

**Contest Advisory Committee
Semi-Annual Report**

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

January, 2015

**Submitted by
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1. Executive Summary

The CAC has been active over the last 6 months. On July 20, 2014 the CAC received a tasking from the PSC that asked for recommendations in the following four areas:

- 1) Investigate potential mobile category for HF Contesting
- 2) Investigate parameters that CAC would recommend for a possible 24 hour category in the ARRL DX Contest.
- 3) Review scoring topics within the ARRL 160 Meter Contest
- 4) Study the feasibility, pros/cons, etc. of making submitted logs public for ARRL Contests

The CAC completed it's work on items 2, 3, and 4 above and issued individual reports to the PSC on each topic. The following recommendations were made on these three topics:

- 1) 24 Hour categories should be added to the ARRL DX Contest in selected single operator categories. A minimum of 12 hours of operation should be required for any award. A participant can enter the 12 hour category or the non-time limited category but not both. All 24 hour categories should allow the use of SO2R (i.e. Single Operator Two Radio).
- 2) It was recommended that no changes be made to the scoring of the ARRL 160 Meter Contest at this time.
- 3) Logs for all ARRL Contests, starting with the ARRL DX Contest and ARRL Sweepstakes, should be made available to the public. The contest branch should consider using some of the best practices implemented by CQ for public posting of logs including policies to minimize staff time dealing with any challenges that may arise from availability of the public logs.

Additional details on these recommendations are discussed elsewhere in this report. The CAC ran out of time to discuss and make recommendations on mobile operation in ARRL HF Contests. This task will be considered by the CAC in early 2015.

Finally, a small subcommittee of the CAC reviewed and updated the "HF Contesting – Good Practices, Interpretations, and Suggestions" document that is posted on the ARRL Web Site. This document had not been updated for some time and had not addressed a number of newer

contesting practices and technologies. The updated document was reviewed by the Contest Branch and is now posted on the League's site.

2. Additional Details

The tasking included in Appendix A was submitted to the CAC on July 20, 2014. Because the topic on mobile operation in HF contests was the most complex, it was decided to address the other three topics in the tasking first. As it turned out, the CAC was able to complete these last three topics, and submit individual reports to the PSC on each, but had to defer the first topic to early 2015. This section provided a summary of the discussion and recommendations made on each of these topics.

2.1 Recommendations Related to 24 Hour Categories for the ARRL DX Contest

As with all proposals to add new categories to an ARRL Contest, there was some immediate concern expressed within the CAC about diluting competition as well as the logistics and cost of issuing a large number of new awards. The chairman discussed this with NN1N and was told that, within reason, we should not be overly concerned with awards costs as long as our proposal is reasonable and consistent with other ARRL Contest Award rules. The intent of the 24 hour category would be to give a realistic chance of competition to a larger base which would hopefully further entice participation. With this in mind, a number of proposals came forward. Within the CAC, there was virtually no support for extending the 24 hour category to Single Band categories. To limit fragmentation, there was some interest within the CAC to limit competition in the new 24 hour categories to the country level (i.e. awards for top ten in each 24 hour category for W/VE and each DX entity).

The most popular proposal was to have 24 hour category awards defined in the SOHPAB, SOHPABU, SOLPAB, SOLPABU, and SOQRPAB categories and that is the committee's recommendation. It is recommended that awards be issued to the top score in all ARRL/RAC sections as well as each DX entity. To minimize the possibility of awards being awarded to non-competitive scores, it is also recommended that a participant operate for at least 12 hours and/or make a minimum number of QSOs to qualify for an award.

As for the last two questions in the tasking, the CAC was virtually unanimous on these. Should a 24 hour category be implemented, it should not be extended to the multi-op categories. Also, the CAC saw no reason to restrict SO2R operation in the Single Operator 24 Hour categories as part of this change.

