

# Appendix D

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MN DNR NATURAL HERITAGE INFORMATION  
SYSTEM (NHIS) DETERMINATION LETTER





Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Ecological & Water Resources  
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

April 22, 2025

David Bauer  
Alliant Engineering

RE: Natural Heritage Review of the proposed **Century Ponds**,  
T28N R22W Section 12; Ramsey County

Dear David Bauer,

For all correspondence regarding the Natural Heritage Review of this project please include the project ID **MCE-2025-00184** in the email subject line.

As requested, the [Minnesota Natural Heritage Information System](#) has been reviewed to determine if the proposed project has the potential to impact any rare species or other significant natural features. Based on the project details provided with the request, the following rare features may be impacted by the proposed project:

*State-listed Species*

- [Henslow's sparrows](#) (*Centronyx henslowii*), a state-listed endangered bird species, were documented north of the project area during a 2021 survey by Midwest Natural Resources. Suitable nesting habitat for this species includes uncultivated and unmowed grasslands and old fields with standing, dead vegetation, and a substantial litter layer.

As stated in the 2021 survey, the project area did not have suitable nesting habitat for Henslow's sparrow due to its consistent use by golfers and groundskeeping activities. However, as project details state, the golf course has been left fallow and unmaintained since 2021. Therefore, the project area may provide suitable nesting habitat for Henslow's sparrows. As such, initial disturbance in areas with suitable nesting habitat should not occur during their breeding season, between May 15 and July 15. **If avoidance during breeding season is not feasible, areas that will be disturbed that contain suitable nesting habitat will need to be surveyed for active nests prior to any project disturbance.**

Please contact [Review.NHIS@state.mn.us](mailto:Review.NHIS@state.mn.us) to confirm that the above avoidance measure will be implemented or to inform us that avoidance is not feasible. If avoidance is not feasible, the project area will need to be surveyed for active nests prior to any project disturbance. Requirements for surveys and lists of DNR certified surveyors can be found at the [Natural Heritage Review website](#).

- [Sullivant's milkweed](#) (*Asclepias sullivantii*), a state-listed threatened plant species, was documented within the project area in 2021 during a survey conducted by Midwest Natural Resources. As noted in the survey, the Sullivant's milkweed was likely planted. Regardless of whether or not the individual(s) were planted, Minnesota's Endangered Species Statute (Minnesota Statutes, section 84.0895) and associated Rules (Minnesota Rules, part 6212.1800 to 6212.2300 and 6134) prohibit the take of endangered or threatened plants or animals, including their parts or seeds, without a permit.

**If the project is planning to avoid the Sullivant's milkweed, please send documentation of avoidance to [Reports.NHIS@state.mn.us](mailto:Reports.NHIS@state.mn.us). If the project is not planning to avoid the Sullivant's milkweed, apply for a [permit to take with mitigation](#). For more information on the permit to take process, please visit [Endangered and Threatened Species Permits](#).**

- Several plant species of special concern were documented within the project area in 2021 during a survey conducted by Midwest Natural Resources including [white wild indigo](#) (*Baptisia lactea* var. *lactea*), [rattlesnake master](#) (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), [Kentucky coffee tree](#) (*Gymnocladus dioica*), [creeping juniper](#) (*Juniperus horizontalis*), and [swamp white oak](#) (*Quercus bicolor*). **We strongly recommend project alternatives that avoid or minimize impacts to known occurrences of these species.**
- The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) tracks bat roost trees and hibernacula plus some acoustic data, but this information is not exhaustive. Even if there are no bat records listed nearby, all of Minnesota's bats, including the federally endangered northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), can be found throughout Minnesota. During the active season (approximately April-November) bats roost underneath bark, in cavities, or in crevices of both live and dead trees. Tree removal can negatively impact bats by destroying roosting habitat, especially during the pup rearing season when females are forming maternity roosting colonies and the pups cannot yet fly. To minimize these impacts, **the DNR recommends that tree removal be avoided from June 1 through August 15.**
- Please visit the [DNR Rare Species Guide](#) for more information on the habitat use of these species and recommended measures to avoid or minimize impacts.

#### *Federally Protected Species*

- The area of interest overlaps with a U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Rusty Patched Bumble Bee [High Potential Zone](#). The [rusty patched bumble bee](#) (*Bombus affinis*) is federally listed as endangered and is likely to be present in suitable habitat within High Potential Zones. From April through October this species uses underground nests in upland grasslands, shrublands, and forest edges, and forages where nectar and pollen are available. From October through April the species overwinters under tree litter in upland forests and woodlands. The rusty patched bumble bee may be impacted by a variety of land management activities including, but not limited to, prescribed fire, tree-removal, haying, grazing, herbicide use, pesticide use, land-clearing, soil disturbance or compaction, or use of non-native bees. If applicable, **the DNR recommends reseeding disturbed soils with native species of grasses and forbs using [BWSR Seed Mixes](#) or [MnDOT Seed Mixes](#).**

**To ensure compliance with federal law, please conduct a federal regulatory review using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's online [Information for Planning and Consultation \(IPaC\) tool](#).** Please note that all

projects, regardless of whether there is a federal nexus, are subject to federal take prohibitions. The IPaC review will determine if prohibited take is likely to occur and, if not, will generate an automated letter. The [USFWS RPBB guidance](#) provides guidance on avoiding impacts to rusty patched bumble bee and a key for determining if actions are likely to affect the species; the determination key can be found in the appendix.

#### *Environmental Review and Permitting*

- The Environmental Assessment Worksheet should address whether the proposed project has the potential to adversely affect the above rare features and, if so, it should identify specific measures that will be taken to avoid or minimize disturbance. Sufficient information should be provided so the DNR can determine whether a permit to take will be needed for any of the above protected species.
- Please include a copy of this letter and the MCE-generated Final Project Report in any state or local license or permit application. Please note that measures to avoid or minimize disturbance to the above rare features may be included as restrictions or conditions in any required permits or licenses.

The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS), a collection of databases that contains information about Minnesota's rare natural features, is maintained by the Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Department of Natural Resources. The NHIS is continually updated as new information becomes available and is the most complete source of data on Minnesota's native plant communities, rare species, and other rare features. However, the NHIS is not an exhaustive inventory and does not contain the locations of all rare features in the state. Therefore, ecologically significant features for which we have no records may exist within the project area. If additional information becomes available regarding rare features in the vicinity of the project, further review may be necessary.

For environmental review purposes, the results of this Natural Heritage Review are valid for one year; the results are only valid for the project location and project description provided with the request. **If project details change or the project has not occurred within one year, please resubmit the project for review within one year of initiating project activities.** Resubmit by selecting *Clone Project as Draft* on the project page in MCE.

The Natural Heritage Review does not constitute project approval by the Department of Natural Resources. Instead, it identifies issues regarding known occurrences of rare features and potential impacts to these rare features. Visit [Natural Heritage Review](#) for additional information regarding this process, survey guidance, and other related information. For information on the environmental review process or other natural resource concerns, please contact your [DNR Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist](#).

Thank you for consulting us on this matter and for your interest in preserving Minnesota's rare natural resources.

Sincerely,

*Molly Barrett* Digitally signed by Molly Barrett  
Date: 2025.04.22 13:43:38 -05'00'

Natural Heritage Review Specialist

[molly.barrett@state.mn.us](mailto:molly.barrett@state.mn.us)

Cc: [Melissa Collins](#), Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist, Central (Region 3)