

# SANDBLAST 2026

I started volunteering for this in 2017 so this is my 10th year. In January I reserved a campsite at H Cooper Black State Park so on Wednesday Feb 24 I left Mint hill around 1315 , arrived around 1500 and began to set up. It takes me about an hour to do all, including my HF antenna which is a G5RV with the center atop a 35 foot telescopic pole (yellow) in the picture.



I check into the NC Evening net at 1830L and CNE(Carolinas Net Early) at 1900L, So I cook my dinner before. After CNE I usually take my shower then check into the Carolinas' Slow net at 2000L. On Wednesdays I am 4RN rep for CNL(Carolinas Net Late on 3.571) so at 2130L I check into 4RNL(4<sup>th</sup> Region Net Late on 3.567). At 2200 I am NCS for CNL so I do that. Then I listen to some music and am in bed by 2300. Up at 0730 to dress and get on the NCMN (North Carolina Morning Net) at 0745on 3.927 as rep from CNL. Then breakfast and do a POTA (Parks on the Air) activation. I start on 80m then switch to 40m when it gets slow. This year, 40m was hopping and I quickly made 20 contacts, plus 2 on 80, all CW. I then went hunting Park 2 Park and added 5 to the list (all CW). I then took a break to hookup my sewer line and I needed more hose, so I checked the local Wal-Mart online and they had it in stock, so off I went. By now it is time to start dinner so I cook my dinner and start over.

Friday I get told I am in the wrong campsite so I plan to move. I activate POTA again and get 10 QSOs when I get a call to come and setup a radio for a ham at the Service Area. So Off I go. I come back, take a 1 hr nap, and move my rig to the next site over. Well, now the antenna will not tune. After trying multiple times, it still will not tune on 75 or 80 but it does tune on 40m , I

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tried several things including putting antenna down and up, I give up, I do not have a dummy load so I cannot check the coax nor my antenna analyzer to check the antenna, OH well the campground fills up so the noise is usually bad anyway so I text a friend to cover my net assignments.

Friday night they run 2 Rally stages “After Dark” so I go to a nearby Spectator area and watch the action. No pictures since it was dark. After the action I get a Phone call to meet a ham at 0730 to setup his radio.

The Saturday Morning meeting with a ham at 0730 10 minutes away is better than meeting the group at 0600, 30 minutes away, so I am up at 0700, pick up a quick Breakfast and go to the meeting place only to find he has been reassigned to the finish vs the start so off I go to the finish but with many of the roads now closed for the event I have to drive a big loop around. I get there at 0800 and he has fixed his radio issue with another radio so I head to the Service Area to await other trouble calls. Just after noon, I get a call to check the radio at at Stage 5 start. Seems it was working then not. I head over to Stage 5 and the OP just finished reprogramming his radio so it is now working. I head back to the Service Area. Just as I pull in, I get a call to go back as his radio is no longer making it to the repeater. Back to Stage 5 start and the OP has done nothing and it just stopped. I pull up alongside his vehicle and I hit the repeater just fine, but I am using a high gain 5/8 wave whip and he is using a ¼ wave vertical so I suspect he just needs a better antenna. Stage 7 is about to start and he needs to be on the air, so he hops in my passenger seat and uses my radio to call the stage with no issues. Here are some pictures of Stage 7 start.



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Here is a group photo of the team at stage 7, Thanks to Heather Dunsford (KD4HMD) for the picture. The young fellow in front of me with the hat is IAN (KR4IEA).



After stage 7 I head back to camp to watch stage 9 as they run very close to camp. Here is my view of stage 9 car from inside my truck.

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After the event I head to camp, clean up and go to the awards dinner in downtown Cheraw.

The next morning I pack up and head home. See y'all next year.