

Note, this article was originally written for and appeared in the Sept. 2025 Foothill Flyers Running Club newsletter.

Sweeping AC100 2025

Three years ago, I started my article on the 2022 Angeles Crest 100 Mile Endurance Race by saying it was the most unusual year. Well, 2025 was even more so. As with the 2022 race, the course had to be an out and back from Wrightwood due to the recent forest fires and storms which were substantial. This year the finish rate was only 50.4% as compared to 64% in 2022 which is also not too much different than the Wrightwood to Altadena course normally run. 2025 had 282 signed up, 204 started and 103 finished. Temperatures were actually a little lower this year.

After a week or so of reflection, talking with runners and looking at the data, it is likely the low finish rate was due to circumstances resulting in insufficient training, hydration and fueling. It did not look like the race would go on after all the fires, storm damage and forest closures, so many may have eased off on the training or planned on other races. It was not until April 26th that the event application was approved by the USFS and signed off by Ken Hamada, the Race Director, on June 9th that the race became official.

The sweep teams encountered 7 runners that needed help getting to an aid station which is twice as many as previous years. This year we had 22 volunteers to fill out 8 sweep teams, some of which also worked at an aid station prior to sweeping. The sweep team leaves an aid station at cutoff and stays behind the last runner while at the same time removing course marking ribbons. At no time do sweeps pass a runner. The idea is to minimize the amount of time coming upon a runner that needs help. Those that need help are most always pushing the cutoff time and in this race the sweeps only need to be able to maintain a fast walk of about 20 minutes per mile. Sweeps do not have to be fast runners, but do need to be experienced trail runners capable of doing their segments distance. Also, it helps to have some medical training like EMT, CERT or Red Cross first aid. At least one on the team needs to have a ham radio license so communications can be maintained with the aid stations and Search & Rescue.

When the team arrives at an aid station, they check with the aid station captain, medical and ham radio people to find out if there are any runners that they think might need their help over their segment. Typically, they will get the bib numbers of the last 5 runners and confirm ham radio communications before leaving.

The toughest AC100 segment is the 11.8 miles between Vincent Gap and Islip Saddle with the over 3 miles with 1000 ft per mile climb up to Mt. Baden-Powell at 9300 ft on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). There are typically 8 runner drop outs for various reasons at Islip Saddle. This year there were 21. The climb in the mid-day heat and high altitude takes a lot out of runners. We had a team sweep this outbound segment

in the interests of runner safety even though they did not pick up course marking ribbons. As it were, two runners got about half way up Baden-Powell when our sweep team of 4 (Beth Epstein, Dave Scobie, Mona Gutierrez and Erika Varis) reached them and the runners decided it was not going to be their day. Two sweeps were split off to escort them back down to the Vincent Gap aid station. Sweep radioed down and aid station volunteers would start up to meet them. The sweeps then returned up the mountain to rejoin the rest of the team.

The turn-around at the Shortcut Saddle aid station has a cutoff of 9pm and would be the first segment to remove ribbons behind the last runner on the way back to Chilao 2. But at cutoff, there are still a few runners on trail that need the markers, especially at night. So, in order to not wait for the last runner to reach Shortcut vs. start at cutoff, we started a team from Charlton Flat (Jeff Liter, Eric Anderson and John Aboud) on the Silver Moccasin trail that followed the last stragglers going toward Shortcut. When the two sweep teams met, both could then start picking up ribbons. It worked and probably saved an hour getting to a runner in need.

Mary Ann and I arrived at Shortcut around 7:30pm Saturday night to make radio contact with the inbound team from Charlton Flat and monitor the bib numbers and condition of the last runners out of Chilao 1 to pass on to the team. Brett Terrell's sweep team (Laura Sohaskey and Tom Rosebrook), after leaving Shortcut Saddle on their way to Chilao 2 (6.3 mile segment) at cutoff, came across a runner, #103 with her pacer, having a hard time climbing up the steep hill to Charlton Flat. He called us on the ham radio around 10pm describing the incident. It was determined that she would not make the 11:30pm cutoff at Chilao and was just out of gas. So, we drove in to the Charlton Flat camp ground where it intersects with the Silver Moccasin trail to wait for their arrival, render any aid and transport them to Chilao to drop. We advised Shortcut and Chilao aid stations.

