B.V.A.R.A. QRM

W3SGJ **www.qsl.net/bvara** **September 2003**

144.710/145.310 MHZ - 100 HZ PL **447.975/442.975 MHZ - 100 HZ PL**

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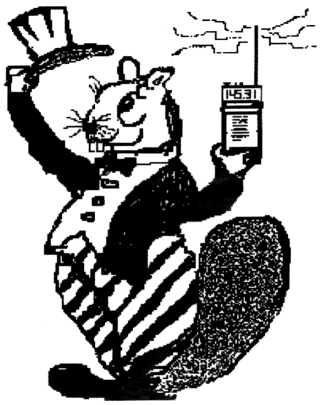

THE NET LIST

WPA CW NET.....……...7:00 PM DAILY.....3.585

TRADERS NET.....……..7:00 PM MON & FRI 3.898

HOSS TRADERS....…….8:00 PM WEDNESDAY.3.910

CALLOUS BOTTOMS...11:00 PM DAILY...3.912.5

WPA PHONE & TFC NET…6:00 PM DAILY...3.983

PA TRAFFIC TRAINING NET..6:30 PM…3.610

E-CARS.....……..8:00 AM DAILY...7.255

EAN NET..……2:30 PM DAILY..7.243

RIP VANWINKLE....…...7:00 AM DAILY..145.31

B.V.A.R.A. 2 METER…..8:30 PM WED....145.31

B.V.A.R.A. 10 METER…9:00 PM WED...28.370

WPA TRAFFIC.....…….8:00 PM DAILY..146.88

QCWA NET.....……....8:30 AM SUNDAY.147.03

VISIT THE B.V.A.R.A.'s WEBSITE AT:

www.qsl.net/bvara

If you have a submission for the B.V.A.R.A. QRM you may submit it to Janet N3NBJ by any of the following means.. E-mail: ke3ed@arrl.net, Packet: ke3ed@k3oiw.#wpa.pa.usa.na, or typed in text format on floppy disk. Thank you.

Inside This Issue

==**CLUB NEWS**==

CLUB MEETING

The September B.V.A.R.A. meeting will be held on Thursday the 11th, 7:30 PM at the Beaver County Emergency Center located at 250 East End Avenue, Beaver, PA. A nominating committee will be presented for office elections slated in November as well as other business. Other topics for discussion will be planning for the upcoming PA QSO Party and location of this years Christmas Party. Fund raising projects will also be discussed. As usual the coffee will be on.

LEE WHITMIRE - W3RHO – SK

The B.V.A.R.A. is sad to announce the passing of Life member Lee Whitmire. Lee was a key figure in the Club's development and took part in incorporating the B.V.A.R.A. He will certainly be missed.

CORN ROAST

A great time was had by all who attended our annual Corn Roast at Brady's Run Park. The corn was delicious as well as all the wonderful covered dishes. A special thanks to all the ladies who set up the tables and the guys who shucked and cooked the corn. Door prizes were also awarded to:

Shawn Newberry
Mel KD3US
Chris W3OUF
Wes N3ALS
John KC3OW

Congratulations to all.

HAMS NIGHT OUT

This month our plans for "Ham's Night Out" takes us to The Texas Roadhouse in Center Twp, near Lowes. We will meet there at 6:00 PM. Hope to see you there.

ARRL Western Pennsylvania Section Manager:
John V. Rodgers, N3MSE
n3mse@arrl.org

One of the most rewarding aspects of being section manager is the opportunity to acknowledge individuals that have been recognized for their accomplishments in amateur radio. This month I have the pleasure of doing just that for several individuals. First I want to congratulate Bruce Watson, AA3LX, of Butler who was selected as The Professional Edustcator of the year by the ARRL board of directors. Bruce is a science teacher at the Mars Middle School and an assistant section manager here in W. Pa. Bruce has been using amateur radio in the classroom for several years and is also creating numerous training programs about various aspects of amateur radio. I want to also thank Bruce for his outstanding work in the section promoting amateur radio and working to get more young people involved in the hobby.

Several young people in our section were awarded scholarship grants by the ARRL foundation and the Foundation for Amateur Radio. Those individuals include Victoria Reid, AA3OT of Sigel, James Rusinko, KB3GWD of Pittsburgh, Robert Rodgers, Wa3KOI of Gibsonia, Amy Johnson, KB3HXF of New Castle and Eric Tichanski, NI3S of Chicora. Our congratulation goes out to these individuals and best wishes for continued success in school and amateur radio.

Last month I reported the appointment of Rick Johnson, AE3C as DEDC for official emergency stations. A typo had Rick's last name incorrectly listed. Sorry Rick. His daughter BarbaraKB3HAS, also asked me to remind everyone of the under 21 net on the 146.88 repeater on Sunday evenings at 8:30 PM. Congratulations also goes out to the North Hills High School radio club for placing third in the school club roundup high school division.

In the upcoming weeks you will see many changes in our section. We are still in need of volunteers to fill many key positions. There is a need for individuals that will step forward and give some time back to the hobby to promote amateur radio and the many facets. We have a need for a DEC in the North 1 region of the section. We also need to fill the vacancy of SEC created by Rich Beaver becoming an assistant section manager. There are several counties that have no emergency coordinator and I would like to see that these positions are filled. Another area that needs a volunteer is that of affiliated club coordinator. This person would be a liaison between the area clubs and HQ as well as the section. Individuals interested in any of these positions as well as any of the many field appointments should contact myself at n3mse@arrl.org or Rich Beaver at n3srj@arrl.net

The Atlantic Division leadership is in the process of forming a group of individuals that will be producing some educational programs to assist groups in making presentations at club meetings and other events. More information on this subject will be made available in the next month or so and I encourage you to visit the division web page at http://www.atldiv.org More information will be placed there as the program progresses.

