

# Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter

July-August 2018

W0C/SC-011 basecamp by Steve-WGØAT

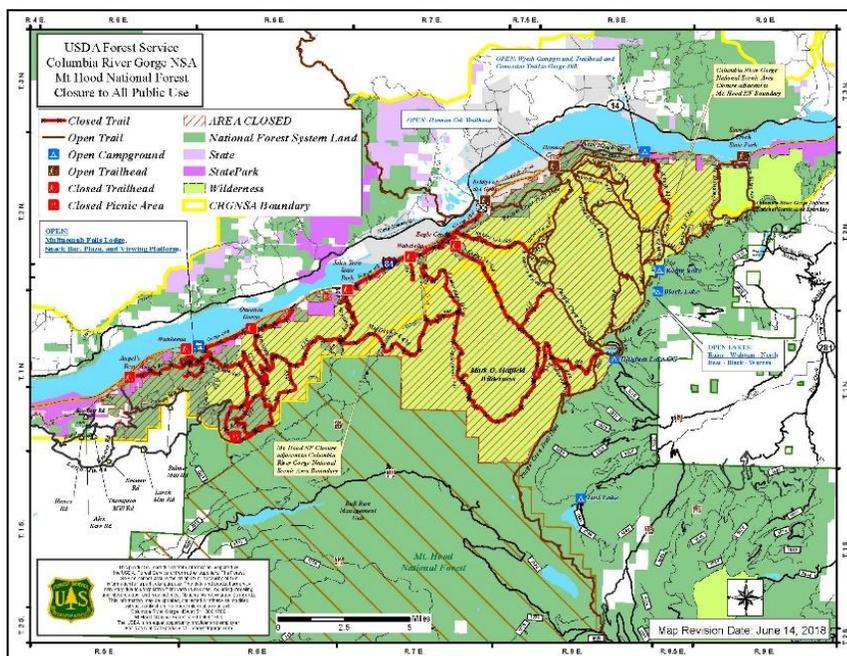
**Reminder for Upcoming Events** – Summer should be busy with hikes to summits, here's a few ways to combine contests and other activities with radio from the peaks...

[2018 CQ World Wide VHF Contest](#) on July 21-22. The Hilltopper category is perfect for SOTA.

[ARRL 222 and Up Contest](#) on August 4-5 – Give 446.00-fm a try with your HT if you are on a summit, and if possible, know your six-digit grid square or summit lat/lon for the exchange.

[Colorado 14er Event](#) on August 4-5 – Many SOTA summits are activated in W0C this weekend. Use this chance at extra activity for a west coast Summit-to-Summit Event the same weekend. Look at SOTAWatch spots and find someone else on a summit – give them a call with “Summit-to-Summit” and work ‘em. Note that S2S contacts are logged as both Activator and Chaser for proper credit.

## Trails of the Columbia River Gorge...Some Trails Open after Eagle Creek Fire – The Pacific Crest Trail



Association focuses on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (of course) but also has information on [other fire closures](#). For Oregon, they feature this [detailed map](#) and information that the Pacific Crest Trail and Mount Defiance trails are open!

### Software to Check Out (Android) –

I'm not big on phone apps, but this one sold itself. I often look out at the horizon and wonder what peaks I'm seeing – with Peakfinder, I just need to hold up my phone and they are identified!

<https://www.peakfinder.org/>

**An Oregon Volcano Tour** – Mark-K7EEX gives an overview of Oregon’s Cascade volcanoes and what it takes to climb them. Note the differences he describes between hiking on an established trail and technical climbing with high angle snow and rockfall hazards – but one summit could involve a chairlift ride!

While many SOTA associations have bunches of easy 10-point summits, for activators in Oregon, those points won’t come easily. Almost all of the high point mountains in Oregon require considerable efforts, especially those in the Cascades where almost all of them are glaciated volcanoes. That said, while most of them require significant effort, some of them become sometimes a bit like hikes in the summer as the snow gives way to pathways of scree and volcanic ash. The primary climbing season for the hike-able peaks is July through September. Grab your backpack, some sturdy boots, a lot of water, and let’s go climbing.

The crown jewel of Oregon is [Mount Hood \(W7O/CN-001\)](#). This is the second most climbed glaciated peak in the world with an estimated 10,000 climbers a year attempting the summit. But don’t be lulled into thinking it easy. Even the trade route up from Timberline Lodge requires 8-12 hours round trip and requires the skills of ice and snow travel year-round. It is a burly 5000’ of elevation gain on a slope that is best done early in the season before the snowpack turns to an ice sheet and rockfall becomes a threat. Crampons, a helmet and an ice axe are mandatory gear and roping up on the final sections near the summit is recommended if conditions are anything but soft snow. Registration at Timberline Lodge is required for all climbers and avalanche beacons are highly recommended.

