

# Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter

May-June 2018

En route to Garibaldi, VE7/SL-009 by John-VA7JBE

**Upcoming SOTA Events** – Here are a few of the events that Guy-N7UN has outlined for PNW SOTA in 2018:

- June 1-3: [SeaPac Northwest Ham Convention](#), Seaside, Oregon
- June 1: [SOTA Northwest Gathering](#), Pizza Harbor, Seaside, Oregon Friday, 6pm
- Jun 9-10: North America SOTA Summer Activity Weekend + [ARRL June VHF Contest](#)

**Busy Trails** – We’ve seen it here in Oregon...trails have busier over time...a lot busier. A story in the Seattle Times points out the magnitude of the issue – the number of [Seattle area hikers have doubled in less than ten years](#). Remember to leave some space on the summits for the many (many) others enjoying our mountains.

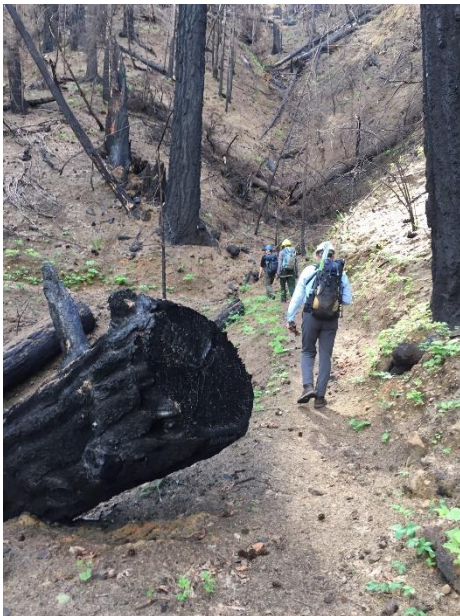
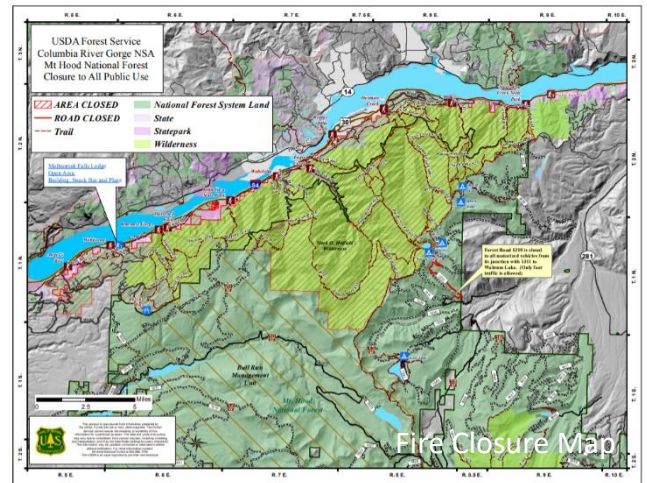
**Things I'll Remember for the Next S2S Party** – Kim-K7IMA has some ideas for efficient operations when there are ten or more folks joining a Summit-to-Summit event:

New to Ham Radio? Me too! I got my license last May and enjoyed my first Summit-to-Summit Party in September. What a great time! I learned a few things too...

1. Bring warm clothes for the top. Extra snacks are a good idea too. We had about 12 hams on summits around Oregon and Washington and it took almost 2 hours for everyone to work everyone else. It was a beautiful day but it can get chilly sitting there for so long after the climb. I was really glad that I brought extra clothes and something to eat.
2. Clipboard and paper for notes. A net control station called for “All Summits” to kick off the “party” with everyone checking in with their callsign and SOTA Summit Reference. Helpful Tip - write ALL the callsigns and Summit References down as each Activator checks in. It was really helpful to me to have the list to refer to during the event. If you miss the check in, write them down as they work other folks so you don’t need to ask again when it’s your turn – short exchanges help to move things along.
3. If you’ve never done this before, most SOTA ops are very clear and succinct in the exchange. This helps the round robin go faster which is important when we’re on top of a summit where it could be cold and wet. Also, when it’s your turn, only work the people you haven’t worked yet.
4. Arrive early to set up. We had planned an extra hour or so in our schedule and thank goodness because we used that hour up completely by going to the wrong trailhead and our two-mile hike became a four-mile hike. We arrived at the summit only four minutes before to the party start time. But with a quick set up we were ready on time – Whew!
5. Submit your log – although not as fun as the S2S Party, Summit-to-Summit contacts are verified for SOTA awards, and so you need to submit both Activator contracts AND Chaser contacts made (summits you work from a summit are Chaser contacts) – it’s the right thing to do after the event.
6. Meet up with folks afterwards and tell stories about your activation!

