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## Stranded Marines Skyline Trail

**October 16, 2009**  
**Skyline Trail**  
**2009-016**

**By Nick Nixon**

The first callout text came just after 6:00 pm on Friday, October 16, 2009. Gwenda advised me that a group of seven Marines were on Skyline Trail and were in need of water. Apparently a group of about 26 Marines started up Skyline trail Friday morning. They divided into three groups, a fast group, medium speed group and a slow group. The first two groups made it to Long Valley without any problem. However, the seven individuals in the slow group became even slower as the heat of the day hit and they ran low on water. One of the Marines that made it to Long Valley went to the Ranger Station about 1:30 pm and reported that the slow seven were having problems due to the heat and inadequate hydration. Ranger Sahl and one Park Aid filled their packs with water bottles and started down Skyline. One early estimate was that the Marines were about 3,000 vertical feet down from Grubbs Notch (also called the “launching pad”). That would leave the steepest part of Skyline to still be climbed.

I got a quick start towards the tram. Three other RMRU members – Carlos Carter, Les Walker and Chuck Springer responded but were some distance behind. It appeared they would be about an hour behind me. Upon arriving at the tram I went to Grubbs Notch. One experienced State Park Volunteer was waiting for someone else to accompany him down with water. It was already dark, the tram was only scheduled to run until 9:45 pm, and I believed that the next RMRU member was an hour behind (I later found out that Carlos Carter was only about 15 minutes behind me). The Park Volunteer and I started down with ten liters of water. Those of you who have been down Skyline know that the trail is very hard to identify towards the top. It is even worse in the dark. The footing can be very bad. In any event, the Park Volunteer and I met up with the first six Marines and Ranger Sahl at about the middle of the “traverse of the fluted ridges”. The Park Aid was behind them with the last Marine who was moving very slowly and having problems with dizziness and a headache. We gave half of our water to the first six and then headed down toward the last Marine and Park Aid. We met up with them starting the traverse. After hydrating the Marine we started up very slowly.

Carlos, Les and Chuck positioned themselves at Grubbs Notch and maintained radio

contact with us. The last couple of hundred vertical feet, Les and Chuck came down with water and to assist us up the final slope. Les was even kind enough to carry my pack. I wasn't so proud to pass up that offer. The tram stayed open to carry us down at 11:00 pm.

This ultimately was a successful joint effort by the State Park and RMRU. The Marines were very appreciative and I'm not sure if they called me "sir" out of military courtesy or respect for my advanced age. Anyway, all went well and everyone was fine.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.