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Immediately

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## **New Initiative Focuses on Water Quality Improvement in the Mississippi River Basin and Gulf of Mexico**

- *Monsanto Company launches new effort to help reduce nutrients and sediments in agricultural runoff by partnering with The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Soybean Association, Delta Wildlife and The National Audubon Society on conservation projects in the Mississippi River Basin.*
- *Monsanto's new partners commit to sharing best conservation practices and joining in dialogue with other conservation groups, agriculture groups, government leaders as well as other parties interested in working with farmers to preserve water quality and conserve wildlife habitat along the river and its tributaries.*

ST. LOUIS — A new initiative announced today aims to reduce nutrient and sediment movement into the United States' largest river system, the Mississippi River. Monsanto is partnering with multiple agricultural and conservation groups that are working with farmers to help reduce runoff from the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico.

The Nature Conservancy, the Iowa Soybean Association and Delta Wildlife are all working collaboratively with farmers to remove nutrients and sediment from agricultural runoff in the Mississippi River Basin. The National Audubon Society is working with homeowners and others to implement measures which can improve wildlife habitat and the quality of water entering the Mississippi River. The new initiative by Monsanto will advance the group's work and help determine the effectiveness of various conservation measures on improving wildlife habitat and water quality.

"The Mississippi River is an ecological treasure and an economic powerhouse," said Michael Reuter, who oversees The Nature Conservancy's Great Rivers Partnership, which was created to help advance conservation of the world's major river systems, including the Mississippi. "This new effort by Monsanto will help show how we can make farming and conservation in the Mississippi River Basin more compatible so that nature and people alike benefit from improved water quality and enhanced wildlife habitat."

"We're proud to work on this bold conservation initiative which we believe offers a sustainable vision for agricultural landscapes wherein farmers can support our world's growing needs for food, fiber and fuel in ways that not only preserve water quality, but also support diverse and abundant wildlife populations," said Jerry Steiner, executive vice president at Monsanto. "We believe this initiative can serve as an important stepping stone toward the goal of preserving natural resources and wildlife in the Mississippi River Basin for future generations."

"Farmers are emerging in key leadership roles through their investments, and by participating in the planning and implementation of practices that perform environmentally. It's our goal to support them and help them make meaningful progress," said Roger Wolf, Director of Environmental Programs at the Iowa Soybean Association. "Our goal is to use science — research and data — to systematically develop and

implement a suite of management techniques that help production agriculture measurably improve stewardship while maintaining or increasing profitability.”

“Delta Wildlife is pleased to join forces with Monsanto, The Nature Conservancy, and the Iowa Soybean Association to implement a large-scale project that will improve water quality in the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico,” stated Bobby Carson, Chairman of the Delta Wildlife Board of Directors. “While significant environmental benefits will certainly accrue from this project, it will also nurture a more sustainable and profitable future for agriculture.”

“Audubon is pleased to be part of this effort to foster a sustainable Mississippi River watershed for people and wildlife,” said Roger Still, Vice President of Audubon’s Mississippi River Initiative. “We are committed to engaging individuals to take action in their own lives to help address the water quality and habitat issues in the watershed. This effort complements our broader Mississippi River Initiative.”

Under the projects:

- The Nature Conservancy will conduct a three-year conservation pilot in four watersheds in the Upper Mississippi River basin that include the Root River in southeastern Minnesota, the Pecatonica River in southern Wisconsin, the Boone River in northern Iowa and the Mackinaw River in central Illinois. The Conservancy will work with local partners, including farmers, in those watersheds to implement and study conservation techniques that best lower nutrient and sediment concentrations by reducing runoff from agricultural landscapes. Through this project, the Conservancy will seek to determine which tools work best in a larger, sub-watershed system and will then communicate findings to crop producers to guide their farm stewardship decisions.
- The Iowa Soybean Association will conduct research on paired, micro watersheds in two areas: the Boone and Raccoon Rivers. The group will also coordinate conservation outreach in those watersheds, which includes monitoring, measurement and evaluation of on-farm resources and environmental outcomes.
- Delta Wildlife will install Best Management Practices (BMPs) on approximately 1,000 sites on working farms in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta region of the Lower Mississippi Valley. BMPs will be designed to reduce off-site movement of nutrients and sediments while providing secondary environmental benefits in the form of improved fish and wildlife habitat and water conservation. The project will include a monitoring and assessment component that will thoroughly document accrued environmental benefits.
- Data collected from all projects will be reported on annually and is expected to generate novel approaches which can be implemented more broadly across rural landscapes. Crop producers will be directly involved in the respective projects. Findings from all projects will be shared with farmers regularly so that they can observe and adapt cultural practices that preserve water quality and improve wildlife habitat.
- Audubon will raise awareness of how people can be good stewards of nature in their own backyards. The project will focus on promoting specific individual actions to enhance water quality and habitat for birds and other wildlife. Audubon will broadly communicate these best practices throughout the Mississippi River watershed.
- Monsanto will commit more than \$5 million to support all of the projects. Monsanto will also work actively with all the four groups to share data generated from all projects with its farmer customers. The company will also encourage on-farm adoption of management practices that contribute to water quality.

