

NASHINGTON STATE ANIMAL RESPONSE TEAM BANNUAL REPORT



A Letter From the President



For WASART, 2015 was another busy year with many challenging and gratifying rescues. Our teams' skills were tested on many levels and our connection with the community continued to grow. As you'll see in the details further in this report, WASART played an important role in our communities here in Washington, and nationally as well.

Our training and outreach programs continued to evolve as the needs changed. I'm extremely happy to report that our reputation with citizens and law enforcement is more solid than ever. The fact that we train, practice and respond at the levels we do, have earned the trust and respect with the people we serve and work alongside with. We have some of the most stringent training curriculums that I've seen, and that has enabled our volunteers to respond successfully to extremely technical and difficult rescues.

From the high-profile rescue of Anakin the horse, to the mountain rescue of a dog near the Canadian border, to sheltering during the wildfires, our teams helped make a positive impact for many, many lives. And that's just a few of the dozens that we responded to in 2015.

In April, several of us traveled to Okanogan County to train community members on care and sheltering during a crisis. Later that year, this community was then able to open their own shelter and run it effectively during the wildfires in their area. I believe it's critical to help empower individuals to know what to do in an emergency and assist their neighbors. WASART can't always respond every time, and this kind of cooperation and teamwork can indeed change lives.

To say that I'm proud to be a part of this organization is a huge understatement. We are making a difference, we are helping, we are offering compassion in dire situations, and we are continuing to improve the lives of humans and animals all year long.

With deep gratitude,

Shawndra Michell President

Vision

To be the premier animal disaster response organization throughout the Northwest.

- Recognized as a model for other animal response organizations
- Member of the Governor's Readiness Council
- State accreditation/recognition/ appointment
- Best trained/highly respected





Respect

Credibility

Honesty

Accessibility

Ethics



Integrity

We do what we say we can do. Above reproach as well as morally and legally responsible for our actions and decisions.

Education

Developing and sharing knowledge and technical expertise. Utilizing skills and available resources to inform and train members and the broader community.

Professionalism

Excellence in reputation and delivery.

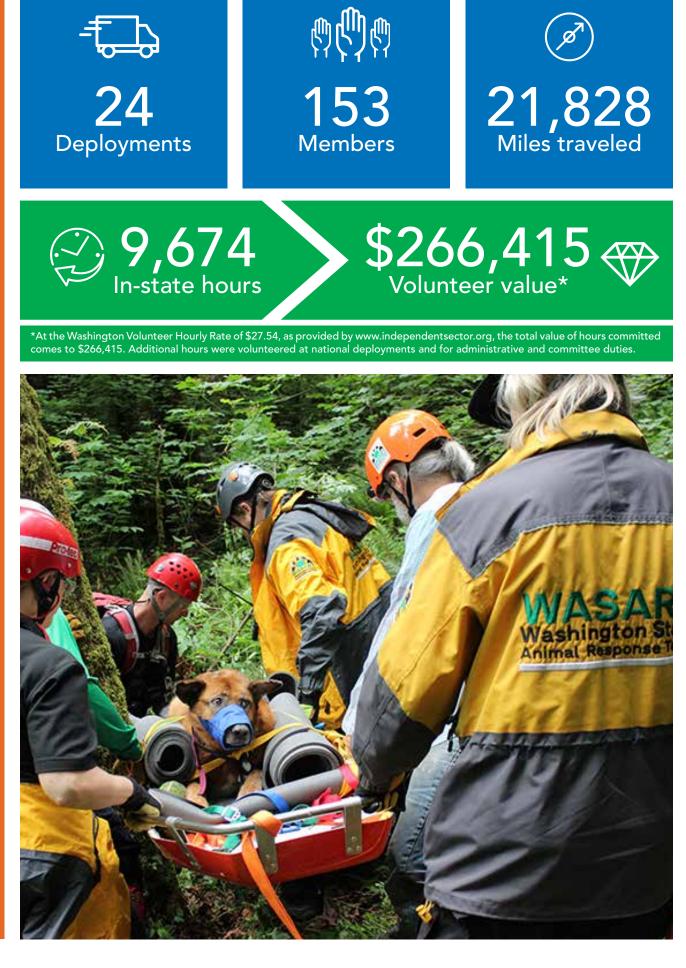
Teamwork

Collaborative skills, experience and training, and willingness to work with each other and other organizations. This allows us to expand our capabilities. Respectful collaboration to efficiently achieve our goals.

