

# Noise Floor

Official Publication of the Pacific Northwest VHF society

**Volume 7, Issue 1**

**April 2010**

## Return of the Noise Floor

After an almost 2 year hiatus the Noise floor is back. The society staff would like to thank Jim Aguirre, W7DHC for all the hard work and effort in creating this publication.

The society has grown in leaps and bounds since the original publication in 2001. The goal is that the Noise Floor can come back to grow with the society.

In the re-birth of this publication we encourage all members to contribute articles for publication. All articles should be ham radio related. There is room for carefully crafted opinions on ham radio/ vhf related topics as well.

There may be an editor here that facilitates the publication, but it is to be owned by all members of the society. The goal is to make this a quarterly publication. I encourage participation from all to help achieve this goal.

I will also seek input from outside of the society if it looks to be good knowledge to share.

Ultimately I hope that this will help us grow as a community with the sharing of ideas, techniques, processes and skills involved with our activities.

Thanks for your support.

\_Ed\_

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## Grid Exploration Awards Program Kicked off in 2009.

The Pacific Northwest VHF Society is proud to announce the creation of the Grid exploration Awards Program.

The Program was created by the Board of Directors in the late Fall of 2008. The goal was to expand on the idea of the Fred Fish Award but with a Northwest theme.

All QSOs from January 1 2009 will count towards this award. This was to give everyone a fresh start and to encourage activity.

Currently the Society is seeking artwork from the membership for the certificates mentioned below. Any artwork needs to be submitted to Frank Bechdoldt, K3UHF by July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010 for review and selection by BOD.

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## **Explanation of VUCC process and VUCC certification offered by N6ZE**

Pete Heins, N6ZE, has been a (VHF/UHF Century Club) VUCC Awards Manager for many years and sometimes receives requests to concurrently certify Worked All States (WAS) while performing a VUCC Field Check.

To facilitate this, he requested that his local California radio club to forward an endorsement /request to ARRL HQ to designate him as an ARRL HR WAS Awards Manager. Subsequently, ARRL Awards Branch Manager, Bill Moore, NC1L, approved N6ZE for this volunteer ARRL position on 23 November 2009.

In time, the ARRL envisions that certification for most ARRL awards will be possible through Logbook of the World (LOTW), but for the present, volunteers still bear the responsibility for verifications for VUCC, WAS, & WAC.

All Initial DXCC applicants must still apply directly to ARRL HQ in Newington, CT and send legitimate QSL cards and completed paperwork for 100 different countries.

Subsequent DXCC endorsements can be delegated to a volunteer Award Manager, BUT N6ZE DOES NOT HAVE authority to do any DXCC QSL card checking

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*The Noise Floor is the official publication of the Pacific Northwest VHF Society. All opinions expressed herein are those of the individual authors unless specifically stated as being otherwise.*

*Editor*

*Frank Bechdoldt, K3UHF*

*Submit material to the editor at  
[K3uhf@hotmail.com](mailto:K3uhf@hotmail.com) (please put Noise  
Floor in Subject), or via USPS to  
PO box 1472, Clatskanie, Or 97016*

## **Groundwork laid for 2010 Conference**

Due to the hard work by Kenny, KU7M, arrangements have been made for the 2010 PNWVHF Society Conference in Sea-Tac Wa. From October 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010.

The conference will be held at the Embassy Suites Seattle Tacoma International Airport. 15920 W. Valley Hwy, Seattle, WA 98188



Reservations can be made by calling 425.227.8844

A virtual tour can be taken by going online to:

<http://www.advancedmethod.com/embassysuites/tour/>

or reservations may be made by going to:

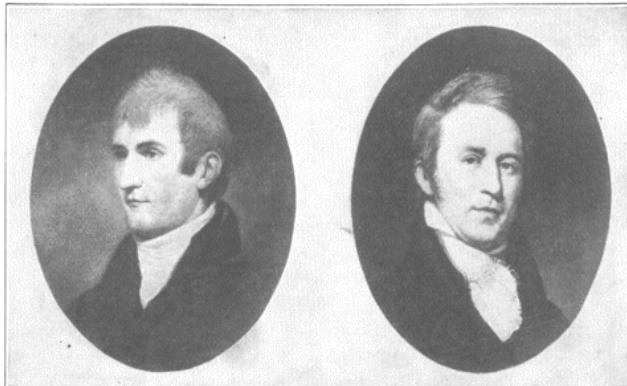
[www.seattletacoma.embassysuites.com](http://www.seattletacoma.embassysuites.com)

