

The Western Mining Alliance

Voice of the Independent Miner

December 2013



Good Will Towards Men

"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Luke 2:9-12

In this issue we're providing a larger Christmas issue and printing more member's stories so you have something to read during the cold winter nights. We think it's important to print our stories about prospecting and dredging to ensure we remember what we're fighting for.

In 2009, the state of California banned suction gold dredging through the use of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). This led to multiple law suits of which we've tried to cover and keep you up to date. One thing we know, some things will be settled in 2014.

This is truly an all or nothing fight. There is no middle ground and this is clear from the state's position in papers they've filed. Either they have the right to ban us permanently, or they don't. It's that simple.

This fight has very little to do with the suction dredge, or those of who choose to spend our summers on the rivers. It has everything to do with the state's power to simply ban what they choose. Suction dredges were easy, there are very few of us, and we're not very well organized. What the state didn't expect was for us to file suit and to sustain these suits over three years.

What happens in California will affect Oregon, Washington and Idaho. If we win on our preemption arguments then this provides grounds to attack the recent Oregon laws banning suction dredging. If we win in California we can then take the fight to Oregon and Idaho. The Idaho fight is an easy one, we just have to shed ourselves of our current legal bills and then move on to the next fight.

We Upgraded the Store (finally)

Thanks to everyone who navigated our old store site and actually bought something. We did a complete overhaul of the store, added new stuff and dropped the prices on everything. And we did all this one month ahead of our schedule. As a bunch of volunteers with day jobs it's hard to keep up with things. We've made a lot of progress the past year. We started in January selling bumper stickers and continued to expand and upgrade until we

now have an actual online store. When you click the Store tab on our site you'll go to our new store "Sierra Rivers." You can also go directly by typing in www.sierrarivers.com. If you order today it's likely we can get you what you want by Christmas. We added a shopping cart which accepts all forms of payment. Security is handled by an online system with 128bit encryption and we've definitely simplified the checkout process and the shopping experience.

All profits go right back into the fight.

We're Giving Back

You've probably noticed we keep increasing our advertising. We do this as a service to members. As certified capitalists we support anyone with a small business and we'll do what we can to help get the word out about your store our product. We're happy this month to have two more advertisers and we hope you'll remember this Christmastime to send some business towards fellow miners and let Wal-Mart lose a few bucks of our business.

Please remember to support the small towns in the rural areas. Let's make a point to do business in small towns. Even if it simply means stopping at the café and buying a cup of coffee – do it. The big cities will get along fine without us, the small towns won't.

Member Stories

This month we're printing more member stories. Of anything we do with the newsletter our favorite is reading about people's adventures. We decided to provide a newsletter filled with miner's stories and we hope you'll enjoy them. If you want to contribute something just e-mail us. Don't worry if you're not a good writer, we'll edit it and clean it up for publication. If you don't want to write you can call Rick and he'll do a phone interview with you and then we'll write it up.

Miner Rick Reviews the Sierra Blaster



One of my claims is in a steep and narrow canyon filled with rocks the size of trucks. This particular location has a great reputation for good gold, and it has been hit by armies of miners dating back to the 1850's. All the easy gold has been found, but with so many large rocks scattered about, and because this canyon is so steep and remote, chances are most of those monster rocks have never been moved.

A couple of years ago I was looking for a way to make the rocks smaller so I could move them easily. I purchased a 10,500 pound winch, but even with snatch blocks, the sheer quantity of rocks made it nearly impossible to move anything as they were all jammed into each other.

I shopped around looking for devices for small scale blasting. Knowing getting a powder license wasn't going to be in my future. After looking at several manufacturers of small blasting devices, I settled upon a device which used a charge the size of a firecracker that was ignited by the pressure of a pneumatically powered firing pin. At first I liked the device, but I recognized that there were some limitations:

I would have to pack in a air compressor so the firing mechanism would work.

