

# **Bylaws of Whatcom County Search and Rescue Council**

Revised February 2025  
Approved March 5, 2025

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Whatcom County Search & Rescue Council (WCSAR) is committed to maintaining a constant state of readiness for search, rescue, recovery, and incident response, while also promoting safety and outdoor education. WCSAR shall work in affiliation with state and local emergency management agencies utilizing the principles of the Incident Command System (ICS). WCSAR shall be comprised of a network of local SAR Units trained and certified individual volunteers. In addition, the WCSAR shall be non-political and non-partisan in character. WCSAR does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations.

## **ARTICLE 1 - NAME AND PURPOSE**

### **Section 1.1 Name**

The name of the Corporation shall be Whatcom County Search and Rescue Council, hereinafter referred to as “The Corporation” or “WCSAR Council” or “WCSARC.” WCSAR Council is a private, non-government, and nonprofit corporation incorporated under the laws of the State of Washington.

### **Section 1.2 Purpose**

The purposes of the Whatcom County Search and Rescue Council is to provide oversight and control of the Whatcom County SAR building and WCSAR Council equipment; to develop and incorporate policies that apply to all Whatcom County SAR Units; to provide technical consulting and assistance in the field of search and rescue to the Whatcom County Sheriff and other responsible agencies; to promote the free exchange of rescue techniques and procedures; to disseminate advances in equipment; and to promote the interchange of information regarding the resources available for rescue operations within Whatcom County.

### **Section 1.3 Objectives**

The objectives of the Council are:

- To promote cooperation between Units of the Council
- To represent and be a spokesperson for member Units in the formulation of ways and means of better accomplishing search and rescue operations
- To develop and incorporate policies that apply to all Whatcom County SAR Units
- To promote the assembly of leaders who are knowledgeable in search and rescue techniques and operations
- To assist responsible agencies in search and rescue operations

- To promote the best possible utilization of personnel and equipment in the conduct of training exercises and search and rescue operations
- To promote cooperation with other agencies involved in SAR operations
- To promote the education of the public in wilderness safety
- To conduct a continuing, effective public information and relations program

## **ARTICLE 2 - MEMBERS**

### **Section 2.1 Members**

- Member Units of the WCSARC have an interest in WCSARC, promote the objectives of the Council, and meet the requisite standards set forth herein. Member Units shall be private, nonprofit WCSARC organizations deemed effective by the Executive Board. Member Unit have a voice and one vote in WCSARC.

### **Section 2.2 Qualifications to be a Member Unit**

The following are requirements to be a WCSARC member Unit:

- A prospective member Unit shall submit a formal letter of application to the Council.
- Applying organizations shall require all their members to have a Whatcom County Department of Emergency Services card and meet the requirements of Washington Administrative Code 118-04-120.
- Units shall maintain bylaws including the Unit's training requirements and response classes, such as novice, support, and field or equivalent. Said bylaws shall be available for council review upon request.
- Units shall maintain non-profit status.
- Each member Unit and its members are expected to adhere to the expectations in Appendix C.

### **Section 2.3 Ongoing Membership requirements**

- Becoming a member Unit and maintaining membership is at the discretion of the WCSARC voting Units who may test the organization's abilities and effectiveness.
- A representative in attendance may represent only one Unit. Each member Unit shall meet 75% attendance of the monthly council meetings. A Unit may apply for an exception from the council based on extenuating circumstances.
- Participate in council hosted operational programs funded by the agreement with the served agency.
- Member Units failing to meet the qualifications to be a member of the WCSARC is required to appear before the WCSARC and show cause why the member or member Unit shall not be dropped from the WCSARC.
- The Council shall send a registered physical and electronic letter to any Unit that has not participated in Council meetings for three consecutive months. More than three letters in a calendar year shall result in an organization being removed from the Council.
- A member Unit may be removed by a vote of three-fourths of those Delegates present and voting at a regularly scheduled meeting of the WCSARC. Notice of an upcoming vote for a member or member Unit's dismissal shall be made at a previously regularly

scheduled meeting and all WCSARC voting members shall be notified in writing by email or USPS at least two weeks prior to a vote being taken.

