

FCC ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR SIDEBAND

REPRINT FROM JAN.-FEB. '80

SIDEBAND RADIO DIGEST

The FCC Commissioners have instructed the FCC's Private Radio Bureau to prepare a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) for exclusive Single-Sideband (SSB) communications in the Citizens Band (CB) Radio Service. This was the result of an open meeting of the FCC on Dec. 19.

Specifically, the FCC News Release said, the Commissioners directed the Bureau staff (quote) to draft a proposal to:

- reallocate frequencies between 27.410 and 27.540 MHz to the Citizens Band Radio Service for SSB-only operation;
- amend the rules to permit limited transmitter tuning (a VXO control) on all channels for single-sideband only;
- amend the rules to permit domestic communications beyond the existing 150-mile (250 km) limit, provided that such an amendment does not conflict with international radio regulations;
- eliminate the five-minute transmission time rule;
- allow modification of existing CB equipment to include new features and channels;
- inquire into the possibility of testing SSB-only operators as part of the licensing procedure. (end quote from News release)

The FCC decision came as a result of the Commissioners' favorable consideration of a report presented by the Bureau staff which evaluated a number of alternatives, including the problems of incompatibility between SSB and AM operation, channel congestion, and a regulatory plan unsuitable for SSB type operation. This was in response to two Petitions, RM-3299 and RM-3317.

The FCC points out that NO changes in rules have yet occurred, but this is a step toward solving SSB problems.

Although not in the news release, reports say the new SSB channels are to be 5 kc apart. Also, it's hoped that arrangements can be made with Canadian officials to include Canada in this SSB-only band.

How to administer "testing for the new band, caused much discussion at the Dec. 19 meeting. This magazine's Editor had just submitted to the FCC a proposal outlining a testing procedure which could permit "immediate" licensing, but the FCC is currently dealing with a problem of "volunteer" examiners on Amateur bands which must be resolved first.

"SSB-only" band expansion stops at 27.540 MHz because IRAC (the Interdepartmental Radio Advisory Committee) is refusing to release the additional frequencies to the FCC. In fact, a NASCAN report says the NTIA (National Telecommunications Information Administration) is currently forming an enforcement unit to act against those who cause interference to the Government frequencies above 27.540 MHz, and primarily around these six frequencies: 27.575, 585, 625, 750, 900, and 27.980 MHz.

FCC ANNOUNCES (Cont'd):

One report said that IRAC allegedly promised to release the frequencies between 27.540 and 28 MHz to the FCC for Sideband-only use "in a year or two", but only IF people would vacate and stay off those frequencies in the meantime.

FCC DELAYS NPRM; SSB FREQS DOUBTFUL

REPRINT FROM MAY-JUNE '80
SIDEBAND RADIO DIGEST

(By Chuck Hensarling, Washington State CB Radio Assoc.)

As far as the FCC is concerned, the proposal for a more disciplined "special license SSB hobbyist radio sub-service" at 27.MHz is essentially dead.

It has been learned that the present version of the Notice of Proposed Rule-Making (NPRM) calls for a mere expansion of the present CB Radio Service to add a few additional channels in the frequency band above Channel 40 (27.41 to 27.54 MHz).

Special licensing and testing for a SSB sub-service is no longer under consideration.

There is major opposition to any type of expansion at 27 MHz within the FCC. This was confirmed by Mr. Ronald Stone, Chief of the Policy Development Division, FCC Private Radio Bureau, on May 1, 1980.

The reason given for this change in policy, is that there are no funds available to implement new programs. Although the comments on the petitions by potential users of the SSB radio service indicated a willingness to pay a fee for special licensing and testing, this has been rejected. The FCC Office of General Counsel has ruled that a fee cannot be collected for this type of license until a fee schedule has been established for all types of FCC licenses. The FCC has not charged any fees for licenses since the courts ruled their fees for various licenses were unfair and arbitrary. The FCC has not yet developed new fee schedules in accordance with the court guidelines.

According to Stone, the only way the original proposal could be restored, is if the funds are made available to finance the new program. The FCC could ask Congress for a budget supplement to support the program, but this action is unlikely in view of recent budget cuts and "the Commission policy in this regard."

Congress could provide the necessary funding and direct the FCC to implement the new program, if enough people would request it.

Information now indicates the NPRM in its revised version won't be released to the public until July, 1980, at the earliest.

As this writer sees it, the latest turnabout of the FCC concerning the SSB radio service at 27 MHz, is a disappointment, not only because it appears that we have lost, but because it raises serious questions as to the integrity of the FCC as a Government agency.