

County Hunter News

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Volume 4, Issue 10

Welcome to the On-Line County Hunter News, a monthly publication for those interested in county hunting, with an orientation toward CW operation.

Contributions of articles, stories, letters, and pictures to the editor are welcomed, and may be included in future issues at the editor's discretion.

The County Hunter News will attempt to provide you with interesting, thought provoking articles, articles of county hunting history, or about county hunters or events, ham radio or electronics history, general ham radio interest, and provide news of upcoming operating events.

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County Hunter Nets run on 14.0565, 10.122.5, and **7056.5**, with activity nights on 3556.5 on Tuesday evenings around 8-9pm Eastern Time. Also, with low sunspot activity, most of the SSB activity now is on 'friendly net' 7188/7185 KHz. The cw folks are now pioneering 17M operation on 18.0915. (21.0565, 24.915.5, and 28.0565 when sunspots better). Look around 18135 or 18.132.5 for occasional 17M SSB runs.

You can see live spots of county hunter activity at ch.W6RK.com

For information on county hunting, check out the following resources:

The USACA award is sponsored by CQ Magazine. Rules and information are here: <http://countyhunter.com/cq.htm>

For general information FAQ on County Hunting, check out: <http://countyhunter.com/whatis.htm>

MARAC sponsors an award program for many other county hunting awards. You can find information on these awards and the rules at: http://countyhunter.com/marac_information_package.htm

The CW net procedure is written up at: <http://www.wd3p.net/ch/netproc/netproc.htm>

The County Hunting forum is at <http://countyhunter.com/forum1>

There is a lot more information at www.countyhunter.com . Back issues of the County Hunter News are available at www.CHNewsonline.com

De N4CD (email: telegraphy@verizon.net)

Notes from the Editor

1) Awards – Wow! Another month with lots of awards issued. It looks like many got the needed counties over the summer, despite the horrid conditions. With mobiles running all over the country in the past few months, it is nice to see so many finish up on the various awards. Lots of mobiles have gone the extra mile to get those last counties.

2) Financial Meltdown – It looks like the current financial mess in the credit markets has got all the attention now. This all started with the CRA – the Community Reinvestment Act – which was passed under Jimmy Carter (D) back in the 70s. In the mid 90s, it was expanded. It required ‘lending institutions’ to certify that 50% of their loans went to ‘low income’ applicants. That was the beginning of the credit crisis.

It seems with the current ‘entitlement mentality’ in the USA, where everyone is ‘entitled’ to live in a single family home that they ‘must’ be able to afford, that Congress, the house builders, the mortgage brokers, the real estate sales people, and the execs at lending institutions all had a vested interest in selling more and more homes to more and more people, regardless of whether they actually could afford them or not!

It got worse under Bill Clinton (D) who pushed for allowing banks and ‘investment’ houses to combine in 1999. You didn’t know that? Along with the expansion of the CRA in the mid 90s, that set the train wreck in progress.

The Fed government had required Fannie and Freddie to make 50% of their loans to people, most of whom could never pay them back. Hey, politicians don’t make sense; they make regulations buried deep in spending bills. If they lenders were found to have ‘not made’ risky loans, they could be sent off the slammer for 20 years! Not that too many execs objected, because their bonuses were based upon generating ‘more business’ – which meant giving out more and more loans. Each year after 2001, the loans got riskier and riskier as the mortgage lenders had to go deeper and deeper into the pool of ‘potential home buyers’.

Now, lots of folks benefited. All the refinancing generated gigantic fees. All the house sales and house flipping made real estate folks happy. The higher the price of homes, the happier the real estate folks and mortgage lenders were! They made more money! They did more ‘business’. The construction folks couldn’t build houses fast enough! Many buyers were buying ‘investment homes’ they intended to flip in a few years – they couldn’t really afford them, but hoped to hang on for a few years with zero interest loans, nothing down, and sell when their house doubled in 3 or 4 years in value.

When the WTC disaster happened, it rocked the economy. The Federal government lowered interest rates to spur business investment. So what did we have here?

a) Many vested interests whose sole interest was building, selling, and making loans to more and more people. The pool of available buyers got riskier and riskier.

b) The original lenders had no worries. As long as Fannie and Freddie would buy ‘any loan’ and especially loans to low income people, the original lenders foisted off the risk to the Federal government! The original lenders pocketed the big origination fees, the real estate folk pocketed big commissions, the builders made fat profits, and the tax payer got stuck with the bad loans. Only in a ‘liberal’ world do profits get given to the private sector, and the bad debts get foisted off on tax payers to the tune of hundreds and hundreds of billions, if not more. Where is fiscal responsibility?

c) Money was cheap – with interest rates low – the prices of houses rocketed. In CA and FL, prices doubled in a few years. That made many rational people decide to get in on the ‘greed’ and buy bigger houses and investment properties to share in that ‘price appreciation’.. If you looked at FL, over half the construction was for condos and apartments than the buyers had no interest in living in – just a place to flip in 3 years. Same in Nevada. Millions of folks could ‘afford’ loans on half million and million dollar houses at low interest teaser rates with gimmicks about only paying 1/6th of the real interest. They never had 20% down, never could make the payments on a conventional loan.

d) In order to keep things going, the lenders resorted to NINJA loans. No Income, No Job or Assets. You could get a half million dollar loan with no income verification (you could lie about it), with no job, and with no assets. At one point, Ditech (you remember them? They’ve disappeared of the TV, right?) would grant loans in 12 seconds! You apply on line and 12 seconds later you might be ‘approved’ for hundreds of thousands! Incredible!

e) When many of the loans began to reset, and when the pool of available buyers dried up.....well, you got the housing meltdown. You had a half million unoccupied houses/units – waiting for buyers! Suddenly folks panicked – they didn’t want to be holding properties where they wouldn’t make big fat profits and could barely make payments, or could even rent them out. Soon it was a million could no longer make the payments, and another 5 million realized that with their zero down loan, their houses were worth less than their mortgage now! Also, there were no more buyers willing to fork over even more money than the ridiculously high prices!

f) Affirmative-action policies trumped sound business practices. A manual issued by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston advised mortgage lenders to disregard financial common sense. "Lack of credit history should not be seen as a negative factor," the Fed's guidelines instructed. Lenders were directed to accept welfare payments and unemployment benefits as "valid income sources" to qualify for a mortgage. Failure to comply could mean a lawsuit.

g) “Five years ago, when the Bush administration proposed much tighter regulation of the two companies, House Member Barney Frank (D) was adamant that "these two entities, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, are not facing any kind of financial crisis." When the White House warned of

"systemic risk for our financial system" unless the mortgage giants were curbed, Frank complained that the administration was more concerned about financial safety than about housing.

Now that the bubble has burst and the "systemic risk" is apparent to all, Frank blithely declares: "The private sector got us into this mess." Well, give the congressman points for gall. Wall Street and private lenders have plenty to answer for, but it was Washington and the political class that derailed this train. If Frank is looking for a culprit to blame, he can find one suspect in the nearest mirror."

Source: Boston Globe

So that gets us to today. All of those loans were bought up by Freddie and Fannie and packaged into 'investment vehicles'. All those loans they were forced to buy by the government (Congress) started going bad. They then sold them to others. Along the same lines, other banks issued CDO (collateralized debt obligations) with the same problems. No one knows what the stuff is worth. No one wants to buy it, and no one wants to do business with another bank holding the 'toxic paper'.

In the mean time, the ex CEO of Fannie works for Obama as a chief economist. Before he left, he hauled in 90 million in bonuses over six years for ever increasing risky sub prime loans by the tens of billions. Another top officer, who raked in 10s of millions in bonuses, is another of Obama's economic advisors. Let's see – Obama protects them from any regulatory scrutiny. They donate millions to his campaigns. Then he has them as chief economists on his campaign? Heck, he isn't even President yet, and the stench is enough to sicken everyone.

So now the taxpayers will be on the hook for a trillion. Yet, Congress STILL thinks there is a money fairy! Barney Franks (D) was trying to require that any 'profit' made on the sale of 'any' asset be set aside and 40% of it used to buy low income housing. Duh! Let's see. They buy a trillion in assets, sell half at a profit and the Congress and their pet program gets to glom on to 40% of the profits? And spend it on new spending programs? Maybe hundreds of billions?

But the tax payers take the loss for the half they sell at a loss? You can't take the sum of the net profit for all the assets? Dang, those democrat

liberals are going to get you coming and going! (Sec 105.b of the financial bail out act). The devil is in the detail. No one has a clue as to what really is in the legislation hidden away to give political favors or change industries in unanticipated ways. So tax payers pay another couple hundred billion to fund the special pork projects of Obama, Dodd, Franks, and Pelosi?

More than a good part of the blame on this is due to ACORN (left wing 'community organizing' group) that pushes for low income housing subsidies by the billions, and whose main mission is to take federal money to sign up democratic voters in low income neighborhoods, along with signing them up for every possible government program. Not amazing that they are under investigation in 50 major cities and 10 states for voter fraud. Oh, and they were hand in hand with Obama (D) in Chicago. That is how he got elected in the first place. All those housing grants (tens of millions) he asked for went to ACORN, his buddy Rezko (now in the fed slammer), his 'church' outreach program, and similar. All four of Rezko's gigantic frauds – housing developments that cost taxpayers tens of millions – are now boarded up. Oh, and they are in Obama's district not far from his house. And before he started his run for President, he asked for nearly a billion dollars in 'earmarks' to people like ACORN and other 'community organization' and 'housing groups'. When will the rape of tax payers end?

