

AARC and IRLP Fact or Fiction

You just have to love society. People will inevitably ignore something, good, bad or indifferent, until they no longer have a choice in the matter. Then the response is just like their first born child was taken from them.

I must admit, I have only used IRLP one time. It just didn't offer me what I needed for that personal gratification in operating. A different thing works for me, but be it far from me to minimize the enjoyment that others derive from it. The way I figure, that is why there are so many modes of operation in Amateur Radio.

Let's explore IRLP as it pertains to the AARC and its repeaters.

THE BASICS

Pluses - It allows communication with other hams world wide when it is linked. It doesn't require a large antenna array, tower or lots of money to participate it. It can be done with a modest amount of knowledge and experience in ham radio.

Minuses - Requires a computer with an internet connection. Requires a connection to a ham radio transceiver and antenna and requires a control operator at the radio.

We all know that IRLP and its variations are becoming very popular. It is a mode that is easy to use and allows a wide audience for both listening and participation. We only have to listen to the nets established to see its uses, and it is still growing.

So, to run an IRLP node, someone has invested money to buy a computer, the software, maintain the internet connection, a radio, radio interface, antenna, and feedline, in all the right amounts to make it work. That makes an assumption that they have an amateur radio license in good standing.

Now we have to invest time. Time to build and test the system and make it operational. Time to be a control operator. Time and money for any repairs, because we all know things are built to fail. We just hope to go a long time before they do fail. The reality, they will fail especially over time as all equipment and people are not ever lasting.

APPLICATION

At this point, we have an IRLP capable station ready to operate. We sign up and get a node number, and learn the commands to bring it up, change the other nodes we hear and talk to. The excitement builds.

It has now been connected to other nodes, and all kinds of people from all over the world are coming across. Different voices, different accents, different languages. Life is good.

REALITY

As we are cruising down the highway of happiness, enjoying the breeze in our hair, the sun is out and we are loving life.

Ooops, I just heard someone make reference to something I find offensive. I am a polite person, I wait my turn, and finally have an opportunity to suggest to the offending party that they should not make said remarks, especially at this time of day, I have young children listening, and they shouldn't be subjected to such offensive remarks. The wonderful gentleman I suggested this thought to, retorts, "If you don't like it, turn your radio off."

Crash, bang, boom... My life has just been assaulted in the worst way. I approached things like and adult, and I get Ghengis Khan replying to me. The clouds and rain start, and the lightening is striking close to home.

I am a civic minded person, I notify the control operator since the offender was the person who established the IRLP link to the frequency I was listening to and participating on. I also enlist several others to do the same thing. I figure that if enough people complain, something will be done. Of course, I do this over the phone, because "Ghengis Khan" might be listening. I talk to several people, and a few several times, because they listen and they agree with me.

Finally someone suggests recording the person on the air making the offensive remarks and turn it over to the ARRL's Official Observer. Nah, that is asking me to do too much, plus that person might find out who I am and not like me anymore for trying to rain on them. I'll just complain to someone in the perceived seat of power, and have them do my dirty work; after all, that is the American way.

Now it has made its way up the ladder of authority. The club that runs the repeater that the offensive things were uttered on has it as an agenda item to address.

FACTS

Exhibit 1

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
Anchorage Amateur Radio Club (AARC)
AND
Dave Cloyd, KL7M

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) is hereby made and entered into by and between the Anchorage Amateur Radio Club, hereinafter referred to as AARC, and Dave Cloyd, KL7M, hereinafter referred to as KL7M.

A. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this MOU is to continue to develop and expand a framework of cooperation between AARC and KL7M to develop mutually beneficial programs allowing for AARC Board approval of an Internet Linking Radio Project (IRLP and EchoLink) system to be identified as IRLP/ EchoLink to be connected by KL7M to the AARC 147.27 repeater on Mount Susitna. This program provides continuous testing of the operability of IRLP/ EchoLink on the Susitna wide-area repeater system. In the event of technical problems with the 147.27 repeater, the nets are authorized to move to 147.33 MHz repeater at the discretion of the Net Manager and the Trustee.