On September 7th the Western Pennsylvania Section Convention will be held in conjunction with the Butler County Amateur Radio Association hamfest in Butler, Pa. This is the third year for our section convention and we are looking forward to many informative programs during the event. This year the guest from ARRL HQ will be Dennis Motschenbacher,K7BV. Dennis is sales/marketing manager and will speak on the dxpedition to East Timor and on 6

meter operating. There is also scheduled a forum on echolink and with ARRL division and section leaders. More information is available at http://www.qsl.net/w3udx On Sunday August 24th the Skyview amateur radio society will have their annual hamfest at the clubhouse. Hope to see everyone at these fun events.

Don't forget on October 11th and 12th is the Pennsylvania QSO Party. I personally look forward to this even sponsored by the Nittany Amateur Radio Club. To get more information about this event visit the web site at http://www.nittany-arc.org/paqso.html

I also want to thank the countless members of the league and the volunteers that help me in representing each of you in the W. PA. section. Your efforts are greatly appreciated by all of the members and especially by myself.

==>AMATEUR COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO POTENTIAL BPL THREAT

Members of the Amateur Radio community have responded to the potential threat posed by Broadband over Power Line (BPL) by opening their wallets in a most generous fashion. ARRL Chief Development Officer Mary Hobart, K1MMH, says BPL has hit a major hot button with amateurs, but more help is needed.

"We're now up to nearly $193,000 from more than 3690 donors," Hobart said as July drew to a close. The goal for the special Spectrum Defense campaign is $300,000 by August 31.

Possibly equally significant is the fact that the number of donors to the BPL campaign substantially exceeds the number of individuals and organizations--approximately 1900--who filed initial comments in response to the FCC's Notice of Inquiry (NOI) on BPL earlier this year. While the deadline for initial comments has passed, the FCC this week extended the reply comment deadline to August 20 <http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-03-2590A1.doc>.

The League filed a 120-page package of comments and technical exhibits <http://www.arrl.org/announce/regulatory/et03-104/> on July 7, and it plans to file reply comments.

A form of power line carrier (PLC) technology, BPL would use existing electrical power lines to deliver high-speed (ie, broadband) Internet services to homes and businesses. Because it would use frequencies between 2 and 80 MHz, HF and low-VHF amateur allocations could be affected if such systems are deployed. Proponents--primarily electric power utilities--already are testing BPL systems in several markets. Although FCC rules already allow BPL, industry proponents want the FCC to relax radiation limit, which could further increase the interference potential to Amateur Radio operations.

ARRL Lab Manager Ed Hare, W1RFI, is continuing his efforts to assess and quantify the effects of BPL on HF amateur allocations. Just back from a more than 1300-mile trip to evaluate the effects of BPL systems now in the testing stages, Hare described the interference he monitored on the HF bands as "devastating." Meanwhile, ARRL President Jim Haynie, W5JBP, and members of the ARRL Technical Relations Office staff have been working to build the Amateur Radio case against BPL in Washington.

In a recent solicitation focusing on the BPL issue, ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ, said no prior threat has posed a challenge more serious. "The threat is as close as the power lines right in your neighborhood," Sumner said in issuing a call to action to all amateurs. "Only by joining forces financially will we be able to educate government officials quickly and effectively on the impact of this new threat to Amateur Radio spectrum."

BPL technology already has been deployed in some European countries, and amateurs there have experienced interference from the systems. Responding in part to concerns expressed by its amateur community, Japan last year decided not to adopt the technology because of its interference potential.

For additional information on BPL, visit the ARRL "Power Line Communications (PLC) and Amateur Radio" page <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/HTML/plc/>. Hobart invites donors to visit the ARRL Spectrum Defense campaign page <https://www.arrl.org/forms/development/donations/bpl/>.

==>FCC UPHOLDS VANITY FEE POLICY, SETS NEW FEE START DATE

The FCC says the new, higher Amateur Radio vanity call sign regulatory fee of $16.30 for the 10-year license term will go into effect September 9. Until then, applicants for amateur vanity call signs will continue to pay the current $14.50 fee per vanity application. The FCC expects to collect close to $160,000 from 9800 Amateur Radio vanity call sign applicants during Fiscal Year 2003. That's up by almost $30,000 and 800 applications from FY2002.

In releasing its annual Report and Order on the assessment and collection of regulatory fees for FY2003, the FCC responded at some length to comments filed from the amateur community. Some commenters had questioned the need for the fee, the requirement to pay it when renewing a vanity call sign and why refunds were not automatic.

Telecommunications Act provisions governing regulatory fee assessment cover applications for vanity call signs, which, the FCC said, "are voluntarily requested by licensees" and are "a value-added benefit not afforded to all licensees." Assessment of a regulatory fee to cover the FCC's processing and enforcement costs to make the vanity call sign service available is reasonable, the Commission concluded.

The FCC said its current policy of assessing "a nominal fee" at the time of initial application and at each renewal also allows greater access to vanity call signs. "A high one-time-only fee would be cost prohibitive for many entities wishing to obtain a vanity call sign," the Commission said. The Commission also said it incurs costs to manage each vanity call sign throughout its existence, not just in the first 10 years.

Regarding refunds due when the FCC denies an application, the FCC said its rules require a written request from applicants before it can process refunds of regulatory fees. "The written request serves as documentation when cross-referencing each unique file number that may be entitled to a refund," the FCC added.

The FCC said the documentation was particularly important in the case of Amateur Radio vanity applications, "because filing trends indicate that some applicants file several vanity call sign applications per day for several days on end." Requiring a written request makes it easier to certify "which fees are to be refunded for which dismissed applications," the Commission said. In addition, those processing applications in FCC bureaus and offices don't have the authority to issue refunds without proper documentation.

A copy of the Report and Order is available on the FCC Web site <http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-03-184A1.doc>.

