

CCARC News

Capital City Amateur Radio Club

May 2026

Including
news from
HARCMT



Headwaters Club News

By Stacy Webb KK7CJV

HARCMT Repeater Inaugural Net

Join us May 6th at 7pm for the Headwaters Hump Day Net. This will be the Inaugural Christening Net, and we would like to extend the invitation to all to participate. The repeater is located just off Jackrabbit Lane in Gallatin County (until we can secure tower space). The frequency is 145.39 – offset PL Tone 100. The Club has also implemented an Allstar and EchoLink node-W7HWC-R. So, whether you are within reach of the repeater or far away, there is an option for everyone to join in the fun. Help us bring our new repeater to life by checking into our Inaugural net.

Missouri Headwaters State Park Volunteer Clean-up Day

Headwaters Amateur Radio Club of Montana was out helping with the Missouri Headwaters State Park Volunteer Clean-up Day. The weather cooperated wonderfully as we walked and picked up garbage in one of our favorite local state parks. Many hands helped to make the event a success!

Coming Events 2026

CCARC monthly meeting – May 4, 7pm at the Salvation Army, 1330 Hudson St. or on Google Meet, <https://meet.google.com/zfs-ctwp-bax>

HMS Tech Expo – May 7 at Helena Middle School. We provide ham radio demo.

Don't Fence Me In Race - May 9. Contact Al Le Vie KH7AL

Governor's Cup Race -June 13. Contact John Geach KS7R. See article below.

Field Day – June 27-28. Campground on MacDonald Pass. Contacts Al Le Vie KH7AL and Zhaun Paddock AI7BM.

Glacier-Waterton Hamfest – July 17-19. Contact Keat W7KJA for reservations. stay@gmrvpark.me

Coffee Net – Every Saturday at 9 am on 147.22, Belmont Repeater. Eyeball @ Red Atlas at 9:30.

Trivia Net - every Sunday, 7:30 pm on 147.22. John Monson AJ7MT

Mickey KK7NNE pointed out the petroglyphs in the park, so we took a short detour from our task at hand to view the new-found gem in the park! It was a wonderful time getting to know more about our member Todd KC2UTT as we all helped clean up. This park has many amazing features. Thank you to all that helped to keep one of our favorite parks clean and beautiful. And the day would not be complete without a POTA activation, so Eric KE7NLU and I ended the day with a few in the log.

Wheat MT Hams N Coffee

Great turnout for the Wheat MT Club Roundup for Hams N Coffee! We had over 60 hams with their XYLs and family attend. It was a major consensus

that a bigger facility is needed next year. It was an amazing time chatting with so many new and



seasoned hams from the clubs in SW Montana. Headwaters Amateur Radio Club of Montana, Capital City Amateur Radio Club, Gallatin Ham Radio Club, Butte Radio Club and Anaconda Radio Club were all in attendance. Thank you all for making this event a success! Amateur radio is booming, as seen in the new and old hams in attendance, and the enthusiastic welcome our clubs extend to all in this wonderful hobby. Some GMRS folks were in attendance as well. The curious not only got their questions answered but also were encouraged to join the ham universe by utilizing the great study aid hamstudy.org. It was a great time had by all. Hope to see you next year! (I'm working on a bigger facility for next year)



Governor's Cup 2026

The CCARC will again be providing race communications for the Governor's Cup on

Saturday June 9. Our Club has been a vital part of this race for over 40 years. We provide racer position results throughout the 13-mile half marathon course, along with relaying any vital medical or emergency communications that may be necessary for public safety.

The race will only take a few hours of your time on the morning of June 13. We'll need about 12 hams for communications at the various checkpoints. If you'd like to help but are new to race communications, I'll pair you with a more experienced ham.

I'll pass around a sign-up sheet for the race at the May club meeting. If you'd like to help but won't be at the meeting, please let me know directly.

~Thanks, John KS7R

jcgeach@gmail.com

APRS for the New Ham

By Brett Penner N7SKI

Like many operators getting started with APRS, I was looking for two simple things: a reliable way to spot SOTA activations and a backup communication method when I'm out of cell coverage. APRS checked both boxes—but there was one catch.

