



PCT Hikers Lost Off-Trail

April 27, 2011
Pacific Crest Trail at Snow Creek
2011-008

<="" tr="">

Written by Pete Carlson

The call on Tuesday night stated that two Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) hikers had lost the trail between Black Mountain and the desert floor at Snow Creek. In the dark the hikers had come upon a cliff that had water below it. Since they were out of water they dropped a pack down the cliff, intending to lighten their loads for down climbing to the water source. They soon realized that they could not reach the water or the pack. They called for help on a cell phone, indicating that they were OK and could spend the night out safely, but would need help the next morning.

Five RMRU team members met at Snow creek near the PCT junction at 8 a.m. Wednesday and made plans as we waited for the RSO helicopter to show up at 9 a.m. During that time we communicated by cell phone with the two lost hikers and learned that by daylight they had found a way to get to their pack and the water. They were now hiking through brush up to a ridge top where they hoped to determine their actual location. Upon reaching the ridge top our subjects reported they could see the trail again, so they continued cross-country through the brush until they reached the PCT. Just at that time the RSO helicopter arrived and began searching for our subjects. The helicopter crew soon spotted the lost hikers and reported that they were about 45 minutes away from the road. We contacted the subjects again via cell phone and they told us that they were fine to hike out on their own. The helicopter left and we just waited at the trail head for our subjects.

The hikers were fine and said they were going to continue on their hike to Canada. We wished them well and the mission concluded by noon.

Editor's note: If this mission had occurred 10-15 years ago, the hikers would probably not have carried a cell phone, and RMRU would not have heard about their predicament. They would simply have waited overnight and found their ways out the next morning, just as they did in this instance. Sometimes if weather conditions are favorable and no one is in danger it is better to wait for daylight and problem-solve accordingly. But once a call for help comes, RMRU must respond and be ready to

help if needed. Cell phones can help save lives, but the convenience of cellular communication can lead to a false sense of security and/or premature calls for assistance.

RMRU Team members present: Pete Carlson, Glenn Henderson, Matt Jordon, Les Walker, 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.