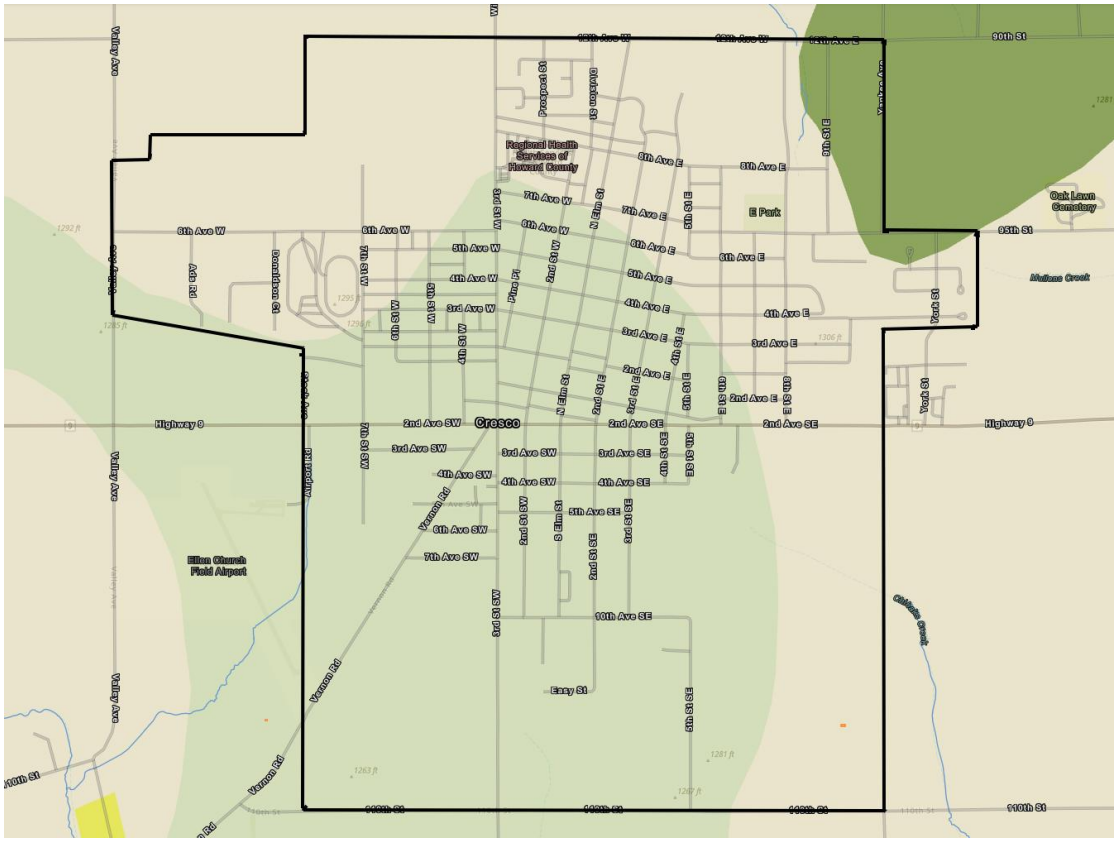
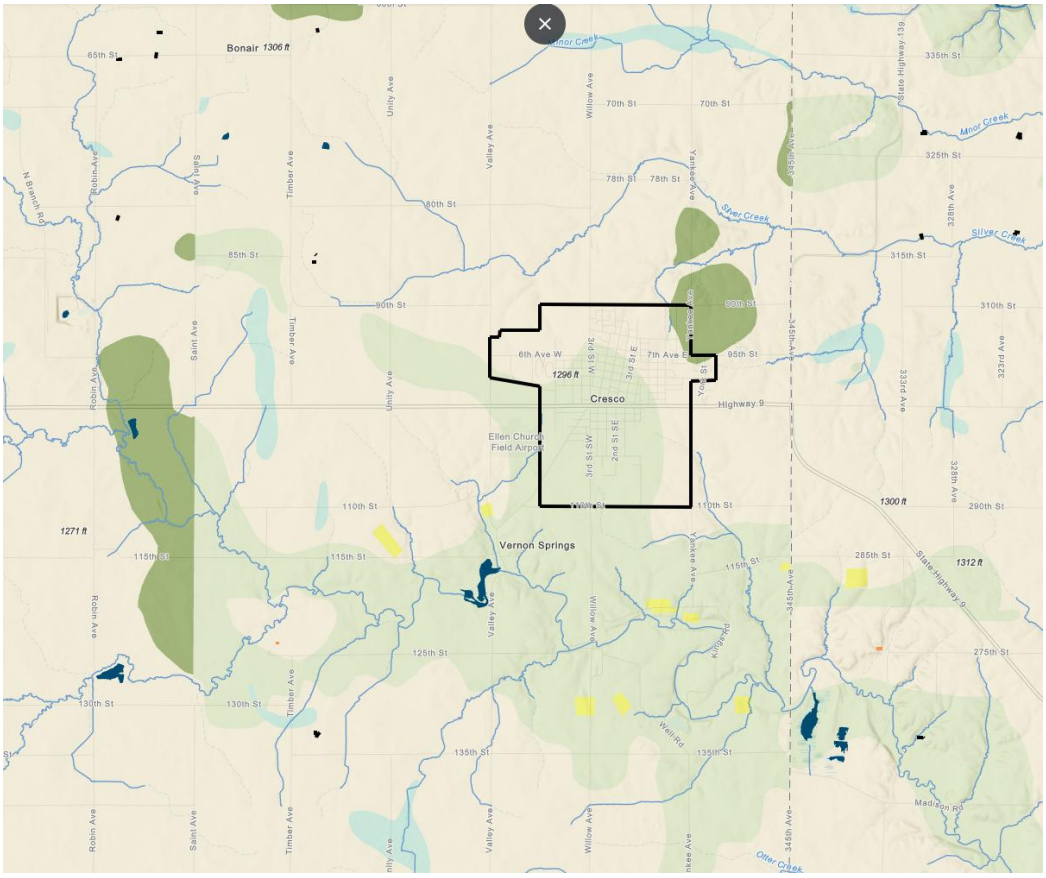
Natural Resources
Historic Vegetation



