The Titusville Communicator

TARC April SITREP

By Paul Fee ~ N6PDF

This is going to be a newsletter that's primarily focused on a specific event, because we just spent an AMAZING weekend conducting that event ~ and it was PHENOMENAL!

Thank you to everyone that jumped in and participated in the 2025 Florida QSO Party! There were so many superlative things that happened, that I'm going to run out of superlatives! First of all, huge thanks to Tom KN4GLO and Sally KN4HPX for the use of their ranch and their incredible hospitality. We could not do this without their kind support. Neither could we do events like these without the amazing support of Roy N4RKM and Stephanie K4MVO with the delicious foods, drinks, snacks, and other things that they thoughtfully provide. Then there was the setup crew, the operating crew, the repair crew, the entertainment crew, and all of the other necessary activities that went on throughout the weekend. Truly an epic event for all who jumped in and made it all come together.

To the meat of the subject: The Florida QSO party itself. The event coordinator was Mike KW4DX (Cool callsign!) and he magically pulled it all together, with a final result that simply boggles the mind. We got set up on Saturday starting at 9 AM, and quickly assembled the antenna components and readied the stations. The two new IC-7300 rigs worked great!! The proof is in the pudding, as they say!

Over the course of the event, we totaled 527 QSOs all across the nation and around the world. Our unofficial score shows 33,856 points, which has been submitted for scoring. Official results will be published as soon as they are available. Needless to say, this is a *dramatic* improvement from our past events, and we should be very proud of how far we've come so fast!

N6PDF ~ TARC President

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Paul

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The Sausage-Making Behind the '25 FL QSO Party

By Paul Fee ~ N6PDF

It's very easy to think that the events we conduct each year just happen by magic, but they don't. The success or failure of our events and our projects are 100% dependent upon the efforts and energies of our members.

Mike KW4DX stepped up to the plate and volunteered to be the event coordinator last month, and he immediately star ted a publicity campaign, using social media, this newsletter, and email/TXT to get everyone motivated and coordinated. Equipment was readied, and resources were lined up to support this event. In the final week, Mike was really pushing to get things ready. It all paid off on Saturday morning when we all showed up to get the show on the air. We had volunteers lined up to start collecting contacts, had folks cooking and preparing food, and we had support people doing everything necessary to get the best signal out on the air. We assembled the various antennas, tested their SWR, and adjusted as necessary for the best signal. We swapped out the multi-band "fan" dipole for the end fed shunt dipole, which turned out to be the better antenna system. There was some noticeable "splatter" from one radio to another even with the band-pass filters, and we'll continue to improve upon this configuration as time moves forward. Tom found some improvement opportunities on his new switching system, and he'll work those out before the next event.

We had a brand new member show up, and jump right into the fray! Everyone enjoyed the participation of Greg KK4LWB who came to visit, ended up joining, and stepping right up to the console and racked up many, many contacts! Good job Greg!!

All good things must come to an end, so at the completion of the QSO Party, we disassembled and stowed the gear, collected up all of the logs and data, and cleaned up after ourselves and make sure everything is ready for the next event.

It was mentioned that the HF beam we used needs a little adjustment for phone band use. That's a great project and we can get together and do that. Another possibility is using a different antenna all together. If that's what works best, let's do it! Looking forward to Summer Field Day!

Exploring VHF Packet Radio in Amateur Radio!

As demonstrated at this months meeting, VHF packet radio and Winlink can be powerful tools in the amateur radio hobby, especially for digital communication and emergency off-grid comms. VHF packet radio operates on the 2-meter band (144–148 MHz), using the AX.25 protocol to send small data packets between stations. Packet radio is especially valued for its ability to transmit data reliably over short to medium distances without voice.

Winlink, on the other hand, is a global messaging system that allows amateur radio operators to send and receive emails via radio. When paired with a VHF packet setup, it becomes a low-bandwidth, infrastructure-independent email service ideal for emergencies or off-grid use. With a terminal node controller (TNC) or software modem, a computer, and a VHF transceiver, operators can connect to local Winlink RMS (Radio Message Server) gateways. This combination of VHF packet and Winlink strengthens an operator's ability to communicate when traditional methods fail. It fosters technical skills, supports community service, and showcases amateur radio's versatility. Setting up and operating a packet setup is not expensive or extremely difficult, in fact it's fairly simple.

