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SUBJECT	Spectrum Management & Contests		
Society	RSGB	Country:	UK
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## Introduction

Whilst contesting is both popular and is an important component of the hobby in terms of pushing forward developments in both the technology and operating skill, it continues to attract criticism for the congestion that it causes on some of the HF bands. The recommendation DV05\_C4\_Rev\_07 from the last Conference that non-contesting radio amateurs use the 30, 17 and 12m bands fails to meet the needs of those, particularly SSB operators, who would normally want to use the propagation available on 80 and 40m. This proposal is for a relatively simple addition to contest management that does not imply additional restrictions to contest operation. It should quickly change operating habits for the majority of contests that Region 1 Member Societies organise and limit the congestion due to contesting to a few weekends a year when the most popular and widely entered contests are run.

It is hoped that the other Regions will note such action by Region 1 and efforts made to manage in a similar fashion so that a general overall improvement is achieved, even perhaps with the largest of contests.

## **Background**

Conference agreed at Tel Aviv, 1996, that Member Societies shall include information about contest free segments in their contest rules. The need for stating frequency segments in the rules for a contest has been written into the "Guidelines for Contests" chapter for the Region 1 HF Manager's Handbook. This amended chapter, proposed by the RSGB, was approved at the Region 1 Interim Conference in February 2007. It is expected to be formally approved at this Conference. Whilst the practice of stating frequency segments for contests is now fairly common, there is a question over the extent to which any action is taken to put this particular rule into effect. Certainly, some contests are already quite effectively self-policed during the contest itself, but it is less clear that for others action is taken such as alerting, or perhaps penalising, stations during the adjudication process. Because of this, adherence to the specified frequency rule for contests is not consistent and some involved in the contests either are not aware that frequency rules are in place for a specific contest, or if they are, they perhaps feel that they can ignore the rule, thus inadvertently causing the contest to impact to the non-contester in a way that the contest organiser sought to avoid.

The problem that this proposal seeks to address can be seen by considering the 2007 IARU World Championship HF Contest. During an 80-minute period of monitoring of the bands 160m to 40m some 46 stations were found to be operating outside the frequency segments laid down in the contest's rule 6.3. Most of these were from a handful of stations "running" on a frequency; it was of concern to see several HQ stations in this category! By addressing the stations "running" it could be expected that the bulk of the spill over from the frequency segment agreed for the rules could have been eliminated. That HQ stations were in this small group is significant as one might expect these to use the best available equipment and experienced operators. It suggests that many contesters

perhaps do not check the rules closely enough. Perhaps they are used to checking for the contest exchange, multipliers, etc, not realising that frequency rules have perhaps been put into place. Certainly, for this particular contest, organised by ARRL, the frequency rule is somewhat hidden away!

Although monitoring of Region 1 organised contests has not been systematically undertaken a similar picture was found by looking briefly at one of the RSGB's larger contests. Monitoring the RSGB's 2007 IOTA Contest for 3 hours produced 71 stations operating outside the frequency segments in the bands 80m to 20m. The main problems were SSB and CW incursions into the datamode segments, and a lack of adherence on 80m CW to the contest rule stipulating the use of "contest preferred segments. In recent years the RSGB has been applying some checks on the frequency rule for this contest and for the offenders some warnings, and even penalties have been issued. Of the 71 QSOs logged most were later confirmed during the adjudication process.

A number of RSGB contests, like those of some other national societies, are quite effectively self-policed during the operation of the contest. This should be encouraged in order to spread the appropriate behaviour and contain the contests within the planned frequency segments. However, RSGB considers that this may not be enough, particularly for contests where the contest has a more international appeal. Some other means of putting the frequency rules into effect, with perhaps a range of responses to those considered to be operating outside the contest frequency rules needs to be developed.

Whilst it is not the purpose of this proposal to stipulate how contest organisers should put their frequency-segmenting rule for their contests into effect, a few thoughts on the task are worth considering. With computerised logging more commonplace, and some contesting logging programs including frequency in the data capture, contest adjudicators may now have some scope for checks than a few years ago. However, this approach is perhaps open to contest logs being edited prior to submission, and it would seem wrong to stipulate frequency as a mandatory requirement in contest logs. Another approach might be to selectively monitor short periods of a contest. This may only need to be done on a sample basis, as the behavioural change required will come from the deterrent effect rather than through rigorous monitoring of the majority of contest QSOs. A suitable monitoring file format could be produced that could be merged with the contesters' logs to allow possible frequency segment irregularities to be spotted during the adjudication process. False positives, due to stations taking on another's identity and seeking to discredit another entrant by operating outside the approved frequency segments, would be easily picked up by analysis of the merged monitoring file with the contesters' logs.

This proposal also does not cover what outcome should be applied for frequency segment infringements – it needs to be merely sufficient to encourage better operating practice. It is possible that some warning e-mails, etc, might be enough followed up perhaps another year with penalties if a warning a previous year is ignored. Importantly, the proposal does not specify how contest organisers set the frequency segments for their contests. The RSGB, like a majority of other national societies within Region 1 remain firmly against proposal that might seek to change "Contest Preferred Segments" from their current "guideline" status to that of a "mandatory" status.

## Recommendation

The Committee recommends that Region 1 Member Societies check and put into effect rules that relate to frequency usage for the HF contests that they organise, and that Region 1 Executive considers encouraging other IARU Regions to adopt a similar approach.