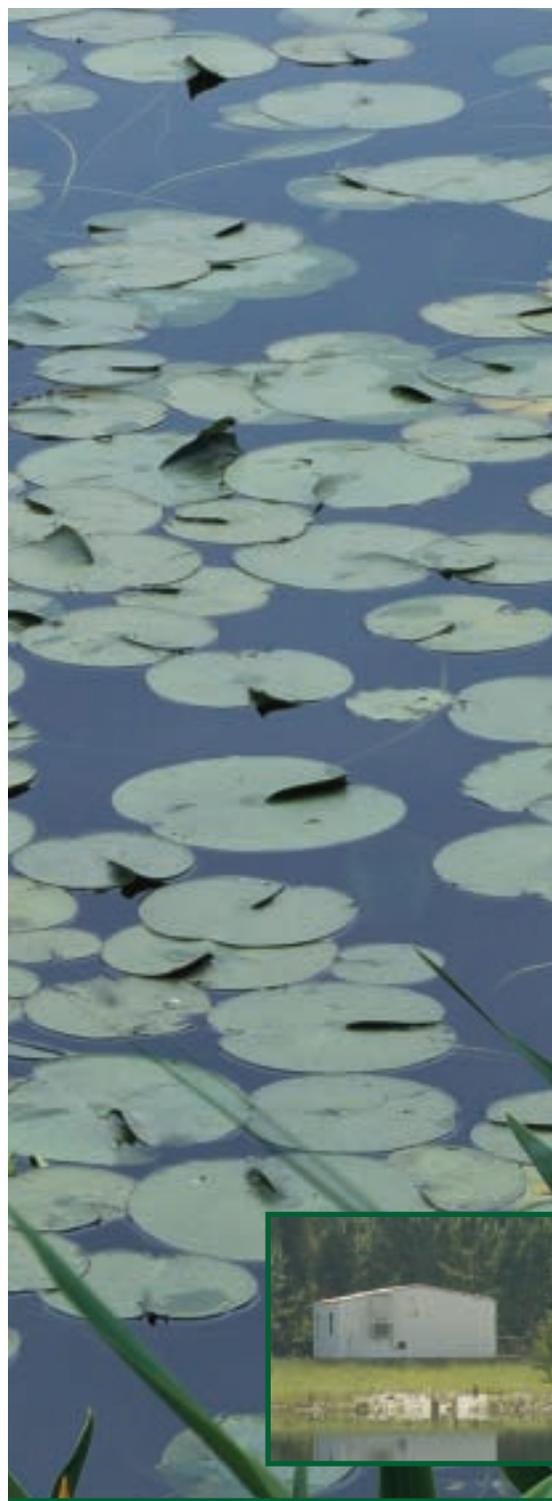




# Wildlife Enhancements Help to Open Doors of Aggregate Facilities

*by Bob Johnson, Executive Vice President  
and Sue Wolinsky, Certification Program Coordinator  
Wildlife Habitat Council*



Stone, sand and other minerals are the material backbone of products that we, the general public, have grown to rely upon in our everyday lives. We find these materials in buildings, roads, bridges, as parts of cars, in appliances and even in our toothpaste. In fact, we would be hard pressed to find a product that is not involved in some way with the extraction industry. Although these products have become essential in our lives, we also know that preserving the integrity of the biosphere is critical to the existence of all life. Corporations in the stone and sand mining business have begun this process by forming partnerships with conservation experts and integrating wildlife management programs. These strategies help provide essential components at facilities to sustain wildlife, including water, cover, food and habitat.

The Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC), a non-profit organization helping to administer voluntary wildlife habitat enhancement and environmental education programs, has worked with many in the aggregates industry throughout its 15 years in business. Through the Wildlife Habitat Council, companies can learn to use the experience and results of habitat enhancement efforts to create environmental education and outreach opportu-

nities with neighboring communities. Integrating the enthusiasm, imagination and voluntary contributions of employees with wildlife habitat enhancement opportunities builds strong bonds of respect and cooperation with local community groups.

One noteworthy example of the success that results from integrating corporate conservation and educational programs with local communities comes from Rinker Materials Corporation. Rinker joined WHC in 1996 and currently has six of its operations pursuing wildlife habitat enhancement programs. One of these sites is the 474 Sand Mine, located seven miles west of Walt Disney World in Clermont, Fla. In June 2000, Rinker's 474 Sand Mine formed a partnership with local schools and businesses that resulted in the site being awarded a Five-Star Restoration Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to enhance the shoreline of a reclaimed mine lake. According to Mark Davies, Business Development Manager, Rinker Materials Corp., this opportunity, as well as the involvement of WHC in facilitating partnerships, "has opened many doors for environmental education and conservation programs as well as acted as a springboard to significantly expand our original idea for the project. The program has grown from the original plan to restore a 26-acre lake to a wetland, into creating a 1,250-acre outdoor classroom—all of this in just one year!"

