

Recycle in the Yard /// How to Pave on a Bridge

# PAVINGPRO

COMMERCIAL • RESIDENTIAL • MAINTENANCE

## Alakona Weathers Hawaiian Paving

**+**  
**SPECIALTY PROJECT**

Runway Milling in 3D

CARLSON

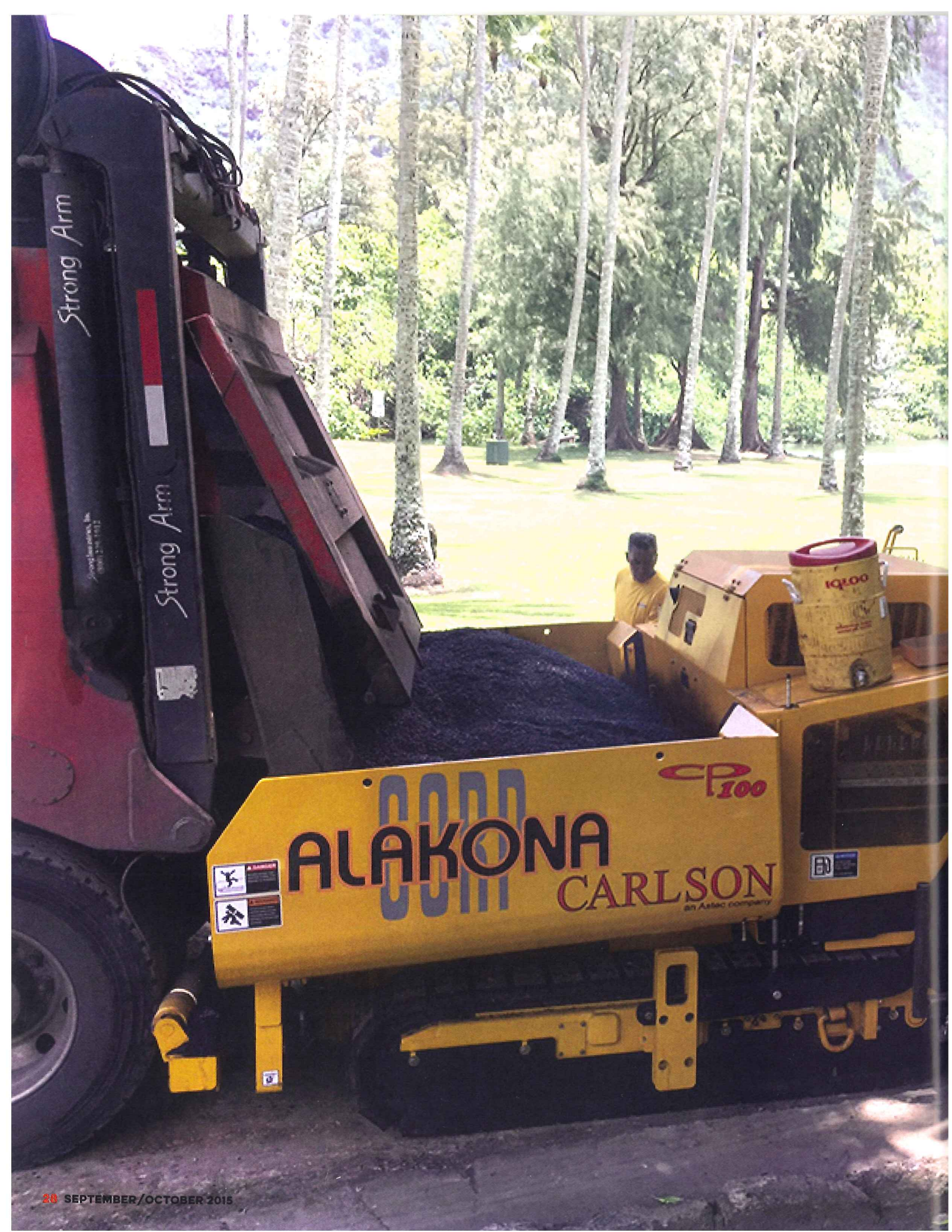
EZ  
SCREED

E. Meier Spells  
Efficiency

Preserve Your  
Spray Tips

[MYPAVINGPRO.COM](http://MYPAVINGPRO.COM)







Alakona's paving equipment has to be small enough to handle parking bays and narrow city streets, but also capable of completing bigger projects, such as state roads and large parking lots.



