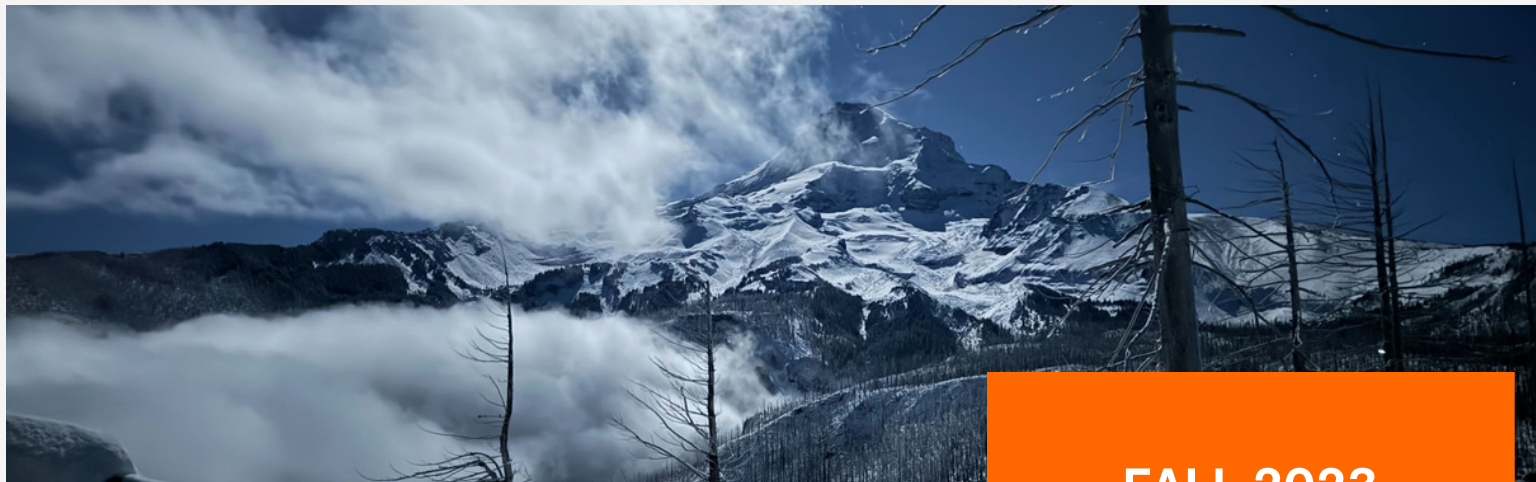


# THE CALLOUT



## Dear Friends and Supporters:

The spring and summer were full of search and rescue activities for PNWSAR. From aiding people caught on trails obliterated by recent landslides and wildfires, to helicopter evacs and medical assists on the Columbia River, we have been busy demonstrating the diverse and crucial role PNWSAR plays in the community. Our involvement in 65 callouts as well as over 100 trainings this year showcases our passionate commitment to the safety and well-being of others. We also believe in engaging our community beyond callouts and were thrilled to see many of you while we supported events like the Gorges Polar Plunge, Post Canyon Enduro Race, Wy'east Trailfest, and KiteBoard for Cancer. Another fantastic opportunity this year saw the women from PNWSAR teach an Arc'teryx sponsored Wilderness Safety Course for Women as well as a WFR base medical class.

One of our proudest moments this year was PNWSAR's taking part in searching for a two-year-old girl who wandered away from her home one evening in May. Over 100 volunteers from many agencies worked through the night, searching for miles, walking side by side through dense overgrown fields, ponds, streams, and blackberry thickets - including every outbuilding. When she was eventually found unharmed in the middle of a field of tall grass after 18 hours of intense searching, you could feel the collective sigh of relief from her family and searchers alike.

We need to give a big thank you to all of our partners. As this multi-agency search demonstrated so well, we are not able to perform rescues by ourselves. The 911 dispatchers are the first to get the call for help, no matter the time of day or night. Our dedicated Hood River County Sheriff SAR deputies coordinate the on-scene response. Our families hold down the fort at home while we drop everything to take off and help those in need. Our partner search and rescue agencies join us as we trek into the wilderness. Even the smallest callout has many, many people involved.

Of course none of this would be possible without the critical partnership between our team of unpaid professional rescue volunteers and the caring people who donate funds to the successful operation of Search and Rescue.