Iowa - 1836-1859 GLO Vegetation

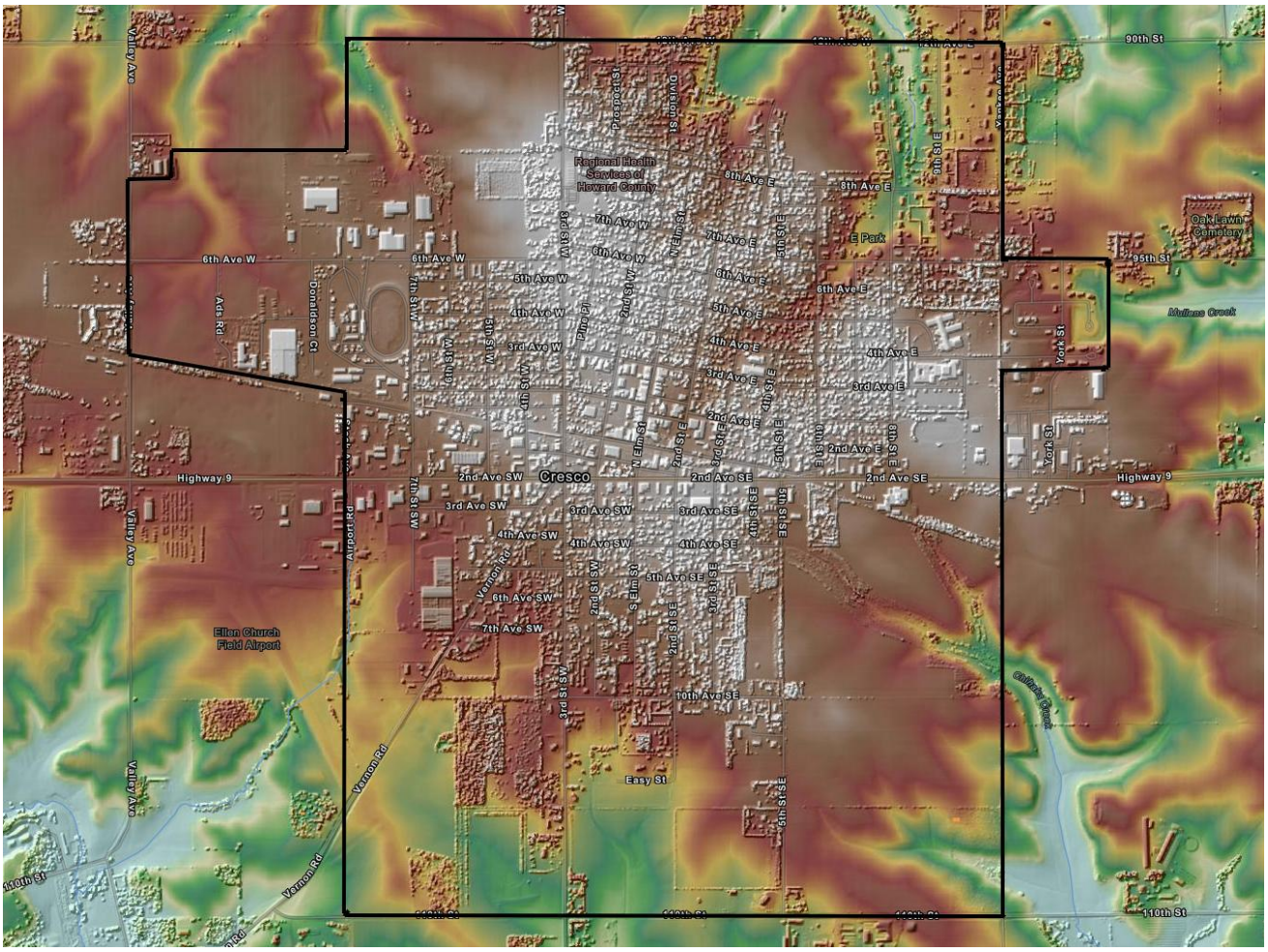
GLO_vegetation

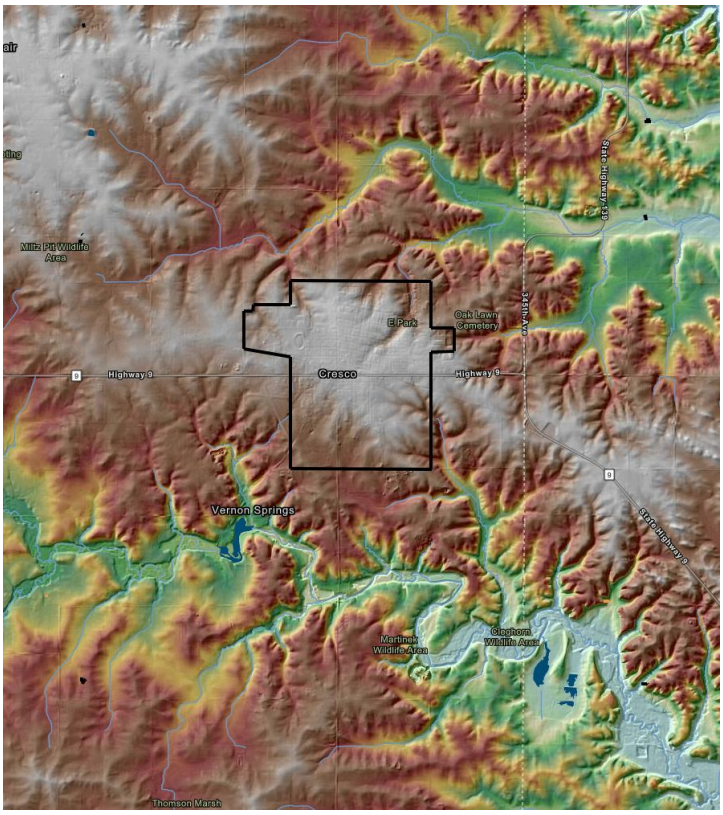
- Field
- Field (Native American)
- Forest
- Lake/pond
- Prairie
- River
- Scattered trees/prairie
- Village (Native American)
- Village/city
- Wetland

