
APPALACHIAN SEARCH AND RESCUE CONFERENCE

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**Reply To:
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May 6, 1991

To: Members, 1991 ASRC Board of Directors

From: Keith Conover, M.D., ASRC Board Member/MRA Eastern Region Chairman.

SUBJECT: ASRC-MRA relationship

I agreed last year to serve as Chairman of East Region MRA, primarily because some national MRA officers suggested that I take the job. (Apparently my name is known at the national level; whether that's good or bad, I don't know.) At present, the MRA Eastern Region chairman is appointed by the Chairman of the ASRC Board of Directors. I agreed to the appointment only with the provisos that I would be a near-total figurehead, that Cady Soukup (our Region Secretary) would do all the real work, and that I would resign as soon as we got the Region up and running.

I am resigning as Chairman, effective at the June meeting of the ASRC Board of Directors. I expect that the Eastern Region MRA will adopt Bylaws and formally elect a Chairman at a first Region meeting right after the June ASRC Board meeting.

I am taking this opportunity to document my understanding of the long, complex, and occasionally frustrating history of the ASRC/MRA relationship.

Gene Harrison, Ray Cole, Rita Cloutier, and I founded the ASRC in the early 1970's. Our intent was, from the beginning, for the ASRC to be part of the MRA. We structured our original training standards to meet the MRA standards of the time. We wanted to emulate the MRA ideal of hard-core outdoor people with SAR and medical training. We wanted the ASRC to provide cliff rescue, wilderness search, and winter rescue: to provide those kind of rescue resources only hard-core outdoor people can.

Our original intent was for the ASRC to be a resource provided by the outdoor community to help find and rescue people in the wilds. We thought it imperative that the outdoor public take responsibility for its own, to prevent excessive regulation by land management agencies. We also felt a moral imperative to give something back to the wilderness and to wilderness travelers.

Unlike the MRA model, however, we wanted the ASRC to be free of the inter-team competition that we saw in the West. We thought that by using the same uniform, same training standards, and a completely unified command, we could achieve a high level of interoperability and camaraderie. It worked. ASRC Groups may argue (as do people within a Group), but the Groups don't compete with one another. Indeed, on the last operation (Dogwood) I worked with several different ASRC members without ever finding out which Group they were from; the question just never seemed to come up.

Starting when we founded the ASRC, we made contacts with the MRA. In the mid 1970's, we had a test of the ASRC by MRA members from the West. At that time, the ASRC consisted of two Groups, the Potomac Valley SAR Group (later to become the Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group), in the Washington DC area, and the Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group in Charlottesville, VA. The MRA accepted the ASRC as a member, with the understanding that it was composed of two local "chapters" of a single, unified SAR team.

During the succeeding ten years, the relationship between the ASRC and the MRA became tenuous. The ASRC was poor in its attendance at MRA meetings (as it still is) due to the expense of cross-country airline tickets, and the financial state of the ASRC and its members (poor). During this time, the ASRC grew to where it included six local Groups. Though the ASRC grew, it still maintained its tight operational integration. The local Groups serve some administrative and training needs, but the ASRC is the primary operational and administrative organization, not the Group. (For instance: at ASRC Board of Directors meetings, it is common to find that the alliances on controversial subjects have little to do with the members' Group affiliation.)

ASRC members all still wear the same uniform, no matter which Group they come from. ASRC members still meet the same training standards, no matter which Group they come from. And, whenever the ASRC participates in a mission, it does so as the ASRC, not as any particular Group. So, even with the ASRC's growth, it still remains, in most ways, a single operational SAR team.

However, during the late 70's and early 80's, the ASRC evolved as well as grew. As Virginia's state government got more involved in SAR, so did the ASRC. The ASRC came to the point where it ran a wilderness, rural, or suburban (or even urban) search for the state every couple of weeks. Because of this large load of searches, and because of the relative rarity of rescues, some ASRC members came to see the ASRC's primary role as search, not rescue. These members viewed the ASRC's affiliation with the MRA as superfluous.

Some other members, who were supportive of rescue as a major ASRC role, still thought affiliation with the MRA as superfluous. They simply thought MRA affiliation wasn't "worth much" to the ASRC. In their view, the MRA was not well-known in the East, so MRA affiliation would not gain the ASRC much credibility in the local area (and, by this point, the ASRC's reputation was well-established). They said MRA membership was too expensive: \$5/person dues, plus all the time and expense of going to MRA meetings.

