



**Missions**  
**January - June 2022**

# Thank You!

To all that volunteer their time and financial assistance....

**Countless people owe their lives**



## OUR SUSTAINING MEMBERS



**January - June, 2022**

**EVEREST CLUB \$5,000 +**

Riverside Elks Lodge #643

**BENEFACTOR CLUB \$1,000.00 +**

Scott Bros Dairy Farms | Joan & Larry Parker | Doug Laher

**SUMMIT CLUB \$500.00+**

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Lynn Nicodemus | Jack & Michelle Schnurr | Judy Goetz | Laura Peterson | Scott Hooks

**SUPPORTING < \$100.00**

Rich Stuka | Thomas Kaczmarek | Rebekah Sanford

**IN MEMORY OF TREVOR LAHER**

Lanny Inabnit | Suzanne Wilkins | Laura Quinn | Katie Manwell

## RESCUE TEAM MEMBERS



**Thomas Blanke** - Oceanside | **Coby Brown** - Hemet | **Steve Bryant** - Alta Loma  
**Pete Carlson** - Blue Jay | **Kase Chong** - Hemet | **Blake Douglas** - Riverside  
**James Eckhardt** - Riverside | **Matt Frenken** - Hemet | **Michael George** - Riverside  
**Donny Goetz** - Idyllwild | **Josh Gould** - Murrieta | **Beth Jeffery** - Murrieta  
**Glenn Henderson** - Hemet | **Eric Holden** - Temecula | **Tony Hughes** - Yorba Linda  
**Kevin Kearn** - Huntington Beach | **Rob May** - Riverside | **Caleb Miner** - Hemet  
**Tobias Moyneur** - Calimesa | **Robert Newton** - Hemet | **Shani McCullough** - Temecula  
**Amber Prestegard** - San Diego | **Vinay Rao** - San Jacinto | **Steven Rider** - Oceanside  
**Tyler Shumway** - Hemet | **Becky Templeton** - Murrieta | **Jessie Virga** - Temecula  
**Ray Weden** - Murrieta | **Richard Yocum** - Idyllwild

**Support Members**

Corey Ellison | Kaitlyn Ellison | Joe Erickson | Gary Farris  
Kaylean May | Brad Scott | Ty Wittersheim



**MISSION REVIEWS**

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**On the Cover -**

Helitac Training-  
Hemet / Ryan Airport  
Photo - Eric Holden

Newsletter Editor -  
Gary Farris



## President's Message

### Eric Holden

The start of 2022 marks a new era for RMRU.

We have seen some of the senior members of the team retire and start up new paths in life, and have taken on a lot of new members.

Our call outs have decreased significantly as the use of helicopters has become safer from technology.

Even though some of the team dynamics are currently changing, we have seen a large increase in the amount of training the team does.

Team members are getting together more frequently to hone their skills through mountaineering, climbing, backpacking and canyoneer-

ing. We have branched out through more preventative SAR, trail safety talks and community outreach.

The family bond that RMRU has continues to be strong. I have seen a lot of the new members really shine throughout their years on the team.

This year marks one of the first years that my predecessor Glenn Henderson is not on the board. His 40+ years of experience have been invaluable to the team and to me personally. I continue to learn from him and go to him for advice. The team has been built up through his leadership and is what it is today because of him and past members.

RMRU continues to be a top notch professional rescue team and I am looking forward to the next year. No matter the weather, holiday or time of day, RMRU will be ready to respond to the next call for help.

Cheers,  
Eric Holden  
RMRU President



## Mountain Rescue Association



*RMRU joined the MRA in 1961 and is a regular member.*

# Mission Reviews

January - June 2022

*The following pages contain a selection of firsthand accounts of RMRU missions written by the team members involved.*



## Evidence Search

January 8, 2022

Ortega Highway

Written by Glenn Henderson

The team was called out for an evidence search in the Cleveland National Forest. We were given 3 specific locations to search but nothing was found.

### RMRU Members Involved:

Zane Anglin, James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken, Michael George, Josh Gould, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Vinay Rao, Steve Rider, and Becky Templeton

## Tahquitz Peak Rescue

January 22, 2022

Tahquitz Peak Ice Slopes

Written by Editor

The team was called out for a young man who called and said he was stuck on icy slopes just below Tahquitz Peak.

While the member were driving to base camp the man managed to get back to softer snow and was able to get out on his own.

### RMRU Members Involved:

Zane Anglin, Coby Brown, Matt Frenken, Donny Goetz, Caleb Milner, Steve Rider, and Ray Weden

## Skyline Trail Rescue

January 27, 2022

Mt. San Jacinto, Ca,

Written by James Eckhardt

At 7:00PM on Thursday, we got a call that two hikers were stuck on skyline trail with a California State Parks ranger and a second ranger had fallen 100 feet and sustained possible leg and head injuries.

