

2025-2026 TPSA REGIONAL SCENARIO**CAUSE NO. F25-0803-1245**

STATE OF TEXAS	§	IN THE DISTRICT COURT
VS	§	268TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
SAL WARNER	§	FORT BEND COUNTY, TEXAS

TASK – Prepare for your event (Opening/Closing) using this document. You may choose to be the prosecutor or defense attorney.

TYPE OF CASE – Criminal

CASE SUMMARY – On August 3, 2025, the body of Sara Anne Rutherby was recovered from 40 Acre Lake at Brazos Bend State Park. Investigation by the Fort Bend County Sheriff’s Office determined she died from drowning following blunt-force injury and restraint. Evidence and witness information led to the arrest of Sal Warner on August 12, 2025, for Murder, Tampering with Physical Evidence, and Abuse of Corpse.

CHARGES (You may choose to charge with one or all of the following charges)

- Murder (Texas Penal Code § 19.02(b)(1))
- Tampering with Physical Evidence (Texas Penal Code § 37.09(a)(1))
- Abuse of Corpse (Texas Penal Code § 42.08(a)(1))

DEFENDANT – Sal Warner

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS –

- Discovery of Victim: August 3, 2025
- Search Warrant Executed: August 9, 2025
- Arrest of Defendant: August 12, 2025
- Indictment Returned: August 15, 2025
- Plea Hearing: Defendant entered plea of “Not Guilty”

- Trial Date: Pending assignment by the 268th Judicial District Court

PRESUMPTIONS

- The defendant has been properly Mirandized prior to making any statements or confessions.
- All physical and testimonial evidence referenced in the case has been lawfully collected.
- The chain of custody for all physical evidence is intact and properly documented.
- All warrants, searches, and arrests in the case are legally valid and have not been suppressed.
- There are no procedural or constitutional defects affecting admissibility of the evidence provided.
- The timeline of events is accurate and complete as presented within the official scenario materials.
- Competitors should not introduce new evidence or facts outside the official case packet.
- All names, dates, and exhibits provided are fictional and created for educational purposes.

PHONE TRANSCRIPT — CALL TO PARK HEADQUARTERS

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – State Park Police Division
Brazos Bend State Park, Fort Bend County, Texas

Date: August 3, 2025

Time: 07:13:22 a.m. (Call recorded via Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office Communications)

Participants: Franklin Doss (Reporting Party); Lisa Boyd (Brazos Bend State Park Headquarters)

07:13:22 a.m. – Incoming call to park headquarters main line

Boyd: Brazos Bend State Park Headquarters, this is Lisa. How can I help you this morning?

Doss: Hi, yes ma'am, my name's Franklin Doss. I'm up on the observation tower right now doing some bird watching, and I think there's a body floating in the lake.

Boyd: I'm sorry—did you say a body in the lake?

Doss: Yes ma'am. It looks like a person floating on their back, not moving at all. I can see it through my spotting scope. It's near the middle of the lake, kind of north of the fishing pier.

Boyd: Okay, sir, thank you. Please stay where you are and don't try to go down to the water. I'm going to notify our Rangers right now. What's your full name and a phone number in case they need to reach you?

Doss: Franklin Doss, and my number's 832-555-0196.

Boyd: Alright, Mr. Doss. I'm contacting the Rangers through the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office. They'll be on their way to you. Please stay on the tower and keep your phone handy in case they call back.

Doss: Yes ma'am, I'll stay right here.

Boyd: Thank you, sir. You did the right thing calling this in.

07:14:02 a.m. – Call ended.

Follow-Up Coordination Log (Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office CAD entry):

07:13:45 – Brazos Bend HQ reported call from citizen observing possible body in 40 Acre Lake.

07:14:10 – Sheriff's Office dispatched TPWD Rangers Ethan Collier and Marisa Velasquez to scene (ETA 10 minutes).

07:23:50 – Rangers confirmed arrival at observation tower.

Attachment A — Observation Tower Location Notes

Officer: Ranger Ethan Collier #214

Date: August 3, 2025

Location: Observation Tower – 40 Acre Lake, Brazos Bend State Park

Purpose: Scene-location reference and visibility conditions as observed upon arrival.

Site Overview

- The observation tower is situated on the western shoreline of 40 Acre Lake, approximately 60 yards north of the fishing-pier parking area.
- Structure height: approximately 25 feet with three viewing platforms; top deck used by visitors for wildlife observation.
- Access via gravel trail from Park Road 72 (approx. 0.2 miles).
- Nearest shoreline distance from tower base to water edge: approximately 15 feet.
- Line of sight to the suspected location is clear across the open water; the body was visible at an estimated 120-degree bearing from the top platform.

Environmental Conditions (07:23 hrs)

- Weather: Clear skies, light southeast wind 3–5 mph.
- Temperature: Approximately 78 °F (26 °C).
- Water conditions: Calm, minimal surface ripple, patches of aquatic vegetation mid-lake.
- Visibility: Excellent; sun approx. 20 degrees above eastern horizon.
- No odor of decomposition detectable from tower or pier distance.

Relative Landmarks

- Fishing Pier: Visible south-southwest of tower (~35 yards).
- Observed body location: Approx. mid-lake, slightly north of pier's axis line.
- Other structures visible: trail signage, park bench, and dock safety buoys.
- No other individuals or vessels observed on lake at time of arrival.

Sketch Reference: Hand-drawn scene diagram attached to TPWD case file under evidence log.

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Attachment B — Time Log of Arrival and Coordination Calls

Officer: Ranger Ethan Collier #214

Date: August 3, 2025

Incident: Deceased Person – 40 Acre Lake

Time (HHMM)	Action / Communication	Unit / Person Contacted	Remarks
0713	Call received at Brazos Bend Park Headquarters from visitor reporting possible body in lake.	Lisa Boyd (Park HQ)	Information relayed to Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office Communications.
0714	Sheriff's Office dispatcher notified TPWD State Park Police Units 214 (Collier) and 237 (Velasquez).	Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office Dispatch	Rangers assigned and acknowledged call for service.
0715	Units 214 and 237 departed Brazos Bend HQ en route to observation tower.	Radio traffic via FBCSO channel	Estimated arrival 8–10 minutes.
0723	Units 214 and 237 arrived on scene at observation tower parking area.	On scene	Visual contact made with reporting party Franklin Doss.
0725	Collier confirmed visual of human body floating mid-lake.	Observation from tower	No boats or additional persons observed.
0728	Velasquez proceeded to fishing pier to deploy flat-bottom park boat.	Unit 237	Collier maintained visual from tower.
0735	Velasquez launched boat and approached body.	Unit 237	Collier relocated to pier for scene security.
0745	Velasquez confirmed subject deceased; no sign of movement or vital response.	Unit 237 to Unit 214 radio traffic	Collier requested FBCSO investigator and ME response through dispatch.
0812	FBCSO deputies and crime-scene investigator arrived on scene.	Deputy Jacob Morales #201, Deputy Tanya Rhodes #204, Investigator Daniel R. Vega #1735 (CID)	Scene secured; initial briefing conducted with Collier and Velasquez.
0818	Medical Examiner's Office notified via FBCSO dispatch.	Dr. A. Pena (ME)	ME team en route to recover remains.
0837	TPWD scene assist concluded.	Collier & Velasquez	Returned to HQ for report entry.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – State Park Police Division**Supplemental Incident Report – Ranger Marisa Velasquez**

Report Date: August 3, 2025

Reporting Officer: Ranger Marisa Velasquez, Badge No. 237

Agency: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – State Park Police Division

Duty Station: Brazos Bend State Park, Fort Bend County, Texas

Type of Incident: Deceased Person / Recovery and Scene Support

Case No.: To be assigned by Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office

On Sunday, August 3, 2025, at approximately 0714 hours, I was notified through Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office Communications of a call from a citizen at Brazos Bend State Park reporting a possible body floating in the 40 Acre Lake. I responded in coordination with Ranger Ethan Collier (#214).

We departed park headquarters at approximately 0715 hours and arrived on scene near the observation tower at approximately 0723 hours. Ranger Collier made contact with the reporting party, identified as Franklin Doss, while I proceeded to the fishing pier area located south of the tower to determine shoreline access for water recovery.

At 0728 hours, I launched the TPWD flat-bottom aluminum maintenance boat from the pier. I proceeded slowly toward the center of the lake, guided by radio directions from Ranger Collier, who maintained visual contact from the tower.

At approximately 0735 hours, I located a human body floating face-up, partially entangled in aquatic vegetation and reeds. The subject was clothed and appeared pale in color. The body was oriented head-north, feet-south, and was located approximately 32 yards from the eastern edge of the pier.

I approached to within ten feet and confirmed that the individual showed no signs of movement or respiration. Based on visible skin pallor, stiffness, and vegetation entanglement, the subject appeared deceased. I observed no flotation devices or boating equipment nearby.

To prevent further drift, I used a boat hook to stabilize the body in place without disturbing surrounding vegetation. I radioed Ranger Collier to advise confirmation of a deceased person and requested he contact Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office for investigative response.

At 0812 hours, Deputies Jacob Morales (#201) and Tanya Rhodes (#204) arrived on scene, accompanied by Investigator Daniel Vega (#1735). Upon their arrival, I guided Investigator Vega to the location via boat. Under his supervision, I assisted with photographic documentation and initial recovery procedures.

The body was carefully secured using a flotation harness and towed to the pier under direction of

Investigator Vega. Once the subject was removed from the water, I noted the following observable details:

- Adult individual, apparent female build.
- Pale skin with early signs of bloating and marbling consistent with submersion.
- Clothed in light-colored shirt and denim pants.
- Visible laceration and depressed wound to the rear scalp area consistent with blunt trauma.

Upon recovery to shore, I maintained custody of the body until the arrival of Dr. Ana Peña, Medical Examiner for Fort Bend County, at approximately 0830 hours. Dr. Peña officially pronounced death at 0834 hours.

Personal effects collected from the immediate area included:

- One (1) section of light-green nylon vegetation twine entangled near the subject's right wrist.
- One (1) silver stud earring recovered from lake vegetation adjacent to body.

All recovered items were placed into separate TPWD evidence bags, labeled, and transferred to Investigator Vega under chain of custody at 0852 hours.

The body was transported from the scene by the Medical Examiner's team at approximately 0908 hours. The recovery boat was returned to park storage, cleaned, and logged as disinfected following biohazard protocol.

No additional evidence was located in the immediate vicinity during visual shoreline inspection.

Report complete.

Submitted By: Ranger Marisa Velasquez #237

Texas State Park Police Division – Brazos Bend State Park

August 3, 2025 — 1630 hrs

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FORT BEND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE – CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

Supplemental Report — Scene Search and Discovery of Additional Remains

Report Date: August 5, 2025

Reporting Investigator: Daniel R. Vega, Badge #1735

Agency: Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office – Criminal Investigations Division (CID)

Location: 40 Acre Lake, Brazos Bend State Park, Fort Bend County, Texas

Type of Report: Supplemental / Expanded Scene Investigation

Reference Case No.: FB-25-0803-40AL

I. Background

This report supplements the initial incident documentation and medical examiner response concerning the recovery of an unidentified deceased female from the 40 Acre Lake at Brazos Bend State Park on August 3, 2025. During subsequent scene processing beginning on August 4, 2025, additional human remains were discovered in and around the lake perimeter, prompting a coordinated multi-agency search and recovery operation that continued through August 5, 2025.