Most of the information I found said the APRS-to-SMS gateway SMSGTE had been shut down back in 2023. That seemed like a major limitation. If APRS couldn't reach a cellphone, how useful would it really be in an emergency?

Digging a little deeper, I came across references to a newer solution—an opt-in SMS service developed by NA7Q and documented on aprs.wiki. This turned out to be exactly what I was looking for: a way to bridge APRS and SMS, with a bit more control and flexibility than the old system.

Setup is straightforward. Head to the SMS section of aprs.wiki and register the phone number (or numbers) you want to reach via APRS. Once registered, you'll receive a confirmation text from (866) 352-4096. Save this number in your phone, it acts as the gateway between SMS and APRS.

Sending a Message from APRS to SMS

To send a text message from your radio, address it to SMS and include the phone number:

To: SMS

@4061234567 No cell coverage. Get me on the radio!

When delivered, the recipient will see:

@N7SKI-7 No cell coverage here. Get me on the radio!

This preserves your callsign while delivering a clean, readable message to the phone user.

Sending a Message from SMS to APRS

The system also works in reverse. From your phone, send a text to the gateway number:

To: 8663524096

@N7SKI-7 Did you forget your cellphone?

The APRS user will receive:

@4061234567 Did you forget your cellphone?

This creates a true two-way bridge between RF and SMS, something many operators thought was gone for good.

Using Aliases for Privacy

One concern with APRS-to-SMS is exposing phone numbers over the air. The system addresses this with aliases.

To create an alias

To: SMS

```
#alias #add brett 4061234567
```

To remove an alias

```
#alias #remove brett 4061234567
```

Once set, you can send messages using the alias instead of the phone number:

```
@brett hey bro! how you doing?
```

This keeps phone numbers out of APRS traffic while maintaining ease of use.

Checking for Missed Messages

If you think you may have missed a message, you can query the system:

To: SMS

APRSM

This will return any queued or missed messages. There are other commands available, look through aprs.wiki for more information.

Why This Matters

For new hams, and especially for those operating in the backcountry, this "new SMS" capability brings APRS back into the spotlight. It provides:

- A backup communication path when cell service is unavailable
- A simple way to coordinate SOTA or POTA activations
- A practical emergency contact method using existing APRS gear

Combined with the broader APRS network and tools described on aprs.wiki, this approach restores much of what made APRS-to-SMS so compelling in the first place.

Look for next month's writings for my details about my setup and use of APRS2SOTA.

Free to Good Home Antique Radio



Contact Al Simons WA1TYB

ATV-Assisted SOTA Activation Hedges Mountain (W7M/CL-114)

April 18, 2026

By Al Le Vie KH7AL



On Saturday, April 18, 2026, Brett N7SKI and I met in York, MT. Our plan was to use our ATVs to travel about seven miles from York to Hedges Mountain (W7M/CL-114) via Forest Service trails. Around 2:30 p.m., we met up, jumped on our ATVs, and rolled toward the summit. This was a new experience for me. Our family bought an ATV about a year ago so we could join my youngest son on his dirt bike adventures. It has been fun, though it hasn't seen as much use as I expected. In years past, I might have held a purist's disdain for drive-up summits—let alone using recreational vehicles to reach them. That view was shortsighted. Getting out and enjoying our public lands, however you choose to do it, is what matters. And with SOTA, as long as you adhere to Leave No Trace principles, there are a myriad of ways to reach a summit.

Within twenty minutes, we were climbing the final, very steep ridge and soon rolled onto the barren, bedrock summit. I didn't even break a sweat on this climb. I might be able to get used to that.



As usual, our local group of chasers helped us get the hill activated, with ten contacts on 2 meters in short order. Good thing, too, as the bands were not especially favorable. I was only able to make

one contact on 17 meters CW and eight on 20 meters CW.

Hedges Mountain is an unassuming but prominent summit on the eastern horizon from Helena. With its untreed southern exposure, you can often gauge how snowy the hike might be just by looking at it from town. Today, it was all clear motoring after a recent warm-up, though on the leeward side of the summit a substantial snow drift was still slowly melting in the spring warmth.