## FAMILY OWNED CONTRACTOR MEETS CHALLENGES OF PAVING IN PARADISE

BY TRAVIS COLWELL

**I**f you asked asphalt contractors where they would most like to pave, chances are the State of Hawaii would be near the top of the list. And for good reason. With lush tropical landscape, beautiful beaches and warm, tropical weather year round, Hawaii appears to offer the ideal conditions for contractors to pave without worry. But as Arist de Wolff, superintendent for Alakona Corp of Honolulu, will tell you, it is anything but easy to pave in the Aloha State.

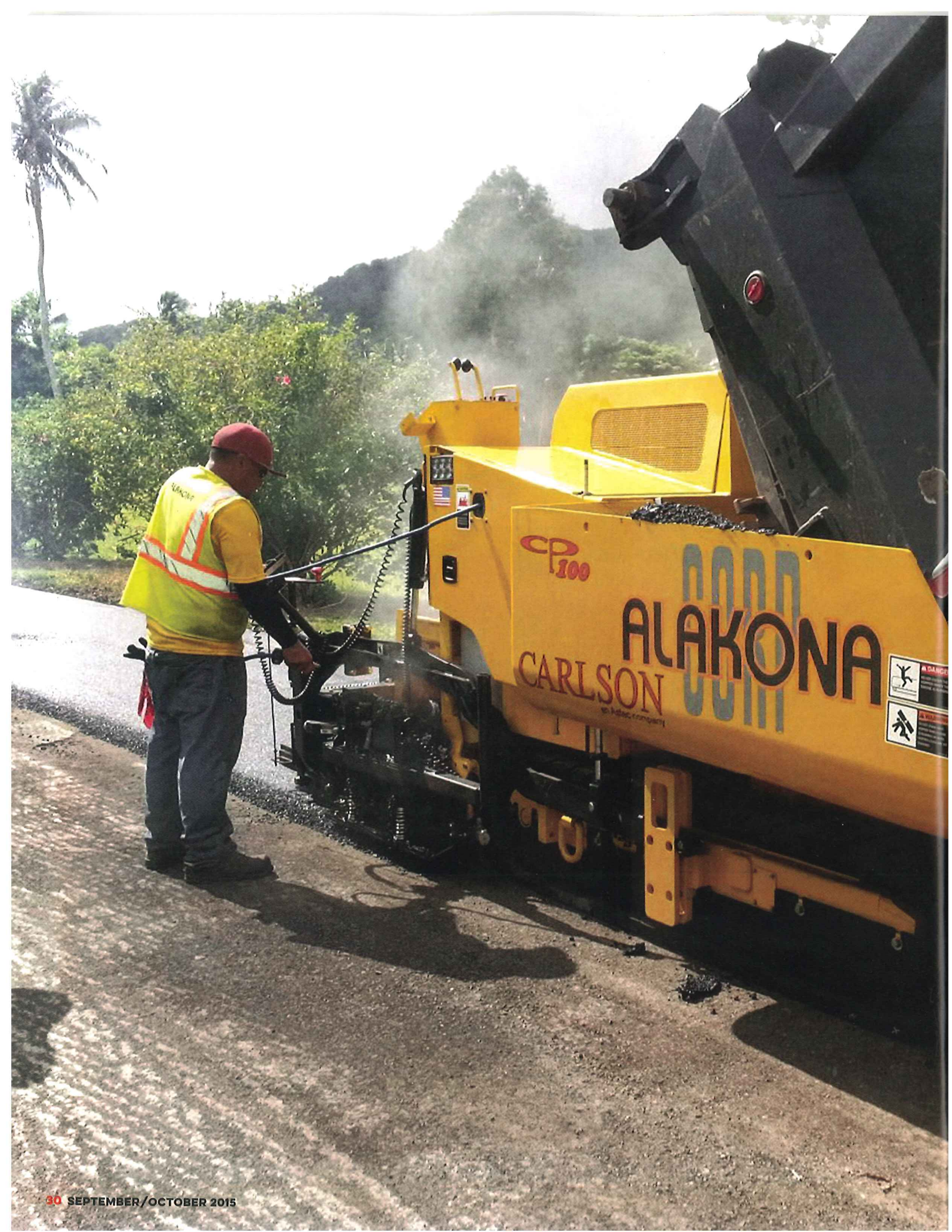
### SMALL ISLANDS, BIG CHALLENGES

For Alakona Corp, meeting the unique challenges posed by Hawaii's location, climate and population growth is a daily task. Founded by Mervyn de Wolff in 1982, the family-owned asphalt and asphalt maintenance contractor has grown to become one of Oahu's premier contractors for residential, commercial, municipal and military projects. While having a main focus on Oahu, the state's most populous island, Alakona also serves communities and municipalities on the neighboring islands.

