



Progressing 802.11ah Implementation in GNU Radio with gr-halow

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What is the Problem?

802.11ah (HaLow) technology is not readily available so it is easier and more convenient to keep using other internet of things (IoT) technologies.

10 Wi-Fi CERTIFIED HaLow devices

versus

75569 Wi-Fi Certified 802.11b devices

12501 Wi-Fi Certified 802.11g devices

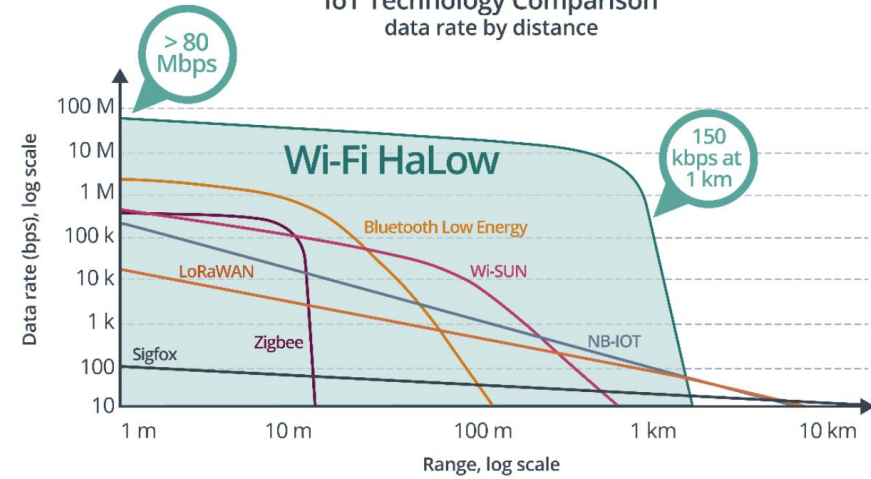
2501 Wi-Fi Certified 802.11n devices*

Open Source implementations:

- ZigBee: gr-ieee802-15-4
- Bluetooth: gr-bluetooth
- 802.11a/g/p: gr-ieee802-11
- LoRa: gr-lora & gr-lora_sdr
- HaLow: ???

*Source: [Wi-Fi Alliance](https://www.wi-fi.com)

IoT Technology Comparison
data rate by distance



Attributes	Wi-Fi HaLow	Bluetooth Low Energy	Z-Wave	Zigbee	Wi-SUN	Sigfox	LoRaWAN	NB-IOT
Frequency	Sub-1 GHz	2.4 GHz	Sub-1 GHz	2.4 GHz / Sub-1 GHz	Sub-1 GHz	Sub-1 GHz	Sub-1 GHz	Licensed
Data rate (bps)	150 k - 86.7 M ⁸	125 k - 2 M	9.6 k - 100 k	250 k	6.25 k - 800 k (50 k default)	100 or 600	300 - 27 k	20 k - 127 k
Range (m)	> 1 k	< 100	< 30	< 20	< 1 k	< 40 k	< 10 k	< 10 k
Modulation	OFDM over BPSK, QPSK, 16/64/256 QAM	GFSK	GFSK	BPAK/ OQPSK	MR-FSK / MR-OFDM / MR-OQPSK	DBPSK/ GFSK	CSS	QPSK
Battery life	Years	Years	Years	Years	Years	Years	Years	Years
Security	WPA3	128-bit AES in CCMmode	Security 2 (S2)	128-bit AES in CCMmode	IEEE 802.1X	Session-level security	128-bit AES in CCMmode	3GPP security
OTA firmware updates	Supports	Supports	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subscription required	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
TCP/IP (internet)	Supports	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Network topology	Star / Relays	P2P* / Mesh	Mesh	Mesh	Mesh	Star	Star	Star
Open standard	IEEE 802.11ah	Bluetooth SIG	Proprietary	IEEE 802.15.4	IEEE 802.15.4g	Proprietary	Proprietary	3GPP LTE Cat-NB1/NB2

⁸ Peer-to-peer

Source information used for this table is publicly available

A Solution and the Why



Create an open-source implementation of 802.11ah, gr-halow, to enable researchers, hobbyists, and developers experimentation with HaLow through SDR emulation

- HaLow Bandwidths (1, 2, 4, 8, 16 MHz) are within the range of consumer SDRs
 - Survey capability tested with RTL-SDR, AirSpy R2, HackRF, Pluto SDR
- HaLow Data rates are achievable by consumer processors without significant overflows
 - Survey capability tested with x86_64 Intel N95 CPU
- Sits in the middle of the distance vs data rate tradeoff for omnidirectional antennas; suitable for mobile data-demanding IoT applications
 - Drone telemetry and sensor streaming
 - Amateur Radio Emergency Data Network



My Approach

Make as much progress as possible towards an open source transceiver for unencrypted 1 MHz HaLow channels

I depend on [gr-ieee802_11](#) for most of the PHY RX chain. Eventually, I would like the 802.11ah implementation to live within gr-ieee802_11 instead of its own standalone gr-halow repository.