### **ARTICLE 3 - ORGANIZATION**

#### **Section 3.1 Council Makeup**

- 3.1.1 The WCSARC shall consist of an Executive Board, and representatives from each Member Unit.
- 3.1.2 Each Unit shall assign one member in good standing to represent their Unit at the council. This representative will be known as the Delegate. It is recommended that the Delegate be the Member Unit's President. Each Unit should appoint an alternate, to be reported to the council.
- 3.1.3 The Executive Board (The Board) as defined in section 4.1 shall manage the affairs and the property of the Corporation. The Board Officers shall act only as a Board, and individual Officers shall have no power as such.

#### **Section 3.2 Meetings**

##### 3.2.1 Monthly Meetings

Meetings shall be held monthly on the first Wednesday of each month, at the Whatcom County Search and Rescue Building, at such time or other location as may be mutually agreed upon by the Executive Board.

##### 3.2.2 Cancelled Meetings

Meetings canceled due to operational requirements and legal holidays can be held on such other agreed-upon date.

##### 3.2.3 Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the Chair to resolve urgent problems.

##### 3.2.4 Quorum

A quorum shall consist of two-thirds of the active member Units, and at least two Officers of the Council. Voting shall not take place unless a quorum is in attendance.

A Delegate can only represent one Unit during a vote.

##### 3.2.5 Meeting Conduct

Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Current WSCAR SOPs.

##### 3.2.6 Voting

3.2.6.1 Only Delegates may vote.

3.2.6.2 Each Unit holds one vote via their Delegate.

3.2.6.3 In the event of a tie, the Council Chair may cast a tie-breaking vote.

3.2.6.4 Voting on issues shall be by secret ballot or open ballot at the discretion of the Chair.

3.2.6.5 Simple majority shall rule unless otherwise provided in these bylaws.

3.2.7 Organization Reports

Reports of mission activity by member organizations of the Council shall be presented at the regularly scheduled meetings of the Council. Reports are to include missions, training, hours, active member count, fundraising activities, and any other pertinent info.

3.2.8 Agenda Issues

Units desiring to add to the agenda issues affecting search and rescue activities or Council members shall contact the Secretary or Chair prior to the monthly meeting.

3.2.9 Organization Roster Reporting

Current organization rosters shall be turned in to the Council Secretary annually by the February meeting with field qualifications, and designated call out person(s). Rosters shall be forwarded to the WCSO deputies and DEM by the WCSARC.

## **ARTICLE 4 - EXECUTIVE BOARD**

### **Section 4.1 General**

The Executive Board (The Board) shall manage the affairs and the property of the Corporation. The Board Officers shall act only as a Board, and individual Officers shall have no power as such. The Executive Board shall be comprised of the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, At-Large and if available, the Immediate Past Chair.

### **Section 4.2 Compensation**

Board members shall not receive compensation for their services as such but the Board may authorize reimbursement for expenses incurred by Board members in connection with the performance of their duties; provided, however, that nothing herein contained shall be construed to preclude any Board member from serving the Corporation in any other capacity or receiving compensation for any such services.

### **Section 4.3 Indemnification**

Any person made a party to any action, suit or proceeding by reason of the fact that they are or were an Officer or Director of the Corporation, or of any corporation for which he served as a Director or Officer at the request of the Corporation, shall be indemnified by the Corporation against the reasonable expenses, including attorney's fees, actually and necessarily incurred by him in connection with the defense of such action, suit or proceeding, or in connection with any appeal therein, except in relation to matters as to which it shall be adjudged in such action, suit or proceeding that such person is liable for willful misconduct or recklessness in the performance of his duties. The foregoing right of indemnification shall be deemed exclusive of any other rights to which any such Director, Officer or employee may be entitled as a matter of law.

- 4.3.1 A Directors and Officers insurance policy shall be acquired and maintained by the Corporation to ensure that the indemnification shall be available in a timely manner.

## **ARTICLE 5 - OFFICERS**

### **Section 5.1 Officers**

The Officers of the Corporation shall be the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and At-Large. One person may hold only one of the previously mentioned offices at any one time. Officers are also Directors of the Corporation. Officers shall attend a minimum of 75% of the scheduled WCSAR Council meetings.

### **Section 5.2 Qualifications of Officers**

To serve as an Officer of the Whatcom County Search and Rescue Council an individual shall be a member in good standing of a Unit in good standing.

