

The NC State Patrol has identified the man found dead early Saturday morning near the scene of a wreck from Friday night, but the investigation into the fatal crash continues. Sgt. Henley identified the deceased man as 52-year old Alberto Pineda of Spruce Pine, Pineda's body found about a half mile downstream in the Toe River from the crash site, the body found just after sunup Saturday morning. Sgt. Henley said the GMC Sierra SUV carrying five crashed traveling US 19E, running off of the road to the left as they were headed in the direction of the Mitchell County line. The SUV ran off of the road at about 8:45 PM and overturned, with mostly minor injuries reported for the four occupants found at the scene—the most serious said to be suffering a broken collar bone. But the fifth person—possibly the driver—was not found as dusk turned to darkness, and even after an extensive rescue squad search of the area around the crash scene. Family and friends of the man were first back out to search early Saturday morning, and just after 7am, there was a report that a body was found in the Toe River, near where Winters Lane crosses over the river. Avery deputies converged on the scene and turned the matter back over to the State Patrol, with the body sent for an autopsy to determine the identity of the man and the cause of death. Sgt. Henley identified the man as Alberto Pineda, but said that there were still a number of factors to determine in the fatal wreck investigation.