



NUMBER 178

July 2023

**CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN
RESCUE GROUP**

P. O. BOX 2037
RIDGECREST, CA 93556

See our web page at clmrg.org and clmrg.org/contactus.html
Also the California Region's web page at crmra.org.
Find us on Facebook – China Lake Mountain Rescue Group

**CLMRG is funded in part by the Combined Federal Campaign,
Just Giving and Private Donations**



This is Us, June 2023

Operations, March– June 2023

2023-6 4 March Kern County/Mariposa Co Search for evidence Phil Cash

On Saturday, 25 February 2023, around 1700 Linda Finco (team Captain) received a request from Kern County Sheriff Office (KCSO) Sergeant Saldana to support an evidence search on Saturday 4 March near Maricopa, CA. She sent out the request via email that night and again via the callout system on Sunday, 26 February. Phil Cash offered to be the leader and Terry Mitchell accepted to be the coordinator. Eileen Loughran assisted with the callout. CLMRG had already committed to a snow/ice training in June Lake that weekend and the Sergeant agreed that the operation was priority. Tom Roseman, Tom Sakai, Phil Cash, David Jensen, Jessica Kormelink, Mike Franklin, Joe Kromphardt committed to the search. On Thursday, 2 March, the training exercise was canceled for bad weather and the members of that group were encouraged to join the search. Jensen dropped out and Nathan Simons, Nick Pio, Andrew Cammenga, and Dave Doerr joined this effort.

We met at the Hut at 0500 on 4 March and began the drive to the Command Post and stopped on the way in Tehachapi to pick up Mike Franklin and take a driving break. We arrived at the muster point around 0800 where we met Sgt. Saldana and given our search assignments. We completed the search around 1200 when we were released and returned home via Tehachapi, dropping off Franklin and securing at the Hut at 1630.

2023-7 9 March Mobilization Kern County/Kernville assist bad weather issues Finco

On Thursday, March 9, 2023, Kern County Sheriff (KCSO), Sgt. Joe Saldana sent a text to all Kern County Search and Rescue (SAR) teams to request the teams go on standby for the incoming storm and possible evacuations and/or rescues that would be required due to the predicted flooding. The requested standby period was starting Thursday night through Friday, (9-10 March).

Linda Finco initiated the Group callout and was the Operation Leader. Carin Miles coordinated the callout with help from Sheila Rockwell. Fourteen members committed to be on standby starting Thursday evening at 1700. Members were Dan Bishop, Dave Miles, Nathan Simons, Nick Pio, Bill Stephenson, Bob Huey, Gina Niesen, Phil Cash, Roger Pio, Andrew Cammenga, Tom Sakai and Sean McNamara. Sean was not available for Friday, but Mike Derkey made the commitment for Friday afternoon. Members were told to have their ready-pack set to go, and dress appropriately for the very inclement weather.

The commitment for Thursday night was to be available to go door to door in the Upper Kern and Kernville area to request residents in high-risk flood areas to evacuate, however, most residents in these areas evacuated on their own so we were not needed.

For Friday, the Sheriff asked CLMRG to back-up Kern Valley SAR as needed throughout the day. As the rain continued Friday, road closures to the Kernville area and upper Kern River forced residents to stay in place. Although there was significant flooding throughout Friday, there was never any serious threat to structures inhabited by people.

At 1745 the Sheriff took all teams off standby and we would be back in our regular call status if anything were to occur throughout the next few days due to the storm. Kernville area was effectively isolated due to road closures for a couple of days. The North Fork of the Kern peaked at 11,000 cfs (normal around 1000 cfs or less) and the South Fork cut a wide gap in Sierra Highway that may take months to fix.

2023-8 12 March Transits Kern County/PCT Simons

China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) via Kern County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) Sgt. Andrew Avila, responded to a request to rescue four male dirt bikers stuck on the PCT north of highway CA-58. The request for a hasty team was received at 1726, with Carin Miles as Coordinator (OC) and Eileen Loughran as Telephoner (OT). Nathan Simons committed as Operation Leader (OL) and assembled a hasty team at Dave and Carin Miles' residence, consisting of Dave Miles, Phillip Cash, Nick Pio and Nathan Simons.

