

City announces changes after drowning

Official: Man dove from Fort Dickerson Quarry cliff

STEVE AHILLEN
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

A day after the first drowning of the summer at Fort Dickerson Quarry, the city of Knoxville is taking measures to try to stop people from jumping off the cliffs.

The victim of a drowning Sunday evening was a 27-year-old man identified Monday as Dezayas Smith of Knoxville. After the drowning was reported at

around 7:45 p.m., a rescue squad worked into the night before the body was recovered in 165 feet of water around 12:45 a.m. Monday. The quarry is more than 200-feet-deep in spots with almost no visibility.

Smith had apparently jumped off a cliff from a height of 50 to 65 feet and did not resurface, according to Knoxville Fire Department spokesman D.J. Corcoran. He said the fire department was originally called to the scene, but after two hours the search was handed over to the Knoxville Volunteer Emergency Rescue Squad.

A member of the dive team suffered a



Knoxville Parks and Recreation Director Joe Walsh announced plans Monday to help prevent another quarry tragedy from happening.

“dive-related emergency” and was taken to a hospital for treatment, according to a rescue squad dispatcher who said she could give neither the dive team member’s name nor condition.

On Monday at the quarry near the spot where the victim had jump to his death, Knoxville Parks and Recreation Director Joe Walsh announced plans to help pre-

vent it from happening again.

“We had a meeting with the mayor this morning,” he said. “We are going to put up a barricade with signage to warn people not to jump from the cliff.”

Walsh noted that signs had been put up at other taller cliffs at the other end of the quarry but none had been put up where the victim had jumped.

He said the quarry, a part of Fort Dickerson Park, has increased in popularity since the city recently added a road and a parking lot that allowed people a much shorter walk to the quarry. It’s located off

See DROWNING, Page 14A

2017 Jun Fort Dickerson quarry drowning

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JOE WALSH

KNOXVILLE PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR

Drowning

Continued from Page 1A

Chapman Highway in South Knoxville.

Walsh said the city does not keep count of how many visitors the quarry attracts, but he said he had been at the park the night before when a crowd he estimated at about 70 or 80 people was leaving.

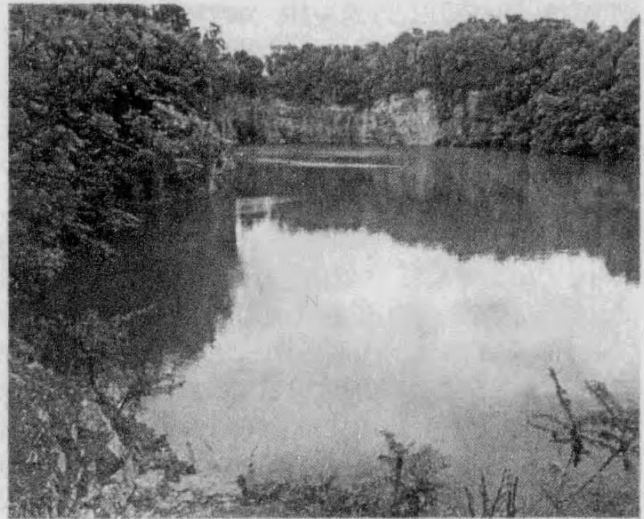
No one drowned in the quarry last year as far as Walsh said he knew, but he added several drownings had occurred in 2015 and there have been others there in the past.

“There is no fool-proof way to keep people from doing what they shouldn’t be doing,” Walsh said. “We are trying to identify what the issues are then try to deal with them.”

Walsh said the city will soon be embarking on a project to enhance the quarry area.

“We have a plan to build this into something a little nicer with a walkway, concession stand and permanent restrooms,” he said.

The project, to be conducted in phases,



BRIANNA PACIORKA/NEWS SENTINEL

A drowning occurred at Fort Dickerson Quarry on Sunday when someone dove off a 65-foot cliff and didn’t resurface, officials said.

is expected to be finished in the next three or four years.

“We are working with the Aslan Foundation on developing the detailed plans for Fort Dickerson Park Quarry,” Walsh said. “We do have some funds available in our fiscal year 2017-18 budget to help make the plans that have been developed a reality.”

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