**Oregon Fire Closures** – Although this story focuses on [Oregon's Eagle Creek Fire](#), fires have affected the whole Pacific Northwest and change our hiking landscape. Be sure to check out fire closures before you head out. Matt-KF7HIZ has been volunteering on post-fire trail crews and has this first-hand account on the condition of Gorge trails:

The Gorge never promised that it would remain unchanged. It's always been changing and it always will be. But the Eagle Creek Fire in September of 2017 accelerated and made that change more visible. I've had the opportunity to join a number of volunteer trail crews over the past few months and see the changes in the Gorge firsthand.



As of now, all of the trails on the Oregon side of the Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area are still closed. The only way into these areas is with a sanctioned trail work crew. If you venture past the barricades, security guards, police tape, and numerous warning signs at each trailhead, they will ticket and arrest you. And for good reason: **The trails are really dangerous.**

On one day, we worked on clearing landslides for hours and had to keep clearing them because the rock kept re-covering the trail while we worked on it. As we pulled more rock off the trail, a downed tree the length of a bus went speeding down the hill on a river of rocks.

Standing trees look safe as you approach them, only to discover when viewed from the other side that nearly half of it is completely burnt away. Widow makers are dangling everywhere.

We wear hard hats at all times and are required to halt work anytime the wind is more than a light breeze.

The ground can suddenly give way creating a 10-foot-wide sinkhole in the space where the roots of a tree have been burnt away.

Clearing the numerous trees that have fallen across the trails in designated wilderness areas can only be done by two people pulling on crosscut saws. Internal combustion engines (including chainsaws) are prohibited.

The good news is that the trail crews are making progress. And the forest is already recovering. Ferns are regrowing out of burnt mounds. Wild flowers rise out from around charred wood. In some places the fire only cleared out the understory and eliminated competition for the larger trees. Fir cones litter the forest floor, ready to sprout a brand-new forest. The summits will still be there.





**Good Practices – Things We’ve Learned** – Here are a few things that I need to remind myself about ‘once in a while’...or sometimes, even more often. What have you learned in your SOTA life?

**Turn your Handie-Talkie on** – I was reminded again recently of the value of leaving your HT on 146.52 as you climb. We couldn’t reliably reach a fellow Activator on a nearby summit using text messages – with only a few miles between us 2m FM would have done the job as we both hiked summits we were unfamiliar with. Monitoring 146.52 has also provided several surprising Summit-to-Summit contacts – give a shout out on 52 when you arrive at the summit and before you head back down.

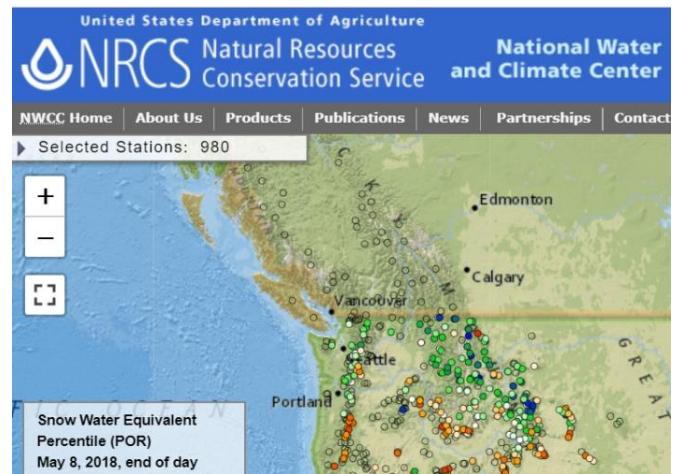
**Write down the Summit Reference** – Have you arrived on a summit with no idea of the summit reference for your spot? Writing it down at home is a good idea, and I’m going to do it someday.

