

The SkyWave Vilas County Amateur Radio Club



W9RRA/R and W9VRC/R Echolink Is Connected

On Sunday March 29, 2026, the Rhinelander Repeater Association and Vilas County Amateur Radio Club cooperated by connecting 3 radio repeaters and 2 Echolink systems to simulcast the Northwoods ARES Net.

Every transmission was broadcast over the entire area covered by the Rhinelander, Willow and Eagle River repeaters. The Echolink connection was operated by the two groups. The simulcast used only existing equipment and can be activated by any ham radio operator anywhere in the covered areas.

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VCARC MONDAY NIGHT 2 METER NET

The VCARC 2 Meter Net meets every Monday night starting at 7:30 PM local time. Net Control is via the W9VRC Eagle River repeater on 145.150/ PL 114.8.

Echolink is also available for Ham Operators outside of the Eagle River repeater coverage area.

A digital Net immediately follows. Fred KD9CCE, RayBob KD9DDE and Kyle AB9AX are Net Controls.

VCARC MAY BOARD MEETING

The VCARC Board meeting will be held on Wednesday May 13, starting at 6:00 PM local time Via Zoom.

All VCARC Members are welcome to attend. We value everyone's thoughts and ideas for 2026!

VCARC MAY BREAKFAST

A VCARC Breakfast is planned for May 16 at 9:00 AM at the Friendship House Restaurant in Eagle River WI. Please contact RayBob KD9DDE via rmh2992@aol.com if you are planning to attend.

This is a great opportunity to "Meet and Greet" VCARC Members and other Ham Operators from the area. See everyone there!



VCARC APRIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

April 08, 2026, 6:00 PM – The Meeting was called to order by Bob KC9RF.

Treasurers Report (April Ending)

Beginning Balance	\$6856.82
Expenses: Donations, License, UPS	821.71
Membership Dues	100.00
Donations	0.00
Ending Balance	\$6135.11

Old Business

Tom W9TBZ performed several analysis with repeater coverage software. The analysis examined the Eagle River repeater's antenna height, gain and power levels against the area terrain. It was determined that increasing the antenna gain and height 10 ft only marginally increased the repeater coverage area.

It was decided that no changes would be made to the repeater antenna system at this time.

New or relocated repeater locations are still being considered in the Conover and Boulder Junction areas. Evaluation of these sites continues to be led by Kirby W8DCD.

A donation has been made to WeComm of Wisconsin for Brad Pointon's assistance in troubleshooting the Eagle River repeater issues.

New Business and Announcements

No New Business was discussed.

The motion to adjourn was made at 7:05 PM.

VCARC NEWS

Included is the VCARC Meeting and Event Schedule for 2026. Please consider volunteering for one or more of the scheduled events.

VCARC/ Member Activities	Date(s)
May Board Meeting	05/13/26
Dayton Hamvention	05/15 - 05/17/26
June Member Meeting*	06/10/26
InSayner Bike Ride Support	06/13/26
ARRL Field Day 2026	06/27- 06/28/26
July Member Meeting	07/08/26
August Board Meeting	08/12/26
September Board Meeting	09/09/26
Wisconsin POTA Contest	09/19/26
WI ARES/ RACES Conference	10/10/26
October Member Meeting	10/14/26
November Board Meeting	11/11/26
December Board Meeting	12/09/26

* Field Day Discussions and Preparation

VCARC Field Day 2026

The following is the VCARC Field Day 2026 schedule. For more information regarding Field Day and Ham operator participation Contact Bob KC9RF. Everyone is welcome to attend!

Friday June 26, 2026

- 3:00 PM Tribute Brewery, Eagle River: Kick off Field Day Weekend, grab a craft beer with RayBob KD9DDE and Fred KD9CCE

Saturday June 27, 2026

- 9:00 AM Dee Dee's Diner, Sugar Camp: Field Day Breakfast (All are welcome)
- 10:30 AM Sugar Camp Municipal Complex: Field Day Site Set Up
- 1:00 PM Field Day Operations Begins
- 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM Open to the Public, Tours
- 5:30 PM Field Day Cookout and Pot Luck
- Field Day Continues All Night

Sunday June 28, 2026

- Field Day Continues All Morning
- 1:00 PM Field Day Operations Wrap Up
- 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM Pack Up And Go



W9VRC/R and W9RRA/R Echolink Is Connected

During the Net, 16 hams from 4 counties communicated for 38 minutes without any issues or dropouts. This demonstrated how during an event such as a severe weather Net all involved trained volunteers can be immediately updated with a single radio transmission.

A special thanks for all who participated in the Echolink testing and worked on the technical issues making this very important connection possible.

