Investigation underway

In the early afternoon on Dec. 27, around 2:14 pm on the day leading up to the New Year, McKinley County Sheriff's officers found an unattended body on Country Road 1.

The body was reported by a man, 44, from Gallup, who discovered a decomposing leg while walking with his dogs around Rock Springs.

"My dogs were nibbling on something. I went to go check what they were eating and I notice a leg that had green pants," he told MCSO Dep. Josie Bowman in a statement.

The identity of the deceased person is not yet known, although officers did find identification near the body at the scene. They have yet to confirm a link between the ID and the physical remains.

Police spent a full day checking for the remains that were scattered in the rugged area. MCSO Sgt. Elreno Henio uncovered a leg bone, and a spinal column "still attached to ribs," according to his report. Henio also found a pair of black boots lying upstream.

The investigation ran until nearly midnight, when officers' progress was impeded by darkness and rough terrain. The scene was secured and work was set to resume again the following morning.

Officers did retrieve a lower jawbone, which is currently being examined by a forensic scientist in an effort to identify the John Doe.

Forensics will confirm whether the remains belong to the individual through dental records.

Cadaver dogs will search the area for the rest of the remains, hoping to find the top half of the skull, and for more clues on what may have led to this person's death.

By Abigail Rowe
Sun Editor