



2006 VHF Contesting Survey

Data, Analysis & Commentary

Foreword

I love VHF and microwave contesting and I know many of those that read this feel the same. And although I've only been doing it a few years, I've formed some strong opinions about what I like and don't like and even how I think others should behave while contesting. But why is this — why can't we all just have fun? As I tried to understand what I took issue with and why others had issues, I came to realize that even though we are all “playing together,” we are each playing for different reasons and with different goals. Some want to accumulate band-grids for VUCC and the contest, itself, is not terribly important. Others are in a dead heat in their category trying to beat out known opponents. Personally, I enjoy working long, difficult microwave shots with my friends, but I like to see a high score at the end of the day too. And all of these different goals and many others combined with how we were trained as operators, our local culture and our personalities all affect our on-air behaviors and how we operate a contest.

To try and keep everything as fair as possible, rules tell us what we should and should not do in the contest. There is the notion that the rules will equalize the playing field so that anyone that enters any given category in a contest will be on equal footing with all other entrants in the contest. But the reality is that in a VHF and microwave contest, there are so many variables not controlled by the rules that greatly affect a participant's ability to score well in a contest. There's everything from population density to grid size and topography to just plain who's on the air this weekend.

In the end, everyone's idea of fun is different. My personal goal is to help make VHF and microwave contesting more fun for everyone. In the recipe for more fun, the ingredients can be everything from rule changes and behavior changes to downright contest promotion like Rovermania (way to go NLRs). But in a group our size, you can't please everyone. Any change will please some, not affect some and infuriate a few. Some are cautious about change when it might offend someone even if the change helps the majority. I say let's all take a deep breath and do what's best for the majority and if a rule or two offends us, be glad that the other fifty don't. Where possible, let's go for win-win.

So in order to find out how the group feels, I launched a survey in late 2006. I expected about 75-100 participants to chime in and let me know how they felt and I figured that with a group of around 1,000 active participants I should be pleased with a 5-10% response. Boy was I surprised! The on-line survey received 375 responses which is more than the logs that many of the contests we participate in receive! With so many responses, I felt that it would be best to not botch the analysis. I wrote to every VHF and microwave club I could find and asked the groups to help provide input on the analysis. Out of the 25 groups I contacted, most wanted to see the raw data and eight agreed to send me an analysis and some comments of their own. I'm certain I missed asking some important questions and I imparted my own bias into the survey even though I tried to avoid it. Here, then, is the voice of these testers. The primary audience for this document is the members of the ARRL VHF/UHF Advisory Committee (VUAC), the Contest Advisor Committee (CAC) and the ARRL Member Services Committee (MSC) in hopes that rule changes or other recommendations that stand out will be drafted and implemented.

One thing I learned doing this survey is that there are not only just a lot of opinions about the rules, but there are a lot of good suggestions. My crude multiple choice format really didn't allow for suggestions or comments so I received all of these lumped in a single question at the end of the survey. Out of respect for the considerable time each of these amateurs spent writing the comments, I felt an obligation to integrate them as best as I could into this report. My

punishment for formatting the survey in this way was having to sort out all these comments and get them in the right place in this report!

Something that should not be taken lightly and which will be visible later in the comments is that many have the opinion that while certain rule changes or behavior changes of individuals may make the contest more enjoyable or provide some additional rewards, the real item that needs “fixing” in VHF contesting is the activity level. While the survey focused on the rules, several good comments about how to increase activity and some other topics were provided by respondents and I have done my best to carve out a space for these in the report as well.

I realize that this document is huge, but there are a lot of opinions that are rolled up in here and I hope I have done all of the points of view justice. In the end, I hope this consolidated format of opinions on contesting will help the VUAC and the ARRL make some decisions on rule changes or even help with some larger concerns of the group such as activity and promotion.

73,
Stephen Hicks, N5AC
August 1st, 2007

The Survey

I drafted the survey in late 2006 and ran it by a few contesting buddies before launching it. An email was sent to every VHF contesting email reflector and microwave club reflector that I knew about. I asked that wide dissemination for the survey be given so that any reflectors I missed might be notified by a member of that list. This is what that note looked like:

From: Stephen Hicks, N5AC
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2006 16:08
Subject: VHF+ Terrestrial Contest Survey

Fellow VHF and Microwave Contester,

There have been numerous discussions in the past about ARRL contest rules in the VHF and up contests. We all know what it's like to get beat in a contest "fair and square" and we know what it's like to encounter situations that make it frustrating to operate in the contest simply because the rules make it less fun or even unfair.

In an effort to consolidate the opinions of the contesting community, we have created a survey to determine if a number of issues that have come up are really issues that require rule changes or not. The more input we have on the survey, the better the data will be – even if you do not have any issues with the current state of the rules, we would appreciate your input on the survey to let us know this.

At the conclusion of the survey period, the results will be tabulated and provided to the VUAC as well as the participants in the survey. Please take a moment to answer the survey and if you see a geographical region not listed in the "to" line of this email, please feel free to forward the survey to other groups --- the more input the better. Here is the link for the survey.

<url>

The survey will be active for one week, ending on NOVEMBER 1ST.

Thanks & 73,
Steve, N5AC
VP, North Texas Microwave Society

The survey itself had only 20 questions, the first five of which were largely demographic in nature. The survey arose out of complaints we had heard from other testers and things we had observed ourselves. Again, while I feel certain everything was not addressed by the survey, those I asked felt like it was a good start. Here, then, are the questions that were asked:

1. Please select a from a list of contests that you OPERATED IN in the last two years (please check all that apply)
2. If you operated in one or more of these contests, is your primary operating class
3. What is your ARRL Division
4. We would like to have your callsign for two reasons: 1) When we submit our results to the VUAC we would like to place your call as a participant and 2) to follow-up if we have questions about your responses and to let you review the results before we send them.
5. We would like your email to be able to follow-up with you in the event we have a question about your responses and to ensure only one response per individual
6. Grid Circling is a term used when multiple rover stations drive around the edges or corners of grids and work most of the permutations of contacts across bands for many points, generally at a short distance. Assuming for the moment that grid circling is an

- acceptable way to score points, would you favor a different CLASS of rover to support both those rovers that do and those that do not "grid circle?"
7. Would you favor, instead of a separate class for grid circling rovers, abolishing the practice knowing that some rovers who enjoy this may no longer participate?
 8. APRS is a method used by many amateurs to transmit their position using a GPS, a TNC or tracker, and a 2m FM radio. If a rover were to employ the use of APRS, other stations would be able to see them rove around on a map on the internet (see for example http://map.findu.com/n5ac*). Would you be in favor of allowing rovers to use APRS during a contest?
 9. Pack roving is when two or more rovers travel in a caravan. Pack roving allows rovers to share experience and assist each other in repairs. It also allows other stations to work multiple rovers on a single beam heading when the pack stops. But it also allows the rovers to inflate their scores by working each other as they cross grid lines. Pack roving is generally distinguished from grid circling because the pack rovers do not drive in circles around grid intersections to achieve large point values, but rather just work their roving partners as they drive into subsequent grids. Pack roving is currently allowed by contest rules. Are you in favor of allowing pack roving to continue?
 10. Under current ARRL rules, a rover vehicle is only allowed to be occupied by one or two individuals. With contest durations of 30+ hours, unsafe conditions may result from driving while sleepy. Most rovers spend the night in a hotel to combat this problem, but there are other solutions. Please check any that you would find acceptable
 11. Do you think ARRL VHF + contests should have a QRP category that allows for operation from home?
 12. Do you believe Captive Rovers --- that is rovers that will only work one fixed station --- are an issue in your area?
 13. On a scale from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Definitely), I feel that I have a say in how contest rules are made
 14. Do you know who your representative on the VUAC (VHF/UHF contest advisory committee) is?
 15. Have you been contacted by your VUAC representative to solicit your opinions on VHF/UHF contesting?
 16. Would you support a measure to allow any number of youth participants (under a given age) to operate during a VHF+ contest without altering the station's class of operation? For example, this would allow for a rover with 4 participants -- two adult amateurs and two boy scouts. Or a "single operator" fixed station that also had several youth participants.
 17. In some sections where activity is lower, initiatives are being taken to increase VHF+ contesting participation. Would you support a rules change that would allow a "new operator" to participate in a station without altering that station's class. For example, allow an individual new to VHF+ contesting to spend a few hours at another individual's station operating without altering the entry class?
 18. Due to the wide variance in population density, contacts above 6m are widely available in some areas (East and West coasts) while more scarce in other areas (Southern states, gulf area, rocky mountains and Midwest). Would you be in favor of creating a "population density handicap" that would put divisions on closer to even footing in VHF+ contests? Such a system, although not yet devised, would likely add some sort of multiplier effect on non-6m contacts for entrants in non-dense areas of the country. This would never completely level the playing field, but it would simply spread around the existing inequities.

19. Currently, the ARRL hands out certificates for leaders on specific bands in each division, but rovers are specifically excluded from achieving these awards. Would you be in favor of changing this?
20. Is there anything else you would like to see reviewed or any comments you would like to make?

The Participants

I would like to personally thank all those that responded to the survey. Not only did these folks respond to the questions, MANY submitted comments that are included in ***** which helped us better understand some of the issues and concerns of the community. Each respondent spent between 30 minutes and an hour responding and so this report is the culmination of several hundred hours of labor from the contesting community. Please thank these hams for their participation in the survey next time you see them!

AGØA	WØPSS	N1ØFZ	VA3CDD	KB3ZS	KE4YYD	K6EU	W7FSI	K8WW
WDØACD	KFØQ	KA1ØJ	K3DD	W3ZZ	AA4ZZ	WB6FFC	W7HDD	K8XK
WØAH	KBØQGT	W1RT	W3DHJ	NN4AA	N5AC	AD6FP	W7HR	AF8Z
NØAKC	KCØQIT	W1RZF	K3DNE	W4AD	W5AK	K6FV	K7HSJ	WA8ZBT/ W5ROK
KØAWS	KØSHF	N1SZ	WA3DRC	K4ADR	AA5AM	W6GMT	K7IDX/7	
KBØBRO	KBØSNO	AF1T	K3EGE	N4AOE	NE5B	AA6HA	N7IR	K9AKS
KBØCIM	KØSQ	K1TEO	K3EOD	N4BH	N5BA	K6HLH	K17JA	N9BD
KØCJ	KMØT	K1TOL	WA3ETD	K4CSO	KA5BOU	KG6HSQ	KU7M	KC9BQA
WØDJM	KCØTLW	K1TR	ND3F	W4DEX	KI5DR	AA6IW	K7MDL	N9DG
NØDQS	KCØTUD	WZ1V	W3FEY	K4FJW	KA5DWI	WA6JBD	KB7ME	NT9E
NØEDV	KRØU	AL1VE	W3GAD	N4FLM	K5DYY	K6JEY	W7MY	WD9EXD
WØEEA	WØUC	K1WHS	WA3GFZ	W4FRA	KE5EXX	WA6KLK	KG7P	KC9FQD
WØETT	KRØVER	K1ZE	KB3GJT	WB4GCS	KD5HPT	KT6KT	AF7P	W9FZ
KMØF	KØVXM	K2AMI	AA3GN	W4HP	KC5IIT	N6KW	KC7PVD	W9GA
KBØFHP	NØVZJ	WB2AMU	KB3HCL	K4HV	N5KDA	K6NC	K7RAT	W9GKA
WØFMS	NØWBW	K2AXX	KE3HT	N4ION	W5KDA	K6NKC	K7RJ	K9HMB/ K9NS
KBØG	WYØX	W2BVH	WA3IAC	WB4IXU	WB5KIA	KJ6NO	KA7RRA	
WØGSK	WBØYFL	N2CQM	W3IIT	W4IY	K5LLL	AF6O	WB7RSG	K9IJ
WVØH	NØYGM	W2EV	N3IQ	ON4IY	NM5M	W6OAL	N7SC	N9ISN
KBØHNN	WAØYPL	N2EZX	K3IUU	W4JJF	KM5OL	KG6ONE	N7SS	N9JIM
NAØIA	KØYW	NJ2F	K3JJZ	K4JSI	AE5P	W6OUU	WV7T	N9KC
WØIJR	AA1AA	WA2GFP	W3KM	KG4LEV	K5QE	N6RMJ	KD7TJC	K9KL
WØIJR	K1DH	KC2HIZ	VE3KRP	AA4NU	WM5R	N6RMJ	KD7TXG	N9LAG
NØJK	K1DS	K2JJB	K3LFO	N4OFA	K5RHR	KA6T	WA7TZY	K9MK
WØJLF	KB1EKZ	AA2JZ	K3MF	WF4R	KD5SHM	KG6TCV	KD7UFF	K9MU
WØJLF	K1EP	KF2KO	K3MM	K4RF	N5SXA/6	K6VCR	WB7UNU	N9NDP
KØKFC	KB1EXM	AB2KT	N3NGE	W4RXR	AE5T	N6VHF	W7USB	NX9O
NØKP	NJ1F	N2LBT	WA3NUF	W4SC	WA5TKU	KD6VNQ	KL7UW	WA9O
WØKU	N1FGY	KA2LIM	VE3OIL	WB4SLM	KM5TY	AE6WT	KE7V	K9PW
KCØKVD	WA1HCO	N2MLP	VE3OJN	K4SN	WA5UFH	W6YLZ	K7WA	NG9R
AAØKW	NZ1I	WB2PID	K3OR	K4TO	W5UWB	NJ7A	K7XC	K9RQ
WØLD	KT1J	VE2PIJ	W3SZ	N4TSV	K5VH	KC7AOI	K7YO	W9RVG
WØLEV	N1JEZ	KB2SFA	KM3T	W4TXS/N	W5WN	K7AWB	KD7ZD	K9RZZ
WBØLJC	N1JFU	K2SIX	K3TD	8AG	W5WVO	W7BX	WB8BZK	W9SZ
NØLL	KJ1K	N2SLN	VE3TFU	WB4UNA	N5XMV	KF7CQ	N8KH	N9TZL
KØLMD	N1KPW	KB2SSS	W3TMZ	K4UVA	WB5ZDP	W7CS	W8LNA	WO9U
KØMHC	W1LVL	K2TR	VA3TO	W4WA	W5ZF	K7CW	K8MR	KF9US
KØNR	WW1M	W2TTT	K3TUF	KE4WBO	WB6AAG	N7DB	KB8PXV	WE9Y
WØOZL	K1MAP	N2UO	K3UHF	W4XP	KA6AMD	KB7DQH	WW8RR	K9ZF
KØPG	W1MKY	WA2VOI	W3UUM	K4XR	W6BY	W7EME	W8RU	
WØPHD	N1MU	K2YSY	KB3XG	KF4YLM	NR6CA	N7EPD	WB8TGY	
NØPOH	K1NKR	K3CB	W3XO/5	W4YOE	WA6CGR	K7FL	KB8U	

Analysis Teams

After individual responses were collected, raw data was provided to any participant that wanted to see the data. In addition, 25 contesting and VHF/microwave clubs were asked to participate in the actual analysis and commentary on the data. For various reasons, a

number of groups declined to participate. Some cited heavy VUAC or ARRL involvement from members of their club, some stated that they believed that there were no issues with the rules as they were written and still others just didn't have time. Over half simply did not respond to the query to participate in the analysis which could be for any number of reasons including incorrect email addresses. The groups that did respond are listed below.

Pacific Northwest VHF Society

Prepared by Scott Honaker, N7SS

Reviewed by Pacific Northwest VHF Society Officers and Board of Directors

*Lynn N7CFO, Kevin KF7CN, Jim W7DHC, Bob K7TM, Jim K7YO, Bob N7AU,
Scott N7SS and Gabor VE7DXG*

Background

The Pacific Northwest VHF Society was founded in 2001 by a handful of VHFers primarily in Western Washington. The mountain ranges of the Pacific Northwest present a significant challenge to contesters in the region. Additional challenges are presented by being bounded by the Pacific Ocean in the west, a latitude that doesn't often offer favorable propagation modes and very few populated areas.

The Pacific Northwest VHF Society has focused on growing the group and increasing participation during the various contests throughout Washington, Oregon, Idaho and British Columbia. After just a few years, the Society has nearly 350 members and is still growing steadily. As a result of increased local participation in all classes, the various contests are much more interesting. There has also been significant growth of local users of microwave gear.

Given the differences in geography and demographics across the United States, it's simply impossible to make a contest rule set that guarantees an even playing field. There are some areas where the rules can and should be improved (rover operations, for example) but maximum participation must be the primary goal of an ARRL contest.

North Texas Microwave Society

Prepared by Eric Silverthorn, NM5M

Background

The North Texas Microwave Society is dedicated to promoting activity, the state of the art in equipment design, and the exchange of ideas and technology for the amateur bands above 902 MHz. Founded in the 1980s by Al Ward and Kent Britain, the NTMS while officially not a contest club includes among its ranks about 25 active contest operators in the West Gulf Division. Overall membership in the NTMS exceeds 350 amateurs worldwide. There are approximately 75 NTMS members located in the North Texas section.

Florida Weak Signal Society

Prepared by Walter Dail, K4HV

Inputs from *K4HV, NN4AA, WB4BKC, KØVXM, KI4NPV, N8KH, W4VND, W3QO, K4RSV*

Background

The Florida Weak Signal Society was formed approximately two and a half years ago by a small group of central Florida radio amateurs interested in the technical aspects of microwave operating and equipment building. One of the main goals was to help organize VHF-UHF-Microwave enthusiasts in the central Florida area, and to help others to get motivated to build microwave equipment. As a result, the SFL and NFL ARRL sections have seen a higher number of contest participants submitting scores on the higher bands; especially 3.4GHz -10GHz and several tropo distance records have been made. Significant station improvements are evident in submitted scores as well. More and more hams in Florida are now becoming interested in VHF-UHF weak signal operation and membership has grown steadily over the past 18-24 months.

The main challenges in the area are low population density and keeping antennas up due to hurricanes taking them down.

FLWSS supports an email reflector, holds quarterly meetings to allow for technical exchanges and swap sessions, and became an ARRL affiliated organization in April 2006. Membership is free to any licensed radio amateur. We have approximately 50 members scattered throughout the central Florida area. FLWSS will be sponsoring the 2008 SVHF Conference in Orlando, FL.

Pack Rat VHF Contesting

Prepared by Rick Rosen, K1DS

Background

The Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club was founded in 1956 by a group of Philadelphia area hams whose main interests were building equipment and operating the amateur radio frequencies of 50 MHz and above. The founding members almost immediately were nicknamed the "Pack Rats" because of their propensity for collecting all manner of electronic equipment and parts. The nickname stuck and for more than 40 years the Mt. Airy VHF Radio Club better known as the "Pack Rats" has grown and prospered. Although the higher frequency and microwave bands carry the mystique of requiring specialized technical skills, our members come from all walks of life but share a common interest in VHF and above operating and help each other wherever possible. We do have a number of members with technical expertise and many of the transverter, amplifier, and antenna designs that these members have created have been publicized in the major Amateur Radio journals and conferences.

Representation & Validity

One of the chief concerns I had with the survey was ensuring that we received wide participation and that all areas of the country were well represented. I encouraged everyone who took the survey to ask others to take it and to get it in the hands of others that might not have been on one of the lists where the notification was originally posted. Figure 1 shows the number of participants from each ARRL Division as reported directly by the respondents. While the representation is not “flat,” participants from every ARRL Division responded and through clubs were asked to raise any issues that might be specific to their geography that might not be well represented in a national survey.

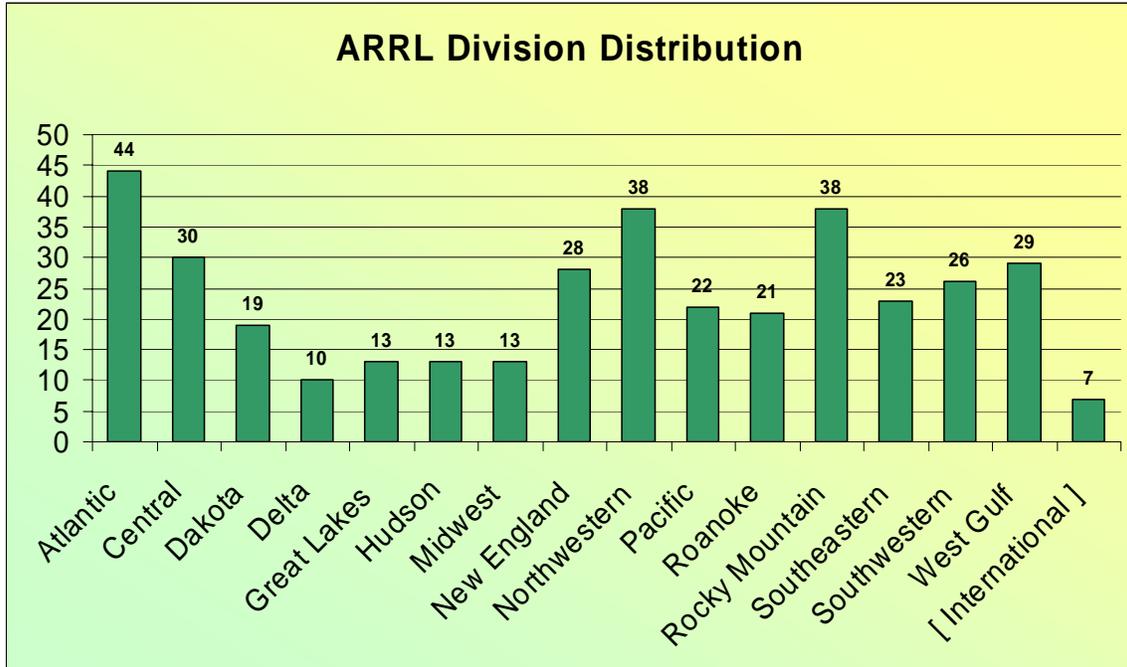
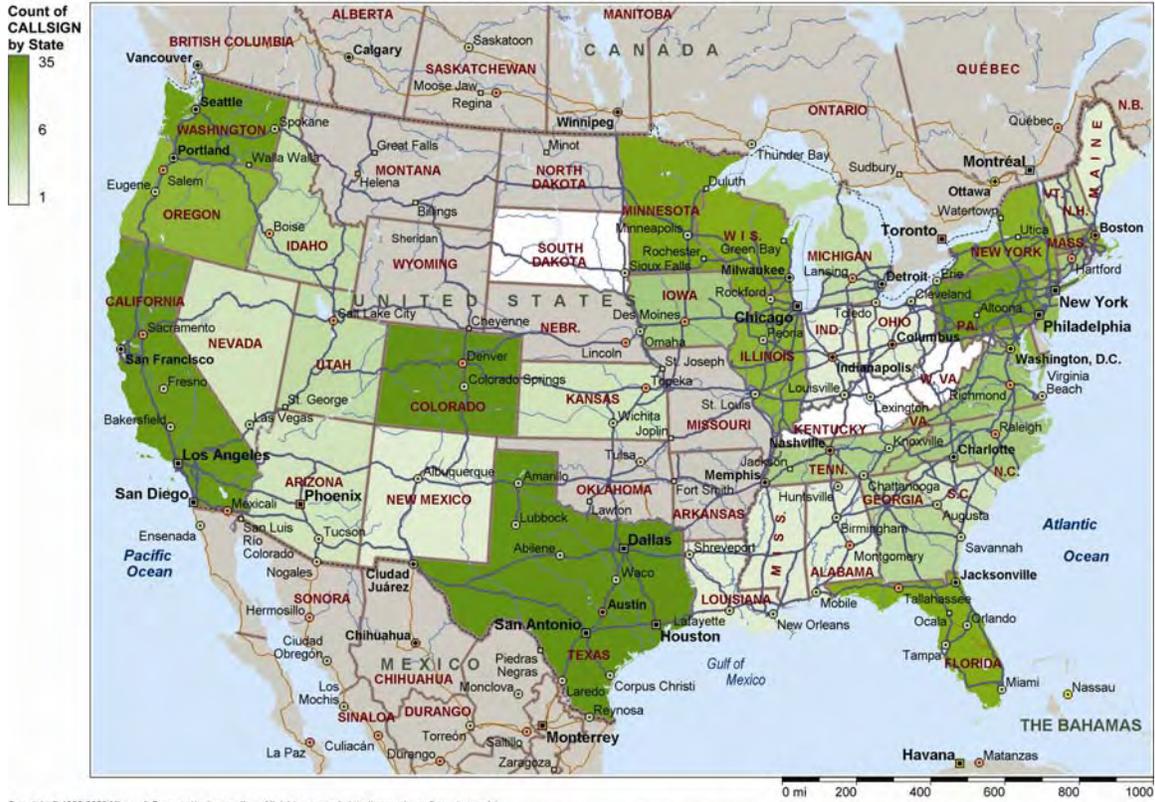


Figure 1, Survey Geographic Distribution

While no effort was made to make the survey scientific, it did receive wide distribution and has effectively recorded the wishes of amateurs all across the country (and some international participants).

