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(54) **DYNAMIC TUNING IN DENSE ARRAYS OF ELECTRICALLY SMALL ELEMENTS**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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(60) Provisional application No. 61/652,694, filed on May 29, 2012.

**Publication Classification**

(51) **Int. Cl.**

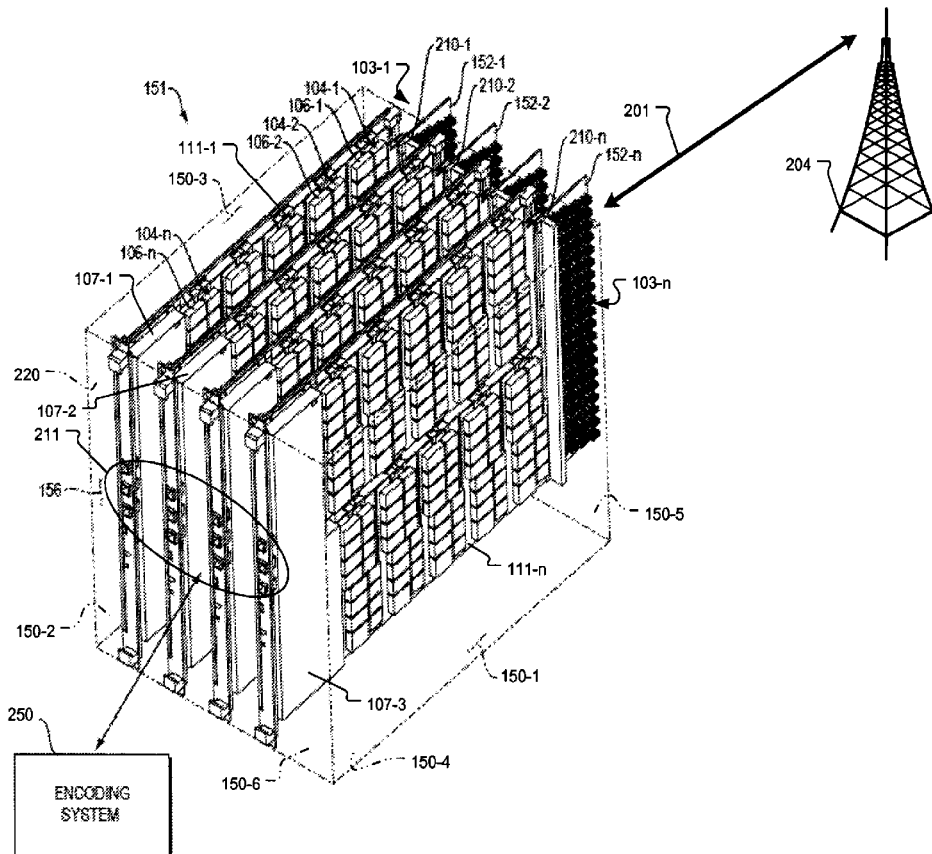
*H04N 21/438* (2006.01)

*H04N 5/50* (2006.01)

*H04N 21/4402* (2006.01)

*H04N 21/433* (2006.01)

A system and method for dynamically tuning antenna elements is disclosed. The method comprises: receiving requests to capture over the air broadcasts; selecting an antenna element from a group of available antenna elements to capture one of the requested over the air broadcasts; applying default settings to tune the selected antenna element to capture the one of the requested over the air broadcasts; and dynamically tuning the selected antenna element to enhance reception of the one of the requested over the air broadcasts. The method may further comprise measuring parameters toward optimizing the selected antenna element. The method may also include maintaining the tuning of the selected antenna element until the received request is automatically released because time has elapsed. The method may additionally include recording and/or streaming the requested broadcast to an end-user.



