



The care and Feeding of Chasers

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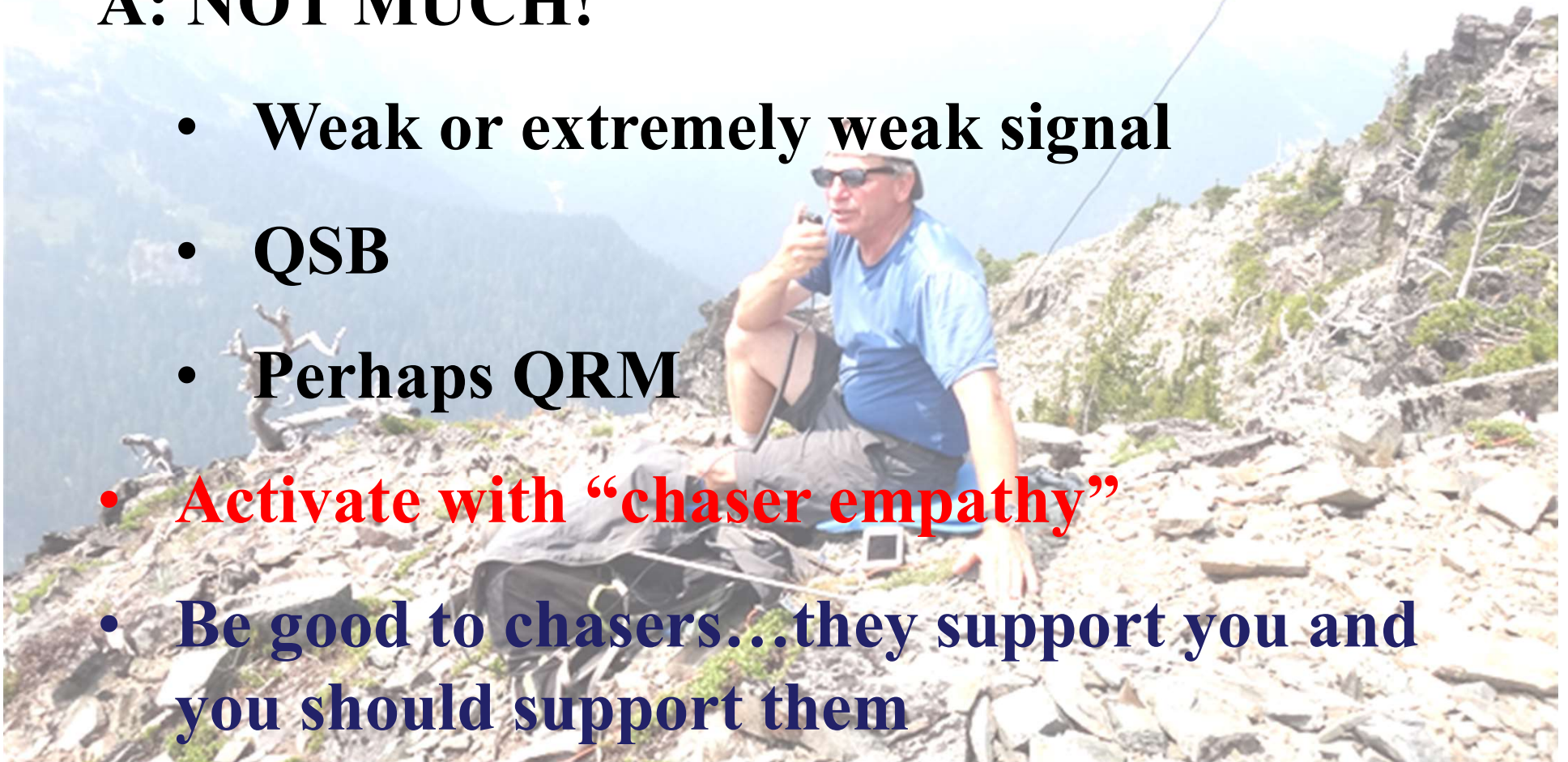
Photo: N7IDS

Chasers are an important part of the SOTA ecosystem

Q: What does a chaser typically hear?