The room rate is \$109 a night. \*



## **Grid Exploration Awards designed to boost & reward VHF+ activity from pg 1**

Artwork could be non-copyrighted drawings, sketches pictures or the like that will be the back drop for the certificates. Plaque design will be handled by PNWVHF society staff.



LEWIS AND CLARK

Art submissions for the following certificates should be e-mailed to: K3UHF@hotmail.com and titled PNWVHFART.

A brief summary of awards available for home stations:

The Apple Certificate will be given to any station who works all grids within the state of Washington using any combination of bands.

The Chinook Certificate will be given to any station who works all grids within the state of Oregon using any combination of bands.

The Mountain Bluebird Certificate will be given to any station who works all grids within the state of Idaho using any combination of bands.

The Spirit Bear Certificate will be given to any station who works a minimum of 15 grids within the province of British Columbia with any combination of bands.

The Homestead Plaque will be issued to any station who completes the Apple, Chinook, Mountain Bluebird, and Sprit Bear certificates. Plaques will be numbered in the order stations are qualified and confirmed.

One numbered Outpost Certificate will be given to any station who achieves any of the above awards on any single band. A second or third certificate will be awarded when additional sections are completed on a single band.

Numbered Band Endorsements will also be added to the Homestead Plaque The Mountain Bluebird Certificate for each Outpost Certificate.

Portable mobile and rover plaques are also available.

The Captain Lewis Certificate will be given to any station who activates all grids within the State of Washington using any combination of bands.



The Captain Clark Certificate will be given to any station who activates all grids within the State of Oregon using any combination of bands.

The Sacagawea Certificate will be given to any station who activates all grids within the State of Idaho using any combination of bands.

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## *Meet the Officers*

*Scott Honaker (N7SS)*



***PNWVHFS President  
Snohomish, Washington (CN87wt)***

Scott says he's "a young'un," having received his amateur radio license in 1991. His original call sign was N7WLO. He notes that he participated in his first VHF portable operation in the mid 90s. As he describes the experience "It was a miserable, wet, windy and cold experience on Grass Mountain in CN97. Rather than keeping me away; however, that experience inspired me to try some more organized and better equipped efforts in future contests."

"I see VHF+ as the last frontier of amateur radio," he says. We aren't just talking around the world...there are still records being broken, propagation modes to be better understood and utilized, and newer digital modes that are changing the face of VHF+ operations."

Scott notes that "the Pacific Northwest VHF Society has made a HUGE difference in the local VHF community and I'm excited to be able to contribute." Scott is also a charter member of the Micro-hams (Microsoft Amateur Radio Club) and its current president. He is also charter member #14 of the Pacific Northwest VHF Society. Other interests include flying his own plane, boating and "other fun stuff." \*

## *Meet the Officers*

*Jessie Oberreuter (KB7PSG)*



***PNWVHF Secretary  
Seattle, Washington (CN87)***

Jessie joined the ham radio fraternity in 1992 : "I was always doomed to be an engineer. I actually started with 2m Packet. Then it was QRP CW. Looking for a new challenge, I talked KI7EL (my Elmer) and N7XKJ into doing a VHF contest with me, and the rest, as they say, is history."

Outside of operating the contests "bus portable" as a member of KI7EL, most of Jessie's radio time is spent building and repairing equipment, and keeping the Society running. "I don't get on the air much these days -- partially due to not yet having rebuilt the antenna farm at my new QTH, but also largely due to lack of time."

The new QTH is a few miles north of Seattle's U-District, with a giant elm tree in the back yard. "I'm actually looking forward to some 160m action as soon as I can get a wire in that tree. I had the pruning guys hang some pulleys and lines, but I haven't had time to string the antenna."

