

Environmental Philanthropy project:

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Fact sheet on Nature Conservancy Great Plains Initiative

Background: This project would consist of supporting The Nature Conservancy and other members of the coalition working to preserve biodiversity and natural communities in the Great Plains. This area extends from southern Canada to Mexico's northern border

In 1993 the Nature Conservancy (TNC) launched the Great Plains Initiative, a joint project with the Western Governors' Association and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. A list of others involved is attached. The Great Plains Partnership is built on the idea that through cooperation, rather than conflict, economic and environmental interests can be compatible. Its mission is to catalyze and empower the people of the Great Plains to define and create their own generational sustainable future. It's focus is to strengthen and improve biological diversity and ecosystem health in ways that also strengthen and improve the economic, social and cultural foundations of the region. Much of the science needed to identify rare plants, animals and natural communities has been completed; working with others in creative ways to ensure their preservation is the task ahead.

Opportunities: The Great Plains Partnership is an excellent possibility for major Monsanto involvement. It is a unique global ecosystem in need of protection. The plains and its animals, such as bison and antelope, occupy a beloved place in the hearts of many Americans and others around the world with obvious possibilities for recognition and publicity. The Great Plains Partnership includes the kinds of partners Monsanto would find valuable. The approach being taken ties closely to Monsanto's vision of sustainability and includes balancing economic and environmental concerns. So far, no other company has stepped forward to play a major role.

Monsanto's Roles: There are several possibilities for Monsanto involvement:

*Leadership support: The Great Plains initiatives will be composed of a number of landscape-scale project areas where a combination of land and acquisition and leases, partnerships, and local cooperation will ensure ecological and economic values are preserved. Monsanto would have opportunities to play a role here, including with the use of its agricultural products in land stewardship and restoration.

*Local community partnerships: The Conservancy is also looking for local partnerships in small communities and with groups of citizens. For example, a group of cattle ranchers in the Sand Hills area of Nebraska recently asked TNC for technical advice in managing their rivers and watershed. Monsanto's expertise in hydrological management could have been useful here -- in this example we could have become a third partner, offering our technical expertise and support. This type of involvement offers the long-term partnership that goes beyond simply giving money. Of course we could also offer monetary assistance, such as to publicize the opportunity to work with us and TNC. Such publicity would hopefully help tap into the environmental ideas of many individuals throughout the region (while in the process gaining significant publicity for our own role).

*Self-sustaining environmental projects: TNC is also considering projects which combine ecological management with economic benefit. Such projects thus do not require constant funding. One example of this kind of project involves the cedar trees which grown up in endangered habitats since humans have limited the wildfires which used to keep them in check. Working with the conservancy,, a company currently removes these cedars, selling the popular furniture-making wood that comes from them, and creates

local jobs. Again, Monsanto could become a partner in identifying and initiating other such enterprises. Involving our technical know-how and regional networks of contacts to seek out these possibilities would move us beyond simply handing out money

. *Conservancy internal reorganization: The TNC would like some of the experiences learned in the Great Plains initiative to be spread to other conservation efforts by the Conservancy itself and by others. Monsanto could provide the seed money and support for communicating these lessons learned and thus benefit other environmental efforts.

Benefits: Favorable publicity, gaining respect and people who see us as partners over a wide geographical area, an opportunity to make a difference with technologies we already have, opportunities to position our products as part of the solution and the possibility to have a positive impact on a significant ecological region are among the benefits of supporting the Great Plains Partnership. On this last point: TNC's report stresses the large scope of its efforts. This is the first integrated effort to coordinate the conservation efforts over an entire bioregion. Even if Monsanto only participates in pieces of this plan, these pieces could have an impact over a significant world ecosystem.

Risks: There are risks with any partnership initiative of this size that is in its early stages. However, the interest of the partners increases the odds of success.

Potential Partners: The Nature Conservancy, the EPA, the Western Governors' Association, communities across the plains region, associations and specific groups of citizens.

Resources Needed: This depends upon the project or projects chosen. In addition to opportunities to give money, there are also opportunities to offer non-financial resources, such as technical knowledge.

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