

The News of the
SWAMP FOX CONTEST GROUP
Tales From the Swamp

Editor: Scott Brown, N2OG

January 2022

HAPPY NEW YEAR SWAMP FOXES!

It's nice to start all over again as a club each year. I am starting as the new editor of our newsletter! I would like to thank our club's officers for giving me the opportunity to edit the "Tales from the Swamp" newsletter. Special thanks to Kevan, N4XL for helping me get off the ground. I want this newsletter to be useful to you. These newsletters will hopefully give you new avenues to increase your scores.

If you haven't noticed our club is growing! We have new talented members to draw ideas from to meet new goals set by our President. Based on last year, soon we will have many more new active members. I was going to ask Frank, KG4IGC for a proper list of all our members with their call signs and email addresses. I wanted to print the updated list in the Newsletter for you. Frank had already updated the list for all to see on the club website. I would like to point all of our members to our informative website where that list and much much more can be viewed. [Swamp Fox Contest Group](#). A big thank you to Frank for keeping the website up and running!

Presidents Corner

Covid-19 rates (both daily case #'s and percent positivity) are soaring probably from the Omicron variant. In my original email to the

club, I stated that if the "pandemic raises its ugly head again to dangerous levels" that we'd (present officers) reevaluate the annual meeting as an in-person meeting vs. a Zoom meeting. We are at that point - we needed to reevaluate. When I wrote the email on December 12'th, we (SC) had 863 new daily cases and a percent positivity rate of 5%. On Friday January 7'th we had 14,586 new daily cases and a percent positivity rate of 28% (stats from Johns Hopkins site). Unfortunately, some of these cases are reportedly also occurring in those who have been vaccinated.

I reached out to the present club officers and the majority strongly feel we should shift our in-person meeting to a Zoom meeting again this year. I agree. The rising/high case # and percent positivity rates greatly concern me. Holding the meeting in a closed indoor environment with little room for social distancing also concerns me for the safety of our members, guests and families.

I will send an email Group.io poll with several dates/times to determine the best timing for the Zoom meeting (probably a weekday evening) to get the most attendance. This also eliminates the conflict with winter field day that was a concern for a couple of members.

73,
Ed K3DNE

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAMWORK By N2OG Scott

There is no "I" in team! These sayings can be true for us. For us to have our best year we will have new attainable goals. In our world it is easy to set point goals and see results after the contest. We should have an easy time getting to our goals this year because we have new exciting talent on our team. No problem right, wrong! I am challenging each of us to have our best possible year! We will continue to grow as a club. That is going to be a fact. The number of people moving to

our state will increase our numbers. We will have a big group of contestants that will make every club take notice. It can get difficult to effectively manage a larger group. We can look at ourselves and see where we can improve for our members.

To continue to move up in ranking, we can have better contest preparation as a team. Looking hard at how we can improve our team placement. We are growing as a club and we can now use our members to collect the data needed to prepare a contest plan. Let's start with the two common factors all teams deal with. The man and the machine.

What can we do to improve ourselves? Physical fitness will do more to improve your sharpness and ability to work for long hours more than any other thing. I hope you will look at what you are doing to stay fit or improve your fitness for yourself, your family and of course your team. Briefly, if your exercise routine does not make you feel "uncomfortable" ie, sweating while you are doing it, you are not getting much benefit from your exercise. If you have any questions about exercise or are interested in a free exercise plan made for you, please contact me! I have been a coached athlete and a fitness coach for many years and can help anyone no matter there current level of fitness.

Next the machine, our stations. What have you done for your station lately? We all have a routine we go through to ensure trouble free operation, yet we have all stumbled here. Not always from a lack of attention, but sometimes software issues. Sometimes things break. Let's go through our stations top to bottom and see if there is an issue that needs attention.

I see other clubs trying to work together better as a team. As a team we can build better contest plans that we all can use to increase our scores. The information available to us on the web in itself makes us better, if we use it. We can use the Reverse Beacon Network, WSPR with PSK Reporter just to name a few resources.

We are all dabbling in space science, propagation, reports contest log reports and good old fashioned understanding of propagation. This can get all overwhelming to first collect the information let alone get it useful to our geographic location for each contest. My suggestion is to use our manpower to divide and conquer these useful tools and bring to light their information.

Here is a YouTube video about WSPR. I have used it but not on a regular basis. This is a great start for everyone to do an updated or current WSPR test at your station. You will see in this video its value and your knowledge of your station. I emphasize knowledge of your station and specifically your antennas.

