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Maiden Rock

Wisconsin Industrial Sand Company (WISC) in Maiden Rock was purchased in 1996 by Fairmount Minerals. Maiden Rock is an underground mine with a processing plant on the surface. Over the many years of its existence it has produced quality industrial sand for many types of industries. The Jordan formation of sandstone, with the coon valley on the overlay, is the geology where the sand is mined. The service road from the processing facility to the mine is the only road not paved. Water trucks are used on the entire property to control potential fugitive dust. Where the office is located, and on other paved roads, both water trucks and sweepers are used to control dust. A representative conducts monthly inspections on the dust collection units that are located at strategic areas within the processing facility, to ensure absolute efficiency of the dust control. The inspections also verify the accuracy of the daily data collection of the dust collection units, which is recorded on every shift.

Just recently, upgrades have been made to the rail load-out system after a complaint was received about dust emissions in that area. In response to the neighbor's concern about dust and noise, the rail load-out was relocated, further from the Village and closer to the WISC facility. The relocation helped to reduce the noise by decreasing the number of rollers on the conveyor belt that created additional noise. The number of transfer points was also the decreased, which reduces the number of locations where fugitive dust could potentially escape. In addition, the relocation allowed WISC to accommodate more rail cars, reducing the amount of truck traffic traveling through the Village.

This past year other upgrades and improvements have been made. WISC completed installation of a new dryer which uses the latest technologies to reduce energy usage. Natural gas is now used as a fuel source, instead of propane. A new screen tower was installed, with an additional dust collection system to lower potential dust emissions. Because there is a limited amount of space in the underground areas, the wash plant is being moved to the surface. The installation of the new wash plant which will have the state of the art technologies available will help to reduce the amount of water coming from the high-capacity wells.

At our underground mines, we work closely with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to monitor and research the bat populations in our mines. Our Maiden Rock mine is the second largest bat hibernaculum in the state of Wisconsin, with the third largest being our Bay City mine. The demographics and health of the bat populations are carefully recorded, and the information is used to try to prevent the spread of White Nose Syndrome to Wisconsin. We were very involved in the restoration of a local trout stream, Pine Creek, working in close collaboration with the WDNR and the local Trout Unlimited chapter to complete the project over the course of three years.

Menomonie

WISC's operation in Menomonie is a surface mine with a processing plant. The building that houses the offices, maintenance shop, conference room, lab, employee break room, and storage areas was the first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified building in Dunn County

LEED is an independent, third-party certification by the U.S. Green Building Council, which provides verification that a building, home or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at achieving high performance in key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. WISC's Menomonie facility has a geothermal heating and cooling system, water saving faucets and flushers, and lights controlled by sensors that detect movement in the room, among other things. Much of the material that was used to construct the building is recycled materials, such as the wallboard, doors, windows and a beautiful conference room table and reception desk made from recycled wine barrels.

When the Menomonie operation first began in 2008, potential fugitive dust was controlled with water trucks and street sweepers. The Plant Manager noticed very early on that there was a potential for the sand to blow off the stock piles that were located out in the mine. Industrial water cannons were purchased and placed strategically throughout the mine to apply water to the piles, so there would be no migration of sand off of the property. The water cannons can be rotated and moved to different areas of the stock pile(s) as needed.

In 2009 a thickener tank was installed to help with the reduction of the clays that are suspended in the water and attached to the sand during the washing process. The clays create additional dust and have the capability to float in the air. Not only was the thickener tank good for clay collection, but it also reduced water usage from the high-capacity wells by means of recirculation. The water usage and additional equipment damage reduction helped in achieving our continuous goal of energy reduction.

This past year a large array of solar panels was installed in conjunction with Fairmount Minerals' Eco-efficiency team and students from the local Chippewa Valley Technical College. The solar array has 165 modules that are 240 watts each, and provides enough energy to offset nearly all of the power consumed by the office/lab/maintenance shop building.

