Gumbo

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$300 million Deep Soil Mixing Project Racing Toward Completion

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They came, they mixed, they delivered.

In only two weeks, Treviicos South will have completed what is being hailed as the largest deep soil mixing project in the U.S., and possibly the world. "We had eight rigs running at one time, and it was pretty intense," says Wesley Schmutzler, project manager. From August 16, 2010 to January 6, 2011, Treviicos' peak crew of 180 was running three Japanese and five Trevi/Soilmec rigs, 24 hours per day, 5.5 days per week, in order to mix 1.7 million cubic yards.

Photo courtesy Filippo Leoni, project engineer & technical manager, Treviicos South

Treviicos is a specialty sub to the joint venture of Archer Western and Alberici, tasked with delivering a $300 million contract for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to bring a 5.3-mile long stretch of earthen levee from + 17 ft. to +28 ft. as part of the Greater New Orleans Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System.

I reported on the project back in April (https://enr.construction.com/engineering/subscription/LoginSubscribe.aspx?cid=14346.

"This kept us busy and used a lot of resources," Schmutzler says. The deep soil mixing required about 460,000 tons of cement. Delivering the cement to the site was a logistical challenge. "At the peak, when we had eight rigs running, we were delivering 110 trucks per day at 26 tons per load," Schmutzler says. At the same time, the AWA jv was hauling in clay to increase the height of the levee.

Photo courtesy Filippo Leoni, project engineer & technical manager, Treviicos South

Not only did Treviicos prove to the engineering community that such a project is possible, Treviicos achieved "phenomenal" coring, Schmutzler says. "We cored 3 % of the elements installed, close to 600 cores for quality control/ quality assurance purposes."

Treviicos is actually ahead of schedule because the contractor had the foresight to order a bunch of spare parts and tapped into support from Trevi's Soilmec division, Schmutzler says. "Most companies would have had trouble finding as many resources as we did performing the job, but we were able to keep from having any down time with equipment."

Keeping pace with the schedule was critical to the AWA jv's ability to meet its May 31 deadline on completing the overall project. Archer Western and Alberici are following behind Treviicos with 1.6 million cubic yards of clay. "Basically, we knock it down with dozers and we disc it up with a tractor and a plow," says Mike McClellan, construction manager for the AWA jv. "We let the sun and wind hit it. We disc it up every day until it reaches the specified moisture. Then we roll and use compactors and put on the next 12-inch lift." The biggest challenge moving forward, McClellan says, is the weather, which is always fickle in New Orleans. "If we have good weather, it will be easy to finish. If the weather's bad, it will be challenging." Luckily, January and February have been unseasonably dry.

Currently, the joint venture is placing about 9-10,000 tons per day and driving 150 ft. long H-piles without splicing in the leads, McClellan says. "Normally, you get to 120 or 130 ft long, and you have to weld on the leads, but we're working with a supplier called Birminghammer and using their pile lead system (with a Manitowoc 2250). That has increased our production."

One mile of the project is already complete, and another three miles are between 70 and 80% complete. "We're just getting started on lifts on the last mile," McClellan says. The project is on schedule to meet the Corps' June 1, 2011 deadline to provide 100-year levels of protection from storm surge. "We had a late start, but we have been able to make up the schedule by adding rigs and equipment," McClellan says. "And it's under budget."

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