November 2026

THE HAMSTER



Official Monthly Newsletter Publication Of The Rochester (MN) Amateur Radio Club



THE HAMSTER

2026 Rochester Amateur Radio Club Officers

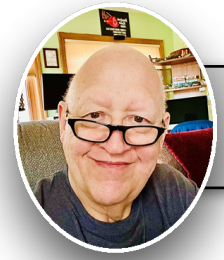
President: Jared Pfaffenbach - KEØPGS
Vice President: Nicole Jacobitz - KCØPRG
Treasurer: George Hopkins - NØUM
Secretary: Collin Howe - AAØCN
Member At Large: Steve Wiebke - WØSTV
Trustee: Steve Wiebke - WØSTV

The Hamster is the official monthly newsletter publication of the Rochester (MN) Amateur Radio Club (RARC). The Hamster is distributed monthly via the official RARC groups.io email reflector free to members and non-members and is also available online in the club website: www.rarchams.org.
Rochester (MN) Amateur Radio Club was founded in 1932 and has been an ARRL (Amateur Radio Relay League) Affiliated Club for 50+ years.
All members are invited to contact the Hamster with comments and/or questions. Additionally, members are encouraged to suggest or submit story ideas, photos or content to the Hamster via the Editor's email link below.
The Hamster has an *outstanding* staff of regular contributors and you are invited to join the team!

G. Mark Kelm (KØGMK) - Editor

This Month In The Hamster

- **Table Of Contents - page 2**
- **RARC Editor's Thoughts (KØGMK) - page 3**
- **RARC Training Program (KEØEXE) - page 4**
- **RARC POTA Outing Photos (KFØRHE) - pages 5-8**
- **Fall POTA Information - page 9**
- **RARC Education (KØVH) - pages 10-11**
- **Contest Corner (K4IU) - pages 12-14**
- **Hamster Hints (KEØEXE) - pages 15-17**
- **ARES & Community Service (WØSTV) - Page 18**
- **RARC Meeting Minutes (AAØCN) - pages 19-20**
- **RARC Technical Committee (KFØS) - page 21**
- **RARC Wednesday AM Breakfast - page 22**
- **ARRL Membership Information - page 23**
- ***Updated* Local Ham Radio Nets - page 24**
- **RARC Contact Information - page 25**



Editor's Thoughts

G. Mark Kelm (KØGMK)

First, I want to thank all of the **Hamster contributors** for their **stellar work** for the October issue while I was indisposed. Without all of you this publication would not have the quality content that it has and the value to members of RARC.

Second, I would like to point out the outstanding contributions that **Steve Wiebke (WØSTV)** continually makes to the Rochester Amateur Radio Club. Every successful club activity has the indelible stamp of Steve's contributions. Without Steve RARC would not be the same. Please tell Steve "thank you" the next time you see him.

Lastly, November is the month of the year that **RARC is seeking members** for the **RARC Board of Directors**. If you are new to RARC or a new ham this would be an excellent opportunity to learn the workings of the club and to familiarize you with the club activities and membership. However, if you are an OG and perhaps have served before, consider stepping up and adding your knowledge and expertise to RARC. We vote in December. Leave a post on https://groups.io/g/rarchams/ or email one of the offices listed on page 2 of this issue with your interest.

See you in December!

73 Mark de (KØGMK)

RARC Training Program

Nicole (KCØPRG) - Vice President

"Using Discarded AA & C Alkaline Cells To Create Useful Batteries"

Presented By: Bob (KEØEXE)



Training Presentation begins at 6:30 PM in the Rochester EOC at 2105 Wheelock Drive NE in the lower level of Rochester Fire Station # 2, the RARC monthly club meeting follows

RARC POTA Outing 10/3/2026

Eric (KF0RHE)







