

# Pumped

BY TONY BENNETT



## GPM INC. ANTICIPATES GROWTH TO SERVE LARGE INDUSTRIES IN NORTH AMERICA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

**S**lurry pumping is crucial to many different industries, especially those in which manufacturing or processing leads to the production of waste liquids. So dependable pumps are vital for many regional companies, including Iron Range taconite producers. These are tough industries requiring tough products, and Duluth-based GPM Inc. has made a name for itself by manufacturing those pumps. For 40 years, it has been a reliable partner with its customers.

Today, GPM employs about 70 people. Its manufacturing facility and corporate headquarters are both located in Duluth and its MSP Sales & Service Center is in Apple Valley, Minnesota. The company also has a sales and service center in Bismarck, North Dakota, and an office in Billings, Montana.

Peter Haines is GPM's chief executive officer, and though he's relatively new there (he was tapped for the position in 2017), his professional background has prepared him for his position very well.

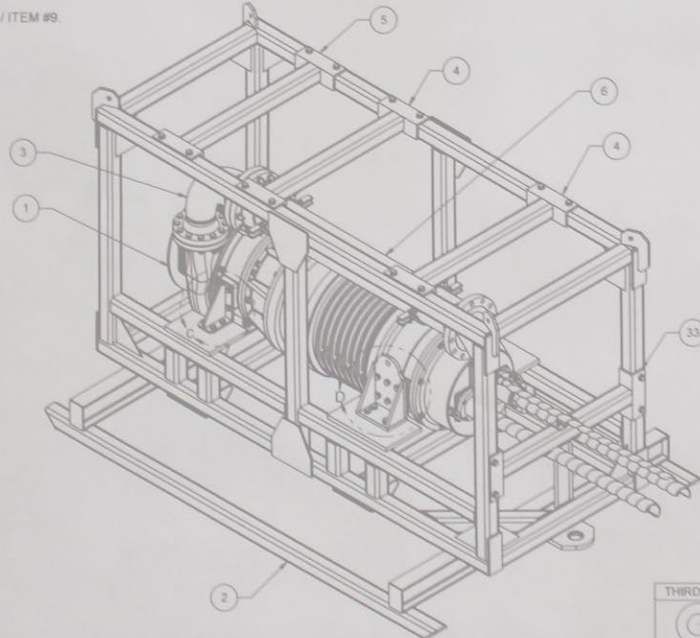


Mary Willemarck - reception/administrative support



***"We not only service our pumps, but we'll service anybody's rotational equipment and rebuild it back to the OEM factory specs."***

— CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER PETER HAINES

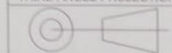


16	G10902	L.W. 5/8"	-	18/8	16
17	G10971	HHCS 5/8-11 X 1-3/4"	-	18/8	8
18	G10904	L.W. 3/4"	-	18/8	36
19	G10987	HHCS 3/4-10 UNC X 2-1/2"	-	18/8	12
20	G24824	HEX BOLT 3/4-10 X 4"	-	18/8	12
21	G11136	HEX NUT 7/8-9UNC	-	18/8	12
22	G10964	HEX BOLT 7/8-9UNC X 5"	-	18/8	12
23	G29205	HEX BOLT 3/4 x 10UNC X 6.00"	-	18/8 SS	16
24	G11000	HHCS 3/4-10 UNC X 3"	-	18/8	8
25	G10990	HHCS 5/8-11 X 2"	-	18/8	8
26	G28952	1" CABLE PROTECTOR	-	-	100
27	G27142	2" CABLE PROTECTOR	-	-	50
28	G29106	PLUG, HANDLE W/ CABLE CLAMP	-	BLUE POLY	1
29	G29105	PLUG, MULTIPIN, 24 PIN, 7.5A	-	BLUE POLY	1
30	G29190	CABLE CLAMP, Ø2.500	PT-89-002-75	A36	2
31	G11134	HEX NUT 3/4-10 UNC	-	18/8	28
32	G10869	F.W. 3/4"	-	18/8	16
33	G29266	SUPPORT BEAM, DEWATERING SKID	PT-89-002-82	-	1
34	G15167	HHCS 3/8-16 X 1.25"	-	18/8	6
35	G10894	L.W. 3/8"	-	18/8	6

