

On the **JOB**TM

TRAIL BLAZER

SUSTAINABLE APPROACH
HELPS TRAIL BUILDER SUCCEED



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EMPIRE



TRAIL BLAZER

SUSTAINABLE APPROACH HELPS TRAIL BUILDER SUCCEED

When Matt Woodson's crews are pioneering a trail 20 miles deep in isolated mountain backcountry, the last thing they want to encounter is an equipment breakdown.

That's why the leading trail building company in the U.S. relies on Cat® equipment to get the job done.

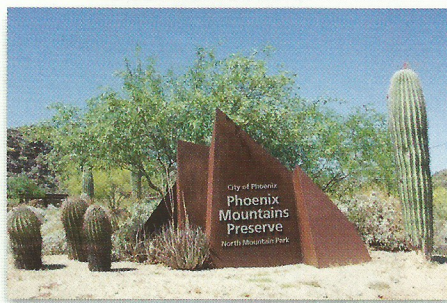
Okanogan Trail Construction Inc. (OTC) specializes in the design, building and maintenance of trails. The Arizona-based company started in 1983 when Woodson began contracting independent trail work for the U.S. Forest Service in the remote North Cascades range of Washington State.

Throughout the 1980's, Woodson and his crew repaired and restored trails in the Northwest, learning the idiosyncrasies of sustainable trail design and repair. At the time, OTC was often repairing trails that were improperly designed by other trail builders.

By the early 1990's, OTC began reconstructing sizable sections of deteriorating trails. Through large-scale reconstruction, Woodson and his crew were able to implement design modifications to better ensure trail sustainability. In the mid-1990's, OTC began building new trails from design to finish. Starting from the very foundation of each project enabled Woodson to integrate sustainable design, assuring durable outcomes.

"We've had this machine for five years under the most rugged conditions, and it's still going strong."

**— MATT WOODSON
OWNER
OKANOGAN TRAIL CONSTRUCTION, INC.**



For the past sixteen years, OTC has been building new trails in the diverse regions of the Western U.S., specializing in the rugged and remote terrains of national forests, wildlife preserves and private lands. More recently, the company has conducted business in urban areas as well, such as college campuses, mountainous suburban areas and outer-city neighborhoods, giving OTC well-rounded expertise in every aspect of trail building.

"We basically work everywhere in the U.S., and we'll work anywhere in the world that we can find trail work—it's mainly a matter of finding the right people to contract us," Woodson says.

OTC is very good at what he refers to as

"stealth excavating." This involves going into largely untouched natural areas and having a minimal impact on the surrounding environment.

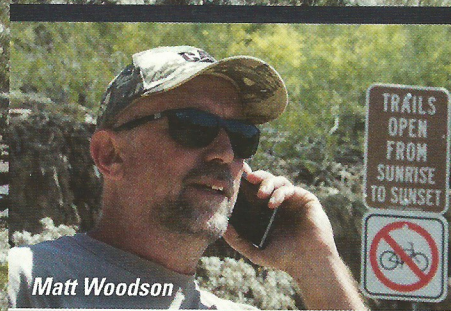
"This is a very technical and precise type of excavating," Woodson says. "It is possible to use heavy equipment and still have a minimal impact on environmentally sensitive areas. We strive to not disturb any more than is necessary to actually produce a trail."

The right tool for the job

Trail building requires a high degree of advanced planning. It starts with Woodson making a firsthand assessment of the terrain, and identifying the control points. Then he sets up a flag line to show his crew where to build the trail.

"Our strategy is to get in and get out as efficiently as possible," Woodson says. "When we build new trails, we do everything from blasting to jackhammering rock. We tend to specialize in hard-rock trail jobs."

(Continued on page 18)



Matt Woodson

COMPANY PROFILE

**OKANOGAN TRAIL
CONSTRUCTION, INC.**

Employees: 12

Location: Cave Creek, Ariz.

