

GIS Tips & Tricks

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Need to Find Something Fast? Here are a Few Tips

With ever increasing access to new datasets, we tend to include more datasets into the mapping application. When the Table of Contents fills up, we either start turning off layers or making groups. Eventually it becomes difficult to navigate to a specific item. So, here are a few quick tips and tricks to facilitate navigation in your map document.

A common feature of most, if not all, GIS software is a coupling between the geometry of a feature and the feature's record in an attribute table. That is, if you select an item's geometry on the map, it appears highlighted on the map and that same item is also highlighted in the layer's attribute table. Conversely, selecting an item in the attribute table, highlights the feature's geometry on the map. Again, like ArcGIS, most GIS software will allow the user to drive to a selected item, by double-clicking on the record in the attribute table.

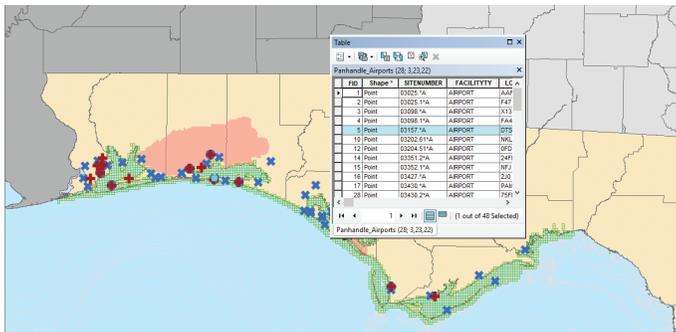


Figure 1. Map showing the feature geometry (highlighted point on the map) is coupled to the highlighted record in the attribute table.

To drive to the selected item, double-clicking on the highlighted record zooms-in to the item and centers the item in the map as in Figure 2.

But, what if you just want to center the selected item without changing the zoom ratio (map scale) to facilitate seeing a selected feature in a larger context, as in Figure 3?

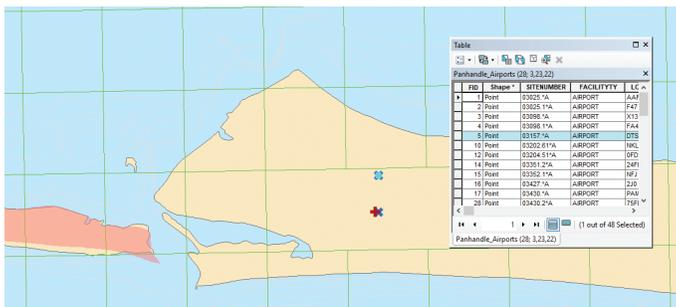


Figure 2. Double-clicking on the selected item, zooms-in to and centers the selected item on the map.

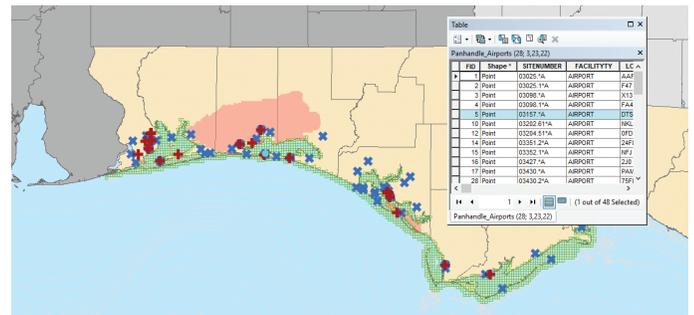


Figure 3. Using the "Pan To" or the [CTRL]+Double-click on a selected items, centers the item on the map without changing the map scale.

There are actually two ways to accomplish this task. The conventional keystrokes are just to right-click on the item in the attribute table and select the "Pan To" option as in Figure 4. The hidden feature tip is to hold down the [CTRL] key and double-clicking on the gray-space to the left of the selected feature. Both methods will center the selected feature without changing the map scale.

There are lots of hidden gems in the ArcGIS user interface. Please feel free to share yours with us. Send your questions, comments, and tips to GISTT@ASPRS.org.

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Photogrammetric Engineering & Remote Sensing
Vol. 87, No. 10, October 2021, pp. 697-
0099-1112/21/697

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doi: 10.14358/PERS.87.10.697

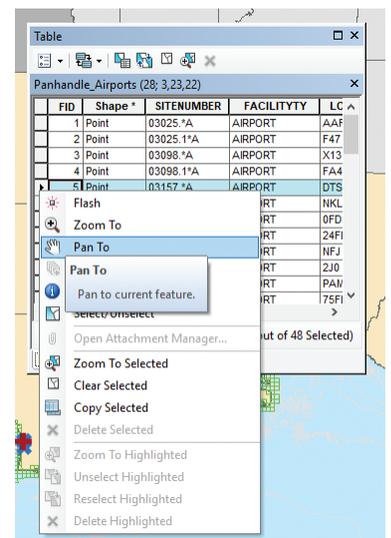


Figure 4. Right-clicking on the selected item in the attribute table to select the "Pan To" function.