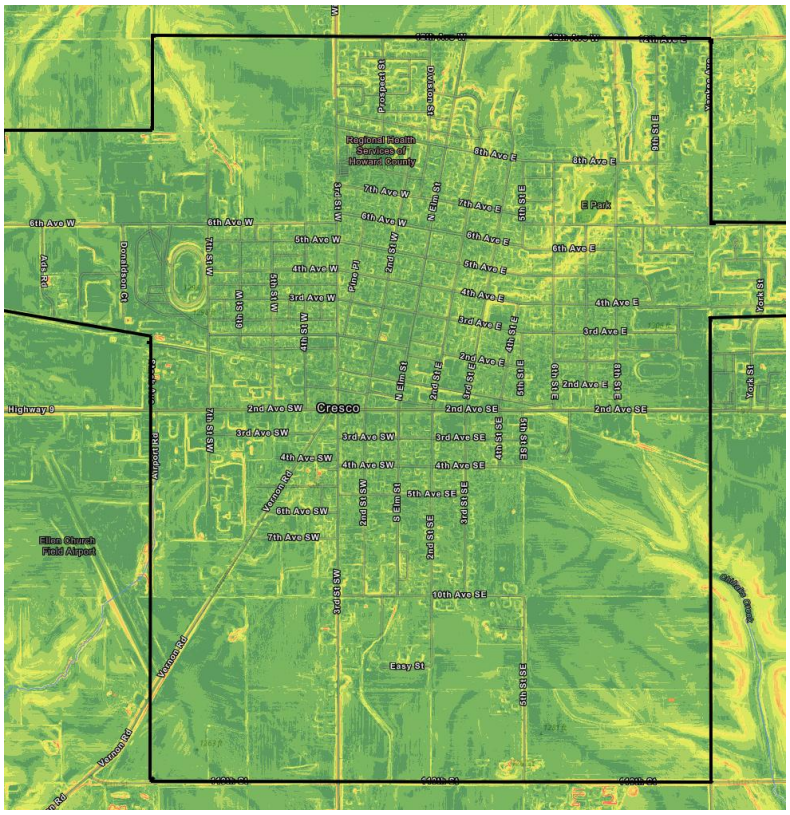


Natural Resources

Terrain & Slope, 2020 LiDAR Hillshade, Digital Surface Model, 2020 LiDAR Slope

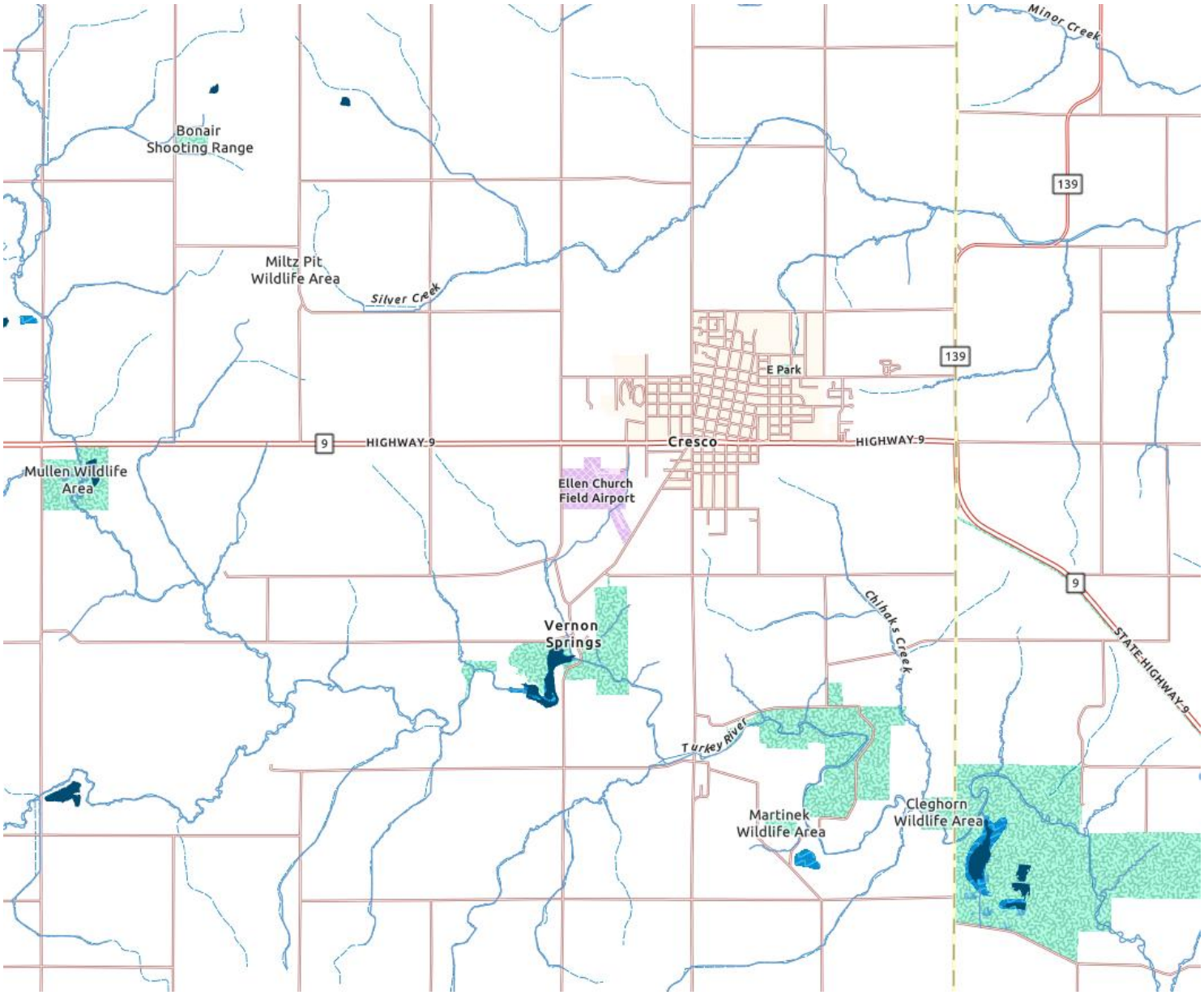






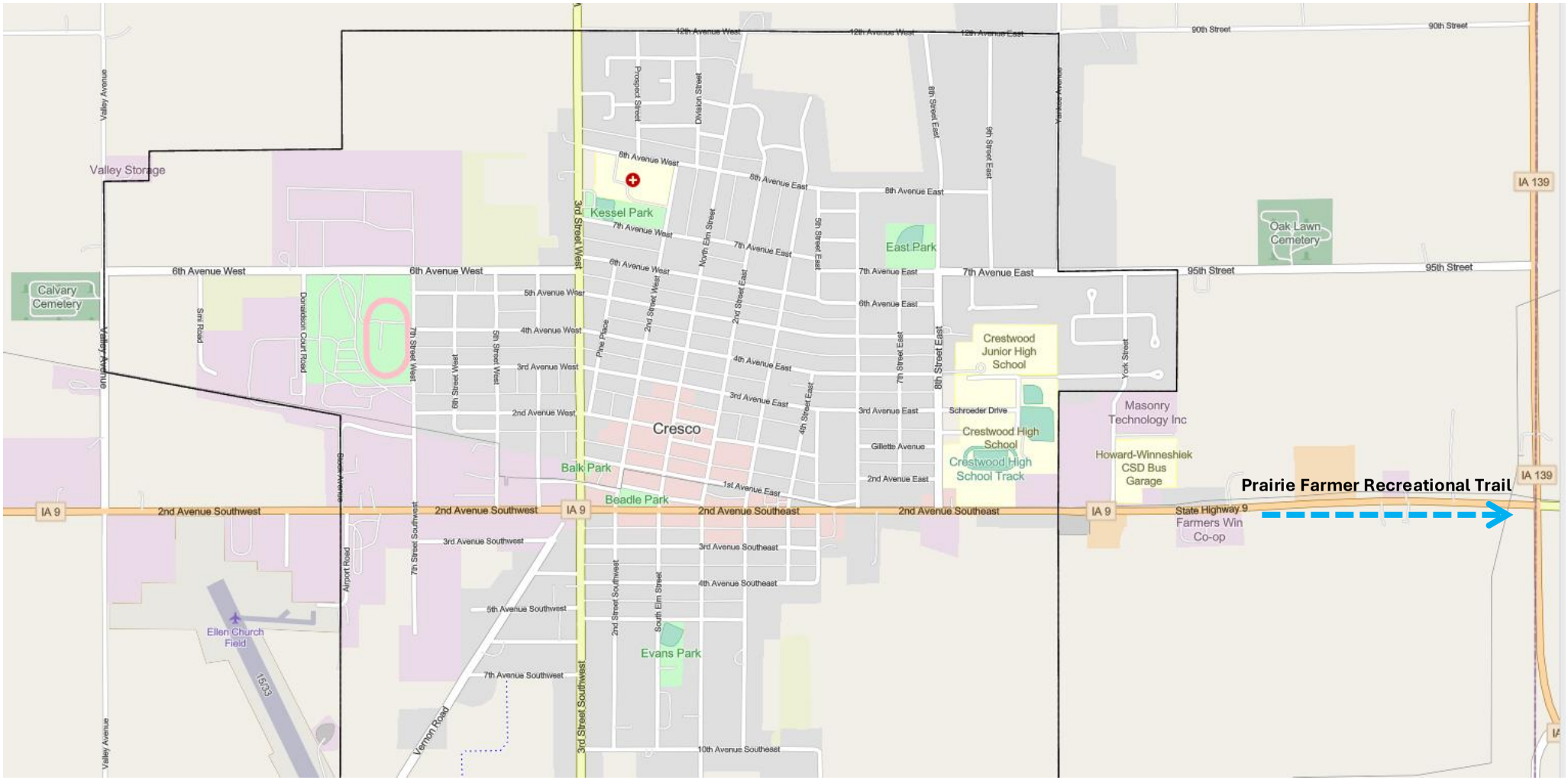
Source: Iowa Geographic Map Server

