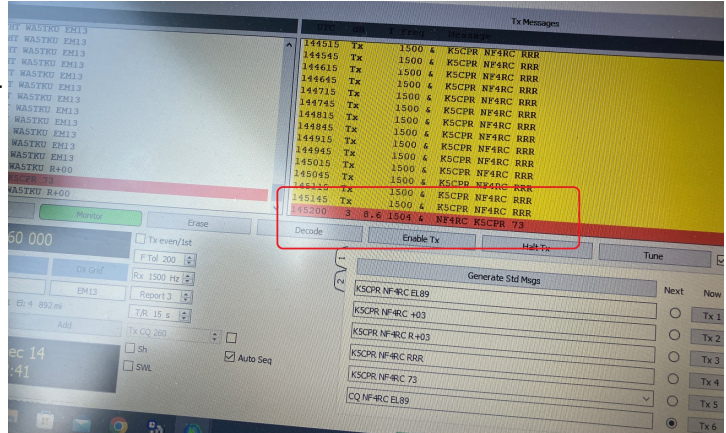


FIRST METEOR SCATTER ARES(R) CONTACT!

by Gordon Gibby KX4Z

Under the expert guidance of **Mike Hasselbeck WB2FKO**, the Alachua County ARES(R) group made their **FIRST meteor scatter 6-meter contact** this Saturday, Dec 14 2024, at the San Felasco State Park -- using only about 80 watts and a 3-element beam. After a LOT of trying (this is not easy like FT8....) we got the entire contact done with K5CPR, in Texas. Carl is apparently an avid meteor scatter ham and our contact (to our North Florida Amateur Radio Club call NF4RC) shows up on his QRZCQ page.



We arrived to San Felasco expecting to use our "new" 6-meter dual-3-500Z amp only to find there was **no electricity!** So we were barefoot on batteries for the morning optimal times. We were actually HEARING a lot of stations -- and we all got very good at recognizing the unmistakable sound



of an incoming MSK144 "ping" when a meteor hit the atmosphere and briefly opened up a window for reflection. Other stations were not hearing us nearly as well as we were hearing them -- many of the signals we heard had very positive S/N ratios on MSK144 and the signals were LOUD. We actually also got a STRONG signal report (positive) from one station. Thanks to the Geminids meteor shower, we were hearing and seeing signals very, very often. But to get five or ten necessary to finish one complete two-way contact....that is harder!! K5CPR was our only total success of the morning.

Later (when the earth geometry no longer favored meteor scatter) a helpful park ranger showed up, turned on the power for us and explained the registration process I had not known about.... so we'll be better prepare the next time! We hustled the hefty SB-220 amplifier over and fired it up for

the FIRST TIME for us (Mike H had it working before but we rewired it to work on 120VAC) and actually got it working on 6 meters into the beam! We didn't have an output power meter at that point, but we had it running about 0.3+ Amp plate current @ 2200VDC so around 700 watts "input" and estimate 350+ watts output into the antenna. Another FIRST for us! The T/R relay turns out to be 21VDC @ 62 mA and that exceeds safety for an ICOM 7300 "send" output so we will need to work on that, but we are almost "there" at having a real working 6-meter monster



amplifier, thanks to George Dietz KN3PAT, who generously donated the amp to our group -- and Mike, who redid the entire power supply and created a replacement meter as well.

Elsewhere I'll report on the 10 meter and POTA and other great work other folks in our group were doing on the same outing. Everyone was having a ton of fun!!