B. STATEMENT OF MUTUAL BENEFIT AND INTERESTS:

AARC benefits include an active partnership with KL7M to plan and maintain a functional link via IRLP and Echolink from the Anchorage 147.27 repeater to other Alaska Amateur radio operators.

The benefits for KL7M through this cooperative effort are provided through use of IRLP and EchoLink as a public service to Alaska users of the 147.27 repeater.

The mutual benefit for both parties is to provide a public service via IRLP and EchoLink to the wide area coverage provided by the Susitna repeater. Ham operators from outside of the repeater area will be able to talk with users on the Susitna repeater providing an additional link for emergencies as well as ham radio fellowship.

C. AARC SHALL:

1. Work with KL7M to identify control operators for IRLP/ EchoLink use on the repeater.
2. Make access available for KL7M's IRLP system and EchoLink to link to the 147.27 repeater during agreed days and times. (Subject to FCC rules and regulations as well as repeater trustee and AARC Board of Directors interpretation)
3. Provide written documentation of this MOU to both parties.
4. Provide written documentation of days and times of operation to all parties involved such as Amateur Radio Emergency Services, Morning Road and Weather Net Control operators and the other nets involved.
5. Coordinate any special uses or administrative activities with all parties.
6. Review this agreement with KL7M no less than annually and modify as necessary.

D. KL7M SHALL:

1. Work with the AARC to identify appropriate IRLP/ EchoLink partnership opportunities and jointly pursue such projects in conjunction with the Repeater
2. Provide IRLP/ EchoLink education for designated control operators as necessary for safe and proper operation of the repeaters and the IRLP/ EchoLink link.
3. Provide control codes to all system control operators as well as the trustee(s) of the applicable repeater license(s) so they can shut down the IRLP and/or EchoLink link connection should any problem arise.

4. Provide technical assistance net control operators to assure smooth operation of IRLP/ EchoLink during designated operating periods.
5. Provide technical expertise to AARC to address technical problems as they arise. Make information on the technical details of the IRLP/ EchoLink service being connected to the repeater available to AARC technical committee as needed.
6. Obtain AARC Board of Directors approval prior to implementation of any additional days, time slots or technology changes/additions for IRLP/ EchoLink linkage to the repeater.
7. Program the IRLP/ EchoLink link to come up on the repeater and be disconnected at agreed upon times.
8. Encourage other ham operators to work with AARC officials to discuss and identify opportunities for cooperative work or mutually beneficial projects or activities, when appropriate.

E. IT IS MUTUALLY UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED BY AND BETWEEN THE PARTIES THAT:

1. DATES and TIMES for IRLP/ EchoLink Links: The days and times that IRLP/EchoLink linkage will occur are as follows:
 - Calendar/Swap & Shop/Newsline - Thursdays – 8:30 PM to 9:30 PM
 - Alaska Statewide Linked Radio Net – Sunday – 7:55 PM to 9:00 PM
 - Morning Road and Weather Net – Monday – Friday - 8:55AM to 10:30AM Tuesday thru Friday and 8:55 AM to 11:00 AM Mondays
 - Net Control Operators will develop successful scripts to use for the net to minimize out of State checkins. Scripts will be needed for the net preamble, for requests for checkins, for restated net purpose throughout the duration of the net, and procedures for handling non-Alaska out of state checkins. The details are left to the net manager but may be modified or rejected by AARC as required.
 - For example: A possible announcement might be: "Welcome to the Susitna Repeater Channel of the Alaska Reflector. The Mt. Susitna Wide-Area Repeater is owned by the Anchorage Amateur Radio Club. The use agreement with them limits users to past or present Alaska stations to meet the purposes of their repeater. Non Alaska stations are welcome to listen in. For more information check out <http://www.KL7AA.net>." Other scripts can be derived from this concept.
2. MODIFICATION. Modifications within the scope of the instrument shall be made by mutual consent of the parties, by the issuance of a written modification, signed and dated by all parties, prior to any changes being performed.
3. TERMINATION. Any of the parties, in writing, may terminate the instrument in whole, or in part, at any time.
4. PRINCIPAL CONTACTS. The principal contacts for this instrument are:

AARC Contacts –or their successors
Kathleen O’Keefe, President, AARC
Phone: 907- 243-4675

KL7M Contact
Dave Cloyd, KL7M
Phone: 907-258-0066

E-Mail :President@kl7aa.net

E-Mail: decloyd@gci.net

Jim Larsen, Vice President, AARC
Phone: 907-345-3190
E-Mail: VicePresident@kl7aa.net

- 5. NON-FUND OBLIGATING DOCUMENT. This instrument is neither a fiscal nor a funds obligation document. Any endeavor or transfer of anything of value involving reimbursement or contribution of funds between the parties to this instrument will be handled in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and procedures including those for Government procurement and printing. Such endeavors will be outlined in separate agreements that shall be made in writing by representatives of the parties and shall be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority. This instrument does not provide such authority. Specifically, this instrument does not establish authority for noncompetitive award to the cooperator of any contract or other agreement.
- 6. COMMENCEMENT/EXPIRATION DATE. This instrument is executed as of the date of last signature and is effective until one or both parties cancel it.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this agreement as of the last written date below.

Anchorage Amateur Radio Club
Kathleen O' Keefe, President

KL7M
Dave Cloyd

DATE	DATE
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Several people have chimed in with their opinions. I have a very strong belief that everybody should be heard. One of those what comes around goes around.

I have received a couple emails on this subject, and want to publish those. I would like to point out that one is to the editor if AARC, so I have no qualms about publishing it here. The other was to the officers of the club, past and present. A past president replied very eloquently and stated things very well.

Exhibit 2

From Jim Larsen, AL7FS, Past President, AARC
(The quotes refer to the KL2AN email following the AL7FS remarks.)

"The net is a worldwide and statewide network that allows HAMS to access each other to share information internationally."

Rob doesn't know or understand that the MOU stated the net was NOT to be a worldwide international net. It was not supposed to even have out of state check ins. I can't say I am surprised at the abuse of IRLP and the MOU on 147.27.

"allows those who can't afford a spendy HF radio to DX worldwide."

There are plenty of different IRLP nodes in the south central area. I am sure the net can be accommodated elsewhere. Also, hams with an IRLP interest can easily transition to these other repeaters for continued access to the world via IRLP and Echolink.

"it appears to those outside of Alaska that the Anchorage club is very small minded, and that DX stations on IRLP and Echolink are not welcome to communicate on your equipment."

That is in fact the intent. Out of state stations were never supposed to be on the Alaska IRLP net. It was for Alaska stations only. Dave Cloyd stated that he could not stop out of state stations and would not put any additional effort into the system to try to do so. AARC tried to accommodate this issue and eventually the camel pushed his way into the tent.

I have received concerns from ARES leaders who believe the IRLP was degrading 147.27 as an ARES emergency repeater. That can be debated but perhaps it is just as well the net go elsewhere. AARC can add IRLP itself if that is deemed a good thing to do for emergency use. The cost to do so would be minimal and may, in fact, be a good idea. Keep AARC in control.

Just today I received a comment that one ham did not like to listen to the net at times as it was often a large collection of poor signals and at times was not even run like a net. Certain hams were allowed to pop in whenever they felt like it with no controls on their usage of the net.

I support the Board's decision to move in a different direction with Emergency Communications and IRLP on the AARC emergency repeater system.

73, Jim
Jim Larsen, AL7FS
907-345-3190

Randy Vallee wrote:

It appears that a few people are unhappy about the removal of IRLP off of the AARC repeaters. I would expect that an article needs to be written and published on the use and abuse of IRLP on the repeaters to clarify the position of the club.

Rob points out that the abuse of a few has spoiled it for many. What he failed to realize, the abuse of the few has affected the many when the few refused to adhere to suggestions to clean it up.

