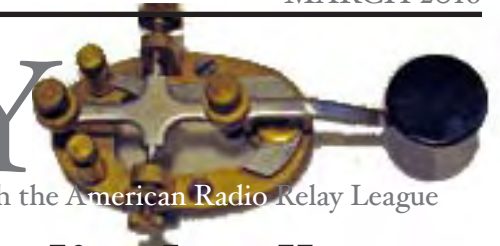


# T H E K E Y

The Riverland Amateur Radio Club is a Special Service Club affiliated with the American Radio Relay League



## Riverland Amateur Radio Club

P.O. Box 621  
Onalaska, Wis. 54650

## Repeater

146.970 PL 131.8

**RARC Net**  
8 p.m. Sundays  
on the 146.970  
repeater.

**Club meetings**  
**April 5 club meeting will be 6:30 p.m. in the Mary-Crest Auditorium at Mayo Health System, 600 West Ave. S.**

**RARC Web page**  
<http://rarc.qth.com/>

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## New public service radios locally

There's a sound on the air around La Crosse and you probably cannot understand it. In January the City of La Crosse turned on a brand-new Motorola 800 MHz digital, trunked radio communications system using the company's P25 format.

For the most part, City Police communications are encrypted with only its main dispatch "open" according to La Crosse Assistant Police Chief Rob Abraham.

"The old system (800 MHz analog trunked) was 20 years old and was no longer supported with parts," says City IT Director Jacky Greschner. "We had only one controller board left and, importantly, we had serious coverage issues," she adds.

The City started the process of setting up a new communication system in 2012 by hiring IT and communication consultant Elert & Associates to evaluate its needs. About 6 million later the system began operating with hardly a glitch this past January.

Part of the evaluation was checking out radios in 100 different city buildings - five tests each - to check coverage. The old system gave about 50 percent in the tested areas while the new system is more than 90 percent.

To assure good coverage the City changed its radio sites to a principal site atop City Hall and subordinate sites on Mississippi Valley Conservancy land above the intersection of County Road B and Hwy 16 (by "our" 440 site) as well as near Mt. La Crosse. Previously the far northern and far southern parts of La Crosse had minimal coverage and Valley View Mall had hardly any.

La Crosse County is changing some of its communications system to improve and strengthen its coverage. It is joining the City on some of the transmission sites, adding microwave carriers and it is setting up special talk groups so City Police may directly

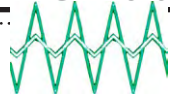


communicate with County Police despite the difference in bands. The County remains on its VHF frequencies.

Early reports from police, fire and other City departments are good. Users are pleased with the system; they get handheld radios for each individual as well as in all vehicles. Before officers and fire fighters shared a limited number of handhelds which caused logistical problems at serious incidents.

Radios issued to firefighters are specially set-up for them with heat resistant cases, larger than usual knobs and controls to accommodate the thick gloves firefighters wear and microphones suited for very noisy conditions and breathing apparatus.

All units have noise cancelling microphones. "There's very good voice quality," notes City of La Crosse Public Works Director Dale Hexom.



## Club news

**U**The RARC is now on Facebook. Look for “RARC” and befriend it. Refer questions to Bill Wood, KE9XQ.

**U**Winter Field Day was a success, reports Dan Abts, AB9TS. In four hours of operation club members tallied 3,228 total points and 76 contacts. And that was in a cozy, heated club trailer.

**U**How’s your shack set-up? Club members want to know. Roger Reader, KA9BKK, will show his shack at the club’s May meeting. The new “Shack Share” is a six or seven minute show of a member’s shack. It could be photos, a video or equipment that you display.

**U**A big turnout of club members is needed to provide communication for La Crosse’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade. At least 10 radio operators are need from 12 1 p.m. Sat. March 12. In April volunteers are needed to provide communication for the La Crosse MS Walk April 23.