Natural Resources
Natural Areas, Open Space and Waterways, Region

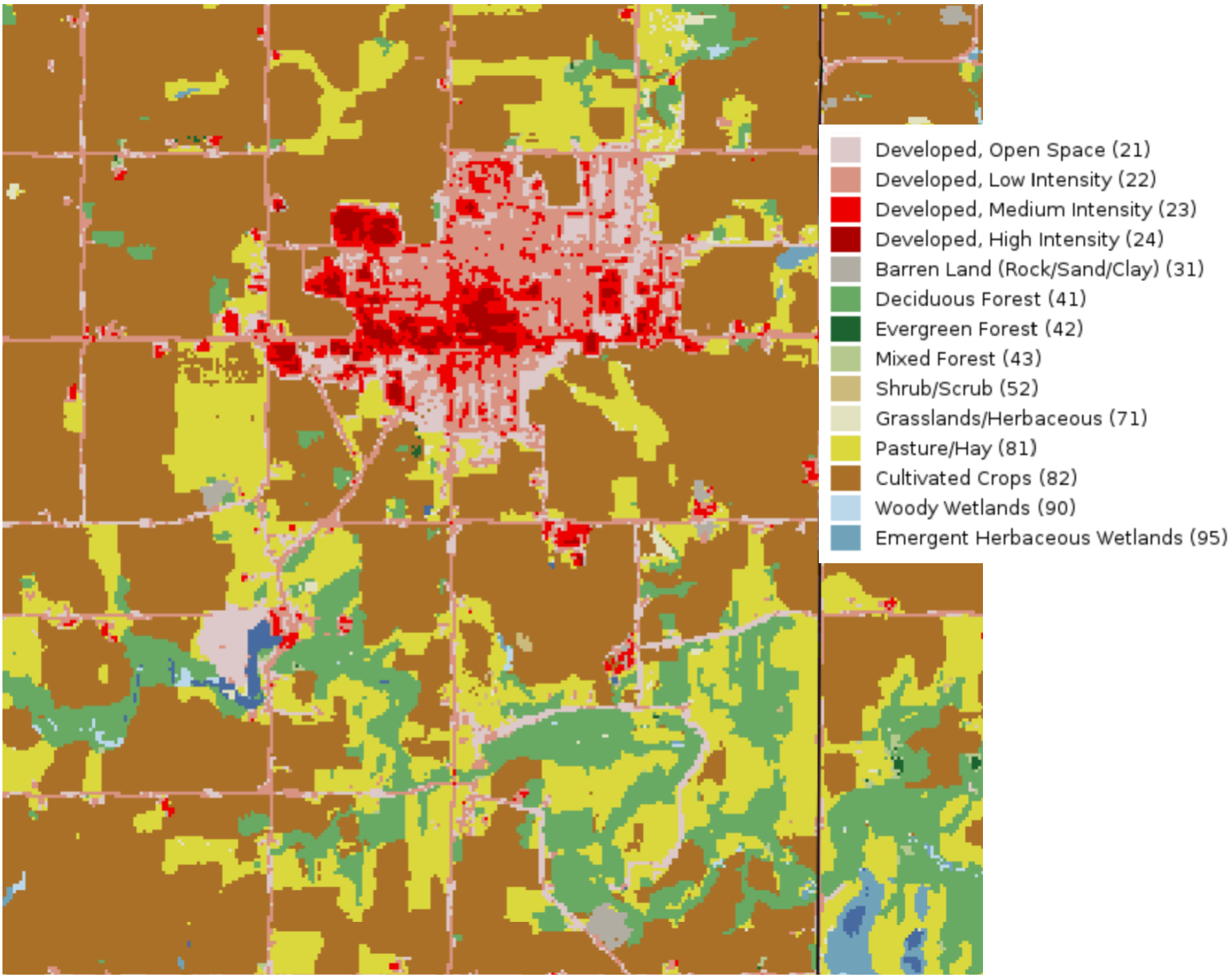


Source: Iowa Geographic Map Server

Natural Resources, Parks and Trails, Cresco



Natural Resources
Land Cover Current, and Change (1985 – 2023)

