

Strategic Plan 2015

Including Mission and Vision Statements

October 2013



That Others May Live



Our Mission

The mission of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference is to locate the lost person efficiently by enabling its member teams to provide the best search and rescue services possible to responsible authorities.

Our Core Values

We expect honesty, integrity, and true professionalism in everything we do.

We value member teams who show commitment through their training, actions, and leadership to the health and safety of all persons engaged in a mission or training exercise.

We value member teams who work in close cooperation and coordination with responsible authorities before, during, and after missions.

We value the fundamental principles and skills of search and rescue as the cornerstone for our member teams to be high quality resources for responsible authorities.

We value technology leadership and practice innovation as the foundations to advancing the state and art of search and rescue in our region.

We value search management excellence, with search managers embracing the critically important practices of safe incident operations, quality service to the responsible authority, best practice implementation, and an awareness of risk management.

We expect teamwork and goodwill among all member teams, regardless of location or practice specialty.

We are an organization of **professionally trained volunteer teams** with shared values that provide the best in search and rescue.



Our Vision

The Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference is an organization of volunteer search and rescue teams in the mid-Atlantic region who are aligned by the common goal to be the resource-of-choice that responsible authorities will turn to when they need to locate a missing person quickly. Our member teams exhibit outstanding professional qualities, share our simple core values, and possess a strong commitment to the lost person. Founded in 1974, the ASRC is one of the oldest search and rescue organizations in the United States and we lean on our extensive experience to guide us into the future.

We are a unifying organization that fosters an environment for our member teams to have the tools they need to be at their very best. Our world-class training standards enable our member teams to ensure their staff is among the best trained anywhere. We provide opportunities and create a culture in which our member teams can share and promote operational best practices and tactical efficiency when engaged in a mission. Our teams regularly evaluate and improve their capabilities by investing in training and continuing education. We value and embrace any resource type which improves the state of search and rescue in our region.

By advancing the practice of search management, we grow with the changing needs that agencies responsible for search and rescue have. Each of our member teams are leaders and innovators in search and rescue by conducting research, evaluating new technologies, and developing new capabilities to offer to the responsible authorities with which they work.

Member teams of Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC):

Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group (AMRG)

Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group (BRMRG)

Delmarva Search and Rescue Group (DMVSAR)

Maryland Search and Rescue (MSAR)

Mountaineer Area Rescue Group (MARG)

Potomac Valley Rescue Group (PVRG)

Rapid Assistance to Community Emergencies (RACE)

Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group (SMRG)



1. Getting Back to Search and Rescue

The ASRC was developed with the specific goal to provide much needed search and rescue resources to an area where none existed and to organize those resources under a common organizational structure, training standards, and performance requirements. This set the standard in the region for search and rescue resources and brought to light, the need for organized assets that governmental authorities could count on. As a result, the awareness of search and rescue resources increased, especially as the ASRC participated in mission after mission. Simultaneously the ASRC continued to grow and accept new member teams and further the state of search and rescue in the region, providing service as an operational entity and functioning as a multi-agency coordination organization among the member-teams. . At the same time, search and rescue teams, not part of the ASRC also continued to develop and group, and at time borrowing the methods and standards that the ASRC utilized.

While search and rescue resources in the mid-Atlantic region continued to grow and develop, responsible authorities became accustomed to calling on individual teams within their area of operations instead of thinking of the entire conference as a response group. This client environment suggests that the ASRC should emphasize its role and capability of providing a form of multi-agency coordination and a unifying service organization to its member teams.