We got to Chilao around 11pm and met with Rick Besocke, Randy Wong and Jim Kasama who were getting ready to actually sweep the next 3 segments totaling 11.8 miles through the night - Chilao, Mt. Hillyer, 3 Points and Cloudburst. Their start was complicated by the aid station captain allowing 3 runners to leave up to 15 minutes after cutoff. We think he did this to spread out the unusually large number of dropped runners that needed transportation back to Wrightwood or other locations after dropping. This delayed the sweep team from starting and complicated figuring out if they were indeed behind the last runners. We drove to a spot in the camp ground we knew could maintain contact with the sweep team at the base of a canyon to make sure a runner did not come back and not be accounted for.

Accounting for all runners is a requirement for getting the USFS Special Use Permit for this event ever since the first one in 1986. Thanks to ham radio being able to log runners in and out of each aid station and transmit that to a data base, the USFS knows we could evacuate the area fairly quickly in the event of a fire or other incident

with a high degree of confidence. Cell phone coverage is sparse in the Angeles National Forest but ham radio with its system of mountain top repeaters has good communications. For many decades now, this data goes into a program called Runner Track that is available in almost real time on the www.ac100.com/live web site. Friends, family or anyone can see where their runner is, pace and expected time of arrival at the next aid station.

One runner did come back to Chilao 2 during that 15 minutes of confusion and did not turn in their wrist band to officially drop. Each aid station verifies their data before they shut down after the last runner reaches the next aid station. The call went out to the sweep team to watch for runner #111 who they thought had dropped at Chilao, but they did not have the cutoff wrist band to verify it. When the sweep team reached Mt. Hillyer after the 1:10am cutoff and reported not seeing that runner, the ham net control in South Pasadena - the race ham radio connection to the telephone system - had to decide to call the runners cell phone or emergency contact number from his race registration before contacting Search & Rescue to initiate a search. His cell phone went to voice mail which would be expected unless and until he got a ride down to La Canada where the cell phone would start working again. Not really wanting to wake up his wife at 2 in the morning to say we think her husband might be lost in the mountains, they did it with their fingers crossed. Her husband had just called her and told her he was on his way home and all was OK. Nothing was said about a mountain lion sighting earlier that evening.

Mary Ann and I thought we might be able to get an hour or two shut-eye at 3 Points waiting for Rick, Randy and Jim to reach us but it was not to be with the lost runner saga on the radio and the aid station volunteer that had to ring a cow bell every time a runner entered. By the time the team reached us, the last runner had departed a half hour earlier. The climb up to Cloudburst is 4.8 miles, 1.75 of which is on the SR 2 pavement. We asked the trail markers to only use chalk on the pavement which allowed us to shuttle the sweeps between the two sections of the PCT and make up time. It worked very well and we caught up to the last runners at the pavement, one of which was not going to make cutoff and decided to drop if we gave him a ride to Cloudburst, which we did.

As an experiment, the trail marking team added a reflector to the bottom of the yellow ribbons on PCT which made it much easier to follow the trail at night. Next year they plan on using them on all the night time trail segments. Jim Kasama wore a very bright reflector vest which helped his sweep team mates see where he was. This too has been added to the notes for next year.

Cutoff at Cloudburst 2 is 4:15am and Mary Ann and I took this segment to sweep ourselves. One reason is 3 years ago I remembered how great it was on the Kratka Ridge section of the PCT, I got a beautiful sunrise and I was really looking forward to that again. Of this 7 miles from Cloudburst to Islip Saddle, only .9 miles of it is on the

PCT, the rest is SR2. While I drove slowly looking for runners on the road, the plan was that Mary Ann would jump out at the turnouts and remove the ribbons. But trail markers Mark Ryne and Bob Spears are much taller than her and she could not reach them all. At one turnout we came across another runner and his pacer wanting to drop if we could call ahead to Islip and get his crew to drive up to meet us at Eagles Roost. His pacer was nice enough to volunteer to get out and get the high ones for Mary Ann. The hams at Islip found his crew and they met us at Eagles Roost which is also the start of the Kratka Ridge section of the PCT.

I did not get my sunrise due to the smoke from a fire in Palmdale that was obscuring the view and actually adding to the breathing reduction at altitude. Mary Ann picked me up at the trail junction just before the Mt. Williamson tunnels and we continued sweeping on down to Islip Saddle.

The Islip 2 to Vincent Gap 2 sweep team (Chris Goddard, Matt Bliss and Amy Kinnisten) left just before we got there. The aid station hams told us there was a problem with the gate locks and we might have a problem driving that 10 mile closed section on SR 2. For the last few days, someone or ones had been going through and not relocking the gates with all the locks in series or making the chain too tight to get loose. If we could not get through, it is a 2.5 hour drive around via the 210 which we had to do last time. But more important, if there was a problem with a runner, the shortcut is to have them come down via the Little Jimmy campground trail or Dawson Saddle Trail.

