RFI Mitigation and Testing Employed at GGAO for NASA's Space Geodesy Project (SGP)"

•Principal Author: Lawrence M. Hilliard
•Co-Authors: Ganesh Rajagopalan (MIT Haystack Observatory),
•Thomas Stevenson, Charles Turner, Berhanu Bulcha (GSFC)

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HAYSTACK OBSERVATORY

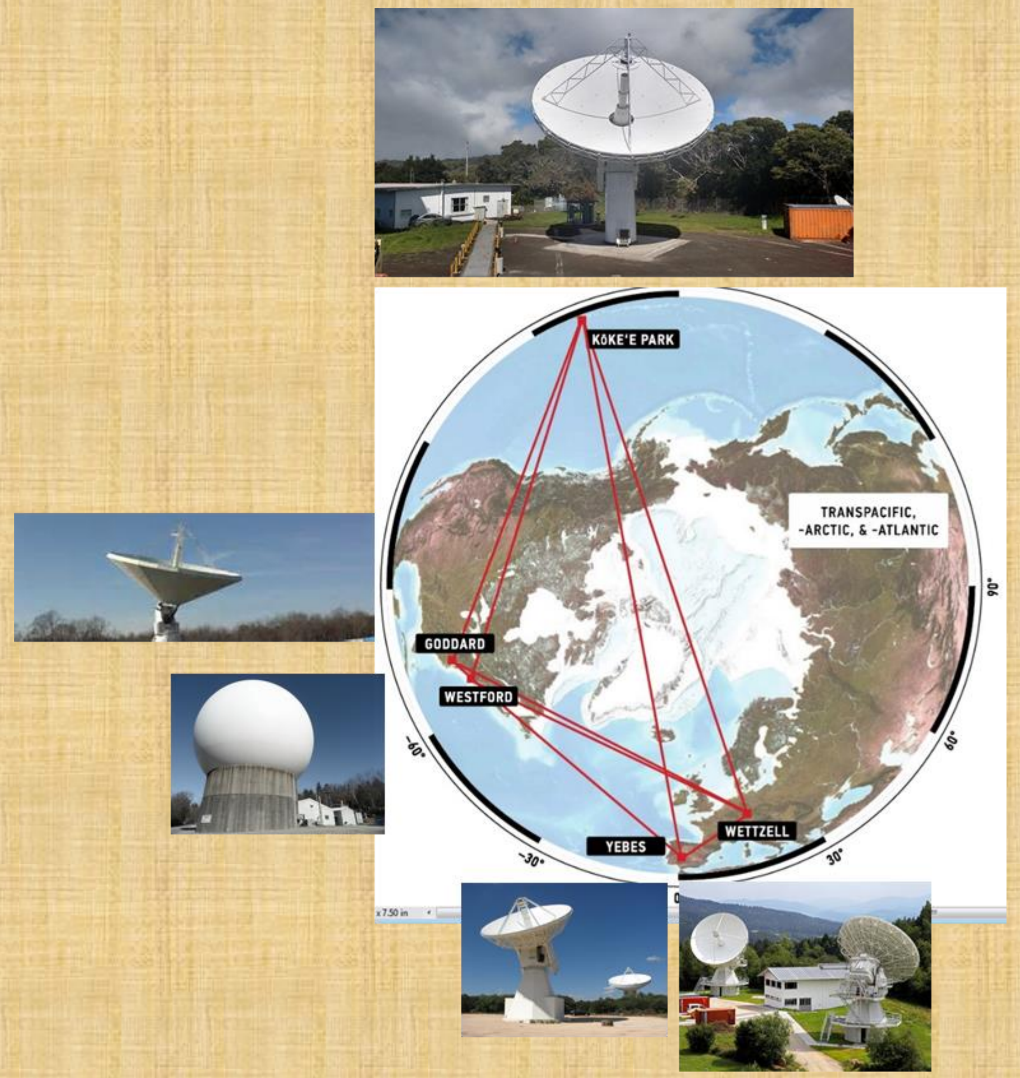
International VLBI Service for Geodesy and Astrometry
IVS is an international collaboration of organizations which operate or support Very Long Baseline Interferometry (VLB I) components.

