

The Monitor



February 2006

Upcoming Events

- TSRC Meeting February 11, 2006, 9:00 am
DHMC Cafeteria, Hanover, NH
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DHMC Cafeteria, Hanover, NH

Letter from the Vice President

January of 2006 saw the departure of club president Charlie Wilbur, N1AOK. We wish him well in his new endeavors in San Diego and hope he can stand that awful weather out there. The February TSRC club meeting will include a special election to fill the vacant office of President. I have been asked if I would be willing to fill the office for the remainder of this term and I have agreed if nominated and elected. In the event of my election as president there will be a vacancy in the Vice President's office. I would ask that all club members consider nominees for either President or Vice President and be prepared to make those nominations at the upcoming meeting.

As most of you know we are preparing for the purchase of a communications trailer this Spring and I am very much looking forward to the process of outfitting it with communications gear and associated equipment/furniture/etc. This will be a fun project and I hope lots of people get involved.

I finally made it up to Strafford, VT. for the VHF Sweepstakes. Bill and Dot were wonderful hosts, as I hear they always are, and the operating was a hoot. Watching AC1H and KA1UAG work 432MHz with a straight key alone was worth the drive. I encourage everyone to make the trip next time.

In case you didn't already know: in March we are hosting ARRL New England Division Director Tom Frenaye, K1KI, who will be speaking at the club meeting. Please help me welcome Tom at that time.

And last but certainly not least, Southern Grafton ARES is participating in a joint search and rescue exercise with Grafton FD, Grafton K9 SAR, Lebanon CAP and Sullivan County ARES on February 18th. This will be the largest scale exercise of its kind ever held in the area and will afford some great training opportunities for everyone involved. If you are interested, please contact Rex, AA1KL, for details or simply come to DHMC cafeteria at 8 am the day of the next club meeting to attend the SGARES monthly meeting.

See you at the meeting!

William Daugherty
N8RPD

WARM WEATHER AND HARDLINE- WIFN IN THE JAN 2006 VHF SWEEPSTAKES

Well, when I wrote the invitation articles for the January Sweepstakes, I had assumed more of the cold winter weather that had characterized previous mid-winter sweeps. But nature has a way of continually surprising us!

Instead of snow, cold winds and temps around zero, we enjoyed mostly clear skies, temps in the 40s and no wind! There was very little snow on the ground and our driveway was bare gravel- were we in a time warp and was it really May??

Joining Dot and I for the weekend event were Rich and Mary Ann Royer, W1HZN and N1DMW, Micky K1XH and son Bradley with his new license, Ken AC1H, Dave KA1UAG, William N8RPD, and Chuck N3WTO. Six of us operated over the weekend- K1XH, AC1H, KA1UAG, N8RPD, N3WTO and WB1BRE.

Dot and Mary Ann provided critical food support with lunches, drinks and the turkey dinner on Saturday evening (the turkey did not survive the event!). Rich did valuable technical support, including bringing three seventy foot lengths of 1/2" hardline, with connectors. One length was installed between Dave's 500 wt 432 Mhz amp and a second length was brought into service when the 7/8" hardline to the 6M antenna got some water in the connector/cable. Prior to the start of the contest, we had a couple other problems, both fixed by Dave KA1UAG. The 432 Mhz rig that drives the amplifier developed a problem with the squelch circuit and Dave disabled the squelch so that we had audio. And there was some scrambling to get matching connectors for a couple of headsets as well.

By contest time we were pretty well ready and the bands "opened up"! Rex AA1KL provided two laptops and Micky K1XH donated an older Dell desktop. Together with the HP desktop at my console location, we had WriteLog logging at all of the stations. The four computers were not linked, and we will be looking at that this year. It makes it much easier to have one common WriteLog database, as I found out when I worked to merge the four files after the contest.

So off we went making contacts, mostly on SSB, but with a few CW and FM contacts as well. We worked stations from Quebec province in Canada and Maine, out to western NY state and up to Ottawa, and down to Pennsylvania and Maryland. The distant stations were primarily on 6M and 2M with 222, 432 and 902 having shorter ranges simplex.

