



ARRL September VHF Contest 2016 Results

By Jeff Klein, K1TEO (wa2teo@aol.com)

Perseverance is an important aspect of successful VHF contesting.

The 2016 September VHF contest will be remembered for two things: average conditions and participation, and continued integration of new rules allowing more real-time interaction during a contest.

Activity Trends

Figure 1 shows that overall participation was down slightly with just over 500 submitted logs. A major variable affecting activity, conditions were so-so with a few experiencing interesting tropo conditions allowing long haul contacts on Sunday night.

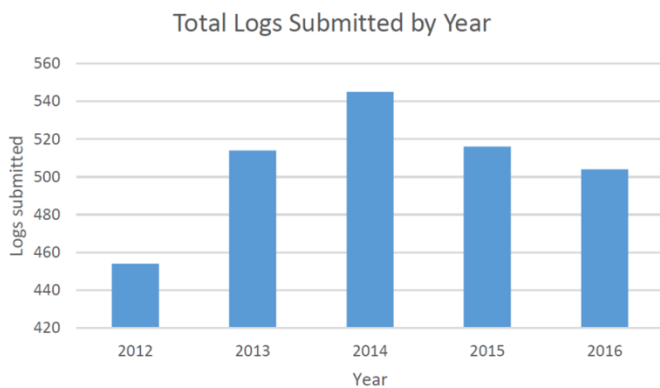


Figure 1 - Logs submitted by year shows that participation was down slightly from the past two years.

This year marked the fourth time around for the relatively new Single-Op, 3 Band (SO3B) and Single-Op, FM Only (SOFM) categories. The SO3B category continues to gain popularity, with 73 submitted logs, the biggest total so far for the category as shown in Figure 2.

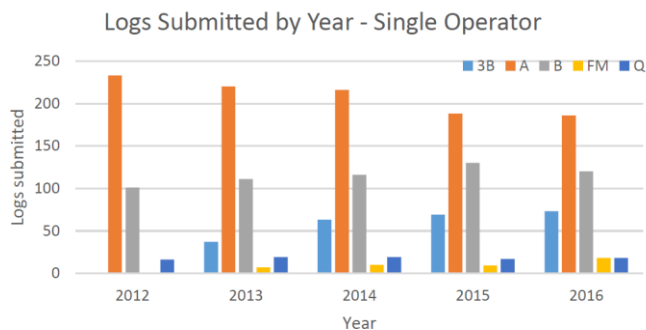


Figure 2 - Single-Operator logs submitted by year

Over the past four years, the Single-Op, Low Power category (SOLP) has seen a drop-off of nearly fifty logs. Overall, single ops running less than full power are up about ten percent during that timeframe. It appears that there is good interest in SO3B and it has helped the overall pool of Single-Operator participants. The SOFM category is yet to gain full traction, though submitted logs doubled this time around with a total of 18.

One major activity change over the last few years can be seen in Figure 3 — Multioperator participation is down almost 40% from the peak year of 2014. That has clear implications for the activity levels heard tuning the bands as multis tend to be the ones calling CQ the most.

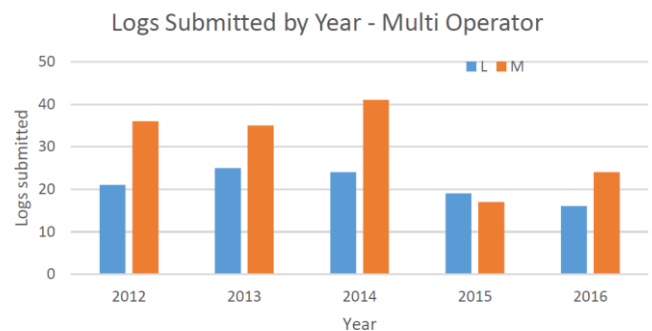


Figure 3 - Multioperator logs submitted by year

Band Activity

This contest saw 2 meters win the prize for most active band with about 13,000 QSOs in the submitted logs. (See Figure 4) Without any real propagation enhancement on 50 MHz, the band fell off to second-most active with over 11,000 QSOs. Likewise, grid totals on 144 MHz were higher than the total for 50 MHz, further confirming the lack of Es, F2, TEP and other types of propagation. About 6,000 QSOs were made on 432 MHz as the next most active band followed by 222 MHz.

Band Name	Abbr	Des.	Band Name	Abbr	Des.
6 meters	6M	A	10 GHz	10G	I
2 meters	2M	B	24 GHz	24G	J
222 MHz	222	C	47 GHz	47G	K
432 MHz	432	D	75 GHz	75G	L
902 MHz	902	9	119 GHz	119G	M
1.2 GHz	1.2G	E	142 GHz	142G	N
2.3 GHz	2.3G	F	241 GHz	241G	O
3.4 GHz	3.4G	G	Light	Light	P
5.7 GHz	5.7G	H			

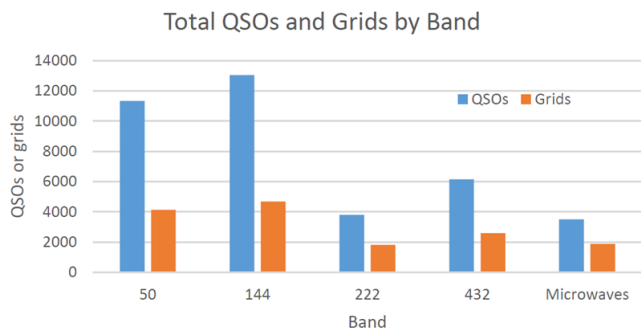


Figure 4 - Total QSOs and grids submitted in the 2016 logs

While there was a distinct lack of propagation enhancement generally, a few participants who stuck with it experienced some exciting conditions on 144, 222 and 432 MHz Sunday evening. Figures 5, 6, and 7 tell the tale. As seems to happen frequently in the September contest, mountaintop multioperator stations AA4ZZ in EM96 and W4NH in EM85 seemed to be on one end of the opening.

contest. For some, the opening was brief. Justin, K9MU noted that the opening only lasted about a half hour at his location. Others noted giving up before the opening, missing the fun and a chance to improve their score. Perseverance is an important aspect of successful VHF contesting.



