



Squelch Tales



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for October 2014



FIRE PREVENTION WEEK OPEN HOUSE AT THE BRUNSWICK, COOKS CORNER FIRESTATION

The Annual Fire Prevention Week Open House will take place at the Cooks Corner Emerson Station on Wednesday, October 8, from 4:00 to 7:00 PM.

The MARA/ARES-CERT team once again has, been invited to participate. Please mark this event on your schedule, if you are available, come out and show the public who we are and what we do.

We have also been invited to attend the open house in Freeport, which coincides with the Brunswick event. If we have a sufficient number of team members available, we could cover both. Two members at each location would be sufficient.

Several team members have responded they will attend. We have three folks going to Freeport already.

Thanks. 73 John, *KIJJS & Harry, NITTT*



Should QSOs from remote stations be given DXCC credit?

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

In July, the DX Advisory Committee Report recommended several rules changes for the DXCC program:

http://www.arrl.org/files/file/About%20ARRL/Committee%20Reports/2014/July/Doc_27.pdf.

Among them, was a recommendation that rule I.9 be changed such that a QSO is acceptable for DXCC credit only when the remote station and the operator's home

station location are no more than 200 km apart.

As with any rule change, this precipitated a lot of comment in the amateur radio community. A thread on the eHam.Net forum

(<http://www.eham.net/ehamforum/smf/index.php/topic,98348.30.html>) got quite a few comments. N7NG had a nice blog post (<http://n7ng.wordpress.com/2014/03/05/remote-control-dxing-and-dxcc/>) on this controversy.

Perhaps the most strident post on this topic was written by WW1X (<http://ww1x.com/opinion/2014/08/14/in-defense-of-remote-dxcc.html>). He called these recommendations “uninformed, misguided, and detrimental to the future of our hobby.” Detrimental to the future of our hobby? Seriously?

Of course, WW1X has a vested interest in this debate. He's the lead developer for RemoteHamRadio.Com, a company that charges other hams to use the “super stations” that they've set up around the world.

Note that the DX Advisory Committee is not saying that amateur radio operators should not use and enjoy these remote stations. All they're saying is that the QSOs made with them, unless they are located less than 200 km from an amateur's home station, are not eligible for DXCC credit. I'm sure that if you asked any of the members of the committee they would agree with WW1X that the remote stations serve a very useful purpose for amateurs who are not able to set up their own home stations.

WW1X prattles on about how “DXCC is not a contest. It's not a competition. There

are no winners or losers. It's a personal achievement award, plain and simple." This is just silly. Of course it's a competition. As N7NG rightly points out if it's not a competition, why publish the DXCC Honor Roll?

What I think is detrimental to the hobby are hams who use RemoteHamRadio.Com to simply add to their DXCC scores. I see no sense in doing so, and furthermore, where's the personal achievement? Anyone who can afford to pay what they charge—and it's not a small sum of money—can work the rarest DX with one of those stations.

A friend of mine, Mark, W8MP, is a RemoteHamRadio.Com customer, and it's a boon for him. He loves being able to work DX from his home in a development where no outside antennas are allowed. He's not trying to pad his DXCC score. He does this for the pure love of talking to other hams in far-away places.

When the final decision is made, I hope the DX Advisory Committee goes back to first principles as set forth in FCC Part 97.1 and makes their decision on whether or not allowing DXCC credit for remote station QSOs contributes to "the advancement of the radio art" or is an "extension of the amateur's unique ability to enhance international goodwill."

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When he's not writing this column for club newsletters, Dan, KB6NU enjoys working CW on the HF bands and teaching ham radio classes. For more information about his operating activities and his "No-Nonsense" series of amateur radio license study guides, go to KB6NU.Com or e-mail cwgeek@kb6nu.com.

More Ears Than You Realize

By Steve Kerchel, AA4AK

MARA members are cautioned to remember that there is absolutely no expectation of privacy for any information transmitted via ham radio. More non-hams

are listening to us than most people realize. With that in mind, please remember that one should never ever discuss pending legal matters on the air. This precaution is for your own safety as well as that of the litigants in the case.

Likewise, you should treat all e-mails, phone calls, social media postings and the like, as if they will be published on the front page of the next issue of the *New York Times*. It has happened before, and it will happen again. **73, Steve, AA4AK**



MARA's First Life Member now a Silent key

On August 5th of this year the MARA's first co-life member Robert "Bob" McQueeney, N1VVF past away from a prolonged health issue in Cherryville, North Carolina. Bob and XYL Gay were very active members of the MARA for many years and good friends to many of us.

