



# PCARA Update



Volume 24, Issue 11 Peekskill/Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association Inc. October 2023

## Run for the radio

We resumed PCARA Monthly **Membership Meetings** and **VE Test Sessions** on Saturday September 16, 2023 at the Putnam Valley Free Library on Oscawana Lake Road in Putnam Valley, NY. We had a respectable turnout.

Among topics covered at the meeting was PCARA's participation in providing communications support for the 43rd Annual Harry Chapin Memorial **Run & Walk Against Hunger** on Sunday October 15, 2023 at the Croton-Harmon High School in Croton-on-Hudson, NY. This is one of our most significant and publicly visible activities of the year and I hope that we will have a record turnout of members in support. More important is the fact that this event continues to fight hunger locally via the Croton-Cortlandt Food Pantry, the Croton Caring Committee, Caring for the Hungry & Homeless of Peekskill, Hillside Food Outreach in Pleasantville, the Food Bank for Westchester and WhyHunger. The event starts at 8:00 a.m. on October 15, 2023 at Croton-Harmon High School. One or more PCARA members may be running!

As in years past, we will be joined by our friends from WECA. If you are interested in participating, please let us know at [mail@pcara.org](mailto:mail@pcara.org). For more information on the 2023 Harry Chapin Memorial Run & Walk Against Hunger please see page 14 and visit: <https://runagainsthunger.com/>.



PCARA members at the Candlewood ARA Hamfest in Danbury on September 10. L to R: Mike N2EAB, Mike KD2PYS, (visitor), Bob N2CBH and Greg KB2CQE.

Following the meeting a Laurel VEC Test Session was held courtesy of Dave KF2BD. There were three candidates in attendance, a full report follows in this month's edition of the *PCARA Update*.

A few PCARA members attended the Candlewood Amateur Radio Association's **Western Connecticut Hamfest** in Danbury, CT on Sunday September 10, 2023 at the Police Activities League on the southern shore of Candlewood Lake. We also met the President of the Metro-North Railroad Amateur Radio Association (MNRARA), Bill KA1FAI selling some goods to raise funds for the club. A few members of PCARA also



Bill KA1FAI, Greg KB2CQE and Bob N2CBH at the CARA Hamfest in Danbury.

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happen to be members of MNRARA as well (it's a small world).

Another point of interest was the Northville (New Milford, CT) Amateur Radio Association's communications vehicle, which originally was a senior citizens bus subsequently adapted for EmComm support. We were given a tour of the vehicle by Steve KC1EEQ and shown their equipment.



Greg KB2CQE is shown around NARA's converted Em-Comm bus by Steve KC1EEQ.

Please mark your calendars with these upcoming events:

- Sunday October 1, **POTA** activation, see alongside.
- Saturday October 7, 2023 at 10:15 a.m.: PCARA Monthly **Membership Meeting** at the Putnam Valley Free Library.
- Saturday October 7, 2023 at 11:30 a.m.: PCARA **VE Test Session**, ARRL VEC at the Putnam Valley Free Library. Candidates, please contact Mike W2IG at w2igg@at@yahoo.com.
- Sunday October 15, 2023 at 8:00 a.m.: 43rd Annual Harry Chapin Memorial **Run & Walk Against Hunger** at the Croton-Harmon High School in Croton-on Hudson, NY.
- Saturday October 21, 2023: **New York State QSO Party**. PCARA members encouraged to operate individually.
- Friday October 23, 2023 at 7:00 pm: PCARA **VE Test Session**, ARRL VEC at Putnam / Northern Westchester BOCES Tech Center in Yorktown Heights, NY. Candidates, please contact Mike W2IG at w2igg@at@yahoo.com.
- Saturday October 28, 2023 at 9:00 a.m.: **PCARA Breakfast** at Downing Park Pavilion in Yorktown Heights, NY.
- Saturday October 28, 2023 at 10:45 a.m.: **PCARA Foxhunt** at FDR Park in Yorktown Heights, NY.

We have a busy month ahead so come out and join us. I look forward to seeing each of you!

- 73 de Greg, KB2CQE

## PCARA Board

President:

Greg Appleyard, KB2CQE; kb2cqe 'at' arrl.net

Vice President:

Bob Tarsio, N2CBH; bob 'at' broadcast-devices.com

Secretary:

Lou Cassetta, KD2ITZ; radiocassetta 'at' gmail.com

Treasurer:

David Fredsall KD2EVI; joann davidss88 'at' verizon.net

Director:

Mike Dvorozniak, W2IG

*Vice President Emeritus: Joe Calabrese, WA2MCR.*

## Net night

Peekskill/Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association holds a roundtable net on Tuesday evenings at 8:00 p.m. and a directed 'Old Goats' net on Thursday evenings at 8:00 p.m. Both events take place on the 146.67 MHz W2NYW repeater, offset -0.600, PL 156.7 Hz.

Join the roundtable to find out what members have been doing or join the Old Goats with net control Karl N2KZ for news and neighborly information.

## POTA activation - KD2ITZ

Members of PCARA will activate Donald J. Trump State Park — Indian Hill Section, POTA Park K-2048, on **Sunday October 1st**. We will begin setting up at 10:00 a.m. and will operate for approximately 2 hours using call sign W2VJ.



All are invited to bring a lawn chair and a bottle of water to the activation site or make contact with us from your QTH.

Donald J. Trump State Park — Indian Hill Section  
GPS: 41.339889, -73.806889; Map link.

**Directions:** From Route 6, east of the Taconic State Parkway and just west of the Houlihan Lawrence building, turn north onto East Main Street and quickly bear right to stay on East Main Street, then turn left onto Indian Hill Road. Go 0.6 miles to the gate and sign at the entrance to the park, on the left side of Indian Hill Road.

**Spotting information:**

<https://pota.app/#/>  
<https://dxwatch.com/>

We look forward to seeing you in the park or hearing your signal on the air.

- 73 de Lou KD2ITZ, Mike W2IG, Verle W2VJ

# Adventures in DXing

- N2KZ

## Take a Hike!

How would your HT perform from the top of a 1200 foot tower? It's like being on the roof of a 120 story building. Wouldn't you love to try that? Well, you can. With a little determination and perspiration, you will be higher than the highest bird. Climb Mount Beacon!

I have lived in Northern Westchester since 1982. I have passed by Mount Beacon on I-84 or Route 9D probably a million times. Who hasn't seen the omnipresent mountaintop communication towers? This summit has always been our ultimate standard for height and greatness. The Mount Beacon Amateur Radio Club 2 meter repeater has been active up there since 1970! Yet, I never hiked up to the top... until a few weeks ago.

