

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



FIRST CLASS MAIL



THE COMMUNICATOR THE COMMUNICATOR

October 2014

Upcoming Events

- Club Breakfast: Saturday Oct 18, 8 a.m.: Denny's, Greenfield
- Crop Hunger Walk: Sunday Oct 19, 1 p.m. for radio ops: Montague Center
- E-Board meeting: Monday Oct 20, 6:00 p.m.: at GCC (**NEW LOCATION!**)
- Program Meeting: Monday Oct 20, 7:15 p.m.: Contesting- Something For Everyone: Matt Wilhelm, W1MSW, ARRL Contest Branch Manager: GCC (**NEW LOCATION!**)
- Club Breakfast: Saturday Nov 15, 8 a.m.: Denny's, Greenfield
- Fox Hunt: Saturday Nov 15, ~10 a.m.: Start at Poet's Seat Tower
- E-Board meeting: Monday Nov 17, 6:00 p.m. : GCC
- Program Meeting: Monday Nov 17, 7:15 p.m.: Program TBA: GCC
- VE license tests: Monday Nov 24, 7 p.m.: Northfield Unitarian Church
- ARRL November Sweepstakes: CW Nov 1 -3, SSB Nov 15-17

DUES are DUE now!

October 2014

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Dues support the repeaters, the club activities and the Communicator.

General Adult - \$15/year

Family Group membership - \$18 /year

Repeater Patron donation - \$10.00 or more Suggested

You may pay for multiple years of membership.

Mail dues to:

Franklin County Amateur Radio Club

PO Box 773

Greenfield, MA 01302

or to

Howard Field

7 Laurel St.

Shelburne Falls, MA 01370-1512

Make checks payable to **FCARC**.

Please include SASE if you wish to have your membership card or a receipt mailed to you.

Calendar

OCTOBER MEETING - CONTESTING: SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE: MATT WILHELM, W1MSW, ARRL CONTEST BRANCH MANAGER

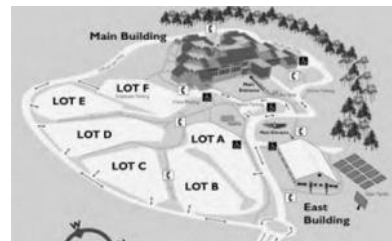
Matt's talk will be a basic overview of contesting with an emphasis on how smaller stations (little pistols) can join in and the benefits they can gain by doing so. I'll discuss some of the more popular contests, what you need to get started, explain contest operating styles and exchanges, list popular contest logging software, give a brief overview of the Cabrillo log standard, and show award examples followed by Q&A.

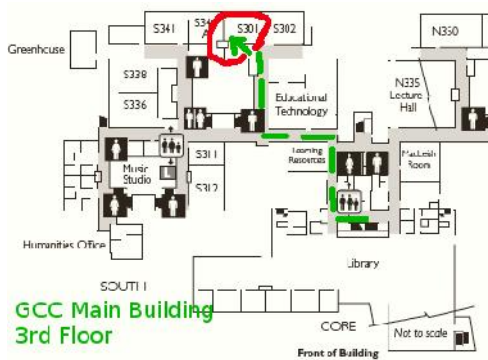
Matt gave a demonstration and presentation to the club at the June meeting on the N1MM Logger that we used at Field Day.

The meeting will be held at Greenfield Community College on October 15th at 7:15 PM. See below for directions.

OCTOBER E-BOARD AND PROGRAM MEETINGS AT GREENFIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The e-board and program meetings on October 15th will again be held at the Greenfield Community College Main Campus in the Engineering Classroom S301 on the 3rd floor of the Main Building. The GCC Main Campus is off Colrain Rd, near the Big Y Plaza in Greenfield. From north or south, take Exit 26 on Rte. 91 for Rte. 2 West, Colrain Rd is first right off Rte. 2 (traffic light here), proceed about 1/2 mile to





the College entrance on the left (road construction here as of Sept 2014). The Main Building is the only multistory building, and is at the far end of the campus from the entrance.

To get to room S301 of the Main Building, take the elevator or stairs to the 3rd floor and follow signs toward south wing classrooms. The meeting program will be the year in review.

