

The Source Information Radio Newsletter

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Elk Have Antlers; Now, Antenna Too **Information Radio Service for Elk Enthusiasts "Herd" on AM 1620 in Pennsylvania**

BENEZETTE, PA: Elk don't listen to the radio, as far as we know. But elk enthusiasts? That might be a different story. At least that's the hope of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, whose Winslow Hill Elk Viewing Area in Northcentral Pennsylvania has become uber-popular recently.

"We're in a very remote area with little to no cell coverage," states spokesperson Mandy Marconi. "We have a lot of important information that we want to get out to visitors, 24 hours, round-the-clock." During the fall "rutting" season, thousands of elk fans from all over the world clamor to the two-lane roads just north of tiny Benezette, Pennsylvania, to experience elk up close.

The medium of radio provides a convenient means of reaching them effectively. "A lot of people pull into our viewing areas and want to view the animals right from their cars." And they also can listen as they drive the local roads in search of viewing opportunities. Marconi says if visitors do get out of their cars, often it is to get a better view of wildlife, so they will frequently walk right by viewing area kiosks and signs. "But, almost everyone has a radio in their car, though; so it's a natural way to reach them."

When the elk become active, Marconi states that people do things they wouldn't normally do – such as approach animals or try to feed or rescue them. Or, they will stop their vehicles in the middle of the road to take a picture or enter private property. The radio system repeats advisories intended to keep visitors and wildlife safe. But in between safety reminders, it does a lot more. "We want to enhance people's experience by telling them the best places and times to view elk and the other wildlife they may see. We give them a little history of our elk herd and let them know how we manage them."

The fifteen minute, multi-voice message is broadcast on an Information Station Specialists' "[Information Station IP](#)" system that was installed in the fall of 2018 at the Winslow Hill Viewing Area ([hear sample](#)). The program is changed seasonally to be relevant to what people will see when they arrive. The signal range on AM frequency 1620 is sufficient to blanket three viewing areas, connecting roads and the Elk Country Visitor Center operated by the Keystone Elk Country Alliance (KICA).

According to Mandy Marconi, the Elk Viewing Area learned about the technology after the success of a similar system installed in 2017 at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management area ([see the story](#)) near Harrisburg, which is also managed by the Commission.

Talking at the Top

North Carolina's First State Park to Install Information Radio Station near Mount Mitchell Peak – Highest in the Eastern US

BURNSVILLE, NC: And you thought Mount Washington in New Hampshire was the tallest peak east of the Mississippi? Most people do. But Mount Mitchell in North Carolina is actually higher by about 400 feet, making it literally the top spot in the eastern US. It is definitely a top spot for visitors. So, North Carolina's Mount Mitchell State Park, which inhabits the summit, plans to install an [Information Radio Service](#) this spring to solve some informational challenges that visitors experience as they climb the steep, two-lane approach road to the venue.

The same elevation that produces 100-mile vistas for visitors, creates a need for the Park to get info into the hands of incoming guests prior to their arrival. Snow, ice, fog and high winds that might not be present in nearby Asheville, can close the park or make the 1,400-foot ascent road dangerous. "In addition, cyclists and hikers are often present on the road," according to Friends of Mount Mitchell State Park IT manager Alan Orovitz, who says the Park plans to use the service to educate and inform visitors as they drive the last 10 minutes from the gate to the summit – where cellular coverage is spotty.

"With ten minutes to talk to people, we will be able to tell them about the natural features, history and amenities of our state's oldest state park...and also provide critical safety information if necessary. For example, if there are severe weather conditions expected, we definitely don't want people to start out on the trail system." Orovitz is a founding member of the [North Carolina High Peaks Trail Association/Friends of Mount Mitchell State Park](#) and knows from whence he speaks. "We have the ability to drop that content in if needed."

But he tells *The Source* that it is travel and parking directions that the broadcast will emphasize, because some people drive right by the Park on the Blue Ridge Parkway and don't realize it's there. After they get inside, guests tend to park at the Visitor Center and often "don't realize that the main show is an additional two miles farther up the road at the observation deck." As a result, the lower parking lots fill unnecessarily. Cate Ferreira, the park's administrative assistant tells *The Source*, "We're really looking forward to having this service up and running."

Mount Mitchell State Park will join [Hocking Hills State Park](#) (in Ohio) and many [US National Parks](#) that utilize Information Radio technology to deliver reliable visitor information in places that lack reliable cellular coverage.

Once on the air, Mount Mitchell State Park's 1630 kHz Information Radio service will arguably produce the highest-elevation AM signal – of any kind – east of the Mississippi River.

Another "first" for the State of North Carolina's first state park.