Figure 5

There was very nice enhancement to the upper Midwest as far as K9MU in EN44 for both stations. Figure 5 shows the Sunday evening 400+ mile QSOs of 'NH (working as far west as EM19 in Kansas — a nice path of about 750 miles), Meanwhile 'ZZ worked as far as EN23 on 432 MHz, over 850 miles to the WNW! This was about 100 miles further than their longest 144 MHz QSO. (See Figure 6 for the Sunday evening 'ZZ 400+ mile QSOs on 144 Mhz - and Figure 7 for their 400+ mile 432 MHz QSOs). This tropo helped SOLP winner K2DRH work numerous new grids in the last few hours. (Thanks to Andy Zwirko, K1RA, for the map generating software.)

This type of opening highlights what it takes to succeed at VHF contesting. For most of the stations who worked the opening, these was by far the best conditions of the

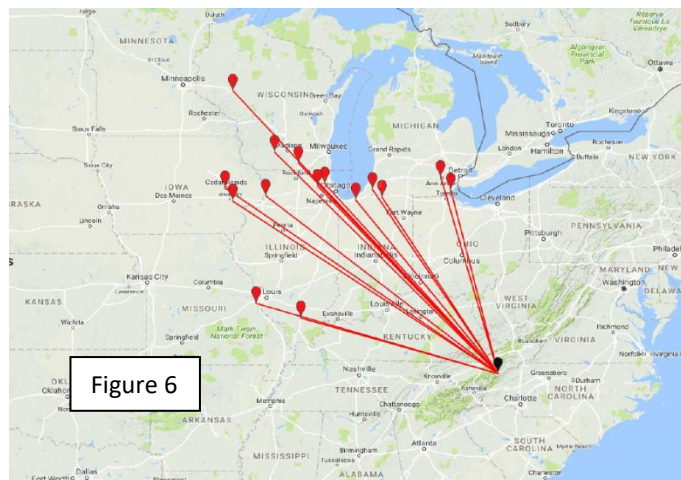


Figure 6

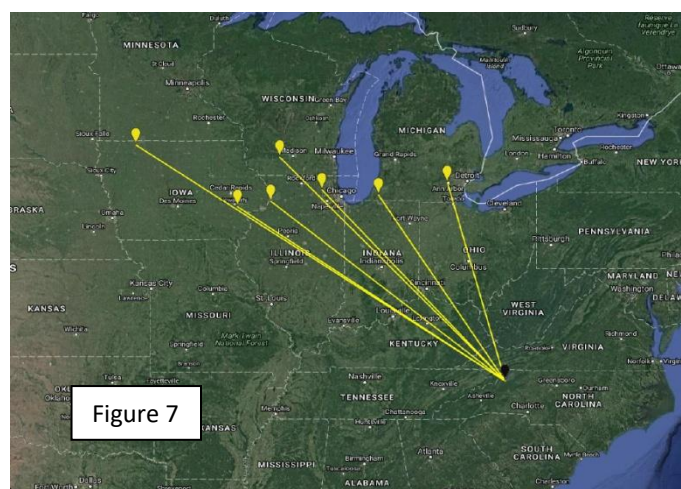


Figure 7

New Rules and Modes

Use of the new rules allowing use of the Internet and other non-amateur means of communication during the contest continue to evolve. Many operators noted that getting on the ON4KST chat page (www.on4kst.com/chat) was helpful in adding to their QSO totals. Those on Ping Jockey (www.pingjockey.net) were able to utilize digital modes, especially WSJT, more effectively than in the past. Long time contester K1RZ enjoyed being able to hook up with more distant stations using the chat pages, working stations previously missed prior to the new rules. VA3ELE concurred noting how many contacts would not have been possible without the real-time connection on the chat page.

In areas where VHF activity is generally low, digital modes can make a large difference, allowing contacts well beyond normal coverage areas. VE1SKY enjoyed the new possibilities, as 90% of his QSOs were made via digital modes, allowing him to participate in the contest from Nova Scotia. He noted how well the new WSJT programs work and encourages others to try them.

Score Enhancements

Of course, another long standing way to make things more interesting and increase the score is to add a band and/or improve your station. NF2RS/R improved their score through “a pile of work” to enhance their capabilities. The hard work paid off with a Limited Rover win for the team of K2ZR and K2QO. In the Pacific Northwest rover activity and high participation from the Pacific Northwest VHF Society kept things hopping.

If you really want to make sure that you are always “fresh meat” and can literally drive to new activity, check out the 26 grid rove of Andrea K2EZ/R. It was quite a story and proved to be lots of fun — you can read her story following the main results.



AC7MD enjoyed great September weather and this terrific view from his operating site on Mount Walker in WWA. (Photo credit – Barry Williams, AC7MD)

Category and Club Winners

Overall results were led by some frequent visitors to the top spots including K2DRH, K1TEO, and W2SZ in the SOLP, SOHP and Multioperator categories. K8GP racked up a huge score to take the Classic Rover, with NF2RS and N2SLN at the top of Limited and Unlimited Rover categories, respectively.

The increased competition in in the SO3B and SOFM categories crowned two new top finishers, KO9A and KM4KMU. W9SZ had another fine effort in the Single-Op Portable category as did the crew at W3SO as they took Limited Multioperator.

A familiar group won the Club competition, as the Mt Airy VHF Radio Club came in with over three quarters

of a million points. The Niagara Frontier Radiosport group was first in the Local Club competition.

Single-Operator

The Single-Operator, Low Power (SOLP) category remains the most popular with 186 entrants this contest. Continuing his success in the category, Bob, K2DRH came out on top. He worked the second highest QSO total and had a significant margin in grids worked to score 144k. His multiplier total was helped by his use of WSJT for digital scatter contacts and some nice tropo enhancement in the last three hours when he worked “a lot of new grids”. The battle for second and third was close with fellow New Englanders AF1T and WB1GQR battling it out. AF1T came out ahead with 81k points versus 74k for ‘GQR. They were followed by K1KG with just over 50k, WB2JAY, and N3RN. Regionally, N4QWZ placed in the Top Ten nationally and led the Southeast region. KC5WX topped the Midwest and KC6ZWT the West Coast Regions.