In 2003, the government auditing agency reported Freddie and Fannie were in big trouble and IMMEDIATE oversight required. In 2005, McCain offered a bill to enforce regulation of Fannie and Freddie. The dems blocked it. It went no where, because the dems (and a fair number of republicans) didn't want the gravy train to end. Fannie and Freddie spread around tens of millions in lobbying money. The most went to Chris Dodd (D) head of the Banking Committee responsible for oversight. The next most went to Obama Barack! The dems cleaned up with lobbying money - and we got the best government money could buy!

Now, what really went on? In 2003?

From: <http://beltwaysnark.com/2008/09/16/john-mccain-supported-a-proposal-for-an-agency-to-oversee-fannie-and-freddiein-2005/>

“The Bush administration today recommended the most significant regulatory overhaul in the housing finance industry since the savings and loan crisis a decade ago.

Under the plan, disclosed at a Congressional hearing today, a new agency would be created within the Treasury Department to assume supervision of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the government-sponsored companies that are the two largest players in the mortgage lending industry.

The new agency would have the authority, **which now rests with Congress**, to set one of the two capital-reserve requirements for the companies. It would exercise authority over any new lines of business. And it would determine whether the two are adequately managing the risks of their ballooning portfolios.

The plan is an acknowledgment by the administration that oversight of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac — which together have issued more than \$1.5 trillion in outstanding debt — is broken. **A report by outside investigators in July concluded that Freddie Mac manipulated its accounting to mislead investors, and critics have said Fannie Mae does not adequately hedge against rising interest rates.**

Wow...now, in 2005 from John McCain:

“I join as a cosponsor of the Federal Housing Enterprise Regulatory Reform Act of 2005, S. 190, to underscore my support for quick passage of GSE regulatory reform legislation. **If Congress does not act, American taxpayers will continue to be exposed to the enormous risk that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac pose to the housing market, the overall financial system, and the economy as a whole.**

I urge my colleagues to support swift action on this GSE reform legislation.”

Well, you don't hear the liberal dems on the TV telling you they blocked any reform of Freddie and Fannie 3 years ago, do you? Of course not!

So we got meltdown. As one of the folks on TV put it, if Congress passes this act, it is the ‘end of the beginning’. Within a few years, if things managed to muddle through, by 2010 to 2012, there will be millions and millions of “Option ARMS” coming due with gigantic balloon payments and big jumps in interest rates. Those ‘zero down, negative amortization’ loans

(where you might be paying ‘only’ 1% interest, with the rest of the interest rate of maybe 6% added on to the loan principle each month) will come due, and folks will either have to finance for the much larger amount they owe, try to sell, or simply walk away if their house values exceed the new loan amount. By the millions.

Then you get slammed by peak oil and \$200 or \$400/bbl oil.

It’s not going to be pretty going forward.

What ever happened to the American ethic that you actually save up 20% to buy a new home? And that you had to have a real job to buy a house? And that you had verify things? And that you didn’t charge up \$40,000 in credit cards at the same time, having to ‘have it all’ and ‘have it now’? What ever happened to folks actually saving up to buy a big screen TV, or a vacation?

The younger generation thinks they are ‘entitled’ ...to the ‘best house’with the best furnishings.....and the ‘best car’. And the best clothes, food, restaurants, wine, electronics, vacations, college educations, and everything else. And never have to really pay for them, since they only have to make ‘payments’. It could be that many are going to get a rude awakening.

3) Don, W9NGA

Don took a direct lightning hit – been off the air for two months. He’s been negotiating with his insurance company to get things fixed. I heard him back on this past week, so things must be getting better.

Several other county hunters got zapped by lightning this year – not a good year for damage to equipment!

4) Operating – Two good state QSO parties coming up in October – CA and PA! Good opportunity for band counties! And new counties.

5) Mobile Activity in September

This was a decent month for mobile activity. Ross, N0ZA, headed out for Hinsdale before the snow flies in CO. That was desperately needed county for the folks and hadn't been run in a long, long time.

Barry, N0KV, and Pat, N0DXE, were out on a nice trip.

Mike, KQ0B, ran his county total up to 1500 by quite a one day trips in MO, getting the needed 1500 points for Master's Gold Award.

Jim, N9JF, was off on multiple trips putting out the counties in IA, MN and wherever he wound up on work assignments.

Larry, NA7W, ran a few in WA for the folks. Ron, KB6UF, ran up through LA to TX and back.

KM1C, Bill, was busy putting out Dukes, MA headed south while cruising along the coast.

Bill, K2HVN was in MN and headed back home, hitting NY, NY, a real tough one to get these days. That was one of the last few for Jerry, W0GXQ, for MG award.

Matt, W0NAC, has been heard more on CW lately in CO.

Randy, AA8R, was spotted in MI in various counties. Then he headed south to FL, running along the way there and back.

Jim, W4HSA has been keeping cw hopping at times with a few trips in VA and NC.

Mike, NF0N, was out in MT. W3DQT was busy putting out counties back east.

Scotty, N4AAT, made a 15 state speed trip through KY to IA to get some needed MP counties, plus put them out on cw and SSB.

Jim, K0ARS, heard often in MO and wherever his work takes him.

Kent, KL1V, wound up in HI and ran all the counties, SSB and CW. Didn't hear a peep out of him here, but there were lots of relays.

Ray, WG6X, made a trip to AL.

The September QSO party brought out lots of activity! Hundreds of spots and maybe 100 counties on the air. Those folks know how to throw a party!

VE3KZE headed down to MI to run counties!

Ed, K8ZZ, was up in GA (bowling tournament?). That is one of a few things that gets him out mobile these days!

Jerry, W0GXQ, ran some up in MN, and Jeff, W9MSE ran some in WI for the folks.

Rick, AI5P was out in CO, then headed up to the Dakotas and all over that neck of the woods for many weeks putting them out.

Scott, KA3QLF, ran rare ones up in NY state.

Greg, NM2L, ran counties in GA and NC. Then up to NY state.

During the annual Route 66 Special Event, some 1x1 calls were on – like W6L for those hunting those.

The annual Salmon Run brought forth mobiles out in WA state. Phil, AB7RW was spotted among the mobiles/fixed stations participating.

Toward the end of the month, Kent, KL1V was headed east from TX, to TN and other states, on a 3 week trip. SSB and CW.

At the end of the month – another great TX QSO Party with lots of participation and fairly decent conditions. More than a dozen very busy mobiles out there!

It seems the most active mobiles were N9JF, K0ARS, KL1V, AI5P, N4CD, AI5P with the trips they took or constantly being on the road, but all the counties are appreciated by the CW folks. Good month for activity. Let's hope it holds up as fall/winter approach and the days get shorter and the weather gets more 'iffy'. There are 3077, and activity is needed from all of them!

Awards - End of the Line?

From the K3IMC Forum:

W0QE: "The reason for this post is not to bash anyone but to examine the effects that the MARAC awards have on county hunting. Any callsigns I mention are for illustrative purposes and I am not attacking or singling out anyone.

To begin, the awards DO AFFECT county hunting! Many county hunters religiously track many or most of the awards especially now that Logger has made this task much easier. County hunting is ALL ABOUT THE MOBILES who provide the counties and the awards very definitely affect the operation of mobiles.

In the past several months I have had the occasion to spend more time monitoring (mostly on CW) since I am down to 5 for my 4th time and ~15 for CW 3rd time. I see a disturbing trend concerning the desirability of the mobiles. Folks like K5GE and N4CD nearly always have more people wanting to work them than other mobiles such as K8ZZ and AB7RW. This is not due to the counties being rarer, the mobile signals being stronger, or the operator more skilled, but is due to the fact that the mobile is GOOD for so many awards.

We have unwittingly encouraged this with the Bingo, MG, MP award progression which may have seemed like a good idea a few years ago. How can we expect new people to be excited to go mobile if they have 3 minute runs and some others consistently have 15 minute runs? Imagine the poor guy who becomes interested in county hunting 5 years from now. By then there would be MG, MP, Master Titanium, Master Plutonium, Master Unobtanium, etc. I really believe this discourages new people from becoming integrated into the community.

So how can we fix this? The "No Star" award would marginally help but it is currently bogged down in the awards committee due to the club call crap that always gets in the way. I think a yearly award that would start on Jan. 1 of each year might be nice. Then an active mobile who is a relatively new

guy could easily compete with the long time guy who has most all the awards. I also think that an end to the MG, MP, MT etc. progression is needed. Before people jump on me as being a complainer since I don't have MG, I have finished MG including the service requirement a while ago but have not applied for the award due to my feelings. Not everyone needs to be in the "arms race" of awards and if we make these people less valuable as mobiles they will be less inclined to remain county hunters.

Perhaps I am way off base here but as a member of the MARAC Awards committee I will not be voting for these progressive awards. Anyone is certainly welcome to contact N0ZA (area director) and try to have me removed.

