

Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter

July-August-September 2020

From Kodiak Peak, Idaho W7I/SR-167

Upcoming Events – Summer Contests! Here are FOUR summer events that you can ‘win’ with QRP from a summit:
[CQ WW VHF](#) – July 18-19. A simple contest as it only uses 6m and 2m. Plus, the “Hilltopper” category is perfect for SOTA.
[ARRL 222 MHz and Up](#) – August 1-2. During this contest I made a personal record of over 200 miles on 432.1-SSB from a Crater Lake summit to SW Washington. It should be possible to work a few on 446.00-FM – try it!
[Colorado 14er Event](#) – Also on August 1-2, there will be opportunities to work HF Summit-to-Summit with folks on the highest peaks in Colorado. When activating HF, try calling “CQ Summit-to-Summit” to give QRP sigs a chance.
[ARRL September VHF](#) – September 12-13. This one should be easy – lots of activity on all V/UHF bands and modes...

Thoughtful Use of 146.52-FM – I’ve heard a few complaints of SOTA Activators using the National Calling Frequency for the SOTA “Contest.” Now SOTA is not a contest, and I doubt that any SOTA Activator stays chatting on 146.52-FM for more than a few minutes at a time (compared to some other long-winded rag-chewers). Still, the [SOTA General Rules](#) call for a “spirit of cooperation” – how can we contribute to that?

Around SW Washington and the Willamette Valley **146.58** is our primary “SOTA” frequency– calling there first can net you Summit-to-Summit contacts and SOTA Chasers that *want* to work you. And if you spot on [SOTAWatch](#), you can use **ANY** QRG – 146.58 or **146.56 often used in Puget Sound**, are fine. It’s a good practice on 2m FM to make few and short CQ calls, and space them out as long as several minutes. People don’t move into range so often that calling every 30-seconds is needed. Also, calling CQ on 146.52 and say “Listening 146.54” shows respect for how 52 can be used. Let’s be good neighbors with our fellow hams and use the Calling Frequency thoughtfully while we have our radiosport fun.

Pacific Northwest Summit-to-Summit Parties – here are upcoming S2S events in the Northwest – join one in your neighborhood by posting an [Alert on SOTAWatch](#) with your comment indicating the event you’ll be participating in.

- + **W7M** Before the [Glacier Hamfest](#). July 16&17 – meet up at the gathering. Contact [Rob-AE7AP](#).
- + **W7I Boise**. [Chris-KG7VLX](#) will host an activation on July 18 to [Lucky Peak](#) – Join him! Work him!
- + **W7W Cascade Crest S2S Party**. Summits on or near the divide! July 11 @1900z. Starting on 146.56-FM.
- + **W7W Puget Sound**. [James-WA7JNJ](#) is hosting a S2S Party on August 8 @1900z– post your own [Alert!](#)
- + VE7 Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island are welcome to join in both W7W S2S Parties!

HF Portable Antennas – In 2014 SOTABeams, a UK supplier of much SOTA-useful gear, put out a survey to determine the most popular HF portable antennas. The survey results include a discussion of each antenna type – quite interesting...
<https://www.sotabeams.co.uk/blog/5-most-popular-hf-portable-antennas/>

A CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS – from John-VA7JBE:

Hello everyone, I hope that you're staying safe and sane during these tumultuous times. As the weather turns fair and the snow in the alpine melts, it's my pleasure to update you all on some of the exciting new changes that will be coming to our association in the near future.

New Summits

There are more than 28,000 P150 summits (prominence greater than 150 metres) in VE7 and so far, we have just 877 registered in the SOTA database. In the coming months we will be processing and adding summits to the database. That means we need volunteers! Anyone can help. All it takes is some time and a diligence to make sure the summit name is correct. If you'd like to be part of this, direct message me your email and I'll send you some more information shortly. The process is expected to begin sometime in July/August.

New Regions

The SOTA summit database can only hold 999 summits per region, and as a result we will be splitting some regions into 2-5 parts to accommodate the high density of summits in our association. These will be announced once they are finalized.

New Awards

To recognize the achievements of activators and chasers in our association, we're cooking up some awards that are more in line with the unique challenges of being a SOTA operator in VE7. These will be administered by the VE7 management team and specific to the VE7 Association.

Sincerely,

John VA7JBE [VA7JBE @ gmail](mailto:VA7JBE@gmail.com)

VE7 Association Manager

Willamette Valley S2S Party – On 20 June **SIXTEEN** Activators on **ELEVEN** summits worked through all S2S permutations in an hour! And the rain nearly stopped (for most of us). No amazing DX with all summits in Oregon, but it was fun and a good way to kick off summer. Below are photos of Etienne-K7ATN on Bald Peak and Troy-KF7SEY on Dorn Peak.