Scott Honaker, N7SS, went a step further and used the state of residence for each participant and came up with the chart shown in Figure 2 which shows the representation by state. While it appears skewed on the surface, I suspect that it is a reasonable reflection on where the activity on the bands actually exists. There are states, though, that have activity where there are no responses at all — Oklahoma and Arkansas immediately come to mind.

Count of Responses by State

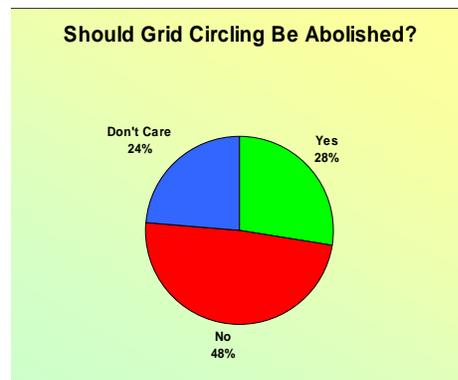
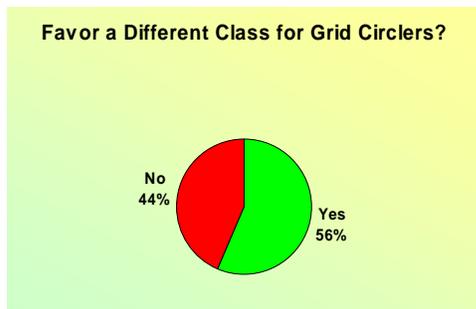


Copyright © 1998-2003 Microsoft Corp. and/or its suppliers. All rights reserved. <http://www.microsoft.com/mappoint>
 © Copyright 2002 by Geographic Data Technology, Inc. All rights reserved. © 2002 Navigation Technologies. All rights reserved. This data includes information taken with permission from Canadian authorities © 1991-2002 Government of Canada (Statistics Canada and/or Geomatics Canada), all rights reserved.

Response Analysis

For each question below, the summary data is provided — in other words the total responses for each answer — along with commentary and analysis from various groups. It is our wish that this analysis lead to discussions in the VUAC about whether specific rules should be changed.

Question 6: *Grid Circling is a term used when multiple rover stations drive around the edges or corners of grids and work most of the permutations of contacts across bands for many points, generally at a short distance. Assuming for the moment that grid circling is an acceptable way to score points, would you favor a different CLASS of rover to support both those rovers that do and those that do not "grid circle?"*



Question 7: *Would you favor, instead of a separate class for grid circling rovers, abolishing the practice knowing that some rovers who enjoy this may no longer participate?*

Grid circling is one of the hot-button issues in VHF and above contesting today. Many participants are frustrated about grid circling, some because of a direct impact on their own contesting and some because of observed issues that are seen with other contesters. For all the commotion, it should be noted that teams that are grid circling are on the bands and having their own fun in the contest. These individuals have built expensive rover stations to enjoy the contest like others and they are often the score leaders in the contest. At the heart of the discussion are a few key questions:

1. Is grid circling a “bad behavior” that we want to ban? Setting aside for the moment the question of scoring, do those that grid circle add something to the contesting community and to VHF and above operating in general or are they a nuisance?
2. Is the root of the complaints simply that grid circlers are taking awards and score rankings from other more classic rover endeavors?
3. Is grid circling acceptable only in moderation and are there limits that should or could be imposed?

Numerous individuals commented on grid circling, many with good ideas about what to do. In the end, several decisions need to be made about grid circling moving forward. First, let's look at some of the comments from survey participants:

I made the presentation at the CSVHF conference several years back - "The Art of the Rover" - that pointed up the mathematical and practical aspects of grid circling. I showed the advantages, techniques and pit falls. Grid circling out here in the great devoid is used to generate activity, combat boredom and generate rover camaraderie. Our primary goal is to work other stations, but we have to go find them. Along the way we try to generate activity where this is none. Our rover runs go up to 1100 miles to activate 16 grids. If it were not for the other rovers, we would not be able to activate the grids on anything other than 6 and 2... No set of rules changes is ever going to be able to "level the field" because of the disparity in density distribution of VHF-microwave activity. I compete against my previous efforts, and optimize my rover and tactics to fit my area. I value my standing in the Division/Section more than on the national ranking. In the Division/Section, I am competing against my peers on the same turf. If I was really worried about national standing, I would drive to the northeast and make a run from Boston to Washington DC. We all live with limitations of geography - witness the HF problem with living in the "black hole" - Rules are not going to fix that one either. If people want more recognition, then provide certificates and awards for the Division/Section level. Paper is cheap. Punitive rules changes will only decrease activity. That is what happened the last time the rover rules were changed, and our contests get very quiet when the rovers stay home. - NAØIA

Some real rovers no longer rove because of grid circling. This stupid practice hurts the contest in more ways than one - and needs to be extinguished. - K7RAT

Grid circling and captive rovers are a non-issue in the great lakes region. A rover (who doesn't enter as a grid-circler) should be moved to the grid-circling category if the total number of QSOs above 432 is greater than 50 AND the percentage of QSOs above 432 with other rovers is greater than 50%. - KB8U

I have roved using three different sets of rules. Several stations chose to stop roving when the rules changed. More started to replace them. If someone's ego or skill set is so limited that they can only compete under one set of rules it is a matter of time before they stop no matter what the rules are. I chose to adapt my strategy to the new rules. Let them go. - VE3OIL

Any mention of 'Grid Circling' or 'pack roving' must include quantifiable boundaries of acceptable practice. I have traveled in convoy with rovers for intervals; I have stumbled into a random collection of rovers at a grid corner. It is intelligent to maximize my score if I am presented the opportunity. How do I know that my random meeting of another station is unacceptable cornering or pack operation? My operations focus on 'real' operation is confirmed by my results. I have on more than one occasion had more 2m and 432 multipliers than any other rover in spite of having very limited activity for the northern half of my compass. I much prefer making 'real' contact to manufacturing QSOs. That does not mean I should forgo the opportunity to collect multipliers and points when I meet other rovers. If a limit needs to be placed perhaps a minimum distance must be traveled before another QSO can be made or a limit in points at a corner between rovers. An absolute ban also has potential to create controversy. - VE3OIL

Also, per questions above, grid circling is totally unfair to non-circling rovers. While I personally think circling is silly (it's a road rally not a contest), even if we can't eliminate it, we should allow real competitors to compete only against their fellow non-circling rovers. - K1TEO

"Grid circling," "Pack Roving," etc. are all red herrings... The problem is that you CANNOT DEFINE the terms in a meaningful manner, nor in such a way that you do not cut out legitimate operators. Drop it for crying out loud! ...Outside of the NE,

Rovers are necessary both for activity and to provide activation of rare and even un-used grids. In the upper Mid-west, it's not uncommon for 25-35% or more of a FIXED STATION'S score to come from Rovers. Remove the reason for Rovers to spend the time, money and (considerable!) effort to support a contest, and Rovers will not go out. When that happens, the scores of fixed stations will go down, and large numbers of stations outside of the coastal activity centers will simply not operate the contests. – WA2VOI

I don't have a problem with either grid-circling or pack-roving provided the rovers are not captive to any group of stations and make an honest effort to work other stations. – VA3CDD

Grid circling rovers and Pack rovers should not be able to score contacts with each other. Rovers should be a complete separate deal and only competing against each other. They should have separate awards i.e.; single op, multi-op etc. – W6OUU

Leave Current Rover Rules Alone. Add Rules Allowing For ROVER Packs, but in THEIR OWN CATEGORY! – K7XC

Grid circling is far more difficult than people think. It should be allowed. There is a lot to learn by doing this. Try grid circling in the January contest in Chicago if you want to see how to EARN points! – N9KC

I am concerned that eliminated rover packs or grid circling could turn more off. One other problem I see is what if two rovers heading in opposite direction cross paths? Are they considered to be grid circling then? That doesn't seem fair. – NØAKC

Grid circling types of contesters should be considered "rover unlimited" and can do whatever i.e. grid circle, pack rove have 4 people in the car etc. This way other rovers that operate more normally will not be ignored for their efforts and the "unlimited" guys can compete with their peers. Everyone would win as the fixed stations can still work all the rovers. – KFØQ

I don't consider captive roving or grid circling a problem. In my opinion, recruitment, mentoring, planning, and camaraderie are all part of contesting and these two practices are examples of all of these. Don't kill those principles. – N1MU

With regard to the grid circling and pack roving...these operators have just found creative ways to maximize their score under the existing rules. If we don't think this is consistent with the purpose of a VHF contest, then we owe it to them to come up with a clear set of new rules. – KØNR

Re: pack roving or Grid Circling -- I don't want to spoil anyone's fun, but I don't want to compete with packs or circlers. I favor an "unassisted" rover category. – KØPG

Thanks for your efforts to change the rules; it is discouraging to see the top rovers in the nation filled up with grid circling scores. Just put them in a separate category and encourage them to Circle, Circle, Circle....MAKES ME DIZZY – N4OFA

*Grid circling and captive rovers are the same thing as far as I'm concerned. They aren't trying to work anybody but their own target stations. A possible, but not perfect, solution would be to require a significant minimum operating time before changing grids, say two hours (about the time it takes to cross a grid west to east, at moderate driving speeds). So if my first QSO from DN70 (where I live) is at 1800Z, I couldn't claim credit for any QSOs from DN80 until 2000Z. This gives the grid-circlers and captive rovers nothing better to do than stay put for a while and *work other stations*. – KRØU*

... I am also somewhat puzzled and disturbed at other topics that will obviously diminish participation. Specifically, the proposals to curtail rover operation seem extremely harmful, particularly in less populated areas, where rovers can add significantly to the otherwise very limited activity. I wonder if the amateurs involved have lost the ability to think clearly when they condemn "grid circling", where I presume their concern might actually be "captive rovers", which is already against the rules. Or perhaps they are oblivious to the fact that rovers engaging in grid circling can provide substantial opportunity for other stations, fixed and portable, to make numerous contacts. This may be particularly true of modest stations restricted by covenants. (Even if a problem exists, which I don't believe it does, simple, measured, carefully thought-out evolutionary changes could be used rather than the ill-conceived rule changes that seem to be advocated. For example, rover-to-rover contacts might have scoring of one half that of other contacts. In the interest of fairness, of course, I presume that fixed stations would limit themselves to antenna heights and power levels equivalent to that of rovers. Wait, perhaps this is counterproductive as well...) – K8XK

No, I don't see a problem with grid circling. And even if there were a problem, adding a class of rover would not help; it would only emphasize the confused thinking that foes of grid circling seem to possess. Would a "normal" rover be prohibited from working another passing rover even once without a classification change? Twice? No, I don't see a problem with this. Why is it beyond the comprehension of grid circling foes that we need more VHF+ activity, particularly in less populated areas? Why are they attempting to abolish a means that adds such activity? It benefits all classes of operators. – K8XK

I was very close to answering question 7 "yes, ban grid circling". But then I thought of a few local rovers who are very active and promote activity a great deal. While they have been known to circle each other at an intersection in metro Milwaukee and while I think that's a perfect waste of time, they don't overdo it and they are eager to work anyone, instead of just each other. As long as a rover's main motivation is to work any/all stations in any/all directions, I'm cool with their little diversions. What I wish could be done is that rovers who obviously only grid circle to create absolutely artificial, inflated scores -- those rovers I wish could be banned/shut down/given no publicity whatsoever. It creates ill will among the general weak signal contesting community when folks hear about rovers that go to amazing lengths to make a record score, yet they made 95-100% of their QSO's only within their grid circling partners. – KC9BQA

I almost quit roving when I ran into grid circlers with hand-helds and lasers that could not work beyond a few miles. That contest I posted a 40k score and they posted 160-300k between the 3 of them. One guy who had real antennas made other contacts and got the big score. The other two stations were captive to him all rotating around grid corners... Grid circling could be limited by the ARRL setting a maximum percentage of QSOs from one station. As a person from the west coast with a population density issue, I would set the limit fairly high, IE 15-20 percent. I have randomly worked other well equipped rovers into this percentage range when I did 15 grids and he did 10 even though we were each doing our own thing. I would suggest the ARRL provide a "world record" per division in grid circling. This could be done anytime with or without a contest after all they are not talking to us anyway. – K3UHF

Rovers are another issue and there still needs to be some categorizing of their operations based on operating style. The grid circlers should declare their category and the pack rovers ... should be able to be recognized for their insanity without throwing the more traditional rovers out of the competition. After all - We do segregate the fixed multi-ops from the single ops. – W3GAD

As an occasional rover and grid circling rover, I think too much emphasis is being placed on how people operate. What's next, are we going to go after fixed stations with good mountaintop locations? This is a hobby, go out and have fun with it! If someone else has the time and wherewithal to put together a better or different station and foot the bill for gas or real estate, so be it. – K6VCR

I believe grid circling should not be allowed under the present rules, however if a different class were to be created for this that would be ok, however I cannot imagine what the challenge would be (you can effectively have your score calculated before the contest providing you hit all the planned grids) I see no contribution to the VHF and up community as far as enhancing operating skills etc. and this would have to be very boring. Need very small antennas and low power. – NØDQS

I have participated in a grid circling expedition. It's a dumb but effective interpretation of existing rules. – N7SS

Thanks to the rover rules changes implemented to stop grid circling back in the Northeast, we had a number of rovers quit operating. We now have only 2 or 3 rovers left who go out along the Front Range within VHF "shot" of Denver. Out here, we need every QSO we can dig up and rovers mean a lot. A separate category for the grid circlers and the pack rovers seems appropriate and would still get these guys to get out there and make some contacts for the fixed and portable stations. – WØETT

The grid circlers would still grid circle, because it's fun. It's also a useful skill to pump out that many QSOs in a short period of time. Some really smart cookies are doing GC and I would hate for them to throw in the towel because someone actually gets in a huff over their score. They happen to be skilled operators and it is pleasure to work them when they are looking for some external tonnage. – KG6ONE

In the interest of promoting "Rovering" over greater distances, the 124 mile restriction for VCCC and WAS for VHF/UHF should be removed, which is one of the prime motivators for "Grid Circling". If you want to use the Rover Contest contacts towards the awards, you have to stay within 124 miles of your home QTH. – N1KPW

It is impossible to define grid circling or pack roving. Any definition you invent somebody could operate just shy of it. – AF6O

Note that the 10mi travel between contacts rule effectively prohibits grid circling in the 10 GHz and Up Contest. – N8KH

Object: To work as many amateur stations in as many different 2 degrees × 1 degree grid squares as possible using authorized frequencies above 50 MHz." then Grid Circling is not acceptable as it works in direct opposition to the event's objective. – W2EV

The Florida Weak Signal Society (FLWSS) considered grid circling and had this to say about their region:

The majority of the VUAC questions dealt with rover operation and captive rovers. However, this does not seem to be a problem in the Southeast and seems largely confined to other divisions which have a higher population density or other reasons.

Eliminate Grid Circling

The goal of the VHF+ contests is to "contact as many stations in as many different grids as possible". Unfortunately, the current rules allow contacting one station (or a small group of stations) many times in as many grids as possible. This is clearly contrary to the goal and needs to be contrary to the rules.

Placing a small time limit per grid will eliminate the intentional grid circling but still allow an incidental meeting of rovers to maximize their points. A 15-30 minute minimum stay per grid is similar to the 30 minute per band rule in HF contests. It requires operators to stay long enough to make a serious effort to "contact as many stations as possible" before changing grids. This short stay can't possibly impact a serious rover effort, yet will kill the ability of grid circlers to rotate effectively.

The Pacific Northwest VHF Society saw grid circling as a problem in a very small percentage of the contesting population, however:

Although grid circling requires certain skills and level of organization, it is clearly contrary to the intentions of the contest. The majority of responses indicated it should not be allowed yet there is concern about chance meeting of rovers.

Pack roving is valuable in several ways. It increases participation, provides an increased level of safety, contributes to the social nature of ham radio and provides access to needed grid squares for every participant. A small time limit per grid (15-30 minutes) would minimize the value of grid circling while still allowing pack roving.

The number of participants who actively grid circle is very small, yet causes a huge amount of resentment in the contest community because of the inflated score. Classes should be kept to a minimum and creating a separate class just to encourage this behavior is not a good solution.

Commenting on grid circling and pack roving, the North Texas Microwave Society representative stated:

This surprised me that the majority is not in favor of eliminating the practice. It seems that most respondents want to create a separate category for this method of operation.

The Park Rats VHF Contesting group carefully considered the results of the survey and what it might mean to VHF contesting:

The issues around rovers doing grid circling, pack roving, and the introduction of more ops to VHF contesting appear to have been the central themes of this current survey. The results are being digested by various VHF clubs and likely to be presented to the VHF-UHF ad-hoc advisory committee. Joe Taylor, K1JT, is the representative to this committee for the Mid-Atlantic Division, and any and all suggestions for contesting issues should be brought to his attention.

Over the years, the attitude of the club members has been that pack-roving and grid-circling by rovers was a tactic that was unacceptable, anti-competitive, and generally unsportsmanlike conduct for contests. Despite the rarity of the occurrence, in recent years these types of operations have recurred, for the express purpose of inflating scores and record setting. Not all of the effects have been negative, as there has been some additional activity generated and more rovers on the road. The ARRL rover rules do not ban any of the suspect rover practices. In order to distinguish those who contest from those who go "fishing in a barrel" there has been the suggestion that a separate class be created for rovers who rely on the rather artificial generation of scores. Although not a scientific, comprehensive or statistically valid survey, results are equivocal about abolishing the practice, but of the 374 total respondents, 211 (57%) said yes and 163 (43%) said no to question #6 for a separate class for grid-circlers, if it is allowed. Of 85 rover respondents alone, 52 (61%) said yes and 33 (39%) said no to the same issue. In relation to the issue of abolishing grid-circling, of the overall respondents 102 (27%) said yes, 182 (49%) said no and 88 (24%) didn't care. If the popular vote matters, it appears as if we may be stuck with this type of activity for the foreseeable future.

A slim majority of the respondents are, in fact, in favor of creating an additional category for those that grid circle. But the definition of what comprises a grid circler is not necessarily easy as VE3OIL points out, "I have traveled in convoy with rovers for intervals; I have stumbled into a random collection of rovers at a grid corner. It is intelligent to maximize my score if I am presented the opportunity. How do I know that my random meeting of another station is unacceptable cornering or pack operation?"

A number of respondents commented that they have actually tried grid circling and find it to be enjoyable. As NØAKC points out, “I am concerned that eliminated rover packs or grid circling could turn more off.” With the huge emphasis in the comments on increasing activity and some support for a separate class for those that wish to grid circle, perhaps the best solution would be to create a separate class for grid circlers. But as K8XK, WA2VOI, AF6O and VE3OIL point out above, the definition of who fits in which category can be difficult and the survey showed that 44% of respondents do not want an additional class made for grid-circling rovers.

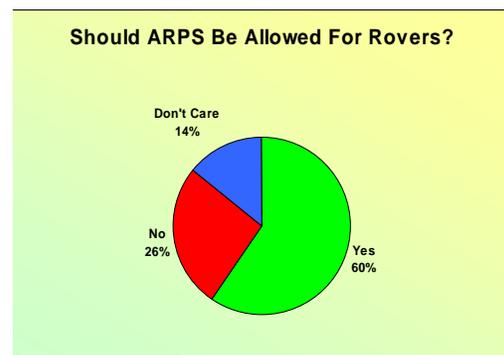
Several solutions were mentioned by respondents including the novel one from K3UHF, “I would suggest the ARRL provide a ‘world record’ per division in grid circling. This could be done anytime with or without a contest after all they are not talking to us anyway.” Other suggestions came from KC9BQA, KB8U and KFØQ among others.

Several, including K1TEO, KFØQ, KØPG, KC9BQA and W3GAP pointed out that the concern with grid circlers is less about their contesting style than it is about their competition with more traditional rovers. As N1MU so eloquently states: “I don’t consider captive roving or grid circling a problem. In my opinion, recruitment, mentoring, planning, and camaraderie are all part of contesting and these two practices are examples of all of these. Don’t kill those principles.” K8XK echoed these concerns: “... I am also somewhat puzzled and disturbed at other topics that will obviously diminish participation. Specifically, the proposals to curtail rover operation seem extremely harmful, particularly in less populated areas, where rovers can add significantly to the otherwise very limited activity.” Again, a separate category for grid circlers might solve both of these issues (eliminate competition with traditional rovers while preserving others’ fun), but the definition of the classes remains a problem that would have to be solved and there is not overwhelming support for this solution.

Several that appeared opposed to grid circling just found the style puzzling rather than objectionable, but a few commented that knowing the high scores that grid circlers achieved with minimal equipment and what appear to them as minimal effort (short contacts with S9 signals) was not only puzzling, but was demoralizing. In the end, abolishing grid circling doesn’t appear to be the answer with only a quarter of respondents favoring this and opinions from amateurs that have tried it that find it enjoyable.

Question 8: *APRS is a method used by many amateurs to transmit their position using a GPS, a TNC or tracker, and a 2m FM radio. If a rover were to employ the use of APRS, other stations would be able to see them rove around on a map on the internet (see for example http://map.findu.com/n5ac*). Would you be in favor of allowing rovers to use APRS during a contest?*

Some confusion still surrounds APRS and what really constitutes using it in a contest. W2EV has suggested that APRS is legal in contests and it is, but only if no digipeaters and no Internet are used to relay the signal. APRS is simply an FSK signal that contains the transmitter’s position (acquired



from a GPS receiver, typically), callsign and any optional text. Generally, the signal is repeated for a few hops as it is transmitted on 144.39 MHz FM so that others that are decoding the signal with a TNC can find out where a station is. The Internet was also added to APRS and now, stations called iGates receive the APRS signal and report the position information to a central server where it can be displayed, along with a detailed map, on a website.