Top Ten, Single Operator, Low Power

Call	Score	QSOs	Mults	Bands
K2DRH	144,840	427	213	ABCD9EFG
AF1T	81,716	357	124	ABCD9EFGHIJP
WB1GQR	74,011	456	109	ABCD9EFG
K1KG	51,060	243	115	ABCD9EFGHI
WB2JAY	39,494	238	91	ABCD9EFG
N3RN	38,359	314	89	ABCDE
WA3EOQ	36,855	214	105	ABCD9E
N4QWZ	34,160	204	112	ABCD9E
VE3DS	32,704	174	112	ABCD9E
W3SZ	29,520	161	82	ABCD9EFGHI

In the Single-Operator, High Power (SOHP) category, K1TEO was the leader with over 300k points. Jeff was at or near the top for QSOs on all bands. In particular, his 903, 1296 and 2304 MHz multipliers paved the way to the victory. Hard charging K1RZ placed second with 234k points while fellow Pack Rat K3TUF finished third. Also in the Mid-Atlantic region, W3IP scored 87k to finish 4th followed by CT station K1GX. June contest winner Paul, WØUC again did very well from the upper Midwest, scoring 51k to take sixth. Regionally, N7EPD led the West Coast stations with 15k while WØGHZ had 17k in the Midwest region.

Top Ten, Single Operator, High Power

Call	Score	QSOs	Mults	Bands
K1TEO	315,805	757	245	ABCD9EFHI
K1RZ	234,117	584	207	ABCD9EFGHI
K3TUF	139,072	440	164	ABCD9EFGHI
W3IP	87,913	424	133	ABCD9E
K1GX	76,608	314	133	ABCD9EFGHI
WØUC	51,712	254	128	ABCD9EFGHI
WA3DRC	44,310	238	105	ABCD9EFGH
K8TQK	36,894	183	129	ABCD9EG
N2GHR	33,579	210	91	ABCD9EF
WZ1V	33,440	221	95	ABCDE

As noted earlier, entrants in the SO3B category continue to increase and this year KO9A scored a convincing win with over 10k points. He led or tied for high QSO and grid totals on all three bands, highlighted by working 33 grids on 50 MHz. After that, the competition was very



tight as the next five finishers were within 1200 points of one another. N3MWQ led the pack to take second ahead of N3ALN, K3UHU, N3XF and KA2BPP.

In regional competition, N7IR led the West Coast while also placing 10th nationally, KI5YG took top honors in the Midwest and K5OLV/4 the Southeast region.

SOFM leader KM4KMU reports "Other than bears loping around

and losing a cell on one my deep cycle batteries it was a fantastic weekend." (Photo credit – John Young KM4KMU)

Top Ten, Single Operator, 3 Band

Call	Score	QSOs	Mults	Bands
KO9A	10,679	157	59	ABD
N3MWQ	3,720	77	40	ABD
N3ALN	3,450	95	30	ABD
K3UHU	2,925	67	39	ABD
N3XF	2,613	59	39	ABD
KA2BPP	2,574	63	33	ABD
K2OEQ	2,250	67	30	ABD
KA2VLP	1,776	67	24	ABD
WV3P	1,750	59	25	ABD
N7IR	1,272	84	12	ABD

The SOFM category saw a jump in entrants from a prior high of 9 to 18 this time. KM4KMU led the competition, operating on 3 bands to score over 4k points. He managed 144 QSOs, showing what is possible with an FM-only entry Next was W2EV followed by a trio of California entrants, NA6AA, K6KQV and W6IA.

Top Ten, Single Operator, FM Only

Call	Score	QSOs	Mults	Bands
KM4KMU	4,221	144	21	BCD
W2EV	855	40	15	ABCD
NA6AA	530	41	10	ABD
K6KQV	477	36	9	ABD
W6IA	410	30	10	BCD
WB9WOZ	351	29	9	BCD
KE6PLA	264	15	11	BCD
N9VM	138	16	6	BCD
K2SI	133	16	7	ABD
K6YAP	72	13	4	BD

The final single-operator category is the Single-Operator Portable (SOP) competition. Zack, W9SZ continued his successful hilltop outings reaching over 5k points. He had QSOs on 9 different bands in the contest! K7ALO reached nearly 4k to take second, with W4DVE right behind. West Coast stations WA7JTM, AI6EA and W6KKO were next. WB2AMU led the Northeast region while placing 7th nationally in the category.

Top Ten, Single Operator, Portable

Call	Score	QSOs	Mults	Bands
W9SZ	5,375	55	43	BCD9EFGHI
K7ALO	3,740	123	22	ABCD9E
W4DVE	2,844	129	18	ABCD9E
WA7JTM	2,655	137	15	ABD
AI6EA	2,163	74	21	ABCD
W6KKO	1,892	62	22	ABCD9
WB2AMU	1,166	43	22	ABCD
NØJK	620	22	20	BD
N3KCM	294	18	14	ABCD
KE7UQL	240	18	12	ABD

A couple of single-band entrants had noteworthy results. On 6 meters, K1TOL had the top QSO total and grid total. Lefty worked 59 grids without the advantage of any enhancement. On 2 meters, KA1ZE utilized his remote QTH to the hilt as he was able to work 59 grids, the most of any station on in the contest in all categories. Likewise 'TOL's grid total was tops overall in the contest.

Multioperator

The Limited Multioperator (LM) category always seems to have tight competition and this year was no exception. With high QSO and grid totals for LM's, W3SO took the category from their WPA mountaintop location with a fine score of nearly 130k. Well-known HF contester Andy, N2NT continues to do well with his group at his

NNJ QTH, just missing 100k this time around. Right behind was AA4ZZ who increased their score nicely in the last few hours with the tropo conditions they experienced from EM96 in western NC. Next in line was W4NH who set up just south of 'ZZ in EM85, also in NC. Followed by W2KV with 25k from their northern NJ FN20 perch near the Big Apple. And from south Texas K5QE continued their excellent efforts from the Midwest region as they narrowly missed 40k points to lead the region and take 5th overall. LM entry totals were down a good deal this year, with no entrants from the Western region and only one from the Midwest.