==>TEEN ASTRONOMERS SPEAK VIA HAM RADIO WITH SPACE STATION

Teenaged members of an amateur astronomers' club enjoyed an opportunity to speak via ham radio with someone in space July 24. The Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) contact originated at Brussels Planetarium, an annex of the Royal Observatory of Belgium. Contact participants got to ask 13 questions of astronaut Ed Lu, KC5WKJ, at the controls of NA1SS aboard the ISS. In response to one youth's question, Lu said he and the Expedition 7 crew commander, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Malenchenko, RK3DUP, get along well in part because they have been in space together before. Lu said if others were able to share his and Malenchenko's perspective on Earth the experience might contribute to world peace.

"I do think it would make a difference if all the peoples of the world could see what we're seeing up here and experience what we're experiencing," Lu said. "The experience of living with people from other cultures, working with them and sharing an incredible view of the earth, and I do think that would make a difference."

As he and other ISS crew members have remarked in previous ARISS conversations, the view of Earth while soaring 240 miles above in space is breathtaking. From "the rich blue colors of the ocean to the white of the clouds, and the red colors of the deserts of Australia or Africa to the dark green colors of the rain forest, it's all incredibly beautiful," Lu remarked.

Lu also said the ISS crew was unable to actually appreciate the absolute silence of space aboard the ISS because the spacecraft is filled with ventilation fans. The fans are a necessary substitute for natural convection currents on Earth, which do not occur in the microgravity of space, he explained.

Lu said he and Malenchenko had "a small celebration" topped off with Chinese rice pudding to mark Lu's 40th birthday on July 1. "A birthday in space was a lot of fun," he said, adding that he got to also talk with some of his colleagues on Earth as they were celebrating.

Handling Earth station duties for the contact was Gerald Klatzko, ZS6BTD, in South Africa. An MCI teleconferencing circuit provided two-way audio between South Africa and Belgium, where the teens and ARISS Vice Chairman Gaston Bertels, ON4WF, used a speakerphone. An audience of about 100 people was on hand, Bertels said.

ARISS is an international project with participation by ARRL, AMSAT and NASA.

==>FCC WARNS TRUCKING FIRMS ABOUT ALLEGED UNLICENSED 10-METER OPERATION

The FCC Enforcement Bureau has sent Warning Notice letters to three highway transportation firms asserting that drivers of some of their vehicles may have transmitted without a license on 10 meters. The notices allege the unlicensed operations took place July 8 on Interstate highways in South Carolina.

Letters went out July 14 from FCC Special Counsel Riley Hollingsworth to Jolly Roger Capital Ltd of Columbia, South Carolina, Tidewater Transit Company of Kinston, North Carolina, and Shuford Lumber of Marion, North Carolina. He warned all three firms that operation of radio transmitting equipment without a license could lead to fines of up to $10,000, equipment seizure and even imprisonment.

Hollingsworth asked all three firms to get in touch with him to discuss the allegations. He told ARRL that one of the companies already had responded and required its driver to remove all radio gear from his truck.

In other enforcement news, the FCC warned two General class operators in Virginia against operating outside their privileges on 20 meters. Hollingsworth wrote Cody A. Stinson, KG4YKL, and Randall K. Stinson, KG4YKM, of Lebanon regarding alleged operation June 20 on 14.210 MHz—a frequency that's outside the General phone band. Hollingsworth cautioned the licensees that such operation

could lead to revocation proceedings and fines and jeopardize attempts to upgrade. He asked both operators to contact him.

The FCC also forwarded a complaint to a New Jersey licensee alleging that a repeater bearing her call sign on 147.775 MHz "often fails to identify, drifts and often generates noise and locks into the transmit mode." The complaint further alleged that the repeater was no longer coordinated. Hollingsworth requested that Elizabeth I. Olsen, N2CTD, of Farmingdale review the complaint, indicate what steps she was taking to verify the repeater's proper operation and respond to a series of questions regarding the repeater.

Hollingsworth also notified Nibia M. Cedeno, ex-N2GRI, of Hollywood, Florida, that the FCC had canceled her General class Amateur Radio license after she failed to appear for reexamination on or before June 30, 2003, as requested last April.

Amateur Radio-related FCC Enforcement Bureau correspondence is available on the ARRL Web site <http://www.arrl.org/news/enforcement_logs/>.

==>NCVEC COMMITTEE STUDYING NEW ENTRY-LEVEL LICENSE PROPOSALS

The National Conference of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (NCVEC) has formed a committee to develop an FCC rule making proposal for a new entry-level Amateur Service license. The move came during the NCVEC's annual meeting July 25 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where attendees heard presentations on the possibilities for such a new ticket. At the same session, the NCVEC also approved plans to draft and submit a rule making petition to eliminate the current 5 WPM Morse code requirement (Element 1) and to give Novice/Tech Plus HF privileges to all current Technician licensees. NCVEC Chair John Creel, WB3GXW, of the Laurel VEC presided over the gathering, which included representatives of 12 of the nation's 14 VECs.

NCVEC Question Pool Committee Chair Scotty Neustadter, W4WW, and Rules Committee Chair Fred Maia, W5YI, offered separate proposals for an entry-level license. Neustadter said while the current entry-level license, the Technician class, provides full VHF and UHF privileges, it does not offer a simple entry path. He recommended a 50-W maximum power output level, Novice/Tech HF subbands plus 12 and 17-meter privileges and a 20-question written exam.

Maia's proposal suggested upgrading all current Tech and Tech Plus licensees to General and allowing their use of all bands. Beginner licensees should be granted call signs from the NA-NZ#xxx call sign block, he said. Both Maia and Neustadter suggest ways to streamline the number of license classes. Maia offered up the possibility of asking the FCC to eliminate the Morse testing requirement immediately, easing code exam format restrictions and giving serious thought to dropping CW-only subbands as well. Neustadter recommended no changes in CW/phone allocations, at least for now.