PUBLIC SERVICE EVENT: FRANKLIN COUNTY CROP HUNGER WALK:

Sunday October 19 is the date of the annual CROP Hunger Walk, taking place this year in *Montague Center*. FCARC participation will be coordinated by Phill Grant N1YPS (phone 648-9077, e-mail phill112643@verizon.net). Radio operators should check in at event headquarters by 1 p.m. The walk starts at 2 p.m. CROP Hunger Walks are community-wide events sponsored by Church World Service and organized by local congregations or groups to raise funds to end hunger at home and around the world.

Secretary's Report

E-BOARD MEETING MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2014– CHRIS MYERS KB1NEK

Present were: Al, Bob D., Jeanne, Howard, Bob S., Ron, Carter, Bruce, Julie Page, Kip, and Rich Stewart.

We met for the first time in Room South 301 on the campus of Greenfield Community College. It is the classroom used by Ted Johnson, WA1KJI, and a colleague of Jeanne Dodge. The room is well equipped with audio-visual equipment and computers.

Discussion on future speakers:

- Matt Wilhelm, W1MSW, has agreed to speak on the subject of contesting, in October or November. Matt was recently appointed by the ARRL as its Contest Manager.
- Suggestions were made to ask Julie Page, KB1WTP, to speak about Disaster Animal Rescue Team, or find someone else who can; to ask Eric Tuller, N1QKO, to speak about the National Weather Service or National Oceanographic and Aeronautic Administration (NOAA); or Ted Johnson to speak about climate changes; or Gerry Lempicki, KA1STZ, or Jim Mullen, KK1W, about radio control.

A foxhunt was proposed for after the club breakfast on Nov. 15.

Bruce is still waiting for a response from John Pise about instructing a class for the technician license. Al wants to help in any such class.

A question was raised about where to have holiday party or future picnics. For the next year, the old Greenfield High School will be demolished. The cafeteria, gym, and some class rooms will remain in use for the school year. We probably can request to use the cafeteria for this year's party, but it is not clear if we will still be able to use it for free. An alternative would be the basement of the Unitarian Church in Northfield where we conduct license examinations and in the past have had pot-luck suppers.

When the tower at Rocky Mount is repaired, we may put the spare 2m repeater there. Currently the spare is being used at the main repeater site in Leyden, while repairs are being made to the main repeater receiver.

The membership meeting followed at 7:15. Bob Solosko and Al showed slides of previous year's events.

News, Activities & Articles

BIKE4FOOD: FCARC PROVIDES RADIO COVERAGE FOR BIKE FOR FOOD FUNDRAISING TOUR, SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 28 - CHRIS MYERS KB1NEK.

Sunday, September 28, eleven members of the club helped Bike for Food volunteers keep track of bicyclists on the 100 mile course used for the annual event starting at the Food Bank for Western Mass. This is the second year the club has helped the Food Bank in its effort to raise funds to meet the increasing needs of area families struggling to buy enough food on shrinking budgets. The Food Bank is a major supplier to local food pantries.

This year our operators staffed four fixed locations where other tour volunteers set up water and snack tables. We also provided operators for three Route Patrol vehicles driven by Food Bank volunteers. Another car was driven by N1AW, operating solo. We set up a net control station at the parking lot at the Food Bank in Hatfield, where we easily kept in touch with the volunteer organizers.

Other than trouble with a speaker plugged into the net control radio, and some interference from Rhode Island on the repeater frequency, the day went without a hitch. There was one mechanical breakdown that KB1TLX reported from Deerfield, and where we helped alert a mobile mechanic to go to the rescue. Afterwards, most of us joined the other participants for a free lunch and a beer at the Food Bank.

BIKE4FOOD – AL WOODHULL N1AW

We were first contacted by the Food Bank last year and asked to help out with the third running of their Bike4Food event. They were still learning how to do such an event, and this year's fourth attempt included a number of changes, not a few of which were results of FCARC's 2013 experiences and interactions this year with the Food Bank's event organizers. This contrasts with the 25 years of experience the Franklin Land Trust has had with the Deerfield Dirt Road Randonnee (although, just as B4F found at a very late stage last year that bridge construction required a route change, the D2R2 this year also had to make changes with short notice because of a bridge rebuilding project).