II. Scene Search Summary

At approximately 0645 hours on August 4, 2025, this investigator, accompanied by Rangers Ethan Collier (#214) and Marisa Velasquez (#237) of the Texas State Park Police Division, initiated an expanded search of the 40 Acre Lake area. Assistance was requested from the Fort Bend County Dive Team, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Marine Unit, and forensic anthropologist Dr. Jeannie Gray (University of Houston – Department of Anthropology) for underwater and shoreline recovery support. Due to turbid water, heavy vegetation, and poor visibility, diver operations were limited to short-duration bottom searches. Recovery efforts extended into August 5, 2025, with rotation of dive teams and use of surface sifting and sediment dredging techniques to locate submerged skeletal material. Security of the scene was maintained overnight by uniformed deputies until operations resumed at 0700 hours the following day.

III. Discovery of Additional Human Remains

Remains ID	Condition	Approx. Location	Notes
Remains #2	Partial skeletal, no soft tissue	Eastern bank, approx. 12 yards from initial decedent recovery site	Discovered by diver team; consistent with long-term water exposure (>12 months).
Remains #3	Advanced decomposition, partial torso with clothing remnants	North cove, 4 ft depth	Recovered in silt layer; clothing fragment consistent with synthetic hiking material.
Remains #4	Skeletal, nearly complete skeletal elements, no soft tissue	Submerged near west treeline, approx. 7 ft depth	Recovered as articulated skeletal remains with minimal disarticulation; preservation consistent with long-term submersion (>24 months).
Remains #5	Partial upper body exhibiting adipocere formation	Marshy inlet at south end of lake	Soft tissue preservation consistent with prolonged submersion in anaerobic aquatic conditions.

All remains were photographed in situ by FBCSO Crime Scene Technician Karen Ly (#2204) prior to recovery. Partial recoveries were secured and documented at the end of each operational day. Each set of remains was individually tagged, bagged, and maintained under chain of custody until final transfer to the Fort Bend County Medical Examiner's Office at 1800 hours on August 5, 2025.

IV. Site Observations

Multiple fragments of clothing and synthetic camping material (nylon straps, tent stakes) were recovered in proximity to Remains #3 and #4. A fragment of duct tape (4-inch section, partial adhesive) was located entangled in vegetation near Remains #5. No visible footwear or personal identification items were recovered at the scene. Diver notes indicate submersion depths ranging between 3.5 and 8.2 feet depending on lake area. Based on algae coverage and sediment accumulation, some remains appear to have been submerged more than two years.

V. Expert Consultation

Dr. Jeannie Gray conducted on-site preliminary osteological assessment, confirming all recovered sets of remains as human and noting that preliminary observations are consistent with all individuals being female. Dr. Gray noted variability in decomposition consistent with multiple deposition events over time rather than a single incident. Formal anthropological and DNA testing were recommended to establish biological profiles and potential cross-reference to regional missing person reports.

VI. Evidence Transfer and Documentation

All remains and associated evidence were transferred to Dr. Ana Peña, M.E., under FBCSO chain of custody at 1800 hours on August 5, 2025. Scene grid and recovery mapping were completed by the FBCSO Crime Scene Unit (Map File: FB-25-0803-40AL-M1). Dive logs, depth profiles, and body-camera footage archived in CID digital case file.

VII. Conclusion

The expanded two-day recovery operation at 40 Acre Lake resulted in the discovery and retrieval of five distinct sets of human remains, including the previously recovered unidentified female decedent from August 3, 2025. Preliminary osteological assessment indicates all recovered individuals are female. The condition and stratification of the remains indicate deposition over multiple years. Pending forensic analysis and identification, this investigation remains active under case number FB-25-0803-40AL.

Report Completed By:

Investigator Daniel R. Vega #1735

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office – Criminal Investigations Division

August 5, 2025 – 1835 hrs

Attachment C — Evidence Collection Log (Narrative Format)

Officer: Ranger Marisa Velasquez #237

Date: August 3, 2025

Location: 40 Acre Lake – Fishing Pier Area, Brazos Bend State Park

Incident: Deceased Person / Body Recovery

Item 001: Section of light-green nylon vegetation twine (approx. 18 in. length).

Location: Floating vegetation adjacent to recovered subject, mid-lake (approx. 32 yards north of pier).

Time Collected: 0841 hrs

Collected By: Rgr. M. Velasquez #237

Transferred To: Inv. D. Vega #1735 (FBCSO CID) at 0852 hrs

Remarks: Bagged in TPWD Evidence Bag #A-001; possible restraint material.

Item 002: Silver stud earring (single).

Location: Recovered from vegetation approximately 1 ft west of body during surface sweep.

Time Collected: 0847 hrs

Collected By: Rgr. M. Velasquez #237

Transferred To: Inv. D. Vega #1735 (FBCSO CID) at 0852 hrs

Remarks: Bagged in TPWD Evidence Bag #A-002; potential personal effect for ID comparison.

Item 003: Biological sample swab (lake water adjacent to recovery site).

Location: Mid-lake – collected under direction of Investigator Vega for ME submission.

Time Collected: 0850 hrs

Collected By: Rgr. M. Velasquez #237

Transferred To: Dr. A. Peña (Fort Bend County ME) at 0855 hrs

Remarks: Swab sealed in forensic tube #LWS-03; biohazard label applied.

Note: Chain of custody transfers and original evidence bag numbers are recorded in the agency evidence file. Signatures and physical transfer documentation are maintained by TPWD and the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office.

FORT BEND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE – CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

EVIDENCE REPORT – CASE FB-25-0803-40AL

Item No.	0064
Item Description	One (1) fragment, green nylon vegetation twine – approximately 11 cm length, recovered from wrist area of Remains #1.
Date/Time Recovered	08/03/2025 – 1324 hrs
Location of Recovery	40 Acre Lake, Brazos Bend State Park – waterline near northern shore grid sector C-3.
Collected By	CST Karen Ly #2204
Witnessed By	Inv. Daniel R. Vega #1735
Initial Disposition	Placed in paper bundle, sealed in evidence envelope; signed by collector.
Transferred To	FBCSO Property Section, Tech M. Ramirez #2319, on 08/03/2025 at 1642 hrs.
Condition	Dry and intact; no visible soil adherence.
Remarks	Twine fragment was loosely looped around decadent tissue on the right wrist of Remains #1; photographed in situ prior to collection (see Photo Log frames 198–203). No additional fiber material observed in the immediate vicinity.

Fort Bend County Medical Examiner's Office

Autopsy and Medical Examiner's Report

Case No.: ME-25-0823-FB

Decedent: Jane Doe (Unidentified Adult Female)

Date of Examination: August 4, 2025

Examiner: Dr. Ana Peña, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner

Location: Fort Bend County Medical Examiner's Office, Rosenberg, Texas

I. Circumstances of Recovery

The decedent was recovered from the 40 Acre Lake within Brazos Bend State Park, Fort Bend County, Texas, on August 3, 2025, at approximately 0830 hours. The recovery was conducted under the supervision of Investigator Daniel R. Vega (#1735, FBCSO) with assistance from Ranger Marisa Velasquez (#237) of the Texas State Park Police Division. The body was transported by the Medical Examiner's Office at approximately 0908 hours and received at the morgue at 1036 hours on the same date.

II. Identification

At the time of examination, the decedent was unidentified. The remains were catalogued as Jane Doe pending fingerprint, dental, and DNA comparison. Identification efforts are in progress through the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office.

III. External Examination

The body is that of a well-developed adult female, appearing approximately 25–35 years of age, measuring 165 cm (5 ft 5 in) in height and weighing approximately 58 kg (128 lbs). The body was recovered, clothed in a light-colored long-sleeve shirt and denim pants. Both garments were saturated and stained with silt and vegetation. Shoes were not present.

Postmortem changes observed:

- Early bloating of face and torso
- Greenish marbling of right lower abdomen
- Rigor mortis absent (consistent with aquatic decomposition)
- Skin slippage noted along dorsal forearms and calves
- No animal predation or scavenger activity observed

External injuries observed:

1. Depressed laceration to posterior scalp, measuring 5.2 cm in length, underlying bone defect present.
2. Abrasion (1.3 cm diameter) on dorsal left wrist.
3. Superficial linear contusions (3–6 cm) across right upper arm, faint.

4. No ligature marks around the neck.
5. No penetrating wounds identified.

The nostrils and oral cavity contained small quantities of lake vegetation and silt. No foreign plastic or fabric material was recovered from the airway.

IV. Internal Examination

Cranial cavity:

- Subgaleal hemorrhage underlying the posterior scalp laceration.
- Linear fracture of the right occipital bone extending 3.5 cm.
- Subarachnoid and subdural hemorrhage present over posterior cerebral hemispheres.

Thoracic cavity:

- Lungs moderately expanded with diffuse pulmonary edema and frothy fluid exuding from cut surfaces. - Water and vegetative debris present in distal bronchi.
- Heart structurally normal, chambers contain minimal dark blood.

Abdominal cavity:

- Organs in normal anatomic position.
- No internal trauma or hemorrhage identified.

Extremities:

- No fractures or defensive wounds observed.
- Fingernails intact with trace sediment beneath nail beds (samples retained for analysis).

V. Toxicology

Peripheral blood, vitreous humor, urine, and gastric contents were obtained for comprehensive toxicology screening. Analysis for ethanol, carbon monoxide, and common drugs of abuse is pending through the Harris County Forensic Toxicology Laboratory (reference submission #HCFTL-25-3908).

VI. Evidence Collected

1. Fingernail scrapings (R & L hands)
2. Head hair and pubic hair standards
3. Clothing (shirt and jeans)
4. Vegetation sample from posterior scalp wound
5. Blood and vitreous fluid samples

All items packaged, labeled, and sealed under Fort Bend County Medical Examiner chain of custody.

VII. Opinion

Cause of Death: Blunt force trauma to the head, associated with drowning.

Manner of Death: Pending investigation (undetermined at time of report).
Estimated Postmortem Interval: 3–6 months prior to recovery, based on aquatic decomposition, skin marbling, and absence of adipocere formation.

Signed: Ana Peña, M.D.

Chief Medical Examiner

Fort Bend County Medical Examiner's Office

Date Signed: August 4, 2025 – 1630 hrs

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Fort Bend County Medical Examiner's Office

Supplemental Report — Toxicology & Identification Results

Case No.: ME-25-0823-FB

Decedent: Jane Doe (now identified as Sara Anne Rutherby)

Date of Report: August 11, 2025

Examiner: Dr. Ana Peña, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner

Location: Fort Bend County Medical Examiner's Office, Rosenberg, Texas

I. Background

This supplemental report is filed in connection with the original autopsy report dated August 4, 2025, concerning the unidentified female recovered from 40 Acre Lake at Brazos Bend State Park on August 3, 2025. Subsequent laboratory and investigative results have provided both toxicological data and a confirmed identification of the decedent.

II. Identification

The decedent has been positively identified as Sara Anne Rutherby, a 28-year-old female (DOB 02/12/1997), of Sugar Land, Texas. Method of Identification: - Fingerprint comparison conducted by the Texas Department of Public Safety Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS). - Verification confirmed on August 8, 2025, by DPS Latent Print Analyst Clara Nguyen (Certification #TX-4786). - Dental record comparison submitted by the Rutherby family dentist, Dr. Elaine Turner, DDS, of Richmond, TX.

