



Badlands Search & Rescue Service

"In Omnia Paratus"

To: North Dakota State Legislative Assembly, House and Senate Members, and the Senate – State and Local Government Committee & Senator Roers, Committee Chair

Date: 2/8/2023

Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution #4007

My name is Travis Bateman and I am the founder of Badlands SAR and also the Search And Rescue Volunteer Association of North Dakota (SARVAND).

My background briefly as it applies to explaining the why is that I grew up in North Dakota and enjoyed the family land near a town with a large cow atop a hill to the west of our state capitol. I entered a life of service as an adult and served in the United States Army including two combat tours in Iraq and I am a disabled veteran. Continuing my service I served as a law enforcement officer in North Dakota during the latest oil boom from Stanley to Watford City and McKenzie County where I achieved my lifelong goal to work a police dog and did so with the main goal to remove illicit drugs and criminals from the streets for the betterment of the community. In that, I also fell in love with western North Dakota and the Badlands. It was also my time serving on the county that it was realized that we have a huge void in SAR in our state. This was experienced first-hand while working several incidents of missing and lost people as they recreated, several incidents involving watercrafts on Lake Sakakawea, and other recreational activities involving our trail system on public lands. In late 2018 before I exited law enforcement, the effort was started to begin building SAR in that area.

Since 2018, this organization has worked at bringing search and rescue capabilities to North Dakota on a statewide scale. We started out with the intention of serving western North Dakota but as time went on, it was realized that there were no dedicated SAR services to any acceptable levels anywhere in the state. Any similar groups simply consisted of water-focused boat teams and those of dive rescue/recovery teams. Not to diminish those teams, but there is much more needed throughout the state.

SAR is a discipline that encompasses ground, water, and air elements and is resource and personnel intensive. SAR is best defined as the utilization of sound tactics and procedures in locating the missing, lost, and injured and providing medical aid if needed but to ultimately evacuate them to a place of safety and further medical care. It does also include the recovery of the deceased. Over the course of that time there have been many challenges. We have trained and deployed to real world incidents across the state and learned from each and every one and still others in the state, region, or country that highlighted the issues at hand that come about when someone goes missing.

We have worked with law enforcement agencies, assisted them in their cases, met families organizing their own efforts when all hope seemed lost, and heard the cries and seen the tears when the missing

have been located. We have learned from all impacted or involved during these events. Shared the motivation, frustration, but most importantly, the unification to respond properly and initiate the process that has been carried out for decades all across our nation and the world.

Badlands SAR has thrust itself to the forefront of addressing the needs that have not existed on any organized level in the majority of the state. Yes, there have been clashes. Yes, there has been red tape or even politics injected where they do not belong that negatively influenced an incident or our efforts to help. And while tales such as that exist and have been told from SAR teams in other states, and as disheartening as they are, this organization has pressed forward because the reality is that none of that matters when a person is missing and something needs to be done on an organized and structures scale.

We have wholeheartedly recognized and fully support the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women/People (MMIW/P) movement and what it works at to help with the exponentially high number of missing indigenous people on not just tribal lands but all lands. And we will continue to focus on that and support those efforts and lend a helping hand when requested.

We have had great people step up to join our team. We currently have members in Minot, Watford City, Dickinson, Bismarck, and Jamestown. We have had excellent and professional peace officers and other public safety members thank, commend, and unite with determination and focus. We have had great people support us and donate to our efforts.

All of this, since 2018, has brought us to today.

We had been working on legislation with the 2023 session but after assistance and feedback from four sheriff's in North Dakota and our Senator sponsor, it was agreed that it was better suited to seek a resolution requesting a study for this statewide SAR association. There is a great deal of work ahead with this as one can imagine.

This was applied for in early January as it tied in with the legislation but this route surfaced as a much better option and if we get the assistance, input, and support that is needed, it will help to begin to build for improvement for SAR readiness, response, alerts, search commencement, and overall SAR disciplines and there will in turn be a better mechanism in place when bad things happen in the backcountry and on the waters of North Dakota. Or when children get lost, elderly despondents wander from home, hunters fall in a ravine, mountain bikers crash, a trail rider is bucked from their horse, or someone falls overboard in the middle of a lake.

The Search And Rescue Volunteer Association of North Dakota (SARVAND) was formed.

As to the points for the need for a study, we have identified several key areas to needed:

- Missing person reports and initial response procedures.
- Needs assessments of necessary training and equipment by county.

- Case studies of past incidents in North Dakota.
- Standards and training certification needs as defined by National Association for SAR(NASAR).
- Review of state SAR organizations, identify registration process, and the prerequisites to be listed.
- Preventative SAR (PSAR) education needs for citizens, children, and recreationists.
- Background check system and requirements for SAR team applicants and members.
- Reimbursement program for associated mission costs to SAR members and organizations.
- Reimbursement & grant program options for SAR organizations for training, facilities, and equipment.
- Existing programs within North Dakota that could network and would benefit from SAR in North Dakota.

On behalf of every member at Badlands Search & Rescue and our new endeavor for statewide efforts to bring SAR to all of North Dakota I thank you for the time and opportunity to speak with you on this today and I stand for your questions.

Respectfully,

Travis F. Bateman

Travis F. Bateman
Director & Founder
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