**U**The RARC Swap Fest has done very well since it moved to the Omni Center in Onalaska. Greg Miller, KA9FOZ, who chairs the event, says the date is still a bit foggy but probably will be Aug. 13. He’s checking for conflicts and, if so, will schedule it Aug. 6.

## President’s Frequency Modulation

By Kevin Holcomb, KC9ZGD

Spring is just around the corner! Days are longer, flowers are blossoming, and numerous club activities are on-deck. The first is the St. Patrick’s Day parade Sat. March 12. It’s good practice and a good service to the community.



The MS walk is Sat. April 23. We’ve helped for many years. May 7 we have the Granddad Half Marathon which takes time and spreads us across the south side.

**Our April meeting** is Storm Spotter training Tues. April 5, at 6:30 p.m. in the Marycrest auditorium at the Mayo clinic. Training is interesting and it is recommended you attend at least every other year. I go every year, as many do, to keep sharp on the skills asked of us in spotting. This is not a topic to take lightly for it could save lives.

It is important to remember when volunteering that we are asked for our help: we are not to do as we want or to tell event organizers how to do the event. We do what is needed of us the way they instruct us. Being professional is very important. Dressing decently, clean language, and good attitude goes a long way. We represent amateur radio and don’t want to give a bad rap on what we do or who we are.

When using the radio, a clear, calm and readable voice is essential in getting the job done. Net control is just that, it controls the net. There should not be arguing on the air and effective communication is done in seconds. Long-winded communication is not helpful especially if an emergency should arise.

Thank-you to all those who have volunteered and who will volunteer. There is a great need for volunteers this year. I’d rather have too many then not enough. Consider helping out and help us grow as a club and community.

## Storm spotting session is April club program

Spring and summer storm spotting training will be the April 5 program for the Riverland Amateur Radio Club. The session will be 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 5, in the Mary Crest Auditorium, Mayo Health System, La Crosse.

The National Weather Service scheduled this time and could not change it. RARC executive Board members decided to make it the club’s official meeting as well.

A storm spotting class is also planned for 7 p.m., Thursday. April 7, in Hokah. Refer to the official National Weather Service site for other locations, [www.weather.gov/arx/skywarn\\_schedule](http://www.weather.gov/arx/skywarn_schedule)



**SKYWARN**

### Riverland Amateur Radio Club

P.O. Box 621  
Onalaska, Wis. 54650



President ..... Kevin Holcomb, KC9ZGD  
Vice president..... Dan Abts, AB9TS  
Treasurer..... Greg Miller, KA9FOZ  
Secretary..... Bob Seaquist, W9LSE  
Newsletter editor.. Bob Seaquist, W9LSE  
Address correspondence regarding the club to Greg Miller, [ka9foz@gmail.com](mailto:ka9foz@gmail.com). This newsletter is sent by e mail to current and past RARC members and others. If you wish to change your address or subscription,



National Parks

ON THE AIR

2016

www.arrrl.org

## Drinking from a fire hose

By Bob Seaquist, W9LSE



Different thrills for different people range from bungee jumping to skiing Antarctica. Or, in Ham Radio, how 'bout generating pile ups at QRP power? I had that thrill this past month, sitting in National Parks working pile ups with my 10 watt radio.

The National Parks On The Air (NPOTA) event (<https://npota.arrrl.org>) is taking off with Hams across North America anxiously chasing every park activation. That's where my story burns a hole in the sky.

Mrs. W9LSE and I decided to spend February in warm, Southern Utah and we planned to see some of the legendary National Parks there. It seemed natural to bring a radio and try NPOTA.

A test run to check the equipment was a horrible failure. 'Couldn't hear anything and surely no one heard me! Same thing on the first NPOTA try in Zion National Park near St. George, Utah.

Grand Canyon not only is more grand in person than its photographs but the radio thing was also grand. More like drinking from a fire hose! The little radio struggled to put 10 watts into the

antenna yet hundreds of Hams from across the country screamed for my attention! At 10 watts! Contacts ranged from New Hampshire to California.

