

# SALT OF THE EARTH



**A**s you drive through the thriving fields of Cotton, Soybeans, Rice and Corn to reach the Caruthersville, MO terminal for the Bruce Oakley Company, you are stunned with the majesty of America's farmlands.

"We are blessed in this part of the country with very fertile soil and plenty of water," agrees Mark Wade, the terminal's manager. "Handling fertilizer can be a corrosive and dusty business at times and the deteriorating effect on machinery is amazing—but, it is very, very satisfying to realize that the success of those crops is due in part to fertilizer products we buy from all over the world and then sell to our customers, who then spread it on the croplands."

## A SIMPLE START

Bruce Oakley left the 10th grade for Arkansas farm work, a stint in the military and ultimately farming with an itch to ever do better. And for him, his first opportunity came in the form of a dump truck that he bought to transport and then spread dry fertilizer from the local dealer. By the time he was around 34, he'd established himself and the Bruce Oakley Company was founded.

Today, the company has become an integrated provider of road and river transportation of dry bulk commodities as well as grain storage and bulk fertilizer sales.

The company has 11 river terminals on the Arkansas, Mississippi and Red rivers, approximately 700+ bulk semi trailers pulled by 650 owner-operator trucks leased to the company, a large tug boat service, hundreds of barges and multiple stevedoring cranes and operators. It is headquartered in North Little Rock, Arkansas and Mr. Oakley's son, Dennis, has aggressively moved the company forward with multiple acquisitions over the past decade.

## FROM BARGE TO FIELD

"Our company will buy partial or full vessels of fertilizers that may originate from the United States, Canada, Europe, the Middle East, Russia and even China, notes Wade. It is typically off loaded on to barges and brought to our terminal. The other company terminals operate the same way.

"We handle Granular Urea, Diammonium Phosphate, Potash, Super Triple Phosphate, Ammonium Nitrate, Ammonium Sulphate and Road Salt. Although, as a company, we buy from all over the world, most of our customers are fairly close by... although we can boast sales in four states since we're near the intersection of Southern Missouri, Western Tennessee, North Mississippi and North Arkansas."

The products are unloaded one barge at a time with a tethered excavator, which dumps into a hopper for conveying into selected bins. "Each barge holds about 58-65 semi loads of

fertilizer," notes Wade. "And during our busy season, we'll load as many as 100 semi loads a day. So, most weeks, we're actively unloading multiple barges. Barges are delivered by in-house and various towing companies."

The trucking is handled by a combination of Bruce Oakley trucks, customer trucks and multiple other trucking companies. "We sell to the multiple fertilizer dealers who then sell to and typically spread the fertilizer in the fields."

## EXTREME CORROSION

Each of the terminals use wheel loaders to move the fertilizer within the bins and to fill truck load orders by getting the fertilizer from the specified bin and then driving outside to a hopper which augers the product into the semi trailer.

"We are the most northern terminal owned by the company," says Wade, "and we sell a significant amount of road ice melt salt in the winter. The salt is not augured from a hopper, but instead dumped over the trailer side by the loader. Some of the trailers are pretty tall, so we actually have the largest wheel loaders of the fleet—the 85Z7 model. We've found that it works well with 5.2 yd. material handling bucket for efficiently loading the salt while still being compact enough to easily work in the bins. We specified the High Lift option and the taller, 26.5R25 tires."



## 85Z7 SUMMARY

**ISUZU 6HK1 Tier 4I engine w/ 243 net HP; 3-element, single stage torque convertor and 4-forward speeds automatically controlled by the unique, KCM Intellitech System for peak performance.**

- **Standard Dump Clearance:** 9'10 1/8"
- **High Lift Dump Clearance:** 11'3 1/8"
- **Overall Length:** 27'9"
- **Height to top of cab:** 11'4 1/4"
- **General Purpose Bucket Capacity:** 4.8 cu. yd.
- **Material Handling Bucket Capacity:** 5.2 cu. yd.
- **Tire Size Options:** 23.5R25 or 26.5R25



*"This is our 2nd round of Kawasaki (KCM) loaders. We had a good experience before and especially like the new design," says Mark Wade.*



*Nearly all materials are barged to the facility and off loaded by a tethered excavator.*



*The 85Z7 loaders are the right size for working inside the fertilizer bins then loading.*



*"We load as many as 100 semi trailers a day during peak season. Everything needs to work without delay."*

The two Kawasaki (KCM) 85Z7 loaders are equipped with the Fertilizer Package that includes extreme air filtration for the engine and cab filtration and pressurization for the operator. Load Rite on-board weigh scales are used constantly to ensure that the trucks are not over or under loaded.

"This is our 2nd round of using a pair of Kawasaki (KCM) wheel loaders," states Wade. "We had a good experience before, but we had a different dealer who was further away than our new dealer, Heavy Machines. The new dealership gave us a price that we liked, and we're glad to be back with the Kawasaki (KCM) loaders.

"We've learned that it is important to trade loaders every three years, regardless of hours, because of the corrosion caused by working fertilizer. It affects the electrical wiring harnesses,

the hydraulic connections, and brake lines. With one of the new loaders, we decided to try a protective coating over the connections called Nylac. So, we'll see how that helps.

"And, I do like the new design. For our industry, I especially like the increased use of fiberglass, plastic and poly. I also like the Isuzu engine. I like the power it puts out, the fuel efficiency and, I like the way they handle the Tier 4 regen situation. We seemed to have a lot of regen issues on the different brand machines they replaced.

"I'm very happy with our decision to go with the Kawasaki (KCM) loaders and Heavy Machines as our dealer."

**Bruce Oakley, Inc. serviced by Heavy Machinery Inc., Memphis, TN**