

To: WLECHA Awards Committee

I am nominating Deputy Christopher Hemauer and K9 Leon with the Manitowoc County Sheriff's Office for Meritorious K9 Track Award as a result of the successful locating of an elderly individual at Point Beach State Park. Point Beach State Park is a 3,000-acre forest in a rural portion of Manitowoc County. Point Beach has 127 campsites with onsite facilities. Campers have access to 6 miles of beach on Lake Michigan, 17 miles of hiking trails, 8.1 miles of biking trails, and 3.6 miles of horse trails. Forest conditions can vary from beaches, dunes, and light forest to densely wooded areas with swamps and bogs. The terrain off of designated trails can further be described as undergrowth and deep coarse woody debris. During this call a vast majority of camp sites were in use and campers were still actively walking and driving through the campgrounds.

On July 25th, 2023, at approximately 2150 hours, Deputies with the Manitowoc County Sheriff's Office were dispatched to 9400 County Road O, Point Beach State Park. The call was in reference to campers reporting an elderly male they were camping with was missing. The caller had reported the male was last seen 15 to 20 minutes prior to the time of call when he was walking to the bathroom. The male's clothing description was given with an approximate age in the 60's. Deputies were further told the male had medical diagnoses of cancer and Alzheimer's. The male left the campsite with no cell phone.

When Deputies arrived an unknown number of campers were already on foot searching for the missing male. A drone equipped with thermal was utilized, however due to the sheer size of the park, overhead obstructions, vehicles, and campers walking, drone use was impractical and was stopped.

Deputies received initial information from campers that the elderly male was seen walking to a restroom 50 feet to the east of his camp site. He was then last seen walking west towards his camp site. Deputies searched on foot through the campgrounds, restrooms, and other public areas for the male, but he was not located.

Additional resources were called in; Deputy Hemauer and K9 Leon, Wisconsin DNR, Point Beach State Park Forest Ranger, Town of Two Rivers Fire Department, and Mishicot EMS. Agency manpower now totaled 21 people, 2 ATV's, 1 Tracked UTV, and Fire vehicles with scene lighting.

Deputy Hemauer and K9 Leon were called in from home and arrived on scene around 2345 hours. After a brief overview of the situation from deputies and the reporting caller, Deputy Hemauer and K9 Leon began their track. An article of clothing from the missing male was used for the track. During the track Deputy Hemauer and K9 Leon traveled 0.5 miles in a southeastern direction. Most of the terrain traveled was dense forest and thick, debris-laden undergrowth. The 0.5 miles of track took 30 to 45 minutes to conduct. Conditions at the time of track were 75-80 degrees and humid. Deputy Hemauer and K9 Leon lost the track and paused for 20 minutes to rest. During which time he also updated Deputies at the staging location of his location and the direction of the track. All agencies deployed from staging. Within 5 minutes members of the search party located the missing male who was approximately 150 yards southeast of where Deputy Hemauer's track paused. The male was found 100 feet into the woods in a clearing. He was hunched against a tree and did not respond to Ems personnel. The male was escorted out of the woods and into an ambulance.

Int the ambulance the male was visibly confused and disoriented. He had minor injuries consisting of scratches and bruises. The male stated he had gone to the bathroom then lost his way and was unaware of where he was or how he got there.

Due to the track provided by Deputy Hemauer and K9 Leon, the search area for the missing male was significantly reduced and with Deputy Hemauer's crucial information on the track direction, lead to the male being found quickly. This successful locating of the missing male resulted in him being reunited with the party he was camping with. I humbly request that Deputy Hemauer and K9 Leon be considered for this award due to their remarkable skills, determination, and dedication to the successful resolution of this incident.

Lieutenant Michael Eron

Manitowoc County Sheriff's Office

Manitowoc, WI