In the mid-1980's, Al and Peggy Rosen of the ASRC's Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group arranged for the ASRC to be officially tested (again) for MRA membership. The word from MRA national officers that the ASRC had grown too much to be considered a single team. Some at the national level still had a hard time believing that the ASRC was as tightly integrated as it was (and still is). Al and Peggy arranged for each individual ASRC Group to test for MRA membership; Hunter Holloway and others came East to run the test. However, not all ASRC Groups attended the test. Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group and Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group both passed the test; Explorer Search and Rescue Post 616 was just testing for Associate status and received it; Richmond Search and Rescue Group received a conditional pass and was granted Associate status. (Associate teams and their Associate Members are a kind of second-class citizenry in the MRA.) Southwest Virginia Mountain Rescue Group simply felt, as I understood it at the time, that as a new Group they were unable to pass the test as a separate Group. Many members of Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group felt MRA affiliation wasn't necessary. Members of BRMRG were also "burnt out" from several recent searches, including some that could be considered "critical incidents" in Critical Incident Stress Debriefing terms.

In 1988, we re-thought this, and decided we didn't like the idea of two separate parallel organizations, the ASRC and the Eastern Region MRA. At the direction of the ASRC Board of Directors (August 1988), Gary Mechtel and I met with Paul Williams to discuss our qualms about the unique situation in our area. After some negotiations with national MRA staff, and Cady Soukup's attendance at the November 1988 MRA meeting, the ASRC became both a team and the Eastern Region of the MRA (I still like the name Appalachian Region a lot better, but never mind). Thus, it became moot which ASRC Groups had passed the test, because those who passed were considered to have done so for the whole ASRC.

However, all was still not quite settled.

There were still many ASRC members, especially college students, who felt the extra \$5/person/year was a waste of money. (The MRA had voted to increase dues from \$1/person to \$5/person to fund a real magazine, the *MRA Rescue Forum*.) Therefore, an unofficial policy developed in which only those people who wanted to be MRA members paid the \$5/year dues; a separate "MRA Member Roster" was mailed to the MRA with all of the dues that were collected. This was considerably less than the MRA expected, given the number of members the Conference was supposed

to have. (An exception was Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group; this ASRC Group voted unanimously to make MRA dues mandatory for all dues-paying members, and the dues were simply raised by \$5/year.)

Let me detour now a bit to talk about MRA Rescue versus Support status for individual members of Regular MRA teams. (MRA teams are classed as Affiliate or Regular teams; there is a special patch for Affiliate team members. Affiliate teams are ones that can't quite measure up to the Regular team status.) Rescue members are those members of Regular MRA teams who meet certain technical standards, as expressed in MRA documents, and as adapted to the particular Region (i.e. crevasse rescue is not needed in the Southwest or East). Support members include everybody else who is a member of the team. According to the MRA, Rescue members get to wear the big MRA patch; Support members can wear a special smaller MRA patch with a "Support" rocker under it.

Back when we first formed the ASRC, we set up two classes of membership: "Basic" and "Rescue." The idea was that you had to become a Basic member to wear the ASRC patch, and to wear the MRA patch you had to be a Rescue member. Well, we never really got going on the Rescue classification, because it seemed irrelevant at the time. After a while, we upgraded the Basic certification standards so much that we decided that Basic members (at that point called "Certified" members) met the MRA standards and could wear the MRA patch.

Later, in the 1980's, we reorganized the ASRC's Bylaws to dissociate training standards from the political aspects of membership (voting and holding office). (There was a lot of yelling and screaming involved, but at the end everyone seemed happy with the new arrangement.)

We decided at this point to scale back the Basic member standards, because they were too detailed for the true needs of the run-of-the-mill ASRC member. We reorganized the training levels as follows:

Callout Qualified (CQ or COQ): Won't kill self in the woods, at least immediately. Has some idea what SAR is about.

Field Team Member (FTM): Replaces the old Trainee standards. Able to accomplish most standard ASRC SAR tasks with aplomb.

Field Team Leader (FTL): Replaces the old Basic standards. Capable of running most standard ASRC SAR tasks with panache. Able to serve as member of team involved in difficult rescue.