Volunteerism

Personal commitment to participate; to participate to the level we can. We are committed and we believe in our Higher Purpose.

2015 At a Glance



Year in Review



Wildfires

For the second year in a row we were called upon to establish and operate an emergency animal shelter during the state wildfires. In August we were called upon to set up two shelters in Tonasket and Brewster.



However overnight Tonasket was placed under a Level 3 Evacuation Order leaving Brewster as the lone shelter. This shelter was in operation August 20-24 and volunteers logged 750 hours and 4,766 miles on this deployment alone.





Equipment

We purchased a second Becker Sling, a second rescue litter and a versatile monopod/bipod/tripod, in part thanks to a grant from the Puyallup Tribe. These have greatly expanded the capabilities of our Technical Rescue Team. We were also the recipient of an American Kennel Club Reunite disaster sheltering trailer. This trailer comes fully loaded with important equipment and supplies, which will be crucial in performing companion animal sheltering.











SARVAC

WASART was granted full voting rights in the Washington Search and Rescue Volunteer Advisory Council and one of our members was elected to the Board of Directors At Large position. SARVAC is an umbrella organization with representatives from individual counties' Search and Rescue organizations, WASART and the State Emergency Management Division. SARVAC's President sits on the Washington State Emergency Management Council, which advises the Governor on issues of emergency preparedness and response. Many of our members are also active SAR participants.

WASART has been an auxiliary member of SARVAC since 2012, but the Council's bylaws only granted voting authority to each county's SAR representative to the Council. At the March meeting, the bylaws were amended to allow voting participation by other organizations whose mission is emergency response, subject to approval by the SARVAC members. WASART was then nominated and unanimously approved to full voting membership, the only non-SAR organization so authorized. It's a real privilege and honor to be fully accepted by the state's SAR representatives, and further confirms our strong working relationship with Search and Rescue.







Education

A major part of what makes WASART unique among animal welfare organizations is our deep commitment training to our members to respond to animal emergency situations, both widescale disasters and individual animal emergencies. Whether for setting up and operating emergency animal shelters, rescuing animals in jeopardy from natural disasters, or transporting animals from danger to safety, we only deploy our members who are trained and credentialed for the situations in which they are deployed. We try to emphasize hands-on training with live animals whenever possible, and bring the perspective of instructors who are

experienced in a wide variety of emergency situations.

This past year we introduced a new format to our two-day trainings. Core, Field Response and Emergency Sheltering were reduced to one day with a supplemental online portion to replace much of the in-class material. This approach has several advantages. It encourages participation by reducing the onsite time commitment of attendees, it reduces the amount of volunteer hours required to staff the trainings and it makes securing locations for trainings easier in that WASART only requires the facilities for a single day rather than an entire weekend.

We also increased the total number of training offerings. Core,

Field Response, Communications and Animal Transport sessions were offered on two separate dates rather than just the single date. We also conducted two Orientation sessions, one Technical Animal Rescue class, an Introduction to the Technical Rescue Team, a Technical Rescue Team Awareness, a Pet First Aid class and a session on Transport with our new box van. Over 130 attendees in total were present at these offerings. Additionally, our Technical Rescue Team continued their monthly trainings to reinforce and enhance their skills, as well as learning to use the new monopod/ A-frame/tripod that we acquired this year.



Outreach

Emergency preparedness and education are a core part of our mission. WASART continued our commitment to community outreach 2015; in we were represented at 18 events in total including Petpalooza in Auburn, Poochapalooza in Marysville, Doga-Thon in Lakewood, Scrub-A-Mutt in Marysville, Dog Days in the Park in Seattle, Woofstock in Tacoma and Barktoberfest in Auburn. WASART additionally attended a number of disaster/emergency preparedness events around the region including Gig Harbor, Issaquah, Lake Forest Park, Thurston County and West Pierce County.

