



ARRL Programs and Services Committee (PSC) Report to the Board of Directors – July 2023

The Programs and Services Committee is pleased to present this report to the ARRL Board of Directors covering PSC activities for the first six months of calendar year 2023. The PSC met in-person in Windsor, CT, on January 19, 2023, (scheduled meeting), and via Zoom virtual calls on March 2, 2023 (special meeting related to Field Day rules only), and May 11, 2023 (scheduled meeting).

ARRL By-law 39:

The Programs and Services Committee shall:

- Create and modify services and programs, and advise the Chief Executive Officer re same, that address and support DX awards, contests, radio sport, W1AW, W1AW services, Logbook of The World and the incoming and outgoing QSL bureau services;
- Create and modify services and programs, and advise the Chief Executive Officer re same, that address and support, volunteer examiners, Volunteer Counsel, Volunteer Consulting Engineers, and educational initiatives;
- Evaluate and recommend awards recipients to the Board for outstanding volunteer service or outstanding achievement;
- Recommend the creation or modification of Board policy that relates to or affects matters for which the Programs and Services Committee has responsibility.

Voting PSC members for 2023:

Director Lippert, ACOW (also Board CAC Liaison)
Director Luetzelschwab, K9LA (also Board DXAC Liaison)
Director McIntyre K6WX
Director Ritz, W7VO, (Committee Chair)
Director Zygielbaum, KOAIZ
Vice Director Nelson, WOND
Vice Director Temples, K9HI
Vice Director Propper, K2DP (PSC Secretary)

2nd Vice President Vallio, W6RGG, (PSC Officer Liaison)

Non-Voting PSC members for 2023:

Mr. Jahnke, W9JJ, ARRL Radiosport and Regulatory Information Manager

Mr. Naumann, W5OV, ARRL Operations Manager (Staff Liaison)

The following are highlights from the three PSC meetings held during the period:

Awards:

The only award vetted by PSC and approved by the full ARRL Board during the period was the “2022 ARRL Doug DeMaw, W1FB, Technical Excellence Award”, which went to John Stanley, K4ERO, for his article “Return Loss Explained, and Why Should We Care” published in the November 2022 issue of QST Magazine.

In the January 2023 PSC meeting it was announced that there are new applications forms available for both 902 MHz and 2304 Worked All States (WAS) awards.

CAC/Contesting:

The PSC continues to be working cohesively with the Contest Advisory Committee, (CAC), under the hand of CAC Chair Craig Thompson, K9CT, and with Director Lippert, ACOW, serving as the ARRL Board Liaison. The PSC Chair continues to be happy with how the CAC is currently functioning, and the CAC e-mail reflector remains very active as they discuss the issues among themselves. They continue to be very cautious regarding ARRL contest rule changes and continue to provide the PSC only their “full consensus” opinions and recommendations for consideration.

Highlights of CAC consensus activities during this first six-month timeframe include:

- Adding new “limited antenna” categories to all ARRL sponsored contests.
- Elimination of aggregate scoring for the DX contests, originally put in place in reaction to COVID restrictions on “in-person” multi-op efforts.
- Recreation of the “VHF Clubs Enhanced Gavel Program,” except now actual gavels are at an extra cost option to certificates.
- Implemented three rule changes for the VHF contests:
 - Adding the 902 and 1296 MHz bands to the Single Operator FM (SOFM) category
 - Clarified a rule to state that for a rover’s score to be included in a club’s score that the rover must have made contacts from somewhere within the club’s territory during the contest.
 - In respect to changing technologies for weak signal work, changing the distance requirements for point-to-point contacts from 1 km to 5 km.
- Implementation of “distance based” scoring for the *ARRL 10 GHz and Up* contest.

It is recommended for further information on CAC current activities, please reference the July 2023 Board meeting Document #22, “Contest Advisory Committee Semi-Annual Report.”

Field Day:

In the January 2023 PSC meeting decisions were finalized for what ARRL Field Day rules would look like for the year. The first step of this process was for the PSC to reach a consensus regarding our position on defining what “Field Day” is: “Field Day is whatever you want it to be. It can be a serious contest, a

casual operating event, mostly a club social event, or an emcomm exercise.” We also tried to ensure FD inclusivity for those whose health or life circumstances keep them from participating in their club’s efforts located out “in the field,” or just cannot get out of the house for FD but still want to have meaningful participation. Those mantras drove PSC FD decisions for 2023:

- Keep “aggregate scoring,” where club members who cannot physically assist a club participating in an actual FD effort “in the field” can add their home station’s scores to a club score.
- A flattening of the mode point scoring to two points per QSO at the Low Power level for all modes: CW, Phone and Digital. There are now more CW contacts made during FD than SSB or digital modes, and digital activity has dramatically increased with the advent of FT8. Due to the above, it was thought by the committee that the original purpose of enhancing scoring for FD CW and digital mode contacts as enacted in 1974 no longer applies. (Put into place to keep “SSB from taking over FD”) as published in QST. The thought also was that flattening out the scoring might drive some FD efforts off FT8, and back to SSB.

