

# Squelch Tales

Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association Newsletter for September 2007

## Four KS1R Repeaters now have final coordination

Phippsburg, July 30<sup>th</sup>: Last month KS1R Trustee, Bruce Randall, W1ZE got with the New England Spectrum Management Council's (NESMC) UHF Coordinator and clean up the coordination records for the Association's 70cM and 23cM repeater records. In the process the coordinator changed the new 447.575 MHz Digital (D-Star) repeater listing from a 1-year temporary listing to a Final coordinated repeater. The MARA now has four coordinated repeaters on Oak Hill in Brunswick.



## Digital repeater repackaged

Donnie, WD1F and Bill, K1MNW have repackaged

the new 447.575 digital repeater into a nice new black 19-inch wide rack mount cabinet provided by Donnie and it will go into the repeater rack in the repeater building. Bruce, W1ZE built a simple 440 J-pole that will be used until such time a higher gain UHF antenna can be obtained and mounted on the tower.

All the MARA needs now is for someone to win the Maine State Lottery and donate a complete ICOM D-Star repeater package. Until then the tech committee will continue to enhance the roll-your-own digital repeater.

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## K1IMA wins prize in Giga Parts Sweepstakes

On August 3rd, Paul Benton (K1IMA) of Bath was selected to receive a second place sweepstakes prize of a Yaesu VX-170, a

2-meter 5-watt hand held transceiver.

The sweepstakes drawing is a promotional give away by the on-line Ham Radio dealer Giga Parts.

The store has given away grand prizes of high end Kenwood and Yaesu all-mode, all-band transceivers like the TS-2000 and FT-2000D. All hams are invited to participate by logging onto their web site at: [www.gigaparts.com](http://www.gigaparts.com).



## Dem Bones, Dem Dry Bones

By Kent Stutzman, KB0RWI,  
ARRL PIO Kansas Section

The structure of an organization is made up of four kinds of bones. There are Wishbones, who spend all their time wishing somebody else would do something about this or something about that. There are the Jawbones, who do all the talking, but very little of anything else. Next comes the

Knucklebones, who knock everything that others are trying to do. Finally, there are the Backbones, who get under the load and do the work. What part of the organization's structure are you? If you are a Wishbone, Jawbone, or Knucklebone, what kind of a Ham are you? Are you happy?

Take a good look at the Backbones in your radio club. These people are not always the board members, but they certainly are the "doers" in the club. I can well imagine that the Backbones also have happy family lives, because it seems that hard work and self-confidence seem to extend into family and working partnerships as well. What constantly amazes me is the number of Backbones who spend long hours representing or working for the club. They seem to never tire making the Club's activities successful.

We hear a lot about getting involved. Take it from one who knows, getting involved is the best therapy there is for adjusting to the life of a Ham. You'll see a change for the better not only in yourself, but also in your hobby and your club. You'll suddenly find people are

friendlier, there is no spare time to wonder how to fill, as there is work to do for each and everyone of us in the club. But, most important of all, you will suddenly realize what you are doing for others. What a beautiful example to set for your children.

So why don't you take a personal inventory? If you are honest with yourself and find you are a Wishbone, Jawbone or Knucklebone, there is no time like the present to make the change so you, too, can become a Backbone. The dedicated, hard working Backbones will welcome you joining them. Only in this way can the Club continue to serve amateur radio and the community.

*Reprint from "QUA/HAMnews" Mar. 1991, which is published by the Bluegrass Amateur Radio Society, Inc. Lexington, Kentucky.*



**Got something to sell?  
Looking for something  
to buy or trade? Just  
want an evening out  
with fellow hams?**

The Portland Amateur Wireless Association (PAWA) presents the

September Tailgater and Mini-fest on Wednesday, September 5, 2007 from 4 PM to dusk. The September Tailgater and Mini-fest will be held at the parking lot of the Stewart Morrill American Legion Post #35, 413 Broadway in South Portland, home of the PAWA. There are no inside tables or activities, everything is outdoors. No commercial vendors, no door prizes, just a good old fashioned get together.

