



# 2015 ASRC Retreat

*Creative thinking inspires ideas. Ideas inspire change.*

## ASRC Direction - FAQ

In October of 2013 the *ASRC Strategic Plan 2015* was published. This document describes the ASRC Core Values, the Vision and five Strategic Goals and Action Items. We continue to follow the direction set by this document; however, after a number of discussions and emails, it has become clear that there is a lack of clarity on the direction defined in this document. The goal of this FAQ is to provide some of that clarity.

### **What are the main tenets of the Strategic Plan?**

#### **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 corner-stone 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.

#### **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



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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.

## **Strategic Goals and Action Items**

1. Getting Back to Search and Rescue
2. Reinforcing our Fundamental Search and Rescue Skills and Strengths
3. Focusing on Those We Serve
4. Developing and Mentoring Today's Leaders
5. Fostering an Ecosystem for Innovation

## **Why does the ASRC have to change?**

Over time the expectations of the RAs and the AHJs (this FAQ is going to use RA going forward) have changed. Since the ASRC serves at the pleasure of these agencies, we must change to meet their new expectations. The state EMAs have made progress, some more than others, in looking at missing person SAR as a responsibility they have, not something that they want to delegate to the local fire department. This has driven a number of changes in the way the RAs think about SAR resources. The RAs are thinking in terms of local teams as the resources they call. We need to acknowledge and move towards the individual groups (our member teams) being the entities they think about. The states have moved towards requesting teams that have met state specific requirements. The ASRC is not going to become recognized in all of the states in which it operates; it is each individual group that will need to meet their specific state's requirements.

## **What will the ASRC become?**

There is no question that it is the ASRC groups (i.e., member teams) that put boots-on-the-ground. The ASRC will become an organization whose purpose is to support each member team in their crucial mission. This support will take multiple forms;



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many you already know and many we have not yet thought of. Some of the ways the ASRC will continue to support the groups are:

- Continue to provide the highest training standards in use in the mid-Atlantic region;
- Provide the structure and governance necessary to make the ASRC the accrediting authority for FTM, FTL, SM, and other specialty certifications. This will remove the concern that some RAs have of ASRC teams being “self-certifying”;
- Provide the expertise to make remote support a significant operational advantage available to ASRC teams; and
- Provide the ability to do research projects that are larger than a single team can handle. There are current projects in the areas of: a) the use of GIS in SAR, b) the use of ESW in search management, c) the use of UAVs in missing person search.

### **What are the major changes?**

There will need to be a number of changes if the ASRC is going to remain a force in missing person search for the next 40 years and beyond. These include:

- The biggest change is that the ASRC and not the groups will be certifying FTMs and FTLs. The mechanics of this are yet to be worked out but, by the end of the 2015 Retreat, we hope to have a solid framework for making this happen. Your group GTOs will continue to be an important part of training and certification; they just will no longer be the only participant in the certification process. The ASRC has been the certifying authority for Search managers (Incident Staff and Incident Commanders) and this change continues that tradition to include the FTM and FTL cadres first with specializations to follow.
- The smallest immediate change will be that the ASRC will no longer be an “operational” entity. This acknowledges that RAs do not call for the ASRC, but rather for member teams. For years our member teams have been changing to meet the demands of our RAs. The RAs want certified resources. The fact that the teams we often call are other ASRC groups is of little interest to the



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RA on the scene. We call other ASRC groups because we know their capabilities and we know that they are able to get the job done.

### **What is the Timeline?**

Any type of large-scale organization change is a long and sometimes unsettling process. There have been a number of bumps, distractions and timing setbacks as we have progressed, but the over all progress has been rewarding. The officers goals were published in the minutes of the October 11, 2014 BoD meeting. These goals laid out a basic timeline for the proposed changes (the times are defined as AGM to AGM so think of them as spring to spring).

#### 2014-2015

- Operations Guidelines: shift from operational to certification/credentialing organization
- Training suite: update to documents to ensure all facets support a credentialing organization

#### 2015-2016:

- Changes to the governing documents will be proposed to support the stated direction of the ASRC.

### **What about the culture?**

Altruism, cooperation, operational leadership, and the highest degree of professionalism are the key components of the ASRC culture. While there are changes in ASRC direction, those changes demand no change in our culture. This does not mean that keeping the culture will be easy. It is never easy to maintain the high level of standards that describe the ASRC. We must continually work to reinforce these key components. We must continue to work for the missing person because it is the right thing to do. We must continue to work together within the ASRC and outside of the ASRC. The mission is far greater than any single group can execute. We must continue to operate at the highest level of professionalism. The RAs we serve expect this of us and more importantly we must expect it of ourselves.