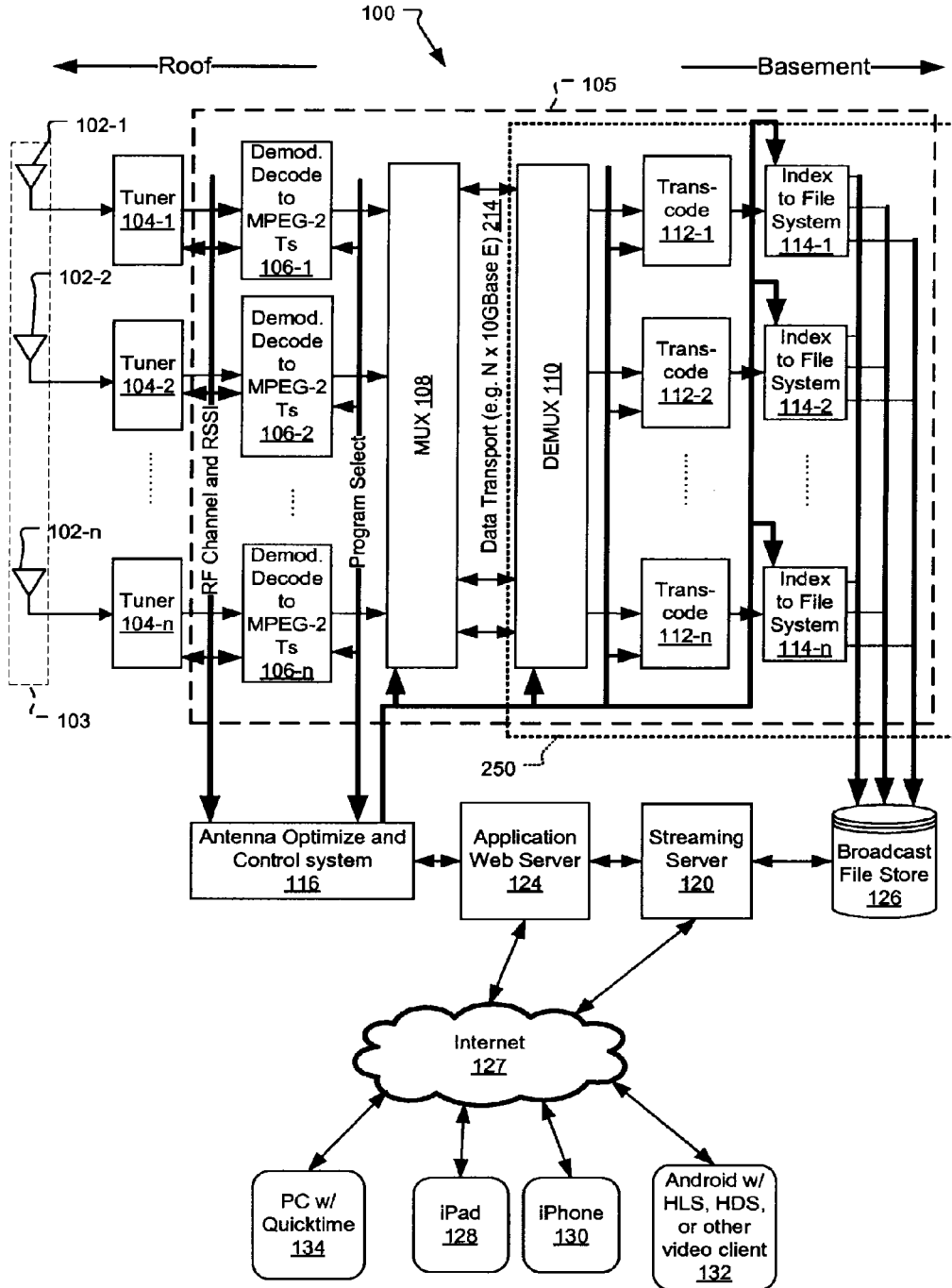


Fig. 1

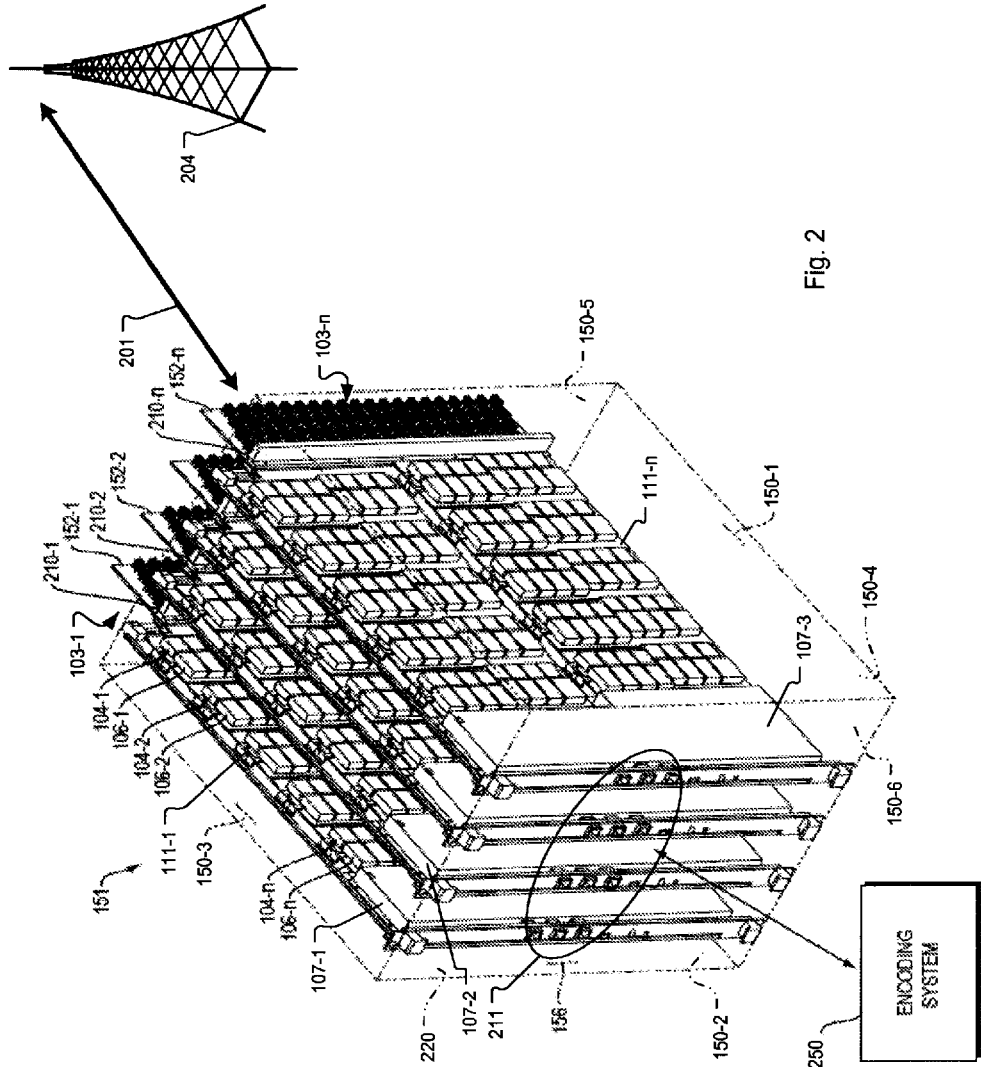


Fig. 2

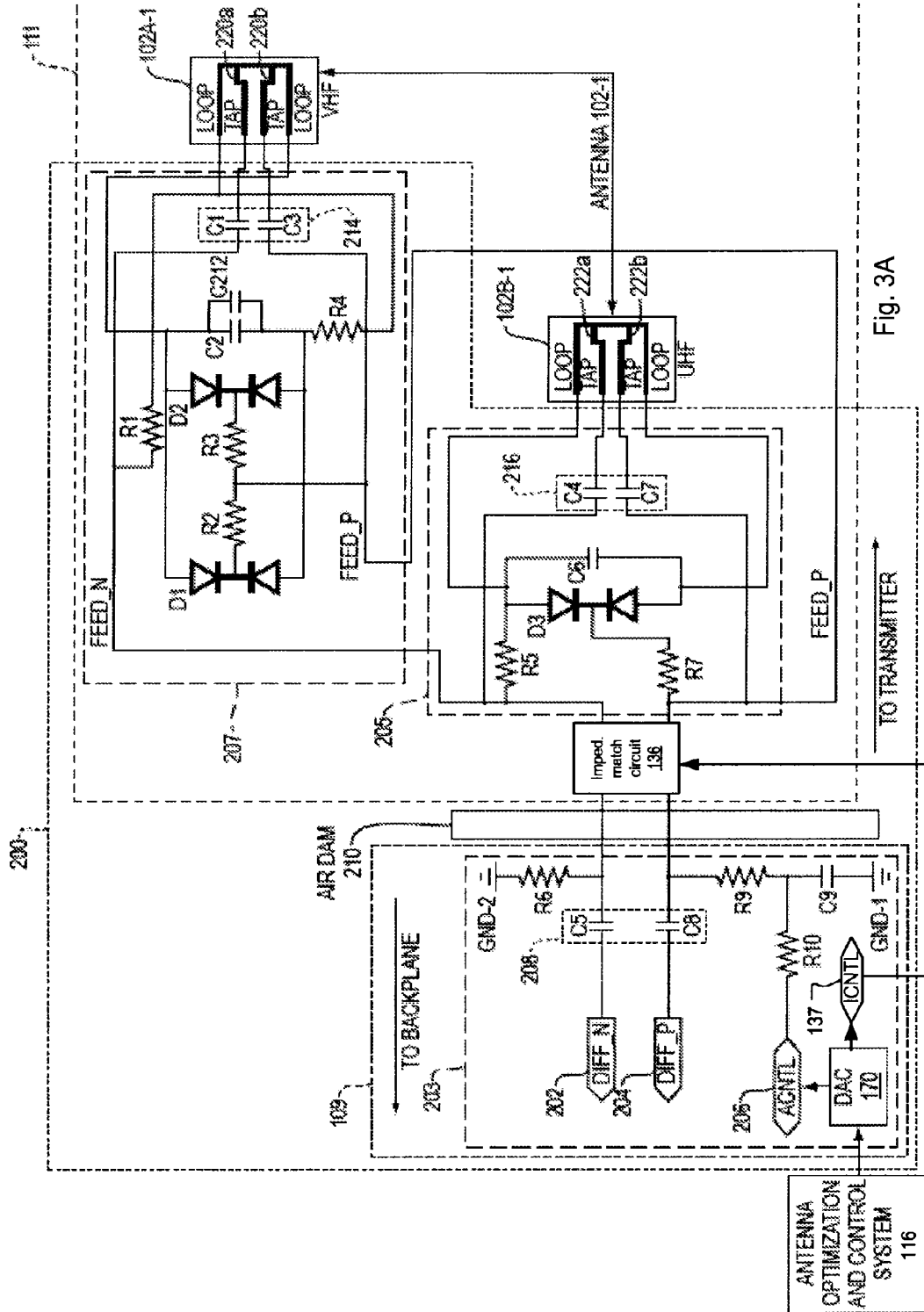


Fig. 3A

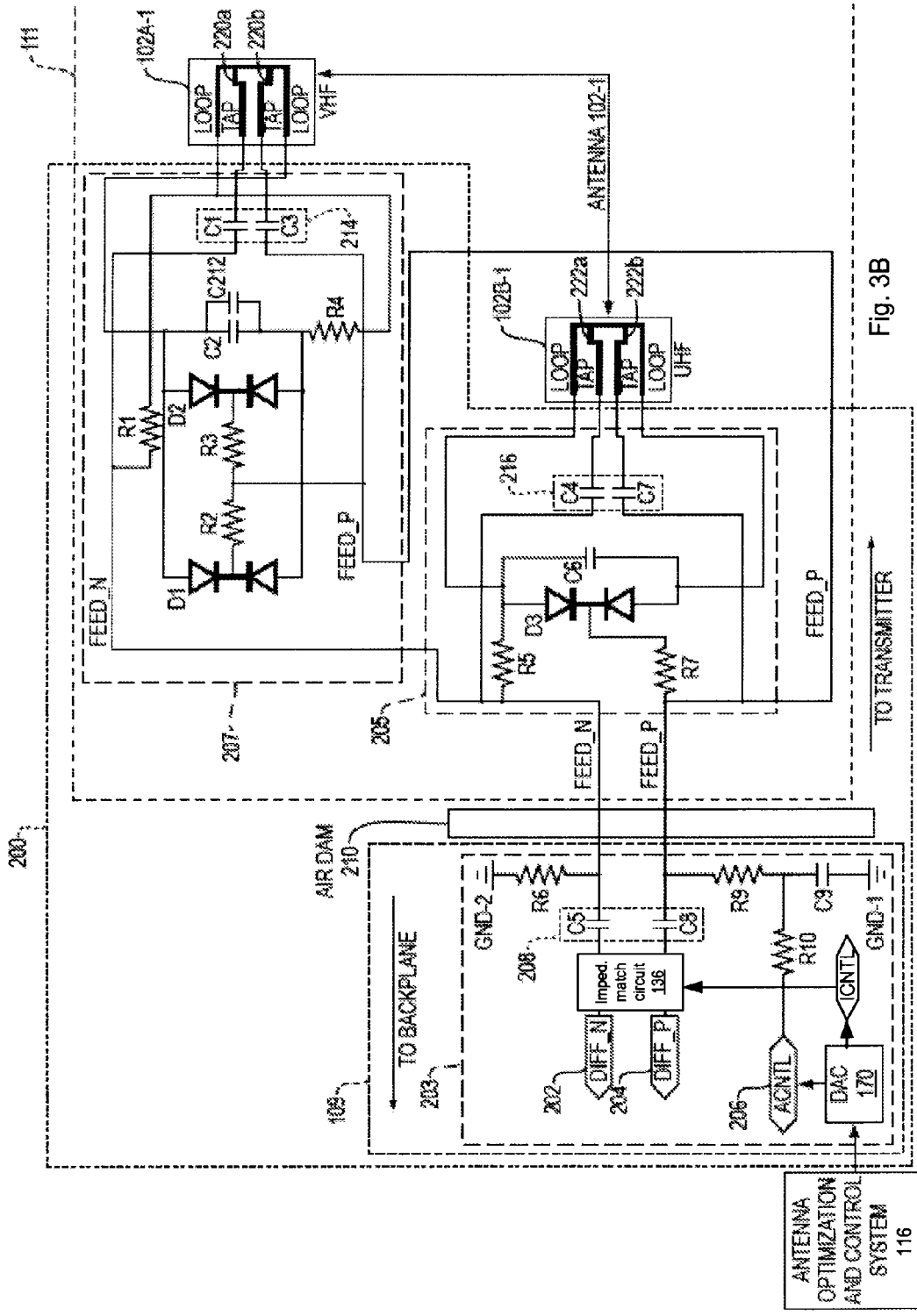


Fig. 3B

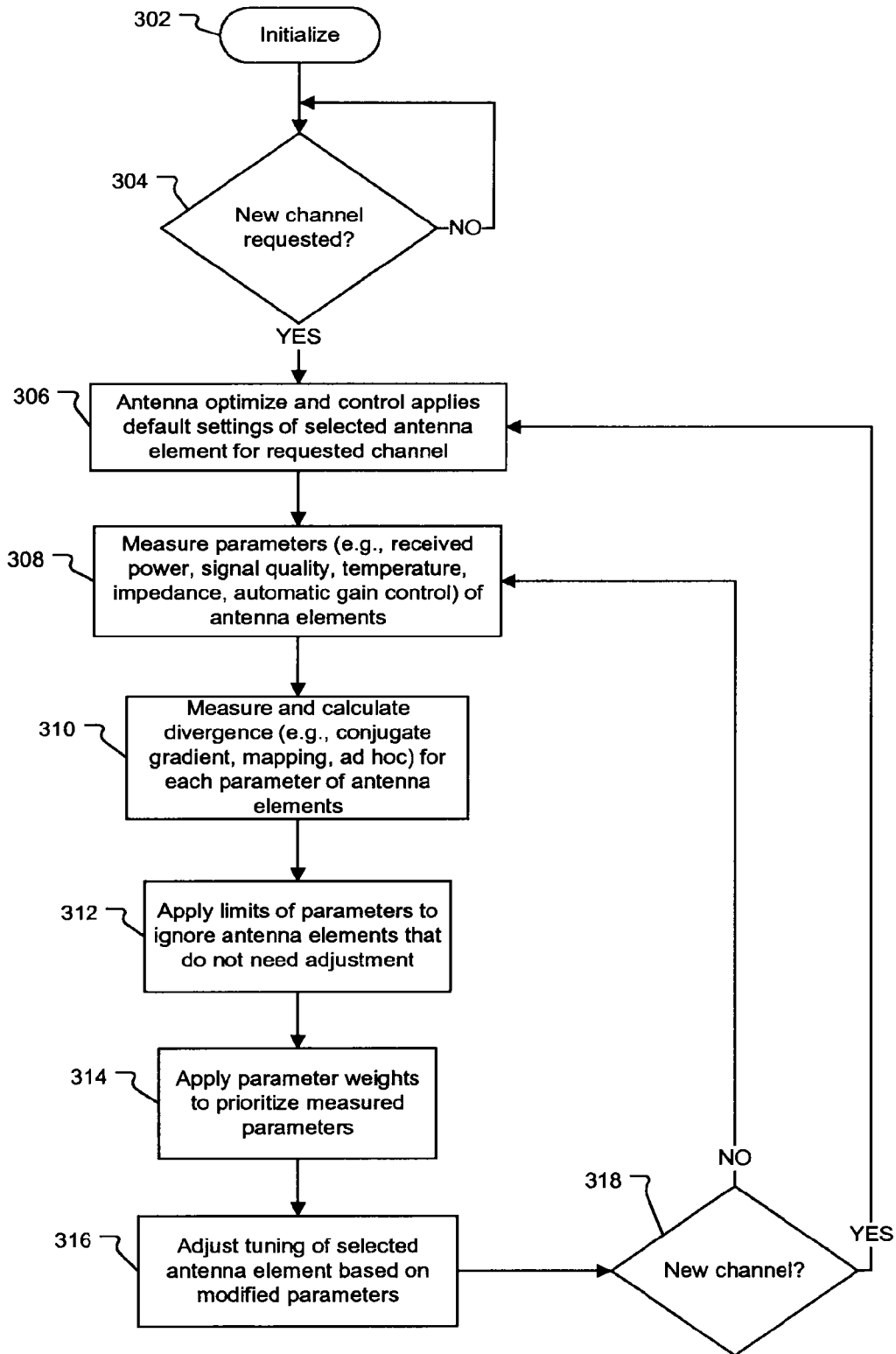


Fig. 4

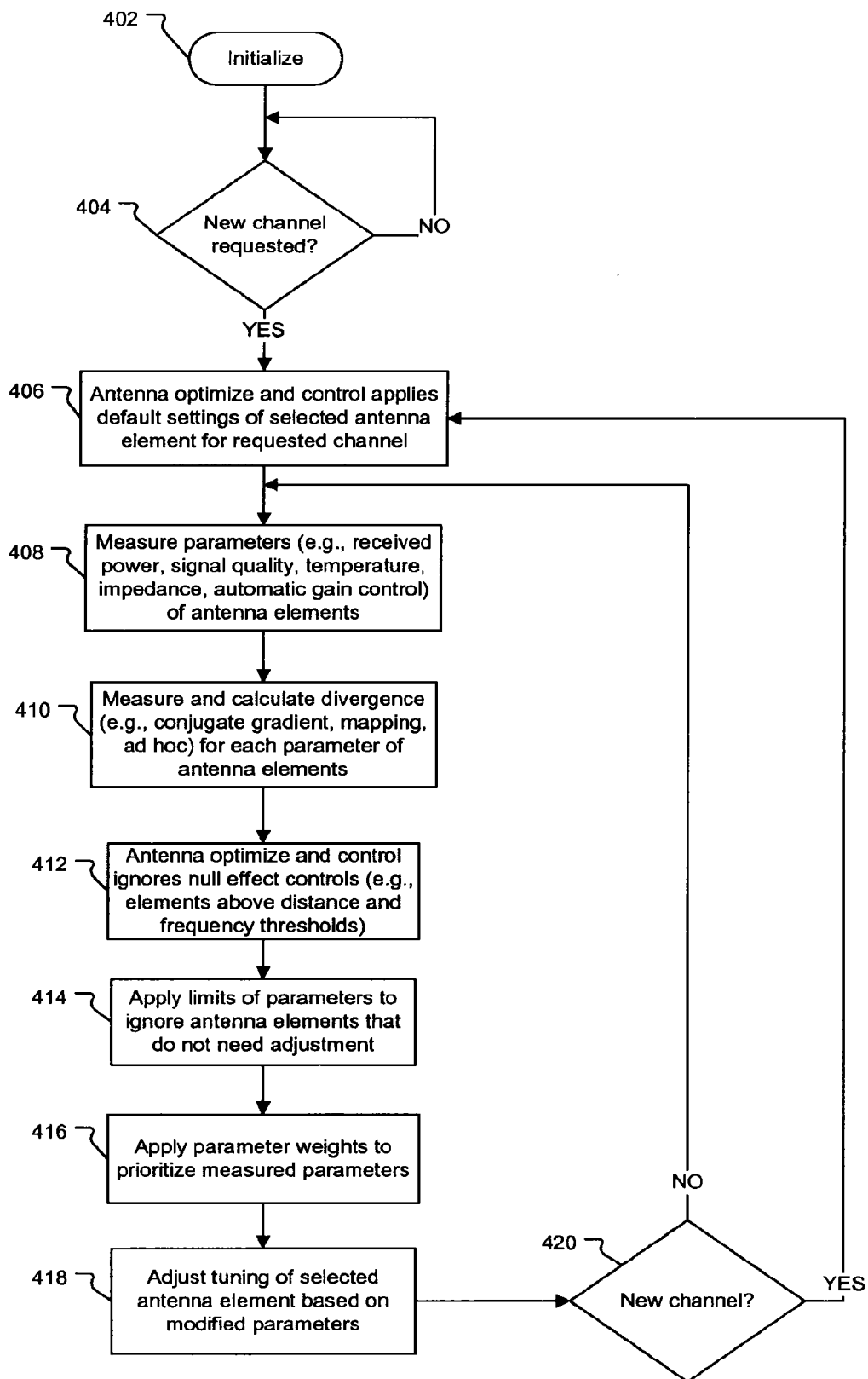


Fig. 5

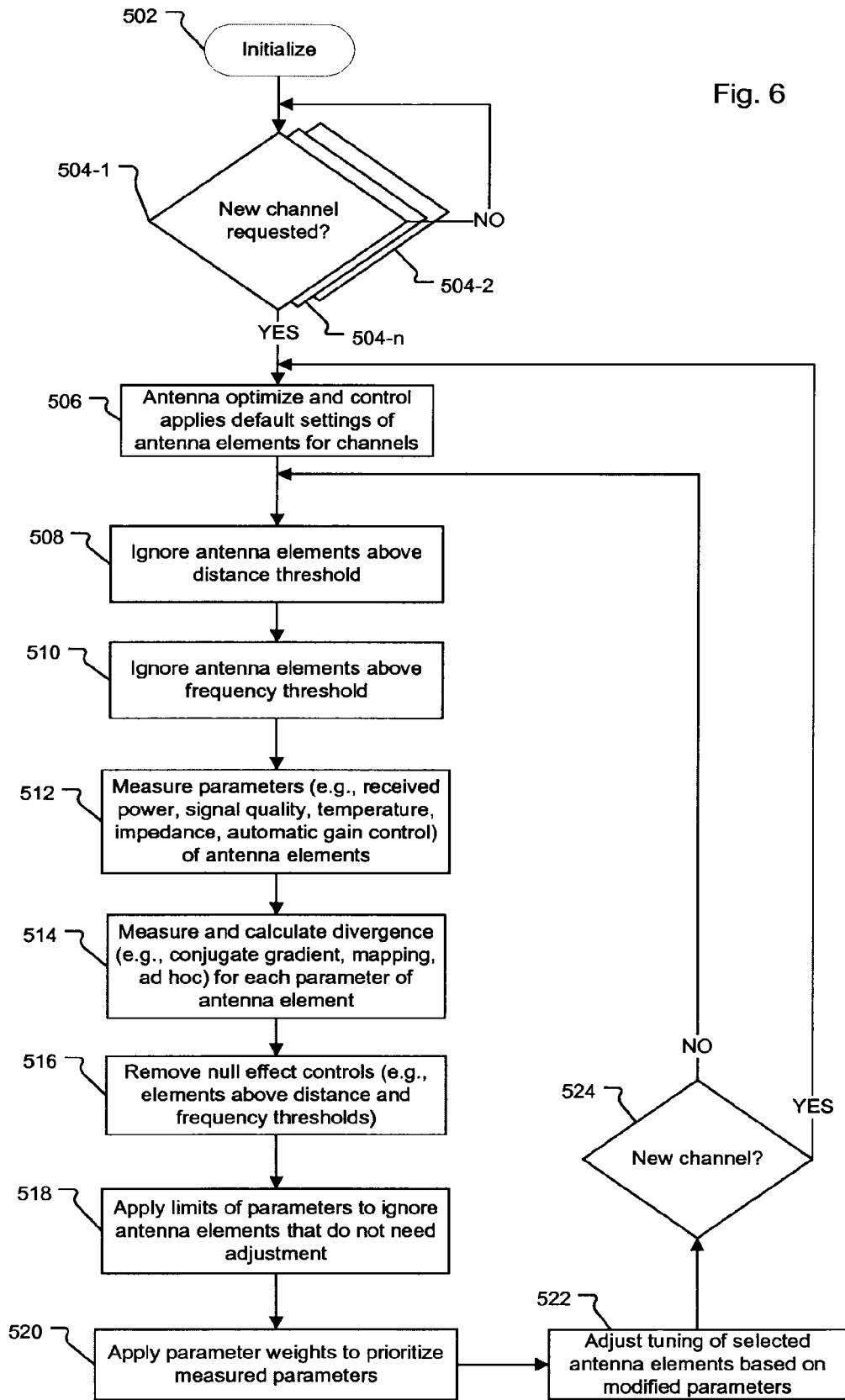


Fig. 6



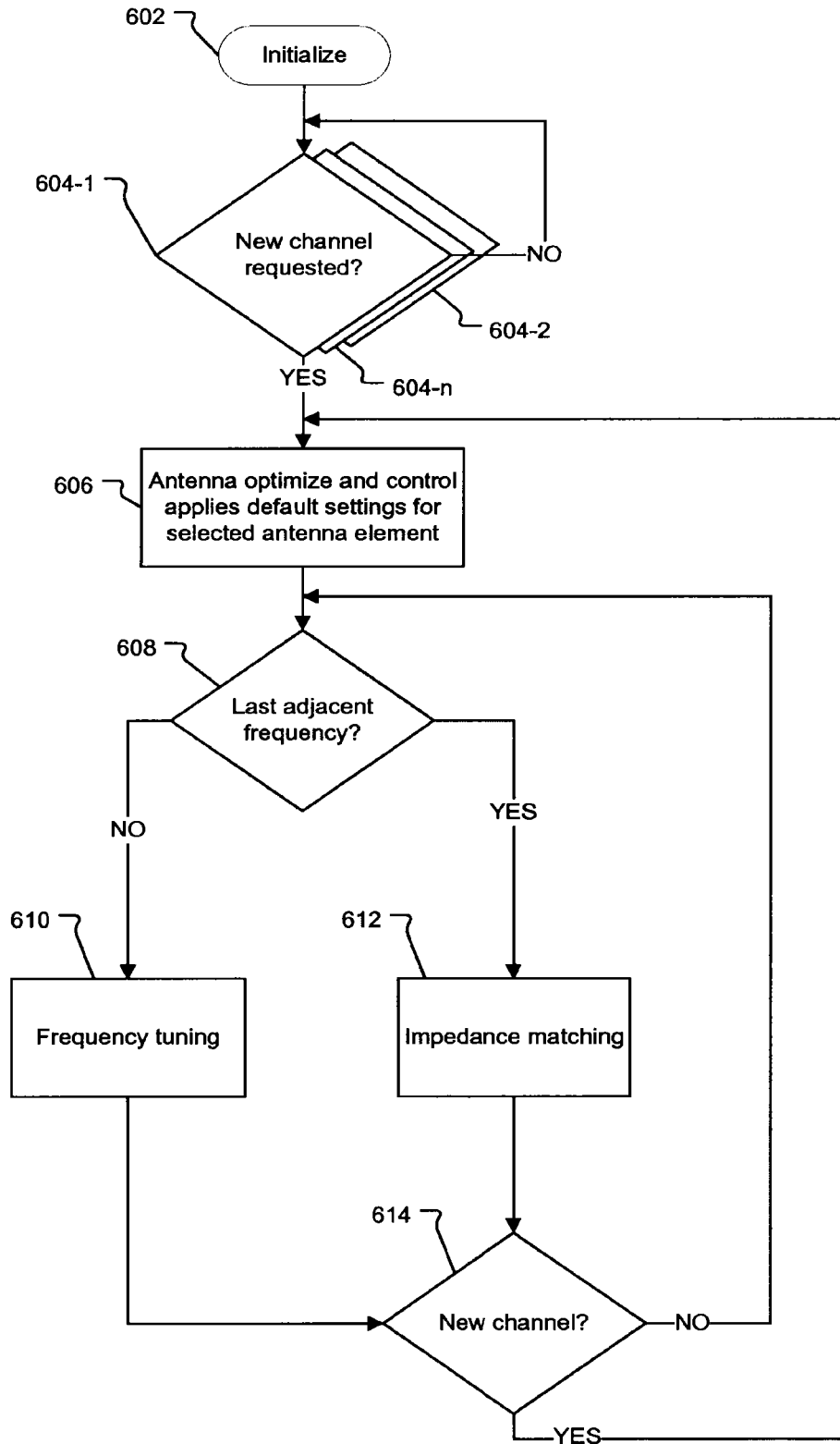


Fig. 7

**DYNAMIC TUNING IN DENSE ARRAYS OF  
ELECTRICALLY SMALL ELEMENTS****INCORPORATION BY  
REFERENCE/CROSS-REFERENCE TO  
RELATED APPLICATIONS**

**[0001]** This application is a continuation of U.S. Pat. No. 9,118,304, filed on Jan. 31, 2013, and issued on Aug. 25, 2015, which claims the benefit under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/652,694, filed on May 29, 2012, both of which are hereby incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

**[0002]** Television programming is broadcast by broadcasting entities on different television channels. Some examples of well-known television networks in the United States include ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, and PBS.

**[0003]** In general, the channels map to frequency ranges within the radio frequency (RF) spectrum. For example, in the United States channel 2 is broadcast between 54-60 Mega-Hertz (MHz), channel 3 is broadcast between 60-66 MHz, and channel 4 is broadcast between 66-72 MHz, to list a few examples.

**[0004]** Recently, systems having arrays of small RF antenna elements have been deployed for capturing the over the air content. The systems then stream the captured content to users via public networks, such as the Internet, and/or private networks. An example of a system for capturing and streaming over the air content to users via the Internet is described in, "System and Method for Providing Network Access to Antenna Feeds" by Kanojia et al., filed Nov. 17, 2011, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/299,186, (U.S. Pat. Pub. No. US 2012/0127374 A1), which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

**[0005]** In these capture systems, each