(Note that after significant member pushback, primarily from large East coast contest clubs, specialty CW organizations, and from many CW enthusiasts, (some of whom threatened to cancel their ARRL membership over the issue), this change was reversed in the Special PSC meeting of March 2, 2023. That was the only agenda item in that meeting.

- Continue to allow Class D (home stations, commercial power) to get point credit for other Class D stations worked, and publish only Class A, B, C and F in QST and Classes D and E only on the ARRL website.
- Created a modified “High Power” category, limited to 500 watts, rather than the pre-pandemic 1,500 watts level.
- Provided scoring incentives for Field Day stations to put more effort into FD “Getting On The Air” (GOTA) operating positions by enhancing the point structures and adding a point bonus for full time live mentoring at GOTA stations.
- Recommended to staff that ARRL host a member “design the next FD logo” contest for 2024 to solicit more input on FD logo designs and increase member engagement. The plan is to continue the contest if proven successful.

DXCC/DXAC:

Under the direction of DXAC Chair Chris Shalvoy, K2CS, and with Director Luetzelschwab, K9LA, as Board DXAC Liaison, the group has been much more active as of late. (As an aside, both Carl and I had a personal meeting with Chris at the last Dayton Hamvention, where Chris outlined his thoughts and plans regarding the committee. We both came away with a positive outlook moving forward).

While they worked on several considerations brought to them in the first six months of the year, only the following was actionable by the PSC:

- The inclusion of a “RTTY Only DXCC” certificate program, (verses just “digital”), but only available upon request of the applicant.

- The consideration of a full review of DXCC rules in 2025 (last done in 2005). The purpose of this effort is to figure out how to attract new hams to the ARRL Honor Roll program, which is believed to be currently unachievable for hams that have recently started the quest. This is due to political and environmental concerns and resultant limitations for many rare entities.

It is recommended for further information on DXAC current activities, please reference the July 2023 Board meeting Document #23, "DX Advisory Committee Semi-Annual Report."

LoTW:

No separate PSC activity in the preceding six months related to LoTW. LoTW is currently under the direction of the separate LoTW Committee under Chair Widin, K0GW, and ARRL Board Liaison Baker, N4MB.

The Clean Signal Initiative Committee:

The Clean Signal Initiative Committee is continuing to work well together, and the program continues to gain traction. While the committee is officially under the direction of ARRL staff, Director Ritz, W7VO, who continues to serve as PSC Liaison, and a voting member of the committee.

The CSI committee, chaired under recently retired ARRL Lab Manager Ed Hare, W1RFI, now has representative members from all the major US and Japanese manufacturers of amateur radio HF transceivers. The committee continues to meet virtually via Zoom monthly, with sessions lasting about two hours each. Over the last six months many of the proposed benchmark templates have been debated and decided upon, and soon they will evolve into an official standard utilizing an Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) template.

At the Hamvention at Dayton in May, the program was kicked off formally by featuring a large posterboard display and handing out small "CSI" badges to visitors located at the ARRL Lab booth. CSI committee members and Lab staff wore large "Ask Me About CSI" badges to stir conversations with members.

In June ARRL published a three-page article in QST magazine highlighting the new CSI program, to positive reviews.

ARRL participation in the President's Volunteer Service Award program:

Early last year the PSC approved ARRL staff looking into whether it would be feasible for ARRL to become a certifying organization in the *President's Volunteer Service Award* program.

For the uninitiated, a program description from their website: <https://presidentalserviceawards.gov/>:

"In 2003, the *President's Council on Service and Civic Participation* founded the *President's Volunteer Service Award* to recognize the important role of volunteers in America's strength and national identity. This award honors individuals whose service positively impacts communities in every corner of the nation and inspires those around them to take action, too. The PVSA has continued under each administration, honoring the volunteers who are using their time and talents to solve some of the toughest challenges facing our nation.

Led by the AmeriCorps and managed in partnership with Points of Light, this program allows Certifying Organizations to recognize their most exceptional volunteers.”

It was determined quite a while ago by ARRL staff that the program was both worthwhile and feasible, however implementation of this program by HQ has been lagging, and still is. The reasons provided in prior PSC meetings have been related to Personify implementation and IT staffing limitations. With a new Director of IT now in place, it is hoped and expected that Bob Naumann, W5OV, will be providing the PSC a new update during the July 2023 PSC meeting.

Open Topics for Future PSC Discussion:

- How to handle with the potential use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology in contesting.
- Whether new rule changes for Field Day 2024 are necessary..
- How to handle the use of VARA and other potential “hybrid digital technologies” in ARRL awards, where there is a possibility that some of the contact for an award is accomplished via the internet, not totally “over the air”.
- When the ARRL “Volunteers On The Air” operating event is concluded, what other member-engaging operating events should be planned for the 2025-2026 timeframe?

The Programs and Services Committee would like to sincerely thank the ARRL Board and Staff for their unwavering support of the committee’s work during this period. We all look forward to continuing our efforts in assisting the ARRL in fulfilling its mission: “To advance the art, science, and enjoyment of Amateur Radio.”

Respectfully submitted:

Mike Ritz, W7VO

Chair, ARRL Programs and Services Committee, on behalf of the Committee