Assistance

This will be the first January contest where we can use unlimited assistance. The purpose of this article is to remind everyone of the available modes of assistance, and to give my impression of their utility.
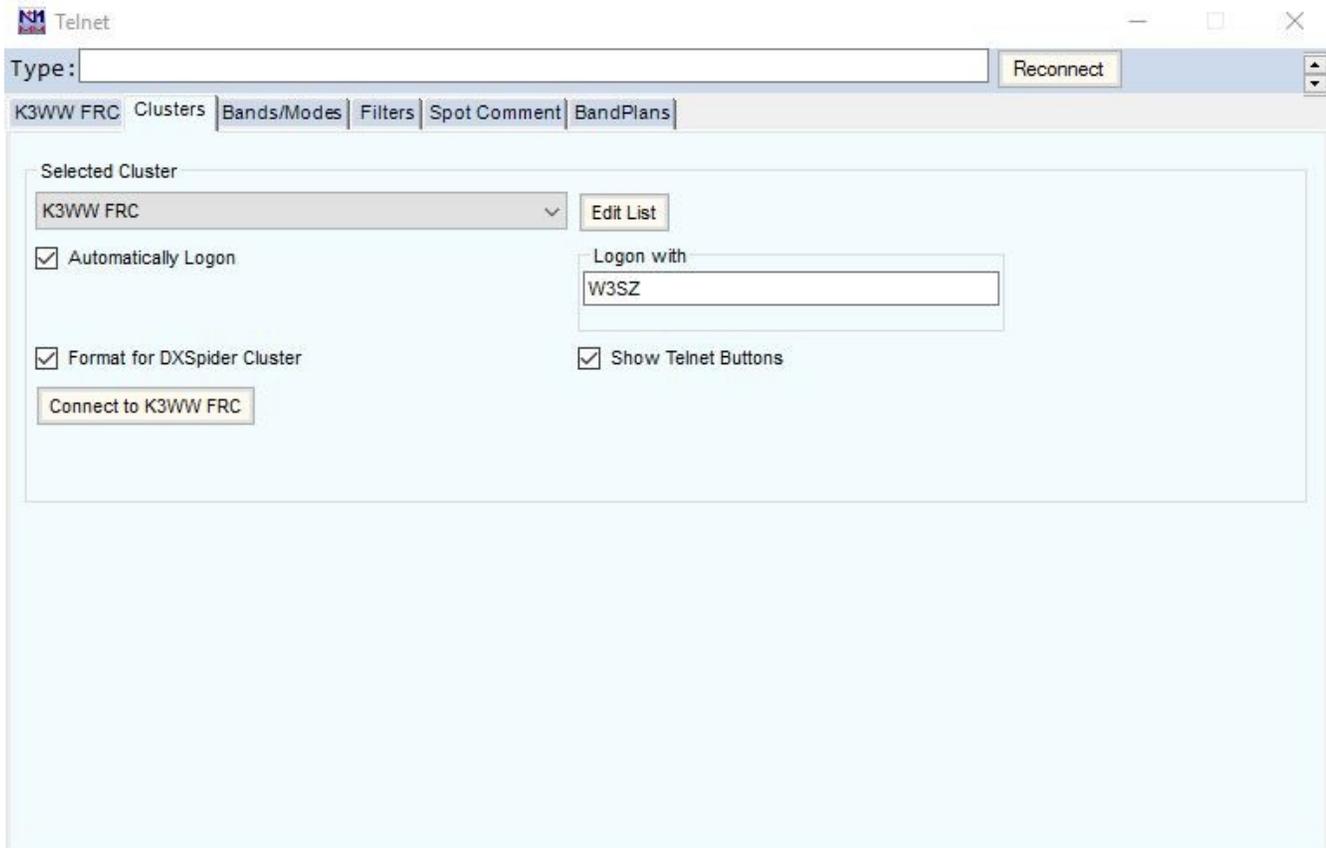
The best modes of assistance for contacting fellow Pack Rats are not necessarily the best modes for contacting rare DX and non-Pack Rats, so these two spheres of influence will be discussed separately.

For contacting fellow Pack Rats, the best forms of assistance are [1] text messaging/phone calls, [2] the Pack Rats' Members-Only Chat Room, and [3] PackRatFinder. The first of these cuts to the chase and gets you directly to the desired Rat. You can find the phone numbers easily in PackRatFinder's "comments" section, or in the "Pack Rats To Find" file distributed by Bob, W2SZ. PackRatFinder (like the Pack Rats' Members-Only Chat Room) is discussed elsewhere in this issue of CheeseBits. The Pack Rats' Members-Only Chat Room lets you contact fellow Pack Rats without having to wade thru all of the noise and "junk" on ON4KST. Put out a general call to fellow Pack Rats on the Chat Page, or call out to a specific Rat. I'd suggest that everyone stay signed in to the Chat Room during the contest and glance at the page periodically to see if there is anyone seeking contacts. Remember that PackRatFinder will now show you the current radio frequencies of all fellow PackRats using PackRatFinder and N1MM+.

