

Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter



July-August-September 2024

Amy-KC7JNU, Bryan-K7AMM and Josef-KD7QOW on Mount Ashland W7O/CS-019 during the 2024 W7O Campout

UPCOMING EVENT – Central Oregon Summit-to-Summit Party on October 12 by Chris-W7MTB

Join us for the [Third Annual Central Oregon Summit-to-Summit Party!](#) We'll be setting up camp at Skull Hollow Campground on the eastern edge of the Crooked River National Grassland, with plenty of summits nearby for 2m QSOs. There are also options for lodging and dry camping in the area. We'll coordinate who will operate from which summit via a Google sheet (see the link above). Please RSVP with your callsign, intended summit(s), and if you want to camp.

Have You Contributed a Trip Report? (On [PNWSOTA](#) or on a [SOTA Summit Page](#)?) Is it current? Is it correct?

Thanks to the foresight of Dan-KK7DS we in the Pacific Northwest (Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and British Columbia) have the world's **best** regional resource for SOTA trip reports. But these trip reports rely on fresh information as access and conditions change all the time. If you provided trip reports in the past and see that things have changed, edit your work or pass your update suggestions to yours truly. Please find guidelines for producing reports useful to those that follow [here](#).

Review Spots and Alerts with [SOTA Atlas](#) – with W7[IM] or W7[OW] by Jeff-WJ7V

To look for local folks on the air, or plan on SOTA Complete or Summit-to-Summit activity, it's handy to review spots and alerts. A feature in SOTA Atlas allows searches for matches like "W7O" for all alerts in Oregon. But, if both Washington and Oregon alerts are of interest, by using the search term "W7[OW]," alerts for both associations will be displayed. And if you are near the Montana/Idaho border, you can search for alerts or spots for both by using "W7[IM]."

Summit-to-Summit Party Report from Elsewhere – 8 June 2024 GW SOTA S2S Event and Hog Roast



Just so you know what we are missing here in the PNW – the 8 June GW SOTA S2S Party (in Wales) was also a great success. Perhaps because the gathering afterwards featured a **hog roast** (yes, a roasted hog.) Two ops reached Mountain Goat status and the event and raffle raised £555 to help with the costs of running SOTA. The event was assigned the special callsign GB4HOG – does the PNW need to roast something to keep up with the SOTA folks in Wales? Thanks to Ben-GW4BML for the Reflector report

Willamette Valley Summit-to-Summit Party Report – 13 April 2024 (W7O) – click for video by Tim-N7KOM. It was a great day for S2S in the PNW. We had awesome weather for the event with 34 activators participating across 20 summits. Huge thanks to Chris-W7MTB for running net control from Bald Peak, W7O/NC-051. The after party took place at a Hillsboro pub, but without a roasted hog.



SOTA Oregon Do-Si-Do Report – 8 June 2024 (W7O)

What is a SOTA Do-Si-Do? Two groups of two to four operators meet at a trailhead that leads to two SOTA summits. Group 1 heads up to Summit A and activates while Group 2 heads up to Summit B and activates. Both groups then meet back at the trailhead. Group 1 now heads up to Summit B while Group 2 heads up to Summit A. Everyone earns Activation points, Chasing points, Summit-to-Summit points and SOTA Completes. This particular DSD was on Tumala and Githens Mountains, near Estacada, Oregon that feature two short hikes with a shared trailhead.

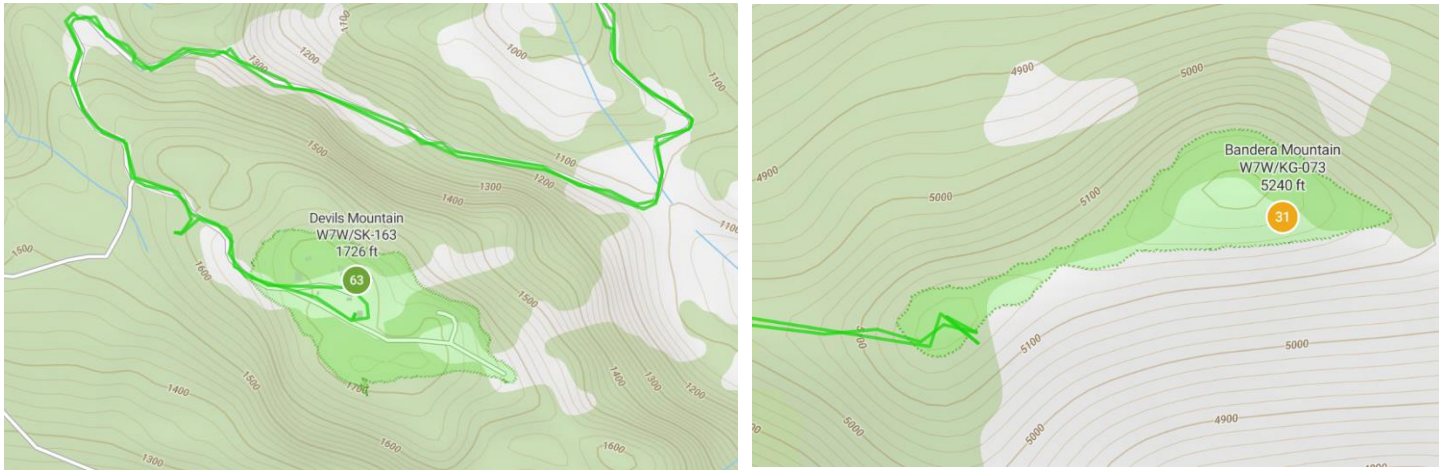
Some consider that the “after party” as the best part of a Do-Si-Do – below are six of the team at Bent Shovel Brewing in Estacada: Bill-WJ7WJ, Corey-KD7LX, Phil-NPMB, Roland-K7FOP, Matt-KF7HIZ, and Kathleen-K7KER (not pictured are Jeff-WX7OR and Mitch-KI7MOG).