Admission is free and there is no charge for tailgating. We will accept donations and new members however! Bring your own goods, tables, chairs and the like. The PAWA will provide a grill for cooking hamburgers, hot dogs or whatever. Bring your own food and drinks (non-alcoholic).

Attendees are encouraged to bring something to share with their fellows. If you care to use our grill, you can bring your own grill to make it a real tailgater.

Get ready for the fall Hamfest season. Hope to see you there! 73, K1GAX





## **DX Beacon Tracker, a handy tool in the shack**

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE

For those of you new to the HF bands and wanting a way to determine which HF band would provide the best chance for landing DX, there is the Northern California DX Federation's (NCDXF) beacon system. What is that you ask? Well, there are 18 amateur radio beacon stations around the globe that are time standard driven and transmit their call signs one after the other so that folks can check conditions on the 20 through 10 meters bands. These beacons stations are located on every continent in both hemispheres except Antarctica.

I find this system very useful in anticipating what part of the world I may be able to communicate with.

Each beacon transmits every three minutes, day and night in CW. A transmission consists of the callsign of the beacon sent at 22 words per minute followed by four one-second dashes. The callsign and the first dash

are sent at 100 watts. The remaining dashes are sent at 10 watts, 1 watt and 100 milliwatts. It is amazing that even when band conditions are poor and the beacon signal is S1 at 100 watts, most times you can still hear the one watt signal and sometimes the 100mw signal.

The frequencies are:

- 20M = 14.100 MHz
- 17M = 18.110 MHz
- 15M = 21.150 MHz
- 12M = 24.930 MHz
- 10M = 28.200 MHz

The station calls signs and located are:

- 4X6TU --- Israel
- 5Z4B----- Kenya
- ZS6DN -- South Africa
- YV5B -----Venezuela
- RR9O ----- Russia
- 4U1UN ----UN, N.Y. City
- JA2IGY---Japan
- OA4B----- Peru
- VE8AT-----Canada
- VR2B -----Hong Kong
- LU4AA ----Argentina
- 4S7B -----Sri Lanka
- W6WX --- California
- OH2B -----Finland
- KH6WO---Hawaii
- CS3B----- Madeira
- ZL6B-----New Zealand
- VK6RVP----Australia

To help you spot the beacon signals; there are several PC programs out there that syncs your PC up to the NCDXF beacons transmit sequence. The program I use is called "DX Beacon Tracker." My old friend Frank La Franco, W6NEK of Huntington

Beach, CA, developed it. Several years ago Frank sent me the program to evaluate, and I liked it very much. Those days it was a commercial program, but a year ago Frank made it available as freeware to all hams.

If you would like to download the **DX Beacon tracker** program go to:

[www.W6NEK.com](http://www.W6NEK.com)

If you want more information on the NCDXF beacon system, go to:

[www.ncdxf.org/beacon](http://www.ncdxf.org/beacon)  
73, W1ZE



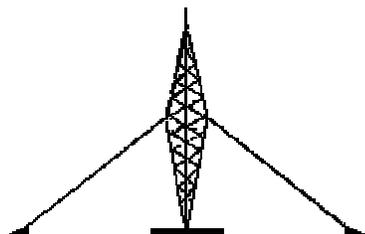
## **Only two more MARA sponsored Ham Exams in 2007**

There is only two more Ham exam sessions left this year. They are:

Saturday, October 13th, and Saturday, December 8th, All test sessions will start promptly at 10:00 AM at the Mid Coast Chapter of the American Red Cross, 16 Community Way in Topsham.