III. Toxicology Results

Substance / Test	Result	Interpretation
Ethanol (Blood)	< 0.01 g/dL	Negative
Carbon Monoxide (COHb)	1.2 %	Within normal postmortem range
Amphetamines	None detected	—
Cocaine / Benzoylcegonine	None detected	—
Opiates / Fentanyl	None detected	—
Benzodiazepines	None detected	—
THC / Cannabinoids	None detected	—
Prescription Drug Screen	Negative for major sedative-hypnotics	
Cyanide	Not detected	—

No intoxicants, sedatives, or incapacitating substances were detected in blood, vitreous, or gastric contents. Results are consistent with a sober individual at the time of death.

IV. Additional Findings

Microscopic analysis of vegetation material recovered from the posterior scalp wound confirmed local plant species consistent with submerged reeds and algae native to 40 Acre Lake, indicating submersion at or near the site of recovery. No foreign soil or non-local particulates were identified.

V. Updated Opinion

Cause of Death: Blunt force trauma to the head, associated with drowning.

Manner of Death: Homicide.

(This classification is based on investigative findings indicating the head injury was inflicted prior to submersion and is inconsistent with accidental fall or self-inflicted trauma.)

Filed and Signed:

Ana Peña, M.D.

Chief Medical Examiner

Fort Bend County Medical Examiner's Office

Date Signed: August 11, 2025 – 1420 hrs

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Attachment D – Preliminary Anthropological Assessment

Prepared By: Dr. Jeannie Gray, Ph.D., Forensic Anthropology Consultant

Affiliation: University of Houston – Department of Anthropology

Date of Examination: August 6–8, 2025

Agency Case No.: FB-25-0803-40AL

Submitted To: Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office – Criminal Investigations Division

Examiner of Record: Investigator Daniel R. Vega (#1735)

I. Background

At the request of Investigator Daniel Vega, Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office, skeletal and decompositional remains recovered from 40 Acre Lake, Brazos Bend State Park, were examined at the Fort Bend County Medical Examiner's facility between August 6–8, 2025. The purpose of this preliminary assessment was to confirm biological identity factors (sex, estimated age, stature, and ancestry where possible) and evaluate taphonomic (postmortem) indicators for each of the five recovered individuals.

II. Methods

All remains were examined macroscopically and under magnification as needed. Measurements were collected following standards established by Buikstra & Ubelaker (1994) and Bass (2005). Comparative skeletal charts were used to record observable traits of sex, age, and ancestry. Soft tissue was noted where present but not dissected, pending full medical examiner examination. Observations below are preliminary and subject to revision upon completion of DNA, isotopic, and histological analysis.

III. Case Summaries

Remains #1 – Unidentified Female

Biological Profile: Female, 25–35 years, ~165 cm (5'5"), European-descended.

Taphonomic Notes: Evidence of blunt trauma to occipital region; moderate aquatic decomposition; minimal insect activity.

Remains #2

Biological Profile: Female, 30–40 years, ~162 cm (5'4"), African-descended.

Taphonomic Notes: Partial skeleton recovered; cortical erosion consistent with long-term aquatic submersion; slight staining from iron-rich sediment.

Remains #3

Biological Profile: Female, 18–25 years, ~160 cm (5'3"), Possibly Hispanic / Latina.

Taphonomic Notes: Partial torso with preserved connective tissue; advanced decomposition; clothing consistent with outdoor recreation wear.

Remains #4

Biological Profile: Female, 35–50 years, ~168 cm (5'6"), European-descended.

Taphonomic Notes: Nearly complete skeleton; partial articulation; advanced aquatic degradation; root staining and algae deposits.

Remains #5

Biological Profile: Female, 40–55 years, ~158 cm (5'2"), African-descended.

Taphonomic Notes: Partial remains exhibiting adipocere formation; minimal disarticulation; waterlogged soft tissue; moderate biofilm overgrowth.

IV. Interpretation

All recovered individuals are biologically female, consistent with osteological markers including pelvic morphology (wide subpubic angle, ventral arc, and sciatic notch), cranial gracility, and long bone robusticity. Varying decomposition and deposition levels strongly suggest multiple introduction events into the lake over time rather than simultaneous deposition. At least three distinct postmortem intervals are apparent based on degree of bone staining, cortical degradation, and adipocere formation. Remains #1 and #3 show evidence consistent with perimortem trauma, possibly blunt-force injury, but further analysis by the medical examiner is required for confirmation.

V. Recommendations

1. Submit all skeletal elements for comparative DNA profiling to determine potential relation among victims.
2. Conduct isotopic analysis for dietary and geographical origin profiling.
3. Compare all recovered individuals against regional missing-person databases within the last five years.
4. Perform 3D skeletal scanning and reconstruction for long-term record preservation and potential courtroom presentation.
5. Preserve adipocere-affected tissues under refrigeration for histological testing prior to further degradation.

VI. Summary

This preliminary anthropological assessment confirms the presence of five adult female individuals recovered from 40 Acre Lake, each representing a distinct deposition event. Biological profiles are complete to the extent possible from available remains. Further laboratory analyses (DNA, isotopic, and trauma-focused) are required for final identification and interpretation.

Signed:

Jeannie Gray, Ph.D.

Forensic Anthropology Consultant

University of Houston – Department of Anthropology

Date Signed: August 8, 2025 – 1710 hrs

FORT BEND CO. SHERIFF'S OFFICE – CID**Missing Persons Bulletin (2023 – 2025)**

Compiled 08/05/2025 • Case Status: Active • Distribution: Internal Use Only

Case No.	Name / Sex	Age	City	Date Last Seen	Description	Circumstances	Agency
23-06104	Angela Reed / F	29	Richmond	06/03/2023	W/F, 5'5", 135 lbs, brown hair, blue eyes. Last seen wearing a gray tank top and jeans.	Reported missing after solo day-hike at Brazos Bend SP. Vehicle located in parking lot Lot 2 unattended.	FBCSO
23-08117	Brian Castillo / M	17	Stafford	07/28/2023	H/M, 5'9", 150 lbs, black hair, brown eyes. Wearing a red hoodie, black pants.	Runaway juvenile. No foul play suspected.	Stafford PD
23-10158	Megan Truitt / F	33	Rosenberg	10/14/2023	W/F, 5'4", 128 lbs, blonde hair, hazel eyes. Last seen wearing blue pullover and khaki shorts.	Failed to return home after a weekend camping trip with friends. Friends departed early due to weather.	FBCSO
24-01156	Crystal Danvers / F	15	Missouri City	01/12/2024	W/F, 5'2", 110 lbs, brown hair, green eyes. Wearing a school uniform.	Left home voluntarily after a domestic dispute. Located safe in Dallas 02/01/24.	Missouri City PD
24-03291	Janelle Ortiz / F	22	Houston	03/23/2024	H/F, 5'3", 120 lbs, dark brown hair, brown eyes. Wearing black hoodie and gray leggings.	Last seen leaving home stating she was 'going to camp for the weekend.' Phone last pinged near FM 762 entrance to Brazos Bend SP.	HPD / FBCSO
24-05392	Ethan Parks / M	42	Needville	05/17/2024	W/M, 6'0", 190 lbs, brown hair, blue eyes. Last seen in work uniform.	Truck abandoned on Hwy 36. Believed to have left the state voluntarily.	DPS
24-09072	Tanya McAfee / F	37	Sugar Land	09/07/2024	W/F, 5'6", 142 lbs, auburn hair, blue eyes. Wearing running gear; pink visor.	Jogger; last seen near Hale Lake Trail parking area. Vehicle still at site when park	FBCSO

						closed.	
25-01227	Lily Nguyen / F	24	Houston	02/05/2025	A/F, 5'2", 118 lbs, black hair, brown eyes. Wearing business attire.	Last seen in Montrose district. Unrelated to park incidents.	HPD
25-04185	Sara Anne Rutherby / F	31	Katy	04/19/2025	W/F, 5'5", 135 lbs, brown hair, blue eyes. Last seen wearing a green t-shirt, denim shorts, hiking boots.	Planned weekend camping trip at Brazos Bend SP. Never returned; family reported missing 04/21/25.	FBCSO
25-08221	Oscar Lopez / M	48	Fulshear	07/12/2025	H/M, 5'8", 175 lbs, black hair, brown eyes. Wearing a fishing vest and hat.	Missing boater on Brazos River upstream of FM 1093. Recovered 07/13/25.	Fulshear PD

FORT BEND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE – FORENSIC LABORATORY DIVISION**Attachment E-3D – FBCSO Biological Fluids / DNA Analysis Report (RW-026)****Case No.:** FB-25-0803-40AL **Lab Case No.:** 25-BF-509**Item Examined:** RW-026 — Hatchet with red rubber handle; organic stain observed on blade edge.**Source:** Seized from Warner residence garage on 08/09/2025 by Tech M. Ramirez #2319.**Methods:**

- Presumptive blood testing (Hemastix & Luminol)
- Confirmatory human-blood test (immunochromatographic)
- DNA extraction → STR profiling → CODIS/State comparison

Results:

- Presumptive tests positive for blood.
- Species testing confirmed human origin.
- Full STR profile developed (21 loci).
- Profile did not match any reference samples from Remains #1–#5.
- No CODIS or Texas-State DNA database hits as of 08/11/2025.

Conclusion & Recommendations:

The blood on RW-026 was identified as human and produced a complete STR profile.

The STR profile does not match any of the recovered decedents (Remains #1–#5) and no matches were located in CODIS or the Texas State DNA database as of 08/11/2025.

The profile will remain on file for potential future comparison should additional victims or related evidence be identified.

Analyst of Record: Dr. Tara Collins #2215, Forensic DNA Unit**Reviewed By:** Dr. Ana Peña, Chief Forensic Examiner**Date Completed:** 08/11/2025 **Time:** 1045 hrs

FORT BEND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE – FORENSIC LABORATORY DIVISION

TRACE MATERIALS SECTION REPORT

Case No.: FB-25-0803-40AL Lab Case No.: 25-TM-408

I. Evidence Submitted

Item #	Description	Source
0064	Fragment, green nylon vegetation twine (~11 cm).	Recovered from wrist area of Remains #1 – 40 Acre Lake, Brazos Bend SP (collected 08/03/25 by CST Ly #2204).
RW-019	Spool, green nylon vegetation twine (partially used, 250 ft roll).	Seized from Warner residence workshop on 08/09/25 under search warrant SW-25-184 (logged by Inv. Vega #1735).

II. Methods

Microscopic Examination (Stereo & Polarized Light Microscopy) – visual comparison of filament structure and twist pattern.

Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR) – polymer composition analysis.

Microspectrophotometry (MSP) – dye spectral comparison (400–700 nm).

Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) – filament diameter and surface morphology.

Density Testing – float-sink in xylene solution for material consistency.

III. Results

Both specimens exhibit identical smooth multifilament construction typical of polyamide (nylon 6/6) twine. FTIR spectra for both samples produced matching absorption peaks at approximately 3300 cm^{-1} (N–H stretch) and 1640 cm^{-1} (C=O stretch).

MSP analysis revealed identical green dye absorption maxima at 442 nm and 679 nm. SEM measurements showed average filament diameter $\approx 0.33 \text{ mm} \pm 0.02 \text{ mm}$ in both samples.

