

NYS Federation of Search and Rescue Teams

Federation Minutes

Date: 7/22/06 **Location:** NAVAC, Syracuse, NY

Teams Represented:

Amigo SAR Dogs	Oswego Co. Pioneer SAR
Cayuga County Highland SAR	Pathfinder K-9 SAR
Central Adirondack Search and Rescue	SAR of the Northern Adirondacks
Lewis County SAR	Team 5-1
Livingston County	Massasauga SAR
Lower Adirondack SAR	Wilderness SAR
Northeast Mobile SAR	New York SAR
New Jersey SAR	

Teams Absent:

Berkshire Mountains SAR	NYC Urban Park Service
Boonville SAR	Single Trackers SAR
Hamburg STAR Team	Ramapo Rescue Dog Association
Western NY Search Dogs	

Officers Present:

Roger Fox, Chairman	Amanda Scarpato, Secretary
Larry, Vice Chairman	Ann MacBride, Treasurer

Guests: Adirondack Mountain SAR Team

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Roger Fox at 9:40.

The past minutes were available online and were accepted as posted.

Treasurers Report: Income from dues and insurance is at \$2, 231.59. Expenses \$17.51. The ending balance was \$6,243.44 with \$51.88 in petty cash. The CD's earned \$36.30 and were rolled over again. Dues notices were sent out and everyone is now paid except NYC Urban Parks. The CD's had the wrong federation tax number and that has now been updated.

The McLoughlin family sent a letter to the federation. They requested donations to be made to the federation in lieu of flowers. Sue Fox has kept track of donations and has let the family know who has donated. As of July 1, 2006 there was \$600 in donations.

Communications: Jeff was not present. The question was raised from a previous meeting about who the new radios would belong to if they were purchased with the federation grant Jeff was working on. If the federation grant pays for the radios, they will be owned by the federation, but individual teams can keep and use them.

Medical: Not present

Logistics: Team equipment survey was passed out. Please fill out and return to Amanda. This is the first start to categorizing and organizing federation resources according to the

NIMS systems. There will be a member survey coming out as a web form soon to help classify team members in regards to capabilities and certifications.

Vice chair: The Lake George fire chief's event was both a success and failure. There was a low turn out and interest was low from the firemen that were there. They were more interested in the toys. The vendors who supplied the funding weren't happy with accommodations and how it worked. However, the chiefs were good to us. The question was raised if it is worth attending in future years since we don't get any membership and there are few to no questions. It was then brought up to consider doing the NY State fair instead of the Fire Chiefs convention. Police chief conventions were brought up and dismissed since it isn't a "boothy" thing and we most likely not be allowed to attend. It was decided the fair would work better, particularly if we could get with DEC at their conservation exhibit. The exhibit attracts hiker/hunter/outdoorsy people. George will look into getting MacGyver cards for people who donate to us. It was asked if teams would support being at the fair. We would need to be there for 8-9 days. It goes from the last week of August and ends on Labor Day. We would need at least 2 people a day. It was suggested that each team take a day and get 2 people. Another thought was to find out when DEC from that teams region will be rotating through and match teams by the DEC region that is covering the fair that day. Roger will look into getting space with the DEC and any issues about what we are legally allowed to do for donations and get back to the teams via email.

Chairmen:

We have been having non stop multiple day searches occurring simultaneously and have been pulled in 3 directions at the same time. However, whatever the IC asked for the federation was able to provide almost every day. We have been trying to make the Rangers sensitive to the fact that people have to work and sooner they call the better and this seemed to have helped the response.

A special thanks to the teams on the east side of the state in particular. It has been a big resource drain on the local teams to have repetitive searches in geographically hard to get at areas.

The canines were asked for and utilized. In many cases it was felt that we could have used more K-9 resources and every K-9 that was there was more then utilized. Lieutenant Preston and Captain Strife wrote thank you letters for a job well done. They appreciate the help and contributions. On both searches we were called in fairly early. In Plessis it has historically taken 3 days before the Federation was notified; this time we were called in within 14 hours. Federation volunteers maintained their presence when local volunteers were no longer available. It speaks about the commitment and professionalism of SAR teams and made a good impression with the Rangers. There was also a lot of time spent in debriefing which also lends creditability. We were able to back up that we did what we said we were going to do and how well we did it.