On Saturday evening, we enjoyed the traditional turkey dinner, while taking a break from operating. Some operating continued into

the evening hours and then we shut down and resume operations on Sunday morning. By Sunday afternoon, we had worked most of the stations on the bands and finding new stations was more of a challenge. We did work several rovers, which usually requires extra effort as mobile signals are unreliable.

The unusual good weather continued through Sunday and things began to wind down Sunday afternoon. Dave and I stayed operating for a few more hours just to pick up any newcomers. We shut down operation sometime after 4PM on Sunday and saved all the logs. Our claimed score this year beats the scores for 2004 and 2005:

YEAR	CONTACTS	GRIDS	SCORE
2004	193	58	12,702
2005	134	46	7,544
2006	181	67	13,888 (Claimed *)

*There are a few dupes in the log, but I expect the total will be still be above 13,000.

Since the total number of grids worked on all bands is a multiplier in the score, it's very important to try to keep getting new grid squares during a contest like this. VHF/UHF/Microwave contesting is primarily weak signal operating and requires good listening skills to pick signals out of the noise.

Lessons learned-

Replacing the coax feed lines to the antennas with hardline made a significant improvement on all bands. This is a must for successful VHF+ contesting!

Checking out all antennas, rotors and rigs ahead of time is very necessary. This year we did not experience any rotor failures.

Computer logging- link the logging computers together. For some reason, even though I merged all four files, I was never able to get the software to give the correct total score and I ended up multiplying the total points by the number of grids by hand to get the result.

For the September 2006 VHF contest and the 2007 Jan VHF Sweepstakes:

I will get with Micky to link the computers.

We will do some mechanical work on the antenna arrays on towers on the front and rear of the garage to clean up cabling. Dave is looking at phasing two 2M horizontal yagis on the rear tower to improve performance and we plan to put the 902 yagi on one of the rotator masts.

Also, we will work to assemble a 6M amplifier of several hundred watts to improve performance.

We did note that many more stations this year seemed to have 222 SSB capability, so Dave is looking at the possibility of adding a 222 transverter to the setup.

Also, I have a 1296 MHz transverter that is crystallized for 1269 MHz (satellite ops) and we will look to recrystal and retune it for 1296.

Fortunately, we have spring and summer to get this work done and checked out before we tackle another contest. Overall everyone had a great time and we enjoyed hosting another W1FN operating event at our QTH.

Dot KA1LDS and Bill WB1BRE



AMATEUR RADIO ANTENNA BILLS IN PLAY IN MISSISSIPPI, VERMONT

Legislation is under consideration in Mississippi and Vermont to incorporate the essence of the limited federal preemption known as PRB-1 <http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/regulations/PRB-1_Pkg/prb-1.pdf> into the statutes of those two states. Echoing the language of PRB-1, the measures call on localities establishing ordinances regulating antenna placement, screening or height to reasonably accommodate Amateur Radio communication and impose the minimum practicable regulation to accomplish the municipality's legitimate purposes. ARRL Mississippi Section Manager Malcolm Keown, W5XX, reports similar bills were introduced this session in the House and Senate. The Senate version has already passed and been sent on to the House.

"Since 2001, Mississippi hams have been trying to get a bill through the Mississippi Legislature to provide for 'reasonable accommodation for the erection of antenna structures' by local zoning boards and to separate us from the cellular telephone tower interests," Keown says. The Senate version of the PRB-1 legislation, SB 2709, cleared the County Affairs and Municipalities committees January 31, and it passed the full Senate February 1. The House version, HB 736, is on the House General Calendar for a vote there by February 9.

Milton Hamfest Feb 25!

"We now have two horses in this race," Keown said this week, urging Mississippi ARRL members to urge their state senators and representatives to support the measures. "Keep your fingers crossed!" Assuming one of the PRB-1 measures succeeds in the House, minor differences in wording would be worked out in committee, Keown speculates. In past years, he says, a PRB-1 bill has made it through one legislative chamber only to die in committee in the other.

Both Mississippi PRB-1 bills leave it up to local governing authorities to determine "the types of reasonable accommodation to be made and the minimum practicable regulation necessary . . . within the parameters of the law." The House version includes an additional sentence: "This legislation supports the Amateur Radio Service in preparing for and providing emergency communications for the State of Mississippi and local emergency management agencies."

