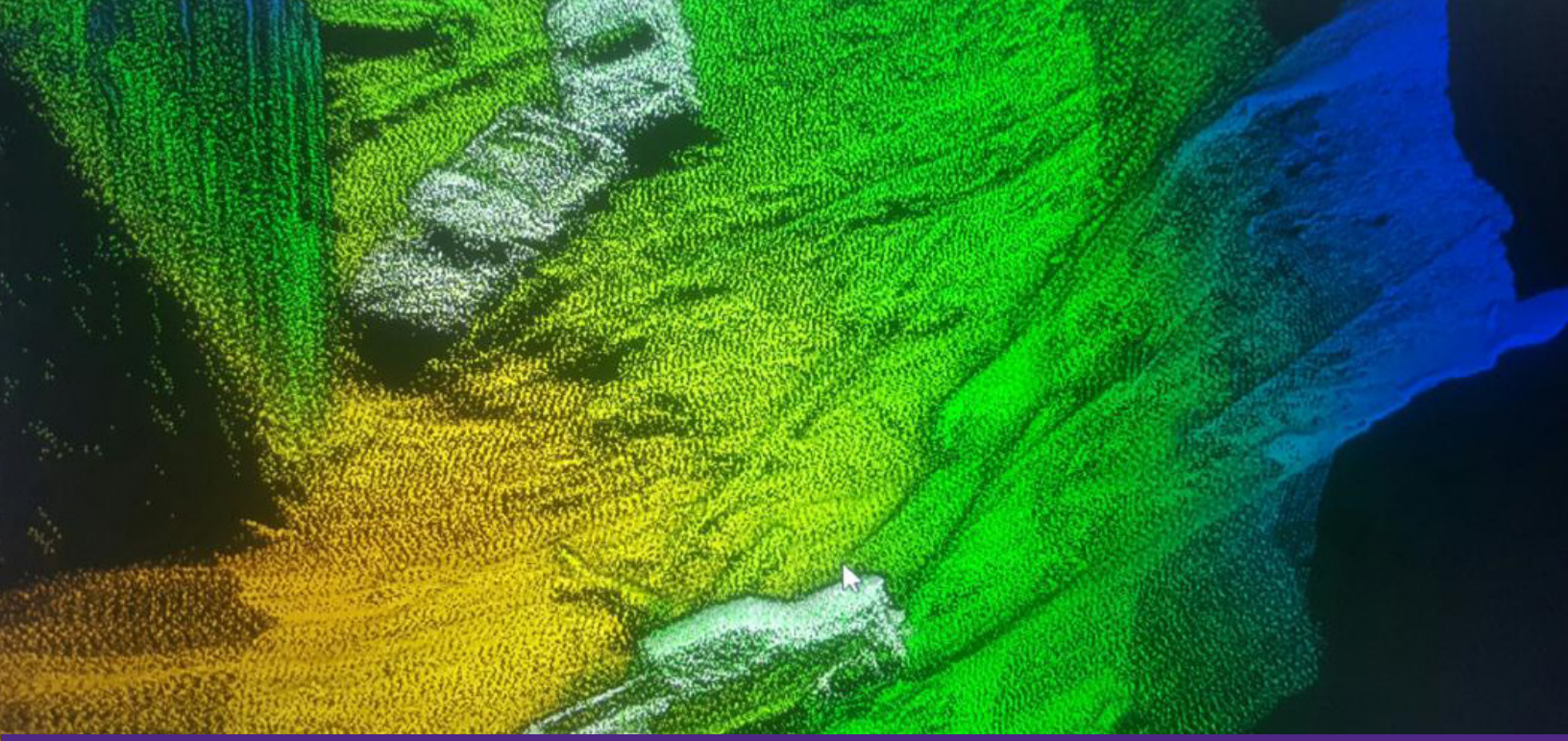


MULTIBEAM HELPS SOLVE CRIME: THE REST OF THE STORY

BY DAVID JONES, REGIONAL MANAGER, MCKIM & CREED

In the fall of 2016, while McKim & Creed was testing our new R2 Sonic Multibeam System in the Cape Fear River in New Hanover County, we inadvertently helped police solve a crime. Our multibeam full-bottom coverage survey captured the image of a submerged Dodge Ram pickup truck, which officers with the Department of Insurance and Wilmington police were searching for in connection with an insurance fraud investigation. Using our coordinates and survey data, divers with the Wilmington Fire Department recovered the Ram emblem and driver's side mirror; enough evidence to verify that this was the vehicle investigators were looking for.

Fast forward one year. McKim & Creed Project Manager Nick Miguez, PLS, and I were scoping a potential new project in neighboring Brunswick County. As I was driving down a back road, Nick spotted a truck that looked like it was covered in barnacles. "What kind of vehicle did you guys find under the bridge?" he asked. When I replied, "Dodge Ram," Nick responded, "I think we just found it... again." We assumed the police had recovered the vehicle and were storing it on this property.

Two weeks later I received a call from Douglas Corkhill, special deputy attorney general with the North Carolina Department of Justice. Doug explained that the Dodge Ram had been removed from the Cape Fear River and was

DAVID JONES
REGIONAL MANAGER, MCKIM & CREED

now missing. "I think I can tell you exactly where that truck is," I told him. Again, we provided survey coordinates to the police and they recovered the vehicle. It turned out the perpetrator had had the vehicle towed from the water and moved to the empty lot.