RARC POTA Outing 10/3/2026

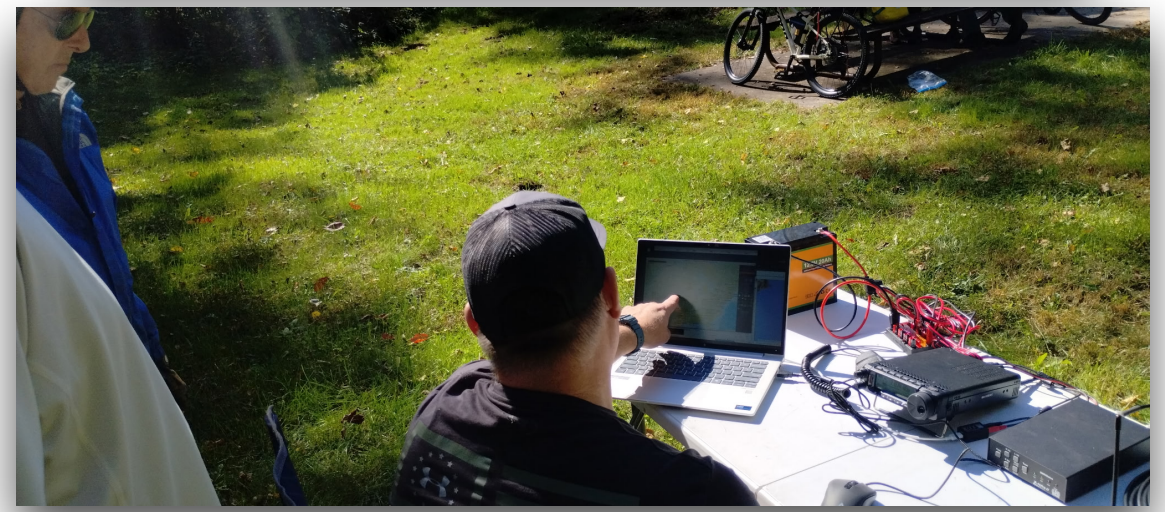
Eric (KF0RHE)



RARC POTA Outing 10/3/2026

Eric (KF0RHE)





RARC POTA Outing 10/3/2026

Eric (KF0RHE)



Parks On The Air ® (POTA)

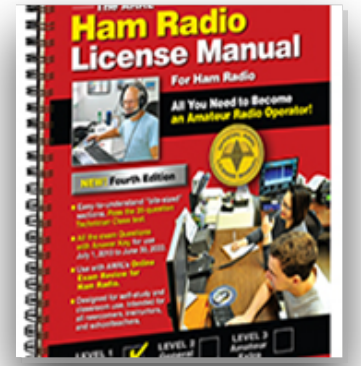
Perhaps you've heard talk on the repeaters or on one of the Nets about Parks On The Air (POTA) You might be interested and think that it could be fun to operate your rig and antenna remotely in a beautiful outdoor setting.

In a nutshell it's all about operating in a state or national park, state trail, national monument, historical location or national battlefield and making at least 10 QSOs to "activate" the entity. It's as simple as that, but there are a few rules.

Take a look at the Parks On The Air website, view the FAQ page, the Help/Getting Started section and perhaps view some of the getting started videos by seasoned POTA operators. If you are interested in becoming an Activator fill out the sign-up to become a



K4IU



RARC Education

Dave - KØVH

Getting your ham radio license in Rochester is a straightforward 3-step process:

Step 1: Study for the Exam Prepare for the 35-question Technician exam using online platforms like HamStudy.org or the ARRL Licensing, Education & Training portal. Other study options are listed below.
Step 2: Get an FRN Before taking your exam, you must register on the FCC CORES website to obtain an FCC Registration Number (FRN). https://apps.fcc.gov/cores/html/Register_New_FRN.htm
Step 3: Take the Test Locally Locally, exams are regularly hosted by the Rochester Amateur Radio Club. 2026 local testing is on November 12 at 7pm at the Red Cross. w0stv@arrl.net for more information.

Here are some other options for preparations and studying gathered from area hams that recently got licensed on what they studied for the test:

NOTE: A Technician Zoom class starts in February! https://k0ltc.org/tech_license_class/

- Technician and General online via WM7X, it's a nationwide online testing service over Zoom, requiring 2 devices. For Technician and General used the ARRL practice test and used KB6NU's No Nonsense study guides for Technician and General.
- Used Ham Radio Test Prep phone app (very useful "on the go"). Have ARRL Tech and General license manuals for more depth when needed. [there are a LOT of phone apps out there! Ham radio prep, Ham radio Exam prep 2026, Ham Radio Exam ....
- ARRL books plus Hamstudy.org (Phone app, $4). Two hams used HamStudy.
- Used Ham Radio Test Prep phone app (very useful "on the go"). Have ARRL Tech and General license manuals for more depth when needed. [there are a LOT of phone apps out there! Ham radio prep, Ham radio Exam prep 2026, Ham Radio Exam ....
- ARRL books plus Hamstudy.org (Phone app, $4). Two hams used HamStudy.



