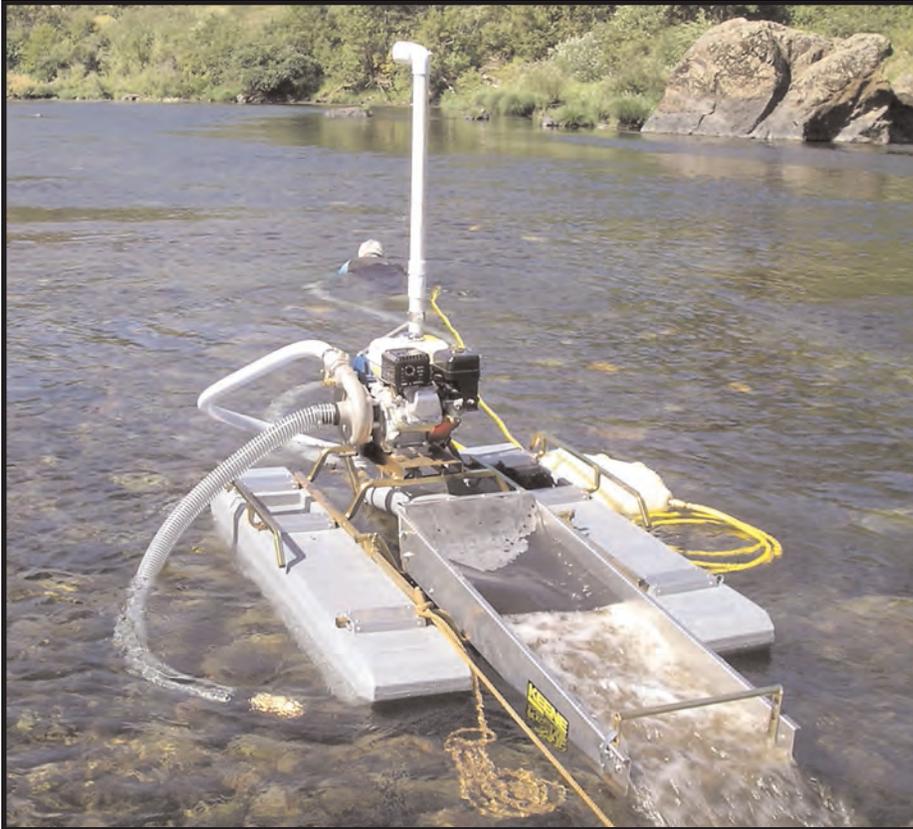


Product Report: Keene's New "Ultra" Dredge Models Offer Exciting New Gold Recovery Opportunities. By David Knowlen



There is an old axiom known to gold dredgers, being that big dredges do big work and give you big results and small dredges well, you get the picture. And it seems that this perception by many gold miners has always been assumed to be true.

But with Keene's new "Ultra" line of three and four inch suction gold dredges, this old theory can now be tossed out the window. The fact is that these new model gold dredges from Keene Engineering perform much like the larger Keene units and they are opening up new and more remote areas to productive gold dredging, including many streams that have never before been dredged.

Now that's exciting news.

I know this firsthand because this is exactly what happened to me last summer while dredging in a remote gold-bearing creek located in the higher ele-

vations within a well known area of southwest Oregon's mountain wilderness.

Now here's the story behind my adventure.

What has now become the Keene "Ultra" series of dredges began some months ago in a discussion I had with Jerry, Pat and Mark Keene. We had been talking about a need for designing and developing new, lighter-weight Keene dredge models capable of being transported and operated in extremely remote, upper elevation areas often overlooked by today's gold miners. The concept was really quite simple, put big dredge performance into a small and highly portable package.

And small means that it had to fit into the back of a mini-truck or inside a small SUV.

So we'll begin with a fact. It is true that many of today's gold dredgers are

aware that a lot of gold remains to be discovered in the hundreds of streambeds in remote and distant upper elevation rivers and creeks but the overwhelming challenge for dredgers is getting up and into these sites, especially with portable equipment that can do a reasonable job.

