

# Maine Association For Search And Rescue

## Meeting Minutes for 7 June 1998

Meeting is called to order by John McDonough, President of MASAR, at 14:02 hours

### Present

Keith R Heavrin Jr. - MESARD, Al Martin - DIRIGO, Mike Sawyer - Warden Service, John McDonough - Wilderness, Randy Armour- Lincoln, Pat Dorian - Warden Service, Peter Byrnes- Lakes Region, Rick Grant - Lakes Region, Chris Drew- Baxter State Park, Dave Martin - DIRIGO.

### Announcements

**MASAR Annual Dues are due in the month of June. All units and members please forward payment to Peter Laveway at your earliest opportunity.**

Baxter State Park's summer volunteer program has started and qualified MASAR members are encouraged to take part. They are offering some nice benefits for qualified people to be in the Park and be available to respond to emergency incidents during busy weeks and week ends.

Tom Santaguida has been appointed to fill the Warden Service Major's position.

Rick Grant of Lakes Region has been named the EMS volunteer of the year and Volunteers of America volunteer of the year. Two prestigious awards and we all extend our congratulations to Rick for this outstanding recognition.

Steve Hudson has tendered his resignation from the MASAR Standards Committee chairman's position.

### Secretary's Report

After Consideration and the correction of the spelling of Roger Guay's name Al Martin moves the minutes from the April meeting be accepted. Seconded by Rick. Unanimous in favor.

### Treasurer's Report

Pete Laveway is not present and no report is available. Al Martin notes that dues are up for 1998 in June.

### Ashland Search Effort

Lengthy discussion ensues concerning this ongoing and still unresolved search for Robert Smith, 70, who went missing during the previous year's deer hunting season. Warden Service planned to hold the MASAR spring training exercise at this search scene in order to continue the effort. Several delays and postponements in the date this exercise was planned for took place. Prior to the exercise, five MESARD dog teams were requested and went up to the area spending two days working with Wardens on the 11th and 12th of May. Several large areas were searched and a number of beaver pond dams breached so they could be looked at. It is reported that some 80 to 90 MASAR ground searchers were present for the continuation of this search on the 30th of the May. Some radio problems again developed. We learned that no matter how hard we look, gaps in coverage may still occur. On one assignment a large area was missed because the team assigned to search it was using a brook as a boundary. The brook had a branch stream coming into it and the teams mistook that branch for the boundary. This was caught and corrected. Another large gap in coverage was discovered near the camp road leading to the Smith's camp. Teams that had been assigned to this area only got part of it done before they were called from the field for another search. This gap was also, eventually, discovered and searched thoroughly. GPS units in general use on searches will help to solve these type errors. Despite a massive effort again this spring no further evidence, leads, or clues of any kind were developed. Operations were cut way back

after this weekend's effort.

Mike Sawyer feels that having search planners visit the field at searches will contribute to getting them better oriented. Pat felt some needless confusion could have been avoided during the search period if some road signs had been put up to help direct searchers in the back roads areas. A few well placed signs at reference points would have saved time. Warden Service felt there was a good turn out for this effort and expresses thanks for everyone's help. Al Martin relates that callout went very well for the search but he is disappointed that there was no response from a bunch of units. The delays and numerous schedule changes were very much a problem.

### **Orono Search**

May 17th a search was initiated for an 80 year old man on Outer Essex street in Orono. He'd not been seen for a few days by neighbors who went to look for him. When they found his bike at his place but no trace of him they called for help. MESARD got a call from Warden Service at around 0600 hours and were told to redirect our effort for the day from the planned training exercise. Dog teams were on scene and searching by 0700 hours. After hasty searching all the trails and roads dog teams began searching areas nearest the PLS. During the late morning hours DIRIGO SAR arrived and began providing assistance and fielding teams to look at drainage areas and more trails further away from the PLS. At around 1630 hours the dog team of John O'Dea and GSD Lucy located the deceased subject about a quarter mile from his home. He was in the open in a power line cut area but was dressed in very dark clothing and he blended in perfectly with the surrounding colors. The plane had flown right over him and a ground team had walked within a hundred feet and not seen him. It was difficult to see him from forty feet away and looking right at him.

Serious safety issues arose during this search as the CP was located on a busy road where cars were accustomed to going by very fast. Ideas to address the issue are advanced and include asking a local law enforcement agency to provide an officer or two to ensure some safety for searchers in the road at such a location. It was also suggested that a couple Warden Service trucks with lights flashing could have been put in the road to warn people of the danger. Peter Byrnes relates that local fire departments are well equipped to help in situations like this. It is suggested that anyone involved in a search effort who sees a safety issue like this should bring it forward and present suggestions to ameliorate it to the search management personnel. On this search the issue was not addressed even though everyone saw it happening. It is suggested that signs might be posted to help get traffic slowed down in such situations.

