

## **Kelly Caldwell:** ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND

Before another subdivision, strip mall, industrial park or roadway is built near you, hours of paperwork and preparation must take place to evaluate the site, assess plant and animal habitats, inspect environmental conditions and obtain federal and state permits. In Holly Springs, NC, Kelly Rosendahl Caldwell (A'98) has made it her business to provide technical environmental services to a variety of energy, roadway, residential and commercial developers.

Caldwell and her business partner, Amy Gonzales, a geologist and professional wetland scientist, left the large environmental consulting firm they both worked for and started AK Environmental, LLC in the spring of 2002, based out of New Jersey. "One of our major clients came with us," says Caldwell. "We did repeat work for them and built our reputation as a quality environmental service provider and soon got more clients."

Early on, Caldwell and Gonzales conducted all the work for their clients on their own, managing wetland delineations, habitat assessments, endangered species studies and permitting. "Now with 11 employees, we have several people on site doing various jobs, while I work out of our newest office in North Carolina," explains Caldwell who moved to the Raleigh area in 2004 with her husband, Pete (MET'99), and handles the day-to-day business management, preparation of permit applications and agency coordination.

"Over the years, Amy and I have expanded our horizons and increased our knowledge for different types of industry," she says. "We believe environmental regulations need to be adhered to and we work with our clients to educate them about the laws and to closely follow the requirements."

AK Environmental handles several natural gas pipeline projects, natural gas compressor stations, electric transmission lines and substations, road and highway construction, and residential and commercial developments across the nation. "Every job is rewarding when you know



you're doing what's right to protect our environment."

In Pennsylvania, the company recently worked with a large energy company that was building a pipeline through an area in which timber rattlesnakes are protected by law. "One of our environmental inspectors was placed on site during construction to look out for the snakes, so when they appeared, the rattlers could be moved to a safe area," says Caldwell.

AK Environmental also volunteers its services to Habitat for Humanity in New Jersey, assisting with permits and other environmental concerns as needed.

Attention to detail, strict adherence to environmental regulations, and organized business management have made AK Environmental a successful small business that reached \$1 million in sales in 2005, its fourth year in business. "It's great to be able to set an example to others who want to start their own business," says Caldwell. "AK Environmental is proof that you can succeed despite your age or gender. It takes hard work, good ethics and strict organization."

From here, Caldwell sees her business continuing to grow with new clients, an increased number of projects, and additional employees. "We're very proud to be making a positive impact on the world environmentally," she adds.

—Shari Gasper