Thoughts On CW by Wayne-N6KR, from the Elecraft user group:

I find that CW has many practical and engaging aspects that I just don't get with computer-mediated modes like FT8. You'd think I'd be burned out on CW by now, over 45 years since I was first licensed, but no, I'm still doing it :)

CW feels personal and visceral, like driving a sports car rather than taking a cab. As with a sports car, there are risks. You can get clobbered by larger vehicles (QRM). Witness road rage ("UP 2!"). Fall into a pothole (QSB). Be forced to drive through rain or snow (QRN).

With CW, like other forms of human conversation, you can affect your own style. Make mistakes. Joke about it.

CW is a skill that bonds operators together across generations and nations. A language, more like pidgin than anything else, with abbreviations and historical constructs and imperialist oddities. A curious club anyone can join. (At age 60 and able to copy 50 WPM on a good day, I may qualify as a Nerd Mason of some modest order, worthless in any other domain but of value in a contest.)

With very simple equipment that anyone can build, such as a high-power single-transistor oscillator, you can transmit a CW signal. I had very little experience with electronics when I was 14 and built an oscillator that put out maybe 100 mW. Just twisted the leads of all those parts together and keyed the collector supply--a 9-volt battery. With this simple circuit on my desk, coupled to one guy wire of our TV antenna mast, I worked a station 150 miles away and was instantly hooked on building things. And on QRP. I'm sure the signal was key-clicky and had lots of harmonics. I've spent a lifetime making such things work better, but this is where it started.

Going even further down the techno food chain, you can "send" CW by whistling, flashing a lamp, tapping on someone's leg under a table in civics class, or pounding a wrench on the inverted hull of an upside-down U.S. war vessel, as happened at Pearl Harbor. Last Saturday at an engineering club my son belongs to, a 9-year-old demonstrated an Arduino Uno flashing HELLO WORLD in Morse on an LED. The other kids were impressed, including my son, who promptly wrote a version that sends three independent Morse streams on three LEDs. A mini-pileup. His first program.

Finally, to do CW you don't always need a computer, keyboard, mouse, monitor, or software. Such things are invaluable in our daily lives, but for me, shutting down everything but the radio is the high point of my day. The small display glows like a mystic portal into my personal oyster, the RF spectrum. Unless I crank up the power, there's no fan noise. Tuning the knob slowly from the bottom end of the band segment to the top is a bit like fishing my favorite stream, Taylor Creek, which connects Fallen Leaf Lake to Lake Tahoe. Drag the line across the green, sunlit pool. See what hits. Big trout? DX. Small trout? Hey, it's still a fish, and a QSO across town is still a QSO. Admire it, then throw it back in.

Back to 40 meters...73, Wayne-N6KR

Two PNW SOTA Stories from VE7-land – Here are some ideas for activations in British Columbia from Gabor-VE7JH and Mike-VE7KPM.

First, we'll hear from Gabor-VE7JH:

Since my plans to enter the CQ-WPX-SSB Contest at the end of March at VE7UF's QTH had fallen by the wayside due to COVID-19, I decided to activate some summits that I have never visited before. Here on Vancouver Island I thought I'd choose some easy ones because the weather was rather dreary and showers were forecast.

I spent Saturday near Langford, BC and visited [Mount Wells VE7/CL-011](#) and [Mount McDonald VE7/CL-015](#). These summits can be attacked from the same parking lot and they each take only about an hour to ascend. It was raining on and off so once on the summit I just stuck to 2m-FM and had no problem making a half a dozen contacts with chasers in Victoria area.

Both mountains have easy to follow trails that are quite well maintained. If one has a half a day to kill in the area they make for a perfect two-fer.

On Sunday I visited [Mount Work VE7/CL-010](#) (pictured below) and Partridge Hills VE7/CL-020 in the Saanich/Highlands area. Both are situated within parks and have well-maintained trails. There were a fair number of hikers around but finding a quiet spot in the activation zone was no problem. I just operated 2m-FM from CL-010, but once I summited CL-020 the sun came out and the winds eased up so I was able to set up my 20m CW gear and worked a handful of USA stations along with DJ5AV, EA7GV and ZL1BYZ.



There is great 2m FM simplex activity in the Capital Region (that's what the "CL" stands for) and US stations across the water are easily reachable too. One should have no problem making the required four QSOs from any of these summits with just a 2m HT and an aftermarket antenna. I have now have activated 31 different summits but there is still plenty to go!

