

*Working in a piece of paradise.*

## **Hackensack Business Focuses on Marine Industry.**

Their business is a perfect fit for two veterans who love the outdoors. Rick Hughes and Dean Garoutte who own Northwoods Dock and Service in Hackensack, are about to enter their busy season – a short one at best in northern Minnesota.



*Northwoods Dock and Service at work with the “barge,” which installs and removes docks and boat lifts.*

The pair started the business in 1992 which then included lawn mowing, tree cutting, painting and storage. “In 1995, the demand for dock and boat lift installation and boat storage was so high, we decided to focus only on the marine industry,” said Garoutte. 1999 was a pivotal year when they developed the “barge.” With the help of Byron Godbersen, founder of ShoreStation, they modified a pontoon to include a lift system for installation and removal of boat lifts and docks, revolutionizing the industry, according to Garoutte.

“We use the barge all day every day in the spring and fall,” Garoutte said. “It also gets used quite a bit in the summer for new boat lift delivery. In a season, we install and remove well over 800 dock and boat lift systems.”

Northwoods Dock also uses a decontamination unit daily. “Even after a good inspection, the waterfront equipment needs ample time out of the water,” explained Garoutte. “We decontaminate all equipment with 225 degree water.” Garoutte said zebra mussels have been the only aquatic invasive species they have seen and only in select areas. These pests attach themselves to boats, lifts and docks and the decontamination and drying time out of the water removes zebra mussels so they can’t be spread to other water bodies.

“The short season is one of the biggest challenges we have,” Garoutte noted. “But an even bigger challenge is Mother Nature – late ice out, heavy rain or wind.”

### **About the owners**

Rick Hughes grew up in Decatur, Ill. He spent many summers at Ten Mile Lake north of Hackensack, where his grandparents had purchased a cabin in the 1950s. His grandparents eventually retired to live at their cabin. After Hughes graduated from high school, he entered the U.S. Coast Guard and served eight years. His last station was in Duluth, which made it possible for him to frequently go to Ten Mile Lake and care for his grandmother after his grandfather died. After his discharge from the Coast Guard, he moved to Ten Mile Lake where he started a handyman business, including lawn mowing, painting, tree removal, dock and boat lift installation and removal.

Enter Dean Garoutte who spent his summers working for Hughes. Garoutte grew up living on Birch Lake near Hackensack. A 1989 Walker High School graduate, he joined the U.S. Army after high school and served for three years. The two became business partners in March 1992. “I love hunting, fishing, trapping and pretty much anything outdoors,” said Garoutte, “making this job the perfect fit for me.”

## **Piece of paradise**

“Ours is a 100 percent service industry,” Garoutte said. “We give the customer everything we’ve got, look them in the eye and be honest with them. We can all not just survive but thrive in our little piece of paradise.”

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*For more information about Northwoods Dock and service, check the website at [www.northwoodsdockservice.com](http://www.northwoodsdockservice.com) or email [nwdock@uslink.net](mailto:nwdock@uslink.net).*



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