The News of the

SWAMP FOX CONTEST GROUP
Tales From the Swamp

Editor: Scott Brown, N2OG

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Presidents Corner

How a Bill Becomes a Law, or for Radiosport: How ARRL Contest Rule Changes Come About

BY ED KUCHARSKI

There has been some recent SFCG email reflector activity about the recent rule changes for the upcoming ARRL November Sweepstakes contest. I've written previously in the President's Perspective about a proposal I submitted to the ARRL for rules changes associated with the ARRL VHF contests. This article is not intended to discuss the controversies associated with the recent SS (or other ARRL contests) rule changes but to outline how rule changes or new rules transpire.

So how do ideas for rule changes or new rules get to and through the ARRL and become a rule, or not? I had a general idea of the process but decided to reach out to Paul Bourque N1SFE, ARRL Contest Program Manager for verification and clarification. Paul consulted with Bart Jahnke W9JJ, ARRL Radiosport and Field Services Manger for further input.

- Suggestions for new rules or changes may be submitted by the "community" to ARRL Division Directors and or Section Managers *or* by ARRL Staff/Committees. That's what I did with my proposal for the VHF Contests (and more, I'll get into that later) – I sent my proposal to our Division Director, Vice Director and Section Manager. It is important to know about ARRL Divisions and Sections. ARRL's governance structure (http://www.arrl.org/organization-structure) divides the US into 15 ARRL Divisions. Every 3 years, ARRL members in each of these Divisions elect both a Director and a Vice Director to represent them on the ARRL's Board of Directors. SFCG is in the Roanoke Division (representing SC, NC, VA and WV). More on ARRL Divisions, Directors and Vice Directors can be found here: http://www.arrl.org/divisions.
There are 71 ARRL geographic Sections. Each section is represented by a Section Manager who is elected to 2-year terms by the ARRL members in their sections. SFCG is (of course) in the SC Section and our Section Manager is SFCG member Marc Tarplee N4UFP. More on Sections here: http://www.arrl.org/sections-by-divisions.

As you can see above, suggestions on rules can come either from the "community" *or* from ARRL staff and/or committees.

- The ARRL Contest Advisory Committee (CAC) has input on various topics, either as tasked by the ARRL Programs and Services Committee (PSC), or self-tasked through input they get directly for the community. I sent my proposal to three members

of the CAC as well! Per the ARRL website, "The ARRL Contest Advisory Committee is established to investigate such matters regarding contests as are referred to by the Programs and Services Committee". Each ARRL Division Director appoints one CAC member. There are also RAC, ARRL Board, Staff and Administrative Liaisons associated with the CAC. A list of CAC members can be found here: http://www.arrl.org/files/file/CAC%20List/CAC%20June%202022(1).pdf.

As you scroll through this list, I'm sure you'll recognize many familiar and active contester's calls, and it becomes obvious that active contesters *do* have a say in rule making!

- The CAC may evaluate various proposals and make recommendations, then send their findings to the PSC. I found with my proposal, that it circulated to at least one other active VHF contester not on the CAC. I found out later that the CAC formed a subcommittee of select active VHF contesters to come to a consensus if possible and make recommendations to the CAC for adoption for recommendation to the PSC.

  As it *pertains to contesting*, the Programs and Services Committee (PSC):

  > "Advise CEO on services provided to individual members other than publications, including but not limited to **contests and awards**, information services including LOTW and W1AW, and incoming and outgoing QSL bureau services".

  For more info on members, functions and recent activity of the

PSC:

http://www.arrl.org/files/file/ODV/Board%20Meeting%20Jan%202022/Document%2012%20PSC%20Report%20January%202022.pdf

- ARRL Staff may also have recommendations that they send to the PSC.
- The PSC reviews and makes decisions on recommendations (to implement or table). The PSC advises the ARRL Board of its decisions.

- The PSC directs ARRL staff to implement those changes.
- ARRL Staff implements the changes.

It's quite the process! I feel very confident that the ARRL considers contest rule changes or new rules that are submitted by the community or general membership seriously. I know that my proposal, which was similar to others, was partially implemented in ARRL VHF contests. I can also see that the ARRL may submit their own recommendations based on what the League believes is best for a particular contest or amateur radio in general. It may be considered self-serving, but it is within their purview based on the information I received from the League.

I have little idea how this process works for non-ARRL contests (CQ, NCJ sponsored or many smaller contests). Perhaps a future article or a guest speaker from one of those organizations to address non-ARRL contest rule making to SFCG via a Zoom meeting would be of interest?