From the summit, Brett and I looked south to scout other summits that might be easily reached by ATV. A plan was hatched, and new adventures await. I still prefer hiking, but as the years go on, I'll gladly use any tool that helps me stay active in the woods and find summits that soothe my soul.

73, Allen ~ KH7AL



FT8 Fun

By Darrell Harris KG7LNA

Running FT8 on 20 watts I got Finland and Russia, 20 and 80 meters, thanks to Mike N6IGA who rebuilt my Heath kit. DX around world – it's great!

SOTA – and a Wedding - in the Southwest

By Rob Kingery AE7AP

We were able to activate 12 summits in seven states on our 2-week trip to Houston for a wedding. We were able to camp every night on the trip except for the two nights in Spring, TX (Houston area).

There were so many interesting things that we saw and did. The first summit, Scotts Bluff, was a very nice early morning hike, but activity was slim in the early morning. I was only able to make 9 QSOs.



Two days later found us camping at Queen Wilhelmina State Park in Arkansas – which was super nice! We began with a sweet 10-point drive-up summit Rich Mountain (W5A/OH-001,) and then did four more activations the next day in Oklahoma that ranged from 8 to 10-points. That made for 44 points in just over 24 hours!! It so

happened that Andy N4TU and Gary W5ODS were activating some of the same summits, so we were able to get some 2-meter “Summit-2-Summit” QSOs. We were even able to coordinate a meeting with Gary and his XYL during one of his activations!

We headed to Spring, TX after Arkansas and Oklahoma and enjoyed Barb’s family, some of whom we hadn’t seen for 25 years (or so) and attended the rehearsal dinner and wedding. We were able to escape on the wedding day for a side trip to Galveston via 2 hours of terrifying Houston traffic. Galveston was very nice, although I expect it gets a bit busy during the summer. We waded in the warm Gulf waters, saw some cool ships at anchor, and even one large LNG carrier coming in (photo below).



We also had an excellent sea food lunch at a restaurant on the docks and bought some shrimp at a dock market as it was being unloaded from the boat.

After Houston, we drove through the very busy and active Permian Basin Oil/Gas fields to Guadalupe Mountains NP where we fried up our shrimp with some blackened seasoning – yummy! We had nearly consistent terrific winds from West Texas to Nevada and Utah that forced us to put rocks in our tent whenever we left it to keep it from blowing away. The winds forced us to abandon our plans to activate Hunter Peak in the Park, and instead we activated a summit near

Carlsbad, NM. During this side trip, we stumbled on Sitting Bull Falls – which is a true desert paradise that is administered as a picnic area by the USFS.



The high point of the trip was probably the time that we spent in El Paso. Mike KD5KC and his wife Monika graciously spent the entire day with us and guided us up Sierra de Cristo Rey (W5N/PO-010). This summit is located on the edge of El Paso, with its southern flank in Mexico. The summit was developed by the local Catholic Church in the 1930s and is a destination for occasional pilgrimages (e.g. Good Friday). A gentle winding path segmented by the “Stations of the Cross” and several shrines leads to a 29-foot statue of Jesus that was carved from imported limestone by a Spanish sculptor who lived in a rock hut part-way up the mountain during the 2-years that it took him to complete the project.





Agents and detainee on border

One of the shrines had a small alcove beneath it with a prayer candle and stream of honeybees that were coming and going from their nest in some hidden cavity. We had dinner with Mike and his wife at a fantastic Mexican food restaurant in El Paso, after which we retired to our tent and the yipping of coyotes at Franklin Mountains State Park. The next day we activated North Franklin Mountain (W5T/FR-001) in the park and Tortugas Mountain (W5N/OR-017) outside of Las Cruces. Tortugas Mountain had an observatory, a shrine, and a roofless stone church on the summit. It was all so interesting!



After Texas, we drove to Las Vegas, NV where we did a morning activation, then visited with Barb's parents, after which we headed home – with a final activation near St George, UT.

I was able to work a ton of Montana stations on this trip, and I worked Bill N7MSI on all but one summit. Bill even found me once when I wasn't spotted!! Thank you everyone for the QSOs.

73, Rob – AE7AP

Capital City Amateur
Radio Club
Helena, Montana



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