Professionally, Jessie is a Senior Engineer for F5 Networks, an adjunct faculty member in Seattle University's Choral Music program, and a semi-regular Computer Science lecturer. "Sleep? What's that?"\*

# Things to Do

## 2010 Contest Line Up.

June 12-14	ARRL June VHF QSO Party
June 26 <sup>th</sup>	Field Day
July	CQ WWVHF (3 <sup>rd</sup> full weekend)
August 7-8	ARRL UHF Contest
August 21-22	10 GHZ & Up ARRL
Sept. 11-13 <sup>th</sup>	ARRL September VHF QSO Party
Sept. 18-19 <sup>th</sup>	ARRL 10 GHZ & Up

## Ham fests & Events

April 17, 2010. Yakima Ham fest. Yakima, Washington  
April 23-25, 2010. Idaho State Convention  
May 1 & 2, 2010. O.C.A.R.C. 6th Annual Ham fest /Electronic Flea Market  
May 8, 2010. Stanwood Camano Amateur Radio Club Ham fests  
June 4-6, 2010. Sea-Pac Ham fest  
June 11-13, 2010. 41st Annual Wenatchee Ham fest  
June 12, 2010. Port Ludlow ARC tailgate swap meet  
June 13, 2010. KARS Ham fest  
July 16-18, 2010. Glacier Waterton International Peace Park Ham fest  
July 30-August 1, 2010. 55th Annual Pacific Northwest DX Convention.  
July 10, 2010. Chehalis Valley ARS 11th Annual Ham fair  
August 14, 2010. Radio Club of Tacoma Ham fest  
August 15, 2010. Antique Radio Swap Meet.  
September 11, 2010. The 4th Annual Clark County ARC Tail-Gate Swap meet  
September 25, 2010. Spokane Ham fest  
October 2-3, 2010. Third annual communications fair and swap meet.  
October 1-3, 2010 PNWVHF conference, Seatac Wa.  
October 23, 2010. Swaptoberfest. Mid-Valley ARES  
June 3-5, 2011. Sea-Pac Ham fest

## Meet the Officers



### ***PNWVHF Vice President Gig Harbor, Washington (CN87)***

Eric's first ham ticket of KB7DQH was received in January 1988, and he has kept it ever since. He began operating on 80 meter CW and 10 meters. A year later he upgraded to Technician, bought a HW2036A a Yagi and began to mount top in his infamous VW bus.

Later he expanded to 2 meter SSB with an IC 202 and began participating in the CQ VHF contests. He bought a FT 620B for 6 meters and set up a beam for portable operations along with fabricating a tower for the bus.

His hobby eventually spilled over into work as a tower climber and he began to collect radio scrap as well. He built many items and expanded to other bands with the scrap.

In May 2004 he bought a new bus that could fit all of his gear as well as several operating stations in hopes of providing a more active station in contests. Later Eric successfully petitioned the ARRL through the VUAC to allow mobile multi op stations in the ARRL contests.

Much of this selfless operation, technical and operating skill has lead him to be the PNWVHF vhfer of the year in 2008. Eric now volunteers as Vice President and gets on the air as well as shows off VHF+ capabilities when and where he can. \*

# Grid Exploration Awards

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The Fraser Certificate will be given to any station who activates 15 grids within British Columbia using any combination of bands.

One Pioneer Plaque per band will be issued to any station who completes the Captain Lewis, Captain Clark, Sacagawea, and Fraser certificates. Plaques will be numbered in the order stations are qualified and confirmed.

One Explorer Certificate per band will be given to any station who achieves any of the above awards on any single band. A second or third certificate will be awarded when additional sections are completed on a single band.

Numbered Band Endorsements will also be added to the Pioneer Plaque for each Explorer Certificate.

## Contact Qualifications:

Contacts made via man made satellites or repeaters are not eligible.

Contacts where there is evidence of rover to rover grid circling will be disqualified after review by the Board of Directors.

Confirmation of contacts can be traditional QSL cards or electronic QSL cards (eQSL or LOTW).