The use of APRS in VHF contesting generally applies to allowing fixed stations to locate rovers as they rove across the countryside without having to track them on sideband. Here are some of the comments from respondents:

APRS is fine if it is not repeated by other stations. It is also already allowed by the rules. But packet spotting on HF is subject to abuse, why add the potential for a similar problem in VHF contests. I am not convinced it will help any one. – VE3OIL

And finally last, I believe that NO online computer use should be allowed at any time by anyone during the contest. Yes, spotting is nice but if this is a contest, do it yourself with your ears and operating skills!!! If you use the computer to spot or even observe spots, then your score should be cut by half or more for a final score. – WA6KLLK

Treat APRS use as any other spotting net. APRS use is MULI OPERATOR category or ASSISTED category (where available). – KRØU

No, it seems like this would have to be reconciled with rules regarding repeaters and non-amateur communications means. – K8XX

There's no debate as to whether APRS should be allowed - YES - It utilizes a relatively new technology as far as Ham Radio is concerned and it happens on VHF+ frequencies. I'd bet quite a few fixed stations use the Internet for spotting stations. Telnet access using a call other than that of the station would never be detected by the contest sponsor. APRS usage should be a no-brainier. Fixed stations know where other fixed stations are located and point their beams accordingly. This would allow everyone to track down rovers. – W4TXS/N8AG

The use of APRS to tracking a rover is a form of spotting which is prohibited under the current rules. (2.1.3. Use of spotting assistance or nets (operating arrangements involving other individuals, DX-alerting nets, packet, etc) is not permitted.) One might also consider a Rover using APRS a form of reverse spotting. From a Rover's point of view, this would increase the chances of more stations looking for him and subsequently working more stations. If APRS is allowed, a new class of operation needs to be defined (single op assisted, multi op assisted, rover assisted, etc.) This would apply equally to any station employing the use of any spotting assistance both receiving and/or transmitting the spotting information. – AA5AM

The use of non-amateur communications and retransmitting (digipeating) are prohibited. APRS (when used as described in the questionnaire) is illegal. However...a variation that uses simplex and doesn't use the internet has been approved. Do you know about that? It used to be called "Beaconet" and is now called "HamIM". – W2EV

While there appears to be good support for APRS both in the survey and on contesting reflectors, one issue that keeps surfacing is that it removes some of the skill required in contesting. Specifically, if a fixed station no longer has to figure out a rover's location, this part of contesting and the skill it requires are no longer useful. In a contest of skill, we would be removing a skill requirement. In a recent contesting reflector post, Bruce, W9FZ, a respected and long-time rover says:

As to APRS, I've generally been "for" it--particularly initially. But I've had a fixed station in my area (re)bring to my attention the idea of "competition" and working hard.

This one particular operator is one of the best in the region in finding me on my roves. Why? Because he tries. He keeps his rotor warm with frequent rotation and same for his VFO dial. For that extra work, he finds me just about everywhere I go. But there is one or more stations in the region who have very capable stations who don't "find" me. (I'll admit I could go looking for them, but within our region, we've seen some good things from rovers sticking to "pre-announced" frequencies off of the calling freqs.) They lament after the contest, "gee, I missed you in some of your grids". But I was there on my pre-announced freq CQ'ing my lungs out swinging the beams in many different directions. I think I could be found :-).

So, under the competition idea, APRS will "change" the playing field. Note I didn't say good or bad. The rover gets more activity and the aggressive rover-seeking fixed station loses some advantage. I'll admit that when I'm CQ'ing my lungs out and not being found, I wonder why I went. But I wait a few minutes and eventually activity picks up again. Also, as rovers include more microwave bands which, generally, require more time (fiddlefactor) per QSO, the rover disappears off of their pre-announced rover freq for longer and longer periods which makes the rover un-findable. When I'm off on a high band and I hear stations calling on "my" freq, I feel bad that I can't let them know that I'll be right back but I can't let go of the dish at that moment in the wind :-).

So, in general, I'm "for" APRS (not just HamIM) but we need to understand that it will change the playing field for fixed stations. As long as we go into it eyes wide-open, I think it's worth a try. If it changes things for the worse, we can always delete it a few years later.

Just got off the local 2m simplex ragchew freq and discussed the APRS topic with a prominent Twin Cities fixed station. He'd just as soon not go down this road because of the competition idea, rovers in this region stay to their pre-announced schedules and freqs pretty well, and most of all, he finds that even well announced rovers are often busy off of "their" freqs working the high bands so APRS would just have fixed stations calling to a rover who couldn't answer right then.

On the flip side of the “removing a skill requirement” argument is the question of whether APRS will enhance activity. Will a rover broadcasting his position that can be viewed on the Internet increase activity (a key goal of all respondents). This is clearly up for debate since it has not yet been tried.

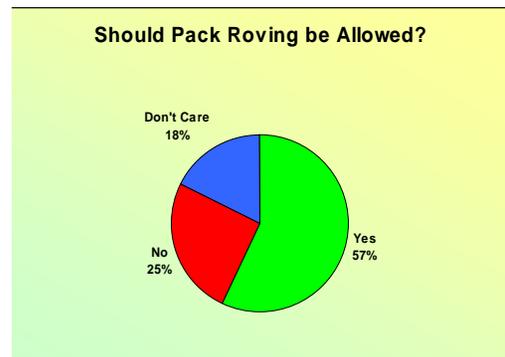
One solution to the problem of removing skills is to provide an unassisted category for those that do not wish to use the APRS data and then allow it for assisted categories. But as pointed out in Bruce’s note, rovers that publish schedules and stick to them might not even want to run APRS since the stations will know where they are in the first place. With only a quarter of respondents against APRS, and the distinct possibility of reducing this by adding an unassisted category, it may be time to give APRS a try in at least one contest.

Question 9: *Pack roving is when two or more rovers travel in a caravan. Pack roving allows rovers to share experience and assist each other in repairs. It also allows other stations to work multiple rovers on a single beam heading when the pack stops. But it also allows the rovers to inflate their scores by working each other as they cross grid lines. Pack roving is generally distinguished from grid circling because the pack rovers do not drive in circles*

around grid intersections to achieve large point values, but rather just work their roving partners as they drive into subsequent grids. Pack roving is currently allowed by contest rules. Are you in favor of allowing pack roving to continue?

[I apologize for the use of the word “roving” in the question. I was chastised by several and informed that the proper term is “roving” which I will use from this point forward!]

Many of the comments of respondents on grid circling also mentioned pack roving since the two can go hand-in-hand. Generally, a grid circler must rove in a pack in order to be successful, but someone roving in a pack does not have to grid circle. A pack rover that does not grid circle may get points driving across a grid line and working a rover in the next grid that he is traveling with, but will not circle around a grid corner working every permutation of sending and receiving grid (there are 16 combinations for two rovers and a pack rover is likely to log only 2-3 of these when the pack crosses a grid-line).



Respondents had a lot to say on pack roving also – here are some of those comments:

Pack roving increases safety and security of rovers and should not be discouraged. The extra points they'd get are minimal. – KB8U

We like roving in packs a great deal. No one feels out here that they have an undue advantage. Most know roving is hard work. – K6JEY

Yes, I see no problem with this, and certainly see the benefits. I must add that I'm offended by the biased wording, apparently to help achieve desired survey results; particularly inflammatory is use of the phrase "inflate their scores" through an allowed activity. Should rovers resent fixed stations with large towers "inflating their scores" by making contacts with each other? – K8XX

Pack or "Gang" roving should either be abolished or should be made a separate category (for those who want to operate that way - not me!). It could be abolished by rejecting (for an award) rover logs where 20% or so of the contacts are made solely with another group of rovers (2 or more in the Pack). Or, if a separate category were created, the software which analyzes the logs could automatically place that rover into the Pack Rover category, when that critical percentage of Pack contacts is reached. Current rover rules are manifestly unfair, in allowing Pack Rovers to amass huge scores among themselves, and make few if any contacts with those outside the Pack. I have experienced it first hand, and was astonished that the Pack Rovers would simply ignore my calls, as it was interfering with their routine of making pre-arranged contacts with Pack members. – K6NC

As far as rover packs?? Every rover pack I have ever seen or heard about is grid circling. Again either outlaw it or create a different class. Rover packs and grid circling is somewhat like a multi op only every one gets a big score. Contesting is about much more than a big score, how you achieve the score and what you contribute to the airwaves, yes you want to compete and it is nice to score competitively but how you do it is important in my opinion. If pack roving and grid circling is allowed then you just as well allow

captive rovers as well. Get back to working on operating skills and working with propagation etc. – NØDQS

Pack roving has numerous advantages, particularly in sparsely populated areas. A small time limit per grid square (15-30 minutes) would be all that is required to separate the grid circling (bad) from the pack rovers (good). – N7SS

If it fails the "object:..." test as outlined in #8 above, it is wrong no matter how it is packaged by participants. – W2EV

As someone who has roved in a pack (with one other rover) I can safely say that the object is simply to hang out with another amateur and have fun, swap stories, and eat dinner together. We also make a few more contacts since we work each other, but we do not engage in exploiting all permutations at a grid confluence. The Pacific Northwest VHF Society echoed this by saying:

Pack roving is valuable in several ways. It increases participation, provides an increased level of safety, contributes to the social nature of ham radio and provides access to needed grid squares for every participant. A small time limit per grid (15-30 minutes) would minimize the value of grid circling while still allowing pack roving.

The NTMS representative stated:

As mentioned in my response to question 7, I am surprised that most said that pack roving should be allowed. I am of the opinion that a don't care response to this question is equivalent to a "Yes"

The real question is probably not should roving in groups be allowed, but what contacts should be allowed when the pack roving is taking place. Pack rovers can enjoy the camaraderie, repair help, dinners, etc. with their fellow rovers even if they are not making contacts between each other. Having said this, a rover gives the opportunity for a fixed station to claim a multiplier in a grid that might otherwise not be activated and if we outright prevent rover-to-rover contacts, we deny the rover the ability to obtain multipliers in the same way.

With only 25% believing pack roving should be eliminated and knowing that eliminating it would dissatisfy some rovers, outright eliminating pack roving seems foolish if our goal is to improve activity. Most who commented that pack roving should be abolished seemed primarily concerned that the rovers in packs were preoccupied with working their comrades and not distant stations. This behavior, where it exists, seems to be the main issue with pack roving that was discernable from the comments made.

Question 10: *Under current ARRL rules, a rover vehicle is only allowed to be occupied by one or two individuals. With contest durations of 30+ hours, unsafe conditions may result from driving while sleepy. Most rovers spend the night in a hotel to combat this problem, but there are other solutions. Please check any that you would find acceptable:*

- *Limiting total number of hours for rovers in the contest 17.1% (64)*
- *Allowing additional people in the car to assist with driving 51.9% (194)*
- *Removing the number of operators limit of 2 49.5% (185)*

- *Allowing additional people in the car to assist with driving, logging or the like, but limiting operators 41.7% (156)*
- *Require frequent ARRL Section Manager inspections to verify large quantities of caffeinated beverages and NoDoz are present in the vehicle*

Generally, I would have expected that everyone would recognize that the last answer was an attempt at humor, but I did receive a few complaints about this solution. More than this, though, was the number of respondents that said their desired answer was not among the selections provided. Specifically, there were a large number of respondents that wanted to see a separate class for single-operator rovers. Several experienced and well recognized rovers operate with a single operator and prefer to operate this way. Here are some of these comments:

Most importantly for this rover would be a single op class - NO additional people, whether operators or support personnel. To keep it simple, I would have a single op rover class and a multiop rover class, same as for fixed stations. There are LOTS of us single op rovers out there. –WW1M

Single person rovers are a separate class of operation from two person rovers. Basically a team against an individual. You don't have multi-operator stations against single operators in the fixed station classifications. Why are they lumped together in Rover class? You want more VHF/UHF station participation. Offer 2 rover classes. Multi and Single person. That way the small guy can at least get some recognition for their individual efforts, plus if they're scored as a separate class, you might get more of them, which could probably increase the total number of contesters in other classes! –ALIVE

I have advocated for separating the 1 and 2 person rovers. Question 10 asks which I would find acceptable--NONE of the responses is acceptable, but the survey too forces a response. –KIDS

Lastly, back to roving. I've always been and always will be a solo-rover. I DO NOT like the idea of two operators AND support drivers. Anything more than two will always kill me. Allowing a driver or other support staff under the guise of safety just skews the competition even more. –W9FZ

How about a single operator Rover category? If you're looking to level the playing field for things such as population density, just think about the disadvantages a single operator rover has as compared to 2 operators....(or more, if some of the changes are adopted) Not just for operating either. Do you know how much work it is to set up a non-dedicated vehicle for 6 bands?? It's a big job! –W4TXS/N8AG

I would like to see a separate Rover class for single operator rovers. It is a real challenge to compete with multi-op rovers who have the luxury of operating virtually full time even while driving. Since there are separate single-op and multi-op classes for fixed stations, logic follows that there should be single-op and multi-op rover classes also. –WB8BZK

Rovers with more than one person on board should be put in a special class regardless the number of people in the vehicle. One transmitting radio at a time! –KE7V

THIS IS NOT TRUE. THE RULES STATE: "2.3. Rover: One or two operators of a single station that moves among two or more grid squares during the course of a contest." The term "Operators" does not preclude a rover from employing a non-operating driver (or two). The term "operator" is defined in VHF Rule 2.1 as the individual who is engaged in: "...transmitting, receiving, spotting, and logging functions as well as equipment and antenna adjustments." ----- NOTE: Why not

reconsider rovers as either "S/O Mobile" or "M/O Mobile" and simplify things? – W2EV

There were also a number in the “more the merrier” camp that are both rovers and fixed stations alike. These respondents generally wanted to lift any restrictions on the number of operators or support people in the vehicle (or add another individual for safety):

Any number of operators/drivers in a Rover under ONE call – K5QE

I would like to see more than two people per rover. – KJ6NO

On question 10, the maximum number of operators should be increased to 3 or the number of hours should be limited. Locally, we have difficulties due to terrain, _active_ amateur population density and bylaws, so we really like the rover concept, but it is very difficult to coordinate work and family schedules between 2 operators for the entire contest. Typically we can find 1 operator for the entire contest and then 2 more operators that can each do half the contest. I don't really like the idea of a non-operator in the rover for driving/logging purposes, but I can understand why some amateurs support it (xyl issues, etc) so I will not argue against it -- I would prefer that everyone had the opportunity to operate. – VA3CDD

My current rover vehicle is set up with four operating positions, with space for more. Thus it is technically possible to support multiband multioperator rover operations from a single vehicle, and with proper station design they can operate with high gain antennas and power levels to 300W per band with minimal interference between the stations. – KB7DQH

I have no objection to extra participants in a rover operation, be it to drive, operate or anything else. – WA7TZY

Rover max operators - I see no need for limiting the operators. As long as there is some limit to the number of bands operated in parallel, I suggest no more than 2 at any time, then this keeps things more level with the many single op rovers. Microwave contacts take a lot of time and a second operator allows more bands to hand out more QSOs before the rover must move on to activate other grids in a limited time period (good for all). So it might be permissible to remove the simultaneous band operation limit for bands above 2GHz to encourage higher band operation. While the mult points are useful, time is the limiting factor for a rover, often forcing a choice to operate the lower bands. Fixed stations have the luxury of more time to spread contacts out and work more equipment. Since rovers are time limited, we all lost out by limiting operators on this high bands. – K7MDL

I would like to see a multi-op rover station category. I've talked with KRØVER, (Eric) about us putting together one in a school bus and turning in a check log just for fun. I'm for anything that includes as many people as possible. – KG6ONE

And a few addressed the root of the question which hinted of restrictions for rovers in the name of safety. I like the way VE3OIL, WA2VOI, K9RZZ and NØDQS reminded us that we are all smart people and we can use our brains to decide what is safe – we don't need a rule to do this for us:

Lack of sleep is part of every contest whether you are at home or on the road. I treat sleep and endurance as part of the event. I need to know what my limitations are and work within them. Is it any safer for the operators who operate as guests at a multi and drive home immediately after the event to get to work the next day? We are responsible for setting our own safe boundaries; common sense can not be imposed by rule. Separating rovers into single and two operators is not a bad idea (though the category may not be big enough to support more granularity). Allowing more than two operators is adding a new

category. The driver is part of the team. One operator and one driver is a two man team. One driver and two operators is a three man team. Leave this rule alone, no need to change. – VE3OIL

Question #10 is the dumbest thing I've heard in YEARS! If you do that, you must also require a 10 hours sleep period during the contest for anyone operating equipment that has a High Voltage power supply (i.e., a tube amplifier). High voltage is dangerous, so this will prevent injury to sleep-deprived operators. It's EXACTLY the same theory as limiting Rovers, etc.! Stupid, stupid, STUPID. – WA2VOI

That's crazy. Why not just shorten the contest? Is it safe for ops to operate a 48 hour HF contest?? – K9RZZ

As far as more operators in the rover there again if you are going to allow 5 or 6 in one rover then that is like a multi op as opposed to 1 or 2 ops. Create a different class if you are going to allow this. As far as 1 or 2 ops and safety, I think that if you stop and sleep at a motel for a bit then how is that any different than the single op at home catching a few Z's. It is part of operating and if you are a 1 or 2 op rover then that is your challenge, seems to have worked pretty good so far. I believe if you are going to allow more drivers or ops then make it a multi rover. If you don't then the 1 and 2 op guys will start staying home cause you can't compete with a rover that will run 24 hours a day during the test. – NØDQS

I must admit I was a little embarrassed after reading these comments – great points! Here are some of the other comments related to this question. Some remind us of the rules and others suggest some changes of a different nature:

re rover a single op rover should be limited to hours and have separate class.. Thinking safety first – W7BX

did not answer #10 because I don't like any of the alternatives. But I strongly agree with premise that only 2 ops is dangerous. I would allow 3 ops but only 2 could operate from a given grid. Ostensible the "inactive" op for that grid could drive or sleep. – W3ZZ

I'm also against opening up the rover category to more than 2 people and I believe this limit of 2 should be more strongly advertised and enforced. I think I would consider a rule that REQUIRES 2 people for a rover entry. This would encourage safety. People would still be welcome to travel alone and submit different logs for each location. For this new rule, however, I would not require that the 2 rover team members travel in the same vehicle, just that they obey the rules requiring their station fit in a circle of a given size when operating (mobile is ok). This at least keeps the 2 people in radio contact for the contest while they are on the road. The rover station could only count contacts that were made when both operators were within the circle. – N1MU

Non-operators in a Rover situation should be unrestricted. Besides the safety factor, there's a participation factor: If Joe Ham is driving across South Dakota to take the family to the Black Hills, encourage him to turn on the rig. Don't say he can't "play radio" along the way just because the kids are in the back seat! – KRØU

A modest change here might help draw interest in further activity. – K8XK

There may be two operators, and an unlimited number of non-operator support people. It's been this way for awhile, unless they changed it again. I don't submit logs anymore, but for example in September 2006 VHF SS, My wife drove the truck some, and my unlicensed son was in the truck--I operated from a towed trailer. I believe I was totally within the published rules, and in fact could have had a second licensed operator... There are two other relevant factors: I've been roving (roving is a silly word, and doesn't make sense--no real rover calls it that!) for 15 years. There have been 3 major rule changes in that time. My easily supportable claim is "it doesn't matter what the

rules are, the best operators will still find a way to win the class", (and I've proven that, holding most of the records under each rule set at some time or another). – ND3F

There is no rule limiting the number of non-operators who contest with a rover. The only limit is 2 operators, unless they changed it very recently and didn't publicize the change...this has been discussed and settled before! – N3IQ

I also think that there should be a 'Band Limit' placed on Rovers tied to the number of operators. 3 bands per op, or something along those lines, or a requirement of a minimum number of contacts be made on each band operated for any credit on that band. – N1KPW

I was forced to make a selection for question #10, but did not like any of the options. – K2TR

The number of operators in a rover question received a lot of comments. I feel that it is safe to say that in general rovers do not favor the idea of placing any restrictions on the time period that a rover can operate (based on his personnel count or otherwise). Rovers want to be free to make this decision based on band conditions, their own physical state, etc. without artificial rules. Several respondents drove this idea home and very few of the respondents (17%) wanted to limit rovers.

The challenge is that the concept of roving was all over the map – some prefer a single op rover, some prefer a two-op rover and some wanted a free-for-all and wanted a way to get a bus full of operators and equipment on the air. Both the single and two-op rovers are existing in the current structure. Creating a separate class for single, double and unlimited operators is certainly an option which would add the ability for rovers to bring a slew of people out contesting. There has also been a recent push for the creation of a separate class of rover for beginners that have only stock equipment: a 6m, 2m and 432 sideband radio. FLWSS calls this the “Joe 706 class” and targets beginners although not necessarily rovers:

Joe 706 Class

There are quite a few hams with capable multiband multimode radios that don't participate. Most of these radios offer 6m, 2m and 70cm. It's difficult to be competitive with limited equipment. A poor showing during a contest does not encourage anyone to try it again.

There should be a limited single operator class that allows up to 4 bands. This allows an IC-706MKIIG, FT-100, FT-897, FT-857 or TS-2000 owner to be competitive with a limited single radio station. By allowing 4 bands, it encourages participants to add an additional band to improve their score. By the time an operator has 5 bands available; they can be competitive in most other classes.

With all this taken into account, this would potentially be four classes of rovers! Do we need four classes of rovers and what would the result be? With this many classes of rovers, each rover might be the only entrant from their section in that rover category. The FLWSS lobbied in their response against creating a single-rover category (and K5QE also presented this as a possible solution at CSVHFS in July 2007):

Do Not Endorse Single Operator Rover Class

There is a disadvantage to roving with a single operator. The loss of competitiveness can be addressed with ham ingenuity by some computer control, a recorded log, etc. It is more difficult to address the safety issue. While many operators may be able to operate their stations while mobile or simply make a rule to not operate while mobile, there is a

larger group who simply expose themselves, other drivers and fellow hams to this risk. Imagine the headlines when one of these vehicles crashes.

Beyond the safety issue, is the lack of an opportunity to mentor new contesters. A single operator class is contrary to the goal of including as many participants as possible. It is not difficult to find people willing to participate as a second operator, driver or logger but you have to look. During the June 2006 contest (prime roving season) there were only 96 over entries – only QRP portable was lower. There is no reason to further split this group.

NTMS had this to say about rover operator numbers:

Overall the consensus is that the number of operators should be limited in a rover however the drivers should not count against the total number of operators in the vehicle. This opinion addresses the safety issue suggested in the poll.

And The Park Rats had this to say:

As far as the rover rules limiting rovers to 1-2 persons, the field in general appears to be in favor of allowing additional assistance to rovers. Perhaps this will finally encourage separation into a single-op and a multi-op rover category. Coupled with this change could be a rule limiting total hours of operation for a single rover for safety reasons.