A second team organized by Linda Finco met at the Hut to gather group gear including a stretcher.

The second team consisted of Linda Finco, Andrew Cammenga, Bill Stephenson and Bob Huey.

After some discussion of type and number of vehicles to take -two 4WD capable, personally owned vehicles (POV) in order to reach and extract all four subjects, and sorting a bad coordinate for last-known-location of the Subjects, the hasty team departed at 1807. Once on CA-58 via Garlock road, we sighted flashing lights and the helicopter which had just finished extracting the second pair of subjects. Both teams had been monitoring East Dispatch radio frequency which the helicopter crew was using and so were in the loop on the status of the operation. Once the Subjects had been handed over to advanced medical services, the teams proceeded back to the Miles' residence. We debriefed and were treated to a homecooked meal.

2023-9 14 March Assist evacuation notices Kern Co, Wofford Heights

Finco

On Tuesday, March 14, 2023, Kern County Sheriff Office (KCSO), Sgt. Joe Saldana sent a text asking if we could assist with door-to-door evacuation notices in Wofford Heights. Soil engineers in the county raised concerns because of the past storms and soil saturation in the hillsides above Wofford Heights (Hwy 155) that the current storm could trigger a massive mudslide in the burn scar area. At 1330 the Kern County Fire Department issued a mandatory evacuation order for all of Wofford Heights with KCSO assisting with a door-to-door notification.

Linda Finco initiated the Group callout and was the Operation Leader with Eileen Loughran coordinating and had help from Terry Mitchell. Dave Miles, Roger Pio and Tom Sakai committed to the operation.

We met at the Hut at 1500 and departed shortly thereafter. We arrived at the Command Post (CP) at 1630 with Brian Baskin from Kern County Search and Rescue (KVSAR) coordinating the SAR teams. We were given an initial assignment to assist teams already in the Pala Rancho area to go door-to-door and inform residents the Kern County Sheriff was issuing a mandatory evacuation order and to let them know that the Kern Valley High School was the evacuation point. On our SAR topo maps we were to mark each residence address and then note whether the resident agreed to evacuate and the number of residents. We continued to do this in the various neighborhoods assigned to us and after our last assignment we returned to the CP. After some discussion if there were any high priority areas still needing notification, the Sheriff decided to release us at 1935 and we secured at the Hut at 2115.

Note: All residents we notified stated they would not evacuate, but just monitor the situation.



South Fork of the Kern River

Culverts couldn't carry the flow. Obviously Sierra Highway is closed for some time to come.

2023-10 2 May Search Kern County/South Fork River, Kernville

Miles

At 1818 hrs on May 1, 2023 Dave Miles received a text from Brian Baskin with Kern Valley Search and Rescue (KVSAR) requesting our assistance in reaching a vehicle that had been swept into the South Fork of the Kern River. At 1954 Dave started a callout and by 2002 he let Baskin know we had a team of at least five. We were to meet the KVSAR team at the South Fork turnoff at 1600 on May 2nd with Debbie Breitenstein acting as Operation Coordinator and Terry Mitchell as Operation Telephoner. When we left the Hut at 1500 with a team of nine: Dave Miles, Bill Stephenson, Nathan Simons, Nick Pio, David Jensen, Phil Cash, Andrew Cammenga, Tom Sakai, and Dan Bishop. We arrived at the river at 1550 and assisted in efforts to get a rescuer to the vehicle in order to examine its contents and to secure a line for a tow truck to pull it out. However the KVSAR swimmer was unable to safely get close enough due to the hazardous water conditions. The South Fork was running at about 3,200 cubic feet per second and had opened a 75 ft gap in the road creating a new river channel through the many trees. It was decided to wait a few days with the hope that the flow would subside making access less dangerous. We secured at the Hut at 2015 hrs.

