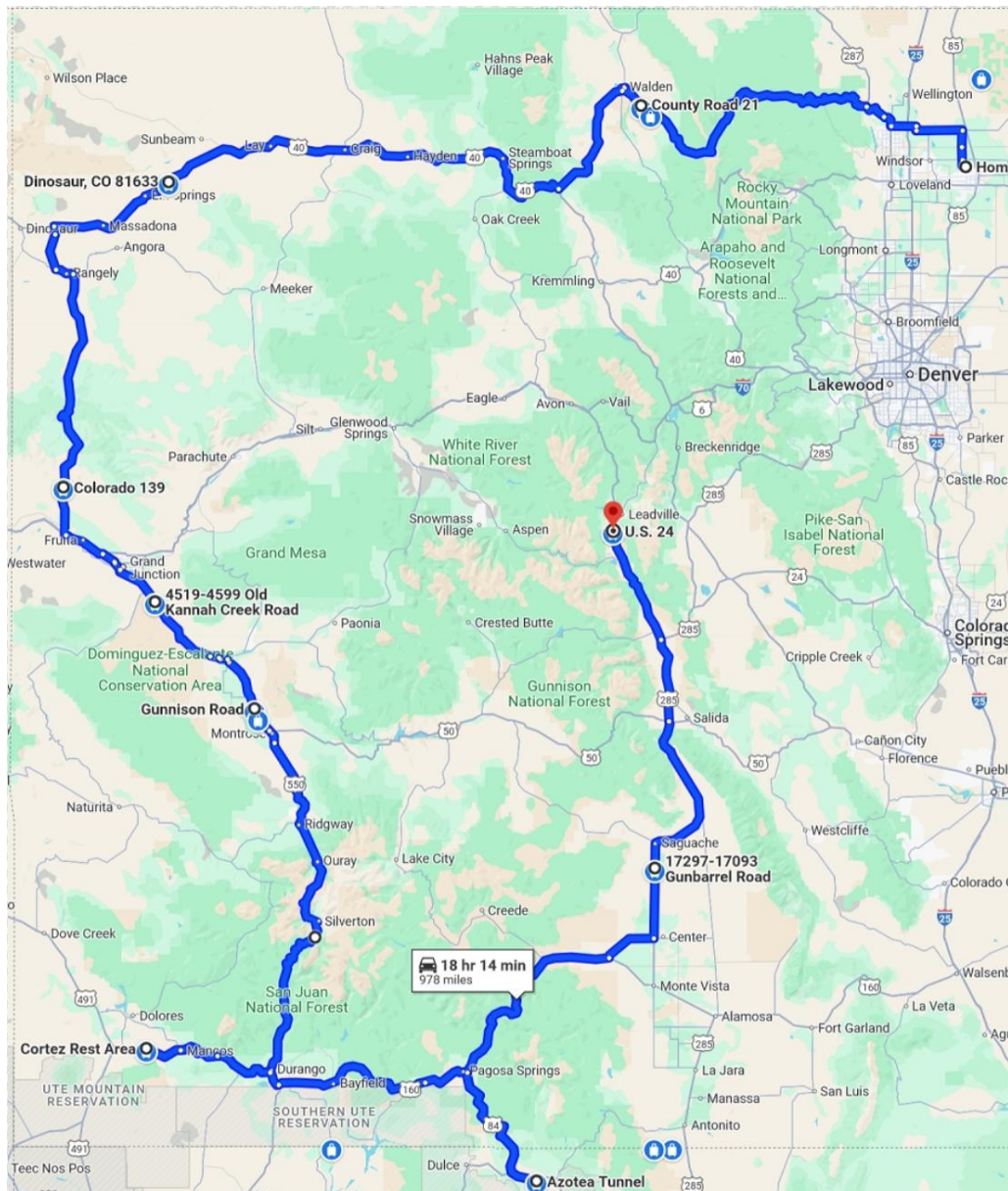


A FINAL SATELLITE SALUTE TO IO-117
A ROCKY MOUNTAIN ROVE ADVENTURE
JULY 2024

Presented By



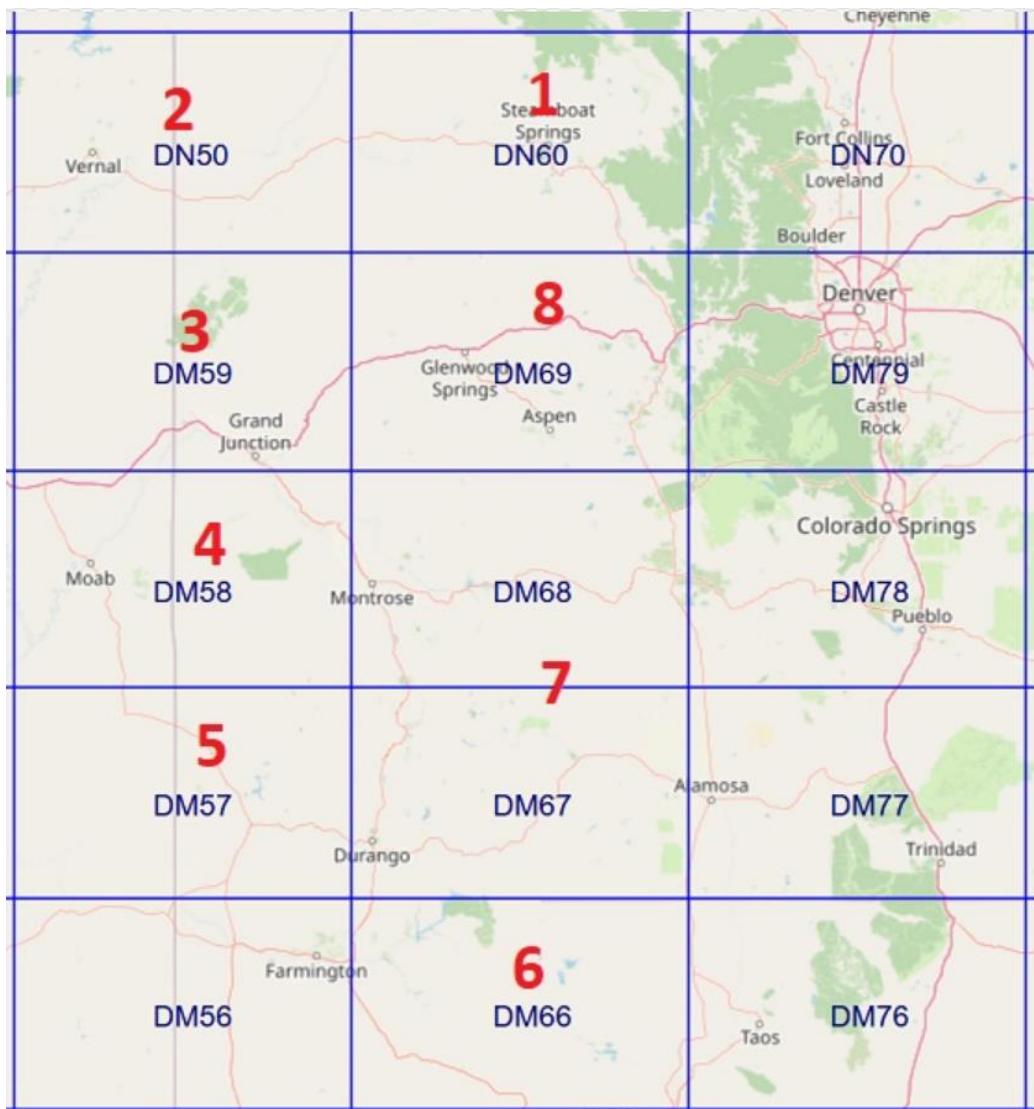
THE ROUTE



The route traversed the Northern Colorado Rockies, down through the Western and Southwestern Colorado Rockies, a short overnight side trip into New Mexico, then up through the Central Rockies and eventually back home to the Northern Front Range of Colorado.

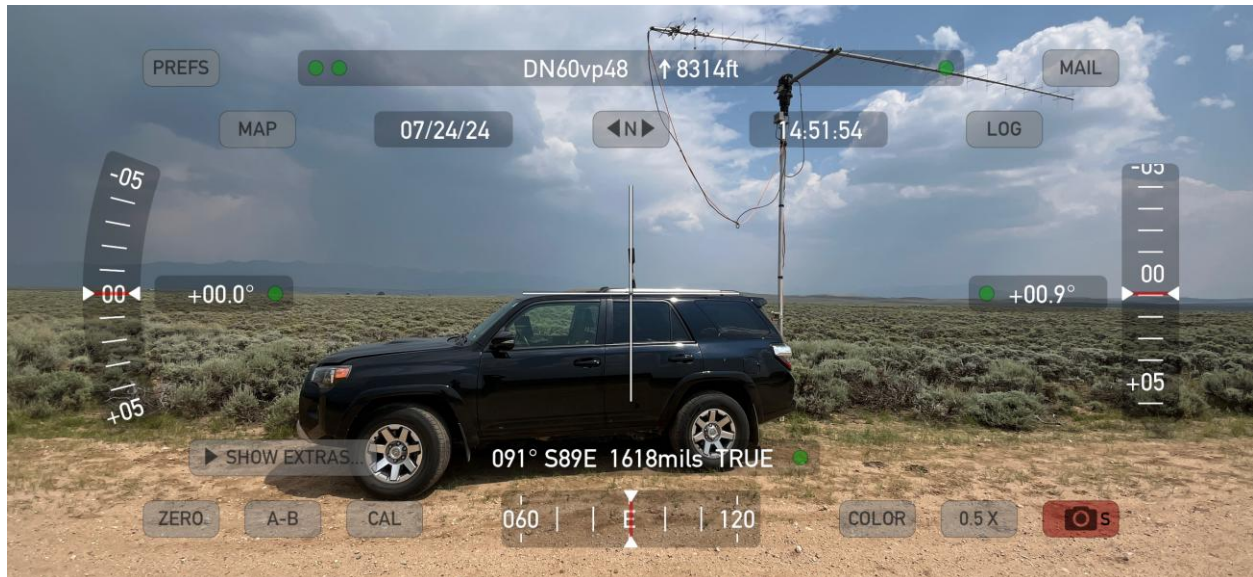
The trip took 10 days and covered 1,465.1 miles.

SEQUENCE OF GRID ACTIVATIONS



There were a total of 9 grids activated, 20 satellite passes, and four overnight satellite activations. The overnight activations took place at DN50 (CO), DN60 (CO), DM66 (NM) and a gridline overnight activation at DM67/68 (CO). A total of 972 contacts were logged. Only the final nighttime pass at DN50 was cut short due to weather, otherwise all passes were completed from start to finish.

DN60



DN60 took place about a mile south of Hwy 14 and 15 miles east of Walden Colorado. It was on a dirt county road where I only saw two cars before sundown and none after that before I left in the morning.

The weather looked threatening both to the east and the west but the skies cleared to the west after sunset and the only lightening seen was off in the far distance to the mountains in the east as seen in the picture above.

The sun was setting around the same time the first of three passes for that evening began. All passes were successfully completed with no weather issues.

The sunrise was just as spectacular and welcomed as the sunset the evening before.

