



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mead's Quarry Lake Closure Extended for Safety Enhancements

(KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE, 5/30/2024)—Mead's Quarry Lake at Ijams Nature Center remains closed this weekend so that Ijams staff can complete the installation of safety signage and equipment around the back wall of the quarry lake.

On Saturday, May 25, a part of the back wall of Mead's Quarry Lake collapsed into the lake, creating a wave that affected swimmers directly across the lake.

"We were very fortunate that there were no serious injuries from this landslide," Amber Parker, CEO of Ijams Nature Center, said. "Despite the signage warning people away from the rock walls, we often have paddleboarders hanging out in that space. Luckily, no one was there that day."

Ijams Nature Center collaborated with a geologist from the Tennessee Geological Survey to conduct an assessment of the affected area. The geologist agreed that, while the area will always be unstable, creating a larger safety zone around it is the best path forward.

"The rock walls of any quarry are unstable places," Parker said. "During the quarrying operations, they were blasted by dynamite for decades, which created cracks and fissures throughout their surface, allowing rain to enter. Natural freeze/thaw cycles then work on those areas until the rock is weakened enough to fall.

"Rocks fall from those walls every day, which is why it's so important to respect safety signage and designated 'no-go' zones," she continued. "Acts of nature will happen. Ijams wants to create safer swimming and paddling in Mead's Quarry Lake. Everyone can help with that by staying away from marked areas."

Ijams Nature Center will install new regulatory buoys to replace those damaged by the landslide and floating rope lines to clearly define the boundaries of safe zones. The "no-go" area will be enlarged to ensure that people are well outside the rock-fall zone. Parker said she anticipates that this work will take until June 5 or 6, and asks for everyone's patience. Please follow Ijams' social media to learn when the Quarry Lake reopens.

"I know everyone wants to swim, and we're all ready for a fun summer at Mead's Quarry, but safety comes first. Please give Ijams time to do the necessary work to create a safe summer for all patrons. While we understand the eagerness to enjoy

Mead's Quarry, safety remains our top priority," Parker said. "We kindly urge visitors to respect the designated boundaries for their own well-being and the safety of others. Any violations will result in immediate removal from the premises."

Ijams Nature Center is a 318-acre nonprofit educational center in the heart of Knoxville and serves visitors of all ages, stages, and abilities. Its mission is to encourage stewardship of the natural world by providing an urban greenspace for people to learn about and enjoy the outdoors through engaging experiences. Ijams features 14 miles of hiking and mixed-use trails, a public access river dock, swimming, boating, biking, and so much more. Hundreds of world-class educational programs and events are coordinated and offered annually. Ijams' grounds and trails are open every day from 8:00 AM until dusk. For more information, visit ijams.org or call 865-577-4717.

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