



News Release

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Flint Hills Resources, Friends of the Mississippi River recognized for restoring Minnesota wildlife habitat

Tandem Global award for grassland restoration comes in addition to first-time gold certification for pipeline terminal site and a re-certification of the Pine Bend Bluffs adjacent to refinery

ROSEMOUNT, Minn. (July 14, 2026) — The restoration and preservation of the Pine Bend Bluffs by Flint Hills Resources, community partners including Friends of the Mississippi River and many dedicated volunteers was recently recognized with a Tandem Global conservation award, the first global award earned for work done at the site. Flint Hills also received the first WHC Certification® gold designation for its pipeline terminal site in Cottage Grove, Minn., and the re-certification of gold status for the Pine Bend Bluffs, which has received the distinction every year since 2023. These two sites are the first and only WHC gold-certified sites in Minnesota.

“We have been fortunate to partner with Friends of the Mississippi River for more than 25 years to restore and conserve natural habitats in our local communities,” said Heather Rein, community affairs director at Flint Hills Resources. “The long-term stewardship of these landscapes requires thoughtful planning paired with a lot of people willing to roll up their sleeves and get the work done, which are hallmarks of Friends of the Mississippi River. Accolades like WHC gold certification and the Tandem Global Grasslands Project Award celebrate everyone who has and continues to contribute countless hours to caring for these sites.”

Tandem Global, a combination of what was the Wildlife Habitat Council and the World Environment Center, annually recognizes excellence in corporate conservation from a variety of industry sectors spanning the globe with WHC Certification, powered by Tandem Global.

Its Grasslands Project Award highlights standout efforts to monitor vegetation and at least one additional criterion, such as wildlife use. Award recipients use their evaluative data to implement conservation actions. Flint Hills was recognized for its continued efforts with Friends of the Mississippi River, Green River Greening and other partners to nurture pre-colonization natural habitat for plants and animals at the Pine Bend Bluffs.

“As the planning and implementation lead for the blufflands project, Friends of the Mississippi River is delighted with the recognition Flint Hills Resources received for this important ecological restoration project,” said Alex Roth, conservation director at Friends of the Mississippi River. “Together, we've restored and enhanced hundreds of acres of habitat, meaningfully engaged the community and made important progress for wildlife and water quality in this critical natural area. We applaud this

commitment to protect and restore habitat — it's paying dividends for the rare plant and animal species that depend on it.”

Earning WHC Gold Certification for a site is the highest level of WHC certification, powered by Tandem Global, the world’s leading voluntary sustainability standard for habitat and species management and conservation education on corporate lands.

The Pine Bend Bluffs became Minnesota’s first WHC gold-certified location in 2023. Directly adjacent to the Pine Bend refinery, more than 250 acres of the site have been restored through conservation and habitat creation projects ranging from bluebird nesting boxes and a snake hibernaculum to pollinator gardens and landscape restoration efforts. Flint Hills employees and community volunteers work together to create healthy habitats and promote biodiversity. [Click here](#) to watch a video about the restoration of the Pine Bend Bluffs.

This year, 6.5 acres of grassland located near the Flint Hill pipeline terminal in Cottage Grove became the state’s second gold site to receive WHC Certification. This accolade followed two years of restoration efforts by Flint Hills and Friends of the Mississippi River.

“The Pine Bend Bluffs and Cottage Grove programs demonstrate what long-term corporate stewardship can achieve when it is grounded in strong community partnerships and a commitment to measurable conservation outcomes,” said Margaret O’Gorman, CEO of Tandem Global. “Through habitat restoration, biodiversity monitoring and sustained volunteer engagement, Flint Hills Resources and its partners have created landscapes that support wildlife, strengthen ecological resilience and provide lasting value for local communities. We are pleased to recognize these efforts through both the Tandem Global Grasslands Project Award and WHC Gold Certification.”

Flint Hills has partnered with Friends of the Mississippi River and Great River Greening since 2000. This long-standing collaboration has improved native prairie and woodland ecosystems while creating space for grasses, wildflowers and other native species to thrive.

About Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery

The Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery produces transportation fuels used throughout the Midwest, including most of Minnesota’s gasoline, diesel fuel, and jet fuel, as well as other products people rely on such as propane and asphalt. Located 17 miles southeast of Minneapolis, Pine Bend has a refining capacity of 375,000 barrels per day and is among the most efficient oil refineries in the country. Flint Hills Resources directly and indirectly supports more than 4,400 Minnesota jobs and has invested nearly \$5.4 billion in upgrades and improvements to its Minnesota facilities since 2002. With more than 1,000 full-time employees, the Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery is one of the largest employers in Dakota County. More information about the Pine Bend refinery is available at [PineBendRefinery.com](https://www.pinebendrefinery.com).

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