*Keelan Cleary*

**Pacific Northwest Search and Rescue President**

**FALL 2023**  
**vol. 1**



**Letter from the President**

**2023 Rescue Highlights**

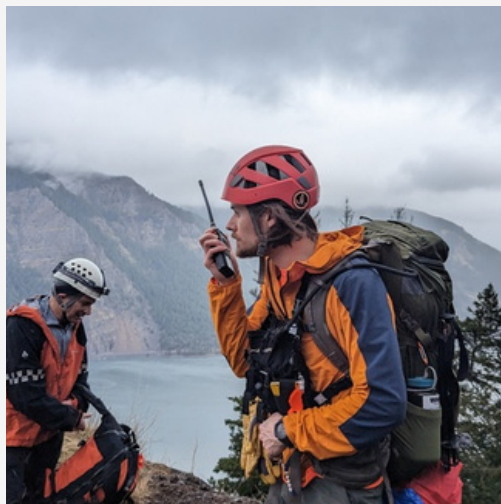
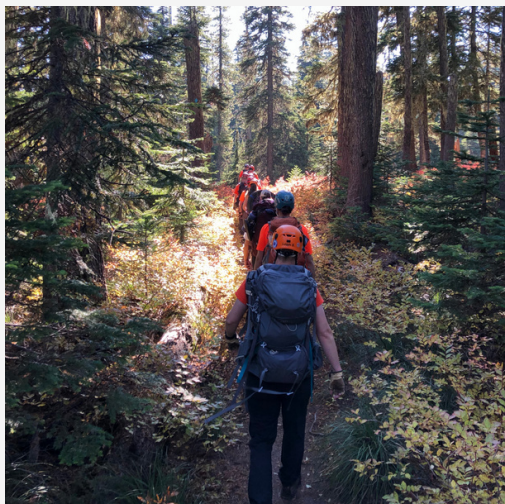
**30 Years of PNWSAR**

**Member Spotlights:**

Scott Houser  
Tony Hobkirk  
Deb Cherachanko

**Thank You to our  
Supporters**

# RESCUE HIGHLIGHTS



## **Ruckel/Wahtum Lost Hikers**

**August 26, 2023 / 9:20 PM**

**Duration: 18h, 40m**

**Attendees: 18**

Two hikers were reported lost below Benson Plateau after attempting to descend Ruckel Ridge Trail, which no longer exists. They were cliffed out between Ruckel Ridge and Ruckel Creek. They were prepared to camp overnight and had food and water, but were on a steep slope and needed assistance finding the way out. One hiker had lost their boots and was in sandals on the steep incline. PNWSAR teams in collaboration with Crag Rats were able to locate the hikers and guide them downhill to safety. The hikers were tired but happy to be returned to their vehicles. At the same time the mission for the Ruckel hikers was underway, two other hikers were reported needing assistance off trail on their way to Wahtum Lake. They had become lost off trail and could no longer locate their camp spot. PNWSAR sent teams from multiple entry points to attempt to access both parties at the same time. The lost Wahtum Lake hikers were located and aided in returning to the trail and hiking out. It was a long night (and following day) on the trail, with some team members covering a total of 22 miles.

## **Yoder Road Missing Toddler**

**May 7, 2023 / 12:20 AM**

**Duration: 16h, 21m**

**Attendees: 27**

A 2-year-old girl was reported missing from home since 6 pm and unable to be located by family and initial searches with law enforcement. When PNWSAR arrived as mutual aid, many resources were already on hand including several LE agencies, FBI, several ambulance and fire districts, and drone teams. Ground searchers and dog teams had been on scene since earlier in the evening conducting grid searches in surrounding fields. PNWSAR completed grid search assignments that re-covered some areas as well as covering some unsearched areas. The primary concerns in our search areas were a pond and stream where searching was a challenge as most of the water was surrounded by thick blackberry patches. We did a third mission with the PNWSAR drone after morning light and added more ground searches. By 9:00 AM searchers from PNWSAR, and at least seven other SAR teams were all in the field looking for the missing child. At 11am she was located alive and alert, immediately provided medical care, and reunited with her family.

