



Squelch Tales



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for September 2004

NEWS FROM NEWINGTON AMATEUR RADIO BPL TEAM TO STRESS CREDIBILITY

From ARRL HQ

The Cincinnati area's Broadband Over Power Line (BPL) Amateur Radio team won't ramp up its activities until Cinergy Corp rolls out its BPL system over a broader area than that of typical BPL field trials to date. ARRL Ohio Section Manager Joe Phillips, K8QOE, says the group--headed by Kirk Swallow, W8QID--initially will study the impact of Cinergy's BPL deployment in two neighborhoods--Hyde Park and Mount Lookout.

"We're not all that geared up, because Cinergy has not established much of a BPL footprint yet," Phillips explained. "We want to see what happens when they do the buildout. That will be the definitive factor."

Cinergy's is being touted as the first large-scale commercial BPL deployment in the US. At this point, Phillips said, the team has seen no formal complaints of interference--just "some reports." But when complaints

do start showing up, "I want ham radio to look credible," he emphasized. "Any interference complaints will be valid." Phillips says the BPL team--a subcommittee of the Greater Cincinnati Local Interference Committee--aims to gather solid engineering data on any BPL interference cases.

"I have this recurring dream that one of these days we'll walk into Cinergy, we'll have data they can't get from their BPL partners and they'll walk away from it saying it's not worth it," Phillips said, noting that utilities are "very PR conscious." An August 10 article in the Cincinnati Enquirer cites "a flurry of concern among ham radio operators" and quotes Cinergy and its partner Current Communications Group as saying that Amateur Radio operators' interference fears "are unfounded."

That assertion flies in the face of the growing number of BPL-related interference reports being tracked by ARRL <http://www.arrl.org/~ehare/bpl/reports>.

Phillips, who's also mentioned in the Enquirer article, predicts the "massive antenna" system that will

result from Cinergy's planned widespread deployment will raise the noise floor to undesirable levels.

"We're not interested in having them fix every little thing," he said, referring to the sorts of "interference mitigation" techniques BPL providers have used to date, such as notching of amateur frequencies. "We are interested in seeing them do what FCC Part 15 rules require--not cause interference to licensed spectrum users."

Phillips also praised the Cincinnati Enquirer for soliciting Amateur Radio's perspective in the BPL controversy. "We don't have to seek it out," he said. "We're now a permanent part of the debate." He said he's in the process of contacting all amateur licensees in the affected neighborhoods--some five or six dozen in all--to enlist their cooperation with the BPL team.

The BPL rollout initially will make broadband service available to some 8000 customers. While Cinergy isn't saying publicly, it's estimated that 1000 or more customers already have signed up for the service.

Cinergy eventually hopes to have up to 55,000 subscribers on board by the end of its first year. Plans call for expanding BPL service to Northern Kentucky and to the remainder of the utility's Southwest Ohio service area next year.

STILL TIME TO COMMENT IN "OMNIBUS" PART 97 RULE MAKING

Because the complete text of the FCC Notice of Proposed Rule Making and Order (NPRM&O) in WT Docket 04-140 failed to make it into the Federal Register until August 17, interested parties now will have until September 15 to comment. Released in April, the so-called "omnibus NPRM" seeks comments on a wide range of proposed Amateur Service (Part 97) rules changes as well as certain changes to Parts 1 and 2 of the FCC's rules. It does not deal with Amateur Radio license restructuring or the Morse code examination requirement for HF privileges.

Among other things, the NPRM&O recommends adoption of the ARRL's "Novice refarming" plan and proposes eliminating FCC rules prohibiting manufacture or marketing of Amateur Radio Service power amplifiers capable of operating between

24 and 35 MHz. Interested parties may comment on the NPRM via the FCC Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS). Click on "Submit a filing." To view filed comments, click on "Search for filed comments." In both cases, enter "04-140" (without the quotation marks) in the "Proceeding" field.

Upgrades to KS1R repeaters underway

The morning of Sunday August 15th had your tech committee (K1MNW, WD1F KC1W & W1ZE) start the long awaited upgrade of the 147.21 KS1R repeater. The new NHRC controller was installed along with the new 40-watt transmitter. A week later the Tech Committee finished the tweak-en-Peak on the systems audio levels and the repeater sounds crisp and clear with acceptable audio levels. A new shielded cable harness will be made up to interlace the three repeater components and it will be finished.

Now that the 2-meter machine is performing the way the Tech Committee wants it, their efforts will turn to the 444.4 repeater that will get well needed upgrades along with the better controller removed from the old .21 repeater. It appears that we will be able to raise the output of the

repeater from about 20-watts to about 100-watts thanks to the donation of a UHF Motorola exciter and commercial grade Aerotron repeater amplifier donated by Bill/K1MNW. When the 444.4 machine is upgraded it too will have autopatch in parallel the 2-meter machine. Stay tuned....