For more information regarding the Northwoods ARES and how to get involved. please contact Ray KB9CBL, Northwoods ARES Emergency Coordinator at KB9CBL@yahoo.com.

VCARC 2026 Membership Dues Being Accepted

Membership Renewals are now being accepted. The Annual Membership cost is \$20 per Individual and \$25 for a Family Membership. Please send renewals and new applications to VCARC P.O. Box 1141, Eagle River, WI 54521.

ARRL NEWS

Brent Walls, N9BA, has resigned as Central Division Director of ARRL The National Association for Amateur Radio®, citing professional and personal commitments. He served as Director since 2025, and before that as Vice Director beginning in 2021.

“Serving in the capacity of Division Director has been a truly rewarding experience and the highlight of my amateur radio journey,” said Walls in a message to ARRL members in the Division. “Whether supporting emergency communications, fostering technical growth, or strengthening our community connections, the ARRL plays an important part, and I am proud to have been part of it.”

Consistent with ARRL's governing documents, Joshua Long, W9HT, of New Haven, Indiana, who has served as Vice Director since 2025, has assumed the office of Central Division Director, effective immediately. ARRL President Rick Roderick, K5UR, will appoint a successor as Vice Director for the remaining term, which expires in 2027.

The Central Division includes Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin. ARRL is governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors.

ARRL CONTESTS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

The following are upcoming ARRL Contests and Special Events in the Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula Michigan Areas.

K3FBI/9 National Police Week (Special Event)

In celebration of National Police Week locally, there will be multi-transmitters on SSB and CW operating on most of the HF bands throughout the day. This includes 10-meter SSB where Technician class licensees could contact K3FBI/9 if the band is open. See this month's Tech Talk for additional information.

Date: Sunday May 10, 2026

Time: 0900 am – 1630 pm local time

Location: State Historical Marker at the Manitowish Waters, WI Visitor Center

Everyone is welcome to attend this Special Event!

Northern Lights Radio Society (Conference) Aurora Conference 2026

Aurora, the largest annual gathering of weak-signal VHFers in the Upper Midwest, is the annual meeting of the Northern Lights Radio Society.

In the morning hours, the club runs an outdoor antenna range from 9:00 am to 1130 am (weather permitting). The technical programs start at 1:00 pm.

Date: Saturday, May 30, 2026

Conference Time: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Location: Plymouth, MN

Website: www.nlrs.club

USS Cobia Museum Ships (Special Event)

Jun 6-Jun 7, 1400Z-2000Z, NB9QV, Manitowoc, WI. USS Cobia Amateur Radio Club. 7.240 14.240. Certificate. KC9YL, kc9yl@arrl.net, n/a. <https://www.qrz.com/db/NB9QV>

EAA Airventure Airshow (Special Event)

Jul 20-Jul 25, 1300Z-2000Z, W9ZL, Oshkosh, WI. Fox Cities Amateur Radio Club. 7.250 14.275 50.150. Certificate. FCARC W9ZL special event station, PO Box 2346, Appleton, WI 54912. FCARC.club

WISCONSIN AREA HAMFEST CALENDER

If you are looking for a new piece of radio equipment or just trying to get rid of that "Old Boat Anchor" a Hamfest is a great way to accomplish both.

The following are the upcoming Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula Michigan Area Hamfests.

A.R.A.C. Hamfest

Date: 05/02/2026

Location: Head of the Lakes Fairgrounds.

4700 Tower Ave. Superior, WI 54880

Sponsor: A.R.A.C - Arrowhead Radio Amateur Club

Website: <http://THEARAC.ORG>

Dayton Hamvention

Date: 05/15/2026 to 05/17/2026

Location: Greene County Expo Center

210 Fairground Rd. Xenia, OH 45385

Sponsor: Dayton Amateur Radio Association

Website: www.hamvention.com

Green Bay Hamfest

Date: 05/30/2026

Location: Our Saviour Lutheran Church

120 South Henry Street Green Bay, WI 54301

Sponsor: Green Bay Mike & Key Club

Website: www.k9EAM.org

LARS 2026 Yooper Hamfest

Dates: 06/05/2026 and 06/06/26

Location: Luce County Fairgrounds

11555 N. County Road 399 Newberry, MI 49868

Sponsor: Luce County Amateur Radio Society

Website: <http://w8nby.org>

Riverland ARC Hamfest

Date: 06/06/2026

Location: La Crosse American Legion

711 6th St S La Crosse, WI 54601

Sponsor: Riverland Amateur Radio Club

Website: <http://rarc.qth.com>

FCARC Sunshine Swapfest

Date: 06/20/2026

Location: Sunnyview Exposition Center Parking Lot

500 E County Rd. Y Oshkosh, WI 54901

Sponsor: Fox Cities Amateur Radio Club Website:

