

# *National Search and Rescue Memorial Proposal*

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## **Introduction**

The emergence of volunteer search and rescue teams throughout the nation has occurred over the course of the last century. To panic stricken people desperately endeavoring to find lost family members or friends, the development of the search and rescue response grew from caring, sacrificing outdoors people, climbers and mountaineers dedicated to saving lives. These fine citizens did not and would not receive pay for their efforts. In the last 70 years, law enforcement in the wilderness, and in the last 20 years fire departments in the urban setting, have assumed responsibility in training and organizing systematic approaches to search, rescue and disaster emergencies. Various skilled responders including mountaineers, divers, dog handlers and aviators are now established and organized into non-profit organizations with international memberships. Some are salaried in search and rescue, but the vast majority are unpaid search and rescue professionals joined to law enforcement through county sheriff offices often through state mandates. The Mountain Rescue Association ([www.mra.org](http://www.mra.org)) and its younger offspring the National Association for Search and Rescue ([www.nasar.org](http://www.nasar.org)) are the two leading national organizations providing certification, training and networking for coordinated response through local agencies connecting with state and federal agencies as deemed necessary. National Parks, such as Mount Rainier, employ people skilled in search and rescue for emergency response in their varied ecosystems and trail networks and rely on unpaid search and rescue professionals from the area to augment their response.

When more incidents began occurring in the mountains of the Northwest in the 1950's, the Mountain Rescue Association was formed in Seattle. Formally called the Washington Mountain Rescue Council, experienced mountaineers were asked by local authorities to voluntarily perform searches and rescues for lost or injured individuals. At times, the search and rescue personnel, unpaid but carrying out professional duties, did not return home alive. Across the country others were injured in rescue missions or training exercises. Avalanches, falls, helicopter crashes and weather claimed the lives of devoted and courageous rescue workers.

There are now more than 450 who have given their lives during search and rescue missions and trainings. Included in this group are 343 fatalities from the World

Trade Centers who are recognized members of the Search and Rescue family of this country. While still tragic, the "small" number of Search and Rescue member deaths is also a testament to the safety record and history of these mostly unpaid professionals.

It is my heartfelt conviction that the time is right and fully appropriate to establish a memorial to those fallen in this specialized service to the public. The memorial can be fitted into present property or set into a developing property. Many designs have come to mind that would be meaningful for public viewing. Simplicity with clarity of message is the type of memorial needed to capture the honor and the remembrance of those who have given their lives. Well known to Search and Rescue members is the slogan, "That Others May Live". It is the mantra of the U.S. Air Force Pararescue personnel and the slogan of the National Association for Search and Rescue, Mountain Rescue Association and SAR units nationwide. The inclusion of the slogan in the memorial is basic to its design and meaningful to the Search and Rescue membership.

### **How the Idea Originated**

During attendance at the International Mountain Rescue Association Conference in June, 2005 I became aware of discussion of a national memorial to the fallen of search and rescue. I am personally aware of losses in my state of Washington that caused me to think seriously about what I could do for this cause. At the conference, I saw a presentation of those who gave their lives in search and rescue missions or trainings. The motto of search and rescue: "That Others May Live" has a deeper significance since viewing that presentation. I am convinced it is both necessary and appropriate that public recognition of their sacrifice be memorialized. The memorial would be a testimony to the dedication to life these self-sacrificing heroes possessed. In keeping with the national tradition of public, inscribed memorials that provide names of the people of valor, it is imperative this national memorial be kept current with each year's fatalities. I believe a nationwide campaign will fund the various aspects of the project. Search and Rescue personnel are historically in the background of many events without full recognition of their contributions. Opening a national memorial fund raising campaign would enhance public awareness of search and rescue and fulfill the goal of establishing a national memorial. For the family members of all fallen rescuers, the rescued persons, and the colleagues of rescuers, a memorial to these extraordinary individuals would offer a place of comfort, reflection, healing and closure. To not accomplish this effort would be the abandonment of honor due these heroes.

### **Location of Memorial: Seattle, Washington**

It is logical and fitting that the memorial be situated in Washington State. Rescues are a thread of life woven into the lives of its citizens both from the perspective of

search and rescue unpaid volunteer efforts and from the outdoor environment that exists. With glaciated peaks, rivers and desert dry land, the Pacific Northwest is recreated heavily but not without emergencies. Great diversity in search and rescues exist sometimes involving a multiplicity of disciplines. Significant is the willingness of the Mountain Rescue Association of Washington to host the national monument with the endorsement of the national Mountain Rescue Association.