As we are about to leave to drive around so as to arrive at Vincent Gap at cutoff, the call comes on the radio from Vincent Gap that a runner came in reporting that a "woman in distress" is sitting on a rock at about mile 80 in the race. I radioed Chris Goddard who was leading this sweep team up the PCT toward Mt. Baden-Powell to find out how close he might be from her and he says about a mile and a half. His team will be first on scene and will evaluate the incident. They find her in a short time and it seems she had been sitting there unable to continue up the mountain from having trouble breathing and had forgotten her inhaler.

We were able to get the gate open at Islip so Chris broke off one of the sweep team members (Matt Bliss) to escort the runner down the 2 miles to us on SR2 via the Dawson Saddle trail. They give her some fluid and food and started down slowly at first and keeping in contact with us every 10-15 minutes or so. She is getting better as they descend. When they reach us she seems fairly well recovered and very talkative. After a little more fluid and food she and our sweeper hop in our car and we are on our way. Luckily, Antelope Valley Search & Rescue happened to come by on patrol and offered to open and reset the gate locks for us at Vincent Gap where her worried husband was now waiting. The Search & Rescue team told us they were impressed with the race operations. Many thanks to all the volunteers especially Brett Terrell and Maria Case who also worked the Cloudburst 1 aid station the day before.

Meanwhile Chris's team is following behind another runner who is having a hard time and ends up escorting him on the course to Vincent Gap. We guard the gate until they arrive so they can drive to get their car at Islip.

The 4.5 mile segment from Vincent Gap to Inspiration point swept by Maria Case and Dave Hokanson was uneventful. Same for Dan Stein and Charles Eberhart who swept 9.3 miles from Inspiration Point on the PCT and Acorn trails to the finish in Wrightwood. We met Dan and Charles after the finish a little after 5pm at the Wrightwood Brew Co. where I had to pay off on the bribe with Charles to sweep if I bought him a beer.

Tom and Mary Ann O'Hara
Foothill Flyers Running Club

August 22, 2025

2025 AC100 Sweep Assignments *Cutoffs noted are the Sweep starting times. T.O. 7-28-2025

Vincent Gap to Islip Saddle 11.8 Miles, *Cutoff 9:20am, 19:04 pace, 6600 - 9300 to 6590 ft on PCT, Mt. Baden-Powell

Beth Epstein KN6VFR, Dave Scobie, Mona Gutierrez, Erika Varis

Charlton Flat Campground to Shortcut ≈2.5 miles. ≈8:30pm, Pace 20:38, monitor for last runner from Chilao 1

Jeff Liter W2JCL, Eric Anderson N5KMF, John Aboud KK6ZVQ

Shortcut to Chilao 6.3 miles Cutoff 9:00pm, Pace 23:49, 4760 ft to 5250 ft

Brett Terrell KM6VQB, Laura Sohaskey, Tom Rosebrook KN6BKT

Chilao to Mt. Hillyer 3.7 miles, Cutoff 11:30pm, 27:02 pace, 5250 to 5900 ft

Rick Besocke KI6ZKM, Randy Wong, Jim Kasama KN6ZUG

Mt. Hillyer to 3 Points 3.3 miles, Cutoff 1:10am, 21:13 pace, 5900 to 5900 ft

Rick Besocke KI6ZKM, Randy Wong, Jim Kasama KN6ZUG

3 Points to Cloudburst 4.8 Miles, Cutoff 2:20am, 23:58 pace, 5900 to 7020 ft

Rick Besocke KI6ZKM, Randy Wong, Jim Kasama KN6ZUG

Cloudburst to Islip 7 miles, Cutoff 4:15am, 19:17 pace, 7020 to 6590 ft.

Tom O'Hara W6ORG, Mary Ann O'Hara WB6YSS

Islip to Vincent Gap 11.8 Miles, Cutoff 6:30am, 25:25 pace, 6590 - 9300 to 6600 ft on PCT, Mt. Baden-Powell

Chris Goddard KM6CKT, Matt Bliss, Amy Kinnisten

Vincent Gap to Inspiration Point, 4.5 Miles, Cutoff 11:30am, 24:27 pace, 6600 to 7400 ft

Maria Case KK6RNK, Dave Hokanson KM6WBG

Inspiration Point to Wrightwood Finish 9.3 Miles Cutoff 1:20pm, 23:39 pace, 7400ft, finish 5940ft

Dan Stein KE6OOF, Chuck Eberhart

Mobile Relay, Sweep Manager, Charlton Flat, Shortcut to Finish, 7pm Sat. to 6pm Sunday.

Tom O'Hara W6ORG, Mary Ann O'Hara WB6YSS