

On Steroids?

A highly customized Jeep Grand Cherokee helps EcoClean build a reputation for inspecting in tough-to-reach places

By Ken Wysocky

At first glance, the 1997 Grand Cherokee Limited that EcoClean uses to transport inspection gear looks like a classic case of killing a mosquito with a shotgun. Why would anyone build a cross between a monster truck and an off-road SUV, complete with 38 1/2-inch tires and a steel-plated frame, to cart around a robotic camera or two?

But it all makes sense when you learn this bad boy goes to rough, remote-access pipelines in the wilds of Maine, and beyond. “We have quite a few remote-access lines around here,” says Greg Goan, owner and manager of EcoClean — The Sewer & Drain Specialist, based in Portland and specializing in inspections, pipe cleaning, and repairs.

“When they were put in years and years ago, no one ever maintained the access roads. So now you have to get through big gully

washouts, boulders and drainage ditches to reach those utility lines. But with this truck, we basically go anywhere we want to go.”

Going to extremes

Goan first considered using a vehicle such as a Polaris Ranger 6-wheeler or a John Deere Gator, but they couldn’t handle rugged terrain, and the open cargo beds left expensive camera equipment exposed to the elements. So Goan, an off-road enthusiast, had a brainstorm: Why not customize an SUV?

Three of Goan’s best friends own New England Offroad Outfitters in Portland, and they were eager to tackle the project back in 2004. “They were all for taking a truck that not many people use for off-roading and taking it to the extreme,” he recalls.

It’s hard to recognize the Grand Cherokee now. It has 3/16-inch steel plating around the frame, an extended long-arm suspension with 7 1/2-inch coil springs on adjustable spacers, high-pinion Dana 60 axles

MONEY MACHINES

OWNER:	EcoClean LLC – The Sewer & Drain Specialist, Portland, Maine
FUNCTION:	Transporting camera systems for inspecting remote-access pipes
VEHICLE TYPE:	Modified 1997 Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited
PRIMARY EQUIPMENT:	Rovver 125, Rovver 225 and pole-mounted QuickView zoom cameras from Envirosight LLC
COST:	About \$85,000
WEB SITE:	www.ecoclean1.com

from a 1978 Ford F-350 Snow-fighter one-ton pickup truck, and chromoly hardened-steel axles running 5.88 gears to compensate for the larger tires.

It also uses ARB Air Lockers selectable locking differentials inside both axles for added traction ability, and an Atlas II 4:1 transfer case that lets drivers choose between front-wheel drive, rear-wheel drive or four-wheel drive.

Drawing stares

The conversion process took about four months and cost between \$85,000 and \$90,000, including the price of the vehicle. “I’ll be honest — no one is stupid enough to put that much money into a truck,” Goan



Owner Greg Goan gave the truck an eye-catching graphics wrap to go with extensive mechanical modifications.

MONEY Machines



The off-road inspection truck owned by EcoClean LLC attracts lots of attention.

says. “But off-roading is a hobby for me, so when I saw the business potential, it just made sense.”

EcoClean uses the unit to transport three robotic cameras made by Envirosight LLC: a Rovver 125, a Rovver 225 and a pole-mounted QuickView zoom camera. The company uses PipeTech software from Peninsular Technologies to collect data and store videos and photos.

A 1998 Jeep Wrangler TJ acts as a support vehicle. Its frame is also wrapped in 3/16-inch steel, helping it carry an onboard welder, air compressor and miscellaneous repair parts for both vehicles so crews can make repairs in the wild. But the Grand Cherokee draws the most stares.

“At first, it was kind of nutty,” Goan recalls. “Every time I drove



The truck carries a complete array of camera equipment for inspecting at manholes in remote locations.

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Greg Goan

down the road, people with cell phone cameras were hanging out their car windows. People are amazed when they see it.”

The truck’s agility in rough terrain is earning EcoClean a reputation for succeeding at problem jobs that other companies have tried and failed. It has reached remote-access lines in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont, and soon might travel to Hawaii. “Have equipment, will travel — that’s our motto,” Goan chuckles.

By the looks of it, not much will stop Goan from getting where he needs

to go. Mixing business with pleasure never looked like so much fun. ■

SHOW US THE MONEY (MACHINE)

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