I learned that I should post a notice on NPOTA's Facebook page as well as on the official NPOTA activation page in order to make the difference from shouting to myself to hearing others shout at me. I was revved and ready for the next park.

I would find a scenic parking area, set up, and almost immediately would be swamped with Hams calling me. Or as I was told by the one Ham, "we've been waiting for you." It was superb sitting amid grand scenery and having Hams from one end of the continent to the other vying for my attention.

In Death Valley, 300' below sea level, not only were chasers waiting for me, they had the frequency reserved and ready for the Qs we racked off. Like the other activations I gave almost all callers honest "5 9" reports and several gave me honest "2 2" in recognition of the bare bones portable set up.

By month's end I activated – and was

the first to activate – Zion National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park, Grand Canyon and Death Valley. All are spectacular places and I also had spectacular radio fun in them.

NPOTA continues all year and I plan to do more activations and a lot of chasing in this fun Ham radio event.



### Gear

Elecraft KX3 radio  
Buddipole antenna  
7 aH gel cell battery  
Note pad log



## Big party, lots of treats

By Bob Seaquist, W9LSE

The question about QSO parties is not “where’s the beer,” but “how much fun can I have on a cold afternoon.” True, beer, other adult beverages and snacks can definitely be a part of a QSO party -- a time when many Hams join several other Hams for a group effort -- but the point is to make a lot of contacts. Better yet, make at least one contact with a Ham in every county of the state! Wisconsin has 72 counties, some of which have actual human beings in them.

Even very modest operations can do well in these events. Last year I score a respectable 6,420 points with 107 Qs and 33 counties at less than 150 watts power. I expected to find my listing at the bottom of the list, but it was way up on the second page. Topping the first page is Chad Kurszewski, WE9V, with 185,022 points. He worked hard at it while I watched the dramatic UW Badger - Michigan State basketball game where UW won, 80-69, in overtime.

For the casual operators among us the joy is in making a lot of friendly contacts. There are some hard core contesters out there but it seems like almost all the Hams working upper Midwest QSO parties are... well...there for the party. There’s even some friendly chatting going on as operators amiably go from one contact to the next.

An example of a decent set-up would be a 100 watt transceiver, tuner, simple wire antenna that will work 40 and 80 meters, and a little time. At contest’s opening bell I wandered 40m for a few minutes then planted myself on a frequency and started calling. Throw out some honey and the bees come! Took some breaks, watched a good basketball game, ran hooting for joy into the living room when I had a rare contact (wife’s reaction: “huh?”) and ran back to the radio.

Even better is having a couple guys over and running a red neck contest station, something we could do in the name of the club. Same radio, same operating technique, same joy but seasoned with company that brings potluck treats and maybe even another radio in order to be a multi op. Being Hams they still may say “huh” but they understand and appreciate rare contacts.

Even if the guys want to stay home and operate in their jammies they can submit their log with the club name and if at least four guys do that we’d score in the club category too.

## Calendar

### Sat. Mar 5

ã Eau Claire 29th Annual Amateur Equipment Auction, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m., Doors Open at 7 a.m., Saving Grace Lutheran Church, 2124 EastRidge Center, Eau Claire. <http://ecarc.org/>

### Sat. Mar 12

ã Communications for La Crosse St. Patrick’s Day Parade, noon.

ã Midwinter Madness Hobby Electronics Show, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m., Buffalo Civic Center, 1306 Country Rd 134, Buffalo, MN.

### Sun., Mar 13

ã Wisconsin QSO Party, 1 - 8 p.m. (The first day of Daylight Savings Time) [www.warac.org/wqp/wqp.htm](http://www.warac.org/wqp/wqp.htm)

### Sun. Mar. 20

ã Wisconsin Antique Radio Club Swapfest, 7 to 11 a.m. The Terminal, 5917 S. Howell Ave., Milwaukee. Radios, tubes, parts, books.

