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# Progressive thinking keeps quarry operation productive during difficult times

by Jon M. Casey

At a time when quarry companies are being challenged to find new ways to market their aggregates, Stony Point Rock Quarry, a member of the Soiland Companies of Sonoma County, CA, is supplying material in innovative and progressive ways. Located in a county that generally is known for its vineyards and wine production, locally owned Soiland Company has developed products that are tailored to the needs of key customers who are looking for quality and sustainability.

## Their History

According to Mark Soiland, President and COO of the Soiland Companies, the business is comprised of three operations. First is the Stony Point Rock Quarry facility located in Cotati, CA. A second facility is Soils Plus located in Sonoma, CA where they produce aggregates as well as a variety of specialty soil products. Their third facility, and most recent acquisition, is located in Santa Rosa, CA (see *Waste Handling Equipment News*, Feb. 2011), and is known as Grab N' Grow Soil Products.

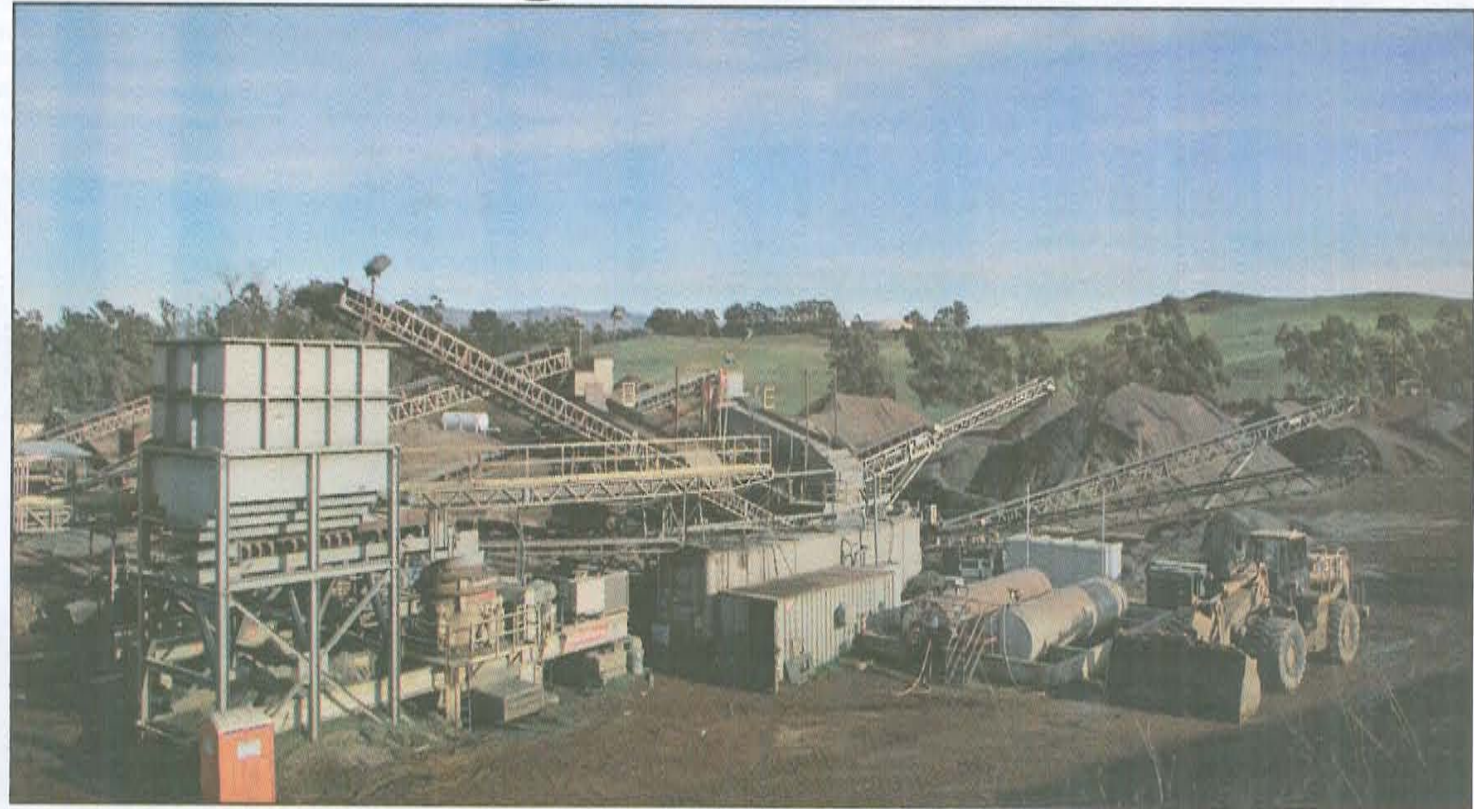
In 1973, Soiland's father Marvin formed the company along with two other businessmen, Jack Witsch and Lynn Williams. Williams served as General Manager until his retirement in 1987. At that time, Soiland purchased his partners' interests and became sole owner of Stony Point Rock Quarry, Inc.

