

Publication: Northwest Arkansas Times;Date: Jun 24, 2008;Section: News;Page: 1



## Swift-water team recovers body of missing person

### ! Authorities report finding nothing suspicious in the 37-year-old man's death.

**BY DUSTIN TRACY Northwest Arkansas Times**

BLACK OAK — An afternoon swimming excursion turned tragic.

Michael Huffman, along with some family and friends, went to the Middle Fork Bridge on Black Oak Road for a dip Sunday afternoon. On Monday afternoon, the 37-year-old Fayetteville man was reported missing. Two hours later, he was found dead in the Middle Fork of the White River.

Kelly Cantrell, public information officer for the Washington County Sheriffs Office, said Huffman's companions thought he had left the river early to go home Sunday afternoon. A friend went by Huffman's house Monday afternoon and discovered him missing, she said, which prompted the county to mobilize its Swift Water Tactical Rescue Team.

It took about 30 minutes for the team to find Huffman in about 5 feet of water just north of the bridge, said John Luther, director of the Washington County Department of Emergency Management.

"Thankfully today we were able to find him pretty quickly," he said.

Crews drove through the river to set up a base on a sandbar. Huffman's family and friends waited on the road, sharing tears and memories of the man. One person even brought an old photo album.

Cantrell said the body was sent to the Arkansas State Crime Lab but that investigators were not aware of anything that appeared suspicious about the incident.

"Hopefully they'll be able to make that determination once the preliminary reports come back (from the crime lab)," she said.

She said officers did not know if any alcohol or drugs were involved.

Luther said this is the second drowning this year in Washington County.

Clint Caudle, 48, of West Fork, disappeared on the morning of March 18 while apparently trying to free his pickup truck, which got stuck on a low-water crossing while he was attempting to cross Dye Creek amid heavy rains. Search teams found his body 17 days later.



BROOKE McNEELY Northwest Arkansas Times Members of the Washington County Swift Water Tactical Rescue Team locate the body of Michael Huffman on Monday in Middle Fork of the White River near Black Oak Road. The man went swimming Sunday and was reported missing Monday.