If you are experienced in mixed rock and snow climbing, an arguably better alpine experience than Mount Hood sits south of her. Mount Jefferson (W7O/CN-002) is a stout climb and requires skilled, technical climbing on mixed rock and ice all year round. The normal route comes in from the north at Jefferson Park. Be aware that Mt. Jefferson is viewed as a test piece for many aspiring Oregon alpine climbers and should not be attempted unless you have experience on a number of other significant, glaciated peaks. The approach is long, and any rescue would be even longer.

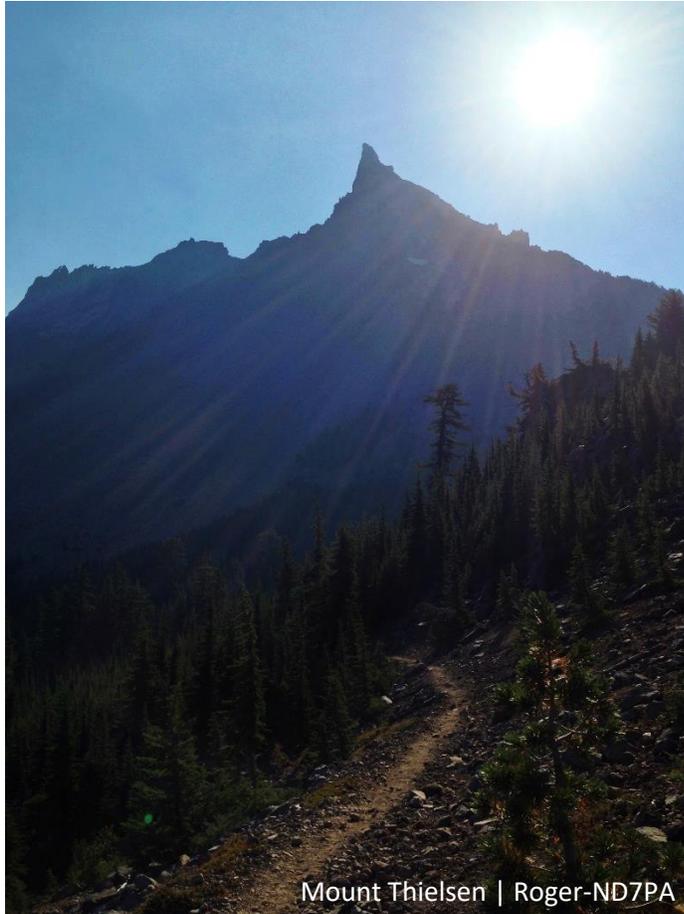
Further south is the Sisters Complex made up of five separate peaks. The easiest and tallest one, [South Sister \(W7O/CM-001\)](#) turns into a long, hard day hike in the summer of about twelve and a half miles round trip. If you are looking for a big summit with unbelievable views, this should be your target. Pack your lightest gear, three or four quarts of water, and get your hike on early in the morning (where early is before sunrise). [Middle Sister \(W7O/CM-003\)](#) and North Sister (W7O/CM-002) both require a greater effort to reach and both have issues with loose rock, especially North Sister, that can be quite treacherous. My recommendation is to get a feel for the experience on other peaks first before attempting either of those.



Broken Top Catwalk with Roger-ND7PA

Southeast of the Sisters sits the rotting volcanic remains of [Broken Top \(W7O/CM-004\)](#). This peak can easily be done in a day, but be aware that the rock is quite loose and the final traverse along the Northwest Ridge has some gut-wrenching exposure (see report above for pictures). The climbing is not hard, but most climbers rope up for the final sections as a fall would have tragic results. That said, the activation zone is before this and an activation can be had without being on the summit.

Across the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway lies one of the easiest ten pointers in Oregon. [Mount Bachelor \(W70/CM-005\)](#) can be accessed directly in the winter on weekends when the Summit Express chairlift is open. If you want to access the summit during the summer you either start at the ski area parking lot and go up the snaking route by Sunrise Lodge, or you can take the Pine Marten ski lift up to the Lodge and then scale the rest of the way up to the summit. If you chose the Pine Martin option, stop off on the way back down to sip a cold beer with the downhill mountain bike loonies.



My favorite climb in all of Oregon rises north of Crater Lake National Park. [Mount Thielsen \(W70/CS-002\)](#) is known as the lightning rod of the Cascades. The last remnants of a long extinct volcano, Thielsen can be climbed in a long day from the west off of Highway 138. For activators, the summit can be activated from Chicken Ledge which sits about 65' below the true summit. For folks that want to get their thrill on, put on a harness and rope up for the most nauseating exposure you've ever had as the final pinnacle drops off hundreds of feet on two sides and several thousand on another.