It was well worth the effort. The view is panoramic and spectacular. Picture yourself in a private airplane soaring over the Hudson Valley! The Newburgh-Beacon Bridge serves as the centerpiece as you gaze across the river to see Newburgh, New Windsor and all points West. Fascinated? No doubt about it. You are really, really high up!



*The view from atop Mount Beacon, looking across the River Hudson and Newburgh-Beacon Bridge. [All pics credit: N2KZ]*

## Let's Levitate

Good planning insures a good hike. Watch weather forecasts and pick a good cool and clear day without any chance of strong winds or heavy rain. Dress appropriately! Remember this is a steep climb with a rough and tumble rocky trail bed. You will probably work up a good sweat! Also remind yourself that the ambient temperature at the summit will be at least of few degrees cooler than when you began at the trailhead.

Your first visit does not require a lot of gear. I brought just my compact Yaesu FT-60 and a baseball hat to shade my now shiny and reflective head. Up we went! The hike begins with scaling a long and fairly steep set of hardy grey metal stairs. You'll find yourself

a very little higher up where the climb really begins. Elevation at the trailhead is at 220 feet above sea level. You will reach 1230 feet atop the Casino summit. You are about to



*The hike begins with grey metal stairs.*

make a 1010 foot climb. It's a good long hike!

There are several levels of the climb. I was told by passers-by that the trail has become more challenging due to the onslaught of recent unbridled floods. All of the smaller stones that were nicely pressed down into years of topsoil are now revealed to the angst of your feet.

Remarkably, one very encouraging sign appeared quickly bringing great confidence. All along the path I saw people of every size and age coming up and down the trail. Very little children and quite senior adults — and everything in between — exchanged greetings and encouragement. I have never seen so much activity on a hiking trail!



*Many hikers were walking up.*

It was a good, steady and invigorating 45 minutes or more up to the top of the hill. As you continue to proceed up, you will have glimpses of your ever-increasing height between the trees. Later on, you will begin to see signs of Mount Beacon's past. Small gauge railroad tracks and remains of enormous guy cables still survive that were once part of the Beacon Incline Railway that would gently carry people to the summit with grace and style. The train service ended in 1978. These days only your feet will get you there!

This steep one mile path is officially known as the Casino Trail. The path is quite obvious throughout your journey. If you have any doubts, just follow the red trail markers!





Map shows Hudson Highlands State Park with Casino Trail from City of Beacon to N/S Beacon Mountain. [Base map: NY State Parks.]

When you finally reach the first summit, you will see the remains of “The Wheel House,” a brick building



Wheel House near northern summit of Mount Beacon hauled tourists to the former Hotel and Casino.

on the left. This was the machine room for the railway. Inside you will find antique large steel wheels and motors that moved the rail cars up and down the mountain. Of course, the building is

now also decorated with all sorts of graffiti.

A few steps higher will reveal a very large rectangular slab of concrete. Call upon your imagination to envision what was once a grand dance hall and casino. The Beaconcrest Hotel and Casino was created as a playground for revelers from New York City and beyond. In the daytime, you would see breathtaking views from high above. At night the view would reveal all the lights from the towns below. Indeed,



Steps to the site of the former Beaconcrest Hotel.

the little train would bring you up to a heavenly hide-away. Years and years of good times were enjoyed up here. You could ride a little train to a place where you could dance with the stars!

Sadly, the hotel burned to the ground in 1927. The dance hall met a similar fate in 1968. The railway was decommissioned ten years later. The view and the Mount Beacon Park hiking trail are now under the auspices of Scenic Hudson, a non-profit environmental organization. A wonderful remembrance of those grandiose days can be found on the Scenic Hudson website at: <https://www.scenic Hudson.org/viewfinder/revisiting-poignant-memories-of-mt-beacon/>.



View from the Casino outlook across the River Hudson.

### Easy Access

Getting to the trail is easy! If you are driving, there is a parking lot at the base. Use this address to guide you: 788 Wolcott Ave, Beacon, NY 12508. If you arrive at Beacon Station via Metro-North, you can take the frequent Beacon Free Loop bus to the trailhead. Get off at bus stop 3! Full details at: <https://www.dutchessny.gov/Departments/Public-Transit/Docs/Public-Transit-Route-G.pdf>. It's hard to miss the start of the trail. Follow the crowds and look for the large and informative welcome signs. Away you go!

### More Adventure

In technical jargon, I was pretty pooped and sweaty when I reached the first summit. It would be a great idea to bring a small towel with you to freshen up when you reach the top. This accomplishment was not too shabby for someone with heart problems that is about to reach 70 years old! I decided to leave the ultimate goal — reaching the fire tower — for my second visit.

Do you have seemingly unbridled energy? If you made it to the first summit and decided that you just couldn't get enough... there is much more to see and adventure! After you make it past the old railroad wheel house and casino remains, you *can* continue on

the red marker trail (which leads to the white trail) that will deliver you to the ultimate experience: the Mount Beacon Fire Tower!

Full disclosure: hiking from the Casino summit to the fire tower requires just as much (if not more) energy than the first portion of the climb. You reap what you sow. I understand that you truly earn your benefits by investing in this final leviathan challenge. You eventually reach the base of the tower.

Those with 'devil may care' constitutions can climb up the tower stairs to the viewing platform at the top where 'you can see from New York City to Albany' just by turning your head! What a difference those extra 60 feet of stairs will make. Now you are really flying like a bird!

Reach the pinnacle and you'll understand why so many people love this place. Mount Beacon never disappoints! Become familiar with the extended climb to the Fire Tower and you will want for more. Fear not! There are miles and miles of other long surrounding trails where you can trek and enjoy. This magnificent mountain is filled with fun and unforgettable vistas in a very accessible location and are yours for free forever more! It's quite a gift.

A complete description of all that Mount Beacon has to offer can be found at: <https://hiketheadudsonvalley.com/hikes/mt-beacon/>. Here you will find dozens of pictures documenting every step all the way up to the top of the observation tower. It really is like being there... and you don't even have to put on your shoes to see it.

### Radio Stuff!

OK! OK! I know this article is *not* intended for an edition of National Geographic or Outdoor magazine! Radios come to life up here too. I brought my trusty Yaesu FT-60 HT up the mountain for a reason. There is a lot to hear from this spectacular QTH in the clouds.

