

**The Soaring Society of America, Inc.**  
Government Liaison Committee  
Stephen Northcraft, Chairman

**Board of Director's Report**  
**September 12<sup>th</sup>, Phoenix, AZ**

**Overview**

There has been one overarching issue during the period since the last Board meeting, the FAA issuing ANPRM FAA-2015-2147, "Transponders for gliders". The SSA responded to this call for information and this Committee will continue to work this issue as appropriate.

**Committee Structure**

Committee Chair	Stephen Northcraft
Airspace	Cindy Brickner, Hal Becker on transponders
Pilot Certification	Rich Carlson (SSF Trustee)
Airport Utilization	Linda Draper-Hivert (Stephen Northcraft)
Aircraft Certification	S. Northcraft (acting)
RTCA and Special Issues	Bernald Smith
GPS/DAFFI	Rick Sheppe
FAA Rule-making Advisory Comm.	Tim Anderson
Surveillance	Gerry Molidor

**Airspace – ANPRM FAA-2015-2147**

This Committee drafted a response to the subject ANPRM, both the ANPRM and the response are attached.

I should note here that the ANPRM was a direct response by the FAA to inquiries made by Senator Reid and Representative Amodei, both of Nevada regarding the situation with gliders in Reno and requesting action. I have also included copies of those letters as part of this report. What is concerning is that the Congressmen had information regarding alleged glider conflicts that does not appear in public databases, and a FOIA request to the FAA has failed to corroborate one of their claims. This is problematic as it appears that someone within the Reno TRACON organization may be releasing information to Congress, directly or indirectly, to further a specific agenda such as making RNO a Class B airspace.

In our response to the ANPRM, the SSA reiterated our previous longstanding position of opposition to mandatory transponder equipment and expanded on our rationale. We included a discussion of why we disagreed with several elements of the NTSB report on the mid-air collision which is referenced in the notice. In that discussion we expanded on our reasons for rejecting many of the facts, representations, and conclusions made in that report (the FAA in DC at the time privately acknowledged that they agreed). We also discussed collision avoidance technology in general, including an extended discussion of

the advantages of FLARM technology. We noted that based on the Government's own statistics, the probability of a mid-air between a glider without a transponder and any other aircraft is essentially no different than it is between transponder equipped aircraft, bringing into question any claimed safety benefit. Finally we concluded that the economic impact (potentially >\$20M to equip the active glider fleet with ADS-B) on our membership does not justify the claimed safety benefit.

Recognizing that some of our members disagree with us I want to make a few points here. First, if there were no costs associated with equipping gliders with transponders or ADS-B, we would not be having this discussion. Equally certainly, if these electronic boxes cost more than new gliders, there would be no need for discussion either. Defining "reasonable cost" is the debate, with many members ignoring the reality that a typical ADS-B installation today costs more than most 1-26s are worth and represents an investment that is more than half the value of many other used gliders. Second, NASA's aircraft incident database indicates that since 1988 (NPRM 88-2) the statistical probability of an aircraft being involved in an NMAC (Near Mid Air Collision) is no different for aircraft equipped with transponders than it is for gliders without transponders. So statistically speaking, installing a transponder does not improve safety for gliders. Third, based on the experience of FLARM users in Europe, installing PowerFLARM offers significant safety benefits to glider pilots, and based on sales numbers, at what many consider a reasonable cost. Finally, both EAA and AOPA are solidly in agreement with our stated position on this issue.

As a late addition to this, the Oregon SSA Governor reports that the approaches to the Hillsboro, OR airport were recently changed. They were changed to accommodate a request by the local commuter airline (Intel Airlines), and have created conflicts with the local glider community. The airline recently reported a couple NMACs (below 3000 ft MSL). The local club is working the problem with ATC.

### **Airspace - TFRs**

TFRs have been prolific again this season; members need to be especially vigilant and check for NOTAMS before flying. Popup TFRs for wildfires have been an issue.