



Search PCT Whitewater Area

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PCT Whitewater Area
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Written by Kirk Cloyd

The day started out like any other Sunday (other than I only had 2.5 hours sleep the night before due to a migraine.) I had dinner with two of my cousins at La Casita Mexican Restaurant in Idyllwild and then visited with the Allert's and their "Rehab Raccoons". A short drive took us home to the desert where I was looking forward to a long night sleep. Just as I stepped into the shower at 9:00pm; a page went out that there was a lost female hiker on the PCT north of Interstate 10. I jumped in the car and headed toward the Whitewater area. Being the closest RMRU team member, I arrived shortly before my team mates and used the time to gather information from the Sargent and Deputy on scene.

I called Gwenda who was in route and relayed the location of the deputy. We both agreed that with the coordinates given by the Sheriff helicopter, who spotted the subject earlier in the day, I might be able to get a bearing on the subject and hike a short distance (300 to 400 yards) from the trailhead to see if I could see the subjects light and determine her location for the team members that were right behind me. If I could make voice contact, I could assess her location, medical situation and relay it to the Command Post. The deputy gave me a lift to the trailhead and greatly assisted in obtaining a bearing of the subjects last know position. As I headed out into the dark, I determined that the direct approach up the side of the ridgeline would be faster than hiking from the bottom of the ridge. Once on top of the ridge, I continued up the ridgeline to look for sign, nothing. At that point, I realized that the subject was most likely on the next ridge over, bummer! By this time the wind picked up and the rain began to fall sporadically. At times, the rain was blowing sideways from the west directly into my face, the same direction I believed the subject to be.

I combed the ridgeline several times looking for a way down and back up the other side. Going down was not an issue but in the dark, the other ridge looked to be a vertical wall of sand and gravel with very little vegetation. I continued to call the subjects name, all the time thinking it was useless in this wind as she probably could not hear me, when all of a sudden I faintly heard, "I'm here, don't leave me! I'm right here!" As I looked up to

the ridge to the west of me, I noted a faint light slowly moving around. I called to her and like on cue, the wind died down and we could hear each other with some effort. I determined that the subject was in fact the 43 year old female we were called to assist. She was not injured but incredibly cold and didn't know how to get down or over to me.

At this time, I made several attempts to contact both the CP and the Deputy. In just a short distance, I had lost cell service. The subject was frantic, cold and kept asking me to not leave her. After quickly assessing both my situation and the subjects, I knew I could quickly and easily walk her out so I instructed the subject to slowly make her way down the ridgeline she was on. (When she asked what a ridgeline was I envisioned a very long and cold night...) I let the subject know that I was going to hike down the ridge I was on and up the one she was on to meet up with her. We kept in voice contact as I quickly made my way down the wide ridge I was on. I crossed the drainage between the two ridges at the bottom and proceeded up the ridge the subject was on. I continued up until I met up with the subject who was seated and shivering in the wind. As I approached the subject, she stood up, hugged and thanked me for coming to help her. I gave her a jacket, gloves and a bottle of water as she had not had anything to drink since she lost her backpack (with her car keys) early in the day.

I helped her down the ridgeline and over to the ridge I started on. From there I found a way down that was acceptable to the subject and down the last decent we went. About half way down, I noticed two lights at the top of the ridge. I knew it was RMRU and that they would have a radio to notify base that we had the subject and were walking to the trailhead. As the subject and I got to the bottom of the ridge, Donny and Matt caught up with us. We all walked the subject out and by 1:30am headed off for a couple hours of sleep before the start of the work day.

RMRU team members present: Roger Barry, Donny Goetz, Matt Jordon, Kirk Cloyd, and Gwenda Yates.

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.