ALL DIMENSIONS ARE  
REFERENCE ONLY  
UNLESS TOLERANCES  
ARE SPECIFIED

REV	DATE	BY	ENG APPROVAL	DESCRIPTION

THIRD ANGLE PROJECTION



<b>GPM Eliminator</b> SOLID PUMPING SOLUTIONS		<b>ASSEMBLY DRAWING</b>	
DRAWN: D. HON	DATE: 18 Sep 15	TITLE: DEWATERING SKID SBHH6 FRAME 5	
CHECKED: L. ESBOLDT	DATE: 14 Oct 15	PART NUMBER: G29204	
ENG APPR: L. ESBOLDT	DATE: 29 Sep 15	SIZE: B DWG. NO. AS-78-HH6-02	
MRG APPR: R. OJALA	DATE: 08 Oct 15	DO NOT SCALE DRAWING SHEET 1 OF 3	
<small>         PROPRIETARY AND CONFIDENTIAL          THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS DRAWING IS          THE SOLE PROPERTY OF GPM. ANY REPRODUCTION IN          PART OR AS A WHOLE WITHOUT THE WRITTEN          PERMISSION OF GPM IS PROHIBITED.       </small>			

*Since then, the aptly named Eliminators ...  
have become GPM's flagship products.*

Nick Nelson - service technician



"A little over 18 months ago, I actually made a sales call on GPM for a bio-based lubes company out of Chicago," Haines explained; at that time, he was vice president of business development for BioBlend Renewable Resources. "I was calling to see if they had a need for biodegradable lubricants for their submersible pumps. One thing led to another, and as I was walking out the door, I met the then-CEO, Rob West. After several lunches and a number of interviewing interactions, I was chosen as the new CEO to chart a forward

path for GPM. I came to sell some oil and walked out as the new CEO.

"What attracted me to GPM was that it was a 39-year-old company at the time," Haines said. "They had a great reputation in the marketplace for heavy-duty, real tough submersible slurry pumps, and I thought that would be a great company to provide oil to, perhaps even a private-label technology. And I got to meet and interact with the owner, Peter Gemuenden – a true visionary in the pump world. I liked the family dynamics that were involved. It was a family-run company with

headquarters here in Duluth and offices in Apple Valley and Bismarck and a variety of sales satellite locations. Everybody was enthused. They had good documentation on why their pumps were the best pumps in the industry for what they do. It was an interesting proposition."

Haines had been in the lubes business for 30 years, so he had a good understanding of the types of products and services GPM provides. "The allure had to do with the quality and the performance attributes of the GPM offerings," he explained.





to develop his own pump solution. He hired engineering personnel to help design the pump that could do just that, and so began the evolution of the GPM Eliminator series of submersible slurry pumps, which today can pump up to 70 percent solids."

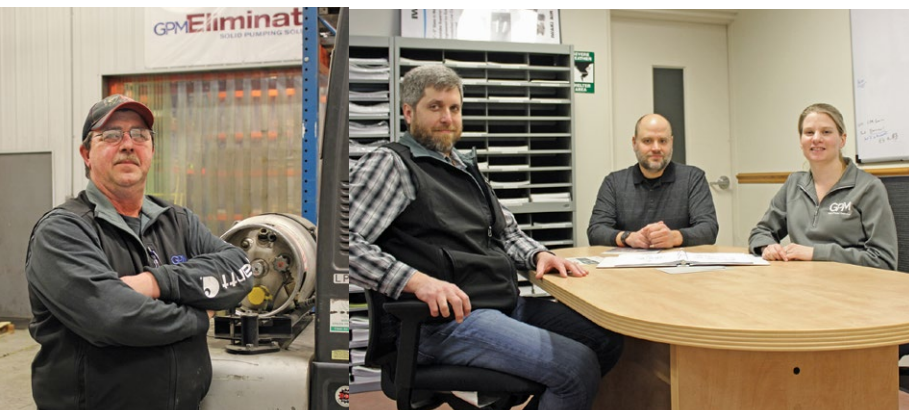
Since then, the aptly named Eliminators – its series of submersible and horizontal slurry pumps – have become GPM's flagship products.

