

Accident Database

Report ID# 229

Help

1994-03-26
Date
Dominic Valleta
Victim
0
Victim Age
Wood River
River
Section
Barberville Dam United States Rhode Island, US
Location
Gage
Medium
Water Level
I
River Difficulty
Caught in a Natural Hydraulic
Cause

Injury Type(s)

– Does not Apply

Factors

– Other

Inexperienced

Victim Experience Level

Private

Trip Type

Open Canoe

Boat Type

Group Info

Paul Valliere

Other Victim Names

Reported

Status



Accident Description

TWO MEN DROWN IN A RHODE ISLAND DAM

Wood River near Acadia, Rhode Island: March 26, 1994

SUMMARY: On Saturday, March 26th tragedy struck a group of paddlers on their annual canoe trip down the Wood River in Rhode Island. Domenic Valleta was killed when he got caught in the hydraulic at the base of Barberville Dam. In the rescue attempt Paul Valliere was also killed and a third man was hospitalized.

DESCRIPTION: The Wood River is a local moving-water stream popular with Rhode Island paddlers. It was swollen from recent snowmelt and rains. this river trip was an annual event for the six men who survived; for the two victims it was their first run. Both men had some paddling experience and were wearing life vests when the incident occurred.

The group launched at

8:00 AM

at Acadia Park off Route 165 for a 16 mile trip to Alton Pond. The group portaged the dam, and one boat launched without incident. The two victims, unfortunately, entered the water too close to the hydraulic. Their canoe was sucked in backwards and capsized. Mr. Valliere was flushed free, but Mr. Valletta remained trapped in the hydraulic. Valliere and a second man ran upstream and jumped into the water to attempt a rescue. They also became trapped.

The Fire Department was called arriving about ten minutes after the capsizing. Mr. Valerie and the other rescuer were pulled into shore unconscious; Mr. Valliere could not be revived; the other man was hospitalized. Mr. Valletta, the original victim, was pulled from the water after about five minutes later. He, too, was beyond help. Authorities are listing the cause of his death as drowning and head trauma. Alcoholic beverages and a small amount of marijuana were found among the gear, but there is no evidence that the men were impaired.

WRITER: Kevin Allsworth, Rhode Island Canoe Association Safety and Education Chair; from The Paddler.

else. Jumping into the same hazard that was trapping their friend was the wrong thing to do. Using a throw bag or tag line would have been much safer had the necessary gear and skills been available.



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