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Since 2000, Flint Hills Resources, Friends of the Mississippi River and Great River Greening have been working together to restore and reconstruct a 78-acre parcel of prairie, savanna and woodland owned by the company within Pine Bend Bluffs.

65 volunteers participate in savannah restoration work on Flint Hills property

On Saturday, Oct. 14, sixty-five volunteers braved cold weather to continue restoration work on Flint Hills Resources property that is part of the Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area in Dakota County. Thirty-five community volunteers joined with 30 Flint Hills employees and family members to plant 5,000 acorns in an effort to reestablish oak trees in the savanna, collect prairie seed and plant sand-gravel prairie seedlings.

The 1,300-acre Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area encompasses oak forest, oak savanna, black ash swamp and rare sand-gravel prairie plant communities. Pine Bend Bluffs is a crucial part of the Mississippi River fly-

way, the annual migration corridor for millions of songbirds and 40 percent of North America's waterfowl and shorebirds. The area was identified as a site of high biological significance by the DNR County Biological Survey in 1999. Ecologists consider the area to be one of the largest and most diverse native ecosystems left in the seven-county metro region.

Since 2000, Flint Hills Resources, Friends of the Mississippi River and Great River Greening have been working together to restore and reconstruct a 78-acre parcel of prairie, savanna and woodland owned by the company within Pine Bend Bluffs. Community volun-

teers and Flint Hills employees have pulled buckthorn, cut honeysuckle, collected and sown prairie seeds and planted native species. The work is helping restore ecological balance to the area, reduce erosion, improve wildlife habitat, protect species diversity and, ultimately, improve and protect water quality.

Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area was named one of 10 Twin Cities Treasures by the Embrace Open Space campaign of the McKnight Foundation in 2002 representing the kind of open space that needs protection from development. The restoration work by Flint Hills Resources, its employees, environmental groups

and volunteers the company-owned parcel earned certification by the Wildlife Habitat Council in 2001. WHC re-certified the parcel in 2006.

Pine Bend Bluffs presents a unique opportunity for collaboration among its several private and corporate landowners, state and local governments, local environmental organizations and the community. Funding for this project has been provided by Flint Hills Resources, the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.