

Coordinators' Report 2016

It has been another active year for BCARCC, particularly because Yaesu decided to sell C4FM repeaters for \$500. This encouraged a high number of Hams to install their own repeater. Many applied for frequencies, some found available ones and many seemed to lose interest after an early burst of enthusiasm. This presents BCARCC with a challenge: we need to know which coordinated repeaters actually make it on the air and which ones leave the frequency clear.

We now ask Hams to advise us when the new repeater hits the air and only publish the frequency once we are advised that it is actually on air. Many are still in limbo.

Here are some statistics, so that you may be aware of the volume of data that we are dealing with:

Total number of entries	654	North Central	11
All repeaters	442	North Interior	33
Simplex notes registered	162	Peace River	7
52 MHz repeaters	7	BC Interior	113
144-148 MHz repeaters	246	BC South East	16
220 MHz repeaters	22	Central Vancouver Island	42
440 MHz repeaters	157	Northern Vancouver Isl.	17
Fraser Valley repeaters	31	Southern Vancouver Isl.	49
Greater Vancouver	98	Yukon Territory	20

But, most importantly, I feel that BCARCC is at the important point where an organization either changes with the times or becomes irrelevant. And here is why:

- There are many other repeater databases on line, some with maps, others with special features. Unless ours has the reputation for being the most accurate, users will stop using it as a reference, repeater operators will no longer believe that coordinating with us is important and BCARCC will lose its credibility. We must therefore update our processes to remain relevant.
- Obviously, technology has changed over the years and BCARCC has to keep up. Specific digital modes now need to be recorded and documented as repeater operators want their particular digital mode published in order to attract users.
- The ARRL provides a significant amount of funding for BCARCC as we sell our database to them annually. They have now updated their database to collect far more information which has put pressure on BCARCC to supply far more data than previously. Last year, a Ham in Michigan kindly offered to convert the data we had to something the ARRL could use. But that was a one-time offer. This year, we need to collect additional data, particularly data concerning modes, access methods and geographic locations, and to be able to convert that data into the format that ARRL requires.

- Last, but very important, our communication with area coordinators and repeater operators has been somewhat lacking in the more recent past. We no longer feel that we really understand what is happening outside our own area. Our area coordinators are too few and they are too dispersed. We need more contact with Hams across the Province in order to stay up to date with coordinations. We need better communication with Hams across the Province.

BCARCC has been working hard to overcome these challenges. I feel that overcoming them is crucial to our survival. We have taken initiatives to update our processes, but more will have to be done. So far, we have,

- Taken the first step and updated our database format to track digital modes, but now we need the operators to update us so that we can update the information that we store.

We have developed a method to do this, but the actual work required will be significant.

To that end, I would like to see all Ham clubs, and particularly BCARCC member clubs to take on the roll of reporting to BCARCC any changes to repeaters, modes, sponsors or other information that would be reflected in an accurate database.

I would like to see clubs sign up to contact us regularly with updates on repeater-related activity. In return, I hope that BCARCC will publish regular newsletters to keep Hams up to date and to show the updates received.

- The work on the database is progressing but what we really need is new information from repeater owners. We will have to work this out in more detail, but a new Request for Coordination has already been implemented. I hope to work the details out with the Executive, but would like to ensure that we do a better job collecting information.

As part of this process, I would like to also limit the kind of information we track. For instance, we currently register simplex frequencies even though we have no way of limiting anyone's use of any simplex frequency. In other words, there is nothing that protects any simplex frequency. I suggest that we stop registering simplex frequencies.

As well, our information on Yukon repeaters is not being kept up to date and we have no way of verifying the data. I suggest that our website simply provide a link to the Yukon Club's website which shows all Yukon repeaters and their locations.

To sum up,

- BCARCC needs to update its processes. This is partly completed;
- we will need new information from repeater operators in order to update our new database,
- we will need to limit the amount of information that we maintain in order to make it all manageable,
- we will need the future support of all Ham Clubs, repeater operators and other Hams to update and maintain the accuracy of our database.

This is a tall order, but I believe that BCARCC's survival may be at stake.

Submitted by George Merchant VE7QH, Chief Coordinator