

Soaring Society of America
Region 1 & Region 3 Report
February 16, 2018
(Submitted by: Ann Lafford)

General Summary Update:

- Not too much new activity since the Fall report since the soaring season is waiting for the Spring weather.
- Was successful in getting some additional club updates which did not respond for the Fall Report.
- Our newest Club in Maine is doing quite well. They now have 20 members, 2 new CFI-G, 1 new private glider pilot licensed, 3 solos, and 1 new tow pilot. Very impressive club after only 2 years.
- 2018 Club Class Nationals and Region 3 Contest will be held at Finger Lakes Soaring in Dansville, NY.
- Region 1 Contest will be held at New England Soaring Association in Springfield, VT.
- General Highlights
 - Membership is holding even and increased in some clubs.
 - Worked with Upstate Aviation Adventure Camp which spent a day at Finger Lakes Soaring.
 - Sugarbush continues to hold the Youth Camps. They held two successful youth camps in 2017 and plan to offer three camps in 2018.
 - CFI-G week long encampment was held in September at Springfield VT Airfield. These encampments have been very successful. This was the 3rd one held since 2015,

Fall Status Summary:

New York Sites:

- **Dansville, NY** – Finger Lakes Soaring Club
 - **Website and Facebook Page**
 - www.flsc.org
 - <https://www.facebook.com/Fingerlakessoaring/>
 - Membership
 - Overall membership remains at 42. Club lost some non-flying members but gained new students - membership keeping pace with attrition.
 - Junior program has 5 members with new members replacing departing members.
 - 6 instructors, 6 tow pilots of which 4 are also instructors. These 4 members are consistently over utilized. We are currently looking for more towpilots and instructors.
 - Equipment
 - Blanik L13 AD – determined to write-off the asset.
 - L-13AC extensively damaged in fall 2016. Parts expensive and often unavailable. A local shop produced needed parts. We expect back in service fall 2017.
 - Procured and SGS 2-33 in spring 2017.
 - Currently utilizing an SGS 2-33 and ASK 21 for instruction.
 - SGS 1-26 – recently restored. Used primarily by post-solo students.
 - Grob 102 – purchased to encourage cross-country flying but remains only slightly used.
 - Instruction
 - Activities up significantly over last season with 11 current students – 8 are new members.
 - Have the only locally based DPE in the club. Able to also certify new instructors. Primarily supporting FLSC and HHSC. Willing to travel outside of Western NY district but this requires FAA coordination.
 - One instructor is using Condor with a couple of students. Scenarios developed by Russell Holtz are working well but need to encourage other instructors to use.
 - Events this year included: Soarfest – a week long glider encampment, a community appreciation day with free glider rides for kids 14 and up, and a Labor Day glider ride program.