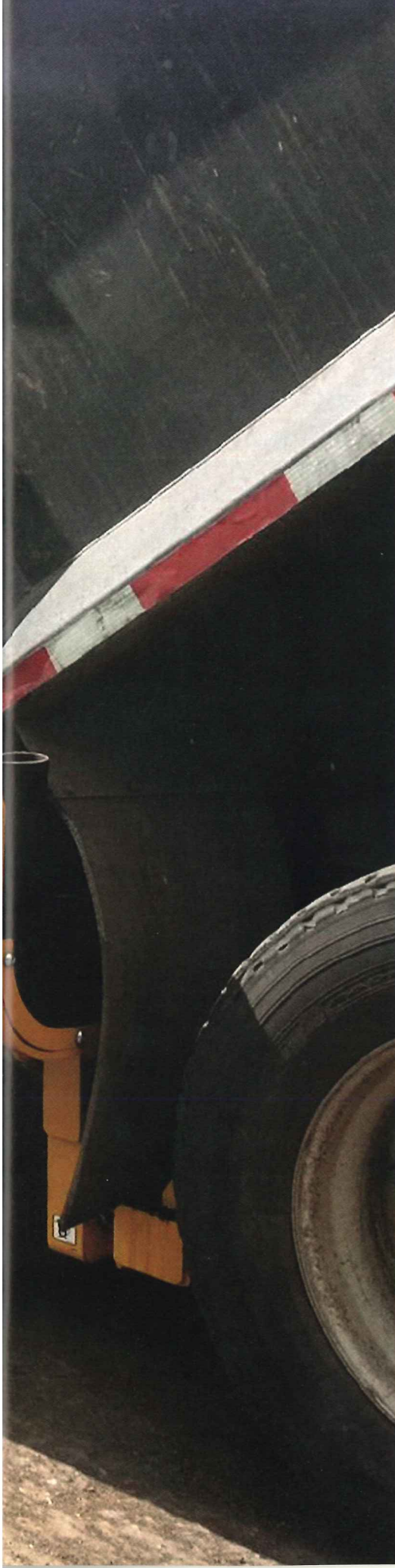
Although each island differs slightly from the next, the chain that makes up Hawaii was formed by volcanic activity, creating rugged topographies of mountains, ridges and valleys. These geological formations, in turn, create unique and fast changing weather conditions











**LEFT:** Year round paving places greater stress on equipment, with regular cleaning and service required to ensure optimal performance. **ABOVE:** From rural communities to city streets, efficiency and quality are essential to alleviate traffic congestion.

on the islands. For contractors such as Alakona, the threat of changing weather means potential disruption of a workday, or emergency repairs to washed out roads following extreme weather conditions. Steep grades on roadways connecting the coastal towns to the interior of the islands also pose significant challenges to logistics and paving; some areas can be remote and narrow.

The steep grades and unpredictable weather conditions may adversely affect paving operations in rural areas, but the conditions for paving in urban areas are just as daunting. "Honolulu is plagued with severe traffic, ranking third in the country for worst traffic congestion," de Wolff said. In fact, more than two thirds of Hawaii's 1.4 million residents, including a considerable presence of active-duty military and their families, reside on the island of Oahu, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This creates significant strain on existing surface transportation commuting in and out of Honolulu, increased by the influx of millions of tourists that flock to the island each year. The challenges for Alakona are then

compounded by the tight working environments within the city itself, such as paving and maintaining parking structures and side streets.

To meet these challenges head on, Alakona has relied on the depth of their team and the equipment they use to become one of the state's most successful and well-respected contractors.

### **PERSONNEL MATTERS**

For Alakona Corp, a major point of pride for the company is the retention rate of employees. "We have some that have been with the company for 20-plus years," de Wolff explained. "It has been one of the major factors that has made Alakona so successful on Oahu in its field."

Such a high rate of employee retention, along with the collective experience of the crews, creates many benefits for the company, including excellent customer satisfaction. Seasoned crew members bring improved quality control on jobs. In a state challenged with congestion, and a variety of weather and terrain, experienced crews



help improve efficiency, enabling teams to complete jobs on time. Alakona crews are familiar with the equipment, know the limitations of the machines, and can maximize the performance in tight work environments and steep grades.