### **Lincoln Search**

MESARD was requested to revisit the crime scene on June 3rd where a body was recovered in Lincoln. The Warden Service and the Medical Examiner's Office requested that they attempt to locate the skull and jaw of the deceased in the area surrounding where the body was buried. The remains had been dug up by a bear and then scattered by other animals. Very little remained to ID the victim and it was hoped that finding part of the skull, with dental evidence, would give a definitive conclusion. MESARD teams conducted a tightly gridded evidence search of the immediate areas for about four hours extending out to several hundred yards away from the burial without finding any further evidence. The burial was several years old.

### **Standards Committee**

John offers that the Standards Committee has finished the final revisions of the MASAR Dog Training Standards. Steve Hudson was not able to attend this meeting to offer the document to the group for consideration and a vote so Keith Heavrin offers to go over it. Keith gives a brief synopsis of why the changes were needed, with occasional comments from John. Keith reads the revised sections to the group and asks for questions from anyone. Keith states that MESARD feels the new training standard is an excellent document that compares very favorably with other nationally respected training standards used by the best dog units in the country. He further recommends that the finished document be voted for and approved by the membership. Al Martin moves to accept all revisions and approve the document. Seconded by Rick Grant. Unanimous vote in favor.

## Education Committee

Dave describes the series of delays and miscommunications that led to a less than hoped for Spring Training Exercise. He feels strongly that MASAR should in future conduct Spring and Fall trainings as scheduled. Obviously, if there is a search, then that search must have priority. MASAR has a responsibility to its membership to provide the training it is requiring in the standards it writes for the performance of its member units. Dave recommends that the MASAR Education Officer be charged with responsibility for seeing that the training exercises are conducted. Dave relates that we had talked before of Warden Service taking charge of the Fall training and that MASAR would conduct the Spring training exercise. The dates and locations were changed for this spring several times and resulted in many people simply giving up on it in confusion. Dave offers that planning for who hosts these trainings, where it will be held, the date as well as who has what responsibilities should be planned 18 months in advance and in writing as soon as the plans can be firmed up. Mike Sawyer asks what Dave means by being responsible for - will there be a committee doing this planning? Dave answers affirmative. Brief discussion of basic formats for the Spring and Fall trainings follow. It is agreed that a mixture of classroom and practical is best. Concern is expressed for how to include people from both ends of the state. Perhaps scheduling ahead will help encourage participation from Southern Maine. Rick forwards that he'd like to see some different training scenarios that included more demonstrated skills.

Dave moves that responsibility for MASAR training weekends be given to the Education Officer of MASAR. Keith Seconds. Vote is unanimous in favor.

Dave moves that MASAR ask Warden Service formally to take charge of the statewide spring training exercise and that MASAR will take charge of the fall statewide training exercise. Seconded by Peter Byrnes. Vote is unanimous in favor.

The dates originally chosen for the statewide exercises have been the third weekend of September and the first weekend of May. Some discussion about moving the spring date to the last weekend of April. W.S. will explore this possibility. Mike says the National Guard units train the first weekend of the month and to include any guard personnel we need to schedule well ahead so they can plan. We'd like to adjust to dates that can be more inclusive for the people in southern Maine. Right now a training conflict occurs with YCERRT attending Fire Attack School. Keith offers we'd like to try to get positive dialog going and include these folks. Rick Grant offers that he has talked to some members of YCERRT and they feel alienated and separate from MASAR. Mike Sawyer says he has also heard some of the frustration folks from the south have expressed. It is generally agreed that we need to establish a dialog and get issues resolved. We all work for the same people. Mike suggests that he Pat Dorian and a MASAR representative should attempt to schedule a meeting with YCERRT leadership to seek a way to bring us all together a little more.

A question is forwarded concerning training opportunities in Baxter State Park. Chris Drew addresses the question stating that Baxter Park is not able to handle large operations concerning training exercises. He relates that they can work with small groups or limited operations but the responsibilities they have and the need to deal with the public make it hard for them to do anything with large training operations. He asks that any units who want to do anything with training in the Park must be sure to fully coordinate those plans with the Park staff.

Dave moves that the fall training exercise be permanently set for the 3rd weekend in September and it will be conducted by MASAR. Peter Byrnes seconds. Unanimous vote in favor.