International Laser Ranging Service — IVS — IDS — IGS INTERNATIONAL GNSS SERVICE

•Radio Frequency Interference (RFI) Mitigation at Goddard Geophysical and Astronomical Observatory (GGAO) has been addressed in three different ways by NASA's Space Geodesy Project (SGP); masks, blockers, and filters. All of these techniques will be employed at the GGAO, to mitigate the RFI consequences to the Very Long Baseline Interferometer.

•The SGP combines the four geodetic techniques of Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), DORIS (Doppler Orbitography and Radiopositioning Integrated from Space), Space Geodesy Satellite Laser Ranging (SGSLR), and the VLBI Global Observing System (VGOS).

VGOS Future:
Five different stations participated in the recent VGOS test performed in May 2017



•FILTERING:In 2017, a high pass filter with cutoff between 2.2-2.3 GHz has been tested at Westford Massachusetts VLBI station signal chain after the 1st stage amplifier. This will be tried at GGAO in the near future to mitigate low band RFI.

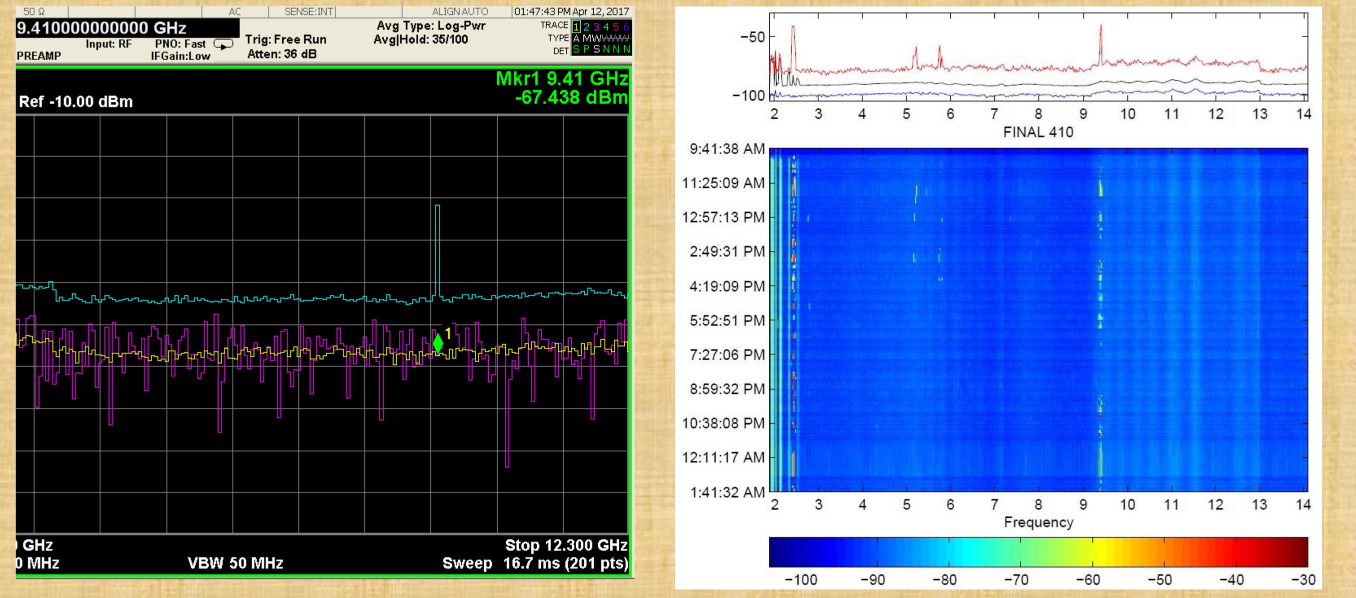
•There is also an HFSS designed model of a high temperature superconductor notch filter that can address the LHRS radar sidelobes and restrict our masks (and their attendant restrictions on sky coverage) to only the radar main lobe. S-parameters from the notch filter model and LHRS measurements at GGAO taken near the VLBI antenna are presented.