As we drove up to the tram, we watched Rescue 9 fly over the subjects' location. We were advised that Rescue 9 was able to hoist the injured ranger, however due to the steepness of terrain and snow conditions surrounding the others, Rescue 9 could not perform a hoist.

Once RMRU members had assembled, we rode up the tram, and Donny, Blake, Caleb, Matt, Zane and I headed out to Grubbs Notch.

Dana stayed at the tram to run base, and Matt and Zane stayed at the Notch to run radio relay. The remaining four of us descended the chute directly south of Grubbs which led directly down to the subjects.

We quickly descended and arrived at our subjects who had been tied to a tree by the State Park ranger to prevent them from slipping. Once we arrived we gave the subjects heavy winter coats to put on and made sure they were wearing microspikes.

*"Even with chopped steps, microspikes did not provide enough traction to make us feel the subjects were secure"*

**RMRU RESCUER -**  
JAMES ECKHARDT

While I put harnesses on and anchored them to a tree, Blake and Caleb started chopping steps into the hard packed snow and ice and Donny rigged an anchor and system to lower the subjects to

the trail. After lowering one of the two subjects, we realized that the trail switch backed close above our location, so we decided to instead short rope both subjects up to Grubbs Notch.

Even with chopped steps, microspikes did not provide enough traction to make us feel the subjects were secure, so Donny short roped one subject and I the other. We quickly made it to the top and headed for the tram.

As we commonly state in mission write ups, this rescue could have been prevented with proper equipment and training. The subjects had no traction and the rangers only had microspikes which are not adequate for steep hard packed snow and ice. As a result of this rescue and the many other rescues completed in just a few days on the skyline trail, it was closed to the public.

#### **RMRU Members Involved:**

Blake Douglas, Caleb Milner, Coby Brown, Dana Potts, Donny Goetz, James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken, Steve Rider, Vinay Rao, Zane Anglin

#### **Other Agencies Involved:**

Riverside Sheriff's Aviation

## **Rescue People on Skyline**

**January 29, 2022**

**Grubbs Notch**

**Mt. San Jacinto, Ca,**

**Written by Blake Douglas**

Saturday, January 29 was a cloudy, cool day in Joshua Tree National Park and RMRU was conducting training scenarios at Cap Rock in preparation for our upcoming recertification with the Mountain Rescue Association.

Since we had several new members recently join the team, and these trainings cover some of our most important team-based skills, we had a substantial turnout of approximately twenty members.

*"We quickly broke down our rope systems and prepared to shift the entire team to the tram."*

**RMRU RESCUER -**  
**BLAKE DOUGLAS**

There also seems to be an unwritten rule that says callouts are certain as soon as a substantial amount of the team is out of the county.

While setting up our afternoon scenario, call captain Ray Weden began receiving messages indicating that a rescue was underway at the Palm Springs Tram, and Sheriff's Aviation was responding.

Details were sparse, and without more information or a specific request to respond, we had no

reason to abandon the training, so we proceeded as normal. After about an hour it was confirmed that aviation was unable to hoist the subject due to high winds, and we were being asked to respond to the Tramway.

We quickly broke down our rope systems and prepared to shift the entire team to the tram. Updated information indicated the subject was on Skyline, near to the location of multiple other recent rescues, and potentially with a mobility injury, such as a broken leg or hip, this could be one of the most technically demanding of rescues, but fortunately the exact kind of thing we had just been training for.

Team 1 would consist of experienced members with snow, technical and medical experience who could reach the subject quickly, safely, and make a rapid evaluation of whether a haul system would be needed.

This was James, Tyler, Rob, and Donny. Team 2 consisted of experienced members that would be expected to run the rope systems or rotate direct care with Team 1. This included myself, Josh, Tom, and Vinay. Team 3 consisted of Zane, Matt, Steve, and Beth to support as needed.

Additional team members responded directly to base, including Eric, Coby, Becky, Michael, Shani, and Ray. This was one of the largest turnouts of RMRU in the field since I joined the team. Every one of these people would have been necessary and essential if the subject had required a haul.



**Prusik Hitch**



Once in the field, the mission was largely and thankfully uneventful. I staged Teams 2 and 3 at Grubb's Notch, we established clear radio communications with base and Team 1 and waited for an update. In the meantime, we reviewed our haul systems and anchor-building techniques, since we would need every member to be capable of as many different tasks and safety checks as possible on a steep, heavily snowed slope at night.