Photo album was circled around with articles and pictures from recent searches.

Roger and KSAR went to 3 different police departments to try and make them aware about the local search teams and the strength of the Federation. While it is difficult to change imbedded policy and mindset, the future of SAR is founded in strength of federation. We can demonstrate to law enforcement that we are a viable, meaningful effective tool.

The last Indian Lake search was specialized from the logistics and staging point of view. It was extremely wild territory and needed people with certain experience and physical fitness levels. It is important to be direct and up front about abilities and for searchers to say no, if they aren't capable. If someone had a problem with the terrain they shouldn't be sent back into the same terrain. When a crew is selected to go with a ranger on a particular task, be sure to select crew boss and backup crew boss that can handle the assignment. Crew bosses should never report 100% coverage. There is no such thing. There should always be at least 1 GPS on a crew to help verify what the coverage was.

Moose River search involved difficult communications. In certain sections the state police bands had to be used. Figure out communications ahead of time; we don't want people unable to talk with each other. The High peaks aren't the only bad communication areas.

ADK can be a very unforgiving area. One mistake and people can be lost. The DEC used up their entire SAR money budget for the year on one of the Indian lake searches.

There were places for improvement on the searches.

K-9 Response: We need to work on getting more federation K-9 resources without losing the quality. With 17-18 dogs we have presently, we will only be able to get about 4-5 dogs on any given search. Previously K-9's weren't being effectively utilized. Now the opposite is happening and we can't get enough K-9 resources at searches.

Injuries: In the last 13 years there has been one Federation member injury. In Indian Lake there were two injuries requiring treatment although neither required evacuation. While the injuries were due to the tough topography and not the persons fault, we do need to consider people's physical condition, age, etc and the areas we are sending them out to search to help avoid problems. In this situation the rangers were rotating between command and the field because exhaustion was making people an accident waiting to happen.

Search Responses: We aren't seeing the same level of Federation response as we used to at searches. In the past for a big search, the Federation would have 100 volunteers easily. On these recent big searches we didn't get close to that and this seems to be a general trend. There are many factors that come into play. People have to work and don't want to give up their pay, searches are far away and not easily accessible, cost of gas, family commitments and (or) people don't want to travel outside their territory.

Discussion was had on what could help improve response numbers. At the second Indian Lake search the word was put out that accommodations were available. This made it more tempting for people to come. At Plessis people didn't have to pay for their accommodations. We may be able to get state rates at motel and we can use the Federation EIN number and tax exempt form to help get better rates when at searches. Ask the motel people- if you don't ask if you can you won't find out. Accommodations appear to be one of the biggest reasons for lower response. If you know you have some place to sleep you can stay longer. Search teams should try and develop strategic relationships with local motels. While the Federation can see if we can get a break at a line of motels, most places we go don't have name brand hotels, so the teams should work on cultivating local relationships. The Federation will pursue seeing if we can get relationships with different places on a statewide basis for gas and food/drinks during a search. It was thought to try and stay at State campgrounds; however they are busy and hard to get a place at since people reserve a year ahead of time. Teams need to think about these types of issues for local searches. Wilderness has a port a john that can be brought to searches in counties nearby.

Car pooling and delegating a travel fund to help pay for gas and tools was also mentioned. Anyone coming through Syracuse for a search on weekends can try to get a hold of Jason or Jeff to car pool with NAVAC vehicles to the search so they don't have to pay for fuel.

Anyone who works for a state agency can ask the Rangers for a slip to allow the employee to credit time at search as regular payroll time. This means the state agency employee can be absent from work and still get their base pay. State agency employees should check with the facility they work with to find out more specifics.

