

DX Advisory Committee Report

December 15, 2018

to the

American Radio Relay League Board of Directors and Programs and Services Committee

Submitted by: John C. Yodis, K2VV

Chairman, DX Advisory Committee

To: The ARRL Board of Directors and the PSC:

From: DX Advisory Committee

Date: December 15, 2018

Subject: FT8 Tasking

The following task was assigned to the DXAC in September 2018:

Given the evident popularity of the new FT8 mode of communication demonstrated by the data collected in LoTW showing a seven-figure increase in the number of monthly QSOs year over year resulting from the explosive adoption of the mode by hams worldwide, and the extremely high percentage (approximating 40%) of all QSOs being made with this mode at the current sunspot minimum.

The Programs and Services Committee (PSC) requests that the DXAC investigate and report to it on the advisability, feasibility and desirability of creating or modifying one or more digital mode awards in the DXCC program to accommodate encourage and reward new modes of amateur radio activity on the bands. The DXAC shall study this task over the next three months with the objective of providing a report and recommendation(s) to the PSC by December 15, 2018, for its consideration.

Subsequently, DXAC members solicited input from hundreds of amateurs directly and via clubs. Conversations often drifted into discussions of what constituted “digital”, whether RTTY should be separated from other digital modes and comparisons of the introduction of FT8 to that of SSB decades ago.

It must be noted that the question of feasibility is largely beyond the control or capability of the DXAC. Per conversations with the DXCC Desk, Digital DXCC records do not contain specific mode data. Credits for RTTY, FT8, PSK and many other modes are stored in the system as “digital”. Whether the committee's recommendations can be addressed will depend of Newington's desire or ability to incorporate specific digital mode information into the DXCC system.

Summary of DXAC Review:

Given the wide diversity of opinions, we are not going to make everyone happy.

1. There is little or no sentiment for creating a separate FT8 DXCC award. It is generally acknowledged that new modes will appear in the future, possibly supplanting FT8.
2. The DX community is generally satisfied with the inclusion of FT8 within the Digital DXCC. There is, however, a desire for specific recognition of achievements with FT8. This can best be accomplished with mode endorsements within Digital DXCC, relying on the prestige of the DXCC program to accommodate, encourage and reward new modes of activity. This also implies support for endorsements for PSK, JT65, etc. The committee is split about 50:50 on whether the endorsement should be a one-time endorsement for 100 entities or go all the way to 340.

3. Although not included in the task, dissatisfaction with the recent redefinition of the RTTY DXCC to include other digital modes was expressed by numerous respondents. A majority of the DXAC would prefer that the original RTTY DXCC be reestablished as a "legacy" program as many long time RTTY operators feel their years of effort have been greatly diminished in status. The DXAC is split on whether RTTY belongs in the "new" Digital DXCC.

DXAC Recommendation:

At a minimum, the committee recommends that ARRL offer an FT8 endorsement for 100 entities confirmed within the Digital DXCC program. The DXAC recognizes that any credits for endorsements may not be retrievable from the current system and may require a new submission from participants, and/or software changes in Newington.

Should the DXCC Desk create a procedure to offer such an endorsement, the committee recommends a review of whether the system can accommodate Digital DXCC endorsements for other modes and/or entity counts above 100. This could also satisfy those amateurs wishing to regain their "pure" standing on RTTY.

Respectfully submitted:

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Midwest Division DXAC Representative / Chairman