user is assigned their own antenna element. Thus, the systems generally include arrays having large numbers of physically small antenna elements. In order to maximize the number of antenna elements at installation locations, the antenna elements are implemented on antenna array cards in two dimensional arrays and are preferably deployed in three dimensional arrays. Generally, the three dimensional arrays are created by stacking the antenna array cards.

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

**[0006]** Because the antenna elements are physically small and the arrays are preferably dense, the capture systems should be located physically near to television transmitters of the broadcasting entities. This ensures a strong signal and compensates for the low gain characteristics of the physically small antenna elements and any other attenuation effects due to the density of the arrays. Additionally, in arrays where there is limited (or no) a priori knowledge of frequency, phasing, or amplitude, the design and configuration of the array is unable to account for coupling (or interference) between antenna elements.

**[0007]** Unlike antenna elements in a phased array, it is not desirable to have multiple antenna elements competing over the same incident power. To minimize coupling between antenna elements, users are not assigned randomly to antenna elements within the array. Instead, they are selectively assigned to antenna elements based on which channels are

requested by the users and to which channels the other antenna elements are already tuned.

**[0008]** Despite attempts to minimize coupling between antenna elements, at least some coupling is unavoidable due to the array density. The present system is directed to dynamically tuning antenna elements to enhance reception and reduce coupling of the antenna elements in the array. By implementing tuning controls, the antenna elements can be tuned based on measured parameters to reduce destructive effects due to coupling between the antenna elements.