After some discussion of possible places to hold the fall training exercise, Keith suggests using the Pineland Center near Freeport. We'd have to check with the folks in charge there first. Al moves that the fall training exercise be held at the Pineland Center. Rick seconds. Vote is unanimous in favor.

Dave announces he is now a Managing The Lost Person Incident instructor now and will try to have a course curriculum put together by the Fall exercise time. Dave also suggests he will see if he can get a Border Patrol mantracking specialist for the Fall exercise.

Keith Heavrin relates that a recently held BASAR training course sponsored by Lakes Region and attended by 7 of MESARD's trainees was a great success. A heartfelt THANKS for a job well done. Lakes Region did a lot of extra things to make the training fun and a good inter-unit experience.

## **Conferences**

Dave Martin will be attending the NASAR Conference and will report on his experiences.

Keith Heavrin announces that MESARD is in the initial stages of planning for sponsoring a Regional/International SAR Conference in Bar Harbor during the spring of 1999. There will be an effort to assess training needs for the area we hope to draw attendees from, and every effort will be made to present course material most relevant to that need. MESARD presented a similar symposium in 1991 consisting of two three-day sections and that was a great success. During that conference the first section of three days was dog related and the second was an MSF/FUNSAR focus. We will again attempt to engage presenters who are nationally known and the best in their field. MESARD will work with Warden Service and MASAR to schedule the most useful date for the conference.

## **Warden Service**

Mike Sawyer relates that Warden Service has decided to formalize the way flagging is used in the field on searches to help clarify navigation in the sometimes large areas searchers deployed in.

1. BASE LINES-All base lines will be double flagged around the trunks of trees when possible. Flags on the trunks will be ten inches apart.
2. SWEEP LINES-Single flags will be tied on limbs, not trunks, when possible.
3. EVIDENCE OR CLUES-Will be marked by tying flagging horizontally to the ground around the location of the evidence when possible.
4. BROOKS-When flagged will be flagged on one side. Search Teams will sweep until they come in contact with that line.

Pat Dorian relates that he thinks MASAR should apply for grants to help with funding issues.

Mike Sawyer observes that there has been a lot of turnover in the SAR Overhead Team and they are operating with a new group now. They note that there are a lot of new wardens now with less than 5 years service. The SAR Manual has been updated and Mike asks that some of us review the revised edition. John McDonough suggests that a revision number and date be placed on the document to help avoid confusion as changes may be made.

Mike reports that the Gray, Maine, Wildlife Game Farm open house was held 6/6/98 and was a great success. Each division had a display booth and there was a Safety Education Presentation. The IF&W Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner were there and were very interested in looking the W.S. gear over. They asked a lot of questions. They were able to inspect the dive trailer, air boat, and the Incident Command Trailer.

After some discussion, it is moved that John McDonough be authorized to write a letter on MASAR's behalf to Commissioner Perry in support of Warden Service equipment needs. Motion is seconded and the vote is unanimous in favor.

Mike states that the Commissioner and W.S. Colonel are working on getting better financial recapture for costs related to SAR operations. They would like to see expenditures kept better track of and recorded so they can be included in the official reports and submitted for recapture.

Mike relates that it is very important that notification of group training exercises be sent to him in order to have such exercises come under the state insurance coverage as authorized exercises.

Mike also relates that W.S. has been offered a 12' hovercraft for the Greenville area for search operations. The craft has been inspected and has been described as in brand-new condition. It comes with a trailer to haul it. The owner, Ned Ackerman, seems sincere and genuine with this offer to give the craft to W. S. The owner would like 501c3 consideration. In order for W.S. to accept the gift, it would have to go through the legislature. After some discussion Al moves that John McDonough be authorized to accept the hovercraft on behalf of Warden Service, either through MASAR or through the Wilderness Rescue Team. Pete seconds and the vote is unanimous to accept.

## **Baxter State Park**

Chris Drew hands out Baxter Park Roster and call out sheets. He announces that the Baxter Park summer volunteer program has started and that the first few weeks are working well. Anyone interested in taking part in the Baxter Park Summer Volunteer program should call Diana Boisvert or Tanya Grant of Lakes Region SAR at 264-7207. Chris notes that he considered last year's program a success that filled about 50% or more of the Park need. He expresses heartfelt thanks for all the MASAR volunteers who have helped out.

The next scheduled MASAR meeting will be held on Sunday August 2nd at the Sidney Warden Service Headquarters at 1600 hours. This meeting was adjourned at 1915 hours.

Respectfully submitted-

Keith R. Heavrin Jr.- MASAR Secretary