

BEARS DEN →
TRAIL CENTER

Winter Retreat

January 2020

Advancing the State of
Search and Rescue





Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference?

The ASRC is an organization of volunteer search and rescue teams (Groups) 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 Groups exhibit outstanding professional qualities, share our simple core values, and possess a strong commitment to locating the lost person.

What is the Winter Retreat?

The Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference (ASRC) sponsors an annual Winter Retreat with the goal to bring together members from each Group to share their knowledge and experience in Search and Rescue. Typically this happens through formal presentations by volunteer speakers and by side conversations. It is a weekend of fellowship between ASRC Groups and gives a forum for information exchange. Another important purpose of the Winter Retreat is for Groups to come together to discuss the direction of ASRC.

Who can attend and do I have to register?

The Winter Retreat is open to all members of our Groups. This is one of the benefits of membership in the ASRC. To coordinate our planning efforts, we do ask that you complete a [brief registration form available at our website](#).

What is this year's theme of the Winter Retreat?

The theme this year is *Advancing the State of Search and Rescue*. As Search and Rescue practitioners and members of the ASRC, we are always seeking new opportunities to do what we do in a way that finds the lost person as quickly as possible. We want to practice our craft as well as we can, look for opportunities for improvement, and transfer our knowledge to others. We want to be leaders in the practice of search and rescue and be at the forefront of technology, methods, knowledge. The many presentations and discussions held at the Winter Retreat are designed with meeting the goals of our Strategic Plan, SP2020.

Where is the Winter Retreat held?

Bears Den Lodge in Bluemont, Virginia. Bears Den is a Potomac Appalachian Trail Club-operated property along the Appalachian Trail. We use the main room as our meeting space and there is a full kitchen, dining room, bunk rooms, and restrooms. There is also plenty of camping outside the building.

The address is: [18393 Blueridge Mountain Road, Bluemont, Virginia 20135](#)

Is food provided?

Yes. Traditionally the ASRC has coordinated food for the weekend making use of the kitchen facilities. Our food is custom catered by one of our own. We do ask for a small cash fee to help offset costs - typically \$20 to \$30 per person for the weekend. Food allergies and preferences are recorded when you register.

Our Mission Statement

The mission of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference is to locate the lost person efficiently by enabling its Groups 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 Groups 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 Groups 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 Groups 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 Strategic Goals

- Credentialing Program
- Develop Our Groups
- Deliver Content to Our Groups
- Develop Our Remote Support Capability
- Fostering an Ecosystem for Innovation



Summary of SP2020





Weekend Agenda

Day 1: Friday, 17 January 2020

- 17:00 Arrival
Bunks are first come, first served
Chat with your colleagues and visit the overlook
Dinner Service - time determined by Chef

Day 2: Saturday, 18 January 2020

- 08:00 Breakfast Service
08:45 Welcome
09:00 Technical Session (see following pages)
12:00 Lunch Service with Guest Speaker
13:00 Technical Session (see following pages)
17:15 Break and Networking
18:30 Regional Beer Tasting with Appetizers
19:30 Dinner Service

Day 3: Sunday, 19 January 2020

- 08:00 Breakfast Service
08:30 Field Team Leader evaluation by the Credentialing Board
We ask that all those present be ready to assist in an evaluation for our candidate. Please bring appropriate clothing and your SAR gear so you can fully participate.
10:30 Board of Directors Meeting
Meeting is open to all persons
See agenda on following pages
12:00 Working Lunch
13:30 Cleanup, weekend adjourns, free time, you may choose to spend the night (approx.)

Day 4: Monday, 20 January 2020

Impromptu activities and unscripted wandering (please do not get lost)

Saturday, 18 January 2020

08:45 - 09:00	Welcome
09:00 - 09:30	Vision and Object Recognition: Implications for Searching Stephen McClanahan - SAROH, MARG
09:30 - 10:00	Remote Support State of the Practice Patty Lindsay - MARG, Remote Support Corps
10:00 - 10:30	Update from the Credentialing Board Steve Weiss - ASRC Credentialing Board Chair
10:30 - 10:45	New Tech for Semi-Tech: Modified Basket Hitch Keith Conover - AMRG
10:45 - 11:00	Break
11:00 - 11:30	Leveraging different implementations of SARTopo Katy Hart, et. al. - SMRG
11:30 - 11:45	MRA 2020 Conference Teaser Amanda Zenuh - AMRG
11:45 - 12:00	Finger injuries Dan Lesinski - AMRG
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch Service
12:15 - 13:00	Advances in Search and Rescue Robert Koester - BRMRG
13:00 - 13:45	“We Don’t Need Another Hero” - Are we falling behind in Safety and Risk Management Don Scelza - AMRG, MARG, Lee Fuell - MARG
13:45 - 14:15	Search and recovery involving river and stream environments Stephen McClanahan - SAROH, MARG
14:15 - 14:30	Injury cards: Improving SAR medical scenario training Sean McElligot - SMRG
14:30 - 14:45	Break and Snacks
14:45 - 15:00	New Tech for Semi-Tech: Petzl Hardware Keith Conover - AMRG
15:00 - 15:45	Latest Lessons from Sweep Width Experiments Ken Chiacchia - MARG
15:45 - 16:00	Break
16:00 - 17:00	SAR GAR Don Scelza - AMRG, MARG
17:00 - 17:15	Closing Thoughts and The State of the ASRC Keith Conover - ASRC



