

Outline of the Descriptive Model

The following outline summarizes the factors that have been identified in the literature as being involved in some way with log entry variation in the VHF contests. The article that best describes the impact upon VHF contesting from the various factors is: "A Descriptive Model of VHF Contest Activity, *National Contest Journal*, May / June 2005, p.14-16.

Generally, factors thought to be related.

- Major regulatory changes in Novice and Tech license structure (Tilton 1957, 1959, 1960; Roseman, 1990; several other articles).
- Changes in the number of US Amateur Licensees caused by regulatory changes, incentive licensing, demographics, and other items (Descriptive Model, 2005).
- Club activity (Role of the Clubs, 2004).
- Technology advances (Tilton; Roseman; Lindholm, 1980; several other articles).
- Demographic effects, post peaks (Descriptive Model, 2005)
- Demographic effects, age-wave of contesters (Zimmerman, 2005).
- Geographic shifts (Zimmerman, 2005).
- Economic & sociological factors (Zimmerman, 2005; Other Impacts).
- Cumulative effect from rules modernization (Role of the Clubs; VHF Model).
- Moral Persuasion (Jones, 2004).

Generally, factors thought to be not related.

- Sunspots (Other Impacts, 2004).
- Individual rules changes (Other Impacts; Zimmerman, 2004).
- Contest administration efforts (Frenaye, 2004; Other Impacts).
- Minor regulatory changes (Other Impacts; Descriptive Model, 2005).
- Weather and seasonal propagation characteristics (Harker; Other Impacts).
- Mode conflict between AM and CW / SSB in the 1960's, and between SSB and FM in the 1970's.
 - But a general shifting of modes may have been involved with both the drop from the 1st peak and the gradual improvement in VHF contesting after the 1975 minimum (Other Impacts; Roseman, 2004; Zimmerman, 2004).

As to why there has not been a proportional increase in contesting from the huge increase in US licensee #'s since the beginning of VHF contesting...

- The VHF contests are boring (Zimmerman, 2003, 2005; Jones, 2003);
- The VHF contests are too microwave oriented (Zimmerman, at all times);
- Lapses in contesting and operating practices on VHF (more reliance on skeds; greater pre-arranged & coordinated activity; more artificial contacts, etc.) (Zimmerman, 2005).
- Economic factors (lack of available land for antennas) (Zimmerman, 2005).

- Restrictive Covenants are having a huge impact on station capabilities (Katz, 2005).
- Sociological factors / individualized preferences (Other Impacts).
- Lack of regular activity on 2 meters (Lindholm, 2005).

Comparing CQ VHF vs ARRL Contests (mostly from CQ VHF article, 2005)

- Individual rules changes in both contest formats have not affected log entries.
 - Exceptions include: specific activity incentive awards (temporary increase in logs) and the 2000 CQ VHF rules changes (more of a lasting change in log entry numbers).
- Differences in administrative styles may have had an impact.
 - CQ administration has been innovative, but chaotic in nature.
 - ARRL administration has been methodical and systematic, but rules changes have been difficult to produce.
 - Possible symbiosis between the two administrations, with CQ trying out new ideas, and ARRL incorporating the more successful thoughts.
- No contest peaks with CQ VHF, unlike the two peaks with ARRL.
 - Probably due to contest structuring problems with the CQ VHF in both eras.
- Far lower log entries in CQ VHF than ARRL due to:
 - Lower log entry % with CQ VHF;
 - Lack of consistency in CQ VHF contests vs a high degree of predictability with ARRL;
 - CQ VHF squeezed in between ARRL June, August, 10 GHz, and Sept contests, as well as several EU events (Katz, Sullivan, Zimmerman e-mails, 2005).
 - More club activity in the ARRL contests; higher circulation base of QST vs CQ; more loyalty by ARRL members in preferring ARRL contests;
 - Poorer band conditions in July than in June;

More specifically, as to the initial years leading to the 1961 peak.

- Regulatory changes: Novice, 1951; Technicians, 1955 and 1959 (Tilton, 1959, 1960; Roseman, 1990; Descriptive Model)
- Contesting centered around club activity in January; June and September was an afterthought (Role of the Clubs).
- Technology advances – Gonsets and the Lunchboxes (Lindholm; Roseman).

As to 1961-1975, the end of the 1st cycle has been attributed to:

- A “loss of interest” demographic after 1961 (Descriptive Model).
- Technician restrictions, 1968; Novice restrictions, 1968 and 1972 (Other Impacts; Roseman).
- Introduction of SSB on VHF, and the deterioration of local VHF activity centering on AM, with a loss of traditional local contest club support from AM activity (Zimmerman, 2005).

- Rapid boom in CB activity, presenting an alternative to amateur radio (Frenaye, 2005).
- Technology - The increasing usage of FM, and the lack of contesting in that mode (Other Impacts).

As to 1975 – 1990, and the increasing popularity of June and September beginning in the mid 1970's, has been attributable to:

- Increasing numbers of US licensees starting in the mid 1970's, possibly related to:
 - License restructuring in mid-1970's (CQ, 5-85 at 105).
 - And / or CB operators becoming amateurs as the CB boom became a "bust" (Descriptive Model; Frenaye, 2005; W5YI, in CQ, 4-88, at 88-89).
- A cumulative effect from the modernization of the rules; i.e. adoption of grid squares; QSO points in January; greater operator categories; more club categories; new specialty contests (Other Impacts; Role of the Clubs).
- The Technician reauthorization on VHF in 1978 (Zimmerman, 2004).
- Wearing off of the FM craze by the mid to late 1970's (Other Impacts).
- Technology, generally – 1st generation of single-band, multi-mode rigs (Roseman, 1990).
- Continued technological advances (receiver and antenna design; improvements in SSB equipment, etc) which allowed longer DX work, especially for June and September contests, making those contests more popular (Zimmerman, 2005).
- Geographic dispersion and increases in activity levels in new areas (Zimmerman, 2005)
- Clubs declining as a % of total log entries in January (Role of the Clubs).
- The beginnings of the "quasi-club", through coordinated activity at a group level (Jones, 2004).
- Rise of individual, non-club activity (Role of the Clubs).

As to the 2nd peak in 1996.

- Major regulatory impact from the influx of no-code Technicians on VHF, starting in 1991 (Other Impacts; Descriptive Model).
- Technology – a new generation of multi-mode, multi-band rigs; transistor power amps; increasing development of commercial VHF equipment; etc (Other Impacts).

As to 1996-current....

- Another loss of interest demographic after 1996 (Descriptive Model; Role of the Clubs).
- 5 wpm regulatory change in 2000 allowing greater access to HF bands (Other Impacts).
- Return to normalcy after the 2nd peak (Trends I and II, 2004).
- Moral persuasion in 2003-2004 (Jones, 2004).
- Negative effect from contests being de-facto microwave events (Zimmerman, at all times).

- Demographic effect from “age-wave” of contesters, with sociological and economic characteristics (Zimmerman, 2005; Descriptive Model).
- Lack of available space in urban areas for antennas & various economic factors (Zimmerman, 2005).

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