1:04

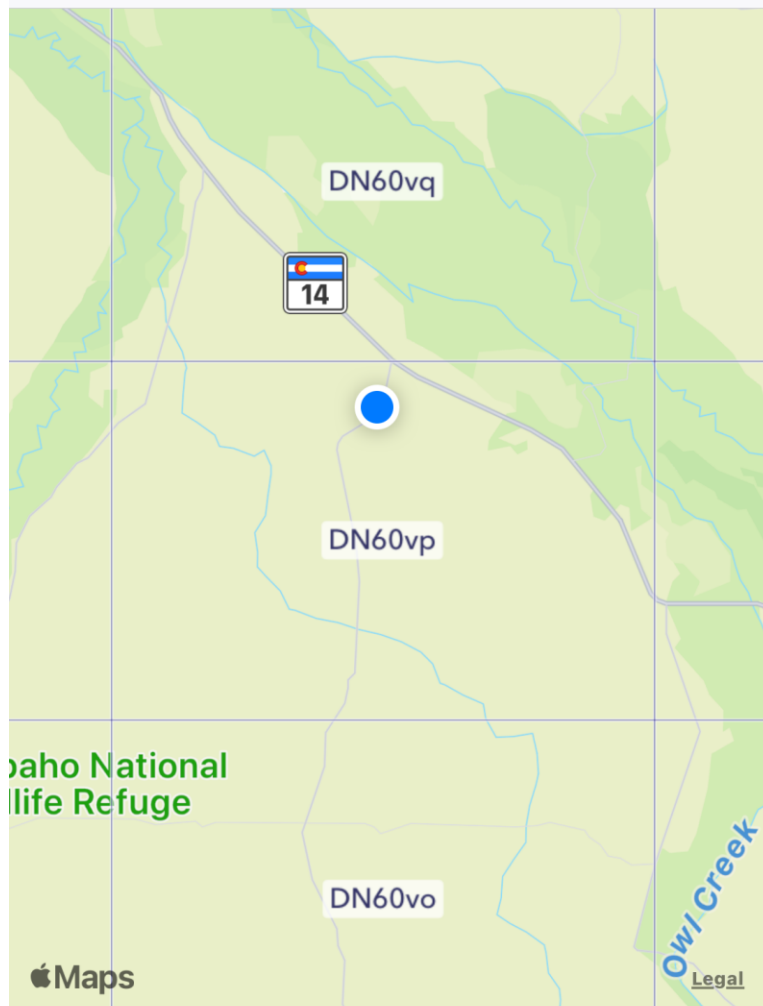


Maidenhead

Latitude
[40.6612° N](#)

Longitude
[106.2092° W](#)

Maidenhead
[DN60vp48](#)



Accurate to 15 Feet





FLYING THE AMSAT COLORS



DN60 Sunset



DN60 Sunrise



The end of the DN60 activation. Time to pack up and head to DN50 west of Craig Colorado.

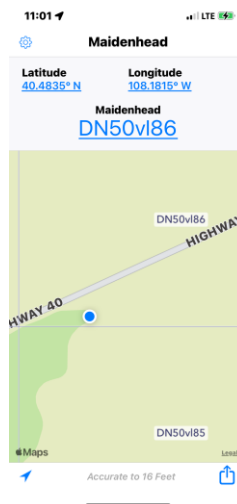
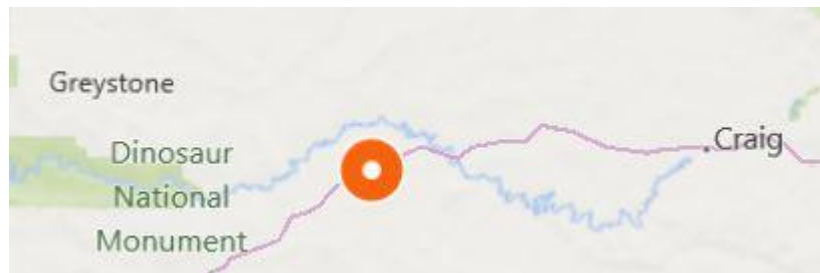


It seems like everywhere I rove the cows show up in the morning.

DN50



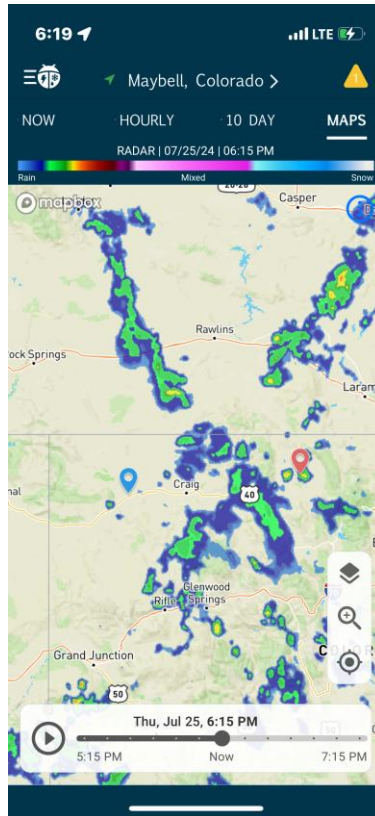
The DN50 activation site was at a historical pull out on HWY 40 west of Craig Colorado and just east of the Dinosaur National Monument.



The initial site at one of the entrances to Dinosaur National Monument ended up being unacceptable due to surrounding mountainous terrain.



The largest issue at DN50 was the constant threat of weather. The first two passes took place between passing thunderstorms. Between passes the antenna was lowered to the ground to minimize my exposure to lightening. The third pass was aborted halfway through due to severe thunderstorms that showed up around 3:30 AM. The rest of the night was spent sleeping after the antenna was taken down and stowed in the car.

