

November 29, 2017 - JW Fishers' Side Scan Sonar Uncovers History

What can be done when disaster strikes and the unforgiving sea claims expensive or invaluable objects? JW Fishers has assisted in the recovery of countless ships, anchors, aircraft, indispensable equipment, and, in the most devastating of cases, loved ones. One of the most effective tools for underwater search and recovery is a Side Scan Sonar (SSS) system. The JW Fishers' line of SSS systems are able to search a large area quickly and to produce a detailed image of the ocean floor, regardless of water clarity.

The Fulton County Sheriff's Office purchased a JW Fishers dual frequency side scan system and has found some interesting things in a short amount of time. One fascinating discovery was the foundation and well of an old house in Sacandaga Lake. The history surrounding this valley is remarkable! In 1907, after decades of debate, the State Water Supply Commission conducted a study on water storage for flood prevention and power development in New York State. The commission gave their report to legislators in 1908, requesting the construction of a reservoir in the Sacandaga Valley. 1902 served as case-in-point of the commission's request as New York faced severe flooding on the Hudson. This pushed New York State to appoint a Water Storage Commission to study the causes of flooding. The year 1913 proved to be the most disastrous in history for down-river communities including Albany, Green Island, Rensselaer, Troy, and Watervliet, who saw the flooding of entire valleys. The Hudson River Regulating District (HRRD) was formed "To regulate the flow of the Hudson and Sacandaga Rivers as required by the public welfare including health and safety."¹

A plan was developed that included 16 new reservoirs, one of which was in the Sacandaga river valley. Over 1,000 citizens were required to leave their land. Dams were built to store the water and in the early 1930's the area was flooded and still remains a large body of water to this day. The reservoir was named "Sacandaga" after the river it was formed from, an Indian name meaning "the drowned land." In the 1960's, the name was changed to "The Great Sacandaga Lake."²

The Tonawanda State Police is another outstanding organization that uses JW Fisher's "right tools for the job" to serve their community. They utilize their JWF Side Scan Sonar quite often and are constantly training to become masters of the system. They are frequently called to search for missing evidence or drowning victims. One of their newest resources is a 27-foot vessel equipped with the latest technology to help make searching safer and easier. Lieutenant Scott Sheehan has been to JW Fishers' facility several times for training on both his department's Side Scan Sonar and SCAN-650 systems. His team has developed an impressive competence with the equipment in a variety of situations, even being called upon by surrounding counties when needed.

Alldive Ltd., based in Malta, specializes in propeller polishing, in-water surveys, underwater video and photography, hull and underwater cleaning, and underwater welding and cutting, both inside and outside of Maltese harbors. They use their JW Fishers Side Scan Sonar system for bottom surveys to include fish farms, jetties, and for the recovery of lost anchors. JW Fishers' equipment is just some of the various tools they utilize to search the open waters. They are an experienced commercial diving company that relies upon a trusted manufacturer to provide the right tools for the job; JW Fishers Mfg. These sonar tools include:

- The SSS-1200 kHz is an excellent choice for law enforcement agencies and dive rescue groups that are searching for small, soft targets such as drowning victims. This frequency produces very high-resolution images, but has a max scan range of only 30 meters per side (maximum swath covered is 60 meters / 200 feet).
- The SSS-600 kHz has very good resolution and scans up to 75 meters on each side of the towfish (maximum swath covered is 150 meters / 500 feet). This system is good for locating a variety of targets from drowning victims to submerged vehicles and structures.
- The SSS-100 kHz has good resolution and scans up to 600 meters on each side of the towfish (maximum swath covered is 1200 meters / 4000 feet). This system is good for searching large areas to look for large targets such as sunken ships and downed aircraft.

A few of the many other search teams using Fishers' side scan systems are South Survey and Mapping Company in China, the Beadle County Office of Emergency Management in South Dakota, the Fall River Police in Massachusetts, the Suffolk County Sheriffs Marine Unit in New York, Union Fire Company in Pennsylvania, North Carolina Department of

Transportation, the US Navy's Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Technology Division, The Oil Services Company FEM Associates in Nigeria, and the Guangdong Construction Engineering in China.

For more information about JW Fishers' complete line of underwater search equipment, please visit <http://www.jwfishers.com>.

1. The Town of Edinburg. "Sacandaga Reservoir," <http://www.edinburgny.com/reservoirhistory.html>
2. Ibid.

Best regards,
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