Density and melting-point testing consistent within 1% variance.

No foreign residues or soil particulates detected on fragment.

IV. Interpretation

The green nylon twine fragment (Item #0064) and reference spool (Item #RW-019) are consistent in color, polymer composition, filament diameter, and dye spectra. No measurable differences were observed. The probability of two independent nylon spools exhibiting this complete combination of characteristics is considered extremely low.

V. Conclusion

The fragment recovered from Remains #1 and the spool seized from the Warner residence are consistent with having originated from the same manufacturing source and cannot be excluded as having a common origin.

Analyst of Record: Dr. Tara Collins #2215

Forensic Analysis II, Trace Materials Section

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office Forensic Laboratory

Date Completed: 08/10/2025 **Time:** 1540 hrs

Reviewed By: Dr. Ana Peña, Chief Forensic Examiner

**FORT BEND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE – CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION
PROPERTY INVENTORY – EXECUTION OF SEARCH WARRANT SW-25-184****Case No.:** FB-25-0803-40AL**Date of Execution:** 08/09/2025**Location:** 14610 Briar Creek Rd., Richmond, TX 77406**Suspect:** Sal Warner (M, DOB 07/19/1988)**Authorized By:** Hon. Judge Rachel Donovan, Fort Bend County Court at Law #2**Executing Officer:** Inv. Daniel R. Vega #1735**Assisting Officers:** Det. Marisa Collier #2128, Tech. M. Ramirez #2319**INVENTORY OF RECOVERED PROPERTY (Selected Items)**

Item No.	Description	Location Within Residence	Evidence Envelope / Tag #	Collected By
RW-019	One spool, green nylon vegetation twine (partially used, approx. 250 ft roll).	Workshop – shelving unit above tool bench	BB-0809-05	Tech. M. Ramirez #2319
RW-020	Pair work gloves with soil and fiber residue (left glove partially torn).	Workshop – on workbench beside vise	BB-0809-06	Tech. M. Ramirez #2319
RW-021	Plastic bin containing assorted nylon cords and outdoor rope segments.	Workshop – under bench	BB-0809-07	Tech. M. Ramirez #2319
RW-022	Canvas duffel bag containing camp stove, propane canisters, and cooking utensils.	Garage – rear storage shelf	BB-0809-08	Det. Marisa Collier #2128
RW-023	Map of Brazos Bend State Park with handwritten notations (“Buckeye Loop” circled).	Living room – coffee table drawer	BB-0809-09	Inv. Daniel R. Vega #1735
RW-024	Laptop computer (HP 15-inch silver).	Office – desk surface	BB-0809-10	Det. Marisa Collier #2128
RW-025	External hard drive (Seagate 2 TB black).	Office – drawer beneath desk	BB-0809-11	Det. Marisa Collier #2128
RW-026	Hatchet with red rubber handle; minor surface corrosion and organic residue on blade edge.	Garage – pegboard tool rack	BB-0809-12	Tech. M. Ramirez #2319
RW-027	Canvas pouch containing four metal tent stakes (oxidized).	Garage – duffel bag adjacent to camping gear	BB-0809-13	Det. Marisa Collier #2128

Remarks:

All recovered evidence items were photographed in place prior to collection and individually sealed in evidence bags bearing the corresponding tag numbers listed above.

All items were transferred to the FBCSO Property Section at 1420 hrs on 08/09/2025 for temporary storage pending laboratory submission. Residence cleared and secured at 1508 hrs.

Prepared By: Inv. Daniel R. Vega #1735

Approved By: Det. Marisa Collier #2128

Date Prepared: 08/09/2025

**FORT BEND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE – CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION | Generated 08/09/2025 | Page
1 of 1**

Attachment E-1 — Texas Parks & Wildlife Reservation Log

Subject: Warner, Sal (M, DOB 07/19/1988)

Driver License: TX 284-59-9037 Vehicle: 2021 Chevrolet Silverado 4x4 (Gray) – TX Plate RNL-8421

Extracted From: TPWD Reservation System – Internal Access

Prepared For: Fort Bend County Sheriff’s Office, CID

Date of Record Pull: August 10, 2025

Reservation ID	Check-In	Check-Out	Location / Campsite	Payment / Guests	Notes
TX-R21367	06/02/2023	06/04/2023	Brazos Bend SP – Red Buckeye Loop, Primitive Site #14	Visa -4420 / 1 (Self)	Solo camper; arrived late Friday; departed Sunday a.m.
TX-R24891	10/13/2023	10/15/2023	Brazos Bend SP – Red Buckeye Loop, Primitive Site #15	Visa -4420 / 1 (Self)	Weather alert issued Saturday night; no incident report.
TX-R25904	03/22/2024	03/24/2024	Brazos Bend SP – Red Buckeye Loop, Primitive Site #13	Visa -4420 / 1 (Self)	Checked in online; Ranger Velasquez confirmed site occupied.
TX-R27155	09/06/2024	09/08/2024	Brazos Bend SP – Red Buckeye Loop, Primitive Site #14	Visa -4420 / 1 (Self)	Solo camper; vehicle observed at fishing pier lot by staff.
TX-R29844	04/18/2025	04/20/2025	Brazos Bend SP – Red Buckeye Loop, Primitive Site #12	Visa -4420 / 1 (Self)	Digital check-in via TPWD app; no registered guests.

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IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF FORT BEND COUNTY, TEXAS**268th Judicial District****STATE OF TEXAS**

v.

SAL WARNER

Cause No.: F25-0803-1245

IN THE NAME AND BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

THE GRAND JURY for the County of Fort Bend, State of Texas, duly organized at the Courthouse of said County, presents that:

SAL WARNER, hereinafter styled the Defendant, on or about April 20, 2025, and before the presentment of this indictment, in Fort Bend County, Texas, did then and there intentionally and knowingly cause the death of an individual, namely SARA ANNE RUTHERBY, by striking her about the head with an unknown blunt object, rendering her incapable of resistance, and thereafter binding her wrists and depositing her into the waters of 40 Acre Lake at Brazos Bend State Park while she was still alive, thereby causing her death by drowning; and did thereby commit the offense of MURDER, in violation of Section 19.02(b)(1), Texas Penal Code.

COUNT I – MURDER

Texas Penal Code § 19.02(b)(1)

A person commits an offense if he intentionally or knowingly causes the death of an individual. Degree: First-Degree Felony

Punishment Range: Imprisonment in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for life or for any term of not more than 99 years or less than 5 years, and an optional fine not to exceed \$10,000.

COUNT II – TAMPERING WITH PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Texas Penal Code § 37.09(a)(1)

A person commits an offense if, knowing that an investigation or official proceeding is pending or in progress, he alters, destroys, or conceals any record, document, or thing with intent to impair its verity, legibility, or availability as evidence.

Degree: Third-Degree Felony

Punishment Range: Imprisonment for 2–10 years and an optional fine not to exceed \$10,000.

Particulars of Offense: SAL WARNER, with knowledge of an active law-enforcement investigation, did intentionally conceal and dispose of the body of SARA ANNE RUTHERBY in 40 Acre Lake, thereby impairing the availability of said body and associated evidence for examination.

COUNT III – ABUSE OF CORPSE

Texas Penal Code § 42.08(a)(1)

A person commits an offense if the person, without legal authority, knowingly disinters, disturbs, damages, dissects, in whole or in part, carries away, or treats in an offensive manner a human corpse.

Degree: State Jail Felony

Punishment Range: Confinement in a State Jail Facility for 180 days to 2 years and an optional fine not to exceed \$10,000.

Particulars of Offense: The Defendant, without legal authority, did knowingly bind and deposit the body of SARA ANNE RUTHERBY into a public body of water, thereby treating said corpse in an offensive manner after inflicting fatal injury.

AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Evidence collected by law enforcement indicates that the Defendant has exhibited a pattern of targeted violence toward female victims frequenting Brazos Bend State Park from 2023 through 2025. While the present indictment specifically addresses the death of SARA ANNE RUTHERBY, the Grand Jury reserves the right to issue superseding indictments pending identification of additional victims.

WITNESS LIST (State’s Preliminary Filing)

Investigator Daniel R. Vega #1735 – Lead Investigator, Fort Bend County Sheriff’s Office (CID)

Dr. Ana Peña – Chief Forensic Examiner, Fort Bend County Medical Examiner’s Office

Dr. Jeannie Gray – Forensic Anthropologist, University of Houston

Dr. Tara Collins #2215 – Forensic Chemist / DNA Analyst, FBCSO Laboratory

Ranger Luis Velasquez #1842 – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, First Responding Officer (Initial Discovery and Scene Security)

Ranger Marisa Collier #2128 – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Assisting Officer (Scene Documentation and Witness Coordination)

Tech. M. Ramirez #2319 – Evidence Technician, FBCSO Property Section

SIGNED AND PRESENTED BY THE GRAND JURY

This true bill returned on the 15th day of August, 2025, in Fort Bend County, Texas.

J. Foreperson

Grand Jury Foreperson

District Attorney

District Attorney, 268th Judicial District

INTERVIEW OF FRANKLIN DOSS

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – State Park Police Division
Brazos Bend State Park, Fort Bend County, Texas

Date/Time: August 3, 2025 — 0715 hrs (Observation Tower, Bayou Bend State Park)

Interviewing Officer: Ranger Ethan Collier, Badge No. 214

Agency: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – State Park Police Division

Q: Please state your full name and date of birth for the record.

A: Franklin Lee Doss. DOB 04/02/1962.

Q: What were you doing at the park this morning?

A: I arrived before sunrise to do birding from the observation tower. I keep binoculars and a spotting scope in my pack and I go up to the tower most mornings.

Q: At approximately what time did you first see something unusual?

A: I noticed something in the water at about 07:12 a.m. from the top level of the tower. At first I thought it might be a log, but it looked oddly symmetrical, so I pulled up my spotting scope.

Q: Describe exactly what you observed.

A: Through the scope I could see the shape of a human form floating on its back, partially entangled in lake vegetation roughly toward the center of the 40-acre lake, slightly north of the fishing pier bearing east. The clothing looked light in color – a pale shirt and jeans – and there was something dark near the head, like reeds or a fishing line. The body was about a third of the way across the lake from the tower, but estimating distance from the tower is rough – it was clearly floating and not moving under its own power.

Q: Did you see any boats, people, or activity on the lake?

A: No. There were no boats or people on the water at that time. The pier area looked quiet. I did not see anyone launching anything.

Q: What did you do next?

A: I used my cell phone to call the park dispatch right away and reported a possible body in the lake. I told them I was on the observation tower and gave them the approximate bearing and distance from the tower. I then remained at the tower to continue observing until rangers arrived so I could provide more detail if needed.

Q: Did you touch or move anything?

A: No – I did not go down to the shoreline or the pier. I stayed on the tower. I did not touch anything.

Q: Can you identify the person you saw or provide any personal identifiers?

A: No. I could not see the face well enough from the tower. I only saw clothing and approximate size – adult female, mid-late 20s, light shirt,

jeans. I would need a closer view to make a positive ID.

Q: Did you take any photos with your phone or camera?

A: Yes, I took two photos through the spotting scope with my phone at 07:14 a.m. I handed the phone to Ranger Velasquez when she arrived; she copied the images for the incident file.