HaLow Activity Scanning

1

Working - Determine if there is HaLow activity, and if there is, what channel it is on

Full Receive Implementation

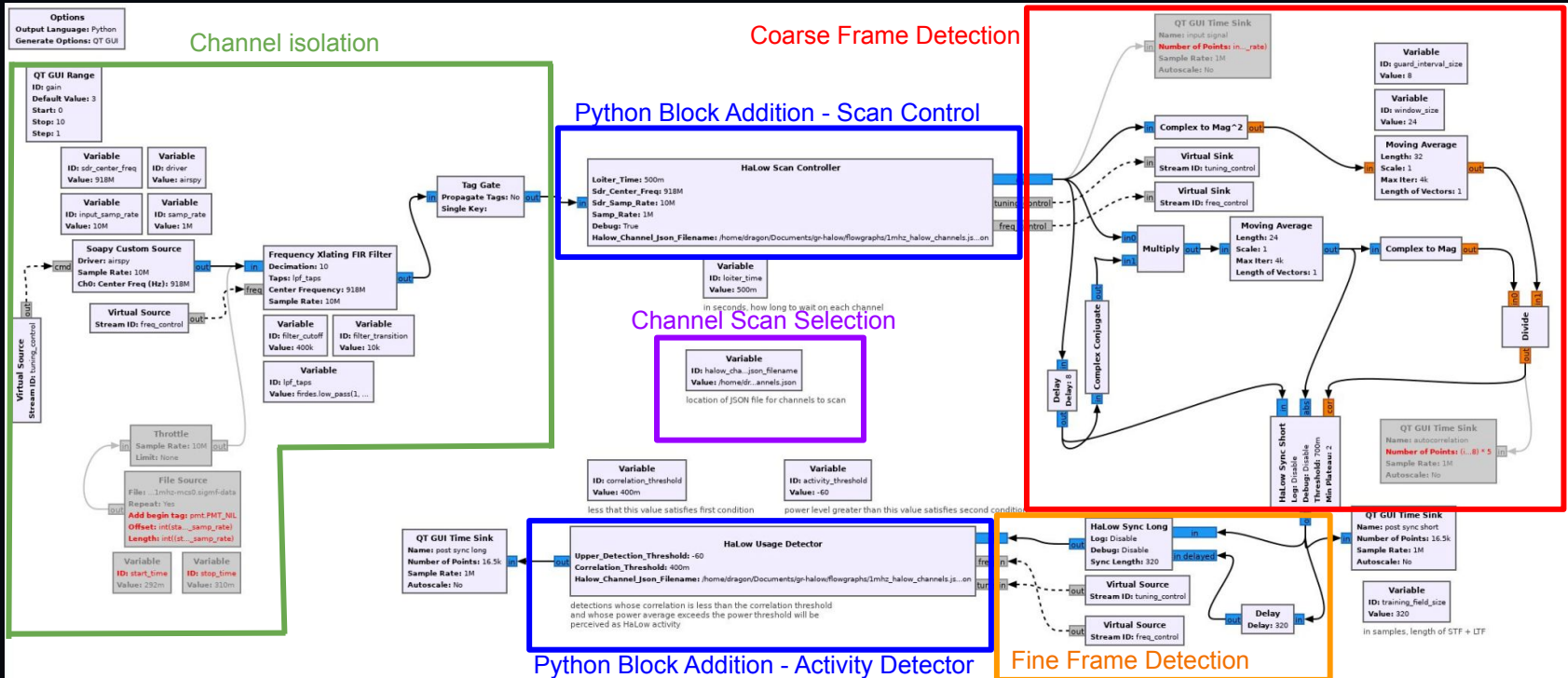
2

Implemented, not working - Decode information from the signal and data field of a HaLow packet

Full Transmit Implementation

3

Not implemented - Send information via HaLow



HaLow Activity Scanning

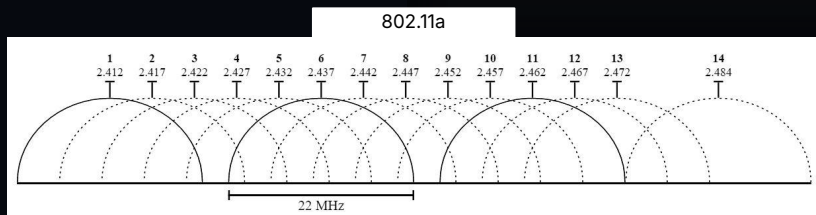
Working - Determines if there is HaLow activity, and if there is, what channel it is on

irongiant33 on GitHub: [gr-halow](https://github.com/irongiant33/gr-halow)

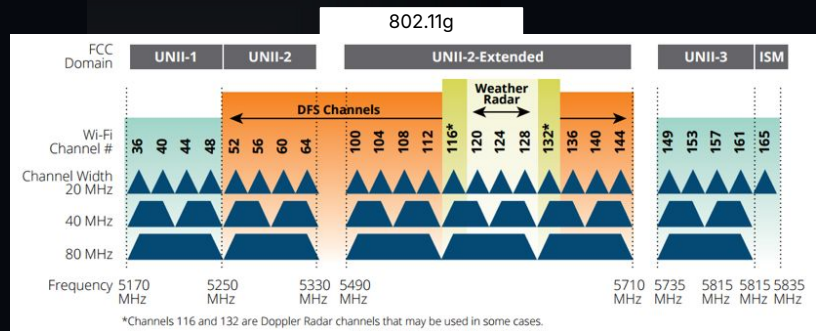
HaLow Modifications

802.11a/g Channels

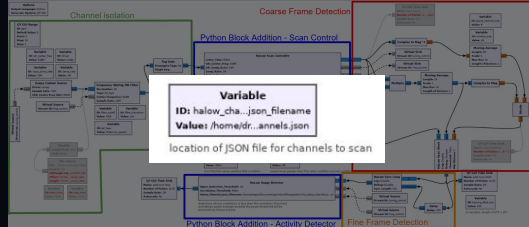
A list of all available channels, their frequencies, and bandwidths per p.4121 of the IEEE standard



