



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

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. Not all communities will have all vegetation types.

The vegetation names commonly used by the GLO surveyors include the following²:

1. Field: Cultivated lands of early pioneers or Native Americans.
2. Grove: Isolated dense stand of trees.
3. Marsh: Perennial wetlands, basins of irregular shape.
4. Prairie: Dominated by prairie grasses with individual or few scattered trees.
5. Thicket: Impenetrable blocks of shrubs, often thorny.
6. Timber: Contiguous blocks of trees extending to the horizon in at least one direction.

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.
² 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), 134-135.



Historical Vegetation

Bioregional Context

Julia Badenhop, Casey Cox, Riley Dunn, Dominick Florer, Hatvany Gomez-Concepcion, Ngoc Ho, Henry Herman, Alysse Kirkman, Giannis Koutsou, Emma Lorenz, Zoey Mauck, Carol Ustine

Iowa State University | Trees Forever | Iowa Department of Transportation

