

NUMBER 179

October 2023

**CHINA LAKE MOUNTAIN
RESCUE GROUP**

P. O. BOX 2037
RIDGECREST, CA 93556

See our web page at clmrg.org and clmrg.org/contact.html

Also the California Region's web page at crmra.org.

Find us on Facebook – China Lake Mountain Rescue Group

**CLMRG is funded in part by the Combined Federal Campaign and Just Giving
We benefit most from Private donations!**

+++++

We've been very busy! Sorry this edition is so late, but operations reports are still coming in... like 3 teams out in one weekend! 15 calls this period.



This is why we spent a lot of time helping Kern Valley SAR people. This is the usually quiet Kern River running at over 6500 cfs just below the Isabella Dam. Normally it's around 16-1800 cfs. Isabella dam went from 36,400 af to 540,000 af, but they've dropped it down to 400,000 af. It looks like a real lake/reservoir now! CDEC, ISB Photo J Westbrook

Operations June – July 2023

2023-16 10 June 2023 RESCUE Kern County Pacific Crest Trail-Horse Canyon

Finco

Sgt. Seibert, with the Kern County Sheriff Office (KCSO), contacted Linda Finco at 1052 on June 10th asking if our team could assist in a rescue on the Pacific Crest Trail. The Sheriff had been contacted by the California Office of Emergency Services (OES) after receiving an SOS inReach message from Gabrielle Roy at 1019. The message stated she had bad knee pain, and although able to walk with some difficulty, she felt she could not continue on the trail and was seeking assistance. The message also gave her location.

I misunderstood the original message and thought Gabrielle was suffering from heat cramps, therefore I contacted Dave Miles to see if he could start with a hasty team to get to her location quickly. Nick Pio and Phil Cash would be on the team with Dave. I then sent out a Group message through our calling system where Sheila Rockwell responded that she could coordinate the callout and Eileen Loughran helping. I wanted additional people to meet me at the hut at 1130 and we would bring a stretcher and wheel in case of a carryout. Bill Stephenson and Andrew Cammenga committed to be on the 2nd team with me.

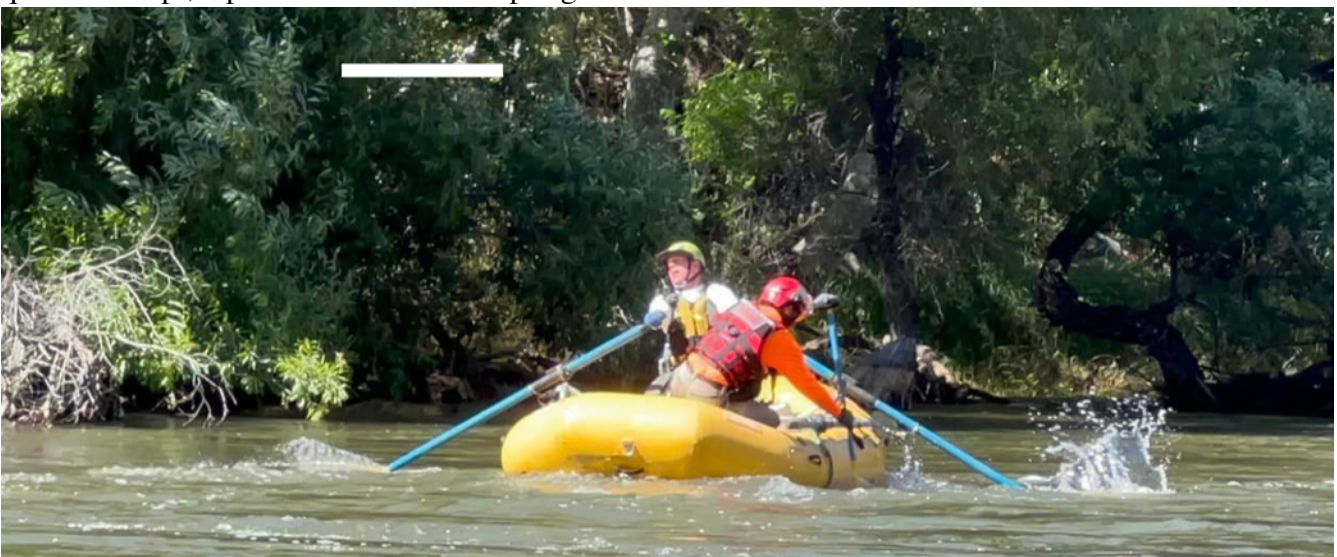
Team 1 departed from Mile's home at 1105. During this time we got a message from the Sheriff stating that Gabrielle was on the Horse Canyon road and would stay put until we arrived. Sgt. Seibert was also enroute and would meet us on the canyon road.

