

Accident Database

Report ID# 4389

Help

2015-06-23

Date

Sean Hiebel

Victim

24

Victim Age

Maumee River

River

Section

Hosey Dam United States Indiana, US

Location

Gage

Water Level

N/A

River Difficulty

Cause Code(s)

- Caught in Low Head Dam Hydraulic

Injury Type(s)

- Does not Apply

Factors

- Inadequate Equipment
- Inexperience
- Poor Group / Scene Management
- Poor Planning

Private

Trip Type

Whitewater Kayak

Boat Type

Group Info

Other Victim Names

Reported

Status

Accident Description

Sean Hiebel, 24, Parker Roush, 24, and Kara Anderson-Roush, 24 were kayaking on the St. Mary's and Maumee Rivers on the evening of June 23, 2015. At approximately 8:45 PM the three kayakers went over the Hosey Dam and Parker and Kara capsized. Sean was able to assist them to the bank, but was overcome by the current and did not surface again. Parker's and Kara's kayaking experience level is unknown. Sean had at least 10 years of kayaking experience and was physically very strong. None of the kayakers had PFDs. Sean's body was recovered 2-1/2 days later, 3.5 miles downstream.


Authorities believe body of missing kayaker has been found

By [WANE Staff Reports](#) Published: June 26, 2015

FORT WAYNE, Ind (WANE) – The body of a man believed to be a kayaker missing since Tuesday evening was pulled from the Maumee River Friday morning by members of the New Haven Fire Department just east of the Kreager Park boat ramp, about three miles away from where the search began.

The body matched the description of Sean Hiebel, 24, of Fort Wayne and a positive identification will be made during an autopsy scheduled for Friday afternoon.

The Fort Wayne Fire Department initiated the search around 9 p.m. Tuesday when a jogger saw three kayakers go over the Hosey Dam, near North Anthony Boulevard. Two of the kayakers were safely rescued, but Hiebel was not found.

 [Flyer sent to NewsChannel 15 of Sean Hiebel, a kayaker who went missing on June 23, 2015.](#)

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“We all decided collectively that we should be expanding our search efforts based on the amount of time that has passed,” FWFD Chief of Special Operations Tim Maloney said.

The search for Heibel came to an end after more than 48 hours Friday morning when a body was spotted just east of the boat ramp.

“New Haven officers, who have been assisting the entire time, put a boat a boat on this morning and at 7:56 New Haven Fire Department recovered the victim,” Conservation Officer Rodney Clear said.

Weather and the fast current forced crews to stay in their boats to search for Hiebel the past few days.

“When the river is moving three times faster than was allowable for a subsurface diver we cannot get in the water, so everything remains surface inspections,” Maloney said.

Hiebel’s family has been notified.

“There is a lot of grief these past three days and they are going to need a lot of support from their family and friends who have been with them the entire time,” Clear said.

Friends posted flyers in hopes he had managed to survive going over the dam.

Kayaker found June 26 in Kreager Park ID'd

News-Sentinel staff reports
Tuesday, July 07, 2015

The Allen County Coroner's Office announced the man recovered June 26 from the Maumee River has been identified as Sean Thomas Hiebel, 24, of Fort Wayne. Cause of death was asphyxia due to drowning, and the manner of death was determined to be an accident.

Hiebel was kayaking with two others when his kayak capsized June 23 near the Hosey Dam. He was found June 26 east of a boat launch in Kreager Park.

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Fort Wayne Implements Warning Signs Near Dams

By [Zach Bernard](#) • May 25, 2016
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Advocates for greater river safety showcase the new signs that will be installed near Fort Wayne's dams.

Credit Zach Bernard/WBOI News

Summer is just a few weeks away, which means boating season is about to kick into full gear. The City of Fort Wayne is being proactive to ensure safety around low-head dams along the St. Joseph and Maumee rivers.

The decision to implement the new safety measures was determined by seven groups after the death of kayaker Sean Hiebel last June, after capsizing over the Hosey Dam.

30 signs and buoys will be installed on bridges and riverbanks near the St. Joseph, Hosey Street and Leo Cedarville dams in an effort to promote greater awareness while in use.

The Tri-State Watershed Alliance was one of the groups involved in the effort. On a boat ride Wednesday, Alliance executive director Dan Wire says having vibrant warning signs in plain sight should improve the awareness of anyone using the rivers.

“Here, it’s really critical that we catch them visually coming down, and I think we’ve got the places that their eyes will do nothing but see the signs when they’re coming

down,” Wire said.



A current warning sign on the Tecumseh Street Bridge.
Credit Zach Bernard/WBOI News

Wire knows how dangerous the rivers can be near dams. He drives a power boat which, while seemingly safe, still carries its own set of dangers. He says preparedness is key.