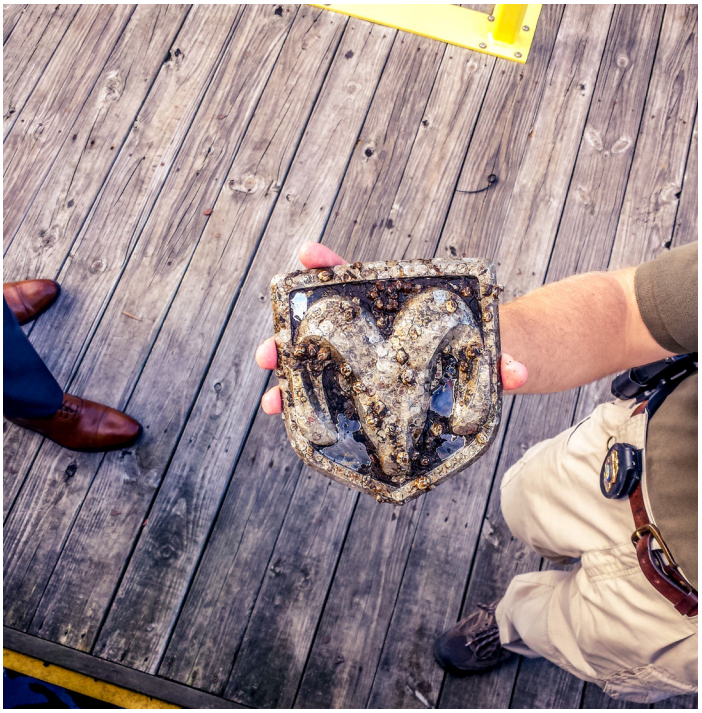
In February 2018, based on his misrepresentations on the Dodge Ram insurance application and other insurance documents relating to the truck, the perpetrator was found guilty of insurance fraud and obtaining property by false pretenses. During the trial, a tow truck driver testified that the perpetrator hired him to pull a Dodge Ram out of river within a week after the truck was located in the river. This explained how the truck ended up on an empty lot in Brunswick County and how law enforcement recovered the vehicle.

McKim & Creed hydrographic surveyor Jared Lambert was called to testify at the trial, explaining in court how McKim & Creed had used multibeam technology to uncover the underwater evidence. "Jared Lambert did a great job testifying about the multibeam technology and how it works. Myself, and the jury, were fascinated by the technology and the clarity of the images produced by the multibeam survey system," said William Van Trigt, Esq., assistant district attorney for New Hanover County.

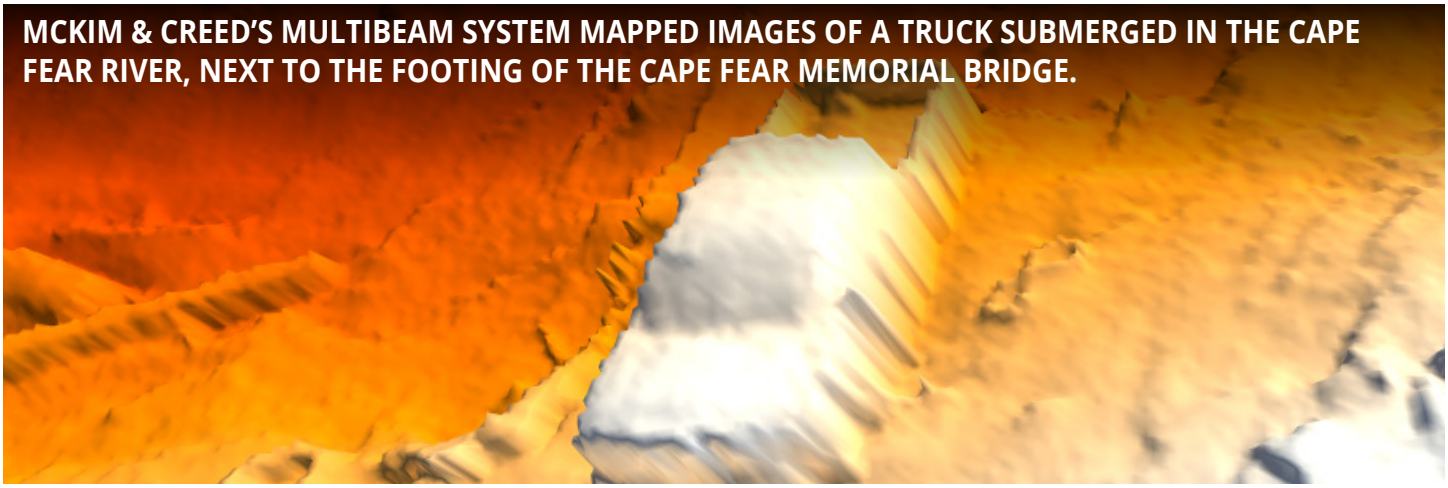
The perpetrator was sentenced to two consecutive 11- to 23-month terms and placed on 36 months of supervised probation. According to William, "The multibeam survey technology was instrumental in obtaining a conviction in this case."

WHO KNEW SURVEYORS COULD ALSO BE CRIME BUSTERS?

Using McKim & Creed's survey coordinates, fire department divers were able to retrieve the Dodge Ram emblem and the driver's side mirror from the sunken vehicle.



Above is a photo of the vehicle that David and Nick discovered on an empty lot in Brunswick County, one year after finding the submerged Dodge Ram pickup in the Cape Fear River. The truck was covered in barnacles and missing the driver's side mirror and Dodge Ram emblem. A tow truck driver testified at the trial that he had been hired by the perpetrator to remove the truck from the Cape Fear River within a week of it being located by McKim & Creed's multibeam system.



MCKIM & CREED'S MULTIBEAM SYSTEM MAPPED IMAGES OF A TRUCK SUBMERGED IN THE CAPE FEAR RIVER, NEXT TO THE FOOTING OF THE CAPE FEAR MEMORIAL BRIDGE.