Team 1 soon radioed back that the subject was mobile and uninjured, and they would hike him out. This only took an hour or two, and we were all back in the tram headed down, thankful for a simple and safe resolution to what could have been a complicated rescue.

### Lessons:

As with many other rescues on Skyline, the immediate cause of the subject's distress was a lack of appropriate snow traction.

Shortly after this rescue and several others, the upper section of Skyline, which falls within the authority of California State Parks, was closed by that agency to any hiker traffic.

### RMRU Members Involved:

Zane Anglin, Coby Brown, Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken, Mike George, Donny Goetz, Josh Gould, Eric Holden, Beth Jeffery, Shani McCullough, Rob Newton, Vinay Rao, Steve Rider, Tyler Shumway, Becky Templeton, and Ray Weden

## North Face of Tahquitz Peak Fatality

January 31, 2022

### North Face of Tahquitz Peak

Written by Eric Holden

On January 30th there was a report of a hiker who slipped from the Tahquitz traverse coming from Chinquapin Flats. The Riverside Sheriff's Rescue 9 helicopter was able to fly the area at dusk and lower a technician down to the subject. The subject unfortunately was found to be deceased. Due to the steep icy terrain Rescue 9 was not able to retrieve the subject. Due to the fading light, it was determined that a recovery would happen first thing the next morning.



James with two crampon point holes in his leg.

On January 31st James, Glenn, Rob, Tyler, and myself met at Keenwild heliport. It was deter-

mined that James, Tyler, and I would be inserted via helicopter with crampons mounted and ice axes ready to go. Glenn and Rob would be stay back at base, in reserve in case something went wrong. James was lowered down first and setup and anchor in case anyone needed it to work on the icy slopes. Tyler and I followed quickly after. Once down James let us know he took a nasty spill as he hit the ice and impaled his leg on his crampons.

While Tyler began prepping our work area, I cleaned and bandaged James's wound. We loaded the subject into the litter and Rescue 9 was able to lift him back to Keenwild. Rescue 9 came back and was able to hoist all of us out of the ice chute without further incident and Rob was able to clean and dress James's wound in a more controlled setting at base.

RMRU would like to remind all our hikers and climbers that in winter conditions, we have extremely dangerous parts of our mountain. Proper mountaineering gear and the training to use them is very essential to recreate safely in the mountains. Our thoughts go out to the subject's friends and family.

### RMRU Members Involved:

James Eckhardt, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, Rob Newton, and Tyler Shumway

### Other Agencies Involved:

RSO – Rescue 9

## Tramway Rescue

February 12, 2022

Palm Springs Tramway Deck

Written by Glenn Henderson

The team was called out to rescue a person that was injured below the upper Palm Springs Tramway. We were cancelled while in route, Cal Fire did the rescue.

### RMRU Members Involved:

Blake Douglas, Glenn Henderson, Shani McCoullough, Caleb Milner, and Rob Newton



## Salton Sea Search

February 25, 2022

Salton Sea

Written by Eric Holden

At 1am on Friday morning we got a call out to respond to a small community north of the Salton Sea for a search. Initially I was the only RMRU member that could make it. I picked up the com van and drove out there to run the IC for the other teams. While in-route I found out fellow RMRU member Matt Frenken was also on his way. Once on scene I began setting up the SERT command center to begin mapping and assignments. About 30 minutes later Riverside Aviation located the subject deceased. Our thoughts go out to her friends and family.

### RMRU Members Involved:

Matt Frenken and Eric Holden

### Other Agencies Involved:

DSSAR, SERT, Riverside Search Dogs



## OES San Gorgonio Search

March 14, 2022

San Gorgonio Wilderness Area

Written by Editor

The subject was reported missing over the weekend with his car found at the South Fork Trailhead.

RMRU was requested to help search on Monday March 14 at 2:30pm and we had five members ready to go for a 7am start at the basecamp at the South Fork Trailhead the next day. In late afternoon on Monday, he was found alive and moving.

Rescuers were able to walk him back to his car.

### RMRU Members Involved:

Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken, Caleb Milner, and Vinay Rao

### Other Agencies Involved:

San Bernardino SAR

## Skyline Corona Search

March 24, 2022

Hagador Canyon

Written by James Eckhardt

At 9:00PM on Thursday, we were notified there was a missing hiker near Skyline in Corona, and at 10:00 PM we were officially activated.

I was the first RMRU member at the trailhead and was able to talk to the reporting party, the subject's sister, who was helpful in providing us with accurate infor-

mation. She had started hiking up Hagador Canyon with the subject at 3:30PM, however he was a faster hiker.

They were separated, the subject's sister hiked back to the trailhead, waited until sunset and called 911 for a search.

