

# Keeping Pace with Alberta's Oily Laundry

By Haley Jorgensen

Every morning the workers of Good Fish Lake Development Limited Partnership (Good Fish Lake), a commercial laundry operation in the Canadian province of Alberta, drive three hours into the boreal forest surrounding the town of Fort McMurray to pick up oil workers' sheets, towels and tar-drenched industrial coveralls. The soiled linens are packed into a semi-truck and transported back to Good Fish Lake, where the laundry is cleaned.

Good Fish Lake, located on the White Fish Lake Reservation about 200 kilometers northeast of Edmonton, is among several commercial laundries to serve a ballooning oil industry in what is known as the oil sands of Alberta. This year, the oil sands are expected to produce 1.2 million barrels of oil per day, roughly equal to the production of Texas, according to the *Christian Science Monitor*. Oil production in Alberta has leaped 61 percent in just four years—creating a huge demand for workers, and subsequently, a method for cleaning their laundry.

Residing in temporary trailer housing in the wilderness of Alberta's oil sands country, thousands of oil workers rely on Good Fish Lake to clean soiled coveralls, sheets and towels. On their own, workers launder personal items at small laundries located at their camps.

## Boosting Laundry Production

To keep pace with the volume of laundry generated by workers in the oil sands, Good Fish Lake recently doubled in size and production, thanks to help from Coronet Equipment (Coronet). A



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Good Fish Lake, located on the White Fish Lake Reservation in Alberta, is a commercial laundry that serves the area's booming oil industry.

laundry equipment distributorship in Edmonton, Alberta, Coronet outfitted Good Fish Lake's new 17,000-square-foot facility with Continental soft-mount laundry equipment and a water-saving reclamation system. The laundry also features three drycleaning machines, specifically in place to remove tar, gas and oil from coveralls.

"Good Fish Lake is under the gun all the time with production," says Coronet Sales Manager Brad Rosin, who has served the commercial laundry for more than a decade. Each week, 10,000 to 15,000 pairs of coveralls are retrieved from the bush and returned to oil workers at Fort McMurray. Similarly, the laundry washes, finishes and folds tons of sheets. Altogether, Good Fish Lake processes 300,000 pounds of laundry per week—all in the name of oil and gas.

## Equipment Mix

To get the job done, the laundry relies on advanced cleaning equipment, including:

four 90- and two 130-pound capacity Continental Washer-Extractors, two 175- and four 125-pound capacity Continental Drying Tumblers, a single roll, 32-inch Continental Flatwork Ironer, and three 135- and one 165-pound capacity Multimatic drycleaning machines.

During the busy month of June, 6,000 men live on-site at the oil sands, according to George Halfe, CEO at Good Fish Lake. With so much volume, Good Fish Lake's laundry equipment must be capable of handling 42,000 pounds per day of the area's dirtiest laundry.

## Equipment Works in Concert

Upon delivery to Good Fish Lake, laundry is sorted and properly cleaned. Subsequently, industrial coveralls head to drycleaning machines, while towels, sheets and blankets hit the Continental washer-extractors. "We can't get the tar off the coveralls unless they are drycleaned," says Halfe. "When the coveralls are really muddy, we dryclean



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them first and then run them through the Continental washers.”

“It works,” says Halfe. “We have the right equipment and use the right methods to get these garments cleaned. It’s important to use hot water and steam, a good water softener and the right temperature and amount of soap. Each of these factors plays into our ability to get the laundry clean.”

During the expansion, Good Fish Lake worked to achieve three goals: saving water, maximizing laundry production and decreasing labor. Advanced equipment and a bit of ingenuity combined to achieve success.

## Water Reclamation

Since Good Fish Lake doesn’t have sewer access, any wastewater gathers in settling ponds on property. As a result, reducing water waste and usage was critical. That’s why Coronet designed the facility’s washers to function with a water reclamation system—cutting water usage and waste by 40 percent. The system reuses rinse water as wash water, saving Good Fish Lake thousands of gallons annually. “We recover the first three rinses of the last wash cycle,” says Rosin. “All the water flows into a center pit, where it is reused for the next rinse.”

## Sticking with Continental Soft-Mount Washers

“We have the machines working day and night,” adds Halfe. “We’ve been using our 90- pound Continental Washer-Extractors for about eight years now. You wouldn’t believe the filth that those machines take out.” With the facility’s recent expansion, two more Continental washers were added at 130 pounds of capacity apiece. “The Continentals are durable and



*Good Fish Lake properly cleans everything from coveralls to bedding for oil workers residing in temporary trailer housing in the wilderness of Alberta’s oil sands country.*

they’ve been good to us,” says Halfe. “That’s why we’ve stuck with them.”

With fewer breakdowns, Good Fish Lake can accommodate the high laundry demands of the oil workers. And, unlike hard-mount washers, the Continental soft-mount washers are freestanding and don’t require bolts to secure them to the floor. “You don’t have to bolt them down, so you can put them anywhere,” says Halfe. So, if oil production in Alberta continues its surge, Good Fish Lake can easily add and/or relocate washers to keep pace with workers’ laundry.

The other critical feature of soft-mount washers is that they produce extract speeds reaching 387 G-force, whereas the typical hard-mount washer generates between 85 and 230 G-force. Since soft mounts remove more water during extract, dry time is reduced and production is improved by as much as 40 percent, according to Rosin.

At Good Fish Lake, each washer is programmed to automatically inject the right chemicals, at the appropriate time and water temperature, during the wash process—eliminating user error and damage to linens. The Continental machines are highly programmable, according to Halfe, as well as easy to operate. To commence the wash process, attendants simply enter a code and push “start.”

After washing, towels and blankets are dried in Continental drying tumblers. The whole process—to wash and dry a load—takes about an hour. Sheets, however, move from washer, to dryer, to flatwork ironer.

## Finishing 8,000 Sheets per Day

The entire cleaning process must happen quickly in order to make certain that the laundry is ready to be sent back to workers the next day. Before purchasing a 32-inch, single roll Continental Flatwork ironer, the only one in the province, Good Fish Lake cleaned and finished about 3,000 sheets on a good day. The job required two people to feed the sheets into an ironer, two people to fold the sheets and one person to pack them up and send them out.

With its new Continental ironer, Good Fish Lake increased production to between 7,000 and 8,000 sheets per day, while using fewer workers to do the job. The ironer, with an automatic folder, has increased efficiency and allowed Good Fish Lake to grow. Good Fish Lake attendants can wash, iron and fold 90 pounds of linens in 1.5 hours, according to Halfe. “Continental is a good product,” he maintains. “It really gets the job done.”

It’s predicted that Alberta’s oil sands will continue to increase production in coming years. Good Fish Lake—thanks to recent improvements and equipment—is designed to be able to accommodate any related bump in laundry volume. Already, the laundry has increased production 50 percent, according to Rosin. ▀



*The facility finishes 8,000 sheets day using a Continental 32-inch, single roll flatwork ironer.*