I feel genuinely bad when I see the newer mobiles have fewer people want to work them. I'm sure they are aware that this is happening and I don't think it serves the county hunting community well to encourage these conditions. On the other hand I do feel that there should be some reward for longevity but I think we have gone too far presently.

73, Larry”

Comments de N4CD

That raises some interesting questions, especially for those going mobile.

- 1) After folks get their USACA, then on to Bingo, up to five stars to give out all five stars at once when they are mobile, is county hunting going to come down to working toward 23rd time around, and Bingo 18th?
- 2) Any newcomer to county hunting needs EVERY county from anyone!
- 3) Propagation matters. Yes, AB7RW is not going to have many contacts. When you are in OR and WA, you are lucky to get 12 contacts on 20M, and likely only a handful on 30m, and maybe 2 or 3 on 40M. That's the way it is. When N4CD is out in OR or WA, sometimes the log has a total of 3 or 6 contacts on ALL bands. Conditions are horrible.
- 4) Rarity matters. If you run the same path, every month, month after month, you aren't going to have many contacts. If W9MSE heads from WI to NC and runs the same route through the same counties, well, folks just don't need most of the counties, unless you have brand new folks showing

up, or folks starting over again needing everything. If Ed, K8ZZ, goes to visit son W8JJ, through the same 15 counties, he likely isn't going to get too many contacts.

5) Let's face it – some mobiles that run the same counties in the same area, or go the same route time and time, a few times a year, are not going to get many contacts as someone headed to seldom run counties!

6) I think quite a few of the CH might also disagree with your assessment. When AB7RW or N4CD is running out west, as well as any other mobile in WA and OR and CA, there are very few contacts. Maybe from COLO (home of W0QE), they have good signals, but the east coast isn't hearing them. On any band.

When KZ2P with his big beams, the 'best' transceivers money can buy, and multi-kilowatt amps barely can hear and work mobiles out there – 'tu tu' ing it with AB4YZ, you know conditions aren't great. On a recent trip out west, most days he was barely S3 to S5 at the best times during the day. For those with dipoles or 100w, it is challenging just to hear the mobiles.

If you run in the middle of the country, with 40, 30 and 20cw, you have a much greater probability of being heard on some band. 15 minute runs? You gotta be kidding. Even Kalawao or Alaska doesn't run 10 minutes these days. Very, very few – and those that are mostly tu-tu relays that drag out that long.

On my last trip to MT, maybe 1/3rd of the counties had 3-20 total contacts. We're at the bottom of the sunspot cycle. In WA and OR, most of the day you had 6 or 8 contacts on 20M. Hardly worth burning the gas.

7) From day 1, every mobile is good for a contact for USACA and for nth time around. They are good for the prefix award for their prefix. They can get LCs for folks for lots of awards. For 3rd time CW. For fourth time around. For first time. For all CW. For half the MARAC awards, you don't need stars or other awards to be able to give out counties.

In some counties, folks may be good for Bingo or Natural Bingo. Once they get USACA, they are good for Bingo in every county. They are good for the prefix award from day one, and the 'combo' award. If they run on cw, they are good for USACW from day one, along with nth time on cw.

As the newcomers get more awards themselves, they can work on Master's Gold. As they add bands and capabilities, they get more contacts.

Going back 12 years or more, when KI0JD ran counties in IA, she had big pileups. She was a YL, good for the YL mobile award, and there weren't many back then. She had a star or two, so she was good for Bingo. She would run half the state one time, with a list of those that needed the county. Yes, she had big pileups. For two reasons – conditions were good – and she was in the middle of the country, so both 40 and 20M worked well. Plus she made extra effort to coordinate with folks for their last counties, and she ran most of the state, insuring lots of last counties.

Way back when, when WA0SBR would run entire states, he had long runs most of the time. That was before MG and MP. So how does that fit in with W0QE's assessment? Other than being good for Bingo, folks chased him for the county. Maybe we just had more active county hunters back then? Not so many had been 'run off'?

Meanwhile, N4CD, just starting out in 1995, had no stars. My runs weren't as long as hers or his, but still were good. There were times I logged 70 contacts in a single county. Imagine that. Now, I get 4 to 20.

That difference back then just got me motivated to get my USACA done! Of course, at the sunspot minimum, everyone suffers with short runs. Even KI0JD/m might only have a half dozen or dozen contacts now.

Later, I started working CW. Folks needed cw counties. More contacts. Then Miss Ida got into county hunting and we ran mobile. Between the two of us, we were good for Bingo in N, C, D, T, P, and H counties – quite a few. But folks with 3 and 4 and 5 stars still had longer runs. So? That gave us incentive to get stars!

8) It also depended where we went. Run counties that were off the beaten path, and you got good runs. Run them on cw in a state without a cw county hunter, and you got good runs. Of course, at the sunspot minimum, a 'good run' might be six or 8 folks on 20M, and maybe 10-15 on 40M SSB. And a handful on cw back then. Some days back in the mid 90s at the sunspot minimum, the only folks I worked on 20M SSB were the VKs for two hours in the morning!

9) Maybe W0QE should look at his own logs – and adjust expectations based upon sunspot activity? I'd bet 3-4 years ago when conditions were good, even with no stars, he had double or triple the number of QSOs/county!

10) So we 'invented' 30M – more chances of working someone on this band if 40M too long and 20M too short. N4AAT snagged me many times on 30M. Sometimes the best band. A fix for declining sunspots for the CW folks. And more people migrated to CW – when they couldn't get them the other way. KA0SHC, WG6X, N4AAT, N9STL, KM9X, and a hundred others! We've had 80M CW activity nights. Now 17M. More ways to get contacts – for any mobile! And the county hunters.

Back then, KD8HA/HB, and NT9V/N9HRX, WB4FFV (big rig), and KC1NA and lots of others had 'good' runs (depending upon the sunspot cycle). Newcomers sometimes complained that they had 'less' contacts-likely true until they got at least one star themselves - usually a few years. That hasn't changed in 45 years of county hunting! Then again, hit a 'rare' county that hadn't been run in a year, and any mobile would have good runs.

I dunno – I go run MT – putting out 90% of the counties in the state – that gives EVERY newcomer a chance to fill in counties for USACA – and for USACW. It gives others the chance for Nth time, USACW I, II, III, IV, V or whatever, Bingo 1-infinity, MG, and MP. Even a newcomer can fill in the MP counties in Logger. Long runs? Hardly – 10 minute runs? Hardly – most runs over in 5 minutes on 20M SSB for everyone! Less on 40M SSB out west. On cw, most over in 5 minutes. Just the bottom of the sunspot cycle. For me. For other mobiles. Just short runs many days unless they are in rare counties that haven't been run lately!

Sometimes 17M was the 'best band'. So? Everyone needs counties on 17M. Virgin territory. I'll take any station there – fixed, brand new one day old licensee is perfectly fine. Same for many on 80M. Same for 20M or 40M band counties!

Now why did I go to MT? Or to WA and OR? Was it because I would get 10-20-3040 contacts a county? Heck no – some only had 5 or 10. It was because I had the incentive to run the counties to have them count for my Master Platinum award. Would I have gone there otherwise? Likely not. It was a challenge to get done for MP, and I had 30+ needed there, plus 15 in

ID, 4 in UT, 1 in NM, and five back east. I headed to OR to get the last counties there for N9STL and N4AAT, plus others for the folks who needed them.

Will I go back to MT or OR any time soon? Likely not unless there is incentive to run it again. I've run it twice now. I haven't run 2 of the MT counties, but if I get to the other 400 I need to run for second time transmit, maybe I'll clean up those someday, but no urgency.

But does that mean that a 'new mobile' with no stars won't have any contacts there? Hardly. Folks missed me and AB4YZ and N8KIE – in MT and ID – just no propagation - needs still posted – SSB and CW. There is a raft of folks just finished up on nth time or USACW Nth time and they needed ANY station there. Mobile, fixed, whatever. Better yet, go to Idaho and run it on CW. Or even KY or WV or ME or NC or half of ARK.

WU3H, N4UJK, and K8CW just finished up and were working me everywhere they could hear me. Same all over the country. They would take anyone for next time around. K8CW finished up and he is on every band and cw and SSB working ANY mobile he hears. They all count! Same for the more than dozen who just finished up again! (Maybe a record month for awards?).

NO STAR AWARD?

Yes, the 'no star' mobile award might be interesting. We'll wait and see what the awards committee cooks up. Maybe yearly challenges too starting Jan. 1 every year. At one point, Risto kept track of mobile activity by quarter – that seems to have ceased.

Meanwhile, MARAC does take a vote and award mobiles each quarter and at the end of the year – with the Mobile of the Year SSB and Mobile of the Year CW. You can win either with no stars. You can win County Hunter of the Year, SSB or CW, with no stars. Or be a runner up and acknowledged.

Like many activities, having a good "Elmer" to help out the newcomer mobiles is important. It's not easy to just 'jump in' and figure out how to maximize contacts from a county, or even be sure your mobile set up is up to snuff so you have a signal that folks can hear, or that you can hear those calling.

