

# Summary of Results: SBARC Membership Survey of the KR5NM Repeater

21 October 2006

## Introduction

The following summarizes the results of the SBARC membership survey about the club repeater which was conducted in September 2006. The purpose of the survey was to determine the level of satisfaction among club members with the KR5NM repeater. Members were given an opportunity to respond to an 18-question survey on various aspects of the repeater. The results of the survey were analyzed and the responses formatted into a suitable graph or text summary for ease of interpretation. The results are presented below.

## Survey Results Summary

1. How many hours a day do you monitor the .92 repeater? Other repeaters?

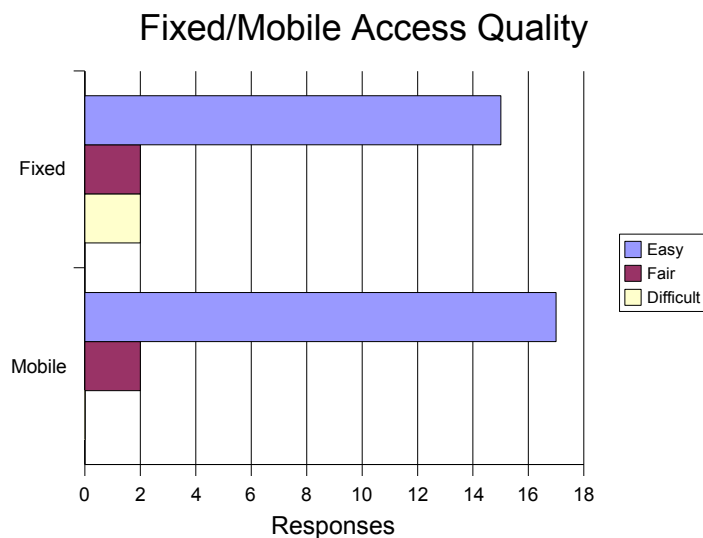
The average daily time monitoring the .92 repeater was 6.6 hours. Average for other repeaters was 4.5 hours.

2. How many other repeaters do you monitor (scan)?

Responses ranged up to 4 amateur repeaters and up to 18 public service channels.

3. From your fixed location is .92 repeater access: (a) easy, (b) fair, or (c) difficult? See graph below.

4. During mobile operation is .92 repeater access: (a) easy, (b) fair, or (c) difficult? See graph below.



5. (a) Is the .92 repeater area of coverage adequate?

Fifteen answered "Yes"; two answered "No"; one answered "Unknown".

(b) If inadequate, where is coverage lacking?

One indicated Carrizozo and Hondo Valley, and one said it is "lacking range in all directions."

6. Would you consider supporting a one-time expenditure to improve the area of coverage of the .92 repeater?

Twelve respondents said, "Yes" (some with qualifications); 6 said, "No"; One said, "maybe"

Although this was intended to be a yes/no question, many members provided additional comments:

One person answered, "Probably .. if it didn't break our/my bank account," while another wrote, "Not right now---- Money's too scarce!" Another answered, "yes, if the levy was reasonable."

Another member replied, "Antenna improvements are needed, yes." Another member responded, "If improvement deemed necessary."

A member opposed to such expenditure wrote, "For what purpose? To fill holes? To extend the footprint? Just because we have some money? My answer is NO, pending more information to justify a need." And another one stated, "No, it's served us just fine since 1991. If it's not broke, don't fix it!!!"

Two members pointed out that other repeaters with wider coverage are available. One of these responded, "No, there are other repeaters available that have wider coverage," while the other wrote, "Maybe, depending on range anticipated, however, 146.98 does really nice, and of course 146.74 is back in operation also."

7. What is the club purpose for running a repeater (rank from most important to least): (a) emergency communications, (b) casual rag chewing, (c) supporting mobile operations, (d) assisting visiting hams, (e) formal nets, (f) communications for public service events?

See table below.