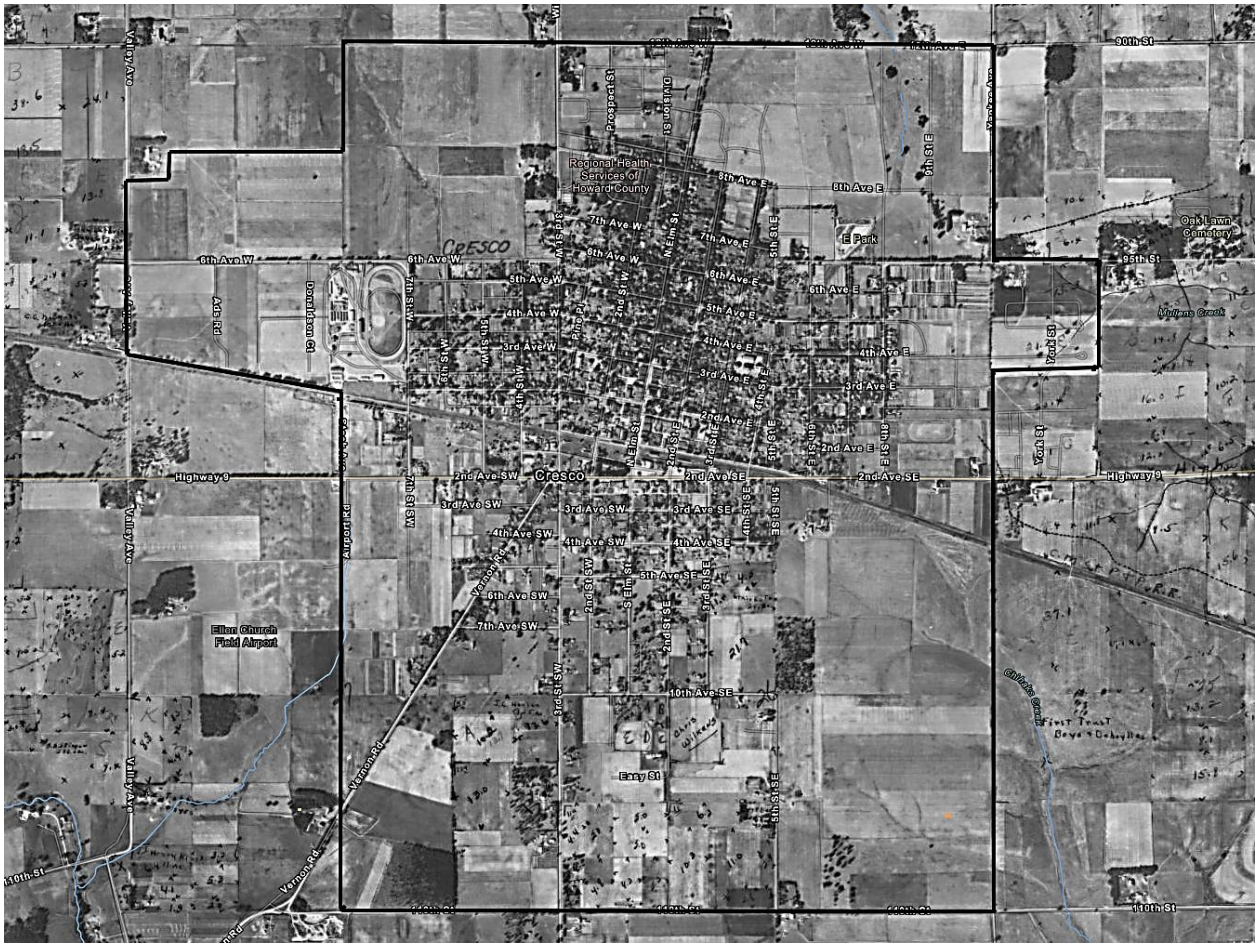


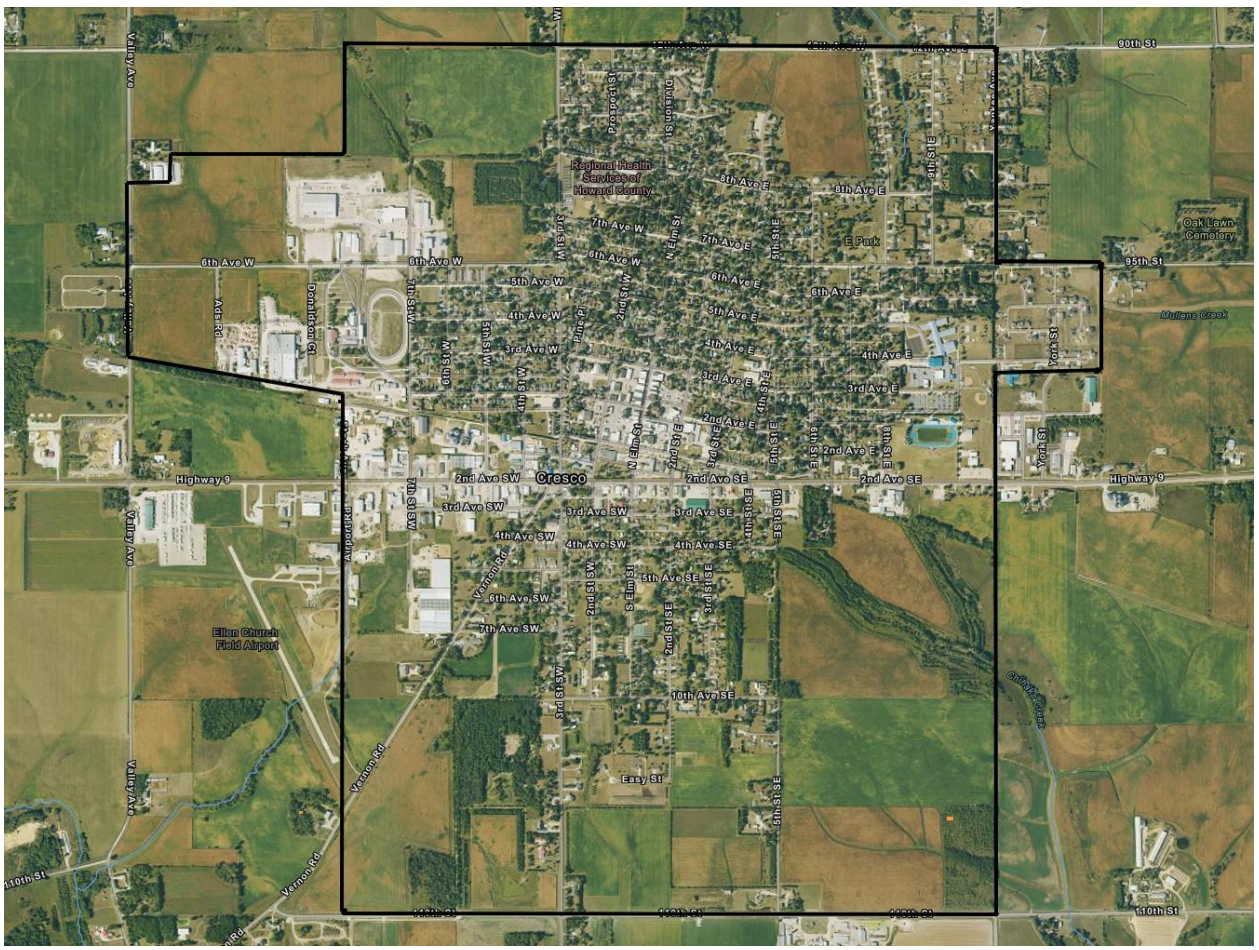
Source: Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium

Land Cover Categories	Area 1985	Area Lost	Area Gained	Area 2023	Net Change	Percent Change
Developed, High Intensity	0.18	0.00	0.21	0.38	0.20	112.40%
Developed, Medium Intensity	1.12	-0.09	1.24	2.27	1.15	103.27%
Developed, Low Intensity	9.72	-0.39	3.61	12.94	3.23	33.22%
Developed, Open Space	13.75	-2.96	1.53	12.31	-1.44	-10.46%
Cultivated Crops	387.17	-18.57	18.63	387.24	0.06	0.02%
Pasture/Hay	39.53	-18.51	15.53	36.55	-2.98	-7.54%
Grassland	0.19	-0.12	0.21	0.28	0.09	45.93%
Deciduous Forest	16.42	-1.19	0.67	15.90	-0.52	-3.16%
Evergreen Forest	0.25	-0.01	0.02	0.26	0.01	2.06%
Mixed Forest	0.16	-0.02	0.04	0.18	0.02	10.66%
Scrub/Shrub	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.00%
Woody Wetland	1.86	-0.08	0.11	1.89	0.03	1.78%
Emergent Herbaceous Wetland	2.47	-0.78	0.23	1.91	-0.55	-22.42%
Barren Land	0.26	-0.06	0.51	0.71	0.45	176.93%
Open Water	0.44	-0.09	0.26	0.61	0.17	39.11%
Perennial Snow/Ice	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%