There was plenty to hear before I even turned on my HT. You can easily recognize the sound of traffic moving across the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge and distinct Metro-North Hudson Line train toots. Bird calls can be heard from miles and miles around. It is no wonder that native Americans and General George Washington's troops both used Mount Beacon to watch and observe everything that approached. No other place could provide this natural sonic early warning system. Height really *is* everything!

At the casino level, you'll immediately notice four towers hosting quite a myriad of antennas. Most obvious are two sets of 4-bay FM arrays, one above the other, all with dark radomes to prevent winter icing.



Karl's Yaesu FT-60R

These belong to Poughkeepsie's WSPK-FM on 104.7 MHz. Their primary antenna stack is on top, the backup is mounted below, all on a 320 feet tall tower.

Of course, the other resident of interest to amateurs is the Mount Beacon Amateur Radio Club.

MBARC covers all bases at

this mountaintop. You'll find four powerful repeaters: WR2ABB/R at 146.970 MHz, W2GIO/R at 223.920 MHz, WA2GZW/R at 449.575 MHz and N2HPA/R at 921.200 MHz. Needless to say, these repeaters are heard with extended reach far and wide. Read MBARC's fascinating history of the Mount Beacon site at: <https://wr2abb.org/home/the-story-of-wr2abb-and-mt-beacon/>

My initial bandscan from the Mount Beacon Casino site befit the topography around me. I saw a clear view from north-northwest to the southwest. Radio reception followed suit! Several familiar 2 meter re-



One of four tall towers at the north summit has two 4-bay arrays for WSPK-FM.

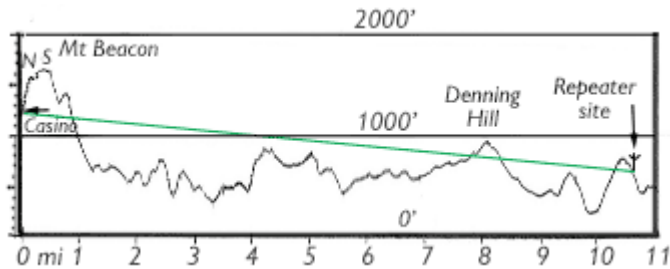


View from Mt. Beacon's Casino level covers north-northwest to southwest.

peaters can be reached: Putnam County's PEARL K2PUT repeater on 145.130 MHz, Westchester's WECA repeater WB2ZII on 147.060 MHz, the WB2IXR Chappaqua repeater at 147.015 and the Rockland Repeater

Association repeaters on 147.105 and 147.165 MHz.

I could barely touch base with the PCARA 2 meter repeater on 146.670 MHz. I could not hit either of our two PCARA 70 cm repeaters in the 440 MHz range. Big, tall and rocky terrain got in the way! The Overlook Mountain's Woodstock repeater on 146.805 MHz was received with simply massive signals up on Mount Beacon.



Height profile and path from Mount Beacon Casino level (left arrow) to W2NYW 2 meter repeater site.

A brief public service announcement: My only disappointment during my hike was the lack of two-way correspondence available from atop the mountain. I know that I was reaching several repeaters from dozens and dozens of miles away. Yet, there were no other fellow human beings who heard me and would offer a reply. Was it something I said? I hope not!

*A plea to the amateur radio community: Many, many people often complain 'I am disappointed because there is no one on.' Just think how wonderful it would be if just one person would reply to your call whenever and wherever you call! A new era could begin with you! Monitor your local repeater. If someone calls, please reply and just say 'hi.' If you were calling CQ... wouldn't a reply be great? Give it a try. Reply! Start today!*

### Utility and Public Service Discoveries

Moving on from the amateur bands, I tried the seven NOAA weather radio channels in the 162 MHz marine band. All channels were filled with full quieting signals, some with 'snurdles' underneath indicating multiple carriers were present arriving from divergent locations. The dominant signals were:

- 162.400 - WXL39 Allentown, PA
- 162.425 - WNG704 Hibernia Park, PA  
(serving Eastern PA, Southern New Jersey and Delaware)
- 162.450 - WNG705 Honesdale, PA (near Binghamton)
- 162.475 - WXL37 Highland, NY (Poughkeepsie)
- 162.500 - WWH33 Cornwall, CT (Northeastern CT)
- 162.525 - WWF48 Mount Greylock, MA (Albany, NY)
- 162.550 - KWO35 New York City

All signals are NBFM (narrow band FM). Notice the lack of any dominant signals from anywhere from the northeast except for very local Cornwall, Connecticut. Great rocks were in the way!

A quick scan across the broadcast auxiliary bands

(450-451 and 455-456 MHz) produced three NBFM signals at full quieting:

- 450.2875 WCBS-TV
- 450.3875 WNBC-TV
- 455.1125 WNYW-TV(FOX 5)

A visit to the 108-137 MHz aircraft communications band (all AM mode) revealed more strong signals. Continual ATIS broadcasts (Automatic Terminal Information Service) of NOTAMs (Notice to Air Men) were received from three local airports:

- 119.275 MHz KMGJ Orange County Airport in Montgomery, NY
- 124.575 KSWF Stewart International Airport (very brief message)
- 126.750 KPOU Hudson Valley Regional Airport  
a.k.a. Dutchess County Airport

All of these loggings were made in a very quick and first visit to the mountain. I can't imagine what you might reach with more power and a three element Yagi. There must be so much more to discover from this celestial site. I can't wait for my next hike to the top. Maybe it is time that *you* made the climb!

One last thought: I am about to reach 70 years of age. In a moment of contemplation, a curious reality occurred to me: how many 73 year old hams lose QSOs when they send their ages — especially in CW? If the other station doesn't copy "AGE HR" and only hears "73... 73"... would they simply end the QSO? Interesting to consider. Don't get old!

Please feel free to reach me at:  
N2KZ@arrl.net.

73 (I'm not that old yet!) and dit  
dit from 'The Old Goat' Karl N2KZ



# NY QSO Party 2023

The New York QSO Party is scheduled for Saturday October 21, 2023, from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. ET, or 1400z October 21 to 0200z October 22.

Ordering of PCARA-sponsored plaques has been transferred from Joe WA2MCR to PCARA's Treasurer David KD2EVI. David arranged with Mike KM2B of Rochester DX Association for PCARA to once again sponsor the 'Non-NY SSB Low Power' plaque. Unfortunately, due to an oversight at NYQP the 'NY Multi-one Low Power Mixed' plaque which PCARA has sponsored in recent years had been assigned to another operator. As a result, for 2023 PCARA will be sponsoring 'NY Mixed Mode QRP' for its second plaque. (Thanks to Mike KM2B for this updated information.) 'Low power' means 5-100 watts, 'QRP' is up to 5 watts RF output.

