

F.C.A.R.C. Inc.  
P.O. Box 773  
Greenfield, MA 01302



FIRST CLASS MAIL



# THE COMMUNICATOR THE COMMUNICATOR

June 2015

## Upcoming Events

- Club Breakfast: Saturday, Jun 13, 8:00 a.m.: Denny's, Greenfield
- E-Board Meeting: Monday, Jun 15, 6:00 p.m.: GCC Room S301 Main Building
- Annual Meeting & Officers Election: Monday, Jun 15, 7:15 p.m.: GCC Room S301 Main Bldg.
- Field Day: Saturday & Sunday, Jun 27/28, All day: Poet's Seat Tower, Greenfield
- Club Breakfast: Saturday, Jul 18, 8:00 a.m.: Denny's, Greenfield
- E-Board Meeting: Monday, Jul 20, 6:00 p.m.: GCC Room S301 Main Bldg.: Plan for next year
- Triathlon: Sunday August 2, 7 a.m.: Nash's Mill Rd., Greenfield
- Bridge of Flowers Race: Saturday August 8, 7 a.m.: Shelburne Falls
- Club Breakfast: Saturday August 15, 8 a.m.: Denny's, Greenfield
- E-Board meeting: Monday August 17, 7 p.m.: Plan for next year, location TBA
- Franklin Land Trust Bicycle Tour (D2R2): Saturday Aug 22, All day: Deerfield – Vermont

# June 2015

## Calendar

### **FIELD DAY, JUNE 27-28, POETS SEAT, GREENFIELD**

Field Day is always the fourth full weekend in June. As usual we will be at Poet's Seat, starting setup about 9 a.m. on Saturday, operating from 2 p.m. Saturday until 2 p.m. Sunday. We operate in Class 2A, one station for SSB and digital operation, one station for CW. We will also have a VHF station, 6 meters and possibly 2 meters and 70 cm, and a GOTA (Get On The Air) station for new hams, not-yet-hams, and anyone else interested in tasting HF operation.

### **PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITIES**

In early August we will assist with communications for the Greenfield Triathlon and the Bridge of Flowers 10K Race. Later in the summer we expect to assist with fund-raising bicycle tour events supporting the Franklin Land Trust as we did last year.

## Secretary's Report

### **E-BOARD MEETING SATURDAY, MAY 30, 2015 AT PICNIC IN LEYDEN, CHRIS MYERS KB1NEK**

1. Nominations for club officers. Al reported that he had contacted Bruce, Howard, and Ron, and that they all agreed to run for another term of office: Bruce as director, Howard as treasurer, and Ron as vice-president. Formal election will be held at the club meeting June 15 at Greenfield Community College.
2. Field Day. Bob Dickerman reported that Cindy does not want to be responsible for preparing lunch on Saturday. Chris offered to organize it. Al reported that Carter's health is failing, and that he may not be able to drive his RV to the Field Day site. We agreed we need to plan a back-up structure for the voice operating position. Bob Solosko offered a tent large enough to stand in. Chris raised the question of how to keep it and the club's own tent from blowing away in a strong wind. Bruce suggested the club buy the kind of sand bags he has seen used at farmers markets. When filled with sand they weigh about 40 pounds, and are made to tie easily around the legs of tents or canopies. Bruce made a motion to buy eight of them. Chris seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
3. Someone suggested making an up to date info board for Field Day. Al will look into it
4. Someone suggested that if we don't have Carter's RV, we should think of renting a porta-potty. Chris offered to check with the Greenfield Parks Dept. to see if it would be OK.

## News, Activities & Articles

### **VE SESSION IN NORTHFIELD, MAY 25**

At the May VE session two candidates upgraded their license class. Roy K1LKY upgraded to Extra and Brad KC1DQX upgraded to General.

The FCARC VE team conducts license exam sessions in Northfield MA on the 4th Monday of February, May, August, and November. More information is available on the Amateur Radio License Exams page on this website.