Team 2 left the Hut at 1145. We made contact with Team 1 when we turned off on the Horse Canyon road. At 1225 Team 1 had made contact with Gabrielle. I contacted Sgt. Seibert who was still enroute to let him know the status and we agreed to just wait for everyone at the intersection of SC 65 and LA2.

Sgt. Seibert got additional information from Gabrielle. She had fallen and injured her knee, which was slightly swollen and made walking difficult. She had a hotel room reserved in Ridgecrest and was just hoping to recuperate there after a few days. The Sheriff released us to transport Gabrielle to Ridgecrest. Team 1 dropped her off at her hotel at 1400 and they arrived back at Miles' house at 1405 while Team 2 secured at the Hut at 1415.

2023-OP Credit 27-28 May 2023 Kern County Kernville

On May 27-28, 2023 we joined KVSAR to stage at Lake Isabella and the Kern River to be ready for rescues over the Memorial Day weekend. We each drove POVs due to overlapping commitments: Dave Miles, Phil Cash, Nick Pio. Although the Team was not mobilized, we reviewed rescue gear and systems and took a quick raft trip., rapids and all. What a spring!



photos KVSAR

2023-17 15 June 2023 RECOVERY Tulare County Ant Canyon Miles

At 2115 on 14 June, 2023 I, David Miles, got an alert requesting CLMRG to assist Kern Valley Search and Rescue (KVSAR) in support of Tulare County efforts to search/recover a deceased kayaker trapped in the rapids of the Kern River near Ant Canyon. Terry Mitchell was Operation Coordinator and Carin Miles was Operation Telephoner. We left the Hut at 0600 on 15 June with a team of six: Dave Miles, Nathan Simons, David Jensen, Linda Finco, Nick Pio, and Bill Stephenson. We arrived at the kayak location around 0740 and looked over the scene with some Tulare deputies while waiting for everyone to arrive. We built some shade and waited at the Command Post while the Tulare Team decided how to proceed. It was confirmed that the kayaker was still in the kayak and that the river was flowing at over 6,000 CFS which made it quite dangerous to perform a recovery. While waiting we did a quick practice of the procedures that we had developed to get ropes setup across the river. We refined these procedures with KVSAR after the last recovery. Just as we were finishing the practice Tulare determined that no recovery attempt was to be made that day and released us at 1415 and we headed home. We secured at the Hut at 1620.



2023- 18 18 June 2023 RESCUE Kern Co. Hobo Campground Stranded Rafters Miles

At 1511 hours on 18 June 2023, Linda Finco sent out an alert to China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) that Kern Valley Search and Rescue (KVSAR) was requesting our help for a rafter stuck on an island at Hobo Campground. Terry Mitchell was OC and Carin Miles was OT. The field team of Dave Miles, Christian Aranda, Bill Stephenson, Linda Finco, Nick Pio, and Phil Cash met at the hut at 1545 and arrived at Hobo Campground at 1700.

This was a very challenging location for a technical rescue since the river was flowing at 5800 CFS and there were 4 foot standing waves in our way. Many obstacles were encountered as we setup a Norwegian Reeve Highline. I will not go into all the technical rigging aspects in this report, but between KVSAR and CLMRG, we have a lot spent a lot of time documenting and analyzing the system for lessons learned.



e to

We deployed a team of 5 to the other side by raft and were able to get the system functional with the 14-foot KVSAR tripod being critical to the success of the highline. At 1945 we sent Phil across on the highline to the island where he secured the Subject and sent him back across the river. We then sent the pulley back to Phil and he was back on shore around 2000. We were able to disassemble the system and get all the team members back on this side of the river by 2100 and debrief by 2130. We returned to the Hut at 2230.

