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Section: Local

DNA evidence could set man free

Geoffrey Fattah, Deseret Morning News

In light of new DNA evidence that could prove his innocence, the Utah Attorney General's Office said it will support overturning the conviction of a man who has been in prison 19 years for the 1984 rape and murder of a 21-year-old woman.

In fact, members of The Rocky Mountain Innocence Center said DNA tests taken from the crime scene and victim show there might be two other males involved in the crime. At this point they are unknown.

The center said earlier this week that it has obtained DNA evidence that indicates **Bruce Dallas Goodman** might not have raped 21-year-old Sherry Ann Fales Williams.

Williams' body was found near a freeway off-ramp north of Beaver on Nov. 30, 1984. Police say her legs were bound. Autopsy results concluded she died from at least eight blows to her head.

Goodman was convicted on circumstantial evidence during a bench trial in which he admitted he had stolen his employer's truck. He claimed to be with friends in California on the day of the murder. However, the truck was found in Las Vegas the night before the murder.

A service station attendant who reportedly saw Williams and a man fitting Goodman's description and a Keno runner in Mesquite reported seeing the two arguing loudly in a casino there. Prosecutors also showed that the rope used to bind the victim was the same type used at Goodman's workplace.

New DNA tests show that body fluids found at the scene do not match's Goodman's DNA but that of two different males.

The Utah Attorney General's Office said that the new DNA tests certainly warrant a second look at Goodman's conviction.

"The new DNA evidence is not conclusive, but it is troubling," said assistant attorney general Erin Riley. "It does not prove Goodman innocent, but it may well create reasonable doubt as to his guilt."

Riley said at the least the case should be set aside for a retrial but that decision must be made by a judge.

The Center filed its petition for post-conviction relief in 5th District Court in Beaver County Friday, asking the court to review the evidence. According to the petition, in 1984 state crime lab workers had collected a partially smoked cigarette butt and body fluids found in the snow near Williams' body.

"Monumental advances in forensic science now allow delicate and complicated DNA

testing of both both the saliva and partially smoked cigarette, the seminal fluid . . . and body fluids found at the crime scene," the petition states.

During parole hearings, Goodman has claimed innocence in the murder. Bowland said his office initially received a letter from Goodman, asking for help. Since then the center petitioned the court to have the biological evidence tested by an independent lab.

Paul Murphy, attorney general's office spokesman, said his office has attempted, but so far been unable to reach Williams' relatives.

Bowland said the center is asking that the state crime lab re-test the evidence to confirm its results. They have also asked not only to resolve Goodman's claims of innocence but also bring those who murdered Williams to justice.