

SSA Directors Report
Regions 2 and 4
September, 2015
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This report is my sixth as regional director of the combined SSA Regions 2 and 4. As before, the report contains more information about Virginia clubs as it has been difficult to visit clubs in NJ and NY.

Transponder Issue

The Region 2 and 4 clubs were not overly active in discussing the FAA's ANPRM about removing the glider transponder exemption. Many clubs already have transponders in their club trainers. Some clubs sent written opinions directly to the FAA website, but I was not able to generate much discussion of the issue with club Presidents (at least via email).

Happenings in the Virginia Region

Virginia Soaring Association – The six clubs in Virginia comprise the Virginia Soaring Association (Tidewater Soaring Society, Skyline Soaring Club, Shenandoah Valley Soaring, Merlin Soaring, Ridge and Valley Soaring and Blue Ridge Soaring Society).

This group meets 2 times each year, once in January for a full day with the officers and a few members from each club to discuss selected subject(s) and once in the summer or fall as a small group to select subjects for the next January's meeting.

In January, 2015, we met in Charlottesville for one full day with 29 CFG's in attendance along with club officers from 5 of the VSA clubs. Interestingly, it turns out that each club uses a relatively different style of instruction. A survey of all students in the 6 Virginia clubs' students was conducted before the meeting asking them about their experiences or opinions of their instructors and the instructor's methods. 117 students responded to the survey. A summary of the responses is that CFI's are quite good; instruction was generally considered to be of high quality. Students craved written lesson plans using a standard syllabus; felt that progress tracking was important; liked regular communication and honest feedback from multiple instructors. Many desired "advanced training".

The VSA will meet in September, 2015 to formulate the subjects for the January, 2016 meeting. High on the list of potential subjects are thermal camps, XC camps and club management issues.

Specific Virginia Clubs

Overall, the SSA member clubs in Virginia are quite successful. Four of them (Tidewater, Skyline, Shenandoah Valley and Merlin) are have grown to the point that they are near the limits of the number of members that can be accommodated. Membership in the Ridge and Valley Club is down.

The mix of limiting factors at each club is different, but common issues are a limited number of instructors or tow pilots, the size of hangers or airfield facilities or the limited number of tow planes and/or training gliders.

Tidewater Soaring Society – Tidewater operates off their own airport, has 14 CFI's, 3 two place ships and about 37 private ships. Alby has reached Tidewater and via a collaboration with the Merlin club (see below) they are trying to get Alby to Kitty Hawk.

Merlin Soaring – Merlin also operates off of a private airport in Amelia, Virginia. They purchased a new Cessna 182 towplane recently, have one instructor and membership has grown about 20% in the last year. Merlin is helping to get Alby to Kitty Hawk, NC. Eric Lambert, the Merlin instructor has a Grob Twin III motor glider and has made multiple attempts to fly Alby to Kitty Hawk, but the weather has not cooperated too well in the past weeks. A great day will be needed to soar across the water to Kitty Hawk. His ship is currently hangered at the Currituck Airport awaiting a good soaring day so he can get Alby across the water.

At some point Alby will return from Kittly Hawk and head west to the Blue Ridge Mountains and then north to Elmira via glider. This will most likely happen in 2016.

Skyline Soaring - Skyline operates off of a public airport at Front Royal, Virginia. They had a good summer. Piet Barber, their chief instructor, became a Glider DPE in July, ending a many year effort to meet the FAA's criteria. Piet is to be warmly congratulated for his effort. Virginia now has two glider DPE's, John Molumphy and Piet. Another Skyline soaring member, Bill Vickland, who is well know to 1-26ers, was awarded the FAA's Master Aviator award for 50 years of accident free flying. Finally, Shane Neitzzy built a soaring simulator based on a highly modified 2-33 frame and Condor. He has displayed It twice this summer at the Air and Space museum's facility at Dulles Airport. There is a short article about this simulator in the September, 2015 *Soaring*.

Shenandoah Valley Soaring -- SVS is doing fine as a club, membership is stable at about 60-65 members and the club has 3 two place ships and 9 CFG's. However, as of September, 2015, the problems remain with the Virginia Department of Aviation prohibiting the use of the grass runway at SVS's home

airport, Eagles Nest, in Waynesboro, Virginia. The issues detailed in 2013 about the state's prohibition of the use of the parallel grass runway for landing gliders is still ongoing and it is a major limitation for Shenandoah Valley Soaring. The club is actively looking for a better home.

Blue Ridge Soaring Society - BRSS operates off their own airport and has upgraded their fleet with the addition of a new ASK-21 which replaces a Blanik L-23. They have about 15 CFG's, but only about 5 are active. JP Stewart, a student at Virginia Tech is their newest instructor. BRSS ran a small XC course this past August and is planning on expanding on the course in future years to include a larger group of pilots from more clubs.

Ridge and Valley Soaring – Ridge and Valley is the smallest club In Virginia and is struggling to maintain membership.

Happenings in the Pennsylvania and New York Region (as reported by Club Presidents)

I have asked for brief reports from the Presidents of clubs in Pennsylvania and New York, but have not gotten much information.

Regional Contests

Region 2 Contest at Mifflin – The May, 2015 contest at Mifflin attracted 34 entrants (same as last year). They got in 4 contest days, with some ridge flying in challenging conditions. On one day, the X-wind was gusting to 30 knots or so and blew over a porta-potty. Winds that blow over porta-pottys can officially be classified as challenging. Karl Striedick won the sports class, John Seymour won the 18 meter class and John Good won the 15 meter combined class. News is that Karl and Iris will hand over leadership of this event to Janine Acee next year.

Region 2 Contest at Wurtsboro - The 2015 Region 2 N contest at Wurtsboro Airport attracted 23 contestants this year, a few more than last year. The weak weather barely allowed 4 contest days; the Sports Class was won by Ryszard Krolikowski and the Bus Class was won by team Aero Club Albatross.

Region 4 South Contest at New Castle – Will be held after submission of this report. Currently has 22 entries

Region 4 North Contest at MASA – Will be held after submission of this report. Currently has 17 entries.

Plans and Future Events

Virginia Soaring Association – VSA will hold a regional conference for all the Virginia Clubs in January of 2016 focusing on advance instruction and club management issues.

FIRCs - The Soaring Safety Foundation will hold a FIRC in the Washing DC Area area in January, 2016. The seminar will be held at the Heritage Hunt Club in Gainesville, Va., a venue that has proven popular.

Respectfully

James C. Garrison
Regions 2 and 4