Begin forwarded message:

*From: *"Rob Stapleton, Jr." <kl2an@arrl.net <[<mailto:robstapleton>>](mailto:robstapleton)>>
*Date: *July 28, 2009 9:45:12 AM GMT-08:00
*To: * <editor@kl7aa.net <[<mailto:editor@kl7aa.net>>](mailto:editor@kl7aa.net)>>
*Cc: * <president@kl7aa.net <[<mailto:president@kl7aa.net>>](mailto:president@kl7aa.net)>>
*Subject: **Kicking AK Morning Net off the Susitna 147.270 repeater*

To whom it may concern,

I am appalled that the ANC Amateur Radio Club has kicked the morning net off the 147.27 repeater. If there are issues why not take that up with the person/s at issue. The net is a worldwide and statewide network that allows HAMS to access each other to share information internationally. IRLP and Echolink are still part of this communication network and allows those who can't afford a spendy HF radio to DX worldwide.

I hope that you reconsider this as it appears to those outside of Alaska that the Anchorage club is very small minded, and that DX stations on IRLP and Echolink are not welcome to communicate on your equipment.

Respectfully,

Rob Stapleton, Jr.

Anchorage, AK

KL2AN

Skype:rob.stapleton.jr

N31342

www.alaskafoto.com <[<http://www.alaskafoto.com>](http://www.alaskafoto.com)>

I even have an email from a G-lander who, since the hearing the news has become distraught over the idea of the removal of IRLP from the AARC repeater. I will leave his name and call off, since it was to the president and vice president of the radio club. He states a good case.

Exhibit 3

I am truly saddened that the first time we communicate it is under these circumstances, I have to say that I am indeed very impressed with the work the Anchorage Club does in the local community, Emergency Communications etc, your newsletters are very impressive, as is the club website.

I want you to know I am the Vice Chairman of (name removed), and have an understanding of club politics; LRS is one of England's oldest and possibly largest clubs.

I also understand the usefulness of local nets, and that sometimes these need to be exclusive.

However I do not understand the need of AARC to evict the IRLP and Echolink connection from the 27 Repeater.

You of course have the right to do so, but I hope you realise what this means to

many stations from the other States, and to those from other counties such as the UK, and mostly to Alaskan stations, who have found the community of amateurs that congregate there to be uplifting, interesting and supportive to one and all.

A case in point is the support for Bob and Kathy, and the best wishes over the last few days for my wife Wendie when she underwent an operation, the weather warnings, bear sightings and other such good deeds and incidences of community spirit.

This I'm sure will continue on both the repeater and the IRLP and Echolink network, but to split the 2 different points of contact seems regrettably unfair.

It also appears to show a lack of vision, understanding and advancement, we have a fantastic hobby with many facets and opportunities, but it is a hobby that is shrinking and declining in achievements made by operators.

The competition for portions of the Radio Spectrum is intensive, and very very lucrative, and there is a lot of the Amateur Band unused, we will lose very large amounts of these frequencies if usage is not encouraged and increased, such encouragement is there in the linking of the repeater and the VOIP network.

It seems therefore shortsighted to deny access to any Amateur, and very wrong to exclude anyone solely because of where they come from!

You cannot know just how much I have been able to learn, new friends I have made, and my wife and I are now going to come to Alaska on vacation due entirely to the welcome found on the morning net.

The 9070 Reflector is the second most used on the system, again partly due to the welcome found on the morning net, including those on the 27 and 33 repeaters.

I have heard several Amateurs who I believe are AARC Members seemingly to support the morning net, on both the repeaters and the VOIP networks, so much so that I have to wonder as to why the Board of Governors seem to want to appose having VOIP on the repeater, against the majority view, and may I ask if the membership have been fully consulted? I only ask because so many seem to want the repeater linked to the VOIP.

I had until this week wanted to contact you (Having heard you on the morning net) about joining the club, and supporting it in anyway I can, but the news that the Repeater will no longer host the IRLP etc saddens me.

