**Natural Areas Data**

The NHIC’s Natural Area Database contains information on over 9,000 areas in Ontario that have been identified as having significant or unique natural heritage features. Examples of natural areas include provincial and national parks, evaluated wetlands, Areas of Natural or Scientific Interest (ANSIs) and conservation areas.

This shapefile shows a centralized location for each natural area as well as selected descriptive information (see table of attributes below). It is available for download and viewing. Some detailed or sensitive information has been removed.

**Using NHIC Natural Areas GIS data**

The data are formatted for general use by the public, planners, landowners, consultants and researchers who require access to NHIC information in a GIS environment. It can be used as a coarse-scale screening tool for proposed projects, for research or for general information.

Absence of a feature at a given location should not be interpreted to mean that there are no natural heritage features in that location. It does mean that there was no information for that location known to NHIC at the time of making the shapefile available. Information from the NHIC should not be considered a substituted for conducting site visits if applicable. The NHIC recommends that users contact the appropriate MNR district office before undertaking local resource management activities or decisions. The NHIC is not responsible for any errors or incompleteness in the application of these data to local analyses or products.

**GIS Software Required to View Data**

To view GIS data and query information contained in the NHIC shapefile you will need to have GIS software. For a list of free data-viewing software, go to Land Information Ontario’s (LIO) free data-viewers page (<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/LIO/2ColumnSubPage/289760.html>). In addition to GIS software, you may want reference map layers displaying features such as roads, streams or political boundaries, which are also available at Land Information Ontario (<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/LIO/2ColumnSubPage/STEL02_167956.html>). LIO also provides access to authoritative boundary data for provincial parks, conservation reserves, ANSIs, evaluated wetlands and other designated natural areas in Ontario.

For questions about NHIC information contact [NHICrequests@ontario.ca](mailto:NHICrequests@ontario.ca).

Attribute Information provided in the Natural Areas shapefile database table is as follows:

| Field Name | Field Definition |
| --- | --- |
| Label | The official name of the natural area |
| NHIC\_AR\_ID | The Area ID is the unique identifier for a given Natural Area record. Refer to this identifier when contacting MNR districts or the NHIC for additional details about a particular record. |
| HECTARES | The size of the natural area calculated from its shape. This may not be consistent with the size of the area during regulation (eg. regulated park). |
| SIGNIF | The official significance level assigned to a natural area when applicable. For example, the significance level of an evaluated wetland (provincial/other) or ANSI (provincial/regional). |
| DATE | The date in which NHIC last updated its spatial information on an area. This date may not be the date the authoritative boundary was established or modified. |
| A\_TYPE | The area type of the natural area as defined and tracked by NHIC. |
| GEN\_TYPE | The generalized area types for summary displays and includes:   * Parks&PAs (provincial regulated parks and protected areas) * NP (national parks) * ANSI (confirmed and candidate ANSIs) * WET (evaluated wetlands) * Other (all other natural areas) |
| Latitude | The latitude coordinate of the point |
| Longitude | The longitude coordinate of the point |
| NHIC\_Notes | A general description of the natural area type |
| County | The county associated with the natural area |
| Ecodistric | The ecodistrict(s) associated with the natural area |
| Mapsheet | The NTS mapsheet associated with the natural area |
| MNRF\_Dist | The MNRF District that is associated with the natural area |
| Easting | The easting of the area’s locational point |
| Northing | The northing of the area’s locational point |
| Zone | The zone of the area’s locational point |
| Descrip | A general description of the natural area (if available) |