

# SARDOC Newsletter



Est. 1983

**Search & Rescue  
Dogs of Colorado**  
Non-profit 501(c) Corp.

## SARDOC MISSION DATA

Dennis McLaughlin

Through December 2012, SARDOC handlers have reported responses to 50 search missions with 49 having been in Colorado and one in South Dakota. Responses have been to 14 Colorado counties with the largest number having been in Larimer and Douglas Counties. *(see map below)*

Responses were for missing suicidal subjects, runaway children, a missing snowshoer, depressed and psychologically unbalanced subjects, lost hikers, mentally challenged subjects, Dementia patients, drowning victims, lost hunters, a person missing from traffic accident, a possible homicide victim, a child that was abducted and a Downs Syndrome child. Dog teams actually fielded on 30 searches with three subjects being located by the dog teams. On 20 of the 50 search missions, the dog teams either didn't field or were stood down while en route as the subjects had returned on their own or

were located upon arrival of SAR.

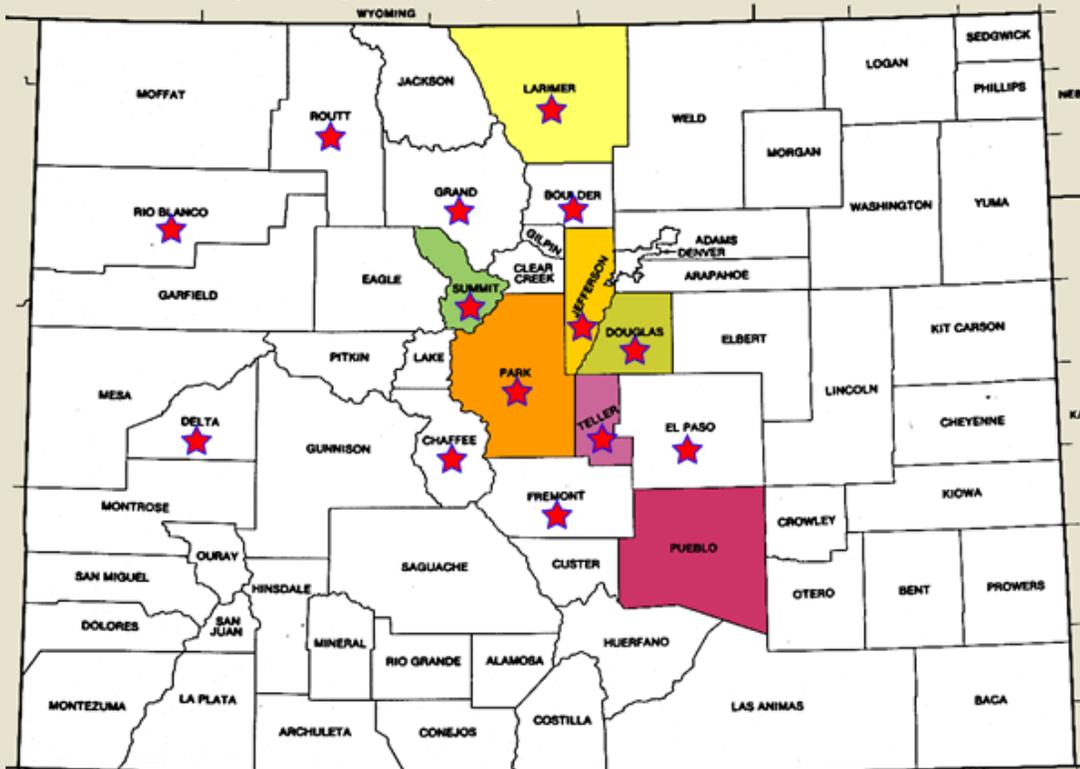
Of those located by dog teams, one was a depressed adult female, another was a hiker and the third was a drowning victim in South Dakota that had been the subject of a large scale search for two weeks prior to the SARDOC team pinpointing the location of the body which was recovered shortly thereafter. Gene Ralston of Idaho, a very well known and experienced side scan sonar operator and water searcher also participated in the search and confirmed the dog team information prior to the recovery of the young man's body. Read more about this mission

At least three of the searches were multi-day searches requiring extended commitments from SARDOC's volunteer dog teams.

