



GAINING GROUND

Hitachi ZW370-6 checks all the boxes for SC Rock

Tapping into a successful business formula isn't always easy, and many thriving contractors often train and gain insight by working in a family firm. For Bill Griste Sr., president of SC Rock, however, his competitive edge in the mining industry comes from years of experience at multiple jobs in his field combined with access to the only deposit of an aggregate in the region.

Based outside of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, SC Rock is a small family-owned company with just under 20 employees. Griste, who discovered the recrystallized limestone deposit at the company's Goretown Mine location a quarter-century ago, says the unique deposit allows them an advantage.

"No one ever thought this material was here — it's an anomaly, and we're blessed to have a corner on the market since we're a local supplier," he says. Griste explains that, before the discovery of the deposit, the prevailing belief was that the only materials in the area were primarily limestone sand and coquina

deposits. The recrystallized limestone, unique in that it is a rock formed by a crystallization process, is formed by a 10-million-year-old intertidal basin.

"People looked all over this county for years and found nothing that could pass as an aggregate," Griste says. "Finding this deposit opened up a whole new market."

Broadening the reach

SC Rock supplies more than a dozen products to a wide variety of customers for a range of applications, including roads, parking lots, bedding for water and sewer, and landscaping. They have a fine

base product they provide to customers for driveways and farms, and they supply Horry County material for use on unpaved roads. Though they've typically served the Grand Strand — a 50-mile radius around the mine — Griste says lately their geographical reach has been widening, and they've been serving a number of customers in southern North Carolina.

Of course, expanding their reach means maintaining a smoothly running operation to guarantee material availability. "Being a small company, we do everything here to fulfill our market, and we have to rely on extraction, production and processing," Griste says. "We have to have equipment available; if equipment is down, it affects the whole operation. No one wants to hear about your equipment being broken down. We want equipment that is reliable, dependable and available when we need it."



Left to right: Bill Griste Sr. and Josh Brookshire

“ Compared to the rest of the market, the ZW370-6 delivered the most uptime, low maintenance, and a competitive price, in a machine that will hold its value. That’s what we look for around here – a machine that’s going to perform for years to come. – Bill Griste Sr. ”

Perfect partnerships

To make sure he achieves that goal, Griste has partnered with Josh Brookshire of May Heavy Equipment. Brookshire, SC Rock’s main contact for sales and service, views the company as highly productive, and appreciates their need to boost efficiency and, most importantly, minimize downtime.

“I call on them multiple times a month, just to check on them and make sure everything is OK and see if they need anything,” Brookshire says. “We keep a Conex box on site at the mine just to make sure we have the parts we need for their equipment.”

Brookshire says when Griste was in the market for a new wheel loader, he immediately recommended the Hitachi ZW370-6. The company had some older Kawasakis they were replacing, and he thought the ZW370-6 would be a great fit for their needs.

Griste said the machine checked all the boxes. “Compared to the rest of the market, the ZW370-6 delivered the

most uptime, low maintenance, and a competitive price, in a machine that will hold its value. That’s what we look for around here – a machine that’s going to perform for years to come.”

The decision to purchase the ZW370-6 was quickly validated by Gregory Griste, Bill’s son, who operates the loader on a daily basis. He liked the performance and comfort of the machine. “I’m 6-foot-3, and the Hitachi ZW370-6 has a lot of room for someone my size,” Greg says. “I spend 50 hours a week minimum in it, and I have no complaints. There is plenty of arm and leg room, as well as seat comfort.”

With respect to the machine’s performance, Greg finds the ZW370-6 is helpful there, as well. “The Hitachi is very good going into the piles,” he says. “You want to be as quick as possible, and get a good time for each truck throughout the day. We’re now able to cut out one extra full bucket for each truck, and do it in two scoops as opposed to three.”

Brookshire says he’s happy with how well

the ZW370-6 is working out for SC Rock. “SC Rock’s downtime has been basically zero, and they’ve upped production,” he says. “The fact that the machine is DPF-free is great for contractors concerned with downtime. DPF tends to have some issues overall, so the system this machine has will have zero issues with the DEF problems. With the Hitachi system, you don’t have as many breakdowns or as many issues, which can downgrade a machine over time.”

He’s also pleased Griste is finding some of the machine’s features useful – particularly ConSite, which provides so much more than a standard telematics system. “ConSite works great for him,” he says. “He typically will see what production they did for that day. Since you can view the travel patterns of the machine, it helps him work with his operator to save time. ConSite helps him tighten everything up on the production side. And everyone likes the power button feature; they use it a lot here. They can hit that button and it gets them to the top of the pile faster. It’s a nice feature that not everyone has.”

Consistency is key

Griste notes that his company faces daily pressures from unpredictable demand, and production can be impacted by a variety of factors such as the elements. To survive and thrive, he says, his company and employees must be dependable and reliable.

“You must be consistent day in and day out, and maintain a high level of production,” he says. “Anyone in the mining business must persevere and have people and equipment around you that can help you do that.”

With respect to the future, expansion is in the works. The mine sits on 900 acres, and they plan to begin work on a new section, which will require hiring new employees. “We have proven reserves that will take us decades into the future, so we see ourselves as a major part of this market for years to come. My boys and I will be able to continue doing what we’re doing – but even more so.” ■