

Visualizing Watersheds with the DNR Watershed Atlas

Before setting out to create a social map, it is important to have a visual depiction of the boundaries of interest. One way to gather the geographic boundaries of a particular watershed is to utilize the online DNR Watershed Atlas. The atlas can be accessed at: http://programs.iowadnr.gov/ims/website/water_monitoring/viewer.htm.

This website is essentially a political map of Iowa overlaid with “layers” of information, including the political boundaries of cities, towns and counties; infrastructure such as roads and drainage facilities; and geographic features like rivers, lakes, and elevation, as shown in figure 4-1. While at first glance this interactive map is rather complex, it is easy to remove types of information depicted on the map in order to hone in on exactly what you want to see.

The legend on the left hand side of the map provides all the different kinds of information that can be layered on top of the Iowa map. Information can be turned on or off (made visible or invisible) by clicking on the shaded box next to the folder or name. In order to make the map easier to view, you will want to turn off the viewing of the IOWATER and IASTORET sites under the Hydrology folder by clicking on the shaded box next to these names. Also, click on the “Admin Political Boundary” to provide a list of political boundaries. You may want to turn off viewing the conservation and recreational lands’ boundaries by clicking on the shaded box next to “ConsRec Land.” Finally, you will want to view all of the watershed basin boundaries. Click on the shaded box next to the folder marked “Basins.”

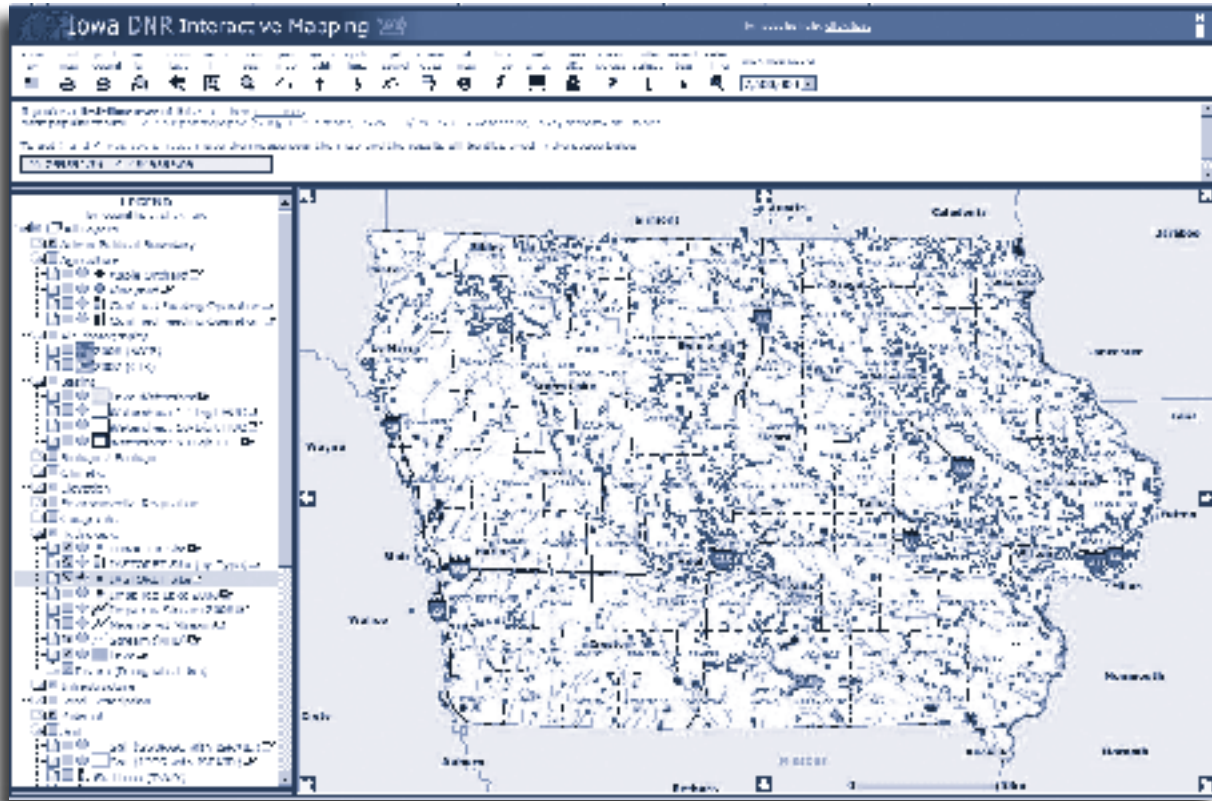


Figure 4-1: DNR Watershed Atlas with cities, counties, roads, and rivers shown.