Source: [Delta EU](#)



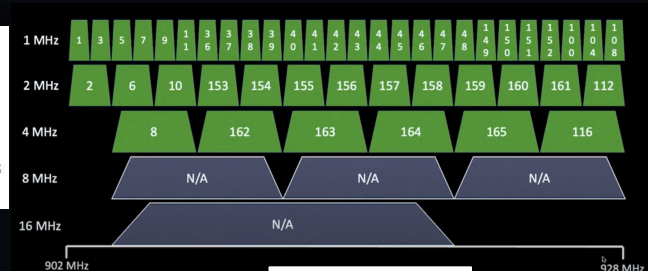
Source: [Aruba Blogs](#)



HaLow Channels

Hardware only has to implement the 1 MHz and 2 MHz channels to be IEEE compliant. However, not all devices will be compliant and some may even list different channel numbers.

Alfa HaLow-U



HaLow Modifications

802.11a/g/p Timing

Constant number of subcarriers, constant relationship between the channel bandwidth and OFDM symbol period (80 samples per OFDM symbol) and guard interval

Table 17-5—Timing-related parameters

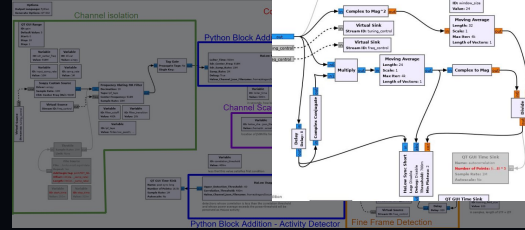
Parameter	Value (20 MHz channel spacing)	Value (10 MHz channel spacing)	Value (5 MHz channel spacing)
N_{SD} : Number of data subcarriers	48	48	48
N_{SP} : Number of pilot subcarriers	4	4	4
N_{ST} : Number of subcarriers, total	52 ($N_{SD} + N_{SP}$)	52 ($N_{SD} + N_{SP}$)	52 ($N_{SD} + N_{SP}$)
Δ_F : Subcarrier frequency spacing	0.3125 MHz (=20 MHz/64)	0.15625 MHz (= 10 MHz/64)	0.078125 MHz (= 5 MHz/64)
T_{FFT} : Inverse Fast Fourier Transform (IFFT) / Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) period	3.2 μ s ($1/\Delta_F$)	6.4 μ s ($1/\Delta_F$)	12.8 μ s ($1/\Delta_F$)
$T_{PREAMBLE}$: PHY preamble duration	16 μ s ($T_{SHORT} + T_{LONG}$)	32 μ s ($T_{SHORT} + T_{LONG}$)	64 μ s ($T_{SHORT} + T_{LONG}$)
T_{SIGNAL} : Duration of the SIGNAL BPSK-OFDM symbol	4.0 μ s ($T_{GI} + T_{FFT}$)	8.0 μ s ($T_{GI} + T_{FFT}$)	16.0 μ s ($T_{GI} + T_{FFT}$)
T_{GI} : GI duration	0.8 μ s ($T_{FFT}/4$)	1.6 μ s ($T_{FFT}/4$)	3.2 μ s ($T_{FFT}/4$)
T_{GT} : Training symbol GI duration	1.6 μ s ($T_{FFT}/2$)	3.2 μ s ($T_{FFT}/2$)	6.4 μ s ($T_{FFT}/2$)
T_{SYM} : Symbol interval	4 μ s ($T_{GI} + T_{FFT}$)	8 μ s ($T_{GI} + T_{FFT}$)	16 μ s ($T_{GI} + T_{FFT}$)
T_{SHORT} : Short training sequence duration	8 μ s ($10 \times T_{FFT}/4$)	16 μ s ($10 \times T_{FFT}/4$)	32 μ s ($10 \times T_{FFT}/4$)
T_{LONG} : Long training sequence duration	8 μ s ($T_{GI} + 2 \times T_{FFT}$)	16 μ s ($T_{GI} + 2 \times T_{FFT}$)	32 μ s ($T_{GI} + 2 \times T_{FFT}$)

HaLow Timing

Variable number of subcarriers, variable relationship between channel bandwidth and OFDM symbol period and guard interval

Table 23-4—Timing-related constants

Parameter	CBW1	CBW2	CBW4	CBW8	CBW16	Description
N_{SD}	24	52	108	234	468	Number of data subcarriers per OFDM symbol
N_{SP}	2	4	6	8	16	Number of pilot subcarrier per OFDM symbol
N_{ST}	26	56	114	242	484	Total number of useful subcarriers per OFDM symbol
N_{SR}	13	28	58	122	250	Highest data subcarrier index per OFDM symbol
Δ_F	31.25 kHz					Subcarrier frequency spacing
T_{DFT}	32 μ s = $1/\Delta_F$					IDFT/DFT period
T_{GI}	8 μ s = $T_{DFT}/4$					Guard interval duration
T_{GI2}	16 μ s					Double guard interval
T_{GI5}	4 μ s = $T_{DFT}/8$					Short guard interval duration
T_{SYM}	40 μ s = $T_{DFT} + T_{GI} = 1.25 \times T_{DFT}$					Duration of OFDM symbol with normal guard interval



Implemented:

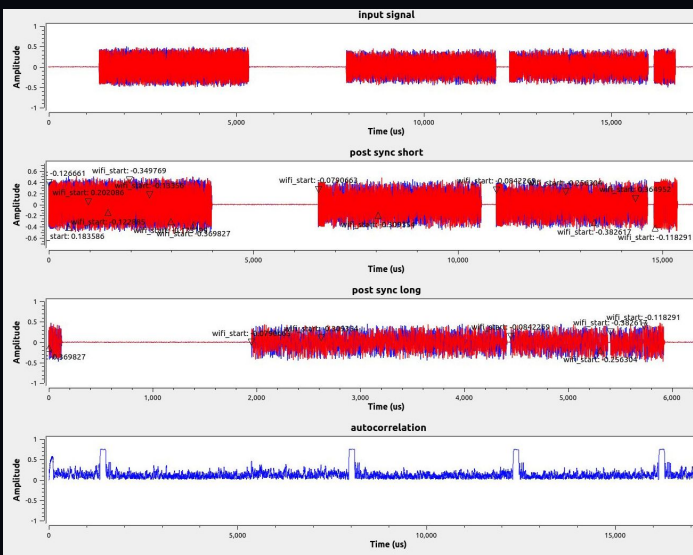
Scope constrained to 1 MHz Channel

The variability in the parameters for each channel bandwidth in HaLow means that software-defined implementations will have to adapt parameters based on the channel that the user wishes to decode. This will add overhead in the form of object properties that will have to propagate throughout the receive chain

HaLow Additions

802.11a/g/p Long Training Field (LTF) Frame Timings

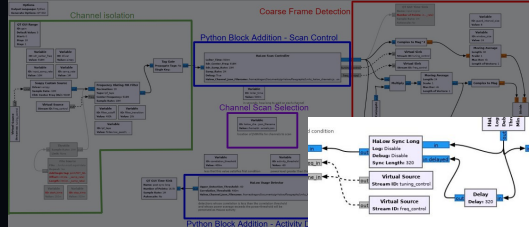
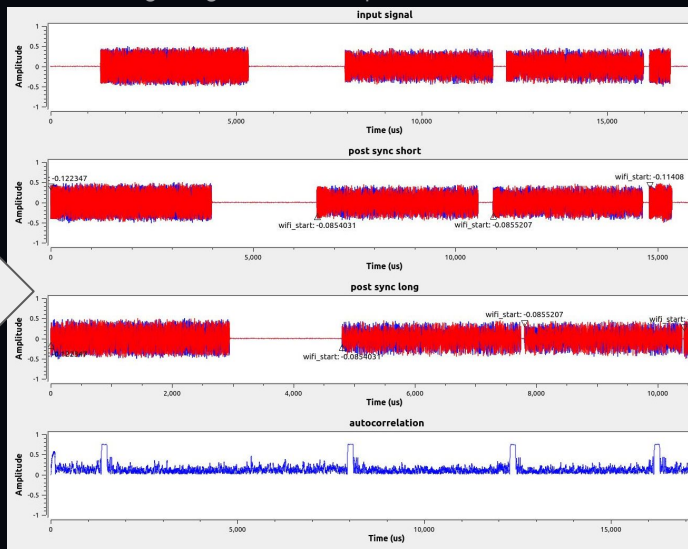
Without proper corrections to the timing in the short and long sync blocks, there was erratic tagging on HaLow packets. The tags did not correspond with the beginning of a HaLow packet.



fix

HaLow Long Training Field (LTF) Frame Timings

Creating variables for the number of samples per OFDM symbol, number of samples per guard interval, and duration of the STF and LTF (in samples) led to placement of tags at the correct beginning of the HaLow packet



However, on neighboring channels there were still some false alarms so I needed a way of filtering those out as much as possible

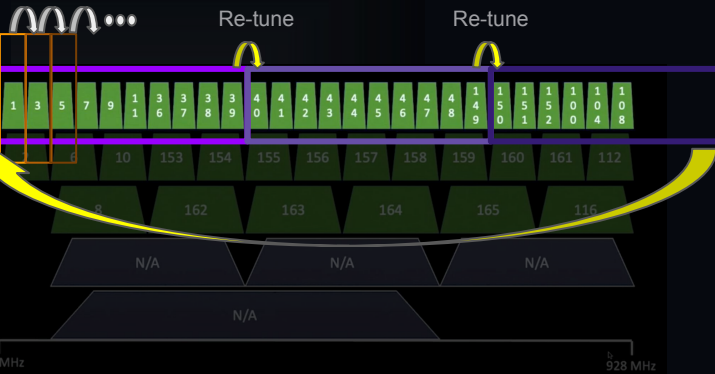
Everything is based off of the IEEE 802.11-2020 MAC and PHY Specification

HaLow Additions

HaLow Scan Control

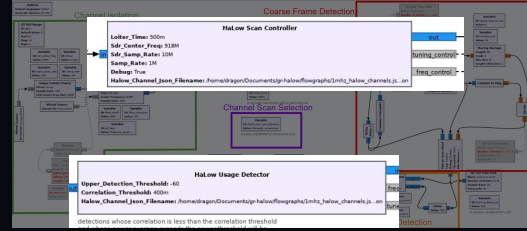
The **SDR bandwidth** should be at least 1 MHz to capture a HaLow channel, but the scan controller adjusts based off of bandwidth available to the SDR. The scan controller filters out the channels in the JSON configuration file that it is not able to scan based off of available bandwidth. Within each tuning window, the **frequency translating FIR filter** isolates each channel for activity analysis. The **loiter time** determines how long the scan controller lingers on each channel.

