

SSA Directors Report

Regions 2 and 4

January, 2016

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This report is an update of the September, 2015 report for SSA Regions 2 and 4 as compiled in January, 2016 for the February, 2016 SSA Board meeting in Greenville, S.C.

Happenings in the Virginia Region

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

In January, 2016, we met in Lynchburg, VA for one full day with the President and 2-3 directors of from each of the 5 VASA clubs. Subjects were: (1) An update on club activities since last January; (2) How to motivate club members to step in and support all club activities. (3) How to develop club leaders (Boards, directors, senior officers) and competent members to provide a sustainable group to manage daily operations, finances, instruction, towing, maintenance and other core activities; (4) Comments from Virginia's 2 DPE's on how to prepare students for FAA exams; (5) A report from BRSS member JP Stewart who was one of the US team pilots competing in the December, 2015 Junior World Championships in Australia. Jenn Player, president of Tidewater Soaring Society, was elected the new coordinator of the Virginia Soaring Association.

The discussion of the Junior World event lead to consideration about more advanced training for both Juniors and all club pilots in our region. There was great enthusiasm for holding a thermal / XC camp supported by the 5 Virginia clubs. A plan is being developed for a XC camp, likely held at the Emporia, VA airport, in May or June of 2016. Five glass, 2 place ships are already committed to the project.

Specific Virginia Clubs

Two noteworthy events have occurred with the SSA member clubs in Virginia since the summer of 2015. As noted in the September, 2015 report, four clubs Tidewater, Skyline, Shenandoah Valley and Merlin are near the limits of the number of members that can be accommodated with their facilities. Their activities and changes from the September 2015 report are highlighted below.

Changes Since the September, 2015 Report - Some major changes occurred with the Ridge and Valley Club and Shenandoah Valley Soaring.

- Ridge and Valley Club – This club was small - less than ten members; they had a prop strike with their tow plane and decided to disband rather than go to the expense of rebuilding their engine. Some of their members

have joined the Shenandoah Valley Soaring and Blue Ridge Soaring Society.

- Shenandoah Valley Soaring – This club lost their hanger lease at Eagles Nest Airport in Waynesboro, Virginia on December 31, 2015. The club is still operating at Eagles Nest, but is currently looking for a new home base. The board is considering moving to various other airports or developing their own gliderport in the Shenandoah valley.

Tidewater Soaring Society – Tidewater has 79 active members, operates off their own airport, has 13 CFI's, 2 towplanes, 3 two place ships and about 23 private ships. TSS did about 1400 flights in 2015; the majority of these flights were training flights. Tidewater participates enthusiastically in the OLC. They also have a cadet scholarship program and bring their sailplanes to events at the Virginia Military Aviation Museum.

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 to 25 pilots with 5 new members in the last year. They did 325 operations in 2015. Alby was flown to Kitty Hawk, NC by Eric Lambert – Merlin's president and chief instructor - in late September of 2015. Eric's flight out over Albemarle Sound and the Atlantic Ocean was quite an achievement. At some point Alby will return from Kitty Hawk and head west to the Blue Ridge Mountains and then north to Elmira via glider. The final legs of this true cross country trip are planned to happen in 2016.

Skyline Soaring - Skyline operates off of a public airport at Front Royal, Virginia. They had a good summer, ending the year with 98 members and over 1800 glider flights. They operate 2 tow planes and 4 club gliders. Not much new to report since September 2015. Major news is that Piet Barber, their chief instructor, became a Glider DPE in July, and has given 9 new pilots their flight tests this fall. Virginia now has two glider DPE's, John Molumphy and Piet, reversing something of a national trend showing a declining number of DPE's. As reported before, Bill Vickland was awarded the FAA's Master Aviator award for 50 years of accident free flying. Finally, Shane Neitzky built a soaring simulator based on a highly modified 2-33 frame and Condor. It will be displayed at the 2016 convention in Greenville, SC.

Shenandoah Valley Soaring -- SVS is doing fine as a club, membership is stable at about 60-65 members and the club has 4 two place ships, one 1-26 and 9 CFIG's. SVS flew about 800 operations in 2015. 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. In a partially related issue, as noted above, the club lost their hanger lease in December. The hanger held 1 tow plane and 5 gliders; its loss is a major disruption. The club is still operating at Eagles Nest, but 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. JP also qualified for the US Junior team and did well at the Junior World Championships in Australia in mid - December, 2015. He will be a major help to developing junior pilots in the future.

Regional Contests

Region 4 South Contest at New Castle – The R4S contest had 21 entries in 2 classes – 18 meter and FAI combined. The weather was weak and only 2 devalued days were flown. Tim Wells won the 18 meter class and Rob Ware won the FAI class much to his delight. Sadly, on one day, a competitor hit a wire with his Ventus during an off-field landing. Thankfully, he is recovering very well.

Region 4 North Contest at MASA – The R4N contest had 20 entries – 12 in the “Gold Class” and 8 in the “Silver Class”. Although everyone flew 8 days out of 8, the weather was either too weak or too wild on 4 days and only 4 valid contest days were flown. However, of the four valid days, one was a great thermal day and another was a ridge mission into the Allegheny ridges west of the Shenandoah Valley for over 250 miles. Not bad for October. Karl Striedieck won the Gold Class and Shane Neitzey won Silver.

Plans and Future Events

Virginia Soaring Association – As noted above, the Virginia Soaring Association Clubs are planning on organizing a XC camp in May or June of 2016 focusing on advanced instruction and beginning XC flying.

*FIRC*s - The Soaring Safety Foundation held a FIRC in the Washington DC area in January 9 / 10, 2016. The seminar was held at the Heritage Hunt Club in Gainesville, VA with 15 participants from Virginia and Maryland. All revalidated their CFI certificates.

Respectfully



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