So should it be the end of the line for new awards in sequence? Likely a few will note that some folks will never get Masters Gold (they haven't managed to get the 'service points'). And if they don't get MG, they cannot get Master Platinum. That is true. Some folks will never get USACW – they chose not to operate on CW. And some will not get US Digital Award either. So?

In the process of others seeking awards, tens of thousands of counties will be run. Everyone working on the 100 other MARAC awards will benefit from having all those counties run as mobiles seek to achieve Master Gold, Master Platinum, and beyond levels.

As most of you are aware, a good part of the 'incentive' for many mobiles is to complete awards – run the 1500 counties required to accumulate the 1500 points for Master Gold Award. Run the counties they need a contact in for the MG award by going there. Same for MP – run the 500 separate counties required – roughly 1/6th the country. If you followed a MG holder around who was working on MP, you would fill in over 500 counties in your log book for USACA, Bingo, stars.

Both cw and ssb nets are run to give every mobile a fair shot at 'putting out counties'. Spotters spot everyone running when they are spotting. Everyone gets their time on net frequency in order. If you want more contacts as a mobile, get in a state QSO party! The pile ups are big, the activity is continuous, and you'll fill in log books. County hunting doesn't start and end on 14.336. In the TX QSO party, likely over 100,000 contacts got made in 2 days of activity. Runs in every county were 20-30-40 QSOs.

So is the 'fact' likely right out of the chat room crowd that because *some* cannot get higher level awards going to stop dead any more advanced awards? Why should it? Yes, KZ2P, who for some reason can't go mobile, might never get MP. And he would not get the next level award either. So? Does he have all the prefixes yet? Does he have USA-Digital? Or the Combo award? Or all YL? (Who would know?). Or 'teams'? Should we discourage anyone other than teams until he gets his 'team award' for all counties? The fact that some might not get an award should not be the reason for not creating it, and giving many mobiles incentive to go out and RUN COUNTIES!

County hunting is what you make of it. Let's see. Where were the county hunter CO mobiles for the CO QSO party? Hmmmm??? And then some complain about 'lack of activity'? Anyone with a mobile could have had a lot of fun. And lots of contacts – lots of activities as everyone was 'needed' in the QSO party. Same for most other state QSO parties. Some are great. Others, there are county hunter mobiles who never even seem to get out for their own state QSO party. Or the state right next door.

No More Sunspots?

From <http://icecap.us/>

"By William Livingston and Matthew Penn, National Solar Observatory, Tucson, AZ

We have observed spectroscopic changes in temperature sensitive molecular lines, in the magnetic splitting of an Fe I line, and in the continuum brightness of over 1000 sunspot umbrae from 1990-2005. All three measurements show consistent trends in which the darkest parts of the sunspot umbra have become warmer (45K per year) and their magnetic field strengths have decreased (77 Gauss per year), independently of the normal 11-year sunspot cycle. A linear extrapolation of these trends suggests that few sunspots will be visible after 2015.

Sunspots are cool dark regions on the solar surface with strong magnetic fields. There have been few direct measurements of changes in the physical parameters of sunspots, but here we present a study which shows that sunspots are becoming warmer and have weaker magnetic fields. The number of sunspots visible on the Sun normally shows an 11-year periodicity, and the current sunspot cycle (cycle 23) had a maximum in

2001, and is entering a minimum phase with few sunspots currently visible. Our data show that there are additional changes occurring in sunspots, independent of the sunspot cycle, and these trends suggest that sunspots will disappear completely. Such an event would not be unprecedented, since during a famous episode from 1645-1715, known as the Maunder Minimum, the normal 11-year periodicity vanished and there were virtually no sunspots visible on the solar surface (Eddy 1976). Recent studies of the appearance rate and latitudinal drift of sunspots (Hathaway et al., 2004) and of the solar magnetic field (Svalgard et al., 2005) predict that the number of sunspots visible in future cycles will be significantly reduced. Finally the occurrence of prolonged periods with no sunspots is important to climate studies, since the Maunder Minimum was shown to correspond with the reduced average global temperatures on the Earth (Foukal et al., 1990). "

<http://www.astroengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/livingston->

Peak Oil News

If Congress acts as truthfully and as quickly on the 'Peak Oil Production' problem as it has on the financial, credit and housing market, you know we are in for really bad times. I attended the Peak Oil Conference in Sacramento in September.

1) Gas Shortages

The last two hurricanes have put many refineries off line. Gasoline inventories before the two hurricanes were at record low levels. With refineries off line, there are now spot shortages – Atlanta – Tennessee – along the east coast, which depends upon pipelines from the Gulf refineries to keep the fuel moving. If everyone in the country were to go out and top off their gas tank, the entire country would be out of gas. That's how little extra capacity there is in the system. What now happens is that if there are spot shortages, like in Atlanta, everyone then gets the idea they better fill up, making a small situation into a disaster in a few days. Human nature at work. Just filling up gas tanks will take 90% of the available inventories in the entire country, leaving entire regions without gas.

2) ASPO Convention - summary from the Oil Drum

Wow – 2 ½ days filled with presentations on everything from coal production to biofuels, coal, natural gas, alternatives, and everything in between. Over 550 in attendance at the 4th Annual USA Association for the Study of Peak Oil.

One of the problems with exact models is that there is inexact data – much of the important data is held by National Oil Companies (NOCs) not in the habit of revealing their actual production and reserve data. However, nearly all felt that peak oil would arrive no later than 2015, and many felt we were at peak oil production in 2008.

Some highlights:

“Monday, September 22, was the first day of the formal meeting, following the Breakout sessions on Sunday. The meeting had over 500 attendees, so that all the seats were full as the meeting started, and there were soon folk standing at the back of the hall. Kjell Aleklett, President of ASPO-International, began with a brief review of world conditions before Sally Odland moderated the first session which was an introduction, or reminder, of the basics of oil generation and exploration. This was provided by Ken Verosub, a professor of geology at UC Davis. Starting with the basics of oil formation, he pointed out the combination of different geological events, and the resulting layers of rock that have to be formed in place in order to create, capture and then trap the rock, and the need for geological movement to then concentrate the supply so that it can be recovered.

He pointed out that the oil has to be “cooked” just the right amount to convert it to oil, which requires a certain depth of burial, at one stage in its history. He illustrated the events through the creation of oil traps around a salt dome. To find the traps, the methodology has had to get more refined. Originally, two-dimensional models of the subsurface were achieved by using exploding sound sources and a small array of geophones to pick up reflected sound waves and thus map the layers of rock beneath the surface. The systems today can use computer analysis to generate three-dimensional

images which can be projected into rooms that allow the geologists a degree of exploration not available in earlier years.

He went on to explain how a “Hubbert” curve of depletion is formed for a given oil field, from the accumulation of production rise and decline of the individual wells in a field. He mentioned that the results of the combination of geological rocks that have to come together to provide a viable field restrict potential discoveries to relatively known places. (These do not include many of the places where the “Drill here, Drill now” message is enunciated). Finding where there is enough oil to justify a well is neither easy nor cheap. He then used some simplified math to show that the amount of oil that is left is already diminished to the point that, in the best circumstance, oil production will peak in the 2010 to 2015 time frame.

Jeremy Gilbert tried to sound a Wake-up call. He noted that in many reports of the remaining reserves and production the only reliable numbers are often the page numbers. He now sees that the projections of the arrival of peak oil have been optimistic, and that the risks have got worse, as the peak point approaches. He noted that as world gas prices continue to rise, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has just cut oil and gas prices (which increases domestic demand). He spoke disparagingly of previous IEA projections, but noted that the agency has recently undergone a change in heart and now sees three problem areas:

- (1) the geological constraints on finding large fields of oil;
- (2) the lack of investment able to exploit these increasingly difficult and expensive sites; and
- (3) the much greater production problems that working in these more difficult environments bring.

He bemoaned the renewable energy mantra that “solar, wind or something, UFO’s perhaps, will bring an answer to our crisis.”

The problem is that we are finding only smaller fields each year, and must thus find more of them to make up for depletion. Those who call for more

drilling need to learn that this will take time (given that all the rigs available are already busy, and that permitting etc all takes time). And as for new technology, this is usually applied in harder-to-produce rock, where its implementation only brings overall recovery values up to what they were originally estimated to be. He noted that while we have doubled the number of drilling rigs (around 3,500) in recent years, overall production levels have remained the same. And since Russia likely peaked last year, we are now running on borrowed time.

The next speaker was Matt Simmons whom I have heard on numerous occasions, but who this time talked into a silence as intense as any I have heard. He scared the audience in a way I have not seen before, perhaps because we were all much more willing to believe this time, given his record from the past.

He noted at the beginning of his talk that there are 150 miles of unit trains leave Wyoming every day. (Ed note – a 1-mile unit train contains 110 rail cars of 100 tons of coal each.) He talked about the elements of risk that we have now forgotten how to apply. He noted that we have forgotten how savage a collapse can be, or how fast it can occur. (Enron unfolded in 7 days. The events of the last week showed how even faster collapse can come now). The delays in bringing oil production on line from the recent hurricanes will only underline this point.

