Mark Your Calendar — September Meeting Change!

Be Prepared! Mark your calendar now for changes to the September Club Meeting schedule!

MARA and VARA will meet jointly on Thursday, September 4, at the Augusta County Government Center on U.S. 11, just south of Verona.

This special meeting will feature a guided tour of the Augusta County Emergency Operations Command Center.

The meeting will begin with a presentation on the EOC center, starting promptly at 7:30 pm.

As of press time, no decision had been made about dinner before the meeting. More information will hopefully be available in next month’s issue of the Monitor.

But for now, mark your calendar with the change.

Thanks to Andrew Barbour, AG4XN, for arranging this tour.

Augusta County Fox Hunt — August 14

In place of the regular Augusta County ARES Net on August 14, there will be a “fox hunt”.

(A “fox hunt” is a hunt for a hidden transmitter.)

The hunt will begin at 7:30, which is a half-hour earlier than the normal Augusta County ARES Net.

The net — ...uh, fox hunt — will be held on 146.490 simplex, which is Augusta County’s official ARES simplex frequency. Net control will be the fox.

The hunt is good training for finding downed aircraft and other radio-direction-finding (RDF) operations. We encourage, but do not require, that you share your compass headings openly on the net so everyone can use them to help triangulate and find the fox.

Participants will check in, then begin feeding their direction headings to the net if they wish. Net control will begin the net with 50 watts transmitter power to take check-ins, and then will reduce to 10 watts for the actual hunt.

Remember, triangulation is the secret to good fox hunting. If, after a reasonable time (2 hours or so?) the fox’s location is still a secret, he may go ahead and reveal his location.

Some may wish to find the fox by themselves individually, and that’s okay, too. If you decide to go mobile to obtain multiple headings yourself, be careful as you drive around! There’s a lot of crazy drivers out there. Don’t be one of them!

David Tanks, AD4TJ
Augusta County Emergency Radio Officer
Bridgewater Lawn Party—Public Service Report

I would like to thank those that helped direct traffic during the Bridgewater Lawn Party parades on July 18 and 19. As usual, each of you did a very good job, and once again nobody got run over! There was the one or two motorist that thought they could do as they pleased, and I understand that one of them got to chat with a police officer.

Gerald Nauman, KN4FM

Thanks to:
Brian, KG4RMY
Dick, KC3AN
Phyllis, N4VZC
Steve, KF4ZWK
Bob, KG4CHL
Chris, KI4BAQ
Bob, N1QEIQ
Gayle, KU4XN

Morse Code Practice

Elwood Shrader, KB4DJN, of Weyers Cave, is holding Morse Code lessons. The lessons began July 21, and meet every Monday evening in his home at 22 Somerset Drive, in Weyers Cave (2 blocks south of the Weyers Cave traffic light!)

Each class lasts about 30-45 minutes. You do not have to be club member, or even a licensed ham to participate.

The lessons are intended to supplement what the student can learn on their own using their own computer software, Morse code instruction tapes, listening to W1AW, or whatever. The objective of the class is to get anyone who’s interested up to speed to take the 5 WPM code test, making them eligible for the General and Extra class ham licenses.

For more information, call Elwood at 540-234-7662.

Fantastic Mods Page — Pictures and Manuals, Too!

Interested in modifying your radio to work the new 60m band?
Looking for a workaround for that troublesome power switch on your Icom mobile rig?
Want to find out how to fix that pesky tone problem on your Kenwood?
Need a copy of a manual?

Want a professional photo of your old radio to accompany an ad?

Thanks to Ray Colvin for providing the URL for one of the best mod pages we’ve seen. Check it out at:

Http://www.mods.dk/index.htm
Copper Tubing Dipole Antenna

Thanks to Ray Colvin, KE4HVR, for the photos of this quick and simple method of making a self-supporting dipole antenna. The antenna can be sized for almost any band above about 20 meters.

The antenna is made of copper tubing, cut to size for the band you wish to work. Two lengths are used, one for each side of the dipole. A short length of PVC pipe is used for the center insulator and for structural integrity in a vertical position.

The bolts, lockwashers, and wing nuts shown will work fine for HF frequencies, and perhaps for 2-meters, but may be introducing some capacitance at the higher frequencies such as 144 or especially 450 MHz. Keep the extra metal to a minimum for minimum effect.

The antenna can be quickly and easily dismantled for convenience in transporting. Ray admits he got the idea from the internet.

An Invitation to Camp, ...to Contest, ...to RTTY — — from WB4WEX

Daryl Cline, WB4WEX, is going to be camping at the Field Day site on September 27, and will be working the CQ-RJ Worldwide RTTY contest that weekend.

If you are interested in joining him for some camping fun on the mountain and/or to help work the contest, contact Daryl at his new email address: daryl@shentel.net.

