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Fort Madison 2011 Prairies for Tomorrow award



Accepting the 2011 Prairies for Tomorrow award are from left Kelly Deen, Environmental Technician; Bill Cobb, Vice President-Environmental Services and Sustainable Development; and Donna Preston, Lab Technician

December 21, 2011 - Climax Molybdenum Company's Fort Madison conversion plant recently earned the 2011 Prairies for Tomorrow award for its management of 200 acres of landfill as native prairie grassland.

The Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC), Pheasants Forever and Quails Forever jointly presented the award – which recognizes exceptional corporate prairie restoration projects – at the 23rd annual WHC Symposium held in Baltimore, Maryland.

“I was ecstatic to hear our name announced,” said Kelly Deen, Environmental Technician, who worked on the application submitted to the WHC. “The competition was tough, so winning felt great.”

Deen is part of a dedicated team of employees that works to maintain the prairie on restored areas of the landfill located 15 miles west of the site. The team undertakes various activities, such as planting trees, conducting prescribed burns, installing and maintaining bluebird boxes, and monitoring bird activity.

The team also helps to identify the appropriate mix of prairie grass seed by analyzing the geography and topography of the area consisting mainly of historic farmland and forest. Native grass species planted include little bluestem, big bluestem, Indian grass, partridge pea and switch grass, to name a few.

Prairie grasslands are a quickly disappearing ecosystem in North America. Once vastly spread across the United States, commercial agriculture and development has left less than one percent remaining. In Iowa, total acreage of native prairie grasslands is even smaller.

“Prairies are critical to support the rich plant diversity and wildlife that is native to the area,” said Joe Bartholomew, Senior Environmental Technician. “Our goal is to restore the prairie back to how it was 200 years ago.”

Fort Madison supports other wildlife projects as part of the Company's biodiversity initiatives. These programs include tracking migratory birds, tagging monarch butterflies, and monitoring food plots and duck boxes. The site has been an active WHC member since 1997.

“We are proud of this recognition and the hard work by employees,” said Scott Ickes, Manager-Quality Assurance and Environmental Affairs. “This is a team effort and they all share in the award.”