



## U.S. MICROBICS INC.

BOB BREHM

**U**.S. Microbics, according to its Web site, [www.bugsatwork.com](http://www.bugsatwork.com) "is a business development and holding company that facilitates and develops the deployment of environmental technologies." The company provides proprietary biotechnology products and services for applications in the global bioremediation, wastewater treatment and regenerative agriculture markets.

Bob Brehm, the Carlsbad-based biotech's CEO, has a much pithier way of putting it. "We make fish smile, deserts bloom and contamination disappear," he says. The company employs a variety of naturally occurring, lab-grown bacteria recipes—or "bug cocktails,"

as Brehm calls them—to accomplish a broad spectrum of tasks, from growing giant tomatoes in Mexico to detoxifying former gas station sites.

"Combining biotechnology and environmental engineering differentiates us from other environmental cleanup firms," Brehm says bluntly, "because we treat the source of the problem, not the symptom—and we do it in a nonconventional way, using a pay-for-performance basis so the client is always satisfied."

Brehm, 55, is equal parts maverick and entrepreneur. A native of Fresno, Brehm says he was a "Berkeley radical in the 1960s, trying to change the sys-

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tem," who nevertheless managed to earn three college degrees, including master's degrees in electrical engineering and business administration. His first job was running a chemical plant for Raychem Corporation; in 1977, he started his own business, selling turnkey computer systems to doctors for billing and insurance. In 1984, Brehm moved to San Diego, where he helped his brother expand his orthodontic supply company.

Five years later, Brehm began a successful consulting practice that provided strategic planning services and raised venture capital for entrepreneurs. He got involved raising money for an upstart public company and wound up as CEO; looking for a new business he hooked up with Mery Robinson, whose father had developed the killer-bug technology used to clean the 1968 Santa Barbara oil spill, and in 1997 U.S. Microbics was born.

"This is the first biotech that has married biotechnology with engineering to solve problems rather than prolong them," Brehm says. "As we leave the R&D phase and enter commercialization of our products and services, we expect a tremendous growth in the next five years as we change the system for solving environmental problems."