PRESS INFORMATION

Volvo revives swamp life

A Volvo ECR88 D-Series excavator fitted with unique swamp pads and grapples is working in the Connecticut swamplands for Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management Program.

A green stretch of salt marshes had extended all the way along the east coast of North America by the time the first European settlers stepped onto US shores. The marshes, created by conditions left by retreating glacier, had formed in estuaries and lagoons on sheltered sides of sand or shingle spits.

Over thousands of years the marshes flourished with life, creating one of the most productive ecosystems in the world. However, a large amount of the original salt marshes were destroyed in the early 1940s to create landfills and manmade roads,

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ruining more than thousands of acres of marshland. It's claimed that only 18,000 acres of the coastal wetlands remain but there are now programs in place to preserve the wetlands as well as restore them.

The CT Department of Energy and Environmental purchased the first-of-its-kind zero gravity marsh excavator for the Fletcher Creek Tidal Wetlands Project at Silver Sands State Park in Milford, Connecticut.

A Volvo never gets bogged down

The Volvo ECR88D excavator removes harmful plant life from the marshes, giving natural plant species the opportunity to grow and flourish to create a more productive wildlife habitat. The excavator has a bucket capacity of more than 23 cubic feet and over six meters (20ft) digging reach. It has a ground pressure of about 1.15, making it extremely lightweight and particularly effective when operating in soft marsh land that sinks under pressure. The machine works across several marshland sites in order to service as much land as possible.

"The excavator is an absolute necessity here – it's one of the few pieces of equipment that can come in and dig a channel, and also restore the ponds," says Paul Capotosto, manager of the Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management Program of the CT DEEP.

The best fit for the job

The one year old Volvo ECR88D excavator worked on The Barn Island WMA project from February until June this year, digging peat and filling holes, channels and pools on the tidal marshes. Jon Grant, the Volvo dealer representative of Tyler Equipment has been working with Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management Program for more than twenty years. The rapid response and ability to offer such an effective machine saw the customer change from using competitor machines to Volvo CE.

"The operator likes using the machine, as it has plenty of attachments and power," says Capotosto. "It has been modified with low ground pressure tracks by Norris Manufacturing from Ohio. The Volvo ECR88D has the option of a GP 4' slopping and clamshell bucket. The ability to interchange buckets on the ECR88D makes it the most effective machine in these conditions."

Chris Norris of Norris Manufacturing explains that this machine is especially suited to being adapted for this type of job.

"When modifying machines for work in marshland, we widen the undercarriage by 102 inches and lengthen it according to the specific machine, adding extra wide pads that can lower ground pressure to less than 2psi," he says. "Our aim is to reduce the overall weight of the machine by increasing its footprint by 50%. The EC88D is an excellent machine for this – they are extremely strong and reliable, and the adaptations work well with the existing structure. The extensive Volvo dealer network makes our job a lot

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easier, and we are able to use Volvo parts wherever possible during the adaptation process. The result is a light, hardworking machine that can be easily transported."

Working on the marshes

Each salt marsh project takes four to six months to complete with plans for this Volvo excavator to be used in salty conditions for at least the next 10 years. The project also has five fixed term and eight seasonal employees facilitating its completion. "The crew works four days a week, 10 hours each day," adds Capotosto. "The Volvo machine will work at least six hours a day, four days a week."

The reliability of the Volvo ECR88D is a crucial part of keeping the work schedule on track. However, there are major challenges that have to be faced such as the soft marsh conditions and 2-3 foot wide channels that have to be crossed. In addition, all the work has to be completed at low tide.

"These projects will help the communities because it will control mosquitoes from tidal marshes that can fly up to 20 to 25 miles away from their larval breeding areas," says Capotosto. "Once a project is completed, the salt marsh mosquito population drops to a low count and citizens will notice that mosquitoes are not biting them during the day time."

We have seen positive improvements in Volvo machines, especially regarding the excavator's power and hydraulics, attachments and the local dealer," concludes Capotosto. "We are always looking for the next model."

Ends.

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