XIV. ONE-WAVELENGTH SINGLE LOOP ANTENNAS

1. The Horizontally Oriented Loop

To calculate the length in feet of any one-wavelength loop, divide 1005 by the frequency in MHz. Horizontally oriented one-wavelength loop antennas have become very popular on 160, 80, and 40 meters and it is one type of NVIS antenna. (NVIS stands for "near vertical incidence skywave" because of its high angle radiation pattern.) It is claimed by its users that the loop antenna is quieter than other antennas. This is because it doesnt pick up the noise from power lines, thunderstorms, etc., coming in at low angles. These antennas radiate on their fundamental frequencies with a broad pattern straight up to put a strong signal for nearby contacts. Recently published articles on this type of antenna have called them "cloud warmers." There are other types of antennas called NVIS antennas other than loops. They are dipoles at low heights or dipoles with parasitic reflectors placed under them to cause the signal to radiate mostly straight up. The NVIS antennas have an advantage in working nearby stations because you dont get the static noise and interference from far distances. They are definitely not DX antennas. An article on NVIS antennas appears in the December 2005 QST.

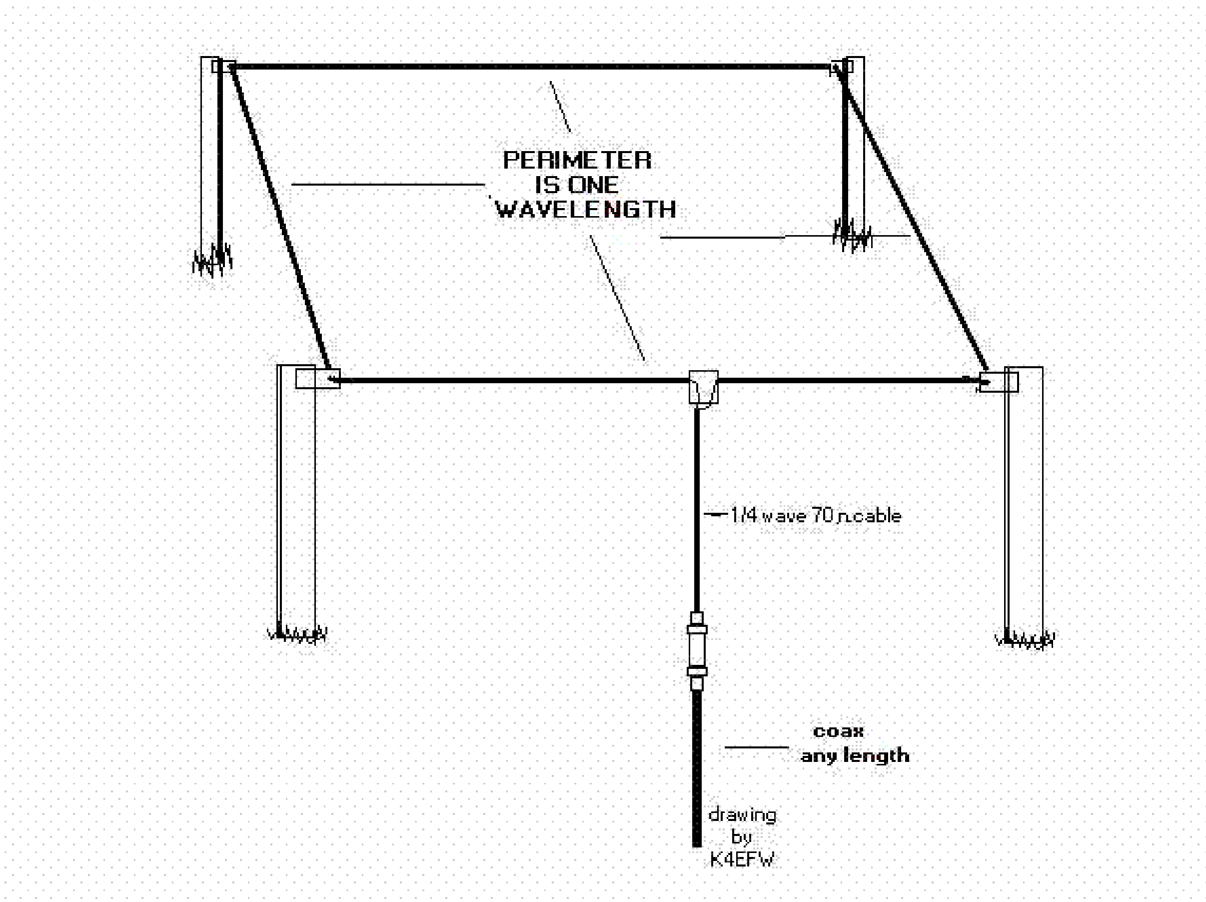
On their fundamental frequencies, horizontally oriented loops take up half the horizontal distance as a half wave antenna for that band. Loops are two-dimensional antennas having depth as well as breadth. There are two loop configurations: The square loop and the triangle loop. Some hams have pulled the loops out in irregular shapes to fit where the supports are located. The only advantage in using a rectangular loop instead of a square loop is to take up less horizontal space. This is true because the gain of a rectangular loop is diminished below a square loop. The area enclosed by the perimeter of the loop determines the gain of a loop. A circular loop has the most enclosed area, but it requires an infinite number of supports. The gain of a loop comes from the loop having two maximum current points separated by a distance of one-quarter wavelength. From here on we will call a horizontally oriented loop a horizontal loop.