1. Gather the Required Equipment

VHF Transceiver – A 2-meter FM radio (handheld, mobile or base station). Antenna – VHF antenna with appropriate coax. TNC (Terminal Node Controller) or Sound Card Interface – Converts digital signals to audio tones. Computer – Runs packet radio software and interfaces with TNC. An inexpensive Raspberry Pi works great. Cables – Audio, data, and possibly serial/USB cables, depending on your gear.

2. Connect the Hardware

Connect the computer to the TNC (via USB or serial).Connect the TNC to the radio's mic and speaker ports (or data port if available). Attach the antenna to the radio and ensure proper SWR and grounding.

3. Install and Configure Software

For traditional TNCs, use software like: Winlink Express (for email) UISS, AGWPE, or Direwolf (for general packet comms)

4. Test the System

Monitor the frequency (Typically 144.390) Try to connect to a local digipeater or Winlink RMS gateway.

5. Practice and Operate

Learn the commands your TNC uses to send/receive data, messages and emails. Explore ways to utilize VHF packet to enhance your capabilities and preparedness for whatever needs arise.

Pictures from the Florida QSO Party 2025

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TARC General Membership Meeting Minutes 04-22-25

President, N6PDF: Call the meeting to order at 7:02 pm, followed by the Vice President, KN4AQJ, leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Those in attendance introduced themselves, and it was determined that we had a Quorum.

A Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously Approved to accept the membership of returning/renewing member John Messina WD4DIR.

A Motion was made and seconded, then unanimously Approved to accept the meeting minutes for March 25, 2025, as printed in the newsletter. Treasurer, Steve, NA4SA, read the Treasurer's Report and a Motion was made to accept it as read, which was then, Seconded, and unanimously Approved.

President, N6PDF, announced our Weekly Net Times/Net Controls, and added the 2 meter single sideband net run by George Swire WG4ES, on Mondays at 7pm, to list of nets in our area. Paul N6PDF stated that all TARC repeaters are functioning.

The Status of Old or Unfinished business is as follows:

a. New By-Laws: Ongoing. Board will address at upcoming meeting.

b. Assets/Equipment Inventory: Roy N4RKM: completed.

c. Communications Trailer Ramp Repair: Tom KN4GLO: near completion, last remaining task is the seal (N6PDF.)

d. Communications Trailer Band Pass Filter Project: Tom KN4GLO: completed.

e. 501 (c) (3) Application: Stephanie K4MVO: ongoing.

f. Mission Statement and Club Future: Paul N6PDF: ongoing.

g. Installation of the 2, new ICOM-7300 Radios in the Comm Trailer: Tom KN4GLO: completed.

h. July 4th, 13 Colonies Special Event: if there is interest, Barry N4NMF, will take the lead: ongoing.

i. Participation in the Florida QSO Party: Mike KW4DX: Ongoing this weekend at Tom and Sally Fuller's QTH.

j. ARRL Field Day – June 28 – 29, 2025: Ongoing – need a Lead and Team for this event.

The following New Business was discussed:

a. Treasurer, Steve NA4SA, mentioned funds were needed to renew the license tags for both the Communications and Tower Trailers; a Motion was made, seconded and unanimously Approved to spend at the amount not to exceed $75.00.

b. Paul N6PDF, asked if there was interest is setting a Date, Time and select a venue for a membership recognition dinner. A Motion was made, Seconded, and Approved to organize this event, with Paul N6PDF at the lead.

Our Speakers for the evening were our President, Paul Fee N6PDF, member Dave Black AF6Q, and VP Keith Desoto, KN4AQJ. Paul and Dave gave us an interesting and thorough explanation of the recent addition of Solar Power Telemetry Capability at the Denman Repeater site using Packet Radio. This was followed by Keith, demonstrating a fun Loop Antenna for AM Radios. Then Paul N6PDF wrapped-up by giving a 'Hands-On' demonstration of installing Crimp vs Solder Connectors on RG8/RG58 cables.

Following a call for membership input and comments by President, Paul N6PDF, the meeting was Adjourned at 8:10 PM. This was followed by a lively social time which concluded at 9:10 PM

Respectfully submitted by

TARC Secretary, Stephanie Merritt K4MVO

Weekly On-the-Air Nets

Name	Frequency	Day	Time	Net Control
Skywarn Net	146.970 MHz	Tuesday	7:00 PM	Barry N4NMF
Mosquito Net	28.333 MHz USB	Wednesday	7:00 PM	George WG4ES
Friendship/ Traders Net	146.970 MHz	Thursday	7:00 PM	Keith KN4AQJ