Once the specific questions in the tasking were addressed, the CAC had significant discussions about the way a 24 hour category should be implemented in the ARRL DX Contest or whether it should at all. There was considerable diversity in these views. Nearly half (7 of 16) felt the 24 hour category in the ARRL DX Contest be implementing with minimum off times similar to ARRL Sweepstakes and that is the committee's recommendation. The group proposing this approach argued that the proposed "24 and done" method of implementing the new category would do little to increase interest in the contest and would, instead, result in reduced activity especially on the second day. This group believes that many semi-serious operators do the best

they can to fit in 24 hours over the entire weekend. It is important to them to get some sleep both nights and fit the contest in with other weekend activities and family commitments. If these entrants started early Friday night (at 7 PM for example), they are forced to go 24 hours straight without sleep to get their 24 hours in. Most will want to sleep the first night meaning they lose those hours of operation. If they need to take a few hours off on Saturday, they lose even more time. With “24 and done”, they are forced to quit at 7 PM Saturday night rather than extend their time into Sunday. It seems like this would greatly reduce activity on Sunday. This group feels that , by allowing an entrant to fit the 24 hours in over the entire weekend with something like 60 minute minimum off times, many more entrants will be encouraged to operate at least 24 hours especially with the availability of some additional awards. It is recognized that this may somewhat discourage slugging it away on the low bands at night making low band Qs less available to DX. However, the need to get the low band multipliers will still encourage some operation on the low bands at night.

The remainder of the CAC was divided on the idea of a 24 hour category. Five felt it best to leave the rules as they are and not implement a 24 hour category at all. Two felt that, rather than add a 24 hour category, it would be best to simply reduce the Single Operators Categories to something like 36 hours. Another proposal was to take this opportunity to totally revamp the ARRL DX contest including the possibility of turning it into a 24 hour event. Things like distance based scoring, DX to DX contacts, etc. could all be revisited. The CAC recognizes that some of these things were studied in a CAC tasking in 2011-2012 and no significant changes were recommended at that time. However, with recent changes to the CQWW contest, there may be more of an appetite for this now.

It is also worth pointing out that there was virtually no support for implementation of a “24 and done” approach to the ARRL DX Contest 24 hour category unless it was done in the context of more broad changes to the contest.

2.2 Recommendations related to ARRL 160 Meter Contest Scoring

As with all topics considered by the CAC, committee members solicited comments from contesters in their divisions on this topic. Significant dialog also took place with contesters in the affected area such as KP2 and KP4. The most detailed discussion took place on the proposal to reclassify AK, HI, PR, VI, and the other KH/KP entities as DX and increase the value of points made with them (by W/VE) from 2 points to 5 points. As DX, they would no longer be able to make contacts with other DX stations outside the continental W/VE area. The discussion on this topic was more divided than one might originally have thought. Strong arguments were made each for making this change and not making this change.

The arguments in favor of this change were:

1. In other ARRL HF Contests such as the ARRL DX Contest and the ARRL 10 Meter contest, the entities mentioned above ARE counted as DX (although these contests use state / province rather than ARRL/RAC section).
2. The proposal will offer an incentive for stations in the VI, PR, PAC and AK Sections to participate in the ARRL 160m contest because their 5 point value will be on par with all other DX stations. (The KP4 or KP2 can now compete on an equal playing field with the ZF or VP2, for example.)
 - a. The net result will be bigger pileups on VI, PR, PAC and AK stations from US/Canadian stations and, therefore, the incentive for more US Territory and AK stations to participate.
 - b. The present situation where the US Territory and AK stations are only worth 2 points does not make them any more attractive (valuable) than working a station “across town”.
3. All US/Canadian stations will benefit by higher scores due to QSOs with stations in the US Territories and AK.
4. All US/Canadian stations will benefit by potentially being able to work additional DXCC entities in the PAC Section.
5. There will be an advantage to West Coast US/Canadian stations to work DXCC multipliers in the PAC Section. (This may be viewed as a disadvantage by other parts of the US & Canada.)
6. There will be an advantage to East Coast US/Canadian stations to work VI and PR stations. (This may be viewed as a disadvantage by other parts of the US & Canada.)
7. The number of DXCC entities that are potentially possible to be worked will increase by the number of DXCC entities in the PAC Section
8. There is strong support from key contesters in the VI and PR sections. They want this change.