Upon their departure to their retirement QTH in the Cherryville, Bob and Gay were made honorary life members of the MARA. Bob will be missed by his Ham Radio friends on mid coast Maine. **Rest in peace old friend.**



New Amateur Radio Vanity Call Sign Fee Set at \$21.40

The FCC has adjusted very slightly downward - to \$21.40 - its proposed Amateur Service vanity call sign regulatory fee for Fiscal Year 2014. In a June Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM), the Commission said it was planning to hike the current \$16.10 vanity fee to \$21.60 for the 10-year license term. The FCC released a Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (R&O) in the proceeding on August 29, in which it recalculated the fee to \$21.40 for the 10-year license term. The \$5.30 increase still represents the largest vanity fee hike in many years.

The new \$21.40 fee does not go into effect until 30 days after the R&O is published in The Federal Register.

In the R&O, the FCC said it considered eliminating the regulatory fee for Amateur Radio vanity call sign applications but decided not to do so "at this time," because it lacks "adequate support to determine whether the cost of recovery and burden on small entities outweighs the collected revenue; or whether eliminating the fee would adversely affect the licensing process." The Commission said it would reevaluate this issue in the future to determine if it should eliminate other fee categories.

The FCC's Wireless Telecomm. Bureau sets the vanity call sign regulatory fee using projections of new applications and renewals, taking into consideration existing Commission licensee databases, such as the Universal Licensing System (ULS) database.

The FCC reported there were 11,500 "payment units" in FY 2014. The Commission said the vanity program generated an estimated \$230,230 in FY 2013 revenue, and it estimated that it would collect nearly \$246,100 in FY 2014.

The vanity call sign regulatory fee is payable when applying for a new vanity call sign or when renewing a vanity call sign, although some older vanity call signs are not subject to the regulatory fee.



Monthly Trivia Question

Which of the following would generally be considered a QRP power level?

- A. 20-watts C. 12-watts
- B. 5-watts D. .55 dbm

Answer on last page



PSKreporter.de



For all you HF digital mode enthusiasts we found a website that may be of interest to you,

<http://www.pskreporter.de>

PSKreporter displays the digital mode data of transmitting and receiving stations and displays them with additional information in selectable views. It may be a handy tool for you.



Coaxial RF chokes are very useful

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE

As most of you know I like to play with antennas, a lot, and like most Hams I have found things that help my antennas and transmission lines perform better or correctly. One bugaboo that rears its ugly head from time to time is having RF running down your coaxial transmission line that makes it difficult to get an accurate SWR reading or causing RF to get into other devices in your shack.

All it takes is a little unbalanced condition at the antenna feed point causing some standing waves and the RF current will start flowing back to the ham shack on the coax shield.

This aggravating problem can be reduced or eliminated with a coaxial RF choke at or very close to the antenna feed point. Some folks install a commercial 1:1 ferrite core balun and they work, but the higher the SWR the higher the power loss plus they cost real money.

The very simple way to eliminate RF on the coax is to make a coax RF choke coil by using the same

piece of coax that is used for the feed-line. In other words, it is not necessary to insert/splice in a choke later. Splicing in a choke may lower the effectiveness of the choke a little. Best way is that the choke and the feed coax should all be one continuous coax run.



Put your coax connector at the end of the coax run that connects to the antenna. Measure down from the connector between 18 to 24 inches maximum. If you go longer than 2 feet, the RF has a much longer piece of coax to travel down to get to the choke, and all of that coax with RF on it's surface starts to act like the antenna, and will radiate.

At the 18 to 24 inch mark, begin wrapping the coax in loops as if you are winding it up for storage. Make between 6 to 10 loops of the coax. Wrap them close together so that the inside measurement of the loops are between 6 to 10 inches across the donut hole. This part is important to remember. You DO NOT have to make each loop side by side in a perfect order. Any of the loops can overlap next to, under, or over the other loops. You do want each loop to be close together (close wound) like a big deli bagel. This coil will have no effect the efficiency of the choke. Wrapping the loops side by side or overlapping is not what makes the choke work. It will still do its job impeding the flow of RF on the shield.

Even though you can make 6 to 10 loops at 6 to 10 inches across the hole, I recommend the 8-8 method. That means you make 8 loops that are 8 inches across the inside of the donut hole. There is no significance to the 8-8 rule other than it is easy to remember and has worked for me. Once again, this is not rocket science. Once you have the loops made and they are about 8 inches across the donut hole, Place several heavy duty nylon tie-

wraps spaced out around the coil to hold it together. Then cover the tie-wraps with electricians tape to further secure the coil. Now you have a tightly wound choke with about 18 to 24 inches of coax from antenna feed point coax connector. The other side of the choke is the rest of the coax that will run to your shack and transceiver(s).

