

Report of the SSA Clubs and Chapters Committee, February 2015

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Major relocations in Region 12.

Krey Field was home a few clubs and chapters in recent years and months. After John Krey passed away, his family opted to close the airfield with hopes to sell to investors. Cypress Soaring Club is the largest occupant to be displaced. A private glider club that was part of a larger German American club listed its equipment for sale a few months ago. Second hand information said that Orange County Soaring Association's equipment and membership has transferred to Cypress Soaring Club. The membership transfer was confirmed by the SSA office.

Lake Elsinore property has been sold and Lake Elsinore Soaring Club will be forced to relocate.

One report suggests that soaring will soon return to Hemet Airport.

Soaring was again represented by local organizations at the AMA Air Expo in Ontario, CA, in January.

No report received by this committee.

Chapter Contacts update

SSA listed chapter officers; president, vice president, secretary were contacted by this committee to determine if they were the current officer/position and to forward as needed if corrections were needed. Chapters were also asked to identify key roles in their organization so that interested SSA committees and functions can reach out to these key people. Such contacts included chief instructor, chief tow pilot, winch chief, newsletter editor, webmaster/digital media contact, safety officer, and membership. Although chapter contact information is requested at chapter renewal time, there is often several months between that process and chapter leadership elections. For others the renewal occurs shortly before elections and the updates aren't completed. Some have already responded, but it's expected to take several weeks to a few months for results.

Chapter rebate program.

The chapter rebate program, as reinitiated, has not had the desired results. In recent years, one average sized chapter, Central California Soaring Club (45 members), has started renewing as a chapter, but, according to Rhonda Copeland, other chapters have switched to individual renewals during the same period, most recently Brandywine Soaring Association (41 members). CCSC leadership was challenged by this committee to reconcile the differences between their membership as listed on their web site and their chapter membership as listed in the SSA member data. Insuring under the SSA Group Plan often drives the diligence which chapters give to SSA membership currency.

In early February, the SSA office reported that 9 chapter rebate checks remained outstanding, including one from 2012. Although this was a robust program at one time, the small amount now offered for

each member renewal is not driving the program. I think the results indicate that SSA members are better served by keeping dues as reasonable as possible. Although the rebates for clubs and chapters are generally small, the total cost to the SSA is several thousand dollars and as part of the overall budget contributes to the need to draw from the endowment funds. This is the type of benefit that might be awarded during a period of growth, but the reality is a steady, slow decline in SSA membership for several years. This would seem contrary to the fiduciary responsibilities of SSA leadership, thus I recommend and will enter a motion to the full board that we suspend the SSA Chapter rebates until such time it will be supported directly by revenues.

Clubs & Chapters Membership and Retention

See the associated 'soaring associates' PDF or spreadsheet. You may have to zoom the view of the PDF. The spreadsheet is an extract of a larger spreadsheet.

The minimum standards of membership within the SSA as an SSA Chapter are defined within the SSA By-Laws. However, some soaring organizations, by commission or omission are listed as chapters that do not meet the minimum standards. Seven are highlighted on the attachment. There could be others, but some of highlighted examples have publicly indicated that their SSA membership component is marginally to significantly less than their total membership. For whatever reason, they are included on the SSA Where-To-Fly Maps, like compliant chapters and business members, and perhaps have availed themselves to other chapter benefits.

Over the years, the SSA staff has encountered difficulties with some of these chapters during renewal periods. It appears the rules have been bent in some cases where the chapter members no longer reach the minimum requirement. In a similar vein, there are at least a couple of clubs with substantial numbers of SSA members that are excluded entirely. Some of this speaks to the limited amount of time staff has to work on follow-up. The seasonal nature of the sport and chapter renewal timing may lead to letting some slide by in order to keep in touch. By my estimate, there are at last 180 members in these clubs that are not SSA members.

More significant is that once a soaring organization ceases to be a chapter, the SSA starts to lose contact. Canceling the chapter status without an alternative consideration is likely to cost significant good will and put large holes in the Where to Fly maps, yet we cannot ignore what the by-laws stipulate. So, how do we both comply with the SSA By-Laws and remain inclusive? My recommendation is to extend this inclusion to the clubs and chapters at issue, and build other opportunities, through the following steps.

1. SSA board adopt a policy to include currently unrecognized soaring resources in the SSA member data
 - a. Select a term, either 'club' or 'soaring associate' to identify these organizations in the SSA member data.
 - i. 'club' may not be inclusive of other organizations that could be included and the term may be confusing as many chapters self-identify as clubs already, including naming conventions.

- ii. 'soaring associates' affords the ability to include clubs and other soaring programs we may or not be aware of, like the Kansas State University Glider Training program or the US Air Force Academy, that are neither chapters nor business members.
 - b. Notify the affected organizations of their loss of chapter status and the reasons. Encourage their participation in the chapter program and offer them the alternative agreement.
2. SSA will provide limited benefits in exchange for information.
 - a. The SSA will list these resources on the SSA Where to Fly maps
 - b. The SSA will share and exchange with these resources via social media channels.
 - c. These resources will agree to and provide full contact and membership information periodically to the SSA for SSA outreach and educational efforts. The information will not be sold or exchanged with third parties.
 - d. Rather than amend the SSA By-Laws, this exchange will be administered through individual Letters of Agreement between the SSA and the resource. See Soaring Associate Letter of Agreement PDF.

Within the SSA member data are flags to indicate the type of membership an entry holds. When entering information, the SSA staff can designate an entry as one of several types; member, family member, chapter, institution, subscriber, and so on. Missing from this designation is 'club' or 'soaring associate'. It's quite simple to add such a designation, either as a matter of policy or by amending the by-laws. Doug Easton will accomplish this once policy or direction from the SSA board is forthcoming. The result will be including additional information included in the SSA member data and additional views to allow the SSA to reach out to persons involved in some segments of soaring that are not currently known to the SSA.

In summary, SSA must play by its own rules, the by-laws. The goal is to be inclusive, grow soaring, and grow the SSA by developing information on persons participating in soaring organizations that are currently unknown to the SSA.

I recommend and will introduce a motion to enable the SSA to move forward with a policy of engaging soaring associates.

Chapter Views

Doug Easton has recently expanded the chapter views for the club and chapters committee to better assist in identifying trends and issues affecting chapters where we might offer better advice and counsel and expand communications.

Chapter Numbers

The number of active flying chapters is currently 135, though one or two maybe chapters within chapters. The number of SSA members within chapters appears to be following the general member trends, down about 60 from 2/13 to 2/14 and down about 90 from 2/14 to 2/15.