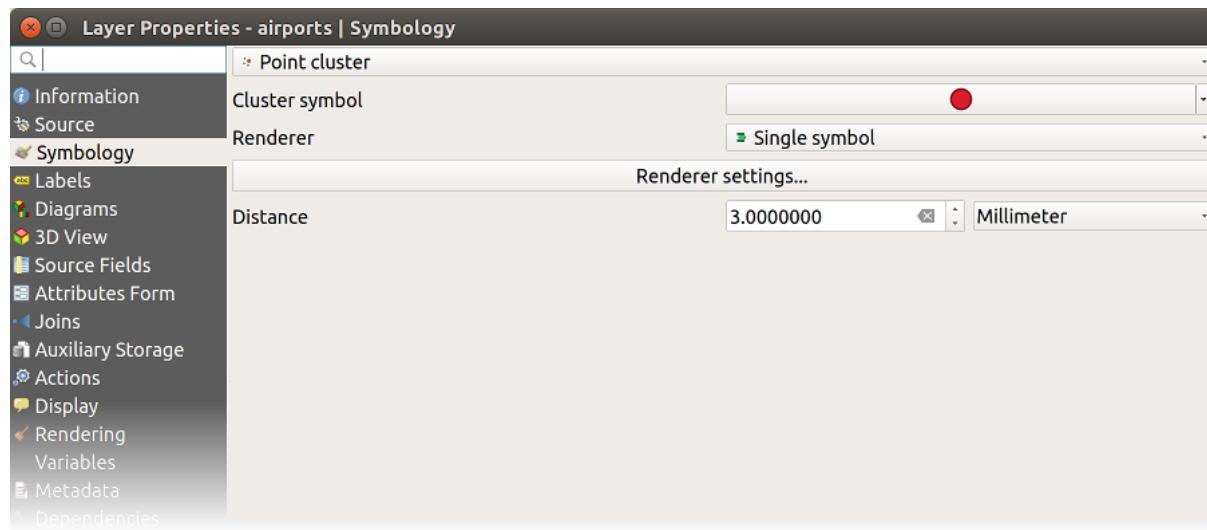


Fig. 13.17: Point Cluster dialog

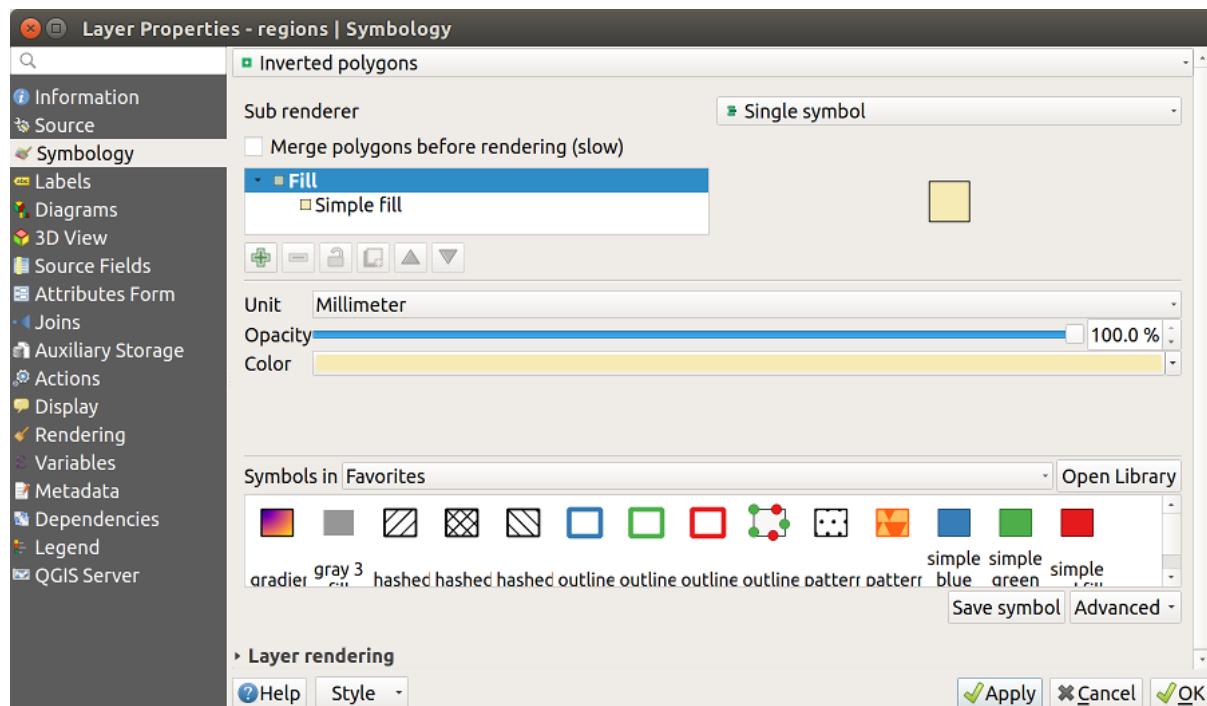


Fig. 13.18: Inverted Polygon dialog

## Heatmap Renderer

With the  *Heatmap* renderer you can create live dynamic heatmaps for (multi)point layers. You can specify the heatmap radius in millimeters, points, pixels, map units or inches, choose and edit a color ramp for the heatmap style and use a slider for selecting a trade-off between render speed and quality. You can also define a maximum value limit and give a weight to points using a field or an expression. When adding or removing a feature the heatmap renderer updates the heatmap style automatically.

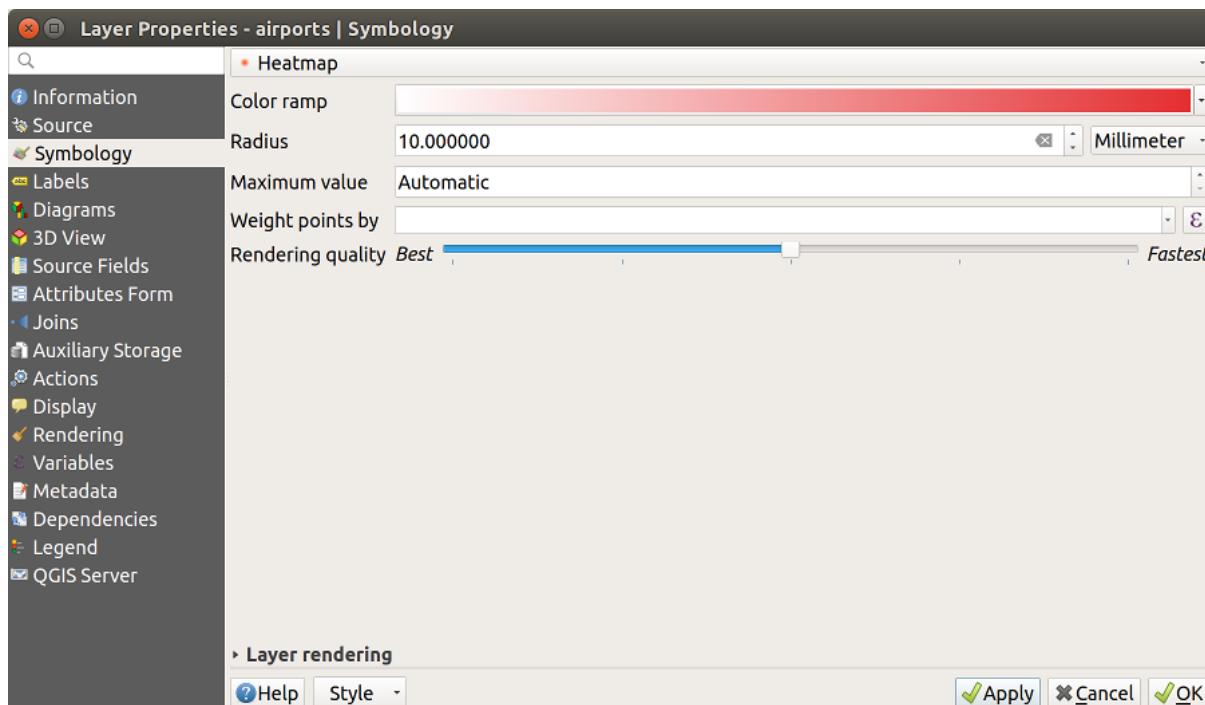


Fig. 13.19: Heatmap dialog

## 2.5D Renderer

Using the  *2.5D* renderer it's possible to create a 2.5D effect on your layer's features. You start by choosing a *Height* value (in map units). For that you can use a fixed value, one of your layer's fields, or an expression. You also need to choose an *Angle* (in degrees) to recreate the viewer position ( $0^\circ$  means west, growing in counter clock wise). Use advanced configuration options to set the *Roof Color* and *Wall Color*. If you would like to simulate solar radiation on the features walls, make sure to check the  *Shade walls based on aspect* option. You can also simulate a shadow by setting a *Color* and *Size* (in map units).

### Tip: Using 2.5D effect with other renderers

Once you have finished setting the basic style on the 2.5D renderer, you can convert this to another renderer (single, categorized, graduated). The 2.5D effects will be kept and all other renderer specific options will be available for you to fine tune them (this way you can have for example categorized symbols with a nice 2.5D representation or add some extra styling to your 2.5D symbols). To make sure that the shadow and the “building” itself do not interfere with other nearby features, you may need to enable Symbols Levels (*Advanced → Symbol levels...*). The 2.5D height and angle values are saved in the layer's variables, so you can edit it afterwards in the variables tab of the layer's properties dialog.

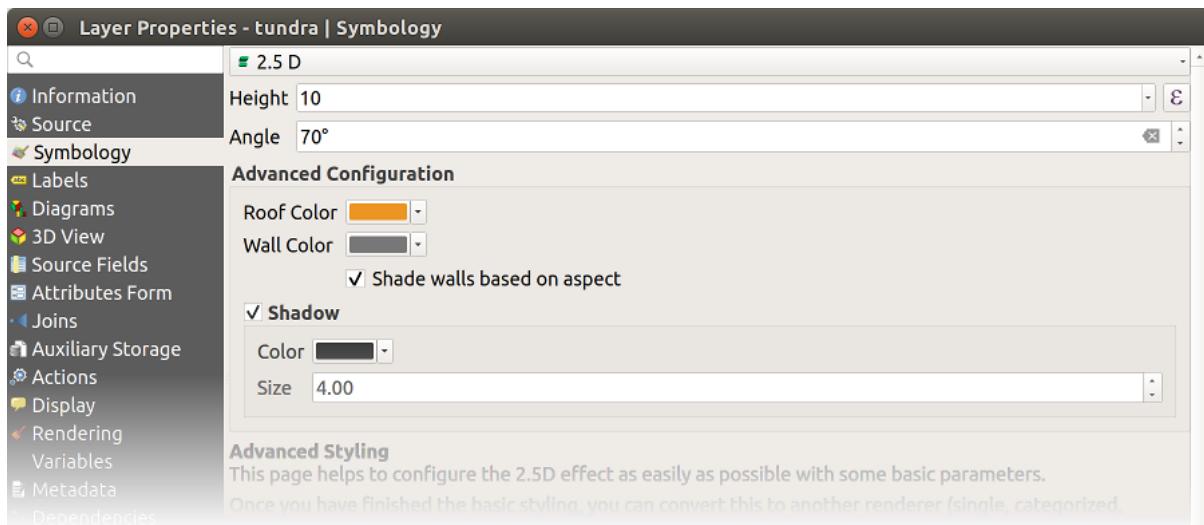


Fig. 13.20: 2.5D dialog

## Layer rendering

From the Symbology tab, you can also set some options that invariably act on all features of the layer:

- *Opacity*: You can make the underlying layer in the map canvas visible with this tool. Use the slider to adapt the visibility of your vector layer to your needs. You can also make a precise definition of the percentage of visibility in the menu beside the slider.
- *Blending mode* at the *Layer* and *Feature* levels: You can achieve special rendering effects with these tools that you may previously only know from graphics programs. The pixels of your overlaying and underlaying layers are mixed through the settings described in [Blending Modes](#).
- Apply *paint effects* on all the layer features with the *Draw Effects* button.
- *Control feature rendering order* allows you, using features attributes, to define the z-order in which they shall be rendered. Activate the checkbox and click on the button beside. You then get the *Define Order* dialog in which you:
  1. Choose a field or build an expression to apply to the layer features.
  2. Set in which order the fetched features should be sorted, i.e. if you choose **Ascending** order, the features with lower value are rendered under those with higher value.
  3. Define when features returning NULL value should be rendered: **first** (bottom) or **last** (top).
  4. Repeat the above steps as many times as rules you wish to use.

The first rule is applied to all the features in the layer, z-ordering them according to their returned value. Then, within each group of features with the same value (including those with NULL value) and thus the same z-level, the next rule is applied to sort them. And so on...

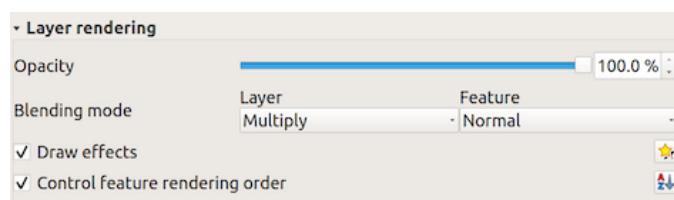


Fig. 13.21: Layer rendering options

## Other Settings

### Symbol levels

For renderers that allow stacked symbol layers (only heatmap doesn't) there is an option to control the rendering order of each symbol's levels.

For most of the renderers, you can access the *Symbols levels* option by clicking the *Advanced* button below the saved symbols list and choosing *Symbol levels*. For the *Rule-based Renderer* the option is directly available through *Symbols Levels...* button, while for *Point displacement Renderer* renderer the same button is inside the *Rendering settings* dialog.

To activate symbols levels, select the  *Enable symbol levels*. Each row will show up a small sample of the combined symbol, its label and the individual symbols layer divided into columns with a number next to it. The numbers represent the rendering order level in which the symbol layer will be drawn. Lower values levels are drawn first, staying at the bottom, while higher values are drawn last, on top of the others.

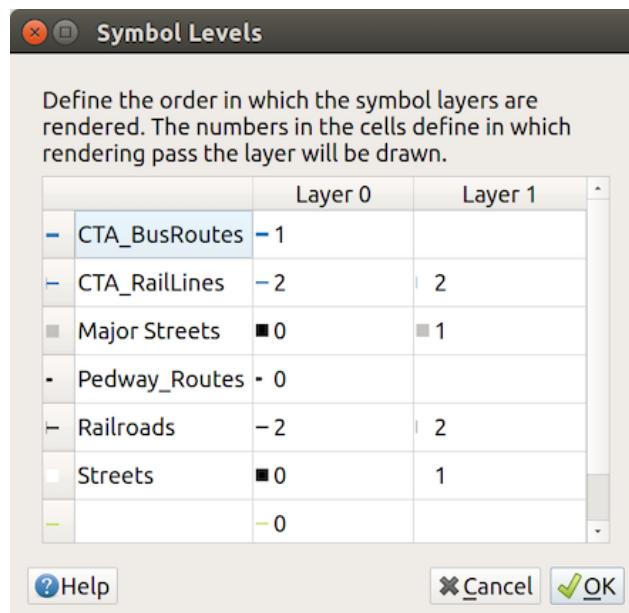


Fig. 13.22: Symbol levels dialog

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**Note:** If symbols levels are deactivated, the complete symbols will be drawn according to their respective features order. Overlapping symbols will simply obfuscate to other below. Besides, similar symbols won't "merge" with each other.

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### Data-defined size legend

When a layer is rendered with the *proportional symbol* or the *multivariate rendering* or when a *scaled size diagram* is applied to the layer, you can allow the display of the scaled symbols in both the *Layers panel* and the *print layout legend*.

To enable the *Data-defined Size Legend* dialog to render symbology, select the eponym option in the *Advanced* button below the saved symbols list. For diagrams, the option is available under the *Legend* tab. The dialog provides the following options to:

- select the type of legend:  *Legend not enabled*,  *Separated legend items* and  *Collapsed legend*. For the latter option, you can select whether the legend items are aligned at the **Bottom** or at the **Center**;

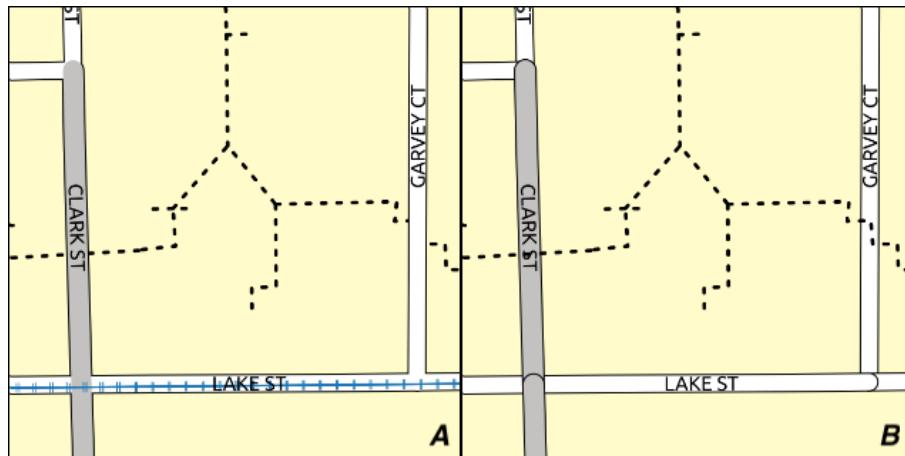


Fig. 13.23: Symbol levels activated (A) and deactivated (B) difference

- set the *symbol to use* for legend representation;
- insert the title in the legend;
- resize the classes to use: by default, QGIS provides you with a legend of five classes (based on natural pretty breaks) but you can apply your own classification using the  *Manual size classes* option. Use the and buttons to set your custom classes values and labels.

A preview of the legend is displayed in the right panel of the dialog and updated as you set the parameters. For collapsed legend, a leader line from the horizontal center of the symbol to the corresponding legend text is drawn.

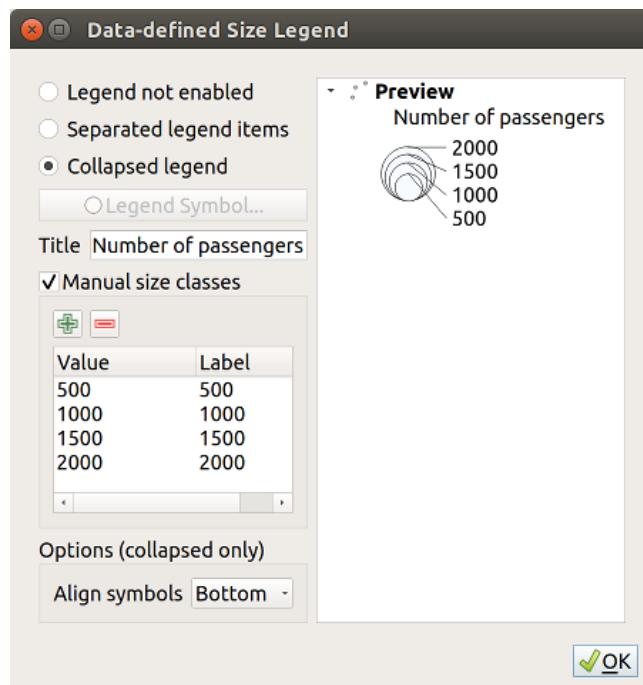


Fig. 13.24: Setting size scaled legend

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**Note:** Currently, data-defined size legend for layer symbology can only be applied to point layer using single, categorized or graduated symbology.

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## Draw effects

In order to improve layer rendering and avoid (or at least reduce) the resort to other software for final rendering of maps, QGIS provides another powerful functionality: the *Draw Effects* options, which adds paint effects for customizing the visualization of vector layers.

The option is available in the *Layer Properties → Symbology* dialog, under the *Layer rendering* group (applying to the whole layer) or in *symbol layer properties* (applying to corresponding features). You can combine both usage.

Paint effects can be activated by checking the *Draw effects* option and clicking the *Customize effects* button. That will open the *Effect Properties Dialog* (see [figure\\_effects\\_source](#)). The following effect types, with custom options are available:

- **Source:** Draws the feature's original style according to the configuration of the layer's properties. The *Opacity* of its style can be adjusted as well as the *Blend mode* and *Draw mode*. These are common properties for all types of effects.

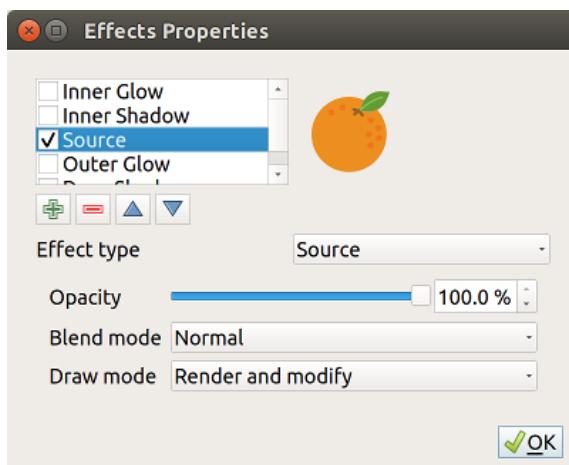


Fig. 13.25: Draw Effects: Source dialog

- **Blur:** Adds a blur effect on the vector layer. The custom options that you can change are the *Blur type* (*Stack blur (fast)* or *Gaussian blur (quality)*) and the *Blur strength*.

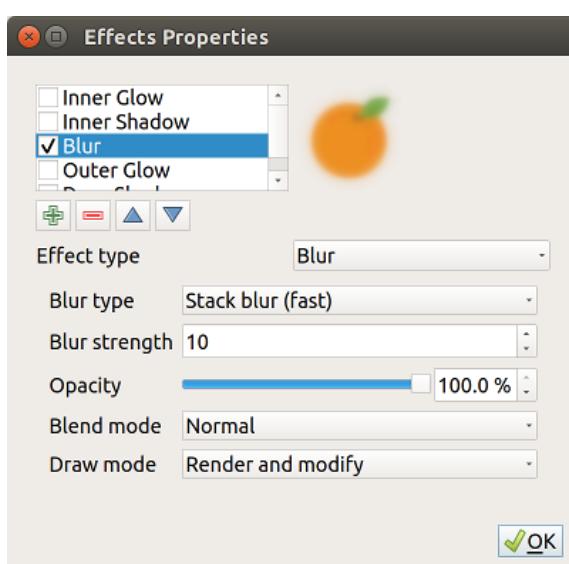


Fig. 13.26: Draw Effects: Blur dialog

- **Colorise:** This effect can be used to make a version of the style using one single hue. The base will always be a grayscale version of the symbol and you can:

- Use the  *Grayscale* to select how to create it: options are ‘By lightness’, ‘By luminosity’, ‘By average’ and ‘Off’.
- If  *Colorise* is selected, it will be possible to mix another color and choose how strong it should be.
- Control the *Brightness*, *Contrast* and *Saturation* levels of the resulting symbol.

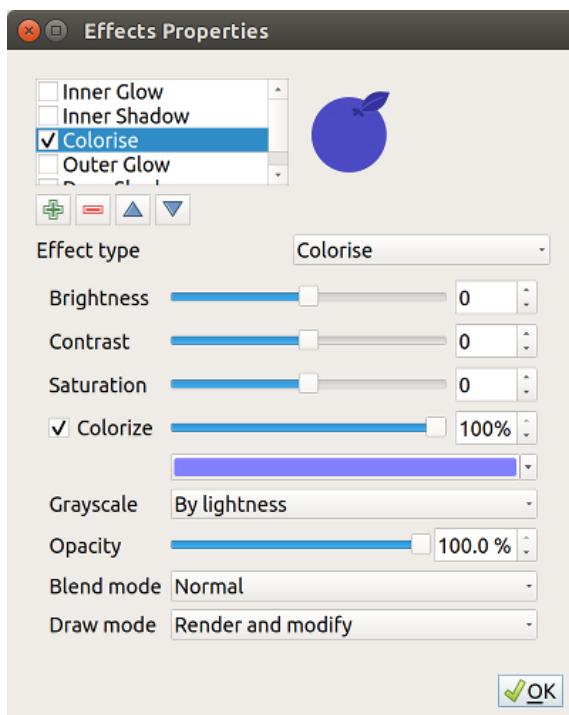


Fig. 13.27: Draw Effects: Colorize dialog

- **Drop Shadow:** Using this effect adds a shadow on the feature, which looks like adding an extra dimension. This effect can be customized by changing the *Offset* angle and distance, determining where the shadow shifts towards to and the proximity to the source object. *Drop Shadow* also has the option to change the *Blur radius* and the *Color* of the effect.
- **Inner Shadow:** This effect is similar to the *Drop Shadow* effect, but it adds the shadow effect on the inside of the edges of the feature. The available options for customization are the same as the *Drop Shadow* effect.
- **Inner Glow:** Adds a glow effect inside the feature. This effect can be customized by adjusting the *Spread* (width) of the glow, or the *Blur radius*. The latter specifies the proximity from the edge of the feature where you want any blurring to happen. Additionally, there are options to customize the color of the glow using a *Single color* or a *Color ramp*.
- **Outer Glow:** This effect is similar to the *Inner Glow* effect, but it adds the glow effect on the outside of the edges of the feature. The available options for customization are the same as the *Inner Glow* effect.
- **Transform:** Adds the possibility of transforming the shape of the symbol. The first options available for customization are the *Reflect horizontal* and *Reflect vertical*, which actually create a reflection on the horizontal and/or vertical axes. The other options are:
  - *Shear X,Y*: Slants the feature along the X and/or Y axis.
  - *Scale X,Y*: Enlarges or minimizes the feature along the X and/or Y axis by the given percentage.
  - *Rotation*: Turns the feature around its center point.
  - and *Translate X,Y* changes the position of the item based on a distance given on the X and/or Y axis.

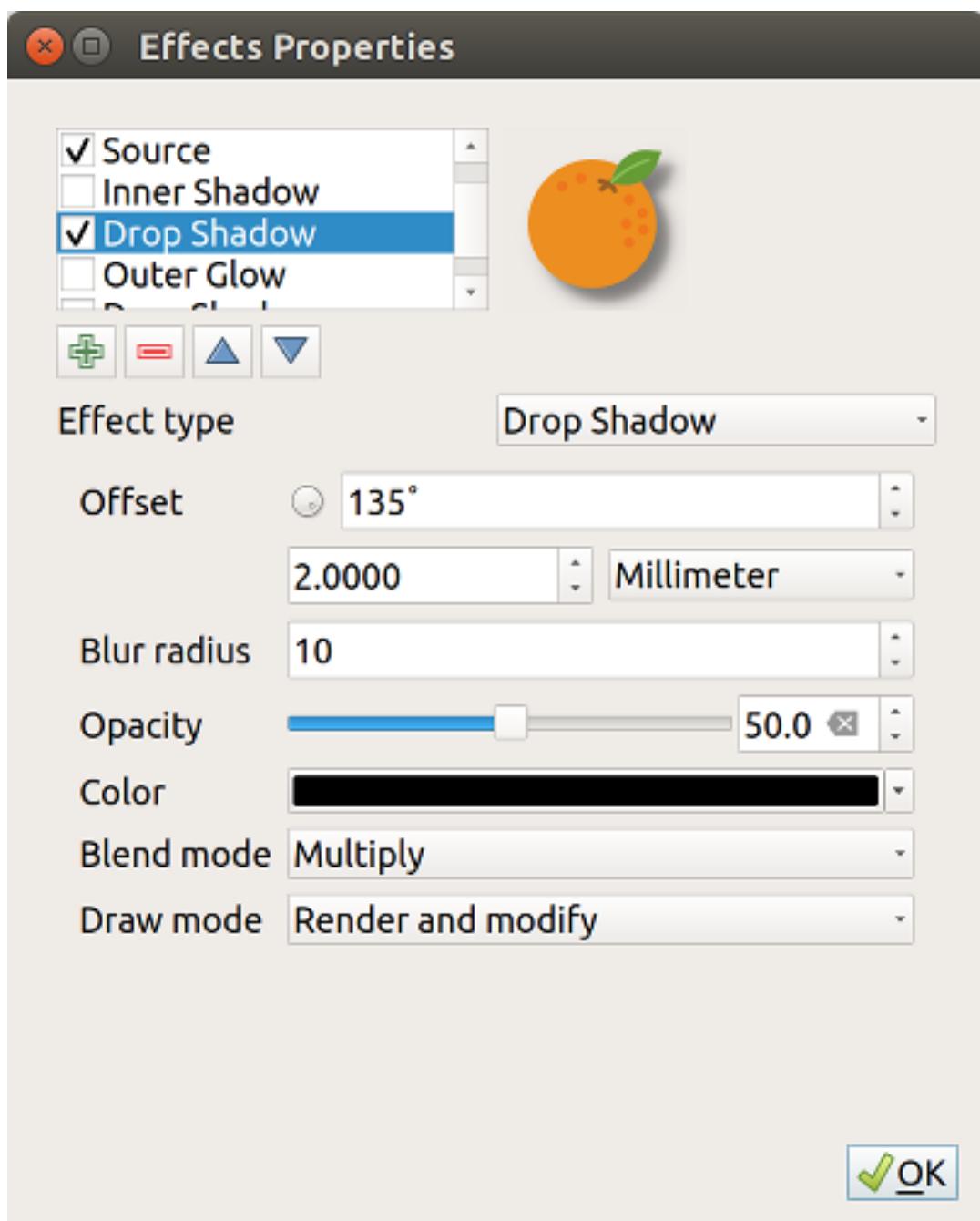


Fig. 13.28: Draw Effects: Drop Shadow dialog

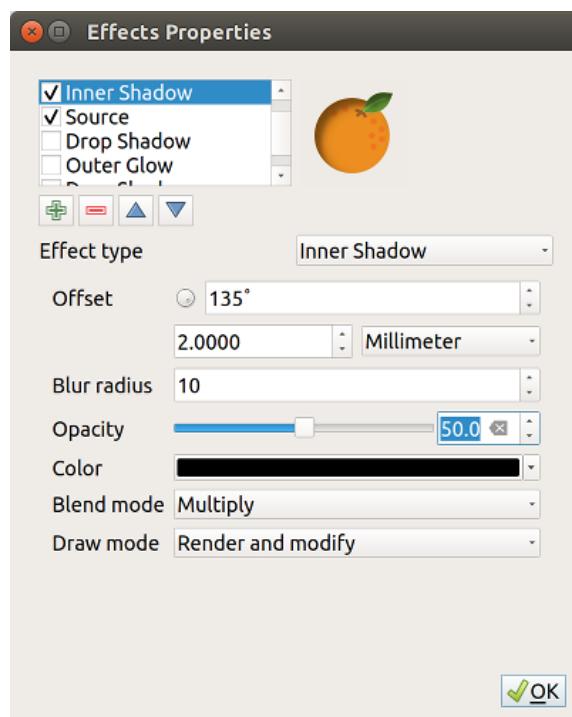


Fig. 13.29: Draw Effects: Inner Shadow dialog

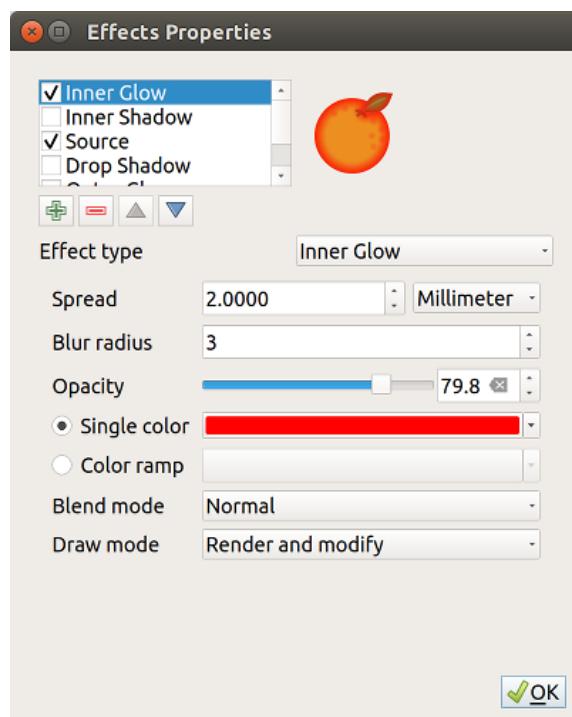


Fig. 13.30: Draw Effects: Inner Glow dialog

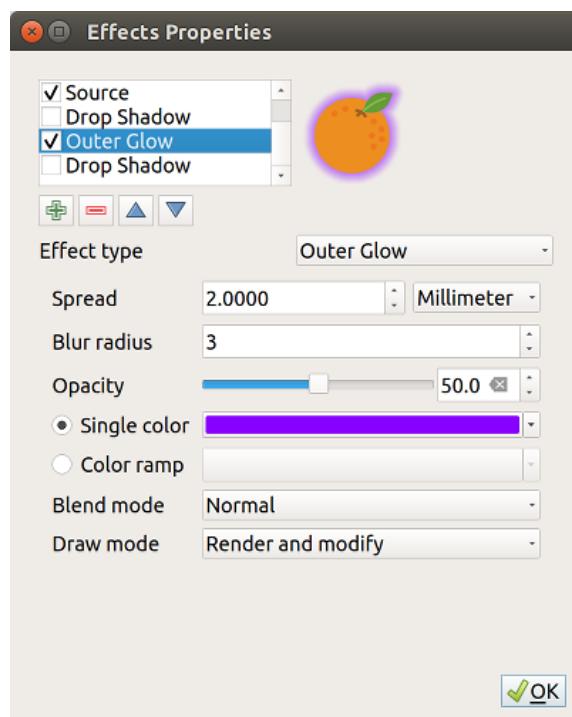


Fig. 13.31: Draw Effects: Outer Glow dialog

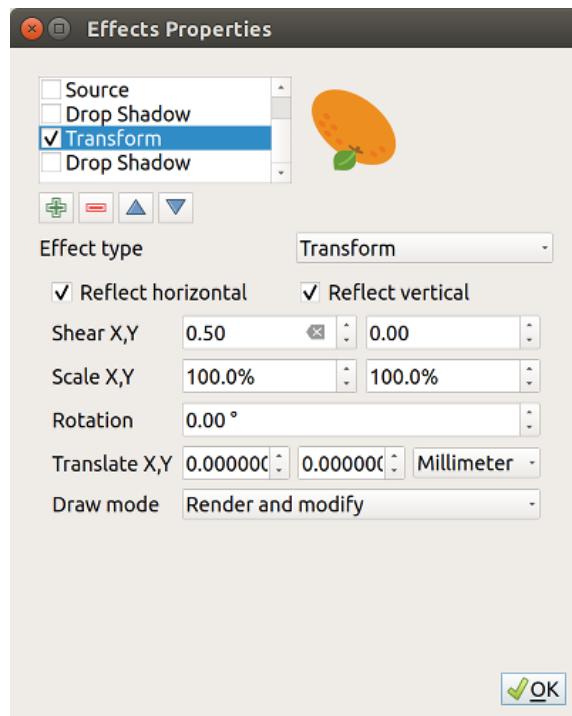


Fig. 13.32: Draw Effects: Transform dialog

One or more effect types can be used at the same time. You (de)activate an effect using its checkbox in the effects list. You can change the selected effect type by using the  *Effect type* option. You can reorder the effects using  *Move up* and  *Move down* buttons, and also add/remove effects using the  *Add new effect* and  *Remove effect* buttons.

There are some common options available for all draw effect types. *Opacity* and *Blend mode* options work similar to the ones described in [Layer rendering](#) and can be used in all draw effects except for the transform one. There is also a  *Draw mode* option available for every effect, and you can choose whether to render and/or modify the symbol, following some rules:

- Effects render from top to bottom.
- *Render only* mode means that the effect will be visible.
- *Modifier only* mode means that the effect will not be visible but the changes that it applies will be passed to the next effect (the one immediately below).
- The *Render and Modify* mode will make the effect visible and pass any changes to the next effect. If the effect is at the top of the effects list or if the immediately above effect is not in modify mode, then it will use the original source symbol from the layers properties (similar to source).

### 13.2.4 Labels Properties

The  *Labels* properties provides you with all the needed and appropriate capabilities to configure smart labeling on vector layers. This dialog can also be accessed from the *Layer Styling* panel, or using the  *Layer Labeling Options* icon of the **Labels toolbar**.

The first step is to choose the labeling method from the drop-down list. Available methods are:

-  *No labels*: the default value, showing no labels from the layer
-  *Single labels*, described below
-  *Rule-based labeling*
- and  *Blocking*: allows to set a layer as just an obstacle for other layer's labels without rendering any labels of its own.

#### Setting a label

The next steps assume you select the  *Single labels* option, enabling following tabs that help you configure the labeling:

- *Text*
- *Formatting*
- *Buffer*
- *Background*
- *Shadow*
- *Placement*
- *Rendering*

It also enables the *Label with* drop-down list, from which you can select an attribute column to use. Click  if you want to define labels based on expressions - See [Define labels based on expressions](#).

The following steps describe simple labeling without using the *Data defined override* functions, which are situated next to the drop-down menus - see [Using data-defined override for labeling](#) for a use case.

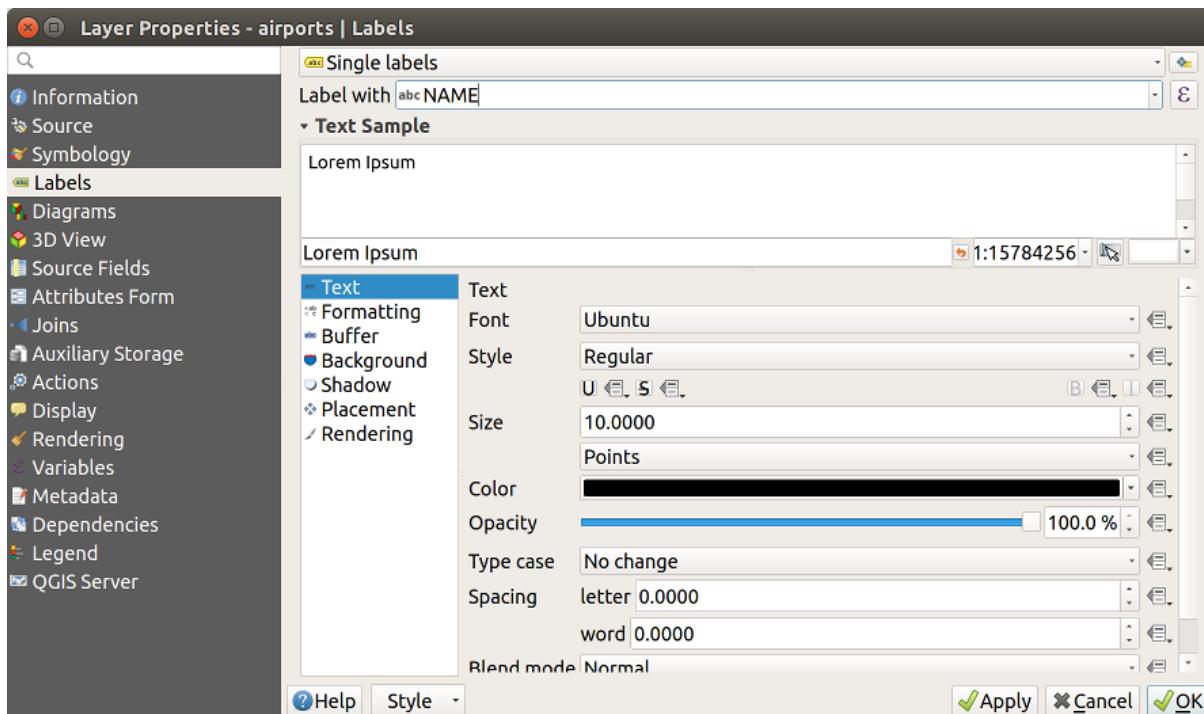


Fig. 13.33: Layer labeling settings - Text tab

### Text tab

In the **abc Text** tab, you can define the *Font*, *Style*, and *Size* of your labels' text (see [Figure\\_labels](#)). There are options available to set the labels' *Color* and *Transparency*. Use the *Type case* option to change the capitalization style of the text. You have the possibility to render the text as 'All uppercase', 'All lowercase' or 'Capitalize first letter'. In *Spacing*, you can change the space between words and between individual letters. Finally, use the *Blend mode* option to determine how your labels will mix with the map features below them (see more about it in [Blending Modes](#)).

The *Apply label text substitutes* option gives you ability to specify a list of texts to substitute to texts in feature labels (e.g., abbreviating street types). Replacement texts are thus used to display labels in the map canvas. Users can also export and import lists of substitutes to make reuse and sharing easier.

### Formatting tab

In the **+ab < c Formatting** tab, you can define a character for a line break in the labels with the *Wrap on character* option. You can also format the *Line Height* and the *alignment*. For the latter, typical values are available (left, right, and center), plus *Follow label placement* for point layers. When set to this mode, text alignment for labels will be dependent on the final placement of the label relative to the point. E.g., if the label is placed to the left of the point, then the label will be right aligned, while if it is placed to the right, it will be left aligned.

For line vector layers you can include *Line directions symbols* to help determine the lines directions. They work particularly well when used with the *curved* or *Parallel* placement options from the *Placement* tab. There are options to set the symbols position, and to *reverse direction*.

Use the **✓ Formatted numbers** option to format numeric labels. You can set the number of *Decimal places*. By default, 3 decimal places will be used. Use the **✓ Show plus sign** if you want to show the plus sign in positive numbers.

## Buffer tab

To create a buffer around the labels, activate the  *Draw text buffer* checkbox in the  *Buffer* tab. You can set the buffer's *Size*, *color*, and *Transparency*. The buffer expands from the label's outline, so, if the  *color buffer's fill* checkbox is activated, the buffer interior is filled. This may be relevant when using partially transparent labels or with non-normal blending modes, which will allow seeing behind the label's text. Deactivating  *color buffer's fill* checkbox (while using totally transparent labels) will allow you to create outlined text labels.

## Background tab

In the  *Background* tab, you can define with *Size X* and *Size Y* the shape of your background. Use *Size type* to insert an additional 'Buffer' into your background. The buffer size is set by default here. The background then consists of the buffer plus the background in *Size X* and *Size Y*. You can set a *Rotation* where you can choose between 'Sync with label', 'Offset of label' and 'Fixed'. Using 'Offset of label' and 'Fixed', you can rotate the background. Define an *Offset X,Y* with X and Y values, and the background will be shifted. When applying *Radius X,Y*, the background gets rounded corners. Again, it is possible to mix the background with the underlying layers in the map canvas using the *Blend mode* (see [Blending Modes](#)).

## Shadow tab

Use the  *Shadow* tab for a user-defined *Draw drop shadow*. The drawing of the background is very variable. Choose between 'Lowest label component', 'Text', 'Buffer' and 'Background'. The *Offset* angle depends on the orientation of the label. If you choose the  *Use global shadow* checkbox, then the zero point of the angle is always oriented to the north and doesn't depend on the orientation of the label. You can influence the appearance of the shadow with the *Blur radius*. The higher the number, the softer the shadows. The appearance of the drop shadow can also be altered by choosing a blend mode.

## Placement tab

Choose the  *Placement* tab for configuring label placement and labeling priority. Note that the placement options differ according to the type of vector layer, namely point, line or polygon, and are affected by the global [PAL setting](#).

### Placement for point layers

With the  *Cartographic* placement mode, point labels are generated with a better visual relationship with the point feature, following ideal cartographic placement rules. Labels can be placed at a set *Distance* either from the point feature itself or from the bounds of the symbol used to represent the feature. The latter option is especially useful when the symbol size isn't fixed, e.g. if it's set by a data defined size or when using different symbols in a categorized renderer.

By default, placements are prioritised in the following order:

1. top right
2. top left
3. bottom right
4. bottom left
5. middle right
6. middle left

7. top, slightly right

8. bottom, slightly left.

Placement priority can, however, be customized or set for an individual feature using a data defined list of prioritised positions. This also allows only certain placements to be used, so e.g. for coastal features you can prevent labels being placed over the land.

The *Around point* setting places the label in an equal radius (set in *Distance*) circle around the feature. The placement of the label can even be constrained using the *Quadrant* option.

With the *Offset from point*, labels are placed at a fixed offset from the point feature. You can select the *Quadrant* in which to place your label. You are also able to set the *Offset X,Y* distances between the points and their labels and can alter the angle of the label placement with the *Rotation* setting. Thus, placement in a selected quadrant with a defined rotation is possible.

### Placement for line layers

Label options for line layers include *Parallel*, *Curved* or *Horizontal*. For the *Parallel* and *Curved* options, you can set the position to  *Above line*,  *On line* and  *Below line*. It's possible to select several options at once. In that case, QGIS will look for the optimal label position. For Parallel and curved placement options, you can also use the line orientation for the position of the label. Additionally, you can define a *Maximum angle between curved characters* when selecting the *Curved* option (see *Figure\_labels\_placement\_line*).



Fig. 13.34: Label placement examples in lines

For all three placement options, in *Repeat*, you can set up a minimum distance for repeating labels. The distance can be in mm or in map units.

### Placement for polygon layers

You can choose one of the following options for placing labels in polygons (see *figure\_labels\_placement\_polygon*):

- *Offset from centroid*,
- *Horizontal (slow)*,
- *Around centroid*,
- *Free (slow)*,
- *Using perimeter*,

- and *Using perimeter (curved)*.

In the *Offset from centroid* settings you can specify if the centroid is of the *visible polygon* or *whole polygon*. That means that either the centroid is used for the polygon you can see on the map or the centroid is determined for the whole polygon, no matter if you can see the whole feature on the map. You can place your label within a specific quadrant, and define offset and rotation.

The *Around centroid* setting places the label at a specified distance around the centroid. Again, you can define *visible polygon* or *whole polygon* for the centroid.

With the *Horizontal (slow)* or *Free (slow)* options, QGIS places at the best position either a horizontal or a rotated label inside the polygon.

With the *Using perimeter* option, the label will be drawn next to the polygon boundary. The label will behave like the parallel option for lines. You can define a position and a distance for the label. For the position,  *Above line*,  *On line*,  *Below line* and  *Line orientation dependent position* are possible. You can specify the distance between the label and the polygon outline, as well as the repeat interval for the label.

The *Using perimeter (curved)* option helps you draw the label along the polygon boundary, using a curved labeling. In addition to the parameters available with *Using perimeter* setting, you can set the *Maximum angle between curved characters* polygon, either inside or outside.

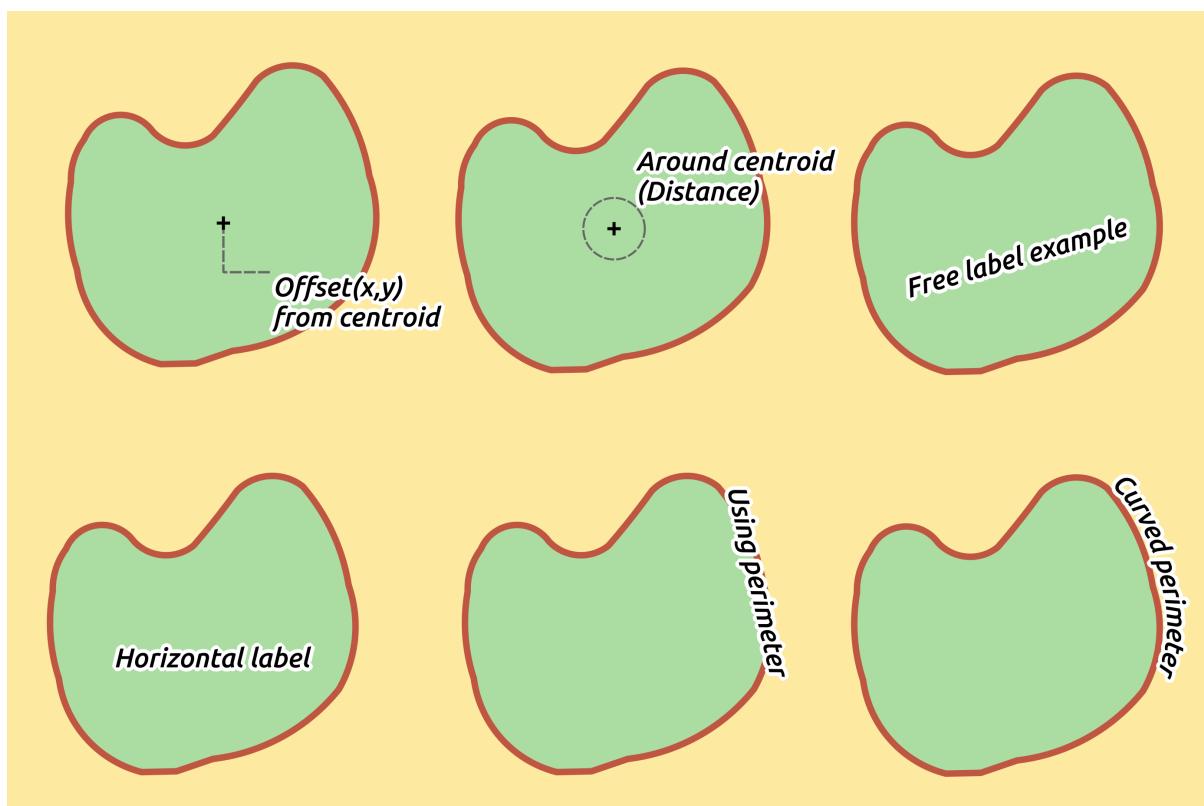


Fig. 13.35: Label placement examples in polygons

In the *priority* section you can define the priority with which labels are rendered for all three vector layer types (point, line, polygon). This placement option interacts with the labels from other vector layers in the map canvas. If there are labels from different layers in the same location, the label with the higher priority will be displayed and the others will be left out.

## Rendering tab

In the *Rendering* tab, you can tune when the labels can be rendered and their interaction with other labels and features.

Under *Label options*, you find the *scale-based* and the *Pixel size-based* visibility settings.

The *Label z-index* determines the order in which labels are rendered, as well in relation with other feature labels in the layer (using data-defined override expression), as with labels from other layers. Labels with a higher z-index are rendered on top of labels (from any layer) with lower z-index.

Additionally, the logic has been tweaked so that if 2 labels have matching z-indexes, then:

- if they are from the same layer, the smaller label will be drawn above the larger label
- if they are from different layers, the labels will be drawn in the same order as their layers themselves (ie respecting the order set in the map legend).

Note that this setting doesn't make labels to be drawn below the features from other layers, it just controls the order in which labels are drawn on top of all the layer's features.

While rendering labels and in order to display readable labels, QGIS automatically evaluates the position of the labels and can hide some of them in case of collision. You can however choose to *Show all labels for this layer (including colliding labels)* in order to manually fix their placement.

With data-defined expressions in *Show label* and *Always Show* you can fine tune which labels should be rendered.

Under *Feature options*, you can choose to *label every part of a multi-part feature* and *limit the number of features to be labeled*. Both line and polygon layers offer the option to set a minimum size for the features to be labeled, using *Suppress labeling of features smaller than*. For polygon features, you can also filter the labels to show according to whether they completely fit within the feature or not. For line features, you can choose to *Merge connected lines to avoid duplicate labels*, rendering a quite airy map in conjunction with the *Distance* or *Repeat* options in Placement tab.

From the *Obstacles* frame, you can manage the covering relation between labels and features. Activate the *Discourage labels from covering features* option to decide whether features of the layer should act as obstacles for any label (including labels from other features in the same layer). An obstacle is a feature QGIS tries as far as possible to not place labels over. Instead of the whole layer, you can define a subset of features to use as obstacles, using the control next to the option.

The priority control slider for obstacles allows you to make labels prefer to overlap features from certain layers rather than others. A **Low weight** obstacle priority means that features of the layer are less considered as obstacles and thus more likely to be covered by labels. This priority can also be data-defined, so that within the same layer, certain features are more likely to be covered than others.

For polygon layers, you can choose the type of obstacle features could be by minimising the labels placement:

- **over the feature's interior**: avoids placing labels over the interior of the polygon (prefers placing labels totally outside or just slightly inside the polygon)
- or **over the feature's boundary**: avoids placing labels over boundary of the polygon (prefers placing labels outside or completely inside the polygon). E.g., it can be useful for regional boundary layers, where the features cover an entire area. In this case, it's impossible to avoid placing labels within these features, and it looks much better to avoid placing them over the boundaries between features.

## Setting the automated placement engine

In the top right corner of the *Labels* tab, you can use the *Automated placement settings (applies to all layers)* to configure a global and automated behavior of the labels. Clicking the button provides you with the following options:

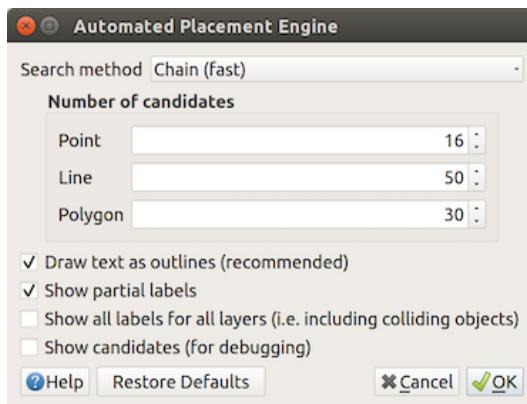


Fig. 13.36: The labels automated placement engine

- The *Search method* combobox provides you with different placement methods for finding good placement solutions for point, line and polygon labeling. More details in this [article](#).
- The *Number of candidates* controls set how many label placement candidates should be generated for each feature type. The more candidates generated, the better the labeling will be - but at a cost of rendering speed. Smaller number of candidates results in less labels placed but faster redraws.
- *Draw text as outlines*: controls whether text labels are drawn (and exported) as either proper text objects OR as paths only. If they are exported as text objects then they can be edited in external applications (e.g. Inkscape) as normal text. BUT the side effect is that the rendering quality is decreased, AND there's issues with rendering when certain text settings like buffers are in place. That's why drawing as outlines is recommended. Note that when [exporting a layout to svg](#) there's actually an override for this setting - so you can leave the project rendering as outlines but for a .svg export export the labels as text.
- *Show partial labels*: controls whether labels which fall partially outside of the map extent should be rendered. If checked, these labels will be shown (when there's no way to place them fully within the visible area). If unchecked then partial visible labels will be skipped.
- *show all labels for all layers (i.e. including colliding objects)*: Note that this option can be also set per layer (see [Rendering tab](#))
- *show candidates (for debugging)*: controls whether boxes should be drawn on the map showing all the candidates generated for label placement. Like the label says, it's useful only for debugging and testing the effect different labeling settings have. This could be handy for a better manual placement with tools from the [label toolbar](#).

## Rule-based labeling

With rule-based labeling multiple label configurations can be defined and applied selectively on the base of expression filters and scale range, as in [Rule-based rendering](#).

To create a rule, select the  **Rule-based labeling** option in the main drop-down list from the *Labels* tab and click the  button at the bottom of the dialog. Then fill the new dialog with a description and an expression to filter features. You can also set a *scale range* in which the label rule should be applied. The other options available in this dialog are the [common settings](#) seen beforehand.

A summary of existing rules is shown in the main dialog (see [figure\\_labels\\_rule\\_based](#)). You can add multiple rules, reorder or imbricate them with a drag-and-drop. You can as well remove them with the  button or edit them with  button or a double-click.

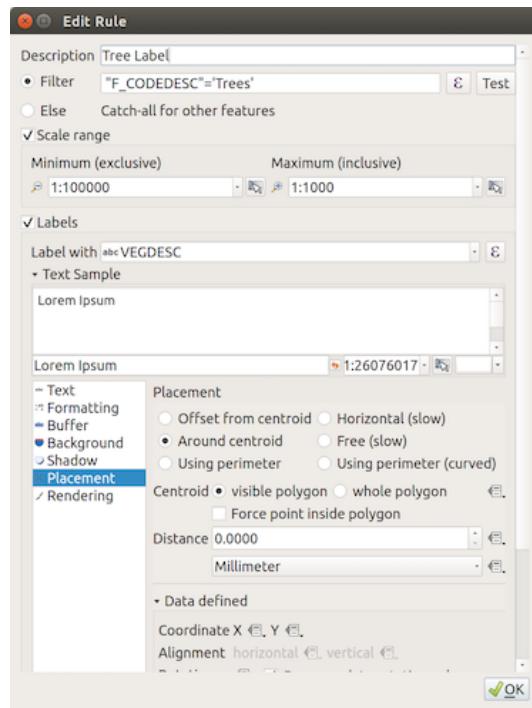


Fig. 13.37: Rule settings

**Layer Properties - Landscape | Labels**

**Rule-based labeling**

Label	Rule	Min. scale	Max. scale	Text
✓ Tree Label	"F_CODEDESC"='Trees'	1:2000000	1:5000	'Type:'    VEGDESC    '\n...
✓ Tundra, Ice, Swamp	"F_CODEDESC" = 'Marsh/S...	1:2000000	1:5000	'Type:'    F_CODEDESC    '\...

**Information**  
Source  
Symbology  
**Labels**  
Diagrams  
3D View  
Source Fields  
Attributes Form  
Joins  
Auxiliary Storage  
Actions  
Display  
Rendering  
Variables

Fig. 13.38: Rule based labeling panel

## Define labels based on expressions

Whether you choose single or rule-based labeling type, QGIS allows using expressions to label features.

Assuming you are using the *Single labels* method, click the  icon near the *Label with* drop-down list in the  Labels tab of the properties dialog.

In *figure\_labels\_expression*, you see a sample expression to label the alaska trees layer with tree type and area, based on the field ‘VEGDESC’, some descriptive text, and the function \$area in combination with `format_number()` to make it look nicer.

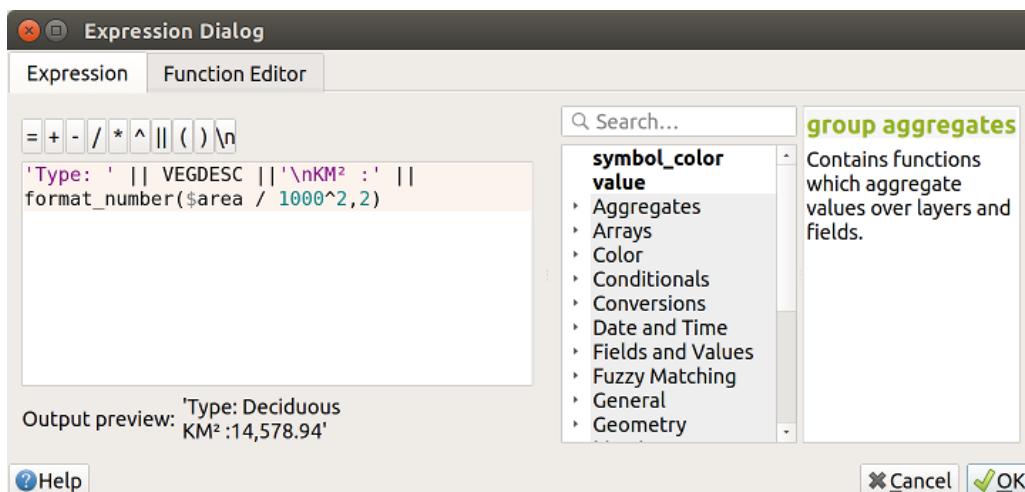


Fig. 13.39: Using expressions for labeling

Expression based labeling is easy to work with. All you have to take care of is that:

- You may need to combine all elements (strings, fields, and functions) with a string concatenation function such as `concat`, `+` or `||`. Be aware that in some situations (when null or numeric value are involved) not all of these tools will fit your need.
- Strings are written in ‘single quotes’.
- Fields are written in “double quotes” or without any quote.

Let’s have a look at some examples:

1. Label based on two fields ‘name’ and ‘place’ with a comma as separator:

```
"name" || ', ' || "place"
```

Returns:

```
John Smith, Paris
```

2. Label based on two fields ‘name’ and ‘place’ with other texts:

```
'My name is ' + "name" + 'and I live in ' + "place"
'My name is ' || "name" || 'and I live in ' || "place"
concat('My name is ', name, ' and I live in ', "place")
```

Returns:

```
My name is John Smith and I live in Paris
```

3. Label based on two fields ‘name’ and ‘place’ with other texts combining different concatenation functions:

```
concat('My name is ', name, ' and I live in ' || place)
```

Returns:

```
My name is John Smith and I live in Paris
```

Or, if the field ‘place’ is NULL, returns:

```
My name is John Smith
```

4. Multi-line label based on two fields ‘name’ and ‘place’ with a descriptive text:

```
concat('My name is ', "name", '\n' , 'I live in ' , "place")
```

Returns:

```
My name is John Smith  
I live in Paris
```

5. Label based on a field and the \$area function to show the place’s name and its rounded area size in a converted unit:

```
'The area of ' || "place" || ' has a size of '  
|| round($area/10000) || ' ha'
```

Returns:

```
The area of Paris has a size of 10500 ha
```

6. Create a CASE ELSE condition. If the population value in field *population* is <= 50000 it is a town, otherwise it is a city:

```
concat('This place is a ',  
CASE WHEN "population" <= 50000 THEN 'town' ELSE 'city' END)
```

Returns:

```
This place is a town
```

7. Display name for the cities and no label for the other features (for the “city” context, see example above):

```
CASE WHEN "population" > 50000 THEN "NAME" END
```

Returns:

```
Paris
```

As you can see in the expression builder, you have hundreds of functions available to create simple and very complex expressions to label your data in QGIS. See [Expressions](#) chapter for more information and examples on expressions.

## Using data-defined override for labeling

With the  Data defined override function, the settings for the labeling are overridden by entries in the attribute table or expressions based on them. This feature can be used to set values for most of the labeling options described above.

For example, using the Alaska QGIS sample dataset, let’s label the airports layer with their name, based on their militarian USE, i.e. whether the airport is accessible to :

- military people, then display it in gray color, size 8;
- others, then show in blue color, size 10.

To do this, after you enabled the labeling on the NAME field of the layer (see *Setting a label*):

1. Activate the *Text* tab.
2. Click on the  icon next to the *Size* property.
3. Select *Edit...* and type:

```
CASE
WHEN "USE" like '%Military%' THEN 8 -- because compatible values are
-- 'Military'
-- and 'Joint Military/Civilian'
ELSE 10
END
```

4. Press *OK* to validate. The dialog closes and the  button becomes  meaning that a rule is being run.
5. Then click the button next to the color property, type the expression below and validate:

```
CASE
WHEN "USE" like '%Military%' THEN '150, 150, 150'
ELSE '0, 0, 255'
END
```

Likewise, you can customize any other property of the label, the way you want. See more details on the *Data-define override* widget's description and manipulation in *Data defined override setup* section.



Fig. 13.40: Airports labels are formatted based on their attributes

## The Label Toolbar

The *Label Toolbar* provides some tools to manipulate *label* or *diagram* properties, but only if the corresponding data-defined option is indicated (otherwise, buttons are disabled). Layer might also need to be in edit mode.



Fig. 13.41: The Label toolbar

While for readability, `label` has been used below to describe the Label toolbar, note that when mentioned in their name, the tools work almost the same way with diagrams:

- Pin/Unpin Labels And Diagrams that has data-defined position. By clicking or dragging an area, you pin label(s). If you click or drag an area holding Shift, label(s) are unpinned. Finally, you can also click or drag an area holding Ctrl to toggle the pin status of label(s).
- Highlight Pinned Labels And Diagrams. If the vector layer of the label is editable, then the highlighting is green, otherwise it's blue.
- Move Label And Diagram that has data-defined position. You just have to drag the label to the desired place.
- Show/Hide Labels And Diagrams that has data-defined visibility. If you click or drag an area holding Shift, then label(s) are hidden. When a label is hidden, you just have to click or drag an area around the feature's point to restore its visibility.
- Rotate Label. Click the label and move around and you get the text rotated.
- Change Label. It opens a dialog to change the clicked label properties; it can be the label itself, its coordinates, angle, font, size... as long as this property has been mapped to a field.

### Warning: Label tools overwrite current field values

Using the *Label toolbar* to customize the labeling actually writes the new value of the property in the mapped field. Hence, be careful to not inadvertently replace data you may need later!

**Note:** The *Auxiliary Storage Properties* mechanism may be used to customize labeling (position, and so on) without modifying the underlying data source.

## Customize the labels from the map canvas

Combined with the *Label Toolbar*, the data defined override setting helps you manipulate labels in the map canvas (move, edit, rotate). We now describe an example using the data-defined override function for the *Move label* function (see [figure\\_labels\\_coordinate\\_data\\_defined](#)).

1. Import `lakes.shp` from the QGIS sample dataset.
2. Double-click the layer to open the Layer Properties. Click on *Labels and Placement*. Select *Offset from centroid*.
3. Look for the *Data defined* entries. Click the icon to define the field type for the *Coordinate*. Choose `xlabel` for X and `ylabel` for Y. The icons are now highlighted in yellow.

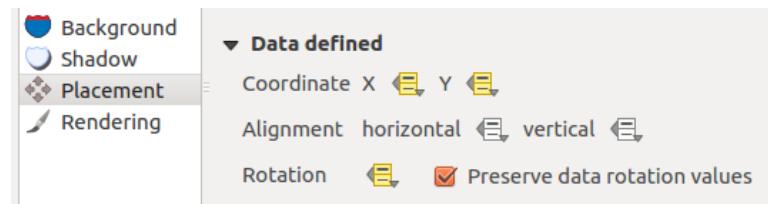


Fig. 13.42: Labeling of vector polygon layers with data-defined override

4. Zoom into a lake.
5. Set editable the layer using the **Toggle Editing** button.
6. Go to the Label toolbar and click the icon. Now you can shift the label manually to another position (see [figure\\_labels\\_move](#)). The new position of the label is saved in the xlabel and ylabel columns of the attribute table.
7. Using *The Geometry Generator* with the expression below, you can also add a linestring symbol layer to connect each lake to its moved label:

```
make_line( centroid( $geometry ), make_point( "xlabel", "ylabel" ) )
```

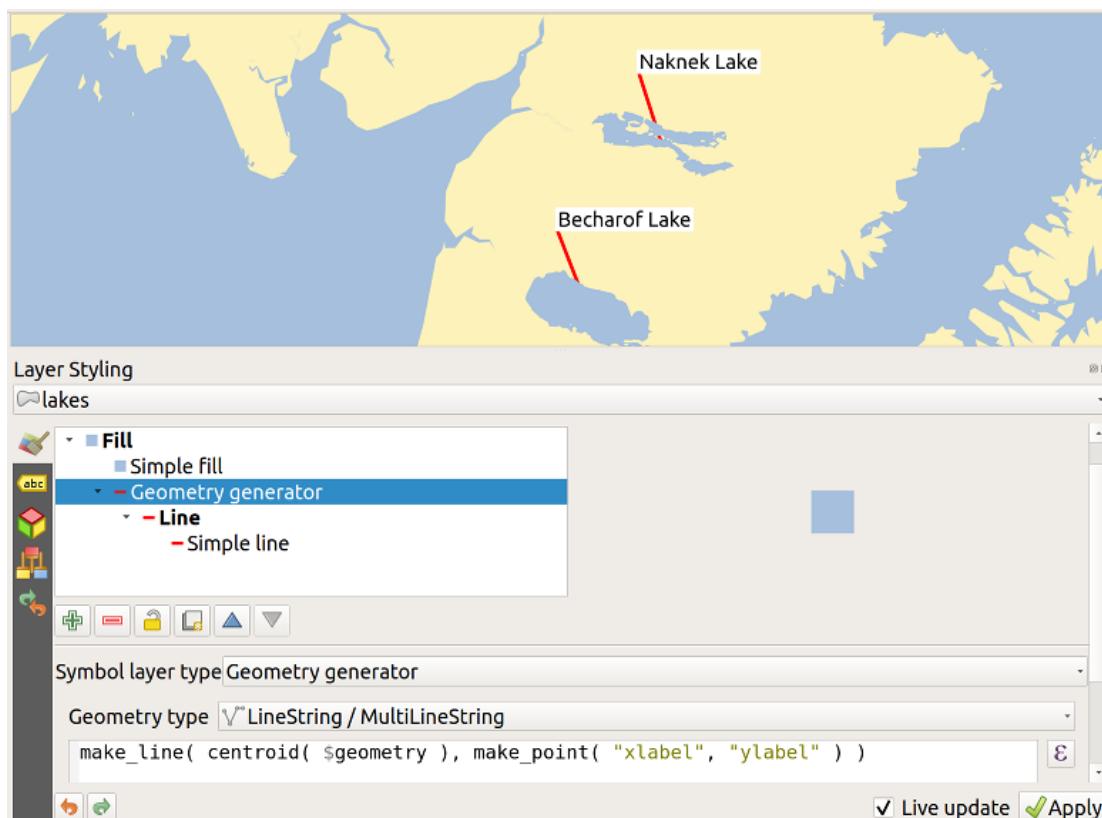


Fig. 13.43: Moved labels

**Note:** The [Auxiliary Storage Properties](#) mechanism may be used with data-defined properties without having an editable data source.

### 13.2.5 Diagrams Properties



The *Diagrams* tab allows you to add a graphic overlay to a vector layer (see [figure\\_diagrams\\_attributes](#)).

The current core implementation of diagrams provides support for:

- *No diagrams*: the default value with no diagram displayed over the features;
- *Pie charts*, a circular statistical graphic divided into slices to illustrate numerical proportion. The arc length of each slice is proportional to the quantity it represents;
- *Text diagrams*, a horizontally divided circle showing statistics values inside;
- and *Histograms*.

In the top right corner of the *Diagrams* tab, the Automated placement settings (applies to all layers) button provides means to control diagram *labels placement* on the map canvas.

---

#### Tip: Switch quickly between types of diagrams

Given that the settings are almost common to the different types of diagram, when designing your diagram, you can easily change the diagram type and check which one is more appropriate to your data without any loss.

---

For each type of diagram, the properties are divided into several tabs:

- *Attributes*
- *Rendering*
- *Size*
- *Placement*
- *Options*
- *Legend*

#### Attributes

*Attributes* defines which variables to display in the diagram. Use button to select the desired fields into the ‘Assigned Attributes’ panel. Generated attributes with *Expressions* can also be used.

You can move up and down any row with click and drag, sorting how attributes are displayed. You can also change the label in the ‘Legend’ column or the attribute color by double-clicking the item.

This label is the default text displayed in the legend of the print layout or of the layer tree.

#### Rendering

*Rendering* defines how the diagram looks like. It provides general settings that do not interfere with the statistic values such as:

- the graphic’s opacity, its outline width and color;
- and, depending on the type of diagram:
  - the width of the bar in case of histogram;
  - the circle background color in case of text diagram, and the font used for texts;
  - the orientation of the left line of the first slice represented in pie chart. Note that slices are displayed clockwise.

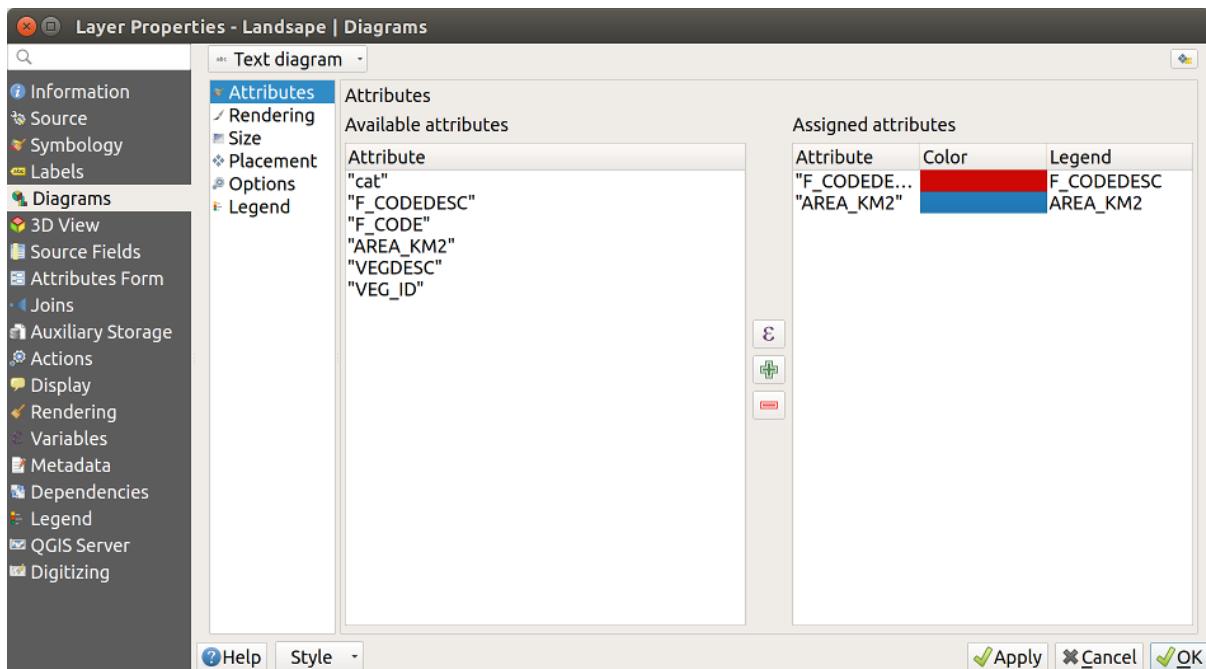


Fig. 13.44: Diagram properties - Attributes tab

In this tab, you can also manage and fine tune the diagram visibility with different options:

- *Diagram z-index*: controls how diagrams are drawn on top of each other and on top of labels. A diagram with a high index is drawn over diagrams and labels;
- *Show all diagrams*: shows all the diagrams even if they overlap each other;
- *Show diagram*: allows only specific diagrams to be rendered;
- *Always Show*: selects specific diagrams to always render, even when they overlap other diagrams or map labels;
- setting the *Scale dependent visibility*;
- *Discourage diagrams and labels from covering features*: defines features to use as obstacles, ie QGIS will try to not place diagrams nor labels over these features.

## Size

*Size* is the main tab to set how the selected statistics are represented. The diagram size units can be ‘Millimeter’, ‘Points’, ‘Pixels’, ‘Map Units’ or ‘Inches’. You can use :

- *Fixed size*, an unique size to represent the graphic of all the features, except when displaying histogram
- or *Scaled size*, based on an expression using layer attributes.

## Placement

*Placement* helps to define diagram position. According to the layer geometry type, it offers different options for the placement:

- ‘Over the point’ or ‘Around the point’ for point geometry. The latter variable requires a radius to follow.
- ‘Over the line’ or ‘Around the line’ for line geometry. Like point feature, the last variable requires a distance to respect and user can specify the diagram placement relative to the feature (‘above’, ‘on’ and/or ‘below’ the line) It’s possible to select several options at once. In that case, QGIS will look for the optimal position of the diagram. Remember that here you can also use the line orientation for the position of the diagram.

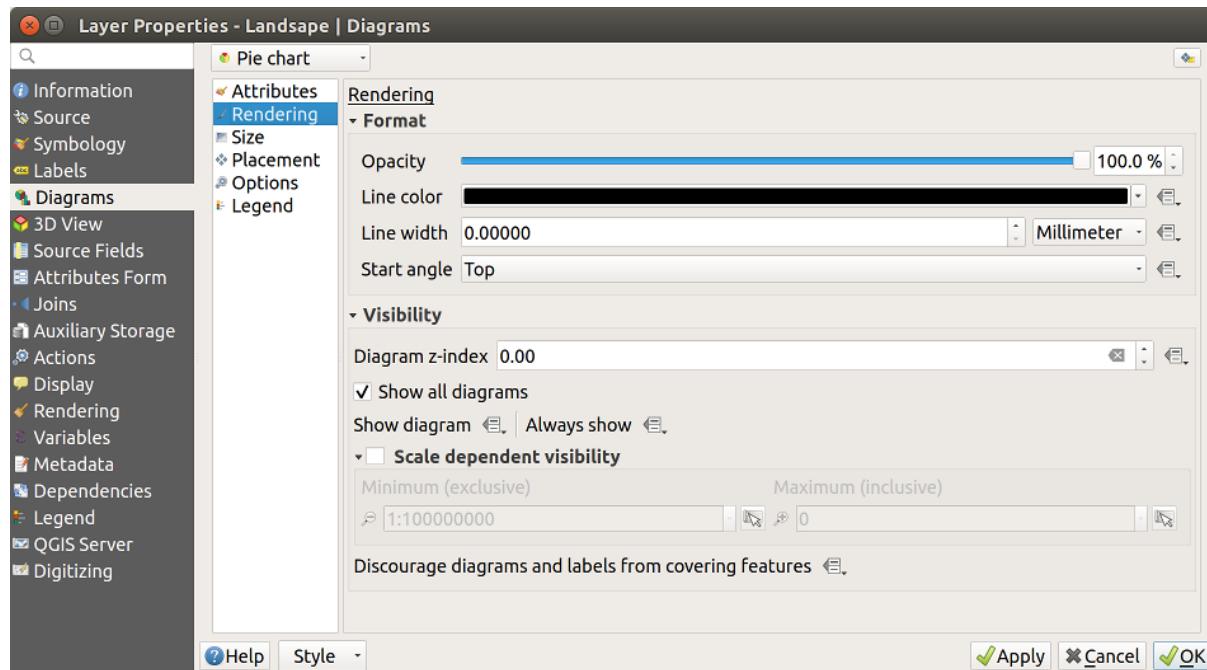


Fig. 13.45: Diagram properties - Rendering tab

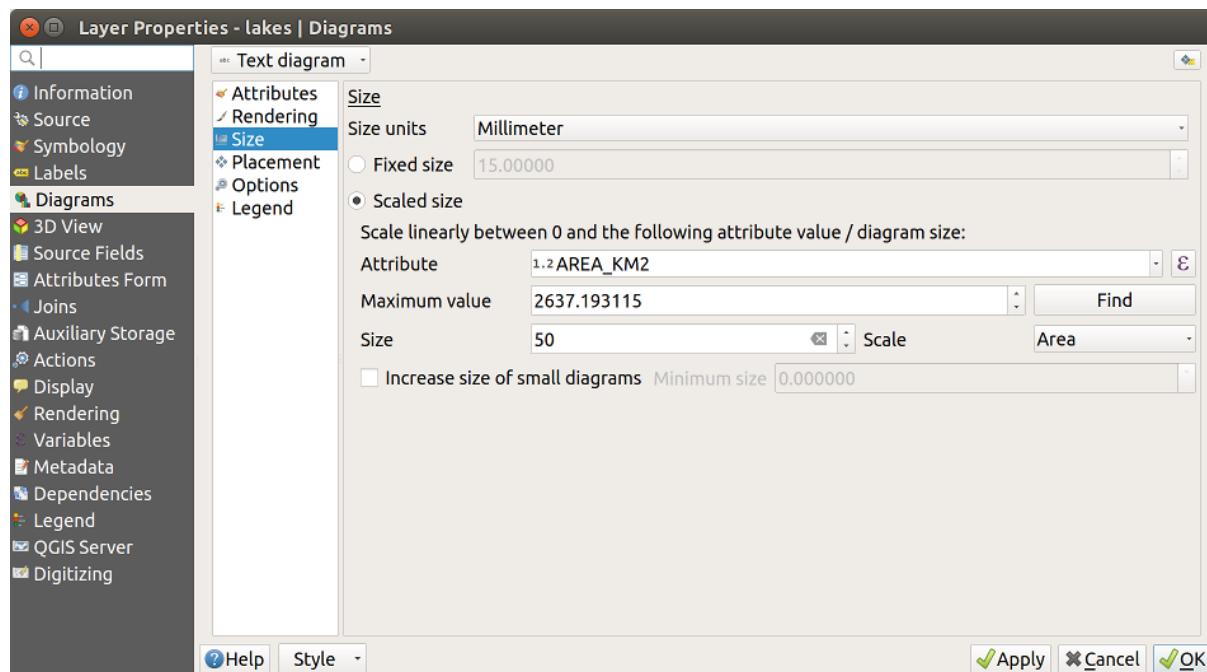


Fig. 13.46: Diagram properties - Size tab

- ‘Over the centroid’, ‘Around the centroid’ (with a distance set), ‘Perimeter’ and anywhere ‘Inside polygon’ are the options for polygon features.

The diagram can also be placed using feature data to fill the coordinates X and Y fields.

The placement of the diagrams can interact with the labeling, so you can detect and solve position conflicts between diagrams and labels by setting the **Priority** slider value.

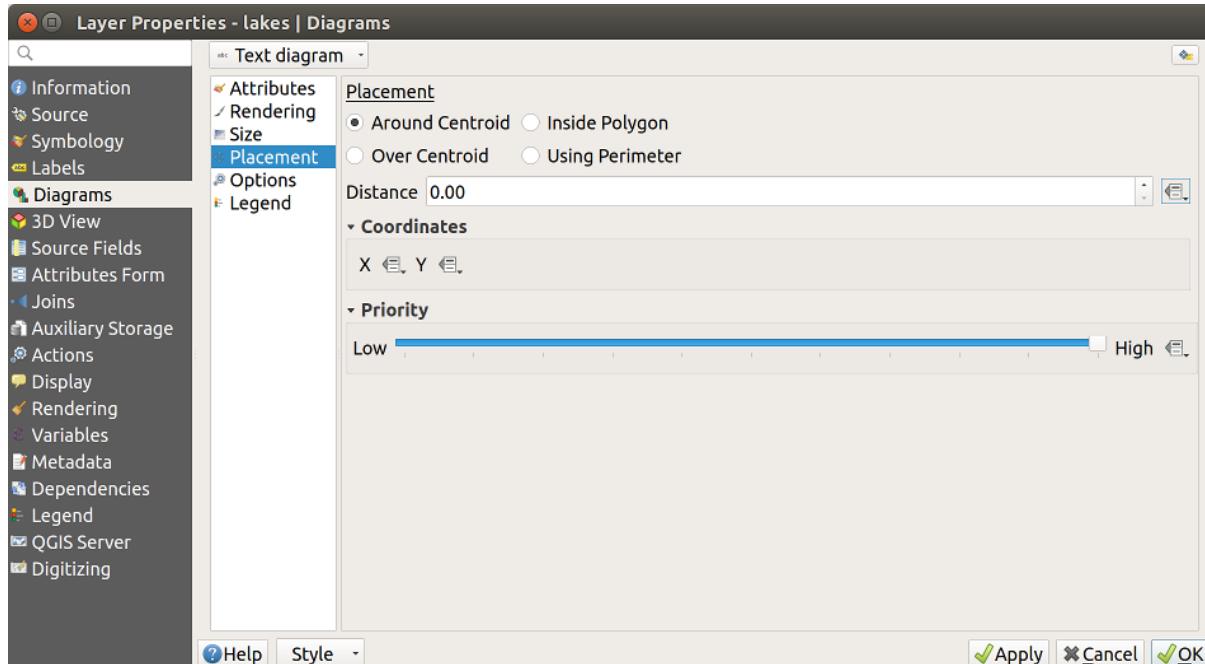


Fig. 13.47: Vector properties dialog with diagram properties, Placement tab

## Options

The *Options* tab has settings only in case of histogram. You can choose whether the bar orientation should be ‘Up’, ‘Down’, ‘Right’ and ‘Left’.

## Legend

From the *Legend* tab, you can choose to display items of the diagram in the *Layers Panel*, and in the *print layout legend*, next to the layer symbology:

- check *Show legend entries for diagram attributes* to display in the legends the *Color* and *Legend* properties, as previously assigned in the *Attributes* tab;
- and, when a *scaled size* is being used for the diagrams, push the *Legend Entries for Diagram Size...* button to configure the diagram symbol aspect in the legends. This opens the *Data-defined Size Legend* dialog whose options are described in *Data-defined size legend*.

When set, the diagram legend items (attributes with color and diagram size) are also displayed in the print layout legend, next to the layer symbology.

## Case Study

We will demonstrate an example and overlay on the Alaska boundary layer a text diagram showing temperature data from a climate vector layer. Both vector layers are part of the QGIS sample dataset (see section *Downloading sample data*).

1. First, click on the  Load Vector icon, browse to the QGIS sample dataset folder, and load the two vector shape layers `alaska.shp` and `climate.shp`.
2. Double click the `climate` layer in the map legend to open the *Layer Properties* dialog.
3. Click on the *Diagrams* tab and from the *Diagram type*  combo box, select ‘Text diagram’.
4. In the *Appearance* tab, we choose a light blue as background color, and in the *Size* tab, we set a fixed size to 18 mm.
5. In the *Position* tab, placement could be set to ‘Around Point’.
6. In the diagram, we want to display the values of the three columns `T_F_JAN`, `T_F_JUL` and `T_F_MEAN`. So, in the *Attributes* tab first select `T_F_JAN` and click the  button, then repeat with `T_F_JUL` and finally `T_F_MEAN`.
7. Now click *Apply* to display the diagram in the QGIS main window.
8. You can adapt the chart size in the *Size* tab. Activate the  *Scaled size* and set the size of the diagrams on the basis of the *maximum value* of an attribute and the *Size* option. If the diagrams appear too small on the screen, you can activate the  *Increase size of small diagrams* checkbox and define the minimum size of the diagrams.
9. Change the attribute colors by double clicking on the color values in the *Assigned attributes* field. *Figure\_diagrams\_mapped* gives an idea of the result.
10. Finally, click *OK*.

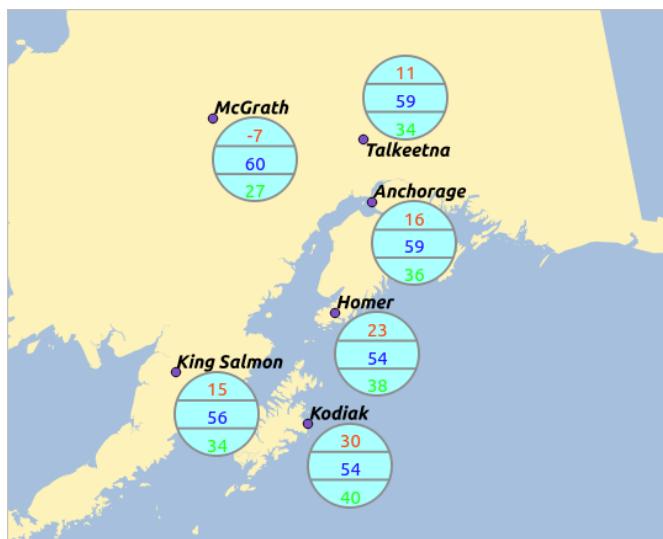


Fig. 13.48: Diagram from temperature data overlayed on a map

Remember that in the *Position* tab, a  *Data defined position* of the diagrams is possible. Here, you can use attributes to define the position of the diagram. You can also set a scale-dependent visibility in the *Appearance* tab.

The size and the attributes can also be an expression. Use the  button to add an expression. See *Expressions* chapter for more information and example.

### Using data-defined override

As mentioned above, you can use some custom data-defined to tune the diagrams rendering:

- position in *Placement* tab by filling X and Y fields

- visibility in *Appearance* tab by filling the *Visibility* field

See [Using data-defined override for labeling](#) for more information.

### 13.2.6 Source Fields Properties

The *Source Fields* tab provides information on fields related to the layer and helps you organize them.

The layer can be made *editable* using the *Toggle editing mode*. At this moment, you can modify its structure using the *New field* and *Delete field* buttons.

You can also rename fields by double-clicking its name. This is only supported for data providers like PostgreSQL, Oracle, Memory layer and some OGR layer depending on the OGR data format and version.

If set in the underlying data source or in the *forms properties*, the field's alias is also displayed. An alias is a human readable field name you can use in the feature form or the attribute table. Aliases are saved in the project file.

Depending on the data provider, you can associate a comment with a field, for example at its creation. This information is retrieved and shown in the *Comment* column and is later displayed when hovering over the field label in a feature form.

Other than the fields contained in the dataset, virtual fields and *Auxiliary Storage* included, the *Source Fields* tab also lists fields from any *joined layers*. Depending on the origin of the field, a different background color is applied to it.

For each listed field, the dialog also lists read-only characteristics such as its type, type name, length and precision. When serving the layer as WMS or WFS, you can also check here which fields could be retrieved.

The screenshot shows the 'Source Fields' tab of the QGIS attribute form configuration dialog. On the left is a sidebar with icons for Information, Source, Symbology, Labels, Diagrams, 3D View, Source Fields (which is selected), Attributes Form, Joins, Auxiliary Storage, Actions, Display, and Rendering. The main area contains a table with the following data:

		Name	Alias	Type	Type name	Length	Precision	Comment	WMS	WFS
1.2	0	cat		double	Real	31	3		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.2	1	LENGTH		double	Real	31	3		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
abc	2	DESCRIPTION		QString	String	80	0		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	3	auxiliary_storage_labeling_positionx		double	Real	0	0		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	4	auxiliary_storage_labeling_positiony		double	Real	0	0		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	5	auxiliary_storage_labeling_labelrotation		double	Real	0	0		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
E	6	length		double	double	20	3	E \$length	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Fig. 13.49: Source Field properties tab

### 13.2.7 Attributes Form Properties

The *Attributes Form* tab helps you set up the form to display when creating new features or querying existing one. You can define:

- the look and the behavior of each field in the feature form or the attribute table (label, widget, constraints...);
- the form's structure (custom or autogenerated):
- extra logic in Python to handle interaction with the form or field widgets.

At the top right of the dialog, you can set whether the form is opened by default when creating new features. This can be configured per layer or globally with the *Suppress attribute form pop-up after feature creation* option in the *Settings → Options → Digitizing* menu.

## Customizing a form for your data

By default, when you click on a feature with the  Identify Features tool or switch the attribute table to the *form view* mode, QGIS displays a basic form with predefined widgets (generally spinboxes and textboxes — each field is represented on a dedicated row by its label next to the widget). If *relations* are set on the layer, fields from the referencing layers are shown in an embedded frame at the bottom of the form, following the same basic structure.

This rendering is the result of the default *Autogenerate* value of the *Attribute editor layout* setting in the *Layer properties → Attributes Form* tab. This property holds three different values:

- *Autogenerate*: keeps the basic structure of “one row - one field” for the form but allows to customize each corresponding widget.
- *Drag-and-drop designer*: other than widget customization, the form structure can be made more complex eg, with widgets embedded in groups and tabs.
- *Provide ui file*: allows to use a Qt designer file, hence a potentially more complex and fully featured template, as feature form.

## The autogenerated form

When the *Autogenerate* option is on, the *Available widgets* panel shows lists of fields (from the layer and its relations) that would be shown in the form. Select a field and you can configure its appearance and behavior in the right panel:

- adding *custom label and automated checks* to the field;
- setting a *particular widget* to use.

## The drag and drop designer

Choose *Drag and drop designer* from the *Attribute editor layout* combobox and you enable a *Form Layout* panel next to the *Available widgets* one. From this panel you can create an editor form with several tabs and named groups to present the attribute fields, as shown for example in [figure\\_fields\\_form](#).

To create the form, you can drag and drop fields from the *Available Widgets* panel to the *Form Layout* one to have fields added to your custom form and drag and drop fields inside the *Form Layout* to reorder their position.

You can also use categories (tab or group frames) to better structure the form. The first step is to use the  icon to create a tab in which fields and groups will be displayed (see [figure\\_fields\\_layout](#)). You can create as many categories as you want. Use  button to remove any unwanted elements. The next step will be to assign to each category the relevant fields, by simple drag and drop. You can use the same fields many times.

You can configure tabs or groups with a double-click. QGIS opens a form in which you can:

- choose to hide or show the item label;
- rename the category;
- set over how many columns the fields under the category should be distributed;

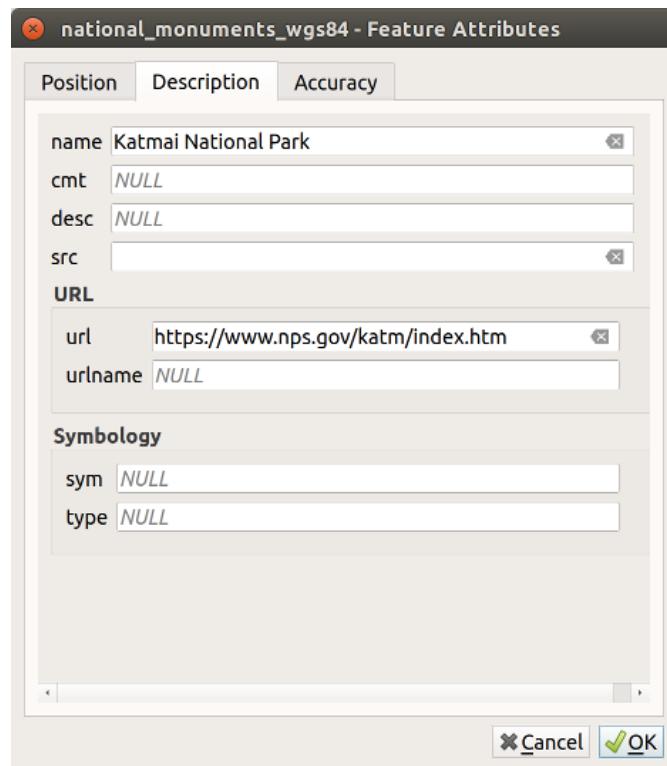
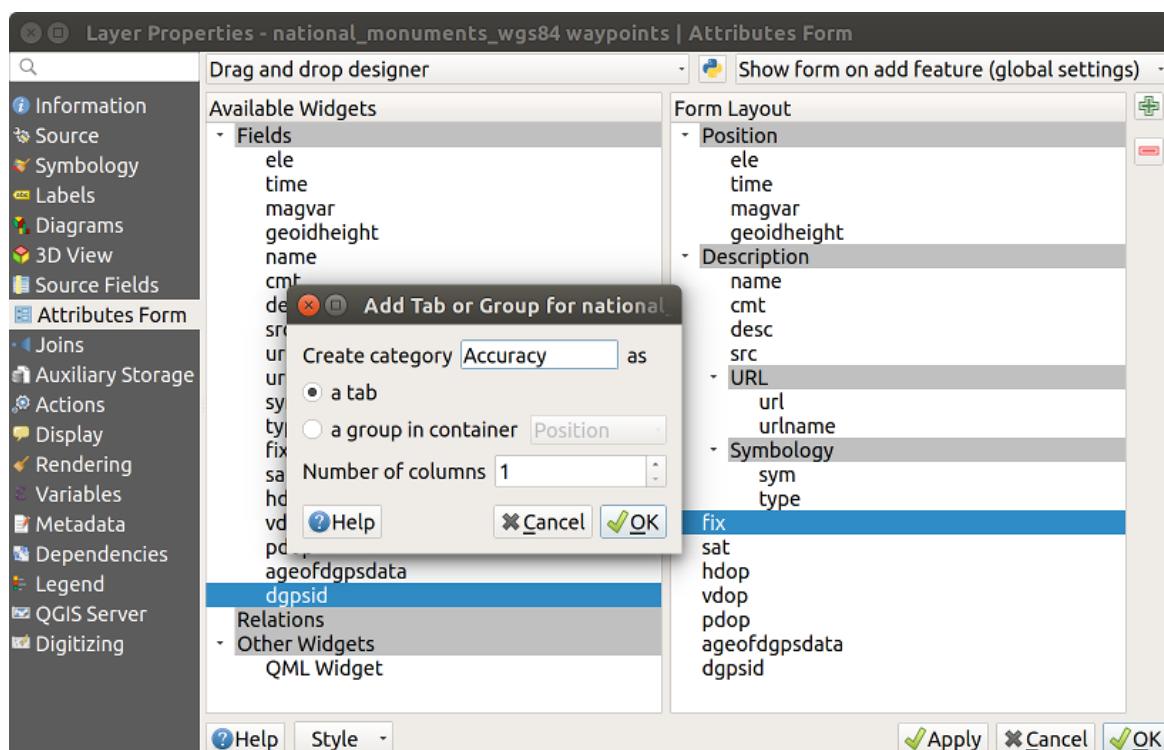


Fig. 13.50: Resulting built-in form with tabs and named groups

Fig. 13.51: Dialog to create categories with the **Attribute editor layout**

- enter an expression to control the category visibility. The expression will be re-evaluated everytime values in the form change and the tab or groupbox shown/hidden accordingly;
- show the category as a group box (only available for tabs).

With a double-click on a field label, you can also specify whether the label of its widget should be visible or not in the form.

In case the layer is involved in one or many to many relations (see [Creating one or many to many relations](#)), referencing layers are listed in the *Relations* frame and their form can be embedded in the current layer form by drag-and-drop. Like the other items, double-click the relation label to configure some options:

- choose to hide or show the item label;
- show the link button;
- show the unlink button.

## Using custom ui-file

The `Provide ui-file` option allows you to use complex dialogs made with Qt-Designer. Using a UI-file allows a great deal of freedom in creating a dialog. Note that, in order to link the graphical objects (textbox, combobox...) to the layer's fields, you need to give them the same name.

Use the *Edit UI* to define the path to the file to use.

You'll find some example in the Creating a new form lesson of the QGIS-training-manual-index-reference. For more advanced information, see <https://nathanw.net/2011/09/05/qgis-tips-custom-feature-forms-with-python-logic/>.

## Enhance your form with custom functions

QGIS forms can have a Python function that is called when the dialog is opened. Use this function to add extra logic to your dialogs. The form code can be specified in three different ways:

- load from the environment: use a function, for example in `startup.py` or from an installed plugin
- load from an external file: a file chooser will appear in that case to allow you to select a Python file from your filesystem
- provide code in this dialog: a Python editor will appear where you can directly type the function to use.

In all cases you must enter the name of the function that will be called (open in the example below).

An example is (in module `MyForms.py`):

```
def open(dialog,layer,feature):
    geom = feature.geometry()
    control = dialog.findChild(QWidged, "My line edit")
```

Reference in Python Init Function like so: `open`

## Configure the field behavior

The main part of the *Attributes Form* tab helps you set the type of widget used to fill or display values of the field, in the attribute table or the feature form: you can define how user interacts with each field and the values or range of values that are allowed to be added to each.

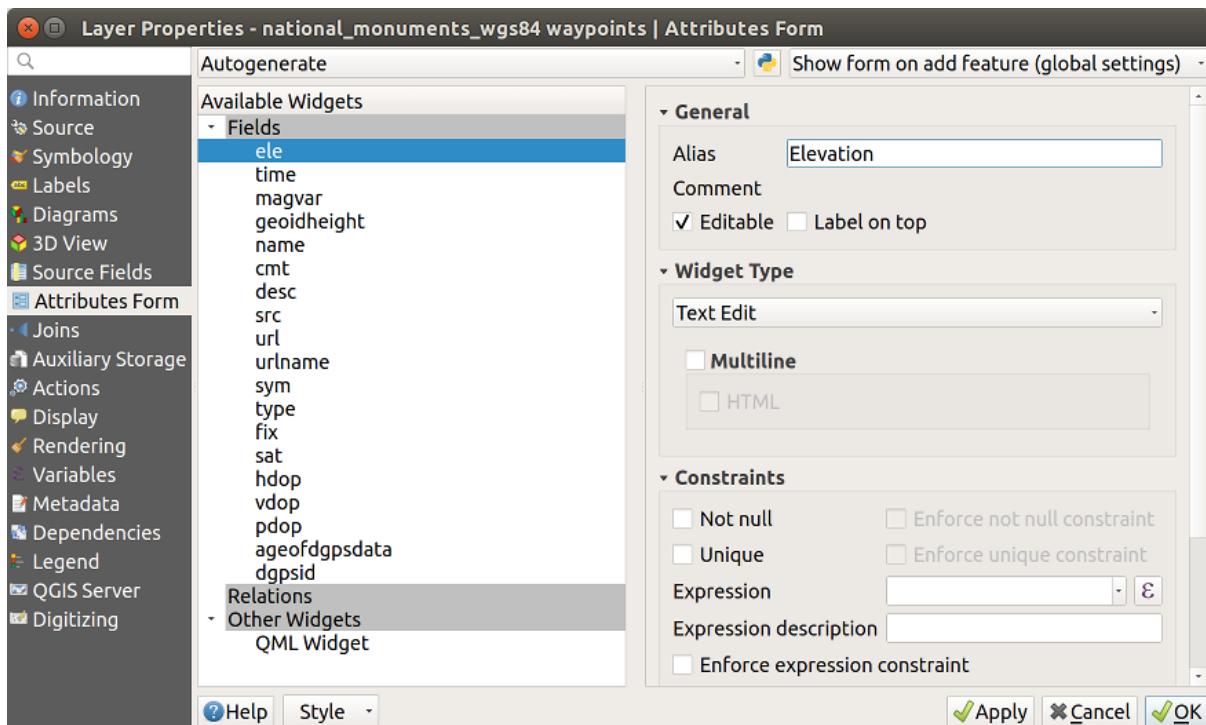


Fig. 13.52: Dialog to select an edit widget for an attribute column

## Common settings

Regardless the type of widget applied to the field, there are some common properties you can set to control whether and how a field can be edited.

### General options

- **Alias:** a human readable name to use for fields. The alias will be displayed in the feature form, the attribute table, or in the *Identify results* panel. It can also be used as field name replacement in the *expression builder*, easing expressions understanding and reviews. Aliases are saved in project file.
- **Comment:** displays the field's comment as shown in the *Source Fields* tab, in a read-only state. This information is shown as tooltip when hovering over the field label in a feature form.
- **Editable:** uncheck this option to set the field read-only (not manually modifiable) even when the layer is in edit mode. Note that checking this setting doesn't override any edit limitation from the provider.
- **Label on top:** places the field name above or beside the widget in the feature form.

### Default values

- **Default value:** for new features, automatically populates by default the field with a predefined value or an *expression-based one*. For example, you can:
  - use `$x`, `$length`, `$area` to automatically populate a field with the feature's X coordinate, length, area or any geometric information at its creation;
  - increment a field by 1 for each new feature using `maximum("field") + 1`;
  - save the feature creation datetime using `now()`;

- use *variables* in expressions, making it easier to e.g. insert the operator name (@user\_full\_name), the project file path (@project\_path), ...

A preview of the resulting default value is displayed at the bottom of the widget.

---

**Note:** The Default value option is not aware of the values in any other field of the feature being created so it won't be possible to use an expression combining any of those values i.e using an expression like concat (field1, field2) may not work.

---

- *Apply default value on update*: whenever the feature attribute or geometry is changed, the default value is recalculated. This could be handy to save values like last user that modifies data, last time it was changed...

## Constraints

You can constrain the value to insert in the field. This constraint can be:

- *Not null*: requires the user to provide a value;
- *Unique*: guarantee the inserted value to be unique throughout the field;
- based on a custom *expression*: e.g. `regexp_match(col0, 'A-Za-z')` to ensure that the value of the field `col0` has only alphabetical letter. A short description can be added to help you remember the constraint.

Whenever a value is added or edited in a field, it's submitted to the existing constraints and:

- if it meets all the requirements, a green check is shown beside the field in the form;
- if it does not meet all the requirements, then a yellow or red cross is displayed near the field. You can hover over the cross to remind which constraints are applied to the field and fix the value:
  - A yellow cross appears when the unmet constraint is an unenforced one and it does not prevent you to save the changes with the “wrong” values;
  - A red cross can not be ignored and does not allow you to save your modifications until they meet the constraints. It appears when the  *Enforce constraint* option is checked.

## Edit widgets

Based on the field type, QGIS automatically determines and assigns a default widget type to it. You can then replace the widget with any other compatible with the field type. The available widgets are:

- **Checkbox**: Displays a checkbox whose state defines the value to insert.
- **Classification**: Only available when a *categorized symbology* is applied to the layer, displays a combo box with the values of the classes.
- **Color**: Displays a *color widget* allowing to select a color; the color value is stored as a html notation in the attribute table.
- **Date/Time**: Displays a line field which can open a calendar widget to enter a date, a time or both. Column type must be text. You can select a custom format, pop-up a calendar, etc.
- **Enumeration**: Opens a combo box with predefined values fetched from the database. This is currently only supported by the PostgreSQL provider, for fields of enum type.
- **Attachment**: Uses a “Open file” dialog to store file path in a relative or absolute mode. It can also be used to display a hyperlink (to document path), a picture or a web page.
- **Hidden**: A hidden attribute column is invisible. The user is not able to see its contents.
- **Key/Value**: Displays a two-columns table to store sets of key/value pairs within a single field. This is currently supported by the PostgreSQL provider, for fields of hstore type.

- **List:** Displays a single column table to add different values within a single field. This is currently supported by the PostgreSQL provider, for fields of `array` type.
- **Range:** Allows you to set numeric values from a specific range. The edit widget can be either a slider or a spin box.
- **Relation Reference:** This widget lets you embed the feature form of the referenced layer on the feature form of the actual layer. See [Creating one or many to many relations](#).
- **Text Edit** (default): This opens a text edit field that allows simple text or multiple lines to be used. If you choose multiple lines you can also choose html content.
- **Unique Values:** You can select one of the values already used in the attribute table. If ‘Editable’ is activated, a line edit is shown with autocompletion support, otherwise a combo box is used.
- **Uuid Generator:** Generates a read-only UUID (Universally Unique Identifiers) field, if empty.
- **Value Map:** A combo box with predefined items. The value is stored in the attribute, the description is shown in the combo box. You can define values manually or load them from a layer or a CSV file.
- **Value Relation:** Offers values from a related table in a combobox. You can select layer, key column and value column. Several options are available to change the standard behaviors: allow null value, order by value, allow multiple selections and use of auto-completer. The forms will display either a drop-down list or a line edit field when completer checkbox is enabled.

---

**Tip: Relative Path in Attachment widget**

If the path which is selected with the file browser is located in the same directory as the `.qgs` project file or below, paths are converted to relative paths. This increases portability of a `.qgs` project with multimedia information attached.

---

### 13.2.8 Joins Properties



The *Joins* tab allows you to join a loaded attribute table to a loaded vector layer. After clicking the *Add vector join* dialog appears. As key columns, you have to define a join layer you want to connect with the target vector layer. Then, you have to specify the join field that is common to both the join layer and the target layer. Now you can also specify a subset of fields from the joined layer based on the checkbox *Choose which fields are joined*. As a result of the join, all information from the join layer and the target layer are displayed in the attribute table of the target layer as joined information. If you specified a subset of fields only these fields are displayed in the attribute table of the target layer.

If the target layer is editable, then some icons will be displayed in the attribute table next to fields, in order to inform their status:

- : the join layer is not configured to be editable. If you want to be able to edit join features from the target attribute table, then you have to check the option *Editable join layer*.
- : the join layer is well configured to be editable, but its current status is read only.
- : the join layer is editable but synchronization mechanisms are not activated. If you want to automatically add a feature in the join layer when a feature is created in the target layer, then you have to check the option *Upsert on edit*. Symmetrically, the option *Delete cascade* may be activated if you want to automatically delete join features.

Moreover, the *Dynamic form* option helps to synchronize join fields on the fly, according to the *Target field*. This way, constraints for join fields are also correctly updated. Note that it's deactivated by default because it may be very time consuming if you have a lot of features or a myriad of joins.

Otherwise, the  *Cache join layer in virtual memory* option allows to cache values in memory (without geometries) from the joined layer in order to speed up lookups.

QGIS currently has support for joining non-spatial table formats supported by OGR (e.g., CSV, DBF and Excel), delimited text and the PostgreSQL provider (see [figure\\_joins](#)).

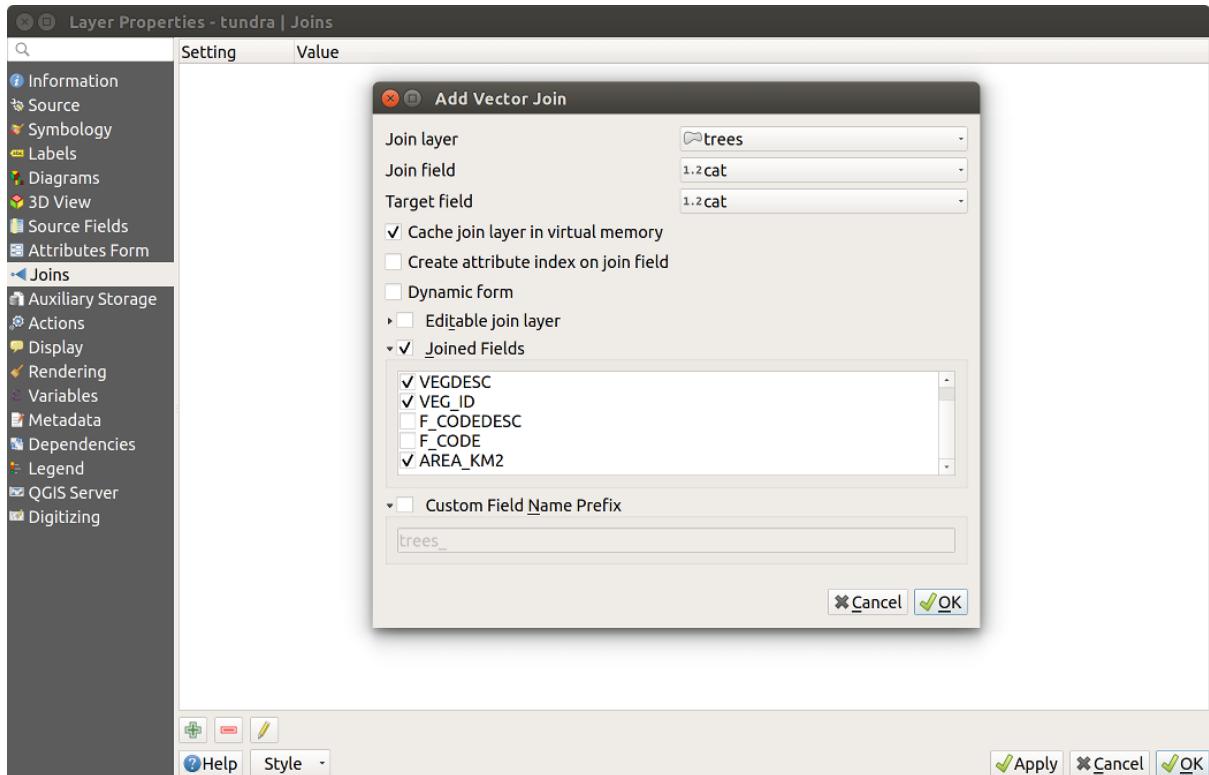


Fig. 13.53: Join an attribute table to an existing vector layer

Additionally, the add vector join dialog allows you to:

- *Create attribute index on the join field*
- *Choose which fields are joined*
- Create a  *Custom field name prefix*

### 13.2.9 Auxiliary Storage Properties

The regular way to customize styling and labeling is to use data-defined properties as described in [Data defined override setup](#). However, it may not be possible if the underlying data is read only. Moreover, configuring these data-defined properties may be very time consuming or not desirable! For example, if you want to fully use map tools coming with [The Label Toolbar](#), then you need to add and configure more than 20 fields in your original data source (X and Y positions, rotation angle, font style, color and so on).

The Auxiliary Storage mechanism provides the solution to these limitations and awkward configurations. Auxiliary fields are a roundabout way to automatically manage and store these data-defined properties (labels, diagram, symbology...) in a SQLite database thanks to editable joins. This allows you to store properties for layers that aren't editable.

A tab is available in vector layer properties dialog to manage auxiliary storage:

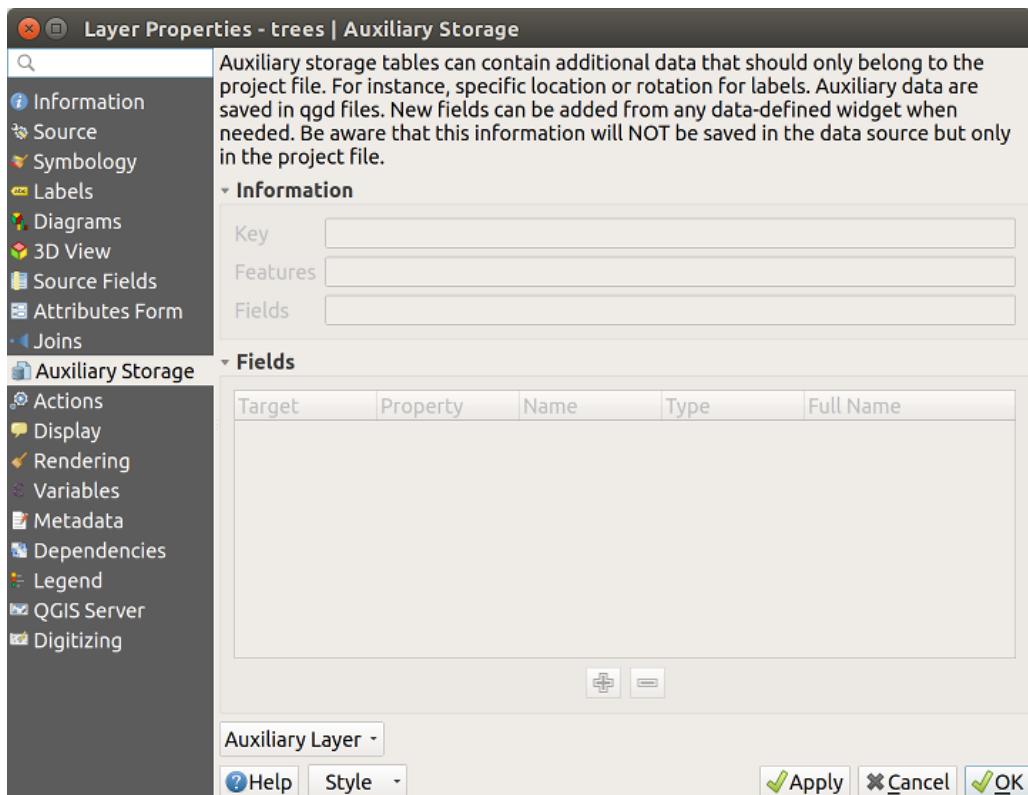


Fig. 13.54: Auxiliary Storage tab

## Labeling

Considering that the data source may be customized thanks to data-defined properties without being editable, labeling map tools described in [The Label Toolbar](#) are always available as soon as labeling is activated.

Actually, the auxiliary storage system needs an auxiliary layer to store these properties in a SQLite database (see [Auxiliary storage database](#)). Its creation process is run the first time you click on the map while a labeling map tool is currently activated. Then, a window is displayed, allowing you to select the primary key to use for joining (to ensure that features are uniquely identified):

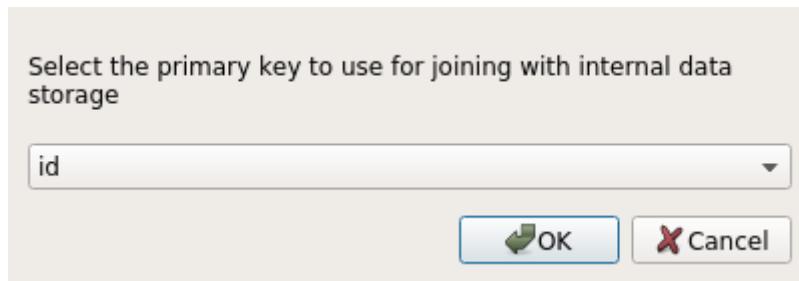


Fig. 13.55: Auxiliary Layer creation dialog

As soon as an auxiliary layer is configured for the current data source, you can retrieve its information in the tab:

The auxiliary layer now has these characteristics:

- the primary key is ID,
- there are 0 features using an auxiliary field,
- there are 0 auxiliary fields.

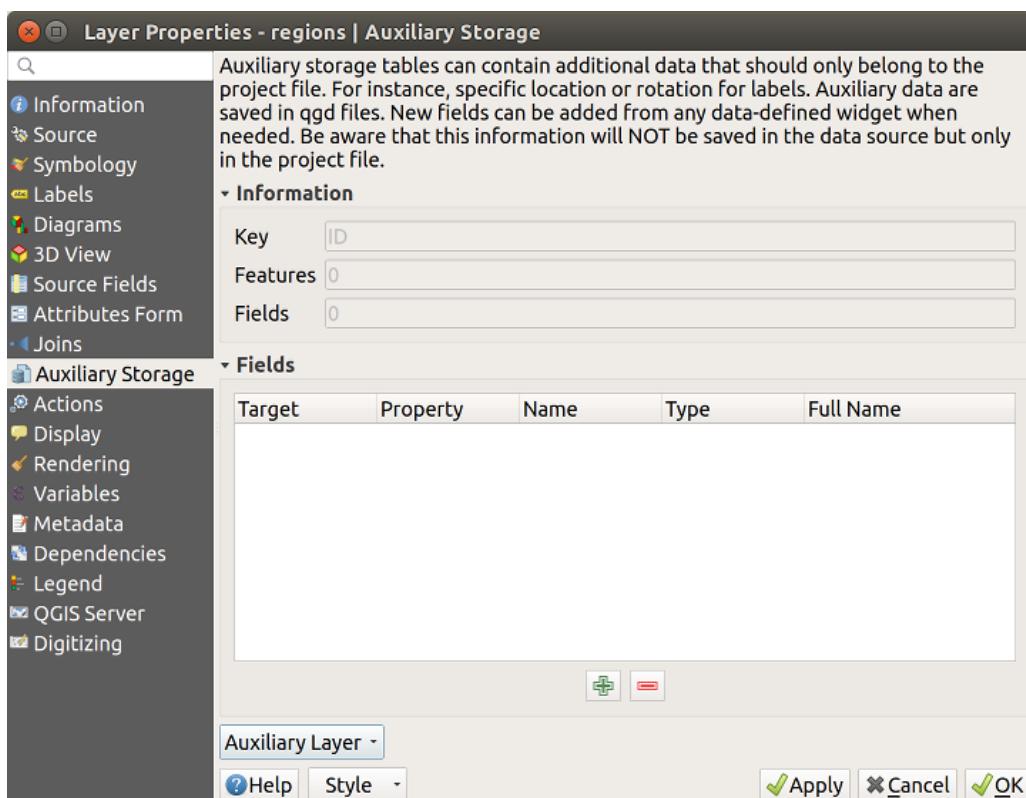


Fig. 13.56: Auxiliary Layer key

Now that the auxiliary layer is created, you can edit the layer labels. Click on a label while the **Change Label** map tool is activated, then you can update styling properties like sizes, colors, and so on. The corresponding data-defined properties are created and can be retrieved:

As you can see in the figure above, 21 fields are automatically created and configured for labeling. For example, the `FontStyle` auxiliary field type is a `String` and is named `labeling_fontstyle` in the underlying SQLite database. There is also 1 feature which is currently using these auxiliary fields.

Notice that the icon is displayed in the *Labels* properties tab indicating that the data-defined override options are set correctly:

Otherwise, there's another way to create an auxiliary field for a specific property thanks to the **data-defined override** button. By clicking on *Store data in the project*, an auxiliary field is automatically created for the *Opacity* field. If you click on this button whereas the auxiliary layer is not created yet, then the window *Auxiliary Layer creation dialog* is first displayed to select the primary key to use for joining.

## Symbology

Like the method described above for customizing labels, auxiliary fields can also be used to stylize symbols and diagrams. To do this, click on **Data-defined override** and select *Store data in the project* for a specific property. For example, the *Fill color* field:

There are different attributes for each symbol (e.g. fill style, fill color, stroke color, etc...), so each auxiliary field representing an attribute requires a unique name to avoid conflicts. After selecting *Store data in the project*, a window opens and displays the *Type* of the field and prompts you to enter a unique name for the auxiliary field. For example, when creating a *Fill color* auxiliary field the following window opens:

Once created, the auxiliary field can be retrieved in the auxiliary storage tab:

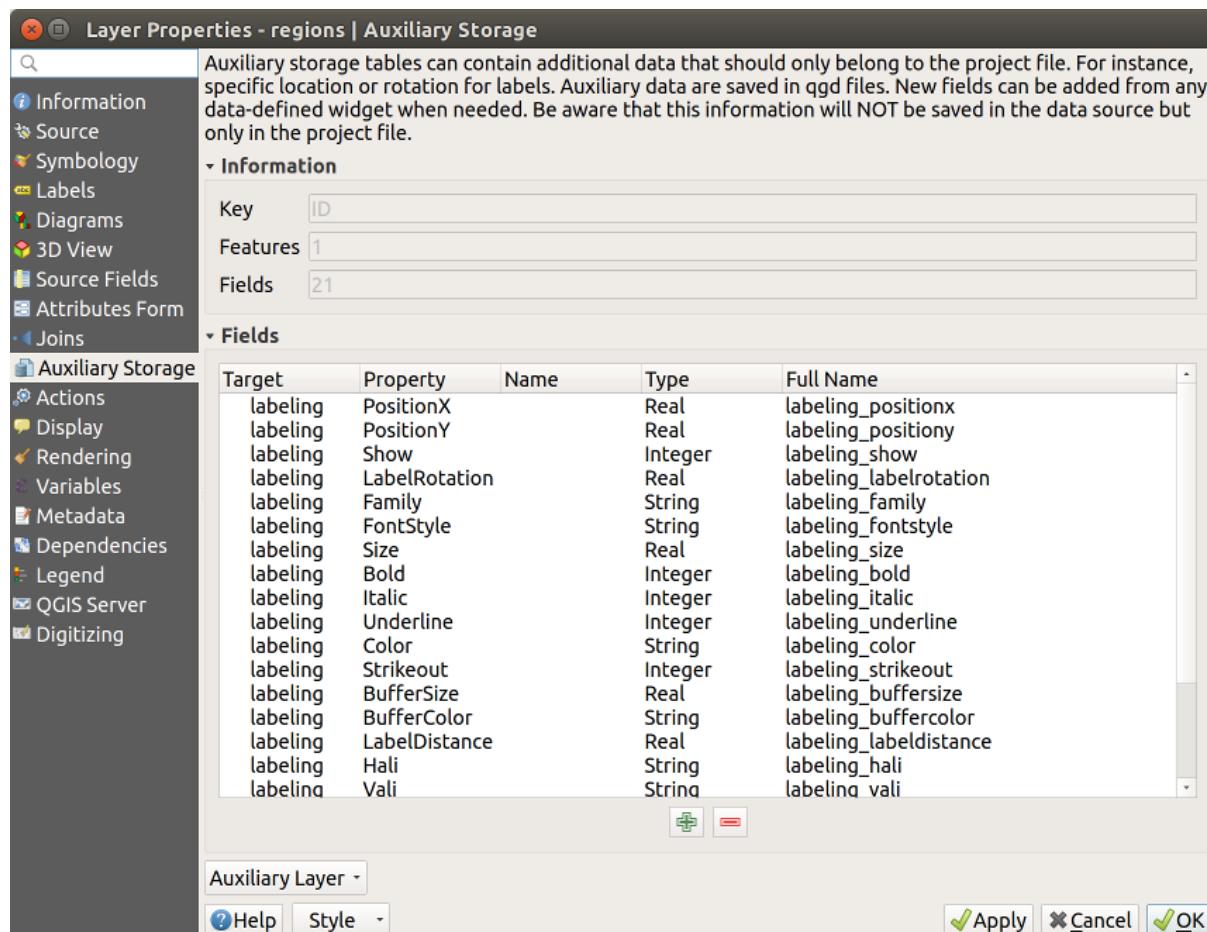


Fig. 13.57: Auxiliary Fields

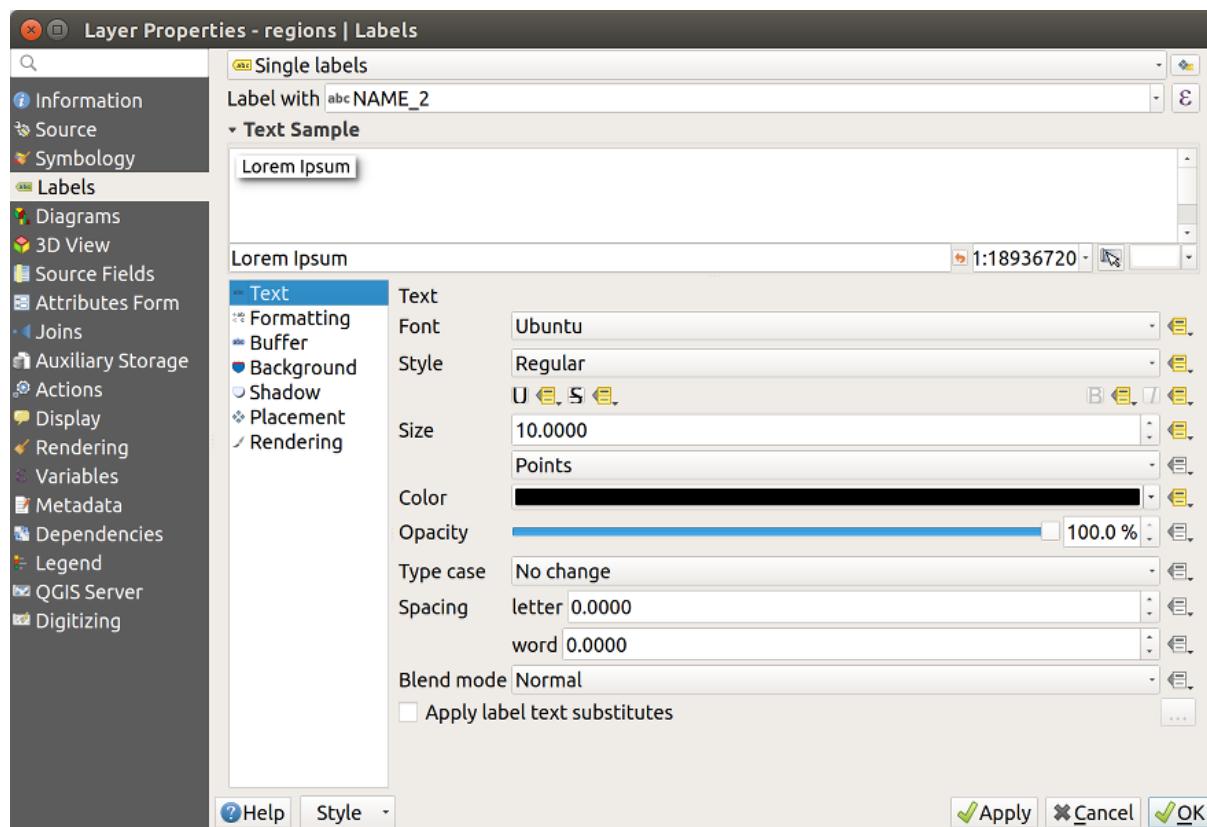


Fig. 13.58: Data-defined properties automatically created

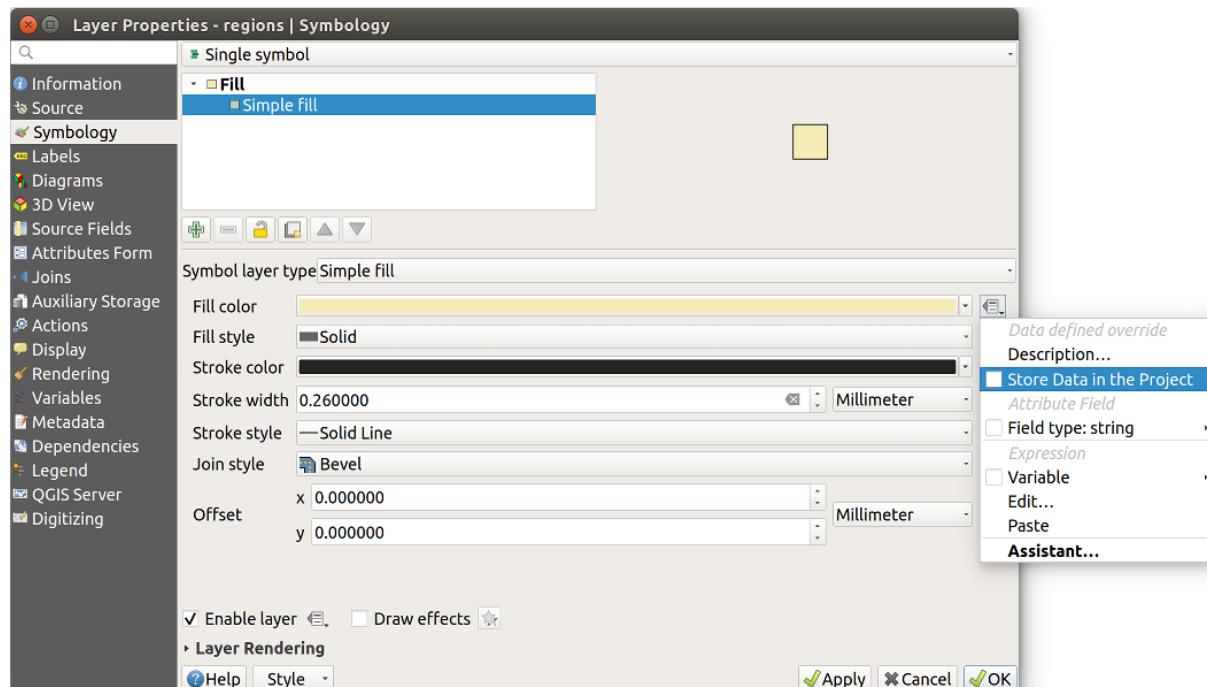


Fig. 13.59: Data-defined property menu for symbol

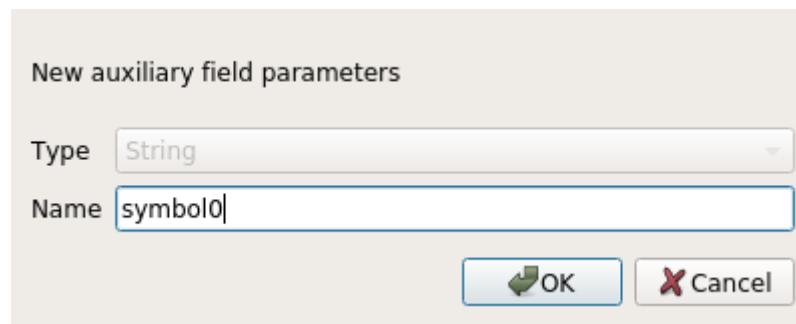


Fig. 13.60: Name of the auxiliary field for a symbol

**Layer Properties - regions | Auxiliary Storage**

**Information**  
Auxiliary storage tables can contain additional data that should only belong to the project file. For instance, specific location or rotation for labels. Auxiliary data are saved in qgd files. New fields can be added from any data-defined widget when needed. Be aware that this information will NOT be saved in the data source but only in the project file.

**Fields**

Target	Property	Name	Type	Full Name
labeling	Show		Integer	labeling_show
labeling	LabelRotation		Real	labeling_labelrotation
labeling	Family		String	labeling_family
labeling	FontStyle		String	labeling_fontstyle
labeling	Size		Real	labeling_size
labeling	Bold		Integer	labeling_bold
labeling	Italic		Integer	labeling_italic
labeling	Underline		Integer	labeling_underline
labeling	Color		String	labeling_color
labeling	Strikeout		Integer	labeling_strikeout
labeling	BufferSize		Real	labeling_buffersize
labeling	BufferColor		String	labeling_buffercolor
labeling	LabelDistance		Real	labeling_labeldistance
labeling	Hali		String	labeling_hali
labeling	Vali		String	labeling_vali
labeling	ScaleVisibility		Integer	labeling_scalevisibility
labeling	MinScale		Real	labeling_minscale
labeling	MaxScale		Real	labeling_maxscale
labeling	AlwaysShow		Integer	labeling_alwaysshow
user	custom	Symbol0	String	user_custom Symbol0

Auxiliary Layer -

Help Style

Apply Cancel OK

Fig. 13.61: Auxiliary field symbol

## Attribute table and widgets

Auxiliary fields can be edited using the [attribute table](#). However, not all auxiliary fields are initially visible in the attribute table.

Auxiliary fields representing attributes of a layer's symbology, labeling, appearance, or diagrams will appear automatically in the attribute table. The exception are attributes that can be modified using the [Label Toolbar](#) which are hidden by default. Auxiliary fields representing a `Color` have a widget **Color** set by default, otherwise auxiliary fields default to the **Text Edit** widget.

Auxiliary fields that represent attributes that can be modified using the [Label toolbar](#) are **Hidden** in the attribute table by default. To make a field visible, open the [Attribute Form properties tab](#) and change the value of an auxiliary field `Widget Type` from **Hidden** to another relevant value. For example, change the `auxiliary_storage_labeling_size` to **Text Edit** or change `auxiliary_storage_labeling_color` to the **Color** widget. Those fields will now be visible in the attribute table.

Auxiliary fields in the attribute table will appear like the following image:

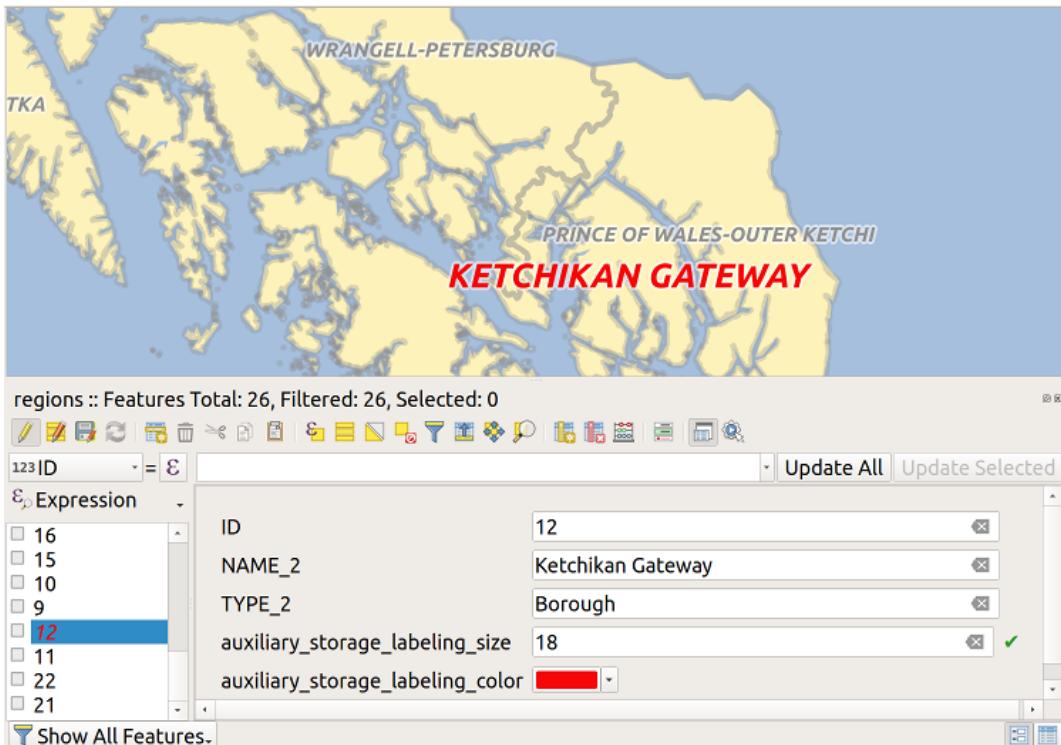


Fig. 13.62: Form with auxiliary fields

## Management

The [Auxiliary Layer](#) menu allows you to manage the auxiliary fields:

The first item *Create* is disabled in this case because the auxiliary layer is already created. But in case of a fresh work, you can use this action to create an auxiliary layer. As explained in [Labeling](#), a primary key will be needed then.