8. How do you personally use the repeater (rank from most frequent to least): (a) emergency communications, (b) casual rag chewing, (c) mobile operations, (d) assisting visiting hams, (e) formal nets, (f) supporting public service events?

See table below.

Rank	Club Purpose	Actual Usage
1	Emergency Communications	Rag Chew
2	Rag Chew	Mobile Operation
3	Mobile Operation	Public Service Events
4	Assist Visitors	Assist Visitors
5	Formal Nets	Formal Nets
6	Public Service Events	Emergency Communications

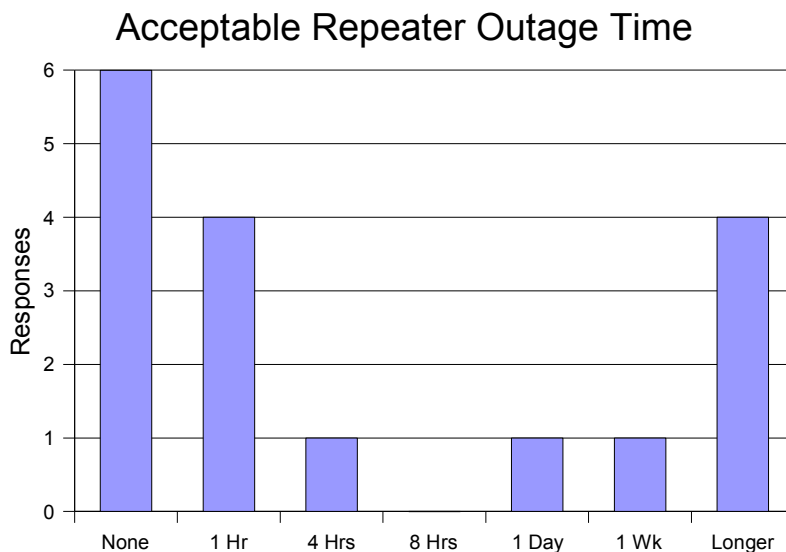
Table 1. Ranking of Club Purpose for Repeater vs. Actual Usage

9. Do you feel the .92 repeater is: (a) under-utilized, (b) over-utilized, or (c) utilized about right?

Seven people think it is under-utilized; eight think it is utilized about right; none think it is over-utilized.

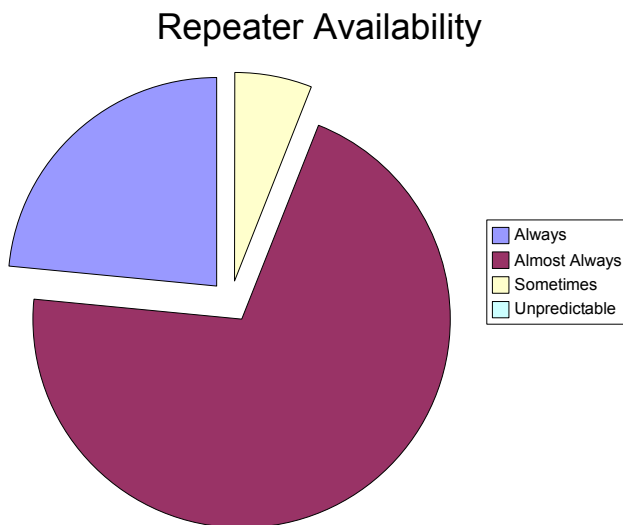
10. Realistically, what amount of .92 repeater outage is acceptable to you during an emergency event: (a) Zero, (b) one hour, (c) four hours, (d) eight hours, (e) one day, (f) one week, (g) longer?

See graph below.



11. Is the .92 repeater available when you want to use it: (a) always, (b) almost always, (c) sometimes, (d) unpredictable?

Four people said "Always", 12 said "Almost Always", and one said "Sometimes". See chart below.