73,
Ed K3DNE

One Tool for Improving

By Kevan Nason, N4XL

This is mainly for our newer contesters. Although what follows could be taken as bragging, it isn't meant to be. The purpose is to show people part of how I use past contest results to motivate me in future contests.

In past newsletters I've suggested finding someone who whupped you and set your sites on beating them. That has been a great motivator for me and led to improvements in my technical knowledge, station performance, and operator skill. Comparing myself to others discouraged me at first. I just couldn't beat some people. I wanted to know why they routinely ranked higher and started researching my competition by looking them up on the internet to see what they were doing that I wasn't.

The trick is to find someone with a similar station as you. Preferably in the same geographical area. And someone you've got a realistic chance of competing with. After flailing around for a bit, I settled on KT4ZB in Savannah, Georgia. Jere is now a silent key, but together we pushed each other to become better operators. He eventually added a 40 meter yagi to his arsenal and went High Power on me. (I'm sure it was only a coincidence that he only did that after he noticed I was outscoring him on a regular basis!)

Ed, K3DNE, pointed out my entry for the 2022 ARRL DX CW contest

was good enough that only three people outscored me in my category. The competitor in my wanted to know why. More importantly, I wanted to know if I can beat 'em next time out. I took their call signs from the final results and went web surfing. Sites visited were 3830, QRZ.COM, and their personal web pages. In the past I have also used Google Maps to see if they have towers and big antennas. I've also found out what contest club(s) they are in and looked through back issues of club newsletters (often available online), club reflectors, and the CQ-Contest reflector to see if there is any additional information about them. The latter items were not needed this time. Some key items for each of the three that beat me are listed below, but I'll first discuss my findings.

Being in Tennessee W9SN doesn't have the New England geographic advantage. That gave me hope. But then I discovered I've no chance against him. He actually owns one of those Rent-A-Remote-Super Station sites that people pay 40 cents a minute to operate. The image below says it all. There isn't any way possible I can compete with that. I won't worry about his online scoreboard showing in the future.

K1XM's station is more modest but is still mostly beyond my reach. He has at least two yagis AND a 40 meter monobander. I couldn't see how high up they are but reading about his accomplishments it seems likely they are fairly high up. Couple those antennas with his Massachusetts QTH and I crossed him off the list of possible targets for the next go round.
N2RC is in New York. His single yagi includes 2 elements on 40, but

like mine is only at 50 feet. He does have beverages where I've only room for a K9AY loop. He doesn't do SO2R. I wasn't doing SO2R in that contest either. And he only beat me by 350K despite having 2 more hours BIC. Sounds like a lot, but once you get that many q's the score starts going up quickly so it isn't as much lead as some may think. So, he has slightly better antennas, I should be able to match his time in the operating chair, and SO2R capability has just been returned to my shack. It's a stretch but he's my new target.

Here's what I used to make that decision.
W9SN – Tennessee, SO2R, 39 hours – 2.80 meg

K1XM – Massachusetts, SO2R, 40 hours – 2.76 meg
"My home station is fairly small. There is one tower, a couple tribanders, a forty meter beam, and wires for 80 and 160. As part of being able to operate SO2R from this station I designed and built an automated antenna control system."

N2RC – New York, Not SO2R, 31.25 hours – 1.88 meg

50 Ft Rohn tower: Optibeam OB 12-4L, 10 – 40 meter yagi

OCF Dipole for 80/30/17M

160m Inverted L

160/80m Beverages NE/SW, NW/SE - KD9SV Reverse Beverage/4 Antenna Preamp System

N4XL – South Carolina, Not SO2R, 29.5 hours – 1.53 meg

50 ft Rohn tower: Bencher Skyhawk, 10 – 15 meter yagi

40/80 meter elevated vertical

160 meter Inverted-L, also used on 80 meters.

K9AY receive loops

Buried feed line run to side of yard waiting a new antenna

<div align="center">

WebSDR.org
BY Scott N2OG

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This is a brief description of WebSDR.org. If you are not aware of this easy to use tool for CW and in particular SSB propagation. On the home screen you are able to filter down to a SDR in the region you are interested in along with the band you want to test.

A WebSDR is a Software-Defined Radio receiver connected to the internet, allowing many listeners to listen and tune it simultaneously. SDR technology makes it possible that all listeners tune independently, and thus listen to *different* signals; this is in contrast to the many classical receivers that are already available via the internet.
WebSDR was first conceived as a means to make the 25 m radio telescope at Dwingeloo available to many radio amateurs for EME reception. In order to test a preliminary version of the software without

using the 25m dish, a shortwave WebSDR was set up on Christmas Eve 2007 at the radio club of the University of Twente. After further development, its existence was publicly announced in April 2008. Interest for the project has been large since then, and many amateurs worldwide have expressed an interest in setting up their own WebSDR server. In November 2008, a beta testing phase has started with a few selected stations. By now, the software is made available to anyone serious about setting up a server; see the FAQ for information on this.

