

Imagine for a moment you are a loach minnow swimming merrily along Arizona's Blue River. To your unending annoyance, invasive non-native species like the lowly common carp are entering your space and crashing the party. It's a safe bet you'd be happy SBBI General Contractors is busy building a fish barrier to protect you and your family.

Fish story

Join SBBI and the Bureau of Reclamation on a project where getting there is half the fun



Helicoptering between the White Mountains in the 2.63-million-acre Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest is exhilarating. But we still manage

to keep our focus on SBBI Vice President Ted Walker's story about how the Department of the Interior's reclamation project playing out some 150 feet below us came to be.

"After years of study, the Bureau of Reclamation awarded the project to SBBI last October. The Bureau's goal is twofold — to protect and restore populations of native fish while helping to create jobs for small businesses like ours," says Walker.

"One of the biggest challenges for us was to source equipment reliable enough for a remote location and, of course, actually get the machines and workers out here to get the job done. Thankfully we had a lot of help from RDO, our John Deere dealer, and beyond to people throughout John Deere.

"SBBI is the right company for this project because we specialize in jobs that require smart problem-solving skills the people on my staff have learned. But this would have been tough to pull off without help from Deere."

Dam it all

At the confluence of the San Francisco and Blue rivers, Walker and SBBI not only work closely with their John Deere dealer, they also receive onsite assistance from Bureau of Reclamation engineers. These engineers worked on the design and construction of the fish barrier — a spillway of sorts that keeps invasive species like channel catfish, carp, and fathead minnow in the San Francisco River where they belong.

With these pesky non-native fish removed from the equation, the fish barrier will also allow repopulation of native alumni fish like roundtail chub, spikedace, loach minnow, and longfin dace in the Blue River.

Where the wild Deere roam

One of the Bureau of Reclamation's stated goals — creating local jobs — seems certain. Consider the remote "man camp" located a few miles from the even-more-remote jobsite that houses the SBBI crew and the helicopter pilots who fly the workers along with cement, diesel tanks, and portable privies. Then, there's the associated vendors whose work makes this massive project possible: chefs, mechanics, engineers, and — oh, yes — the dealer and manufacturer of all that yellow iron assisting on the project.

"Oh, we have some equipment at work down there," says Walker, now in the midst of the project. "And everything that can be John Deere here is. There are two 300D Articulated Dump Trucks, two 135D Excavators, two 550J Crawlers, two 444K Loaders, and a pair of CT332 Compact Track Loaders. Our other equipment on the job includes two rollers, two 2,000-gallon water trucks, and two forklifts." Wait ... that's a whole lot of iron, Ted, how did you get it to this remote location?



1 Whirlybird's-eye view. Everything must be carried into the fish-barrier worksite via helicopter — including SBBI's fleet of Deere equipment.

2 Small miracle. Because the equipment had to be airlifted, two 135D Excavators with one-yard buckets and reduced tail swing were chosen. These agile excavators surprised SBBI with their seven-bucket-per-minute performance.

3 Walker: Arizona Contractor. SBBI's bread and butter is what Ted Walker calls high-risk projects — those that require ingenuity, the most advanced equipment, and superior problem-solving skills.

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4 Self-reliant jobsite. SBBI flies cement into the site and removes aggregate directly from the river. They feed both materials into their onsite portable concrete plant for fish-barrier materials.

5 Prepare for liftoff. RDO and SBBI techs had to disassemble most equipment into sections weighing under 17,000 pounds — the heaviest load the helicopter could carry.

6 Plug and play. By opting for Integrated Grade Control (IGC), SBBI was able to easily add the telematics system of their choice.

7 These shovels are always ready. The unlikely pairing of 135Ds and 300D ADTs has turned out to be the perfect duo for this unique jobsite.



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Operation Deere Drop

Unlike the wily coyotes and fleet-footed roadrunners that live in these parts, SBBI couldn't just run down the road with equipment and supplies in tow. They had to be airlifted via an enormous Sikorsky helicopter. And even with this giant chopper, most of the machines needed to be disassembled, airlifted into the site, and then reassembled. This requires great skill for SBBI mechanic Kyle Lundeen and RDO technician Lynn Olney, with ready assist from John Deere engineers in Dubuque, Iowa.

"The Sikorsky has a weight limit of 17,000 pounds," says the RDO/Tucson field tech, "so we had to disassemble each machine, with each piece light enough for the helicopter to lift. Then we had to reassemble each machine onsite. We put together the 135D Excavators first so we could use them to assist in assembling the other equipment.

"The smaller pieces, like the CT332s, were light enough to carry whole, while others like the trucks needed considerable disassembly and reassembly. It was a unique monthlong assignment, but it went smoothly thanks to all the help I received from Kyle, SBBI's mechanic."

Iron and concrete

Because the location is remote, SBBI has created a totally self-sufficient jobsite with an onsite concrete plant so they can crush rock into aggregate to mix with fly-ash, potash, and cement to rigid Bureau of Reclamation specifications for the fish-barrier concrete. With the crushing operation running all day — supported by John Deere loaders, ADTs, dozers, excavators, and CTLs — cement and other supplies are flown in by a Sikorsky SH-3 Sea King helicopter every 20 minutes or so.

The day we visited the site, every machine cycle was running like clockwork, with SBBI's Ted Walker keeping a sharp eye on all men, machines, and materials in search of ways to make the worksite even more efficient.

"All the Deere equipment has been working great, and the support from our dealer has been terrific," Walker says. "They have been particularly good about thinking through this unique project and working with us to come up with clever solutions to meet the demands of this job. With weight being an issue on this site due to the limitations of the helicopter, we've been using a pair of

John Deere 135D Excavators with slightly oversized one-yard buckets.

"I'm really impressed by the performance of this excavator. With its agility, it can load the truck fast — seven buckets a minute. And that machine's reduced tail swing makes it perfect for the tight quarters on this jobsite."

Go, fish

As we are airlifted away from the site, we can clearly see ground around the fish barrier taking shape and almost ready for the next phase — construction.

Looking at the beautiful cactus-dotted backdrop and shimmering current, we express hope the project helps return the native fish population to its desired level. With SBBI at the helm, that goal is coming along swimmingly. >>

SBBI, Inc. is serviced by RDO Equipment, Tucson, Arizona.



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JohnDeere.com/sbbi