Thanks to Neal, WA4KKL

Pat KD4WWF and Ray KE4HVR, would like to thank Neal and Peggy Buckingham for coming up to the field day site and picking up rocks and sticks for us while we were mowing. That was a big help to us and made our job go much easier.
Preliminary Field Day Results

Neal, N4XU, did a quick comparison with Field Day 2002 to Field Day 2003:

FD 2002
Total Contacts - 2,541
Score 9,046

FD 2003
Total Contacts - 2,641
Score - To Be Determined

So, if we are able to claim all of the bonus points this year that we had last year, our final score for 2003 should be close to last year's total.

However, CW was down by about 100 QSO's from 2002 - which equates to 200 raw points. But we had 100 more overall contacts, so maybe the total will be okay for 2003.

The 2003 Contact Totals are shown at the right:

Clockwise starting at right:
The dinner spread on Friday night was fantastic, and featured many delicious dishes, both identifiable and unidentifiable. — W3HXH holds on to the radio both hands while KE4GMJ calls CQ. — W4PJW and KD4FKT finally figure out that the tower is supposed to be vertical, not horizontal. — ATV was a big part of this year’s field day. — FD is a good time to see some professional tower climbers in action, and learn new techniques, ask questions, and admire the artistry of a good tower man doing his thing.

- CW QSOs: 912
- Phone QSO’s: 955
- Digital QSOs: 73
- Other Digital QSOs: 257
- VHF/UHF: 119
- GOTA: 271
Clockwise starting at right: Field Day is also a good opportunity to try out new rigs, getting a feel for how they operate and their advantages and disadvantages. — The green shack had no transmitters, but generated a lot of RF hash. — W3HXB played the autoharp as well as the autotuner. — K4EME’s mobile rig sports the high-gain antennas needed for satellites, moonbounce, and heating leftovers. — K4RBZ did a great job holding up the tower. Only after FD was over did he learn that the tower was already guyed.
Part of the fun of ham radio is experimenting. Some may call it “playing around with the toys”, but there is great feeling when you launch into the unknown and design your own test setup, especially when it works better than you though it would!

Jason, N4DSL, and Daryl, KG4PRR, have been experimenting with some 802.11 wireless networking gear. This equipment was intended for commercial use in short-distance (<300 feet) wireless local area networks, like those found in businesses and schools.

Six of the 802.11 channels share frequencies with the 2.4 GHz ham band. As long as you set up your 802.11 gear to broadcast your ham call sign as its ID, it is perfectly legal to increase the power and gain beyond what the off-the-shelf 802.11 equipment provides. However, Jason and Daryl have used unmodified equipment running nominal power levels, with gain antennas to achieve their amazing distance.

On July 19, they established a solid connection (67%) from an overlook on Skyline drive to Spotswood High School in McGaheysville at the base of Massanutten peak. The solid two-way connection was made using 19db gain grid dishes and only 30 milliwatts of radio power on each end!

They also established a link from the north side of Broadway to a point over 5 miles to the south, using 63 milliwatts into an omnidirectional antenna on one end, and 30 milliwatts into a directional antenna on the other. These distances are many times what 802.11 gear can normally do.

If you are interested in joining the fun of 802.11 gear for long-distance access (for example, to the Internet), give Jason or Daryl a call.
K4DJG: The Red Planet Approaches

Never again in your lifetime will the Red Planet be so spectacular.

This month and next, Earth is catching up with Mars, an encounter that will culminate in the closest approach between the two planets in recorded history. The next time Mars may come this close is in 2287.

Due to the way Jupiter's gravity tugs on Mars and perturbs its orbit, astronomers can only be certain that Mars has not come this close to Earth in the last 5,000 years but it may be as long as 60,000 years.

The encounter will culminate on August 27th when Mars comes to within 34,649,589 miles and will be (next to the moon) the brightest object in the night sky. It will attain a magnitude of -2.9 and will appear 25.11 arc seconds wide. At a modest 75-power magnification Mars will look as large as the full moon to the naked eye.

Mars is easy to spot. At the beginning of August, Mars will rise in the east at 10 p.m. and reach its highest altitude at about 3 a.m. But by the end of August, when the two planets are closest, Mars will rise at nightfall and reach its highest point in the sky at 12:30 a.m. That's pretty convenient when it comes to seeing something that no human has seen in recorded history.

So mark your calendar at the beginning of August to see Mars grow progressively brighter and brighter throughout the month. Share with your children and grandchildren. No one alive today will ever see this again.