The *Clear* action allows to keep all auxiliary fields, but remove their contents. This way, the number of features using these fields will fall to 0.

The *Delete* action completely removes the auxiliary layer. In other words, the corresponding table is deleted from the underlying SQLite database and properties customization are lost.

Finally, the *Export* action allows to save the auxiliary layer as a [new vector layer](#). Note that geometries are not stored in auxiliary storage. However, in this case, geometries are exported from the original data source too.

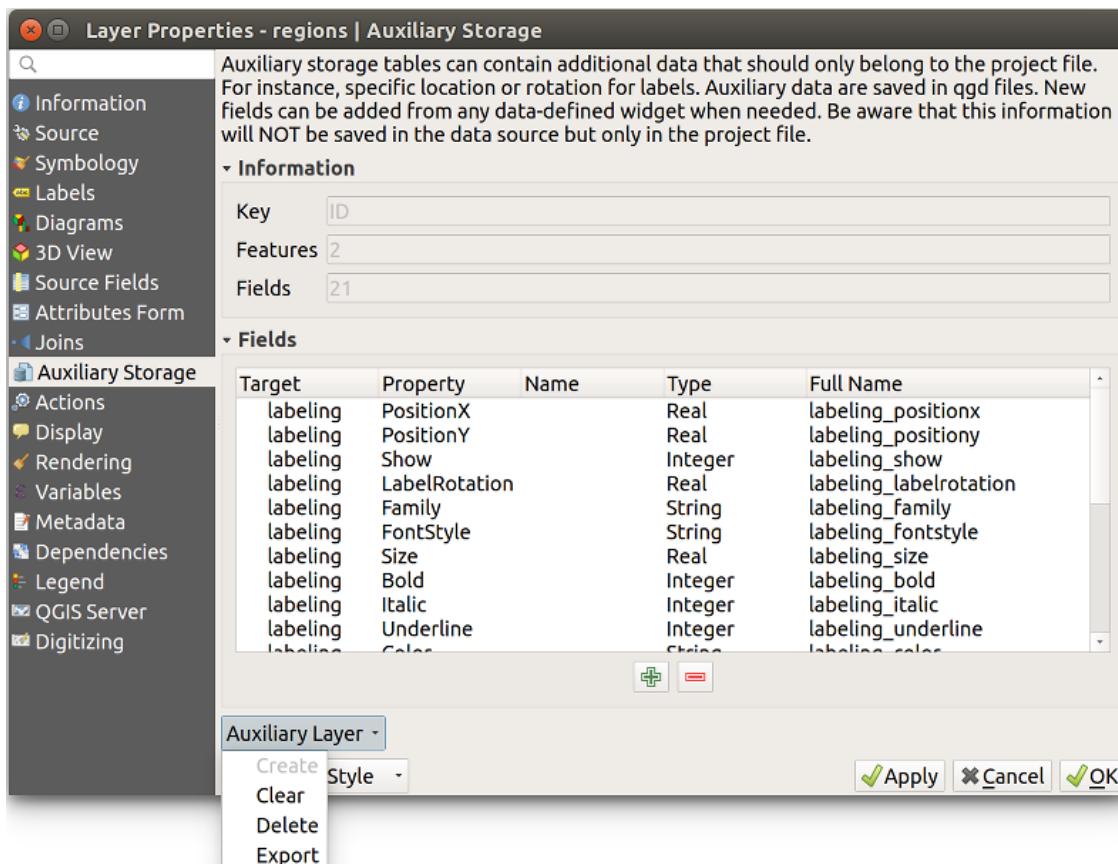


Fig. 13.63: Auxiliary layer management

### Auxiliary storage database

When you save your project with the .qgs format, the SQLite database used for auxiliary storage is saved at the same place but with the extension .qgd.

For convenience, an archive may be used instead thanks to the .qgz format. In this case, .qgd and .qgs files are both embedded in the archive.

### 13.2.10 Actions Properties



QGIS provides the ability to perform an action based on the attributes of a feature. This can be used to perform any number of actions, for example, running a program with arguments built from the attributes of a feature or passing parameters to a web reporting tool.

Actions are useful when you frequently want to run an external application or view a web page based on one or more values in your vector layer. They are divided into six types and can be used like this:

- Generic, Mac, Windows and Unix actions start an external process.
- Python actions execute a Python expression.
- Generic and Python actions are visible everywhere.
- Mac, Windows and Unix actions are visible only on the respective platform (i.e., you can define three ‘Edit’ actions to open an editor and the users can only see and execute the one ‘Edit’ action for their platform to run the editor).

There are several examples included in the dialog. You can load them by clicking on *Create Default Actions*. To edit any of the examples, double-click its row. One example is performing a search based on an attribute value.

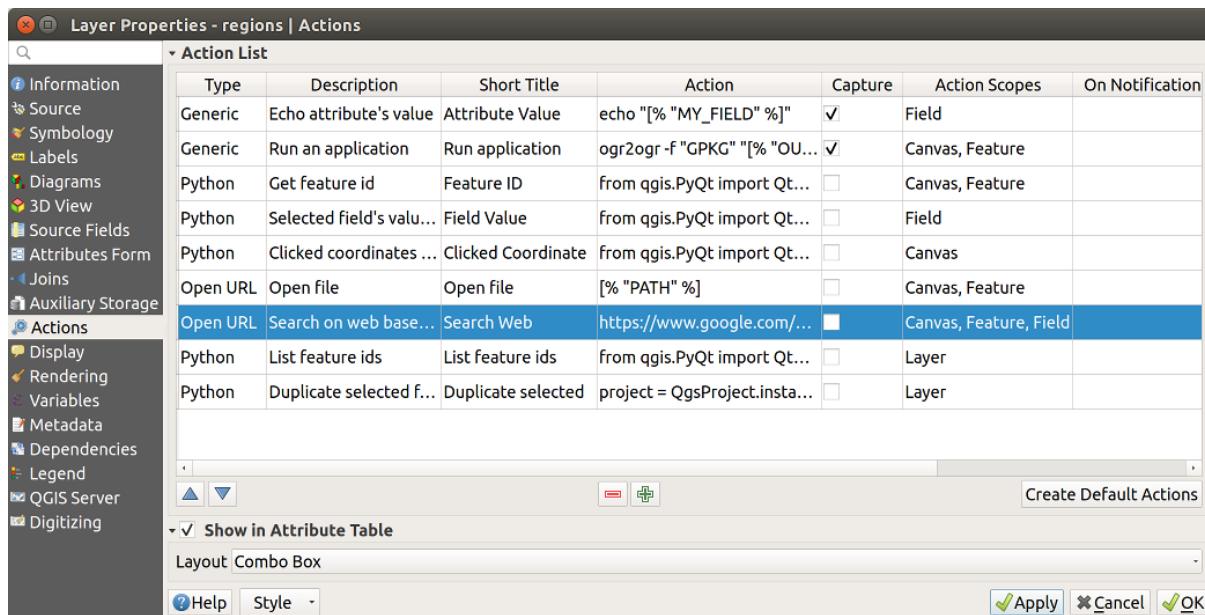


Fig. 13.64: Overview action dialog with some sample actions

This concept is used in the following discussion.

The  *Show in Attribute Table* allows you to display in the attribute table dialog the checked feature-scoped actions, either as *Combo Box* or as *Separate Buttons* (see [Configuring the columns](#)).

## Defining Actions

To define an attribute action, open the vector *Layer Properties* dialog and click on the *Actions* tab. In the *Actions* tab, click the *Add a new action* to open the *Edit Action* dialog.

Select the action *Type* and provide a descriptive name for the action. The action itself must contain the name of the application that will be executed when the action is invoked. You can add one or more attribute field values as arguments to the application. When the action is invoked, any set of characters that start with a % followed by the name of a field will be replaced by the value of that field. The special characters %% will be replaced by the value of the field that was selected from the identify results or attribute table (see [using\\_actions](#) below). Double quote marks can be used to group text into a single argument to the program, script or command. Double quotes will be ignored if preceded by a backslash.

The *Action Scopes* allows you to define *where* the action should be available. You have 4 different choices:

1. *Feature Scope*: action is available when right click in the cell within the attribute table.
2. *Field Scope*: action is available when right click in the cell within the attribute table, in the feature form and in the default action button of the main toolbar.
3. *Layer Scope*: action is available in the action button in the attribute table toolbar. Be aware that this type of action involves the entire layer and not the single features.
4. *Canvas*: action is available in the main action button in the toolbar.

If you have field names that are substrings of other field names (e.g., col1 and col10), you should indicate that by surrounding the field name (and the % character) with square brackets (e.g., [%col10]). This will prevent the %col10 field name from being mistaken for the %col1 field name with a 0 on the end. The brackets will be removed by QGIS when it substitutes in the value of the field. If you want the substituted field to be surrounded by square brackets, use a second set like this: [ [%col10] ].

Using the *Identify Features* tool, you can open the *Identify Results* dialog. It includes a (*Derived*) item that contains information relevant to the layer type. The values in this item can be accessed in a similar way to the other fields

by proceeding the derived field name with `(Derived) ..`. For example, a point layer has an `X` and `Y` field, and the values of these fields can be used in the action with `% (Derived) .X` and `% (Derived) .Y`. The derived attributes are only available from the *Identify Results* dialog box, not the *Attribute Table* dialog box.

Two example actions are shown below:

- konqueror `https://www.google.com/search?q=%nam`
- konqueror `https://www.google.com/search?q=%%`

In the first example, the web browser konqueror is invoked and passed a URL to open. The URL performs a Google search on the value of the `nam` field from our vector layer. Note that the application or script called by the action must be in the path, or you must provide the full path. To be certain, we could rewrite the first example as: `/opt/kde3/bin/konqueror https://www.google.com/search?q=%nam`. This will ensure that the konqueror application will be executed when the action is invoked.

The second example uses the `%%` notation, which does not rely on a particular field for its value. When the action is invoked, the `%%` will be replaced by the value of the selected field in the identify results or attribute table.

## Using Actions

QGIS offers many ways to execute actions you enabled on a layer. Depending on their settings, they can be available:

- in the drop-down menu of  Run Feature Action button from the *Attributes toolbar* or *Attribute table* dialog;
- when right-clicking a feature with the  Identify Features tool (see *Identifying Features* for more information);
- from the *Identify Results* panel, under the *Actions* section;
- as items of an *Actions* column in the *Attribute Table* dialog.

If you are invoking an action that uses the `%%` notation, right-click on the field value in the *Identify Results* dialog or the *Attribute Table* dialog that you wish to pass to the application or script.

Here is another example that pulls data out of a vector layer and inserts it into a file using bash and the `echo` command (so it will only work on  or perhaps ). The layer in question has fields for a species name `taxon_name`, latitude `lat` and longitude `long`. We would like to be able to make a spatial selection of localities and export these field values to a text file for the selected record (shown in yellow in the QGIS map area). Here is the action to achieve this:

```
bash -c "echo \"%taxon_name %lat %long%\" >> /tmp/species_localities.txt"
```

After selecting a few localities and running the action on each one, opening the output file will show something like this:

```
Acacia mearnsii -34.0800000000 150.0800000000
Acacia mearnsii -34.9000000000 150.1200000000
Acacia mearnsii -35.2200000000 149.9300000000
Acacia mearnsii -32.2700000000 150.4100000000
```

As an exercise, we can create an action that does a Google search on the `lakes` layer. First, we need to determine the URL required to perform a search on a keyword. This is easily done by just going to Google and doing a simple search, then grabbing the URL from the address bar in your browser. From this little effort, we see that the format is `https://www.google.com/search?q=QGIS`, where `QGIS` is the search term. Armed with this information, we can proceed:

1. Make sure the `lakes` layer is loaded.
2. Open the *Layer Properties* dialog by double-clicking on the layer in the legend, or right-click and choose *Properties* from the pop-up menu.
3. Click on the *Actions* tab.

4. Click  Add a new action.
5. Choose the *Open* action type,
6. Enter a name for the action, for example `Google Search`.
7. Additionally you can add a *Short Name* or even an *Icon*.
8. Choose the action *Scope*. See [Defining Actions](#) for further information. Leave the default settings for this example.
9. For the action, we need to provide the name of the external program to run. In this case, we can use Firefox. If the program is not in your path, you need to provide the full path.
10. Following the name of the external application, add the URL used for doing a Google search, up to but not including the search term: `https://www.google.com//search?q=`
11. The text in the *Action* field should now look like this: `https://www.google.com//search?q=%NAMES%`
12. Click on the drop-down box containing the field names for the `lakes` layer. It's located just to the left of the *Insert* button.
13. From the drop-down box, select 'NAMES' and click *Insert*.
14. Your action text now looks like this:

```
https://www.google.com//search?q=[%NAMES%]
```

15. To finalize and add the action, click the *OK* button.

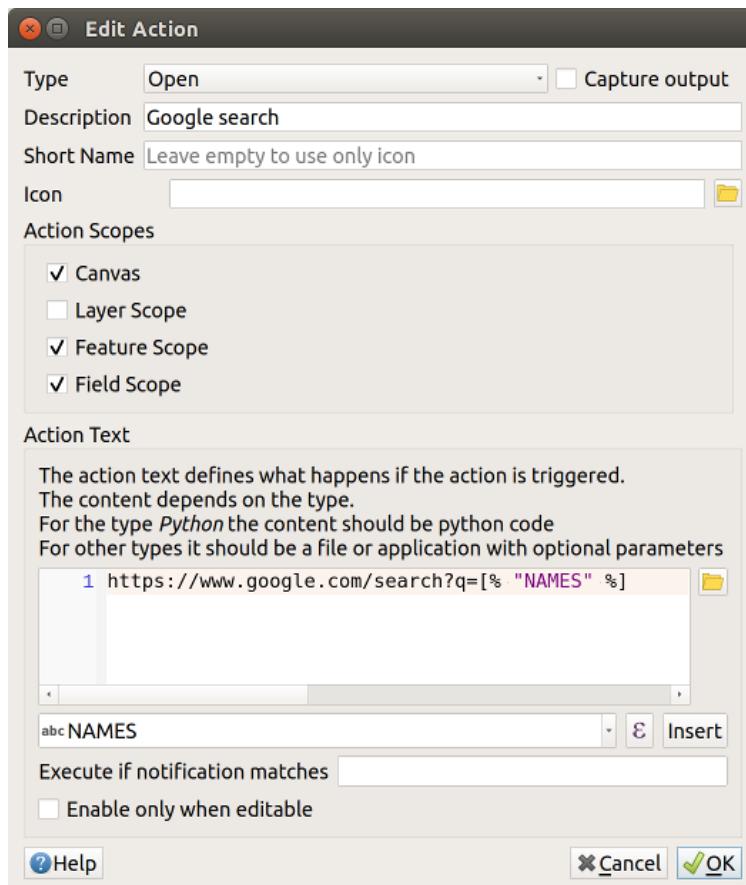


Fig. 13.65: Edit action dialog configured with the example

This completes the action, and it is ready to use. The final text of the action should look like this:

```
https://www.google.com/search?q=[%NAME%]
```

We can now use the action. Close the *Layer Properties* dialog and zoom in to an area of interest. Make sure the lakes layer is active and identify a lake. In the result box you'll now see that our action is visible:

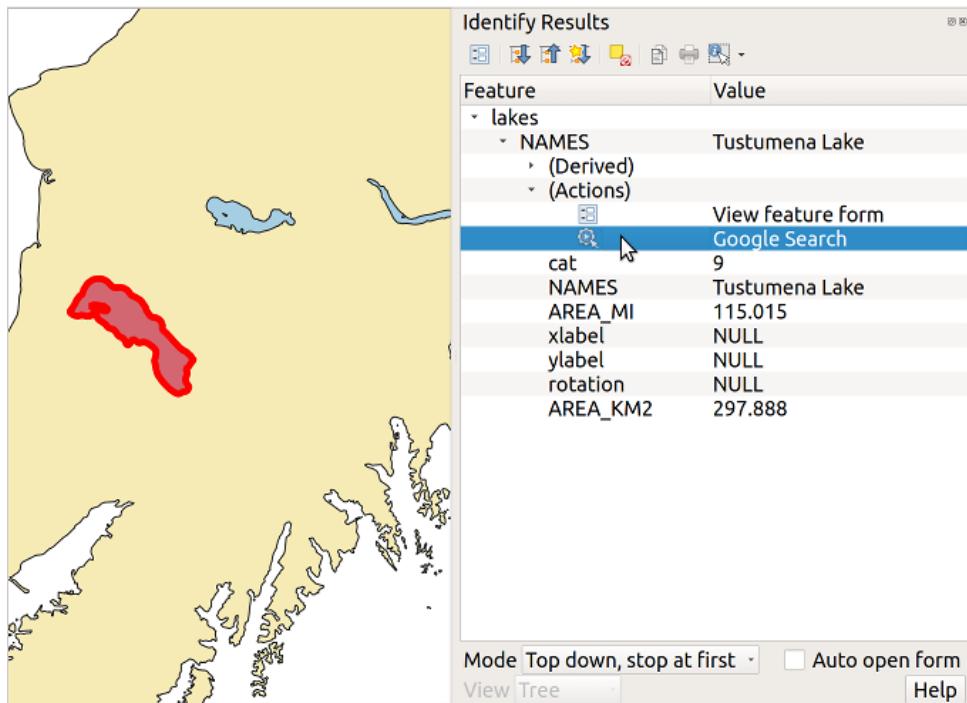


Fig. 13.66: Select feature and choose action

When we click on the action, it brings up Firefox and navigates to the URL <https://www.google.com/search?q=Tustumena>. It is also possible to add further attribute fields to the action. Therefore, you can add a + to the end of the action text, select another field and click on *Insert Field*. In this example, there is just no other field available that would make sense to search for.

You can define multiple actions for a layer, and each will show up in the *Identify Results* dialog.

You can also invoke actions from the attribute table by selecting a row and right-clicking, then choosing the action from the pop-up menu.

There are all kinds of uses for actions. For example, if you have a point layer containing locations of images or photos along with a file name, you could create an action to launch a viewer to display the image. You could also use actions to launch web-based reports for an attribute field or combination of fields, specifying them in the same way we did in our Google search example.

We can also make more complex examples, for instance, using **Python** actions.

Usually, when we create an action to open a file with an external application, we can use absolute paths, or eventually relative paths. In the second case, the path is relative to the location of the external program executable file. But what about if we need to use relative paths, relative to the selected layer (a file-based one, like Shapefile or SpatiaLite)? The following code will do the trick:

```
command = "firefox"
imagerelpath = "images_test/test_image.jpg"
layer = qgis.utils.iface.activeLayer()
import os.path
layerpath = layer.source() if layer.providerType() == 'ogr'
else (qgis.core.QgsDataSourceURI(layer.source()).database())
if layer.providerType() == 'spatialite' else None)
path = os.path.dirname(str(layerpath))
image = os.path.join(path, imagerelpath)
```

```
import subprocess
subprocess.Popen( [command, image] )
```

We just have to remember that the action is one of type *Python* and the *command* and *imagerelpath* variables must be changed to fit our needs.

But what about if the relative path needs to be relative to the (saved) project file? The code of the Python action would be:

```
command = "firefox"
imagerelpath = "images/test_image.jpg"
projectpath = qgis.core.QgsProject.instance().fileName()
import os.path
path = os.path.dirname(str(projectpath)) if projectpath != '' else None
image = os.path.join(path, imagerelpath)
import subprocess
subprocess.Popen( [command, image] )
```

Another Python action example is the one that allows us to add new layers to the project. For instance, the following examples will add to the project respectively a vector and a raster. The names of the files to be added to the project and the names to be given to the layers are data driven (*filename* and *layername* are column names of the table of attributes of the vector where the action was created):

```
qgis.utils.iface.addVectorLayer('/yourpath/[% "filename" %].shp',
  '[% "layername" %]', 'ogr')
```

To add a raster (a TIF image in this example), it becomes:

```
qgis.utils.iface.addRasterLayer('/yourpath/[% "filename" %].tif',
  '[% "layername" %]')
```

### 13.2.11 Display Properties



The *Display* tab helps you configure fields to use for feature identification:

- The *Display name*: based on a field or an *expression*. This is:
  - the label shown on top of the feature information in the *Identify tool* results;
  - the field used in the *locator bar* when looking for features in all layers;
  - the feature identifier in the attribute table *form view*;
  - the map tip information, i.e. the message displayed in the map canvas when hovering over a feature of the active layer with the icon pressed. Applicable when no *HTML Map Tip* is set.
- The *HTML Map Tip* is specifically created for the map tips: it's a more complex and full HTML text mixing fields, expressions and html tags (multiline, fonts, images, hyperlink...).

To activate map tips, select the menu option *View* → *Show Map Tips* or click on the icon of the *Attributes Toolbar*. Map tip is a cross-session feature meaning that once activated, it stays on and apply to any layer in any project, even in future QGIS sessions until it's toggled off.

### 13.2.12 Rendering Properties

#### Scale dependent visibility

You can set the *Maximum (inclusive)* and *Minimum (exclusive)* scale, defining a range of scale in which features will be visible. Out of this range, they are hidden. The button helps you use the current

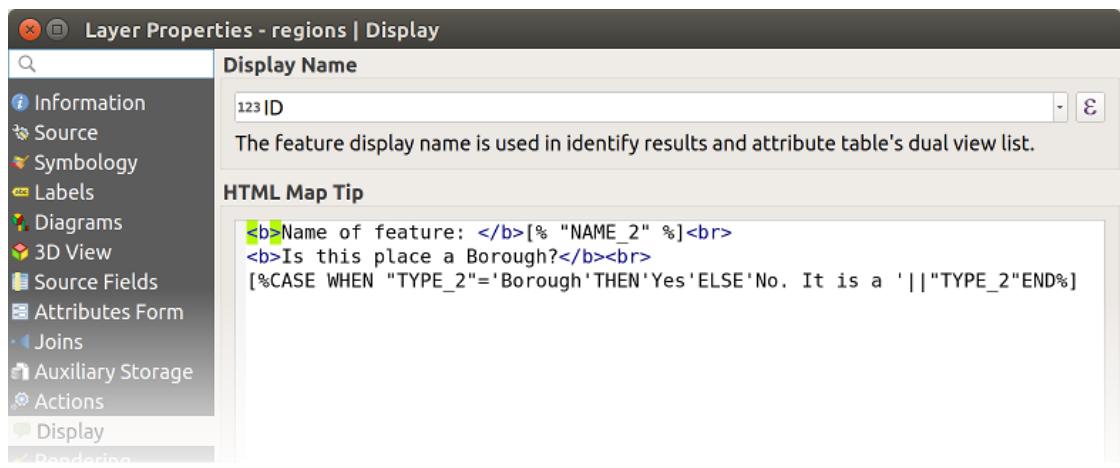


Fig. 13.67: HTML code for map tip



Fig. 13.68: Map tip made with HTML code

map canvas scale as boundary of the range visibility. See [Scale Dependent Rendering](#) for more information.

## Simplify geometry

QGIS offers support for on-the-fly feature generalisation. This can improve rendering times when drawing many complex features at small scales. This feature can be enabled or disabled in the layer settings using the  *Simplify geometry* option. There is also a global setting that enables generalisation by default for newly added layers (see [global simplification](#) for more information).

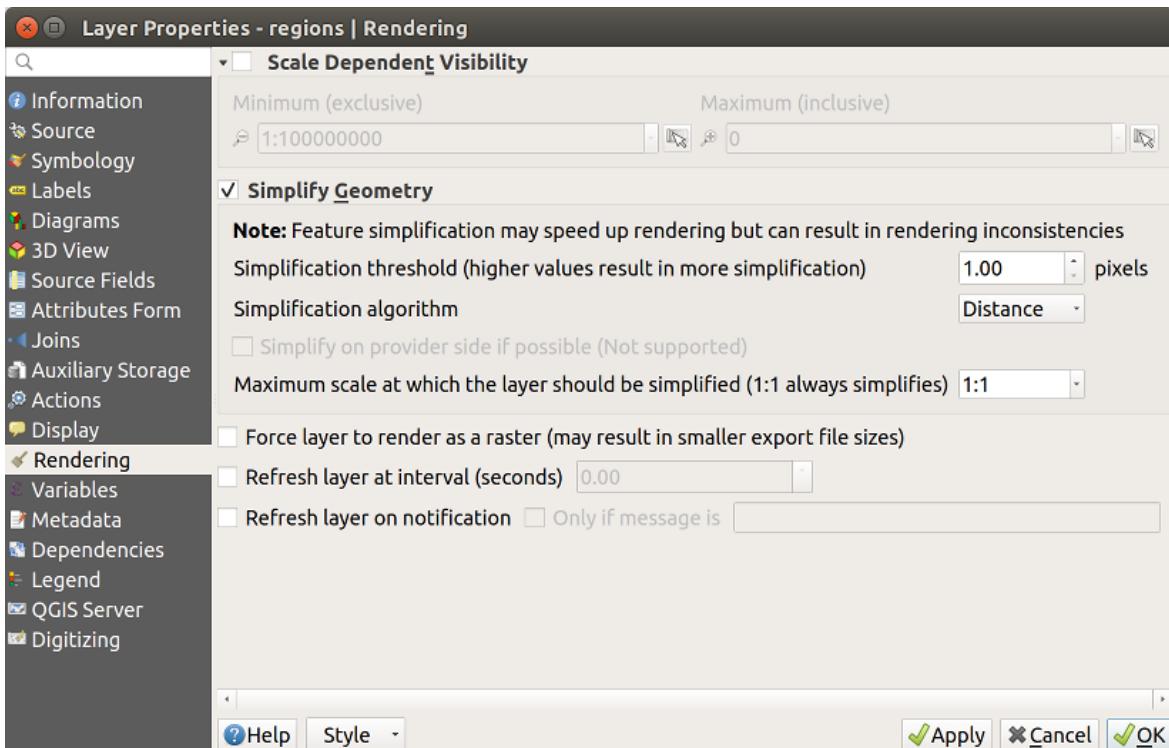


Fig. 13.69: Layer Geometry Simplification dialog

---

**Note:** Feature generalisation may introduce artefacts into your rendered output in some cases. These may include slivers between polygons and inaccurate rendering when using offset-based symbol layers.

---

While rendering extremely detailed layers (e.g. polygon layers with a huge number of nodes), this can cause layout exports in PDF/SVG format to be huge as all nodes are included in the exported file. This can also make the resultant file very slow to work with/open in other programs.

Checking  *Force layer to render as raster* forces these layers to be rasterised so that the exported files won't have to include all the nodes contained in these layers and the rendering is therefore sped up.

You can also do this by forcing the layout to export as a raster, but that is an all-or-nothing solution, given that the rasterisation is applied to all layers.

*Refresh layer at interval (seconds)*: set a timer to automatically refresh individual layers at a matching interval. Canvas updates are deferred in order to avoid refreshing multiple times if more than one layer has an auto update interval set.

Depending on the data provider (e.g. PostgreSQL), notifications can be sent to QGIS when changes are applied to the data source, out of QGIS. Use the  *Refresh layer on notification* option to trigger an update. You can also limit the layer refresh to a specific message set in the  *Only if message is* text box.

### 13.2.13 Variables Properties

 The *Variables* tab lists all the variables available at the layer's level (which includes all global and project's variables).

It also allows the user to manage layer-level variables. Click the  button to add a new custom layer-level variable. Likewise, select a custom layer-level variable from the list and click the  button to remove it.

More information on variables usage in the General Tools *Storing values in Variables* section.

### 13.2.14 Metadata Properties

 The *Metadata* tab provides you with options to create and edit a metadata report on your layer. Information to fill concern:

- the data *Identification*: basic attribution of the dataset (parent, identifier, title, abstract, language...);
- the *Categories* the data belongs to. Alongside the **ISO** categories, you can add custom ones;
- the *Keywords* to retrieve the data and associated concepts following a standard based vocabulary;
- the *Access* to the dataset (licenses, rights, fees, and constraints);
- the *Extent* of the dataset, either spatial one (CRS, map extent, altitudes) or temporal;
- the *Contact* of the owner(s) of the dataset;
- the *Links* to ancillary resources and related information;
- the *History* of the dataset.

A summary of the filled information is provided in the *Validation* tab and helps you identify potential issues related to the form. You can then either fix them or ignore them.

Metadata are currently saved in the project file. It can also be saved as an **.XML** file alongside file based layers or in a local **.sqlite** database for remote layers (e.g. PostGIS).

### 13.2.15 Dependencies Properties

 The *Dependencies* tab allows to declare data dependencies between layers. A data dependency occurs when a data modification in a layer, not by direct user manipulation, may modify data of other layers. This is the case for instance when geometry of a layer is updated by a database trigger or custom PyQGIS scripting after modification of another layer's geometry.

In the *Dependencies* tab, you can select any layers which may externally alter the data in the current layer. Correctly specifying dependent layers allows QGIS to invalidate caches for this layer when the dependent layers are altered.

### 13.2.16 Legend Properties

 The *Legend* properties tab provides you with advanced settings for the *Layers panel* and/or the *print layout legend*. These options include:

-  *Text on symbols*: In some cases it can be useful to add extra information to the symbols in the legend. With this frame, you can affect to any of the symbols used in the layer symbology a text that is displayed over the symbol, in both *Layers panel* and print layout legend. This mapping is done by typing each text next to the symbol in the table widget or filling the table using the *Set Labels from Expression* button. Text appearance is handled through the font and color selector widgets of the *Text Format* button.

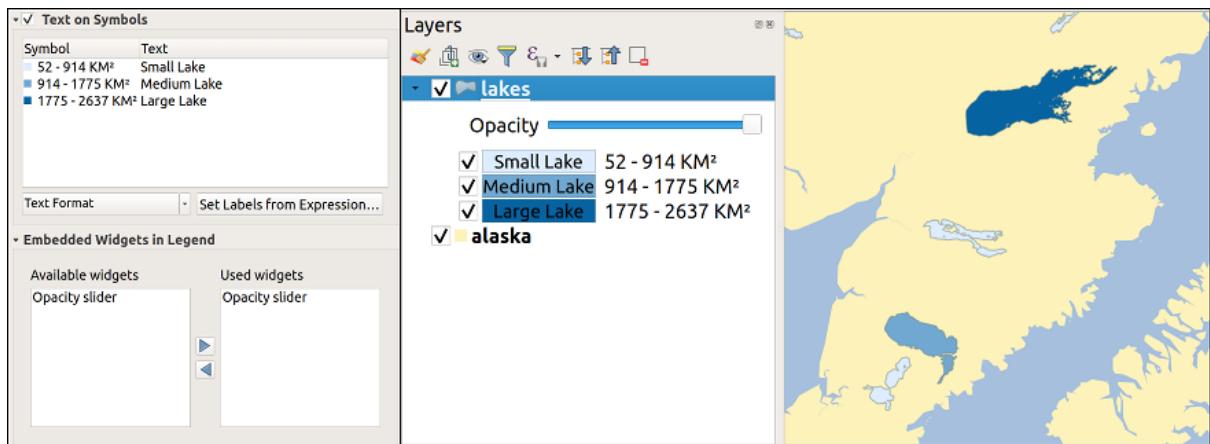


Fig. 13.70: Setting text on symbols (left) and its rendering in the *Layers* panel (right)

- a list of widgets you can embed within the layer tree in the Layers panel. The idea is to have a way to quickly access some actions that are often used with the layer (setup transparency, filtering, selection, style or other stuff...).

By default, QGIS provides transparency widget but this can be extended by plugins registering their own widgets and assign custom actions to layers they manage.

### 13.2.17 QGIS Server Properties

The *QGIS Server* tab consists of *Description*, *Attribution*, *MetadataURL*, and *LegendUrl* sections.

You can add or edit a title and abstract for the layer in the *Description* section. It's also possible to define a *Keyword list* here. These keyword lists can be used in a metadata catalog. If you want to use a title from an XML metadata file, you have to fill in a link in the *DataUrl* field.

Use *Attribution* to get attribute data from an XML metadata catalog.

In *MetadataUrl*, you can define the general path to the XML metadata catalog. This information will be saved in the QGIS project file for subsequent sessions and will be used for QGIS server.

In the *LegendUrl* section, you can provide the url of a legend image in the *url* field. You can use the *Format* drop-down option to apply the appropriate format of the image. Currently png, jpg and jpeg image formats are supported.

### 13.2.18 Digitizing Properties

The *Digitizing* tab gives access to options that help to ensure the quality of digitized geometries.

#### Automatic Fixes

Options in the *Automatic Fixes* section will directly affect the vertices of any geometry which is added or modified. If the *Remove duplicate nodes* option is checked, any two subsequent vertices with exactly the same coordinates will be removed. If the *Geometry precision* is set, all vertices will be rounded to the closest multiple of the configured geometry precision. The rounding will happen in the layer coordinate reference system. Z and M values are not rounded. With many map tools, a grid is shown on the canvas while digitizing.

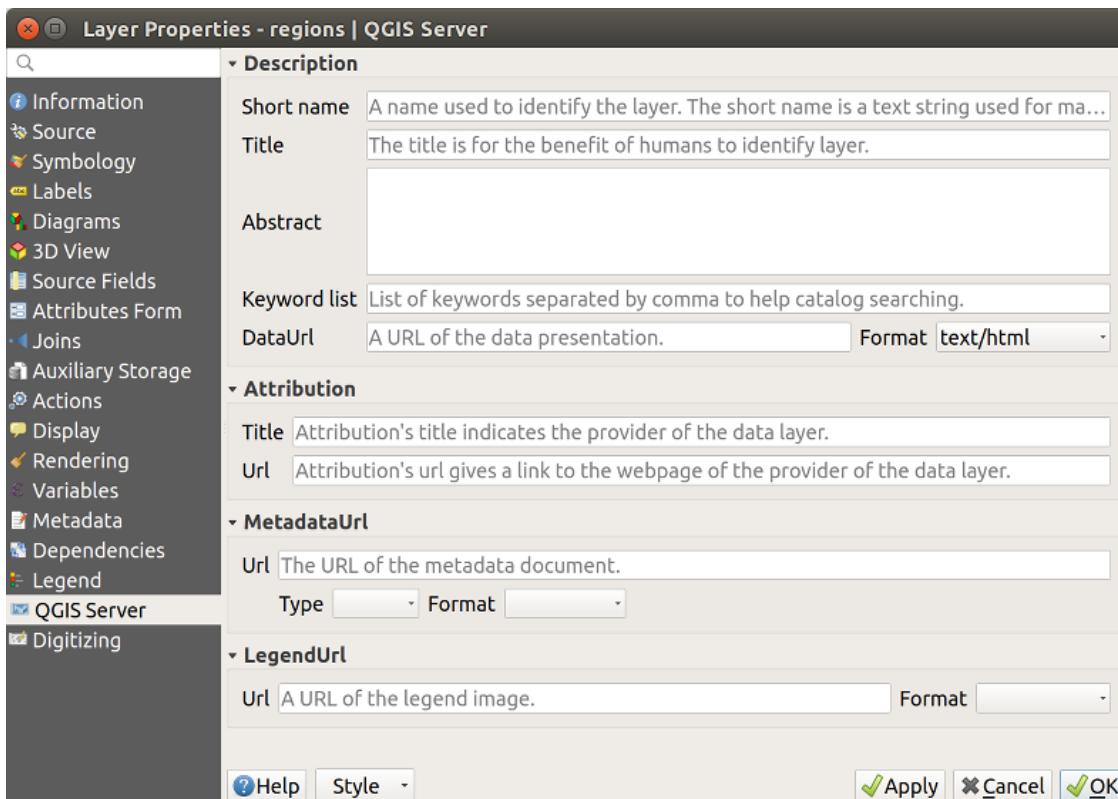


Fig. 13.71: QGIS Server tab in vector layers properties dialog

## Geometry Checks

In the *Geometry checks* section, additional validations on a per geometry basis can be activated. Immediately after any geometry modification, failures in these checks are reported to the user in the geometry validation panel. As long as a check is failing, it is not possible to save the layer. The  *Is valid* check will run basic validity checks like self intersection on geometries.

## Topology Checks

In the *Topology checks* section, additional topology validation checks can be activated. Topology checks will be executed when the user saves the layer. Check errors will be reported in the geometry validation panel. As long as validation errors are present, the layer can not be saved. Topology checks are executed in the area of the bounding box of the modified features. Since other features may be present in the same area, topological errors concerning these features are reported as well as errors introduced in the current edit session.

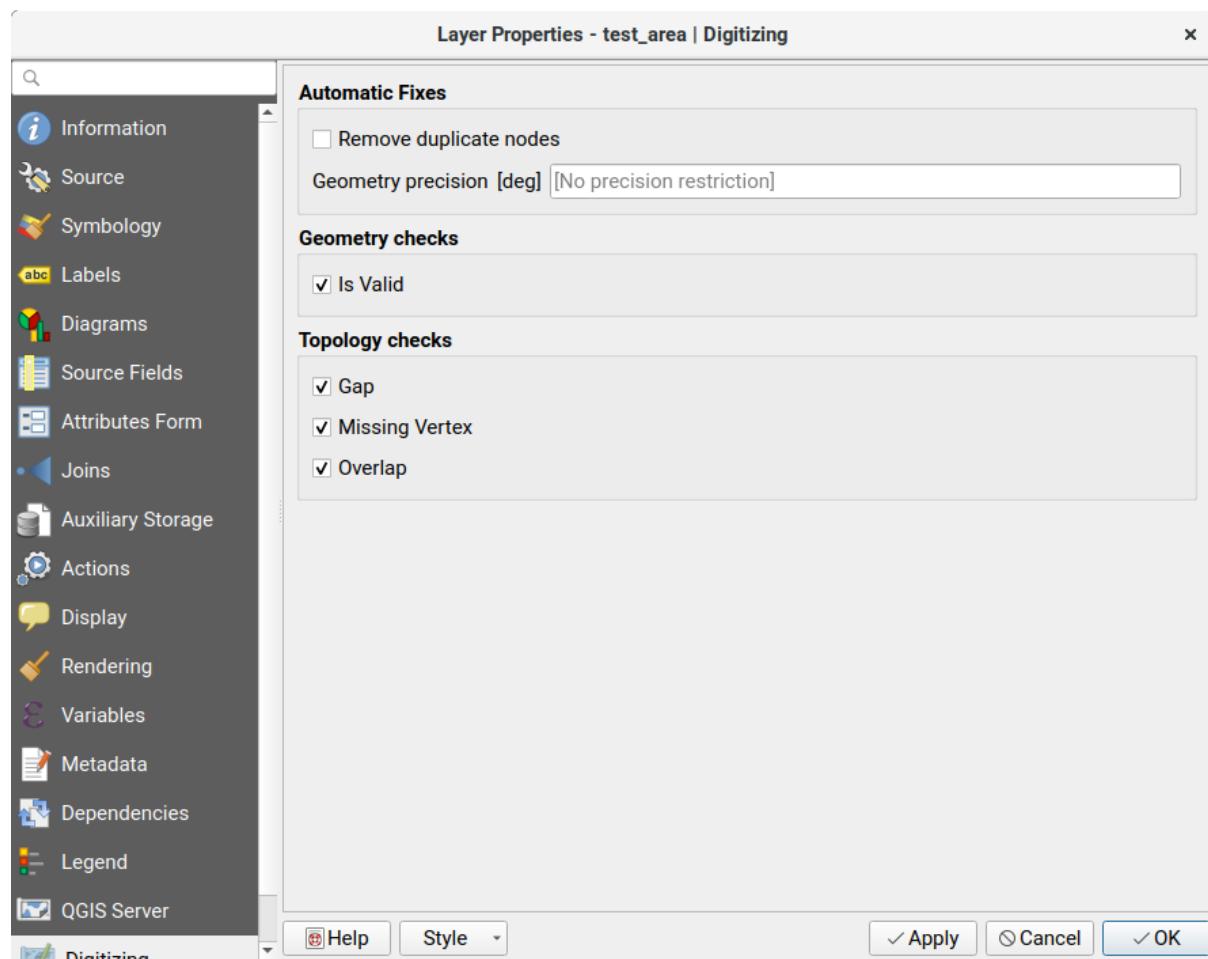


Fig. 13.72: The QGIS Digitizing tab in the vector layers properties dialog

Topology check option	Illustration
<p>The  <i>Gap</i> check will check for gaps between neighbouring polygons.</p>	
<p>The  <i>Overlap</i> check will check for overlaps between neighbouring polygons.</p>	
<p>The  <i>Missing vertex</i> check will check for shared boundaries of neighbouring polygons where one border misses a vertex which is present on the other one.</p>	

## 13.3 Expressions

Based on layer data and prebuilt or user defined functions, **Expressions** offer a powerful way to manipulate attribute value, geometry and variables in order to dynamically change the geometry style, the content or position of the label, the value for diagram, the height of a layout item, select some features, create virtual field ...

### 13.3.1 The Expression string builder

Main dialog to build expressions, the *Expression string builder* is available from many parts in QGIS and, can particularly be accessed when:

- clicking the button;
- *selecting features* with the *Select By Expression...* tool;
- *editing attributes* with e.g. the *Field calculator* tool;
- manipulating symbology, label or layout item parameters with the *Data defined override* tool (see *Data defined override setup*);
- building a *geometry generator* symbol layer;
- doing some *geoprocessing*.

The Expression builder dialog offers access to the:

- *Expression tab* which, thanks to a list of predefined functions, helps to write and check the expression to use;
- *Function Editor tab* which helps to extend the list of functions by creating custom ones.

#### Some use cases of expressions:

- From Field Calculator, calculate a “pop\_density” field using existing “total\_pop” and “area\_km2” fields:

```
"total_pop" / "area_km2"
```

- Update the field “density\_level” with categories according to the “pop\_density” values:

```
CASE WHEN "pop_density" < 50 THEN 'Low population density'
      WHEN "pop_density" >= 50 and "pop_density" < 150 THEN 'Medium population density'
      WHEN "pop_density" >= 150 THEN 'High population density'
END
```

- Apply a categorized style to all the features according to whether their average house price is smaller or higher than 10000€ per square metre:

```
"price_m2" > 10000
```

- Using the “Select By Expression...” tool, select all the features representing areas of “High population density” and whose average house price is higher than 10000€ per square metre:

```
"density_level" = 'High population density' and "price_m2" > 10000
```

Likewise, the previous expression could also be used to define which features should be labeled or shown in the map.

Using expressions offers you a lot of possibilities.

#### **Tip: Use named parameters to improve the expression reading**

Some functions require many parameters to be set. The expression engine supports the use of named parameters. This means that instead of writing the cryptic expression `clamp( 1, 2, 9)`, you can use `clamp( min:=1, value:=2, max:=9)`. This also allows arguments to be switched, e.g. `clamp( value:=2, max:=9, min:=1)`. Using named parameters helps clarify what the arguments for an expression function refer to, which is helpful when you are trying to interpret an expression at a later date!

### 13.3.2 List of functions

The *Expression* tab provides the main interface to write expressions using functions, layer’s fields and values. It contains following widgets:

- An expression editor area to type or paste expressions. Autocompletion is available to speed expression writing:
  - Corresponding variables, function names and field names to the input text are shown below: use the Up and Down arrows to browse the items and press Tab to insert in the expression or simply click on the wished item.
  - Function parameters are shown while filling them.

QGIS also checks the expression rightness and highlights all the errors using:

- *Underline*: for unknown functions, wrong or invalid arguments;
- *Marker*: for every other error (eg, missing parenthesis, unexpected character) at a single location.

#### **Tip: Document your expression with comments**

When using complex expression, it is good practice to add text either as a multiline comment or inline comments to help you remember.

```
/*
Labels each region with its highest (in altitude) airport(s)
and altitude, eg 'AMBLER : 264m' for the 'Northwest Artic' region
```

```
*/
with_variable(
    'airport_alti', -- stores the highest altitude of the region
    aggregate(
        'airports',
        'max',
        "ELEV", -- the field containing the altitude
        -- and limit the airports to the region they are within
        filter := within( $geometry, geometry( @parent ) )
    ),
    aggregate( -- finds airports at the same altitude in the region
        'airports',
        'concatenate',
        "NAME",
        filter := within( $geometry, geometry( @parent ) )
        and "ELEV" = @airport_alti
    )
    || ' : ' || @airport_alti || 'm'
    -- using || allows regions without airports to be skipped
)
```

- Under the expression editor, an *Output preview* displays the result of the expression evaluated on the first feature of the layer. In case of error, it indicates it and you can access details with the provided hyperlink.
- A function selector displays the list of functions, variables, fields... organized in groups. A search box is available to filter the list and quickly find a particular function or field. Double-clicking an item adds it to the expression editor.
- A help panel displays help for each selected item in the function selector.

**Tip:** Press **Ctrl+Click** when hovering a function name in an expression to automatically display its help in the dialog.

- A field's values widget shown when a field is selected in the function selector helps to fetch features attributes. Double-clicking a value adds it to the expression editor.

**Tip:** The right panel, showing functions help or field values, can be collapsed (invisible) in the dialog. Press the *Show Values* or *Show Help* button to get it back.

## Aggregates Functions

This group contains functions which aggregate values over layers and fields.

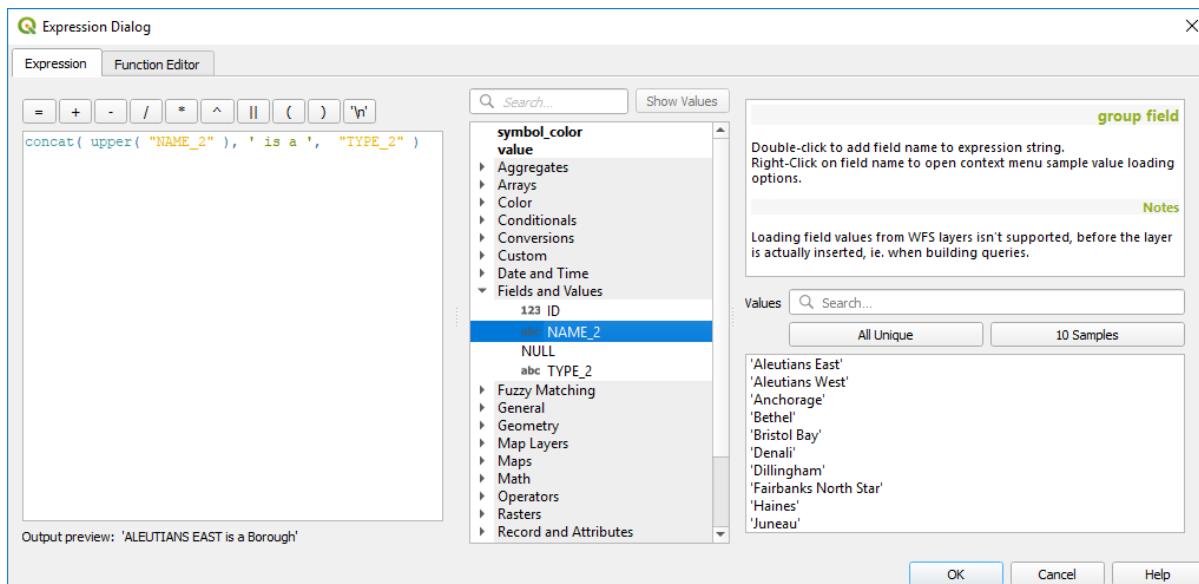


Fig. 13.73: The Expression tab

Function	Description
aggregate	Returns an aggregate value calculated using features from another layer
array_agg	Returns an array of aggregated values from a field or expression
collect	Returns the multipart geometry of aggregated geometries from an expression
concatenate	Returns the all aggregated strings from a field or expression joined by a delimiter
count	Returns the count of matching features
count_distinct	Returns the count of distinct values
count_missing	Returns the count of missing (null) values
iqr	Returns the calculated inter quartile range from a field or expression
majority	Returns the aggregate majority of values (most commonly occurring value) from a field or expression
max_length	Returns the maximum length of strings from a field or expression
maximum	Returns the aggregate maximum value from a field or expression
mean	Returns the aggregate mean value from a field or expression
median	Returns the aggregate median value from a field or expression
min_length	Returns the minimum length of strings from a field or expression
minimum	Returns the aggregate minimum value from a field or expression
minority	Returns the aggregate minority of values (least commonly occurring value) from a field or expression
q1	Returns the calculated first quartile from a field or expression
q3	Returns the calculated third quartile from a field or expression
range	Returns the aggregate range of values (maximum - minimum) from a field or expression
relation_aggregate	Returns an aggregate value calculated using all matching child features from a layer relation
stdev	Returns the aggregate standard deviation value from a field or expression
sum	Returns the aggregate summed value from a field or expression

**Examples:**

- Return the maximum of the “passenger” field from features in the layer grouped by “station\_class” field:

```
maximum("passengers", group_by:="station_class")
```

- Calculate the total number of passengers for the stations inside the current atlas feature:

```
aggregate('rail_stations', 'sum', "passengers",
    intersects(@atlas_geometry, $geometry))
```

- Return the mean of the “field\_from\_related\_table” field for all matching child features using the ‘my\_relation’ relation from the layer:

```
relation_aggregate('my_relation', 'mean', "field_from_related_table")
```

or:

```
relation_aggregate(relation:='my_relation', aggregate := 'mean',
    expression := "field_from_related_table")
```

## Array Functions

This group contains functions to create and manipulate arrays (also known as list data structures). The order of values within the array matters, unlike the [‘map’ data structure](#), where the order of key-value pairs is irrelevant and values are identified by their keys.

Function	Description
array	Returns an array containing all the values passed as parameter
ar-ray_append	Returns an array with the given value added at the end
array_cat	Returns an array containing all the given arrays concatenated
ar-ray_contains	Returns true if an array contains the given value
ar-ray_distinct	Returns an array containing distinct values of the given array
ar-ray_filter	Returns an array with only the items for which an expression evaluates to true
array_find	Returns the index (0 for the first one) of a value within an array. Returns -1 if the value is not found.
array_first	Returns the first value of an array
ar-ray.foreach	Returns an array with the given expression evaluated on each item
array_get	Returns the Nth value (0 for the first one) of an array
ar-ray_insert	Returns an array with the given value added at the given position
ar-ray_intersect	Returns true if any element of array_1 exists in array_2
array_last	Returns the last element of an array
ar-ray_length	Returns the number of elements of an array
ar-ray-prepend	Returns an array with the given value added at the beginning
ar-ray_remove_all	Returns an array with all the entries of the given value removed
ar-ray_remove_at	Returns an array with the given index removed
ar-ray_reverse	Returns the given array with array values in reversed order
array_slice	Returns the values of the array from the start_pos argument up to and including the end_pos argument
ar-ray_to_string	Concatenates array elements into a string separated by a delimiter and using optional string for empty values
generate_series	Creates an array containing a sequence of numbers
reg-exp_matches	Returns an array of all strings captured by capturing groups, in the order the groups themselves appear in the supplied regular expression against a string
string_to_array	Splits string into an array using supplied delimiter and optional string for empty values

## Color Functions

This group contains functions for manipulating colors.

Function	Description
color_cmyk	Returns a string representation of a color based on its cyan, magenta, yellow and black components
color_cmyka	Returns a string representation of a color based on its cyan, magenta, yellow, black and alpha (transparency) components
color_grayscale_average	Applies a grayscale filter and returns a string representation from a provided color
color_hsl	Returns a string representation of a color based on its hue, saturation, and lightness attributes
color_hsla	Returns a string representation of a color based on its hue, saturation, lightness and alpha (transparency) attributes
color_hsv	Returns a string representation of a color based on its hue, saturation, and value attributes
color_hsva	Returns a string representation of a color based on its hue, saturation, value and alpha (transparency) attributes
color_mix_rgb	Returns a string representing a color mixing the red, green, blue, and alpha values of two provided colors based on a given ratio
color_part	Returns a specific component from a color string, eg the red component or alpha component
color_rgb	Returns a string representation of a color based on its red, green, and blue components
color_rgba	Returns a string representation of a color based on its red, green, blue, and alpha (transparency) components
create_ramp	Returns a gradient ramp from a map of color strings and steps
darker	Returns a darker (or lighter) color string
lighter	Returns a lighter (or darker) color string
project_color	Returns a color from the project's color scheme
ramp_color	Returns a string representing a color from a color ramp
set_color_part	Sets a specific color component for a color string, eg the red component or alpha component

## Conditional Functions

This group contains functions to handle conditional checks in expressions.

Function	Description
CASE WHEN ... THEN ... END	Evaluates an expression and returns a result if true. You can test multiple conditions
CASE WHEN ... THEN ... ELSE ... END	Evaluates an expression and returns a different result whether it's true or false. You can test multiple conditions
coalesce	Returns the first non-NULL value from the expression list
if	Tests a condition and returns a different result depending on the conditional check

### Some example:

- Send back a value if the first condition is true, else another value:

```
CASE WHEN "software" LIKE '%QGIS%' THEN 'QGIS' ELSE 'Other' END
```

## Conversions Functions

This group contains functions to convert one data type to another (e.g., string to integer, integer to string).

Function	Description
to_date	Converts a string into a date object
to_datetime	Converts a string into a datetime object
to_dm	Converts a coordinate to degree, minute
to_dms	Converts coordinate to degree, minute, second
to_int	Converts a string to integer number
to_interval	Converts a string to an interval type (can be used to take days, hours, months, etc. of a date)
to_real	Converts a string to a real number
to_string	Converts number to string
to_time	Converts a string into a time object

## Custom Functions

This group contains functions created by the user. See [Function Editor](#) for more details.

## Date and Time Functions

This group contains functions for handling date and time data.

Function	Description
age	Returns as an interval the difference between two dates or datetimes
day	Extracts the day from a date or datetime, or the number of days from an interval
day_of_week	Returns a number corresponding to the day of the week for a specified date or datetime
epoch	Returns the interval in milliseconds between the unix epoch and a given date value
hour	Extracts the hour from a datetime or time, or the number of hours from an interval
minute	Extracts the minute from a datetime or time, or the number of minutes from an interval
month	Extracts the month part from a date or datetime, or the number of months from an interval
now	Returns current date and time
second	Extracts the second from a datetime or time, or the number of seconds from an interval
week	Extracts the week number from a date or datetime, or the number of weeks from an interval
year	Extracts the year part from a date or datetime, or the number of years from an interval

This group also shares several functions with the [Conversions Functions](#) ( to\_date, to\_time, to\_datetime, to\_interval) and [String Functions](#) (format\_date) groups.

### Some examples:

- Get today's month and year in the "month\_number/year" format:

```
format_date(now(), 'MM/YYYY')
-- Returns '03/2017'
```

Besides these functions, subtracting dates, datetimes or times using the – (minus) operator will return an interval.

Adding or subtracting an interval to dates, datetimes or times, using the + (plus) and – (minus) operators, will return a datetime.

- Get the number of days until QGIS 3.0 release:

```
to_date('2017-09-29') - to_date(now())
-- Returns <interval: 203 days>
```

- The same with time:

```
to_datetime('2017-09-29 12:00:00') - to_datetime(now())
-- Returns <interval: 202.49 days>
```

- Get the datetime of 100 days from now:

```
now() + to_interval('100 days')
-- Returns <datetime: 2017-06-18 01:00:00>
```

---

#### Note: Storing date and datetime and intervals on fields

The ability to store *date*, *time* and *datetime* values directly on fields may depend on the data source's provider (e.g., Shapefile accepts *date* format, but not *datetime* or *time* format). The following are some suggestions to overcome this limitation:

- *date*, *Datetime* and *time* can be stored in text type fields after using the `to_format()` function.
  - *Intervals* can be stored in integer or decimal type fields after using one of the date extraction functions (e.g., `day()` to get the interval expressed in days)
- 

## Fields and Values

Contains a list of fields from the layer.

Double-click a field name to have it added to your expression. You can also type the field name (preferably inside double quotes) or its *alias*.

To retrieve fields values to use in an expression, select the appropriate field and, in the shown widget, choose between *10 Samples* and *All Unique*. Requested values are then displayed and you can use the *Search* box at the top of the list to filter the result. Sample values can also be accessed via right-clicking on a field.

To add a value to the expression you are writing, double-click on it in the list. If the value is of a string type, it should be simple quoted, otherwise no quote is needed.

## Fuzzy Matching Functions

This group contains functions for fuzzy comparisons between values.

Function	Description
hamming_distance	Returns the number of characters at corresponding positions within the input strings where the characters are different
levenshheim	Returns the minimum number of character edits (insertions, deletions or substitutions) required to change one string to another. Measure the similarity between two strings
longest_common	Returns the longest common substring between two strings
soundex	Returns the Soundex representation of a string

## General Functions

This group contains general assorted functions.

Function	Description
env	Gets an environment variable and returns its content as a string. If the variable is not found, NULL will be returned.
eval	Evaluates an expression which is passed in a string. Useful to expand dynamic parameters passed as context variables or fields
is_layer_visible	Returns true if a specified layer is visible
layer_property	Returns a property of a layer or a value of its metadata. It can be layer name, crs, geometry type, feature count...
var	Returns the value stored within a specified variable. See variable functions below
with_variable	Creates and sets a variable for any expression code that will be provided as a third argument. Useful to avoid repetition in expressions where the same value needs to be used more than once.

## Geometry Functions

This group contains functions that operate on geometry objects (e.g., length, area).

Function	Description
\$area	Returns the area size of the current feature
\$geometry	Returns the geometry of the current feature (can be used for processing with other functions)
\$length	Returns the length of the current line feature
\$perimeter	Returns the perimeter of the current polygon feature
\$x	Returns the X coordinate of the current feature
\$x_at(n)	Returns the X coordinate of the nth node of the current feature's geometry
\$y	Returns the Y coordinate of the current feature
\$y_at(n)	Returns the Y coordinate of the nth node of the current feature's geometry
angle_at_vertex	Returns the bisector angle (average angle) to the geometry for a specified vertex on a linestring geometry
area	Returns the area of a geometry polygon feature. Calculations are in the Spatial Reference System of this layer
azimuth	Returns the north-based azimuth as the angle in radians measured clockwise from the vertical on point geometry
boundary	Returns the closure of the combinatorial boundary of the geometry (ie the topological boundary of the geometry)
bounds	Returns a geometry which represents the bounding box of an input geometry. Calculations are in the Spatial Reference System of this layer
bounds_height	Returns the height of the bounding box of a geometry. Calculations are in the Spatial Reference System of this layer
bounds_width	Returns the width of the bounding box of a geometry. Calculations are in the Spatial Reference System of this layer
buffer	Returns a geometry that represents all points whose distance from this geometry is less than or equal to the buffer radius
buffer_by_m	Creates a buffer along a line geometry where the buffer diameter varies according to the M values at the vertices
centroid	Returns the geometric center of a geometry (see also qgiscentroids)
closest_point	Returns the point on a geometry that is closest to a second geometry
combine	Returns the combination of two geometries
contains(a,b)	Returns 1 (true) if and only if no points of b lie in the exterior of a, and at least one point of the interior of b lies within the boundary of a
convex_hull	Returns the convex hull of a geometry (this represents the minimum convex geometry that encloses all the points in the input geometry)
crosses	Returns 1 (true) if the supplied geometries have some, but not all, interior points in common
difference(a,b)	Returns a geometry that represents that part of geometry a that does not intersect with geometry b (see also qgisdifference)
disjoint	Returns 1 (true) if the geometries do not share any space together
distance	Returns the minimum distance (based on Spatial Reference System) between two geometries in projected coordinates
distance_to_vertex	Returns the distance along the geometry to a specified vertex
end_point	Returns the last node from a geometry (see also qgisextractspecificvertices)
extend	Extends the start and end of a linestring geometry by a specified amount (see also qgisextendlines)
exterior_ring	Returns a line string representing the exterior ring of a polygon geometry, or null if the geometry is not a polygon
extrude(geom,x,y)	Returns an extruded version of the input (Multi-) Curve or (Multi-)Linestring geometry with an extent defined by the x and y parameters
flip_coordinates	Returns a copy of the geometry with the X and Y coordinates swapped (see also qgisswapxy)
geom_from_gml	Returns a geometry created from a GML representation of geometry
geom_from_wkt	Returns a geometry created from a well-known text (WKT) representation
geom_to_wkt	Returns the well-known text (WKT) representation of the geometry without SRID metadata
geometry	Returns a feature's geometry

Table 13.1 – continued from previous page

Function	Description
geometry_n	Returns the nth geometry from a geometry collection, or null if the input geometry is not a collection
hausdorff_distance	Returns basically a measure of how similar or dissimilar 2 geometries are, with a lower distance indicating greater similarity
inclination	Returns the inclination measured from the zenith (0) to the nadir (180) on point_a to point_b
interior_ring_n	Returns the geometry of the nth interior ring from a polygon geometry, or null if the geometry is not a polygon
intersection	Returns a geometry that represents the shared portion of two geometries (see also qgisintersection)
intersects	Tests whether a geometry intersects another. Returns 1 (true) if the geometries spatially intersect (share a common boundary or overlap)
intersects_bbox	Tests whether a geometry's bounding box overlaps another geometry's bounding box. Returns 1 (true) if they overlap
is_closed	Returns true if a line string is closed (start and end points are coincident), false if a line string is not closed
length	Returns length of a line geometry feature (or length of a string)
line_interpolate_angle	Returns the angle parallel to the geometry at a specified distance along a linestring geometry. Angles are measured clockwise from the positive X axis
line_interpolate_point	Returns the point interpolated by a specified distance along a linestring geometry. (see also qgisinterpolate)
line_locate_point	Returns the distance along a linestring corresponding to the closest position the linestring comes to a specific point
line_substring	Returns the portion of a line or curve geometry falling between specified start and end distances (measured along the line)
line_merge	Returns a (Multi-)LineString geometry, where any connected LineStrings from the input geometry have been merged
m	Returns the M value of a point geometry
make_circle	Creates a circular geometry based on center point and radius
make_ellipse	Creates an elliptical geometry based on center point, axes and azimuth
make_line	Creates a line geometry from a series of point geometries
make_point(x,y,z,m)	Returns a point geometry from X and Y (and optional Z or M) values
make_point_m(x,y,m)	Returns a point geometry from X and Y coordinates and M values
make_polygon	Creates a polygon geometry from an outer ring and optional series of inner ring geometries
make_regular_polygon	Creates a regular polygon
make_triangle	Creates a triangle polygon
minimal_circle	Returns the minimal enclosing circle of an input geometry (see also qgisminimumenclosingcircle)
nodes_to_points	Returns a multipoint geometry consisting of every node in the input geometry (see also qgisextractvertices)
num_geometries	Returns the number of geometries in a geometry collection, or null if the input geometry is not a collection
num_interior_rings	Returns the number of interior rings in a polygon or geometry collection, or null if the input geometry is not a polygon
num_points	Returns the number of vertices in a geometry
num_rings	Returns the number of rings (including exterior rings) in a polygon or geometry collection, or null if the input geometry is not a polygon
offset_curve	Returns a geometry formed by offsetting a linestring geometry to the side. Distances are in the Spatial Reference System of the input geometry
order_parts	Orders the parts of a MultiGeometry by a given criteria
oriented_bbox	Returns a geometry representing the minimal oriented bounding box of an input geometry (see also qgisbbox)
overlaps	Tests whether a geometry overlaps another. Returns 1 (true) if the geometries share space, are of the same type and do not intersect
perimeter	Returns the perimeter of a geometry polygon feature. Calculations are in the Spatial Reference System of the input geometry
point_n	Returns a specific node from a geometry (see also qgisextractspecificvertices)
point_on_surface	Returns a point guaranteed to lie on the surface of a geometry (see also qgispointonsurface)
pole_of_inaccessibility	Calculates the approximate pole of inaccessibility for a surface, which is the most distant internal point
project	Returns a point projected from a start point using a distance and bearing (azimuth) in radians (see also qgisproject)
relate	Tests or returns the Dimensional Extended 9 Intersection Model (DE-9IM) representation of the relationship between two geometries
reverse	Reverses the direction of a line string by reversing the order of its vertices (see also qgisreverseline)
segments_to_lines	Returns a multi line geometry consisting of a line for every segment in the input geometry (see also qgissegmentstolines)
shortest_line	Returns the shortest line joining two geometries. The resultant line will start at geometry 1 and end at geometry 2
simplify	Simplifies a geometry by removing nodes using a distance based threshold (see also qgisimplifygeometry)
simplify_vw	Simplifies a geometry by removing nodes using an area based threshold (see also qgisvwsimplifygeometry)
single_sided_buffer	Returns a geometry formed by buffering out just one side of a linestring geometry. Distances are in the Spatial Reference System of the input geometry
smooth	Smooths a geometry by adding extra nodes which round off corners in the geometry (see also qgissmooth)
start_point	Returns the first node from a geometry (see also qgisextractspecificvertices)
sym_difference	Returns a geometry that represents the portions of two geometries that do not intersect (see also qgisdifference)
tapered_buffer	Creates a buffer along a line geometry where the buffer diameter varies evenly over the length of the line
touches	Tests whether a geometry touches another. Returns 1 (true) if the geometries have at least one point in common
transform	Returns the geometry transformed from the source CRS to the destination CRS (see also qgisreproject)
translate	Returns a translated version of a geometry. Calculations are in the Spatial Reference System of the geometry
union	Returns a geometry that represents the point set union of the geometries

Table 13.1 – continued from previous page

Function	Description
wedge_buffer	Returns a wedge shaped buffer originating from a point geometry given an angle and radii (see also qgis:buffer)
within (a,b)	Tests whether a geometry is within another. Returns 1 (true) if geometry a is completely inside geometry b.
x	Returns the X coordinate of a point geometry, or the X coordinate of the centroid for a non-point geometry.
x_min	Returns the minimum X coordinate of a geometry. Calculations are in the Spatial Reference System of the geometry.
x_max	Returns the maximum X coordinate of a geometry. Calculations are in the Spatial Reference System of the geometry.
y	Returns the Y coordinate of a point geometry, or the Y coordinate of the centroid for a non-point geometry.
y_min	Returns the minimum Y coordinate of a geometry. Calculations are in the Spatial Reference System of the geometry.
y_max	Returns the maximum Y coordinate of a geometry. Calculations are in the Spatial Reference System of the geometry.
z	Returns the Z coordinate of a point geometry

### Some examples:

- You can manipulate the current geometry with the variable \$geometry to create a buffer or get the point on surface:

```
buffer( $geometry, 10 )
point_on_surface( $geometry )
```

- Return the X coordinate of the current feature's centroid:

```
x( $geometry )
```

- Send back a value according to feature's area:

```
CASE WHEN $area > 10 000 THEN 'Larger' ELSE 'Smaller' END
```

## Layout Functions

This group contains functions to manipulate print layout items properties.

Function	Description
item_variables	Returns a map of variables from a layout item inside this print layout

### Some example:

- Get the scale of the 'Map 0' in the current print layout:

```
map_get( item_variables('Map 0'), 'map_scale' )
```

## Map Layers

This group contains a list of the available layers in the current project. This offers a convenient way to write expressions referring to multiple layers, such as when performing *aggregates*, *attribute* or *spatial* queries.

## Maps Functions

This group contains functions to create or manipulate keys and values of map data structures (also known as dictionary objects, key-value pairs, or associative arrays). Unlike the [list data structure](#) where values order matters, the order of the key-value pairs in the map object is not relevant and values are identified by their keys.

Function	Description
hstore_to_map	Creates a map from a hstore-formatted string
json_to_map	Creates a map from a json-formatted string
map	Returns a map containing all the keys and values passed as pair of parameters
map_akeys	Returns all the keys of a map as an array
map_avals	Returns all the values of a map as an array
map_concat	Returns a map containing all the entries of the given maps. If two maps contain the same key, the value of the second map is taken.
map_delete	Returns a map with the given key and its corresponding value deleted
map_exist	Returns true if the given key exists in the map
map_get	Returns the value of a map, given it's key
map_insert	Returns a map with an added key/value
map_to_hstore	Merges map elements into a hstore-formatted string
map_to_json	Merges map elements into a json-formatted string

## Mathematical Functions

This group contains math functions (e.g., square root, sin and cos).

Function	Description
abs	Returns the absolute value of a number
acos	Returns the inverse cosine of a value in radians
asin	Returns the inverse sine of a value in radians
atan	Returns the inverse tangent of a value in radians
atan2(y,x)	Returns the inverse tangent of Y/X by using the signs of the two arguments to determine the quadrant of the result
az-imuth(a,b)	Returns the north-based azimuth as the angle in radians measured clockwise from the vertical on point a to point b
ceil	Rounds a number upwards
clamp	Restricts an input value to a specified range
cos	Returns the cosine of a value in radians
degrees	Converts from radians to degrees
exp	Returns exponential of a value
floor	Rounds a number downwards
inclination	Returns the inclination measured from the zenith (0) to the nadir (180) on point_a to point_b.
ln	Returns the natural logarithm of the passed expression
log	Returns the value of the logarithm of the passed value and base
log10	Returns the value of the base 10 logarithm of the passed expression
max	Returns the largest not null value in a set of values
min	Returns the smallest not null value in a set of values
pi	Returns the value of pi for calculations
radians	Converts from degrees to radians
rand	Returns the random integer within the range specified by the minimum and maximum argument (inclusive)
randf	Returns the random float within the range specified by the minimum and maximum argument (inclusive)
round	Rounds to number of decimal places
scale_exp	Transforms a given value from an input domain to an output range using an exponential curve
scale_linear	Transforms a given value from an input domain to an output range using linear interpolation
sin	Returns the sine of an angle
sqrt	Returns the square root of a value
tan	Returns the tangent of an angle

## Operators

This group contains operators (e.g., +, -, \*). Note that for most of the mathematical functions below, if one of the inputs is NULL then the result is NULL.

Function	Description
a + b	Addition of two values (a plus b)
a - b	Subtraction of two values (a minus b).
a * b	Multiplication of two values (a multiplied by b)
a / b	Division of two values (a divided by b)
a % b	Remainder of division of a by b (eg, 7 % 2 = 1, or 2 fits into 7 three times with remainder 1)
a ^ b	Power of two values (for example, 2^2=4 or 2^3=8)
a < b	Compares two values and evaluates to 1 if the left value is less than the right value (a is smaller than b)
a <= b	Compares two values and evaluates to 1 if the left value is less than or equal to the right value
a <> b	Compares two values and evaluates to 1 if they are not equal
a = b	Compares two values and evaluates to 1 if they are equal
a != b	a and b are not equal
a > b	Compares two values and evaluates to 1 if the left value is greater than the right value (a is larger than b)
a >= b	Compares two values and evaluates to 1 if the left value is greater than or equal to the right value
a ~ b	a matches the regular expression b
	Joins two values together into a string. If one of the values is NULL the result will be NULL
'\n'	Inserts a new line in a string
LIKE	Returns 1 if the first parameter matches the supplied pattern
ILIKE	Returns 1 if the first parameter matches case-insensitive the supplied pattern (ILIKE can be used instead of LIKE to make the match case-insensitive)
a IS b	Tests whether two values are identical. Returns 1 if a is the same as b
a OR b	Returns 1 when condition a or condition b is true
a AND b	Returns 1 when conditions a and b are true
NOT	Negates a condition
column name “column name”	Value of the field column name, take care to not be confused with simple quote, see below
‘string’	a string value, take care to not be confused with double quote, see above
NULL	null value
a IS NULL	a has no value
a IS NOT NULL	a has a value
a IN (value[,value])	a is below the values listed
a NOT IN (value[,value])	a is not below the values listed

---

**Note: About fields concatenation**

You can concatenate strings using either || or +. The latter also means sum up expression. So if you have an integer (field or numeric value) this can be error prone. In this case, you should use ||. If you concatenate two string values, you can use both.

---

**Some examples:**

- Joins a string and a value from a column name:

```
'My feature''s id is: ' || "gid"
'My feature''s id is: ' + "gid" => triggers an error as gid is an integer
"country_name" + '(' + "country_code" + ')'
"country_name" || '(' || "country_code" || ')'
```

- Test if the “description” attribute field starts with the ‘Hello’ string in the value (note the position of the % character):

```
"description" LIKE 'Hello%'
```

## Rasters Functions

This group contains functions to operate on raster layer.

Function	Description
raster_statistic	Returns statistics from a raster layer
raster_value	Returns the raster band value at the provided point

## Record and Attributes Functions

This group contains functions that operate on record identifiers.

Function	Description
\$currentfeature	Returns the current feature being evaluated. This can be used with the ‘attribute’ function to evaluate attribute values from the current feature.
\$id	Returns the feature id of the current row
attribute	Returns the value of a specified attribute from a feature
get_feature	Returns the first feature of a layer matching a given attribute value
get_feature_by_id	Returns the feature of a layer matching the given feature ID
is_selected	Returns if a feature is selected
num_selected	Returns the number of selected features on a given layer
represent_value	Returns the configured representation value for a field value (convenient with some <i>widget types</i> )
uuid	Generates a Universally Unique Identifier (UUID) for each row. Each UUID is 38 characters long.

## Some examples:

- Return the first feature in layer “LayerA” whose field “id” has the same value as the field “name” of the current feature (a kind of jointure):

```
get_feature( 'layerA', 'id', attribute( $currentfeature, 'name' ) )
```

- Calculate the area of the joined feature from the previous example:

```
area( geometry( get_feature( 'layerA', 'id', attribute( $currentfeature, 'name' ) ) ) )
```

## String Functions

This group contains functions that operate on strings (e.g., that replace, convert to upper case).

Function	Description
char	Returns the character associated with a unicode code
concat	Concatenates several strings to one
format	Formats a string using supplied arguments
format_date	Formats a date type or string into a custom string format
format_number	Returns a number formatted with the locale separator for thousands (also truncates the number to the number of supplied places)
left(string, n)	Returns a substring that contains the n leftmost characters of the string
length	Returns length of a string (or length of a line geometry feature)
lower	converts a string to lower case
lpad	Returns a string padded on the left to the specified width, using the fill character
reg-exp_match	Returns the first matching position matching a regular expression within a string, or 0 if the substring is not found
reg-exp_replace	Returns a string with the supplied regular expression replaced
reg-exp_substr	Returns the portion of a string which matches a supplied regular expression
replace	Returns a string with the supplied string, array, or map of strings replaced by a string, an array of strings or paired values
right(string, n)	Returns a substring that contains the n rightmost characters of the string
rpad	Returns a string padded on the right to the specified width, using the fill character
strpos	Returns the first matching position of a substring within another string, or 0 if the substring is not found
substr	Returns a part of a string
title	Converts all words of a string to title case (all words lower case with leading capital letter)
trim	Removes all leading and trailing white space (spaces, tabs, etc.) from a string
upper	Converts string a to upper case
wordwrap	Returns a string wrapped to a maximum/ minimum number of characters

## Variables Functions

This group contains dynamic variables related to the application, the project file and other settings. It means that some functions may not be available according to the context:

- from the  Select by expression dialog
- from the  Field calculator dialog
- from the layer properties dialog
- from the print layout

To use these functions in an expression, they should be preceded by @ character (e.g, @row\_number). Are concerned:

Function	Description
algorithm_id	Returns the unique ID of an algorithm
atlas_feature	Returns the current atlas feature (as feature object)
atlas_featureid	Returns the current atlas feature ID
atlas_featurenumber	Returns the current atlas feature number in the layout
atlas_filename	Returns the current atlas file name
atlas_geometry	Returns the current atlas feature geometry
atlas_layerid	Returns the current atlas coverage layer ID

Table 13.2 – continued from previous page

Function	Description
atlas_layername	Returns the current atlas coverage layer name
atlas_pagename	Returns the current atlas page name
atlas_totalfeatures	Returns the total number of features in atlas
canvas_cursor_point	Returns the last cursor position on the canvas in the project's geographical coordinates
cluster_color	Returns the color of symbols within a cluster, or NULL if symbols have mixed colors
cluster_size	Returns the number of symbols contained within a cluster
current_feature	Returns the feature currently being edited in the attribute form or table row
current_geometry	Returns the geometry of the feature currently being edited in the form or the table row
geometry_part_count	Returns the number of parts in rendered feature's geometry
geometry_part_num	Returns the current geometry part number for feature being rendered
geometry_point_count	Returns the number of points in the rendered geometry's part
geometry_point_num	Returns the current point number in the rendered geometry's part
grid_axis	Returns the current grid annotation axis (eg, 'x' for longitude, 'y' for latitude)
grid_number	Returns the current grid annotation value
item_id	Returns the layout item user ID (not necessarily unique)
item_uuid	Returns the layout item unique ID
layer	Returns the current layer
layer_id	Returns the ID of current layer
layer_name	Returns the name of current layer
layout_dpi	Returns the composition resolution (DPI)
layout_name	Returns the layout name
layout_numpages	Returns the number of pages in the layout
layout_page	Returns the page number of the current item in the layout
layout_pageheight	Returns the active page height in the layout (in mm)
layout_pagewidth	Returns the active page width in the layout (in mm)
map_crs	Returns the Coordinate reference system of the current map
map_crs_definition	Returns the full definition of the Coordinate reference system of the current map
map_extent	Returns the geometry representing the current extent of the map
map_extent_center	Returns the point feature at the center of the map
map_extent_height	Returns the current height of the map
map_extent_width	Returns the current width of the map
map_id	Returns the ID of current map destination. This will be 'canvas' for canvas renders, and the item ID for
map_layer_ids	Returns the list of map layer IDs visible in the map
map_layers	Returns the list of map layers visible in the map
map_rotation	Returns the current rotation of the map
map_scale	Returns the current scale of the map
map_units	Returns the units of map measurements
notification_message	Content of the notification message sent by the provider (available only for actions triggered by provider)
parent	Refers to the current feature in the parent layer, providing access to its attributes and geometry when filtered
project_abstract	Returns the project abstract, taken from project metadata
project_author	Returns the project author, taken from project metadata
project_basename	Returns the basename of current project's filename (without path and extension)
project_creation_date	Returns the project creation date, taken from project metadata
project_crs	Returns the Coordinate reference system of the project
project_crs_definition	Returns the full definition of the Coordinate reference system of the project
project_filename	Returns the filename of the current project
project_folder	Returns the folder of the current project
project_home	Returns the home path of the current project
project_identifier	Returns the project identifier, taken from the project's metadata
project_keywords	Returns the project keywords, taken from the project's metadata
project_path	Returns the full path (including file name) of the current project
project_title	Returns the title of current project
qgis_locale	Returns the current language of QGIS

Table 13.2 – continued from previous page

Function	Description
qgis_os_name	Returns the current Operating system name, eg ‘windows’, ‘linux’ or ‘osx’
qgis_platform	Returns QGIS platform, eg ‘desktop’ or ‘server’
qgis_release_name	Returns current QGIS release name
qgis_short_version	Returns current QGIS version short string
qgis_version	Returns current QGIS version string
qgis_version_no	Returns current QGIS version number
snapping_results	Gives access to snapping results while digitizing a feature (only available in add feature)
symbol_angle	Returns the angle of the symbol used to render the feature (valid for marker symbols only)
symbol_color	Returns the color of the symbol used to render the feature
user_account_name	Returns the current user’s operating system account name
user_full_name	Returns the current user’s operating system user name
row_number	Stores the number of the current row
value	Returns the current value
with_variable	Allows setting a variable for usage within an expression and avoid recalculating the same value repeatedly

### Some examples:

- Return the X coordinate of a map item center to insert into a label in layout:

```
x( map_get( item_variables( 'map1' ), 'map_extent_center' ) )
```

- Return for each feature in the current layer the number of overlapping airports features:

```
aggregate( layer:='airport', aggregate:='count', expression:="code",
           filter:=intersects( $geometry, geometry( @parent ) ) )
```

- Get the object\_id of the first snapped point of a line:

```
with_variable(
    'first_snapped_point',
    array_first( @snapping_results ),
    attribute(
        get_feature_by_id(
            map_get( @first_snapped_point, 'layer' ),
            map_get( @first_snapped_point, 'feature_id' )
        ),
        'object_id'
    )
)
```

### Recent Functions

This group contains recently used functions. Depending on the context of its usage (feature selection, field calculator, generic), any applied expression is added to the corresponding list (up to ten expressions), sorted from the more recent to the less one. This helps to quickly retrieve and reapply any previously used expression.

#### 13.3.3 Function Editor

With the *Function Editor* tab, you are able to write your own functions in Python language. This provides a handy and comfortable way to address particular needs that would not be covered by the predefined functions.

To create a new function:

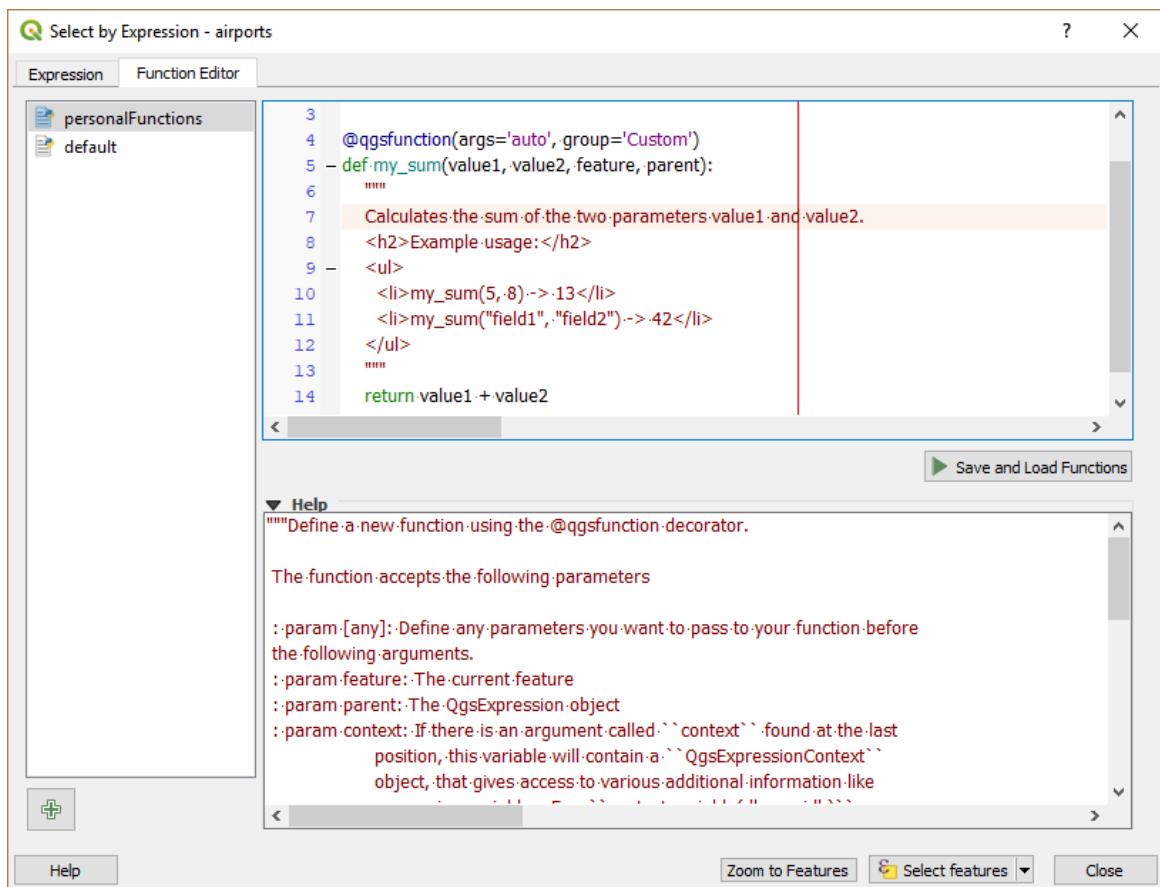


Fig. 13.74: The Function Editor tab

1. Press the  New File button.

2. Enter a name to use in the form that pops up and press *OK*.

A new item of the name you provide is added in the left panel of the *Function Editor* tab; this is a Python .py file based on QGIS template file and stored in the /python/expressions folder under the active *user profile* directory.

3. The right panel displays the content of the file: a python script template. Update the code and its help according to your needs.

4. Press the  Save and Load Functions button. The function you wrote is added to the functions tree in the *Expression* tab, by default under the Custom group.

5. Enjoy your new function.

6. If the function requires improvements, enable the *Function Editor* tab, do the changes and press again the  Save and Load Functions button to make them available in the file, hence in any expression tab.

Custom Python functions are stored under the user profile directory, meaning that at each QGIS startup, it will auto load all the functions defined with the current user profile. Be aware that new functions are only saved in the /python/expressions folder and not in the project file. If you share a project that uses one of your custom functions you will need to also share the .py file in the /python/expressions folder.

Here's a short example on how to create your own functions:

```
from qgis.core import *
from qgis.gui import *

@qgsfunction(args='auto', group='Custom')
def my_sum(value1, value2, feature, parent):
    """
    Calculates the sum of the two parameters value1 and value2.
    <h2>Example usage:</h2>
    <ul>
        <li>my_sum(5, 8) -> 13</li>
        <li>my_sum("field1", "field2") -> 42</li>
    </ul>
    """
    return value1 + value2
```

The short example creates a function `my_sum` that will give you a function with two values. When using the `args='auto'` function argument the number of function arguments required will be calculated by the number of arguments the function has been defined with in Python (minus 2 - `feature`, and `parent`).

This function can then be used in expressions:

Further information about creating Python code can be found in the PyQGIS-Developer-Cookbook.

## 13.4 Working with the Attribute Table

The attribute table displays information on features of a selected layer. Each row in the table represents a feature (with or without geometry), and each column contains a particular piece of information about the feature. Features in the table can be searched, selected, moved or even edited.

### 13.4.1 Foreword: Spatial and non-spatial tables

QGIS allows you to load spatial and non-spatial layers. This currently includes tables supported by OGR and delimited text, as well as the PostgreSQL, MSSQL, SpatiaLite, DB2 and Oracle provider. All loaded layers are listed in the *Layers* panel. Whether a layer is spatially enabled or not determines whether you can interact with it on the map.

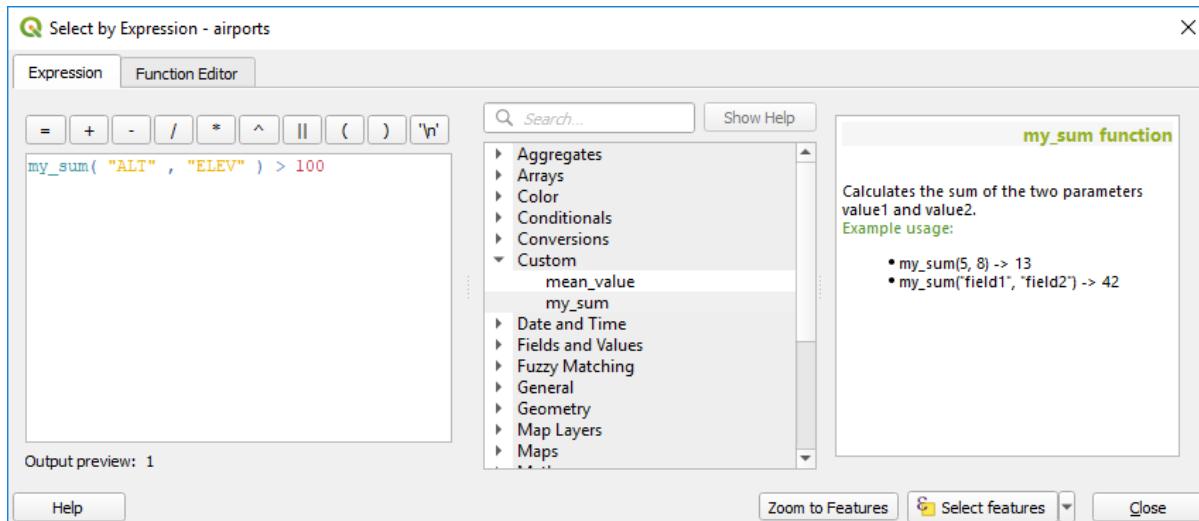


Fig. 13.75: Custom Function added to the Expression tab

Non-spatial tables can be browsed and edited using the attribute table view. Furthermore, they can be used for field lookups. For example, you can use columns of a non-spatial table to define attribute values, or a range of values that are allowed, to be added to a specific vector layer during digitizing. Have a closer look at the edit widget in section *Attributes Form Properties* to find out more.

### 13.4.2 Introducing the attribute table interface

To open the attribute table for a vector layer, activate the layer by clicking on it in the *Layers Panel*. Then, from the main *Layer* menu, choose *Open Attribute Table*. It is also possible to right-click on the layer and choose *Open Attribute Table* from the drop-down menu, or to click on the *Open Attribute Table* button in the Attributes toolbar. If you prefer shortcuts, **F6** will open the attribute table. **Shift+F6** will open the attribute table filtered to selected features and **Ctrl+F6** will open the attribute table filtered to visible features.

This will open a new window that displays the feature attributes for the layer (*figure\_attributes\_table*). According to the setting in *Settings → Options → Data sources* menu, the attribute table will open in a docked window or a regular window. The total number of features in the layer and the number of currently selected/filtered features are shown in the attribute table title, as well as if the layer is spatially limited.

The buttons at the top of the attribute table window provide the following functionality:

regions :: Features Total: 26, Filtered: 26, Selected: 4			
<input type="text" value="abc name_2"/> = <span style="margin-left: 10px;">Update All</span> <span style="margin-left: 10px;">Update Selected</span>			
	id	name_2	type_2
1	1	Aleutians East	Borough
2	2	Aleutians West	Census Area
3	3	Anchorage	Municipality
4	4	Bethel	Census Area
5	5	Bristol Bay	Borough
6	6	Denali	Borough
7	7	Dillingham	Census Area
8	8	Fairbanks No...	Borough
<span style="margin-left: 10px;"></span> <span style="margin-left: 10px;"></span>			

Fig. 13.76: Attribute Table for regions layer

Icon	Label	Purpose	Default Shortcut
	Toggle editing mode	Enable editing functionalities	Ctrl+E
	Toggle multi edit mode	Update multiple fields of many features	
	Save Edits	Save current modifications	Ctrl+S
	Reload the table		
	Add feature	Add new geometryless feature	
	Delete selected features	Remove selected features from the layer	
	Cut selected features to clipboard		Ctrl+X
	Copy selected features to clipboard		Ctrl+C
	Paste features from clipboard	Insert new features from copied ones	Ctrl+V
	Select features using an Expression		
	Select All	Select all features in the layer	Ctrl+A
	Invert selection	Invert the current selection in the layer	Ctrl+R
	Deselect all	Deselect all features in the current layer	Ctrl+Shift+A
	Move selected to top	Move selected rows to the top of the table	
	Pan map to the selected rows		Ctrl+P
	Zoom map to the selected rows		Ctrl+J
	New field	Add a new field to the data source	Ctrl+W
	Delete field	Remove a field from the data source	Ctrl+L
	Open field calculator	Update field for many features in a row	Ctrl+I
	Conditional formatting	Enable table formatting	
	Dock attribute table	Allows to dock/undock the attribute table	
	Action	List the actions related to the table	

## Table Attribute 1: Available Tools

**Note:** Depending on the format of the data and the OGR library built with your QGIS version, some tools may not be available.

Below these buttons is the Quick Field Calculation bar (enabled only in *edit mode*), which allows to quickly apply calculations to all or part of the features in the layer. This bar uses the same *expressions* as the  Field Calculator (see *Editing attribute values*).

## Table view vs Form view

QGIS provides two view modes to easily manipulate data in the attribute table:

- The  Table view, displays values of multiple features in a tabular mode, each row representing a feature and each column a field.
- And the  Form view shows *feature identifiers* in a first panel and displays only the attributes of the clicked identifier in the second one. Form view uses the layer fields configuration (see *Attributes Form Properties*).

You can switch from one mode to the other by clicking the corresponding icon at the bottom right of the dialog.

You can also specify the *Default view* mode at the opening of the attribute table in *Settings → Options → Data Sources* menu. It can be ‘Remember last view’, ‘Table view’ or ‘Form view’.

## Configuring the columns

Right-click in a column header when in table view to have access to tools that help you configure what can be displayed in the attribute table and how.

## Hiding and organizing columns and enabling actions

By right-clicking in a column header, you can choose to hide it from the attribute table. To change several columns behavior at once, unhide a column or change the order of the columns, choose *Organize columns* .... In the new dialog, you can:

- check/uncheck columns you want to show or hide
- drag-and-drop items to reorder the columns in the attribute table. Note that this change is for the table rendering and does not alter the fields order in the layer datasource
- enable a new virtual *Actions* column that displays in each row a drop-down box or button list of actions for each row, see *Actions Properties* for more information about actions.

## Resizing columns widths

Columns width can be set through a right-click on the column header and select either:

- *Set width...* to enter the desired value. By default, the current value is displayed in the widget
- *Autosize* to resize at the best fit the column.

It can also be changed by dragging the boundary on the right of the column heading. The new size of the column is maintained for the layer, and restored at the next opening of the attribute table.

The screenshot shows two instances of the QGIS attribute table interface for the 'airports' layer. Both instances show the same data with 76 total features, 76 filtered, and 3 selected.

**Form View (Top):**

- Toolbar: Includes icons for selection, editing, and saving.
- Search Bar: Shows '123 id' and a dropdown set to 'Expression'.
- Buttons: 'Update All' and 'Update Selected'.
- Expression Editor: Shows the expression 'ALLEN AAF'.
- Table Fields (Selected Row):

id	40
fk_region	22
elev	1167
name	ALLEN AAF
use	Military

**Table View (Bottom):**

- Toolbar: Same as the top view.
- Search Bar: Shows '123 id' and a dropdown set to 'Expression'.
- Buttons: 'Update All' and 'Update Selected'.
- Table Headers:

	id	fk_region	elev	name	use
--	----	-----------	------	------	-----

- Table Data (Rows 1-10):

1	40	22	1167	ALLEN AAF	Military
2	2	18	264	AMBLER	Other
3	49	3	129	ANCHORAGE...	Civilian/Public
4	28	4	78	ANIAK	Other
5	76	19	108	ANNETTE ISL...	Other
6	24	26	282	ANVIK	Other
7	66	2	51	ATKA	Other
8	30	4	111	BETHEL	Civilian/Public
9	3	26	585	BETTLES	Other
10	45	15	135	BIG LAKE	Other

Fig. 13.77: Attribute table in form view (top) vs table view (bottom)

## Sorting columns

The table can be sorted by any column, by clicking on the column header. A small arrow indicates the sort order (downward pointing means descending values from the top row down, upward pointing means ascending values from the top row down). You can also choose to sort the rows with the *sort* option of the column header context menu and write an expression, e.g. to sort the row using multiple columns you can write `concat (col0, col1)`.

In form view, features identifier can be sorted using the  *Sort by preview expression* option.

---

### Tip: Sorting based on columns of different types

Trying to sort an attribute table based on columns of string and numeric types may lead to unexpected result because of the `concat ("USE", "ID")` expression returning string values (ie, '`Borough105`' < '`Borough6`'). You can workaround this by using eg `concat ("USE", lpad("ID", 3, 0))` which returns '`Borough105`' > '`Borough006`'.

---

## Formatting of table cells using conditions

Conditional formatting settings can be used to highlight in the attribute table features you may want to put a particular focus on, using custom conditions on feature's:

- geometry (e.g., identifying multi-parts features, small area ones or in a defined map extent...);
- or field value (e.g., comparing values to a threshold, identifying empty cells...).

You can enable the conditional formatting panel clicking on  at the top right of the attributes window in table view (not available in form view).

The new panel allows user to add new rules to format rendering of  *Field* or  *Full row*. Adding new rule opens a form to define:

- the name of the rule;
- a condition using any of the *expression builder* functions;
- the formatting: it can be chosen from a list of predefined formats or created based on properties like:
  - background and text colors;
  - use of icon;
  - bold, italic, underline, or strikeout;
  - font.

### 13.4.3 Interacting with features in an attribute table

#### Selecting features

In table view, each row in the attribute table displays the attributes of a unique feature in the layer. Selecting a row selects the feature and likewise, selecting a feature in the map canvas (in case of geometry enabled layer) selects the row in the attribute table. If the set of features selected in the map canvas (or attribute table) is changed, then the selection is also updated in the attribute table (or map canvas) accordingly.

Rows can be selected by clicking on the row number on the left side of the row. **Multiple rows** can be marked by holding the `Ctrl` key. A **continuous selection** can be made by holding the `Shift` key and clicking on several row headers on the left side of the rows. All rows between the current cursor position and the clicked row are selected. Moving the cursor position in the attribute table, by clicking a cell in the table, does not change the row selection. Changing the selection in the main canvas does not move the cursor position in the attribute table.

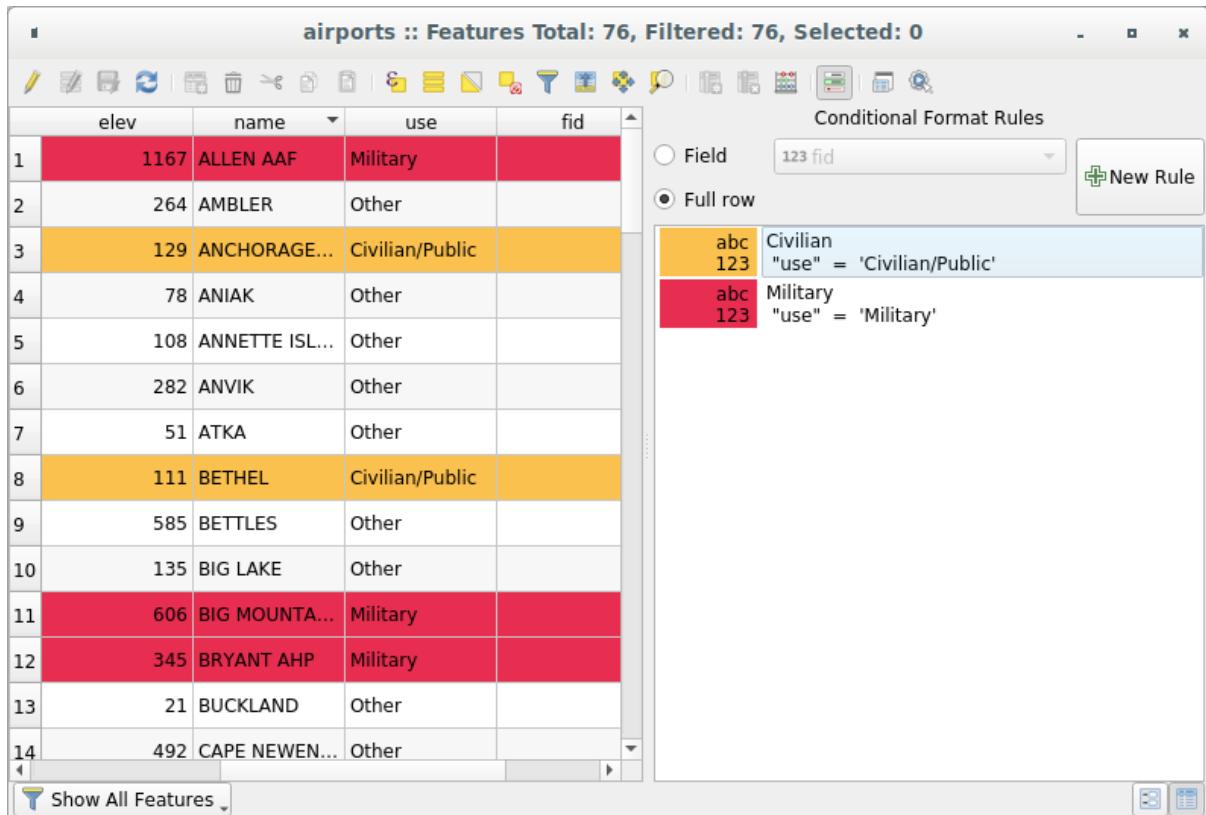


Fig. 13.78: Conditional Formatting of an attribute table

In form view of the attribute table, features are by default identified in the left panel by the value of their displayed field (see [Display Properties](#)). This identifier can be replaced using the drop-down list at the top of the panel, either by selecting an existing field or using a custom expression. You can also choose to sort the list of features from the drop-down menu.

Click a value in the left panel to display the feature's attributes in the right one. To select a feature, you need to click inside the square symbol at the left of the identifier. By default, the symbol turns into yellow. Like in the table view, you can perform multiple feature selection using the keyboard combinations previously exposed.

Beyond selecting features with the mouse, you can perform automatic selection based on feature's attribute using tools available in the attribute table toolbar, such as (see section [Automatic selection](#) and following one for more information and use case):

- [Select By Expression...](#)
- [Select Features By Value...](#)
- [Deselect Features from All Layers](#)
- [Select All Features](#)
- [Invert Feature Selection.](#)

It is also possible to select features using the [Filtering and selecting features using forms](#).

## Filtering features

Once you have selected features in the attribute table, you may want to display only these records in the table. This can be easily done using the [Show Selected Features](#) item from the drop-down list at the bottom left of the attribute table dialog. This list offers the following filters:

- Show All Features
- Show Selected Features
- Show Features visible on map
- Show Edited and New Features
- Field Filter - allows the user to filter based on value of a field: choose a column from a list, type a value and press Enter to filter. Then, only the matching features are shown in the attribute table.
- Advanced filter (Expression) - Opens the expression builder dialog. Within it, you can create *complex expressions* to match table rows. For example, you can filter the table using more than one field. When applied, the filter expression will show up at the bottom of the form.

It is also possible to *filter features using forms*.

---

**Note:** Filtering records out of the attribute table does not filter features out of the layer; they are simply momentarily hidden from the table and can be accessed from the map canvas or by removing the filter. For filters that do hide features from the layer, use the *QueryBuilder*.

---

#### Tip: Update datasource filtering with Show Features Visible on Map

When for performance reasons, features shown in attribute table are spatially limited to the canvas extent at its opening (see *Data Source Options* for a how-to), selecting *Show Features Visible on Map* on a new canvas extent updates the spatial restriction.

---

### Filtering and selecting features using forms

Clicking the  Filter>Select features using form or pressing Ctrl+F will make the attribute table dialog switch to form view and replace each widget with its search variant.

From this point onwards, this tool functionality is similar to the one described in *Select Features By Value*, where you can find descriptions of all operators and selecting modes.

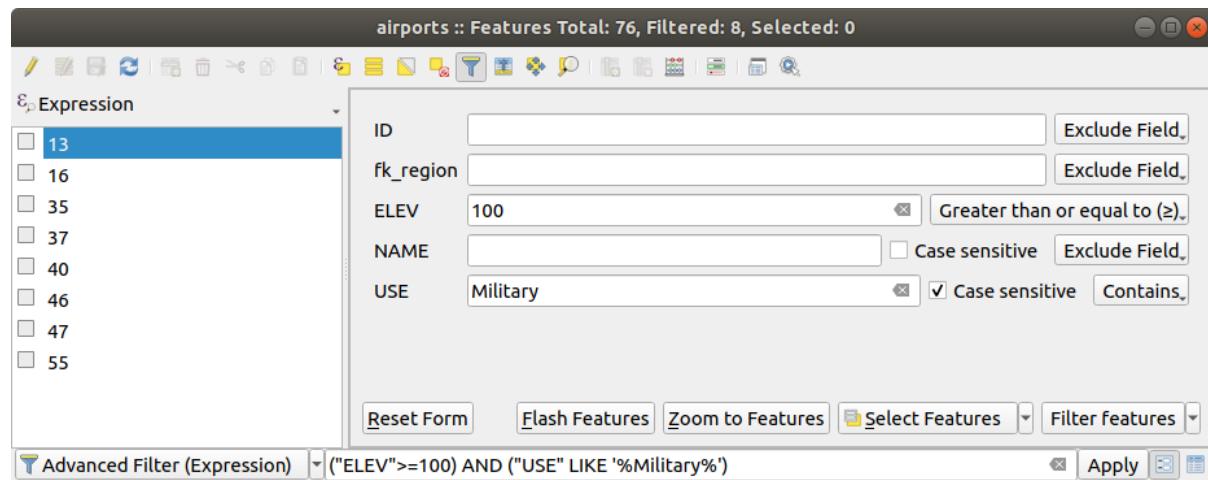


Fig. 13.79: Attribute table filtered by the filter form

When selecting / filtering features from the attribute table, there is a *Filter features* button that allows defining and refining filters. Its use triggers the *Advanced filter (Expression)* option and displays the corresponding filter expression in an editable text widget at the bottom of the form.

If there are already filtered features, you can refine the filter using the drop-down list next to the *Filter features* button. The options are:

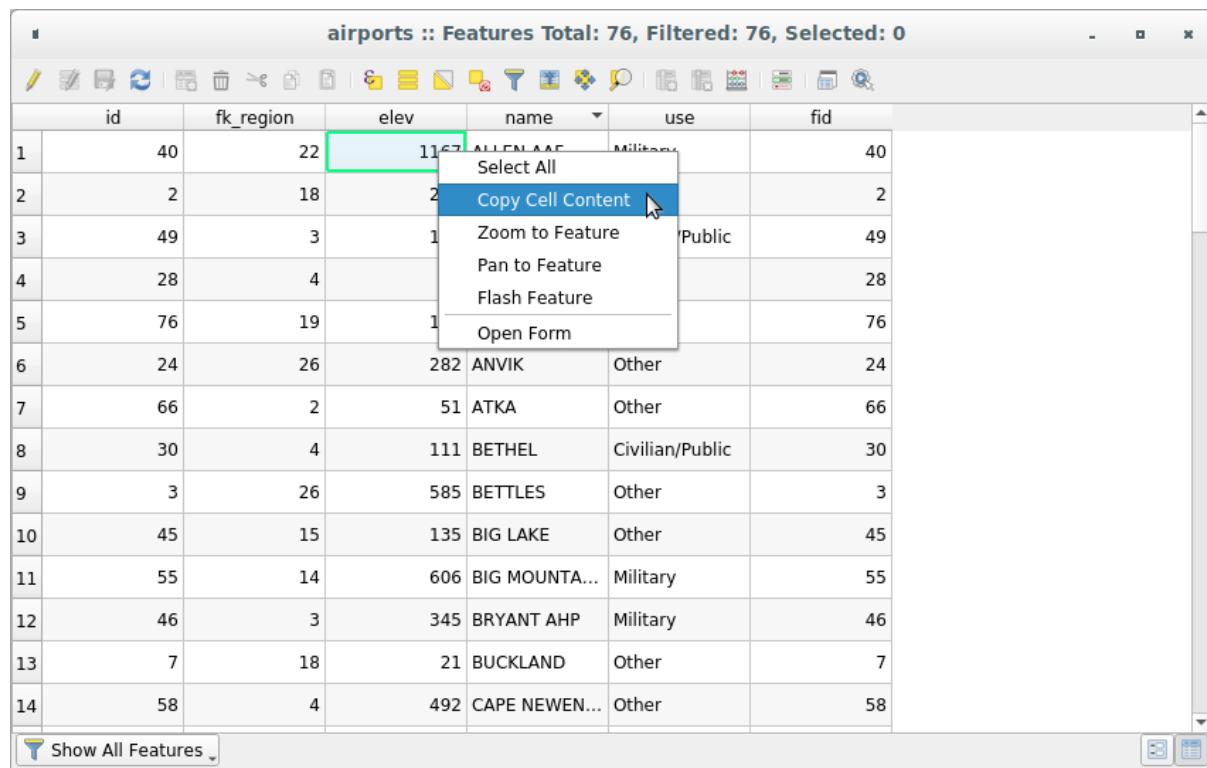
- *Filter within (“AND”)*
- *Extend filter (“OR”)*

To clear the filter, either select the *Show all features* option from the bottom left pull-down menu, or clear the expression and click *Apply* or press Enter.

### 13.4.4 Using action on features

Users have several possibilities to manipulate feature with the contextual menu like:

- *Select all* (**Ctrl+A**) the features;
- Copy the content of a cell in the clipboard with *Copy cell content*;
- *Zoom to feature* without having to select it beforehand;
- *Pan to feature* without having to select it beforehand;
- *Flash feature*, to highlight it in the map canvas;
- *Open form*: it toggles attribute table into form view with a focus on the clicked feature.



The screenshot shows the QGIS Attribute Table for the 'airports' layer. The table has columns: id, fk\_region, elev, name, use, and fid. A context menu is open over the cell containing '111' in the 'name' column for row 1. The menu items are: Select All, Copy Cell Content (which is highlighted with a blue background), Zoom to Feature, Pan to Feature, Flash Feature, and Open Form.

airports :: Features Total: 76, Filtered: 76, Selected: 0						
	id	fk_region	elev	name	use	fid
1	40	22	111	ALLEN AAF	Military	40
2	2	18	2			2
3	49	3	1		Public	49
4	28	4				28
5	76	19	1			76
6	24	26	282	ANVIK	Other	24
7	66	2	51	ATKA	Other	66
8	30	4	111	BETHEL	Civilian/Public	30
9	3	26	585	BETTLES	Other	3
10	45	15	135	BIG LAKE	Other	45
11	55	14	606	BIG MOUNTA...	Military	55
12	46	3	345	BRYANT AHP	Military	46
13	7	18	21	BUCKLAND	Other	7
14	58	4	492	CAPE NEWEN...	Other	58

Fig. 13.80: Copy cell content button

If you want to use attribute data in external programs (such as Excel, LibreOffice, QGIS or a custom web application), select one or more row(s) and use the *Copy selected rows to clipboard* button or press **Ctrl+C**. In *Settings → Options → Data Sources* menu you can define the format to paste to with *Copy features as* dropdown list:

- Plain text, no geometry,
- Plain text, WKT geometry,
- GeoJSON

You can also display a list of actions in this contextual menu. This is enabled in the *Layer properties → Actions* tab. See [Actions Properties](#) for more information on actions.

## Saving selected features as new layer

The selected features can be saved as any OGR-supported vector format and also transformed into another coordinate reference system (CRS). In the contextual menu of the layer, from the *Layers* panel, click on *Export → Save selected features as...* to define the name of the output dataset, its format and CRS (see section [Creating new layers from an existing layer](#)). You'll notice that  *Save only selected features* is checked. It is also possible to specify OGR creation options within the dialog.

### 13.4.5 Editing attribute values

Editing attribute values can be done by:

- typing the new value directly in the cell, whether the attribute table is in table or form view. Changes are hence done cell by cell, feature by feature;
- using the *field calculator*: update in a row a field that may already exist or to be created but for multiple features. It can be used to create virtual fields;
- using the quick field *calculation bar*: same as above but for only existing field;
- or using the *multi edit* mode: update in a row multiple fields for multiple features.

## Using the Field Calculator

The  **Field Calculator** button in the attribute table allows you to perform calculations on the basis of existing attribute values or defined functions, for instance, to calculate length or area of geometry features. The results can be used to update an existing field, or written to a new field (that can be a *virtual* one).

The field calculator is available on any layer that supports edit. When you click on the field calculator icon the dialog opens (see [figure\\_field\\_calculator](#)). If the layer is not in edit mode, a warning is displayed and using the field calculator will cause the layer to be put in edit mode before the calculation is made.

Based on the *Expression Builder* dialog, the field calculator dialog offers a complete interface to define an expression and apply it to an existing or a newly created field. To use the field calculator dialog, you must select whether you want to:

1. apply calculation on the whole layer or on selected features only
2. create a new field for the calculation or update an existing one.

If you choose to add a new field, you need to enter a field name, a field type (integer, real, date or string) and if needed, the total field length and the field precision. For example, if you choose a field length of 10 and a field precision of 3, it means you have 7 digits before the dot, and 3 digits for the decimal part.

A short example illustrates how field calculator works when using the *Expression* tab. We want to calculate the length in km of the *railroads* layer from the QGIS sample dataset:

1. Load the shapefile *railroads.shp* in QGIS and press  **Open Attribute Table**.
2. Click on  **Toggle editing mode** and open the  **Field Calculator** dialog.
3. Select the  *Create a new field* checkbox to save the calculations into a new field.
4. Set *Output field name* to *length\_km*
5. Select *Decimal number (real)* as *Output field type*
6. Set the *Output field length* to 10 and the *Precision* to 3
7. Double click on *\$length* in the *Geometry* group to add the length of the geometry into the Field calculator expression box.
8. Complete the expression by typing */ 1000* in the Field calculator expression box and click *OK*.

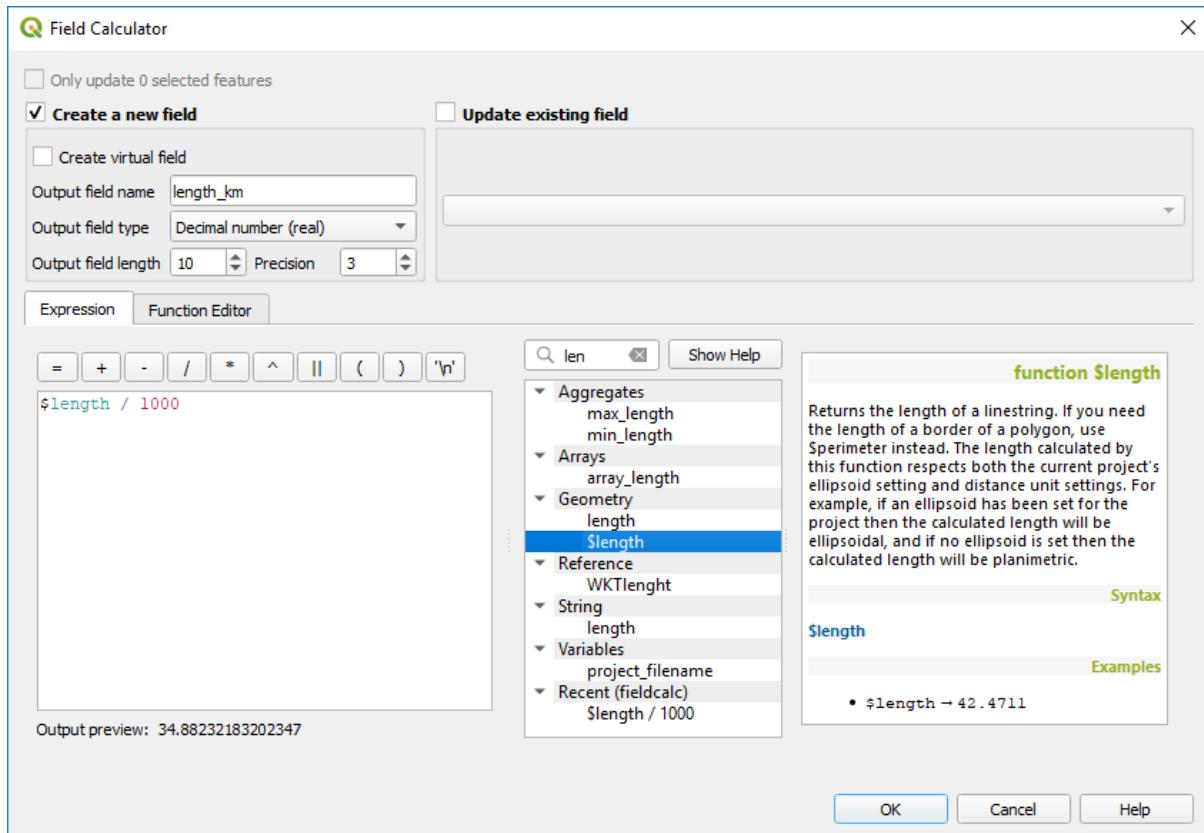


Fig. 13.81: Field Calculator

9. You can now find a new *length\_km* field in the attribute table.

### Creating a Virtual Field

A virtual field is a field based on an expression calculated on the fly, meaning that its value is automatically updated as soon as an underlying parameter changes. The expression is set once; you no longer need to recalculate the field each time underlying values change. For example, you may want to use a virtual field if you need area to be evaluated as you digitize features or to automatically calculate a duration between dates that may change (e.g., using `now()` function).

#### Note: Use of Virtual Fields

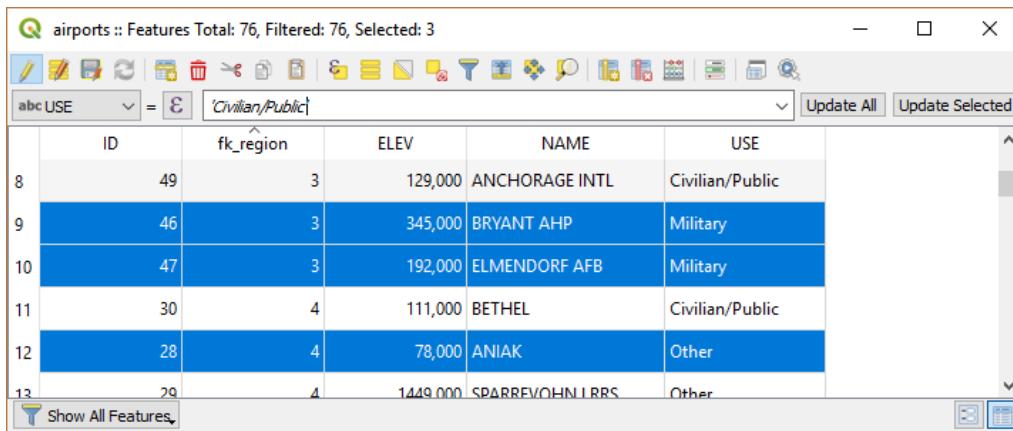
- Virtual fields are not permanent in the layer attributes, meaning that they're only saved and available in the project file they've been created.
- A field can be set virtual only at its creation and the expression used can't be changed later: you'll need to delete and recreate that field.

### Using the Quick Field Calculation Bar

While Field calculator is always available, the quick field calculation bar on top of the attribute table is only visible if the layer is in edit mode. Thanks to the expression engine, it offers a quicker access to edit an already existing field:

1. Select the field to update in the drop-down list.
2. Fill the textbox with a value, an expression you directly write or build using the  expression button.

- Click on *Update All*, *Update Selected* or *Update Filtered* button according to your need.



The screenshot shows the QGIS Attribute Table dialog. At the top, it displays 'airports :: Features Total: 76, Filtered: 76, Selected: 3'. Below the toolbar, there's a search bar with the text 'Civilian/Public'. The main area contains a table with columns: ID, fk\_region, ELEV, NAME, and USE. Rows 9, 10, 11, and 12 are highlighted in blue, indicating they are selected for update. The 'USE' column for these rows shows values like 'Military', 'Military', 'Civilian/Public', and 'Other'. The 'NAME' column includes entries such as 'BRYANT AHP', 'ELMENDORF AFB', 'BETHEL', and 'ANIAK'. The 'ELEV' column shows elevations ranging from 345,000 to 1449,000. The 'fk\_region' column shows values 3 and 4. The bottom of the table has a 'Show All Features' button.

Fig. 13.82: Quick Field Calculation Bar

### Editing multiple fields

Unlike the previous tools, multi edit mode allows multiple attributes of different features to be edited simultaneously. When the layer is toggled to edit, multi edit capabilities are accessible:

- using the *Toggle multi edit mode* button from the toolbar inside the attribute table dialog;
- or selecting *Edit* → *Modify attributes of selected features* menu.

**Note:** Unlike the tool from the attribute table, hitting the *Edit* → *Modify Attributes of Selected Features* option provides you with a modal dialog to fill attributes changes. Hence, features selection is required before execution.

In order to edit multiple fields in a row:

- Select the features you want to edit.
- From the attribute table toolbar, click the button. This will toggle the dialog to its form view. Feature selection could also be made at this step.
- At the right side of the attribute table, fields (and values) of selected features are shown. New widgets appear next to each field allowing for display of the current multi edit state:
  - The field contains different values for selected features. It's shown empty and each feature will keep its original value. You can reset the value of the field from the drop-down list of the widget.
  - All selected features have the same value for this field and the value displayed in the form will be kept.
  - The field has been edited and the entered value will be applied to all the selected features. A message appears at the top of the dialog, inviting you to either apply or reset your modification.
- Clicking any of these widgets allows you to either set the current value for the field or reset to original value, meaning that you can roll back changes on a field-by-field basis.
- Make the changes to the fields you want.
- Click on **Apply changes** in the upper message text or any other feature in the left panel.

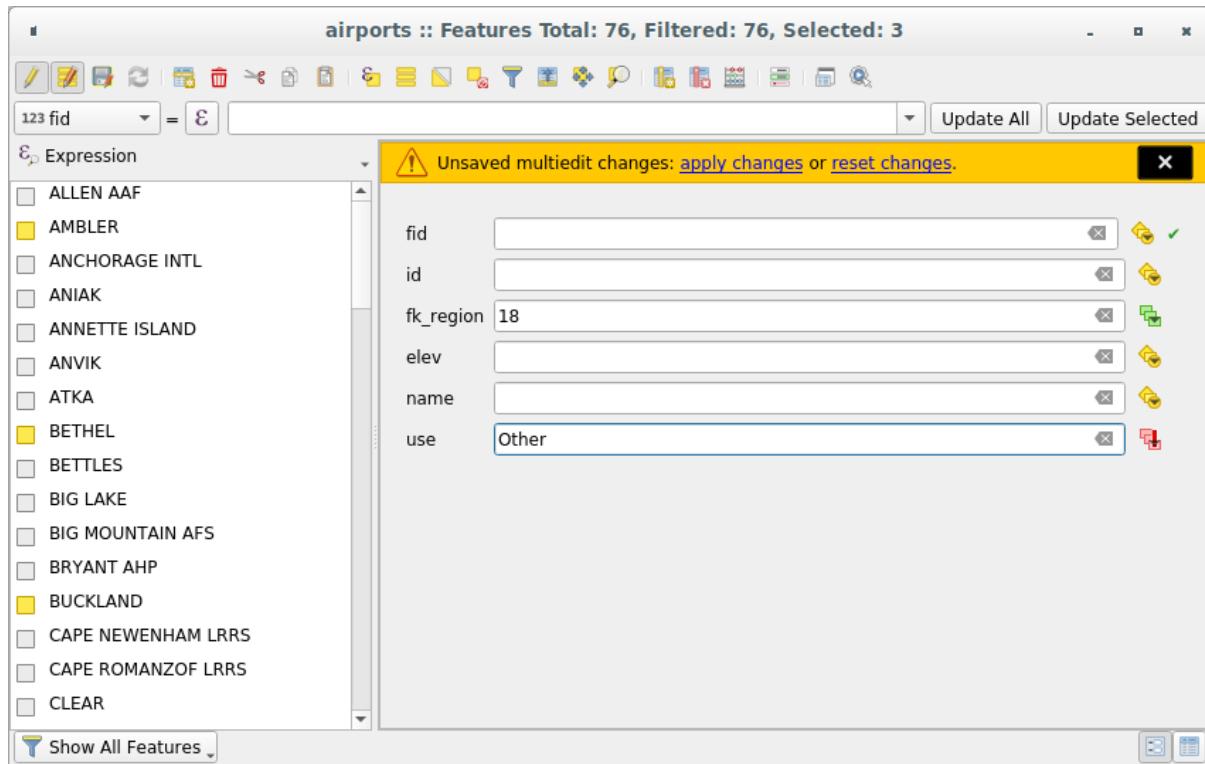


Fig. 13.83: Editing fields of multiple features

Changes will apply to **all selected features**. If no feature is selected, the whole table is updated with your changes. Modifications are made as a single edit command. So pressing Undo will rollback the attribute changes for all selected features at once.

---

**Note:** Multi edit mode is only available for auto generated and drag and drop forms (see *Customizing a form for your data*); it is not supported by custom ui forms.

---

### 13.4.6 Creating one or many to many relations

Relations are a technique often used in databases. The concept is that features (rows) of different layers (tables) can belong to each other.

#### Introducing 1-N relations

As an example you have a layer with all regions of alaska (polygon) which provides some attributes about its name and region type and a unique id (which acts as primary key).

Then you get another point layer or table with information about airports that are located in the regions and you also want to keep track of these. If you want to add them to the regions layer, you need to create a one to many relation using foreign keys, because there are several airports in most regions.

#### Layers in 1-N relations

QGIS makes no difference between a table and a vector layer. Basically, a vector layer is a table with a geometry. So you can add your table as a vector layer. To demonstrate the 1-n relation, you can load the `regions` shapefile and the `airports` shapefile which has a foreign key field (`fk_region`) to the layer `regions`. This means, that



Fig. 13.84: Alaska region with airports

each airport belongs to exactly one region while each region can have any number of airports (a typical one to many relation).

### Foreign keys in 1-N relations

In addition to the already existing attributes in the airports attribute table, you'll need another field `fk_region` which acts as a foreign key (if you have a database, you will probably want to define a constraint on it).

This field `fk_region` will always contain an id of a region. It can be seen like a pointer to the region it belongs to. And you can design a custom edit form for editing and QGIS takes care of the setup. It works with different providers (so you can also use it with shape and csv files) and all you have to do is to tell QGIS the relations between your tables.

### Defining 1-N relations (Relation Manager)

The first thing we are going to do is to let QGIS know about the relations between the layers. This is done in *Project → Project Properties... → Relations*. Open the *Relations* tab and click on *Add Relation*.

- **Name** is going to be used as a title. It should be a human readable string, describing, what the relation is used for. We will just call say **Airports** in this case.
- **Referenced Layer (Parent)** also considered as parent layer, is the one with the primary key, pointed to, so here it is the `regions` layer
- **Referenced Field** is the primary key of the referenced layer so it is `ID`
- **Referencing Layer (Child)** also considered as child layer, is the one with the foreign key field on it. In our case, this is the `airports` layer
- **Referencing Field** will say, which field points to the other layer so this is `fk_region` in this case
- **Id** will be used for internal purposes and has to be unique. You may need it to build *custom forms*. If you leave it empty, one will be generated for you but you can assign one yourself to get one that is easier to handle
- **Relationship strength** sets the strength of the relation between the parent and the child layer. The default *Association* type means that the parent layer is *simply linked* to the child one while the *Composition* type allows you to duplicate also the child features when duplicating the parent ones.

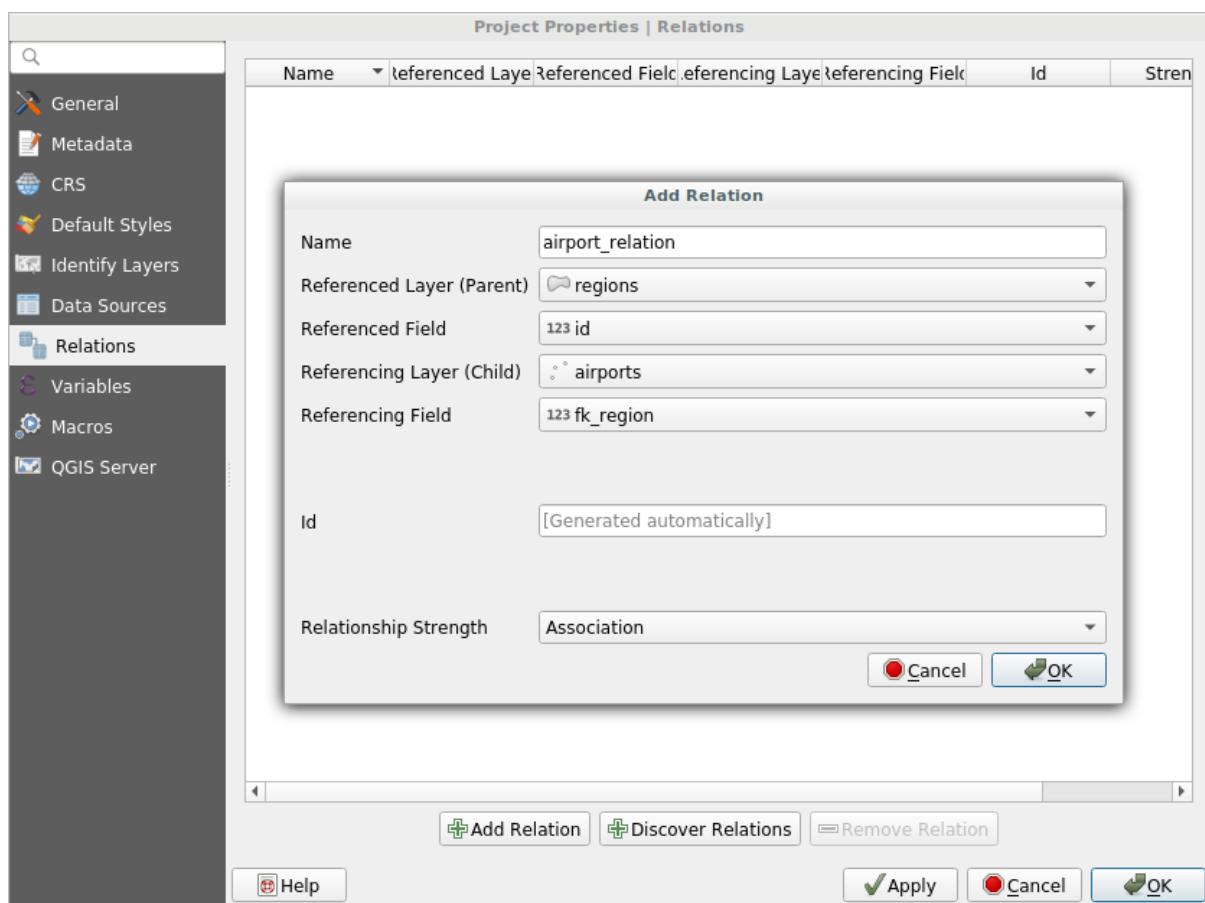


Fig. 13.85: Relation Manager

## Forms for 1-N relations

Now that QGIS knows about the relation, it will be used to improve the forms it generates. As we did not change the default form method (autogenerated) it will just add a new widget in our form. So let's select the layer region in the legend and use the identify tool. Depending on your settings, the form might open directly or you will have to choose to open it in the identification dialog under actions.

	fid	id	fk_region	elev	name	use
1	28	28	4	78	ANIAK	Other
2	29	29	4	1449	SPARREVOH...	Other
3	30	30	4	111	BETHEL	Civilian/Public
4	33	33	4	42	MEKORYUK	Other
5	58	58	4	492	CAPE NEWEN...	Other

Fig. 13.86: Identification dialog regions with relation to airports

As you can see, the airports assigned to this particular region are all shown in a table. And there are also some buttons available. Let's review them shortly:

- The button is for toggling the edit mode. Be aware that it toggles the edit mode of the airport layer, although we are in the feature form of a feature from the region layer. But the table is representing features of the airport layer.
- The button is for saving all the edits.
- The button will add a new record to the airport layer attribute table. And it will assign the new airport to the current region by default.
- The button allows you to copy one or more child features.
- The button will delete the selected airport permanently.
- The symbol will open a new dialog where you can select any existing airport which will then be assigned to the current region. This may be handy if you created the airport on the wrong region by accident.
- The symbol will unlink the selected airport from the current region, leaving them unassigned (the foreign key is set to NULL) effectively.
- With the button you can zoom the map to the selected child features.

- The two buttons and to the right switch between table view and form view where the later let's you view all the airports in their respective form.

In the above example the referencing layer has geometries (so it isn't just an alphanumeric table) so the above steps will create an entry in the layer attribute table that has no corresponding geometric feature. To add the geometry:

- Choose *Open Attribute Table* for the referencing layer.
- Select the record that has been added previously within the feature form of the referenced layer.
- Use the *Add Part* digitizing tool to attach a geometry to the selected attributes table record.

If you work on the airport table, the widget Relation Reference is automatically set up for the `fk_region` field (the one used to create the relation), see [Relation Reference widget](#).

In the airport form you will see the button at the right side of the `fk_region` field: if you click on the button the form of the region layer will be opened. This widget allows you to easily and quickly open the forms of the linked parent features.

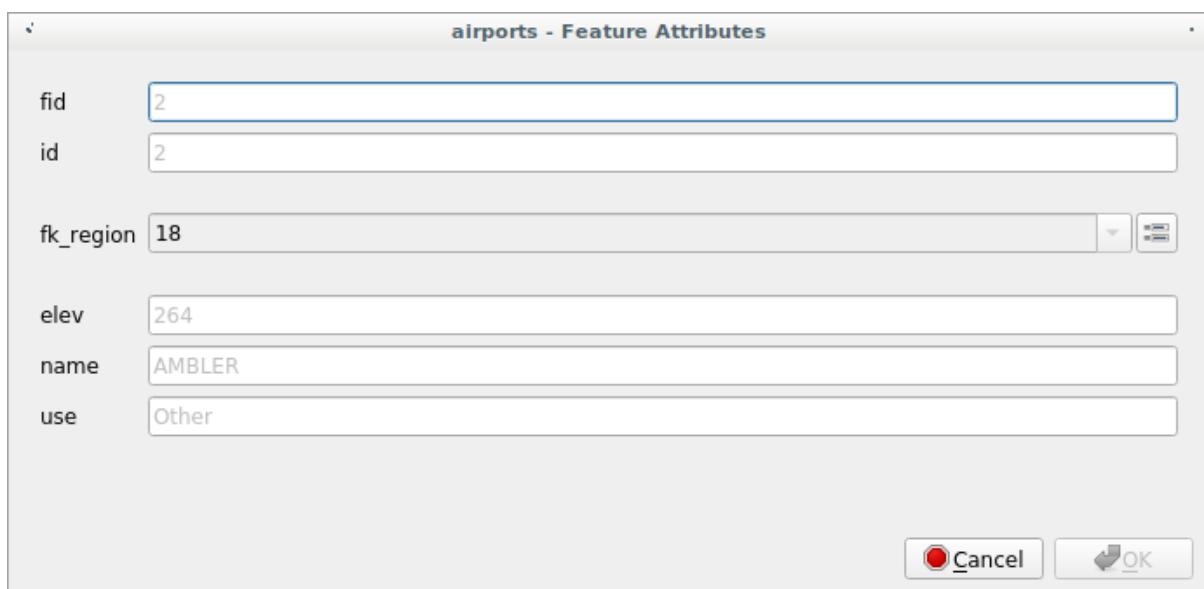


Fig. 13.87: Identification dialog airport with relation to regions

The Relation Reference widget has also an option to embed the form of the parent layer within the child one. It is available in the *Properties → Attributes Form* menu of the airport layer: select the `fk_region` field and check the `Show embedded form` option.