WASART volunteers taught the Animal Response I & II class to on May 16 to CERT volunteers of Kirkland. And in April our volunteers returned to Omak in Okanogan County to help train the Animal Control Officer, Deputy Dave Yarnell, and a team of citizen volunteers in emergency animal sheltering. This training took place April 17-20 and was put to use only a few months later during Washington's largest fire season in state history. At one point they were responsible for sheltering over 200 horses alone.

WASART volunteers also participated in three separate volunteer work parties at New Moon Goat Rescue, Serenity Equine Rescue and Rehabilitation and at Dr. Heather's farm where many of our hands-on animal trainings are held. By lending a hand to other organizations and individuals that share our commitment to animals we come together and strengthen the animal welfare community as whole.

Another significant event that is critical to WASART outreach and partnership efforts is our participation in the annual Washington State Search and

Rescue Conference (SARCON). WASART has served and will continue to be a member of the SAR Conference Steering Committee to plan and organize the conference. This year WASART demonstrated animal rescue techniques using the new horse mannequin Joey and the rescue glide, use of the A-frame, and emergency harnesses and muzzles for dogs at this year's state SAR conference. We also answered questions from the attendees who often encounter animal issues but haven't had in-depth training. WASART also participated in an open-to-the public open house. This is WASART's fifth consecutive year as a SARCON participant. This is a great opportunity for WASART to share our knowledge and skills and increase our involvement in the larger SAR community.

Feed After Fire

In 2015, we engaged in a program that is outside of our usual scope of activities. Thanks to a very generous gift, WASART was able to provide both domestic and wild animals with feed for the winter in areas devastated by the wildfires in Washington State. The project was named Feed After Fire and the money was gifted by an anonymous donor. Most of the funds were targeted for Okanogan County with the remainder used in Ferry County. We purchased a semi-truck load of protein tubs, about 14 tons worth, and two semi-truck loads of hay and blocks to help feed wildlife. The blocks are food for deer and other grazing animals on the outside and have wild bird seed on the inside. North 40 Outfitters in Omak sold this to us at cost helping the money to go even further.









Coordination: Other Agencies

In the course of our rescues we have the good fortune to assist, be assisted by and work side-by-side with some truly amazing individuals and organizations. In some cases our work would not have been possible without their selfless and dedicated assistance. In 2015 we coordinated with members of King County Search and Rescue, Seattle Mountain Rescue, Northwest Horseback Search and Rescue, Regional Animal Services of King County, King County 4x4 Search and Rescue (KC4x4SAR), Ski Patrol Rescue Team (SPART), King County Explorer Search and Rescue (ESAR), Regional Special Vehicles Unit (RSVU), King County Sheriff's office, Snohomish County Sheriff's office, Okanogan County Sheriff's office, Mukilteo Fire Dept. (off-duty), Summit to Sound Search & Rescue, and the Whatcom County Humane Society. A good number of our members participate in other volunteer Search and Rescue and SAR-like organizations including the Canadian Disaster Animal Response Team (CDART) in British Columbia. We greatly value the relationships we have built with these fine organizations and look forward to growing these partnerships in the future.







Last year was eventful for WASART. Our all-volunteer team is accustomed to challenging rescues of companion animals and livestock, and 2015 brought several particularly demanding rescues.



Trapped in a Ravine

WASART was asked to rescue a 2,000 lb. beef cow that was stranded for three days about 175 feet down at the bottom of a steep ravine in Auburn, WA. Informally named Bossy, she had somehow found her way to the bottom of the ravine and couldn't get back to the top. She was cranky and had already charged her owner at least once.

After spending a couple of hours reconnoitering the site on January 15th, WASART's Operations Leader Greta C. determined that two options were available. Plan A was to cut a path up the hillside to see if Bossy would self-rescue. If Bossy did not cooperate, Plan B was to tranquilize her, strap her to a Rescue Glide, which is an animal-sized backboard, and haul her to the top.