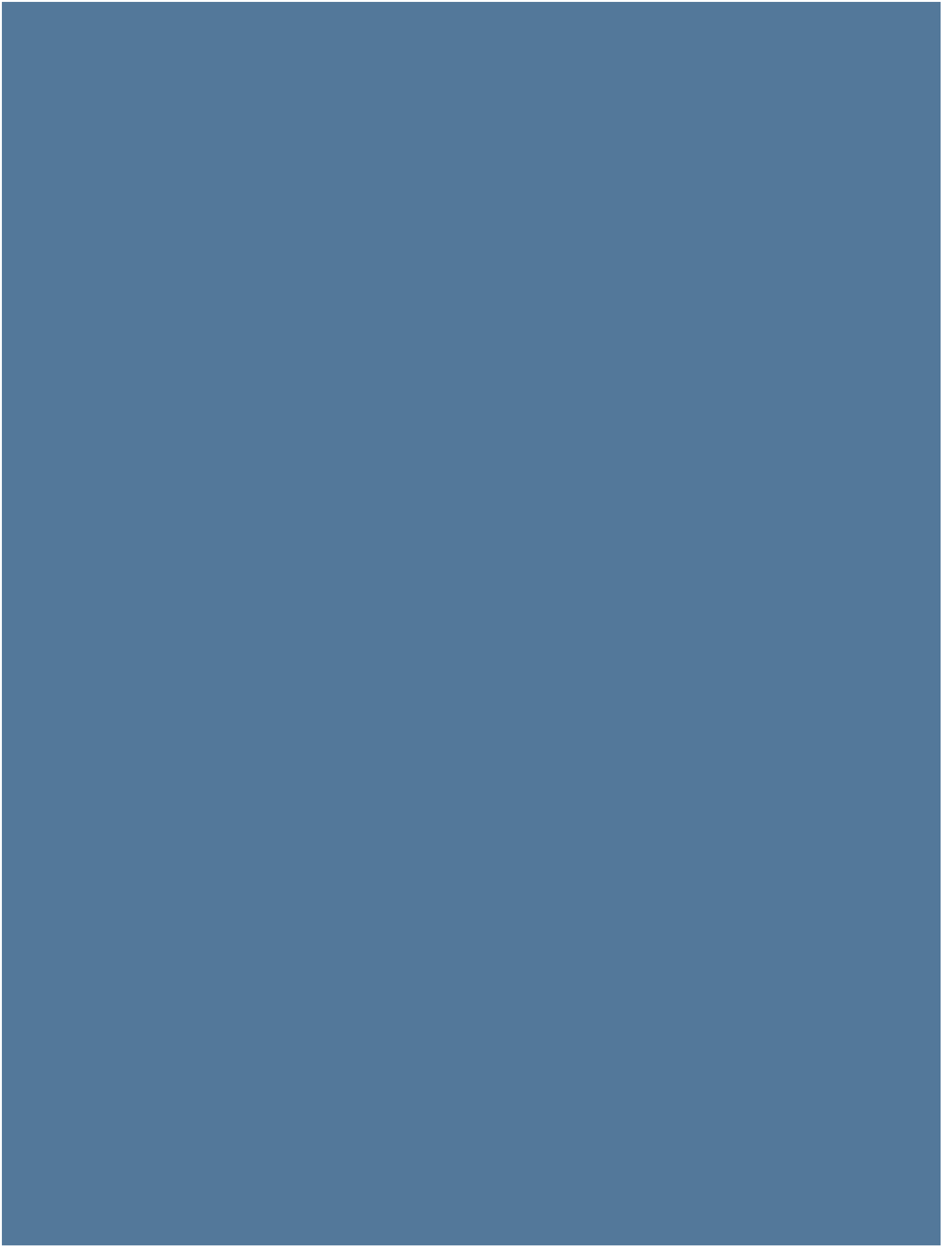
“If you find yourself in a precarious situation, give yourself enough time to react,” Wire says. “If you’ve got ground tackle, an anchor to throw out to halt your forward progress, that can help. Having a paddle on board, that certainly helps; the rivers are on average about 150 wide, so it’s not too much to try to get to one side or the other.”

He also says having extra line is beneficial, especially if a Good Samaritan is nearby. “It’s like somebody saying, ‘Well, my car’s dead, do you have jumper cables?’”

Warning signs are not required by law, but the Fort Wayne area will be the first Hoosier community to install signs to promote safety. Some existing warning signs -

- like those above the Tecumseh Street Bridge -- will be replaced with newer, brighter ones.





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