

***History of the National Association of Search and Rescue Coordinators
(NASARC)***

By Cole Brown, Maryland May 2010

Introduction

I, Cole Brown, Chair of the State Search and Rescue Coordinators Council (SSARCC), on May 11, 2010, realized the success of the council. This caused a little voice in my head to remind me to reflect back on how we arrived here. At the same time, Chris Long, Washington State Search and Rescue Coordinator spoke up and said (about the 12th year in a row, not that I am counting) “Most of you do not know that the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) use to be the National Association of Search and Rescue Coordinators (NASARC) in the earlier 1970’s”. With that said, I think it is important to reflect back on history and learn from those who truly developed this process and the Council that exists today.

*“The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you can see.”
by: Winston Churchill*

As we move forward in our journey as State Search and Rescue Coordinators, we have to remember that our foundation is based on over thirty five (35) years of history and experience with several of those State SAR Coordinators still living. Those include:

Bill Vargas, NM
Chris Long, WA
Rick Goodman, NM
Rick Lavalla, WA
Ralph Wilfong, VA
Winnie Pennington, VA
Bill Wade, NPS
Larry Buffalo, CA
Art Jones (LA)

In this section of the website, I will be reflecting back on those who have influenced me and the many others to make this journey happen. Also I will ensure the preservation of the original purpose of the council.

I began my journey by taking a “Managing the Search Function” Course at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) taught by Jeffery Mitchell and Greg Stiles, Retired Park Superintendent and Ranger at Shenandoah National Park in 1985. In 1986, I was introduced to Marian Hardy and Brook Holt of Dogs East and founders of Mid Atlantic Dogs and joined their search and rescue dog group, Dogs East, Inc. Four years later they suggested I attend a NASAR Conference in Phoenix, AZ in 1990, where I met Bill Wade, Louis Clark McCoy, Greg and Peggy McDonald, Bill Vargas, Rick Lavalla, Skip Stoffel, Rick Goodman and many others who all laid the foundation for me regarding search management and state search and rescue coordination. (I may be forgetting others but not intentional, just old age).

In 1997, at the Richmond NASAR Conference I ran into several of the most experienced search managers and SAR Coordinators and they provided me with a wealth of information and alot of ideas. In, 1999, at the Orlando NASAR Conference several of the SAR Coordinators along with Chris Long, Washington State SAR Coordinator, nudging me along suggested that I coordinate a meeting of all the State SAR Coordinators at the next conference in 2000 (which was cancelled)

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and invite Bill Wade to be the facilitator of the meeting. That was a long year working with Larry Buffalo (CA), Rick Goodman (NM), Bill Vargas (NM), Chris Long (WA), Winnie Pennington (VA), Cole Brown (MD), Eric Fogle (MD), Matt Scharper (CA), Paul Burke (AK), Art Jones (LA), Lee Manning (MA), Georges Klienbaum (OR), Patrick Dorian (ME), James Langston (AZ), Randy Servis (AZ), Bruce Fosdick (CO), Eric Talbot (NC and Past President of NEMA), Mike Guzo (NC), James Bateson (NJ), Mark Fowler (Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, AFRCC) and several others to help identify a state search and rescue coordinator for each state. We worked with the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) and Mike Tuttle (San Bernardino, CA County SAR Coordinator and President of NASAR) to get letters out to the States to ensure a representative from each state was present for the first meeting.

In the years 2000 and 2001, I spoke with Bill Wade, Rick Goodman, Chris Long and Rick LaValla about the idea of a meeting of all State SAR Coordinators at the NASAR Conference and they supported the efforts. Rick LaValla invited me to attend a social event of the National Emergency Managers Association (NEMA) meeting in March 2001, where I met Lacy Suiter and Eric Talbot. Mr. Lacy Suiter was Past Director Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and Search and Rescue Coordinator, Past 1st VP of NASARC, Executive Associate Director for Response and Recovery for FEMA for President Bill Clinton and Past President and Chair of Legislative Committee of NEMA. Eric Talbot, in 2001, was Director of North Carolina Division of Emergency Management and President of National Emergency Managers Association (NEMA). Between the three of them they introduced me to various other state emergency management directors. Thank you to Rick LaValla for the opportunity to make the first meeting successful through the effective networking at the NEMA Mid Year Meeting in March 2001. As a footnote Rick LaValla was hired in late 1971 to serve as Hal's assistant and followed Hal as the next Washington State SAR Coordinator. Rick was the third President of NASAR from Sept 1976 to 1978.