As it was late in the day, Plan A wasn't put into effect until the next day when six WASART members who were experienced in chainsaw use as well as five members from the



2015 Response Highlights



Tahoma Chapter of Backcountry Horsemen spent most of January 16th clearing a path of trees, branches and shrubs. Two additional members of the Backcountry Horsemen returned for part of the next day to assist in any extra brush clearing that needed to be done.

As expected, on Saturday, January 17th, Bossy was still down in the ravine and more fractious than ever. A veterinarian, Peter Sathre, DVM of Plateau Veterinary, was called in to administer a sedative via dart gun. When Bossy was calm and relaxed, members of WASART's Technical Rescue Team began the process of rolling her onto a rescue glide and strapping the glide into a burrito shape. A head protector was fastened to her head to protect her head and eyes from debris, dust and other dangers. With the assistance of two trucks and a tractor pulling in dog-sled style, trussed up Bossy was hauled to the top of the ravine and released from the rescue glide inside a corral. After a few minutes she rose groggily to her feet and a check by Dr. Sathre revealed one minor scrape on a hind leg. Other than that, she was none the worse for wear. All were relieved at the outcome, including the 16 WASART responders.

The rain was falling heavily on the Saturday and the ground quickly became soaked and slick with mud which made the rescue all the more difficult. However, training, expertise, cool heads and expert leadership prevailed and Bossy is now reunited with her owner.

This was a difficult and challenging rescue but the results – an unhurt animal reunited with a grateful owner – made it all worthwhile. The 31 folks who responded to this rescue were very, very pleased with the results.



Dog on a Mountain

The whining and howling are what did it. Vedder Mountain, a small, thickly forested mountain that borders Canada in Whatcom County, is very steep and has patches of exposed rock and cliffs that reflect the sound into the valley and field below. Pretty much any conversation that happens on that mountain echoes across the farmer's field. Residents in Canada began hearing whining, barking, and howling. They contacted Whatcom County Humane Society and an Animal Control Officer (ACO) came out to check it out on the morning of July 27th.

The ACO, recognizing this was a technical situation, contacted Whatcom County Search and Rescue, of which Summit to Sound is a part. The coordinating member of Summit to Sound is also an active and experienced member of WASART and she arranged to have WASART brought in as well.

After the King County contingent departed for Whatcom County between 4:00 a.m. – 5:00 a.m., they met up at 9:30 a.m. with the



Whatcom County contingent assembled across the street from the farmhouse that abuts the Canadian border. The farm's field separates Vedder Mountain from Canada by about a quarter of a mile. This would be Base Camp where the Incident Commander, who runs the show, would remain.

A senior WASART member led the group through a pre-deployment briefing. As is always the case on a deployment, the responders were reminded that humans come first and safety is priority number 1.

The group decided on a strategy and split into teams, each with defined responsibilities. One part of the team would stay at Base Camp (Operations). A second team would walk along the bottom trail that traces the foot of the mountain and try to generally locate the area where the dog was trapped (Team 1). Another team would stay at Base at first to provide backup assistance for the other teams since we didn't know what was going to happen; this was our hedge to be as flexible as possible (Team 2). Yet another team would drive ATVs around and up the mountain to access the equine trails at the top to deliver rope gear, drinking water and anything else that was needed (Team 3).

Team 1 headed out along a trail that runs along the foot of the mountain, 100 feet or so into the tree line; the howling could be heard all along it. The steep angle of the mountain along with the exposed rock also meant it was hard to pinpoint a location. Team 1 gave its best guess and the team was divided into two teams. Team 4 was stationed at the bottom trail and Team 1, comprised of the technical rescue folks who were the most experienced in rope work, headed up the steep side of the mountain.

The terrain was covered with loose hazards – rocks that rolled easily down, loose tree limbs and logs that shifted when stepped on. About 100 feet up, the angle increased further and it became more of a scramble to get up the hillside. The first of the cliff faces was about 200 feet up from the bottom trail and it was here that Team 1 moved back and forth trying to better locate the dog. They determined the dog was above them but as there was no way to get up to the dog, they retraced their steps and met up with Team 3 for the ropes and rescue equipment needed to access the areas from above.

