

SENSITIVE FLORA AND FAUNA DATA POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (Flora and Fauna Division) is responsible for collating and managing flora and fauna data records for the Northern Territory. These records are maintained in the NT Flora and Fauna Atlases, which are spatial databases of all documented species occurring in the Northern Territory and locations at which they have been recorded. Management of these databases involves ensuring data are accurate, up to date and, to the maximum extent possible, readily available to all potential users including the general public. The main portals for external access to these data are NR Maps (<http://nrmaps.nt.gov.au>) and the Atlas of Living Australia (<http://www.ala.org.au>).

Some of the flora and fauna data managed by DENR include information which, if made available without appropriate controls, may cause harm. For instance, some flora and fauna species are potentially vulnerable to illegal collection or deliberate disturbance. Records of biota may be also be associated with sacred or culturally important sites containing values such as rock art, burial sites or artefacts. In addition, there may be commercial or public interests considerations that require access to sensitive quarantine information relating to weeds or diseases to be restricted.

This policy identifies what flora and fauna data is considered 'sensitive' and requires appropriate controls that determine how that data may be disclosed to different parties. The policy aims to balance the benefits from providing unrestricted access to information to facilitate the good management of the Northern Territory's biodiversity, with potential negative impacts that may arise from uncontrolled access to this data.

The most common way to protect 'sensitive' data is by 'denaturing' through reducing the accuracy of the location data. Denaturing will be applied to all sensitive data except to designated and approved users as specified in 'Section 7. Data Users and Access Types'.

2. PURPOSE

Provide a framework for controlling access to spatial data (notably the precise location) for sensitive flora and fauna species, while ensuring data are available for appropriate use (including conservation management, environmental impact assessment and legitimate research purposes).

3. SCOPE

This policy relates to flora and fauna data owned, held or managed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

4. DATA PROVIDERS

In addition to that generated and owned by DENR, flora and fauna data are provided to DENR from a variety of sources. Data providers retain copyright to all data but agree to licence DENR under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 (refer 'Section 5. Licencing'). The data provider also retains the right to determine what data should be classified as sensitive. However, the decision to classify data as sensitive needs to be justifiable and consistent with the principle of making data available for the benefit of the Northern Territory environment to the maximum extent possible. Data providers should be aware that data will be processed in accordance with this policy, and that

DENR may choose not to include datasets in the Flora or Fauna Atlas if we believe the data providers' requirements in relation to sensitive species are unreasonable.

5. LICENCING

Flora and fauna data supplied by DENR to external users is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Australia License (CC BY NC 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) via NR Maps or direct data request. Sensitive flora and fauna data are denatured (generalised) according to the rules detailed in the DENR Sensitive Species List (refer 'Section 6. Sensitive Data'). Original, unaltered, full resolution sensitive flora and fauna data will be released under Data Licence Agreements (refer Attachments) and according to the data user and access limitations specified in Table 1. The agreement prohibits the data from being forwarded to a third party and prohibits the exact locations of sensitive data from being published in any form.

6. SENSITIVE DATA

For the purpose of this policy, sensitive data is: textual and/or spatial information, for which the provision of that information may have a significant negative impact on a species, location (e.g. sacred site) or interest (e.g. quarantine information), and the potential negative impact of making that information freely available outweighs the benefits.

Access to sensitive data is restricted by denaturing (generalising) associated geospatial coordinates and removing any textual locational information. Denaturing can be applied to all records for a species, or a sub-set of records for a species that meet certain criteria, or individual records. The level of denaturing can also vary depending on how much risk is associated with providing accurate locational information for a species. Records will not be denatured if the spatial accuracy of the data is already poorer than the denature level.

A current list of sensitive species, data, criteria, and the level of denaturing is provided in the DENR Sensitive Species List attached to this Policy and periodically updated by the Flora and Fauna data manager. Submissions to add or remove sensitive species from the list, or modify a listing, can be made by emailing biodiversity@nt.gov.au.

7. DATA USERS AND ACCESS TYPES

There are different types of users that access data from the Flora and Fauna Atlases. Each user has different requirements and therefore requires different levels of access. With the exception of DENR staff, appropriate users require permission to access full resolution flora and fauna data (Table 1). Permission to access full resolution flora and fauna data may be requested by emailing biodiversity@nt.gov.au.

Data User	Access to sensitive species data
DENR staff	Full unrestricted access. Any subsequent release of data must adhere to this policy.
Other State and Commonwealth departments or statutory bodies	Full access available on request.
Ecological consultants for development assessment purposes	Full access available on request. Approved users will be provided with a login to NR Maps to access full resolution data. Data must not be distributed further.
Researchers	Access to generalised data. Access to full resolution data may be requested. Access will be assessed on a case by case basis. Data must not be distributed further.
Teachers and students	Access to generalised data. Access to full resolution data may be requested. Access will be assessed on a case by case basis. Data must not be distributed further.
Community groups and associations	Access to generalised data. Access to full resolution data may be requested. Access will be assessed on a case by case basis. Data must not be distributed further.
General public	Access to generalised data only.

Table 1. Data users and access

8. ATTACHMENTS

- DENR Sensitive Flora and Fauna Data List
- Licence for use of Digital Data and Information

9. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document Control

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Document Change History

The following table records the history of any significant changes made to this document. The version number of the document is incremented as follows:

- by 1.0 for significant changes
- by 0.1 for changes made for clarity and reading ease only

Version	Date	Change Details