The 2001 State Search and Rescue Coordinators Meeting

The first meeting of the State Search and Rescue Coordinators occurred on May 24, 2001 in Colorado Springs, Co., in conjunction with the NASAR 2001 Conference, with Mr. Bill Wade as facilitator. As a footnote, in 1973, Bill Wade worked as a Training Specialist at the National Park Service's (NPS) Albright Training Center in Grand Canyon and was one of the founders of the formal search management training program for the NPS). Also in attendance as a guest speaker was Retired Col. Roy Dreibelbis, AFRCC Commander during the 1970's and serving currently in 2001 on the National Search and Rescue Committee (NSARC) Research and Development Working Group. Special thank you goes to Bill Wade for serving as the facilitator. Both Bill and Roy served as Delegates on the NASARC in the early to mid 1970's.

The Agenda and Attendees of the 2001 National SAR Coordinators Meeting are available for review in pdf format on this website.

History

Over the past 11 years, we have continued to have meetings with the State SAR Coordinators and formalized in 2009. Chris Long made a statement during this council meeting that we should

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not forget how we got to this point in 2010. This was not the first time that State Search and Rescue Coordinators formed a council. Back in the late 1960's, several of the Western States' Office of Civil Defense (OCD) recognized that search and rescue preparation and training for natural and manmade disasters were under control, but not as well prepared in several of the western states and the National Park Service (NPS) where they were consistently dealing with the everyday wilderness and back country search and rescue mission for missing and lost people.

The State Search and Rescue Coordinator for Washington State, Hal Foss, who joined the State of Washington Department of Emergency Services as Assistant Director in 1967 and in 1969 became Washington State's first Search and Rescue (SAR) Coordinator. Between the years of 1969 to 1970, Hal determined that there was a need for a forum for SAR Coordinators to meet and discuss SAR matters at all levels of Government (local, State and Federal). In 1970, during a meeting in Salt Lake, Utah the National Association of Search and Rescue Coordinators (NASARC) was formed to foster national inland SAR program. Hal was the catalyst, founder and first president of NASARC. Later due to significant growth in the NASARC, Hal developed and organized the first meeting of the National SAR Council on April 19 and 20, 1974 in Boise, Idaho.

The following organizations were represented by Delegates to the Council:

- Brig. General Glenn R. Sullivan - Cmdr., Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service.
- Hardy M. Willis - Special Assistant for SAR, Federal Aviation Administration.
- Albert J. McCullough - Chief, SAR Liaison Staff, U.S. Coast Guard.
- Lt. Col. Hubert M. Berthold - Hq. Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service, Director of Rescue.
- Lt. Col. Hayden C. Moore - Hq. CAP, USAF, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.
- Bill Wade, National Park Service, Albright Training Academy.
- Ralph Zundel - Secretary, Mountain Rescue Association.
- D. Dickson (MD) - 1st. Vice Commander, National Jeep SAR Association.
- George A. Connell - Past National Cmdr. National Jeep SAR Association.
- Dennis E. Kelley - SAR Magazine and Montrose SAR Team.
- Hal Foss - Washington DES SAR Coordinator and President NASRC.
- Blair E. Nilsson - Colorado DES SAR Coordinator.
- Paul H. Koenig - Utah DES SAR Coordinator.
- Charles M. Rountree - Idaho D.D.R. & C.D.
- Bob E. Hill - California DES SAR Coordinator.
- John Olson - Oregon DES SAR Coordinator.