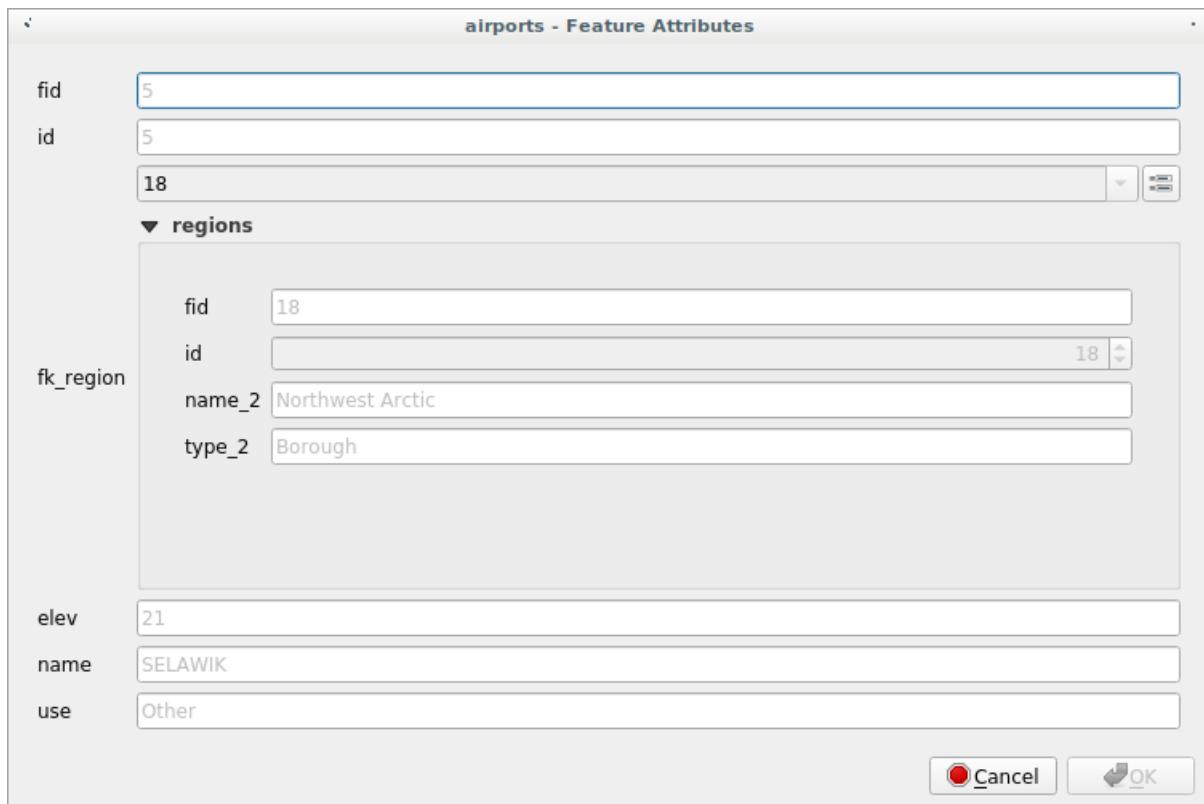
If you look at the feature dialog now, you will see, that the form of the region is embedded inside the airports form and will even have a combobox, which allows you to assign the current airport to another region.

Moreover if you toggle the editing mode of the airport layer, the `fk_region` field has also an autocomplete function: while typing you will see all the values of the `id` field of the region layer.

### Introducing many-to-many (N-M) relations

N-M relations are many-to-many relations between two tables. For instance, the `airports` and `airlines` layers: an airport receives several airline companies and an airline company flies to several airports.

This SQL code creates the three tables we need for an N-M relationship in a PostgreSQL/PostGIS schema named `locations`. You can run the code using the *Database → DB Manager...* for PostGIS or external tools such as pgAdmin. The `airports` table stores the `airports` layer and the `airlines` table stores the `airlines` layer. In both tables few fields are used for clarity. The *tricky* part is the `airports_airlines` table. We need it to list



all airlines for all airports (or vice versa). This kind of table is known as a *pivot table*. The *constraints* in this table force that an airport can be associated with an airline only if both already exist in their layers.

```

CREATE SCHEMA locations;

CREATE TABLE locations.airports
(
    id serial NOT NULL,
    geom geometry(Point, 4326) NOT NULL,
    airport_name text NOT NULL,
    CONSTRAINT airports_pkey PRIMARY KEY (id)
);

CREATE INDEX airports_geom_idx ON locations.airports USING gist (geom);

CREATE TABLE locations.airlines
(
    id serial NOT NULL,
    geom geometry(Point, 4326) NOT NULL,
    airline_name text NOT NULL,
    CONSTRAINT airlines_pkey PRIMARY KEY (id)
);

CREATE INDEX airlines_geom_idx ON locations.airlines USING gist (geom);

CREATE TABLE locations.airports_airlines
(
    id serial NOT NULL,
    airport_fk integer NOT NULL,
    airline_fk integer NOT NULL,
    CONSTRAINT airports_airlines_pkey PRIMARY KEY (id),
    CONSTRAINT airports_airlines_airport_fk_fkey FOREIGN KEY (airport_fk)
        REFERENCES locations.airports (id)
);

```

```
ON DELETE CASCADE
ON UPDATE CASCADE
DEFERRABLE INITIALLY DEFERRED,
CONSTRAINT airports_airlines_airline_fk_fkey FOREIGN KEY (airline_fk)
    REFERENCES locations.airlines (id)
    ON DELETE CASCADE
    ON UPDATE CASCADE
    DEFERRABLE INITIALLY DEFERRED
);
```

Instead of PostgreSQL you can also use GeoPackage. In this case, the three tables can be created manually using the *Database → DB Manager...*. In GeoPackage there are no schemas so the *locations* prefix is not needed.

Foreign key constraints in *airports\_airlines* table can't be created using *Table → Create Table...* or *Table → Edit Table...* so they should be created using *Database → SQL Window...*. GeoPackage doesn't support *ADD CONSTRAINT* statements so the *airports\_airlines* table should be created in two steps:

1. Set up the table only with the *id* field using *Table → Create Table...*
2. Using *Database → SQL Window...*, type and execute this SQL code:

```
ALTER TABLE airports_airlines
    ADD COLUMN airport_fk INTEGER
    REFERENCES airports (id)
    ON DELETE CASCADE
    ON UPDATE CASCADE
    DEFERRABLE INITIALLY DEFERRED;

ALTER TABLE airports_airlines
    ADD COLUMN airline_fk INTEGER
    REFERENCES airlines (id)
    ON DELETE CASCADE
    ON UPDATE CASCADE
    DEFERRABLE INITIALLY DEFERRED;
```

Then in QGIS, you should set up two *one-to-many relations* as explained above:

- a relation between *airlines* table and the pivot table;
- and a second one between *airports* table and the pivot table.

An easier way to do it (only for PostgreSQL) is using the *Discover Relations* in *Project → Properties → Relations*. QGIS will automatically read all relations in your database and you only have to select the two you need. Remember to load the three tables in the QGIS project first.

In case you want to remove an airport or an airline, QGIS won't remove the associated record(s) in *airports\_airlines* table. This task will be made by the database if we specify the right *constraints* in the pivot table creation as in the current example.

---

**Note: Combining N-M relation with automatic transaction group**

You should enable the transaction mode in *Project Properties → Data Sources →* when working on such context. QGIS should be able to add or update row(s) in all tables (*airlines*, *airports* and the pivot tables).

---

Finally we have to select the right cardinality in the *Layer Properties → Attributes Form* for the *airports* and *airlines* layers. For the first one we should choose the **airlines (id)** option and for the second one the **airports (id)** option.

Now you can associate an airport with an airline (or an airline with an airport) using *Add child feature* or *Link existing child feature* in the subforms. A record will automatically be inserted in the *airports\_airlines* table.

---

**Note: Using Many to one relation cardinality**

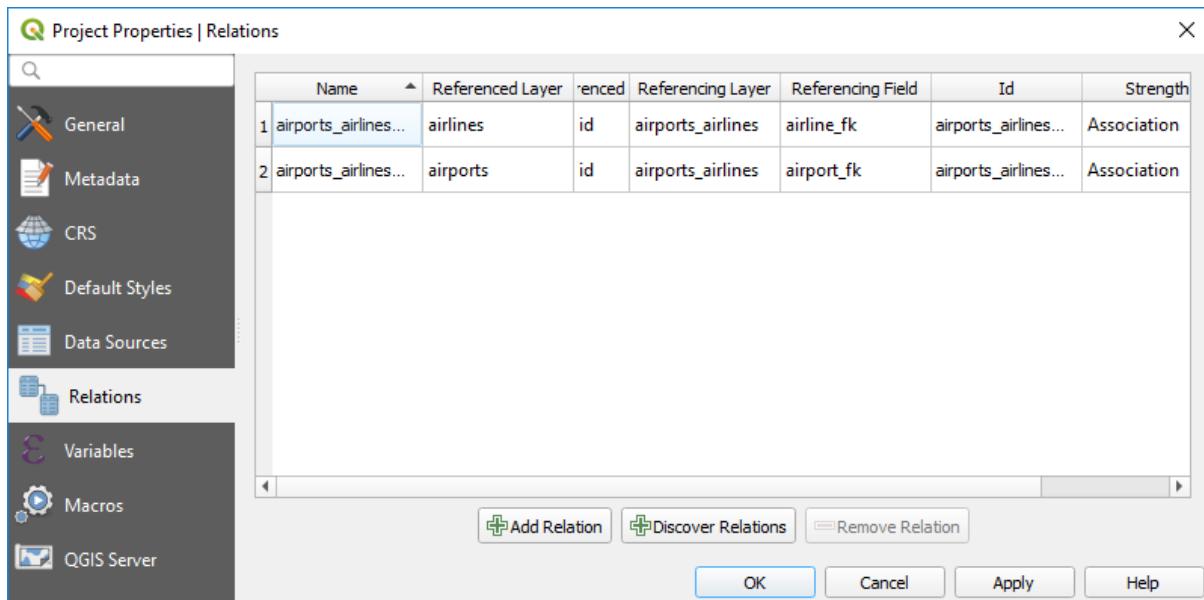


Fig. 13.88: Relations and autodiscover

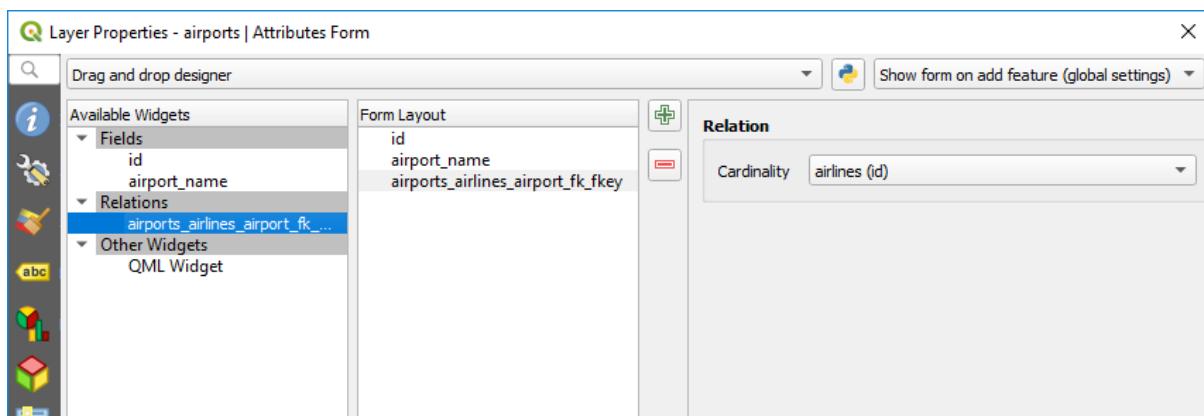


Fig. 13.89: Set relationship cardinality

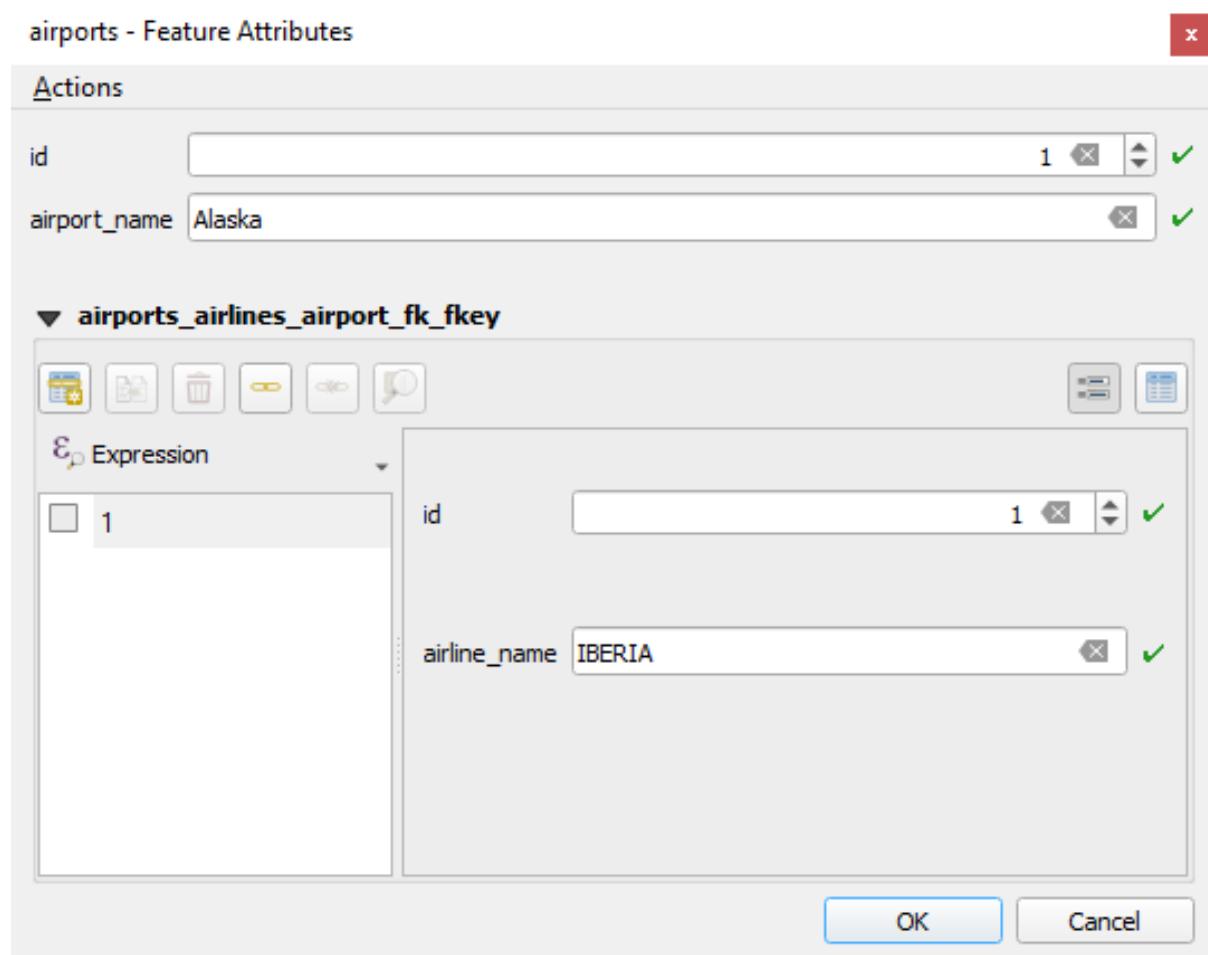


Fig. 13.90: N-M relationship between airports and airlines

Sometimes hiding the pivot table in an N-M relationship is not desirable. Mainly because there are attributes in the relationship that can only have values when a relationship is established. If your tables are layers (have a geometry field) it could be interesting to activate the *On map identification* option (*Layer Properties* → *Attributes Form* → *Available widgets* → *Fields*) for the foreign key fields in the pivot table.

---

**Note: Pivot table primary key**

Avoid using multiple fields in the primary key in a pivot table. QGIS assumes a single primary key so a constraint like constraint airports\_airlines\_pkey primary key (airport\_fk, airline\_fk) will not work.

---

## 13.5 Editing

QGIS supports various capabilities for editing OGR, SpatiaLite, PostGIS, MSSQL Spatial and Oracle Spatial vector layers and tables.

---

**Note:** The procedure for editing GRASS layers is different - see section *Digitizing and editing a GRASS vector layer* for details.

---

**Tip: Concurrent Edits**

This version of QGIS does not track if somebody else is editing the same feature at the same time as you are. The last person to save its edits wins.

---

### 13.5.1 Setting the Snapping Tolerance and Search Radius

For an optimal and accurate edit of the vector layer geometries, we need to set an appropriate value of snapping tolerance and search radius for features vertices.

#### Snapping tolerance

Snapping tolerance is the distance QGIS uses to search for the closest vertex and/or segment you are trying to connect to when you set a new vertex or move an existing vertex. If you aren't within the snapping tolerance, QGIS will leave the vertex where you release the mouse button, instead of snapping it to an existing vertex and/or segment. The snapping tolerance setting affects all tools that work with tolerance.

1. A general, project-wide snapping tolerance can be defined by choosing *Settings* →  *Options...*, *Digitizing* tab. You can select between 'To vertex', 'To segment' or 'To vertex and segment' as default snap mode. You can also define a default snapping tolerance and a search radius for vertex edits. The tolerance can be set either in map units or in pixels. The advantage of choosing pixels is that the snapping tolerance doesn't have to be changed after zoom operations. In our small digitizing project (working with the Alaska dataset), we define the snapping units in feet. Your results may vary, but something on the order of 300 ft at a scale of 1:10000 should be a reasonable setting.
2. A layer-based snapping tolerance that overrides the global snapping options can be defined by choosing *Project* → *Snapping options*. It helps to enable and adjust snapping mode and tolerance on a layer basis (see *figure\_edit\_snapping*). This dialog offers three different modes to select the layer(s) to snap to:
  - *Current layer*: only the active layer is used, a convenient way to ensure topology within the layer being edited

- *All layers*: a quick and simple setting for all visible layers in the project so that the pointer snaps to all vertices and/or segments. In most cases it is sufficient to use this snapping mode.
- *Advanced*: if you need to edit a layer and snap its vertices to another layer, ensure the target layer is checked and increase the snapping tolerance to a greater value. Furthermore, snapping will never occur to a layer that is not checked in the snapping options dialog, regardless of the global snapping tolerance. So be sure to mark the checkbox for those layers that you need to snap to.

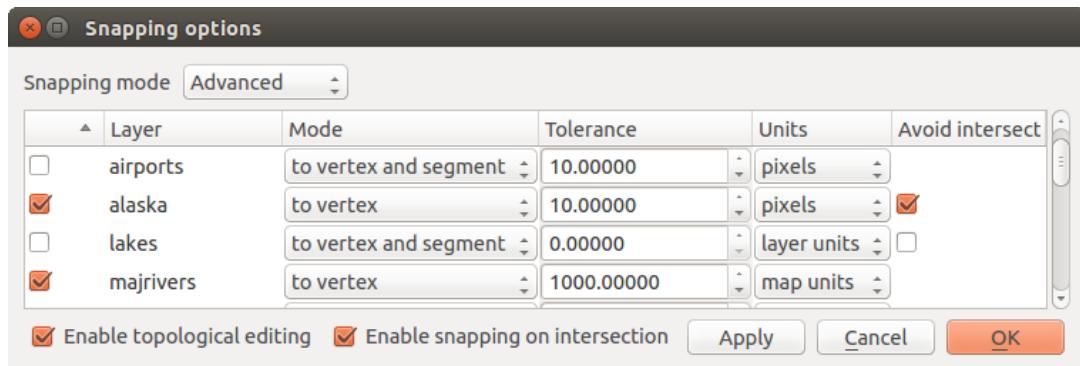


Fig. 13.91: Edit snapping options on a layer basis (Advanced mode)

#### Tip: Control the list of layers to snap

The *Snapping Options* dialog is by default populated with parameters (mode, tolerance, units) set in the global *Digitizing* tab. To avoid layers being checked by default in the **Advanced** mode and hence set snappable, define the *Default Snap mode* to **Off**.

#### Tip: Quickly toggle snapping

You can quickly enable or disable snapping by clicking the  *Enable Snapping* icon or pressing **S** at any time while you're in the map view.

Snapping tolerance can be set in **pixels** or **map units** (the units of the map view). While in the **Advanced** layer selection mode, it is possible to use a snapping tolerance that refers to **layer units**, the units of the reprojected layer when ‘on-the-fly’ CRS transformation is on.

By default, only visible features (the features whose style is displayed, except for layers where the symbology is “No symbols”) can be snapped. You can enable the snapping on invisible features by checking  *Enable snapping on invisible features* under *Settings* →  *Options* → *Digitizing* tab.

#### Search radius

Search radius is the distance QGIS uses to search for the closest vertex you are trying to select when you click on the map. If you aren't within the search radius, QGIS won't find and select any vertex for editing. The search radius for vertex edits can be defined under *Settings* →  *Options* → *Digitizing* tab. This is the same place where you define the general, project-wide snapping tolerance.

Snap tolerance and search radius are set in **map units** or **pixels**, so you may find you need to experiment to get them set right. If you specify too big of a tolerance, QGIS may snap to the wrong vertex, especially if you are dealing with a large number of vertices in close proximity. Set search radius too small, and it won't find anything to move.

## 13.5.2 Topological editing

Besides layer-based snapping options, you can also define topological functionalities in the *Snapping options...* dialog in the *Settings* (or *File*) menu. Here, you can define  *Enable topological editing*, and/or for polygon layers, activate the  *Avoid Intersections* option.

### Enable topological editing

The option  *Enable topological editing* is for editing and maintaining common boundaries in features mosaics. QGIS ‘detects’ shared boundary by the features, so you only have to move a common vertex/segment once, and QGIS will take care of updating the neighboring features.

### Avoid intersections of new polygons

A second topological option called  *Avoid intersections* prevents you to draw new features that overlap an existing one. It is for quicker digitizing of adjacent polygons. If you already have one polygon, it is possible with this option to digitize the second one such that both intersect, and QGIS then cuts the second polygon to the boundary of the existing one. The advantage is that you don’t have to digitize all vertices of the common boundary.

---

**Note:** If the new geometry is totally covered by existing ones, it gets cleared and the new feature will have no geometry when allowed by the provider, otherwise saving modifications will make QGIS pop-up an error message.

---

#### Warning: Use cautiously the *Avoid Intersections* option

Because the option cuts or clears geometry of any overlapping feature from any polygon layer, do not forget to uncheck this option once you no longer need it otherwise, you can get unexpected geometries.

### Enable snapping on intersections

Another option is to use  *Enable snapping on intersection*. It allows you to snap on an intersection of background layers, even if there’s no vertex on the intersection.

### Geometry Checker

A core plugin can help the user to find the geometry invalidity. You can find more information on this plugin at [Geometry Checker Plugin](#).

### Automatic Tracing

Usually, when using capturing map tools (add feature, add part, add ring, reshape and split), you need to click each vertex of the feature. With the automatic tracing mode, you can speed up the digitization process as you no longer need to manually place all the vertices during digitization:

1. Enable the  *Tracing* tool by pushing the icon or pressing **T** key.
2. *Snap to* a vertex or segment of a feature you want to trace along.

3. Move the mouse over another vertex or segment you'd like to snap and, instead of the usual straight line, the digitizing rubber band represents a path from the last point you snapped to the current position.

QGIS actually uses the underlying features topology to build the shortest path between the two points. Tracing requires snapping to be activated in traceable layers to build the path. You should also snap to an existing vertex or segment while digitizing and ensure that the two nodes are topologically connectable through existing features edges, otherwise QGIS is unable to connect them and thus traces a single straight line.

4. Click and QGIS places the intermediate vertices following the displayed path.

Unfold the  **Enable Tracing** icon and set the *Offset* option to digitize a path parallel to the features instead of tracing along them; a positive value shifts the new drawing to the left side of the tracing direction and a negative value does the opposite.

---

**Note: Adjust map scale or snapping settings for an optimal tracing**

If there are too many features in map display, tracing is disabled to avoid potentially long tracing structure preparation and large memory overhead. After zooming in or disabling some layers the tracing is enabled again.

---

**Note: Does not add topological points**

This tool does not add points to existing polygon geometries even if *Topological editing* is enabled. If geometry precision is activated on the edited layer, the resulting geometry might not exactly follow an existing geometry.

---

**Tip: Quickly enable or disable automatic tracing by pressing the T key**

By pressing the T key, tracing can be enabled/disabled anytime even while digitizing one feature, so it is possible to digitize some parts of the feature with tracing enabled and other parts with tracing disabled. Tools behave as usual when tracing is disabled.

---

### 13.5.3 Digitizing an existing layer

By default, QGIS loads layers read-only. This is a safeguard to avoid accidentally editing a layer if there is a slip of the mouse. However, you can choose to edit any layer as long as the data provider supports it (see [Exploring Data Formats and Fields](#)), and the underlying data source is writable (i.e., its files are not read-only).

**Tip: Restrict edit permission on layers within a project**

From the *Project → Properties... → Data Sources → Layers Capabilities* table, You can choose to set any layer read-only regardless the provider permission. This can be a handy way, in a multi-users environment to avoid unauthorized users to mistakenly edit layers (e.g., Shapefile), hence potentially corrupt data. Note that this setting only applies inside the current project.

---

In general, tools for editing vector layers are divided into a digitizing and an advanced digitizing toolbar, described in section [Advanced digitizing](#). You can select and unselect both under *View → Toolbars →*. Using the basic digitizing tools, you can perform the following functions:

Icon	Purpose	Icon	Purpose
	Current edits		Toggle editing
	Save layer edits		
	Add new record		Add Feature: Capture Point
	Add Feature: Capture Line		Add Feature: Capture Polygon
	Vertex Tool (All Layers)		Vertex Tool (Current Layer)
	Modify the attributes of all selected features simultaneously		
	Delete Selected		Cut Features
	Copy Features		Paste Features
	Undo		Redo

Table Editing: Vector layer basic editing toolbar

Note that while using any of the digitizing tools, you can still *zoom or pan* in the map canvas without losing the focus on the tool.

All editing sessions start by choosing the *Toggle editing* option found in the context menu of a given layer, from the attribute table dialog, the digitizing toolbar or the *Edit* menu.

Once the layer is in edit mode, additional tool buttons on the editing toolbar will become available and markers will appear at the vertices of all features unless *Show markers only for selected features* option under *Settings → Options... → Digitizing* menu is checked.

---

#### Tip: Save Regularly

Remember to regularly. This will also check that your data source can accept all the changes.

---

## Adding Features

Depending on the layer type, you can use the Add Record, Add Point Feature, Add Line Feature or Add Polygon Feature icons on the toolbar to add new features into the current layer.

To add a geometryless feature, click on the Add Record button and you can enter attributes in the feature form that opens. To create features with the spatially enabled tools, you first digitize the geometry then enter its attributes. To digitize the geometry:

1. Left-click on the map area to create the first point of your new feature. For point features, this should be enough and trigger, if required, the feature form to fill in their attributes. Having set the *geometry precision* in the layer properties you can use *snap to grid* here to create features based on a regular distance.
2. For line or polygon geometries, keep on left-clicking for each additional point you wish to capture or use *automatic tracing* capability to accelerate the digitization. This will create consecutive straight lines between the vertices you place.

---

**Note:** Pressing Delete or Backspace key reverts the last node you add.

---

3. When you have finished adding points, right-click anywhere on the map area to confirm you have finished entering the geometry of that feature.

---

**Note:** While digitizing line or polygon geometries, you can switch back and forth between the linear *Add feature tools* and *circular string tools* to create compound curved geometries.

---

#### Tip: Customize the digitizing rubber band

While capturing polygon, the by-default red rubber band can hide underlying features or places you'd like to capture a point. This can be fixed by setting a lower opacity (or alpha channel) to the rubber band's *Fill Color* in *Settings → Options → Digitizing* menu. You can also avoid the use of the rubber band by checking *Don't update rubber band during node editing*.

---

- The attribute window will appear, allowing you to enter the information for the new feature. *Figure\_edit\_values* shows setting attributes for a fictitious new river in Alaska. However, in the *Digitizing* menu under the *Settings → Options* menu, you can also activate:

- *Suppress attributes pop-up windows after each created feature* to avoid the form opening;
- or  *Reuse last entered attribute values* to have fields automatically filled at the opening of the form and just have to type changing values.

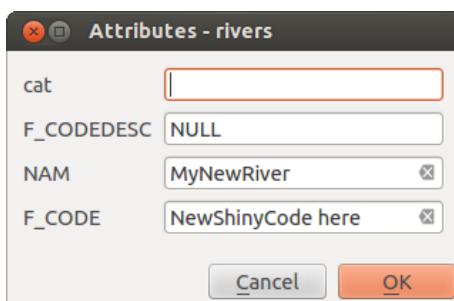


Fig. 13.92: Enter Attribute Values Dialog after digitizing a new vector feature

#### Vertex tool

---

##### Note: QGIS 3 major changes

In QGIS 3, the node tool has been fully redesigned and renamed. It was previously working with “click and drag” ergonomics, and now uses a “click - click” workflow. This allows major improvements like taking profit of the advanced digitizing panel with the vertex tool while digitizing or editing objects of multiple layers at the same time.

---

For any editable vector layer, the  Vertex tool (Current Layer) provides manipulation capabilities of feature vertices similar to CAD programs. It is possible to simply select multiple vertices at once and to move, add or delete them altogether. The vertex tool also works with ‘on the fly’ projection turned on and supports the topological editing feature. This tool is selection persistent, so when some operation is done, selection stays active for this feature and tool.

It is important to set the property *Settings → Options → Digitizing → Search Radius: 1,00* to a number greater than zero. Otherwise, QGIS will not be able to tell which vertex is being edited and will display a warning.

---

#### Tip: Vertex Markers

The current version of QGIS supports three kinds of vertex markers: ‘Semi-transparent circle’, ‘Cross’ and ‘None’. To change the marker style, choose  *Options* from the *Settings* menu, click on the *Digitizing* tab and select the appropriate entry.

## Basic operations

Start by activating the  Vertex Tool (Current Layer). Red circles will appear when hovering vertices.

- **Selecting vertices:** You can select vertices by clicking on them one at a time holding `Shift` key pressed, or by clicking and dragging a rectangle around some vertices. When a vertex is selected, its color changes to blue. To add more vertices to the current selection, hold down the `Shift` key while clicking. To remove vertices from the selection, hold down `Ctrl`.
- **Batch vertex selection mode:** The batch selection mode can be activated by pressing `Shift+R`. Select a first node with one single click, and then hover **without clicking** another vertex. This will dynamically select all the nodes in between using the shortest path (for polygons).

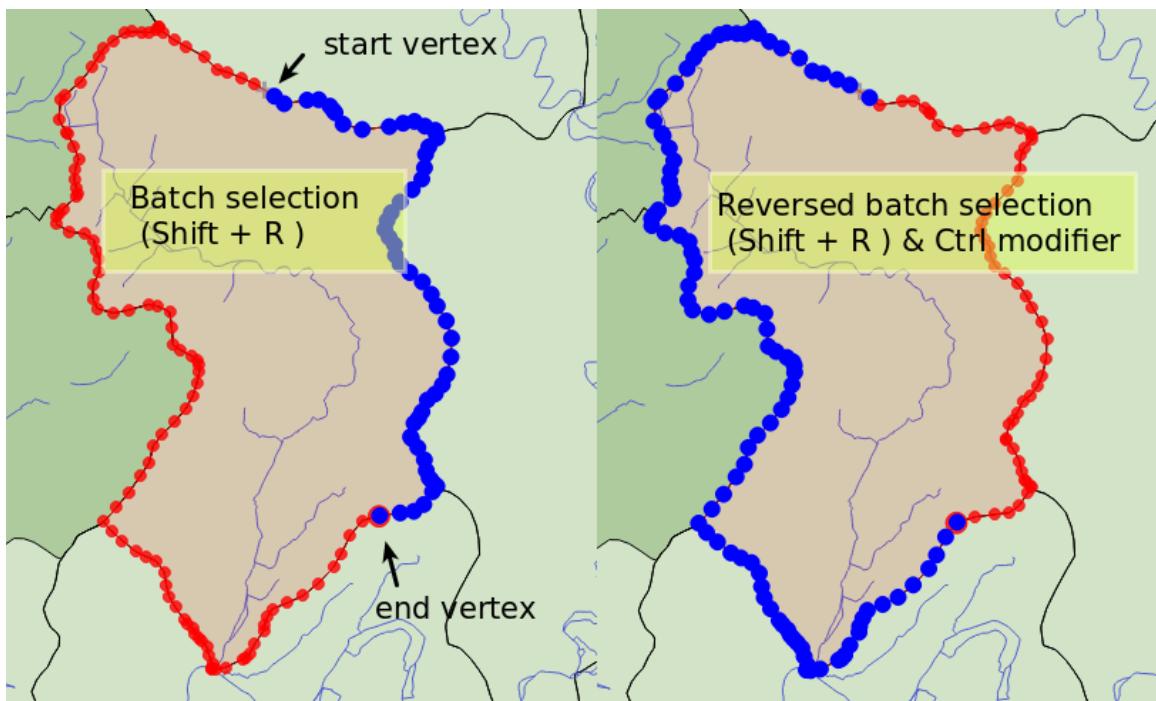


Fig. 13.93: Batch vertex selection using `Shift+R`

Press `Ctrl` will invert the selection, selecting the longest path along the feature boundary. Ending your node selection with a second click, or pressing `Esc` will escape the batch mode.

- **Adding vertices:** To add a vertex, a virtual new node appears on the segment center. Simply grab it to add a new vertex. Double click on any location of the boundary also creates a new node. For lines, a virtual node is also proposed at both extremities of a line to extend it.
- **Deleting vertices:** Select the vertices and click the `Delete` key. Deleting all the vertices of a feature generates, if compatible with the datasource, a geometryless feature. Note that this doesn't delete the complete feature, just the geometry part; To delete a complete feature use the  `Delete Selected` tool.
- **Moving vertices:** Select all the vertices you want to move, click on a selected vertex or edge, and click again on the desired new location. All the selected vertices will move together. If snapping is enabled, the whole selection can jump to the nearest vertex or line. You can use Advanced Digitizing Panel constraints for distance, angles, exact X Y location before the second click. Here you can use the snap-to-grid

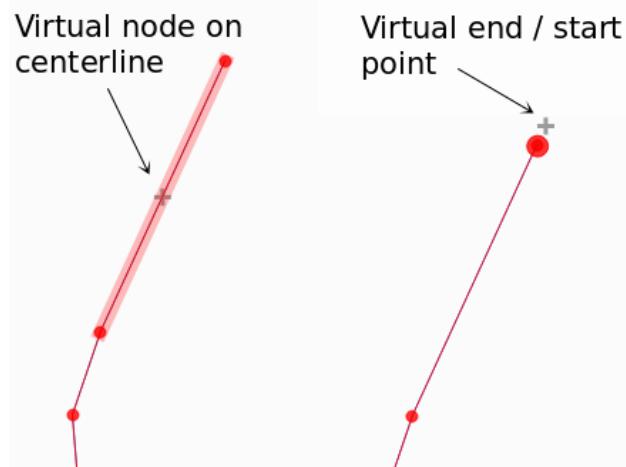


Fig. 13.94: Virtual nodes for adding vertices

feature. Having set a value for the *geometry precision* in the layer properties, a grid appears on a zoom level according to the Geometry precision.

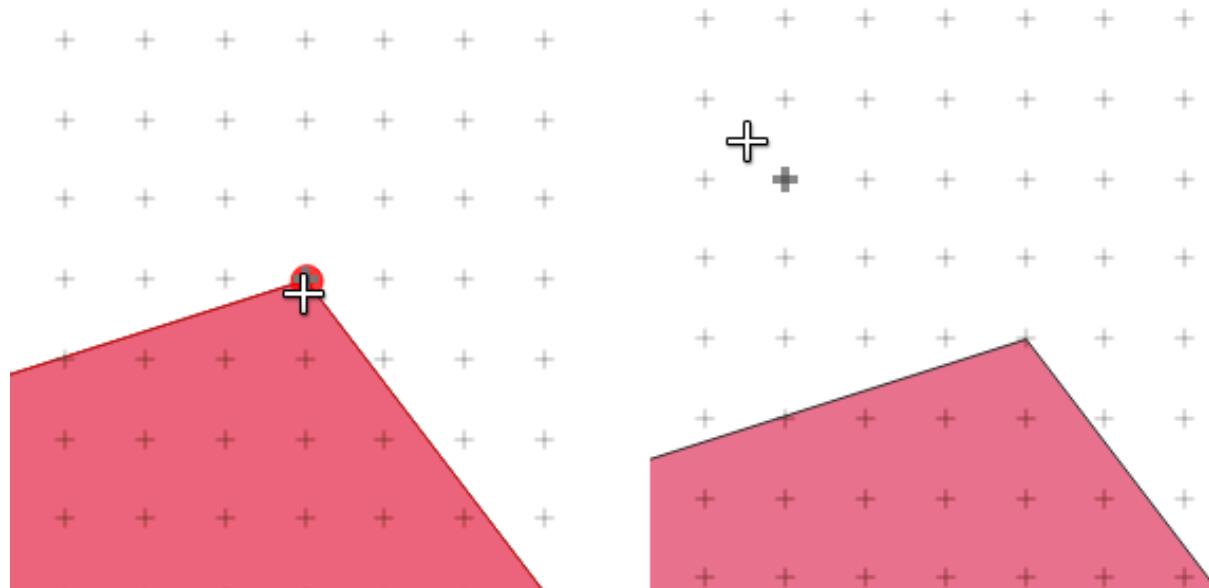


Fig. 13.95: Selecting a vertex and moving the vertices to grid

Each change made with the vertex is stored as a separate entry in the *Undo* dialog. Remember that all operations support topological editing when this is turned on. On-the-fly projection is also supported, and the node tool provides tooltips to identify a vertex by hovering the pointer over it.

### The Vertex Editor Panel

When using the *Vertex tool* on a feature, it is possible to right click to open the *Vertex Editor* panel listing all the vertices of the feature with their *x*, *y* (*z*, *m* if applicable) coordinates and *r* (for the radius, in case of circular geometry). Simply select a row in the table does select the corresponding vertex in the map canvas, and vice versa. Simply change a coordinate in the table and your vertex position is updated. You can also select multiple rows and delete them altogether.

---

**Note:** Changed behavior in QGIS 3.4

Right click on a feature will immediately show the vertex editor and lock this feature, thus disabling the editing of any other features. While being locked, a feature is exclusive for editing: Selecting and moving of vertices and segments by clicking or dragging is only possible for this feature. New vertices can only be added to the locked feature. Also, the vertex editor panel now opens itself automatically upon activating the vertex tool, and its position/docked state remembered across uses.

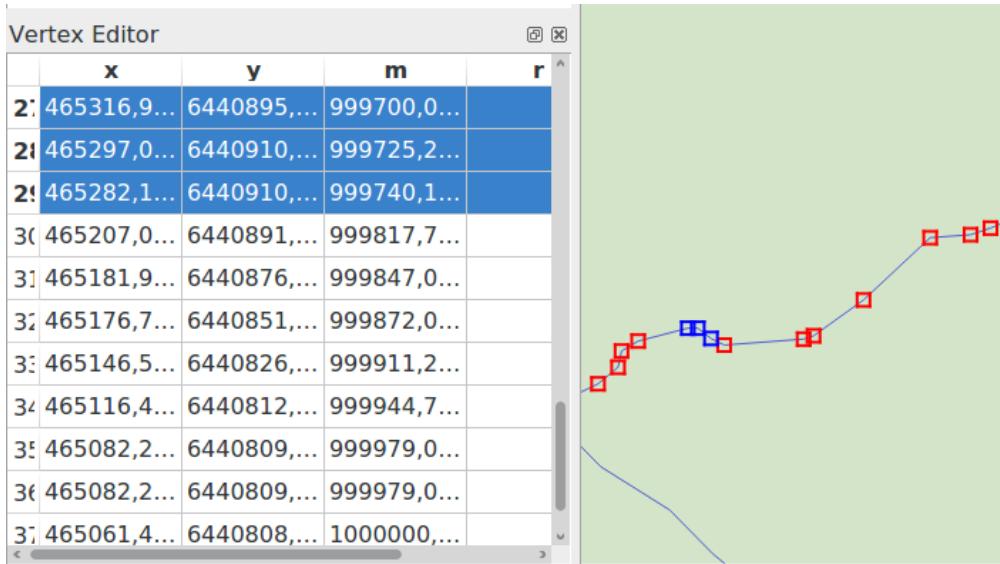


Fig. 13.96: Vertex editor panel showing selected nodes

## Cutting, Copying and Pasting Features

Selected features can be cut, copied and pasted between layers in the same QGIS project, as long as destination layers are set to Toggle editing beforehand.

### Tip: Transform polygon into line and vice-versa using copy/paste

Copy a line feature and paste it in a polygon layer: QGIS pastes in the target layer a polygon whose boundary corresponds to the closed geometry of the line feature. This is a quick way to generate different geometries of the same data.

Features can also be pasted to external applications as text. That is, the features are represented in CSV format, with the geometry data appearing in the OGC Well-Known Text (WKT) format. WKT and GeoJSON features from outside QGIS can also be pasted to a layer within QGIS.

When would the copy and paste function come in handy? Well, it turns out that you can edit more than one layer at a time and copy/paste features between layers. Why would we want to do this? Say we need to do some work on a new layer but only need one or two lakes, not the 5,000 on our `big_lakes` layer. We can create a new layer and use copy/paste to plop the needed lakes into it.

As an example, we will copy some lakes to a new layer:

1. Load the layer you want to copy from (source layer)
2. Load or create the layer you want to copy to (target layer)
3. Start editing for target layer
4. Make the source layer active by clicking on it in the legend
5. Use the Select Features by area or single click tool to select the feature(s) on the source layer

6. Click on the  Copy Features tool
7. Make the destination layer active by clicking on it in the legend
8. Click on the  Paste Features tool
9. Stop editing and save the changes

What happens if the source and target layers have different schemas (field names and types are not the same)? QGIS populates what matches and ignores the rest. If you don't care about the attributes being copied to the target layer, it doesn't matter how you design the fields and data types. If you want to make sure everything - the feature and its attributes - gets copied, make sure the schemas match.

---

**Note: Congruency of Pasted Features**

If your source and destination layers use the same projection, then the pasted features will have geometry identical to the source layer. However, if the destination layer is a different projection, then QGIS cannot guarantee the geometry is identical. This is simply because there are small rounding-off errors involved when converting between projections.

---

---

**Tip: Copy string attribute into another**

If you have created a new column in your attribute table with type ‘string’ and want to paste values from another attribute column that has a greater length the length of the column size will be extended to the same amount. This is because the GDAL Shapefile driver starting with GDAL/OGR 1.10 knows to auto-extend string and integer fields to dynamically accommodate for the length of the data to be inserted.

---

**Deleting Selected Features**

If we want to delete an entire feature (attribute and geometry), we can do that by first selecting the geometry using the regular  Select Features by area or single click tool. Selection can also be done from the attribute table. Once you have the selection set, press Delete or Backspace key or use the  Delete Selected tool to delete the features. Multiple selected features can be deleted at once.

The  Cut Features tool on the digitizing toolbar can also be used to delete features. This effectively deletes the feature but also places it on a “spatial clipboard”. So, we cut the feature to delete. We could then use the  Paste Features tool to put it back, giving us a one-level undo capability. Cut, copy, and paste work on the currently selected features, meaning we can operate on more than one at a time.

**Undo and Redo**

The  Undo and  Redo tools allows you to undo or redo vector editing operations. There is also a dockable widget, which shows all operations in the undo/redo history (see [Figure\\_edit\\_undo](#)). This widget is not displayed by default; it can be displayed by right-clicking on the toolbar and activating the *Undo/Redo Panel* checkbox. The Undo/Redo capability is however active, even if the widget is not displayed.

When Undo is hit or **Ctrl+Z** (or **Cmd+Z**) pressed, the state of all features and attributes are reverted to the state before the reverted operation happened. Changes other than normal vector editing operations (for example, changes done by a plugin) may or may not be reverted, depending on how the changes were performed.

To use the undo/redo history widget, simply click to select an operation in the history list. All features will be reverted to the state they were in after the selected operation.

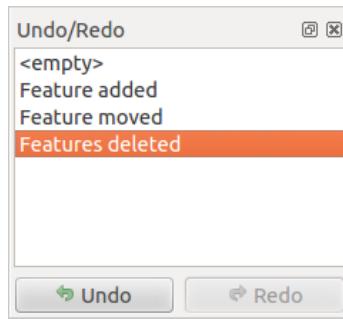


Fig. 13.97: Redo and Undo digitizing steps

### Saving Edited Layers

When a layer is in editing mode, any changes remain in the memory of QGIS. Therefore, they are not committed/saved immediately to the data source or disk. If you want to save edits to the current layer but want to continue editing without leaving the editing mode, you can click the Save Layer Edits button. When you turn editing mode off with Toggle editing (or quit QGIS for that matter), you are also asked if you want to save your changes or discard them.

If the changes cannot be saved (e.g., disk full, or the attributes have values that are out of range), the QGIS in-memory state is preserved. This allows you to adjust your edits and try again.

---

#### Tip: Data Integrity

It is always a good idea to back up your data source before you start editing. While the authors of QGIS have made every effort to preserve the integrity of your data, we offer no warranty in this regard.

---

### Saving multiple layers at once

This feature allows the digitization of multiple layers. Choose Save for Selected Layers to save all changes you made in multiple layers. You also have the opportunity to Rollback for Selected Layers, so that the digitization may be withdrawn for all selected layers. If you want to stop editing the selected layers, Cancel for Selected Layer(s) is an easy way.

The same functions are available for editing all layers of the project.

---

#### Tip: Use transaction group to edit, save or rollback multiple layers changes at once

When working with layers from the same PostGreSQL database, activate the *Automatically create transaction groups where possible* option in *Project → Properties... → Data Sources* to sync their behavior (enter or exit the edit mode, save or rollback changes at the same time).

---

### 13.5.4 Advanced digitizing

Icon	Purpose	Icon	Purpose
	Enable Advanced Digitizing Tools		Enable Tracing
	Move Feature(s)		Copy and Move Feature(s)
	Rotate Feature(s)		Simplify Feature
	Add Ring		Add Part
	Fill Ring		
	Delete Ring		Delete Part
	Offset Curve		Reshape Features
	Split Parts		Split Features
	Merge Attributes of Selected Features		Merge Selected Features
	Rotate Point Symbols		Offset Point Symbols

Table Advanced Editing: Vector layer advanced editing toolbar

#### Move Feature(s)

The **Move Feature(s)** tool allows you to move existing features:

1. Select the feature(s) to move.
2. Click on the map canvas to indicate the origin point of the displacement; you can rely on snapping capabilities to select an accurate point.

You can also take advantages of the *advanced digitizing constraints* to accurately set the origin point coordinates. In that case:

- (a) First click on the button to enable the panel.
  - (b) Type **x** and enter the corresponding value for the origin point you'd like to use. Then press the button next to the option to lock the value.
  - (c) Do the same for the **y** coordinate.
  - (d) Click on the map canvas and your origin point is placed at the indicated coordinates.
3. Move over the map canvas to indicate the destination point of the displacement, still using snapping mode or, as above, use the advanced digitizing panel which would provide complementary distance and angle placement constraints to place the end point of the translation.
  4. Click on the map canvas: the whole features are moved to new location.

Likewise, you can create a translated copy of the feature(s) using the **Copy and Move Feature(s)** tool.

---

**Note:** If no feature is selected when you first click on the map canvas with any of the *Move Feature(s)* or *Copy and Move Feature(s)* tools, then only the feature under the mouse is affected by the action. So, if you want to move several features, they should be selected first.

---

## Rotate Feature(s)

Use the  Rotate Feature(s) tool to rotate one or multiple features in the map canvas:

1. Press the  Rotate Feature(s) icon
2. Then click on the feature to rotate. The feature's centroid is referenced as rotation center, a preview of the rotated feature is displayed and a widget opens showing the current *Rotation* angle.
3. Click on the map canvas when you are satisfied with the new placement or manually enter the rotation angle in the text box. You can also use the *Snap to °* box to constrain the rotation values.
4. If you want to rotate several features at once, they shall be selected first, and the rotation is by default around the centroid of their combined geometries.

You can also use an anchor point different from the default feature centroid: press the `Ctrl` button, click on the map canvas and that point will be used as the new rotation center.

If you hold `Shift` before clicking on the map, the rotation will be done in 45 degree steps, which can be modified afterwards in the user input widget.

To abort feature rotation, press the `ESC` button or click on the  Rotate Feature(s) icon.

## Simplify Feature

The  Simplify Feature tool allows you to interactively reshape a line or polygon geometry by reducing or densifying the number of vertices, as long as the geometry remains valid:

1. Select the  Simplify Feature tool.
2. Click on the feature or drag a rectangle over the features.
3. A dialog pops up allowing you to define the *Method* to apply, ie whether you would like to:
  - simplify the geometry, meaning less vertices than the original. Available methods are *Simplify by distance*, *Simplify by snapping to grid* or *simplify by area* (*Visvalingam*). You'd then need to indicate the value of *Tolerance* in Layer units, Pixels or map units to use for simplification. The higher the tolerance is the more vertices can be deleted.
  - or densify the geometries with new vertices thanks to the *Smooth* option: for each existing vertex, two vertices are placed on each of the segments originated from it, at an *Offset* distance representing the percentage of the segment length. You can also set the number of *Iterations* the placement would be processed: the more iterations, the more vertices and smoother is the feature.

Settings that you used will be saved when leaving a project or an edit session. So you can go back to the same parameters the next time you simplify a feature.

4. A summary of the modifications that would apply is shown at the bottom of the dialog, listing number of features and number of vertices (before and after the operation and the ratio the change represents). Also, in the map canvas, the expected geometry is displayed over the existing one, using the rubberband color.
5. When the expected geometry fits your needs, click *OK* to apply the modification. Otherwise, to abort the operation, you can either press *Cancel* or right-click in the map canvas.

---

**Note:** Unlike the feature simplification option in *Settings → Options → Rendering* menu which simplifies the geometry just for rendering, the  Simplify Feature tool permanently modifies feature's geometry in data source.

---

### Add Part

You can  Add Part to a selected feature generating a multipoint, multiline or multipolygon feature. The new part must be digitized outside the existing one which should be selected beforehand.

The  Add Part can also be used to add a geometry to a geometryless feature. First, select the feature in the attribute table and digitize the new geometry with the  Add Part tool.

### Delete Part

The  Delete Part tool allows you to delete parts from multifeatures (e.g., to delete polygons from a multi-polygon feature). This tool works with all multi-part geometries: point, line and polygon. Furthermore, it can be used to totally remove the geometric component of a feature. To delete a part, simply click within the target part.

### Add Ring

You can create ring polygons using the  Add Ring icon in the toolbar. This means that inside an existing area, it is possible to digitize further polygons that will occur as a ‘hole’, so only the area between the boundaries of the outer and inner polygons remains as a ring polygon.

### Fill Ring

The  Fill Ring tool helps you create polygon feature that totally falls within another one without any overlapping area; that is the new feature covers a hole within the existing one. To create such a feature:

1. Select the  Fill Ring tool.
2. Draw a new polygon over the existing feature: QGIS adds a ring to its geometry (like if you used the  Add Ring tool) and creates a new feature whose geometry matches the ring (like if you *traced* over the interior boundaries with the  Add polygon feature tool).
3. Or alternatively, if the ring already exists on the feature, place the mouse over the ring and left-click while pressing Shift: a new feature filling the hole is drawn at that place.

The *Feature Attributes* form of the new feature opens, pre-filled with values of the “parent” feature and/or *fields constraints*.

### Delete Ring

The  Delete Ring tool allows you to delete rings within an existing polygon, by clicking inside the hole. This tool only works with polygon and multi-polygon features. It doesn’t change anything when it is used on the outer ring of the polygon.

### Reshape Features

You can reshape line and polygon features using the  Reshape Features tool on the toolbar. For lines, it replaces the line part from the first to the last intersection with the original line.

---

#### Tip: Extend linestring geometries with reshape tool

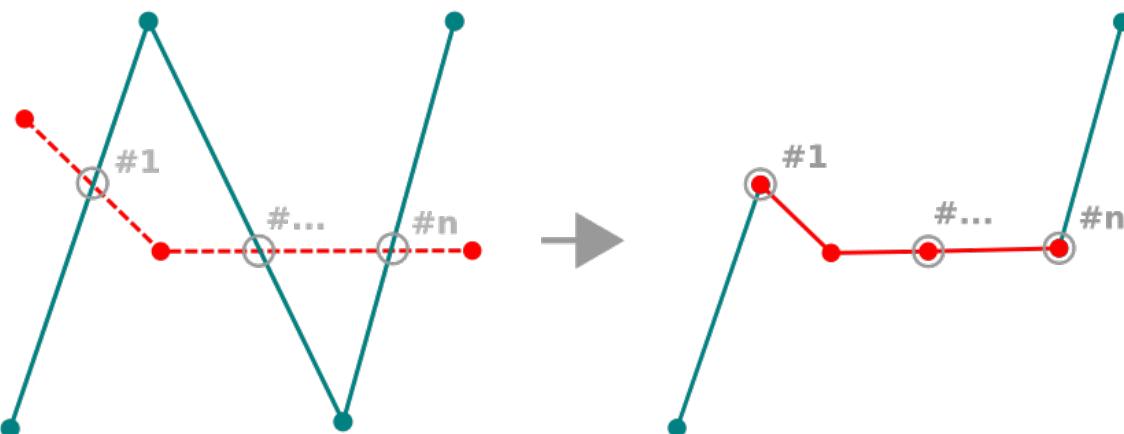


Fig. 13.98: Reshape line

Use the  Reshape Features tool to extend existing linestring geometries: snap to the first or last vertex of the line and draw a new one. Validate and the feature's geometry becomes the combination of the two lines.

For polygons, it will reshape the polygon's boundary. For it to work, the reshape tool's line must cross the polygon's boundary at least twice. To draw the line, click on the map canvas to add vertexes. To finish it, just right-click. Like with the lines, only the segment between the first and the last intersections is considered. The reshape line's segments that are inside the polygon will result in cropping it, where the ones outside the polygon will extend it.

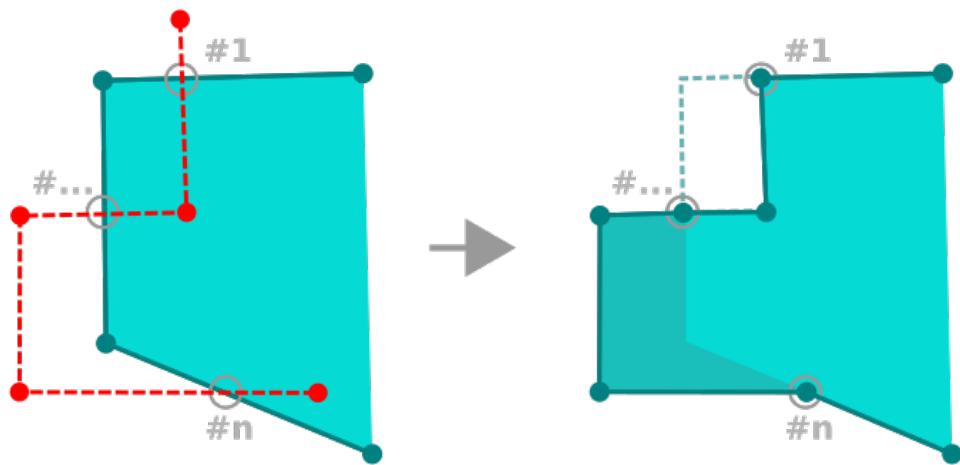


Fig. 13.99: Reshape polygon

With polygons, reshaping can sometimes lead to unintended results. It is mainly useful to replace smaller parts of a polygon, not for major overhauls, and the reshape tool is not allowed to cross several polygon rings, as this would generate an invalid polygon.

**Note:** The reshape tool may alter the starting position of a polygon ring or a closed line. So, the point that is represented 'twice' will not be the same any more. This may not be a problem for most applications, but it is something to consider.

## Offset Curves

The  Offset Curve tool creates parallel shifts of line layers. The tool can be applied to the edited layer (the geometries are modified) or also to background layers (in which case it creates copies of the lines / rings and adds them to the edited layer). It is thus ideally suited for the creation of distance line layers. The *User Input* dialog pops-up, showing the displacement distance.

To create a shift of a line layer, you must first go into editing mode and activate the  Offset Curve tool. Then click on a feature to shift it. Move the mouse and click where wanted or enter the desired distance in the user input widget. Your changes may then be saved with the  Save Layer Edits tool.

QGIS options dialog (Digitizing tab then **Curve offset tools** section) allows you to configure some parameters like **Join style**, **Quadrant segments**, **Miter limit**.

## Split Features

Use the  Split Features tool to split a feature into two or more new and independent features, ie. each geometry corresponding to a new row in the attribute table.

To split line or polygon features:

1. Select the  Split Features tool.
2. Draw a line across the feature(s) you want to split. If a selection is active, only selected features are split. When set, *default values or clauses* are applied to corresponding fields and other attributes of the parent feature are by default copied to the new features.
3. You can then as usually modify any of the attributes of any resulting feature.

---

### Tip: Split a polyline into new features in one-click

Using the  Split Features tool, snap and click on an existing vertex of a polyline feature to split that feature into two new features.

---

## Split parts

In QGIS it is possible to split the parts of a multi part feature so that the number of parts is increased. Just draw a line across the part you want to split using the  Split Parts icon.

---

### Tip: Split a polyline into new parts in one-click

Using the  Split Parts tool, snap and click on an existing vertex of a polyline feature to split the feature into two new polylines belonging to the same feature.

---

## Merge selected features

The  Merge Selected Features tool allows you to create a new feature by merging existing ones: their geometries are merged to generate a new one. If features don't have common boundaries, a multipolygon/multipolyline/multipoint feature is created.

1. First, select the features you'd like to combine.

2. Then press the  Merge Selected Features button.
3. In the new dialog, the *Merge* line at the bottom of the table shows the attributes of the resulting feature. You can alter any of these values either by:
  - manually replacing the value in the corresponding cell;
  - selecting a row in the table and pressing *Take attributes from selected feature* to use the values of this initial feature;
  - pressing *Skip all fields* to use empty attributes;
  - or, expanding the drop down menu at the top of the table, select any of the above options to apply to the corresponding field only. There, you can also choose to aggregate the initial features attributes (Minimum, Maximum, Median, Sum, Count, Concatenation... depending on the type of the field. see *Statistical Summary Panel* for the full list of functions).

**Note:** If the layer has default values or clauses present on fields, these are used as the initial value for the merged feature.

4. Press *OK* to apply the modifications. A single (multi)feature is created in the layer, replacing the previously selected ones.

### Merge attributes of selected features

The  Merge Attributes of Selected Features tool allows you to apply same attributes to features without merging their boundaries. The dialog is the same as the Merge Selected Features tool's except that unlike that tool, selected objects are kept with their geometry while some of their attributes are made identical.

### Rotate Point Symbols

The  Rotate Point Symbols allows you to change the rotation of point symbols in the map canvas.

1. First of all, apply to the symbol a *data-defined* rotation:
  - (a) In the *Layer Properties* → *Symbology* dialog, browse to the symbol editor dialog.
  - (b) Click the  Data-defined override widget near the *Rotation* option of the top *Marker* level (preferably) of the symbol layers.
  - (c) Choose a field in the *Field Type* combobox. Values of this field are hence used to rotate each feature's symbol accordingly.

**Note: Make sure that the same field is assigned to all the symbol layers**

Setting the data-defined rotation field at the topmost level of the symbol tree automatically propagates it to all the symbol layers, a prerequisite to perform graphical symbol rotation with the *Rotate Point Symbols* tool. Indeed, if a symbol layer does not have the same field attached to its rotation property, the tool will not work.

2. Then click on a point feature in the map canvas with the  Rotate Point Symbols and move the mouse around, holding the left button pressed. A red arrow with the rotation value will be visualized (see [Figure\\_rotate\\_point](#)).
3. Release the left mouse button again, the symbol is defined with this new rotation and the rotation field is updated in the layer's attribute table.

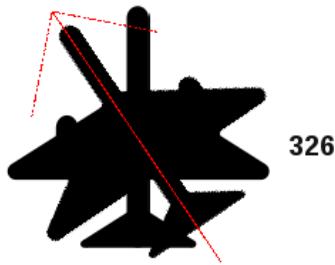


Fig. 13.100: Rotating a point symbol

---

**Tip:** If you hold the `Ctrl` key pressed, the rotation will be done in 15 degree steps.

---

### Offset Point Symbols

The Offset Point Symbols allows you to interactively change the rendered position of point symbols in the map canvas. This tool behaves like the Rotate Point Symbols tool except that it requires you to connect a field to the data-defined *Offset (X, Y)* property of the symbol, field which will then be populated with the offset coordinates while moving the symbol in the map canvas.

---

**Note:** The Offset Point Symbols tool doesn't move the point feature itself; you should use the Vertex Tool (Current Layer) or Move Feature tool for this purpose.

---

### 13.5.5 Shape digitizing

The *Shape Digitizing* toolbar offers a set of tools to draw regular shapes and curved geometries.

#### Add Circular string

The Add circular string or Add circular string by radius buttons allow users to add line or polygon features with a circular geometry.

Creating features with these tools follow the same rule as of other digitizing tools: left-click to place vertices and right-click to finish the geometry. While drawing the geometry, you can switch from one tool to the other as well as to the *linear geometry tools*, creating some compound geometries.

---

#### Note: Curved geometries are stored as such only in compatible data provider

Although QGIS allows to digitize curved geometries within any editable data format, you need to be using a data provider (e.g. PostGIS, memory layer, GML or WFS) that supports curves to have features stored as curved, otherwise QGIS segmentizes the circular arcs.

---

### 13.5.6 The Advanced Digitizing panel

When capturing, reshaping, splitting new or existing geometries you also have the possibility to use the Advanced Digitizing panel. You can digitize lines exactly parallel or perpendicular to a particular angle or lock lines to specific angles. Furthermore, you can enter coordinates directly so that you can make a precise definition of your new geometry.

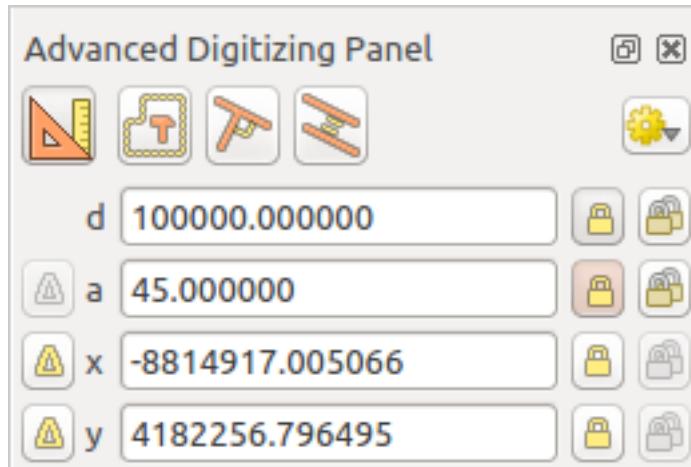


Fig. 13.101: The Advanced Digitizing panel

The *Advanced Digitizing* panel can be open either with a right-click on the toolbar, from *View → Panels → menu* or pressing *Ctrl+4*. Once the panel is visible, click the Enable advanced digitizing tools button to activate the set of tools.

---

**Note:** The tools are not enabled if the map view is in geographic coordinates.

---

### Concepts

The aim of the Advanced Digitizing tool is to lock coordinates, lengths, and angles when moving the mouse during the digitizing in the map canvas.

You can also create constraints with relative or absolute reference. Relative reference means that the next vertex constraints' values will be relative to the previous vertex or segment.

### Snapping Settings

Click the button to set the Advanced Digitizing Tool snapping settings. You can make the tool snap to common angles. The options are:

- *Do not snap to common angles*
- *Snap to 30° angles*
- *Snap to 45° angles*
- *Snap to 90° angles*

You can also control the snapping to features. The options are:

- *Do not snap to vertices or segments*
- *Snap according to project configuration*
- *Snap to all layers*

## Keyboard shortcuts

To speed up the use of Advanced Digitizing Panel, there are a couple of keyboard shorcuts available:

Key	Simple	Ctrl+ or Alt+	Shift+
D	Set distance	Lock distance	
A	Set angle	Lock angle	Toggle relative angle to last segment
X	Set X coordinate	Lock X coordinate	Toggle relative X to last vertex
Y	Set Y coordinate	Lock Y coordinate	Toggle relative Y to last vertex
C	Toggle construction mode		
P	Toggle perpendicular and parallel modes		

## Absolute reference digitizing

When drawing a new geometry from scratch, it is very useful to have the possibility to start digitizing vertexes at given coordinates.

For example, to add a new feature to a polygonal layer, click the button. You can choose the X and Y coordinates where you want to start editing the feature, then:

- Click the *x* text box (or use the X keyboard shortcut).
- Type the X coordinate value you want and press Enter or click the button to their right to lock the mouse to the X axis on the map canvas.
- Click the *y* text box (or use the Y keyboard shortcut).
- Type the Y coordinate value you want and press Enter or click the button to their right to lock the mouse to the Y axis on the map canvas.

Two blue dotted lines and a green cross identify the exact coordinates you entered. Start digitizing by clicking on the map canvas; the mouse position is locked at the green cross.

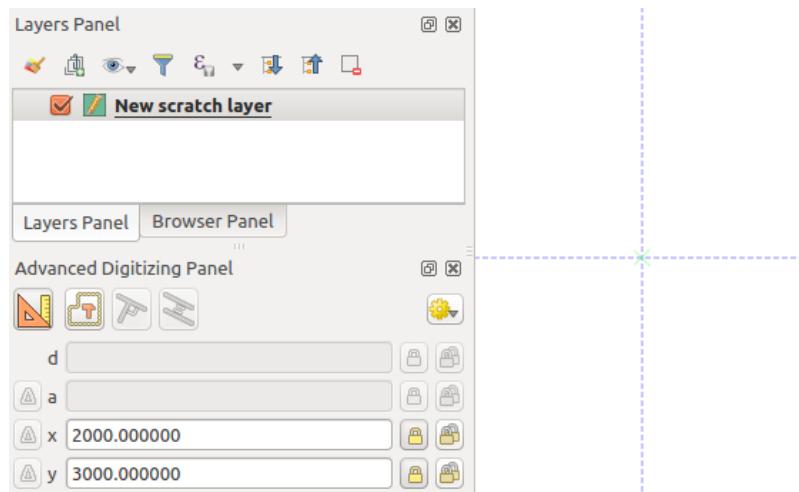


Fig. 13.102: Start drawing at given coordinates

You can continue digitizing by free hand, adding a new pair of coordinates, or you can type the segment's **length** (distance) and **angle**.

If you want to draw a segment of a given length, click the *d (distance)* text box (keyboard shortcut D), type the distance value (in map units) and press Enter or click the button on the right to lock the mouse in the map canvas to the length of the segment. In the map canvas, the clicked point is surrounded by a circle whose radius is the value entered in the distance text box.

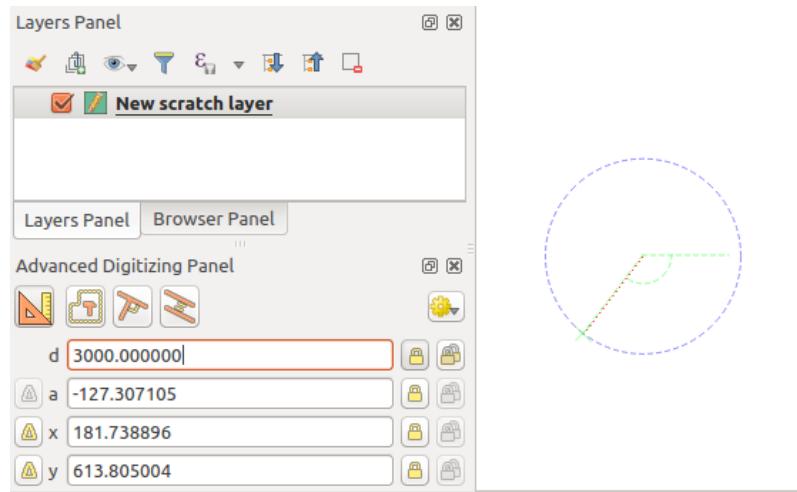


Fig. 13.103: Fixed length segment

Finally, you can also choose the angle of the segment. As described before , click the  $a$  (angle) text box (keyboard shortcut A), type the angle value (in degrees), and press Enter or click the buttons on the right to lock it. In this way the segment will follow the desired angle:

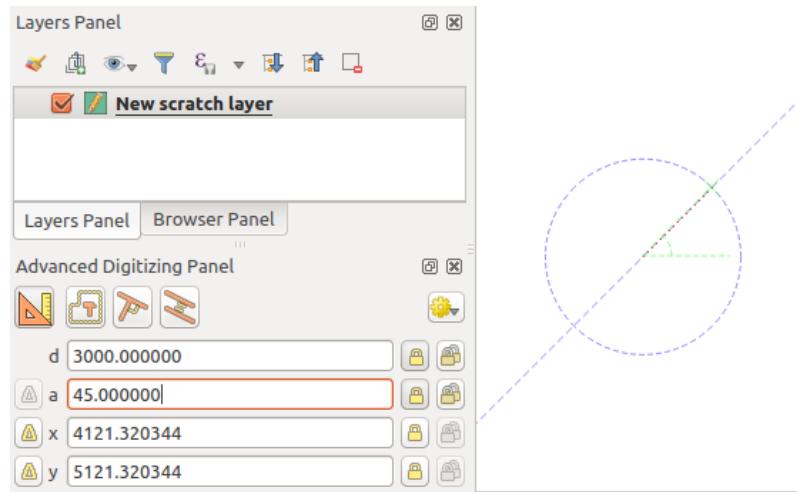


Fig. 13.104: Fixed angle segment

### Relative reference digitizing

Instead of using absolute values of angles or coordinates, you can also use values relative to the last digitized vertex or segment.

For angles, you can click the button on the left of the  $a$  text box (or press Shift+A) to toggle relative angles to the previous segment. With that option on, angles are measured between the last segment and the mouse pointer.

For coordinates, click the buttons to the left of the  $x$  or  $y$  text boxes (or press Shift+X or Shift+Y) to toggle relative coordinates to the previous vertex. With these options on, coordinates measurement will consider the last vertex to be the X and Y axes origin.

## Continuous lock

Both in absolute or relative reference digitizing, angle, distance, X and Y constraints can be locked continuously by clicking the *Continuous lock* buttons. Using continuous lock allows you to digitize several points or vertexes using the same constraints.

## Parallel and perpendicular lines

All the tools described above can be combined with the *Perpendicular* and *Parallel* tools. These two tools allow drawing segments perfectly perpendicular or parallel to another segment.

To draw a *perpendicular* segment, during the editing click the *Perpendicular* icon (keyboard shortcut P) to activate it. Before drawing the perpendicular line, click on the segment of an existing feature that you want to be perpendicular to (the line of the existing feature will be colored in light orange); you should see a blue dotted line where your feature will be snapped:

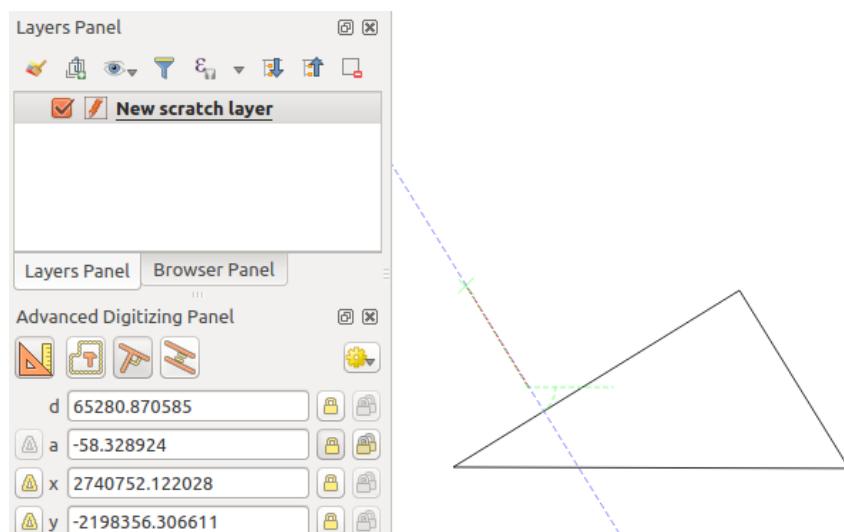


Fig. 13.105: Perpendicular digitizing

To draw a *parallel* feature, the steps are the same: click on the *Parallel* icon (keyboard shortcut P twice), click on the segment you want to use as reference and start drawing your feature:

These two tools just find the right angle of the perpendicular and parallel angle and lock this parameter during your editing.

## Construction mode

You can enable and disable *construction* mode by clicking on the *Construction* icon or with the C keyboard shortcut. While in construction mode, clicking the map canvas won't add new vertexes, but will capture the clicks' positions so that you can use them as reference points to then lock distance, angle or X and Y relative values.

As an example, the construction mode can be used to draw some point at an exact distance from an existing point. With an existing point in the map canvas and the snapping mode correctly activated, you can easily draw other points at given distances and angles from it. In addition to the button, you have to activate also the *construction* mode by clicking the *Construction* icon or with the C keyboard shortcut.

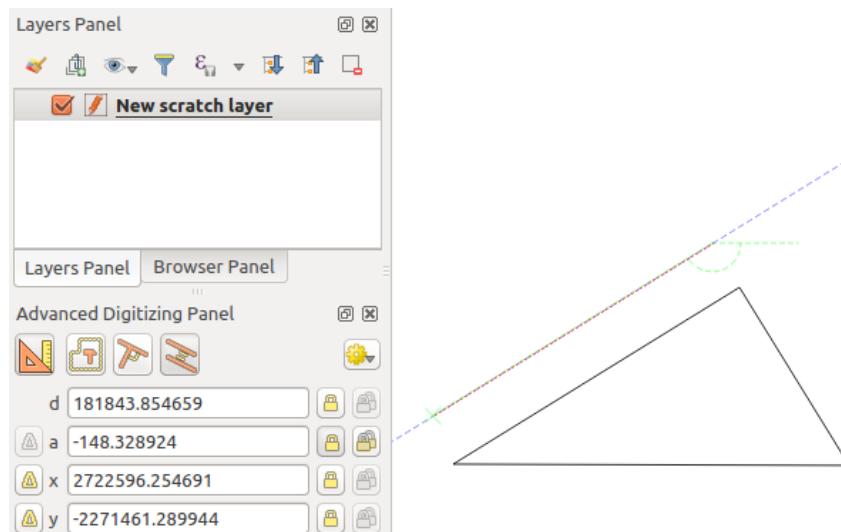


Fig. 13.106: Parallel digitizing

Click next to the point from which you want to calculate the distance and click on the **d** box (D shortcut) type the desired distance and press Enter to lock the mouse position in the map canvas:

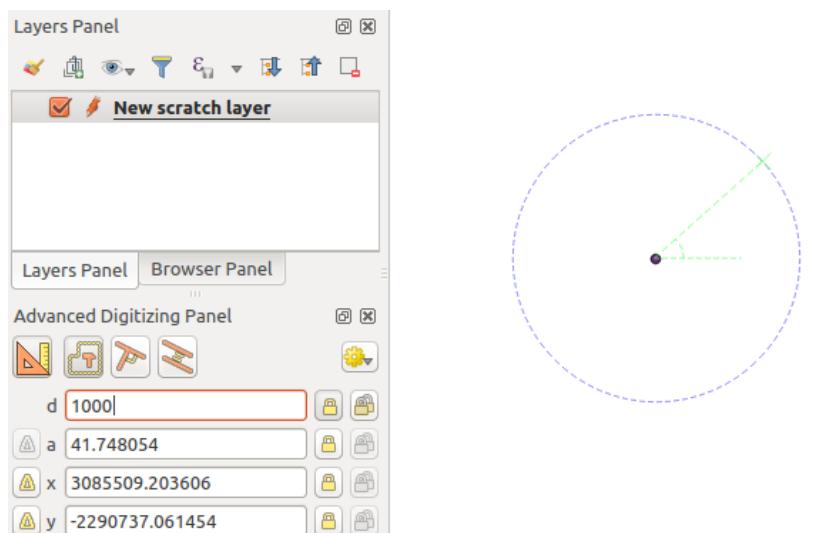


Fig. 13.107: Distance from point

Before adding the new point, press C to exit the construction mode. Now, you can click on the map canvas, and the point will be placed at the distance entered.

You can also use the angle constraint to, for example, create another point at the same distance of the original one, but at a particular angle from the newly added point. Click the Construction icon or with the C keyboard shortcut to enter construction mode. Click the recently added point, and then the other one to set a direction segment. Then, click on the **d** text box (D shortcut) type the desired distance and press Enter. Click the **a** text box (A shortcut) type the angle you want and press Enter. The mouse position will be locked both in distance and angle.

Before adding the new point, press C to exit the construction mode. Now, you can click on the map canvas, and the point will be placed at the distance and angle entered. Repeating the process, several points can be added.

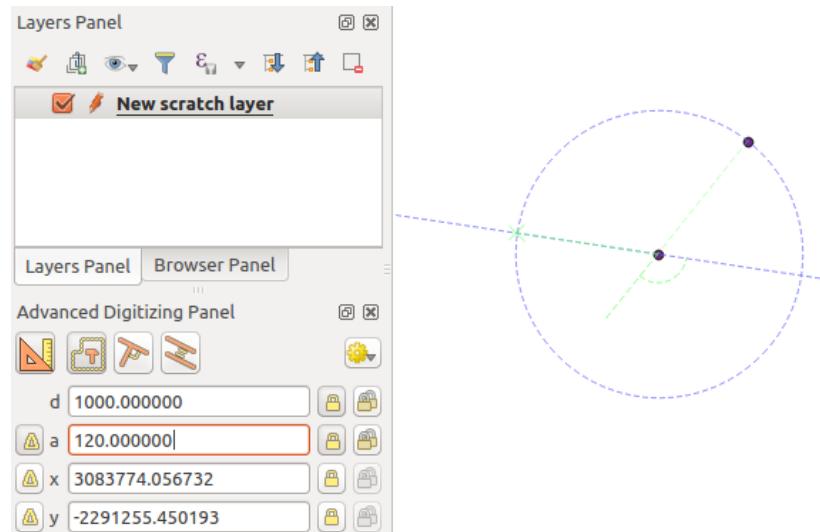


Fig. 13.108: Distance and angle from points

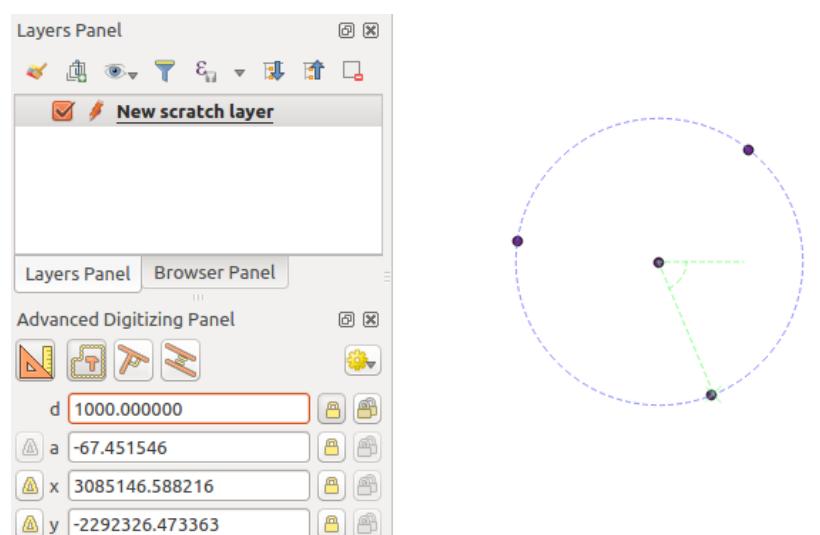


Fig. 13.109: Points at given distance and angle

### 13.5.7 The Processing in-place layer modifier

The *Processing menu* provides access to a large set of tools to analyze and create new features based on the properties of the input features or their relations with other features (within the same layer or not). While the common behavior is to create new layers as outputs, some algorithms also allow modifications to the input layer. This is a handy way to automate multiple features modification using advanced and complex operations.

To edit features in-place:

1. Select the layer to edit in the *Layers* panel.
2. Select the concerned features. You can skip this step, in which case the modification will apply to the whole layer.
3. Press the  *Edit Features In-Place* button at the top of the *Processing toolbox*. The list of algorithms is filtered, showing only those compatible with in-place modifications, i.e.:
  - They work at the feature source and not at the layer level.
  - They do not change the layer structure, e.g. adding or removing fields.
  - They do not change the geometry type, e.g. from line to point layer.

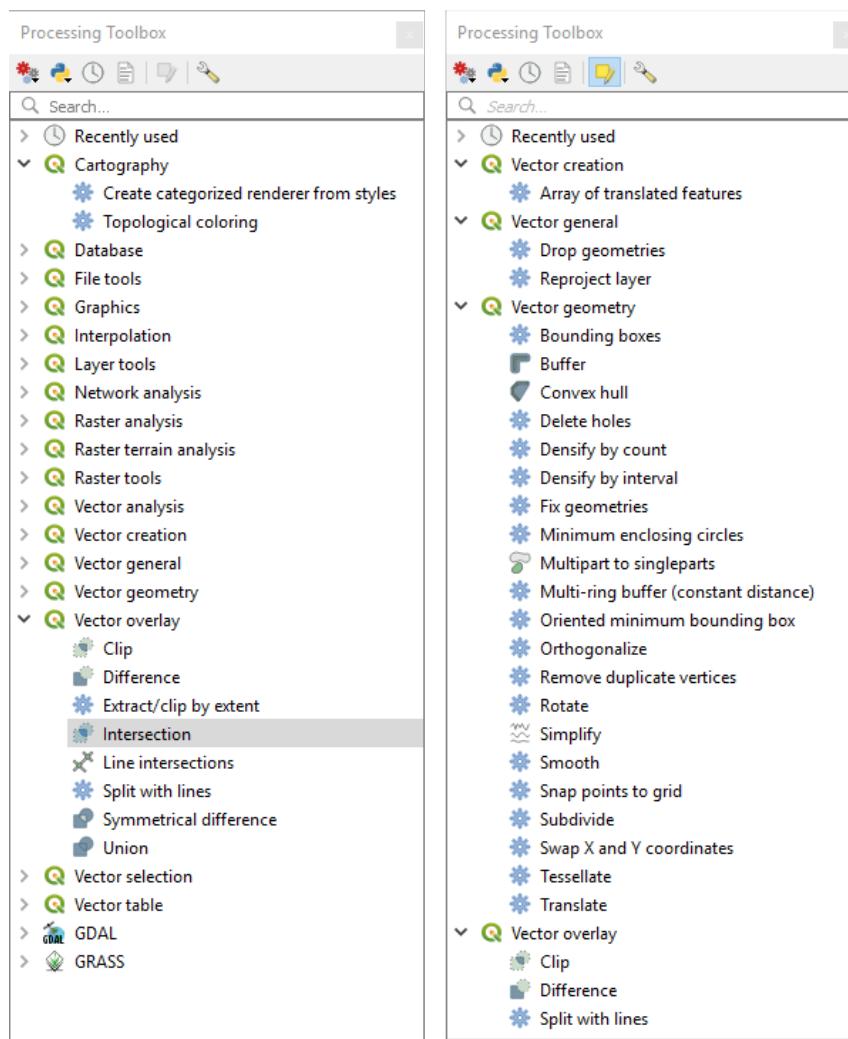


Fig. 13.110: Processing algorithms: all (left) vs polygon in-place editors (right)

4. Find the algorithm you'd like to run and double-click it.

---

**Note:** If the algorithm does not need any additional user-set parameters (excluding the usual input and output layer parameters), then the algorithm is run immediately without any dialog popup.

---

- (a) If parameters other than the usual input or output layers are needed, the algorithm dialog pops up. Fill in the required information.
- (b) Click *Modify Selected Features* or *Modify All Features* depending on whether there's an active selection.

Changes are applied to the layer and placed in the edit buffer: the layer is indeed toggled to editing mode with unsaved modification as indicated by the  icon next to the layer name.

5. As usual, press  Save layer edits to commit the changes in the layer. You can also press  Undo to rollback the whole modification.

# CHAPTER 14

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## Working with Raster Data

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### 14.1 Raster Properties Dialog

To view and set the properties for a raster layer, double click on the layer name in the map legend, or right click on the layer name and choose *Properties* from the context menu. This will open the *Raster Layer Properties* dialog.

There are several tabs in the dialog:

-  *Information*
-  *Source*
-  *Symbology*
-  *Transparency*
-  *Histogram*
-  *Rendering*
-  *Pyramids*
-  *Metadata*
-  *Legend*
-  *QGIS Server*

---

#### Tip: Live update rendering

The *Layer Styling Panel* provides you with some of the common features of the Layer properties dialog and is a good modeless widget that you can use to speed up the configuration of the layer styles and automatically view your changes in the map canvas.

---

**Note:** Because properties (symbology, label, actions, default values, forms...) of embedded layers (see *Nesting Projects*) are pulled from the original project file and to avoid changes that may break this behavior, the layer

properties dialog is made unavailable for these layers.

### 14.1.1 Information Properties

The  *Information* tab is read-only and represents an interesting place to quickly grab summarized information and metadata on the current layer. Provided information are:

- based on the provider of the layer (format of storage, path, data type, extent, width/height, compression, pixel size, statistics on bands, number of columns, rows and no-data values of the raster...);
- picked from the *filled metadata*: access, links, contacts, history... as well as data information (CRS, Extent, bands...).

### 14.1.2 Source Properties

The  *Source* tab displays basic information about the selected raster, including:

- the *Layer name* to display in the *Layers Panel*;
- setting the *Coordinate Reference System*: Displays the layer's Coordinate Reference System (CRS) as a PROJ.4 string. You can change the layer's CRS, selecting a recently used one in the drop-down list or clicking on  *Select CRS* button (see *Coordinate Reference System Selector*). Use this process only if the CRS applied to the layer is a wrong one or if none was applied. If you wish to reproject your data into another CRS, rather use layer reprojection algorithms from Processing or *Save it into another layer*.

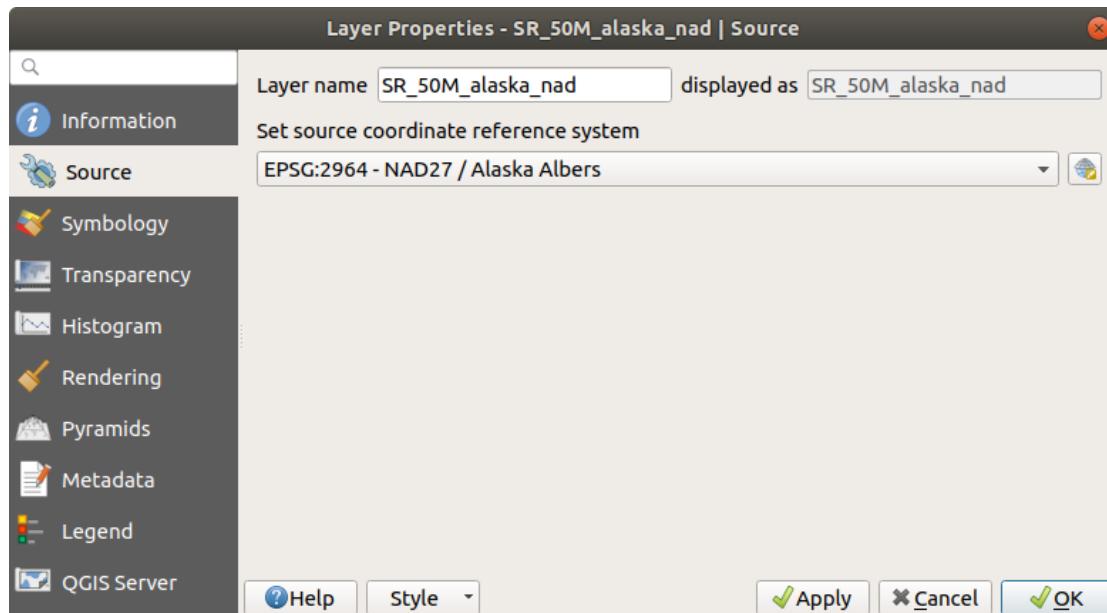


Fig. 14.1: Raster Layers - Source Properties Dialog

### 14.1.3 Symbology Properties

#### Band rendering

QGIS offers four different *Render types*. The renderer chosen is dependent on the data type.

1. *Multiband color* - if the file comes as a multiband with several bands (e.g., used with a satellite image with several bands).

2. *Paletted/Unique values* - for single band files that come with an indexed palette (e.g., used with a digital topographic map) or for general use of palettes for rendering raster layers.
3. *Singleband gray* - (one band of) the image will be rendered as gray; QGIS will choose this renderer if the file has neither multibands nor an indexed palette nor a continuous palette (e.g., used with a shaded relief map).
4. *Singleband pseudocolor* - this renderer is possible for files with a continuous palette, or color map (e.g., used with an elevation map).
5. *Hillshade* - Creates hillshade from a band.

## Multiband color

With the multiband color renderer, three selected bands from the image will be rendered, each band representing the red, green or blue component that will be used to create a color image. QGIS automatically fetches *Min* and *Max* values for each band of the raster and scales the coloring accordingly. You can control the value ranges with the help of the *Min/Max Value Settings* section.

A *Contrast enhancement* method can also be applied to the values: ‘No enhancement’, ‘Stretch to MinMax’, ‘Stretch and clip to MinMax’ and ‘Clip to min max’.

---

### Note: Contrast enhancement

When adding GRASS rasters, the option *Contrast enhancement* will always be set automatically to *stretch to min max*, regardless of if this is set to another value in the QGIS general options.

---

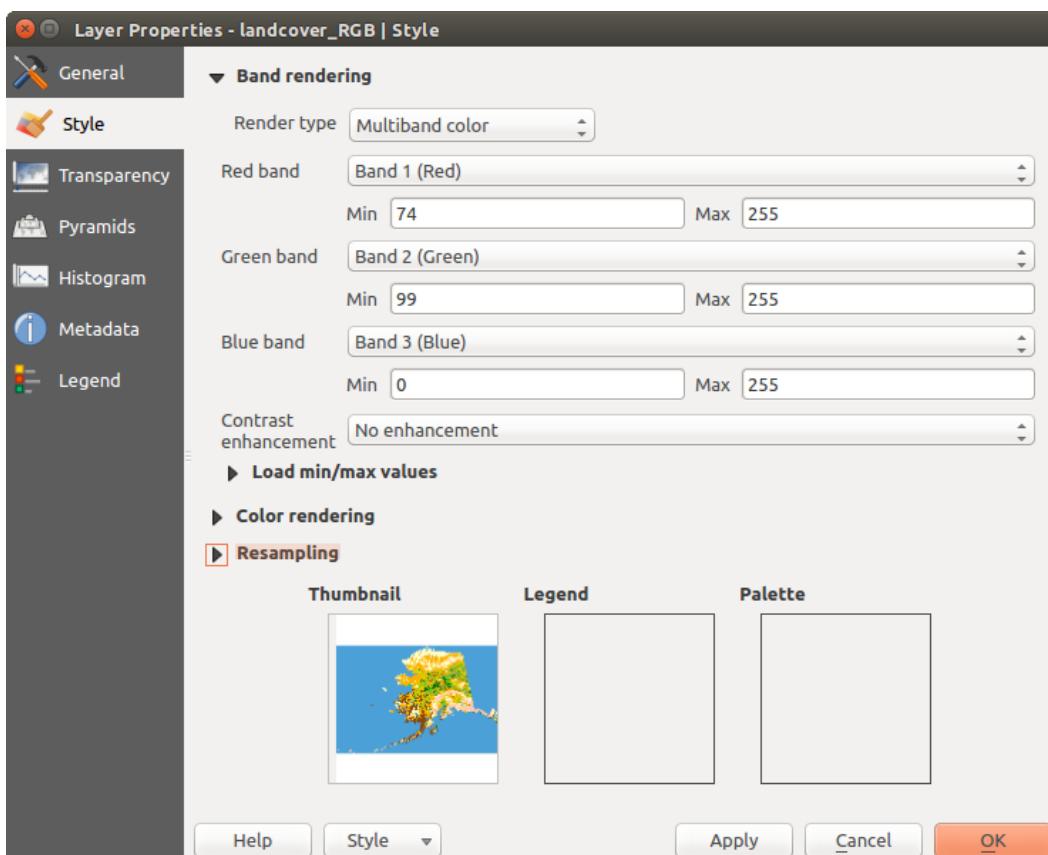


Fig. 14.2: Raster Symbology - Multiband color rendering

---

### Tip: Viewing a Single Band of a Multiband Raster

If you want to view a single band of a multiband image (for example, Red), you might think you would set the Green and Blue bands to *Not Set*. But this is not the correct way. To display the Red band, set the image type to *Singleband gray*, then select Red as the *Gray band* to use.

### Paletted/Unique values

This is the standard render option for singleband files that already include a color table, where each pixel value is assigned to a certain color. In that case, the palette is rendered automatically. If you want to change colors assigned to certain values, just double-click on the color and the *Select color* dialog appears. Also, in QGIS it's possible to assign a label to the color values. The label appears in the legend of the raster layer then.

This option can be used for rendering all raster bands using a palette, assigning a color to each unique raster value.

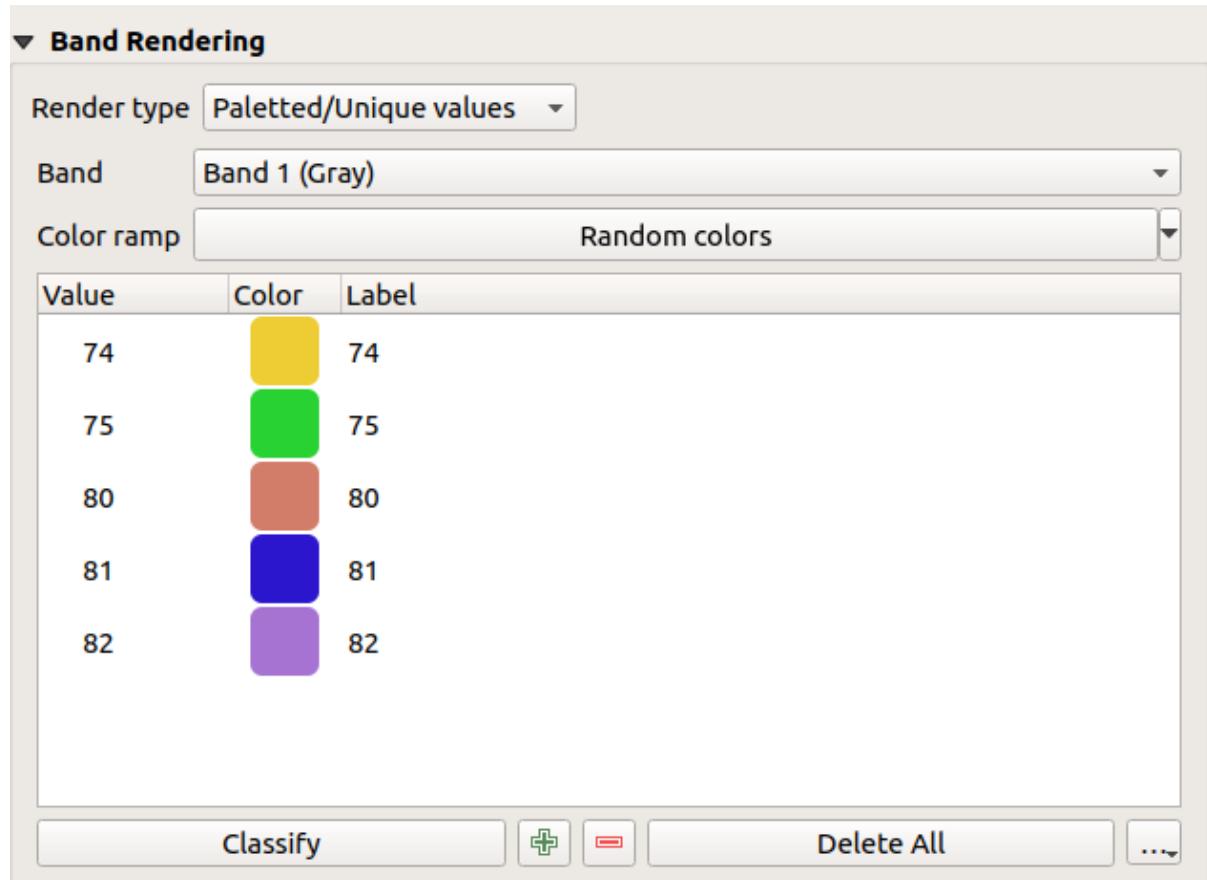


Fig. 14.3: Raster Symbology - Paletted unique value rendering

### Singleband gray

This renderer allows you to render a single band layer with a *Color gradient*: ‘Black to white’ or ‘White to black’. You can define a range of values to color other than the default *Min* and *Max* values of the whole raster, thanks to the *Min/Max Value Settings* option.

Again, a *Contrast enhancement* method can be applied to the values: ‘No enhancement’, ‘Stretch to MinMax’, ‘Stretch and clip to MinMax’ and ‘Clip to min max’.

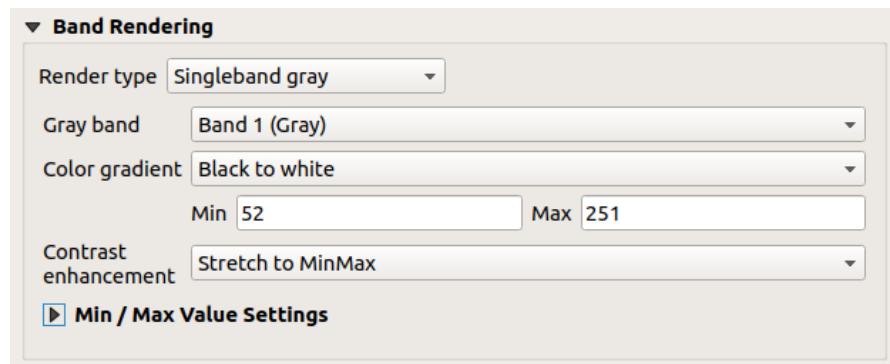


Fig. 14.4: Raster Symbology - Singleband gray rendering

### Singleband pseudocolor

This is a render option for single-band files, including a continuous palette. You can also create individual color maps for the single bands here.

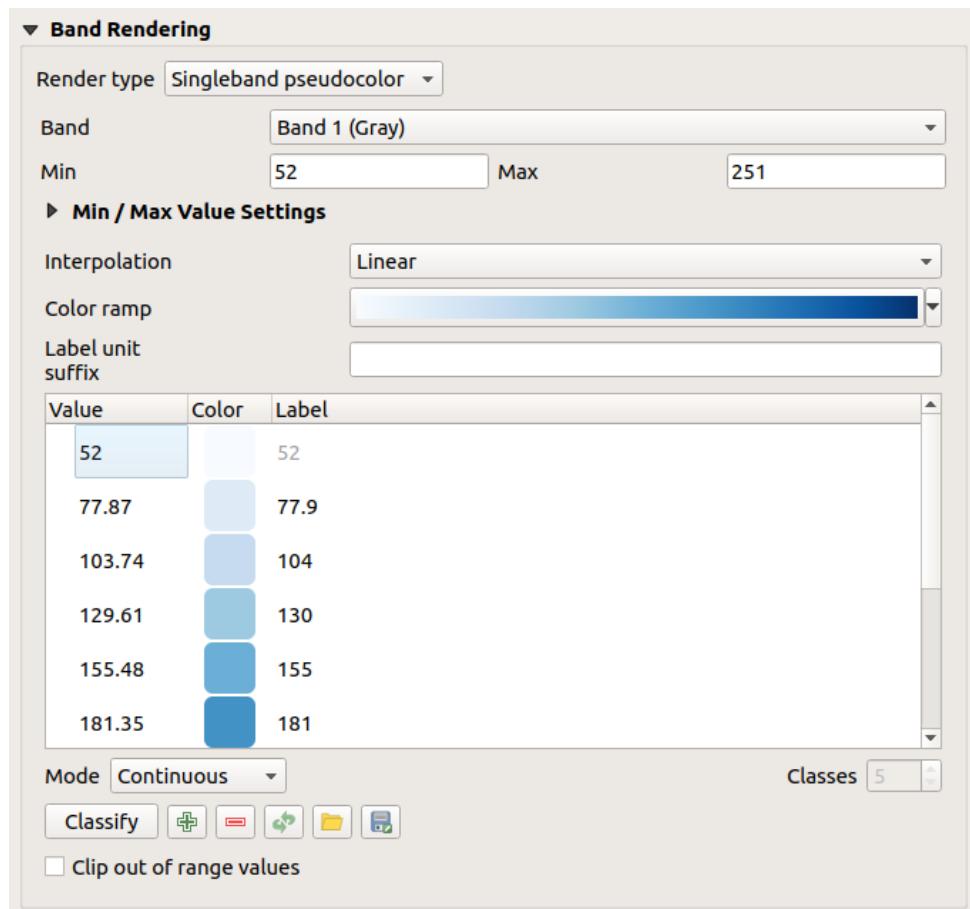


Fig. 14.5: Raster Symbology - Singleband pseudocolor rendering

Using a *Band* of the layer and a *values range*, three types of color *Interpolation* are available:

- Discrete (a  $\leq$  symbol appears in the value column)
- Linear
- Exact (an equal symbol appears in the Value column)

The *Color ramp* drop down list lists the color ramp in your QGIS. You can add a new one, edit or save the one you changed. The name of the color ramp will be saved in the configuration and in the QML files.

The *Label unit suffix* is a label added after the value in the legend.

For the classification *Mode* ‘Equal interval’, you only need to select the *number of classes* 1,00 and press the button *Classify*. In the case of the *Mode* ‘Continuous’, QGIS creates classes automatically depending on the *Min* and *Max*.

The button Add values manually adds a value to the individual color table. The button Remove selected row deletes a value from the individual color table. Double clicking on the value column lets you insert a specific value. Double clicking on the color column opens the dialog *Change color*, where you can select a color to apply on that value. Further, you can also add labels for each color, but this value won’t be displayed when you use the identify feature tool.

You can use the buttons Load color map from file or Export color map to file to load an existing color table or to save the defined color table for other sessions.

The Clip out of range values allows QGIS to not render pixel greater than the *Max* value.

## Hillshade

Render a band of the raster layer using hillshading.

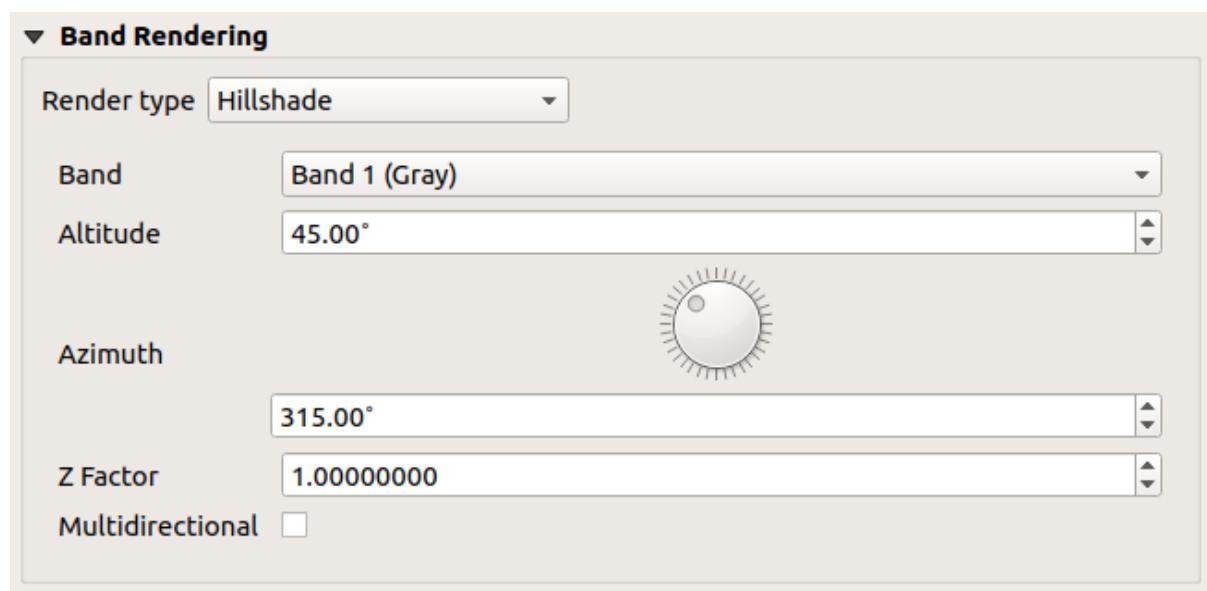


Fig. 14.6: Raster Symbology - Hillshade rendering

Options:

- *Band*: The raster band to use.
- *Altitude*: The elevation angle of the light source (default is 45°).
- *Azimuth*: The azimuth of the light source (default is 315°).
- *Z Factor*: Scaling factor for the values of the raster band (default is 1).
- *Multidirectional*: Specify if multidirectional hillshading is to be used (default is off).

## Setting the min and max values

By default, QGIS reports the *Min* and *Max* values of the band(s) of the raster. A few very low and/or high values can have a negative impact on the rendering of the raster. The [Min/Max Value Settings](#) menu helps you control the values to render.

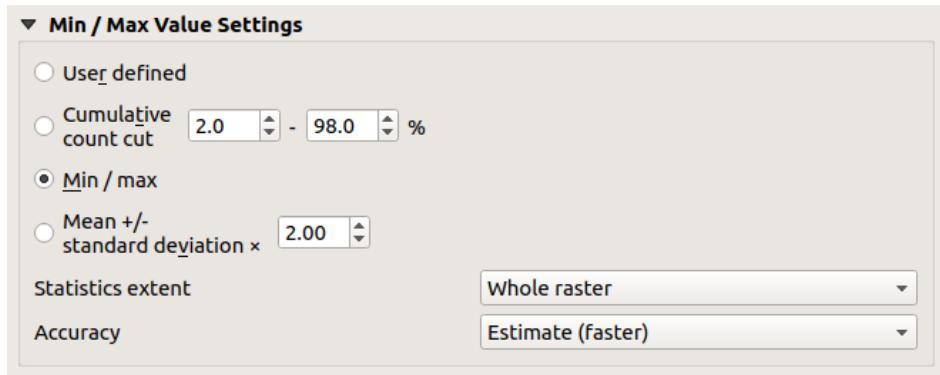


Fig. 14.7: Raster Symbology - Min and Max Value Settings

Available options are:

- *User defined*: The default *Min* and *Max* values of the band(s) can be overridden
- *Cumulative count cut*: Removes outliers. The standard range of values is 2% to 98%, but can be adapted manually.
- *Min/max*: Uses the whole range of values in the image band.
- *Mean +/- standard deviation x*: Creates a color table that only considers values within the standard deviation or within multiple standard deviations. This is useful when you have one or two cells with abnormally high values in a raster grid that are having a negative impact on the rendering of the raster.

Calculations of the min and max values of the bands are made based on the:

- *Statistics extent*: it can be *Whole raster*, *Current canvas* or *Updated canvas*
- and the *Accuracy*, which can be either *Estimate (faster)* or *Actual (slower)*.

---

**Note:** For some settings, you may need to press the *Apply* button of the layer properties dialog in order to display the actual min and max values in the widgets.

---

## Color rendering

For every *Band rendering*, a *Color rendering* is possible.

You can also achieve special rendering effects for your raster file(s) using one of the blending modes (see [Blending Modes](#)).

Further settings can be made in modifying the *Brightness*, the *Saturation* and the *Contrast*. You can also use a *Grayscale* option, where you can choose between ‘By lightness’, ‘By luminosity’ and ‘By average’. For one hue in the color table, you can modify the ‘Strength’.

## Resampling

The *Resampling* option makes its appearance when you zoom in and out of an image. Resampling modes can optimize the appearance of the map. They calculate a new gray value matrix through a geometric transformation.

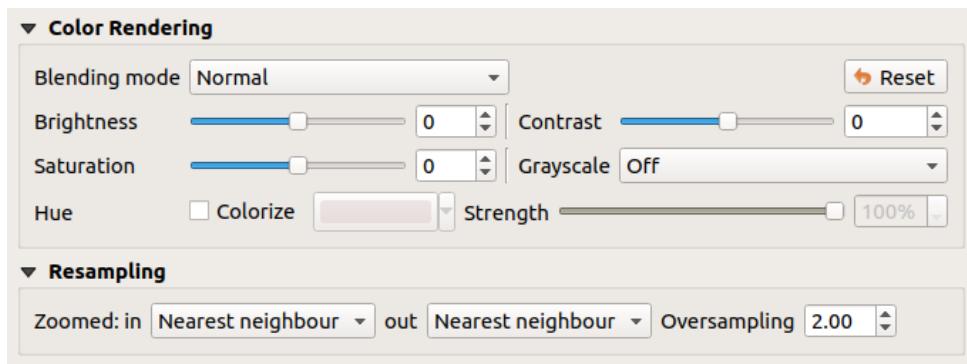


Fig. 14.8: Raster Symbology - Color rendering and Resampling settings

When applying the ‘Nearest neighbour’ method, the map can have a pixelated structure when zooming in. This appearance can be improved by using the ‘Bilinear’ or ‘Cubic’ method, which cause sharp features to be blurred. The effect is a smoother image. This method can be applied, for instance, to digital topographic raster maps.

At the bottom of the *Symbology* tab, you can see a thumbnail of the layer, its legend symbol, and the palette.

#### 14.1.4 Transparency Properties

QGIS has the ability to display each raster layer at a different transparency level. Use the transparency slider to indicate to what extent the underlying layers (if any) should be visible through the current raster layer. This is very useful if you like to overlay more than one raster layer (e.g., a shaded relief map overlaid by a classified raster map). This will make the look of the map more three dimensional.

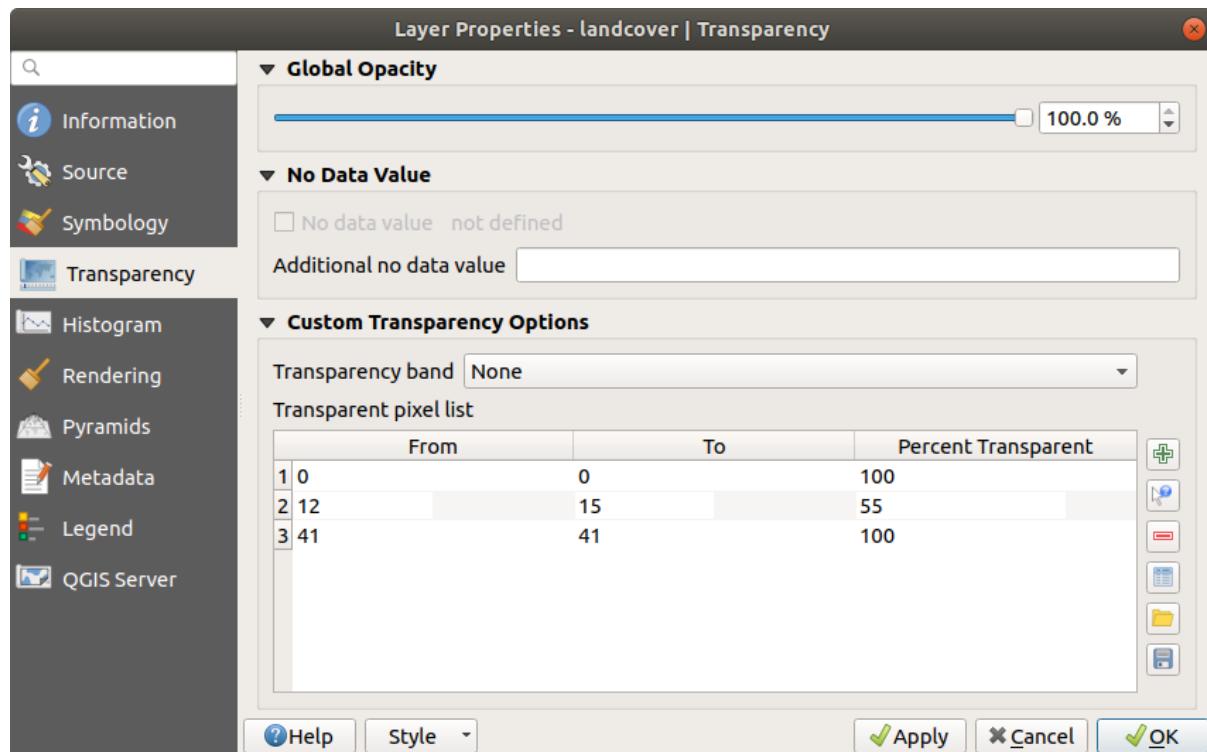


Fig. 14.9: Raster Transparency

Additionally, you can enter a raster value that should be treated as *NODATA* in the *Additional no data value* option. An even more flexible way to customize the transparency can be done in the *Custom transparency options* section:

- Use *Transparency band* to apply transparency on an entire band.
- Provide a list of pixels to make transparent with the corresponding level of transparency:
  1. Click the Add values manually button. A new row will appear in the pixel list.
  2. Enter the **Red**, **Green** and **Blue** values of the pixel and adjust the **Percent Transparent** to apply.
  3. Alternatively, you can directly fetch the pixel values directly from the raster using the Add values from display button. Then enter the transparency value.
  4. Repeat the steps to adjust more values with custom transparency.
  5. Press the **Apply** button and have a look at the map.

As you can see, it is quite easy to set custom transparency, but it can be quite a lot of work. Therefore, you can use the button Export to file to save your transparency list to a file. The button Import from file loads your transparency settings and applies them to the current raster layer.

### 14.1.5 Histogram Properties

The *Histogram* tab allows you to view the distribution of the bands or colors in your raster. The histogram is generated when you press the *Compute Histogram* button. All existing bands will be displayed together. You can save the histogram as an image with the button.

At the bottom of the histogram, you can select a raster band in the drop-down menu and *Set min/max style for it*.

The *Prefs/Actions* drop-down menu gives you advanced options to customize the histogram:

- With the *Visibility* option, you can display histograms of the individual bands. You will need to select the option *Show selected band*.
- The *Min/max options* allow you to ‘Always show min/max markers’, to ‘Zoom to min/max’ and to ‘Update style to min/max’.
- The *Actions* option allows you to ‘Reset’ or ‘Recompute histogram’ after you changed the min or max values of the band(s).

### 14.1.6 Rendering Properties

In the *Rendering* tab, it's possible to:

- apply a *Scale dependent visibility* to the layer: You can set the *Maximum (inclusive)* and *Minimum (exclusive)* scale, defining a range of scale in which the layer will be visible. Out of this range, it's hidden. The Set to current canvas scale button helps you use the current map canvas scale as boundary of the range visibility. See [Scale Dependent Rendering](#) for more information.
- *Refresh layer at interval (seconds)*: set a timer to automatically refresh individual layers at a matching interval. Canvas updates are deferred in order to avoid refreshing multiple times if more than one layer has an auto update interval set.

You can set the *Maximum (inclusive)* and *Minimum (exclusive)* scale, defining a range of scale in which the layer will be visible. Out of this range, it's hidden. The Set to current canvas scale button helps you use the current map canvas scale as boundary of the range visibility. See [Scale Dependent Rendering](#) for more information.

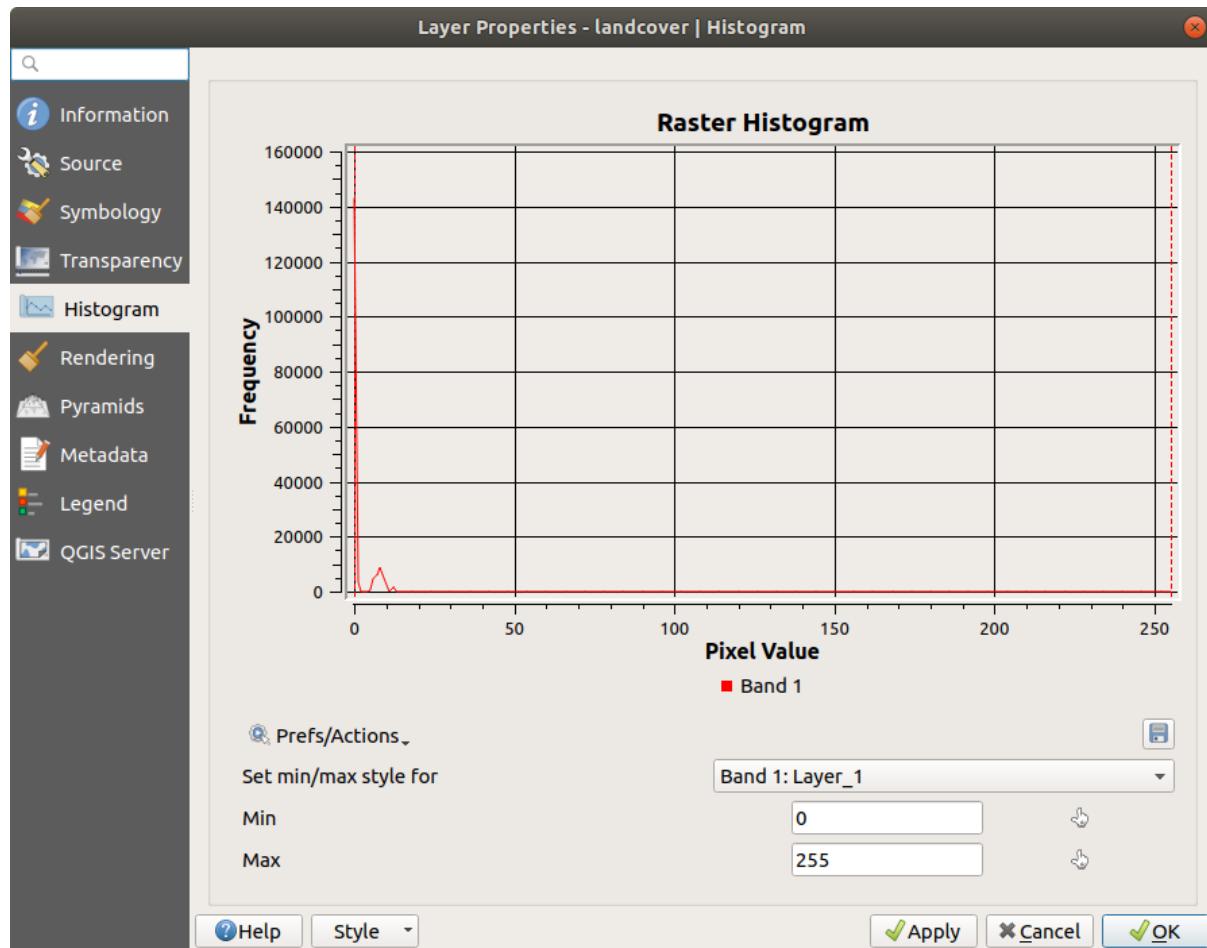


Fig. 14.10: Raster Histogram

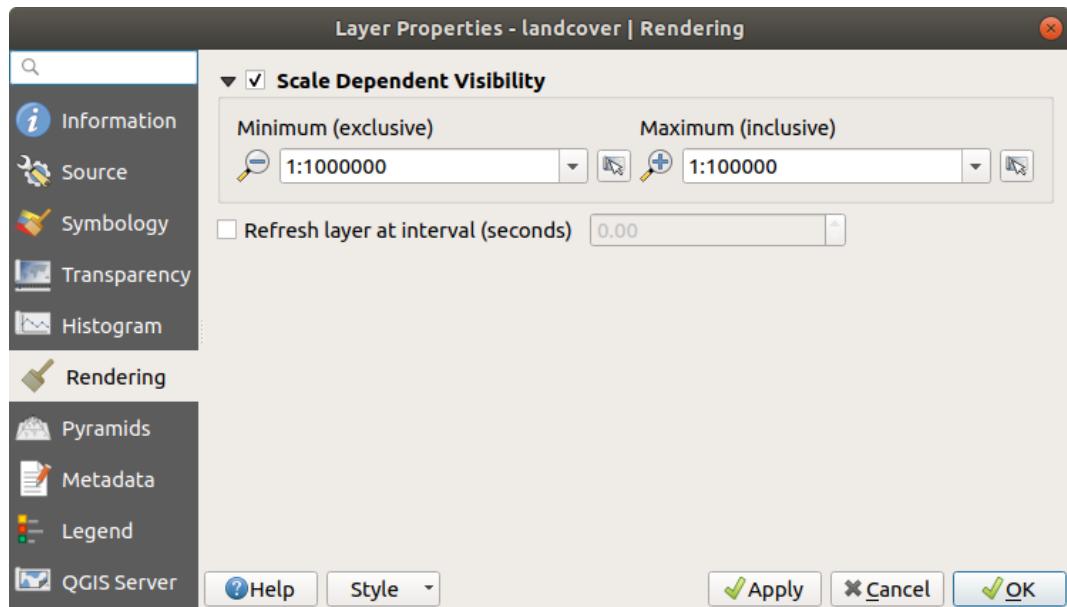


Fig. 14.11: Raster Rendering

### 14.1.7 Pyramids Properties

Large resolution raster layers can slow navigation in QGIS. By creating lower resolution copies of the data (pyramids), performance can be considerably improved, as QGIS selects the most suitable resolution to use depending on the level of zoom.

You must have write access in the directory where the original data is stored to build pyramids.

From the *Resolutions* list, select resolutions for which you want to create pyramid by clicking on them.

If you choose **Internal (if possible)** from the *Overview format* drop-down menu, QGIS tries to build pyramids internally.

---

**Note:** Please note that building pyramids may alter the original data file, and once created they cannot be removed. If you wish to preserve a ‘non-pyramided’ version of your raster, make a backup copy prior to building pyramids.

---

If you choose **External** and **External (Erdas Imagine)** the pyramids will be created in a file next to the original raster with the same name and a **.ovr** extension.

Several *Resampling methods* can be used to calculate the pyramids:

- Nearest Neighbour
- Average
- Gauss
- Cubic
- Cubic Spline
- Laczos
- Mode
- None

Finally, click *Build Pyramids* to start the process.

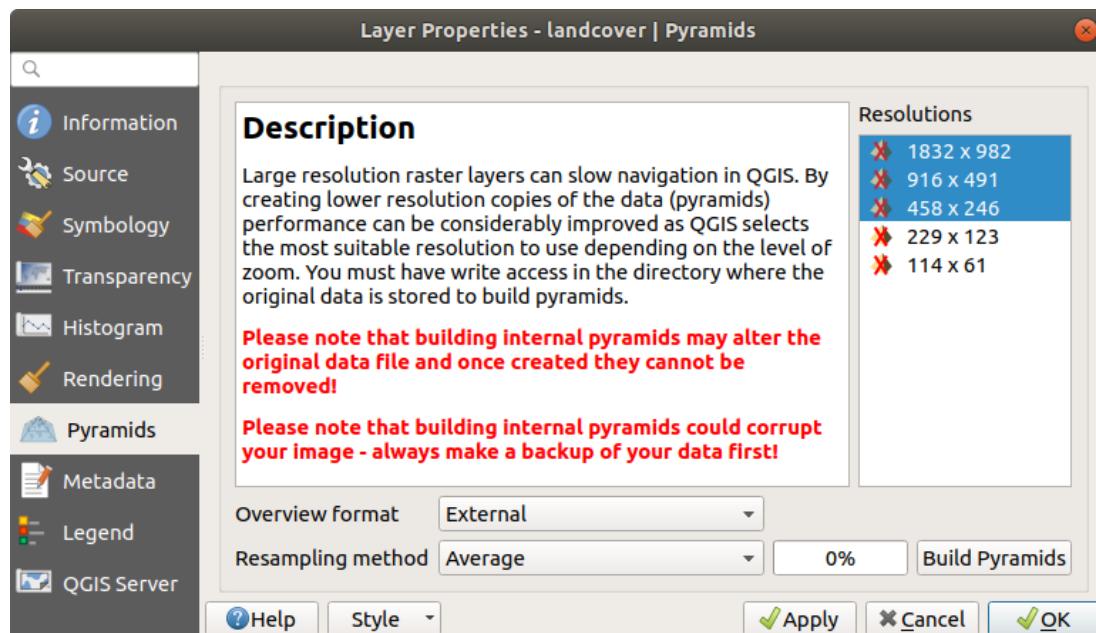


Fig. 14.12: Raster Pyramids

### 14.1.8 Metadata Properties

The *Metadata* tab provides you with options to create and edit a metadata report on your layer. See [vector layer metadata properties](#) for more information.

### 14.1.9 Legend Properties

The *Legend* tab provides you with a list of widgets you can embed within the layer tree in the Layers panel. The idea is to have a way to quickly access some actions that are often used with the layer (setup transparency, filtering, selection, style or other stuff...).

By default, QGIS provides transparency widget but this can be extended by plugins registering their own widgets and assign custom actions to layers they manage.

### 14.1.10 QGIS Server Properties

The *QGIS Server* tab displays a wealth of information about the raster layer, including statistics about each band in the current raster layer. From this tab, entries may be made for the *Description*, *Attribution*, *MetadataUrl* and *Properties*. In *Properties*, statistics are gathered on a ‘need to know’ basis, so it may well be that a given layer’s statistics have not yet been collected.

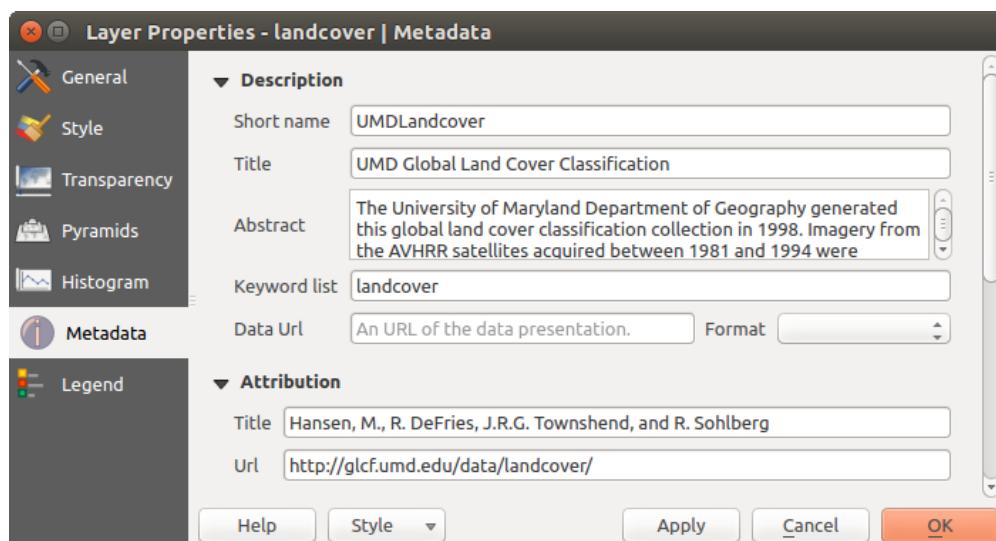


Fig. 14.13: QGIS Server in Raster Properties

## 14.2 Raster Analysis

### 14.2.1 Raster Calculator

The *Raster Calculator* in the *Raster* menu allows you to perform calculations on the basis of existing raster pixel values (see [figure\\_raster\\_calculator](#)). The results are written to a new raster layer with a GDAL-supported format.

The **Raster bands** list contains all loaded raster layers that can be used. To add a raster to the raster calculator expression field, double click its name in the Fields list. You can then use the operators to construct calculation expressions, or you can just type them into the box.

In the **Result layer** section, you will need to define an output layer. You can then define the extent of the calculation area based on an input raster layer, or based on X,Y coordinates and on columns and rows, to set the resolution of

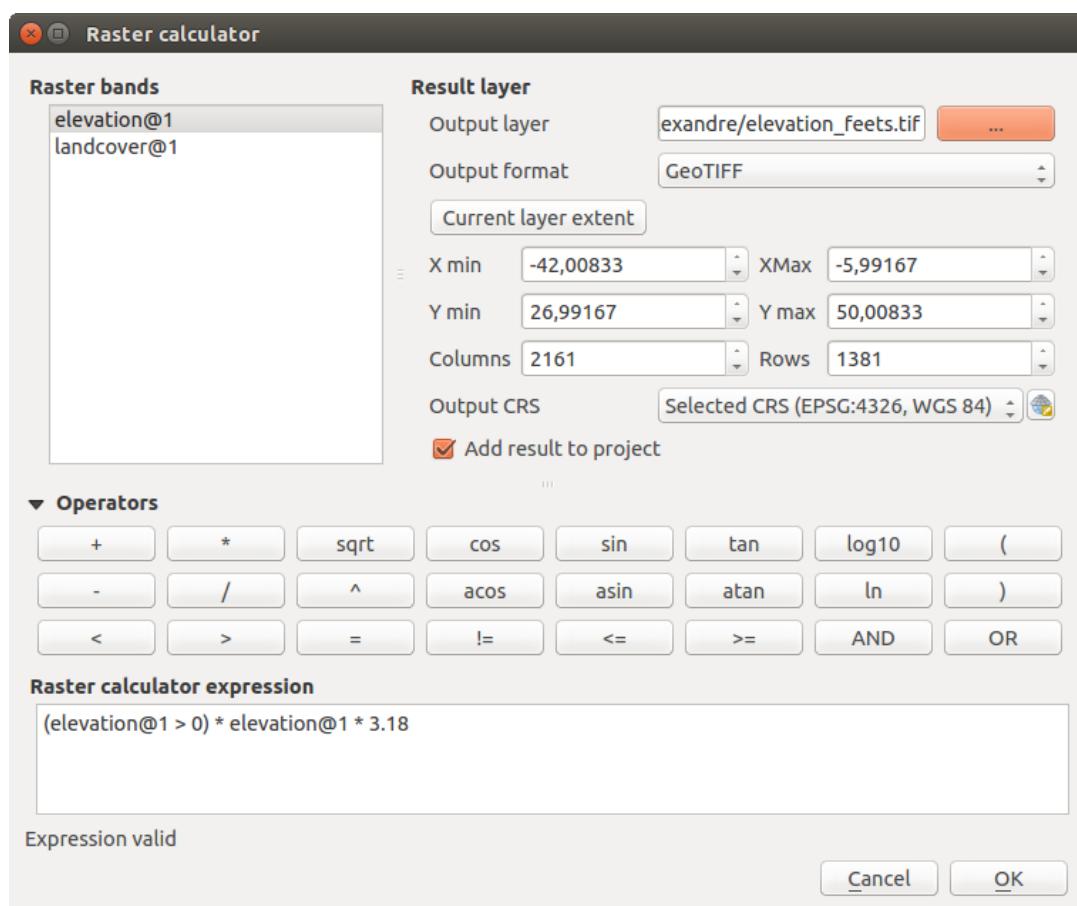


Fig. 14.14: Raster Calculator

the output layer. If the input layer has a different resolution, the values will be resampled with the nearest neighbor algorithm.

The **Operators** section contains all available operators. To add an operator to the raster calculator expression box, click the appropriate button. Mathematical calculations (+, -, \*, ...) and trigonometric functions ( $\sin$ ,  $\cos$ ,  $\tan$ , ...) are available. Conditional expressions (=, !=, <, >=, ...) return either 0 for false or 1 for true, and therefore can be used with other operators and functions. Stay tuned for more operators to come!

With the  *Add result to project* checkbox, the result layer will automatically be added to the legend area and can be visualized.

## Examples

### Convert elevation values from meters to feet

Creating an elevation raster in feet from a raster in meters, you need to use the conversion factor for meters to feet: 3.28. The expression is:

```
"elevation@1" * 3.28
```

### Using a mask

If you want to mask out parts of a raster – say, for instance, because you are only interested in elevations above 0 meters – you can use the following expression to create a mask and apply the result to a raster in one step.

```
("elevation@1" >= 0) * "elevation@1"
```

In other words, for every cell greater than or equal to 0 the conditional expression evaluates to 1, which keeps the original value by multiplying it by 1. Otherwise the conditional expression evaluates to 0, which sets the raster value to 0. This creates the mask on the fly.

If you want to classify a raster – say, for instance into two elevation classes, you can use the following expression to create a raster with two values 1 and 2 in one step.

```
("elevation@1" < 50) * 1 + ("elevation@1" >= 50) * 2
```

In other words, for every cell less than 50 set its value to 1. For every cell greater than or equal 50 set its value to 2.

### 14.2.2 Raster Alignment

This tool is able to take several rasters as input and to align them perfectly, that means:

- reproject to the same CRS,
- resample to the same cell size and offset in the grid,
- clip to a region of interest,
- rescale values when required.

All rasters will be saved in another files.

First, open the tools from *Raster → Align Raster...* and click on the  *Add new raster* button to choose one existing raster in QGIS. Select an output file to save the raster after the alignment, the resampling method and if the tools need to *Rescale values according to the cell size*. The resampling method can be (see [figure\\_raster\\_align\\_edit](#)):

- **Nearest Neighbor**
- **Bilinear (2x2 kernel)**
- **Cubic (4x4 kernel)**: Cubic Convolution Approximation
- **Cubic B-Spline (4x4 kernel)**: Cubic B-Spline Approximation

- **Lanczos (6x6 kernel)**: Lanczos windowed sinc interpolation
- **Average**: computes the average of all non-NODATA contributing pixels
- **Mode**: selects the value which appears most often of all the sampled points
- **Maximum, Minimum, Mediane, First Quartile (Q1) or Third Quartile (Q3)** of all non-NODATA contributing pixels

**Note:** Methods like maximum, minimum, mediane, first and third quartiles are available only if QGIS is built with GDAL >= 2.0.

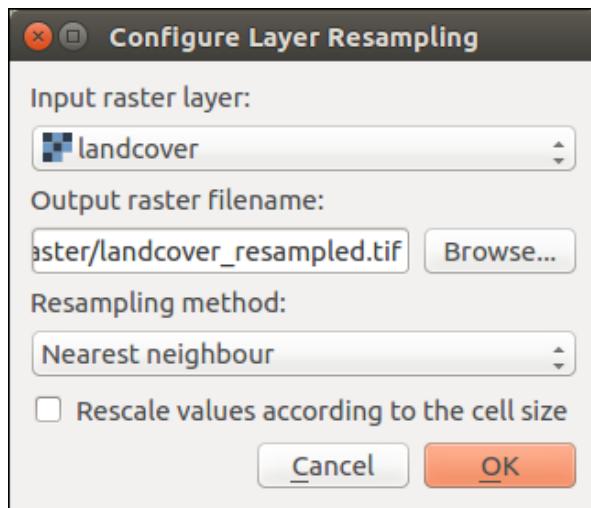


Fig. 14.15: Select Raster Resampling Options

In the main *Align raster* dialog, you can still Edit file settings or Remove an existing file from the list of raster layers. You can also choose one or more other options (see [figure\\_raster\\_align](#)):

- Select the *Reference Layer*,
- Transform into a new *CRS*,
- Setup a different *Cell size*,
- Setup a different *Grid Offset*,
- *Clip to Extent*: it can be user-defined or based on a layer or the map view
- *Output Size*,
- *Add aligned raster to the map canvas*.