A: NOT MUCH!

- **Weak or extremely weak signal**
- **QSB**
- **Perhaps QRM**
- **Activate with “chaser empathy”**
- **Be good to chasers...they support you and you should support them**



Tip: Have The Best Signal Possible

- 1. Your antenna is the most important variable under your control**
- 2. Use an effective antenna**
 - **“Miracle” & compact antennas don’t work well**
 - **Avoid short loaded/helically wound antennas**
 - **Avoid whips $< \frac{1}{4}$ wavelength**
 - **Avoid the Elecraft 25x25 antenna**
 - **Good SOTA antennas:**
 - **With a tuner: 58’ end-fed with counterpoise & a 9:1 unun**
 - **Without a Tuner: Linked dipole**
- 3. Deployment really matters!**
 - **Dipoles: Higher is better for distance**
 - **Longwires: More vertical is better for distance**

Tip: Know your radio

- **Practice at home**
- **Know how your radio's menus work**
- **Commonly needed:**
 - **Power output**
 - **Mic gain**
 - **Compressor setting**
 - **Internal/external mic**
 - **Keyer speed**
 - **Key versus paddle**
 - **Tuner enable/bypass**



Tip: Use Long-range AND Short-range Bands

- ❑ 20m/17m: Great for lots of distant QSOs**
- ❑ 40m/60m: Great for regional QSOs**
- ❑ Use each to work lots of stations AND your friends in the region!**

Notes:

- 30m can go either way**
- 15m, 17m and 20m will often snag you QSOs with Europe (morning) or Asia (afternoon)**
- 60m and 80m sometimes work surprisingly well**
- *Without working both long-range and short-range bands, you WILL leave behind disappointed chasers***
- In 5 years, propagation will be different**

Tip: Pick a Good Frequency

- **Observe where most SOTA activity is on a subband**
 - E.g. 14.061 – 14.067 on 20m CW
 - E.g. 14.340 – 14.347 on 20m SSB
- **Stay in the General part of an HF band**
- **Ensure your frequency is available**
 - **Check SOTA spots for potential conflicts**
 - **QRL before you spot**
 - **Use memory voice/keyer to call CQ while spotting; this “holds” your frequency**

Note: If you *must* send a “test spot” (or “message spot”) use a nonsensical frequency/mode:

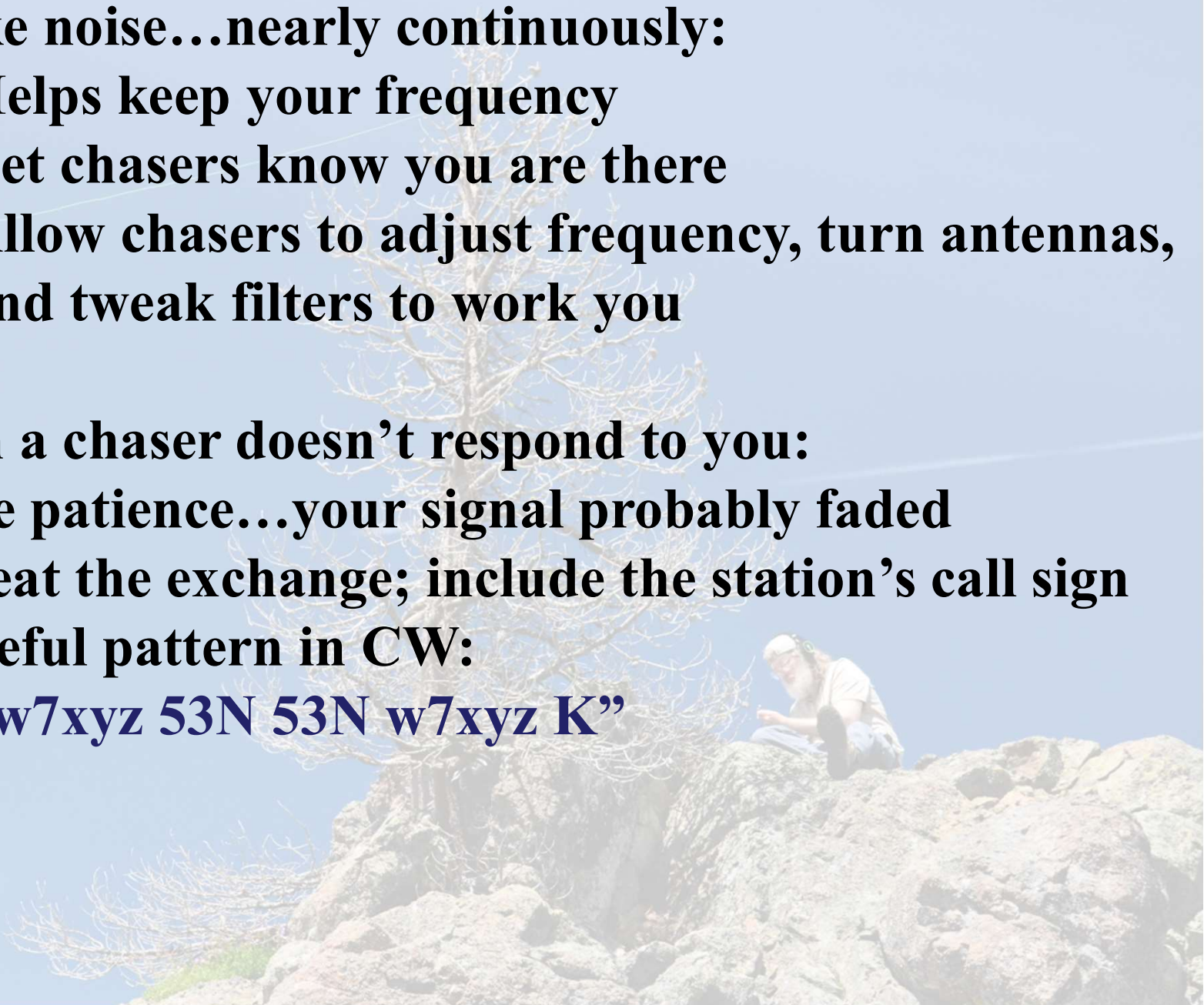
- E.g. 14.000 AM instead of 14.063 CW

Tip: Avoid Long Pauses (on HF)

- **Make noise...nearly continuously:**
 - **Helps keep your frequency**
 - **Let chasers know you are there**
 - **Allow chasers to adjust frequency, turn antennas, and tweak filters to work you**

Tip: When a chaser doesn't respond to you:

- **Have patience...your signal probably faded**
- **Repeat the exchange; include the station's call sign**
- **A useful pattern in CW:**
“w7xyz 53N 53N w7xyz K”



Tip: Assert Positive Control of your Pileups

- Be assertive; have a snappy QSO pace
- Have a fixed routine, esp. at the end of a QSO
- Don't ragchew with a pile-up!
- Your behavior will strongly affect the pile-up
 - Answer the 1st caller; don't answer "tail-enders!"
 - Avoid those who send their call twice in a pileup
 - Avoid gaps...don't log on phone/tablet UNLESS you can do so without pauses!
- Prioritize S2S calls
- Send your call & summit reference judiciously
- Don't leave a frequency while you have callers!

Some tips for VHF activations:

1. Open the squelch when listening for responses to your CQs
2. Peak-up your chaser's signal
 - Go to a higher and less-obstructed spot
 - Adjust the orientation of your antenna
 - Hold your antenna horizontally for H-polarized chasers!
3. Let avid SOTA chasers work you first!
 - In urban areas, start & spot on a frequency other than 146.52
4. Minimize your impact on 146.52:
 - QSY to another frequency with your pile-up
“This is W7XYZ and I hear many callers. I am going to QSY to 146.56....”
 - This practice preserves a good image for you and SOTA
 - This practice helps other users of the frequency
5. Be aware of front-end overload on summits with RF equipment
 - If you get no responses, you may be QRMIing the frequency!
 - SOTABeams makes a nice bandpass filter for this issue.