

The SPARC NEWSLETTER

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A publication of the Southern PA Amateur Radio Club

Harry Bauder, N3FMO President

David Keener K3IWU Vice President

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Ryan Estock K3RDE Secretary

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Field Day Report 2026

by the whole group.

So last year, I had a little two paragraph blurb as a report on the venerable SPARC FD effort, but this year, I have done my best to cajole more info, pictures, and maybe whatever else comes of it. So this year is more than just two paragraphs. This time I spent some cajoling, whining, moaning, begging and other forms of motivation to mention “atta-boy’s” to all those who contributed, and pictures of the fun for the newsletter.

The precise pregame FD plans were to erect three stations with antennas, physically spaced far apart, utilize the club filters on each of them, and run the lot off batteries or generator, depending on what was needed. Separate antennas would be experimented with, along the way, to see what seemed to work.

We also planned and had this swell A+ “public relations” tent and signage right by the entrance, with flashing lights, and even some people stopping by. (who?) I have to say that it was a vunderbar real class act for us! (no pix – dang.) This will undoubtedly give someone an idea of what that funny club on the hill are doing. Maybe a new ham or two will also come from this effort. No matter what, it is a beautiful outreach, for a bunch of neuro-diverse radio nerds, showing other people what we are passionate about.



Anyway, we had to set up the tents and radio mess, and get on the air by 2'ish, when the FD started. Instead of sweating out contact rates, the goal was more laid back, e.g. do a bit of casual operating, eat some burgers and dogs, drink some cokes and whatever, and mostly hang out. And if you got tired, or what else, you could just head home whenever you wanted to. We planned also to tear down on Sunday after the contest ended.

I think that is exactly what happened, so great work guys! I was especially gratified to find so many at the club site even on Sunday morning, operating right up until the end, and then helping tear things down and clean up. Thank you again, to all who did this.

Same as last year, Mark, K3MRK, brought and manned his smooth, fancy, grill to launch dogs and burgers. But this year, 60 swell hamburgers of lancaster-home-raised burger meat, along with chipped beef for philly-style subs was provided by Ryan, K3RDE, who slaughtered his cow. Your editor ceremonially ate the last cheeseburger, slathered with mayo with horse-radish, after doing a chipped beef sandwich earlier. Yum! Maybe I will trade in the horse for a cow.



So here's some of the participants: Mark Walton – K3MRK, Scott Lithgow – KN3A, Ryan Estock – K3RDE and ???- who dat? - in grey shirt, and one of Mark's batteries that ran the rigs the whole time. These batteries impressed me. They lasted the whole weekend, running a typical HF rig at 100 watts. One is surely on my radar. Father's day?

OK, I asked for some pictures, and Don, KD3BVK, sent me these. I was busy playing and doing antenna things, but I noticed that Don was taking these pictures while we were setting up. Kudos to him, otherwise there wouldn't be any photos to write about.

Incidentally, if you find no picture of yourself, doing whatever at FD, then take a picture of yourself next year, and SEND it to me. Also, if you contributed to FD in any way that I didn't mention, next time, please SEND me a note, picture, or whatever, so I can include mentioning you. Also, if you are in a picture as "???", then wear a call letter hat or something. Then you will be archived forever, in this club newsletter, or such, you know, the club record, for all eternity, ok?

Anyway, sundry dipoles were hung from towers and the one old telephone pole. Among others, we hung up a 40 M dipole, an 80 M dipole, and a 20 M EFHW. Some of us tried ground verticals, too. There are also already a lot of dipoles around the club site, so maybe we could better organize where to hang what for next year, but whatever. It's supposed to be unplanned, so we did that part right.

Also, pulleys and ropes at the top of all the towers would be a good future addition. Maybe next time someone climbs up a tower, give them a length of black para-cord, and a pulley to leave up there for FD. Just a thought. Can you see any of the antennas?



We drank cokes and water, and no 807's, because we are not insured for that, but really mostly because most of us are getting up there in years, and would just fall asleep after one. But look at this spread in the shack:



Some brought sides, but who brought the Chips Ahoy chunkies? A FD must, I think. Anyway, there were at most, three stations, one for 80/20 one for 40/FT8, and one ersatz for 10. Here's one pix of Dan Tracey – KD3BVL and Zach Gerber – KC3LKC with a bunch of advisors showing interest and listening in to all the bedlam:



Here's also Dan and Zach, discussing how to fidget with the PC logging setup.



