



# ***THE FEEDBACK***

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Volume 04 Issue 07

July 2004

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*THE AMATEUR RADIO NEWSLETTER*

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Laurel Amateur Radio Club, Inc.

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## Upcoming Events:

Day	Date	Time	Freq	Event
Wed	07/07	2030	147.225+ PL156.7	On-the-Air Net
Wed	07/14	1900		Social Gathering at Sullivan's Steak & Beverage Co
Wed	07/21	2030	147.225+ PL156.7	On-the-Air Net
Wed	07/28	1930		Monthly Meeting @ Woman's Club of Laurel
Sat	08/14	1200		Maryland-DC QSO Party
Sun	08/15	1200		Maryland-DC QSO Party
All		2100	147.540 simplex	Informal Net / Rag-Chew

## Repeaters:

VHF: 147.225+ PL 156.7  
UHF: 442.500+ PL 156.7

## Simplex:

VHF: 147.540  
UHF: 445.975

**Next Meeting:  
July 28, 2004 1930 EDT  
Be There or Be Fishing!**

## President's Ramblings

Well, Field Day is over for another year. What with delays in obtaining permission to use the field, and some other things, the situation became somewhat hectic, but at last we were ready for key down at 2 p.m., give or take a couple. The help was good and willing, although not as many as we would have liked.

The one thing that all agreed on was that any who did not come have reason to regret missing a truly fine time. The weather was great, and those who spent the night slept well, if not long. Present were Ed K3QX, Chuck KB3KTX, Jeff KB3EQH, Kevin WV3D, and his son, Brian, Toby WB3BWR, Charles AA3WC, and his son, Bill, Jim WI3N and his grandson, Dennis KT3D, Jim Reid, and Joe N3TZA. To find out what you missed, just ask any one of those.

Don't forget about the Fourth of July Parade Saturday July 3.

Also prepare your schedules to make Room for the MDC QSO Party which will be MORE fun.

73,  
Joe, N3TZA

## Editors's note on Field Day

This is the third issue of the Feedback in a two month stretch. I got a late start on the April issue so I had to squeeze three issues in where we would normally have had only 2. As a result I think I've managed to squeeze my major contributors of articles dry for the time being! On the afternoon of Thursday, July 22, I will be hitting the road for a week's fishing in Canada so please have any and all contributions for the August Feedback in by the evening of July 21. Any contribution, large or small, will be gladly accepted. It's much better to have articles from the members than to fill the Feedback out with ARRL articles!

Our Field Day Coordinator and VP Kevin, WV3D, has promised to put an article on Field Day 2004 together for the August issue. We'll be looking forward to seeing that next issue. While we're waiting for the formal report I'll give you my informal take on Field Day 2004 and LARC.

Laura and I started Saturday by driving over to the Taste Diner in Laurel for breakfast. I checked in with Joe N3TZA on the way over. He asked me to stop at the Field Day site to make sure that the gate was unlocked – it was – one worry out of the way. Service was slooooooow at the Diner that morning so by the time I took Laura back home and found the various bits of misplaced equipment that I imagined that I needed for field day and waited forever in the supermarket line to buy ice and soda and the shortcut that turned out not to be so short I barely made it to the Field Day site in time to help set up the tent.

We got a portable antenna up and running on 20 meters. At that point I had to leave for a few hours as I had another obligation. When I returned, an inverted V wire antenna for 40 and 80 meters had been erected and we had 2 operators busy trying to make contacts.

Twenty meters was jammed on SSB phone! We were hindered by having only a small antenna for this band. Jeff KB3EQH had his first opportunity to work HF and came away inspired to get his general

ticket. I worked this band for several hours and contacts were sometimes 2 hours apart! It was almost impossible to tune away from a QSO – stations were everywhere. Each time a station would call “CQ Field Day CQ Field Day” the roof would fall in and I was blown off the air by the big guns. Every now and again I would get through. I kept going back to one particularly strong station in North Texas for hours and until I heard “I have a Romeo Charlie and an Ocean America – Romeo Charlie please go ahead” – that was us – W3LRC – finally! About 1:30 a.m. my internal batteries started going flat so I decided it was time to head home for a snooze. When I left Chuck KB3KTX and Kevin WV3D were hard at the 40 meter band

The dog woke me later that morning and I drove back over to the Field Day site. During the evening and early morning hours 80 meters had opened up and Chuck and Kevin made quite a few contacts. In fact Kevin got in one final contact just seconds before we wrapped up at 2:00 p.m. We sat around for a while making a list of the things to remember for next year. I sure hope we still have that piece of paper! After that it was tear down the tent, tear down the antenna, load the truck, head for the shack. As Joe N3TZA said you really missed a good one if you didn’t show up. I’m already looking forward to next year.