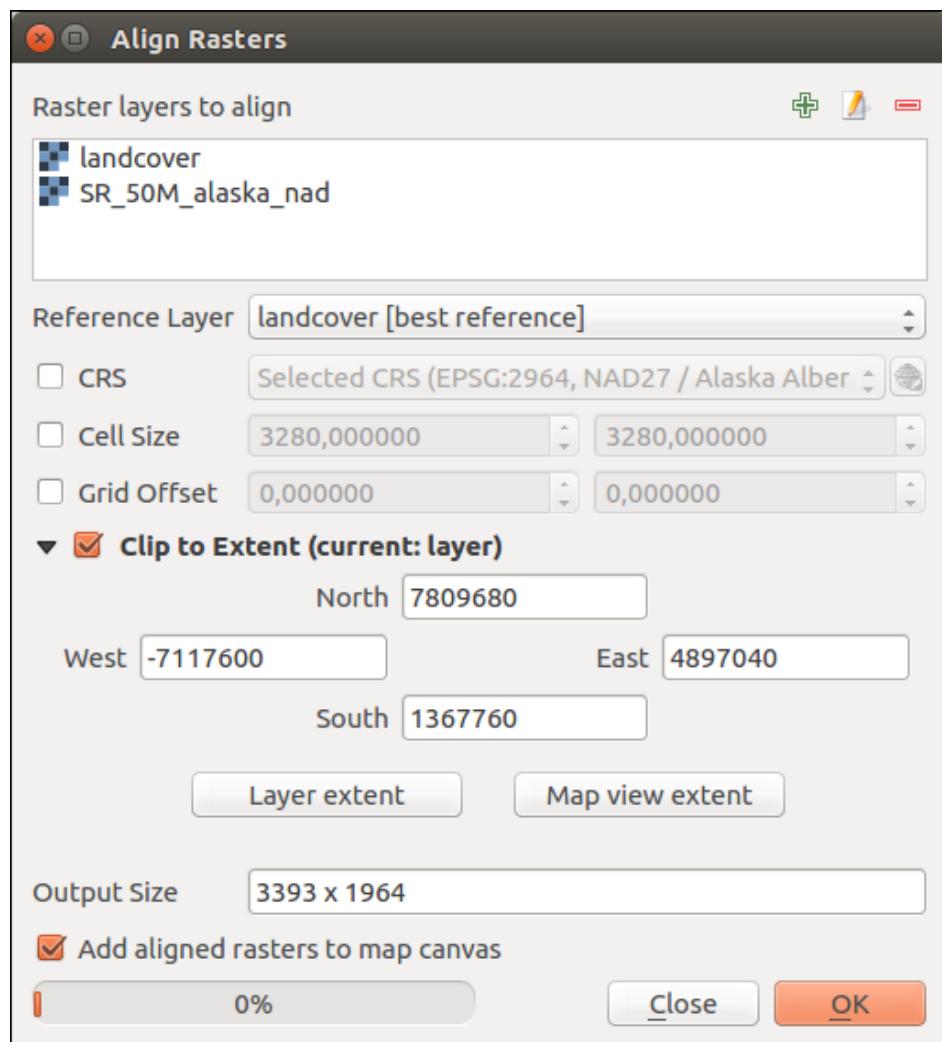


Fig. 14.16: Raster Alignment

# CHAPTER 15

## Working with Mesh Data

### 15.1 Working with Mesh Data

#### 15.1.1 What's a mesh?

A mesh is an unstructured grid usually with temporal and other components. The spatial component contains a collection of vertices, edges and faces in 2D or 3D space:

- **vertices** - XY(Z) points (in the layer's coordinate reference system)
- **edges** - connect pairs of vertices
- **faces** - a face is a set of edges forming a closed shape - typically a triangle or a quadrilateral (quad), rarely polygons with more vertices

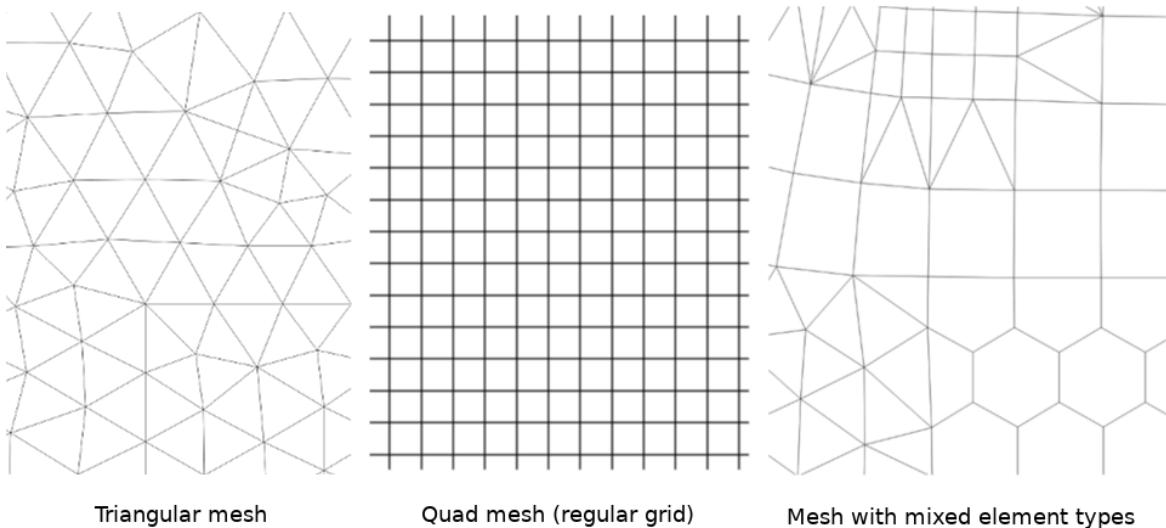


Fig. 15.1: Different mesh types

QGIS can currently render mesh data using triangles or regular quads.

Mesh provides information about the spatial structure. In addition, the mesh can have datasets (groups) that assign a value to every vertex. For example, having a triangular mesh with numbered vertices as shown in the image below:

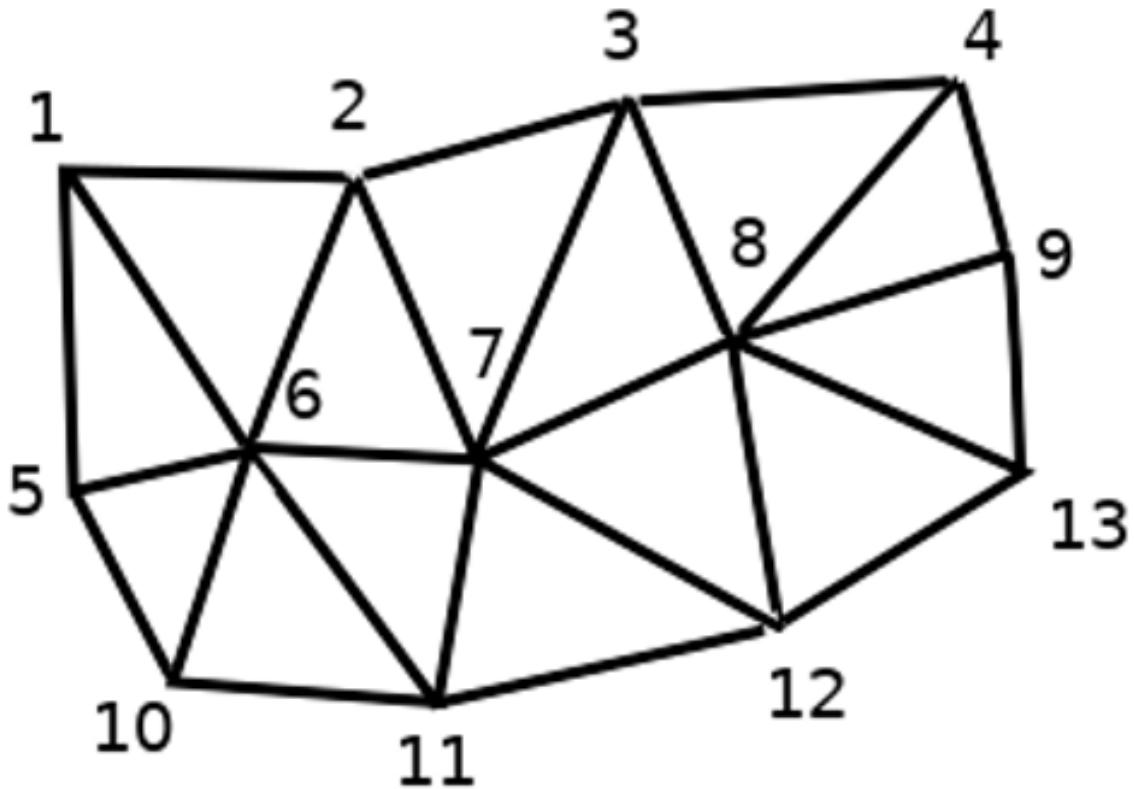


Fig. 15.2: Triangular grid with numbered vertices

Each vertex can store different datasets (typically multiple quantities), and those datasets can also have a temporal dimension. Thus, a single file may contain multiple datasets.

The following table gives an idea about the information that can be stored in mesh datasets. Table columns represent indices of mesh vertices, each row represents one dataset. Datasets can have different datatypes. In this case, it stores wind velocity at 10m at a particular moments in time (t1, t2, t3).

In a similar way, the mesh dataset can also store vector values for each vertex. For example, wind direction vector at the given time stamps:

10 metre wind	1	2	3	...
10 metre speed at time=t1	17251	24918	32858	...
10 metre speed at time=t2	19168	23001	36418	...
10 metre speed at time=t3	21085	30668	17251	...
...	...	...	...	...
10m wind direction time=t1	[20,2]	[20,3]	[20,4,5]	...
10m wind direction time=t2	[21,3]	[21,4]	[21,5,5]	...
10m wind direction time=t3	[22,4]	[22,5]	[22,6,5]	...
...	...	...	...	...

We can visualize the data by assigning colors to values (similarly to how it is done with *Singleband pseudocolor*

raster rendering) and interpolating data between vertices according to the mesh topology. It is common that some quantities are 2D vectors rather than being simple scalar values (e.g. wind direction). For such quantities it is desirable to display arrows indicating the directions.

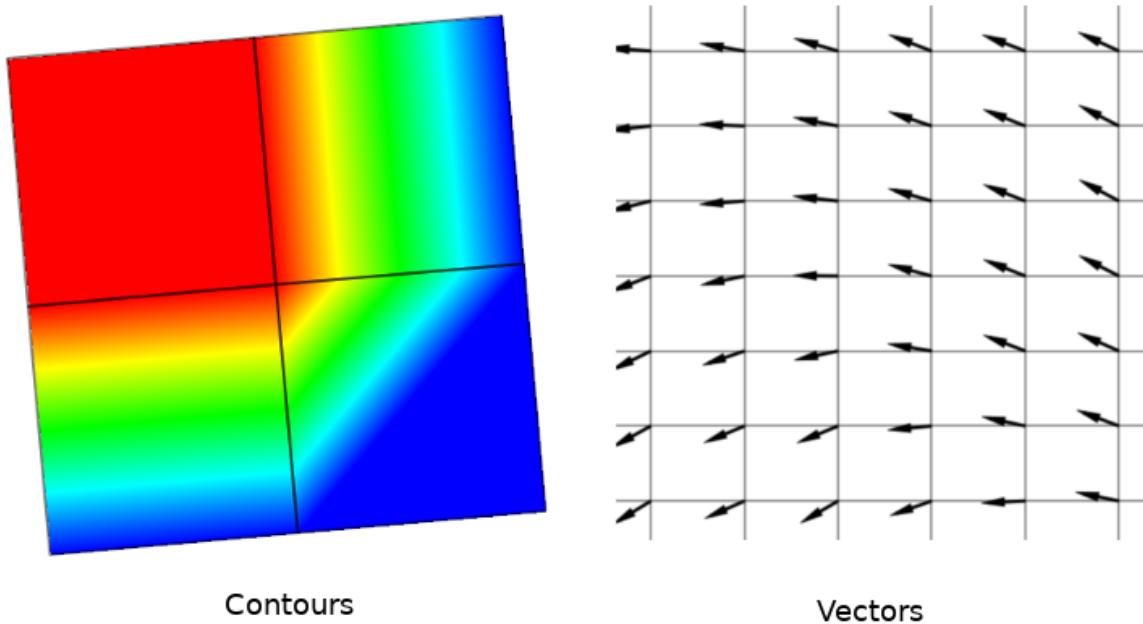


Fig. 15.3: Possible visualisation of mesh data

### 15.1.2 Supported formats

QGIS accesses mesh data using the [MDAL drivers](#). Hence, the natively supported formats are:

- NetCDF: Generic format for scientific data
- GRIB: Format commonly used in meteorology
- XMDF: As an example, hydraulic outputs from TUFLOW modelling package
- DAT: Outputs of various hydrodynamic modelling packages (e.g. BASEMENT, HYDRO\_AS-2D, TUFLOW)
- 3Di: 3Di modelling package format based on Climate and Forecast Conventions (<http://cfconventions.org/>)
- Some examples of mesh datasets can be found at <https://apps.ecmwf.int/datasets/data/interim-full-daily/?levtype=sfc/>

### 15.1.3 Loading a mesh layer

To add a mesh layer to QGIS:

1. Open the *Data Source Manager* dialog, either by selecting it from the *Layer* → menu or clicking the  button.
2. Then, enable the  *Mesh* tab on the left panel
3. Press the *...* button to select the file and press *Add*. The layer will be added using the native mesh rendering.

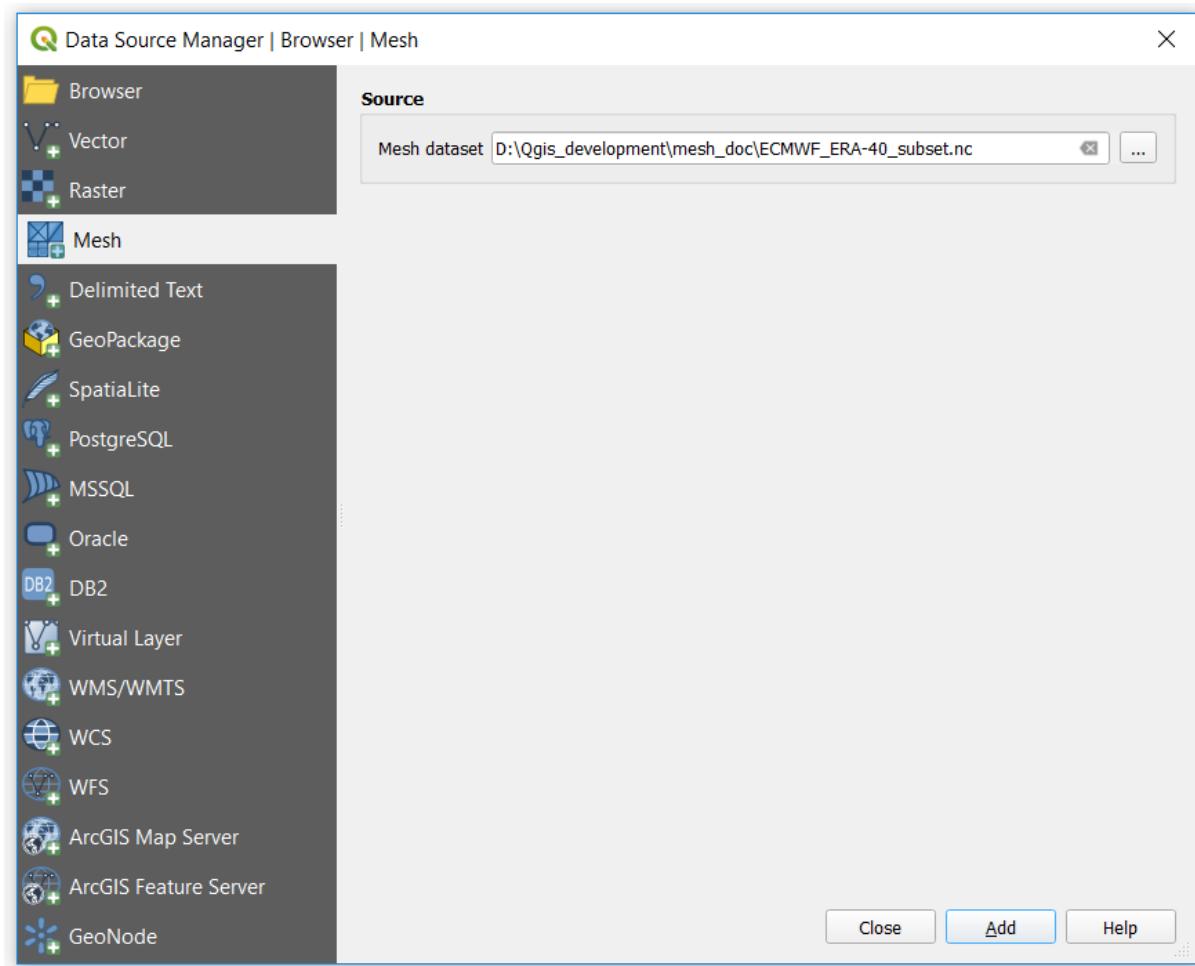


Fig. 15.4: Mesh tab in Data Source Manager

## 15.1.4 Mesh Dataset Properties

### Information

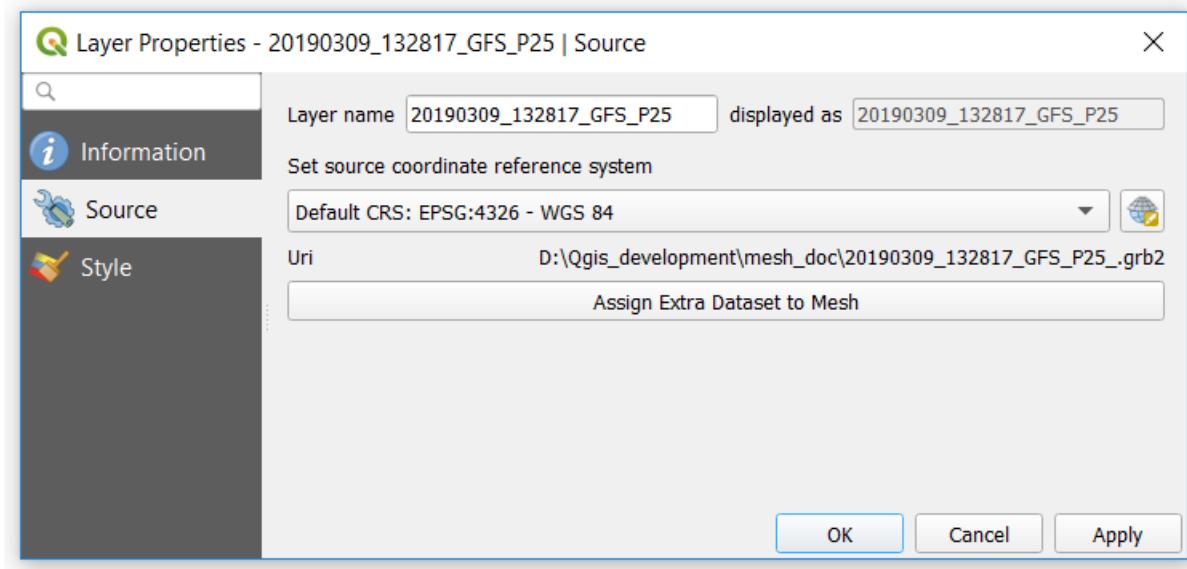


Fig. 15.5: Mesh Layer Properties

The *Information* tab is read-only and represents an interesting place to quickly grab summarized information and metadata on the current layer. Provided information are (based on the provider of the layer) uri, vertex count, face count and dataset groups count.

### Source

The *Source* tab displays basic information about the selected mesh, including:

- the Layer name to display in the *Layers* panel
- setting the Coordinate Reference System: Displays the layer's Coordinate Reference System (CRS) as a PROJ.4 string. You can change the layer's CRS by selecting a recently used one in the drop-down list or clicking on Select CRS button (see *Coordinate Reference System Selector*). Use this process only if the CRS applied to the layer is wrong or if none was applied.

Use the *Assign Extra Dataset to Mesh* button to add more groups to the current mesh layer.

### Style

Click the Style button to activate the dialog as shown in the following image:

Style properties are divided in several tabs:

- General*
- Contours Symbology*
- Vectors Symbology*
- Rendering*

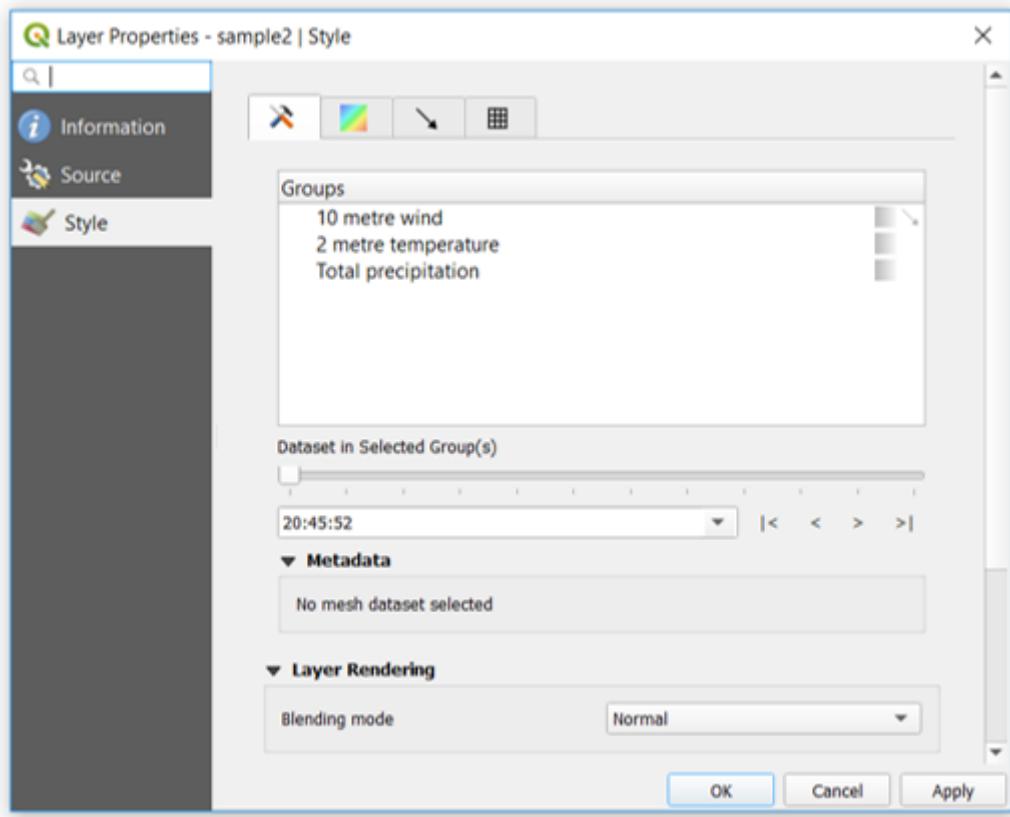


Fig. 15.6: Mesh Layer Style

## General

The tab presents the following items:

- groups available in the mesh dataset
- dataset in the selected group(s), for example, if the layer has a temporal dimension
- metadata if available
- *blending mode* available for the selected dataset.

The slider , combo box and buttons allow to explore another dimension of the data, if available. As the slider moves, the metadata is presented accordingly. See the figure *Mesh groups* below as an example. The map canvas will display the selected dataset group as well.

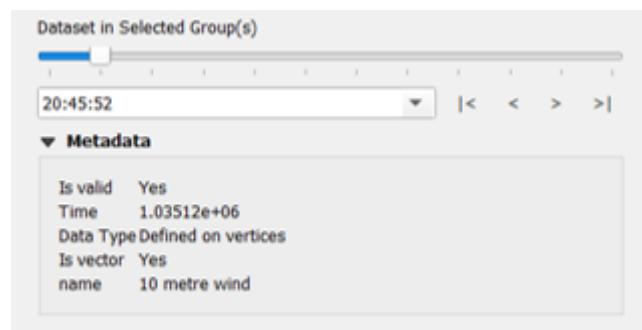


Fig. 15.7: Dataset in Selected Group(s)

You can apply symbology to each group using the tabs.

## Contours Symbology

Under *Groups*, click on to show contours with default visualization parameters.

In the tab you can see and change the current visualization options of contours for the selected group, as shown in the image *Styling contours in a mesh* below:

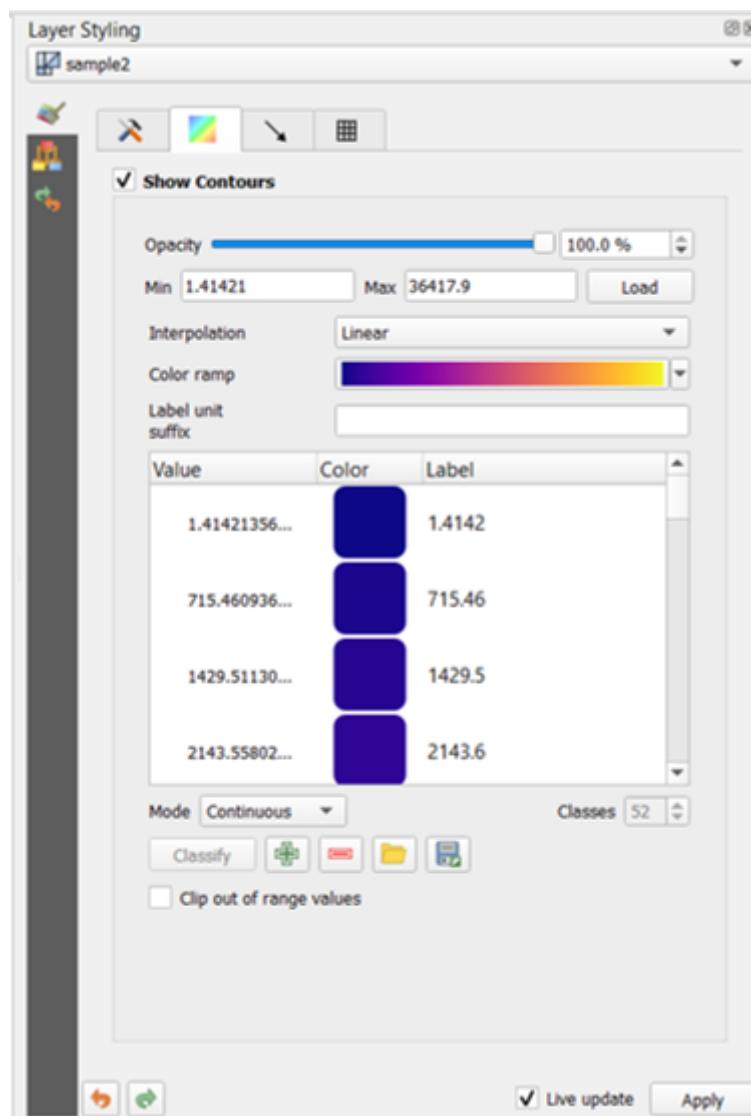


Fig. 15.8: Styling Contours in a Mesh Layer

Use the slide bar or combo box to set the opacity of the current group.

Use *Load* to adjust the min and max values of the current group.

The *Interpolation* list contains three options to render contours: *Linear*, *Discrete* and *Exact*.

The *Color ramp* widget opens the *color ramp drop-down shortcut*.

The *Label unit suffix* is a label added after the value in the legend.

By selecting *Continuous* in the classification *Mode*, QGIS creates classes automatically considering the *Min* and *Max* values. With ‘Equal interval’, you only need to select the number of classes using the combo box *Classes* and press the button *Classify*.

The button Add values manually adds a value to the individual color table. The button Remove selected row deletes a

value from the individual color table. Double clicking on the value column lets you insert a specific value. Double clicking on the color column opens the dialog *Change color*, where you can select a color to apply on that value.

## Vectors Symbology

In the tab  click on  to display vectors if available. The map canvas will display the vectors in the selected group with default parameters. Click on the tab  to change the visualization parameters for vectors as shown in the image below:

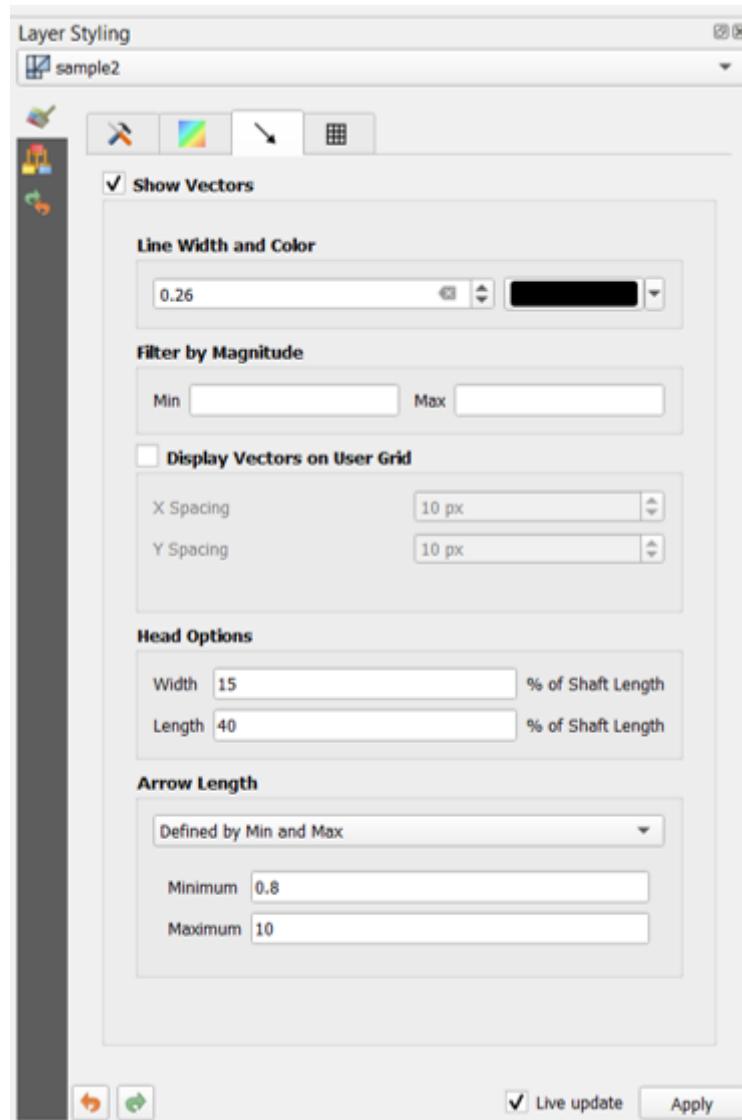


Fig. 15.9: Styling Vectors in a Mesh Layer

The line width can be set using the combo box or typing the value. The color widget opens the dialog *Change color*, where you can select a color to apply to vectors.

Enter values for *Min* and *Max* to filter vectors according to their magnitude.

Check on the box  *Display Vectors on User Grid* and specify the *X spacing* and the *Y spacing*, QGIS will render the vector considering the given spacing.

With the Head Options *Head Options*, QGIS allows the shape of the arrow head to be set by specifying width and length (in percentage).

Vector's *Arrow length* can be rendered in QGIS in three different ways:

- Defined by Min and Max: You specify the minimum and maximum length for the vectors, QGIS will adjust their visualization accordingly
- Scale to magnitude: You specify the (multiplying) factor to use
- Fixed: all the vectors are shown with the same length

## Rendering

In the tab , QGIS offers two possibilities to display the grid, as shown in the image :ref:`'Mesh rendering <figure\_mesh\_symbology\_grid>'`:

- Native Mesh Rendering that shows quadrants
- Triangular Mesh Rendering that display triangles

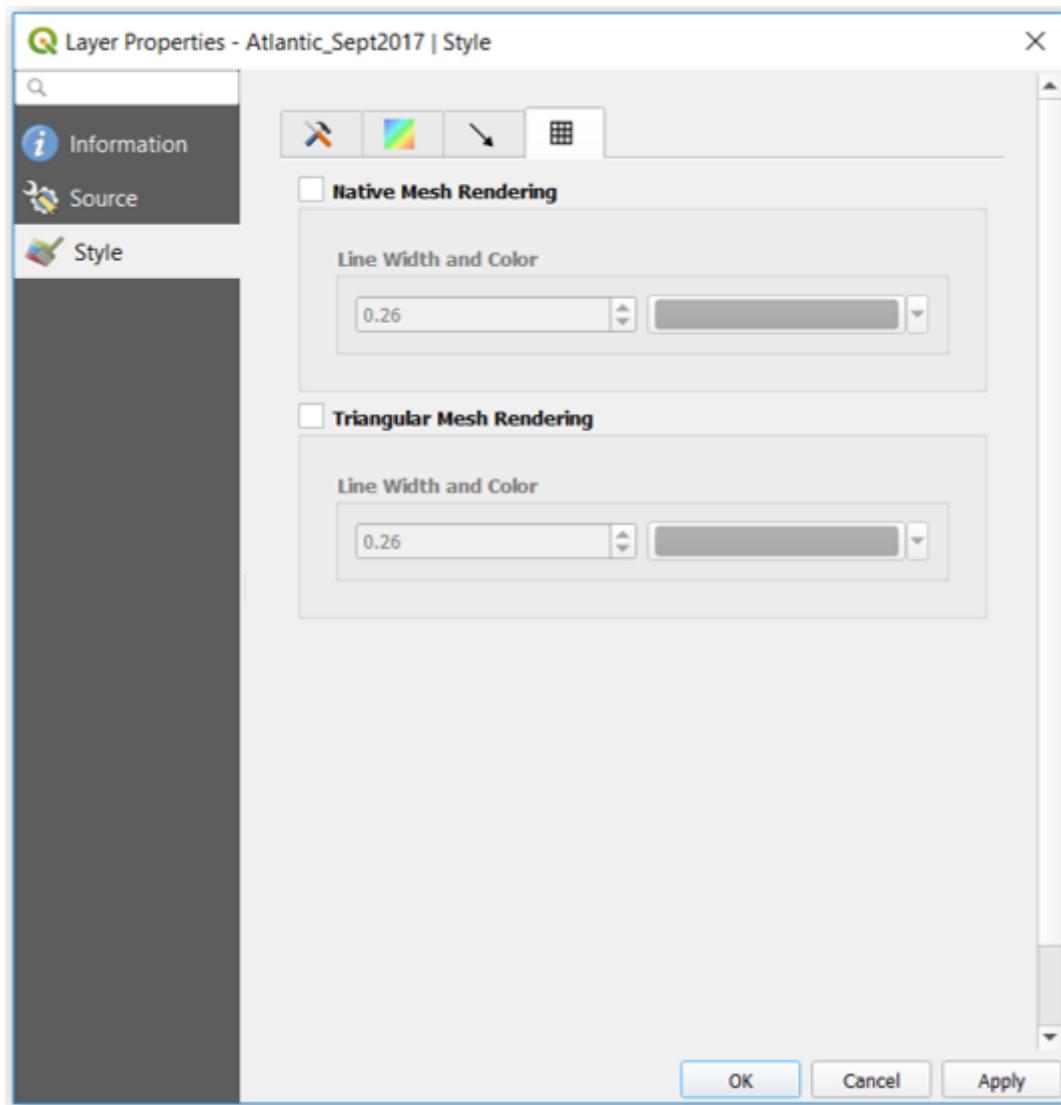


Fig. 15.10: Mesh Rendering

The line width and color can be changed in this dialog, and both the grid renderings can be turned off.



# CHAPTER 16

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## Laying out the maps

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With Print Layouts and Reports you can create maps and atlases, and print them or save them as image, PDF or SVG files.

### 16.1 Overview of the Print Layout

The print layout provides growing layout and printing capabilities. It allows you to add elements such as the QGIS map canvas, text labels, images, legends, scale bars, basic shapes, arrows, attribute tables and HTML frames. You can size, group, align, position and rotate each element and adjust their properties to create your layout. The layout can be printed or exported to image formats, PostScript, PDF or to SVG (export to SVG is not working properly with some recent Qt4 versions; you should try and check individually on your system). You can save the layout as a template and load it again in another session. Finally, generating several maps based on a template can be done through the atlas generator.

#### 16.1.1 Sample Session

Before you start to work with the print layout, you need to load some raster or vector layers in the QGIS map canvas and adapt their properties to suit your own convenience. After everything is rendered and symbolized to your liking, click the  New Print Layout icon in the toolbar or choose *File → New Print Layout*. You will be prompted to choose a title for the new layout.

To demonstrate how to create a map please follow the next instructions.

1. On the left side, select the  Add new map toolbar button and draw a rectangle on the canvas holding down the left mouse button. Inside the drawn rectangle the QGIS map view to the canvas.
2. Select the  Add new scalebar toolbar button and click with the left mouse button on the print layout canvas. A scalebar will be added to the canvas.
3. Select the  Add new legend toolbar button and draw a rectangle on the canvas holding down the left mouse button. Inside the drawn rectangle the legend will be drawn.
4. Select the  Select/Move item icon to select the map on the canvas and move it a bit.

5. While the map item is still selected you can also change the size of the map item. Click while holding down the left mouse button, in a white little rectangle in one of the corners of the map item and drag it to a new location to change its size.
6. Click the *Item Properties* panel on the left down side and find the setting for the orientation. Change the value of the setting *Map orientation* to ‘15.00°’. You should see the orientation of the map item change.
7. Now, you can print or export your print layout to image formats, PDF or to SVG with the export tools in *Layout* menu.
8. Finally, you can save your print layout within the project file with the  Save Project button.

You can add multiple elements to the print layout. It is also possible to have more than one map view or legend or scale bar in the print layout canvas, on one or several pages. Each element has its own properties and, in the case of the map, its own extent. If you want to remove any elements from the layout canvas you can do that with the **Delete** or the **Backspace** key.

### 16.1.2 The Layout Manager

The *Layout Manager* is the main window to manage print layouts in the project. It gives you an overview of existing print layouts and reports in the project and offers tools to:

- add new print layout or new report from scratch, template or duplicating an existing one;
- rename or delete any of them;
- open them in the project.

To open the layout manager dialog:

- from the main QGIS dialog, select *Project → Layout Manager...* menu or click on the  Layout Manager button in the *Project Toolbar*;
- from a print layout or report dialog, select *Layout → Layout Manager...* menu or click on the  Layout Manager button in the *Layout Toolbar*.

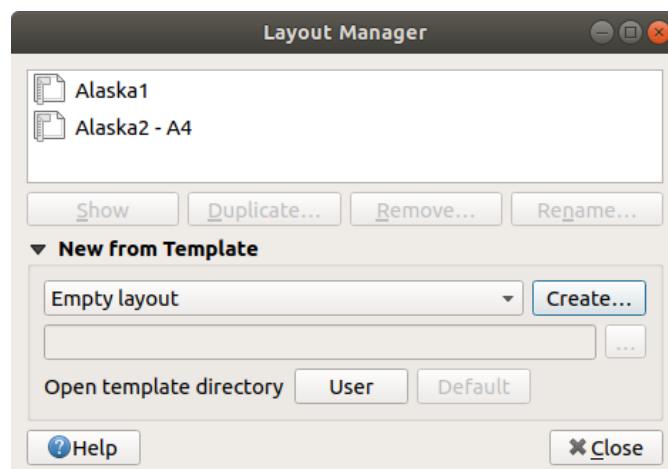


Fig. 16.1: The Print Layout Manager

The layout manager lists in its upper part all the available print layouts or reports in the project with tools to:

- show the selection: you can select multiple reports and/or print layout(s) and open them in one-click. Double-click a name also opens it;
- duplicate the selected print layout or report (available only if one item is selected): it creates a new dialog using the selected one as template. You'll be prompted to choose a new title for the new layout;

- rename the report or layout (available only if one item is selected): you'll be prompted to choose a new title for the layout;
- remove the layout: the selected print layout(s) will be deleted from the project.

In the lower part, it's possible to create new print layouts or reports from scratch or a template. By default, QGIS will look for templates in the user profile and the application template directories (accessible with the two buttons at the bottom of the frame) but also in any folder declared as *Path(s) to search for extra print templates* in *Settings → Options → Layouts*. Found templates are listed in the combobox. Select an item and press the *Create* button to generate a new report or print layout.

You can also use layout templates from a custom folder; in that case, select *specific* in the templates drop-down list, browse to the template and press *Create*.

#### Tip: Creating template-based print layouts from Browser panel

Drag-and-drop a print layout template .qpt file from any file browser onto the map canvas or double-click it in the *Browser panel* generates a new print layout from the template.

### 16.1.3 Menus, tools and panels of the print layout

Opening the print layout provides you with a blank canvas that represents the paper surface when using the print option. Initially you find buttons on the left beside the canvas to add print layout items: the current QGIS map canvas, text labels, images, legends, scale bars, basic shapes, arrows, attribute tables and HTML frames. In this toolbar you also find buttons to navigate, zoom in on an area and pan the view on the layout a well as buttons to select any layout item and to move the contents of the map item.

*figure\_layout\_overview* shows the initial view of the print layout before any elements are added.

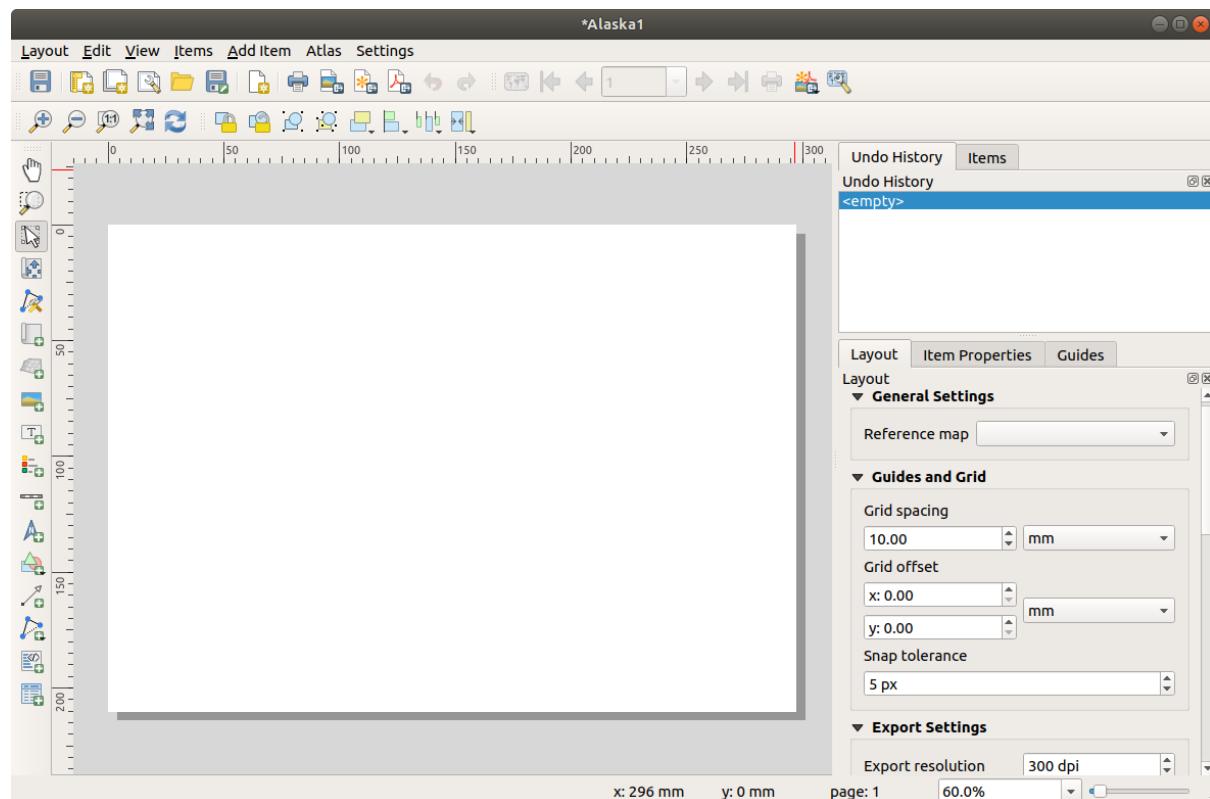


Fig. 16.2: Print Layout

On the right beside the canvas you find two set of panels. The upper one holds the panels *Items* and *Undo History* and the lower holds the panels *Layout*, *Item properties* and *Atlas generation*.

- The *Items* panel provides a list of all the print layout items added to the canvas and ways to globally interact with them (see [The Items Panel](#) for more information).
- The *Undo History* panel displays a history of all changes applied to the layout. With a mouse click, it is possible to undo and redo layout steps back and forth to a certain status.
- The *Layout* panel allows you to set general parameters to apply to the layout when exporting or working within (see [The Layout Panel](#) for more details);



Select/Move item

- The *Item Properties* panel displays the properties for the selected item. Click the icon to select an item (e.g., legend, scale bar or label) on the canvas. Then click the *Item Properties* panel and customize the settings for the selected item (see [Layout Items](#) for detailed information on each item settings).
- The *Atlas* panel allows you to enable the generation of an atlas for the current layout and gives access to its parameters (see [Generate an Atlas](#) for detailed information on atlas generation usage).

In the bottom part of the print layout window, you can find a status bar with mouse position, current page number, a combo box to set the zoom level, the number of selected items if applicable and, in the case of atlas generation, the number of features.

In the upper part of the print layout window, you can find menus and other toolbars. All print layout tools are available in menus and as icons in a toolbar.

The toolbars and the panels can be switched off and on using the right mouse button over any toolbar or through *View* → *Toolbars* → or *View* → *Panels* →.

## Menus and Tools

### Layout menu

The *Layout* provides action to manage the layout:

- Save the project file directly from the print layout window.
- Create a new and blank print layout with *New Layout...*
- *Duplicate Layout...* : Create a new print layout by duplicating the current one.
- Remove the current layout with *Delete Layout...*
- Open the *Layout Manager...*
- *Layouts* → : Open an existing print layout.

Once the layout is designed, with *Save as Template* and *Add Items from Template* icons, you can save the current state of a print layout session as a .qpt template file and load its items again in another session/print layout.

In the *Layout* menu, there are also powerful ways to share geographical information produced with QGIS that can be included in reports or published. These tools are *Export as Image...*, *Export as PDF...*, *Export as SVG...* and *Print....*

Below is a list of all the available tools in this menu with some convenient information.

Tool	Shortcut	Toolbar	Reference
 Save Project	Ctrl+S	Layout	<a href="#">Introducing QGIS projects</a>
 New Layout	Ctrl+N	Layout	<a href="#">The Layout Manager</a>
 Duplicate Layout		Layout	<a href="#">The Layout Manager</a>
 Delete Layout			
 Layout Manager...		Layout	<a href="#">The Layout Manager</a>
Layouts →			
Layout Properties...			<a href="#">The Layout Panel</a>
Rename Layout...			
 Add Pages...		Layout	<a href="#">Working with the page properties</a>
 Add Items from Template		Layout	<a href="#">Creating a layout item</a>
 Save as Template...		Layout	<a href="#">The Layout Manager</a>
 Export as Image...		Layout	<a href="#">Export as Image</a>
 Export as SVG...		Layout	<a href="#">Export as SVG</a>
 Export as PDF...		Layout	<a href="#">Export as PDF</a>
Page Setup...	Ctrl+Shift+P		
 Print...	Ctrl+P	Layout	<a href="#">Creating an Output</a>
Close	Ctrl+Q		

## Edit menu

The *Edit* menu offers tools to manipulate print layout items. It includes common actions like selection tools, Copy/Cut/Paste and undo/redo (see [The Undo History Panel: Revert and Restore actions](#)) functionality for the items in the layout.

When using the Paste action, the elements will be pasted according to the current mouse position. Using the *Edit → Paste in Place* action or pressing Ctrl+Shift+V will paste the items into the current page, at the same position they were in their initial page. It ensures to copy/paste items at the same place, from page to page.

Below is a list of all the available tools in this menu with some convenient information.

Tool	Shortcut	Tool-bar	Reference
Undo (last change)	Ctrl+Z	Layout	<a href="#">The Undo History Panel: Revert and Restore actions</a>
Redo (last reverted change)	Ctrl+Y	Layout	<a href="#">The Undo History Panel: Revert and Restore actions</a>
Delete	Del		
Cut	Ctrl+X		
Copy	Ctrl+C		
Paste	Ctrl+V		
Paste in place	Ctrl+Shift+V		
Select All	Ctrl+A		
Deselect all	Ctrl+Shift+A		
Invert Selection			
Select Next Item Below	Ctrl+Alt+[		
Select Next Item above	Ctrl+Alt+]		
Pan Layout	P	Tool-box	
Zoom	Z	Tool-box	
Select/Move Item	V	Tool-box	<a href="#">Interacting with layout items</a>
Move Content	C	Tool-box	<a href="#">The Map Item</a>
Edit Nodes Item		Tool-box	<a href="#">The Node-Based Shape Items</a>

## View menu

The View menu gives access to navigation tools and helps to configure general behavior of the print layout. Beside the common zoom tools, you have means to:

- Refresh view (if you find the view in an inconsistent state);
- enable a *grid* you could snap items to when moving or creating them. Grids setting is done in *Settings → Layout Options... or in the Layout Panel*;
- enable *guides* you could snap items to when moving or creating them. Guides are red lines that you can create by clicking in the ruler (above or at the left side of the layout) and drag and drop to the desired location;
- *Smart Guides*: uses other layout items as guides to dynamically snap to as you move or reshape an item;
- *Clear Guides* to remove all current guides;
- *Show Bounding box* around the items to better identify your selection;
- *Show Rules* around the layout;
- *Show Pages* or set up pages to transparent. Often layout is used to create non-print layouts, e.g. for inclusion in presentations or other documents, and it's desirable to export the composition using a totally transparent

background. It's sometimes referred to as “infinite canvas” in other editing packages.

In the print layout, you can change the zoom level using the mouse wheel or the slider and combo box in the status bar. If you need to switch to pan mode while working in the layout area, you can hold the Spacebar or the mouse wheel. With **Ctrl+Spacebar**, you can temporarily switch to Zoom In mode, and with **Ctrl+Alt+Spacebar**, to Zoom Out mode.

Panels and toolbars can be enabled from the *View →* menu. To maximise the space available to interact with a composition you can check the  *View → Toggle Panel Visibility* option or press **Ctrl+Tab**; all panels are hidden and only previously visible panels are restored when unchecked.

It's also possible to switch to a full screen mode to have more space to interact with by pressing **F11** or using *View →  Toggle Full Screen*.

Tool	Shortcut	Toolbar	Reference
 Refresh	F5	<i>Navigation</i>	
<i>Preview →</i>			
 Zoom In	Ctrl++	<i>Navigation</i>	
 Zoom Out	Ctrl+-	<i>Navigation</i>	
 Zoom to 100%	Ctrl+1	<i>Navigation</i>	
 Zoom Full	Ctrl+0	<i>Navigation</i>	
<i>Zoom to Width</i>			
 Show Grid	Ctrl+'		<i>Guides and Grid</i>
 Snap to Grid	Ctrl+Shift+'		<i>Guides and Grid</i>
 Show Guides	Ctrl+;		<i>Guides and Grid</i>
 Snap to Guides	Ctrl+Shift+;		<i>Guides and Grid</i>
 Smart Guides	Ctrl+Alt+;		
<i>Manage Guides...</i>			<i>The Guides Panel</i>
<i>Clear Guides</i>			<i>The Guides Panel</i>
 Show Rulers	Ctrl+R		
 Show Bounding Boxes	Ctrl+Shift+B		
 Show Pages			
<i>Toolbars →</i>			<i>Panels and Toolbars</i>
<i>Panels →</i>			<i>Panels and Toolbars</i>
 Toggle Full Screen	F11		<i>View</i>
 Toggle Panel Visibility	Ctrl+Tab		<i>View</i>

## Items menu

The *Items* helps you configure items' position in the layout and the relations between them (see *Interacting with layout items*).

Tool	Shortcut	Toolbar	Reference
<i>Group</i>	Ctrl+G	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Grouping items</i>
<i>Ungroup</i>	Ctrl+Shift+G	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Grouping items</i>
<i>Raise</i>	Ctrl+]	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Alignment</i>
<i>Lower</i>	Ctrl+[	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Alignment</i>
<i>Bring to Front</i>	Ctrl+Shift+]	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Alignment</i>
<i>Send to Back</i>	Ctrl+Shift+[	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Alignment</i>
<i>Lock Selected Items</i>	Ctrl+L	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Locking items</i>
<i>Unlock All</i>	Ctrl+Shift+L	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Locking items</i>
<i>Align Items →</i>		<i>Actions</i>	<i>Alignment</i>
<i>Distribute Items →</i>		<i>Actions</i>	<i>Moving and resizing items</i>
<i>Resize →</i>		<i>Actions</i>	<i>Moving and resizing items</i>

## Add Item menu

These are tools to create layout items. Each of them is deeply described in [Layout Items](#) chapter.

Tool	Toolbar	Reference
<i>Add Map</i>	<i>Toolbox</i>	<a href="#">The Map Item</a>
<i>Add Picture</i>	<i>Toolbox</i>	<a href="#">The Picture Item</a>
<i>Add Label</i>	<i>Toolbox</i>	<a href="#">The Label Item</a>
<i>Add Legend</i>	<i>Toolbox</i>	<a href="#">The Legend Item</a>
<i>Add Scale Bar</i>	<i>Toolbox</i>	<a href="#">The Scale Bar Item</a>
<i>Add Shape →</i>	<i>Toolbox</i>	<a href="#">The Regular Shape Item</a>
<i>Add Arrow</i>	<i>Toolbox</i>	<a href="#">The Arrow Item</a>
<i>Add Node Item →</i>	<i>Toolbox</i>	<a href="#">The Node-Based Shape Items</a>
<i>Add HTML</i>	<i>Toolbox</i>	<a href="#">The HTML Frame Item</a>
<i>Add Attribute Table</i>	<i>Toolbox</i>	<a href="#">The Attribute Table Item</a>

## Atlas menu

Tool	Shortcut	Toolbar	Reference
 <i>Preview Atlas</i>	Ctrl+Alt+/	Atlas	<i>Preview and generate an atlas</i>
 <i>First Feature</i>	Ctrl+<	Atlas	<i>Preview and generate an atlas</i>
 <i>Previous Feature</i>	Ctrl+,	Atlas	<i>Preview and generate an atlas</i>
 <i>Next Feature</i>	Ctrl+.	Atlas	<i>Preview and generate an atlas</i>
 <i>Last feature</i>	Ctrl+>	Atlas	<i>Preview and generate an atlas</i>
 <i>Print Atlas...</i>		Atlas	<i>Preview and generate an atlas</i>
 <i>Export Atlas as Images...</i>		Atlas	<i>Preview and generate an atlas</i>
 <i>Export Atlas as SVG...</i>		Atlas	<i>Preview and generate an atlas</i>
 <i>Export Atlas as PDF...</i>		Atlas	<i>Preview and generate an atlas</i>
 <i>Atlas Settings</i>		Atlas	<i>Generate an Atlas</i>

## Settings Menu

The *Settings → Layout Options...* menu is a shortcut to *Settings → Options → Layouts* menu of QGIS main canvas. Here, you can set some options that will be used as default on any new print layout:

- *Layout defaults* let you specify the default font to use;
- With *Grid appearance*, you can set the grid style and its color. There are three types of grid: **Dots**, **Solid** lines and **Crosses**;
- *Grid and guide defaults* defines spacing, offset and tolerance of the grid (see *Guides and Grid* for more details);
- *Layout Paths*: to manage list of custom paths to search print templates.

## Contextual menus

Depending on where you right-click in the print layout dialog, you open a contextual menu with various features:

- Right-click on the menu bar or any toolbar and you get the list of layout panels and toolbars you can enable or disable in one-click.
- Right-click over a ruler and you can  *Show Guides*,  *Snap to Guides*, *Manage Guides...* opening the *Guides panel* or *Clear Guides*. It's also possible to hide the rulers.
- Right-click in the print layout canvas and:
  - You'll be able to *Undo* and *Redo* recent changes, or *Paste* any copied item (only available if no item is selected).
  - If you click over a page, you can additionally access the current *Page Properties* panel or *Remove Page*.
  - If you click on a selected item then you can cut or copy it as well as open the *Item Properties* panel.
  - If more than one item are selected, then you can either group them and/or ungroup if at least one group is already in the selection.
- Right-click inside a text box or spinbox widget of any layout panel provides edit options to manipulate its content.

## The Layout Panel

In the *Layout* panel, you can define the global settings of your print layout.

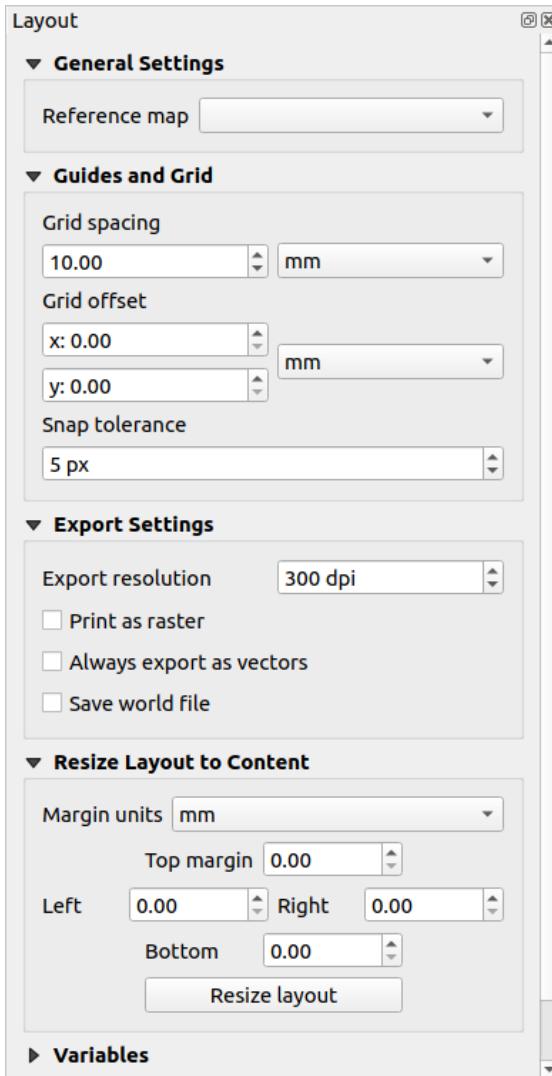


Fig. 16.3: Layout Settings in the Print Layout

### General settings

In a print layout, you can use more than one map item. The *Reference map* selects the map item to be used as the layout's master map. The layout will use this map in any properties and variable calculating units or scale. This includes exporting the print layout to georeferenced formats.

### Guides and Grid

You can put some reference marks on your paper sheet to help you accurately place some items. These marks can be:

- simple horizontal or vertical lines (called **Guides**) put at the position you want (see [The Guides Panel](#) for guides creation).
- or regular **Grid**: a network of horizontal and vertical lines superimposed over the layout.

Settings like *Grid spacing* or *Grid offset* can be adjusted in this group as well as the *Snap tolerance* to use for items. The tolerance is the maximum distance below which the mouse cursor is snapped to a grid or a guide, while moving, resizing or creating an item.

Whether grid or guides should be shown is set in *View* menu. There, you can also decide if they might be used to snap layout items. When both a grid line and a guide line are within tolerance of a point, guides will always take precedence - since they have been manually set (hence, assumption that they have been explicitly placed at highly desirable snapping locations, and should be selected over the general grid).

---

**Note:** In the *Settings → Layout Options* menu, you can also set the grid and guides parameters exposed above. However, these options will only apply as defaults to new print layouts.

---

## Export settings

You can define a resolution to use for all exported maps in *Export resolution*. This setting can then be overridden each time you export a map.

Because of some advanced rendering options (*blending mode*, *effects*...), a layout item may need rasterization in order to be exported correctly. QGIS will individually rasterize it without forcing every other item to also be rasterized. This allows printing or saving as PostScript or PDF to keep items as much as possible as vectors, e.g. a map item with layer opacity won't force labels, scale bars, etc to be rasterized too. You can however:

- force all the items to be rasterized checking the  *Print as raster* box;
- or use the opposite option, i.e. *Always export as vectors*, to force the export to keep items as vectors when exported to a compatible format. Note that in some cases, this could cause the output to look different to layout.

Where the format makes it possible (e.g., .TIF, .PDF) exporting a print layout results by default in a georeferenced file (based on the *Reference map* item in the *General settings* group). For other formats, georeferenced output requires you to generate a world file by checking  *Save world file*. The world file is created beside the exported map(s), has the name of the page output with the reference map item and contains information to georeference it easily.

## Resize layout to content

Using the *Resize page* tool in this group, you create a unique page composition whose extent covers the current contents of the print layout (with some optional *margins* around the cropped bounds).

Note that this behavior is different from the *crop to content* option in that all the items are placed on a real and unique page in replacement of all the existing pages.

## Variables

The *Variables* lists all the variables available at the layout's level (which includes all global and project's variables).

It also allows the user to manage layout-level variables. Click the  button to add a new custom layout-level variable. Likewise, select a custom layout-level variable from the list and click the  button to remove it.

More information on variables usage in the *General Tools* section.

## Working with the page properties

A layout can be composed of several pages. For instance, a first page can show a map canvas, and a second page can show the attribute table associated with a layer, while a third one shows an HTML frame linking to your

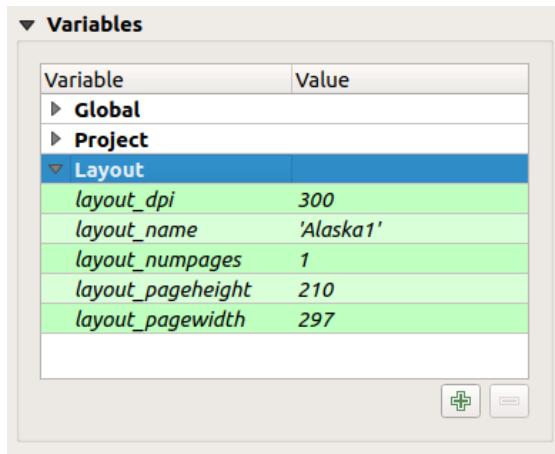


Fig. 16.4: Variables Editor in the Print Layout

organization website. Or you can add many types of items on each page.

### Adding a new page

Furthermore, a layout can be made using different size and/or orientation of pages. To add a page, select the  *Add Pages...* tool from the *Layout* menu or *Layout Toolbar*. The *Insert Pages* dialog opens and you are asked to fill:

- the number of pages to insert;
- the position of the page(s): before or after a given page or at the end of the print layout;
- The *Page size*: it could be of a preset format page (A4, B0, Legal, Letter, ANSI A, Arch A and their derivatives as well as a resolution type, such as 1920x1080 or 1024x768) with associated *Orientation* (Portrait or Landscape).

The page size can also be of a custom format; In that case, you'd need to enter its *Width* and *Height* (with locked size ratio if needed) and select the unit to use among mm, cm, px, pt, in, ft... Conversion of entered values is automatically applied when switching from one unit to another.

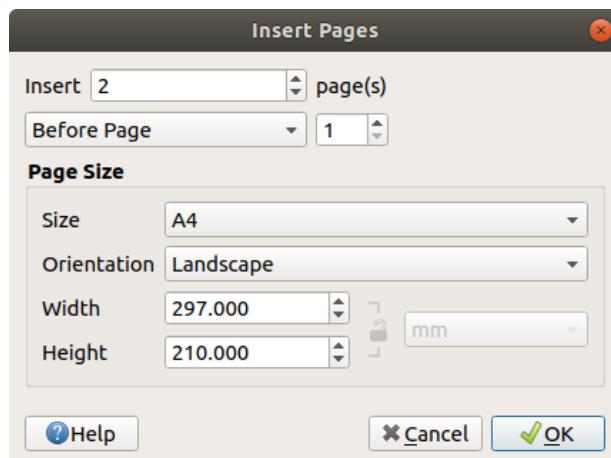


Fig. 16.5: Creating a new page in the Print Layout

## Updating page properties

Any page can be later customized through the *Page Item Properties* panel. Right-click on a page and select *Page Properties*.... The *Item Properties* panel opens with settings such as:

- the *Page size* frame described above. You can modify each property using the data defined override options (see [Explore Data-defined override buttons with atlas](#) for a use case);
- the  *Exclude page from exports* to control whether the current page with its content should be included in the *layout output*;
- the *Background* using the *color* or *symbol* you want.

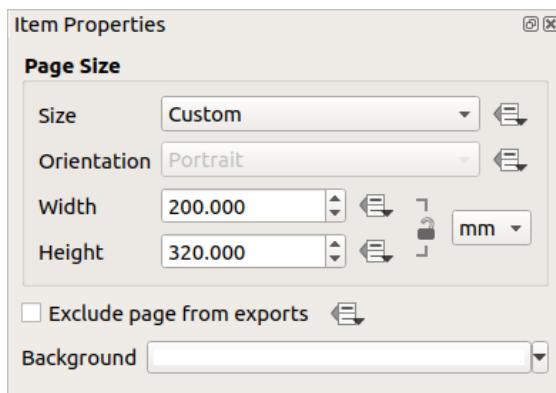


Fig. 16.6: Page properties dialog

## The Guides Panel

Guides are vertical or horizontal line references you can place on a layout page to assist you on items placement, when creating, moving or resizing them. To be active, guides require the *View → Show Guides* and *View → Snap to Guides* options to be checked. To create a guide, two ways:

- assuming *View → Show Rulers* option is set, drag out a ruler and release the mouse button within the page area, at the desired position.
- more accurate and always available, use the *Guides* panel.

The *Guides* panel allows creation of snap lines at specific locations: click the Add new guide button and enter coordinates of the horizontal or vertical line. Different units are available for setting. The panel also allows adjusting position of existing guides to exact coordinates: double-click a guide coordinate and replace the value.

To delete a guide, select it and press Remove selected guide button. Use *Clear All Guides* to remove all the guides in the panel.

Guides are single page only meaning that the *Guides* panel lists guides of the current page (whose number is shown at the top of the dialog). Likewise, it allows creation or removal of guides only in the current page. The *Apply to All Pages* button allows you to setup the guide configuration on a single page and easily transfer it to all other pages in the layout.

---

### Tip: Snapping to existing layout items

Other than guides and grids, you can use existing items as snapping references when moving, resizing or creating new items; these are called **smart guides** and require *View → Smart Guides* option to be checked. Anytime the mouse pointer is close to an item's bound, a snapping cross appears.

---

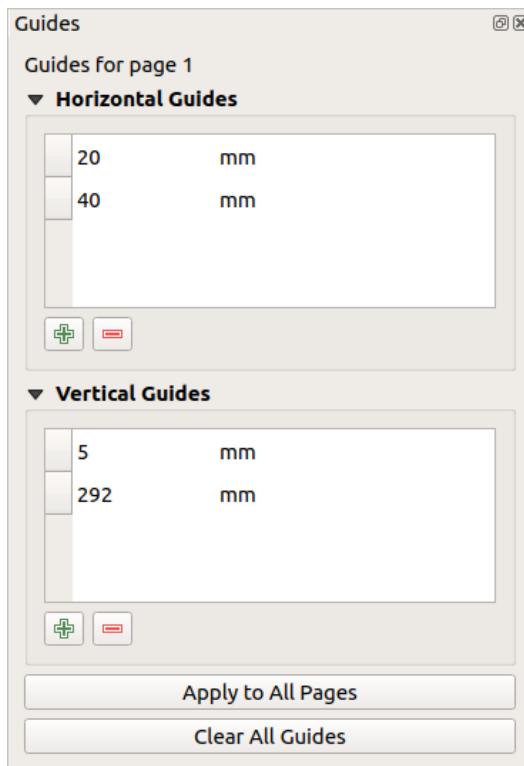


Fig. 16.7: The Guides panel

## The Items Panel

The *Items* panel offers some options to manage selection and visibility of items. All the items added to the print layout canvas (including *items group*) are shown in a list and selecting an item makes the corresponding row selected in the list as well as selecting a row does select the corresponding item in the print layout canvas. This is thus a handy way to select an item placed behind another one. Note that a selected row is shown as bold.

For any selected item, you can :

- set it visible or not;
- lock or unlock its position;
- sort its Z position. You can move up and down each item in the list with a click and drag. The upper item in the list will be brought to the foreground in the print layout canvas. By default, a newly created item is placed in the foreground.
- change the item ID by double-clicking the text;
- right-click an item and copy or delete it or open its *properties panel*.

Once you have found the correct position for an item, you can lock it by ticking the box in column. Locked items are **not** selectable on the canvas. Locked items can be unlocked by selecting the item in the *Items* panel and unchecking the tickbox or you can use the icons on the toolbar.

## The Undo History Panel: Revert and Restore actions

During the layout process, it is possible to revert and restore changes. This can be done with the revert and restore tools available in the *Edit* menu, the *Layout* toolbar or the contextual menu any time you right-click in the print layout area:

- Revert last change



This can also be done by mouse click within the *Undo history* panel (see [figure\\_layout](#)). The History panel lists the last actions done within the print layout. Just select the point you want to revert to and once you do new action all the actions done after the selected one will be removed.

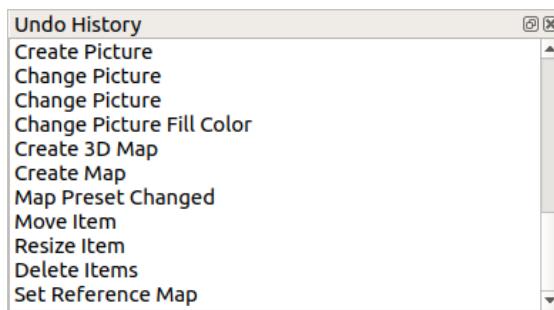


Fig. 16.8: Undo History in the Print Layout

## 16.2 Layout Items

### 16.2.1 Layout Items Common Options

QGIS provides a large set of items to layout a map. They can be of map, legend, scale bar, picture, table, north arrow, image type... They however share some common options and behavior that are exposed below.

#### Creating a layout item

Items can be created using different tools, either from scratch or based on existing items.

To create a layout item from scratch:

1. Select the corresponding tool either from the *Add Item* menu or the *Toolbox* bar.
2. Then:
  - Click on the page and fill the size and placement information requested in the *New Item Properties* dialog that pops up (for details, see [Position and Size](#));

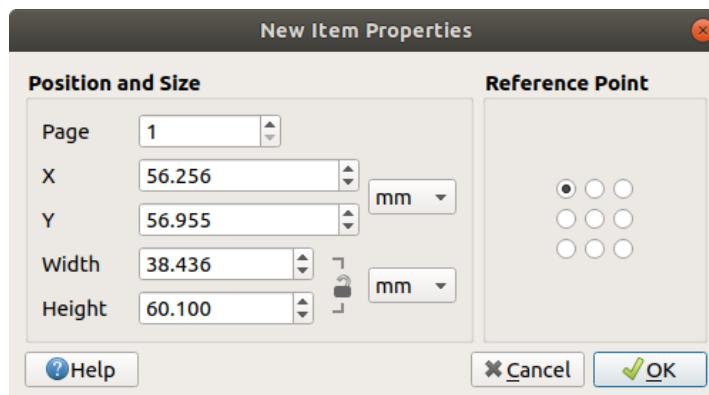


Fig. 16.9: New Item properties dialog

- Or click-and-drag to define the initial size and placement of the item. You can rely on *grids and guides* snapping for a better position.

---

**Note:** Because they can have particular shapes, drawing node or arrow items does not work with one-click nor click-and-drag methods; you need to click and place each node of the item. See [The Node-Based Shape Items](#) for more details.

---

You can also:

1. Select an existing item with the  Select/Move item button from the *Toolbox* toolbar
2. Use the contextual menu or the *Edit* menu tools to copy/cut the item and paste it at the mouse position as a new item.

You can also use the *Paste in Place* (**Ctrl+Shift+V**) command to duplicate an item from one page to another and place it in the new page at the same coordinates as the original.

Moreover, you can create items using a print layout template (for details, see [The Layout Manager](#)) through the *Layout → Add Items from Template...* command.

---

#### Tip: Add layout items using the file browser

From your file browser or using the *Browser* panel, drag-and-drop a print layout template (.qpt file) onto a print layout dialog and QGIS automatically adds all items from that template to the layout.

---

### Interacting with layout items

Each item inside the print layout can be moved and resized to create a perfect layout. For both operations the first step is to activate the  Select/Move item tool and click on the item.

 You can select multiple items with the  Select/Move item button: click and drag over the items or hold the **Shift** button and click on each of the items you want. To deselect an item, click on it holding the **Shift** button.

Each time there's a selection, count of selected items is displayed on the status bar. Inside the *Edit* menu, you can find actions to select all the items, clear all selections, invert the current selection and more...

### Moving and resizing items

Unless *View → Show Bounding Boxes* option is unchecked, a selected item will show squares on its boundaries ; moving one of them with the mouse will resize the item in the corresponding direction. While resizing, holding **Shift** will maintain the aspect ratio. Holding **Alt** will resize from the item center.

To move a layout item, select it with the mouse and move while holding the left button. If you need to constrain the movements to the horizontal or vertical axis, just hold the **Shift** button on the keyboard while moving the mouse. You can also move a selected item using the **Arrow keys** on the keyboard; if the movement is too slow, you can speed it up by holding **Shift**. If you need better precision, use the *Position and size* properties, or grid/guides snapping as explained above for item's creation.

Resizing or moving several items at once is made the same way as for a single item. QGIS however provides some advanced tools to automatically resize a selection of items following different rules:

- each item height matches the  tallest or the  shortest selected item;
- each item width matches the  widest or the  narrowest selected item;
- resizes items to  squares: each item is enlarged to form a square.

Likewise, automated tools are available to organize multiple items position by distributing equidistantly:

- edges (left, right, top or bottom) of items;

- centers of items either horizontally or vertically.

## Grouping items

Grouping items allows you to manipulate a set of items like a single one: you can easily resize, move, delete, copy the items as a whole.

To create a group of items, select more than one and press the *Group* button on the *View* menu or the *Actions* toolbar or from the right-click menu. A row named *Group* is added to the *Items* panel and can be locked or hidden like any other *Items panel's object*. Grouped items are **not individually** selectable on the canvas; use the Items panel for direct selection and access the item's properties panel.

## Locking items

Once you have found the correct position for an item, you can lock it by using the *Lock selected items* button in the *View* menu or the *Actions* toolbar or ticking the box next to the item in the *Items* panel. Locked items are **not** selectable on the canvas.

Locked items can be unlocked by selecting the item in the *Items* panel and unchecking the tickbox or you can use the icons on the toolbar.

## Alignment

Raising or lowering the visual hierarchy for elements are inside the *Raise selected items* pull-down menu. Choose an element on the print layout canvas and select the matching functionality to raise or lower the selected element compared to the other elements. This order is shown in the *Items* panel. You can also raise or lower objects in the *Items* panel by clicking and dragging an object's label in this list.

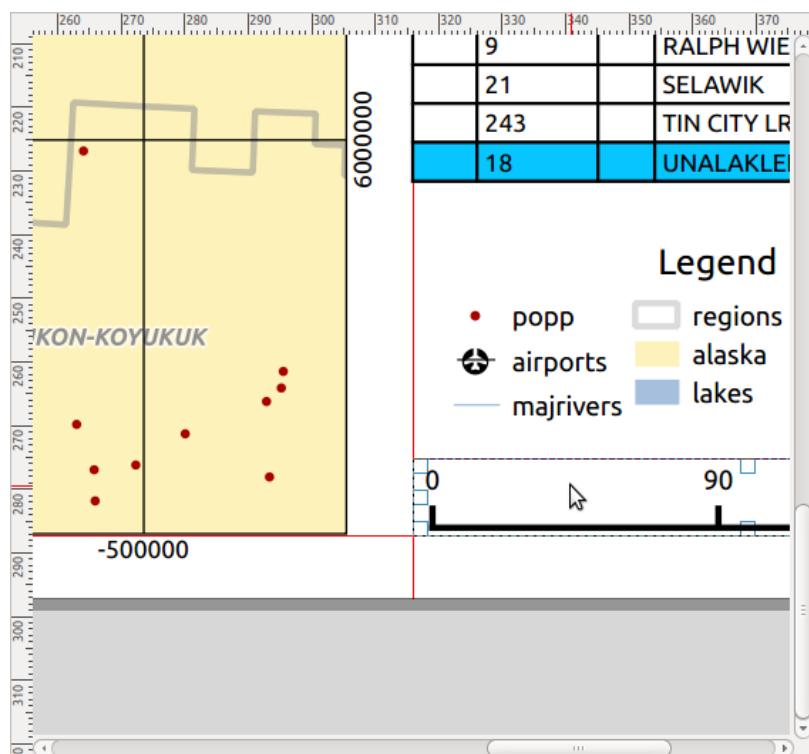


Fig. 16.10: Alignment helper lines in the print layout

There are several alignment options available within the  Align selected items pull-down menu (see [figure\\_layout\\_common\\_align](#)). To use an alignment function, you first select the elements and then click on one of the alignment icons:

-  Align Left or  Align Right;
-  Align Top or  Align Bottom;
-  Align Center horizontally or  Align Center Vertical.

All selected elements will then be aligned to their common bounding box. When moving items on the layout canvas, alignment helper lines appear when borders, centers or corners are aligned.

## Items Common Properties

Layout items have a set of common properties you will find at the bottom of the *Item Properties* panel: Position and size, Rotation, Frame, Background, Item ID, Variables and Rendering (See [figure\\_layout\\_common](#)).

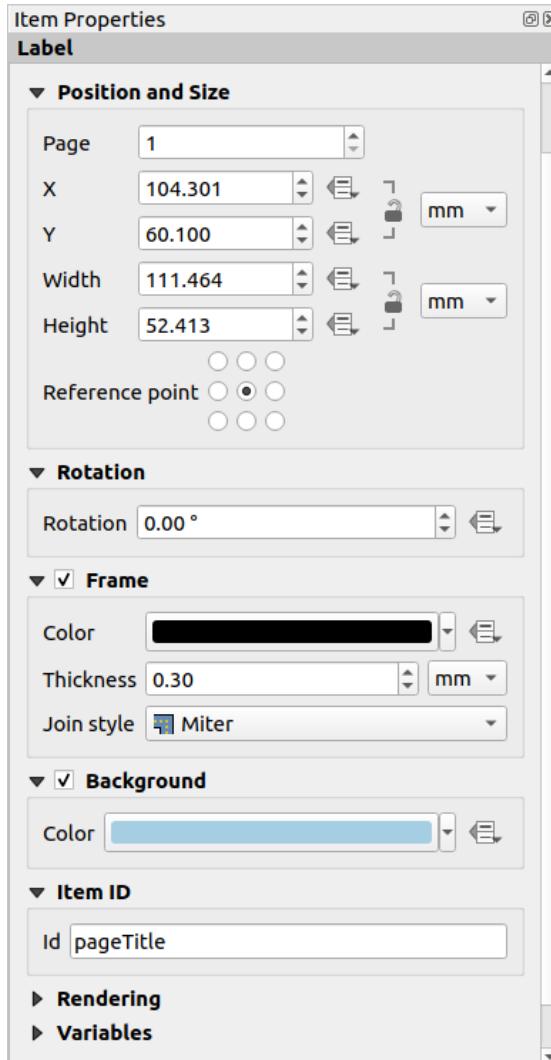


Fig. 16.11: Common Item Properties groups

**Note:** The  Data defined override icon next to most of the options means that you can associate that property with a layer, features attributes, geometry or with any other layout item's property, using [expressions](#) or [variables](#). For

more information see [Data defined override setup](#).

- The *Position and size* group lets you define the size and position of the frame which contains the item (see [Position and Size](#) for more information).
- The *Rotation* sets the rotation of the element (in degrees).
- The  *Frame* shows or hides the frame around the item. Click on the *Color* and *Thickness* and *Join style* widgets to adjust those properties.
- Use the *Background color* menu for setting a background color. Click on the [Color...] button to display a dialog where you can pick a color or choose from a custom setting. Transparency can be adjusted through altering the alpha field settings.
- Use the *Item ID* to create a relationship to other print layout items. This is used with QGIS server and other potential web clients. You can set an ID on an item (for example, a map or a label), and then the web client can send data to set a property (e.g., label text) for that specific item. The `GetProjectSettings` command will list the items and IDs which are available in a layout.
- *Rendering mode* helps you set whether and how the item can be displayed: you can, for instance, apply [blending mode](#), adjust the opacity of the item or [Exclude item from exports](#).

## Position and Size

Extending the features of the [New Item Properties](#) dialog with data-defined capabilities, this group allows you to place the items accurately.

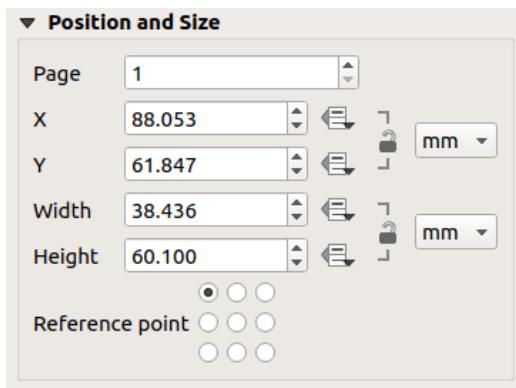


Fig. 16.12: New Item properties dialog

- the actual number of the page to place the item on;
- the reference point of the item;
- the *X* and *Y* coordinates of the *Reference point* of the item on the chosen page. The ratio between these values can be locked by clicking on the button. Changes made to a value using the widget or the tool will be reflected in both of them;
- the *Width* and *Height* of the item bounding box. As for coordinates, the ratio between width and height can be locked.

## Rendering mode

QGIS allows advanced rendering for layout items just like vector and raster layers.

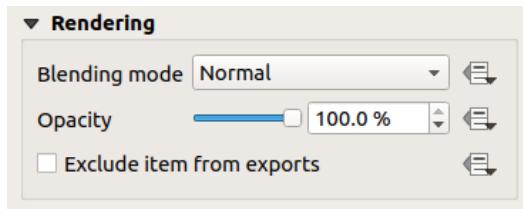


Fig. 16.13: Rendering mode

- **Blending mode:** With this tool you can achieve effects which would otherwise only be achieved using graphic rendering software. The pixels of your overlaying and underlaying items can be mixed according to the mode set (see [Blending Modes](#) for description of each effect).
- **Transparency** : You can make the underlying item in the layout visible with this tool. Use the slider to adapt the visibility of your item to your needs. You can also make a precise definition of the percentage of visibility in the menu beside the slider.
- **Exclude item from exports:** You can decide to make an item invisible in all exports. After activating this checkbox, the item will not be included in export to PDF, print etc..

## Variables

The *Variables* lists all the variables available at the layout item's level (which includes all global, project and composition's variables). Map items also include Map settings variables that provide easy access to values like the map's scale, extent, and so on.

In *Variables*, it's also possible to manage item-level variables. Click the button to add a new custom variable.

Likewise, select any custom item-level variable from the list and click the button to remove it.

More information on variables usage in the [Storing values in Variables](#) section.

### 16.2.2 The Map Item

The map item is the main frame that displays the map you've designed in the map canvas. Use the **Add Map** tool following [items creation instructions](#) to add a new map item that you can later manipulate the same way as exposed in [Interacting with layout items](#).

By default, a new map item shows the current status of the *map canvas* with its extent and visible layers. You can customize it thanks to the *Item Properties* panel. Other than the [items common properties](#), this feature has the following functionalities:

#### Main properties

In the *Main properties* group (see [figure\\_layout\\_map](#)) of the map *Item Properties* panel, available options are:

- The *Update Preview* button to refresh the map item rendering if the view in map canvas has been modified. Note that most of the time, the map item refresh is automatically triggered by the changes;
- The *Scale* to manually set the map item scale;
- The *Map rotation* allows you to rotate the map item content clockwise in degrees. The rotation of the map canvas can be imitated here;
- The *CRS* allows you to display the map item content in any [CRS](#). It defaults to *Use project CRS*;
- **Draw map canvas items** lets you show in the print layout [annotations](#) that are placed on the main map canvas.

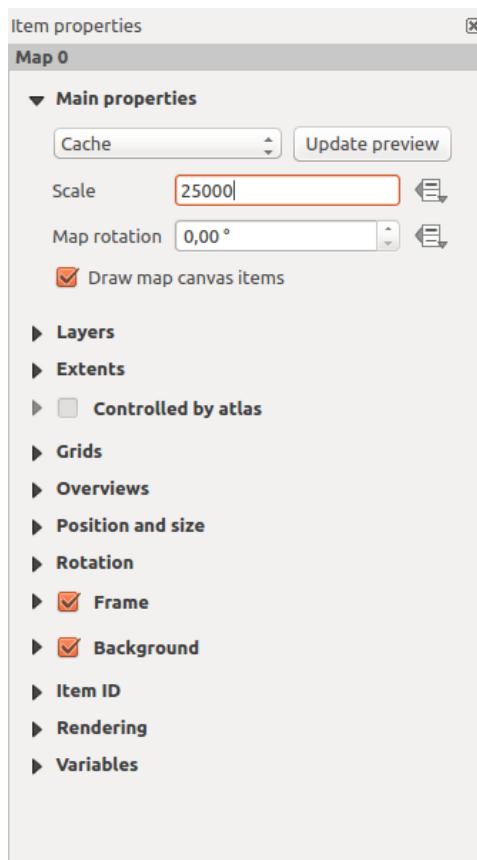


Fig. 16.14: Map Item Properties Panel

## Layers

By default, map item appearance is synced with the map canvas rendering meaning that toggling visibility of the layers or modifying their style in the *Layers Panel* is automatically applied to the map item. Because, like any other item, you may want to add multiple map items to a print layout, there's a need to break this synchronization in order to allow showing different areas, layer combinations, at different scales... The *Layers* properties group (see [figure\\_layout\\_map\\_layers](#)) helps you do that.

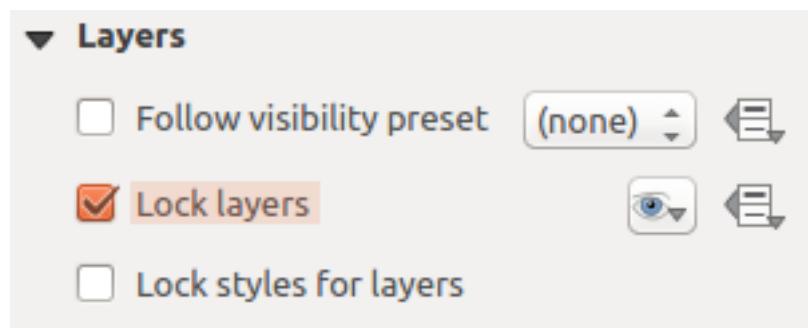


Fig. 16.15: Map Layers group

If you want to keep the map item consistent with an existing *map theme*, check  *Follow map theme* and select the desired theme in the drop-down list. Any changes applied to the theme in QGIS' main window (using the replace theme function) will automatically affect the map item. If a map theme is selected, the *Lock styles for layers* option is disabled because *Follow map theme* also updates the style (symbology, labels, diagrams) of the layers.

To lock the layers shown in a map item to the current map canvas visibility, check  *Lock layers*. When this option is enabled, any changes on the layers' visibility in QGIS' main window will not affect the layout's map item. Nevertheless, style and labels of locked layers are still refreshed according to QGIS' main window. You can prevent this by using *Lock styles for layers*.

Instead of using the current map canvas, you can also lock the layers of the map item to those of an existing map theme: select a map theme from the  drop-down button, and the  *Lock layers* is activated. The set of visible layers in the map theme is from now on used for the map item until you select another map theme or uncheck the  *Lock layers* option. You then may need to refresh the view using the  button of the *Navigation* toolbar or the *Update Preview* button seen above.

Note that, unlike the *Follow map theme* option, if the *Lock layers* option is enabled and set to a map theme, the layers in the map item will not be refreshed even if the map theme is updated (using the replace theme function) in QGIS' main window.

Locked layers in the map item can also be *data-defined*, using the  icon beside the option. When used, this overrides the selection set in the drop-down list. You need to pass a list of layers separated by | character. The following example locks the map item to use only layers layer 1 and layer 2:

```
concat ('layer 1', '|', 'layer 2')
```

## Extents

The **Extents** group of the map item properties panel provides the following functionalities (see *figure\_layout\_map\_extents*):

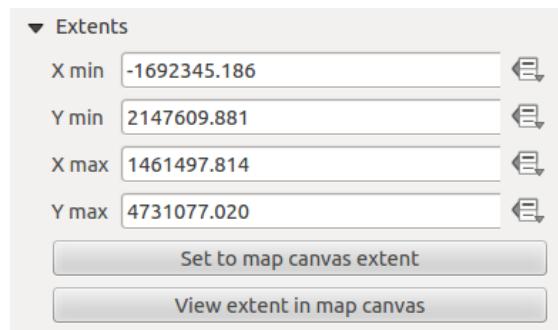


Fig. 16.16: Map Extents group

The **Extents** area displays X and Y coordinates of the area shown in the map item. Each of these values can be manually replaced, modifying the map canvas area displayed and/or map item size. Clicking the *Set to Map Canvas Extent* button sets the extent of the layout map item to the extent of the main map canvas. The button *View Extent in Map Canvas* does exactly the opposite; it updates the extent of the main map canvas to the extent of the layout map item.

You can also alter a map item extent using the  tool: click-and-drag within the map item to modify its current view, keeping the same scale. With the  tool enabled, use the mouse wheel to zoom in or out, modifying the scale of the shown map. Combine the movement with **Ctrl** key pressed to have a smaller zoom.

## Controlled by atlas

The  *Controlled by atlas* group properties is available only if an *atlas* is active in the print layout. Check this option if you want the map item being ruled by the atlas; when iterating over the coverage layer, the map item extent is panned/zoomed to the atlas feature following:

-  *Margin around features*: zooms to the feature at the best scale, keeping around each a margin representing a percentage of the map item width or height. The margin can be the same for all features or *set variable*, e.g., depending on map scale;
-  *Predefined scale (best fit)*: zooms to the feature at the project *predefined scale* where the atlas feature best fits;
-  *Fixed scale*: atlas features are panned from one to another, keeping the same scale of the map item. Ideal when working with features of same size (e.g., a grid) or willing to highlight size differences among atlas features.

## Grids

With grids, you can add, over your map, information relative to its extent or coordinates, either in the map item projection or a different one. The *Grids* group provides the possibility to add several grids to a map item.

- With the  and  buttons you can add or remove a selected grid;
- With the  and  buttons you can move up and down a grid in the list, hence move it on top or bottom of another one, over the map item.

Double-click the added grid to rename it.

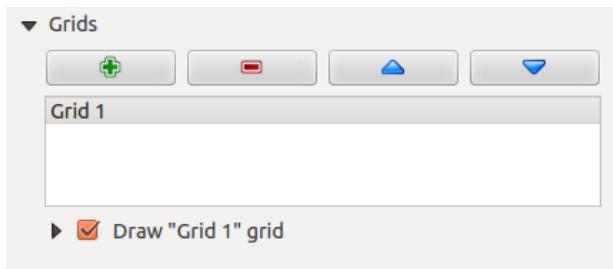


Fig. 16.17: Map Grids Dialog

After you add a grid, you can activate the checkbox  *Draw grid* to allow overlaying the grid onto the map item. Press the *Modify Grid...* button to access configuration options.

## Grid Appearance

As grid type, you can specify to use a:

- *Solid*: shows a line across the grid frame. The *Line style* can be customized using *color* and *symbol* selector widget;
- *Cross*: displays segment at the grid lines intersection for which you can set the *Line style* and the *Cross width*;
- *Markers*: only displays customizable markers symbol at grid lines intersection;
- or *Frame and annotations only*.

Other than the grid type, you can define:

- the *CRS* which could not be the same as the map item's;
- the *Interval* between two consecutive grid references in X and Y directions;
- the *Interval Units* to use for the grid references, in Map units, Millimeters or Centimeters;
- an *Offset* from the map item edges, in X and Y directions;

- and the *Blend mode* of the grid (see [Blending Modes](#)) when compatible.

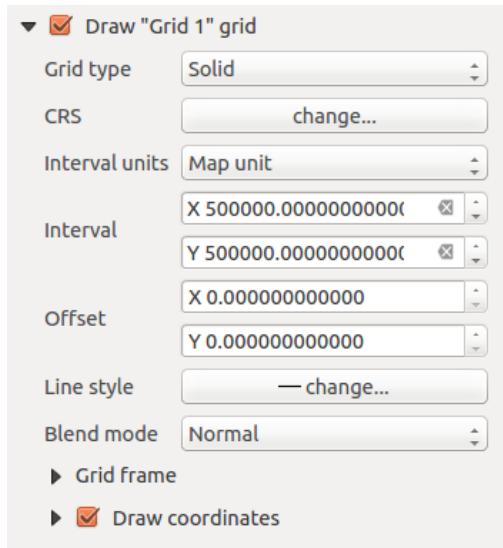


Fig. 16.18: Draw Grid Dialog

## Grid Frame

There are different options to style the frame that holds the map. Following options are available: No Frame, Zebra, Interior ticks, Exterior ticks, Interior and Exterior ticks and Line border. Also you can choose to set visible or not each side of the grid frame.

When compatible, it's possible to set the *Frame size*, *Frame line thickness*, *Frame fill colors*. With Latitude/Y only and Longitude/X only settings in the divisions section you have the possibility to prevent a mix of latitude/Y and longitude/X coordinates showing on a side when working with rotated maps or reprojected grids.

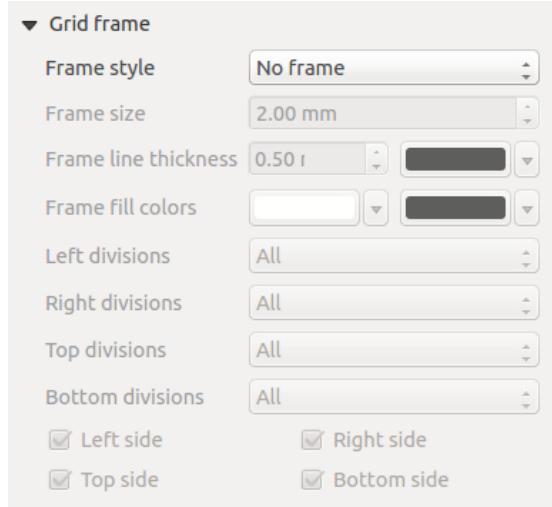


Fig. 16.19: Grid Frame Dialog

## Coordinates

The  *Draw coordinates* checkbox allows you to add coordinates to the map frame. You can choose the annotation numeric format, the options range from decimal to degrees, minute and seconds, with or without suffix, aligned or not and a custom format using the expression dialog.

You can choose which annotation to show. The options are: show all, latitude only, longitude only, or disable(None). This is useful when the map is rotated. The annotation can be drawn inside or outside the map frame. The annotation direction can be defined as horizontal, vertical ascending or vertical descending.

Finally, you can define the annotation font, font color, distance from the map frame and the precision of the drawn coordinates.

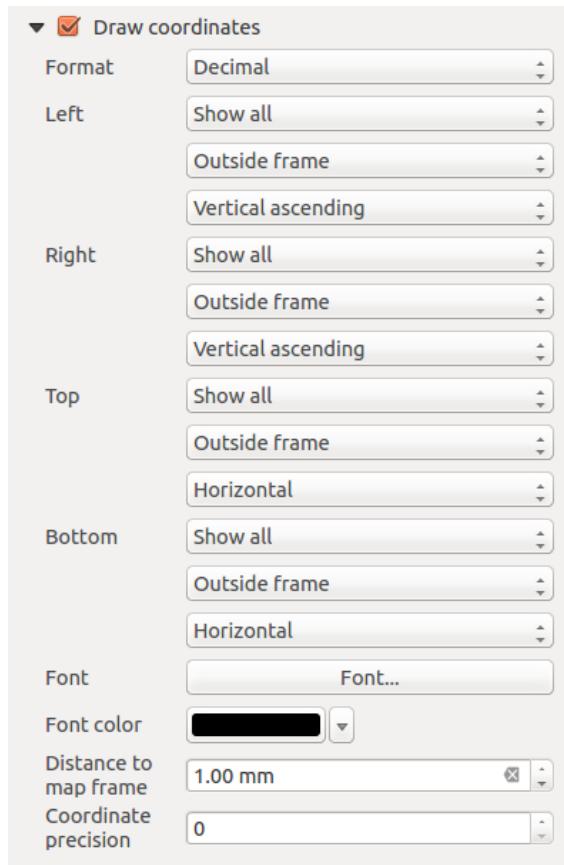


Fig. 16.20: Grid Draw Coordinates dialog

## Overviews

Sometimes you may have more than one map in the print layout and would like to locate the study area of one map item on another one. This could be for example to help map readers identify the area in relation with its larger geographic context shown in the second map.

The *Overviews* group of the map panel helps you create the link between two different maps extent and provides the following functionalities:

To create an overview, select the map item on which you want to show the other map item's extent and expand the *Overviews* option in the *Item Properties* panel. Then press the button to add an overview.

Initially this overview is named 'Overview 1' (see [Figure\\_layout\\_map\\_overview](#)). You can:

- Rename it with a double-click;
- With the and buttons, add or remove overviews;
- With the and buttons, move up and down an overview in the list, hence move it on top or bottom of another one, over the map item.

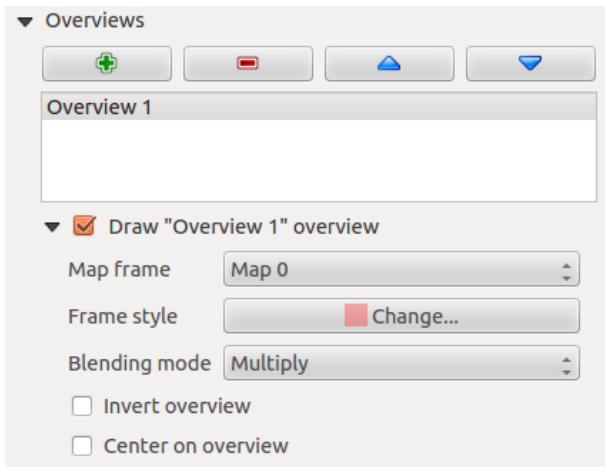


Fig. 16.21: Map Overviews group

Then select the overview item in the list and check the  *Draw “<name\_overview>” overview* to enable the overview drawing over the selected map frame. You can customize it with:

- The *Map frame* combo list can be used to select the map item whose extents will be drawn on the present map item.
- The *Frame Style* allows you to change the style of the overview frame.
- The *Blending mode* allows you to set different transparency blend modes.
- The  *Invert overview* creates a mask around the extents when activated: the referenced map extents are shown clearly, whereas everything else is blended with the frame color.
- The  *Center on overview* puts the extent of the overview frame in the center of the overview map. You can only activate one overview item to center, when you have added several overviews.

### 16.2.3 The Label Item

The *Label* item is a tool that helps decorate your map with texts that would help to understand it; it can be the title, author, data sources or any other information... You can add a label with the  *Add Label* tool following *items creation instructions* and manipulate it the same way as exposed in *Interacting with layout items*.

By default, the label item provides a default text that you can customize using its *Item Properties* panel. Other than the *items common properties*, this feature has the following functionalities (see *figure\_layout\_label*):

#### Main properties

The *Main properties* group is the place to provide the text (it can be in HTML) or the expression to build the label. Expressions need to be surrounded by [% and %] in order to be interpreted as such.

- Labels can be interpreted as HTML code: check  *Render as HTML*. You can now insert a URL, a clickable image that links to a web page or something more complex.
- You can also use *expressions*: click on *Insert an expression* button, write your formula as usual and when the dialog is applied, QGIS automatically adds the surrounding characters.

---

**Note:** Clicking the *Insert an Expression* button when no selection is made in the textbox will append the new expression to the existing text. If you want to update an existing text, you need to select it the part of interest beforehand.

---

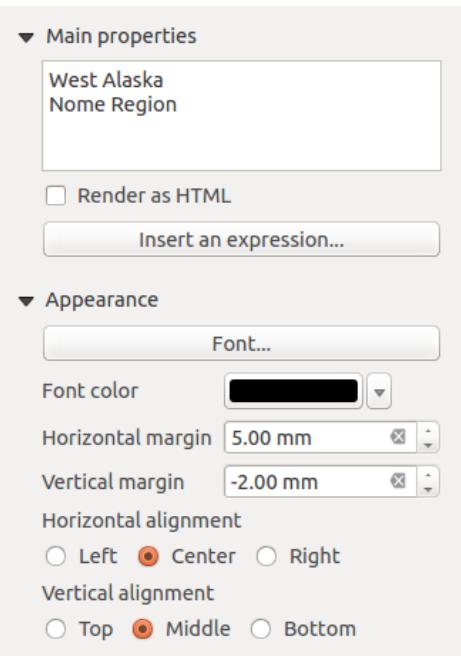


Fig. 16.22: Label Item Properties Panel

You can combine HTML rendering and expressions, leading to e.g. a text like:

```
[% '<b>Check out the new logo for ' || '<a href="https://www.qgis.org" title="Nice_<br>logo" target="_blank">QGIS ' || @qgis_short_version || '</a>' || ' : ' %]
```

which will render: **Check out the new logo for QGIS 3.0 :** 

## Appearance

- Define *Font* by clicking on the *Font...* button or a *Font color* by pushing the *color widget*.
- You can specify different horizontal and vertical margins in mm. This is the margin from the edge of the layout item. The label can be positioned outside the bounds of the label e.g. to align label items with other items. In this case you have to use negative values for the margin.
- Using the text alignment is another way to position your label. It can be:
  - *Left, Center, Right* or *Justify* for *Horizontal alignment*
  - and *Top, Middle, Bottom* for *Vertical alignment*.

## Exploring expressions in a label item

Below some examples of expressions you can use to populate the label item with interesting information - remember that the code, or at least the calculated part, should be surrounded by [% and %] in the *Main properties* frame:

- Display a title with the current atlas feature value in “field1”:

```
'This is the map for ' || "field1"
```

or, written in the *Main properties* section:

```
This is the map for [% "field1" %]
```

- Add a pagination for processed atlas features (eg, Page 1/10):

```
concat( 'Page ', @atlas_featurenumber, '/', @atlas_totalfeatures )
```

- Return the X coordinate of the bottom left corner of a map canvas:

```
x_min( map_get( item_variables( 'Map 1' ), 'map_extent' ) )
```

- Retrieve the name of the layers in the current layout ‘Map 1’ item, and formats in one name by line:

```
array_to_string(
    array_FOREACH(
        map_get( item_variables( 'Map 1' ), 'map_layers' ), -- retrieve the layers
    ↵list
        layer_property( @element, 'name' ) -- retrieve each layer name
    ),
    '\n' -- converts the list to string separated by breaklines
)
```

## 16.2.4 The Legend Item

The *Legend* item is a box or a table that explains the meanings of the symbols used on the map. A legend is then bound to a map item. You can add a legend item with the  *Add Legend* tool following *items creation instructions* and manipulate it the same way as exposed in *Interacting with layout items*.

By default, the legend item displays all available layers and can be refined using its *Item Properties* panel. Other than the *items common properties*, this feature has the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_legend](#)):

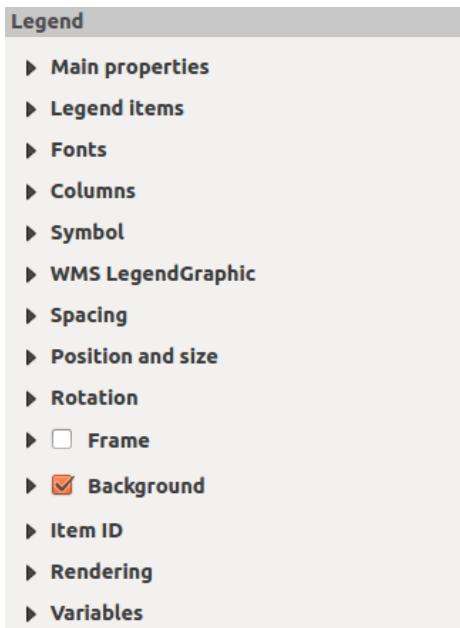


Fig. 16.23: Legend Item Properties Panel

### Main properties

The *Main properties* group of the legend *Item Properties* panel provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_legend\\_ppt](#)):

In Main properties you can:

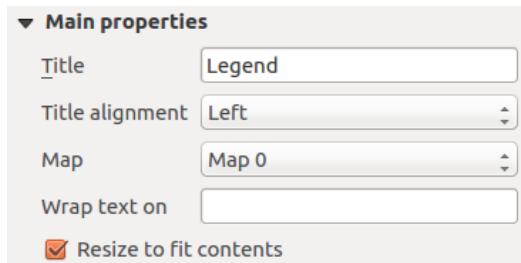


Fig. 16.24: Legend Main properties group

- change the title of the legend. It can be made dynamic using the *data-defined override* setting, useful for example when generating atlas;
- set the *Title alignment* to Left, Center or Right;
- choose which *Map* item the current legend will refer to;
- wrap the text of the legend on a given character: each time the character appears, it's replaced by a line break;
- use  *Resize to fit contents* to control whether or not a legend should be automatically resized to fit its contents. If unchecked, then the legend will never resize and instead just stick to whatever size the user has set. Any content which doesn't fit the size is cropped out.

## Legend items

The *Legend items* group of the legend *Item Properties* panel provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_legend\\_items](#)):

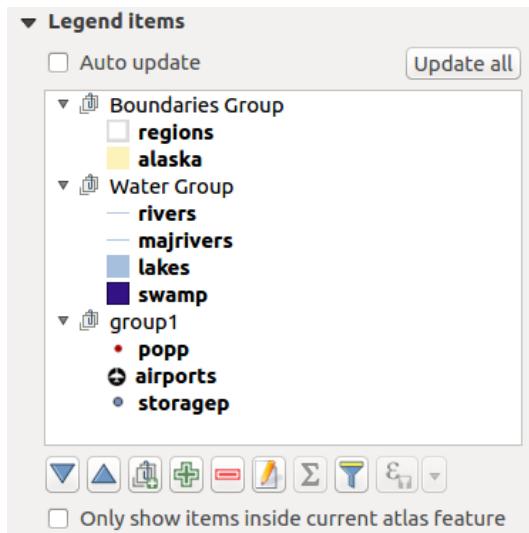


Fig. 16.25: Legend Items group

- The legend will be updated automatically if  *Auto-update* is checked. When *Auto-update* is unchecked this will give you more control over the legend items. The icons below the legend items list will be activated.
- The legend items window lists all legend items and allows you to change item order, group layers, remove and restore items in the list, edit layer names and add a filter.
  - The item order can be changed using the and buttons or with 'drag-and-drop' functionality. The order can not be changed for WMS legend graphics.

- Use the  button to add a legend group.
- Use the  button to add layers and  button to remove groups, layers or symbol classes.
- The  button is used to edit the layer, group name or title. First you need to select the legend item. Double-clicking the item also opens the text box to rename it.
- The  button adds a feature count for each class of vector layer.
- With the  Filter legend by map content button, only the legend items visible in the map will be listed in the legend. This tool remains available when  Auto-update is active.
- The  Filter legend by expression helps you filter which of the legend items of a layer will be displayed, i.e. using a layer that has different legend items (e.g., from a rule-based or categorized symbology), you can specify a boolean expression to remove from the legend tree, styles that have no feature satisfying a condition. Note that the features are nevertheless kept and shown in the layout map item.

While the default behavior of the legend item is to mimic the *Layers panel* tree, displaying the same groups, layers and classes of symbology, right-click any item offers you options to hide layer's name or raise it as a group or subgroup. In case you have made some changes to a layer, you can revert them by choosing *Reset to defaults* from the contextual menu.

After changing the symbology in the QGIS main window, you can click on *Update All* to adapt the changes in the legend element of the print layout.

- While generating an atlas with polygon features, you can filter out legend items that lie outside the current atlas feature. To do that, check the  Only show items inside current atlas feature option.

## Fonts, Columns, Symbol

The *Fonts*, *Columns* and *Symbol* groups of the legend *Item Properties* panel provide the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_legend\\_fonts](#)):

- You can change the font of the legend title, group, subgroup and item (feature) in the legend item using the font selector widget;
- You provide the labels with a **Color** using the *color selector* widget. The selected color will apply to all font items in the legend;
- Legend items can be arranged over several columns. Set the number of columns in the *Count*  field. This value can be made dynamic e.g., following atlas features, legend contents, the frame size...
  -  *Equal column widths* sets how legend columns should be adjusted.
  - The  *Split layers* option allows a categorized or a graduated layer legend to be divided between columns.
- You can also change the width and height of the legend symbol, set a color and a thickness in case of raster layer symbol.

## WMS LegendGraphic and Spacing

The *WMS LegendGraphic* and *Spacing* groups of the legend *Item Properties* panel provide the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_legend\\_wms](#)):

When you have added a WMS layer and you insert a legend item, a request will be sent to the WMS server to provide a WMS legend. This Legend will only be shown if the WMS server provides the GetLegendGraphic capability. The WMS legend content will be provided as a raster image.

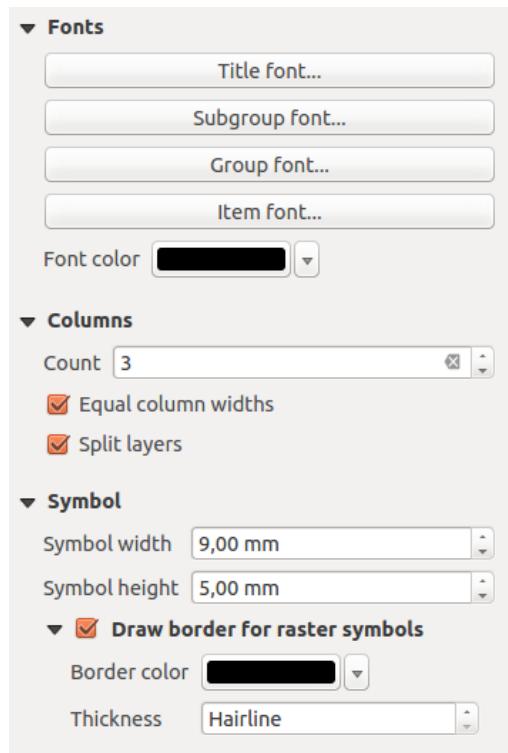


Fig. 16.26: Legend Fonts, Columns and Symbol groups

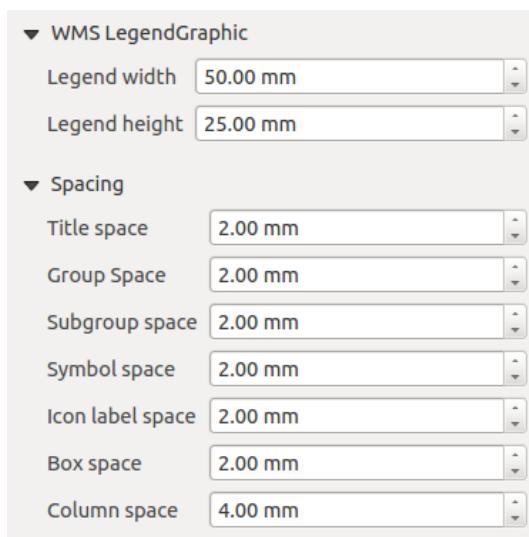


Fig. 16.27: WMS LegendGraphic and Spacing groups

*WMS LegendGraphic* is used to be able to adjust the *Legend width* and the *Legend height* of the WMS legend raster image.

*Spacing* around title, group, subgroup, symbol, icon label, box, column or line can be customized through this dialog.

### 16.2.5 The Scale Bar Item

Scale bars provide a visual indication of the size of features, and distance between features, on the map item. A scale bar item requires a map item. Use the **Add Scale Bar** tool following *items creation instructions* to add a new scale bar item that you can later manipulate the same way as exposed in *Interacting with layout items*.

By default, a new scale bar item shows the scale of the most recently added map item. You can customize it thanks to the *Item Properties* panel. Other than the *items common properties*, this feature has the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_scalebar](#)):

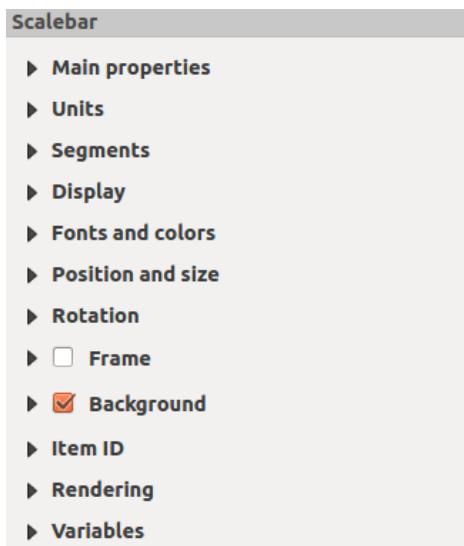


Fig. 16.28: Scale Bar Item Properties Panel

#### Main properties

The *Main properties* group of the scale bar *Item Properties* panel provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_scalebar\\_ppt](#)):

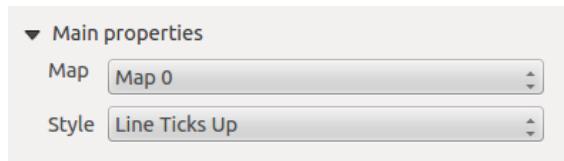


Fig. 16.29: Scale Bar Main properties group

- First, choose the map the scale bar will be attached to.
- Then, choose the style of the scale bar. Six styles are available:
  - **Single box** and **Double box** styles, which contain one or two lines of boxes alternating colors;
  - **Middle, Up** or **Down** line ticks;
  - **Numeric**, where the scale ratio is printed (i.e., 1:50000).

## Units and Segments

The *Units* and *Segments* groups of the scale bar *Item Properties* panel provide the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_scalebar\\_units](#)):

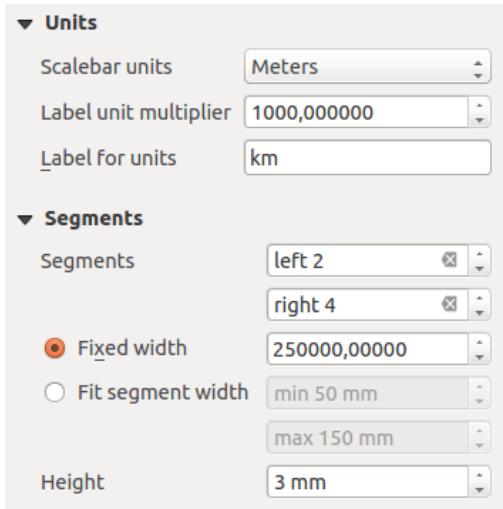


Fig. 16.30: Scale Bar Units and Segments groups

In these two groups, you can set how the scale bar will be represented.

- Select the units you want to use with *Scalebar units*. There are many possible choices: **Map Units** (the default one), **Meters**, **Feet**, **Miles** or **Nautical Miles**... which may force unit conversions.
- The *Label unit multiplier* specifies how many scale bar units per labeled unit. Eg, if your scale bar units are set to “meters”, a multiplier of 1000 will result in the scale bar labels in “kilometers”.
- The *Label for units* field defines the text used to describe the units of the scale bar, eg `m` or `km`. This should be matched to reflect the multiplier above.
- You can define how many *Segments* will be drawn on the left and on the right side of the scale bar.
- You can set how long each segment will be (*Fixed width*), or limit the scale bar size in `mm` with *Fit segment width* option. In the latter case, each time the map scale changes, the scale bar is resized (and its label updated) to fit the range set.
- *Height* is used to define the height of the bar.

## Display

The *Display* group of the scale bar *Item Properties* panel provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_scalebar\\_display](#)):

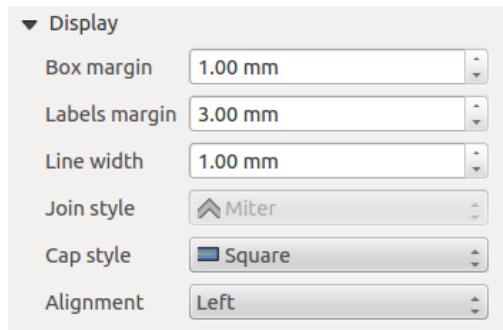


Fig. 16.31: Scale Bar Display group

You can define how the scale bar will be displayed in its frame.

- *Box margin* : space between text and frame borders
- *Labels margin* : space between text and scale bar drawing
- *Line width* : line width of the scale bar drawing
- *Join style* : Corners at the end of scale bar in Bevel, Miter or Round style (only available for Scale bar style Single Box & Double Box)
- *Cap style* : End of all lines in style Square, Round or Flat (only available for Scale bar style Line Ticks Up, Down and Middle)
- *Alignment* : Puts text on the left, middle or right side of the frame (works only for Scale bar style Numeric)

## Fonts and colors

The *Fonts and colors* group of the scale bar *Item Properties* panel provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_scalebar\\_fonts](#)):

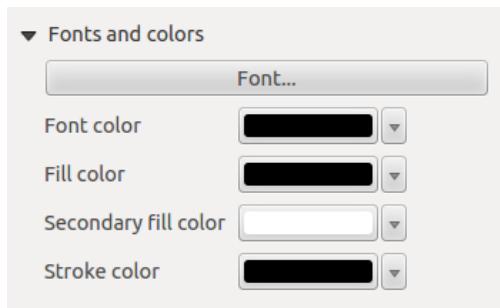


Fig. 16.32: Scale Bar Fonts and colors groups

You can define the fonts and *colors* used for the scale bar.

- Use the *Font* button to set the font of scale bar label
- *Font color*: set the font color
- *Fill color*: set the first fill color
- *Secondary fill color*: set the second fill color
- *Line color*: set the color of the lines of the Scale Bar

Fill colors are only used for *Single Box* and *Double Box* styles.

### 16.2.6 The Attribute Table Item

Any layer in the project can have its attributes shown in the print layout. You can use this to decorate and explain your map with information about underlying data. Use the  *Add Attribute Table* tool following [items creation instructions](#) to add a new map item that you can later manipulate the same way as exposed in [Interacting with layout items](#).

By default, a new attribute table item loads first rows of the first (alphabetically sorted) layer, with all the fields. You can however customize the table thanks to its *Item Properties* panel. Other than the [items common properties](#), this feature has the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_table](#)):

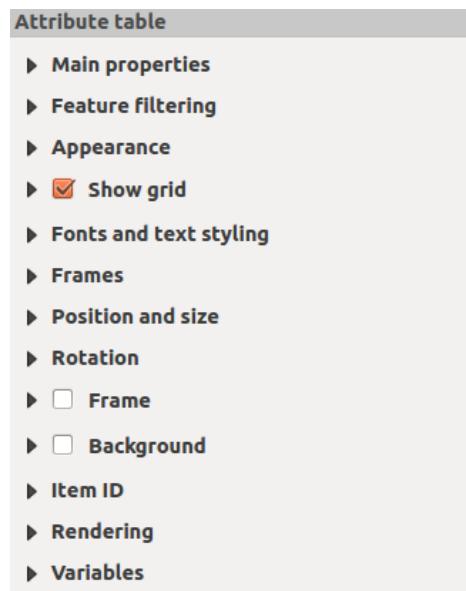


Fig. 16.33: Attribute table Item Properties Panel

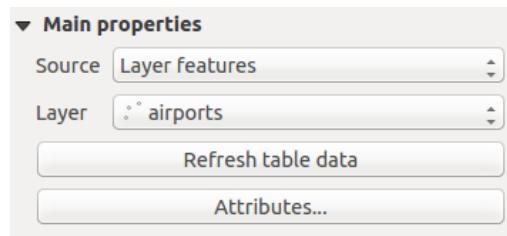


Fig. 16.34: Attribute table Main properties Group

## Main properties

The *Main properties* group of the attribute table provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_table\\_ppt](#)):

- For *Source* you can by default only select **Layer features** allowing you to select a *Layer* from the vector layers loaded in the project.

The  button near the layer list allows you to dynamically change the layer which is used to populate the table, e.g. you could fill the attribute table with different layer attributes per atlas page. Note that the table structure used ([column settings](#)) is the one of the layer shown in the *Layer* drop-down list and it is left intact, meaning that setting a data defined table to a layer with different field(s) will result in empty column(s) in the table.

In case you activate the  *Generate an atlas* option in the *Atlas* panel (see [Generate an Atlas](#)), there are two additional *Source* possible:

- **Current atlas feature** (see [figure\\_layout\\_table\\_atlas](#)): you won't see any option to choose the layer, and the table item will only show a row with the attributes from the current feature of the atlas coverage layer.
- and **Relation children** (see [figure\\_layout\\_table\\_relation](#)): an option with the relation names will show up. This feature can only be used if you have defined a [relation](#) using your atlas coverage layer as parent, and the table will show the children rows of the atlas coverage layer's current feature.
- The button *Refresh Table Data* can be used to refresh the table when the actual contents of the table has changed.

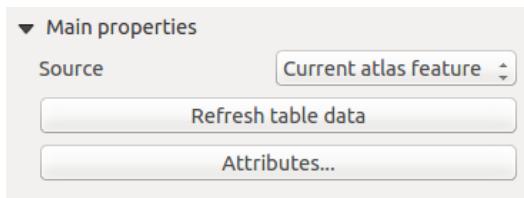


Fig. 16.35: Attribute table Main properties for ‘Current atlas feature’

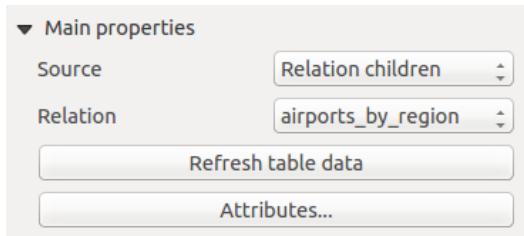


Fig. 16.36: Attribute table Main properties for ‘Relation children’

- The button *Attributes...* starts the *Select Attributes* dialog, (see [figure\\_layout\\_table\\_select](#)) that can be used to change the visible contents of the table. The upper part of the window shows the list of the attributes to display and the lower part helps you sort the data.

In the *Columns* section you can:

- Move attributes up or down the list by selecting the rows and then using the  and  buttons to shift the rows. Multiple rows can be selected and moved at any one time.
- Add an attribute with the  button. This will add an empty row at the bottom of the table where you can select a field to be the attribute value or create an attribute via a regular expression.
- Remove an attribute with the  button. Multiple rows can be selected and removed at any one time.

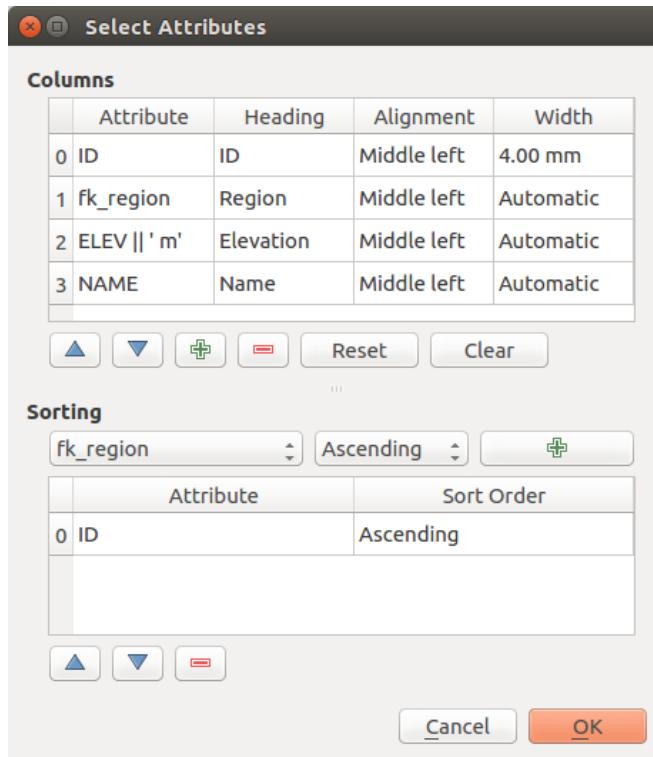


Fig. 16.37: Attribute table Select attributes Dialog

- Reset the attribute table back to its default state with the *Reset* button.
- Clear the table using the *Clear* button. This is useful when you have a large table but only want to show a small number of attributes. Instead of manually removing each row, it may be quicker to clear the table and add the rows needed.
- Cell headings can be altered by adding the custom text in the *Heading* column.
- Cell alignment can be managed with the *Alignment* column which will dictate the texts position within the table cell.
- Cell width can be manually managed by adding custom values to the *width* column.

In the *Sorting* section you can:

- Add an attribute to sort the table with. Select an attribute and set the sorting order to **Ascending** or **Descending** and press the button. A new line is added to the sort order list.
- select a row in the list and use the and buttons to change the sort priority on attribute level. Selecting a cell in the *Sort Order* column helps you change the sorting order of the attribute field.
- use the button to remove an attribute from the sort order list.

## Feature filtering

The *Feature filtering* group of the attribute table provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_table\\_filter](#)):

You can:

- Define the *Maximum rows* to be displayed.
- Activate *Remove duplicate rows from table* to show unique records only.

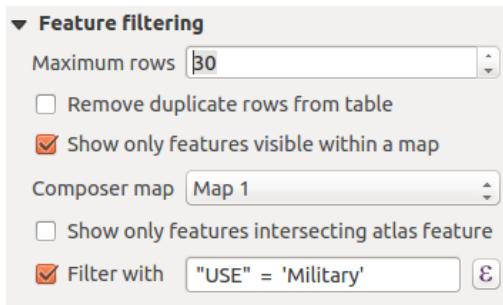


Fig. 16.38: Attribute table Feature filtering Group

- Activate  *Show only visible features within a map* and select the corresponding *Linked map* whose visible features attributes will be displayed.
  - Activate  *Show only features intersecting Atlas feature* is only available when  *Generate an atlas* is activated. When activated it will show a table with only the features which intersect the current atlas feature.
  - Activate  *Filter with* and provide a filter by typing in the input line or insert a regular expression using the given  expression button. A few examples of filtering statements you can use when you have loaded the airports layer from the Sample dataset:
    - ELEV > 500
    - NAME = 'ANIAK'
    - NAME NOT LIKE 'AN%'
    - regexp\_match( attribute( \$currentfeature, 'USE' ) , '[i]' )
- The last regular expression will include only the airports that have a letter 'i' in the attribute field 'USE'.

## Appearance

The *Appearance* group of the attribute table provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_table\\_appearance](#)):

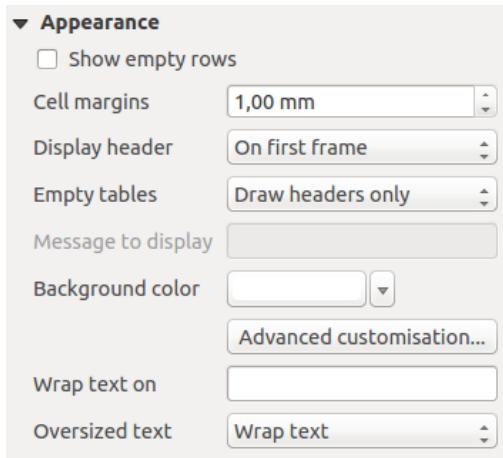


Fig. 16.39: Attribute table appearance Group

- Click  *Show empty rows* to fill the attribute table with empty cells. This option can also be used to provide additional empty cells when you have a result to show!
- With *Cell margins* you can define the margin around text in each cell of the table.

- With *Display header* you can select from a list one of ‘On first frame’, ‘On all frames’ default option, or ‘No header’.
- The option *Empty table* controls what will be displayed when the result selection is empty.
  - Draw headers only**, will only draw the header except if you have chosen ‘No header’ for *Display header*.
  - Hide entire table**, will only draw the background of the table. You can activate  *Don't draw background if frame is empty* in *Frames* to completely hide the table.
  - Show set message**, will draw the header and adds a cell spanning all columns and display a message like ‘No result’ that can be provided in the option *Message to display*
- The option *Message to display* is only activated when you have selected **Show set message** for *Empty table*. The message provided will be shown in the table in the first row, when the result is an empty table.
- With *Background color* you can set the background color of the table using the *color selector* widget. The *Advanced customization* option helps you define different background colors for each cell (see [figure\\_layout\\_table\\_background](#))

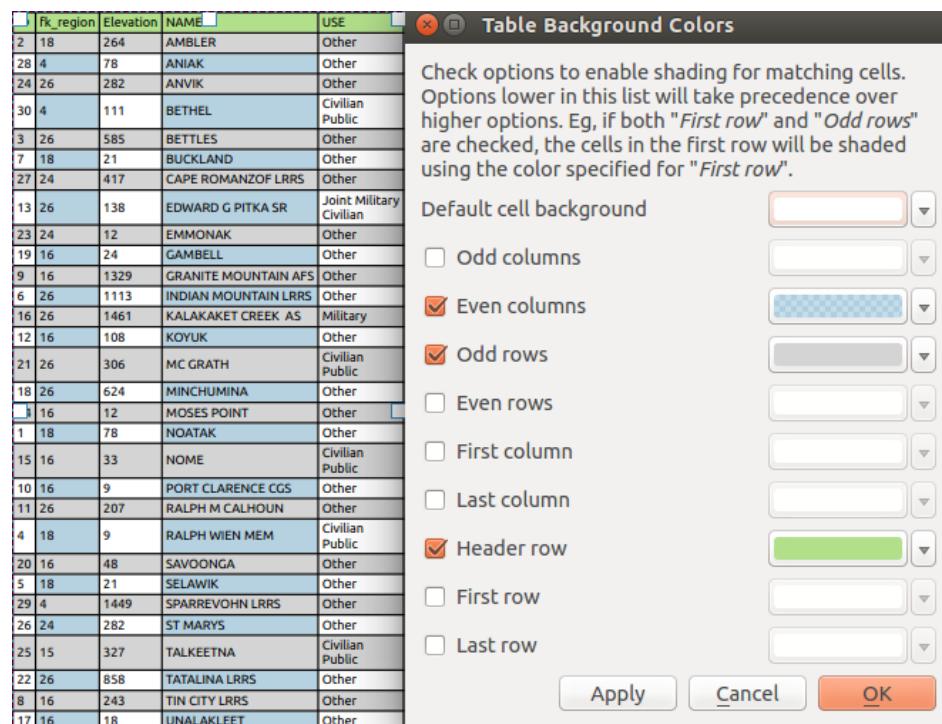


Fig. 16.40: Attribute table Advanced Background Dialog

- With the *Wrap text on* option, you can define a character on which the cell content will be wrapped each time it is met
- With *Oversized text* you define the behavior when the width set for a column is smaller than its content’s length. It can be **Wrap text** or **Truncate text**.

## Show grid

The *Show grid* group of the attribute table provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_table\\_grid](#)):

- Activate  *Show grid* when you want to display the grid, the outlines of the table cells. You can also select to either *Draw horizontal lines* or *Draw vertical lines* or both.
- With *Line width* you can set the thickness of the lines used in the grid.
- The *Color* of the grid can be set using the color selection widget.

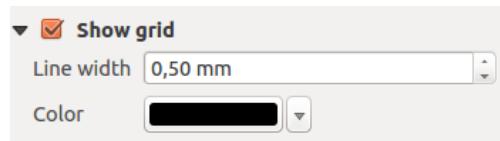


Fig. 16.41: Attribute table Show grid Group

## Fonts and text styling

The *Fonts and text styling* group of the attribute table provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_table\\_fonts](#)):

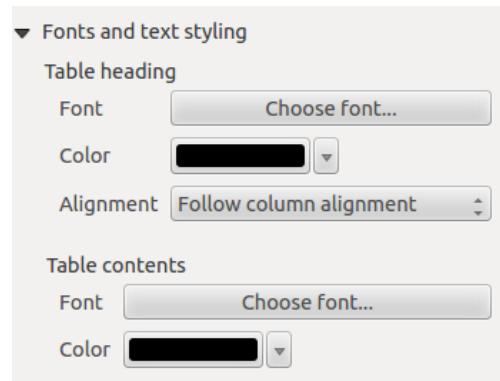


Fig. 16.42: Attribute table Fonts and text styling Group

- You can define *Font* and *Color* for *Table heading* and *Table contents*, using font and color selector widgets.
- For *Table heading* you can additionally set the *Alignment* to Follow column alignment or override this setting by choosing Left, Center or Right. The column alignment is set using the *Select Attributes* dialog (see [figure\\_layout\\_table\\_select](#) ).

## Frames

The *Frames* group of the attribute table properties provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_table\\_frames](#)):

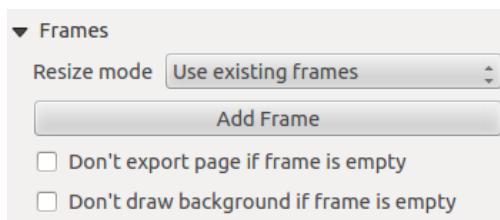


Fig. 16.43: Attribute table Frames Group

- With *Resize mode* you can select how to render the attribute table contents:
  - Use existing frames displays the result in the first frame and added frames only.
  - Extend to next page will create as many frames (and corresponding pages) as necessary to display the full selection of attribute table. Each frame can be moved around on the layout. If you resize a frame, the resulting table will be divided up between the other frames. The last frame will be trimmed to fit the table.
  - Repeat until finished will also create as many frames as the *Extend to next page* option, except all frames will have the same size.

- Use the *Add Frame* button to add another frame with the same size as selected frame. The result of the table that will not fit in the first frame will continue in the next frame when you use the *Resize mode Use existing frames*.
- Activate  *Don't export page if frame is empty* prevents the page to be exported when the table frame has no contents. This means all other layout items, maps, scalebars, legends etc. will not be visible in the result.
- Activate  *Don't draw background if frame is empty* prevents the background to be drawn when the table frame has no contents.

### 16.2.7 The Picture Item

The *Picture* item is a tool that helps decorate your map with pictures, logos... It's also the one that provides the in-built north arrows. You can add a picture with the  *Add Picture* following *items creation instructions* and manipulate it the same way as exposed in *Interacting with layout items*.

By default, the picture item is a blank frame that you can customize using its *Item Properties* panel. Other than the *items common properties*, this feature has the following functionalities (see *figure\_layout\_image*):

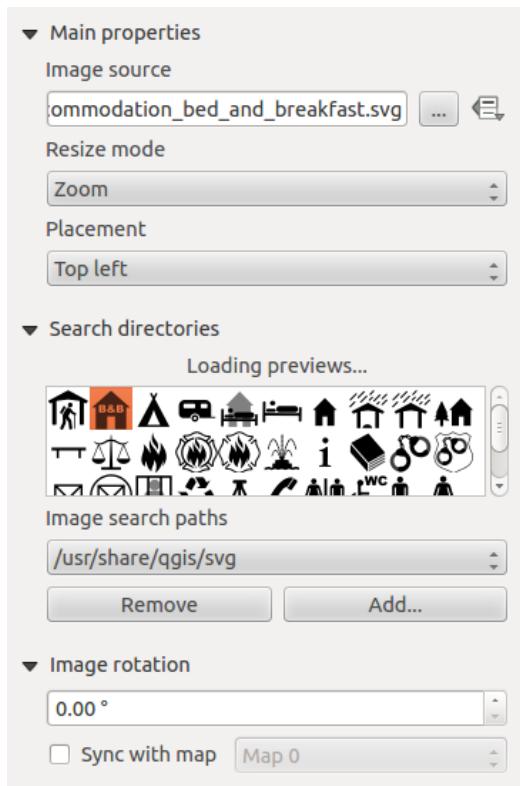


Fig. 16.44: Picture Item Properties panel

You first have to select the image you want to display. There are several ways to set the *Image source*:

1. In the *Main properties* group, use the  *Browse* button of *image source* to select a file on your computer. The browser will start in the SVG-libraries provided with QGIS. Besides SVG, you can also select other image formats like *.png* or *.jpg*.
2. You can enter the source directly in the *Image source* text field. You can even provide a remote URL-address to a picture.
3. From the *Search directories* area you can also select an image from the loaded previews to set the image source. These images are by default provided by folders set in *Settings → Options → System → SVG Paths*.

