

**State of Minnesota
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Trails & Waterways**

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Subject: *Virginia OHV Recreation Area
Natural Heritage Database Report, St. Louis County
For T58N, R17W, Sect. 2-4, 8, 9, 11, 14-16, 22 & 23.*

I. RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

The Minnesota Natural Heritage database has been reviewed to determine if any rare plant or animal species or other significant natural features are known to occur within the above referenced project area. A print-out with the results of this search and an explanation of data fields is attached. Guidelines for managing Peregrine Falcon habitat are also attached.

Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus (Peregrine falcon), a state and federally-listed bird species, was identified in T58N, R17W Section 8 along the Richelau Mine Cliffs. Its nest was last observed in 1992, and the falcon(s) are still thought to inhabit the area. Standard guidelines for managing peregrine falcon habitat do not exist due to the inherent variability in the behavior of nesting pairs, and because of variations in the physical attributes of nest sites and breeding territories. Still, as a State (threatened) and Federal (endangered) listed species, conservation and management plans should be adopted to protect occupied breeding territories and historic aeries. No OHV activity is planned adjacent to the peregrine falcon habitat.

Botrychium Species

The database search also turned up several occurrences of Botrychium adjacent to the project area (some of which occur on the Gilbert OHVRA Site). The report *cites B. pallidum* (Pale Moonwort), *B. simplex* (Least Moonwort), and *B. mormo* (Goblin Fern) in the area. *B. pallidum*, a state-listed endangered plant, occurs on former tailings basins located at the Gilbert OHVRA. *B. simplex* and *B. mormo*, state special concern species, were also identified nearby. Three floristic surveys conducted on the Virginia Site during 1998-99, however, did not reveal any state or federally protected plants among the 318 taxa recorded on seven distinct habitat types. (See attached)

II. DISCUSSION

The Natural Heritage database is maintained by the Natural Heritage and Nongame Wildlife units within the DNR's Section of Ecological Services. It is the most complete source of data on Minnesota's rare, endangered, or otherwise significant plant and animal species, plant communities, and other natural features. It is used in fostering better understanding and protection of these rare features. The information in the database is constantly being updated. The County Biological Survey for St. Louis County, however, has not yet been completed. Consequently, it is possible that there may be rare or otherwise significant natural features not reflected in the database.

III. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Natural Heritage elements and other high-value natural features should be identified and protected from possible OHV impacts or development activities.

IV. IMPACT AVOIDANCE, MINIMIZATION AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program recommends that impacts to identified features either from trail or facilities development, or from the cumulative affects of OHV use be avoided. Strategies should be developed to protect identified sites and species. Since indirect effects stemming from soil erosion and sedimentation can occur, even at considerable distances from these sites, trail design and placement should reflect the important concern for sensitive natural features.

V. REFERENCES

1. Karen L. Cieminski, Natural Heritage Ecologist, MN DNR Natural Heritage & Non-Game Research Program, St. Paul, MN Oct. 1999.
2. Dave Holmbeck, MN DNR Regional Environmental Assessment Biologist, Grand Rapids, MN, June 2000. (review)
3. Walton, G., Contract Botanist, 04/16/98 – 04/28/98, Botrychium search of 25-acre tailings basin. Findings: *B. multifidum* identified, no ETS species.
4. Walton, G. & Deb Shubat, Botanists, 11/02/98 – 11/04/98, General Floristic Survey, Findings: 169 taxa recorded, 3 habitat types checked. *B. multifidum* identified. No state or federally listed species were noted.
5. Walton, G. & Deb Shubat, Botanists, 08/07/99 – 08/08/99, General Floristic Survey, Findings: 318 taxa identified in seven different habitat types. *B. multifidum* and *B. virginianum* were identified, but no state or federally listed ETS species noted.