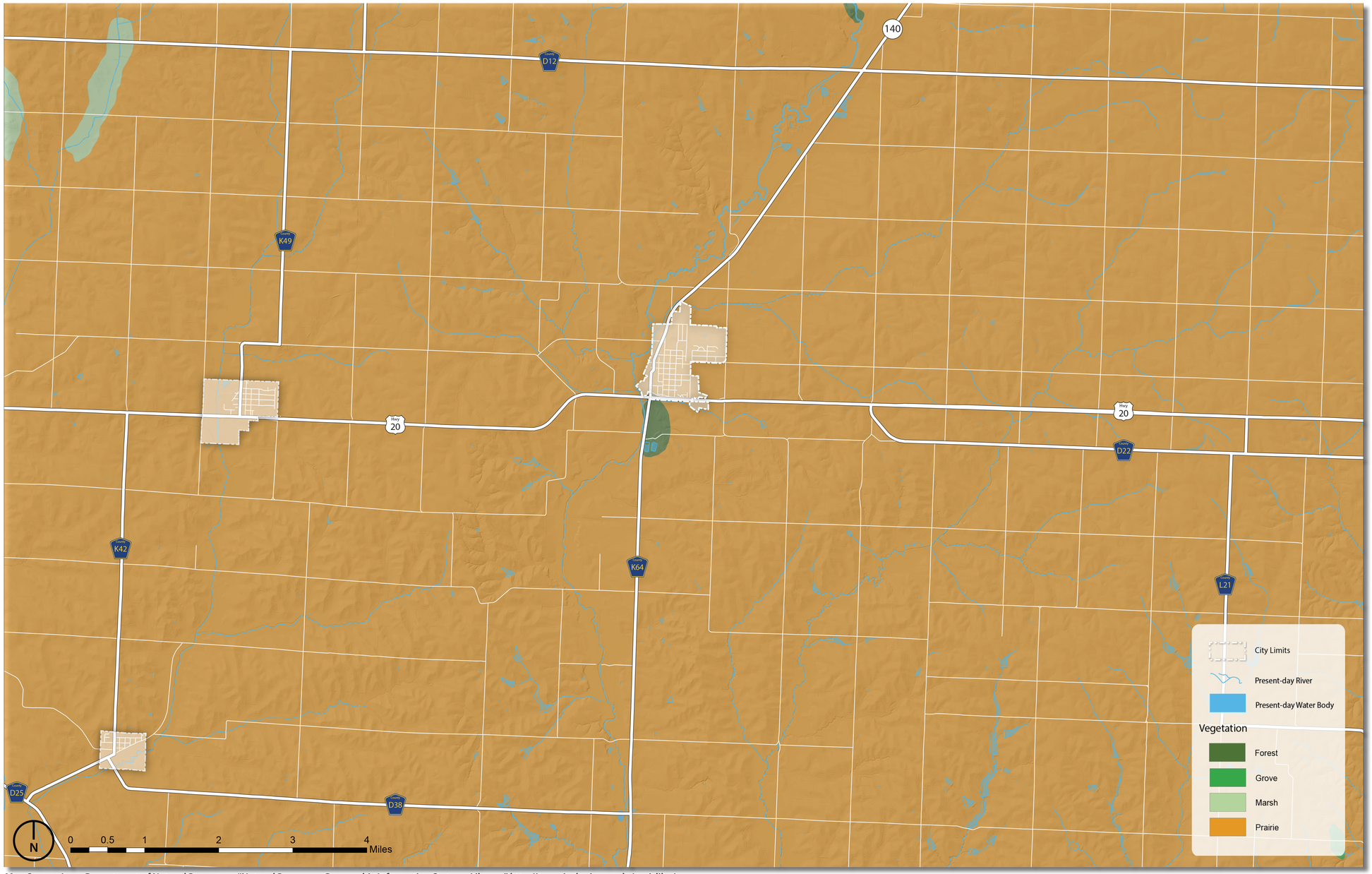

Map Source: Iowa Department of Natural Resources, "Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems Library," http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/nrgislibx/.

Historical Vegetation

The vegetation information shown here is derived from township maps made by the General Land Office (GLO) surveys beginning in 1836 through 1859. The vegetation information was digitized in 1996 as a resource for natural resource management and is useful "...for the study of long term ecological processes and as baseline data for the study of present day communities."[1]

The names of plant communities mapped by the GLO surveyors varied. The original terminology used by the surveyors who made maps has been preserved in the original data, but we have renamed the plant types on this map to reflect names used in contemporary ecological vegetation communities.

Not all communities will show all vegetation types., in part because the people making the maps in the 1800's did not understand and record the subtleties of different plant communities. In addition, landscape conditions that effect vegetation change from place to place. These factors include geology, exposure to wind, seasonal flooding or high ground water, and fire frequency.

The vegetationincluded in the map may include the following:

1. Forest : Trees with mainly closed canopy; ground vegetation shade tolererant. Infrequent fire disturbance.
2. Savana: Scattered trees with an open canopy and prairie below. Frequent fire disturbance.
3. Marsh: Mainly perennial non-woody plants; water dominated and frequent fires.
4. Prairie: Mainly perennial non-woody plants with frequent fire disturbance.
5. Field: Cultivated lands of early pioneers or Native Americans.

1 J.E. Ebinger, "Presettlement Vegetation of Coles County, Illinois," Transactions of the Illinois Academy of Science (1987): 15-24, quoted in Michael Charles Miller, "Analysis of historic vegetation patterns in Iowa using Government Land Office surveys and a Geographic Information System" (master's thesis, Iowa State University, 1995), 8.

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Historical Vegetation

Bioregional Context

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