The arguments against this change were:

1. Stations on the east coast already realize a scoring advantage in this contest because of their easier access to 5 point QSO and multipliers with Europe. By adding additional 5 point QSOs in relatively close proximity (as opposed to the rest of the country), this further exasperates this issue.

2. As currently structured, the ARRL 160 Meter Contest is primarily a North American contest with a little bit of DX sprinkled in. Overall, this has been a successful format except for those in the affected entities (i.e. KP2, KP4, etc.). Were the goal of ARRL's 160 Meter Contest to be a DX contest, then this proposal would make more sense.
3. All other ARRL sponsored HF contests that use ARRL / RAC Sections in the exchange do not consider the entities in question to be considered DX. This proposal would, therefore, introduce an inconsistency on how these sections are handled. The total number of sections for ARRL 160 would be 79 as opposed to 83 for ARRL Sweepstakes.
4. Logging software would have to be changed.
5. A general response from many contesters questioned was that "If it's not broke, don't fix it."
6. Although this is an easily fixable issue, the QST and Expanded Results write-ups are not consistent in the way they report DX participation in this contest. Unless the contest write ups include head to head completion reporting for DX stations, there would be no inherent benefit to having the affected entities reclassified as DX. The table below indicates whether the ARRL contest write-ups included head to head DX competition.

Published ARRL 160m Contest Results

	<i>DX write up in QST</i>	<i>DX write up in Expanded Results</i>
<i>2013</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>2012</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>2011</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>2010</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>2009</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>2008</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>2007</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>

After discussing this topic at length, a poll was taken of the entire CAC. CAC members were asked to respond to the following question:

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SCORING OPTIONS DO YOU PREFER FOR THE ARRL 160 METER CONTEST?

- A. No changes to current scoring
- B. Increase points for AK, HI, PR, VI, and other KH/KP entities to 5 points. Leave everything else the same.
- C. Make ALL QSOs (including DX) worth 2 points.
- D. Other - Please Specify

It was later clarified that option B meant changing the classification of the effected entities to DX status meaning that they could only work W/VE stations and that these QSO would be worth 5 points to the W/VE stations. This would, therefore, reduce the number of ARRL / RAC sections to 79 for this contest only.

Eight members of the CAC chose Option A and seven members chose Option B. The results of the poll are included in Appendix B. The recommendation of the committee is, therefore, not to make any scoring changes to the ARRL 160 Meter Contest at this time.

Several members of the committee indicated that this decision was a close call for them (both ways). If there was a strong support within the PSC or the ARRL Board to change the status of AK, HI, PR, VI, and other KH/KP entities from ARRL/RAC sections to DX for the purposes of the ARRL 160 Meter Contest, this is not a move that would have strong opposition from the CAC. Having said that, the CAC as a whole does not see a compelling reason to make a scoring change at this time and its recommendation, as indicated above, is to make no change to the scoring rules of the ARRL 160 Meter Contest.

2.3 Recommendations Related to Publically Posting Logs from ARRL Contests

As with all topics considered by the CAC, committee members solicited comments from testers in their divisions on this topic. A number of points for and against the posting of public logs were identified and will be discussed below. During our discussions, it was also decided to discuss this topic with Randy, K5ZD to get a perspective on how public logs were implemented for CQWW. Several questions were also directed to Matt, W1MSW at the League's Contest Branch.

The majority of the CAC either supported public logs outright or , in some cases, were simply not against it if it did not take too much of the League's resources to do so. The most common reason stated was transparency and openness. Some also mentioned that providing public logs would provide a useful tool for studying propagation from various areas of the world. Similarly,

contesters could study the logs of their competitors to learn new operating strategies. How many contesters would actually take the time to do this is unknown. Finally, posting logs publically for ARRL contests would provide consistency with CQ who has been posting CQWW contest logs for a number of years.

