

SHORT-TURN RADIUS HELPS BUILD HIGH-DOLLAR DREAMS

Gently rolling pine-forested hills, sandy soils, and a cooler, drier climate help define the distinct eco-region known as the Sandhills Area of south-central North Carolina. Ever since James Tufts came to the region in 1895 and decided it was the perfect location for a health resort, visitors lured to the area by his first-rate resort have been equally charmed. And after Tufts built a golf course at his Pinehurst Resort, leading to 18-hole mania that swept the entire region, development of lush golf courses and high-end residential sites have kept planning engineers and contractors hopping ever since.

One of the beneficiaries of this building boom is Sandhills Contractors, Inc. of Sanford. “We started in 1988 as a subcontractor laying pipe for Highway Constructors; they were involved in municipal, state and residential projects,” says Robert Fulton, Vice President. “As we grew, we got more involved in municipal work till the tax cuts of the early 2000s. Now we’re more into residential and commercial development. Most of the concrete work we do is still for cities and towns. The water and sewer work tends to be in the private market.”

“We do the grading, all the underground utilities, and the

curb, sidewalk, and gutter work,” adds President Ronnie Turner. “The only thing we don’t do is asphalt.”

One of their most recent projects is with Hobbs, Upchurch and Associates, a full-service engineering and planning firm whose

headquarters are in nearby Southern Pines.

Through them, Sandhills is doing the site development for Mid South Golf’s new posh residential development. Shady lots are nestled between fairways, selling for a cool quarter of a million dollars each. Buyers are eagerly snapping them up.

Sandhills purchased their first Kawasaki wheel loader in 1997. It was a 65ZIV and they used it to carry pipe and backfill trenches. A year later they bought a second 65ZIV. In 2004, they bought a 65ZV. Although a larger size might seem more useful, the company actually finds the smaller size more productive.

“All our 65s have quick couplers to handle forks and buckets,” says Fulton. “For what we do, this is a niche machine for us. Anything smaller would be too small. But in these tight areas with pipe, like this 50-foot right of way here at Mid South, the 65s work perfectly. They turn short and they’re fast. In our business, time is money and we like to move.”

Generally, Sandhills Contractors runs three to four jobs simultaneously, using 15 to 20 people. They work a 60-mile radius around Sanford, with the bulk of it in the southern quadrant because it has less rock, making it easier to dig. Although the company doesn’t really need to advertise for work anymore, they are careful to keep in constant touch with their engineering contacts. “When a city or corporation has a big job, they contact everybody they can find,” explains Fulton. “But when it’s a small job, they have a short list of people they are comfortable with. So when that job is up our alley, they’ll call to say we might want to take a look at it.”

And odds are that one of their Kawasaki 65s will find itself in yet another tight spot where its short turn radius and quick speed will make Sandhills Contractors money.

Sandhills Contractors, Inc. is serviced by the Raleigh branch of Interstate Equipment Company.

(Right) Many contractors sub out curb work. But Sandhills does their own curb, gutter, and sidewalk work. This slipform machine extrudes a continuous feed of concrete through a mold to form both curb and gutter simultaneously. Only a little bit of hand finishing is required.



**Sandhills Contractors
President Ronnie Turner**



Vice President Robert Fulton

“ They turn short and they’re fast. In our business, time is money and we like to move. ”

– Robert Fulton, Vice-President



Sandhills is doing the site prep for this new housing subdivision in Fayetteville, North Carolina. The company's fleet of Kawasaki wheel loaders uses quick couplers to swap out between buckets and adjustable 48- to 60-inch forks.