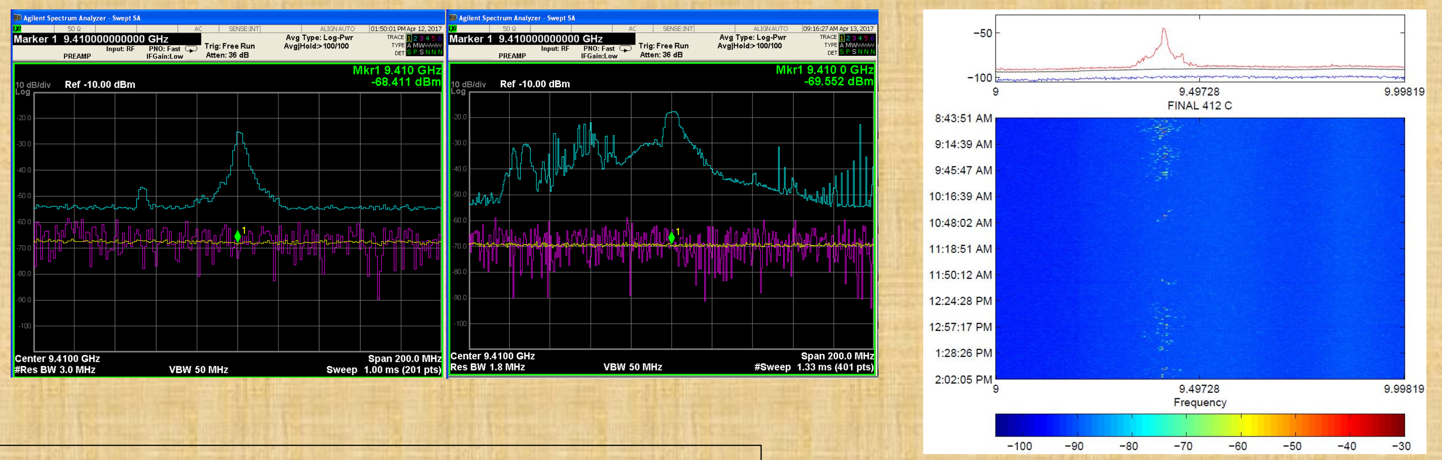
Problem Statement:

•The problem at GGAO, and at the 4-technique geodetic stations of the future being deployed by SGP, is that both DORIS and SGSLR require emissions that are found in the VGOS broadband. For DORIS, path loss and blockage on the GGAO campus reduce the effect of RFI to that of raising the noise floor to a tolerable level. For SGSLR, we have had to introduce low-elevation restrictions or "masks" to both the Laser Hazard Reduction System (LHRS) radars and the VLBI antenna. The VLBI can be damaged by the 4kW peak power output LHRS radar, so the main lobe (-57.1 dBW at VLBI phase center) must be avoided which will destroy the receiver, and the 1st sidelobe saturates the optical link in the receiver chain in effect blinding VLBI from high band (5-14 GHz). In VLBI, low band (2-5 GHz) does not use the same optical link because the low band RFI (e.g. DORIS, wifi, …) would saturate as well, but can be carried back via coaxial cable.

•Background: The VGOS version of VLBI has recently been modernized to collect a 2-14 GHz broadband spectrum in accordance with VLBI2010: Current and Future Requirements for Geodetic VLBI Systems . One of the objectives of that 2005 report was to "Reduce Susceptibility to External Interfaces" and "continuous frequency coverage … to 14 GHz, but the channels and frequencies actually used would be selected as those that are most free from RFI at all sites".

•These are measurements of the radar through the 12m antenna at GGAO(black screens), and through the RFI monitor system that takes cumulative data (blue plots). These plots were taken in max hold so a large radar pulse detection would register for 100 sweeps and then the file closes and a new max is found.