Loiter time



HaLow Activity Detector

To reduce false alarms, the HaLow activity detector accepts a **threshold for the frequency offset** and the **average power level**. If the incoming tag value is below the threshold for the frequency offset and the next 10 samples average power exceeds the power threshold, a detection is printed to the screen.

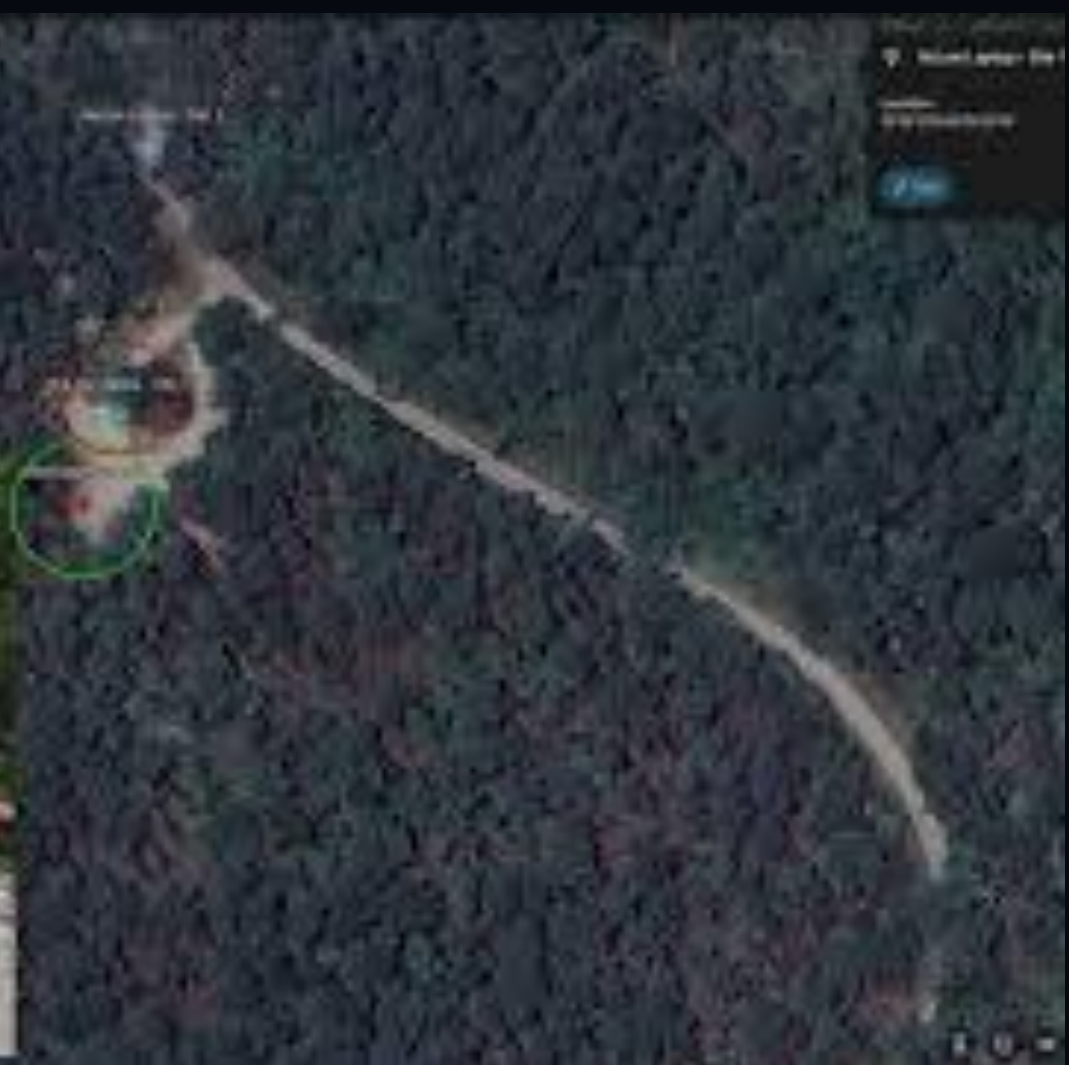


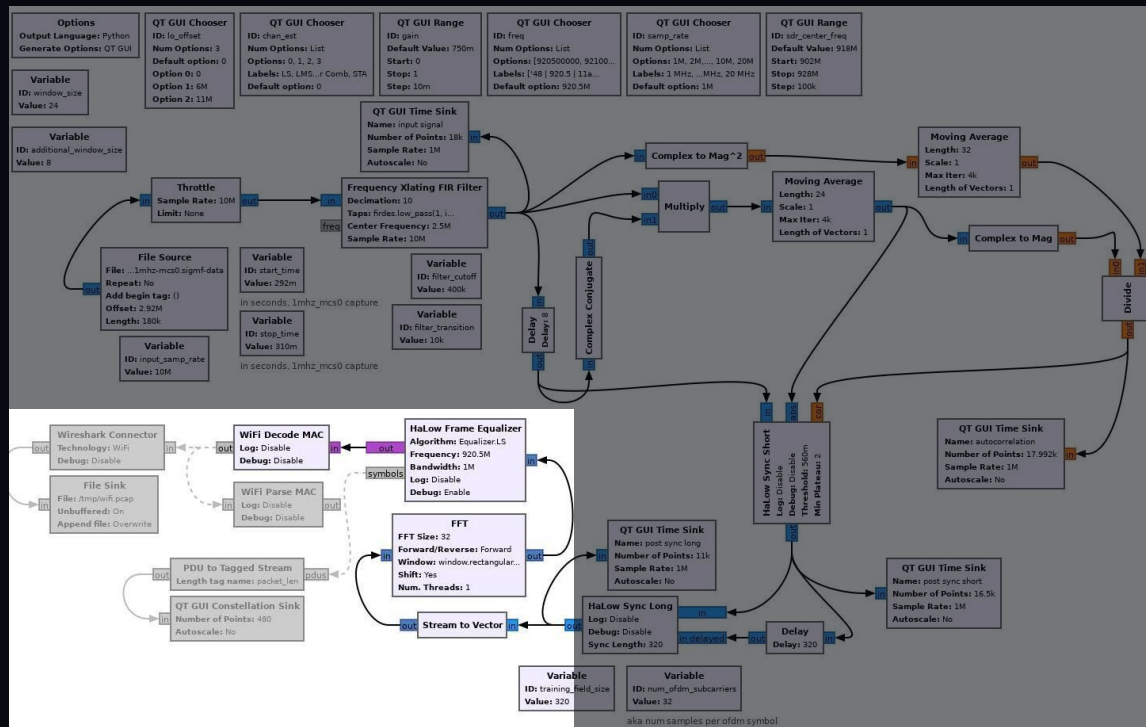
```

SDR frequency is 928.00 MHz
current channel is 151 freq 923.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
current channel is 152 freq 924.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
current channel is 100 freq 925.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
current channel is 104 freq 926.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
current channel is 108 freq 927.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
SDR frequency is 907.00 MHz
current channel is 1 freq 902.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
current channel is 3 freq 903.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
current channel is 5 freq 904.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
current channel is 7 freq 905.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
current channel is 9 freq 906.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
current channel is 11 freq 907.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
current channel is 36 freq 908.50 MHz, bw 1.00 MHz
HaLow activity - channel 36, freq 908.5 MHz, bw 1.0 MHz, power avg: -55.50 dB
HaLow activity - channel 36, freq 908.5 MHz, bw 1.0 MHz, power avg: -37.13 dB
