

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



FIRST CLASS MAIL



THE COMMUNICATOR THE COMMUNICATOR

May 2013

Upcoming Events

- New England QSO Party May 4-5
- Club breakfast: Saturday May 11, 8:00 a.m.: Denny's, Greenfield
- VE license test: Monday May 16: Shelburne Fire Station
- E-board meeting: Monday May 20, 6:00 p.m. : Greenfield High School
- Meeting & Program: Monday **May 20**, 7:15 p.m.: Greenfield High School
- VE license test: Monday May 27, 7:00 p.m.: Northfield Unitarian Church
- E-board meeting: Monday June 10, 6:00 p.m. : Greenfield High School
- Annual Meeting & Officers Election: Monday June 10, 7:15 p.m. : Greenfield High School
- Club breakfast: Saturday June 15, 8:00 a.m.: Denny's, Greenfield
- Field Day: Saturday and Sunday June 22 and 23, all day: Poet's Seat Tower, Greenfield

May 2013

Calendar

CLUB PICNIC POSTPONED

For a number of years, Fred and Jan Smead have been hosting the annual club picnic. However, they are unable to host a picnic this year and thus we are looking for a location for the picnic for sometime in June or July. More information will be in the June Communicator. If you can suggest a location for the picnic, or if you'd like to host the picnic, contact Chris KB1NEK or Al N1AW.

NEW ENGLAND QSO PARTY MAY 4-5

See article by Tom Frenaye K1KI below.

VE LICENSE TESTS

There will be a VE license test session at the Shelburne Fire Station on May 16 following the last Technician license class. This VE session is open to anyone, not just participants in the Tech class, we can give exams for any license class. If you are not taking the Tech class and want to attend this VE license test session, please contact Al Woodhull, N1AW as space is limited. There will also be the regularly scheduled VE session in Northfield on Monday May 27.

Secretary's Report

E-BOARD MEETING, MONDAY, April 22, 2013 – BOB DICKERMAN WA1QKT

1. Howard N1LUP will contact Fred Smead to ask if Fred wants to host May picnic.
2. Al N1AW said cost of cable replacement on 2 m repeater is unknown, engineer Howard Frost said will send bill soon.
3. Al will make appointment with Howard Frost to restart weather station soon.
4. Belle KB1NOG said she will encourage a couple of the Technician class students, who had reservations about completing class, to continue with the class.
5. Field Day
 - Al talked to Stuart KB1MFM, who said he will encourage a few GHS students to attend
 - Al mentioned that Scott N1LYW suggested that we could boost score by getting more bonus points
 - Need to ask Phil N1YPS if will operate 6 m VHF station.
 - Al said maybe we should ask new hams if they want to make simplex 2 m and 440 FM (as well as SSB) contacts in first couple of hours of contest. Bob WA1QKT said he would ask Northfield hams if interested. (Might need to coordinate with Phil N1YPS if only one VHF/UHF station allowed)
6. Al said that he would like to give up organization of Greenfield Triathlon to someone else, so that he could consider working on a new event, the Franklin Land Trust Bike Tour "D2R2". Bob W1SRB said that he has volunteered on the Bike Tour, and would have more information on it soon for Al.

7. Election of officers will be at June meeting, must get nominations started. Bob WA1QKT said he would contact Richard AC1L to ask if he would like to solicit nominations this year.

SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR APRIL 22, 2013 FCARC MEETING – BOB DICKERMAN WA1QKT

After we enjoyed coffee from AI N1AW and blueberry muffins from Belle KB1NOG in the GHS cafeteria, we moved to the small auditorium and the meeting was brought to order at 7:15 PM by AI N1AW (Chris KB1NEK was absent due to a cold).

The main topic of the meeting was organization for our upcoming Field Day. Field Day will be held on June 22 and 23 this year.

AI N1AW presented a history of our standing in recent Field Days by showing some statistics for the last 7 years. Last year we scored 3,744 in class 2A, the highest score we have attained since before 2006. Last year we made 601 CW contacts and 285 voice contacts, for a total of 886 QSOs; this is more than 300 contacts above the numbers we have made in any year since before 2006. While Field Day is only partly a contest, the high number of contacts reflects the quality of the radio stations that were set up, the ability and number of participating operators, and the support and participation of our other members and friends in setup, teardown, food preparation, publicity, and the like. We hope to do well again this year.

