

Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter



Upcoming Events –

[CQ Worldwide VHF Contest, July 16-17th](#) is for 50 and 144MHz only and includes FM, but most activity is weak-signal SSB (with some digital and CW). Note that the calling frequency 146.52 is off limits. The exchange is grid square.

[ARRL September VHF Contest, September 10-12th](#) for all bands 50MHz and up. Some FM activity – but don't abuse the calling frequency 146.52. Exchange is four-digit grid square. If you can do SSB from a summit you should be popular.

Breaking News! Updated SOTA General Rules: <https://www.sota.org.uk/Joining-In/General-Rules>

Everyone should read the Rules for our radiosport...

A Note from Chris – F4WBN

Chris has provided first DX for many new and old SOTA Activators in the PNW. His signal is consistently good, and his hearing is excellent!

Here's a note from Chris:

"It is always a pleasure to make distant contacts and it has been my "passion" for a very long time. If my modest contribution I can transmit my passion, then I am fulfilled! Very best regards, Chris-F4WBN"



SOTA (sort of) featured on the BBC: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mn4Ob0v-vAY>

PNW W7O Campout Report – July 8-11 2022

The First Annual PNW Campout was hosted by the generous Amy-AG7GP and Robin-N7HAP at Hyatt Lake Recreation Area east of Ashland, Oregon. SOTA ops took over one and a half campground loops (20 sites!) and a number of cabins at nearby Hyatt Lake Resort. With trip reports prepared by Amy in hand for the three dozen or so nearby summits, the activations kept on coming with bunches of local Summit-to-Summit contacts and RF streaming out from Southern Oregon peaks to Chasers all over the world.

Per Amy, "I have so much to say about the W7O/PNW campout . . . it was fantastic! Great location and lovely weather. We had a great crowd of terrific ops keeping 2m smoking the whole weekend. Some nice milestones were met: Bill-WJ7WJ achieving MG, and we welcomed three new ops to SOTA and ham radio. There were 25 operators activating over two dozen different summits over the four-day event, with over 100 activations, more than 1300 QSOs with over 600 S2S contacts. The whole weekend I felt was a reflection of what sets ham radio apart from most hobbies, particularly SOTA, with the team effort, support, positive attitude, really just a lot of kindness and camaraderie. Thank you All!"
73, Amy-AG7GP and Robin-N7HAP



A Note on LiPo Batteries from Fred ["Skip"] K6DGW

Lithium Polymer (LiPo) batteries need some extra safety measures; I had one catch fire while on my KX1 in a Spartan Sprint. I never put high-capacity batteries inside my gear, it was on an external pigtail, and I was outside on the deck. I was able to grab the pigtail and fling it over the railing onto a gravel driveway where it was spitzen und sparken mit flammen for about five minutes. I did know better than to get out the hose. [:=)

I much prefer LiFePO₄ batteries which are rated for aircraft use but I still charge them outside from a solar panel. (Green electrons sometimes get a bonus in QRP activities.) LiFePO₄ batteries have a very flat discharge curve until just about depleted. And the LiFePO₄ chemistry is much less reactive. Beware the cheap ones from you know where. They're made with reject cells and have a discharge curve resembling the glide angle of a brick.

Reminder – if you spot on 2m FM, you can spot ANYWHERE and the chasers will find you! There's no need to spot on the calling frequency, 146.52.

Reminder – Summit-to-Summit (S2S) contacts are entered both as an Activator contact AND a Chaser contact. It's easy to do so by [uploading a *.CSV file](#) from your activation.

Reminder – If a summit has not been activated, there may be a good reason – do your homework with research using the SOTA summit database, PNWSOTA.org, SummitPost.org, SOTL.as and even...Google.com. Consider that private property, watersheds, Indian Reservations, and military bases are all off limits even if listed in the SOTA database.

New Pinnacle Peak (Washington) Lookout by Josh-WU7H Darryl-WW7D and I recently activated Pinnacle Peak (W7W/KG-126) on a cold and sunny Friday afternoon in February. This 2-point summit was first activated by K7ATN in 2011, and is an easy hike that is near Enumclaw, WA (see PNWSOTA.org for many past trip reports). Darryl and I had totally forgotten about the new replica fire lookout tower that was installed on the summit in late 2021, and it was an AWESOME surprise! The views from the tower are great and make this a first-rate summit. Read more about the tower [here](#).

