



# Born to produce

A Pennsylvania producer – and its sister company that manufactures dredges – knows a thing or two about material extraction.

By Patrick Hernan

**D**avid P. Hoobler knows a thing or two about life's challenges. He delivered his sixth child in a hospital elevator 11 years ago and stood there holding her while the flabbergasted nurses waiting there when the doors opened scampered to get help.

"It's one of my best memories," says Hoobler, who has himself given birth to two companies — H&H Materials, a progressive sand-and-gravel operation in Stoneboro, Pa., its manufacturing arm, Supreme Manufacturing Inc. Both are located in rural Mercer County, just off Interstate 79.

An ability to think clearly during moments in which others might panic also has served Hoobler well in business. His firm has transformed itself over 21 years from a two-person operation that lacked production equipment into a modern dynamo that employs 16 and has become a vital member of the community.

## CHALLENGE

Getting good production out of bad material.

## SOLUTION

A Supreme dredge and floating conveyor system.

## TIP

After its first plunge of the day, the bucket "remembers" its position, and its descent rate into the pond quickens.

## Supreme dredge

The linchpin of H&H's operation is a heavy-duty dredge made by Supreme, its sister firm. Supreme is in the process of marketing the fully automated dredge nationally after it built a multistory machine for H&H and married it per-

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# sand and gravel

fectly to a floating conveying system. The floating system, which includes 420 ft. of conveyor, joins a land-based system that shuttles product about half a mile to the plant for final processing.

Supreme offers both the dredge and the conveying systems as a means of helping producers reduce labor costs, increase efficiency, reduce downtime and minimize the need to purchase expensive haul trucks and loading equipment, Hoobler says.

H&H hosted an open house earlier this year to showcase the dredge for customers, employees and members of the closely knit community of Stoneboro. About 150 people attended and saw what Hoobler describes as a next-generation piece of machinery that maximizes production and requires only one person to operate.

"We set this up so we can handle poor material and still get big production," Hoobler says. "Anybody can handle the good stuff."

The dredge, which can be tailored to a producer's individual specifications, features a 10-cu.-yd. clamshell suspended on cables. The bucket is capable of lifting material from a depth of 200 ft. On the day Pit & Quarry visited, H&H hauled up load after load from a depth of 64 ft. A back-up operator was at the helm because the regular dredge man was attending a mandatory safety-training class the firm was holding.

## Dredge particulars

Among the equipment on the dredge is a control cabin, a tool room and small shop, an 8- x 20-ft., two-deck screen, a 7- x 12-ft., single-deck screen, two 15-in. cyclones, a tilting grizzly, two feed gates and a rock chute for oversize. The hopper has a capacity of 460 cu. ft. The well into which the bucket plunges is 46 ft., 6-in. wide. Hoobler says the dredge and its conveyor add-ons enjoy uptime of more than 95 percent. The firm consistently produces up to 500 tph. Employees work two 9-hour shifts.

"We can adjust that upward to two 10-hour shifts or two 12-hour shifts to match production needs," he notes. H&H's typical production season begins in March and ends in December. Customers' needs

are met through stockpiles during cold winter months.

A 100-hp electric, hydraulic motor inside the bucket that runs forward and backward makes easy work of the material, which is deposited into a hopper. A 500-hp motor powers the hoist. Initial separation is accomplished through the use of Deister screens. Should oversize material clog the hopper feed, an operator can summon an electric hammer. Because the system is automated, the bucket waits until the hammer finishes its job before moving into position.

After its first plunge of the day, the bucket "remembers" its position and its descent rate into the pond quickens. An amperage monitor helps keep track of the underwater load, which is hoisted to the surface.



"It's sort of, 'Beam me up, Scotty,'" Hoobler says of the machine's electronic systems, all of which are monitored by a computer in the dredge's air-conditioned control cabin.

Behind the room is a compartment that encases all the machine's circuitry behind secure electric panels. The circuit room is equipped with a refrigerator and microwave oven. Atop the dredge is a hoist trolley house. Safety rails are present on the dredge's walkways. Moving parts are enclosed to prevent injuries, and only minimal vibrations are

**The land-based portion of the conveyor system shuttles product half a mile to the plant for processing.**



The dredge at H&H can be tailored to make product exactly to a producer's individual specifications.

felt on the decks despite the presence of powerful equipment.

Operators can set the drain time on the bucket for whatever they want. The bucket then moves automatically to the hopper and the material starts a journey of more than 2,400 ft. back to the plant on 36-in. conveyor belts.

### To the plant

Once material is conveyed to the plant over land, it enters 1,800 ft. of stacking conveyor for further screening and processing into the firm's principal sand-and-gravel products. H&H produces seven types of sand, including three masonry sands and 10 different grades of stone or blends.

Concrete sand is the firm's principal product, but Hoobler says H&H has a history of making

products "no one else wants to mess with or change their plant to make. We set up our plant so we could make changes."

The firm's focus is on making customers happy the first time. "We offer quality material at a quality price, but making special blends is how we got our ft in the door in 1979," Hoobler says.

Today's plant bears no resemblance to the start-up business into which Hoobler entered with his father. That plant, Hoobler says, featured one conveyor — from the hopper to the main screen.

The sand and stone plants plant include equipment from Deister, McLanahan, Linatex, Kolberg, Gorman-Rupp, Eagle Iron Works and others.

H&H started offering conveying systems and other products for sale about a decade ago, Hoobler says. Disappointed with its inability to get parts needed to run its dredging operation at maximum uptime, the firm began to brainstorm on how it might build a machine equipped with all U.S.-made components.

"It was hard to get replacement parts," Hoobler says of the firm's decision to start making dredges. "Our 8-yd. clamshell hydraulic was not big enough and had too many foreign parts, which resulted in increased downtime.

"We decided we could do it better ourselves, so we built a new 10-yard [machine] with as many U.S. and interchangeable parts as possible."

Uptime is the key to the Supreme dredge, Hoobler says. "We looked at every detail possible to make it serviceable." **PQ**

## Community involvement earns dividends

**H**&H Materials is located behind a cornfield in the closely knit small town of Stoneboro, Pa., home of the famous Stoneboro Fair.

Company Vice President Neil Hoobler says the firm values its role in the community and has undertaken a number of projects to make charming Stoneboro and the surrounding communities in rural Mercer County even nice places to live.

"We try to sponsor things in the community, especially Little League, where we donate material for the fields," Hoobler says.

Office manager Will Rose says the firm also actively supports volunteer fire departments, the United Way, the

American Heart Association and a youth center known as "Downtown Ministries."

In addition, Rose says, the firm advertises in local programs and flyers nonprofit organizations create to help raise funds. The ads don't pay for themselves, but that's not really the point. "We're just helping out a good cause," Rose says.

H&H President David Hoobler says members of his work force of 16 appreciate the firm's efforts and are proud their employer donates material, manpower and equipment to serve a community need.

"We have extraordinarily loyal help," Hoobler says. "Last year, we

had 10 employees who didn't miss a day of work all year."

H&H rewarded those employees by presenting each with a \$100 bonus that was distributed during the holiday shopping season. "Christmas time was perfect for it," Hoobler says.

But bonuses and community involvement are not solely responsible for H&H's ability to retain good workers during a time in which the economy is humming and many companies are losing employees. Safety-training seminars the firm holds help send the message that management cares about its work force. "They're not just for compliance," Hoobler says.