Cat® equipment: 301.8C Mini Excavator, 242D Skid Steer Loader; (Rentals): 236D, 259D, 302.7D, 303.8C, 304E; 318,416F, 420E, 420F, CB14B, CB32B, CC34, 924K, D6K; (Leased): 301.7D, 305.5D, CB24, 216B



As crews often work in remote settings, OTC must truck heavy equipment in on rugged trails or sometimes via rail or by helicopter. While the company has utilized a range of excavators through the years, the main machine crews currently use for trail building is a Cat 301.8C Mini Excavator.

“The 301.8C is a great tool because its size fits with the average trail width, which is four feet,” Woodson says. “It has tracks which are retractable and expandable, and it’s a very versatile tool with auxiliary hydraulic ports. We can run a wide range of attachments, including hydraulic hammers.”

Woodson likes the ability to utilize different bucket sizes, and adds that the blade is an essential component for building completed trails, owing to the stability it provides when swinging loads on elevated trails.

OTC has tried other mini excavator brands, and has developed a strong preference for Cat machines.

“The power of the 301.8C is perfect for its size,” Woodson says. “It has more power than the others, and they’re much more trouble free. We’ve had very few field repairs.”

Unlike the bulk of excavating that takes place on flat terrain, OTC crews are constantly working on steep slopes with existing bedrock jutting out. Woodson says the durability of the Cat mini excavator is unmatched.

“We’ve had this machine for five years under the most rugged conditions, and it’s still going strong,” he says. “I expect it will be fine for another five years. The 301.8C is definitely well built.”

Beyond durability, OTC operators have come to trust the stability of Cat machines while operating on steep slopes.

“Caterpillar’s design is really well balanced,” he says. “This is an everyday

way of life for us, so that when we get up on a mountainside with just a little dirt track, you want to have faith in your equipment, and we definitely have that with our Cat excavator. At this point, we’re so used to it that we would never want to use anything else.”

OTC utilizes a Cat 242D Skid Steer Loader for a variety of tasks, including hauling essential materials like water and work tools and staging concrete equipment on trails.

“We also use it for hauling dirt and rocks, and it can be loaded to the max and it doesn’t tip,” Woodson says. “I would say the 242D has been a great boon to our company. We use it with forks, and we use it with a bucket. We also use the hydraulic takeoffs on it for jackhammers. Pound for pound, the machine does more work for us than any piece of equipment we have.”

Fuel efficient

Fuel efficiency is critical for OTC crews, which use ATVs to haul in diesel fuel.

“If you have to carry five gallons of fuel in for three miles on a trail with a 1,500 foot elevation gain, you don’t want to be doing a lot of it,” Woodson says. “With the 301.8C, it’ll use about 10 gallons in a week, so that’s real manageable. We can haul that in. We are able to do an amazing amount of work for the little amount of fuel that we burn.”

Initially, OTC will lease a piece of equipment to determine if it’s the right machine for the job, and then purchase it after a trial period. The company also rents machines and attachments for specialized needs. Woodson knows he can count on his Cat dealer, Empire, to provide him with the right piece of equipment no matter what the task.

“I used to look at different rental companies, whereas with Empire, once you sign up with them you’re all set,” he says. “They have a huge reach here in Arizona, and they have a complete selection of everything we need.” **OTJ**



WHAT HE LIKES ABOUT CAT® EQUIPMENT

“My operators are very happy working with Cat equipment,” says Matt Woodson, president of Okanogan Trail Construction. “We’ve used other brands that have been very problematic. Everything is well designed. Caterpillar has outdone themselves, as usual, just creating a simple machine that my operators can jump on. You turn it over and it starts immediately. There really is nothing that we have to complain about—they work when they’re supposed to and function the way they are intended.”

WHAT HE LIKES ABOUT HIS CAT DEALER

“One reason we got into Cat equipment is because dealers provide such great parts and service,” says Woodson.

“Not only do they have an extensive array of machines to lease or purchase, but we found that the guys are completely open to any kind of repair that may be needed. They’re always there, they keep in touch with us, and they always provide parts quickly. I would give them a perfect 10 on service.

OTC purchased its Cat 242D Skid Steer Loader on the advice of Empire Southwest sales representative Mark Snow.

“I can call him, and he’s like an encyclopedia of Cat equipment,” Woodson says. “I can ask any question, and he’ll have the answer for me.”