Based on geotagged photos she had taken and a ping from location sharing on the subject's cell phone, we were able to make an effective search plan. This information ultimately led to a quick search and rescue.

Blake and I planned to hike up Hagador Canyon trail, and when Steve and Vinay arrived, they were to drive up Skyline and search the top of Hagador Canyon.

Blake and I quickly hiked up the trail, and we assumed the subject would be awake due to San Bernardino Sheriff's Aviation flying loudly overhead.

At 0.7 miles into the trail, there was a junction, and as Blake hiked 50 feet up the adjoining path/scramble, I looked down the main trail and saw the subject slowly walking towards me.

It was immediately obvious that he had a head injury. He was mobile, so we decided the best course of action was to continue hiking out to get him to higher medical care as soon as possible.

We notified base to have an ambulance waiting, and we made good time over the short distance back to the trailhead where we handed

the subject over the firefighter paramedics and AMR. We wish the subject a full and speedy recovery.

**RMRU Members Involved:**

Blake Douglas, Eric Holden, James Eckhardt, Steven Rider, Vinay Rao

**Other Agencies Involved:**

Riverside Sheriff's Aviation, San Bernardino Sheriff's Aviation, Corona PD



## Missing Hiker Tramway

March 31, 2022

Tramway to San Jacinto Peak

Written by Editor

The call came at 8:45 pm that a hiker was missing from a hike to San Jacinto Peak from the Tramway.

As team members were getting ready to leave the hiker was found by State Parks Rangers at 9pm.

**RMRU Members Involved:**

Zane Anglin, Coby Brown, Blake Douglas, Matt Frenken, and Vinay Rao



## Cold and Wet

### Backpacker

April 22, 2022

Saddle Junction and Chinquapin Flats -

Mt. San Jacinto

Written by Caleb Milner

The call came out around 10:30 at night for a lost and distressed backpacker who was very cold and wet. That night they were out

in a minor storm came through Idyllwild, bringing some precipitation but mostly just bringing temperatures down below freezing. They were reported to be about halfway in between Saddle Junction and Chinquapin Flat on the PCT and in a campsite. I was the first to the Command Post (CP), being that I was working in Idyllwild when the call came. Even the temperatures in town were around freezing and cloudy, so the high country would be very cold.



Glenn, 2 Subjects, Vinay, Caleb, and Kase at base

Vinay, Glenn, and Kase showed up shortly after I did, so we made plans to drop Kase, Vinay and I off at Humber Park to hike up Devil's Slide to meet up with the subject. Glenn would run base down in Idyllwild. Tobias and Ray would be the second team to go out once they showed up to the CP.

Once at Humber we planned to hike up to the point where we had heard the subject was. And then attempt to contact the subject by calling out. There was an inch or two of snow on the ground at 6,500' and dense fog.

Shortly after starting up Devil's Slide Trail, we talked to a hiker who reported smelling smoke around

where the subject was supposed to be, which was a good sign because we'd heard our subject had made a campfire to make it through the night.

Our hike ended quite abruptly when we passed a group of hikers coming down Devil's Slide, one who fit the description of the subject, so we stopped and asked, and it turned out to be our subject.

We found out the subject had called their friend early in the morning, asking him for assistance, and he had taken the friend to the specific campsite before, so the friend knew where he would be.

We began hiking down, not even half a mile up the trail, we talked with the subject and found out more about the situation. It was a windy night, and every time they tried to exit their tent they would get blown over, and the minor precipitation caused everything to get wet.

Other than a very cold and windy night, our subject was in good condition, and so we hiked them down and turned them over to the Sheriff Deputy and AMR who was on scene.

**RMRU Members Involved:**

Kase Chong, Glenn Henderson, Caleb Milner, Tobias Moyneur, Vinay Rao, and Ray Weden



Figure 8 follow through



## Lost Hikers Round Valley

May 5, 2022

Tamarack Valley Area

Written by Blake Douglas

On the evening of Thursday, May 5, the team was notified that Riverside Sheriff's Office Aviation was attempting a hoist rescue in the Tamarack area of the San Jacinto high country. Due to turbulence, the hoist attempt was soon aborted, and RMRU was cleared to proceed with a ground team response.

Our subjects were off-trail and lost, but uninjured. The coordinates provided by Rescue 9 placed them at 9500' elevation, on the slopes between the Wellman Trail and the Tamarack Valley campground, just south of an unnamed use trail informally referred to as "the Ranger Route", the "Mountaineer's Trail", "Sid Davis West", or other such variations.

This route is a more direct path to the summit in winter and saves over a mile compared to following the standard tram-to-peak trails that take you to Wellman's Divide first. Unfortunately, it is still sufficiently indistinct that persons without backcountry navigation experience will find it difficult to follow, particularly after new snow or high winds (when team member Caleb Milner and I descended this route in March, we found the tracks wiped out due to snowdrift on approximately half of this section).

