

Going forward with full service.

One-stop shopping for site preparation services can be a big plus for large-site developers. When seeking contracts for big-box sites, full-service site prep firms may gain a distinct advantage over their competitors by offering developers an approach that allows for more control over the project and greater efficiency on the job.

Schlouch Incorporated of Blandon, Pennsylvania, is one such firm that puts its full-service capability to good use in tackling big-box sites. Schlouch serves a number of counties in southeastern Pennsylvania within a 50-mile radius of its headquarters in Berks County. It employs 365 people, has an investment in equipment in excess of \$35 million and brings in annual revenues of approximately \$60 million.

Currently, Schlouch has a project in the works in Pennsylvania's Upper Macungie Township in Lehigh County. The 50-plus-acre site will be home to a 726,000-square-foot commercial warehouse being constructed by Cutler Associates of Allentown, Pennsylvania. Cutler Associates, a progressive design-build and construction management company, has a longstanding relationship with Schlouch; the two firms have worked together on a number of sites in this area.

On its current Cutler project, Schlouch is providing turnkey sitework including clearing and grubbing, surveying, stakeout, blasting, rock removal, earthwork, sanitary and storm sewer installation, water line layout and installation, sediment/erosion control, road layout and installation, building pad preparation, concrete curb installation, paving and seeding.

"All of these services are in-house at Schlouch," says Barry Schlouch, owner and company coordinator. "In recent years we found that it was more efficient for us to add our own teams to handle such things as blasting, paving, concrete flatwork, concrete curbing and sediment/erosion control. These teams complement our basic excavating and utility services, and provide for seamless execution on the job."

Mike Williams is Schlouch's site coordinator tasked with bringing the site to completion. To date, Williams and his highly skilled team have moved more than 500,000 cubic yards of dirt and more than 100,000 cubic yards of rock on the site. Pipe crews are now busy on the site installing sewer and water lines. Still to come this spring are 57,000 square yards of asphalt paving and installation of concrete curbing on the site.

Williams says that since the project began in mid-2005 he has had an array of equipment on the job that at one time included 10 A35 Volvo (www.volvo.com) off-road trucks, up to six drills, three rollers, 365C and 345C Caterpillar (www.cat.com) excavators, a D65 Komatsu (www.komatsu.com) dozer, an L180E Volvo wheel loader, and two dozers—one Cat D8T and one 850J John Deere (www.deere.com)—equipped with Trimble (www.trimble.com) GCS900 GPS grade control systems. While his needs didn't make a dent in the Schlouch fleet of more than 200 pieces of



heavy equipment, just having access to these resources made life easier for Williams and his team.

The Schlouch team used GPS for most of the site layout, and didn't need to call in the survey team until it was time to verify the final layout. As the work progressed, the dozers equipped with the GPS systems were used for precision grading. According to Williams, Schlouch is using GPS technology more and more on its sites to improve the quality of its product.

"We also maintain high quality by using our in-house service teams for all aspects of the project," Williams says. "Our people know what we and the client expect and go the extra mile to deliver." Because Williams is working with all Schlouch employees on a project, he is able to maintain a strong relationship with the people responsible for various aspects of the work. "If I were to hire someone 'outside' to do the curb work on the job, he might be on another site when I need him," he explains. With Schlouch's full-service approach, even if the curb superintendent has been called to another site, Williams can coordinate with him to ensure that he is at the site where he will best serve the interests of the company. "Schlouch special teams give us more control in the execution of the job as we move from one stage to another, making us more efficient in meeting our schedules. This is a real plus for our customer," Williams says.

Barry Schlouch reinforces what Williams says: "I have talked with the Cutler people in charge of this job and they have expressed satisfaction with our performance and said they were very impressed with the equipment, people and organization of the site." This full-service approach Schlouch offers is keeping clients happy. "We focus on repeat customer relationships like the one we have with Cutler," Schlouch says. And, he adds, "We can only earn that relationship through performance." **SP**