This reclamation project prompted many members of the community to become involved in activities aimed at conserving habitat as well as educating the public about what the aggregate mining industry is doing to help the environment. Rinker went one step further in forming lasting bonds with the community by nominating Alicia Hughes, a local science teacher and member of Rinker's Educational Advisory Council, as the Wildlife Habitat Council's *Community Partner of the Year*. Hughes, who went on to win this coveted title, said she feels privileged to be a part of such a terrific corporate partnership with Rinker, and that everyone affiliated with this project through the company has taken her



*Rinker Materials 474 Sand Mine was awarded WHC's 2002 Corporate Lands for Learning of the Year for wetland reclamation activities at the Engstrom Lake.*



*Richard Harvey, U.S. EPA, joins Rinker Materials Corp. employees: Travis Wellman, area operations manager; Tracy Bryant, community relations coordinator and Mark Lacke, regional operations manager, at the Engstrom Lake ceremony.*

students' learning as seriously as she does. The 474 Sand Mine was also awarded the distinguished title of *Corporate Lands for Learning of the Year* from WHC on Nov. 19 in recognition of their outstanding accomplishments in environmental education.

This outstanding example of successful community outreach through wildlife habitat enhancement and environmental education can be found within many other members' programs with the Wildlife Habitat Council. Unimin Corporation, a longstanding member since 1989, has 31 sites participating in *Wildlife at Work<sup>SM</sup>* programs. The Tamms/Elco Plant, located on 2,000 acres in Alexander County in southern Illinois, has also realized a great deal of success and has received increased recognition from the local community. Volunteer employees take advantage of the opportunities created by the site's mining and reclamation program to incorporate wildlife management projects for species ranging from the threatened timber rattlesnake to endangered species of bats on various areas of the property. The Magazine Mine on-site is the largest abandoned, underground silica mine within both the Unimin complex and the state of Illinois. Unimin partnered with Bat Conservation International, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Southern Illinois University, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and USDA Forest Service to survey the mine and carefully document the bat population. Unimin Corp.'s Tamms/Elco Plant was the recipient of WHC's prestigious *Corporate Habitat of the Year Award* in 2002, and was recognized with the Illinois Governor's Habitat Conservation Award.

Rinker Materials Corp. and Unimin Corp. are just two of 120 corporations and more than two dozen conservation members that make up the Wildlife Habitat Council. Other sand, gravel and mineral mining companies in the membership are found on page 55 and include Vulcan Materials Company, a founding WHC member, Lafarge North America, Inc., and newest member to join, Hanson Building Materials America. Each of these companies

demonstrates the vision and mission of WHC, which is to work to increase the amount and quality of wildlife habitat on corporate, public and private lands. WHC has worked with landowners at more than 1,000 sites involving more than two million acres of land as part of its *Wildlife at Work* and *Corporate Lands for Learning<sup>SM</sup>* programs. As part of the *Wildlife at Work* Program, WHC also manages a flourishing Nest Monitoring Program. In 2002, more than 11,000 birds were fledged, involving member companies at 130 sites. The nesting season included 45 different species, including the American kestrel, bald eagle, eastern bluebird, killdeer and red-tailed hawk, which can be found at many aggregate sites.

In the November/December 2002 issue of *Stone, Sand & Gravel Review*, NSSGA Chairman Johnny Green challenged the aggregates industry to “open its doors” in May 2003 as part of NSSGA’s Centennial Program. The Wildlife Habitat Council is thrilled with this call by Green and would like to shine a light on those who have

already taken aggressive steps to include their local communities while also striving to improve the amount and quality of habitat available to wildlife. Green’s challenge provides a focus on the importance of public perception to the entire industry. It also opens the door for the aggregates industry to demonstrate what steps are being taken by the industry as a whole, as well as by individual operating units, to enhance the quality of life experienced by the community. Through cooperative efforts that involve environmental stewardship, education and the community, the aggregates industry can continue to positively influence our daily lives, while building long-term partnerships within the community. The Wildlife Habitat Council commends the NSSGA and those within the aggregates industry in

their recognition of the importance of individual communities, and will continue to provide the industry with assistance in meeting the challenges and opportunities of the future.

For more information about the Wildlife Habitat Council, please visit [www.wildlifehc.org](http://www.wildlifehc.org). □

*Photos courtesy of Rinker Materials Corporation.*

#### **Aggregate, Sand and Metals Mining Members of the Wildlife Habitat Council**

- Alcoa Inc.
- Ash Grove Cement Company
- Barrick Gold Corporation
- Fairmont Minerals, Ltd.
- Florida Rock Industries, Inc.
- Glacier Northwest
- Graniterock Company
- Hanson Building Materials America
- Industrial Minerals Association—North America
- Kentucky-Tennessee Clay Company
- Lafarge North America Inc.
- Rinker Materials Corporation
- Unimin Corporation
- Vulcan Materials Company