

## How to Obtain NHIS Data

The Division of Ecological and Water Resources maintains the Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS), a collection of data layers that provides information on Minnesota's rare plants, animals, native plant communities, and other rare features. The NHIS is continually updated as new information becomes available.

### Why consider NHIS Data?

- Required as part of Minnesota's environmental review process. This data is often referred to as "ecologically sensitive resources" in environmental review documents.
- May be required for some permit/license/grant applications.
- For due diligence to ensure compliance with state law.
- For local government planning (e.g., comprehensive plans and watershed district plans).

### Two Options for viewing NHIS Public Data Layers:

NHIS public data layers include MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance, DNR Native Plant Communities, and Calcareous Fens.

1. [Minnesota Conservation Explorer](#) – GIS data layers are available to view at no cost; does not require GIS software
2. [Minnesota Geospatial Commons](#) – GIS data layers are available to download at no cost; requires GIS software to view

*Questions: Please contact Lisa Joyal, NHIS Data Distribution Coordinator, at 651-259-5109 or [lisa.joyal@state.mn.us](mailto:lisa.joyal@state.mn.us).*

### Two Options for requesting NHIS Rare Features Data:

The NHIS Rare Features Data layers are considered nonpublic data under the Minnesota Data Practices Act because they contain specific locations of state-listed species.

1. **Natural Heritage Review.** Submit a Natural Heritage Review request at [Minnesota Conservation Explorer](#). Users will need to register and log in before receiving the option to request a Natural Heritage Review. The user will receive a letter regarding potential impacts to state-listed species and other rare features in the vicinity of the area of interest, and any measures needed to comply with state law.

*Natural Heritage Review Fee Schedule: \$120/hour*

2. **License Agreement for GIS Data.** Submit a [License Agreement Application Form](#). The Rare Features Data (locations of state-listed species) can be viewed at [Minnesota Conservation Explorer](#) (MCE) by entering into a license agreement with the DNR. An additional fee is charged for manual data delivery outside of MCE. The purpose of the license is to establish a contractual relationship between the DNR and licensee, and to provide a training context regarding the interpretation and appropriate use of the Rare Features Data.

*License Agreement Fee Schedule:*

**2-year License Agreement Fee:** \$360 + \$40/county

**License Amendment Fee:** \$120 + \$40/county

**Manual Delivery Fee:** \$120/license or amendment

**Exceptions:** Fees will be waived for 1) government agencies, and 2) non-governmental organizations that are working in partnership with the DNR to further the DNR's conservation goals on the ground.