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ACA PRODUCTS

Buena Vista-based aggregate producer/contractor offers wide range of services to mountain customers



Michael Coleman,
President

About 100 miles due west of Colorado Springs, sits the Rocky Mountain town of Buena Vista. Founded in 1864 as a farming community, by the mid-1890s it had become a popular stagecoach and railroad stopover. Its agricultural-based economy tended to make it more stable than the mining or prospecting communities in the region. Today, summer tourism is a leading industry. Buena Vista is known as the “Whitewater Capital of the World” because it has more whitewater rafters and kayakers on the nearby Arkansas River than any other river in the world.

ACA Products is one of Buena Vista’s largest employers. Like the town itself, it has a rich history. Originally, ACA was part of Avery Structures, which became ASI RCC, a roller-compacted concrete company that does major dam projects around the world. In 1997, Owner Paul Moltz, a dam-building specialist, sold ASI RCC, then bought back the aggregate part of the business the following year and started ACA.

Today, ACA Products (ACA stands for asphalt, concrete and aggregates) offers a wide range of services to customers within a 50-mile radius

of Buena Vista. The company has four pits and one quarry that produce washed sand; washed rock, gravel and road chips; crushed aggregates including road base, drain gravel and RAP; and top soil and screened fill dirt. ACA also makes both concrete and asphalt for area contractors and is a contractor itself, with a paving side and an earthwork side.

“When you’re in the mountains, it helps to be relatively self-sufficient, which we are,” said ACA Products President Michael Coleman. “Material production is our largest division and what we’re best known for. We have multiple wash plants and crushing spreads, including mobile crushers. We’ve done mobile crushing at the Climax Mine for the last five years. We have asphalt and concrete plants here at our main pit in Buena Vista.

“Because of where we’re located, our construction side does a lot of water-related projects including dams, park grounds and river restoration,” he added. “Our Owner, Paul Moltz, may be the most respected dam authority in the state. A few years back, we spent three entire summers working on an asphalt dam. Last summer we did the earthwork for a dam in Creede. That’s a specialty which suits us, but we do other construction as well, such as street paving. This past winter and spring, we built the Ruby Mountain Campground near Nathrop, which is a popular spot for rafting and four-wheeling enthusiasts.”

Quality product and professional service

In addition to supplying its own construction crews, ACA Products also sells material to other contractors, who can pick it up or have it delivered. The company employs up to 60 people during its busy summer months. It tries

The Rocky Mountains provide a stunning backdrop for ACA Products’ quarry near Buena Vista.





The Avery Pit is the largest of four ACA Products pits that produce a wide range of material including sand, washed rock and crushed aggregates. The company uses primarily Komatsu equipment to run the pits. "We've used Komatsu for many years and have always been very happy with the product," said President Michael Coleman.

to keep everybody on the payroll during the winter by having employees build stockpiles, do construction and catch up on maintenance.

"Although it varies somewhat from year to year, material supply is probably about 60 percent of our business, with contracting the other 40 percent," Coleman reported. "I think what separates us from other aggregate suppliers is a combination of quality products and top service. We pride ourselves on having consistently clean products that are readily available. When it comes to service, we're committed to getting customers in and out of the yard quickly. If we're delivering aggregate or concrete, we do so in a timely and professional manner. Our customers appreciate that we have quality equipment, which helps ensure promptness.

"Of course, our employees are key as well," he added. "Our guys are talented and experienced. We have an excellent retention rate. Most of them have been with us five to 10 years. Our operators are highly productive and so are our concrete and aggregate delivery drivers. Up here in the mountains, there are some difficult sites that can be challenging to reach. Our guys are good drivers, and once they get to the site, they know what they're doing."

Coleman says ACA's employees, led by Aggregate Production Superintendent Josh Criswell, are also very safety conscious.