Contacts made in grids that are on a state border may be counted in either state. British Columbia contacts only count for British Columbia if that station was in British Columbia. Contacts for the Mountain Bluebird, Apple, Spirit Bear, Chinook, and Outpost Certificates must be made from British Columbia. Contacts can not be used for Idaho, Oregon or Washington state certificates.

Roving / Portable stations must have the other station clearly state what grid you were in during the contact on the QSL.

Maritime Mobile contacts count for the grid they are in if the grid includes land for the state/ province

claimed.

Contacts with Aeronautical and Orbital stations do not apply.

All qualifying contacts must be made after 00:00 UTC January 1, 2009.

Application Procedure: can be found on the PNWVHF Society web page.

Progress updates can be sent to K3UHF who will post them in the Newsletter \*

## EME Contest rules bring about change.

The elimination of the Assisted class in the 2009 ARRL EME contest caused some controversy and yielded mixed results for the contestants left to participate.

As an antidotal statistic, the Two Meter SSB Only category only received 28 logs for the 2009 contest as compared to 65 logs for 2008. This reflects the probable drop of contestants due to the loss of the Assisted Class entrants in 2009. Assisted entrants are more likely to be stations who are limited to digital communications to complete most QSOs. However webpage records indicate much activity by participants in the contest that were ineligible to submit their log due to the use of spotting web pages. Analog Digital Mixed Assisted Total logs are as follows:  
**2008 6 22 3 34 65**  
**2009 12 N/A 16 N/A 28**

The resulted is only 43 percent of the total logs received for 2008 to materialize in 2009. A drop well beyond the historical year to year fluctuations of past contest entries.

However, CW entries were double for 2009 as compared to 2008. However this number

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## **QRM**

Someone once asked at a conference “why don’t we talk about satellites?” I’ve been in the Society since 2003 and I sometimes wonder why we as a group seem to shy away from discussing the Satellites and the potential for activity on the birds.

AMSAT and other entities have recently added a few more birds for people to work on SSB and there is a plethora of birds to work on FM.

I’m sure the old pro of weak signal work would find this boring or believe it reflects a lack of effort. However to a new person to VHF it could be a window of opportunity to introduce weak signal work to new blood.

Perhaps it’s the general feeling that you are working a flying repeater that might keep some away or talking about them in these circles.

However I would think the world of AMSAT as the close brother to the area of weak signal work. I would think that if approached correctly they could be quite complimentary of one another with the net result being more people equipped for SSB use of the higher bands.

Finally the growth of AMSAT could be the key to using more and more spectrum in the microwave bands. As competition for spectrum increases we need to find more and more ways to regularly use this spectrum in a meaningful manner.

Working a sat takes some operating skill or interfacing skill with a computer. The atmosphere on some SATs is quite competitive reminding me of 20 meter pile ups to Antarctica. Sats also routinely provide the opportunity to make several contacts a day as they pass over. This seems better than sitting in the shack and listening to static in hopes of an opening. Openings always happen when you are gone. You can schedule your time on a SAT.

Ed

## **VUCC Certification from page 2**

As an ARRL HF WAS Manager, Pete is able to certify any ARRL member who has successfully completed the requirements for a “Worked All States” award. He then submits the originals of all paperwork to the ARRL Awards Branch at ARRL HQ in Newington, CT and returns all QSL cards and copies of the paperwork to the applicant.

On January 30, 2010, Pete completed checking QSL cards and completed VUCC and WAS application forms for Ted Henderson, KI7BP of Caldwell, Idaho, (Grid DN-13) for a double ARRL Award. Ted supplied QSLs cards for an initial 6 meter VUCC Award of 125 grids confirmed as well as valid QSL cards for 6 meter contacts in all 50 states. Pete has previously certified about 50 applications for the treasured VHfer’s award and this marks his first WAS verification

QSL cards must be properly filled out to be submitted for an award. WAC, ARRL’s WAS, VUCC, DXCC, and other non-ARRL award programs all require certain information to be supplied on each QSL card.