### Tue. Apr. 5

ã Riverland Amateur Radio Club meeting, 6:30 p.m., MaryCrest Auditorium, Mayo Hospital, 700 West Ave. South.

Storm spotter training.

### Sat. Apr. 23

ã Communications for La Crosse MS walk, 9 a.m., La Crosse Center.

### Wisconsin QSO Party

1 - 8 p.m. Sunday, March 13  
(The first day of Daylight Savings Time)

[www.warac.org/wqp/wqp.htm](http://www.warac.org/wqp/wqp.htm)





## RIVERLAND AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

On February 6, 1985, the regular monthly meeting of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club was called to order by President Craig Goldbeck. Minutes of the January meeting were approved as read from the Badger State Smoke Signals. Treasurers report was approved.

**Old Business:** It was brought to the clubs attention that there was a need for more members to serve on the repeater committee. There were no volunteers.

There was no response for anyone on whether we should change the meeting night. So it will remain the first Wednesday of each month.

**New Business:** In order to set up a swapfest committee, volunteers from the membership were requested. Rich Williams, KV9U, and Steve Mrachek, N8CEY, volunteered to head the committee.

With warmer weather only a few months away, it was requested of Nook, K9E60, to give us a brief explanation of properly conducting a transmitter hunt. We will be planning one for this spring or summer.

Field Day was briefly discussed with very little interest. Talk of combining Field Day with a camping get together was brought up. Any ideas on this, bring them up at the meetings.

It was noted that the RTTY repeater antenna has been permanently mounted by an installation crew who was working on the tower. Everything is operating trouble free at this time.

Rich, KV9U, reminded everyone of the upcoming exams scheduled at the center, on March 13, 1985-- requesting that anyone interested in taking an exam, please notify him by the 10th of February.

Members present at this meeting was 30. Meeting was adjourned at 8:05 P.M. Duane, W9HWQ, conducted a discussion on the proper use of the RTTY Repeater.

Respectfully Submitted  
Greg A. Miller, KA9F0Z  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Riverland Amateur Radio Club.

## Additional Notes:

Everyone remember that the March meeting is the last night to turn in your total for the pre-fix contest.

Everyone who signed up for the January 19th Christmas dinner, even in the sub-zero weather, showed up and had a good time. This shows that we have a great group of Amateur Radio operators in this area. I look for a great year and club activities with all of this support.

Our club is really going great -- lets keep it up -- give your support by attending the meetings and contribute whatever you can.

1) Greg A. Miller	KA9F0Z
2) John Carroll	W9MMP
3) Ron Reed	KA9ISV
4) John Young	W9KAZ
5) Ernie Gershon	K9ZVU
6) Mike Nelson	KB9RJ
7) Steve Mrachek	N9CEY
8) Kent Helman	W9LZQ
9) Bruce Bjerstedt	K9CUT
10) Val Elston	WA9F10
11) Gary L. Webb	N9DHQ
12) Roger Reader	KA9BKK
13) Hugh Barker	KA0EJZ
14) Art Osborn	W0JDC
15) Rick Williams	KV9U
16) Dick Low	K0JYB
17) Jim Theisen	KD9EG
18) Bob Pluntz	WD9FKV
19) Bob Golleran	W9JLH
20) Bill Winder	K9E60
21) Herman Ludvik	W9HJV
22) John Markos	KA9LQF
23) L. Knutson (Knut)	W9SFL
24) Phillip Long	KA9RLI
25) Dallas Miller	K9LEC
26) L. F. (Nook) Bentzen	K9E60
27) Graig Goldbeck	N9ETD
28) Jerry Grokowski	WA0HCZ
29) Jim Burcum	K9LBX
30) Duane Fruechte	W9HWQ
31) George Kroner (guest)	KA9HDP
32) Carl Berg (guest)	N5EXA

A gray-haired lady, long a member of her community and church, shook hands with the minister after the service one Sunday morning. "That was a wonderful sermon," she told him, "just wonderful. Everything you said applies to someone I know."