## SARDOC currently has 20 Certified teams based around the state.

SARDOC certifies dog teams in trailing, airscent, avalanche, human remains detection and water search.

★ 49 mission responses reported throughout Colorado in 2012/ 1 mission in South Dakota



### Certified Team

#### Locations

#### Larimer County

- 7 Airscent
- 2 Trailing
- 1 Water

#### Summit County

- 2 Airscent
- 2 Avalanche

#### Jefferson County

- 1 Airscent
- 1 Avalanche

#### Douglas County

- 2 Airscent

#### Park County

- 4 Airscent
- 1 Avalanche
- 1 Water

#### Teller County

- 2 Airscent

#### Pueblo County

- 1 Airscent

# Sheriff's Resources and Information

**Call to request  
Services  
719-278-8181**

Search & Rescue Dogs of Colorado (SARDOC) has supplied operational search dog teams to law enforcement agencies and SAR teams in Colorado since its inception in 1983. All of our dog handlers are volunteers and we do not charge for our services. SARDOC dog teams are available 24/7, 365 days a year.

## Effective Call Out and Deployment of Canine Search and Rescue Resources

Search Dogs are just another resource we have available to us to help in the effort to find the missing person. As with any resource, when deployed in the most effective manner possible to optimize their capabilities, the better the results will be.

Click [here](#) for detailed information about how to best use the following resources.

**\*Trailing** dogs follow ground scent from where the subject has traveled. They are best at getting a direction of travel for the search.

**\*Air Scent** dogs work specific areas using the scent flowing in the wind. They can find live subjects, as well as deceased.

\*These dogs are scent specific, (scent article optimal).

**Cadaver** dogs are used for land cadaver searches. They should be capable of locating bodies, as well as smaller things, such as bones. They are NOT needed for recent suicides, etc. Air Scent dogs are effective for recently deceased parties.

**Water** dogs are trained to find ANY human scent under the water, including cadaver.

**Avalanche** dogs search for any human scent coming from under the snow surface. Dogs should search for the subject-some will also indicate on articles (i.e. gloves, packs, etc.)

Dog Unit Leader can be provided as a specialist to the operations and planning sections on missions when requested.

## How to Obtain a Scent Article

- ⇒ Select an article of clothing that has been worn and touched only by the subject. Wallets, insoles and hair-brushes also work. When in doubt, let the handler get it if at all possible. On multi-day searches, incoming handlers will probably want to select new scent articles if that possibility exists to eliminate all chances of contamination. Do not choose something out of a family laundry basket.
- ⇒ Using a Ziploc baggie, invert it over your hand (nitrile/latex gloves on your hands are a real plus), pick up the article, fold the bag back over the article and seal. Do not touch the inside of the bag.
- ⇒ If the scent article must come from a vehicle, please let the handler take care of this. Sometimes, the only way to get a scent article is to rub some gauze on the steering wheel, seat cushion, headrest, door handle, etc. So, please, if you must get into the car, touch as little as possible and remember what has been touched. If the car is locked, the handler might have to scent the dog through the crack in the door. (This works, so don't touch!!)

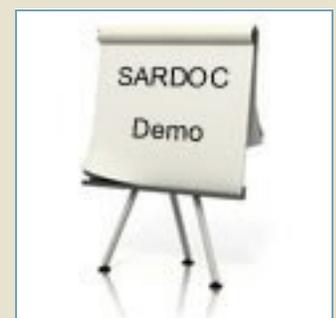
## Free Presentations

SARDOC members and their canine partners are happy to do free demonstrations for law enforcement agencies and any other organization that might request one.

SARDOC was a presenter at the 2012 Colorado Sheriffs Conference held in Denver on January 4, 2012.

We will fit our presentation  
to your needs!

[Please contact us.](#)



## DISTANCE ALERTS AND HOW THEY CAN IMPACT THE SEARCH EFFORT

Marcia McMahan

Dogs are just one of many wonderful resources available to help in the search for the missing person. However, scent discriminating airscents and cadaver dogs well-trained in large area distance alerting can have quite a successful impact on difficult searches involving moderate to difficult terrain in the Rocky Mountain Region.