• Used Ham Radio Test Prep phone app (very useful "on the go"). Have ARRL Tech and General license manuals for more depth when needed. [there are a LOT of phone apps out there! Ham radio prep, Ham radio Exam prep 2026, Ham Radio Exam ....

• ARRL books plus Hamstudy.org (Phone app, $4). Two hams used HamStudy.

• https://hamradioprep.com/ has videos, practice tests and can cover all levels of licensing.

•KN6NU's guide (free on Kindle or as a PDF) plus Maple Grove Zoom class. For Extra used Zoom class from the Ham Club at the National Electronics Museum in Baltimore. This is an 11 week zoom session attended by hundreds across the US. https://www.k3nem.org/?page_id=12 Note there are Tech and General classes in the fall, and Extra in the winter.

Then *GET ON THE AIR!*

73 Dave Naatz (KØVH) Rochester, Minnesota



Contest Corner

Fred - K4IU

Many of us enjoyed the CQWW SSB contest which just concluded last weekend. There was a lot of DX to be worked including some rare ones. November kicks off with a couple of the most iconic contests on the calendar, the ARRL sponsored Sweepstakes. There is one weekend for CW and one for Phone. The exchange is a little longer than most contests and similar to what might be used in a traffic net so take time to study it. I usually have a little sheet in front of me to get things in the right order. This month ends with the 48 hour CQWW CW contest. In between there are some EME and RTTY events. Here are some of the November standouts you might want to get on your operating calendar.

November 1 — North American Sprint SSB A fast, high-speed activity using quick exchanges and rapid band changes.

November 7–9 — ARRL Sweepstakes CW This the classic CW marathon featuring the long exchange of a serial number, a precedence, your call sign, a check (the last two digits of your first-licensed year), and your ARRL/RAC Section. CW aficionados love it! For me half the fun is the hunt for all 83 ARRL/RAC sections.

November 21–23 — ARRL Sweepstakes SSB The phone edition of Sweepstakes, bringing huge pileups and plenty more of section-chasing excitement. It's the same exchange as used in the CW contest .

November 28–29 — CQ World Wide DX CW One of the largest DX contests of the year, filling the bands with worldwide CW activity and rare multipliers.

Not enough fun for you? Check out all the activity on the WA7BNM calendar website and if you're interested in an encyclopedic version of Contest/DX topics visit NG3K.com. Bill has a lot of informative links that you can click away all day on.



-...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...- -...-

A comparison: Yagis vs OCHW vs EFHW for contest activity

It's no secret that good antennas will improve contest scores. Every contest operator I know would like to have "big or bigger iron" in our backyards! But regulatory (**HOAs)** and pocketbook (**$$**) limitations are obstacles to many hams wanting to achieve this goal. It's estimated that only around 10% of hams get Yagi antennas in the air.

So how good are the alternatives? Can an average new or old ham enjoy contest weekends with wire antennas? How do they compare with Yagis?



The short answer is yes! An average ham absolutely can enjoy contest weekends with end fed halfwave, **EFHW** or center fed halfwave, **CFHW,** wire antennas. They're simple, effective, and surprisingly competitive when used with savvy operating skills. But compared with **Yagis**, they have less gain and no directionality, so you won't run with the big guns. But even as a little pistol you will make plenty of contacts and have fun. Here is a table of some things to consider.

Feature	EFHW / CFHW Wire Antennas	Yagi Beam
Gain	~0 dBd	7–8 dBd
Directionality	None	Strong, rotatable
Bands	Multi-band (harmonics)	Usually 1–3 bands
Cost	Low ($40–$150)	High ($500–$3000+)
Install	Easy, one support	Complex tower/rotator
Contesting	Great for casual ops	Best for competitive ops

Most contest QSOs are made by stations running **simple wire antennas**. You won't win CQWW with an EFHW but you'll absolutely enjoy the weekend and log plenty of contacts. If you later upgrade to a Yagi, you'll notice a huge improvement. But remember, you don't need one to enjoy contesting.

