

GM Recognized for Protecting Environment

by Irena Granaas

With the certification by the Wildlife Habitat Council of four more of its company-managed wildlife habitats, General Motors boasts more such certifications than any other automaker.

The recent additions bring GM's certified managed habitats to nearly 2,500 acres of wildlife habitat on 25 of the company's global sites.

GM earned a "Corporate Lands for Learning" certification for its site at Mogi das Cruzes in Brazil, which features a wildlife habitat spread over 4.3 hectares (more than 10 acres).

A team at the site organizes an environmental week giving employees a chance to enjoy outdoor activities and hear lectures on "green" practices such as saving water and reusing materials.

"Wildlife at Work" certifications were issued for GM's managed habitats at the Bowling Green, Ky., assembly plant; its Desert Proving Grounds in Yuma, Ariz.; and the Drayton Plains, Mich., warehouse.

The "Wildlife at Work" certifications went to the Yuma site, where saguaro cacti were relocated to provide nesting for birds and a more reliable food supply for pollinators; and to the Drayton warehouse, which converted an unused parking lot into a 35-acre wildlife habitat that helps sustain the deer herd, expand the bird population and increase plant diversity.

"Our natural resources have business value and we work to protect them," said Mike Robinson, GM vice president of sustainability and global regulatory affairs. "These wildlife habitats also enable employees to take part in conservation efforts and help us strengthen our community ties."

Sharon Basel, communications manager for GM's environmental initiatives, affirmed that the automaker is committed to increasing native biodiversity at company facilities and certifying each of its manufacturing sites where feasible by 2020. A total of 91 facilities are included as part of this effort.

With the four new certifica-



Deer roam at the GM's Drayton Plains Warehouse facility.

tions last week, and five re-certifications of existing sites, the total is "a little more than a quarter of the way there just in year two of our commitment," said Basel.

The five sites receiving recertification as a result of having continued their successful wildlife habitat management programs, are Bay City, Mich., Powertrain; Toledo, Ohio, Transmission; Spring Hill, Tenn., Manufacturing; GM Powertrain, Warren; and the Warren Technical Center.

Teams at the Warren Tech Center earned the site's recertification in part by continuing to contribute to local biodiversity.

"We have a specific area that we have redeveloped incorporating natural grasses and other types of plantings that attract butterflies, attract birds and also attract other types of animals in terms of nesting and cover and that sort of thing," Basel said.

"So there are several aspects to our certified areas within the Tech Center property. One is the beautification we did a number of years ago and continually work to enhance along a walking mall between our Engineering Center and down toward our Design Center (running) from east to west across the campus.

"And then our reflecting ponds that are natural habitats for geese and ducks and other birds and fish, and keeping those healthy and growing the presence of wildlife within those bounds. So with the Wildlife Council, it isn't just that you get a certification . . . You have to continually work to get recertified. In the recertification process, you actually have to show results of enhancing and growing and further improvement to the habitat area."

Basel explained that while GM does not have an overall budget for these projects as a corporation, the projects are funded through each individual site's facility dollars, along with other expenses.

"It isn't a matter of throwing money at something. It's really a matter of going out and trying to recognize the importance of establishing natural and preservation activities at each of our facilities.

"Because quite often," said Basel, "our properties are very large properties within a community, and inasmuch as we can try to preserve the natural surroundings of our facilities, or restore them to something productive and worthwhile, the community can also enjoy it, and that's really the goal."

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