The thought on searches is all too often that either the dog found the subject or he didn't and no other information is retained from the debrief. However, dogs can very positively impact every search in one or more of the following ways:

- Locate the subject.
- Provide directional alerts in the direction of the subject allowing for successful placement of other dog teams, foot teams, or helicopters in the same or subsequent operational period.
- Indicate the subject is not in the area.

Traditional methods for working search dogs mandate using a grid pattern in an assigned area and working until the dog either alerts and finds the subject, or comes up with no indications. Using distance alerts, however, emphasizes a much stronger trust of the dog earned by careful training and education. Education is the key here, as the dog has learned to compile his scent information from quite far away, when properly trained, and to work the area on his own initiative if enough scent is present to draw him forward. These dogs can pick up directional scent from quite a distance and provide the following information to help in the search.

Valuable Information gathered by dog teams that will be relayed to base upon debrief:

- Coordinates of dog interests and alerts with bearings.
- High probability areas according to the above.
- If interest is high enough while searching, areas ahead to be checked out by ground teams, helicopter, etc.
- Triangulation of all alerts (particularly if several dog teams bring information back to base) that might point to the high probability area for the subject. The points can then be marked with bearings and lines drawn well out across map to narrow down the subject's position.
- Factors that might be influencing the information, such as terrain and weather, that might skew the lines of scent.
- Other information that might directly lead the search forward. Information should not exclusively redirect the entire search, but should be followed up carefully.
- Negative areas, areas cleared, and holes that the team missed in their area.

Good information from well-trained, reliable dogs teams can help further the search in a major way. A "Dog Team Unit Leader", or the equivalent, at base can help analyze the dog information and consolidate it all onto one map to look for the areas of dog interests and where they lead. This information can give a good idea as to where the subject might be and assist in a find in the next operational period or sooner.

### Contact:

[Coordinator@sardoc.org](mailto:Coordinator@sardoc.org)

### Executive Board:

President  
Andrea Reller

Dog Coordinator  
Robin Anderson

Secretary  
Linda Gruver

Training Director  
Mike Erickson

Director at Large  
Dennis McLaughlin

### Standards Committee:

Denise Alvord - Ina Bernard  
Marcia McMahan - Nancy May



### SARDOC Adopts Online Meeting Technology

The time and cost of travel has always been a challenge for statewide volunteer groups like SARDOC. There is, of course, no substitute for being there when you're training a dog. But for committee meetings and other non-training meetings, connecting by phone or internet is now a viable option.

SARDOC used the GoToMeeting service this year to implement over 30 online meetings of committees, Executive Board, and the general membership. In addition to the thousands of driving miles and hundreds of travel hours saved, these online meetings make it much more convenient for our members to keep involved and in touch.

Many thanks to Citrix and TechSoup for making a low-cost GoToMeeting license available to nonprofit organizations like SARDOC.

## A Note from the President

2012 has been a very proactive year for SARDOC. Our standards committee has been diligent in revising and updating our standards throughout the year. The SARDOC certification process is thorough and results in very qualified dog teams. Each SARDOC handler is also an active member of their local search and rescue team.

I am happy to share with you that we have three new certified dog teams. Sabine and her dog Annie are a new air scent team and field with Park County SAR. Teller County SAR is where you will find the recently certified team of Barbi and her dog Molly. Ina and her canine Finya field with Pueblo ESB. Certification is a long process but well worth it in the end! Congrats to all the teams.

Well, I guess when we have the new teams to welcome, we may also have to say good -bye to old friends. Last year we lost Loki, super dog from Park County. He and his partner Roger had many successes in the search and rescue world (SARDOC and FEMA). The loss of our partners is very tough. We log hundreds of hours in training, demo and travel time. Sometimes we get to spend several years with them and sometimes their lives are cut short. As handlers, we find joy in knowing they were our hero dogs and their most fun game was to "go find".