- **Issues:**
 - **Airport:** In 2015 the town owning our airport was advised by the FAA that gliders and tow planes operating on the grass area adjacent to the paved runway was unsafe. The town responded that they would NOTAM the turf area closed but apparently the NOTAM system has no way to accomplish this. **RESOLVED:** In the spring of 2017 the town received a letter from FAA indicating that they had re-evaluated the matter and found that our operation was safe and permitted.
 - **Lease Issue 1:** Finger Lakes Soaring leases, for \$1 per year, 2 acres from the town and has built a hangar and training facility on that property. The hangar, which we financed and built, was to be transferred to the town after the mortgage was paid off in 2005. We recently found that the town did not accept the hangar but never notified us. Subsequently this year the county has assessed us for the value of both facilities. **STATUS:** Our appeal was rejected but the local pilot association had the same problem and was successful in removing the tax obligation. Current action is to re-appeal using the same documentation. Town has said they would accept transfer of the hangar as contracted. Expect resolution in late 2017 or early 2018.
 - **Lease Issue 2:** Our lease comes up for renewal in 3 years and the town has indicated that they plan to increase our rent significantly. The current airport operator pays \$2,400 annual rent for the facility. We expect that this will be the maximum for FLS as we have a significantly smaller hangar.
- **Elmira, NY – Harris Hill Soaring**
 - Membership - Total number is about the same. We've had plenty of new people join while several have left. Most have just left due to age, busy families or other interests. Some left due to the cost and time commitment versus the amount of flying they were doing. Our biggest problem is not training all the new people that come through the door and they leave before they are certified. If we could crack the code on this one the membership at HHSC would be growing. The excellent website by Tom Berry is where most people find out about us - that is true for new members and rides.
 - Instructors - Though we have a healthy number of instructors only a few can commit the time necessary to really make progress with private pilots. The summer operations instructor is there M-F for the juniors can get some real instruction in. Our Wednesday night instruction program is for senior members and is very popular and productive. Dave Welles and Ed Funk are club heroes there and do the bulk of the Sr. member instruction. Very little gets done on the weekends other than flight reviews and supervised solos.
 - Events - Combining the junior camp/race in conjunction with R3 was a big success. It was not our most organized effort but we pulled it off. The R3 task area is pretty ideal for people flying their first contest. The classroom facilities at the NSM are ideal also. Getting a bunch of juniors together was great fun and added a lot to R3. The idea of a contest pilot coming to the regional and bringing a junior or two from his club to the jr camp has great potential to bring people from further away. I recommend that one or two junior events be held each year in conjunction with regionals versus a junior class at many regionals. Critical mass is important to the success of the event.
 - Other happenings - New club house being built at Harris Hill. It is an approximately \$260,000 project and should be pretty nice. Cabin restoration and Pawnee rebuilds in the near future.
- **Hamilton, NY – Iroquois Soaring**
 - No new input since Fall 2016 which is as follows:
 - ISA membership stays about the same 10-15 members and usually just operate on weekends.
 - Have stopped giving rides because of members worry about liability and the work involved. We did make a lot of money with the Soaring Adventure rides. They were a good organization to work with. The main concern is that if we happened to not be in compliance with some FAR or a member somehow injured a passenger we would not be insured. We had many elderly passengers.
 - Our only other concern is the lack of new members but that has always been the case in our area. We have 3 instructors so that is not a problem. Otherwise ISA is doing well and happy with the system.
- **Saratoga Springs, NY – Adirondack Soaring Association & Saratoga Soaring Association**
 - Website/Facebook page

- www.adirondacksoaring.com
 - <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Adirondack-Soaring-Club/174662735889109>
 - Our current membership is at 87 members. We have obtained several good energetic students this year. We have three members that have sold their privately owned sailplanes this year and one new member purchased a brand new ASG 29.
 - We have sold off our last Blanik L23 and now have (2) Grob 103 Twin II's and (2) Grob 103C Twin III's. We also have a Grob 102 Astir CS single seat sailplane. Our old L-23 is now in WallaWalla, WA, at a new commercial operation.
 - We just recently decided to sell our last two Blanik L-13's. They have been sitting since 2010 and the rodents have chewed and urinated in them. It was a sad to look at them like this. We were approached to sell them to a club in Paraguay. We received very little money for them but hope that they are flying again very soon. This brings us great satisfaction to see them fly again.
 - The weather has been horrible this year. Rain and more rain. We are still able to get a decent amount of instructional flights and even a bunch of training during the week. Unfortunately, we are still down with the number of tows at least 25% for the year.
 - Instructors
 - We have lost three instructors this year due to death and illness. This has put a lot of strain on the club. Chief Flight Instructor Tom MacJarrett, passed away due to a scuba diving accident. Tom was instrumental in some of the club's events such as Ground School and Freedom's Wings. This will be a difficult individual to replace, as he devoted 4 or 5 weekend days a month to instructing.
 - We are pushing three other members to become new instructors. This is going to take time.
 - On another note, one of our instructors, Lee Harrison, has established a Summer Intensive, two weeks of daily training to get some selected students soloed.
 - Events
 - We have opted to take a break this year from our Lake Placid Wave and SoaringEncampment. Several members will be attending the Greater Boston Soaring event in Gorham, NH during Columbus Day Weekend.
 - Membership Retention:
 - We believe keeping prices affordable brings new ones into the sport. Our current membership dues are \$25. Month for regular membership and \$15/ mo for Junior & Long Distance memberships. Tows are \$37 to 3K, \$27 to 2k, and \$17 to 1K.
 - We have tried various events to obtain new members but we tend to do best with walk-ons or those that find us.
- **Saratoga Springs, NY – Saratoga Soaring Association**
 - Website page- www.saratogasoaring.com
 - Own a Grob 103 Twin II and receive tows from Adirondack Soaring
 - Sold the last single place sailplane owned privately late last year.
 - Have not flown sailplanes this year yet.
 - Acquired a Light Sport Aeronca Champ.
- **Towanda, NY – Niagara Soaring Club**
 - We are a small club, down to about twelve members with half of those active.
 - At this time, the Niagara Soaring Club is not operating. Both our tow pilot and instructor have been dealing with some health issues. We are working to fix this situation.
 - Finger Lakes Soaring (FLSC) in Dansville has offered to have them operate out of Dansville for the short-term by bringing a couple their planes and getting tows from FLSC. No activity as of yet.
- **Freehold, NY – Nutmeg Soaring Association**
 - No new input since Fall 2016 which is as follows:
 - Membership has held about even this year to date with some of our older members dropping to non flying status but new members coming in to maintain the membership