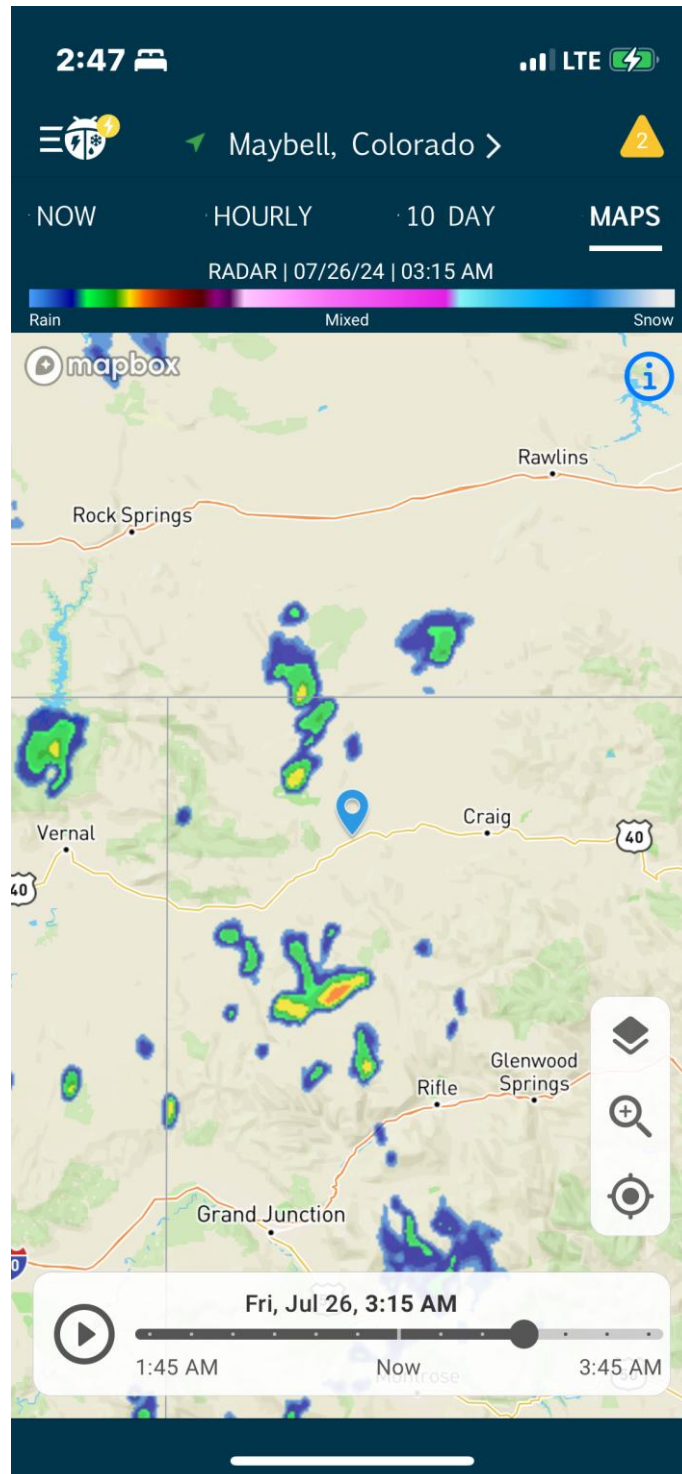


Sunset was spectacular as usual.

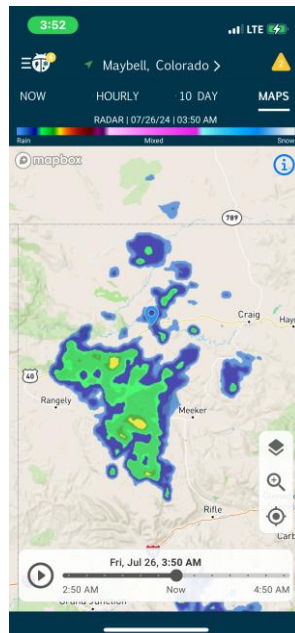


DN50 Sunset

The final pass in the early morning hours had a radar picture that looked clear enough to begin the pass that would start around 3AM.



Halfway through the pass things had changed rapidly in the last hour to the radar picture below.



After the Asian footprint was finished the pass was aborted in order to take the antenna down before the major portion of the storm hit. In retrospect this was the right decision.



After a night of hamming, storm watching, raising and lowering the antenna three times, the sunrise that morning was a very welcomed sight.



CO monitor and headlamp resting on covered equipment.

DM59



Looking southwest toward Grand Junction Colorado.



Looking northeast back toward DN50.

1:06



Maidenhead

Latitude

[39.2774° N](#)

Longitude

[108.8035° W](#)

Maidenhead

[DM59og36](#)



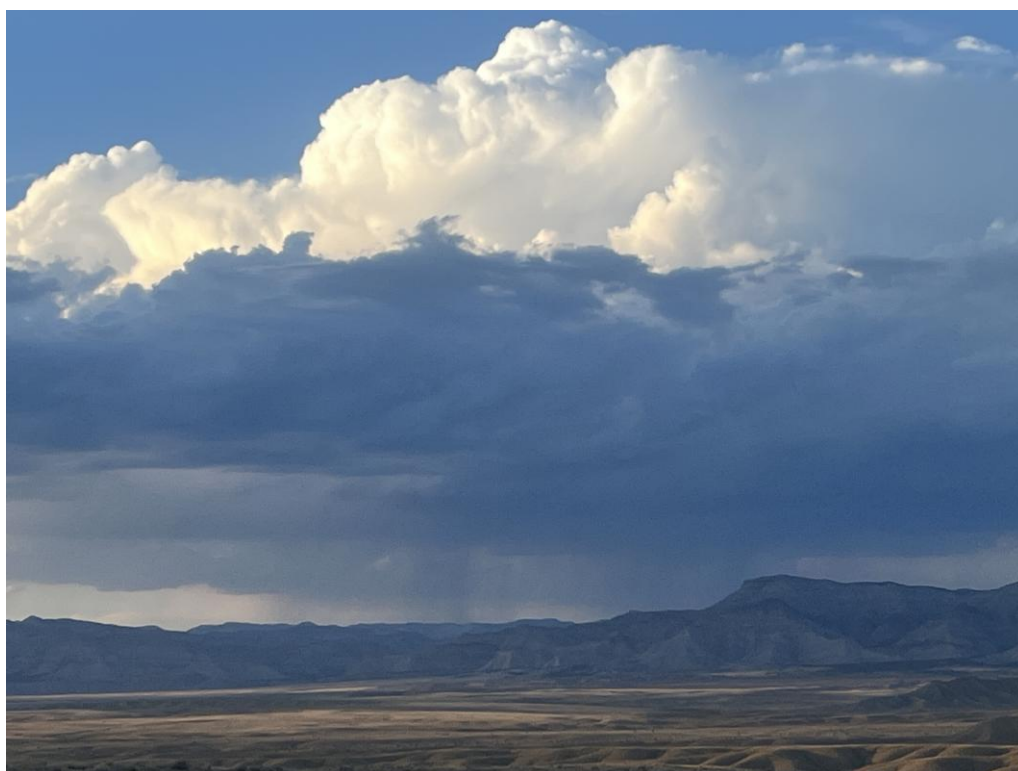
Accurate to 16 Feet





DM59 Scenery







DM59 Sunset

Two passes were done at DM59. After finishing those passes and packing up I arrived in Grand Junction around 11PM to check into a hotel for a shower and a good night's sleep after spending two nights and three days in the 4-Runner.