Retirement is a second life for some dogs and dear ole' Maggie from Mesa County SAR is trying to teach her handler Shannon how to just hike and not search. Maggie was a star on the western slope and Shannon had many years (since 1993) devoted to SARDOC. Shannon's dedication was much appreciated.

I hope that you will check our website at [www.SARDOC.org](http://www.SARDOC.org) and get to know us. We all volunteer our time as both, dog handlers and as SAR members. It is with dedication to wanting to be the best we can be that we are willing to spend our own time and out of pocket expenses to train toward certification.

Wishing you a happy New Year!  
Andrea Reller

## From the Dog Coordinator

SARDOC closes out the year 2012 having participated in 50 missions with several direct finds made by dog teams, as well as numerous assists that led to finds on missions around the state. SARDOC continues to focus on training handlers and dogs to achieve a strong foundation in scent theory and weather knowledge. These skills have enabled SARDOC teams to provide accurate clues to mission management. Last year, SARDOC was complemented on the professionalism of our handlers and dogs, along with their diligence to effectively cover assigned search areas.

SARDOC handlers train regularly at high altitudes as well as beyond their home territory in order to present themselves as the best possible resource. The skills learned by handlers in mountainous terrain have time and again proven valuable in the urban environments as well.

SARDOC continues to place value on the ability of our teams' to search significantly large areas of rough terrain. The skill of the SARDOC handler is evident in our teams' ability to provide long distance scent information ascertained from search dog scent alerts and scent interests. Scent is a valuable clue that is used by mission management to locate a subject, even when the missing person is not in the team's assigned area.

SARDOC finishes their year with 20 certified teams able to respond around the state and surrounding regions. Teams are willing to drive several hours to assist law enforcement agencies in the search for lost, missing or deceased persons, any day or night of the year. SARDOC certifies dog teams in the disciplines of trailing, airscent, avalanche, human remains detection and water search.

SARDOC also provides additional assistance in the way of mission management. Law enforcement agencies can request a Dog Unit Leader to assist in plotting information reported by dog teams onto mission area maps. Their knowledge and experience in search dog behavior and scent theory in various terrains, under all weather conditions, provides help in assembling and translating scent clues. They can then use these clues to plan strategies for subsequent operational periods.

Robin Anderson

# Training Events

## Southern Region

SARDOC teams from across the state gathered in May 2012 for a building search training weekend in Colorado Springs at the "School for the Deaf and the Blind". We were able to simulate search problems encountered in urban settings, a very important and valuable component in training a well-rounded search dog. The dog learns the concept of transitioning from the outdoor environment to indoors. They have to learn to "tell" the handler to open spaces they can't otherwise access. It's necessary for a search dog to overcome obstacles, walk on all kinds of surfaces, crawl into tight spaces and figure out scent pictures in enclosed areas. These types of searches are trust and confidence building experiences for both dog and handler.

Building searches are not only challenging but also a lot of fun for dog

## Western Region

In June, teams from all regions came together to train at the Ridgway State Park in Ouray County. It's always great to be able to train away from our local areas. With Colorado's different terrain features, it is important to expose our dogs to as many variations as possible. They quickly discovered the difference in vegetation as they felt the prickles of cacti in their paws. Handlers came prepared with tweezers and booties. The dogs adjusted quickly however, and were very smart as to how to maneuver in this kind of environment without getting impaled.

The layout of the park allowed us to set up search scenarios at the campgrounds and surrounding areas along the Uncompahgre River. Campers, fishermen and hikers provided great opportunities to practice scent discrimination as the dog teams had to work through many of

## Central Region

This statewide training weekend was held in August at Wellington Lake. Training stations to practice water search, cadaver search, trailing and airscenting were set up around the lake .

SARDOC dog handlers are also members of their local SAR team where they learn to become proficient in First Aid, mountaineering and more.

Park County Search and Rescue volunteers gave their time and effort to set up a rappelling station for the dog teams. This was a wonderful opportunity to introduce dogs to the sensation of being lifted off the ground.

The dogs really liked zipping down the line as they put their trust into their handlers, who had quite a bit of fun themselves.