see Abstracts on following pages

Technical Session Schedule



Vision and Object Recognition: Implications for Searching

Stephen McClanahan - SAROH, MARG

Field searching relies heavily on human vision and the ability to recognize objects that are out of place. Searchers seek to continually improve their ability to detect clues. This presentation focuses on basics of vision and how it relates to our ability to recognize objects. It is known that visually scanning an area tends to blur the mental images received by the brain, limiting our ability to discern things that are out of place. The Coast Guard has developed visual techniques used in open water searches that attempt to overcome this barrier; we will summarize these techniques and explore their applicability for wilderness search and rescue.

Remote Support State of the Practice

Patty Lindsay - MARG, RSC

Patty will review the Remote Support Corps (RSC) accomplishments and the connections made to other groups in 2019. This talk will also provide an update to the RSC capabilities and a “typical” response picture. Finally, Patty will describe the role and activities of the On Scene Liaison that every Group should have as part of their search management toolbox to interface with the RSC.

Update from the Credentialing Board

Steve Weiss - Credentialing Board Chair

Steve will provide an update on the credentialing board in light of the Version 8.0 standards approved by the ASRC Board of Directors in 2019.

New Tech for Semi-Tech: Modified Basket Hitch

Keith Conover - AMRG

The “go-to” tree anchor for doing semi-tech evacuations (low-angle rope rescue) has long been the wrap-3 pull-2 anchor. The Modified Basket Hitch is faster, easier, just as strong and less prone to error. Should we switch? A demonstration and very brief discussion of the technique. Aimed at those interested in semi-tech but not so much in vertical rescue.

Leveraging different implementations of SARTopo

Katy Hart, Steve Weiss - SMRG

Katy and Steve will discuss how SMRG’s experience using SARTopo and Remote Support has advanced their relationships with Responsible Authorities (RA) in Virginia. Broad knowledge of search management combined with SARTopo has allowed Katy and others to implement the software in different ways for different RAs. Color pallets, folder structures, and other differences has opened the door for SMRG in Virginia in ways that were previously difficult.

MRA 2020 Conference Teaser

Amanda Zenuh - AMRG

AMRG will give us a brief overview of their planning for the upcoming MRA conference hosted by AMRG. The conference will occur from 11 to 13 June 2020 at the Seven Springs Resort in Champion, Pennsylvania.

Finger injuries

Dan Lesinski - AMRG

Search and rescue personnel are subject to increased risk of finger injuries during training or mission response due to the nature of the work. Dan will present recent personal experience and provide information on hazard analysis, methods of injury, personal protective equipment, and care for such injuries.

Advances in Search and Rescue

Robert Koester - BRMRG

Join us during lunch as Robert discusses recent advancements in search and rescue technology and search theory. This talk will include updates to POA, POD, PSR, and FIND. Don't know what those acronyms are? Join us to find out and get up to speed on the latest and greatest in search and rescue.

“We Don't Need Another Hero” - Are we falling behind in safety and risk management?

Don Scelza - AMRG, MARG & Lee Fuell - MARG

On December 14, 2019, West Valley Search & Rescue (CA) volunteer Tim Staples died when he fell into an ice chute while searching for a lost hiker in challenging winter conditions on Mount Baldy, CA. While the Appalachian operating environment is not as challenging as Mount Baldy, Tim's tragic death generated some significant reflection and leadership discussion within MARG about safety and risk management on SAR operations; this session will expand that discussion to include the broader ASRC. Don and Lee will lead a discussion of risks, risk management, risk-based decision making and safety policies and practices within the ASRC and similar practices in the broader emergency services community. The intent is to help us all meet the #1 objective of any public safety agency: *Everyone goes home.*

Search and recovery involving river and stream environments

Stephen McClanahan - SAROH, MARG

Unfortunately, some of our missions are search and recovery operations. Those that involve drowning in streams and rivers are particularly challenging searches since these environments can often carry human remains unknown distances downstream, either on the surface or below. This presentation attempts to summarize what is known from the scientific literature on the behavior of human bodies postmortem after submersion in moving waterways. As will be demonstrated, this is a complex problem involving multiple variables and limited data to date. While the overall goal is to explore and perhaps develop parameters that may aid in recovery efforts, the more immediate objective of this presentation is to collect input from expert searchers on additional data sources and potential collaborators to aid in this research.