James and I responded to the Palm Springs Tram, followed soon after by Matt, Beth, and Richard.

James and I set out immediately and made it to our subject's coordinates just after nightfall. They were on a rocky prominence, thankfully having stayed put per directions from Rescue 9. They were experienced hikers, but in this case, the victims of unfortunate circumstance – a recent backpack swap had left them with only one headlamp, which had accidentally been left on for hours due to something in the pack pressing on the battery switch.

They had become aware that the day was getting late as they descended from the San Jacinto Peak and were confused when they reached the junction of the informal trail with the main one. They chose the informal trail, but then lost it, and were not confident that their off-trail skills were sufficient to either continue descending or retrace their steps back to the main trail.

Fortunately getting them to the informal trail was a matter of only a few minutes' inconvenience mixed terrain with some lingering snow, followed by a simple and uneventful hike on the established trails back to the tram.

We reached the tram around 11:45pm, which was graciously left open by tram staff, and we were able to ride down promptly, concluding the mission around 12:30am..

### RMRU Members Involved:

Blake Douglas, James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken, Beth Jeffery, Steven Rider, and Richard Yocum

## Injured Hiker

Tamarac

May 7, 2022

Tamarack Valley Area

Written by Richard Yocum

On 5/7/2022 at 1617 hours RMRU was requested to assist a middle-aged female hiker with an injured leg below San Jacinto Peak in an area west of Tamarack Valley after Riverside Sheriff's Rescue 9 helicopter (RSQ9) determined that a hoist was not possible due to high winds and turbulence.



Subject nice and warm in sleeping bag and two pads under her.

13 RMRU members drove to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway and rode the tram to the upper station to assist. RMRU Base was to be established at the upper tram station and "SanJac2" State Park Rangers at the Long Valley Ranger Station provided additional base support.

At 1855 after a 4-mile hike (elevation gain 1,670') following the Sid Davis route, the first hasty team (James and Blake) found the injured hiker within 100' of



her reported coordinates. She was alone except for 1 State Parks ranger, lying on a rock, visibly shivering, complaining of being quite cold, and wrapped head to foot in plastic. A team of 5 State Park Wilderness Aides arrived about 15 minutes later.



**Richard talking to Subject, while Litter is set up in background**

She had stepped on a loose rock about 0.3 miles below the summit and was unable to bear weight. A hiking group of 5 men traded off carrying her piggyback 0.8 miles down trail and a 500' decrease in elevation until they reached a stretch where they were slipping and sliding, and she felt unsafe and asked them to stop carrying her.

The subject was alert and oriented x 4, with a tender left ankle wrapped in an Ace bandage without gross deformity. CSM distal to the ankle was intact. The weather was in the mid-50s degrees and breezy. She was moved off the rock onto a Z-Lite ground pad, given some honey to ingest, and put in a thermal wrap using a sleeping bag and tarp with two hot water Nalgene bottles inside.

At 1945 Team 2 (Matt and Richard) and Team 3 (Tyler, Tobias, and Tom) arrived at the subject. Medical care was transferred from

Blake to Richard and a medical re-assessment consisted of unstable left ankle injury, mild hypothermia responding to treatment, and mild headache that had started only minutes before. The left ankle was immobilized in a SAM splint and Ace wrap.

She was transferred to a padded wheeled litter, placed on two Z Lite Pads, a tarp, and a sleeping bag, with padding provided under the knees and lumbar back. A climbing harness was applied and used for internal lashings. She was covered with a down blanket and another tarp, over which external lashings were secured. After Team 4 (Tony Hughes and Vinay Rao) arrived, the 9 RMRU members and 6 park rangers/aids with the subject at that time commenced a litter carryout at about 2000.

The subject's headache progressed to 9/10 severity with nausea and several episodes of dry retching, and a diagnosis of AMS was added to her medical problem list. The wheeled litter carryout was slow going given the narrow, vegetation-choked, rugged, rocky, steep trail, with patches of sloped snow, and the need to lift the litter over rocks and tree roots to minimize the jostling effect on her nausea, ankle pain, and then back pain from being immobilized in the litter.

Given the progressive AMS and increasing urgency, another request was made for hoist evacuation but RSQg was still unavailable.

During this time, the evac team was notified of a second callout,

for 3 climbers stranded on Tahquitz Rock without food, water, or warm clothing to sustain them through the chilly night. The temperature had dropped into the 40s and the wind was intermittently fierce in the treetops.

