

Feedback on Rule Change Proposal

Whitepaper

Dom Smith MOBLF, May 2014

First off, thanks very much for doing such an open consultation. This is a great step forward, and I hope the responses you receive are useful.

Note: I generally operate from G6UW & G3PYE, but my opinions here are my own, and are not necessarily representative of either group. I have skipped Proposals/Suggestions on which I have no particular opinion.

Proposal B1

Yes, this looks entirely sensible (though it might be useful for new contesters if you make it clear what pieces of equipment you are interested in; I doubt you care about the exact version number of the logging software or the model of the CW key).

Proposal B2

Whilst my initial reaction was to agree with this, if the category exists, I'm not sure why giving a certificate should be dependent on an arbitrary definition of 'merit'. What is merit-worthy in the eyes of an experienced committee member might be very different from the view of the foundation/intermediate licence-holder involved.

My first introduction to contesting was making just over 100 QSOs in the REF-Union contest from a poorly-equipped shack with a long-wire poked out of my bedroom window while I was a teenager. Imagine my surprise to receive a certificate afterwards, as I was the only low power entrant from England that year! The encouragement I gained from that piece of paper far outweighed the cost of the stamp to send it to me.

Proposal B3

This is where I have a particular problem. The key phrase in your proposal is 'relevant contest rules'; I'm not sure what that means. The IARU Region 1 HF Manager's handbook¹ clearly states [my underlining]:

The frequency planning for all contests should comply with the IARU Region 1 Bandplan (using contest-preferred segments where possible), and depending on the likely level of activity use as little spectrum as possible...

CHAPTER 8.1 §8

The caveats I have underlined indicate to me that the IARU has an expectation that some contests will not be able to comply with the contest-preferred segments, due to the number of participants, and so the IARU has delegated to you the responsibility of taking this decision for your contests.

To follow the spirit of the IARU expectation, I believe you should, for each contest, look at the number of entrants in the previous year, taking into account any trends in the number of entrants over the past several years. On the basis of that number, estimate the bandwidth required for the

¹ http://www.iaru-r1.org/index.php?option=com_remository&Itemid=&func=fileinfo&id=427

contest and, if it cannot fit into the contest-preferred segment, then the contest is permitted to stray out of the contest-preferred segment. Likewise, if the number of entrants suggests that the whole contest-preferred segment is not required, it is your obligation to word the rules so as to avoid using the whole contest-preferred segment.

I fear that by leaving 'relevant contest rules' undefined, you are potentially proposing a one-size-fits-all-contests approach, which doesn't seem to address the delicate balance between the diverse needs of testers and non-testers that the wording in the HF Manager's Handbook implies.

Suggestion B5

I like this idea, but to keep adjudication transparent I believe that doing this has a prerequisite that you first publish all submitted logs online (not just individual UBNs), together with the SDR recordings, so it's clear which 'end' of the QSO made any mistakes.

As for the values of x , y and z , I'd suggest that you should keep the bonus special by making all the levels hard to achieve. Perhaps, therefore, $x=0.5%$; $y=1%$; $z=2%$?

Proposal B6

Yes, I agree.

Proposal H1

For me, contesting is about improving skills, and modern contesting inherently involves being assisted and using technology to your advantage. Whilst I have admiration for those who produce high unassisted scores, they have deliberately crippled themselves, in much the same way as not having a great antenna or running 20W in a 100W category is a form of self-crippling. I wouldn't expect separate categories for every type of disadvantage someone could chose to operate under, so I see the separation of assisted/unassisted as a potentially slippery slope (not to mention the practicalities of sourcing the new trophy sponsors!)

Proposal H2

Yes, this is sensible.

Suggestion H3

I'm concerned this is only a 'Suggestion', not a 'Proposal'. Regardless of the outcome of the consultation, I believe you have to do something following the carnage last year. I'm also slightly disappointed that the wording of the Background section implies that the Committee has not yet acknowledged the extent of the disruption caused.

My personal preference is option (1): split bands with the 40m band. This seems to be the only way of spreading participation (although I'd also stress my comments on B3, since I view the decision to completely avoid the contest-preferred segment as flawed logic in any case).

Option (1) also has benefits for H4 below, hence it being my first choice, but I'd also be happy with option (3): Sprint element. Sprints are the best way of ensuring that frequency hogging doesn't give anyone an unfair advantage (and this probably accounts for the regular participation of youngsters from the WWYC, including myself, in the EU Sprints a few years ago).

Suggestion H4

If you adopt option (1) for H3, then surely this brings the additional benefit of allowing option (3) for H4. The stations in GM and other outlying regions would be able to start the contest on 40m, so timings wouldn't be so critical. They could then switch to 80m as darkness falls and propagation into England returns.

If you don't adopt option (1) for H3, then I'd suggest going for option (2) for H4. It would dramatically affect the results of the contest, but it seems that doing nothing is unfair, and a 30-minute change isn't going far enough.

Proposal H6

Yes, this seems sensible. I doubt I'd participate for reasons of time, but anything that can attempt to increase participation on these bands before the sunspot number gets too low would be useful.

Proposal H7

I'd like to support this, but the inspection regime on VHF is already too shrouded in mystery. I'd personally like, after each major VHF contest, an open report from the contest committee listing the stations visited, any anomalies found and any action taken. Until you do this, I can't have enough credence that inspections actually happen (and are useful) and so adding HF doesn't seem worth it.

Suggestion H8

Personally, I have too many other commitments at weekends to take on any additional contests beyond the largest ones (CQWW, Phone NFD and sometimes ARRL). That's why the weekday UKACs worked used to work well for me² and I don't think you should aim to move people to weekends if that doesn't fit in with their other responsibilities.

Proposal V1

Although the anti-M5 brigade generally just seem to be a very vocal minority, it might be useful to adopt option (b) as a way of addressing their concerns and attempting to account in the scoring system for the inequalities caused by geography. It could also 'spice things up' a little.

Proposal V2

Yes, this is sensible.

Suggestion V4

See my comments on H8 above.

²I haven't participated in any contests since the disaster of 80m AFS because I cannot motivate myself to take part when I can't trust that the rules, and their potential implications, have been carefully considered. Hopefully this whitepaper exercise will help to restore that confidence.