Maia, Neustadter, Jim Wiley, KL7CC, and John Johnston, W3BE, will serve on the entry-level license study committee. The panel is to report back to the NCVEC within a few weeks.

The NCVEC representatives' approval to petition the FCC seeking the deletion of the Element 1 Morse code examination requirement for HF access was in reaction to the World Radiocommunication Conference 2003 (WRC-03) decision to leave such requirements up to individual administrations. The ARRL-VEC abstained from voting on the issue.

Responding to a question, the FCC's Bill Cross, W3TN, told the group that he did not believe the Administrative Procedures Act would permit the FCC to drop the Morse code testing requirement on its own motion. He predicted a lively debate during any proposal-and-comment period.

In remarks at the meeting, FCC Special Counsel for Enforcement Riley Hollingsworth complimented the VECs for their efforts. He noted that complaints concerning the administration of amateur exams were at their lowest point in the five years he's been handling amateur enforcement. He also said VECs should not underestimate the FCC's concerns regarding examination integrity.

Members of the Licensing and Technical Analysis Branch staff at the FCC's Gettysburg office demonstrated a beta version of new Universal Licensing System <http://wireless.fcc.gov/uls/> on-line filing software expected to go live in September. Among other features, the new, user-friendly software will incorporate on-screen links to context-relevant "common questions" and ease the process of applying for a vanity call sign. It also will provide compatibility with screen-reading software employed by sight-impaired users.

The NCVEC unanimously approved an extension of an experiment to use videoconferencing technology to conduct Amateur Radio testing in remote areas of Alaska. The NCVEC had voted last year to back a one-year trial run to be conducted by the Anchorage Volunteer Examiner Coordinator. Jim Wiley, KL7CC, of the Anchorage VEC told his colleagues that, after unexpected delays, his VEC expects to be testing within three months.

==>INTERNATIONAL SPACE SCHOOL STUDENTS TALK TO THE "OTHER" ISS

Students at the International Space School <http://www.intspaceschoolfnd.org/> spoke August 1 via ham radio to NASA ISS Science Officer Ed Lu, KC5WKJ, aboard the International Space Station and at the controls of onboard ham station NA1SS. The contact was arranged via the

Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) program. The students gathered at the University of Houston in Clear Lake, Texas, for the contact, and Lu answered a dozen questions during the 10-minute pass. In answer to one question, Lu said being on the ISS had not altered his views regarding the possibility of extraterrestrial life.

"I've always thought that it would be pretty remarkable circumstances if we on Earth were the only life anywhere in the universe," Lu responded. "The question is, 'Where?'" Lu said the answer to the question of whether life exists beyond the bound of Earth "is profound either way."

Lu also said he seems to be enjoying spicier foods more since he's been aboard the ISS, but he was not able to figure out why that's the case. Every day on the ISS involves solving a problem of one kind or another, he said, but he called being in space "quite an honor" and "a tremendous opportunity" and he predicted the day would come when more people got the chance to experience space firsthand.

Perhaps more than classroom work, Lu said, his experience as an aircraft owner helped prepare him for being in space. Being aboard the ISS "is a lot like working on the inside of an airplane or on the engine of an airplane in a lot of a cases, because the basic 'wrench skills' turn out to be quite a plus up here," he said.

Since the ISS was passing over the Southern Hemisphere at the time, Tony Hutchison, VK5ZAI, in Australia--an ARISS veteran--served as Earth station for the International Space School contact. MCI provided a two-way audio teleconferencing link between Australia and Houston. ARISS <http://www.rac.ca/ariss/> is an international program with participation by ARRL, AMSAT and NASA.

==>HAMS A BRIGHT SPOT DURING POWER BLACKOUT

When a power blackout struck at least a half dozen eastern states August 14, many Amateur Radio operators were ready and able to provide whatever assistance they could. Hardest hit were metropolitan areas like New York City, Detroit and Cleveland. In New York, residents and commuters found themselves stranded in electricity-dependent elevators and subway or rail cars while visitors ended up stuck at airports, which were forced to shut down. With the cellular systems overloaded or out altogether, the incident turned into a test of Amateur Radio's capabilities to operate without commercial power.

"It was a good drill," said New York City-Long Island Section Emergency Coordinator Tom Carrubba, KA2D. But, he adds, it was a cautionary tale too. "The lesson is that everybody gets a little complacent," he said. "Have emergency power backup and make sure it's working!"

By and large, Carrubba said, ARES members did what they were trained to do. "It's going to show the worth of Amateur Radio," he said of the blackout response. "There were people on the air immediately."

Diane Ortiz, K2DO, the Public Information Coordinator for NYC-Long Island was one of them. When power went down in her Suffolk County community, she started up an informal VHF net. Over the next 20 hours or so, it passed some 500 pieces of what Ortiz described as largely "health-and-welfare traffic."

"People are getting on and helping," she said. In addition to handling messages for people stranded in the city, amateurs also relayed useful information, such as which stores or filling stations were open and operating. With many radio and TV stations dark, and hams were able to help fill the information void, Ortiz said.

In the Big Apple itself, ARES teams provided communication support for Red Cross Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs) set up at main transportation centers in Manhattan. ARES members also accompanied ERVs on fire calls.

RACES activated in most Greater New York City area counties after a state of emergency was declared. Some ARES teams--including a few across the Hudson River in New Jersey--activated or remained on standby to help if called upon. In New Jersey, a net linked the Red Cross lead chapter's N2ARC in Princeton with other New Jersey ARC chapters.

Michigan Section Manager Dale Williams, WA8EFK, reports scattered ARES activations. Williams, who lives in Dundee south of Detroit, was without power August 15 and relying on his emergency generator. Some Michigan ARES teams assisted emergency operations centers and the Red Cross.

In Ohio, Section Emergency Coordinator Larry Rain, WD8IHP, reports that all ARES organizations in northern Ohio were activated after the power grid went down. Still going strong at week's end were ARES teams in Cleveland and Akron. "ARES is handling communication support for Ohio Emergency Management in the affected cities and communities," Rain said. Ohio VHF and UHF nets and the Ohio SSB net on HF have been handling blackout-related traffic.