Full details of the New York QSO Party Rules plus operating hints are available on the web site: <https://nyqp.org>.

## Club entry

At the time of writing Joe WA2MCR was uncertain whether he would be able to host PCARA's club entry this year. Please keep an eye on Google Groups for any late changes to the situation.



*A large tree limb came down across Joe WA2MCR's yard in September, taking down the HF and VHF antennas.*

As a result, PCARA's 2023 entry may have to be in the form of efforts by **individual stations**, just as in the year 2020 when operation was affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

PCARA members taking part from their own stations can have their scores accumulated for the combined "New York Club high score". When submitting an entry, stations should indicate their "Club Name" as 'Peekskill/Cortlandt ARA'. Various categories are available to individual stations: Single operator, Mobile or Portable, High/Low power or QRP, and mode CW only – Phone only – RTTY/Digital only or Mixed



*Map shows the 62 Counties of New York State to be contacted in the New York QSO Party. Putnam County is 'PUT' and Westchester County is 'WES'.*

Mode.

The contest starts at 10:00 a.m. Eastern on Saturday October 17 and runs for 12 hours until 10:00 p.m. that same evening. New York stations will send signal report plus county, using a three-letter abbreviation for the county name. Westchester County is WES and Putnam County is PUT. Stations outside New York will send their Signal Report plus State, Province or "DX".

Full rules, including the list of three-letter county codes, can be found at the New York QSO Party web site: <https://nyqp.org/wordpress/>.

## Logging software

When operating from your own station, if you would like to employ the same computer logging software that is used at other PCARA events, N3FJP's State QSO Party logging programs are available from the following page: <https://n3fjp.com/stateqsoparty.html>. Registration for the NY State program is \$8.99, or you can register *all* of N3FJP's logging programs for \$59.99. The program version for 2020 was 2.0, the current version is 2.2.5, so if you are an existing user, you may need to download an update.

The N1MM Logger, <https://n1mmwp.hamdocs.com/> can also be used. Set-up instructions are available at the NYQP web site under "Info you can use".

# New ham finds friends and technical support in PCARA - WA4ARB

If ever a club exhibited the qualities that make ham radio such a distinguished hobby, it would have to be PCARA. As its newest member, I wouldn't be on the air (at least not on HF) had it not been for the club's help and encouragement this past summer. But before I go into that, a little background is in order.

I inherited an appreciation for radio from my father, who was licensed in 1972 as WA4ARB, and then as AB2R in 1979. While growing up I would hang out with him in his shack, listen to him work the bands, and marvel at the QSL cards tacked to the wall. He taught me how to solder in his workshop, and introduced me to electronics with this Science Fair 150-in-1 Project Kit, which even had a CW key.



Science Fair 150 in 1 Electronic Project Kit. [Credit: cropped image by Caroline, Wikimedia Commons CC BY 2.0]

My father's own key went silent this past winter at the age of 93, and I spent a lot of time recalling the hours spent with him in his shack and workshop. Although I inherited his woodworking skills and enjoy making period furniture reproductions, for some reason I didn't get around to pursuing ham radio on my own. But the more I thought about it this past winter, I realized it's never too late to start, so I began studying for a Technician license. When I felt ready to take the exam, I looked up testing sites and discovered there was a ham radio club right in the Peekskill-Cortlandt area, with a test date coinciding with Field Day.

## Field Day encounter

When I attended the club's Field Day at GW Elementary School, I was welcomed by Lou KD2ITZ. He introduced me to other club members, explained the antennas that were in use, and asked me about my interests in radio. Mike N2EAB even got me on the air that afternoon, for the first time since I was a kid. The next day I returned to take the exam, managed to pass it, and then passed the General exam a short time later. The FCC subsequently granted my request to change my call sign of KE2BPF to my father's first call sign of WA4ARB.

## Antenna support

Lou stepped into the role of Elmer and offered to help me select equipment for my shack, and to raise an antenna together. After doing some research I acquired a Yaesu FTdx10, followed by an Alinco DM-330MVT power supply recommended by Malcolm NM9J, and an LDG RT-100 remote tuner recommended by Jay, NE2Q. Then Lou came over to the house to look at the property, the height and location of different trees, and the intended location of the shack. After running different options past club members and other knowledgeable sources, he ultimately recommended



a balanced LDG RC-100 controller and RT-100 remote tuner, covering 1.8 to 54 MHz, as long as possible between opposite sides of the property, and advised me on what supplies to acquire.

With Lou's invaluable help, the initial installation of the antenna this past summer resulted in a 100-foot doublet. We attached one end of wire to an insulator and cord running through a pulley at the top of a 35-foot tree, and attached the opposite end of wire to an insulator and cord running through a pulley attached to the top of a 35-foot mast.

## Green tech

I made the mast from a very thick, strong and straight bamboo pole that I harvested from a grove on the edge of my neighborhood. Bamboo can be three times stronger than construction timber, and can have greater tensile strength than steel. I cured the pole by running a blowtorch over it, a common technique that causes the resins to bubble up and immediately dry, producing a shiny surface impenetrable to insects and mildew. The mast is bracketed to a vertical support post of a wooden garden pergola, and eight guy-lines stabilize the mast from its peak and mid-point.



Treated bamboo pole as antenna support. [Photos credit:WA4ARB].

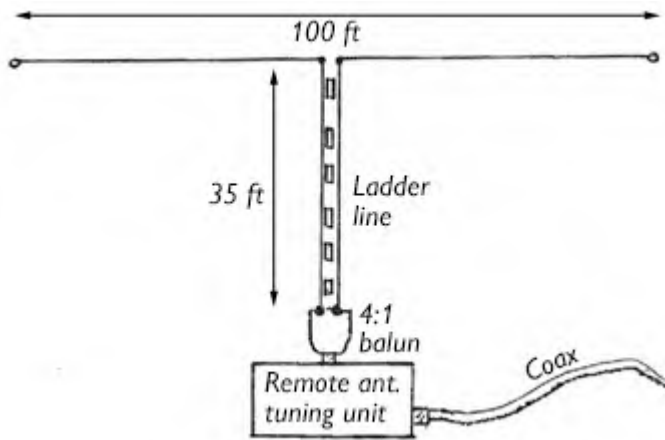
Ladder line runs straight down from the antenna's center insulator to a 4:1 balun, which is attached to the LDG remote tuner. The antenna is suspended over a



formal rose garden, so aesthetic considerations resulted in running 75 feet of unobtrusive low-loss coax instead of ladder line from the tuner to the shack. The coax then connects to a 1:1 unun that is attached to the tuner's remote controller, which is attached to the Alinco power supply.