While they aren't 10-pointers, the five summits that surround Crater Lake are worthy of the time and doubling or tripling up on them is rumored to be easy in a day. [Mount Scott \(W70/CS-003\)](#) is the most visited peak in the park and has an amazing view of the entire lake. From the Rim Road, park at the Mt. Scott Trailhead and take the 2.1-mile hike to the summit, gaining about 1200' total. Note that this trail often doesn't open until July.

The southernmost volcanic 10-pointer in Oregon is the little-known Mount McLoughlin (W70/CS-001). In the summer, McLoughlin becomes a non-technical but long, day hike. If you climb her, know that you are one of the few that do so as she gets very little attention in comparison to many of the other Cascade volcanoes. The best bet is to camp out near the trailhead and get an early morning start to avoid the surprising sun and heat of the summer months.

If you are interested in any of these peaks, many more details can be found at [www.summitpost.org](http://www.summitpost.org). I also recommend Jeff Thomas's classic book, *Oregon High: A Climbing Guide*.

**A message from our friends at the Oregon Department of Transportation** – Beginning on July 1, distracted driving penalties in Oregon will increase and the prohibited activities change. Know your local laws and carry your license if you operate while mobile. Other jurisdictions are likely moving in the same direction with less tolerance for activities that move your attention away from the road.

The law in Oregon now includes cell phones, tablets, Kindles, laptops, GPS units, mobile music players or any electronic device. Exemptions include those making medical emergency calls, truck and bus

drivers following federal rules, two-way radio use by school drivers and utility drivers during the scope of their employment, police, fire, ambulance, and emergency vehicle operators during the scope of their employment and **ham radio operators**.

**Arizona Mega Activation**– Pete-WA7JTM, Association Manager for W7A, describes their big January event in the SOTA Reflector. Their effort got the attention of ARRL in the [full results contest write-up](#).

The W7A (Arizona) Mega Activation day went off as planned on Sunday, January 21st. The coincided with the ARRL January VHF Contest, and we thought it might be fun, and we were right.

Thirteen Arizona Activators were on Summits simultaneously Sunday Morning, and it was extremely busy to say the least. It looks like the SOTA Activators made over 600 VHF/UHF QSO's on 50, 144, 223, and 432 MHz, and every log was filled with S2S contacts. The logging was fast and furious and I heard rumors of “smoking pencils” during the peak hours of the event.



I managed to make 124 VHF/UHF contacts, working 12 SOTA Activators, and making 31 S2S contacts. Other Activators had similar results. We won't know the final results for a while from all of the participants...seems some of us were worn out a bit by hiking up to their summits with radios, batteries, antennas (yagis on four bands in some cases), masts, the and cold weather gear. The local VHF testers told us this was the busiest January VHF event maybe ever in Arizona, and SOTA had a lot to do with that. So, congrats to all and maybe we can get twenty summits on the air next year!

**QST features SOTA with “Nature-Friendly Amateur Radio”** – The June 2018 issue (page 64) has a thoughtful article by Bruce-N7RR using photos of SOTA activations from Todd-W7TAO (and his kids) and Roland-K7FOP.

**Gear Idea for Activators** – Yes, that is a shower cap on a KX3. No need to get your radio wet – just put a hotel shower cap over it and still hear the Chasers and make some adjustments. For strapping your antenna mast to trees or fence posts, there's always the basic webbing strap – but add a few inches of old inner tube to make it 'stick' to your pole for less sliding around.



There are lots of clever ways to secure your antenna to the top of your telescopic pole – these small caribiners are light and are easy enough to work when your hands are cold. And speaking of a telescopic pole, don't be wishing you still had the cap at the top, keep it with you with a bit of duct tape and string. To secure a 2m yagi to a mast, take two of these [Wooster LockJaw](#) and set them up back to back to adapt any boom to any pole.



Roger-ND7PA recommends a [hook and loop cinch strap](#). He found ones 1.5 inches wide and 24 inches long with a metal buckle at one end to help tighten the strap. I really like [waterproof log books](#) – with a pencil I've not had a worry about my logbook smearing or dissolving in rain or snow.



**It's Okay to Turn Around. Even Twice** – Andrew-K7ASQ makes a point and sets an example for forgoing an activation for your own safety or that of your team. SOTA is only a game, and the mountains and the points will be there later – let's make sure that all of us are also there later to try again...