As a result places are running out of gasoline (Ed note the two folk next to me at the table were from Atlanta and Tennessee and neither town had any gas stations left with fuel, as far as they knew). The South is going to have to cope with a growing shortage until more of the infrastructure comes back on line, and that may be weeks into the future. This will get worse if all motorists suddenly start topping up their tanks, since this will sensibly empty the floating reserve that is the volume moving through the system at the moment. This will, in turn, remove confidence in the system, which will make the situation worse. The heating oil situation for the North East is only going to get worse in this scenario. And there is no data on how close to a

collapse we currently are. And the collapse could well be a disaster equivalent to that of Gustav/Ike squared.

He noted that contrary to the solutions for the financial world there is no insurance policy that can help with Peak Oil. The paradigm is changing and sadly the world is still Energy Illiterate.

He also commented, having talked with producers of the new gas wells being drilled in the various shale formations around the country, that this is close to, if not already at a point where the energy costs to sink the well are not returned by the gas recovered from it. Further in talking with Baker Hughes folk (the ones that track the wells that are drilled around the world), he found that those who thought depletion in old fields was less than 5% got no takers from his audience, 60% of the audience thought that depletion was between 6 and 8% and the remainder thought that it was in the range above 10%. (As noted earlier the assumed value is often taken as somewhere between 2 & 4% with TOD using around 4.5%). It was by far the most pessimistic that I have heard him give.”

Note de N4CD: Depletion rates are critical. Each year, oil producers see their mature fields decline by the decline rate. If they are producing 1 million barrels a day, that means in one year, the field will drop in production by 5% or 8% or whatever the decline rate is. In order to stay even, they have to find, and put into production new fields. Just to stay even! If that rate is 7%, that means they have to scramble very quickly to find any new oil, or accept just producing less. If you recall the past issues, Mexico has seen Cantarell, the second biggest field in the world, decline at over 25% per year! There is no way they can bring on new production to just keep their output constant, so Mexico’s exports are dropping like a rock. Mexico is the second largest (or was) exporter to the USA.

“Jim Buckee of Talisman gave the luncheon address, talking on the production company viewpoint. He differentiated between the volume available in a field, and the production rates that can be achieved at it. He said that Peak Oil is real, and illustrated this conclusion by discussing the

decline in production rate from virtually all the major oilfields of the world. 90% of production comes from 10% of the fields and we know which they are. He then went through the list, which was dominated by the comment “in terminal exponential decline.” The depletion rate he quoted (after the 50% production point) was on average 10%.

In discussing the KSA fields he said that these also will follow these rules, as Abqaiq already is. Talk of increasing post peak production with Enhanced Oil Recovery Techniques does not spell out what these might be, and his opinion was that this was a likely myth. Recent Natural Gas Liquid (NGL) increases have hidden the likely peaking of crude oil, but this will only last a short interval more before it too will start to decline.

He did give a realistic reason why the major oil companies have not admitted to Peak Oil, pointing out that it will lead to reactions very similar to those that hit the financial community last week. Nevertheless with resource nationalism rising this makes further exploration tough; makes it difficult for industry to attract people; has doubled production costs over the last 3 years; and leads to a constant fight against field declines.

He pointed out that there is no opposite to a train wreck. Further nationalism just means that the state takes a larger slice of a pie of fixed size. The change in production from majors to IOCs to NOCs has led to increasingly smaller production levels at higher costs. He felt we would hold production at the current level of around 85 mbd for another decade, but only because we will soon see effective rationing of this supply.”

You got that? There is no opposite of a train wreck! The peak oil express is headed your way.

“Jim Puplava felt that the worst is yet to come. He relies on the Chicago Federal National Activity Index. When this falls below -0.7, then there will be recession (it’s close). He is recommending a Prius to help in the time when gas rationing arrives. We are at a point where we have maximized the rig count and yet production is not rising. He feels it is ludicrous not to expect a decline in non-OPEC production. We have an immediate crisis and need to take action. We are talking about the wrong set of solutions and need

to change the mind set. The opinion of the experts has been shaken and the lack of good information does not help.”

For those really wanting to understand the issues, I suggest you do some of the viewing of the presentations at:

<http://www.aspo-usa.org/aspousa4/proceedings/>

If you just want to read one, read

http://www.aspo-usa.org/aspousa4/proceedings/Simmons_Matthew_ASPOUSA2008.pdf

The general feeling at the meeting was that things were worse than they appeared. Not good.

Sunspots? What Sunspots?

“The sun has reached a milestone not seen for nearly 100 years: an entire month has passed without a single visible sunspot being noted.

The event is significant as many climatologists now believe solar magnetic activity – which determines the number of sunspots -- is an influencing factor for climate on earth.

According to data from Mount Wilson Observatory, UCLA, more than an entire month has passed without a spot. The last time such an event occurred was June of 1913. Sunspot data has been collected since 1749.”

Source:

<http://www.dailytech.com:80/Sun+Makes+History+First+Spotless+Month+in+a+Century/article12823.htm>

“In 2005, a pair of astronomers from the National Solar Observatory (NSO) in Tucson attempted to publish a paper in the journal *Science*. The pair looked at minute spectroscopic and magnetic changes in the sun. By extrapolating forward, they reached the startling result that, within 10 years, sunspots would vanish entirely. At the time, the sun was very active. Most of their peers laughed at what they considered an unsubstantiated conclusion.

The journal ultimately rejected the paper as being too controversial.

The paper's lead author, William Livingston, tells *DailyTech* that, while the refusal may have been justified at the time, recent data fits his theory well.

In the past 1000 years, three previous such events -- the Dalton, Maunder, and Spörer Minimums, have all led to rapid cooling. One was large enough to be called a "mini ice age". For a society dependent on agriculture, cold is more damaging than heat. The growing season shortens, yields drop, and the occurrence of crop-destroying frosts increases.

Meteorologist Anthony Watts, who runs a climate data auditing site, tells *DailyTech* the sunspot numbers are another indication the "sun's dynamo" is idling. According to Watts, the effect of sunspots on TSI (total solar irradiance) is negligible, but the reduction in the solar magnetosphere affects cloud formation here on Earth, which in turn modulates climate.”

Now, not everything is perfectly cut and dry!

“Article Update, Sep 1 2008. After this story was published, the NOAA reversed their previous decision on a tiny speck seen Aug 21, which gives their version of the August data a half-point. Other observation centers such as Mount Wilson Observatory are still reporting a spotless month. So depending on which center you believe, August was a record for either a full century, or only 50 years.”

In either event – bad news for County Hunters!

Update – end of September – one or two brief duration sunspots appeared in Cycle 24. I guess the sun is trying, but judging from my last trip, it isn't doing much to help us out, yet!

Solar Wind – What's Up?

Last week's Propagation Forecast Bulletin ARLP039 mentioned an announcement coming on Tuesday this week from NASA. It concerned data from the Ulysses spacecraft indicating solar wind pressure is declining. The speed of solar wind hasn't changed much, but the density and temperature are lower. The Ulysses craft orbits the Sun over a six year period, during which it flies over both the Sun's south and north poles. The average solar wind pressure measured from February 1992 to February 1998 declined over the following decade, and the pressure during the February 2002 to February 2008 pass was about 20 percent lower.

In addition, the solar magnetic field dropped more than 30 percent over the same period. Because the data has been collected over such a short time, there isn't much historical context for these readings.

What does this indicate for radio propagation? Unknown, but perhaps this shows overall slowing of solar activity.

Source: ARRL Propagation Bulletin

On the Road with N4CD I

It was still a hot summer, but Scottie sent me a map of his proposed trip he was planning in September. He was headed to 14 states to run counties for

his Masters Platinum Award. I could help him out a bit and save him 500 miles of driving. Joyce, N9STL, needed Dallas, AR, also for a LC as did several others needing things nearby.

So, without a whole lot of preparation, I loaded up the car for an overnight trip and headed out. It was hot and there were storms all around. Tropical Storm Fay was dumping 20-30 inches of rain on FL. It got N4UJK's beam – parts of it were on the ground. Dan, KM9X was headed to KY to run some counties, including a LC for me. KY is 'too close' to TX for 20M, and at the 'too far' area for reliable 40M. So I could do better by getting closer. Too many things said 'go to ARK' for the weekend.

Not a whole lot of exciting news – Scottie got the counties he needed. Joyce got the one she needed, and Larry, W0QE got his last two in ARK. The Super 8 Motel in Pine Bluff was OK...had waffles for breakfast. (Jefferson County). Greg, NM2L was doing the NC on 40 and 30CW. Runs got spotted, but conditions weren't too great.

On Sunday, Dan, KM9X, gave AE3Z one of his last for MG, and Alan, KI7WO gave Don his last WBOW (Rush, KS) for Masters Gold. He'll be getting a number real soon. Let's see..that's about the 4th in a row WBOW for Masters Gold that did not take place on the "Jim Net". KI7WO is another one of the 'not allowed' to run on 14.336 crew (the 50-100 of us). Sick, isn't it? Well, thank goodness for 40M, N5UZW and the rest of the 40M group that makes running counties fun on SSB.

Alan just got his Bingo at the end of July and he was out to put it to good use. With the help of friends, KI7WO ran on 40M and 20M SSB on 14.323 or so, and cw, and got the LC WBOW for Don. Don is another one who works both SSB and CW including 30M. That gives you many more options for finishing up awards – especially with today's conditions!

