

A Natural Pillar of the Community

How savvy companies are transforming their community engagement model for the benefit of company, community and conservation

ABOUT AN HOUR SOUTHEAST of Atlanta sits Monroe County's quaint, unincorporated community of Juliette, Georgia, the filming location of the 1991 motion picture Fried Green Tomatoes and current home to Vulcan Materials Company's Macon Quarry. On any given day, you can see the normal trucks and trains that one might expect transporting the quarry's granite products alongside the Ocmulgee River, but the team at Macon Quarry has chosen to also open its gates for a different purpose – to provide a nature-based learning experience to area schools and other youth groups.



Since Vulcan's acquisition of the property in 2007, the small team at Macon Quarry has developed meaningful, enduring relationships with third grade teachers from six surrounding counties to bring their eager students to the site to witness local nature thriving alongside an active mine. Approximately 2,500 students each year are invited to explore the forested buffer along the employee-maintained nature trail, where they learn about native flora and fauna from passionate Vulcan

employees and absorb locally relevant wildlife information from the trail's extensive interpretive signage. Vulcan's commitment to community embodied at the Macon Quarry and elsewhere throughout North America has earned the company recognition through Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) Conservation Certification®. To date, 38 of its facilities have achieved WHC Conservation Certification, recognizing the significant, positive impacts these programs have made

in the local communities where the company's conservation education-focused efforts thrive. As Vulcan's corporate social responsibility page on its website correctly points out, "We're in this together," which is echoed throughout the company and reaffirmed by Vulcan's Foundation Manager, Carol Maxwell who says, "Vulcan Materials Company is committed to promoting healthy environments in the communities where we operate and beyond. Conservation education projects are a key element in meeting this corporate social responsibility goal."

Seeing the many benefits of opening their facilities up to select community groups, other companies have recognized the importance of building strong relationships over time with their neighbors by leveraging their landholdings to host impactful, outdoor programs. Such is the case for Covia Holdings Corporation's Texas-based Cleburne Facility. While the property was originally acquired by the company in 1983 for the purpose of mining and processing fine grain silica sand for the industrial market, the team quickly decided to make use of the 2,100-acre property's natural features for a still greater purpose - youth development.

Amidst hosting several area youth groups such as the American Heritage Girls and Trail Life USA, the Cleburne Facility team has turned its property into a destination location for Texas Boy Scout troops from the region's Long Horn Council. Each year, approximately 600 scouts of all ages descend on the facility for a unique experience where they can increase their knowledge of the site's mining operations, local wildlife and the land reclamation process underway at the site through in-depth life skills training and completion of various projects. Typical projects include bird house repair, trail maintenance, and tree plantings, and recently a scout even completed his Eagle Scout Service Project on-site by building an amphitheater in conjunction with the Texas Master Naturalists, where the club will be



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able to meet for future education events. To date, countless scouts have earned merit badges ranging from Geology and Mining & Society to Forestry and Naturalist for their participation in the various camps and activities hosted each year at the Cleburne Facility.

The commitment to community shown by the team at Cleburne Facility is not only exemplified by the plant superintendent's longtime



personal involvement with the Boy Scouts, but is also recognized by Covia's corporate planners as a key component to the company's overall sustainability. As Doug Losee, Vice President of Environmental, explains, "Corporate sustainability is taken very seriously by our industry and Covia continuously strives to lead by example. Most of our mine sites open their doors annually to host community educators and events. Our continued partnerships with organizations like the

WHC—2019 marks 30 continuous years with WHC—further solidifies Covia's commitment to community engagement and the widespread benefits it brings to all those involved."

Increasingly, companies both inside and outside the industry are correctly identifying the long-term need to further engage their neighbors and communities at-large as the bar continues to be raised on social and environmental expectations. By opening their gates to community groups like schools and scouts to

learn about the company's operations and thoughtful stewardship of the land, these corporate conservation leaders are not only securing their business's social license to operate through community engagement, but are effectively supporting a host of other requirements necessary for their company's long-term success.

For over 30 years, WHC has been working alongside its members in the building materials sector (and beyond) to help them realize their business goals through site-based, relevant and meaningful wildlife habitat conservation and environmental education programs. These programs have been developed with the explicit goal of engaging the company's facility-based team members, attracting and retaining new talent and exposing and educating the next generation workforce to the mining industry through STEM-based, experiential learning opportunities. These programs can also offer nature-based solutions to reclamation and remediation requirements and can demonstrate a strong commitment to compliant, productive outcomes to regulators and other stakeholders.

Aggregating these efforts back at corporate headquarters, companies are able to utilize associated project metrics to showcase to shareholders their collective impact across their operations through their sustainability reporting from the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) to their own annual sustainability report.

If you would like to learn more about WHC's work with companies who are currently engaging communities through biodiversity projects, visit www.wildlifehc.org, where you'll find corporate success stories, free live and on-demand webinars and topic-specific white papers. If you would like to start a conversation to discuss how WHC can tailor an approach for your company's specific needs and opportunities, please email strategyandplanning@wildlifehc.org. ■

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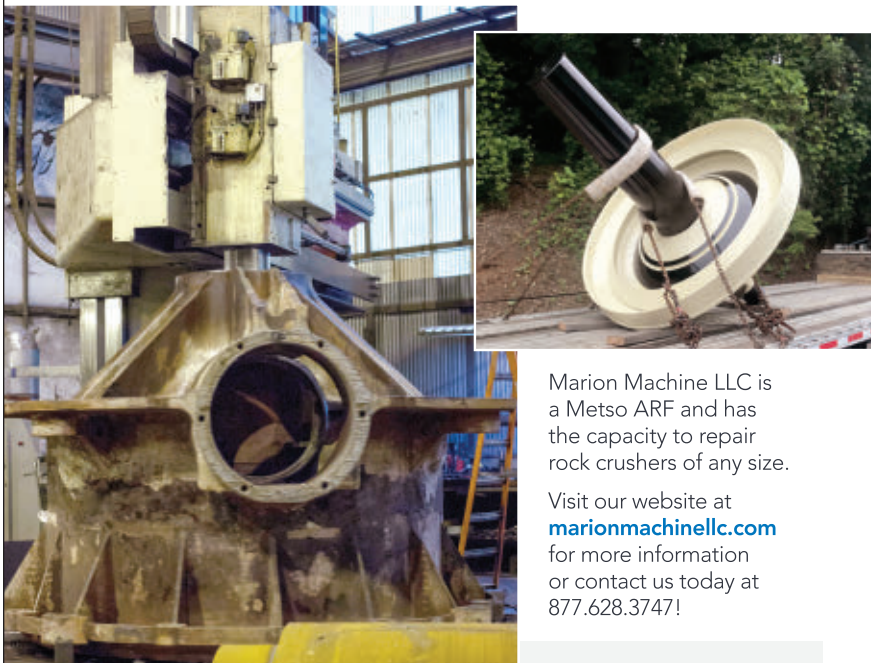
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