We also modeled the gain of the horizontal loop for the 80-meter band over real ground. The maximum gain occurs with the loop at 7 meters or about 25 feet above ground. Mind you, this gain is straight up from the loop. At that height, its gain is about 9.25 dBi and that equates to about 7 dBd in free space. The gain of the loop diminishes slightly as the antenna is raised. The feed-point radiation resistance at 7 meters height is 35 ohms resistive and 0.0 ohms reactance and you do not need a matching section of 70-ohm coax. At a height of 10 meters or about 33 feet, the radiation resistance rises to 63.5 ohms. There the SWR will be 1.27:1, if it is fed directly with 50-ohm coax. At 15 meters or about 50 feet, the radiation resistance rises to 118 ohms and a 70-ohm matching section will be in order. The gain drops to a little less than 7 dBi at that height. These figures may or may not be applicable to your QTH, because your soil conductivity may be different from the soil we used to model it. As you can see from the above numbers, the feed-point resistance rises as the loop is raised.

The horizontal loops also are used on their harmonic frequencies. The loop with more gain and a

superior pattern is a two-wavelength loop. An 80-meter loop is a two-wavelength loop on 40 meters. The two-wavelength loop has a lower angle of radiation, but is a very large antenna for 80 meters. At 3800 kHz it has a perimeter of about 530 feet. A two-wavelength loop is not an NVIS antenna. Using coax with a tuner is not an ideal way for working a loop on its harmonic frequencies. This is because of the high SWR in the coax on some bands will cause high loss. For example, an 80-meter loop fed on 40 meters will have an SWR of 8:1 and the SWR on 20 meters will be 49.5:1. There will be some hams who will say they get satisfactory results this way, however theory suggests they will have a stronger signal if they use a ladder-line because ladder-line has less loss. Feeding a loop antenna with ladder-line makes more sense when working a loop on harmonic frequencies.

Figure 29. One Wavelength Horizontal Loop



To realize maximum gain, make the square and triangle have equal sides. When the sides are equal, the loop has maximum enclosed area for whatever configuration you use. Other shapes will work, but the gain will suffer.