Nancy Hall, KC4IYD--who lives 20 miles west of Cleveland--said she's glad she'd taken the ARRL Emergency Communications Level I class. "I have to say that being a ham and knowing about emergency preparedness did make life easier for me and my family," said Hall, who's now signed up for the Level II class.

New England states were far less affected by the blackout. ARES/RACES operators in the region were on standby after the blackout. Only Connecticut and sections of Western

Massachusetts reported significant outages, and ARES nets activated in both states.

Bill Sexton, N1IN/AAR1FP, an Army MARS member, said his emergency power capability permitted him to check into the Northeast SHARES (National Communications System HF Shared Resources Program) net and maintain e-mail contact after Berkshire County lost power.

"The experience proved once gain the great strength of ham radio in an emergency," Sexton said. "It is self-starting, and it is everywhere."

==>ALASKA AMATEUR DEBUTS EXPERIMENTAL 136-KHZ BEACON

An Alaska amateur has launched a beacon on 136 kHz under an FCC Part 5 experimental license, and he's already confirmed a reception report from British Columbia and received an unconfirmed report--or "trace"--from the UK. Laurence Howell, KL1X (ex-GM4DMA), reports his WD2XDW CW beacon from Anchorage (BP41xd) is now on the air 24/7 at 137.77350 kHz--a slight change from his initial frequency to avoid LORAN C spurs.

"A lot of experimenters are still reeling after the recent refusal by the FCC to allow a 136-kHz allocation to the Amateur Service," Howell told ARRL. "This Part 5 license approval is most welcomed by the experimental community."

In May, the FCC unexpectedly turned down ARRL's petition to grant 135.7 to 137.8 kHz to amateurs. In its denial, the FCC cited arguments put forth by power companies that amateur operation in the vicinity of 136 kHz might interfere with power line carrier (PLC) systems used to control the power grid.

Howell says Steve McDonald, VE7SL--some 2100 kms away in British Columbia--was able to copy a part of the WD2XDW call sign about 45 minutes before dawn on August 15. The "capture" matched up with the beacon's transmission.

"Given the time of year and solar/geomagnetic conditions, this is a very good sign," he said.

The WD2XDW beacon is being used for propagation experimentation within the US and to check transpolar propagation to Europe on paths over the high Arctic. It's transmitting very slow-speed CW--so-called "QRSS" transmissions of one dit every six seconds--at up to 2 W ERP.

The beacon's antenna is a 32-meter (105 feet) wire vertical with a capacity top hat, about 1 mH of base-loading inductance and a killer ground system that covers several acres. Despite the extensive ground system, Howell says, the antenna system remains pretty lossy at LF.

Howell notes that Alaska is in a period of essentially 24-hour daylight, but he expects things to heat up on LF in late September or early October. Experimenters use software such as Argo <http://www.weaksignals.com/> to "copy" the weak-signal LF transmissions.

Howell said he hopes his beacon will promote a better understanding of complex propagation modes associated with what he termed "this fascinating part of the spectrum."

==>MORE COUNTRIES DROP MORSE CODE REQUIREMENT

Two more countries have joined the small, but growing, list of
administrations that no longer require Amateur Radio applicants to pass a Morse code test to have access to HF. Others have indicated they will do so soon. Affected countries also have granted HF privileges to their amateurs who hold "no-code" VHF/UHF licenses.

Joining Switzerland, Belgium, the UK and Germany are Norway and the Netherlands. Waiting in the wings are Austria and New Zealand.

The actions are in response to the World Radiocommunication Conference 2003 decision to delete the requirement to prove Morse code ability from the international Radio Regulations, leaving individual administrations to decide if they want to retain it or not.

The Norwegian Post and Telecommunication Authority <http://www.npt.no/> reportedly has told the Norwegian Radio Relay League <http://www.nrrl.no/> that the three former license classes--with LA, LB and LC call sign prefixes--were combined into one class on August 19. Those holding LC call signs have been issued new LA-prefix call signs, and those holding LB-prefix call signs may apply for LA call signs if they wish.

The Netherlands Radiocommunications Agency <http://www.agentschaptelecom.nl/> announced this week that Morse proficiency will cease to be a requirement for HF access as of September 1. The Netherlands' Class A and C licenses--which correspond to CEPT Classes 1 and 2 respectively--will enjoy the same privileges, although they'll retain their distinctive call sign prefixes for now. The change does not affect the Class N license, which permits 2-meter and 70-cm operation only. A letter to all amateurs was to go out this week to all hams in the Netherlands.

Information from Austria's IARU member-society, the Austrian Experimental Radio Transmitters Union (OeVSV) <http://www.oevsv.at/>, indicates that country will grant provisional HF access to all CEPT Class 2 licenses "sometime in September," pending formal changes.

New Zealand telecommunications authorities plan to remove the requirement for Morse competency from the General class syllabus as part of the next round of updates to that country's radiocommunications regulations. The change is expected to go into effect later this year.

In the US, six unrelated petitioners have requested the FCC to delete the requirement that applicants pass the 5 WPM Element 1 Morse code test to gain HF access and make related changes in the Amateur Service rules (Part 97). The FCC has not yet invited public comment on any of these petitions.--some information from RSGB, No-Code International and Kees Murre, PA2CHM

==>POPULAR SATELLITE SHUTS DOWN

The popular and heavily used UO-14 FM satellite has quit working, and some in the amateur satellite community worry that the venerable easy-sat could be down for the count. UO-14 (145.975 MHz up, 435.070 MHz down for Mode J) failed to appear on August 5 over the western Americas, but ground controller Chris Jackson, G7UPN, later was able to reset the satellite from the UK.