In Vermont, meanwhile, the House Government Operations Committee on February 2 heard public testimony on a PRB-1 bill introduced in the House, H.12. Several Amateur Radio operators attended the session along with representatives from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, which opposes such legislation, and several public safety officials.

The proposed Vermont antenna bill not only calls for community regulators to "reasonably accommodate" Amateur Radio communication, it includes a schedule of minimum regulatory heights, below which localities could not impose restrictions.

On lots smaller than one acre, municipalities could not restrict the overall height of an Amateur Radio antenna and associated support structure to less than 75 feet above ground level "nor restrict the number of support structures."

On parcels of one acre or larger, the bill, as written, would prohibit municipalities from restricting the height of an Amateur Radio antenna "to less than that specified in 47 CFR §97.15(a) nor restrict the number of support structures." That section of the Amateur Service rules actually does not specify a height, but it does require antenna structures more than 200 feet above ground to notify the Federal Aviation Administration and register the structure with the FCC.

In historic or design control districts, the Vermont bill would permit localities to restrict the height of antennas and associated support structures to less than 75 feet but would not allow them to prohibit Amateur Radio antennas and support structures altogether nor to limit their height to less than that of the tallest permitted structure within such a district.

The measure would grandfather existing Amateur radio antennas and support structures and provide for their repair or replacement "with comparable components" without further permitting or review.

To date, 21 states have enacted Amateur Radio antenna bills that reflect the PRB-1 limited federal preemption.

Disclaimer

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The Milton Hamfest is less than a month away. We have laid out a whole bunch of exciting programs to continue to call it the "best little hamfest in the world". Of course everyone thinks first of the Flea Market and we will have many of the same vendors back this year with their truckloads of great goodies. And this year, for the first time in many years, we will have a major dealer join us. KJI Electronics will be up from NJ with radios from all the radio manufacturers. Start making out your shopping list now!

We have so many demonstrations and forums that we often refer to the morning's activities as a "3-ring circus"! For something completely different, Special Event Station K1D will be set up in the lobby and will be operated by Kids. Come watch the kids compete making contacts. If you like, sign up your Kid (licensed or not) to join in the fun. We'll also bring back the popular IRLP and Echolink demonstrations. And just outside, we will have a tethered high altitude balloon complete with radio payload.

Plan your forum visits now, because we guarantee that there will be too many to go to! Mike Gruber from the ARRL Lab will talk about Powerline Interference and RFI and Consumer Devices. Brian Riley N1BQ will bring back the QRP and APRS Forums and will also have a talk on Computers used in the Shack. Mike Fortney KB1MDA and Shemane Austin KC2NAZ will introduce us to amateur radio used in High Altitude Balloons. John Grow VE2EQL will have a new talk on High Performance Antennas in small spaces. The ARRL Forum will bring us up to date on affairs in amateur radio and yours truly will combine comedy and showmanship to entertain our non-ham guests and hypnotize them into getting their ham licenses! And that will be easy enough, as exams will be given at Noon, with the test fee only \$14.

Up to the minute details on the Milton Hamfest are at <http://www.ranv.org/milton.html>

HAM CLASSES

The number of new hams in Vermont last year totaled around 30, a rather disappointing number. Factor in the large number of non-renewals and our ham population again has dropped. But there are certainly plenty of ham classes out there to take. I will be running the one-day Technician courses on March 18th in Burlington and April 1st in Manchester, New Hampshire. Do some reading, go to class all day, take the test and get the license a couple of days later. It can't get any easier. But, you have to sign up and do it. If you don't like the one day format, clubs in St. Albans, Barre and Rutland have 3-6 session classes. Or, if you don't like to travel to a class, I have the entire course available at a web site! Make sure you get your friends to sign up for a course. Or, at the very least, buy them a study book (I'll have them available at the fest!) We all have read that Morse code is going away soon. But, how many of you are studying for that General or Extra class upgrade? Both the General and Extra Courses are available On-line. Give it a try; I think you'll have fun learning on the computer.

Information on the One Day Technician or General course: <http://www.ranv.org/weekend.html>

Information on the On-Line Web courses (with sample lessons) <http://www.hamclass.net>

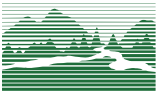
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ELECTRONIC ADDRESSES

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Don't forget to check the TSRC Home Page!
Make it your default start page!
<http://www.w1fn.org>



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