A number of concerns about the posting of logs publically were also identified. Some questioned whether all contesters, especially those in the upper tier, would want to reveal their operating strategy to their competitors. At the other end of the spectrum, some expressed a concern that new, inexperienced contesters might be “embarrassed” to expose their log to the public causing them, perhaps, to not submit the log at all. Another concern was that logs for the ARRL DX Contest logs could encourage some cheating in the ARRL DXCC program. DXers could study ARRL DX Contest logs from rare countries looking for calls very similar to their own and use this information to attempt to get a confirmation for a contact that they did not actually make.

One very valid concern expressed by a member of the CAC was that public logs would be used to challenge the work being done by the League’s log checkers. This could be a time consuming task as well as being demoralizing to the League’s volunteer log checkers. The CAC Chairman addressed this issue with the Contest Branch. Matt, W1MSW responded that the Contest Branch would envision treating challenges caused by public logs the same as they treat challenges to the existing Log Checking Reports (LCRs). The Contest Branch would not enter in debates with contesters over individual QSOs. However, if the posting of public logs does uncover a true issue with log checking, it will be addressed with the volunteer log checkers in a positive manner. This seems like a reasonable approach to the CAC.

Some members of the CAC advised that the DX Advisory Committee be consulted to see if they had any concerns about publically posted contest logs as they relate to administering the League’s DXCC program. The DX Advisory Committee Chairman Arne, N7KA was contacted. Arne put the idea of public logs to the DXAC. Feedback from the DXAC discussions was provided back to the CAC.

Several members of the DXAC saw no problem posting contest logs publically and even pointed out that it is already being done for CQWW anyway. They felt it would be a good tool in DX planning. But a majority of the committee was against the posting of ARRL DX contest logs publically. The primary reason was the potential for “harvesting” DX QSO confirmation from the logs of DX station logs by looking for calls that were very close to their own and trying to convince the DX station that they had copied the call wrong. The DXAC acknowledged that most major DXpeditions post their logs publically anyway but pointed out that such on-line logs during a DXpedition typically do NOT include date and time of the QSO.

Because CQ has posted logs publically for the CQWW DX Contest for a number of years now, the CAC Chairman contacted CQ Contest Manager, K5ZD, to get his recommendations on best practices for posting contest logs publically. Randy (K5ZD) confirmed that the primary driver for posting logs publically was transparency. CQ posts the logs AFTER log checking. Also, CQ has a policy of not posting check logs. Their reasoning is that check logs are not considered competitive entries. Whatever the reason someone chooses to submit as a check log, they do not

feel they need to make these logs public. It also gives them an answer for those people who are willing to help by sending in their log, but do not want it made public.

Randy claims the administrative work to post the logs publically is relatively small. They run the logs through a utility program that strips off any address and e-mail information. The logs are then uploaded to the Web Server. A script creates the web page with the list of logs.

CQ also posts the Log Checking Reports for the winning entries in the major contest categories.

In general, the CAC is comfortable with the practices that CQ uses in posting public logs (except for the posting of selected LCR reports) and believes that there would be benefit in adopting a consistent policy for selected ARRL Contests.

After discussing this topic at length, a poll was taken of the entire CAC. The results of the poll are included in Appendix B.

Based on the results of this poll and the discussion above, the CAC makes the following recommendations:

- 1) The CAC recommends logs for ARRL Contests be posted publically.
- 2) The League should begin the public log posting process with the ARRL DX Contest followed by ARRL Sweepstakes.
- 3) Logs should not be posted until after the log due date for the specific contest has passed.
- 4) Logs should be posted after corrections resulting from log checking have been made.
- 5) The League should establish a policy of how it will respond (or not respond) to challenges to contest results and log checking based on the availability of public logs to all participants.
- 6) The League should consider a policy of not posting check logs similar to what is done by CQ for the CQWW Contest.
- 7) The CAC sees no need to publicly post Log Checking Reports of all participants.