2023-11 6 May Alert Kern Co. South Fork of Kern River

Miles

KVSAR called us to back up another attempt at getting the vehicle out of the river. Dave Miles was OL, Carin Miles was Coordinator, and Eileen Loughran Telephoner. Nathan Simons, Tom Sakai, Bill Stephenson, Joe Kromphardt, Chris Aranda, Gina Niesen, Phil Cash, and David Jensen committed to go on Sat. 6 May. However, on May 4, KVSAR said the tow truck was able to pull the van out of the water. No sign of the driver.

2023-12 Alert 20 May Recovery Kern Co. South Fork Valley

Miles

Dave Miles is OL, Sheila is Op Coordinator, Eileen Loughran Telephoner. Kern Valley SAR asked for backup to help with person from the South Fork. Bill S, Nick Pio, Phil Cash, Chris Aranda, Joe Kromphardt, Jessica Kormelink, and Dan Bishop volunteered to go.

2023-13 22 May Rescue Kern Co. Jawbone Canyon-PCT

Finco

At 1510 on Monday, 22 May, Linda Finco received a text from Brian Baskin, Kern Valley Search and Rescue (KVSAR). Brian was enroute to a location on the Pacific Crest Trail out of Jawbone Canyon to assist a hiker who had sent out an inReach emergency request. Another member from KVSAR was approaching the location from the west through Caliente. Brian was requesting assistance from the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG). The emergency request was from Michael Lee who stated in his message that he had contracted food poisoning that morning and was unable to eat or drink and he feared dehydration. I responded to Brian that we would try to get a team to assist.

I sent out a message on our callout system requesting anyone who could respond as a hasty team and then a follow up team. Terry Mitchell responded to coordinate the callout with the help of Sheila Rockwell. I took the operation lead and began coordinating with Terry. Dave Miles, Christian Aranda and Andrew Cammenga met at Mile's house to be the hasty team. Bill Stephenson, Linda and Phil Cash would meet at the hut by 1615 to bring the stretcher and wheel in case of a carry out. At 1530 I texted Brian to let him know a hasty team would be heading out soon and another team would follow with the stretcher and wheel.

As the three from the hut were packing gear, Nick Pio contacted me. It was agreed we would finish packing and meet Nick at his home where he would have his pack and be ready to go. We departed the hut at 1620 and picked up Nick and were heading out of town by 1700. As the teams headed up the canyon we received radio traffic on dispatch that the Fire Helicopter was enroute to assist with the rescue. Brian had reached Michael and after giving him fluids, felt he was capable to walk out with assistance. The CLMRG hasty team had reached the PCT and started to hike, but turned around after the helo picked up Michael. All teams started back home at 1800.

At 1830 as we monitored East Dispatch we heard there might be another rescue on the PCT near our location. It was reported that the hikers were out of food and still had over 30 miles to hike. We pulled over at the turn off to Walker Pass and I tried to contact Sgt. Saldana to let him know we could quickly respond if

needed. Miles and Brian were still out of cell service, so I texted Dave to give me a call as soon as he got the message.

At 1845 Dave called and I told him about the call from dispatch. After a few more calls, we were given the go ahead to proceed to the location of the hikers to assist. (See Op Report 2023-14)

2023-14 22 May Rescue

Kern/Dove Springs/Walker Pass

Finco

We were on our return to the Hut from Operation 2023-13 when we heard on East Dispatch another request for assistance for hikers on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). The hikers were out of food and water and still had 30 miles to hike to get to Walker Pass and their vehicle. We contacted the Sheriff, Sgt. Saldana, to let him know our location and availability and at 1900 he released us to go and assist. I called Terry Mitchell to let her know all of us (Linda Finco, Dave Miles, Christian Aranda, Andrew Cammenga, Bill Stephenson, Phil Cash and Nick Pio) were responding to assist along with Brian Baskin, Kern Valley Search and Rescue (KVSAR), who was also enroute.

