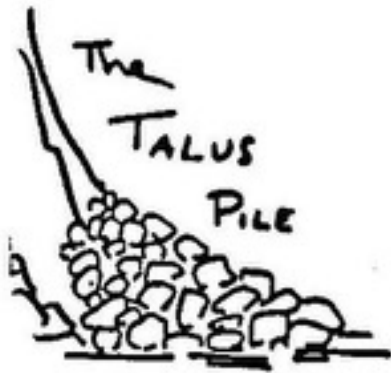


NUMBER 162

July 2017



CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN RESCUE GROUP

P. O. BOX 2037
RIDGECREST CA 93556

TRAINING SCHEDULE

Date		Leader	
July	28-30	Summer Class Overnights	
Aug	1-2	Summer Class/ Climbing & Party, Robbers Roost	
Aug	5	7 Teacups	Litton
Aug	11-13	Palisades	Swanson
Aug	19	Mount Goddard	Swanson
Aug	25	7 Teacups	Litton
Aug	25-27	Incredible Hulk	Swanson
Sept	11	Meeting	Host: Cash Refreshments: Doerr, Niesen
Oct	16	Meeting	Host: Finco Refreshments: Burge

SCREE

Check out our web page at clmrg.org.

Check out the California Region's web page at crmra.org.



CLMRG is funded in part by United Way of Indian Wells Valley.

2017 OPERATION REPORTS (thru 15 June 2017)

Operation 2017-01 (ALERT)

2 January 2017

Goat Meadow Snow Play Area (Mariposa County)

By Dave Miles

Summary:

Request to assist in search for overdue hiker.

Narrative:

I, (Dave Miles), received a text from Sgt. Bittle at 1900 on January 2, 2017. Mariposa County was requesting assistance for a search for an overdue hiker. The search was for a 17-year old male who went for a day hike and had not returned. I replied to Sgt. Bittle and then called Terry Mitchell to start a callout. After getting off the phone with Terry I received another text from Sgt. Bittle stating the subject had just walked out.

Operation 2017-02 (SEARCH), OES #2017-LAW-2993

31 January - 1 February 2017

Avila Valley (San Luis Obispo County)

By Tom Roseman

Summary:

Search/Recovery

Narrative:

I (Tom Roseman) received a call late in the afternoon on the 31 of January from Linda Finco looking for an operation leader. Janet Westbrook acted as the coordinator and Mary Schmierer assisted as a telephoner. Jeff Green and Phil Cash committed to go on the operation. We left the hut at 0300 the next morning (February 1) in order to make the 0700 briefing that morning. We encountered heavy fog just past Bakersfield but were still able to arrive just after 0700, to learn the brief had slipped to 0730. Sgt. Bittle, with the Kern County Sheriff, was already on scene with five other Kern County searchers. The search was into the 4th day, and a total of 50 searchers were on hand from multiple counties. After the briefing, we deployed as an all Kern County team with nine searchers. We spread out into two teams and started working downhill at around 0830. Around 1000 Sgt. Bittle found the subject at the bottom of a ravine in shallow water. He was deceased, but the coroner determined that he had not drowned. The body was placed in a stretcher and using a tree as an anchor, we raised him 30 feet up the bank to a level place. A sheriff's helicopter arrived about an hour later and hoisted the subject after he was removed from the stretcher into a special bag supplied by the helicopter crew. After the debriefing, and a meal provided by the local Salvation Army, we drove home, arriving shortly before 1900.

Lessons learned:

1) The wiper blades on the Explorer once again were not functional despite having been replaced in November. Jeff suggested getting silicone blades that he uses, and he ordered them on the way home. 2) The out of county credit card I have for fuel did not work. I talked to Sgt Bittle and he will try to get us new cards.

Operation 2017-03 (SEARCH)

5 February 2017

Cow Creek Flat - Democrat Road (Kern County)

By Luke Swanson

Summary:

Search for missing mushroom hunter.

Narrative:

CLMRG was contacted by the Kern County Sheriff's Office on the morning of Sunday, 5 February, 2017 to assist with a search for a missing hiker. I, (Luke Swanson), received a call from the coordinator, Terry Mitchell, at 0536 and agreed to lead the operation. Phil Cash, Tom Sakai, and Bill Stephenson committed to the operation. The team met at the hut at 0700.