Hager City/Bay City

WISC's facility at Hager City is processing facility which receives the sand from the underground mine in Bay City. A local contractor services this facility and surface area at the mine to water and sweep the roads, including the highway in Bay City to ensure sand is not migrating off the property. WISC personnel conduct regular spot checks to make sure the trucks leaving the mine are securely covered, preventing any sand from blowing off the trucks. Last year a portion of the roadway leading into the Hager City facility was replaced by WISC, and asphalt was added to make it safer to travel on. The roadway leading into the mine was modified for the same reasons, as well. In 2011, a thickener tank was installed in the underground mine to reduce water usage from the high-capacity wells. The thickener tank allows the water being used to be recycled, and prevents potential clay residue from becoming airborne.

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The Bay City underground mine is the third largest bat hibernaculum in the state with approximately 60,000 bats and four species present as of this past year. Working closely with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, bats have been collected from this mine over that past couple of years and were used as the control group in their studies researching White Nose Syndrome. Employees worked with the Boy Scouts to add bat boxes to the sites that were built by the Boy Scouts who built the nurseries to help increase the bat population. Employees at Hager City and Bay City also work in conjunction with the WDNR and Trout Unlimited chapter towards restoring the Trembelle River in to a productive trout stream.

At all WISC facilities, every year we work towards a continued reduction in energy use, including dryer fuel, diesel fuel, and kilowatts used in our operations. We carefully track our greenhouse gas emissions, and plant native trees and/or prairies to sequester our carbon emissions on various properties. Our certifications from the Wildlife Habitat Council at all WISC facilities, for both the Wildlife at Work and Corporate Lands for Learning programs, show the many ways that we are committed to environmental preservation and conservation at our facilities and within our communities. Through these programs, we work with community groups such as schools, boy scouts and girl scouts, 4-H groups, service organizations and many others to complete projects that focus on the preservation of native wildlife and habitat at and around our facilities. Projects completed over the last year include: building and installing bat houses; tree planting; building and installing bluebird houses; planting and maintaining a pollinator garden; tracking and recording the types and number of species that we see on our property; and many more. For our employees, it is a satisfying accomplishment to know we have helped to educate the next generation about the importance of environmental preservation, and to be part of a continuation of a population.

Fairmount Minerals has formed 13 Sustainable Development teams. Each team has at least one WISC employee to ensure that WISC facilities are operating with the sustainable development philosophies that Fairmount Minerals strongly believes in. Every team focuses on a different area of sustainable development (SD), and many of the teams focus on environmental aspects of SD. The Quest for Eco-Efficiency (QEE) Team's mission is to focus on projects that mitigate our ecological impact through the development, implementation and education of practices that reduce energy consumption, produce green energy, and sequester emissions. The Environmentally Responsible Products and Processes Team (ERPP) works to ensure that all products and processes are as environmentally safe and efficient as possible, while consuming less energy, conserving more resources, and producing less waste and fewer emissions. And the Clean Water Team's mission is to develop and enhance sustainable water filtration products and processes that improve current water systems in a profitable manner. Each SD Team sets one bold goal every year, and every facility within Fairmount Minerals works to achieve that goal. Some of the goals that WISC facilities will achieve by the end of 2012 include: complete a water footprint evaluation at each facility and provide a reduction plan; implement one alternative energy or energy efficiency project that fosters current or future efficiencies at each facility; and implement at least one best practice project that results from a Treasure Hunt.

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One goal set by the Recover, Recycle, Reuse Team is to become zero waste at all Fairmount Minerals facilities by 2015. This means that we will be contributing no solid waste to a landfill from any of our facilities. We are currently tracking not only the types of waste that are created at our facilities, but also the amount of waste that gets placed into our dumpsters. By tracking the types of waste created, we can research alternatives for recycling or reusing that waste. By the end of 2012 all WISC facilities will be composting and recycling common materials such as plastic, glass, aluminum, paper, batteries, and fluorescent bulbs. Most of these recycling processes are already in place at our facilities. In 2013 and 2014 we will work on finding ways to recycle or reuse some of the uncommon materials such as rubber belting from conveyors, tires, large air filters used in the heavy equipment, plastics that are not usually recyclable, and Styrofoam. We will continue to track and reduce the amount of waste generated, to ensure that we meet our goal of zero waste by 2015.