Searches, both above and below the dam, are super difficult and dangerous. The river is rocky and throws up waves and has real rapids. It flows along at about 5 mph, but there is an



undertow that is faster. Normally the river below the dam flows at around 12-1500 cfs. This was released from the dam at over 6500 cfs. most of the summer. There are eddies, where the water swirls back on itself and makes a whirlpool, and there are underwater “strainers”, tree limbs that catch anything going by. A person would get trapped in the tangle and drown. In 2023 we had a banner year for snow, 300%, and the Kern 6x normal!



2023-19 19-20 June 2023 SEARCH Kern County Mojave Evidence Search

Finco

Sgt. Saldana, Kern County Sheriff (KSCSO), texted Kern County Search and Rescue (SAR) team captains on Monday, 19 June at 1330. Sgt Saldana was requesting a head count to assist in an evidence search on Tuesday, 20 June in Mojave.

Linda Finco took the operation and used the callout system to notify members. Janet Westbrook coordinated the callout and Terry Mitchell would assist Janet on Tuesday. Nathan Simons, Gina Niesen and Tom Sakai committed to the search. The original meet time was set for 0700 at our rescue Hut located on the Navy base, however, base traffic can be difficult at that hour, so Finco picked up the Sheriff's vehicle Monday afternoon and made the new meet location at the Albertson's parking lot at 0700. The 4 members met at 0700 and arrived at the Command Post at 0750. The Sheriff waited for all teams to arrive, so the briefing occurred at 0830. CLMRG was designated Team 1 and given a zone to grid search. We started our grid search at 0900, completed our first assignment at 1100 and after a short break we started another grid search on the neighboring zone. We completed that search assignment at 1250. All teams were back for the debrief by 1315. We secured back at the Albertson's parking lot at 1450.



2023-20 24 June 2023 TRANSIT Kern County Pacific Crest Trail – HWY 58 Miles

At 1831 on June 24, 2023, Dave Miles got an alert for an injured 66 year old female hiker on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) just north of the intersection with Highway 58. Terry Mitchell was the OC and Eileen Loughran was the OT. Dave called Tehachapi Mountain Search and Rescue (TMSAR) Captain Dan Gates to get details and we agreed that even if I was the only one from CLMRG it would be good to have our litter and wheel available. The Subject was located in some rough terrain that might require technical gear. Dave Miles was the OL and Carin Miles went to be a driver. Dave drove to the Hut and picked up the truck, litter, wheel, and technical gear and we left at 1956. By the time we got to the Garlock turnoff, we heard that TMSAR had reached the Subject and that a helicopter was airlifting her out. We turned around and secured at the Hut at 2047.

2023-OP Credit 01 July 2023 Kern County Kernville assist KRV SAR

On July 1, 2023 we joined KVSAR to stage at Lake Isabella and the Kern River to be ready for rescues over the July 4th weekend. We left the Hut at 0630 with a team of three: Dave Miles, Bill Stephenson, and Nathan Simons. We stopped by the South Fork of the Kern River to check the conditions of the river that had cut through the road. We arrived at the KVSAR compound at 0800 and then went to Lake Isabella for training on rafts, power boats, and to do various swim tests. After lunch we went to Sandy Flat to do self-rescue swim test. At the KVSAR compound we discussed the Hobo Campground rescue and reviewed gear. At 1800 we had a BBQ at the French Gulch boat launch and then drove home. We secured at the Hut at 2100.

2023-21 02 July 2023 SEARCH /RECOVERY Kern County Sandy Flat – Kern River N. Pio

CLMRG received a call-out at 1200 on Sunday July 2nd to assist in a search for a missing male Subject that was swept away from Keysville South along the Kern River. I (Nick Pio) accepted as Leader and Dave Miles also committed. Carin Miles coordinated. We went to the Hut at 1300 to collect gear to support a technical rescue/recovery if the operation evolved into that. At approximately 1415 we were within radio contact of the ongoing search being led by Kern Valley Search and Rescue (KVSAR), and we were instructed to head to Sandy Flat Campground. Just before, at 1411 KVSAR was notified that the Subject had been located, approximately 9 miles down-river from the point last seen. Upon arrival we assisted in the recovery efforts. Remaining with KVSAR, we staged out of their compound for the rest of the afternoon in case another call-out was received. At 2005 we left to head back to Ridgecrest and were secured at 2122.