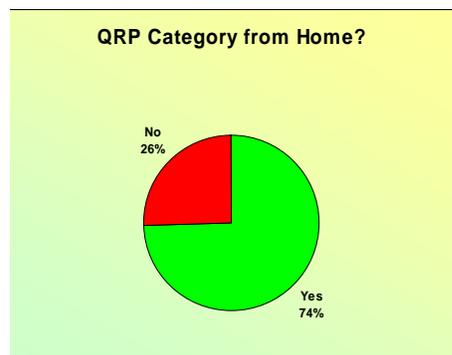
The VUAC will have to carefully weigh these comments and determine what is best for existing participants and what will bring in new activity. Personally, while I have my own opinion on the classes, I would trade my desires for more activity in the contests. In other words, if my category was thrown all out of kilter by new rules, but significant new blood was brought into VHF contesting; I would get over what happened to my category.

Question 11: Do you think ARRL VHF + contests should have a QRP category that allows for operation from home?

The respondents were largely in favor of creating a “QRP from home class” or allowing QRP operation from a fixed location as can be seen in both the vote and the comments below:

I especially would like to see the QRP fixed class come into existence, as it would allow for the use of superior antennas, yet involve the challenge of reduced power. I like roving, but the cost of gas and the relatively few higher band ops in my area have made some sort of fixed operation more attractive to me lately. There aren't a lot of hilltops in central Wisconsin suitable for portable QRP operation, but plenty of fixed stations could throttle back the power and participate in this proposed class. – KF9US

The QRP category should apply to anyone with the 5 or 10 watts - not just the portable stations. (10 watts might be better since there's still quite a few 10 watt rigs around). If QRP is extended for home stations, more guys might get on for a VHF contest! Mountain-toppers out here have to have a brick to be heard by our nearest Kansas station - Larry NØLL, who is 300 miles away from Denver. Portable should be for those who activate a grid different from their home grid for the contest. You could have Low Power (under 160 watts which is the size of the average VHF



brick) and High Power categories for those over 161. Getting a rare grid activated is worth some extra certificates out here. - BTW, it doesn't make much sense to have a portable station running QRP out here due to the distances involved to work more than the locals. - WØETT

QRP stations allowed to operate from different locations - KG5HSQ

A QRP Entry Class for fixed stations would be nice. - WA8ZBT/W5ROK

I am an "old" ham, but enjoy QRP building and operating (i.e. building from "scratch" not kits) To have operating equipment I've built and enter into the contest will be a fun thing for me. Not having a QRP class, means that I have to compete with all the other entrants on an even scale. Running QRP, 5 watts or less is more difficult etc etc etc, and should be considered when establishing classes. I am also new to VHF contesting, and having recently relocated to a new QTH for retirement, I haven't had the opportunity to again begin building etc as I wish to. That shall be revised in the very near future. - AA2JZ

Some voted against creating a new class (26%) and there were a few comments along these lines also:

Don't mess with the portable nature of the QRP class...it is the only category that specifically encourages portable operation. I think portable hilltopping is a great way to get folks interested in VHF contesting. - KØNR

QRP stations should truly be portable during the ARRL VHF contests. There are some stations that use QRP from a second home-like QTH that seem to violate the principle of this category. Cars and tents are the way to go!! - WB2AMU

In VHF, the issues are quite different when it comes to power restrictions/categories. ERP rules the roost. If the "object:" is to make contact with as many people as possible, then there should be no encouragement of practices that limit ones ability to do that. My answer would be different if the "object:" were to provide awards for a diverse participation base. :) - W2EV

W2TTT also made this comment:

As far as the QRP from home...it might be better to have a bunch of bands and QRP than two or four bands and 100 or 1500W. - W2TTT

The PNWVFHS provided the following rationale for altering the existing QRP category to increase the numbers, safety and enjoyment in the existing category:

Second Operator in QRP Portable Class and Allow Relocation

Single operator QRP portable classes have notoriously low scores. The single operator in this case imposes a number of limitations:

- **It discourages mentoring of new operators.**
There is a missed opportunity to introduce this type of operating to other hams. It can also be very boring operating remotely without someone along. It seems contrary to the social nature of hams and ham activities.
- **It limits the size/capability of any operation to remote locations.**
These operations could be to very remote locations. It is difficult to find people willing to pack gear but not operate. This severely limits how remote or how large these operations can be. A second operator would greatly improve the potential of these operations.

- ***It's contrary to safety.***
Any backcountry trip has inherent risk. The typical fitness level of hams and the erection of large antenna structures pose additional risk. Most outdoor activities (hiking, mountain climbing, scuba diving, etc) rely on the buddy system. QRP portable should be no different.

The final limitation is the ability to move. Here in the west, there are plenty of grids that are nearly inaccessible. This makes them not practical to cover via a rover operation. Often any given portable location within a grid will have significant mountain shadowing and limited access to population centers.

If a portable station were able to move one time either within a grid or to a new grid, they could be available to a larger number of operators and improve their score (to justify activating a rare grid). This could be scored exactly the same as rovers, with the limitation of a single move.

NTMS suggested:

Most favor a QRP Category (The ARRL used to have this category in its VHF contests)

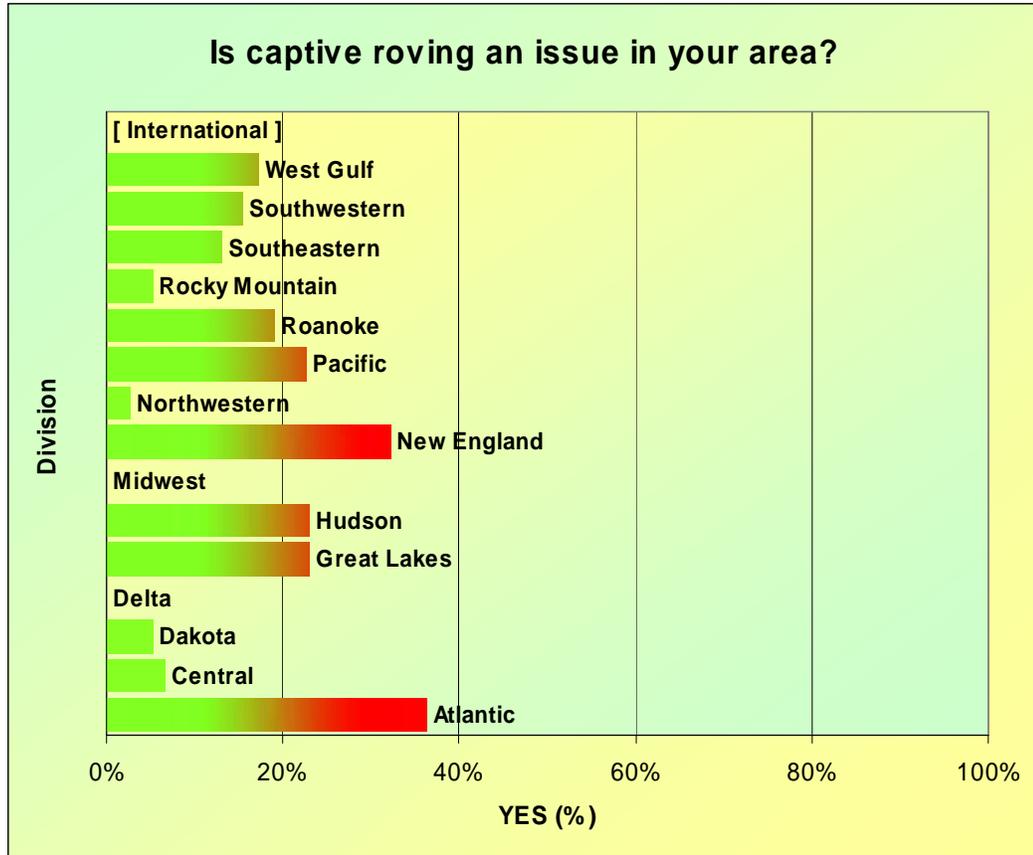
The Park Rats echoed an earlier concern about expanding the number of categories while also supporting a home QRP category:

Having a home QRP category is a nice way to get the newcomers started. Perhaps we ought to also consider some bonus points like those applied on Field Day for QRP stations that head to mountaintops and use battery or natural power, or stations who are adding a youth or newcomer to VHF operations. We must be careful though, as there are barely 1000 entries for the June VHF, and having too many categories for awards is mind-boggling. There are already 80 possible ARRL sections with 5 categories of stations, so there are 400 potential records to be set or broken, aside from each of the certificate categories with recognition for the top 3 in each section, and the top five in each division in QST write-ups. On the other hand, many are jaded by seeing pictures and write-ups of the same perennial winners, and the greater post-contest reading interest is often with the smaller stations, rovers, and mountain-toppers.

So there is good support for creating a home-QRP category, but it needs to be carefully weighed against creating another category. With an increase in activity – for example if we had 5,000 participants in the June VHF contest rather than 1,000 – adding a category would be less of an issue.

Question 12: *Do you believe Captive Rovers --- that is rovers that will only work one fixed station --- are an issue in your area?*

This question about captive roving created a lot of fireworks. Most ARRL Divisions reported that there were only minor or no issues in this area. For the most part, participants felt like captive roving was a “bad behavior” and not just something that was designed to boost score. In other words, participants felt like it was unsportsmanlike and should be prevented if possible. Only two areas stood out on actual votes as appearing to have a significant issue, the New England Division and the Atlantic Division.



I believe that there is, however, an additional kind of problem going on here. I rove in the West Gulf Division and I know every rover, personally, in this division that has roved in the last few years. I know none of them are captive rovers. Yet, almost 20% of respondents indicated that there are captive rovers in the division. While I can't speak for all divisions, I do believe I understand what is occurring in this division. As a rover, I try to know who I can count on to be on during a contest and who will give me multipliers and points. When I stop, I will often point in those directions and call, expecting answers from these stations. You could say that I have a behavioral bias to working these stations and you can see VA3CDD echoes this statement below. Also, anyone who has helped me get on the air on a particular band or has asked to work me in a grid while in the contest is likely to get some sort of "special treatment" meaning I'm going to try to understand when they are on and where to raise them on the air. I also call CQ, but most of my points come from these stations that I know personally because they are following me and I recognize their calls and know what bands they have.

Marshall, K5QE, has helped mentor and equip several rovers in the area. The stations he helps get going probably feel somewhat indebted to him as anyone would to their Elmer. These rovers often plan their roves to grids Marshall would like in the contest. But I know the operators personally and I know they will work anyone they can hear. Having said this, the inherent bias is to work Marshall. In my mind, these folks are not captive rovers. To me, and I hope most of you, a captive rover is someone who will only work one station (or club) and who even goes to lengths to avoid other stations. To encourage everyone to meet each other and know where they are going to be in the upcoming contests, K5QE even hosts an annual BBQ for all VHF/UHF contesters in the area.

Because of all of the concerns about stations operating on the calling channel, I will often say on the calling channel "let's all go up to 110 and run the bands from there." This is an attempt to stay off of the calling channel for liaison work... certainly other stations are welcome to join us, but are stations misinterpreting such actions as the actions of a captive rover? If confusion over who is really acting as a captive rover is happening in the West Gulf Division, is this also happening in other divisions?

After reading comments and discussing this with other testers, I believe there is a continuum that exists and that there is not really a "black and white" in the captive rover question. On one side are stations that clearly work hard to work everyone and on the other side are stations that will only work one individual or club. But in the middle are behaviors of rovers that can be misinterpreted. If a rover stops at a hill and turns only in the directions of his friends, calls and works them briefly and leaves, I would not consider him to be squarely in the "work anyone camp." Is this person a "captive rover?" Probably not. But is he giving any station the opportunity to work him from that hilltop? The answer to this has to be "no" also. I believe that some of these less desirable behaviors are what are creeping into the responses for this question. I think it is important for rovers, even those that know they are not captive, to consider this question carefully and ask themselves if there is something they should be doing differently.

There are two divisions, New England and Atlantic, where significant concern over captive rovers exists. The rovers in these areas know better than anyone what the situation in this area is and some of them have commented below.

The best piece of advice I could offer any station who believes that this is going on in their area is to find a venue to meet the rovers, make a personal introduction, discuss what bands you have and tell the rovers you will be looking for them in the contest. At the same time, rovers need to follow W3IY's advice and "look for the weak ones." Here are many of the comments on captive rovers that were received:

the captive rover thingie is not nice... send all u find guilty out to me and I will feed them feet first into the woodchipper.. - W7BX

#12 is a recent local situation, but has definitely reduced the enjoyment on VHF/UHF contesting for me. To the point that I have questioned/and reduced the amount of effort to seriously work an entire contest. Why take off from work, put in hours in front of the radio to hear comments: .../r " well I'm not pointed in your direction to try that band" .. then 5 minutes later: "..5.. de .../r; sure let me stop and point in your direction ..." (this was from R's within 100 miles of my QTH) - W3UUM

Captive rovers are not a problem in my area - but I think it is a problem. - K7RAT

Grid circling and captive rovers are a non-issue in the great lakes region. - KB8U

The only negative effect I find from captive rovers is that the big fixed stations with captives get lazy. They stop turning their beams aggressively as they know they have a nearly guaranteed QSO with a captive coming up. If every other rover was captive it would elevate my results as captive rovers are less free to seek random multipliers and QSOs and as a result reduce their final score. - VE3OIL

Our local rovers make an extra effort to give contacts to fixed stations that have helped the rovers by providing equipment and expertise, but we are definitely not captive. If I hear a remote station that is not in my log, I do not ignore them -- I need those

points and I will run all the bands that I can with that remote station to get & give the points. – VA3CDD

I operate as a Rover and have been helped immensely by W2SZ, especially by Dick Frey, WA2AAU. I go to rare grids, like FM27 and contact as many stations as I can. About 3/4 of my contacts are NOT with W2SZ. I resent implications regarding "captive rovers". If more people spent the time to mentor new people on VHF/UHF then these bands would be more active. – KJ1K

Survey is much too simplistic - I have many comments about some of these questions, especially the "captive rover" issue - which has been blown out of proportion by certain 'sour-grapes' persons/groups who are ONLY interested in being a winner, and do not care about introducing new ops to VHF+ (otherwise they would not be so vehement about new ops being loaned decades-old equipment which might only be used to QSO a few [or even one] other stations). Since I am one of the 2 or 3 guys who build that equipment (Ca. 1980) for one of the larger multi-ops, it seems counterproductive to keep new guys from working microwaves just because some fairly-recent groups can not, or will not, put a bunch of rover-kits together to loan out to newbies. Etc. Etc. – WA2GFP

to me captive rovers are the biggest problem with VHF contesting – KØSQ

Captive rovers are really unethical. The home station group sets them up for one purpose which is not in the spirit of the contest. Group roving is another poor practice; again it favors select home stations. There are so many rovers now they are fighting rover QRM when they reach a particular site. This is a significant problem with a rover running QRO which some do. – W3TMZ

No, I don't think it's a problem here, and I believe it's currently prohibited. Insufficient activity of any sort is the main problem. – K8XX

And in that rover vein, my #1 hot button is captive rovers. I do wish you had asked more than simply "yes/no, do I feel captive rovers are an issue in my area?" Because while no, captive rovers are not an issue in the Upper Midwest, I have learned over the past 3 years that apparently they can be in other parts of the country. Now mind you, I came into this little niche of V/UHF grid chasing and contesting pretty much without any preconceived notions whatsoever. So I have a bit of an outsider's mentality. But I cannot for the life of me see one single good thing about a rover that will only work a certain fixed station. I don't care how competitive things are in New England and the east coast in general, if it were up to me, captive roving would be actively discouraged and penalized. It is so hard to even find stations to work on 50 MHz and up. And I love rovers; I'm continually amazed at the amount of work they have to do to equip their vehicle and then drive all over heck. But why a rover would go to all that trouble when they can only work specified stations?? ---- what a waste! I'm glad I don't live out east. It would make my blood boil and I would probably cause a big problem eventually via some email list. Also, perhaps some of the captive rover stories are exaggerated or in the past. It's hard to nail down the details; it's almost always a rumor-driven whispering type of thing. Anyway, enough about that. :) – KC9BQA

I believe captive rovers is the biggest problem. Although more money usually produces a bigger score, one station in particular has more than 10 captive rovers. A single rover can add 100,000 points to a stations score. That station usually beats our club by 1 million points. 10 rovers at 100,000 points - hmmm? – WA3GFZ

I don't like hidden rovers using a special frequency to just work their friends. – WE9Y

Get rid of captive roving. – K3DNE

BTW, while we haven't experienced it out here, I think anyone having a captive rover providing QSOs and grids for a home station or a multi op station is a practice that

should be banned as unsportsmanlike. We are all about generating more VHF activity, not running up a score for one station. If anyone is doing it, it is a very poor operating practice. The equivalence in a HF contest would be sending someone to a rare DX country and having the "rare DX station" give out a multiplier to only his friends or a particular DX club. –WØETT

On the subject of "Captive Rovers", they should not be allowed, and although question 12 seems to refer to only working one station, they tend to only work other members of the same club or group. I don't think that they are a problem in this area, but the concept of the contest is to talk to as many different people as possible, not just your club members you rag-chew nets with. –N1KPW

The abuse of captive rovers should be stopped. In most cases it's just unethical. All rovers must submit their own scores separately. Stipulate a maximum number of points or QSOs with one station as a percentage of totals or DQ the whole score. Multi-ops may not include any score generated by working their own logged operators. –K3MM

Captive rovers also easily caught with software .. if there are a bunch of rovers that only one or two fixed stations work and don't turn in logs, that should be easily flagged. –WIRT

Question 13: *On a scale from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Definitely), I feel that I have a say in how contest rules are made*

As W2EV asks in the comments below, should testers have a say in the contest rules? To the extent that the ARRL is a member-funded organization and the contests are provided as a membership service, one would expect that the ARRL would do their best to ensure that their members are pleased with the ultimate results. This has to be an aggregate result, though, as there is probably no way for the ARRL to please each member in such an endeavor.

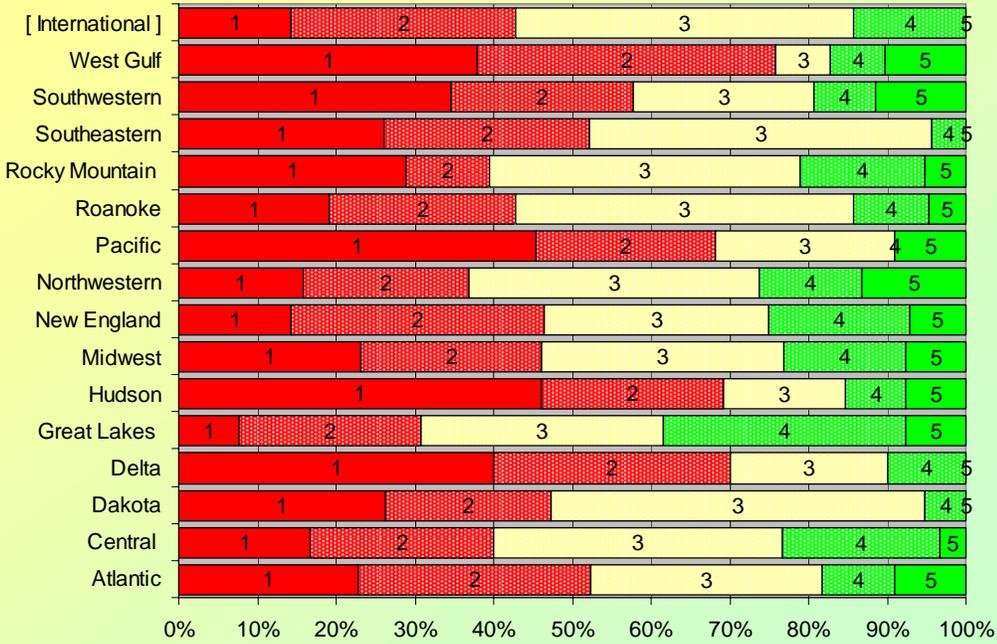
The graph of the results below is intended to summarize the respondent's answers to this question. The red bars entering from the left show the percentage of members from the divisions at left that felt like they had no say in how the rules are made. Conversely, the green bars entering from the right show how many felt like they did have a say in how rules are made. And the yellow in the center represents the percentage of those that felt like they were somewhere in the middle. Clearly, there are more who feel like they do not have a say in the rules and while it varies some by division, there does not appear to be a trend worth discussing in detail. The question is what result would the ARRL prefer to see from the graph? If everyone had a say in how the rules are made, the ARRL could spend countless dollars or volunteer effort discussing contesting with every individual tester and to what end? Would the rules be better for everyone or would the same mix of biases as a result of geography, population density, operator density, etc. remain? From the respondents' overall comments, funds might be better spent on bolstering activity would be better spent. Here are the comments received:

... I do applaud the effort to find out what needs to be done. Hopefully, the next time a survey like this comes out, the answer to Question #13 can be a '4' or a '5' instead of the '1' that it is here. –WA2VOI

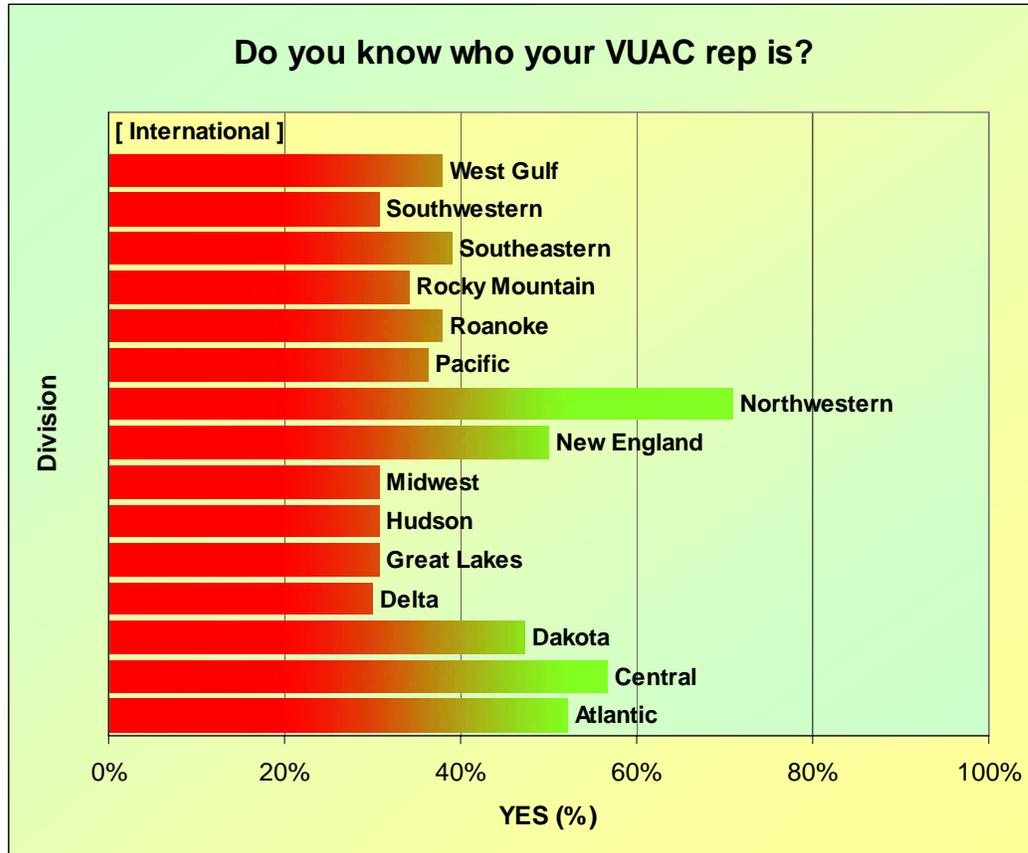
The ARRL needs to approach the VHF clubs for input. The ARRL chose an HF contesting group to provide input for the New England division –N1JFU

No. Nor should I, unless the sponsor believes that I should. –W2EV

I Feel I Have a Say in Rules



Question 14: Do you know who your representative on the VUAC (VHF/UHF contest advisory committee) is?