"In the industrial world, people understand that you need to pump water," said Haines. "That's a nice, clean product to pump. But the reality is, in every single plant, everything funnels down to a sump. That sump can contain solids, and you have to be able to move that heavy-duty slurry combination of liquids and solids to a handling point. So every facility out there has pumps. A lot of people don't realize that over 25 percent of all electricity generated in North America powers a motor that runs a pump. That's how many pumps are out there. Pumps are critical workhorses of American industry."

There are three main legs to GPM's business, Haines explained: "We have our OEM [original equipment manufacturer] offering – the pumps that we make and sell. We have a line of distributed products – 15 market-leading technology products beyond the GPM Eliminator" [more on this flagship pump later]. And our third leg is the service side. We not only service GPM pumps, but we'll service anybody's rotational equipment and rebuild it back to the OEM

factory specs while matching their original warranty."

GPM Inc. was launched in 1978 by Peter Gemuenden, who is now the company's chairman and president. "One of the things he very quickly found out was that there wasn't a dependable, reliable pump in the marketplace that could pump heavy-duty slurries," Haines said. "There was nothing out there that would perform for any length of time. Since he couldn't find a pump that would do it, he decided



Mike Leyrer - GM Service

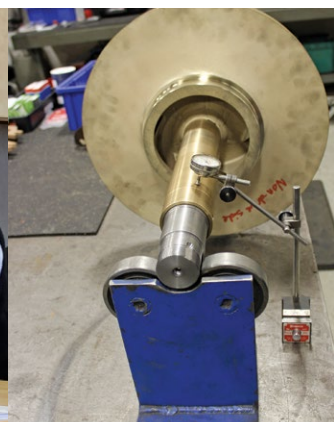
From left: Tom Hansen, Ryan Stromberg, Ariel Wolf (inside sales/support team)



From left: Luke Esboldt, Aaron Myhrer, Dan Hon, Matt Lauseng (engineering team)



Tom Sieger - chief financial officer







***“The focus is to continue improving our marketing strategies to better support the sales and manufacturing divisions.”***

– MARKETING DIRECTOR BLAKE KOLQUIST

To illustrate why GPM’s unique pumps are crucial to the company’s customers, Haines cited taconite production. “Let’s take the Iron Range, for example,” he explained. “You have taconite pellets that fall onto the floor. Through washdowns and so forth, those pellets end up in a sump. Processing plants must be able to pump these marble-sized chunks of taconite and get it removed from the sump; otherwise, it plugs up the plant. Our pumps can move that kind of material. In the bowels of every single facility is a sump that everything washes down into. How do you remove that unique combination of liquids and solids? That’s what our Eliminator pumps were designed to do.”

GPM serves many other types of companies that rely on its pumps as well. “Whether it’s mining, food and beverage facilities, pulp and paper mills or power plants – where you have coal dust that ends up migrating everywhere, and you have to be able to keep the plants clean – all kinds of facilities have a need for liquid conveyance, and many times these liquids contain solids,” said Haines.

Indeed, thanks to the reliability of the company’s pumps and service, GPM has grown steadily over the decades. Today, the Eliminator pump is used by industries throughout North America and beyond. In addition to mining companies, GPM serves these customer segments: oil refining and recovery; steel mills and heavy industries; pulp and paper; water treatment and wastewater and sewage; power generation; ethanol/grain processing; chemical; and food processing.