We are planning to operate in a similar configuration to last year's, at Poet's Seat Tower in Greenfield. We will enter as class 2A (2 HF stations, one CW, one SSB) with a Get On The Air (GOTA) station that AI will set up, and a VHF station in the tower, run we hope, by Phil N1YPS - we need to ask him. We are hoping that Carter WA1TVS will let us use his RV, which has a bathroom and a kitchen, for the SSB station again - we need to ask him. We are not sure yet what radio will be used for CW station. We may relocate the GOTA antenna to the west side of the hill to avoid interference with the SSB station. Bob WA1QKT will contact Gary KB1WTR and/or Gary KB1AKU to ask if one of them will tow the trailer, and Bob will go and check the trailer. Bob has delivered a letter requesting a permit to the Greenfield Licensing Board. We should try all bands when operating if run out of stations; last year we had no contacts on 15 m. AI said we need to remember to change bands on the logging program CT when we change bands on the radio, else we will lose all points we would have otherwise earned for contacts made on the new band. We may try to have the VHF station in the tower make simplex 2 m and 440 FM (as well as SSB) contacts in first couple of hours of contest - we need to coordinate with Phil on this. We don't have anyone to organize food yet.

Bob WA1QKT wondered whether we should try to make some digital (PSK31, etc.) QSOs this year, which, like CW contacts, are worth 2 points each. We have never done this before. If we do, it might be convenient to use a logging program on the digital mode laptop PC.

We will invite Technician class members to Field Day.

6 people attended the meeting.

News, Activities & Articles

INSTALLING ANTENNAS AT THE DEERFIELD EOC - CHRIS MYERS KB1NEK

Three club members help install antenna for three amateur radio bands at Deerfield EOC

As most FCARC club members know, Deerfield select board member Carolyn Shores-Ness, KB1WTQ, studied for, and succeeded in getting her technician's license a little over a year ago, motivated by the desire to find a way to fill the communications gap made apparent by tropical storm Irene.

In the last nine months or so, members of the club have discussed with Carolyn various options for realizing amateur radio as an option for back-up communication. Last fall, at our suggestion, the town of Deerfield bought an FT-8900 radio and a Diamond antenna for 6m, 2m, and 70cm. It also purchased a 20 amp Astron power supply.

On Thursday, April 11, Bob Dickerman, WA1QKT, Rich Stewart, KB1NOX, and Chris Myers, KB1NEK installed the antenna with the help of the town's facility manager, Kevin Scarborough, and two contract electricians. The antenna was put up on the same telephone pole, and twelve feet below, the antennas used by the Deerfield Police. The two electricians pulled the coax cable through a couple of hundred feet of underground conduit and the overhead space of the police offices, to a conference room being set up as the town's emergency operations center.

With the antenna in place, and the excess coax cut off, Rich soldered on a PL-259 connector, and we tested the radio. I had already programmed the radio several months ago for the so-called MARC frequencies (MRC, Amateur Radio, CERT) we use in Franklin County for Emergency and public service work. I quickly made contacts on the Leyden and Mt. Tom repeaters.

During the week of April 29, I plan to return to the EOC with Carolyn to show her how the radio works, and, more importantly, to test its ability to communicate to various parts of the town, using both the 2m and 70 cm bands. Deerfield is fortunate to have repeaters for both of those bands on Pocumtuck Rock, behind the Eaglebrook School. The location of the repeaters should enable ready communications over the whole town. The repeaters are maintained by Richard Strycharz, AB1RS.



Chris, KB1NEK with Kevin Scarborough (in red) installing the antenna (photo by Bob Dickerman WA1QKT)

AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICE (ARES) - NEEDS MORE MEMBERS - CHRIS MYERS, KB1NEK ARES EMERGENCY COORDINATOR

In an accompanying article in this month's Communicator, I described the installation of an amateur radio back-up system for the town of Deerfield.

In the nearly two years since the natural disasters of 2011, there has been growing interest in Franklin County in the possibility of using amateur radio for emergency back-up communications. The town of Shelburne received a used 2m radio, loaned by the FCARC, and has purchased the antenna to go with it. The town of Colrain is considering the same, with an antenna already donated for the day the town moves ahead.