“Are we there Yet?” – W7W Activation Zones in [SOTL.as](https://sotlas.com) by Ben-WA7BEN

Ben-WA7BEN has added Activation Zone contours to the Washington Association on SOTA Atlas. The AZ is defined as within 25 meters vertically of the summit peak (about 82 feet). For those of us activating in other Associations, we can use a lower resolution version developed by Ara-N6ARA: <https://activation.zone/>. There is also an AZ feature for the SOTAGoat app on iPhones, although some have reported that it isn't consistently accurate.

Below are two examples for AZ contours as implemented in SOTA Atlas for the popular summits of Devils Mountain and Bandera Mountain. As always, activators are responsible for determining compliance with SOTA Rules.



SOTA Gathering at SeaPac Hamfest by Greg-K7AGL

The PNW SOTA Pizza Gathering was held at Pizza Harbor in Seaside, Oregon on Friday May 31st. We had 15 people attend and in addition to getting some face time with activators usually we only hear on the air, we were able to share some activation stories, discuss equipment, different modes and radios, as well as some tips and tricks regarding car issues when traveling to activations.

Activation stories shared included driving to a "drive-up" which turned out to be a 4WD road filled with brush in an Oldsmobile, Peanut and Stinky the SOTA goats pooping on a radio during an activation, being completely clouded in with no summit view after finally getting to the top of Mt Adams, the "Farmboys Racing" summit, participating in three way summit Do-Si-Dos, seeing decommissioned military missile sites on summits, seeing the decommissioned nuclear reactors at Hanford from summits and more!

As Hams do, conversations wandered from activation stories to supporting equipment (10 ply tires vs 4 ply, 12V air compressors and other emergency car support), radios, operating modes, the pros and cons of DMR, spotting techniques as well as differences living in areas surrounded by 6-8 point summits vs. 1 point summits.

It was enjoyable to see fellow activators and share the camaraderie of SOTA. Looking forward to next year. Keep that Friday evening before SeaPac free for more SOTA fun.

73, Greg-K7AGL

Allen-KH7AL has put together interview videos of those influential in SOTA – check them out!

[“Diet SOTA” Episode #1](#) – Rob-AE7AP (W7M Association Manager)

[“Diet SOTA” Episode #2](#) – Guy-N7UN (responsible for developing many SOTA Associations)

[“Diet SOTA” Episode #3](#) – Gary-W0MNA and Martha-W0ERI (Chasers extraordinaire)

[“Diet SOTA” Episode #4](#) – Matt-K0MOS (WOC Association Manager)

Even More Group Activations – Puget Sound Version – by Ben-WA7BEN

The Amateur Radio Club at the University of Washington (W7YD) hosted a very successful SOTA QSO Party in May on South Tiger Mountain W7W/KG-121. We got ten QSOs on 2m, with many club members doing their first SOTA activation. Thanks to all the chasers!



SUMMITS ON THE AIR

**HUSKY
SOTA**



Enjoy hiking and portable amateur radio operations? Please join our SOTA QSO party and chase us from home or another summit. We hope to work many stations!

for more info please contact us: arcuw@uw.edu or [@uwhamradio](https://twitter.com/uwhamradio)

The Amateur Radio Club at the University of Washington (W7YD) is hosting a SOTA QSO party. All welcome!

