

Newsletter #1: October 8, 2018

Hello everyone. This is the beginning of a News List for the W2DRZ antenna controller and related products and software. The newsletter will be sent on an occasional basis, when there are new versions or products to announce. Or maybe just to stay in touch or offer usage tips. To start I have added all current customers that I have email addresses for to the list. **If you do not wish to receive this News Letter**, please email me and I will remove you.

New Software Versions

Today I want to announce a new DrzTrack program version, with a corresponding new firmware update. It is DrzTrack version 5.11 and Firmware version 5.10. These must be used together. These programs are available on our web site, along with details on changes and new features (<http://www.w2drz.ramcoinc.com>). Users who have DrzTrack version 5.01 or greater will be able to use the boot loader to install the new firmware.

One of the new features in DrzTrack 5.10 was support for multiple instances of DrzTrack, each being associated with a different controller board. This way one could have multiple controllers (perhaps one for each band) and be able to control them both at once from the same computer. The problem was that the setup and saved data for DrzTrack was stored in a common location for all copies. So, if you had one for two meters and one for the 432 band, when you used the either one, it would overwrite the saved data for the other one.

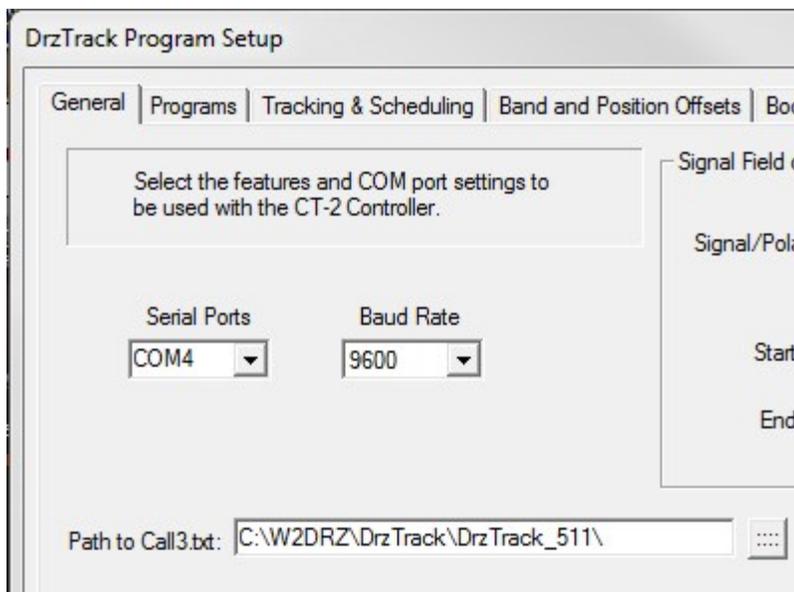
The fix was to make DrzTrack store its information using the name of the folder that DrzTrack resides in. That works fine, but it turned out that I introduced a new bug into the program. The bug caused the inability to store and retrieve the band data in the position offset tab of the setup dialog. So, one could set an offset for the feed for a band, but when the program was restarted that offset was lost. That is fixed in version 5.11.

Call Lookup Problems

Another new feature in version 5.10 was to allow specifying where the call3.txt file that DrzTrack uses is located. Call3.txt contains the location information for over 5000 amateur stations known to use EME or general VHF. It is used when you enter a call in the DX Station box in DrzTrack, and in the local control panel for looking up station information.

Prior DrzTrack versions only looked for call3 in the installation folder. But if you are using WSJT or Map65, or some other program that also uses Call3.txt, then you would end up with different information in each copy of the file. Now you can change the location of Call3.txt for DrzTrack to match the location used by the WSJT version. That way when you add an entry with either DrzTrack or with WSJT, both programs will

have the new entry. Below is the portion of the setup dialog showing where this can be changed:



This shows the default location of Call3.txt that is installed with DrzTrack. The ::: button to the right of the field is a Browse button to assist in setting a different folder that contains the Call3.txt file. You may also manually type in the path if you wish.

By the way, some people have had difficulty figuring out where Call3 is located when using the new WSJT-X program. It is stored in the user "AppData/Local" folder for the logged

in windows user. For example, for myself it is at "C:\Users\Russ\AppData\Local\WSJT-X\".