In late March, I met with Butch Garrity, the supervisor for the 911 call center at Shelburne Control to discuss the use of a 2m radio and antenna that had been donated by a ham living in Northfield, whose professional job is the installation and maintenance of police radios. Butch is hopeful that we can find several experienced amateur operators, who live in the vicinity, who would be willing to operate in the Shelburne Control center during disasters that result in serious communications black outs. Because it is located at the state police barracks on Rt. 2 in Shelburne, any such operators would have to pass a criminal record check and receive credentials ahead of time.

The first week of April, I found out that Baystate Franklin Medical Center has decided to move ahead with plans to make use of amateur radio equipment it bought last year. The plans include moving the equipment to the same conference room where it's other emergency communications equipment is located. The hospital also recruited one of the members of its security staff to study for an amateur technician's license. By luck, the club was just about to start a course to teach the material, so the staff member, Jeff McAndrews, was able to start with us at the beginning.

In my discussions with the clinical emergency coordinator for the hospital, Cheryl Volpe, I suggested strongly that having one staff member capable of using the equipment would probably not be enough in an extended disaster. I said I hoped she and her boss, the director of security, would consider accepting a roster of amateur operators from the Greenfield area who could assist.

During the two storms in 2011 that hit Franklin County, the tropical storm and the freak October snow storm, we were asked to staff a number of shelters and the EOC in the Greenfield Fire Station. A repeat emergency could see us being asked to staff those same, or even more shelters, EOC's in at least two additional towns, plus the hospital and Shelburne Control. If such a disaster happened tomorrow, we would have a very difficult time finding enough amateur radio volunteers.

For readers who in the past have thought that ARES would never really need their skills, I urge you to consider joining and putting yourself on the roster of people we can call on. Anyone who wants more information can contact me at 413-625-0344.

KB1BSS 146.985 MHZ REPEATER MAINTENANCE – AL WOODHULL N1AW

FM radio station WPVQ owns the tower on Frizzell Hill in Leyden where our 2 meter repeater is mounted. The engineer for the station notified us first week in April that he was going to have a tower climber on site to prepare for improvements to the broadcast antenna, and we were invited to use this professional's skills to work on our repeater installation. We made a quick decision to use this opportunity to replace the repeater feedline. This was done on Tuesday, April 9. High quality cable treated for moisture resistance was used, and quality N-type connectors were installed by a professional. Incidentally, the old cable had UHF-type connectors and required adapters to connect to the N-type connectors on the antenna and the duplexer. So this constitutes an upgrade to the system.

The old feedline that was removed showed definite signs of corrosion due to water getting inside the cable. The old cable was cut in several places while being removed, and in one place a cut revealed a copper center conductor that had turned green - corrosion, obviously due to water getting into the cable. Preliminary reports seem to indicate that the repeater is performing better than previously. However, we

are still considering replacing the antenna itself, which has been in service for many years. Reports of any problems with the repeater from users are welcome - contact Chris, KB1NEK, or Al, N1AW.

We are aware that the weather station is not reporting the correct temperature at the repeater site. We did not know that a special procedure is required to restart the weather recording apparatus when every part of the repeater including the weather monitor is powered down. We will do this the next time we can get access to the repeater site. This is expected to be possible on Monday April 29 when, weather permitting, the WPVQ engineer plans to be there to do maintenance on the FM station.

It should be noted that this was not an inexpensive operation. Professional tower climbers earn their pay. The cost of the cable and connectors was about \$200, and our total cost is expected to be about \$690. We will bring this to the membership at a meeting soon, as our by-laws require membership approval for an expenditure over \$200.

WHAT IS THE SNAIL NET? AL WOODHULL, N1AW

For several years now a group of FCARC members have been holding an informal slow speed CW practice net on the 80 meter band. We call ourselves the Snail Net. Some of us never had to take a Morse code test to get our licenses; others had not used code for a



The tower climber replacing the coax cable



Al, N1AW, checking the SWR

while, felt rusty, and wanted to rebuild the skill. When the net began the usual speed was 5 words per minute or less; most members are now comfortable going faster than that, but we are willing to slow down if others want to join us.