### **Section 5.3 Election of Officers**

- 5.3.1 Elections of Officers shall be at the regularly scheduled December meeting.
- 5.3.2 An Elections Committee of not fewer than three persons shall be appointed by the Chair by the September meeting. They shall present a slate of Council Officer candidates at the October meeting, with verification of eligibility. Additional nominations for Council Officers shall be accepted from the floor at the November meeting. The Elections Committee shall verify eligibility before voting.
- 5.3.3 The election of Officers shall be conducted by the Chair of the Elections Committee. Voting shall be by secret ballot and in accordance with these bylaws. Voting shall be decided by a simple majority of WCSAR Council members present.

### **Section 5.4 Terms of Office**

- Officers shall serve for a term of one year, with no maximum number of terms.
- The Immediate Past Chair shall serve on the Executive Board until replaced by a new Immediate Past Chair.

### **Section 5.5 Duties of Officers**

- 5.5.1 **Chair** The Chair shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation, shall have general supervision over the affairs and property of the Corporation and over its several Officers, and shall generally do and perform all acts incident to the office of Chair. The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the WCSAR Council and shall have such other powers and duties as may be assigned to him or her from time to time by the members or as prescribed by the Council Bylaws or Council Standard Operating Procedures. Only when authorized by a vote of the WCSAR Council, the Chair may execute in the name of the Corporation, deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts or other instruments authorized by the WCSAR Council, except in cases where the execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the Council or by these Bylaws to some other Officer or agent of the Corporation. The Chair shall appoint, subject to confirmation by the WCSAR Council, the Head of any committees formed. All other appointments shall be at his discretion.

- 5.5.2 **Vice Chair** The Vice-Chair shall act as the equipment manager, facilities coordinator, and the training coordinator. They shall also perform all duties normally associated with the office, shall perform duties of the Chair at his/her request, and, during the Chair's absence shall have all his power and duties. When so acting, a Vice Chair shall have all the powers of and shall be subject to all the restrictions upon, the Chair. Only when authorized by a vote of the WCSAR Council, the Vice Chair may also sign and execute, in the name of the Corporation, deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, or other instruments authorized by the WCSAR Council, except in cases where the signing and execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the Council or by these Bylaws to some other Officer or agent of the Corporation. The Vice Chair shall perform other duties from time to time as assigned to him by the Chair or WCSAR Council members.
- 5.5.3 **Secretary** The Secretary shall act as a secretary of and keep the minutes of all meetings of the WCSAR Council. Whenever required by the Chair, the Secretary shall perform duties for any committee. In the absence of the Secretary, the majority of the members present at any meeting may designate any person to act as Secretary for that meeting. The Secretary shall see that all notices are duly given in accordance with these Bylaws and as required by law. The Secretary shall have charge of the books, records, and papers of the Corporation relating to its organization as a Corporation and shall see that all reports, statements, and other documents required by law are properly kept or filed, except to the extent that the same are to be kept or filed by the Treasurer. The Secretary shall perform all the duties normally incident to the office of Secretary and other duties as may from time to time be assigned by the WCSAR Council or by the Chair.
- 5.5.4 **Treasurer** The Treasurer shall act under the supervision of the WCSARC and shall have charge and custody of, and be responsible for, all the funds of the Corporation and shall keep, or cause to be kept, and shall be responsible for the keeping of, accurate and adequate records of the assets, liabilities and transactions of the Corporation. The Treasurer shall deposit all money and other valuable effects of the Corporation in the name of and to the credit of the Corporation in such banks, trust companies, or other depositories as may be designated. The Treasurer shall disburse the funds of the Corporation based upon proper vouchers for such disbursements. The Treasurer shall perform all the duties normally incident to the office of Treasurer and other duties as may from time to time be assigned to him by the Council or the Chair. The treasurer shall report account summaries including income and expenses for each month. If required by the WCSAR Council, the Treasurer shall give a bond forth faithful discharge of his duties in such sum and with such surety or sureties as the Council shall determine. The Corporation shall pay the expense of such bond.
- 5.5.5 **At Large** Fills the roles as requested to support other Officers of the council.

## **Section 5.6 Vacant Officer Positions**

- 5.6.1 If an elected Officer does not serve an entire term, the Chair shall appoint a replacement for the remainder of that term subject to confirmation by the WCSAR Council Executive Board.

- 5.6.2 If the elected Officer leaving is the Chair, the elected Vice-Chair shall become the Chair for the remainder of that term. The new Chair shall appoint a new Vice-Chair for the remainder of that term.

