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I support the ARRL's petition to shift the cw/data segment of the 80 meter band up 50 kHz, move the segment authorized for automatically controlled stations, and grant data privileges to Novice/Tech licensees on 80 and 15 meters.

The ARRL's reasoning is sound. It was a mistake to allocate all the voice spectrum the FCC did (down to 3600 kHz) when that happened 10 years ago. It's time to undo that mistake.

But there's an even better reason. Interest in data modes is growing, and those modes are particularly attractive to young people generally interested in technology. As we recruit those potential hams, we need spectrum for them to use.

As the current sunspot cycle continues to decline, the 80 meter band will become more valuable for long-distance communication at night. While that's true for every mode hams want to use, the current limit of 100 kHz of spectrum for data will become a greater problem. A shift of 50 kHz from voice to data will give the data mode users a more fair share of the limited spectrum available.

My long-term preference is some form of the ARRL's old, withdrawn "Regulation by Bandwidth" proposal. It was wise then, and it's even wiser now. But until then, the data modes on 80 meters should have more elbow room. Voice operators are complaining, of course, but their slice of the pie has been too generous for a decade.

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