**[0009]** In general, according to one aspect, the invention features a method for dynamically tuning antenna elements. The method comprises receiving requests to capture over the air broadcasts, selecting an antenna element from a group of available antenna elements to capture one of the requested over the air broadcasts, and dynamically tuning the selected antenna element to enhance reception of one of the requested over the air broadcasts.

**[0010]** In embodiments, the method further comprises measuring parameters of the selected antenna element to determine how to optimize the selected antenna element. The parameters typically include received power, signal quality, temperature of the antenna element, and/or automatic gain control, which can be prioritized. Preferably the method further comprises adjusting a control voltage of a varactor diode pair based on the measured parameters to tune the selected antenna element.

**[0011]** In examples, an optimization algorithm is used to yield a divergence of the measured parameters. The optimization algorithm can be a conjugate gradient algorithm, mapping techniques, or ad hoc algorithm.

**[0012]** Impedances matching is also preferably employed between the antenna elements and tuners with impedance matching circuits.

**[0013]** In some cases parameter limits are applied to prevent dynamically tuning antenna elements above a distance threshold or above a frequency threshold.

**[0014]** In other examples, the method may further comprise maintaining the tuning of the selected antenna element until the received request is released. In some instances this release may be related to a time attribute associated with a request to capture over the air broadcasts, wherein the time attribute identifies at least a broadcast expiration time. In this instance, the method may further automatically release the selected antenna element after the broadcast expiration time. In some examples, the time attribute may further identify a broadcast start time, in which case selecting the antenna element from the group of available antenna elements may automatically occur before the broadcast start time.