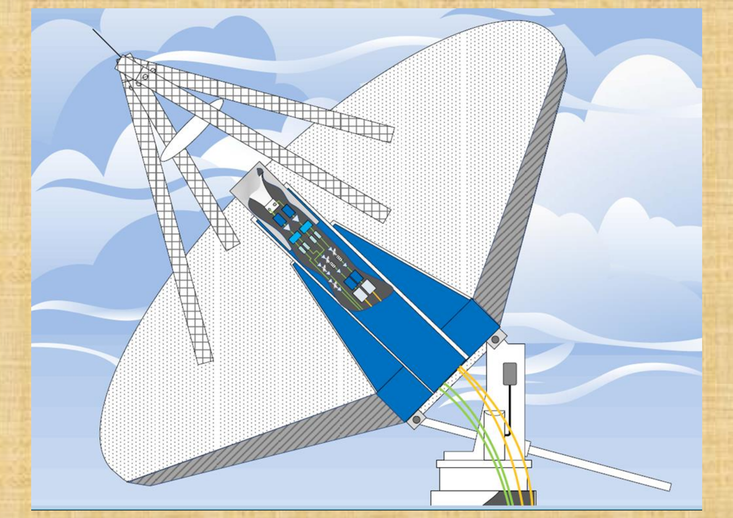




BLOCKING: Effective for DORIS, but hard to use in wind

•Reflective Blockers were investigated as well using solid cloth, and stainless steel mesh materials in 2012 and had the effect of 20 dB attenuation when located in the far field between SGSLR and VLBI. In 2014, a test DORIS was loaned to SGP by CNES to conduct similar tests on the blocking effectiveness realized from an unobstructed DORIS (direct line of sight) with less path loss and tuned to a slightly different frequency discernable by DORIS receivers in orbit above GGAO.

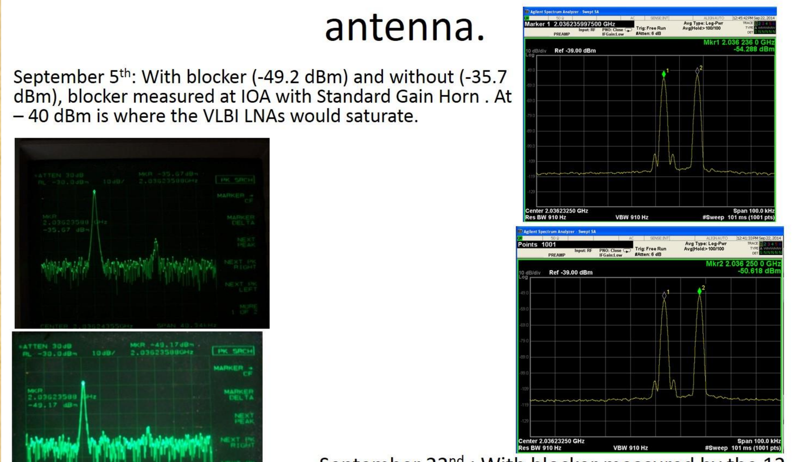
GGAO



Raising the blocker to 4 meters blocks lines of sight to all positions of the VLBI subreflector