On Sunday and Wednesday evenings, at about 7:55 p.m., you will hear an announcement on the Leyden 2 meter repeater from the person who will be the Snails' net control station that evening. The frequency to be used will be announced (usually 3.530 MHz, but subject to change if there would be interference). At 8 p.m. the net control station will call the net up on that frequency, while continuing to listen to the repeater in case anyone needs help finding the frequency or wants the net to slow down. On the CW frequency individual stations expected to be present will be called, for instance "KB1NEK QNI? KN" - which means, "KB1NEK, do you want to check into the net, response expected from you only" (three letter "Q" signals compress a lot of meaning into three letters!). After going through the list the net control station will then send "QNI? K" (not KN) which means anyone not already checked in is welcome. After all have checked in then each is called on in turn to say something, very much like what we do on the two meter information net on Thursday evening. Typically the Snail Net lasts until about 8:30 p.m. After that, if the repeater is not busy we return to 2 meters to discuss how the net went, and perhaps to continue by voice discussions that began in Morse code.

The active members recently have been WA1QKT, K1SMY, W1SRB, WA1TVS, KB1NEK, and N1AW. We would be happy to have others join us. The frequency we use in the 80 meter band is available for CW use by Technician class licensees, no code test is required. The procedures we use are simple. We do use a small number of standard "Q" signals, including a few of the "QN" signals used exclusively for network operations. There is a Snail Net Protocol on the FCARC website at http://www.fcarc.org/Files/SnailNet/SnailNetProtocol.txt

We are open to having sessions at different times or on different days if there is interest; the Snail Net originally started as a weekday daytime activity and added Sunday and evening sessions to accommodate members who were not free at the original times.

NEW ENGLAND QSO PARTY MAY 4-5 – TOM FRENAYE K1KI

The New England QSO Party is coming next weekend - May 4-5 - and we' are always looking for more activity from Massachusetts. The NEQP is a great way to test your antennas on 80-10 meters and to be the focus of a lot of activity as stations from around the world look for New England stations. **Plus, it's fun!!**

Here is a summary of the New England QSO Party rules:

Object: To contact as many New England stations (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont) in as many New England counties as possible on 80-40-20-15-10m. (**New England stations work anyone**)

Date: First full weekend of May. (May 4-5 in 2013)

Contest Period: 2000Z Saturday until 0500Z Sunday (4pm EDT Saturday until 1am EDT Sunday) and 1300Z Sunday until 2400Z Sunday (9am EDT Sunday until 8pm EDT Sunday).

Categories: Single-operator high power, low power(150w or less) and QRP(5w or less) categories, plus multi-operator, single transmitter. Same four categories for mobiles. Single-operator stations using assistance during the contest (packet or Internet spotting nets, etc.) will compete in the multi-single category.

Contest Exchange: Send signal report and state/province (DX stations send signal report and "DX"). **New England stations send signal report, county and state.**

QSO Points: Count one point per phone QSO, two points per CW (includes digital modes)QSO.

Multiplier: Stations outside of New England use [counties](#) as multipliers for a total of 67 (CT/8 MA/14 ME/16 NH/10 RI/5 VT/14). **New England stations use states(50)(Count DC as MD), Canadian provinces(14) and DXCC countries as multipliers.**

Scoring: Total score is QSO points times the multiplier. Mobiles count QSO points per county and multipliers from all counties (counted once).

Suggested frequencies: CW - 3540 7035 14040 21040 28040, SSB - 3850 7280 14280 21380 28380. ** Now that the broadcast stations are mostly out of 7125-7200, try 7180 on 40m SSB.**

Reporting: Logs should indicate times in UTC, bands, modes, calls and required contest exchange. All stations include your club's name in the log header or summary. Entries must be submitted within 30 days and sent to NEQP, P.O.Box J, West Suffield CT 06093 or via e-mail to logs@neqp.org (Cabrillo format preferred).

Awards: Certificates will be awarded to the top scorers (25 QSO minimum) in each New England county, U.S. state, Canadian province and DXCC country. A number of special plaques will also be awarded to top scorers.

Additional details can be found on the NEQP web site at <http://www.neqp.org>

See if you can have a competition within your club for the top scorer. Several clubs are challenging each other for the best club score.

We're especially looking for mobile stations to put the rarest counties on the air.

THE COMMUNICATOR is an informational publication for members of the Franklin County Amateur Radio Club. Officers: President: Chris Myers, KB1NEK (camyers_1@verizon.net), Vice President: Al Woodhull, N1AW (n1aw@arrl.net), Treasurer: Howard Field, N1LUP (howfield@comcast.net), Secretary: Bob Dickerman, WA1QKT (rld@dickermanelectronics.com), Director: Belle Dyer, KB1NOG (bdyer58@mtdata.com), Director: Bob Solosko, W1SRB (w1srb@arrl.net)

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.