



2010 – International year of biodiversity

The term “biodiversity” refers to the natural diversity of living organisms; it is assessed by considering the diversity of ecosystems. The United Nations has declared 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity, in order to raise public awareness about the current situation and the consequences of the decline in biodiversity around the world.

Preserving biological diversity in the face of a barrage of threats including rampant urbanization, intensive farming, deforestation and pollution has become a global issue. Many people consider the increasing rate of decline in biodiversity to be a major environmental concern, with an impact comparable to global warming. Vallourec attaches special importance to these issues when considering its industrial development projects.

Certain specific Vallourec activities have a direct link with biodiversity, and we have been taking very practical steps in this area for a number of years. An excellent example is the case of V & M Florestal, a Brazilian subsidiary of V & M do Brazil, which cultivates eucalyptus plantations to produce charcoal for use as a source of energy for steelmaking.

The company operates plant and wildlife monitoring programmes in conjunction with the University of Minas Gerais and Lavras. The aim of these programmes is to measure the impact of the company’s activities on the natural environment and implement appropriate management strategies to preserve and balance biodiversity.

V & M Florestal owns a total of 232,000 hectares (580,000 acres) of forests, with a ratio of one hectare of native forest for every one and a half hectares of eucalyptus plantation. The company has designated and maintains a network of “ecological corridors” to enable wildlife to circulate freely.

Biodiversity

V & M Florestal plays a fundamental role in nature conservation by protecting the region's characteristic ecosystems. The company set up a camera-based monitoring programme, which has resulted in the identification of several hundred species of birds and dozens of species of mammals, including a number of endangered species.

Vallourec has created a 210,000 square metres nature reserve near the V & M do Brazil plant in Barreiro.



Some 77 different types of bird, including the Blue-black grassquit and the Gilt-edged Tanager (*Tangara cyaniventris*), are among the many species inhabiting this nature reserve, which is also home to rich plant life featuring more than 200 different species.

Another V & M do Brazil subsidiary, V & M Mineração, operates a mining business in the town of Brumadinho, approximately 50 km from the Barreiro industrial complex. The site is located in a transitional zone between two ecosystems, where the "cerrado" (savanna) meets the "mata atlantica" (Atlantic forest).

In order to monitor the impact of its activities on the natural environment more effectively, V & M Mineração regularly audits biodiversity on the site and in neighbouring areas. To help preserve numerous wildlife species, a 200-hectare nature reserve was established in the Atlantic forest. To date, no fewer than 148 different bird species have been spotted in the reserve.

The company is also committed to restoring the environment in mining areas. For example, in 2008, 167,000 square metres of mined land were recovered by planting them with species native to the region. These planted areas are now covered with many different

kinds of trees, grasses and leguminous plants. Over the years, more than 1.3 million square metres of land have been restored in this way.

As part of our sustainable development strategy, we are now studying how we can roll out this "best practice" to our other major industrial facilities.

Applications and initiatives are also being developed at other sites, such as the plant in Rath, Germany (see inset).

Our goal for 2010 is to achieve a better understanding of the biodiversity-related values in the areas around our sites: for example by identifying vulnerable ecosystems and the risks posed by our industrial processes. We will address any problems encountered as we meet these new challenges by designing and implementing appropriate action plans in partnership with our neighbours, the local authorities and specialists on the subject.





A new lizard protection area

The town of Ratingen, near Düsseldorf, is currently building administration buildings in an area near the railway station at the V & M Deutschland plant in Rath. A sizeable population of lizards was found in the area earmarked for development, and an agreement has now been reached between the plant and the municipality to set aside an alternative area for these creatures at the Vallourec-owned site. The new conservation area, which features sandy soil and is well exposed to the sun, is an ideal habitat for lizards. The brush cover on the land has been cut back to provide the best possible living conditions.



Before



After planting