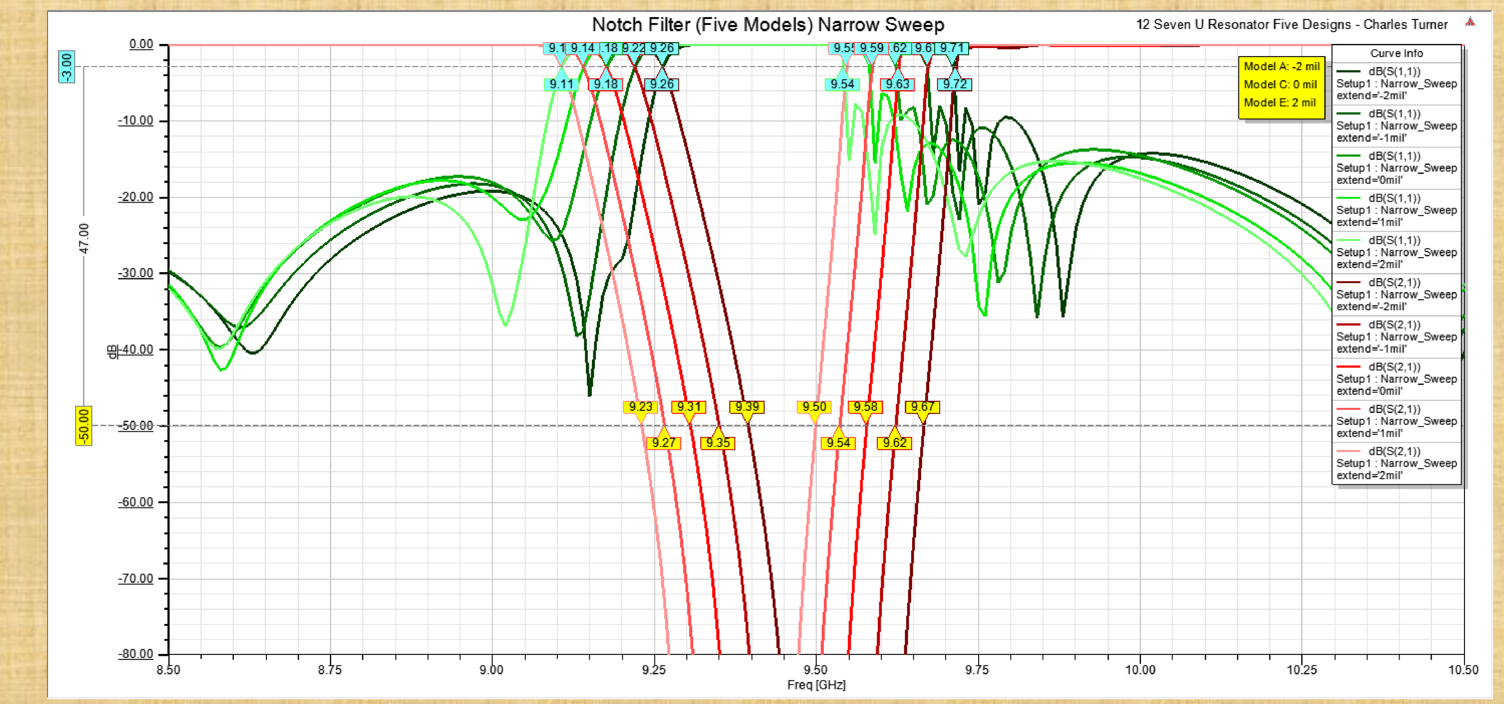
DORIS test as measured at VLBI antenna.

September 5th: With blocker (-49.2 dBm) and without (-35.7 dBm), blocker measured at IOA with Standard Gain Horn . At – 40 dBm is where the VLBI LNAs would saturate.



September 22nd : With blocker measured by the 12 meter(Marker 1:Test DORIS=-54.3 dBm, Marker 2: Operational DORIS=-50.6 dBm)