<https://fcarc.club/>

WI9SM Hamfest

Date: 07/11/2026

Location: American Legion Post 434

9327 S. Shepard Ave. Oak Creek, WI 53154

Sponsor: South Milwaukee Amateur Radio Club

Website: <http://wi9sm.org>



TECH TALK

Assembling a Solar Powered APRS Digipeater

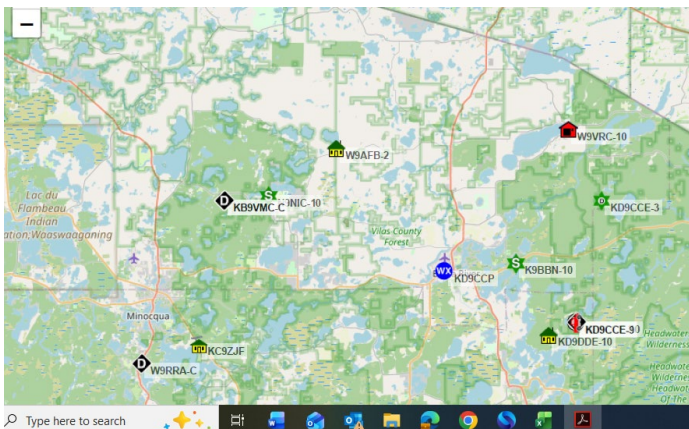
The Automatic Packet Reporting System (APRS) is a digital communications protocol for the transmission and propagation of real-time messaging between amateur stations. Data can include text messages, weather station output, station location and status information, GPS data, and more.

A common use for APRS is to manage sporting events such as cross-country racing. Digipeaters – digital repeaters – receive and rebroadcast data packets to propagate across the network. A nicely done overview of APRS can be found here <https://n3tw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/APRS-Overview.pdf>.



Digipeaters can be maintained by individuals or clubs. The station addressed in this article is located by Imogene Lake, in the township of Phelps in northern Wisconsin and operated by KD9CCE.

The station supports the APRS network in northern Wisconsin and other Midwest states and provides a learning opportunity for APRS and solar power.



The station was first activated at Imogene in the spring of 2025 and lived on a milk crate in a tent until taken down just before snow season. The equipment was:

- Byonics Tiny Trak 4 (the APRS device)
- 50-watt two-meter radio
- 12-volt distribution block
- PWM solar charge controller
- switches to isolate the battery and solar panel
- 75 Ah SLA battery (replaced with two 10 Ah batteries for 2026)
- 225-watt solar panel connected with 10-gauge wire
- Ed Fong ladder line in PVC J-Pole antenna at 21 feet
- The coax run for the antenna is short so I am using RG-8X



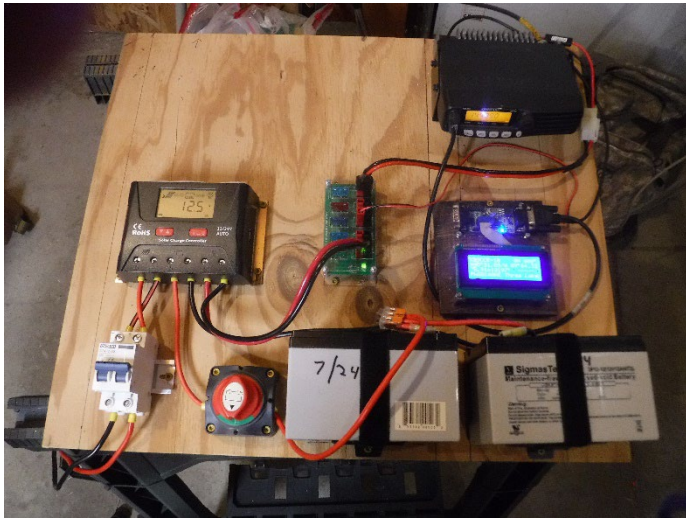
The software for this installation is propriety from Byonics and contained in the Tiny Trak device. Programming and changes are made with a keyboard and attached display. The device can also be accessed via laptop and in that case would not require the Byonics display.

There are numerous other choices on the market for APRS devices, I chose Byonics for low cost, good reputation, and good support via email. The documentation is difficult to interpret, if anyone takes up this device.

I am happy to share the configuration I developed after much trial and error and research. The device is versatile; it rode in my truck with an attached GPS as a tracking device before being reconfigured as a digipeater.

The station will return to Imogene Lake in the spring of 2026 (now!). It can be viewed on aprs.fi as KD9CCE-3.

Enter KD9CCE in the Track Callsign field, Click on Show All to view the APRS "neighborhood" in the Eagle River area. Click on an icon for traffic and other station details.