73
Fred K4IU@me.com



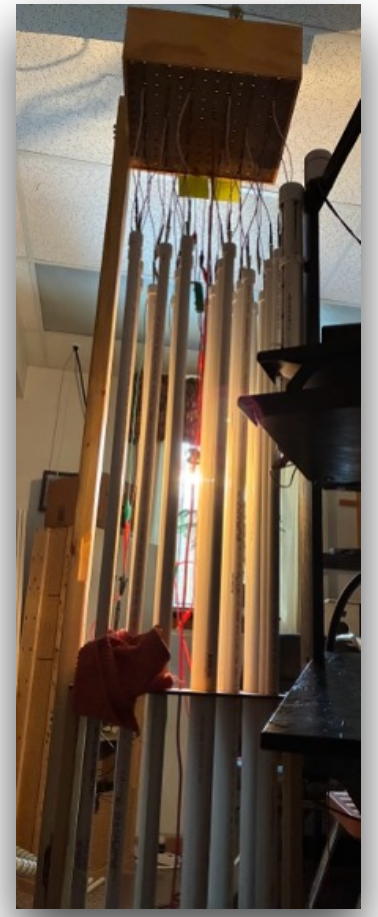
Hamster Hints

Bob - KEØEXE

Last month's eulogy to "Reactor" creates a natural vacuum for introducing its orphaned offspring: "SLAB." The "Staggered, Linear Array of Batteries" will be presented at the November RARC club meeting. Come see more, including SLAB's grandfather (show & tell!), simply known as "The Battery Box." These are Weak-cell Energy Retrieval (W-CER)—which may be pronounced "worser"—inventions...

All three incantations focused on modular implementations. The original, Battery Box, was the most modular of all—"too" modular, in fact! It's short tubes, each containing only five AA-cells, became a weakness as well as a strength—I will this explain at the Club meeting!

Reactor eliminated that weakness, but introduced its own: the tubes were run through holes drilled in two hardboard panels, to support and position them, which made difficult the process of changing-out bad cells. The advantage-gained (long tubes) was kept, in SLAB, while eliminating the liability (difficult removal/ replacement).



"The Reactor," in operation.



Hamster Hints

Bob - KEØEXE

SLAB is my first permanently-anchored, reused-cell prototype, too, which has it's own advantages and disadvantages. Interestingly, a couple little cousins were also spun-off recently: one, a small, two-tube, double-A pack, useful for portable work ("Clippy"), and the other, a dense box of C-cells—not exactly portable, but definitely powerful ("Hefty"). Clippy makes use of extra lengths of tube I had on-hand, from the original Battery Box. (If you are interested in building your own Clippy, I can sell you a pair of the convenient clips and PVC tubes, for just $2.00, my cost . The other parts are easy to buy, make, or find in your own junk box. The total cost of one Clippy is less than $10, for parts, including imitation Powerpole(TM) connectors.)

I will have many photos and things to see and touch at the meeting, detailing my multi-year adventure in extracting the remaining energy, we often throw away, from our discarded alkaline-type cells. ...Come to the meeting and learn more!



"Clippy," a 15V, portable, AA-cell battery pack.



Hamster Hints

Bob - KEØEXE

Last month's eulogy to "Reactor" creates a natural vacuum for introducing its orphaned offspring: "SLAB." The "Staggered, Linear Array of Batteries" will be presented at the November RARC club meeting. Come see more, including SLAB's grandfather (show & tell!), simply known as "The Battery Box." These are Weak-cell Energy Retrieval (W-CER)—which may be pronounced "worser"—inventions...

All three incantations focused on modular implementations. The original, Battery Box, was the most modular of all—"too" modular, in fact! It's short tubes, each containing only five AA-cells, became a weakness as well as a strength—I will this explain at the Club meeting!

Reactor eliminated that weakness, but introduced its own: the tubes were run through holes drilled in two hardboard panels, to support and position them, which made difficult the process of changing-out bad cells. The advantage-gained (long tubes) was kept, in SLAB, while eliminating the liability (difficult removal/replacement).