Dispatch gave us the location of the hikers and it was determined it was a straightforward approach up Dove Springs on SC 103 to their location near Pinyon Mountain on the PCT. Brian (KVSAR) and our hasty team (Miles, Aranda and Cammenga) were the first to arrive, followed by our vehicle (Finco, Stephenson, Cash, Pio) at 1950. The 3 hikers were Andrew Leos, 54, from Rancho Cucamonga, CA, Mike Pipgras, 50, from Yakima, WA, and Jarrett Plante, 29, from Rochester, NY. The three were hiking the PCT together using a leap-frog method with their vehicles. They left a car in Tehachapi and were hiking to their vehicle at Walker Pass. Their cache at their current location had been emptied of all their provisions. They did not have enough food and water to continue to Walker Pass, so they requested assistance. We put the 3 hikers in Dave's vehicle and he and Christian would drop them off at their vehicle at Walker Pass. Andrew joined us and we headed back to the Hut and secured at 2100. Dave dropped the hikers off at Walker Pass 2050 and he and Christian secured at Mile's house at 2130.

Public Education

CLMRG is an all-volunteer, 501 (c) non-profit that operates under the auspices of the Kern County Sheriff's Office providing search and rescue (SAR) services on an on-call basis at no cost. A secondary mission is to provide wilderness safety education to members of our Ridgecrest, CA community. We do rely on and much appreciate donations. They are used to buy group equipment for our searches and rescues. New better equipment, radios and ropes are on the market every year. We appreciate having the resources to stay on top so we can do our job to help everyone.

Lost but Found program

The China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) offers a *Lost, But Found* presentation to children K-5 on how to stay safe in the wilderness. CLMRG has been presenting the program to local schools for over 50 years on an annual basis.

The *Lost, But Found* program is widely acclaimed and developed by the Association of National Park Rangers. Presentations detail what kids can do to prevent becoming lost in the wilderness and if the worst happens, what actions they can take to help searchers find them quickly and stay safe while they wait. The program consists of a short video and then discussion and demonstration led by CLMRG members to reenforce the lessons presented in the video. If time permits, a short Q&A session ends the program. An hour should be scheduled for the event. We also provide handouts for parents summarizing what the kids learned.

This year, two schools, Inyokern and Gateway Elementary, responded to our offer to present the Lost, but Found program. Thanks to Tom Roseman, Terry Mitchell, and Gina Najera-Niesen for presenting and Linda Finco for helping with the logistics. We taught 3 sessions and provided 360 brochures for the kids to bring home to their parents. The program continues to be well received!

Summer class

Seven weeks of class done! Thanks to Phil Cash who has revamped this course over the past years and made it a real success. To Nick Pio who organized trips despite snow, more snow, melting snow..... and to Dave Miles as head Wednesday rock activities. Many orange shirts contributed to the Tuesday evening lectures at the Maturango Museum. We started with 40 eager beginners and 30 of them showed up for the final class party. That's 30 more hikers in the mountains who have proper equipment and training and won't need to call CLMRG for every little thing. They can help others. They have great skills now. Go Hiking!

If they want to join CLMRG, there's a lot more to learn and paperwork to do, but stick with it! You already know camping and knots. Now for more rock climbing skills, more knots, more training.

Run with the Burros, 2023

CLMRG Supported the annual **Run with the Burros** event in Indian Wells and Short Canyons. Our part of this event was organized by Public Education Chair Jessica Kormelink to provide Safety, First Aid, for race contestants during the event. The Team of Jessica, Linda Finco, Gina Niesen, Scott Paniccia, and Bill Stephenson met at the Hut Saturday morning 0800, picked up Scott Paniccia at Triangle Drive and headed out to the event. 145 entrants started, most with their burro. After reporting in with the Event Coordinator we went to a predesignated location 1/2 way up Indian Wells Canyon to watch and monitor contestants. No contestant problems, furry or sweaty. The event sweep came through and confirmed that all contestants were in front of him and we watched till the sweep came back down the canyon on the return route. We headed over into Short canyon at around 1230, stopped at an intersection and watched the contestants go through. After confirming the last contestant was through, we drove the race route back to the beginning and signed out with the Coordinator ~1410, returning to the Hut at 1500. California Breakfast Burritos gave us a nice donation.