We quickly set up HF using my linked dipole in a unique way: we put one leg up my mast that was strapped to a corner of the lookout. The other leg we dangled off the lookout. I suppose you could call this a vertical dipole - it worked well and we quickly gobbled up all available S2S contacts. I did runs on 30 and 40m, and ended up with 30 Q's (10 S2S). Darryl (pictured) had a good run on 20m and probably got about the same. The only DX was with Japan. The lookout was moderately busy with different groups of people coming and going. We had lots of interest and questions about what we were doing – everything was positive and no one seemed bothered by our presence. We did use headphones for a lot of the activation and kept the volume levels low when not using headphones. I probably would not try to operate HF from the tower on a weekend day if the WX is good. If you are in the area, I highly recommend this summit. If you go in the winter don't forget the microspikes like we did. The trails were very icy.



On 2m FM – Make those marginal contacts!

When an Activator is being worked by a home or mobile station, often the more powerful and better “antenned” station can be heard okay by the activator, but the home station can't quite copy the activator's 5W and marginal antenna. If the Activator can watch their S-Meter and move such that the signal strength of the home station is maximized during a long transmission, then the home station can sometimes copy well enough to make a two-way exchange of callsign and signal report. Standing up, stepping up onto a stump, standing on a picnic table, moving a few feet or even inches can make the difference. This approach has been successful more than half the time to complete a QSO – give it a try!

News You Can (and should) Use:

California's Largest Private Landowner Closes All Forestlands to Public

<https://www.sfgate.com/california-wildfires/article/California-largest-private-landowner-closes-forest-17266493.php>

Fire Closure Maps on the Willamette National Forest:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/willamette/alerts-notices/?cid=fseprd552029>

The Clackamas River Highway (224) is open, but ONLY the main road as far as Ripplebrook – no side roads or trails:

<https://www.mthoodterritory.com/clackamas-river>.

THE IDAHO EDITION – SUMMITS OF SOUTH-CENTRAL IDAHO by Scott-K17EMX

Having recently moved to South-Central Idaho, it's been a struggle to get out of the house for regular activations. With the harsh winter conditions and high winds, coupled with sickness and injuries, I've only been able to activate a few summits. Of note to those who might be driving along I-84 through the area, here are some summits that you might consider as SOTA opportunities that won't take too long (all descriptions are for summer weather conditions).



W71/CI-086 Pike Mountain (6 pts - photo by Rick Baugher←): Though a ways from I-84 (46.3 miles to be exact), this is a wonderful drive up a forested canyon (Rock Creek Road/FS-515). The last 1.6 miles is on a well graded gravel road to a parking lot summit with an overlook and benches for activating.

W71/CI-049 Mount Harrison (6 pts): Travel 41 miles south off of I-84 on state highway 77 and then turn west (up) the mountain. After 10.8 miles of climbing, you'll find this summit at the end of a perfectly paved road with a parking lot, an active forest service lookout, restroom facilities and benches for activating. The views are fantastic.

W71/CI-060 Peak 8762 (6 pts): This a sister peak of Mount Harrison. It is a bit lower in elevation and requires a one-mile hike (550 feet gain). The hike begins at the end of the Twin Lakes Campground, which you pass on the way to Mount Harrison.

W71/CI-094 North Deadline Ridge (6 pts – photo idahoclimbingguide.com→). Just West of Pike Mountain, this is an easy drive on a well-graded gravel road. Roads of varying quality leads to just west of the summit. Continue south past the ski area on the unpaved but improved FS-500 to its junction with FS-541. Follow FS-541 to the top of Deadline Ridge and a junction with FS-647. When dry the roads to this point are passable to most passenger cars. FS-647 is a rough road and 4WD or at least a high-clearance vehicle with all terrain tires is advised past this point. You can walk to the summit using FS-647 in 1.1 miles with 250 feet of elevation gain. Hike the road until you are just west of the summit and then hike up the brushy slope to the summit.



W71/CI-139 Kimama Butte (2 pts): Exit I-84 at Exit 201 for Kasota Road/Paul. Turn onto ID-25. Drive 2.9 miles and turn left onto S 1150 W. Follow this road for 10.0 miles. Turn left onto 900 N. In 0.7 miles, keep right toward Kimama Lookout Road. Park here and follow the road to the summit. I snowshoed this summit in winter and don't think the road to the summit looks Prius friendly. The hike is short and not overly steep (0.9 miles).

