

Water rescue finds helicopter in Tenn.

By Paul McKibben

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Boone County Water Rescue was able to find in just a few days a helicopter that had crashed in Tennessee, ending a two-week search for the downed aircraft last month.

A four-man crew of the all-volunteer unit arrived in Tennessee on Nov. 14. The crew searched that night and during the weekend looking for the helicopter that had crashed on Nov. 2 in the Cumberland River between Sumner and Wilson counties. The helicopter's pilot had died and his body was recovered Nov. 11.

Boone County Water Rescue located the helicopter around 4:30 p.m. on Nov. 16. It was in 54 feet of water.

Capt. Dale Appel said they were able to find the helicopter in the amount of time they did because of the way they reconstruct the event and how they search. Also, they've improved the technology.

Appel said he has an outstanding crew.

"They worked hard," he said.

The weather wasn't the best either. Appel said the first two

days they had white caps, high winds, rain and snow. He said in the last four or five hours they were there, there was very little rain but it was just freezing cold. Boone County Water Rescue did not have to send in divers.

Along with Appel, members of Boone County Water Rescue that traveled to Tennessee were Sgt. Ken Purcell, Mike Bean and Jason Geiman.

During the recovery operation, about 35 federal, local and state emergency response agencies helped. The search began on Nov. 3.

Ken Weidner, director of Sumner County Emergency Management, said one of the other sonar groups on scene suggested calling Boone County Water Rescue.

"They're very thorough," he said.

The incident wasn't the first time Boone County Water Rescue has been called to another state. They've worked in places such as Nebraska, Colorado, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. The agencies who call for Boone County Water Rescue pay its expenses on its trips.

The Tennessean contributed.