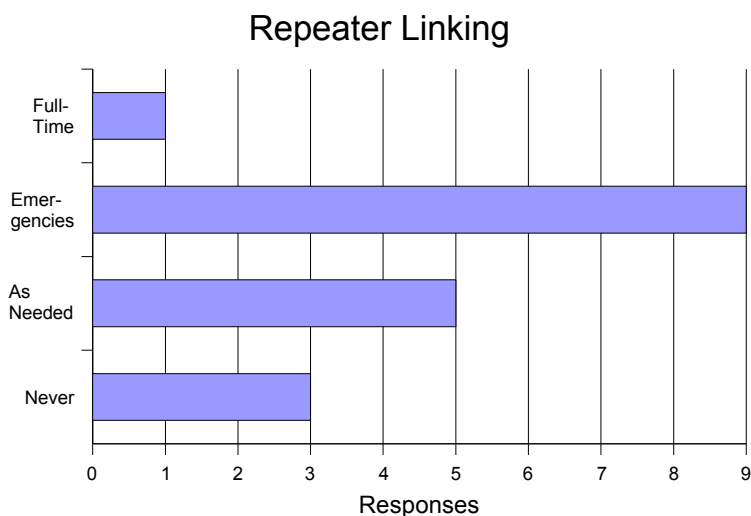
12. Are you in favor of adding Echolink access to the .92 repeater?

Ten answered "No"; seven answered "Yes"; two had "No opinion"

13. If EchoLink were added, would you want to allow incoming connects from (a) any user or (b) restrict connects to members only?

Nine would want connects restricted to members only; eight would allow connects from any user.

14. Are you in favor of linking the .92 repeater to other area or regional repeaters: (a) full-time, (b) in emergencies only, (c) upon demand of a member, or (d) never?



Note: Two people said both Emergencies and On Demand.

15. Is it just as easy to change frequencies to access a wide area repeater as it would be to link the .92 repeater to one of the other systems?

Fourteen said, "Yes"; One said, "home, yes; mobile, "no".

16. What additional features or capabilities, if any, would you like to see available on the .92 repeater?

Two members mentioned Echolink.

Two others suggested a phone patch. (One of these wrote, "Since I don't carry a cell phone, I like having autopatch capability. I am not sure if there is any patch capability on the .92 machine." The other one suggested, "A workable, equipment safe phone patch for emergency use.").

Two members dislike the tone access requirement. One wrote, "Do away with that damned tone access, and restore a truly open repeater." The other wrote, "Get rid of the PL tones and phone patch."

One member suggested, "Voice announcements and maybe the weather. A regular SBARC 2-meter net might get more activity, or a swap net if there's enough interest.

Another member answered, "Battery voltage monitor w/ voice announcement."

17. (a) Is the club repeater satisfying your local radio communications needs?

14 said "Yes"; 2 said "No".

(b) If not, what needs are not being met?

One said, "I find tone access to be major inconvenience"; one answered, "coverage in county needs to be improved, and needs to be more stable".

18. Would it be just as useful to you to shut down the local .92 repeater and depend on one of the wider area repeaters for communications?

Seventeen said, "No". One said, "Yes".

Of the seventeen negative answers, nine included additional explanation, including the following:

"Absolutely not – we would have zero say so in the operation of the wider area net."

"No, the 92 is part of the club and should be kept up to allow club members and visitors a local machine to rag chew on, also the wide area repeater may be used more for emergencies and this allows the .92 to still be used for non emergency or back up communications if needed. Past rifts in the club have reduced some of the 92 usage, but I hope that the members of the club will begin to think more toward what is best for ham radio in Lincoln County and put the past rifts away and get back to the old social groups that used the repeater in the past."

"I oppose any moves to further change the repeater. I realize changes are considered progress, but it seems to me that the repeater is being used now as much as anything as a plaything for visiting engineers."

"I like the idea of having a local-coverage repeater, especially for local emergencies. If a local emergency were handled on a wide-area machine there might be too much traffic. During an emergency, we should be able to have a "net control" access the wide area machine to communicate outside this area."