During the 1990s, Mark and his sister Marlene joined the operation and they expanded their operations to include a site in Bodega, which is now reclaimed and closed. They also acquired their Soils Plus facility in Sonoma. In 2009, they acquired Grab N' Grow Soil Products in Santa Rosa. Today, Mark and Marlene oversee daily operations of the business. Marlene serves as the company CFO.

Soiland says that in 1996, along with the management changes they made, they also made production improvements to the Cotati facility. New equipment immediately increased tonnage from approximately 250,000 tons annually, to nearly 600,000 tons. That increase took place, practically overnight. Today, production at that facility averages between 350,000 and 550,000 tons, annually.

## The Products

Soiland says that Stony Point Rock



Sonoma County California provides a scenic backdrop to the processing plant at Stony Point Rock Quarry, Cotati, CA.

Quarry has several attributes that gives it a distinct advantage over other facilities. "The operation is located close to a main U.S. highway here in California, U.S. Highway 101," he says. "That makes it very easy for customers to access our products."

Additionally, because of the size of the facility and the composition of the geology at that location, the company is able to produce aggregate products in three distinct colors, which is extremely appealing to the local landscaping industry. The Red/Brown material and the Blue colored rock products offer landscape designers the materials they need to create unique products for their customers. "There is a growing demand for these products," says Soiland.

At the same time that they are producing these desirable, virgin aggregate products, they also are able to take in two important recyclable materials that they are turning into useful, profitable products.

"We have sufficient real estate here to stockpile and process recyclable materials such as con-

crete, brick and road construction/repair waste," he says. "We take in about 60-percent of the county's waste of this kind, which is more than any other one producer in the area. More importantly, we have developed a market for products made from recycled asphalt shingles and recycled porcelain toilets and porcelain tiles. All of this helps preserve the area landfills. This is a tremendous benefit to area contractors who then can avoid the landfill tipping fees, which are above \$100 per ton, so we both win. Soils Plus and Stony Point are excellent outlets for this kind of recyclable material."

Soiland says that they have worked with contractors to accept material that is often not wanted at other recycling locations. "We are willing to take in larger and dirtier material than others," he says. "If you can fit it into a truck, we

will take it. We will even take concrete that contains steel and rebar when others will not. That gives us a good supply of recyclable material. We have the equipment and the real estate to process it, so that is a real benefit. On a long shift, we can process about 3,000 tons of material, even with hand sorting of the debris. We have been doing this for 8 to 10 years."

## Specialties

In addition to their standard aggregate production, Stony Point specializes in the recycling of two materials that most producers find difficult to handle: asphalt shingles and porcelain toilets, and ceramic tiles. "We have found a regular customer for recycled ceramic materials," he says.

This was especially important during

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Asphalt shingles before and after. In the foreground, shingles awaiting processing will be turned into a raw material like that in the background.