## **THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS**

- Cascade Locks Fire
- Civil Air Patrol
- Clackamas County Sheriff's Office
- Clackamas SAR
- Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area
- Crag Rats
- Hood River County Sheriff's Office
- Mountain Wave
- Multnomah County Sheriff's Office
- Multnomah County SAR
- Mt. Hood SAR Council
- Oregon Office of Emergency Management
- Port of Hood River
- Portland Mountain Rescue
- U.S. Forest Service
- Wasco County Sheriff's Office
- Washington County SAR
- Washington County Sheriff's Office



# RESCUE HIGHLIGHTS

## Eagle Creek Punchbowl Falls Hip Injury

**July 15, 2023 / 2:12 PM**

**Duration: 8h, 18m**

**Attendees: 16**

A hiker slipped on submerged rocks in upper Punchbowl Falls and severely injured her pelvis and hip. Her friends helped her out of the water, and someone hiked back down the trail for cell service to call 911 for help. Her friends stayed with her, behind an unstable log jam on the far side of the creek from the trail, but she was unable to move. When PNWSAR received the callout, a small team was nearby for a marine safety patrol and were able to get on the trail within an hour of the call. The hasty team was shortly followed by more PNWSAR teams, the Crag Rats, and Cascade Locks Fire paramedics. While the hasty team was en route to the subject's location at Punchbowl Falls, another mission arose for a heatsick hiker on the Ruckel Creek trail, which is a nearby trailhead. The temperature was over 100 degrees that day. Several PNWSAR searchers were diverted to the concurrent mission, where they successfully intercepted the sick hiker's party, provided aid, and guided them safely back to the trailhead. At the Eagle Creek trail, searchers arrived at Punchbowl Falls, located the injured subject, and assessed her condition. She had been lying prone on the rocks for over three hours. Rescuers carefully stabilized her injuries and loaded her into a litter for transport, then carried her to the top of the log jam. Several of PNWSAR's Rope Support Team were on scene, and they worked with responding Crag Rats to construct a technical rope system to lower the subject down from the log jam. She was then transported across the creek to the trail with a floating litter system, then searchers navigated the narrow trail with the litter. The subject was transported from the trailhead to the hospital for emergency surgery & recovery.

## HOW TO CALL SEARCH AND RESCUE

### Utilize Handheld Satellite Devices

Handheld satellite devices such as SPOT or Garmin inReach and some cell phones, which allows users to communicate with International Emergency Response Coordination Center (IERCC) which can then contact local dispatch.

### Dial or Text 911

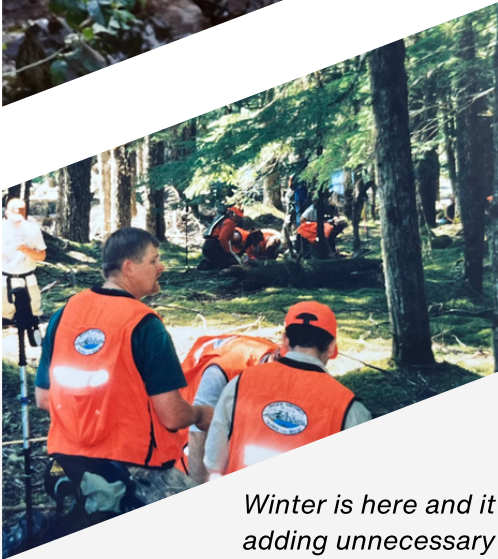
Calls to 911 go to local emergency dispatch, which then contacts PNWSAR coordinators to coordinate a rescue plan.

**DO NOT** call search and rescue directly.

### What to Say When You Call 911

1. Provide your location first.
2. Describe the nature of the accident and condition of the person in need.
3. Try not to move around when speaking so that the call does not drop.
4. Unless you are in immediate danger, stay in the same location until Search & Rescue arrives.

# 30 YEARS OF PNWSAR



**Pacific Northwest Search and Rescue** was inspired by the search in Wasco County, Oregon for a 17-year-old elk hunter in the late fall of 1991. Corey Fay and two of his friends began their hunt along Badger Creek, but Corey became separated and didn't return. The official search for him continued for two weeks and involved tracking dogs brought in from Utah and a famous man-tracker from the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. At the time, it was Oregon's most extensive search and cost over \$500,000. A middle-aged couple from Beavercreek, Oregon, Irv & Joan Wettlaufer, were hunting nearby and offered to help search for Corey, but the Wasco County Sheriff deputies managing the search declined because the Sheriff's Office could only accept state-certified SAR volunteers. A year later, a hunting party came across Corey's rifle, and subsequent searches located his boots, pack, and remains an astonishing 10 miles away and 3000 feet up in elevation from his last known location.

As soon as the Wettlauffers returned home from their trip, they began researching what it would take to help the lost & injured in the wilderness, and through meetings with the Wasco County Sheriff their desire to help people in need developed into founding a full search and rescue team. In the summer of 1993, PNWSAR was incorporated as a ground search team for Clackamas County. Two out of five founding board members were women, which is a tradition of inclusivity we're proud to continue.

