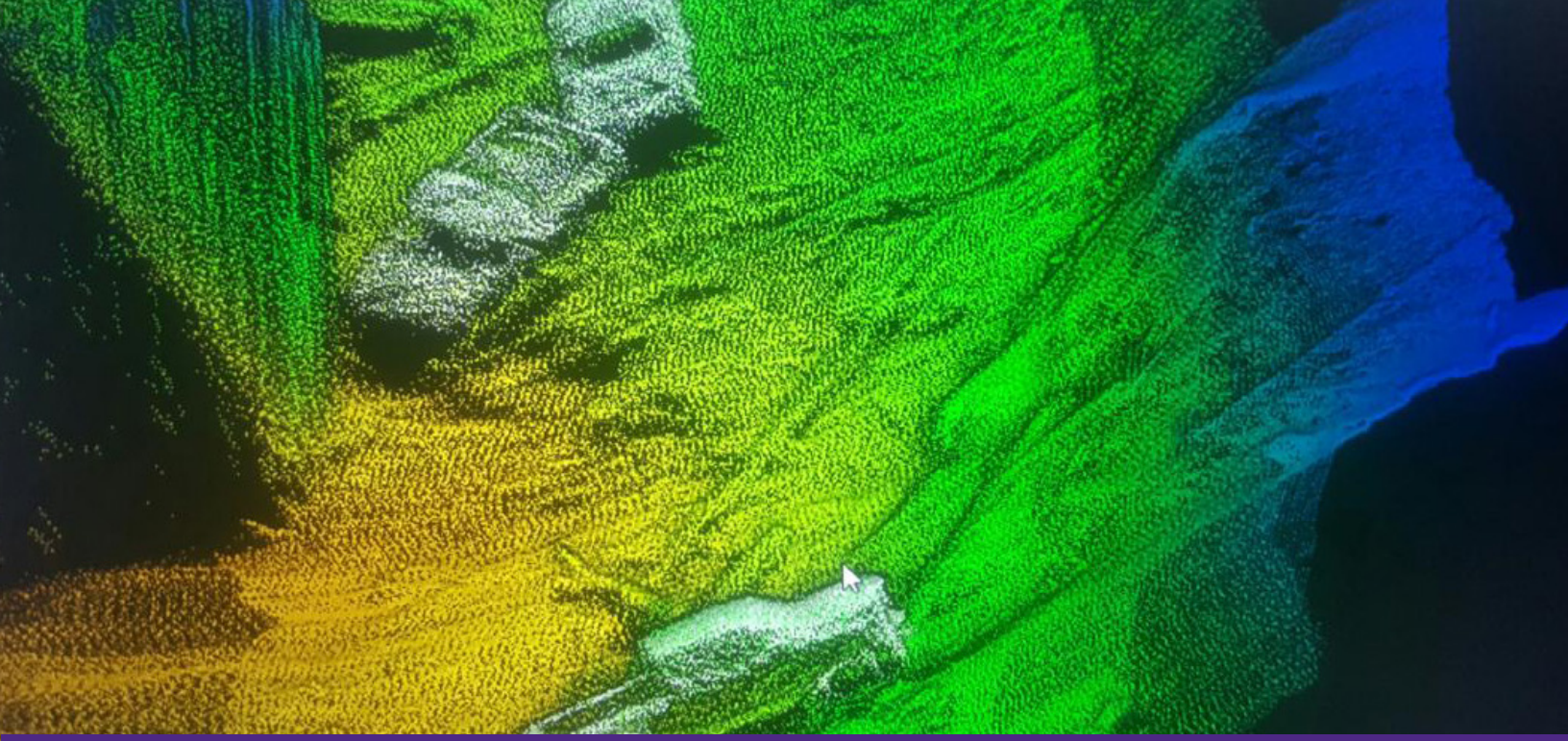


MULTIBEAM HELPS SOLVE CRIME

BY DAVID JONES, REGIONAL MANAGER, MCKIM & CREED

When McKim & Creed invested in an R2 Sonic Multibeam System, we knew we would be able to provide high-resolution bathymetry and imagery to our clients. What we didn't know is that we would also be able to help solve a crime.