**[0015]** In still other examples, the method may further comprise recording the one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a memory associated with an end-user that submitted a request to capture the one of the requested over the air broadcasts. The method may still further include transcoding the captured one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a format that is more efficient for storage than the over the air broadcast format. In other examples, the method may comprise transcoding the captured one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a format that is more efficient for streaming to the end-user than the over the air broadcast format.

**[0016]** In general, according to another aspect, the invention features an antenna element tuning system, comprising a web server that receives requests to capture over the air broadcasts from broadcasting entities and an antenna controller that

selects an antenna element from a group of available antenna elements to capture the requested over the air broadcasts and then dynamically tunes the antenna element to enhance reception of the one of the requested over the air broadcasts. In certain instances, the system may measure parameters of the selected antenna element to optimize the selected antenna element. The measured parameters may be selected from the group comprising received power, signal quality, temperature of the antenna element, and automatic gain control. These measured parameters may be used to adjust a varactor diode pair that may be part of the system.

**[0017]** In some examples, the system may comprise a timer operably connected to the antenna controller such that the selected antenna element is automatically released after the expiration time of the one of the requested over the air broadcasts. This timer may be a countdown timer and may be connected to the antenna controller such that the selected antenna element is tuned and released based on the timing of the one of the requested over the air broadcasts. Alternatively, the timer may be a real time clock in which case the timing of antenna tuning, recording, and/or streaming may be based on actual time.

**[0018]** The system in some instances may further include memory for storing the one of the request over the air broadcasts. In still other examples, the system may still further include a transcoder to convert the captured one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a format that is more efficient for storage than the over the air broadcast format. Alternatively, a transcoder may be included in the system to convert the captured one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a format that is more efficient for streaming to the end-user than the over the air broadcast format.

**[0019]** The above and other features of the invention including various novel details of construction and combinations of parts, and other advantages, will now be more particularly described with reference to the accompanying drawings and pointed out in the claims. It will be understood that the particular method and device embodying the invention are shown by way of illustration and not as a limitation of the invention. The principles and features of this invention may be employed in various and numerous embodiments without departing from the scope of the invention.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

**[0020]** In the accompanying drawings, reference characters refer to the same parts throughout the different views. The drawings are not necessarily to scale; emphasis has instead been placed upon illustrating the principles of the invention. Of the drawings:

**[0021]** FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating a system for the capture and distribution of broadcast television programs.

**[0022]** FIG. 2 is a schematic perspective view of a three dimensional antenna array including a card cage structure shown in phantom, which functions as an enclosure for the antenna array cards.

**[0023]** FIG. 3A is a circuit diagram of an antenna and tuning feed network for an antenna system.

**[0024]** FIG. 3B is an alternative embodiment of the circuit diagram and tuning feed network for the antenna system.

**[0025]** FIG. 4 is a flowchart illustrating the steps the antenna optimize and control system performs to dynamically tune a single antenna element.

**[0026]** FIG. 5 is a flowchart illustrating the steps the antenna optimize and control system performs to dynamically tune antenna elements where there is no a priori knowledge of the antenna elements.

**[0027]** FIG. 6 is a flowchart illustrating the steps the antenna optimize and control system performs to dynamically tune antenna elements where there is prior knowledge of the antenna elements in the array.

**[0028]** FIG. 7 is a flowchart illustrating the steps the antenna optimize and control system performs to dynamically tune antenna elements with frequency tuning and impedance matching.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

**[0029]** The invention now will be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which illustrative embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein; rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those skilled in the art.

**[0030]** As used herein, the term “and/or” includes any and all combinations of one or more of the associated listed items. Further, the singular forms of nouns and the articles “a”, “an” and “the” are intended to include the plural forms as well, unless expressly stated otherwise. It will be further understood that the terms: includes, comprises, including and/or comprising, when used in this specification, specify the presence of stated features, integers, steps, operations, elements, and/or components, but do not preclude the presence or addition of one or more other features, integers, steps, operations, elements, components, and/or groups thereof Further, it will be understood that when an element, including component or subsystem, is referred to and/or shown as being connected or coupled to another element, it can be directly connected or coupled to the other element or intervening elements may be present.

**[0031]** FIG. 1 shows a capture system **100** that enables individual users to receive terrestrial television content transmissions captured by antenna elements **102** and streamed to the users. The system **100** allows each user to separately access the feed from a separate antenna element for recording or live streaming of content transmissions.

**[0032]** In a typical implementation, users access the system **100** via packet network(s), which can be private and/or public, such as the Internet **127**, with client devices **128**, **130**, **132**, **134**. In one example, the client device is a personal computer **134** that accesses the system **100** via a browser. In other examples, the system **100** is accessed by mobile devices such as a tablet or slate computing device, e.g., iPad mobile computing device, or a mobile phone, e.g., iPhone mobile computing device or mobile computing devices running the Android operating system by Google, Inc. Other examples of client devices are televisions that have network interfaces and browsing capabilities. Additionally, many modern game consoles and some televisions also have the ability to run third-party software and provide web browsing capabilities that can be employed to access the video from the system **100** over a network connection.

**[0033]** The broadcast content is often displayed using HTML-5 or with a media player executing on the client

devices such as QuickTime by Apple Corporation, Windows Media Player by Microsoft Corporation, iTunes by Apple Corporation, or Winamp Media Player by Nullsoft Inc., to list a few examples that are currently common.

**[0034]** An application web server (or application server) **124** manages requests or commands from the client devices **128, 130, 132, 134**. The application server **124** enables the users on the client devices **128, 130, 132, 134** to select whether they want to access previously recorded content transmission, set up recordings of future content transmissions, or watch live broadcast television programs in real time. In some examples, the system **100** also enables users to access and/or record radio (audio-only) broadcasts.

**[0035]** If the users request to watch previously recorded content transmissions, then the application server **124** sends the request of the user to a streaming server **120**, which retrieves each users' individual copy of the previously recorded content transmission from a broadcast file store (or file store) **126**, if that is where it is resident, and streams the content to the client device **128, 130, 132, 134** from which the request originated. If the users request to set up future recordings of content transmissions such as television programs, the application server **124** communicates with an antenna optimization and control system **116** to configure broadcast capture resources to capture and record the desired content transmissions by reserving antenna and encoding resources for the time and date of the future recording. If the users request to watch live broadcast television programs in real time, the antenna optimization and control system **116** identifies antenna resources available for immediate assignment.

**[0036]** In current embodiments, streaming content is temporarily stored or buffered in the streaming server **120** and/or the broadcast file store **126** prior to playback and streaming to the users whether for live streaming or future recording. This buffering allows users to pause, rewind, and replay parts of the television program.

**[0037]** In one implementation, the antenna optimization and control system **116** maintains the assignment of an antenna element **102** to the user throughout any scheduled television program or continuous usage until such time as the user releases the antenna element by closing the session or by the expiration of a predetermined time period as maintained by a timer implemented in the antenna optimization and control system **116**. An alternative implementation would have each antenna element **102** assigned to a particular user for the user's sole usage.

**[0038]** The broadcast capture portion of the system **100** includes an array **103** of the antenna elements **102-1, 102-2 . . . 102-n**. Each of these antenna elements **102-1, 102-2 . . . 102-n** is a separate antenna element that is capable of capturing different terrestrial television content broadcasts and, through a digitization and encoding pipeline, separately process those broadcasts for storage and/or live streaming to the client devices **128, 130, 132, 134**. This configuration allows the simultaneous recording of over the air broadcasts from different broadcasting entities for each of the users. In the illustrated example, only one array of antenna elements **103** is shown. In a typical implementation, however, multiple two dimensional arrays are used, and in some examples, the arrays are organized into groups of three dimensional arrays. An example of a three dimensional array (which includes arrays **103-1 to 103-n**) is shown in FIG. 2.

**[0039]** The antenna optimization and control system **116** determines which antenna elements **102-1 to 102-n** within the

antenna array **103** are available and optimized to receive the particular over the air broadcast content transmissions requested by the users. In a preferred embodiment, the antenna optimization and control system **116** implements an assignment algorithm that optimally assigns users requests to antenna elements **102-1 to 102-n** to minimize the amount of coupling between the antenna elements **102-1 to 102-n**.

**[0040]** In one implementation, determination of optimized antennas is accomplished by comparing received signal strength indicator (RSSI) values of different antenna elements. RSSI is a measurement of the power of a received or incoming radio frequency signal. Thus, the higher the RSSI value, the stronger the received signal.

**[0041]** In an alternative embodiment, the antenna optimization and control system **116** determines the best available antenna using Modulation Error Ratio (MER). Modulation Error Ratio is used to measure the performance of digital transmitters (or receivers) that are using digital modulation. In short, the antenna element that has the best MER for the desired channel is selected and assigned to receive that channel.

**[0042]** In the illustrated embodiment, the assignment algorithm avoids assigning user requests to antenna elements if the assigned antenna elements will be blocked by other antenna elements tuned to the same or similar channel. Additionally, if the assigned antenna elements must be tuned to the same or similar channel as other adjacent antenna elements, then the antenna optimization and control system **116** assigns user requests to antenna elements that traditionally have had lower coupling when assigned near other antenna elements tuned to the same or similar channel.

**[0043]** In scenarios where coupling cannot be avoided, the antenna optimization and control system **116** dynamically tunes the antenna elements **102-1 to 102-n** based on measured parameters. In a typical implementation, the antenna optimization and control system **116** adjust a control voltage sent to varactor diode pairs to dynamically tune the antenna elements **102-1 to 102-n** based on measured parameters of the antenna elements.