When KM9X hit Butler, KY, he was good copy on 40M SSB, and we made a quick CW contact after the run getting N4CD closer to third time cw.

Later that day, I hit Montgomery and Pike, AR, again – (I ran them a few weeks ago) – but this time on a weekend to catch those who aren't retired yet – Randy AJ5ZX needed two and he's finished now in ARK, plus others were hunting for them. The DX was in for most of the weekend with DL8MLD, DL3DXX, LY2ZZ, OH3JF, and OK2EC in the log as well as

KH6G for many counties. Several others are ‘starting over’ again like LY2ZZ, K8CW, and WU3H – they need ‘everything’ from everyone.

Conditions were, to put it mildly, rotten! Not much happening on 20M in most counties – but some had runs of 15 or more. On 20M SSB, most mobiles had a few calling, then a few relays. 40M SSB and CW were much better. Frosty, W0FP, Scottie, N4AAT, and others pitched in to run the mobiles over the weekend. 17M was not good – I worked from zero to six stations on 17M. Going to the central part of the country, when skip on 17M is long – isn’t the best plan for success there.

I made it home by dinner time. Gas was as cheap as \$3.29 at one station – up to about \$3.59 – getting better, but still 3 times what it was 3-4 years ago. Not ‘cheap’ in reality. You still go through \$50-60-70 a day in gas depending how far and how fast you go!

It was a ‘good weekend’ despite not a lot of contacts in the log, but the ones that were there were good. A LC for me, a LC for W0QE, most of AR finished off for Scottie, N4AAT, a LC for Joyce, N9STL on cw. And I’m sure others needing ARK counties got a lot of them as well – which is what it is all about – HAVING FUN AND RUNNING COUNTIES! Helping out folks get their awards!

AA8R – On the Road

Randy made a trip to KY and to the south. Here are a few comments from him

Trip South

Approx 3100 miles and 111 counties including a special contact with AB7RW for his last Bingo in Webster, KY. Thanks to all the NC and ANC for helping. Pattie and I enjoyed the Trip.



AA8R in Webster KY

Going to Hawaii - AA8R & W8TAX.

Next trip we will be putting out all 5 of the Hawaiian counties in 24 days starting 10/13/08 thru 11/5/08. SSB, CW and PSK31 on 80, 40, 30, 20, 17, 15, 12 and 10 meters. In each county I will try to do at least one late night on 80/40. (Not sure if a late night will be possible in Kalawao). Please check the KK7X forum for more details as they develop.

Peak Oil News II

1) Democrat Intelligence

Nancy Pelosi shows her understanding of oil issues on her investments – and she is the Speaker of the House of Representatives!

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26377338/page/3/>

"REP. PELOSI: No, no, it was between 50 and \$100,000, and it's part of an, you know, entrepreneurial package. This is the package we sign up for, this is what they invest in. But that's not the point. I'm, I'm, I'm investing in something I believe in. **I believe in natural gas as a clean, cheap alternative to fossil fuels.**"

"The fact is, the supply of natural gas is so big, and you do need a transition if you're going to go from fossil fuels, as you say, you can't do it overnight, but you must transition. These investments in wind, in solar and biofuels and focus on natural gas, these are the real alternatives."

"MR. BROKAW: Sounds like we're going to have offshore drilling.

REP. PELOSI: No, no, no."

comments de N4CD

1) Duh! Natural gas IS a fossil fuel. She is so dumb she doesn't even realize that!

2) Even more so, it is produced by those 'evil oil companies' that she and Obama want to tax, tax and tax. Nitwit! And in many situations, it comes up with oil from the well. You get both at many/most oil wells! There are tens of billions of cubic feet that had to be re-injected into the ground in Prudhoe Bay because there is no way to get it to market currently. Some of it is flared off.

3) Doesn't she realize that natural gas comes from the Gulf of Mexico where they drill offshore? And CA? and FL? and AL? and likely elsewhere??? Including offshore AK? Does she think it all magically appears only in the continental USA? Much of Alaska's natural gas comes from wells in Prince William Sound (in the water!). The Gulf of Mexico has many natural gas only wells. Likely other off shore wells will be only natural gas.

And doesn't she realize that ANWR will have both oil and natural gas?

What a complete blathering idiot! Talk about not knowing anything about economics or oil/natural gas production or basic science! What is scary is that in the event of the death of the President and Vice President, she would then become President of the USA, as Speaker of the House.

Quick.....get Sarah Palin in the White House....Sarah Palin is an expert at oil/gas issues. Palin is an expert on what it takes to build multi ten billion dollar natural gas pipelines to get natural gas to market. Pelosi and her clone, Obama, are total energy dimwit idiots!

2) Those 'major' new fields

a) Production at the Eni SpA-led Kashagan oil project in Kazakhstan may be delayed until 2014, almost a decade behind the original start date, an aide to the Central Asian nation's president said.

Difficult technical conditions for drilling and shipments mean the field may come on stream a year later than the current target of 2013, Nurlan Balgimbayev, an adviser to President Nursultan Nazarbayev, told reporters on the sidelines of an energy conference in the capital, Astana, today.

Production is scheduled to begin in 2013, already eight years behind the original start-up date of 2005, after state-run KazMunaiGaz National Co. took a greater share in the project in January. By the end of 2013 all facilities must be ready and transportation issues resolved, Timur Kulibayev, chairman of the KazEnergy association, told a press conference.

The venture ``will not be able to produce oil in winter, so the start date will be 2014," said Kulibayev, whose group unites producers in Kazakhstan including Chevron Corp. and BG Group Plc. ``The point is to make the

project work in time as the more we delay the start to production, the higher the costs are."

The venture, whose partners also include Exxon Mobil Corp., Royal Dutch Shell Plc and Total SA, should produce 450,000 barrels a day in 2014, said Kulibayev, who is married to Nazarbayev's daughter. Eni earlier estimated output reaching 370,000 barrels of oil a day in the year after the start to production, before rising to a peak of about 1.5 million barrels a day.

The Eni SpA-led group developing Kazakhstan's Kashagan oil field has seen costs surge by a third in the past year as raw material and labor prices in the industry gained, Energy Minister Sauat Mynbayev said.

The budget for Kashagan's experimental phase has risen to \$36 billion from the Kazakh government's estimate a year ago that starting production at the world's largest discovery in three decades would cost \$27 billion. **At that time, the government forecast the overall cost of starting and running the field through the 2040s would be \$136 billion.**

b) The US deepwater was supposed to grow, but delay after delay has caused production for the Gulf on Mexico to decline by 20% since 2005 rather than grow. Now it is estimated to drop another 10% over then next 3 years.

That is a big difference from the growth expected just a few years ago.

c) Brazil was supposed to grow it's production, and has been flat for the last two years.

d) Russia was supposed to grow also, and it appears that they are running fast just to stay flat.

3) Daqing – China

“Daqing is one of the world's largest fields and it is in all out decline.

In 2002 it was producing just over 1 million barrels a day from about 33,000 wells. By the end of 2006 it was producing only 880,000 barrels a day from about 45,000 wells. Total production down 10% from 33% more wells.

4) Battery Powered Cars – From China

http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/sep2008/gb20080929_875227.htm?chan=top+news_top+news+index+-+temp_global+business

Des Moines-based MidAmerican Energy, controlled by Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway (BRKA), plans to pay about \$231 million for a 10% stake in Chinese auto and battery maker BYD Co. which expects to roll out fully electric cars before the end of next year.

The deal represents Buffett's first strategic investment in China .

BYD made a splash at the Detroit Auto Show in January when it unveiled a prototype hybrid electric car which it said it would export to the U.S. by 2010. The backing of Berkshire Hathaway, which owns 87% of MidAmerican, will help BYD launch a fully electric car, selling for about \$20,000

U.S. Dealer Network

The success of the electric car program depends on the ready availability of charging centers, and that's where MidAmerican comes in. Sokol says the company will help set up charging facilities at traditional gas stations and shopping mall parking lots. As the company has the largest source of renewable energy in the country, much of which can be made available to charge car engines during off peak hours, says Sokol. "We can drop these charging stations anywhere," he says. "If you want a rapid charging one in your garage it will cost between \$2,500 and \$3,000 to install." He figures the annual energy cost to run a BYD-made electric car, based on 12,000 miles per year, would be about \$400, compared with \$2,400 for a traditional gas-powered car with fuel priced at \$4 per gallon. What's more, the energy consumed by an electric car in the U.S., assuming the national average of 51% of power supplied by coal, would produce just 2.5 tons of carbon dioxide, compared with six tons for a conventional car.

MidAmerican is also discussing with BYD how to set up a U.S. dealer network for the electric car, which would likely go head to head with offerings from industry heavyweights Toyota General Motors Ford ,and Chrysler. The electric cars will be initially shipped fully built, but assembly

in the U.S. would make more sense in the long run once volumes grow, he says.

BYD plans to begin selling the F3 DM (or dual mode) hybrid car by the end of the year in China, while it will roll out the fully electric car, called the E6, by the end of 2009.

Chat Room Follies

After the last issue concerning the chat room and those that ‘chirp along’, I received some email. Some interesting comments from some of those emails.

