

**Contest Advisory Committee
Semi-Annual Report**

**For the American Radio Relay League
Board of Director's Meeting**

January 2026

**Craig Thompson, K9CT
Chairman, CAC
craig@k9ct.us
309 251 9805**

Overview:

CAC has been discussing possible changes to Sweepstakes in the last couple of months. This followed a noticeable reduction in past contest log submissions and online comments following the CW weekend.

Most of our discussions take place online in our discussion group. The CAC members report our activities to their respective board members. Our liaison to the PSC is Tom Frenaye, K1KI and he is kept updated, monitors our discussions and updates CAC on PSC actions.

Tasks:

We were asked by PSC to review the Canadian sections for TERR. After a discussion, we recommended keeping SS to 85 sections with TERR consisting of NT, NU and YT. This was announced by the HQ Contest team.

CAC has been observing the discussions on the internet discussion groups for issues related to all contests in general. Both the ARRL contest group and the CQ contest group are the most active. We also get input from our respective contests groups that the CAC members belong to.

CAC Membership:

The CAC membership has some changes in the works. Zev, N2WKS has resigned and Sebastian, KI2D was named his replacement. Glenn, W0GJ has recently resigned and Drew, K3PA has been appointed. We still need a representative for the West Gulf Division as this position has been vacant for over two years.

I will be retiring from the CAC as chairman and the Central Division CAC member. Tim, K9WX has been appointed as my replacement. Rick, K5UR will be appointing a new CAC chairman soon.

- Atlantic – Jon, AA1K; jz73@verizon.net
- Central – Tim Gennett, K9WX; TimK9WX@gmail.com
- Dakota – Jon Platt, W0ZQ; W0ZQ@aol.com
- Delta – Stan Stockton, K5GO; wa5rtg@gmail.com
- Great Lakes – Dan Kovatch, W8CAR; w8car@bex.net
- Hudson – Sebastian Delmont, KI2D ki2d@ki2d.net
- Midwest – Drew Vonada-Smith, K3PA drew@whisperingwoods.org
- New England – Rudy Bakalov, N2WQ; r_bakalov@yahoo.com
- Northwestern – Jim Cassidy, KI7Y; ki7y@arrl.net
- Pacific – Jim Brown, K9YC; K9YC@arrl.net
- Roanoke - Don Daso, K4ZA; k4zadondaso@juno.com
- Rocky Mountain – Darryl Hazelgren, K7UT; darryl@hazelgren.net
- Southeastern – Charles Wooten, NF4A; NF4A@knology.net

- Southwestern – Mike Fulcher, KC7V, mikekc7v@gmail.com
- West Gulf – TBD
- Radio Amateurs of Canada – Samuel A. Ferris, VE5SF; ve5sf@sasktel.net

I will comment that most members have participated in our discussions and meetings.

VHF CAC Subcommittee:

Committee members:

Jon Platt, W0ZQ (Subcommittee Chair)
Craig Thompson, K9CT
Jeff Ach, W2FU
Rus Healy, K2UA
Steve Kostro, N2CEI
Bob Striegl, K2DRH
John Kalenowsky, K9JK
Jim Duffey, KK6MC
Eric Olson, N7EPD

CAC and VHF Subcommittee work and recommendations:

The CAC has recently discussed the reduced number of logs in the SS Phone and CW contests. It is apparent that we don't have as many operating as before and the Sunday activity is reduced.

We brainstormed and decided to try an overlay for the last 6 hours of the 2025 SS weekends. The reasoning is that some don't want to operate the entire 24 hours and that 6 hours might attract those with less time while 24-hour operators are looking for contacts.

We submitted a proposal for an overlay to the PSC that was denied.

This November brought more discussion about growing the activity in SS especially after the CW weekend. The CAC exchanged many emails and after summarizing these ideas, we held two online video conferences in November and December. In addition, we have scheduled another meeting 6 January, 2026.

A list of ideas under discussion:

Rev. 23 December 2025

The following is a summary of possible SS contest rule changes that have been captured from the CAC group.io reflector. The intent of any contest rule change is to address declining activity while preserving the fundamentals that make SS unique. We are open to other ideas and you should contact your CAC representative. The number system used below is intended for reference use and tracking.

