

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Terry Allison, K5TDA



Those of you who were at the last club meeting heard about the “gridpedition” to the far south end of the Big Bend National Park that is scheduled for late June. This is to activate a rare “grid” so that grid hunters can work it on 6 meters. Also 6 meters is mentioned in this newsletter in the Field Day article. And I spent part of this last weekend working 6 meters. According to my log, my last page or two of contacts are all on 6 meters.

What is the fuss about 6 meters? Some call it the “magic band”. Why do people have call signs like k0six or k4six? What is the big deal?

6 meters has the characteristics of both a VHF band and an HF band. As a VHF band it allows reliable communications out beyond 200 miles with small beams and 100 Watts of power. With bigger antennas and more power you can work other stations by reflecting signals off the moon. It is not too hard to bounce signals off incoming meteorites and talk to stations that way.

It is the HF characteristic that makes the fun band it is. At the very peak of the 11 year sunspot cycle the band can open like most of the HF bands, to most any part of the world. The rest of the time it is subject to an ionospheric propagation mode called Es or E skip. E skip is a fairly random mode that can allow signals to bounce up to about 1500 miles. The ionized portion of the atmosphere (commonly called an “e cloud”) that supports this propagation can be very small. They can form almost anywhere, usually during the daylight or early evening hours. Some say that Es clouds are associated with big thunderstorms.

You never know what 6 meters is going to do. You can turn on the radio at any given time and not have any idea if the band is open at all, or if it is, where to. That is a lot of the excitement of the band, the unpredictability. Of course with the internet there are now some propagation and contact trackers out there. My favorite is this one:

<http://www.vhfdx.net/spots/map.php?Lan=E&Frec=50&ML=M&Map=NA>

This page shows contacts reported to the DXCluster system for 6 meters in near real time. So if the band is open and going you can see the contacts. However, if no one actually makes calls it may be that no one knows the band is open. There are a lot of beacons on 6 meters that run all the time from many locations, so if you listen for those they may give a clue that the band is open.

A lot of people on 6 meters (or most VHF bands) try to talk to as many “grids” as possible. The world has been divided up into a number of equal sized squares (or grids), based on latitude and longitude. The goal of chasing grids is to talk to as many different of these squares as possible. Only one station has talked to all the possible grids in the United States proper. That was W5FF, who lived near Albuquerque, NM. Fred had the biggest signal I have ever heard on 6 meters. I could work him any time of the day or night, regardless of where my own

antenna was pointed. I activated many of the grids around this area for him back in the day. Others are getting close to talking to all of the U.S. grids, but some of the grids are not very active. A case in point is the one at the very southern end of the Big Bend National Park. It takes a good four wheel drive to get there, and then these days there is the problem of drug runners and banditos. But, folks need that grid to complete their quest to work all of the U.S grids, so someone is going to go down there and activate the grid in June. And the band may not be open to anywhere while they are there. If that happens they will work as many stations as they can via meteorite scatter. But, you never know. And that is the fun of 6 meters.

FROM THE EDITOR

Bill Baker, W5ATO



It is going to get busy in June. I'll be in Oklahoma from the 16th to about the 23rd. June's newsletter will probably be quick and short, but we will have Field Day updates in it. Field Day is the 26th, K5N 6-meter grid expedition will be activating rare grids in the National Park from June 29 to July 2nd, and don't forget July 4th Hamburger Smoke Out in the Park on the 4th.

In some late breaking news, Look for a new antenna tower at field Day. I'll let Mike, NW5M describe it.

“Jeff Davis County has just received a new trailer mounted crank up tower. It is a 55ft tower (no guys required for up to 50mph winds depending upon wind loading of the payload) and has a generator mounted on the trailer to provide power to raise and lower the tower and power equipment. (There is a 42 gallon gas tank on the trailer which gives an estimated run time of 120 hours at a 25% load.)”

Mike further states “This trailer is available to be used for any disaster, drill or special event support in the state of Texas...”



Primarily, this tower is to support communications needs for wild land fires, and other emergencies, and may also be used to enhance communications support for other emergencies or general public safety concerns. And to insure that it is operated, tested, inspected and maintained, it may also be used in support of public events.

As our Field Day operations are a public event and by ARRL definition an activity designed to exercise the skills of operators and the condition of equipment for

emergency communications service, Jeff Davis County Fire Marshall, Ward, is asking that we put this tower in service at Field Day.