

Geological Mishap Drains Lake

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CEDAR LAKE This small lake community has, rather suddenly, become lakeless. The 75-acre lake in rural central Oklahoma, built about 30 years ago for the recreation of several families, is virtually dry after a geological accident caused it to empty like a sink with the stopper pulled.

"It looks just like it did when we started it when you look out there it just looks like an empty lake," said Dale Phenis, one of the 600 stockholders who own the lake. He also is the area's Civil Defense director.

"There's a cavern out there you could bury a bus in," he said.

"It gives you the willies when you look at it."

Investigators from the state's Water Resources Board say the lake draining incident possibly a unique occurrence apparently was caused by a years-long saturation of layers of gypsum about 20 feet below the bottom of the lake. This apparently caused "cavities," which in turn, about a week ago, caused the lake bed to "drop" about 12 feet.

"It fell suddenly and by 'suddenly' we're talking about in several minutes," said Harold Springer, spokesman for the resources board.

At least one big "crack" in the earthen dam then spilled the lake's contents water and fish, too down a small creek. The spill was noticed Nov. 7.

About 125 families live in the vicinity of Cedar Lake, which is was an excavation in a spring-fed canyon in southwestern Canadian County about 10 miles north of Cogar. A center for fishermen and boaters, a fire department and a church also are there.

"I look out and I can see a hole in the ground," said Vickie Hagerman, secretary in the nearby "sportsmen's club." Like others familiar with the once scenic, 55-foot-deep lake, she finds it hard to believe.

"I knew that lake back and forth and up and down ... we raised our kids out there, on weekends, you know. It was a nice, clear lake," said Jack Ford, an Oklahoma City insurance and real estate man and lake stockholder.

Ford won a trophy in a fishing contest there last summer by catching a 7-pound-plus bass. "I won't be catching any more there, though not for about five years, anyway."

But there's optimism as well as disappointment around the muddy basin that once was Cedar Lake.

"It's sad, but yet this way we can dredge it out and clean up the docks," said Phenis. "We'll build it back somehow. We'll build it back if we all have to use shovels." **BLOG: NAME:**

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