In 2016 I took my hiking adventures to a new level and successfully completed a handful of multi-day trips in the mountains. The year culminated with a nine-day, 75 mile thru-hike of Washington Section J of the Pacific Crest Trail—from Snoqualmie to Stevens Pass. Upon my return, a friend approached me and asked if I wanted to go on one more adventure that year. He eventually talked me into summiting Mount Adams with him and his brother. Two weeks later, camped halfway up the southern face of the mountain at 9400 feet, my friend came to my tent and said we had a problem. His brother had started

to show signs of altitude sickness and was now frantically packing his things to descend, insisting that we stay behind to summit the next morning as planned. The sun was setting, and weather reports called for wind gusts of 55+ mph that night. I glanced up toward the summit and thought of everything I had gone through to get me to where I was. I looked back at my friends, who were looking at me, waiting for me to make a decision. I looked up again and watched the cloud forming over Pikers Peak. As badly as I wanted to stay and make the summit, it was foolish to be going down alone at night. I turned to my friends and made my decision: "It's done."

We packed everything up, left the shelter of the rock wall where we had set up camp, and headed out into the darkness. Exposed to the winds with only the light of our headlamps and a GPS track to guide us, we ended up on the wrong spur and missed the trail. Our only option was to cross up and over a rock field to get back on track. While I was stepping over one of the jagged rocks, I was hit by a wall of wind and over I went. I covered my face as I rolled and bounced from one rock to another. I didn't go very far, but when I stopped my pants were cut open and my knee and leg were bleeding along with my hands. I walked myself back to the car. The cuts healed, but weeks passed and the pain in my knee didn't go away. An MRI finally showed what I had suspected but hoped wasn't true—I had torn my meniscus.

Starting with arthroscopic knee surgery, the first half of 2017 consisted of physical therapy and learning to walk, run, and hike again. By the end of the year I felt like I had made a full recovery and my sights began to return to Mount Adams. This time I was the one that talked a friend into going with me, and a date was set in early September to return to the mountain. That morning I awoke to the news that the Columbia Gorge was on fire and a quick call to the ranger station in Trout Lake confirmed the bad news: "You can still go up there if you want, but you'd better bring a respirator with you because it's covered in smoke." We chose another date, and three weeks later we were finally at the trailhead. The fire was out, and the air was clear, but a cold snap had brought an early snowfall to the higher elevations of the mountain.

The temperature had warmed back up and was unusually mild, softening the fresh snow and making it time-consuming to traverse. The extra time combined with a late start forced us to set up camp almost 1500 feet below the Lunch Counter—elevation we would have to make up the next morning on our push to the summit. The cold night hardened the snow, making it perfect for walking with crampons. Soon we arrived at the Lunch Counter where I had turned around a year before. We ate a quick snack and continued up the snowfield toward the summit. It wasn't long before the temperature broke 50 degrees and we were sinking in the snow again. Between post-holing and the lack of oxygen we were taking breaks every ten minutes from the exertion of the climb. Seven grueling hours later we reached Pikers Peak—the false summit at 11,650 feet.

We stopped to eat our last Cliff Bars and catch our breath. The final ascent to the summit began after a short walk across a saddle, but at the rate we were going it would take about an hour to climb the final few hundred feet. I pulled the Camelbacks out of our packs to check how much water we had left, and the reality of our situation set in. We had spent the last seven hours climbing 4200 feet in only three miles. The plan was to be back at camp for lunch, but it was past 3:00 pm and sunset was in just over two hours. The sun was on us the whole afternoon and we were hot and sweating and exhausted. The

rest of our food was back at camp, and we only had a liter of water left between the two of us. I looked over at the summit of Mount Adams. I saw the old lookout tower up there, poking out of the snow. I thought of everything I had gone through to get to me where I was. I looked back at my friend, who was looking at me, waiting for me to make a decision. I looked back at the summit—it seemed so close. The draw of the summit only another hour away was strong, but it was foolish to push any further. I turned to my friend and made my decision: “It’s done.”

We glissaded back down to the Lunch Counter. Descending further, even with first-hand knowledge of how easy it is to take the wrong path, we ended up on the wrong side of a spur. Our only option was to go up and over the rocks to camp, and we made it just as the sun set behind Mount Saint Helens. We ate our lunches for dinner as we began melting snow and getting ready for a second, unplanned, night on the mountain. The next morning, we hiked out and returned home without incident.

Hikers and especially climbers, in my experience, often get focused on the goal of reaching some destination—whether a camp site, a lake, or the summit of a peak. With a competitive scoring system like Summits on the Air, that focus can become even stronger. Whether it’s an 12,000’ volcano in your way, a thunderstorm, or an upset stomach, what I’ve learned is that it’s always okay to turn around—those places will still be there tomorrow. Mount Adams is still there, and I’m already planning for my return. Third time’s the charm!

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