A loader prepares to move some of the porcelain recyclables to be ground into useful cement ingredients.

## Soiland from 16

a recent initiative by their water agency to replace all of the older toilets in homes within the County. Because of the need for conserving water in this region, the county offered financial rewards for installing low volume-flush toilets. As a result, there was an abundance of ceramic toilets to recycle.

Soiland says that they supply a customer with the ground, recycled porcelain, which is used to produce a patented concrete product made from porcelain sand and a Portland Cement substitute, which is also manufactured from the recycled porcelain material. The customer has developed a high quality line of sinks, tubs and containment vessels for both domestic and commercial customers. "They even make sculptures from this material. Their finished products are unusually durable, are impervious to water and staining and are quite beautiful."

As the only recycler of asphalt shingles (RAS) in the area, Soiland says they are providing a service to the community as they divert more than 10,000 tons of the materials from the landfills. They are also providing their customers with a better asphalt product using the RAS as an ingredient. "Asphalt producers are familiar with Recycled Asphalt Pavement (RAP) in their mix designs, but few have worked with RAS," he says. "We have found in our mix designs using RAS that the granite provides more durability to the mix, and the fibrous material from the backing adds a strength component to the mix design as well. We add about 5 to 6 percent by weight to the mix."

Soiland paved a large driveway and parking area at Grab N' Grow with the RAS asphalt material. He reports that the 500-ton paving job has considerable traffic and wear from large and small equipment and other vehicles, and the new pavement has proved very durable. He says that he is looking forward to the day when the California Department of Transportation will consider RAS in the mix designs for public roadways.

### The Facilities

Of the three facilities in the Soiland Companies, the Stony Point operation is the major aggregates producer. "The Soils Plus operation is about half soils manufacturing and half aggregates production," he says. "Specialty soils from Soils Plus are used primarily for land-



When material needs to be ground for recycling, Soiland looks to leased or contracted equipment to process the material. Here, asphalt shingle material is being ground for use in RAS asphalt.

scapers, sports facilities of all kinds, and commercial applications."

"We are not a distributing quarry," he says. "We are production-oriented. We do not own our own fleet of trucks. We rely upon independent haulers and self-haul customers to haul of our aggregates and soil products. In this way, we can devote our resources to producing the highest quality products."

Soiland recalled that some years ago they were the first quarry in the nation to acquire a Metso triple-slope 8x20 screening system for Soils Plus. "We are always looking for ways to improve how we manufacture our products," he says. "We do our research to find the best product for the job. For example, we have rolling stock at our facilities that includes Kawasaki, John Deere, Caterpillar and Komatsu brands. We find the dealer with the equipment that best meets the needs that we have. We even go so far as to acquire custom buckets for our wheel loaders to meet the individual need of each location and each application."

"We are big believers in scales systems as well," he adds. "We use Loadrite Payload Scales for maximizing our payloads. We also use belt scales to monitor our production to improve performance and profitability."