Both of the VUAC questions beg the question as to whether the VUAC members should be reaching out to the VHF/UHF contesting population to solicit their opinions and concerns on ARRL contests. The VUAC page on the ARRL website has this to say about the VUAC:

The Special VHF-UHF Advisory Committee (VUAC), recently established by the ARRL Board is off and running. The committee consists of a Chairman, a Representative from each ARRL Division (appointed by the Division Director) and a representative from Canada.

The committee is charged by the Programs and Services Committee (PSC) with "doing no harm." The committee is expected to communicate with the V/U public and "seek consensus." Although an initial topic has been given to the committee at the outset, the PSC expects the committee to discover topics to consider from the public domain.

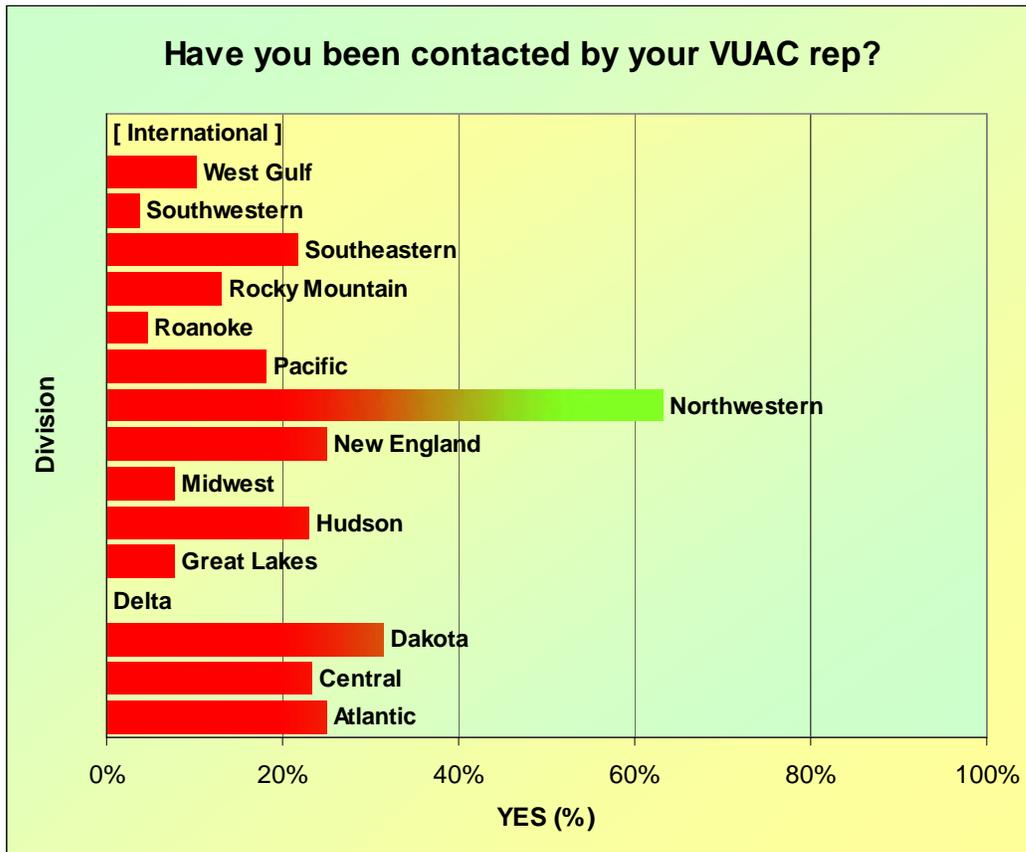
The committee is not a traditional advisory committee. It is mandated to consider only contest issues, and its term is limited to three years duration. The three-year term began on June 1, 2006.

Please don't hesitate to contact your representative and share your views on VHF- UHF contesting issues.

There appears to be an expectation that the individuals on the committee are plugged-in to the contesting community and will be able to represent contesters and that members should contact their representative if they have views to share. This is, in fact, how many other political processes work. Having said this, I feel certain that the contesting community would appreciate the VUAC members reaching out and discussing issues. No doubt some of the members of the VUAC have done just this. Jim Aguirre, W7DHC, stood out in the “have you been contacted” with a huge 71% of respondents in the division stating that they had been contacted by Jim. Almost a third of respondents in several other divisions stated they had been contacted including Atlantic (K1JT), Central (W9XA), Dakota (WØZQ), Hudson (K2TR), New England (K1EP) and Southeastern (W4KXY). For the most part, these are the same divisions where respondents said that they knew their VUAC representative.

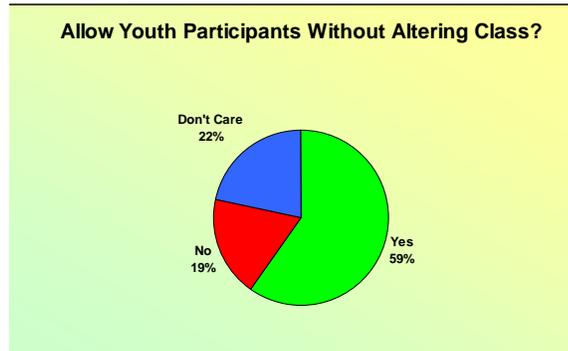
Only a single comment was received for these three questions and it read “VUAC members should be people who actually take part in contests above 30 MHz.”

Question 15: *Have you been contacted by your VUAC representative to solicit your opinions on VHF/UHF contesting?*



Question 16: *Would you support a measure to allow any number of youth participants (under a given age) to operate during a VHF+ contest without altering the station's class of operation? For example, this would allow for a rover with 4 participants -- two adult amateurs and two boy scouts. Or a "single operator" fixed station that also had several youth participants.*

It's no secret to anyone that an increase in activity is on the minds of most VHF/UHF contesters. In an attempt to gauge if contesters felt like bringing in youth operators without a change in class penalty would be of interest, we asked the question. Most contesters were in favor and will tell you that adding a youth participant to a station will generally reduce their score by virtue of the extra time they spend elmering the participant and the decreased rate that will generally occur. But with activity being a key concern for respondents, adding new blood is important and if the rules can be adjusted where this can occur without a class penalty, it might be the right thing to do. Here are some of the comments that were from respondents that favored this idea:



Numbers 16 and 17 (youth and newbie) are wonderful superb fantastic ideas. – W7BX

For question 16 - Age, under 16. Limit the number of youth operators at maybe 2 or 3. Why not create assisted category versions of all the single op' and rover categories. The assistance could be in the form of 'cluster spots, newcomers or youth - any or all. – NX9O

An excellent idea. It will get new, keen people expose to radio in general and more specifically VHF and contesting. Any time I have had my son to 'help' me contest it reduces my score. "New' operator needs some definition. Is one of my local HF big guns operating his first VHF event 'new'? – VE3OIL

I am 100% behind any effort that encourages youth participation and encourages new operators to try out all areas of the hobby. Any current operator that is willing to take the time and put in the effort to make this happen should get some sort of break or other encouragement. Introducing new people to contesting, be they youth, new amateurs, or old non-contesters takes time and effort to explain the how's, what's, whys and where's of this activity. It was/is an enthusiastic group of contesters that got me hooked and keeps me coming back. Although I've been an amateur for 13 years, I never really got the point of contesting until some local VHF contesters got me started in VHF+ roving as the 2nd operator in a club rover. The next contest I had a basic 7 band station setup (4 good bands & 3 very weak bands) -- the only thing that will cause me to quit is poorly thought out rule changes that put limits on my enjoyment of the hobby. – VA3CDD

I am in favor of any 'mentoring' activities generally. – W9GA

The other ideas like including young operators and new operators....these are great ideas...just come up with clear rules that work. – KØNR

I like the idea of extra points for first time visitors and operators. – K6JEY

Regarding #16 and #17. I answered yes, but would 'qualify' the answer. While I would agree to more operators in the defined situations, there must still be only one transmitter on the air to qualify as 'single op'. – K9IJ

This may be a useful way to increase interest, assuming a reasonable age is selected. Would first have to see details. A modest change might be helpful to ultimately enhance activity, with better definitions needed of "new operator" and "a few hours"; first need details. – K8XX

New operator and "youth operator" are entirely acceptable as a multi-operator or limited multi-operator entry. – KRØU

On questions 16 and 17, I support allowing new or inactive operators to use a single station. This should be no different than a single op station since there is no QSO rate change, and there is no parallel band/QSO rate production going on. In fact bringing in a new/inactive operator will likely reduce the potential high score. I do not think it looks like a multi station at all since it is limited to a single transmitter per band, and one QSO at any one time for all bands operated. – K7MDL

Think the youth initiative is good. May need more thought. – K1ZE

W3ZZ's comment below highlights an important point that if youth participants are allowed to participate, we should ensure that their participation is publicized:

I found #16 and #17 interesting. This isn't Field Day with GOTA station. FD is not a contest - it is an operating exercise. I thought the VHF contests were supposed to be contests. If you are going to teach you are going to spend time with your student(s) and you won't be able to win. Thus why not operate as a multi where you can watch the packet and work some grids you might otherwise miss. The students would at least get to see their calls in Web listings. – W3ZZ

A few felt that the youth idea and the next question's "newbie" idea had some issues to be ironed out:

The Youth OP for a few hours idea if full of enforcement problems, As is the New OP idea. Both ideas could be corrupted with little effort. – K7XC

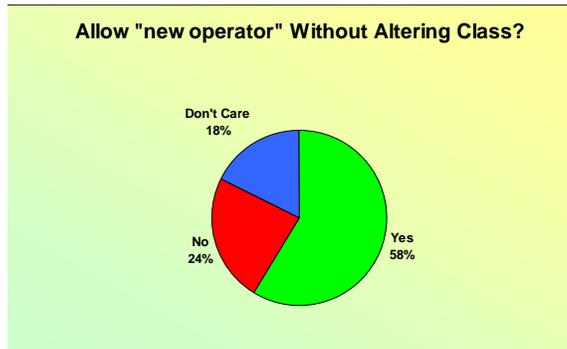
As far as allowing youth or a new to VHF op in the shack, that would be a good deal for Field Day and a good thing to do but if this were to be allowed I can see a lot of potential for abuse, like creating a free multi op station only it's not. Again in the populated areas this could be an advantage as compared to areas of less ham density such as parts of the mid west and west. I drive thru some grids in NE and SD where there is near no ham population. – NØDQS

I would object to allowing extra participants to operate in a fixed single operator station. Observation or logging would be OK. For multi operator classification, multiple operators would be OK. – WA7TZY

Not against having scouts etc. participate; let us do that, with ZERO points. – WB5KIA

Question 17: In some sections where activity is lower, initiatives are being taken to increase VHF+ contesting participation. Would you support a rules change that would allow a "new operator" to participate in a station without altering that station's class? For example, allow an individual new to VHF+ contesting to spend a few hours at another individual's station operating without altering the entry class?

Many comments about the "new operator" were covered in the comments in the previous question. There is an additional concern with the "new operator" idea; mainly that it would be easier for someone to abuse. There was not a tremendous amount of thought put into either of these two suggestions before adding them to the survey. Here is the main concept: Is there a way to get some new people



interested and participating in a way that would encourage operators to invite and use new operators, whether they are youth or not. The thought was if an operator derives some benefit or advantage from adding the additional operator, then they will be more inclined to do it. Would it be so bad if everyone felt like they needed to have a youth or newbie operator at their station to compete? Personally, my thought was to give those that invite a new operator a slight advantage, but again I've not thought through this in detail. Here are some of the additional comments on the "new operator" question:

The newcomer must be declared in the log. A newcomer who is listed as a guest in an additional log of a single op' during the same contest or in the future, would cause the single op' log to be pushed into the appropriate multi-op' class. Newcomers at W4NH are exempt from being asked to help pay for the camping sites, fuel and related shared expenses of participating in the contest. The next time that person joins us for another contest, they must join the club (for insurance reasons) and they will be asked to share the common expenses. Why not create assisted category versions of all the single op' and rover categories. The assistance could be in the form of 'cluster spots, newcomers or youth - any or all. – NX9O

This needs to be given more thought. What is the definition of 'New to VHF+ contesting' and 'a few hours'. What would prevent a single op station from recruiting an experienced HF contesting that has no VHF+ contest experience to operate for a "few hours". This may not make much difference on the higher frequencies but on 6m and maybe 2m it would. – AA5AM

An excellent idea. It will get new, keen people expose to radio in general and more specifically VHF and contesting. Any time I have had my son to 'help' me contest it reduces my score. "New" operator needs some definition. Is one of my local HF big guns operating his first VHF event 'new'? – VE3OIL

The Youth OP for a few hours idea if full of enforcement problems, As is the New OP idea. Both ideas could be corrupted with little effort. – K7XC

The first timer operator should be limited to six hours of participation for a total of 12 first timer hours in a weekend contest. Anything we do should encourage increase activity. That is more important than anyone's score. – W2TTT

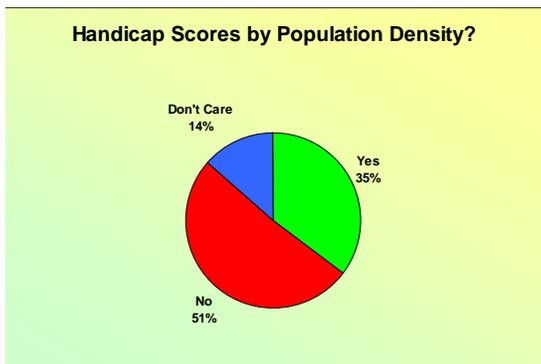
I would say skip the Cub Scout idea and go for the newbie ham that has the ticket, we invite new hams into our contest station from time to time. – WD9EXD

*The issue is the same in both cases. It is in encouraging participation by “new blood” without regard as to its vintage. Try this one on for size: greenhorn operators: 1. Definition - an individual who has not previously participated in a particular class of radio sporting events in the previous 10 years. Greenhorn status remains in effect for 364 days from initial participation. This encourages the coaching and total immersion of greenhorns for a full year. 1.a definition: class of radio sporting events – sporting events with similar operating and strategizing personalities. Example: January VHF SS, June VHF QSO party and September VHF contest all share a similar personality. The 10-GHz and above event is unique. The August UHF contest is unique (?). 2. Disposition: greenhorn’s do *not* count toward the operator count of any category. 3. Number allowed: the number of greenhorns cannot exceed 50% (rounded up) of the number of non-greenhorn operators. Example 1: a multiop has 4 operators. Only 2 may be greenhorns. Example 2: a multioper has 7 operators. Only 4 may be greenhorns. Example 3: a singleop may have single greenhorn *and* a non-greenhorn and still remain in the single-op category (!). – W2EV*

In the final analysis, the question remains: is this a good tool to increase activity on the bands and can it be implemented in a way that does not alienate existing contesters?

Question 18: *Due to the wide variance in population density, contacts above 6m are widely available in some areas (East and West coasts) while more scarce in other areas (Southern states, gulf area, rocky mountains and Midwest). Would you be in favor of creating a "population density handicap" that would put divisions on closer to even footing in VHF+ contests? Such a system, although not yet devised, would likely add some sort of multiplier effect on non-6m contacts for entrants in non-dense areas of the country. This would never completely level the playing field, but it would simply spread around the existing inequities.*

Of all of the ideas indirectly suggested in the survey, this one received one of the coldest welcomes. For the most part, participants felt like a handicap might be a good idea, but there would be no real way of implementing it that would both be fair and would be perceived as fair. Here are the comments that were made by survey participants:



Those of us in Eastern Oregon cant compete with the high population density East coast multiops... and is rather discouraging knowing we don't have a prayer in Hell of competing. – W7BX

Some kind of distance multiplier is another way of helping the stations in less populated grids. Scoring could be in the form of a multiplier that increases as grid distance increases or it could be similar to the Stu Perry 160m contest. – NX9O

Regarding question number 18: There are other location-specific phenomena taking place that affect contest outcomes. For example, the folks in the Midwest get more 2m E-skip to places where there are hams inhabiting the earth. You can't work E-skip east from Boston, MA but you can work in every direction from Lincoln, Nebraska. Same goes for meteor scatter. But by the same token, a percentage of the high-density areas enjoy one

additional activity, too: Pacific coast and Atlantic coast operators (who are already surrounded by high activity for the most part) get coastal tropo, which occurs more often than any other radio wave propagation enhancement (except for random meteors), and it affects more than just the 2-meters that E-skip affects. All other areas have to wait for "conventional" tropo which is MUCH more rare than coastal tropo. Nevertheless, I applaud any effort to provide hope for smaller stations who always feel hopelessly outgunned, and the population density handicap is a good idea in theory and is appreciated, although maybe instead of division, use section, or better yet, grid square for the granularity. Here's why: I am in the rarest grid square among the "high density northeast" so I am a statistical anomaly. That means I would suffer just because I was lumped together with the northeast activity center. Furthermore, I encourage a look at other factors that will affect scores and participation: 1) distance-based scoring above 6m favors financially-gifted hams 2) no emphasis on belonging to a club 3) higher point values for FM simplex contacts 4) points handicaps in small percentages for rovers activating more than 2 grids 5) points handicaps in small percentages for number of bands used greater than 1 band 6) points handicaps in small percentages for each 100 watts greater than 100 watts on each band 7) points handicaps in small percentages for each hour operated beyond one hour 8) contest categories based on ERP instead of power or number of bands or operators 9) it might be time for a decimal-number scoring system rather than integers – N2SLN

I like the population density idea, Its hard, more like impossible to be competitive living out in the sticks. I am sure there are hundreds of contacts to be made in the big cities like Minneapolis I could never hear. There are lots of stations with indoor antennas, low power, apartment dwellers etc. that get better scores than I do running power and big antennas. I never submit a score because I know I have no chance of winning anything. Its always fun to operate and give out points but would be nice to get something more out of the effort. – KBØCIM

Despite the fact that you say it isn't, applying handicaps is leveling the playing field. We, in the Pacific Northwest are already handicapped by where we are - the farther to the northwest the worse it is. In 2004 and 2005 we finally got into the top 10 Multi-Unlimited category. For many years, this was thought to be impossible. Why? Because we are at a distinct disadvantage geomagnetic latitude-wise for sporadic-E propagation and west coast climate-wise and relief-wise for tropospheric propagation. In both cases, we are the ones in the distinct disadvantage as compared to all other areas of the country. To handicap us because we are on the West Coast would result in an unfair addition to the other disadvantages we have to deal with. No. We don't need handicaps or field levelers. We want to continue to be able to earn what we get. Don't make things easy. This is competition. If guys want to win contests, let them build their stations and improve their operating abilities. Besides, there's nothing that can be done that would make it possible for us to win any national VHF contest out here. Leveling the playing field would make it possible, right? NOT! – K7CW

Living in Idaho where the VHF/UHF density is extremely low, the best we can do is compete against each other in Idaho. Unless there is a handicap system put in place stations in this part of the country will never achieve national recognition. – W6OUU

Stations where there are less than 10 Active operators within their own grid, or surrounded by grids with no activity, should have a remote operations multiplier based on contest entries over the past 10 years. Publish the grid from which each operation has taken place from. The data in on the summary sheet, why not use it!!!!!!!!!!!!!! – K7XC

Much is made of the advantage we seem to have in the West with ducting and mountains. We feel strongly that operators in other parts of the country have many other modes of enhancing their propagation as well. They just have to find them. A good example is reflection off of water towers on 10GHz for those in the Midwest. A station in a building in Fargo, N.D. could probably work most of the state that way. I like the idea of extra points for first time visitors and operators. – K6JEY

I also oppose any tinkering with the scoring system for regional balance in scoring. We know that regional differences exist, but no system would eliminate geographic imbalance and some would probably create more. For example, how about the advantage the some operators have in large metro areas compared to the boonies within the same region of the country. Compare, for example, Southern Illinois with the Chicago area, both in the same section and division. Continued emphasis should be placed on regional winners. QST write-ups do a fair job in emphasizing regional winners, but it could be improved. – K9AKS

I am really against making artificial adjustments for different areas in the country. I think that's a way to move the winner around artificially to satisfy a few people. I know that the leaders in most of the contests are comprised of people from all around the country who travel for the contests. Others are welcome to do this as well. – N1MU

On the population density issue, I would favor such a thing if you could come up with a decent set of rules...I am not sure that is possible. – KØNR

About population densities, it will never really work out in my opinion. The west coast is not that all densely populated!!! Come on up to Northern California/Southern Oregon and see for your self. Distance does not hack it either due to terrain. – WA6KLLK

Equality in sparsely populated areas has been a problem for a long time. "Big guns" stations are not even as much of a fairness issue as people in areas where there are only few stations per square mile as opposed several for the same given area. – KMØF

Here the goal is worthy, but I'm quite skeptical that a workable approach can be identified. I'd love to see concrete proposals. – K8XX

Population Density Handicap is a bad idea, My station is in EM57 (Southern ,IL) We see good Grid counts but bad QSO rates so I would probably benefit from it but that's why we look for the band openings, You cant level the playing field because you have no control over propagation, Fla stations don't have much of a chance to work AU openings like MN and WI stations, How do we fix that? NO Handicaps, You play the cards (Propagation) dealt, Do the best with what you get.(Propagation) Improve your station to do better with out propagation. – WD9EXD

I don't think you can do a handicap for population density, however you can make less populated grids worth more points. I once proposed a locally sponsored contest based on a grid map with population density. – K3UHF

I like your thinking in question 18, about the handicapping issue. But I can't imagine anything you work out would be considered fair by everyone. For instance, out here in the Los Angeles/Orange/San Diego County "basin," we have a dense population of hams. But, we are surrounded by 6,000-12,000 foot mountains in all directions except toward the ocean. So, unless you have a big tower with lots of beams and amps, once you work all the locals, your day is pretty much over. This is a dense area, but the low power/big antenna challenged hams are handicapped by the mountains. How are you going to address that issue? The newer hams and youth you are looking to attract (based on your other questions) are not going to have killer stations. It's only going to take them a few contests to figure out that it is hard to work out of this area. Then if the rules change to handicap low population areas, they are going to get discouraged. My point again is that I don't think you could think of all the different operational scenarios across the US and take those all into account when making a "handicap" rule. – N6VHF

As far as giving different areas "handicaps" based on ham density I think most of us in the lesser populated areas know we will never, or almost never compete with more populated areas, that is the way it is, by handicapping the deal that really does not allow you to beat someone in another area it just artificially equalizes the scores. Not sure about

this being a good idea, where do you draw the line. Give a division a handicap and someone within the division will have the same problem as we have now since they live in a sparsely populated state within the division. So I guess I have always been aware of the pop difference and tried to improve upon that. – NØDQS

Latitude Multiplier: Final score should be multiplied by the cosine of the station's latitude. If a rover, this should be the average of the high and low latitudes. Reasons for this should be obvious. – K5VH

I'm not sure doing this on a Division basis would work although it would be an improvement. Using a population center vs. rural areas would be better. When I lived in Eastern Mass I could work more stations on 5 watts and a 15' high halo on 2M than I'll ever work with all kinds of power and stacked yagis in Western Colorado. – WØOZL

one alternative would be to use something like the Stew Perry 160 meter QSO points per distance criteria. I operated last year's Stew Perry for the first time and thought the scoring system worked pretty well. - While we can't compete with the guys on the east coast and their ability to work into EU on 160m, it did give us some point recognition for working the east coast from here and Hawaii which is a long ways from Colorado. Something similar to this could be worked out for VHF contest contacts. – WØETT

Better than a population density handicap would be providing section winners like used to be the case in the 1980s. My contacts for 2005 & 2006 will never show up in QST. My call won't show up. That is discouraging. It makes it seem like there is no activity, and discourages new operators from getting on the microwave bands. All participation should be published, no matter how small. If the current situation continues, I expect the population density of microwave operators to become EVEN MORE lopsided. (It has a tendency to become lopsided based upon existing activity, but the published contest results strongly contribute to the population density of microwave operators becoming even more lopsided.) – N8KH

The world isn't fair. We've got to get over this issue. However...the only way that i would support "handicap" is if it were used just like it is used in golf - by revealing the handicap clearly and plainly in the results on an individual-entry basis and not hiding it in the scoring calculation. This doesn't work for me: i scored 1,433,257 (oh, by the way, the rules said that I add 1,400,000 because I'm disadvantaged). This works for me: "I scored 1,433,257 with a 1,400,000 handicap." – W2EV

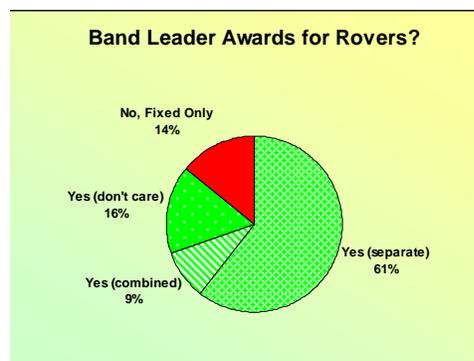
Question 19: Currently, the ARRL hands out certificates for leaders on specific bands in each division, but rovers are specifically excluded from achieving these awards. Would you be in favor of changing this?