**[0044]** In still other alternative embodiments, other methods to minimize destructive coupling effects, which minimize least mean squared error of the metric being optimized, could also be implemented.

**[0045]** After identifying antenna elements with adequately minimized coupling, the antenna optimization and control system **116** assigns the user requests to the antenna elements **102-1 to 102-n**. The antenna optimization and control system **116** then signals corresponding RF tuners **104-1 to 104-n** to tune the assigned antenna elements to receive the requested broadcasts.

**[0046]** The received broadcasts from each of the antenna elements **102-1 to 102-n** and their associated tuners **104-1 to 104-n** are transmitted to an encoding system **105** as content transmissions. The encoding system **105** is comprised of encoding components that create parallel processing pipelines for each allocated antenna **102-1 to 102-n** and tuner **104-1 to 104-n** pair.

**[0047]** The encoding system **105** demodulates and decodes the separate content transmissions from the antennas **102-1 to 102-n** and tuners **104-1 to 104-n** into MPEG-2 format using an array of ATSC (Advanced Television Systems Committee) decoders **106-1 to 106-n** assigned to each of the processing pipelines. The content transmissions are decoded to MPEG-2

content transmission data because it is currently a standard format for the coding of moving pictures and associated audio information.

**[0048]** The content transmission data from the ATSC decoders **106-1** to **106-n** are sent to a multiplexer **108**. The content transmissions are then transmitted across an antenna transport interconnect to a demultiplexer switch **110**. In a preferred embodiment, the antenna transport interconnect is an nx10 GbE optical data transport layer.

**[0049]** The content transmission data of each of the antenna processing pipelines are then transcoded into a format that is more efficient for storage and streaming. In the current implementation, the transcode to the MPEG-4 (also known as H.264) format is effected by an array of transcoders **112-1** to **112-n**. Typically, multiple transcoding threads run on a single signal processing core, SOC (system on a chip), FPGA or ASIC type device.

**[0050]** The content transmission data are transcoded to MPEG-4 format to reduce the bitrates and the sizes of the data footprints. As a consequence, the conversion of the content transmission data to MPEG-4 encoding will reduce the picture quality or resolution of the content, but this reduction is generally not enough to be noticeable for the average user on a typical reduced resolution video display device. The reduced size of the content transmissions will make the content transmissions easier to store, transfer, and stream to the user devices. Similarly, audio is transcoded to AAC in the current embodiment, which is known to be highly efficient.

**[0051]** In one embodiment, the transcoded content transmission data are sent to a packetizers and indexers **114-1**, **114-2** . . . **114-n** of the pipelines, which packetize the data. In the current embodiment, the packet protocol is UDP (user datagram protocol), which is a stateless, streaming protocol.

**[0052]** Also, in this process, time index information is added to the content transmissions. The content data are then transferred to the broadcast file store **126** for storage to the file system, which is used to store and/or buffer the content transmissions as content data for the various content transmission, e.g., television programs, being captured by the users.

**[0053]** In typical embodiments, the content data are streamed to the users with HTTP Live Streaming or HTTP Dynamic Streaming. These are streaming protocols that are dependent upon the client device. HTTP Live Streaming is a HTTP-based media streaming communications protocol implemented by Apple Inc. as part of its QuickTime X and iPhone software systems. The stream is divided into a sequence of HTTP-based file downloads. HDS over TCP/IP is another option. This is an adaptive streaming communications protocol by Adobe System Inc. HDS dynamically switches between streams of different quality based on the network bandwidth and the computing device's resources. Generally, the content data are streamed using Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) or Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (or HTTPS). HTTPS combines HTTP with the security of Transport Layer Security/Secure Sockets Layer (or TLS/SSL). TLS/SSL are security protocols that provide encryption of data transferred over the Internet.

**[0054]** FIG. 2 is a schematic perspective view of an exemplary card cage **151**, which is shown in phantom. The card cage **151** functions as an enclosure to house antenna array cards **152-1** to **152-n** to create a three-dimensional array of antenna elements. The three dimensional array is comprised of multiple two dimensional antenna arrays **103-1** to **103-n**.

**[0055]** The sides **150-1**, **150-2**, top **150-3**, bottom **150-4**, front portions **150-5**, and rear **150-6** walls of the card cage **151** are fabricated from a conductive material to maximize Faraday shielding of the antenna elements from the active electronics. The front wall **150-5** of the card cage provides an open port as the boresight **201** of the antenna arrays **103-1** to **103-n** and faces a television transmitter **204** of the broadcasting entity. Some examples of broadcasting entities include The American Broadcasting Company (ABC), The National Broadcasting Company (NBC), CBS broadcasting corporation (CBS), and The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). The rear wall **150-6** of the card cage **151** includes data transport interfaces **211** that connect the antenna array cards **152-1** to **152-n** to the remainder of the encoding system **250**, which includes the transcoders **112-1** to **112-n**, packetizers and indexers **114-1** to **114-n**, and broadcast file store **126** (shown in FIG. 1). The transcoders **112-1** to **112-n**, packetizers and indexers **114-1** to **114-n**, and file store **126** are preferably located in a secure location such as a ground-level but or the basement of a building, which provides protection from weather and elements and generally has better control over the ambient environment.

**[0056]** In a current embodiment, each antenna array **103-1** to **103-n** includes **80** antenna elements that are located outside the Faraday shielding of the card cage **151**. Typically, the antenna elements are dual loop antennas. Thus, in the current embodiment with **80** antenna elements, there are 160 loop antennas. In alternative embodiments, as many as 320 antenna elements (640 loops antennas) or possibly 640 antenna elements (1280 loops antennas) are installed on each antenna array card **152-1** to **152-n**. Each antenna is approximately 0.5 inches in height, 0.5 inches wide, or about 1 centimeter (cm) by 1 cm, and has a thickness of approximately 0.030 inches, or about a 1 millimeter (mm). In terms of the antenna elements, when configured as a square loop, the 3 sided length is preferably less than 1.7 inches (4.3 cm), for a total length of all 4 sides being 2.3 inches, (5.8 cm).

**[0057]** Air dams **210-1** to **210-n** divide the antenna arrays **103-1** to **103-n** from the tuner demodulator sections **111-1** to **111-n**. The air dams **210-1** to **210-n** act to block the airflow for the antenna array cards **152-1** to **152-n** and fill in the gap between the cards such that the air dam of each card engages the backside of its adjacent card. Additionally, the air dams **210-1** to **210-n** also act as part of the Faraday shields to reduce electromagnetic interference (EMI).

**[0058]** Typically, the antenna array cards **152-1** to **152-n** are orientated vertically, with the antenna elements horizontal to create a horizontally polarized (Electric Field) half omnidirectional antenna array. Additionally, the antenna elements protrude out of the front of card cage **208** to further help reduce interference between the components (e.g., tuner and demodulators) and the antenna arrays **103-1** to **103-n**.

**[0059]** Alternatively, if over the air content from the broadcasters has a vertical polarization, which occurs in some locales, then orientation of the antenna array cards **152-1** to **152-n** and antennas should be changed accordingly. The illustrated example shows the orientation of the antennas for broadcasters with horizontal polarization.

**[0060]** FIG. 3A is a circuit diagram of a multi-band antenna **102-1** and tuning feed network **200** for an antenna system **100**, which has been constructed according to the principles of the present invention.

**[0061]** In the illustrated circuit diagram, a multi-band antenna element **102-1** is shown as a dual band antenna. In the

illustrated example, the antenna element **102-1** further includes a low frequency antenna element **102A-1** and a high frequency antenna element **102B-1**. In alternative embodiments, however, additional antenna elements could be implemented to form a tri-band antenna or a multi-band antenna with three or more antenna elements. In still other embodiments, the antenna is constructed from only a signal antenna element that covers both bands of interest or only a signal band.

**[0062]** In a typical implementation, the low and high frequency antenna elements **102A-1**, **102B-1** are electrically small loop antennas. Loop antennas have an inductance that is proportional to the area carved out by the loops. Here, the antenna elements **102A-1**, **102B-1** are rectangular. Other shapes such as circular shaped loop antennas known in the art could also be implemented. Electrically small antennas are defined for a particular wavelength  $\lambda$  (X) and radius "a" of the sphere enclosing an antenna. Then, if  $4\pi a < \lambda$  ( $4\pi a$  is less than  $\lambda$ ), the antenna is considered electrically small. See Wheeler, "Fundamental limitations of Small Antennas, Proceedings of the IRE, Vol. 35, December 1947, pp. 1479-1484.

**[0063]** Generally, the antenna element **102-1** is multiply resonant. This enables the antenna element **102-1** to have optimal performance at a wide range of frequencies and reject interference from other signals that may be in the same band as the desired signal.

**[0064]** In general, smaller antennas are preferable to achieve higher density, yet smaller antennas typically have a lower gain. As a result in other embodiments larger antennas/antenna elements are used, such as antennas/antenna elements with a total length of up to 20 cm, or even up to 50 cm or 100 cm, and possibly even larger understanding that there is a concomitant decrease in packing density.

**[0065]** A resonance of the antenna element **102-1**, and each of the other antenna elements **102-2** to **102-n**, is controlled via a respective tuning feed network **200**. The tuning feed network **200** includes a radio frequency (RF) coupling and direct current (DC) injection section **203**, a high frequency tuning section **205**, and a low frequency tuning section **207**. In a typical implementation, the components of the tuning feed network **200** are mounted on the antenna array card (e.g., **152-1** to **152-n** in FIG. 2) adjacent to the antenna element **102-1**.