Incidentally, the software was Jason's, N8WXZ's installed code, so thanks Jason, for setting up and maintaining it. I forget what kind it was, but it is easy enough to set up and learn how to use. All you have to do is run the server code on PC number 1, by simply turning it on first, and then turn on the other machines. All done. All the other PCs communicate over the WiFi and will find the server, and start to log their data to it. If you happen to be operating, you then enter your call, initials, mode, and which band you are on.

Everything from then on gets logged in under your name, and band. It is quite easy to use, but Jason gave me a short tutorial on how to set up and use it. I have the movie, but maybe we should save it somewhere, like on the website, if anyone wants to learn how to use the

computers for logging before next FD comes around. Here's a picture inside the shack, just because.



Power was completely external of the power grid, for all the stations, both CW and SSB, using batteries and even solar power. We had a generator from Scott, KN3A, and/or Ryan, K3RDE, I think, but we never even needed it, or the 5 gallons of gasoline I brought. The bands this year were ok ...not great, but ok. No, there was no fanstasitc six openings, and 10 meters was lackluster, so it was 40 and 20 during daylight, and 80, 40 at night, with maybe a few on 20 early evening. Normal.

I heard that a couple of the fellas stayed up to weee-nigh 2 AM, working stations, but W3IHM was QRT by 10 PM, so I don't know who, and nobody told me.

Here's Matt Steger - N3NTJ (in white shirt) and Zach Gerber - KC3LKC (on the tower) and ??? putting up one end of the dipole.



Some of us, like me, belong to many of the local clubs. For several years, I tried to duck in and out of more than one FD. I wanted to see and do everything, with everybody, but now I am getting too old to hustle around the county. Plus, I could never really dedicate effort, hopping around like that. Nowadays, I am gravitating toward staying put. But that's me! If you got the spunk, go for it!

And here's an idea. Next year I would like to try and work all the other local club FD sites, like on VHF with yagis or something. I know we can work W3AD with an HT, but W3RRR? EARS? Does Kenny's group do FD? Maybe even York or Reading clubs? Still, it would be fun to work some of you guys as "runners". Maybe I could make up a "Worked All Lanc. Co. Ham Tribes" or some such award, to give to the club with the most Lancaster County or whatever club stations worked. So remind me next year.



After all the antennas were up, we started to operate. Here's Dan Tracey – KD3BVL, and Rowland Shank – W3DSE, doing some of that SSB stuff.

Eventually, we put up another station on the empty table, and played around with different antennas, including a portable quarter wave on 10 M at the end of a rather long piece of coax, in the orchard, to see if we could operate without QRM.

As far as QRM, it worked, and even a few stations were heard, but the band apparently was dying, or the coax loss was enough to eat up all the TX smoke. So no QSOs were had on 10, but we tried.

So, how do they score these things anyway? Here's the report from Matt, N8NTJ:

Hey Sam:

The dupe sheet that prints out from the software has a breakdown of how many contacts per mode/per band and a final preliminary score. When you upload the dupe file to the ARRL FD website, it lets you check boxes for certain bonus criteria for things like if you ran on battery power and/or solar

power, if an elected official made an appearance, etc. Based upon what boxes you choose that apply, the website then tells you your total score. I don't know if anyone actually kept an official count of participants (does participants mean only those who ran a radio or those from the club who showed up to help in some way?). I took it as the latter as we had all of the above (radio ops, setup people, and tear down people). The number of participants doesn't factor into the points or bonuses so this number appears to just be administrative as far as our log submission goes. Since we used solar power to charge the batteries, I chose Battery and Solar. We had a public greeting tent set up so I took that to mean that we could claim the "public information table" bonus. This was the first time I ever did the Field Day log upload so it was a learning process.

ARRL sends us this as confirmation.

Summary:

Entry received at: 2026-06-29 11:19:46

Call Used: K3IR GOTA Station Call: (NONE) ARRL/RAC Section: EPA Class: 4A

Participants: 18 Club/Group Name: Southern Pennsylvania Amateur Radio Club

Power Source(s): Battery, Solar

Power Multiplier: 2X

Preliminary Total Score: 2,292

Bonus Points:

100% emergency power	400
Public information table	100
W1AW Field Day message	100 -
Documented by ARRL FD 2026 letter.pdf	
Site visit by invited elected official	100
Social media	100
Entry submitted via web	50

Total bonus points 850

Score Summary: (Cabrillo log/dupe sheet file: K3IR_Field Day_2026_dupe file.dup)

