

## Cost-effective Slope Packing

Contractor-developed attachment saves time, labor and equipment costs.

Thompson Grading, Dallas, GA, has been in operation for over 30 years, specializing in moving dirt using scrapers, excavators, dozers, motor graders and articulated trucks. Its fleet includes approximately 70 machines.

Though busy managing his growing construction firm, Calvin Thompson, owner, still works in the field as needed. Last summer was just such an occasion. With foremen on vacation, he ended up managing a couple of large projects. But he found himself frustrated by a lack of available equipment.

"When I got out in the field and started getting involved with the jobs, every time I needed a dozer to do some finish grading, pad grading or cutting out for curbs, they were always tied up walking slopes," he explains.

Environmental regulations require compaction and roughing of exposed soil to prevent runoff and allow seed to take hold. For slopes, standard industry practice is to use a crawler loader or dozer to "walk" across the sloped area. Thompson felt this process was too costly, too time consuming and tied up equipment needed for other tasks.

With 30+ years of experience as an equipment operator, Thompson was able to come up with a unique alternative in the form of the Rockland Thompson Slope Packer. Developed by Thompson and manufactured and marketed through Rockland Mfg., the Slope Packer is an excavator-mounted attachment consisting of a self-cleaning drum with dozer cleats. Available in lengths up to 8 ft., it uses the down pressure of the excavator boom to pack slope in any condition and at any grade.

"You don't have to fight slopes day in and day out now," Thompson states. "You can leave a bucket on [the excavator], work all week and at the end of the week, pin up to the Slope Packer and accomplish all the slope work you need to do."

The excavator can be stationed at the top of the slope where it reaches down with the attachment to pack and roughen the soil. The Slope Packer is suited for use with various sizes of machines. "Say you have an excavator that can reach out 30 ft. The good thing about these wide-pad (track) excavators is if you have a slope that is 50- to 60-ft. long, you can walk the excavator down the slope to get to the areas you can't reach, then walk back up the slope and marry it all up," says

Thompson. "Nothing is out of reach."

Because the excavator is not required to walk horizontally across the slope, it can continue to operate in conditions not suited to other equipment. "When a dozer can't climb the slopes because it's too slick and wet, the Slope Packer



Calvin Thompson, Thompson Grading, developed the Slope Packer as a more cost-effective method for grading contractors to pack slopes and other exposed surfaces on jobsites. His company now has an excavator dedicated specifically to this task.

can work," Thompson comments. "If it rains, you can send somebody out there and get your investment out of the excavator."

The ability to accurately position the attachment also enables the operator to pack soil right up to silt fence and other obstacles without damage. "If you're coming down the slope with a dozer and it's a little slick, you slide right through the silt fence," Thompson notes. Replacement costs may be only \$2 a foot, but this adds up over the course of a year. "If we tear out 10 ft. here and 10 ft. there, we're paying in excess of \$30,000 in silt fence repair. In the end, it's a lot of money."

Yet, the real cost savings is in productivity. Thompson Grading ran an excavator and dozer in a side by side comparison. "It took a dozer one hour and 40 minutes to walk 100 ft. of 12-ft. vertical slope," says Thompson. "It took the Slope



The Rockland Thompson Slope Packer allows an excavator to be used to "surface rough" slopes significantly faster than a crawler dozer or loader.

Packer 15 minutes to do the same job. There's a 78% savings there."

Further savings can be found in reduced fuel costs and undercarriage wear, plus avoiding the need for a skilled operator, says Thompson. "You don't have to have a high-paid operator to do this. You can use it for a training platform for excavator operators," he comments. "He's not digging; he's not cutting anything on grade. He's just surface roughing the job. You can't mess it up."

For its projects, Thompson Grading has one of its excavators dedicated strictly for slope work. The machine also packs grassy areas around grade stakes. "We walk it around the grass so we can see the grades stakes," says Thompson. "It's minor, but it can save you money having to get it re-staked."

Thompson notes they haven't had a single complaint regarding erosion control since he developed the Slope Packer. "The biggest problem I have now," he says, "is guys out in the field fighting over it."



**Rockland  
Manufacturing  
Company**  
800-458-3773  
www.rocklandmfg.com