about even with last year. We have a group of teen age students flying for the first time in many years.

- After several years of declines, our number of tows has increased this year primarily due to some enthusiastic new members and generally favorable weather.
 - We expanded our glider fleet with the purchase of a G102. We now operate two twin Astir/G103's the G102 and a 1-26. We also have the Pawnee tow plane.
 - We had one new solo so far this year, and two pilots got commercial add on ratings.
 - Likewise glider instructors remain in short supply.
 - Our tow pilot situation has improved some from last year however tow pilot scheduling remains tight
 - Financially the club is in good shape with no debt. We are applying for state grants to improve the airports infrastructure (runways, taxiway, apron, hangers) however the likelihood of receiving funding remains unknown at this time. In the future we will need to plan a replacement for the barn/hanger we currently use.
 - We held an open house event back in June and had a modest turnout. We will evaluate our advertising approach if we decided to do one again next year.
 - We had an "encampment" week around the July 4 holiday where we operated all week (as opposed to just weekends) This year saw so an uptick in participation, with some new members using the opportunity to get a number of flights in quick succession.
- **Mayville, NY – Aero Soaring Club**
 - No new input since Fall 2016 which is as follows:
 - Aero Soaring Club at Mayville, NY is on a downward trend in terms of membership and at risk of going extinct if this continues.

Vermont Sites:

- **Morrisville, VT – Stowe Soaring**
 - The season has been slow so far due to all the rain and cloudy weather but we are still having fun! We didn't have any of our usual strong spring long distance days, but we have brought in a number of new people to soaring and lessons are up this year – when the weather allows! .
- **Springfield, VT – New England Soaring Association (NESA)**
 - Membership is holding level at 46 members.
 - Instructor count is adequate for current student base and could in fact handle several.
 - Events – Scheduled to host Region 1 contest again this year.
 - We hosted the Soar Vermont CFIG camp in the fall for the third year. There is discussion about possibly hosting one for 2018.
- **Post Mills, VT – Post Mills Soaring Club**
 - PMSC continues to grow
 - We do not promote growth as a goal. We prefer to focus on quality of training.
 - We have grown our CFI-G cadre to 4 instructors with a tentative 5th coming along.
 - We have almost completed the removal of surrounding trees that will make the airport safer. We do not have safety fields any of us want to try and therefore need to have unobstructed return to the field from all directions.
 - We are making good use of a clubhouse that was an existing structure the club members moved to the airport by pulling together equipment, construction talent, and serious sweat equity.
 - The club is very dedicated to making long cross country flights a regular occurrence and training new pilots in that direction.
 - We have put in place a structured safety program that has been well communicated. It involves a Chief Flying Officer, an empowered Safety Officer, "safety pilots", and a board that is in place for resolutions should a dispute occur. The strategy behind our safety program is the belief that situation awareness on the pilot level is the prize, not writing long policies that attempt to cover every possible situation.
 - We want to add a 2 seat glider for dual cross country training. Planning on how we might overcome a handful of obstacles is where we are at the present time