ARES

Amateur Radio Emergency Service

Olmsted ARES Mission Statement:

To be so effective that you are able to help others.

The October ARES meeting focused on effectiveness of transmitting precise information in the least amount of time. We also discussed the legalities of working for our served agencies, from the National Weather Service to the public service for local events. This was a review for some and new for others. We decided that our ARES members should have NIMS Course 100 accreditation to better understand what ICS is all about. I will see if we can get an instructor to teach this program. If not, we will do our own in house training and testing as a group.

We were asked to help with a new public service activity. The Haunted Halfie marathon on October 31st. To the people that help cover communications when requested. Our past public service communications are being noticed and are expanding our public service efforts. Well done.

Steve Wiebke (W0STV) - Olmsted/Rochester ARES EC

The more preparation, the less confusion

RARC October 2026 Meeting Minutes

Collin (AAØCN

Program: Sable Island DXpedition with Glenn Johnson W0GJ / CY0S

Raffle: $19 payback, Waldemar wins!

Business meeting:

KC0QJB hosting JamboreeOnTheAir 10AM-2PM this Saturday Oct 17th at Gamehaven Scout Reservation
VE Test Session in Austin, 7pm on Oct 21st at Austin Chamber of Commerce
Rochester VE Test Nov 12 305 Alliance Place 7pm, bring $15 and Gov ID (or 2 forms of ID) and FRN from FCC

Vice President Report:
Next Month: KE0EXE Bob "Battery Reactor"
December: TBD
January: Dinner!

Secretary's report: Received
Treasurer's report: Received

Tech Committee Report: KF0S
Contact sheets for repeaters are generated, need to deliver/post.
Mayo access underway, org changes causing issues.
146.820 repeater time change fixed
Hardline: some interest
Military Mast: Pending Pickup, paid for (AA0CN), triggers purchase of telescoping mast for club.
Tri-band antennas still for sale.
Echolink state needs a static/VPN to get through Metronet.

RARC October 2026 Meeting Minutes

Collin (AAØCN

Field Day items to look into: N1MM vs Wavelog, FT-710 + Digi modes?

John Marshall Radio Club: AA3ME
Tuesdays after school, enthusiastic seniors! Scholarship money!
Roof antenna approvals going on.

ARES/PublicService: W0STV
ARES meeting this Saturday, 9AM Sept 17th
ARRL Conference, new leadership.
Retailers not able to sell non-FCC approved radios: Frequencies readings on our radios, checking each for qualification.
Info/Scheduling for 2027, looking for more activities!

125Live: 6PM 10/14 meet at front door for 15-20min to haul antenna base/weights down the steps, Steve will have trailer. Repurpose for John Marshall.

Old Business: POTA outing! ~8 participants
NorthStar convention ARRL – discuss Saturday at ARES mtg
20/15/10 Mosely Classic 33 antennas (will deliver!) for sale, 2x
Field Day signs – Work-in-progress

New Business:
Slate of Officers mostly solid, looking for Vice President!
Dues coming… due! Pay them!
January Holiday Party – Consider venues!
Winter Field Day coming up in January 23-24th. Plan 23rd 8AM-5PM
Consider Mondays at either Legion hall, happy hour? 5PM West Side VFW, check reflector!
Meeting closed 8:35pm, 73!

RARC Technical Committee

Eric (KFØS)

Tech Committee - 10/12/26

Attendees: Eric (KF0S), Jared (KF0PGS), Steve (W0STV), Nicole (KCOPRG), Jason (KT5OK), Taylor (N0TAB)

