

**Report of the Ad Hoc HF Band Planning Committee
ARRL Board of Directors
July 2012**

5 MHz R&O effective 5 March 2012

Not long after our January board meeting it was learned the 60 Meter Report and Order effective date would be early March. On February 24 staff – principally Steve Ford and Dan Henderson – posted a 60 Meter Recommended Guidelines document to the website. This was formulated by WB8IMY with input from our committee, CTO Price and Counsel Imlay. Excepting a few eager beaver early operations and some transmissions off the channel centers, inauguration of the new power, mode and channel assignment privileges came off well. The first couple days were chaotic with heavy loading but as the novelty factor was quenched things settled in.

Changed sentiment at NTIA re modes In mid-March internet rumblings were surfacing that opined ARRL's operating suggestions were far more stringent than necessary as per allowed modes. Since 2006, when ARRL first asked NTIA to relieve operating restrictions on these channels, NTIA had been specifically asked for, and specifically approved in writing, the use of USB, CW, PSK31 and Pactor III emissions ONLY. Because of the sensitivity of government agencies which actively use the 60 meter band regarding access to the channels on short notice, and because amateur operations at 60 meters are likely to be scrutinized in advance of WRC-15's consideration of an allocation, ARRL's recommendations to limit Amateur emissions to those actually approved by NTIA was appropriately conservative. NTIA's modified position on mode selection was thus no small surprise. It came in the form of a March 18 email from NTIA's Stephen Veader to K7DB, (which was widely distributed by K3UK), stating that NTIA only required the emissions be ≤ 2.8 kHz wide, fit the emission designator, and be centered on channel centers. Amateurs must be prepared to QRT upon USB notification by government users.

CEO Sumner confirmed this information with NTIA's Karl Nebbia. While there are good and important reasons to remain extra vigilant and protect our good sharing track record, it was felt we should relax our constraints on recommended modes in view of NTIA's changed view. Not long after the NTIA confirmation we switched our website's mode advice content to the following:

- The Report and Order also allows the use of modes that comply with emission designator 2K80J2D, which includes any digital mode with a bandwidth of 2.8 kHz or less whose technical characteristics have been documented publicly, per Part 97.309(4) of the FCC Rules. Such modes would include PACTOR I, II or III, 300-baud packet, MFSK, MT63, Contestia, Olivia, DominoEX and others.

Aftermath from NTIA's relaxed position The manner in which this played out is unfortunate, but the result -- greater flexibility in authorized operating modes -- is a gain. The idea of contacting NTIA and/or FCC to confirm their long-standing dictates prior to the effective date was considered and rejected. This was obviously not the best decision and could be borne in mind when a similar long-in-the-tooth issue comes up again.

With these factors, as well as FCC's imprecise wording in the R&O and preceding documents, Steve Ford did yeoman service formulating our position in the operating practices document, then relaxing it, and getting word out both via our website and QST. Dan Henderson, who as Regulatory Information manager was the ostensible author, nimbly fielded questions and brought concerns to our attention. The committee notes our thanks to them as well as Brennan Price, Chris Imlay and Dave Sumner.

Future work at 5 MHz Our suggestion to occupy channels from the bottom up with cw/digital, and top-down with USB should be reviewed from time to time in light of actual usage patterns. Any persistent trends should be looked at as an opportunity to fine tune or adjust ARRL's suggestions. More globally, the committee and entire board need to remain aware that it would be wonderful to obtain a contiguous allocation at 60 Meters, and that such an allocation is a possible outcome of WRC-15. As an interim accommodation it would be desirable spectrum efficiency-wise to be allowed multiple sub-channels for cw and data operation within single channels. Near to mid-term, chances of being successful with this are dubious.

Other HF concerns A couple stakeholders have encouraged us to consider recommending an expansion of the 75 Meter DX Window, in light of greatly expanded 75 Meter voice privileges. This is a back-burner item which we are cognizant of but not yet of a mind to actively consider.

Respectfully submitted,

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