- Suggestion to SSA: we would like to see "Soaring" cover photography turned into a monthly SSA member controlled contest. There are many ways this could be done that would promote involvement and interest in the magazine for little cost. Should this idea capture some lift I am available with other club members to make further suggestions on how this could be managed for a trial period.
- **Warren, VT – Sugarbush Soaring Association**
 - We suffered from poor weather on a number of key weekends in 2017, so our total number of flights for the season were down to 1,636 from 2,033 in 2016. Our number of rides given nearly matched 2016 (394 vs. 401).
 - Our overall membership was up to 136 from 125 in 2016. We were down three full members, but this was made up for with young adult and student memberships. Several of them are prepping to solo during the 2018 season and one is working on his Commercial. We are quite encouraged by this trend.
 - Our overall financial position remains strong. Rides and instruction make up the majority of our revenue, and flights by the “Great White Fleet” continue to shrink.
 - We had two successful youth camps in 2017, and plan to offer three camps in 2018. Thanks to some advertising in AOPA and good word of mouth we expect to be fully subscribed (see <http://sugarbushsoaring.com/rides-lessons/youth-soaring-camp>)
 - We are satisfied an unfortunate with the student base for our roster of instructors, and are fortunate to have a DPE available on site.
 - We had setback at the end of the last season when an un-forecasted wind storm tore the tie downs on our two 2-33's and totaled both of them. One of them is being rebuilt by K&L and we have ordered another PW-6. We expect to have both available by the start of the 2018 season.

Massachusetts Sites:

- **North Adams, MA – Mohawk Soaring Club**
 - No new input since Fall 2016 which is as follows:
 - Mohawk is holding on but it is a struggle with low membership.
 - Have 3 CFIG's.
 - Just acquired a new (to us) 2-33a. Still recovering from the L-13 grounding and Lark age expiration/renewal issues.
- **Sterling, MA – Greater Boston Soaring Club**
 - Website/Facebook page
 - <http://soargbsc.com>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/Greater-Boston-Soaring-Club-139665672768626/>
 - Membership:
 - Membership holding roughly steady at 119. A few members moved out of the area or left the sport for age-related reasons; nearly as many new members have joined.
 - The help attract new members, we created a 90-day trial membership plan. It allows prospective members to get in a few instructional flights and see if the club really works for them without making a large financial commitment. This change was completed in just the last few weeks, and we do not have any trial members at the moment.
 - We also created an emeritus membership category, open to non-active former members with at least 15 years with the club and a solid record of help to the club beyond the duties expected of all members. Emeritus members pay no dues and cannot fly as PIC.
 - Activities with other clubs
 - Mifflin encampment (May)
 - Franconia encampment (September)
 - Mt. Washington Wave Camp (October)
 - Instruction
 - We need more instructors. We schedule one instructor for each operation (Saturdays and Sundays), but could easily use two each day.
 - We have two members planning to attend the CFI-G encampment in Springfield, VT.

- Wednesday evening instruction for juniors and Thursday evening instruction for adults continue to be popular programs.
- Equipment
 - 3 tow planes
 - 4 two-seat gliders
 - 4 single-seat gliders
 - For the first time in nearly three years, all aircraft are flying
 - The ASK-21 has been very popular since it entered service about 1 year ago.

Connecticut Sites:

- **Danielson, CT** – Connecticut Soaring Association
 - 2017 was a successful year, building on the strong foundation we have built over the last few years in which we:
 - Bought our fourth glider, a 1-34
 - Rebuilt our towplane engine
 - Trained several new CFI's and Tow Pilots
 - Have benefit of a glider DPE within the club
 - In 2017, we had 37 flying days, with a total of 525 flights logged by club members – both of which are records (by 100%!)
 - Of those 525 flights, 354 flights were instructional flights. Two instructors had over 100 lessons each!
 - Our busiest month was October with 104 flights logged, and we actually flew all the way to December. We tried to do a New Years Eve flight day, but the weather didn't cooperate.
 - We have brought on several new tow pilots, and that has helped share the load.
 - We had three new solos, one private add-on, and one sport pilot add on.
 - A lot of discussion about using the Sport Pilot route for power pilots who are out of currency – see discussion in our recent newsletter.
 - We also ended the year financially strong, and paid the loan for the Pawnee in full. We now owe three members who loaned us money for the 1-34 purchase, and we anticipate being able to do that over a two year period.
 - Membership is flat to up slightly. We had a large cohort of students/transition pilots who are making their way to solo and flight test.
 - We are still having a difficult time attracting youth, but we are attractive to adults who have the time and disposable income to try something new.
 - The instructional program is the subject of a lot of discussion among the CFGs, including:
 - The Sport Pilot sign off regulations/implications
 - FIRC's – many of us use the AOPA online FIRC. Since there are electives that are available for some of the FIRC lessons, it was suggested that SSA work with AOPA to add a glider lesson elective to the AOPA FIRC, or to develop its own online FIRC for those who can't get to the in-person FIRC locations.
 - Using our syllabus more effectively
 - Teaching students better risk management skills
 - Balancing maintaining our operating efficiency during the day while ensuring sufficient time for lessons,
 - How to put together an effective ground school – perhaps an online virtual ground school using Skype or other technology would be successful?
 - Maintaining student records at the field.
 - In short – we are working hard to continuously improve our instructional effectiveness.
 - We do most of our marketing through facebook, since it is easy to maintain. We do have a website, but keeping up with it is hard and takes commitment. We also have a Yahoo groups site that we use to communicate within the club. The Yahoo groups site is members only so we can discuss club business.
 - For 2018, we want to continue to move our students through the instructional process and encourage people to improve their skills and enjoyment of the sport. We would like to participate in some regional activities to get experience flying in other (ie. Better) soaring conditions, for example at Wurtsboro, Mifflin, and Springfield.
 - The SSA magazine continues to be excellent – thanks for the effort that is put into that!
 - We probably don't make use of the SSA discussion group as much as we should – I will work on that.
 - Upcoming events include a winter luncheon at the New England Air Museum on Feb 3, and our annual meeting and safety seminar to be held at the end of March to prepare for the upcoming season.