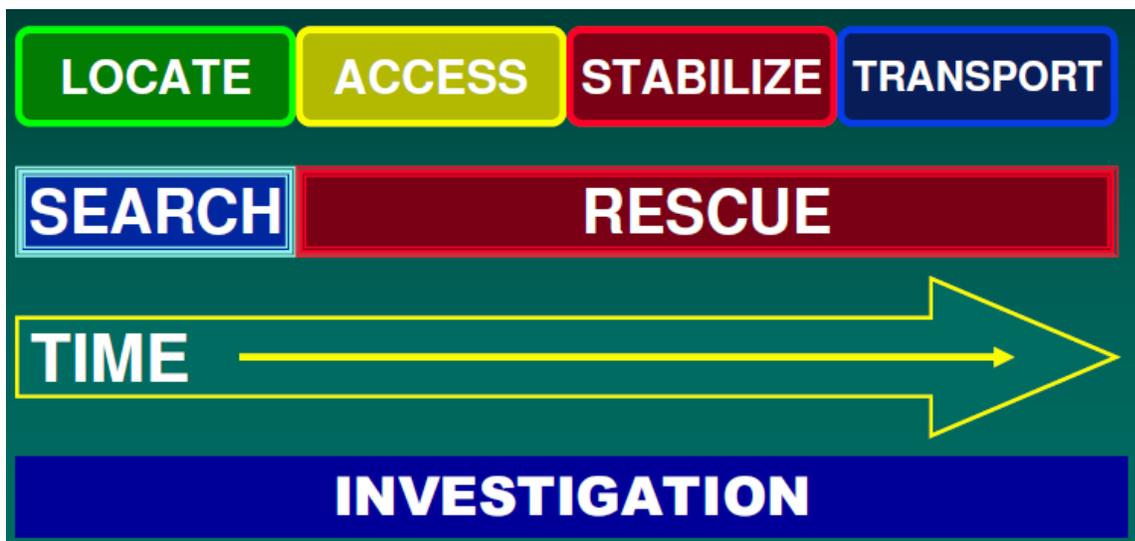
The first and major goal of this strategic plan is to revisit our organizational structure, return to team-centered management, and define the value of the ASRC to each of its unique member teams. To do this we will:

- Develop methods and practices for the ASRC to serve the needs of its member teams instead of its member teams serving the needs of the ASRC;
- Develop the organization and governance to align with team-centered management and continue to support the ASRC's capability to provide multi-agency coordination, among the member-groups and across the community.
- Provide updated administrative and operations manuals which create a community of search and rescue teams, to continue to discuss topics which are important to them and not debate the proceedings of the ASRC;
- Empower our member teams to develop their relationships with the responsible authorities they serve; and
- Provide a culture which values the needs the responsible authorities we serve and find ways to balance those needs with those of the missing person whom we ultimately train to help.

2. Reinforcing our Fundamental Search and Rescue Skills and Strengths

A successful search and rescue mission is dependent on many variables, one of the most important of which is having skilled, trained, and experienced personnel to deploy in the field. The responsible authorities, search managers and search planners are dependent on the field personnel who are searching the segments they are assigned. The subject deserves to have each segment searched to the best of the ability of that team assigned to it. An important goal of this Strategic Plan 2015 is to recommit the ASRC to recognizing that the fundamental skills of search and rescue are the cornerstone of our practice. In this regard, we will continue to:

- Build training programs which continually reinforce and strengthen the skills taught in every basic search and rescue program;
- Develop within each member team an emphasis that all responses and trainings are performed and accomplished with a focus on the safety of personnel;
- Place a high value, with equal weight and emphasis, on technical skills such as searching, land navigation, wilderness survival, incident command systems, communications, wilderness rescue and first aid skills;
- Leverage our experienced personnel to pass these basic skills and their importance on to the new members of each team;
- Hone and adapt these skills and strengths to the areas in which we operate, understanding the terrain and the associated hazards;
- Ensure that personnel of each member team are qualified individuals by developing training and evaluation standards that are second-to-none; and
- Place a high value on qualified, well-rounded, field team leaders who lead their teams on missions, understand their tasks within the context of the mission, and provide the best possible results of each task to the search managers.



3. Focusing on Those We Serve

We are here to provide our particular skill sets to aid the lost person. Everything we do is ultimately for the lost person during their time of need.