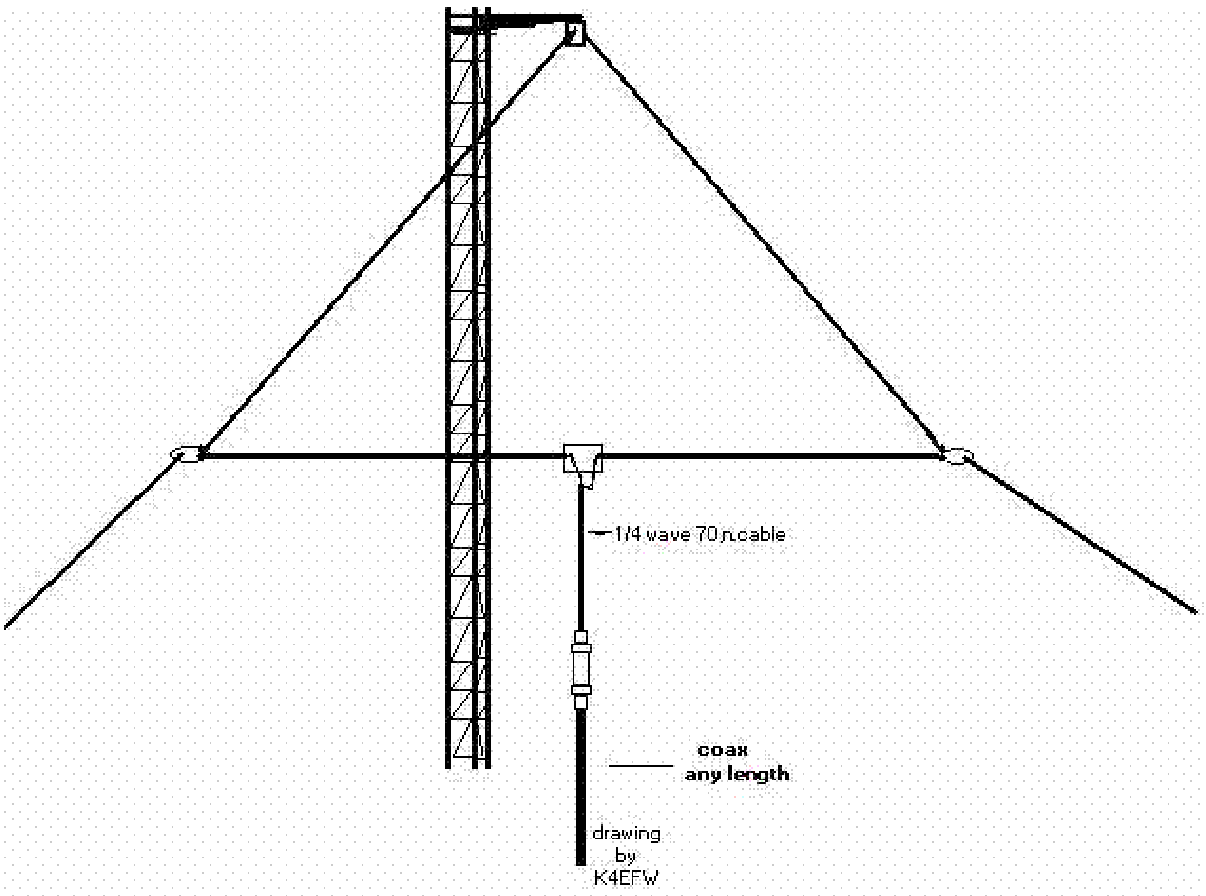
To support a square loop, you will need four supports, one for each corner. We hope you will have trees or masts in the right places. A triangular loop will need three supports. Once you have cut the single piece of wire to the right length, run the wire through as many insulators as you have corners. At each corner of the loop, put an insulator and tie the corner to a support with a rope from the insulator. To make the feed-point, connect both ends of the loop to an insulator. Strip the insulation from the outer part of the coax. Separate the shield from the center conductor. The ends of the coax are connected to the ends of the loop across the insulator. Most hams do not feed loops with a balun at the feed-point.

