



Glenn Tuttle

Four stations collaborate on net sponsored by Seven Seas Cruising Association

Atlantic HF radio net formed

BY GLENN TUTTLE

Seven Seas Cruising Association (ssca.org) and Marine Weather Center (mwxc.com) have announced the formation of a new high-frequency radio net specifically designed to assist trans-Atlantic cruisers. The net will begin operation on April 15, 2018, utilizing SSB frequency 12.350 at 2130 UTC (1730 Eastern Time) and will immediately precede Chris Parker's scheduled weather broadcast on frequencies 8.137 USB and 12.350 USB at 2200 UTC.

The back-and-forth migration of cruisers crossing the Atlantic occurs during just a few months of the year when

weather conditions favor the passage. Cruisers cross from the Caribbean or U.S. to Europe from April through June and from Europe heading west from November through January. These men and women range from solo sailors to crews of two and more, some crossing for the first time and others with years of transoceanic passages under their belt. Regardless of one's experience level, all such passages may be challenging should weather, mechanical or medical issues arise.

HF radio nets are the lifeblood of the long-distance cruising community. They

exist to keep cruisers connected, allow them to pass along vital information and call for assistance in the event of an emergency. Aside from an EPIRB, an HF SSB radio is the most effective means for long-distance cruisers to issue a distress call, as it enables them to reach multiple stations with one broadcast. A mayday call on an HF radio will be reported to the USCG, as well as heard by those on other vessels who may be able to assist.

A valuable resource

In 2015, I approached the SSCA Board about initiating a dedicated HF Cruisers'

Glenn Tuttle, left, and Dick Giddings, two of the coast station operators participating in the new Atlantic radio net, at Tuttle's KPK setup in Punta Gorda, Fla.

COMMUNICATIONS

Radio net. As a longtime cruiser, SSCA Commodore and amateur radio operator, I thought this would be a valuable resource for cruisers. Now operating seven days a week and licensed by the FCC as coastal station call sign KPK, this net allows cruisers to communicate with each other and with friends and family on shore. "SSCA is America's largest and oldest cruising association and while we have members cruising around the world, the majority of them cruise in the Atlantic and Caribbean oceans," said Kathy Barth, president of SSCA.

I was delighted that the board agreed to sponsor a dedicated HF radio net. There were plenty of times while cruising in the Caribbean when we did not have Internet access or cellular service and needed some information or non-emergency assistance. Now, we could give our fellow cruisers that help.