2.4 Updated HF Contesting Guidelines Document

During the last six months, a small CAC subcommittee headed up by George, K5KG took on the task of updating the “HF Contesting Guidelines Document” which is posted on the ARRL Web Site. Others serving on the committee were Chas (K3WW), Dennis (W1UE), and Jim (N3BB). The previous document, which was developed by previous members of the CAC, was very useful

to testers but had become out of date. The document was updated to reflect recent changes in contesting technology such as remote operation. In addition, some sections were rewritten and reorganized to improve readability. The preliminary draft was also reviewed by the entire CAC as well as by Matt Wilhelm, W1MSW and Ward Silver, N0AX. Comments received by these parties were incorporated into the document. The final document is posted on the Leagues site at:

http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Contest%20-%20General/HFContestingGuidlines_201411.pdf

The CAC appreciates the efforts of K5KG and his team for the long hours they put in updating this contesting document.

3. Administrative Notes

George Tranos, N2GA has replaced George Wilner, K2ONP as the CAC representative from the Hudson Division. The CAC thanks K2ONP for his year of service to the committee and welcomes N1GA to the CAC.

Late last summer, the CAC began having problems with the CAC Reflector and, for a time, used a direct e-mail list to conduct its business. That proved to be problematic so the committee worked with the League's IT department to resolve the reflector issues. A special thanks to Joel, NJ1Q and Andrew, KB1YFW for resolving the issues we had. The CAC is now successfully using the League's CAC reflector to conduct its business.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Dewey, KØAD
Dakota Division Representative
CAC Chair

Appendix A

CAC Tasking Received from PSD on 20 July, 2014

**(Excluding tasking on Mobile Categories for
HF Contests)**

CAC Tasking on Addition of 24-hour category to the ARRL International DX Contest

The PSC requests that the CAC evaluate adding a 24-hour category to the ARRL DX contests -- phone and CW.

Within the last few years the CAC has considered a 24-hour category but not recommended adding one.

To make the tasking easier, assume the following:

- (1) The 48-hour contest period will not change.
- (2) A diurnal cycle is necessary for the ideal 24 hour competition -- entrants should not "cherry-pick" the best hours out of 48 to operate, nor should they operate anywhere from 25-48 hours and pick-out the best 24 hours from therein.
- (3) After the contest starts at 0000Z, the minute in which a 24-hour category entrant makes his/her first QSO is the minute in which the 24-hour clock starts. From that time on, the entrant will have 1440 minutes of operating time contiguously with no off-times.
- (4) After the 1440 minutes of operating time is passed, an operator may continue to make QSOs in the contest.

The main questions for the CAC to answer and consider for recommendations are these:

- (1) In which contest categories should a 24-hour contiguous entry be allowed? Single Op All Band High Power, SOAB Low Power, SOAB HP Assisted, SOAB LP Assisted, SOAB Low Power, SO Single Band, etc.
- (2) Should a 24-hour entrant who operates more than the contiguous 24 hours also be allowed to enter a score in the non-time-limited category? Should the larger score also count towards a club compilation rather than the 24-hour score?
- (3) Should the 24-hour category be available to multi-operator entries with similar questions as in # 1?
- (4) Should the 24-hour category allow use of 2 radios, known as SO2R for single ops, or should there be a limit to a single radio? If there should be a limit, would that limit apply to the other multi-band entry categories?

Please submit comments and recommendations no later than *September 1, 2014*.

CAC Tasking on Evaluation of ARRL 160-meter contest scoring rules

Over the years, various complaints have been filed about the scoring for the ARRL 160 Meter Contest. The main areas of concern are (1) that the points given for working stations outside of an ARRL section are too high (5 points); and (2) stations located in “DX” sections (Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and other KH/KP islands) are only given 2 points for QSOs with stations in ARRL sections – deemed unfair because the stations in the lower 48 states and Canada are so far away. These concerns are somewhat counter to each other, but they are what they are.

The CAC is tasked with considering the following issues:

- (1) Can the scoring structure be improved / modified so that all participants can benefit in some way?
- (2) If the answer to (1) is yes, please describe the options for creating these benefits.
- (3) Although PSC requests that CAC focus its evaluation on scoring, if CAC feels it necessary to address other 160 Meter contest rules, feel free to offer those recommendations.

Please report back to PSC no later than ***December 15, 2014***, with any recommendations or comments.