The team drove the Explorer and reached the Command Post (CP) at approximately 0830. The CP was located at the intersection of Democrat Rd. and 178, which is west of Lake Isabella on 178. Upon arrival, the team met Sgt. Williams and was briefed on the situation. The subject, Steve Garcia, was reported missing by his hiking partner on the evening of Saturday, 04 February. We were told that they had been hiking together along the dirt road that started at our location and roughly paralleled 178 heading southwest. They were apparently interested in finding wild mushrooms. At some point, the subject decided he wanted to leave the road/trail and started heading up the steep hill that was on the south side of the road. The subject reportedly stated he was looking for a hawk's feather. We were initially told that the reporting party (RP) then separated from the subject and did not follow him up the hill.

On the night of 4 February, another Kern County SAR team followed the subject's tracks until the terrain made it difficult to continue finding sign. We were given the GPS location for the point where the subject split up from the RP, and the GPS location for the last track marked by the search team. The tracks were lost when the area became obscured by cow tracks. Photographs of the subject and his shoe print were texted to me.

Our assignment was to proceed to the last confirmed track marked by the previous team, and attempt to find any additional tracks or signs that could help determine the subject's location. We located the marking where the subject reportedly separated from the RP. We followed the tracks that left the dirt road and headed uphill. There were clearly multiple sets of tracks heading up the hill toward the GPS location we were given for the last confirmed track. We reached the GPS location for the last confirmed track and found a ribbon marking a track. However, we also found another ribbon around a few hundred feet further up the hill marking another track that we believed to be the subject's. The area was covered in cow tracks which made it much more difficult to distinguish human tracks. The subject's shoes also appeared to have only a shallow tread. We carefully searched the area for any additional tracks, but found nothing conclusive. We continued up the hill, which we believed was the subject's likely direction of travel. The last confirmed track was heading up the hill on a grassy ridgeline, which gradually fell away on either side. Therefore we expected that the subject would continue up the ridgeline, unless he decided to change his course. As we continued, we spread out and moved slowly, looking for tracks or signs of the subject. We did not find any additional tracks.

We did find some signs where we believed someone picked up and discarded several mushrooms. There were around 4 mushrooms in a pile and around 3 other mushrooms scattered in the area. We found no signs of bite marks in any of the mushrooms. We reported the mushrooms to the CP and provided the GPS location. We later collected some of the same type of mushrooms and took them back to the CP.

We continued up the ridgeline until the ridge appeared to end and gradually blend into the hillside. At this point there was no obvious path that the subject would have continued to follow. The road was often visible from the ridgeline we had been following and we found it unlikely that the subject could have been unable to locate it. A helicopter had also been searching in our area. The area had some trees and rocks, but also had a lot of open area. If the subject was in the area and not seriously injured, he would have likely been able to draw attention from the helicopter.

From our last point there were two gullies in view and both had small streams running through them. After discussing with the CP, we split up into two teams of two in order to follow the two different gullies back towards the road. Swanson and Stephenson followed the gully to the northwest and Cash and Sakai followed the gully to the southeast. The gullies were difficult to search due to several cliff bands and lots of bushes, trees, and rocks. Both teams followed their respective gully back towards the road and met at the CP. Upon exiting the gully and reaching the dirt road that we initially hiked in on, Sakai and Cash located a print they believed belonged to the subject. They found one clear print and one possible print, but no additional tracks matching the subject. These tracks were surprisingly located further southeast along the dirt road than the subject was reported to have reached. The single track also indicated the subject was heading further southeast along the road away from the CP. We reached the CP at around 1400.

Sgt. Williams asked the RP to return to the CP to clarify/provide additional information. The RP then reported that our previous information was not correct. He stated that he followed the subject up the hill, leaving the dirt road. He caught up with the subject somewhere higher up and talked to him there. He then left the subject and went down the same gully that Sakai and Cash had proceeded down. He also said that he had later gone back to look for the subject when he didn't return. Furthermore, he believed the mushrooms we had found could have been left by him and not the subject.

Sgt. Williams sent a K9 unit to investigate the tracks found by Sakai and Cash. We waited at the CP until Sgt. Williams released us for the day at 1600. We reached the hut and secured at 1739.