The reason for that shutdown remains a mystery. "Since the flight computer is not operating, we have no way of knowing why this event occurred and can only hope that it is not a sign of more problems to come," Jackson said at the time. His words turned prophetic a week or so later when UO-14 again failed. It was still not back in operation at week's end.

"It seems that there is a problem with the UO-14 power system--possibly a battery cell has a fault," Jackson said after the second shutdown. "This is causing the spacecraft to shut down during some eclipses." Jackson said since this was shutting down the whole spacecraft, it was impossible to implement an automatic routine to periodically cycle the transmitter and keep it on.

Jackson said UO-14 had been changed over to a secondary power system that does not shut down quite as easily, and he was running UO-14's downlink in telemetry mode to find clues to the problem on board. One possible fix was to make the satellite automatically switch its power back on each time it passes over its Surrey, England, control point.

"UO-14 is getting on toward 14 years and has completed something on the order of 74,000 charge/discharge cycles of its NiCd batteries--not bad really," Jackson said. "Let's hope it can manage a few more."

AMSAT-NA Vice President for User Services Bruce Paige, KK5DO--a regular satellite user--says many UO-14 users have migrated to another FM satellite, SaudiSat SO-50 (145.800 MHz up, 436.800 MHz down, 67 Hz CTCSS tone, for Mode J). "It is a bit more difficult to work as you have to have a 67-Hz PL tone," he said. "The polarity of the satellite changes many times during a pass." Paige notes that hams nonetheless have had success with handheld transceivers and very modest antennas. He said SO-50 is typically on over North America.--AMSAT News Service/AMSAT BB

==>FCC DESIGNATES HEARING ON FORMER AMATEUR'S GMRS APPLICATION

The FCC has designated the General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) application of Richard Allen Burton, ex-WB6JAC, of Harbor City, California, for hearing. For more than two decades, Burton has had a troubled relationship with the FCC, which revoked his General-class Amateur Radio station license and suspended his operator license in 1981 for "willful and repeated violation" of the Amateur Service rules. Since then, the FCC has stymied his every effort to return to ham radio.

"Based on the information before us, we believe that Burton's history of repeated violations of the [Communications] Act and our rules raises a substantial and material question of fact as to whether he possesses the requisite character qualifications to be a Commission licensee," the FCC asserted in a Hearing Designation Order released August 7. Burton filed his GMRS application in June 2002. GMRS is a general-purpose UHF radio service that operates under Part 95 of the FCC's rules.

In addition to Burton's 1981 license revocation, the HDO cites his four separate convictions for alleged unlicensed operation of radio transmitting equipment. As a result of his most recent conviction in 2000, Burton spent three months in a federal prison in Texas, received a year's probation and was ordered to undergo psychological counseling.

In 1996, Burton was briefly successful in becoming relicensed when the FCC issued him the call sign KF6GKS after he'd passed the Technician examination. The FCC promptly set aside the grant as soon as it realized the error.

Burton recently got a Warning Notice from FCC Special Counsel Riley Hollingsworth citing monitoring information alleging that Burton had operated on 2 meters "on numerous occasions" in the Los Angeles area since January. Last year, the FCC warned a Los Angeles-area repeater owner about allowing Burton to use his repeater.

The hearing will consider Burton's prior record as well as the more recent allegations. Based on the evidence presented, the FCC will determine Burton's qualifications to be an FCC licensee and whether to grant his GMRS application.

The HDO is available on the FCC Web site <http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-03-2607A1.doc>.

==>FCC INVITES COMMENTS ON SIX MORSE CODE-RELATED PETITIONS

The FCC has invited public comments on six separate Morse code-related petitions for rule making, some of which would altogether eliminate Element 1, the 5 WPM Morse test, from the Amateur Service rules (Part 97). World Radiocommunication Conference 2003 (WRC-03) made optional the requirement to prove the ability to send and receive Morse signals to operate below 30 MHz.

A petition from Peter M. Beauregard, KI1I, designated RM-10781, would give all Technician licensees current Novice/Tech Plus CW privileges on 80, 40, 15 and 10 meters and limited phone and image privileges on 80, 40 and 10 meters. Beauregard said the CW privileges would "encourage Technician class licensees to upgrade to General" by giving them a "practice area." He has proposed new Tech phone/image privileges on 3850-3900 kHz and 7225-7300 kHz. His petition would not eliminate Element 1, however.

Pete V. Coppola, KG4QDZ, and family--Tina Coppola, KG4YUM, and Pete A. Coppola, KG4QDY--have asked the FCC to eliminate Element 1 from the rules. The Coppolas' petition, designated RM-10782, would grant Tech Plus HF privileges to current Technician licensees. It also would retain the current CW-only subbands. The Coppolas asked the FCC to make the change effective immediately on a provisional basis.

Kiernan K. Holliday, WA6BJH, has asked the FCC simply to "remove all requirements for knowledge of Morse code" from the Amateur Service rules. Holliday said there is less reason to require Morse code in the Amateur Service today. In his petition, designated RM-10783, Holliday also said the code requirement limits the ability of handicapped individuals to get ham tickets. "The Commission's policy should be to encourage the use of Amateur Radio," he said.

Dale Reich, K8AD, petitioned the FCC to delete Element 1 for General class applicants but keep it in place for Extra class applicants. Under Reich's scheme, "no-code" Techs wanting HF privileges would have to upgrade to General first. Reich's petition is designated RM-10784.

Eric Ward, N0HHS, seeks immediate elimination of "proficiency in telegraphy using Morse code." The "immediate removal of the telegraphy requirement from Amateur Radio licensing is appropriate and clearly in the public interest," Ward contended in his petition, designated RM-10785.

In a detailed, nine-page petition, the National Conference of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (NCVEC) is calling on the FCC to delete Element 1 and give "Tech Plus" privileges to current Technician licensees. The NCVEC also asked the FCC to "take expedited action" to allow volunteer examiner coordinators (VECs) to discontinue administering Element 1 "as soon as possible."