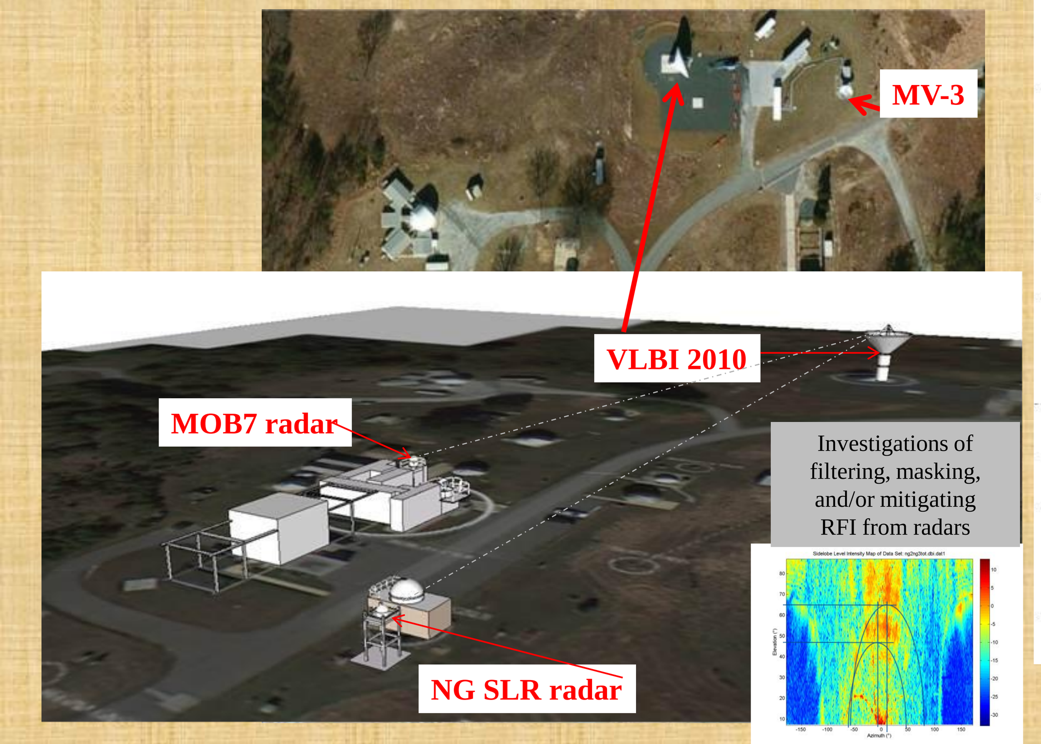
FILTERING:50 dB Rejection, << 0.1 dB insertion loss, 500 MHz BW



Characterizing the 12m Antenna at GGAO

•In October 2012, at GGAO we conducted two different VLBI tests defining the reduced sky coverage impact of using masks to restrict the viewing angle of both the SGSLR and the VLBI on the GGAO campus. We also ran tests earlier in 2012, characterizing the VLBI antenna beam pattern with 9.41 GHz (sidelobe surrogate(ss)) beacons transmitting from locations near the directional antenna locations used by LHRS. With these tests we recognized hot spots associated with the VLBI subreflector looking right at the LHRS ss beacon.

VLBI @ (area 200 at Goddard aka GGAO)



Comparison to ANSI sidelobe envelope

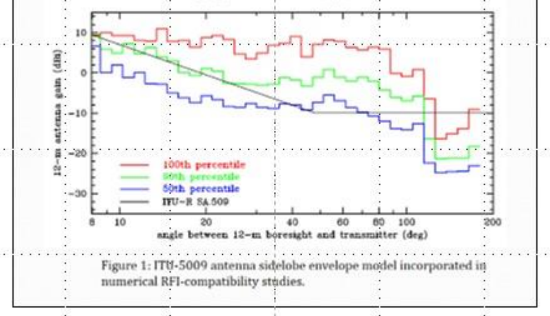


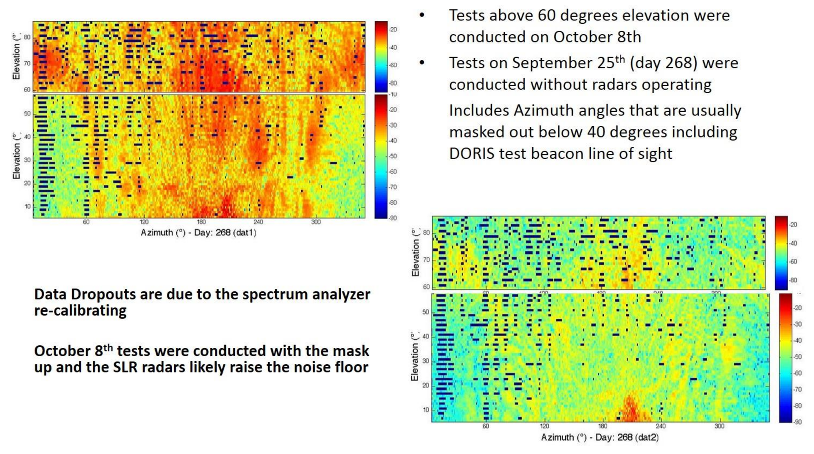
Figure 1: ITU-5009 antenna sidelobe envelope model incorporated in numerical RFI-compatibility studies.