Rescue Specialist (RS): Able to run difficult rescue.

Incident Staff (IS): Able to serve as member of the Staff on a large search without killing self or others.

Incident Commander (IC): Able to run large search or rescue operations with élan.

We specifically set up these standards to include the Virginia SAR standards for each equivalent level, and for our standards to go a bit beyond the state standards in rescue and wilderness travel.

We voted to make the new Rescue Specialist standard the requirement for MRA Rescue status and to wear the MRA patch. We continued our policy of **not** permitting the MRA Support patch (or Associate patch for ESAR and RSAR) to be worn by ASRC members, and to permit the use of only the small ("cap") MRA patch above the left breast pocket on Rescue

members' uniforms. We established a grandfather clause to permit those currently wearing MRA patches to do so until we finished the new Rescue Specialist standards. We would make up the RS standards in concert with Virginia. (We're still waiting for these standards.)

Several years passed with little coordination between MRA and ASRC. During this period, the ASRC Long-Range Plans Committee under Gary Mechtel reviewed the ASRC-MRA relationship and recommended that we adopt one of three policies:

1. Continue with the ASRC as the Eastern Region, and require that any team in the area wanting to join the MRA also join the ASRC. We understood that this would be acceptable to the national MRA if we wished to do this.
2. Discontinue all affiliation with the MRA.
3. Set up an Eastern Region MRA separate from the ASRC, with the ASRC as a single member team, but with each ASRC Group having the option to test separately. Groups that pass the MRA test separately would be entitled to separate representation at the Region level.

(My personal position has always been that there should be a tight link between ASRC and Eastern Region MRA. I also feel that we cannot expect much more administrative time from our members. We already have Virginia Search and Rescue Council meeting, Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council state and regional meetings, Group meetings, and ASRC Board meetings (not to mention minor inconveniences such as training and missions). Adding another set of meetings and another administrative bureaucracy seems a waste.)

At the last two ASRC membership meetings, the membership both times voted for option #3. However, as far as I can tell, nobody has really done anything about setting up a separate "Eastern Region MRA" organization.

I also have heard that some ASRC members still expect to have an option of whether to pay MRA dues and to be an MRA member. I also know, from my conversations with many MRA members and officers outside the ASRC, that this is unacceptable to the MRA. It is clear that we must, if we have selected to stay part of MRA, pay dues as do all the other MRA teams.

Since I was appointed as Eastern Region Chairman by outgoing ASRC Board of Directors Chairman Bob Koester, I am trying, as I exit, to propose a plan that would make everyone equally happy/unhappy. Here it is. (I suggest you vote individually on each of the six items.)

Keith's Quick-and Dirty MRA Region Plan:

1. To start with, the Eastern Region MRA will consist of the following member teams:
 - 1.1. The ASRC as a whole. (Regular Team)

- 1.2. Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group, ASRC (Regular Team)
- 1.3. Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group, ASRC (Regular Team)
- 1.4. Richmond Search and Rescue Group, ASRC (Associate Team)
- 1.5. Explorer Search and Rescue Post 616 (Associate Team)
2. Each member team will have two votes in the Region. Groups' delegates will be their ASRC Delegates or Alternates. The ASRC will be represented by the Chairman and Vice Chairman. New member teams will be represented by two delegates of their choice.
3. The Region Board of Directors will operate according to a set of Bylaws that look almost exactly like a subset of the ASRC Bylaws (a proposal is attached). All Region Board meetings will be held immediately after ASRC Board of Directors meetings and at the same location.
4. All ASRC members are MRA members. Only ASRC Active Members are considered members for MRA dues purposes. (Sustaining Members are honorary "members" who are not assessed ASRC dues, nor are they allowed to vote, to hold office, or to wear the ASRC uniform. Sustaining Members include corporations as well as individuals. For instance, the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club is a Sustaining Member.) ASRC Active Members are, for MRA purposes, divided into Rescue and Support Members. Those with an ASRC Rescue Specialist Certification will be MRA Rescue Members; all other ASRC Members (except Sustaining Members) are MRA Support Members. (I've included a little diagram, on a separate page, to help you sort out all these membership and team types.)
5. The ASRC shall collect dues from the ASRC Active Members of each Group at the same time it assesses Group dues. The official Conference Roster in effect on January 1 of each year shall be used for assessing each Group's MRA dues.
6. The ASRC will pay its past-due 1990 dues based on the membership list Peter McCabe forwarded to the MRA. All future payments will be based on the official Conference Roster.

