

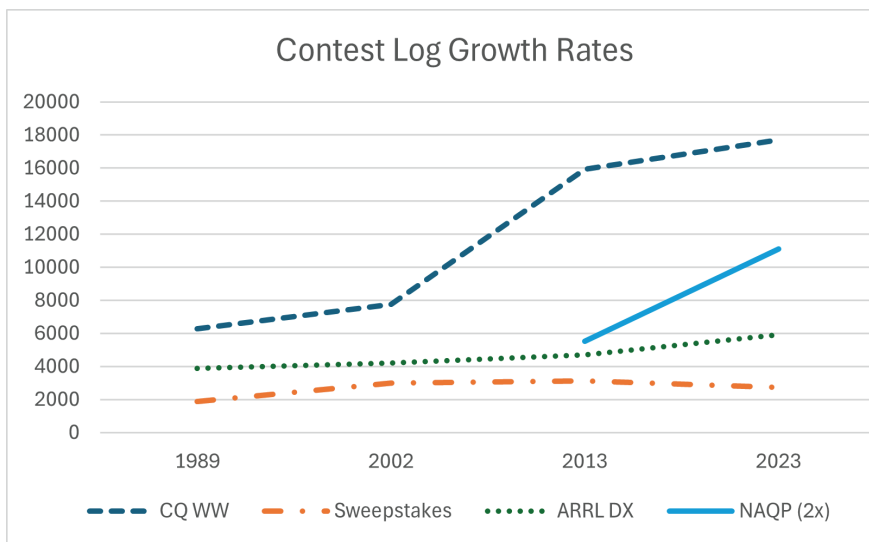
## From the Editor

I'm going to combine two New Year's traditions into one and call this column "New Year's Resolution to Enhance the State of the Contesting Union." That, of course, requires answering the question, "What is the state of the contesting 'union'?"

By most quantitative metrics, contesting is growing. WA7BNM's Contest Calendar shows over 700 contests. Randy Thompson, K5ZD, published log counts for CQ WW going all the way back to 1948 (<https://cqww.com/stats-by-cat.htm>). I decided to look at the numbers for 2023 and the two previous solar cycle peaks in 2013 and 2002, then threw in 1989 since that was the first for the Assisted category, driven by the emergence of packet clusters and CT logging software. (I was too lazy to subtract Explorer, Check Logs, and DQs, so the numbers are slightly overstated.)

ARRL Contest Program Manager Paul Bourque, N1SFE, gave me the equivalent log counts for ARRL DX and Sweepstakes. There is no NAQP data before 2006 but Bruce Horn, WA7BNM, provided log counts for 2023 and 2013. NAQP is a bit of an odd duck, as it also includes a RTTY leg and runs twice per year. But the goal is to look at growth trends, not compare total entries. The graph gives us a quick glance at the past 20 years.

From 2002 to 2013, CQ WW logs doubled and NAQP logs did the same from 2013 to 2023. The ARRL DX test had a slower but steady growth rate across that 20-year span.



Sweepstakes was flat for a decade, then started to decline.

Some thoughts on what this limited set of data is telling us:

- "Everyone works everyone" contests are definitely more popular than "everyone works the host country." This has been proven in national contests that have switched formats.
- The state of the contesting union is strong. Both domestic and DX contests are growing. State QSO parties and WPX seem to also be showing strong growth, as are digital contests.
- Sweepstakes is the outlier.

In the late '80s and early '90s, I was an op at the W3LPL multi-multi and Frank had old copies of *NCJ* around that I'd read on shift breaks. A frequent letter to the editor back then (over 40 years ago!) was complaining

about SSSS, *Sweepstakes Sunday Slog Snoozefest*, caused by the "work once per contest" rule. I think in recent years skimmers and SO2R have worsened the Sunday slog, as Sweep chasers are done even earlier than in the old days.

Most contests change over time and maybe it is time to look at changing the Sweepstakes rules. Heck, in recent years, major league baseball put in a pitch clock and the NFL radically changed kickoffs.

So, the resolution is to think of other ideas to keep contesting log counts, fun levels, and the fundamental challenge of putting together a big score growing, and to contact contest sponsors with your suggestions. Here's one: banning cut numbers from everywhere except the NN in 5NN...