



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

P.O. BOX 10070 – BROOKSVILLE, FL 34603-0070 FAX 352 796-0493 PHONE 352 754-6830

Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
Community/Media Relations Manager, 352-797-3609

Re: Two More Divers Die in Eagle's Nest Dive Area

Date: October 17, 2016

On 10-16-16 at approximately 6 p.m., Hernando County deputies were called to the Eagle's Nest dive area located at 7199 Cortez Boulevard in Weeki Wachee for two missing divers.

Upon arrival, deputies met with Justin Blakely, the third diver. Blakely advised that his two friends, Patrick Peacock and Chris Rittenmeyer, traveled from Fort Lauderdale to conduct a three-day dive at Eagles Nest with him. Blakely also advised that Peacock and Rittenmeyer were both experienced divers and had both dived Eagle's Nest several times in the past.

All three divers entered the water at 2 p.m. Blakely being the most inexperienced diver was to remain closer to the surface while the other two divers explored the caves. The plan was for Peacock and Rittenmeyer to check in with Blakely at a predetermined location at 3 p.m. Blakeley waited, and they did not show up. Blakely went back 30 minutes later; they still were not there. Blakely checked back every 30 minutes, meeting with negative results.

At 6 p.m., Blakely notified law enforcement.

In the evening hours of 10-16-16 a group of rescue divers entered the water in an attempt to locate Peacock and Rittenmeyer. Unfortunately, the rescue divers were unable to locate either one of the divers.

At 9 a.m. on 10-17-16, a new group of rescue divers entered the water in an attempt to locate Peacock and Rittenmeyer. Both divers were located in close proximity to one another in 260 feet of water. The divers were in a very dangerous and complex area of the cave system.

The rescue divers assisted in removing the bodies from the water. Both bodies were turned over to the Medical Examiner's Office.

Next of kin notification for both individuals has been made.

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, and remains accountable to them.