Top Ten, Limited Multioperator

Call	Score	QSOs	Mults	Bands
W3SO	129,860	563	172	ABCD
N2NT	96,068	526	146	ABCD
AA4ZZ	89,019	456	157	ABCD
W4NH	57,001	389	119	ABCD
K5QE	39,893	227	139	ABCD
W2KV	25,174	270	82	ABD
N9UHF	13,144	167	62	ABCD
NE5BO	9,966	112	66	ABCD
W4COV	7,552	115	59	ABCD
K3CCR	5,456	106	44	ABD

The Unlimited Multioperator (UM) had a nice pickup in entrants going from 17 last year up to 23 this year.



The N8ZM Unlimited Multioperator site (Photo credit – Tom Holmes, N8ZM)

W2SZ continued their high scoring results, with over a half-million points. They had the highest number of QSOs in the entire contest with nearly 1200. They also worked a total of 259 grids, tops as well, with single-operator K1TEO next at 245. K2LIM operated 11 bands to score 308k for second, followed by FN21 entrant W2EA with over 200k. North of the border, Peter, VA3ELE operated from home assisted by Steve, VE3SMA to manage 43k, about 300 points ahead of fifth-place entry WE1P. N8ZM took top honors in the Great Lakes region followed by N2PA in western NY, while K7VHF had the top score of 16k from the West

Coast (see their write up of their experience in the story following the results as well as pictures of their portable operation).



The W2EA team and operating position in FN21. (photo credit – South Jersey Mountain Toppers Amateur Radio Club)

Top Ten, Unlimited Multioperator

Call	Score	QSOs	Mults	Bands
W2SZ	567,469	1,196	259	ABCD9EFGHIJP
K2LIM	308,328	816	232	ABCD9EFGHIP
W2EA	218,504	795	191	ABCD9EFGHIP
VA3ELE	43,792	220	112	ABCD9EFGIP
WE1P	43,442	288	107	ABCD9EFG
N8ZM	33,705	237	107	ABCD9E
N2PA	24,480	203	90	ABCD
K7VHF	16,956	204	54	ABCD9EFGHI
WB6W	7,995	135	41	ABCD9E
W6TV	5,106	92	37	ABCD9E

Rovers

Overall Rover category activity was down a good deal this year. Limited Rover dropped from 29 entries to 19 while Classic Rover was down to 25 from 34 in 2015. Rovers have a significant impact on the contest activity as a whole, so hopefully they will be back in force for the 2017 event!

In the Classic Rover category, Terry K8GP with partner Andy, K1RA activated 6 grids to the tune of 766 total QSOs! They worked over 100 QSOs on the bottom four bands and had high totals on the microwaves, as well.

With an excellent grid multiplier of 135, they tallied over 200k points. VE3OIL continued his roving success scoring 89k points, including a Rover-high total of 138 grids worked. Third and fourth were separated by a scant 200 points as WA3PTV edged out KF2MR. Rounding out the top five was another Canadian as VE3WJ broke the 30k point level. W7QQ had the top score in the Midwest Coast region while placing sixth nationally and KE7MSU led the West Coast region.

Top Ten, Classic Rover

Call	Score	QSOs	Mults	Grids Act'd	Bands
K8GP/R	202,365	766	135	6	ABCD9EFGHI
VE3OIL/R	89,377	311	139	8	ABCD9EFGHIJP
KF2MR/R	41,952	236	92	5	ABCD9EFGI
WA3PTV/R	41,752	286	68	4	ABCD9EFGHI
VE3WJ/R	31,800	127	100	8	ABCD9EFHIJP
W7QQ/R	24,702	166	69	8	ABCD9EFGHIJ
WA3RGQ/R	23,296	191	56	4	ABCD9EFGHI
W9SNR/R	22,177	181	67	3	ABCD9EFGHI
AB4CR/R	19,435	140	65	4	ABCD9EFGHI
W5VY/R	13,694	114	82	5	ABCDE

NF2RS continued their success in the Limited Rover category, as their pre-contest work to upgrade their capabilities paid off with nearly 500 total QSOs. Activating 7 grids resulted in a solid 67k point total for the team. Andrea, K2EZ, activated a whopping 26 grids to take second overall in the category. See more about her experience in the story following the results. W3ICC was the other station in the Limited Rover group to break 10k points as they were third. Elsewhere, top scorers included VE7JH on the West Coast, and W9YOY in the Central region.

Top Ten, Limited Rover

Call	Score	QSOs	Mults	Grids Act'd	Bands
NF2RS/R	67,009	460	113	7	ABCD
K2EZ/R	37,168	273	101	26	ABCD
W3ICC/R	28,269	270	81	5	ABCD
W9YOY/R	9,810	169	45	11	ABCD
K1SIG/R	6,750	114	45	3	ABCD
KØBAK/R	5,952	93	48	8	ABCD
W1RGA/R	5,688	130	36	4	ABCD
NL7CO/R	2,294	48	31	10	ABCD
VE7JH/R	2,128	62	28	3	ABCD
VE6WK/R	1,712	82	16	4	ABD

The Unlimited Rover (RU) category saw five entries with Lu, N2SLN taking first overall with 29k points. He hit five grids with his four-band rover. KJ1K was next followed by N6JET.

Top Ten, Unlimited Rover

Call	Score	QSOs	Mults	Grids Act'd	Bands
N2SLN/R	29,412	274	76	5	ABCD
KJ1K/R	10,810	100	46	5	ABCD9EFGHI
N6JET/R	7,029	146	33	5	ABCD9
WØVOA/R	6,256	100	34	4	ABCD9E
WD5DJW/R	36	4	6	2	BD

Club Competition

A total of 21 Clubs competed in the Medium category this year, up a couple from 2015. Moving from fourth to the top spot this year were the Packrats from the Mt Airy VHF Radio Club. Nineteen club members contributed a total of over three-quarters of a million points. Maintaining second place this year was the North East Weak Signal Group with just over a half-million points. Last year's winners from the Potomac Valley Radio Club upped their number of participants to a contest club-leading total of 45 to score 475k in fourth. The Contest Club of Ontario continued their success in this contest taking fourth with a fine total of more than 200,000 points.