Q: Is there anything else you observed that might help the investigation?

A: The wind was light from the southeast and the lake surface was calm. There was no obvious boating traffic and no other people near the pier. The body had been floating in open water and I did not detect any visible signs of struggle from my vantage point – just the entanglement in vegetation.

Q: Would you be willing to provide a written statement and testify in court if needed?

A: Yes, absolutely. I'll do whatever I can to help.

Q: Thank you. No further questions at this time.

– End of Interview –

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STATE OF TEXAS v. SAL WARNER**Cause No. F25-0803-1245**

268th Judicial District Court
Fort Bend County, Texas

TESTIMONY OF**FRANKLIN LEE DOSS**

Civilian Witness / Reporting Party

DIRECT EXAMINATION**BY THE PROSECUTOR**

Q: Please state your full name for the record.

A: Franklin Lee Doss.

Q: Mr. Doss, were you at Brazos Bend State Park on the morning of August 3, 2025?

A: Yes. I arrived before sunrise to bird-watch from the observation tower.

Q: What equipment did you bring with you?

A: Binoculars and a spotting scope.

Q: Around what time did you first notice something unusual?

A: Around 7:12 a.m. I saw something in the water that did not look like a log, so I used my spotting scope.

Q: What did you observe?

A: I saw what looked like a human body floating on its back, tangled in vegetation, near the center of the lake. The clothing looked light-colored — a pale shirt and jeans.

Q: Did you see any movement or activity around the body?

A: No. No movement at all, and no boats or people.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers **State's Exhibit 1**, a photograph taken by Mr. Doss at approximately 7:14 a.m. through his spotting scope.

DEFENSE:

Objection, foundation and authenticity.

PROSECUTOR:

Mr. Doss personally took the photograph and turned it over to law enforcement. He can authenticate it.

THE COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 1 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Mr. Doss, do you recognize Exhibit 1?

A: Yes. That is the first photo I took of the body from the observation tower.

Q: Is it a fair and accurate depiction of what you saw?

A: Yes, it is.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers **State's Exhibit 2**, the second photograph taken by Mr. Doss at approximately 7:14 a.m.

DEFENSE:

Same objection — foundation.

PROSECUTOR:

The witness took this photo moments after the first. He can verify it.

THE COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 2 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Mr. Doss, is Exhibit 2 the second photo you took?

A: Yes. It was taken through my spotting scope from the same location.

Q: And is it an accurate representation of what you saw that morning?

A: Yes, it is.

CONTINUED DIRECT EXAMINATION

Q: After observing the body, what did you do?

A: I called the Brazos Bend State Park headquarters immediately.

Q: About what time did that call take place?

A: Around 7:13 a.m.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers **State's Exhibit 3**, the transcript of the phone call Mr. Doss made to park headquarters at 7:13:22 a.m.

DEFENSE:

Objection — hearsay.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, this is the witness's own call, his own statements, and he can confirm its accuracy.

THE COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 3 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Mr. Doss, do you recognize Exhibit 3?

A: Yes. That is the transcript of the call I placed to park headquarters.

Q: Is it an accurate reflection of what you said?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you report during that call?

A: That I saw what looked like a body floating in the lake, north of the fishing pier, and gave them my name and phone number.

Q: What did you do after making the call?

A: I stayed on the tower and kept watching, just like they asked.

Q: Did you go down to the shoreline or approach the body?

A: No. I stayed on the tower the entire time.

Q: Did law enforcement arrive?

A: Yes. Rangers arrived around 7:23 a.m. Ranger Collier spoke with me and collected information.

Q: Did you willingly give your photos to the Rangers?

A: Yes. Ranger Velasquez copied the images from my phone for the report.

Q: Were you later interviewed by law enforcement?

A: Yes, that same morning.

PROSECUTOR:

No further questions, Your Honor.

CROSS-EXAMINATION**BY DEFENSE COUNSEL**

Q: Mr. Doss, you were standing on the top platform of the observation tower, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: That tower is approximately 25 feet high?

A: Yes.

Q: And the body was a significant distance away — about a third of the way across the lake?

A: Yes, that's correct.

Q: From that distance, you could not see the person's face clearly?

A: No, I could not.

Q: So you could not identify the person?

A: Correct.

Q: And you testified that the clothing “looked” light-colored. Could the lighting, sun angle, or glare have affected your perception?

A: It’s possible, yes.

Q: You also “estimated” the person appeared female. That was just your best guess, correct?

A: Yes, based on size and clothing.

Q: You did not see how the body entered the water?

A: No.

Q: You did not see anyone push, injure, or otherwise interact with the body?

A: No.

Q: You did not see any boats or persons in the area?

A: No.

Q: You cannot testify to when, how, or why that person ended up in the lake?

A: No, I cannot.

DEFENSE COUNSEL: No further questions.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION

BY THE PROSECUTOR

Q: Mr. Doss, when you saw the body, did you immediately report it?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you cooperate fully with Rangers and investigators?

A: Yes, absolutely.

Q: At any time did you disturb or approach the body?

A: No.

PROSECUTOR:

Nothing further.

THE COURT:

Mr. Doss, you may step down.

End of Testimony of Franklin Lee Doss

STATE OF TEXAS v. SAL WARNER**Cause No. F25-0803-1245**

In the 268th Judicial District Court
Fort Bend County, Texas

TESTIMONY OF**RANGER ETHAN COLLIER (#214)**

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department — State Park Police Division

DIRECT EXAMINATION**BY THE PROSECUTOR**

Q: Please state your name and occupation for the record.

A: My name is Ranger Ethan Collier. I am a State Park Police Officer with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department assigned to Brazos Bend State Park.

Q: Were you on duty on the morning of August 3, 2025?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: How did you first become aware of the incident at 40 Acre Lake?

A: At approximately 7:14 a.m., dispatch notified Ranger Velasquez and me that a park visitor had reported a possible body floating in the lake.

Q: What did you do in response?

A: We departed park headquarters at approximately 7:15 a.m. and drove to the 40 Acre Lake observation tower area.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers **State's Exhibit 40**, the Time Log of Arrival and Coordination Calls created and signed by Ranger Collier on August 3, 2025.

DEFENSE:

Objection — hearsay.

PROSECUTOR:

Ranger Collier authored this log in the ordinary course of his duties. He can authenticate it.

COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 40 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Ranger, do you recognize Exhibit 40?

A: Yes. That's my time log for August 3rd, documenting our call-out, arrival, and actions.

Q: Is it accurate?

A: Yes, it is.

CONTINUED DIRECT EXAMINATION

Q: What time did you arrive at the observation tower area?

A: At approximately 7:23 a.m., as documented in my time log.

Q: What did you do upon arrival?

A: I made contact with the reporting party, Mr. Franklin Doss, who was still on the observation tower.

Q: What information did Mr. Doss provide?

A: He stated he had been observing the lake through his spotting scope and saw what appeared to be a human body floating near the center of the lake, north of the fishing pier.

Q: Did you verify his observation?

A: Yes. From the top of the observation tower, at about 7:25 a.m., I visually confirmed a human body floating face-up in the lake about 30 yards from the pier.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers **State's Exhibit 41**, the Observation Tower Notes authored by Ranger Collier and documenting his visual confirmation from the tower.

DEFENSE:

Objection — hearsay and improper foundation.

PROSECUTOR:

The notes were written by Ranger Collier during the call-for-service and document his firsthand observations.

COURT:

Objection overruled. Exhibit 41 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Ranger, do you recognize Exhibit 41?

A: Yes. These are my handwritten tower notes taken at 7:25 a.m. that morning.

Q: Are they accurate?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you do after confirming the presence of the body?

A: I radioed Ranger Velasquez at the pier and directed her to deploy the flat-bottom maintenance boat to approach the body.

Q: Did you maintain visual contact?

A: Yes, until I relocated to the fishing pier to assist with scene security during the water approach.

Q: What occurred after Ranger Velasquez reached the body?

A: At approximately 7:45 a.m., she confirmed the individual was deceased. I then radioed Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office dispatch and requested an investigative response.

Q: Did additional personnel arrive?

A: Yes. At approximately 8:12 a.m., Deputies Morales and Rhodes, along with Investigator Vega, arrived on scene.

Q: What was your role once they arrived?

A: I briefed Investigator Vega, maintained scene control at the pier, and assisted with securing access points around the lake area.

Q: Did you collect any evidence?

A: No. All evidence collection on the water was handled by Ranger Velasquez under Investigator Vega's direction.

PROSECUTOR:

No further questions, Your Honor.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

BY DEFENSE COUNSEL

Q: Ranger Collier, you only saw the body from the top of a 25-foot observation tower, correct?

A: Yes, that's correct.

Q: You could not see the victim's face clearly?

A: No, not clearly.

Q: You could not determine the cause of death from your vantage point?

A: Correct.

Q: And you cannot say how long the body had been in the water?

A: No.

Q: Mr. Doss reported seeing no other people or boats on the lake — and you also saw none, correct?

A: Correct.

Q: You did not observe anyone placing the body in the water?

A: No.

Q: And you did not observe the defendant, Mr. Sal Warner, at the park on August 3rd?

A: No, I did not.

Q: The only thing you personally confirmed that day was that a body was present in the lake?

A: That is correct.

DEFENSE COUNSEL: No further questions.

BY THE PROSECUTOR

Q: Ranger, did you follow proper procedure in responding to this call?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: And did you coordinate appropriately with Ranger Velasquez and the Sheriff's Office?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you accurately record times and actions as required by your duties?

A: I did.

PROSECUTOR: Nothing further.

COURT: Ranger Collier, you may step down.

End of Testimony of Ranger Ethan Collier

STATE OF TEXAS v. SAL WARNER

Cause No. F25-0803-1245

District Court of Fort Bend County, Texas

268th Judicial District

TESTIMONY OF

RANGER MARISA VELASQUEZ

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department – State Park Police Division

DIRECT EXAMINATION

BY THE PROSECUTOR

Q: Please state your name and occupation for the record.

A: My name is Ranger Marisa Velasquez. I am a State Park Police Officer with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department assigned to Brazos Bend State Park.

Q: Were you on duty on the morning of August 3, 2025?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: How did you first become involved in the incident at 40 Acre Lake?

A: At about 7:14 a.m., I was notified through Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office Communications that a visitor had reported a possible body floating in the lake.

Q: What happened after you received that notification?

A: Ranger Collier and I left park headquarters at approximately 7:15 a.m. and responded to the observation tower area.

Q: When did you arrive on scene?

A: Around 7:23 a.m.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers State's Exhibit 20, the Supplemental Incident Report prepared and signed by Ranger Velasquez on August 3, 2025.

DEFENSE:

Objection, hearsay and lack of foundation.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, Ranger Velasquez is the author of the report, it was made in the regular course of her duties, and she is here to authenticate it.

THE COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 20 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Ranger, do you recognize Exhibit 20?

A: Yes. That is my report from August 3rd.

Q: And is it accurate?

A: Yes, it is.

CONTINUED DIRECT EXAMINATION

Q: After arriving near the observation tower, what did you do?

A: Ranger Collier contacted the reporting party while I proceeded to the fishing pier to prepare for water access.

Q: Did you deploy a boat?

A: Yes. At approximately 7:28 a.m. I launched the park's flat-bottom aluminum maintenance boat.

Q: What did you observe once on the water?