A decision was made to send James, who had been team lead, and Tyler to hike back to the tram as Team 7 and drive to the second mission. The evac team lead was transferred from James to Tony and the evac team, now 13 members, continued the descent. At 2232, Team 5 (Amber and Steve) reached the evac team and joined in the carryout, bringing the evac team back up to 15 members.



**Carry out over rocks going down the trail.**

As the hours passed, the evac team was tiring from the exertion of moving the litter through the rugged terrain, with much of the effort related to lifting the litter over rocks and roots to smooth out the ride.

At 2300 after 3 hours the litter had traveled only 1 mile and reached

Wellman Divide at 9,722'. The evac team requested additional personnel to assist the litter carryout. Base was successful in arranging the tram to resume operations to transport 4 members of DSAR who were available to assist.

Over the course of the night 7 members on the evac sustained some type of minor medical problem or injury, and at 0019, a team of 4 from the evac team who could no longer help was formed and hiked together back to the tram station, leaving only 11 persons on the evac team.

The evac continued down the Wellman trail past Round Valley and then followed the recommendation of the park ranger to divert right on the "High Trail" and then follow an off trail "litter route" that the ranger was leading.

The evac team met the DSAR team on this off-route section just before dropping down onto the Hidden Divide trail. Now fortified by fresh personnel, the evac team was able to complete the carryout to the Long Valley Ranger Station, where the subject was transferred from the litter to a wheelchair. She was wheeled up the ramp to the upper tram station and her care was transferred to AMR at approximately 0315. The litter carryout covered 4.1 miles with elevation decrease of approx. 1,700' and took 7¼ hours.

The subject, the AMR team, and all RMRU and state parks personnel were transported by tram and arrived at the lower station shortly before 0400. Of the subject's

medical problems, the hypothermia resolved with the hypo wrap, the AMS resolved with decrease in altitude, the back pain was much improved, and the unstable left ankle injury remained. The mission was concluded at 0328.



RMRU and other helpers back at Tramway, Subject in center.

#### RMRU Members Involved:

Thomas Blanke, Blake Douglas, Matt Frenken, Mike George, Tony Hughes, Tobias Moyneur, Amber Prestegard, Steven Rider, Tyler Shumway, Vinay Rao, Ray Weden, and Richard Yocum

#### Other Agencies Involved:

California State Parks Rangers and Wilderness Aids:

At least 8 members

Desert Search and Rescue (DSAR): 4 members

Palms Springs Aerial Tramway

Riverside County SERT

Riverside County Sheriff's Aviation Unit and Rescue 9 helicopter

## Stuck Climbers

May 8, 2022

Tahquitz Rock, Idyllwild

Written by Donny Goetz

Around 8:45 pm, the second call of the night came through. Three climbers were stranded 550' up the side of Tahquitz rock on a popular, yet challenging route known as Whodunnit. Most of the team was already involved in what became an exceptionally long and physical rescue of an injured hiker near the summit of Mt. San Jacinto. I had not responded to that call as my wife and I were out for our anniversary dinner, and we had a huge response from the rest of the team. Now, we were faced with another challenging mission with limited team resources. We left dinner and headed home to pack my gear.



Donny fir Rescuer over the side with lots of rope and gear.

The Sheriff's aviation unit attempted to fly but high winds



forced them to stand down for the duration of both missions. I was given the cell number for one of the subjects and called to get more information on their position and condition. Thankfully, all three were together at one location, anchored safely and uninjured. However, they were out of food, water and only had one light sweatshirt between the three of them. Additionally, they informed me they had purposely climbed off route to the west but we're unsure how far off they were. Temperatures were expected to drop into the low 40's that night and the wind chill would likely bring it into the upper 30's. I assured the young men we were on our way but tried to be realistic about the timeline, so they knew to expect a long night out.



**On top in the early morning light.  
(Kase, Caleb, Tyler, and Donny)**

I arrived at the Forest Service station in Idyllwild to meet 5 other team members. Our typical trainings for technical missions involve 12-20 people carrying a truckload of gear. We wouldn't have that luxury here. We began gathering gear and assessing exactly what we needed vs. how much we would be able to carry. With our packs set, we caravanned to Humber Park and set off on the Lunch Rock climber's trail around 11 pm.

We worked our way to the western toe of Tahquitz rock and headed around to the south side where we picked up the Friction Descent route as our means of ascent to the top of the crag. Our subjects called me a couple times along the way to voice their concern about hypothermia. I gave them some tips on staying warm with the limited resources they had and updated them on our timeline. Around this time, we were informed two additional team members had been pulled from the rescue of the injured San Jacinto hiker and routed to rendezvous with the 5 of us.