Affiliated Club Competition

Club	Score	Entries
Medium		
Mt Airy VHF Radio Club	764,221	19
North East Weak Signal Group	533,327	15
Potomac Valley Radio Club	475,366	45
Contest Club Ontario	224,929	8
Society of Midwest Contesters	164,803	11
Northern Lights Radio Society	113,432	15
Frankford Radio Club	97,658	4
Pacific Northwest VHF Society	92,479	29
Carolina DX Association	89,246	3
Rochester VHF Group	76,129	9
Yankee Clipper Contest Club	33,566	4
Northern California Contest Club	18,313	6
Roadrunners Microwave Group	8,608	3
Southern California Contest Club	5,268	3
Grand Mesa Contesters of Colorado	4,648	3
Arizona Outlaws Contest Club	3,753	12
Wayne County Amateur Radio Club	3,087	5
DFW Contest Group	2,752	5
Florida Contest Group	991	6
Willamette Valley DX Club	832	3
Alaska VHF-Up Group	332	4
Local		
Niagara Frontier Radiosport	68,353	4
Michigan VHF-UHF Society	29,209	5
Badger Contesters	24,503	5
Florida Weak Signal Society	20,223	7
Bergen ARA	3,913	3
Bristol (TN) ARC	3,910	3

Six clubs competed in the Local category with the Niagara Frontier Radiosport group coming out on top with 68,000 points. The Michigan VHF-UHF Society matched their winning total from last year to take second followed by the Badger Contesters just behind in third.

Next Time

Special thanks to Andy, K1RA for his help with the maps of paths worked by AA4ZZ and W4NH. Also to Andrea, K2EZ and Dale, KD7UO for taking the time to tell us a bit about their operations.

The 2017 September VHF contest is just around the corner. Let's hope for some interesting band conditions. As 2016 demonstrated, band openings or not there is plenty of action and ways to have fun. Hope to see you there.

Stories from the Open Road

K7VHF – by Mike, KD7TS and Dale, KD7UO

We collaborated for the Sept 2016 VHF contest, operating with the Pacific Northwest VHF Society's club call K7VHF. We both own rather tired, high-mileage vans dedicated to VHF+ activities in the mountains surrounding the Seattle area. This was our third collaboration for a contest. There's safety in numbers; we've encountered washed-out roads, failed brakes, starter motors that refuse to start, blown tires, etc.

For this contest we chose Candy Rock Mountain, west of Olympia, WA, elevation 2400 ft, in CN87ka. This mountaintop is usually gated closed but a call to DNR resulted in the gate being open for the weekend. The location affords great visibility from Vancouver/Victoria BC to the north, all of Puget Sound area in WA, and Portland OR to the south.



The K7VHF station atop Candy Rock Mountain (photo credit Mike Reed, KD7TS)

KD7UO worked the lower bands of 6, 2, and 222, while KD7TS worked the more exotic bands from 432 up to 10 GHz. Unlike the June contest, there was no propagation

to speak of on 6-meters, but the excellent location allowed tropo contacts from the Pacific beaches to eastern WA and eastern OR, as well as picking up plenty of Qs in the major population centers of Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland.

K2EZ's Amazing 26-Grid Rove – by Andrea Slack, K2EZ

It's clear that Andrea loves to rove — just look at her QRZ.com page for one terrific trip after another. You'll really enjoy her latest adventure, too! – Ed.

My intent was to have an easier more relaxed rove than my 27-grid effort in January 2016. Rather than start in central PA, which I had done in January, and suffer thru the unproductive long deep valleys of West Central PA, I hoped that by starting in the flatlands I would cut down on non-productive areas. Also, in keeping the route shorter not be so pressed for time. My endpoint was still the general vicinity of Houston, Texas as I have a secondary QTH west of Houston in Brenham, Texas.

I opted to start out at the EN60/EN61/EN71/EN70 grid intersection a bit south of Akron, Indiana. The map showed a road route that circled very close to this intersection.

I started to question this decision the morning of the contest as I started my trek north from Indianapolis. I heard NOBODY on VHF SSB. Nobody at all. This is something I never experienced before. There always was someone on SSB the hours before the contest. Some idle chatter, some testing out signals. Where was everyone?

The next problem occurred when I got up to the grid corner and discovered one of the roads covering two legs of the square around the corner looked to be just a track around the edge of a farmer's field. It was a farm access "road" at best, if not entirely private property. It was unpaved, with puddles and lots of mud. So instead of a nice 1-mile square around the grid corner, the real road was 5 miles. I could only get to 3 of the four grids without going at least a couple miles out.



K2EZ's Rover that completed a 26-grid jaunt. (Photo credit – Andrea Slack, K2EZ)

I had wanted to be in the new grid in seconds, not minutes. Not insurmountable, but I didn't want any stations I could get to work me on the initial grid to wander off. I also wanted to get stations worked in all four grids as quickly as possible and get moving. Especially when up until that point I didn't know who I would be able to reach. Fortunately feelers I had put out to stations via email and telephone calls were starting to pay off and I had a couple stations to work at the starting bell.

In the end I decided against to risk the "road" that went along the perimeter of the field. There were some trees between where I needed to go and the house that seemed to be located on that particular lot. The neighboring house was in clear view however.

I decided to wait till close to the start of the contest, go down that field access road to get to EN71, work the stations I had skeds with and then get out of there. I justified this thinking well the "road" was on the map so it must be a road.

I had 4WD so as long as it wasn't too soft I expected to get out of there okay. As it turned out, it wasn't too bad. I had to go about 500 feet down this field "road" to get into EN71. I felt quite exposed. I just prayed that someone wouldn't come up behind me with a tractor and block me in.

Fortune smiled on me, I worked two stations on the four bands I had and a third station on just two bands as they

had some technical difficulties. I then backed down the road safely and finally could relax. It wasn't long before I had worked most of the stations from all four grids.

My intended route south of there would bring me thru Indianapolis, Louisville, Nashville, Memphis, Little Rock, Texarkana, Dallas, and end with a final run in the Houston area. I anticipated hitting 22 to 24 grids. The latter portion of this route was very similar to my January rove — more or less the same after I hit Louisville. Like January I had some "optional" grids I would hit provided conditions were active and I could be sure of activating that grid and had time.

In the end my final route was just about 1300 miles covering 26 grids. In terms of grids per miles traveled this was much more efficient than in January when it took me a bit over 1700 miles to get 27 grids.

What worked in my favor on this rove was my starting point being very close to the grid intersection and the terrain being flat. Contacts from all four grids were essentially identical. In January I was near a grid corner, but the distance was closer to 10 miles from my starting point and only one of the four grids was in a good location. The other three were down in a valley and it was difficult to get contacts from those three grids.

