



JHPTS - VTATI Tracking Course Summary

Lusk, WY - Niobrara County SAR

Date: 06/08/2018 through 06/10/2018

Instructors: Lead Dan Remsburg, Instructor Jessica McMahon, Assistant Anissa El Bialy

Weather: Typical Wyoming summer weather. Upper 50s at night to upper 80s during the day. Mostly sunny with an occasional cloudy period. No appreciable rain. Just a few scattered drops. Fog and dew on Saturday morning. Wind heavy at times 20-35 miles per hour mostly from the SW. Switched to out of the N on Sunday.

Students: 2 Novice (1 new and 1 having attended a class two years prior), 5 Basic, 6 Apprentice, 4 Journeyman

Terrain: Hilly prairie with patches of dense timber, especially in the hills and draws. Grass cover exceptionally tall this year due to above average moisture this spring. Grasses very resilient, especially the buffalo grass. Some small cactus amongst the grasses. Hills and draws very steep once in the timber.

Setting: This training was conducted in two separate venues. The classroom portion and some of the meals were at the Niobrara County High School. We met there each morning for breakfast before class. The field portion was approximately 8 miles north of town on a private ranch. The host team established a base camp with main tent and shaded netting covering the seating area. Meals were brought out to the tent while in the field. Two porta-potties were also set up here. This camp was approx. ¼ mile from where the sign was laid. As usual, the food and the atmosphere at this event were incredible. The county sheriff even bakes the cinnamon rolls for the class.

Class Training: After the initial classroom intros and preliminary presentations, the Novice, Basic, and Apprentice students stayed in the classroom while the Journeyman, including Apprentice Bill Daniel, moved to the library. The long Power Point presentation was given by Jessica McMahon and Anissa El Bialy to the junior students with a module apiece presented by two of the Apprentices. The Journeyman were taught by the Lead Instructor. Topics included program updates, Tracking Team Leadership, in-house training requirements, Journeyman responsibilities, report writing, evaluations, public presentations, evidence searches, etc. Emphasis was given to the responsibilities of the senior trackers to provide support and training to units surrounding them with no senior trainers available locally.

After lunch on Friday, we moved to the field. I laid out the plan for the field portion and passed along safety tips about the heat, sun, mosquitos, and ticks. The Novice, Basic, and Apprentices were given sign lines laid out on Thursday at 4:30 pm. These lines were appropriately laid to their level but it became

evident that the vegetation on the first Basic line was quite different than the second line. It was more of an Apprentice 1 line. Nearer the top of the ridge, it was more sparse and tougher, but the team wanted to work it out. They were slower, but did an awesome job and learned a lot. Jess and Anissa coached these four lines for the most part as I was focused on the Journeyman scenario. I did, however, come by every 45 mins to an hour to check on progress, talk to the students in the teams and the instructors, answer questions, provide guidance, and bring the cooler of water and ice by as it was in my vehicle. They all appreciated having it available so they did not have to walk all the way back to camp in the heat. The Journeyman scenario was another ¼ mile north in the steep wooded area so I moved back and forth between them.

The Journeyman (and one soon to be) were given a scenario by an RP who had a big fight with his girlfriend. After spending romantic time on a blanket on the ridgetop, she grabbed her clothes and ran off into the woods – taking the RPs shoes with her so he could not follow. She was not seen or heard from since Thursday afternoon. The goals given to the team were to find the LKP where the blanket had been spread, find where the missing female stopped to get dressed, and other clues along the sign line. They were to follow the sign using cutting techniques until the end, which turned out to be the highway where the female was picked up. This was an extensive scenario with no less than 3 ridges and steep draws to work through. Grasses, pine needles, downed logs, and more were encountered. Any mistakes made during the scenario were discussed during a round table discussions and changes made in procedures to prevent reoccurrence. A tremendous job by the team to finish up just 30 minutes before we called it for lunch on Sunday.

Other: We conducted a certification board on Bill Daniel of Larimer County SAR Saturday after lunch.

Note: This will be the last annual class to be held in Lusk. They plan to do another class in the future but want to take a break after hosting this for 12-13 years in a row. The plan among the Wyoming State Trackers is to host the class each year but mix up the venue. They were discussing where to host it at their meeting after the class. I did not hear the results.

We concluded our class with the presentation of Journeyman to Bill Daniel from Larimer County SAR in CO. Congratulations, Bill!!

Side Note: We had a field visit by long time trackers Keith Black and Donna Ickes. Donna could not resist and worked some sign with team 1 for a while. Once a tracker

Dan Remsburg
Signcutter
Lead Instructor