W7I/CI-109 Cotterel Mountains HP (4 pts - photo by idahoclimbingguide.com→): On the way to Mount Harrison, you access this peak from ID-77, 7.4 miles south of Albion. Turn east onto a maintained gravel road just south of Connor Summit. Follow this steep road to the summit and its RF facilities in 4.0 miles.



W7I/CI-135 East Hills (2 pts): Though close to I-84, access to this peak is not for the faint of heart. Drive 3 miles south of Declo, then east on 300 South to the end of the graded county road. This spot has a good size parking area. From this parking area it is about 1.5 miles and 1200 feet; of gain to the top on a steep 4WD road. It is possible to drive on this road all the way to the summit. The road is VERY steep (uncomfortable to walk on in places) and might be

“exciting” to drive in a proper 4WD vehicle. From 4,600 feet, hike east up a BLM two-track road. Follow the ridge of East Hills east to reach the summit. There is a road along the ridge but even getting to the ridge in a vehicle requires more guts than I possess! A hiking trail that will get you to the ridge – trailhead at 42.48895, -113.58626. I hiked down this trail and found it less steep and much more scenic than the 4WD road.

This area of South-Central Idaho is a departure from the green farmlands and forested mountains of western Oregon and Washington. I’m finding the area fascinating and am excited to explore, and activate, the Sawtooths and Grand Tetons to the north this summer.

STILL THE IDAHO EDITION – ACTIVATING IN NEIGHBORING WYOMING by Pat-K7GUD

Eastern Idaho looks directly onto Wyoming’s summits and this winter the Teton powder skiing was reduced to three magnificent weeks, December 23 to January 6. After that, almost no new snow. As a result, I started skiing peaks for SOTA activations. It's interesting, when I ski peaks for SOTA, the skiing is just a way to get in and out. The ONLY way to get in and out. If the snow conditions happen to be good, that's a bonus. But of the eight ski activations I did from December to May, the snow conditions ranged from barely OK to the worst ski day of my life.

When the peaks get two to six feet of snow on them, you can ski up slopes and ridges that would be very difficult or impossible in the summer. For example, when you ski up a peak, you don't have to be careful of every footstep through talus, scree, bushes, and plants. And the descent is much faster than hiking down. For example, a peak that takes three hours to ski up, can take 30 minutes or less to ski down. Even when the snow is terrible, skiing down is much faster, and very exciting!

Last summer, I activated Munger Mountain, W7Y/TT-149. As I was hiking down, I kept thinking about the great ski terrain I was seeing. I made a mental note to come back in the winter.

I decided to attempt Munger Mountain on February 13, 2022. The forecast called for clear, mild, and calm weather. My route was up south facing ridges. I was hoping for some corn snow.

My first disappointment was that the access road was closed 2 miles from the start of my route. If I wanted to continue, my route was now ten-miles out and back instead of six. Since I was already there, I decided to try. I skied down the road for two-miles to the beginning of my route, a low angle ridge that looked like it continued to the summit without a lot of up and down.

My second disappointment was that the snow was breakable crust, a thin breakable layer of icy crust on top of softer snow. That makes it terrible to walk on: the crust is not thick enough to support a boot, but it will hold you up on skis

unless you put a lot of pressure on it, like when you turn. Thus, the name, breakable crust. I have never mastered skiing breakable crust. I've been told that the best way to ski it is to ski it fast. But if you do that and things don't work out, you could get a season-ending injury.

I needed ski crampons for the first 200 feet of elevation. After that, the ridge was a mild angle, and I was able to ski up it without ski crampons. Once on the ridge, I got great views of the Teton range to the north, and of the Palisades range to the west. Although there were some old ski and snowmobile tracks higher up, I was alone on the mountain.



On the summit, it took me about ten minutes to set up. If a summit has a foot or more of snow, I found that I can jam one of my ski poles in the snow, then stomp down the snow around it to create a solid post to which I can strap my seven-meter carbon fiber fishing pole. This works better than jamming the mast in the snow. Because the mast has such a narrow end, it tends to keep going down in the snow, thus shortening my antenna height.

