

MASAR Officers Meeting

4 October 1998

Present

John McDonough, Steve Hudson, Andy Robidoux, Randall Armour, Dave Martin, Al Martin, Peter Laveway, Keith Heavrin.

Meeting is called to order at 1305 hours by John McDonough who proceeds by giving a background description of MASAR, its establishment, the OD system of callout. In that history evolved a need to consider and develop training standards for the different types of resources that make up the Association. This project was supported by and encouraged by Warden Service leadership so MASAR proceeded with the several years long and very time consuming project of creating a new SAR Dog training standards as well as a Basic Ground Searcher training standard. The project culminated earlier in 1998 with the adoption of these standards and the testing objectives related to them by the MASAR membership. It was our understanding during the considerable work involved with the project that these training standards would be accepted by the state of Maine or by Warden Service as the official volunteer training standards for the state or at least the preferred training standards.

John relates that in recent conversations with Warden Service leadership some reluctance has been expressed for the agency to be adopting anything that was not developed within the agency. They are hesitant to consider adoption of standards developed by volunteers. John further expresses some optimism that we may be able to get this work accepted. Steve relates that members of his team have asked why we took this all on at our own expense. Al suggests Warden Service won't take any liability burden with this and feels that as long as they don't have to take responsibility they may be OK with it. Steve expresses surprise that Warden Service is balking now after the consistent support and participation they brought to the project. Keith expresses disappointment and an inability to understand how this stance could be arrived at given the history of support to date. The standards produced are a comprehensive and excellent piece of work that compare very favorably with any others being used in the country today.

The training standards project was designed to create a level of skill member units would agree to operate within and there by ensure a level of training Warden Service could depend upon for the trained volunteers only. The standards were not designed to preclude any search managers' prerogatives concerning who they could use or when.

Andy Robidoux forwards that this all may not be an issue unless we push it. Warden Service faces what they may perceive as an exposure issue with this and we need not get in their faces about it. He feels they will still call volunteer units for searches.

It is suggested that hard versus soft acceptance of the MASAR training standards may be the issue. Keith asks if we may not agree to draft a letter to Warden Service leadership to inquire as to what level they would be willing to accept the standards. There are a number of possibilities with this from being adopted as the official state standards to being recognized as the preferred standards.

It is agreed that John will call the Colonel to talk with him about these issues and see what Warden Service leadership thinks on these topics. Steve suggests that if Warden Service is concerned about exposure, they are already exposed for the simple fact that they are not willing to get behind nationally accepted level of training standards.

Fall Training Exercise

A general critique of these exercises ensues. This year's fall exercise was interrupted by the search that started in Harmony on Saturday. Most of the scheduled training did go off as planned except the building searches scenario. Dave suggests we go to a single training exercise a year and that we use the simulated search scenario as the center piece of this exercise. Al forwards that he would like to know why so few people

attended this fall. 1990 saw 85 attend and 1991 saw 120. When do people want the training to take place? Randy suggests that more interest and attendance occurs when we hold the training somewhere that there is something else to do in addition to the training, such as Bar Harbor. Keith relates that appealing to the whole family and considering including them should be looked at.

Has the search exercise using the search simulation as a training tool been worn out? Keith suggests we have used it a lot and many are tired of it. Steve reminds us that this may be true for veterans but there are a lot of new people who have never worked a search who still benefit a lot. Andy feels we need to drive the curriculum towards a mix of topics, both basic and advanced. He suggests several to include medical, technical, and basic.

Andy says that Mahoosuc would like to sponsor the 1999 fall training exercise. At this writing, MESARD is working on plans for a spring training exercise. Their hope is to sponsor a Managing The Lost Person Incident course followed by a three day International SAR Dog Conference. Between the time of this meeting and the writing of the minutes MESARD has decided to scale back planning due to unavailability of the several specific instructors targeted for the courses. Mahoosuc will coordinate with MESARD on this. Al says we have locked ourselves into two dates for these annual exercises and do we want to continue with that. Would another time of year be better. Randy says Warden Service needs to be in charge of one of these. It is suggested we might consider going back to a symposium format that was so popular for several years. Point is taken that we went to the search simulations because attendance at symposiums was falling off. Al asks if we want to continue sticking with a set date for the MASAR sponsored training or would it be better to let the MASAR unit willing to sponsor the training adjust the date to best suit their needs. It is agreed to allow the date to be flexible for the MASAR unit who is willing to sponsor the training.

Andy forwards that it would be a benefit for us to bring the Civil Air Patrol into the SAR picture in Maine. Dave counters that the CAP Wing has not been willing to make a firm commitment to SAR. It is felt that CAP is a resource but how can we help them to become a more SAR-oriented unit.

Transportation of SAR personnel is discussed with a look at the two new helicopters in use now. Both are very much more limited for moving people. Al suggests one consideration. MASAR could be working towards getting Warden Service or the state to reimburse for some expenses related to travel to searches and search-related expenses.

John forwards the question, "Where do we want MASAR to go for the future."

Al feels we need to advocate more for involving trained volunteers in search management. It is generally felt that MASAR needs to advocate more for the member units and the volunteer SAR community.

Consideration and discussion of the topic of whether MASAR should put together a feeding trailer to be staffed by volunteers at searches. Some of the feeding situations for volunteers at recent searches has been adventures. It is generally agreed not to pursue this but that we would be willing to help Warden Service find a trailer and that MASAR volunteers would be willing to serve a shift at working in the feeding trailer at a search.

A discussion of MASAR members' participation in searches ensues. Dave says he feels we are only likely to see around 10% of the MASAR unit members at any given search. He feels we need to work at getting more volunteer units established in the state. Andy and John feel that public relations for MASAR is very important and not much is being done now in this area. John says public service spots for TV or radio should be explored. Al suggests we get Warden Service officials to get local Wardens to act as liaison for local groups. Steve and Keith feel that will never happen. None of us has ever had any luck getting Warden Service personnel to attend unit training.

John forwards that he has a Heritage Fund Grant application and asks what MASAR might list to apply for. Keith suggests we could address seed money for bringing in highly qualified instructors for MASAR educational purposes. Steve observes we would need to set specific goals of a certain number of radios or Wilderness First Responder course billets for unit members.

Steve forwards the question of whether MASAR wants to place more emphasis on operations and to work on a set of standards for operational leaders. Steve also feels MASAR needs to place more emphasis on

how trained volunteers are used at searches. Wardens do not need to use so much supervision with MASAR trained volunteers. In many cases the experience and training of the volunteers exceeds that of the Wardens supervising. It is felt that Warden manpower could thus be focused in productive areas and save them for where they are needed.

The old Find-A-Space-and-Show-Your-Face Program is brought up. General recognition of the fact that the video is extremely out of date but the message it is intended to deliver is still very important. Most teams have stopped using the video and adapted the program to be more modern. It is suggested that we should encourage a remake of the video.

With the arrival of several people who will attend the 1600 hours MASAR general meeting, the officers meeting is adjourned at 1551 hours.

Keith R Heavrin, Jr.
Secretary - MASAR