Operation 2017-04 (SEARCH)

5 -6 February 2017

Cow Creek Flat - Democrat Road (Kern County)

By Linda Finco

Summary:

Continuation of search for missing mushroom hunter.

Narrative:

I (Linda Finco) received a text from Sgt. Bittle with the Kern County Sheriff’s Office at 2026 on Sunday, 5 February. KCSO was requesting additional searchers for the continuation of the search for Steve Garcia (see operation 2017-03). Based on the areas searched by teams on Sunday, the sheriff had some technical areas they wanted to search on Monday. Terry Mitchell coordinated the callout and Dave Miles, Tom Roseman, Sean Litton, Nathan Simons, Mike Franklin and Phil Cash committed for the operation.

We met at the hut on Monday, 6 February at 0700 and departed the hut at 0720. We arrived at the command post off of Highway 178 near Cow Flat Road around 0900. Due to the rain, it was decided the technical canyon would not be safe to search. Based on additional clues, other areas needed to be cleared. Possible tracks were found on Cow Flat Road on Sunday. One track was near the drainage that the subject and the reporting party (RP) had been up and down earlier on Saturday and there was another possible track further down the road to the west. It was decided teams would try to clear the area from Cow Flat Road down to the highway to see if there were any signs that the subject might have descended directly to the highway from Cow Flat Road. Teams were deployed at 0930 and completed their search assignments around 1100 and returned to base. After further discussions with the RP and based on the area the RP last saw Steve (PLS), it was decided to send teams up the west drainage from the PLS to clear the upper portion. Members split into three, 2-man teams. The drainage was searched resulting in no clues. The team of Miles and Litton continued on up to the PLS and cleared the hillside below the rocky headwalls just in case the subject decided to descend directly from the PLS back down to the highway. Again no clues were found. Teams were debriefed and we left the command post at 1610 and returned to the hut at 1753. We secured at the hut at 1800.

Operation 2017-05 (ALERT), OES # 2017-LAW-30129

7 February 2017

Mt. Baldy (San Bernadino County)

By Linda Finco

Summary:

Request for Type 1 searcher to assist in search for missing hiker on Mt Baldy.

Narrative:

I (Linda Finco) received a text from Sgt. Bittle with the Kern County Sheriff’s Office at 2218 on Tuesday, 7 February. There was a mutual aid request from San Bernardino County requesting Type 1 searchers for an on-going search on Mt. Baldy. Janet Westbrook coordinated the callout, but we could not find an operations leader due to work commitments, and our on-going search in Kern County (Operations 2017-03 and 2017-04).

Operation 2017-06 (SEARCH)

12 February 2017

Cow Creek Flat - Democrat Road (Kern County)

By Dan Bishop

Summary:

Continuation of search for missing mushroom hunter. (see Operations 2017-03 and 2017-04)

Narrative:

This is day 8 of the continuation of the search operations for Steven Garcia who became separated from his hiking partner in the lower Kern River canyon on February 4th. I, (Dan Bishop), responded to lead the team on Sunday, February 12th.

The group callout was initiated earlier in the week with Terry Mitchell acting as co-ordinator. Those committing to the Sunday search included Dan Bishop, Dave Miles, Tom Roseman, Tom Sakai, Jeff Green, Nathan Simons, Phil Cash, Debbie Breitenstein, Sean Litton, and Bill Stephenson. Leaving the hut at 0515 we arrived at the Command Post (CP), located at a pull out off of Highway 178 between Kern Valley road and Cow Flat road. We were joined by members of Kern Valley SAR and Tehachapi SAR where we were briefed on our assignments. D.Bishop, T.Roseman, J.Green, and T.Sakai were to be inserted by Air-5 helicopter to the 3500 foot elevation where we were to sweep down a steep, brushy canyon to the highway and CP. A second China Lake team of D.Miles, S.Litton, N.Simons, and P.Cash was also inserted via helicopter and their assignment was to sweep down a similarly

Search terrain



rough search area east of the CP. Additionally, our third team of D.Breitensten and B.Stephenson conducted multiple sweeps of areas around the Cow Flat road.