[WSPR - An Introduction for Beginners | WSJT-X Ham Radio - YouTube](#)

After the video we can brainstorm in Group io just how we can best use this program in our plans. Many of you may already be expert using WSPR. I think if we can get a group to run this program on a rotating basis we will have a much better handle on propagation.

Right at the moment I just look at the SFI on QRZ.com and do the best I can. I also see where the activity is on the cluster and go there. I should be able to get better results with better planning. We look forward to hearing from those who have already been down this path.

From the reflectors

CONVERSATION

Recently, I had reached out to contest clubs to share their stories of how they were actively seeking to increase participation in contests and encourage younger contesters.

Scott, N3FJP, shared what the [Northeast Maryland Amateur Radio Contest Society](#), has been doing to encourage growth of their club. The club creates a very positive environment where every QSO is

valued. Even if new members only make a handful of QSOs, club members make sure to let them know that their participation is welcomed and appreciated.

The club offers a virtual clubhouse where members can find technical assistance, encouragement, and a real time scoreboard to keep members engaged. Members are also able to communicate with each other in real-time via an online chat room. They view their contest participation not only as an individual, but also as a group event for the whole club. The online scoreboard/leaderboard makes it very easy and fun for members to encourage each other, while simultaneously having fun chasing each other up and down the leaderboard.

The club also has other awards and recognitions, such as their medalist awards for reaching a certain number of QSOs in a contest weekend: www.nemarc.org/medalists.html. The approach is resonating with new contesters as well as established contesters.

You can read more about what the club is doing at www.n3fjp.com/help/clubcontesting.html. The information at that link includes an article from the August 2016 issue of QST that outlines their strategy and approach.

Reverse Beacon Network

Reverse Beacon Network (RBN) is an internet-based network of dedicated wide-band receivers around the world that decode CW signals in real time and generate "spots" that contain frequency, signal strength, and other information. The effect is that of a traditional beacon in reverse -- instead of checking propagation by tuning one's receiver to a transmitting beacon at a particular frequency, one merely transmits (usually by calling CQ on CW) while connected to a RBN to see which of the receivers on the network hears you.

-- thanks to Patrick Barkey, N9RV



Congrats Kevan!

Solar Data/Propagation tool for Windows 10 by F4HUY based on N0NBH Solar Banners

<https://www.swampfoxcontestgroup.com/propagation>

Frank KG4IGC

You can see we already have a place where we can go for propagation. We can just add our own observations for others to view for our Team operating plan.

In the same thread Dave WB5NHL went on to say this;

On my "propagation" monnitor I run Simon"s World Map grayline with nice large local and UTC time

<https://www.dit-dit-dit.com/simon-s-world-map>

I keep a tool similar to your reference on the same monitor

Finally, here's another tool that I keep in the corner of the display for a quick check to a DX using Voacap.

<http://www.dxatlas.com/hamcap/>

And then Dave said this; For the K and A indexes indicators of geomagnetic activity i.e. how disturbed the ionosphere is. They are

related to each other. K being logarithmic increments of power of 10 and A being linear. Here is a summary

Ionospheric conditions	K index	A index
Quiet	0-1	0-7
Unsettled	2	8-15
Active	3	16-29
Minor storm	4	30-49
Major storm	5	50-99
Severe storm	6-9	> 99

K's of 4 and above likely mean poor propagation

The Hamcap tool uses Voacap behind the scenes to do a propagation prediction.

Open the ant tab and select the antennas (your antennas and the DX antennas) by band. You can be conservative if you don't know the dx station configuration.

In the settings tab set your home latitude and longitude. I also select show MUF, show best hour, show sun, plot path. I like color and high resolution also

On the front parameters tab, set the current month, whether you want short path or long path prediction, set the SSN value for today or use the planetary K index (you can experiment with each), finally set your xmt power.

Now, type in a dx call, btw it doesn't have to be real, just real country code.

Here parameters for England Clicking on the map shows global propagation Clicking chart shows data for DX station lighter better mouse over and SNR, MUF red line, yellow squares

best hour prop

type of propagation, and MUF are shown Mouse over time, freq, SNR and MUF shown

Play with it and have fun. Remember it's just a prediction i.e. educated guess hihi

BTW, a much more powerful online tool is available here. Lots and lots of stuff to learn and play with.

