

Quarries off limits to daredevils

Authorities said they'll bar access to sites like the one where a young man drowned June 4.

By Bryan McKenzie
The (Charlottesville) Daily Progress

LOVINGSTON — Fueled by adventure-themed social media posts, young adventurers have been flocking to local abandoned quarries for illegal swim and dive sessions, but regional authorities say they want that to stop.

Officials with the Nelson County Sheriff's Office and Albemarle County Police Department on Thursday joined supervisors from both counties in warning quarry-bound thrill seekers that trespassing laws will be enforced in both counties.

The joint effort comes after the June 4 death of 18-year-old Henry Christian Morin of Hanover County, who apparently dove off a quarry cliff near Schuyler in southern Albemarle County into deep water.

Other youths at the quarry called 911 when Morin did not resurface. A Virginia State Police Search and Recovery Team recovered Morin's body two days later.

Police, government officials and residents say the area has become a recreation area for adventurers who park their vehicles on narrow two-lane roads and walk between a series of old quarries to swim and dive.

They noted that when police arrived after the first



NELSON COUNTY TIMES | FILE

The Schuyler Quarries are a string of quarries located along the border of Nelson and Albemarle counties. Although they are all on private property, some are popular swimming places for adventure-seekers in the summer, despite the deep waters and slick, steep foundations of soapstone.

emergency calls regarding Morin's disappearance, there were more than a dozen youths on site.

The state Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has not released the cause of Morin's death or what caused him to not resurface.

"It's important that everyone knows what the dangers are of swimming and diving in these quarries and the potential for danger that these quarries represent," said Nelson County supervisor Jesse Rutherford, who represents the Schuyler area.

"It's private property. It's not a theme park. It's not a state park. It's not open to the public. It is trespassing," Daniel Rutherford, Nelson County commonwealth's attorney said.

"We have talked to the property owners and they do not want people trespassing. We will enforce the trespassing laws. This will

not be a slap-on-the-shoulder charge in Nelson County," Daniel Rutherford said, adding that his office will seek maximum penalties when appropriate. "These quarries are not safe for diving. They are not safe for swimming. They are old industrial sites with equipment in them, trees and rocks."

Nelson County deputies have issued more than 70 trespassing citations this year, officials estimated.

Albemarle County police Capt. Darrell Byers said officers will respond as quickly as possible to any calls for trespassers in the quarries.

"We view [Morin's death] as a tragedy and we want to prevent another one," Byers said.

The area where Morin had been swimming has about 10 abandoned quarries of various sizes, many adjacent to each other. The area was the center of soapstone mining from the late 1890s

throughout the 20th century, and the activity left quarries with steep walls hundreds of feet high that filled with water over the years. The ponds can be between 45 to 150 feet deep.

Property owners say the quarry waters are dangerous and may be populated with decades of detritus, including abandoned mine equipment, old stoves, refrigerators and washing machines, mattresses, full-size trees and even large chunks of rock that have slid from the smooth quarry walls below the surface.

The quarry ponds are also magnets for adventure-seekers who post videos and selfie shots of themselves leaping, diving and falling into the waters from sheer rock cliffs.

They've become so popular that property owners have complained that as many as 100 adventurers will visit the area on a weekend, parking their cars on the narrow roads nearby.

"They see people making videos of themselves jumping off the quarry walls or taking selfies and posting them on YouTube or Instagram and it brings a lot of adventure tourists out," said Jesse Rutherford. "There are so many cars parked out there that they block the roads."

Rutherford said some thrill seekers are less than happy when asked by locals to move their cars.

"There have been beer cans thrown at passing cars and sometimes it turns into something like a frat party," he said.

Police looking for missing Doswell teen

18-year-old was last seen swimming in Albemarle quarry

By The Daily Progress

Albemarle County police are searching for a Doswell teenager who was last seen swimming in an

abandoned quarry with friends on Tuesday near Schuyler.

Late Wednesday afternoon, authorities said they had suspended their search for Henry Christian Morin, 18, and would resume their efforts Thursday.

Police said they will release more information on

the missing teenager as it becomes available.

Albemarle police officers responded to a call to assist fire and rescue personnel about 6 p.m. Tuesday in the 8700 block of Schuyler Road, near the road's intersection with Quarry Hill Lane.

Crews were called to the

scene for a water rescue in an abandoned quarry but were unable to find the person.

The area was the center of soapstone mining from the late 1890s throughout the 20th century. The activity left several deep quarries with ponds that can be 45 feet deep or deeper.

2019 Jun police search for 18 year old at quarry

Clipped By:
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MORIN, Henry Christian

Connolly, 18, passed away earlier this month after a drowning accident. He was born June 15, 2000, to Kate Connolly and Patrick Morin. Henry was adventurous and an active member of the Boy Scouts, earning the highest achievement, Eagle Scout. Many describe Henry as a courageous, kind, loving and appreciative young man who was always prepared to aid anyone in need. He attended Patrick Henry High School, where he was to be graduated on June 15, 2019, before moving on to the University of Colorado. He was known to treat everyone with kindness, deference and inclusiveness, one of the highest marks of solid character. His teachers described him as a "breath of fresh air" and "joy to teach." Henry had a smile that lit up a room as he entered. His long blonde hair evolved over the years from crew cut, to corn rows, to man bun and finally to his signature modelesque wave. These memories of his changing hairstyle had been a unifying theme of conversation for his friends. He was well known and loved by many even outside of the Patrick Henry community. Henry is survived by his parents, Kate Connolly and Patrick Morin; brothers, Andrew and William. His parents expressed how truly blessed they are to have had him with them for 18 years. A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. on Monday, June 10, 2019, at St. Michaels Catholic Church, 4491 Springfield Rd., Glen Allen, Va. 23060. Condolences may be registered online at www.nelsenashland.com.



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