Chris Peters - machinist



Jeff Miller - machinist



Dave Kilsdonk - machinist



Trevor Rygg - service technician



***"I'm in and out of the mines four days a week, providing them pumping solutions. It's different every day."***

— SALES REPRESENTATIVE ADAM CHRISTENSEN

"We have a nationwide network of distributors that market our product," Haines said. "In the upper Midwest, we have a smaller footprint where we have direct sales reps with feet on the street. The GPM Eliminator is marketed throughout North America, and then the additional goal is to market our 15 other product lines, which include products from Flowserve, Sundyne, Roots, Ebara and others."

He noted that GPM Inc., since it represents world-class manufacturers, also helps its customers find solutions for air conveyance issues,



Bob Poulter - GM Electrical Services Group



marketing fans and blowers, plus gearboxes, mechanical seals, cooling towers, valves and material handling systems. In addition, a high-growth arena cited by GPM is tied to engineered fabrication; engineering unique and diverse pump skids and other engineered solutions. The company is also interested in providing dry conveyance solutions, where substances like coal or sand and other dry solids are moved.

The company's global reach is expanding as well. "The majority of our global sales is based on our reputation," Haines said. "When major engineering firms around the world run into pump challenges, and when they're looking for a solution with something that's tough to pump, our name ends up surfacing, and they

end up contacting us. We just had a couple of big 300-horsepower pumps delivered to a large gold mining operation down in Indonesia. We can sell pumps up to 1,000 horsepower, so they're big, big pumps – not like the little pump you might find as a sump pump in your house. Our smallest pump weighs just over 450 pounds. Our large pumps, like those that went to Indonesia, can be 20 feet tall."

In just the past six months, GPM Inc. has sent pumps not only to Indonesia, but to Ireland, Singapore and Australia. "We offer pumping solutions for global market sectors," Haines said.

As well as the mining industry, GPM's largest customer sectors include power generation and the oil and gas industries. "We deal with a lot

of coal-fired power plants throughout North America, underground mines up in Canada, open-pit mines in the U.S. and the pulp and paper industry," said Haines. "We also have a large presence in the oil and gas sector, servicing customers like Husky [Energy] in Superior, Flint Hills Resources in Minneapolis, Marathon in North Dakota and St. Paul Park refinery down in St. Paul." And that's only a small sampling of a very long list of GPM's clientele.





Adam Christensen is a sales representative with GPM and was GPM's top sales producer in 2018. He's also part of the company's family business dynamic, since Peter Gemunden is his grandfather. Christensen's father and brother are also engaged with the company.

"I basically grew up in the pump shop here," said Christensen.

During college, he worked at GPM as a technician during the day while he attended classes in the evenings. He moved on to the service center and eventually landed in the role he has occupied for the last five years or so. "My heart and soul has always been here," he said. "I really enjoy what I do. I'm very blessed."

Christensen mainly calls on customers based in Northern Minnesota with an emphasis on mining accounts. And "calls" means boots on the ground service – not just the phone.

"I'm in and out of the mines four days a week, providing them pumping solutions. It's different every day," he explained. "I'll get a call from one of



Jason Simmons - machine shop manager

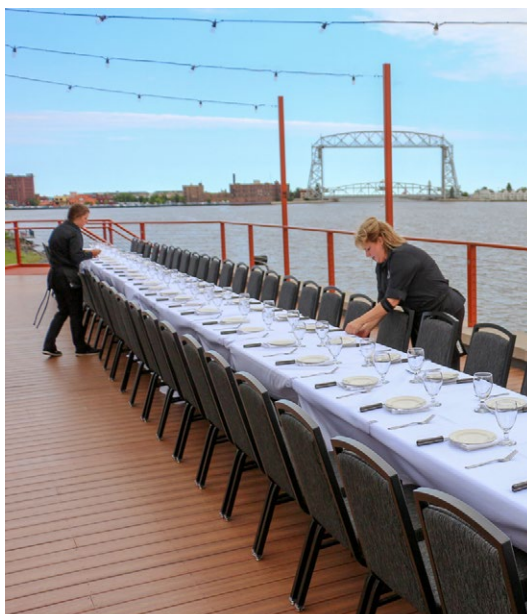


Sam Hodel - engineering



the guys at the plant, and I'll jump in my truck and get covered in black dust and check out a pump. A lot of times, you look at the pump ... and it's been there since they built the place. So you have to kind of reengineer the system for them and provide them with the solution that they're looking for."

