

Wildlife Habitat Programs Thrive at Ready Mixed Facilities

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What do the Empire State Building, Interstate 81 and creating better wildlife habitat have in common? Well, in this case they each involve the concrete industry. The first two examples have a more obvious link. They are man-made structures that required concrete, and lots of it. In the latter case, the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) has opened discussions with the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association to explore how WHC can assist association members in designing and implementing wildlife habitat programs at ready mixed facilities. These operations are located for the most part on small pieces of property, usually a few acres, and generally in suburban or

urban settings. The goal of the WHC is to help the ready mixed industry appreciate the opportunity of playing a role in creating, enhancing and restoring available wildlife habitats and using them for environmental education and outreach.

WHC, a non-lobbying, non-profit organization, has worked with many concrete-producing corporations, including Lafarge North America Inc., Vulcan Materials Company and Hanson Building Materials America, to assist with the development of voluntary wildlife enhancement programs at their operating facilities. A list of current members associated with sand, gravel and stone extractive industries and with ready mixed concrete are identi-

Table 1: NRMCA Members Who Are Members of the Wildlife Habitat Council

- Aggregate Industries, Inc.*
- Ash Grove Cement Company*
- Florida Rock Industries, Inc.*
- FMC Corporation*
- Glacier Northwest*
- Lafarge North America Inc.*
- Oldcastle Materials*
- Rinker Materials Corporation*

* Indicates corporation is a member of both the Wildlife Habitat Council and the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association



fied in Table 1 on page 19. Through involvement with WHC, companies are provided the opportunity to restore natural habitat in and around their workplace, as well as unite with local communities to increase the amount and quality of wildlife habitat and promote environmental education and awareness. WHC currently has nearly 100 corporate members, along with more than two dozen conservation organizations and a growing list of universities and government agencies. Additional information about the council can be found at www.wildlifehc.org.

Lafarge North America Inc., the largest diversified high-quality construction material supplier in the United States and Canada, is one notable example of the proven success between corporations and WHC. As a supplier of such materials as concrete and asphalt, Lafarge has been involved with WHC since 1992 and has paved the way for similar corporations to achieve a better ecological balance. Currently Lafarge has 50 of its sites active with the WHC, with 15 of them having WHC-accredited habitat enhancement programs. Their sites have

implemented such projects as nest box construction, native plantings, wetlands restoration and educational outreach programs. They plan to continue increasing their involvement with WHC and encouraging all facilities to establish voluntary wildlife habitat enhancement programs and have them certified by WHC. A good example of Lafarge's success is located at its Fredonia Site in Kansas, where an initial property inventory proved a lack of cover and living space for a variety of species. Employees solved that problem by erecting floating

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geese nests in ponds and a nesting island on a settling basin, preventing the constant problem of raccoons stealing geese eggs. Furthermore, the wildlife team engaged the community by working with elementary and middle school students in the Fredonia School District to build eastern bluebird nest boxes and plant a butterfly garden. Such a pollinator garden is a project that requires very little effort and very little space, yet yields enormous results.

A second noteworthy example of the success that follows when corporate conservation and educational programs are integrated with local communities is Rinker Materials Corporation. Rinker, a WHC member since 1996, has six of its operations currently pursuing wildlife habitat enhancement programs. A closer look at one of these sites, the 474 Sand Mine situated seven miles west of Walt Disney World in Clermont, FL, shows how a smaller endeavor can result in a thriving wildlife habitat. Its original goal, to restore a 26-acre lake to a wetland, resulted in a 1,250 acre-outdoor classroom — in just one year!

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Some of the Lafarge North America cement plants that have worked and are currently working with WHC have found strong results. The Harleyville Cement Plant in South Carolina contains forested and wetland areas. The regular flow of groundwater from the quarry creates small ponds that are a natural habitat for migratory waterfowl, resident alligators and other species. The Paulding, OH, facility has instituted "Hillside Wildflowers," which through the applied use of topsoil and planted blend of native wildflowers, helps deter erosion between the cement plant and the quarry. As these examples show, there are many opportunities in the ready mixed concrete business that lend themselves to habitat reconstruction and preservation.

Vulcan Materials Company, a WHC member since 1989, introduced the program to Cemex in 1992. This site, also known as the Brooksville Quarry, is in Hernando County, FL. On its expansive property of 4000 acres of land, approximately 40 acres are available for wildlife management programs. With such lofty goals as creating a pond for fish and waterfowl and enhancing a hunting/feeding ground for birds of prey, the quarry has successfully built shelters, perches and sunning poles for birds and waterfowl; provided a suitable habitat for birds of prey; created pond platforms for turtles and continued its involvement with the Chassahowitz Interagency Black Bear Working Group. Another successful Vulcan venture is the 115 Quarry in North Carolina. Some of its most recent accomplishments include planting wildflowers in previously established pollinator gardens surrounding the main office pond, and construction and then placement of butterfly boxes. Future interests include wild turkeys and stocking a hunting creek with rainbow trout. Vulcan Materials has 64 facilities working with the council and 36 have accredited wildlife habitat enhancement programs.

Wildlife enhancement programs, designed by WHC biologists, are tailored to each particular site and facility. Whether the land available for wildlife management is 1000 acres or just one, WHC can suggest potential programs and assist with wildlife management. WHC looks forward to expanding its outreach efforts to ready mixed concrete facilities and surrounding communities. For more information, contact WHC at 301/588-8994 or email whc@wildlifehc.org. ■

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