"The Amateur Service community suffers from the loss to its ranks of a large number of potentially excellent operators who are turned away because of the CW requirement," the NCVEC petition said.

The organization, the umbrella group for the 14 VECs in the US, said there's "no longer any reasonable justification for requiring an applicant to demonstrate this antiquated skill," and that most applicants never use Morse after they pass the test. The NCVEC petition is designated RM-10787.

The ARRL-VEC abstained from voting on the NCVEC's petition question when it came up during the NCVEC's July 25 meeting in Pennsylvania. At its own July meeting in Connecticut, the ARRL Board of Directors affirmed its interest in reviewing members' input on the Morse issue as well as on other possible revisions to Part 97 arising from WRC-03. The Board's current position is to retain the Morse requirement for HF access.

Two more recently filed petitions--one from No Code International and another from two amateur licensees--are expected to be put on public notice in the near future.

Interested parties may file comments on any or all of these petitions using the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/ecfs/>, which also permits users to view the petitions and all comments on file. There is a 30-day comment window.

To file a comment, click on "Submit a Filing" under "ECFS Main Links." In the "Proceeding" field, type the full RM number, including the hyphen, and complete the required fields. "RM" must be in capital letters, and you must include the hyphen between "RM" and the five-digit number. You may type your remarks into a form or attach a file. ECFS also accepts comments in active proceedings via e-mail, per instructions on the ECFS page.

While a Morse code exam element remains on the books in the US, Canada and elsewhere, a handful of countries--including Switzerland, Belgium, the UK, Germany, Norway and the Netherlands--already have moved to drop their Morse requirements. Austria and New Zealand are expected to do so soon.

==>ISS PACKET SYSTEM FAILS AGAIN AFTER BRIEF RESTART

After being out of service for some time, the RS0ISS packet system aboard the International Space Station reappeared briefly on August 24, much to the delight of packet users. But it didn't stay in operation very long. Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) International Chairman Frank Bauer, KA3HDO, says he still hopes the current crew of Yuri Malenchenko, RK3DUP, and Ed Lu, KC5WKJ, can get to the bottom of what's wrong with the packet module before the Expedition 8 crew arrives in October.

Bauer says Malenchenko was able to reactivate the packet system on August 24 at around 1200 UTC. "Over the next nine hours, many hams around the world sent unproto digi signals through the packet system," he said, before the system abruptly quit. Bauer says the ARISS team has had several discussions on what the next steps should be.

Complicating the debugging effort, he said, is Progress rocket undocking and docking maneuvers that will occur over the next few days, leaving little extra time for the crew to troubleshoot the problem. Bauer said the current plan is to have Malenchenko provide a visual status report of the packet module (ie, which switches are on, what LEDs are illuminated).

Bauer says having Malenchenko recycle the power should bring the packet system back up. "If the system abruptly shuts down after a few hours—as we expect--we will then ask the crew to attach a computer to the packet module, download the current parameters to the ground and reset the module," he said.

Bauer has expressed confidence that the packet problems will be resolved and that ARISS will move on to other challenges--including the installation of the Phase 2 hardware in a couple of months. "Please keep the faith," he said.

==>BIG PROJECT CURRICULUM, LAB HANDBOOK NOW ON-LINE

The ARRL Education and Technology Program--also known as "The Big Project"--has posted an updated version of its Basic Curriculum and Radio Lab Handbook to the ARRL Web site <http://www.arrl.org/FandES/tbp/Curriculum-Materials.html>. The revised materials became available for downloading on August 27.

"This curriculum is a living document and requires active participation to make it better," said ARRL Education and Technology Program Coordinator Mark Spencer, WA8SME. "Therefore, user input is very important, not only to the quality of this curriculum, but to the project as a whole."

In an effort to expedite delivery and reduce costs, the documents only went through a cursory editing process rather than a more formal and rigorous exercise, and Spencer noted that some typographical and other errors may remain. "User assistance here would also be greatly appreciated," he added.

The curriculum is divided into two sections, the Basic Curriculum and the Radio Lab Handbook, all in packed ZIP files for the fastest possible download. The materials also are available as individual files in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format (PDF files require Adobe Reader software to view).

The Basic Curriculum ZIP file is 1.5 MB, while the Radio Lab Handbook--which contains many figures and diagrams--is 5 MB. Spencer said he'd make the materials available on a CD-ROM to those experiencing problems downloading them from the Internet. He asked all downloading any portion of the document to let him know via e-mail if they are using the material.

"We want to be able to keep users informed of updates," he said. "The major point is that the document needs active participation to keep it alive, well and ever-improving."

Spencer invited comments, critiques, additions and recommendations via telephone, 860-594-0396, or e-mail at mspencer@arrl.org.

==>NEW ARRL SECTION MANAGERS TAKING REINS IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA, ORANGE

ARRL Field and Educational Services Manager Rosalie White, K1STO, has appointed Rich Beaver, N3SRJ, of Jeannette, as Western Pennsylvania Section Manager, effective September 8, 2003. He will succeed John Rodgers, N3MSE, who's stepping down for personal reasons but will remain in office through the Western Pennsylvania Section Convention the weekend of September 6-7.

Rodgers initially became SM in January 2000 when then-SM Bill Edgar, N3LLR, was appointed Atlantic Division Vice Director. He was elected to a two-year term in his own right last fall. Beaver will complete Rodgers' current term, which ends December 31, 2004. An Assistant Section Manager since June, Beaver has served as Western Pennsylvania Section Emergency Coordinator since February, 1998. Members may contact Rich Beaver via e-mail, n3srj@arrl.net.

White has appointed Carl H. Gardenias, WU6D, of Highland, California, to replace Joe Brown, W6UBQ, as ARRL Orange Section Manager. Brown, who is stepping down September 14 because he's moving out of the section, recommended Gardenias for the position. White accepted Brown's resignation "with regret," and she called Brown "a fine leader" who has served his section well for more than 20 years. "Your dedication and work will be greatly missed," she told Brown.

