



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program, Box 25

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RECEIVED
SEP 22 2003

SHORT ELLNOTT HENNINGSON
10901 RED CIRCLE DR. #200
MTKA., MN 55343

September 18, 2003

Marty Smith
Associated Consultants Engineers, Inc.
10901 Red Circle Drive, Suite 200
Minnetonka, MN 55343

Re: Request for Natural Heritage information for vicinity of proposed Rushford Power Plant,
T104N R8W Section 14, Fillmore County
NHNRP Contact #: ERDB 20040181

Dear Mr. Smith,

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 an approximate one-mile radius of the area indicated on the map enclosed with your information request. Based on this review, there are 31 known occurrences of rare species or natural communities in the area searched (for details, see enclosed database printout and explanation of selected fields). Following are specific comments for **only those elements that may be impacted** by the proposed project. Rare feature occurrences not listed below are not anticipated to be affected by the proposed project.

- The power plant is proposed within an area that has been identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey as a "Site of Outstanding Biodiversity Significance". "Sites of Biodiversity Significance" are areas with varying levels of native biodiversity that may contain high quality native plant communities, rare plants, rare animals, and/or animal aggregations. Biodiversity significance is evaluated on the basis of the number of rare species, the quality of the native plant communities, size of site, and context within the landscape. This particular site contains Oak Forest and Dry Prairie Natural Communities and supports several rare plant species (see the enclosed map for details). To protect this ecologically significant site we would prefer that an alternative location be selected for the power plant. If this is not feasible, we request that the setbacks designated in the Fillmore County Blufflands Ordinance be adhered to. We further request that all landscape plantings incorporate native species. If you would like assistance with developing an appropriate planting list, please contact Regional Plant Ecologist, Ann Pierce at (507) 280-5076.

The Natural Heritage database is maintained by the Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program, a unit within the Division of Ecological Services, Department of Natural Resources. It is continually updated as new information becomes available, and is the most complete source of data on Minnesota's rare or otherwise significant species, natural communities, and other natural features. Its purpose is to foster better understanding and protection of these features.

Because our information is not based on a comprehensive inventory, there may be rare or otherwise significant natural features in the state that are not represented in the database. A county-by-county survey of rare natural features is now underway, and has been completed for Fillmore County. Our information about natural communities is, therefore, quite thorough for that county. However, because

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survey work for rare plants and animals is less exhaustive, and because there has not been an on-site survey of all areas of the county, ecologically significant features for which we have no records may exist on the project area.

The enclosed results of the database search are provided in two formats: index and full record. To control the release of locational information which might result in the damage or destruction of a rare element, both printout formats are copyrighted.

The index provides rare feature locations only to the nearest section, and may be reprinted, unaltered, in an Environmental Assessment Worksheet, municipal natural resource plan, or report compiled by your company for the project listed above. If you wish to reproduce the index for any other purpose, please contact me to request written permission. Copyright notice for the index should include the following disclaimer:

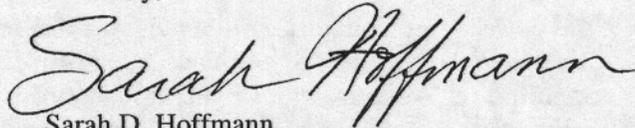
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The full-record printout includes more detailed locational information, and is for your personal use only. If you wish to reprint the full-record printouts for any purpose, please contact me to request written permission.

Please be aware that review by the Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program focuses only on *rare natural features*. It does not constitute review or approval by the Department of Natural Resources as a whole. If you require further information on the environmental review process for other wildlife-related issues, you may contact your Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist, Shannon Fisher, at (507) 359-6073.

An invoice for the work completed is enclosed. You are being billed for map and database search and staff scientist review. Please forward this invoice to your Accounts Payable Department. Thank you for consulting us on this matter, and for your interest in preserving Minnesota's rare natural resources.

Sincerely,



Sarah D. Hoffmann

Endangered Species Environmental Review Coordinator

encl: Database search results
Rare Feature Database Print-Outs: An Explanation of Fields
Natural Communities and Rare Species Map: Fillmore County
Invoice

cc: Ann Pierce
Shannon Fisher