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UNIMIN CORPORATION RECOGNIZED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE

BALTIMORE, MD—Employees at Unimin Corporation’s Tunnel City received international recognition for their contributions to wildlife habitat conservation at the Wildlife Habitat Council’s (WHC) 25th Annual Symposium, *Celebrating Corporate Conservation*. Unimin Corporation demonstrated its commitment to environmental stewardship by achieving *Wildlife at Work* certification at Tunnel City. The Unimin Tunnel City facility was also recognized by the Wildlife Habitat Council and Bat Conservation International by awarding it the prestigious 2013 Bat Conservation Action Award.

“Unimin Corporation is being recognized as an industry leader in corporate conservation,” said Margaret O’Gorman, WHC president. “It is a model for how we at the Wildlife Habitat Council connect corporations and communities to create habitat and increase biodiversity on corporate properties for the benefit of all. Through its certification programs of private lands owned by the corporate sector, WHC has set the standard for conservation programs on privately held land for more than 25 years.”

Unimin’s Tunnel City Plant is located on approximately 1200 acres and is located west of Tomah near Tunnel City in Greenfield and Adrian Township, Monroe County, Wisconsin. Part of the property was previously owned by the Union Pacific Railroad and the remainder of the property was a combination of residential homes, heavy forest cover and some farmland. Of the 1200 acres, 958 acres are available for wildlife, and 65 of those acres are actively managed for wildlife.

The site is home to an abandoned and collapsed railroad tunnel that was considered to be a liability. After an initial survey in 2011, by the Wisconsin DNR, it was discovered that the tunnel was actually important bat hibernacula for several bat species listed as threatened in Wisconsin. The wildlife team decided to take several steps to allow the site to continue to serve as ideal bat habitat. The tunnel was the main focus of these efforts. The wildlife team partially filled in the railroad bed to decrease the entrance size, installed a special gate over the entrance that would not inhibit bat movement but would keep people out, and planted several native forbes near the entrance. They also allow bat biologists from the Wisconsin DNR to regularly conduct bat surveys on the site and plan to allow this to continue in the future. The wildlife team also partnered with a local scout troop to construct and install several bat houses on the site.

In addition to bat habitat management, they also have made significant efforts to restore Karner blue butterfly habitat on the site. In 2011, an initial survey of the property was conducted with the assistance of Cedarburg Science, LLC, and it was discovered the site contained potential habitat for this federally endangered species. The wildlife team partnered with the Wisconsin DNR to develop a habitat conservation plan to guide all habitat and reclamation plans in order to best benefit this butterfly. In 2012,

the wildlife team planted 65 acres of disturbed area on the site with native plants critical to the life cycle of the Karner blue butterfly. They plan to continue this project with further plantings in disturbed areas and replanting where necessary. They also have plans to monitor the butterflies twice annually during their peak flight periods.

Unimin Corporation's Tunnel City was one of 255 programs recognized at the 2013 Symposium as meeting the strict certification requirements *Wildlife at Work*. In addition, 65 programs received *Corporate Lands for Learning* certification. Certification requirements are strict and require that programs apply for periodic renewal. *Wildlife at Work* certification recognizes outstanding wildlife habitat management efforts at corporate sites, and offers third-party validation of the benefits of such programs. *Corporate Lands for Learning* certification provides programs with third-party recognition for educational programs. Since 1990, WHC has certified 668 *Wildlife at Work* and 161 *Corporate Lands for Learning* programs worldwide.

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The Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) is a nonprofit, non-lobbying organization dedicated to increasing the quality and amount of wildlife habitat on corporate, private and public lands. WHC devotes its resources to building partnerships with corporations and conservation groups to create solutions that balance the demands of economic growth with the requirements of a healthy, biodiverse and sustainable environment. WHC-assisted wildlife habitat and conservation education programs are found in 45 states, the District of Columbia and 11 other countries. To learn more, visit www.wildlifehc.org.

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