I have to work in the Emergency Department instead of being at the June ASRC Board of Directors meeting where this will be discussed. Regardless of what happens at this meeting, I still resign as Chairman, and I'm not willing to serve as an MRA officer any more. (I'm well aware of our time-honored tradition of electing people who aren't present to defend themselves.) You guys need to vote in new MRA officers at the June meeting.

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I hope that this historical compilation is accurate; I've done my best. Do what you will with my plan, but at least do **something**; don't postpone the reckoning any more.

Good luck.

Sincerely yours,



Keith Conover, M.D.

Member, Board of Directors; Chairman for MRA Affairs

cc: Drew Davis, MRA President; Hunter Holloway, Past MRA President;
Keith Cubbedge; Louie Clem, MRA Executive Secretary.

encl: Copies of previous ASRC-MRA summaries; diagram of member types;
excerpts from MRA Constitution and Bylaws; proposed Eastern Region
MRA Bylaws.

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Mountain
Rescue
Association

*ESAR 616
RSAR*

*ASRC
AMRG
SMRG*

Associate
Teams

Ex-officio
Teams

Regular
Teams

Associate
Members

Rescue
Members

Support
Members

*Not applicable to ASRC
Members, because the
ASRC as a whole is a
Regular Team. Might apply
to non-ASRC teams that join.*

*ASRC Rescue
Specialists*

*All other ASRC
Members (except
Sustaining)*

MRA Eastern Region Structure



THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION

THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION (MRA) IS A NON-PROFIT VOLUNTEER PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO THE SAVING OF LIVES THROUGH RESCUE AND WILDERNESS SAFETY EDUCATION. ALTHOUGH NON-OPERATIONAL AS FAR AS RESCUES GO, IT DOES CREATE A CENTRAL ORGANIZATION THROUGH WHICH THE EFFORTS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE MEMBER UNITS MAY BE COORDINATED TO PROMOTE MORE EFFECTIVE MOUNTAIN SAFETY AND PROVIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE SERVICE. THE CAPABILITIES OF THE INDIVIDUAL UNITS ARE INCREASED BY BRINGING TEAMS TOGETHER THAT WILL PROVIDE ADDITIONAL MANPOWER AND RESOURCES. AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE MAY TURN TO THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION AS A SOURCE OF MOUNTAIN RESCUE KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNIQUES TO AUGMENT THEIR LOCAL CAPABILITIES. WHEN "MOUNTAIN RESCUE SERVICE" IS REFERRED TO HERE, IT MEANS A SITUATION WHERE ALPINE TECHNIQUES ARE USED REGARDLESS OF TERRAIN. AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF THIS WAS THE USE OF MOUNTAIN RESCUE TECHNIQUES BY THE ALASKA RESCUE GROUP IN DOWNTOWN ANCHORAGE AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE IN MARCH, 1964, AND BY THE CALIFORNIA UNITS AT THE 1971 SYLMAR EARTHQUAKE. THROUGH PUBLICATIONS LIKE THE ASSOCIATION'S NEWSLETTER, EQUIPMENT INFORMATION, BULLETINS, SEMINARS, CONFERENCES AND TRAINING WORKSHOPS, MRA PROMOTES THE FREE EXCHANGE OF RESCUE TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES. IT DISSEMINATES ADVANCES IN EQUIPMENT AND, WHEN POSSIBLE, PROMOTES A STANDARDIZATION THAT WILL IMPROVE RESCUE OPERATIONS.

IN JUNE 1961, THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION GRANTED THE MRA A LICENSE TO OPERATE EMERGENCY RADIO EQUIPMENT. THE INDIVIDUAL UNIT HOLDS A LICENSE THAT IS SUPPLEMENTAL TO THE MASTER LICENSE SO THEY MAY OPERATE IN ANY STATE WEST OF 100 DEGREES W. LONGITUDE. THE RADIO FREQUENCY IS 155.160 MHZ. BY SPECIAL AGREEMENT, THIS APPLIES IN PARTS OF CANADA AND MEXICO.

THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION ENDEAVORS TO WORK CLOSELY WITH ALL SEARCH AND RESCUE GROUPS, AGENCIES, MOUNTAINEERING CLUBS AND OUTING GROUPS IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP CONSTANTLY INFORMED OF ADVANCEMENTS. MRA ENCOURAGES THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND INQUIRIES FROM ALL GROUPS EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT ELIGIBLE OR INTERESTED IN MEMBERSHIP.

THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION WAS OFFICIALLY ORGANIZED ON JUNE 7, 1959, AT TIMBERLINE LODGE ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF MT. HOOD, OREGON, AND WAS LATER INCORPORATED AS A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON. THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE COUNCIL OF WASHINGTON WAS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR STARTING THE BALL ROLLING MANY YEARS AGO BY JUST THINKING BIG. THEY WERE HOLDING LARGE SPRING TRAINING CONFERENCES FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS WHEN OREGON LATCHED ONTO THE IDEA. THEN THERE WAS AN EXCHANGE OF MEETINGS, WHICH HIT A REAL HIGH WITH OVER 400 PEOPLE REGISTERED. THEY WERE FOUND SLEEPING ON AND UNDER TABLES AND BEDS AT TIMBERLINE LODGE. THIS CONFERENCE WAS ATTENDED BY INDIVIDUALS FROM ALL OVER THE WESTERN STATES.

AT ONE OF THE MEETINGS, THE IDEA OF AN ASSOCIATION WAS BORN. NRA'S REALITY THEN CAME AFTER TWO YEARS OF AN AD-HOC COMMITTEE WORKING ON A BASIC BYLAW FORMAT. IT WAS ON JUNE 7, 1959, THAT THE COMMITTEE EFFORTS WERE FINALLY APPROVED, WITH ELEVEN RESCUE TEAMS FROM OREGON AND WASHINGTON SIGNING THE ORIGINAL BYLAWS OF NRA. THE ENTHUSIASM FOR THIS ORGANIZATION WAS QUICKLY PICKED UP BY THE WELL-ESTABLISHED AND ORGANIZED RESCUE TEAMS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND COLORADO. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, NRA MEMBERSHIP INCLUDED UNITS FROM CALIFORNIA TO ALASKA. THE MAJOR CONCENTRATION OF MEMBERS LIES IN THE WESTERN PART OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT, WHERE A GREATER DEMAND IS MADE FOR MOUNTAIN-ALPINE RESCUE SERVICE. MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN TO UNITS FROM MEXICO, UNITED STATES, AND CANADA. AN EX-OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP HAS BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO GOVERNMENTAL UNITS.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERSHIPS OF MILITARY MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAMS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TEAMS, AND THE AEROSPACE RESCUE AND RECOVERY SERVICE HAVE HELPED TO CREATE CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SAR PERSONNEL. UNITS WHICH HAVEN'T OBTAINED FULL CERTIFICATION, BUT WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO THE LOCAL MISSIONS, ARE ELIGIBLE FOR ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP. GEOGRAPHICAL SEPARATIONS, TERRAIN DIFFERENCES AND JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES MAKE IT NECESSARY TO FORM REGIONS THAT BETTER SERVE THE UNITS AND THE AREAS IN WHICH THEY OPERATE.

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION

A volunteer non-profit public service organization dedicated to the saving of lives through rescue and outdoor safety education.

ARTICLE I. NAME, ADDRESS AND PURPOSE

Section I. The name of this organization shall be the Mountain Rescue Association (MRA).

Section II. The address of the Association shall be the address of the Executive Secretary, unless some other address is designated by the Board of Director.

Section III. The purpose of this Association shall be to provide a central organization through which the efforts and activities of member units may be coordinated to promote more effective mountain safety education, to improve mountain rescue service, to promote the free exchange of rescue techniques and procedures, to disseminate advances in equipment, and to promote standardization thereof.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Section I. Membership in the Association shall be open to any mountain rescue unit or similar organization approved by the Board of Directors.

Section II. The unit or organization shall in itself be a member of the Association. There shall be three categories of membership for units and organizations: Regular, Ex-officio, and Associate.