He also noted the importance of the services GPM Inc. provides. For this company's customers, it's crucial to get operations back on track and minimize downtime.



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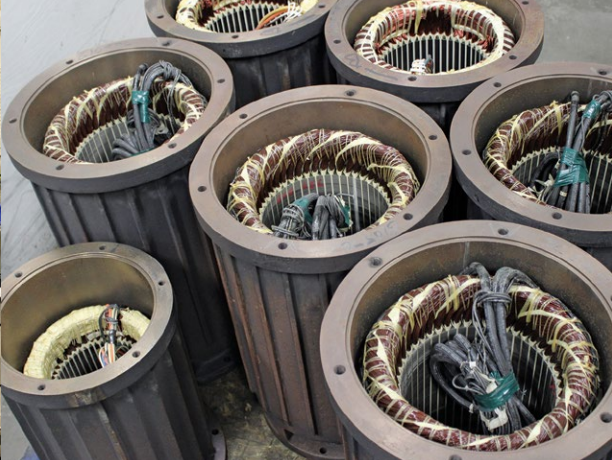




Terry King - engineering director



Andy Gruba - service technician



"If somebody has a pump break down, they call me, we send a truck, have it disassembled here and send a repair quote," Christensen said. "And nine times out of 10, they [customers] say, 'Yup – get it back to me.' Every day, you never know when your phone's going to ring. You could be talking about a \$500,000 dewatering project, or you could be talking about a \$250 sump pump."

The GPM Eliminator is the top-selling product the company manufactures, Christensen says. "It's robust," he explained. "These people pump taconite pellets with them ... If your product survives in one of the taconite facilities, it's pretty darn good."

Blake Kolquist has been with the company for a decade, formerly in a service and safety role before he was tapped to serve as GPM's marketing

director. "Over the last few years, we've tried to expand and increase our marketing focus" Kolquist said. "Our highly skilled team has been designing, engineering and manufacturing a wide range of engineered projects and products that have proven to be effective solutions for our customers. The focus is to continue improving our marketing strategies to better support the sales and manufacturing divisions."

Kolquist is proud of the company and how it treats employees. "Over the past 10 years, GPM has grown

***For this company's customers, it's crucial to get operations back on track and minimize downtime.***

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Chris Morgan - business development manager




Dennis Stangler - OEM assembly manager

leaps and bounds across all business units, but one critical component remains the same, and that is the culture," he said. "The company is truly committed to the personal and professional success of its employees. That's what I believe is a big reason for continued success and growth."

GPM Inc. also believes in supporting the community, and one of Kolquist's duties is assisting with its sponsorship of the annual Kolar Toyota ALS Fishing Tournament, a fundraiser to help people battling amyotrophic lateral sclerosis,

a progressive neurodegenerative disease. "I've been involved with the ALS Association for about 25 years. My uncle was diagnosed in 1994 and passed away in 2007," he explained. "My parents and their friends and family and a bunch of people in the community started the fishing tournament back in 1995. About eight years ago, we transitioned the leadership group to more of a youth movement, and I took the lead on that. It's been a lot of fun working with different companies and people around the

area. We've raised many millions of dollars. This region is absolutely incredible." He's proud of GPM for another reason: 2018 was a record year for the company. "We have a lot to be excited about and a lot to look forward to," Kolquist said.

Haines also says there's much more in store for GPM. "I think the future is very positive," he said. "We fully anticipate doubling in size by 2022, based on our current pace. That's how optimistic we are." 

Tony Bennett is a Duluth-based freelance writer.





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