## Smithville Lake Victims Identified

News

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The bodies of two men were pulled from Smithville Lake, nearly 14 hours after they were reported missing during the day on Friday. The men have now been identified.



The gravel road leading from the Arnold Road access point in Clinton County continues on under the water  $\hat{a}_{\square}$  it's an old roadbed that many longtime locals like Gregory Weese and John Butts news about and it led the two friends to a tragic Fourth of July end.

Officials said it's a popular spot for those who know about it and the two men were wading across a finger of the lake on it when they disappeared.

"Apparently it is known to a lot of people that live here locally, so we have people wade out in this area," said Sgt. Sheldon Lyon with the Missouri Highway Patrol.

That's what authorities believe 55-year-old Butts of Smithville and 56-year-old Weese of Plattsburg were doing Thursday about 5:30 p.m. when one went under.

Lyon said troopers believe one of the men stepped out of the shallow end and got in trouble and the second man was unsuccessful in trying to save him.

"One of them struggled, the other - his best friend - tried to help him and they both drowned," Lyon said.

Search crews were looking for the two into the night Thursday, then resumed efforts Friday morning. They located the pair near a tree stump a few yards from where they were last seen struggling for help.

"Just make sure if you come to the lake, you want to get in the water, wear your life jacket, even if you're a great swimmer, we see good swimmers get in trouble," Lyon said.

Investigators still don't know how well the two men could swim or if alcohol played a factor, but said the drownings are a tragic reminder of water safety.

"It's always difficult anytime somebody drowns, it's really a tragic event. Our hearts go out to the family," Lyon said.

The underwater road explains why the lake is shallow in the area and swimming is not allowed there. Officials said, despite that, many people ignore the fact and get right into the water at that

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