**THANK YOU**  
**PARK COUNTY**  
**SEARCH AND RESCUE**



and handler. The dogs love the fast pace of a hasty search. They get very excited about checking many different rooms. Handlers love the opportunity to get creative in setting up the search scenarios to afford the dogs a great learning experience. They also further their ability to think through problems they encounter when a door is closed, or how to get to where the scent leads them by taking an alternative route because the direct route is blocked.

The weekend was a great success! A BIG **THANK YOU** to **Helen Freeman**, an employee of the school and former SARDOC member, for helping to make this possible!

them to get to the subject they had been scented on.

Water search teams were able to hone their skills working the lake area from shore and off the boat. Park Rangers gave two full days to SARDOC taking teams out on the reservoir to train. A much appreciated opportunity!

Many park officials, their spouses and other volunteers helped by hiding for our dog teams, providing great food and facilities and by giving very informative presentations.

**THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!!**



Another highlight of the weekend was a presentation given by Jen Hebel. Jen's field of expertise ranges from that of former SARDOC dog handler and trainer, teaching Military Working Dog Handlers canine first aid for the field, to being a Veterinarian. She has certified as Rehabilitation Therapist and studied Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine and acupuncture. Dr.Hebel taught us how to keep our canine athletes in great shape by doing chiropractic exercises and stretches, using the right diet and much more. Working dogs put a lot of stress on their bodies. Anything we can do to help them feel their best will translate into better performance and a longer, happier life.

**Thank you**  
**Jen!**



**Jen Hebel and Chara**

## Training Director Update

2012 was another busy year for SARDOC, with roughly 100 scheduled practices across the state including wilderness, water, cadaver, avalanche, and building search exercises. A highlight of our training schedule are the quarterly SARDOC Weekends, two-day trainings where handlers from across the state gather to meet, train, and share best practices. This year, the Weekends were held at Ridgway, Colorado Springs, Wellington Lake in Park County, and Larimer County.

This year also saw the rollout of an internally developed "Progression Evaluation" program. The Progression Evaluations are a series of search problems that handlers in training can use to chart their progress towards certification. They are observed and graded by experienced handlers.

Mike Erickson

## Large Area Cadaver Search

Sabine Johnson

HRD/Cadaver search is a specialty with a large number of variables to train for. The dogs have to learn to recognize and indicate on a wide range of scents created during the decomposition process of the human body. This range is further increased by the influence of climate and weather conditions during which the decomposition took place, the length of time the subject has been missing. Wet environments will eventually produce the scent picture of adipocere (a substance from body fat), while a dry environment will have more of a mummification effect resulting in a mustier scent picture. In addition to all of the above, the conditions on the actual search day, such as time of day, time of year, weather, etc. will also influence the scent picture with which the dog team will be working.

SARDOC's cadaver search teams train at least once a month as a group, focusing on these variables. Once the dog has learned the basics of identifying and indicating cadaver scent we begin to hide sources in various scenarios. The dogs learn to alert on the scent when buried in soil, hidden in rock outcroppings, openly on the ground or hanging up high. In the beginning, these exercises are set up in a smaller area setting until the dog understands what's being asked of him and reliably masters the skills. HRD/Cadaver search is based on airscent capabilities, as the scent is carried in a similar way as live scent. We build the dog's ability to work the scent picture in the given terrain and then increase the areas in size and complexity as the team advances. Our dogs are trained to alert on human scent only. They will not alert on animal remains.

Colorado's vast wilderness typically makes for very large areas which our teams are required to search. To provide the best service possible SARDOC recently updated and revised the Standards for HRD/Cadaver search, to ensure that our

dog teams solidly acquire the ability to locate and indicate cadaver scent in large areas. The committee worked very hard to develop a certification test that implements the criteria of cadaver search, whether it's on the scale of urban interface areas or vast areas of wilderness terrain. After many hours of discussion and testing in the field, the Standards Committee approved the new test!