Membership: Oswego can get 2\3 of their 20 members to a search if they are lucky. With smaller teams 2\3 of their members is not a big number. We need to work on increasing local team membership. Some smaller teams try to work with surrounding teams since they have trouble increasing their membership. If a search comes in they automatically put the teams nearby on standby. All teams should set up working arrangements with neighboring teams. If at any time, the numbers that a team can provide aren't viable for a search, they need to call their neighbors to alert them. Teams shouldn't be just filling out names on the roster. People on the roster should be active. Also, teams need to think about why they are having a problem attracting members. If the team is trying the same thing over and over and it isn't working the team needs to change their approach. If the team needs help from Federation don't be afraid to ask. KSAR asked and got Federation members to come in and help with training. If teams are going to be viable organizations they need to take their base members and build them up with greater numbers, experience, and expertise. We also need younger base coming in; 10 years later people are 10 years older and may have trouble doing some things in the field.

The Federation would like to get out recognition to Bonnie Castle, along with the Plessis and Indian Lake fire departments. A motion was made for Roger to handle getting small

plaques for each time we have a situation like this. The motion was amended to spend up \$250 for an initial cache of plaques to be handed out at the chairmen's discretion. It was pointed out that we needed to also be sure to thank the auxiliary as well as the fire department.

Every state agency has to have members at ICS 100 and NIMS 700. Team officers need to have ICS 200, 300, and 400 and NIMS 800. This should be done by September per the department of homeland security mandate for emergency response agencies. If teams haven't done this yet, please try to get members trained ASAP. Independent study classes are available from FEMA's web page. Some Rangers can also teach the classes.

Recent search list information is still being compiled. We need to get more information from teams. Teams can do the sheet or do the form from the web page.

K9 committee:

Testing System: Team coordinators should contact Chris Buff at let her know when a K-9's on team certifications are done. Chris needs a copy of the first 3 team certifications and whether the K-9 passed or failed before setting up the Federation tests.

Testing: Many testers are not testing. Testers should step up and start testing. John Girton is currently the only qualified person for trailing testing.

There is discussion of a second tier approach for outside teams and agencies if all the dogs are already busy. For example, bringing in dogs from NJ for a search close to the NY-NJ border. However, we need to protect the gains we have made in NY so any dogs that are brought in will have to be a good representation for us.

Some people's certifications are missing. Some K-9 handlers say they have the first 3 certifications but Chris doesn't have any paperwork. Please make sure to turn in copies of all paperwork.

Bill Dotson will be holding a K-9 Disaster First Responder class sponsored by Cayuga Oct 26-29th.

Insurance:

An overview of the highlights of the insurance we carry was passed out. This includes special equipment and the teams that are paying to cover that equipment. One item of special note is that personal equipment appears to have no deductible.

If anyone needs a certificate of insurance for an event or venue there is form on web page that should be filled out. Teams can fax or mail it in and the certificate should be mailed out within about 24 hours. If teams request a certificate and don't get one back in reasonable amount of time let Roger know. Mike White will be at the next meeting to discuss insurance since its renewal time.

Fall Conference:

Program is coming together and they are still inserting more classes including Dave Clarks Digital Mapping and a DEC Ranger Map and Compass class. The first 100 registrants will be in a pool for a drawing to give back 2 days of the conference for free. Costs were raised 10% because of the cost of food. If there is a profit, the profit will be put back to some of the people who are coming. The lower lodge where people were camping previously will be used to create bigger canine areas. It is expect registration will be available with all the costs laid out by August 1. There will be gifts at check in. Showers are still available. It is estimated it will take 1 day for 3-4 people to put in showers the week before.

Old Business:

NJ Incident Response is a probationary team. They are technically due in August and they couldn't make this meeting so will put on hold till next meeting.

NASAR training license: There have been problems communicating with NASAR on this so no action has been taken. At the last meeting it was discussed we would try to do the license with NAVAC and Wilderness to share the cost. However, if we go through NAVAC and (or) Wilderness, NASAR will only let them test and certify Wilderness people rather than all members in the Federation, so this has to go through the federation. The DEC will recognize the training once it is set up since they recognize the need for intermediate education. ASTM is the standard setting committee while NASAR is education and certification group. Whatever ASTM comes up with, the DEC will recognize. However, we will not see the Basic Wildlands class change much since that is designed mostly for fire service personal. Crew boss will change and intermediate level class will be added.