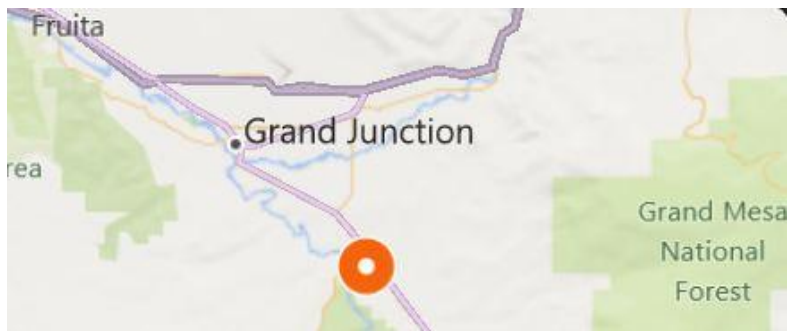
The following morning gave me a chance to find a good place to setup for two passes starting in the late afternoon in DM58 about 30 minutes south of Grand Junction. After many miles of searching the best spot was located considering the 360 degrees of surrounding mountains.

DM58



With threatening clouds to the west the antenna was laid down until pass time.







11:00



Maidenhead

Latitude

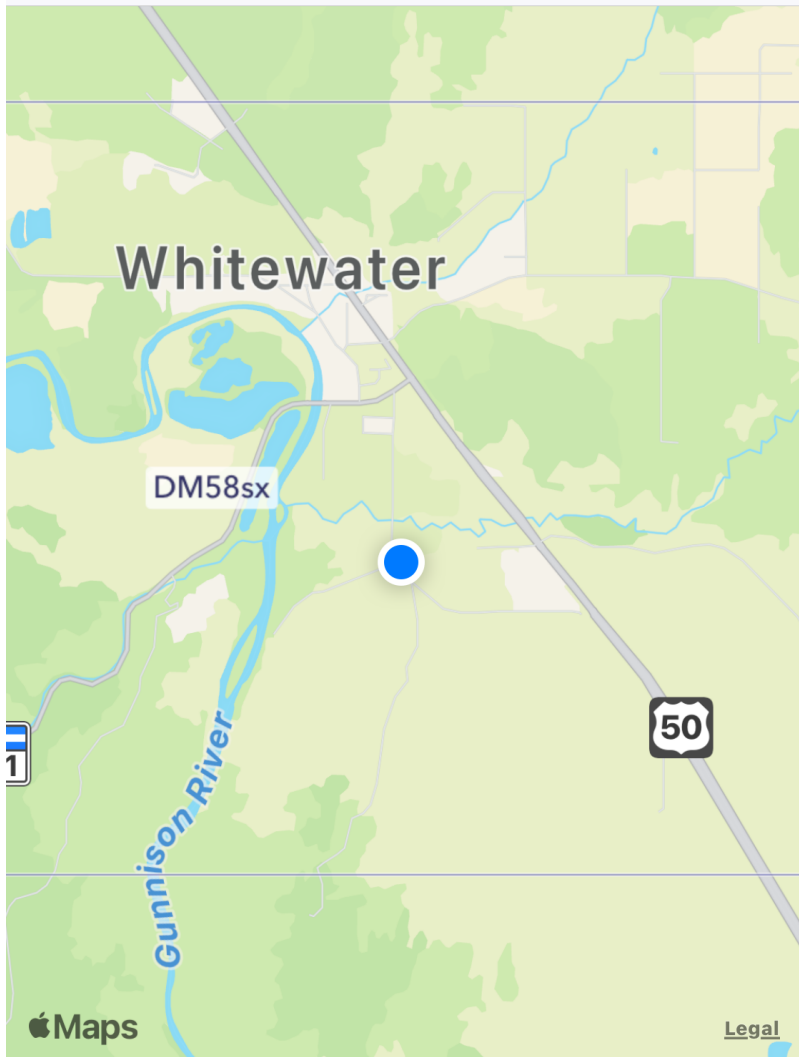
[38.9752° N](#)

Longitude

[108.4452° W](#)

Maidenhead

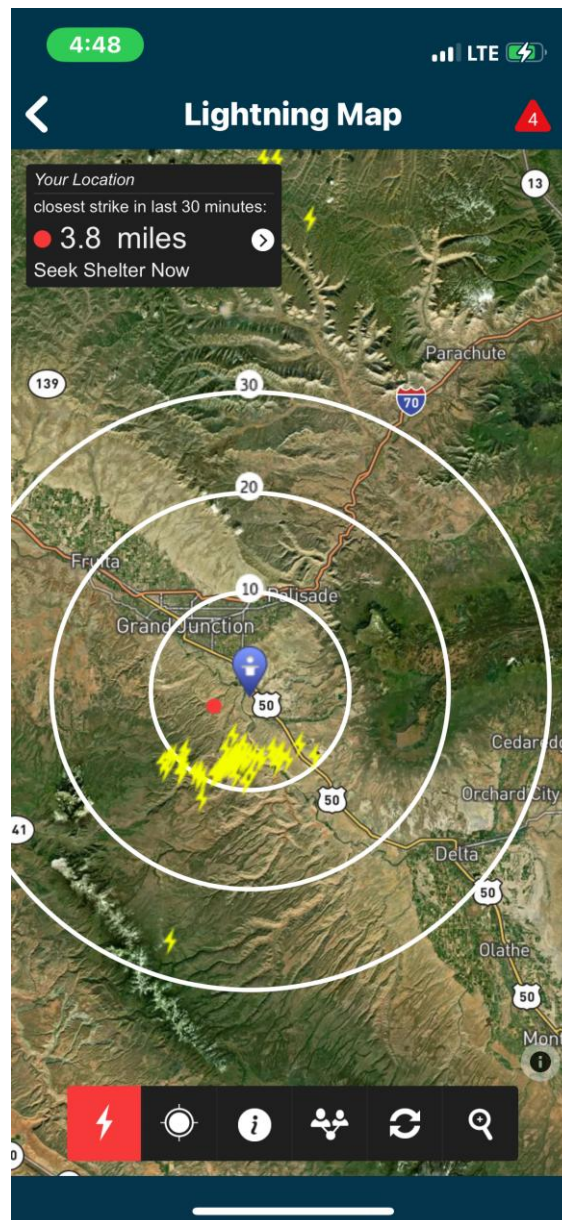
[DM58sx64](#)