When a team requests a test they have to show proof of successful completion of a Bloodborne Pathogens class, a Crime Scene Preservation Class and Hazmat Awareness Level class. SARDOC also requires a minimum attendance at monthly group trainings and the successful completion of a written exam. In addition the handler has to provide confidence forms signed by approved handlers that have observed the team during trainings. Once the dog team is approved, the test is conducted in a 40 acre area of varied terrain. There will be 3 – 5 sources hidden in various stages (buried, hanging, surface). It is unknown to the handler how many and at what stage.

This test will produce very well-prepared cadaver search teams to serve Colorado and surrounding areas in locating deceased parties.



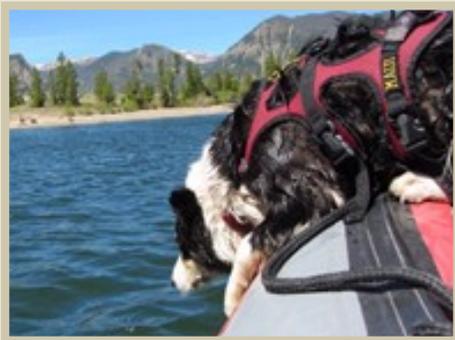
Dog indicating on buried source

# Water Dogs!

Marcia McMahon

**S**ARDOC just completed a wonderful year of water trainings. We were fortunate enough to be able to work with Summit Dive Rescue, Ridgway State Park, and Pueblo Lake State Park, to name a few. Training with these agencies in their home areas enabled us to set up very realistic training scenarios in a variety of water environments and work them from several different types of watercraft. These problems prepared our dogs for the missions for which they were requested this summer. They also educated our young, up and coming teams for real life water work situations.

Water dogs must reliably alert on human scent emanating from beneath the surface of the water and perform a reliable final alert as close to the subject's location as possible. To teach them, we use divers, as well as cadaver scent source, sunk at various depths, depending on each dog's level and our training goals. When the dog alerts, the diver pops out of the water with the dog's toy, which excites the dog tremendously, solidifies the alert, and ignites the desire to find. When cadaver scent source is used, it is connected to a rope which is threaded through a weighted pulley system and run to shore under the water. It can be popped up and down in the water, at the handler's discretion, by a person hiding on shore, to build drive and reward the dog, and have the pin point..



The scent from the underwater source rises from the lake bottom in a widening conical shape. Where it exits on the water surface, it is picked up by the wind and blown out in a widening shape (cone), but it will have a good line to it. As the handler grids the water in the boat perpendicular to the wind, the dog will pick up on the cone. When the dog becomes animated and turns in the direction of the line of scent, the boat also must turn and work the scent into the source according to the direction given by the dog through body language and nose points. The dog becomes more animated the closer the boat comes to the source until the closest point, where the dog will bark, paw, or whatever his/her final alert has been trained to be. The handler then marks the "spot" with the GPS. The radius of the scent cone emanating up from the

subject will be approximately the depth of the subject, but the dogs learn to work closer and closer with age and experience.

Teams also train along the shoreline. The dog will point out into the water when he/she hits upon the main lines of scent. The handler records the bearing of the dog's points and marks these alerts with flagging and GPS. By triangulating the bearings, the handler narrows down and defines the search area that will then be worked from the boat.

**O**n actual searches, water dogs can be extremely effective when other resources might be limited by visibility factors. The scent will always be there. This summer, for example, SARDOC received a request from Pennington County SAR in South Dakota for a water dog. A young man had drowned in Lake Deerfield and foot teams, divers, dogs and sonar had been unable to locate him during a 16 day search.

The lake had a 10-mile-long shoreline, plus ½ mile long coves. The kayak, paddles, and vest had been found in various locations along the shoreline of one of the coves so we used this for our start. We headed out on foot along the shoreline and the dogs began to alert immediately. They pulled all the way out to where the cove met the main body of water, worked along the lake shoreline for just a short distance, and indicated that the search area was from the mouth of the cove out into the lake. They also indicated the subject was a little further out into the lake rather than close to shore. The alerts were marked with flags and GPS with bearings recorded.