2023- 22 04 July 2023 ALERT Los Angeles Co. Lost hiker Altadena N. Pio

2023- 23 05 July 2023 “ “

2023- 24 06 July 2023 “ “

At 1324 on July 3rd CLMRG received a Mutual Aid Request in Los Angeles County to assist in a July 4th search for a missing 66 year old male last seen on July 1st on the Chaney Trail. Nick Pio accepted as Leader with Bill Stephenson, Mike Derkey, and Dan Bishop committing. After receiving the information from Dave Miles I contacted the Command Post point of contact (POC) to arrange lodging to leave that night. At 1600 I received a message from Kern County Sgt. Saldana that we were no longer needed for the July 4th search and wanted to see if we could field another team for July 6th. I sent out a cancellation to the team and a new alert for the 6th, Phil Cash was the only commitment.

On July 4th we received an additional callout for July 5th and had no commitments.

After the fact I learned that the Command Post was still expecting our team on July 4th but communication misunderstandings resulted in the stand-down of resources. The lesson learned was for future mutual aid calls is that SGT Saldana wants to be the POC unless specified otherwise.

Note: Subject was subsequently found deceased from an apparent fall

2023-25 07 July 2023 SEARCH Kern County Riverside Park – Kern River

N. Pio

On July 7th we received a call to assist Kern Valley Search and Rescue (KVSAR) with a search for missing Hispanic male that was last seen in the Kern River at Riverside Park. Dave Miles initially accepted as leader and contacted Brian Baskins of KVSAR and set a meet time at the Hut of 1500. Another China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) team was scheduled to leave that evening for a search in San Luis Obispo County, and after some back and forth with Sheriff we were told the in-county search took priority. Nick Pio then took over as Operation Leader with Dave Miles, Roger Pio, Phil Cash, and David Jensen committed. A follow-on team of Dan Bishop and Joe Kromphardt also committed and met at the Hut at, however, it was soon learned that a KVSAR team had previously landed their boat on the island and had searched a short section of shoreline. From there they returned to the steel cable crossing at 1930 after which the first team packed up and went to dinner with KVSAR. I sent out an Alert to continue search the next day on July 8th.

During this time our second team of Bishop and Kromphardt arrived at the CP at 1700 and started searching down river-right. They completed their assignment and debriefed at 1900 and then returned to Ridgecrest. 1600. Sheila Rockwell was Coordinator with Eileen Loughran helped as Telephoner. The first team arrived at the Command Post

located at Old Cemetery at 1620. Our first goal was to identify river-left access for searching that shore. With members of KVSAR we accessed through private property and identified an island that needed to be searched and discovered there was a steel cable that crossed the river to the island. After evaluating the cable condition and backing it up with a



simple tensioning system, N. Pio and Jensen used the steel cable to shuttle across where they searched the west side of the island, checking river left for clues. Finding tracks at the shore that initially led them to believe the Subject may have been stuck on the island

2023- 26 July 7 2023 SEARCH Kern Co. Riverside Park, Kernville N. Pio

On July 7th 2023 at 1950, China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) was requested by Kern Valley Search and Rescue (KVSAR) to continue a search for a missing 21 year old Hispanic male wearing a white shirt, last seen rafting with a party of four by Riverside Park on August 7th. Nick Pio continued as Operation Leader from the previous Op period (2023-25) with C. Miles as Coordinator as well as D. Miles and J. Kromphardt also committed to the search.

The team met at D. Miles house at 0700 and drove to the Command Post (CP) located at Old Cemetery launch, arriving at 0830. D. Miles boarded the KVSAR pontoon boat searching the mouth of the river into Lake Isabella. N. Pio and Kromphardt were dropped off via zodiac style boat on an island located on river-right. The Kern County Sheriff helicopter was also searching and had located a white object on river-right, believing it may have been the missing Subjects shirt. N. Pio and Kromphardt were able to make their way to the object relatively quickly and determined the object was instead an old sandbag. They continued searching river-right and completed searching the perimeter of the island after which they were picked up by the boat and brought back to the CP. The search was stopped at 1230 to prepare for any additional callouts that may occur during the busy weekend.