If you plan to attend, please be prompt and have your photo ID, copy of your current license and exam fee (cash no checks)

Kudos goes to MARA member Michele Briggs, KC7LIF and Dot Burgess, KB1OGR for upgrading to General Class at the August 11<sup>th</sup> session. Good work ladies! **73, Bryce, K1GAX**  
**MARA VE Liaison**



## Bruns Node hears again

On Friday August 10<sup>th</sup> Bruce, W1ZE and Bill, K1MNW went over to the repeater building to clean connectors on the 147.21 repeater. In the process they took a look at the KS1R-1 "BRUNS" packet node and all seemed OK except for the 2M Alinco transceiver. A week before Bill and Donnie, WD1F checked and found the Alinco Transceiver was off frequency by a mile or two and they fixed that error. The Alinco is now functioning as expected, but that rice box has NO front-end selectivity. When the 147.21 repeater comes up it renders the BRUNS node deaf until the .21 machine drops carrier. A pass cavity is needed in

line and if possible a notch cavity to attenuate the 147.21 signal. A commercial transceiver with a tighter front end would help. While there, Bruce noted the Bozak half-wave vertical antenna was sitting on the wire fence so he moved the antenna up a few feet so that the radials cleared the barbwire fence. SUCCESS! From Bruce's QTH the 145.01 BRUNS node is full quieting his receiver in Phippsburg and he connected to the node on the first packet burst. It responded with the command list. Bruce entered the "Heard" command and it said it had received signals from W1ZE and W1EMA-2. W1EMA is the Knox County EMA/ARES folks.

The tech-committee now needs to upgrade the program chip in the TNC with the latest "TheNet" node program to make it more versatile. This node would be very useful for southern and central Maine ARES activities along with general amateur radio communications.

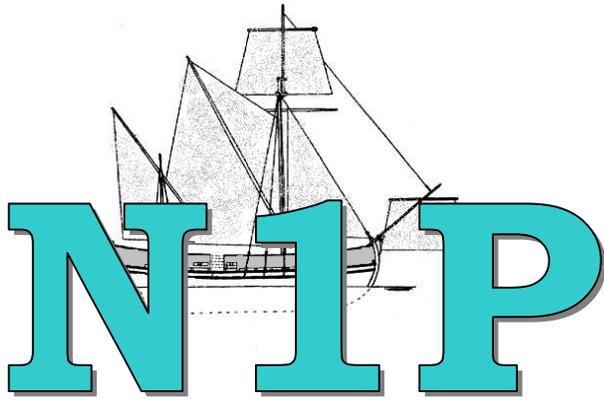
Those of you with more packet node experience than Donnie, Bill or Bruce are encouraged to help in this project.

## Tour Des Farms, another success

**Wiscasset:** In the early morning of August 19<sup>th</sup> seven dedicated hams from the MARA gathered at the Morris Farm on Route 27 to get this years Tour Des Farms Century Bike ride off to a safe start. The Morris farm was the start and end of three separate rides. The first were a group of twenty hardy bikers that headed out on a 100 mile tour through Lincoln County that extended from North Whitefield to Pemeguid lighthouse and back to Wiscasset. Next had a group of about 40 leave at 9:30AM. These folks were fifty milers that took a similar route without the ride to the lighthouse. At mid-day there was an eighteen mile family ride that wandered through Wiscasset and Dresden along the Kennebec River.

Not one person got lost and everyone that started the rides finished. At the end of the rides, a Bar-B-Q picnic was provided to the riders and volunteers. Kudos goes out to N1HOV, K1JJS, WD1F, KA5FPT WB1EFN, N1IPA and W1ZE for their efforts and a job well done, **AGAIN!**





# N1P

By Steve Kercel, AA4AK

The **N1P** operation was a unique event in the history of the MARA. As most readers already know, it was a commemoration of the landing of the Popham colonists on August 13, 1607 at Sabino Point in present-day Phippsburg. The operation took place on August 17-19, 2007 at the Meadowbrook Campground. (Note: The Club extends its heartfelt thanks to Chris Mixon, owner of the campground, for allowing us to use the site free of charge.)