Accurate to 15 Feet



Despite the impressive clouds and lightening in the area it all cleared up by pass time.

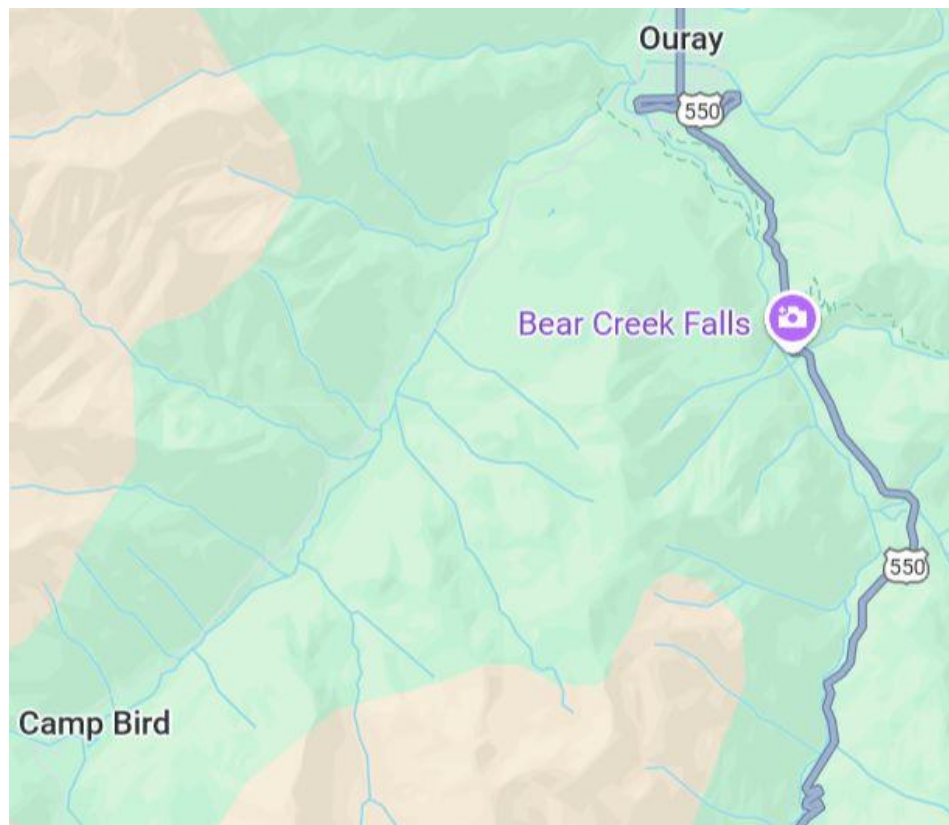


After two successful passes I packed up in the dark and headed back to the hotel in Grand Junction with my next destination the following day being Durango Colorado. From there my plan was to activate DM57 in Southwestern Colorado.

THE MILLION DOLLAR HIGHWAY

The trip from Grand Junction to Durango is a beautiful drive which eventually takes you through the San Juan Mountains. It's pretty much flat land to Montrose Colorado. You pass the verdant crops of Olathe Colorado along the way which is famous for its sweet corn this time of year. From Montrose you drive south to Ridgeway at which point you start the climb into the heart of the San Juan Mountains.

Your next destination will be Ouray Colorado, pronounced U-Ray. Ouray is an old mining town which back in the 1800's supported to Camp Bird Mine. The trip to the Camp Bird mine is a mild 4WD road up further into the mountains to the southwest.



Since the Camp Bird Mine shut down years ago after processing millions of ounces of gold and silver, the town of Ouray is now the 4WD capital of Colorado in the summer months. The Alpine Loop will take you through the high mountain passes of the San Juan's.

Numerous 4WD trails in the area allow you to turn what would otherwise be a short two hour drive on pavement into a daylong and sometime hair raising adventure getting to towns like Silverton, Lake City or Telluride. Having been on almost every one of those trails previously in years past I can attest to the adrenaline fueled nature of those drives. But, this trip wasn't about that so I had to keep driving pavement to get to where I needed to be.



From Ridgeway driving south to Ouray and the San Juan Mountains.







The Ouray Cemetery north of town where my wife's relatives are buried.



A view of Ouray from above town on the Million Dollar Highway.





Ouray has the nickname of being the Switzerland of America. The dirt road to the left in the picture will take you up to the old Camp Bird Mine. 4WD roads beyond that can get you to Telluride Colorado for the brave of heart.

The following are views along the Million Dollar Highway, so named for all the gold and silver that was hauled out of the Camp Bird Mine in years past.