HaLow activity - channel 36, freq 908.5 MHz, bw 1.0 MHz, power avg: -37.73 dB
HaLow activity - channel 36, freq 908.5 MHz, bw 1.0 MHz, power avg: -49.08 dB
HaLow activity - channel 36, freq 908.5 MHz, bw 1.0 MHz, power avg: -57.30 dB
HaLow activity - channel 36, freq 908.5 MHz, bw 1.0 MHz, power avg: -38.31 dB
HaLow activity - channel 36, freq 908.5 MHz, bw 1.0 MHz, power avg: -39.94 dB
HaLow activity - channel 36, freq 908.5 MHz, bw 1.0 MHz, power avg: -51.11 dB
    
```

802.11AH Status		
Working Mode	Network Name	Device IP
MESH Node	gnuradioconf	192.168.100.1 (Static (Manual))
MAC Address	Channel / Frequency	Bandwidth
00:C0:CA:B3:D5:34	36 (908.5) MHz	1 M
Security	Country Code	TX Power
No Encryption	United States (US)	23 dBm

Alfa HaLow-U Configuration Webpage





GNU RADIO VERSION 3.10.10.0

HaLow Full Receiver

Implemented, not working - Determines if there is HaLow activity, and if there is, what channel it is on

irongiant33 on GitHub: [gr-halow](https://github.com/irongiant33/gr-halow)

HaLow Modifications

802.11a PPDU Format

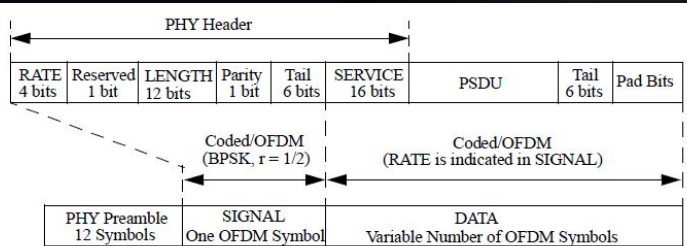
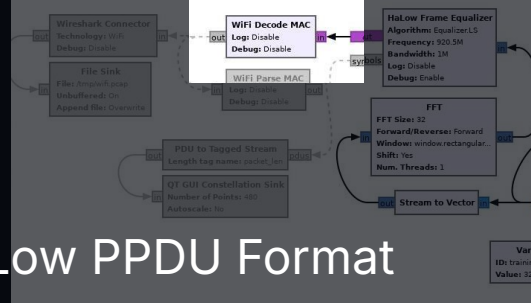


Figure 17-1—PPDU format

Table 17-6—Contents of the SIGNAL field

R1-R4	Rate (Mb/s) (20 MHz channel spacing)	Rate (Mb/s) (10 MHz channel spacing)	Rate (Mb/s) (5 MHz channel spacing)
1101	6	3	1.5
1111	9	4.5	2.25
0101	12	6	3
0111	18	9	4.5
1001	24	12	6
1011	36	18	9
0001	48	24	12
0011	54	27	13.5

HaLow PPDU Format



The general structure for SIG_1M is defined as in Figure 23-3. This frame format is used for SIG_1M PPDU SU transmission.