**Sun
26
May
2024**

Club members will be operating from SOTA summits in the Tiger Mountain State Forest on 2m and HF bands during mid-morning and early afternoon



Solar Flare Alert Subscription; Waterfall of HF Black-Out Online Resources – by Matt-W4GO

A few months ago, I subscribed to alerts of various space-weather conditions [offered by the NOAA Space Weather Prediction Center 34](#). One of the alert triggers I enabled is for “X-ray Events,” which are the most immediate effect of a solar flare and cause short-term HF black-outs on the sun-lit side of Earth.

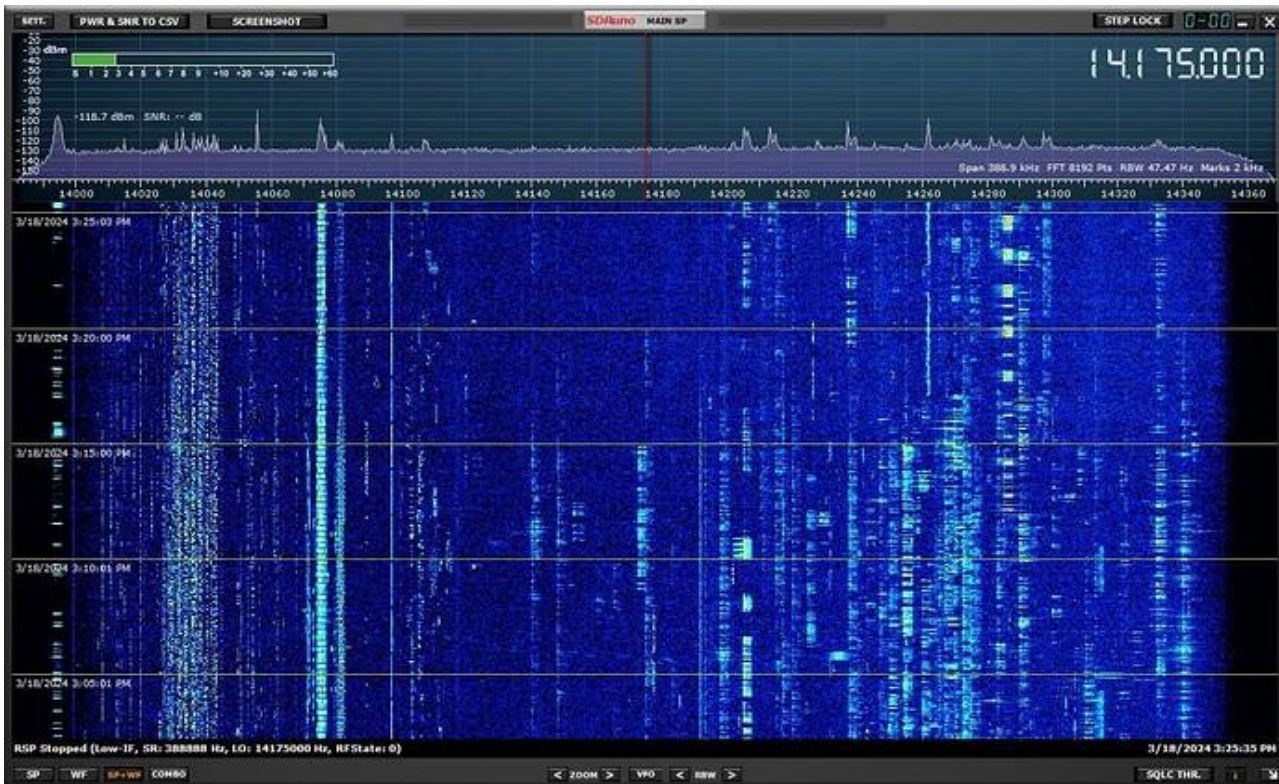
I receive the alerts by email and also by text message (SMS). The latter is accomplished by subscribing with an email address comprised of my phone carrier’s email-to-text gateway (in my case as a T-Mobile subscriber: <ten_digit_mobile_number>@tmomail.net).

The alerts seem to be timely. I receive them some minutes before the X-ray event/flare/black-out is indicated on the websites where I view current space weather.

Still, I was wondering, were I to be operating / listening on the air at the time of a flare, what the time delta would be between observing the onset of HF black-out conditions (i.e., hearing signals diminish) and receiving the alert. Would it be prompt enough to be useful information during a 30-minute summit activation in which signals disappear for an unknown reason? If signals degraded due to a flare, I might wait it out on summit; on the other hand, if due to the onset of a severe geomag storm, I likely wouldn’t.

To get an idea of the black-out-to-alert latency, I’ve been running my SDR during daytime so as to display the 20m band on a waterfall with a slow descent rate, spanning about 25 minutes along the vertical axis.

