

Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference  
Board of Directors

## "White Paper: Board of Directors Structure"

October 24, 1993

This paper comes to you from the Board of Directors retreat at the Blackburn Appalachian Trail Center. Those of us sitting around the wood-burning stove picked immediate priorities. One was the structure of the Board of Directors.

There are many issues related to the Board's structure, but the focus of this paper is **ossification vs. continuity**. Some organizations have leadership that is slow to change, and bad policies become set in stone ("ossified"). On the other hand, some organizations change leadership so frequently that the direction of the organization changes every year. Such organizations spend much of their leadership effort reinventing the same wheel that has already been developed by previous leaders.

According to those at the retreat, the ASRC has suffered from both problems, but there seemed to be a consensus that at this point, ensuring more continuity could help the ASRC. There are several different ways to accomplish this, and the suggestions below are all ones used by other nonprofit organizations similar to the ASRC.

**1. Chairman-Elect.** The idea here is that you elect the head of the organization a year ahead of time. The Chairman-Elect (though a term more commonly heard is President-Elect) serves a single term as an apprentice. The Chairman-Elect would sit on the Board of Directors, and would serve as Vice-Chairman and as the Chairman's understudy for a year. When a new Chairman-Elect is elected, the old Chairman-Elect automatically steps up to being Chairman.

There are some distinct advantages for the ASRC in such a system: improved continuity, and a better-prepared Chairman. There are also some distinct disadvantages: the Chairman has to step down after a single term, though we could increase the term to two years to take care of this. And if we have a good Chairman, the Chairman is forced out by the system, though we can always re-elect the old Chairman as the new Chairman-Elect.

And people in a volunteer organization lose interest, move, get busy, or for some other reason will drop out. What if the Chairman-Elect drops out?

But on balance, this system seems attractive for the ASRC.

**2. Past Chairman.** The idea here is that the immediate past Chairman stays on the Board of Directors for another term.

When Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council discussed this, some suggested that the immediate past President of PSARC should sit on the Board but not have a vote. A legitimate objection is that lacking a vote would make the past President a "lame duck." As a lame duck, the past President would have little motivation to drive XX hours to meetings.

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This does provide some continuity, but unlike the Chairman-Elect system, doesn't guarantee any apprenticeship opportunity.

**3. Staggered Terms for Conference officers.** This would require us to go to two-year terms. The Chairman would be elected on even years, the Vice-Chairman on odd years. This does provide continuity, but like the Past Chairman system, doesn't provide apprenticeship. If we do this, we need to either use item 4, below, or allow the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to hold office even if not elected by the Group as a Board delegate.

**4. Straggered Terms for BOD members.** This concept involves changing each BOD member's term of office to two years. Each group would still elect two BOD members, however, only one position would be filled each year.

We can mix and match these systems in various ways: many organizations use **both** the President-Elect and past President systems.

This is only a summary of possible changes we can make right now to the existing Board of Directors structure. There are other longer term changes we might make that were offered as possibilities at the retreat: having separate Administrative and Operational Boards of Directors; having one of or more of these Boards elected from the general membership rather than appointing delegates from each Group; and having only a subset of the total ASRC membership responsible for electing officers. This paper doesn't go into detail on any of these options.

Be prepared to discuss these options at the next Board of Directors meeting. Whatever we decide at the Board meeting will be voted on at the next General Membership Meeting. Thank you.