All teams were quickly fielded before 0900. Steep, brushy, and water saturated soil was encountered. Previous searchers tracks as well as tracks from the subject's hiking partner were seen. This added to the clutter from the previous day's rain. Many odd clues, unrelated to the search were discovered. Most teams were back from their assignments by 1500 with D.Breitenstein and B.Stephenson completing at 1615. No further definitive evidence was discovered, so after debriefing, we headed home and we secured at the hut at 1800.

Operation 2017-07 (SEARCH), OES # 2017-LAW-35137

9-10 April 2017

Mt. Baldy (San Bernadino County)

By Luke Swanson

Summary:

Request to assist in search for missing hiker on Mt Baldy.

Narrative:

CLMRG was contacted by Sgt Bittle. San Bernardino County was requesting assistance for an on-going search for a missing hiker. I, (Luke Swanson) was the operation leader and Sheila Rockwell coordinated the callout. One additional member, Jon Slager, committed to the operation.

We met at the hut at 0430 on 10 April and drove to the command post (CP) at the Mt. Baldy fire station. Breakfast was provided at 0700 and the briefing was scheduled for 0730. We arrived at around 0700. The operation was being led by Deputy Rich Farrow of San Bernardino County.

The subject, Seuk Kim, (Sam), went to hike Mt. Baldy on the evening of Friday, 7 April. When his family reported him missing, his car was found at Manker Flat and he was believed to have taken the Sierra Hut/Baldy Bowl trail (which was his typical route). Mr. Kim had summited Mt. Baldy more than 800 times and was working on reaching 1000 this year, therefore, many local hikers knew him or were familiar with him. Stormy weather was reported on the night of April 7th. Although many areas of the mountain were still covered with snow, much or all of the trail was easily passable without any snow equipment.

The China Lake team was assigned to "team 3" along with Donna Newlan from the San Bernardino County/Valley of the Falls team. The team was one of the "alpine" teams which were equipped to deal with potential snow or ice on Baldy. Several teams, including our team, were sent to the helicopter landing zone (LZ) to be lifted to the summit for quicker access to assigned search areas.

While waiting for the helicopter, Brad (also from the Valley of the Falls team) reported chest pain and was immediately looked at by several other SAR members also waiting for the helo (including one MD, one nurse, and several EMTs). It was quickly agreed upon that Brad was suffering a serious heart attack and the situation was reported to the CP. It was decided that the en route helo would be used to transport Brad to the hospital. Brad was lifted into a stretcher (he did not appear to be able to walk). The helicopter landed shortly thereafter and the medical attendant assessed Brad's condition. She agreed that he should be air lifted to the hospital. He was transferred onto their stretcher and loaded into the helo. It was later reported that Brad went into surgery and received 5 stents.

The remaining SAR teams remained at the LZ to wait for the helo to return. After waiting for some time, Deputy Farrow arrived to notify the teams that the helo had been rerouted again to assist with a shooting that occurred at a San Bernardino County school. Therefore a different helo was requested. The helo began transporting teams at around 1200 and transported our team to the summit.

We were assigned a search area northeast of the summit. The area covered a few broad gullies between two ridgelines, and was mostly covered with snow. The terrain was steep enough to warrant crampons and ice axe, but most of the snow was soft enough to easily move across (although some icy sections were encountered). We decided to spread out and traverse back and forth between the two ridgelines. Donna decided to stay on one of the ridges, where she could see most of the search area, in order to provide a radio relay for several teams in the area. Jon and I made several passes at different elevations. We remained approximately 50 feet apart. A lot of the search area was an open snow field, making it very easy to see anything. Other parts of the search area had some trees, although visibility remained relatively good. The team felt confident that the subject would have been spotted if he had slid down the slope and hit a tree within the search area. No slide marks or any other sign of the subject was found. The search area extended down to 9200 feet from the summit.

We regrouped at the saddle along the Devils Backbone trail, below the summit of Mt. Baldy. Jon and I searched another gully below the saddle, while Donna continued to provide a radio relay. Radio communication proved very poor in the area and some other teams could not sufficiently communicate with the CP. Although our assignment was completed, we remained at the saddle in order to ensure the other teams could communicate with the CP.

After waiting around an hour, the other teams were picked up by the helo, and we were told to exit. We proceeded down the Devil's Backbone trail and reached the awaiting vehicle at the ski area within about 30 minutes at 1900. We reached the CP at 1940.