A WebSDR server consists of a PC running Linux and the WebSDR server software, a fast internet connection (about a hundred kbit/s uplink bandwidth per listener), and some radio hardware to feed antenna signals into the PC. This radio hardware is typically a quadrature mixer connected to the PC's sound card, like the popular SoftRock kits.

Questions and comments can be sent to PA3FWM, the author of the WebSDR software and maintainer of this site, but please read the FAQ first.

A list of currently active WebSDR servers is on http://www.websdr.org/.

From the Reflector

There was a recent discussion about how copper corrosion in antenna wire may contribute to noise level on the RSGB Technical reflector. Nothing definitive, but food for thought. Also consider that the outer shield of virtually every coax cable is copper braiding and potentially susceptible to the same issue. For the first 15 years of my Ham career I was not aware that outdoor coax connections should be wrapped to prevent water from getting into the cable. More than once I had removed the end from an exposed coax cable and found the braid gray with corrosion. This effect can happen anywhere as my installations where corrosion was found were usually hundreds of

miles from the ocean.

Kevan N4XL
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Tim Hague Aug 19   #67694
Has anyone carried out any research of the effects of corrosion on antenna wire and noise level?, I've had a 100ft top doublet up for the last 4 years in a marine environment, 2 miles from the SW Cornwall coast. My noise level has been steadily increasing over the last few months across the HF spectrum and I've put it down the proliferation of rubbish electronics. Recently I had cause to take the antenna down and noticed that the insulated stranded copper wire was heavily corroded so I stripped it back a few feet, it was still corroded. Built a new antenna and my noise level has dropped back to where it was… very low. I know about dissimilar metals, diode effects etc, just found this very interesting. I am going to do some conductivity tests on the old wire and compare to the new and see what the differences are.

Bob G3REP Aug 19   #67699
I just wonder if the extraneous noise be could brought about by mucky deposits on the end insulators, rather than the wire itself, causing the problem? (That is, of course, assuming you have used them !)

Ian hope Aug 19   #67703
No Idea on antenna wire and corrosion, but having dealt with power cables in marine environment, 5 years is normally best you get before the copper goes black and you get voltage drop, You can get 20-30% drop on corroded power cables within 5 years if that helps

Ian
M5IJH

Brain post a link below to a subscription service. I subscribed and I

have not gotten any alerts. Yet I may be inline to actually get subscribed.

N2OG Scott

Indeed!

All I posted was the subject line of a NOAA email I got from a subscription to space weather alerts. I should have included more about who to get it - it's very helpful:

https://www.swpc.noaa.gov/content/subscription-services

73!
-Brian n8wrl

[SFCG] Antenna pics...

From the reflector

Mike Burton KY4ID

As promised on our 80m net, here is a pic of the new/old doublets. You can see the old one near the roof line. There are two peaks like that on the house, which is 2 stories. It's always hard to tell heights, etc. from a picture, but to give you a reference, the old doublet runs about 1-2ft above those peaks. That doublet is 35 ft above ground level, but of course the height varies a lot as it goes over the house.

I'm estimating that the new doublet is 25 feet above the old one, for a total height of around 60 feet. The red arrow that you see is where one side of the new doublet is attached. The other side is attached to the top of a pecan tree (in the foreground) at a similar height. The air cannon had a bit of a learning curve, but was a real game changer and worth every penny. It took all day to get the new antenna into position. I must've gone up/down the ladder 30 times.

I wanted to say thanks because this is the product of a lot of different things I've picked up from you all. A while back, Kevan stressed making station improvements, which I had been dragging my feet on. Ted passed along the idea of putting a counterweight system in. I did that on the new antenna which will make life a lot easier.

Finally, Scott has talked a lot about using WSPR. I tried that for the first time on Sunday to attempt to make some comparisons between the new and old antennas. Signal reports on 20m are much better with the new antenna, but 40m signal reports seem to be slightly better with the old one. I can't quite figure that out. I'm doing spot checks, but I'm sure there's probably a more scientific way to do this. I'll dig into it more when I have time. Thanks again.