Team 1, which now consisted of WASART member Rory K. and Summit to Sound member Ed H., began the first of nine or so descents, rappelling from anchor points above to safely make it to more level spots below. By the end of the day, they'd total about 500 feet of descent as well as countless other elevation changes from just walking/scrambling up and down while they triangulated the dog from its vocalizations.

Team 1 was certain they were close but had yet to actually see the dog. The dog could have been loose, pacing or hiding. It could have fallen into a hole. At 6:06 p.m., we heard over the radio from Team 1: "We are going to try one more descent and then call it." The rest of us held our breaths in the ensuing radio silence that was maintained so Team 1 could focus on safety and concentrate on their work. No one liked the idea of leaving the dog for another night but we trusted Team 1 to make the right decisions in regards to capability and safety.

Finally, at 6:35 p.m., after 9 hours on-site of planning, strategizing, and arduous physical activity up and down the mountain, came Team 1's radio transmission: "I'm coming down and I've got a puppy in my backpack." Apparently Rory had rappelled further down the mountain, seeing and hearing nothing because the dog kept silent as he went past. Then towards the bottom Rory heard the dog above him. He climbed back up and found it was standing on a 9" ledge, just large enough for it to stand, but no more. He grabbed the black dog, which looked to be a Schnauzer mix of about 35 lbs., thrust it into his backpack and continued on. The team then made their careful way back down the mountain, which included several more rappels. They took a lot of breaks as they were exhausted. The dog rode quietly down with them.

Team 4 waited at the bottom trail for them along with Team 3, which had brought ATVs to help carry out the packs and very heavy ropes. It took a couple of hours to safely get back down to the trail and Team 1 was preceded by rolling rocks and the sounds of them moving through the underbrush.

The returning teams drank a lot of water, and one of the Team 4 members took the backpack and dog and hiked out to deliver the dog to Operations and the Animal Control Officer (ACO) who had been on site during the entire operation. The ACO checked the dog out and immediately left for the emergency veterinarian clinic. The dog was not obviously injured but after days of standing on a rock cliff during the heat without food or water the ACO determined it was necessary for the dog be checked professionally.

The teams all began the process of packing up, resting a bit, and hydrating. We debriefed and began to disperse. The King County contingent arrived back home between 3:00 a.m. – 4:45 a.m. on July 28th.

And the rest of the story? Well, that little black dog has been adopted by her rescuer, Irish born Rory, and has been renamed Tulla, which is Gaelic for 'hill' or 'mountain'. A fitting end for a very lucky dog.





Horse Stuck in Mud

Dane wound up sunk to his belly in mud at about noon. At the request of the Snohomish County Sheriff's Department, we set out from the equipment van's base in Enumclaw for Snohomish's Lord Hill County Park, a popular equine destination. When we arrived we were met by Snohomish County Search & Rescue Coordinator Officer Danny Wikstrom and volunteers from the Snohomish County search and rescue community. We knew we were looking at a 1.5-mile hike in to the horse's location so we were happy to see the search and rescue team's ATV to help carry much of our heavy rescue gear. Included in this were pieces from the aluminum A-frame, our Becker sling - a purpose built sling used to help raise large animals to their feet - and our rescue glide.

Once we were on site, we found the 26-year old Dane surrounded by

law enforcement officers from the Sheriff's Department (horse people themselves), more search and rescue volunteers, the owners, other people and horses who had been riding with Dane's owners and veterinarian Dr. Liana Wiegel and veterinary technician Kerry Pfaltzgraf who both just happened to be riding in the area.

The WASART team got right to work. First they tried the easiest solution in hopes that Dane, an experienced endurance horse, just needed a bit of help to get unstuck. The procedure, called a forward assist, involves sliding a very wide strap around Dane's chest and between his front legs. The strap has loops at the end for attachment to a pulley system where mechanical advantage meant a few people could really give the horse a boost.