2023- 27 8 July 2023 SEARCH Kern Co. Riverside Park, Kernville Stephenson

On Saturday 15 July 2023, China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) assisted Kern Valley Search and Rescue (KVSAR) with the continued efforts in a series of searches for a missing male Subject reported last seen in the Kern River below Kernville River Park on 9 July. Carin Miles was the Coordinator with Terry Mitchell as Telephoner along with Operation Leader Bill Stephenson while Rick Burnes, Phil Cash, and Dave Miles also committing.

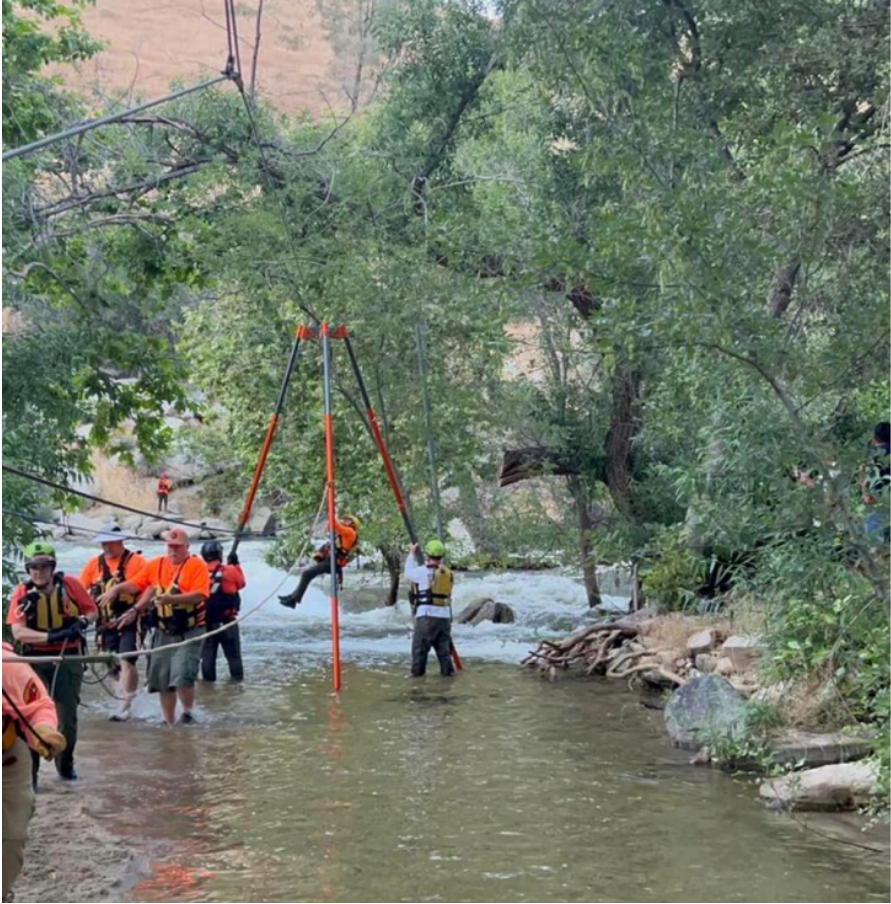
The Team met at the Hut at 0530, departing at 0545 using the Sheriff's vehicle Chevy Tahoe, while Dave Miles drove his vehicle. Meeting the KVSAR Team at 0700 at the Command Post (CP) near the Kern River Valley Cemetery north of Wofford Heights we learned that the Kern Dive Team also responded with personnel and boats which we helped with putting in the water. After the 0730 Ops briefing, all CLMRG members were detailed to a large pontoon boat and a KVSAR boat operator. Detailed to be spotters on the boat and to search two river sections, which contained tree-line strainers and points of interest. Leaving the CP at 0750, we towed another boat north to a location approximately 150 yards south of where Kern River flows into Lake Isabella right below Kernville. Beginning our search from here down to just north of the Cemetery and as far east as the Kernville Airport.

We used binoculars as well as stopping and getting close to points of interest. There were several stands of trees and tree "islands" which were searched on the west side down to almost the CP. We also searched several large backwaters on the east side of the main channel into the Lake. There were also large areas of floating debris fields from earlier high-water run-off. Finding no clues, at 1045 we retrieved the boat we had towed earlier and that was returning to the CP. We towed them back in and arrived at 1110. Following the debrief, recovering all the boats, Dave and Phil continued after noon to look over some previous OPS sites. Rick Burnes and I returned to Ridgecrest 1445 and secured from the OP.

