

W7O – SOTA Oregon Newsletter

January–February 2016

Kids on the Air Day – Sunday, January 3 – On my first activation back in January 2012 (thanks Dan-KK7DS), I was desperately tuning around to find a fourth contact on 20m phone. I heard a young voice calling “CQ SOTA” – or so I thought. Our QSO was a bit confusing, but it wasn’t until I got a QSL card did I understand that he was calling “CQ KODA” for Kids on the Air Day. You can take your own kids out, or listen for young voices calling and let them know you are on a mountaintop!

<http://www.arrl.org/kids-day>

ARRL VHF Contest – January 30 & 31 – Yeah, I keep going on about how much fun this is – some of you understand what I’m talking about. Note your grid square for the exchange – hand out a few QSOs on January 30 & 31 to some grateful folks on 50MHz and up. <http://www.arrl.org/january-vhf>.

2016 National Parks on the Air (NPoTA) and SOTA’s Care for the Environment – In 2016, the National Parks Service will be celebrating its centennial, and showcasing the beauty of NPS sites, by inviting the public to participate in a number of planned events, including ARRL’s yearlong National Parks on the Air (NPoTA). This radio operating event is a great way for us to celebrate because there are some 1,929 SOTA summits that lie within the boundaries of the 432 NPS Units. So there is the potential for “dual-activations,” i.e. NPoTA plus SOTA.

Guy-N7UN has suggested a great way that SOTA activators can support the spirit of the NPS centennial celebration. Guy is encouraging all activators on any summit to pick up and dispose of trash left behind by others – to be an active participant in keeping our natural world...natural.

As outdoorsmen/women who participate in SOTA, we already understand [Leave No Trace \(LNT\)](#) principles, and the SOTA organization has an official position statement concerning [Care for the Environment](#). The NPS is charged with preservation of every aspect of our parks for future generations. Consider carefully how you use trees, move rocks, step off the trail or generate [excessive noise](#) – anything that might change the natural experience for those around you or that will follow. And as Guy suggests, please lend an extra hand to pick up and dispose properly of all trash.

Remember that ten QSOs are required for a NPoTA activation and contacts must be logged to LoTW. The NPoTA Activator Guide can be found [here](#). If you really want a pile-up, do both NPoTA and SOTA – see the article below for some tips on handling the onslaught.

Our Best SOTA Behavior – Chris-K6CMG made the note on the NASOTA reflector that he hears more than a few people tuning up on his activation frequency while he's working Chasers. This brings up the broader topic of just plain nice behavior – for those that haven't seen it, the DX Code of Conduct has some guidelines for operating that are worth checking out: <http://dx-code.org/Certificate.pdf>.

In addition to good practices in general, there are some ways to handle large pile-ups that can help serve a large number of callers when you “are the DX” as suggested by Scott-K7ZO. There are [some good points here](#), summarized below for SOTA+NPoTA activators:

- You are the boss in charge of the pile-up
- Announce your callsign frequently
- Establish and maintain a rhythm – be efficient and limit chatter
- Avoid working by call area numbers – use other criteria like Summit-to-Summit, QRP, etc.
- Leverage any part of a callsign you can hear and work only that station
- Ignore calls that are not the station you are trying to work – stay in charge
- Don’t give the exchange [RS(T) and/or NPoTA Reference] until you have a callsign

Disaster! Averted! – I was just reading about a JA ham that went all the way to activate an offshore island and forgot an adapter for his antenna. He'll have to go back another time. Have you had to make a repair or MacGyver something that had gone wrong on a summit in order to complete the activation? More than once I've been left tapping out code using a mini-phone plug against the PL-259 connector, but that doesn't get close to the MacGyver credit one might get the following two fixes. Let me know your story and we'll put it here in the newsletter.



Darryl-WW7D was activating High Rock (W7W/PL-029, right photo) last February when he forgot a Power Pole splitter so he could not power up his FT-857 and LDG antenna tuner at the same time. So after Darryl was done with 2m and 23cm QSOs, he disassembled the Power Pole connector on the tuner by lifting under each blade with a small screwdriver and pulling each blade out by its wire. Then he inserted the proper blades into the REAR of the battery Power Pole connector, enough to make contact. He had to hold that power connection with one hand, while operating the antenna tuner with the other. The tuner uses latching relays, so once the tuning was complete, he could remove power from the tuner and it held its settings. He first tuned the antenna for 24 MHz and made five QSOs. Then late he went through the procedure again for one QSO on 21 MHz.

Etienne-K7ATN was on Lava Butte (W7O/CE-188, left photo) and had left the jumper from the radio to the halfwave tuner down at the car. Rather than give up on HF or trudge back to the car, Etienne made up a jumper with a few inches of counterpoise. The results were probably not 50 Ohms, but don't try telling that to the Chasers that he worked that day. Thank goodness for multi-tools.

Winter – A Time to Learn CW! – If you are not out activating this winter, try getting up to “speed” with a new mode –CW! Rich-N4EX looked at the eham.net product review section for [CW training](#) and based on the number of reviews and their ratings, the following could be possible candidates for aids to learn CW:

- Code Quick 2000
- G4FON Morse Tutor
- Gordon West W5YI
- Koch Method CW Trainer for Windows
- Learn CW Online

[CW Academy](#) is another option, offering “on the air” skeds with a mentor; this may work for some folks with home stations. SOTA Chasers are renowned for slowing down for new CW operators – go with a buddy on the first few activations to have someone help you copy if you get nervous. CW is a fun option when QRP SSB just isn’t quite enough.

Idaho “Kool-Aid Kids” Chaser Challenge – Scott-K7ZO and Jim-K7MK are pleased to announce the final standings in their 2015 “Kool-Aid Kids” Chaser Challenge. K7MK and K7ZO created this to encourage chasers to work them both on all bands and modes during their Idaho W7I activations. “Kool-Aid Kids” are chasers that have successfully “drunk the SOTA Kool-Aid from Idaho.” The top ten chasers will receive a signed certificate and the top three are getting an added bonus of a box of Idaho Spud Bars – just in case their store of holiday candy is disappearing.

The **top ten** in the 2015 Challenge, and the total number of QSOs they had with K7ZO and K7MK are:

W7RV	28	AA7DK	7
W0MNA	22	WA2USA	7
WOERI	21	AE9F	6
NG6R	16	K8TE	6
N4EX	15	KB1RJD	6

Look for the announcement of the 2016 Idaho Chaser Challenge in a few months. Winter has Idaho pretty well in its grips and there won’t be many activations for a while. Unless you have a snowmobile or do activations from the top of ski lifts, the next few months will be quiet for activations in W7I.

Thank you to Rich-N4EX, Guy-N7UN and Scott-K7ZO for their contributions to this issue. Please let me know what you’d like to see in the newsletter. Share it 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/w7o-sota-oregon-newsletters.