Concerning one county hunter - He got all worked up about one of the allegations tossed around: “It is a FACT someone turned in logs for another star. It is a FACT at least one of those contacts used was an illegal and invalid qso, the Stations license he contacted was expired.”

I then asked him had he checked the license status of each and every entry he had made to any of his books for tracking awards? He said nothing. Amazing, isn’t it? He would accuse others or repeat gossip, yet he himself had not checked every single one of his logged contacts?

Likely, it will take him the next two months to check the 3000 or so he now has in his log book for USACA. After all, he wouldn’t want to be ‘guilty’ of submitting an application that had a single contact with an ‘expired’ station license! The QSL card he got 15 or 20 or 40 years ago used for first time? Did the guy actually have a good license at the time? Or had it expired a month before and he didn’t realize it? How would you even check today for a contact 5 or 15 or 25 years ago? Oh, but what if he did have one?

The stations he worked in any of the state QSO parties? Did he check their license status before entering them, or sending them an MRC? Even

mobiles running on the county hunter net? Check the license status of each one before sending an MRC?

I'd bet \$10 there isn't a single county hunter out there that has verified the 'license status' of the operator they worked (at the time/date of the QSO) to see if there was a valid license in effect for every award they ever applied for. So one really has to wonder why he himself would repeat this bloviating! He had not done it himself, but happily 'chirped along' with the chat room crowd when the happily discovered an 'error' in one of the chat room episodes!

This was a case of someone other than the awards chairman obtaining copies of a log submission and going through it with a fine tooth comb and microscope, looking for an 'error'. Now, did these same folks spend the hours and hours of time doing the same for everyone else's logs? Or even their own logs? You gotta be kidding. Wisely, the awards chairperson saw through this, and since no other application had ever been scrutinized for 'license status' of all contacts, and the application had been submitted in good faith by the county hunter with the NORMAL diligence in making sure he had worked someone in each of the counties, the issue was simply dismissed.

In an ideal world, there is no QRN, no static and everyone is 59 or 599. In an ideal world, no one ever lets their license expire. Or moved and had the wrong county still on their QSL card. Or ran a county, then 'corrected it' later, but not in all the county hunter logs as the folks never got the 'correction'. In the real world, you do reasonable diligence to be sure you are logging things correctly. Only when the 'chat room crowd' goes on a witch hunt will they pull out all the stops, and do things that no one has ever done before to try and find 'an error'. I wonder if their own submissions would stand up to the same scrutiny? Likely not. You think KZ2P, with over 50,000 contacts used for awards, checked the license status of every single entry, for having a license, at the time he worked that operator? You gotta be kidding!

It's amazing what 'gossip' the chat room crowd passes around, and then they 'chirp along' bashing and trashing certain operators. I won't mention any calls. They know who they are. I sure hope they are now busy checking each and every contact they make, and have in the logs – all 100,000 or

200,000 or more of them. Heck, one of them might be used for a prefix award someday. Better be right!

End of discussion of the issue.

CW Skimmer

From ARRL at <http://www.arrl.org/news/features/2008/09/05/10317/?nc=1>

“*CW Skimmer* is a computer application that is making a big impression in Amateur Radio these days. It is a "multi-channel CW decoder and analyzer" that simultaneously decodes all CW signals in the receiver passband, waterfall displays the signals' dots and dashes with a resolution sufficient for reading visually, extracts call signs from the signals and labels the signals on the waterfall with the call signs.

“Every decade or so, something comes along that can substantially change the way we approach DXing and contesting. The next such innovation has arrived. CW Skimmer, just publicly announced, is shareware available from www.DXAtlas.com. Combined with your current transceiver or simple, very inexpensive Software Defined Radio (SDR) hardware that is already available, CW Skimmer will enable CW operators to be aware of everything that is going on across large swaths of any band. It will copy literally hundreds of signals on the band simultaneously (limited only by CPU capacity), and decode, recognize and list callsigns with their associated frequency.

You feed audio from your receiver (SDR or otherwise) to your computer's soundcard. CW Skimmer looks at the entire swath of spectrum it can "hear", identifies CW signals, and decodes them all! Then it looks at the decoded text and works to identify stations newly arrived on the band, stations calling CQ, etc. It generates a time-stamped list of these stations and their frequencies. You can pick out individual signals and enhance their readability by putting them through a tight DSP filter, or click on a station and move your transceiver to its frequency, but what is truly different about Skimmer is its mega-multi-tasking decoders.

You can read more about the features of this *Windows 98/ME/2000/XP* application on the *CW Skimmer* [page](#) of the DX Atlas Web site. To see *CW Skimmer* in action, there is a YouTube [video](#) you can view that demonstrates the program skimming beacons on 144 MHz.

Some hams are up in arms about using *CW Skimmer* in contests. Jamie Dupree, NS3T, has been following the contest issues on his radio-sport.net blog. Meanwhile, Pete Smith, N4ZR, wrote an excellent article addressing the features and concerns of *CW Skimmer*. Pete is also responsible for writing a *CW Skimmer* tutorial, which is suggested reading by the software's creator.

De N4CD: If you get CQ Magazine, nice article with pics there on CW Skimmer as well

On the Road with N4CD II

The planned trip to CA started in early September – I was off to the ASPO (Association for Study of Peak Oil) convention in Sacramento, CA the county hunter way – driving. The on line planners said it was about 2000 miles to get there – the short way. The car was loaded up for a two week trip. I checked the needs page – a few needs in TX, a few in NM, hardly any in AZ, and scattered needs in CA.

Since I had already finished up MP, there was no reason to run counties, other than helping out others, and filling in some ‘transmitted counties’ for second time around. That meant I had to hit Gila and Santa Cruz, AZ. The bad news is that I had been in Santa Cruz, and the band died for several hours – deader than a doornail. I sat not hearing a single signal on any band for over 2 hours, and had to leave to get to where I was headed. Maybe this time would be better?

It was west in TX after rush hour going west out the interstate. Scottie, N4AAT needed Reagan, TX for MP, so I took a detour down there and not that for him. After an overnight stop (Motel 6), I met up with Dave, KA5TQF, in El Paso County, TX, for a breakfast meet at the local IHOP.



KA5TQF Dave

Dave finished up first time, then stopped counting counties for 3 years. Lately, he decided he would start on second time and has been filling in counties left and right. With a big signal out of El Paso County, he had been helping on 14.336 until he was 'fired'. (see story last month). Now, he is having even more fun working all the mobiles out there, and operating both CW and SSB.

After a very pleasant two hour meet, I headed out to NM to get Sierra, NM for Joyce, N9STL, her last MP in NM. That worked out well – the bands were not great, but at least I had a dozen or more contacts from that part of the country. I headed west into AZ, hoping to make it to Globe, AZ for a motel – I had one reserved there.

It seems that before I got there, on the only road going there from the east, a small Tercel blew a tire, skidding across the road and did a head on with a bus. (the Tercel lost – 3 fatalities – only a few injuries on the bus). The

road was shut, and the highway patrol indicated it would be shut for at least 6 hours. It was backtrack 30 miles to the last town to find a motel. (Super 8 – waffle for breakfast).

The next morning, the road was open again, and it was off to Globe, AZ (Gila County), then south down to Santa Cruz, AZ. This time I had success and made contacts from the county, finishing of AZ for second time transmit. The next segment was over to Los Angeles – running all the counties there. I had run about 15 in CA so far, so that left one heck of a lot to go. Conditions from out west are more challenging. First, 30M works only part of the day to get back to the middle and east coast. 40M has SSB and other QRM on cw, but it can be good early and late, but not much in the middle of the day other than the ‘left coasters’ who need it – a small handful. I tried to run all 3 bands, and a few times had success on 17M.

After a short stop in LA, it was up through CA to Sacramento via some back roads. If you like twisty roads, you can start on 99 from 101 up through the canyons. Hundreds of twists in the road and you’ll average under 45 mph, maybe 30 in many segments. Scenic but slow. After an overnight stop in Buttonwillow, CA (Motel 6), it was again up through the hills hitting some counties off the interstate. The next night was in Jamestown, CA – old touristy town from the gold rush days. Not a whole lot of contacts in CA – had been ‘run to death’ by the convention attendees.

The Peak Oil Conference was in downtown Sacramento at the Hyatt Regency. They wanted \$179/night for a room, plus \$20 a day for parking your car in the garage! (6 foot clearance). Needless to stay, as a ‘frugal county hunter’, I elected to stay a mile away and pay \$176 for three nights at the Vagabond Motel. At the Hyatt Regency, if you drove it before 8am and parked all day, it was \$10/day parking. So I did it the ‘frugal way’. I had to take the antennas off the car to get in the garage – hauled them up to the motel room.

After 3 days of very interesting presentations, I was off to OR. Joyce, N9STL, and Scottie, N4AAT, each needed 3 or 4 in OR, and many of them were the same ones! Joyce had a fine signal from her QTH in IL, but Scottie from SC was worried about not being able to hear mobiles at that distance. He originally planned a ‘speed trip’ up to IL to work me, but last minute problems caused him to stay near home. However, Scottie now had a powerful alternative – CW!

I headed up Interstate 5 to OR. Had to skip running counties either side. Trinity is always needed, but is 20-30 miles off the interstate, and a 2 hour delay to get there and back, and run the county. I made it up to OR, got Douglas for N9STL, then headed west to get Coos and Curry.