### The 2004 Maryland-DC QSO Party

The 2004 Maryland-DC QSO party will be held from August 14 1600 UTC to August 15 0400 UTC and August 15 1600 to 2359 UTC. That’s Saturday, August 14 from noon to midnight EDT and Sunday, August 15 from noon to 1959 EDT. LARC won this event 4 years running from 1996 through 1999 and took second in 2000. Since then we have fallen off a good bit but we intend to make a big turn around this year!

I have volunteered to coordinate the LARC assault on this contest and I need your help to make this a success for each member and the Club as a whole. Whatever you can do in this contest will be critical to our success. If you can only make a single QSO from your base station, please do it! We need everybody’s participation as each point counts!

I have the recommended logging software but we might well be able to use some laptop computers at the shack. We do have some machines in the shack but I’m unsure at this point how they will perform so I like to know that we have some backup. A critical need will be to have HF operators, especially those who can do CW in the shack. We need to make contact with the other states and DX entities for QSO points and multipliers. CW QSO’s are worth 3 times as much as phone so I hope we can do CW. We also need mobile operators, VHF operators in the shack, and loggers.

We have an antenna party planned at the shack for Saturday, August 7. We need to do a bit of work on the beam and get a couple of extra antennas up. The start time has not been set yet but try to make it – all help is welcome and needed.

Please let me know if you can participate in the Contest in any form. Send me an E-mail at [powerpro80@yahoo.com](mailto:powerpro80@yahoo.com) or call me at home (301-871-2698), office (301-713-3267 x135), or on my cell phone (240-498-8432).

I will be sending more info out on the Club’s plans. More details on the Maryland-DC QSO party can be found at <http://www.w3cwc.org/funcontest.htm>

===== ARRL News =====

==>UTILITY CUTS SHORT BPL TRIAL THAT WAS TARGET OF AMATEUR COMPLAINTS

Alliant Energy has called an early end to its broadband over power line (BPL) pilot project in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The "evaluation system" went live March 30, and plans called for keeping it active until August or September. Alliant shut it down June 25. Ongoing, unresolved HF interference from the system to retired engineer Jim Spencer, W0SR, and other amateurs prompted the ARRL to file a complaint to the FCC on Spencer's behalf demanding it be shut down and the utility fined.

Alliant Energy's BPL Project Leader Dan Hinz says the ARRL complaint "certainly was a factor" in the utility's decision to pull the plug prematurely but "not the overriding factor." The main reason, he said, was that Alliant accomplished most of its objectives ahead of schedule. The primary purpose of the Cedar Rapids evaluation was to gain an understanding of BPL technology and what issues might be involved in a real-world deployment, Hinz explained. But, he added, regulatory uncertainty and other unspecified technical issues also factored into the choice to end the pilot early.

Hinz said Alliant is "mashing the data" to compile a written evaluation Of the Cedar Rapids pilot, but the company has no plans at this point to move forward with BPL. Alliant did not partner with a broadband services provider, and it has no other BPL test systems in operation. The system used Amperion BPL equipment.

According to Spencer, five fixed Amateur Radio stations within proximity of the BPL evaluation system and two mobile stations formally reported BPL interference on HF. "The radio amateurs and Alliant Energy cooperated by sharing interference information," he said. "Alliant Energy turned the BPL evaluation system off twice to allow collection of extensive BPL frequency and signal level data--with and without BPL." He said Alliant and Amperion tried various "notching" schemes to rid amateur frequencies of the BPL interference with only limited success.

The system included both overhead and underground BPL links to feed 2.4 GHz wireless "hot spots" for end user access. Hinz said the area's topography presented some challenges, especially with the wireless links. "I think in the end, we actually over-challenged ourselves with this specific pilot location," he said. And, despite "substantial progress" in mitigating interference, Alliant decided at this point that "it wasn't worth the extra effort" to resolve the thornier technical issues, Hinz added.