The CLMRG team staged with KVSAR the remainder of the afternoon and returned to Ridgecrest, securing at 1815.



A high line was rigged so the kids who were trapped on the island could be brought across the river and not have to be in the water. Slick! Good thing CLMRG has a lot of ropes! Superior engineering!



2023- 27 8 July 2023 SEARCH Kern Co. Riverside Park, Kernville

Stephenson

On Saturday 15 July 2023, China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) assisted Kern Valley Search and Rescue (KVSAR) with the continued efforts in a series of searches for a missing male Subject reported last seen in the Kern River below Kernville River Park on 9 July. Carin Miles was the Coordinator with Terry Mitchell as Telephoner along with Operation Leader Bill Stephenson while Rick Burnes, Phil Cash, and Dave Miles also committing.

The Team met at the Hut at 0530, departing at 0545 using the Sheriff's vehicle Chevy Tahoe, while Dave Miles drove his vehicle. Meeting the KVSAR Team at 0700 at the Command Post (CP) near the Kern River Valley Cemetery north of Wofford Heights we learned that the Kern Dive Team also responded with personnel and boats which we helped with putting in the water. After the 0730 Ops briefing, all CLMRG members were detailed to a large pontoon boat and a KVSAR boat operator. Detailed to be spotters on the boat and to search two river sections, which contained tree-line strainers and points of interest. Leaving the CP at 0750, we towed another boat north to a location approximately 150 yards south of where Kern River flows into Lake Isabella right below Kernville. Beginning our search from here down to just north of the Cemetery and as far east as the Kernville Airport. We used binoculars as well as stopping and getting close to points of interest. There were several stands of trees and tree "islands" which were searched on the west side down to almost the CP. We also searched several large backwaters on the east side of the main channel into the Lake. There were also large areas of floating debris fields from earlier high-water run-off. Finding no clues, at 1045 we retrieved the boat we had towed earlier and that was returning to the CP. We towed them back in and arrived at 1110. Following the debrief, recovering all the boats, Dave and Phil continued after noon to look over some previous OPS sites. Rick Burnes and I returned to Ridgecrest 1445 and secured from the OP.

2023-29 & 30 19, 20, 21 July, 2023 ALERT, SEARCH LA County Monrovia

Finco, Bishop

In the evening hours of July 19th, China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) received a mutual aid request from the California Office of Emergency Service (OES), via Sgt Saldana, of the Kern County Sheriff office, to assist in a search in the mountains north of Monrovia in Los Angeles County for an overdue hiker. Due to the late notice and the early muster time the following morning, only Linda Finco was able to commit as Operation Leader (OL) with Sheila Rockwell acting as the Coordinator and Eileen Loughran as the Telephoner for this Alert since we could not field a team.

As the search continued the next day, July 20th, a Team was able to be coordinated by Eileen Loughran and with Sheila Rockwell acting as Telephoner, Dan Bishop OL, Bill Stephenson, and Jessica Kormelink committed to respond to search on the 21st. Because of the early morning briefing and the expected delay with LA traffic, the Team left in the evening with lodging being arranged by OES. Sgt Saldana informed the Team that a member of the South Kern team, Steve Packard, would join CLMRG in this effort. Since Mr. Packard lived in the Simi Valley area, we arranged to meet at the CP in the morning, which was about 40 minutes away.

Departing the Hut at 1900 and arriving at the Command Post (CP) located at the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue headquarters (1901 Stonehouse Rd) we were given a conference room to spend the evening with our sleeping bags and pads. After midnight, team members from Sierra Madre and Montrose arrived from evening search assignments having been helicopter extracted from their search areas.

At the morning brief at the CP our Team learned that this was the 5th operational period of the search for the Subject, Colin Waler, 53 year old, reported missing on 17 July after departing for a hike, last seen on 15 July from a trail head in Monrovia. Mr. Walker frequently hiked in the area, especially the Santa Anita canyon

where he would often leave trails in search of landmarks documented on old maps. In his large pack that he always carried with him were loppers and a machete which he used to access areas of brush in his exploration.