Purpose
The sidelobe envelope presented in Figure 1, is assumed to provide a worst-case 12m antenna gain vs. pointing-to-RFI-source. This assumption should be validated experimentally to provide assurance of the 12m antennas gain characteristic which in-turn (combined with other information) will provide confidence in the received DORIS/radar power levels will not exceed the worst-case expectation.

Planned Experimentation
To validate the sidelobe model, a separate field test of the 12m sidelobe envelope is planned. The field test will be carried out with a mobile beacon that is capable of transmitting at the DORIS and aircraft tracking radar frequencies, 2.036 and 9.4 GHz respectively.

BLANKING: We have plans to introduce blanking to lower the overall noise floor at GGAO

VLBI Sidelobe Tests on 9/25 and 10/8



- Tests above 60 degrees elevation were conducted on October 8th
- Tests on September 25th (day 268) were conducted without radars operating

Includes Azimuth angles that are usually masked out below 40 degrees including DORIS test beacon line of sight

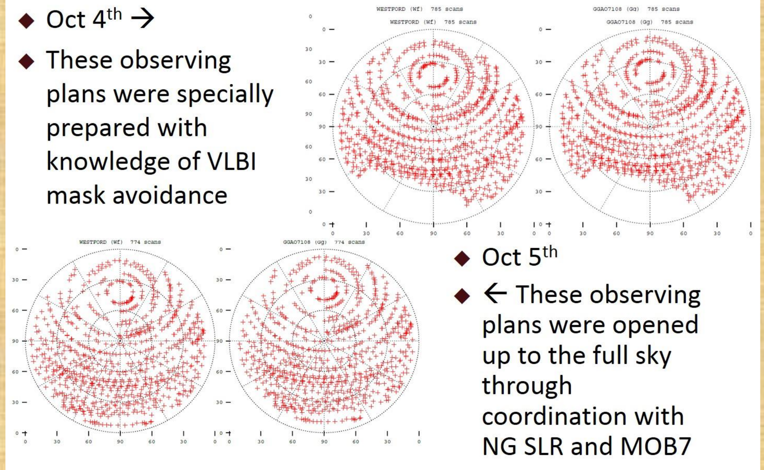
Data Dropouts are due to the spectrum analyzer re-calibrating

October 8th tests were conducted with the mask up and the SLR radars likely raise the noise floor

MASKING: Impact on VLBI and SLR

Loss of the Southern sky must be planned around due to radar masks at GGAO

- Oct 4th →
- These observing plans were specially prepared with knowledge of VLBI mask avoidance



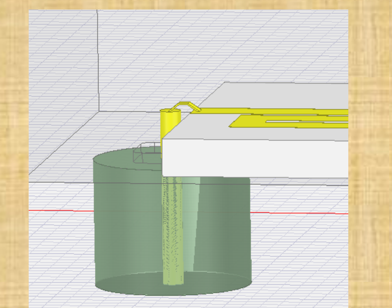
- Oct 5th
- ← These observing plans were opened up to the full sky through coordination with NG SLR and MOB7

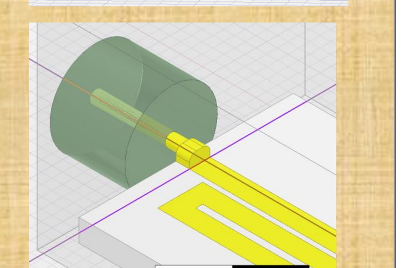
•5 different designs were requested of the foundry.

