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Family asks for changes at low-head dams following Neosho, Mo. girl’s death



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NEOSHO, Mo. (KY3) - The family of a Neosho, Mo. girl wants to draw attention to the danger of low-head dams after her drowning.

Kaylin Brown, 12, drowned on Shoal Creek on May 26. Her uncle says it was after her last day of school. She visited the low-head dam with a family friend to play in the water and celebrate. Kaylin played below the dam, when she tripped, getting too close to the dam’s powerful circulating current. Searchers found her body downstream days later.

Family friend Trevor Hicks, 31, tried to save her. He later died after he was injured in the drowning.

In 2015, two other men drowned at the site. As a result of a lawsuit in that case, the city of Neosho posted warning signs about the dam’s danger. http://www.palmerlaw.com/index.php/case-history/Low_Head_Dam_Case

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Matthew Brown, Kaylin’s uncle, wishes there were “no swimming” signs at the site, because at times, the water is calm, and at others, the dam current



The city closed Lime Kiln Park to repair flood damage.

The city of Neosho owns the 1940s dam, which pools water for the city’s drinking water supply. It already has plans to reconstruct Lime Kiln Dam, adding a rock ramp on the lower side, in conjunction with the state and U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

“Below the dam, what they will do is go in there and build rock structures that will make it flow more like rapids,” says Neosho City Manager David Kennedy. “So canoes can pass over, boats can pass over.”

He says they’re just beginning the project engineering. The rock ramp will help wildlife movement and safety.

“I think it would be something that other communities that have this type of structure would take note, get with their local conservation department,” Kennedy says. “There is funding available out there for these types of projects.”

Of course, Brown wishes the project was already done and Kaylin was still here. “It needs to be done to every low head dam in the state of Missouri,” Brown says.

KY3 asked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and the Missouri Department of Conservation about a list or map of low-head dam locations. None of the agencies could provide a list of the structures. USACE did point us to the National Inventory of Dams website, but we could not find a way to sort by low-head dams on the resource. <https://nid.sec.usace.army.mil/ords/f?p=105:1:.....>

A Brigham Young University study has listed some of the low-head dams where drownings have occurred across the country. See the list and interactive map here: <https://krcproject.groups.et.byu.net/browse.php>

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