Another factor that worked in my favor was that since I didn't have to cover as many miles on my main route, I was able to make some doglegs and pick up all the "optional" grids along the route.

Weather seemed to smile on me. As I left the grid intersection where I started the contest the rain started to pick up. It got fairly heavy at one point but I never saw any lightning. After an hour or two I didn't see anything more than a drizzle for the remainder of the contest. I heard a number of stations in Ohio were forced off the air. That did indirectly affect me as they were unavailable for me to contact as I headed south past Indianapolis towards Kentucky.

Radio propagation was nothing special. A couple micro openings but pretty much it was basic terrestrial propagation. To me this is the sort of conditions I like in the contest. In June I was really thrown off my stride by the big 6-meter opening. The single-op stations were all on 6-meters chasing contacts and multipliers. My mobile setup just can't compete on 6-meters. Them spending much of their time on 6-meters in June caused a significant reduction of 2-meter, 1.25-meter and 70-cm Qs with the attendant loss of multipliers I might otherwise have gotten.

In September though, this was what I liked; just having to work for every Q and QSY thru the bands. This is what I have optimized the radio setup in the rover to do. And I admit it is this hopping thru the bands that is one of the things I love about the VHF contest. To me a big 6-meter opening makes the dynamic more like a HF contest.

I finished my first day a bit west of Nashville. Shortly before stopping for the night I was able to make a dogleg and pick up an extra grid thanks to Todd, N4QWZ being willing to stay up for 15 minutes as I made that run. As I recall he was the only one I worked in that grid. It may seem like a great deal of effort to spend a round trip of 30 minutes for four Qs (one per band), but it was also a multiplier.

I stopped for the night and got a good 6 hours sleep.

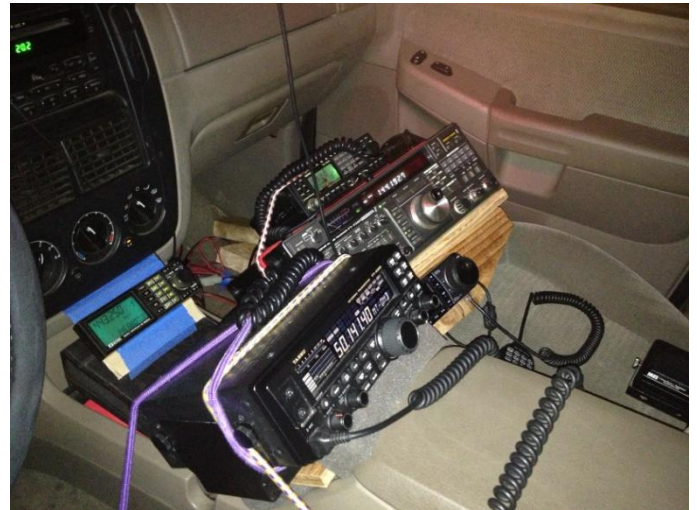
The next day it wasn't long before I was picking up stations in the Memphis area. There was lots of activity in that area and once again I was able to make a dogleg south of Nashville to pick up another of my optional grids. It was nice to see this activity in Nashville as I knew that once I crossed the Mississippi I had a long run across Arkansas and would only get a few stations thru Little Rock and Texarkana. Real activity wouldn't pick up till I got to the outskirts of Dallas.

During this run across Arkansas I knew that I should be able to reach K5QE as I had worked them in January. Unfortunately, K5QE was having technical problems. I heard at one point that they had lost all their preamps on one band and were down to a backup rig on one band. So getting signals to them wasn't so easy but we managed.

Unfortunately, at some point, someone didn't get the phone completely on the hook at K5QE and when I crossed into the next grid and tried to get their attention by calling, the line was continuously busy. Without any other stations that I knew I could reach I feared I might end up crossing thru a grid or two without getting at least one contact which I needed to get the activation multiplier.

I was almost across the grid and the phone was still busy. Fortunately, I did find another station to make a contact with. I was starting to approach the end of the next grid when I finally got a copy on K5QE calling CQ. Signals were marginal as they weren't pointing my way but finally I was able to get their attention and alert them to the problem with the phone in addition to making contacts with them.

As I approached Dallas, as expected, there was quite a bit of activity. Once again I had time to make a dogleg and pick up another of my "optional" grids. At this point Qs with K5QE were going smoothly and things were looking up for me.



Inside the K2EZ Rovermobile (photo credit, Andrea Slack, K2EZ)

From what I hear, things weren't so good for K5QE — with so much equipment off line, most of the operators had left leaving K5QE and his main partner there alone. This created the next unfortunate circumstances. Marshall had some company from overseas and had an obligation to play host. So after having gotten south of Dallas, I no longer had K5QE to contact with and another 4 or 5 grids to go where I was within range of K5QE. That would be 20 Qs I would have to make up someplace else.

I was on my final leg, I realized I was close to my own grid activation record and that if I could get across just one more grid, there was a real chance I could get to the EL19/EM10/EM20/EL29 corner and add two more grids to my total. This proved to be unreachable in part due to a navigation error on I-45. I failed to get off the highway where I had planned and by the time I realized this I was quite a bit further south and east of efficient routes to the grid corner.

I did make the attempt but I with about 30 minutes left it was clear that I couldn't make it. At that point I changed my route away from the grid corner and headed directly towards Brenham, Texas to my QTH there. As timing would have it, contest time ran out just as I crossed the line into Brenham and just 2 miles from my destination.

One funny story. When I had finally gotten off I-45, I needed to get fuel. As I pulled into the gas station a car pulled up behind me. A young woman got out of her car

to ask me if I was a “storm chaser”. I regretfully told her no, it is for a radio and was currently involved in a radio contest. I pulled out my roadmap with grid markings and asked her the quality of various possible routes from where I was. She didn’t understand any of it, but was completely thrilled to help out, to see this map with arcane grid labels and a vehicle full of electronic gadgets.

I also should note that by the end of the contest my antenna was getting a bit “buggy”. It was working fine, but by “buggy” I mean covered with bugs — something I did not encounter in January.