As for any broader implications, Hinz says he's always viewed BPL as a "strategic deployment technology," not one a company could roll out just anywhere and expect to be competitive with existing broadband services such as cable and DSL. "At least that's how we were looking at it," he said. "You have to find the right areas with the right topography with the right concentration of certain types of customers," he said.

"It's never been in my mind that BPL has to compete with the speeds of cable today," Hinz added. "It has to compete with the speeds of cable and the next best thing tomorrow as well, if it's going to be usable well into the future." He hinted that Alliant might want to take another look at BPL once the FCC has put BPL rules and regulations into place, and the technology has further evolved.

The ARRL's formal complaint to FCC Enforcement Bureau Chief David H. Solomon called on the Commission not only to close down Alliant's BPL field trial system but to fine the utility \$10,000 for violating the Communications Act of 1934 and FCC Part 15 rules. Commenting on the termination of the Cedar Rapids BPL trial, ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ, pointed out that Alliant had tried for more than 12 weeks to fix the interference problem to a station 600 feet from its installation.

"In the end," Sumner said, "the interference was not eliminated except by shutting down the BPL system. Could the case against BPL deployment be any clearer?"

Spencer said he was happy with Alliant's decision, and he was gracious in expressing appreciation to the utility for working with him. "And thanks also to the ARRL and the Cedar Rapids BPL Steering Committee for their knowledge and efforts in making a truly professional evaluation," he added.

Still outstanding are some chronic power line noise problems Spencer has experienced.

For additional information, visit the "Broadband Over Power Line (BPL) and Amateur Radio" page on the ARRL Web site <<http://www.arrl.org/bpl>>. To support the League's efforts in this area, visit the ARRL's secure BPL Web site <<https://www.arrl.org/forms/development/donations/bpl/>>.

==>UPLC COMMENT SHOWS BPL CAMPAIGN STARTING TO PAY OFF, HAYNIE SAYS

ARRL President Jim Haynie, W5JBP, says a remark the United Power Line Council (UPLC) made recently about Amateur Radio shows that the League's BPL message is getting through. In its reply comments on the FCC's BPL Notice of Proposed Rule Making in ET Docket 04-37, the UPLC's Brett Kilbourne claimed that members of the BPL industry are the real experts on the technology, "not a misinformed set of armchair amateurs that still use vacuum tube transmitters." A subsequent UPLC press release repeated the swipe, drawing a storm of protest from the amateur community. Haynie said this week that he took comfort rather than offense at the intended affront.

"I thought that the comment was a good indicator that the work that the League has been doing on multiple fronts is beginning to pay off," Haynie said. The League's FCC filings, technical studies and information on BPL, he said, have made it "very embarrassing" for the BPL industry to keep insisting "that the emperor is wearing clothes," so it's resorted to name calling instead.

Haynie said he remains puzzled that the BPL industry appears unwilling to support its claims that "the risk of interference from BPL is extraordinarily low, because it produces only minimal radio frequency energy at a few points in the system," as the UPLC's press release asserts. Any harmful interference that does occur, the UPLC claims, can be "mitigated" using a variety of techniques, "including frequency notching or frequency shifting."

"Just saying 'We said it's not going to interfere' is not going to cut it," he said. Haynie challenged the BPL industry to sponsor independent, professional engineering evaluations of the technology's interference risk. "Let's see what they've got."

Haynie said that while he found the UPLC's "armchair amateurs" remark amusing, its severe criticism of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Phase 1 BPL report and comments in The proceeding raised his eyebrows a bit. In its press release, the UPLC said "NTIA's recommendations and ARRL's naysaying are misguided" and that the UPLC has "forcefully replied" to interference concerns.

"For Mr Kilbourne to come out and say they [NTIA] don't know what they're talking about, he might as well shoot himself in the foot," Haynie said, pointing out that the White House, which is promoting BPL, is putting a lot weight on the NTIA's recommendations.

In its comments, the UPLC said the NTIA's approach was "fundamentally at odds with the Part 15 rules" and "unjustified" by BPL's interference potential.

In response to the criticism leveled from the amateur community, the UPLC declared its "support for Amateur Radio remains unabated," but expressed concern for "uninformed armchair quarterbacking by a small number of amateurs." The UPLC also said it has "sought to work with ARRL," citing its offer to help resolve "a complaint in Cedar Rapids, Iowa." Alliant Energy prematurely shut down its BPL pilot system in Cedar Rapids June 25. Interference complaints from amateurs were a factor in the utility's decision.

## THE LAUREL AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

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