We arrived on top around 12:45 am and began trying to assess our position relative to the subjects. I knew where their intended route topped out on the crag but wasn't sure how far west they had diverted. I picked an area where a route called the Long Climb finishes and built a quick anchor to safely get near the edge of the wall. Coby, our teammate who was running base operations, was stationed at Humber Park and I contacted him on the radio. He could see the subject's headlamps and I began flashing mine on the summit edge so he could determine how far off we were. It was clear to him we had to go further east so I climbed up toward the summit blocks of the crag.

Around this time, our other teammates, Tyler and James, arrived at Humber Park. Tyler could see my light, told me to head further east and that, despite the subjects being off route, beginning down the upper portion of Whodunnit was the best approach. I returned to

the first anchor, repacked, and led our group to the true summit of the crag where Whodunnit finished. We quickly set anchors, repacked my pack with gear for our subjects including several jackets, food, water, and some hot cocoa my wife had brewed for them while I packed.



**The 3 Subjects with Donny, getting ready to head up.**

I discussed the general plan with our team, asked Kase to run operations on the summit and began rappelling off the top. In addition to the gear for our subjects, I carried two ropes pre-flaked for rapid deployment, a full set of cams and nuts to use for various anchors and extra webbing. I placed two directional anchors to prevent my rope from contacting loose rocks and a sharp edge as I worked down into the darkness. Soon, I was at the end of my first 200' rope and still could not see or hear the stranded climbers. I built an anchor of 4 cams equalized with webbing, tied off my first rope and connected my next rope. I continued rappelling past another bulge and finally had visual contact with the subjects. I could see they were approximately 50' to the right of the route. I set another directional cam to keep my rope from contacting a loose block the size of a large refrigerator-

## MISSION REVIEWS JANUARY - JUNE 2022

ator and continued down to their elevation. Once even with them, I traversed to their location, inspected their anchor, and connected to them. It was now close to 2 am.

I began assessing their condition and handing out jackets and the hot cocoa. They were cold but not hypothermic so I knew they would be in good spirits once warmed up a bit. I requested Rob, our strong medical professional, to join me. Rob, who had been up for over 33 hours from his last shift in the ER, realized he was too tired to safely execute the technical maneuvers and the summit team discussed options. Kase asked if Josh was willing to go over the side and he happily geared up. Josh joined me soon after and we began working out the details of getting our subjects out.



**Members on top resting on top till members over the side need help**

They seemed warm enough to climb the remaining 350' to the summit with protection from ropes anchored above. I examined their ropes, took one and climbed back to my intermediate anchor. The plan was that I would belay the first climber to my location, on their lead rope, transfer him to a belay from the summit team and begin belaying the second



**Josh, last man up, mission almost over.**

climber while the first climber went on to the top. Our rappel lines would remain fixed in place which the climbers could pull on if they needed. This way, two of the three were moving at the same time on separate belays.

We began the process. By now, Tyler and James had rendezvoused with our summit team. I requested to have one more rope brought down to my location. Tyler obliged and brought our last rope which would be used to belay the first climber up the final pitch to the summit. He climbed back up and helped the summit team prepare for the belay. Our first climber made it up to me, I tied him to the belay line running to the summit, confirmed via radio that the summit team was ready and set him off on the last pitch while trailing his lead rope. Josh connected the second climber to the lead line and their second rope which would trail down to the third climber. Our second subject began his ascent to my location but struggled a bit

more than the first. Though they were on separate belays, they were still connected by their own ropes. The first climber ran out of slack to move so our summit team had to hold his weight while our second worked through a difficult section.

The second made it to my location while the first topped out. I transferred the second to our summit team, pulled slack to the third and belayed him up. The third managed the pitch without falls and was soon at the anchor with me. Our second had topped out and the summit team soon had our third on belay. As he began climbing the final pitch, I noticed the twilight creeping over the ridge to our east. I had a quick bite to eat and took in the ever-brightening view as Josh broke down the lower anchor and ascended to mine. I was getting cold, and Josh offered to let me climb the next pitch first since he had warmed up a bit climbing to my anchor. I took the second rope from him and ascended our fixed line.

I topped out and Josh followed quickly behind me. The views were great. A dense layer of clouds settling into Idyllwild 1700' below us but we were basking in the early morning sunlight. James and Rob had already begun the descent with our subjects, so we were simply left to break down our anchors, pack up and head down at a relaxed pace.

The descent from the summit is not particularly difficult but we took our time as we were plenty tired and there are a few spots where falling is not an option. We



made it safely back to the trail and continued to Humber Park. We arrived around 8:30 am making it 10.5 hours from when we began the hike. We returned some of the gear that belonged to our subjects and headed to town for a meal at the Red Kettle.