N4CD Coos OR

The first part of the trip I wore shorts and tee-shirt. Naturally, for the conference I had to put on a short sleeve shirt and pants. After that, I put on my shorts again – well, that lasted until I got to OR, and the temps were in the low 70s during the day, and it drizzled, and went down to the 50s and 40s at night. Hmm...fall was arriving and summer in much of OR is not 'hot' like in TX. Fall is definitely cooler! After running north for another bunch of counties along 101, I then headed back to the interstate and decided to zip on home via UT. I was only getting a handful of contacts.

Scottie worked me on several bands on cw – usually 20 and often on 17M cw, and a few times on 30M cw. Signals not great, but the number of

contacts in the log were not many from most counties. (despite what W0QE says, having stars, MG, means nothing if folks just can't hear you to work you!). It was tough making contacts, and unless you really picked good spots to run, you had a hard time even getting heard.

My car is directional – about 2 S units on 20/30/40. Larry, W0QE, did the antenna tests two years ago (results were in earlier issue of the CHNews) showing the directionality of many mobiles and their set ups. So if I am out in CA or OR, I want to orient the car pointed east for best results. That isn't always possible! Along the coast, you have ridges and mountains right to the east. Often the road is cut into the west side of the ridges, meaning you are looking right into mountain sides. When I could, I got as far back from the ridges to have a 'low take off angle' that was clear – sometimes you could go down a beach road and get away from the ridge. Even on east-west highways, they often ran through valleys and signals were blocked. Finding a good spot to run was the challenge. You seldom ran 'the county line' as most were not in good places or you were not pointed in the right direction.

I saw a new road sign – “Tsunami Hazard Area!”. Dang, I guess you are supposed to listen for the tsunami warning sirens and know what to do if they go off. There are a few of them along the coast roads in OR at lower points in bays where you might be in danger. I'll add that to my list of “ELK” and “MOOSE” and “Snowmobiles Crossing” and “Low Flying Aircraft” and other things to watch out for! Hi Hi....

After an overnight stay in Curry, I headed north and then hit the interstate going east. All of a sudden there is this big booming signal from W8MP. Hey, he is in the same county! Now, how often do you suddenly run into a county hunter in the middle of Oregon along the interstate? (I did pass AA9JJ/N9QPQ along the same interstate about 10 years ago as they were stopped in a rest area giving out the county). Well, what do county hunters do if they can? Have an eyeball!



Bob N4CD Mark W8MP Phil AB7RW

Mark found himself out in that neck of the woods with 24 hours to kill. He is an airline pilot and was on a layover. He got in touch with Phil, AB7RW, and they hatched a plan to get some of each others needed counties in OR. We all hooked up in Hood River, OR.

Now, that's the easy way to work counties on 17M! From a few miles away – doesn't matter what the sunspot number is! After a pleasant eyeball and chat for a while, we went off in different directions – N4CD headed east toward WY, and the others headed to run some central OR counties.

You'll note the clouds and not so great weather – you can keep Oregon weather. As you head east, it gets very dry. Along the coast – clouds, cool, drizzle. Low temps too – 40s, 50s, and 60s.

Joyce needed two in UT, so it was down the interstate through ID to UT to run Cache and Morgan. I'm not sure why so many people go to Cache, but there is a 4 lane very busy highway going there. After 10 miles or so, you hit the county line, and a few miles later are some good spots to run. After

runs on all bands, it was back to the interstate and around on I84 to get Morgan UT, then over to Summit UT then into WY on I80. Not many motels after you leave the Salt Lake City/Ogden area – so I wound up in WY at the first town in a Motel 6. Dang – I had run all the WY counties along the interstate, but the fastest way home from Salt Lake is along I80 headed east, then down I25 in CO, out I70, then hit 287 all the way to TX and home. There wasn't anything new to hit for a long time, but I ran most of the counties along the way.

The 'good news' was that the Texas QSO party started on Saturday, and I could work mobiles on 20 and 40M! The bad news was that I was mobile in WY, and not in Texas giving out TX counties!

Around Denver, I headed east to Elbert, Prowers, then south to Kiowa and down into OKLA and into TX. The TX QSO party had been going on for a day by the time I made it to TX, but still I had 6 hours to have fun and give out counties.

Now, any 'mobile' of any level of achievement can give out counties in a state QSO party. There were dozens of mobiles out. Norm, W3DYA, was busy giving out counties on cw, along with K5SF on SSB, and K5OT helping out with multi-op K5NA. There were many fixed stations on the air, plus some SSB only mobiles and some mixed mode mobiles (SSB and CW). The DX was piling in, with LY2ZZ, DL3DXX, OK1APV, LY1CX, DL8USA, DL6KVA, CU2JT and others in there calling. Many of the 'contesters' including WA3HAE, W7OM, K7BG, N4PN, N6MU, were working anyone they could hear. Naturally, many county hunters were in there getting new ones, or prefixes or new band counties.

Some of the other mobiles were K5UN, N5NA, NO5W, KB6HWD, WW5X, WB0TEV, WC5D, KK5LO, W0BH, K5MRA, KB5U, and AC0HW.

Some mobiles ran 3 and 4 way county lines – requiring you to work them 3 or 4 times quickly to get all of the counties. You got more contacts and the mobile logged 3 or 4 contacts. Lots of fun. I managed to run through about 10 counties in the 5.5 hours I had. The contest ends early at 3pm, so the last part I just drove home, making a few runs. I was 'worn out'. So many counties, so little time!

I needed about 10 in TX. Didn't hear most of them – either I was busy elsewhere, or there was no propagation, or they were run on SSB and I

needed CW. I guess I'll have to find someone to go get them with me – QRP at 20 feet overcomes all propagation problems! Hi hi

Fun trip – 5000 miles or so – time for an oil change. Car has 212,000 miles on it. Barely broken in for some county hunters like W1TEE and N4AAT who put 370,000 miles on his Mazda truck. I don't know if I'll run it up that high. I haven't found anything I like better yet. As long as gas prices hang in there, I'll keep driving it. Gas ranged from \$3.95 in CA/OR to as low as \$3.36 in WY.

Hope I managed to hit something you needed! Overall, it was sure under 1 contact per mile on the trip – hardly something to write home about – but that's not why county hunters go mobile! Lots of contacts in the TQP per mile, but many with the same county hunters and just good contest fun. Working anybody from out west is a challenge – you hit a rare county and the folks show up. Run a common county and you are lucky to have six contacts in the log. That's the way it is with conditions.

Next big trip? Headed back to MD for Thanksgiving – but that is six weeks off. Maybe some recuperating and rest? You never know where N4CD will wind up!

Quick Disconnects – from WG6X

Ray, WG6X, mentions two of the Quick Disconnects available for screw driver type installations.



Don't know if you are interested or think it might be useful for the newsletter for comparison of quick disconnects, but here is a picture comparing the presently smaller one sold quick disconnect sold by several screwdrivers for attaching whips to the screwdriver, often bought to change out hamsticks, and sold by some dealers like WB0B and the larger one sold by Bleedlove Machine Shop.

I have been using both the smaller one and the original large one that as I understand was made by a machine shop sold through GLA systems until he married a rich woman and quit the business and recently picked up and now sold by Bleedlove Machine Shop. I just bought a couple and a couple top sections from Bleedlove machine Shop. I first used this larger one out in CA while running a large Bugcatcher and was able to change to hamstick for local running.

<http://members.fortunecity.com/breedlovemachineshop/page2.html>

73,

Ray

Awards

BINGO II #53 WD9HAW 8-20-08
BINGO II #54 AE3Z 8-21-08
USACA #1168 K5OT 8-25-08
USACA #1169 N5MLP 8-27-08
MASTER GOLD #31 AE3Z 8-24-08

Fourth TIME #137 AD8W 8-26-08
Second TIME #384 W3DYA 8-26-08
Third TIME #217 KY0E 8/28/08
BINGO II #55 N7PIB 8/29/08
USACA #1170 KB9YVT 9-03-08

MASTER GOLD #32 N7PIB 9/3/08
USA-CW II #20 W3DYA 9-7-08
5 STAR #37 N0ZA 9-8-08
5TH TIME #92 WD9HAW 9-9-08
USACA #1171, NU0Q, 9-26-08

Second Time #385 N5PR 9/12/08
Fourth Time #138 W0QE 9/12/08
BINGO II #56 WG6X 9/14/08
MASTER GOLD #33 KQ0B 9/16/08

Seventh Time #12 N4AAT 9/17/08
BINGO #302 AB7RW 9/19/08
MASTER GOLD #34 W0GXQ 9/20/08

Operating Events for County Hunters

California QSO Party

Serial and state/prov/"DX" or CA county www.cqp.org

4 Oct 1600Z - 5 Oct 2159Z

Pennsylvania QSO Party

Serial and ARRL/RAC section www.nittany-arc.net/paqso.html

11 Oct 1600Z - 12 Oct 2200Z CW-1.81 & 40 kHz above band edge, Phone-1.85,3.98,7.28,14.28,21.38,28.48,PSK31 calling freq, mobile 5 kHz lower.