**Maine, N. H. rescuers carry injured hiker three miles down rugged trail**

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Terry Karkos/Sun Journal  
Thirty rescuers from Maine and New Hampshire form a human chain early Wednesday evening through a rock-strewn stream crossing on Notch Trail in the Mahoosuc Mountains of Riley Township. They are passing along a litter at center containing a Massachusetts hiker who suffered a head injury while on a day hike through Mahoosuc Notch on the Appalachian Trail.

RILEY TOWNSHIP — Thirty rescuers from Maine and New Hampshire hand-carried a litter holding an injured Massachusetts man about 3 miles down a rugged backcountry trail early Wednesday evening.

William Tarkulich, 53, of Lexington, Mass., suffered a head injury while on a day hike with friends. He was brought out of the woods at 8:30 p.m. at the Notch Trail head and placed into a Berlin Emergency Medical Service Inc. ambulance.

Because a medical helicopter wasn't available, Tarkulich was driven 10 miles along the gravel Success Pond Road to Androscoggin Valley Hospital in Berlin, N.H.

According to Maine Warden Brock Clukey, Tarkulich, his friend and the friend's son headed up Notch Trail for a day hike into Mahoosuc Notch on the Appalachian Trail.

"Mahoosuc Notch is reputed to be the toughest mile on the entire Appalachian Trail, and it very well might be," rescuer Bob Baribeau of Mahoosuc Mountain Rescue said at the staging area 9 miles west of Route 26 and Grafton Notch State Park.

The notch is a narrow gully littered with house-sized boulders through which the trail passes around and under a series of cool, wet and rocky caves.

"It is always 45 degrees to 50 degrees Fahrenheit in there, not the 70 degrees like it is here," Baribeau of Bethel said.

New Hampshire Fish and Game Warden Matt Holmes said on scene that the accident happened at about 3 p.m. when the trio were about three-quarters of the way through the mile-long Notch.

"From what I understand, I believe he slipped and fell over backwards," Holmes said. "His body twisted and went sideways and he hit his head on a rock."

Two Appalachian Trail through-hikers, doing the entire 2,175-mile trail in one trip from Georgia to Maine, met the day hikers and helped them get Tarkulich back through the Notch, said Tarkulich's friend who didn't give his name.

They headed to where the Notch Trail off Success Pond Road intersects the Appalachian Trail.

Holmes said someone called 911 from a cell phone, which was transferred first to the Berlin Fire Department in New Hamphire. It was then forwarded to the Berlin Police Department and on to Holmes' Fish and Wildlife regional office.

A New Hampshire warden contacted the Maine Warden Service, which launched its own rescue effort at about 4:30 p.m. Bethel Rescue and Newry and Berlin firefighters also responded, along with search and rescue teams from both states.

A team of 10, which was sent in to meet and treat Tarkulich, found him to be hypothermic and wrapped him in blankets before placing him in a one-wheel litter.

Three miles away, Baribeau massed 20 more rescuers to help with the carry-out.

"The Army standard, which we use, is 12 to 15 men for a one-mile carry," he said. Due to the rough terrain, he doubled that.

"Over the last 10 years, we've had 12 to 13 rescues in the Notch," Baribeau said. "Most often, they've been due to ankle injuries or head injuries The Notch always leaves its imprint on hikers going through it."

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