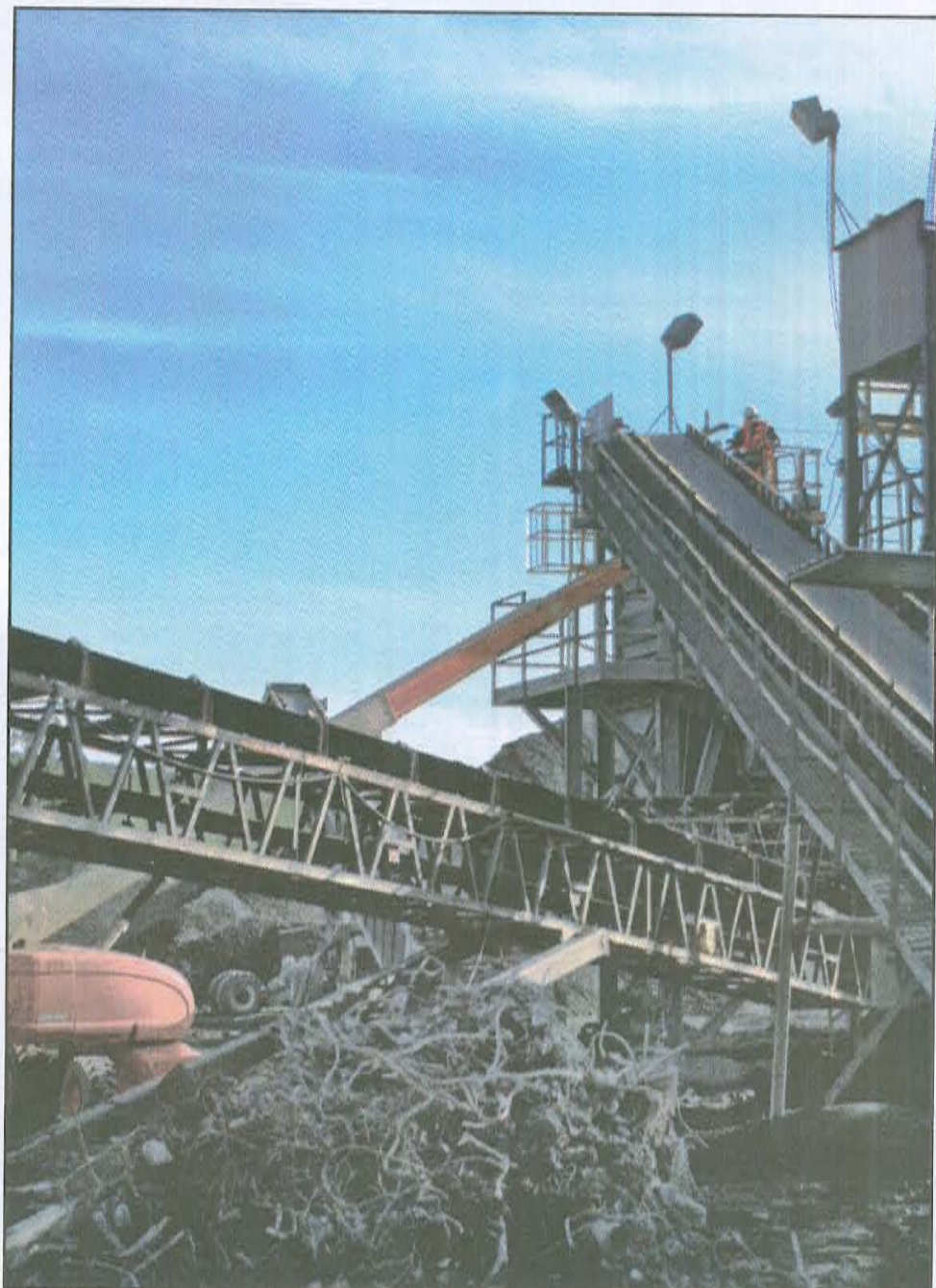
### The Future

As it has been with the entire industry, the economic downturn has affected the Soiland Companies in a similar way as it has others, financially. Just the same, Mark says that by employing good people and providing them with excellent benefits, they are working to find ways to create and sell more products in this difficult financial climate.

With the 2009 addition of Grab N'

Grow Soil Products, there will undoubtedly be more overlap in the availability of their various products from each of the three facilities. The Soiland Companies are developing new products and services that will add new customers and will serve their current customer base more effectively.

For more information about the Soiland Companies, visit their Web site: [www.soilandrocks.com](http://www.soilandrocks.com).



A worker performs routine maintenance on a conveyor during a period of down time on a Friday afternoon. In the foreground, a pile of rebar that has been extracted by a magnetic separator can be seen.



At the Stony Point Rock Quarry in Cotati, solar panels atop the office building supplies electrical energy for the office. In the foreground, porcelain toilets and tiles await future recycling.