Gardenias has been an ARRL Life Member since 1979 and serves on the ARRL Ad Hoc Committee for Strategic Planning. In addition, he's been a member of the International DX Convention (Visalia) committee since 1983 and chaired the committee for six years. He also has taught licensing classes for many years and now coordinates other instructors. Members may contact Carl Gardenias via e-mail, cgardeni@uci.edu.

==>IN BRIEF:

*** Question mark hovers over wedding in space:** Is the wedding-by-proxy of International Space Station Expedition 7 crew commander Yuri Malenchenko, RK3DUP, and his fiancée Ekaterina Dmitriev still on? The answer depends on whether you're listening to the bride or to Russian space officials, who apparently were caught off guard when they got wind of the nuptials planned for August 10. News reports quoting Russian space agency spokesman Sergei Gorbunov say Malenchenko canceled his plans after considering potential legal and technical complications. As a Russian military officer, he must get permission to marry. But the wedding plans are reported to be continuing apace on Earth. That side of the ceremony is set to take place in Clear Lake, Texas. Fort Bend, Texas, County Clerk Dianne Wilson, who issued a marriage license July 17 to Malenchenko and Ekaterina Dmitriev, insists the wedding is a go. If the on-orbit wedding does happen, it would be a space first. Texas law permits one or both applicants to be absent from the wedding ceremony by having a proxy stand in. After Malenchenko returns from space in October, the couple reportedly will have a church wedding in Russia. Malenchenko is 41; Dmitriev, a US citizen who lives in the Houston area, is 26. News accounts say Malenchenko popped the question in December before heading into space and did not want to wait until his return to get married.

*** Ham radio key in California hiker's rescue:** The San Diego Union Tribune's SignOnSanDiego.com Web news service reports that a hiker in the El Capitan open space preserve suffering apparent heat exhaustion was rescued July 19 after his hiking companion used ham radio to relay a message to authorities. ARRL member Rod Dinkins, AC6V, picked up the distress call from Tim Slaby, KG6QPL, and alerted the San Diego County Sheriff's Department's Santee station. Slaby resorted to his ham radio handheld after discovering that his cellphone wouldn't work in the wilderness. KG6QPL was able to raise the Palomar Amateur Radio Club repeater some 40 miles away, however. Slaby, who also carried a GPS unit, was able to pinpoint the pair's location. A sheriff's helicopter crew rescued the exhausted hiker--identified as Thomas Sayer--and airlifted him to an ambulance, which transported him to a hospital, authorities said. He was treated for dehydration and released about four hours later. "For hikers in need of help, Amateur Radio worked where their cell phone didn't," said ARRL Vice President (and former Southwestern Division Director) Fried Heyn, WA6WZO.

*** Incident leads to cancellation of ham exam sessions:** Ham radio exam sessions--including one set for August 10--at the East Valley Sheriff's Station in Thousand Oaks, California, were put on hold after the site became a crime scene earlier this week. VE Coordinator and PIO for the Conejo Valley Amateur Radio Club Jeff Reinhardt, AA6JR, reports that the community room where the VE exams are held every other month was damaged in a shooting incident and--as part of a crime scene--it's off limits to the public until further notice. He said the club hopes to resume its normal exam schedule in October.

*** Ham radio distress call yields help from next state:** When 83-year-old Walter Siebert, K3KBR, of Valley Lee, Maryland, started suffering serious chest pains July 15, he called 911. For reasons yet to be determined, no one answered. So Siebert turned to ham radio and put out a cry for help on 75 meters, saying he was having chest pains and needed to go to the hospital. Larry Wheeler, KG4RGN, heard Siebert's plea in Williamsburg, Virginia. At the time, Wheeler was monitoring a net on 3947 kHz as part of Amateur Radio Emergency Service District 7's participation in a Surry Nuclear Power Plant VOPEX (Virginia Operations Plan EXercise) drill. He notified the net to clear the frequency and contacted Siebert to get the necessary details. Wheeler then got in touch with the 911 dispatcher in James City County, Virginia. The 911 dispatcher in turn was able to reach the proper authorities in Maryland and get medical help to Siebert, who was hospitalized.

*** ISS commander takes a bride by proxy:** In a space travel first, International Space Station Expedition 7 commander Yuri Malenchenko, RK3DUP, took a bride right on schedule August 10. The twist, of course, was that Malenchenko was circling the globe some 240 miles in space, while his betrothed, Ekaterina Dmitriev, stood on Earth next to a cardboard cutout of her husband. The bride and groom blew kisses via videophone during the private ceremony for family and friends at Johnson Space Center. Under Texas law, a proxy can stand in for one or both of the parties in a wedding. Associated Press reported that the life-sized cutout of the groom greeted guests at the wedding reception, which was held at a restaurant decorated with silver stars and mannequins dressed as astronauts. The couple plans a more traditional church wedding after Malenchenko returns to Earth in late October. The couple reportedly plans a honeymoon in Hawaii. AP says Malenchenko wore a bow tie with his blue space garb for the ceremony. Dmitriev, who just turned 27, is a US citizen and lives in Houston. She and Malenchenko--a Russian Air Force colonel--have been dating for about a year. Malenchenko is 41. Fort Bend, Texas, County Clerk Dianne Wilson issued the marriage license July 17. Malenchenko arranged to have a wedding ring flown up aboard a Progress cargo vehicle that arrived at the ISS in June. ISS NASA Science Officer Ed Lu, KC5WKJ, served as best man during the Sunday ceremony and played the wedding march on his electronic keyboard. NASA so far has remained mum on the marriage. At one point, Russian space officials tried to get Malenchenko to call off the nuptials until he returned to Earth, but, apparently, love ultimately won them over.