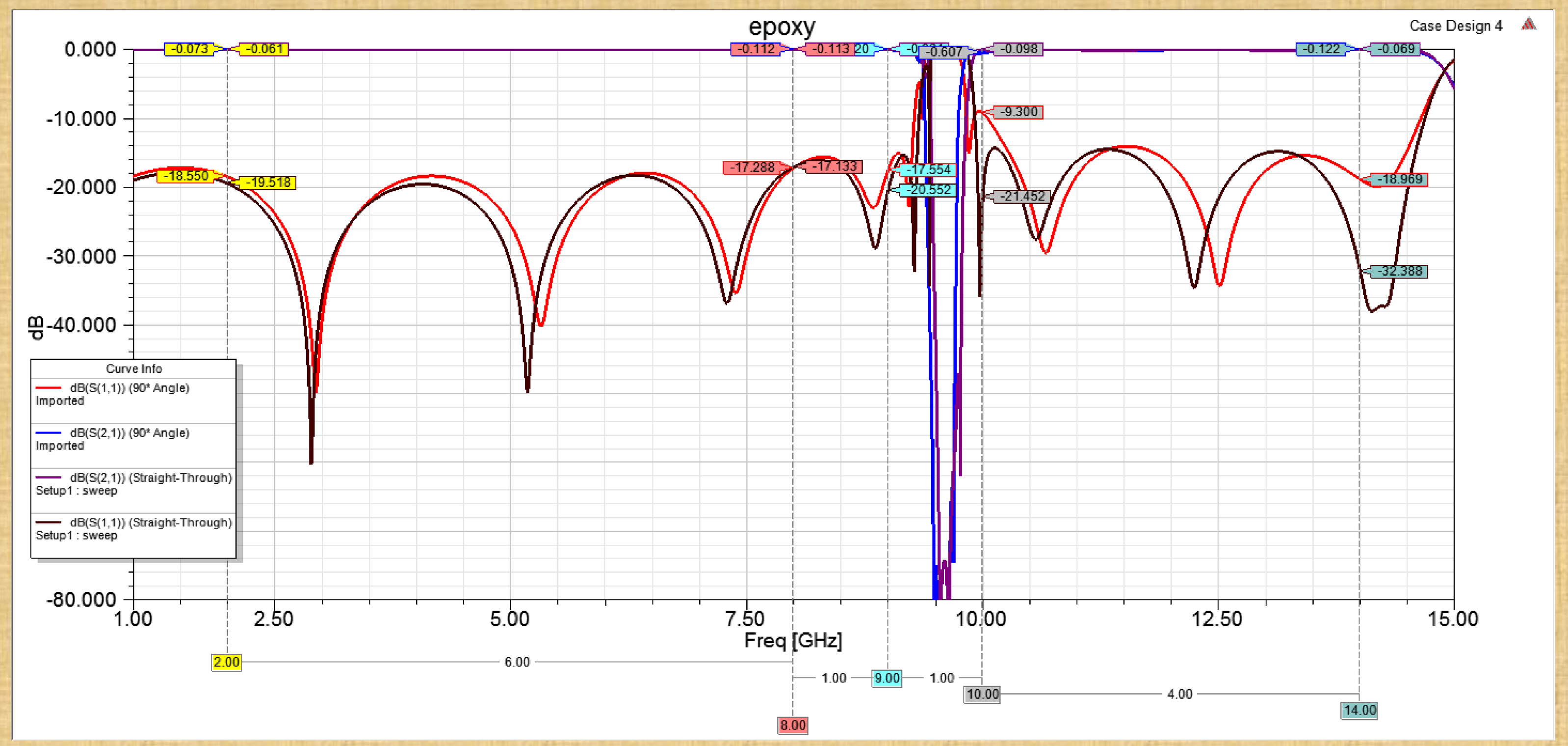
•We hedged this because of uncertainty in the material properties and tolerances could cause us to miss the notch we wanted.

•The model was given further detail after the foundry run was started to see the effect of connectors

•The simulation shows that reflection is less if we use a straight connector versus a 90 degree bend







For more information on geodetic VLBI please go to:
http://space-geodesy.nasa.gov
http://ivscc.gsfc.nasa.gov/

Space Geodesy Project's Very Long Baseline Interferometry contacts:
Chopo Ma (x4-6101), John Gipson(x4-6876), Larry Hilliard(x6-9294)