The forward assist did not work because the angle was too low, so the team set up the A-frame. The frame is set into place with spikes hammered into the ground through the feet, and stabilized with anchor points. In this case the A-frame, which pivots, was leaned over Dane so he could be pulled up vertically as much as possible.

While part of the team was setting up the A-frame, another part was outfitting the horse with the Becker sling around his chest and just in front of his hind legs. The Becker sling has a couple of straps with thick padding to protect the horse as much as possible during lifting. We also made plans to protect the legs. The concern was that suction from the mud could damage the joints and ligaments on legs that are meant to bear weight from above rather than remain attached from below.

Dr. Wiegel, who practices for Pilchuck Veterinary Hospital in Snohomish, called for IV fluids and administered them as she and vet tech Kerry Pfaltzgraff monitored Dane, who by then had been in the mud about five hours and was likely both cold and exhausted from trying to fight his way out.

Dane was pulled out of the mud very carefully and very slowly. However, it appeared that his left hind leg was stuck. We'd seen the other hind leg move, as well as the forelegs shaking, as he tried to lift himself out. The rescue glide was set in front of him with a rope attached so that we could pull it out of the way if he tried to stand.

As he ascended, everyone near him tried to encourage him with claps and shouts. He finally fought himself alert although it was obvious he was not yet ready to stand on his own and the mud on which he was mired was too soft to bear his whole weight. With that in mind, we carefully laid him on the glide and began to strap him in for both safety and in preparation for transport should we need it. The Becker sling was left on, though we removed the heavy spreader bar. The A-frame was left in place as well. There was a bit of a race against time as he started to slide backwards, very slowly, into the muck again.

Bundling him into the glide meant

padding, hobbles, and ratchet straps. Dr. Wiegel continued to monitor him and give him fluids while we tucked a couple of emergency space blankets around him to help combat hypothermia. Once tucked into the glide we moved him forward onto ground both firmer and more level. We consulted with Dr. Wiegel and she felt it best to try to get him on his feet as soon as possible even if the A-frame needed to assist his ability to stand.

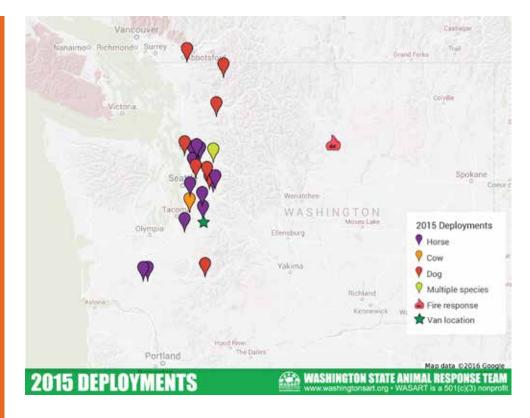
We unstrapped Dane and moved to reattach the spreader bar. But Dane had ideas of his own. He burst into effort, slipping on the muddy glide. He tried again and we quickly removed the glide as he gained his feet. The relief among the now 30+ rescuers was palpable. Dane seemed very glad to be able to stand even if it just meant now he could urinate all he'd been holding in for the past five and a half hours.

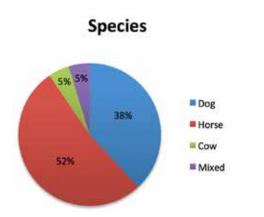
Dr. Wiegel encouraged him to take a step and he cautiously flexed his back legs. Step by step, he seemed to warm and loosen. The vet tech and a WASART member walked next to him with the IV bag. It was time to

head him back to the horse trailer and the trail would be just enough length and incline to keep warming him up. He was aware enough to realize he was leaving his 4-legged buddies behind and hollered for them, so the riders standing by quickly followed to help soothe him. Dane, his owners and Dr. Wiegel all left immediately for Pilchuck Veterinary Hospital. We received word later that he's doing very well and expected to make a full recovery. As our part of the emergency was over, we packed up and began to haul equipment out, again with the help of the ATV unit. As always, we are incredibly grateful for the teamwork that allows us to save these lives. The Snohomish Sheriff's Department is incredibly kind and generous with their time and volunteers. Officer Wikstrom and his team are always great to work with. We very much appreciate their willingness to call in additional search and rescue volunteers. Dane was also very fortunate for Dr. Wiegel and vet tech Kerry Pfaltzgraff, who happened to be riding by and stopped to help.