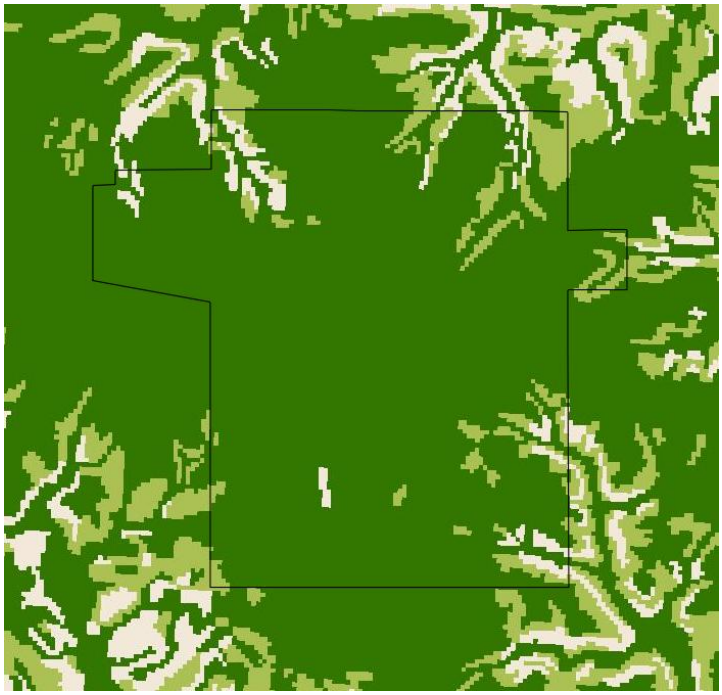
*All numbers expressed in square miles

Cresco Area Orthophotos, 2030 & 2023





Agriculture, Farmland Classification

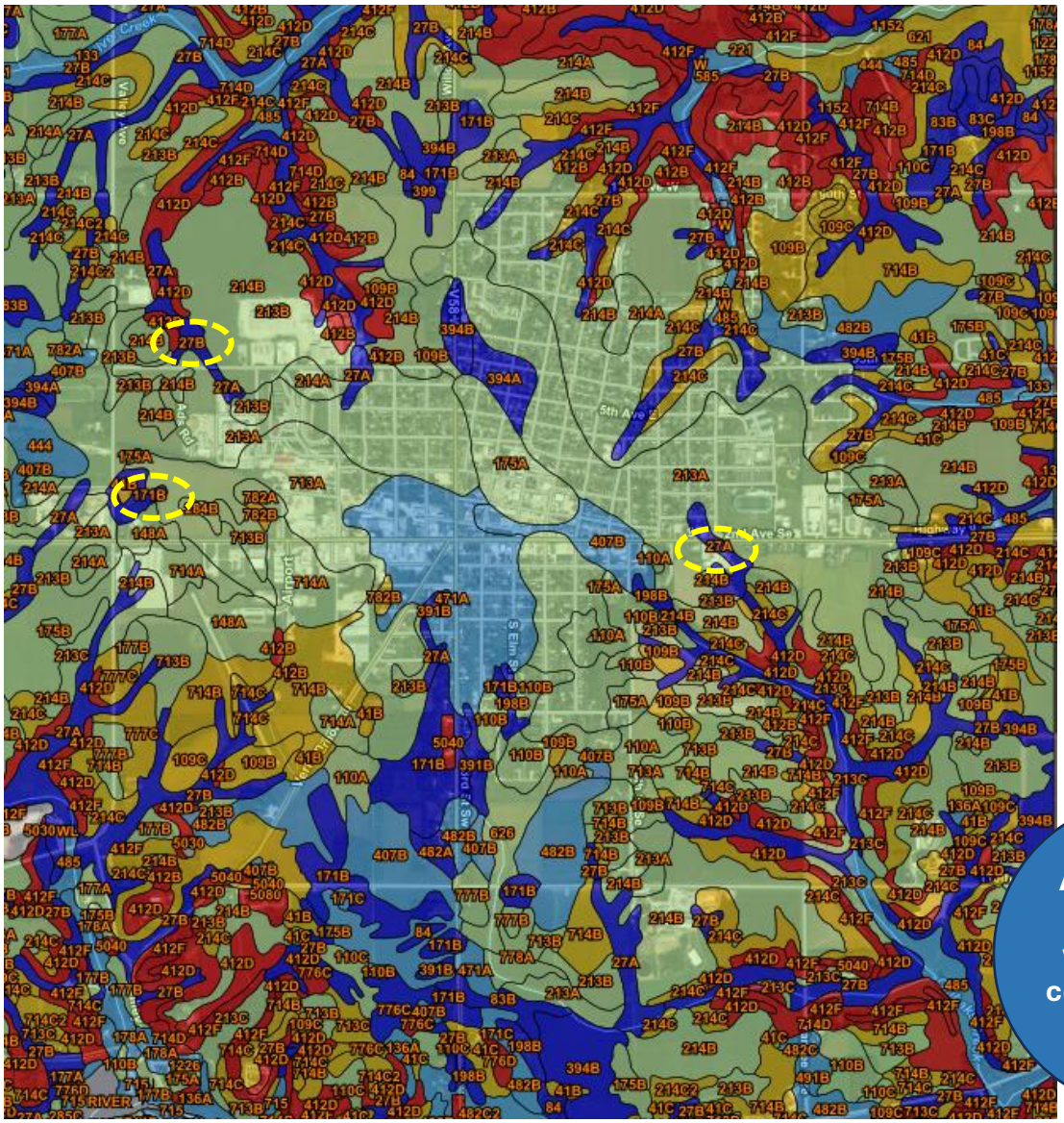


Farmland classification identifies map units as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, farmland of local importance, or unique farmland. It identifies the location and extent of the soils that are best suited to food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops.

USA SSURGO - Farmland Class

- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Farmland of Unique Importance
- Not Prime Farmland

Agriculture, Corn Suitability Rating



Corn suitability ratings (CSR2) provide a relative ranking of all soils mapped in the State of Iowa according to their potential for the intensive production of row crops. The CSR2 is an index that can be used to rate the potential yield of one soil against that of another over a period of time. Considered in the ratings are average weather conditions and frequency of use of the soil for row crops. Ratings range from 100 for soils that have no physical limitations, occur on minimal slopes, and can be continuously row cropped to as low as 5 for soils that are severely limited for the production of row crops.

About 16% of Cresco falls within a high corn suitability rating (82>)

Agriculture Summary

Agriculture in Howard County	
Number of Farms:	869
Total farm acreage:	296,769
Average farm size in acres:	342
Farms by size:	
1 to 9 acres	62
10 to 49 acres	197
50 to 179 acres	281
180 to 499 acres	190
500 to 999 acres	78
1,000 or more acres	61
Market value of Ag. Products Sold:	$586,466,000
Crops, nursery, greenhouse	$266,736,000
Livestock & poultry	$319,730,000

Source: Agricultural Census, 2022

Livestock and Poultry Inventory:		
Cattle & Calves	Farms	181
	Number	33,433
Hogs & Pigs	Farms	35
	Number	531,959
Sheep & Lambs	Farms	30
	Number	1,364
Broilers & Other	Farms	8
	Number	12,115
Selected Crops Harvested:		
Corn for grain	Farms	436
	Acres	137,990
Corn for silage	Farms	30
	Acres	3,356
Wheat for grain	Farms	3
	Acres	40
Oats for grain	Farms	16
	Acres	547

Source: Agricultural Census, 2022

Historical Agricultural Land Values

1980	1990	2000	2010	2014	2015
1,645	955	1,571	4,364	7,211	6,857

Number of Farms

1950	1982	2002	2007	2012	
1,714	1,055	891	877	883	

Average Farm Size in Acres

1950	1982	2002	2007	2012	
170	264	302	318	340	

Ag land values have quadrupled.