At the very least a QSL card must include: ALL required information shall be entered on 1 side of the card (although some is permitted to be written on the other side also!): this is a requirement so insure that photocopied information cannot be included on a non-valid QSL card.

Pen or non-erasable marker must be utilized (no pencil!). Exception: if grid locator is printed on the QSL card, it may be written in pencil by the applicant. Call sign, name, grid locator, address, state/country (possibly county), band, transmission mode (ssb/cw/psk,FM), date/time (Preferably in GMT/UTC/Zulu/CUT!) usually are the minimum required elements. Signal reports, equipment, etc. are nice to include also.

For further details on the ARRL Awards Programs, please refer to >> <http://www.arrl.org/awards/> << for additional information.

Any ARRL member who meets the requirements for either WAS or VUCC can e-mail me Pete Heins at [n6ze@aol.com](mailto:n6ze@aol.com) to make arrangements for completing the award certification. \*

## **EME rule Changes stirs up more questions and debate from Page 6**

is still about ½ of the previous years digital entries.

Research was done during contest hours on the N0UK EME chat page, a 2 meter liaison point. (note any station using this service is disqualified from competing under the current ARRL rules)

A random sample of the number of users reflected 275 users. This number is 982% of the total number of 2 meters entrants.

Antidotal evidence would suggest a large number of would be contestants were prevented from competing by the current ARRL rules.

Also of the 28 Two Meter only class, only 7 were from US stations in the ARRL sponsored contest.

Questions still remain if the rule changes for EME contests were effective if the goal was to gather more log submissions. Others feel the goal was to bring the contest back to it's old school roots.

In 2009 several of the qualified Contestants were spotted and listed on various web pages by non qualified participants of the contest. The result being a dramatic increase of scores for the qualified entrants making QSO's with non qualified participants that resulted in a dramatic increase of contestants that remained qualified scores.

To some the evidence suggests that no amount of rule changing will offset the spread of technology, information and the desire to add grids to one's collection vs. being allowed to enter a log in a contest.

At this point in time the VUAC is again open to input on how the rule changes effected activity and participation. A list of VUAC representatives is listed on the ARRL web page.  
\*

## **N7SC appointed as VUAC Rep.**

Late in 2009 Jim Aguirre, W7DHC resigned as the Northwest's VUAC member after several years of hard, frustrating and sometimes under appreciated work.

Jim was diligent in letting the membership know what was going on in committee and often passed on the members views on to committee.

Jim demonstrated much patience with members frustrations over the years and the various heated debates over the issues. He will be missed as an advocate for VHF activities within the complicated political system of the ARRL.

Replacing him is Steve Chastain, N7SC. A serious VHF presence from Medford, Or.

Steve was first licensed in as WN7SJV, he acquired his present call in 1977. Steve's radio interests are building antennas and amplifiers for VHF/UHF and weak signal operating. For the last 25 years he was employed with the same company, first as an electronics technician and the last fifteen years as a computer and networking technician.

Jim was appointed as the Northwest Division VUAC rep. in October, 2009 by Jim Fenstermaker (K9JF) the ARRL Northwest Division Director. He volunteered for this appointment because he thought it was important that our division was represented on this committee, and he wanted to give something back to the hobby that has been so enjoyable all these years.

## Huge Moon attracts Hams.



The Moon reached its minimum distance to the earth for this year at the end of January. Many local members were on the air drumming up contacts from around the world. Of course there were grumblings of the inconvenient moonset times that interfered with one's sleep or work. However, it was commonly reported as one of the better moons as of late, allowing many small stations to work off the lunar surface. \*

Portland Area Ham's met for a long lunch In March at Buster's BBQ in Tigard, Oregon.



Attendees were :

Pete Holmes - K0VIZ	CN85
Hugh Flint - KF7LN	CN95
Jim Garver - K7YO	CN85
Mark Tapper - W7PJ	CN87
Stan Beneveds - KG7P	CN87
Frank Bechdoldt - K3UHF	CN86
Bruce Junkin - KI7JA	CN85 (taking picture)
Mike Coogan - KB7ME	CN85
Bob Moorehouse- KB7ADO	Cn86

No one choked on ribs.