**[0066]** In the illustrated example, the low frequency tuning section **207** and low frequency antenna element **102A-1** are designed to receive carrier signals in the VHF (Very High Frequency) range or 174 MHz to 216 MHz. The high frequency tuning section **205** and high frequency antenna element **102B-1** are designed to receive carrier signals in the UHF (Ultra High Frequency) range or 470 MHz to 700 MHz.

**[0067]** In a typical implementation, antenna elements (e.g., reference numerals **102-1** to **102-n** in FIG. 1) are grouped together on an antenna array card (reference numerals **152-1** to **152-n** in FIG. 2) to form an antenna array (reference numerals **103-1** to **103-n** in FIG. 2) of antennas. Each antenna element **102-1** to **102-n** within the antenna array **103** is tuned by a separate tuning feed network **200**. Implementing a separate tuning feed network **200** for each antenna **102-1** to **102-n** enables each antenna to be individually tuned to a different frequency.

**[0068]** Returning to FIG. 3A, a RF connection from the low frequency tuning section **207** to low frequency antenna element **102A-1** is made via capacitors **C1** and **C3**. Capacitors

**C1** and **C3** have a capacitance of 2.2 nanoFarads, in one example, and these capacitors form a DC block (low frequency tuning section DC block **214**). A DC block is a frequency filter designed to filter out lower frequency signals and DC signals while allowing higher frequency RF signals to pass. Additionally, the low frequency tuning section DC block **214** prevents the low frequency antenna element **102A-1** from shorting out a tuning voltage sent from the RF coupling and DC injection section **203**.

**[0069]** In alternative embodiments, the RF connection is made with band pass filters, high pass filters, diplexers and/or multiplexers.

**[0070]** Capacitors **C1** and **C3** connect to low frequency tap points **220a**, **220b** of the low frequency antenna element **102A-1**. The low frequency tap points **220a**, **220b** are designed to present the desired impedance from the low frequency antenna element **102A-1** to the feed lines **FEED\_P**, **FEED\_N**. The location of the intersection of the low frequency tap points **220a**, **220b** with the low frequency antenna element **102A-1** and the area cut out between the tap structure contribute to the impedance transformation.

**[0071]** Capacitors **C2** and **C212** are in parallel with the varactor diode pairs **D1** and **D2**. In the illustrated example, capacitor **C2** has a capacitance of 15 picoFarads and capacitor **C212** has a capacitance of 18 picoFarads. The varactor diodes pairs **D1**, **D2** resonate with the inductance of the low frequency antenna element **102A-1** to set the tuning frequency. The bandwidth is determined by the value of resistor **R4** along the parasitic resistances in the wire of the low frequency antenna element **102A-1** and the varactor diode pairs **D1** and **D2**. Resistors **R1**, **R2**, and **R3** provide high impedance connections for DC tuning voltages that are supplied on the feed line **FEED\_P** to the varactor diode pairs **D1** and **D2**. The high impedance serves two purposes. First, the high impedance provides isolation to the feed lines **FEED\_P**, **FEED\_N** so that RF signal is not lost. Second, the high impedance provides isolation from the varactor diode pairs **D1** and **D2** so they are not disrupted by other impedance/capacitive effects.

**[0072]** Referring to the high frequency tuning section **205**, while there are some differences in the components used and their values, the basic functionality of the circuit is the same as the low frequency tuning section **207**. For example, the high frequency antenna element **102B-1** is generally identical to the low frequency antenna element **102A-1** in a current embodiment. Additionally, capacitors **C4** and **C7** provide an RF connection from the high frequency antenna element **102B-1** to the high frequency tuning section **205**. Likewise, capacitors **C4** and **C7** form a DC block (high frequency tuning section DC block **216**). Capacitors **C4** and **C7** each have a capacitance value of 24 picoFarads (compared to 2.2 nanoFarads for **C1** and **C3**). Resistor **R7** and **R5** provide a high impedance connection for the tuning voltages provided on feed line **FEED\_P** to varactor diode pair **D3**. The parasitic resistances in the wire of the high frequency antenna element **102B-1** and the varactor diode pair **D3** set the bandwidth. Lastly, high frequency tap points **222a**, **222b** are designed to present the desired impedance from the high frequency antenna element **102B-1** to the feed lines **FEED\_P**, **FEED\_N**.

**[0073]** The feed lines (**FEED\_N** and **FEED\_P**) connect the high frequency tuning section **205** and the low frequency tuning section **207** to the RF coupling and DC injection section **203**. The feed lines (**FEED\_N**, **FEED\_P**) carry the received RF signal from the antenna elements **102A-1**, **102B-1**, to the RF coupling and DC injection section **203**. In a

typical implementation, the physical distance from the RF coupling and DC injection section **203** and the antenna elements **102A-1**, **102B-1** can be relatively large. For example, in one embodiment the physical distance is twenty or more inches (approximately 0.5 meters). In alternative embodiments, however, the physical distance is only a few inches (e.g., approximately 5 to 8 centimeters).

**[0074]** The tuning feed network further includes an impedance matching circuit **136**, which matches the impedance between the RF coupling and DC injection section **203** and the high and low frequency tuning sections (reference numerals **205**, **207**, respectively). Impedance matching circuits help maximize power transfer and provide an additional means to dynamically tune the antenna element. In the illustrated example, an impedance control line (ICNTL) **137** provides a control signal to adjust the impedance matching circuit. In the illustrated example, the impedance matching circuit **136** is located in the antenna section **111** near the antenna elements.

**[0075]** The RF coupling and DC injection section **203** includes an analog control line (ACNTL) connection **206** and two logical interfaces: DIFF\_N **202** coupled with DIFF\_P **204**. The two logical interfaces DIFF\_N **202**, DIFF\_P **204** are differential radio frequency connections that carry received carrier signals to a receiver (or tuner) and demodulator (reference numerals **104-1** and **106-1** in FIG. 1) that are located on an antenna array card (reference numeral **152** in FIG. 2). The ACNTL connection **206** is a single-ended analog control line that is referenced to ground (e.g., GND-1) and provides the control signal, to tune the varactor diode pairs D1, D2, D3. In the current embodiment, the control signal is a tuning voltage. In the illustrated embodiment, the control signal from the ACNTL connection **206** is generated by the antenna optimization and control system **116**. The control signal from the antenna optimization and control system **116** is converted to a voltage by a digital to analog converter **170**. A common tuning voltage is provided to the low and high frequency tuning sections **205**, **207** and the antenna elements **102A-1**, **102B-1**.

**[0076]** In an alternative embodiment, the control signal could be a differential control signal. In this embodiment, another input control signal is injected at GND-2 and connected at the end of resistor R6 (GND-2 would be removed/replaced).

**[0077]** Capacitors C5 and C8 are blocking capacitors and form a DC block (RF coupling and DC injection DC block **208**). The RF coupling and DC injection DC block **208** provides the ability to superimpose the control signal from ACNTL connection **206** on the same feed line (FEED\_P) as the received carrier signals from the low and high frequency antenna elements **102A-1**, **102B-1**.

**[0078]** Typically, when creating a multi-band antenna, two or more antenna elements are put in parallel. There are several important factors to account for when combining multiple antenna elements. For example, in band (where the antenna is tuned), the impedance as measured at the low frequency tap points **220A**, **220B** will look like a single pole bandpass (complex pole-pair) filter having a desired impedance at the resonant frequency. Below the tuned frequency, the impedance will look like a short circuit. Above the tuned frequency, the impedance will approach an open circuit. When implementing the low frequency tuning section DC block **214**, the low frequency tuning section **207** approaches an open circuit at higher frequencies.

**[0079]** Because the low frequency antenna element **102A-1** looks like an open circuit when the tuning feed network **200** is operating at higher frequencies, the low frequency tuning section **207** is typically able to connect to the high frequency tuning section **205** without issue. However, the high frequency antenna element **102B-1** looks like a short circuit when the tuning feed network **200** is operating at lower frequencies. To protect the low frequency antenna element **102A-1** when operating at lower frequencies, high frequency tuning section DC block **216** is used to electrically open the high frequency antenna element **102B-1**.

**[0080]** In alternative embodiments, different capacitors values used for the high frequency tuning section DC block **216**. In the illustrated example, the 24 pF capacitor is selected. Similar design considerations are applied when combining additional antenna elements to create tri-band or multi-band antenna elements with, for example, three or more loop antennas.

**[0081]** FIG. 3B is an alternative embodiment of the tuning feed network **200** for the antenna system **100**.

**[0082]** The illustrated example is nearly identical to the circuit diagram of FIG. 3A. In the illustrated example, however, the impedance matching circuit **136** is located between the DIFF\_N **202** and DIFF\_P **204** inputs and the RF coupling and DC injection DC block **208** (e.g., capacitors C5 and C8). Additionally, the impedance matching circuit **136** is located in the tuner and demodulator section **109**.

**[0083]** FIG. 4 is a flowchart illustrating the steps the antenna optimize and control system **116** performs to dynamically tune an antenna element. In the illustrated example, the antenna optimize and control system **116** has no prior information about the antenna elements within the array.

**[0084]** In the first step **304**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** determines if a new channel is requested by a user. If a new channel is not requested by the user, then the antenna optimize and control system **116** waits until a new channel is requested.

**[0085]** If a new channel is requested by the user, then the antenna optimize and control system **116** selects an optimized antenna element and applies default settings of the selected antenna element for the requested channel in step **306**. In the next step **308**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** measures parameters of the antenna elements. In a preferred embodiment, the measured parameters include received power of the antenna element, signal quality of the antenna element, temperature of the antenna element, impedance of the antenna element, and/or automatic gain control level, to list a few examples.