2. The Vertically Oriented Single Loop for 40 and 80 Meters

Vertically oriented loops radiate broadside to the plane of the loop. A horizontally polarized vertically oriented loop has both vertical and horizontal wires. From here on out, we will refer to a vertically oriented loop as just a vertical loop. When using this term, we are not referring to its polarization. If the feed-point is on one of the horizontal wires, the loop radiates horizontally polarized waves. The vertical wires radiate weaker vertically polarized waves. If the feed-point is on one of the vertical wires, vertically polarized waves will be radiated. The radiation from a one-wavelength vertical loop has both high-angle and low-angle radiation. It is a good antenna for both nearby stations and for DX contacts. It is better than a dipole for DX because the vertical loop puts out a stronger low angle signal than a dipole does.

The gain of a vertical delta loop is 4.55 dBi or about 2.4 dBd. Its feed-point impedance is about 120.5 ohms. The square vertical loop has 5-dBi gain and about 2.85 dBd and the feed-point resistance is 143 ohms. They both need to be fed with a series quarter-wave matching section of 70-ohm coax.

Figure 30. Single-Element Vertical Delta Loop



Square vertical loops need two supports. The square vertical loop needs less vertical space than the delta loop. The vertical space needed for a square vertical loop for 80 meters is 92 feet. For 40 meters the vertical space is half that. It is rare to find someone using the square vertical loop these days. The vertical delta loop is more common because it needs only one high support. The apex of a delta loop for 3500 kHz needs to be 102 feet high and on 40 meters, it needs to be 62 feet. This assumes the bottom horizontal wire will be 20 feet off the ground. In order to make a vertical loop fit on a shorter support, the sides of the loop can be reduced in length while making the horizontal wires longer. This will put the two maximum current points closer together, which has the effect of reducing the gain.

Like the horizontal loop, the formulas for finding the length in feet of these loops are the same: 1005

divided by frequency in MHz. In addition, because the feed-point resistance is nearly the same as horizontal loops, quarter-wave matching sections and other methods can be used to feed the vertical loops. The vertical loop is not as sensitive to height as the horizontal loop. Both vertical square loops and vertical delta loops can be operated on harmonically related bands. (See Figure 32).

Figure 31. Radiation Pattern of a 30-Meter Delta Loop on 30 Meters.
The Bottom Wire is at 18 Meters above Ground.

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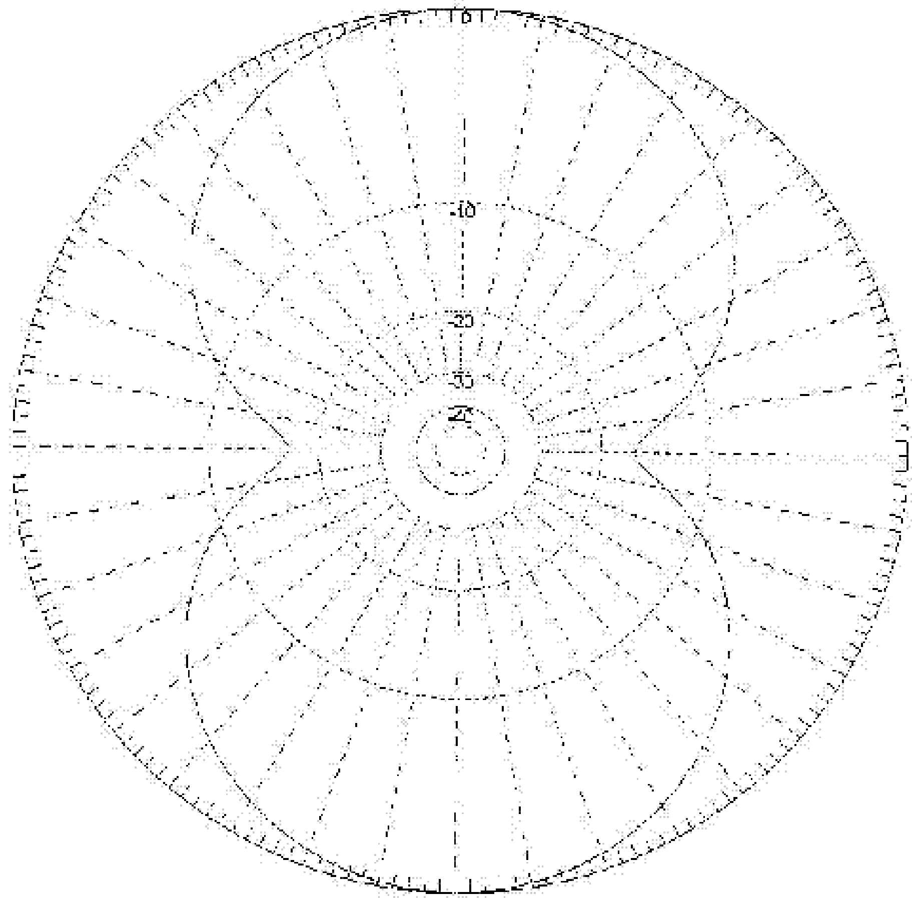