As a footnote, I am noticing what I feel may be a negative outcome of the rule change that allowed for making phone calls or using other means (like ON4KST chat) to setup contacts. It seems many stations are turning to places like ON4KST and relying on coordinating via phone calls or text messages to arrange to try contacts and not engaging in calling CQs. And when they are calling CQ they are relying on fixed arrays pointed at population centers or tending to keep their beams pointed towards such population centers.

As a rover I often find myself in spots outside where stations are looking. It seems to me that many of the stations that I used to hear calling CQ and sweeping their beams around just aren’t doing that as much as before. When I am on the move, other than APRS reporting my position, I can’t self-spot or get on ON4KST without stopping.

Overall, I was generally pleased with how this rove went. My total multipliers were down by about 15% yet I saw a jump in my total Qs. This despite a couple of the big stations I was counting on having problems.

My final score wasn’t quite as good as in January, but it was within shouting distance. As I see it, I achieved a key goal, which was greater time and mile efficiency. I hit population centers while there was still good activity unlike in January where I reached some active areas after many stations were shutdown for the night. So I spent less time on the road, had a rove that was 400 miles shorter, and still managed to activate 26 grids and get nearly the same score. Yes, I was quite happy!

Division Winners

Classic Rover	Call	Score
Atlantic	KF2MR/R	41,952
Central	W9SNR/R	22,177
Dakota	KCØP/R	12,735
Delta	W5VY/R	13,694
Midwest	WAØCNS/R	420
Northwestern	KE7MSU/R	4,901
Roanoke	K8GP/R	202,365
Rocky Mountain	W7QQ/R	24,702
West Gulf	NØLD/R	3,535
Canada	VE3OIL/R	89,377

Limited Rover

Atlantic	NF2RS/R	67,009
Central	W9YOY/R	9,810
Dakota	NØSPN/R	65
Hudson	WB2SIH/R	589
Midwest	KBØZOM/R	1,305
New England	K1SIG/R	6,750
Rocky Mountain	ABØYM/R	1,368
West Gulf	K2EZ/R	37,168
Canada	VE7JH/R	2,128

Unlimited Rover

Atlantic	N2SLN/R	29,412
Delta	WD5DJW/R	36
New England	KJ1K/R	10,810
Pacific	N6JET/R	7,029
Rocky Mountain	WØVOA/R	6,256

Single Operator, High Power

Atlantic	K1RZ	234,117
Central	WØUC	51,712
Dakota	WØGHZ	17,952
Delta	KG5MD	5,568
Great Lakes	K8TQK	36,894
Hudson	N2GHR	33,579
Midwest	KØTPP	10,414
New England	K1TEO	315,805
Northwestern	N7EPD	15,340
Pacific	WA6OSX	7,920
Roanoke	W3IP	87,913
Rocky Mountain	WB2FKO	3,813
Southeastern	N4TWX	7,252
Southwestern	N6VI	1,780
West Gulf	K5LLL	8,250
Canada	VE3ZV	26,966
DX	XE2CQ	384

Single Operator, Low Power

Atlantic	N3RN	38,359
Central	K2DRH	144,840
Dakota	WBØHHM	2,684
Delta	N4QWZ	34,160
Great Lakes	WZ8T	7,729
Hudson	WB2JAY	39,494
Midwest	WBØNRV	2,040
New England	AF1T	81,716
Northwestern	KEØCO	5,868
Pacific	KC6ZWT	8,424
Roanoke	KJ4ZYB	11,610
Rocky Mountain	K7ULS	195
Southeastern	KX4R	26,600

Southwestern	W6IT	3,472
West Gulf	KC5WX	6,732
Canada	VE3DS	32,704

Single Operator, Portable

Atlantic	N3KCM	294
Central	W9SZ	5,375
Hudson	WB2AMU	1,166
Midwest	NØJK	620
New England	N1PRW	160
Northwestern	K7ALO	3,740
Pacific	W6KKO	1,892
Southwestern	WA7JTM	2,655

Single Operator, 3 Band

Atlantic	N3MWQ	3,720
Central	KO9A	10,679
Dakota	KEØZ	154
Delta	W4TTM	130
Great Lakes	K8XX	400
Hudson	KA2BPP	2,574
Midwest	KØJQA	375
New England	W9JJ	630
Northwestern	KX7L	1,071
Pacific	KK6ZIZ	264
Roanoke	WA4LDU	792
Rocky Mountain	KC4YLV	91
Southeastern	K5OLV/4	1,175
Southwestern	N7IR	1,272
West Gulf	KI5YG	1,144
Canada	VE6NR	672

Single Operator, FM Only

Atlantic	W2EV	855
Central	WB9WOZ	351
Dakota	WD9IGX	20
Delta	WX4ET	32
Northwestern	KL2DN	33
Pacific	K6KQV	477
Roanoke	KM4KMU	4,221
Southwestern	NA6AA	530

Limited Multioperator

Atlantic	W3SO	129,860
Central	N9UHF	13,144
Dakota	WØVB	1,107
Delta	NE5BO	9,966
Hudson	N2NT	96,068
New England	WW1VT	495
Roanoke	AA4ZZ	89,019
Southeastern	W4JNB	1,219

Unlimited Multioperator

Atlantic	K2LIM	308,328
Central	N2BJ	2,808
Great Lakes	N8ZM	33,705
Hudson	WE1P	43,442
New England	W2SZ	567,469
Northwestern	K7VHF	16,956
Pacific	WB6W	7,995
Rocky Mountain	NØKE	1,980
Southeastern	WK4U	2,132
West Gulf	K5QE	39,893
Canada	VA3ELE	43,792

Regional Leaders

LM = Limited Multioperator; R = Classic Rover; RL = Limited Rover; RU = Unlimited Rover; SO3B = Single Operator, 3 Band; SOFM = Single Operator, FM Only; SOHP = Single Operator, High Power; SOLP = Single Operator, Low Power; SOP = Single Operator Portable; UM = Unlimited Multioperator