On receiving the alert for the moderate, M6.7 flare that occurred on 2024 Mar 18 at 1916 UTC, I took a screenshot and captured my first clear, graphical indication of an HF black-out (perhaps “brown-out” would be more fitting for this one):



TL;DR: Waterfall screenshot of HF black-out caused by solar flare. SMS/email alert received six minutes after onset of black-out, potentially useful for SOTA activations.

I would judge the fading to become apparent on the waterfall image at about 3:17 PM local time, or 1917 UTC. Not every signal outright disappears. But there's a clear drop in signals over on the SSB side of the band, the morass of FT8 signals becomes weaker (more blue and less yellow/red), and an apparent CW contest thins out quite a bit.

The alert for this flare was received at 3:23 PM local time or 1923 UTC, both in my email inbox and on my phone's SMS app. That's a latency of six minutes, so not exactly real-time, but still quick enough to be useful information when operating, on summit or otherwise. The text of the alert says:

Issue Time: 2024 Mar 18 1918 UTC
 ALERT: X-Ray Flux exceeded M5
 Threshold Reached: 2024 Mar 18 1916 UTC
 NOAA Scale: R2 - Moderate

So the time at which the flux reached NOAA's threshold to qualify as an "event" seems to correspond pretty well, in this case, with when the fade-out first becomes apparent on the waterfall.

I'm going to continue running the slow waterfall as much as practical during daytime. I'd like to see if the alert latency varies. It would also be interesting to capture the black-out from a solid X-class flare.

73, Matt-W4GO

Get Your Geek On! Click for video of Hans Summers-G0UPL giving an [extended interview](#) regarding the QMX & QMX+ portable transceivers.



Activations with No Points? Why Ever?

Why would you activate a SOTA Summit twice in the same calendar year? Many do it just for fun! Some have high noise levels at home so another location is often quieter. For some, it may be a favorite hike. Or, perhaps it's just close to home and you are on the air for radio fun in just minutes.

Some might do it just to check out a new antenna, or experience special propagation. My best reason is to run into other folks doing SOTA, and hang out with them.

Take the example of Bald Peak – it is the most activated summit in W7O at 324 times – it even makes the top 50 most activated of all SOTA summits. So far this year, W7BDJ has activated it nine times with an average of around 70 contacts per activation. K7ATN has activated Bald Peak six times this year and 45 times in 13 years. Chasers get points each UTC Day for each summit – so they are happy to show up again and again.

George Fox University Students get on the SOTA Air Waves – by Kevin-AK7U

With support from their instructor, Kevin-AK7U, four George Fox students (EE seniors) have constructed two radios (hardware and GnuRadio software) which they'll operate from Bald Peak (W7O/NC-051) for their final project.

They packed their radios up to Bald Peak to make SOTA contacts with y'all on 10m SSB and RTTY (the two modes implemented). I'll have my X6100 and K6ARK 40m EFHW set up to let them play SOTA a little more. We also brought 2m FM HT for additional contacts as needed.

Also, Kevin offered five percent extra credit for making a CW SOTA CQ call that got a response. A couple of them practiced sending their callsigns for this. One new ham was so excited to get a 55 report he was at a loss for words. 73, Kevin-AK7U

Work Four? Even More! Please!

Most all know that it takes four QSOs with different stations to accumulate SOTA activation points. Not so many know that just one QSO counts for an activation of a summit, although no points accrue. This means that logging *every* activation, whether “successful” or not is important – it makes for complete records of SOTA activity. Also important is helping chasers make their points – and the best way for activators to do that is to work every chaser you can. That often means working more than four stations. Unless there's a safety or weather-related reason, please call and work stations until “the well is dry,” that is, no responses to your “CQ SOTA” for a minute or two.

W7O 2024 Campout by Amy-AG7GP



It was another amazing year for the W7O Campout. Despite the heat and last-minute changes, we had a great crowd of around 45 ops doing 100s of activations and making thousands of QSOs. The Howard Prairie Campground in Southern Oregon was a fantastic location for shade and group gathering in the evenings. Tim-N7KOM achieved Mountain Goat on Mount McLaughlin, Andy N4LAG and Debbie KQ4IAM drove the farthest from North Carolina. No one got hurt, lost, broke down, or had heat-related issues. A success! I intended on taking it easy, maybe sitting on a summit each day and chasing S2S. Instead, I had the pleasure of doing eight summits with six different ops. What seemed to be most treasured at the campout was the reunion of friends for their annual eyeball QSOs and all the new friends made! See y'all next year! de Amy-AG7GP

Mount Hood Once Had a Fire Lookout?

Yep! [Click for video story:](#)



SOTA ARTS PAGE

The Giant Paddle – offered by Ara-N6ARA <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KV3eYtOfI0>

SOTA Bird, Created by Franzi-WE7CAT <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvBL7j8VxbU>



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