"No. The .92 repeater serves a useful purpose as a local machine. However, coverage should be enhanced to better serve those current and future members who live outside of the immediate Ruidoso high signal strength area. Problem areas include Carrizozo and the Hwy 70 east corridor. The intent is not to turn it into a wide-coverage machine, rather it becomes a more useful repeater to Lincoln County hams.

If any machine were to be shut down, I would eliminate the redundant backup machine to reduce the ongoing support and maintenance requirements (with a possible trade-off of lower reliability). Instead, apply club resources to one single repeater system that serves all members consistently."

"No. the .92 repeater is kinda nice because it's quiet most of the time. Never a wait for access to it, conversations more likely to be of local interest."

"No, but I don't really care. I estimate I spend less than 1 hour per YEAR \*talking\* on the repeater and maybe 10 hours listening. If it were only a wide area repeater available, I wouldn't bother at all."

"No. The savings were earned to take care of the .92 repeater for as long as possible and not to be spent on a whim by a spendthrift. If you get rid of the .92 repeater, there's no longer a need for the club and it should be disbanded and the money dispersed according to state law."

Below are comments not associated with any specific survey question:

One person wrote, "The only thing we might look at is an alternate site for the backup repeater. When originally installed, it was supposed to be only a temporary location until a permanent location was found."

The other member wrote, "We have gone from a simple repeater to a very complex system. I doubt if visitors can use it."

## Comments by the President

First, I wish to thank everyone who participated in the survey. This was the first time, to my knowledge, that the membership was formally polled for their opinions about the repeater. The results will be used to help guide the officers and the repeater committee in our planning and actions regarding this very important club asset.

Reviewing the survey results I found several obvious conclusions. These include:

- Overwhelmingly, members want to keep the repeater running and operational.
- Members are generally pleased with the repeater coverage, but a majority would consider a club expenditure to improve it.
- The main reason stated for the club running the repeater is to support Emergency Communications, yet in terms of how it is actually used by the members, Emergency Communications ranks last.
- Member opinions are divided on the question of adding EchoLink, with 10 against and 7 in favor.

Overall, members seem satisfied with the repeater. The main usage of the repeater by the members polled is clearly mobile operations and rag chewing. This is not unexpected, but I thought emergency communications would rank somewhat higher than dead last. It is possible that a lack of emergency events in the past year or two caused it to fall in ranking in people's minds. Or possibly people default to a more wide-area coverage machine for emergency communications.

Two other areas of interest were member opinions on acceptable outage times and repeater availability (questions 10 and 11). While six people said that they expect the repeater to have *zero* outage time (i.e., 100% availability) nearly twice as many (11 people) said that they could tolerate outages ranging from one hour to one week or more! Clearly, most members accept some level of downtime.

Related to this, only a small number of members surveyed (24%) said the repeater is always available when they want to use it. Although the survey was not intended to precisely quantify the system availability, I would have liked to have seen a greater percentage of "always available" responses. There could be several explanations for this. For example, it is possible that members have not programmed the tone for the backup repeater to use when needed. It is possible that members focused on the down-times associated with the transition to solar power last year. Or perhaps more experience with the updated redundant configuration is needed.

Lastly, I gather from the comments made that the membership prefers to have a repeater that is limited to a local service area as opposed to being a wide-area coverage machine. More than one comment favored having a local coverage machine for use by (local) members and visitors to Ruidoso. I think this is a very practical and reasonable objective for our repeater. However, a significant number of local club members live outside the Village of Ruidoso limits. In the discussions that follow, consideration should be given to the ability of our non-Ruidoso members to enjoy using the machine as easily as those members in-town can. I believe this need can be reasonably accommodated without compromising the local nature of the machine.

Rather than make any final conclusions or recommendations here, I will leave it to the officers collectively, and the repeater committee to determine what next steps to take. Any significant proposals or changes will be brought before the membership for discussion, debate, and your vote.

I hope the results presented herein stimulates further discussion on this topic. Thank you again for your input.

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President, Sierra Blanca Amateur Radio Club  
October 2006