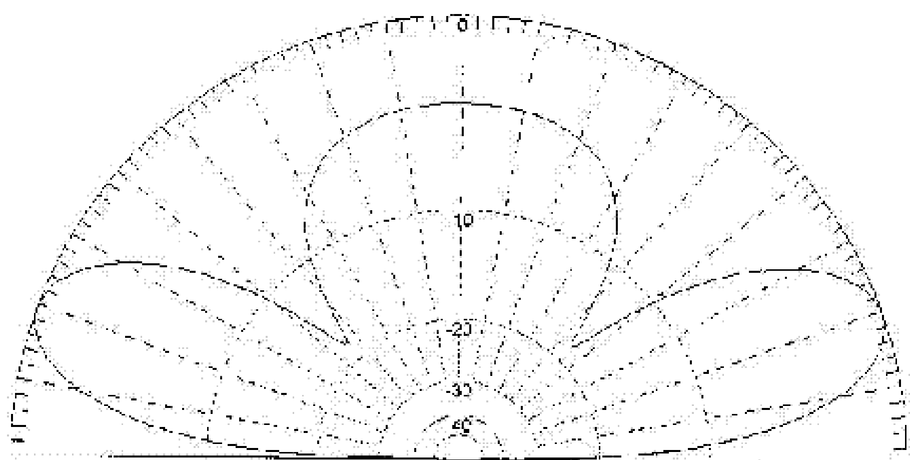

Ga : 8.43 dBi = 0 dB (Horizontal polarization)
F/B: 0.00 dB; Rear: Azim. 120 dg, Elev. 60 dg
Freq: 10.100 MHz
Z: 101.904 - j2.068 Ohm
SWR: 2.0 (50.0 Ohm), 5.9 (600 Ohm)
Elev: 19.6 dg (Real GND :18.00 m height)

The horizontal pattern shown above demonstrates that the 30-meter delta loop has a bi-lobal pattern broadside to the plane of the loop. The vertical pattern below the horizontal pattern shows both high angle and low angle radiation. The angle of maximum radiation is at 35 degrees above the horizon. The angle of radiation straight up is only down about 1.5 dB. This is pattern demonstrates the vertical delta loop is good for both nearby stations as well as DX.