### **FIELD DAY IS COMING! AL WOODHULL N1AW**

The ARRL Field Day is probably the most popular on-the-air event in ham radio, at least in the US and Canada. Always held on the fourth full weekend of June, Field Day is part emergency drill, part contest, and part social occasion. As emergency preparation, the emphasis is on setting up amateur radio stations and antennas quickly, in locations where normal commercial electrical power is not available, and keeping the stations on the air for 24 hours - a test of technical ability and logistics such as might be needed in the aftermath of a serious emergency. As a contest, well, officially "Field Day is not a contest" but tell that to the 2,687 individuals and groups who sent in their scores to be listed in QST magazine and on the ARRL website. As a social occasion, Field Day is for many clubs the major event that signals the beginning of summer - a campout, a picnic, a 24 hour party, typically with activities that attract entire families of ham radio operators, as well as members of the general public. Field Day 2015 is Saturday June 27th and Sunday June 28th.

For the FCARC Field Day is all of these. For more years than most current members of the club can remember we have camped out at the Poets Seat Tower in Greenfield's Rocky Mountain Park. We start setting up antennas at 9 or 10 a.m. on Saturday. We pause at noon for a picnic-style meal, and hopefully we have two complete operating ham stations ready to go at 2 p.m. when the competition begins. One station will operate HF SSB and possibly digital modes and the other will operate HF CW. In addition we will have a VHF (6 meters, maybe also 2 meters) station, and a Get-On-The-Air (GOTA) station staffed by volunteers who can help new amateur operators and interested not-yet-licensed community members who want to experience amateur radio operation. The GOTA station can also be used by more experienced operators who have been inactive or who don't have equipment of their own at home. We will keep the HF stations on the air as continuously as possible for 24 hours, until 2 p.m. on Sunday, at which time the process of packing up and taking down antennas will begin.

More information about Field Day in general is available on the ARRL website at <http://www.arrl.org/field-day>. FCARC's Field Day will be the main topic at our June 15th club meeting at GCC. Everyone is welcome on Field Day weekend. If you can make a commitment in advance to spend a few hours on the air please do so. If you just want to drop by and want a chance to operate for a short while we'll find you an opportunity. If you just want to socialize that's OK too.

Every year we try to improve on our performance, and we usually succeed. By the time you read this the FCARC website will have a link to a page that compares our scores for the past nine years. Below is a summary of our two most recent efforts:

Field Day 2014, 33 participants:

QSOs: CW 772 (HF 744, GOTA 28); phone: 326 (HF: 309, GOTA: 18, 6 m: 10)

QSO points: 3740, bonus points: 770, total score: 4510

Field Day 2013, 28 participants:

QSOs: CW 205, digital: 7; phone: 339 (HF: 309, GOTA: 10, 6 m: 19, satellite: 1)

QSO points: 1526, bonus points: 890, total score: 2416

### **FCC ELIMINATING VANITY CALL SIGN FEE**

The FCC is dropping the regulatory fee to apply for an Amateur Radio vanity call sign. As the Commission explained in a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Report and Order, and Order (MD Docket 14-92 and others), released May 21, it's a matter of simple economics.

"The Commission spends more resources on processing the regulatory fees and issuing refunds than the amount of the regulatory fee payment," the FCC said. "As our costs now exceed the regulatory fee, we are eliminating this regulatory fee category." The current vanity call sign regulatory fee is \$21.40, the highest in several years. The FCC reported there were 11,500 "payment units" in FY 2014 and estimated that it would collect nearly \$246,100.

"The Commission often receives multiple applications for the same vanity call sign, but only one applicant can be issued that call sign," the FCC explained. "In such cases, the Commission issues refunds for all the remaining applicants. In addition to staff and computer time to process payments and issue refunds, there is an additional expense to issue checks for the applicants who cannot be refunded electronically."

The Commission said that after it provides the required congressional notification, Amateur Radio vanity program applicants "will no longer be financially burdened with such payments, and the Commission will no longer incur these administrative costs that exceed the fee payments. The revenue that the Commission would otherwise collect from these regulatory fee categories will be proportionally assessed on other wireless fee categories."

The FCC said it would not issue refunds to licensees who paid the regulatory fee prior to its elimination.