Burros will cooperate if the person is kind to them. Just have to ask the right way.
The course came in varying lengths, from 10 miles to Marathon!

Donations

Terry and Andrew Mitchell

Janet Westbrook – donated classroom at the Maturango Museum for Tuesday classes

Olivera Dimsoka – thanks for the summer class!

Amazon Smile (they're discontinuing this program. It's been a big help!)

WACOM

California Breakfast Burritos – for helping with Run with a Burro race

CFC Pledge

Training reports

2023 21-23 April Training Report Inyo Co/June Lake area

Bishop

Winter training occurred over three days from 21 to 23 April in the June Lake vicinity.

This was originally planned as the MRA winter reaccreditation; however, historic snowfall canceled the MRA event. The Group had reserved a condo for that weekend, which had to be postponed due to a winter storm and moved to these April dates.

On Friday, D.Bishop, M.Park, and N.Simons departed Ridgecrest in the morning and after checking into the condo, snow-shoed/skied to the summit of Reversed Peak. The afternoon sun had made the snow very soft which prevented any useful ice ax practice.

That evening D.Miles, P.Cash, R.Burnes arrived at the condo. Additionally, J.Kromphardt and A.Cammenga also joined us with the intent to go skiing at June Mountain after training.

Saturday, D.Bishop, M.Park, R.Burnes, P.Cash, and D.Miles conducted ice ax self-arrest training near the Fern Lake trailhead. Additionally, we practiced snow based belaying techniques, picket placements. D.Miles and P.Cash stayed to practice snow shelter building while D.Bishop, M.Park, R.Burnes continued up on snowshoes to Fern Lake. Above the Lake we proceeded through the steep snow and made the Carson Peak pass, 10200ft. The snow was again becoming soft in the late afternoon, however, good glissading was possible through much of the descent which also provided good opportunities to practice self-arrest.

Sunday on the way back D.Bishop, M.Park, R.Burnes, P.Cash, N.Simons, and D.Miles stopped near Deadman Pass and constructed an igloo. The 9ft diameter structure took about 2

hours to build. DB

Igloo living is fun! It's quiet in there, and one candle or light will provide great illumination for the whole thing. During the night the walls melt a little, then freeze and become very strong. Hot air and human bodies have been able to heat an igloo a bit larger than this one to 40° F. That's pretty nice without wind! With just one candle it will glow in the dark. Takes time and the right snow conditions. The alternative is to dig one-person snow caves, but they can be cozy too. You can make a shelf for goodies and a candle, hang stuff from the ceiling,,,,, Just be sure to put a flag outside so people can know you're there, especially snow plows! JW



We've been working with Kern Valley SAR doing searches along the Kern River. Several people have died in this river already this summer. Keep out signs are everywhere, both English and Spanish, but some people don't think that applies to them.

Our assignment this time was "search river left" ... it's not a walk in the park! Loaded with Poison Oak. In this photo the river is quite low, normal for winter, but now with all the snow melting and coming down this place is now water from above where the orange shirt is, all the way across the river, flowing at 5-6 mph. With that much water, the rocks become invisible. Boating is extremely dangerous. Tubing is out of the question.

The drone photo on pg. 4 shows what happens with a break in the road/levee – the river goes crazy and makes new channels and eddies in strange places.

Next Talus Pile will feature some of the amazing things we've all learned how to do – we take our ropes and rig them across the river to tie in boats and swimmers from KVSAR, and even rig high lines to transfer people above the raging waters. Stay tuned!