There was very strong support for increasing the number of certificates for rovers and this question is a clear indication of this trend. Additionally, other comments about certificates were made and are included below – some about rovers and some not.

First, Second, and Third awards for Rovers in each SECTION – K5QE

If a rover is a band leader from a specific division, then yes. Only the contacts made from within the specific division should count.

This might cause a logging or counting issue as the log is required to show grid operated but not the division. Many grids are split across division lines. Bottom line, do not allow



the rover to unfairly inflate a band score if not all the contacts were made from within the division. – NX9O

One of my local HF+ contests has a rover rule and allows exactly this. I have on occasion been high score in a region even though I was only there for a couple oh hours. Care must be taken though. A rover who works a single station four times from four adjacent grids on say 3456 may not have done something more noteworthy than a fixed station that works two others in different grids. But any rover that manages to work more stations on a band from a grid during a short stay than a fixed station worked during the entire contest has earned a top band recognition. Another idea that might have merit is a 'top grid' award. Compute rover scores for each grid activated. Award either against fixed stations or amongst rovers. There may be rovers who are in the right place and time for E-skip, tropo or AU and manage a great run from a single grid but have no other sites available that are not in a hole. – VE3OIL

Like myself here in the Rocky Mountain Section I would like to see those that can run high power or participate in the contests place themselves in the high power class rather than the low in order to allow the young and new operators to possibly achieve a certificate by being in the low power class. Just have the high power operators show a little consideration for those that will eventually replace us. I would like to see local nets and groups offer a certificate to the younger and newer operators to just get on during the various contests and make as little as ten contacts to be awarded a local certificate. This is something we have started doing in the Rocky Mountain Area via the Rocky Mountain VHF+ Group (www.RMVHF.org). – W6OAL

For band awards, I would like to see the rovers get acknowledged for their contribution. Our club rover would probably have won the local section award for 10G in June, the fixed stations that won the award had less than half the contacts we made (and we were the only local rover in that contest so no grid-circling or pack-roving issues). – VA3CDD

Item 19 of the survey is important. Rovers and Fixed and portable top scoring stations should each have separate awards. – WB6FFC

How about Certificates for all entries sent in with scores? – WD9EXD

Award for most grid(s) activated during contest. – N4FLM

Top scoring Rover in each Section should be awarded certificates, instead of just Division winners. – KD5SHM

More recognition through certificates in each section would be worthwhile to get more rovers on the road. – WØETT

Categories for certificates: Home station leaders in each section: Have QRP, Low Power under 160w, and High Power over 160w categories with leaders getting a certificate. (Most guys have bricks of 160w). – WØETT

Here I'm advocating more certificates which I know are costly in terms of time, paper, and postage. I know its been hashed over before but one possibility is for a "winner" to download and print his own certificate from an contest administrator's website. Some would be open to this and others may not. Such a process would not eliminate the plaques. Some certificates might be deemed important to print and mail from HQ. - You could test the acceptability of the do-it-yourself certificate by sponsoring a recognition certificate for activity in a contest, perhaps by making at least 50 or 100 contacts. Those who qualified could be directed by email to a website where they could download the inscription/writing for their certificate. Later, the administrators could check to see how many actually applied for their cert. – WØETT

Question 20: *Is there anything else you would like to see reviewed or any comments you would like to make?*

There were a large number of comments that just didn't fit well within other sections of the document. Many of these comments that were made are about issues with contesting that were not raised in the survey. Some are other topics that were touched on briefly, but are much deeper in their discussion and didn't really apply to a specific question. In an effort to let all of these comments be heard, they have been included here in back of the report and divided by overall topic of interest.

By far, the most additional comments surrounded activity. In fact we received a few "it's the economy, stupid" type of notes about activity – that is we should stop focusing on various rule changes and focus on increasing activity. It is beyond the scope of what I was trying to do here to collect and analyze alternate suggestions such as how to best promote contests and how to include others that are traditionally not VHF contesters in the activity. There are a lot of great ideas in this section and to the extent possible I would encourage the VUAC to review these and forward any they feel like would have a big impact.

Next to activity, distance-based scoring was a popular topic. Judging by the numbers of respondents that independently mentioned distance-based scoring, there appears to be a broad base of support for the concept. Again, I would encourage the VUAC to consider the excellent comments surrounding the use of distance based scoring.

SCORING

The grids are wider in the southern states where the population is generally lower. Put in a multiplier base on latitude. Allow stations outside the US to participate and count their contacts with non-US stations. It's time the ARRL contests drop the HF sweepstakes image and become worldwide contests. – W3XO/5

In 10G+ contest.. add more incentive for higher frequency bands. For example, band multiplier or more QSO points, or initial band contact points. – N9JIM

*Distance based scoring is missing from this survey. In its simplest form it can be based on a 6-digit grid exchange and then calculate the actual distances from those log entries. Multipliers should remain 4-digit grid. The final scoring is easy by computer and the contest sponsor can do the calculations from Cabrillo files they receive. Paper logs can also be calculated once they are entered into the sponsors master log database. Note that distance based scoring such as this will automatically remove much of the incentive that there is now for grid circling. Could possibly make question 7 moot. The goal shouldn't be trying to level the playing field but should instead seek to appropriately reward each and *every* Q made based on its *difficulty*. The current system only rewards the first "hard to make" Q to a distant grid by virtue of its multiplier value. All other Q's to that same grid are worth less, therefore have less incentive to be made. This indirectly puts the competitive emphasis on Q counts vs. DX. That scoring system adds extra bias that favors the high population density areas over the lower density areas. The key issues to resolve with distance based scoring system are: 1. 6M, it's too "HF like" to fit this scheme well, if it doesn't open this works well, if does open it wildly skews the scoring such that 6M would totally dominate a multiband station's score. 2. Extra burden on rovers to know where they are to the required precision of 6-digit grids. A key thing that should be allowed under distance based scoring. Namely allow multiple Q's with the same rover while they are in a specific 4-digit grid, but then only score using the single Q with greatest 6-digit to 6-digit grid distance successfully achieved while in that 4-digit grid. – N9DG*

Re-examine rover scoring. You have pointed out that there is no advantage (other than QSO points) to work me twice on 3456 from different grids. This seems silly. I still don't understand rover scoring. – K5QE

No new categories, it just dilutes competition. You can't make scoring fair, so why change it? It will upset more people than it would please. – K9PW

Human errors in logging are something that is going to happen. Penalty point deductions should only apply where willful cheating is detected. ARRL should feedback to the participants on the reason for deducting points. – W3FEY

The scoring needs to be changed. Heavily Weighted towards 1st contact in grid, For contacts with same station (rovers) in different grids no QSO points and only one half of grid points...etc.. this needs to be worked on. – W4SC

When Dup Checking or Log Checking for Ambiguous call signs and errors. Just remove only the effected call sign, adjust the score and do not punish. – AE5T

Yes, would like to see some scoring bonus multiplier based on distance of contact on bands above 222. Instead of using mileage as indicator, possibly use grid indicators as basis to count bonus with a minimum of 4 grid separation as the minimum to add a bonus multiplier. Examples: 222 contact from EM85 to EM87, no bonus. A contact from EM85 to EM55 (or EM88, EM15) would count X2 point bonus on 222, X3 bonus on 432, etc. – WW8RR

Scoring should be done on the DISTANCE of the contact, as some of the European contests are doing. This would help level the playing field between those who live in the high density areas and those who live in the "hinterlands" – K9RQ

I feel many of the changes made in recent years have actually hurt activity on the bands above 902 MHz. Limited multiop being the primary blame. Also the big contest stations' operating practices are they're own downfall, because I know of many who avoid even getting on during a contest weekend if they're close to an aggressive contester. In the southeast we're in a different world activity wise. At Microwave Update last weekend a good example was voiced. One New England attendee was bragging about having worked over 100 stations in the 10 GHz contest. The top station in the southeast, W4DEX, worked only 2 stations and was on for the whole contest period. Past experience says he could have worked many stations in PA/NJ area if they'd have felt compelled to look down his way. But they were out for quantity not range. I was on the original ARRL contesting committee 20 years ago that instituted grid squares, and the same issues and challenges were voiced then. Grid squares were the great equalizer for state size differences. But activity on the higher bands seemed to be a much greater goal then than now, which seems odd as we stand a greater chance of losing the upper bands today as a result of the eventual rule changes like limited multiop. – K4CSO

to level the playing field give a multiplier for distance worked for each contact or total distance worked for all contacts and make it a significant amount. Example more points for a 250 KM contact on 10 GHz than for a 50 Km contact. In the last 10 GHz and up contest I worked three stations, 3 grids, 2 states and 2 countries. 905 KM total longest 570 KM shortest 149 KM. No circling rovers heard of course at a distance of 400 to 500 KM..... – WØPHD

I think we need to come up with a density multiplier. Perfect example was during the Fall Sprints. Hams in the northeast were saying activity was down and how no one shows up for the sprints. Then they did a report of the QSO's and grids; 40 QSO's and 17 grids. I don't think there are 40 hams with 222 or VHF equipment 300 miles around here. I think this density multiplier only needs to apply to those contests that have club competition included, though maybe it should be for all. Maybe a mileage bonus like 10 gig contests. I also would like to see maybe a limited single op class. Many hams don't have/want 10

bands they may have 5 or 6, they cannot compete with those UHF and SHF contacts. The points should be reduced for those. Gregg K9KL EN64 P.S. there are WAY more cows out here than there are people! – K9KL

I strongly feel that the present system that encourages the use of the maximum number of bands to achieve maximum scores should not, not, not be changed. If a station wants to win, more bands is one key. Utilization of all bands is a goal that is worthy. I started years ago with 2 meters for fun. It's still fun, but I now run 6 bands (when they're all working !!). I do not even like the "limited" category for the "big Guns" because I find that some have, from time to time, quit using the higher bands during contests. If I can get them running QRP Port. then anyone, or any group, can ! THE MORE BANDS THE MERRIER ! – W4RXXR

Distance scoring for at least one of the contests [September would be best] – W3ZZ

Current point allocations making a 1 mile 10 GHz contact worth 4 times or 6 times as much as a 500 mile 2 meter contact on a dead band. The latter makes winners out of any person that has a big microwave station whether or not he has any operating skills on 6 and 2 meters where every single contact is NOT made by schedule as it is on all the microwave bands. These winners clearly have technical skills or the money to buy microwave equipment and integrate it but I thought contests were a combination of operating skills and technical skills. – W3ZZ

I would like to see the UHF AUGUST scoring based along the lines of the 10GHZ up, scoring points per km contact distance. – VE3TFU

Regarding question number 18: There are other location-specific phenomena taking place that affect contest outcomes. For example, the folks in the Midwest get more 2m E-skip to places where there are hams inhabiting the earth. You can't work E-skip east from Boston, MA but you can work in every direction from Lincoln, Nebraska. Same goes for meteor scatter. But by the same token, a percentage of the high-density areas enjoy one additional activity, too: Pacific coast and Atlantic coast operators (who are already surrounded by high activity for the most part) get coastal tropo, which occurs more often than any other radio wave propagation enhancement (except for random meteors), and it affects more than just the 2-meters that E-skip affects. All other areas have to wait for "conventional" tropo which is MUCH more rare than coastal tropo. Nevertheless, I applaud any effort to provide hope for smaller stations who always feel hopelessly outgunned, and the population density handicap is a good idea in theory and is appreciated, although maybe instead of division, use section, or better yet, grid square for the granularity. Here's why: I am in the rarest grid square among the "high density northeast" so I am a statistical anomaly. That means I would suffer just because I was lumped together with the northeast activity center. Furthermore, I encourage a look at other factors that will affect scores and participation: 1) distance-based scoring above 6m favors financially-gifted hams 2) no emphasis on belonging to a club 3) higher point values for FM simplex contacts 4) points handicaps in small percentages for rovers activating more than 2 grids 5) points handicaps in small percentages for number of bands used greater than 1 band 6) points handicaps in small percentages for each 100 watts greater than 100 watts on each band 7) points handicaps in small percentages for each hour operated beyond one hour 8) contest categories based on ERP instead of power or number of bands or operators 9) it might be time for a decimal-number scoring system rather than integers – N2SLN

mw scoring with power classes and distance as part of score. – KL7UW

Grid circling rovers and Pack rovers should not be able to score contacts with each other. Rovers should be a complete separate deal and only competing against each other. They should have separate awards i.e.; single op, multi-op etc. – W6OUU

I also think there should be a scaling of scores for 1. activating a band and 2. making contacts on higher bands egg 24GHz and up. – K6JEY

Roving adds a lot to VHF-up contesting. Rules should encourage more roving. I've been in remote grids where it is impossible to raise anyone on the bands, and this can be discouraging. More activity follows when more rovers are out there. – N9KC

check logs for "Unique" busted calls as the rest of the contests are doing. The software exists, It will tend to improve the accuracy of scoring. – KØYW

Incentive for long distance QSOs above 6M. Contest time is a good opportunity to work long distance stations owing to the higher number of stations on. Scoring might be based upon the number of grid boundaries crossed say. – N7DB

One other comment - I have seen many proposals for awarding different point totals for distance and what have you. It seems like every one of these proposals had one goal - to beat W2SZ. I know W2SZ uses some tactics (like captive rovers) that seem unfair. But it just seems pointless to me with trying to come up with ways to unseat them. They will find ways to get around it anyway. Find ways that make the contest fun and get more people on - that will make it fun for everyone. – NØAKC

The reason I feel powerless, is that during the first "rover scoring debate", I put together well-reasoned thoughts that addressed behaviors elicited by different scoring schemes. Despite my firm support for original rover scoring, and my contact with ARRL leaders, I was powerless to effect change--even as a nationally prominent rover. Here I was, a prominent rover, asking for a course of action, yet club scoring wishes of large clubs trumped my wishes. I am a firm believer in original rover scoring as a strong motivator to get rovers to activate distant (rare) grids. What we have now is van's with Omni's trolling metro corridors adding to QSO volume--not grid volume. Ok, to each their own fun. But now I, who activate rare grids benefiting fixed stations, am killed in contest scoring. I'll keep doing it my way. – W9FZ

I am intrigued by a distance multiplier for scoring however. The time may not be here yet, but applying QSO distance for each contact might be a way to level the playing field between high activity areas and the more rural areas to some extent. Six digit grids and computer logging would have to be used. Some will grumble, but it does lead to improved stations, which is one goal of the contesting concept. There are plenty of problems that need to be worked out, such as what to do with six meters. Such a plan could stifle higher band activity if six meters was treated similarly to 1296 for example. I still believe some experimentation here might be a good thing. – K1WHS

Another thing NOT noted in your poll is the use of digital. While I am for it, I think that maybe raising the point count for CW should be done. Everyone says CW is dying but I have a hard time with that. Digi is fine but it takes away from the hobby as well as gives to it. With many of the digi modes now there is a built in master list or you can make one so that even if not all the cal is received, it will tell you the call from the master list. Not a good idea. – WA6KLLK

I have not indicated a preference on most of the questions above because we need something very different from the few changes suggested by the questions. We need a distance metric (based on the distance between grid squares) for all contesters as has been used in Europe for many years. It would create a more equal playing field for all participants and also minimize the "problems" of grid circling and pack roving. It's a simple solution. I can not for the life of me figure out why North American weak signal VHFers don't put their weight behind such a change which has created incredible VHF activity in European contests. – WØAH

Contacts with rovers should count the same as contacts with fixed stations. Not what was proposed by previous study group. – K6EU

As grid square sizes are a function of latitude, and grid squares are multipliers, perhaps multiplying the final score by the cosine of the latitude would be in order. For example a grid square at 60 degrees latitude is roughly 60 Nautical miles on a side (360 square NM) whereas a grid square at the equator 0 degrees latitude is roughly 120 NM x 60 NM or 720 square nautical miles. Is it fair for a station at the equator to score based on the fact that he has to work possibly twice as far to achieve a new multiplier? A scoring based on distance as used in some microwave contests takes this into consideration and levels the playing field. – K5LLL

1. Extra points for distance 2. Same point value for all bands. – KE4YYD

Also QSO points could go away and points could be awarded for distance in grid squares. By doing so you might end the contest at the 1.2 GHz line. This should be a new contest as to not upset the apple cart. Each band would be the same. After all a new band is a multiplier in itself, since it adds more QSOs. Another kick in the pants would be to count CW as a separate QSO as compared to SSB and maybe another for digital. This will keep the bands hopping and perhaps lessen the population density issue because with density comes QRM. Another would be to make the contests 48 hours and you can work a station once each day (UTC time) – K3UHF

Distance scoring! Distance scoring! Distance scoring! – AB2KT

Yes, an unfair penalty is currently awarded for working and claiming a contact with a Limited MO station on a frequency other than the ones they are competing in. The unfair part is that I have no control over the situation. I make a legitimate contact and because the other station does not turn in a log for that band I get penalized! NOT FAIR! He doesn't even lose a contact! – K3LFO

A VHF+ contest (not June) using a distance scoring scheme. Check out the VHFcontesting and VHF@w6yx.stanford.edu archives for discussions on this subject in the past. I would prefer this much more than any other "level the playing field" plan - especially the population density plan above. – K3DNE

More points for WSJT contacts so more stations will feel the need to operate these modes. These contacts take much longer to complete and should be rewarded accordingly. – W5AK

I rove mainly on 10 and 24GHz, sometimes 1296/2304/3456(when it works) for fun I don't always turn in logs, etc. because it's just for fun and for experimentation purposes. Usually, I rove with one or more other individuals and yes, we are always helping each other make repairs, etc. It sometimes bothers me that rovers may decide to grid circle or try to work each other while moving in a pack. We don't do that because we're too close to each other and honestly, what's the point. If some guy has to have fun by getting the most points, then let them live with the guilt that they received the points in a poor manner. My thought would be a score that is weighted more heavily on distance, not the number of contacts made. Or perhaps a power scale vs. distance (thus helping QRP stations). If I make a 475km contact on 10GHz, perhaps it should be worth 100 or 200X what a 2km contact would? If I used 20W and a 5 foot dish maybe it's only 10 or 20X? – N5SXA/6

Points for CW and Digital QSOs: In VHF contests, I suggest a QSO point for a phone contact like it is now AND another point for either a CW or digital (RTTY, PSK31, etc.). Maybe this would encourage more VHF contacts and activity from those who like RTTY/PSK31. Just require the contacts be on a separate frequency such as CW 25 kHz down from the call frequency and 25 or 50 kHz up for RTTY/PSK. - At least this would keep us awake out here after we've managed 50-60 QSOs in two days during a January VHF Sweepstakes. – WØETT

I think that there should also be a minimum time spent in each grid for credit in that grid based on the time required to cross a grid. Starting from the time the first contact is made for a given grid (on any band), you cannot make another contact from an adjacent grid (on any band) until that time has past. – N1KPW

What about 6 digit grids and distance calculation as a multiplier? That eliminates the pack rove/grid circling problem instantly. Might even moderate the population density problem by encouraging DXpeditions and paths not normally tried. Scoring easily dealt with software, requires a couple extra characters per log entry. – W1RT

I wouldn't mind some distance consideration in some contests for microwave bands, giving added value to long distance contacts. – K3TUF

10 GHz AND UP

On another issue, 10GHz and Up NEEDS clarification on the 10-mile rule. Right now, we are operating on a email from Billy Lunt that offered clarification. The wording is NOT clear enough. Is there a lumpy exclusion zone set-up around each operated location (I think yes)? Clarify the rule so it's CLEAR. Also, 10GHz NEEDS some scoring changes to make the motivation and rewards better for bands above 10GHz. – W9FZ

I'd like to see the 10 Gig contest with a less complicated scoring system, but I confess to not having an alternate scheme to suggest. Why not include 5 Gig in that contest, as this band is underused and the bands above 24 Gig are still beyond the capabilities of most hams. Call the contest a "Microwave" contest, instead of 10 Gig. – KF9US

I think a 24GHz and up contest for one weekend, or even just one day would be nice. – WB8TGY

ACTIVITY

Anything which could help attract operators in the Midwest would be great -- too much emphasis by the ARRL is placed on HF contesting. – WO9U

I would like to see rules / point structure that encourages getting new people on the air. In all the years of VHF/UHF/Microwave contesting in Utah, I have worked very few "new" stations. It is always the same set of died in the wool contesters. New people are discouraged. I don't know what the changes could be, but I think we put too much emphasis into cranking out manufactured piles and piles of Q's and not enough on helping the new people get on the air and try contesting. – K7RJ