73, Gabor-VE7JH

And now we'll hear from Mike-VE7KPM:

Firstly: at the beginning of this year I had my third anniversary in the SOTA program! On December 30, 2016, I hiked up Partridge Hills with my FT-817 and a Miracle Whip antenna and completed my first activation. Since then, I have done SOTA ops, (not all successful), in 7 countries, on three continents, and three different US States. Having devoted most of my spare time to this activity since then, I have accumulated 99 points so far; so, it will only be 28 more years before I can attain Mountain Goat Status... 😊

On another note – earlier this year I set out to activate Walbran Mountain. It was a comedy of errors and some of the best dumb luck I've ever had the pleasure of experiencing. For the first time in months, I decided to have a few drinks the night before, so, long story short, I not only slept in, but my packing and preparedness was less the stellar. One of the biggest "oopsies", was my daughter had turned my computer off, because the screen was interfering with a game she was playing, so when I plugged my GPS watch in to charge overnight, it did not; and I unfortunately didn't notice until I was already on the road.

I arrived out in "the bush" just after sunrise, and I immediately came across a guy with a flat tire, who had no jack. Being the dumbass I am, I had taken my jack out of my truck after unpacking from my double flat incident last month, and not put it back in, so I couldn't help him, but I told him I would go find someone with a jack, and send them his direction. He had gotten his flat in the road I was heading for, so I was leery to go that route now that I realized I had no jack myself.





Not too far down the road, I ran in two guys in a truck, who had a jack, and were happy to go help the guy with the flat. In the process, we were shooting the breeze, and I mentioned I was hoping to explore a way to the top of Edinburgh Mountain. Turns out one of the guys was a logging contractor, who worked up there, and knew of a road that wasn't on any map, that went the better part up the mountain, and, they had a rough trail from there to the summit, where they had installed a repeater for their logging operations.

His directions were outstanding. I found the road, and was able to drive halfway up the mountain, and hike the remainder of the road, and then quickly found the "trail" to the summit. I did make the decision to ditch a bunch of gear, including my 25w VHF radio, and, unknowingly my backup GPS unit.

I could not raise anyone of 2m on my HT, nor would any one answer my calls on HF, so I tried chasing some contacts, but that was fruitless as well. I was starting to get disheartened, when, I pulled out my phone to check the time. Thank god my watch was dead! Turns out, I was roaming on US cell service!!! So, I'm sure it cost me a fortune, but I was able to spot myself, which saved my activation.

73, Mike-VE7KPM

Test Yourself on Navigation Skills – This article presents a full range of skills that are often critical for finding SOTA summits – and more importantly, returning from them. It should give each of us a few ideas about what we should know before heading out. <https://www.outsideonline.com/2405201/navigation-skills-test-checklist#close>

Virtual SOTA Gatherings – In this COVID era with no gathering at SeaPac or even meeting up at a pub after an activation, the PNW enjoyed two “virtual” gatherings organized by Ken-K17VEM. Below you can find the presentations on wire HF antennas and planning for a successful summit:

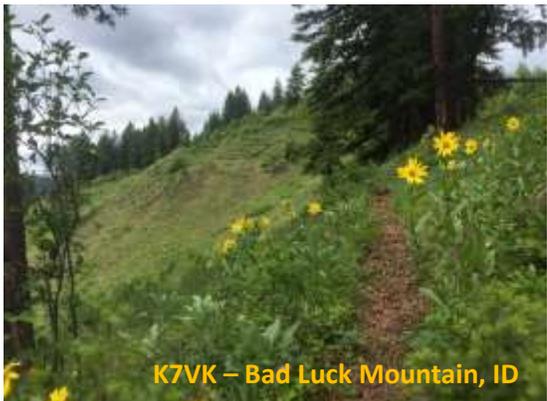
<http://www.pnwsota.org/content/virtual-sota-gathering-april-2020>

<http://www.pnwsota.org/content/virtual-sota-gathering-may-2020>

Trip Reports on PNWSOTA – Trip reports is one of my favorite things to help other activators enjoy ANY and ALL summits – by knowing how to get there and what to expect on the trail. In the past two months EIGHTEEN ops have published **57** trip reports on pnwsota.org – thanks to them so that others can follow after.

KG7EJT	WJ7WJ	KK7A	KA7GPP	KJ7EHA	W7EEE
AE7AP	K7AHR	WA7JNJ	AG7GP	KE4HET	W6PZA
K7VK	K7ATN	AF7MD	NOSLA	AE7EU	KF7SEY

Below is a sampling of some of nice photographs from these trip reports – zoom in to appreciate their work.



Jim-K7MK – Idaho’s Newest Mountain Goat! by Jim-KK7A

On April 18th 2020 at 20:36 UTC Jim Cullum, K7MK completed his fourth QSO from Kodiak Peak (W7I/SR-167) and became Idaho’s second ever Mountain Goat! And not just MG on that day – it was also his birthday! See the banner photo for this newsletter for the view from his MG summit...

