

PROJECT PROFILE

PROJECT: CAMP FIRE REMEDIATION

LOCATION: PARADISE, CA

APPLICATION: SEDIMENT CONTROL

PRODUCT: SILTSOXX™ (5" DIAMETER)

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For Matthew Kearns, erosion control was always a family business. Matt's father started an erosion control business in the late 1980s with a focus on lawns, sports fields and golf courses. Matt and his younger brother, Chad helped their dad out with the business. When Matt graduated from high school, he joined the military and his brother continued working for his dad. When Matt returned home from his military service in 2016, he and Chad were ready to start their own business.

"We knew we wanted to start some sort of business together," said Matt. "We already had all the equipment from my dad so we decided to go into erosion control on the construction side. That's how Grassroots Erosion Control, Inc. started."

In October of 2017, Northern California saw a series of 250 wildfires, covering 245,000 acres and destroying nearly 9,000 buildings. A debris removal company contacted Grassroots for help with post-fire remediation. At this point, the business was just Matt and Chad but they were able to provide erosion control for 170 lots in Northern California. Grassroots was exclusively hydro-mulching at this time.

In July of 2018, another debris removal company contacted Grassroots for post-fire remediation help on the Carr Fire, which burned in Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area. The Carr Fire burned nearly 230,000 acres and destroyed over 1,600 buildings. This time, Grassroots was able to provide erosion control using hydro-mulch and straw wattles on 800 lots.

When the Camp Fire hit in November of 2018, Matt knew they were going to need additional help for the workload



that this fire would entail. "We knew we were going to have to hire a crew for Camp Fire. We needed more bodies," said Matt.

"What we really wanted to do was hire locally and give back to the community. We knew people had lost jobs, their homes and were in desperate need of work. We used Alliance for Workforce Development, Inc. to be paired with people in the community who lost their homes and needed work."

As Matt began to hire crew members unfamiliar with how to install erosion control products, he realized there was a need for education. Matt met with Filtrexx sales representative Bryan Hofmann and they discussed the need for a best practices workshop. Matt had attended a previous erosion control workshop with David Franklin, consultant with Envirotech NPDES Services.

"I had attended two of David's workshops in the past and David is a great teacher," said Matt. "Our original idea was to just educate Grassroots crew members, but Bryan took the workshop idea and ran with it."

Bryan organized over 100 participants in the post-fire remediation workshop held in Paradise, California in May that included consultants, government agencies, erosion control companies and more.

"Our guys really liked the workshop," said Matt. "We still use David's lingo from the workshop. I had a few guys that didn't attend and they really missed out. The workshop was

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so helpful and I'd do another one in a heartbeat. We're about education at Grassroots and we want to be on the forefront of change in our industry. We aren't just doing stuff to do stuff."

When Matt and his crew aren't doing post-fire remediation clean-up, they work on Caltrans projects. Matt wants Grassroots to be a leader in the erosion control industry when it comes to product use.

"This industry is always evolving," he said. "New products are always being introduced and we want to understand how they all work. Some people just throw out BMP's just to do it. We

want to do things with a purpose."



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