There are ½ as many farms as there were a half century+ ago.

Average farm size has doubled.

Few young people are farming.

Only ½ of farmers list it as their primary job.

Farm employment is almost half what it was 35 years ago.

Characteristics of Principal Farm Operators

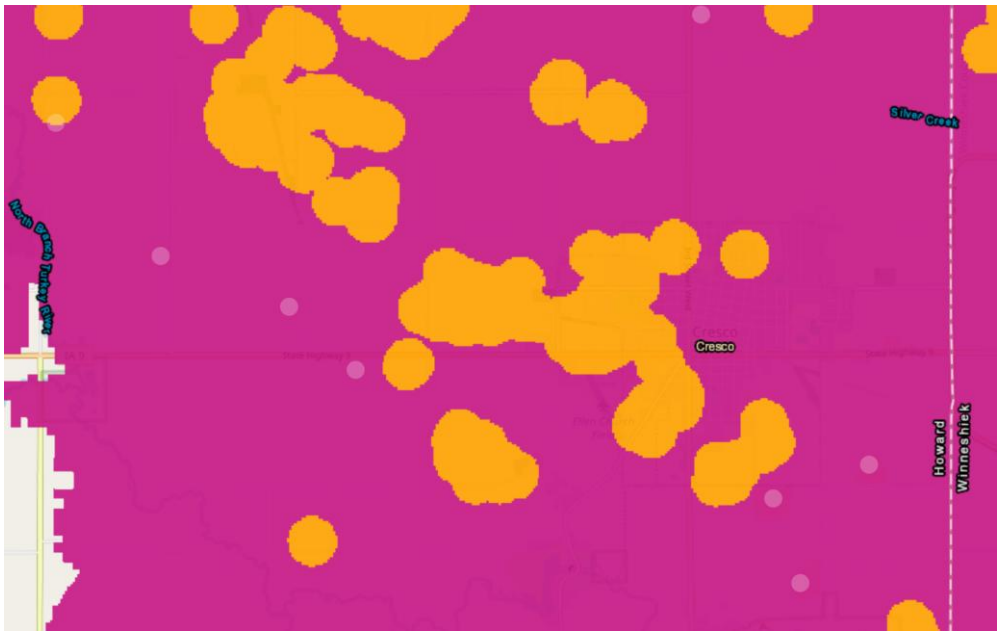
Female	<35 Yrs	65 Yrs+	Worked any days off farm	Worked 200+ days off farm	Primary occupation is farming
10.2	6.0	27.4	60.9	32.8	51.4

Farm Employment

1980	1990	2000	2010	2014	
1,473	1,182	1,099	929	915	

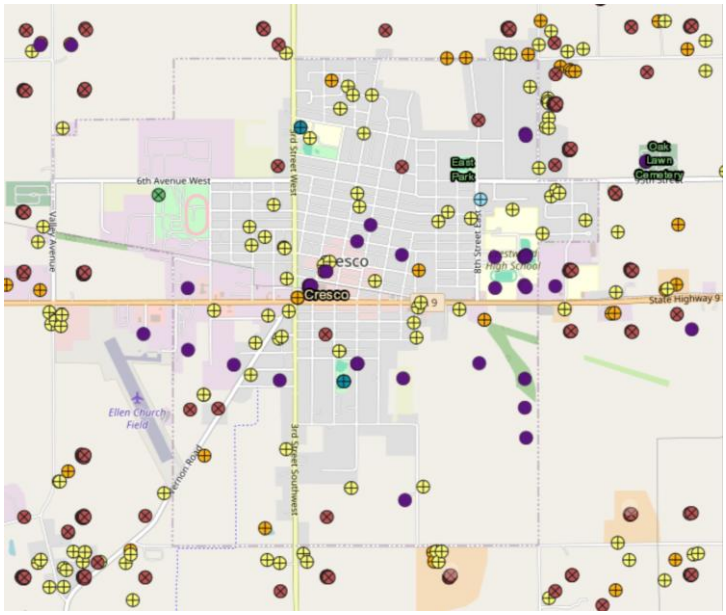
Source: Iowa State University, Community Indicators Program

Natural Resources
Ground Water Quality / Karst Geology



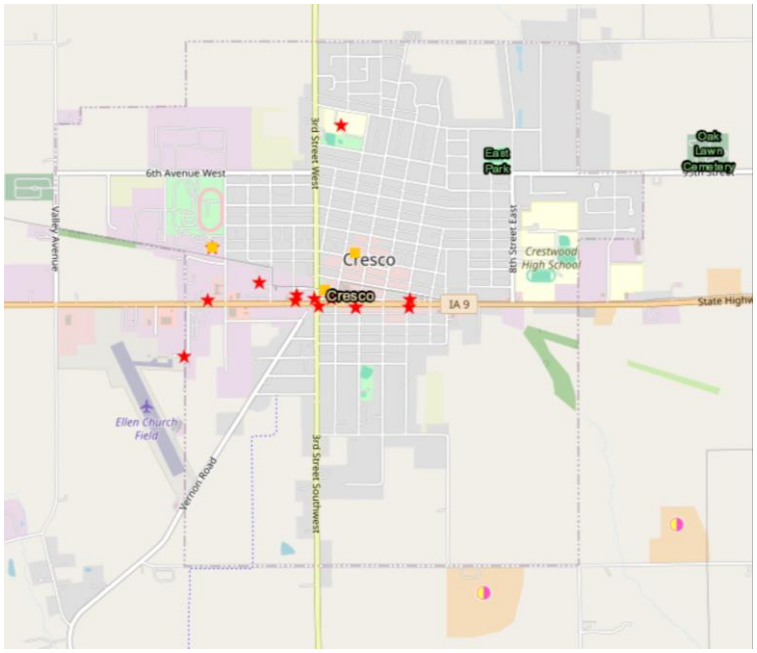
- Sinkhole w/ 1000 ft radius
- Karst and Potential Karst

Wells



- Public Water Supply Well
- IGS GeoSam Well
- Water Use Well
- Private Well Tracking System
- Agricultural Drainage Well
- County or Test Well
- Plugged Well

