

POCONO RECORD

NEWS

Park Service says Delaware River search for two missing fishermen is scaled back

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TODAY'S UPDATE: A crew from Whitehall Township near Allentown is on the river searching with a boat equipped with side scan sonar.

BUSHKILL — It's been two weeks since two fishermen were swept away in the Delaware River and more than 90 dives have taken place to try to recover their bodies.

The search for Timothy Panella and Richard Skoland is ongoing, but has been scaled back, the National Park Service announced Wednesday.

The two men have been missing since a boating accident near Dingmans Ferry on April 3. A third man, Ronald Priest, swam to safety and summoned help.

Rangers at Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area are conducting daily boat patrols of the search area, looking for signs of the missing men. Extremely cold water temperatures lead searchers to believe that the bodies of the victims remain submerged somewhere within the overall search area.

Daily helicopter flights by New Jersey and Pennsylvania state police continue over the river corridor as their schedules permit.

On Monday, the U.S. Coast Guard from Air Station Atlantic City flew by helicopter with River District Ranger A.J. North on board. The Coast Guard flight provided a clear sense of the large scope and complexity of the search environment. Water clarity has improved to about six feet, but there are still many areas of the river where the depth exceeds that level of visibility.

Multiple agencies and volunteer organizations have been involved in the search, including personnel from Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, Valley Forge National Historical Park, the NPS Northeast Region Exotic-Invasive Plant Management Team, New Jersey State Police Marine Services Unit and dive T.E.A.M., New Jersey State Police Aviation Bureau, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Pennsylvania Game Commission,

Pennsylvania State Police Aviation Division, Bushkill Fire Company, Bushkill Fire Company Auxiliary, Dingman Township Volunteer Fire Company, Hemlock Farms Volunteer Fire Company, Northampton Fire Department, Port Jervis Fire Department, Portland Hook and Ladder Company, Pike County K-9, Ramapo Rescue Dog Association and the Garden State Underwater Recovery Unit.

Boaters, anglers and other river users are urged to wear their personal flotation devices when on or near the river and to call (800) 543-4295 to report anything that might bring this search to a close.

October 2007: Daniel Yolinsky, 19, of Hackettstown, N.J., drowned after trying to swim across the Delaware River. He and friends had been wading in the water near Tocks Island. August 2007: Anderson Defreitas of Elmwood Park, N.J., drowned in the river near Narrowsburg, N.Y., while swimming with his brother and cousin. August 2007: William Orbe-Jimenez, 21, of Passaic, N.J., drowned while swimming in the Delaware River at the Kittatinny Point Visitors Center on the New Jersey side. August 2005: A kayaking trip in the Delaware River near Freeman Point turned deadly when Eliezer Vazquez, 17, from the Bronx, N.Y., tried swimming across the river and drowned. June 2005: William Runyeon, 78, of Wyomissing, drowned while fishing in the Delaware River. His body was found in the river near Bushkill. July 2004: Layton Ledgister, 52, drowned in the Upper Delaware River when his canoe capsized. July 2004: Youl Brimmer Correa, 22, of North Bergen, N.J., jumped 50 feet from an abandoned railroad abutment into the Upper Delaware River and drowned. Police say alcohol was a factor in drowning. August 2003: Jasmany R. Gordon-Morales, 22, of Newark, N.J., drowned near the Kittatinny Point Visitor Center as he attempted to swim the river from the New Jersey side to the Pennsylvania side. June 2003: In Westfall Township, searchers recovered the body of Obinna Okoro, 17, of Union, N.J., about six miles from where he fell into the Delaware River during a school rafting trip 10 days earlier. July 2002: Near Portland, George Arias, 37, and his brother, Harold, 34, from Astoria, N.Y., drowned in the river when their raft flipped over. July 2002: Otoniel Villanueva Jr., 13, of Rahway, N.J., was fishing with his aunt and uncle and a couple of friends at the Karamac Access in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, just south of Worthington Forest in New Jersey, when he jumped in the river and drowned.

Delaware River drownings