Bob Van Fossen
K4DJG

From the MARA President

As I look out the one window of the room where my computer is located, I see a reminder that I need to re-erect my antenna. It is draping from the roof to its anchor point in a tree away from the house. It came down as a result of the two trees swaying in the wind and wearing the parachute cord in two. (I use parachute cord to hold up both ends of the G5RV antenna.) I am presently QRT until I get it back up.

Our new house is to be started in October so I plan to erect antennas there soon. As the old saying goes: "The shoemaker's kids go without shoes"....

I am in the middle of moving two professional radio stations, WJDV-FM and WHBG-AM from their present location behind Pano's Restaurant to our studios and other three station transmitter site on Route 33 west of Harrisonburg. The WJDV-FM antenna will be installed at the 330 ft. level on the 500 ft. WQPO tower and WHBG-AM will be transmitted from the center WSVA tower. This is a large project and if anyone wishes to come and observe the "goings-on", feel free to contact me at (540)434-0331. I am dealing with 3 and 1/8 inch, 1 and 5/8 inch and 7/8 inch transmission lines and am having a real "antenna party", particularly installing the connectors on the ends of the transmission lines.

Again, it was nice seeing all who were at Field Day. As usual, it was another nice effort by the two clubs and I know of no one who did not have a good time. Jeanne and I spent most of our time at the Hospitality Center. I thank all who participate in this venture and "hats off" to a job well done by everyone.

Ellsworth, K4LXG

Don't forget the VE Examinations in Dayton on Saturday, August 9.
Make Your Own Access Map — Before You Need It

Can you work Luray on simplex from your home? Can you reach New Market? How about Crimora? Mount Solon? Churchville?

The weekly (or monthly) ARES Nets are a great opportunity for you to create your own Access Map.

Next time you check into one of the local nets, put your radio in “reverse” mode and listen to the repeater’s input frequency. Get a map of the valley, and begin putting green dots on the stations you can reach by simplex from your home. Over the course of several months, you should be able to get a good idea of the capability and limitations of your 2-meter station.

The Rockingham County ARES Net meets on simplex on the first Monday of each month specifically to enable members to discover where they can, and can’t reach on simplex. Take advantage of this by starting your map! You never know when the repeaters will be knocked off the air.

In addition to the Rockingham county net, add stations from the Page County ARES Net (Sunday nights), the Augusta net (second Thursday of the month), or the Highland County net (the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays).

Once you feel like you’ve got a good idea of where your home station will reach, do it over again at an emergency response site — one that you would like to volunteer to man during a disaster. For example, go to your nearby fire department station-house or school or shelter. Sit in your car during net time, and listen on the input, marking down on a map those stations you can work simplex from your emergency location.

I’d like to see a date set aside this fall for everyone to be “dispatched” (or volunteer) to go to an emergency response location for the net. It would be a good idea to see which fire stations can talk to which stations, which schools can reach which rescue stations, and which rescue stations can reach the hospitals. This knowledge may be invaluable should an emergency strike the valley.

MARA Secretary’s Report

The July meeting of the Massanutten Amateur Radio Association was held at Evers Restaurant in Mt. Crawford, the meeting was opened at 7:30PM by the club president, Ellsworth Neff, K4LXG, and there were 21 members and 9 guests present.

The secretary’s report for the June meeting was accepted as given in the July issue of the MARA monitor.

Don Landes, WX4C brought up the possibility of a MARA club call sign, this will be voted on by a ballot that will be mailed out, either mail the ballot back to MARA, PO Box 1882, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 or bring it to the next meeting.

Ellsworth, K4LXG noted that for MARA to continue to be an ARRL affiliated club it needs to have an ARES program, and an ARES EC, there will be a ballot sent out to all members to vote on rather or not members want MARA to be affiliated with the ARRL or not, please fill out the ballot and mail to MARA, PO Box 1882, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 or bring it to the August meeting.

Gerald Nauman, KN4FM reminded members of the annual Bridgewater lawn party July 18th and 19th and that help will be needed.

Andrew Barbour, AG4XN announced that there will be a tour of the Augusta EOC center in Verona on September 4th along with the VARA club.

Billy Hooke, KG4JOF noted that there were 108 people signed in at this year’s field day and there were 2257 contacts this year versus 2241 last year.

The next QRP club meeting will be at the home of Chuck, KD5KA on Tuesday, July 15th at 7:00 PM in Weyers Cave.

A new member application was read, Chris Shirkey, K4BAQ will be voted on at the August meeting.

Carol Landes, N4JKX won the 50 / 50 drawing, $15 went to Carol and $15 went to the club.

The formal meeting was adjourned at 8:17PM.