Jim’s quest began five years earlier on this same peak with his first ever SOTA activation. Obviously, he enjoys the hobby and after five years and 218 activations he achieved his goal. During his SOTA career Jim has activated US summits in Idaho, Arizona, Massachusetts, Vermont, Utah, Oregon, California, Washington, and South Dakota. He also took advantage of some business trips to Germany and activated summits there. There are numerous “first activations” in Jim’s SOTA career – often involving bushwhacking up Idaho’s all too common trail-less summits. More than once Jim aborted summit quests when the brush got too thick and the planned for route just was not going to work. About 70% of his activations and 60% of his points came from his home state of Idaho.

When Jim started his Mountain Goat campaign, he was exclusively an SSB operator. A year later he made some initial QSY’s into the CW world. This was also during the ARRL’s National-Parks-On-The-Air program and for both NPOTA and SOTA, CW is a most useful mode. Within a few months, by the fall of 2016, Jim was operating exclusively in CW, a mode he continues today. Chasers will hear him flying along at 20+ words per minute – they better be ready to hear their callsign come back over the airways.



And, of course, Jim could not have achieved Mountain Goat without dedicated chasers following him to summits. Across the almost 5,000 QSOs Jim logged from summits in the past five years there were six operators who worked him more than 100 times. These were: WØMNA (157), WØERI (156), W7RV (124), KK7A (118), N4EX (108), and NS7P (108).

Jim is already off and working on his second Mountain Goat. He is borrowing some from KR7RK’s playbook down in Arizona. Longer activations with bigger antennas and more power across more bands and modes. Maybe this will be a more leisurely next 1,000 activation points. Only time will tell. But, for sure, he has not retired as a SOTA activator.



Congrats to Rich-AC7MA as another W7W MG! by Bill-WA7NCL

Rich has been an outdoors enthusiast for many years. He hiked and climbed extensively in the 80’s and 90’s. I met Rich through work in the late 90s and found he was a fellow ham. I encouraged him to get a station going and he became a regular with my small Field Day group. We also did a few VHF contests together as a portable station.

Rich is well known for his contributions to many of the Elecraft products including the K3/K3S, KX3, and KX2. His SOTA setup consists of a KX2 with integrated key, internal tuner and battery. He has a link dipole that he has designed with a twisted pair feed line and collapsible fiberglass pole. The system deploys amazingly fast and he has an extremely effective system that works well on 40 thru 15 meters.

Rich's first SOTA attempt was Mt. Electric. He had a prototype KX3 and failed to make any QSOs. His first successful SOTA was in Aug. 2012 on Loser Ridge (of all places). In September of that year we did Beckler Peak together on a busy Saturday. We set up on the peak amid the crowd of people there with crying babies and a tennis ball crazed dog. The dog managed to get tangled in Rich's feed line and nearly pulled his KX3 over the edge of the cliff. He vowed thereafter to avoid popular peaks on weekends, as befitting the Spirit of SOTA.

In 2013 through 2015 - Rich was very busy with Elecraft work and only did an occasional summit.

In 2016 - Rich increased his SOTA activities. In July he and I did seven peaks in three days in the Blewett Pass / Table Mountain area. In the fall he did Mt. Herman in Colorado with Steve WGØAT and in the process became familiar with some real Goats, Rooster and Peanut.



In 2017 - Rich and I introduced Josh-WU7H to SOTA with a July trip to Tinkham Peak. The trip was not an ideal SOTA initiation and Rich bunged up his knee which reduced the SOTA output for the rest of the summer.

In 2018 - Rich retired from Elecraft and his SOTA numbers jumped tremendously. Spring saw his first winter bonus peak. July featured a one-day marathon to Pechugh, Kelly Butte, Sawmill Ridge, and Colquhoun Peak and a three-day trip to the Entiat and Tyee Ridge. The later trip featured a plague of yellow jackets and a windy night near Tyee Mountain.

In 2019 - Rich and I made a five-day July expedition to seven peaks on the Columbia Crest. This included first activations of W7W/ FR-009 Midnight Mountain, FR-010 King Mountain, FR-021 Graves Mountain, and FR-007 White Mountain. Also notable were two summer "death march" day hikes to Thomas Mountain and Rock Mountain.

In 2020 - the Coronavirus made SOTA peaks difficult in the spring. Rich discovered the Campbell Global forest lands outside of Snoqualmie and made many trips to the lowland peaks there using a combination of hiking and biking. After the shutdown was lifted, he made an expedition back to the Entiat Ridge peaks and achieved his Mountain Goat there.

Your ideas for this newsletter are welcome – Gabor-VE7JH, Mike-VE7KPM, Jim-KK7A, Bill-WA7NCL and Wayne-N6KR contributed to this newsletter and I appreciate it. Share the newsletter with others or subscribe or unsubscribe by email to climb2ski@gmail.com. This newsletter is brought to you by the W7O Association Manager, Etienne-K7ATN. Find back issues here: www.pnwsota.org/content/pacific-northwest-sota-newsletters.