A: Around 7:35 a.m., guided by radio from Ranger Collier, I located a human body floating face-up, tangled in vegetation, about 32 yards from the pier.

Q: What was the condition of the body?

A: The individual appeared deceased. I saw pale skin, early bloating, and clothing consisting of a light-colored shirt and denim pants.

Q: Did you disturb the body?

A: Only to prevent the body from drifting. I used a boat hook to stabilize it without disturbing vegetation.

Q: What did you do next?

A: I radioed Collier to notify the Sheriff's Office and request an investigator.

Q: Did law enforcement arrive?

A: Yes. At about 8:12 a.m., Deputies Morales and Rhodes and Investigator Daniel Vega arrived at the pier.

Q: Did you assist Investigator Vega?

A: Yes, I guided him to the location and assisted with documentation and recovery procedures.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers State's Exhibit 21, the Evidence Collection Log completed by Ranger Velasquez.

DEFENSE:

Objection, hearsay.

PROSECUTOR:

Ranger Velasquez personally collected and logged the items. She can testify to the chain of custody.

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 21 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Ranger, do you recognize Exhibit 21?

A: Yes. It is my evidence collection log for August 3rd.

Q: And is it accurate?

A: Yes, it is.

CONTINUED DIRECT EXAMINATION

Q: What items did you collect during the recovery operation?

A: I collected three items:

- A section of light-green nylon vegetation twine
- A single silver stud earring
- A lake water swab from the recovery area

Q: Where was the twine located?

A: In vegetation near the decedent's right wrist, mid-lake.

Q: What time did you collect it?

A: 8:41 a.m.

PROSECUTOR:

The State offers State's Exhibit 22, the light-green nylon vegetation twine collected by Ranger Velasquez.

DEFENSE:

Objection, lack of proper chain of custody.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, Exhibit 22 was collected by this witness, bagged, labeled, and transferred directly to Investigator Vega at 8:52 a.m. Her log documents it.

THE COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 22 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Ranger, is Exhibit 22 the same twine you collected?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: What was the second item you collected?

A: A silver stud earring recovered about one foot west of the body.

Q: What time was it collected?

A: 8:47 a.m.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers State's Exhibit 23, the silver stud earring collected by Ranger Velasquez.

DEFENSE:

Objection, relevance.

PROSECUTOR:

The item was recovered adjacent to the body and may assist in identification or corroborating scene conditions.

THE COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 23 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Ranger, is this the earring you collected?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: And the third item?

A: A water swab sample collected under Investigator Vega's direction.

Q: What time did you collect it?

A: 8:50 a.m.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers State's Exhibit 24, the lake water swab collected at the recovery site.

DEFENSE:

Objection, improper predicate.

PROSECUTOR:

The witness personally collected, labeled, and transferred the swab to Dr. Peña at 8:55 a.m. The chain of custody is intact.

THE COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 24 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Ranger, is Exhibit 24 the sample you collected?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: After recovery, what happened to the body?

A: It was transferred by the Medical Examiner's Office at about 9:08 a.m.

Q: Did you complete your reports later that day?

A: Yes.

No further questions, Your Honor.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

BY DEFENSE COUNSEL

Q: Ranger Velasquez, you did not personally observe the body enter the water, correct?

A: Correct.

Q: You did not see a struggle or any person in the vicinity?

A: No, I did not.

Q: The items you collected, such as the earring and the twine — you cannot say how long they had been in the lake?

A: No, I cannot.

Q: And you cannot say whether they drifted due to water movement?

A: I can only testify to where I found them.

Q: Your focus was recovery, not determining the cause of death?

A: Correct.

Q: And you made no conclusions about who placed the body in the lake?

A: No, that is not my role.

DEFENSE COUNSEL: No further questions.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION

BY THE PROSECUTOR

Q: Ranger, did you follow proper evidence procedures when collecting these items?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: And did you document each item and transfer under chain of custody?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you disturb the scene beyond what was required to safely recover the decedent?

A: No.

PROSECUTOR:

Nothing further.

THE COURT:

The witness may step down.

End of Testimony of Ranger Marisa Velasquez

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STATE OF TEXAS v. SAL WARNER**Cause No. F25-0803-1245**

In the 268th Judicial District Court
Fort Bend County, Texas

TESTIMONY OF**INVESTIGATOR DANIEL R. VEGA (#1735)**

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office – Criminal Investigations Division

DIRECT EXAMINATION**BY THE PROSECUTOR**

Q: Please state your name and occupation for the record.

A: My name is Investigator Daniel R. Vega. I am an investigator with the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office, Criminal Investigations Division.

Q: Were you assigned as the lead investigator in case number FB-25-0803-40AL?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: How did you first become involved in this case?

A: On August 3, 2025, I was notified that a deceased female had been located in 40 Acre Lake at Brazos Bend State Park. I arrived on scene at approximately 8:12 a.m.

Q: What did you observe when you arrived?

A: Ranger Velasquez transported me from the pier to the location on the water. I observed a deceased adult female floating face-up, entangled in aquatic vegetation. She was wearing a light-colored shirt and denim pants, and showed evidence of bloating consistent with prolonged submersion.

Q: Did you supervise the recovery?

A: Yes. I directed the flotation-harness recovery, assisted with scene documentation, and stayed with the remains until the Medical Examiner arrived at approximately 8:30 a.m. The body was transferred at around 9:08 a.m.

Q: Investigator Vega, after the initial recovery of the decedent on August 3rd, what led you to order an expanded search of the crime scene area?

A: Several factors contributed to that decision. First, the condition of the remains indicated the deceased had been in the water for an extended period of time, suggesting that additional evidence or remains could be present in or around the lake. Second, a section of green nylon twine was located near the decedent's right wrist. That type of material is not naturally found in the lake environment and raised concern for possible restraint or foul play. Third, the missing-persons report indicated the victim had last been seen at the park months earlier. Taken together, these factors made it necessary to conduct a full secondary search of the surrounding area.

Q: Was that consistent with standard investigative procedure?

A: Yes. When a body is located outdoors, especially in water, and there are indications of potential foul play or long-term deposition, protocol requires a broader search. That's why we brought in the TPWD Marine Unit, the Dive Team, and forensic anthropologist Dr. Jeannie Gray.

Q: Did that expanded search lead to additional discoveries?

A: Yes. Over August 4th and 5th, the search resulted in the recovery of four additional sets of human remains from separate locations around 40 Acre Lake. All were documented, mapped, and transferred to the Medical Examiner's Office.

CONTINUED DIRECT EXAMINATION

Q: After the decedent was later identified as Sara Anne Rutherby, what steps did you take?

A: I reviewed her missing-persons file. It indicated she had gone camping at Brazos Bend State Park the weekend of April 18–21, 2025 and never returned. Based on that, I requested all park visitor logs, reservation records, vehicle entries, and day-use check-ins for that date range.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers **State's Exhibit 29**, the Brazos Bend Park Visitor Log Summary for April 18–21, 2025, received and reviewed by Investigator Vega.

DEFENSE:

Objection — foundation and accuracy.

PROSECUTOR:

He personally requested and reviewed these records. He can authenticate them.

COURT:

Objection overruled. Exhibit 29 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Investigator, do you recognize Exhibit 29?

A: Yes. This is the visitor-log summary provided to me by park headquarters.

Q: And you reviewed it as part of your investigation?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you find significant in those records?

A: One entry stood out: Sal Warner. He was the only solo visitor present during the relevant dates, April 18–20, 2025. He camped in the Red Buckeye Loop, which is close to several trailheads. He also had multiple solo reservations at the park over the last two years.

Q: What did you do next?

A: I conducted a background check and drafted an affidavit for a search warrant on Mr. Warner's residence.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers **State's Exhibit 31**, the Search Warrant Property Inventory from the execution of Search Warrant SW-25-184 at the residence of Sal Warner on August 9, 2025.

DEFENSE:

Objection — relevance.

PROSECUTOR:

The inventory documents evidence seized that is directly connected to forensic submissions in this case.

COURT:

Objection overruled. Exhibit 31 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Investigator, is Exhibit 31 the inventory you prepared?

A: Yes.

Q: What items relevant to this case were seized?

A: A partially used spool of green nylon vegetation twine, rope segments, outdoor gear, and a park map with handwritten markings concentrated around the Buckeye Loop. The twine appeared visually similar to the twine recovered near the decedent.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, State's Exhibit 20 remains admitted.

COURT:

It remains in evidence.

PROSECUTOR:

The State offers **State's Exhibit 32**, the scene-mapping file created under Investigator Vega's supervision documenting recovery sites.

DEFENSE:

Objection — foundation.

PROSECUTOR:

The Crime Scene Unit created it as part of Vega's investigation. He maintained the file.

COURT:

Objection overruled. Exhibit 32 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers **State's Exhibit 33**, the chain-of-custody summary derived from Investigator Vega's original evidence entries.

DEFENSE:

Objection — cumulative hearsay.

COURT:

Overruled. Exhibit 33 is admitted.

CONTINUED DIRECT EXAMINATION

Q: Based on all the evidence you collected and reviewed, what conclusion did you reach at that point in your investigation?

A: That Sal Warner was present in the park at the time of the victim's disappearance, had a pattern of repeated solo visits, and possessed materials consistent with those found on the decedent, which made him the primary suspect.

PROSECUTOR:

No further questions.

CROSS-EXAMINATION**BY DEFENSE COUNSEL**

Q: Investigator Vega, the park logs only show that the defendant was in the park, correct?

A: Correct.

Q: They do not show he ever met the victim?

A: No.

Q: They do not place him at 40 Acre Lake?

A: No.

Q: You cannot personally confirm that the twine recovered from the decedent came from the spool seized at Mr. Warner's home?

A: That determination comes from forensic analysis, not from me.

Q: You did not witness Mr. Warner commit any crime?

A: No, I did not.

Q: You relied on the park logs to identify him?

A: Yes, that was part of the investigative process.

Q: And you agree that many people use maps, right?

A: Yes.

DEFENSE COUNSEL: No further questions.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION**BY THE PROSECUTOR**

Q: Investigator, were your investigative steps — requesting park records, expanding the search, executing a warrant, and submitting evidence — all in accordance with standard procedure?

A: Yes, absolutely.

Q: And did the results of the expanded search and search warrant support the direction of your investigation?

A: Yes, they did.

PROSECUTOR:

Nothing further.

COURT:

You may step down.

End of Testimony of Investigator Daniel R. Vega

STATE OF TEXAS v. SAL WARNER

Cause No. F25-0803-1245

District Court of Fort Bend County, Texas

268th Judicial District

TESTIMONY OF

DR. ANA PEÑA

Chief Medical Examiner, Fort Bend County

DIRECT EXAMINATION

BY THE PROSECUTOR

Q: Please state your name and occupation for the record.

A: My name is Dr. Ana Peña. I am the Chief Medical Examiner for Fort Bend County.

Q: Were you involved in the investigation concerning the deceased individual recovered from 40 Acre Lake on August 3, 2025?

A: Yes. I responded to the scene that morning and later conducted the autopsy on August 4, 2025.

Q: What time did you arrive at the lake on August 3rd?

A: I arrived at approximately 8:30 a.m. and officially pronounced death at about 8:34 a.m.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers State's Exhibit 10, the Autopsy and Medical Examiner's Report dated August 4, 2025, prepared and signed by Dr. Peña.

