

# Accident Database

**Report ID# 468**

Help

1997-11-09
Date
Jay Ernest
Victim
47
Victim Age
Kishacoquillas Cr.
River
Section
Low head dam United States Pennsylvania, US
Location
Gage
High
Water Level
N/A
River Difficulty
Caught in Low Head Dam Hydraulic
Cause

Injury Type(s)

– Does not Apply

Factors

– Other

Extensive Experience

Victim Experience Level

Private

Trip Type

Whitewater Kayak

Boat Type

Group Info

Other Victim Names

Reported

Status



# Accident Description

On November 9, 1997 Kishacoquillas Creek (the Kish), a Class II run in central Pennsylvania, was running at near flood levels following heavy rains. Jay Ernest, 47, an experienced paddler, was kayaking with two friends when they reached a low-head dam. The first paddler went over the dam, flipped, and was trapped in the hydraulic. Mr. Ernest, the second paddler followed with similar results. Both were recirculated in the hydraulic below the dam for some time. The third paddler went to shore, portaged the dam, and attempted to rescue his friends. The first paddler was able to fight his way out of the hydraulic and made it to shore; Mr. Ernest was unconscious when he was ejected. The first paddler pulled Mr. Ernest to shore and began CPR while the third ran for help. Rescue squads responded quickly, but Mr. Ernest never regained consciousness. He was transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead.

SOURCE: PA Fish Commission small craft accident summary; Dave Guss; Lewistown [Sentinel](#).

ANALYSIS:

1. (Walbridge) Dams are dangerous except when only a very small amount of water is flowing over it. At high water, this one created a very dangerous hydraulic. Anyone lacking extensive experience and excellent water reading ability should portage dams without question.
2. (PFC) The victim was wearing a PFD but no wetsuit or cold weather gear. Hypothermia may also have played a role in the drowning.

On November 9 Class II-III Kishacoquillas Creek (the Kish) in central Pennsylvania was running high following heavy rains. Jay Ernest, 47, an experienced paddler, was kayaking with two friends when they encountered a low-head dam. Clippings from the Lewistown Sentinel sent by Dave Guss, an active racer from the ‘70’s, reported the accident as follows: The first paddler went over the dam, flipped, and became trapped in the hydraulic. Ernest, the second paddler followed with similar results. The third paddler landed, portaged the



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