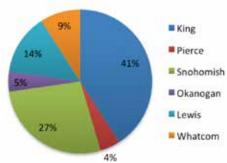


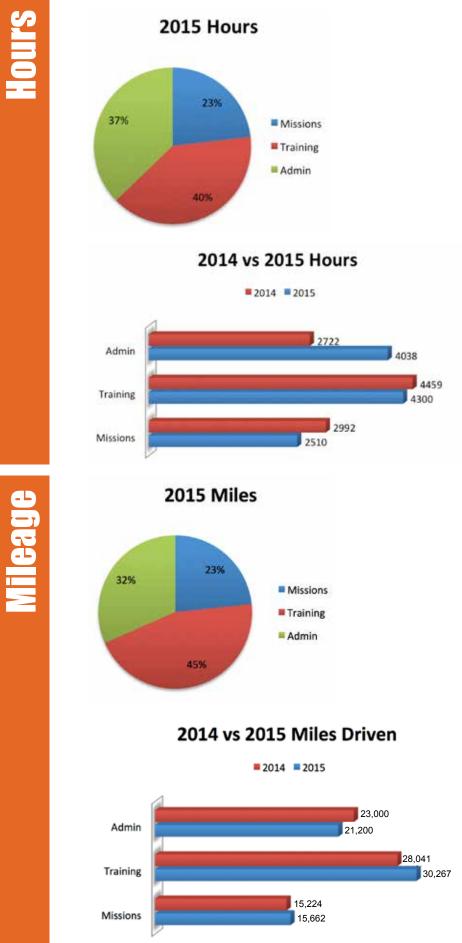
2015 Deployment Stats





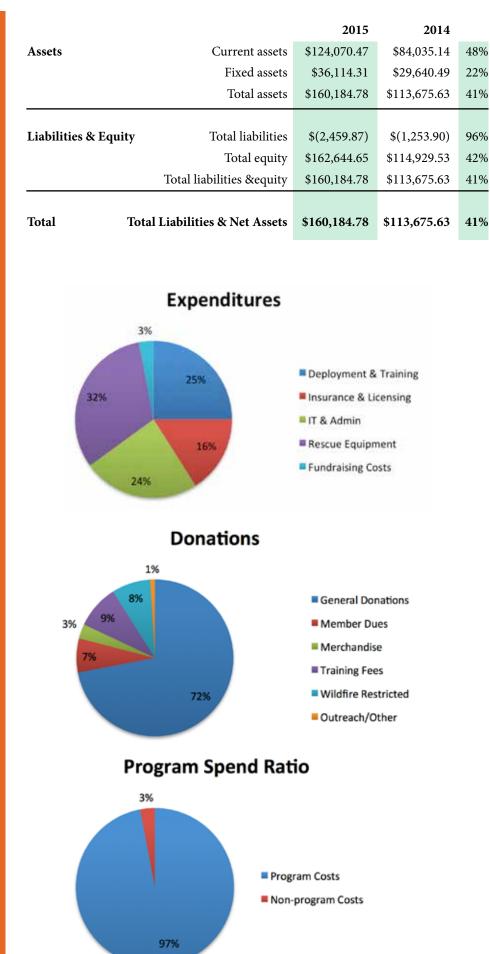
Responses in Counties







2015 Financial Summary



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Did we get it wrong?

We value your contribution and it's our goal to make sure everyone is correctly represented. If we missed your name or misspelled it, please let us know at fundraising@ washingtonsart.org and we'll issue a revision.

In Honor of

Bossy – Joshua Neely Gemma – Wild Sage LLC Dane – Alison Shaw

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Joey – Mark Shelton, DVM & Victoria Grenier Lucky – Stephanie Sundier Morgan – Anonymous Shayne – Deb Lemeshko

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