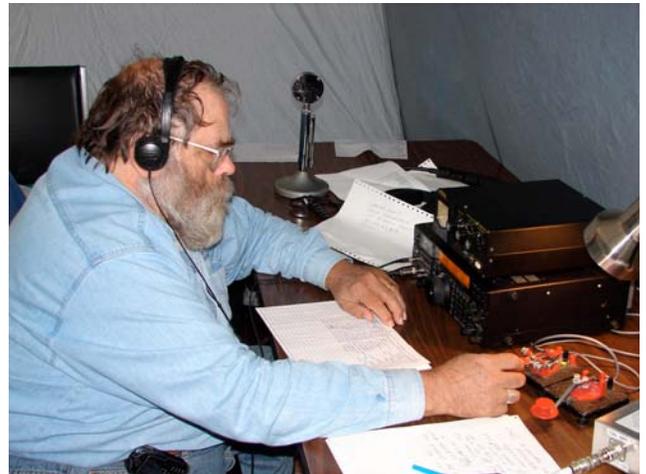
*Planning meeting at Meadowbrook Campground*

The operation spanned 51 hours. The first log entry is AE4NU in Virginia on 40 meter CW at 1920 UTC on August 17, and the last log entry is IN3ZNR in Italy on 20 meter SSB at 2220 UTC on August 19. Operation was round-the-clock except for a 3-hour break on Saturday night when we shut down temporarily when our signal was

interfering with the guitar amplifier at the karaoke concert that was going on right under our 20-meter antenna. There were a total of 503 contacts. The longest distance worked was 10587 miles to VK7SM in Tasmania.

I would like to thank all 38 participants. These included 15 licensed hams, 22 unlicensed visitors, and one dog. We note with sadness the passing of Don Benson's (WN10TV) father-in-law on the Friday night of the event. Don was a major contributor to the planning of the event, and arranged for us to get the site free of charge. He had planned to take a major role in the operation, but was in Millinocket most of the weekend. He was able to visit the site briefly on Sunday afternoon.

What was most remarkable about the event is that we did it on a shoestring. The site, including water, restrooms, electricity and security was free. The Red Cross loaned us tables, chairs, and cots free of charge. We rented a tent from the Base for \$36. Operating gear and accessories were loaned by various members.



*AA4AK working the pileup on 20 CW*

We first got on site on Thursday August 16, and erected the antenna supports and the main tent, and moved the furniture into the tent. We had a thunderstorm Thursday night, and on Friday morning, the tent floor

had puddles where water had wicked up through the bottom canvas. The first task was to move the furniture out of the tent and mop up the puddles. We put down several layers of tarps to prevent further puddling.



*N1P operating site*

Having recovered from the storm, we erected a secondary screen tent, the three HF antennas, and the VHF array. We installed the two HF stations in the main tent, and the VHF station and a talk-in station in the screen tent. We had the 2-meter talk-in rig running by 1600 UTC on Friday, and our first logged contact 3½ hours later. Operations went well on Friday night and into Saturday morning. From about midnight to dawn on Saturday morning conditions were very poor, with only a few contacts being made on 40 meters.



*W1ZE & N1TTT in the VHF/UHF tent*

We kept VHF gear in the screen tent overnight because there was no rain in the forecast. The screen tent was not designed to be rainproof. However, shortly after dawn on Saturday morning we had a violent rainstorm that lasted for about two hours. Some very quick scrambling was necessary to protect the VHF gear from being damaged by the rain. Fortunately, the main tent stayed nice and dry with no further puddling.

Except for the interference problem with the karaoke singers, we did not run into any further misadventures. Propagation Saturday night was substantially better than Friday night, and there was no rain after Saturday morning. The VHF operation was knocked down late Sunday afternoon. About 2200 UTC Sunday, the knockdown began in earnest, and we completed the knockdown and left the site about 2330 UTC on Sunday. By Tuesday, Bruce already had 7 certificate requests in hand. There was one unexpected benefit from the operation. We had had quite a few upgrades from Technician over the past year, and for many members, the N1P operation was their first, and very positive, experience with HF operating.

Organizationally, the setup, operation and knockdown were well choreographed. Considerable preparation was done by a great many members. I would like to give my warmest thanks to all those who worked so hard to make this happen.

**73, Steve**

(N1P photos provided by John Briggs, KC6TVF)



**HAVE YOU UPGRADED  
YOUR LICENSE CLASS YET?**