Abstracts



Injury cards: Improving SAR medical scenario training

Sean McElligot - SMRG

Sean is developing “injury cards” for use during any training exercise. Rather than making up random injuries on the fly, there will be a set list of cards to draw from. Cards will be set on three levels of severity, essentially; walkout w/ assistance, minor medical care, and major medical emergency/evacuation. The cards will draw from common injuries/illnesses seen on searches, and will contain information on the treatment for the assigned injuries. Sean will take questions and recommendations for improvement as part of the presentation.

New Tech for Semi-Tech: Petzl Hardware

Keith Conover - AMRG

Our traditional hardware for steep semi-technical evacuations that might involve both raising and lowering is a combination of a load-releasing hitch, rappel rack, rescue pulleys, Prusiks and lots of attention. New hardware, particularly from Petzl, can simplify this greatly, at a cost. Is it worth it? A demonstration and very brief discussion of new equipment. Aimed at those interested in semi-tech but not so much in vertical rescue.

Latest Lessons for Sweep Width Experiments

Ken Chiacchia - MARG

Though we have a lot of data on lost person behavior to help us figure out POAs for missing people, POD is still largely “junk data.” Sweep width research is helping us get much more accurate PODs but still has a way to go for full operational application. The critical separation method is a Before-Time means for spacing line searchers so that they reach a predictable “Goldilocks” POD -- but it’s based on a lot of (old) assumptions. Ken will discuss his new paper in press at Wilderness and Environmental Medicine Journal that compares the results of critical separation to new findings in sweep width; he’ll also do a quick review of the state of the field, including next steps in the research and what current data hints that research’s findings may be.

SAR GAR

Don Scelza - AMRG, MARG

This talk is a follow-up to the safety discussion lead by Don and Lee earlier in the day. Don will present one tool available to Groups to manage risk at the task level during missions and trainings. Improve the safety culture of your organization by learning and implementing the lessons Don will provide.

Closing Thoughts and State of the ASRC

Keith Conover - Chair, ASRC

Keith will end the technical session by presenting his take on the state of the ASRC, its current directions, and an outlook for the future. A perfect segue to Board of Directors Meeting on Sunday!



Weekend Menu

Day 1: Friday, 17 January 2020

Dinner Service

Pork Chili Verde

with tortillas, cotija cheese, sour cream, cilantro, and lime

Mexican Street Corn Salad

Day 2: Saturday, 18 January 2020

Breakfast Service

Steel-cut Oatmeal

Irish Soda Bread a la Weiss

Hard boiled eggs, cheese, yogurt, and fruit assortment

Lunch Service

Smokey Potato Chickpea Stew

Sandwiches

Dinner Service

Blue Cheese Stuffed Flank Steak

Sticky Malaysian Chicken

Roast Brussel Sprouts

Sweet Potato Fries

Salad

Focaccia a la Weiss

Desserts and Sweets

Bourbon Cream Cake

Banoffee Pike

Apple Yogurt Cake

Day 3: Sunday, 19 January 2020

Breakfast Service

Omelet Rolls

Leftovers from prior meals

Beverages available throughout the weekend

coffee, hot tea (regular and decaffeinated)

breakfast apple and orange juice



Board of Directors Meeting Agenda

Sunday, 19 January 2019

- I. Call to Order/ Safety Moment
- II. Participant Roll Call
- III. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
- IV. Officer Reports
 - A. Chair
 - B. Treasurer - **including end-of-year ROSTERS**
 - C. Training
 - D. Operations
- V. New and Unfinished Business
- VI. Good of the Order
- VII. Adjourn

Note: Agenda is likely to be updated.





Notes

Use this space to take notes during the weekend.
Or write down your suggestions for 2021 and send to the Chair.



Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group (AMRG)

Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group (BRMRG)

Maryland Search and Rescue (MSAR)

Mountaineer Area Rescue Group (MARG)

Northwest Pennsylvania K9 Search and Rescue (NWPAK9SAR)

Remote Support Corps (RSC)

Search and Rescue Ohio (SAR-OH)

Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group (SMRG)

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All photographs taken by Michael Hansen at Bear's Den during the 2019 Winter Retreat