Potential Contamination Points

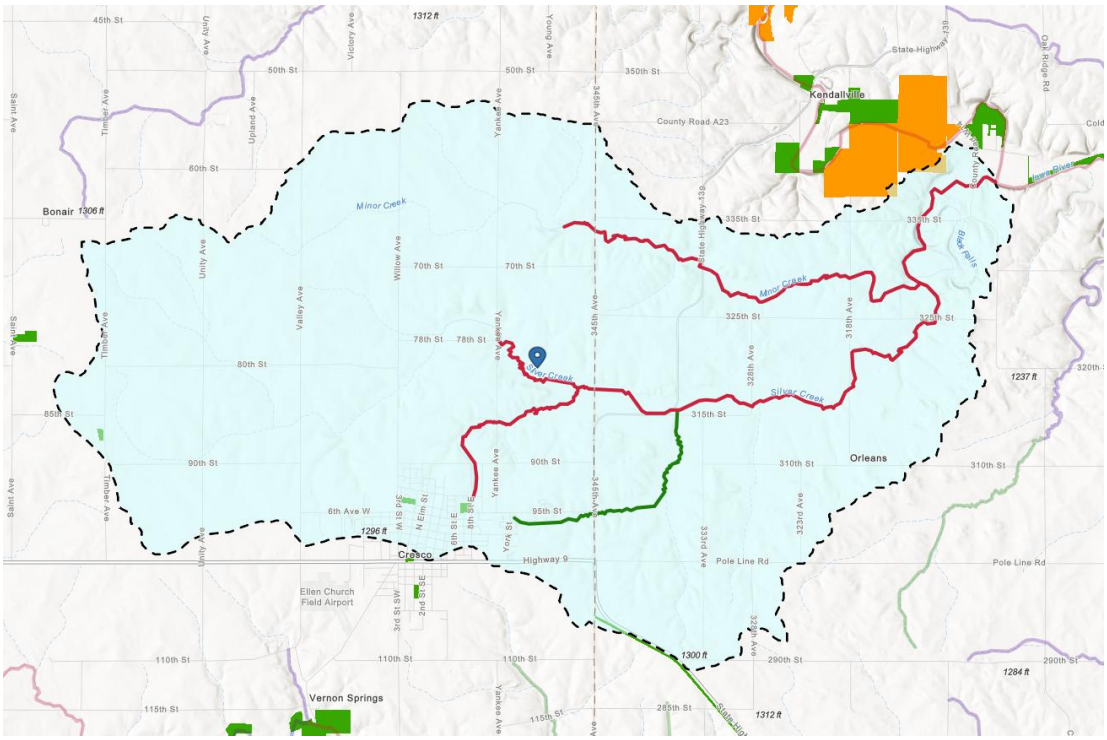


- Contaminated Sites Facility
- Leaking UST
- Active, Confinement/Open Feedlot

Source: Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources, GP6 Well Siting Tool

Natural Resources
IDNR 2022 Impaired Streams

Silver Cr. Watershed



Source: Iowa Geographic Map Server

Silver Creek
State Waterbody ID: IA 01-UIA-282

Year Last Reported: 2024

Waterbody Condition: Impaired (Issues Identified)

Organization Name (ID): Iowa (21IOWA)

What is this water used for?	Condition
Aquatic Life	Good
Swimming and Boating	Impaired

Identified Issues:

- Bacteria and Other Microbes

Bacteria and Other Microbes

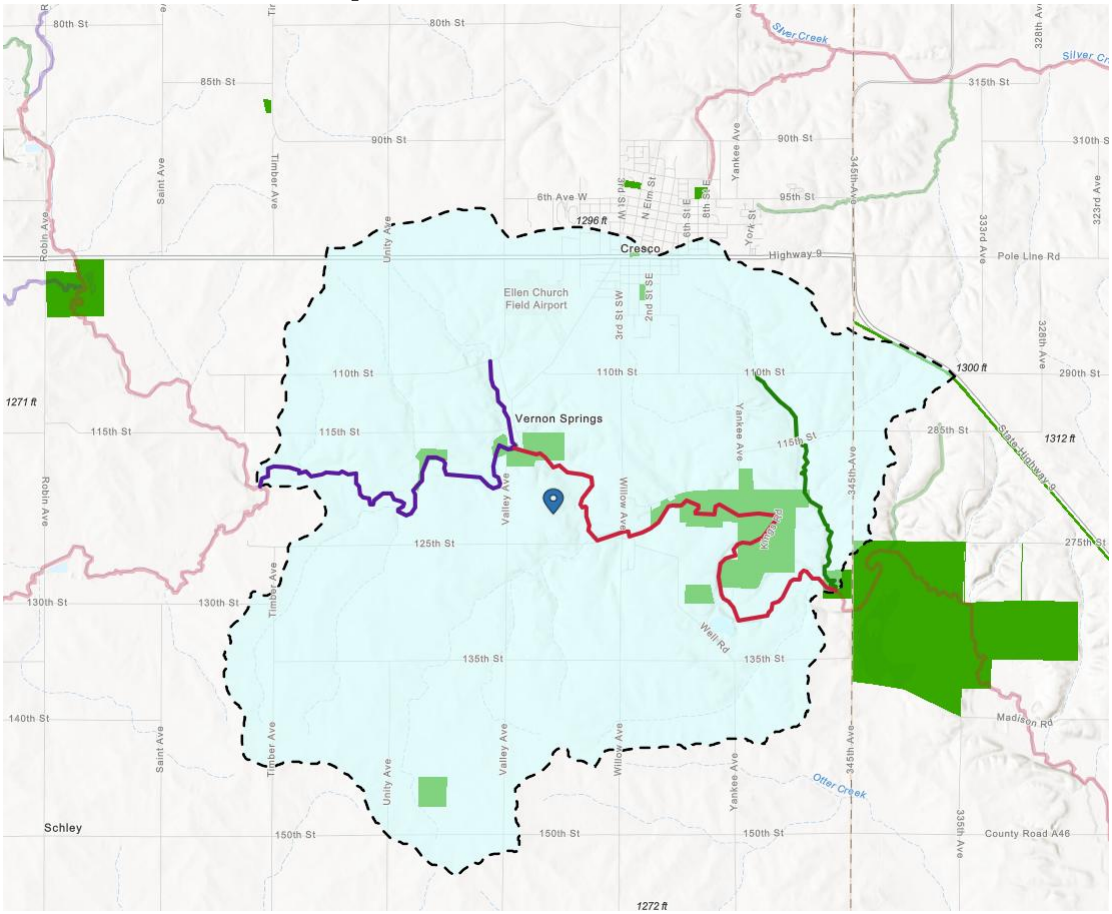
Definition

Bacteria and other microbes (pathogens) are potentially disease-causing organisms from human or animal waste that enter water from faulty septic systems, sewage discharges, farm and feedlot manure runoff, boat discharges, and pet waste. People can become ill by eating contaminated fish or shellfish or swimming in waters with high levels of these microbes.

What you can do

People can help reduce pathogen contamination by practicing appropriate disposal of animal and boat waste and avoiding disposal in waterways, fixing leaky septic tanks, picking-up pet waste, and avoiding manure application close to shorelines or drainage ditches. Read more about pathogens in waterways.

Chihaks Cr. – Turkey R. Watershed



Turkey River
State Waterbody ID: IA 01-TRK-154

Year Last Reported: 2024

Waterbody Condition: Impaired (Issues Identified)

Organization Name (ID): Iowa (21IOWA)

What is this water used for?	Condition
Aquatic Life	Good
Swimming and Boating	Impaired

Identified Issues:

- Bacteria and Other Microbes