

EAGLE POST 25

EAGLE POST - The newsletter of **Friends of Eagles Nest Wilderness**, apprising you of important activities in and around Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas.

Dear *|FNAME|*

Greetings!

April 2018: **SEARCH & RESCUE IN
SUMMIT COUNTY**

by Charles Pitman

*Mission Coordinator and Public
Information Officer*

*The SUMMIT COUNTY RESCUE
GROUP*

Before we get started - a word about **something new** this year! We are expanding the role of Volunteer Wilderness Rangers (VWRs) to include **TRAILHEAD HOSTING**. So, if you're coming off a ski injury or your mobility is not up to a 4 hour hike, [sign up](#) for VWR training (June 2) and become a Trailhead Host.

INTRODUCTION:

The deep love of outdoor recreation in Summit County keeps us pushing boundaries, and sometimes we need help. Search and Rescue is a big enterprise, and the all-volunteer SUMMIT COUNTY RESCUE GROUP is at the forefront of readiness, expertise, and commitment. Read below about the extraordinary breadth of their responsibilities, how they interface with other agencies, and how, for less than a penny a day, you can help.

Summit County Rescue Group

by Charles Pitman

Mission Coordinator, Public Information Officer
Summit County Rescue Group

Participating in a group whose unofficial motto is "Join search and rescue and see



Summit County by headlamp" may not be to everyone's liking, but it fairly describes much of what the Summit County Rescue Group (SCRG) does. Our band of 65 intrepid and well trained volunteers will, indeed, help the injured, lost or stranded backcountry traveler in all weather conditions, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This takes a high level of dedication and professionalism that team

members exhibit on every mission.

But why is there a volunteer group at all? Why is this not a paid state or county agency? In Colorado, search and rescue (SAR) is, by statute, a function of county

sheriffs' departments. However, most sheriffs recognized early on that their departments were not sufficiently staffed or funded to fulfill that SAR role, and this resulted in the establishment of county SAR teams. SCRG was formed in 1972 and became a 501(c)(3) non-profit in 1973. The Summit County Sheriffs Office (SCSO) has long recognized the capabilities of SCRG and its ability to absorb what would otherwise be a logistical, staffing, and financial drain on an already overburdened agency.



Although operating as an independent entity, we work very closely with the SCSO's Special Operations Department; those three individuals, who train with SCRG, will, at times, accompany us in the field. The team enjoys a level of autonomy that is not the norm in every county, and SCRG works hard to maintain the professional attitude, level of training, and responsiveness that the sheriff will find properly fulfills his overall authority.

SCRG takes pride in the fact that we have been fully accredited by the Mountain Rescue Association for many years. SCRG is also one of the busiest teams in the state, and highly regarded by our professional SAR peers. SCRG will receive from 150 to 200 calls a year for some type of assistance. Of those calls, we will send teams in the field on anywhere from 50 to 90 missions a year. The remaining calls might be solved from the dining room table with a good mapping program (typical for a lost hiker), or some will solve themselves prior to fielding a team (the party had dinner on the way home to Denver and didn't call his/her spouse), and some prove to be nothing that the Mission Coordinator feels is of concern (headlamps from night time rock and ice climbers in Ten Mile Canyon really weren't an SOS).



Navigating a difficult stretch of the McCullough Gulch trail with injured patient

SCRG responds to a wide array of missions, some straight forward and some complex. These include avalanches, snowmobile and ATV accidents, lost hikers/snowshoers/skiers, injured rock and ice climbers, backcountry motor vehicle accidents, paragliders, downed aircraft, injured mountain bikers, injured parasailers on iced-over Lake Dillon, cliffed-out hikers, and serious illnesses. In addition, the team is now the responsible agency for swift water rescues. When the pager sounds, you never know what the situation will be. SCRG does, however, have limits as to the areas of the county to which we respond. We cover all locations, except those within ski area and town boundaries (with rare exceptions). That leaves all Wilderness and non-wilderness areas, which are the bulk of the county. Whether a hiker is injured on the top of Quandary Peak or becomes lost on the Gore Range

Trail, SCRG will respond.