The 8-8 rule is fine for the HF bands and it is OK for 6-meters too, but if your antenna is only for 50 MHz the rule should be closer to the 6-6 rule, six turns of coax with a 6-inch ID on the coil within about 8 inches from the antenna feed point.

When feeding a two meter antenna just one or two loops about 4 to 5 inches ID within 4 to 6 inches of the antenna feed point will do the job nicely.

For those of you that are a bit anal retentive and want to keep things uniform you could always wind your RF choke on a section of 4 to 6 inch diameter plastic tube or PVC pipe. I use this method to feed my vertical Tarheel 400a screwdriver antenna that



is roof mounted on my QTH in southern California. It works well and I maintain easy tuning of the antenna across the HF spectrum with no RF getting into the shack. MFJ also uses this type of RF choke on their MFJ-4796 trapped vertical multiband dipole.



For more information on coaxial RF chokes (1:1 current baluns), check our:

<http://www.hamuniverse.com/balun.html>

73, Bruce, W1ZE



September was not a good month for the KS1R Repeaters

Reported by Bruce Randall, W1ZE

During the last week of October the news media reported that the MARA's Repeater site benefactor and repeater maintenance guru Bill Messier, K1MNW had run a fowl of the IRS and US Justice Department. Fran, K1BBJ noted the article in the Portland Press Herald and quickly advised Bruce Randall, W1ZE, (that's me) The MARA's Technical committee chairman and KS1R Trustee of the alarming news that was in the paper. After reading the article I immediately started contacting members to the tech committee and MARA Executive Board. It was agreed that the MARA should get some legal advice as soon as possible and maybe think about removing our equipment from the hill.

At this early juncture Bruce contacted Maine Section Manager Bill Crowley, K1NIT to see if he could assist us in getting advice on what the Association should do from the legal folks at the ARRL as soon as possible. Bill did just that. Within a day Bill had contacted the ARRL legal advisor and his recommendation was:

1. Quickly remove our equipment from repeater site so as to forgo losing access to club equipment for some period of time if the Feds started seizure action.
2. Next best, if not removed in time we should inventory all Association owned equipment and submit a list with a signed and notarized affidavit showing these items are not the property of the site owner and that the MARA has no financial interaction with Bill, then submit it to the Justice Department in Portland.

Fortunately a few days later a small group of MARA members assembled on the repeater site along with owner Bill messier, K1MNW. They identified and removed the MARA's

equipment from the repeater building. Bruce, W1ZE's took all the repeater equipment to his shop/QTH to be reassembled. The next evening Donnie Dauphin, WD1F disconnected and removed the D-Star repeater that was housed at a different location and tower at the repeater site. Within 24 hours Donnie had the D-Star repeater back up and running from his QTH and tower in Phippsburg.

On Sunday morning, September 7th a group of seven MARA members gathered again at the repeater site. Jim N1IPA and Dan, N5AGG put on their climbing gear and headed up the tower with lots of rope. They were quickly successful in lowering down the side of the 90-foot microwave tower the Association's dual-band repeater antenna and three unused Rhon 45 tower sections that were going to be used to add 30 feet to the existing 90 foot microwave tower. After removal they were carted off to Harry's (N1TTT) QTH at the bottom of the hill.

The following week Bruce, W1ZE started reassembling the 147.21 and 444.4 MHz repeaters so that there would not be a long delay before getting them back up on the air from their temporary site at Donnie Dauphin, WD1F's QTH and tower in Phippsburg.

Thanks go to Frank Naimann, N1ITR and Dave Hawke, KQ1L for letting the MARA and Midcoast ARES/CERT use the 146.70 Litchfield repeater during the unforeseen down period.

The Good News:

On Saturday September 13th Bruce delivered the two meter repeater to Donnie's QTH in Phippsburg and they got it up and running into a dual-band, hardline fed, antenna up on the top of Donnie's tower.



Fortunately we got our club equipment removed and all three repeaters back on the air thanks in no small part to the generosity of Donnie Dauphin, WD1F for offering a warm

dry basement to house the repeaters and a high tower with antennas already attached.