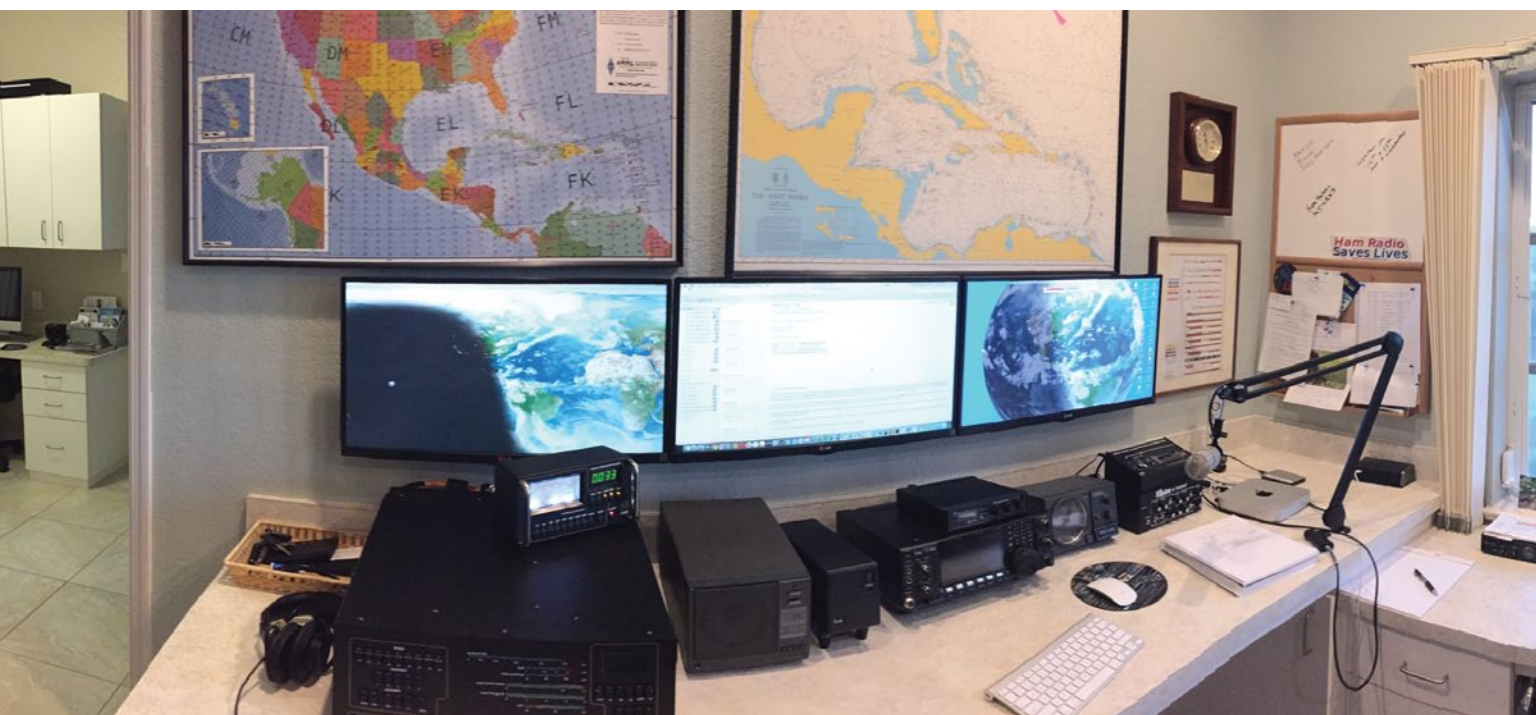
Chris Parker and associates

at the Marine Weather Center are widely regarded as experts in marine weather forecasting and routing for cruisers. Several years ago, Chris profoundly upgraded his HF radio capabilities with the installation of high-quality directional antennas and the ability to broadcast simultaneously on different marine frequencies. Over the years, Chris Parker has fielded countless calls for assistance and handled emergencies over the HF marine bands. The most recent case involved a single-handed sailor and subscribing vessel with the Marine Weather Center on passage from Bermuda to St. Thomas who lost his forestay and was in peril of being dismasted. Chris expertly guided this sailor through twice-daily radio contacts, providing him with essential weather information and advice on jury-rigging his standing rigging. In addition, Chris coordinated with the USCG, giving them daily updates on the sailor's progress. The sailor sur-

vived gale-force winds and high seas and made it safely to San Juan.

HF radio relies on propagation for effective communication. Fortunately, Chris had good propagation during this recent sailor's situation in the Atlantic Ocean, but when there are propagation issues, relay stations play a crucial role as part of effective HF radio communications. Coastal stations KPK, KJM and KNC monitored Chris's daily communications with the disabled vessel, prepared to assist should HF propagation disrupt their communications or if Chris experienced radio problems.

Cruisers who follow Marine Weather Center and KPK have benefited from multiple stations working together to provide relays and enhanced communication — particularly during an emergency. Curt Barth, a longtime cruiser and SSCA commodore understood the importance of multiple stations working together, saw an opportunity to assist trans-Atlantic cruis-



ers and asked the SSCA Board to authorize and support these efforts. “When any vessel has an emergency at sea, it’s vital that they have support and contact with people who may be able to help them, either by getting to their location or by providing valuable information,” said Barth. “Having four radio stations working together could certainly provide cruisers and their families with peace of mind and may save lives.”