Backcountry operations can be challenging because the Mission Coordinators have to recognize when they are sending teams into areas with different 'ownerships' (e.g., private, county, state, federal). In addition, Summit County hosts two federally designated Wilderness Areas (Eagles Nest and Ptarmigan Peak), which can present specific obstacles that we need to properly address prior to team and equipment deployment. The Sheriff's Office has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Forest Service that allows for the use of a wheeled litter and/or a helicopter if these are the only means of bringing out the patient. When these resources are used, a report is filed with the Forest Service so they can keep proper statistics.



Our wheeled litter is a manually powered device and is the primary method by which we can expeditiously and safely extract a subject. It is still time consuming and can be exhausting for the team, especially on narrow and rocky trails, or on ones with a lot of deadfall. The entire device, with patient, medical equipment and litter has to be constantly lifted over obstacles. Four or five hours just to bring a

patient out of the field is not uncommon; add to that the time to get to the patient, evaluate injuries, treat and package the patient and a mission can easily run 6 to 10 hours.

In some instances, only a helicopter will suffice. A critically injured or sick patient, severe weather projected in the coming hours that could place rescuers at risk, search for a missing person (often at night using night vision goggles), or an avalanche with potentially buried subjects all can weigh in favor of using air assets. SCRG has an excellent relationship with both Flight for Life (FFL) and the High-Altitude Army National Guard Aviation Training Site (HAATS) in Gypsum. These activities can bring different air assets into play. There is, however, also a different protocol to obtain air services from either FFL (private) or HAATS (military). Because of the added risk with air operations, SCRG uses them sparingly and not without considering all of the other options. But helicopters are most definitely a life saver.

In some instances, SAR operations might be viewed in a negative light by the general public. Why is this? There are times when the use of ATVs or snowmobiles are the preferred method to get teams in close to the patient as quickly as possible. Those machines do not have 'lights and sirens' and our packs obscure 'Mountain Rescue' on the back of our jackets. So a hiker or skier may not know who we are or what we are doing. We try to go slowly and be respectful of all backcountry users; we almost always operate on trails. In fact, because most hiking trails are not even suitable for ATVs or snowmobiles, fully mechanized travel generally takes place on established backcountry roads.

Getting a patient out of the field is only part of the process. We often interact with neighboring county's SAR teams, law enforcement agencies, fire departments, Summit County Ambulance Service (SCAS), ski areas, US Forest Service, and potentially other federal, state, county and local agencies. We are proud to maintain an excellent relationship with all entities. In addition, SCAS has the Wilderness Paramedic Program that is specifically designed to have paramedics trained in SCRG's procedures. In the event a paramedic is necessary during a mission (often the case), a Wilderness Paramedic will participate in the mission as a part of the team. Often the crucial nature of an illness or injury will necessitate the use of medications and/or narcotics that only a paramedic can administer.



Bringing out an injured hiker using the wheeled litter on the McCullough Gulch trail

As with most SAR teams in Colorado, **our services are completely free**, with no cost for the team, Wilderness Paramedic, or Flight for Life (if requested to do a search to locate a lost or injured individual), and no charge if a HAATS helicopter (e.g., a Blackhawk) is used. There will be, however, a charge if a patient is medically evacuated via Flight for Life or if an ambulance is required to take the patient from the trailhead to a higher level of care. The use of air assets during a mission is at the discretion of the Mission Coordinator in consultation with the medical and technical personnel on scene and also after consultation with the Sheriff's Office.

Our equipment takes quite a beating, and we rely on the **CORSAR card** funds to help. Read the sidebar below to learn how, for just three dollars a year, you can help keep our teams supplied with top-notch equipment.



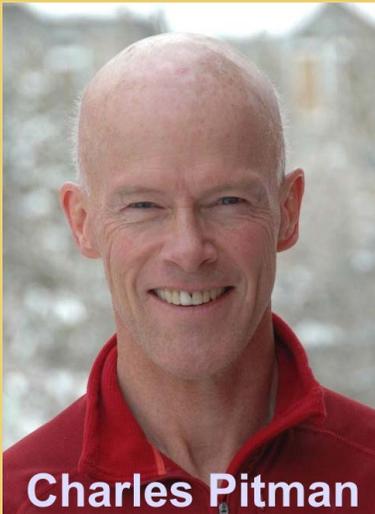
Search and Rescue is both rewarding and challenging. It

comes with a high level of dedication of team members to provide assistance to those in trouble in the backcountry. But it also means a level of satisfaction that isn't necessarily achieved in other pursuits. Team funding comes mostly from donations and occasional grants. SCRG is ready for all emergencies, day and night, and in all weather conditions. It takes nothing more than a call to 911.