More interest within CAC:

2. Change the contest to 24 hrs – 1400 to 1400z or 1800 to 1800z
4. Eliminate the prohibition against using a transmitter under more than one call. (ie, an operator could enter with multiple call signs and multiple logs from the same station)
5. Go to live online scoring (instant winners)
 - a. Create dynamic creation of new mults or bonus points to increase interest
8. Make the contest 15, 20 and 40m only to focus activity.
12. Remove unassisted
14. Youth & Rookie categories
 - a. Youth (< 25)
 - b. Rookie (licensed < 3 yrs)
 - c. “Elmer Award” for operators who work the most Youth/Rookies
 - d. Rather than tied to when you are licensed, tied to “I’m new to SS” overlay, perhaps for anyone who has entered less than five SS before.
17. Outside of LoTW, using the SS logs that are submitted, cross check them and allow anyone who qualifies and wants it to receive a paper WAS mailed to them. Add print to the certificate to indicate WAS was achieved in one 24 hour time period during XXXX Sweepstakes. Promote it.
18. Launch aggressive marketing campaign with email
 - a. Email outreach to prior contestants 30 and 7 days ahead of the contest
 - b. Personal message to lapsed participants
 - c. Social media blitz
 - d. QST & Newsletter
 - e. Club activations; revive club competition
 - f. Participation awards, revive the pins for; clean sweep, rare section activation, 5, 10 15, etc, years of participation

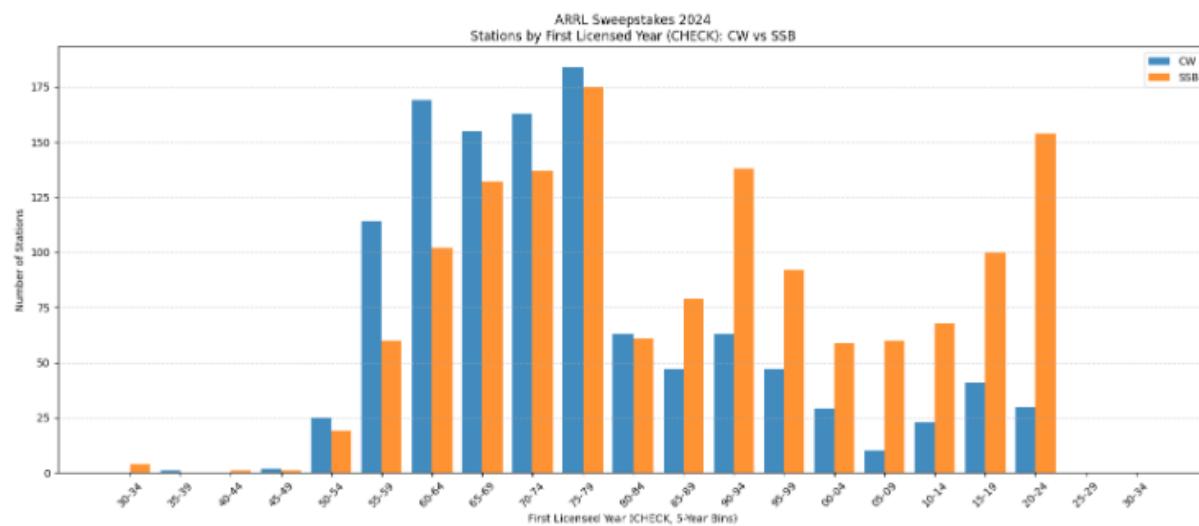
Less likely:

1. Change the contest to 12 hrs – 1800z to 0600z, no breaks
3. Shorten the contest to 24 hrs spread over two 12-hour sessions or three 8-hour sessions with an 8-hour break in-between.
6. Being able to work the same station:
 - a. Once on each band.
 - b. A second time on any different band,
 - c. Group 10/15/20 and 40/80/160 into two buckets; you can work the same station twice, once from each band/bucket.
7. In the contest exchange, rather than send call sign send your previous QSO call sign.
9. Simplify the exchange but preserve the domestic heritage. S/N, Power, Call, Section.
10. Combine CW+SSB into a single weekend while allowing you to work the same station twice per band. CW gets more points than SSB.
11. Bonus points for activating rare section(s).
13. Keep the exchange as is but open up the contest to DX stations. Their exchange would be S/N + Prec (power). XE, Caribbean, Central America
15. Add a third weekend; SS digital (FT4/8)

16. Add a Sunday afternoon overlay; perhaps the last 6 hours. Contest-within-the contest with winners highlighted and celebrated as are full time SSers.

I did some research using ChatGPT. The SS logs from 2024 were scraped from the ARRL contest website and analyzed. When the 2025 logs have been adjudicated, I will do the same to compare data. Several observations were made but the most significant was the significant drop off in CW logs.

Here is the data from the 2024 SS CW and SSB Contests:



For 2025, the CAC's VHF+ subcommittee will:

1. Following the proposal which appeared in the NCJ's *"VHF Contesting"* column that would allow up to three contacts per band based on mode, the CAC's VHF subcommittee has discussed its merits. We note that CQWW VHF recently split out their 6m & 2m VHF contest from one weekend with mixed modes into two weekends; one for just analog modes and one for just digital modes. As the ARRL contests are 6m through Light this adds complications to the NCJ proposal that the NCJ proposal itself notes. While no recommendations are planned at this time we continue to discuss and monitor all conversations.
2. We continued to monitor the EME communities' reactions to the recent EME contest changes. No further recommendations are planned at this time.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the ARRL Contest Advisory Committee

Craig Thompson, CAC Chairman