Legislative:

The bill passed the senate but is still sitting in committee in the house. A visit needs to be scheduled with assemblymen Sweeny because he doesn't understand the legislation. The basis of the bill not coming out of committee was because they don't see the need for a new category of emergency response agency to be created. Any municipality could contract with a search and rescue team to provide services as things are. They missed the point that we have become a main stream emergency services provider and are part of that team. They are trying to fit us into existing categories rather than creating a new category. While from the legal perspective they are correct, from the practical stand point this would involve contracting with 2,000 entities. It is much easier for us to be recognized as emergency services rather than attempting to go out and write 2000 contracts with each fire dept. Fire service does not have an issue with the bill. However, some of long island fire companies have people devoted to tracking legislation and they are opposing the bill. It is felt that if it can get out of committee the bill will probably pass. The question for the opposition to this bill is why does fire and EMS deem it

necessary to have fire department and EMS defined as being made up of fire and EMS members? This is essentially the same thing we are looking for.

New business:

Application North Country SAR: The team has been around for 2-3 years and has been on searches with us out east. They are a small but persistent in holding together a group. They were not represented at the meeting. They have 17 members and typically can get 3-4 to respond to searches. During discussion NJ brought up that NJ is not taking applications for small teams; instead they tell them to join an existing team. There was some discussion. This team already has qualified people and has a Ranger relationship. The nearest neighboring team is 35 miles away. North Country SAR was present at the last meeting; they have bylaws; are incorporated as a 5013c and have members who have completed the Wildlands DEC class along with 1 CFR. North Country SAR was accepted as a probationary member.

Sue Fox put together a flier for Oswego 35 anniversary dinner. The dinner will be held Saturday, October 7th.

The Joel Hardin tracking class information is available from the web page. The class will be held September 22-24. For more information see the Federation web page.

Massasauga will be sponsoring a Managing the Land Search Operation Class taught by Bob Caster. This is an internationally recognized 40 hour class similar to Managing the Lost Person Incident and involves lost person behavior profiling. Massasauga has a facility lined up. The cost of the class is expected to be \$3700-4000. Massasauga will be contributing \$1500 and requested a matching grant of \$1500 from the Federation to help keep costs down for participants. The class is a 4 day, 40 hour class being held on Oct 6-9 (Columbus Day weekend). The classroom can hold 40 people. Arrangements can be made for a group of rooms the Holiday Inn in Fairport to get lower room rates. The cost of tuition will cover breakfast and lunch, but people will need to pay for their dinner and lodging. DEC, local sheriff and fire personal may be let into the class after Federation members. They will be charged more tuition. There was discussion on the precedent to subsidize a class and the fact that the calendar is fairly busy in September and October. There was concern with how many people will come with COMFED being the month before. It was asked if this class could possibly be held at a later date such as Presidents Day weekend. When the Federation has money, it has typically gone to training to help better ourselves. Precedent in the past has been to give people their money back if they went ahead and took the class so the federation didn't end up paying for a class and have the person not show up. For the Managing the Lost Person class the same thing was done; people took and passed the class and then got a reimbursable amount back. NAVAC works the same way- members have to complete and pass class and then get their money back. There is no test with this class. There was a motion for Federation members to get \$75 back after they successfully completed the class. This will mean Federation members should be paying \$125 and non Federation members should be paying \$250 for the class up front. The motion passed

Western NY suggested trying to also attract members of the local police and not worrying about the fire department. Roger will pass out information to the Rangers.

A motion was made to advance Massasauga \$1500 to help them cover expenses until people sign up and pay. The motion passed.

K-9 Disaster class will be held the weekend of October 27. Every certified K-9 should attend. There is expected to be no to minimal costs for federation members to attend.

Adirondack SAR wanted to apply but didn't have a copy of their bylaws. The team was given the training module information and an application. They will be covering Montgomery and Fulton counties.

There will be a DEC basic class in September at Corogra Lake
Oswego will also be running basic class soon.

The Bon-Ton does something called Care to Share Day. It is a great fund drive for teams. If you have a store near your team ask them about it.

April 29, 2007 Ramapoo will have the dedication of their headquarters building. They invite everyone to attend. Ramapoo will be able to provide accommodations.