

Comments on SB20-130 A BILL FOR AN ACT CONCERNING BACKCOUNTRY SEARCH AND RESCUE SERVICES IN COLORADO, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

Greetings, my name is Mike McDonald. I'm a 41 year veteran of volunteer search and rescue. I joined a mountain rescue team in 1979 and a year later joined Civil Air Patrol. I've been on search and rescue (SAR) teams in three western states, the last 24 years in Colorado.

I'm currently a coordinator with and one of the original members of the Douglas County Search and Rescue Team, having also served on its board of directors. I'm a type 1 incident commander and the wing search and rescue officer for Colorado Wing, Civil Air Patrol. I was on the board of directors of the Colorado Search and Rescue Board, now the Colorado Search and Rescue Association, for twelve years, six as treasurer.

I was also chairman of the ASTM International Committee on Search and Rescue Standards, and chair of its subcommittee on search and rescue operations and management. FEMA hired me as a technical specialist in search and rescue to train the searchers and assist management on the Shuttle Columbia recovery in Texas in 2003.

There are two areas of the bill with which I have concerns. The first is Section 2 in which the term "Backcountry Search and Rescue" is defined. As printed in the re-engrossed, March 11, 2020 version of the bill, it takes 31 lines to define the term. Only one line in that definition separates backcountry search and rescue from the rest of search and rescue, and that is line 25 on page 3, which reads "LOCATING LOST OR INJURED INDIVIDUALS IN REMOTE AREAS" and the actual distinction is only in the term "remote areas." Nowhere does the bill define remote areas.

However in the Colorado Code of Regulations, 8 CCR 1307-1, which defines the rules and operating procedures of the Search and Rescue Fund, administered by the Department of Local Affairs, and which is also affected by this bill, there is a more defining statement which is "an area beyond the boundaries of normally available emergency services." There are also written Search and Rescue Fund Standard Operating Guidelines approved by the Executive Director of DOLA, the most recent online version dated September 10, 2019, which further adds to remote area the stipulation of "requiring the specialized skills of a SAR resource." This SOG also uses the term backcountry without definition.

ASTM standard *F1616 Guide for Scope of Performance of First Responders Who Practice in the Wilderness or Delayed or Prolonged Transport Settings* has other more defined criteria which this bill, the rules and regulations are trying to establish.

SB20-130 needs to better define backcountry search and rescue, looking at the DOLA and ASTM documents for guidance, since this term is the crux of the bill.

My concern with the terminology is not pedantic but is also the reason for my second concern with the bill. Section 3 of the bill states. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CONDUCT A STUDY AND DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH BACKCOUNTRY SEARCH AND RESCUE IN THE STATE.

How can a study of backcountry search and rescue be conducted when only the undefined term "remote area" separates it from other types of search and rescue? The argument can be made that

areas in the eastern plains are remote. However, search and rescue incidents in those areas, and the personnel who conduct them, would not be included in the proposed study.

As a more specific example, the Douglas County Search and Rescue Team averages around 160 search and rescue incidents per year. When the team submits its application for DOLA Search and Rescue Fund grant money, some 40% of its missions are not counted because they aren't considered to be "backcountry," despite the term being poorly defined.

Yet Douglas County Search and Rescue conducts all of its missions, whether backcountry, remote or in-town, with the same personnel, the same specialized search and rescue skills, same specialized procedures and techniques, and the same specialized equipment, some purchased with DOLA funds. These non-qualifying search and rescue missions expose the personnel to the same psychological stress and oftentimes the same physical stress as in "backcountry" SAR.

If the state is to expend funds to conduct a study of the challenges to search and rescue in Colorado, the study needs to include more than just "backcountry" search and rescue.

Thank you.