



Office of Civil Rights

Native Connections

In conjunction with National American Indian Heritage Month, Caltrans is spotlighting Disadvantaged Business Enterprise: S.T. Rhoades Construction. This is part of a series of articles showcasing Caltrans' subcontractors' diversity.

Steve Rhoades was born, raised – and for the last 10 years – has grown his construction business in the same area as his Pit River Native American ancestors lived.

As a youngster, Rhoades was teased for his heritage, but as an adult, he said having roots in the Redding-area helped him build rewarding connections with people who care more about his work ethic than who his ancestors were.

In his early adult years, Rhoades worked for J.F. Shea, Tullis, Inc., Ron Hale Construction and Stimpel-Wiebelhaus Associates.

“While working for those guys, I learned a lot about the industry,” Rhoades said.



When he was 44, he decided to start his own paving, concrete, and underground utility business: S.T. Rhoades Construction. At first, he did not have much capital. He said banks didn't want to loan him money because they were unfamiliar with him – a common hurdle for new businesses. So, he got certified as a

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise and went through the Small Business Administration's 8(a) Federal Developmental Program to learn the business side of things. But ultimately, he said the biggest help came from Redding prime contractors that solicited him for jobs because they knew his work ethic. "It takes effort and time to build your businesses manpower and project portfolio," Rhoades. "When you have a small business, you don't have the volume of work needed to keep people. After a lull, it is hard to get employees to come back."

As a result of his hard work and relationship building, his company has grown to do a variety of projects, from paving to utilities, and structures – in locations ranging from Hawaii to Death Valley, and from northern California to Virginia.

He said he also owes Caltrans a "Thank you," for the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program, which is designed to remedy the continuing effects of discrimination, level the playing field for disadvantaged small businesses and give them a fair opportunity to compete for federally-funded transportation contracts. "That's huge in helping companies get projects," Rhoades said. "I don't think small disadvantaged businesses would get the work they do without the federal percentage goals. In fact, I don't think a lot of the small businesses would be IN business without these goals."

To get certified as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise visit Caltrans' [Website](#).