



## Greenbush company ships dredges to Iraq W&S still going strong two years after sale

by Jason Ogden

GREENBUSH – When Tom Stojsik, founder of W&S Dredge Manufacturer, sold his company in 2006, he wanted to see it and employees in good hands.

“I didn’t want to see my 38 years go to waste when I retired,” he said at the time. “I also felt an obligation to my employees and wanted to leave the company in the hands of experienced, trustworthy people.”

His goal was realized and now, two years later, the company continues to thrive.

W&S still builds dredges – floating platforms with large pumps to suck dirt, sand or gravel from the bottom of a waterway – from Stojsik’s original design. The dredges can deepen waterways as much as 20 feet.

The company is based in Greenbush, but is now owned by Better Dredges, Inc., an affiliate of Dredging Supply Company of Louisiana and, according to General Manager Rose Koenig, business is good.

Thursday, three dredges valued at nearly \$800,000 started the long journey from the Greenbush yard by truck, with an eventual destina-

tion in Iraq.

A massive crane used nylon straps to lift the machines, which are the length of three compact cars, onto the flatbeds.

Koenig said the machines will travel to Philadelphia, then be shipped across the Atlantic Ocean.

The shipment of three dredges at one time is unusual for the company, Koenig said.

These are the first ever W&S dredges sold to Iraq and included an uncommon option – air conditioning.

According to Brian Kunding, who works in the purchasing and receiving department, many dredges have been sold to South American countries over the years for a number of different purposes.

One is used for shrimp farming in Ecuador, another on a Colombian banana plantation, said Kunding.

Koenig said, over the years, the company has made more units than it can count and now typically manufactures from six to 10 a year.

W&S employs 10 people full time.



Photo by Jason Ogden

**MIDEAST BOUND** – The Badger model of a W&S Dredge sits waiting to be loaded onto a semi. This dredge was constructed for a company to be used in Iraq.

Kunding explained how the dredge works and some of the special features that go into the machine.

Because the dredge will be used in a saltwater environment – which is highly corrosive to steel construction – zinc sacrificial anodes are installed near the underside of the dredge’s pontoons.

According to Kunding, the salt water will attack the zinc and corrode it, instead of the steel.

Most of the parts are fabricated in Greenbush, with the exception of the pumps, tubing and the John Deere engine, which is the largest model offered by the tractor manufacturer.

When the dredge is on water, a large metal device called a ladder is extended into the water.

On the end of the ladder is a suction hose, as well as a mechanical unit which loosens up the underwater soil.

That soil is pumped through the machine and out tubing which extends onto the shore.

As the machine works further and further from shore, as much as 2,500 more feet of tubing can be added, Kunding said.

The company offers two production models, the Wolverine and its smaller cousin, the Badger.

And each one is built right in Greenbush, Mich.



Photo by Jason Ogden

**TOOTHY** – This spinning head sits on the bottom of the ladder, which is lowered into the water from the dredge. The head stirs up material on the bottom of the waterway, which is then sucked up.

## Mackinac Bridge work begins Northbound delays are expected

MACKINAW CITY – Northbound travellers should expect delays when crossing the Mackinac Bridge for the next few months.

Beginning today, April 9, the Mackinac Bridge Authority (MBA) will start work to resurface the entire northbound side of I-75 on the bridge. The project includes concrete deck and steel joint repairs and replacement of concrete curb. Completion is expected in late June.

Northbound traffic will be shifted to the southbound side from Jamet Street in Mackinaw City to the tollbooths in St. Ignace. Two-way traffic will be maintained for

the duration of the project. Wide loads will be restricted to crossing only once a day.

Motorists are encouraged to use extreme caution and drive at or below the posted speed when crossing the bridge. Passing will not be allowed.

According to the MBA, the \$3.2 million price tag includes the work to be done this year and similar improvements to the southbound side in 2009.

Once completed, life of the deck will be extended by several years and motorists will enjoy a smoother ride, according to the agency.



Photo by Jason Ogden

**CONSTRUCTION** – Steve Donajkowski, left, welds together the pontoon of a dredge, while Aaron Burkhart assists.