### **Section 5.7 Removal of Officers**

- 5.7.1 Any Officer may be removed from the office at a regular or special meeting provided all Delegates and the Executive Board are notified five days in advance in writing. There shall be at least a two-thirds majority vote by Delegates present at such a meeting.
- 5.7.2 The Chair (or Vice-Chair, in the event of the removal of the Chair) shall be responsible for the duties of the removed Officer until a replacement is appointed or elected. A special election shall be held within two months to fill the position for the remainder of the term. The special election shall be conducted according to the procedures for the election of Officers at the annual meeting.

## **ARTICLE 6 - COMMITTEES**

### **Section 6.1 Committees**

The Chair and the Whatcom County Search and Rescue Council may delegate the management of any properties of the Council and the performance of Council activities to committees or organizations as necessary and appropriate. Any such committee shall be announced at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

## **ARTICLE 7 - FINANCES**

### **Section 7.1 Monies**

- 7.1.1 Monies for operations of the Whatcom County Search and Rescue Council shall be from voluntary contributions of member organizations, public donations, grants, and fundraising activities and or sources as they become available.
- 7.1.2 Officers may spend up to \$500 in a month, collectively, for day-to-day operation, services or to repair, maintain or replace an existing resource. Amounts over \$500 shall be approved by the council. In an emergency, expenditures over \$500 shall be approved by the board.
- 7.1.3 The Chair shall appoint a board to review all complex money matters as the need arises. All complex money matters shall be discussed at one meeting, placed in the minutes to inform all the organizations, and then a vote shall be taken at the following Council meeting. There shall be at least a two-thirds majority vote by members present at such a meeting. A matter becomes complex by a majority vote at the time the issue arises.
- 7.1.4 All reimbursements shall require a receipt or documented proof of purchase.
- 7.1.5 **Fiscal Year** The fiscal year of the Corporation shall begin on January 1 of each year and shall end on December 31 in each year. A profit/loss statement shall be provided at the February meeting.

### **Section 7.2 Accounts**

- 7.2.1 **Savings Account**

- Some of the savings account money may be put into a Certificate of Deposit (CD).
- All Savings Account money shall be transferred only to the Checking Account or CD unless approved by the Council.

**7.2.2 General Operating Checking Account**

- Bank account signers shall be the Treasurer and Chair or a Board appointed SAR member.
- Expenditures from the checking account are to be used for Council operations, such as bookkeeping, mission supplies, for equipment and expenditures authorized by the Council.
- No cash withdrawals shall be made.
- The payee cannot be the signatory.

**ARTICLE 8 - DOCUMENTATION**

**Section 8.1 Documentation**

- The official address of WCSARC is 1041 W. Smith Rd., Bellingham, WA 98226. All official correspondence shall use this address. Special exceptions may be made with Executive Board approval on a case-by-case basis.
- All business accounts and software shall be in the council’s name and use the official address. All official email correspondence shall use the domain in use by the council.
- All documents, forms, manuals, etc. that are required to be kept as hard copies shall be stored at the SAR building.
- Electronic files and records shall be kept within the record management system in use by the council.
- All access codes and account information shall be available to at least one additional WCSAR Council Officer.

**Section 8.2 Recordkeeping** The basis for each decision subject to this Article shall be fully documented, including:

- the terms of the approved transaction and the date approved;
- the members of the decision-making body who were present during the debate on the transaction and those who voted on it;
- the comparability data that was relied on by the decision-making body and how the data was obtained; and
- any actions by a member of the decision-making body having a conflict of interest.

**ARTICLE 9 - FUNDRAISING**

**Section 9.1 WCSAR Council Logo**

WCSARC logos shall not be used for any outside fundraising purposes without prior written permission from the Search and Rescue Council. If permission is granted, it can be revoked at any time.



**Section 9.2 Telephone Soliciting**

Whatcom County Search and Rescue Council does not permit telephone soliciting.

**ARTICLE 10 - CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

**Section 10.1 General Principles.**

- 10.1.1 Neither Council members nor their relatives shall be compensated in any manner beyond the value of actual expenses.
- 10.1.2 Primary responsibility for making all decisions related to a conflict of interest, or possible conflict of interest, shall rest with the members of the WCSAR Council. The Council may delegate decisions subject to this Article to a committee composed of individual Council members unrelated to, and not subject to the control of, the person or persons involved in the proposed transaction.
- 10.1.3 No Council member may receive economic benefits from WCSAR Council that exceeds the consideration provided for such transaction.
- 10.1.4 Deliberation, decision-making, and written documentation of all arrangements subject to this Article shall take place before WCSAR Council makes payments of any kind.

