

**OnlineAthens** | ATHENS BANNER-HERALD**DISASTER**

# Rescue teams locate bodies of missing teens along McNutt Creek

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Published 2:53 p.m. ET June 5, 2018 | Updated 6:38 a.m. ET June 6, 2018

The long, arduous search for the bodies of two drowning victims ended Tuesday morning, when their bodies were recovered along McNutt Creek.

“This morning, shortly after 11 o’clock, within five minutes of each other and 50 yards away from each other, we located both boys,” Oconee County sheriff’s Chief Deputy Lee Weems said during a Tuesday press conference in Watkinsville.

The bodies were found about a quarter of a mile south of the dam where they went under, according to Capt. James Hale, who supervised the operations for the sheriff’s office.

Cameron Smith, 18, of Comer and Robert Bryant Wade, 18, of Bogart drowned Friday at a dam constructed for the former Puritan mill. Witnesses told authorities that Wade was on the dam and fell into the rushing water of the flooded creek. When Smith heard frantic screams from others, he dove into the creek in an effort to rescue Wade.

Neither young man knew each other.

Rescue teams on Friday were faced with the exceptionally high water level, following several days of downpours in the Athens area. But as the days passed the water level began dropping.

“Today the conditions were just right all the way around,” Hale said on Tuesday.

During the search along the river, rescue units were faced not only with the high water levels, but the terrain itself presented a challenge, according to Hale.

Oconee County Emergency Management Director C.J. Worden said the manpower that went into the search exceeded the county’s resources. However, the effort was assisted by other agencies supplying K-9 teams, swift water teams, open water divers and more.

“The list goes on and on,” he said. “We have been blessed beyond belief with the outpouring of support.”

Weems also commended businesses at nearby The Falls shopping center for helping the victims’ families and rescue personnel.

Worden warned people to stay off dams.

“It’s not meant for recreation,” he said.

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