Post meeting and RARC meeting comments in italics

- **Contact sheets generated for sites. Need to deliver and inventory sites.**
  - Pat and Darrell are contacts for Mayo repeaters.
  - Eric and John Scott are contacts for 82 and digipeater.
- Would like Mayo access for more than Darrell. Taylor stated he is back to square one with org changes. Jason to **investigate from his side.**
- **146.82 repeater time discrepancy will be updated with DST change.**
- **Sales:**
  - Hardline: Jeff Hovel (N0UNC) mentioned he is interested in purchasing the heliax, paying scrap price for it. Guesstimate was $0.50/ft. Jared gave John D. 's email. Note sure of final status.
  - Military mast: Collin will purchase. Not picked up yet.
    - Club already approved purchase of a heavy-duty telescoping mast upon sale of military mast. Taylor will follow up with George.
  - No hits yet on the tri-band beams.
- **Echolink status (W0STV). MetroNet network changes have sidelined access. Needs a static URL. Steve is looking to setup a VPN to restore access.**
- **Field day items to investigate later:**
  - N1MM vs WaveLog for logging. We want to keep logging simple but also make the log submission easier.
  - FT-710 setup for digital modes (from past meeting notes).

Wednesday Morning RARC Ham Radio Gathering

You Are Invited!

Stop By For Breakfast or Coffee
&
Ham Radio Talk!





- **Wednesdays at 9:00 AM (1400 UTC)**

Rooster's (North Location) - 2280 Superior Drive NW

- **Are you a member of the ARRL?**
- **Are you new to Ham Radio?**
- **Have you been licensed for a while but not active?**
- **Are you active but have never explored the ARRL?**

***RARC** has been an **ARRL** affiliated club for the past 50+ years. **RARC** wants all members to know about the benefits of being a member of the ARRL and how the **ARRL** promotes amateur radio and represents and supports Hams throughout the year.*

Here is a link for you to view what the ARRL offers Hams. Take a look:

ARRL Benefits

Weekly Nets

Sunday:

- **Austin 73 Sunday Evening Net** - 7PM on 146.730 MHz PL 100
- **Owatonna/Steele County ARC Club Net** - 7:30PM on 145.490 MHz PL 100
- **MN D-Star Net** - 7:30PM Reflector XLX632A
- **Fillmore County Net** - 7:45PM 147.015 MHz PL 110.9/ 444.250 MHz PL 136.5
- **Goodhue County ARES Net/Hiawatha Valley ARC** - 8PM 147.300 MHz PL 136.5
- **Southern MN Fusion Net** - 8:30PM Wires X Rm 40861
- **Dodge County ARES Net** - 8:30PM 146.820 MHz PL 100
- **Faribault RBWMS Net** - 8:30PM 146.390 MHz PL 100
- **Winona Emergency Preparedness Net** - 8:30PM 146.835 MHz PL 131.8
- **Olmsted County ARES Net** - 9PM 146.820 MHz (even # Days) 147.255 MHz (odd # Days) PL 100
- **Northern Lights 2 Meter SSB Net** - 9PM 144.200 MHz

Monday:

- **Elmer's Net** - 8PM 147.255 MHz PL 100
- **Waseca Digital Practice Net** - 7PM 146.715 MHz PL 141.3

Tuesday:

- **SE MN 10 Meter Net** - 7PM 28.325 MHz USB

Wednesday:

- **SE MN Digital ARES Net** - 7PM 146.820 MHz PL 100 MT63 2000L
- **Wednesday Night Experiment** - 9PM 146.790 MHz PL 100

Thursday:

- **WØNE Weekly WinLink Check-in Net** - All Day
- **Rochester Hobby Net (Any Hobby Except Ham Radio)** - 7PM 147.255 MHz PL 100
- **Southern MN ARES 80 Meter Net** - 8PM 3.583.5 MHz Olivia 8-500

Saturday:

- **20 Meter IBM Net** - 11AM 14.347 MHz USB

Contact RARC

RARC meets the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM (except the August meeting is the Annual RARC Picnic and January is the annual holiday party) in the lower level of Rochester Fire Station #2 in the EOC at 2185 Wheelock Drive NE, Rochester, MN

Website: http://www.rarchams.org/

Mail: RARC , P.O. Box 1, Rochester, MN 55903

Groups.io: Register to post and receive RARC official email, notices and the Hamster

Weekly Net: **Sundays at 9:00 PM: 147.255 repeater** (PL Tone 100) **Odd** numbered Sundays
146.820 repeater (PL Tone 100) **Even** Numbered Sundays

If you have any questions or comments about the Hamster or are interested in perhaps being a contributor please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for reading the Rochester Amateur Radio Club's Official Publication.

G. Mark Kelm - KØGMK - Editor