*Guyed mast made out of a 35 foot bamboo pole is fastened to the pergola for support.*



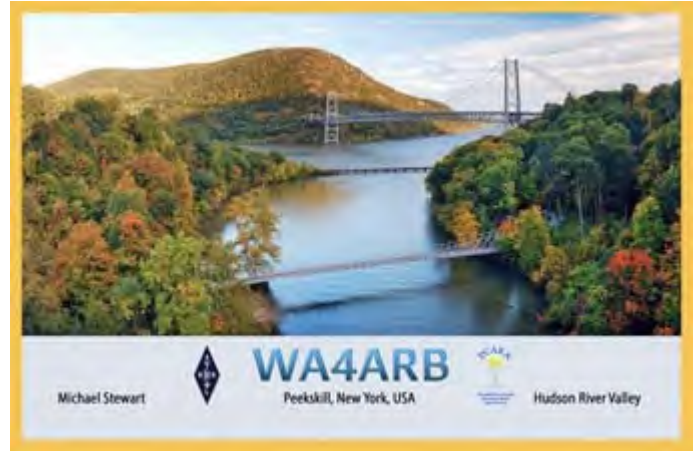
*Doublet antenna fed with ladder line through a remote antenna tuner covers multiple amateur bands.*

There are numerous impediments to properly connecting any of this to the main utility ground on the other side of the house. As a result, we decided that I'll unplug the coax from inside the shack whenever the transceiver is not in use, and pull it out through the wall and place it at a distance from the house. This approach is recommended in ARRL's book, *Bonding and Grounding*, so that lightning doesn't flow through the coax into the shack. Fortunately, an exterior door is located in the shack right by the entry/exit point of the coax, which makes this easy to do.

### Practical test

After installing the antenna, connecting it to the transceiver and powering it on, Lou and I began testing the tuner on a few of the most common bands, and

found that it worked very well. We then had the good fortune of hearing a CQ transmitted from KD4GE in South Carolina, who was happy to learn that he was my first-ever HF contact. He sent me his QSL card, and of course I reciprocated by sending him mine.



*Mike WA4ARB designed this QSL card with a photo that he took from Popolopen Bridge.*

In the days that followed, I made many domestic and international contacts as I grew increasingly confident in using the radio, following protocols, and picking up the lingo. As I explored the bands, I discovered that while the antenna and tuner worked very well on 12, 15, 17, 20 and 40 meters, that I had some serious interference on 6 and 10 meters, and that I couldn't tune 80 meters to an acceptable SWR. This led to a series of conversations with Lou, Malcolm, and others who suggested some ways to try diagnosing and solving these problems. I'll describe those in Part 2 of this article, on how I eliminated interference on 10 meters and finally got on 80 meters, so stay tuned!

- Mike WA4ARB

# Amateur Radio news

For many years my homepage for Internet browsing has been ARRL's very own web site, <http://www.arrl.org/>. This was a fine place to begin, with a dozen or more fresh news stories on the front page, all pertaining to amateur radio.

## No news is good?

In recent years, ARRL's home page has been showing less up-to-date content. For example, two years ago there were 10 news items on the home page covering a period of just 5 days. This year, home page items have stretched out as far as 22 days, with multiple instances of the 'K7RA Solar Update' visible. (Media hits are reported separately on <https://www.arrl.org/media-hits>.)



ARRL home page ([arrl.org](http://www.arrl.org)) has been showing less news in recent years.

Is there less news to report? I don't think so. ARRL seems to be redirecting most of its news and features to social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram and



ARRL's page on Facebook contains a lively mix of news and stories.

Twitter — now renamed 'X'. When I checked the ARRL page on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ARRL>) there were 25 items with a lively mix of stories, during the same period when there

were only 14 items on [arrl.org](http://www.arrl.org). For those who log in, Twitter, aka X (<https://www.twitter.com/arrl>) also has a wide mix of stories. [Thanks to Karl N2KZ for this information — if you do not login, Twitter/X only shows some very old, sample news stories from ARRL.]

ARRL Headquarters also maintains a presence on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/user/ARRLHQ>) and on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/american-radio-relay-league>).

## Social insecurity

I try to avoid social media — even though PCARA has its own page on Facebook maintained by Karl, N2KZ (<https://www.facebook.com/pccararadio>).

As Susan Bradley of *Ask Woody* points out — “If the site is free, **you** are the product.” Bear this in mind when you visit any social media site that is nominally “free”. At best, your interests are being tracked while you roam the Internet, then sold to advertisers. At worst, social media sites have been accused of highly questionable activities, including poor care of user data and lack of control over misleading, hateful content.



If the site or service is free, then you are the product.

## Cast a wider net

There are plenty of other sources of Amateur Radio news on the Internet in addition to ARRL. Some have been around for a while, others are more recent. Here are a few of the sites that I have found useful.

## QRZ!

The web site <http://www.qrz.com/> is known for providing details of international amateur radio stations from just a call sign. It also has a “Newsroom” at <https://forums.qrz.com/index.php#qrz-newsroom.5>.

QRZ was founded in 1992 by Fred AA7BQ as a project to distribute the content of FCC's call sign database, available at the time on IBM magnetic tape. This was followed by distribution on CD-ROM which proved very popular, then <http://www.qrz.com> appeared on the World Wide Web in 1993.



QRZ! Callsign Database CD-ROM from July 1995.

## eHam

Amateur radio equipment review site: <https://www.eham.net/> has its own news column. See: <https://www.eham.net/news/index>. eHAM was founded in 1999 by Bill W4AN (SK) and



eHam.net news page.

Garth KG7GA with the slogan “eHam.net is a community site for active Amateur Radio operators.” (EHAM is also the ICAO code for Amsterdam Airport Schiphol.)

## RSGB

The Radio Society of Great Britain was founded in 1913 as the London Wireless Club.