Other facts that make the state of Washington best suited for the national memorial are profound. Research and design of mountain and rescue equipment has been an ongoing business in the State. Recreational Equipment Incorporated, Feathered Friends, Patagonia, and Outdoor Research are just a few. Prior to the attack on the World Trade Centers, the largest number of fallen rescuers consisted of wilderness search and rescue members from Washington. Also, the three national parks: Rainier, Olympic and North Cascades, have compiled events of rescue to the proportion and complication that the state of Washington is a resource for rescue training for mountain guides, river guides, hiking guides and hunting and fishing expedition leaders. The state has outdoor clubs and organizations, known worldwide, that routinely train people to be safe in the outdoor environment such as The Mountaineers and The Cascadians. There is a substantial appreciation for search and rescue work by the media throughout the state.

Seattle is the appropriate location for the memorial due to the fact Seattle is the birthplace for the Mountain Rescue Association, now international in its membership. It is also the birthplace of many related organizations and industries that support search and rescue. Seattle is home to The Mountaineers whose work and publications have enriched mountaineering for years. In cooperation with the American Red Cross, The Mountaineers offers Mountain-Oriented First Aid for outdoor enthusiasts to educate in life saving first aid practices in the wilderness environment. Technology in Seattle is an environment of benefit for many aspects of search and rescue with organizations and businesses networking with military, law enforcement, fire departments and outdoor equipment suppliers to develop innovative products. Equipment for the outdoors is marketed through businesses such as Recreational Equipment Incorporated, Feathered Friends, Outdoor Research, K2 skis and snowboards and other retailers. The “hub” nature of Seattle for search and rescue, mountaineering, national parks, outdoor products and world famous climbing companies makes it a natural fit for such a memorial. It is important that the memorial be situated in a city providing accessibility rather than the inconvenience of remote or rural settings. The City of Seattle is in the process of redeveloping many properties so the time is right to be included in the planning to establish a memorial that will enhance a visitor’s experience and further the public’s knowledge of search and rescue.

## Partnership Plan

In a proposal of national purport, I envision partners rising from a multiplicity of sources. In thinking of possible partners I would like to suggest:

Congress: Senators and Representatives  
Office of the President of the United States  
Governors  
Mountain Rescue Association  
National Association of Search and Rescue  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
State Emergency Management Offices  
National Park Service: Climbing Rangers, Water Rescue Teams, Emergency Service Personnel  
National Ski Patrol  
County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Teams  
National Safety Council  
Related Business Partners: REI, Feathered Friends, Eastern Mountain Sports, etc.  
Outdoor clubs/Organizations: The Mountaineers, Trails Associations, Hiking Clubs, Civil Air Patrol, Event Coordinators, etc.  
Ambulance services  
Families of Rescued Citizens  
Search and Rescue K9 Organizations  
Aviators Associations  
Helicopter Businesses and Associations  
Snowmobile manufacturers and suppliers  
Water/Scuba organizations  
Hospitals/Trauma Hospitals  
Wilderness Medicine Doctors and Advocates  
Native American Tribes  
Local Law Enforcement agencies  
Various Camping Organizations  
Backcountry Horseman  
Orienteering Clubs  
Geological Clubs  
Environmental Protection Agencies  
Firefighter Units and Organizations  
U.S. Forest Service

Process Plan for the Memorial:      Detail left to later development.

1. Establishment of a 16 member Steering Committee  
Application form prepared.  
Application process.  
Review and Decision of Membership and Leadership  
Meeting Plans adopted.  
Steering Committee Agendas and Actions recorded and reported

Dissolution to Executive Committee once Memorial is built.  
Executive Committee oversees future preservation of Memorial

2. Development Components: Details left to Steering Committee accomplishment.  
National Research of the Fallen Heroes Names and Stories  
Memorial Design and Site Selection  
Fiscal Campaign and Budget Plan  
Construction  
Dedication
3. Ongoing Maintenance with oversight by Mountain Rescue Association and Washington Mountain Rescue Association as a member of the Executive Committee.

**Additional Proposals:**

1. A National Week/Day of Recognition for unpaid Search and Rescue Volunteers enacted through a Congressional Bill.
2. A National Museum established to preserve the history and showcase highlights of search and rescue service throughout the country.

**Conclusion**

For the purpose of brevity and concise communication, this proposal does not contain the forms for the RFP process for the contracted elements of this project. Those forms and procedures can be accomplished by the Steering Committee. Fiscal accountability is feasible through establishing a 501c3 and through impeccable business practices between an accounting firm of Seattle and the Steering Committee of the project. Outside examination, review and outcome evaluation of the project can be contracted and accomplished at various benchmarks. Artist concepts will be an RFP process with the final decision resting with the Steering Committee. Full disclosure and honest accounting will be the manner that this project will be accomplished.

**I am convinced that this project is a necessary and essential contribution to the fabric of American life. The outstanding work of Search and Rescue personnel has long been understated and underrepresented in the country. Again, to abandon this project is to withhold honor due some of the finest citizens of America.**

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