West Coast Region			Midwest Region			Central Region			Southeast Region			Northeast Region		
Pacific, Northwestern, and Southwestern ARRL Divisions; Alberta; British Columbia, and NT RAC Sections			Dakota, Midwest, Rocky Mountain and West Gulf ARRL Divisions; Manitoba and Saskatchewan RAC Sections			Central and Great Lakes ARRL Divisions; Greater Toronto Area, Ontario East, Ontario North, and Ontario South RAC Section			Delta, Roanoke, and Southeastern ARRL Divisions			New England, Hudson and Atlantic ARRL Divisions; Maritime and Quebec RAC Sections		
Call	Score	Cat	Call	Score	Cat	Call	Score	Cat	Call	Score	Cat	Call	Score	Cat
KE7MSU/R	4,901	R	W7QQ/R	24,702	R	VE3OIL/R	89,377	R	K8GP/R	202,365	R	KF2MR/R	41,952	R
K7SWS/R	3,390	R	KCØP/R	12,735	R	VE3WJ/R	31,800	R	W5VY/R	13,694	R	WA3PTV/R	41,752	R
			KK6MC/R	9,261	R	W9SNR/R	22,177	R	AG4V/R	8,544	R	WA3RGQ/R	23,296	R
VE7JH/R	2,128	RL	NØHZO/R	9,143	R							AB4CR/R	19,435	R
VE6WK/R	1,712	RL	NØLD/R	3,535	R	W9YOY/R	9,810	RL	WD5DJW/R	36	RU	K1DS/R	5,780	R
						KC9PCP/R	600	RL						
N6JET/R	7,029	RU	K2EZ/R	37,168	RL				W3IP	87,913	SOHP	NF2RS/R	67,009	RL
			NL7CO/R	2,294	RL	WØUC	51,712	SOHP	N3MK	21,280	SOHP	W3ICC/R	28,269	RL
N7EPD	15,340	SOHP	ABØYM/R	1,368	RL	K8TQK	36,894	SOHP	K1HTV	13,908	SOHP	K1S1G/R	6,750	RL
KE7SW	9,246	SOHP	KBØZOM/R	1,305	RL	VE3ZV	26,966	SOHP	W4RX	7,436	SOHP	KØBAK/R	5,952	RL
K7YDL	8,184	SOHP	W3DHI/R	1,276	RL	KB8U	15,662	SOHP	N4TWX	7,252	SOHP	W1RGA/R	5,688	RL
WA6OSX	7,920	SOHP			WA8RJF	7,316	SOHP							
K7CW	6,750	SOHP	WØVOA/R	6,256	RU				N4QWZ	34,160	SOLP	N2SLN/R	29,412	RU
					K2DRH	144,840	SOLP	KX4R	26,600	SOLP	KJ1K/R	10,810	RU	
KC6ZWT	8,424	SOLP	WØGHZ	17,952	SOHP	VE3DS	32,704	SOLP	KJ4ZYB	11,610	SOLP			
K2GMY	7,904	SOLP	KØTPP	10,414	SOHP	WZ8T	7,729	SOLP	WA7TOF	5,476	SOLP	K1TEO	315,805	SOHP
KEØCO	5,868	SOLP	K5LLL	8,250	SOHP	K8CC	7,632	SOLP	K4FJW	3,458	SOLP	K1RZ	234,117	SOHP
K6CLS	3,720	SOLP	KØSIX	7,290	SOHP	K9MU	7,504	SOLP				K3TUF	139,072	SOHP
W6IT	3,472	SOLP	KØAWU	5,640	SOHP				K5OLV/4	1,175	SO3B	K1GX	76,608	SOHP
					W9SZ	5,375	SOP	WA4LDU	792	SO3B	WA3DRC	44,310	SOHP	
K7ALO	3,740	SOP	KCSWX	6,732	SOLP	KO9A	10,679	SO3B	KK4MA	285	SO3B			
W4DVE	2,844	SOP	WBØHHM	2,684	SOLP	W89TFH	1,100	SO3B	N4MM	187	SO3B	AF1T	81,716	SOLP
WA7JTM	2,655	SOP	AF5Q	2,088	SOLP	W9ZB	540	SO3B	W4TTM	130	SO3B	WB1GQR	74,011	SOLP
A16EA	2,163	SOP	WBØNRV	2,040	SOLP	K8XX	400	SO3B				K1KG	51,060	SOLP
W6KKO	1,892	SOP	NØLL	1,288	SOLP	WB8BZK	140	SO3B	KM4KMU	4,221	SOFM	WB2JAY	39,494	SOLP
								WX4ET	32	SOFM	N3RN	38,359	SOLP	
N7IR	1,272	SO3B	NØJK	620	SOP				KW4LU	8	SOFM			
KX7L	1,071	SO3B			WB9WOZ	351	SOFM				WB2AMU	1,166	SOP	
KA6BIM	676	SO3B	K15YG	1,144	SO3B				AA4ZZ	89,019	LM	N3KCM	294	SOP
VE6NR	672	SO3B	KØJQA	375	SO3B	N9UHF	13,144	LM	W4NH	57,001	LM	N1PRW	160	SOP
WA2KDL	637	SO3B	KEØZ	154	SO3B				NE5BO	9,966	LM	WX3P	70	SOP
			K5ND	117	SO3B	VA3ELE	43,792	UM	W4COV	7,552	LM	N2TEB	60	SOP
NA6AA	530	SOFM	NØAT	96	SO3B	N8ZM	33,705	UM	W4JNB	1,219	LM			
K6KQV	477	SOFM			N2BJ	2,808	UM				N3MWQ	3,720	SO3B	
W6IA	410	SOFM	WD9IGX	20	SOFM	VA3NW	1,885	UM	WK4U	2,132	UM	N3ALN	3,450	SO3B
KE6PLA	264	SOFM	KEØOR	14	SOFM				AD4ES	588	UM	K3UHU	2,925	SO3B
N9VM	138	SOFM	KEØFMX	1	SOFM							N3XF	2,613	SO3B
											KA2BPP	2,574	SO3B	
K7VHF	16,956	UM	WØVB	1,107	LM									
WB6W	7,995	UM									W2EV	855	SOFM	
W6TV	5,106	UM	K5QE	39,893	UM				K2SI	133	SOFM			
K6YK	3,078	UM	NØKE	1,980	UM									
VE6AO	833	UM	KCSMVZ	440	UM							W3SO	129,860	LM
											N2NT	96,068	LM	
											W2KV	25,174	LM	
											K3CCR	5,456	LM	
											WB3IGR	2,784	LM	
											W2SZ	567,469	UM	
											K2LIM	308,328	UM	
											W2EA	218,504	UM	
											WE1P	43,442	UM	
											N2PA	24,480	UM	