

HEADQUARTERS NEWS NOTES

The new Electronic Sanction Request (ESR) is coming soon

By Chris Zegelin, my.ava.org developer

A primary goal of the my.ava.org web site was to replace the existing 'legacy' ESR with a new, more capable version. This goal is close to fruition. The ESR is, of course, much more than just sanctioning. It includes all of the club management, reports; a myriad of details that had to move off the legacy system to support the sanctioning and club operations.

The legacy ESR was started in about 2003, followed by some major updates beginning in 2006. Ron Drum was the lead designer and his work was brilliant for a software system that is still functioning 18 years later.

The new system is different and may take a little time to learn all the new capabilities. Hopefully it will be easier to use for the basics. There were two requirements in the design. The first was to support needed features and capabilities that simply were not possible with the old design. The second was to enable the creation of an AVA app for smartphones and tablets. The first requirement has brought us things like the 'Event Status' and 'Sell it' features. The second is where it gets interesting.

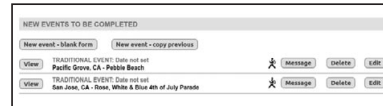
The legacy sanction design, the fields and how they were used, were conceived before smartphones existed, let alone the concept of an app. Smartphones are different than a desktop in many ways. They are mostly used in portrait mode, the screen size is much smaller, and everything is touch with no mouse as just three examples. Many of you may have noticed that my.ava.org automatically detects portrait mode and dynamically adjusts the screen display and supports touch input. This is a first step, but now the display page can become impossibly long. In short some of the information that we collect in the sanction simply is incompatible with the nature of an app. The new ESR tries to address some of this but must do so in a way that is not disruptive. We still have to use it while we are changing it.

Some clubs will be requested to modify or update their existing sanctions to help this effort. Certainly they will have to review their sanctions to make sure that the information was transferred correctly, and then use the new ESR to fix any translation errors.

Of current concern is the distance fields where clubs have been able to enter any text string. The distance string translation code has some 15 rules, but will not catch all incompatible entries. There is also confusion about the contents of the comments field and the event information (extra description) field. There is a button in the new ESR to easily swap the contents of these two fields. We will need your help.

The new ESR design follows the model where you edit a copy of the sanction, then publish the result when you are done. This looks somewhat like the temporary files that you get when you edit a document. We take this one step further where the 'copy' can be saved, reviewed and edited further before being submitted for approval and publishing. This fundamental change means that mistakes can be found and corrected before the sanction is made public. If you mess up the copy, you can abandon it without effecting the published sanction. It also provides the ability to add new features that everyone has been looking for.

ACE events: ACE-WG is available and is being lightly used. It is fully supported, now and in the future. ACE-T, ACE-P, ACE-Y events however are not being used at all. There will be no support for them in the initial release of the new ESR because this support would significantly delay the new ESR and the important new features it brings. Only four of these events have ever been sanctioned; two in 2018, and two in 2019.



A New Sanction

A new sanction is of course a core capability, but now you will have "New event – copy previous." Yes, you can go back up to six years and copy a previous sanction into your new sanction. Think about Traditional events that you do year after year. Update the date, review everything and it is ready for approval. You can even copy an old YRE into a new Traditional event or the reverse.

Resurrect an old YRE or Seasonal

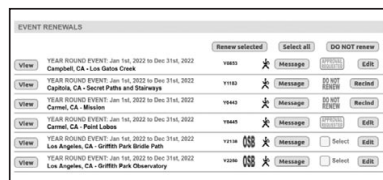
The stamp numbering in the new system will not reuse Yxxxx numbers for new YREs and Seasonals which allows a club to consider putting a YRE on hiatus for a year or two. With the resurrect feature you can bring the YRE back, while retaining the original Yxxxx number. Your club can now easily rotate YRE events on a yearly basis to add interest to your walk schedule. This is similar to "New event – copy previous," but does additional checks such as preventing duplication of events. My club is thinking about maintaining an inventory of routes, swapping among routes, one year to the next.

Transfer events to/from another club

This was possible with the legacy ESR, but it was difficult to do. This new feature makes it easy and the software makes sure that all the changes needed for the transfer are done correctly. There is the obvious need where a club disbands and other clubs wish to take over their events, but think about how clubs could collaborate to the point where events are 'loaned' to another club for a festival.

A club chooses one or more events to transfer and attaches them to a transfer code. The transfer code is sent to one or more potential recipient clubs. The recipient club can see the events after entering the transfer code. The club can then choose which events to accept.

Renewals



Renewals are part of the ESR and are handled using the same copy mechanism. A copy of the current year's sanction can be edited or changed for the following year, then submitted for approval and publishing. The new design allows you to see the status of all your renewals in a single list. Renewal or 'Do not renew' is much easier to manage.

Edit existing sanctions

A core capability. Again a copy is made, one that you can edit, save and review. Other club members can also review and comment on the changes such as proofing a change to driving directions before the changes become public. Editing an approved sanction generally does not require another RD approval. The legacy design, however, required an RD actually make certain changes to the sanction. Something else for the RD to pay attention to. The new design allows the clubs to make those changes, verify them, and then submit the result for approval. Items such as a simple mistake in the spelling of the city can now be corrected quickly and accurately.

A chat/message box for each sanction under edit

This allows comments and suggestions to be quickly handled between all the people who are involved in a sanction; i.e., the POC or editor, the reviewers, the people approving the sanction. The current method of email or phone calls is cumbersome and it's too easy to lose the thread with time lost.

You can choose to receive an email alert if a new message has been left.

The actual sanction edit

This core function has been reorganized into multiple tiles with the individual tiles dealing with a specific aspect of the sanction. Why should you have to fill in 'strollers' for a swim or snowshoe event? The design will show the fields that are required for a sanction type, autofill is used when appropriate, and generally it is clearer and easier to complete a sanction.

The sanction edit is where you will see changes that are driven by the needs of an app. The major considerations are how different distances are entered and how remote starts are treated. With the distance you have the ability to specify a different trail rating for additional distances. This will help with an app event search. The remote starts (for the online start box [OSB] and a physical start box, [PSB]) are handled in a more consistent way, and one where driving directions from your current location can be quickly pulled up with Google maps.

The legacy system allowed many of the fields to be free form text. This simply doesn't work on an app where it is important to constrain the field to something that can be easily rendered or understood in the app. For example, many of the sanction text fields have special Microsoft characters embedded. These show up as little question marks on the web site and may not show at all in an app.

When will the switchover occur?

Typically January and February are our quiet months for sanctioning. This would be an ideal time for us to make the transition. This is an exciting development with our ability to remove the legacy system from AVA's critical infrastructure. More details will be forthcoming in the January Checkpoint. 