Am I really that unwelcome on the repeater, what offence have I caused you (the Governors), believe me, we would not want to exclude you from anything here in Leicester, and I in fact invite you to visit at any time, to call us, or contact us by any means.

Personally I think there has to be a way of settling any differences, but would hate to think that my presence on the net has in anyway upset or caused problems resulting in the VOIP being removed from the 27 Repeater, because until this news I had felt completely welcomed!

Anyway please forgive me expressing my feelings and thoughts in this way,

73 and Regards

(Name removed to protect identity).

DISAPPOINTMENT

I, too, am saddened. These people and many others have put forth a great case to keep IRLP. What is totally missing from all this, is the original intent for the 147.27 and 147.33 repeaters. They are under the license of Alaska ARES. Look it up. The original intent was to be able to provide area wide communications in the event of an emergency. After all, our motto is **“Amateur Radio. When all else fails”**.

Having been born before statehood in Alaska and raised in Alaska, I very much understand the need for reliable, effective communications in an emergency. I worked in bush Alaska for almost 30 years, traveling all over. I have a pretty good idea of rough conditions. I can remember when villages had only 1 phone, and sometimes it even worked. There was no TV for many years, and people communicated face to face. You depended on the HF radio installed in the BIA schools for communications when the village phone was down. Believe me that happened often enough.

I must admit, I have only been a Ham since 1993, but in those years, I have learned a couple things. Even my wife to be knows these things and she just got her license.

First, when communicating, courtesy to others is of utmost important.

Second, if asked to change your tone, words or incantations of those words, you did it, because it is required by the FCC in Part 97. If you didn't follow those suggestions, you risked loosing your license and possible fine.

The story at the beginning of this document was related to me through others. The authenticity of it is unknown to me personally, but the validity of it is good enough, as the persons giving it to me are considered by me to be reliable.

As the elected leader of the club, it is my responsibility to insure its assets are being used wisely, compliant with FCC Regulations and within the spirit of Amateur Radio.

Over the past month, I have had many complaints about problems with the IRLP use on the 147.27 repeater. Not wanting to jump harshly, it was placed on the agenda for the July Board Meeting.

After much discussion, it was unanimously decided the IRLP would be removed from all repeaters that AARC owned and operated.

REASONING

First and foremost, it is a repeater with a primary intent of emergency communications. It was felt that the use of IRLP would degrade the equipment to the point that in the time of need, it may not be able to handle the necessary communications requirements.

Second, many felt the persons acting as control operators for the linking of IRLP, did not operate it effectively enough, and often lost control of things. When it was pointed out that certain things were offensive, they were not responsive to those needs.

I want to add in here, that words are subjective. It all depends on the person. What I find acceptable, you may find offensive, and vice versa.

Third, there are many IRLP nodes here in Anchorage, and even more in the Matanuska Valley. While the 147.27 was off the air for an extended period recently, IRLP and the nets that normally occur did not cease to exist. It merely moved to a simplex frequency or an IRLP repeater and continued its happy life.

Fourth, there exists some question as to the legality of having IRLP on repeater systems depending upon the method in which they are assembled. There are many discussion groups entertaining this very idea, and neither the FCC nor the ARRL have come out with a position on this.

CONCLUSION

So where does that leave us?

Currently, we will not allow IRLP, or any derivatives, to be used on the repeater systems under normal operations. That leaves us with the ability to still link it in to a repeater in the event of an emergency. I believe that in the future, AARC will endeavor to establish its own IRLP node that it operates for emergency purposes.

To quote the above words again. *“Amateur Radio. When all else fails”*.

With all the harsh words being spread and all the animosity being put forth about the efforts of AARC officers to maintain a healthy club sponsored repeater system for South Central Alaska, I have to wonder, who else has bellied up to the bar and built repeater systems to attempt to survive the next major catastrophe and provide the necessary communications? Who among you are willing to take the weight on your shoulders and believe in **“Amateur Radio. When all else fails”**?

Randy Vallee
KL7Z
President AARC