

CAC Report- Tasking 2018.1

Tasking 2018.1 - SS Changes

The PSC desires more context, details, and information on three proposed changes to SS. Any changes to the November Sweepstakes should benefit many participants and attract new players to the contests, so the CAC is being asked to consider the pros and cons of the following suggested changes:

1. Should the starting time of SS be moved up to an earlier time? (current start 2100Z Sat)
2. Shorten contest and/or the off time? (current, 30 hours long, all must take 6 hours off time)
3. Should Multi-op stations be permitted to operate the full contest time? (currently, 24 hours max)

Consideration should be given to all North American regions.

Based on the report from the CAC any one, or all three of these suggested changes could be implemented so each suggestion should be considered on its individual merits.

Problem: The SS Contest, particularly on Sunday, is a slow slog. To be one of the top scoring stations, one must “suffer” through rates of 20-30 per hour. Those 20 rate hours do add up, but, for most contesters, they are not really “fun”. In 2018, the CAC dealt with several ideas to change SS; several proposals (contact stations once per band rather than once per contest, count mults once per band rather than once per contest, change contest weekends, shortening the exchange) were all rejected, as they would too radically change the contest, i.e. SS would no longer be SS.

To process the question, various members of the CAC contacted their fellow contesters, asking for input. After taking that input and discussing the issue among ourselves, a poll of the CAC produced the following results:

1. Should the starting time of the SS be moved to an earlier time?
CAC polled in favor of this by 12-4. 1800Z was the preferred new start time by a 13-1-2 poll. It was felt that this would foster more participation by moving the hours to more daylight time.
2. Should the SS be shortened or the current off time be changed?
CAC polled split on this, 8-8. Off time was judged to be a significant strategic element by most.
3. Should Multi-op stations be permitted to operate the full 30 hours?
CAC polled 14-2 in favor of this. We saw mostly up side on this. A few multi owners said it would just mean 6 more low rate hours they would have to man their stations to be competitive, but overall the contest community seemed to be in favor of this. Some multi-owners endorsed the additional 6 hours of operating time as an aid for new contesters to learn to operate without hurting the overall score.

During the course of our discussion, an additional idea emerged that had merit, so we took this opportunity to explore it more in length. I'll add it as #4.

4. Should the SS offer a 12 hour category and revise the ARRL Family Rule***.

***ARRL Family Rule: A transmitter, receiver, or antenna used to contact one or more stations may not subsequently be used under any other call during the contest period, except for family stations where more than one call sign has been issued , and then only if the call sign is used by a different operator. The intent of this rule is to accommodate family members who must share a rig and to prohibit manufactured or artificial contacts.

If the ARRL Family Rule was revised, it could add another 100-200 new stations to work on Sunday and considerably enliven the Sunday contest. A possible revision:

ARRL Family Rule REVISED: A transmitter, receiver, or antenna used to contact one or more stations may not subsequently be used under any other call during the contest period, except under the following conditions:

1. The station is a remote station, and each call sign is a distinct control station.
2. Family stations where more than one call sign has been issued, and then only if the call sign is used by a different operator. Call signs used at this station go with the operator.
3. Any station can change call signs once during the contest; once the change is made, the original call can't be used again for contest operation in that contest.
4. A combination of #1 and #3 above.

The intent of this rule is to prohibit manufactured or artificial contacts.

If this change is done, there are a number of operators that would prefer to make two competitive 12-hour contests in one SS; they live for the run, and currently, as SS is done, Sunday is definitely not a "run" day. This should create more activity on Sunday, enlivening it for everyone.

Example: I operate the first 12 hours of the contest as W1UE, then I operate the second 12 hours as KM1W (I'm trustee). This enlivens Sunday for the full time ops, as KM1W is "Fresh meat" for everyone, and it enlivens Sunday for me by allowing me to "rework" everyone that I already worked on Saturday.

The CAC endorsed changing the Family Rule by a poll of 14-2.

Summary: Changing the Family Rule will probably produce the biggest change in overall participation as measured by normal metrics (more stations, more call signs, more contacts). Changing the contest starting time should have a small impact, as it will produce more daylight operating hours across more of the country which should increase the activity (more contacts). Allowing Multi-op stations to operate the full 30 hours will also have a small impact (more contacts, training time for new ops).

Dennis W1UE
CAC Chairman

Attachment: SS Participation Projections

SS Participation Projections:

Here is what seems to be the real problem with SS, particularly with SS CW. I requested the call signs from the 2018 SS contests, and the corresponding check (last two years of first license) for that call sign. I found the distribution of checks as follows:

00-09 44 (all new licenses this century)
 10-19 51 (there were no 19s, as probably expected) (all new licenses this century)
 20-39 0 (there were 4 calls, but all were club calls)
 40-49 41 (some checks were during WW2, assume they are errors)
 50-59 273
 60-69 371

Using these figures, I did a little math on participation trends.

2030 Projection:

2018 logs: 1288
 +51 New logs, based upon growth rate of 10-19 figure above
 - 273 "Aging out" of the 50-59 checks
 1066 Logs submitted in 2030

2040 Projection:

2030 Log Projection 1066
 51 New logs, based upon growth rate of 10-19 figure above
 - 371 "Aging out" of the 60-69 Checks
 746 Logs submitted in 2040

BTW, W1UE's SS check is 69, and his current age is 67. In 2040, he will be 88 years old and probably not contesting any more. When does the lack of participants make the contest unsustainable as a 24 hour contest?