

CHAMPLAIN REGIONAL REPEATER ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

This Newsletter is addressed to not only our members in good standing, but also to all inactive members for whom I have an address.

Due to the extraordinary advancements made in communications technology in recent years; cell phones, e-mail, iPods, Blackberries, etc.; many Ham Radio Operators have lost interest in the hobby. As a result the membership of many Amateur Radio Clubs has greatly diminished. This certainly holds true for the membership of the Champlain Regional Repeater Association.

Have you listened to the nightly Mini Net on our VE3STP repeater recently? Thanks to the dedication of a few Net Controllers and some reliable members who check in regularly, we still have a Net. Compared to the dozens of regular check ins we had in past years, a good night now brings ten to twenty and often less. During the day a "VE3JSQ mobile listening" seldom gets a response. I don't know what would happen if we asked "can anyone do a quick one way for me in Ottawa". Remember the Annual Corn Boil? We had four members attend this past August.

A loss of interest in Amateur Radio results in a lack of on air activity. It is possible for this to eventually result in the loss of some of our frequency allocations since there are many commercial interests seeking spectrum space for other uses. Let's use it before we lose it.

Due to our remaining solid core members who pay the annual membership fee and some members who have made very generous donations, we have been able to keep the repeater on the air. Your Executive truly wants to bring the Champlain Regional Repeater Association back to the glory days. Membership fees are now twenty five dollars a year and forty dollars for a family. They are due in January of each year. If you have not paid for a few years there is no penalty, simply pay this year and your membership is renewed. Please make cheques payable to the CRRA and forward to our Treasurer, Brian Hick, VE3BRT.

Address:

1118 Ebbs Bay Road
RR 1, Carleton Place,
Ontario, K7C 3P1

Most of you will receive this letter via Canada Post because we do not have an e-mail address for you. To help avoid postal cost in the future, will you please send your e-mail address to <ve3jsq@gmail.com> your club secretary.

A message from our President, VE3AMN, Graham Patterson :

At 0001 AM EST Monday January 25th, VE3STP will implement a Continuous Tone Coded Squelch System ("CTCSS") for access to the repeater. The CTCSS frequency will be 114.8 Hertz.

This decision and alternative solutions to the interference problems which plague us have been debated for some time and the Executive voted unanimously on January 9th to activate the feature. The control system allows the Technical Director (Sandy, VE3AAC) to disable the CTCSS by remote control, so that the original "noise squelch" circuit takes over - but this is intended to be a very rare event.

To access VE3STP, your rig will have to emit the sub-audible tone (114.8 Hz) when you "push to talk" on 146.460 MHz because the presence of this tone is what will "open" the repeater and cause your signal to be re-transmitted on 147.06 MHz. Previously the presence of your carrier and thus the disappearance of the noise on the idle input channel is what keyed the repeater.

You DO NOT have to arrange your rig's receiver to open YOUR squelch upon receipt 114.8 Hz tone. Your use of the tone sent by VE3STP is completely optional. You might consider using it in the future IF you have a local interference problem on 147.060 MHz.

In the early days of two meter FM, our rigs were not equipped for CTCSS operation. Some of our membership's radios may not have the ability to emit the required sub-audible tone. Mostly however our rigs HAVE the capability but we just haven't had to use it - so we're not as familiar with CTCSS as our fellows who operate in more hostile environments than ours. To be sure, there are a great many very reliable and solid rigs out there, which do NOT have the ability to apply sub-audible CTCSS tone built in. Such radios are reasonably simple to modify - most practicably by the addition of a small circuit board built for the purpose.

The Champlain Regional Repeater Association's need to employ CTCSS on VE3STP's input frequency is driven by two primary factors: first is the location of our repeater and the sensitivity of our receiver, which are superlative from the VHF standpoint - but the downside of course is that we can "hear" from far away to the south; second, our input frequency of 146.460 MHz brings some baggage from the old days with it. In the "official" ARRL band plan the sliver between 146.40-146 MHz can be (and is) used for simplex, repeater input and REPEATER OUTPUT frequencies. Where "46" is used as a repeater output - as it is in Wilkes-Barre Penn. at N3FCK a input frequency 1 MHz higher is used. I have found at least five 147.46/146.46 repeaters in the USA, but there may be more. However the most important factor to us in Renfrew county is that K3FCK has a location that is every bit as good as ours - but nearly 300 miles away! And that the most usual use for 146.46 MHz to the south and in parts of Canada is for simplex operation.

In such a situation as we find ourselves with in the here and now, we and our American neighbours are ALL using 146.460 MHz in a legal and sanctioned way and it is incumbent upon ALL of us to solve our problems through co-ordination and the sensible application of technology - which is what we are doing.

A message from our Net Manager, VE3KEG, Steve :

We are having some difficulty maintaining smooth operation of the mini-net at 6:45pm every day, especially on the weekends, due to lack of net controllers. We need more volunteers as net controllers. You can view a sample of the net log sheet at <http://ve3stp.org/Preamble.html> Please let me know if you're willing to volunteer. It's really quite fun, and gives you a chance to get known in the local ham community. Regular controllers have been filling in when they happen by, but we would like "regulars" assigned to each night of the week. For procedure, just listen in on any mini-net occurrence. The whole community will be grateful for your contribution.

My e-mail address is my call sign @rac.ca.

Thanks,

Steve Paynter
VE3KEG