### **ARE KNOBS AND BUTTONS TOAST? DAN ROMANCHIK, KB6NU**

In a recent column on EETimes ([http://www.eetimes.com/author.asp?doc\\_id=1324283](http://www.eetimes.com/author.asp?doc_id=1324283)), an old colleague of mine, Martin Rowe, says, "Knobs and buttons are slowly on their way out. Get used to it." He's referring to the controls on oscilloscopes, but if he were a ham, he might just as well be talking about amateur radio transceivers, too.

We already see this happening in amateur radio. FlexRadio, and a couple of other companies, already make transceivers with no front panel controls. You must have a computer to use them.

Might we even start to see this with handheld and portable equipment? For example, how much cheaper could they make a Baofeng if to use it, you had to also have an Android or iPhone app to act as the human interface?

To be honest, I haven't really thought about this much myself. I'm enough of a dinosaur to still prefer buttons and knobs, but having to use on-screen controls certainly doesn't turn me off. Rowe claims, however, that "as the old-timers retire (or in our case as older hams become

SKs), younger engineers (or young hams) will expect every user interface to function like a phone or tablet. Don't believe me? Just wait."

I got several interesting replies to this idea on my blog. Bill, AD8BC says, "What would be fun would be an open-source mobile radio. I picture an RF deck with a Raspberry Pi and touch screen for control, the Pi would simply tell the RF deck where to tune and handle the interface and scanning functions, it would ship with a stock app, but you could make your own. Built in support for SDR stuff, packet, APRS, remote operation...."

Most commenters, however, even the younger guys, still seem to prefer analog controls. Lucien, DH7LM, says, "I'm a newly licensed ham and I like both – experimenting with advanced computer stuff like SDRs and the great feeling a real radio provides!" Grant, KJ6ZZD, says, "Knobs perform some tasks better than a screen can. Knobs provide some tactile feedback that a screen just can't."

So, what do you think? Are knobs and buttons toast, or do you think there's still some life left in analog controls?

### **FCARC PICNIC, MAY 30, 2015 AT LEYDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

For the second year, the FCARC held a picnic for members and friends at the Elementary school in Leyden.

A foxbox was hidden for an informal walk-around fox hunt and members occasionally hunted for it throughout the morning. Chris Dickerman was the first to find it.

Al, N1AW cooked hamburgers and hotdogs on the grill. Rich, KB1NOX, used the grill to warm up chicken legs he had already cooked at home. Salads and desserts were provided pot luck fashion.

Al set up an Icom 706 radio, connected to a ham-stick antenna to try to log in to the Hurricane test net scheduled for the day. However, we were not able to hear any activity on the frequency set for that net.

Fred Smead, a friend of the club who used to host picnics at his house in the past brought one of his pieces of old equipment to show off, while club members of the executive board held a meeting.





## THE LAST WORD:

Al N1AW saw this on the internet:

"Coils and condensers are used for listening to kilocycles or megacycles but those newfangled kilohertz or megahertz won't pass through them so inductors and capacitors are required.

"You can still get condensers from old radios or from some of the surplus sellers and at hamfests (look under the tables). Coils can be found in the same places or we can wind our own. We can still get the cardboard coil forms brand new for two or three dollars and they come with a pound or two of free oatmeal!"

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THE COMMUNICATOR is an informational publication for members of the Franklin County Amateur Radio Club. Officers: President: Al Woodhull, N1AW ([n1aw@arrl.net](mailto:n1aw@arrl.net)), Vice President: Ron Niswander, K8HSF ([reniswander@gmail.com](mailto:reniswander@gmail.com)), Treasurer: Howard Field, N1LUP ([howfield@comcast.net](mailto:howfield@comcast.net)), Secretary: Chris Myers, KB1NEK ([cmyers1@verizon.net](mailto:cmyers1@verizon.net)), Director: Belle Dyer, KB1NOG ([bdyer58@mtdata.com](mailto:bdyer58@mtdata.com)), Director: Bruce Fuller KB1TLX, [perkinsdowns@yahoo.com](mailto:perkinsdowns@yahoo.com). This is your newsletter! Amateur radio information of general interest, club member project descriptions and doings, radio applications to other activities, corrections, or suggestions are all welcome. Individual submissions make for variety! We need more writers! Send submissions to Bob Solosko at [w1srb@arrl.net](mailto:w1srb@arrl.net).