



Second Century

The Future of DXCC

DXCC® is one of ARRL's many ETLAs (extended three-letter acronyms), this one describing our primary recognition program for working countries on the HF bands, the higher bands where EME is necessary, and even satellite. The DX Century Club® was born of a time when radios were meager by today's standards, making contact with 100 countries quite an accomplishment!

As the years moved on, equipment improved, and solar conditions improved to where many who experienced it believe that Solar Cycle 19 was the best one ever. Thrill-seeking hams like Lloyd and Iris Colvin were traveling to rare countries handing out contacts toward progressively higher DXCC totals for their followers! In a letter to the *QST* Editor in 1966, member Ralph McClintock, K1SCQ, wrote "...this mess is getting to the point where DXCC should be rephrased DX-pedition Continuing Countlessness." Gone were the days of having an actual QSO with a new DX country and learning something about the operator, replaced with a quick 59 QRZ. The change was not a happy one. It is similar to the cries that FT8 contacts should not be counted for DXCC.

Today DXCC is nowhere near a lifetime endeavor. Receiver stats from Rob Sherwood, NC0B, show many outstanding radios with little to no discernable difference among the top radios. DXpeditions are more routine, and pileups, once a badge of honor to bust, are now decoded by modes like FT8 and Super Fox. Even tuning across the bands has become a lost art, replaced by spotting networks and programs tracking when a needed country is on the air, and where. Big stations can achieve DXCC on four or even five bands in one contest weekend!

DXCC has always been a bit of an opportunity to brag about ranking. Attend nearly any DX banquet to observe the tradition of watching people sit down as the emcee counts up the total countries worked, leaving only the top earners left standing for a round of deserved applause. Today's top tier of DXCC is celebrated with two honors: you need 331 countries for Honor Roll and all 340 for Honor Roll #1. Conventional wisdom once showed that it took around 15 years to get on Honor Roll. Not anymore.

The world is dynamic. In the history of the program, governmental changes have caused countries to be added and deleted. Look at Bonaire, PJ4. If you worked the same station with the same call on the same band on 10/9/2010 and again on 10/10/2010, you have two countries in your DXCC count, with the earlier one having been deleted due to a change in government. Same thing

for Canal Zone, now a part of Panama. So a DXCC count including deleted countries is deceiving in terms of an attainable goal.

If a government turns a former DXpedition hot spot into an environmentally protected zone, is it fair to keep the entity on the list or should it be deleted? Will the change last forever?

DXpedition visionary George Wallner, AA7JV, and his team have developed Radio In a Box (RIB) stations, essentially radios with networking infrastructure, in a box, that can be dropped on an island and operated remotely from a boat. He's hoping that teams can make an argument to regulators about operating from a protected area with near zero human footprint. George has also leveraged Starlink internet access to permit remote operators from around the world to keep the stations hopping! No operator fatigue here! But these operations open up new questions about the radio regulations governing these operations and care must be taken to follow them.

The last major change to DXCC was in 2000. Changes have been at a glacial pace, some citing an old guard unwilling to "move the bar" of achievement. Next year, the ARRL Programs and Services Committee will be undertaking "DXCC 2025" to examine the program with the DX Advisory Committee, potentially to make changes to keep up with the changing technologies and environments.

What changes do you want to see to DXCC? Think about the next 15 years. Will you make Honor Roll? Will some heavily regulated entities keep you from your goal? One thing is for sure: you'll need to be radio active to catch the rare ones as they pop up. Be a connector and include friends from your club to tackle the DX challenge together. And see you in the pileups!

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