4. Use the  `data defined override` button to set the image source from a feature attribute or using a regular expression.

---

**Note:** In the *Search directories* group, you can use the *Add* and *Remove* buttons in the group to customize the list of folders to fetch and preview images from.

---

With the *Resize mode* option, you can set how the image is displayed when the frame is resized:

- **Zoom**: enlarges/reduces the image to the frame while maintaining aspect ratio of picture;
- **Stretch**: stretches image to fit inside the frame, ignores aspect ratio;
- **Clip**: use this mode for raster images only, it sets the size of the image to original image size without scaling and the frame is used to clip the image, so only the part of the image inside the frame is visible;
- **Zoom and resize frame**: enlarges image to fit frame, then resizes frame to fit resultant image;
- **Resize frame to image size**: sets size of frame to match original size of image without scaling.

Depending on the selected *Resize mode*, the *Placement* and *Image rotation* options are disabled or not. With *Placement* you can select the position of the image inside its frame. QGIS default provided .SVG files are customizable, meaning that you can easily apply different *Fill color*, *Stroke color* (including opacity) and *Stroke width* than the original, using their corresponding feature in the *SVG Parameters* group. These properties can as well be *data-defined*.

If you add a .SVG file that does not enable these properties, you may need to add the following tags to the file in order to add support e.g. for transparency:

- `fill-opacity="param(fill-opacity)"`
- `stroke-opacity="param(outline-opacity)"`

You can read this [blog post](#) to see an example.

Images can be rotated with the *Image rotation* field. Activating the  *Sync with map* checkbox synchronizes the rotation of the image with the rotation applied to a selected map item; this is a convenient feature for north arrows that you can align with either:

- the **Grid north**: direction of a grid line which is parallel to the central meridian on the national/local grid;
- or the **True north**: direction of a meridian of longitude which converges on the North Pole.

You can also apply a declination *Offset* to the picture rotation.

---

**Note:** Many of the north arrows do not have an 'N' added in the north arrow, this is done on purpose for languages that do not use an 'N' for North, so they can use another letter.

---

## 16.2.8 The HTML Frame Item

It is possible to add a frame that displays the contents of a website or even create and style your own HTML page and display it! You can add a picture with the  *Add HTML* following [items creation instructions](#) and manipulate it the same way as exposed in [Interacting with layout items](#).

The HTML item can be customized using its *Item Properties* panel. Other than the [items common properties](#), this feature has the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_html\\_ppt](#)):

### HTML Source

The *HTML Source* group of the HTML frame *Item Properties* panel provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_html\\_ppt](#)):

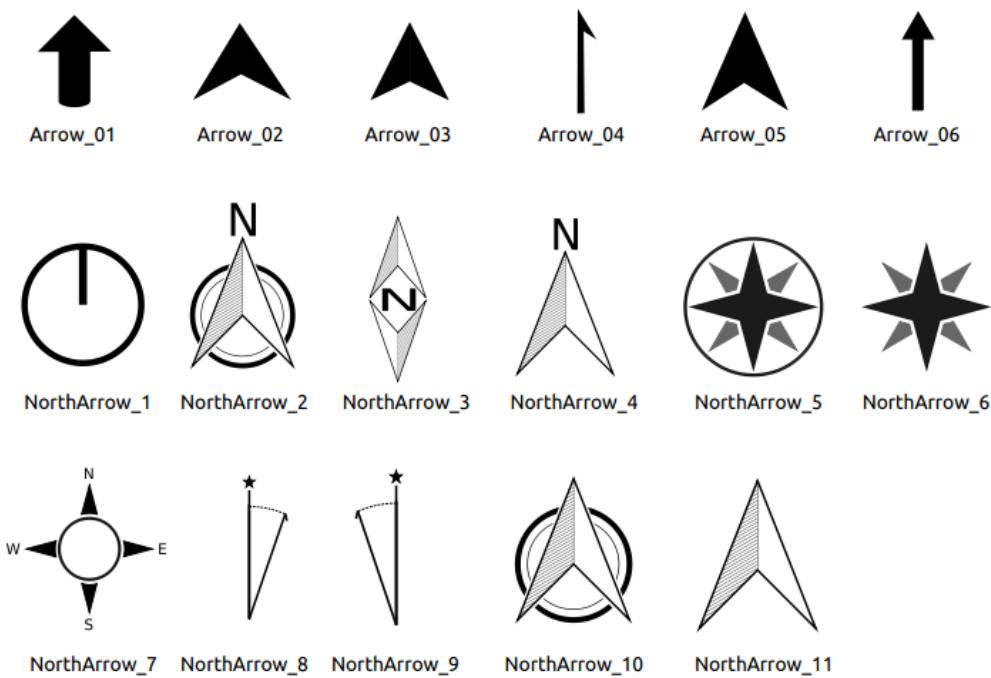


Fig. 16.45: North arrows available for selection in provided SVG library

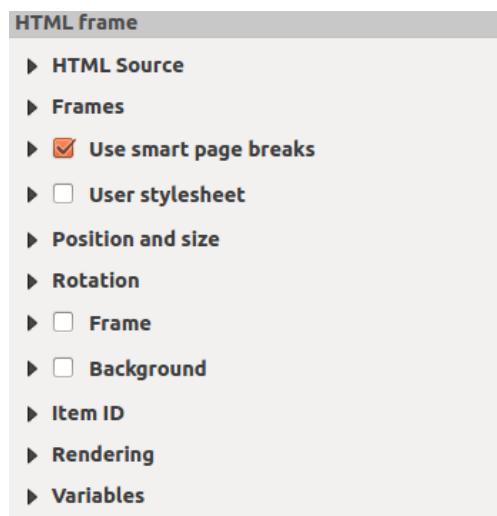


Fig. 16.46: HTML Frame, the Item Properties Panel

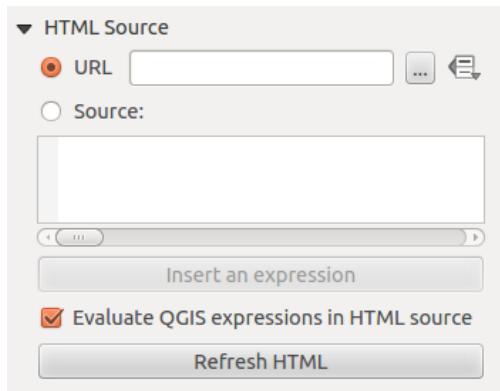


Fig. 16.47: HTML frame, the HTML Source properties

- In *URL* you can enter the URL of a webpage you copied from your Internet browser or select an HTML file using the ... *Browse* button. There is also the option to use the *Data-defined override* button, to provide a URL from the contents of an attribute field of a table or using a regular expression.
- In *Source* you can enter text in the textbox with some HTML tags or provide a full HTML page.
- The *Insert an Expression* button can be used to insert an expression like [%Year (\$now)%] in the Source textbox to display the current year. This button is only activated when radiobutton *Source* is selected. After inserting the expression click somewhere in the textbox before refreshing the HTML frame, otherwise you will lose the expression.
- Activate *Evaluate QGIS expressions in HTML code* to see the result of the expression you have included, otherwise you will see the expression instead.
- Use the *Refresh HTML* button to refresh the HTML frame(s) and see the result of changes.

## Frames

The *Frames* group of the HTML frame *Item Properties* panel provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_html\\_frames](#)):

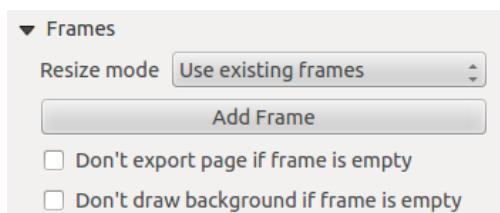


Fig. 16.48: HTML frame, the Frames properties

- With *Resize mode* you can select how to render the HTML contents:
  - *Use existing frames* displays the result in the first frame and added frames only.
  - *Extend to next page* will create as many frames (and corresponding pages) as necessary to render the height of the web page. Each frame can be moved around on the layout. If you resize a frame, the webpage will be divided up between the other frames. The last frame will be trimmed to fit the web page.
  - *Repeat on every page* will repeat the upper left of the web page on every page in frames of the same size.
  - *Repeat until finished* will also create as many frames as the *Extend to next page* option, except all frames will have the same size.

- Use the *Add Frame* button to add another frame with the same size as selected frame. If the HTML page does not fit in the first frame it will continue in the next frame when you use *Resize mode* or *Use existing frames*.
- Activate  *Don't export page if frame is empty* prevents the page from being exported when the frame has no HTML contents. This means all other layout items, maps, scale bars, legends etc. will not be visible in the result.
- Activate  *Don't draw background if frame is empty* prevents the HTML frame being drawn if the frame is empty.

### Use smart page breaks and User style sheet

The *Use smart page breaks* dialog and *User style sheet* dialog of the HTML frame *Item Properties* panel provides the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_html\\_breaks](#)):

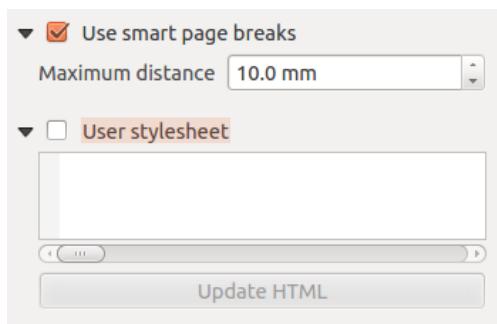


Fig. 16.49: HTML frame, Use smart page breaks and User style sheet properties

- Activate  *Use smart page breaks* to prevent the html frame contents from breaking mid-way a line of text so it continues nice and smooth in the next frame.
- Set the *Maximum distance* allowed when calculating where to place page breaks in the html. This distance is the maximum amount of empty space allowed at the bottom of a frame after calculating the optimum break location. Setting a larger value will result in better choice of page break location, but more wasted space at the bottom of frames. This is only used when *Use smart page breaks* is activated.
- Activate  *User style sheet* to apply HTML styles that often is provided in cascading style sheets. An example of style code is provided below to set the color of `<h1>` header tag to green and set the font and font size of text included in paragraph tags `<p>`.

```
h1 {color: #00ff00;
}
p {font-family: "Times New Roman", Times, serif;
    font-size: 20px;
}
```

- Use the *Update HTML* button to see the result of the style sheet settings.

### 16.2.9 The Shape Items

QGIS provides a couple of tools to draw regular or more complex shapes over the print layout.

---

**Note:** Unlike other print layout items, you can not style the frame nor the background color of the shapes bounding frame (set to transparent by default).

---

## The Regular Shape Item

The *Shape* item is a tool that helps to decorate your map with regular shapes like triangle, rectangle, ellipse...

You can add a regular shape using the  Add Shape tool which gives access to particular tools like  Add Rectangle,  Add Ellipse and  Add Triangle. Once you have selected the appropriate tool, you can draw the item following *items creation instructions*. Like other layout items, a regular shape can be manipulated the same way as exposed in *Interacting with layout items*.

---

**Note:** Holding down the Shift key while drawing the basic shape with the click and drag method helps you create a perfect square, circle or triangle.

---

The default shape item can be customized using its *Item Properties* panel. Other than the *items common properties*, this feature has the following functionalities (see figure\_layout\_label):

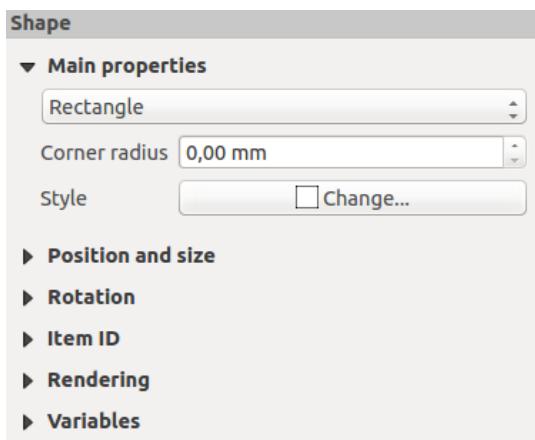


Fig. 16.50: Shape Item Properties Panel

The *Main properties* group shows and allows you to switch the type of the shape item (**Ellipse**, **Rectangle** or **Triangle**) inside the given frame.

You can set the style of the shape using the advanced *symbol* and *color* selector widget...

For the rectangle shape, you can set in different units the value of the *Corner radius* to round of the corners.

## The Node-Based Shape Items

While the  Add Shape tool provides way to create simple and predefined geometric item, the  Add Node Item tool helps you create a custom and more advanced geometric item. For polylines or polygons, you can draw as many lines or sides as you want and vertices of the items can be independently and directly manipulated using the  Edit Nodes Item. The item itself can be manipulated as exposed in *Interacting with layout items*.

To add a node-based shape:

1. Click the  Add Node Item icon
2. Select either  Add Polygon or  Add Polyline tool
3. Perform consecutive left clicks to add nodes of your item. If you hold down the Shift key while drawing a segment, it is constrained to follow an orientation multiple of 45°.
4. When you're done, right-click to terminate the shape.

You can customize the appearance of the shape in the *Item Properties* panel.

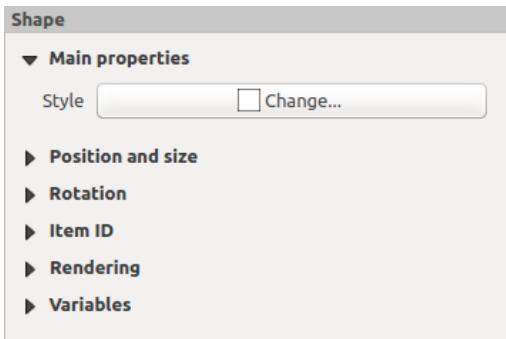


Fig. 16.51: Polygon Node Shape Item Properties Panel

In the *Main properties*, you can set the style of the shape using the advanced *symbol* and *color* selector widget...

For polyline node items, you can also parameterize the *Line markers* i.e. add:

- start and/or end markers with options:
  - *None*: draws a simple polyline.
  - *Arrow*: adds a regular triangular arrow head that you can customize.
  - *SVG marker*: uses an SVG file as arrow head of the item.
- customize the arrow head:
  - *Arrow stroke color*: sets the stroke color of the arrow head.
  - *Arrow fill color*: sets the fill color of the arrow head.
  - *Arrow stroke width*: sets the stroke width of the arrow head.
  - *Arrow head width*: sets the size of the arrow head.

SVG images are automatically rotated with the line. Stroke and fill colors of QGIS predefined SVG images can be changed using the corresponding options. Custom SVG may require some tags following this *instruction*.

## The Arrow Item

The  *Add Arrow* tool is a shortcut to create an arrow-enabled polyline by default and thus has the same properties and behavior as a *polyline node item*.

Actually, the arrow item can be used to add a simple arrow, for example, to show the relation between two different print layout items. However, to create a north arrow, the *image item* should be considered first as it gives access to a set of north arrows in .SVG format that you can sync with a map item so that it rotates automatically with it.

## Editing a node item geometry

A specific tool is provided to edit node-based shapes through  *Edit Nodes Item*. Within this mode, you can select a node by clicking on it (a marker is displayed on the selected node). A selected node can be moved either by dragging it or by using the arrow keys. Moreover, in this mode, you are able to add nodes to an existing shape: double-click on a segment and a node is added at the place you click. Finally, you can remove the currently selected node by hitting the `Del` key.

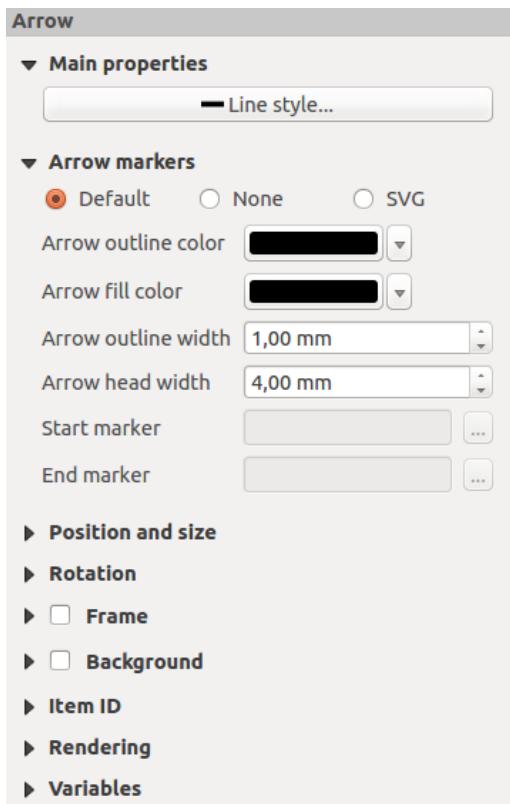


Fig. 16.52: Polyline Node Shape Item Properties Panel

## 16.3 Creating an Output

The *figure below* shows an example of print layout including each type of layout items described in the previous section.

From the *Layout* menu or toolbar, you can output the print layout to different file formats, and it is possible to modify the resolution (print quality) and paper size:

- The Print icon allows you to print the layout to a connected printer or a PostScript file, depending on installed printer drivers.
- The Export as image icon exports the print layout in several image formats such as PNG, BMP, TIF, JPG, and many others...
- The Export as SVG icon saves the print layout as an SVG (Scalable Vector Graphic).
- The Export as PDF icon saves the defined print layout directly as a PDF.

### 16.3.1 Export settings

Whenever you export a print layout, there are a selection of export settings QGIS needs to check in order to return the most appropriate output. These configurations are:

- the *Export settings* of the *Layout* panel, such as *Export resolution*, *Print as raster*, *Always export as vectors* or *Save world file*;
- the *Exclude page from exports* in the *page item properties* panel;
- the *Exclude item from exports* in the *item properties* panel.

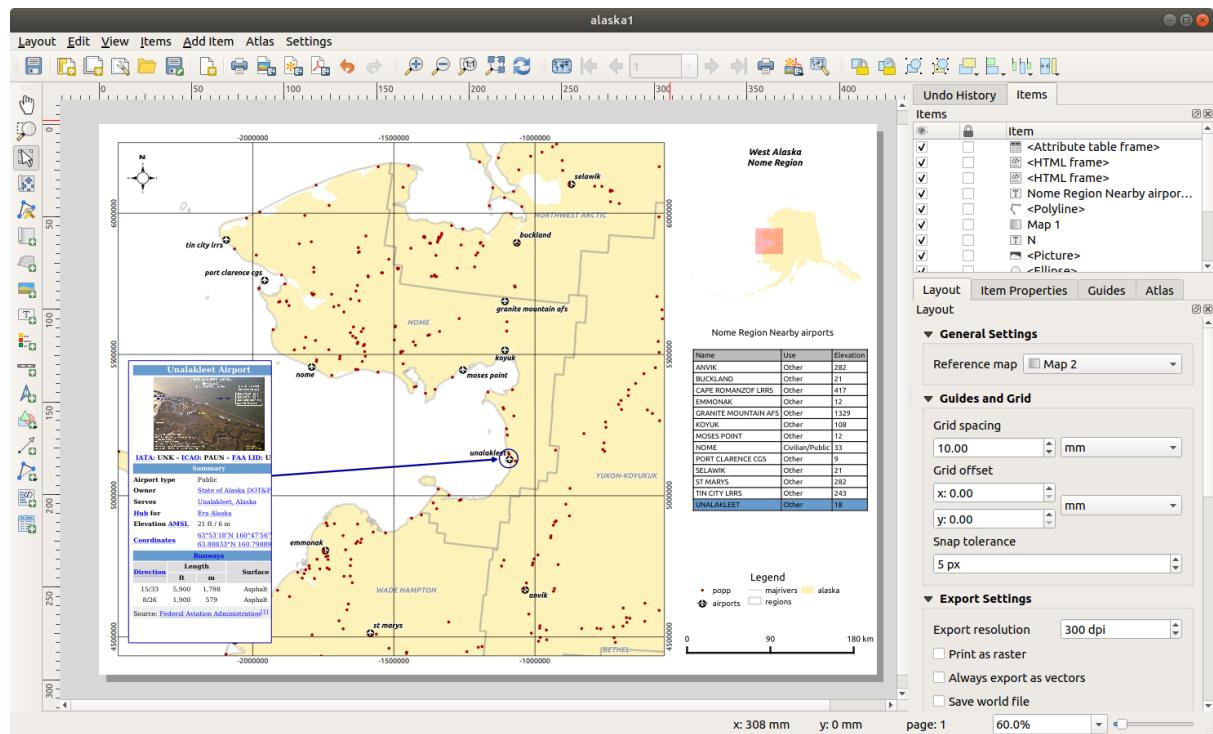


Fig. 16.53: Print Layout with map view, legend, image, scale bar, coordinates, text and HTML frame added

### 16.3.2 Export as Image

Clicking the icon will ask you to select the image format and enter the filename to use to export the print layout: in the case of multi-page composition, each page will be exported to a file with the given name appended with the page number.

In the next *Image Export Options* dialog, you can optionally override the print layout resolution and the exported page dimensions (set in *Layout* panel).

By checking option, the image output by the layout will include the minimal area enclosing all the items (map, legend, scale bar, shapes, label, image...) of each page of the composition:

- If the composition includes a single page, then the output is resized to include EVERYTHING on the composition. The page can then be reduced or extended to all items depending on their position (on, above, below, left or right of the page).
- In case of a multi-page layout, each page will be resized to include items in its area (left and right sides for all pages, plus top for the first page and bottom for the last page). Each resized page is exported to a separate file.

The *Crop to content* dialog also allows to add some margins around the cropped bounds.

#### Tip: Use image formats that support transparency when items extend beyond the paper extent

Since layout items may be placed outside the paper extent, using the *Crop to content* option while exporting can result in an image that extends beyond the paper extent. Since the background outside of the paper extent will be transparent, for image formats that do not support transparency (eg, .BMP, .JPG) it will be rendered as full black, “corrupting” the image.

Use transparency-compatible formats like .TIFF or .PNG in such a case.

If you need to export your layout as a **georeferenced image** (e.g., to share with other projects), check the option and a world file named like the page on which the map reference set in *Layout* panel is

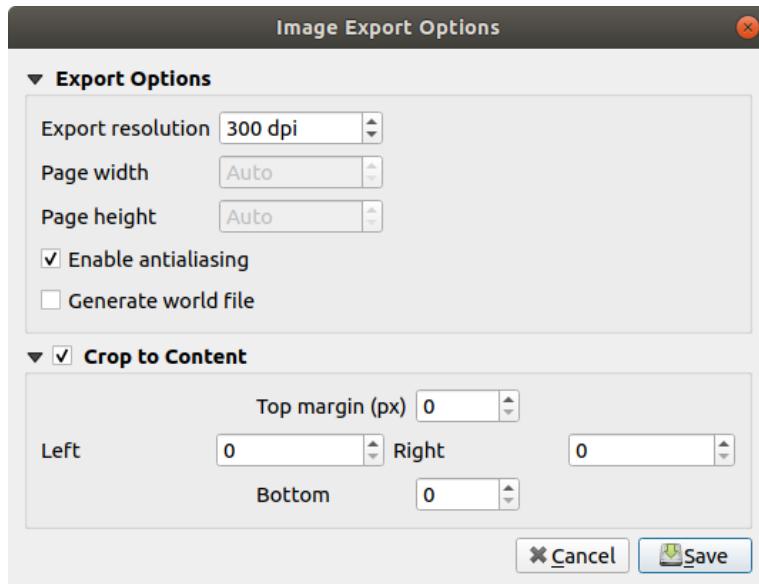


Fig. 16.54: Image Export Options, output is resized to items extent

placed will be created along the export(s). This option can also be checked by default in the *layout panel*. When needed, images rendering can also be improved with the *Enable antialiasing* option.

### 16.3.3 Export as SVG

With  [Export as SVG](#), you also need to fill the filename (used as a basename for all files in case of multi-page composition) and then can apply  [Crop to content option](#).

The SVG export options dialog also allows to override the layout default export and offers other settings:

- [Export map layers as SVG groups](#): may affect label placement.
- [Render map labels as outlines](#): unchecking this will allow you to edit labels as texts in vector illustration software.
- [Always export as vectors](#): some rendering options require items to be rasterized for a better rendering. Check this option to keep the objects as vectors with the risk that the appearance of the output file may not match the print layout preview (for more details, see [Export settings](#)).
- [Export RDF metadata](#).

---

**Note:** Currently, the SVG output is very basic. This is not a QGIS problem, but a problem with the underlying Qt library. This will hopefully be sorted out in future versions.

---

### 16.3.4 Export as PDF

The  [Export as PDF](#) tool exports all the composition pages into a single PDF file you'd need to provide path and name. Unlike the other formats, exporting to .PDF does not provide means to override the layout export settings. So check [these settings](#) to ensure they are compatible with your needs.

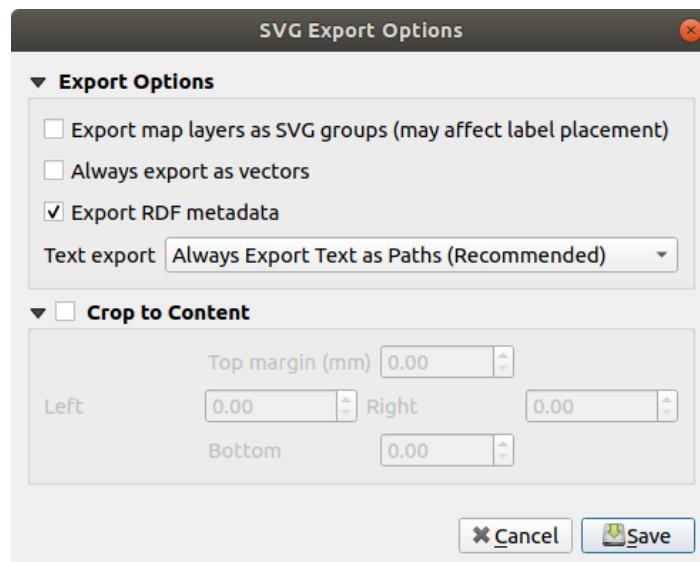


Fig. 16.55: SVG Export Options

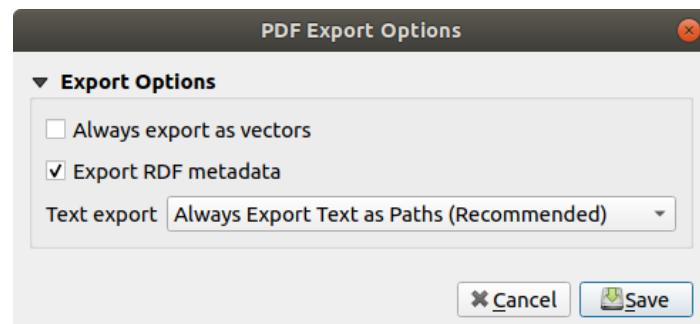


Fig. 16.56: PDF Export Options

---

**Note:** Exporting a print layout to formats like **.PDF** or **.TIFF** creates by default a georeferenced output (no world file needed).

---

### 16.3.5 Generate an Atlas

Atlas functions allow you to create map books in an automated way. Atlas uses the features of a vector or table layer called **coverage layer** and creates an output for each **atlas feature**. The most common usage is to zoom a map item to the current atlas feature. Further use cases include:

- a map item showing, for another layer, only features that share the same attribute as the atlas feature or are within its geometry;
- a label or html item whose text is replaced as features are iterated over;
- a table item showing attributes of associated *parent or children* features of the current atlas feature...

For each feature, an output is processed for all pages and items according to their exports settings.

---

**Tip: Use variables for more flexibility**

QGIS provides a large panel of functions and *variables*, including atlas related ones, that you can use to manipulate the layout items but also the layers symbology according to atlas status. Combining these features gives you a lot of flexibility and helps you easily produce advanced mappings.

---

To enable the generation of an atlas and access atlas parameters, refer to the *Atlas* panel. This panel contains the following functionalities (see [figure\\_layout\\_atlas](#)):

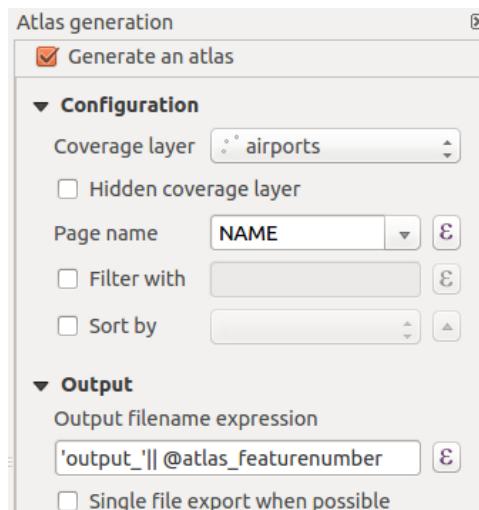


Fig. 16.57: Atlas Panel

- *Generate an atlas*, which enables or disables the atlas generation;
- A *Coverage layer*  combo box that allows you to choose the table or vector layer containing the features to iterate over;
- An optional  *Hidden coverage layer* that, if checked, will hide the coverage layer (but not the other layers) during the generation;
- An optional *Page name* combo box to give a more explicit name to each feature page(s) when previewing atlas. You can select a field of the coverage layer or set an *expression*. If this option is empty, QGIS will use an internal ID, according to the filter and/or the sort order applied to the layer;

- An optional *Filter with* text area that allows you to specify an expression for filtering features from the coverage layer. If the expression is not empty, only features that evaluate to `True` will be processed;
- An optional  *Sort by* that allows you to sort features of the coverage layer, using a field of the coverage layer or an expression. The sort order (either ascending or descending) is set by the two-state *Sort direction* button that displays an up or a down arrow.

You also have options to set the output of the atlas:

- An *Output filename expression* textbox that is used to generate a filename for each geometry if needed. It is based on expressions. This field is meaningful only for rendering to multiple files;
- A  *Single file export when possible* that allows you to force the generation of a single file if this is possible with the chosen output format (PDF, for instance). If this field is checked, the value of the *Output filename expression* field is meaningless;
- An *Image export format* drop-down list to select the output format when using the  *Export atlas as Images...* button.

## Control map by atlas

The most common usage of atlas is with the map item, zooming to the current atlas feature, as iteration goes over the coverage layer. This behavior is set in the *Controlled by atlas* group properties of the map item. See [Controlled by atlas](#) for different settings you can apply on map item.

## Customize labels with expression

In order to adapt labels to the feature the atlas iterates over, you can include expressions. What you should take care of is to place expression part (including functions, fields or variables) between [% and %] (see [The Label Item](#) for more details).

For example, for a city layer with fields CITY\_NAME and ZIPCODE, you could insert this:

```
The area of [% concat( upper(CITY_NAME), ',', ZIPCODE, ' is ',  
format_number($area/1000000, 2) %] km2
```

or, another combination:

```
The area of [% upper(CITY_NAME)%],[%ZIPCODE%] is  
[%format_number($area/1000000,2) %] km2
```

The information [% concat( upper(CITY\_NAME), ',', ZIPCODE, ' is ',  
format\_number(\$area/1000000, 2) %] is an expression used inside the label. Both expressions would result in the generated atlas as:

```
The area of PARIS, 75001 is 1.94 km2
```

## Explore Data-defined override buttons with atlas

There are several places where you can use a  *Data defined override* button to override the selected setting. These options are particularly useful with atlas generation. See [Data defined override setup](#) for more details on this widget.

For the following examples the `Regions` layer of the QGIS sample dataset is used and selected as coverage layer for the atlas generation. We also assume it's a single page layout containing a map and a label items.

When the height (north-south) of the extents of a region is greater than its width (east-west), you rather want to use *Portrait* instead of *Landscape* orientation to optimize the use of paper. With a  Data Defined Override button you can dynamically set the paper orientation.

Right-click on the page and select *Page Properties* to open the panel. We want to set the orientation dynamically, using an expression depending on the region geometry so press the  button of field *Orientation*, select *Edit...* to open the *Expression string builder* dialog and enter the following expression:

```
CASE WHEN bounds_width(@atlas_geometry) > bounds_height(@atlas_geometry)
THEN 'Landscape' ELSE 'Portrait' END
```

Now if you *preview the atlas*, the paper orients itself automatically but items placement may not be ideal. For each Region you need to reposition the location of the layout items as well. For the map item you can use the  button of its *Width* property to set it dynamic using following expression:

```
@layout_pagewidth - 20
```

Likewise, use the  button of the *Height* property to provide following expression and constrain map item size:

```
@layout_pageheight - 20
```

To ensure the map item is centered in the page, set its *Reference point* to the upper left radio button and enter 10 for its *X* and *Y* positions.

Let's add a title above the map in the center of the page. Select the label item and set the horizontal alignment to  Center. Next move the label to the right position, activate from *Reference point* any of the middle buttons, and provide the following expression for field *X*:

```
@layout_pagewidth / 2
```

For all other layout items you can set the position in a similar way so they are correctly positioned when the page is automatically rotated in portrait or landscape. You can also do more tweaks such as customizing the title with feature attributes (see *Customize labels with expression* example), updating images with atlas feature, resizing the legend columns number according to page orientation...

Information provided is an update of the excellent blog (in English and Portuguese) on the Data Defined Override options [Multiple\\_format\\_map\\_series\\_using\\_QGIS\\_2.6](#).

This is just one example of how you can use some advanced settings with atlas.

### Preview and generate an atlas



Fig. 16.58: Atlas Preview toolbar

Once the atlas settings have been configured and layout items (map, table, image...) linked to it, you can create a preview of all the pages by clicking *Atlas* → *Preview Atlas* or  Preview Atlas icon. You can then use the arrows in the same toolbar to navigate through all the features:

-  First feature
-  Previous feature
-  Next feature
-  Last feature

You can also use the combo box to directly select and preview a specific feature. The combo box shows atlas features name according to the expression set in the atlas *Page name* option.

As for simple compositions, an atlas can be generated in different ways (see [Creating an Output](#) for more information). Instead of *Layout* menu, rather use tools from *Atlas* menu or toolbar.

This means that you can directly print your compositions with *Atlas* → *Print Atlas*. You can also create a PDF using *Atlas* → *Export Atlas as PDF...*: You will be asked for a directory to save all the generated PDF files, except if the  *Single file export when possible* has been selected. In that case, you'll be prompted to give a filename.

With *Atlas* → *Export Atlas as Images...* or *Atlas* → *Export Atlas as SVG...* tool, you're also prompted to select a folder. Each page of each atlas feature composition is exported to the image file format set in *Atlas* panel or to SVG file.

---

#### **Tip: Print a specific atlas feature**

If you want to print or export the composition of only one feature of the atlas, simply start the preview, select the desired feature in the drop-down list and click on *Layout* → *Print* (or *Export...* to any supported file format).

---

## 16.4 Creating a Report

### 16.4.1 What is?

This section will help you set up an automatic report in QGIS. By definition a GIS report is a document containing information organized in a narrative, graphic, maps, or tabular form, prepared on ad hoc, periodic, recurring, regular, or as required basis. Reports may refer to specific periods, events, occurrences, or subjects, locations, and may be communicated or presented in oral or written form. The reports in QGIS will allow the users to output their GIS projects in a simple, quick and structured way.

### 16.4.2 Get started

*Reports* menu is an extension of Print Layout. This functionality can be found in *Project* → *New Report* or inside of *Project* → *Layout Manager*.

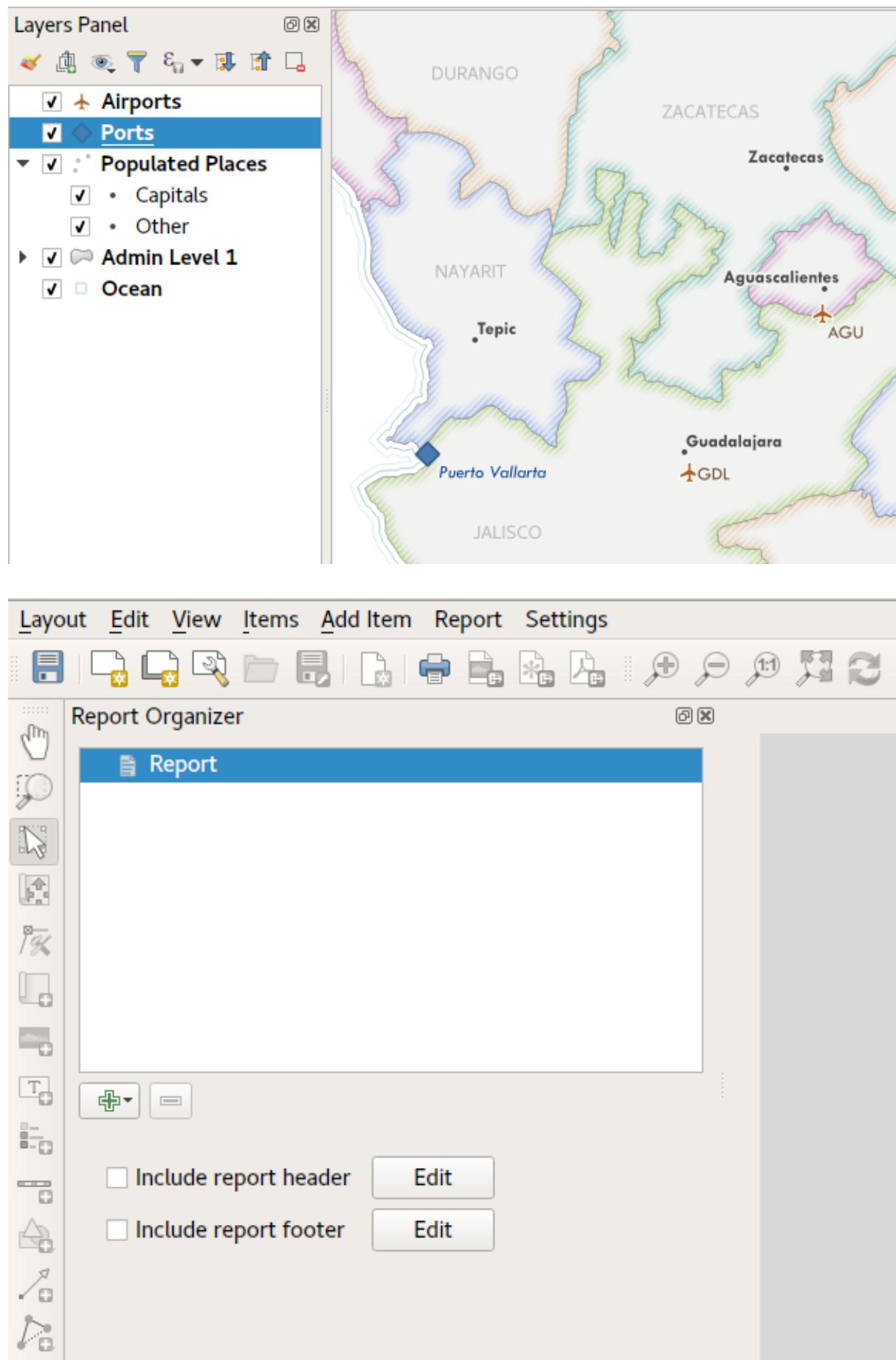
In the *Layout Manager* dialog the report can be created through *New from template* and select the dropdown option *Empty Report* and hitting *Create...* button.

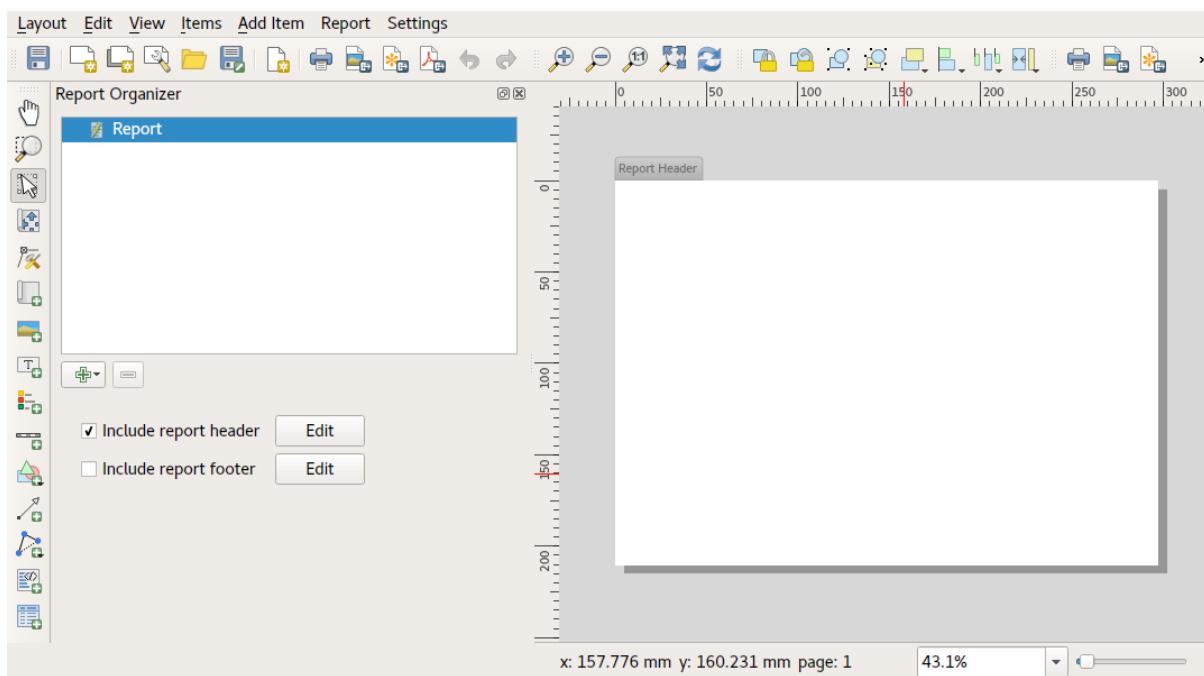
For this example, we use some administrative boundaries, populated places, ports and airports from dataset of Natural Earth.

Using the *Project* → *New Report* command, we then create a new blank report. Initially, there's not much to look at – the dialog which is displayed looks much like the print layout designer, except for the new *Report Organizer* panel shown on the left:

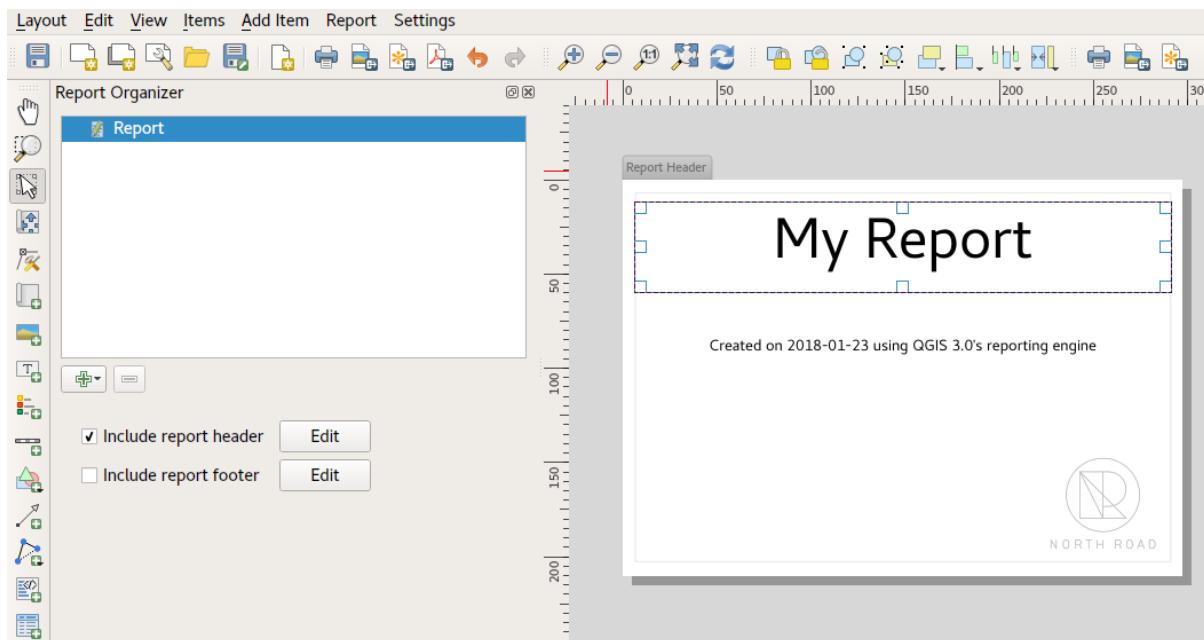
### 16.4.3 Layout Report Workspace

QGIS reports can consist of multiple, nested sections. In our new blank report we initially have only the main report section. The only options present for this report section is *Include report header* or *Include report footer*. If we enable these options, the header will be included as the very first page (or pages...) — individual parts of reports can be multi-page if desired) in the report, and the footer would be the last page. Let's go ahead and enable the header, and hit the *Edit* button next to it:

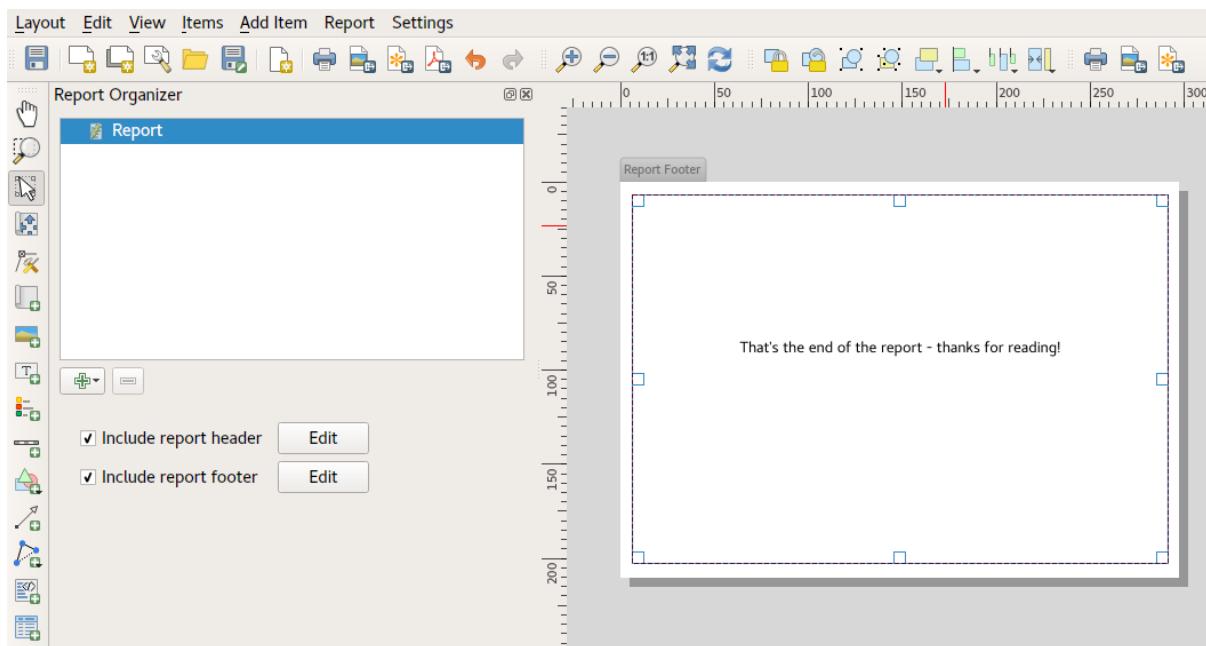




A few things happen as a result. Firstly, an edit pencil is now shown next to the *Report* section in the *Report Organizer*, indicating that the report section is currently being edited in the designer. We also see a new blank page shown in the designer itself, with the small *Report Header* title. In QGIS reports, every component of the report is made up of individual layouts. They can be created and modified using the exact same tools as are available for standard print layouts – so you can use any desired combination of labels, pictures, maps, tables, etc. Let's add some items to our report header to demonstrate:



We'll also create a simple footer for the report, by checking the *Include report footer* option and hitting *Edit*.

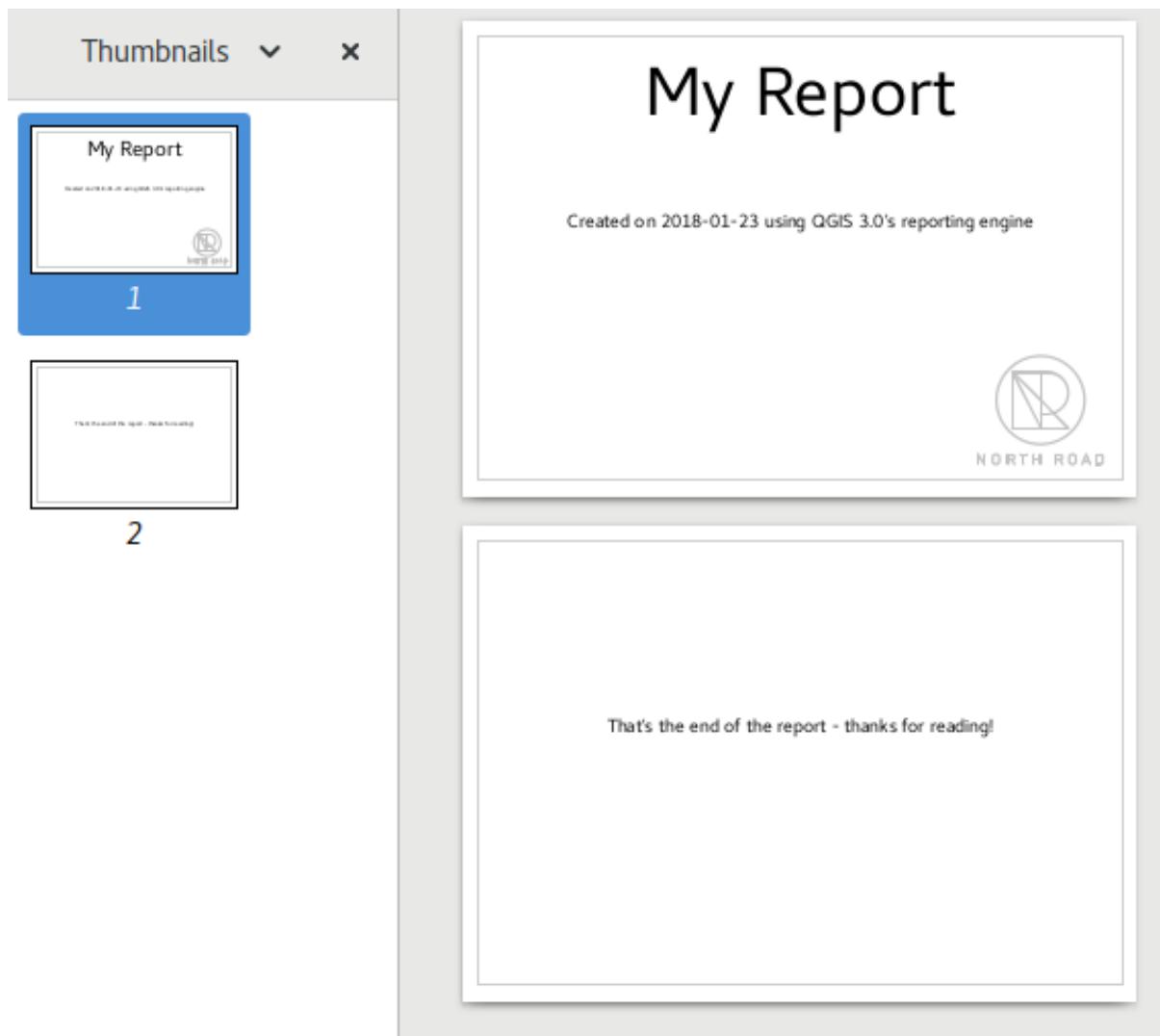


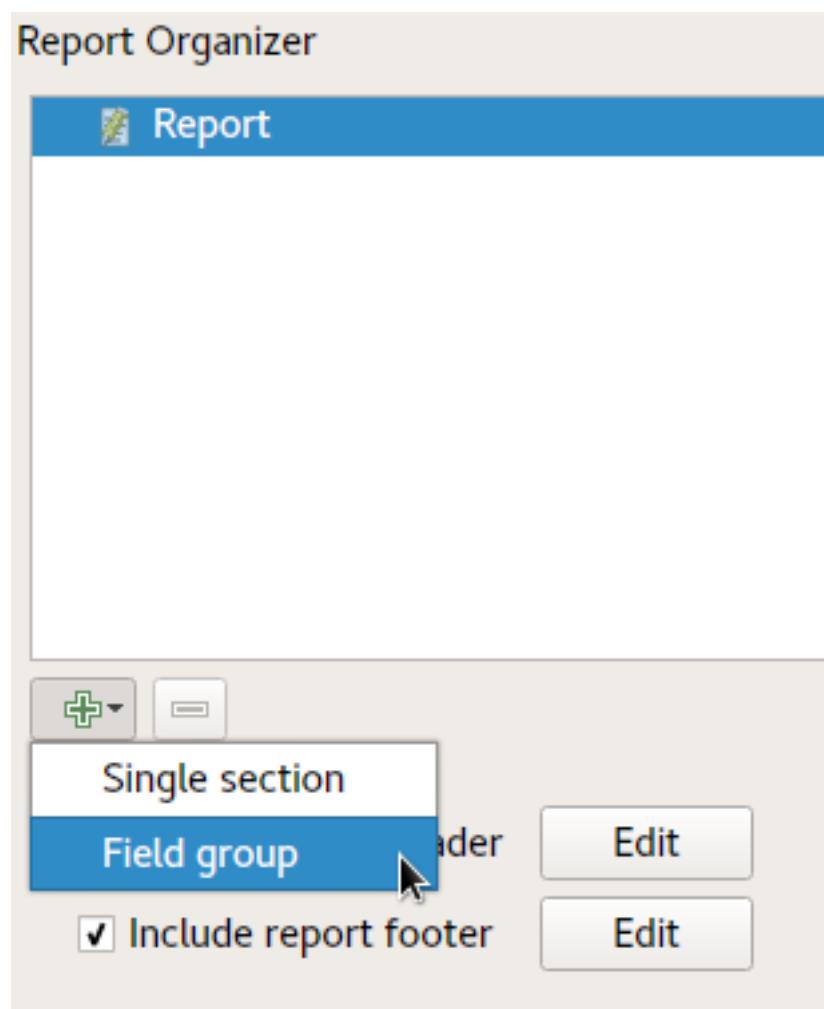
Before proceeding further, let's export this report and see what we get. Exporting is done from the Report menu – in this case we select *Export Report as PDF* to render the whole report to a PDF file. Here's the not-very-impressive result – a two page PDF consisting of our header and footer:

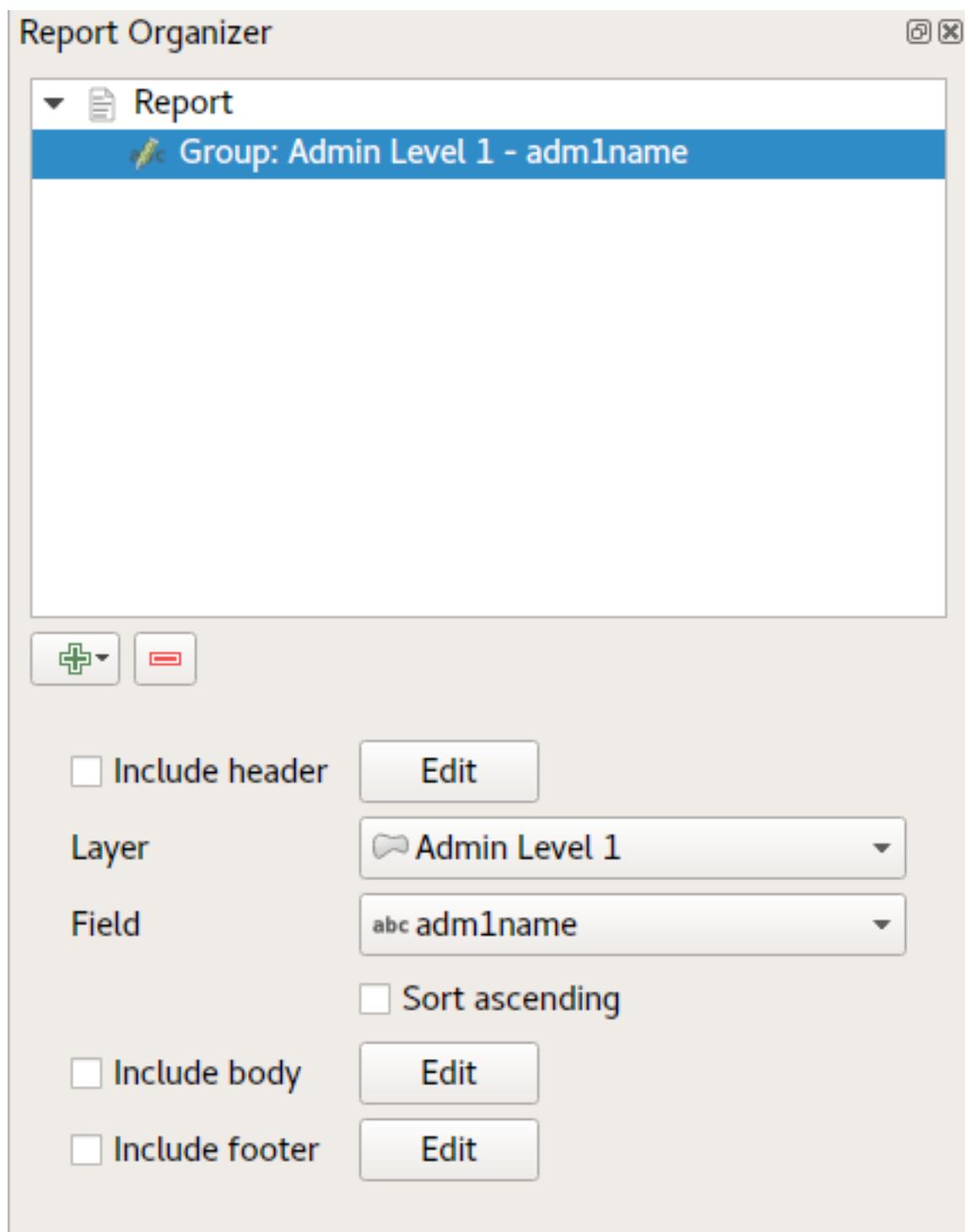
Let's make things more interesting. By hitting the  Add Static Layout Section button in the *Report Organizer*, we're given a choice of new sections to add to our report.

There are two options: *Add Static Layout Section* and a *Field Group Section*. The *Add Static Layout Section* is a single, static body layout. This can be used to embed static layouts mid-way through a report. Alternatively, a *Field Group Section* repeats its body layout for every feature in a layer. The features are sorted by the selected grouping feature (with an option for ascending/descending sort). If a field group section has child sections (e.g. another field group section with a different field), then only features with unique values for the group feature are iterated over. This allows nested reports with different information.

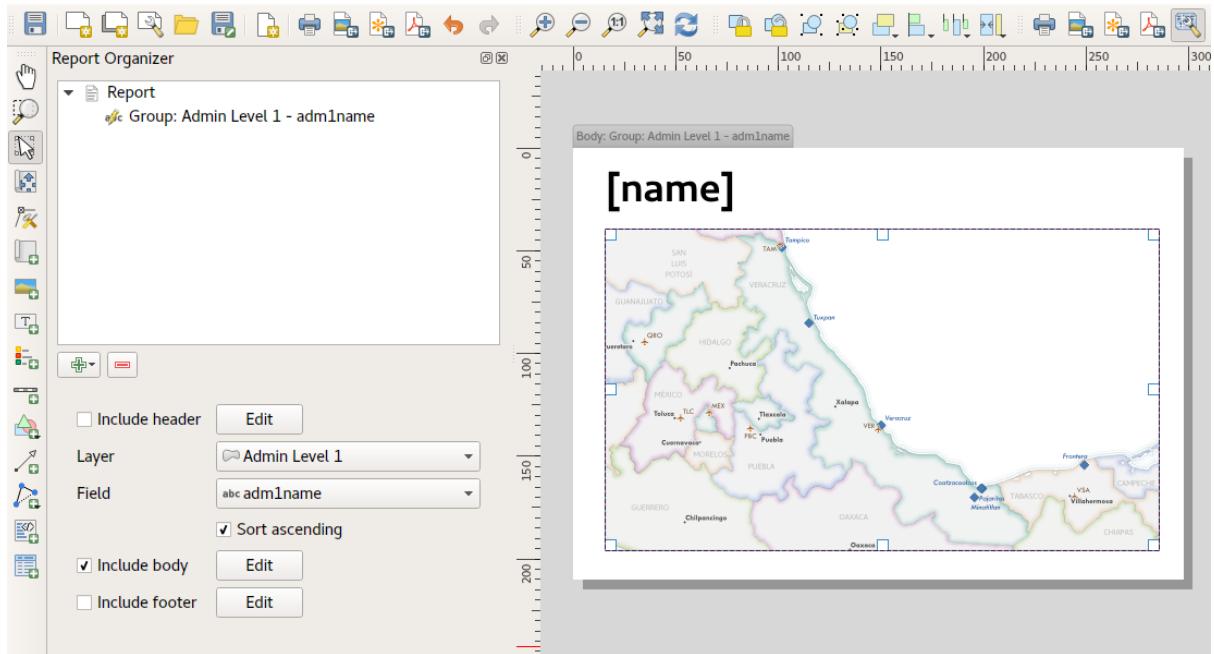
For now we'll add a Field Group to our report. At its most basic level, you can think of a *Field Group Section* as the equivalent of a *print atlas*. You select a layer to iterate over, and the report will insert a section for each feature found. Selecting the new *Field Group Section* reveals a number of new related settings:







In this case we've setup our Field Group so that we iterate over all the states from the *Admin Level 1* layer, using the values from the *adm1name* field. The same options for header and footer are present, together with a new option to include a *body* for this section. We'll do that, and edit the body:



We've setup this body with a map (set to follow the current report feature – just like how a map item in an atlas can follow the current atlas feature), and a label showing the state's name. If we went ahead and exported our report now, we'd get something like this:

First, the report header, then a page for each state, and finally the report footer. So more or less an atlas, but with a header and footer page. Let's make things more interesting by adding a subsection to our state group. We do this by first selecting the state field group in the organizer, then hitting the *Field Group Section* button and adding a new *Field Group Section*:

When a *Field Group Section* is iterating over its features, it will automatically filter these features to match the feature attributes from its parent groups. In this case, the subsection we added will iterate over a *Populated Places* layer, including a body section for each place encountered. The magic here is that the *Populated Places* layer has an attribute named *adm1name*, tagging each place with the state it's contained within (if you're lucky your data will already be structured like this – if not, run the Processing Join Attributes by Location algorithm and create your own field). When we export this report, QGIS will grab the first state from the *Admin Level 1* layer, and then iterate over all the *Populated Places* with a matching *adm1name* value. Here's what we get:

# My Report

Created on 2018-01-23 using QGIS 3.0's reporting engine



NORTH ROAD

## Michoacán



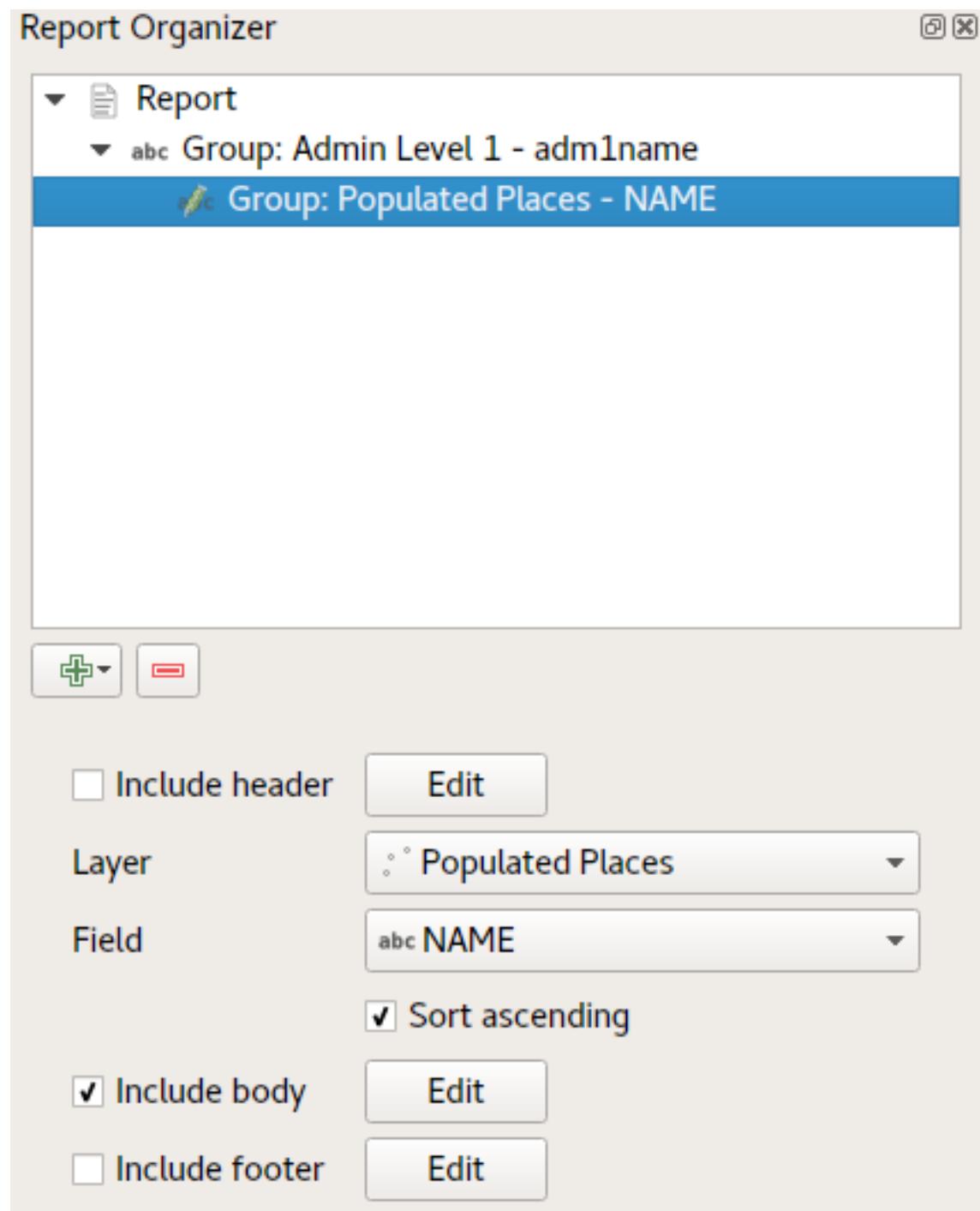
## Guanajuato



## Jalisco



That's the end of the report - thanks for reading!





Here we created a basic body for the *Populated Places* group, including a map of the place and a table of some place attributes. So our report is now a report header, a page for each state followed by a page for every populated place within that state, and finally the report footer. If we were to add a header for the *Populated Places* group, it would be included just before listing the populated places for each state:

Similarly, a footer for the *Populated Places* group would be inserted after the final place for each state is included.

In addition to nested subsections, subsections in a report can also be included consecutively. If we add a second subsection to the *Admin Level 1 group* for *Airports*, then our report will first list ALL the populated places for each state, followed by all the airports within that state, before proceeding to the next state. In this case our report would be structured like this:

#### 16.4.4 Report Output

The key point here is that our *Airports group* is a subsection of the *Admin Level 1 group* – not the *Populated Places group*. Here’s what our report could look like now:

Combining nested and consecutive sections, together with section headers and footers allows for tons of flexibility. For instance, in the below report we add another field group as a child of the main report for the :guilabel‘Ports’ layer. Now, after listing the states together with their populated places and airports, we’ll get a summary list of all the ports in the region:

## My Report

Created on 2018-01-23 using QGIS 3.0's reporting engine



NORTH ROAD

## Jalisco



## Guanajuato



## Populated places in Jalisco

## Populated places in Guanajuato

## Place: Autlan



## Place: Cd. Guaya



## Place: Ciudad Guzman



Report Organizer

The Report Organizer dialog shows a hierarchical report structure:

- Report
  - abc Group: Admin Level 1 - adm1name
  - abc Group: Populated Places - NAME
  - abc Group: Airports - name** (highlighted in blue)

Below the tree view are configuration buttons:

- Add (+)** and **Remove (-)** buttons.
- Include header**:  **Edit** button.
- Layer**:
- Field**:
- Sort ascending**:
- Include body**:  **Edit** button.
- Include footer**:  **Edit** button.

## My Report

Created on 2018-01-23 using QGIS 3.0's reporting engine



NORTH ROAD

Place: Salamanca



Populated places in Jalisco

Guanajuato



Airports in Guanajuato

Place: Autlan



Populated places in Guanajuato

Place: Cd. Guzman



Place: Cd. Guzman



Del Bajío Int'l



Jalisco



Airports in Jalisco

Report Organizer

The dialog shows a hierarchical report structure under the 'Report' category. The 'Group: Ports - name' item is currently selected. Below the tree view are configuration buttons for header, body, and footer inclusion, along with dropdowns for layer and field selection.

Report

- abc Group: Admin Level 1 - adm1name
  - abc Group: Populated Places - NAME
  - abc Group: Airports - name
- abc Group: Ports - name

+  -

Include header  Edit

Layer : Ports

Field : abc name

Sort ascending

Include body  Edit

Include footer  Edit

This results in the last part of our report exporting as:

### 16.4.5 Export settings

Whenever you export a report, there is a selection of export settings QGIS needs to check in order to return the most appropriate output. As you can start to imagine, reports in QGIS are extremely powerful and flexible!

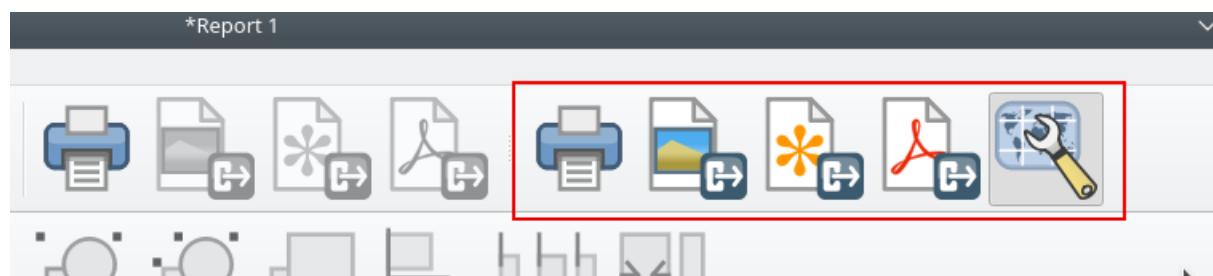
---

**Note:** When you are exporting a report to the available formats please choose the options (Print, SVG, Image, PDF) that have the labels saying *Export Report as...* otherwise you will print the current active map.

---

The current information was adapted from the blog of North Road, [Exploring Reports in QGIS 3.0 - the Ultimate Guide!](#)





# CHAPTER 17

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## Working with OGC Data

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### 17.1 QGIS as OGC Data Client

The Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) is an international organization with membership of more than 300 commercial, governmental, nonprofit and research organizations worldwide. Its members develop and implement standards for geospatial content and services, GIS data processing and exchange.

Describing a basic data model for geographic features, an increasing number of specifications are developed by OGC to serve specific needs for interoperable location and geospatial technology, including GIS. Further information can be found at <https://www.opengeospatial.org/>.

Important OGC specifications supported by QGIS are:

- **WMS** — Web Map Service ([WMS/WMTS Client](#))
- **WMTS** — Web Map Tile Service ([WMS/WMTS Client](#))
- **WFS** — Web Feature Service ([WFS and WFS-T Client](#))
- **WFS-T** — Web Feature Service - Transactional ([WFS and WFS-T Client](#))
- **WCS** — Web Coverage Service ([WCS Client](#))
- **WPS** — Web Processing Service
- **CSW** — Catalog Service for the Web
- **SFS** — Simple Features for SQL ([PostGIS Layers](#))
- **GML** — Geography Markup Language

OGC services are increasingly being used to exchange geospatial data between different GIS implementations and data stores. QGIS can deal with the above specifications as a client, being **SFS** (through support of the PostgreSQL / PostGIS data provider, see section [PostGIS Layers](#)).

#### 17.1.1 WMS/WMTS Client

##### Overview of WMS Support

QGIS currently can act as a WMS client that understands WMS 1.1, 1.1.1 and 1.3 servers. In particular, it has been tested against publicly accessible servers such as DEMIS.

A WMS server acts upon requests by the client (e.g., QGIS) for a raster map with a given extent, set of layers, symbolization style, and transparency. The WMS server then consults its local data sources, rasterizes the map, and sends it back to the client in a raster format. For QGIS, this format would typically be JPEG or PNG.

WMS is generically a REST (Representational State Transfer) service rather than a full-blown Web service. As such, you can actually take the URLs generated by QGIS and use them in a web browser to retrieve the same images that QGIS uses internally. This can be useful for troubleshooting, as there are several brands of WMS server on the market and they all have their own interpretation of the WMS standard.

WMS layers can be added quite simply, as long as you know the URL to access the WMS server, you have a serviceable connection to that server, and the server understands HTTP as the data transport mechanism.

Additionally, QGIS will cache your WMS responses (i.e. images) for 24h as long as the GetCapabilities request is not triggered. The GetCapabilities request is triggered everytime the *Connect* button in the *Add Layer(s) from WMS(T) Server* dialog is used to retrieve the WMS server capabilities. This is an automatic feature meant to optimize project loading time. If a project is saved with a WMS layer, the corresponding WMS tiles will be loaded from the cache the next time the project is opened as long as they are no older than 24H.

## Overview of WMTS Support

QGIS can also act as a WMTS client. WMTS is an OGC standard for distributing tile sets of geospatial data. This is a faster and more efficient way of distributing data than WMS because with WMTS, the tile sets are pre-generated, and the client only requests the transmission of the tiles, not their production. A WMS request typically involves both the generation and transmission of the data. A well-known example of a non-OGC standard for viewing tiled geospatial data is Google Maps.

In order to display the data at a variety of scales close to what the user might want, the WMTS tile sets are produced at several different scale levels and are made available for the GIS client to request them.

This diagram illustrates the concept of tile sets:

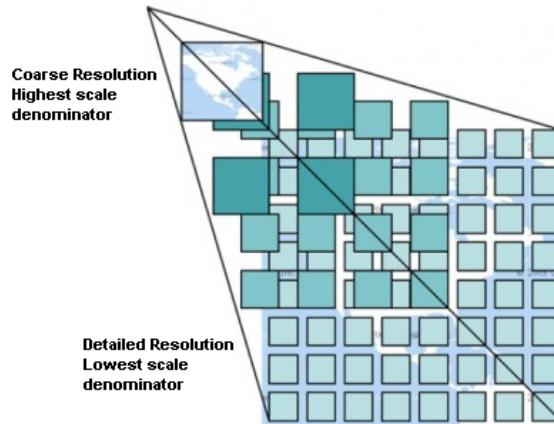


Fig. 17.1: Concept of WMTS tile sets

The two types of WMTS interfaces that QGIS supports are via Key-Value-Pairs (KVP) and RESTful. These two interfaces are different, and you need to specify them to QGIS differently.

1. In order to access a **WMTS KVP** service, a QGIS user must open the WMS/WMTS interface and add the following string to the URL of the WMTS tile service:

```
?SERVICE=WMTS&REQUEST=GetCapabilities
```

An example of this type of address is

```
https://opencache.statkart.no/gatekeeper/gk/gk.open_wmts?\n    service=WMTS&request=GetCapabilities
```

For testing the topo2 layer in this WMTS works nicely. Adding this string indicates that a WMTS web service is to be used instead of a WMS service.

- The **RESTful WMTS** service takes a different form, a straightforward URL. The format recommended by the OGC is:

`{WMTSBaseUrl}/1.0.0/WMTSCapabilities.xml`

This format helps you to recognize that it is a RESTful address. A RESTful WMTS is accessed in QGIS by simply adding its address in the WMS setup in the URL field of the form. An example of this type of address for the case of an Austrian basemap is <https://maps.wien.gv.at/basemap/1.0.0/WMTSCapabilities.xml>.

---

**Note:** You can still find some old services called WMS-C. These services are quite similar to WMTS (i.e., same purpose but working a little bit differently). You can manage them the same as you do WMTS services. Just add `?tiled=true` at the end of the url. See [https://wiki.osgeo.org/wiki/Tile\\_Map\\_Service\\_Specification](https://wiki.osgeo.org/wiki/Tile_Map_Service_Specification) for more information about this specification.

When you read WMTS, you can often think WMS-C also.

---

## Selecting WMS/WMTS Servers

The first time you use the WMS feature in QGIS, there are no servers defined.

Begin by clicking the  Add WMS layer button on the toolbar, or selecting *Layer → Add WMS Layer...*

The dialog *Add Layer(s) from a Server* for adding layers from the WMS server appears. You can add some servers to play with by clicking the *Add Default Servers* button. This will add two WMS demo servers for you to use: the WMS servers of the DM Solutions Group and Lizardtech. To define a new WMS server in the *Layers* tab, select the *New* button. Then enter the parameters to connect to your desired WMS server, as listed in *table\_OGC\_wms*:

Name	A name for this connection. This name will be used in the Server Connections drop-down box so that you can distinguish it from other WMS servers.
URL	URL of the server providing the data. This must be a resolvable host name – the same format as you would use to open a telnet connection or ping a host.
Username	Username to access a secured WMS server. This parameter is optional.
Password	Password for a basic authenticated WMS server. This parameter is optional.
Ignore GetMap URI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Ignore GetMap URI reported in capabilities.</i> Use given URI from URL field above.
Ignore GetFeatureInfo URI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Ignore GetFeatureInfo URI reported in capabilities.</i> Use given URI from URL field above.

Table OGC 1: WMS Connection Parameters

If you need to set up a proxy server to be able to receive WMS services from the internet, you can add your proxy server in the options. Choose *Settings → Options* and click on the *Network & Proxy* tab. There, you can add your proxy settings and enable them by setting  *Use proxy for web access*. Make sure that you select the correct proxy type from the *Proxy type*  drop-down menu.

Once the new WMS server connection has been created, it will be preserved for future QGIS sessions.

---

### Tip: On WMS Server URLs

Be sure, when entering the WMS server URL, that you have the base URL only. For example, you shouldn't have fragments such as `request=GetCapabilities` or `version=1.0.0` in your URL.

---

**Warning:** Entering **username** and **password** in the *Authentication* tab will keep unprotected credentials in the connection configuration. Those **credentials will be visible** if, for instance, you shared the project file with someone. Therefore, it's advisable to save your credentials in a *Authentication configuration* instead (*configurations* tab). See [Authentication System](#) for more details.

## Loading WMS/WMTS Layers

Once you have successfully filled in your parameters, you can use the *Connect* button to retrieve the capabilities of the selected server. This includes the image encoding, layers, layer styles and projections. Since this is a network operation, the speed of the response depends on the quality of your network connection to the WMS server. While downloading data from the WMS server, the download progress is visualized in the lower left of the WMS dialog.

Your screen should now look a bit like [figure\\_OGC\\_add\\_wms](#), which shows the response provided by the European Soil Portal WMS server.

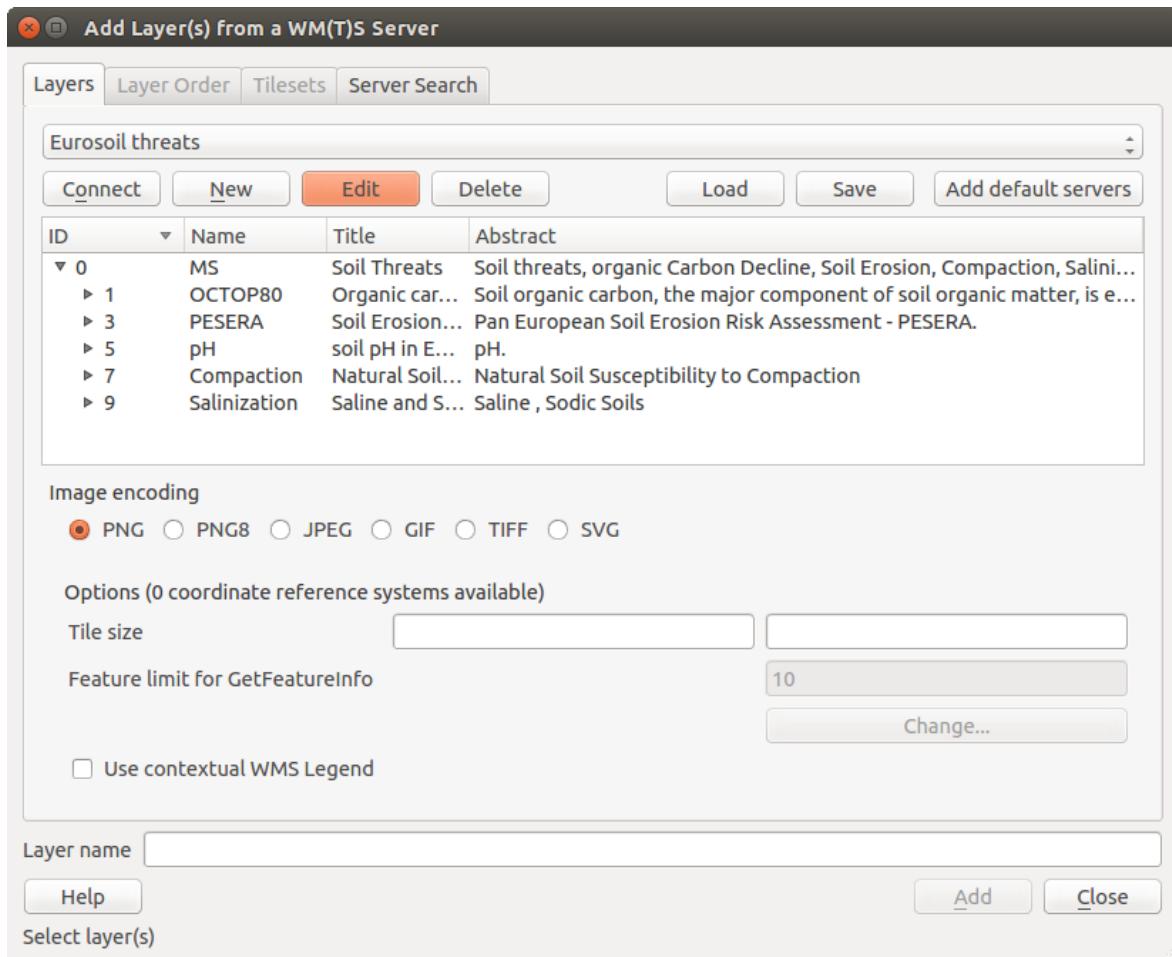


Fig. 17.2: Dialog for adding a WMS server, showing its available layers

### Image Encoding

The *Image encoding* section lists the formats that are supported by both the client and server. Choose one depending on your image accuracy requirements.

#### Tip: Image Encoding

You will typically find that a WMS server offers you the choice of JPEG or PNG image encoding. JPEG is a lossy compression format, whereas PNG faithfully reproduces the raw raster data.

Use JPEG if you expect the WMS data to be photographic in nature and/or you don't mind some loss in picture quality. This trade-off typically reduces by five times the data transfer requirement compared with PNG.

Use PNG if you want precise representations of the original data and you don't mind the increased data transfer requirements.

## Options

The Options area of the dialog provides a text field where you can add a *Layer name* for the WMS layer. This name will appear in the legend after loading the layer.

Below the layer name, you can define *Tile size* if you want to set tile sizes (e.g., 256x256) to split up the WMS request into multiple requests.

The *Feature limit for GetFeatureInfo* defines what features from the server to query.

If you select a WMS from the list, a field with the default projection provided by the mapserver appears. If the *Change...* button is active, you can click on it and change the default projection of the WMS to another CRS provided by the WMS server.

Finally you can activate  *Use contextual WMS-Legend* if the WMS Server supports this feature. Then only the relevant legend for your current map view extent will be shown and thus will not include legend items for things you can't see in the current map.

## Layer Order

The *Layer Order* tab lists the selected layers available from the current connected WMS server. You may notice that some layers are expandable; this means that the layer can be displayed in a choice of image styles.

You can select several layers at once, but only one image style per layer. When several layers are selected, they will be combined at the WMS server and transmitted to QGIS in one go.

### Tip: WMS Layer Ordering

WMS layers rendered by a server are overlaid in the order listed in the Layers section, from top to bottom of the list. If you want to change the overlay order, you can use the *Layer Order* tab.

## Transparency

In this version of QGIS, the *Global transparency* setting from the *Layer Properties* is hard coded to be always on, where available.

### Tip: WMS Layer Transparency

The availability of WMS image transparency depends on the image encoding used: PNG and GIF support transparency, whilst JPEG leaves it unsupported.

## Coordinate Reference System

A coordinate reference system (CRS) is the OGC terminology for a QGIS projection.

Each WMS layer can be presented in multiple CRSs, depending on the capability of the WMS server.

To choose a CRS, select *Change...* and a dialog similar to [Custom CRS Dialog](#) will appear. The main difference with the WMS version of the dialog is that only those CRSs supported by the WMS server will be shown.

## Server search

Within QGIS, you can search for WMS servers. [Figure\\_OGC\\_search](#) shows the *Server Search* tab with the *Add Layer(s) from a Server* dialog.

As you can see, it is possible to enter a search string in the text field and hit the *Search* button. After a short while, the search result will be populated into the list below the text field. Browse the result list and inspect your

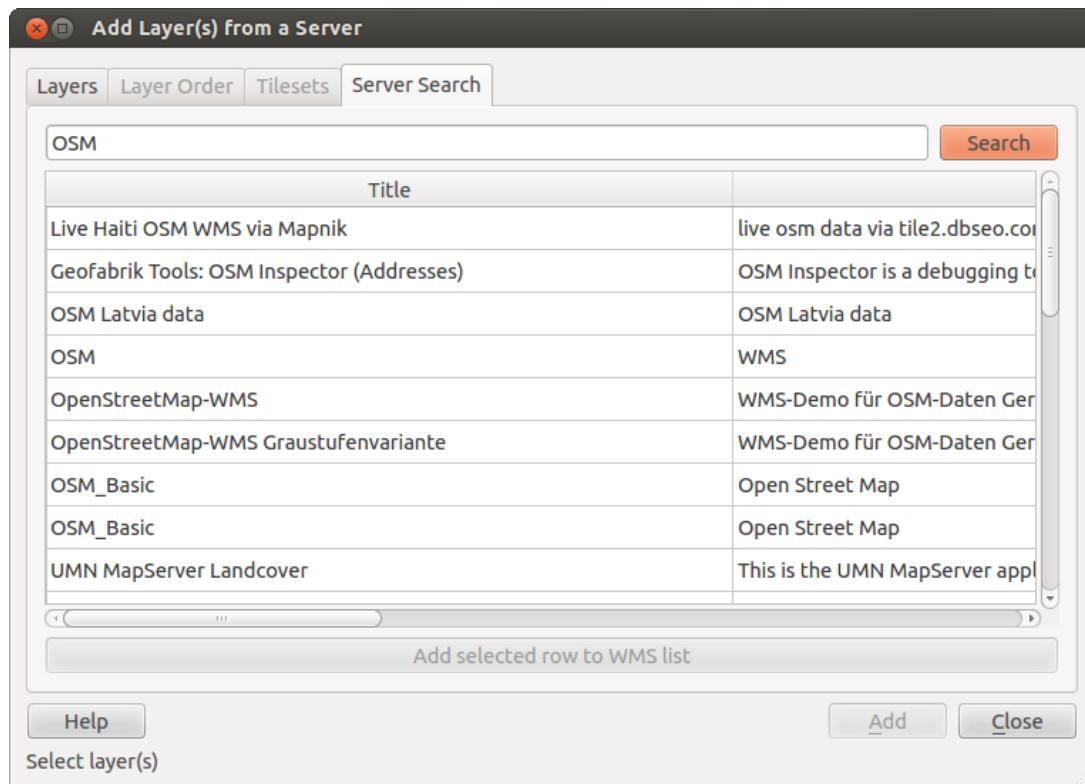


Fig. 17.3: Dialog for searching WMS servers after some keywords

search results within the table. To visualize the results, select a table entry, press the *Add Selected Row to WMS List* button and change back to the *Layers* tab. QGIS has automatically updated your server list, and the selected search result is already enabled in the list of saved WMS servers in the *Layers* tab. You only need to request the list of layers by clicking the *Connect* button. This option is quite handy when you want to search maps by specific keywords.

Basically, this option is a front end to the API of <http://geopole.org>.

## Tilesets

When using WMTS (Cached WMS) services like

```
https://opencache.statkart.no/gatekeeper/gk/gk.open_wmts?\n    service=WMTS&request=GetCapabilities
```

you are able to browse through the *Tilesets* tab given by the server. Additional information like tile size, formats and supported CRS are listed in this table. In combination with this feature, you can use the tile scale slider by selecting *View → Panels* (or *Settings → Panels*), then choosing *Tile Scale Panel*. This gives you the available scales from the tile server with a nice slider docked in.

## Using the Identify Tool

Once you have added a WMS server, and if any layer from a WMS server is queryable, you can then use the *Identify* tool to select a pixel on the map canvas. A query is made to the WMS server for each selection made. The results of the query are returned in plain text. The formatting of this text is dependent on the particular WMS server used. **Format selection**

If multiple output formats are supported by the server, a combo box with supported formats is automatically added to the identify results dialog and the selected format may be stored in the project for the layer. **GML format**

## support

The  Identify tool supports WMS server response (GetFeatureInfo) in GML format (it is called Feature in the QGIS GUI in this context). If “Feature” format is supported by the server and selected, results of the Identify tool are vector features, as from a regular vector layer. When a single feature is selected in the tree, it is highlighted in the map and it can be copied to the clipboard and pasted to another vector layer. See the example setup of the UMN Mapserver below to support GetFeatureInfo in GML format.

```
# in layer METADATA add which fields should be included and define geometry
→(example) :

"gml_include_items"      "all"
"ows_geometries"         "mygeom"
"ows_mygeom_type"        "polygon"

# Then there are two possibilities/formats available, see a) and b):

# a) basic (output is generated by Mapserver and does not contain XSD)
# in WEB METADATA define formats (example):
"wms_getfeatureinfo_formatlist" "application/vnd.ogc.gml,text/html"

# b) using OGR (output is generated by OGR, it is send as multipart and contains
→XSD)
# in MAP define OUTPUTFORMAT (example):
OUTPUTFORMAT
  NAME "OGRGML"
  MIMETYPE "ogr/gml"
  DRIVER "OGR/GML"
  FORMATOPTION "FORM=multipart"
END

# in WEB METADATA define formats (example):
"wms_getfeatureinfo_formatlist" "OGRGML,text/html"
```

## Viewing Properties

Once you have added a WMS server, you can view its properties by right-clicking on it in the legend and selecting **Properties**. **Metadata Tab**

The tab *Metadata* displays a wealth of information about the WMS server, generally collected from the capabilities statement returned from that server. Many definitions can be gleaned by reading the WMS standards (see OPEN-GEOSPATIAL-CONSORTIUM in *Literature and Web References*), but here are a few handy definitions:

- **Server Properties**
  - **WMS Version** — The WMS version supported by the server.
  - **Image Formats** — The list of MIME-types the server can respond with when drawing the map. QGIS supports whatever formats the underlying Qt libraries were built with, which is typically at least `image/png` and `image/jpeg`.
  - **Identity Formats** — The list of MIME-types the server can respond with when you use the Identify tool. Currently, QGIS supports the `text-plain` type.
- **Layer Properties**
  - **Selected** — Whether or not this layer was selected when its server was added to this project.
  - **Visible** — Whether or not this layer is selected as visible in the legend (not yet used in this version of QGIS).
  - **Can Identify** — Whether or not this layer will return any results when the Identify tool is used on it.
  - **Can be Transparent** — Whether or not this layer can be rendered with transparency. This version of QGIS will always use transparency if this is Yes and the image encoding supports transparency.

- **Can Zoom In** — Whether or not this layer can be zoomed in by the server. This version of QGIS assumes all WMS layers have this set to Yes. Deficient layers may be rendered strangely.
- **Cascade Count** — WMS servers can act as a proxy to other WMS servers to get the raster data for a layer. This entry shows how many times the request for this layer is forwarded to peer WMS servers for a result.
- **Fixed Width, Fixed Height** — Whether or not this layer has fixed source pixel dimensions. This version of QGIS assumes all WMS layers have this set to nothing. Deficient layers may be rendered strangely.
- **WGS 84 Bounding Box** — The bounding box of the layer, in WGS 84 coordinates. Some WMS servers do not set this correctly (e.g., UTM coordinates are used instead). If this is the case, then the initial view of this layer may be rendered with a very ‘zoomed-out’ appearance by QGIS. The WMS webmaster should be informed of this error, which they may know as the WMS XML elements LatLonBoundingBox, EX\_GeographicBoundingBox or the CRS:84 BoundingBox.
- **Available in CRS** — The projections that this layer can be rendered in by the WMS server. These are listed in the WMS-native format.
- **Available in style** — The image styles that this layer can be rendered in by the WMS server.

### Show WMS legend graphic in table of contents and layout

The QGIS WMS data provider is able to display a legend graphic in the table of contents’ layer list and in the print layout. The WMS legend will be shown only if the WMS server has GetLegendGraphic capability and the layer has getCapability url specified, so you additionally have to select a styling for the layer.

If a legendGraphic is available, it is shown below the layer. It is little and you have to click on it to open it in real dimension (due to QgsLegendInterface architectural limitation). Clicking on the layer’s legend will open a frame with the legend at full resolution.

In the print layout, the legend will be integrated at its original (downloaded) dimension. Resolution of the legend graphic can be set in the item properties under *Legend → WMS LegendGraphic* to match your printing requirements.

The legend will display contextual information based on your current scale. The WMS legend will be shown only if the WMS server has GetLegendGraphic capability and the layer has getCapability url specified, so you have to select a styling.

### WMS Client Limitations

Not all possible WMS client functionality had been included in this version of QGIS. Some of the more noteworthy exceptions follow.

#### Editing WMS Layer Settings

Once you’ve completed the  Add WMS layer procedure, there is no way to change the settings. A work-around is to delete the layer completely and start again.

#### WMS Servers Requiring Authentication

Currently, publicly accessible and secured WMS services are supported. The secured WMS servers can be accessed by public authentication. You can add the (optional) credentials when you add a WMS server. See section *Selecting WMS/WMTS Servers* for details.

---

#### Tip: Accessing secured OGC-layers

If you need to access secured layers with secured methods other than basic authentication, you can use InteProxy as a transparent proxy, which does support several authentication methods. More information can be found in the InteProxy manual at <https://inteproxy.wald.intevation.org>.

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**Tip: QGIS WMS Mapserver**

Since Version 1.7.0, QGIS has its own implementation of a WMS 1.3.0 Mapserver. Read more about this in chapter [QGIS as OGC Data Server](#).

---

### 17.1.2 WCS Client

 A Web Coverage Service (WCS) provides access to raster data in forms that are useful for client-side rendering, as input into scientific models, and for other clients. The WCS may be compared to the WFS and the WMS. As WMS and WFS service instances, a WCS allows clients to choose portions of a server's information holdings based on spatial constraints and other query criteria.

QGIS has a native WCS provider and supports both version 1.0 and 1.1 (which are significantly different), but currently it prefers 1.0, because 1.1 has many issues (i.e., each server implements it in a different way with various particularities).

The native WCS provider handles all network requests and uses all standard QGIS network settings (especially proxy). It is also possible to select cache mode ('always cache', 'prefer cache', 'prefer network', 'always network'), and the provider also supports selection of time position, if temporal domain is offered by the server.

**Warning:** Entering **username** and **password** in the *Authentication* tab will keep unprotected credentials in the connection configuration. Those **credentials will be visible** if, for instance, you shared the project file with someone. Therefore, it's advisable to save your credentials in a *Authentication configuration* instead (*configurations* tab). See [Authentication System](#) for more details.

### 17.1.3 WFS and WFS-T Client

In QGIS, a WFS layer behaves pretty much like any other vector layer. You can identify and select features, and view the attribute table. Since QGIS 1.6, editing WFS-T is also supported.

In general, adding a WFS layer is very similar to the procedure used with WMS. The difference is that there are no default servers defined, so we have to add our own.

#### Loading a WFS Layer

As an example, we use the Gateway Geomatics WFS server and display a layer. [https://demo.gatewaygeomatics.com/cgi-bin/wfs\\_gateway?REQUEST=GetCapabilities&VERSION=1.0.0&SERVICE=WFS](https://demo.gatewaygeomatics.com/cgi-bin/wfs_gateway?REQUEST=GetCapabilities&VERSION=1.0.0&SERVICE=WFS)

To be able to load a WFS Layer we create a connection to the WFS server first.

1. Open the *Data Source Manager* dialog by pressing the  *Open Data Source Manager* button
2. Enable the  *WFS* tab
3. Click on *New...* to open the *Create a New WFS Connection* dialog
4. Enter *Gateway Geomatics* as name
5. Enter the URL (see above)
6. In the WFS settings dialog, you can:
  - Indicate the WFS version of the server. If unknown, press the *Detect* button to automatically retrieve it.
  - Define the *maximum number of features* retrieved in a single GetFeature request. If empty, no limit is set.
  - *Invert axis orientation*.

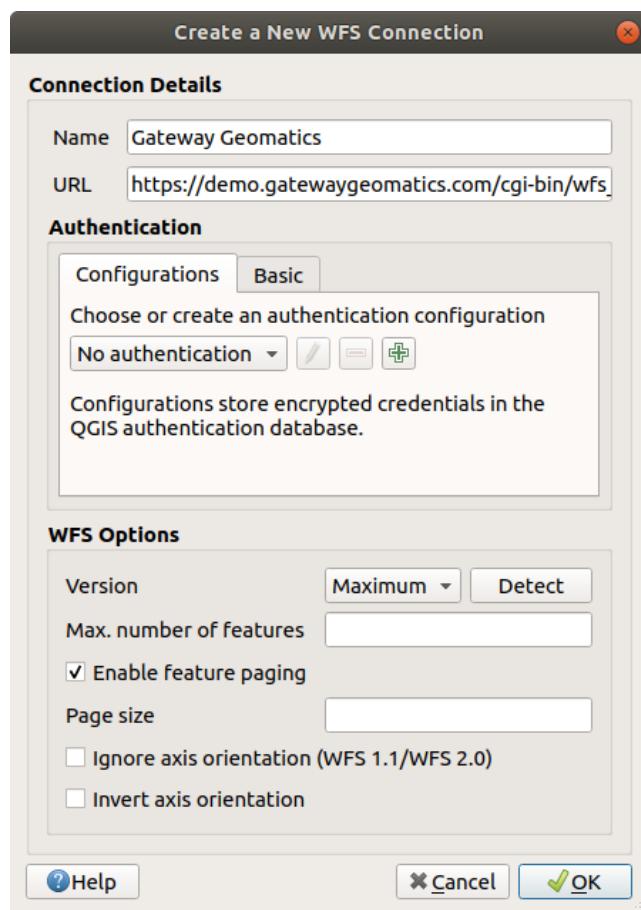


Fig. 17.4: Creating a connection to a WFS server

- And depending on the WFS version:
  - Force to *Ignore axis orientation (WFS 1.1/WFS 2.0)*
  - *Enable feature paging* and specify the maximum number of features to retrieve with *Page size*. If no limit is defined, then the server default is applied.

**Warning:** Entering **username** and **password** in the *Authentication* tab will keep unprotected credentials in the connection configuration. Those **credentials will be visible** if, for instance, you shared the project file with someone. Therefore, it's advisable to save your credentials in an *Authentication configuration* instead (*Configurations* tab). See *Authentication System* for more details.

#### 7. Press *OK* to create the connection.

Note that any proxy settings you may have set in your preferences are also recognized.

Now we are ready to load WFS layers from the above connection.

1. Choose ‘Gateway Geomatics’ from the *Server Connections*  drop-down list.
2. Click *Connect*
3. Select the *Parks* layer in the list
4. You can also choose whether to:
  - *Use title for layer name*, showing the layer’s title as defined on the server in the *Layers* panel instead of its *Name*
  - *Only request features overlapping the view extent*
  - *Change the layer’s CRS*
  - or *Build query* to specify particular features to retrieve, by either using the corresponding button or double-clicking the target layer.
5. Click *Add* to add the layer to the map.

You'll notice the download progress is visualized in the lower left of the QGIS main window. Once the layer is loaded, you can identify and select a couple of features and view the attribute table.

**Note:** QGIS supports different versions of the WFS protocol, with background download and progressive rendering, on-disk caching of downloaded features and version autodetection.

#### Tip: Finding WFS Servers

You can find additional WFS servers by using Google or your favourite search engine. There are a number of lists with public URLs, some of them maintained and some not.

## 17.2 QGIS as OGC Data Server

QGIS Server is an open source WMS 1.3, WFS 1.0.0, WFS 1.1.0 and WCS 1.1.1 implementation that, in addition, implements advanced cartographic features for thematic mapping. QGIS Server is a FastCGI/CGI (Common Gateway Interface) application written in C++ that works together with a web server (e.g., Apache, Lighttpd). It has Python plugin support allowing for fast and efficient development and deployment of new features. The original development of QGIS Server was funded by the EU projects Orchestra, Sany and the city of Uster in Switzerland.

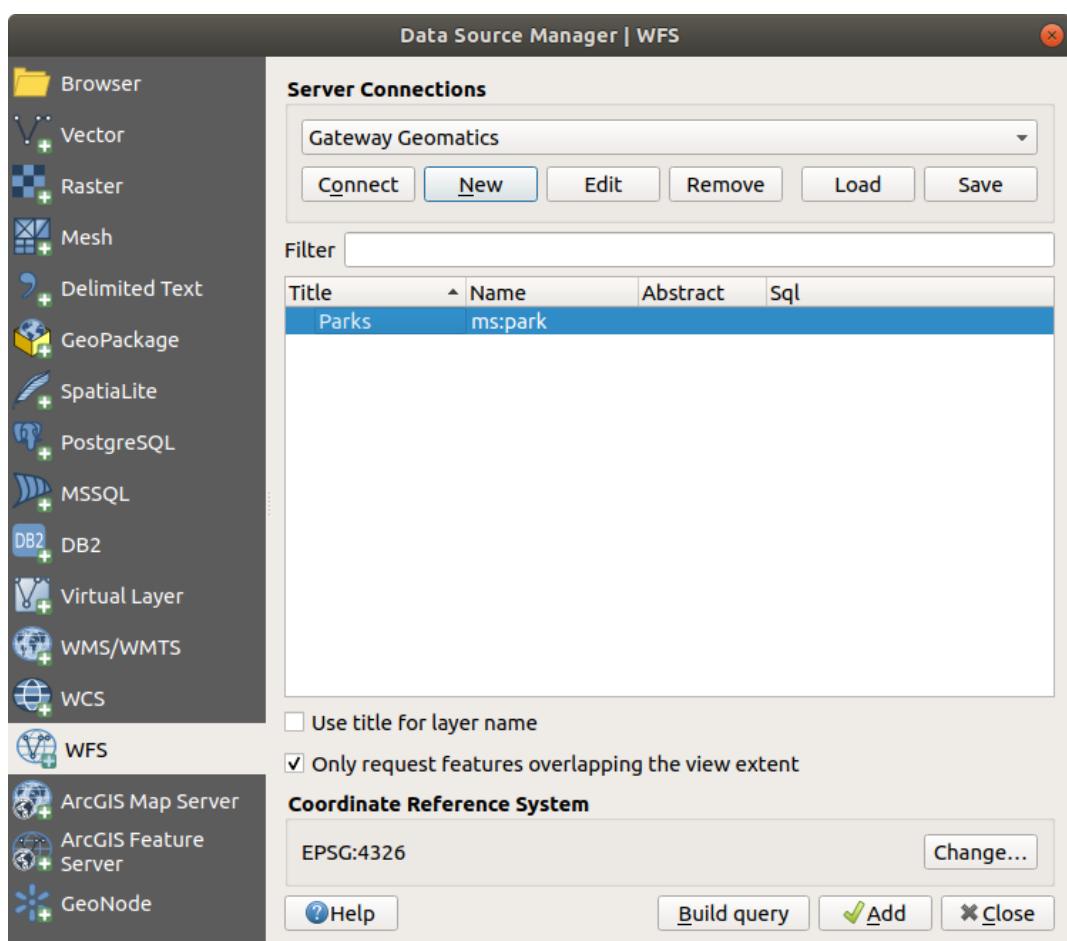


Fig. 17.5: Adding a WFS layer

QGIS Server uses QGIS as back end for the GIS logic and for map rendering. Furthermore, the Qt library is used for graphics and for platform-independent C++ programming. In contrast to other WMS software, the QGIS Server uses cartographic rules as a configuration language, both for the server configuration and for the user-defined cartographic rules.

As QGIS desktop and QGIS Server use the same visualization libraries, the maps that are published on the web look the same as in desktop GIS.

In the following sections, we will provide a sample configuration to set up a QGIS Server on Debian/Ubuntu Linux. For more detailed installation instructions on other platforms or distributions and more information on working with QGIS Server, we recommend reading the QGIS Server Training Manual or `server_plugins`.

## 17.2.1 Getting Started

### Installation on Debian-based systems

At this point, we will give a short and simple installation how-to for a minimal working configuration on Debian based systems. However, many other distributions and OSs provide packages for QGIS Server.

Requirements and steps to install QGIS Server on a Debian based system are provided in [QGIS installers page](#). Please refer to that section.

### HTTP Server configuration

#### Apache

Apache and its `mod_fcgid` module may be used for executing QGIS Server.

Install Apache and `mod_fcgid`:

```
sudo apt install apache2 libapache2-mod-fcgid
```

Here we assume that an Apache VirtualHost is already set up. For example this is what a basic VirtualHost configuration may look like:

```
<VirtualHost *:80>

    ServerAdmin webmaster@localhost
    DocumentRoot /var/www/html

    ErrorLog ${APACHE_LOG_DIR}/error.log
    CustomLog ${APACHE_LOG_DIR}/access.log combined

</VirtualHost>
```

---

**Note:** On Debian systems, a default VirtualHost is available in `/etc/apache2/sites-available/000-default.conf`.

---

Let's now add `mod_fcgid` configuration directives for QGIS Server:

```
<VirtualHost *:80>

    ServerAdmin webmaster@localhost
    DocumentRoot /var/www/html

    ErrorLog ${APACHE_LOG_DIR}/error.log
    CustomLog ${APACHE_LOG_DIR}/access.log combined
```

```
FcgidInitialEnv DISPLAY ":99"
FcgidInitialEnv QGIS_SERVER_LOG_LEVEL "0"
FcgidInitialEnv QGIS_SERVER_LOG_STDERR "1"

<Location /qgisserver>
    SetHandler fcgid-script
    FcgidWrapper /usr/lib/cgi-bin/qgis_mapserv.fcgi virtual
    Options +ExecCGI -MultiViews +FollowSymLinks
    Require all granted
</Location>

</VirtualHost>
```

See the `mod_fcgid` documentation for more information on the `Fcgid` parameters used. And see below to understand when and why the `DISPLAY` environment variable needs to be set.

Now restart Apache for the new configuration to be taken into account:

```
sudo service apache2 restart
```

QGIS Server is now available at <http://localhost/qgisserver>.

## NGINX

You can also use QGIS Server with [NGINX](#). Unlike Apache, NGINX does not automatically spawn FastCGI processes. The FastCGI processes are to be started by something else.

On Debian-based systems, you may use `fcgiwrap` or `spawn-fcgi` to start and manage the QGIS Server processes. Official Debian packages exist for both.

---

**Note:** `fcgiwrap` is easier to set up than `spawn-fcgi`, because it's already wrapped in a Systemd service. But it also leads to a solution that is much slower than using `spawn-fcgi`. With `fcgiwrap` a new QGIS Server process is created on each request, meaning that the QGIS Server initialization process, which includes reading and parsing the QGIS project file, is done on each request. With `spawn-fcgi`, the QGIS Server process remains alive between requests, resulting in much better performance. For that reason, `spawn-fcgi` is recommended for production use.

---

Install NGINX:

```
sudo apt install nginx
```

## fcgiwrap

If you want to use `fcgiwrap` to run QGIS Server, you first have to install the corresponding package:

```
sudo apt install fcgiwrap
```

Then, introduce the following block in your NGINX server configuration:

```
1  location /qgisserver {
2      gzip          off;
3      include       fastcgi_params;
4      fastcgi_pass  unix:/var/run/fcgiwrap.socket;
5      fastcgi_param SCRIPT_FILENAME /usr/lib/cgi-bin/qgis_mapserv.fcgi;
6  }
```

Finally, restart NGINX and `fcgiwrap` to take into account the new configuration:

```
sudo service nginx restart
sudo service fcgiwrap restart
```

QGIS Server is now available at <http://localhost/qgisserver>.

### spawn-fcgi

If you prefer to use `spawn-fcgi` instead of `fcgiwrap`, the first step is to install the package:

```
sudo apt install spawn-fcgi
```

Then, introduce the following block in your NGINX server configuration:

```
location /qgisserver {
    gzip           off;
    include        fastcgi_params;
    fastcgi_pass   unix:/var/run/qgisserver.socket;
}
```

And restart NGINX to take into account the new configuration:

```
sudo service nginx restart
```

Finally, considering that there is no default service file for `spawn-fcgi`, you have to manually start QGIS Server in your terminal:

```
sudo spawn-fcgi -s /var/run/qgisserver.socket \
                 -U www-data -G www-data -n \
                 /usr/lib/bin/cgi-bin/qgis_mapserv.fcgi
```

Of course, you may write an init script (like a `qgisserver.service` file with Systemd) to start QGIS Server at boot time or whenever you want.

QGIS Server is now available at <http://localhost/qgisserver>.

---

**Note:** With the above command `spawn-fcgi` spawns only one QGIS Server process. To use more than one QGIS Server process you can combine `spawn-fcgi` with the `multiwatch` tool, which is also packaged in Debian.

---

## Configuration

The `include fastcgi_params;` used in previous configuration is important as it adds the parameters from `/etc/nginx/fastcgi_params`:

```
fastcgi_param QUERY_STRING      $query_string;
fastcgi_param REQUEST_METHOD    $request_method;
fastcgi_param CONTENT_TYPE     $content_type;
fastcgi_param CONTENT_LENGTH    $content_length;

fastcgi_param SCRIPT_NAME       $fastcgi_script_name;
fastcgi_param REQUEST_URI       $request_uri;
fastcgi_param DOCUMENT_URI      $document_uri;
fastcgi_param DOCUMENT_ROOT     $document_root;
fastcgi_param SERVER_PROTOCOL   $server_protocol;
fastcgi_param REQUEST_SCHEME   $scheme;
fastcgi_param HTTPS             $https if_not_empty;

fastcgi_param GATEWAY_INTERFACE CGI/1.1;
fastcgi_param SERVER_SOFTWARE   nginx/$nginx_version;
```

```

fastcgi_param REMOTE_ADDR      $remote_addr;
fastcgi_param REMOTE_PORT     $remote_port;
fastcgi_param SERVER_ADDR    $server_addr;
fastcgi_param SERVER_PORT    $server_port;
fastcgi_param SERVER_NAME    $server_name;

# PHP only, required if PHP was built with --enable-force-cgi-redirect
fastcgi_param REDIRECT_STATUS 200;

```

Of course, you may override these variables in your own configuration. For example:

```

include fastcgi_params;
fastcgi_param SERVER_NAME domain.name.eu;

```

Moreover, you can use some *Environment variables* to configure QGIS Server. With NGINX as HTTP Server, you have to use **fastcgi\_param** to define these variables as shown below:

```

fastcgi_param QGIS_DEBUG      1;
fastcgi_param QGIS_SERVER_LOG_FILE /tmp/qgis-000.log;
fastcgi_param QGIS_SERVER_LOG_LEVEL 0;

```

---

**Note:** When using spawn-fcgi, you may directly define environment variables before running the server. For example: `export QGIS_SERVER_LOG_FILE=/home/user/qgis.log`

---

## Xvfb

QGIS Server needs a running X Server to be fully usable. But if you don't have one, you may use xvfb to have a virtual X environment.

To install the package:

```
sudo apt install xvfb
```

Then, according to your HTTP server, you should configure the **DISPLAY** parameter or directly use **xvfb-run**.

For example with NGINX and spawn-fcgi using xvfb-run:

```

xvfb-run /usr/bin/spawn-fcgi -f /usr/lib/bin/cgi-bin/qgis_mapserv.fcgi \
          -s /tmp/qgisserver.socket \
          -G www-data -U www-data -n

```

The other option is to start a virtual X server environment with a specific display number thanks to **Xvfb**:

```
/usr/bin/Xvfb :99 -screen 0 1024x768x24 -ac +extension GLX +render -noreset
```

Then we just have to set the **DISPLAY** environment variable in the HTTP server configuration. For example with NGINX:

```

fastcgi_param DISPLAY      ":99";

```

Or with Apache:

```

FcgidInitialEnv DISPLAY      ":99"

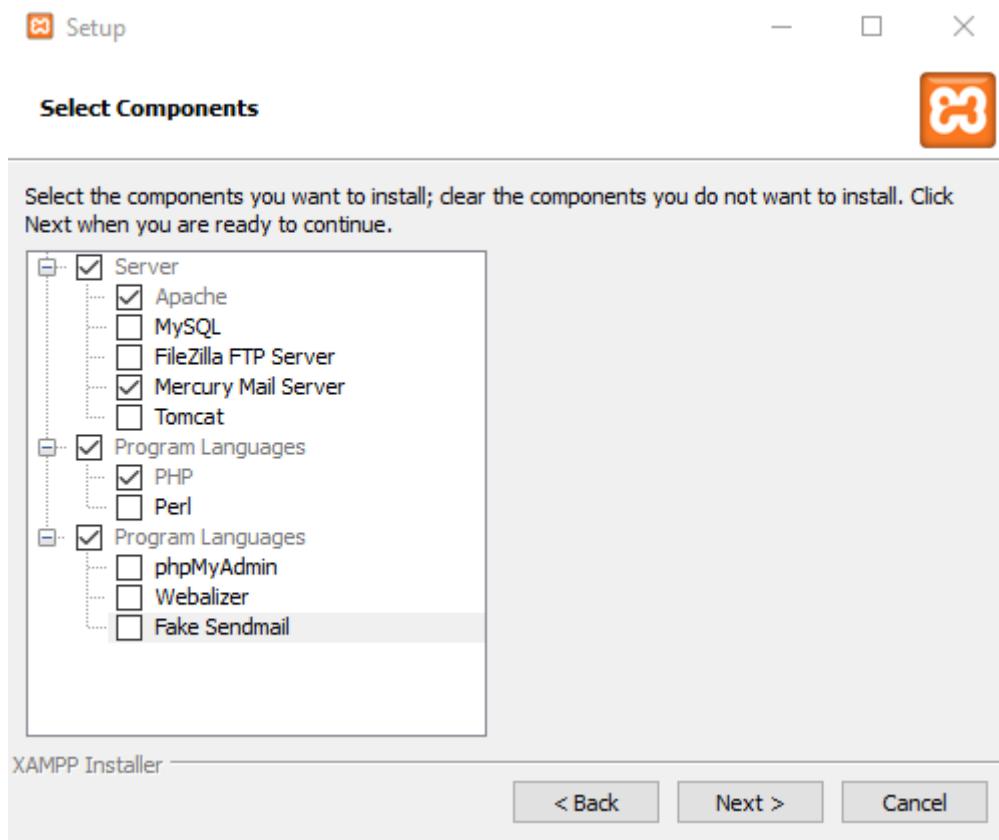
```

## Installation on Windows

QGIS Server can also be installed on Windows systems. While the QGIS Server package is available in the 64 bit version of the OSGeo4W network installer (<https://qgis.org/en/site/forusers/download.html>) there is no Apache (or other web server) package available, so this must be installed by other means.

A simple procedure is the following:

- Download the XAMPP installer (<https://www.apachefriends.org/download.html>) for Windows and install Apache



- Download the OSGeo4W installer, follow the “Advanced Install” and install both the QGIS Desktop and QGIS Server packages
- Edit the httpd.conf file (`C:\xampp\apache\httpd.conf` if the default installation paths have been used) and make the following changes:

From:

```
ScriptAlias /cgi-bin/ "C:/xampp/cgi-bin/"
```

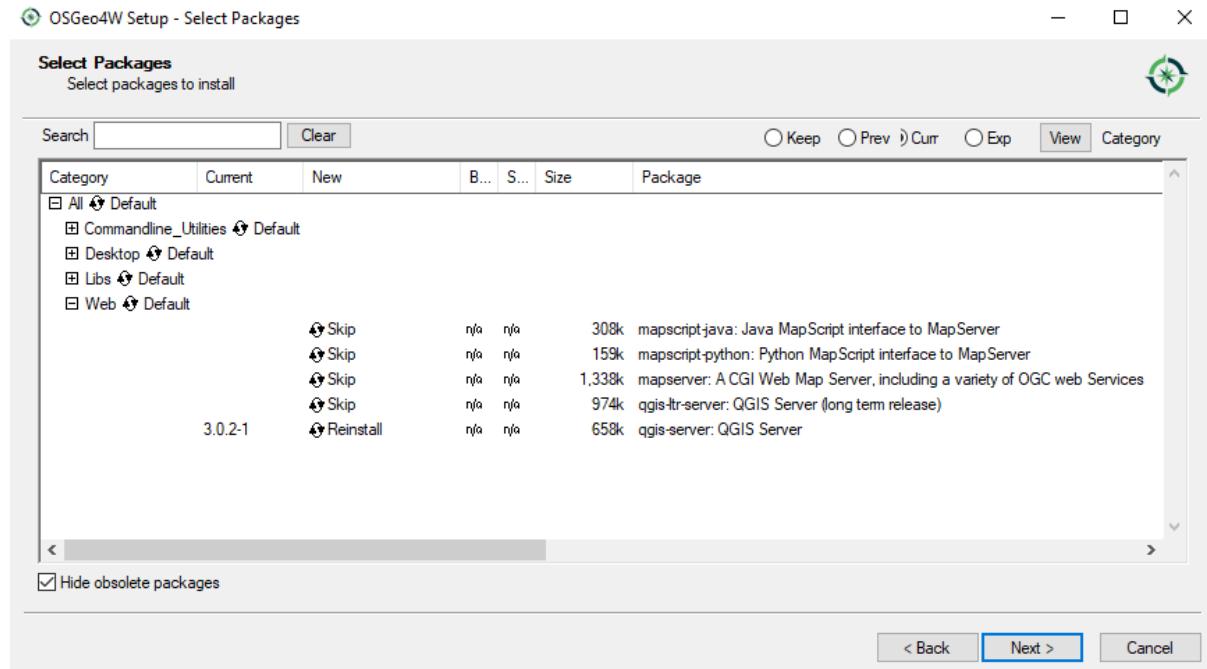
To:

```
ScriptAlias /cgi-bin/ "c:/OSGeo4W64/apps/qgis/bin/"
```

From:

```
<Directory "C:/xampp/cgi-bin">
AllowOverride None
Options None
Require all granted
</Directory>
```

To:



```
<Directory "c:/OSGeo4W64/apps/qgis/bin">
SetHandler cgi-script
AllowOverride None
Options ExecCGI
Order allow,deny
Allow from all
Require all granted
</Directory>
```

From:

```
AddHandler cgi-script .cgi .pl .asp
```

To:

```
AddHandler cgi-script .cgi .pl .asp .exe
```

Then at the bottom of httpd.conf add:

```
SetEnv GDAL_DATA "C:\OSGeo4W64\share\gdal"
SetEnv QGIS_AUTH_DB_DIR_PATH "C:\OSGeo4W64\apps\qgis\resources"
SetEnv PYTHONHOME "C:\OSGeo4W64\apps\Python36"
SetEnv PATH "C:\OSGeo4W64\bin;C:\OSGeo4W64\apps\qgis\bin;C:\OSGeo4W64\apps\Qt5\bin;
    ↪C:\WINDOWS\system32;C:\WINDOWS;C:\WINDOWS\System32\Wbem"
SetEnv QGIS_PREFIX_PATH "C:\OSGeo4W64\apps\qgis"
SetEnv QT_PLUGIN_PATH "C:\OSGeo4W64\apps\qgis\qtplugins;
    ↪C:\OSGeo4W64\apps\Qt5\plugins"
```

Restart the Apache web server from the XAMPP Control Panel and open browser window to testing a GetCapabilities request to QGIS Server

[http://localhost/cgi-bin/qgis\\_mapserv.fcgi.exe?SERVICE=WMS&VERSION=1.3.0&REQUEST=GetCapabilities](http://localhost/cgi-bin/qgis_mapserv.fcgi.exe?SERVICE=WMS&VERSION=1.3.0&REQUEST=GetCapabilities)

### Serve a project

Now that QGIS Server is installed and running, we just have to use it.

Obviously, we need a QGIS project to work on. Of course, you can fully customize your project by defining contact information, precise some restrictions on CRS or even exclude some layers. Everything you need to know about that is described later in [Configure your project](#).

But for now, we are going to use a simple project already configured. To retrieve the project:

```
cd /home/user/
wget https://github.com/qgis/QGIS-Training-Data/archive/QGIS-Training-Data-v2.0.
→zip -O qgis-server-tutorial.zip
unzip qgis-server-tutorial.zip
mv QGIS-Training-Data-QGIS-Training-Data-v2.0/training_manual_data/qgis-server-
→tutorial-data ~
```

The project file is `qgis-server-tutorial-data-master/world.qgs`. Of course, you can use your favorite GIS software to open this file and take a look on the configuration and available layers.

By opening the project and taking a quick look on layers, we know that 4 layers are currently available:

- airports
- places
- countries
- countries\_shapeburst

You don't have to understand the full request for now but you may retrieve a map with some of the previous layers thanks to QGIS Server by doing something like this in your web browser to retrieve the `countries` layer:

```
http://localhost/qgisserver?
MAP=/home/user/qgis-server-tutorial-data-master/world.qgs&
LAYERS=countries&
SERVICE=WMS&
REQUEST=GetMap&
CRS=EPSG:4326&
WIDTH=400&
HEIGHT=200
```

If you obtain the next image, then QGIS Server is running correctly:

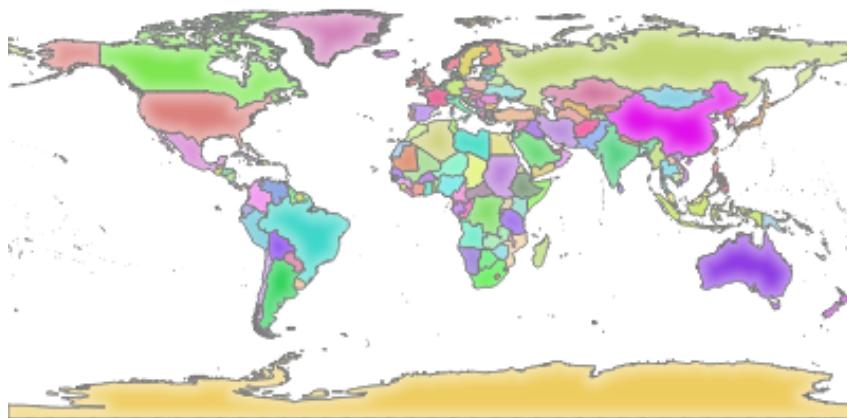


Fig. 17.6: Server response to a basic GetMap request

Note that you may define **PROJECT\_FILE** environment variable to use a project by default instead of giving a **MAP** parameter (see [Environment variables](#)).

For example with spawn-fcgi:

```
export PROJECT_FILE=/home/user/qgis-server-tutorial-data-master/world.qgs
spawn-fcgi -f /usr/lib/bin/cgi-bin/qgis_mapserv.fcgi \
```

```
-s /var/run/qgisserver.socket \
-U www-data -G www-data -n
```

## Configure your project

To provide a new QGIS Server WMS, WFS or WCS, you have to create a QGIS project file with some data or use one of your current project. Define the colors and styles of the layers in QGIS and the project CRS, if not already defined.

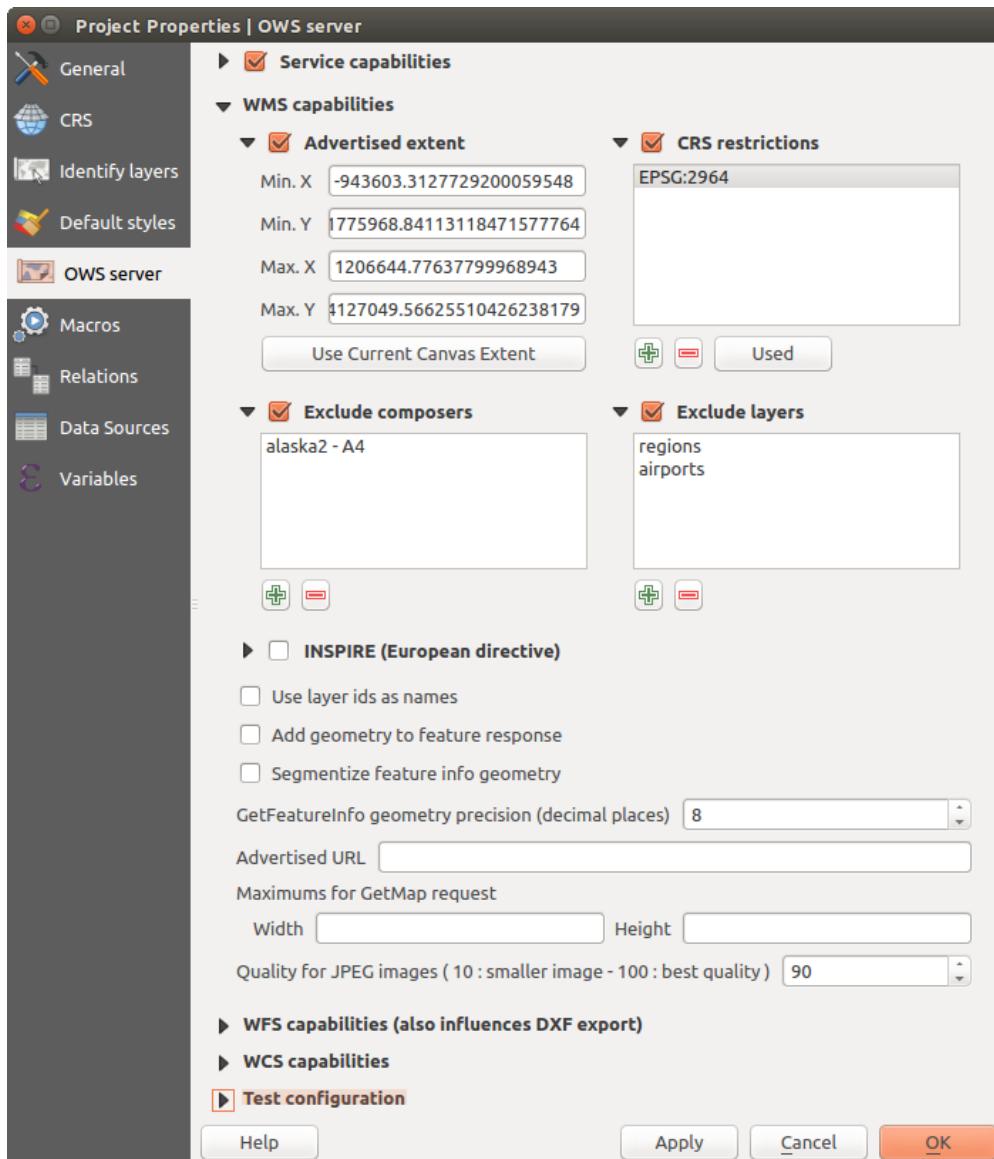


Fig. 17.7: Definitions for a QGIS Server WMS/WFS/WCS project

Then, go to the *QGIS Server* menu of the *Project → Properties...* dialog and provide some information about the OWS in the fields under *Service Capabilities*. This will appear in the GetCapabilities response of the WMS, WFS or WCS. If you don't check  *Service capabilities*, QGIS Server will use the information given in the `wms_metadata.xml` file located in the `cgi-bin` folder.

## WMS capabilities

In the *WMS capabilities* section, you can define the extent advertised in the WMS GetCapabilities response by entering the minimum and maximum X and Y values in the fields under *Advertised extent*. Clicking *Use Current Canvas Extent* sets these values to the extent currently displayed in the QGIS map canvas. By checking  *CRS restrictions*, you can restrict in which coordinate reference systems (CRS) QGIS Server will offer to render maps. It is recommended that you restrict the offered CRS as this reduces the size of the WMS GetCapabilities response.

Use the  button below to select those CRSs from the Coordinate Reference System Selector, or click *Used* to add the CRSs used in the QGIS project to the list.

If you have print layouts defined in your project, they will be listed in the *GetProjectSettings* response, and they can be used by the GetPrint request to create prints, using one of the print layout layouts as a template. This is a QGIS-specific extension to the WMS 1.3.0 specification. If you want to exclude any print layout from being published by the WMS, check  *Exclude layouts* and click the  button below. Then, select a print layout from the *Select print layout* dialog in order to add it to the excluded layouts list.

If you want to exclude any layer or layer group from being published by the WMS, check  *Exclude Layers* and click the  button below. This opens the *Select restricted layers and groups* dialog, which allows you to choose the layers and groups that you don't want to be published. Use the Shift or Ctrl key if you want to select multiple entries. It is recommended that you exclude from publishing the layers that you don't need as this reduces the size of the WMS GetCapabilities response which leads to faster loading times on the client side.

You can receive requested GetFeatureInfo as plain text, XML and GML. Default is XML, text or GML format depends the output format chosen for the GetFeatureInfo request.

If you wish, you can check  *Add geometry to feature response*. This will include in the GetFeatureInfo response the geometries of the features in a text format.

As many web clients can't display circular arcs in geometries you have the option to segmentize the geometry before sending it to the client in a GetFeatureInfo response. This allows such clients to still display a feature's geometry (e.g. for highlighting the feature). You need to check the  *Segmentize feature info geometry* to activate the option.

You can also use the *GetFeatureInfo geometry precision* option to set the precision of the GetFeatureInfo geometry. This enables you to save bandwidth when you don't need the full precision.

If you want QGIS Server to advertise specific request URLs in the WMS GetCapabilities response, enter the corresponding URL in the *Advertised URL* field.

Furthermore, you can restrict the maximum size of the maps returned by the GetMap request by entering the maximum width and height into the respective fields under *Maximums for GetMap request*.

If one of your layers uses the *Map Tip display* (i.e. to show text using expressions) this will be listed inside the GetFeatureInfo output. If the layer uses a Value Map for one of its attributes, this information will also be shown in the GetFeatureInfo output.

## WFS capabilities

In the *WFS capabilities* area you can select the layers you want to publish as WFS, and specify if they will allow update, insert and delete operations. If you enter a URL in the *Advertised URL* field of the *WFS capabilities* section, QGIS Server will advertise this specific URL in the WFS GetCapabilities response.

## WCS capabilities

In the *WCS capabilities* area, you can select the layers that you want to publish as WCS. If you enter a URL in the *Advertised URL* field of the *WCS capabilities* section, QGIS Server will advertise this specific URL in the WCS GetCapabilities response.

## Fine tuning your OWS

For vector layers, the *Fields* menu of the *Layer → Properties* dialog allows you to define for each attribute if it will be published or not. By default, all the attributes are published by your WMS and WFS. If you don't want a specific attribute to be published, uncheck the corresponding checkbox in the *WMS* or *WFS* column.

You can overlay watermarks over the maps produced by your WMS by adding text annotations or SVG annotations to the project file. See the [Annotation Tools](#) section for instructions on creating annotations. For annotations to be displayed as watermarks on the WMS output, the *Fixed map position* checkbox in the *Annotation text* dialog must be unchecked. This can be accessed by double clicking the annotation while one of the annotation tools is active. For SVG annotations, you will need either to set the project to save absolute paths (in the *General* menu of the *Project → Properties...* dialog) or to manually modify the path to the SVG image so that it represents a valid relative path.

### 17.2.2 Services

QGIS Server is able to serve data according to standard protocols as described by the **Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC)**:

- WMS 1.1.0 and 1.3.0
- WFS 1.0.0 and 1.1.0
- WCS 1.1.1
- WMTS 1.0.0

Extra vendor parameters and requests are supported in addition to the original standard that greatly enhance the possibilities of customizing its behavior thanks to the QGIS rendering engine.

#### Web Map Service (WMS)

The **1.1.0** and **1.3.0** WMS standards implemented in QGIS Server provide a HTTP interface to request map or legend images generated from a QGIS project. A typical WMS request defines the QGIS project to use, the layers to render as well as the image format to generate. Basic support is also available for the **Styled Layer Descriptor (SLD)** standard.

Specifications document according to the version number of the service:

- [WMS 1.1.0](#)
- [WMS 1.3.0](#)

Standard requests provided by QGIS Server:

Request	Description
GetCapabilities	Return XML metadata with information about the server
GetMap	Return a map
GetFeatureInfo	Retrieves data (geometry and values) for a pixel location
GetLegendGraphics	Returns legend symbols

Vendor requests provided by QGIS Server:

Request	Description
GetPrint	Returns a QGIS composition
GetProjectSettings	Returns specific information about QGIS Server

## GetMap

Standard parameters for the **GetMap** request according to the OGC WMS 1.1.0 and 1.3.0 specifications:

Parameter	Required	Description
SERVICE	Yes	Name of the service (WMS)
VERSION	No	Version of the service
REQUEST	Yes	Name of the request (GetMap)
LAYERS	No	Layers to display
STYLES	No	Layers' style
SRS / CRS	Yes	Coordinate reference system
BBOX	No	Map extent
WIDTH	Yes	Width of the image in pixels
HEIGHT	Yes	Height of the image in pixels
FORMAT	No	Image format
TRANSPARENT	No	Transparent background

In addition to the standard ones, QGIS Server supports the following extra parameters:

Parameter	Required	Description
MAP	Yes	Specify the QGIS project file
BGCOLOR	No	Specify the background color
DPI	No	Specify the output resolution
IMAGE_QUALITY	No	JPEG compression
OPACITIES	No	Opacity for layer or group
FILTER	No	Subset of features
SELECTION	No	Highlight features
FILE_NAME	No	Only for FORMAT=application/dxf File name of the downloaded file
FORMAT_OPTIONS	No	Only for FORMAT=application/dxf key:value pairs separated by semi-colon. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SCALE: to be used for symbology rules, filters and styles (not actual scaling of the data - data remains in the original scale).</li><li>• MODE:NOSYMBOL FEATURESYMBOL corresponds to the three export options offered in the QGIS Desktop DXF export dialog.</li><li>• LAYERSATTRIBUTES:yourcolumn_with_value if not specified, the original QGIS layer names are used.</li><li>• USE_TITLE_AS_LAYERNAME: if enabled, the title of the layer will be used as layer name.</li></ul>

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMS
&VERSION=1.3.0
&REQUEST=GetMap
&MAP=/home/user/project.qgs
&LAYERS=mylayer1,mylayer2,mylayer3
&STYLES=style1,default,style3
&OPACITIES=125,200,125
&CRS=EPSG:4326
&WIDTH=400
&HEIGHT=400
&FORMAT=image/png
&TRANSPARENT=TRUE
&DPI=300
```

## SERVICE

This parameter has to be WMS in case of the **GetMap** request.

## VERSION

This parameter allows to specify the version of the service to use. Available values for the VERSION parameter are:

- 1.1.0
- 1.3.0

If no version is indicated in the request, then 1.3.0 is used by default.

According to the version number, slight differences have to be expected as explained later for the next parameters:

- CRS / SRS
- BBOX

## REQUEST

This parameter is GetMap in case of the **GetMap** request.

## LAYERS

This parameter allows to specify the layers to display on the map. Names have to be separated by a comma.

In addition, QGIS Server introduced some options to select layers by:

- a short name
- the layer id

The short name of a layer may be configured through *Properties* → *Metadata* in layer menu. If the short name is defined, then it's used by default instead of the layer's name:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMS
&REQUEST=GetMap
&LAYERS=mynickname1,mynickname2
&...
```

Moreover, there's a project option allowing to select layers by their id in *OWS Server* → *WMS capabilities* menu of the *Project* → *Properties...* dialog. To activate this option, the checkbox *Use layer ids as names* has to be selected.