So, "seeing Summit County by headlamp" has its rewards, not the least of which is observing a sunrise over the Rockies while walking out with a subject at 5:30 a.m. Not a bad pursuit, all in all.

About Charles Pitman:

**BUY YOUR
\$3 CORSAR CARD!**



Born in New Hampshire, Charles moved to Grand Junction, CO at an early age where he inherited his parents' love of the mountains. He started skiing at a young age, skiing the old Grand Mesa Ski Area. Summers were spent hiking with his father and at two cabins, one in the Snowy Range in Wyoming and the other at Trout Lake (near Telluride). Charles graduated from Colorado State University in 1970 with a degree in electrical engineering and went to work as a test engineer for the Department of the Navy in Port Hueneme, CA. After a successful 33 year career testing state-of-the-art ship defense systems, in 2003 Charles and his wife, Debbie, retired and moved to Silverthorne. They love international travel. Charles joined the Summit County Rescue Group in 2004 and is currently the team's Public Information Officer and also one of nine Mission Coordinators. In his spare time, Charles loves cycling, Nordic skiing, and hiking. He also is an avid reader, focusing heavily on ancient history.

Missions can be tough on equipment, and on occasion items are damaged or destroyed in the process of a rescue. One avenue that SCRG has to recoup some costs is to tap into a fund at the Department of



Local Affairs (DOLA). Those funds are replenished when backcountry users purchase the **Colorado Outdoor Recreation Search and Rescue (CORSAR) card**, sometimes called the 'hiker's card'. The card can be purchased, \$3.00 for one year, at many outdoor stores, or [on-line](#). In addition, contributions to that fund include hunting and fishing licenses and ATV and snowmobile registrations. If a person is rescued, and during the mission some of our equipment is damaged, and we find that the individual has either a CORSAR card or a registration or license, we are able to apply (annually via the Sheriff's Office) for DOLA funds. This is an important source of reimbursement for teams that don't have regular funding streams.

Be aware that there is a significant misperception about the CORSAR card. It is **not** an insurance card that provides for free rescues or a helicopter ride out of the backcountry. Rescues are always free and a medical evacuation becomes what is essentially an expensive ambulance ride. Other uses of air assets (other than a medical evacuation) are not charged to the individual we are searching for.



I HELP  SEARCH
COLORADO

Wanna **become a member** of the team? Send a short bio to SCRG at info@scrg.org . A meet-and-greet intro meeting, then six 2-3 hour training meetings (spring & fall). Then a pack check and knot test, and 6 month probationary period, and if all goes well, full membership.

BECOME A
VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGER



CLICK TO APPLY!

APPLICATIONS NOW
BEING ACCEPTED!

In 2017, more than 50 VWRs directly contacted more than 11,000 hikers. *Greet & teach!*

Make a donation to FENW



Make a difference!

Volunteer - **2018 Trail projects:**

- Gateways Trail Day – June 16 & 17
- National Trails Day – June 2
- East Vail Overnight – Aug
- Deluge Lake Trail with VOC – Sep
- Overnight registration box installation – TBD



Recent Newsletters ([ALL](#) newsletters)

- March: "[Bill Mounsey, the Father of Eagles Nest Wilderness](#)" by Senator Kerry Donovan
- February: "[The Continental Divide Bill](#)" by Susie Kincade
- January: "[Meet FENW President Tim Drescher](#)" by Tim Drescher
- December: "[The Search for Powder](#)" by Joel Gratz
- November: "[The Cabin on Bighorn Creek](#)" by Andy Walker
- October: "[Rename the Gore Range](#)" by Karn Stiegelmeier
- September: "[The Battle for Our National Monuments](#)" by Julie Mach
- August: "[Global Warming in the Gore Range](#)" by David Schimel
- July: "[The Continental Divide Wilderness & Recreation Act](#)" by Josh Kuhn

Lily Pad Lakes Plank Bridge Project – TBD

- Salt Lick Connector Trail with VOC – Aug 11-12
- Adopt-A-Trail on Deluge, potentially Bighorn – TBD
- FENW/Colorado Outward Bound, Piney Lake – Aug 2

Learn about trail work [here](#).