Unfortunately the UHF D-Star repeater coverage was significantly reduced by the lower elevation. However, initial coverage tests the two meter repeater were promising



Looking north up the Kennebec river atop WD1F's tower

As you can see from the above photo taken from the top of Donnie's tower there is a clear view up the Kennebec valley in the direction of Augusta and the repeater was usable in the area behind the capitol district. Time will tell what the new coverage will be. The good news is **KS1R/R is back on the air.**



New Yaesu FT-991 All-Band, Multimode Portable transceiver to hit the stores shortly

Recently introduced at the Tokyo Ham show. Yaesu has come out with a new rig the **FT-991**, looks like the little cousin to the FTDX-1200 & FTDX-3000 and we believe it will be replacing the earlier rigs like the popular FT897D



The FT-991 is the next generation in all mode, all band MF/HF/VHF/UHF transceiver with C4FM (System Fusion) Digital capability. The FT-991 includes multi-mode operation on CW, AM, FM, SSB, and Digital Modes (Packet, PSK31, RTTY and C4FM), with 100 Watts of HF Capability (50 Watts VHF/UHF).

The New FT-991 now includes a high-resolution full color 3.5" TFT Touch panel for superior operability and visibility, incorporating a High Speed Spectrum scope with ASC (Automatic Spectrum-scope control) built in.

The transceiver has not arrived at the various candy stores yet but they are taking reservations. We are looking forward to the first reviews.



FCC Enforcement Bureau Warns Two Hams for Failure to Identify Properly

The FCC Enforcement Bureau has released *Warning Notice* letters it sent in July to two radio amateurs, advising them that it had monitored transmissions during



which the licensees had failed to identify properly. The Bureau [posted](#) the correspondence earlier this month on its Amateur Radio Service Enforcement Actions web page. The two notices from FCC Enforcement Bureau Special Counsel Laura L. Smith, both dated July 21, contain essentially the same wording.

In a [Warning Notice](#) to Gary E. Davis, W1IT, of Inman, South Carolina, Smith told Davis that he was monitored on July 15 and 16 at the FCC's High Frequency Direction Finding Center (HFDFC) in Maryland, failing to properly identify while operating on 7.185 MHz. "[Y]ou were heard by a Commission employee operating your Amateur Radio station for 20 minutes without identifying in a timely manner," Smith wrote. "The Commission employee used direction-finding equipment and confirmed the transmissions were coming from your location."

Smith pointed out that Section 97.119(a) of the Amateur Service Rules requires each amateur station to "transmit its assigned call sign on its transmitting channel at the end of each communication, and at least every 10 minutes during a communication."

In a nearly identically worded [Warning Notice](#) to John J. Krajewski, KB3MZQ, of Newark, Delaware, Smith said the HFDFC also had monitored transmissions by him on July 15 and 16, also on 7.185 MHz, during which he failed to identify properly.

Smith said the FCC had "recorded the offending transmissions" in both instances and offered to make copies available to Davis and Krajewski. She further advised Davis and Krajewski that recurring "operation of this type" after receipt of the warning letters, could subject them to "severe penalties, including license revocation, monetary forfeiture (fines), or a modification proceeding to restrict the frequencies upon which you may operate."

In 2006, in response to a *Petition for Rule Making*, the FCC declined to modify its Amateur Service station identification rules. The petition received some 100 comments. In dismissing the petition the following year, the FCC concluded that the changes requested were "neither necessary nor supported by the Amateur Radio community," and that the failure-to-identify problem "would be better addressed by enforcement of the present rule, rather than a rule change." **Remember, ID your station at the start, and end of a QSO and every 10 minutes in between!**



HR-4969

By ME Section Manager, Bill Crowley, K1NIT

On September 18, Maine Rep. Mike Michaud signed on as a cosponsor of HR-4969, the bill that would extend the benefits of the PRB-1 antenna ordinance to hams who live in private developments. The previous week, Rep. Chellie Pingree became a cosponsor.

This support is a direct result of Maine Hams, taking the time to let them both know how important this legislation is to the amateur radio service. It goes to show that we can make a difference when we work together.

And now, I need to ask you one more favor: Please take a minute and drop Mike or Chellie a note or a postcard (QSL card) thanking them for signing on in support of ham radio. Their addresses are:

Rep. Chellie Pingree, M.C.

U.S. House of Representatives
1318 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Rep Mike Michaud, M.C.

U.S. House of Representatives
1724 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

73, Bill, K1NIT



ANSWER TO TRIVIA QUESTION IS:

B.

5 Watts: Many hams use very low power, known as "QRP" and sometime as little as 50 milliwatts (0.05 W), for worldwide communications.