Our team ate dinner at the CP and then drove back to the hut. The operation was secured around 2230.

Operation 2017-08 (SEARCH), OES # 2017-LAW-35137

10-11 April 2017

Mt. Baldy (San Bernadino County)

By Dan Bishop

Summary:

Continuation of search for missing hiker on Mt Baldy.

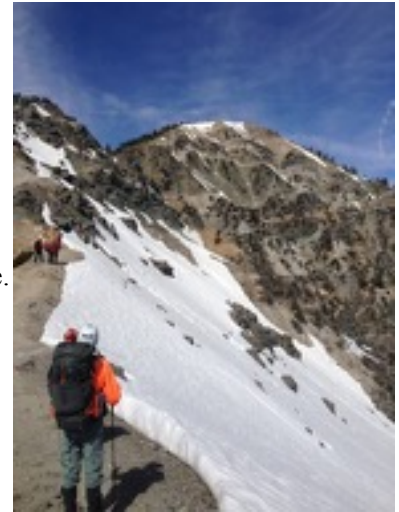
Narrative:

This is day three of the continuation of the search for Seuk Kim who failed to return from his hike of Mt. Baldy on Friday evening, April 7th. CLMRG had sent a search team on Monday, I (Dan Bishop) responded to send an additional team for Tuesday, April 11.

Those committing to the search included; D.Bishop, Tom Sakai, and Bill Stephenson. Sheila Rockwell acted as coordinator and Mary Schmierer assisted with the call-out. Leaving the hut at 0515, we arrived at the Command Post, located at the Mt. Baldy Fire Station, at 0800. We were combined with team members from San Bernardino, Fresno, and Sierra Madre. Our assignments were to clear two chutes down from the Devil's Backbone trail to the Baldy Ski Hut. Our teams were driven up to chair 4 above the Ski Lodge and preceded toward Mt. Baldy. Conditions on the Backbone were good with little to no snow on the trail. Sweeping down from the trail, we arrived at the Ski Hut around 1330. We started a secondary search of the boulder field in the Baldy Bowl west of the Ski Hut when word came that the subject had been located at 1430. We returned to the Command Post, had dinner compliments of San Bernardino's food truck and returned to Ridgecrest at 1900.

Mr. Kim's body was spotted by helicopter on the north side of the Mt. Baldy summit, below a steep snow/ice slope. LA county Air-5 helo was to attempt recovery the following day. Mr. Kim had reportedly reached the summit late in the evening on that Friday, however, the deteriorating weather, low visibility, and darkness may have contributed to the outcome of this incident.

Conditions on the saddle at the start of the Devils Backbone Trail.



Operation 2017-09 (SEARCH/RECOVERY)

22-23 May 2017

Mt Whitney Trail (Inyo County)

By Dan Bishop

Summary:

Search for missing hiker on Whitney Trail, then recovery.

Narrative:

On Monday, 22 May, Kern County Sheriff, Sgt, Haislip, contacted CLMRG in response to a request from Inyo County for assistance in a search for a missing hiker on the Mt. Whitney Trail. The subject, Donying "Cindy" Qui, a 27 year old Asian female became separated from her party of three while attempting to day hike to the summit of Mt. Whitney via the main trail on Sunday, May 21st. Her party started that day at 0200 from the trailhead and she was last seen descending from Trail Camp at 1500. When she failed to return to the trailhead the search was initiated on Monday, May 22nd, with Inyo County Search and Rescue and CHP H-80 helicopter conducting a search of the trail. I, (Dan Bishop), and Nathan Simons committed for the search on Tuesday. Sheila Rockwell served as coordinator.

Leaving the hut at 0530 we arrived at the Command Post (CP), located at the Lone Pine Airport at 0650. Ample resources were on hand from San Bernardino County and Sierra Madre teams. We were briefed that a pack, thought to be the subject's, was found by an Inyo team member below the water fall at Outpost Camp. The plan was to have the Army National Guard Chinook insert a team at Outpost Camp to check out the waterfall area and another team to be dropped off at Trail Camp and to sweep down to Outpost Camp. Our assignment, with three members from Sierra Madre, was the upper search area and at 1030 we landed above Trail Camp. During our search we were flagged down by a party of four who reported that one of their members, Alex, was complaining of fatigue and nausea. Suffering

from apparent AMS (acute mountain sickness), we advised him to descend. With our encouragement, all of those in his party choose to descend with Alex.