Section III. Regular membership is open to qualified volunteer mountain rescue units and organizations. Regular members are subject to dues and may vote at Association meetings.

Section IV. Ex-officio membership is open to governmental and professional rescue units and organizations. Ex-officio members are not subject to dues and may not vote.

Section V. Associate membership is open to other search and rescue units and organizations. Associate members are subject to dues but may not vote.

Section VI. The Board of Directors shall establish minimum requirements and uniform insignia for each category of membership, provided Associate insignia shall be distinct from Regular insignia.

Section VII. All unit memberships shall be for a period of five (5) years from date of acceptance and be renewed for like intervals. The Board of Directors shall establish minimum requirements for renewal and revocation of membership.

B. REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION

1. Applications for membership must be submitted in writing by the rescue unit to the Executive Secretary of the Mountain Rescue Association. Applications must include first year's dues (except Ex-Officio) and four copies of the following:

- a. Constitution and Bylaws.
- b. The roster of rescue and support members on call.
- c. List of rescue equipment available.
- d. Detailed information on how governmental agencies, or other rescue groups request help of the unit.
- e. The method used to assemble personnel.
- f. Description and extent of areas for which the unit will normally provide coverage.
- g. The list of all operations and activities, including training schedule, during the previous two years.
- h. Statement of willingness and ability to support and cooperate with nearby MRA units.
- i. An explanation of the leadership structure.

2. Requirements for Regular Membership

- a. There must be a need for a mountain rescue unit in the area, considering terrain and incidents.
- b. The unit must be a volunteer, non-profit, public service organization.
- c. The unit must be self-governing with elected membership.
- d. The unit must have a minimum of five (5) Rescue members, as defined below, and a sufficient number of support members to handle search and rescue operations in unit's primary area of operation.
- e. The unit must agree to ratify and support the Constitution and Bylaws of the Mountain Rescue Association.
- f. (June, '89) Teams applying for full membership that have not completed all field testing for full accreditation shall be known as "Applicant" teams.

3. Requirements for Associate Membership

- a. The unit must meet requirements "a" through "c" and "e" under Regular Membership.
- b. Be actively engaged in search and rescue training and operations and (where appropriate) regional activities. Participate in joint operations with Regular MRA teams.
- c. Demonstrate an interest in, and capacity for, furthering the aims of the Region in which they operate. (delete rest of paragraph, June, '89)

4. Reserved for future use (Section 4 [a-c]) (June, '89)

a. The unit must meet requirements "a" and "d" under Regular Membership.

b. The unit must demonstrate an interest in and capacity for furthering the aims of the Region and of MRA.

c. The unit's stated purposes and operations shall not be in conflict with the Constitution and Bylaws of the MRA.

5. Requirements of Ex-Officio Membership - Non-Certified

This category is primarily intended for governmental agencies and organizations which do not have rescue teams.

a. The agency or organization must indicate a willingness and capacity for furthering the aims of the MRA.

b. The unit's stated purposes and operations shall not be in conflict with the Constitution and Bylaws of the MRA.

6. Requirements for Individual Members of MRA Units and Organizations

A. Regular and Certified Ex-Officio Units

1. Rescue: Be an experienced mountaineer able to lead Class 4, thoroughly familiar with stretcher evacuation procedures on high angle rock and snow, able to organize and effect a rescue with only climbers untrained in rescue techniques to assist. Hold a current ARC Standard First Aid and Personal Safety card (Advanced First Aid and Emergency Care plus Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation, or better, is strongly recommended). Maintain active participation in search and rescue operations and training activities.

2. Support: Assist in search and rescue operations and maintain active participation in unit activities. Field support personnel must hold a current ARC Standard First Aid and Personal Safety card.

B. Associate and Non-Certified Ex-Officio Units: Be competent, responsible search and rescue personnel and maintain active participation in operations and training activities. Field personnel must hold current ARC Standard cards.

NOTES:

Field personnel must be familiar with map and compass and wilderness navigation and be able to function in the field at night.

Field personnel must be in excellent physical condition and be adequately equipped and trained to be self-sustaining in the field in whatever weather permits.

Field personnel must be knowledgeable of appropriate search techniques such as: hasty search, visual tracking and sign cutting, confinement and line search, and use of dogs.