73,
Burton

> Good work Burton with WSPR. Did you test 20 and 40 at the same time of day or did you wait until both bands were at their daily best?
>
> N2OG Scott

Kevan N4XL

<p style="text-align:center">From LICW Reflector</p>

IF you are interested in how some of the best operators practice read on. On a busy day I try to at least a through e below and more most days. I you do not understand what is being explained just email me for a further explanation.

We are what we repeatedly do; nothing happens without practice!

1. First, read Nancy Kott's articles at least once (twice is better)

2. Record a practice sending session daily, listen to it several days later

(NOTE: Head send these – not from a printed page. Strive for no errors)

a. Send the alphabet twice

b. Send your call sign five times

c. Send your name five times

d. Send your QTH three times

e. Send your (memorized) Pan gram of the Week twice

3. Learn a 'New CW Sound' alphabet by one characteristic/unique sound per

character (at fast character speeds) in Stephen Phillips' Word List Trainer

a. Set the computer's character sending speed at 30 wpm or faster

b. Play the 'Beat the Computer' game with the alphabet (A-Z) starting at

~1500 ms Recognition Time. Speak the letter before the computer does.

c. Keep reducing the Recognition Time (formerly Thinking Time) until you

can speak the letter before the computer at ~300 ms Recognition Time

d. Add numbers to the alphabet (A-Z, 0-9), reset Recognition Time = 1000

ms or more if necessary. Continue to 'Beat the Computer'. Shorten the

Recognition Time as you improve.

e. Combine the alphabet, numbers, and punctuation (A-Z, 0-9, and four

punctuation marks [. , / ?]). Practice Beat the Computer with these 40

characters down to approximately 300-500 ms Recognition Time.

4. Play 'Beat the Computer with USA State Abbreviations, then 2 letter

words, then 1-3 letter words.

5. Don't practice with phrases yet (see below)

6. Enable the 'Build' button for Progressive Word Building when you first

begin to practice with words longer than 3 letters (Beat the Computer

continues).

a. Start Progressive Word Building at 1-4 letter words

b. Continue Progressive Word Building practice up to ~1-7 letter words

c. Practice on the Top 100 Words plus any other single word list

7. Reset Beat the Computer Recognition Time to 3500 ms, disable

Progressive Word Building. Practice on short phrases, then longer ones.

8. After doing well with long phrases move on to QSOs and short stories at

faster and faster actual (Farnsworth) speeds. Keep the computer's

character sending speed at 30 wpm or faster throughout. NOTE: Your

sending practice and on-air QSOs provide plenty of listening time and practice at slower character speeds.

9. Seek out and have ragchew QSOs with other proficient CW ops and enjoy getting to know who you're talking with - make new friends!

A Good ICR Daily Practice Routine

Here's my suggestion for an effective ICR practice routine. ICR practice means just listening – no writing. This plus getting on the air with 'ICR QSOs' (QSOs with no writing except name & callsign) is the best path to achieving CW head copy using Instant Character Recognition (ICR). Students who practice with the computer only don't do nearly as well as students that practice with the computer and with on-the-air QSOs. Set and leave WLT's character speed at 30 wpm (or faster) to hear CW characters more easily as a single sound.

• Warm up first by sending the alphabet, your callsign, name, QTH, and a pan gram sentence at whatever speed you're comfortable with. Head send it all including the Pan gram (memorize it) – don't read from a printed page as you send. Record all sending sessions and listen to them several days later. Concentrate on good letter-to-letter rhythm and tempo and very good word spacing.

• After your sending warm up spend one 10-15 minute practice session with Steps

3(a) through 3(e) 'Beat the Computer' ICR practice every day. Review Glenn's

videos on W4YES.com to learn how the 'Beat the Computer' game works. Keep

reducing the Recognition Time in Word List Trainer as you improve. Spend a bit

more practice time on any 'pause and ponder' characters.

• Later in the day, do two more 15-minute practice sessions with single words. If

you've reached an ICR skill level required for phrases, work with single words

and then phrases. If you're just beginning your journey to ICR, start with state

abbreviations and short 1-3 letter words. Important: Always use an actual

(Farnsworth) speed that puts you in the Learning Zone (~65% copy, ~35% miss);

you must practice getting and missing to achieve ICR. Use the 'Build' button to

enable Progressive Word Building on words longer than three letters. This

practice technique eases the difficult jump from recognizing single letters to

building words at the rate of the incoming letters. Get good at ICR word building

without Progressive Word Building enabled before moving on to phrases, short

stories and QSOs. Be patient!