At 1140 the subject was discovered by the team at Outpost Camp, on a ledge down 30 meters from the top of the waterfall. The snow depth this season provided a direct path from Outpost Camp up to Trailside Meadow over the waterfall, and allowing a detour from having to go to Mirror Lake via the trail. This was the ascent and descent route of the subject. It is unclear if the waterfall was visible on that Sunday or if it was obscured by the snow. A faint glissade track could be seen on the snow coming from above and disappearing into the hole created by the waterfall and fast melting snow. The team at Outpost Camp was able to lower a search member from above into the hole next to the waterfall and extract the subject's body. It is unclear how her pack came to rest on the snow outside the waterfall hole, however, without that clue her discovery would have been delayed.

As our team was directed to proceed to Outpost Camp for helicopter extraction, we encountered Alex, the AMS victim, still slowly descending. His symptoms had become worse with a 7 of 10 headache pain, and blood oxygen level of 77%. We shifted our effort to assist him and advised CP of the need for a possible helo evacuation. Monitoring his condition as we went, it took 2 hours to get to Outpost Camp with him slowly improving as we went. At 1500 all were assembled at the extraction point where the Chinook took all of us, including Alex and his party, along with Cindy's remains back to Lone Pine.

We were back at the hut by 1730.



Outpost Camp waterfall



Awaiting Help Extraction
(Outpost Camp)



Chinook landing
(Outpost Camp)

Operation 2017-10 (SEARCH)

3-4 June 2017

Kern River (Kern County)

By Tom Roseman

Summary:

Search for subject on the Kern River.

Narrative:

I, (Tom Roseman), received a call early in the evening on June 3rd from Dave Miles looking for an operation leader for a search on the Kern River for the next day. I took the operation and Sheila Rockwell coordinated. Luke Swanson, Tom Sakai, Bill Stephenson, Phil Cash, Conner Warren and David Jensen committed for the operation. We left the hut at 0630 the next morning in order to make the 0800 briefing at the Kern Valley hut. The person we were looking for was Karin Mambreyan, a male subject of Armenian descent, who was last seen on the 3rd of June floating face down on the Kern River below the dam by some commercial rafters, who tried to recover his body from the swift-

ly flowing river without success. Interviews with his friends revealed he had been drinking alcohol all day and that he had jumped into the river and was swept away. We received a safety briefing by Tony, with the Kern Valley team, and issued PFD's (personal flotation devices), helmets and rope toss bags. We also were given pre and post poison oak wipes. Our members were paired with Kern Valley team members and given assignments to search the banks of the river. The river was flowing at 5,600 cfs (cubic feet per second) and was very dangerous, so we were cautioned not to take risks. We were also warned that rattlesnakes were active. We started searching around 0900. Luke was buzzed by a healthy rattler and jumped into some poison oak to avoid the snake. Wearing PFD's made the hot conditions worse! We finished our assignments around noon and had lunch with the Kern Valley members before driving home. We secured at the hut after fueling the vehicles. This was the first operation for Conner and David. It was nice to get new members on an operation.

GROUP BUSINESS

Public Education:

- Talus Pile:

This is our 2nd newsletter of the year. If you currently receive a paper copy of the Talus Pile, please consider letting us send you an electronic copy via email instead. Just send an email to publiced@clmrg.org and let us know. Starting with this issue, we will try to add photos to the electronic version to help show off what we do (photos are just too expensive to reproduce in the printed version). The expanded version will be posted on our website, www.clmrg.org. As an all-volunteer, non-profit even little steps help us keep expenses low. Thank you!

- Summer Mountaineering Class:

We are in the midst of teaching our annual Basic Mountaineering & Mountaineering Safety class. Students are attending lectures and practical skill sessions as well as enjoy opportunities for day hikes (July 15 and 16) and an overnight backpacking trip (July 29-30) in the nearby Sierra Nevada Mountains at skill levels ranging from introductory to fairly strenuous. This year's class runs through August 2nd.