Since 1996 the RSGB has had its own web site: <http://rsgb.org/>. The society's news page reflects amateur radio in the



UK: <https://rsgb.org/main/blog/category/front-page-news/> *Radio Society of Great Britain news page.*

## RAC

Radio Amateurs of Canada (aka Radio Amateurs du Canada) is headquartered in Ottawa, Ontario. It was



*Radio Amateurs of du Canada web site.*

Canadian amateurs on: <https://www.rac.ca/>.

## Mastodon

Mastodon was created in 2016 as an open-source, self-hosted alternative to Twitter. Its popularity has increased since Elon Musk took Twitter over in October 2022. Mastodon's slogan is: “Social networking that's not for sale.”



*'Mastodon.Radio' space.*

The 'Mastodon.Radio' space is administered by Christopher MOYNG and is intended for amateur radio enthusiasts and shortwave listeners. The local timeline of recent posts can be found at: <https://mastodon.radio/>

public/local. A sister server for radio amateurs in the Americas is administered by Smitty N6MTS at <https://mastodon.hams.social/public/local>.

## Southgate Amateur Radio News

For a long time I followed web site: <http://www.southgatearc.org> as an alternative to news from ARRL. Southgate Amateur Radio Club, founded in 1936 as the Southgate and Finchley Group of the RSGB in north London came to the Internet in 2003. Their site, edited by Richard Brunton G4TUT changed from a simple source of club information to a selection of amateur radio articles, news, circuits, designs and humor. The title changed in 2011 to “Southgate Amateur Radio News”, with G4TUT maintaining news items every day until his passing at the end of 2022. Since then, this daily aggregation of ham radio news from around the world has been badly missed.



*Southgate Amateur Radio News, as captured in October 2020, provided a comprehensive set of amateur radio news stories from around the world.*

In mid-2023 the domain 'southgatearc.org' was acquired by Cale K4HCK, owner of “Amateur Radio Daily” and the address now redirects to the web site: <https://daily.hamweekly.com/> (see below). Southgate Amateur Radio Club in north London has its own, separate web site, <http://southgatearc.uk/>.

## Amateur Radio Weekly

Amateur Radio Weekly, <https://hamweekly.com/> came on the scene in 2015 as a weekly e-mail newsletter with links to amateur radio news, technology, projects and events. An archive of the weekly newsletters is available at <https://hamweekly.com/archive/>. The archive runs from March 2014 to the present day, with a three-year break from 2019 to 2022. Publisher is Cale K4HCK.

## Amateur Radio Daily

Amateur Radio Daily is a daily complement to Amateur Radio Weekly. It began in May 2023 and can be

found at: <https://daily.hamweekly.com/>. The daily publication covers more time-sensitive material than the weekly newsletter, with items on club activities, special event stations and DXpeditions. The publisher is Cale K4HCK.



### This Week in Amateur Radio

The web site “This Week in Amateur Radio” (TWIAR) can be reached at <https://twiar.net/>. The site has been run since July 2016 by Greg Williams K4HSM. K4HSM also has an amateur radio weblog at: <http://www.k4hsm.com/> entitled “The Hot Spicy Mustard Files”.



So far as I can tell, the TWIAR site

has no connection with “This Week in Tech”, <https://twit.tv/>, which previously produced the Ham Nation videos — <https://www.youtube.com/user/TWiTHamNation>. Ham Radio Crash Course, <https://hamradiocrashcourse.com/> is now responsible for the Ham Nation videos, see: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1KAjn5rGhiz78lmXZa1d-s10jxAwAd3Aq> )

### Blogs.Radio

There are many, many blog (= weblog) sites maintained by individual radio amateurs and groups. One place that you can view new blog postings on a daily basis is the site: <https://blogs.radio>, maintained by Michael DK1MI. Michael has his own web site with blog at: <https://dk1mi.radio/>.



### AmateurRadio.com

The web site: <http://www.amateurradio.com> began life in 1996 as “Amateur Radio-Operator-Online”, a web site with general information about U.S. amateur radio. It came back to life in 2004 as “Amateur Radio On-Line”, an amateur radio store in New Mexico. In 2010 it was revived as an amateur radio news site, with contributions from Julian G4ILO, Anthony K3NG and Paul

WW2PT. Nowadays managing editor Matt W1MST supervises a group of contributors from the USA, Canada and UK.

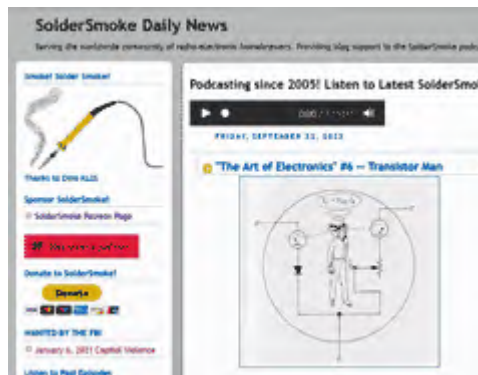
### Amateur Radio Update

PCARA is not the only organization with an “Update”. The “Amateur Radio Update” web site, <http://amateurradioupdate.com/> first appeared in 2021. Its home page displays news headlines from Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC), ARRL and RSGB — plus contests and ‘QSO Today’ podcasts (<https://www.qsotoday.com/>). Ownership of the site is not made clear.



### SolderSmoke

Solder Smoke (great name!) has been presenting podcasts about the practical side of amateur radio by Bill N2CQR, Mike KL7R (SK) and Pete N6QW, beginning in 2005 with a series of Echolink conversations.



The archive of older podcasts is available at <http://soldersmoke.com/>. The current episode is posted on blog page: <https://soldersmoke.blogspot.com/>, which also includes the “SolderSmoke Daily News”.

- NM9J

## V.E. Tests

PCARA recommenced activities after the summer break with a monthly meeting at the Putnam Valley Library on Saturday September 16. The 10:15 a.m. meeting was followed by a V.E. Test Session at 11:30 a.m.

Three candidates took part in the Test Session and two of them were successful. Daniel KC1SPA of Danbury CT upgraded from General to Extra. FCC processed the upgrade on September 18 and changed Dan's call to AC1PY. Daniel has joined PCARA — he had previously qualified for Technician then General at PCARA's March 4 and July 15 test sessions.

Geoffrey Smith of Mahopac successfully passed Element 2, qualifying for Technician. The FCC granted his new license with call sign KE2BXK on September 20.

This was a Laurel VEC Test Session with team leader Dave KF2BD and VE's Lou KD2ITZ, Rob AD2CT, Verle W2VJ and NM9J.