<https://www.voacap.com/hf/>



Dave Kjellquist WB5NHL

For others reading here is a succinct reason for smoothed SSN vs daily SSN

"To be more elaborate, the solar energy reaching the ionosphere is dependent on the number and size of the sunspots. The effects take two to three days to substantially change the ionization in the ionosphere. The net effect is that on a given HF link the Maximum Observed Frequency (MOF) for the path at a given hour will change over the days of the month. The variation of "daily solar flux" over the days of the month is taken into account by VOACAP through the use of the MUF-DAY tables."

Voacap smoothed SSN is an input parameter. Checking SIDC link monthly or so is probably reasonable.

Current, Hamcap dat file (available on his site) provides smoothed SSN by month for 10 years!! Not sure how often he updates but current file is 12/1/2021. The source for smoothed sunspot data that replaced NOAA in 2016 is Solar Influences Data Analysis Center (SIDC) of the Royal Observatory of Belgium.

<http://sidc.oma.be/silso/FORECASTS/KFprediML.txt>

Looking at the data for 12/2021 SIDC SSN 45 ± 6 Hamcap SSN 34
However, like most things it isn't quite this simple... In July 2015, the
SIDC revised their method of computing smoothed SSN. To better
match SSN history. It appears that VE3NEA is in the camp that
believes the change has made VOACAP SSN estimates less
accurate. Here is a graph of Voacap SSN published on the web that
explains the difference between SIDC and Hamcap (SIDC_ADJ) SSN.
NGDC is the old NOAA numbers i.e. gold standard hihi. Bottomline,
your mileage will vary. Hamcap allows you to change the value in
params tab so you can quickly do a sensitivity check.

Editors note; This is Greek to me!

10 Meter Long Path

By Kevan Nason N4XL

VK6T was put in my 2021 CQWW CW log using a Long Path
propagation route. I was a bit surprised to notice he was strongest
pointed almost due south at 170 degrees rather than the normal 120
shown on an azimuth map centered on South Carolina. It turns out
rather than being unusual that was the expected direction to find him.
Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA, explains why in a 2012 article available on
his website at https://k9la.us/A_Refreshers_on_10m_Long_Path.pdf .
Whether or not you have directional or higher gain antennas this is
useful information as it explains when long path openings may be
present on 10 meters to many hard to get multipliers in eastern Asia.
Even modest stations may be able to take advantage of this
opportunity if the SFI is high and their timing is right. Those with
beams should consider pointing that way for a listen or to try a few
CQ's.

More Propagation information we can use. I am excited to see where
we can take this for our club website Propagation Page.

This years club contests we should all try to enter.
 There are nine ARL-sponsored contests that are designed as
 Affiliated Club Competition (ACC) for ARRL and RAC affiliated clubs:

1. January VHF Contest
2. RTTY Roundup
3. International DX Contest
4. June VHF Contest
5. 222 MHz and Up Distance Contest
6. September VHF Contest
7. November Sweepstakes
8. 160-Meter Contest
9. 10-Meter Contest

For full club competition rules, please see the link below:
 Club Competition Rules ver 1.03 (23 December 2020)

Team Competition; North American QSO Party

First one

CW: 1800 UTC January 15 to 0600 UTC January 16, 2022 (second
 full weekend in January except 2022)

Rules here; <http://www.ncjweb.com/NAQP-Rules.pdf>

Mark your Calenders! For these please.

Contest	Month	Weekend	Rules Issue	Results Issue	More info
CQ WW 160 Meter / CW	Jan	Last full weekend	Dec.	Aug.	More Info
CQ WW RTTY WPX	Feb	2nd full weekend	Jan.	Jul.	More Info
CQ WW 160 Meter / SSB	Feb	Last full weekend	Dec.	Aug.	More Info
CQ WW WPX / SSB	Mar	Last full weekend	Feb.	Sept.	More Info

CQ WW WPX / CW	May	Last full weekend	Feb.	Nov.	More Info
CQ WW VHF	July	3rd full weekend	Jun.	Jan.	More Info
CQ WW RTTY DX	Sept	4th full weekend	Jul.	Mar.	More Info
CQ WW DX / SSB	Oct	Last full weekend	Sep.	Apr.	More Info
CQ WW DX / CW	Nov	Last full weekend	Sep.	May.	More Info

And Finally these are on our radar; <https://ncjweb.com/north-american-sprint/>

I hope each of you have a great New Year and the best contest season ever!

Signing Off, N2OG Scott 73