For contacting non-PackRats, the best forms of assistance are [1] text messaging/phone calls, [2] ON4KST, and [3] the N1MM+ Telnet/DX Cluster function. You need to have an account on ON4KST to use it, so set one up now. There are multiple ON4KST chat pages. The one that we should all be using is the Region 2 144 and 432 MHz Chat page. Go to http://www.on4kst.com/chat/start.php to get started. On ON4KST you can directly contact stations to set up QSOs in real time. Get on ON4KST and watch the flow for several weekends before the contest, to get a feel for it.

The N1MM+ Telnet/DX Cluster brings to your N1MM+ display a listing of all stations spotted on the bands and modes that you specify when setting up this function in N1MM. You can also filter the output to include just specific geographic areas or just certain prefixes. You can click on a spot and if you have N1MM+ set up to control your radio's frequency, the radio will automatically go to the spotted frequency (and mode), as well as placing the spotted station's call in the entry window for logging. Using the N1MM+ Telnet/DX Cluster function requires some setting up, so you should do that now and test it if you are going to use it during the contest. Waiting until the last minute is the best way to guarantee that you won't have it working properly for the contest.

http://n1mm.hamdocs.com/tiki-index.php?page=Telnet+Window has good information, and I'll get you started here. To setup initially, go to "Tools>>Telnet Window Tools" and open the "Clusters" window (see below). Pick a cluster to use from the list, or add one. I added one by clicking on "Edit List" and then on the bottom empty line typing "K3WW FRC" in the left cell and "k3ww.gofrc.org:7300" in the right cell and clicking on "OK". Then I selected the K3WW cluster that I had just added from the listbox. After you've selected a cluster in this manner, check "Automatically Logon" and enter your call in the box labeled "Logon with" and check the "Show Telnet Buttons" box.

If you are using a DXSpider cluster like K3WW, check that box. Then click to open the "Bands/Modes" window and select the bands that you will be running during the contest and then click on "All Modes" or select the modes you will be running. Then go to the "Filters" window and make your selections. I use a 30 minute timeout and check "Save Spots" and the first 3 boxes on the left. Go to "Spot Comment" and check "Grid Square" and "Mode". Next, return to the "Clusters" window and click on the "Connect" button and then go to the first window which will be labeled with the name of the cluster that you selected, and you will see your DX Cluster spots. Go back to the main N1MM+ log entry window and click on "View" and select "Available Mults and Qs" and configure it by right-clicking first in the top section and then in the bottom section and setting the various options and clicking the appropriate selections. If you've configured it correctly, the "Mults and Qs" window should look something like the figure below. At this point you should be getting lots of spots. If you are not, then

something is wrong.   In that case, try opening up your firewall and/or router for N1MM+ Logger. The Mults and Qs window that I show below only has 4 calls in it, because this is not a VHF contest weekend. During a contest, the window would have many stations listed. This "Mults and Qs" window (and NOT the Telnet window) is the one that you watch during the contest, because its output is limited to the bands/modes/geographic areas that you have selected. The Telnet window is unfiltered, and so it has a lot of extraneous HF and DX station information that you don't want to see and that would distract you during the contest.

Available - 3 Mults 4 Qs (No Spot Focus Change) of 4 total spots

Mults & Qs												Bands & Modes

		6m	2m	1.25m	70cm	35cm	23cm	13cm	9cm	6cm	3cm	1cm
Mults		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Qs		1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Qs		1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Call	Freq	Dir	Mode	Mult?	S/N	Time v	Spotter	Grid
K5DOG	50280.0	248°	USB	No		0244Z	W4IMD	----
W3BFC	144205.0	060°	USB	Yes 1		0237Z	WZ1V	FN31
K5DOG	144144.0 ±	281°	USB	Yes 1		0230Z	W0BL	DN60...
RK9JR	144122.0	013°¤	USB	Yes 1		0229Z	4Z5CP	MP80...

  If you wish, you can also display the spots on band-specific bandmaps that automatically follow whatever band(s) you are logged in to on your main and auxiliary radios by clicking on "Window" at the top of the main N1MM+ entry window and then selecting "Bandmap". Just as N1MM+ will take your radio to the frequency and mode indicated in the spot and put the spot's callsign into the entry window when you click on a spot in the Mults and Qs window, it will set your radio to the frequency and mode of the spotted station and put the spotted callsign into the entry window when you click on a spot on the Bandmap. When the band is hopping, it's like shooting fish in a barrel.
--Roger W3SZ