*VEs check candidate credentials at the September 16 VE Test Session in Putnam Valley Library.*

PCARA has additional V.E. Test Sessions scheduled for Saturday October 7, 11:30 a.m. at Putnam Valley Library and on Monday October 23, 7:00 p.m. at PNW BOCES. Both are ARRL VEC events and candidates should contact Mike W2IG using w2igg@at@yahoo.com.

Laurel VEC test sessions are administered with no charge to the candidates, while ARRL VEC tests normally have a \$15.00 test fee.

Under ARRL's Youth Licensing Grant program, candidates younger than 18-years old pay a reduced examination session fee of \$5.00 to the ARRL VEC VE team at the time of the exam. In addition, ARRL will cover the one-time \$35.00 application fee for new license candidates younger than 18 for tests administered under the ARRL VEC program. The \$35.00 FCC application fee will be reimbursed after the ARRL VEC receives the completed reimbursement form and the new license has been issued by the FCC.

## Foxhunt October 28

PCARA's next Foxhunt is scheduled for 10:45 a.m. on Saturday October 28, following the 9:00 a.m.

PCARA breakfast at Downing Park pavilion. The rules will be similar to PCARA's previous Foxhunts in FDR State Park.

There are other events planned in the park that day, including a 5K 'Monster Dash' starting at 9:30 a.m. Here are the **Foxhunt rules** courtesy of Lou, KD2ITZ:



*FDR State Park. [Base map: NYS Parks].*

- Transmission: FM simplex on 146.565 MHz.
- Transmissions start at 10:45 a.m.
- All are welcome to participate.
- Participants must start in the Pool Parking Lot.
- Participants are not allowed to enter FDR Park before 10:30 a.m. (unless meeting for PCARA breakfast at the usual location).
- Depending on the number of participants, the start times may be staggered.
- Depending on the number of participants, some participants will be invited to start from a different location.
- The transmitter will be hidden within the confines of FDR Park.
- Please be mindful of **other events** scheduled in **Parking Lots 1 and 4**.
- Once the event begins, participants must remain on foot, without assistance of vehicles of any kind.
- Participants are encouraged to work in groups of two or three.
- Participants who locate the transmitter should discreetly inform the event coordinator who will note the time. Avoid revealing the site to other participants who are still hunting.
- The participant who locates the transmitter in the least amount of time will be invited to assume the role of fox at the next event.
- Any changes due to weather or unforeseen circumstances will be posted to the PCARA Google Group and Facebook Page.

# Run Against Hunger 2023

## Our ninth time

PCARA and WECA have once again been invited to provide communication support for the Annual Harry Chapin Memorial Run/Walk Against Hunger, which takes place on Sunday October 15th, 2023. The very first Run Against Hunger was organized in Croton-on-Hudson to honor singer-songwriter Harry Chapin who died in a Long Island auto-accident in 1981. This year will be the 43rd occasion that the event has been commemorated. For 2023 the run is being organized as an in-person event taking place on Sunday October 15 along with a virtual event during Oct 7-14. The first time PCARA was involved in the event was October 2014.



## Sunday schedule

Timing of the races will be the same as for the 2022 event. The 5K Race/Walk starts at 8:30 a.m. This is followed by the 10K Race which begins at 10:00 a.m. The final event of the day is the 1 mile Fun Run which begins at 11:45 a.m. With the exception of the 'Fun Run', start and finish lines are all close to Croton-Harmon High School.

### 5K Race & Walk, 8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

The 5K Run/Walk begins near the High School and continues along Old Post Road South, down Truesdale Drive, east on Cedar Lane, then north up Nordica Drive and Truesdale Drive, through Croton Gorge and returning down Cleveland Drive to the High School.

### 10K Race, 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Starting from near Croton-Harmon High School on Old Post Road South, north on Cleveland Drive, left on Gerstein Street and right on Wood Road onto Rt 129. Left onto Batten Road, then across the New Croton Dam. Return is along Quaker Ridge Road, crossing the river at Quaker Bridge Road, then Rt.129 to Jacoby Street and returning down Cleveland Avenue to Old Post Road South and the High School.

### One Mile Fun Run, 11:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

The start point of this run/walk is on Cleveland Drive, just south of Veteran's Corners. North on Cleveland Drive to CET (Carrie E Tompkins) Elementary School on Gerstein Street, then back along Cleveland Drive, finishing at the High School.

Full details of the three race routes are available at the Run Against Hunger web site, <https://runagainsthunger.com/course/>. Details of frequencies along with



Runners in the October 2022 10K race start out from Croton-Harmon High School.

maps showing location of radio stations and water stops are available from Greg KB2CQE; register your interest by sending an e-mail to Greg using mail[at]pcara.org.

Please watch for announcements about possible changes to the routes and stations. Setup at the High School should begin around 7:30 a.m. for Net Control at the usual location on the school driveway.

## WLIW re-scan

On September 15, Long Island PBS station WLIW began announcements that over-the-air TV viewers will need to re-scan their sets on October 16 as the channel is moving to a new frequency. This change is in connection with roll-out of ATSC 3.0, the 'NextGen TV' digital broadcasting standard that promises improved compression, 4K resolution, 120 frames per second, high dynamic range, interactivity and data transmission.



WLIW-21's programming presently consists of four ATSC 1.0 streams — WLIW HD 21.1, Create 21.2, World 21.3 and AllArts (HD) 21.4. They are currently carried on RF channel 32, UHF frequency 578 MHz.

WNET, Channel 13's current programming consists of four program streams — WNET HD 13.1, PBS Kids 13.2, WNED-CD (HD) 14.1 and WMBQ-CD 46.1. They are carried by WNET's VHF transmitter on Channel 12, 204 MHz.

After the October 16 rearrangement, WLIW's ATSC 1.0 stream will be moved to the WNET transmitter on RF Channel 12 along with WLIW's World and All Arts streams. The Create stream in ATSC 1.0 will move to WCBS-TV's transmitter on RF Channel 36. PSIP virtual channel numbers will remain the same.

This will free up WLIW's transmitter at One World Trade Center to carry ATSC 3.0 programming. The 'NextGen TV' streams to be carried on RF channel 32 include: WLIW and WNET — plus WMBQ-CD (FNX), WCBS-TV, WNBC-TV, and WNJU (Telemundo).

[Sources: WLIW, FCC, N2KZ]

# Summertime FM Fun

- N2KZ

At our summer home in Central Michigan, we have a small CD and cassette player combination that also features an AM/FM radio. For several years, the FM section was using just a random piece of wire for an antenna. We have lots of young little kids in our family these days, so I guess the wire became a toy that was never re-returned or fell to some other awful fate.

