

**Contest Advisory Committee
Semi-Annual Report**

**For the American Radio Relay League
Board of Directors Meeting**

January 2012

**Submitted by
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1. Executive Summary

- On November 7, 2011, Al Dewey, KØAD (Dakota Division CAC Representative) accepted an appointment by President Craigie, N3KN, to chair the CAC through 2012.
- On November 13, 2011, the CAC resumed discussions on the ARRL DX Tasking. Discussion on this tasking had been suspended earlier in the year due to CAC Reflector leaks as reported in the July 2011 CAC report to the board.
- The CAC has not yet completed the ARRL DX Tasking but significant progress has been made – particularly in the area of Region Based results reporting. It is anticipated that the CAC will complete this tasking within the next two months.
- Participation by CAC representatives remains about the same.
- There is interest in the CAC, and with the Chairman, for proposing additional items for study once the ARRL DX tasking (and any others submitted by the P&SC) are completed.

2. ARRL DX Tasking

The tasking to study the ARRL DX Contest is attached as an addendum to this report. The intent of the tasking is to determine if there are ways to make the contest more enjoyable and increase participation of both W/VE and DX stations.

Prior to resumption of the ARRL DX Tasking discussions, the CAC had agreed not to recommend allowing DX to DX contacts in the ARRL DX Contest.

Since the resumption of CAC discussions on the ARRL DX Tasking, the following items have been discussed.

- A. Distance-based scoring
- B. Region-based results reporting
- C. 24-hour category for single-op stations

A summary of these discussions is given below.

2A. Distance Based Scoring

When the CAC suspended work on ARRL DX Tasking last summer, we were in the midst of the discussion on distance based scoring. There was considerable support within the CAC for this change at that time. Since then, however, feedback to the CAC from the contest community on the possibility of distance based scoring has been almost entirely negative. One of the reasons expressed were the difficulties in taking propagation into consideration. For example, contacts on 10M can often be LESS difficult over longer distances. Another factor often cited was the fact that such a change would de-motivate DXpeditions to the Caribbean because the point value of Caribbean to W/VE QSOs would be diminished.

In the July 2011 report to the Board, it was reported that Ken Wolfe, K1EA, had agreed to rescore the results from the 2010 and 2011 ARRL DX Contest using a distance based scoring algorithm so that the results could be compared with the current scoring method. Since that report, Ken's results were made available to the CAC and analyzed. Unfortunately, an anomaly was found in the 2010 rescoring results so they could not be analyzed. But the 2011 results were evaluated by a member of the CAC. In general, the scores in the W1, W2, and W3 areas were reduced somewhat and the scores in most other areas of the country went up. There was some minor switching of position in the Top Ten lists and in a few instances, the winner of a category was different with distance based scoring. The most significant change was that a W9 went from fifth place to first place in one of the SSB categories.

Despite a true belief within the CAC that distance-based scoring would be better (i.e. fairer) than the current scoring system, it is also felt that a truly fair distance based scoring system would be extremely difficult to implement and would not be accepted at this time. It is expected that the CAC will recommend not implementing such a change in its final recommendations.

2B. Region Based Results Reporting

The main problem that the distance based scoring proposal was trying to solve was to provide a fairer way to compare results between stations that have clear geographical and propagation advantages in the ARRL DX Contest. For example, an extraordinary effort from a contester in South Dakota is going to be at a big disadvantage against a similar effort from a station in New England. Another way to solve this problem is to simply report the results by region rather than an overall W/VE Top Ten. The CAC believes that the primary recognition for a strong effort in that ARRL DX Contest is the contest write-up in *QST*. Recognition in the expanded Web Report (or the on-line scores database) also has value but the most prominent place to be recognized is the main contest results write-up in *QST*. At this point the majority of the CAC believes that that overall W/VE Top Ten boxes should be replaced (not augmented) by regional based listings of top scores. This is different than the current approach in which the overall W/VE Top Ten boxes are displayed prominently in the article followed by a list of regional winners in five regions. The CAC's belief is that the Regional Results should have top billing and that the overall W/VE results should have less prominence if they are included at all.

The CAC has not yet agreed upon a recommended makeup of the W/VE Regions for score reporting purposes or which categories should be reported in each region. Several region proposals have been suggested. It is believed that too few regions does not adequately solve the inequity while too many divisions somewhat dilutes the prominence of outstanding efforts. A current proposal within the CAC consisting of seven regions is currently being given serious consideration.

Finally, the CAC is aware that the planned electronic version of *QST* is not far off. It is also understood that the web-based version of the *QST* will have the potential of expanded content for contest results write-up. It is also understood that the printed version of *QST* will continue to exist and that there are some practical limitations on page count allocated to contest results write-ups in the printed version.