I spotted myself on 20 meters, and the pileup started immediately. After about 30 minutes, I had 22 QSOs and was going to change to 40 meters, but my fingers were numb. I had to shut down. My hands were so cold, I could barely wind up my antenna.

With everything packed up, I started the treacherous ski down. As I said, I am not good at skiing breakable crust. But it became an exciting game to see if I could get down without a major crash...or injury. And even though the snow was awful, it was a fun adventure picking my way down the ridge. Once in a while, I'd find a small patch of reasonable snow and I could make a few turns. But it was mostly survival skiing. I made it to the road with no injuries.



From the eight ski activations I did this winter, I learned a lot. First, I learned that it can be fun to ski peaks even if the snow is terrible. Second, I learned to ski terrible snow a little better. Third, I learned that I need a Bothy Bag to be comfortable on winter activations or on cold windy summits. I have terrible circulation in my hands so they get cold very easily. The Bothy Bag is an amazing emergency shelter: it sets up instantly, and it keeps me very warm, even on cold, windy summits. Yes, it's a bit claustrophobic, yes it can be steamy, and yes it can be VERY noisy in high wind. But since getting it, I have never had to go QRT because my fingers were numb. And forth, I learned that if you're going to use a Bothy Bag, you need a pair of rubber-tipped ear pods to block out the wind noise.

Here is video I made of the W7Y/TT-149 activation: <https://vimeo.com/677942724>. 73, Pat-K7GUD

EVEN MORE FOR THIS IDAHO EDITION – The Idaho Climbing Guide website supplements [Idaho: A Climbing Guide](https://www.idahoacimbingguide.com/) by Tom Lopez (available on Amazon and other retailers). The associated website includes updated access and route information, new peaks, new routes, photos, maps and other tips: <https://www.idahoacimbingguide.com/>.

Report on the Spring 2022 Willamette Valley S2S Party by Greg-KJ7EHA

This year the Willamette Valley Spring Summit-to-Summit Party took place on May 7th. This 2m FM event offers a chance for new SOTA activators to make S2S contacts on many Portland-area summits and we did have a few new operators participate which was fun to see. We delayed a few weeks from the original planned April date because of cold, wet weather and low snow levels. In 2022, Portland received the most rain ever recorded in the month of April! But even with the new date many operators still had to find lower summits because of lingering snow. The weather on the day of the Party wasn't that great with several operators hunkered down in a Bothy Bag or sheltered under a tarp. I went with the tarp option (see photo) which kept the sleet mix off me during the activation. This year the adverse weather reduced participation to 13 ops, but we still ran a net control to keep the event short. Thank you to all who participated!



Here's what Portland Mountain Rescue (PMR), and all the other regional volunteers, think about when the turn out to save the lives of those unlucky, ill equipped, or unprepared in the mountains: www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/snow-sports/mount-hood-search-rescue-surge/.



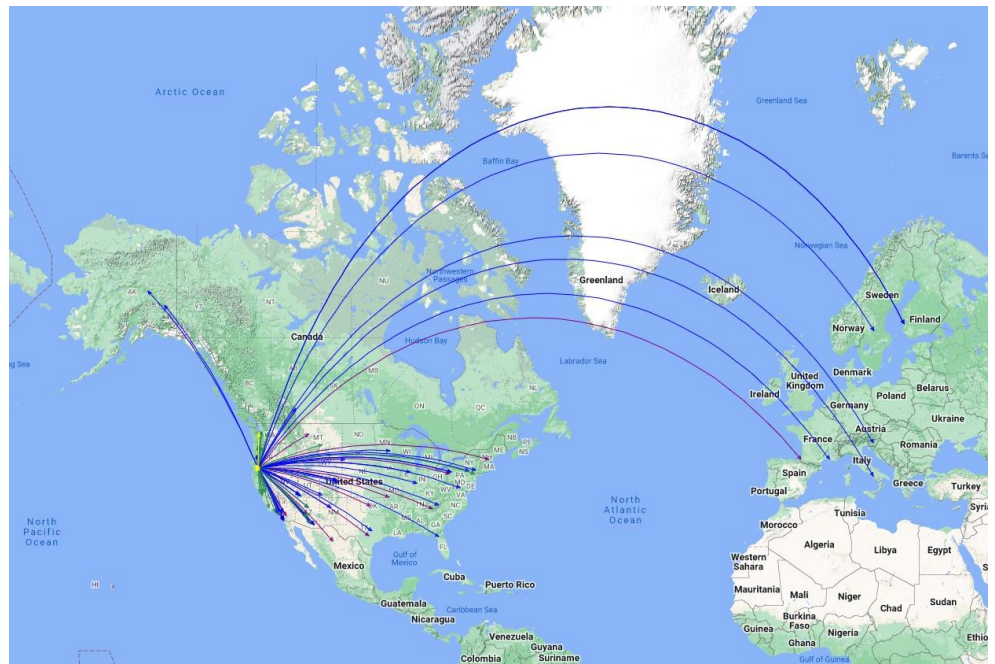
Pam and Jim Prank Dwight with Morse Code (The Office): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zfNfiINOIE>

