



2019 Year in Review

Overview and Organization

2019 was a year of learning, growth, and service to the community. Our organization consists of search and rescue volunteers from counties throughout Washington State. Our members have extensive training in search planning and management as well as experience on some of the most complex, multi-day search incidents in recent state history.

Each of our volunteers also serves on their home county search and rescue team as well as serving as part of the Washington State SAR Planning Unit (WASSPU)

In February 2019 we incorporated as a Washington State Not for Profit Corporation and received our 501(c)(3) designation from the IRS. Because of this we are able to raise needed funds to support the work that we do.

As part of growing our organization and formalizing our structure, we elected our initial Board of Directors, developed Bylaws and created Work Teams to better distribute and organize our work.

We focused on our primary functions:

- Providing remote or on-scene planning resources
- Recommending search planning strategies and tactics
- Providing technical search mapping services
- Applying modern search theory to extended search & rescue incidents.

At year end, we had 25 volunteer members from 8 different counties throughout the state. Each of these members bring years of experience in search and rescue.

Mission Support in 2019

From the slopes of Mt. Rainier, to the wilds of the North Cascades National Park, to the pine forests of eastern Washington and the wide-open spaces of southern Washington, our members deployed on 11 SAR missions in 2019.

Many of the missions that our members go on cover multiple days and involve days of planning before we ever reach the search location. We work closely alongside local incident command staff and county sheriff's departments, all with the goal of bringing home the lost and the missing.

In 2019 our missions included a variety of SAR-related incidents. We assisted in searches for lost hikers in two different national parks, as well as the successful rescue of four climbers stranded on Mt. Rainier for several days. We also assisted in several criminal evidence searches and provided remote search plans for multiple search operations.

Trainings and Presentations

A large part of the work we do is helping to educate groups on using certain types of tools that assist in search planning. In addition, through presentations, we are able to share the wealth of information that our volunteers have gathered over many years of search and rescue work.

To that end, under the capable leadership of our President, Eric Rosenberg, our team conducted more than 10 classes on the use of SARTopo, one of the best mapping tools used for search and rescue. These classes were presented free of charge to many different groups and counties throughout Washington state.

Several of our members teamed up to provide several different presentations at the annual Washington State SAR Conference. Presentations included:

- Using Search Theory to Find Human Remains
- Search Tactics for Finding Human Remains
- Smarter SAR II: Making Knowledge Accessible
- Using SARTopo for Search and Rescue

Other Activities

Two of our members, Eric Rosenberg and Dan Merrifield, were presented with Leadership Awards at the annual WA State Search and Rescue conference in recognition of their contributions to search and rescue.

We attended and supported Mountain Rescue Association incident support planning meetings at Mount Rainier National Park.

We met with representatives from Olympic National Park and North Cascades National Park to introduce our unit and our services.

We provided wilderness navigation training to King County SWAT team.

SSPU members participated in a remote search planning exercise, hosted by the Mountain Area Rescue Group, (a member of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference). This resulted in tentative plans to share training experiences and resources in the future.

We launched our website at www.wasspu.org and began producing regular newsletters in order to share the work that we are doing.

We received our first ever grant from the Puget Sound Energy Foundation. This grant for \$5,000 will assist us in purchasing Probability-Based Search Planning Software. This software will help us be more efficient in our search planning activities.