**Mark the Location of the Car** – Especially when going cross country, mark where you left the car (or where you left the trail or road) with your GPS. It could save some trouble to know if you are heading towards the car, or perhaps away from it. Again, don’t ask me how I know this...

**Have an Activation Alternative** – Your targeted summit may not be accessible – private property, closed gates, snow or travel delays can foil the best plans – prepare with another summit nearby that could provide a “Back-up Plan” – exactly how W7O/WV-134 got its SOTA name.

**It’s 80 Degrees – Isn’t summer here already? Or is my trail still blocked by snow? Using [SnoTel Sites](#) –**

Although down here in the Valley we think that winter is COMPLETELY over, it’s not quite that way yet in the mountains, and folks have been surprised by ‘unexpected’ snow on roads and trails. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has a network of automated sites that collect snow depth. We can use those sites that are at about the same elevation and region to give us an idea of the snow that still might be around. Click on one of the dots on the map in the link and select the “30-Day Daily Table.” The table will show the snow depth at that site. For example, the Mt. Hood Test Site had 100 inches of snow on May 5 – something to think about for summits around 5300 feet near Mt. Hood.



**Garibaldi, VE7/SL-009 Activation Report** – Again, John-VA7JBE has put together a great narrative of a first activation and backcountry ski adventure – the photos below are just a sample of his experience – check it out.

<https://summitsandradios.wordpress.com/2018/04/11/return-to-garibaldi-ve7-sl-009/>



## Inaugural BC Summit-to-Summit Party Report – Mike-VE7KPM brings us a summary of the April BC S2S event.

Members of the new VE7 SOTA Facebook group organized the Inaugural BC Summit-to-Summit Party on 7 April, 2018. While interest was high, the inclement weather, which ranged from torrential downpours on the coast to blizzards in the interior, did hamper participation. However, four operators – Bailey-VA7AIB, Jonathan-VA7NMD; Justin-VE7LUI, and Mike-VE7KPM activated summits. Bailey and Mike activated Mount Newton, VE7/CL-018 and Bear Hill, VE7/CL-024 respectively on the Saanich Peninsula of Southern Vancouver Island; Justin activated Burnaby Mountain, VE7/GV-009 in Metro Vancouver; and Jonathan was on Sumas Peak, VE7/FV-026 in the Fraser Valley.

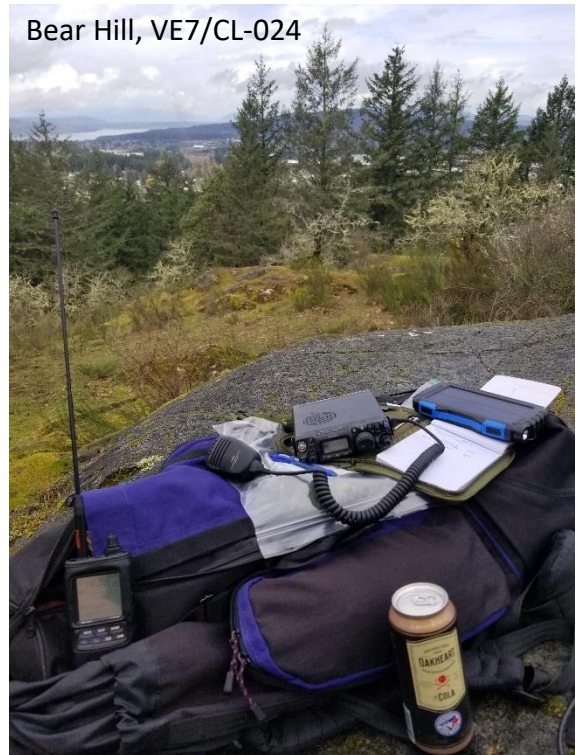
Braving forecasts of heavy rain and strong winds, or in Jonathan's case, snow, all four headed out with VHF equipment to their prospective summits and tried to work each other, as well as complete their activations. Some contacts were easier than others - Mike and Bailey were within eyesight of each other but Mike was the only one able to get through to Jonathan on Sumas Peak, and struggled through lots of QRM on the call frequency to do so.