Amy-AG7GP – A New PNW Nanny Goat – in her own words...



I'm not sure where to begin because I won't know where to finish. So mainly I want to say **THANK YOU** to all the SOTA family! Coincidentally, I was able to time my MG activation on my three-year SOTA-versary, partly due to late winter WX issues and also being delayed with covid for two weeks. The weather ended up outstanding and it was a beautiful day. Just enough blue sky and clouds to feel you were in the heavens. [Big Red Mountain \(W7O/CS-034\)](#), one of my favorite places, was my 219th activation, and I also achieved 3x Sloth with the 17 S2S I made. I

soaked in the moment and spent more time than usual operating, finishing with 108 QSOs, (seven DX), with my KX2 at about 10W, using a homebrew linked dipole I made last week. I made sure Robin-N7HAP was my fourth contact on 2m FM to be my official MG QSO, I could not do this without his support. Thanks again for all the SOTA support, it's such an awesome program. Now to MGx2! 73, 88, de AG7GP 🏠 🐐



April Fools – In July...provided by Steve-WGØAT

Bill-WJ7WJ – Another PNW Mountain Goat – in his own words...

I was born a Capricorn, the Sea Goat. I was teased on the playground as Billy Goat. I've been a Scape Goat and have aged into an Old Goat, but I am now pleased to be a Mountain Goat!

How did it happen? To get my 1,000 points I did 298 peaks, 212 of them unique, acquiring 2626 Summit-to-Summit points and 125 SOTA Completes along the way.

Why did it happen? SOTA is a great way of discovering places you didn't know existed. Many with spectacular views and no one else around.

How do I feel about it? It makes me wax poetic:

You goat! It's not usually a praise.
In some, even hackles may raise.
But I'm proud to be one.
The achieving was great fun.
We SOTA ops have different ways!

Thanks Chasers! Bill-WJ7WJ



Elizabeth-KD9ORR and Leah-KD9LFZ do POTA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRAArVfaGok>

Although not SOTA and not the PNW, the fun that these two were having with their POTA activation should happen on every summit!



Recommended Video by Tim-N7KOM – Jason Hummel is an adventure photographer, storyteller, and ski mountaineer, currently working on a project to ski all of Washington's named glaciers.

<https://www.jasonhummelphotography.com/2022/06/17/hannegan-to-canada/>

Ode To SOTA by Steve-GW7AAV

What lofty peaks do I aspire?
On which to set my lengthy wire
And does the pleasure match the pain?
As I set out to climb again

In sleet and rain and icy hail
Ascending ripped by bitter gale
Each step more weary than the last
I steel myself to set my mast

To yonder pinnacle I must climb
Where mists will mask a view divine
Gasping for breath I slowly haul
My aching frame o'er stony wall

Brackish streams which to ford
Deep and narrow or shallow but broad
Pushing through the untrod bracken
My meagre pace I often slacken

To high point where few have stood
I weave my way through tangled wood
On rocky paths many a stumble
Oft walking stick prevents a tumble

At last upon the summit top
I lay my load and I can stop
Unpack the kit erect the mast
Make sure the pegs are knocked in fast

Sheltered in the summit cairn
I call CQ and work in turn
The chasers who answer my call
Be patient I will work you all

These lofty peaks to which I aspire
On which to set my lengthy wire
Well does the pleasure match the pain?
Ask me when I climb again