

DNA sequencing identifies remains in 30 year cold case

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Alstrom Point in Kane County. (Kane County Sheriff's Office)

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KANAB – Investigators have identified the remains of a man that were found in Kane County more than 30 years ago.

The Kane County Sheriff's Office identified **James Howard Conklin**, born in 1950, as the man whose remains were found by hikers near Big Water in February of 1994.

Lt. Alan Alldredge with the Kane County Sheriff's Office said numerous attempts were made to identify the remains over the years, and their department submitted DNA into national databases for missing persons, but [attempts were all unsuccessful](#).

"Despite extensive efforts by law enforcement investigators to identify the subject, the case went cold for 30 years," Alldredge said.

Then, in 2024: A breakthrough.

The latest technology

This year, Kane County detectives and the Utah Medical Examiners Office sent evidence to [Orthram DNA Laboratory](#) in Texas, Alldredge said. Scientists there were able to develop a "DNA extract" that they used to create a "comprehensive DNA profile" for the unidentified man.

With a DNA profile came the possibility to track down relatives.

"Ultimately the DNA and genealogy provided new leads to Kane County Sheriff's Detectives," Alldredge said.

With this new information, a new investigation followed, and detectives made contact with a man they believed might be the son of the unidentified man. Investigators took a DNA sample from the son and compared the two – and it turned out they were right. Police were then finally able to contact the victim's family and give them updates about the case.

Alldredge said evidence suggests Conklin died sometime after May of 1988. Authorities believe Conklin was homeless at the time of his death and had been seen in Flagstaff, Arizona.

Despite identifying the man, the investigation is still ongoing. It was not immediately clear if investigators suspected foul play in Conklin's death. Alldredge asked anybody with information about Conklin to call [Kane County Sheriff's Office](#) at 435-644-2349, or email them at comm@kane.utah.gov.