Years back I had told Mark and Pat Keene about a remote Oregon creek I had worked back in the 1980s which we discovered had good quantities of both fine and course gold. In the distant past and through the region's geological evolution, this stream had eroded a new channel directly across an ancient tertiary riverbed where ample amounts of gold once had resided. Some of that gold had been re-deposited in this new creek bed, and from what we saw in our sampling, the composition of the overburden indicated that no one had ever dredged on this location.

But here was the problem. Getting up to this creek was a major challenge because it's located in an especially remote and rugged mountainous upper elevation region with no nearby roads or trails for packing in our equipment. Getting up to this site requires several difficult hikes on terrain more suited for pack animals or mountain goats.

And large productive equipment of that time was just not light enough to be feasibly transported up to this creek. Back then we had successfully used a tiny backpack rig but the amount of recovery was not really worth the effort.

So Keene Engineering began work on designing what they now call the "Ultra" series of gold dredges. And last summer I gave one of their new models a test on this remote location.

It began with this new Keene dredge sitting in parts and pieces on my shop floor. Starting with the basic frame and floatation, in just ten minutes it was completely assembled. I was

impressed as easy and smooth the assembly went.

I also noticed that it looked similar to my five-inch Keene dredge, large in features but so much smaller in size and weight being just over forty-one inches wide and about six feet long, perfect for a small mini-truck or SUV. And it was powered with a reliable Honda 4 horsepower engine, a proven high-output (HO) Keene pump and connected to a T80 compressor for underwater operations.

Best of all, the sluice box had all of Keene's unique combination of Hungarian riffles, a large upper area of black rubber matting for checking values and a generous section of miner's moss used for trapping fine gold. All assembled on the light frame and two pontoons with the hoses, jet flare and Keene's great non-clogging coupler system it was noticeably lightweight.

And while my wife said it was cute, cute doesn't mean it will bring in the gold. The proof would be how it delivered in productivity and recovery.

So just a week later and a half-day's drive culminating at the end of an ancient logging road our travels had brought us within about a mile of this remote Oregon creek. I noticed that twenty years had not changed this area too much.

Jim, my dredging partner and I secured my truck in a clearing under a large oak tree and we unloaded the dredge components along with my other mining and camping gear. The hardest part lay ahead, packing in all the gear on a narrow and winding uphill trail. The plan was simple, we would arrange all of our gear into several moderate pack loads with as much as we could physically carry on each trip up and onto the site. The remainder of our gear would be kept here in our base camp.

The next day we were up early and I quickly noticed that Keene's new dredge component design made the unit weight much lighter and easier for us to carry. The most challenging single component was the engine, pump and compressor which we put on a custom-built hand (Page Two)

-truck with large wheels. While it took the better part of a day we packed in all



of our operational "necessities" and by late afternoon our dredge was assembled and in the creek ready for its first trial early the next day.

Now something you should know is that I am now in my early sixties and a much younger man would have a whole lot less challenge in toting a gold dredge, support equipment and camping gear all the way up to a site such as this one. But I also believe that my enthusiasm for dredging and a long and recurring case of 'gold fever' all added to my stamina.

And before calling it a day and while gazing at the now-assembled "Ultra-3" floating in this creek was when I actually realized that for the first time we finally have a dredge up here that could find the gold that I had long dreamed of recovering. After completing our camp and preparing dinner that evening Jim and I discussed our operating plan and both of us envisioned a hoped for sluice full of that precious yellow metal that we have chased for so many years.

The next morning and up early, we moved the dredge downstream to what looked like a promising low pressure spot where the creek gently makes a sweeping bend and there are three calm pools lying behind several large sloping bedrock outcroppings. While positioning Keene's new "Ultra-3" I noticed that this dredge slid nicely over the shallow bars and exposed rocks and the balance of the entire unit made it easy for one man to easily maneuver

it to where we would begin our sampling efforts.

With the dredge in position and just one pull on the starter the Honda engine came to life we noticed the large volume of water flowing through the sluice box. We reduced the engine speed and adjusted the sluice angle and after checking my regulator I dove underwater and got to work sampling in several locations and tearing into the overburden. In operating the nozzle I was impressed when I felt the dredge nozzle's strong suction power quickly pulling material up and into the intake hose.