• Do one "Lightning Round" - a 5 or 10-minute practice session with 1-

5 letter

words at 150% faster than your current best actual (Farnsworth) speed. Keep the

computer's character sending speed at 30 wpm or faster. Sit back, relax, close

your eyes, and listen to see if any letters and words 'pop' into your mind. There's

little expectation of being able to head copy at 150% faster than your best speed

so this lack of expectations gets your conscious mind out of the way. You'll

begin to experience high speed subconscious ICR when something 'pops'.

• Replace your 'Lightning Round' or do an occasional fifth session (two or more

times/week) with what we call the 'Aspirational' practice technique in Word List

Trainer. Choose 1-4, 1-5, 1-6 letter words, or the Top 100 Words. Here's how:

• Hide the word History display so you won't see the word until

you play a new word with the 'M' key. Type ? to see all

keyboard shortcuts

• Start at 20 or 25 wpm character speed, disable Repeat, enable

Shuffle, count=1, disable 'Say After', hit Space bar to Play

• Reduce the actual (Farnsworth) speed using the z hotkey in 5

wpm increments until you can successfully copy the word (hit

the Space bar to play the word again at each slower speed)

• Once you recognized the word, speed it back up to 20 or 25

wpm in 5 wpm increments using the x key to experience what

the word sounds like as you hit the Space bar at each faster and faster speeds

Enjoy your journey to achieving Instant Character Recognition!
73,
Tom W0FN and Glenn W4YES

From Kevan N4XL

I ran across this website that shows the model projected paths for all tropical storms. Here is the link:

https://ruc.noaa.gov/tracks/

FROM LICW Reflector

DE WB2UZE

The International CW Council, Home - International CW Council has created a new ongoing activity called Top9 with the purpose of creating activity in the top 9 KHZ of allocated CW bands. The reason being if we create more activity at the top of the allocated bands designated by the IARU, it will be harder for various authorities to chip away at them and give them to digital for example. It will be very beneficial to have your QSOs on those frequencies and here is a chart of the IARU band edges allocated to CW worldwide:

Region 1: Europe, Africa, ME, North Asia	Region 2: The Americas	Region 3: S, E, SE Asia, Oceania
80m: 3.561-3.570 MHz	80m: 3.561-3.570 MHz	80m: 3.526-3.535 MHz
40m: 7.031-7.040	40m: 7.031-7.040	40m QRO: 7.021-

MHz	MHz	7.029 MHz
30m: 10.121-10.130 MHz	30m: 10.121-10.130 MHz	40m QRP: 7.021-7.030 MHz
20m: 14.061-14.070 MHz	20m: 14.061-14.070 MHz	30m: 10.121-10.130 MHz
17m: 18.086-18.095 MHz	17m: 18.086-18.095 MHz	20m: 14.061-14.070 MHz
15m: 21.061-21.070 MHz	15m: 21.061-21.070 MHz	17m: 18.086-18.095 MHz
12m: 24.906-24.915 MHz	12m: 24.906-24.915 MHz	15m: 21.061-21.070 MHz
10m: 28.061-28.070 MHz	10m: 28.061-28.070 MHz	12m: 24.906-24.915 MHz
		10m: 28.061-28.070 MHz

In some case such as 40m you will see that the cutoff is lower than you might think but this is the actual band plan agreed to worldwide.

All you have to do is make a QSO of minimum 5 minutes in length in any format within the above designated frequencies and you qualify to post your QSO on the ICWC website under Top9 submission. **You can submit the first 9 days of the month following your QSOs. For example if you made qualifying QSOs in August you can submit then now until Sept 9.**

This activity will be very easy for many Long Island CW Club members to support and I hope you will do so. The risk to the CW bands and to certain ham radio bands in general is very serious now as some of you might have been reading.

Regards
Howard

Check John out ! From what I gathered he was top Fox in this contest! Dave and Burton might have been rockin but you were the rock crusher! Congratulation John!

John Wulf
K4FT johnk4ft@gmail.com via groups.io

Finally broke 80 S&P. Dave and Burton were rockin!

Station: K4FT
Class: **Single Op LP**
QTH: SC
Operating Time (hrs): 1
Location: USA

Band	QSOs
160:	
80:	7
40:	62
20:	12
15:	
10:	
Total:	**81**

Mults	**7**	Total Score	**6,075**

Club: Swamp Fox Contest Group

And Finally Kevan, N4XL has recharged and reloaded for another round as Editor of Tales from the Swamp! He will take over Editor duties as of next month. It has been my pleasure to gather info and create a newsletter for you. I will now work at implementing some of the ideas form the last several months of the newsletter.

Thanks for reading and 73

N2OG Scott