We were testing our new system in the Cape Fear River when we were approached by a City of Wilmington, North Carolina police vessel. The officers aboard politely asked what we were doing, and we explained that we were testing a new multibeam system by conducting full bottom coverage surveys. When we described the high-resolution images we were able to capture, things got interesting.

"You haven't seen a truck down there by chance, have you?" asked the officers. "As a matter of fact, we just passed over a Dodge 1500 a few minutes ago," we replied. "Are you serious?" they asked. "That is the same type of vehicle we are looking for. May we board your vessel and take a look?"

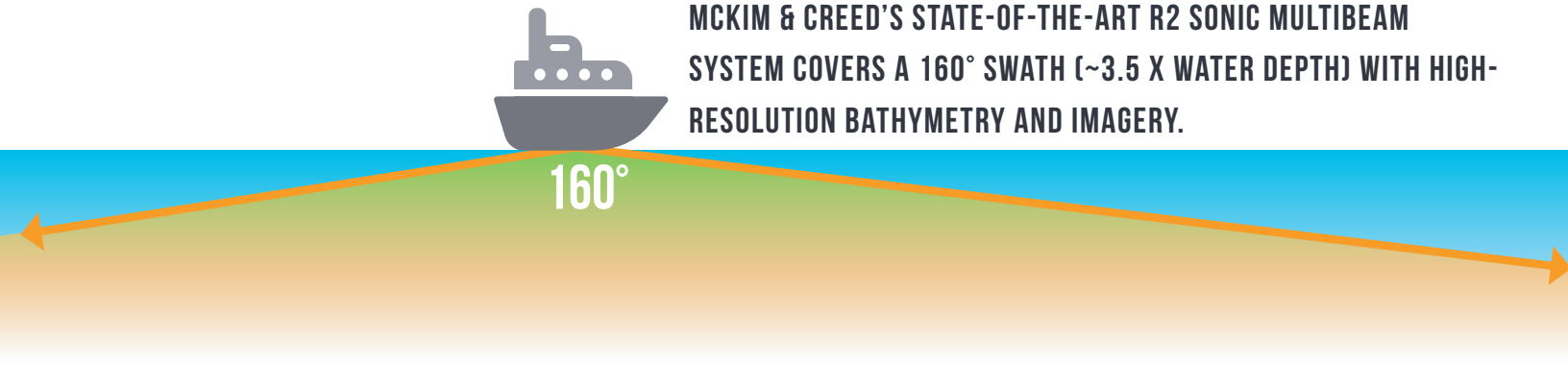
It turned out that the officers were investigating an insurance fraud case. They had reason to believe that the perpetrator had driven a vehicle into the river and reported it as stolen to claim the insurance money. They just needed a way to prove it.

DAVID JONES
REGIONAL MANAGER, MCKIM & CREED

It was multibeam to the rescue! We surveyed the area and found not one, but multiple sunken vehicles. And the images were so clear that the officers were able to confirm that one of the vehicles matched the description of the "stolen" truck.

A couple of weeks later we joined the police on their vessel and used survey-grade GPS to navigate to the location of the underwater vehicle. Within three casts of their search magnet, the police locked onto the vehicle and sent a diver down. He confirmed the identity of the truck based on reported damage, and retrieved a piece to confirm it was the vehicle in question.

This serendipitous experience fully embodies McKim & Creed's vision of "people helping people." Not only are we helping our clients obtain more accurate and complete underwater surveys, but we also helped our police department solve a crime.

Damon Wolf (left) with ECHO 81, our equipment vendor, joins McKim & Creed hydrographic surveyors Martin Taylor, Heather Lewis and Jared Lambert aboard McKim & Creed's survey vessel.

After identifying the vehicle via multibeam, McKim & Creed joined the police on their vessel and used survey-grade GPS to navigate to the precise location. A diver retrieved items from the sunken vehicle that confirmed it was the truck in question.