Todd Harrison, K4TMH
MARA Secretary

Calendar of Events

August 3: Berryville Hamfest
August 5: VARA Club Meeting: Staunton Shoneys
August 7: MARA Club Meeting: Mt. Crawford Evers
August 9: VE Examinations in Dayton VA
August 10: Carroll County MD Hamfest
August 23: WV State Hamfest (Jacksons Mill WV)
August 30: Morgantown WV Hamfest
August 30-31: Shelby NC Hamfest
September 4: Joint MARA/VARA Meeting, Augusta EOC
The Valley Amateur Radio Association met at Shoney’s in Staunton on July 1, 2003. The President Benny Cook N4BCC opened the meeting at 7:43pm. There were 13 members present and 5 guests, Bob Van-Fossen K4DJG, Oscar Price KB4GU, Jo Ann Price KB4EFC, Ken Anderson KD4VPE, Kaitlyn Anderson (Ken’s daughter). Welcome to our visitors, and we would like to see all of you back next month.

The 50/50 was won by Cowles Andrus III K4EME, congratulations Cowles! Cowles gave his share back to the club and we thank him for doing so.

Billy KG4JOF, Field Day Chairman, reported that all went well at Field Day 2003 and it looks like we made more contacts than last year. The final count was not in at our July meeting.

Thanks to Billy and all committee members for organizing a very successful FD 2003.

Pat KD4WWF and I, Ray KE4HVR, would like to thank Neil and Peggy Buckingham for coming up to the field day site and picking up rocks and sticks for us while we were mowing. That was a big help to us and made our job go much easier.

Thanks to all that helped make Field Day 2003 a success such as: radios, antennas, generators, coax, push up poles, towers, station shelters, computers and many other items. Also thanks to all the operators that kept the stations running especially during the early morning hours.

A BIG THANKS...to all who helped tear down the equipment and get it loaded on trailers to come off the mountain after a tiring weekend making contacts and catching a nap when you could.

Alby McCutchen AD4KZ brought to our attention at our June meeting that the three local libraries do not have license study material for new hams and suggested that the club purchase a book for each of the three local libraries. Bill agreed to contact ARRL to see what was available for Club purchases and get prices.

Bill Karle KG4UPN contacted the ARRL for the club and brought back information on purchasing Ham Radio license study guides for prospective hams. A set of books, CD’s and tapes was $200. This will be discussed more at our August meeting.

Doug Alder N4DUG is recovering from his heart attack and was on the mountain for FD 2003. Also, thanks to Doug for the station shelters again this year.

Lonnie Czerniak N4WIV, Greg’s (W4GRC) wife, got her hard neck brace off Monday July 7th and is doing well. NOW........she can turn her head to make sure Greg is still doing the housework and not goofing off.

Let’s keep these folks in our thoughts and prayers.

David Tanks AD4TJ Needs HELP with the Augusta County ARES Net. Anyone that is willing to be net control and help David out give him a call. The Net will be held on the 146.850 repeater on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 8:00pm. This repeater has a minus offset and a tone of 131.8 when needed.

Mark your calendar and check into the net. Remember without YOU there will be NO ARES NET.

We would like to get training classes started for the Technician level. Anyone interested in helping teach the classes please contact Benny N4BCC, Alby AD4KZ or Richard AA4RH. We need to get some young people interested in ham radio. Listen for any hints that someone may like to learn what ham radio is all about.

PROGRAMS NEEDED...Richard AA4RH, our Program Chairman, asks for anyone who would like to do a program at one of our meetings to give him a call and get a date set up to present it. It does not have to be HAM related. It could be anything you think the group would find interesting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58pm

Submitted By: VARA Secretary
Ray Colvin KE4HVR

The deadline for the September issue of the Monitor is Friday, August 22.
MASSANUTTEN AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION, Inc.

President: Ellsworth Neff, K4LXG
Vice President: Chuck Vogan, KD5KA
Secretary: Todd Harrison, K4TMH
Treasurer: Sandy Mullins, K4PZC
Board (exp 03): Jason Armentrout, N4DSL
Board (exp 04): Richard Haxton, KC3AN

http://mara.ws

MARA meets the first Thursday of each month at Ever’s Restaurant on U.S. 11 south of Harrisonburg. Meal starts at 6:30 pm. Business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

Visitors are welcome.

Dues ($12 per year) should be mailed to:
MARA
PO Box 1882
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

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VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

President: Benny Cook, N4BCC
Vice President: Ken Harris, KE4GKD
Secretary: Ray Colvin, KE4HVR
Treasurer: Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW
Program Manager: Richard Huttinger, AA4RH

http://www.qsl.net/w4mus

VARA meets the first Tuesday of each month at Shoneys Restaurant on U.S. 250 east in Staunton. Meal starts at 6:30 pm. Business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

Visitors are welcome.

Dues ($15 per year) should be mailed to:
Jeff Rinehart, W4PJW
1344 Hankey Mtn Hwy
Churchville, VA 24421