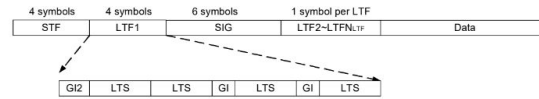


Figure 23-3—SIG_1M format

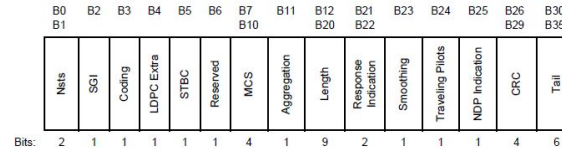


Figure 23-16—Structure of the 6 symbol SIG field of S1G_1M PPDU

Table 23-41—S1G-MCSs for 1 MHz, $N_{ss} = 1$

MCS Idx	Mod	R	N_{BPSCS}	N_{SD}	N_{SP}	N_{CRPS}	N_{DRPS}	N_{ES}	Data_rate (kb/s)	
									8 μ s GI	4 μ s GI
0	BPSK	1/2	1	24	2	24	12	1	300.0	333.3
1	QPSK	1/2	2	24	2	48	24	1	600.0	666.7
2	QPSK	3/4	2	24	2	48	36	1	900.0	1000.0
3	16-QAM	1/2	4	24	2	96	48	1	1200.0	1333.3
4	16-QAM	3/4	4	24	2	96	72	1	1800.0	2000.0
5	64-QAM	2/3	6	24	2	144	96	1	2400.0	2666.7
6	64-QAM	3/4	6	24	2	144	108	1	2700.0	3000.0
7	64-QAM	5/6	6	24	2	144	120	1	3000.0	3333.3
8	256-QAM	3/4	8	24	2	192	144	1	3600.0	4000.0
9	256-QAM	5/6	8	24	2	192	160	1	4000.0	4444.4
10	BPSK	1/2 with 2 μ s repetition	1	24	2	24	6	1	150.0	166.7

Implemented: Function for HaLow 1 MHz PPDU Decoding

In the future, each PPDU should have its own object (i.e. legacy Wi-Fi, halow 1 MHz, HaLow 2 MHz Short Frame, HaLow 2 MHz Long Frame, etc.) that has its own decoder function and properties because they are all unique

My 1 MHz scope constraint helped me here because I only had to make the adjustment for the PPDU format shown on the right

Not pictured are the corrections for 2x repetition for MCS 10 and deinterleaving that I needed to add.

Everything is based off of the IEEE 802.11-2020 MAC and PHY Specification

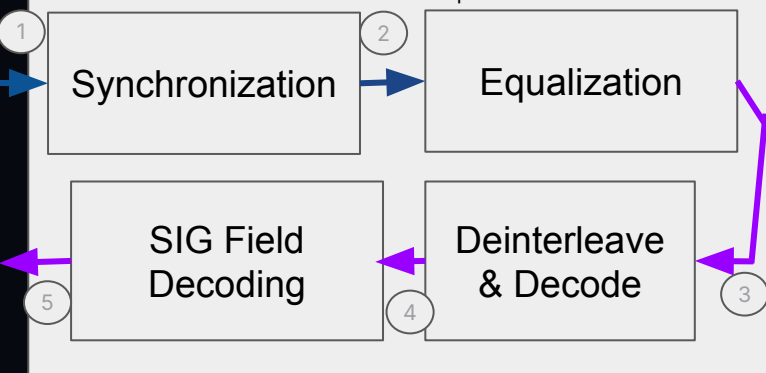
HaLow Improvements

Intermediate Testing

A lot is compressed into a single GNU Radio block, which makes it hard to modify and test to make sure everything right.

1. I assume the input to the frame equalizer is good given my success with the HaLow scanner
2. Unsure how to test the output of synchronization
3. Post equalization should yield interleaved bits, but they are LDPC encoded. How to verify equalizer?
4. LDPC decoded bits should be recognizable from PPDU format
5. Compare MCS value to the value it was set to

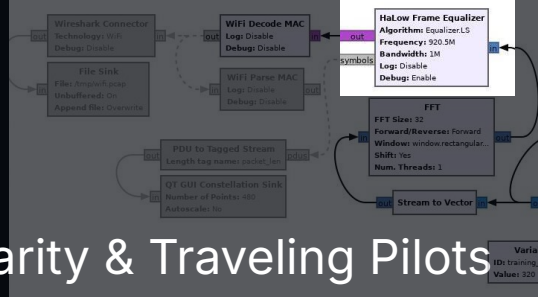
HaLow Frame Equalizer



Polarity & Traveling Pilots

Fixed pilot polarity corrections affect frequency offset correction, so that is possibly skewing my input to the equalizer. HaLow uses the same polarity values as 802.11ah

There is the possibility of traveling pilots in HaLow to better track changing channel conditions. I am currently assuming there are no traveling pilots, but this might be a bad assumption. I also have not been able to find a control on the Alfa HaLow-U that will guarantee no traveling pilots. The benefit of traveling pilots is their polarity is always positive.