	CW	Digital	Phone	Total
Total QSOs	129	6	451	
Total Points	258	12	451	721

Claimed Score = (QSO points x power mult) = 1,442

Submitted by: Matthew Steger, N3NTJ

Band/Mode QSO Breakdown:

	CW		Digital		Phone	
	QSOs	Pwr(W)	QSOs	Pwr(W)	QSOs	Pwr(W)
160m	0	0	0	0	0	0
80m	55	100	0	0	0	0
40m	11	100	6	50	390	100
20m	26	100	0	0	60	100
15m	9	100	0	0	0	0
10m	28	100	0	0	0	0
6m	nil.					
2m	nil.					
222	nil.					
432	nil.					
Other	nil.					
Satellite	nil.					
GOTA	nil.					
TOTAL	129		6		451	

I took no photos but hopefully those that were taking photos will send them in to you for inclusion. I write the monthly newsletter for my Civil War re-enactor unit so I know how hard it is to get people to submit content.

73, Matt N3NTJ

So the ARRL report shows where we can add bands, etc, if we ever want to go hog wild and compete as a contender. Sure, that may be for some of you guys, but I just like to putter around with radio crap, hang up antennas, and cut wire. In fact, I wanted to climb the old telephone pole, but didn't have boots, spurs, and my old climbing belt. (...but I still have my buttset.) And there also has been about 50 years of water under the dam, and five knee surgeries in the way, too. And where'd this big gut come from?



So maybe next year we can do the same thing again? How about it? I mean we didn't have hurricane rain, tornado winds, lightning storms, heart-stopping heat, bone-chilling cold, or even a backed up Taj-ma-potty. And we also had fresh grilled meat! And radios on tables in a field! How could it get even better? Well, next year, Sam could remember to bring his tent AND the skin that goes over the frame. That's about it, though.

I had a great time. Did you?



Meeting Night

The SPARC monthly general membership meeting is the fourth Tuesday of the month, July the 28th at 7:00 PM. The meeting is being held at the Clubhouse. Bring your snacks and hike out your trash.

License Test Sessions

Testing is conducted at the SPARC site on the first Tuesday of every month. Fee to take the exam. It is \$14.00 payable on the K3IR website or in person, cash or check only.

You can pre-register to take the technician test, or upgrade, at Hamstudy.org. There is also a link on the K3IR web site. If you do not already have one, go to fcc.gov and register for a FRN (Federal Registration Number).

Looking For Volunteers

SPARC currently has 131 “active” members on the roster. We have a lot to offer to our members. At this time we have a dedicated group of hardworking volunteers who keep the site running. Some say this is typical with most organizations. I don't think SPARC should be “typical” We need more real active members. Jobs range from the highly technical to the mundane but ALL are important. Please look at the list below and see if there is a place for you.

IT Team

Tower climbers and ground help

Operating building maintenance and cleaning

Operating building equipment maintenance and improvement

Porta Potty cleaning (not Pumping!)

Adopt a Highway crew

Elmers and Elm’ettes

Hamfest help, planning, etc.

Meeting programs and talks

Antennas! ...always more, bigger, higher.

Someone to take the trash home and pitch it when it’s full.

Someone else to either eat or toss the old stuff in the fridge.

FMDX E-layer Plasma Antics:

Hey, have you been listening on the FM broadcast band lately? On my way to buy more horse, dog, and chicken feed at the TSC, I heard 89.3 MHz KXNE, Norfolk, NB, last Friday, the 17th, at around 3 PM in my car. It's a 45 kW ERP station carrying Nebraska Public Media. It was in for a good half hour, so I sat in the parking lot and recorded some of it.

I could also hear other stations in the QSB mix, but KXNE had a clear copy and ID right at 3:00 PM. I am trying to get a confirmation from them via e-mail. That's over 1200 miles from here.

And I can just hear you thinking:

"Well, Sam's got a 1000' 24 element super-duper top secret yagi array he designed secretly for FM broadcast, and he also is a wizard, complete with the long white beard, and a tall hat with the moon and stars on it, and a sparkley magic wand, so obviously he can hear super FMDX, but I surely can't."

Stop.

My car radio received this with only the "in-windshield antenna", that is, actually one of the rear window defroster lines cut out, and that single strip of wire hooked to the FM radio center wire. That's it. So quit your pouting, and get tuning before the sunspot peak goes away. 11 years is a long time, and we never know if this is the last peak. Ever hear of the Maunder Minimum?