We need more activity, especially in the bands above 2m. – K6FV

I feel like activity on the > 50 MHz bands has been stagnant at best - if not diminishing during the past 6 years that I have been active in VHF/UHF contests. VHF contests without the possibility of six meters being open are non-events for us in the Northwest. Just working the same guys on all the same bands isn't very exciting. – K7RAT

Any ideas to increase activity should be explored – K1TEO

FM Only Guys!!! That is how most people get in to contesting A lot of new guys have only FM rigs They get a taste of contesting Then may win an award And move up to SSB CW And add bands – KØSHF

I would support any measure to help increase activity on the bands, increase "Fun" and promote Amateur Radio to the general public, as well as hams who might otherwise not operate in VHF+ contests. – KI5DR

Of the three major ARRL VHF contests I have entered around 100 in a row. Local activity drops off a little every year. More activity should be a goal in the Midwest. – NØLL

I wish we had more rovers here in the Midwest like we used to have. I know rule changes several years back turned many of them off and it has really diminished the amount of rovers here. – NØAKC

Please consider every contest an opportunity to introduce VHF-ing to the rest of the amateur community. Craft the rules to promote this activity, not limit it. – WDØACD

I am absolutely in favor of any and every idea that will get more people on the VHF+ bands. Scoring is almost incidental -- it's a lot more fun to make a bunch of QSOs on 6m and get a lower score than to make a handful of QSOs on microwaves and score 10 points higher. On the other hand, every uW QSO is a thrill because of the miles per milliwatt factor. Trying to find the other guy both in direction and frequency makes uW contesting challenging. The homebrew aspect is also attractive to me personally. – K2HIZ

If any changes are made, they should encourage incentives for more contacts. The more activity there is, the better it is for everyone. – N1FGY

But we're fortunate here in the Upper Midwest because V/UHF contesting is alive and growing. I cannot begin to overemphasize how much the NLRS (Northern Lights Radio Society) out of the Minneapolis/St. Paul area has done to consistently promote and improve activity in our entire region. The Badger Contesters and Chippewa Valley VHF (EN44 mostly) group also can be counted on to have several dozen stations in most contests. Good roving up here as well. Usually at least a half dozen well-equipped rovers I can work if I look hard enough. (AND I DO, hi!) – KC9BQA

I am working hard to encourage microwave activity in SW PA. However, the first time my friends spend the entire contest listening to the New England crowd working each other and ignoring the rest of us, they'll give up. I'd like to see some incentive to work "new" operators. – WB4GCS

Get more participation is key. Maybe increasing point values for CW, PSK31, RTTY, WSJT and even FM exchanges might be considered. – KA5DWI

My second strong preference is to promote VHF+ operation anyway we can! – ND3F

I strongly favor any changes that make roving easier and more enjoyable for the fellas who do it. Without them, it's talking to the same guys contest after contest. – K3DD

Our vote at WØKVA/RM HAM RADIO is to do anything to increase and encourage participation. Above 6 MTRs, things get a little slim here in the Rockies. – WØKU

In the case of roving, EVERYTHING to PROMOTE all types should be done. Team roving, circling, whatever, I stopped roving early in the category because it was tiring, more about driving and logistics than operating. Those who enjoy it should be left to come up with innovative ways to MAKE MORE QSOS. QSOS = fun and success. Anything else is BS. – AA1AA

I like the idea of getting other hams into contesting. We need to make changes to get new people into contesting now. I think the ARRL has done very little in this area and has lost interest in trying to do so. We should also give the existing contesters a stronger incentive to get on more bands. This may be that less populated areas of the US may get more points for a 2304 MHz contact than someone in NY. This could be governed by how many scores were turned in from a specific area. The limited Multi-op category does not encourage the use of higher bands regardless of how many people are in the group.

This should also change to encourage the use of higher bands by all groups without losing the competitive edge from how many people or resources a group has available. This is why the Limited Multi-Op was created to keep the same group from winning every year. There are lots of work to be done. The first thing is to change the way the rules are created. – W4WA

More concerned about the paucity of participating stations than the rules. The solution is to encourage more activity and get some of the FM only stations that have SSB / CW capabilities to participate. If that means operating a station as multi rather than single, so be it. Getting more call signs on the air isn't smart, what is needed is more STATIONS. – WB5KIA

I live and work contests in the rocky mountain region and anything that we can do to stimulate participation and get more operators and assistance for our slim-or-none participation would be greatly appreciated. – NØWBW

Not strictly on topic. but what about having some sort of VHF FM operating event nationally? This might convince some of the FM ops to give the weak signal modes a try, and we can always use more activity on VHF/UHF – K4JSI

We need to consider an FM only, or a "rookie" category. We desperately need to attract "new blood" to increase activity. – K9ZF

ASSISTANCE

stations should not be allowed to use the internet for spotting, IRC's for confirmations & VOiP stations should be classified as "remote" ... I think all operations should be classified by where the coax attaches to the radio and the operator should be present at that location – WB4SLM

BANDS

When six meters opens up in a contest, all the activity on other bands goes down. Individual home stations stay on six meters and end up with many stations worked and huge scores. I do not see the great skill in operating when using kilowatts and large beams, much like HF contests. As a Rover you must have an operator on six meters to be competitive and get all the multipliers. The score does not show the work or commitment or expense of having and operating a multiband station. Give me no propagation on six or a big tropo opening, then we can all have some fun. – N4OFA

222MHz is another sore spot with me. It's NOT a UHF frequency. Look in any number of ARRL publications and you'll see VHF defined as 30 - 300MHz. So, let's have a VHF ONLY contest with just the 3 VHF bands. I think this would increase the use of 222 much more than having it as an incorrectly labeled band in the ARRL UHF contest. It's much more like 2 meters than 432MHz anyway. – W4TXS/N8AG

The ARRL "VHF" contests should be just that VHF. "UHF" contacts during the "VHF" contest should not be counted. Let's level the playing field to differentiate the spectrum and thus not penalize the ham that does not have the upper bands during the "VHF" contests. Have separate contests, one for actual VHF contacts (6,2,222), and another for UHF/SHF contacts (70cm and up). Too much emphasis is placed on the UHF/SHF bands during the "VHF" contests. If we are to have a much more fair contest structure with all bands (VHF,UHF,SHF) then let's call the contest what it is and perhaps a different point structure. I'm not sure how this would work. It is beyond my mind power, but it does seem to me a bit unfair to enter the contest with limited VHF/UHF when you know that you are competing with others who have much greater advantage by having the UHF/SHF points. In hugely populated areas, such as the northeast it is obviously much easier to make contacts (points) than for someone in a much less densely populated area. – WF4R

There has been discussion about additional points credit for microwave contacts and, on the other hand, not even allowing microwave contacts in some contests. Since I am a microwaver, I'd like to see these addressed. I definitely don't want microwave QSO's to be disallowed! – W9SZ

BEHAVIOR

My biggest frustration in VHF contesting is the frantic band hopping. Often I will hear a close by rover that is pinning my S meter on 2 meters, but before I can even say my callsign, he's QSY'd to 432 or above with another station ... and often, I'll never hear him again. That's the nature of the game, and most guys love this, but it's a big turn off for me. I'll never get refused a QSO like that during a multi-band HF contest ! – K9RZZ

What really annoys me is those powerful fixed stations south of me that will not point their antennas north in the contests. It gets really annoying when some of those same stations ask me to activate some of the rare grids that are local to me on a non-contest weekend – I rove in those rare grids on the contest weekends, I do not like be asked to go back by a station I heard but would not work me during the contest. This same issue impacts other local stations and is a common complaint from the fringe areas. – VA3CDD

Some Rover groups from Southern CA continue use 222.100 MHz SSB at 100+W output levels for their local intercom freq between the rovers in their group. Doing so absolutely ruins the 222 MHz calling frequency for everyone else, for hundreds of miles!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Couple that with their usually compromise antenna systems and you have the classic alligator station, all mouth, no ears! Their needs to be wording forbidding this. – K7XC

I have a QRP station most of the time, and am nearly always over run by the BIG GUNS, so it is not a contest for me at all, just a chance to get on and work. – N5XMV

many rovers cheat, the point mongers, there using cell phones, the internet, texting, a good number of these contesters are not getting a complete QSO and recording it as one, of course they know jo blow was on that 220, 432, 2 & 6 at specific times the received the emails, the text messages, and the good old cell phone call, I do not participate any more because of this, and yes there's the fixed stations doing this to – KG6TCV

I would be in favor of setting aside some specific frequencies for rovers on the six meter band during. Contests. I have gone in the rover mode in every contest for the last several years. I announce my frequency on the Prop. Logger and then when I set up and get going, some of the "Big Fellers" get on my frequency and crush me. Very frustrating considering the cost to me in time and money to get to these rare grids and give them out. PLEASE try and promote the setting aside of certain frequencies for rovers such as myself, IE: 50.165, 50.175, and 50.185, etc. That would make it more enjoyable for those of us with just mobile stations trying to help others. Thanks. – W5ZF

I gave up on VHF and above contesting some time back do to the large number if LIDs I encountered during contests (this is also a problem with HF contests). Figure out some rules that make it harder for people to be LIDs. As an example, on 6M SSB call freq. Stations will start sending CW saying they are working down 20 while a voice QSO is in progress. Same holds true for voice, people will start calling CQ right on top of someone else QSO. Maybe prohibit all operations within 25kHz of any call freq. There is also a problem of people hearing a station and then using a freq just close enough to cause interference so they can attract people making contacts with the first station. Another improvement would be to limit freq. hopping. Make anyone that calls CQ stay on that freq for certain minimum amount of time. The other problem with contests in general are the 15second contacts. Develop some contests that require at least a 5min contact for it to count. After all, the supposed purpose of contests is to sharpen skills need during an

emergency and emergency comms are always longer than typical contest contacts. – WØGSK

CALLING FREQUENCIES

We should address the issue of stations camping on the calling frequencies(CF). In the non-dense population areas it could be allowed but not in the East/West Coast areas. No points should be given for contacts on the calling frequencies...OK call CQ CONTEST and announce a QSY frequency for the QSO & points. Also we should consider keeping a clear area up & down from the calling frequencies to prevent splatter from stations that camp close to the CF. i.e. 50.125 to 50.175 should be a non-contest segment or 144.095 to 144.105. – K2SIX

I think 2 meter FM operation should be unrestricted, including 146.52, etc. This may have been useful in the past but is unnecessary today. – W7HR

I am the Pacific Division VUAC rep so please think about whether you wish to include my votes or not. I can understand if you don't. One of the big questions--VHF contests--is the use of 146.52, i.e., eliminate the restriction. Most reps say this should be done BUT I say NO because I feel that it will drive hams away as many hams don't like the contesting ((You hear this on HF allot)) and I also feel that here in the west 146.52 is actually starting to be reestablished as a calling frequency when there are mobiles out and about. To be descended upon by a bunch of contesters would drive them off the air and maybe even off the band. – WA6KLLK

Also look at the (I think) NA QSO party rule of QSYing after a QSO following a CQ/QRZ. That might eliminate the call frequency hogging and hogging in general by the Big Guns. Finally eliminate call frequency use for any voice QSO period. – KA5DWI

Another thing would be to allow use of the national simplex frequencies on FM. How much activity is there on 146.52? Let's be realistic and not exclude any amateur frequencies. – W4TXS/N8AG

How about limiting the time the big multiops dominate a particular frequency? Not only do they seem to think they own it, but they are usually as wide as a barn, basically controlling a lot of bandwidth around "their" frequency. Ask the question on your survey if a smaller fixed station or rover has ever found a seemingly clear frequency and then, all of a sudden, the big station jumps back in after taking a break or switching ops and drives the "little" guy away. Maybe a frequency range per band should be set up for the big multiop stations or even the big gun single ops.....at least for calling CQ If that were done, lots of folks would know just where to look for these guys. – W4TXS/N8AG

Disallow contacts made on 50.125 and 144.200. This would force operators to "spread out" making more contacts during a contest. – W4HP

CATEGORIES/CLASSES

my contesting is limited to the occasional contact to a friend that is contesting to help give a point or two and wishing I could do more. I now have a 706mkIIg and will possibly pursue a more active role in future contests. Having category that favors stock equipment would be a good thing to draw more people into the VHF/UHF contests. one thought pops to mind is that , for instance , sports car club of America has over 25 different classes for Autocrossing (Solo II) to allow participation from a wide range of cars and levels of modifications something like that may also help to attract more people. – KD7TXG

I am ambivalent in creating too many new classes, as we are getting to the point where their will be too few participants in any given class, unless the operator numbers grow considerably. – W9GA

I would like to see a 50-432 MHz (lower four) class for single Ops with both low power and high power classifications. – K9MU

The league should have categories for "portable" in the UHF test. This may/may not need a power requirement. I think it would be great to encourage others to activate rare grids - or try the portable thing for a change. It would also help reward efforts of setting up a portable station. – KFØQ

The league should clarify the rules for number of QSO's in a division to determine which division your score will be counted in. Many of us can operate in multiple divisions during one contest. – KFØQ

The league should have some form of "Joe '706" category for limited stations of 3 bands with 100W max, and/or offer "rookie" awards for first timers. On the same note what about some type of participation cert for those brave souls who operate year after year never getting the big award in the division but supporting everyone else and the league by just being there and turning in their log. The 6HR max QRP portable category that CQWW has is really fun. The league might want to encourage that as well. – KFØQ

I do not support the addition of new entry categories. Most such proposals are made by very special, narrow interests. The current six entry categories present opportunities for virtually any interest. Six of them crown section champs, which means we have a potential of 480 section champions! So, something in the range of 30 - 60 percent of all participants could be champions! Sounds like youth sports in which any kid who shows up gets a trophy. In particular, it makes no sense to me to destroy the Single Operator Portable category by allowing home stations into the QRP category. Let the go portable! – K9AKS

*I would be in favor of things that increase activity, but am also not in favor of adding categories / operating classes to contests. Rules should be simple. I believe that adding more categories will only dilute efforts and stifle competition. – K1WHS
I also believe that there should be a "super class" i.e., one that if you any band over 1296, then you are in the super class regardless. It would even out the playing field a bit more. – WA6KLLK*

How about an "antenna challenged" class, so the little pistols can win a few awards instead of getting beaten out by the super stations? – NG9R

Make a new class Stock only 6,2 and 432 no amps no preamps, no spotting just radio and antenna . single op or rover – W6GMT

I would like to see a limited single op award similar to the limited multiop award. – NJ2F

Keep it simple. Too many rules, too many classes, sub groups, just to artificially "level the playing field". It will never be. How about playing against your own previous score? Look at European VUSHF contests for simplicity! – KT1J

I would like to see the Limited Multioperator eliminated, and a power limit placed on the Multioperator stations. – K4FJV

I would like to see the "limited multi operator" revamped. There should be a separate class of limited multi operator that takes into account power (100 watts or less per band) and the number of operators. Making it a true "limited multi operator" class. I helped form a group of local hams to operate in VHF/UHF contests. There were never more than 4-6 ops in the group, and we never operated using more than 100 watts for 6 and 2, around 25 watts for 222 and no more than 45 watts on 432. We found we were increasing having to compete against groups of 20-30 ops, using much higher power per band who then submitted contest logs for only 4 bands thus making them qualify as

"limited multi ops". In the past these groups were multi operator, activating many bands. Some even used as much as 1,000 watts on 6 meters, 600 watts on 2. Often they positioned their operators close to large cities (like Chicago) where they can work many local hams on FM. While my group operators from Bald Knob Mt in Southern IL (EM-57) a VERY rural area. We did it for fun, we did it to put what was then a fairly rare grid on the bands. But the group members began to feel that it was not worth the effort to set up, operate, and camp out (in tents or a small camper) for the weekend when we had unfair competition. So, I would like to see a limited multi operator class that takes power levels AND numbers of operators into account, not just bands submitted. – N9LAG

As a fairly newcomer (3 years) to VHF / UHF, and operating SOLP class in the contests, I find it difficult to be competitive with my 4 band operation to compete with the 6 band plus operators. I think most newbies are going to run the lower VHF and UHF bands and as they are intrigued or \$\$\$ allows pick up a few more bands, or they will get totally turned off with contests because they cannot compete. I have done very well in past contests only because of openings on 50 MHz, and operating skills to log fast and go. Is it possible to consider a limited band operating class for some VHF /UHF contests? This I feel would peak some interest in newbies to VHF /UHF contesting. Question #2 is what is the possibility of the ARRL to notify contest submitters to corrections made on points eliminated from your contest score. A friend told me that on some HF contests they explain docked points. Thanks for the survey. – NØVZJ

For single ops in VHF-UHF contests only, delete the requirement that all equipment be located within 1000', and revert to the old rules which allowed single op stations to operate from anywhere within one single grid without having to enter as a rover. – K1MAP

I would like to see an "all encompassing" rule change to encourage the use of higher frequency RF spectrum by allowing more points to be gathered during a contest if that station normally doesn't participate in higher band activities. For example, I have a portable 10-gig station that I set up on the deck to facilitate that band for those that have it. However, I do feel that if I do opt to activate that band from my QTH during a busy contest with a good 6 meter opening, I am detracting from my 6 meter score by doing so. If I were to allow my wife, KCØTRJ, to activate the 10-gig rig, I would have to change my entry class and that I would like to see changed. She doesn't participate in the 'normal' contest but it would help out all people involved in the contest if she were to participate and give out contacts on a band that would otherwise go unattended from here. – WVØH

CHANGES

Any plan of "spreading the inequalities", "leveling the playing field" or making one rover score "fairer" than the other will only do more harm than good. – N7EPD

CONTEST SCHEDULING

Move the January VHF contest to the off weekend between the playoffs and the super bowl even if this means operating the first weekend in February. – WA3NUF

The January VHF contest should be moved to the second weekend of January. This would increase the likelihood of Sporadic-E openings as well as taking advantage of F2 openings during the peak sunspot years on Six Meters. The 2002 January contest had some F2 on Six but it would have been much better if the contest was held two weeks earlier! – WB2AMU

Move the UHF contest to April. Jan to June is a long stretch with out a major contest. Conditions are likely to be better and participation will probably increase. – KØVXM

Would like to see 10GHz and up contests and 10 GHz sprints in cooler weather, say mid October. These operations for most of us are portable and it is extremely hot here in Florida on the dates scheduled. This discourages many locals from operating. – NN4AA

ARRL scheduled the RM division convention the same weekend as the 2006 June QSO party. This devastated participation, and should *NEVER* happen again! – KRØU

Change the August date for the ARRL UHF Contest and ARRL 10GHz Contest to make them more favorable during times of good propagation. Hot humid months are not good conditions for UHF and Microwave operation and just makes for dead band conditions. Spring time is much better for tropo and decent band conditions. Having to operate 10GHz portable during 95 deg heat 90% humidity is NOT fun and discourages operators. Moving these contests to an April-June time frame keeping the June Contest as is will increase participation. – K4HV

CONTACT SCHEDULING

Consider changing rules so that QSOs could not be set up by using radio or cell phones. Only random contacts allowed. – AA6HA

I do NOT like clubs that schedule QSOs with members in advance. In one contest I remember, one of the top stations hardly ever called CQ during the entire contest. Everything was scheduled with members via their website in advance via a scheduling web form. I DO favor non-automated scheduling of QSOs via chat or live links during a contest. This allows a station to work someone on the fringe of their range. – K3DD

I have no problem with that. I do have a problem with people making schedules with others, that they want to meet at a certain time, on a certain band. The Contest is what it is! We are all in the same boat!! Or so I thought!! – KCØVKD

COVERAGE

The rules aren't broke, why mess with them? Competition in the ARRL VHF+ contests is local not national. The coverage of VHF+ contests in QST and on the ARRL web site is the problem, not the rules. If the ARRL contest director knew something about VHF+ contests that would be a good first step. Second there needs to be someone who can pick competent volunteer writers for more in depth local coverage of each region in the country. These writers need to know the difference between the various competition categories, their history and the rules that govern each of them. For instance, some of the recent authors of the June VHF QSO Party articles didn't know that the Single Operator Portable category has been around longer than the Single Operator Low Power category. The former category was renamed from the QRP Portable category a few years ago at the insistence of a few vocal HF QRP operators who didn't like the 10 watt PEP power limitation. This renaming has done nothing but cause confusion and may have actually lowered participation in this category of competition, in my opinion. – N7IR

MODES AND DIGITAL

Re-examine the rules/scoring pertaining to Digital modes (WSJT) – WZ1V

All digital contacts should be listed as a separate category – WB4SLM

More than one contact per band (CW or Digital and SSB). – WA8ZBT/W5ROK

DX

Under current ARRL VHF Contest rules - DX entrants may work only W/VE stations for contest credit. I would suggest allowing "DX to DX" contacts as well. – N9JK

FAMILY RULE

I think the family rule (more than one call on a station) should be eliminated. Each contact should require a separate station including antennas. (If it isn't allowed for rovers it shouldn't be allowed for anyone.) – WØEEA

Also rovers should be allowed to operate under different calls using the same gear under family rules as well. Recently this was ruled unacceptable in the ARRL contests since the specific rover rules took precedent over family rules. This should be reversed. – N9DG

I would also like to see rules drafted that would accommodate family roving. We had a great deal of fun doing that until last year. It did not inflate our scores -- it limited them because of the time it took to make double QSOs. Home stations enjoyed getting the chance to make another QSO. We did not work each other. Under current rules, my wife could bring two of our HTs along, get out of the car, walk 100 yards away and work me on the five bands those HTs cover. I would have many more mults, 40 or so more Qs and a much higher score. We could add a couple of 10GHz and 24GHz Gumplexers and have a high six figure score. That's legal now, but it isn't in the spirit of contesting. I would like to see the VUAC consider a way for two family members -- who share a station -- to operate from a vehicle. When the practice was eliminated I was informed that it was feared that family rovers would grid circle or run in packs, compounding the pack/circling problem. I believe that people of good will can address all of these issues to the satisfaction of, well, many. -- KØPG

Clarification of liaison rules in the 10 GHz and up contest allowing linked repeaters, HF, cell phone etc. Clarification that liaison is for path alignment ONLY, and the contact exchange must occur on the microwave channel. Clarification of the family rule where family members can share one radio. There is some conflict in how the rule reads across VHF contest general rules, and contest specific rules. -- WA6JBD

FREQUENCIES

The world has progressed from crystal controlled VHF FM transceivers. Drop the ban on 146.52 and the requirement for "standard simplex frequencies" (VHF rules 1.8.1 and 1.9). Keep restrictions on repeater input/outputs (standard, coordinated repeaters). -- AAØKW

Get rid of the exclusions for contest operating on 50.110 and 146.52. These were set up to allow ownership of specific frequencies for individuals. One band one transmitter effectively limits band ownership. -- AF8Z

GENERAL

Being a rover is hard, but it's one of my favorite ways of operating. I've always assumed it was just going to be impossible to win any of the contests outright as a rover, and I've always assumed that living in Colorado meant I'll never see the kind of contact rates or DX opportunities on the higher bands that folks who live in higher population density and/or tropo areas see. In other words, I'm out roving because I enjoy the experience, not because I have any vague hope of "winning". Despite that, I've gotten a certificate for a record score in the Rocky Mountain region in the ARRL UHF contest, which was pretty cool. At the end of the day, I'd like rules that make roving fun and rewarding, but I don't really care if I win any particular contest. -- KBØG

BEWARE of unintended consequences in roving rules, they are especially not applicable to the 10GHz+ contest. -- KB8U

You may be interested in an upcoming article I am publishing in QST on the explanatory reasons for VHF contest log entry variation over the years. It is entitled "The Past, Present, and Future of VHF Contesting". You may also be interested in an article that went into greater detail on the statistical analysis employed. This was entitled "A Statistical Model of VHF Contesting" and was published in the 2006 CSVHF Proceedings. I can send you copies of these articles, if you like. One of the conclusions of these articles was that individual rules changes have not statistically been shown to affect log entry data, although radical rules changes (ala CQ VHF circa 2000) as well as the rules modernization of the 1980's may have had some impact on log entry data. In general, the qualitative and quantitative models suggest that regulatory changes and demographic factors have had the greatest impact on contest log entries. -- W8GKA

Why does General VHF rule 1.2 exist? What is the harm if I go to someone else's station (probably not a VHF contesting enthusiast), make some QSOs, and send in an entry?