The hardware components are mounted on a board installed in a tool shed year-round. This next winter will reveal if the solar panel has been installed correctly to allow snow to fall to the ground.

To deal with possible snow cover on the panel and resultant damage to the batteries, the charge controller is set to turn off at 12.4 volts (50% discharge for an SLA battery) and turn on again at 12.6 volts.

Due to the remoteness of the installation, a 50-watt signal is used, if this were located in an urban area, I would use a 4-watt HT.

For any questions or comments please reach out to bouwmanf@gmail.com. 73!

Ham Radio Celebrates National Police Week

May 10th to May 16th this year is National Police Week as per President John F. Kennedy's decree in 1962 for whatever week the Peace Officer's Memorial Day of May 15th falls in.

This is an observance in the United States that pays tribute to the local, state, and federal officers who have died, or who have been disabled, in the line of duty.

According to the Officer Down Memorial Page, in 2026, 35 law enforcement officers (LEOs) have died in the line of duty, with 18 being by violent means from a criminal which includes 13 by gunfire. In 2025 there were 115 deaths. Around the country different entities will be commemorating the loss of these men and women.

The callsign of K3FBI is registered to the FBI Amateur Radio Association and has a station at the FBI Academy in Quantico, VA. Special Event Station K3FBI/9, with the "9" suffix indicating it is in Wisconsin, will be on the air on Sunday May 10th from the location of the State Historical Marker near the Manitowish Waters Community Center.

For the previous five years, retired FBI Special Agents Paul Schumacher and Scott Hanley who have ham radio licenses with the callsigns of KD9FM and WA9STI respectively and a ham friend Roger Scott KF9D have operated K3FBI/9 at Little Bohemia Lodge.

The Lodge was the site of a 1934 raid to capture gangsters John Dillinger and Baby Face Nelson where FBI Special Agent W. Carter Baum and an innocent civilian were killed, and Spider Lake Constable Carl Christensen was seriously wounded.

This will be the first time K3FBI/9 will set up at the Historical Marker which was dedicated on August 24, 2024. The FBI Field Office in Milwaukee is named after Special Agent Baum.

The ham operators will be on various high frequency shortwave bands on both voice and Morse Code enabling them to communicate with other hams around the country and overseas.

During the radio contacts, the historical significance of Little Bohemia and Spider Lake will be mentioned and that all fallen officers are being remembered. If the hams calling in are LEOs or have relatives in law enforcement, they will be encouraged to advise of the agencies.

Schumacher and Hanley will also be available to answer questions about the raid, the FBI, and amateur radio.

There will be other K3FBI/# stations on the air from around the country beginning on Sunday and throughout the week. Anyone working these stations can download a free certificate after the event.

Vilas County Amateur Radio Club

An ARRL Affiliated Organization

VCARC OFFICERS and COMMITTEES

President Bob Barnum, KC9RF
Vice President Kirby Giampa W8DCD
Secretary Marie Beckholt, KD9VUB
Treasurer RayBob Heuer, KD9DDE
Board Member Ray Protich WB9OCO
W9VRC Trustee Tom Bahr W9TBZ
Newsletter Bob Barnum, KC9RF, Ray Protich WB9OCO



CONTACT INFORMATION

Mailing Address: Website: <https://vcarc.net/>
W9VRC
Vilas County Amateur Radio Club
P.O. Box 1141
Eagle River, WI 54521

MEMBER AND BOARD MEETINGS

VCARC Member and Board Meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month starting at 6:00 PM. The Member Meetings can be attended either in person or via Zoom. The Board Meetings are Zoom only. Please check the Member Activity Schedule for the dates each meeting is held. Zoom logins will be sent out to those on the VCARC email list.

VCARC REPEATER INFORMATION

The VCARC operates W9VRC/R amateur radio repeaters in Eagle River and Land O' Lakes Wisconsin. The VCARC operates a weekly Informational Net every Monday night starting at 7:30 PM local time. Net Control is via the Eagle River repeater. A digital Net immediately follows.

Repeater Information	Eagle River Repeater	Land O' Lakes Repeater
Frequency	145.150 (-)	145.390 (-)
PL Tone	114.8	114.8
Operating Modes	Auto C4FM/ Analog	Auto C4FM/ Analog
Echolink	Node 691369	-
Wires X	-	Room 8011
Yooper Net (IRARC)	-	Room 65384
ARES/ RACES	Back up for W9RRA/R	-

THE SKYWAVE NEWSLETTER

The SkyWave is the Official publication of the Vilas County Amateur Radio Club. If you wish to contribute articles or other newsworthy items regarding Amateur Radio for publication, please contact Bob KC9RF at rwb1636@gmail.com or Ray WB9OCO at WB9OCO@gmail.com.