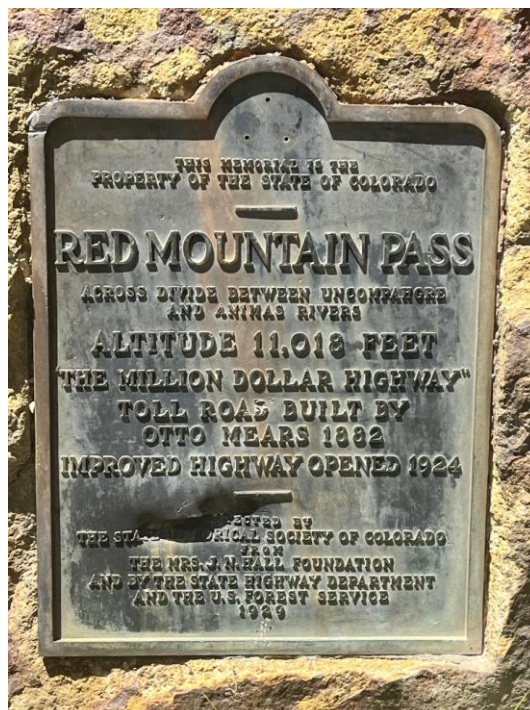


Snow slide tunnel





Travelling toward Red Mountain Pass along the route south to Durango.





Red Mountain Pass seems like a good name for it.



View from Red Mountain Pass



Next Pass Molas Pass, 10,910 Feet Elevation



Snowdon Peak, 13,077 feet as seen from Molas Pass



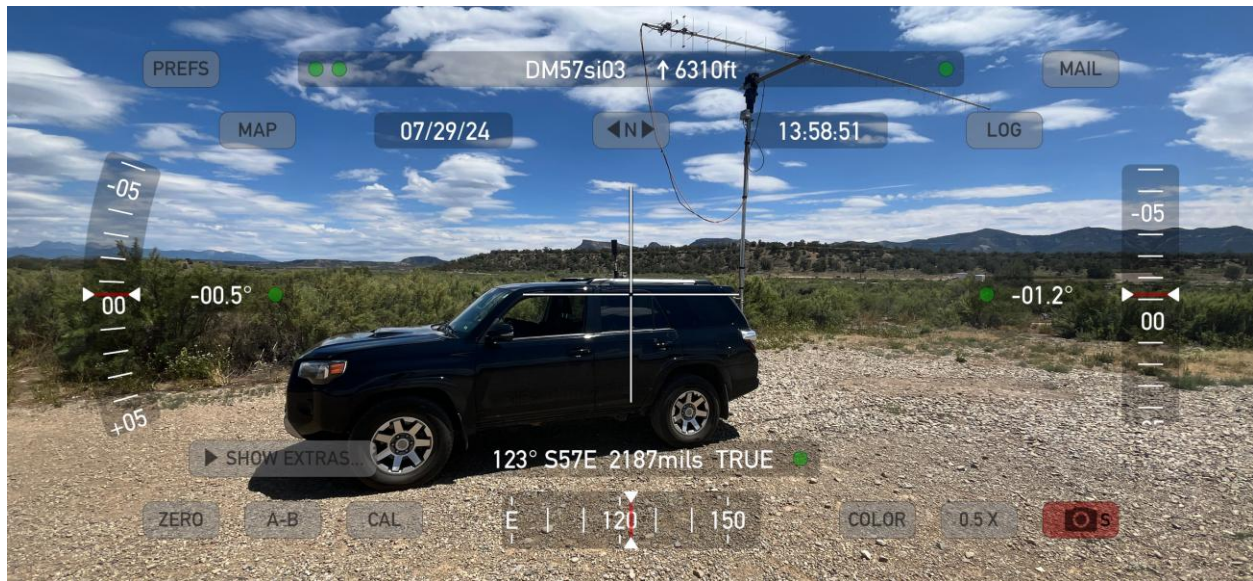
As you can see HWY 515, The Million Dollar Highway, is not conducive to much, if any, low horizon satellite hamming. This day was spent making that trip with no passes planned. The need was to get to Durango in time to be able to travel west into DM57 to see if my site picked out on Google Maps was acceptable. That site picked out on the map would have been okay by my assessment when I saw it but I wanted better if possible.

I travelled further west toward Cortez Colorado and found a pullout well off the road for a mountain biking network of trails. It was across the highway from the Montezuma County Fairgrounds seen below. It looked like the perfect spot for a late day and early evening pass the following day. The only people using this area were bikers coming out with their bikes on their vehicles and parking for a late afternoon bike ride on the trails so it didn't look to me that anyone would be bothered by my presence the next day. It was clearly marked as a day use area only. My last planned pass the next day would end right after sunset so I felt like I would be good using the area.



Back now the 45 minute drive to Durango for a good night's rest.

DM57



To get to this site in DM57 from Durango is about a 45 minute drive that takes you past the entrance to Mesa Verde National Park. The park is in the mountainous area to the east as seen above and below.





Two successful passes were run from DM57. Near the end of the last pass the sun had set providing another beautiful ending to a good afternoon of satellite hamming.



Antenna take down took place in the dark and it was back to Durango to rest up for a couple planned back to back overnight pass runs in the 4-Runner to take place in DM66 in New Mexico and hopefully a gridline activation at DM67/68 in Colorado.

DM66



The drive east from Durango to Pagosa Springs is a pleasant drive at which point I headed south after gassing up and getting snacks and sandwiches for the overnight stay. Once in New Mexico you are in DM66 on Hwy 84. I took a few sides roads looking for activation sites but this is a pretty mountainous area and no ideal sites were found. Travelling further south and ending up on Hwy 64 I found a pull out that was quite large and well off the main road. There were some old signs posted there but both unreadable from years of sun and weather exposure. It had the best horizons of any place I'd seen up to that point. There were no gates or fences preventing access so I decided this was the place to be for a DM66 activation in New Mexico.

I lined up the vehicle north and south to make antenna calibration simple and sat for a few hours relaxing, eating and sleeping. A couple of hours before the first pass and in daylight I set up the antenna and got all equipment up and running.

There was very little traffic on the road in front of me and no one ever pulled into this pull out area the entire time I was there.



Looking south toward Hwy 64 from the 4-Runner.

Looking north



After the first pass the sun has set once again.



1:23



Maidenhead

Latitude

[36.8885° N](#)

Longitude

[106.7462° W](#)

Maidenhead

[DM66pv03](#)



Accurate to 16 Feet



After a successful night of GC passes the sun once again presented itself in a spectacular fashion to start another day and hopefully a dual gridline activation back up in Colorado.



