



Search and Rescue San Mateo Trail

April 8-9, 2012
Ortega Mountains
2012-011

Written by Paul Caraher

Surely we won't be called out Easter Sunday night when everyone is enjoying the evening with his or her families. My wife takes one look at me and says, "Are you for real of course you will". Sure enough the call came out at 9:16 PM for two lost hikers in the Cleveland National Forest. We were told to meet at the Candy Store on Ortega Highway and standby for further instruction.

Upon arrival I met with the sheriff deputy and was briefed on the lost hikers. Fortunately the hikers had a smart phone and were able to relay their lat and long. Unfortunately, one of the subjects had an ankle and acl injury. About this time, fellow RMRU members Alan Lovegreen and Donny Goetz rolled in. Frank Snider was on his way from Hemet with the team vehicle to set up base camp.

As we were formulating a plan of attack, our call out captain Gwenda Yates issued a redirect to Tenaja Falls trailhead. We followed the deputy to the trailhead and started getting ready to head out. The lat/long provided from the subject put them on the San Mateo trail about 11 trail miles from our location. Alan had a family commitment in the morning so he stayed back to set up radio relay and to help Frank out at base.

Donny and I descended into the canyon and promptly lost all radio and phone contact with base and were unable to communicate with anyone until the next morning. After a night of multiple creek crossings and poison oak drudgery, we finally crested the ridge on the other side of the canyon. I looked at my GPS and noted that we were only two tenths of a mile away from the subjects. It was time for a call out. Sure enough we had voice contact and were with the subjects in a matter of minutes.

Because of the subjects remote location, we still did not have radio contact with base but were able to use our cell phones to check in. One of the hikers had a sprained ankle and was unable to put any weight on it for the hike out. The decision was made to have Star 9 fly to us for a hoist. Donny proceeded to scout for a hoist location

while I provided medical aid for the injured hiker.

Shortly thereafter, Star 9 radioed and informed us they were air born and about 15 minutes out. As soon as we heard their rotors and had a visual, I guided them in with a signal mirror. Two screamer suits were lowered and we began to package the two hikers. Both were hoisted up and flown back to base where Frank Snider, Jeri Sanchez and Glenn Henderson were waiting. Donny and I were flown out a few minutes later.

Besides the sprained ankle and a little dehydration, the subjects were fine. A special thank you to Sheriff aviation and it's flight crew. They are always there for us.

RMRU team members present: Paul Caraher, Donny Goetz, Glenn Henderson, Alan Lovegreen, Jeri Sanchez, Frank Snider.

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.