

Category: Co-Winner of the Special Biodiversity Award

Company: Holcim

Location: El Puente, Spain

The El Puente gravel pit, located in the Toledo province about 45 km from Madrid, is a unique open-pit mining site which serves as a remarkable example of sustainable growth and flourishing biodiversity.

El Puente represents a model in terms of sustainable aggregate extraction due to the fact that, from day one, the planning of the rehabilitation process is carried out prior to the extraction work, and not after the machines have left the site. For this reason it is a reference in terms of how profitable exploitation, worker safety, environmental stewardship and social responsibility can be held in healthy balance.

The El Puente gravel pit has gone over 1,000 days without any accidents requiring a leave of absence, clearly reflecting the commitment of Holcim's workers and management to safe working conditions at the installations.

Systems have been implemented for recuperating water, oil and other waste, which, once separated, are collected by compliant waste management services. In fact, 95% of the water used in the workshops is reused and returns either to the circuit or serves for watering the roads to avoid excessive dust in the gravel pit.

The beauty of the lakes which now fill the excavated areas and the wealth of plant and animal life, such as the more than 200 species censused in the gravel pit lakes, (some included in the National Catalogue of Endangered Species) make the site seem like a nature reserve.

Holcim Spain's restoration efforts in El Puente gravel pit have been lauded by business associations, government bodies, environmental organisations and impartial certifying bodies. This recognition culminated when the El Puente gravel pit lakes, inhabited by thousands of birds, was designated a zone of special protection for birds (ZEPA) by the Government of Castile-La Mancha, under the framework of the Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

It is not by sheer coincidence that the El Puente gravel pit has become an outstanding example of environmental rehabilitation. Holcim's commitment to making this wildlife refuge a reality was the key driver behind its creation, working with sustainability and safety principles as strategic drivers.

Had it not been for this vision and commitment, this remarkable ecosystem never would have been possible.