Like the D2R2, the B4F event featured different routes of various lengths, some of which overlapped. For mobile volunteers, accounting for lost riders was complicated by staggered starting times and riders who discovered of unplanned shortcuts. On both the D2R2 and the B4F routes bike paths unavailable to motorized sweep vehicles were used, and this sometimes led to confusion about the whereabouts of stragglers.

This was FCARC's fourth experience supporting a long-distance bike event. Those who participated felt we made a significant contribution. Communication really helps: for example, the hitch for a child's bicycle trailer broke; an FCARC volunteer communicated the problem to event headquarters and an event staffer was dispatched with tools and parts that enabled the rider and child to complete the event.

Events like these do require a substantial time commitment, but it doesn't have to be all-day; 100 mile riders who start at 6 a.m. won't arrive at a mid-route water stop until many hours



later. Scheduling part-day shifts worked well. A volunteer benefit of both the D2R2 and B4F events is the generous refreshments available to volunteers as well as riders at the end, including the participation of Berkshire Brewing Company as one of the sponsors.

CONTESTING: WHY AND HOW FOR THE BEGINNER - AL WOODHULL, N1AW

More than anything else, a radio contest gives you an opportunity to learn what your station can do. In a few hours of operation you can confirm the possibility of communicating with dozens or even hundreds of different stations. You can get an idea of whether your antenna works better in some directions than others. And by listening to the results as other stations call or work the same stations you are calling you can compare the effectiveness of your station with others. How is this different from non-contest days? Contest contacts are brief, you will make many contacts, and other stations will want to contact you, even if your signal is hard to hear or your code speed is slow.

You will also learn some things about the fascinating peculiarities of radio wave propagation. If you start listening on the 10, 15, or 20 meter band you are likely to find that on the highest band where you can hear anybody you may hear very few stations, but many of them will be far away and they may hear you easily, even though you cannot hear other stations they contact who may be much closer to your location. If you hear activity on 10 meters or 15 meters during the afternoon the signals will probably disappear after sunset, but signals on the next lowest band will persist until later. If you operate late at night you may make contacts over surprisingly long distances on the lower bands, 40 and 80 meters. Around sunrise or sunset you may find strong signals coming from the north or south, from stations in the "grey line" zone where the sun is also rising or setting. You may observe these phenomena any day, not just during a contest, but a contest often brings a "dead" band to life -- for instance, "everyone knows" that the 10 meter band is useless when the 11 year sunspot cycle is at its low point, but on a contest weekend serious multi-multi stations (multi-operator, multi-transmitter efforts) will keep on calling CQ even on a "dead" band, and if there is any possibility of the band opening you will hear signals coming through.

The ARRL Sweepstakes contests (CW the first full weekend of November and phone the third full weekend of November) are excellent opportunities to get into contesting. There will be many participants, not all of them hot-shot serious competitors, and many modest stations with simple antennas and relatively low power will be as eager to contact you as you may be to contact them. On CW, especially, you can probably count on working almost every station you can hear if you have an average installation; as a rough rule you can generally consider a 10 watt CW signal to be as effective as a 100 watt voice signal.

For an easy start, write down and rehearse a few times exactly what you will send as your contest exchange. The fastest senders tend to concentrate at the lowest frequencies in the band, and that is where the band is most crowded. So listen for slow speed signals on the highest frequency where you hear activity in the band. Then listen to several contacts by a station calling CQ before you call him. That way you will know ahead of time what he will be sending when he comes back to your call. Timing is important, send your call as soon as you hear the other station end his transmission. Send just your call and don't try to send it fast -- the other station will slow down to your speed. If you don't catch all the information don't hesitate to send "PSE RPT QRS" ("please repeat and send more slowly").

Once you have made a few contacts you will begin to feel more confident, and if you put in a couple of hours you may find your code speed improves significantly. If you take some time off and get on again later you will find new stations you haven't heard before, and they will want to add you to their logs as well. Also, you may find yourself quite popular if you have been off for a long period and then return to operate during the last hour of a contest. Even if calling CQ did not produce many replies early in the contest it may work well for you near the end.