We serve the lost person primarily at the request of the governmental authorities responsible for locating and rescuing the lost person. The quality of the relationships with these responsible authorities are of utmost importance to our member teams so we can effectively deliver our services to the lost person. We are committed to further developing these relationships to better serve the lost person. To achieve these goals we will:

- Recognize that each member team should have strong relationships with the responsible authorities in their area. We will encourage and support our member teams to further develop these relationships with the local, state and federal responsible authorities in their service areas;
- Recognize that the responsible authorities that utilize our member teams are our clients and our response to their requests for services are focused on their needs and requests at the time of our responses. Our member teams bring the full breadth of their capabilities to bear on each mission or request, including highly trained and skilled personnel. This enables our member teams to provide the services that the responsible authority requests, but also provides additional resources should the responsible authority choose to activate them;
- As the mission warrants, our member teams can, with the agreement of the client, activate additional ASRC teams to bring the full resources of the conference to bear on the mission;
- We work with the responsible authority when our resources are requested. If the conditions of the search mission do not match our expectations then we are committed to working with the responsible authority to help them conduct the best search mission possible with the given resources within the parameters they are comfortable working;
- We have the best interest of the lost person in mind at all times. We fulfill this by having the best interest of the responsible authority in mind at all times as well. Our personnel will not freelance while engaged in a mission whether their work is in the field or at the incident command post. The time for our member teams to air their disagreements is during after action reviews or in private with the responsible authority. We will not criticize our partners in public.

4. Developing and Mentoring Today's Leaders

Every member team of the ASRC has experienced and dedicated senior personnel with a wealth of valuable knowledge. The ASRC encourages the senior membership and leaders of its member teams to share and pass on that knowledge for the next generation of leaders. At the same time, the ASRC promotes and encourages a culture of continuing education for the current leaders and senior membership of its member teams.

Each member's involvement in search and rescue shouldn't stop with just attaining a base level certification to be operational. Our member teams should encourage its membership to continue to field team leader and take on other roles within search and rescue including team officer positions, search management roles, specialty disciplines and so on. Today's leaders are the key to maintaining the tradition of excellence that the ASRC is known for and setting the example for tomorrow's leaders.

To achieve these goals the ASRC will:

- Encourage the members of each member team to achieve their field team leader status. We recognize that field team leader is not just a role during missions, it is a role carried through the entirety of their involvement in search and rescue. The field team leader sets the example for new and incoming team members, shares their knowledge and enthusiasm for the work we do, and provides leadership during all team functions;
- Provide an open forum for the officers and leaders of the member teams to exchange ideas and thoughts on leading their respective teams, ask questions and share their teams accomplishments. The ASRC will actively engage the training and operations officers of each team and create opportunities for information and ideas exchanges. All discussions will be moderated to ensure a positive environment is created; and
- Provide open access to those who have specialized knowledge and expertise to share through regular webinars, conference calls, or other means. Each of our member teams have personnel who have something to share, we want to harness that information and make it accessible to our membership.



5. Fostering an Ecosystem for Innovation

The ASRC is proud of the work it has done in the past to advance the state of search and rescue in the region. We want to continue to be recognized by our peers and clients as practice leaders for land search and rescue. Our goal is to continue this tradition of developing new capabilities, improving search management, harnessing new technologies and methods all in order to locate the lost person quickly. A cornerstone for this type of environment is a practice of continual and honest self-assessment to bring to light those policies, procedures, skills, and abilities which are benefiting our responses or need additional refinement.

We encourage our member teams to assess their respective response areas for additional capabilities that the responsible authorities and the lost subject they work for may benefit from. What is missing from your area? What could be done better? We encourage our member teams to interview the responsible authorities to find out what they think could be improved upon or additional capabilities that is needed. While the ASRC has its roots in ground-based search and rescue, it should not ignore additional types of resources if they are warranted.

Some of our members are doing work with national implications. This work is impressive and confirms that there is much that can be improved within the practice of search and rescue. We should congratulate our colleagues who are doing this work and look to them as examples of the type of innovation the ASRC can foster.

We will implement this goal by:

- Encouraging our member teams to identify new capabilities they can bring to bear on search and rescue missions based on routine mission debriefs;
- Assisting teams in developing new capabilities by providing needed support to help review standards, finding experts in the field, understanding best practices and identifying other support as needed;
- Keeping our member teams informed of current issues and advances in search and rescue, emergency management and operational tactics that could be implemented in our region;
- Providing assistance in finding sources to fund particular projects, and
- Acknowledging the work done by others to advance the state of search and rescue in our region.

