Surveying Z-Boat Visible in Google Earth

Surveyors from Select Energy Services, San Antonio, USA, were surprised to see one of their remotely operated hydrographic survey vehicleâ€™s activities photographed and incorporated into Google Earth. Water sourcing manager Justin Duke was preparing to embark on a hydrographic survey of a water holding pond for a natural gas fracturing operation in Texas. As the Google Earth image came into focus after he had entered the lat/long coordinates, a small yellow dot could be seen in the middle of the frac pit, and seemed to have a wake behind it. When he zoomed in, Justin saw his Z-Boat in the satellite image - and yet he had not even started the survey!

By coincidence, the photograph used in Google Earth had been taken exactly when Justin was at the pit the previous time it was surveyed – which had been for about an hour a few months before. After conducting the survey as usual, the bathymetric map image was generated for the client - although this time with the added bonus of a photographic coincidence included at no extra charge. Based on an average age of Google Earth imagery of around three years, the approximate odds of this photograph existing are about 1 in 25,000.

The team uses the Oceanscience (San Diego, CA) Z-Boat 1800 to conduct holding pond volume surveys that are crucial to effectively manage industrial process water inventories.

The Z-Boat incorporates a single beam echo sounder, GPS and telemetry system to allow fast bathymetric surveys without any requirement to launch a manned boat onto the water. The Z-Boat is particularly suitable for these relatively small surveys since several pits can be surveyed each day with just a single surveyor on the job.