



Rocky Mountain National Park News Release

June 24, 2006
For Immediate Release
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Search Continues for Missing Volunteer in Rocky Mountain National Park

Rocky Mountain National Park staff continue their search today for a park volunteer that was last seen northeast of Desolation Peaks above tree line, Friday, June 23, at 11:30 a.m. Sam Dratch, a volunteer working with the Resource Management Division was returning to base camp with his National Park Service staff partner when he went ahead. At one point Sam's partner yelled to "slow up," but Sam possibly did not hear because of the wind. Sam was 50 to 100 yards ahead when his partner last saw him. When his partner reached the base camp Sam was not there. The two hiked in to the area on Thursday, June 22, and established a base camp to complete Big Horn Sheep research. Their plan was to come out to the Chapin Pass Trailhead yesterday afternoon.

Sam Dratch is 23 years old with dark brown medium length wavy hair and brown eyes. He is approximately 5'8" – 5'-10" tall and very thin with a runner's build. Dratch was wearing a long sleeve tan shirt, tan pants, and a green pile jacket. He had on hiking boots, however his pack with most of his supplies was at the base camp. He apparently had a headlamp with him. Since his pack was not with him he was not prepared to spend the night in the back country.

Park officials are asking visitors who might have been hiking in the Desolation Peaks

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area, Corral Creek area or Lawn Lake area on Friday, June 23 to please contact the park at (970) 586-1204 for help in determining where he might have been seen last.

The search effort began late Friday afternoon. Initial search efforts consisted of establishing a containment area along Fall River Road and in the Corral Creek area. This morning, Saturday, June 24, over 75 people are involved in the search efforts. Park staff are being assisted by 10 search teams, including 6 dog teams, from 7 Search and Rescue organizations. Search efforts are focused in the area from Lawn Lake Trail west, around the base camp area, and in the Hague Creek area along the creek up to treeline and over to the Mummy Pass Creek and trail. A helicopter is also being utilized to assist with search efforts. Larimer County Search and Rescue, Grand County Search & Rescue, Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, Routt County Search & Rescue, Arapaho Rescue Patrol, Summit County Rescue, and Garfield County Search & Rescue are assisting in the search efforts.

Among the policy changes made recently in Rocky, all resource management staff must go in pairs and have a working radio with them. The staff person attempted to find Dratch and eventually hiked to higher ground to notify park dispatch, this occurred at approximately 1:56 p.m.

Desolation Peaks is in a remote, high altitude, rugged area that has several other prominent peaks. It is located in the northern part of Rocky Mountain National Park. There are few designated trails in the area and hiking mainly occurs cross country.

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