

FIRST UP!

Big Creek Sand & Gravel transitions from Kawasaki to Hitachi Wheel Loaders

Story and photos by Aaron Marsh



It's no surprise that Borger, Texas-based Big Creek Sand & Gravel would take the lead in trying out new Hitachi equipment. The sand and gravel operation depends on its current Hitachi wheel loaders for reliability and productivity. When the company reviewed the specs for the Hitachi ZW330-6, the machine's features aligned with its needs, and it added the powerful, efficient ZW330-6 to its fleet.

Charles Harvey, mine manager at Big Creek, says the two Hitachi ZW330-6s that the company is running have met and even exceeded their expectations. They're the first two to be sold in the U.S.

"For productivity and reliability, this is one of the best loaders we've operated," he notes. "And performance is everything for a company that handles Big Creek's scope of work."

Big Creek's 60-plus employees provide aggregate sales, trucking, asphalt paving and earthwork for clients that include the Texas Department of Transportation and ConocoPhillips Company. To accomplish this, the company's digging operation is up and running six days a week, up to 11 hours each day, producing sand and gravel as well as concrete aggregate, concrete sand and hot-mix aggregate in its sifting and crushing operations.

"We produce our sand and gravel for our contractors, who mainly use it for highway construction work," Harvey says. One of the company's contractors is working a project on Highway 60, and another is doing a project on Interstate 40. Another contractor has a Route 60 project coming up next year.

In addition to the Hitachi ZW330-6s, Big Creek is running Kawasaki wheel loaders including seven 92Z7s, five 90ZVs, and one 95ZV along with a Hitachi ZW370-6. The company also operates three Caterpillar D6 dozers, in addition to rock crushing and material separating machinery.

Why choose Big Creek over the competition? Harvey says it comes down to reliably good product. "We take a lot of pride in our material and make sure it's of good quality," he says.

EFFICIENT OPERATION

The decision to buy the new Hitachi ZW330-6 revolves around the quest for power, technology, efficiency and productivity.

Falling right in the middle of Hitachi's ZW-6 wheel loader lineup, the ZW330-6 delivers 26% higher traction force than the prior model, allowing the loader to dig deeper and more efficiently into piles of material. It has a number of fuel-saving features as well, and offers technological sophistication, with complimentary built-in advanced telematics and business logistics monitoring through their ConSite suite of programs and apps designed to assist owners and fleet managers to manage the cost of ownership.

One of the standout features on this model is that its Cummins engine does not have a diesel particulate filter, or DPF, which helps improve fuel efficiency and eliminates a major maintenance item.

"The Hitachis have the selective catalytic reduction systems (SCR) with no DPF. That's huge," says Dallas McMann, general manager at Amarillo Machinery

“ For productivity and reliability, this is one of the best loaders we've operated. ”

“ Performance is everything for a company that handles Big Creek's scope of work. ”

– Charles Harvey, mine manager for Big Creek



Company, Big Creek's Hitachi dealer. "That's one more item eliminated that could have potentially caused problems or become another cost item down the road."

Despite the lack of a DPF filter, the ZW330-6's engine is Tier 4 Final compliant and has low emissions thanks to its SCR technology. The urea/diesel exhaust fluid tank is located at ground level for quick access and easier filling. The engine also incorporates exhaust gas recirculation technology to reduce emissions.

Harvey agrees that the lack of DPF is a game-changer with the ZW330-6. "Particulate filter is always a problem, and without that it does help," he says.

To maximize efficiency and fuel economy, the ZW330-6's engine features a common rail fuel injection system and a programmable idle shutdown system that limits fuel waste while reducing emissions and noise. The 310-horsepower engine produces 1,070 foot-pounds of torque and features a quick power boost button that increases power output by 10%.

ADVANCED SAFETY

The visibility in the ZW330-6 contributes substantially to safe machine operation. Hitachi eliminates opaque rear pillars, which create blind spots and delivers a 360-degree view for the operator. This sets the Hitachi machine apart from competitors.

"The guys love the increased visibility of the loader and its direct impact on safety," Harvey says.

A rear-view camera also improves visibility and boosts safety. McMann points out that the rear-view camera displays on the multifunctional LCD monitor in front of the driver, which also shows other useful information such as fuel and DEF levels.

"The location of the backup camera display is in front of you — instead of off to the side or up top like it is in other models — where it's easier to see as you're performing your operations," McMann says.

Finally, the ZW330-6 also has LED tail lights and optional front and rear LED work lights for better illumination, even in low-light conditions.



TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP MANAGEMENT

McMann says that productivity decision making is streamlined with Hitachi's ConSite remote intelligent monitoring and managing applications. "The ZW330-6 lowers the total cost of operation by offering hardware and software programs that improve efficiency, reduce downtime and monitor productivity," he says.

ConSite goes beyond telematics. The dealer can monitor the health and productivity of the ZW Dash-6 loaders and can make recommendations to quickly and efficiently "predict and prevent" unscheduled downtime. There's a full suite of tools designed to manage performance and productivity, from idle and operating time to fuel efficiency, location services and managing maintenance schedules. The new ConSite pocket app displays the operational status of the loaders over smart phones and Google maps.

OPERATOR COMFORT

Gary Hudgens, a supervisor at Big Creek, says the ZW330-6's controls are another benefit. "I like how smooth the controls are on them. I love the controls," he says. In addition, he says the driver environment is optimized and quieter thanks to improved sound insulation in the cab and the low-noise Cummins engine, which is particularly useful for operations that run long hours, such as Big Creek. An E-Stick joystick steering and function is designed to make operation simpler and easier.

Operator comfort is a big part of the ZW330-6's appeal, McMann says. "There are a lot of features in there to give that operator comfort," he says. "If an operator is in there for 10-12 hours a day, you want him to feel comfortable."

DEALER-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

Harvey says the dealer relationship and service are a large part of the decision to purchase the Hitachi wheel loaders. "We have a good relationship with Amarillo Machinery. They help us with equipment decisions and provide the service we need to keep our operation running safely and productively," he says.

McMann says to factor in the benefits of selling equipment with cutting-edge technology like ConSite, lower cost of ownership, productivity, safety and driver comfort, and you can see why this close dealer-customer relationship works so well. ■

Watch Big Creek Sand & Gravel's story on being the first to purchase the ZW330-6 in the U.S. market.

youtu.be/vn-54nC8504