For the most part, the weather held off. Bailey and Jonathan got sprinkled on for a time, Mike managed two hours of activating in nothing but a t-shirt, and Justin reported no rain in Vancouver.

Other than this being the first of what will surely be many BC S2S Parties, there were a couple of other notable firsts. Jonathan, who was on his third activation, recorded his first S2S contact; and Bailey achieved his first activation, with points for his first try no less!

All stations operated on 2m FM; either on handhelds with aftermarket whips or on portable rigs and yagis. Most stations who were scared off by the weather were able to chase at least one of the activators, so participation was an all-around effort.

After event feedback on the VE7 SOTA Facebook group was unanimously positive from everyone involved, Activators and Chasers, and talk has already turned to when the next Summit-to-Summit Party will be; which is looking like mid-summer time frame. The group is linked to, and shares members with Washington and Pacific Northwest SOTA groups, and BC members are looking forward to any inter-regional activities as well. We also look forward to connecting with any other SOTA operators in, and around, British Columbia. Follow the British Columbia Summits on the Air Facebook Group [here](#).



Mike-VE7KPM



**Victory Snatched from the Jaws of Defeat** – There probably aren't many times that Activators arrive at the "trailhead" via waterway – perhaps this is a first! Josh-WU7H activated Wagner Mountain (W7O/CE-237) while on a rafting trip down the John Day River in Central Oregon. But his activation almost didn't happen without having his HT along and making a call on 2m FM (see earlier story about "Things We've Learned"). There is always a chance that your mountain-top location will reach someone on 146.52, and that worked for Josh. See his blog and other photos here: [www.pnwsota.org](http://www.pnwsota.org).



**Crowdsourcing for PNW Accessible Summits** – Chris-WX7EMT has started on a project to provide a comprehensive list of summits that are either near drive-ups to the AZ, or easy hikes of less than a mile one-way. This will be a better way to describe "Recommended Summits" that can currently be found on [www.pnwsota.org](http://www.pnwsota.org). Chris has offered to take in information from all our experienced PNW Activators. Eventually we'd like the list to include blog links for details on reaching trailheads, what the hike is like, and what you'll find at the summit. Currently it includes only W7W summits as that's what he knows...the current version can be found [here](#). Please contact Chris with any information on additional summits that should be included as "Accessible" – his email is [chris.caviezel.fire@gmail.com](mailto:chris.caviezel.fire@gmail.com).

**Vanity Name the Numbered Peak Promotion** – Just a reminder, that if you are the first activator of an unnamed, numbered peak in W7O and W7I and also W7W (numbered plus radio jargon), there is an opportunity to submit a more appropriate name that will eventually be used in the SOTA database.

Here are some examples of summits renamed for SOTA:

Peak 2140, W7O/WV-134 was renamed "Back-up Plan" for the failure preceding its first activation

Peak 761, W7O/WV-138 was renamed "Skyline Ridge" for a nearby park

Peak 4375, W7I/SR-167 was renamed "Sam High Point" to honor SK W7JWO, Sam High

Peak 4980, W7O/CN-082 was renamed "Chasers Rock" to recognize all SOTA Chasers.

[Click here](#) for more details on how you might rename a numbered summit.

**Anyone Do CERT or NET?** – [Community Emergency Response Teams](#) or [Neighborhood Emergency Teams](#) are volunteers that prepare for potential disasters and hazards that may impact their community with training in basic disaster response skills, such as light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster triage. And radio communications, of course. I'm looking for ways to help those folks to support CERT or NET Amateur Radio communications with practice for their radio skills. SOTA or VHF Contesting might be two ideas – how would you see that working? I'd like to hear ideas from anyone that is involved in CERT or NET.

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