New Hampshire Sites:

- **Francoina, NH** – Franconia Soaring Association

- Franconia Soaring Association is at 50 members including 10 youth members. Membership is stable.
- Instructors and towpilots are needed.
- Host four events during the year
 - Post Mills - July 4th
 - Greater Boston - Labor Day
 - Airport Awareness Day -Aug 26 (Host a local outreach effort every year, where we give low cost rides to locals in the surrounding town. We give 10 minute rides for 30 dollars. Five dollars of each ride will be donated to a local church food bank.)
 - Adaptive Day - September 28 (We give free rides to the physically handicapped, paid for by a local adaptive group and our club.)
 - We are attempting to purchase the airport. Currently have a handshake agreement, however the owners are trying to modify the agreement which is causing some problems. We are starting a fund raising initiative. How can the SSA help?

Pennsylvania Sites:

- **Pittsfield, PA – Brokenstraw Soaring Club**
 - Membership steady, lost a couple and gained a couple.
 - Number of instructors is OK for the limited number of students we have.
 - Could use a couple of tow-pilots as others have moved away or are busy doing something else.
 - Beginning of the season had terrible weather, rain and wind that hindered most flying until July.
 - No activities planned this year.
 - Member flying participation has decreased due to a variety of reasons, mostly aging pilots and other family commitments.

- **Eighty Four, PA - Pittsburgh Soaring Association**
 - Website/Facebook page
 - pghsoar.org
 - <https://www.facebook.com/Pittsburgh-Soaring-Association>.
 - Most effective tool in gaining new members.
 - Member referrals and our online presence and SSA listing making us known to people moving to our area who already have an interest in soaring.
 - Presence at PIT and LBE 2 airshows was very effective promotion
 - Up 12 full members this year, to 46 total.
 - 25 new associate members as a result of airshow promotion.
 - Retaining membership:
 - Encourage completion of training.
 - Increase club activities promoting new flying experiences; e.g. taking club ships to Ridge Soaring PA for introduction to mountain soaring.
 - Issues:
 - Unforeseen Pawnee maintenance (engine, landing gear, rudder) consumed both time and money this year.

- **Sanford, Maine - Sanford Soaring Club**
 - Currently have roughly 20 members, 16 or so active.
 - Our freshly restored 2-33 looks great and made it through the season still looking good.
 - Two members got their CFI-G during the season, one got his private glider add-on, 3 others soloed during the season, and we trained and signed off another tow pilot.
 - Several more are poised to get their ratings in 2018, including possibly 1-2 more instructors.
 - The club now has 4 CFI-Gs, 5 tow pilots (4 of those overlap!), and in addition to the two club gliders (2-33 and 1-26) we have two members owning their own gliders with a third on its way for next season.
 - Getting a DPE out our way has been a bit of a challenge but by scheduling 2 check rides in one day we've managed to make it work.
 - One member also bought a simulator with the Condor software and is going to share it with club members.

- No major complaints from the airport community, although we still identify safety and communication concerns as we grow in activity level.
- Website/Facebook page
 - **sanfordsoaring.com**
 - <https://www.facebook.com/sanfordsoaring/>