Join us! for our next

Planning Meeting

THURSDAY, April 12, 5:30 PM,
USFS Minturn & USFS Silverthorne
([MAP](#))

Details at www.fenw.org/

- June: "[The American Beaver: An Icon of the West](#)" by Elissa Slezak
 - May: "[Meet Wilderness Manager Mike Beach](#)" by Mike Beach
 - April: "[Future of Eagles Nest](#)" by April Phule
-

- CITY MARKET COMMUNITY REWARDS PROGRAM
Please [register](#) your City Market Value Card, linking it to FENW, which will send rebates to FENW without compromising your earned fuel points. Please note that each card holder may only sign up for one tax exempt organization. **THANKS!**



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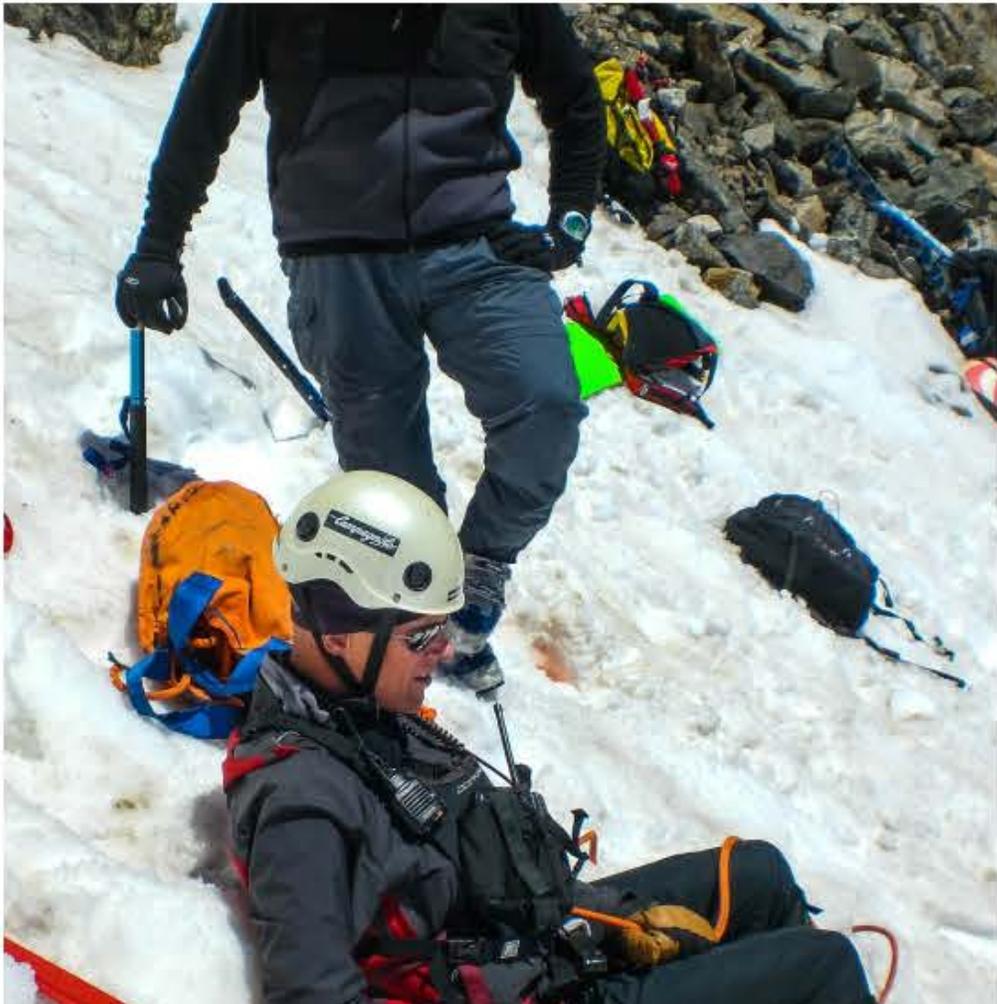
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Searching for a downed aircraft

search for a lost snowboarder
on Quandary Peak (lost
overnight in sub-zero temperatures)







Charles lowering a critically injured skier down Christo Couloir on the south side of Quandary Peak