I needed to use a 5/16" SDS bit to drill into the rock and because of the small size of the drill bit it quickly burned up.

The bits which were longer than 12" were expensive.

4. Drilling the hole deeper than 6" allows the shaft to "wander" causing the hole to be out of alignment.

5. The pneumatic firing process tended to misfire because of the firing pin not seating properly.

6. The \$2 firecracker sized charges for this device would only "crack" the rock and I would have to spend a lot of time with a breaker bar to actually "split" the rock.

7. The charges weren't waterproof.

I lamented to a friend of mine the challenges of using this device. Being an inventor, my friend, Dana Allen, listened to my request for a better rock breaking device and then he designed the present iteration of the Sierra Blaster. I have been using his device for over a year now and I am convinced it is the most amazing thing a small-scale miner could use to reach the gold under the big rocks.

For the last year, Dana and I spent time on my claim testing modifications. In my opinion the Sierra Blaster is a game changer for the small-scale miner.

With the advent of the Patriot Act gaining access to any sort of traditional explosives is next to impossible and when you do find conventional explosives you have to pay a licensed contractor to come in to use it. The Sierra Blaster is the first ATF approved small scale blasting device to be used without a needing an explosives license.

The primary concern was to create a device that was extremely safe. The specialized connectors didn't look like any other commonly used contractor-type connectors. This ensured the cord wasn't accidentally attached to power before the charge was ready to be ignited.

The ignition pulse of the Sierra Blaster is supplied by an electrical connection to a portable 600 watt generator (Harbor Freight \$90) and they are developing a 9v option for those who are working in remote locations and are not willing to pack in a generator.

The optimal diameter of the drill hole is 3/8" (10mm). We found when drilling smaller diameter holes, the bits burned up quicker and when drilling the larger holes, it took more time to drill and the explosive force was less. The 10mm bit is also less expensive.

The charges are contained in a waterproof 10mm diameter tube. As part of the ATF approval process Dana had to demonstrate how stable the charges were for transport. He showed them he could burn them and he hammered the charges on an anvil and yet the charge was completely inert and didn't explode.

Miner Rick Reviews the Sierra Blaster

The 10mm drill hole allows the small scale miner to use either a contractor grade electrical SDS drill or a small powered gas drill like the Ryobi ER160 (I have 3 of them). When drilling a 10mm diameter 10" deep hole, the drilling typically takes less than a minute.

The Sierra Blaster utilizes a "containment rod" to which the charge is attached and is then pushed into the hole. The containment rod prevents the release of explosive gases. The Sierra Blaster uses two versions of containment rods. One is made of aluminum and a heavier containment rod is of stainless steel which is used for situations where weight is not an issue. The added weight of the stainless steel rod helps hold the charges in when blasting in horizontal or upside down positions.

One great feature of the Sierra Blaster is it can be used in a wet environment. The charges are completely waterproof and have been tested after being submerged for over 15 minutes.

Dana and I spent many summer days on my claim drilling 4-6 foot diameter rocks and splitting them with a single \$1 charge. Dana sells a \$1 ignition charge and a \$0.75 helper charge. His charge costs were half of what I was paying using the other system and it seemed the explosive power was 4 times more powerful.

I'd recommend getting at least several extra containment heads. Multiple simultaneous explosions can create a much larger fracture.

The Sierra Blaster system sells for \$695 and contains one containment head, all the cords, a few drill bits and a box of ignition and helper charges. It all comes in a soft pack easy to pack on the trail. Extra heads run \$200 each and the system can accommodate up to firing 6 heads simultaneously.

I have been using the Sierra Blaster with Dana for over a year and it's an amazing device and I recommend it for anyone needing to split some rock. I use it on my claim and I don't have any complaints.



If you wish to purchase the Sierra Blaster, go to Dana's website: www.sierrablaster.com to view some of his videos of the blasting process, or on WMA's new e-commerce site: www.sierrarivers.com