"That's something we emphasize as a company, and our employees have bought into it. It definitely makes us better. We get a lot of



compliments from people, even Mine Safety and Health Administration inspectors, on our pits. They are some of the cleanest, neatest aggregate operations you'll find anywhere. We believe having an orderly site allows us to operate safer and more efficiently. And for some of our customers, safety is not just suggested, it's mandatory. For example, at Climax Mine, if you don't work safely and have the record to prove it, you're gone. In fact, if your safety standards aren't adequate, you won't be allowed on the property in the first place."

Reliable, long-lasting Komatsu equipment

Hand-in-hand with its commitment to safety, service and productivity is ACA Products' equipment fleet. The company primarily runs Komatsu equipment from Power Motive at its quarry, pits and construction sites. Sales Rep Dakota Warren works closely with Coleman on equipment matters.

ACA has 15 or so wheel loaders, ranging from a Komatsu WA320 to a WA600, and a half dozen or so Komatsu excavators, from a PC88 to a PC400. In addition to the Komatsu machines, the company also has KPI-JCI crushing and screening equipment from Power Motive.



Josh Criswell,
Aggregate Production
Superintendent

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ACA Products is 'definitely still growing'

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"We've used Komatsu for many years and have always been very happy with the product," said Coleman. "It's productive, reliable equipment that lasts a long time. We use Komatsu wheel loaders as our primary production machines in the plants. Some of those wheel loaders have more than 20,000 hours, and they're still going strong. They do such a good job that we can't justify getting rid of them and buying new ones just yet.

"We also like KOMTRAX, the machine-monitoring system that comes standard on all Komatsu equipment," he added. "It's especially beneficial for repairs and maintenance. The system gives us error codes that help us or Power Motive diagnose issues. It also reminds us when service intervals are due. It's a valuable tool."

Power Motive is 'dialed in'

Equally important to Coleman is the service that Power Motive provides.

"Service is important to everybody, but because of where we are located, it's especially important to us," said Coleman. "We're not right on the Front Range. We're two hours away from the nearest dealership. That can be a big problem if the dealer isn't really dialed in to service. Fortunately for us, Power Motive is dialed in. If a machine breaks down, we need help right away – and that's what we get from Power Motive.

"They've treated us well from the very beginning," he added. "Power Motive comes out to do all our warranty work and anything specialized that we're not well-equipped to handle. The technicians are very professional and responsive. They do everything they can to get here as soon as possible to get us back up and running – and we appreciate that. The excellent support Power Motive provides is definitely one of the reasons we're loyal to them."

Growing and optimistic

When Coleman came onboard in January 1999, shortly after Moltz had reacquired the business, ACA Products was a much smaller company than it is today.

"We didn't have any asphalt to speak of," Coleman recalled. "We had one little gravel pit and did a small amount of concrete work. In total, we probably had fewer than 10 people working here. That's because ASI RCC was primarily a dam-building company, and they pursued that all over the world. They weren't very interested in the local aggregate/construction market.

"We've built ACA up to where we are now – a workforce of about 50 to 60; four pits and a quarry for a pretty significant aggregate operation; and a construction company capable of doing a lot of different things – and we're definitely still growing. We've been permitting more pits and expanding on the construction side.

"As opportunities arise, we consider them, and if they make sense for us, we pursue them," Coleman added. "There isn't the type of rapid growth and development going on out here, the way it is in Denver and Colorado Springs right now. But all those people moving to Colorado's cities also enjoy visiting the mountains, so we're optimistic about what the future holds for ACA Products." ■

ACA Products President Michael Coleman (left) works closely with Power Motive Sales Rep Dakota Warren. "Service is important to everybody, but because of where we are located, two hours from the nearest dealership, it's especially important to us," said Coleman. "The excellent support Power Motive provides is one of the reasons we're loyal to them."



ACA Products has a contracting side that does both earthwork and paving. Here, the company is building the Ruby Mountain Campground on the Arkansas River near Nathrop.