- Girl Scout Encampment – Wednesday, April 12th.

CLMRG continued its 50+ year tradition of setting up a high line for LA area Girl Scouts during their weeklong desert campout. The high line was set up in record time. We had a good turnout and sent approximately 40 girls and 6 camp counselors across the canyon with no one backing out! Troop leaders thanked us for our continued support. Eight members - Tom Sakai, Jeff Green, Sean Litton, Dave Miles, Linda Finco, Mike Franklin, Bill Stephenson, and Eileen Loughran participated. THANKS to everyone that came to help out - Special thanks to Sean who also gave a campfire talk and to Tom Sakai and Tom Roseman for adding a third step to the rock face which helped the girls feel a bit more secure while climbing out to get in position for the high line!

- The 2017 Lost, but Found program:

During May, members went out to 5 schools giving 7 presentations to our local kids speaking to them about how to keep from getting lost and if they do, how to help SAR find them quicker! Teams of 1-2 members go out to the school, show a video put together by the National Park Foundation, and then do some demonstrations to reinforce what was shown on the video and if time, do a short Q&A. The kids can then up with some interesting questions. Parent handouts were provided for over 2100 families. The program continues to be well received. Thank you to all the members who participated! Linda Finco, Tom Roseman, Gina Najera-Niesen, Phil Cash, and Dave Miles who gave presentations and to Carol Burge for providing logistics support!

SAR Appreciation Dinner:

The annual dinner to recognize SAR volunteers was held on April 1st. CONGRATULATIONS!

Dave Doerr was recognized as our *Top Contributor for his efforts as our 2016 Summer Class Committee Chair!* Organizing our 7-week Basic Mountaineering and Mountaineering Safety course is a huge commitment. All total CLMRG members put in over 650 hours of volunteer time towards this class with Dave taking the lead. Dave worked diligently to make the class a success - completing months of preparation, coordinating all the volunteers for weekly lectures and outdoor practicals and taking on the role of lead instructor - and he's agreed to chair the committee for 2017 too! In 2016, we had 34 students successfully complete the course and 4 of those students became interested enough in CLMRG to submit applications to join Kern County SAR.

The Sheriff honored the following CLMRGers for their time in service:

Bill Stratton - 10 yrs
Bill Stephenson - 10 yrs
(includes time with Indian Wells Cave team)
Dave Miles - 15 yrs
Mike Franklin -15 yrs
Gina Najera-Niesen - 20 yrs
Debbie Breitenstein - 25 yrs

Mike Myers - 25 yrs
Terry Mitchell - 25 yrs
Bob Huey - 35 yrs
Daryl Hinman - 40 yrs
Sheila Rockwell - 45 yrs
Janet Westbrook - 50 yrs
Al Green - 55 yrs



CLMRG members (L to R) -
Dave Doerr, Linda Finco, Gina Najera-Niesen, Dave Miles, Janet Westbrook, Bob Huey,
Debbie Breitenstein, Al Green, Paul DeRuiter

CLMRG received 3 of the 4 awards for 25 years and the only team receiving awards for 35, 45, 50 and 55 years. That is quite an accomplishment!

Paul DeRuiter received a retirement plaque from the sheriff for his 32 years of service with search and rescue.

MRA Search & Tracking Accreditation

3 March 2017

Stoddard Valley OHV (San Bernadino County)

By Linda Finco

Summary:

CLMRG was re-certified by the CalMRA in the area of Search and Tracking.

Narrative:

CLMRG participated in the California Region Search and Tracking Accreditation testing on Saturday, 4 March. It should be noted in preparation for the test members spent many training hours on man tracking, perimeter cutting, grid searching and base camp operations. We do most of this training on an annual basis, but in preparation for the test members put in additional hours as we trained newer members. Also members showed up Wednesday, 1 March to inventory the equipment and get the equipment loaded into the vehicles.

Nineteen members committed to the test. Members were Linda Finco, Mike Myers, Tom Roseman, Dave Miles, Luke Swanson, Bob Huey, Phil Cash, Mike Derkey, Dave Doerr, Sean Litton, Tom Sakai, Nathan Simons, Bill Stephenson, Bill Stratton, Conner Warren, Debbie Breitenstein, Eileen Loughran and Cynthia Rempel. Applicant David Jensen completed all the preparation training so he participated also. Because we had so many members and leaders participating, Terry Mitchell volunteered to be the in town coordinator in case anything was needed.

