



SARA Newsletter

December 2003

Shreveport Amateur Radio Association

Meeting:

First Thursday of each month at 6:30 P.M. in the Bossier Main Library History Center

Local Amateur Information

Available at:

www.qsl.net/nwlarn/

SARA Repeaters:

145.050 - K5SAR
DX Packet Cluster
145.110 - N5FJ
146.700 - K5KDO
146.820 - K5SL
440.900 - N5FJ

SARA

PO Box 37632

Shreveport, LA

71133-7632

2004 Club Officers

President – David Crosby,

K5SRZ

Vice President – Glenn Pettiet,

K5TGP

Treasurer – Randy Fulco,

K5SL

Secretary – Laura Webb,

KD5IHT

EchoLink on the 146.82 Repeater

From conception to now...

For several years, hams could talk to other hams via voice over the Internet. Depending on how fast your modem connection was you could have an almost steady voice conversation via a dial up modem. I-Link is a ham to ham voice chat which first appeared almost three years ago. Roughly two years ago EchoLink was born with more features, and a world wide server system to all continents. Designed for ham to ham contacts, EarthLink employs call sign verification to allow only hams connection to locations anywhere in the world and use a remote transceiver. Links to homes, repeater sites, or even HF base stations were possible. With high speed Internet now available to the general population, streaming voice via the Internet became a reality. Links via the EchoLink system have been up for over a year to hams all over the world.

Clint, VK2ACM, is a pioneer in our area of discovering HF and VHF links in all parts of the globe via EchoLink. Clint regularly talks to friends back home on repeaters in Sydney using his home PC. When 10 meters is not open he can still communicate with friends in Australia. Clint, Rick (K5VXT), and others have friends in far-away places that can communicate via EchoLink even when the ionosphere does not cooperate.

The possibility of an EchoLink connection to a local repeater has been discussed informally several times. To be on vacation, out of town on work, or have ham friends from another country connect and talk on the repeater is a novel idea. However, the potential for enhanced communications during regional emergencies, for Home Land Security, or coordinating local events may be the biggest plus for the area.

Rick Ware (K5VXT) brought EchoLink to the attention of the Bossier Marshall's Office (BMO) who also recognized the communication potential of EchoLink during disasters or emergencies. Distant hams could listen in and participate; the State EOP office in Baton Rouge could monitor regional situations, as well as local officials using it for emergency backup communications. BMO decided to fund the purchase of the equipment for an EchoLink link. (Something which all EchoLink users should to be remembered.)

Rick and Clint asked Randy, K5SL, trustee of K5SL/R (146.82), if the repeater could be used for EchoLink and what equipment it would require. He informed Rick that the 146.82 controller has a remote base port that has been ready since 1993, and used for a 29.6 FM monitor on a test

basis a few years ago. The other necessary equipment would be two UHF transceivers, two antennas, a computer interface, a computer and a high-speed Internet connection.

Slowly, the necessary equipment was purchased for the BMO side. The original 146.82 repeater controller was reprogrammed and updated from its original install in 1993. (Yes it has been on Schumpert ten years now and with a free auto patch!). After many hours of wiring interfaces, modifying radios, and configuring PCs it finally materialized in November, 2003. K5BMO/L was on the air in late November.

The K5BMO/L equipment is all owned by the Bossier Marshall's Office and the link transceiver at the 146.82 repeater site is on loan from BMO. T1 Internet connection enables up to four users via the Internet at once. It is a 24 by 7 dedicated system with a very fast PC. Audio levels to and from the Internet have been set by trial and error and will probably require additional attention. It is now very readable. Reports of 146.82 audio being heard on the Internet via the K5BMO/L link are consistently "one of the better audios on the EchoLink system."

Notes on Usage of EchoLink

The intention for the K5BMO link to K5SL/R via the Internet is for out of town hams or hams out of the normal range of the receiver to be able to communicate with hams within range. We invite all club members to respond to EchoLink guests and make them feel welcome to our area. We even suggest club members invite DX ham friends to try it out. Local hams should also download the software, check your soundcard on the test server, and then try a link somewhere in the world. The novelty of EchoLink is tremendous, wanting to "hear yourself" on the repeater is understandable. However, continued local use is frowned upon, use your radio instead and give the available slots to someone outside of the ArkLaTex.

If you use EchoLink to talk to other hams, invite them to connect to K5BMO/L themselves. The K5BMO/L system is probably better than 99% of those out there. The T1 connection and 2 GHz laptop provide the speed and power necessary to accept four simultaneous users from the Internet. If you hear the 146.82 repeater announcing a connected call via the link, please invite the ham into the QSO. Keep transmissions short – it is still a repeater. Invite other repeater listeners to say hello. It would make the connected ham want to stop by again.