I've been doing this for years in the November CW SS, and nobody ever seems to mine working me those extra times. I'd also think it would be a great way to demonstrate to the host what a guy can do on VHF with his station. Reexamine the one call per operator per location and one call per transmitter rules for VHF. (General rules for all contests, 3.3 and 3.5) If things get slow, let a guy fire up with a club call, or have somebody else stop in to operate under his own call. The later would seem to be a good way to introduce a newcomer to VHF contesting. – AAØKW

I would like to hear more about the committee that is looking at revising the rules. – KE3HT

I also think this survey sent to ALL active operators, not just the Eastern clubs... is long long overdue!!!!!! Thanks for the chance to vent about what bothers me about VHF Contesting. Ever think of doing this for those who operate SS? – K7XC

No, I'm generally satisfied with the current rules. I'm disappointed there is so much time and effort wasted on changing rules instead of investing in getting more activity on the bands. – N2LBT

We need to make microwave contacts more relevant. CW on 24 GHz doesn't advance the state of the art. I'm in favor of creating a new way to gain points by putting up microwave links that provide real data networks. This would bring new computer type people into the hobby and build on the enthusiasm for wireless networking...and generally make Amateur Radio more relevant. – WA1HCO

I am not sure "tweaking" with the rules will have much effect on energizing VHF contests. We need something bold....which will probably be fought to the death by the established leaders in VHF contesting. – KØNR

In the New Mexico Section most operators appear to be happy to get a few contacts and are not very concerned about running up their scores. – K5RHR

One thing that I could see happen, is that high powered stations could set up sites in remote locations - for instance, like the bug multi-multis do when they travel to the Caribbean. Perhaps a multiplier based on distance from the home grid square could be possible - but that would also advantage those with excellent propagation All in all, I think that the contest is as fair as it can be...there will be always stations that have unlimited resources and unlimited ERP, and those with more modest setups, in lousy locations. The big guys will win, and the little guys try to best their personal best. I always enjoy the contest - and that is good enough.... – KBØFHP

The other factor--every time the rules change, the records and history are affected--can you imagine a major rules change in CQWW that would obviate history in some class? (There's probably a third--every rule change has wanted effects and possibly some unwanted ones--the reason the rules were changed from v2 to v3 is that v2 didn't work out--who can predict what v4 will bring (not me!).) My strong preference is to NOT change the rules, and enforce the ones we have. – ND3F

Please don't change the rules again...the best guys will "win" (whatever that means) no matter what the rules are... – N3IQ

Contesting has all been ruined in the Rocky Mountain region due to distances, discrimination against rovers and inaccurately unfair rules applied across regions. A decade or so ago, contesting was still fair and fun. Then things changed ruining it. There is so much cheating going on in this region now that it makes fair contesting impossible. for example, multiple operators work a declared single operator station driving up their score. Rovers are all but precluded now from the Rocky Mountain region. How I miss the days of fun, fair contested and Rovers like NØLRJ out there on the open vast range of the Midwest shooting their signals back to the Rocky Mountain

front range high country. Things are totally different here in Colorado when it comes to contesting than back on the east coast! Now I participate during contests to only hand out QSO points from my contest station. Maybe some day things will change making contesting fair and fun again for all. I am here to offer suggestions or work on a committee to fix contesting for the better. I don't like to complain without offering solutions – NØYGM

There has been a constant, 10+ year long writing and rewriting of the VHF+ rules. This is always advertised as to "increase fairness" or "increase participation" but the underlying issue is there are some in the VHF+ community that cannot win without a lot more effort on their part that they are unwilling to expend. In HF, hams fly to the other side of the earth and lug all kinds of equipment to win, or just to activate places. VHFers stay home and try to rewrite the rules. If an increase in participation revolves around more everyday support of VHF+ from the league, stop watering down QST and put QEX articles back into the main magazine. Undertake a multi-year effort concentrating on one band, like 222 (which we need to save), to get equipment BUILT.
– AA1AA

IMPLEMENTATION

Thank you for this survey. When you transmit the results to the VUAC, you should suggest that whatever they finally decide, that they work hard to see that their decisions are implemented. That hasn't happened in the past going back to the CAC's decision on going back to the original rover scoring rules which was rejected by the ARRL. – W3ZZ

ANY rule, or INTERPRETATION of a rule MUST be published at least 3 months prior to its being enforced, and notification of that publication must be made in the announcement for the contest. Any rule or interpretation of a rule that is NOT thusly published may be ignored as if it did not exist. – WA2VOI

In over 25 years of VHF/UHF operating, I have seen many opinion polls taken in the West, I have yet to see any action taken by ARRL as a result of them. – W7USB

INTEGRATE RULINGS

I also think the 'rulings' published on email reflectors should be made a part of the rules, where everyone sees them and knows the rules, not left to the net where some see (and obey) them and others don't. – WØEEA

LENGTH

I have mentioned the following several times in previous discussions with VHFers and in the ARRL survey conducted three years ago: 1) The January and September VHF contests are much too long for the amount of activity that is present. Both contest should be shortened by three hours to end at 8 pm EST on Sunday. There is at most a few hundred stations for anyone to work, compared to thousands that can be worked during most HF contests. The June contest can support the last three hours because of the probability of Sporadic-E conditions on Six Meters. But the other two events should be shortened! – WB2AMU

LOGGING

Contest logs, if submitted should be accepted in any form. All stations operating other than fixed home location should indicate such. Rover/Mobile/Portable as a W6 station operating outside California...even if permanent home location for contest. – K7IDX/7

As more and more people are less likely to QSL and/or submit logs to LoTW, I'd like to see a requirement, for ARRL Contests anyway, that log submissions for these contests must be like wise submitted to LoTW. – N1KPW

MISC

Web available log entry for spring and fall Sprints, like Arrl contest entry via web. – WB4IXU

A home base station should be allowed to rove to another operator's site (regardless of distance) to make contacts \geq 47GHz including lasers, and have them count on the base station score. The benefit would be additional multipliers on bands that would normally not be worked. The penalty is fewer Qs while the station is out making the local rove. – KB3GJT

PLAQUES

Why does the UHF Contest not have award plaques? Certificates are only awarded. Seems the ARRL does not think much of this contest and should fix this inequity. The contest should not be treated any different than any other of the contests, as it also provides activity, especially at the higher bands and is just as important in generation of activity. – KMØT

PORTABLE OPERATION

The portable class needs to follow closer the operator rules that rovers have today. The idea of being portable, but having to operate by yourself really restricts what could be a really cool category. Allowing multiple people to take part allows a team to share the load and enjoyment. – KU7M

It is important to encourage activating rare grid squares, IN the West and also east coast, that often requires travel to distant and RF remote locations. This is fun and rewarding, but you usually trade off any hope of scoring high. It also often means hiking in and maybe overnighiting on a mountain top. This raises a few points. 1. Hiking to activate a rare grid means low power and small antennas (weight). Also fewer bands (weight again). More bands can be activated by permitting multiple operators, similar to roving. There is little reward in the 2nd "pack mule" person going along and not operating. Multi classes might apply, but power is a huge handicap. 2. CQ VHF has a hilltop category which is nice. It allows for the long hike times up and down by limiting operating hours to 6. This is ideal for a day hike. This encourages activating rare locations. Since the major contests are 2 day events, the operator(s) should be permitted to turn in 2 logs, one for each day, and each log competes with others in the same hilltop class. Each log must be from a different location, same grid allowed (some min distance change required). If operating overnight, the best of the 2 days logs would be submitted, not combined in this hilltop class. This keeps things even with the day hikers who operate only 1 day for 6 hours per location and encourage activating more locations. Operating over 2 days can be more relaxing appealing to a less physically energetic/capable audience, and gives more QSO possibilities for all. Overnigheters can elect to file under portable class if they want to combine 2 days logs or operate for more than 6 hours a day. A day hiker can not operate much more than 6 hours. – K7MDL

An item to encourage risk to travel to far destinations - you may be the only ham in that grid all weekend. There is no one to QSO with to count the multiplier for that grid. While there is the multiplier point for activating each grids, you are penalized for operating in grids without the possibility of making a QSO count within the grid. A second traveler in the rover should be allowed to operate under their own call and equipment they carried along to make a QSO in that grid, on any band that they are equipped to make the QSO on. This also encourages carrying and investing in spares, and getting more operator interest through the possibility of operating more equipment configurations. Keeps a second operator more interested during a time when there is little radio activity (often the case for remote grids where no other hams operate on VHF). – K7MDL

I also feel adding 2 operators to QRP portable (like rovers) would improve safety and participation. With more assistance, some major mountaintop operations would be possible and fun to try. – N7SS

CATEGORIES, POWER

*The low power limit should be the same on all bands, 100w across the board. – W7?
A more reasonable contest power level limitation for “Low Power” on 902 and above
would be 25 Watts. It’s 200W on 6 and 2 M and 100W for 222 and 432 MHz. 10 Watts
is too restrictive and does not foster contest activity. – WB5ZDP*

*Increase the low power category power limit on 902 and up to 50 Watts to reflect the
realities of today's stations. – KØVXM*

*Power classes are not per today's standards. High power should be 400watts and up, as
bricks are available for the ABCD bands to or near this level. If you run a KW on one of
these bands, then you should be considered high power. For 900 MHz and up, power
should not be a factor in determination of your class. It really does not make that much
difference in the overall score. Why punish a ham for having a 25 watt amp on 902 or a
15 watt amp on 5.7 GHz that he got on the cheap at a ham fest, but he wont get on for the
contest because it puts him in the high power class. – KMØT*

*Raise or eliminate the low power limit on 903 and above in order to encourage operation
o the higher frequencies without jeopardizing the Low Power Category status of the
entry. – K4TO*

I think low power levels need to be adjusted for the microwave bands. – K3TUF

POWER SOURCE

*Why should rovers be required to carry their own power sources? (VHF Rule 2.3.3)
Permit the use of AC mains by rovers. The really good hilltops probably don't have AC
anyway, but in the flatlands, it would be a lot easier to plug into AC than being forced to
carry batteries or generators, and would be one less barrier to potential rovers. –
AAØKW*

RESULTS

*Contest results posted in CQ or QST magazine again. Or on a web site that doesn't
require membership to follow contest results or entries. – N4FLM*

The 10GHz scores should be printed in QST. – AF1T

The 10GHz scores should be printed in QST. – W1MKY

*Better than a population density handicap would be providing section winners like used
to be the case in the 1980s. My contacts for 2005 & 2006 will never show up in QST.
My call won't show up. That is discouraging. It makes it seem like there is no activity,
and discourages new operators from getting on the microwave bands. All participation
should be published, no matter how small. If the current situation continues, I expect the
population density of microwave operators to become EVEN MORE lopsided. (It has a
tendency to become lopsided based upon existing activity, but the published contest
results strongly contribute to the population density of microwave operators becoming
even more lopsided.) – N8KH*

ROVER LOGGING

*Logging requirements for rovers should be specified. There is nothing that states that the
actual time of a contact must be logged. I feel this leads to some creative logging. While
more logging requirements would pose a danger to a rover in motion, I think that
allowing more operator/drivers could make this a more viable and safe action. – KG7P*

ROVER RULES

*Rover rules have been the topic of discussion for several years as well as creating some
controversy. In the grand scheme of things, Rovers only account for less than 20 percent*

of the stations that participate. It is the other areas that need improving. Rovers will not make or break the VHF contest! –WB2AMU

ROVING

I enjoy working the contests with a mobile/Rover setup that is an EVERYDAY, permanent installation on my vehicle. There should be some restriction or penalty assessed towards to the "Temporary" installations out there, the SUV's with multiple Yagis temporarily lashed to the roof, etc. A Mobile station should be a Mobile station, not a moving antenna farm that will be disassembled at the end of the contest. A 'portable' station is that, one that needs to be disassembled at point one, then reassembled at point two prior to operation. A true permanent-mobile installation should not have to compete against a moving portable one. Maybe this means there should be different classes of Rovers. –N1KPW

Most of your questions relate to rovers. Roving has caused a decrease in fixed station operation in the northwest in my opinion. If the trend continues, the VHF/UHF contests will be rovers only. I am thinking there needs to be separate rover contests and separate weak signal contests. –KF7CQ

RULES, GENERAL

Yes, inappropriate rules should be eliminated. Specifically, in the 10 GHz and Up contest, the "24 Hour" rule is unnecessary (They don't have this rule in the low band contests) and the rule that says that a particular transmitter can ONLY be used by one operator (callsign) except for the "Family Rule" during the whole contest is ridiculous! There are many instances where someone can only work one day of the contest or only one weekend and that radio could be loaned to someone who is available the rest of the time. Why are we penalizing the radio and extra (needed) participation in the contest. Stupid rules, dump them! –WA6CGR

Let's keep the rules to a minimum and simple to understand. –K7YO

SPOTTING

In rural areas contacts are few and require more luck than skill in coordinating potential contacts unless scheduled in advance. REMOVE THE RESTRICTION FOR INTERNET SPOTTING AND REALTIME SCHEDULING. –W7MY

TIME

I would like to see the ARRL VHF contests start earlier, i.e. 1200z instead of 1800z. I have seen several contest where 6m was open early in the morning but had closed by the time contest time came. Maybe even run the contest from 1200 am local Saturday to 1200 am Monday. This would open up possible early morning MS contacts that otherwise would be missed. –WAØYPL

Would rather start on Friday evening or earlier on Saturday. –N9BD

Limit total number of operating hours over a contest weekend. –KM5OL

Summary

A tremendous amount of effort went into the answers provided in this survey, not just the multiple-choice answers, but the volumes of individual comments that testers provided. VHF and microwave testers are a passionate bunch and it would be a shame to not take advantage of all of these great thoughts on testing. My sincere wish is that the ARRL volunteers tasked with oversight of the VHF tests take the time to read these comments and apply them to any endeavors to alter the rules, fashion new rules and promote testing. I realize that there is a significant volume of information here and we all thank you for taking the time to read it!

73,
Steve, N5AC

INDEX

10 GHz AND UP, **53**
AA1AA, 55, 64
AA2JZ, 30
AA5AM, 21, 42
AA6HA, 60
AAØKW, 62, 63, 66
AB2KT, 52
ACTIVITY, **53**
AE5T, 49
AF1T, 66
AF6O, 17
AF8Z, 62
ALIVE, 24
Analysis, 13
APRS, 20
ARRL Division, 11
ASSISTANCE, **55**
BANDS, **55**
BEHAVIOR, **56**
CALLING
 FREQUENCIES, **57**
Captive Rovers, 31
CATEGORIES,
 POWER, **66**
CATEGORIES/CLASS
 ES, **58**
certificates, 46
CHANGES, **60**
CONTACT
 SCHEDULING, **60**
CONTEST
 SCHEDULING, **60**
COVERAGE, **61**
DIGITAL, **61**
DX, **61**
 elmering, 39
FAMILY RULE, **61**
Florida Weak Signal
 Society, 9
Foreword, 2
FREQUENCIES, **62**
GENERAL, **62**
Grid Circling, 13
handicap, 43
have a say, 35
IMPLEMENTATION,
 64

INTEGRATE
 RULINGS, **64**
Joe 706 class, 28
K1DS, 9, 25
K1EP, 38
K1JT, 38
K1MAP, 60
K1TEO, 14, 54
K1WHS, 51, 59
K1ZE, 40
K2HIZ, 54
K2SIX, 57
K2TR, 27, 38
K3DD, 55, 61
K3DNE, 35, 52
K3LFO, 52
K3MM, 35
K3TUF, 53, 66
K3UHF, 16, 45, 52
K4CSO, 49
K4FJW, 59
K4HV, 9, 60
K4JSI, 55
K4RSV, 9
K4TO, 66
K5LLL, 52
K5QE, 25, 28, 33, 46,
 49
K5RHR, 63
K5VH, 45
K6EU, 52
K6FV, 53
K6JEY, 23, 40, 44, 51
K6NC, 23
K6VCR, 17
K7CW, 44
K7IDX, 64
K7MDL, 26, 40, 65
K7RAT, 14, 33, 54
K7RJ, 53
K7TM, 8
K7XC, 15, 41, 42, 44,
 56, 63
K7YO, 8, 67
K8XK, 16, 20, 23, 27,
 34, 40, 45
K9AKS, 44, 59
K9IJ, 40

K9KL, 50
K9MU, 58
K9PW, 49
K9RQ, 49
K9RZZ, 26, 56
K9ZF, 55
KA5DWI, 54, 57
KB3GJT, 65
KB7DQH, 26
KB8U, 14, 22, 33, 62
KBØCIM, 44
KBØFHP, 63
KBØG, 62
KC9BQA, 34, 54
KCØVKD, 61
KD5SHM, 47
KD7TXG, 58
KE3HT, 63
KE4YYD, 52
KE7V, 25
KF7CN, 8
KF7CQ, 67
KF9US, 29, 53
KFØQ, 15, 58
KG5HSQ, 29
KG6ONE, 17, 26
KG6TCV, 57
KG7P, 67
KI4NPV, 9
KI5DR, 54
KJ1K, 34
KJ6NO, 25
KL7UW, 51
KM5OL, 67
KMØF, 45
KMØT, 65, 66
KØNR, 15, 30, 40, 45,
 63
KØPG, 15, 62
KØSHF, 54
KØSQ, 34
KØVXM, 9, 60, 66
KØYW, 51
KRØU, 16, 20, 27, 40,
 60
KT1J, 59
KU7M, 65
LENGTH, **64**

LOGGING, **64**
 MISC, **65**
 MODES AND
 DIGITAL, **61**
 Mt. Airy VHF Radio
 Club, 9
 N1FGY, 54
 N1JFU, 36
 N1KPW, 17, 27, 35, 53,
 64, 67
 N1MU, 15, 27, 45
 N2LBT, 63
 N2SLN, 44, 50
 N3IQ, 27, 63
 N4FLM, 47, 66
 N4OFA, 15, 56
 N5AC, 3, 68
 N5SXA, 53
 N5XMV, 56
 N6VHF, 45
 N7AU, 8
 N7CFO, 8
 N7DB, 51
 N7EPD, 60
 N7IR, 61
 N7SS, 8, 11, 17, 23, 66
 N8KH, 9, 17, 46, 66
 N9BD, 67
 N9DG, 48, 61
 N9JIM, 48
 N9JK, 61
 N9KC, 15, 51
 N9LAG, 59
 NAØIA, 14
 ND3F, 27, 55, 63
new operator, 41
 NG9R, 59
 NJ2F, 59
 NM5M, 8
 NN4AA, 9, 60
 NØAKC, 15, 51, 54
 NØDQS, 17, 23, 26, 41,
 45
 NØLL, 54
North Texas
 Microwave
 Society, 8
 NØVZJ, 59
 NØWBW, 55
 NØYGM, 64
 NX9O, 40, 42, 43, 46

Pacific Northwest
 VHF Society, 8
 Pack Rat VHF
 Contesting, 9
Pack roving, 22
 Participants, 7
 PLAQUES, **65**
population density, 43
 PORTABLE
 OPERATION, **65**
 POWER, **66**
 POWER SOURCE, **66**
QRP, 29
 Question 10, 24
 Question 11, 29
 Question 12, 31
 Question 13, 35
 Question 14, 37
 Question 15, 38
 Question 16, 39
 Question 17, 41
 Question 18, 43
 Question 19, 46
 Question 20, 48
 Question 6, 13
 Question 7, 13
 Question 8, 20
 Question 9, 22
 questions, 4
 Representation, 11
RESULTS, **66**
 rover certificates, 46
ROVER LOGGING, **66**
 rover occupation, 24
ROVER RULES, **67**
 rovers, captive, 31
ROVING, **67**
rules, 35
RULES, GENERAL,
 67
SCORING, **48**
 spotting. *See* APRS
SPOTTING, **67**
 Summary, 68
 Survey, 4
 Teams, Analysis, 7
TIME, **67**
 VA3CDD, 15, 25, 32,
 34, 40, 47, 56
 Validity, 11

VE3OIL, 14, 20, 26, 34,
 40, 42, 47
 VE3TFU, 50
 VE7DXG, 8
VUAC representative,
 37
VUAC, contacted by,
 38
 W1MKY, 66
 W1RT, 35, 53
 W2EV, 17, 21, 23, 25,
 30, 35, 36, 42, 46
 W2TTT, 30, 42
 W3FEY, 49
 W3GAD, 17
 W3IY, 33
 W3QO, 9
 W3TMZ, 34
 W3UUM, 33
 W3XO, 48
 W3ZZ, 27, 41, 50, 64
 W4HP, 58
 W4KXY, 38
 W4RXR, 50
 W4SC, 49
 W4TXS, 56, 58
 W4TXS/N8AG, 20, 25
 W4VND, 9
 W4WA, 55
 W5AK, 52
 W5ZF, 57
 W6GMT, 59
 W6OAL, 47
 W6OUU, 15, 44, 51
 W7, 66
 W7BX, 27, 33, 40, 43
 W7DHC, 8, 38
 W7HR, 57
 W7MY, 67
 W7USB, 64
 W8GKA, 62
 W9FZ, 25, 51, 53
 W9GA, 40, 58
 W9SZ, 56
 W9XA, 38
 WA1HCO, 63
 WA2GFP, 34
 WA2VOI, 15, 26, 36,
 64
 WA3GFZ, 35
 WA3NUF, 60

WA6CGR, 67
WA6JBD, 62
WA6KLK, 20, 45, 51,
57, 59
WA7TZY, 26, 41
WA8ZBT, 61
WA8ZBT/W5ROK, 29
WAØYPL, 67
WB2AMU, 30, 60, 64,
67
WB4BKC, 9
WB4GCS, 54
WB4IXU, 65

WB4SLM, 55, 61
WB5KIA, 41, 55
WB5ZDP, 66
WB6FFC, 47
WB8BZK, 25
WB8TGY, 53
WD9EXD, 42, 45, 47
WDØACD, 54
WE9Y, 35
WF4R, 56
WO9U, 53
WØAH, 52
WØEEA, 61, 64

WØETT, 17, 29, 35, 46,
47, 53
WØGSK, 57
WØKU, 55
WØOZL, 46
WØPHD, 49
WØZQ, 38
WVØH, 60
WW1M, 24
WW8RR, 49
WZ1V, 61
youth participants, 39