**[0086]** In the next step **310**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** calculates a divergence for each measured parameter. The divergence is calculated to provide a vector derivative based on coupling of all antenna elements. In a typical implementation, the divergence is calculated via a conjugate gradient, mapping techniques, or using ad hoc optimization algorithms. Alternative implementations may implement other methods to calculate the divergence, which are known in the art.

**[0087]** Next, in step **312**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** applies limits for the parameters. This is done so that antenna elements that do not need to be adjusted are ignored. In a typical implementation, the users are selectively assigned antenna elements throughout the array to minimize coupling between adjacent antenna elements. Thus, in some scenarios, the antenna elements will not need to be adjusted

(even though they could be adjusted) because the antenna elements are able to adequately receive the requested channel using the default tuning parameters. That is, the additional tuning of the antenna element would only provide a minimal (or negligible) increase in the quality of the received signal.

**[0088]** In the next step **314**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** applies parameter weights to prioritize the measured parameters. Each parameter measured in the tuning process is multiplied by a pre-defined constant (weight). An increased weight will increase the impact a parameter has on the tuning algorithm. A smaller weight will cause a parameter to have less impact on the tuning algorithm. A weight of zero will eliminate the impact of a parameter. Thus, parameters with higher weights have higher impact and higher priority.

**[0089]** In the next step **316**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** adjusts the tuning of the selected antenna element based on the modified parameters.

**[0090]** In the next step **318**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** determines if a new channel is requested by a user. If a new channel is not requested by the user, then the antenna optimize and control system **116** returns to step **308** to measure parameters of the antenna elements. If a new channel is requested by the user, then the antenna optimize and control system **116** returns to step **306** to apply default settings of the newly requested channel.

**[0091]** FIG. **5** is a flowchart illustrating the steps the antenna optimize and control system **116** performs to dynamically tune antenna elements **102-1** to **102-n**. In this embodiment, there is no prior information about the measured parameters of the antenna elements **102-1** to **102-n**.

**[0092]** In general, because there is no prior knowledge about the measured parameters, information about all the antennas must be measured before elements can be adjusted. This is because any adjustment to one antenna element can affect other antenna elements within the array. By measuring all the parameters of all the antenna elements first, the antenna elements are tuned with respect to the other antennas.

**[0093]** In the illustrated example, steps **402-410** are identical to steps **302-310** of FIG. **4**.

**[0094]** In the next step **412**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** ignores null effect controls from other antenna elements (i.e., not the selected antenna element). In a preferred embodiment, the null effect controls are antenna elements, which are not close in physical distance or tuned frequency to cause interference (e.g., coupling) with the selected antenna. In a typical implementation, the antenna optimize and control system **116** includes predefined frequency and distance thresholds. If the other antenna elements exceed the thresholds, then the antenna optimize and control system **116** ignores the measured parameters from these antenna elements. In a preferred embodiment, the frequency threshold is one channel higher or lower than the channel of the selected antenna element. In a preferred embodiment, the distance threshold is the physical distance between antennas such that the coupling while on the same channel is less than or equal to  $-20$  decibels.

**[0095]** Lastly, in the illustrated example, steps **414** to **420** are identical to steps **312-318** of FIG. **4**.

**[0096]** FIG. **6** is a flowchart illustrating the steps the antenna optimize and control system **116** performs to dynamically tune antenna elements. In this embodiment, there is prior knowledge of the parameters of the antenna elements.

**[0097]** Steps **502-506** are nearly identical to steps **302-310** of FIG. **4**. In the illustrated example, multiple threads (i.e., independent sequences) are created for each new channel requested by individual users (shown as steps **504-1** to **504-n**).

**[0098]** The prior knowledge of the antenna elements enables the antenna optimize and control system **116** to ignore antenna elements above predefined distance and frequency thresholds in steps **508** and **510**, respectively.

**[0099]** In the next step **512**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** measures parameters of the antenna elements. In the next step, **514**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** measures parameters and calculates the divergence for the parameters of the antenna elements.

**[0100]** In the next step **516**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** removes null effect controls to further ignore antenna elements that will not have an effect on the selected antenna. Even though some antenna elements were ignored in steps **508** and **510**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** ignores additional antennas elements in step **516** because new users are being assigned antennas, current users are stopping their service (i.e., discontinuing use of assigned antennas), and current users are also changing channels.

**[0101]** Lastly, in the illustrated example, steps **518** to **524** are identical to steps **312-328** of FIG. **3**.

**[0102]** FIG. **7** is a flowchart illustrating the steps the antenna optimize and control system **116** performs to dynamically tune antenna elements with frequency tuning and impedance matching.

**[0103]** Similar to step **504-1** to **504-n** in FIG. **6**, multiple threads **604-1** to **604-n** are created for each new channel requested by different users. In the first step **604**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** determines if a new channel is requested by a user.

**[0104]** If a new channel is not requested by the user, then the antenna optimize and control system **116** waits until a new channel is requested. If a new channel is requested, then the antenna optimize and control system **116** applies default settings for the elected antenna element for the requested channel in step **606**.

**[0105]** In the next step **608**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** determines if the last adjacent frequency has been adjusted. If the last adjacent frequency has not been adjusted, then the antenna optimize and control system **116** performs frequency tuning (e.g., FIGS. **4-6**) for the antenna elements in step **610**.

**[0106]** If the last adjacent frequency has been adjusted, then the antenna optimize and control system **116** performs impedance matching for the antenna elements in step **612**. In a typical implementation, the impedance matching is performed by the impedance matching circuit (e.g., reference numeral **136** in FIGS. **3A-3B**).

**[0107]** In the next step **614**, the antenna optimize and control system **116** determines if a new channel is requested. If a new channel is not requested, then the antenna optimize and control system **116** returns to step **608**. If a new channel is requested, then the antenna optimize and control system **116** applies defaults settings of the selected antenna element for the requested channel in step **606**.

**[0108]** While this invention has been particularly shown and described with references to preferred embodiments thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and details may be made therein



without departing from the scope of the invention encompassed by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

**1.** A method for dynamically tuning antenna elements, the method comprising:

receiving requests to capture over the air broadcasts;  
 selecting an antenna element from a group of available antenna elements to capture one of the requested over the air broadcasts;  
 applying default settings to tune the selected antenna element to capture the one of the requested over the air broadcasts; and  
 dynamically tuning the selected antenna element to enhance reception of the one of the requested over the air broadcasts.

**2.** The method of claim **1**, further comprising measuring parameters of the selected antenna element to determine how to optimize the selected antenna element, wherein the parameters are selected from the group comprising received power, signal quality, temperature of the antenna element, and automatic gain control.

**3.** The method according to claim **2**, further comprising prioritizing the measured parameters.

**4.** The method according to claim **1**, further comprises maintaining the tuning of the selected antenna element until the received request is released.

**5.** The method according to claim **4** wherein the requests to capture over the air broadcasts include a time attribute, the time attribute identifying at least a broadcast expiration time, the method further comprises automatically releasing the selected antenna element after the broadcast expiration time.

**6.** The method according to claim **5** wherein the time attribute further identifies a broadcast start time, selecting the antenna element from the group of available antenna elements automatically occurs before the broadcast start time.

**7.** The method according to claim **6** further comprising recording the one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a memory associated with an end-user that submitted a request to capture the one of the requested over the air broadcasts.

**8.** The method according to claim **7** further comprising transcoding the captured one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a format that is more efficient for storage than the over the air broadcast format.

**9.** The method according to claim **7** further comprising transcoding the captured one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a format that is more efficient for streaming to the end-user than the over the air broadcast format.

**10.** The method according to claim **1** further comprising transcoding the captured one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a format that is more efficient for streaming to the end-user than the over the air broadcast format.

**11.** The method according to claim **1** further comprising recording the one of the requested over the air broadcasts into

a memory associated with an end-user that submitted a request to capture the one of the requested over the air broadcasts.

**12.** The method according to claim **11** further comprising transcoding the captured one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a format that is more efficient for storage than the over the air broadcast format.

**13.** The method according to claim **1** wherein the requests to capture over the air broadcasts include a real time attribute, the real time attribute identifying at least a broadcast start time, selecting the antenna element from the group of available antenna elements automatically occurs before the broadcast start time.

**14.** The method according to claim **13** further comprising setting a countdown timer and automatically releasing the selected antenna element after the expiration of the countdown timer.

**15.** An antenna element tuning system, comprising:  
 a server that receives requests to capture over the air broadcasts from broadcasting entities; and

an antenna controller that selects an antenna element from a group of available antenna elements to capture one of the requested over the air broadcasts and then dynamically tunes the selected antenna element to enhance reception of the one of the requested over the air broadcasts.

**16.** The system according to claim **15** further comprising a timer operably connected to the antenna controller such that the selected antenna element is automatically released after the expiration time of the one of the requested over the air broadcasts.

**17.** The system according to claim **16** wherein the timer is a countdown timer.

**18.** The system according to claim **15** further comprising a timer operably connected to the antenna controller such that the selected antenna element is tuned and released based on the timing of the one of the requested over the air broadcasts.

**19.** The system according to claim **18** wherein the timer is a real time clock.

**20.** The system according to claim **15** further comprising memory for storing the one of the request over the air broadcasts.

**21.** The system according to claim **20** further comprising a transcoder to convert the captured one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a format that is more efficient for storage than the over the air broadcast format.

**22.** The system according to claim **15** further comprising a transcoder to convert the captured one of the requested over the air broadcasts into a format that is more efficient for streaming to the end-user than the over the air broadcast format.

**23.** The system according to claim **15**, wherein the antenna controller applies parameter limits to prevent dynamically tuning antenna elements above a frequency threshold.

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