**Section 10.2 Basis for Decision-making**

In making decisions subject to this Article, the Council members or decision-making committee, shall, to the best of its ability, obtain and rely upon appropriate data as to comparability, such as:

- information about compensation paid by similarly situated corporations for similar goods or services
- current compensation surveys compiled by independent firms
- actual written offers from similarly situated corporations.

**Section 10.3 Conflict of Interest.**

- 10.3.1 No Council member may vote upon a matter in which he or she has a direct financial interest. No Council member may vote upon a matter in which he or she has a business or family relationship with anyone who has a direct financial interest.
- 10.3.2 Immediately upon becoming aware that such a conflict may exist, a Council member shall disclose the existence of the potential conflict to the remaining Council members. If, by a vote of the remaining Council members, a conflict of interest is found to exist, the Council member with the conflict shall withdraw from further deliberation and refrain from voting on the matter.

**ARTICLE 11 - AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS**

**Section 11.1**

- 11.1.1 There shall be a bylaw review every January, or at another scheduled meeting determined by the Chair.

- 11.1.2 The proposed bylaws shall be presented at the following scheduled meeting.
- 11.1.3 The proposed bylaws shall be voted on at the next scheduled meeting after presentation, so that each Unit can inform their membership.

**Section 11.2**

A notice of intent for Bylaw review and/or change shall be given prior to a regularly scheduled meeting, and a written notice of the intended changes shall be sent to the member Units prior to voting on the amendments at a regularly scheduled meeting.

**Section 10.3**

The bylaws of the Council shall be amended by a two-thirds majority vote at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Whatcom County Search and Rescue Council.

**ARTICLE 12 - COUNCIL LOGOS**

- Production of logos or logoed items shall be authorized by the Executive Board.
- All decals, patches and logoed items shall be returned to the organization when a person is no longer a member of a member Unit. Exceptions may be made by the Executive board.
- Logos kept as mementos are not to be displayed or worn publicly.
- Members shall be in good standing to display logos of the organization.

**ARTICLE 13 - DISSOLUTION OF WCSAR COUNCIL**

In the event of dissolution of the Council, the net assets are to be distributed as follows: After all debts and obligations are paid or adequately provided for, the remaining assets shall be divided amongst the member organizations which, at the time of disbandment, are actively participating in search and rescue and have established a tax-exempt status as required in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

**ARTICLE 14 - ADOPTION OF BYLAWS**

The members of the WCSAR Council have adopted the foregoing Bylaws.

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Chair  
Lauri McBeath

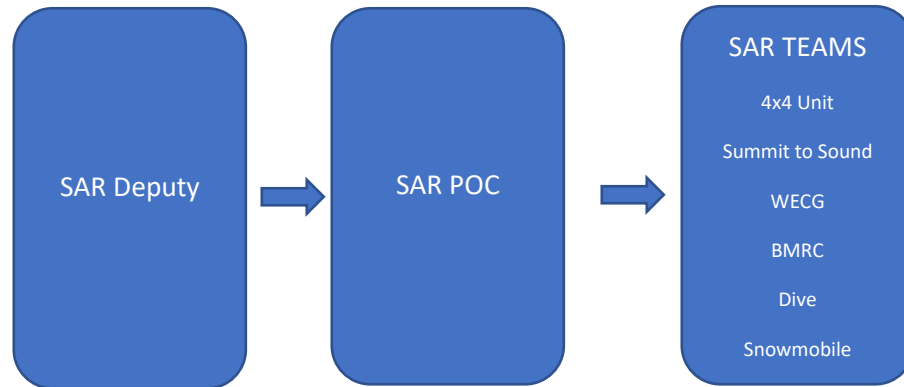
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vice Chair  
Aaron Kurashige

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX Page A

### FLOW CHART FOR 911 CALLS NEEDING SAR TEAMS



#### Point of Contact (POC) Job Description and Value

- Primary point of contact for SAR Deputies to reach any and all SAR Council resources. A SAR POC would be available 24 hrs. a day-365 days a year.
- Assist teams with resources and support needed during a SAR mission.

## Appendix Page B

### SAR Council Organization Chart

Administration includes record keeping for the council, team's day to day operations and representation at WASARVAC. This is to document the processes that are being phased in.

Councils and member Units in Org Chart format