Without any antenna at all the radio was mute. Actually, it just received static. I know the feeling. I had a free idle moment so I thought I would try to improve this condition. I had a plan!



JVC FS-V100 compact component system had lost its antenna. [Photos: N2KZ.]

## What's at hand?

In my squirreled-away stash of project left-overs, I found a very short stub of co-ax cable that had a male F-connector at one end and bare ends at the other. I needed some hookup wire, so I used a small scrap of CAT 5 cable cut to about 28 inches long. I unraveled the blue-white pair and now had two dipole elements. (Do you know the meaning of blue-orange-green-brown-slate? Ask an old Bell Telephone guy! In the world of CAT 5 you don't get the slate pair. You only get 8 wires, not 10!)

I carefully removed the gray CAT 5 insulation and set it aside. I attached one wire to the center conductor and soldered it together. I tried to attach the other one to the braided shield but no solder would adhere!

The short length of co-ax was from a certain era (I guess about 1985) when braids were actually made of aluminum! No solder would ever see this braid. After all, the cable TV world used crimped F-connectors for literally everything. Who needed solder!

I knew how to make this connection! Going back to my Telco days, I had an instant solution. I used a 3M™ Scotchlok™ splicer! You would slide two or three pieces of small gauge wire into these mini-contraptions and then press the center plastic circle down with a 3M Scotchlok tool or a simple gas plier. Included in every 3M Scotchlok was a bead of



3M Scotchlok™ splicer.

clear silicone seal to make the connection a weather-proof crimp. Bingo! A nice clean splice to aluminum braid! I then used a couple of short pieces of the CAT5 cable's gray insulation to slide over my splices for a more finished look.



Center of Karl's improvised FM dipole with Scotchlok splice on the right.

I couldn't wait to try out my new creation and was very pleased with the results. It certainly brought in the few local FM's with full quieting. I was amazed how clear the local NPR station from across Lake Huron in Oscoda came in. You could tell it was a summer of endless tropospheric enhancement. I could hear a quite distant CBC Radio One outlet from Ontario almost continually with full quieting, too! Not bad for a very simple dipole sitting right behind a radio by the window.



JVC compact system is shown receiving WCMB-FM on 95.7 MHz from Oscoda Michigan. Improvised FM dipole is just visible behind the radio.

I am always amazed that very simple things can work so well! Just a few minutes for a summertime arts 'n' crafts project made all the difference.

Curious to me was the results of some brief experimentation. In this particular case, the antenna seemed to pick up more stations when the elements made a circle just like a simple outdoor-mounted FM loop than straight out like a traditional dipole. Did this configuration provide a better impedance match or was it just coincidence? No matter, my homebrew quickie dipole brought me smiles

- N2KZ

# Peekskill / Cortlandt Amateur Radio Association

**Mail:** PCARA, PO Box 146, Crompond, NY 10517

**E-Mail:** mail 'at' pcara.org

**Web site:** <http://www.pcara.org>

**PCARA on Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/pcararadio>

**YouTube Channel:** <https://www.youtube.com/@peekskillcortlandtamateurr7670>

**PCARA Update Editor:** Malcolm Pritchard, NM9J

E-mail: NM9J 'at' arrl.net

*Newsletter contributions are always very welcome!*

Archive: <http://nm9j.com/pcara/newslett.htm>

## PCARA Information

PCARA is a **Non-Profit Community Service**

**Organization.** PCARA meetings take place every month (apart from July/August break). See <http://www.pcara.org> for current details.

## PCARA Repeaters

**W2NYW:** 146.67 MHz -0.6, PL 156.7Hz

**KB2CQE:** 449.925MHz -5.0, PL 179.9Hz

**N2CBH:** 448.725MHz -5.0, PL 107.2Hz

## PCARA Calendar

**Sun Oct 1:** POTA Activation, 10:00 a.m., Donald J. Trump State Park — Indian Hill Section. See page 2.

**Sat Oct 7:** PCARA Meeting, 10:15 a.m. Putnam Valley Library, 30 Oscawana Lake Rd., Putnam Valley, NY.

**Sat Oct 7:** PCARA VE. Test Session, 11:30 a.m., Putnam Valley Library. See below.

**Sun Oct 15:** Harry Chapin Run Against Hunger, Croton-on-Hudson. First race 8:30 a.m. See page 14.

**Sat Oct 21:** NY State QSO Party. See page 7.

**Mon Oct 23:** PCARA VE. Test Session, 7:00 p.m. PNW BOCES.

**Sat Oct 28:** PCARA Breakfast, 9:00 a.m., Downing Park Pavilion.

**Sat Oct 28:** Foxhunt 10:45 a.m. FDR Park, Pool parking lot.

## Hamfests

**Check with organizers before leaving.**

**Sat Oct 14:** Bergen ARA Fall Hamfest, Westwood Regional High School, 701 Ridgewood Rd., Township of Washington, NJ. 8:00 a.m.

**Sun Oct 15:** Splitrock ARA North Jersey Tailgate Hamfest, Landing Park Recreation Complex, 165 Landing Rd., Landing NJ. 8:00 a.m.

## VE Test Sessions

**Check with the contact before leaving.**

**Oct 7, 14, 17, 21, 28:** Westchester ARC, 19 Hunts Bridge Rd, Yonkers NY. 11:00 a.m. Must contact VE, ac2r'at'arrl.net.

**Oct 7, 14, 17, 21, 28:** NYC-Westchester ARC, 43 Hart Ave, Yonkers NY. 12:00 noon. Must contact VE, k2ltm'at'aol.com.

**Oct 7:** PCARA, Putnam Valley Library, 30 Oscawana Lake Rd Putnam Valley, NY. 11:30 a.m. Must contact VE w2igg'at'yahoo.com.

**Oct 12:** WECA, Westch Cnty Fire Trg Center, 4 Dana Rd Valhalla NY. 7:00 p.m. Contact VE, N2gdy'at'weca.org

**Oct 20:** Orange County ARC, Munger Cottage, 40 Munger Dr, Cornwall NY. 6:00 p.m. Contact VE w2bcc'at'arrl.net.

**Oct 23:** PCARA VE. Test Session, 7:00 p.m. PNW BOCES, 200 BOCES Drive, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598. Must contact VE w2igg'at'yahoo.com.



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