--Earl A. Mathes  
Keil Tri-County Record.

A wise man once said:

Many a man's tongue has broken his nose.

--Byron McNutt  
Waushara Argus

# W e a r y o f W i n t e r

By Carl Thurston, KC9HDS

When you live in the upper Midwest, you expect to have to deal with Winter. Few truly like this season. Yes there are the skiers, snowmobilers, and ice fishermen who long for Winter at least part of the time as we go through Summer and Fall, but by and large, most people, if they are truthful, dread the thought of Winter. Let's face it, when the temperature drops into the minus column and there is several feet of snow on the ground, it becomes hard to find anything likeable about Winter. Sure, many of us, especially those who are retired, stay indoors and hunker down over a nice hot cup of our favorite beverage and dream wistfully of sandy beaches, palm trees, and sunny warm days. This becomes a bit of a fantasy daydream for many. Some give in to it and fly South to warmer climes, those that can afford to and have the free time to go. The rest of us are stuck for the duration of this season. Lately we have been blessed with fairly mild Winters, which makes dealing with the season somewhat more tolerable, but even so, one gets weary of the Winter blahs.

For those who are forced to face the Wintery blasts as part of their occupation, one can but feel sympathy for them. Being forced through necessity to leave one's nice warm home to go out and do the work that needs to be done can be even more wearisome. There are so many jobs that require one's presence in the outdoors regardless of weather conditions. The indefatigable

letter carriers come instantly to mind, but they aren't the only ones who must persevere: Think of farmers, truck drivers, policemen, to name but a few. When you think about it there aren't many occupations that are out there where one can stay at home during inclement weather. With the advent of the Internet, there are more jobs that can be done at home, but in reality there aren't that many who are so blessed.

You might point out that there are some hardy souls out there who actually enjoy braving the frigid elements of Winter. We had a few such individuals who participated in Winter Field Day. Actually, it wasn't much of a task to participate as those happy Hams were nice and warm in our heated communications trailer. Though there were few, they did have a good time and made a significant list of contacts during the abbreviated time that the RARC set aside for this event. Nationally this event was scheduled to go a total of 24 hours, but various constraints made it necessary to limit out time to but four hours. Yes, this was way short of what was set up for this event, but it was a lot better than the showing made by the members of the RARC last year. What's that you say? You don't recall what the RARC membership did for Winter Field Day last year? That because no one showed up so it never happened last year. Since those who took part in it this year enjoyed it so much, perhaps there will be more who want to do it again

next year. We may even go for the full 24 hour event!

In the meantime, for those of you out there who wish that they could have been there at this year's Winter Field Day, there is always the annual FYBO Day, that although the isn't anything scheduled officially for RARC participation, one can join in by simply picking a spot and setting up your rig and have at it. There is a certain thrill when you make a QSO with someone in the Bahamas during an event like this and hear the amazement in the tone of their voice when you tell them the local weather conditions. We might sit here and dream of being in the Bahamas when the Winter winds are blowing and the ice and snow are still in evidence, but it is kind of fun to send a cold blast to the Caribbean, even if it is only via HF. Although Winter weariness is common around here, one can still escape for a bit when the bands are open to warmer climes. Think Spring and try to enjoy Winter, it won't be too much longer and Spring will be here and this winter will be just a memory.



## Kerchunking

Kerchunking is defined as pressing the PTT to trigger the repeater without any intention to talk to anyone. The funniest thing is that if someone tries to talk to them, they simply disappear.

Kerchunking is a universal phenomenon. Kerchunk if you have to. But always identify your transmissions! Another good thing to keep in mind is to always allow a slight pause to allow another station to transmit if he needs to.