[Continued next page]

## WINTER SAFETY TIPS

*Winter is here and it's time to review your supplies, gear, and practices to make sure you aren't adding unnecessary risk to your outdoor travel and adventures. Here are five items to consider:*

**Always check the weather report before you go.** But don't believe it. The weather in our area can change on a dime and as you change altitude. You should always see what the weather is going to be but don't assume it will always be right. Pack for contingencies.

**Always know snow and avalanche conditions.**

Understand how the NWAC system works. Use it. If you go into the backcountry, consider an avalanche safety class. Know how to understand slopes and terrain traps. Carry the right gear to rescue and be rescued.

**Always have emergency supplies in your car.** Even if you don't need them, you're likely to come across somebody who does.

**Always carry extra layers and extra calories.** It's super easy to get wet. Choose clothes that stay warm even when they're wet (like wool or fleece, no cotton!) and carry an extra dry set you can change into.

**Always tell somebody who isn't in your party where you are going and don't change plans without updating them.** We're pretty good at finding people but if we don't even know where to start it makes it a lot harder.



# 30 YEARS OF PNWSAR

Since our initial days, PNWSAR has fledged into a full and vibrant search team that has supported well over a thousand missions through our 30-year history. Always all-volunteer and donation-funded, team organization became more formal as the volunteer membership grew to over 80 members. In 2006, the board launched the Training Committee, cementing PNWSAR's reputation as highly trained "unpaid professionals." Various specialty skills have been added through the years, including the high-angle Rope Support Team (RST) in 2009. A generous car dealership donated our team pickup truck also in 2009, which was a major level-up in how we respond to missions with team equipment. Our dedicated Training Committee published our training documents in 2010, and we have shared this repository of knowledge with other teams around the country as a gold standard for SAR training. Also in 2010 we had so much interest in volunteers joining PNWSAR that we established an application and annual training cohort system to be more efficient with certifying new searchers who join us. The cohorts have had the hidden benefit of forging strong bonds among searchers. Many become lifelong friends.

In 2018 PNWSAR entered a new phase of modernizing and transitioning for the long-term. Kicking it off, one of our talented searchers, Aaron Kuehn, updated our longtime logo with a fresh and innovative design to commemorate our 25th anniversary year. Former president Dave Prouty had drawn up the previous logo during his presidency starting in 2005. Our original logo was affectionately known as the "SAR bats," because the motif in the sky looked, to many people, like many bats flying around!

Then in 2020, PNWSAR took the major step of leasing a warehouse space for equipment storage and team meetings - we finally have a real home! Until then, our team equipment was either in the team truck, parked at an outdoor storage facility, or distributed among team members. Our "team house" has been transformative for keeping equipment safe and maintained, the sense of belonging for all of our volunteer members, and ultimately our operational effectiveness. Along with our transition in 2021 to the Hood River County Sheriff's Office as our law enforcement partner and launching the Marine Safety Patrol program for summer kiteboarders on the Columbia River, PNWSAR is both an established technical resource for our region and poised to actively continue evolving to serve our community's needs. Throughout 30 years, it has been our deep honor to be the helpers - the best part of someone's worst day.

## Presidents

Irv Wettlaufer, 1993-2005  
Dave Prouty, 2005-2012  
Tony Hobkirk, 2012-2019

Diana Worthen, 2019-2022  
Keelan Cleary, 2022-present



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Scott Houser

**Has served as: vice president, board member, RST lead, swiftwater team lead**

*When did you join the team?*

I've been on PNWSAR off and on since 1999 – 17 years total.

*Memorable moments:*

Many of my favorite moments are from mutual aid missions when we have worked with other Oregon and Washington SAR teams. A few highlights:

- Finding a lost Mt. Hood hiker on a warm summer night, then walking him 10 miles back to base under a giant full moon.
- Leading a team that got completely off its assigned course during a winter mission near Mt. Adams – and then stumbling across the person we'd been looking for all night.
- A multi-agency mission in beautiful Jefferson Park on Mt. Jefferson.
- A Rope Support Team rescue of a stranded kayaker at the bottom of a cliff on the Sandy River.



*How has SAR changed since you started?*

It's surprising how little it's changed, although technology has made some parts easier. Ground search and rescue still usually means getting out and looking!

*How has it changed you?*

I'm no longer afraid of heights, moving water, or being in the woods after dark.

*Favorite trail snack:*

My teammate Craig's homemade elk jerky, and peanut M&M's.