When you have turned off and on all that you want to change on the map, click on the button at the bottom of the legend marked “Redraw the Map.” You will now have a map that only shows town, city and county boundaries, the geographic features of lakes, rivers, and streams, and the watershed basins, like the example in figure 4-2.

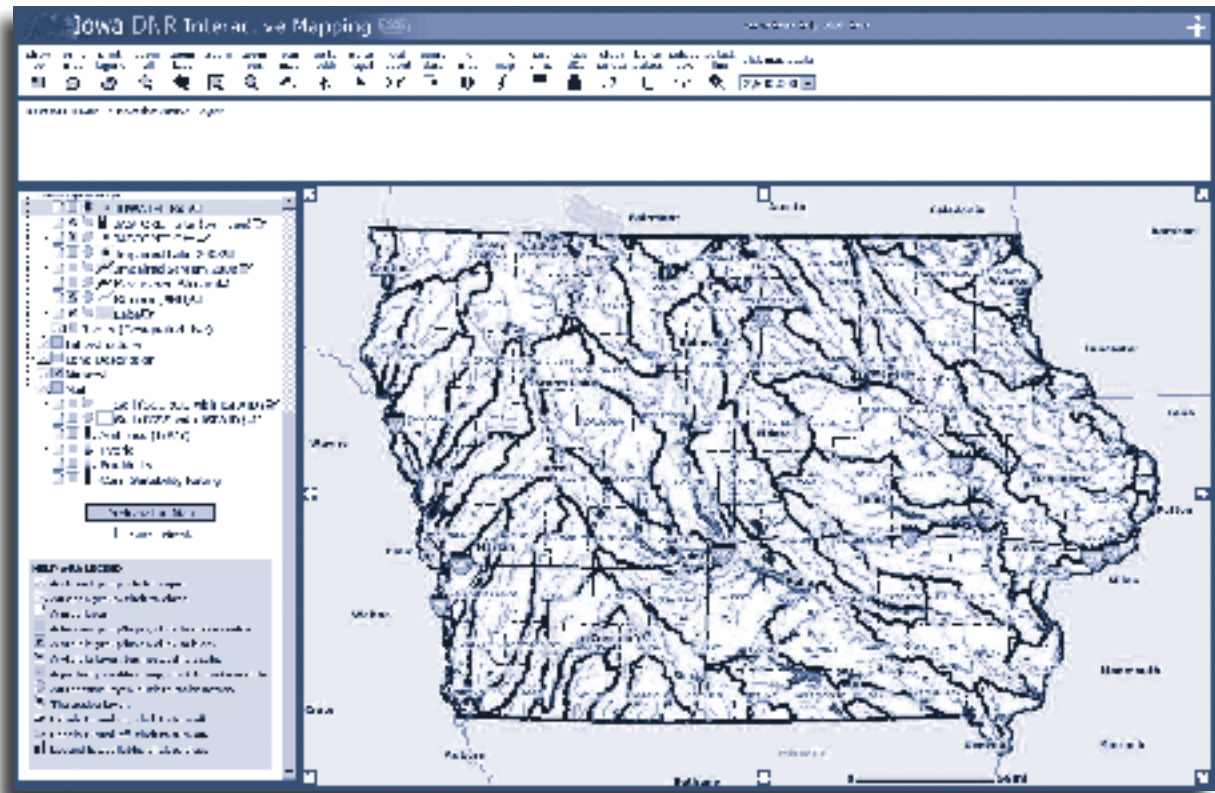


Figure 4-2: DNR Watershed Atlas with watersheds highlighted.

Along the top edge of the map is a series of user functions. Click on the one marked "Zoom In" and then click on the map to the general location you are looking for. Keep zooming in until you reach the desired level of detail. You can also use the "Pan Map" function to scroll the map in any direction to center the information on the screen that you want to see.

For example, if you wanted to see the boundaries of the Silver Creek Watershed near Cresco, you would keep zooming in on the map until you reached the desired level of detail and then pan the map to center on the location of Silver Creek as it enters the town of Cresco.