KS1R 1.284 GHz repeater working better than expected

On Wednesday August 11th, the MARA's microwave guru, Bill/K1MNW loaned Cliff/N1NJB and sidekick Art/AA1YB one of his 1.2 GHz 10-watt Kenwood FM transceiver and a 1.2 GHz mag-mount antenna. The two mobilized their way back up the coast and made various contacts on their way up to Washington with their last contact with the KS1R repeater from Aborn Hill. A week later the two accessed the KS1R 1.2 GHz repeater from high ground in Acadia National Park.

Saturday August 14th Pete/W1PWW borrowed a 1.2 GHz mag-mount from Bill and headed down the coast. Later in that evening Pete asked Bill through the 1.284 KS1R repeater how he was being heard. Bill said, "you are Q-5 and about full scale on the 5-meter. Where are you now, South Portland or Westbrook?" Pete replied, "Nope, I'm in

Newberry Massachusetts." On the evening of August 21st stations in the Boston area discovered our 1.2 GHz repeater and had a long QSO with Bill. There may have been a bit of a lift on but that is still great DX for microwaves. Folks, our 2M or 70cM repeaters do not make it that far. The 1284 MHz repeater does not provide blanket coverage to those distances, but at microwave those signal reports are impressive in the FM mode.

Here is a list of call signs of folks that have or now using the KS1R 1.2 GHz repeater

- K1MNW, Brunswick, ME
- W1PWW, Georgetown, ME
- WD1F, Phippsburg, ME
- N1NJB, Orland, ME
- AA1YB, E. Orland, ME
- K1IF, Oxford, ME
- K1MJP, Orr's Island, ME
- NH
- MA

MARA key in three successful August Bike Rides

By W1ZE



The 50-mile Tour de Merrymeeting Bay was the first of three public assistance communications

efforts for the MARA. KS1R event net control was in the capable hands of Abe/KC1W as the ride around Merrymeeting Bay went off with out a hitch. The communications team of Bryan/AA1WI plus son Shan/KB1LJX, Donnie/ WD1F, Louise/KB1IEF, Brian/AA1WI and Bruce/W1ZE helped keep things flowing. That event finished up at noon and everyone was invited to lunch.

The following Sunday (22nd) had the communications team of Bob/N1VVF, Gay/N1XBN, Bruce/W1ZE, Donnie/WD1F and Louise/KB1IEF With Lee /N1HOC taking the rains as KS1R Net Control at the Morris Farm in Wiscasset. After the event all the volunteers were invited to attend the BBQ and have a great organic meal. It was some wicked good!

On Saturday the 28th the Comm. team of Lee/N1HOC, Bruce/W1ZE, Donnie/WD1F, Bob/N1VVF Gay/N1XBN and Paul/KA5FPT arrived early in the morning at the Brunswick Mall to help get that special event underway. As usual the 50 and 100-mile ride went off without a hitch. The motto for this event was, "don't forget to hydrate!"

The three event promoters were overjoyed with the performance of

the MARA communications team and want us back next year.

W1PWW & K1MNW are into VHF-UHF weak signal DXing

Association member Pete, W1PWW of Five Islands and MARA r and Tech Committee member Bill/K1MNW and are having a lot of fun these days. On their towers are 144, 432, and 1296 MHz yagis and the two are making QSOs on SSB and CW. Both are now active on the Maine and New England weak signal nets and promoting activity on 1296 MHz.

Bill just ordered a 25-watt 1296 transverter to stick on his IC-706MKIIG or FT-817 and hopes to hook-up with other 1296ers in the southern and western New England states, plus upstate New York and Pennsylvania. Pete is the proud owner of a Kenwood TS-2000 that has the factory added 1.2 GHz module installed. He is active on SSB and CW on all the bands from 50 MHz to 1.2 GHz.

If you want more information about VHF & UHF weak signal work, contact Bill or Pete. They will do their best to pass on the virus to you.



Its not that tough
Just do it!



A.R.E.S.

FCC EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS DECLARATION POLICY PREFERS VHF-UHF

The FCC has formalized its policy for issuing an emergency communications declaration (ECD) on Amateur Radio Service frequencies. The policy, which became effective August 2, states that ECDs will be issued for VHF or UHF repeaters--if the licensee consents--or on simplex channels in the 60-meter band. The FCC will not entertain requests to specifically sequester frequencies in other HF bands for emergency traffic only. Past emergency communications declarations--typically issued during weather-related emergencies--have put frequencies on 75 and 40 meters off limits to general use in an affected region.

"ECDs may only be issued after a disaster disrupts normal communication systems in a geographic area subject to FCC regulation," the FCC said, citing §97.401(b). Under its provisions, when a disaster disrupts normal telecommunications systems in a given area, the FCC may declare a temporary communication emergency

that sets forth any special conditions and special rules stations must observe while it's in effect. The policy clarifies that the FCC has authority to issue ECDs only for communication emergencies and not on the basis of anticipated emergencies. It also tightens up the requirements to request an ECD.

The policy calls for VHF and UHF Amateur Service channels to receive preference for ECDs. Requests may indicate a specific repeater system, subject to permission from the repeater's licensee or trustee. On HF, the FCC says, an ECD may authorize the use of one or two 60-meter channels, centered on 5332, 5348, 5368, 5373 and 5405 kHz, subject to §97.303(s).