Figure 32. Radiation Pattern of a 30-meter Delta Loop on 15 Meters

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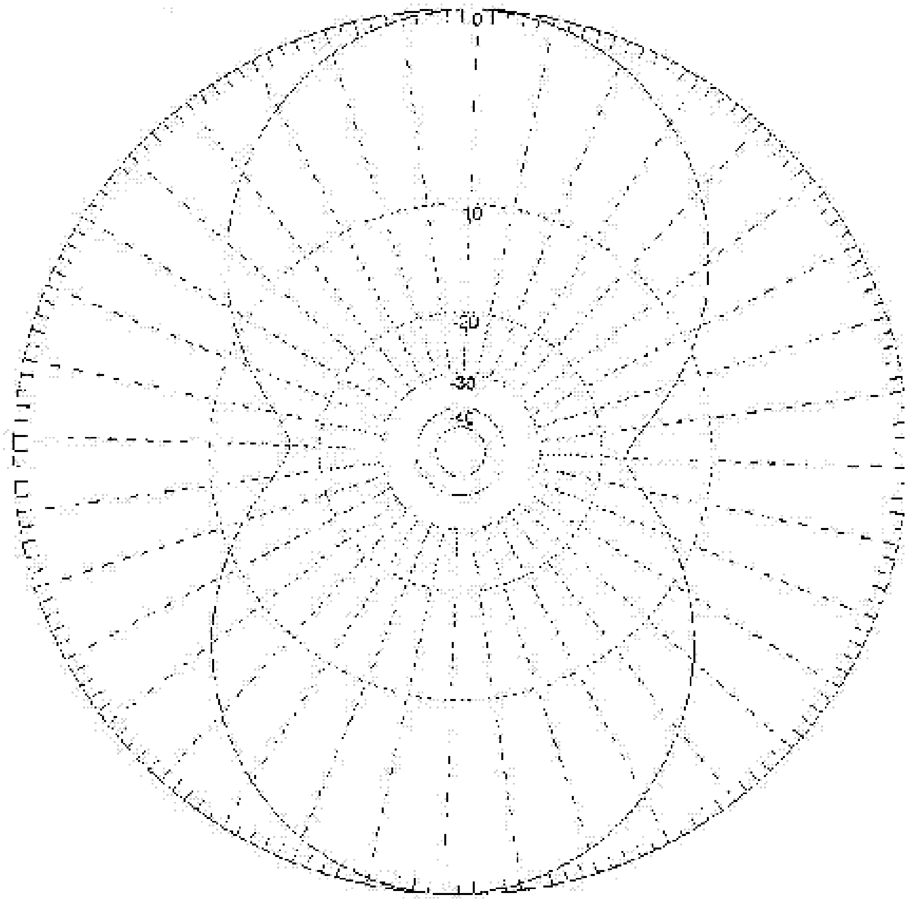

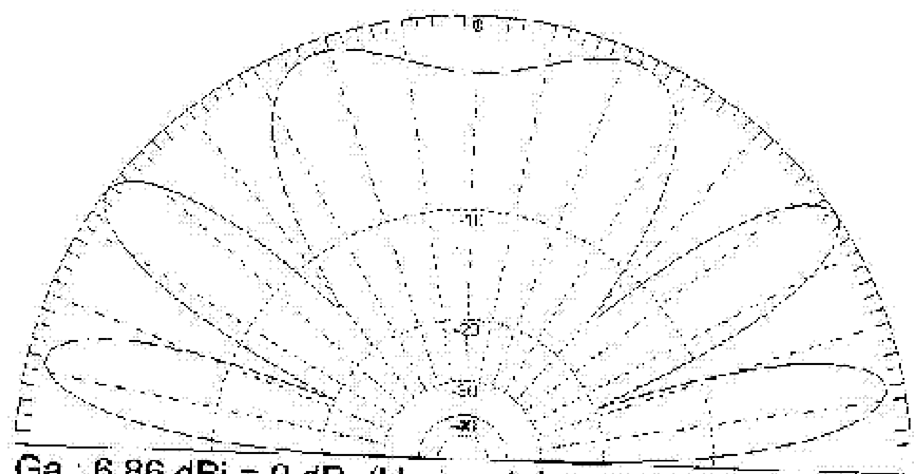

Ga : 6.86 dBi = 0 dB (Horizontal polarization)
F/B: 0.00 dB; Rear: Azim. 120 dg, Elev. 60 dg
Freq: 21.200 MHz
Z: 544.350 + j314.303 Ohm
SWR: 14.5 (50.0 Ohm), 1.7 (600 Ohm)
Elev: 35.4 dg (Real GND :18.00 m height)