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMS
&REQUEST=GetMap
&LAYERS=mylayerid1,mylayerid2
&...
```

## STYLES

This parameter can be used to specify a layer's style for the rendering step. Styles have to be separated by a comma. The name of the default style is default.

## SRS / CRS

This parameter allows to indicate the map output Spatial Reference System in WMS **1.1.0** and has to be formed like EPSG:XXXX. Note that CRS is also supported if current version is **1.1.0**.

For WMS **1.3.0**, CRS parameter is preferable but SRS is also supported.

Note that if both CRS and SRS parameters are indicated in the request, then it's the current version indicated in VERSION parameter which is decisive.

In the next case, the SRS parameter is kept whatever the VERSION parameter because CRS is not indicated:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WMS  
&REQUEST=GetMap  
&VERSION=1.3.0  
&SRS=EPSG:2854  
&...
```

In the next case, the SRS parameter is kept instead of CRS because of the VERSION parameter:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WMS  
&REQUEST=GetMap  
&VERSION=1.1.0  
&CRS=EPSG:4326  
&SRS=EPSG:2854  
&...
```

In the next case, the CRS parameter is kept instead of SRS because of the VERSION parameter:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WMS  
&REQUEST=GetMap  
&VERSION=1.3.0  
&CRS=EPSG:4326  
&SRS=EPSG:2854  
&...
```

## BBOX

This parameter allows to specify the map extent with units according to the current CRS. Coordinates have to be separated by a comma.

However, a slight difference has to be noticed according to the current VERSION parameter. Actually, in WMS **1.1.0**, coordinates are formed like minx,miny,maxx,maxy or minlong,minlat,maxlong,maxlat. For example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WMS  
&REQUEST=GetMap  
&VERSION=1.1.0  
&SRS=epsg:4326  
&BBOX=-180,-90,180,90  
&...
```

But the axis is reversed in WMS **1.3.0**, so coordinates are formed like: miny,minx,maxy,maxx or minlat,minlong,maxlat,maxlong. For example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WMS  
&REQUEST=GetMap
```

```
&VERSION=1.3.0
&CRS=epsg:4326
&BBOX=-90,-180,90,180
&...
```

## WIDTH

This parameter allows to specify the width in pixels of the output image.

## HEIGHT

This parameter allows to specify the height in pixels of the output image.

## FORMAT

This parameter may be used to specify the format of map image. Available values are:

- jpg
- jpeg
- image/jpeg
- image/png
- image/png; mode=1bit
- image/png; mode=8bit
- image/png; mode=16bit
- application/dxf Only layers that have read access in the WFS service are exported in the DXF format.

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMS&VERSION=1.3.0
&REQUEST=GetMap
&FORMAT=application/dxf
&LAYERS=Haltungen,Normschacht,Spezialbauwerke
&STYLES=
&CRS=EPSG%3A21781&BBOX=696136.28844801,245797.12108743,696318.91114315,245939.
→25832905
&WIDTH=1042
&HEIGHT=811
&FORMAT_OPTIONS=MODE:SYMBOLLAYERSYMBOLITY;SCALE:250&FILE_NAME=plan.dxf
```

## TRANSPARENT

This boolean parameter can be used to specify the background transparency. Available values are (not case sensitive):

- TRUE
- FALSE

However, this parameter is ignored if the format of the map image indicated with FORMAT is different from PNG.

## MAP

This parameter allows to define the QGIS project file to use.

As mentioned in [GetMap parameters table](#), MAP is mandatory because a request needs a QGIS project to actually work. However, the `QGIS_PROJECT_FILE` environment variable may be used to define a default QGIS project. In this specific case, MAP is not longer a required parameter. For further information you may refer to [Advanced configuration](#).

## BGCOLOR

This parameter allows to indicate a background color for the map image. However it cannot be combined with TRANSPARENT parameter in case of PNG images (transparency takes priority). The colour may be literal or in hexadecimal notation.

URL example with the literal notation:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WMS  
&REQUEST=GetMap  
&VERSION=1.3.0  
&BGCOLOR=green  
&...
```

URL example with the hexadecimal notation:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WMS  
&REQUEST=GetMap  
&VERSION=1.3.0  
&BGCOLOR=0x00FF00  
&...
```

## DPI

This parameter can be used to specify the requested output resolution.

## IMAGE\_QUALITY

This parameter is only used for JPEG images. By default, the JPEG compression is -1.

You can change the default per QGIS project in the *OWS Server → WMS capabilities* menu of the *Project → Properties...* dialog. If you want to override it in a GetMap request you can do it using the IMAGE\_QUALITY parameter.

## OPACITIES

Opacity can be set on layer or group level. Allowed values range from 0 (fully transparent) to 255 (fully opaque).

## FILTER

A subset of layers can be selected with the FILTER parameter. Syntax is basically the same as for the QGIS subset string. However, there are some restrictions to avoid SQL injections into databases via QGIS Server. If a dangerous string is found in the parameter, QGIS Server will return the next error:

Indeed, text strings need to be enclosed with quotes (single quotes for strings, double quotes for attributes). A space between each word / special character is mandatory. Allowed Keywords and special characters are 'AND', 'OR', 'IN', '=', '<', '>', '>=', '>', '>=' , '!=' , '(', ')'. Semicolons in string expressions are not allowed

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMS
&REQUEST=GetMap
&LAYERS=mylayer1,mylayer2
&FILTER=mylayer1:"OBJECTID" = 3;mylayer2:'text' = 'blabla'
&...
```

**Note:** It is possible to make attribute searches via GetFeatureInfo and omit the X/Y parameter if a FILTER is there. QGIS Server then returns info about the matching features and generates a combined bounding box in the xml output.

## SELECTION

The SELECTION parameter can highlight features from one or more layers. Vector features can be selected by passing comma separated lists with feature ids.

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMS
&REQUEST=GetMap
&LAYERS=mylayer1,mylayer2
&SELECTION=mylayer1:3,6,9;mylayer2:1,5,6
&...
```

The following image presents the response from a GetMap request using the SELECTION option e.g. <http://myserver.com/...&SELECTION=countries:171,65>.

As those features id's correspond in the source dataset to **France** and **Romania** they're highlighted in yellow.

## GetFeatureInfo

Standard parameters for the **GetFeatureInfo** request according to the OGC WMS 1.1.0 and 1.3.0 specifications:



Fig. 17.8: Server response to a GetMap request with SELECTION parameter

Parameter	Required	Description
SERVICE	Yes	Name of the service (WMS)
VERSION	No	<i>See GetMap</i>
REQUEST	Yes	<i>See GetMap</i>
LAYERS	No	<i>See GetMap</i>
STYLES	No	<i>See GetMap</i>
SRS / CRS	Yes	<i>See GetMap</i>
BBOX	No	<i>See GetMap</i>
WIDTH	Yes	<i>See GetMap</i>
HEIGHT	Yes	<i>See GetMap</i>
TRANSPARENT	No	<i>See GetMap</i>
INFO_FORMAT	No	Output format
QUERY_LAYERS	Yes	Layers to query
FEATURE_COUNT	No	Maximum number of features to return
I	No	Pixel column of the point to query
X	No	Same as <i>I</i> parameter, but in WMS 1.1.0
J	No	Pixel row of the point to query
Y	No	Same as <i>J</i> parameter, but in WMS 1.1.0

In addition to the standard ones, QGIS Server supports the following extra parameters:

Parameter	Required	Description
MAP	Yes	<i>See GetMap</i>
FILTER	No	<i>See GetMap</i>
FL_POINT_TOLERANCE	No	Tolerance in pixels for point layers
FL_LINE_TOLERANCE	No	Tolerance in pixels for line layers
FL_POLYGON_TOLERANCE	No	Tolerance in pixels for polygon layers
FILTER_GEO	No	Geometry filtering
WITH_MAPTIP	No	Add map tips to the output
WITH_GEOMETRY	No	Add geometry to the output

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMS
&VERSION=1.3.0
&REQUEST=GetMap
&MAP=/home/user/project.qgs
&LAYERS=mylayer1,mylayer2,mylayer3
&CRS=EPSG:4326
&WIDTH=400
&HEIGHT=400
&INFO_FORMAT=text/xml
&TRANSPARENT=TRUE
&QUERY_LAYERS=mylayer1
&FEATURE_COUNT=3
&I=250
&J=250
```

## INFO\_FORMAT

This parameter may be used to specify the format of the result. Available values are:

- text/xml
- text/html
- text/plain
- application/vnd.ogc.gml
- application/json

## QUERY\_LAYERS

This parameter specifies the layers to display on the map. Names are separated by a comma.

In addition, QGIS Server introduces options to select layers by:

- short name
- layer id

See the LAYERS parameter defined in [See GetMap](#) for more information.

## FEATURE\_COUNT

This parameter specifies the maximum number of features per layer to return. For example if QUERY\_LAYERS is set to layer1,layer2 and FEATURE\_COUNT is set to 3 then a maximum of 3 features from layer1 will be returned. Likewise a maximum of 3 features from layer2 will be returned.

By default, only 1 feature per layer is returned.

## I

This parameter, defined in WMS 1.3.0, allows you to specify the pixel column of the query point.

## X

Same parameter as I, but defined in WMS 1.1.0.

## J

This parameter, defined in WMS 1.3.0, allows you to specify the pixel row of the query point.

## Y

Same parameter as J, but defined in WMS 1.1.0.

## FI\_POINT\_TOLERANCE

This parameter specifies the tolerance in pixels for point layers.

## **FI\_LINE\_TOLERANCE**

This parameter specifies the tolerance in pixels for line layers.

## **FI\_POLYGON\_TOLERANCE**

This parameter specifies the tolerance in pixels for polygon layers.

## **FILTER\_GEOM**

This parameter specifies a WKT geometry with which features have to intersect.

## **WITH\_MAPTIP**

This parameter specifies whether to add map tips to the output.

Available values are (not case sensitive):

- TRUE
- FALSE

## **WITH\_GEOMETRY**

This parameter specifies whether to add geometries to the output.

Available values are (not case sensitive):

- TRUE
- FALSE

## **GetPrint**

QGIS Server has the capability to create print layout output in pdf or pixel format. Print layout windows in the published project are used as templates. In the **GetPrint** request, the client has the possibility to specify parameters of the contained layout maps and labels.

Parameters for the **GetPrint** request:

Parameter	Required	Description
MAP	Yes	Specify the QGIS project file
SERVICE	Yes	Name of the service (WMS)
VERSION	No	<a href="#">See GetMap</a>
REQUEST	Yes	Name of the request (GetPrint)
LAYERS	No	<a href="#">See GetMap</a>
TEMPLATE	Yes	Layout template to use
SRS / CRS	Yes	<a href="#">See GetMap</a>
FORMAT	Yes	Output format
STYLES	No	<a href="#">See GetMap</a>
TRANSPARENT	No	<a href="#">See GetMap</a>
OPACITIES	No	<a href="#">See GetMap</a>
SELECTION	No	<a href="#">See GetMap</a>
mapX:EXTENT	No	Extent of the map 'X'
mapX:LAYERS	No	Layers of the map 'X'
mapX:STYLES	No	Layers' style of the map 'X'
mapX:SCALE	No	Layers' scale of the map 'X'
mapX:ROTATION	No	Rotation of the map 'X'
mapX:GRID_INTERVAL_X	No	Grid interval on x axis of the map 'X'
mapX:GRID_INTERVAL_Y	No	Grid interval on y axis of the map 'X'

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMS
&VERSION=1.3.0
&REQUEST=GetPrint
&MAP=/home/user/project.qgs
&CRS=EPSG:4326
&FORMAT=png
&map0:EXTENT=-180,-90,180,90
&map0:LAYERS=mylayer1,mylayer2,mylayer3
&map0:OPACITIES=125,200,125
&map0:ROTATION=45
```

Note that the layout template may contain more than one map. In this way, if you want to configure a specific map, you have to use `mapX:` parameters where X is a positive number that you can retrieve thanks to the **GetProjectSettings** request.

For example:

```
<WMS_Capabilities>
...
<ComposerTemplates xsi:type="wms:_ExtendedCapabilities">
<ComposerTemplate width="297" height="210" name="Druckzusammenstellung 1">
<ComposerMap width="171" height="133" name="map0"/>
<ComposerMap width="49" height="46" name="map1"/></ComposerTemplate>
</ComposerTemplates>
...
</WMS_Capabilities>
```

## SERVICE

This parameter has to be WMS.

## REQUEST

This parameter has to be `GetPrint` for the **GetPrint** request.

## TEMPLATE

This parameter can be used to specify the name of a layout template to use for printing.

## FORMAT

This parameter specifies the format of map image. Available values are:

- jpg
- jpeg
- image/jpeg
- png
- image/png
- svg
- image/svg
- image/svg+xml
- pdf
- application/pdf

If the `FORMAT` parameter is different from one of these values, then an exception is returned.

## mapX:EXTENT

This parameter specifies the extent for a layout map item as `xmin,ymin,xmax,ymax`.

## mapX:ROTATION

This parameter specifies the map rotation in degrees.

## mapX:GRID\_INTERVAL\_X

This parameter specifies the grid line density in the X direction.

## mapX:GRID\_INTERVAL\_Y

This parameter specifies the grid line density in the Y direction.

## mapX:SCALE

This parameter specifies the map scale for a layout map item. This is useful to ensure scale based visibility of layers and labels even if client and server may have different algorithms to calculate the scale denominator.

## mapX:LAYERS

This parameter specifies the layers for a layout map item. See [See GetMap](#) for more information on this parameter.

## mapX:STYLES

This parameter specifies the layers' styles defined in a specific layout map item. See [See GetMap](#) for more information on this parameter.

## GetLegendGraphics

Several additional parameters are available to change the size of the legend elements:

- **BOXSPACE** space between legend frame and content (mm)
- **LAYERSPACE** vertical space between layers (mm)
- **LAYERTITLESPACE** vertical space between layer title and items following (mm)
- **SYMBOLSPACE** vertical space between symbol and item following (mm)
- **ICONLABELSPACE** horizontal space between symbol and label text (mm)
- **SYMBOLWIDTH** width of the symbol preview (mm)
- **SYMBOLHEIGHT** height of the symbol preview (mm)

These parameters change the font properties for layer titles and item labels:

- **LAYERFONTFAMILY / ITEMFONTFAMILY** font family for layer title / item text
- **LAYERFONTBOLD / ITEMFONTBOLD** TRUE to use a bold font
- **LAYERFONTSIZE / ITEMFONTSIZE** Font size in point
- **LAYERFONTITALIC / ITEMFONTITALIC** TRUE to use italic font
- **LAYERFONTCOLOR / ITEMFONTCOLOR** Hex color code (e.g. #FF0000 for red)
- **LAYERTITLE / RULELABEL** set them to FALSE to get only the legend graphics without labels

Content based legend. These parameters let the client request a legend showing only the symbols for the features falling into the requested area:

- **BBOX** the geographical area for which the legend should be built
- **CRS / SRS** the coordinate reference system adopted to define the BBOX coordinates
- **WIDTH / HEIGHT** if set these should match those defined for the GetMap request, to let QGIS Server scale symbols according to the map view image size.

Content based legend features are based on the [UMN MapServer implementation](#):

- **SHOWFEATURECOUNT** if set to TRUE adds in the legend the feature count of the features like in the following image:



## GetProjectSettings

This request type works similar to **GetCapabilities**, but it is more specific to QGIS Server and allows a client to read additional information which is not available in the GetCapabilities output:

- initial visibility of layers
- information about vector attributes and their edit types
- information about layer order and drawing order
- list of layers published in WFS

## Web Feature Service (WFS)

The **1.0.0** and **1.1.0** WFS standards implemented in QGIS Server provide a HTTP interface to query geographic features from a QGIS project. A typical WFS request defines the QGIS project to use and the layer to query.

Specifications document according to the version number of the service:

- [WFS 1.0.0](#)
- [WFS 1.1.0](#)

Standard requests provided by QGIS Server:

Request	Description
GetCapabilities	Returns XML metadata with information about the server
GetFeature	Returns a selection of features
DescribeFeatureType	Returns a description of feature types and properties
Transaction	Allows features to be inserted, updated or deleted

## GetFeature

Standard parameters for the **GetFeature** request according to the OGC WFS 1.0.0 and 1.1.0 specifications:

Parameter	Required	Description
SERVICE	Yes	Name of the service
VERSION	No	Version of the service
REQUEST	Yes	Name of the request
TYPENAME	No	Name of layers
OUTPUTFORMAT	No	Output Format
RESULTTYPE	No	Type of the result
PROPERTYNAME	No	Name of properties to return
MAXFEATURES	No	Maximum number of features to return
SRSNAME	No	Coordinate reference system
FEATUREID	No	Filter the features by ids
FILTER	No	OGC Filter Encoding
BBOX	No	Map Extent
SORTBY	No	Sort the results

In addition to the standard ones, QGIS Server supports the following extra parameters:

Parameter	Required	Description
MAP	Yes	Specify the QGIS project file
STARTINDEX	No	Paging
GEOMETRYNAME	No	Type of geometry to return
EXP_FILTER	No	Expression filtering

## SERVICE

This parameter has to be WFS in case of the **GetFeature** request.

For example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WFS  
&...
```

## VERSION

This parameter allows to specify the version of the service to use. Available values for the VERSION parameter are:

- 1.0.0
- 1.1.0

If no version is indicated in the request, then 1.1.0 is used by default.

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WFS  
&VERSION=1.1.0  
&...
```

## REQUEST

This parameter is GetFeature in case of the **GetFeature** request.

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WFS  
&VERSION=1.1.0  
&REQUEST=GetFeature  
&...
```

## RESULTTYPE

This parameter may be used to specify the kind of result to return. Available values are:

- results: the default behavior
- hits: returns only a feature count

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WFS
&VERSION=1.1.0
&REQUEST=GetFeature
&RESULTTYPE=hits
&...
```

## GEOMETRYNAME

This parameter can be used to specify the kind of geometry to return for features. Available values are:

- extent
- centroid
- none

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WFS
&VERSION=1.1.0
&REQUEST=GetFeature
&GEOMETRYNAME=centroid
&...
```

## STARTINDEX

This parameter is standard in WFS 2.0, but it's an extension for WFS 1.0.0. Actually, it can be used to skip some features in the result set and in combination with MAXFEATURES, it provides the ability to page through results.

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WFS
&VERSION=1.1.0
&REQUEST=GetFeature
&STARTINDEX=2
&...
```

## Web Map Tile Service (WMTS)

The **1.0.0** WMTS standard implemented in QGIS Server provides a HTTP interface to request tiled map images generated from a QGIS project. A typical WMTS request defined the QGIS project to use, some WMS parameters like layers to render, as well as tile parameters.

Specifications document of the service:

- [WMTS 1.0.0](#)

Standard requests provided by QGIS Server:

Request	Description
GetCapabilities	Returns XML metadata with information about the server
GetTile	Returns a tile
GetFeatureInfo	Retrieves data (geometry and values) for a pixel location

## GetCapabilities

Standard parameters for the **GetCapabilities** request according to the OGC WMTS 1.0.0 specifications:

Parameter	Required	Description
SERVICE	Yes	Name of the service (WMTS)
REQUEST	Yes	Name of the request (GetCapabilities)

In addition to the standard ones, QGIS Server supports the following extra parameters:

Parameter	Required	Description
MAP	Yes	Specify the QGIS project file

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WMTS  
&REQUEST=GetCapabilities  
&MAP=/home/user/project.qgs
```

## SERVICE

This parameter has to be WMTS in case of the **GetCapabilities** request.

## REQUEST

This parameter is GetCapabilities in case of the **GetCapabilities** request.

## MAP

This parameter allows to define the QGIS project file to use.

## GetTile

Standard parameters for the **GetTile** request according to the OGC WMTS 1.0.0 specifications:

Parameter	Required	Description
SERVICE	Yes	Name of the service (WMTS)
REQUEST	Yes	Name of the request (GetTile)
LAYER	Yes	Layer identifier
FORMAT	Yes	Output format of the tile
TILEMATRIXSET	Yes	Name of the pyramid
TILEMATRIX	Yes	Meshing
TILEROW	Yes	Row coordinate in the mesh
TILECOL	Yes	Column coordinate in the mesh

In addition to the standard ones, QGIS Server supports the following extra parameters:

Parameter	Required	Description
MAP	Yes	Specify the QGIS project file

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMTS
&REQUEST=GetTile
&MAP=/home/user/project.qgs
&LAYER=mylayer
&FORMAT=image/png
&TILEMATRIXSET=EPSG:4326
&TILEROW=0
&TILECOL=0
```

## SERVICE

This parameter has to be WMTS in case of the **GetTile** request.

## REQUEST

This parameter is GetTile in case of the **GetTile** request.

## LAYER

This parameter allows to specify the layer to display on the tile.

In addition, QGIS Server introduced some options to select a layer by:

- a short name
- the layer id

The short name of a layer may be configured through *Properties → Metadata* in layer menu. If the short name is defined, then it's used by default instead of the layer's name:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMTS
&REQUEST=GetTile
&LAYER=mynickname
&...
```

Moreover, there's a project option allowing to select layers by their id in *OWS Server → WMS capabilities* menu of the *Project → Project Properties* dialog. To activate this option, the checkbox *Use layer ids as names* has to be selected.

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WMTS  
&REQUEST=GetTile  
&LAYER=mylayerid1  
&...
```

## FORMAT

This parameter may be used to specify the format of tile image. Available values are:

- jpg
- jpeg
- image/jpeg
- image/png

If the FORMAT parameter is different from one of these values, then the default format PNG is used instead.

## TILEMATRIXSET

This parameter allows to define the CRS to use to compute the underlying pyramid and has to be formed like EPSG:XXXX.

## TILEMATRIX

This parameter allows to define the matrix to use for the output tile.

## TILEROW

This parameter allows to select the row of the tile to get within the matrix.

## TILECOL

This parameter allows to select the column of the tile to get within the matrix.

## MAP

This parameter allows to define the QGIS project file to use.

As mentioned in [GetMap parameters table](#), MAP is mandatory because a request needs a QGIS project to actually work. However, the QGIS\_PROJECT\_FILE environment variable may be used to define a default QGIS project. In this specific case, MAP is not longer a required parameter. For further information you may refer to [Advanced configuration](#).

## GetFeatureInfo

Standard parameters for the **GetFeatureInfo** request according to the OGC WMTS 1.0.0 specifications:

- WMS 1.1.0

Parameter	Required	Description
SERVICE	Yes	Name of the service (WMTS)
REQUEST	Yes	Name of the request (GetFeatureInfo)
LAYER	Yes	Layer identifier
INFOFORMAT	No	Output format
I	No	X coordinate of a pixel
J	No	Y coordinate of a pixel
TILEMATRIXSET	Yes	<i>See GetTile</i>
TILEMATRIX	Yes	<i>See GetTile</i>
TILEROW	Yes	<i>See GetTile</i>
TILECOL	Yes	<i>See GetTile</i>

In addition to the standard ones, QGIS Server supports the following extra parameters:

Parameter	Required	Description
MAP	Yes	Specify the QGIS project file

URL example:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMTS
&REQUEST=GetFeatureInfo
&MAP=/home/user/project.qgs
&LAYER=mylayer
&INFOFORMAT=image/html
&I=10
&J=5
```

## SERVICE

This parameter has to be WMTS in case of the **GetFeatureInfo** request.

## REQUEST

This parameter is GetFeatureInfo in case of the **GetFeatureInfo** request.

## MAP

This parameter allows to define the QGIS project file to use.

As mentioned in [GetMap parameters table](#), MAP is mandatory because a request needs a QGIS project to actually work. However, the QGIS\_PROJECT\_FILE environment variable may be used to define a default QGIS project. In this specific case, MAP is not longer a required parameter. For further information you may refer to [Advanced configuration](#).

## LAYER

This parameter allows to specify the layer to display on the tile.

In addition, QGIS Server introduced some options to select a layer by:

- a short name
- the layer id

The short name of a layer may be configured through *Properties → Metadata* in layer menu. If the short name is defined, then it's used by default instead of the layer's name:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WMTS  
&REQUEST=GetFeatureInfo  
&LAYER=mynickname  
&...
```

Moreover, there's a project option allowing to select layers by their id in *OWS Server → WMS capabilities* menu of the *Project → Project Properties* dialog. To activate this option, the checkbox *Use layer ids as names* has to be selected.

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?  
SERVICE=WMTS  
&REQUEST=GetFeatureInfo  
&LAYER=mylayerid1  
&...
```

## INFOFORMAT

This parameter allows to define the output format of the result. Available values are:

- `text/xml`
- `text/html`
- `text/plain`
- `application/vnd.ogc.gml`

The default value is `text/plain`.

## I

This parameter allows to define the X coordinate of the pixel for which we want to retrieve underlying information.

## J

This parameter allows to define the Y coordinate of the pixel for which we want to retrieve underlying information.

## Extra parameters supported by all request types

- **FILE\_NAME** parameter: if set, the server response will be sent to the client as a file attachment with the specified file name.
- **MAP** parameter: Similar to MapServer, the MAP parameter can be used to specify the path to the QGIS project file. You can specify an absolute path or a path relative to the location of the server executable (`qgis_mapserv.fcgi`). If not specified, QGIS Server searches for .qgs files in the directory where the server executable is located.

Example:

```
http://localhost/cgi-bin/qgis_mapserv.fcgi?\nREQUEST=GetMap&MAP=/home/qgis/mymap.qgs&...
```

---

**Note:** You can define a **QGIS\_PROJECT\_FILE** as an environment variable to tell the server executable where to find the QGIS project file. This variable will be the location where QGIS will look for the project file. If not defined it will use the MAP parameter in the request and finally look at the server executable directory.

---

## REDLINING

This feature is available and can be used with GetMap and GetPrint requests.

The redlining feature can be used to pass geometries and labels in the request which are overlapped by the server over the standard returned image (map). This permits the user to put emphasis or maybe add some comments (labels) to some areas, locations etc. that are not in the standard map.

The request is in the format:

```
http://qgisplatform.demo/cgi-bin/qgis_mapserv.fcgi?map=/world.qgs&SERVICE=WMS&\nVERSION=1.3.0&\nREQUEST=GetMap\n...\n&HIGHLIGHT_GEOM=POLYGON((590000 5647000, 590000 6110620, 2500000 6110620, 2500000\n5647000, 590000 5647000))\n&HIGHLIGHT_SYMBOL=<StyledLayerDescriptor><UserStyle><Name>Highlight</Name>\n<FeatureTypeStyle><Rule><Name>Symbol</Name><LineSymbolizer><Stroke><SvgParameter\nname="stroke">%23ea1173</SvgParameter><SvgParameter name="stroke-opacity">1</\nSvgParameter><SvgParameter name="stroke-width">1.6</SvgParameter></Stroke></\nLineSymbolizer></Rule></FeatureTypeStyle></UserStyle></StyledLayerDescriptor>\n&HIGHLIGHT_LABELSTRING=Write label here\n&HIGHLIGHT_LABELSIZE=16\n&HIGHLIGHT_LABELCOLOR=%23000000\n&HIGHLIGHT_LABELBUFFERCOLOR=%23FFFFFF\n&HIGHLIGHT_LABELBUFFERSIZE=1.5
```

Here is the image outputed by the above request in which a polygon and a label are drawn on top of the normal map:

You can see there are several parameters in this request:

- **HIGHLIGHT\_GEOM:** You can add POINT, MULTILINESTRING, POLYGON etc. It supports multipart geometries. Here is an example: HIGHLIGHT\_GEOM=MULTILINESTRING((0 0, 0 1, 1 1)). The coordinates should be in the CRS of the GetMap/GetPrint request.
- **HIGHLIGHT\_SYMBOL:** This controls how the geometry is outlined and you can change the stroke width, color and opacity.
- **HIGHLIGHT\_LABELSTRING:** You can pass your labeling text to this parameter.
- **HIGHLIGHT\_LABELSIZE:** This parameter controls the size of the label.
- **HIGHLIGHT\_LABELCOLOR:** This parameter controls the label color.
- **HIGHLIGHT\_LABELBUFFERCOLOR:** This parameter controls the label buffer color.
- **HIGHLIGHT\_LABELBUFFERSIZE:** This parameter controls the label buffer size.

## External WMS layers

QGIS Server allows including layers from external WMS servers in WMS GetMap and WMS GetPrint requests. This is especially useful if a web client uses an external background layer in the web map. For performance



Fig. 17.9: Server response to a GetMap request with redlining parameters

reasons, such layers should be directly requested by the web client (not cascaded via QGIS server). For printing however, these layers should be cascaded via QGIS server in order to appear in the printed map.

External layers can be added to the LAYERS parameter as EXTERNAL\_WMS:<layername>. The parameters for the external WMS layers (e.g. url, format, dpiMode, crs, layers, styles) can later be given as service parameters <layername>:<parameter>. In a GetMap request, this might look like this:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMS&REQUEST=GetMap
...
&LAYERS=EXTERNAL_WMS:basemap,layer1,layer2
&STYLES=,
&basemap:url=http://externalserver.com/wms.fcgi
&basemap:format=image/jpeg
&basemap:dpiMode=7
&basemap:crs=EPSG:2056
&basemap:layers=orthofoto
&basemap:styles=default
```

Similarly, external layers can be used in GetPrint requests:

```
http://localhost/qgis_server?
SERVICE=WMS
...
&REQUEST=GetPrint&TEMPLATE=A4
&map0:layers=EXTERNAL_WMS:basemap,layer1,layer2
&map0:EXTENT=<minx,miny,maxx,maxy>
&basemap:url=http://externalserver.com/wms.fcgi
&basemap:format=image/jpeg
&basemap:dpiMode=7
&basemap:crs=EPSG:2056
&basemap:layers=orthofoto
&basemap:styles=default
```

## 17.2.3 Plugins

### Installation

To install the HelloWorld example plugin for testing the servers, you firstly have to create a directory to hold server plugins. This will be specified in the virtual host configuration and passed on to the server through an environment variable:

```
sudo mkdir -p /opt/qgis-server/plugins
cd /opt/qgis-server/plugins
sudo wget https://github.com/elpaso/qgis-helloserver/archive/master.zip
In case unzip was not installed before:
sudo apt install unzip
sudo unzip master.zip
sudo mv qgis-helloserver-master HelloServer
```

### HTTP Server configuration

#### Apache

To be able to use server plugins, FastCGI needs to know where to look. So, we have to modify the Apache configuration file to indicate the **QGIS\_PLUGINPATH** environment variable to FastCGI:

```
FcgidInitialEnv QGIS_SERVER_LOG_FILE /tmp/qgis-000.log  
FcgidInitialEnv QGIS_SERVER_LOG_LEVEL 0  
FcgidInitialEnv QGIS_PLUGINPATH "/opt/qgis-server/plugins"
```

Moreover, a basic HTTP authorization is necessary to play with the HelloWorld plugin previously introduced. So we have to update the Apache configuration file a last time:

```
# Needed for QGIS HelloServer plugin HTTP BASIC auth  
<IfModule mod_fcgid.c>  
    RewriteEngine on  
    RewriteCond %{HTTP:Authorization} .  
    RewriteRule .* - [E=HTTP_AUTHORIZATION:%{HTTP:Authorization}]  
</IfModule>
```

Then, restart Apache:

```
sudo a2ensite 001-qgis-server  
sudo service apache2 restart
```

**Tip:** If you work with a feature that has many nodes then modifying and adding a new feature will fail. In this case it is possible to insert the following code into the `001-qgis-server.conf` file:

```
<IfModule mod_fcgid.c>  
FcgidMaxRequestLen 26214400  
FcgidConnectTimeout 60  
</IfModule>
```

## How to use a plugin

Test the server with the HelloWorld plugin:

```
wget -q -O - "http://localhost/cgi-bin/qgis_mapserv.fcgi?SERVICE=HELLO"  
HelloServer!
```

You can have a look at the default GetCapabilities of the QGIS server at: `http://localhost/cgi-bin/qgis_mapserv.fcgi?SERVICE=WMS&VERSION=1.3.0&REQUEST=GetCapabilities`

### 17.2.4 Advanced configuration

#### Logging

To log requests sent to the server, you have to set the following environment variables:

- `QGIS_SERVER_LOG_LEVEL`
- `QGIS_SERVER_LOG_FILE`
- `QGIS_SERVER_LOG_STDERR`

Take a look on *Environment variables* to understand their meanings.

#### Environment variables

You can configure some aspects of QGIS Server by setting **environment variables**.

According to the HTTP server and how you run QGIS Server, there are several ways to define these variables. This is fully described in *HTTP Server configuration*.

## **QGIS\_OPTIONS\_PATH**

Specifies the path to the directory with settings. It works the same way as QGIS application --optionspath option. It is looking for settings file in <QGIS\_OPTIONS\_PATH>/QGIS/QGIS3.ini.

## **QUERY\_STRING**

The query string, normally passed by the web server. This variable can be useful while testing QGIS server binary from the command line.

For example for testing a GetCapabilities request on the command line to a project that also requires a PostgreSQL connection defined in a pg\_service.conf file:

```
PGSERVICEFILE=/etc/pg_service.conf QUERY_STRING="MAP=/path/to/test.qgs&SERVICE=WMS&
→REQUEST=GetCapabilities" /path/to/qgis_mapserv.fcgi
```

The result should be either the content of the GetCapabilities response or, if something is wrong, an error message.

## **QGIS\_PROJECT\_FILE**

The .qgs or .qgz project file, normally passed as a parameter in the query string (with *MAP*), you can also set it as an environment variable (for example by using mod\_rewrite Apache module).

Note that you may also indicate a project stored in PostgreSQL, e.g. postgresql://localhost:5432?sslmode=disable&dbname=mydb&schema=myschema&project=myproject.

## **QGIS\_SERVER\_LOG\_FILE**

Specify path and filename. Make sure that server has proper permissions for writing to file. File should be created automatically, just send some requests to server. If it's not there, check permissions.

QGIS\_SERVER\_LOG\_FILE is deprecated since QGIS 3.4. File logging support will be removed in QGIS 4.0.

## **QGIS\_SERVER\_LOG\_STDERR**

Activate logging to stderr. It's disabled by default. This variable has no effect when QGIS\_SERVER\_LOG\_FILE is set.

- 0 or false (case insensitive)
- 1 or true (case insensitive)

## **MAX\_CACHE\_LAYERS**

Specify the maximum number of cached layers (default: 100).

## **DISPLAY**

This is used to pass (fake) X server display number (needed on Unix-like systems).

## **QGIS\_PLUGINPATH**

Useful if you are using Python plugins for the server, this sets the folder that is searched for Python plugins.

## **QGIS\_SERVER\_LOG\_LEVEL**

Specify desired log level. Available values are:

- 0 or INFO (log all requests)
- 1 or WARNING
- 2 or CRITICAL (log just critical errors, suitable for production purposes)

## **QGIS\_SERVER\_PARALLEL\_RENDERING**

Activates parallel rendering for WMS GetMap requests. It's disabled (`false`) by default. Available values are:

- 0 or `false` (case insensitive)
- 1 or `true` (case insensitive)

## **QGIS\_SERVER\_MAX\_THREADS**

Number of threads to use when parallel rendering is activated. Default value is `-1` to use the number of processor cores.

## **QGIS\_SERVER\_CACHE\_DIRECTORY**

Specifies the network cache directory on the filesystem. The default directory is named `cache` and located in the profile directory.

## **QGIS\_SERVER\_CACHE\_SIZE**

Sets the network cache size in MB. The default value is 50 MB.

### **Settings summary**

When QGIS Server is starting, you have a summary of all configurable parameters thanks to environment variables. Moreover, the value currently used and the origin is also displayed.

For example with spawn-fcgi:

```
export QGIS_OPTIONS_PATH=/home/user/.local/share/QGIS/QGIS3/profiles/default/
export QGIS_SERVER_LOG_FILE=/home/user/qserv.log
export QGIS_SERVER_LOG_LEVEL=2
spawn-fcgi -f /usr/lib/cgi-bin/qgis_mapserv.fcgi -s /tmp/qgisserver.sock -U www-
↪data -G www-data -n

QGIS Server Settings:

- QGIS_OPTIONS_PATH / '' (Override the default path for user configuration): '/
↪home/user/.local/share/QGIS/QGIS3/profiles/default/' (read from ENVIRONMENT_
↪VARIABLE)

- QGIS_SERVER_PARALLEL_RENDERING / '/qgis/parallel_rendering' (Activate/
↪Deactivate parallel rendering for WMS getMap request): 'true' (read fromINI_
↪FILE)

- QGIS_SERVER_MAX_THREADS / '/qgis/max_threads' (Number of threads to use when_
↪parallel rendering is activated): '4' (read fromINI_FILE)
```

```

- QGIS_SERVER_LOG_LEVEL / '' (Log level): '2' (read from ENVIRONMENT_VARIABLE)

- QGIS_SERVER_LOG_FILE / '' (Log file): '/tmp/qserv.log' (read from ENVIRONMENT_
↪VARIABLE)

- QGIS_PROJECT_FILE / '' (QGIS project file): '' (read from DEFAULT_VALUE)

- MAX_CACHE_LAYERS / '' (Specify the maximum number of cached layers): '100' ↩
↪(read from DEFAULT_VALUE)

- QGIS_SERVER_CACHE_DIRECTORY / '/cache/directory' (Specify the cache_
↪directory): '/root/.local/share/QGIS/QGIS3/profiles/default/cache' (read from_
↪DEFAULT_VALUE)

- QGIS_SERVER_CACHE_SIZE / '/cache/size' (Specify the cache size): '52428800' ↩
↪(read from INI_FILE)

Ini file used to initialize settings: /home/user/.local/share/QGIS/QGIS3/profiles/
↪default/QGIS/QGIS3.ini

```

In this particular case, we know that **QGIS\_SERVER\_MAX\_THREADS** and **QGIS\_SERVER\_PARALLEL\_RENDERING** values are read from the ini file found in **QGIS\_OPTIONS\_PATH** directory (which is defined through an environment variable). The corresponding entries in the ini file are **/qgis/max\_threads** and **/qgis/parallel\_rendering** and their values are **true** and **4** threads.

### Short name for layers, groups and project

A number of elements have both a **<Name>** and a **<Title>**. The **Name** is a text string used for machine-to-machine communication while the **Title** is for the benefit of humans.

For example, a dataset might have the descriptive Title “Maximum Atmospheric Temperature” and be requested using the abbreviated Name “ATMAX”. User can already set title for layers, groups and project.

OWS name is based on the name used in layer tree. This name is more a label for humans than a name for machine-to-machine communication.

QGIS Server supports:

- short name line edits to layers properties You can change this by right clicking on a layer, choose *Properties* → *Metadata tab* → *Description* → *Short name*.
- WMS data dialog to layer tree group (short name, title, abstract)

By right clicking on a layer group and selecting the *Set Group WMS data* option you will get:

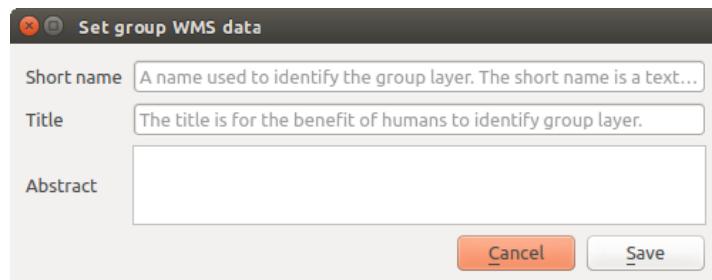


Fig. 17.10: Set group WMS data dialog

- short name line edits to project properties - add a regexp validator "`^ [A-Za-z] [A-Za-z0-9\._-]*`" to short name line edit accessible through a static method

- add a regexp validator "`^ [A-Za-z] [A-Za-z0-9\._-]*`" to short name line edit accessible through a static method

You can choose a short name for the project root by going to *Project properties* → *OWS Server* → *Service capabilities* → *Short name*.

- add a `TreeName` element in the `fullProjectSettings`

If a short name has been set for layers, groups or project it is used by QGIS Sever as the layer name.

### Connection to service file

In order to make apache aware of the PostgreSQL service file (see the *PostgreSQL Service connection file* section) you need to make your `*.conf` file look like:

```
SetEnv PGSERVICEFILE /home/web/.pg_service.conf

<Directory "/home/web/apps2/bin/">
    AllowOverride None
....
```

### Add fonts to your linux server

Keep in mind that you may use QGIS projects that point to fonts that may not exist by default on other machines. This means that if you share the project, it may look different on other machines (if the fonts don't exist on the target machine).

In order to ensure this does not happen you just need to install the missing fonts on the target machine. Doing this on desktop systems is usually trivial (double clicking the fonts).

For linux, if you don't have a desktop environment installed (or you prefer the command line) you need to:

- On Debian based systems:

```
sudo su
mkdir -p /usr/local/share/fonts/truetype/myfonts && cd /usr/local/share/fonts/
↪truetype/myfonts

# copy the fonts from their location
cp /fonts_location/* .

chown root *
cd .. && fc-cache -f -v
```

- On Fedora based systems:

```
sudo su
mkdir /usr/share/fonts/myfonts && cd /usr/share/fonts/myfonts

# copy the fonts from their location
cp /fonts_location/* .

chown root *
cd .. && fc-cache -f -v
```

# CHAPTER 18

---

## Working with GPS Data

---

### 18.1 GPS Plugin

#### 18.1.1 What is GPS?

GPS, the Global Positioning System, is a satellite-based system that allows anyone with a GPS receiver to find their exact position anywhere in the world. GPS is used as an aid in navigation, for example in airplanes, in boats and by hikers. The GPS receiver uses the signals from the satellites to calculate its latitude, longitude and (sometimes) elevation. Most receivers also have the capability to store locations (known as **waypoints**), sequences of locations that make up a planned **route** and a tracklog or **track** of the receiver's movement over time. Waypoints, routes and tracks are the three basic feature types in GPS data. QGIS displays waypoints in point layers, while routes and tracks are displayed in linestring layers.

---

**Note:** QGIS supports also GNSS receivers. But we keep using the term GPS in this documentation.

---

#### 18.1.2 Loading GPS data from a file

There are dozens of different file formats for storing GPS data. The format that QGIS uses is called GPX (GPS eXchange format), which is a standard interchange format that can contain any number of waypoints, routes and tracks in the same file.

To load a GPX file, you first need to load the plugin. *Plugins* →  *Plugin Manager...* opens the Plugin Manager Dialog. Activate the  *GPS Tools* checkbox. When this plugin is loaded, a button with a small handheld GPS device will show up in the toolbar and in *Layer* → *Create Layer* → :

-  *GPS Tools*
-  *Create new GPX Layer*

For working with GPS data, we provide an example GPX file available in the QGIS sample dataset: `qgis_sample_data/gps/national_monuments.gpx`. See section *Downloading sample data* for more information about the sample data.

1. Select *Vector → GPS Tools* or click the  GPS Tools icon in the toolbar and open the *Load GPX file* tab (see [figure\\_GPS](#)).
2. Browse to the folder `qgis_sample_data/gps/`, select the GPX file `national_monuments.gpx` and click *Open*.

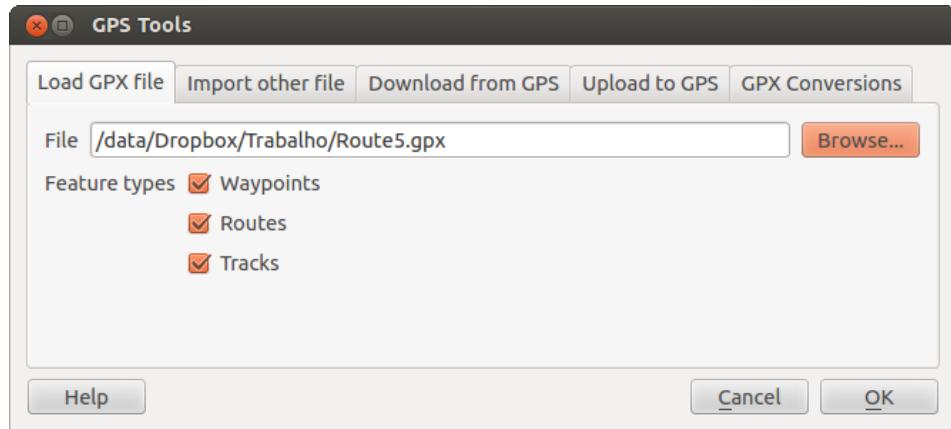


Fig. 18.1: The *GPS Tools* dialog window

Use the *Browse...* button to select the GPX file, then use the checkboxes to select the feature types you want to load from that GPX file. Each feature type will be loaded in a separate layer when you click *OK*. The file `national_monuments.gpx` only includes waypoints.

---

**Note:** GPS units allow you to store data in different coordinate systems. When downloading a GPX file (from your GPS unit or a web site) and then loading it in QGIS, be sure that the data stored in the GPX file uses WGS 84 (latitude/longitude). QGIS expects this, and it is the official GPX specification. See <https://www.topografix.com/GPX/1/1/>.

---

### 18.1.3 GPSBabel

Since QGIS uses GPX files, you need a way to convert other GPS file formats to GPX. This can be done for many formats using the free program GPSBabel, which is available at <https://www.gpsbabel.org>. This program can also transfer GPS data between your computer and a GPS device. QGIS uses GPSBabel to do these things, so it is recommended that you install it. However, if you just want to load GPS data from GPX files you will not need it. Version 1.2.3 of GPSBabel is known to work with QGIS, but you should be able to use later versions without any problems.

### 18.1.4 Importing GPS data

To import GPS data from a file that is not a GPX file, you use the tool *Import other file* in the GPS Tools dialog. Here, you select the file that you want to import (and the file type), which feature type you want to import from it, where you want to store the converted GPX file and what the name of the new layer should be. Note that not all GPS data formats will support all three feature types, so for many formats you will only be able to choose between one or two types.

### 18.1.5 Downloading GPS data from a device

QGIS can use GPSBabel to download data from a GPS device directly as new vector layers. For this we use the *Download from GPS* tab of the GPS Tools dialog (see [Figure\\_GPS\\_download](#)). Here, we select the type of GPS device, the port that it is connected to (or USB if your GPS supports this), the feature type that you want to download, the GPX file where the data should be stored, and the name of the new layer.

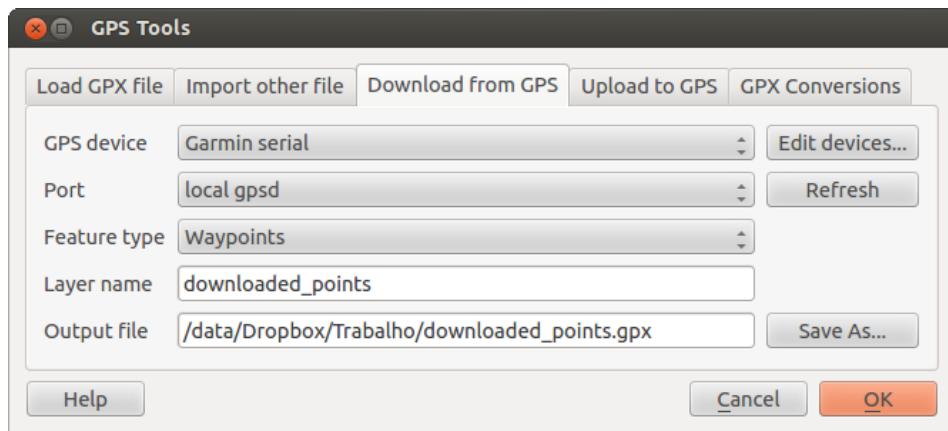


Fig. 18.2: The download tool

The device type you select in the GPS device menu determines how GPSBabel tries to communicate with your GPS device. If none of the available types work with your GPS device, you can create a new type (see section [Defining new device types](#)).

The port may be a file name or some other name that your operating system uses as a reference to the physical port in your computer that the GPS device is connected to. It may also be simply USB, for USB-enabled GPS units.

- On Linux, this is something like /dev/ttyS0 or /dev/ttyS1.
- On Windows, it is COM1 or COM2.

When you click *OK*, the data will be downloaded from the device and appear as a layer in QGIS.

### 18.1.6 Uploading GPS data to a device

You can also upload data directly from a vector layer in QGIS to a GPS device using the *Upload to GPS* tab of the GPS Tools dialog. To do this, you simply select the layer that you want to upload (which must be a GPX layer), your GPS device type, and the port (or USB) that it is connected to. Just as with the download tool, you can specify new device types if your device isn't in the list.

This tool is very useful in combination with the vector-editing capabilities of QGIS. It allows you to load a map, create waypoints and routes, and then upload them and use them on your GPS device.

### 18.1.7 Defining new device types

There are lots of different types of GPS devices. The QGIS developers can't test all of them, so if you have one that does not work with any of the device types listed in the *Download from GPS* and *Upload to GPS* tools, you can define your own device type for it. You do this by using the GPS device editor, which you start by clicking the *Edit Devices* button in the download or the upload tab.

To define a new device, you simply click the *New Device* button, enter a name, enter download and upload commands for your device, and click the *Update Device* button. The name will be listed in the device menus in the upload and download windows – it can be any string. The download command is the command that is used to download data from the device to a GPX file. This will probably be a GPSBabel command, but you can use any other command line program that can create a GPX file. QGIS will replace the keywords %type, %in, and %out when it runs the command.

%type will be replaced by -w if you are downloading waypoints, -r if you are downloading routes and -t if you are downloading tracks. These are command-line options that tell GPSBabel which feature type to download.

%in will be replaced by the port name that you choose in the download window and %out will be replaced by the name you choose for the GPX file that the downloaded data should be stored in. So, if you create a device type with the download command gpsbabel %type -i garmin -o gpx %in %out (this is actually the

download command for the predefined device type ‘Garmin serial’) and then use it to download waypoints from port /dev/ttyS0 to the file output.gpx, QGIS will replace the keywords and run the command gpsbabel -w -i garmin -o gpx /dev/ttyS0 output.gpx.

The upload command is the command that is used to upload data to the device. The same keywords are used, but %in is now replaced by the name of the GPX file for the layer that is being uploaded, and %out is replaced by the port name.

You can learn more about GPSBabel and its available command line options at <https://www.gpsbabel.org>.

Once you have created a new device type, it will appear in the device lists for the download and upload tools.

### 18.1.8 Download of points/tracks from GPS units

As described in previous sections QGIS uses GPSBabel to download points/tracks directly in the project. QGIS comes out of the box with a pre-defined profile to download from Garmin devices. Unfortunately there is a [bug #6318](#) that does not allow create other profiles, so downloading directly in QGIS using the GPS Tools is at the moment limited to Garmin USB units.

#### Garmin GPSMAP 60cs

##### MS Windows

Install the Garmin USB drivers from [https://www8.garmin.com/support/download\\_details.jsp?id=591](https://www8.garmin.com/support/download_details.jsp?id=591)

Connect the unit. Open GPS Tools and use type=garmin serial and port=usb: Fill the fields *Layer name* and *Output file*. Sometimes it seems to have problems saving in a certain folder, using something like c:\temp usually works.

##### Ubuntu/Mint GNU/Linux

It is first needed an issue about the permissions of the device, as described at [https://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/USB\\_Garmin\\_on\\_GNU/Linux](https://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/USB_Garmin_on_GNU/Linux). You can try to create a file /etc/udev/rules.d/51-garmin.rules containing this rule

```
ATTRS{idVendor}=="091e", ATTRS{idProduct}=="0003", MODE="666"
```

After that is necessary to be sure that the garmin\_gps kernel module is not loaded

```
rmmmod garmin_gps
```

and then you can use the GPS Tools. Unfortunately there seems to be a [bug #7182](#) and usually QGIS freezes several times before the operation work fine.

#### BTGP-38KM datalogger (only Bluetooth)

##### MS Windows

The already referred bug does not allow to download the data from within QGIS, so it is needed to use GPSBabel from the command line or using its interface. The working command is

```
gpsbabel -t -i skytraq,baud=9600,initbaud=9600 -f COM9 -o gpx -F C:/GPX/aaa.gpx
```

##### Ubuntu/Mint GNU/Linux

Use same command (or settings if you use GPSBabel GUI) as in Windows. On Linux it maybe somehow common to get a message like

```
skytraq: Too many read errors on serial port
```

it is just a matter to turn off and on the datalogger and try again.

## BlueMax GPS-4044 datalogger (both BT and USB)

### MS Windows

**Note:** It needs to install its drivers before using it on Windows 7. See in the manufacturer site for the proper download.

Downloading with GPSBabel, both with USB and BT returns always an error like

```
gpsbabel -t -i mtk -f COM12 -o gpx -F C:/temp/test.gpx
mtk_logger: Can't create temporary file data.bin
Error running gpsbabel: Process exited unsuccessfully with code 1
```

### Ubuntu/Mint GNU/Linux

#### With USB

After having connected the cable use the `dmesg` command to understand what port is being used, for example `/dev/ttyACM3`. Then as usual use GPSBabel from the CLI or GUI

```
gpsbabel -t -i mtk -f /dev/ttyACM3 -o gpx -F /home/user/bluemax.gpx
```

#### With Bluetooth

Use Blueman Device Manager to pair the device and make it available through a system port, then run GPSBabel

```
gpsbabel -t -i mtk -f /dev/rfcomm0 -o gpx -F /home/user/bluemax_bt.gpx
```

## 18.2 Live GPS tracking

To activate live GPS tracking in QGIS, you need to select *View → Panels  GPS Information Panel* or press `Ctrl+0`. You will get a new docked window on the left side of the canvas.

There are four possible screens in this GPS tracking window:

-  GPS position coordinates and an interface for manually entering vertices and features
-  GPS signal strength of satellite connections
-  GPS options screen (see *figure\_gps\_options*)

With a plugged-in GPS receiver (has to be supported by your operating system), a simple click on *Connect* connects the GPS to QGIS. A second click (now on *Disconnect*) disconnects the GPS receiver from your computer. For GNU/Linux, `gpsd` support is integrated to support connection to most GPS receivers. Therefore, you first have to configure `gpsd` properly to connect QGIS to it.

**Warning:** If you want to record your position to the canvas, you have to create a new vector layer first and switch it to editable status to be able to record your track.

### 18.2.1 Position and additional attributes

 If the GPS is receiving signals from satellites, you will see your position in latitude, longitude and altitude together with additional attributes.

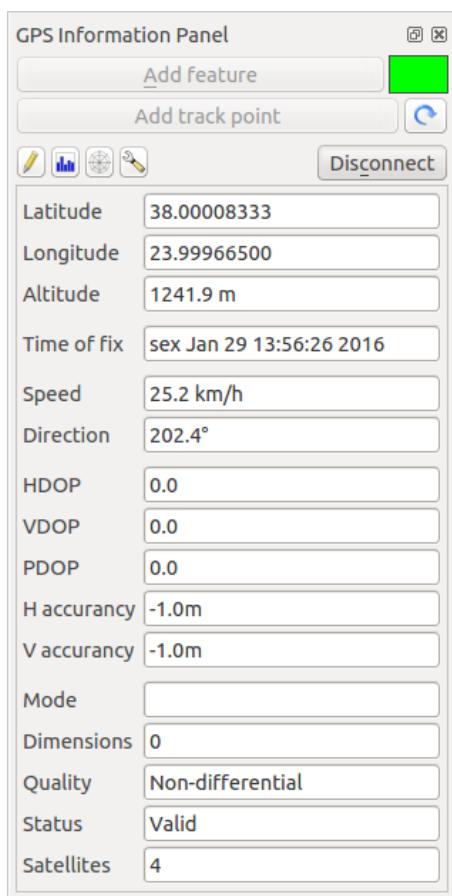


Fig. 18.3: GPS tracking position and additional attributes

## 18.2.2 GPS signal strength



Here, you can see the signal strength of the satellites you are receiving signals from.

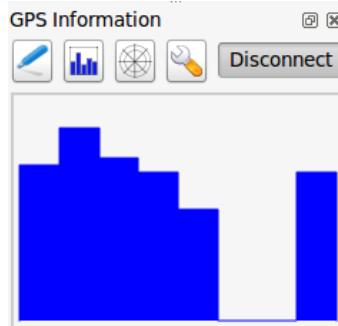


Fig. 18.4: GPS tracking signal strength

## 18.2.3 GPS options

In case of connection problems, you can switch between:

- Autodetect
- Internal
- Serial device
- gpsd (selecting the Host, Port and Device your GPS is connected to)

A click on *Connect* again initiates the connection to the GPS receiver.

You can activate  *Automatically save added features* when you are in editing mode. Or you can activate  *Automatically add points* to the map canvas with a certain width and color.

Activating  *Cursor*, you can use a slider to shrink and grow the position cursor on the canvas.

You can also set an *Acquisition interval (seconds)* and a *Distance threshold (meters)* parameters to keep the cursor still active when the receiver is in static conditions.

Activating  *Map centering* allows you to decide in which way the canvas will be updated. This includes ‘always’, ‘when leaving’, if your recorded coordinates start to move out of the canvas, or ‘never’, to keep map extent.

Finally, you can activate  *Log file* and define a path and a file where log messages about the GPS tracking are logged.

If you want to set a feature manually, you have to go back to Position and click on *Add Point* or *Add Track Point*.

## 18.2.4 Connect to a Bluetooth GPS for live tracking

With QGIS you can connect a Bluetooth GPS for field data collection. To perform this task you need a GPS Bluetooth device and a Bluetooth receiver on your computer.

At first you must let your GPS device be recognized and paired to the computer. Turn on the GPS, go to the Bluetooth icon on your notification area and search for a New Device.

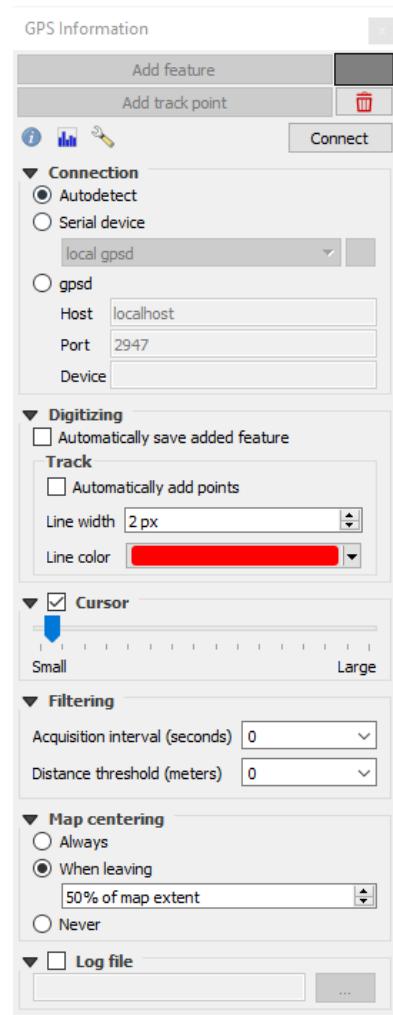


Fig. 18.5: GPS tracking options window

On the right side of the Device selection mask make sure that all devices are selected so your GPS unit will probably appear among those available. In the next step a serial connection service should be available, select it and click on *Configure* button.

Remember the number of the COM port assigned to the GPS connection as resulting by the Bluetooth properties. After the GPS has been recognized, make the pairing for the connection. Usually the authorization code is 0000.

Now open *GPS information* panel and switch to  GPS options screen. Select the COM port assigned to the GPS connection and click the *Connect*. After a while a cursor indicating your position should appear.

If QGIS can't receive GPS data, then you should restart your GPS device, wait 5-10 seconds then try to connect again. Usually this solution work. If you receive again a connection error make sure you don't have another Bluetooth receiver near you, paired with the same GPS unit.

## 18.2.5 Using GPSMAP 60cs

### MS Windows

Easiest way to make it work is to use a middleware (freeware, not open) called [GPSGate](#).

Launch the program, make it scan for GPS devices (works for both USB and BT ones) and then in QGIS just click *Connect* in the Live tracking panel using the  *Autodetect* mode.

### Ubuntu/Mint GNU/Linux

As for Windows the easiest way is to use a server in the middle, in this case GPSD, so

```
sudo apt install gpsd
```

Then load the garmin\_gps kernel module

```
sudo modprobe garmin_gps
```

And then connect the unit. Then check with `dmesg` the actual device being used bu the unit, for example `/dev/ttyUSB0`. Now you can launch `gpsd`

```
gpsd /dev/ttyUSB0
```

And finally connect with the QGIS live tracking tool.

## 18.2.6 Using BTGP-38KM datalogger (only Bluetooth)

Using GPSD (under Linux) or GPSGate (under Windows) is effortless.

## 18.2.7 Using BlueMax GPS-4044 datalogger (both BT and USB)

### MS Windows

The live tracking works for both USB and BT modes, by using GPSGate or even without it, just use the  *Autodetect* mode, or point the tool the right port.

## Ubuntu/Mint GNU/Linux

### For USB

The live tracking works both with GPSD

```
gpsd /dev/ttyACM3
```

or without it, by connecting the QGIS live tracking tool directly to the device (for example `/dev/ttyACM3`).

### For Bluetooth

The live tracking works both with GPSD

```
gpsd /dev/rfcomm0
```

or without it, by connecting the QGIS live tracking tool directly to the device (for example `/dev/rfcomm0`).

## Authentication System

### 19.1 Authentication System Overview

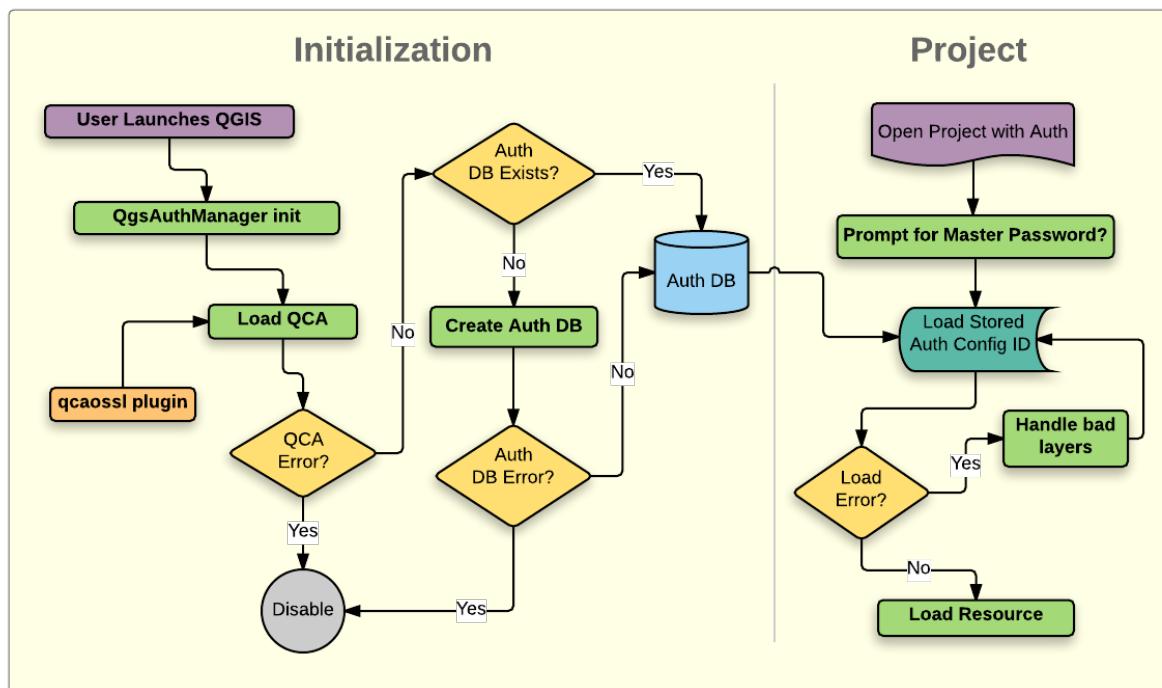


Fig. 19.1: Anatomy of authentication system

#### 19.1.1 Authentication database

The new authentication system stores authentication configurations in an SQLite database file located, by default, at <user home>/.qgis3/qgis-auth.db.

This authentication database can be moved between QGIS installations without affecting other current QGIS user preferences, as it is completely separate from normal QGIS settings. A configuration ID (a random 7-character alphanumeric string) is generated when initially storing a configuration to the database. This represents the configuration, thereby allowing the ID to be stored in plain text application components, (such as project, plugin, or settings files) without disclosure of its associated credentials.

---

**Note:** The parent directory of the `qgis-auth.db` can be set using the following environment variable, `QGIS_AUTH_DB_DIR_PATH`, or set on the command line during launch with the `--authdbdirectory` option.

---

## 19.1.2 Master password

To store or access sensitive information within the database, a user must define a *master password*. A new master password is requested and verified when initially storing any encrypted data to the database. Only when sensitive information is accessed is the user prompted for the master password, which is then cached for the remainder of the session (until application is quit), unless the user manually chooses an action to clear its cached value. Some instances of using the authentication system do not require input of the master password, such as when selecting an existing authentication configuration, or applying a configuration to a server configuration (such as when adding a WMS layer).

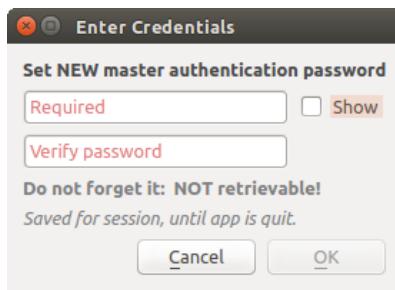


Fig. 19.2: Input new master password

---

**Note:** A path to a file containing the master password can be set using the following environment variable, `QGIS_AUTH_PASSWORD_FILE`.

---

## Managing the master password

Once set, the master password can be reset; the current master password will be needed prior to resetting. During this process, there is an option to generate a complete backup of the current database.



Fig. 19.3: Resetting master password

If the user forgets the master password, there is no way to retrieve or override it. There is also no means of retrieving encrypted information without knowing the master password.

If a user inputs their existing password incorrectly three times, the dialog will offer to erase the database.



Fig. 19.4: Password prompt after three invalid attempts

### 19.1.3 Authentication Configurations

You can manage authentication configurations from *Configurations* in the *Authentication* tab of the QGIS Options dialog (*Settings → Options*).

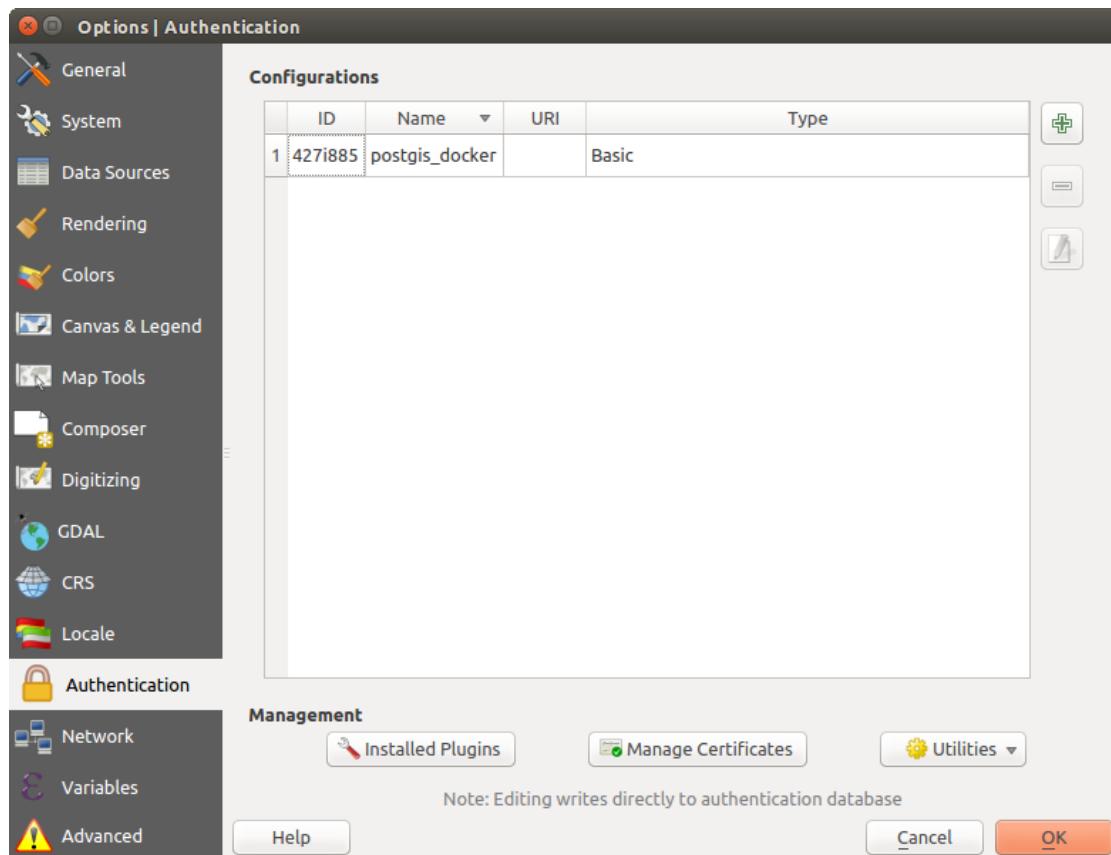


Fig. 19.5: Configurations editor

Use the button to add a new configuration, the button to remove configurations, and the button to modify existing ones.

The same type of operations for authentication configuration management (Add, Edit and Remove) can be done when configuring a given service connection, such as configuring an OWS service connection. For that, there are action buttons within the configuration selector for fully managing configurations found within the authentication

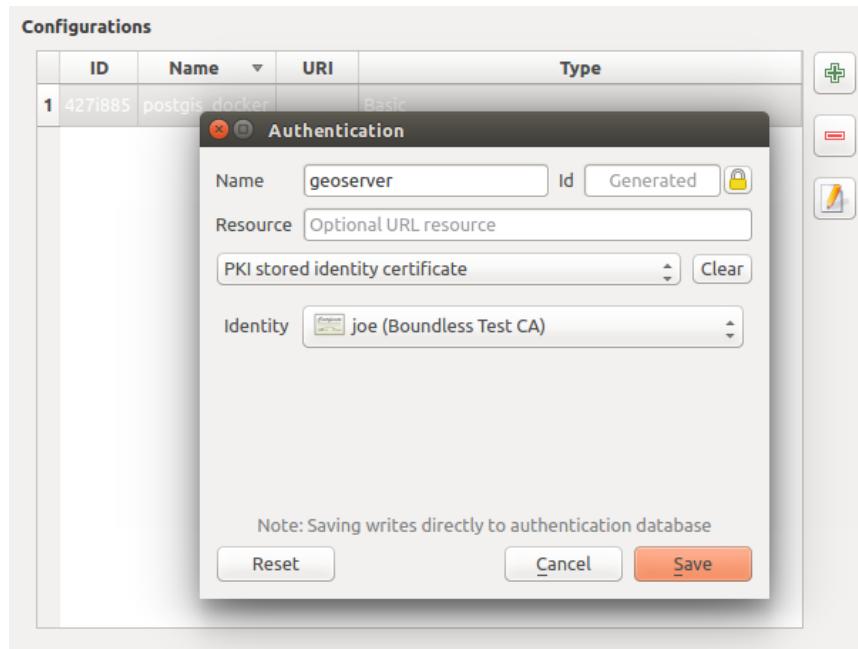


Fig. 19.6: Adding config from within Configuration editor

database. In this case, there is no need to go to the *configurations* in *Authentication* tab of QGIS options unless you need to do more comprehensive configuration management.

When creating or editing an authentication configuration, the info required is a name, an authentication method and any other info that the authentication method requires (see more about the available authentication types in *Authentication Methods*).

#### 19.1.4 Authentication Methods

Available authentications are provided by C++ plugins much in the same way data provider plugins are supported by QGIS. The method of authentication that can be selected is relative to the access needed for the resource/provider, e.g. HTTP(S) or database, and whether there is support in both QGIS code and a plugin. As such, some authentication method plugins may not be applicable everywhere an authentication configuration selector is shown. A list of available authentication method plugins and their compatible resource/providers can be accessed going to *Settings → Options* and, in the *Authentication* tab, click the *Installed Plugins* button.

Plugins can be created for new authentication methods that do not require QGIS to be recompiled. Since the support for plugins is currently (since QGIS 2.12) C++-only, QGIS will need to be restarted for the new dropped-in plugin to become available to the user. Ensure your plugin is compiled against the same target version of QGIS if you intend to add it to an existing target install.

---

**Note:** The Resource URL is currently an *unimplemented* feature that will eventually allow a particular configuration to be auto-chosen when connecting to resources at a given URL.

---

#### 19.1.5 Master Password and Auth Config Utilities

Under the Options menu (*Settings → Options*) in the *Authentication* tab, there are several utility actions to manage the authentication database and configurations:

- **Input master password:**
  - Opens the master password input dialog, independent of performing any authentication database command.

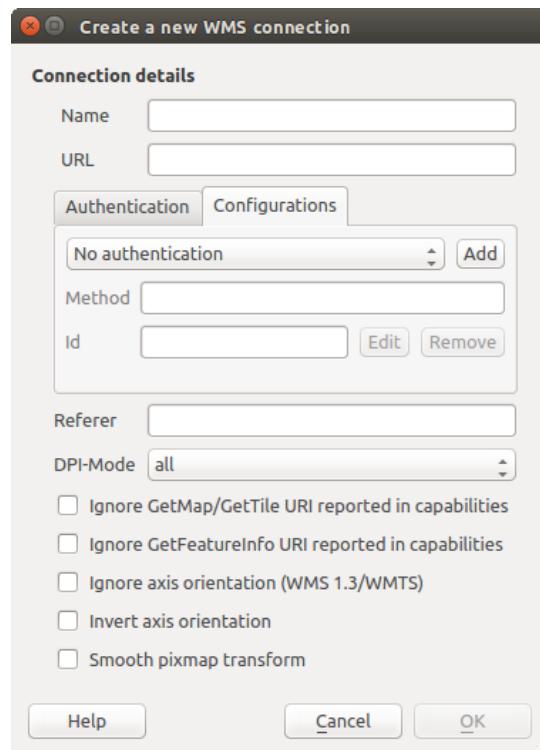


Fig. 19.7: WMS connection dialog showing *Add*, *Edit*, and *Remove* authentication configuration buttons

Installed authentication method plugins		
Method	Description	Works with
Basic	Basic authentication	postgres, db2, ows, wfs, wcs, wms, ogr, gdal, proxy
EsriToken	ESRI token based authentication	arcgismapserver, arcgisfeatureserver
Identity-Cert	PKI stored identity certificate	ows, wfs, wcs, wms, postgres
OAuth2	OAuth2 authentication	ows, wfs, wcs, wms
PKI-Paths	PKI paths authentication	ows, wfs, wcs, wms, postgres
PKI-PKCS#12	PKI PKCS#12 authentication	ows, wfs, wcs, wms, postgres

**X Close**

Fig. 19.8: Available method plugins list

Fig. 19.9: Basic HTTP authentication configs

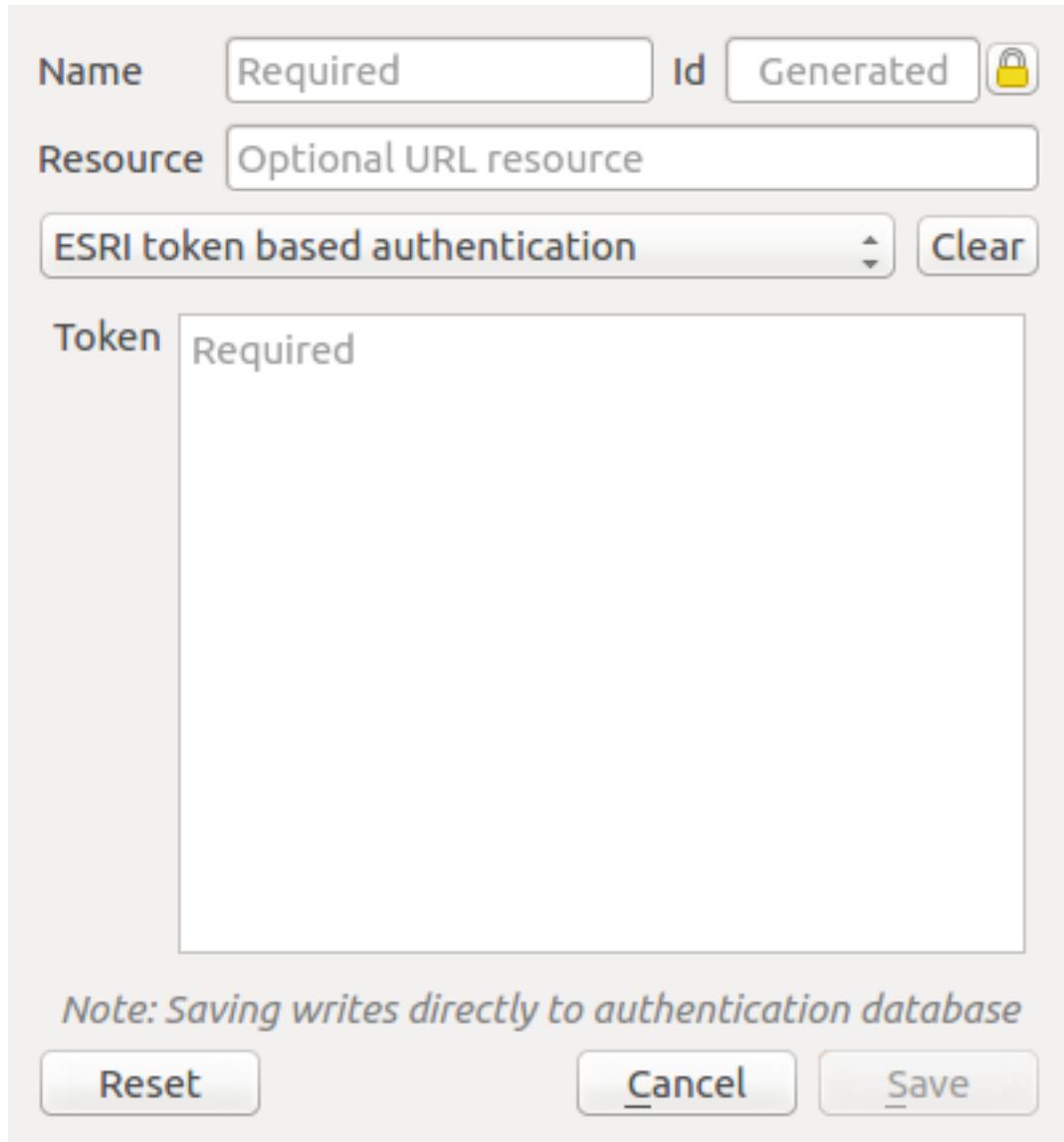


Fig. 19.10: ESRI Token authentication configs

Name  **Id**

Resource

OAuth2 authentication

Configure  Software S

Grant Flow

Description

Request URL

Token URL

Refresh Token URL

Redirect URL  /

Client ID

Client Secret

Scope

API Key

*Advanced*

Token Session  Persist between launches

Access Method

Request Timeout

**Extra initial request parameters**

Key	Value (unencoded)	

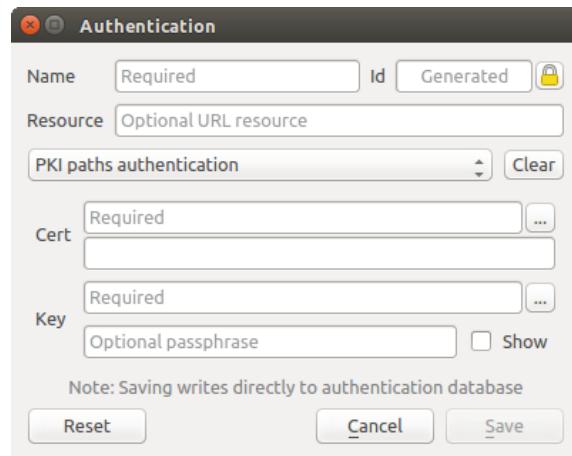


Fig. 19.12: PKI paths authentication configs

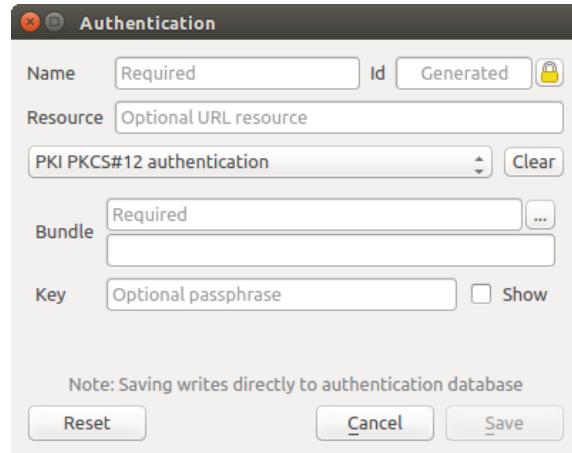


Fig. 19.13: PKI PKCS#12 file paths authentication configs

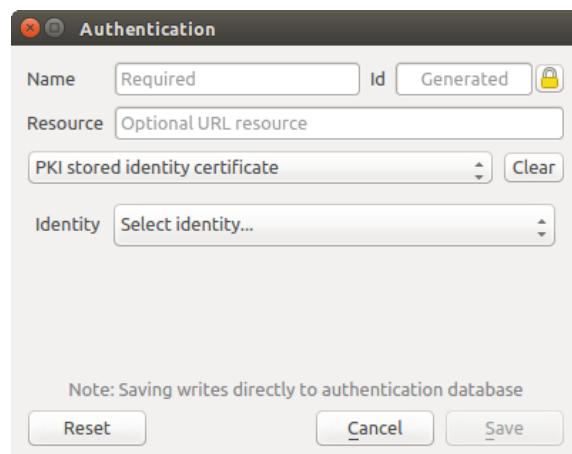


Fig. 19.14: Stored Identity authentication configs

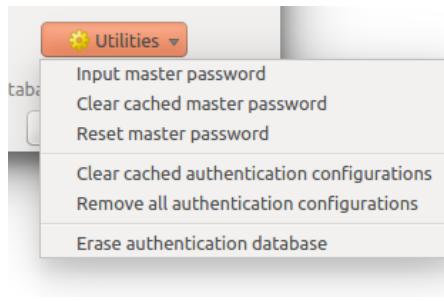


Fig. 19.15: Utilities menu

- **Clear cached master password:**
  - Unsets the master password if it has been set via input dialog.
- **Reset master password:**
  - Opens a dialog to change the master password (the current password must be known) and optionally back up the current database.
- **Clear cached authentication configurations:** Clears the internal lookup cache for configurations used to speed up network connections. This does not clear QGIS's core network access manager's cache, which requires a relaunch of QGIS.
- **Reset master password:** Replaces the current master password for a new one. The current master password will be needed prior to resetting and a backup of database can be done.
- **Remove all authentication configurations:** Clears the database of all configuration records, without removing other stored records.
- **Erase authentication database:** Schedules a backup of the current database and complete rebuild of the database table structure. These actions are scheduled for a later time, so as to ensure other operations like project loading do not interrupt the operation or cause errors due to a temporarily missing database.

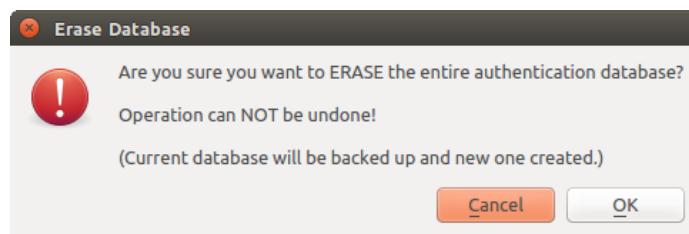


Fig. 19.16: DB erase verification menu

### 19.1.6 Using authentication configurations

Typically, an authentication configuration is selected in a configuration dialog for a network services (such as WMS). However, the selector widget can be embedded anywhere authentication is needed or in non-core functionality, like in third-party PyQGIS or C++ plugins.

When using the selector, *No authentication* is displayed in the pop-up menu control when nothing is selected, when there are no configurations to choose from, or when a previously assigned configuration can no longer be found in the database. The *Type* and *Id* fields are read-only and provide a description of the authentication method and the config's ID respectively.

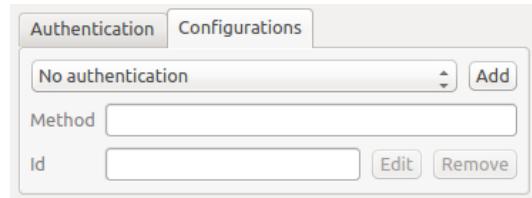


Fig. 19.17: Authentication configuration selector with no authentication

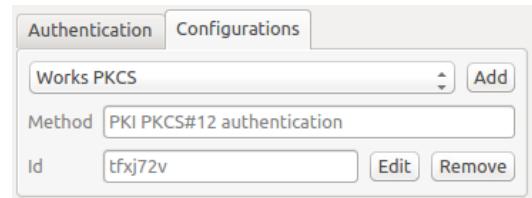


Fig. 19.18: Authentication configuration selector with selected config

### 19.1.7 Python bindings

All classes and public functions have sip bindings, except `QgsAuthCrypto`, since management of the master password hashing and auth database encryption should be handled by the main app, and not via Python. See *Security Considerations* concerning Python access.

## 19.2 User Authentication Workflows

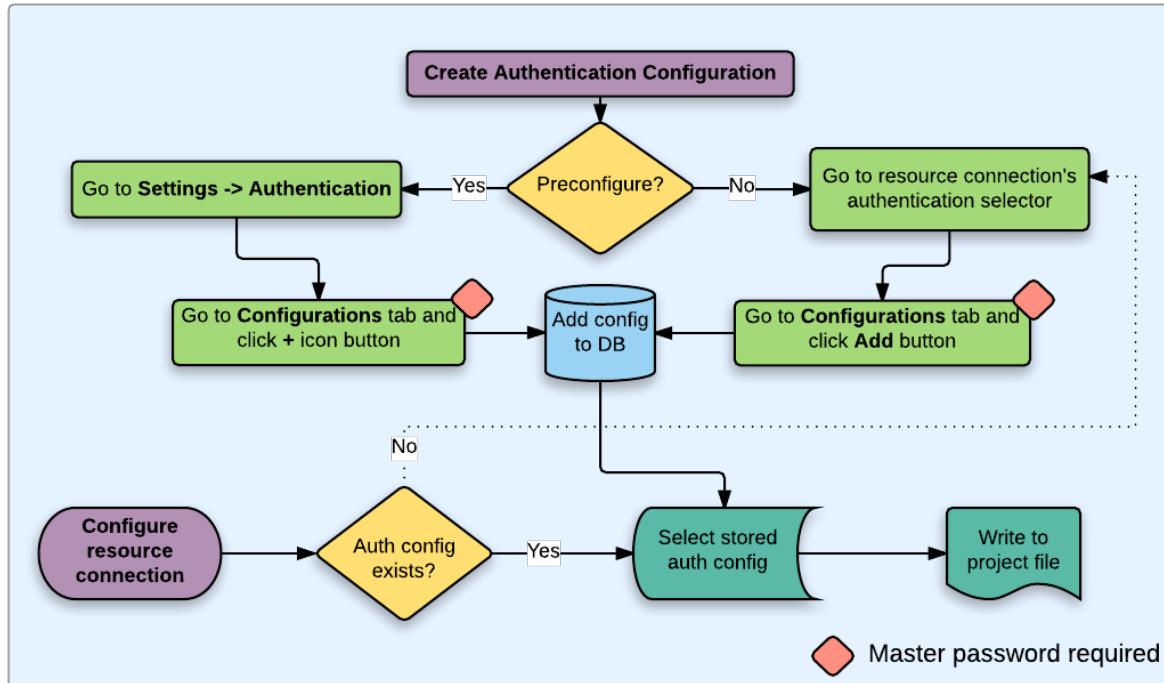


Fig. 19.19: Generic user workflow

### 19.2.1 HTTP(S) authentication

One of the most common resource connections is via HTTP(S), e.g. web mapping servers, and authentication method plugins often work for these types of connections. Method plugins have access to the HTTP request object and can manipulate both the request as well as its headers. This allows for many forms of internet-based authentication. When connecting via HTTP(S) using the standard username/password authentication method will attempt HTTP BASIC authentication upon connection.

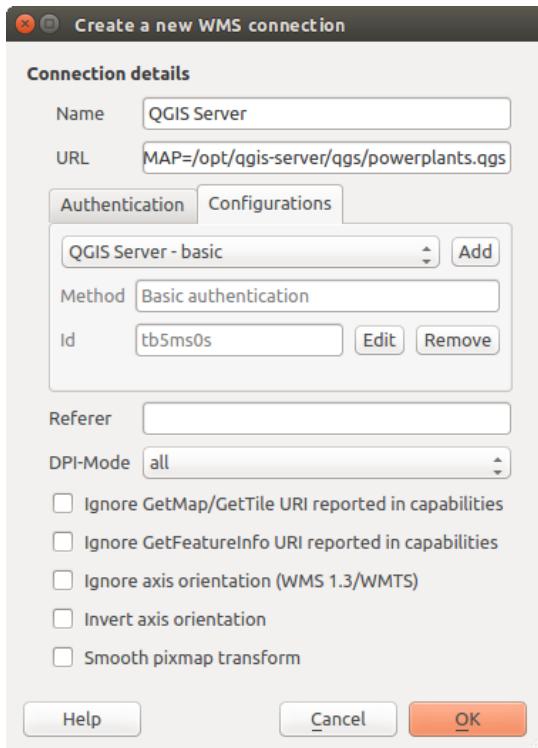


Fig. 19.20: Configuring a WMS connection for HTTP BASIC

### 19.2.2 Database authentication

Connections to database resources are generally stored as `key=value` pairs, which will expose usernames and (optionally) passwords, if *not* using an authentication configuration. When configuring with the new auth system, the `key=value` will be an abstracted representation of the credentials, e.g. `authfg=81t21b9`.

### 19.2.3 PKI authentication

When configuring PKI components within the authentication system, you have the option of importing components into the database or referencing component files stored on your filesystem. The latter may be useful if such components change frequently, or where the components will be replaced by a system administrator. In either instance you will need to store any passphrase needed to access private keys within the database.

All PKI components can be managed in separate editors within the **Certificate Manager**, which can be accessed in the *Authentication* tab in QGIS *Options* dialog (*Settings → Options*) by clicking the *Manage Certificates* button.

In the *Certificate Manager*, there are editors for **Identities**, **Servers** and **Authorities**. Each of these are contained in their own tabs, and are described below in the order they are encountered in the workflow chart above. The tab order is relative to frequently accessed editors once you are accustomed to the workflow.

---

**Note:** Because all authentication system edits write immediately to the authentication database, there is no need to click the *Options* dialog *OK* button for any changes to be saved. This is unlike other settings in the Options

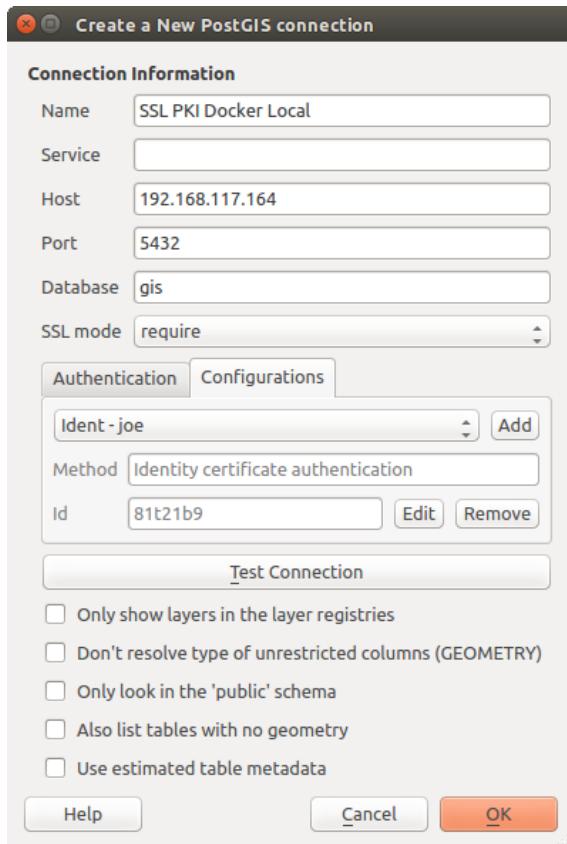


Fig. 19.21: Configuring a Postgres SSL-with-PKI connection

dialog.

## Authorities

You can manage available Certificate Authorities (CAs) from the **Authorities** tab in the **Certificate manager** from the **Authentication** tab of the QGIS Options dialog.

As referenced in the workflow chart above, the first step is to import or reference a file of CAs. This step is optional, and may be unnecessary if your PKI trust chain originates from root CAs already installed in your operating system (OS), such as a certificate from a commercial certificate vendor. If your authenticating root CA is not in the OS's trusted root CAs, it will need to be imported or have its file system path referenced. (Contact your system administrator if unsure.)

By default, the root CAs from your OS are available; however, their trust settings are not inherited. You should review the certificate trust policy settings, especially if your OS root CAs have had their policies adjusted. Any certificate that is expired will be set to untrusted and will not be used in secure server connections, unless you specifically override its trust policy. To see the QGIS-discoverable trust chain for any certificate, select it and click the **Show information for certificate**.

You can edit the *trust policy* for any selected certificate within the chain. Any change in trust policy to a selected certificate will not be saved to the database unless the **Save certificate trust policy change to database** button is clicked *per* selected certification. Closing the dialog will **not** apply the policy changes.

You can review the filtered CAs, both intermediate and root certificates, that will be trusted for secure connections or change the default trust policy by clicking the **Options** button.

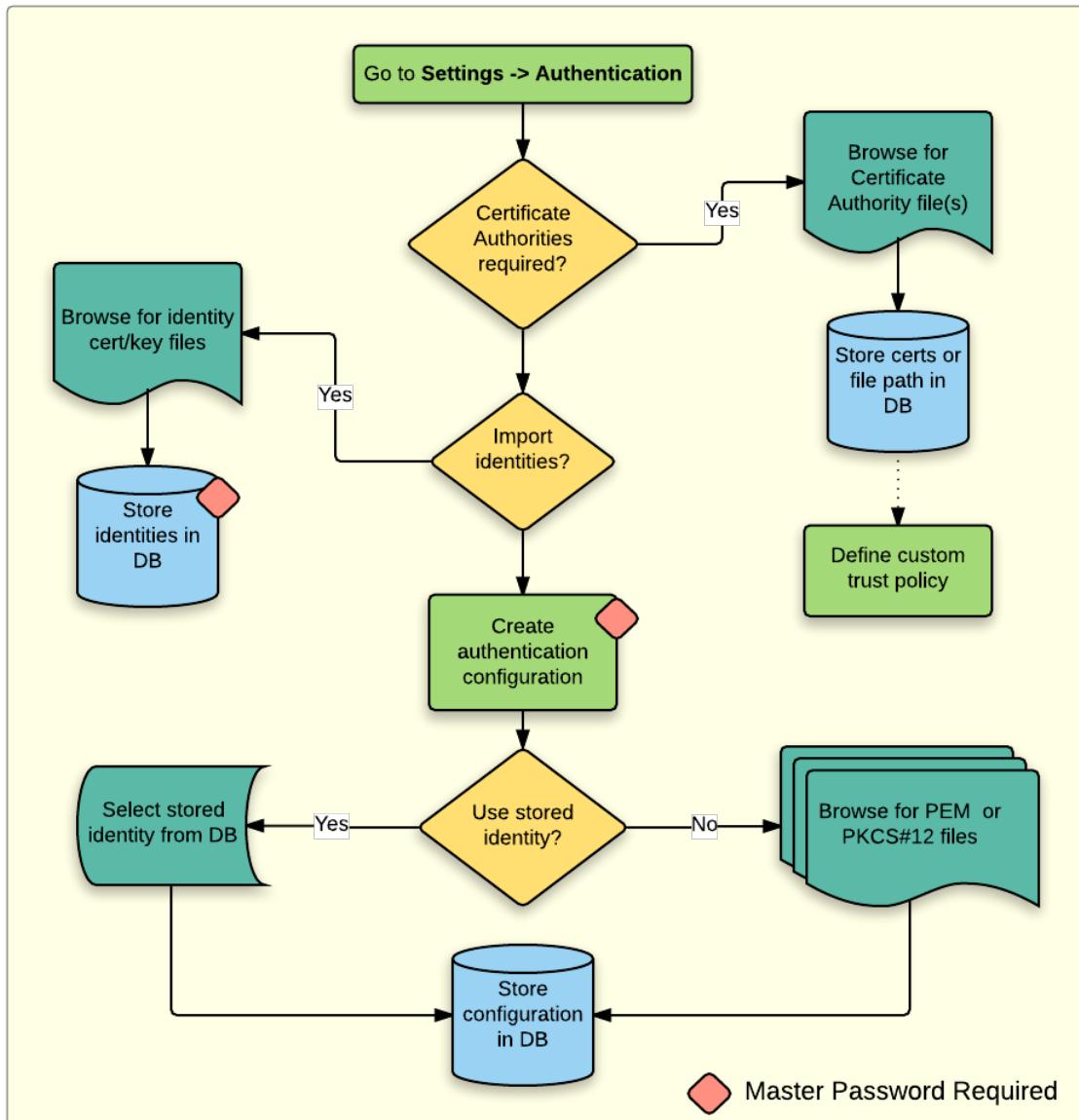


Fig. 19.22: PKI configuration workflow

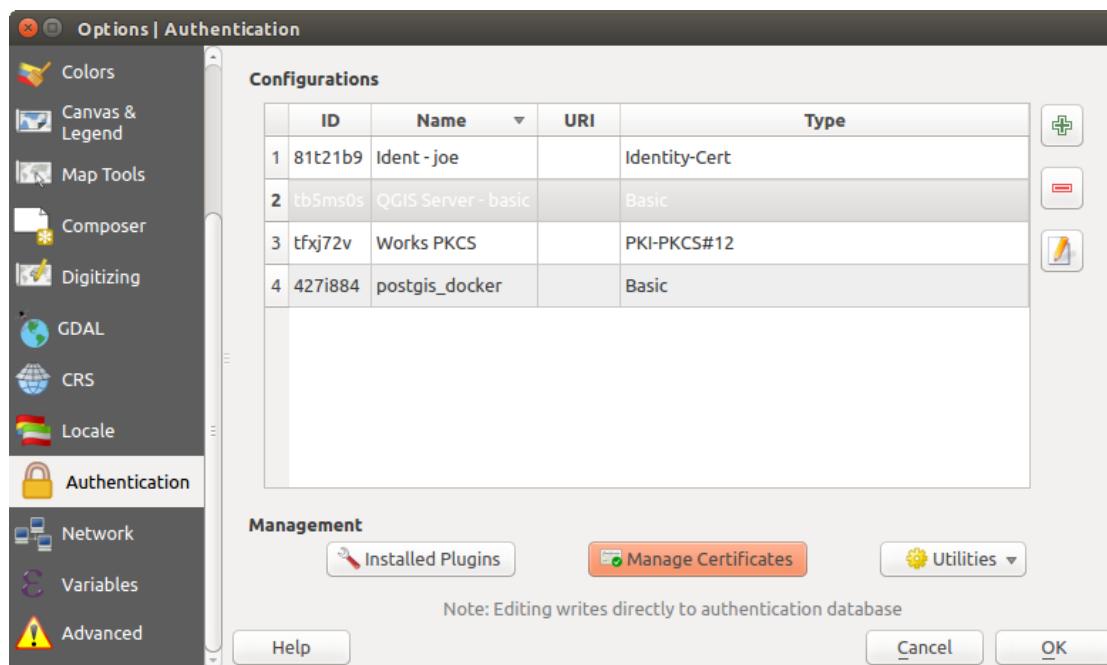


Fig. 19.23: Opening the Certificate Manager

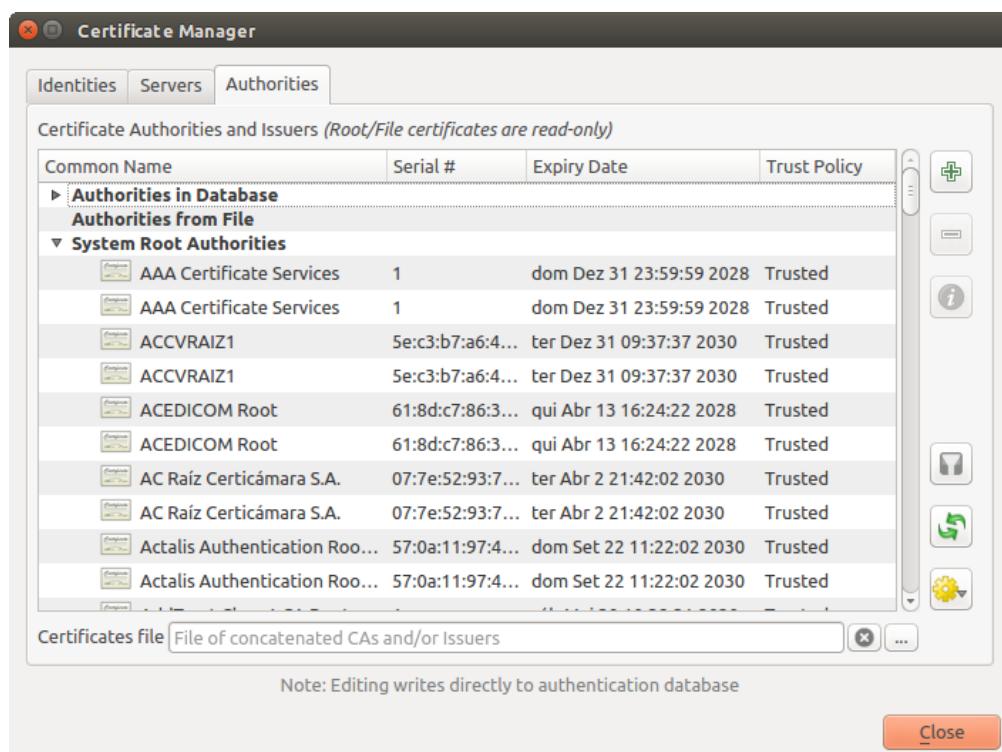


Fig. 19.24: Authorities editor

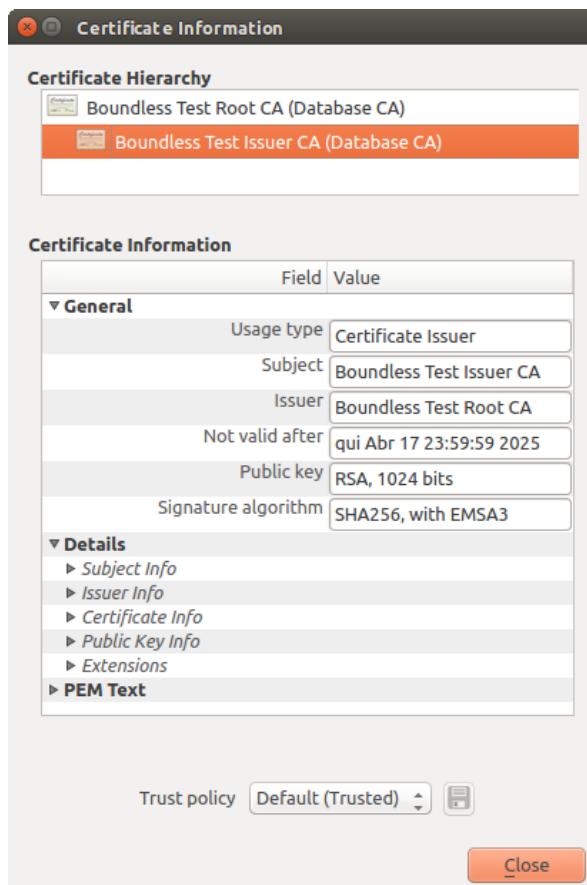


Fig. 19.25: Certificate info dialog



Fig. 19.26: Saving the trust policy changes

**Warning:** Changing the default trust policy may result in problems with secure connections.

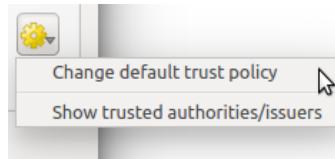


Fig. 19.27: Authorities options menu

You can import CAs or save a file system path from a file that contains multiple CAs, or import individual CAs. The standard PEM format for files that contain multiple CA chain certifications has the root cert at the bottom of the file and all subsequently signed child certificates above, towards the beginning of the file.

The CA certificate import dialog will find all CA certificates within the file, regardless of order, and also offers the option to import certificates that are considered invalid (in case you want to override their trust policy). You can override the trust policy upon import, or do so later within the **Authorities** editor.

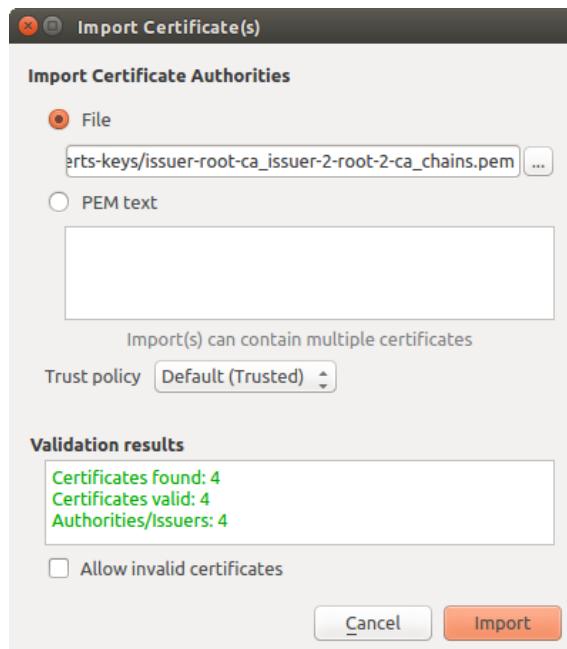


Fig. 19.28: Import certificates dialog

---

**Note:** If you are pasting certificate information into the *PEM text* field, note that encrypted certificates are not supported.

## Identities

You can manage available client identity bundles from the *Identities* tab in the *Certificate manager* from the **Authentication** tab of the QGIS Options dialog. An identity is what authenticates you against a PKI-enabled service and usually consists of a client certificate and private key, either as separate files or combined into a single “bundled” file. The bundle or private key is often passphrase-protected.

Once you have any Certificate Authorities (CAs) imported you can optionally import any identity bundles into the authentication database. If you do not wish to store the identities, you can reference their component file system paths within an individual authentication configuration.

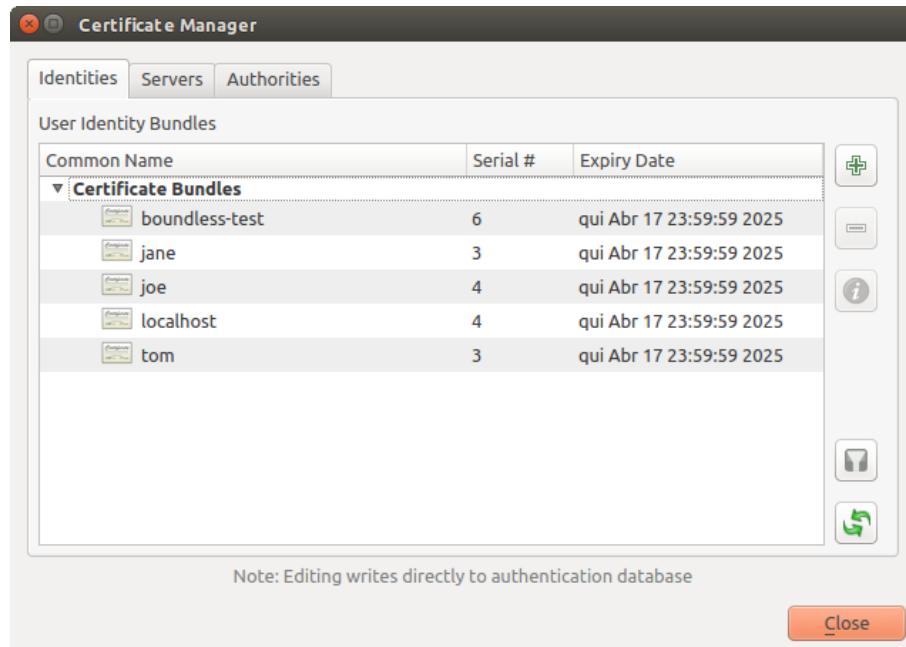


Fig. 19.29: Identities editor

When importing an identity bundle, it can be passphrase-protected or unprotected, and can contain CA certificates forming a trust chain. Trust chain certifications will not be imported here; they can be added separately under the *Authorities* tab.

Upon import the bundle's certificate and private key will be stored in the database, with the key's storage encrypted using the QGIS master password. Subsequent usage of the stored bundle from the database will only require input of the master password.

Personal identity bundles consisting of PEM/DER (.pem/.der) and PKCS#12 (.p12/.pfx) components are supported. If a key or bundle is passphrase-protected, the password will be required to validate the component prior to import. Likewise, if the client certificate in the bundle is invalid (for example, its effective date has not yet started or has elapsed) the bundle can not be imported.

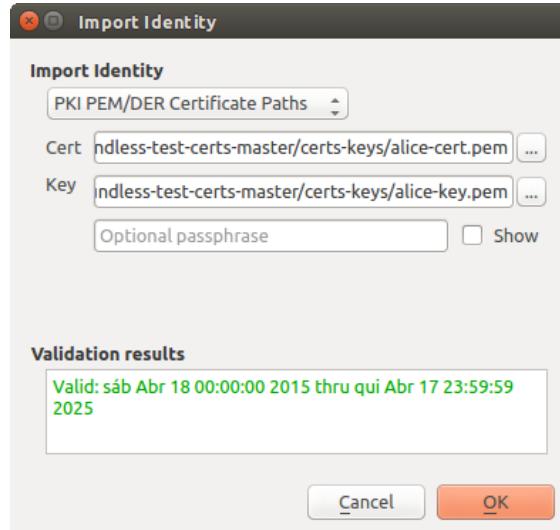


Fig. 19.30: PEM/DER identity import

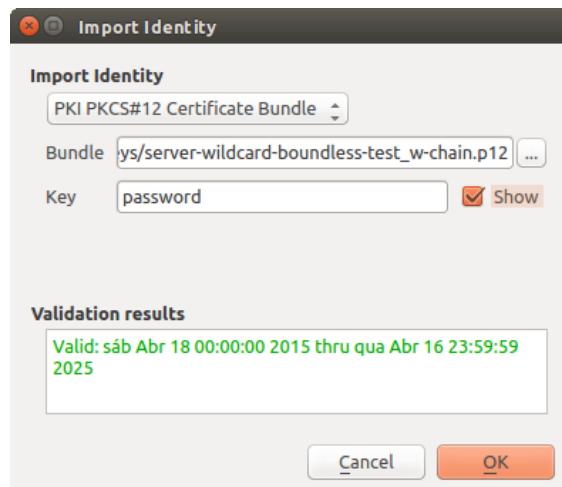


Fig. 19.31: PKCS#12 identity import

#### 19.2.4 Handling bad layers

Occasionally, the authentication configuration ID that is saved with a project file is no longer valid, possibly because the current authentication database is different than when the project was last saved, or due to a credentials mismatch. In such cases the *Handle bad layers* dialog will be presented upon QGIS launch.

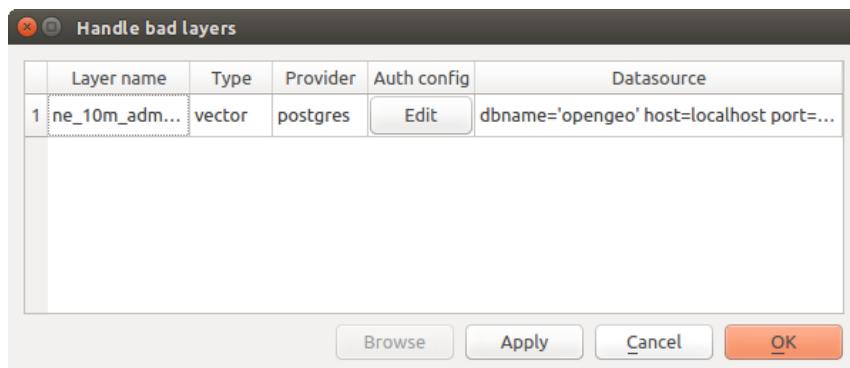


Fig. 19.32: Handle bad layers with authentication

If a data source is found to have an authentication configuration ID associated with it, you will be able to edit it. Doing so will automatically edit the data source string, much in the same way as opening the project file in a text editor and editing the string.

#### 19.2.5 Changing authentication config ID

Occasionally, you will need to change the authentication configuration ID that is associated with accessing a resource. There are instances where this is useful:

- **Resource auth config ID is no longer valid:** This can occur when you have switched auth databases and need to *align* a new configuration to the ID already associated with a resource.
- **Shared project files:** If you intended to share projects between users, e.g. via a shared file server, you can *predefine* a 7-character (containing **a-z** and/or **0-9**) that is associated with the resource. Then, individual users change the ID of an authentication configuration that is specific to their credentials of the resource. When the project is opened, the ID is found in the authentication database, but the credentials are different per user.

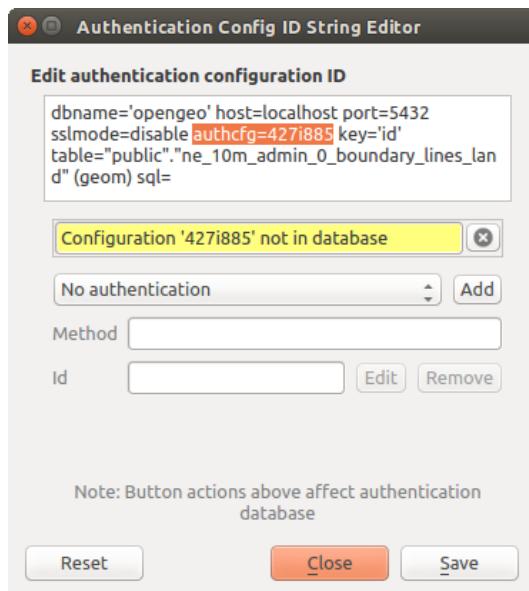


Fig. 19.33: Edit bad layer's authentication config ID

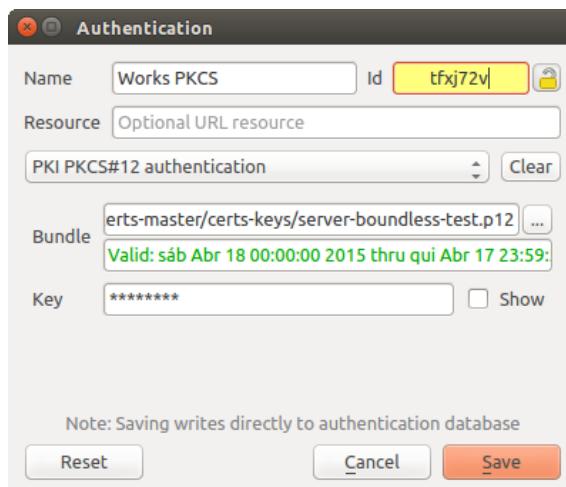


Fig. 19.34: Changing a layer's authentication config ID (unlocked yellow text field)

**Warning:** Changing the auth config ID is considered an advanced operation and should only be done with full knowledge as to why it is necessary. This is why there is a lock button that needs clicked, to unlock the ID's text field prior to editing the ID.

### 19.2.6 QGIS Server support

When using a project file, with layers that have authentication configurations, as a basis for a map in QGIS Server, there are a couple of additional setup steps necessary for QGIS to load the resources:

- Authentication database needs to be available
- Authentication database's master password needs to be available

When instantiating the authentication system, Server will create or use `qgis-auth.db` in `~/.qgis2/` or the directory defined by the `QGIS_AUTH_DB_DIR_PATH` environment variable. It may be that the Server's user has no HOME directory, in which case, use the environment variable to define a directory that the Server's user has read/write permissions and is not located within the web-accessible directories.

To pass the master password to Server, write it to the first line of file at a path on the file system readable by the Server processes user and defined using the `QGIS_AUTH_PASSWORD_FILE` environment variable. Ensure to limit the file as only readable by the Server's process user and to not store the file within web-accessible directories.

**Note:** `QGIS_AUTH_PASSWORD_FILE` variable will be removed from the Server environment immediately after accessing.

### 19.2.7 SSL server exceptions

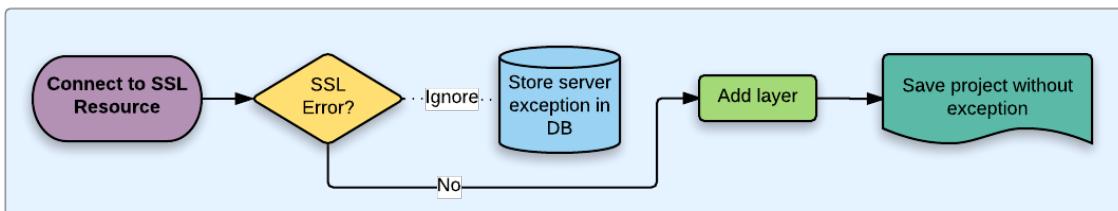


Fig. 19.35: SSL server exception

You can manage SSL server configurations and exceptions from the **Servers** tab in the **Authentication** section of the **QGIS Options** dialog.

Sometimes, when connecting to an SSL server, there are errors with the SSL “handshake” or the server’s certificate. You can ignore those errors or create an SSL server configuration as an exception. This is similar to how web browsers allow you to override SSL errors, but with more granular control.

**Warning:** You should not create an SSL server configuration unless you have complete knowledge of the entire SSL setup between the server and client. Instead, report the issue to the server administrator.

**Note:** Some PKI setups use a completely different CA trust chain to validate client identities than the chain used to validate the SSL server certificate. In such circumstances, any configuration created for the connecting server

will not necessarily fix an issue with the validation of your client identity, and only your client identity's issuer or server administrator can fix the issue.

You can pre-configure an SSL server configuration by clicking the  button. Alternatively, you can add a configuration when an SSL error occurs during a connection and you are presented with an **SSL Error** dialog (where the error can be ignored temporarily or saved to the database and ignored):

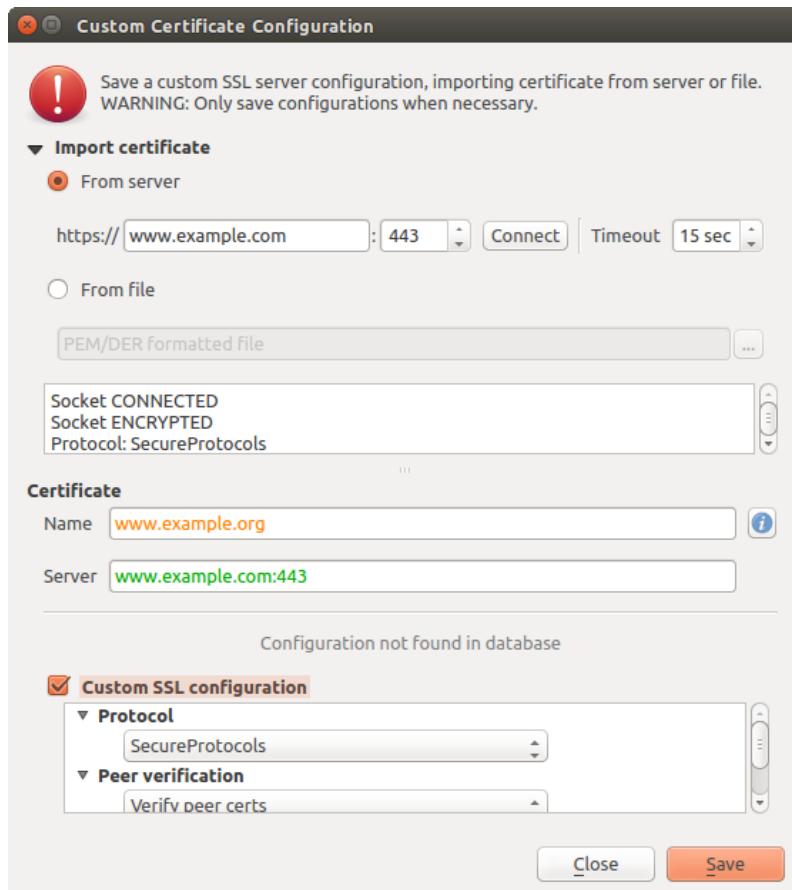


Fig. 19.36: Manually adding configuration

Once an SSL configuration is saved to the database, it can be edited or deleted.

If you want to pre-configure an SSL configuration and the import dialog is not working for your server's connection, you can manually trigger a connection via the **Python Console** by running the following code (replace `https://bugreports.qt-project.org` with the URL of your server):

```
from PyQt4.QtNetwork import *
req = QNetworkRequest(QUrl('https://bugreports.qt-project.org'))
reply = QgsNetworkAccessManager.instance().get(req)
```

This will open an SSL error dialog if any errors occur, where you can choose to save the configuration to the database.

## 19.3 Security Considerations

Once the master password is entered, the API is open to access authentication configs in the authentication database, similar to how Firefox works. However, in the initial implementation, no wall against PyQGIS access has been defined. This may lead to issues where a user downloads/install a malicious PyQGIS plugin or standalone app that gains access to authentication credentials.

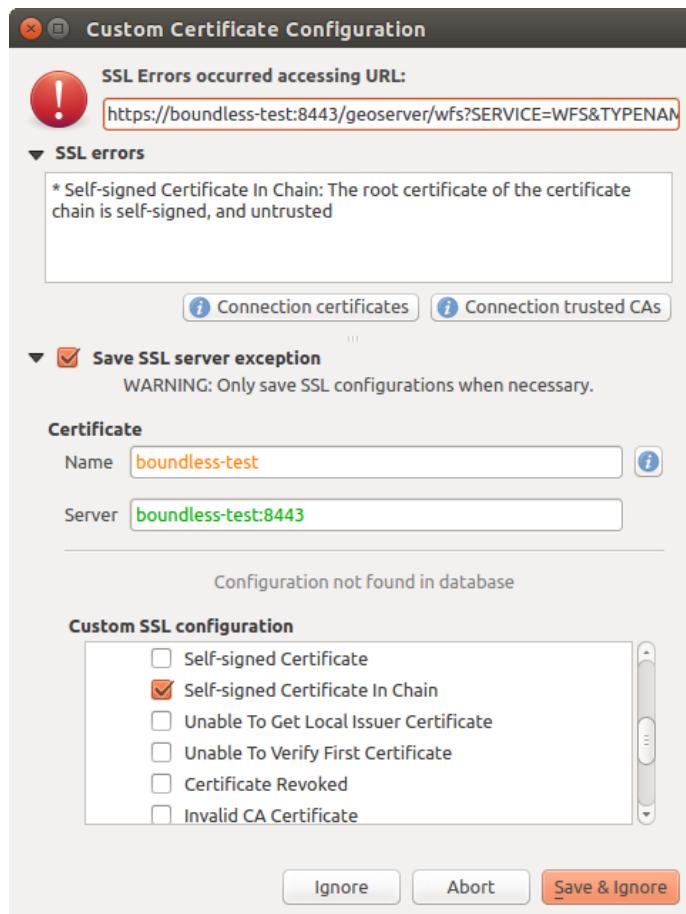


Fig. 19.37: Adding configuration during SSL error

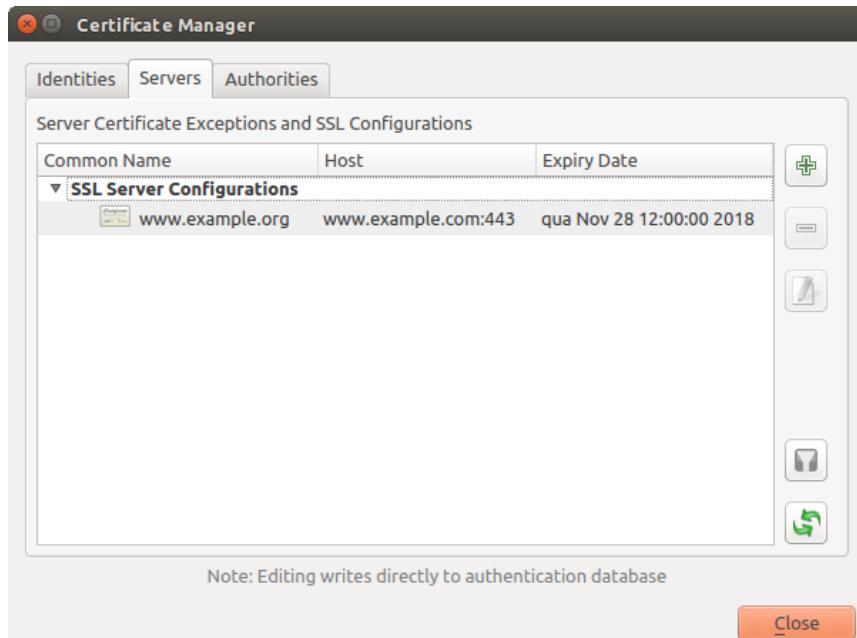


Fig. 19.38: Existing SSL configuration

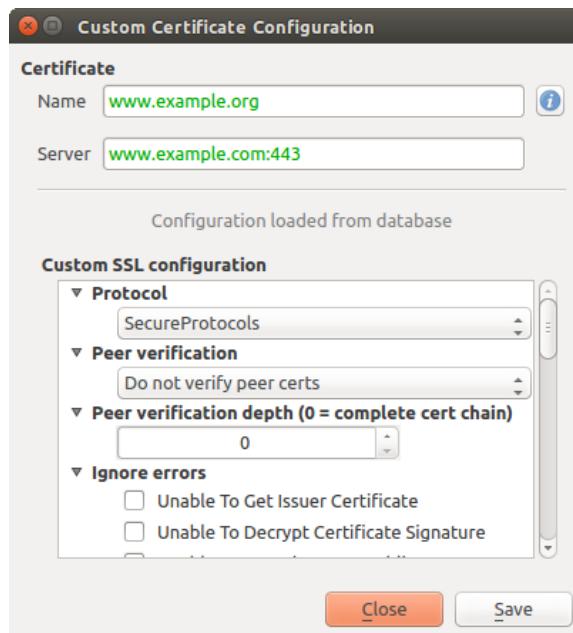


Fig. 19.39: Editing an existing SSL configuration

The quick solution for initial release of feature is to just not include most PyQGIS bindings for the authentication system.

Another simple, though not robust, fix is to add a combobox in *Settings → Options → Authentication* (defaults to “never”):

