

W7O – SOTA Oregon Newsletter

November-December 2015

ARM Updates a Coming – The SOTA Management Team will be asking Associations worldwide to update Association Reference Manuals (ARM) to refer to minimum prominence of "150 meters (492 feet)", and activation zones of "25 meters (82 feet)". Currently for peaks in the western US, it's 500 feet prominence and 80 feet for the AZ. The change in prominence could mean that there would be a few newly qualified summits in some associations...but don't hold your breath because the rules need to be set, the ARMs modified, and then approved by the MT. It could be 2017 before the changes are in place for some associations, but these differences are small and it won't make much difference to most, except that you might consider setting your GPS to read out elevation in meters instead of feet.

National Parks on the Air for 2016! – ARRL just announced a new program for 2016 – recognizing 100 years of the National Park Service with ham radio. With all the summits in National Parks and Monuments (and more) – altogether 432 'units,' this will be a great combination with SOTA. Still, note some differences –10 QSOs are required for an activation to count for NPoTA (yep, ten) - and contacts must be logged to LoTW. The Activator Guide can be found [here](#) and "Activator Tips" [here](#) (none posted yet). For SOTA we should be certain to post specific experience information on SOTAWatch summit pages (in the Northwest, www.PNWSOTA.org is the place to do that) to share with other SOTA Activators. **Let the pileups begin!**

Upcoming Event – 10 Meter Contest – December 12-13 brings us another contest using small antennas - it's a near perfect fit for SOTA. Usually when we tune across the 10-meter band we hear nothing...absolutely nothing. But the second weekend of December propagation will need to be Really Bad for you to hear nothing. The exchange is signal report and State [note that everyone uses 59/9 for the report]. See more here and submit a log if you can: www.arrl.org/10-meter.

The 1-Kilo HF challenge – a multiband activation pack below 1 kilogram – Here's an idea that's both crazy and brilliant – keeping things lightweight. Really lightweight. Ignacio-EA2BD has put together a [very light, two-band CW rig, antenna, mast](#) and all the rest needed to get on the air for a successful SOTA activation.

And Fred-KT5X has gone way beyond (below?) 2.2 pounds with his [0.5 kg activation challenge](#). He's even working to eliminate the pack and to carry everything in his pockets!

Whoa, Lots of Two Meter Antenna Ideas – For those that activate using an HT, the antenna that it came with isn't usually a great option. An improved antenna can make as big a difference as opening the squelch. There are a lot of possibilities out there – choices include after-market 'improved' whips, telescopic 5/8 wave (Smiley) and halfwave antennas (MFJ), small portable yagis (Arrow and Elk), and homemade yagis put together with elements made from tape measure or piano wire or house wire (I've also seen barbed wire). For antennas you can elevate, some like a rollup J-pole that can be hung on a branch or hoisted on a fishing pole (by MFJ and others). Here are three 'articles' that compare some different antenna options for 2m HT:

- [G4ILO's 2m HT Antenna Shootout](#)
- [KH7O 2 meter Hand Held Antenna Comparisons](#)
- [High-Efficiency Antennas for Hand-Held Radios](#)

I've found that the 5/8 wave, halfwave and J-pole antennas work almost as well as three element yagis – and you don't need to assemble or point them. And remember that some HT receivers are better than others – sensitivity is one thing, rejection of unwanted signals is another that can make a big difference on a summit with comm equipment – you might not hear callers when you are using an 'improved' antenna due to front-end overload (this has happened to me). Polarization and position can also make a big difference – moving a few feet, stepping up onto a rock, or tipping your radio for horizontal vs. vertical could help you work that fourth contact – try it.

A Reminder that SOTA is a RadioSport – Rules for anything are so we are all playing the same game – and SOTA is a game, a sport, and lucky for us, a **RADIO**sport. We think it's the most fun you can have on the air while in the mountains. So, let's remember. If you can't get to within 80 vertical feet of the summit, you are not in the Activation Zone and it's not SOTA. If you can't work people on simplex, it's not SOTA. If you are in the vicinity of a vehicle, it's not SOTA. Using a generator – it's not SOTA. Private property (without permission), it's not SOTA. But it's not like you are stuck with failure – try another peak! Remember, there are 1900+ summits in W7O, 2700+ in W7W, and even more in other western associations – not every peak might be 'activatable' on that particular day, but there are plenty of others that could be. And if something keeps you from getting into the activation zone, consider writing a trip report on www.PNWSOTA.org and pay it forward for those that might follow.

Northwest Microwave Challenge – The Pacific Northwest VHF Society (PNWVHFS) has just announced a SOTA-related [Microwave Challenge for Activators and Chasers](#). Although you might not get four contacts on the 33cm and 23cm bands (902MHz and 1296MHz), this new challenge for Northwest states and provinces could get you a certificate for longest accumulated QSO distance or most unique summits activated or chased. There is a [Microwave Challenge Tips](#) page and [Equipment Tips](#) to get you started.

Hey, it's been a year of newsletters for W7O and it can be anything you want it to be – I'm running out of ideas so I'm open to yours. Share this 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/w7o-sota-oregon-newsletters.