2C. Addition of a 24 Hour Category

Earlier in 2011, the CAC had agreed not to recommend a reduction in the 48 hour time limit for Single Operator entries in the ARRL DX Contest. This was reported in the July 2011 report to the board. However, the addition of a new 24 hour category had not yet been addressed or discussed. The CAC is currently split on this issue. Some believe that it will dilute or reduce participation. Another concern is that it will cause participants to put less priority on the low bands where QSO rates are significantly lower than the high bands. Others on the CAC believe that, with the aging contester population, such a category would be popular. Conceivably, some participants who operate 15 to 20 hours may be motivated to operate more hours if a 24 hour category was introduced for single operators. Additional discussion within the CAC is needed on this topic before a final recommendation can be made.

2D. Additional Items to be Discussed

In addition to the major topics identified in 2A, 2B, and 2C above, a number of additional topics are yet to be discussed. These are more minor issues and it is not believed that discussion on these topics will be as time consuming as the items reported above.

- QSO Point structure
- DX and W/VE exchanges
- Clean Sweep Award for DX Stations
- Incentives to increase DX participation
- Incentives to increase DXpeditions
- Incentives to increase activation of rare Sections
- Separate reporting for US and Canada
- Addition of XE and XE States (world works North America)

3. Other Topics

It is common for ARRL contest improvement ideas to be suggested from members both inside and outside the CAC. A number of these ideas have been brought forth. Some examples are:

- 1) Clarification of off time rule in ARRL RTTY Contest.
- 2) Should the ARRL 10 Meter Contest continue to award twice the point value for CW QSOs (i.e. some say SSB Qs are actually harder to make)?
- 3) What possibilities exist for better integration of contest log and LoTW log submission?
- 4) What marketing efforts might make ARRL Contests even more appealing to both new and veteran contesters?

There is interest within the CAC in discussion topics outside the formal taskings from the P&SC. For now, these ideas are simply being kept on a list. Once all formal taskings are complete, it is intended that the CAC will attack this list and, if appropriate, recommend additional taskings to be studied.

4. Participation by CAC Members

It is the chairman's observation that the participation level remains about the same as reported in July 2011. As before, about 1/3 of the representatives actively participate in our discussions. About 1/3 of the representatives will reply with a one- or two-line opinion or vote when asked, though sometimes it's apparent that the issue has not been considered in any depth or in light of comments made by the more active representatives. The remaining 1/3 of the representatives have to be chased down for responses and votes.

A roll call of the CAC was taken on November 11th and all members of the CAC responded. Since then, the participation level has been roughly as described above.

One major concern is that a CAC representative for the New England Division has not been appointed to replace Dick Green, WC1M. Participation level in the ARRL DX Contest is very high in the New England Division and many of the top scores posted are by those in the W1 area. Making a final recommendation to the P&SC on changes to the ARRL DX Contest without representation from the New England Division would seem inadvisable. To illustrate this, the chairman recently received in the mail a three page letter from the Yankee Clipper Contest Club expressing concerns about proposed changes to the ARRL DX Contest.

5. Recognition of WC1M

On behalf of the CAC, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dick Green, WC1M, for his years of service to the CAC and, in particular, for the years he served as chair. Dick did an excellent job of keeping the committee on task and helped us reach consensus on some very controversial issues within the CAC. Dick has been extremely helpful to me during my transition to the role of chair. I continue to value his advice.

6. Administrative Notes

Since the July 2011 report to the board, there has been two changes to the CAC Roster. The first change is the resignation of Dick Green, WC1M, as the New England representative and chair. The second change is that Charles Fulp, K3WW, has replaced Mike Gilmer, N2MG, as the Atlantic Division representative.

Respectfully submitted,
Alan Dewey, KØAD
CAC Chair
Dakota Division Representative

**CAC Tasking
ARRL DX Contest
January 25, 2011**

The P&SC asks the CAC to evaluate the ARRL DX Contest and the existing rules in order to provide recommendations for changes/updates, if the CAC so decides.

Topics to be evaluated should include, but are not limited to:

- * Creation of a 24-hour category for single operator stations. Should this category be created, and should it also:
 - encompass a 24-hour contiguous period
 - options to be evaluated could include:
 - (a) first 24 hours;
 - (b) last 24 hours;
 - (c) 24 hours from the first QSO; and
 - (d) any 24 hours with a pre-determined number of off times of some minimum length

- * QSO Point structure
- * DX and W/VE exchanges
- * Clean Sweep Award for DX Stations
- * Incentives to increase DX participation
- * Incentives to increase DXpeditions
- * Incentives to increase activation of rare Sections
- * Separate reporting for US and Canada
- * Addition of XE and XE States (world works North America)

Some of these suggestions would be a significant departure from the current rules. They should be reviewed and discussed, but the CAC is not required to include any of them in its final recommendations.

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