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PINE BEND BLUFFS NATURAL AREA RECEIVES ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

ROSEMOUNT, Minn. — Restoration of the Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area was recognized recently with the Minnesota Environmental Initiative Award for Natural Resource Protection. These awards are given for outstanding partnerships between business, government and environmental groups that tackle environmental problems.

Over the past eight years, a unique collection of collaborators, from industry and government to nonprofits, have worked together to protect and restore one of the highest quality remaining natural areas in the Twin Cities on the bluffs of the Mississippi River. The 1,800 acre Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area has been designated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as an area of outstanding biological diversity.

To date, the partnership has resulted in the permanent protection of 256 acres along the river, and ecological resource management plans were developed for about 800 acres of the Natural Area. This planning has been followed by implementation that includes intensive ecological restoration work on over 160 acres. Ecologists consider the area to be one of the largest and most diverse native ecosystems left in the seven-county metro region.

Friends of the Mississippi River has led the restoration work in the Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area. The other partners involved in the protection and restoration of the natural area are the DNR's Metro Greenways and Ecological Services programs, the Dakota County Farmland and Natural Area Program, Dakota County Parks Department, Flint Hills Resources (a landowner in the area), Great River Greening, the Trust for Public Land, the city of Inver Grove Heights, Macalester College, the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Mississippi River Fund, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, and the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources.

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.

Friends of the Mississippi River is a citizen-based nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and enhancing the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities. Through education, outreach and advocacy, we protect water quality, conserve vital land along the river and its tributaries, and foster a sense of place that is rooted in the unique cultural, historical and recreational assets of the Mississippi.

Great River Greening is a non-profit organization that restores valuable and endangered natural areas and open spaces in the greater Twin Cities by engaging individuals and communities to be stewards of the Mississippi, Minnesota and St. Croix river valleys and watersheds. Greening involves on-the-ground volunteers on a larger scale than any other local organization—14,000 since 1995. Great River Greening—restoring the land, renewing communities.

Flint Hills Resources LP is a leading provider of transportation fuels used in the Upper Midwest. Flint Hills' Pine Bend refinery has a crude oil processing capacity of approximately 280,000 barrels per day and employs about 800 people full-time. Flint Hills Resources is headquartered in Wichita, Kansas and has refineries in Corpus Christi, Texas and North Pole, Alaska, as well as a chemical facility in Joliet, Illinois. More information about the company is available at www.fhr.com.

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