DEFENSE:

Objection, hearsay and lack of foundation.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, this report was prepared by Dr. Peña in the course of her official duties, and she is available for cross-examination.

THE COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 10 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Dr. Peña, do you recognize Exhibit 10?

A: Yes. This is my autopsy report for this case.

PROSECUTOR:

Does it accurately reflect your findings during the autopsy?

A: Yes, it does.

Q: Please describe the general physical characteristics of the decedent.

A: The decedent was an adult female, approximately 25 to 35 years old, about 165 centimeters tall and weighing around 58 kilograms. She was clothed in a light-colored long-sleeve shirt and denim pants.

Q: What postmortem changes did you observe?

A: Early bloating, greenish marbling, absence of rigor mortis consistent with aquatic decomposition, and skin slippage along the forearms and calves.

Q: Did the body exhibit external injuries?

A: Yes. A depressed laceration to the posterior scalp with underlying bone defect, a small abrasion on the left wrist, and faint contusions on the right upper arm.

Q: Please summarize the internal head findings.

A: A linear fracture of the right occipital bone and hemorrhage in multiple layers beneath the scalp and within the cranial cavity.

Q: What did you observe in the lungs?

A: Pulmonary edema, frothy fluid upon sectioning, and water with vegetative debris in the distal bronchi — consistent with drowning.

PROSECUTOR:

The State offers State's Exhibit 11, the Supplemental Medical Examiner's Report dated August 11, 2025, which includes identification confirmation and toxicology interpretations.

DEFENSE:

Objection, cumulative and hearsay.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, this report is authored and signed by Dr. Peña. It updates and completes the cause and manner of death evaluation.

THE COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 11 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Dr. Peña, do you recognize Exhibit 11?

A: Yes. This is my supplemental report.

Q: Does Exhibit 11 accurately reflect your findings?

A: Yes, it does.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State also offers State's Exhibit 12, the complete toxicology results referenced in Exhibit 11.

Objection, improper foundation.

PROSECUTOR:

Dr. Peña collected the specimens, submitted them for analysis, reviewed the results, and incorporated them into her supplemental findings.

THE COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 12 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Dr. Peña, are these the toxicology results you reviewed and relied upon?

A: Yes, they are.

Q: And what were the findings?

A: All screens were negative. No alcohol, controlled substances, sedatives, or incapacitating agents were detected.

Q: Was the decedent later identified?

A: Yes. She was identified as Sara Anne Rutherby through fingerprint comparison verified on August 8, 2025, and confirmed with dental records.

Q: Based on all of your findings, what was the cause of death?

A: Blunt force trauma to the head associated with drowning.

Q: And the manner of death?

A: After reviewing investigative information, I classified the manner of death as homicide.

PROSECUTOR:

No further questions, Your Honor.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

BY DEFENSE COUNSEL

Q: Dr. Peña, the scalp wound — can you state with certainty what object caused it?

A: No, I cannot identify the precise object.

Q: And you didn't witness the injury occur?

A: Correct.

Q: You testified that drowning occurred. Do you agree drowning can occur in many situations?

A: Yes.

Q: You cannot provide the exact sequence of events — blow versus submersion — correct?

A: I can only state the head injury occurred prior to death. The precise sequence is not medically determinable.

TPSA

2026 Regional Conference Scenario V2

Q: Your postmortem interval estimate was three to six months. That is a broad range?

A: It is an estimate based on the state of aquatic decomposition.

Q: And that range can shift depending on environmental factors?

A: Yes.

Q: You cannot identify who placed the decedent in the lake?

A: Correct.

Q: And you did not determine how she entered the water?

A: Correct.

DEFENSE COUNSEL:

No further questions.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION

BY THE PROSECUTOR

Q: Dr. Peña, the presence of water and vegetation in the lungs — does that indicate the decedent was alive when submerged?

A: Yes, it does.

Q: And the head injury — was it consistent with perimortem blunt force trauma?

A: Yes.

Q: Combined, do these findings support a classification of homicide?

A: Yes, they do.

PROSECUTOR:

Nothing further.

THE COURT:

The witness may step down.

End of Testimony of Dr. Ana Peña

STATE OF TEXAS v. SAL WARNER**

Cause No. F25-0803-1245
268th Judicial District Court
Fort Bend County, Texas

TESTIMONY OF**DR. JEANNIE GRAY**

Forensic Anthropologist — Consultant, Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office

DIRECT EXAMINATION**BY THE PROSECUTOR**

Q: Please state your name and occupation for the record.

A: My name is Dr. Jeannie Gray. I am a forensic anthropologist and serve as a consultant for the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office.

Q: Were you asked to assist in the investigation at 40 Acre Lake at Brazos Bend State Park in August of 2025?

A: Yes. I was contacted by Investigator Vega to assist with the recovery and assessment of skeletal remains discovered during the extended search on August 4th and August 5th.

Q: What was your role in that process?

A: My role was to assist the investigative team in locating, documenting, and recovering skeletal remains found around the lake perimeter and within shallow water areas, and then to conduct an anthropological assessment of the remains.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, the State offers **State's Exhibit 50**, the Anthropological Assessment prepared and signed by Dr. Gray.

DEFENSE:

Objection — hearsay.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, Dr. Gray is the author of this report, she personally examined the remains, and she is available for cross-examination.

COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 50 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Dr. Gray, do you recognize Exhibit 50?

A: Yes. This is the anthropological assessment I completed for this case.

Q: And is it accurate and complete?

A: Yes, it is.

CONTINUED DIRECT EXAMINATION

Q: Dr. Gray, can you describe how many sets of remains you examined?

A: I examined four sets of human remains recovered during the extended search.

Q: Were these remains recovered from a single location or multiple areas?

A: They were recovered from multiple locations around 40 Acre Lake — along shorelines, shallow water zones, and vegetated areas.

Q: Did the condition of the remains indicate a similar pattern of environmental exposure?

A: Yes. All four sets of remains showed characteristics consistent with prolonged deposition in a warm, humid, aquatic environment.

Q: Did you observe any evidence of scavenging or animal predation?

A: No. There were no signs of animal predation on any of the remains I examined.

Q: Were you able to determine anything about the biological profile of these individuals?

A: Yes. The remains belonged to adult individuals. The degrees of skeletal completeness, weathering, and aquatic exposure were consistent with extended time in the environment.

Q: Did your assessment reveal any clear evidence of trauma?

A: I observed no conclusive perimortem trauma on the skeletal elements recovered. However, in aquatic environments, soft-tissue trauma may not be preserved, and certain bone trauma may not be recoverable depending on which elements were present.

Q: Based on your findings, were all remains human?

A: Yes. All remains recovered during the extended search were confirmed human.

Q: Did you document the recovery locations as part of your work?

A: Yes. Each recovery site was photographed, mapped, and documented in coordination with the Crime Scene Unit and Investigator Vega.

PROSECUTOR:

No further questions, Your Honor.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

BY DEFENSE COUNSEL

Q: Dr. Gray, you stated that the remains were consistent with prolonged exposure in a lake environment. You cannot determine precisely how long they had been there, correct?

A: Correct. I can estimate a general range based on taphonomy, but not an exact date.

Q: You also said you observed no conclusive perimortem trauma. So you cannot say these individuals were murdered, correct?

A: I cannot determine the cause or manner of death from the skeletal elements recovered.

Q: And you cannot identify any of these individuals?

A: No, not from the skeletal elements alone. Identification would require DNA or other forensic comparison.

Q: You cannot link these four sets of remains to my client?

A: I make no conclusions regarding suspects. My role is limited to the anthropological examination.

Q: And you cannot say whether these remains have any connection to the victim found on August 3rd?

A: I cannot make that determination. My assessment is limited to the condition of the skeletal remains.

DEFENSE COUNSEL: No further questions.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION

BY THE PROSECUTOR

Q: Dr. Gray, although you cannot determine the manner of death, were your findings consistent with remains being deposited in the same general environment over time?

A: Yes. The taphonomic patterns were consistent across the sets of remains.

Q: And was your documentation of the remains conducted in accordance with accepted forensic-anthropology procedures?

A: Yes, it was.

PROSECUTOR: Nothing further.

COURT:

Dr. Gray, you may step down.

End of Testimony of Dr. Jeannie Gray

STATE OF TEXAS v. SAL WARNER

Cause No. F25-0803-1245
268th Judicial District Court
Fort Bend County, Texas

TESTIMONY OF**DR. TARA COLLINS**

Forensic Scientist – DNA / Biological Fluids Unit
Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office Crime Laboratory

DIRECT EXAMINATION**BY THE PROSECUTOR**

Q: Please state your name and occupation for the record.

A: My name is Dr. Tara Collins. I am a forensic scientist with the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office Crime Laboratory assigned to the DNA and biological fluids section.

Q: Did you analyze any evidence associated with case FB-25-0803-40AL?

A: Yes. I analyzed Item RW026, which was submitted to the laboratory as part of this case.

Q: What was Item RW026?

A: RW026 was a hatchet submitted to our laboratory for DNA and biological fluids testing.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, at this time the State offers **State's Exhibit 60**, the Biological Fluids and DNA Analysis Report for Item RW026, authored and signed by Dr. Tara Collins.

DEFENSE:

Objection, hearsay.

PROSECUTOR:

Your Honor, Dr. Collins is the author of the report, performed the analysis herself, and is available for cross-examination.

COURT:

Objection overruled. State's Exhibit 60 is admitted.

PROSECUTOR:

Dr. Collins, do you recognize Exhibit 60?

A: Yes. This is my DNA and biological fluids analysis report for Item RW026.

Q: Is it a true and accurate copy?

A: Yes, it is.

CONTINUED DIRECT EXAMINATION

Q: What testing did you perform on the hatchet?

A: I first conducted a visual and chemical examination for the presence of biological material. A stain on the hatchet tested positive for blood. I then extracted DNA from that stain and generated a DNA profile.

Q: Were you provided a known DNA standard for comparison?

A: Yes. I received a known reference DNA sample for Sara Anne Rutherby.

Q: Did you compare the DNA profile from the hatchet to the known profile?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What was the result?

A: The DNA profile obtained from the bloodstain on Item RW026 did not match the DNA profile of Sara Anne Rutherby.

Q: Did you detect any additional contributors?

A: No. The profile obtained from the biological stain was a single-source DNA profile consistent with one individual. No foreign DNA contributors were detected.

Q: Are your conclusions stated within Exhibit 60?

A: Yes. The report contains the testing performed, the results, and my conclusions.

Q: And were those conclusions reached in accordance with accepted forensic laboratory practices?

A: Yes, they were.

PROSECUTOR:

No further questions.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

BY DEFENSE COUNSEL

Q: Dr. Collins, you cannot say when the blood was deposited on the hatchet, correct?

A: Correct. DNA testing cannot determine the time at which biological material was deposited.

Q: You also cannot say how the blood got there?

A: That is correct. I can only tell you whose DNA profile was present.

Q: And you cannot say who handled the item before it reached your lab?

A: I cannot speak to any handling prior to its submission to the laboratory. I can only confirm the condition of the item once it was received as reflected in the report.

Q: Your analysis does not prove that my client ever touched the hatchet, right?

A: My analysis only identifies the DNA present on the biological stain. It does not identify who handled the object.

