

July Summary

Last year at this time we were consumed by the threat of wild land fires. This year wild land fires have consumed a record 1.1 million acres in California, much of it in our Sacramento Valley Section. What we feared has come to pass, and our fire season is not over. While July was much quieter than June, due in most cases to lower winds and protracted fire fighting effort, we still had fires start and consume large tracts of wild lands. As with last month, Amateur Radio helped stem the fires. In one case, Hugh, KD6STL, of Herlong, was working as communications support for a Baptist Outreach using the WD6AXM/R Sutter Buttes machine, but working in the Concow (fire) area, and came upon a small fire just getting started with fuel around it. We called it in, and in the few minutes it took an engine company to arrive on scene, Hugh had found yet another fire to report. Both fires represented a greater threat, but were extinguished due to quick response.

Bob, K6HEW, Solano County EC, was working in the Chico area as an American Red Cross disaster worker. He passed the thanks of Red Cross to the Butte County and other Amateur Radio volunteers that made the Red Cross effort so effective the last two months. 'You and your crew did an outstanding job of showing them the value of amateur radio.'

ASM Les, W6TEE, reports that member of Radio Amateur Mobileers Society, the Mt. Vaca Radio Club, and the North Hills Radio Club enjoyed a campout at Mineral, CA, near the entrance to Lassen Volcanic National Park. Ten families with 8 RVs, 1 tent, and one motel room took advantage of great weather and good company. Hiking, visiting, and operation on 2m, both mobile and hand held were used.

Jettie, W6RFF, reports he is on RTTY (with other digital modes to follow) using a SignalLink USB sound card system and MMTTY. He says the SignalLink connects to a USB port on the computer and to the Aux connections on the back of the TS870. Only two cables are involved. His first QSO was with A35RK in Tonga. So, Jettie, how long to a DXCC digital endorsement?

Amador County Amateur Radio Club is planning a demonstration of digital modes this fall. If you want to try digital modes on HF (or VHF) and have a computer there are some variables you want to consider. The operating system of your computer and the complexity of the setup are two that come to mind. The system I used for several years involved a Windows XP computer, a MicroHam USB II interface, and a variety of programs which included MixW. My new Windows Vista computer does not allow MixW to work well so I am starting over with Ham Radio Deluxe. Starting over is not a big deal, as I have been doing computer RTTY and other modes as they came along since October, 1978, (PET 8K computer, Microtronics interface, loop keyer and a Model 15 or 26 printer.) Because all of this can be perplexing, check into the Tigertronics website at http://www.tigertronics.com/sl_soft.htm for a listing of current programs, the operating systems with which they work, and those things you need to really get started. It can be simple or fancy, the latter including rig control, automatic lookup of stations contacted, and perhaps a Google Earth display. Steve Ford, WB8IMY, has written a great primer on this subject, ARRL'S HF DIGITAL HANDBOOK, now in its fourth edition. I might add that some of these modes work just as well on VHF.

While it looks like Amador County ARC has their program for fall, does your club need something to entrance its members? The Northern California DX Foundation has over 100 videos in its library. See ncdxf.org for details on the Foundation and on how to obtain a video. Thanks to Dick, K6LRN.

Allen Pitts, W1AGP, at ARRL HQ, has some tips for clubs in the August Club News for club newsletter editors and contributors. 'Be informative. A good newsletter should contain the following basic information: meeting time, date, and place plus simple directions; list of club officers and contact information.' (The name of your organization should appear prominently.) Also, contact information for the newsletter editor and the membership chairperson. Also, for clubs that maintain a website, the URL, club e-mail address, frequency pair of club repeater with the offset, PL tone, club net schedule and other on the air activities make useful content. If your club has a VE team, list their exam schedule. Even if everyone in your club is involved in some activity and has all the details, put that material in the newsletter for non-members to consider. 'The personality of the club should be in the newsletter. A few words from the club president and recognition of member achievements are always good material. Be sure to invite contributions such as announcements and articles.' Allen also asks that if you are not already doing so, send your electronic newsletters to clubs@arrl.org. Of course printed copies can be mailed to: ARRL, Attn: Clubs, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111.

As promised, here is the announcement from Stu, WA6BTK, regarding the Lincoln, CA, hamfest. 'A Northern California Hamfest & Swapmeet is being held in Lincoln on September 6, 2008. It is sponsored by the Western Placer Amateur Radio Club, the River City Amateur Radio Club, the Yuba-Sutter Amateur Radio Club, and the Sierra Foothills Amateur Radio Club. The event will be held on the Lincoln High School campus from 0700 until noon. There will be many tables with ham radio related items for sale, VE exams, food and soft drinks, and fellowship. Admission and parking is free. There is a charge for vendors. Details and a location map are available on the Western Placer ARC website: www.wparc.org. Information is also available from Steve Harding, KT6Z, at 916-434-2878.'

July's section net on HF occurred when everybody but the Section Manager was somewhere else. The net had to be moved up a notch due to QRM and we lost out. If an HF net is not required, we will stick with the VHF net on the WD6AXM/R machine at 146.085 MHz, plus offset, tone 127.3 Hz, beginning at 1900L, Wednesday, August 13.

At 1930L, we will try the HF net at 3987 kHz with the latest ham radio news. The WD6AXM repeater is also the place to hear the ARRL audio news on each Friday evening at 1900L when the news is produced. If your club would like to play the news on your repeater, but you haven't figured out how to do that, contact me at W6KJ@arrl.org

73, Ron Murdock, W6KJ, ARRL SACRAMENTO VALLEY SECTION MANAGER