

ARRL VUAC Committee Executive Report

To The ARRL Board of Directors

January 2012

Respectfully submitted by:
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VUAC Committee Chairman

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The VUAC was tasked by the P&SC to make recommendations to encourage, explore and expand the ARRL VHF and UHF contests and other operating activities by using the multi-band and multi-mode capabilities of modern transceivers and related equipment.

By way of a public survey the VUAC focused on 2 popular suggestions that we believe would attract new participants who have modern multi-band and/or multi-mode equipment into ARRL V/UHF contests. The following two proposals were submitted for review.

1. A new operating category could be added to the allowable entry categories for the January, June, & September VHF contests to accommodate those operators of modern HF transceivers that are increasingly equipped with the three most popular V/UHF bands: 50, 144, & 432 MHz. The category can be described as Single-Op Three Band (SO3B) for use on 50, 144, & 432 MHz. Recommended power limits are 100W PEP for 50 and 144 MHz; 50W PEP on 432 MHz. For the full wording and rationale of this proposal see Attachment One.
2. The Single Operator category could be expanded to include a Single Operator FM Only category to attract the large pool of modern multi-band FM transceiver users. The bands proposed for this category are 50, 146, 223, & 440 MHz with power limited to 100W. For the full wording and rationale of this proposal see Attachment Two.

While fully exploring the assigned task the VUAC was drawn to several other related topics that we consider worthy of additional work and discussion. Below are some of those topics.

- Given the huge influx of HF radios that now include 6m, much time was spent discussing means of bridging 6m and HF contests in an effort to attract new V/UHF contesters from the HF side. Suggestions included a 6m option within the 10m contest, a stand alone 6m contest, or a 6m overlay contest during Field Day.
- Much time was also spent exploring both fair and effective ways of reducing club radius restrictions to further expand club participation. These distance restrictions for Local Clubs also place a burden on their rovers when the rovers travel beyond the allowed club radius. Roving seems vital to V/UHF contest growth and relaxation of the radius restrictions needs study.
- Use of assistance (internet, cell phone, via repeater, etc) continued to be a topic of interest when comparing with similar acceptance in HF contests. The VUAC would like to further explore this topic.

- General relaxation/modernization of VHF+ contest rules aimed at increasing the fun level and generating more activity was a popular topic. The current three tiered contest rule structure is seen as complex for some new contest entrants.
- Several on the VUAC (including this chairman) feel very strongly that rover rules need a fine tuning. Considering the impact of rovers to the success of V/UHF contests, creative ideas to further promote the fun and art of roving without the inequality of classing rover teams with traditional (stand-alone) rovers needs further attention.
- Debate continued on the feasibility of increasing September VHF contest activity through allowing alternate scoring methods. Currently the ARRL VHF & UHF contests are scored by grids times QSO points. The debate is whether introducing distance scoring into one contest, as an option only, would generate activity. Distance scoring is found in the ARRL 10GHz & Up contest as well as in both microwave and HF contests supported by other sponsors.

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Attachment One

Rationale for Single-Op Three Band Operating Category

Motion reads: That the ARRL add the following new section to the "General Rules for ARRL Contests Above 50 MHz"

2.1.3 Single-Op Three Band (SO3B):

- 2.1.3.1 Operation is on 50, 144, and 432 MHz only.
- 2.1.3.2 Power limits on any band may not exceed the following
 - 2.1.3.2.1 50 MHz and 144 MHz -- 100 watts PEP
 - 2.1.3.2.2 432 MHz -- 50 watts PEP

In support of this proposed rule change, a new operating category would be added to the allowable "Entry Categories" for the January, June, and September VHF contests.

Rationale: Modern HF radios now commonly include the 6m band. 2m and 70cm are often included as well. Not so long ago to reach those bands dedicated V/UHF radios or transverters were required. Although 160m through 70cm radios have become both common and popular, the ARRL VHF contest rules have remained the same. Single Operator (SO) class is not delineated by the number of bands but by output power (Low Power and High Power). Overlooked is the operator who may own a modern HF radio capable of the 6m, 2m, and 70cm bands that cannot be competitive against SOLP contest operators capable of many bands. Current rules may be ignoring a new and growing group of operators who have limited bands and ability or incentive to compete. The purpose of the Single-Op Three Band (SO3B) category is to encourage this growing group to explore and expand their amateur radio experiences in the world above 50MHz.

Attachment Two

Rationale for FM-only Category

Motion reads: That the "ARRL General Rules for ARRL Contests Above 50 MHz" be modified by expanding the Single Operator category with the following section:

2.1.3 Single Operator FM Only.

All contacts made using FM mode only. See 1.7, 1.8, and 1.9 above for rules relating to FM.

2.1.3.1 Bands include 50, 146, 223, and 440 MHz.

2.1.3.2 Power output on any band is not to exceed 100 watts.

2.1.3.3 Operation can be from any one fixed location such as a home station, portable location, or hill top.

Rationale: Many new hams are introduced to the hobby via "FM clubs" focused on the FM mode. Radio manufacturers direct much attention to this group. A review of recent QSTs reveals a very high percentage of advertising for multi-band FM only radios which account for a large pool of transceivers in use today. To attract new contesters, this proposed rule change would encourage such radio owners to expand their knowledge and experience with V/UHF contesting. The present ARRL V/UHF contest rules structure does not encourage the use of the FM mode. Limiting power to 100W and bands to 50, 146, 223, and 440 MHz could allow FM participants to be competitive without requiring transverters or external power amplifiers. A well equipped FM-only contester could own a modern HF+ 6m radio plus a tri-band FM-only radio.

The open poll of V/UHF contesters conducted earlier this year indicated support for an FM operating category as well.