



SQUELCH TALES



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association
for August 2024



Join the Fun on 6 Meters!

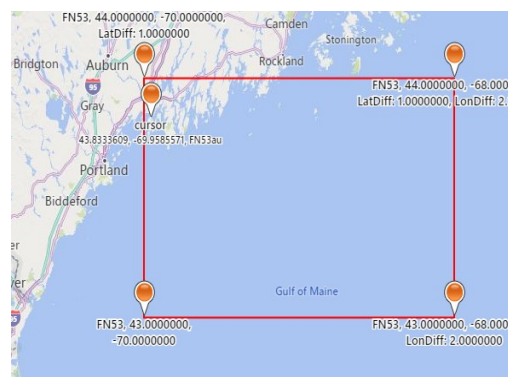
By Dick Bean, K1HC



My antenna farm in Harpswell, ME

Now that summer is in full swing, take a spin of your radio dial to six meters! Sporadic E propagation on 6 meters is very common this time of the year, so it is a good time to try out the band if you haven't. From my location in Harpswell, I am able to make CW contacts with European stations using my 5-watt Yaesu FT-817 and a 6 meter loop on my back deck. Admittedly, the hams on the other end were doing the "heavy lifting" with Yagis on their end, but it just goes to show you don't need a lot to have fun on 6 meters. Only about 20 feet of wire in a loop is a full wavelength on 6 meters (formula $1005/50=20.1$), so that can fit just about anywhere. Additionally, many HF dipoles can work well on 6 meters, sometimes even without a tuner (an 80 or 40 meter dipole has worked for me as well). Just give it a try!

FT8 is a very popular mode on the band, so if you are already operate FT8 on the HF bands, give 6 meter FT8 a try. There are some hams out there who are clamoring for 6 meter contacts with those in MARA who are in grid square FN53.



This is FN53 Maidenhead grid

[If you don't know your grid, just look at your listing on QRZ.COM under the "Details" tab.] QRZ indicates only a little over 300 hams are in this grid. So for those hams chasing 6 meter grids, FN53 is in demand! The Fred Fish Memorial Award (FFMA) was created in honor of Fred Fish, W5FF (SK), who was the first amateur to have worked and confirmed all 488 Maidenhead grid squares in the 48 contiguous United States on 6 Meters. [see <http://www.arrl.org/FFMA> for a full description – only one Maine ham, Lefty, KITOL, has qualified so far]. No matter what grid you may be in, have fun on 6 meters while we have these summer band openings!

73, Dick, K1HC

Editors Note:

As you can see above only a small chunk of FN53 is on dry land and that land is mostly on the coast in the Bath, Brunswick and mid coast area. There are just a few hams in FN53 that are active on six and they are very popular, such as K1HC, WD1F, N1MA & W1ZE, so like Dick requests, come join the fun on the Magic Band.





Old Sol's effect on Ham Radio

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE

We are currently in an up cycle in solar activity and on a majority of the higher HF bands we hams can work the world with a barefoot rig and simple antenna.

For those of you that have not experienced one of these eleven year up cycles before you can have a lot of fun working DX all around the globe night and day. However, there are days that the bands seem to be almost dead and the lower HF bands like 160, 80/75 and 60 meters are almost unusable during the daylight hours due to noise levels approaching S-9 and sometimes higher. There is a lot of reasons for these conditions but most of it stems from Old Sol, our sun's activity.

To get a better explanation on this I recommend reading [the ARRL article from the ARRL Lab Staff](#). Mike Gruber, WA1SVF, assisted by Dean Straw, N6BV, answer some questions about how the sun influences the propagation of radio signals. The article provides explanations of the 11-year sunspot cycle, solar flares, coronal holes, A-Index and K-Index numbers, and much more. A good short read.

73, W1ZE



HURRICANE SEASON IS UPON US. ARE YOU PREPARED?

OK, so we don't live in Florida or on the Gulf Coast and seldom does a tropical storm make it up to the Great State of Maine. However, with the planet warming up and hurricanes of greater magnitude on the increase we may not be able to just shine it on any more.

You are a ham radio operator and you may have the ability to communicate when the things get tough. To be a responsible communicator you should start thinking of what you need to do to be prepared "JUST IN CASE!"

First, do you have a plan to keep you and your family's ability to weather out a big storm with possible loss of power, telephone, internet, etc..

Have you signed up with your local EMA office to be put on the Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs) where local authorities can send out a short emergency alerts to your WEA-enabled mobile device in your locally targeted area. Sagadahoc and Cumberland County provide this service. Check out the info on:

<https://www.maine.gov/portal/CAS/>

In addition, do you have the capability to monitor and/or participate in the Hurricane Watch Net that operates on 20 and 40 meters, 14.325.00 MHz and 7.268.00 MHz SSB. Check out their website at: <https://www.hwn.org/>, a good place to get information and track storm progress when you loose telephone and Internet access.

It Maybe a good idea for you to start thinking how you will be able to communicate if worst comes to worst.

- Do you have backup power generation at your QTH, or at a minimum a station battery backup system so you can stay on the air, and in addition maybe tune in your local AM-FM broadcast stations if they are still on the air.
- If all you have is an HT you may need to think how you can communicate if your local repeater is off the air. Maybe a good outside antenna on your roof or mast to improve things.

Your MARA operates and maintains four KS1R repeater and as of now three of them at WD1F's QTH have solar and generator backup. So we may be able to provide a wider area of communications.

Be prepared.



ARRL email forwarding service has issues

By W1ZE

Some of you have taken advantage of the ARRL's email forwarding service and it did make it easy to have a short "call sign" type email address as I did. However as of late the service has become unreliable and in my case I have been unable to send emails to some folks that use the service. Section Manager Phil Duggan, N1EP said:

"Bruce, The ARRL.net forwarding service has had issues for a long time and I recommend people stop using it. But I have not heard of any recent issues other than. ORG addresses like mine. I'll reach out to the ARRL."

If you use the ARRL.NET service and you have missed getting this newsletters and other messages sent to you that way, please send me an alternate email address for my mailing list.

73, Bruce, W1ZE