Note that the path must include a backslash character at the end. If you forget to add it the program will do it for you.

But in DrzTrack version 5.10 there were two bugs having to do with call3.txt. The first was that the call3 file could not be found from the main dialog DxCall Window (thanks to Mark, 9H1BN for finding this bug for me). The second problem was that when a new call was added (from the local control dialog) the new file was being written to an incorrect location. Both of these bugs are fixed in the 5.11 version.

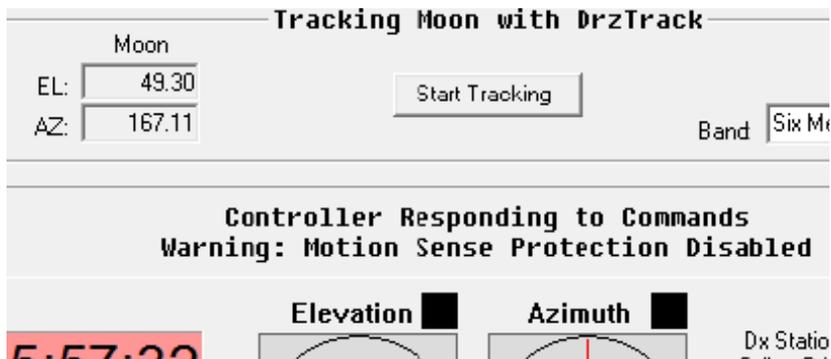
Boot Load Woes

When using DrzTrack I repeatedly noticed that it was easy for me to accidentally click on the wrong option when accessing the setup menu at the top of the main dialog. This resulted in entering the boot loader when I really wanted to enter setup. To add insult to injury, entering the boot loader screen would cause the firmware to hang if one exited without actually boot loading - requiring a manual reset!

So, I made three changes. First was to change the Setup menu item to have no options. Instead it simply enters the setup dialog when it is clicked. Next the boot load dialog was moved to the last tab in the setup dialog, making it more difficult to accidentally enter. Finally, I modified the boot load dialog to not cause the hang if it was entered and then exited without starting a boot load. Hopefully these changes will help some of you - as well as myself.

Motion sensing

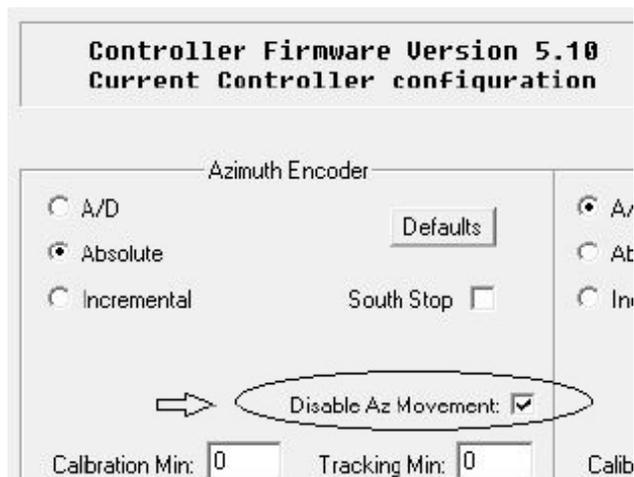
Due to requests from users I have added two new features in version 5.11. One is to be able to disable motion sensing. To review, motion sensing allows the controller to stop trying to move the antennas in case they are jammed. But there may be times when someone wants to test something and does not want motion sensing to interfere with the test. This can now be done by setting the field called Move Precision (in the encoder configuration dialog) to zero. When you do this and then send the configuration to the controller you will get a warning message. Also, whenever one of the motion sensors is disabled the main dialog's status message will show that motion sensing is disabled, as shown here:



Disabling Motion control

The other new feature is to disable motion control for either AZ or EL. That is done in the encoder configuration dialog, with a checkbox near the top for each direction:

Disabling movement means that none of the on-screen controls for that direction will work, even when tracking. This is useful for operators who wish to track automatically in one direction only, while using manual tracking for the other direction.



That is all for this first newsletter. I wish everyone to have happy and successful EME and other Ham activities.

Very 73 – Russ K2TXB

PS: Comments are welcome. Send to k2txb@comcast.net