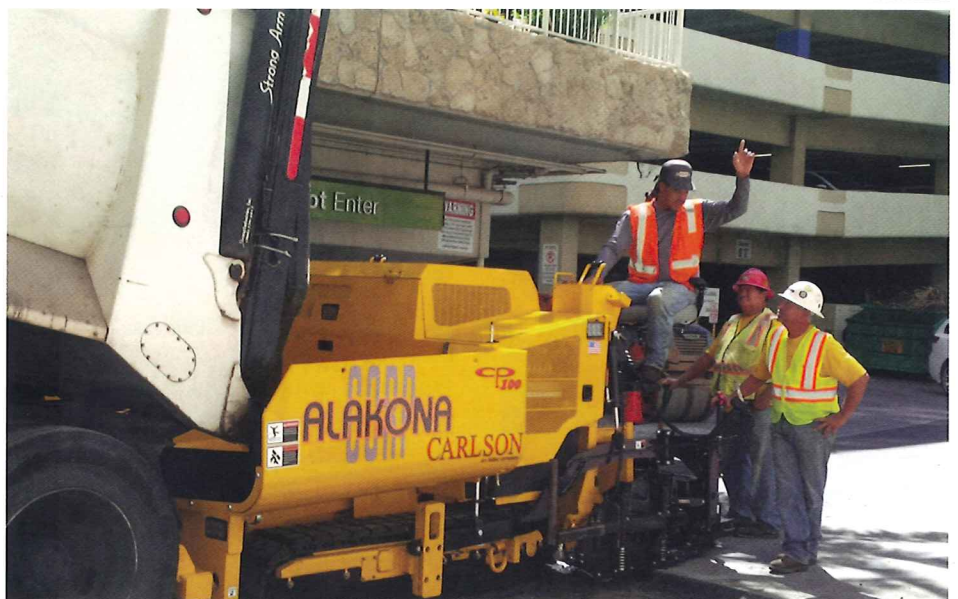
Although Alakona's paving and pavement maintenance crew members' collective years of experience have made the difference on the jobsite, the company's dedicated support staff has been equally as pivotal to the company's success. "We often work almost six days a week," John Montgomery, head mechanic for Alakona Corp, explained. Employing three full time mechanics, Montgomery and his team work around the clock at Alakona's facility in Honolulu as well as on the jobsites to keep all the equipment working at optimum efficiency and condition. As de Wolff bluntly stated, "Downtime means machines are not supporting the company."

The impact of down machines reaches further than just costing the company money. Delays and down machines can cause excessive frustration for customers and motorists alike. Lane closures or project delays can contribute to the already heavy congestion in and around Honolulu, as well as cause travel problems for more rural communities. Between the efficient, highly experienced crews and the dedicated service team, Alakona continues to be on the forefront of getting the job done without unduly inconveniencing residents, helping them earn the respect of their customers and community.

**For contractors such as Alakona, the threat of changing weather means potential disruption of a workday, or emergency repairs to washed out roads following extreme weather conditions.**

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

Investing in new equipment can be a stressful and expensive experience for any contractor. Alakona is no different. What sets Hawaii's contractors apart from the rest of the United States is the need for equipment that fits their niche. Instead of



**ABOVE TOP:** Alakona works with equipment manufacturers to customize their machines to the challenges Hawaii presents. **ABOVE BOTTOM:** Alakona works on a paving project in the city of Waikiki. Densely populated areas, like Waikiki, present unique challenges for Alakona.

having a separation between highway class and commercial class equipment, Alakona invests in platforms that combine the two for a more versatile, flexible fleet.

As de Wolff pointed out, "Paving and pavement maintenance can be difficult to complete because of tight work areas, such as parking lots, condos, valley roads and densely populated areas like Waikiki." Platforms have to be smaller to handle parking bays and narrow city streets, but the equipment also must be able to complete bigger projects such as state roads and large parking lots. Equipment must also be able to stand the stress of year-round paving seasons, year after year.

Beyond the build and robustness of platforms, Alakona also seeks to establish sound

relationships with the manufacturers to ensure their equipment is fully supported. "We look to establish long-lasting relationships with the companies we buy from," de Wolff explained. Close relationships with dealers and manufacturers have helped Alakona tailor its machines to the company's specific requests. de Wolff explained how, during their most recent purchase of a Carlson CP100 asphalt paver, Alakona was able to meet with Carlson's engineers to discuss solutions to the challenges unique to Hawaii.

"We strive to be the best paving and pavement maintenance company on Oahu..." With the right equipment to strike the balance needed for flexibility, and a well-trained, experienced team, Alakona continues to grow and serve satisfied customers. 