These are some tasty treats that go well with carrots as a good road snack.



DM67/DM68



10:00 ↗



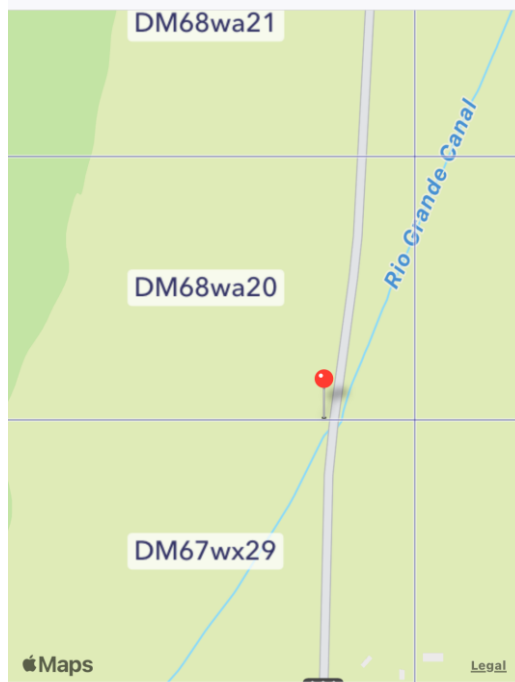
Maidenhead

Latitude
[38.0000° N](#)

Longitude
[106.1435° W](#)

Maidenhead

[DM68wa20](#)





Having arrived earlier than expected at the gridline and finding it an acceptable location to attempt to spend the night I decided to setup and run an earlier bonus pass than posted on hams.at. That early pass ended up being a very productive NA/EU pass, particularly since it was at a reasonable hour in EU. That activity decreased the pileups on the following three passes which certainly gave more stations a chance for the gridline.



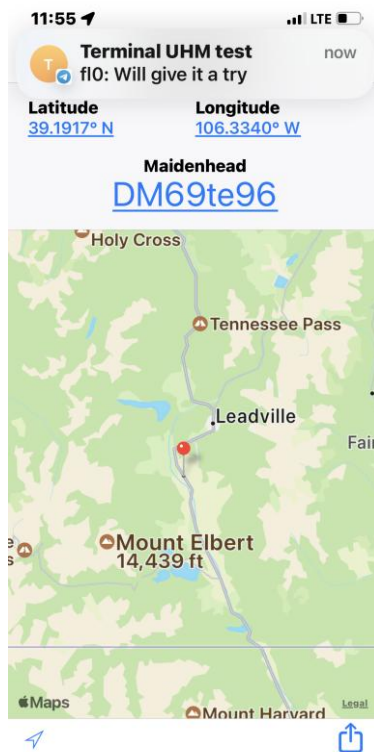


A DM67/68 Colorado Sunset



Sunrise the following morning portended another beautiful day on tap for the final grid activation further north in DM69.

DM69



Located a few miles south of Leadville Colorado.

11:55

LTE



Maidenhead

Latitude

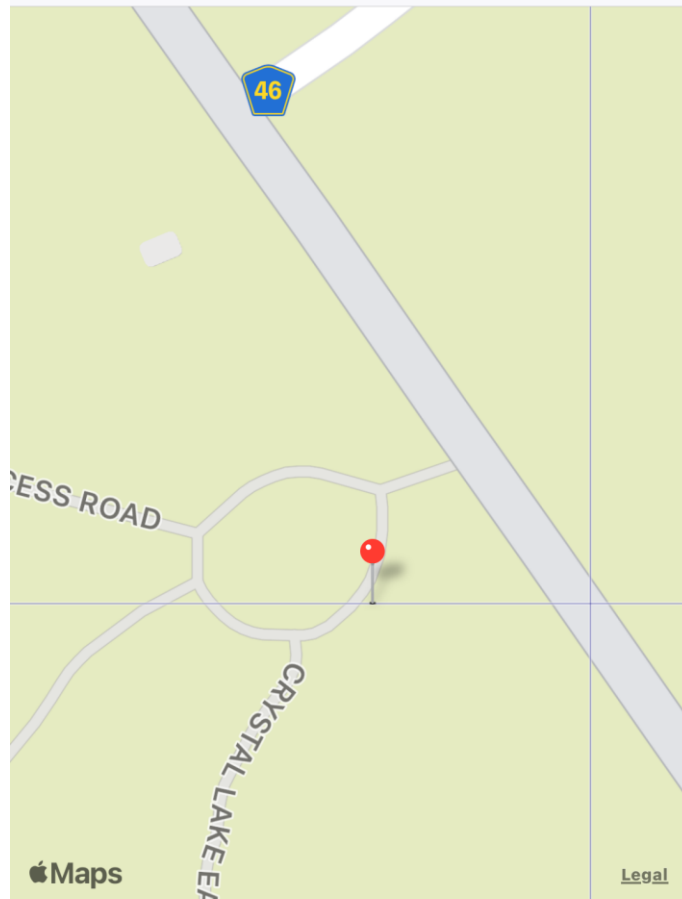
[39.1917° N](#)

Longitude

[106.3340° W](#)

Maidenhead

[DM69te96](#)



The Crystal Lake pullout loop was a perfect place to set up for the final two passes of the trip. The surrounding scenery was absolutely beautiful as was the weather.



Mount Elbert 14,439 Feet



The tallest mountain in Colorado



The two final passes were very productive and were a good finish to a long trip. The sun was setting at the very moment of the end of the final pass so I stepped outside to capture the event.





I spent the night in Leadville to rest up for the short drive home the following morning and then it was over.

What an amazing trip with some amazing GC satellite hamming. IO-117 held up for every pass during the entire trip. Unfortunately GC has become much less reliable since the end of this rove and is currently non-functional. It will likely remain in that non-functional state, unable to connect hams around the globe, but while it lasted it was an AMAZING ADVENTURE IN SATELLITE HAM RADIO and I was happy to be part of it all... 73 Jeff / KI0KB/P