Fixed Pilot EQN 23-50

$$P_n^{\{-7,7\}} = \{\Psi_{(n \bmod 2)+2}, \Psi_{((n+1) \bmod 2)+2}\}$$

$$P_n^k \notin \{-7,7\} = 0$$

Table 21-21—Pilot values for 80 MHz transmission

Ψ_0	Ψ_1	Ψ_2	Ψ_3	Ψ_4	Ψ_5	Ψ_6	Ψ_7
1	1	1	-1	-1	1	1	1

Traveling Pilot EQN 23-51

$$P_n^k = \begin{cases} 1.5 \times P_{n, \text{fix}}^{k(l)}, & k \in K_{\text{Pilot_Travel}}(n) \text{ and } k = K_{\text{Pilot_Travel}}(n) \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Table 23-21—Traveling pilot positions for NSTS=1, 1 MHz S1G PPDU


Pilot Index l	Pattern Index m												
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
0	-2	-10	-5	-13	-8	-3	-11	-6	-1	-9	-4	-12	-7
1	12	4	9	1	6	11	3	8	13	5	10	2	7

Resources

- [irongiant33/gr-halow: An open-source implementation of Wi-Fi HaLow, a.k.a. IEEE 802.11ah \(github.com\)](#)
- IEEE MAC and PHY specification for 802.11ah (free to download): <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/9363693>
- Google Drive Link for HaLow SigMF Files:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DEHoJCMcezHTnvYwK1-GE37gLbkNcJ1I?usp=drive_link
 - Upload to [IQEngine](https://staging.iqengine.org/upload) (<https://staging.iqengine.org/upload>) is pending
- [DragonOS](#) - helpful videos & tools for SDR hobbyists
- Troy Martin - 802.11ah Real-World Performance Results: [Wi-Fi HaLow 802.11ah & Real-World Performance Results | Troy Martin | WLPC Phoenix 2024 \(youtube.com\)](#)
- Andreas Spiess on HaLow: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rj9GZQtFs8k>
- Ben Jeffery on HaLow: [802.11ah Wi-Fi HaLOW: The 1 Kilometer WiFi Standard \(youtube.com\)](#)
- WiFi Certified HaLow Product Finder - [Product Finder Results | Wi-Fi Alliance](#)

THANK YOU

FOR ATTENDING

 @samiammiller



KD2MwK



irongiant33

IEEE Standards Breakdown: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/9363693>

- Ch15 is 802.11 (dsss in 2.4 GHz, 1Mbps, 2Mbps rates) p.2749
- Ch16 is 802.11b (HT dsss in 2.4ghz 1, 2, 5.5, 11Mbps rates) p.2773
- Ch17 is 802.11a (ofdm in 5ghz, 5MHz, 10MHz, 20MHz channel widths 6,9,12,18,24,36,48,54 Mbps rates in 10MHz channel) p.2802
 - P.2807 PPDU format
 - P.2810-2811 I'm pretty sure this is 802.11a modulation dependent parameters and timing parameters. It looks similar to HaLow at just 10x the rates
- Ch18 is 802.11b-corrigendum1 (extended rate phy "ERP" dsss in 2.4ghz, backwards compatible with 802.11a/b) p 2848
- Ch19 is 802.11g (ofdm in 2.4ghz, but also backwards compatible with ch18 dsss in 2.4ghz and ch17 ofdm in 5ghz) p.2860
 - P.2862 - definition of non-ht, ht-mf, ht-gf. Pretty sure gr-ieee80211 only supports non-ht. Support for ch17/18 packets. Mixed format (MF) has preamble that can be decided by ch17/18 but data that cannot. Greenfield (GF) cannot be recognized at all by ch17/18.
 - P.2873 PPDU format. Makes sense for delay of 16us because STF and LTF are each 8us.
 - P.2880 timing parameters. 48 complex data numbers. 52 sub carriers, highest sub carrier index is 26. 312.25 khz subcarrier spacing
- Ch20 is directional multi gig, 802.11ad? p.2962
- Ch21 is very high throughput, 802.11ac? p.3010
- Ch22 is television very high throughput 802.11af? p.3137
- Ch23 is 802.11ah (ofdm in S1G, essentially 802.11g knocked down 10x) p.3186

Commercial Device Breakdown

Morse Micro

- MM6108-MF08651-US (\$30 - PCB Module):
<https://www.mouser.com/ProductDetail/Morse-Micro/MM6108-MF08651-US?qs=mELo uGlnn3dMCf9rE7Pbkw%3D%3D>
- MM6108-EKH03-05US-E (\$250 - Router):
<https://www.mouser.com/ProductDetail/Morse-Micro/MM6108-EKH03-05US-E?qs=mELouGlnn3fleIQYzZodAg%3D%3D>
- MM6108-EKH01 (\$500 - Development Kit):
<https://www.mouser.com/c/?marcom=169968848>

Newracom

- Alfa HaLow-U (\$125):
<https://store.rokland.com/products/alfa-network-halow-u-802-11ah-halow-us-b-adapter-support-ap-client-mode>
- Alfa AHPI7292S Raspberry Pi Hat (\$65):
<https://store.rokland.com/products/alfa-network-ahpi7292s-ieee-802-11ah-sub-1-ghz-module-in-raspberry-pi-hat-for-m-factor>
- Teledatics XPAH (\$99):
<https://teledatics.io/collections/all>
- Teledatics HaloMax (\$109):
<https://www.crowdsupply.com/teledatics-incorporated/halomax-tm-long-range-wireless>

Taixin

- LilyGo T-HaLow (\$30):
<https://www.lilygo.cc/products/t-halow>
- Other products on AliExpress:
 - (\$70) [1.2KM Wireless Long Distance WIFI AP Transmitter Sender Receiver For 4MP 5MP 8MP IP PTZ Camera Ethernet Equipment - AliExpress 30](#)