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More players getting involved in Lost River Cave suds investigation

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Suds accumulate at the mouth of Lost River Cave on Friday.

Grace Ramey/photo@bgdailynews.com

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INFORMATION**

Answers
needed at Lost
River Cave

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WKU to pinpoint
suds origin

Lost River Cave
looks for answers as
suds issue worsens

Rho Lansden began getting calls by 7 or 7:30 a.m. Thursday. The Lost River Cave suds were back – again – and this time, they emitted a “potent,” “perfumed” and “fresh laundry” smell.

Unfortunately, what might be a preferred clothing scent is not a favorite odor of tourists or aquatic residents of the cave’s natural waterways.

There hadn’t been significant rainfall in Bowling Green for several days to explain the suds’ appearance. To say the least, Lansden, Lost River Cave executive director, was frustrated.

“I am disappointed that we are dealing with this again today,” she said.

Since last week, a testing team comprised of the Department of Water, the city of Bowling Green environmental office and Western Kentucky University has “been working nonstop on this,” Lansden said.

On Thursday, the team performed basic, low-cost, qualitative analysis to determine whether there were surfactants, compounds that make up soap, in Lost River Cave's waterways, said Matt Powell, city environmental manager.

"You could also just see it," he said.



The city environmental office continues to work with people in the watershed area who may be using chemicals that could seep into the groundwater, causing the suds. All investigations are ongoing, Powell said.

The planned WKU study is beginning to take samples, too, but it is taking a more scientific, possibly longer-term approach, Lansden said.

The Kentucky Energy & Environment Cabinet is also now involved, according to communications assistant Robin Hartman.

“The cabinet is currently in the process of testing the material,” Hartman said in a statement to the Daily News. “Despite the challenging nature of the karst topography of the area, and the number of ground water and surface water sources, the cabinet will make every effort to locate the responsible party so there are no future occurrences.”

Lansden said she is prepared to ride this out until a solution is found.

“Everyone has different authorizations that they can and cannot do,” she said. “All of this will eventually come together.”

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