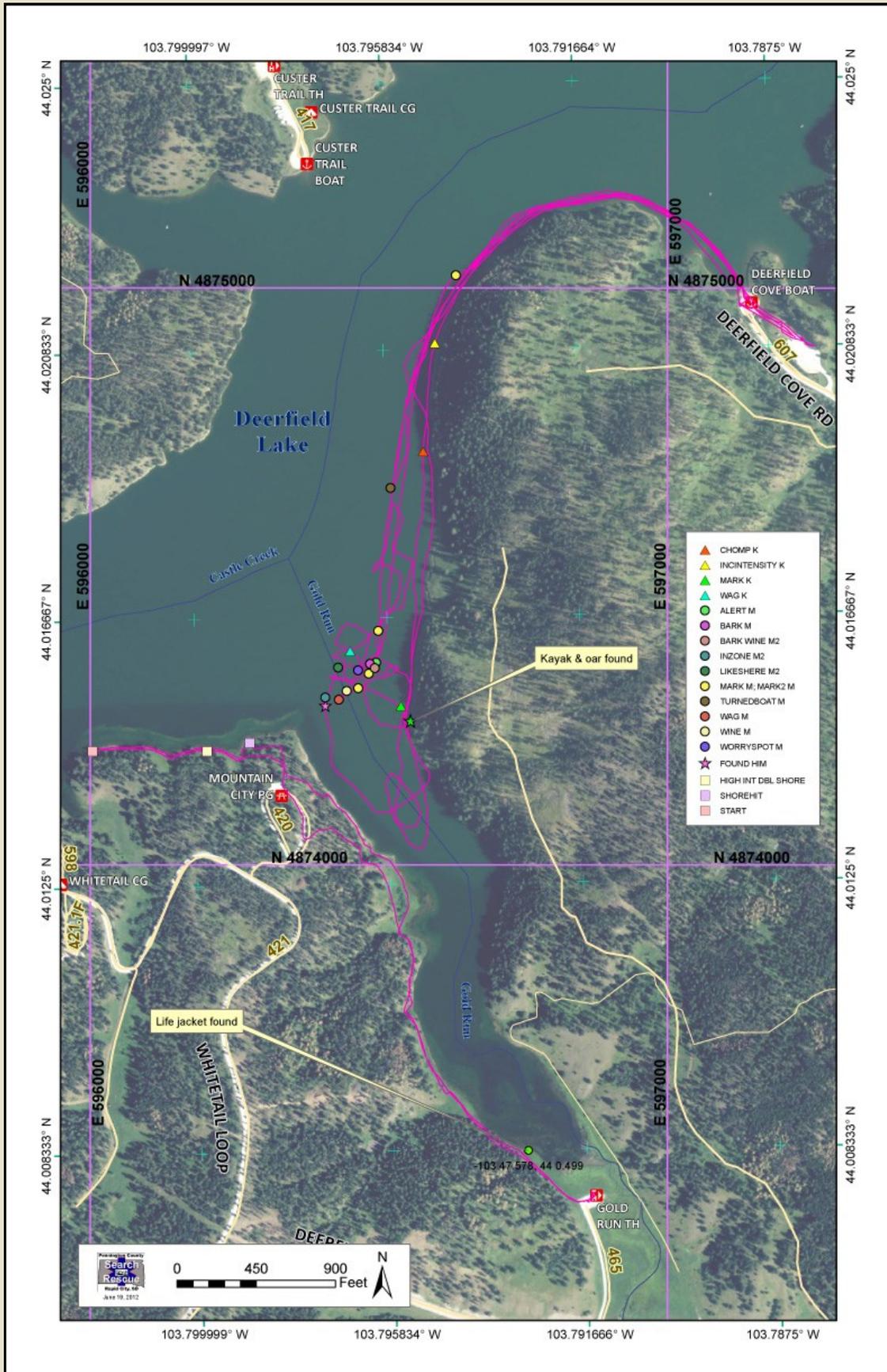
We returned to the start and had to drive quite a distance to board the boat, which was docked in a different cove. In spite of the distance, Maui began to alert from the boat immediately and we followed her "nose" for approximately 45 minutes, around a point, then out into the middle of the mouth of the high probability cove. She became quite excited at this point, and we carefully moved forward along her line of scent until she gave her final alert. My second dog, Koert, then had his turn on the boat, and he reaffirmed Maui's alerts. I worked Maui a second time after Koert, coming in from a different angle due to shifting winds, and she re-alerted 15 feet from the original alert. Our work was done.