About an hour later and with a half dozen sample holes we confirmed in what we had believed, that our operation was likely the first time that anyone had ever dredged in this creek location. The overburden was about three feet deep and all the way down to the shallow bedrock it was hard-packed and the cobbles were properly stacked as only nature can arrange through time.

The farther down that I dredged the more the composite overburden changed color becoming dark gray, then black and finally shades of orange and red indicating decomposing iron composite in the material. I throttled back the engine to idle and pulled back the rubber dampener to inspect for values. Both of us quickly noticed that the sluice had done a great job in containing the heavier material which was packed nicely in behind each riffle. And best of



all there was gold, lots of gold!

Earlier I had noticed underwater that several small pieces of gold going into the intake nozzle and now looking at the sluice's black rubber matting what we saw had brought a big grin to both of us. All across the matting were specks, pieces and even some small flakes of gold. We both noticed a single "picker" resting in the upper corner near the opening of the jet flare. And all of the gold was located in the upper area of the sluice indicating that this dredge was doing its job and not losing any recovered values.

Satisfied with the amount of gold at this specific location we began what could be called our production operation. And after our first cleanup it turned out that we were both well rewarded for this decision when that evening we saw lots of gold in the bottom of each of our gold pans.

Since Jim and I are quite careful about doing timely dredge cleanups, often as much as twice or three times a day. We once again used and praised the simplicity of Keene's time-saving Sluice Bucket Recovery System (SBRS). This device makes dredge cleanup so easy but best of all it prevents losing any your gold while we used to fumble with the sluice, carpet, matting and riffles all the while holding a tub to catch our "cons". I highly recommend this unit for any small to medium-sized dredge operator.

And for the many days of work our

"little" dredge performed flawlessly. I recall that we had only two plug-ups all during our operation and these were within the dredge hose due to us allowing oblong cobbles to pass into the nozzle. Amazingly we never once had to shutdown for a plug-up because Keene's quick release system has all but eliminated this former problem.

Well, the days flew by and our time for this trip went all too fast, as it always seems to do when you are into recovering good amounts of gold. Jim and I had spent several days dredging on this remote creek location and our time here was drawing to a close.

And when we finished our final day and looked at the results of our efforts we again appreciated just how easy it was to operate this new Keene dredge. The Ultra-3 had proven itself and clearly was a winner in our books.

And when it was time to depart each of us had a nice amount of gold to show for our dredging efforts. In fact the amount of gold we recovered here had literally paid for this new dredge.

We also realized just how fortunate we were in finding a lot of fine and course gold along with about two dozen small nuggets on this distant creek. It does not happen like this all the time. And while we completed our gold recovery later when we returned home and had weighed our results and divided our shares, both of us realize that we must return next year. The enclosed picture pretty much says it all, and this was just my share of our recovery. Thanks to our productive operation last year and to this new Keene "Ultra-3" dredge, Jim and I have already decided that next summer we shall make a return visit to this remote southwestern Oregon creek. And perhaps next time we'll give a new Keene "Ultra-4" a chance to increase our gold recovery even more. Either way I'm certain that Keene has a winner with their new "Ultra" series of dredges.

And if someone asks for our evaluation on the level of performance on this new dredge, well, it's really quite simple...small in size, light in weight and quite large on performance and productivity.....and truly a great value for the investment.

The gold in the picture really says it all.



<u>MODEL</u>	<u>EQUIPMENT</u>	<u>WEIGHT</u>
3400P	3" Dredge 3.5hp B&S P103	155 lbs
3400PH	3" Dredge 4hp Honda P104	159 lbs
3405P	3" Dredge 3.5hp B&S P103 T80	165 lbs
3405PH	3" Dredge 4hp Honda P104 T80	169 lbs
3500P	3" Dredge 6.5hp Honda P180	169 lbs
3500PH	3" Dredge 6.5hp Honda P180	167 lbs
3505P	3" Dredge 6.5hp P180 T80 Comp	179 lbs
3505PH	3" Dredge 6.5hp Honda P180 T80	177 lbs

Each dredge is equipped with 20 feet of 3 inch suction hose - sluice box is 14 inches x 48 inches. New oversized jet flare and jet with suction hose quick coupling - 2 Floats 60" x 10.5" x 10.5" - Dimensions are 60" x 40".