C. PROCEDURE FOR BECOMING A MEMBER OF MRA

1. Certification Procedure: Regular and Ex-Officio Members

Each unit applying for Regular or Certified Ex-Officio membership must be sponsored by a member unit or Region of the Mountain Rescue Association familiar with the mountaineering and search and rescue proficiency of the applicant unit. The sponsoring unit or Region shall conduct such test of the applicant unit's proficiency as are necessary to assure the applicant unit is technically competent to handle mountain search and rescue problems anywhere in its own area of operation. Upon successful demonstration of rescue capabilities on high-angle rock, ice and snow, and wilderness search, the sponsoring unit or Region shall recommend acceptance of the applicant unit. Upon approval by the Board of Directors, the applicant unit shall be authorized use of the MRA Rescue and Support insignia.

2. Acceptance Procedure: Associate Members and Non-Certified Ex-Officio

Each unit applying for Associate or non-certified Ex-Officio membership must be sponsored by a member unit or Region of the MRA familiar with the wilderness search and rescue proficiency of the applicant unit. The sponsoring unit or Region shall assure that the applicant unit is willing and able to support the aims of MRA and is a distinct credit to the Association. The sponsor then may recommend acceptance of the applicant unit. Upon approval by the Board of Directors, the applicant shall be authorized use of the MRA Associate insignia.

3. Renewal Procedure: All Memberships

Upon the presentation of adequate evidence to the Board of Directors by a Region or the membership committee that a member unit meets the appropriate requirements as defined in Section B - Requirements for Membership, membership may be renewed for a period of five (5) years by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

4. Revocation Procedure: All Memberships

The Board of Directors shall have the authority, by a two-thirds vote, to revoke membership upon presentation of adequate evidence that a member unit or organization does not meet membership requirements.

NOTE: Member units and organizations are expected to participate actively in MRA and Region affairs, meetings, seminars, workshops, and conferences.

Field personnel must be trained in proper safety precautions for working with helicopters.

Rescue personnel must be thoroughly familiar with knots, belays, rappelling, roped climbing, route finding, anchor placements, brake systems for lowering, mechanical advantage systems for raising, stretcher rigging, snow travel, and use of ice axe and crampons.

MRA "?" Region Meeting Notes: Greg Shea, Chairman protem

Here's the current situation as I understand it:

Both AMRG and SMRG passed recertification tests and are eligible for Certified Regular Membership. ESAR 616 successfully completed enough stations to be eligible for Associate Membership. They may become eligible for Certified Regular Membership by retaking the vertical rescue portion of the test. RSAR failed to complete the entire test, but is recognized by the MRA Executive Secretary as an Associate Member Unit. The retesting shall be performed by AMRG and/or SMRG. National Park Service 535 is a nearby Unit currently listed as Ex-Officio (assumed to be non-Certified).

According to both the MRA Bylaws and their Executive Secretary we are not yet a Region, yet many of their Directors are treating us as if we were one already (e.g. Walt's post-test announcement in the Difficult Run parking lot).

If we would like to become one, we must:

1. Select a name and boundaries, subject to MRA BOD approval.
2. Select a Chairman.
3. Adopt a Regional Constitution and Bylaws, subject to MRA BOD approval.
4. Apply for Regional recognition to the MRA.

Each Unit within the proposed Region must meet all requirements, in MRA Bylaws, Section B (pp. 11-12). In particular, each Unit must structure its roster using appropriate individual membership classifications (e.g. Rescue or Support members in Certified Units and Associate members in Associate Units). Each Unit must create a Constitution and Bylaws that can be approved by the MRA, and must become non-profit; currently all MRA units have individually secured federal tax-exemption through code 501(c)(3). Each Unit must pay annual dues of \$1 per member on their roster. Each Unit must ratify and support the MRA Constitution and Bylaws. Specifics can be located in the MRA "Bluebook" pages: 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15.

Clearly, there are many top-level topics which must be hammered out at this first meeting. I don't presume to have all the answers; we must decide these for ourselves. I merely want to ensure that we're all aware of the issues before coming to the meeting, which will be held on Saturday, April 2 at 1400 at Shenandoah National Park Headquarters in Luray, VA. It will be preceded by an ASRC BOD meeting.

Thank you for your interest in these matters.