CAC Tasking on Evaluation of making ARRL contest entries available to the public

The CAC is tasked with considering the following questions:

- (1) Should ARRL make contest entries public, with the same or similar presentation as has been done for the CQWW DX Contests? Please summarize the committee’s reasoning behind its recommendation(s).
- (2) If the answer to (1) is *yes*, to which ARRL contests should this recommendation apply, and which contest(s) should be implemented first?
- (3) Are there any issues or further recommendations regarding this subject?

Please report back to PSC no later than ***December 1, 2014***, with any recommendations or comments.

Appendix B

**Results of Committee Polls Taken on
Assigned Taskings**

CAC Poll on ARRL 160 M Contest Scoring

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SCORING OPTIONS DO YOU PREFER FOR THE ARRL 160 METER CONTEST?

- A. No changes to current scoring
- B. Reclassify AK, HI, PR, VI, and other KH/KP as DX reducing the number of ARRL/RAC sections from 83 to 79 for this contest. As with any other DX , W/VE QSOs with them will be worth 5 points and they cannot work other DX.
- C. Make ALL QSOs (including DX) worth 2 points.
- D. Other - Please Specify

	Division	Vote
K3WW	Atlantic	B
K9IG	Central	B
K0AD	Dakota	A
K5GO	Delta	B
K8CC	Great Lakes	A
K0RH	Midwest	A
W1UE	New England	B
KI7Y	Northwestern	A
W6DR	Pacific	B
K4ZA	Roanoke	B
K0KR	Rocky Mountain	A
K5KG	Southeastern	B
K6NA	Southwestern	A
N3BB	West Gulf	A
VE5SF	RAC	A

Contest Advisory Committee Poll on Public Logs

	ARRL Division	Question 1	Question 2	Comments
K3WW	Atlantic	C	D	Use same process as CQ
K9IG	Central	A	C	
K0AD	Dakota	A	C	Start with ARRL DX and SS
K5GO	Delta	A	C	
K8CC	Great Lakes	B	N/A	
K2ONP	Hudson	A	C	
K0RH	Midwest	A	A	ARRL DX Contest Only
W1UE	New England	A	A	
K17Y	Northwestern	C	D	League decide which to do first
W6DR	Pacific	A	C	
K4ZA	Roanoke	A		Use same process as CQ
K0KR	Rocky Mountain	C	D	All contests. League decides best order.
K5KG	Southeastern	A	C	
K6NA	Southwestern	A	C	
N3BB	West Gulf	A	C	
VE5SF	RAC	A	A	

1) Which of the following reflects your position concerning the posting of ARRL Contest Logs?

- A) I am in favor of public posting of ARRL Contest Logs.
- B) I am not in favor of public posting of ARRL Contest Logs.
- C) I am neutral on the issue. I don't object but don't consider it important enough to divert significant HQ resources (if needed) from other areas.

2) If ARRL Contest Logs were to be made public, which contests should be implemented first?

- A) ARRL DX Contest
- B) ARRL Sweepstakes
- C) Both ARRL DX and ARRL Sweepstakes
- D) Other

CAC Poll on Method for Adding 24 Hour Category to ARRL DX Contest

	ARRL Division	Quick Poll
K3WW	Atlantic	B
K9IG	Central	B
K0AD	Dakota	B
K5GO	Delta	E
K8CC	Great Lakes	D
K2ONP	Hudson	E
K0RH	Midwest	C
W1UE	New England	B
K17Y	Northwestern	B
W6DR	Pacific	C
K4ZA	Roanoke	C
K0KR	Rocky Mountain	C
K5KG	Southeastern	B
K6NA	Southwestern	C
N3BB	West Gulf	E
VE5SF	RAC	B

- A. "24 Hours and Done" as proposed in the tasking.
- B. "24 out of 48 Hours with 60 minute minimum off -times"
- C. "Do not add 24 hour category at this time"
- D. "Total revamp of contest including reducing it to a 24 hour event"
- E. None of the above

Appendix C

Current ARRL Contest Advisory Committee Roster

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