

# Weeklong search fails to find missing fishermen

An accelerated weekend search on Lake Murray for two missing West Columbia friends who have not been heard from since they left Sunday (Feb. 17), apparently on a fishing trip, had not produced success at Monday's noon press deadline for this publication.

Officials from the state Department of Natural Resources were joined by Lexington County and Richland County Marine Patrols and volunteer members of the Lake Murray Coast Guard Auxiliary in the week-long search that began Monday (Feb. 12) when Michael Spooone, 42, and David Koprowski, 33, were reported missing.

Also, helicopters from DNR, members of State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) and Saluda County SD have searched, according to Mike Willis,

spokesperson for the DNR.

"We've covered the entire 48,000 acre lake and 520 miles of shoreline," said Willis, "and so far the only things we've found that may be associated with the missing fishermen are a six-gallon gas tank and a blue fishing jacket that possibly came off the boat."

Those items were found in the Shull Island and Beaver Creek Dam areas of Lake Murray. Willis said that the search has focused on that area, one of the deepest on Lake Murray where water levels can be deeper than 150 feet.

Officials believe Spooone and Koprowski were involved in a boating accident, Willis indicated. A truck and boat trailer reportedly belonging to the men were found near a boat ramp, and it has

•See **Search** on **Page 3**

## •Search

Continued from Page 1

been reported that several people told officials they saw men resembling Spooone and Koprowski fishing Feb. 11, according to Willis.

According to Willis, the two missing persons are believed to have gone out on Lake Murray on a fishing trip at about 8 a.m. Sunday (Feb. 11).

Willis said the DNR was notified by their wives at about midnight Sunday that the two were missing. The wives thought they might have gone to the Santee lakes, and officials searched there for about four and a half hours before getting another call saying the two might be at Lake Murray.

Investigating officials are reported to have found their Chevy truck and boat trailer at a landing on the Irmo side of the lake's dam, after which the search began on Lake Murray.

"Usually, the search does not drag on this long," said Willis. "We just don't know where they are. The gasoline tank and floatation device are the only clues we've located that might be linked to the tragedy."

Volunteers from the Lake Murray Coast Guard Auxiliary have assisted in the rescue mission all last week, joining the rescue mission immediately on learning of the two being missing.

George Crouch and Bill Turner, who have coordinated the Auxiliary's assistance, held a briefing at Flotilla Island Saturday morning at which time search sector maps were distributed to the participating members.

"Several of our members have joined in the search during the week, but this weekend more of our volunteer members were available and offered their boats and personal service," said Turner, commander of the Lake Murray Coast Guard Auxiliary. Turner said that all members of Flotilla 12-3, including coxswains and crew members, and vessels (including jetskies) who were available during the weekend were urged to assist in the search.

Turner said he is keeping the Coast Guard at Charleston informed on the progress of the search.

Spoone is the owner of Southern Coachworks, a custom auto body and interior repair shop off 12th street in West Columbia.