



Business Profile: Lake Phoenix in Brunswick County



Driving down a quiet gravel road in rural Brunswick County, you would never expect to find a fully stocked dive shop and scuba center. However, in the small community of Rawlings, the appropriately named "Quarry Lane" is home to Lake Phoenix Scuba Park and Family Campground.

Served by Southside Electric Cooperative (SEC), what was once known as Lake Rawlings is under new management and has taken on a "total transformation," according to owner Rob Grose. "We decided the name Lake Phoenix was fitting, due to the amount of changes and improvements we had planned for the property." Those changes, according to Grose, had to start at the front desk. "We wanted to make the entire experience friendly and enjoyable, beginning with arrival at the park."



The redesigned dive shop boasts a complete selection of scuba equipment, gear, snacks and other essential items.

Walking into the dive shop, visitors will immediately notice how clean and inviting it is. Friendly staff wait to help each guest with the check-in process. “We make the process easy, so visitors can check in, sign a waiver and start having fun,” according to Grose. The fully stocked dive shop has everything needed for the complete scuba experience, from air tanks to fins and wet suits.

Grose purchased the property, which includes the 13-acre quarry, in April 2015 and began the transformation. When asked if he has done it all alone, he is quick to say, “I have a great group of people helping me.”

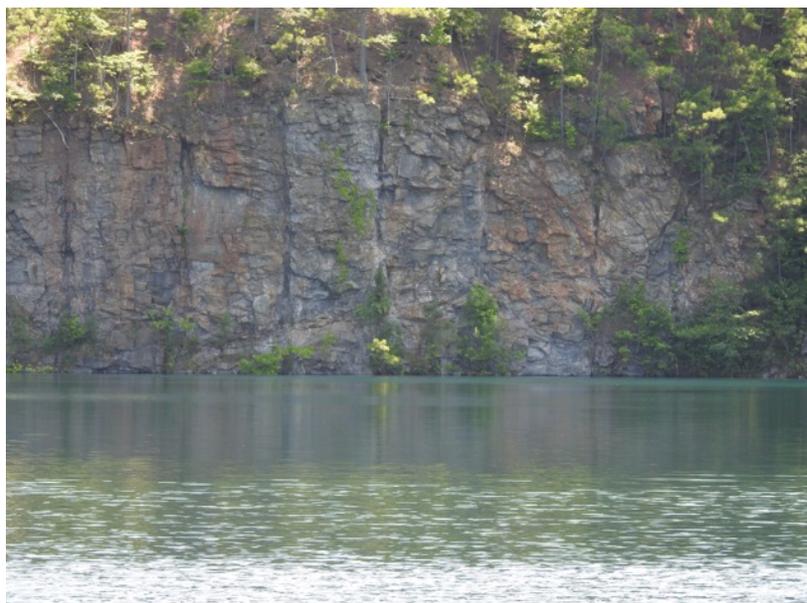
He laughs, adding, “Some of them don’t even work here.” Grose mentions that many of his “regulars” have pitched in to make improvements, donating their time and skills to rebuild the facility.

Lake Phoenix began as a rock quarry in the early 1970s. The quarry was mined exclusively for granite to be used in the construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge expansion and portions of Interstate 85. “The projects were completed, and the price of granite dropped, so the quarry was flooded and abandoned as a mine,” recalls Grose. In the early 1990s, the quarry was leased and became Lake Rawlings, a campground and scuba-diving center.

Why scuba in rural Brunswick County?

“The quarry contains the clearest water in the Mid-Atlantic region,” explains Grose. “With underwater visibility in the 20- to 30-foot range, it makes for an excellent place to learn scuba, practice your

The shores of the lake are bordered by steep granite walls, showing the marks from the quarry excavation process.



skills or just explore.” The steep granite walls, underwater rock formations, depths to 68 feet and clear water make for many hours of interesting exploring. “The quarry is stocked with bluegill and bass, which we consider pets. They are used to the divers and will even eat right out of your hand,” shares Grose.

If the natural attractions are not enough to keep divers busy, numerous structures have been submerged in the quarry over the years. “We have over 30 unique objects to view while underwater,” explains Grose, “multiple platforms, eight boats, a school bus, several cars and even a helicopter.” These items offer visiting divers places to explore and practice their skills, while making for an interesting scuba experience.



The clear water allows for great views of fish, even for visitors standing on the dock.

Grose says much of his scuba business comes from dive shops, “We have dive shops that bring their students here to get certified and practice their skills.” He says there are several shops in the Richmond area, but other students travel from as far as Maryland. “We also have divers who travel to the quarry just to play and explore the lake. They come from various parts of the state, as well as from other states,” notes Grose.

In addition to those who dive for fun, Lake Phoenix also welcomes those engaged in professional training. “We have had divers here training with

the FBI, state and local police departments, various fire departments and other groups,” shares Grose.

Locals interested in learning to scuba dive and become a “certified open water diver” can receive all of their testing and training at Lake Phoenix. “We encourage people to go through their local dive shop for certification. However, we know that for many people, a dive shop is not within a reasonable driving distance,” explains Grose.

Lake Phoenix is not only for divers, offering opportunities to kayak, swim and snorkel. “There are really not many places to swim around here,” states Grose. “We allow swimmers to come during the week throughout the summer and enjoy the cool, clear water.” There are covered shelters adjacent to the lake where guests can grill out and relax after a day of swimming.

Visitors wishing to stay for more than the day will find plenty of accommodations. Grose explains, “We are a full-service campground. We have hookups for RVs, tent sites, volleyball courts, a basketball court, a playground, and on the weekends, a full concession stand.” Improvements have also been made

throughout the campground, from the new shelters to the completely remodeled bathhouse. “This is a great place for a weekend getaway, family vacation or just a place to come hang out.” And the entire park is surrounded by woods, providing plenty of wildlife for nature lovers.

Grose says the transformation to Lake Phoenix has come a long way. “We wanted to create a peaceful, relaxing environment,” says Grose, “where there is something for everyone.” However, he also says the transformation is far from complete. “We have a long list of

upgrades and additions planned for the park in the future.” He laughs, “As of now, we have seven SEC meters on the property, but we are definitely going to need a few more!”

For more information on Lake Phoenix in Brunswick County, visit www.lake-phoenix.com.



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