Q: You cannot determine whether the hatchet was used as a weapon?

A: DNA testing alone cannot determine whether an item was used as a weapon.

Q: You detected no DNA belonging to the defendant, correct?

A: I detected no additional DNA contributors beyond the single-source profile that matched the victim.

DEFENSE COUNSEL: No further questions.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION

BY THE PROSECUTOR

Q: Dr. Collins, although DNA testing cannot tell us when the blood was deposited or how it got there, does it reliably tell us whose blood it is?

A: Yes. A DNA profile can tell you whose blood it is, however, in this case there was no match to the reference sample for Sara Anne Rutherby.

Q: And was all testing performed according to the laboratory's approved protocols?

A: Yes, it was.

PROSECUTOR: Nothing further.

COURT: Dr. Collins, you may step down.

End of Testimony of Dr. Tara Collins

STATE OF TEXAS v. SAL WARNER**Cause No. F25-0803-1245**

268th Judicial District Court

Fort Bend County, Texas

TESTIMONY OF**LISA BOYD**

Park Headquarters Dispatcher

Brazos Bend State Park

(Called by the Defense)**DIRECT EXAMINATION****BY DEFENSE COUNSEL**

Q: Please state your name and occupation for the record.

A: My name is Lisa Boyd. I am a dispatcher at Brazos Bend State Park Headquarters.

Q: Were you on duty on the morning of August 3, 2025?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: At approximately 7:13 a.m., did you receive a phone call from a park visitor named Franklin Doss?

A: Yes. He reported that he believed there was a body floating in 40 Acre Lake.

Q: Did you later have the opportunity to review the transcript of that call?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: And is that transcript an accurate reflection of the call you answered?

A: Yes, it is.

DEFENSE COUNSEL:Your Honor, the witness is referring to **State's Exhibit 3**, which has already been admitted.**COURT:**

Very well. Proceed.

CONTINUED DIRECT EXAMINATION

Q: During that call, did Mr. Doss report seeing anyone else near the body?

A: No. He said he didn't see anyone else on or near the lake.

Q: Did he report seeing any suspicious persons?

A: No, he did not.

Q: Did he mention seeing my client, Mr. Sal Warner?

A: No, he did not mention anyone by name.

Q: At the time of the call, did you have any information indicating that a crime had been committed?

A: No. At that point it could have been an accidental drowning.

Q: What action did you take after receiving the call?

A: I immediately notified Rangers Velasquez and Collier, who were on duty and closest to the 40 Acre Lake area.

Q: When you contacted the Rangers, did you identify any suspect?

A: No. There was no suspect information at that time.

Q: Did you take any steps to close the park or secure the area?

A: No. The report wasn't treated as a crime until the Rangers confirmed what they found.

Q: Are there security cameras covering 40 Acre Lake?

A: No, there are no cameras in that area.

Q: Are there cameras covering the trails or the primitive camping loops?

A: No, those areas are not monitored by cameras either.

Q: Would you agree that many visitors come and go each morning without reporting to you directly?

A: Yes. People can enter for hiking, bird-watching, or fishing anytime after opening.

Q: So on the morning of August 3rd, anyone could have been in the lake area without you knowing their names?

A: Yes, that's correct.

Q: At any point that morning, did you relay information identifying Mr. Warner as a suspect?

A: No, I didn't know who he was at that time.

DEFENSE COUNSEL:

No further questions.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

BY THE PROSECUTOR

Q: Ms. Boyd, when Mr. Doss reported that he believed he saw a body, you took that seriously, correct?

A: Yes, absolutely.

Q: And you promptly dispatched Rangers Velasquez and Collier?

A: Yes.

Q: That response was appropriate and timely?

A: Yes.

Q: You didn't go to the scene yourself?

A: No.

Q: So you cannot testify about what Rangers or investigators found once they arrived?

A: Correct.

PROSECUTOR: No further questions.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION

BY DEFENSE COUNSEL

Q: Ms. Boyd, just to clarify — at the time of that call, there was *no information* suggesting my client was involved in anything?

A: That's correct.

Q: And the park was open and accessible to anyone that morning?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: And no security cameras exist that could confirm who was near the lake that morning?

A: No, there are no cameras in that area.

DEFENSE COUNSEL: Nothing further.

COURT:

Thank you, Ms. Boyd. You may step down.

End of Testimony of Dispatcher Lisa Boyd

STATE OF TEXAS v. SAL WARNER**Cause No. F25-0803-1245**

268th Judicial District Court
Fort Bend County, Texas

TESTIMONY OF**REVEREND MATTHEW KELLER**

Senior Pastor, Trinity Woods Community Church
(Character Witness for the Defense)

DIRECT EXAMINATION**BY DEFENSE COUNSEL**

Q: Please state your name and occupation for the record.

A: My name is Reverend Matthew Keller. I am the senior pastor at Trinity Woods Community Church here in Fort Bend County.

Q: How long have you known the defendant, Mr. Sal Warner?

A: I've known Sal for a little over twelve years. He began attending our church when he was in his twenties.

Q: How would you describe your relationship with him?

A: I have served as his pastor and spiritual mentor. We meet regularly—sometimes formally, sometimes informally—to talk about life, faith, and personal growth.

Q: Have you had opportunities to observe his character during that time?

A: Yes, many. Sal has been consistently respectful, thoughtful, and gentle in all my interactions with him.

Q: Are you aware that Mr. Warner frequently spends time outdoors hiking and camping alone?

A: Yes. Sal often spoke with me about his outdoor retreats. He considered nature a place for meditation, reflection, and reconnecting with his faith. He described it as his personal way of becoming centered and spiritually grounded.

Q: Did you ever have concerns about those solitary outdoor trips?

A: No. In fact, I encouraged them. They were peaceful, introspective activities. He would come back from those trips calmer, more collected, and more spiritually focused.

Q: Have you ever known Mr. Warner to be violent or aggressive toward anyone?

A: Absolutely not. I have never seen him raise his voice, lose his temper, or act out physically in any situation. That is not his nature.

Q: Has he ever expressed harmful thoughts toward others?

A: No. In all my years counseling him, I never heard anything of that sort.

Q: Based on your long-term relationship with him, how would you describe his overall character?

A: Sal is a quiet, gentle individual. He is introspective, respectful, and compassionate. He has always struck me as someone who values peace and solitude, not harm or conflict.

DEFENSE COUNSEL:

No further questions.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

BY THE PROSECUTOR

Q: Reverend, you care about Mr. Warner, correct?

A: I care about all of my congregants, yes.

Q: And your knowledge of him is based on how he behaves in church settings, right?

A: Primarily, yes.

Q: You weren't with him during any of the events the State alleges occurred?

A: No, I was not.

Q: You don't know anything about his personal habits outside what he chose to tell you?

A: Only what he shared with me, yes.

Q: And you wouldn't necessarily know if he had engaged in conduct inconsistent with your teachings, correct?

A: No, not unless he brought it to me.

Q: You cannot testify about what happened at 40 Acre Lake?

A: No, I cannot.

Q: You weren't with him in April when the victim disappeared, correct?

A: Correct.

PROSECUTOR: No further questions.

REDIRECT EXAMINATION

BY DEFENSE COUNSEL

Q: Reverend Keller, your testimony today—does it reflect your honest and personal experience with Mr. Warner over more than a decade?

A: Yes, it does.

Q: And based on that experience, have you ever known him to be an individual capable of violence?

A: No. That would be entirely inconsistent with the person I know.

DEFENSE COUNSEL: Nothing further.

COURT:

Thank you, Reverend Keller. You may step down.

End of Testimony of Reverend Matthew Keller

Dr. Jeannie M. Gray Ph.D., D-ABFA**Office:** Forensic Sciences Building, Houston, TX**Phone:** (281) 555-0194**Email:** jgray.forensics@fsconsult.org**Forensic Anthropologist**

Consultant – Fort Bend County Sheriff’s Office Houston, Texas

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Forensic Anthropology

University of Tennessee – Knoxville (Body Farm)

*Dissertation: “Taphonomic Processes in Warm, Humid, Aquatic Environments”**Completed: 2010*

M.A., Biological Anthropology

Texas State University – San Marcos (2006)

B.S., Anthropology (Honors)

Texas A&M University (2004)

CERTIFICATIONS & PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS

Diplomate, American Board of Forensic Anthropology (D-ABFA) - Board Certified: 2015 – Present

Certified Crime Scene Analyst

International Association for Identification (IAI) Since 2013

OSHA 40-Hour HAZWOPER Certification Valid through 2026

FEMA ICS 100, 200, 700, 800 Certified

CURRENT POSITIONS

Forensic Anthropology Consultant

Fort Bend County Sheriff’s Office – Criminal Investigations Division

2016 – Present

- Provides forensic anthropological analysis for unidentified human remains
- Responds to outdoor crime scenes involving skeletonized or decomposed remains
- Works with Medical Examiner’s Office on trauma analysis and human identification
- Assists in large-scale searches, mapping, and recovery operations

Adjunct Professor of Forensic Anthropology

University of Houston – Department of Sociology & Anthropology

2014 – Present

TPSA

2026 Regional Conference Scenario V2

- Teaches: Forensic Anthropology, Osteology, Human Variation
- Supervises graduate students conducting forensic research
- Develops field-based practicums in decomposition and recovery techniques

PREVIOUS POSITIONS

Forensic Anthropologist

Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences, Houston, TX

2010 – 2016

- Conducted anthropological exams for unidentified remains
- Participated in over 350 forensic anthropology cases
- Provided expert testimony in local and federal courts

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Human skeletal identification
- Outdoor scene recovery of human remains
- Taphonomy in aquatic and swamp environments
- Postmortem interval estimation (PMI)
- Perimortem trauma analysis
- Mapping & documenting scattered remains
- Differentiating human vs. non-human bone
- Decomposition processes in Texas climate
- Mass disaster recovery operations
- Forensic archaeology
- Coordination with ME, law enforcement, and CSI units

CASE EXPERIENCE

Total forensic anthropology cases:

460+ (2010–2025)

Outdoor recovery scenes:

190+, including:

- Bodies recovered from lakes, rivers, marshes
- Scattered remains due to water flow or environmental exposure
- Long-term decompositional scenes in Texas heat

COURT TESTIMONY:

Testified 37 times in district and federal courts as an expert in forensic anthropology.

PUBLICATIONS (Selected)

Gray, J. (2023). *"Aquatic Taphonomy: Decomposition Patterns in Freshwater Bodies in the Gulf Region."*

Journal of Forensic Sciences.

Gray, J. & Hollister, M. (2020). *"Recovery of Fragmented Remains in Submerged Environments."*

Forensic Anthropology Review.

Gray, J. (2017). *"Human vs Non-Human Bone: Field Guide for First Responders."*

Texas Forensic Institute Press.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS)
- American Board of Forensic Anthropology (ABFA)
- Southwestern Association of Forensic Anthropologists (SWABA)
- Texas Association of Medicolegal Investigators (TAMI)

TRAININGS & WORKSHOPS (Selected)

- Advanced Aquatic Recovery Workshop – Florida Institute of Forensic Science (2022)
- Crime Scene Mapping & GIS for Forensics – AAFS (2021)
- Trauma Analysis in Osteology – UT Knoxville (2018)
- FEMA Mass Fatality Response Course (2016)
- Chemical & Biological Scene Safety – IAI (2015)