*When did you join the team?*

2001 - Since then I think I've done almost everything I could! I've had the privilege of serving on the Board of Directors, including a stint as the team's president. I've been vice president a few times, training committee chair, a founding member of the rope support, swiftwater, and mountain bike teams, logistics team lead, and a member of the drone team and EMS committee.

*Memorable moments:*

One mission in particular comes to mind: in the middle of the night, our team of four was dropped on Still Creek Road in a raging blizzard and hip-deep powder. Our mission was to locate a missing snowboarder who had ventured off the back side of Ski Bowl.

## Tony Hobkirk

**Has served as: president, vice president, board member, training committee chair, RST lead, logistics team lead, mountain bike team lead**

After the tracked vehicles had left us, I had this profound feeling: a combination of excitement, awareness of the situational challenge, unwavering determination, and unspoken camaraderie. We headed into the darkness like it was just another day at the office. It was a defining moment in my SAR career. I realized that this type of work is truly a calling for some people. My teammates are some of the most exceptional people I've known--each in their own way--and I continue to be surrounded by such people.

*How has it changed you?*

SAR has taught me to better empathize and connect more deeply with people, which has impacted me both personally and professionally. But most importantly, it's given me life-long friends through experiences that connect us in ways most people never encounter.

*Favorite trail snack:*

I have a salt tooth, so I always default to savory/protein snacks. My favorites are smoked almonds and jerky. But if I'm on the trail long enough, I'll eat almost anything you hand me.



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



## Deb Cherachanko

**Has served as: board member, training committee, logistics team lead, family liaison, ATV team lead**

*When did you join the team?*

I joined November, 2007. I'm starting my 17th year.

*Memorable moments:*

Hmmm – So many!

I was the 1st person to certify on compass navigation at night. Tony Hobkirk was my shadow.

I remember my first experience with a subject's family. His mom was crying at the mission base when we came out of the field with her son. He had survived a serious fall. While she was hugging me I realized the impact we make by what we do.

*How has SAR changed since you started?*

SAR has become much more technical than it was when I started. And much more respected. The addition of drones, FLIR, better communication devices, more technical clothing (especially outerwear), equipment for the technical specialty teams, and on and on.

*How has it changed you?*

SAR has changed me. It changes all of us. This is my tribe. These are my people. We are all links in a very long chain, all the same yet different. And everyone necessary for the mission to be a success. No matter the search nor my assignment there is nowhere I would rather be than with this team, no matter the conditions. SAR has made me a more grateful person. It forces me to set judgment aside and do the right thing.

*Favorite trail snack:*

My favorite trail snack is a salted nut roll and an egg salad sandwich on white bread. PB&J is second. And yes, I don't care if it's 94 degrees outside and it's been in my pack all day.





# SUPPORT PNWSAR



PNWSAR began in 1993 by a small group of concerned citizens from around the Mt. Hood region who saw the need for a well-trained volunteer ground search and rescue team due to the increased numbers of individuals entering the nearby wilderness areas. During the past 30 years, we have responded to well over 1,000 calls for help.

We are recognized as one of the premier ground search and rescue teams in the region and are called on for our services for missing and injured community members 365 days a year. No other organization exists at the level of readiness of PNWSAR to access backcountry landscapes and assist in medical emergencies for those that need it. It is because of our volunteer efforts and your support that we are successful in our mission. With increased numbers of people recreating outdoors, our relevance is more important than ever.

If you've supported PNWSAR in the past, *THANK YOU!* We hope you will consider renewing your support or increasing your donation. If you haven't supported the work of PNWSAR, now is an incredible time to do it. All donations are tax deductible and donating to PNWSAR is easy. Contribute via our website or send your donation by mail to our address below. Donations of any amount help us support the agencies that depend on us. No amount is too small!



**Pacific Northwest Search and Rescue, Inc.**  
10776 SE Highway 212  
Clackamas, Oregon 97015

[pnwsar.org](http://pnwsar.org)



**Thank you to these  
employers for their  
flexibility and support of  
our volunteers.**

- Cascade Trenchless Consulting
- Columbia Gorge Family Medicine
- Columbia Sportswear Company
- FlightSafety International
- Good Trip Adventures
- Icicle Tricycles
- Kinship Partners Inc
- KMHD
- Lam Research
- Lanternfish Press
- Legacy Health
- Nordic
- OHSU
- Oregon Department of Justice
- PLEXSYS Interface Products
- Verisk Analytics