

Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter

July-August 2017

Darryl-WW7D – photo by David Steven

Upcoming Pacific Northwest SOTA Events – Here are some events that I would encourage you to put on your calendar. Note that they are ALL the same weekend – this will be a date to head out to a summit!

- [Northwest Summit-to-Summit Event](#) on August 5-6 – Try 146.52-fm and 446.00-fm.
- [ARRL 222 and Up Contest](#) on August 5-6 – 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 5-6 – Many SOTA summits activated in WOC.
- **VE2 MegaSOTA Event on August 5** (check out alerts [here](#)).

Turnout for SeaPac SOTA Gathering – The first weekend of June we had about 16 SOTA-folk gathering in Seaside for the annual SOTA Pizza Gathering. And then, on Saturday morning there was a great turnout for a presentation by Andrew-NO6E, "[Summits On The Air - In your hiking boots or bathrobe.](#)" Followed later in the afternoon by Guy-N7UN with, "[Let's Go Portable! Or How to have fun with your Go-Kit.](#)"

Reminder from the SOTA Management Team – The SOTA MT want to remind Activators of an important responsibility for a SOTA summit activation to be valid. The SOTA General Rules state this requirement clearly:

3.7 Rules for Activators: All Expeditions must use legitimate access routes and comply with any local rules regarding use of the land. In particular, Activators must ensure that they have any necessary permission to operate from their chosen Summit, or that access is customary.

In particular, Activators should be satisfied that there is no indication that access to the summit is forbidden, as access is subject to change. Here checking access rights means checking websites, maps, notices in the nearest village or tourist centre as well as onsite footpath notices. Activating a summit where permission has not been given or implied by 'open access' will invalidate the activation.

The SOTA MT recently deleted a North America W7A Activation where there was clear violation of this summit access rule. Violations of this type have a negative impact on the SOTA program and we will not hesitate to protect the SOTA program in the future.

Elliott-K6EL and Guy-N7UN
SOTA Management Team

Cheap as Free: Radios that are Worth their Price – This guest editorial by Andy-MM0FMF below gives us something to think about when recommending “starter” radios. Sadly, I have tried to work a couple Activators that were on summits with RF sites where the Activator could not hear multiple nearby callers due to receiver blockage (this also happened once to my Yaesu near a TV transmitter). NOTE THAT using a smaller antenna or turning on the attenuation (if available) can sometimes alleviate this issue. Also see November 2015 QST, article on page 74 and graphs on page 75 for emissions information for some radios.

“The big difference between these radios and many others is that the guts is a single chip SDR setup. The antenna connects straight to the RF input of the chip and there is no bandpass or front-end filtering. The chip covers 134-174MHz and 200-260MHz and 400-520MHz. This means that you effectively have a wideband amp connected to an antenna and as a result it is wide open to any RF received, often tens of MHz away from your own working frequency. The performance gets worse the better the antenna as more out of band RF is fed to the input, swamping it.

It's not the only set overloaded when used with a bigger antenna. I could list handfuls of radios that suffer, some costing hundreds of pounds. Some are very good on the other hand. However, the point is that whilst all suffer to some degree, some are really bad. People saying the performance is acceptable when you only paid a pittance for it are the people ignoring the elephant in the room. If I buy a cheap car, I don't expect it to be as fast, luxurious, well handling and all 'round delight compared to a £150,000 supercar. But I do expect it to be able to stay on the road, keep up with traffic, not be a danger and to get me around the country when I want. If these uber-cheap radios were cars then you'd find quite a lot of the time when another car was a few hundred yards in front or behind you, that yours would not respond to the steering wheel and veer off the road or the engine would stop till the other car was miles away. "Hey maybe it's only usable when the roads are deserted but it was cheap" is exactly the mindset people have about a radio that does suffer quite badly from other signals. The problem is the roads are not deserted. And neither are the bands free of out of band signals. ”

Andy-MM0FMF

SOTA Spotting: Being Found – One of the best things about activating a SOTA summit is sharing it with the SOTA Chasers that want to work you. Even with our short exchanges, hearing a familiar call and a voice you know (or a fist!) has come to be fun as I've gotten to know the Chasers out there. Here's how to be found...aside from phone apps that I'll try to cover in another issue.

The most straightforward way to self-spot for SOTA is to have a web-enabled phone and service on your summit. Verizon seems to be the best, followed by AT&T for coverage, followed by all other carriers. You can then use <http://www.sotawatch.org> to announce your summit and QRG and also see where others are operating for possible Summit-to-Summit attempts.

APRS can work well. You need to set it up in advance with [Stewart-GOLGS](#). See his [website](#) to learn more. The syntax is not too bad, but I do keep a note on my radio to help me remember. Trying a test message before heading out is a good idea for APRS. Make sure that it says “TEST” and use 7.0-ssb or other nonsense freq.

SMS spots are also great. Again, it needs to be set up in advance with [Andy-MM0FMF](#). I have found that I can often send an SMS when there is no web or voice cell service. Here are Andy's [instructions](#). He recommends that you send a test message before you climb a summit...then he knows he has your call and cell number right and you know the syntax. It may take a couple days for either to get set up.

Peter-K3OG on the Activation of Mount Rainier-Columbia Crest, W7W/RS-001

After months of planning and some sporadic training, Peter-K3OG, and his climbing partner from Denver began their climb of Mount Rainier from the Paradise Ranger Station at 5400 feet around 10am on June 29th. The weather throughout their trip was fortunate; sunny and mostly calm, even at the summit! After climbing the Muir snowfields through the day and applying many layers of sunscreen, they arrived for an overnight stay at Camp Muir – at an elevation of just over 10,000 feet. K3OG made a few 2m repeater and simplex contacts from camp after dinner and before their short rest for an early start the next day. As cell phone coverage at Camp Muir is non-existent, he also sent APRS messages letting friends and family know that all was well.



At about 2am the next morning the two set off roped up and ready with ice axes and crampons for the summit along the Disappointment Cleaver (DC) route with the APRS radio sending periodic position information. By 4am local time Peter's mom back in 3-land was tracking her son's progress and was pleased to see that everything was going according to plan. The team ascended Disappointment Cleaver and enjoyed a fantastic sunrise while the passed through 12,000 feet. The summit crater was reached around 7am and by 8am, K3OG made his first QSO with Jason-KE7UIU in Marysville and with 15 more stations with best DX to Grandview, WA at 100 miles. Weather conditions were great for their time at the

summit before altitude sickness began to set in and the radio was packed up.

The descent back to Camp Muir was uneventful – always a good thing in mountaineering. Another night was spent at Camp Muir and by lunchtime on July 1st the climbing duo was back at the parking lot enjoying a beer and preparing to return to Seattle to celebrate another successful climb and SOTA activation. Many thanks to all the chasers who were on the air early on a weekday to make the SOTA activation possible and apologies to those who missed the chance to chat during the limited time to on the summit.



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