Other forms of communication

As a result, four FCC coastal HF radio stations have collaborated to form this new Trans-Atlantic Cruisers’ Net. They are: Chris Parker on WCY in Lakeland, Fla., representing the Marine Weather Center; Glenn Tuttle on KPK in Punta Gorda, Fla., representing Seven Seas Cruising Association; Dick Giddings on KNC in Dover, N.C., representing the Cruiseheimers and Doo-Dah nets; and

Jim West on KJM in Ellijay, Ga., representing Maritime Mobile Service Net and SSCA. Coastal stations have a distinct advantage because they can utilize other forms of communication to effectively coordinate rescue efforts through telephone, email and fax, and do it consistently.

For years, the popular Cruiseheimers marine SSB net and its follow-up Doo-Dah net have relied on a series of relay stations and vessels to maintain communications with boats from Nova Scotia to the Caribbean. Dick Giddings, also known as “St. Jude,” holder of FCC License KFR, operates a base station from his home in Dover, N.C., and is a frequent net controller for both the Cruiseheimers Net and his afternoon Doo-Dah Net. The Cruiseheimers Net begins at 0830 Eastern Time on SSB frequency 8.152, while the afternoon

Below, a panoramic view of the communications gear at Tuttle’s KPK station.

Active Atlantic and Caribbean radio nets partnered with SSCA

Trans-Atlantic Cruisers’ Net sponsored by SSCA This net begins April 15, 2018, at 2130 UTC on SSB frequency 12.350 and will be monitored by the following: from SSCA, Glenn Tuttle and Jim West; and from Cruiseheimers and Doo-Dah nets, Dick Giddings. Chris Parker with Marine Weather Center’s trans-Atlantic passage net will follow at 2200 UTC, also on SSB frequency 12.350.

U.S. Coast and Caribbean nets

- WCY: Chris Parker representing Marine Weather Center. For Marine Weather Center’s East Coast and Caribbean schedules, see www.mwxc.com.
- KNC: Dick Giddings representing the Cruiseheimers and Doo-Dah nets.
 - Cruiseheimers: 0830 Eastern Time on SSB frequency 8.15
 - Doo-Dah Net: 1700 Eastern Time on SSB frequency 8.152
- KJM: Jim West representing Maritime Mobile Service Net.
- KPK: Glenn Tuttle representing Seven Seas Cruising Association.
 - SSCA Safety and Security Net: 0715 and 0815 Eastern Time on SSB frequency 8.104

Glenn Tuttle





Dick Giddings

Left, Dick Giddings with his radio gear for station KNC in Dover, N.C. Below, the view of the Georgia mountains from Jim West's KJM station in Ellijay, Ga.



Jim West

Doo-Dah Net begins at 1700 on frequency 8.152.

Jim West, an experienced sailor and amateur radio enthusiast, recently entered the marine SSB arena from his home in the mountains near Ellijay, Ga. Jim, a longtime net controller on the Maritime Mobile Service Net as well as the Waterway Radio and Cruising Club Net, also now holds FCC Coastal Station License KJM. Jim is active on both the Cruisheimers and Doo-Dah nets as a relay station and is a partner on SSCA's

HF radio service nets, which operate daily at 0715 and 0815 Eastern Time on frequency 8.104.

The purpose of the Trans-Atlantic Cruisers' Net will be to listen for any emergency or priority traffic, to pass marine safety information and to assist any vessel with our land-based services. These

services may include radio checks, float plans, telephone contact with family and friends, boat-to-boat relays, access to medical or mechanical professionals, calls to marinas, Internet searches or other assistance. All members of this net are experienced in communicating with the USCG Rescue Coordination Center in Miami, Fla. I am also a member of the USCG Auxiliary as an HF operator.

Utilizing a net control station and relay stations, this net should have effective communications with vessels making the trans-Atlantic passage between Europe and the Caribbean. This new net will welcome all vessels at no cost. These SSB nets do not require an amateur radio license, only a Restricted Radiotelephone Operator permit for the radio operator and a Radio Station Authorization license for the vessel. No tests are required for these licenses. ■

Glenn Tuttle operates coast station KPK and cruises with his wife aboard their 46-foot Grand Banks, Tothill.

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