The CLMRG assignments composed of two areas east of Clamshell Peak, one drainage and one ridge, both descending into the East Fork of the Santa Anita Canyon, which was previously searched. Bishop and Kormelink took the ridge while Stephenson and Packard were to search the drainage. Driving past the closed road leading to the landing zone (LZ) located above Chanty Flat, 3.5 miles from the CP, the CLMRG teams were to be flown in via the LA County Air-5 helicopter to a LZ on the summit of Clamshell Peak. During the helicopter safety brief all the teams (7 searchers total) were instructed to expect to be extracted via the Air-5 hoist due to no suitable LZ anticipated to be available in the search area.

2023 – 31 23 July 2023 SEARCH L.A. County Monrovia N. Pio

On July 20th at 0657 China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) received a mutual aid request from the California Office of Emergency Service (OES), via Sgt. Saldana, of the Kern County Sheriff office to assist in a search in the mountains north of Monrovia in Los Angeles County for an overdue hiker Colin Walker. This was a follow-on search from 21 July where CLMRG sent a team. Mr. Walker was described as an amateur historian that sought out points of historic interest and old, no longer maintained trails. He was known to frequent local libraries and dig up microfilm maps from the 1800's. He was also known to carry loppers and other trail cutting equipment but was cognizant to not create false trails for other hikers by pushing through 6-8 ft of brush before cutting trail. He typically traveled alone but was very familiar with the area.

N. Pio accepted as Leader for a team on Sunday the 23rd, with E. Loughran as Coordinator and S. Rockwell and Telephoner, S. Paniccia and R. Pio also committed. Due to the 3hr drive at 0700 briefing, we left the evening of the 22nd, meeting at the Hut at 1900 and grabbing gear for short rappels. The lodging was arranged by OES we arrived at the local YMCA, at 2150 and were able to catch some sleep in the gymnasium.

On the 23rd we meet at 0700 for the briefing at the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Command Post (CP). Our assignment was a ridge line that started at Rankin Peak and ended at the parking lot where the Subject vehicle was located. This started at the end of an old switchback that is no longer shown on current maps. The theory of our search area was that the Subject may have used this old trail as an exit route and taken the ridge line as a shortcut to his vehicle.

We were helicopter inserted a little bit east of Rankin Peak and hiked to the beginning of our search area and began down the ridge line. Searching was extremely difficult through overgrown brush and thick manzanita that had burned in a previous wildfire. We decided that the Subject would likely not have used this ridge as a shortcut and there was no signs of any brush being cut. We made our way back up to main trail and tried descending a clearing to see if could cut back into our search area. This terrain was steep and became impassable. At that point we decided that due do out distance to the trail head and time of day to hike to another extraction point we requested to be picked up. At 1430 we were extracted by the helicopter and returned to the LZ and drove back to the CP where we debriefed. We returned to Ridgecrest that night and were secure at 1930.

POST SCRIPT:

Monrovia, Calif. (KABC) -- The Los Angeles County Coroner's Office has confirmed that human remains found last month in the Angeles National Forest belong to missing hiker Colin Walker.

Walker, 53, was reported missing after he went hiking early on the morning of July 15 along the Clamshell trail in Monrovia. An extensive search effort was launched but the remains of the South Pasadena man were not discovered in the area until July 26.



Rick Burnes, Jessica Kormelink, Maricela Park and Nathan Simons
The Summit of White Mountain Peak, 2nd highest peak in CA, 14,252'

CLMRG thanks.....

The China Lake Mountain Rescue Group (CLMRG) would like to thank Mojave Pistachios for their generous donation to CLMRG. This contribution allows CLMRG to continue our primary mission of search and rescue of lost or injured persons as well as our secondary mission of teaching wilderness safety to the public. CLMRG also provides 'Lost but Found' presentations in our local schools and other organizations when asked. The 'Lost but Found' presentation teaches kids what to do if they get lost.

The City of Ridgecrest and the Ridgecrest Police Dept. gave us a commendation for helping during the flooding from Hurricane Hillary.

The China Lake Mountain Rescue Group is an all-volunteer non-profit organization affiliated with the Kern County Sheriff's Office, a member of the Mountain Rescue Association, and funded by private donations. CLMRG is a member of the Combined Federal Campaign.