During the phone weekend you'll also find your operating ability will improve -- even though Morse code is not an issue on phone, there is skill involved in phone operation, and you will feel more confidence in your timing and the operation of your radio after a stint of contest operation.

One of the nice things about the Sweepstakes contest is that operators keep track of their operating time and submit it with their logs. The contest rules allow up to 24 hours of operation during the 30 hour contest period, but since the results posted on the ARRL web page will include the number of hours operated, you can compare how you did with other stations who only operated for a few hours. If you are not planning a 24 hour operation you can easily do all your logging on paper, you don't need to have a computer logging program. Paper logs can be converted to electronic form on-line, or you can submit a paper log. After the contest, consider submitting your log even if you only operated for a short time and made only a few contacts. In 2008 N1AW was the only operator in the Western Massachusetts ARRL section to submit a log in the QRP class, and he got a certificate for first place in the section and class for a two hour, 6 QSO effort. The contest results posted on the ARRL web page show that almost 200 logs were submitted for operations of four hours or less in 2008. Paper logs are accepted (see the rules) or you can convert your log to an electronic Cabrillo-formatted using the web application at <http://www.b4h.net/cabforms>.

TWITTER: ANOTHER TOOL IN THE HAM RADIO TOOLBOX; DAN ROMANCHIK, KB6NU

It all starts innocently enough. You get a computer to do your logging, and before you know it, you're working digital modes. Then, you snake an Ethernet cable down to the shack or connect to your wireless router. Pretty soon, you can't do without having a browser window open to one of the DX clusters or ReverseBeacon.Net or QRZ.Com or all three simultaneously.

Well, now's there another Internet service that I can't do without down in the shack: Twitter! I get on Twitter all the time now when I'm in the shack, and I love it. It's truly enhanced my amateur radio experience.

One of the ways it's done this is by bringing me all kinds of interesting technical information. I not only follow @hackaday and @DIYEngineering, and @EDN.Com, but a bunch of hams who are doing fun things. I hate to list some, for fear of leaving some out, but I will give a shout out to @NT7S, @AA7EE, @mightyohm, @caulkstel, @LA3ZA. There's even @HiramPMaxim (the P stands for "parody"). If you go to my blog at KB6NU.Com and search for "From my Twitter feed," you'll find links to some of the most interesting Tweets that have found their way to me.

I'm also following a couple of amateur radio retailers. Today, for example, @DXEngineering is offering \$55 off the RigExpert AA-54 Antenna Analyzer.

I also use it to get information about weather conditions and band conditions. For example, I follow @edvielmetti, who is KD8OQG. He's always tweeting about local severe weather. A Tweet from him gets me to turn on my 2m radio to monitor the local SkyWarn net. As far as band conditions go, I throw out a Tweet, asking about band conditions, and in seconds, I'll get reports from my followers here in the U.S. and around the world. I try to do my part as well. When I fire up the rig, I'll Tweet out a report of how the bands seem to me. While all of this is great, it's really all about the people. I currently have more 2,200 followers and I follow more than 900. I would never have met some of these hams if it wasn't for Twitter, and I have since worked several of them on the air after first meeting them on Twitter. Last May, we had a "Tweetup" at the Dayton Hamvention. There were at least 20 of us there. How cool is that?

Twitter isn't for everyone, but I'd encourage you to give it a try. I'm having a lot of fun on Twitter, and I think you will, too. If you do set up a Twitter account, please follow me, @kb6nu. If you mention that you read this column, I'll be sure to follow you back.

THE COMMUNICATOR is an informational publication for members of the Franklin County Amateur Radio Club. Officers: President: Al Woodhull, N1AW (n1aw@arrl.net), Vice President: Ron Niswander, K8HSF (reniswander@gmail.com), Treasurer: Howard Field, N1LUP (howfield@comcast.net), Secretary: Chris Myers, KB1NEK (camyers1@verizon.net), Director: Belle Dyer, KB1NOG (bdyer58@mtdata.com), Director: Bruce Fuller KB1TLX, 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.