K5SL/R users will hear a 1000Hz tail beep on the repeater to indicate repeater is transmitting and receiving audio with K5BMO/L. However, the K5SL/R controller can disable its link transceiver entirely for emergency situations or public service events. A 500 Hz tail beep indicates the repeater is only receiving audio from K5BMO/L and EchoLink. Repeater user's audio have priority override over EchoLink audio. If the repeater is busy, you may not hear a voice announcement of an Internet connect from K5BMO/L, so pausing between exchanges helps. An EchoLink user needs at least three seconds to key up the K5BMO/L link transmitter. Additionally, delays of the repeater and link radios connecting to the Internet may chop off the first second or two of the repeater user's transmission to the Internet as well. Keying the mic for a second before speaking will help avoid this problem too.

Things are still in the growing and learning stages of its use. The use of "over" sure helps EchoLink users know you are throwing it back to him to transmit. Dragging your feet on the repeater helps doubling. The squelch tail is as short as can be programmed and will be followed by either a 1000 Hz or 500 Hz tone if the EchoLink link radio is operating. Remember, once again, as always—listen, then listen again you may be jumping into a conversation between a local user and his friend coming in on the Internet. Use your call if you want to come into the conversation. The system was put up for all to enjoy. Email, or better yet, send HF traffic to a ham friend who you have not heard from and get him to connect via K5BMO/L if you can not make a regular HF scheduled QSO or invite them to the Wednesday night net at 8:30 PM. If K5SL/R seems to be dominated by

uninteresting EchoLink traffic, please move to a different repeater or a simplex frequency for a while. If absolutely necessary, interrupt an EchoLink QSO for just a moment and request your party meet you on another frequency.

The quietness and outstanding audio of a multi-user ham QSO using a PC to PC EchoLink connection should be experienced by every ham. Hopefully, the K5BMO/L EchoLink connection to K5SL/R in Shreveport can be another innovative area for experimentation and pleasure for the hams in our area. Packet Cluster was in the early 90's. **K5SL, K5VXT, VK2ACM**

HAMVENTION 2004 SEEKS AWARD NOMINEES

Nominations close January 31 for the Hamvention 2004 Radio Amateur of the Year, Technical Excellence and Special Achievement awards.

The Radio Amateur of the Year is an individual with a long term commitment to the advancement of Amateur Radio--a well-rounded amateur who has contributed in an exceptional manner to Amateur Radio.

The Technical Excellence award goes to an amateur who has made an outstanding technical contribution to advance Amateur Radio. This could include, but is not limited to, a revolutionary equipment design or operational mode that has positively influenced the day-to-day operation of many amateurs.

The Special Achievement award honors an outstanding contribution to the advancement of Amateur Radio and typically recognizes an amateur who has spearheaded a significant project.

All amateurs are eligible for any of these awards, and the Hamvention Awards Committee makes the final decision on recipients, based in part on the information submitted on the nominee's behalf (and not on the number of nominations). Documentation to support a nomination is essential. This could be in the form of magazine articles, newsletters, newspaper clippings or videos. All materials become the property of Hamvention and will not be returned.

Submit nominations by mail to Awards Committee, Hamvention 2004, PO Box 964, Dayton OH 45401, or complete the on-line Nominating Form on the Hamvention 2004 Web site <<http://www.hamvention.org>> (click on "Award Nominations"). Nominees are responsible for submitting substantiating documentation via mail by January 31, 2004.

Hamvention 2004 is May 14-16.

ARRL Emergency Communications

course registration: Registration opens Monday, January 5, 12:01 AM Eastern Time (0501 UTC), for the on-line ARRL Level I Emergency Communications course (EC-001). Registration remains open through the January 10-11 weekend or until all available seats have been filled--whichever comes first. Class begins Tuesday, January 20. Thanks to our grant sponsors--the Corporation for National and Community Service and the United Technologies Corporation--the \$45 registration fee paid upon enrollment will be reimbursed after successful completion of the course. During this registration period, approximately 175 seats are being offered to ARRL members on a first-come, first-served basis. Senior amateurs are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity. To learn more, visit the ARRL Certification and Continuing Education Web page <<http://www.arrl.org/cce/>> and the C-CE Links found there. For more information, contact Emergency Communications Course Manager Dan Miller, K3UFG, <dmiller@arrl.org>; 860-594-0340.