



Recommended Guidance for Providing Natural Heritage Data for Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program Grant Applications

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Below is guidance to help Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) applicants determine whether Natural Heritage element occurrence data is relevant to their grant applications. This guide is specifically for applicants completing the Species and Communities with Special Status table for WWRP habitat projects.

The Washington Department of Natural Resources' Natural Heritage Program maintains a database of the documented locations of rare species and rare and/or high-quality ecosystems that occur in the state. Such locations are referred to as "element occurrences". Only element occurrences confirmed by the Natural Heritage Program are to be included in the Species and Communities with Special Status table. Applicants who believe they have undocumented occurrences of rare species and rare and/or high-quality ecosystems should contact Natural Heritage Program scientists for confirmation.

Please follow the process below to determine if Natural Heritage data is applicable to the project:

Step 1. Determine the presence of known element occurrences.

An applicant should use the Natural Heritage Program's online [Data Explorer](#) to determine the presence of known element occurrences in the project area. Once the Data Explorer page is opened, be sure to click the "Rare Species and Ecosystems Locations" button at the top of the page. Zoom to the project area and determine if any of the depicted element occurrences overlap. Click on an element occurrence polygon to determine the name of the species and/or ecosystem present. See the [Data Explorer User's Guide](#) for additional information.

- If an element occurrence is present, **proceed to Step 3.**
- If no element occurrence is present but the applicant believes that an undocumented occurrence of a rare species and rare and/or high-quality ecosystem is present, **proceed to Step 2.**
- If no element occurrence is present and there is nothing to indicate that there is an undocumented occurrence, then **no** rare species or rare and/or high-quality ecosystem should be listed in the Species and Communities with Special Status table.



Step 2. Consult with the Natural Heritage Program about potential undocumented locations of rare species and rare and/or high-quality ecosystems.

If the applicant has an observation of an undocumented occurrence of a [rare species](#) or rare and/or high-quality [ecosystem](#) on the project site, please reach out to [Natural Heritage Program](#) scientists (listed on the right side of the web page) to discuss the observation and any other supporting information available. Contingent on staff capacity and the information provided, the Natural Heritage scientist may be able to confirm the presence of these rare features at the project site. Because Natural Heritage staff availability is limited, consultations will be prioritized based on the State Conservation Status and/or the Natural Area Representation Priority of the element in question. If Natural Heritage staff are unable to provide consultation, the potential rare species or rare or high-quality ecosystem cannot be listed in the Species and Communities with Special Status table. The [list of species](#) that the Natural Heritage Program considers to be rare in the state can be found online. The [list of ecosystems](#) that occur in the state also can be found online.

Step 3. Record the priority status of each documented rare species and rare and/or high-quality ecosystem.

Rare species and rare and/or high-quality ecosystems are assigned two priorities: (1) State Conservation Status and (2) Natural Area Representation Priority (see [the Natural Heritage Program web page](#) for additional details). The State Conservation Status indicates the relative imperilment of the element by assigning it a state endangered, threatened, or sensitive status. These are distinct from the federal designation of endangered or threatened. The Natural Area Representation Priority indicates the priority for protecting an element as part of a natural area included on the state register of natural areas. Here are the options for completing the Species and Communities with Special Status table:

- If the proposal is being submitted in the WWRP Natural Areas category, record both the State Conservation Status and the Natural Area Representation Priority of each element found in the project area.
- If the proposal is being submitted to a different WWRP category that overlaps or is in a natural area included on the state register of natural areas, record both the State Conservation Status and Natural Area Representation Priority of each element found in the project area.



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- If the proposal is not being submitted to the WWRP Natural Areas category and is not in a natural area included on the state register of natural areas, record the State Conservation Status only for the documented rare species and rare and/or high-quality ecosystem found in the project area.

Resources

List of sites on the [State Register of Natural Areas](#) Tables 10-12

State Conservation Status can be found here:

- [Plants](#)
- [Ecosystems](#)
- Animals: conservation status of animals is provided by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Natural Area Representation Priorities can be found here:

- [Plants](#)
- [Ecosystems](#)
- [Animals](#)

Washington Natural Heritage Program [Website](#)