Report of the Programs and Services Committee
July 2008 ARRL Board Meeting

The committee is busy, dominated by wrapup of the SM governance study tasked to us at Minute 32 of last July's board meeting. Several other issues involving emcomm, our awards programs and other areas are ongoing.

Thanks to 2006-7 chair Jay K0QB and the 2007 PSC for initiating the SM governance study, and to President Joel W5ZN for appointing ex-SMs W6RGG and W4OZK to the present committee. These two along with ex-SM Tom W3TOM serve as our SM governance subcommittee while completing the study.

PSC met in-person 19 January as part of the board meeting. We held a teleconference 21 March and met 31 May at ARRL Hq. Other committee business has been conducted via the PSC reflector.

The Programs and Services Committee is charged with a broad range of responsibilities including recommending program priorities and evaluating current and developing services within the Membership and Volunteer Program Department. The PSC is also responsible for overview of Education activities, W1AW, and advising the CEO on the Volunteer Examiner and Volunteer Professional programs.

A.   Membership and Volunteer Programs

1. Membership Services

Opportunities for revenue and service which are dependent on IT and web design exist throughout the organization, but possibly nowhere are they more abundant than in the MVP area. We continue to wait in the queue for implementation of creative and labor-saving ideas. On the positive side improvements throughout the LoTW system continue to be made. Additionally it appears that the board-mandated Triple Play award will soon be implemented. Direct field entry of DXCC card data should be online soon.

DXCC
Even after expanding data entry positions, staffing them remains a challenge. Volunteer keyboard entry is of help. With the upcoming implementation and acceptance of digital DXCC applications from the field turnaround time and DXCC efficiencies will improve. HQ volunteers working within MVP have been of great help also. The upside to the backlog is that it is obviously a vibrant and popular program even at sunspot minimum.

PSC will present motions to the Board to revise DXCC Section II Rule 5 to reinstate Deleted Status for entities as required, and removing Section III Rule 5 prohibiting publication of logs. Despite thorough efforts of the DXCC 2000 committee to

contemplate and accommodate ongoing political changes, real world dynamics plus LoTW database constraints indicate that deleted entities have their place in DXCC. Prevention of DXCC applicant subterfuge by trying to keep DXpedition logs non-public is impossible, plus discourages propagation-related research. The proper way to handle this is to educate QSL managers on adopting good methodology for editing log callsigns.

 The lobbying efforts and inquiries we experienced over Kosovo reinforce the wisdom of solid rules to apply in determining entities. Among other things it keeps ARRL from becoming a political football. That said we can be mindful that a few years ago the board adopted removal of the IARU society method of determining a parent entity. As new political realities come into play it may be prudent to develop new, additional parent country determination rules to better handle situations. To be consistent with prior changes and promote a reasoned atmosphere, any entities created by future rulemaking action should have an "event date" no earlier than the date of adoption of said rule. PSC remains open to considering appropriate rulemaking.

Contest
Skimmer software which decodes cw over a large passband is the current hot topic in contesting. CAC will be studying the issue. Categories in the EME contest have grown nearly as large as the number of entrants! Something needs to be done to trim this down.

 Advisory Committees–
VUAC
Creation of the Single Op Assisted category at VHF + is a current issue. This has been made desirable because of availability of rover spotting on the internet, which is not allowed for use by traditional Single Ops. The downside is "category creep" such as in the current EME contest, and how to best contain it.
CAC
The remote operation study is concluded and they will turn to Skimmer. In both cases talks with CQ's people are developing ideas consistent across the contest community.
DXAC
The remote operation study is concluded and no formal assignments are in play.

2. Field Services

SM Governance

Our report to the board will be Doc. 17a. At this writing our research is nearly complete but we are debating recommendations in a couple cases.   A nearly complete Doc. 17a will be circulated by the July 14 deadline but we anticipate revising and substituting it immediately subsequent to our July 17 meeting, or at worst within a couple weeks.

ARES and EmComm
Dennis Dura K2DCD has been traveling extensively, including the recent GAREC conference in Friedrichshafen. Implementation of the NERPC recommendations

continues apace and is a complex endeavor. His workload is extensive and increased assistance would be beneficial in processing this important work.

PSC will be reviewing progress on the MDEC program outgrowing from the NERPC report and the needs of Katrina-sized disasters.

PSC is eager to see a reinstated MOU with Red Cross which addresses our volunteers' privacy and financial confidentiality concerns. Credentialing in general seems to be a dynamic situation. We need to keep an eye toward how best to vet and certify our emcomm volunteers so they can be seamlessly utilized in NIMS deployments as well as those of the array of local and regional agencies we can service.

The committee supports recent moves by GAREC and IARU Regions establishing Emergency Center of Activity frequencies. Through our dealings with emcomm and contesting, we urge spectrum users and IARU to be aware of these frequencies but consider them as active non-contesting areas only during emergencies or wide area drills.

B.   Education
Testing Integrity
Concerns have arisen in regard to consistency of testing (and to some extent teaching) methods among the various implementations of our ARECC course offerings. The committee will monitor and offer guidance as needed.

C.   W1AW

Listenership to W1AW bulletins is shrinking. PSC will be looking at the best ways to utilize this flagship resource throughout the day and year.

D.   VEC

Online processing of field-entered VE test results is complicated not only by the various demands on our limited web design resources, but concerns with SSN and other privacy issues. It's exciting that ARRL VEC acceptance of online field data is slated for Q3-4.

The size as well as complexity and irrelevance of much of the new Extra Class question pool is of concern to VEC and PSC, and should be to US amateurs. ARRL's NCVEC vote status as one of 14 peer groups can make it difficult to effect sensible changes. Specific problems have been identified and Perry Green WY1O will bring them to attention of the QPC at their late July meeting.

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