#### RMRU Members Involved:

Coby Drown, Kase Chong, James Eckhardt, Donny Goetz, Josh Gould, Caleb Milner, Rob Newton, and Tyler Shumway



### Lost off Trail

May 16, 2022

#### Devils Slide Trail

Written by Eric Holden

Tom was spending the night at my house to get ready for a big canyoneering trip the next morning. While he was disassembling his rescue pack to be turned into canyoneering Pack. We got a call out for a lost hiker about a mile up the devils slide trail. I geared up and went out to Tom's van to see him continuing to pack canyoneering gear.

He sees me in my RMRU Shirt and like a deer in headlights, checks his phone and sees the callout. I give him 10 to repack for rescue. Just as we hope in my car to begin the drive up the mountain, we get a go that the subject walked out. Well Tom, guess you get to re-re-repack for canyoneering tomorrow morning.

#### RMRU Members Involved:

Tom Blanke, James Eckhardt, Eric Holden, Donny Goetz, Steven Rider, and Vinay Rao



### Missing Person

May 20, 2022

#### Poppet Flats

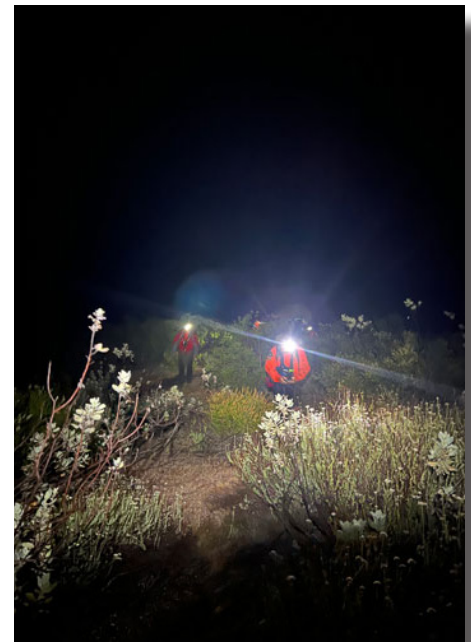
Written by Tobias Moyneur

At 8:00PM on Friday, we were notified about a possible rescue near Idyllwild-Pine Cover in the San Bernardino National Forest. Two hours later, we were officially activated. The subject went missing after their vehicle ran out of gas and he attempted to locate a gas station on foot. The subject got lost on their return trip and was confronted with worsening trail conditions and poor visibility due to incoming fog. 911 was called providing us with an accurate GPS location and informed us that the subject would stay in one place. Fortunately, the subject was able to make a small fire to keep warm while we started our search.



Subject by his fire with RMRU member

Matt, James, and I were the first team sent out to search for the missing subject. The accurate GPS location from the 911 call allowed us to drive on a series of truck trails to find the most efficient way to hike into the subject. Special thanks to a resident in the area that granted us access on their property and detailed advice on the layout of the terrain. We followed a trail for about one



Searching for sign in Brush area and fog.

mile before the GPS coordinates required us to bushwhack through dense brush and shrubs.

James was the first to find the subject who was more than thrilled not to be alone. We provided the subject with warm liquids, clothes, food and performed a medical assessment.

The subject had taken a few minor falls in the dark, but after 30 minutes of rest we were confident we could all walk out. Matt and I began finding the best path to walk the subject out while James put out the fire the subject had made to keep warm. On the way back, we met up with Vinay and Steve.

#### RMRU Members Involved:

James Eckhardt, Matt Frenken, Eric Holden, Tobias Moyneur, Steven Rider, and Vinay Rao





# ABOUT RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT

FOUNDED 1961

MEMBER MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION 1963

GOVERNING BODY: RIVERSIDE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

MEMBERS: ORIGINAL: 6 | CURRENT MEMBERS: 38

ANNUAL BUDGET: ORIGINAL \$200 | CURRENT \$15,000

MISSIONS: TOTAL OVER 2,000 | AVERAGE PER MONTH: 3.33

## RMRU BOARD MEMBERS 2022 - 2023

Eric Holden - President

Donny Goetz - 1st Vice-President | Ray Weden - 2nd Vice-President

Vinay Rao - Secretary | Blake Douglas - Member at Large



## BECOME A SUSTAINING MEMBER



### SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Your donation is deductible from both your state and federal taxes

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#### Membership Types:

- ☐ Benefactor Club \$1,000 +
- ☐ Summit Club \$500
- ☐ Patron Club \$200
- ☐ Century Club \$100
- ☐ Supporting Club < \$100

Please send your donation to:

Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit  
43950 Acacia Street  
Hemet, California 92544



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[rmru.org](http://rmru.org)



**Courage  
Commitment  
Compassion**