```
"Allow Python access to authentication system"
Choices: [ confirm once per session | always confirm | always allow | never ]
```

Such an option’s setting would need to be saved in a location non-accessible to Python, e.g. the authentication database, and encrypted with the master password.

- Another option may be to track which plugins the user has specifically allowed to access the authentication system, though it may be tricky to deduce which plugin is actually making the call.
- Sandboxing plugins, possibly in their own virtual environments, would reduce ‘cross-plugin’ hacking of authentication configs from another plugin that is authorized. This might mean limiting cross-plugin communication as well, but maybe only between third-party plugins.
- Another good solution is to issue code-signing certificates to vetted plugin authors. Then validate the plugin’s certificate upon loading. If need be the user can also directly set an untrusted policy for the certificate associated with the plugin using existing certificate management dialogs.
- Alternatively, access to sensitive authentication system data from Python
- could never be allowed, and only the use of QGIS core widgets, or duplicating authentication system integrations, would allow the plugin to work with resources that have an authentication configuration, while keeping master password and authentication config loading in the realm of the main app.

The same security concerns apply to C++ plugins, though it will be harder to restrict access, since there is no function binding to simply be removed as with Python.

### 19.3.1 Restrictions

The confusing [licensing and exporting](#) issues associated with OpenSSL apply. In order for Qt to work with SSL certificates, it needs access to the OpenSSL libraries. Depending upon how Qt was compiled, the default is to

dynamically link to the OpenSSL libs at run-time (to avoid the export limitations).

QCA follows a similar tactic, whereby linking to QCA incurs no restrictions, because the qca-openssl (OpenSSL) plugin is loaded at run-time. The qca-openssl plugin is directly linked to the OpenSSL libs. Packagers would be the ones needing to ensure any OpenSSL-linking restrictions are met, if they ship the plugin. Maybe. I don't really know. I'm not a lawyer.

The authentication system safely disables itself when `qca-openssl` is not found at run-time.

# CHAPTER 20

---

## GRASS GIS Integration

---

GRASS integration provides access to GRASS GIS databases and functionalities (see GRASS-PROJECT in *Literature and Web References*). The integration consists of two parts: provider and plugin. The provider allows to browse, manage and visualize GRASS raster and vector layers. The plugin can be used to create new GRASS locations and mapsets, change GRASS region, create and edit vector layers and analyze GRASS 2-D and 3-D data with more than 400 GRASS modules. In this section, we'll introduce the provider and plugin functionalities and give some examples of managing and working with GRASS data.

The provider supports GRASS version 6 and 7, the plugin supports GRASS 6 and 7 (starting from QGIS 2.12). QGIS distribution may contain provider/plugin for either GRASS 6 or GRASS 7 or for both versions at the same time (binaries have different file names). Only one version of the provider/plugin may be loaded on runtime however.

### 20.1 Demo dataset

As an example, we will use the QGIS Alaska dataset (see section *Downloading sample data*). It includes a small sample GRASS LOCATION with three vector layers and one raster elevation map. Create a new folder called `grassdata`, download the QGIS 'Alaska' dataset `qgis_sample_data.zip` from <https://qgis.org/downloads/data/> and unzip the file into `grassdata`.

More sample GRASS LOCATIONS are available at the GRASS website at <https://grass.osgeo.org/download/sample-data/>.

### 20.2 Loading GRASS raster and vector layers

If the provider is loaded in QGIS, the location item with GRASS  icon is added in the browser tree under each folder item which contains GRASS location. Go to the folder `grassdata` and expand location `alaska` and mapset `demo`.

You can load GRASS raster and vector layers like any other layer from the browser either by double click on layer item or by dragging and dropping to map canvas or legend.

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#### Tip: GRASS Data Loading

If you don't see GRASS location item, verify in *Help → About → Providers* if GRASS vector provider is loaded.

---

## 20.3 Importing data into a GRASS LOCATION via drag and drop

This section gives an example of how to import raster and vector data into a GRASS mapset.

1. In QGIS browser navigate to the mapset you want to import data into.
2. In QGIS browser find a layer you want to import to GRASS, note that you can open another instance of the browser (*Browser Panel (2)*) if source data are too far from the mapset in the tree.
3. Drag a layer and drop it on the target mapset. The import may take some time for larger layers, you will see animated icon in front of new layer item until the import finishes.

When raster data are in different CRS, they can be reprojected using an *Approximate* (fast) or *Exact* (precise) transformation. If a link to the source raster is created (using `r.external`), the source data are in the same CRS and the format is known to GDAL, the source data CRS will be used. You can set these options in the *Browser* tab in *GRASS Options*.

If a source raster has more bands, a new GRASS map is created for each layer with `.<band number>` suffix and group of all maps with  icon is created. External rasters have a different icon .

## 20.4 Managing GRASS data in QGIS Browser

- Copying maps: GRASS maps may be copied between mapsets within the same location using drag and drop.
- Deleting maps: Right click on a GRASS map and select *Delete* from context menu.
- Renaming maps: Right click on a GRASS map and select *Rename* from context menu.

## 20.5 GRASS Options

GRASS options may be set in *GRASS Options* dialog, which can be opened by right clicking on the location or mapset item in the browser and then choosing *GRASS Options*.

## 20.6 Starting the GRASS plugin

To use GRASS functionalities in QGIS, you must select and load the GRASS plugin using the Plugin Manager.

To do this, go to the menu *Plugins → Manage and Install Plugins...*, select  *GRASS* and click *OK*.

The following main features are provided with the GRASS menu (*Plugins → GRASS*) when you start the GRASS plugin:

-  Open Mapset
-  New Mapset
-  Close Mapset
-  Open GRASS Tools
-  Display Current GRASS Region



## 20.7 Opening GRASS mapset

A GRASS mapset must be opened to get access to GRASS Tools in the plugin (the tools are disabled if no mapset is open). You can open a mapset from the browser: right click on mapset item and then choose *Open mapset* from context menu.

## 20.8 GRASS LOCATION and MAPSET

GRASS data are stored in a directory referred to as GISDBASE. This directory, often called `grassdata`, must be created before you start working with the GRASS plugin in QGIS. Within this directory, the GRASS GIS data are organized by projects stored in subdirectories called LOCATIONS. Each LOCATION is defined by its coordinate system, map projection and geographical boundaries. Each LOCATION can have several MAPSETS (subdirectories of the LOCATION) that are used to subdivide the project into different topics or subregions, or as workspaces for individual team members (see Neteler & Mitasova 2008 in *Literature and Web References*). In order to analyse vector and raster layers with GRASS modules, you generally have to import them into a GRASS LOCATION. (This is not strictly true – with the GRASS modules `r.external` and `v.external` you can create read-only links to external GDAL/OGR-supported datasets without importing them. This is not the usual way for beginners to work with GRASS, therefore this functionality will not be described here.)

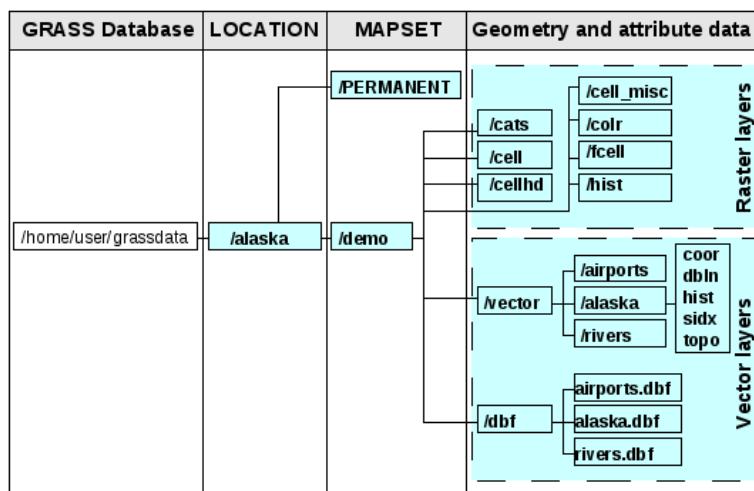


Fig. 20.1: GRASS data in the alaska LOCATION

## 20.9 Importing data into a GRASS LOCATION

See section *Importing data into a GRASS LOCATION via drag and drop* to find how data can be easily imported by dragging and dropping in the browser.

This section gives an example of how to import raster and vector data into the ‘alaska’ GRASS LOCATION provided by the QGIS ‘Alaska’ dataset in traditional way, using standard GRASS modules. Therefore, we use the landcover raster map `landcover.img` and the vector GML file `lakes.gml` from the QGIS ‘Alaska’ dataset (see *Downloading sample data*).

1. Start QGIS and make sure the GRASS plugin is loaded.
2. In the GRASS toolbar, click the Open MAPSET icon to bring up the MAPSET wizard.

3. Select as GRASS database the folder `grassdata` in the QGIS Alaska dataset, as LOCATION ‘alaska’, as MAPSET ‘demo’ and click *OK*.
4. Now click the  Open GRASS tools icon. The GRASS Toolbox (see section *The GRASS Toolbox*) dialog appears.
5. To import the raster map `landcover.img`, click the module `r.in.gdal` in the *Modules Tree* tab. This GRASS module allows you to import GDAL-supported raster files into a GRASS LOCATION. The module dialog for `r.in.gdal` appears.
6. Browse to the folder `raster` in the QGIS ‘Alaska’ dataset and select the file `landcover.img`.
7. As raster output name, define `landcover_grass` and click *Run*. In the *Output* tab, you see the currently running GRASS command `r.in.gdal -o input=/path/to/landcover.img output=landcover_grass`.
8. When it says **Successfully finished**, click *View Output*. The `landcover_grass` raster layer is now imported into GRASS and will be visualized in the QGIS canvas.
9. To import the vector GML file `lakes.gml`, click the module `v.in.ogr` in the *Modules Tree* tab. This GRASS module allows you to import OGR-supported vector files into a GRASS LOCATION. The module dialog for `v.in.ogr` appears.
10. Browse to the folder `gml` in the QGIS ‘Alaska’ dataset and select the file `lakes.gml` as OGR file.
11. As vector output name, define `lakes_grass` and click *Run*. You don’t have to care about the other options in this example. In the *Output* tab you see the currently running GRASS command `v.in.ogr -o dsn=/path/to/lakes.gml output=lakes\_\_grass`.
12. When it says **Successfully finished**, click *View Output*. The `lakes_grass` vector layer is now imported into GRASS and will be visualized in the QGIS canvas.

### 20.9.1 Creating a new GRASS LOCATION

As an example, here is the sample GRASS LOCATION `alaska`, which is projected in the Albers Equal Area projection using feet as units. This sample GRASS LOCATION `alaska` will be used for all examples and exercises in the following GRASS-related sections. It is useful to download and install the dataset on your computer (see [Downloading sample data](#)).

1. Start QGIS and make sure the GRASS plugin is loaded.
2. Visualize the `alaska.shp` shapefile (see section [Loading a layer from a file](#)) from the QGIS Alaska dataset (see [Downloading sample data](#)).
3. In the GRASS toolbar, click on the  New mapset icon to bring up the *MAPSET* wizard.
4. Select an existing GRASS database (GISDBASE) folder `grassdata`, or create one for the new LOCATION using a file manager on your computer. Then click *Next*.
5. We can use this wizard to create a new MAPSET within an existing LOCATION (see section [Adding a new MAPSET](#)) or to create a new LOCATION altogether. Select  *Create new location* (see [figure\\_grass\\_new\\_location](#)).
6. Enter a name for the LOCATION – we used ‘`alaska`’ – and click *Next*.
7. Define the projection by clicking on the radio button  *Projection* to enable the projection list.
8. We are using Albers Equal Area Alaska (feet) projection. Since we happen to know that it is represented by the EPSG ID 2964, we enter it in the search box. (Note: If you want to repeat this process for another LOCATION and projection and haven’t memorized the EPSG ID, click on the  CRS Status icon in the lower right-hand corner of the status bar (see section [Working with Projections](#))).
9. In *Filter*, insert 2964 to select the projection.
10. Click *Next*.

11. To define the default region, we have to enter the LOCATION bounds in the north, south, east, and west directions. Here, we simply click on the button *Set Current QGIS Extent*, to apply the extent of the loaded layer `alaska.shp` as the GRASS default region extent.
12. Click *Next*.
13. We also need to define a MAPSET within our new LOCATION (this is necessary when creating a new LOCATION). You can name it whatever you like - we used ‘demo’. GRASS automatically creates a special MAPSET called PERMANENT, designed to store the core data for the project, its default spatial extent and coordinate system definitions (see Neteler & Mitasova 2008 in *Literature and Web References*).
14. Check out the summary to make sure it’s correct and click *Finish*.
15. The new LOCATION, ‘alaska’, and two MAPSETS, ‘demo’ and ‘PERMANENT’, are created. The currently opened working set is ‘demo’, as you defined.
16. Notice that some of the tools in the GRASS toolbar that were disabled are now enabled.

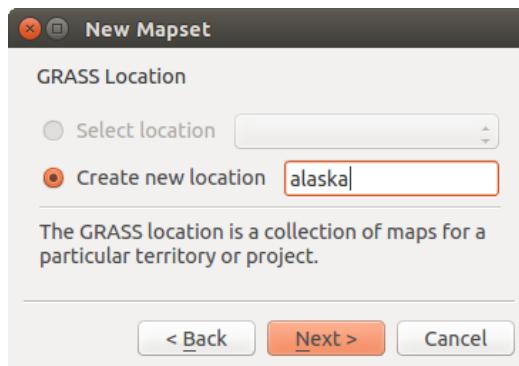


Fig. 20.2: Creating a new GRASS LOCATION or a new MAPSET in QGIS

If that seemed like a lot of steps, it’s really not all that bad and a very quick way to create a LOCATION. The LOCATION ‘alaska’ is now ready for data import (see section *Importing data into a GRASS LOCATION*). You can also use the already-existing vector and raster data in the sample GRASS LOCATION ‘alaska’, included in the QGIS ‘Alaska’ dataset *Downloading sample data*, and move on to section *The GRASS vector data model*.

### 20.9.2 Adding a new MAPSET

A user has write access only to a GRASS MAPSET which he or she created. This means that besides access to your own MAPSET, you can read maps in other users’ MAPSETS (and they can read yours), but you can modify or remove only the maps in your own MAPSET.

All MAPSETS include a WIND file that stores the current boundary coordinate values and the currently selected raster resolution (see Neteler & Mitasova 2008 in *Literature and Web References*, and section *The GRASS region tool*).

1. Start QGIS and make sure the GRASS plugin is loaded.
2. In the GRASS toolbar, click on the  *New mapset* icon to bring up the MAPSET wizard.
3. Select the GRASS database (GISDBASE) folder `grassdata` with the LOCATION ‘alaska’, where we want to add a further MAPSET called ‘test’.
4. Click *Next*.
5. We can use this wizard to create a new MAPSET within an existing LOCATION or to create a new LOCATION altogether. Click on the radio button  *Select location* (see *figure\_grass\_new\_location*) and click *Next*.
6. Enter the name `text` for the new MAPSET. Below in the wizard, you see a list of existing MAPSETS and corresponding owners.

7. Click *Next*, check out the summary to make sure it's all correct and click *Finish*.

## 20.10 The GRASS vector data model

It is important to understand the GRASS vector data model prior to digitizing. In general, GRASS uses a topological vector model. This means that areas are not represented as closed polygons, but by one or more boundaries. A boundary between two adjacent areas is digitized only once, and it is shared by both areas. Boundaries must be connected and closed without gaps. An area is identified (and labelled) by the **centroid** of the area.

Besides boundaries and centroids, a vector map can also contain points and lines. All these geometry elements can be mixed in one vector and will be represented in different so-called ‘layers’ inside one GRASS vector map. So in GRASS, a layer is not a vector or raster map but a level inside a vector layer. This is important to distinguish carefully. (Although it is possible to mix geometry elements, it is unusual and, even in GRASS, only used in special cases such as vector network analysis. Normally, you should prefer to store different geometry elements in different layers.)

It is possible to store several ‘layers’ in one vector dataset. For example, fields, forests and lakes can be stored in one vector. An adjacent forest and lake can share the same boundary, but they have separate attribute tables. It is also possible to attach attributes to boundaries. An example might be the case where the boundary between a lake and a forest is a road, so it can have a different attribute table.

The ‘layer’ of the feature is defined by the ‘layer’ inside GRASS. ‘Layer’ is the number which defines if there is more than one layer inside the dataset (e.g., if the geometry is forest or lake). For now, it can be only a number. In the future, GRASS will also support names as fields in the user interface.

Attributes can be stored inside the GRASS LOCATION as dBase, SQLite3 or in external database tables, for example, PostgreSQL, MySQL, Oracle, etc.

Attributes in database tables are linked to geometry elements using a ‘category’ value.

‘Category’ (key, ID) is an integer attached to geometry primitives, and it is used as the link to one key column in the database table.

---

### Tip: Learning the GRASS Vector Model

The best way to learn the GRASS vector model and its capabilities is to download one of the many GRASS tutorials where the vector model is described more deeply. See <https://grass.osgeo.org/documentation/manuals/> for more information, books and tutorials in several languages.

---

## 20.11 Creating a new GRASS vector layer

To create a new GRASS vector layer, select one of following items from mapset context menu in the browser:

- New Point Layer
- New Line Layer
- New Polygon Layer

and enter a name in the dialog. A new vector map will be created and layer will be added to canvas and editing started. Selecting type of the layer does not restrict geometry types which can be digitized in the vector map. In GRASS, it is possible to organize all sorts of geometry types (point, line and polygon) in one vector map. The type is only used to add the layer to the canvas, because QGIS requires a layer to have a specific type.

It is also possible to add layers to existing vector maps selecting one of the items described above from context menu of existing vector map.

In GRASS, it is possible to organize all sorts of geometry types (point, line and area) in one layer, because GRASS uses a topological vector model, so you don't need to select the geometry type when creating a new GRASS vector.

This is different from shapefile creation with QGIS, because shapefiles use the Simple Feature vector model (see section [Creating new vector layers](#)).

## 20.12 Digitizing and editing a GRASS vector layer

GRASS vector layers can be digitized using the standard QGIS digitizing tools. There are however some particularities, which you should know about, due to

- GRASS topological model versus QGIS simple feature
- complexity of GRASS model
  - multiple layers in single maps
  - multiple geometry types in single map
  - geometry sharing by multiple features from multiple layers

The particularities are discussed in the following sections.

### Save, discard changes, undo, redo

**Warning:** All the changes done during editing are immediately written to vector map and related attribute tables.

Changes are written after each operation, it is however, possible to do undo/redo or discard all changes when closing editing. If undo or discard changes is used, original state is rewritten in vector map and attribute tables.

There are two main reasons for this behaviour:

- It is the nature of GRASS vectors coming from conviction that user wants to do what he is doing and it is better to have data saved when the work is suddenly interrupted (for example, blackout)
- Necessity for effective editing of topological data is visualized information about topological correctness, such information can only be acquired from GRASS vector map if changes are written to the map.

### Toolbar

The ‘Digitizing Toolbar’ has some specific tools when a GRASS layer is edited:

Icon	Tool	Purpose
	New Point	Digitize new point
	New Line	Digitize new line
	New Boundary	Digitize new boundary
	New Centroid	Digitize new centroid (label existing area)
	New Closed Boundary	Digitize new closed boundary

Table GRASS Digitizing: GRASS Digitizing Tools

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### Tip: Digitizing polygons in GRASS

If you want to create a polygon in GRASS, you first digitize the boundary of the polygon. Then you add a centroid (label point) into the closed boundary. The reason for this is that a topological vector model links the attribute information of a polygon always to the centroid and not to the boundary.

---

### Category

Category, often called cat, is sort of ID. The name comes from times when GRASS vectors had only singly attribute “category”. Category is used as a link between geometry and attributes. A single geometry may have multiple categories and thus represent multiple features in different layers. Currently it is possible to assign only one category per layer using QGIS editing tools. New features have automatically assigned new unique category, except boundaries. Boundaries usually only form areas and do not represent linear features, it is however possible to define attributes for a boundary later, for example in different layer.

New categories are always created only in currently being edited layer.

It is not possible to assign more categories to geometry using QGIS editing, such data are properly represented as multiple features, and individual features, even from different layers, may be deleted.

### Attributes

Attributes of currently edited layer can only be modified. If the vector map contains more layers, features of other layers will have all attributes set to ‘<not editable (layer #)>’ to warn you that such attribute is not editable. The reason is, that other layers may have and usually have different set of fields while QGIS only supports one fixed set of fields per layer.

If a geometry primitive does not have a category assigned, a new unique category is automatically assigned and new record in attribute table is created when an attribute of that geometry is changed.

---

**Tip:** If you want to do bulk update of attributes in table, for example using ‘Field Calculator’ ([Using the Field Calculator](#)), and there are features without category which you don’t want to update (typically boundaries), you can filter them out by setting ‘Advanced Filter’ to `cat is not null`.

---

### Editing style

The topological symbology is essential for effective editing of topological data. When editing starts, a specialized ‘GRASS Edit’ renderer is set on the layer automatically and original renderer is restored when editing is closed. The style may be customized in layer properties ‘Style’ tab. The style can also be stored in project file or in separate file as any other style. If you customize the style, do not change its name, because it is used to reset the style when editing is started again.

---

**Tip:** Do not save project file when the layer is edited, the layer would be stored with ‘Edit Style’ which has no meaning if layer is not edited.

---

The style is based on topological information which is temporarily added to attribute table as field ‘topo\_symbol’. The field is automatically removed when editing is closed.

---

**Tip:** Do not remove ‘topo\_symbol’ field from attribute table, that would make features invisible because the renderer is based on that column.

---

### Snapping

To form an area, vertices of connected boundaries must have **exactly** the same coordinates. This can be achieved using snapping tool only if canvas and vector map have the same CRS. Otherwise, due conversion from map coordinates to canvas and back, the coordinate may become slightly different due to representation error and CRS transformations.

---

**Tip:** Use layer’s CRS also for canvas when editing.

---

### Limitations

Simultaneous editing of multiple layers within the same vector at the same time is not supported. This is mainly due to the impossibility of handling multiple undo stacks for a single data source.

 On Linux and macOS only one GRASS layer can be edited at time. This is due to a bug in GRASS which does not allow to close database drivers in random order. This is being solved with GRASS developers.

---

#### Tip: GRASS Edit Permissions

You must be the owner of the GRASS MAPSET you want to edit. It is impossible to edit data layers in a MAPSET that is not yours, even if you have write permission.

---

## 20.13 The GRASS region tool

The region definition (setting a spatial working window) in GRASS is important for working with raster layers. Vector analysis is by default not limited to any defined region definitions. But all newly created rasters will have the spatial extension and resolution of the currently defined GRASS region, regardless of their original extension and resolution. The current GRASS region is stored in the \$LOCATION/\$MAPSET/WIND file, and it defines north, south, east and west bounds, number of columns and rows, horizontal and vertical spatial resolution.

It is possible to switch on and off the visualization of the GRASS region in the QGIS canvas using the  `Display current GRASS region` button.

The region can be modified in ‘Region’ tab in ‘GRASS Tools’ dock widget. Type in the new region bounds and resolution, and click *Apply*. If you click on *Select the extent by dragging on canvas* you can select a new region interactively with your mouse on the QGIS canvas dragging a rectangle.

The GRASS module `g.region` provides a lot more parameters to define an appropriate region extent and resolution for your raster analysis. You can use these parameters with the GRASS Toolbox, described in section [The GRASS Toolbox](#).

## 20.14 The GRASS Toolbox

The  `Open GRASS Tools` box provides GRASS module functionalities to work with data inside a selected GRASS LOCATION and MAPSET. To use the GRASS Toolbox you need to open a LOCATION and MAPSET that you have write permission for (usually granted, if you created the MAPSET). This is necessary, because new raster or vector layers created during analysis need to be written to the currently selected LOCATION and MAPSET.

### 20.14.1 Working with GRASS modules

The GRASS shell inside the GRASS Toolbox provides access to almost all (more than 300) GRASS modules in a command line interface. To offer a more user-friendly working environment, about 200 of the available GRASS modules and functionalities are also provided by graphical dialogs within the GRASS plugin Toolbox.

A complete list of GRASS modules available in the graphical Toolbox in QGIS version 3.4 is available in the GRASS wiki at [https://grass.osgeo.org/wiki/GRASS-QGIS\\_relevant\\_module\\_list](https://grass.osgeo.org/wiki/GRASS-QGIS_relevant_module_list).

It is also possible to customize the GRASS Toolbox content. This procedure is described in section [Customizing the GRASS Toolbox](#).

As shown in `figure_grass_toolbox`, you can look for the appropriate GRASS module using the thematically grouped *Modules Tree* or the searchable *Modules List* tab.

By clicking on a graphical module icon, a new tab will be added to the Toolbox dialog, providing three new sub-tabs: *Options*, *Output* and *Manual*.

#### Options

The *Options* tab provides a simplified module dialog where you can usually select a raster or vector layer visualized in the QGIS canvas and enter further module-specific parameters to run the module.

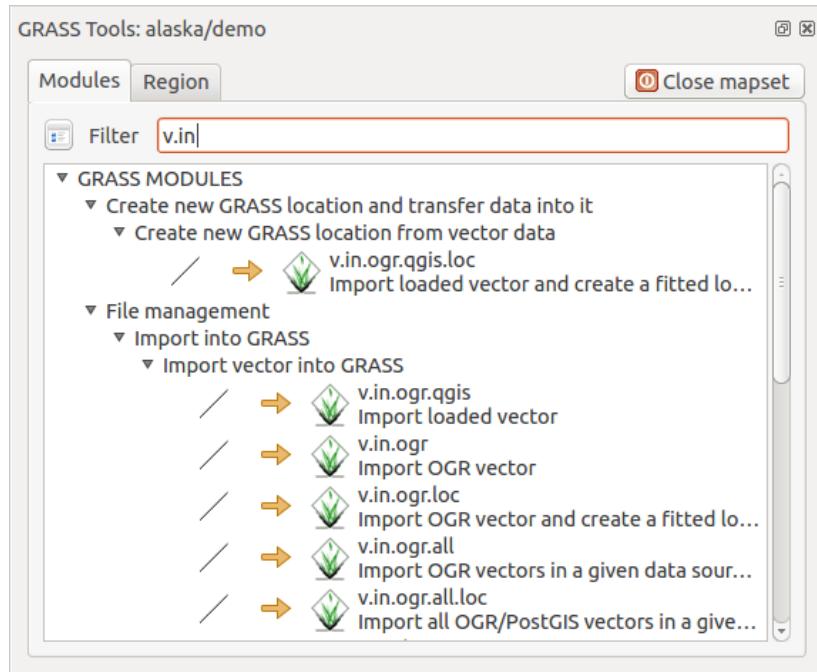


Fig. 20.3: GRASS Toolbox and Module Tree

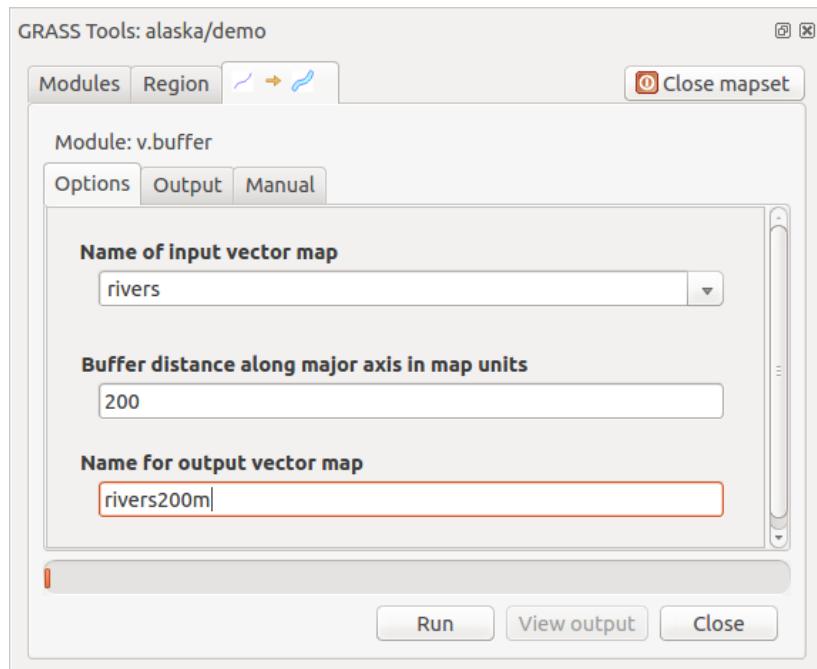


Fig. 20.4: GRASS Toolbox Module Options

The provided module parameters are often not complete to keep the dialog simple. If you want to use further module parameters and flags, you need to start the GRASS shell and run the module in the command line.

A new feature since QGIS 1.8 is the support for a *Show Advanced Options* button below the simplified module dialog in the *Options* tab. At the moment, it is only added to the module `v.in.ascii` as an example of use, but it will probably be part of more or all modules in the GRASS Toolbox in future versions of QGIS. This allows you to use the complete GRASS module options without the need to switch to the GRASS shell.

## Output

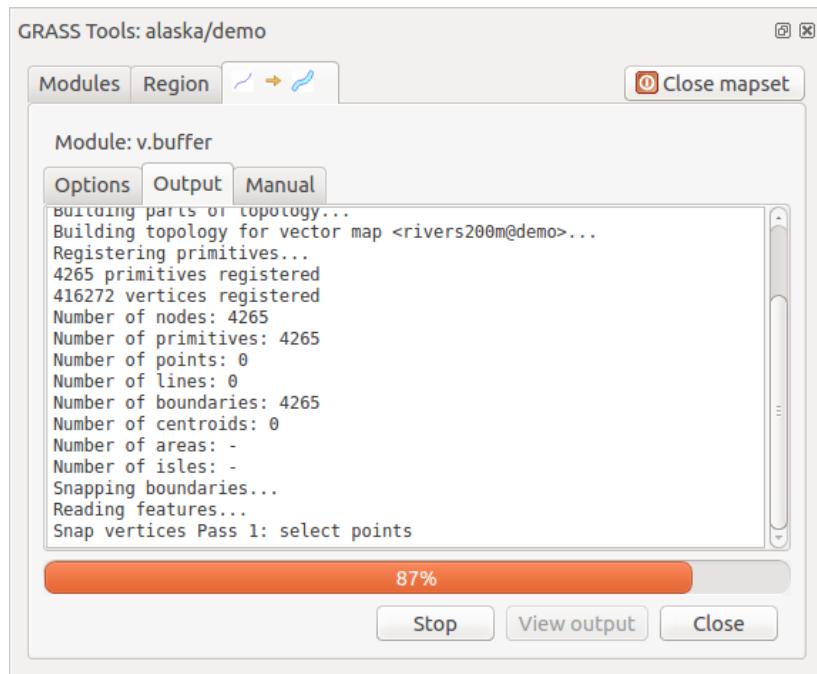


Fig. 20.5: GRASS Toolbox Module Output

The *Output* tab provides information about the output status of the module. When you click the *Run* button, the module switches to the *Output* tab and you see information about the analysis process. If all works well, you will finally see a *Successfully finished* message.

## Manual

The *Manual* tab shows the HTML help page of the GRASS module. You can use it to check further module parameters and flags or to get a deeper knowledge about the purpose of the module. At the end of each module manual page, you see further links to the [Main Help index](#), the [Thematic index](#) and the [Full index](#). These links provide the same information as the module `g.manual`.

---

### Tip: Display results immediately

If you want to display your calculation results immediately in your map canvas, you can use the ‘View Output’ button at the bottom of the module tab.

---

## 20.14.2 GRASS module examples

The following examples will demonstrate the power of some of the GRASS modules.

### Creating contour lines

The first example creates a vector contour map from an elevation raster (DEM). Here, it is assumed that you have the Alaska LOCATION set up as explained in section [Importing data into a GRASS LOCATION](#).

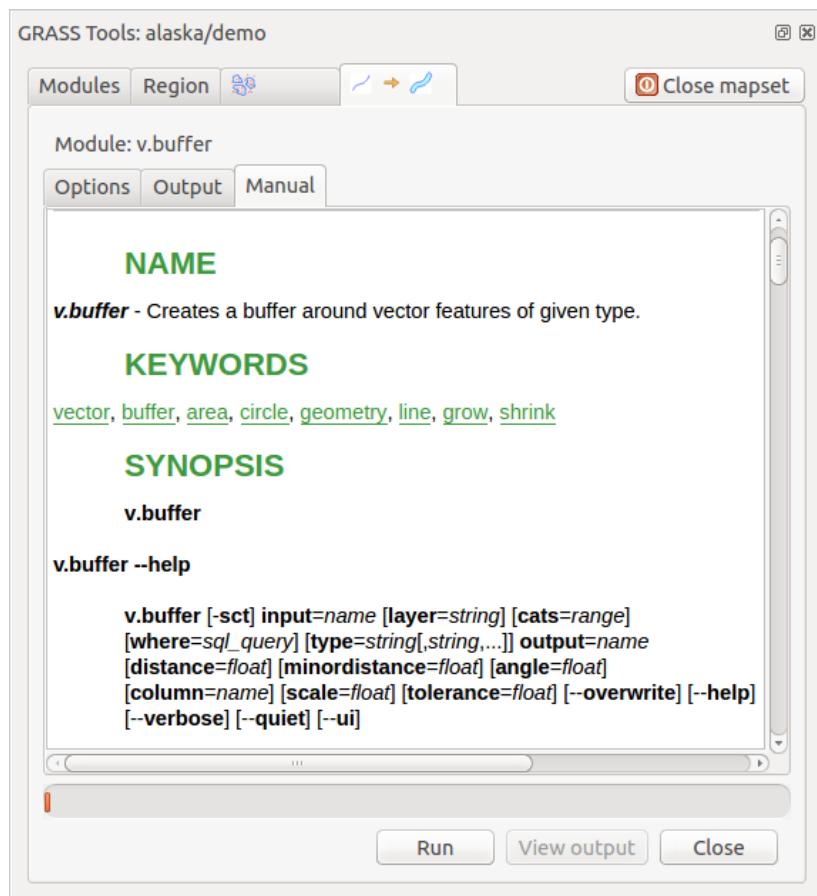


Fig. 20.6: GRASS Toolbox Module Manual

- First, open the location by clicking the  Open mapset button and choosing the Alaska location.
- Now open the Toolbox with the  Open GRASS tools button.
- In the list of tool categories, double-click *Raster → Surface Management → Generate vector contour lines*.
- Now a single click on the tool **r.contour** will open the tool dialog as explained above (see [Working with GRASS modules](#)).
- In the *Name of input raster map* enter `gtopo30`.
- Type into the *Increment between Contour levels*  the value 100. (This will create contour lines at intervals of 100 meters.)
- Type into the *Name for output vector map* the name `ctour_100`.
- Click *Run* to start the process. Wait for several moments until the message `Successfully finished` appears in the output window. Then click *View Output* and *Close*.

Since this is a large region, it will take a while to display. After it finishes rendering, you can open the layer properties window to change the line color so that the contours appear clearly over the elevation raster, as in [The Vector Properties Dialog](#).

Next, zoom in to a small, mountainous area in the center of Alaska. Zooming in close, you will notice that the contours have sharp corners. GRASS offers the **v.generalize** tool to slightly alter vector maps while keeping their overall shape. The tool uses several different algorithms with different purposes. Some of the algorithms (i.e., Douglas Peuker and Vertex Reduction) simplify the line by removing some of the vertices. The resulting vector will load faster. This process is useful when you have a highly detailed vector, but you are creating a very small-scale map, so the detail is unnecessary.

---

#### Tip: The simplify tool

Note that QGIS has a *Vector → Geometry Tools → Simplify geometries* tool that works just like the GRASS **v.generalize** Douglas-Peuker algorithm.

---

However, the purpose of this example is different. The contour lines created by **r.contour** have sharp angles that should be smoothed. Among the **v.generalize** algorithms, there is Chaiken's, which does just that (also Hermite splines). Be aware that these algorithms can **add** additional vertices to the vector, causing it to load even more slowly.

- Open the GRASS Toolbox and double-click the categories *Vector → Develop map → Generalization*, then click on the **v.generalize** module to open its options window.
- Check that the 'ctour\_100' vector appears as the *Name of input vector*.
- From the list of algorithms, choose Chaiken's. Leave all other options at their default, and scroll down to the last row to enter in the field *Name for output vector map* 'ctour\_100\_smooth', and click *Run*.
- The process takes several moments. Once `Successfully finished` appears in the output windows, click *View Output* and then *Close*.
- You may change the color of the vector to display it clearly on the raster background and to contrast with the original contour lines. You will notice that the new contour lines have smoother corners than the original while staying faithful to the original overall shape.

---

#### Tip: Other uses for r.contour

The procedure described above can be used in other equivalent situations. If you have a raster map of precipitation data, for example, then the same method will be used to create a vector map of isohyetal (constant rainfall) lines.

---



Fig. 20.7: GRASS module v.generalize to smooth a vector map

### Creating a Hillshade 3-D effect

Several methods are used to display elevation layers and give a 3-D effect to maps. The use of contour lines, as shown above, is one popular method often chosen to produce topographic maps. Another way to display a 3-D effect is by hillshading. The hillshade effect is created from a DEM (elevation) raster by first calculating the slope and aspect of each cell, then simulating the sun's position in the sky and giving a reflectance value to each cell. Thus, you get sun-facing slopes lighted; the slopes facing away from the sun (in shadow) are darkened.

- Begin this example by loading the gtopo30 elevation raster. Start the GRASS Toolbox, and under the Raster category, double-click to open *Spatial analysis → Terrain analysis*.
- Then click **r.shaded.relief** to open the module.
- Change the *azimuth angle*  270 to 315.
- Enter gtopo30\_shade for the new hillshade raster, and click *Run*.
- When the process completes, add the hillshade raster to the map. You should see it displayed in grayscale.
- To view both the hillshading and the colors of the gtopo30 together, move the hillshade map below the gtopo30 map in the table of contents, then open the *Properties* window of gtopo30, switch to the *Transparency* tab and set its transparency level to about 25%.

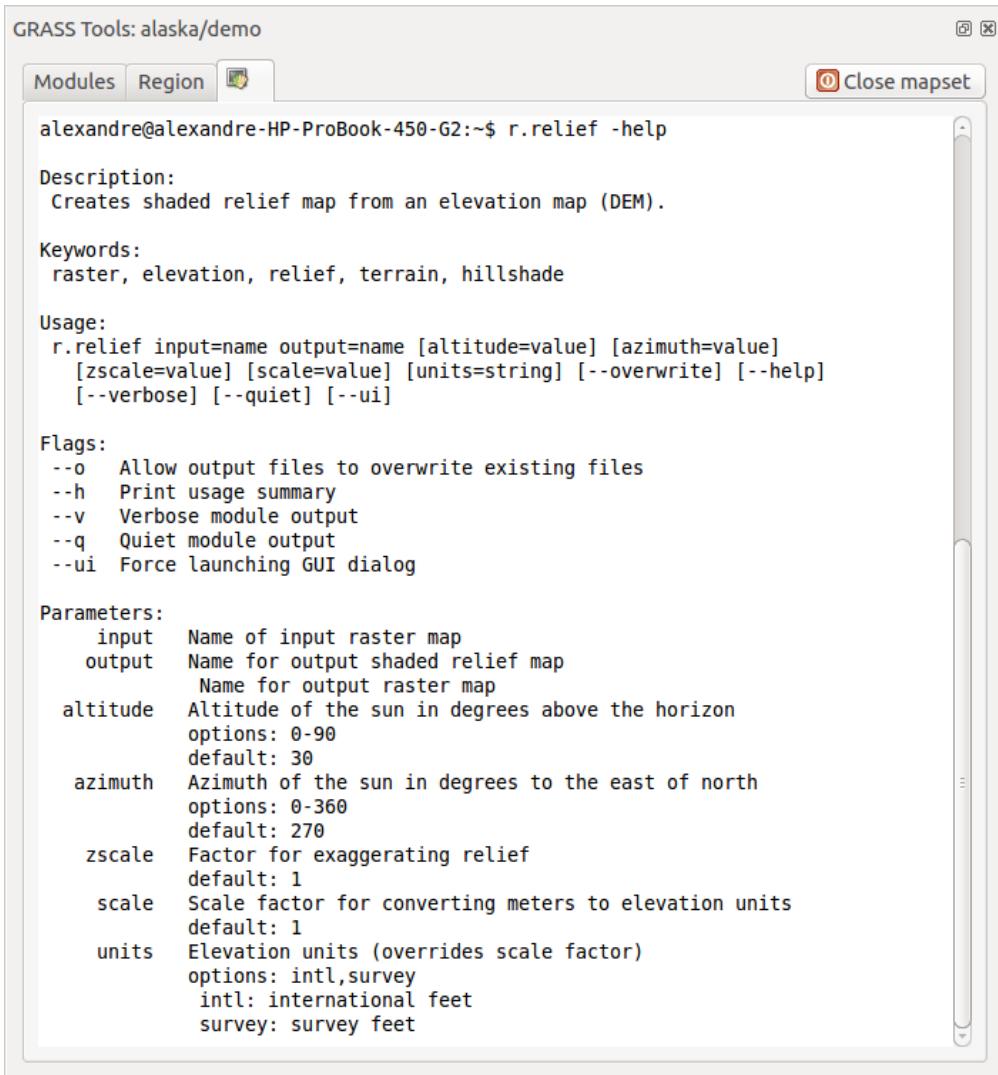
You should now have the gtopo30 elevation with its colormap and transparency setting displayed **above** the grayscale hillshade map. In order to see the visual effects of the hillshading, turn off the gtopo30\_shade map, then turn it back on.

### Using the GRASS shell

The GRASS plugin in QGIS is designed for users who are new to GRASS and not familiar with all the modules and options. As such, some modules in the Toolbox do not show all the options available, and some modules do not appear at all. The GRASS shell (or console) gives the user access to those additional GRASS modules that do not appear in the Toolbox tree, and also to some additional options to the modules that are in the Toolbox with the simplest default parameters. This example demonstrates the use of an additional option in the **r.shaded.relief** module that was shown above.

The module **r.shaded.relief** can take a parameter *zmult*, which multiplies the elevation values relative to the X-Y coordinate units so that the hillshade effect is even more pronounced.

- Load the gtopo30 elevation raster as above, then start the GRASS Toolbox and click on the GRASS shell. In the shell window, type the command `r.shaded.relief map=gtopo30 shade=gtopo30_shade2 azimuth=315 zmult=3` and press Enter.
- After the process finishes, shift to the *Browse* tab and double-click on the new gtopo30\_shade2 raster to display it in QGIS.



The screenshot shows a GRASS Tools window titled "GRASS Tools: alaska/demo". The window has tabs for "Modules", "Region", and a small icon. A "Close mapset" button is in the top right. The main area displays the help documentation for the `r.shaded.relief` module. The text is as follows:

```
alexandre@alexandre-HP-ProBook-450-G2:~$ r.shaded.relief -help

Description:
Creates shaded relief map from an elevation map (DEM).

Keywords:
raster, elevation, relief, terrain, hillshade

Usage:
r.shaded.relief input=name output=name [altitude=value] [azimuth=value]
[zscale=value] [scale=value] [units=string] [--overwrite] [--help]
[--verbose] [--quiet] [--ui]

Flags:
--o Allow output files to overwrite existing files
--h Print usage summary
--v Verbose module output
--q Quiet module output
--ui Force launching GUI dialog

Parameters:
  input    Name of input raster map
  output   Name for output shaded relief map
           Name for output raster map
  altitude Altitude of the sun in degrees above the horizon
           options: 0-90
           default: 30
  azimuth  Azimuth of the sun in degrees to the east of north
           options: 0-360
           default: 270
  zscale   Factor for exaggerating relief
           default: 1
  scale    Scale factor for converting meters to elevation units
           default: 1
  units    Elevation units (overrides scale factor)
           options: intl,survey
           intl: international feet
           survey: survey feet
```

Fig. 20.8: The GRASS shell, `r.shaded.relief` module

- As explained above, move the shaded relief raster below the gtopo30 raster in the table of contents, then check the transparency of the colored gtopo30 layer. You should see that the 3-D effect stands out more strongly compared with the first shaded relief map.

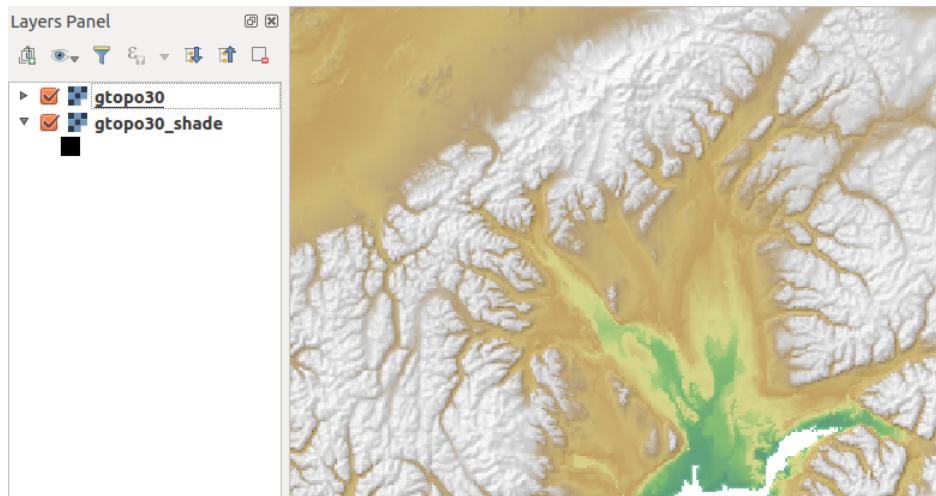


Fig. 20.9: Displaying shaded relief created with the GRASS module `r.shaded.relief`

### Raster statistics in a vector map

The next example shows how a GRASS module can aggregate raster data and add columns of statistics for each polygon in a vector map.

- Again using the Alaska data, refer to [Importing data into a GRASS LOCATION](#) to import the shapefiles/trees.shp file into GRASS.
- Now an intermediate step is required: centroids must be added to the imported trees map to make it a complete GRASS area vector (including both boundaries and centroids).
- From the Toolbox, choose *Vector → Manage features*, and open the module **v.centroids**.
- Enter as the *output vector map* ‘forest\_areas’ and run the module.
- Now load the `forest_areas` vector and display the types of forests - deciduous, evergreen, mixed - in different colors: In the layer *Properties* window, *Symbology* tab, choose from *Legend type* ▾ ‘Unique value’ and set the *Classification* field to ‘VEGDESC’. (Refer to the explanation of the symbology tab in *Symbology Properties* of the vector section.)
- Next, reopen the GRASS Toolbox and open *Vector → Vector update* by other maps.
- Click on the **v.rast.stats** module. Enter `gtopo30` and `forest_areas`.
- Only one additional parameter is needed: Enter *column prefix* `elev`, and click *Run*. This is a computationally heavy operation, which will run for a long time (probably up to two hours).
- Finally, open the `forest_areas` attribute table, and verify that several new columns have been added, including `elev_min`, `elev_max`, `elev_mean`, etc., for each forest polygon.

### 20.14.3 Customizing the GRASS Toolbox

Nearly all GRASS modules can be added to the GRASS Toolbox. An XML interface is provided to parse the pretty simple XML files that configure the modules’ appearance and parameters inside the Toolbox.

A sample XML file for generating the module `v.buffer` (`v.buffer.qgm`) looks like this:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<!DOCTYPE qgisgrassmodule SYSTEM "http://mrcc.com/qgisgrassmodule.dtd">

<qgisgrassmodule label="Vector buffer" module="v.buffer">
    <option key="input" typeoption="type" layeroption="layer" />
    <option key="buffer"/>
    <option key="output" />
</qgisgrassmodule>
```

The parser reads this definition and creates a new tab inside the Toolbox when you select the module. A more detailed description for adding new modules, changing a module's group, etc., can be found at <https://qgis.org/en/site/getinvolved/development/addinggrasstools.html>.



# CHAPTER 21

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## QGIS processing framework

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### 21.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the QGIS processing framework, a geoprocessing environment that can be used to call native and third-party algorithms from QGIS, making your spatial analysis tasks more productive and easy to accomplish.

In the following sections, we will review how to use the graphical elements of this framework and make the most out of each one of them.

There are four basic elements in the framework GUI, which are used to run algorithms for different purposes. Choosing one tool or another will depend on the kind of analysis that is to be performed and the particular characteristics of each user and project. All of them (except for the batch processing interface, which is called from the toolbox or the algorithm execution dialog, as we will see) can be accessed from the *Processing* menu item (you will see more entries; the remaining ones are not used to execute algorithms and will be explained later in this chapter).

- The *Toolbox*: The main element of the GUI, it is used to execute a single algorithm or run a batch process based on that algorithm.
- The *Graphical Modeler*: Several algorithms can be combined graphically using the modeler to define a workflow, creating a single process that involves several subprocesses.
- The *History* manager: All actions performed using any of the aforementioned elements are stored in a history file and can be later easily reproduced using the history manager.
- The *Batch Processing* interface: This interface allows you to execute batch processes and automate the execution of a single algorithm on multiple datasets.

In the following sections, we will review each one of these elements in detail.

### 21.2 Configuring the Processing Framework

As has been mentioned, the configuration menu gives access to a new dialog where you can configure how algorithms work. Configuration parameters are structured in separate blocks that you can select on the left-hand side of the dialog.

Along with the aforementioned *Output folder* entry, the *General* block contains parameters for setting the default rendering style for output layers (that is, layers generated by using algorithms from any of the framework GUI

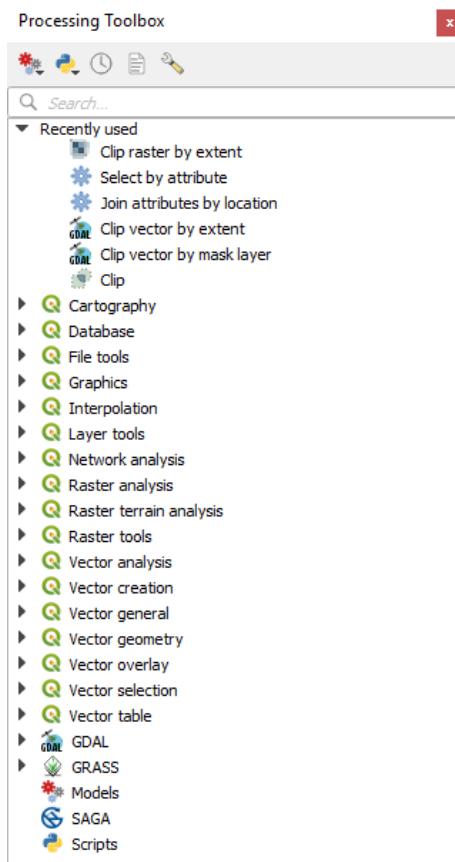


Fig. 21.1: Processing Toolbox

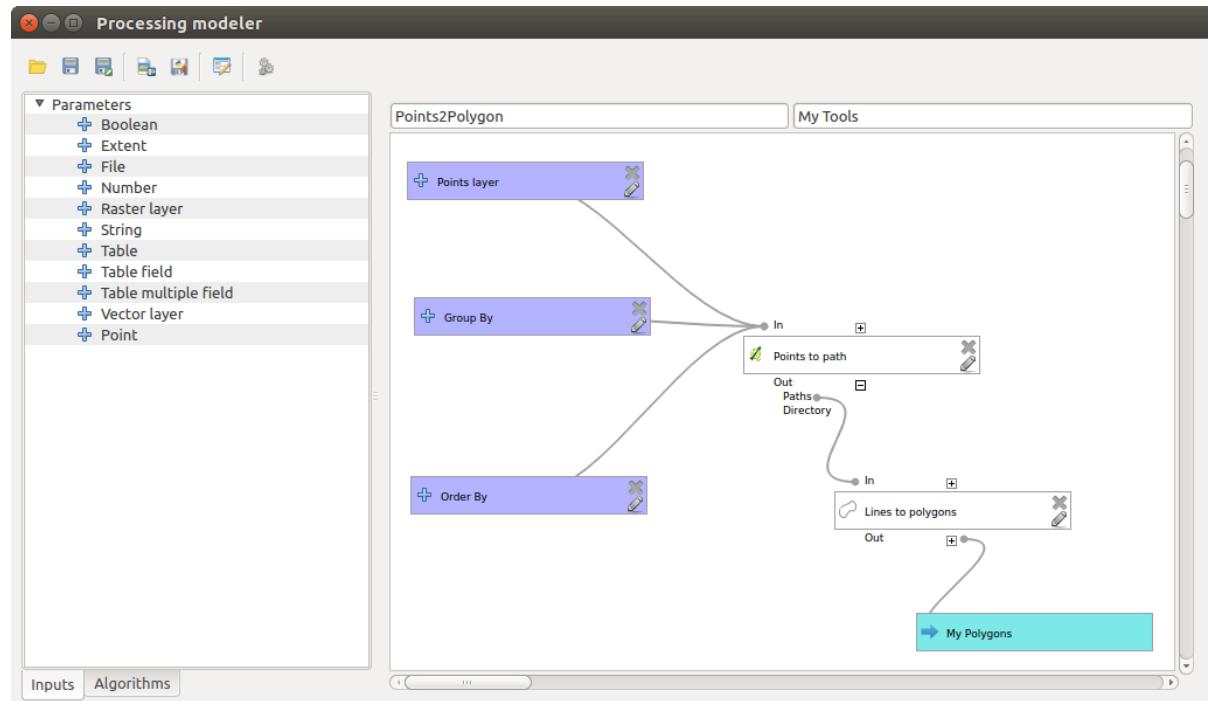


Fig. 21.2: Processing Modeler

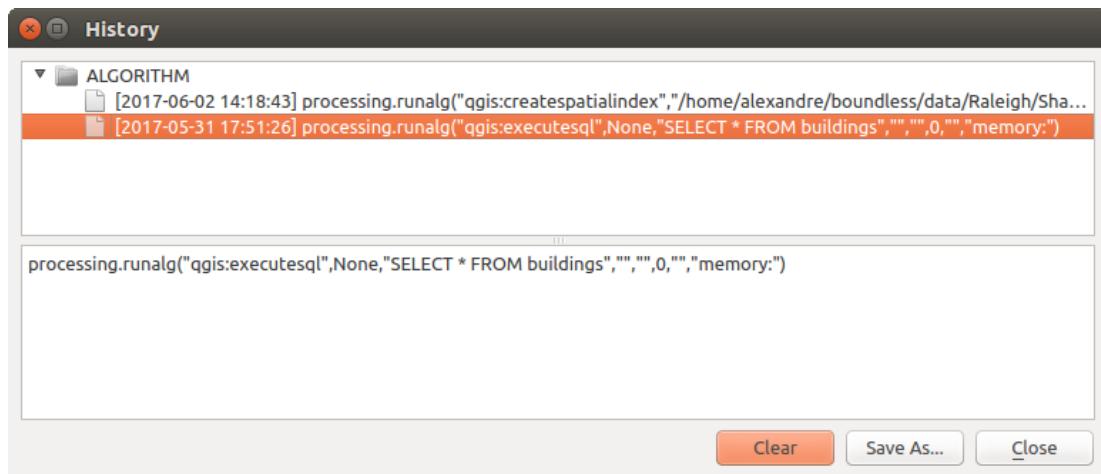


Fig. 21.3: Processing History

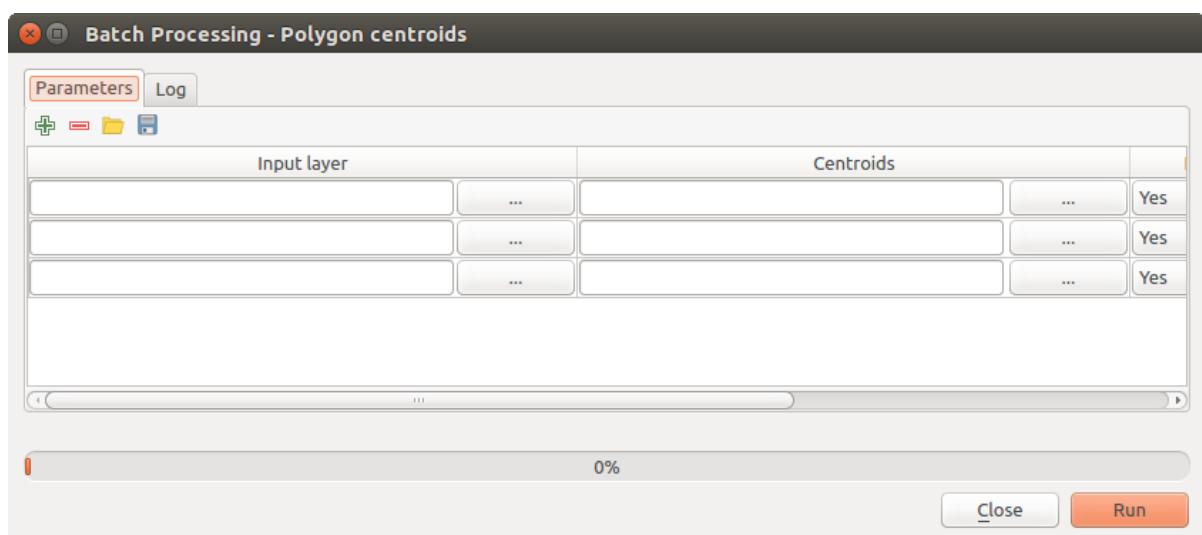


Fig. 21.4: Batch Processing interface

components). Just create the style you want using QGIS, save it to a file, and then enter the path to that file in the settings so the algorithms can use it. Whenever a layer is loaded by Processing and added to the QGIS canvas, it will be rendered with that style.

Rendering styles can be configured individually for each algorithm and each one of its outputs. Just right-click on the name of the algorithm in the toolbox and select *Edit rendering styles for outputs*. You will see a dialog like the one shown next.

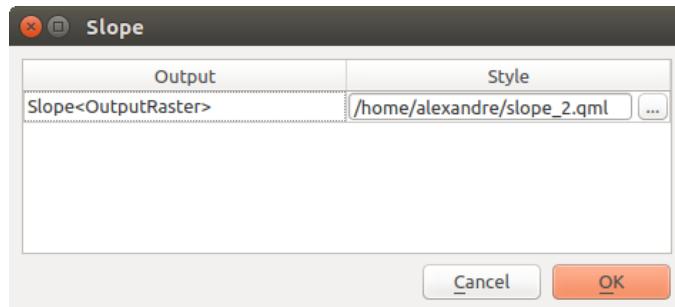


Fig. 21.5: Rendering Styles

Select the style file ( .qml ) that you want for each output and press *OK*.

Other configuration parameters in the *General* group are listed below:

- *Use filename as layer name*. The name of each resulting layer created by an algorithm is defined by the algorithm itself. In some cases, a fixed name might be used, meaning that the same output name will be used, no matter which input layer is used. In other cases, the name might depend on the name of the input layer or some of the parameters used to run the algorithm. If this checkbox is checked, the name will be taken from the output filename instead. Notice that, if the output is saved to a temporary file, the filename of this temporary file is usually a long and meaningless one intended to avoid collision with other already existing filenames.
- *Keep dialog open after running algorithm*. Once an algorithm has finished execution and its output layers are loaded into the QGIS project, the algorithm dialog is closed. If you want to keep it open (to run the algorithm again with different parameters, or to better check the output that is written to the log tab), check this option
- *Use only selected features*. If this option is selected, whenever a vector layer is used as input for an algorithm, only its selected features will be used. If the layer has no selected features, all features will be used.
- *Pre-execution script file* and *Post-execution script file*. These parameters refer to scripts written using the processing scripting functionality, and are explained in the section covering scripting and the console.

Apart from the *General* block in the settings dialog, you will also find a block for algorithm providers. Each entry in this block contains an *Activate* item that you can use to make algorithms appear or not in the toolbox. Also, some algorithm providers have their own configuration items, which we will explain later when covering particular algorithm providers.

## 21.3 The Toolbox

The *Processing Toolbox* is the main element of the processing GUI, and the one that you are more likely to use in your daily work. It shows the list of all available **algorithms** grouped in different blocks called *Providers*, and custom **models** and **scripts** you can add to extend the set of tools. Hence the toolbox is the access point to run them, whether as a single process or as a batch process involving several executions of the same algorithm on different sets of inputs.

Providers can be (de)activated in the *Processing settings dialog*. By default, only providers that do not rely on third-party applications (that is, those that only require QGIS elements to be run) are active. Algorithms requiring

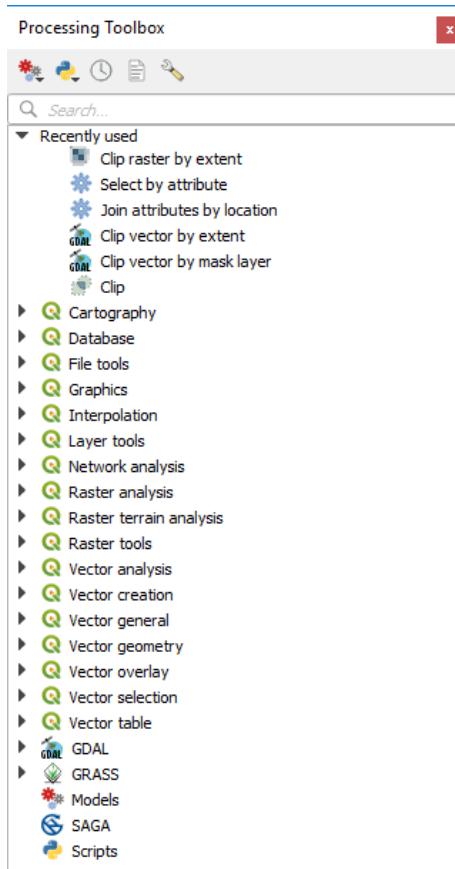


Fig. 21.6: Processing Toolbox

external applications might need additional configuration. Configuring providers is explained in a *later chapter* in this manual.

In the upper part of the toolbox dialog, you will find a set of tools to:

- work with  Models: *Create New Model...*, *Open Existing Model...* and *Add Model to Toolbox...*;
- work with  Scripts: *Create New Script...*, *Create New Script from Template...*, *Open Existing Script...* and *Add Script to Toolbox...*;
- open the  History panel;
- open the  Results Viewer panel;
- toggle the toolbox to the *in-place modification mode* using the  button: only the algorithms that are suitable to be executed on the active layer without outputting a new layer are displayed;
- open the  Options dialog.

Below this toolbar is a  *Search...* box to help you easily find the tools you need. You can enter any word or phrase on the text box. Notice that, as you type, the number of algorithms, models or scripts in the toolbox is reduced to just those that contain the text you have entered in their names or keywords.

---

**Note:** At the top of the list of algorithms are displayed the most recent used tools; handy if you want to reexecute any.

---

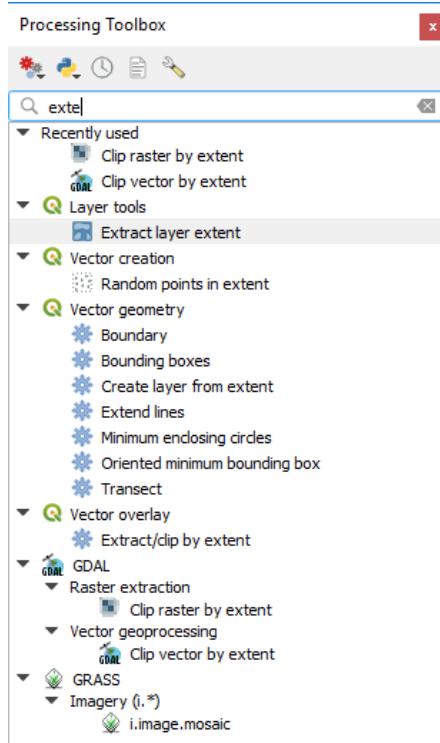


Fig. 21.7: Processing Toolbox showing search results

To execute a tool, just double-click on its name in the toolbox.

### 21.3.1 The algorithm dialog

Once you double-click on the name of the algorithm that you want to execute, a dialog similar to that in the figure below is shown (in this case, the dialog corresponds to the `Centroids` algorithm).

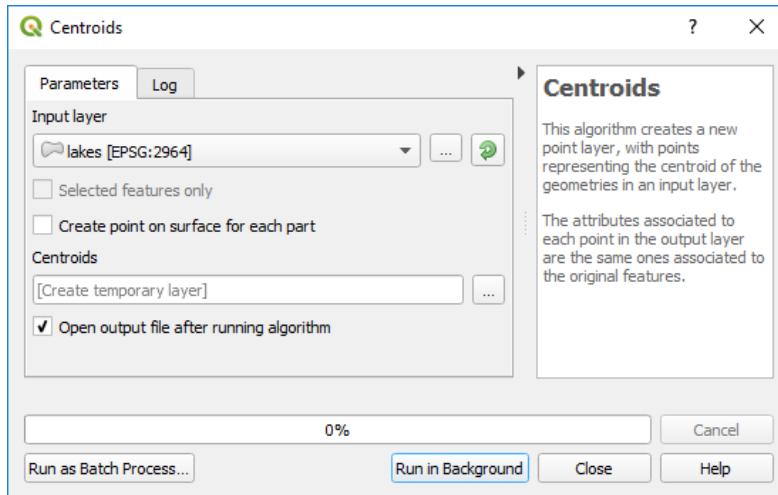


Fig. 21.8: Parameters Dialog

This dialog is used to set the input values that the algorithm needs to be executed. It shows a list of input values and configuration parameters to be set. It of course has a different content, depending on the requirements of the algorithm to be executed, and is created automatically based on those requirements.

Although the number and type of parameters depend on the characteristics of the algorithm, the structure is similar for all of them. The parameters found in the table can be of one of the following types.

- A **raster layer**, to select from a list of all such layers available (currently opened) in QGIS. The selector contains as well a button on its right-hand side, to let you select filenames that represent layers currently not loaded in QGIS.
- A **vector layer**, to select from a list of all vector layers available in QGIS. Layers not loaded in QGIS can be selected as well, as in the case of raster layers, but only if the algorithm does not require a table field selected from the attributes table of the layer. In that case, only opened layers can be selected, since they need to be open so as to retrieve the list of field names available.

You will see an iterator button by each vector layer selector, as shown in the figure below.

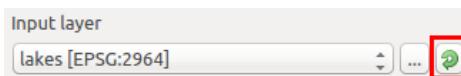


Fig. 21.9: Vector iterator button

If the algorithm contains several of them, you will be able to toggle just one of them. If the button corresponding to a vector input is toggled, the algorithm will be executed iteratively on each one of its features, instead of just once for the whole layer, producing as many outputs as times the algorithm is executed. This allows for automating the process when all features in a layer have to be processed separately.

---

**Note:** By default, the parameters dialog will show a description of the CRS of each layer along with its name. If you do not want to see this additional information, you can disable this functionality in the Processing Settings dialog, unchecking the *General → Show layer CRS definition in selection boxes* option.

---

- A **table**, to select from a list of all available in QGIS. Non-spatial tables are loaded into QGIS like vector layers, and in fact they are treated as such by the program. Currently, the list of available tables that you will see when executing an algorithm that needs one of them is restricted to tables coming from files in dBase (.dbf) or Comma-Separated Values (.csv) formats.

- An **option**, to choose from a selection list of possible options.
- A **numerical value**, to be introduced in a spin box. In some contexts (when the parameter applies at the feature level and not at the layer's), you will find a  Data-defined override button by its side, allowing you to open the *expression builder* and enter a mathematical expression to generate variable values for the parameter. Some useful variables related to data loaded into QGIS can be added to your expression, so you can select a value derived from any of these variables, such as the cell size of a layer or the northernmost coordinate of another one.

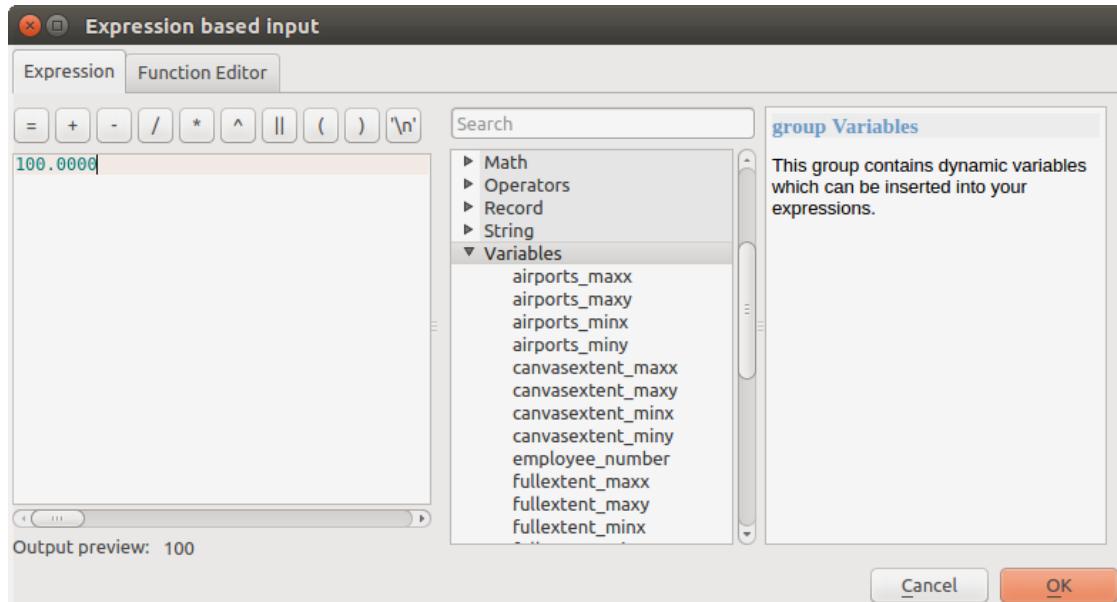


Fig. 21.10: Expression based input

- A **range**, with min and max values to be introduced in two text boxes.
- A **text string**, to be introduced in a text box.
- A **field**, to choose from the attributes table of a vector layer or a single table selected in another parameter.
- A **coordinate reference system**. You can select it among the recently used ones from the drop-down list or from the *CRS selection* dialog that appears when you click on the button on the right-hand side.
- An **extent**, to be entered by four numbers representing its xmin, xmax, ymin, ymax limits. Clicking on the button on the right-hand side of the value selector, a pop-up menu will appear, giving you options:
  - to select the value from a layer or the current canvas extent;
  - or to define it by dragging directly onto the map canvas.

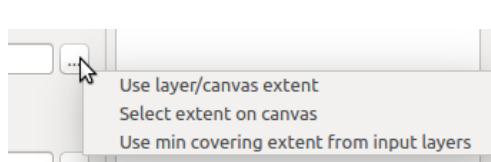


Fig. 21.11: Extent selector

If you select the first option, you will see a window like the next one.

If you select the second one, the parameters window will hide itself, so you can click and drag onto the canvas. Once you have defined the selected rectangle, the dialog will reappear, containing the values in the extent text box.

- A **list of elements** (whether raster or vector layers, tables, fields) to select from. Click on the ... button at the left of the option to see a dialog like the following one. Multiple selection is allowed and when the

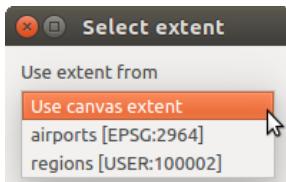


Fig. 21.12: Extent List

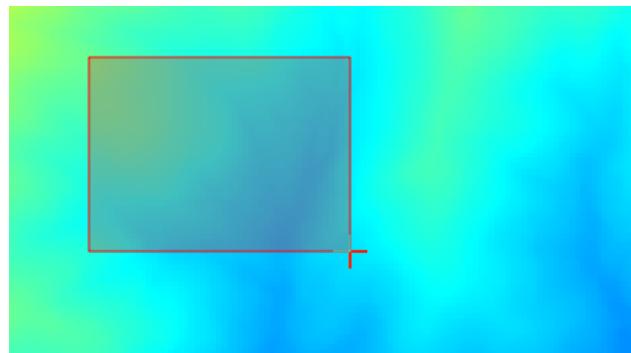


Fig. 21.13: Extent Drag

dialog is closed, number of selected items is displayed in the parameter text box widget.

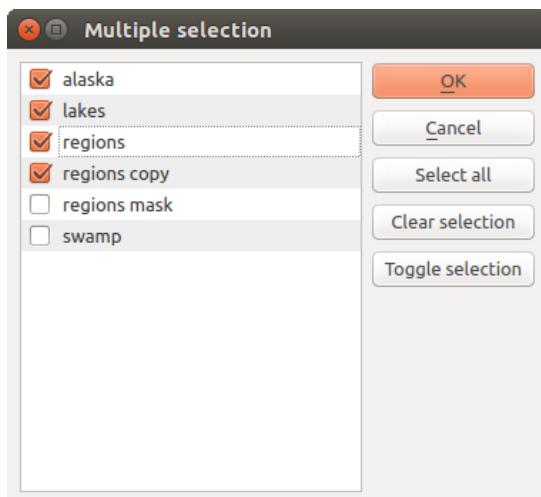


Fig. 21.14: Multiple Selection

- A **small table** to be edited by the user. These are used to define parameters like lookup tables or convolution kernels, among others.

Click on the button on the right side to see the table and edit its values.

Depending on the algorithm, the number of rows can be modified or not by using the buttons on the right side of the window.

---

**Note:** Some algorithms require many parameters to run, e.g. in the qgisrastercalculator you have to specify manually the cell size, the extent and the CRS. You can avoid to choose all the parameters manually when the algorithm has the `Reference layers` parameter. With this parameter you can choose the reference layer and all its properties (cell size, extent, CRS) will be used.

---

Along with the *Parameters* tab, you will find another tab named *Log*. Information provided by the algorithm during its execution is written in this tab, and allow you to track the execution and be aware and have more details

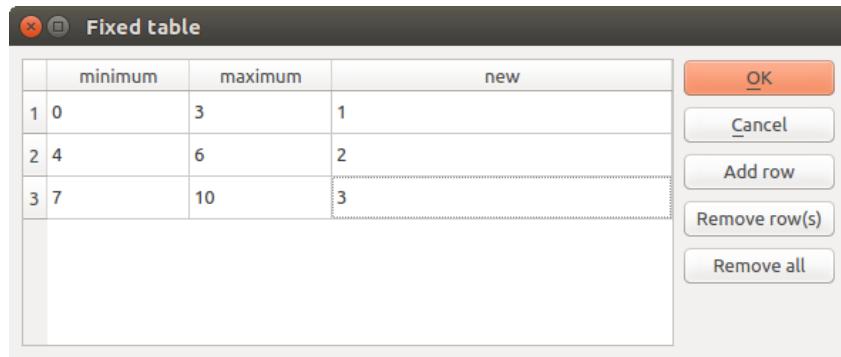


Fig. 21.15: Fixed Table

about the algorithm as it runs. Notice that not all algorithms write information to this tab, and many of them might run silently without producing any output other than the final files.

On the right hand side of the dialog you will find a short description of the algorithm, which will help you understand its purpose and its basic ideas. If such a description is not available, the description panel will not be shown.

For a more detailed help file, which might include description of every parameter it uses, or examples, you will find a *Help* button at the bottom of the dialog bringing you to the Processing algorithms documentation or to the provider documentation (for some third-party providers).

### A note on projections

Processing algorithm execution are always performed in the input layer coordinate reference system (CRS). Due to QGIS's on-the-fly reprojecting capabilities, although two layers might seem to overlap and match, that might not be true if their original coordinates are used without reprojecting them onto a common coordinate system. Whenever you use more than one layer as input to a QGIS native algorithm, whether vector or raster, the layers will all be reprojected to match the coordinate reference system of the first input layer.

This is however less true for most of the external applications whose algorithms are exposed through the processing framework as they assume that all of the layers are already in a common coordinate system and ready to be analyzed.

By default, the parameters dialog will show a description of the CRS of each layer along with its name, making it easy to select layers that share the same CRS to be used as input layers. If you do not want to see this additional information, you can disable this functionality in the Processing settings dialog, unchecking the *Show layer CRS definition in selection boxes* option.

If you try to execute an algorithm using as input two or more layers with unmatched CRSs, a warning dialog will be shown. This occurs thanks to the *Warn before executing if layer CRS's do not match* option.

You still can execute the algorithm, but be aware that in most cases that will produce wrong results, such as empty layers due to input layers not overlapping.

---

#### Tip: Use Processing algorithms to do intermediate reprojection

When an algorithm can not successfully perform on multiple input layers due to unmatched CRSs, use QGIS internal algorithm such as `qgisreprojectlayer` to perform layers' reprojection to the same CRS before executing the algorithm using these outputs.

---

### 21.3.2 Data objects generated by algorithms

Data objects generated by an algorithm can be of any of the following types:

- A raster layer
- A vector layer
- A table
- An HTML file (used for text and graphical outputs)

These are all saved to disk, and the parameters table will contain a text box corresponding to each one of these outputs, where you can type the output channel to use for saving it. An output channel contains the information needed to save the resulting object somewhere. In the most usual case, you will save it to a file, but in the case of vector layers, and when they are generated by native algorithms (algorithms not using external applications) you can also save to a PostGIS, GeoPackage or SpatiaLite database, or a memory layer.

To select an output channel, just click on the button on the right side of the text box, and you will see a small context menu with the available options.

In the most usual case, you will select saving to a file. If you select that option, you will be prompted with a save file dialog, where you can select the desired file path. Supported file extensions are shown in the file format selector of the dialog, depending on the kind of output and the algorithm.

The format of the output is defined by the filename extension. The supported formats depend on what is supported by the algorithm itself. To select a format, just select the corresponding file extension (or add it, if you are directly typing the file path instead). If the extension of the file path you entered does not match any of the supported formats, a default extension will be appended to the file path, and the file format corresponding to that extension will be used to save the layer or table. Default extensions are `.dbf` for tables, `.tif` for raster layers and `.gpkg` for vector layers. These can be modified in the setting dialog, selecting any other of the formats supported by QGIS.

If you do not enter any filename in the output text box (or select the corresponding option in the context menu), the result will be saved as a *temporary file* in the corresponding default file format, and it will be deleted once you exit QGIS (take care with that, in case you save your project and it contains temporary layers).

You can set a default folder for output data objects. Go to the settings dialog (you can open it from the *Settings → Options → Processing* menu), and in the *General* group, you will find a parameter named *Output folder*. This output folder is used as the default path in case you type just a filename with no path (i.e., `myfile.shp`) when executing an algorithm.

When running an algorithm that uses a vector layer in iterative mode, the entered file path is used as the base path for all generated files, which are named using the base name and appending a number representing the index of the iteration. The file extension (and format) is used for all such generated files.

Apart from raster layers and tables, algorithms also generate graphics and text as HTML files. These results are shown at the end of the algorithm execution in a new dialog. This dialog will keep the results produced by any algorithm during the current session, and can be shown at any time by selecting *Processing → Results Viewer* from the QGIS main menu.

Some external applications might have files (with no particular extension restrictions) as output, but they do not belong to any of the categories above. Those output files will not be processed by QGIS (opened or included into the current QGIS project), since most of the time they correspond to file formats or elements not supported by QGIS. This is, for instance, the case with LAS files used for LiDAR data. The files get created, but you won't see anything new in your QGIS working session.

For all the other types of output, you will find a checkbox that you can use to tell the algorithm whether to load the file once it is generated by the algorithm or not. By default, all files are opened.

Optional outputs are not supported. That is, all outputs are created. However, you can uncheck the corresponding checkbox if you are not interested in a given output, which essentially makes it behave like an optional output (in other words, the layer is created anyway, but if you leave the text box empty, it will be saved to a temporary file and deleted once you exit QGIS).

## 21.4 The history manager

### 21.4.1 The processing history

Every time you execute an algorithm, information about the process is stored in the history manager. Along with the parameters used, the date and time of the execution are also saved.

This way, it is easy to track and control all the work that has been developed using the Processing framework, and to reproduce it.

The history manager is a set of registry entries grouped according to their date of execution, making it easier to find information about an algorithm executed at any particular moment.

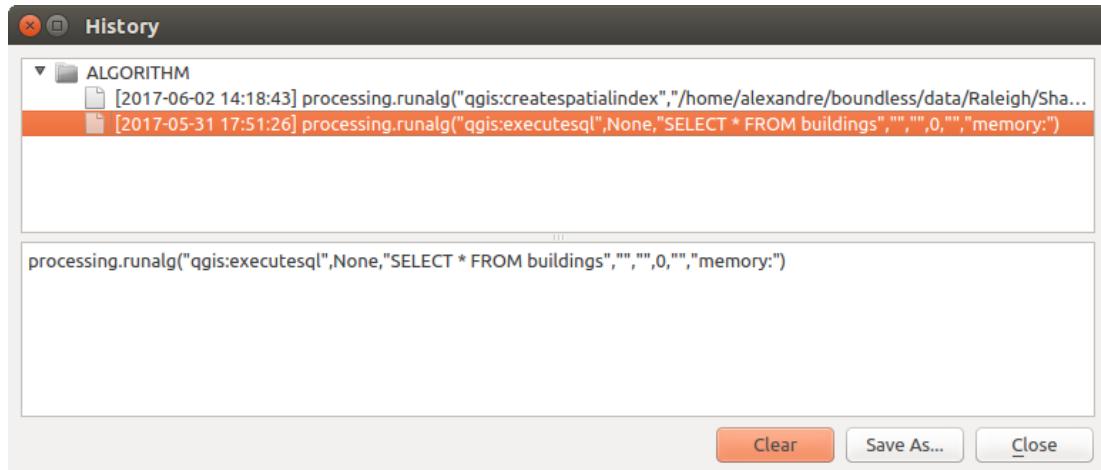


Fig. 21.16: History

Process information is kept as a command-line expression, even if the algorithm was launched from the toolbox. This makes it also useful for those learning how to use the command-line interface, since they can call an algorithm using the toolbox and then check the history manager to see how that same algorithm could be called from the command line.

Apart from browsing the entries in the registry, you can also re-execute processes by simply double-clicking on the corresponding entry: the algorithm dialog opens with parameters already filled; you can then change any of them to fit your needs and re-run the algorithm.

The *History* dialog also provides a convenient way to contribute to the consolidation of the testing infrastructure of QGIS Processing algorithms and scripts. Right-click on a command you previously executed and you can *Create Test...* for the concerned algorithm, following instructions at <https://github.com/qgis/QGIS/blob/master/python/plugins/processing/tests/README.md>.

### 21.4.2 The processing log

The history dialog only contains the execution calls, but not the information produced by the algorithm when executed. That information is written to the QGIS log (*View → Panels → Log Messages Panel*), in a *Processing* tab.

Third-party algorithms are usually executed by calling their command-line interfaces, which communicate with the user via the console. Although that console is not shown, usually a full dump of it is written to the log each time you run one of those algorithms. To avoid cluttering the log with that information, you can disable it for each provider, looking for the corresponding option in the provider entry of the settings dialog.

Some algorithms, even if they can produce a result with the given input data, might add comments or additional information to log if they detect potential problems with the data, in order to warn you. Make sure you check those messages in the log if you are having unexpected results.

## 21.5 The graphical modeler

The *graphical modeler* allows you to create complex models using a simple and easy-to-use interface. When working with a GIS, most analysis operations are not isolated, but rather part of a chain of operations instead. Using the graphical modeler, that chain of processes can be wrapped into a single process, so it is as more convenient to execute as a single process later on a different set of inputs. No matter how many steps and different algorithms it involves, a model is executed as a single algorithm, thus saving time and effort, especially for larger models.

The modeler can be opened from the processing menu.

The modeler has a working canvas where the structure of the model and the workflow it represents are shown. On the left part of the window, a panel with two tabs can be used to add new elements to the model.

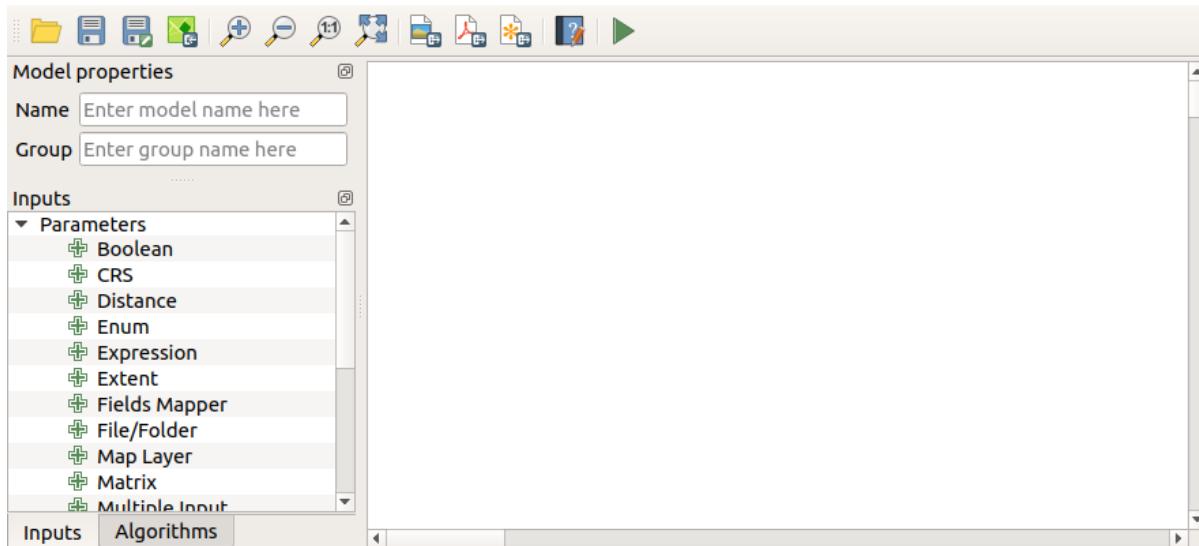


Fig. 21.17: Modeler

Creating a model involves two steps:

1. *Definition of necessary inputs.* These inputs will be added to the parameters window, so the user can set their values when executing the model. The model itself is an algorithm, so the parameters window is generated automatically as it happens with all the algorithms available in the processing framework.
2. *Definition of the workflow.* Using the input data of the model, the workflow is defined by adding algorithms and selecting how they use those inputs or the outputs generated by other algorithms already in the model.

### 21.5.1 Definition of inputs

The first step to create a model is to define the inputs it needs. The following elements are found in the *Inputs* tab on the left side of the modeler window:

- Raster layer
- Vector layer
- String
- Table field
- Table
- Extent
- Number
- Boolean

- File

Double-clicking on any of these elements, a dialog is shown to define its characteristics. Depending on the parameter itself, the dialog may contain just one basic element (the description, which is what the user will see when executing the model) or more of them. For instance, when adding a numerical value, as can be seen in the next figure, apart from the description of the parameter, you have to set a default value and a range of valid values.

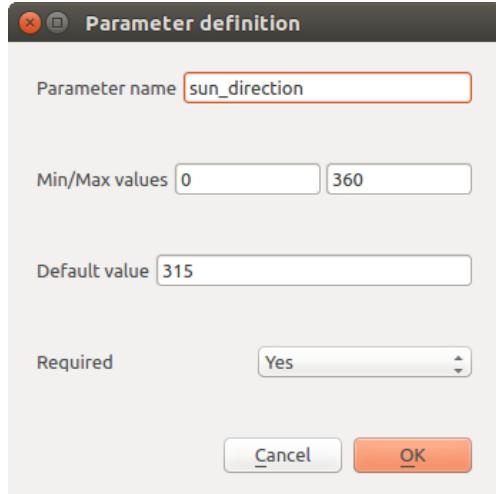


Fig. 21.18: Model Parameters Definition

For each added input, a new element is added to the modeler canvas.



Fig. 21.19: Model Parameters in canvas

You can also add inputs by dragging the input type from the list and dropping it in the modeler canvas, in the position where you want to place it.

### 21.5.2 Definition of the workflow

Once the inputs have been defined, it is time to define the algorithms to apply on them. Algorithms can be found in the *Algorithms* tab, grouped much in the same way as they are in the toolbox.

To add an algorithm to a model, double-click on its name or drag and drop it, just like it was done when adding inputs. An execution dialog will appear, with a content similar to the one found in the execution panel that is shown when executing the algorithm from the toolbox. The one shown next corresponds to the SAGA ‘Convergence index’ algorithm.

As you can see, some differences exist. Instead of the file output box that was used to set the file path for output layers and tables, a simple text box is used here. If the layer generated by the algorithm is just a temporary result that will be used as the input of another algorithm and should not be kept as a final result, just do not edit that text box. Typing anything in it means that the result is final and the text that you supply will be the description for the output, which will be the output the user will see when executing the model.

Selecting the value of each parameter is also a bit different, since there are important differences between the context of the modeler and that of the toolbox. Let’s see how to introduce the values for each type of parameter.

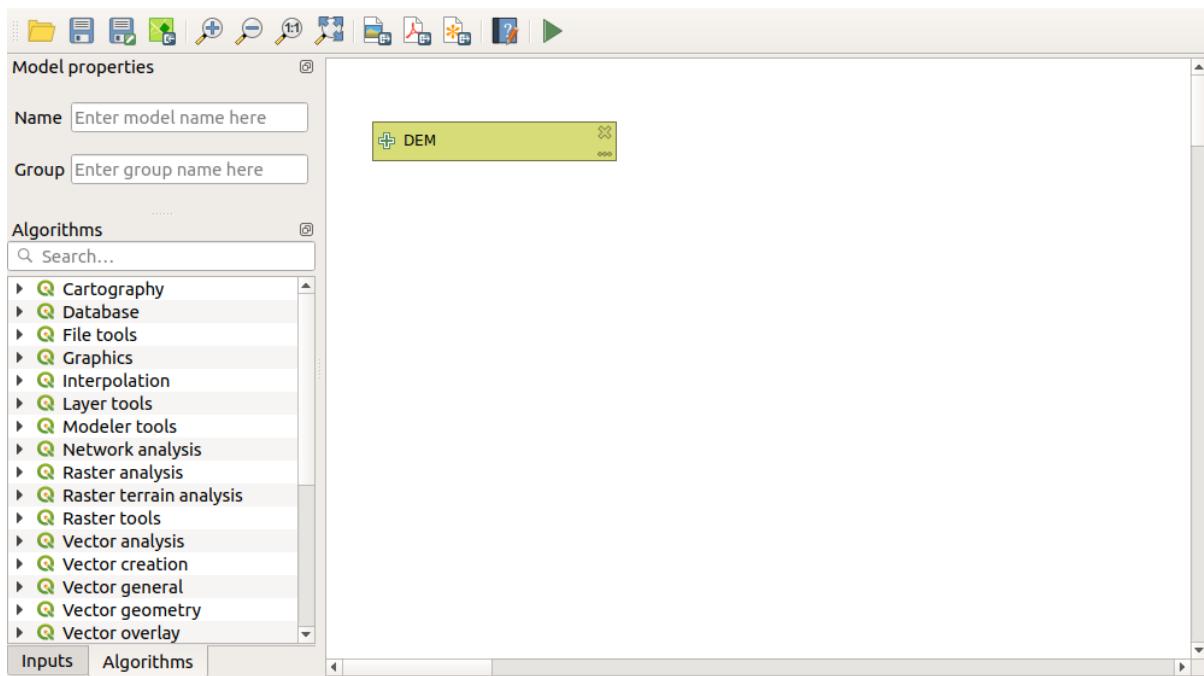


Fig. 21.20: Model Inputs

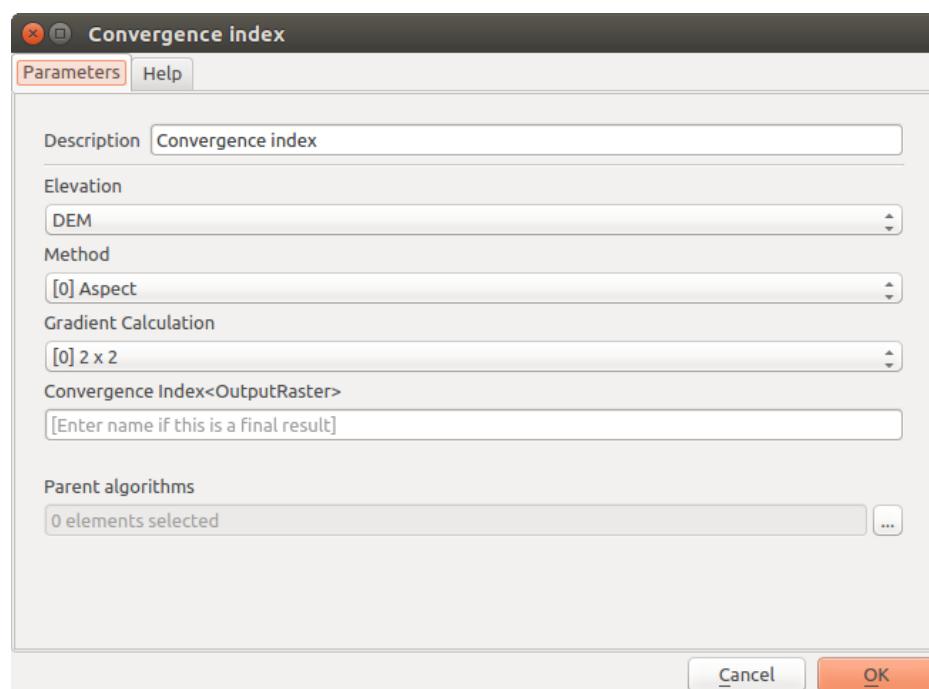


Fig. 21.21: Model Algorithm parameters

- Layers (raster and vector) and tables. These are selected from a list, but in this case, the possible values are not the layers or tables currently loaded in QGIS, but the list of model inputs of the corresponding type, or other layers or tables generated by algorithms already added to the model.
- Numerical values. Literal values can be introduced directly in the text box. Clicking on the button beside the text box, expressions can be entered. Available variables for expressions include numerical inputs of the model, and also statistical values from available raster layers within the model.
- String. Literal strings can be typed in the corresponding text box. Clicking on the button beside the text box, expressions can be entered, as in the case of numerical values.
- Table field. The fields of the parent table or layer cannot be known at design time, since they depend on the selection of the user each time the model is executed. To set the value for this parameter, type the name of a field directly in the text box, or use the list to select a table field input already added to the model. The validity of the selected field will be checked at run time.

In all cases, you will find an additional parameter named *Parent algorithms* that is not available when calling the algorithm from the toolbox. This parameter allows you to define the order in which algorithms are executed by explicitly defining one algorithm as a parent of the current one, which will force the parent algorithm to be executed before the current one.

When you use the output of a previous algorithm as the input of your algorithm, that implicitly sets the previous algorithm as parent of the current one (and places the corresponding arrow in the modeler canvas). However, in some cases an algorithm might depend on another one even if it does not use any output object from it (for instance, an algorithm that executes a SQL sentence on a PostGIS database and another one that imports a layer into that same database). In that case, just select the previous algorithm in the *Parent algorithms* parameter and the two steps will be executed in the correct order.

Once all the parameters have been assigned valid values, click on *OK* and the algorithm will be added to the canvas. It will be linked to all the other elements in the canvas, whether algorithms or inputs, that provide objects that are used as inputs for that algorithm.

Elements can be dragged to a different position within the canvas, to change the way the module structure is displayed and make it more clear and intuitive. Links between elements are updated automatically. You can zoom in and out by using the mouse wheel.

You can run your algorithm any time by clicking on the *Run* button. However, in order to use the algorithm from the toolbox, it has to be saved and the modeler dialog closed, to allow the toolbox to refresh its contents.

### 21.5.3 Saving and loading models

Use the *Save* button to save the current model and the *Open* button to open any model previously saved. Models are saved with the `.model` extension. If the model has been previously saved from the modeler window, you will not be prompted for a filename. Since there is already a file associated with that model, the same file will be used for any subsequent saves.

Before saving a model, you have to enter a name and a group for it, using the text boxes in the upper part of the window.

Models saved on the `models` folder (the default folder when you are prompted for a filename to save the model) will appear in the toolbox in the corresponding branch. When the toolbox is invoked, it searches the `models` folder for files with the `.model` extension and loads the models they contain. Since a model is itself an algorithm, it can be added to the toolbox just like any other algorithm.

Models can also be saved within the project file using the  *Save model in project* button. Models saved with this method won't be written as `.model` files on the disk but will be embedded in the `.qgz` project file.

Project models are available in the  *Project models* menu of the toolbox.

The `models` folder can be set from the Processing configuration dialog, under the *Modeler* group.

Models loaded from the `models` folder appear not only in the toolbox, but also in the algorithms tree in the *Algorithms* tab of the modeler window. That means that you can incorporate a model as a part of a bigger model, just as you add any other algorithm.

Models will show up in the *Browser* panel, and can be run from there.

### Exporting a model as an image, PDF or SVG

A model can also be exported as an image, SVG or PDF (for illustration purposes).

#### 21.5.4 Editing a model

You can edit the model you are currently creating, redefining the workflow and the relationships between the algorithms and inputs that define the model itself.

If you right-click on an algorithm in the canvas representing the model, you will see a context menu like the one shown next:



Fig. 21.22: Modeler Right Click

Selecting the *Remove* option will cause the selected algorithm to be removed. An algorithm can be removed only if there are no other algorithms depending on it. That is, if no output from the algorithm is used in a different one as input. If you try to remove an algorithm that has others depending on it, a warning message like the one you can see below will be shown:

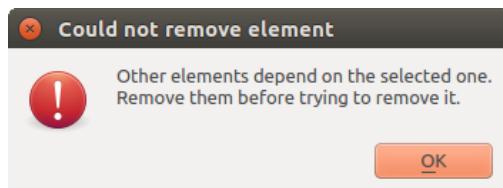


Fig. 21.23: Cannot Delete Algorithm

Selecting the *Edit* option will show the parameters dialog of the algorithm, so you can change the inputs and parameter values. Not all input elements available in the model will appear in this case as available inputs. Layers or values generated at a more advanced step in the workflow defined by the model will not be available if they cause circular dependencies.

Select the new values and then click on the *OK* button as usual. The connections between the model elements will change accordingly in the modeler canvas.

A model can be run partially, by deactivating some of its algorithms. To do it, select the *Deactivate* option in the context menu that appears when right-clicking on an algorithm element. The selected algorithm, and all the ones in the model that depend on it will be displayed in grey and will not be executed as part of the model.

When right-clicking on an algorithm that is not active, you will instead see a *Activate* menu option that you can use to activate it back.

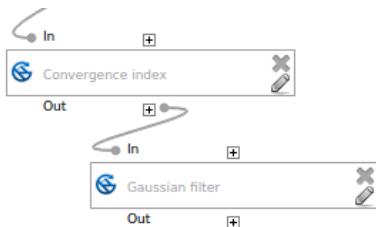


Fig. 21.24: Model With Deactivated Algorithms

### 21.5.5 Editing model help files and meta-information

You can document your models from the modeler itself. Just click on the *Edit Model Help* button and a dialog like the one shown next will appear.

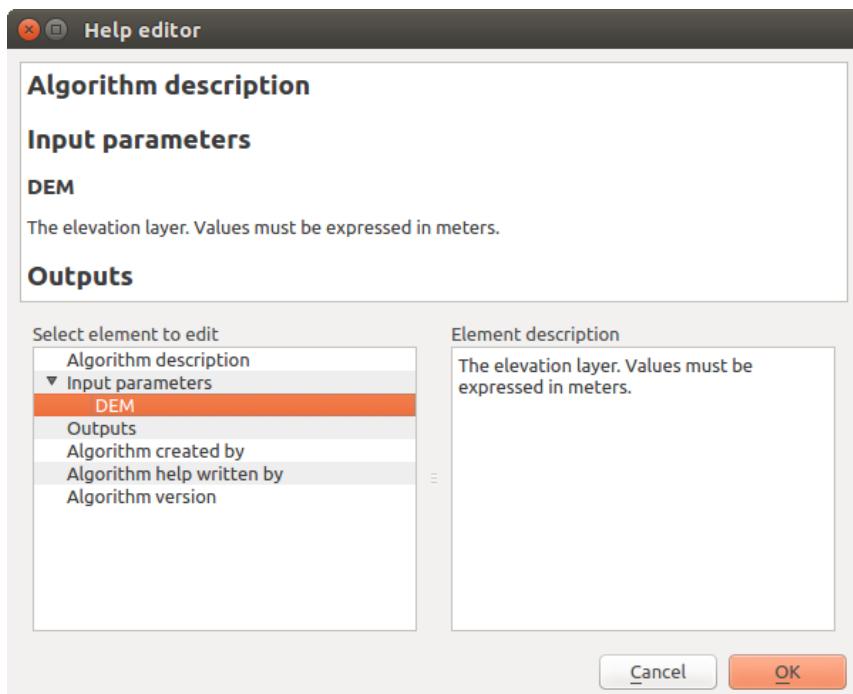


Fig. 21.25: Help Edition

On the right-hand side, you will see a simple HTML page, created using the description of the input parameters and outputs of the algorithm, along with some additional items like a general description of the model or its author. The first time you open the help editor, all these descriptions are empty, but you can edit them using the elements on the left-hand side of the dialog. Select an element on the upper part and then write its description in the text box below.

Model help is saved as part of the model itself.

### 21.5.6 About available algorithms

You might notice that some algorithms that can be executed from the toolbox do not appear in the list of available algorithms when you are designing a model. To be included in a model, an algorithm must have a correct semantic, so as to be properly linked to others in the workflow. If an algorithm does not have such a well-defined semantic (for instance, if the number of output layers cannot be known in advance), then it is not possible to use it within a model, and thus, it does not appear in the list of algorithms that you can find in the modeler dialog.

## 21.6 The batch processing interface

### 21.6.1 Introduction

All algorithms (including models) can be executed as a batch process. That is, they can be executed using not just a single set of inputs, but several of them, executing the algorithm as many times as needed. This is useful when processing large amounts of data, since it is not necessary to launch the algorithm many times from the toolbox.

To execute an algorithm as a batch process, right-click on its name in the toolbox and select the *Execute as batch process* option in the pop-up menu that will appear.

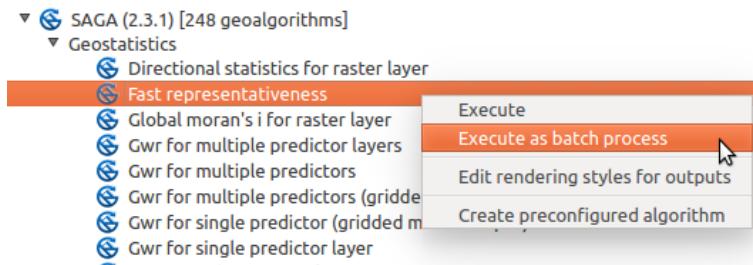


Fig. 21.26: Batch Processing from right-click

If you have the execution dialog of the algorithm open, you can also start the batch processing interface from there, clicking on the *Run as batch process...* button.

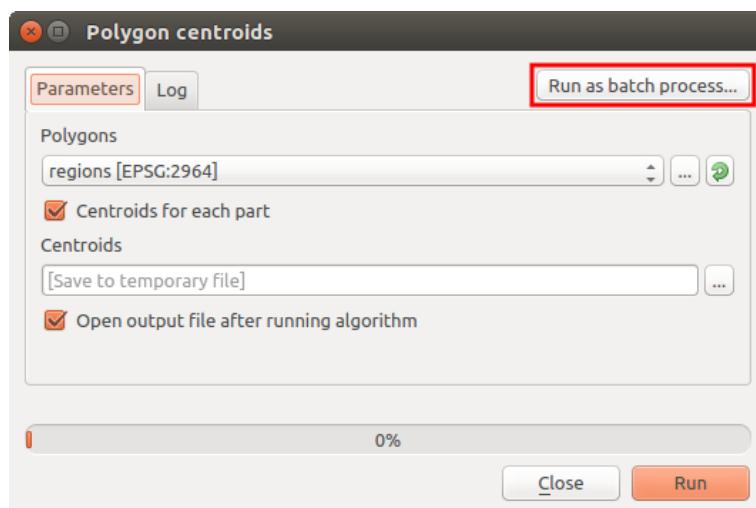


Fig. 21.27: Batch Processing From Algorithm Dialog

### 21.6.2 The parameters table

Executing a batch process is similar to performing a single execution of an algorithm. Parameter values have to be defined, but in this case we need not just a single value for each parameter, but a set of them instead, one for each time the algorithm has to be executed. Values are introduced using a table like the one shown next.

Each line of this table represents a single execution of the algorithm, and each cell contains the value of one of the parameters. It is similar to the parameters dialog that you see when executing an algorithm from the toolbox, but with a different arrangement.

By default, the table contains just two rows. You can add or remove rows using the buttons on the lower part of the window.

Once the size of the table has been set, it has to be filled with the desired values.

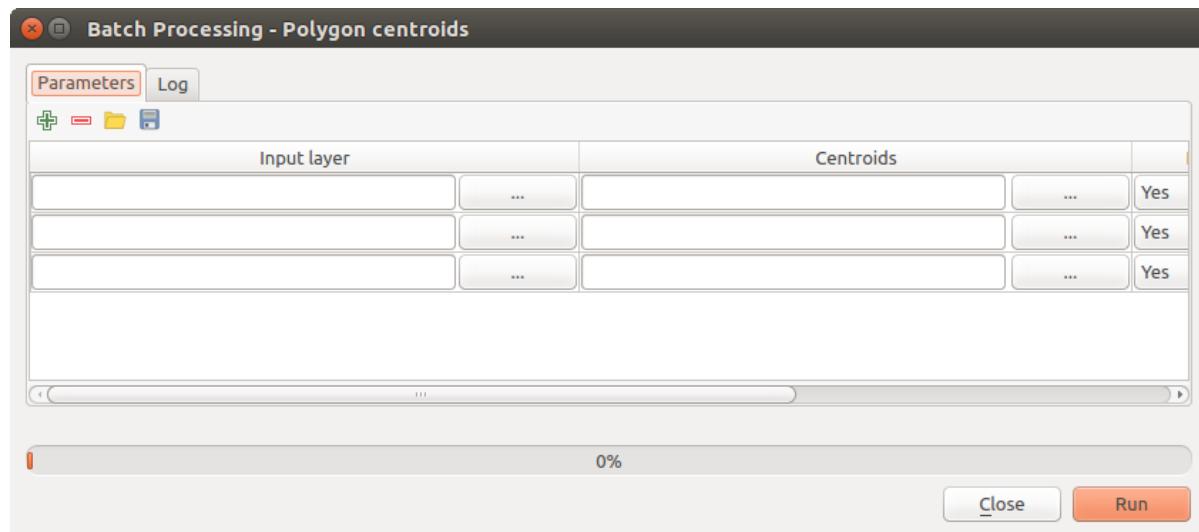


Fig. 21.28: Batch Processing

### 21.6.3 Filling the parameters table

For most parameters, setting the value is trivial. Just type the value or select it from the list of available options, depending on the parameter type.

Filenames for input data objects are introduced directly typing or, more conveniently, clicking on the ... button on the right hand of the cell, which will show a context menu with two option: one for selecting from the layers currently opened and another to select from the filesystem. This second option, when selected, shows a typical file chooser dialog. Multiple files can be selected at once. If the input parameter represents a single data object and several files are selected, each one of them will be put in a separate row, adding new ones if needed. If the parameter represents a multiple input, all the selected files will be added to a single cell, separated by semicolons (;).

Layer identifiers can be directly typed in the parameter text box. You can enter the full path to a file or the name of a layer that is currently loaded in the current QGIS project. The name of the layer will be automatically resolved to its source path. Notice that, if several layers have the same name, this might cause unexpected results due to ambiguity.

Output data objects are always saved to a file and, unlike when executing an algorithm from the toolbox, saving to a temporary file or database is not permitted. You can type the name directly or use the file chooser dialog that appears when clicking on the accompanying button.

Once you select the file, a new dialog is shown to allow for autocomplete of other cells in the same column (same parameter).

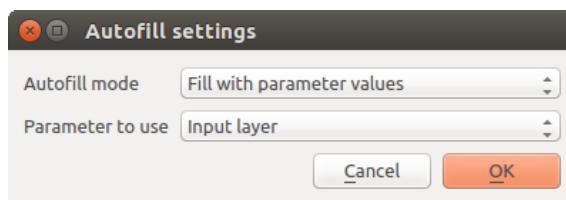


Fig. 21.29: Batch Processing Save

If the default value ('Do not autocomplete') is selected, it will just put the selected filename in the selected cell from the parameters table. If any of the other options is selected, all the cells below the selected one will be automatically filled based on a defined criteria. This way, it is much easier to fill the table, and the batch process can be defined with less effort.

Automatic filling can be done by simply adding correlative numbers to the selected file path, or by appending the

value of another field at the same row. This is particularly useful for naming output data objects according to input ones.

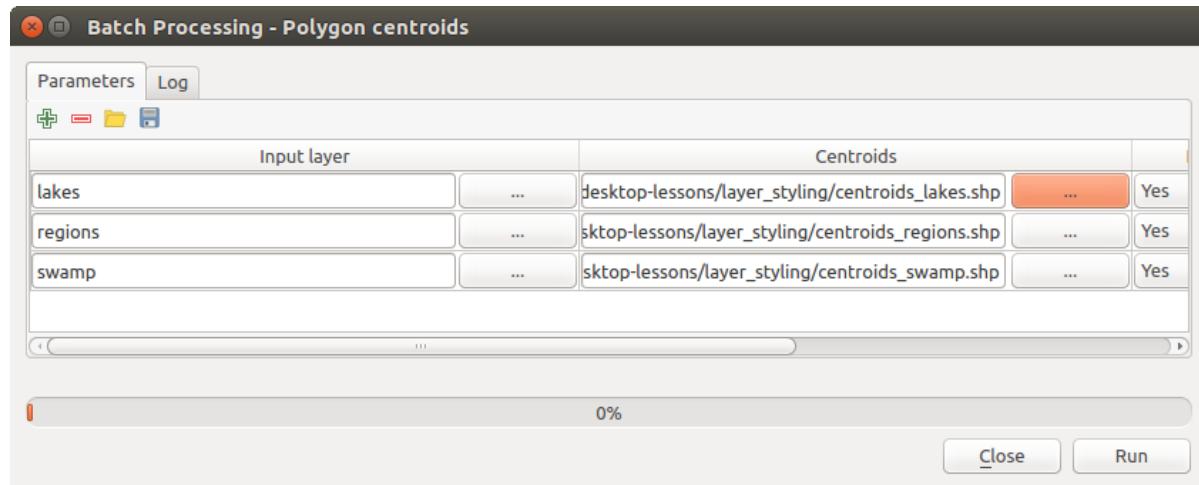


Fig. 21.30: Batch Processing File Path

#### 21.6.4 Executing the batch process

To execute the batch process once you have introduced all the necessary values, just click on *OK*. Progress of the global batch task will be shown in the progress bar in the lower part of the dialog.

### 21.7 Using processing algorithms from the console

The console allows advanced users to increase their productivity and perform complex operations that cannot be performed using any of the other GUI elements of the processing framework. Models involving several algorithms can be defined using the command-line interface, and additional operations such as loops and conditional sentences can be added to create more flexible and powerful workflows.

There is not a processing console in QGIS, but all processing commands are available instead from the QGIS built-in *Python console*. That means that you can incorporate those commands into your console work and connect processing algorithms to all the other features (including methods from the QGIS API) available from there.

The code that you can execute from the Python console, even if it does not call any specific processing method, can be converted into a new algorithm that you can later call from the toolbox, the graphical modeler or any other component, just like you do with any other algorithm. In fact, some algorithms that you can find in the toolbox are simple scripts.

In this section, we will see how to use processing algorithms from the QGIS Python console, and also how to write algorithms using Python.

#### 21.7.1 Calling algorithms from the Python console

The first thing you have to do is to import the processing functions with the following line:

```
>>> import processing
```

Now, there is basically just one (interesting) thing you can do with that from the console: execute an algorithm. That is done using the `run` method, which takes the name of the algorithm to execute as its first parameter, and then a variable number of additional parameters depending on the requirements of the algorithm. So the first thing you need to know is the name of the algorithm to execute. That is not the name you see in the

toolbox, but rather a unique command-line name. To find the right name for your algorithm, you can use the `processingRegistry`. Type the following line in your console:

```
>>> for alg in QgsApplication.processingRegistry().algorithms():
    print(alg.id(), "->", alg.displayName())
```

You will see something like this (with some extra dashes added to improve readability).

```
3d:tessellate -----> Tessellate
gdal:aspect -----> Aspect
gdal:assignprojection -----> Assign projection
gdal:buffervectors -----> Buffer vectors
gdal:buildvirtualraster ----> Build Virtual Raster
gdal:cliprasterbyextent ----> Clip raster by extent
gdal:cliprasterbymasklayer -> Clip raster by mask layer
gdal:clipvectorbyextent ----> Clip vector by extent
gdal:clipvectorbypolygon ---> Clip vector by mask layer
gdal:colorrelief -----> Color relief
gdal:contour -----> Contour
gdal:convertformat -----> Convert format
gdal:dissolve -----> Dissolve
...
```

That's a list of all the available algorithm IDs, sorted by provider name and algorithm name, along with their corresponding names.

Once you know the command-line name of the algorithm, the next thing to do is to determine the right syntax to execute it. That means knowing which parameters are needed when calling the `run()` method.

There is a method to describe an algorithm in detail, which can be used to get a list of the parameters that an algorithm requires and the outputs that it will generate. To get this information, you can use the `algorithmHelp(id_of_the_algorithm)` method. Use the ID of the algorithm, not the full descriptive name.

Calling the method with `native:buffer` as parameter (`qgis:buffer` is an alias for `native:buffer` and will also work), you get the following description:

```
>>> processing.algorithmHelp("native:buffer")
Buffer (native:buffer)

This algorithm computes a buffer area for all the features in an
input layer, using a fixed or dynamic distance.

The segments parameter controls the number of line segments to
use to approximate a quarter circle when creating rounded
offsets.

The end cap style parameter controls how line endings are handled
in the buffer.

The join style parameter specifies whether round, miter or
beveled joins should be used when offsetting corners in a line.

The miter limit parameter is only applicable for miter join
styles, and controls the maximum distance from the offset curve
to use when creating a mitered join.

-----
Input parameters
-----

INPUT: Input layer
```

```
Parameter type: QgsProcessingParameterFeatureSource

Accepted data types:
- str: layer ID
- str: layer name
- str: layer source
- QgsProcessingFeatureSourceDefinition
- QgsProperty
- QgsVectorLayer

DISTANCE: Distance

Parameter type: QgsProcessingParameterDistance

Accepted data types:
- int
- float
- QgsProperty

SEGMENTS: Segments

Parameter type: QgsProcessingParameterNumber

Accepted data types:
- int
- float
- QgsProperty

END_CAP_STYLE: End cap style

Parameter type: QgsProcessingParameterEnum

Available values:
- 0: Round
- 1: Flat
- 2: Square

Accepted data types:
- int
- str: as string representation of int, e.g. '1'
- QgsProperty

JOIN_STYLE: Join style

Parameter type: QgsProcessingParameterEnum

Available values:
- 0: Round
- 1: Miter
- 2: Bevel

Accepted data types:
- int
- str: as string representation of int, e.g. '1'
- QgsProperty

MITER_LIMIT: Miter limit

Parameter type: QgsProcessingParameterNumber

Accepted data types:
- int
- float
```

```

        - QgsProperty

DISSOLVE: Dissolve result

Parameter type: QgsProcessingParameterBoolean

Accepted data types:
    - bool
    - int
    - str
    - QgsProperty

OUTPUT: Buffered

Parameter type: QgsProcessingParameterFeatureSink

Accepted data types:
    - str: destination vector file, e.g. 'd:/test.shp'
    - str: 'memory:' to store result in temporary memory layer
    - str: using vector provider ID prefix and destination URI,
          e.g. 'postgres:....' to store result in PostGIS table
    - QgsProcessingOutputLayerDefinition
    - QgsProperty

-----
Outputs
-----

OUTPUT: <QgsProcessingOutputVectorLayer>
        Buffered

```

Now you have everything you need to run any algorithm. As we have already mentioned, algorithms can be run using: `run()`. Its syntax is as follows:

```
>>> processing.run(name_of_the_algorithm, parameters)
```

Where `parameters` is a dictionary of parameters that depend on the algorithm you want to run, and is exactly the list that the `algorithmHelp()` method gives you.

```
>>> processing.run("native:buffer", {'INPUT': '/data/lines.shp',
        'DISTANCE': 100.0,
        'SEGMENTS': 10,
        'DISSOLVE': True,
        'END_CAP_STYLE': 0,
        'JOIN_STYLE': 0,
        'MITER_LIMIT': 10,
        'OUTPUT': '/data/buffers.shp'})
```

If a parameter is optional and you do not want to use it, then don't include it in the dictionary.

If a parameter is not specified, the default value will be used.

Depending on the type of parameter, values are introduced differently. The next list gives a quick review of how to introduce values for each type of input parameter:

- Raster Layer, Vector Layer or Table. Simply use a string with the name that identifies the data object to use (the name it has in the QGIS Table of Contents) or a filename (if the corresponding layer is not opened, it will be opened but not added to the map canvas). If you have an instance of a QGIS object representing the layer, you can also pass it as parameter.
- Enumeration. If an algorithm has an enumeration parameter, the value of that parameter should be entered using an integer value. To know the available options, you can use the `algorithmHelp()` command, as above. For instance, the “native.buffer” algorithm has an enumeration called `JOIN_STYLE`:

```

JOIN_STYLE: Join style

Parameter type: QgsProcessingParameterEnum

Available values:
- 0: Round
- 1: Miter
- 2: Bevel

Accepted data types:
- int
- str: as string representation of int, e.g. '1'
- QgsProperty

```

In this case, the parameter has three options. Notice that ordering is zero-based.

- Boolean. Use True or False.
- Multiple input. The value is a string with input descriptors separated by semicolons (;). As in the case of single layers or tables, each input descriptor can be the data object name, or its file path.
- Table Field from XXX. Use a string with the name of the field to use. This parameter is case-sensitive.
- Fixed Table. Type the list of all table values separated by commas (,) and enclosed between quotes (""). Values start on the upper row and go from left to right. You can also use a 2-D array of values representing the table.
- CRS. Enter the EPSG code number of the desired CRS.
- Extent. You must use a string with xmin, xmax, ymin and ymax values separated by commas (, ).

Boolean, file, string and numerical parameters do not need any additional explanations.

Input parameters such as strings, booleans, or numerical values have default values. The default value is used if the corresponding parameter entry is missing.

For output data objects, type the file path to be used to save it, just as it is done from the toolbox. If the output object is not specified, the result is saved to a temporary file (or skipped if it is an optional output). The extension of the file determines the file format. If you enter a file extension not supported by the algorithm, the default file format for that output type will be used, and its corresponding extension appended to the given file path.

Unlike when an algorithm is executed from the toolbox, outputs are not added to the map canvas if you execute that same algorithm from the Python console using `run()`, but `runAndLoadResults()` will do that.

The `run` method returns a dictionary with one or more output names (the ones shown in the algorithm description) as keys and the file paths of those outputs as values:

```

>>> myresult = processing.run("native:buffer", {'INPUT': '/data/lines.shp',
    'DISTANCE': 100.0,
    'SEGMENTS': 10,
    'DISSOLVE': True,
    'END_CAP_STYLE': 0,
    'JOIN_STYLE': 0,
    'MITER_LIMIT': 10,
    'OUTPUT': '/data/buffers.shp'})
>>> myresult['OUTPUT']
'/data/buffers.shp'

```

You can load feature output by passing the corresponding file paths to the `load()` method. Or you could use `runAndLoadResults()` instead of `run()` to load them immediately.

## 21.7.2 Creating scripts and running them from the toolbox

You can create your own algorithms by writing Python code. Processing scripts extend `QgsProcessingAlgorithm`, so you need to add some extra lines of code to implement mandatory functions. You can find *Create new script* (clean sheet) and *Create New Script from Template* (template that includes code for mandatory functions of `QgsProcessingAlgorithm`) under the *Scripts* dropdown menu on the top of the Processing toolbox. The Processing Script Editor will open, and that's where you should type your code. Saving the script from there in the `scripts` folder (the default folder when you open the save file dialog) with a `.py` extension should create the corresponding algorithm.

The name of the algorithm (the one you will see in the toolbox) is defined within the code.

Let's have a look at the following code, which defines a Processing algorithm that performs a buffer operation with a user defined buffer distance on a vector layer that is specified by the user, after first smoothing the layer.

```
from qgis.core import (QgsProcessingAlgorithm,
    QgsProcessingParameterNumber,
    QgsProcessingParameterFeatureSource,
    QgsProcessingParameterFeatureSink)

import processing

class algTest(QgsProcessingAlgorithm):
    INPUT_BUFFERDIST = 'BUFFERDIST'
    OUTPUT_BUFFER = 'OUTPUT_BUFFER'
    INPUT_VECTOR = 'INPUT_VECTOR'

    def __init__(self):
        super().__init__()

    def name(self):
        return "algTest"

    def displayName(self):
        return "algTest script"

    def createInstance(self):
        return type(self)()

    def initAlgorithm(self, config=None):
        self.addParameter(QgsProcessingParameterFeatureSource(
            self.INPUT_VECTOR, "Input vector"))
        self.addParameter(QgsProcessingParameterNumber(
            self.INPUT_BUFFERDIST, "Buffer distance",
            QgsProcessingParameterNumber.Double,
            100.0))
        self.addParameter(QgsProcessingParameterFeatureSink(
            self.OUTPUT_BUFFER, "Output buffer"))

    def processAlgorithm(self, parameters, context, feedback):
        #DO SOMETHING
        algresult = processing.run("native:smoothgeometry",
            {'INPUT': parameters[self.INPUT_VECTOR],
            'ITERATIONS':2,
            'OFFSET':0.25,
            'MAX_ANGLE':180,
            'OUTPUT': 'memory:'},
            context=context, feedback=feedback, is_child_algorithm=True)
        smoothed = algresult['OUTPUT']
        algresult = processing.run('native:buffer',
            {'INPUT': smoothed,
            'DISTANCE': parameters[self.INPUT_BUFFERDIST],
            'SEGMENTS': 5,
```

```

        'END_CAP_STYLE': 0,
        'JOIN_STYLE': 0,
        'MITER_LIMIT': 10,
        'DISSOLVE': True,
        'OUTPUT': parameters[self.OUTPUT_BUFFER]),
        context=context, feedback=feedback, is_child_algorithm=True)
buffered = algresult['OUTPUT']
return {self.OUTPUT_BUFFER: buffered}

```

After doing the necessary imports, the following `QgsProcessingAlgorithm` functions are specified:

- `name`: The id of the algorithm (lowercase).
- `displayName`: A human readable name for the algorithm.
- `createInstance`: Create a new instance of the algorithm class.
- `initAlgorithm`: Configure the parameterDefinitions and outputDefinitions.

Here you describe the parameters and output of the algorithm. In this case, a feature source for the input, a feature sink for the result and a number for the buffer distance.

- `processAlgorithm`: Do the work.

Here we first run the `smoothgeometry` algorithm to smooth the geometry, and then we run the `buffer` algorithm on the smoothed output. To be able to run algorithms from within another algorithm we have to define a dummy function for the `onFinish` parameter for `run`. This is the `no_post_process` function. You can see how input and output parameters are used as parameters to the `smoothgeometry` and `buffer` algorithms.

There are a number of different parameter types available for input and output. Below is an alphabetically sorted list:

- `QgsProcessingParameterBand`
- `QgsProcessingParameterBoolean`
- `QgsProcessingParameterCrs`
- `QgsProcessingParameterDistance`
- `QgsProcessingParameterEnum`
- `QgsProcessingParameterExpression`
- `QgsProcessingParameterExtent`
- `QgsProcessingParameterFeatureSink`
- `QgsProcessingParameterFeatureSource`
- `QgsProcessingParameterField` - A field in the attributes table of a vector layer. The name of the layer has to be specified.
- `QgsProcessingParameterFile`
- `QgsProcessingParameterFileDestination`
- `QgsProcessingParameterFolderDestination`
- `QgsProcessingParameterMapLayer`
- `QgsProcessingParameterMatrix`
- `QgsProcessingParameterMultipleLayers`
- `QgsProcessingParameterNumber`
- `QgsProcessingParameterPoint`
- `QgsProcessingParameterRange`

- `QgsProcessingParameterRasterDestination`
- `QgsProcessingParameterRasterLayer`
- `QgsProcessingParameterString`
- `QgsProcessingParameterVectorDestination`
- `QgsProcessingParameterVectorLayer`

The first parameter to the constructors is the name of the parameter, and the second is the description of the parameter (for the user interface). The rest of the constructor parameters are parameter type specific.

The `input` can be turned into QGIS classes using the `parameterAs` functions of `QgsProcessingAlgorithm`. For instance to get the number provided for the buffer distance as a double:

```
self.parameterAsDouble(parameters, self.INPUT_BUFFERDIST, context)).
```

The `processAlgorithm` function should return a dictionary containing values for every output defined by the algorithm. This allows access to these outputs from other algorithms, including other algorithms contained within the same model.

Well behaved algorithms should define and return as many outputs as makes sense. Non-feature outputs, such as numbers and strings, are very useful when running your algorithm as part of a larger model, as these values can be used as input parameters for subsequent algorithms within the model. Consider adding numeric outputs for things like the number of features processed, the number of invalid features encountered, the number of features output, etc. The more outputs you return, the more useful your algorithm becomes!

## Feedback

The `feedback` object passed to `processAlgorithm` should be used for user feedback / interaction. You can use the `setProgress` function of the `feedback` object to update the progress bar (0 to 100) to inform the user about the progress of the algorithm. This is very useful if your algorithm takes a long time to complete.

The `feedback` object provides an `isCanceled` method that should be monitored to enable cancelation of the algorithm by the user. The `pushInfo` method of `feedback` can be used to send information to the user, and `reportError` is handy for pushing non-fatal errors to users.

Algorithms should avoid using other forms of providing feedback to users, such as print statements or logging to `QgsMessageLog`, and should always use the `feedback` object instead. This allows verbose logging for the algorithm, and is also thread-safe (which is important, given that algorithms are typically run in a background thread).

## Handling errors

If your algorithm encounters an error which prevents it from executing, such as invalid input values or some other condition from which it cannot or should not recover, then you should raise a `QgsProcessingException`. E.g.:

```
if feature['value'] < 20:  
    raise QgsProcessingException('Invalid input value {}, must be >= 20'.  
    format(feature['value']))
```

Try to avoid raising `QgsProcessingException` for non-fatal errors (e.g. when a feature has a null geometry), and instead just report these errors via `feedback.reportError()` and skip the feature. This helps make your algorithm “model-friendly”, as it avoids halting the execution of an entire algorithm when a non-fatal error is encountered.

## Documenting your scripts

As in the case of models, you can create additional documentation for your scripts, to explain what they do and how to use them.

`QgsProcessingAlgorithm` provides the `helpString`, `shortHelpString` and `helpUrl` functions for that purpose. Specify / override these to provide more help to the user.

`shortDescription` is used in the tooltip when hovering over the algorithm in the toolbox.

### 21.7.3 Pre- and post-execution script hooks

Scripts can also be used as pre- and post-execution hooks that are run before and after an algorithm is run, respectively. This can be used to automate tasks that should be performed whenever an algorithm is executed.

The syntax is identical to the syntax explained above, but an additional global variable named `alg` is available, representing the algorithm that has just been (or is about to be) executed.

In the *General* group of the processing options dialog, you will find two entries named *Pre-execution script* and *Post-execution script* where the filenames of the scripts to be run in each case can be entered.

## 21.8 Writing new Processing algorithms as Python scripts

In QGIS 3.4, the only way to write Processing algorithms using Python is to extend the `QgsProcessingAlgorithm` class.

Within QGIS, you can use *Create new script* in the *Scripts* menu at the top of the *Processing Toolbox* to open the *Processing Script Editor* where you can write your code. To simplify the task, you can start with a script template by using *Create new script from template* from the same menu. This opens a template that extends `QgsProcessingAlgorithm`.

If you save the script in the `scripts` folder (the default location) with a `.py` extension, the algorithm will become available in the *Processing Toolbox*.

### 21.8.1 Extending `QgsProcessingAlgorithm`

The following code

1. takes a vector layer as input
2. counts the number of features
3. does a buffer operation
4. creates a raster layer from the result of the buffer operation
5. returns the buffer layer, raster layer and number of features

```
from qgis.PyQt.QtCore import QCoreApplication
from qgis.core import (QgsProcessing,
                      QgsProcessingAlgorithm,
                      QgsProcessingException,
                      QgsProcessingOutputNumber,
                      QgsProcessingParameterDistance,
                      QgsProcessingParameterFeatureSource,
                      QgsProcessingParameterVectorDestination,
                      QgsProcessingParameterRasterDestination)
import processing

class ExampleProcessingAlgorithm(QgsProcessingAlgorithm):
```

```

"""
This is an example algorithm that takes a vector layer,
creates some new layers and returns some results.
"""

def tr(self, string):
    """
    Returns a translatable string with the self.tr() function.
    """
    return QCoreApplication.translate('Processing', string)

def createInstance(self):
    # Must return a new copy of your algorithm.
    return ExampleProcessingAlgorithm()

def name(self):
    """
    Returns the unique algorithm name.
    """
    return 'bufferrasterextend'

def displayName(self):
    """
    Returns the translated algorithm name.
    """
    return self.tr('Buffer and export to raster (extend)')

def group(self):
    """
    Returns the name of the group this algorithm belongs to.
    """
    return self.tr('Example scripts')

def groupId(self):
    """
    Returns the unique ID of the group this algorithm belongs
    to.
    """
    return 'examplescripts'

def shortHelpString(self):
    """
    Returns a localised short help string for the algorithm.
    """
    return self.tr('Example algorithm short description')

def initAlgorithm(self, config=None):
    """
    Here we define the inputs and outputs of the algorithm.
    """
    # 'INPUT' is the recommended name for the main input
    # parameter.
    self.addParameter(
        QgsProcessingParameterFeatureSource(
            'INPUT',
            self.tr('Input vector layer'),
            types=[QgsProcessing.TypeVectorAnyGeometry]
        )
    )
    self.addParameter(
        QgsProcessingParameterVectorDestination(
            'BUFFER_OUTPUT',
            self.tr('Buffer output'),
            subType=QgsProcessing.TypeVectorAnyGeometry
        )
    )

```

```

        )
    )
# 'OUTPUT' is the recommended name for the main output
# parameter.
self.addParameter(
    QgsProcessingParameterRasterDestination(
        'OUTPUT',
        self.tr('Raster output')
    )
)
self.addParameter(
    QgsProcessingParameterDistance(
        'BUFFERDIST',
        self.tr('BUFFERDIST'),
        defaultValue = 1.0,
        # Make distance units match the INPUT layer units:
        parentParameterName='INPUT'
    )
)
self.addParameter(
    QgsProcessingParameterDistance(
        'CELLSIZE',
        self.tr('CELLSIZE'),
        defaultValue = 10.0,
        parentParameterName='INPUT'
    )
)
self.addOutput(
    QgsProcessingOutputNumber(
        'NUMBEROFFEATURES',
        self.tr('Number of features processed')
    )
)
)

def processAlgorithm(self, parameters, context, feedback):
    """
    Here is where the processing itself takes place.
    """
    # First, we get the count of features from the INPUT layer.
    # This layer is defined as a QgsProcessingParameterFeatureSource
    # parameter, so it is retrieved by calling
    # self.parameterAsSource.
    input_featureresource = self.parameterAsSource(parameters,
                                                   'INPUT',
                                                   context)
    numfeatures = input_featureresource.featureCount()

    # Retrieve the buffer distance and raster cell size numeric
    # values. Since these are numeric values, they are retrieved
    # using self.parameterAsDouble.
    bufferdist = self.parameterAsDouble(parameters, 'BUFFERDIST',
                                         context)
    rastercellsize = self.parameterAsDouble(parameters, 'CELLSIZE',
                                             context)
    if feedback.isCanceled():
        return {}
    buffer_result = processing.run(
        'native:buffer',
        {
            # Here we pass on the original parameter values of INPUT
            # and BUFFER_OUTPUT to the buffer algorithm.
            'INPUT': parameters['INPUT'],
            'OUTPUT': parameters['BUFFER_OUTPUT'],

```

```

'DISTANCE': bufferdist,
'SEGMENTS': 10,
'DISSOLVE': True,
'END_CAP_STYLE': 0,
'JOIN_STYLE': 0,
'MITER_LIMIT': 10
},
# Because the buffer algorithm is being run as a step in
# another larger algorithm, the is_child_algorithm option
# should be set to True
is_child_algorithm=True,
#
# It's important to pass on the context and feedback objects to
# child algorithms, so that they can properly give feedback to
# users and handle cancelation requests.
context=context,
feedback=feedback)

# Check for cancelation
if feedback.isCanceled():
    return {}

# Run the separate rasterization algorithm using the buffer result
# as an input.
rasterized_result = processing.run(
    'qgis:rasterize',
    {
        # Here we pass the 'OUTPUT' value from the buffer's result
# dictionary off to the rasterize child algorithm.
        'LAYER': buffer_result['OUTPUT'],
        'EXTENT': buffer_result['OUTPUT'],
        'MAP_UNITS_PER_PIXEL': rastercellsize,
        # Use the original parameter value.
        'OUTPUT': parameters['OUTPUT']
    },
    is_child_algorithm=True,
    context=context,
    feedback=feedback)

if feedback.isCanceled():
    return {}

# Return the results
return {'OUTPUT': rasterized_result['OUTPUT'],
         'BUFFER_OUTPUT': buffer_result['OUTPUT'],
         'NUMBEROFFEATURES': numfeatures}

```

Processing algorithm standard functions:

- **createInstance (mandatory)** Must return a new copy of your algorithm. If you change the name of the class, make sure you also update the value returned here to match!
- **name (mandatory)** Returns the unique algorithm name, used for identifying the algorithm.
- **displayName (mandatory)** Returns the translated algorithm name.
- **group** Returns the name of the group this algorithm belongs to.
- **groupId** Returns the unique ID of the group this algorithm belongs to.
- **shortHelpString** Returns a localised short help string for the algorithm.
- **initAlgorithm (mandatory)** Here we define the inputs and outputs of the algorithm.

INPUT and OUTPUT are recommended names for the main input and main output parameters, respec-

tively.

If a parameter depends on another parameter, `parentParameterName` is used to specify this relationship (could be the field / band of a layer or the distance units of a layer).

- **processAlgorithm (mandatory)** This is where the processing takes place.

Parameters are retrieved using special purpose functions, for instance `parameterAsSource` and `parameterAsDouble`.

`processing.run` can be used to run other processing algorithms from a processing algorithm. The first parameter is the name of the algorithm, the second is a dictionary of the parameters to the algorithm. `is_child_algorithm` is normally set to `True` when running an algorithm from within another algorithm. `context` and `feedback` inform the algorithm about the environment to run in and the channel for communicating with the user (catching cancel request, reporting progress, providing textual feedback). When using the (parent) algorithm's parameters as parameters to "child" algorithms, the original parameter values should be used (e.g. `parameters['OUTPUT']`).

It is good practice to check the `feedback` object for cancellation as much as is sensibly possible! Doing so allows for responsive cancellation, instead of forcing users to wait for unwanted processing to occur.

The algorithm should return values for all the output parameters it has defined as a dictionary. In this case, that's the buffer and rasterized output layers, and the count of features processed. The dictionary keys must match the original parameter/output names.

## 21.8.2 Handing algorithm output

When you declare an output representing a layer (raster or vector), the algorithm will try to add it to QGIS once it is finished.

- Raster layer output: `QgsProcessingParameterRasterDestination`.
- Vector layer output: `QgsProcessingParameterVectorDestination`.

So even if the `processing.run()` method does not add the layers it creates into the user's current project, the two output layers (buffer and raster buffer) will be loaded, since they are saved to the destinations entered by the user (or to temporary destinations if the user does not specify a destination).

If a layer is created as output of an algorithm, it should be declared as such. Otherwise, you will not be able to properly use the algorithm in the modeler, since what is declared will not match what the algorithm really creates.

You can return strings, numbers and more by specifying them in the result dictionary (as demonstrated for "NUMBEROFFEATURES"), but they should always be explicitly defined as outputs from your algorithm. We encourage algorithms to output as many useful values as possible, since these can be valuable for use in later algorithms when your algorithm is used as part of a model.

## 21.8.3 Communicating with the user

If your algorithm takes a long time to process, it is a good idea to inform the user about the progress. You can use `feedback` (`QgsProcessingFeedback`) for this.

The progress text and progressbar can be updated using two methods: `setProgressText(text)` and `setProgress(percent)`.

You can provide more information to the user using `pushCommandInfo(text)`, `pushDebugInfo(text)`, `pushInfo(text)` and `reportError(text)`.

If your script has a problem, the correct way of handling it is to raise a `QgsProcessingException`. You can pass a message as an argument to the constructor of the exception. Processing will take care of handling it and communicating with the user, depending on where the algorithm is being executed from (toolbox, modeler, Python console, ...)

## 21.8.4 Documenting your scripts

You can document your scripts by overloading the `helpString()` and `helpUrl()` methods of `QgsProcessingAlgorithm`.

## 21.8.5 Flags

You can override the `flags` method of `QgsProcessingAlgorithm` to tell QGIS more about your algorithm. You can for instance tell QGIS that the script shall be hidden from the modeler, that it can be canceled, that it is not thread safe, and more.

---

**Tip:** By default, Processing runs algorithms in a separate thread in order to keep QGIS responsive while the processing task runs. If your algorithm is regularly crashing, you are probably using API calls which are not safe to do in a background thread. Try returning the `QgsProcessingAlgorithm.FlagNoThreading` flag from your algorithm's `flags()` method to force Processing to run your algorithm in the main thread instead.

---

## 21.8.6 Best practices for writing script algorithms

Here's a quick summary of ideas to consider when creating your script algorithms and, especially, if you want to share them with other QGIS users. Following these simple rules will ensure consistency across the different Processing elements such as the toolbox, the modeler or the batch processing interface.

- Do not load resulting layers. Let Processing handle your results and load your layers if needed.
- Always declare the outputs your algorithm creates.
- Do not show message boxes or use any GUI element from the script. If you want to communicate with the user, use the methods of the feedback object (`QgsProcessingFeedback`) or throw a `QgsProcessingException`.

There are already many processing algorithms available in QGIS. You can find code on [https://github.com/qgis/QGIS/tree/release-3\\_4/python/plugins/processing/alg/qgis](https://github.com/qgis/QGIS/tree/release-3_4/python/plugins/processing/alg/qgis).

## 21.9 Configuring external applications

The processing framework can be extended using additional applications. Currently, SAGA, GRASS and R are supported. Algorithms relying on an external applications are managed by their own algorithm provider. Additional providers can be found as separate plugins, and installed using the QGIS Plugin Manager.

This section will show you how to configure the Processing framework to include these additional applications, and it will explain some particular features of the algorithms based on them. Once you have correctly configured the system, you will be able to execute external algorithms from any component like the toolbox or the graphical modeler, just like you do with any other geoalgorithm.

By default, all algorithms that rely on an external application not shipped with QGIS are not enabled. You can enable them in the settings dialog. Make sure that the corresponding application is already installed in your system.

### 21.9.1 A note for Windows users

If you are not an advanced user and you are running QGIS on Windows, you might not be interested in reading the rest of this chapter. Make sure you install QGIS in your system using the standalone installer. That will automatically install SAGA and GRASS in your system and configure them so they can be run from QGIS. All the algorithms from these providers will be ready to be run without needing any further configuration. If installing through OSGeo4W application, make sure you select for installation SAGA and GRASS as well.

## 21.9.2 A note on file formats

When using an external software, opening a file in QGIS does not mean that it can be opened and processed as well in that other software. In most cases, other software can read what you have opened in QGIS, but in some cases, that might not be true. When using databases or uncommon file formats, whether for raster or vector layers, problems might arise. If that happens, try to use well-known file formats that you are sure are understood by both programs, and check the console output (in the history and log dialog) to know more about what is going wrong.

Using GRASS raster layers is, for instance, one case in which you might have trouble and not be able to complete your work if you call an external algorithm using such a layer as input. For this reason, these layers will not appear as available to algorithms.

You should, however, find no problems at all with vector layers, since QGIS automatically converts from the original file format to one accepted by the external application before passing the layer to it. This adds extra processing time, which might be significant if the layer has a large size, so do not be surprised if it takes more time to process a layer from a DB connection than it processes a layer from a Shapefile format dataset of similar size.

Providers not using external applications can process any layer that you can open in QGIS, since they open it for analysis through QGIS.

Regarding output formats, all formats supported by QGIS as output can be used, both for raster and vector layers. Some providers do not support certain formats, but all can export to common formats that can later be transformed by QGIS automatically. As in the case of input layers, if this conversion is needed, that might increase the processing time.

## 21.9.3 A note on vector layer selections

External applications may also be made aware of the selections that exist in vector layers within QGIS. However, that requires rewriting all input vector layers, just as if they were originally in a format not supported by the external application. Only when no selection exists, or the *Use only selected features* option is not enabled in the processing general configuration, can a layer be directly passed to an external application.

In other cases, exporting only selected features is needed, which causes execution times to be longer.

## 21.9.4 SAGA

SAGA algorithms can be run from QGIS if you have SAGA installed in your system and you configure the processing framework properly so it can find SAGA executables. In particular, the SAGA command-line executable is needed to run SAGA algorithms.

If you are running Windows, both the stand-alone installer and the OSGeo4W installer include SAGA along with QGIS, and the path is automatically configured, so there is no need to do anything else.

If you have installed SAGA yourself and your QGIS installer did not include it, the path to the SAGA executable must be configured. To do this, open the configuration dialog. In the *SAGA* block, you will find a setting named *SAGA Folder*. Enter the path to the folder where SAGA is installed. Close the configuration dialog, and now you are ready to run SAGA algorithms from QGIS.

If you are running Linux, SAGA binaries are not included with Processing, so you have to download and install the software yourself. Please check the SAGA website for more information.

In this case, there is no need to configure the path to the SAGA executable, and you will not see those folder entries. Instead, you must make sure that SAGA is properly installed and its folder is added to the PATH environment variable. Just open a console and type `saga_cmd` to check that the system can find where the SAGA binaries are located.

### About SAGA grid system limitations

Most SAGA algorithms that require several input raster layers require them to have the same grid system. That is, they must cover the same geographic area and have the same cell size, so their corresponding grids match. When

calling SAGA algorithms from QGIS, you can use any layer, regardless of its cell size and extent. When multiple raster layers are used as input for a SAGA algorithm, QGIS resamples them to a common grid system and then passes them to SAGA (unless the SAGA algorithm can operate with layers from different grid systems).