#### **Partners Remain Committed to Broader Dialogue, Working with Other Experts Along River**

The projects, announced today, are expected in the near term to offer to the agricultural community a comprehensive approach to improving the health of the Mississippi River. They are also expected to generate best practices that may be integrated into management plans designed to conserve major river systems around the world.

Monsanto and its conservation partners, along with grower associations including the American Soybean Association and the National Corn Growers Association also announced that they will be forming a Mississippi River Farm Nutrient Working Group. The group expects to engage other agricultural-related interests, government leaders and other interested organizations in this group. Additional information on this group will be announced in spring 2009.

The group is expected to engage additional experts in an effort to share findings and best practices, raise awareness and broaden restoration efforts along the Mississippi River. The Working Group will also discuss what might be needed to help farmers implement stewardship projects at a higher rate, and see what can be done to provide incentives or enabling policies to assist them in doing this.

### **A New Vision for Agricultural Landscapes**

This bold conservation initiative offers a new vision for the Mississippi River and agricultural landscapes by which farmers can efficiently produce higher-yielding crops for food, fiber and fuel in ways that further preserve water quality as well as support diverse and abundant wildlife populations.

Over the years, crop producers have implemented cultural practices that reduce erosion, runoff and sedimentation into our nation's rivers and streams. These common on-farm stewardship practices include conservation tillage, no-till, filter strips and water control structures. Improved placement of fertilizers and precision application of fertilizers and agri-chemicals are additional, market-driven best management practices that contribute to improved water quality in agricultural ecosystems. Additionally, on-farm tools available to farmers today, such as, herbicide-tolerant crops are supporting the conversion of farmland to no-till practices which greatly reduce erosion and the emission of greenhouse gas into our environment.

In the future, crop producers are expected to have additional on-farm tools which can enhance their environmental stewardship efforts. Agricultural technology providers, such as Monsanto, are working to develop nitrogen-use efficiency technologies and crop products that yield more on each acre of land. Earlier this year, the company announced its commitment to develop, by 2030, certain seeds that can double crop yields and reduce by one-third the amount of key resources, e.g., nitrogen and water, required to grow crops.

### **Additional information**

The partners will be holding a press conference later this morning at 10 a.m. (Central Time). To register for this conference, please visit <https://intercall.webex.com/intercall/j.php?ED=111047517&UID>.

The partners have also posted a press kit related to today's announcement online at: [www.monsanto.com/mississippiriverproject](http://www.monsanto.com/mississippiriverproject). The press kit includes additional information about the projects and the Mississippi River basin, photos of management practices and regional wildlife, bios of all presenters as well as other related information.

### **About the Partners**

The Nature Conservancy is the leading conservation organization working to protect the most ecologically important lands and waters around the world for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. The Mississippi River has been designated a global priority by The Nature Conservancy as part of its Campaign for a Sustainable Planet to protect lands and waters in the United States and around the world for future generations. The Conservancy's goal is to help protect at least 10 percent of each of the world's major habitat types — forests, oceans, rivers and lakes, grasslands, and deserts and dry lands — by the year 2015. Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at [www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org).

The Iowa Soybean Association develops policies and programs that help farmers expand profit opportunities while promoting environmentally sensitive production using the soybean checkoff and other

resources. The Association is governed by an elected volunteer board of 21 farmers. To learn more about our association, please visit: [www.iasoybeans.com](http://www.iasoybeans.com).

Delta Wildlife was founded in 1990 for the specific purpose of conserving, enhancing and restoring native wildlife habitats, wildlife populations and natural resources found in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta region of Northwest Mississippi. With a membership base that owns and manages more than 60 percent of all the land in the region, the organization has found success through the development and implementation of science-based projects and programs, targeted education and outreach, and by demonstrating the highest possible level of accountability to organizational members and professional peers. To learn more about Delta Wildlife and its programs and projects, please visit their website at [www.deltawildlife.org](http://www.deltawildlife.org).

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. Our Mississippi River Initiative, spanning the river's entire watershed, is focused on protecting and enhancing declining birds and their habitats; reducing excess nutrients to improve water quality; and restoring natural hydrology to sustain important river functions and reduce the loss of coastal wetlands in Louisiana. Our actions are coordinated at hemispheric, national, regional and local scales. To learn more about Audubon, and its efforts to protect the Mississippi, please visit: [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).

Monsanto Company is a leading global provider of technology-based solutions and agricultural products that improve farm productivity and food quality. Monsanto remains focused on enabling both small-holder and large-scale farmers to produce more from their land while conserving more of our world's natural resources such as water and energy. To learn more about our business and our commitments, please visit: [www.monsanto.com](http://www.monsanto.com).