The minutes of the first National SAR Council were written by Blair Nilsson, Colorado Search and Rescue Coordinator and are available for review in pdf format on this website. They were published in the Search and Rescue Magazine (Official Publication of the National Association of SAR Coordinators), by Dennis Kelley, Montrose Search and Rescue Team Member, in Summer Edition 1974.

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On July 14, 1974, Hal Foss, President of the National Association of Search and Rescue Coordinators and Washington State SAR Coordinator suffered a fatal heart attack while climbing Mt. St. Helens, Washington State, with his son Lynn and another teenager. In honor of Hal Foss's contributions in the field of Search and Rescue, the Hal Foss Award was initiated by NASARC, in late 1974, to periodically honor those with similar dedications to the saving of human life. NASAR carries on this tradition, honor and award to this day.

As a footnote: The National Association of Search and Rescue Coordinators (NASARC) changed their name on September 9, 1976 at the 8th Annual Conference in Cheyenne, Wyoming to the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR).

As I read through Dennis Kelley's Search and Rescue Magazines from 1973 up through 1980's, I learned that we, as State SAR Coordinators, are facing the same challenges that our predecessor's did in the late 1960's and 70's and we need to understand their challenges, successes, mistakes, and learn from them so we can succeed in our journey through the 21st Century.

*"Those that fail to learn from history, are doomed to repeat it."
by: Winston Churchill*

Challenges that face State SAR Coordinators Today

There are several similarities between the State SAR Coordinators of 1970's and 2010's:

- The first is indentifying and validating each States Search and Rescue Coordinator and getting representation from all of the states to represent their Governors, Public Safety officials, and/or Emergency Managers for SAR.
- The second issue is the consistency from various SAR entities Federal, State, Local and various national SAR entities such as NASAR and Mountain Rescue Association (MRA) and others on standards, certification, testing, and credentialing.
- Third is maintaining an open dialogue and sharing of activities and best practices amongst the States and Federal SAR Coordinators and Partners.
- And forth is a formalized process of a search and rescue data collection system for the development of national statistics.

These and several other items where stated at the first National SAR Council Meeting in April 1974 but just a few months prior, Hal Foss gave the graduating speech to the third Graduating Class of the National Search and Rescue School on February 15, 1974. Hal in his speech laid out the benefits of the establishment of a central SAR coordination point for a State and he also left them with some thoughts as they prepare for home to ensure they work to establish a better state SAR program and survival education program.

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For SAR professionals (paid and non-paid) to make a difference in this country regarding search and rescue, the state Governors, Public Safety officials, and/or Emergency Managers need to ensure they have a person at each of these meetings that possess the jurisdictional responsibility or authority from their home state for SAR, to contribute and address the true SAR issue facing the States.

Identifying who the State SAR Coordinator is can be a challenge and be unique for each state due to the wide array of SAR i.e. Disaster SAR (ESF-9) vs. Civil SAR (day to day) which includes ground, waterborne, and aeronautical SAR. The two tools or methods that can help in identifying the State SAR Coordinators are the long standing written Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) between the US Inland SAR Coordinator, United State Air Force, and the Governor of the State. The second is the State Agency responsible for coordinating Disaster Response for SAR (ESF-9) for the State.

I dedicate the History Section of the Website for the State Search and Rescue Coordinators Council to Hal Foss. Hal's wisdom and insight has led us to where we are today. I would also like to dedicate the History Section to Dennis Kelley for his dedication to the documentation of these events as they happened in Search and Rescue Magazines.

I would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to this article:

- Chris Long for your persistence and dedication to the SAR Coordinators meetings.
- Dennis Kelley for allowing us to post parts of the Search and Rescue Magazines on the site.
- Rick LaValla for the background information, networking opportunities, and support.
- Matt Scharper, Mike McDonald, and Byron Thompson for their review and comments.
- Rob and Becky McCormick for their review and grammatical fixes to this article.
- My wife, Christine and daughter, Ashley for their editorial reviews and continuous support.

Notes: The author served as past Board Member of NASAR from 1999 to 2007 and has been a member of NASAR since 1986 and become a life member of NASAR in 2007.