See ARRL's Frequently Asked Questions regarding 60-meter operation <<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/regulations/faq-60.html>> for details.

The FCC said frequencies in other amateur bands--where emergency nets already have been established--may be used during emergencies under the provisions of §97.101(c). That rule section stipulates that amateur operators give priority to stations providing emergency communications "at all times and on all frequencies."

The FCC policy, Emergency Communications Declarations in the Amateur Radio Service, is available on the ARRL Web site: <http://www.arrl.org/FandES/field/emcom-declarations.html>.

MINUTES from the August 26th MEETING

Call to Order:

The August Meeting of the Merry Meeting Amateur Radio Association was called to order at 7:01pm by our President Donnie/WD1F at the Mid Coast Hospital, Brunswick Maine.

Attendees:

MARA Members:

Abe/KC1W, Donnie/WD1F, Bruce/W1ZE, Eric/KB1HYV, Bill/K1MNV, Allan/WA1SCS, Tom/WA1PJS, Jarry/KB1KJY, Bob/N1GWE, Lee/N1HOC, John/KC6TVF, Lee/W1LWT, Paul/KA5FPT.

Treasurer's Report:

Bob/N1GWE reported that the current balance is: \$635.69

Technical Committee:

Following reported by

Bruce/W1ZE, Donnie/WD1F and Bill/K1MNV.

1. The new 2-meter controller has been installed and is working well. Some fine-tuning to be completed, such as, add autodial numbers, and ability to turn off the requirement for a PL tone to access the repeater. There are a lot of other bells and whistles available with this controller that the technical committee will continue to trial.

2. The 440 machine has been upgraded with an increase in

power out. Autopatch will also be available on the this repeater.

3. The 1.2 GHz repeater continues to amaze everyone. Bill/K1MNW has regularly worked hams in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and a weak signal group in the Bangor ME area.

4. ATV Bill/K1MNW and Lee/W1KWT are discussing the possibility of using 1.2 GHz FM for the balloon project that Lee is working on. Bill would then convert the signal to the cable channel 60 so the flight could be monitored by anyone wishing to.

5. Discussion regarding linking the 440 repeater with 6 meters and 1.2 GHz followed. A motion was made by Bruce/W1ZE and seconded by Bob/N1GWE to go ahead with that project. The attending membership passed unanimously.

Activities:

1. Tour of Merry Meeting Bay August 14th. Abe/KC1W was net control for this event and reported all went well. MARA members using portable radios were assigned to the two chase vehicles provided by Goodwin Chevrolet and two bicyclists were assisted by MARA members during this year's event. Organizers of the event have already requested MARA assistance next year.

2. Tour de Farms will be August 22nd. Another successful event supported by MARA hams. Reports from Donnie/WD1F and Bruce/W1ZE were that the barbeque following the ride was excellent as usual.

3. Dan Michaud is scheduled for August 28th and Lee/N1HOC is looking for additional volunteers to assist with this ride.

Sagadahoc ARES:

Allan/WA1SCS Sag EC

1. Allan recommends members consider taking CPR and ARC First Aid courses and carrying first aid kits in their cars. The ARC in Topsham is hosting an all day First Aid/CPR class on September 25th. Members interested should contact the American Red Cross. Also Vocational Education in Brunswick will be starting an EMT course for anyone interested.

2. Planning for the ARES Seminar in November continues. Subjects on the agenda may include: First Aid/CPR, providing assistance on scene of an emergency, the Incident Command System and the Maine Emergency Communicator Level I course. Date, time and location to be determined, more to come as the plans firm up.

3. The October Quarterly ARES meeting will involve a table top exercise. Members in the area are encouraged to attend. Bruce/W1ZE is working on the details at this time and date, time and location will be published as soon as confirmed.

4. The subject of handling some practice traffic, or passing real routine traffic during the Monday night ARES net was discussed. This will be considered in the future.

Old Business:

Lee/W1LWT reports that due to circumstances out of his control the balloon project launch will be delayed until at least later this fall. He has successfully completed trials of parachute drops with 6 and 8 pound loads

and the discussion regarding ATV continues with Bill/K1MNW.

New Business:

1. The year is quickly drawing to a close. Lee/N1HOC has volunteered to check on availability of space at the China Rose for MARA's Holiday Party, and make the reservation for one of the Saturday's in early December. Date and information on the party will be distributed once confirmed.

2. John/KC6TVF has expressed interest in exploring the communication capabilities available at the new home of the Mid Coast American Red Cross in Topsham. Allan/WA1SCS as the county Emergency Coordinator also has interest. John and Lee/N1HOC will make some contacts and see if a visit can be scheduled.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the MerryMeeting Amateur Radio Association will be held at MidCoast Hospital on September 30th, 2004 at 7:00PM.

Adjournment:

At 7:55pm Bruce/W1ZE made a motion, seconded by Lee/N1HOC, to adjourn the meeting.

**Windsor Hamfest
& Flea market
Saturday,
September 11th.
admission \$5.00
Windsor Fairgrounds.
Rt-17 & China Rd.
Ham Exams and
Friday evening
overnight camping**