Gene Ralston had come from Idaho with his Sidescan Sonar. He took the boat out to the area of the dogs' alerts and immediately spotted a suspicious "form" at the bottom of the lake. A diver was dropped down and found our subject in less than 5 minutes. The water was 47 feet deep and the subject was completely covered by a thick layer of silt.

This is just an example of how well-trained water dogs can be very effective very quickly on a water search. They can narrow down the search area in a relatively short time, achieve a pinpoint, and, in so doing, help define a very workable search area for divers. And most importantly, they can help bring closure to the family.

# South Dakota Water Mission Map

Provided by Pennington County SAR



## NEW SARDOC AIRSCENT TEAMS FOR 2012

Marcia McMahon

Search and Rescue Dogs of Colorado is pleased to announce the Certification of three new Airscent Teams in 2012. We have two new teams in our Southern Region, as well as one in our Central Area.

To certify in Air Scent, these teams spend a minimum of two years training. First, the handlers begin by learning extensive navigational skills and they must pass a test for GPS, for navigating for an airscent team, navigating for a trailing team, and navigating at night. They also must become a fieldable member of their local Search and Rescue Team. This means they will be fully trained in all aspects of SAR before they can test their dog.

While the handlers are learning navigation, they are also learning to teach their dogs to trail. At about the one year point, when the dog is trailing fairly well on trails aged at least 3 hours, the handler then chooses to either continue training their dog in trailing or to switch to Air Scent. They then begin moving up through a series of progression tests which will ultimately prepare them for the grueling final test for certification.

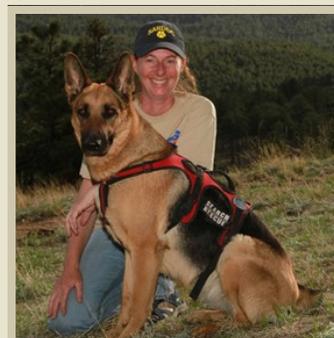
Both the disciplines of Trailing and Air Scent involve scent discrimination. Once the dog has been switched to Air Scent, the team will then spend one to two more years learning to hone their skills at airscent problems in terrain that is Colorado Specific; rugged and high altitude as well as Front Range and urban-oriented. Colorado has very difficult terrain and SARDOC teams are well-trained to deal with it when they reach testing. The Certification test for Air Scent is ½ mile x 1 mile and the team must find the correct subject in two hours in moderately rugged terrain.



**Ina Bernard and Finya**



**Barbi Atkins and Molly**



**Sabine Johnson and Annie**

Most recently, Ina Bernard and her Bernese Mountain Dog, Finya, passed their Airscent Test in a complicated area of Lost Park, in Park County. Finya is Ina's third airscent dog. Ina was a member of El Paso County SAR for many years. She now fields with Pueblo County ESB. She is currently a member of the SARDOC Standards Committee. Finya happily worked her way through her test in 17 degree, snowy weather, and found her subject well before the time limit. Finya will also be training in the discipline of water as soon as the weather allows.

Barbi Atkins and her Weimeraner, Molly, also took their Certification Test for Air Scent this Fall in challenging terrain up the Poudre River. Molly is Barbi's third airscent dog. Barbi fielded previously with El Paso County SAR with her first two airscent dogs. After a stint in Florida, she returned to Divide, Colorado. She and Molly now field with Teller County SAR.

Last February, Sabine Johnson and her German Shepherd, Annie began fielding with Park County Search and Rescue out of Bailey. They deftly wove their way up a complicated drainage system near Red Feather Lakes to certify in Air Scent. Annie is Sabine's first dog; a dedicated Shepherd intense on doing her job, who also enjoys Water and HRD training.

### **Congratulations!**

All three, as with all Certified SARDOC dogs, are on call for missions throughout the State of Colorado and beyond.