

CAMP News

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Performa User Group



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Don't Forget That 2011 Dues Are Due; Powerpoint in May

Second notice, folks. If you haven't yet paid your dues, please give membership director Mike Knight your \$20 check at the May meeting, or mail it to him at 483 Marston Road, Gardiner, ME 04345. For our May program, Jeff Frankel will demonstrate the new version of Microsoft Powerpoint, part of Microsoft Office for Macintosh 2011. We meet at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 11 at Buker Community Center in Augusta.

Choice Is Good

by Jeffrey Frankel

Time Warner Cable (and its predecessors) was my White Knight for finally bringing broadband internet to little ol' Windsor in September 2005. But by January of this year the bloom had most definitely faded from the rose. Every evening, network speeds slowed to a crawl. A service call and a new modem didn't improve the situation, and TWC refused to give me any timetable for correcting what a second technician acknowledged was network overload.

Enter Fairpoint Communications. Thanks to conditions laid down by the Public Utilities Commission in connection with the takeover of Verizon's land line business in northern New England, Fairpoint is under specific mandate to expand broadband access in Maine. As my frustration with TWC was nearing its peak, Fairpoint launched a promotion for DSL internet that piqued my interest. When a customer service rep called back to let me know that 15 MB/sec service was available in my area, I jumped at the bait.

All's well that ends well, and my new home network is now running fast and fine. But as I discussed at the April CAMP meeting, it took me several weeks to work the kinks out.

The root cause of my difficulties was the incompatibility of the VPN service my wife uses on her work laptop with the Westell 7500 combined ADSL2+ modem/router supplied by Fairpoint. This was actually déjà vu to me, as I ran into the exact same problem with the Apple Extreme router I owned when my wife's employer first set up the VPN. My solution at that time was to buy a replacement router, a Linksys WRT54G, which worked swimmingly with TWC's cable modem.

Try as I might, I couldn't find the correct ports to open on the Westell to pass through the VPN connection. Carol's IT folks were unable to remedy the situation on their first try, and

Fairpoint wouldn't dig into it unless I signed up for a premium (\$\$) support plan. I was able to cobble together a workaround by bridging the modem of the Westell to my good ol' Linksys. This substituted the Linksys router for the router portion of the Westell unit, and enabled Carol's VPN client to connect to its server. Yay, Linksys! The downside was a noticeable performance hit on my network. So, back to the drawing board.

I solved the problem this time the same way I did last time: by buying another router. More specifically, I bought a combined ADSL2+ modem/router to replace the Westell. The new unit is a Netgear DGN3500 which I purchased locally from Staples. It passes through the VPN connection with no problem. Although I had to shell out \$120 I really didn't want to spend, the Netgear offers a number of capabilities the Westell doesn't, such as gigabit ethernet ports, 802.11n wireless connectivity, and a USB port for attaching a network hard drive. (I'm using a spare thumb drive.)

Setting up the DGN3500 required a little bit of effort. The setup wizard failed, but a phone call to Fairpoint gave me the missing piece of information I needed to configure the router manually. A call to Netgear was also necessary to resolve a printing issue. I was initially concerned that the wireless signal didn't reach my basement as strong as it used to, but rotating the router 90° on its stand took care of that.

So I'm a happy CAMPer for now. All's well that ends well, forsooth; here's hoping it stays well, that's the truth! ☼



Router settings for configuring a Netgear DGN3500 ADSL2+ modem/router to connect to Fairpoint's DSL network in Windsor, Maine. In lieu of entering your email password, you can also use a generic password that Fairpoint tech support will give you. I imagine that the purpose of the generic password is to avoid connection failure down the line if a customer changes his or her email password at a later date but forgets or doesn't know to also change this information on the router. I assume that the settings shown above will work on any of Netgear's combination ADSL2+ modem/routers.