Eight members departed Friday, 3 March around 12:30 pm. The event was being held in the Stoddard Valley OHV area off of Interstate 15 just south of Barstow, CA. Members arrived around 2 pm and got the team checked in. We then set up the base camp. Two members (with 3 additional arriving later in the night) stayed to camp at the site. The rest of us drove down the road to Victorville to stay in a motel. The other eleven members left Ridgecrest at 6 pm. That evening after dinner, the members at the motel got together for some preliminary planning.

Evaluators needed to be at the site at 7 am, so those of us in the motel got on the road at 6:30 am. Breakfast was provided by the host team (West Valley). Members were assigned tasks to prepare group gear and coordinate personnel in preparation for the test. Bob Huey and Nathan Simons would be evaluators for other teams. For our team, I (Linda Finco) would be the operations leader, Mike Myers (planning), Eileen Loughran (inReach communications and planning), Mike Derkey (radio communications) and Cynthia Rempel (radio log) would remain in base camp. All other members would be fielded on the problem with Dave Miles being the section leader for coordinating the search effort from the field with base.

The reporting party (RP) and two evaluators (Contra Costa and Sierra Madre) showed up at our base camp around 9:00 am and the problem began. The RP reported her friend had wandered off after wanting to go explore in the area. She gave us the last known coordinates (PLS). We had teams fielded by 0930 am and they arrived at the PLS at 10:30 am (about 5 miles across desert in the OHV area). We knew radio communications would be tough for a field team searching in areas to the east of where we had our base camp located, so we sent Bill Stephenson to be a radio relay. Bill was located on the same hilltop as the host team's command post relay and other SAR teams' relays. However, once our teams arrived at the PLS it was determined the current relay position could still not communicate with the field teams. Base was contacted by cell phone and it was decided to set up a 2nd relay to communicate with the first relay. Even that relay resulted in spotty communications, but we were able to communicate. I briefed the team to keep communications down to only important communications. So with our spotty communications it was easy to not try to communicate every clue due to the difficulty. It should also be noted we did have our inReach devices which should have allowed us to text on our cell phones via satellite. In training and on previous operations, these devices have worked well, but for some reason we had issues and the inReach devices were of no use.

Our field team determined a direction of travel heading west from the PLS. Planning suggested a few washes to the west that might be used as track traps for containment. Later we learned from the field teams during the debrief that there were a lot more OHV roads and washes than what was shown on the maps, so they were well aware of areas of potential track traps.

Our next communication with the field teams was at 11:40 am. Our field teams arrived on the scene of an actual rollover accident with an off road vehicle. They assisted in uprighting the vehicle. In talking and learning our team was searching for a subject, the off roader told our team he saw the guy earlier up the road, wandering and acting confused. Our team had also found gummy bears, M&M's and a hiking stick along the same road. The teams were still on track and the subject was now circling heading south.

At 12:30 pm we did get the message from relay that the subject had been found. He had a suspected broken femur and the field teams were requesting a helicopter for evacuation. When it was determined a helicopter would not be available, the team secured the subject into a stretcher and placed him in one of the vehicles for transport. All members were back in base at 1400.



We had a debrief, and then regrouped for our grid search problem. The scenario for the grid search was we were looking for evidence from a homicide. We were to search an area looking for the evidence. The items we had to find would be tagged. We were not to touch the evidence, but identify the item with a description and the tag number found on the item and the GPS coordinate using WGS 84 UTM. During our grid search we located all 8 items. We returned to our site and loaded our gear and waited for our evaluation.

The evaluators stated we showed excellent leadership (in base and in the field), tracking skills and medical. They were more critical of our communications, although I am not sure what more we could have done except to have moved base camp, and that was discussed during the operation with our base camp evaluator. Had this been an on-going search, we would have moved base to a better location for communications. In the end we were successful in our Search and Tracking Accreditation and passed.

The team had to wait for Bob Huey to finish his evaluator job, but we secured the area and headed out for dinner around 5 pm. We arrived back at the hut and secured at 8 pm.

China Lake is funded in part by the United Way of Indian Wells Valley



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