The definition of that common grid system is controlled by the user, and you will find several parameters in the SAGA group of the settings window to do so. There are two ways of setting the target grid system:

- Setting it manually. You define the extent by setting the values of the following parameters:
  - *Resampling min X*
  - *Resampling max X*
  - *Resampling min Y*
  - *Resampling max Y*
  - *Resampling cellsize*

Notice that QGIS will resample input layers to that extent, even if they do not overlap with it.

- Setting it automatically from input layers. To select this option, just check the *Use min covering grid system for resampling* option. All the other settings will be ignored and the minimum extent that covers all the input layers will be used. The cell size of the target layer is the maximum of all cell sizes of the input layers.

For algorithms that do not use multiple raster layers, or for those that do not need a unique input grid system, no resampling is performed before calling SAGA, and those parameters are not used.

### Limitations for multi-band layers

Unlike QGIS, SAGA has no support for multi-band layers. If you want to use a multiband layer (such as an RGB or multispectral image), you first have to split it into single-banded images. To do so, you can use the ‘SAGA/Grid - Tools/Split RGB image’ algorithm (which creates three images from an RGB image) or the ‘SAGA/Grid - Tools/Extract band’ algorithm (to extract a single band).

### Limitations in cell size

SAGA assumes that raster layers have the same cell size in the X and Y axis. If you are working with a layer with different values for horizontal and vertical cell size, you might get unexpected results. In this case, a warning will be added to the processing log, indicating that an input layer might not be suitable to be processed by SAGA.

### Logging

When QGIS calls SAGA, it does so using its command-line interface, thus passing a set of commands to perform all the required operations. SAGA shows its progress by writing information to the console, which includes the percentage of processing already done, along with additional content. This output is filtered and used to update the progress bar while the algorithm is running.

Both the commands sent by QGIS and the additional information printed by SAGA can be logged along with other processing log messages, and you might find them useful to track in detail what is going on when QGIS runs a SAGA algorithm. You will find two settings, namely *Log console output* and *Log execution commands*, to activate that logging mechanism.

Most other providers that use an external application and call it through the command-line have similar options, so you will find them as well in other places in the processing settings list.

### 21.9.5 R. Creating R scripts

To enable R in Processing you need to install the **Processing R Provider** plugin.

R integration in QGIS is different from that of SAGA in that there is not a predefined set of algorithms you can run (except for a few examples). Instead, you should write your scripts and call R commands, much like you would do

from R, and in a very similar manner to what we saw in the section dedicated to processing scripts. This section shows you the syntax to use to call those R commands from QGIS and how to use QGIS objects (layers, tables) in them.

The first thing you have to do, as we saw in the case of SAGA, is to tell QGIS where your R binaries are located. You can do this using the *R folder* entry in the processing configuration dialog. Once you have set that parameter, you can start creating and executing your own R scripts.

---

**Note:** for **Windows** user, usually the R executable file is in the C:\Program Files\R\R-3.2 folder. Add just the folder and **NOT** the binary!

---

Once again, this is different in Linux, and you just have to make sure that the R folder is included in the PATH environment variable. If you can start R just typing R in a console, then you are ready to go.

To add a new algorithm that calls an R function (or a more complex R script that you have developed and you would like to have available from QGIS), you have to create a script file that tells the processing framework how to perform that operation and the corresponding R commands to do so.

R script files have the extension .rsx, and creating them is pretty easy if you just have a basic knowledge of R syntax and R scripting. They should be stored in the R scripts folder. You can set this folder in the *R settings* group (available from the processing settings dialog), just like you do with the folder for regular processing scripts.

Let's have a look at a very simple script file, which calls the R method `spsample` to create a random grid within the boundary of the polygons in a given polygon layer. This method belongs to the `maptools` package. Since almost all the algorithms that you might like to incorporate into QGIS will use or generate spatial data, knowledge of spatial packages like `maptools` and, especially, `sp`, is mandatory.

```
##polyg=vector
##numpoints=number 10
##output=output vector
##sp=group
pts=spsample(polyg,numpoints,type="random")
output=SpatialPointsDataFrame(pts, as.data.frame(pts))
```

The first lines, which start with a double Python comment sign (##), tell QGIS the inputs of the algorithm described in the file and the outputs that it will generate. They work with exactly the same syntax as the Processing scripts that we have already seen, so they will not be described here again.

Please have a look at the R Intro and the R Syntax Training Manual Chapters to have more information on how to write your own R scripts-

When you declare an input parameter, QGIS uses that information for two things: creating the user interface to ask the user for the value of that parameter and creating a corresponding R variable that can later be used as input for R commands.

In the above example, we are declaring an input of type `vector` named `polyg`. When executing the algorithm, QGIS will open in R the layer selected by the user and store it in a variable also named `polyg`. So, the name of a parameter is also the name of the variable that we can use in R for accessing the value of that parameter (thus, you should avoid using reserved R words as parameter names).

Spatial elements such as vector and raster layers are read using the `readOGR()` and `brick()` commands (you do not have to worry about adding those commands to your description file – QGIS will do it), and they are stored as `Spatial*DataFrame` objects. Table fields are stored as strings containing the name of the selected field.

Tables are opened using the `read.csv()` command. If a table entered by the user is not in CSV format, it will be converted prior to importing it into R.

Additionally, raster files can be read using the `readGDAL()` command instead of `brick()` by using the `##usereadgdal`.

If you are an advanced user and do not want QGIS to create the object representing the layer, you can use the `##passfilenames` tag to indicate that you prefer a string with the filename instead. In this case, it is up to you to open the file before performing any operation on the data it contains.

With the above information, we can now understand the first line of our first example script (the first line not starting with a Python comment).

```
pts=spsample(polyg,numpoints,type="random")
```

The variable `polygon` already contains a `SpatialPolygonsDataFrame` object, so it can be used to call the `spsample` method, just like the `numpoints` one, which indicates the number of points to add to the created sample grid.

Since we have declared an output of type vector named `out`, we have to create a variable named `out` and store a `Spatial*DataFrame` object in it (in this case, a `SpatialPointsDataFrame`). You can use any name for your intermediate variables. Just make sure that the variable storing your final result has the same name that you used to declare it, and that it contains a suitable value.

In this case, the result obtained from the `spsample` method has to be converted explicitly into a `SpatialPointsDataFrame` object, since it is itself an object of class `ppp`, which is not a suitable class to be returned to QGIS.

If your algorithm generates raster layers, the way they are saved will depend on whether or not you have used the `##dontuserasterpackage` option. If you have used it, layers are saved using the `writeGDAL()` method. If not, the `writeRaster()` method from the `raster` package will be used.

If you have used the `##passfilenames` option, outputs are generated using the `raster` package (with `writeRaster()`), even though it is not used for the inputs.

If your algorithm does not generate any layer, but rather a text result in the console instead, you have to indicate that you want the console to be shown once the execution is finished. To do so, just start the command lines that produce the results you want to print with the `>` ('greater') sign. The output of all other lines will not be shown. For instance, here is the description file of an algorithm that performs a normality test on a given field (column) of the attributes of a vector layer:

```
##layer=vector
##field=field layer
##nortest=group
library(nortest)
>lillie.test(layer[[field]])
```

The output of the last line is printed, but the output of the first is not (and neither are the outputs from other command lines added automatically by QGIS).

If your algorithm creates any kind of graphics (using the `plot()` method), add the following line:

```
##showplots
```

This will cause QGIS to redirect all R graphical outputs to a temporary file, which will be opened once R execution has finished.

Both graphics and console results will be shown in the processing results manager.

For more information, please check the script files provided with Processing. Most of them are rather simple and will greatly help you understand how to create your own scripts.

---

**Note:** `rgdal` and `raster` libraries are loaded by default, so you do not have to add the corresponding `library()` commands (you just have to make sure that those two packages are installed in your R distribution). However, other additional libraries that you might need have to be explicitly loaded by typing, `library(ggplot2)`. If the package is not already installed on your machine, Processing will download and install it. In this way the package will be also available in R Standalone. **Be aware** that if the package has to be downloaded, the first time you run the script it might take a long time.

---

## 21.9.6 GRASS

Configuring GRASS is not much different from configuring SAGA. First, the path to the GRASS folder has to be defined, but only if you are running Windows.

By default, the Processing framework tries to configure its GRASS connector to use the GRASS distribution that ships along with QGIS. This should work without problems in most systems, but if you experience problems, you might have to configure the GRASS connector manually. Also, if you want to use a different GRASS installation, you can change that setting and point to the folder where the other version is installed. GRASS 7 is needed for algorithms to work correctly.

If you are running Linux, you just have to make sure that GRASS is correctly installed, and that it can be run without problem from a console.

GRASS algorithms use a region for calculations. This region can be defined manually using values similar to the ones found in the SAGA configuration, or automatically, taking the minimum extent that covers all the input layers used to execute the algorithm each time. If the latter approach is the behavior you prefer, just check the *Use min covering region* option in the GRASS configuration parameters.



# CHAPTER 22

## Plugins

### 22.1 QGIS Plugins

QGIS has been designed with a plugin architecture. This allows many new features and functions to be easily added to the application. Some of the features in QGIS are actually implemented as plugins.

#### 22.1.1 Core and External plugins

QGIS plugins are implemented either as **Core Plugins** or **External Plugins**.

*Core Plugins* are maintained by the QGIS Development Team and are automatically part of every QGIS distribution. They are written in one of two languages: **C++** or **Python**.

Most of External Plugins are currently written in Python. They are stored either in the ‘Official’ QGIS Repository at <https://plugins.qgis.org/plugins/> or in external repositories and are maintained by the individual authors. Detailed documentation about the usage, minimum QGIS version, home page, authors, and other important information are provided for the plugins in the Official repository. For other external repositories, documentation might be available with the external plugins themselves. External plugins documentation is not included in this manual.

To install or activate a plugin, go to *Plugins* menu and select  *Manage and install plugins...*. Installed external python plugins are placed under the `python/plugins` folder of the active *user profile* path.

Paths to Custom C++ plugins libraries can also be added under *Settings* → *Options* → *System*.

---

**Note:** According to the *plugin manager settings*, QGIS main interface can display an icon on the right of the status bar to inform you that there are updates for your installed plugins or new plugins available.

---

#### 22.1.2 The Plugins Dialog

The tabs in the Plugins dialog allow the user to install, uninstall and upgrade plugins in different ways. Each plugin has some metadata displayed in the right panel:

- information on whether the plugin is experimental
- description

- rating vote(s) (you can vote for your preferred plugin!)
- tags
- some useful links to the home page, tracker and code repository
- author(s)
- version available

At the top of the dialog, a *Search* function helps you find any plugin using metadata information (author, name, description...). It is available in nearly every tab (except  *Settings*).

### The **Settings** tab

The  *Settings* tab is the main place you can configure which plugins can be displayed in your application. You can use the following options:

- *Check for updates on startup.* Whenever a new plugin or a plugin update is available, QGIS will inform you ‘every time QGIS starts’, ‘once a day’, ‘every 3 days’, ‘every week’, ‘every 2 weeks’ or ‘every month’.
- *Show also experimental plugins.* QGIS will show you plugins in early stages of development, which are generally unsuitable for production use.
- *Show also deprecated plugins.* Because they use functions that are no longer available in QGIS, these plugins are set deprecated and generally unsuitable for production use. They appear among invalid plugins list.

By default, QGIS provides you with its official plugin repository with the URL <https://plugins.qgis.org/plugins/plugins.xml?qgis=3.0> (in case of QGIS 3.0) in the *Plugin repositories* section. To add external author repositories, click *Add...* and fill in the *Repository Details* form with a name and the URL. The URL can be of `http://` or `file://` protocol type.

The default QGIS repository is an open repository and you don’t need any authentication to access it. You can however deploy your own plugin repository and require an authentication (basic authentication, PKI). You can get more information on QGIS authentication support in *Authentication* chapter.

If you do not want one or more of the added repositories, they can be disabled from the Settings tab via the *Edit...* button, or completely removed with the *Delete* button.

### The **All** tab

In the  *All* tab, all the available plugins are listed, including both core and external plugins. Use *Upgrade All* to look for new versions of the plugins. Furthermore, you can use *Install Plugin* if a plugin is listed but not installed, *Uninstall Plugin* as well as *Reinstall Plugin* if a plugin is installed. An installed plugin can be temporarily de/activated using the checkbox.

### The **Installed** tab

In the  *Installed* tab, you’ll find listed the Core plugins, that you can not uninstall. You can extend this list with external plugins that can be uninstalled and reinstalled any time, using the *Uninstall Plugin* and *Reinstall Plugin* buttons. You can *Upgrade All* the plugins here as well.

### The **Not installed** tab

The  *Not installed* tab lists all plugins available that are not installed. You can use the *Install Plugin* button to implement a plugin into QGIS.

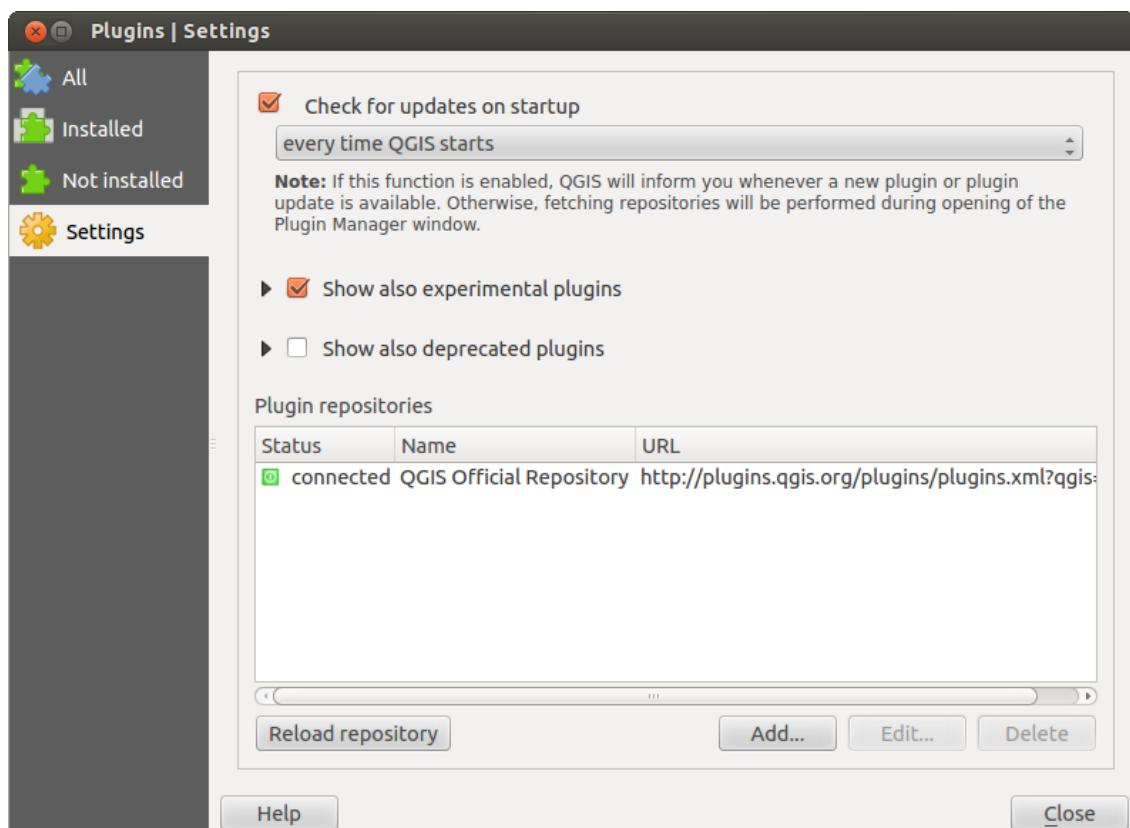


Fig. 22.1: The *Settings* tab

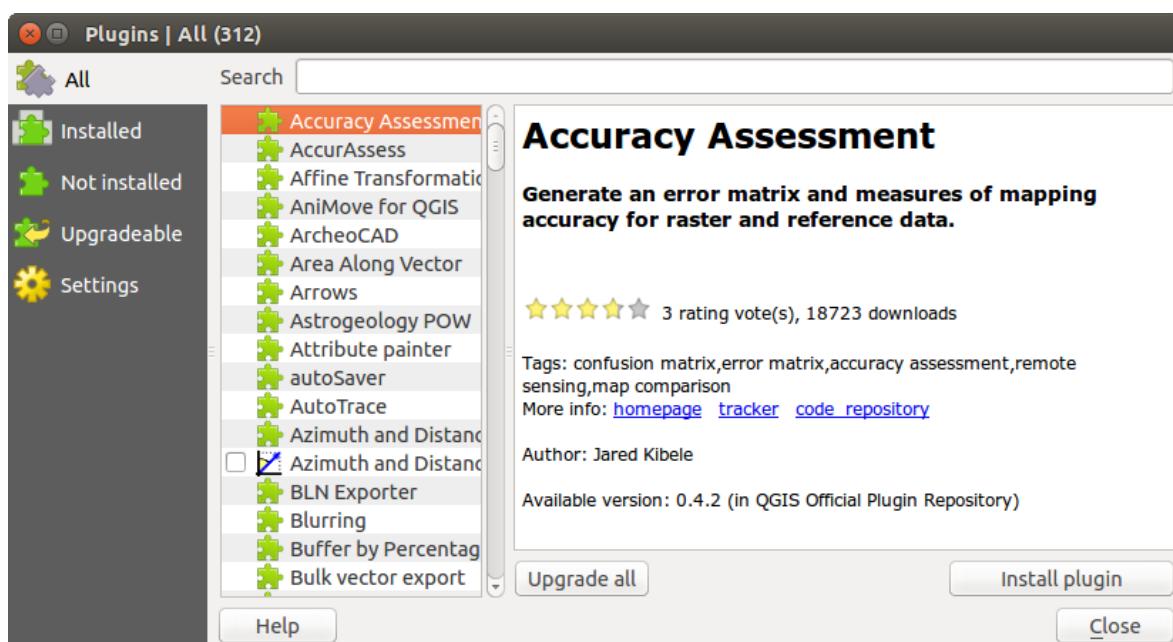
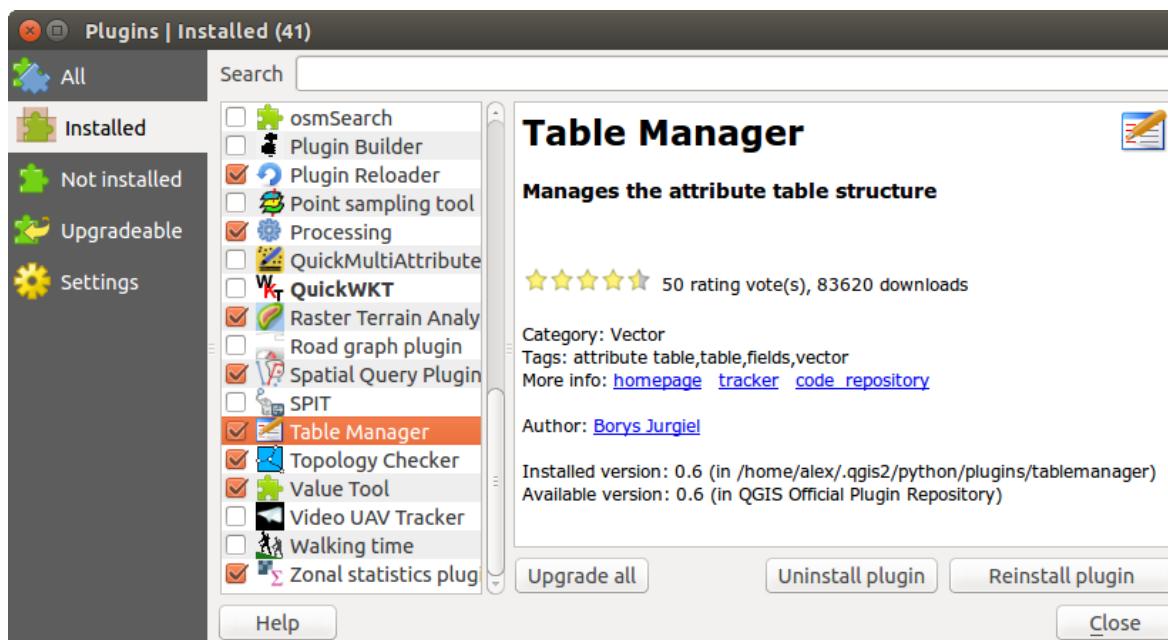


Fig. 22.2: The *All* tab

Fig. 22.3: The *Installed* tabFig. 22.4: The *Not installed* tab

## The Upgradeable and New tabs

The *Upgradeable* and *New* tabs are enabled when new plugins are added to the repository or a new version of an installed plugin is released. If you activated  *Show also experimental plugins* in the *Settings* menu, those also appear in the list giving you opportunity to early test upcoming tools.

Installation can be done with the *Install Plugin*, *Upgrade Plugin* or *Upgrade All* buttons.

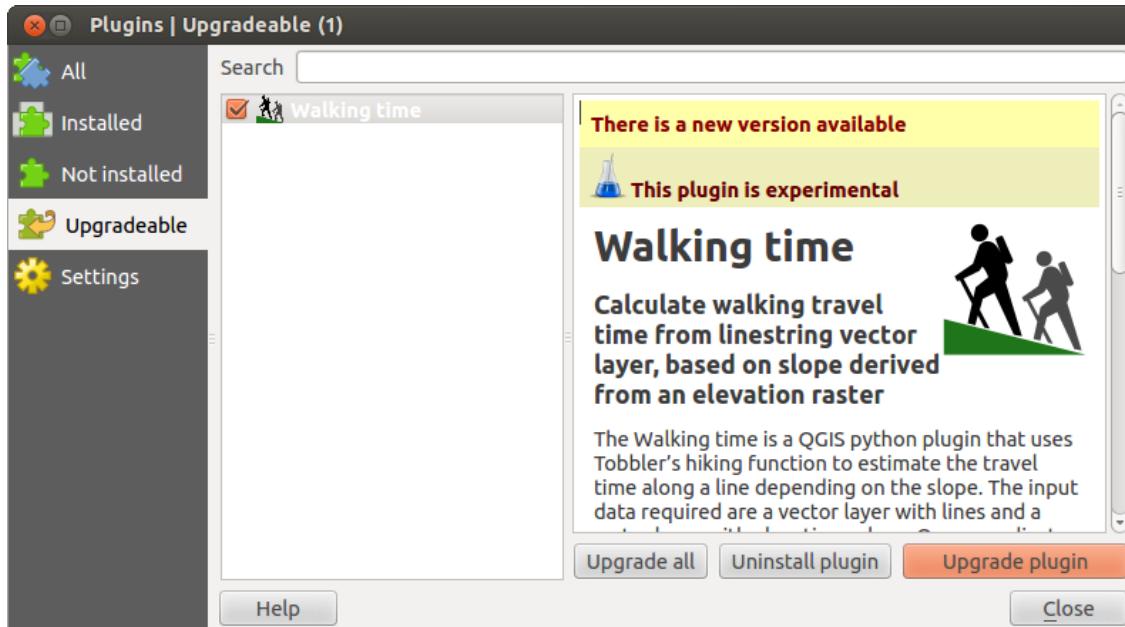


Fig. 22.5: The *Upgradeable* tab

## The Invalid tab

The *Invalid* tab lists all installed plugins that are currently broken for any reason (missing dependency, errors while loading, incompatible functions with QGIS version...). You can try the *Reinstall Plugin* button to fix an invalidated plugin but most of the times the fix will be elsewhere (install some libraries, look for another compatible plugin or help to upgrade the broken one).

## The Install from ZIP tab

The *Install from ZIP* tab provides a file selector widget to import plugins in a zipped format, e.g. plugins downloaded directly from their repository.

## 22.2 Using QGIS Core Plugins

### 22.2.1 Coordinate Capture Plugin

The coordinate capture plugin is easy to use and provides the ability to display coordinates on the map canvas for two selected coordinate reference systems (CRS).

1. Start QGIS, select *Properties...* from the *Project* menu and click on the *CRS* tab. As an alternative, you can also click on the *CRS* icon in the lower right-hand corner of the status bar.

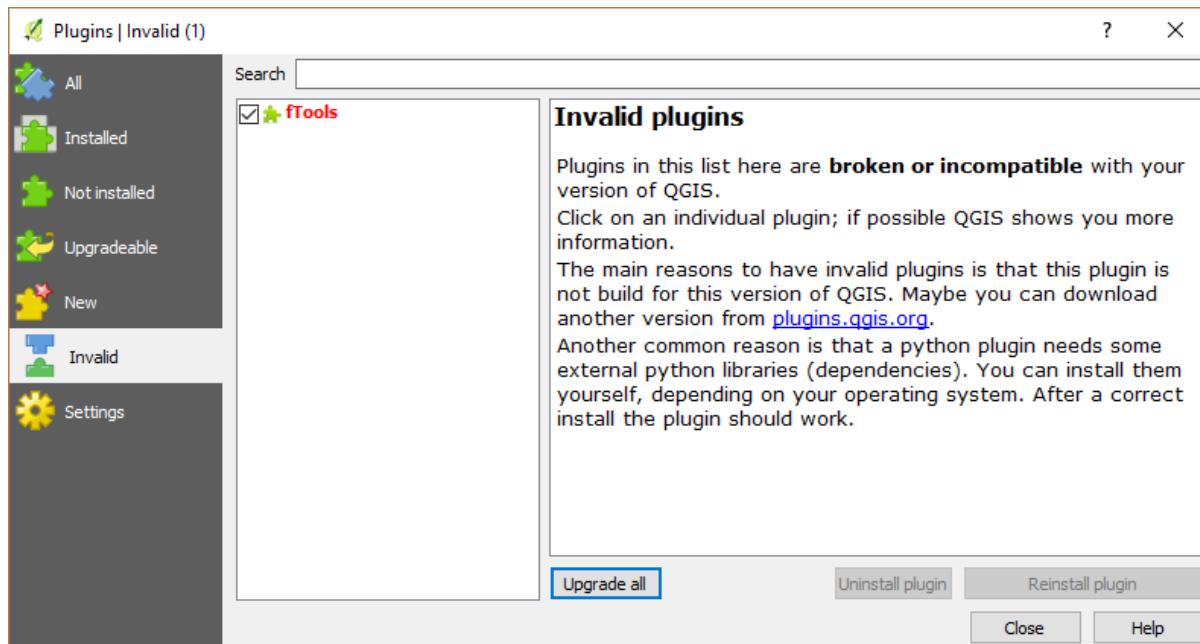


Fig. 22.6: The *Invalid* tab

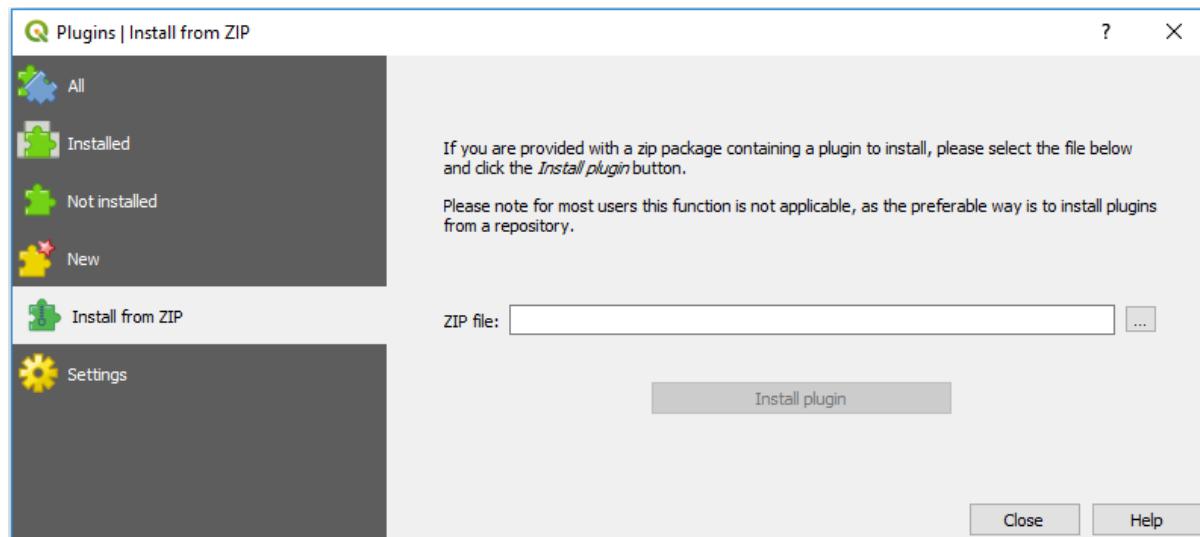


Fig. 22.7: The *Install from zip* tab

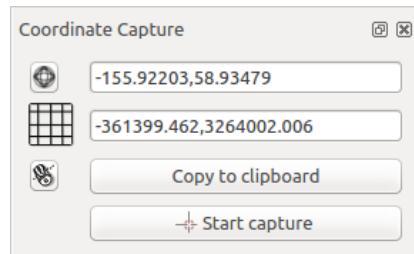


Fig. 22.8: Coordinate Capture Plugin

2. Click on the  *Enable on the fly projection* checkbox and select a projected coordinate system of your choice (see also [Working with Projections](#)).
3. Activate the coordinate capture plugin in the Plugin Manager (see [The Plugins Dialog](#)) and ensure that the dialog is visible by going to *View → Panels* and ensuring that  *Coordinate Capture* is enabled. The coordinate capture dialog appears as shown in Figure [figure\\_coordinate\\_capture](#). Alternatively, you can also look for *Vector → Coordinate Capture*.
4. Click on the  Click to select the CRS to use for coordinate display icon and select a different CRS from the one you selected above.
5. To start capturing coordinates, click on *Start Capture*. You can now click anywhere on the map canvas and the plugin will show the coordinates for both of your selected CRS.
6. To enable mouse coordinate tracking, click the  mouse tracking icon.
7. You can also copy selected coordinates to the clipboard.

## 22.2.2 DB Manager Plugin

The DB Manager Plugin is officially part of the QGIS core and is intended to be the main tool to integrate and manage spatial database formats supported by QGIS (PostGIS, SpatiaLite, GeoPackage, Oracle Spatial, Virtual layers) in one user interface. The  DB Manager Plugin provides several features. You can drag layers from the QGIS Browser into the DB Manager, and it will import your layer into your spatial database. You can drag and drop tables between spatial databases and they will get imported.

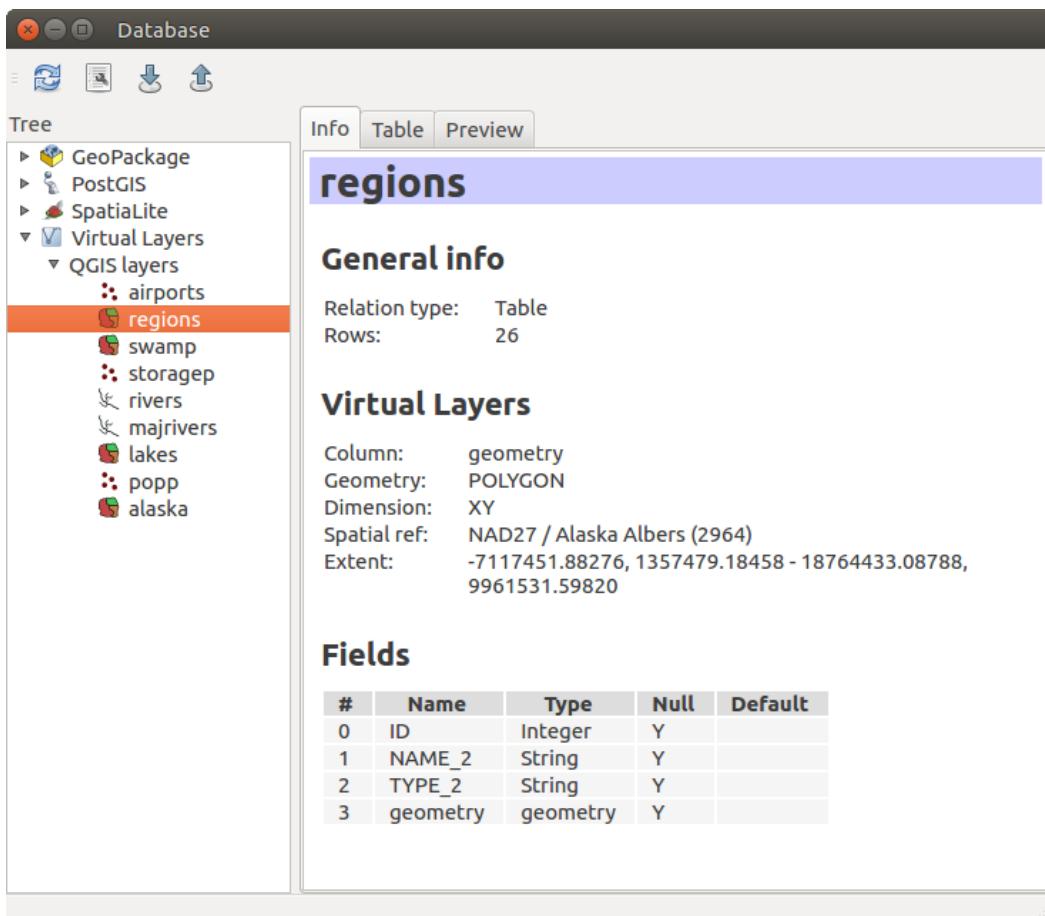


Fig. 22.9: DB Manager dialog

The *Database* menu allows you to connect to an existing database, to start the SQL window and to exit the DB Manager Plugin. Once you are connected to an existing database, the menus *Schema* and *Table* additionally appear.

The *Schema* menu includes tools to create and delete (empty) schemas and, if topology is available (e.g., PostGIS 2), to start a *TopoViewer*.

The *Table* menu allows you to create and edit tables and to delete tables and views. It is also possible to empty tables and to move tables from one schema to another. As further functionality, you can perform a VACUUM and then an ANALYZE for each selected table. Plain VACUUM simply reclaims space and makes it available for reuse. ANALYZE updates statistics to determine the most efficient way to execute a query. Finally, you can import layers/files, if they are loaded in QGIS or exist in the file system. And you can export database tables to shape with the Export File feature.

The *Tree* window lists all existing databases supported by QGIS. With a double-click, you can connect to the database. With the right mouse button, you can rename and delete existing schemas and tables. Tables can also be added to the QGIS canvas with the context menu.

If connected to a database, the **main** window of the DB Manager offers three tabs. The *Info* tab provides information about the table and its geometry, as well as about existing fields, constraints and indexes. It also allows you to run Vacuum Analyze and to create a spatial index on a selected table, if not already done. The *Table* tab shows all attributes, and the *Preview* tab renders the geometries as preview.

## Working with the SQL Window

You can also use the DB Manager to execute SQL queries against your spatial database and then view the spatial output for queries by adding the results to QGIS as a query layer. It is possible to highlight a portion of the SQL and only that portion will be executed when you press F5 or click the *Execute (F5)* button.

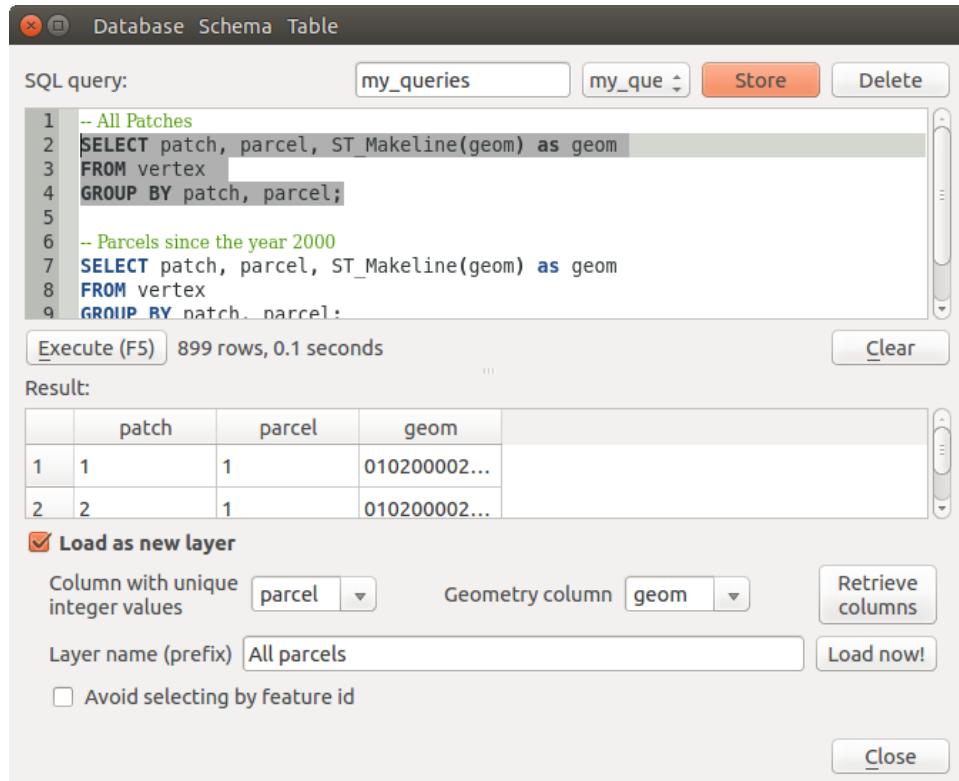


Fig. 22.10: Executing SQL queries in the DB Manager SQL window

**Note:** The SQL Window can also be used to create Virtual Layers. In that case, instead of selecting a database, select **QGIS Layers** under **Virtual Layers** before opening the SQL Window. See [Creating virtual layers](#) for

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instructions on the SQL syntax to use.

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### 22.2.3 eVis Plugin

(This section is derived from Horning, N., K. Koy, P. Ersts. 2009. eVis (v1.1.0) User's Guide. American Museum of Natural History, Center for Biodiversity and Conservation. Available from <https://biodiversityinformatics.amnh.org/>, and released under the GNU FDL.)

The Biodiversity Informatics Facility at the American Museum of Natural History's (AMNH) Center for Biodiversity and Conservation (CBC) has developed the Event Visualization Tool (eVis), another software tool to add to the suite of conservation monitoring and decision support tools for guiding protected area and landscape planning. This plugin enables users to easily link geocoded (i.e., referenced with latitude and longitude or X and Y coordinates) photographs, and other supporting documents, to vector data in QGIS.

eVis is now automatically installed and enabled in new versions of QGIS, and as with all plugins, it can be disabled and enabled using the Plugin Manager (see [The Plugins Dialog](#)).

The eVis plugin is made up of three modules: the 'Database Connection tool', 'Event ID tool', and the 'Event Browser'. These work together to allow viewing of geocoded photographs and other documents that are linked to features stored in vector files, databases, or spreadsheets.

#### Event Browser

The Event Browser module provides the functionality to display geocoded photographs that are linked to vector features displayed in the QGIS map window. Point data, for example, can be from a vector file that can be input using QGIS or it can be from the result of a database query. The vector feature must have attribute information associated with it to describe the location and name of the file containing the photograph and, optionally, the compass direction the camera was pointed when the image was acquired. Your vector layer must be loaded into QGIS before running the Event Browser.

#### Launch the Event Browser module

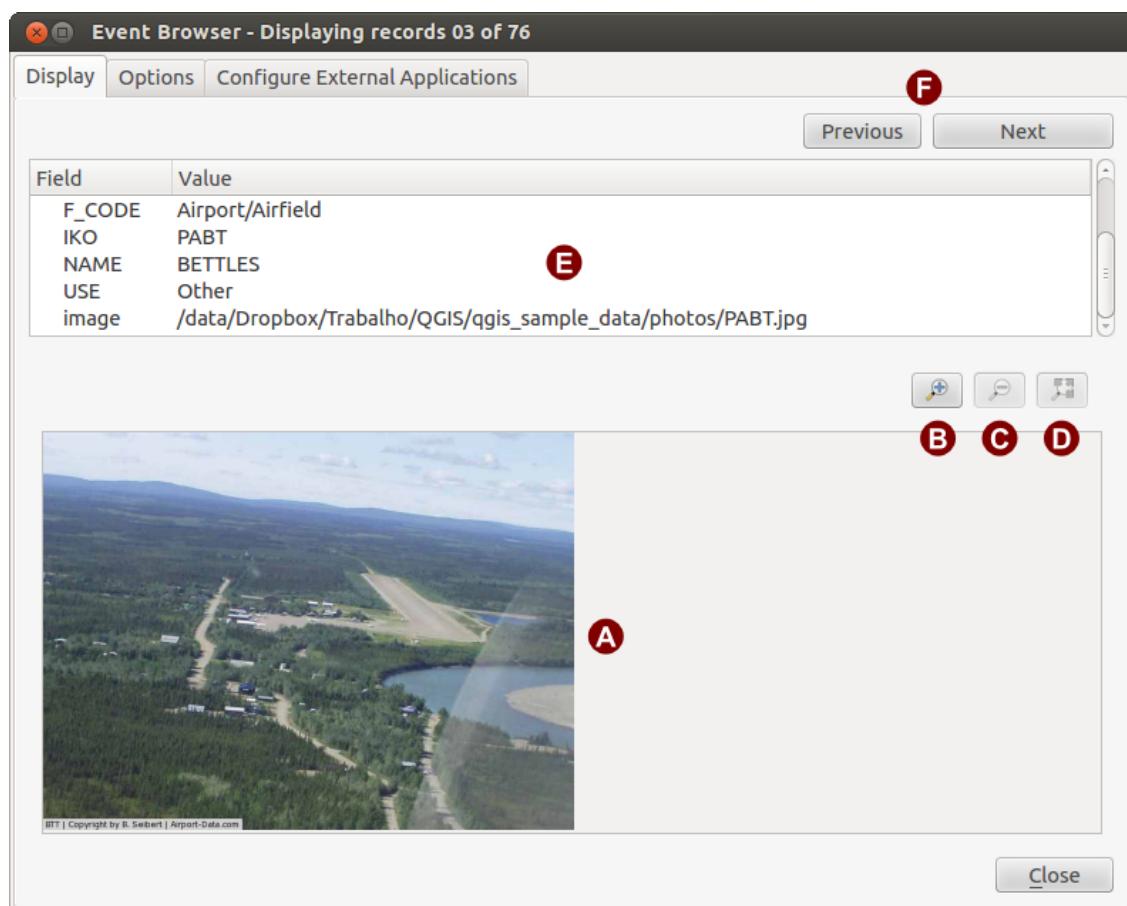
To launch the Event Browser module, click on *Database* → *eVis* →  *eVis Event Browser*. This will open the *Generic Event Browser* window.

The *Event Browser* window has three tabs displayed at the top of the window. The *Display* tab is used to view the photograph and its associated attribute data. The *Options* tab provides a number of settings that can be adjusted to control the behavior of the eVis plugin. Lastly, the *Configure External Applications* tab is used to maintain a table of file extensions and their associated application to allow eVis to display documents other than images.

#### Understanding the Display window

To see the *Display* window, click on the *Display* tab in the *Event Browser* window. The *Display* window is used to view geocoded photographs and their associated attribute data.

1. **Display window:** A window where the photograph will appear.
2. **Zoom in button:** Zoom in to see more detail. If the entire image cannot be displayed in the display window, scroll bars will appear on the left and bottom sides of the window to allow you to pan around the image.
3. **Zoom out button:** Zoom out to see more area.
4. **Zoom to full extent button:** Displays the full extent of the photograph.
5. **Attribute information window:** All of the attribute information for the point associated with the photograph being viewed is displayed here. If the file type being referenced in the displayed record is not an image but is of a file type defined in the *Configure External Applications* tab, then when you double-click

Fig. 22.11: The *eVis* display window

on the value of the field containing the path to the file, the application to open the file will be launched to view or hear the contents of the file. If the file extension is recognized, the attribute data will be displayed in green.

6. **Navigation buttons:** Use the Previous and Next buttons to load the previous or next feature when more than one feature is selected.

## Understanding the Options window

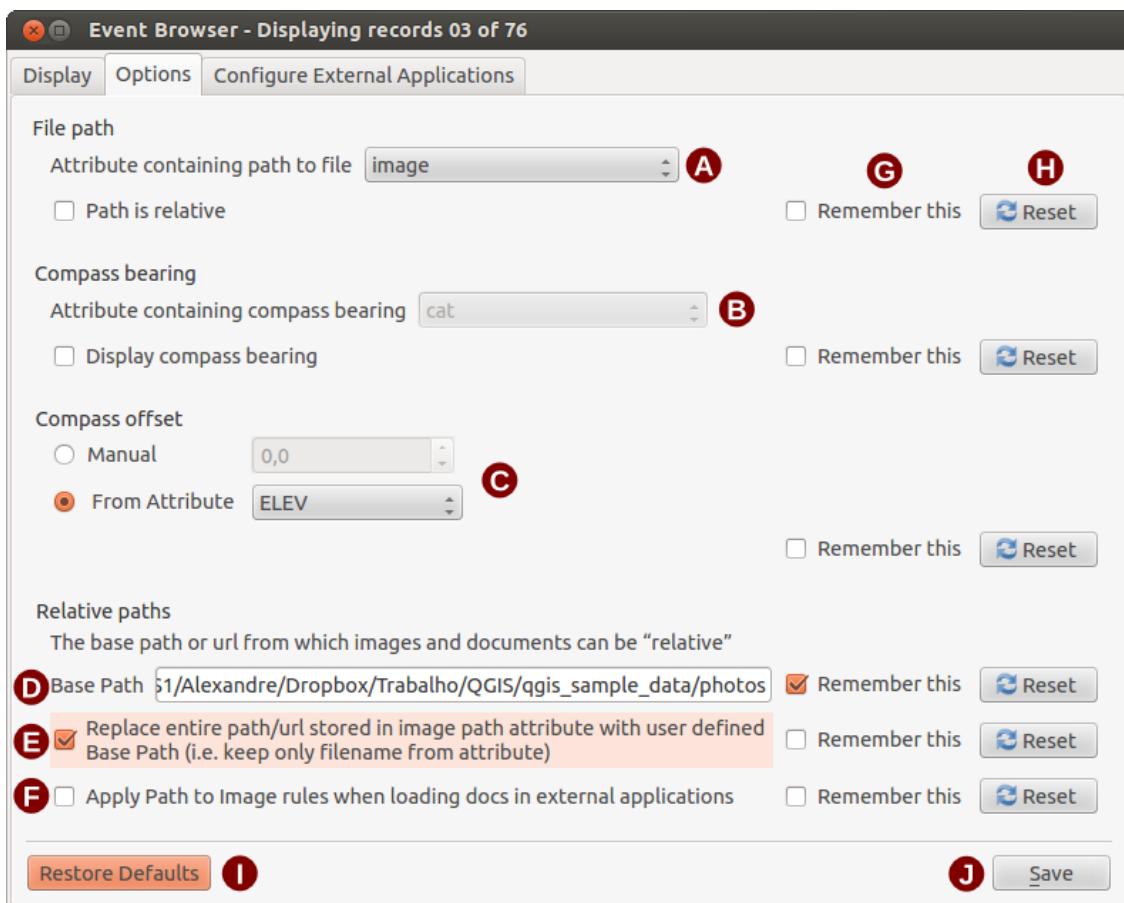


Fig. 22.12: The *eVis* Options window

1. **File path:** A drop-down list to specify the attribute field that contains the directory path or URL for the photographs or other documents being displayed. If the location is a relative path, then the checkbox must be clicked. The base path for a relative path can be entered in the *Base Path* text box below. Information about the different options for specifying the file location are noted in the section *Specifying the location and name of a photograph* below.
2. **Compass bearing:** A drop-down list to specify the attribute field that contains the compass bearing associated with the photograph being displayed. If compass bearing information is available, it is necessary to click the checkbox below the drop-down menu title.
3. **Compass offset:** Compass offsets can be used to compensate for declination (to adjust bearings collected using magnetic bearings to true north bearings). Click the  *Manual* radio button to enter the offset in the text box or click the  *From Attribute* radio button to select the attribute field containing the offsets. For both of these options, east declinations should be entered using positive values, and west declinations should use negative values.
4. **Directory base path:** The base path onto which the relative path defined in *Figure\_eVis\_options* (A) will be appended.

5. **Replace path:** If this checkbox is checked, only the file name from A will be appended to the base path.
6. **Apply rule to all documents:** If checked, the same path rules that are defined for photographs will be used for non-image documents such as movies, text documents, and sound files. If not checked, the path rules will only apply to photographs, and other documents will ignore the base path parameter.
7. **Remember settings:** If the checkbox is checked, the values for the associated parameters will be saved for the next session when the window is closed or when the *Save* button below is pressed.
8. **Reset values:** Resets the values on this line to the default setting.
9. **Restore defaults:** This will reset all of the fields to their default settings. It has the same effect as clicking all of the *Reset* buttons.
10. **Save:** This will save the settings without closing the *Options* pane.

### Understanding the Configure External Applications window

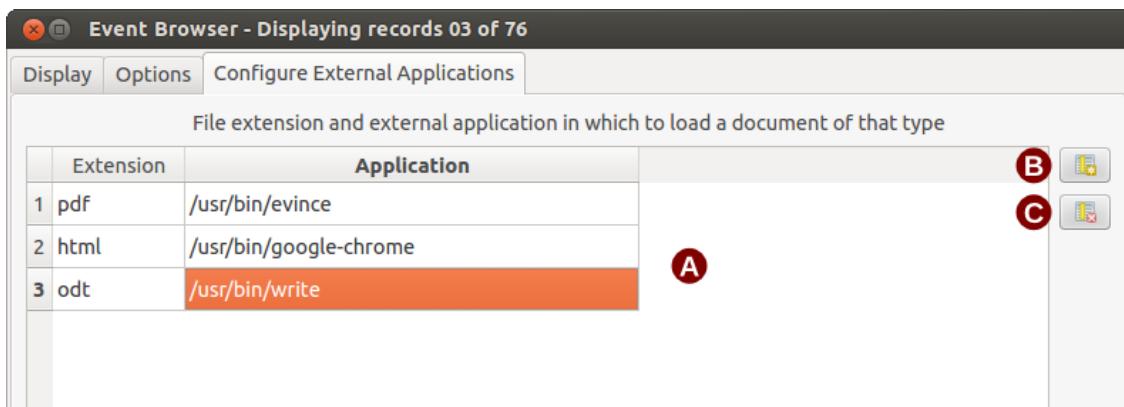


Fig. 22.13: The *eVis* External Applications window

1. **File reference table:** A table containing file types that can be opened using eVis. Each file type needs a file extension and the path to an application that can open that type of file. This provides the capability of opening a broad range of files such as movies, sound recordings, and text documents instead of only images.
2. **Add new file type:** Add a new file type with a unique extension and the path for the application that can open the file.
3. **Delete current row:** Delete the file type highlighted in the table and defined by a file extension and a path to an associated application.

### Specifying the location and name of a photograph

The location and name of the photograph can be stored using an absolute or relative path, or a URL if the photograph is available on a web server. Examples of the different approaches are listed in Table *evis\_examples*.

X	Y	FILE	BEARING
780596	1784017	C:\Workshop\eVis_Data\groundphotos\DSC_0168.JPG	275
780596	1784017	/groundphotos/DSC_0169.JPG	80
780819	1784015	https://biodiversityinformatics.amnh.org/\evistestdata/DSC_0170.JPG	10
780596	1784017	pdf:https://www.testsite.com/attachments.php?\attachment_id=12	76

## Specifying the location and name of other supporting documents

Supporting documents such as text documents, videos, and sound clips can also be displayed or played by eVis. To do this, it is necessary to add an entry in the file reference table that can be accessed from the *Configure External Applications* window in the *Generic Event Browser* that matches the file extension to an application that can be used to open the file. It is also necessary to have the path or URL to the file in the attribute table for the vector layer. One additional rule that can be used for URLs that don't contain a file extension for the document you want to open is to specify the file extension before the URL. The format is — file extension:URL. The URL is preceded by the file extension and a colon; this is particularly useful for accessing documents from wikis and other web sites that use a database to manage the web pages (see Table *evis\_examples*).

## Using the Event Browser

When the *Event Browser* window opens, a photograph will appear in the display window if the document referenced in the vector file attribute table is an image and if the file location information in the *Options* window is properly set. If a photograph is expected and it does not appear, it will be necessary to adjust the parameters in the *Options* window.

If a supporting document (or an image that does not have a file extension recognized by eVis) is referenced in the attribute table, the field containing the file path will be highlighted in green in the attribute information window if that file extension is defined in the file reference table located in the *Configure External Applications* window. To open the document, double-click on the green-highlighted line in the attribute information window. If a supporting document is referenced in the attribute information window and the file path is not highlighted in green, then it will be necessary to add an entry for the file's filename extension in the *Configure External Applications* window. If the file path is highlighted in green but does not open when double-clicked, it will be necessary to adjust the parameters in the *Options* window so the file can be located by eVis.

If no compass bearing is provided in the *Options* window, a red asterisk will be displayed on top of the vector feature that is associated with the photograph being displayed. If a compass bearing is provided, then an arrow will appear pointing in the direction indicated by the value in the compass bearing display field in the *Event Browser* window. The arrow will be centered over the point that is associated with the photograph or other document.

To close the *Event Browser* window, click on the *Close* button from the *Display* window.

## Event ID Tool

The ‘Event ID’ module allows you to display a photograph by clicking on a feature displayed in the QGIS map window. The vector feature must have attribute information associated with it to describe the location and name of the file containing the photograph and, optionally, the compass direction the camera was pointed when the image was acquired. This layer must be loaded into QGIS before running the ‘Event ID’ tool.

## Launch the Event ID module

To launch the ‘Event ID’ module, either click on the  *Event ID* icon or click on *Database* → *eVis* → *Event ID Tool*. This will cause the cursor to change to an arrow with an ‘i’ on top of it signifying that the ID tool is active.

To view the photographs linked to vector features in the active vector layer displayed in the QGIS map window, move the Event ID cursor over the feature and then click the mouse. After clicking on the feature, the *Event Browser* window is opened and the photographs on or near the clicked locality are available for display in the browser. If more than one photograph is available, you can cycle through the different features using the *Previous* and *Next* buttons. The other controls are described in the *Event Browser* section of this guide.

## Database connection

The ‘Database Connection’ module provides tools to connect to and query a database or other ODBC resource, such as a spreadsheet.

eVis can directly connect to the following types of databases: PostgreSQL, MySQL, and SQLite; it can also read from ODBC connections (e.g., MS Access). When reading from an ODBC database (such as an Excel spreadsheet), it is necessary to configure your ODBC driver for the operating system you are using.

## Launch the Database Connection module

To launch the ‘Database Connection’ module, either click on the appropriate icon  eVis Database Connection or click on *Database* → *eVis* → *Database Connection*. This will launch the *Database Connection* window. The window has three tabs: *Predefined Queries*, *Database Connection*, and *SQL Query*. The *Output Console* window at the bottom of the window displays the status of actions initiated by the different sections of this module.

### Connect to a database

Click on the *Database Connection* tab to open the database connection interface. Next, use the *Database Type*  combo box to select the type of database that you want to connect to. If a password or username is required, that information can be entered in the *Username* and *Password* textboxes.

Enter the database host in the *Database Host* textbox. This option is not available if you selected ‘MS Access’ as the database type. If the database resides on your desktop, you should enter “localhost”.

Enter the name of the database in the *Database Name* textbox. If you selected ‘ODBC’ as the database type, you need to enter the data source name.

When all of the parameters are filled in, click on the *Connect* button. If the connection is successful, a message will be written in the *Output Console* window stating that the connection was established. If a connection was not established, you will need to check that the correct parameters were entered above.

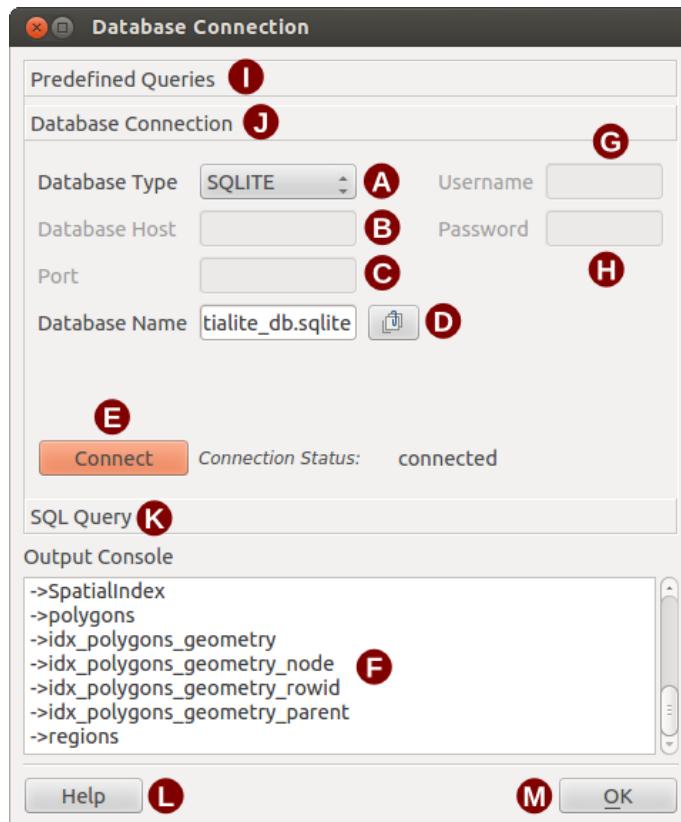


Fig. 22.14: The *eVis* Database connection window

1. **Database Type:** A drop-down list to specify the type of database that will be used.

2. **Database Host:** The name of the database host.
3. **Port:** The port number if a MySQL or PostgreSQL database type is selected.
4. **Database Name:** The name of the database.
5. **Connect:** A button to connect to the database using the parameters defined above.
6. **Output Console:** The console window where messages related to processing are displayed.
7. **Username:** Username for use when a database is password protected.
8. **Password:** Password for use when a database is password protected.
9. **Predefined Queries:** Tab to open the “Predefined Queries” window.
10. **Database Connection:** Tab to open the “Database Connection” window.
11. **SQL Query:** Tab to open the “SQL Query” window.
12. **Help:** Displays the online help.
13. **OK:** Closes the main “Database Connection” window.

## Running SQL queries

SQL queries are used to extract information from a database or ODBC resource. In eVis, the output from these queries is a vector layer added to the QGIS map window. Click on the *SQL Query* tab to display the SQL query interface. SQL commands can be entered in this text window. A helpful tutorial on SQL commands is available at <https://www.w3schools.com/sql>. For example, to extract all of the data from a worksheet in an Excel file, select `* from [sheet1$]` where sheet1 is the name of the worksheet.

Click on the *Run Query* button to execute the command. If the query is successful, a *Database File Selection* window will be displayed. If the query is not successful, an error message will appear in the *Output Console* window.

In the *Database File Selection* window, enter the name of the layer that will be created from the results of the query in the *Name of New Layer* textbox.

1. **SQL Query Text Window:** A screen to type SQL queries.
2. **Run Query:** Button to execute the query entered in the *SQL Query Window*.
3. **Console Window:** The console window where messages related to processing are displayed.
4. **Help:** Displays the online help.
5. **OK:** Closes the main *Database Connection* window.

Use the *X Coordinate* and *Y Coordinate* combo boxes to select the fields from the database that stores the X (or longitude) and Y (or latitude) coordinates. Clicking on the *OK* button causes the vector layer created from the SQL query to be displayed in the QGIS map window.

To save this vector file for future use, you can use the QGIS ‘Save as...’ command that is accessed by right-clicking on the layer name in the QGIS map legend and then selecting ‘Save as...’

---

### Tip: Creating a vector layer from a Microsoft Excel Worksheet

When creating a vector layer from a Microsoft Excel Worksheet, you might see that unwanted zeros (“0”) have been inserted in the attribute table rows beneath valid data. This can be caused by deleting the values for these cells in Excel using the Backspace key. To correct this problem, you need to open the Excel file (you’ll need to close QGIS if you are connected to the file, to allow you to edit the file) and then use *Edit → Delete* to remove the blank rows from the file. To avoid this problem, you can simply delete several rows in the Excel Worksheet using *Edit → Delete* before saving the file.

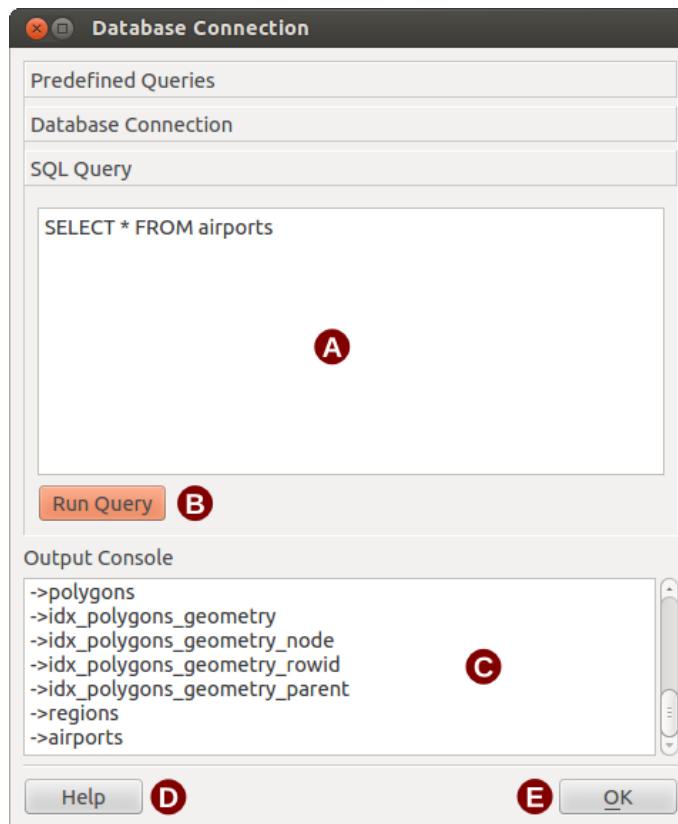


Fig. 22.15: The eVis SQL query tab

### Running predefined queries

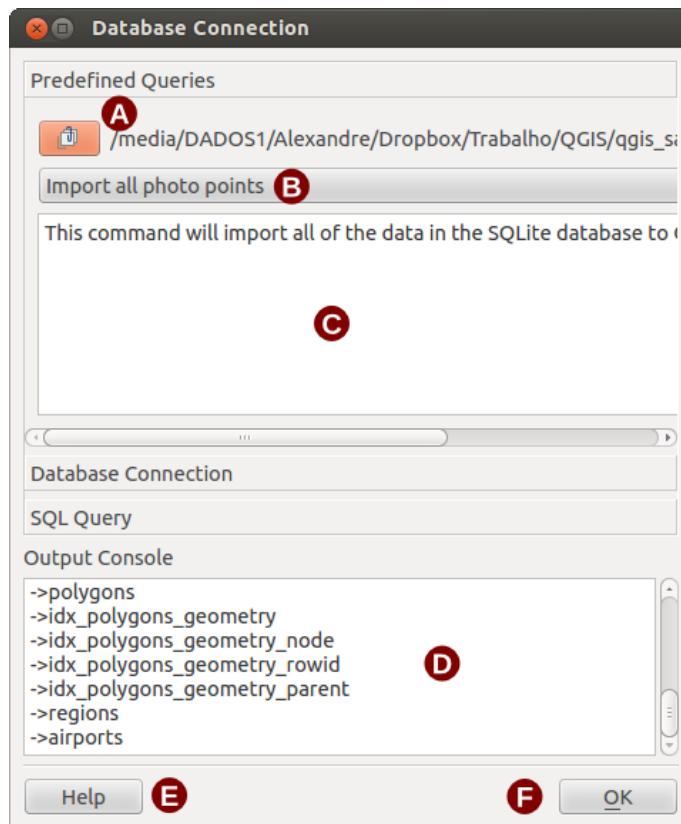
With predefined queries, you can select previously written queries stored in XML format in a file. This is particularly helpful if you are not familiar with SQL commands. Click on the *Predefined Queries* tab to display the predefined query interface.

To load a set of predefined queries, click on the Open File icon. This opens the *Open File* window, which is used to locate the file containing the SQL queries. When the queries are loaded, their titles as defined in the XML file will appear in the drop-down menu located just below the Open File icon. The full description of the query is displayed in the text window under the drop-down menu.

Select the query you want to run from the drop-down menu and then click on the *SQL Query* tab to see that the query has been loaded into the query window. If it is the first time you are running a predefined query or are switching databases, you need to be sure to connect to the database.

Click on the *Run Query* button in the *SQL Query* tab to execute the command. If the query is successful, a *Database File Selection* window will be displayed. If the query is not successful, an error message will appear in the *Output Console* window.

1. **Open File:** Launches the “Open File” file browser to search for the XML file holding the predefined queries.
2. **Predefined Queries:** A drop-down list with all of the queries defined by the predefined queries XML file.
3. **Query description:** A short description of the query. This description is from the predefined queries XML file.
4. **Console Window:** The console window where messages related to processing are displayed.
5. **Help:** Displays the online help.
6. **OK:** Closes the main “Database Connection” window.

Fig. 22.16: The *eVis* Predefined Queries tab

### XML format for eVis predefined queries

The XML tags read by eVis

Tag	Description
query	Defines the beginning and end of a query statement.
shortde- scription	A short description of the query that appears in the eVis drop-down menu.
descrip- tion	A more detailed description of the query displayed in the Predefined Query text window.
database- type	The database type, defined in the Database Type drop-down menu in the Database Connection tab.
database- port	The port as defined in the Port text box in the Database Connection tab.
database- name	The database name as defined in the Database Name text box in the Database Connection tab.
databaseuser name	The database username as defined in the Username text box in the Database Connection tab.
databasepass- word	The database password as defined in the Password text box in the Database Connection tab.
sqlstate- ment	The SQL command.
autocon- nect	A flag ("true" or "false") to specify if the above tags should be used to automatically connect to the database without running the database connection routine in the Database Connection tab.

A complete sample XML file with three queries is displayed below:

```

<?xml version="1.0"?>
<doc>
  <query>
    <shortdescription>Import all photograph points</shortdescription>
    <description>This command will import all of the data in the SQLite database to QGIS</description>
    <sqlstatement>SELECT Attributes.*, Points.x, Points.y FROM Attributes LEFT JOIN Points ON Points.rec_id=Attributes.point_ID</sqlstatement>
    <autoconnect>false</autoconnect>
  </query>
  <query>
    <shortdescription>Import photograph points "looking across Valley"</shortdescription>
    <description>This command will import only points that have photographs "looking across a valley" to QGIS</description>
    <sqlstatement>SELECT Attributes.*, Points.x, Points.y FROM Attributes LEFT JOIN Points ON Points.rec_id=Attributes.point_ID where COMMENTS='Looking across valley'</sqlstatement>
    <autoconnect>false</autoconnect>
  </query>
  <query>
    <shortdescription>Import photograph points that mention "limestone"</shortdescription>
    <description>This command will import only points that have photographs that mention "limestone" to QGIS</description>
    <sqlstatement>SELECT Attributes.*, Points.x, Points.y FROM Attributes LEFT JOIN Points ON Points.rec_id=Attributes.point_ID where COMMENTS like '%limestone%'</sqlstatement>
    <autoconnect>false</autoconnect>
  </query>
</doc>

```

## 22.2.4 Geometry Checker Plugin

Geometry Checker is a powerful core plugin to check and fix the geometry validity of a layer. It is available from the *Vector* menu ( *Check Geometries...*).

## Configuring the checks

The *Check Geometries* dialog shows different grouped settings in the first tab (*Setup*):

- *Input vector layers*: to select the layers to check. A  *Only selected features* checkbox can be used to restrict the checking to the geometries of the selected features.
- *Allowed geometry types*: to allow only some geometry types like point, multipoint, line, multiline, polygon and multipolygon.
- *Geometry validity*: depending on geometry types, the user can choose  *Self intersections*,  *Duplicate nodes*,  *Self contacts* and  *Polygon with less than 3 nodes*.
- *Geometry properties*: depending on geometry types, the user can choose  *Polygons and multipolygons may not contain any holes*,  *Multipart objects must consist of more than one part* and  *Lines must not have dangles*.
- *Geometry conditions*: user can add some condition to validate the geometries with a minimal segment length, a minimum angle between segment, a minimal polygon area and sliver polygons detection.
- *Topology checks*: depending on geometry types, the user can choose  *Checks for duplicates*,  *Checks for features within other features*,  *Checks for overlaps smaller than 1,00*,  *Checks for gaps smaller than 1,00*,  *Points must be covered by lines*,  *Points must properly lie inside a polygon*,  *Lines must not intersect any other lines*,  *Lines must not intersect with features of layer* ...,  *Polygons must follow boundaries of layer* ... .
- *Tolerance*: you can define the tolerance of the check in map layer units.
- *Output vector layer* gives the choice to the user how get the result between modify the current layer and create a new layer.

When you are happy with the configuration, you can click on the *Run* button.

The *Geometry Checker Plugin* can find the following errors:

- Self intersections: a polygon with a self intersection;
- Duplicate nodes: two duplicates nodes in a segment;
- Holes: hole in a polygon;
- Segment length: a segment length lower than a threshold;
- Minimum angle: two segments with an angle lower than a threshold;
- Minimum area: polygon area lower than a threshold;
- Silver polygon: this error come from very small polygon (with small area) with a large perimeter;
- Duplicates features;
- Feature within feature;
- Overlaps: polygon overlapping;
- Gaps: gaps between polygons.

The following figure shows the different checks made by the plugin.

## Analysing the results

The results appear in the second tab (*Result*) and as an overview layer of the errors in the canvas (its name has the default prefix `checked_`). A table lists the *Geometry check result* with one error per row and columns containing: the layer name, an ID, the error type, then the coordinates of the error, a value (depending on the type of the error)

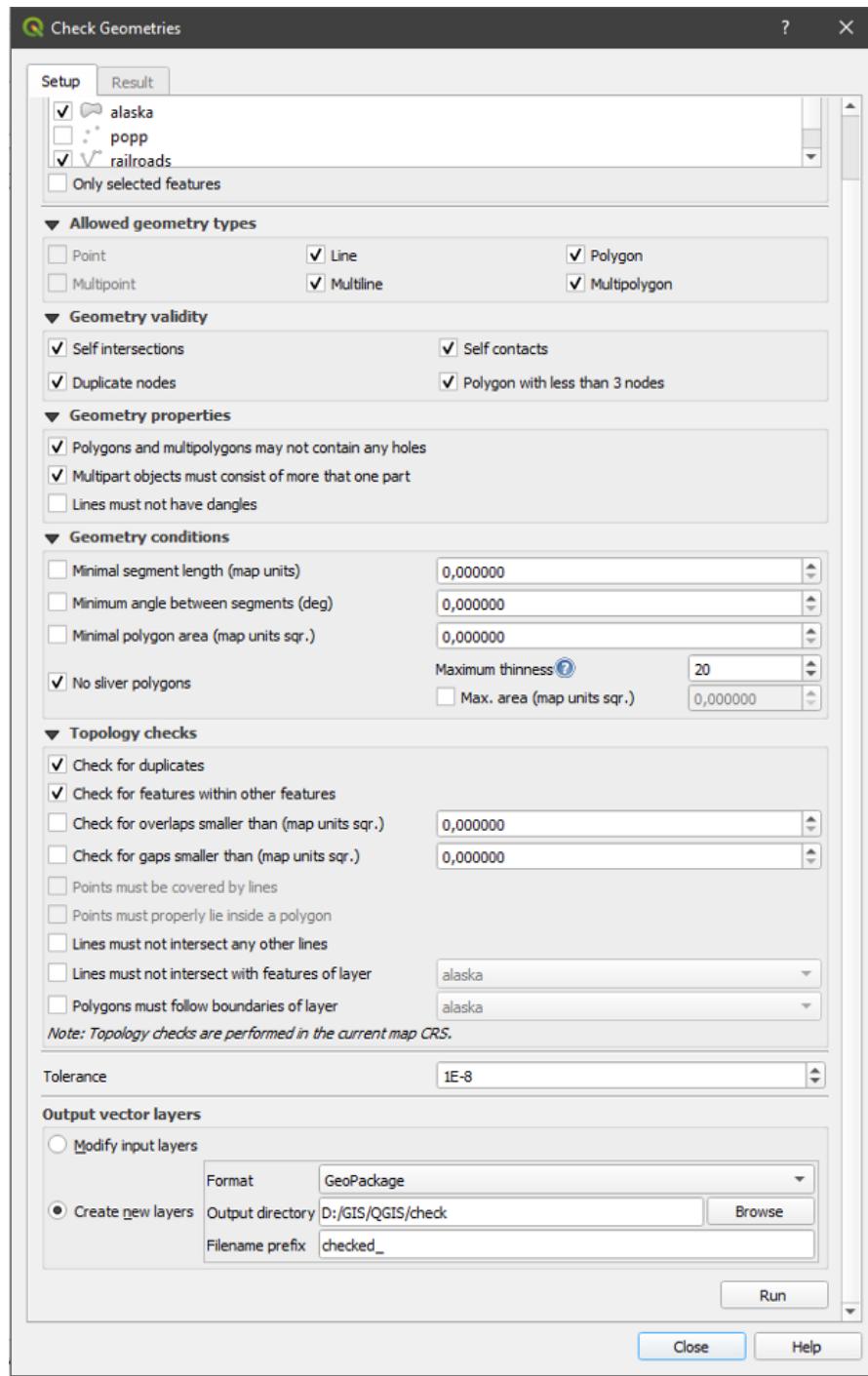


Fig. 22.17: The Geometry Checker Plugin

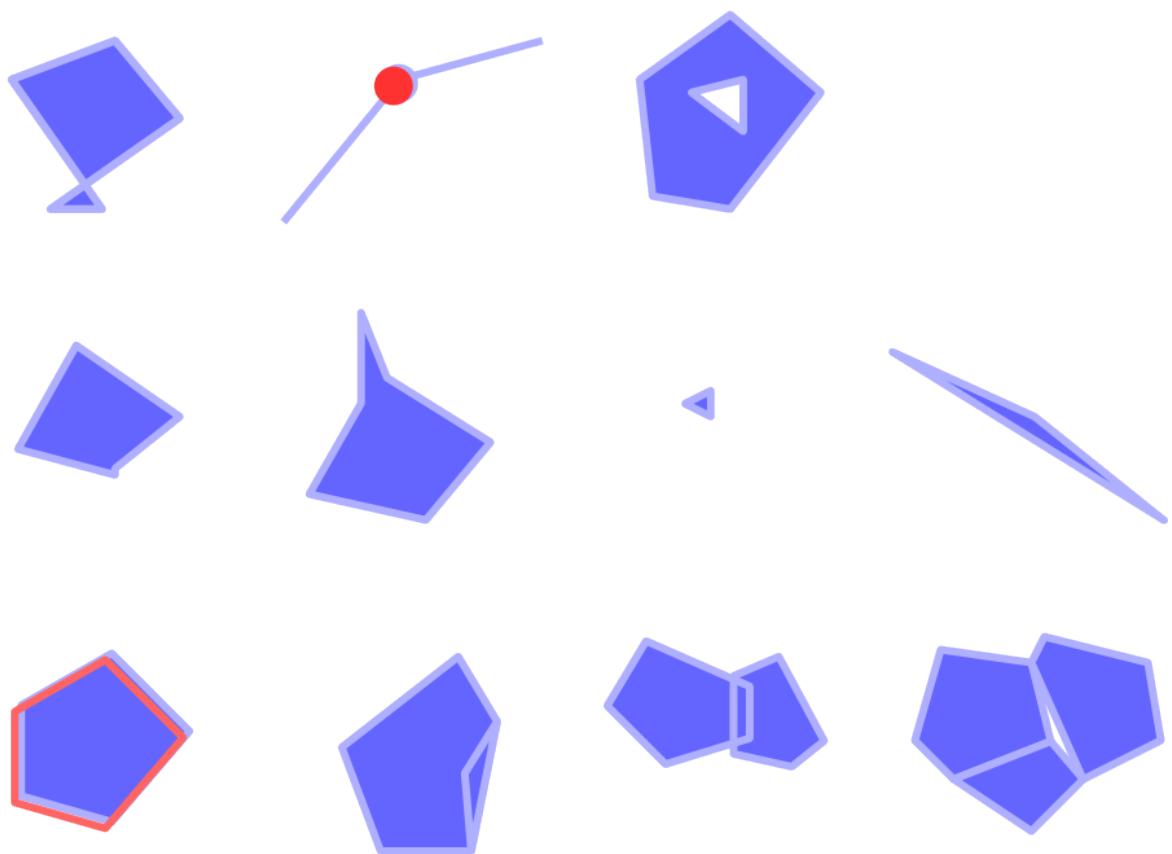


Fig. 22.18: Some checks supported by the plugin

and finally the resolution column which indicates the resolution of the error. At the bottom of this table, you can *Export* the error into different file formats. You also have a counter with the number of total errors and fixed ones.

You can select a row to see the location of the error. You can change this behavior by selecting another action between *Error* (default), *Feature*, *Don't move*, and *Highlight contour of selected features*.

Below the zoom action when clicking on the table row, you can:

- *Show selected features in attribute table*;
- *Fix selected errors using default resolution*;
- *Fix selected errors, prompt for resolution method*. You will see a window to choose the resolution's method among which:
  - Merge with neighboring polygon with longest shared edge;
  - Merge with neighboring polygon with largest area;
  - Merge with neighboring polygon with identical attribute value, if any, or leave as is;
  - Delete feature;
  - No action.

---

**Tip: Fix multiple errors**

You can fix multiple errors by selecting more than one row in the table with the *CTRL + click* action.

---

The default action can be changed with the last icon *Error resolution settings* For some type of errors, you can change the default action between some specific action or *No action*.

Finally, you can choose which *attribute to use when merging features by attribute value*.

## 22.2.5 Georeferencer Plugin

The Georeferencer Plugin is a tool for generating world files for rasters. It allows you to reference rasters to geographic or projected coordinate systems by creating a new GeoTiff or by adding a world file to the existing image. The basic approach to georeferencing a raster is to locate points on the raster for which you can accurately determine coordinates.

### Features

Icon	Purpose	Icon	Purpose
	Open raster		Start georeferencing
	Generate GDAL Script		Load GCP Points
	Save GCP Points As		Transformation settings
	Add Point		Delete Point
	Move GCP Point		Pan
	Zoom In		Zoom Out
	Zoom To Layer		Zoom Last
	Zoom Next		Link Georeferencer to QGIS
	Link QGIS to Georeferencer		Full histogram stretch
	Local histogram stretch		

## Table Georeferencer: Georeferencer Tools

### Usual procedure

As X and Y coordinates (DMS (dd mm ss.ss), DD (dd.dd) or projected coordinates (mmmm.mm)), which correspond with the selected point on the image, two alternative procedures can be used:

- The raster itself sometimes provides crosses with coordinates “written” on the image. In this case, you can enter the coordinates manually.
- Using already georeferenced layers. This can be either vector or raster data that contain the same objects/features that you have on the image that you want to georeference and with the projection that you want for your image. In this case, you can enter the coordinates by clicking on the reference dataset loaded in the QGIS map canvas.

The usual procedure for georeferencing an image involves selecting multiple points on the raster, specifying their coordinates, and choosing a relevant transformation type. Based on the input parameters and data, the plugin will compute the world file parameters. The more coordinates you provide, the better the result will be.

The first step is to start QGIS, load the Georeferencer Plugin (see [The Plugins Dialog](#)) and click on *Raster → Georeferencer*, which appears in the QGIS menu bar. The Georeferencer Plugin dialog appears as shown in [figure\\_georeferencer\\_dialog](#).

For this example, we are using a topo sheet of South Dakota from SDGS. It can later be visualized together with the data from the GRASS spearfish60 location. You can download the topo sheet here: [https://grass.osgeo.org/sampleddata/spearfish\\_toposheet.tar.gz](https://grass.osgeo.org/sampleddata/spearfish_toposheet.tar.gz).

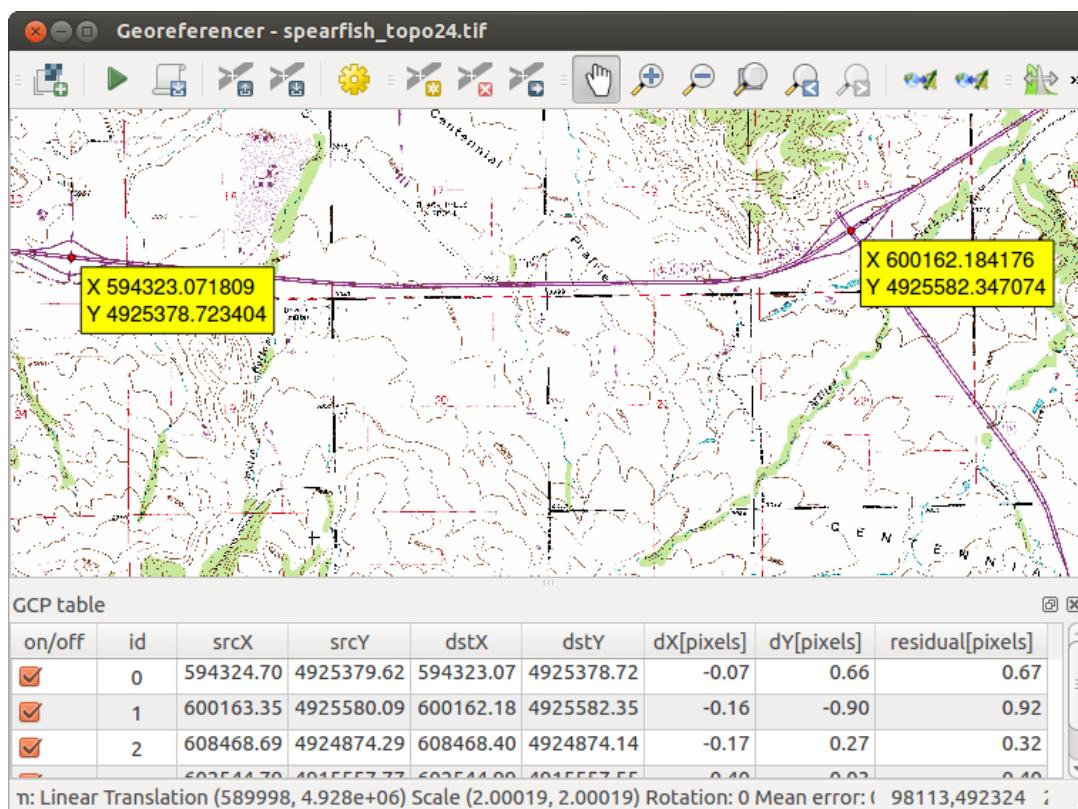


Fig. 22.19: Georeferencer Plugin Dialog

## Entering ground control points (GCPs)

1. To start georeferencing an unreferenced raster, we must load it using the  button. The raster will show up in the main working area of the dialog. Once the raster is loaded, we can start to enter reference points.
2. Using the  Add Point button, add points to the main working area and enter their coordinates (see Figure [figure\\_georeferencer\\_add\\_points](#)). For this procedure you have three options:
  - Click on a point in the raster image and enter the X and Y coordinates manually.
  - Click on a point in the raster image and choose the  From map canvas button to add the X and Y coordinates with the help of a georeferenced map already loaded in the QGIS map canvas.
  - With the  button, you can move the GCPs in both windows, if they are at the wrong place.
3. Continue entering points. You should have at least four points, and the more coordinates you can provide, the better the result will be. There are additional tools on the plugin dialog to zoom and pan the working area in order to locate a relevant set of GCP points.

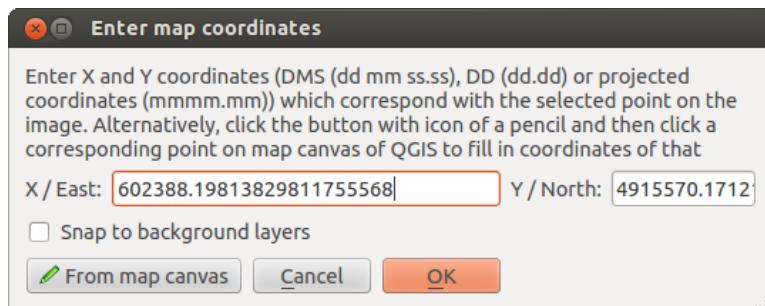


Fig. 22.20: Add points to the raster image

The points that are added to the map will be stored in a separate text file (`[filename].points`) usually together with the raster image. This allows us to reopen the Georeferencer plugin at a later date and add new points or delete existing ones to optimize the result. The points file contains values of the form: `mapX, mapY, pixelX, pixelY`. You can use the  Load GCP points and  Save GCP points as buttons to manage the files.

## Defining the transformation settings

After you have added your GCPs to the raster image, you need to define the transformation settings for the georeferencing process.

### Available Transformation algorithms

Depending on how many ground control points you have captured, you may want to use different transformation algorithms. Choice of transformation algorithm is also dependent on the type and quality of input data and the amount of geometric distortion that you are willing to introduce to the final result.

Currently, the following *Transformation types* are available:

- The **Linear** algorithm is used to create a world file and is different from the other algorithms, as it does not actually transform the raster. This algorithm likely won't be sufficient if you are dealing with scanned material.
- The **Helmert** transformation performs simple scaling and rotation transformations.
- The **Polynomial** algorithms 1-3 are among the most widely used algorithms introduced to match source and destination ground control points. The most widely used polynomial algorithm is the second-order

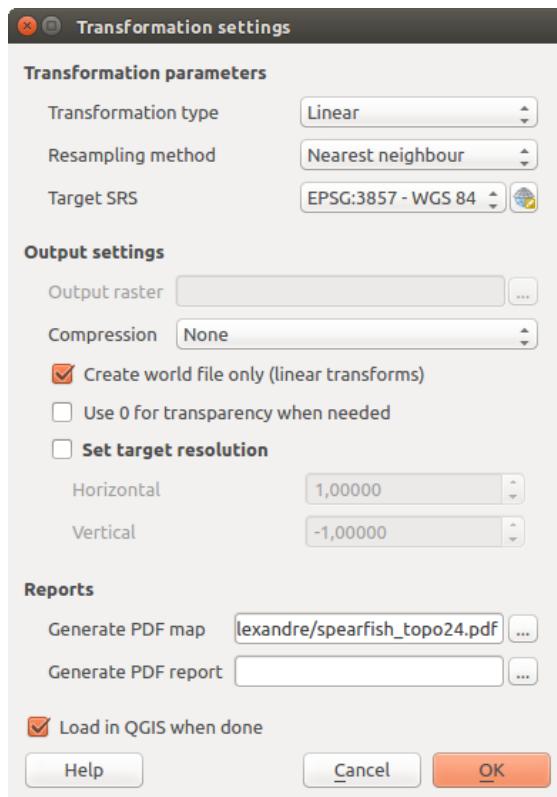


Fig. 22.21: Defining the georeferencer transformation settings

polynomial transformation, which allows some curvature. First-order polynomial transformation (affine) preserves collinearity and allows scaling, translation and rotation only.

- The **Thin Plate Spline** (TPS) algorithm is a more modern georeferencing method, which is able to introduce local deformations in the data. This algorithm is useful when very low quality originals are being georeferenced.
- The **Projective** transformation is a linear rotation and translation of coordinates.

### Define the Resampling method

The type of resampling you choose will likely depend on your input data and the ultimate objective of the exercise. If you don't want to change statistics of the image, you might want to choose 'Nearest neighbour', whereas a 'Cubic resampling' will likely provide a more smoothed result.

It is possible to choose between five different resampling methods:

1. Nearest neighbour
2. Linear
3. Cubic
4. Cubic Spline
5. Lanczos

### Define the transformation settings

There are several options that need to be defined for the georeferenced output raster.

- The  *Create world file* checkbox is only available if you decide to use the linear transformation type, because this means that the raster image actually won't be transformed. In this case, the *Output raster* field is not activated, because only a new world file will be created.
- For all other transformation types, you have to define an *Output raster*. As default, a new file ([file-name]\_modified) will be created in the same folder together with the original raster image.
- As a next step, you have to define the *Target SRS* (Spatial Reference System) for the georeferenced raster (see [Working with Projections](#)).
- If you like, you can **generate a pdf map** and also a **pdf report**. The report includes information about the used transformation parameters, an image of the residuals and a list with all GCPs and their RMS errors.
- Furthermore, you can activate the  *Set Target Resolution* checkbox and define the pixel resolution of the output raster. Default horizontal and vertical resolution is 1.
- The  *Use 0 for transparency when needed* can be activated, if pixels with the value 0 shall be visualized transparent. In our example toposheet, all white areas would be transparent.
- Finally,  *Load in QGIS when done* loads the output raster automatically into the QGIS map canvas when the transformation is done.

### Show and adapt raster properties

Clicking on the *Raster properties* option in the *Settings* menu opens the [Layer properties](#) dialog of the raster file that you want to georeference.

### Configure the georeferencer

- You can define whether you want to show GCP coordinates and/or IDs.
- As residual units, pixels and map units can be chosen.
- For the PDF report, a left and right margin can be defined and you can also set the paper size for the PDF map.
- Finally, you can activate to  *Show Georeferencer window docked*.

### Running the transformation

After all GCPs have been collected and all transformation settings are defined, just press the  Start georeferencing button to create the new georeferenced raster.

## 22.2.6 MetaSearch Catalog Client

### Introduction

MetaSearch is a QGIS plugin to interact with metadata catalog services, supporting the OGC Catalog Service for the Web (CSW) standard.

MetaSearch provides an easy and intuitive approach and user-friendly interface to searching metadata catalogs within QGIS.

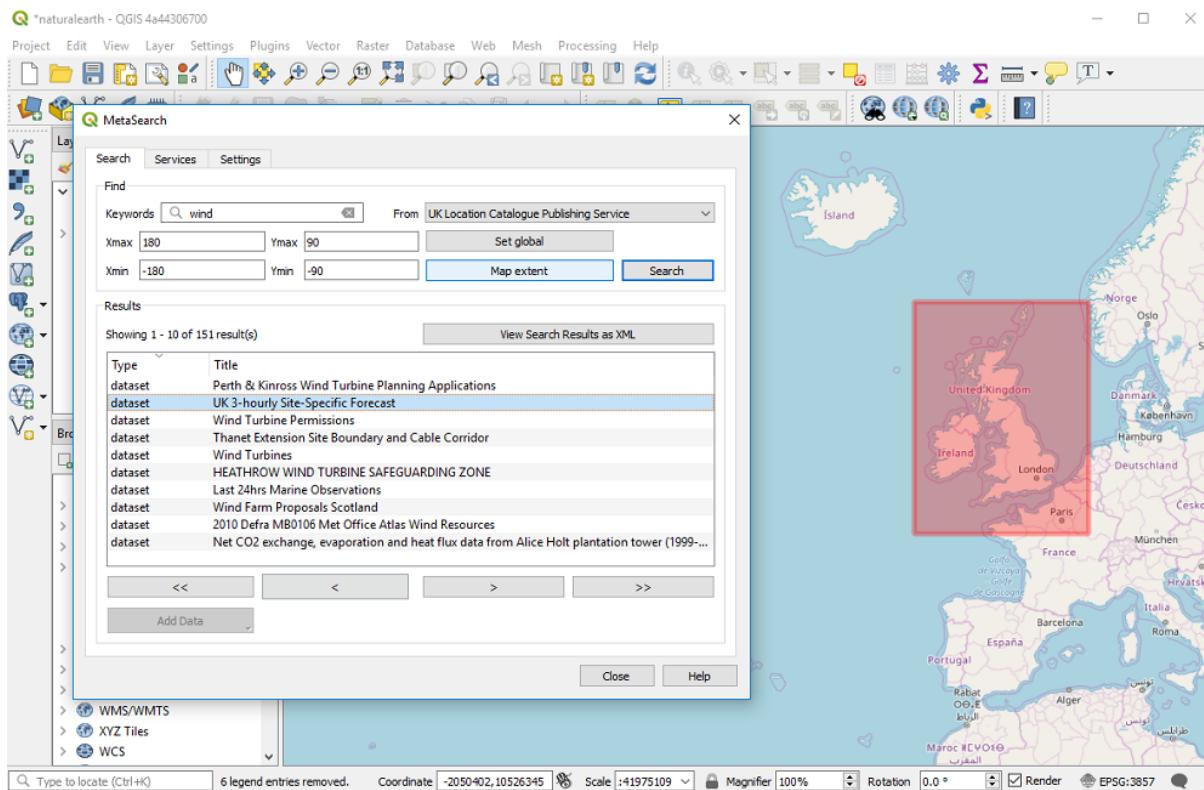


Fig. 22.22: Search and results of Services in MetaSearch

## Installation

MetaSearch is included by default with QGIS 2.0 and higher. All dependencies are included within MetaSearch. Install MetaSearch from the QGIS plugin manager, or manually from <https://plugins.qgis.org/plugins/MetaSearch>.

## Working with Metadata Catalogs in QGIS

### CSW (Catalog Service for the Web)

CSW (Catalog Service for the Web) is an OGC (Open Geospatial Consortium) specification that defines common interfaces to discover, browse and query metadata about data, services, and other potential resources.

### Startup

To start MetaSearch, click the icon or select *Web → MetaSearch → MetaSearch* via the QGIS main menu. The MetaSearch dialog will appear. The main GUI consists of three tabs: *Services*, *Search* and *Settings*.

### Managing Catalog Services

The *Services* tab allows the user to manage all available catalog services. MetaSearch provides a default list of Catalog Services, which can be added by pressing *Add Default Services* button.

To all listed Catalog Service entries, click the dropdown select box.

To add a Catalog Service entry, click the *New* button, and enter a *Name* for the service, as well as the *URL* (endpoint). Note that only the base URL is required (not a full GetCapabilities URL). If the CSW requires

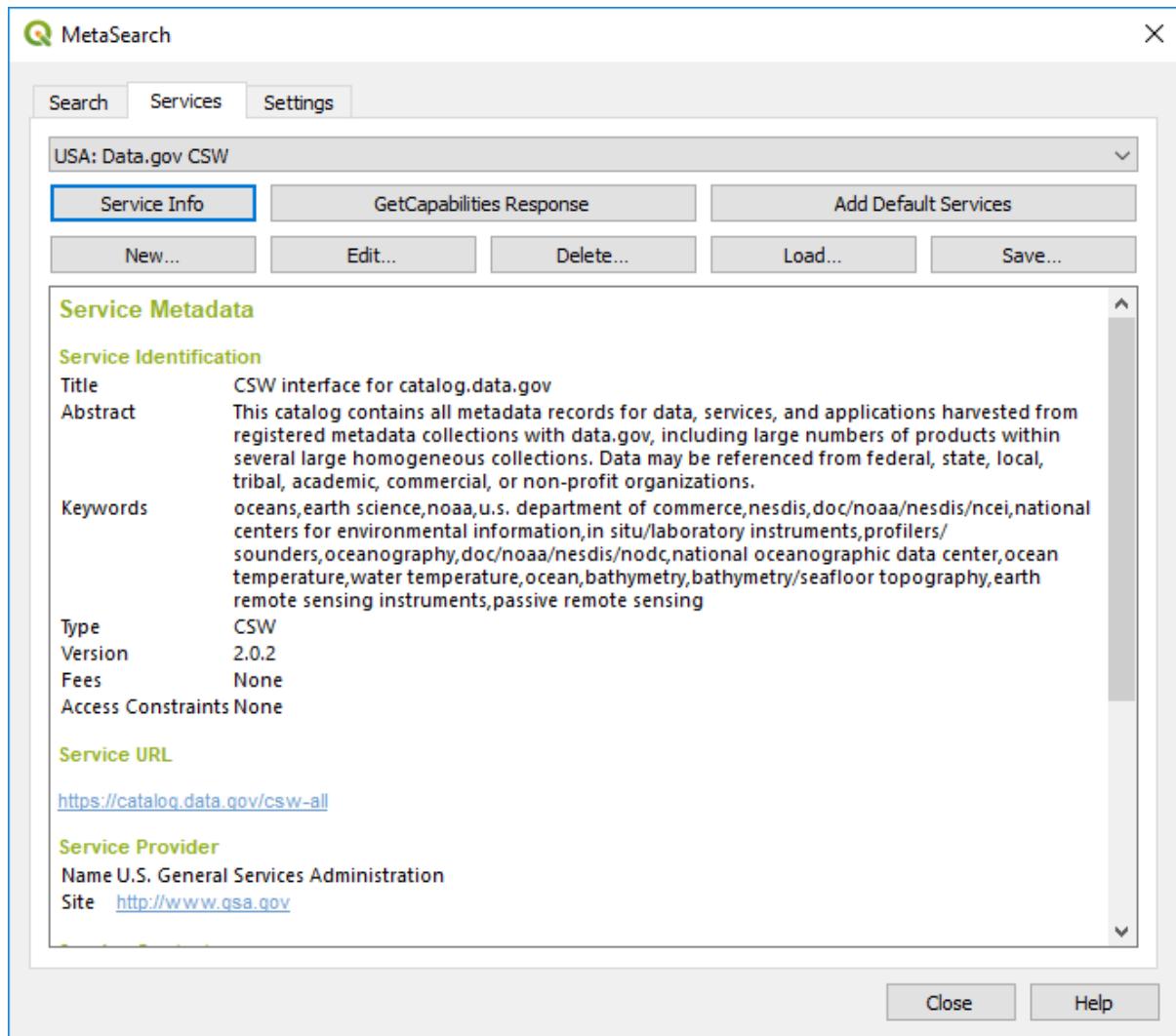


Fig. 22.23: Managing Catalog Services

authentication, enter the appropriate *User name* and *Password* credentials. Clicking *OK* will add the service to the list of entries.

To edit an existing Catalog Service entry, select the entry you would like to edit and click the *Edit* button, and modify the *Name* or *URL* values, then click *OK*.

To delete a Catalog Service entry, select the entry you would like to delete and click the *Delete* button. You will be asked to confirm deleting the entry.

MetaSearch allows for loading and saving connections to an XML file. This is useful when you need to share settings between applications. Below is an example of the XML file format.

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<qgsCSWConnections version="1.0">
    <csw name="Data.gov CSW" url="https://catalog.data.gov/csw-all"/>
    <csw name="Geonorge - National CSW service for Norway" url="https://www.geonorge.no/geonetwork/srv/eng/csw"/>
    <csw name="Geoportale Nazionale - Servizio di ricerca Italiano" url="http://www.pcn.minambiente.it/geoportal/csw"/>
    <csw name="LINZ Data Service" url="http://data.linz.govt.nz/feeds/csw"/>
    <csw name="Nationale Georegister (Nederland)" url="http://www.nationaalgeoregister.nl/geonetwork/srv/eng/csw"/>
    <csw name="RNDT - Repertorio Nazionale dei Dati Territoriali - Servizio di ricerca" url="http://www.rndt.gov.it/RNDT/CSW"/>
    <csw name="UK Location Catalogue Publishing Service" url="http://csw.data.gov.uk/geonetwork/srv/en/csw"/>
    <csw name="UNEP/GRID-Geneva Metadata Catalog" url="http://metadata.grid.unep.ch:8080/geonetwork/srv/eng/csw"/>
</qgsCSWConnections>
```

To load a list of entries, click the *Load* button. A new window will appear; click the *Browse* button and navigate to the XML file of entries you wish to load and click *Open*. The list of entries will be displayed. Select the entries you wish to add from the list and click *Load*.

Click the *Service Info* button to displays information about the selected Catalog Service such as service identification, service provider and contact information. If you would like to view the raw XML response, click the *GetCapabilities Response* button. A separate window will open displaying Capabilities XML.

## Searching Catalog Services

The *Search* tab allows the user to query Catalog Services for data and services, set various search parameters and view results.

The following search parameters are available:

- **Keywords:** free text search keywords;
- **From:** the Catalog Service to perform the query against;
- **Bounding box:** the spatial area of interest to filter on defined by *Xmax*, *Xmin*, *Ymax*, and *Ymin*. Click *Set Global* to do a global search, click *Map Extent* to do a search on the visible area only or manually enter custom values as desired.

Clicking the *Search* button will search the selected Metadata Catalog. Search results are displayed in a list and are sortable by clicking on the column title. You can navigate through search results with the directional buttons below the search results. Clicking the *View Search Results as XML* button opens a window with the service response in raw XML format.

Clicking a result will provide the following options:

- if the metadata record has an associated bounding box, a footprint of the bounding box will be displayed on the map;
- double-clicking the record displays the record metadata with any associated access links. Clicking the links opens the link in the user's web browser;

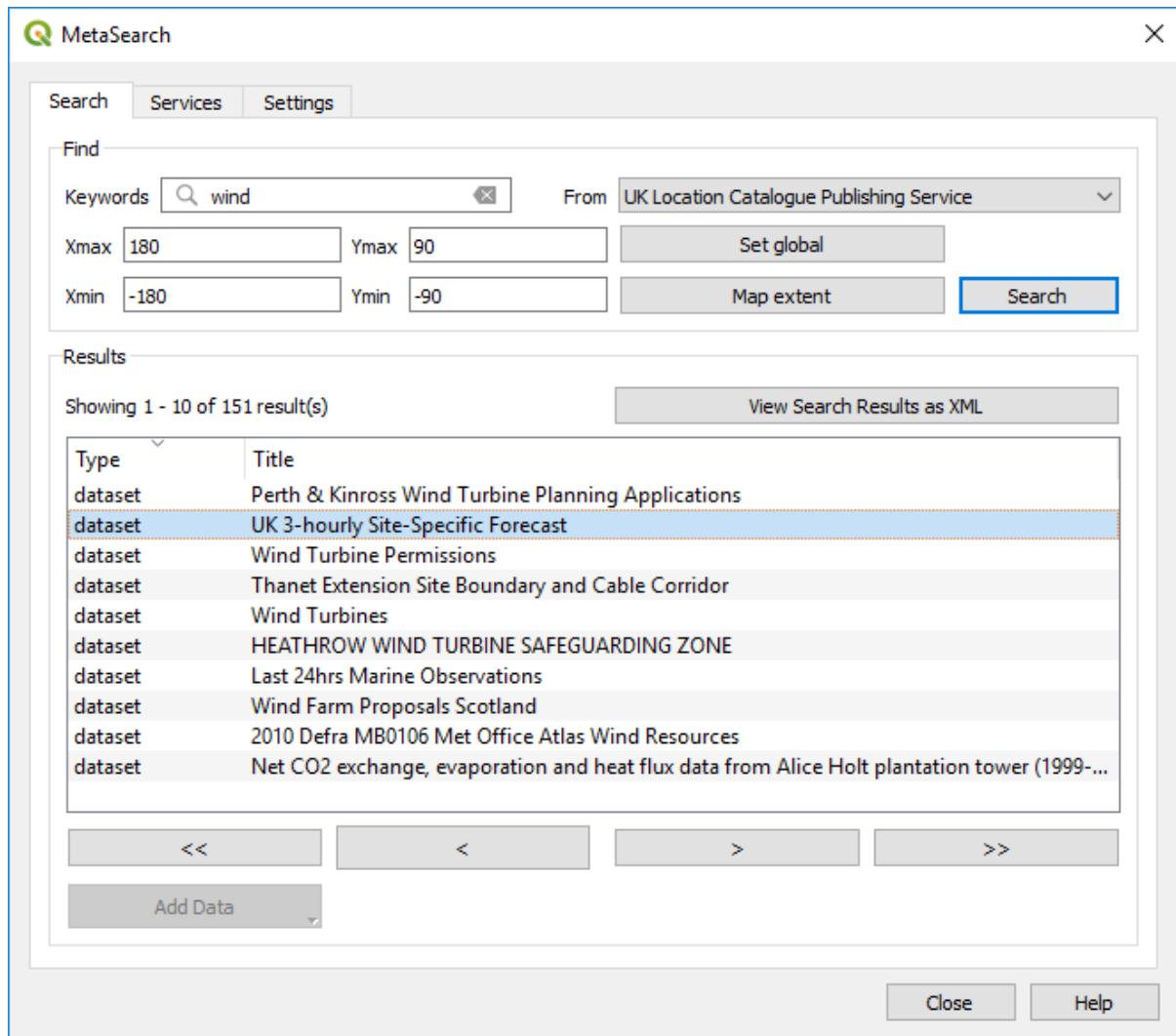


Fig. 22.24: Searching catalog services

- if the record is a supported web service (WMS/WMTS, WFS, WCS, ArcGIS MapServer, ArcGIS Feature-Server, etc.), the *Add Data* button will be enabled for the user to add to QGIS. When clicking this button, MetaSearch will verify if this is a valid OWS. The service will then be added to the appropriate QGIS connection list, and the appropriate connection dialog will then appear.

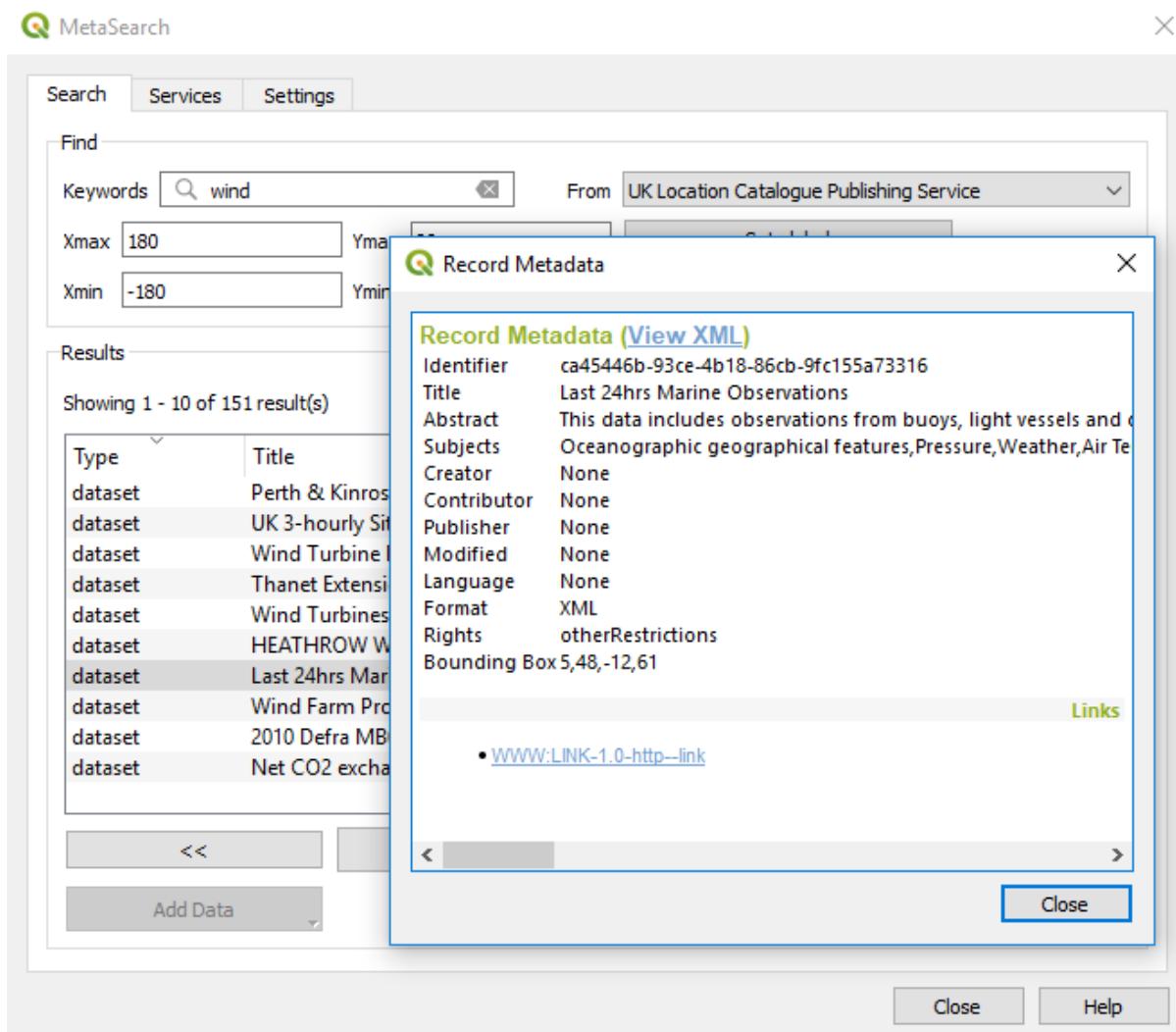


Fig. 22.25: Metadata record display

## Settings

You can fine tune MetaSearch with the following *settings*:

- Results paging*: when searching metadata catalogs, the number of results to show per page. Default value is 10;
- Timeout*: when searching metadata catalogs, the number of seconds for blocking connection attempt. Default value is 10.

### 22.2.7 Offline Editing Plugin

For data collection, it is a common situation to work with a laptop or a cell phone offline in the field. Upon returning to the network, the changes need to be synchronized with the master datasource (e.g., a PostGIS database). If several persons are working simultaneously on the same datasets, it is difficult to merge the edits by hand, even if people don't change the same features.

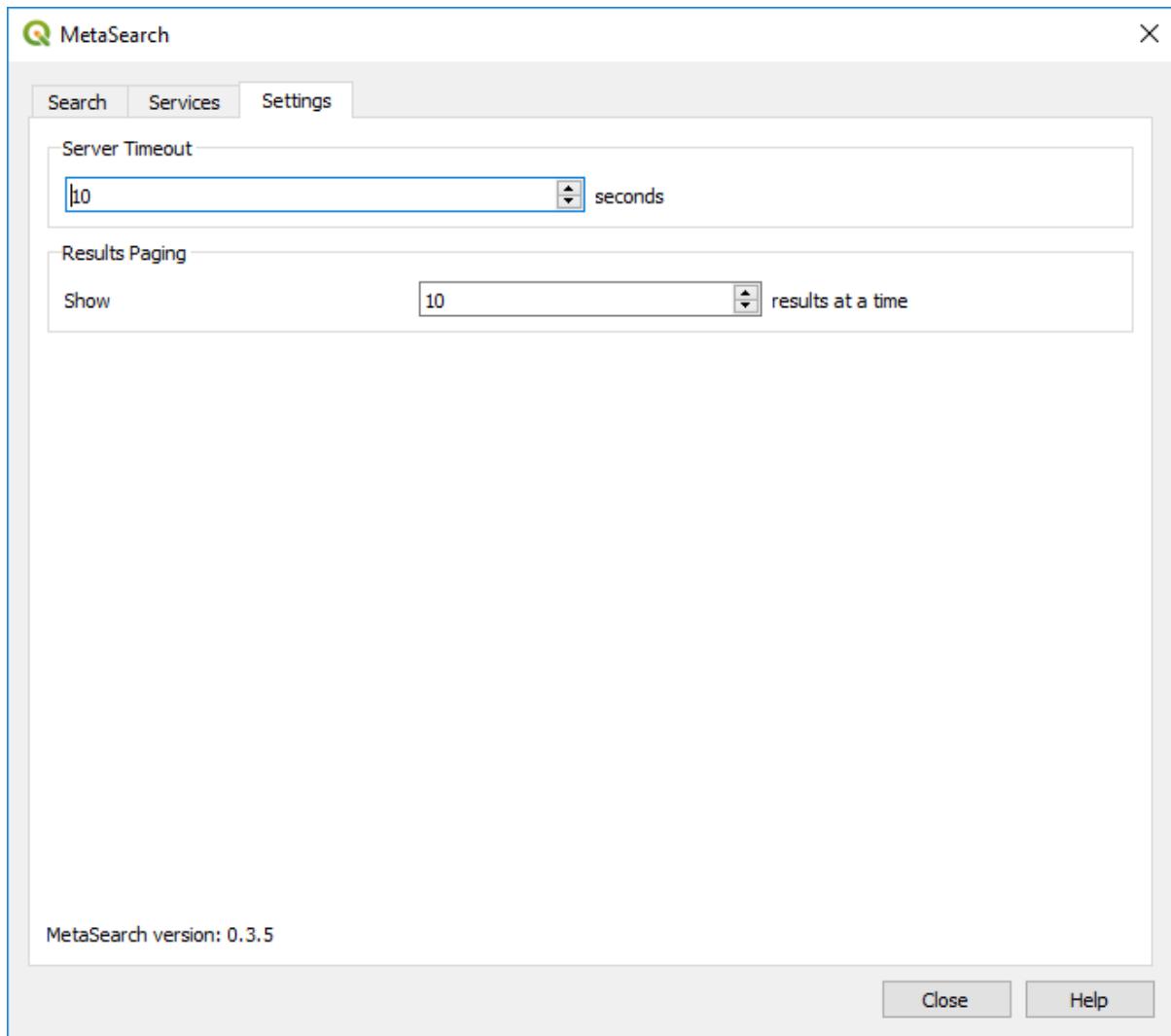


Fig. 22.26: MetaSearch settings

The  Offline Editing Plugin automates the synchronisation by copying the content of a datasource (usually PostGIS or WFS-T) to a SpatiaLite or GeoPackage database and storing the offline edits to dedicated tables. After being connected to the network again, it is possible to apply the offline edits to the master dataset.

To use the plugin:

1. Open a project with some vector layers (e.g., from a PostGIS or WFS-T datasource).
2. Assuming you have already enabled the plugin (see [Core and External plugins](#)) go to *Database* → *Offline Editing* →  *Convert to offline project*. The eponymous dialog opens.
3. Select the *Storage type*. It can be of *GeoPackage* or *SpatiaLite* database type.
4. Use the *Browse* button to indicate the location of the database in which to store the *Offline data*. It can be an existing file or one to create.
5. In the *Select remote layers* section, check the layers you'd like to save. The content of the layers is saved to database tables.
6. You can check  *Only synchronize selected features if a selection is present* allowing to only save and work on a subset. It can be invaluable in case of large layers.

This is all!

7. Save your project and bring it on the field.
8. Edit the layers offline.
9. After being connected again, upload the changes using *Database* → *Offline Editing* →  *Synchronize*.

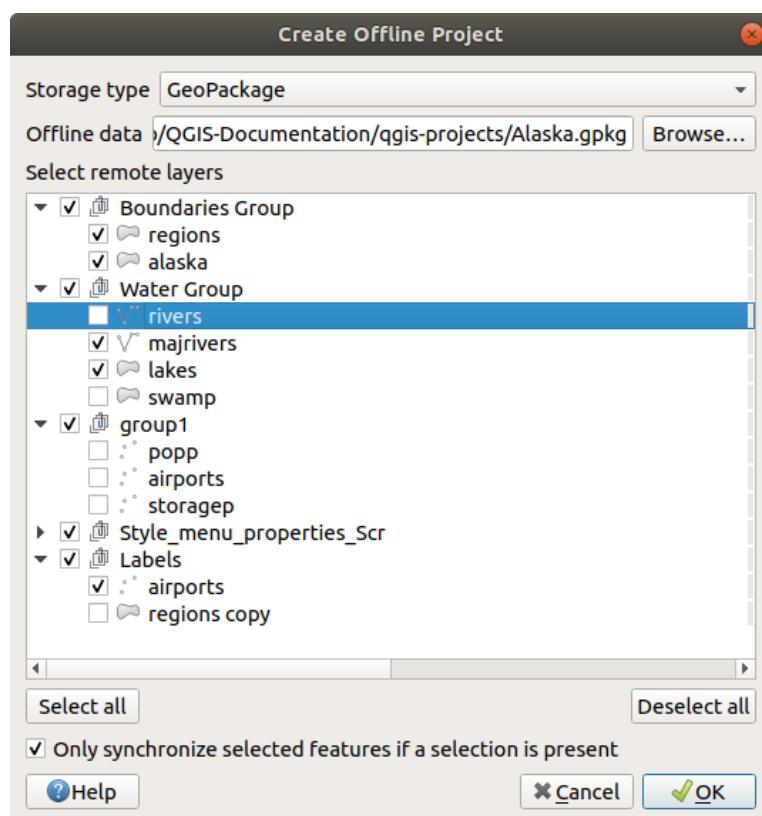


Fig. 22.27: Create an offline project

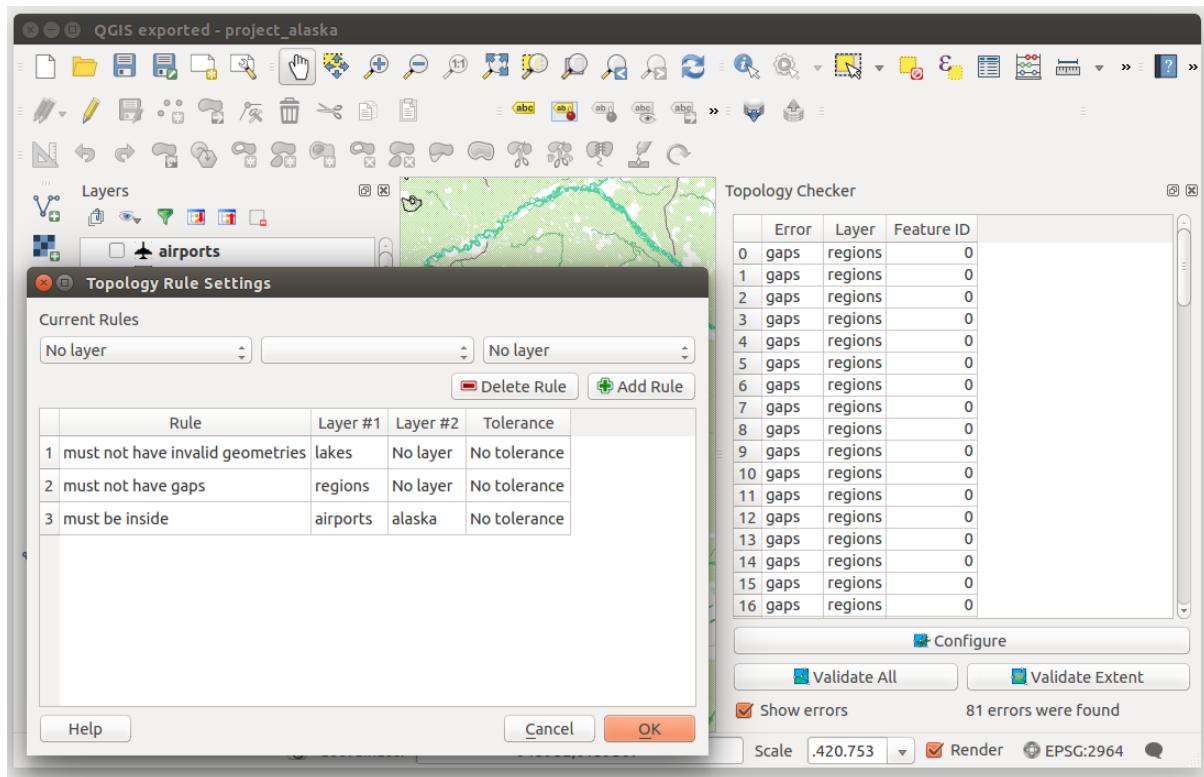


Fig. 22.28: The Topology Checker Plugin

## 22.2.8 Topology Checker Plugin

Topology describes the relationships between points, lines and polygons that represent the features of a geographic region. With the Topology Checker plugin, you can look over your vector files and check the topology with several topology rules. These rules check with spatial relations whether your features ‘Equal’, ‘Contain’, ‘Cover’, are ‘CoveredBy’, ‘Cross’, are ‘Disjoint’, ‘Intersect’, ‘Overlap’, ‘Touch’ or are ‘Within’ each other. It depends on your individual questions which topology rules you apply to your vector data (e.g., normally you won’t accept overshoots in line layers, but if they depict dead-end streets you won’t remove them from your vector layer).

QGIS has a built-in topological editing feature, which is great for creating new features without errors. But existing data errors and user-induced errors are hard to find. This plugin helps you find such errors through a list of rules.

It is very simple to create topology rules with the Topology Checker plugin.

On **point layers** the following rules are available:

- **Must be covered by:** Here you can choose a vector layer from your project. Points that aren’t covered by the given vector layer occur in the ‘Error’ field.
- **Must be covered by endpoints of:** Here you can choose a line layer from your project.
- **Must be inside:** Here you can choose a polygon layer from your project. The points must be inside a polygon. Otherwise, QGIS writes an ‘Error’ for the point.
- **Must not have duplicates:** Whenever a point is represented twice or more, it will occur in the ‘Error’ field.
- **Must not have invalid geometries:** Checks whether the geometries are valid.
- **Must not have multi-part-geometries:** All multi-part points are written into the ‘Error’ field.

On **line layers**, the following rules are available:

- **End points must be covered by:** Here you can select a point layer from your project.
- **Must not have dangles:** This will show the overshoots in the line layer.

- **Must not have duplicates:** Whenever a line feature is represented twice or more, it will occur in the ‘Error’ field.
- **Must not have invalid geometries:** Checks whether the geometries are valid.
- **Must not have multi-part geometries:** Sometimes, a geometry is actually a collection of simple (single-part) geometries. Such a geometry is called multi-part geometry. If it contains just one type of simple geometry, we call it multi-point, multi-linestring or multi-polygon. All multi-part lines are written into the ‘Error’ field.
- **Must not have pseudos:** A line geometry’s endpoint should be connected to the endpoints of two other geometries. If the endpoint is connected to only one other geometry’s endpoint, the endpoint is called a pseudo node.

On **polygon layers**, the following rules are available:

- **Must contain:** Polygon layer must contain at least one point geometry from the second layer.
- **Must not have duplicates:** Polygons from the same layer must not have identical geometries. Whenever a polygon feature is represented twice or more it will occur in the ‘Error’ field.
- **Must not have gaps:** Adjacent polygons should not form gaps between them. Administrative boundaries could be mentioned as an example (US state polygons do not have any gaps between them...).
- **Must not have invalid geometries:** Checks whether the geometries are valid. Some of the rules that define a valid geometry are:
  - Polygon rings must close.
  - Rings that define holes should be inside rings that define exterior boundaries.
  - Rings may not self-intersect (they may neither touch nor cross one another).
  - Rings may not touch other rings, except at a point.
- **Must not have multi-part geometries:** Sometimes, a geometry is actually a collection of simple (single-part) geometries. Such a geometry is called multi-part geometry. If it contains just one type of simple geometry, we call it multi-point, multi-linestring or multi-polygon. For example, a country consisting of multiple islands can be represented as a multi-polygon.
- **Must not overlap:** Adjacent polygons should not share common area.
- **Must not overlap with:** Adjacent polygons from one layer should not share common area with polygons from another layer.

Below is the list of Core plugins provided with QGIS. They are not necessarily enabled by default.

Icon	Plugin	Description	Manual Reference
	Coordinate Capture	Capture mouse coordinate in different CRS	<i>Coordinate Capture Plugin</i>
	DB Manager	Manage your databases within QGIS	<i>DB Manager Plugin</i>
	eVis	Event Visualization Tool	<i>eVis Plugin</i>
	Geometry Checker	Check and repair errors in vector geometries	<i>Geometry Checker Plugin</i>
	Georeferencer GDAL	Georeference rasters with GDAL	<i>Georeferencer Plugin</i>
	GPS Tools	Tools for loading and importing GPS data	<i>GPS Plugin</i>
	GRASS	GRASS functionality	<i>GRASS GIS Integration</i>
	MetaSearch Catalog Client	Interact with metadata catalog services (CSW)	<i>MetaSearch Catalog Client</i>
	Offline Editing	Offline editing and synchronizing with database	<i>Offline Editing Plugin</i>
	Processing	Spatial data processing framework	<i>QGIS processing framework</i>
	Topology Checker	Find topological errors in vector layers	<i>Topology Checker Plugin</i>

## 22.3 QGIS Python console

As you will see later in this chapter, QGIS has been designed with a plugin architecture. Plugins can be written in Python, a very famous language in the geospatial world.

QGIS brings a Python API (see PyQGIS Developer Cookbook for some code sample) to let the user interact with its objects (layers, feature or interface). QGIS also has a Python console.

The QGIS Python Console is an interactive shell for the python command executions. It also has a python file editor that allows you to edit and save your python scripts. Both console and editor are based on PyScintilla2 package. To open the console go to *Plugins → Python Console* (**Ctrl+Alt+P**).

### 22.3.1 The Interactive Console

The interactive console is composed of a toolbar, an input area and an output one.

#### Toolbar

The toolbar proposes the following tools:

- Clear Console to wipe the output area;
- Run Command available in the input area: same as pressing **Enter**;
- Show Editor: toggles *The Code Editor* visibility;
- Options...: opens a dialog to configure console properties (see *Options*);
- Help...: browses the current documentation.

## Console

The console main features are:

- Code completion, highlighting syntax and calltips for the following APIs:
  - Python
  - PyQGIS
  - PyQt5
  - QScintilla2
  - osgeo-gdal-ogr
- Ctrl+Alt+Space to view the auto-completion list if enabled in the *Options*;
- Execute code snippets from the input area by typing and pressing Enter or *Run Command*;
- Execute code snippets from the output area using the *Enter Selected* from the contextual menu or pressing Ctrl+E;
- Browse the command history from the input area using the Up and Down arrow keys and execute the command you want;
- Ctrl+Shift+Space to view the command history: double-clicking a row will execute the command. The *Command History* dialog can also be accessed from context menu of input area;
- Save and clear the command history. The history will be saved into the file `~/.qgis2/console_history.txt`;
- Open QGIS C++ API documentation by typing `_api`;
- Open QGIS Python API documentation by typing `_pyqgis`.
- Open PyQGIS Cookbook by typing `_cookbook`.

### Tip: Reuse executed commands from the output panel

You can execute code snippets from the output panel by selecting some text and pressing Ctrl+E. No matter if selected text contains the interpreter prompt (>>>, ...).



Fig. 22.29: The Python Console

### 22.3.2 The Code Editor

Use the  Show Editor button to enable the editor widget. It allows editing and saving Python files and offers advanced functionalities to manage your code (comment and uncomment code, check syntax, share the code via codepad.org and much more). Main features are:

- Code completion, highlighting syntax and calltips for the following APIs:
  - Python
  - PyQGIS
  - PyQt5
  - QScintilla2
  - osgeo-gdal-ogr
- Ctrl+Space to view the auto-completion list.
- Sharing code snippets via codepad.org.
- Ctrl+4 Syntax check.
- Search bar (open it with the default Desktop Environment shortcut, usually Ctrl+F):
  - Use the default Desktop Environment shortcut to find next/previous (Ctrl+G and Shift+Ctrl+G);
  - Automatically find first match when typing in find box;
  - Set initial find string to selection when opening find;
  - Pressing Esc closes the find bar.
- Object inspector: a class and function browser;
- Go to an object definition with a mouse click (from Object inspector);
- Execute code snippets with the  Run Selected command in contextual menu;
- Execute the whole script with the  Run Script command (this creates a byte-compiled file with the extension .pyc).

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**Note:** Running partially or totally a script from the *Code Editor* outputs the result in the Console output area.

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### 22.3.3 Options

Accessible from the Console toolbar and the contextual menus of the Console output panel and the Code Editor, the *Python Console Settings* help manage and control the Python console behavior.

For both *Console* and *Editor* you can specify:

- *Autocompletion*: Enables code completion. You can get autocompletion from the current document, the installed API files or both.
  - *Autocompletion threshold*: Sets the threshold for displaying the autocompletion list (in characters)
- *Typing*
  - *Automatic parentheses insertion*: Enables autoclosing for parentheses
  - *Automatic insertion of the ‘import’ string on ‘from xxx’*: Enables insertion of ‘import’ when specifying imports

For *Editor* you can also specify:

- *Run and Debug*

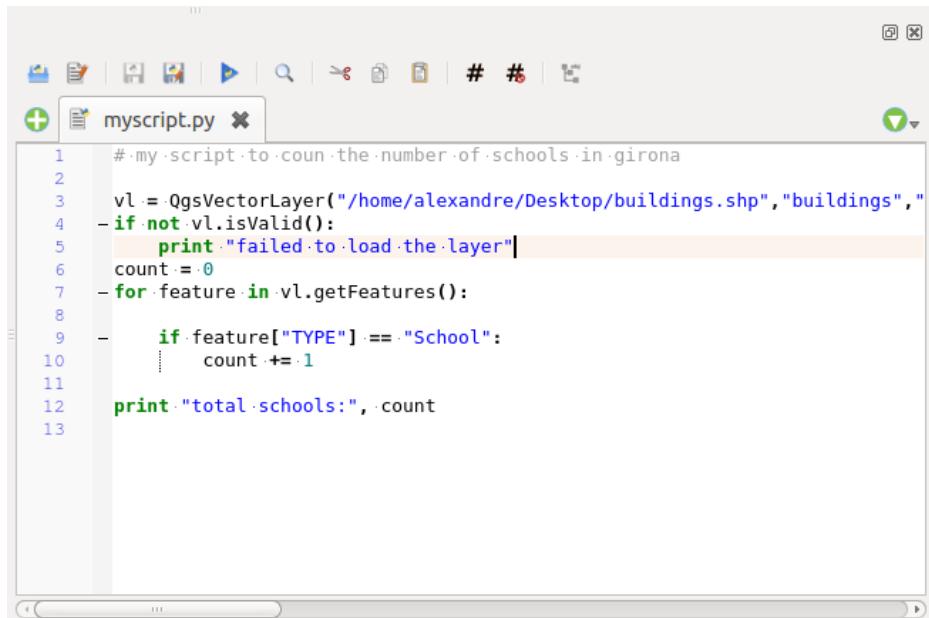


Fig. 22.30: The Python Console editor

- *Enable Object Inspector (switching between tabs may be slow)*: Enable the object inspector.
- *Auto-save script before running*: Saves the script automatically when executed. This action will store a temporary file (in the temporary system directory) that will be deleted automatically after running.
- *Font and Colors*: Here you can specify the font to use in the editor and the colors to use for highlighting

For APIs you can specify:

- *Using preloaded APIs file*: You can choose if you would like to use the preloaded API files. If this is not checked you can add API files and you can also choose if you would like to use prepared API files (see next option).
- *Using prepared APIs file*: If checked, the chosen \*.pap file will be used for code completion. To generate a prepared API file you have to load at least one \*.api file and then compile it by clicking the *Compile APIs...* button.

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#### Tip: Save the options

To save the state of console's widgets you have to close the Python Console from the close button. This allows you to save the geometry to be restored to the next start.

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# CHAPTER 23

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## Help and Support

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### 23.1 Mailing lists

QGIS is under active development and as such it won't always work like you expect it to. The preferred way to get help is by joining the qgis-users mailing list. Your questions will reach a broader audience and answers will benefit others.

#### 23.1.1 QGIS Users

This mailing list is used for discussion of QGIS in general, as well as specific questions regarding its installation and use. You can subscribe to the qgis-users mailing list by visiting the following URL: <https://lists.osgeo.org/mailman/listinfo/qgis-user>

#### 23.1.2 QGIS Developers

If you are a developer facing problems of a more technical nature, you may want to join the qgis-developer mailing list. This list is also a place where people can chime in and collect and discuss QGIS related UX (User Experience) / usability issues. It's here: <https://lists.osgeo.org/mailman/listinfo/qgis-developer>

#### 23.1.3 QGIS Community Team

This list deals with topics like documentation, context help, user guide, web sites, blog, mailing lists, forums, and translation efforts. If you would like to work on the user guide as well, this list is a good starting point to ask your questions. You can subscribe to this list at: <https://lists.osgeo.org/mailman/listinfo/qgis-community-team>

#### 23.1.4 QGIS Translations

This list deals with the translation efforts. If you like to work on the translation of the website, manuals or the graphical user interface (GUI), this list is a good starting point to ask your questions. You can subscribe to this list at: <https://lists.osgeo.org/mailman/listinfo/qgis-tr>

### 23.1.5 QGIS Project Steering Committee (PSC)

This list is used to discuss Steering Committee issues related to overall management and direction of QGIS. You can subscribe to this list at: <https://lists.osgeo.org/mailman/listinfo/qgis-psc>

### 23.1.6 QGIS User groups

In order to locally promote QGIS and contribute to its development, some QGIS communities are organized into QGIS User Groups. These groups are places to discuss local topics, organize regional or national user meetings, organize sponsoring of features... The list of current user groups is available at <https://qgis.org/en/site/forusers/usergroups.html>

You are welcome to subscribe to any of the lists. Please remember to contribute to the list by answering questions and sharing your experiences.

## 23.2 IRC

We also maintain a presence on IRC - visit us by joining the #qgis channel on irc.freenode.net. Please wait for a response to your question, as many folks on the channel are doing other things and it may take a while for them to notice your question. If you missed a discussion on IRC, not a problem! We log all discussion, so you can easily catch up. Just go to <https://qgis.org/irclogs> and read the IRC-logs.

Commercial support for QGIS is also available. Check the website <https://qgis.org/en/commercial-support.html> for more information.

## 23.3 BugTracker

While the qgis-users mailing list is useful for general ‘How do I do XYZ in QGIS?’-type questions, you may wish to notify us about bugs in QGIS. You can submit bug reports using the QGIS bug tracker at <https://issues.qgis.org/projects/qgis/issues>. When creating a new ticket for a bug, please provide an email address where we can contact you for additional information.

Please bear in mind that your bug may not always enjoy the priority you might hope for (depending on its severity). Some bugs may require significant developer effort to remedy, and the manpower is not always available for this.

Feature requests can be submitted as well using the same ticket system as for bugs. Please make sure to select the type Feature.

If you have found a bug and fixed it yourself, you can submit either a Pull Request on the Github QGIS Project (prefered) or a patch also. The lovely redmine ticket system at <https://issues.qgis.org/projects/qgis/issues> has this type as well. Check the Patch supplied checkbox and attach your patch before submitting your bug. One of the developers will review it and apply it to QGIS. Please don’t be alarmed if your patch is not applied straight away – developers may be tied up with other commitments.

Note that if you supply a Pull Request, your change would be more likely be merged into the source code!

## 23.4 Blog

The QGIS community also runs a weblog at <https://planet.qgis.org/planet/>, which has some interesting articles for users and developers as well provided by other blogs in the community. You are invited to contribute your own QGIS blog!

## 23.5 Plugins

The website <https://plugins.qgis.org> provides the official QGIS plugins web portal. Here, you find a list of all stable and experimental QGIS plugins available via the ‘Official QGIS Plugin Repository’.

## 23.6 Wiki

Lastly, we maintain a WIKI web site at <https://github.com/qgis/QGIS/wiki> where you can find a variety of useful information relating to QGIS development, release plans, links to download sites, message-translation hints and more. Check it out, there are some goodies inside!



# CHAPTER 24

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## Contributors

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QGIS is an open source project developed by a team of dedicated volunteers and organisations. We strive to be a welcoming community for people of all race, creed, gender and walks of life. At any moment, you can [get involved](#).

### 24.1 Authors

Below are listed people who dedicate their time and energy to write, review, and update the whole QGIS documentation.

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## 24.2 Translators

QGIS is a multi-language application and as is, also publishes a documentation translated into several languages. Many other languages are being translated and would be released as soon as they reach a reasonable percentage of translation. If you wish to help improving a language or request a new one, please see <https://qgis.org/en/site/getinvolved/index.html>.

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# CHAPTER 25

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## Appendix

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### 25.1 GNU General Public License

Version 2, June 1991

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